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WebUser

Issue 511

30 Sept - 13 Oct 2020

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Go beyond the Google graveyard

It's always depressing when one of your favourite products disappears, after the parent company decides it's "no longer financially viable" or has "reached the end of its lifecycle". Little thought is given to the devoted fans of that 'brand' who have come to depend on it, because business is business. If you didn't want Mars to stop making white chocolate Maltesers, you should've bought more of them at the time!

Google is notoriously brutal about axing beloved software and services, consigning at least a dozen tools to its development graveyard every year. Our Technical &

Reviews Editor, Andy Shaw, has never forgiven the 2013 scrapping of Google Reader and my Mum still mourns the loss of Picasa in 2015.

Fortunately, as we explain in this issue's cover feature, for every product Google abandons, there's usually a similar and often superior alternative. We round up the best free replacements for Google's castoffs to help you fill the void.

Robert Irvine, Editor
editor@webuser.co.uk
[#webuser](#)



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How to use Bitly links

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.



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

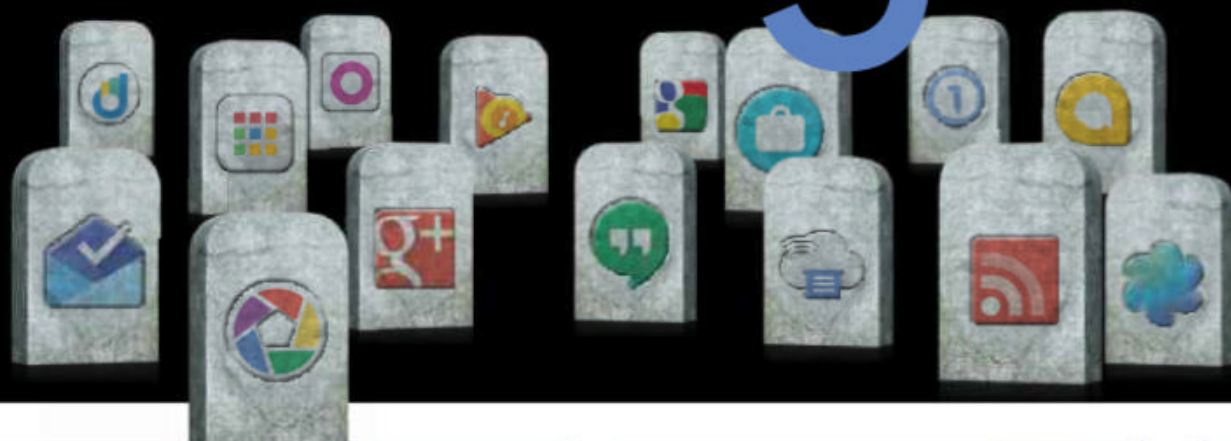


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30 SEPT - 13 OCT 2020

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FEATURE

Killed by Google



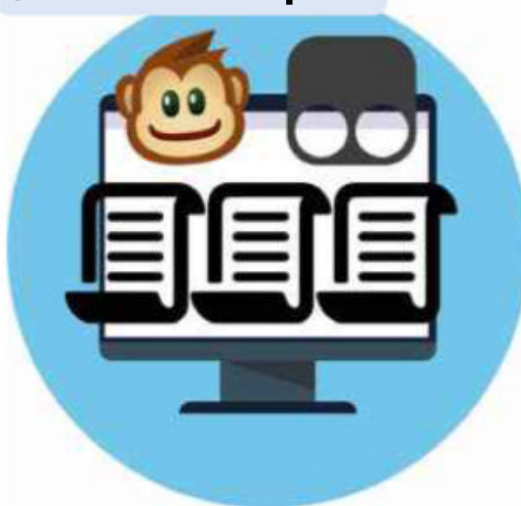
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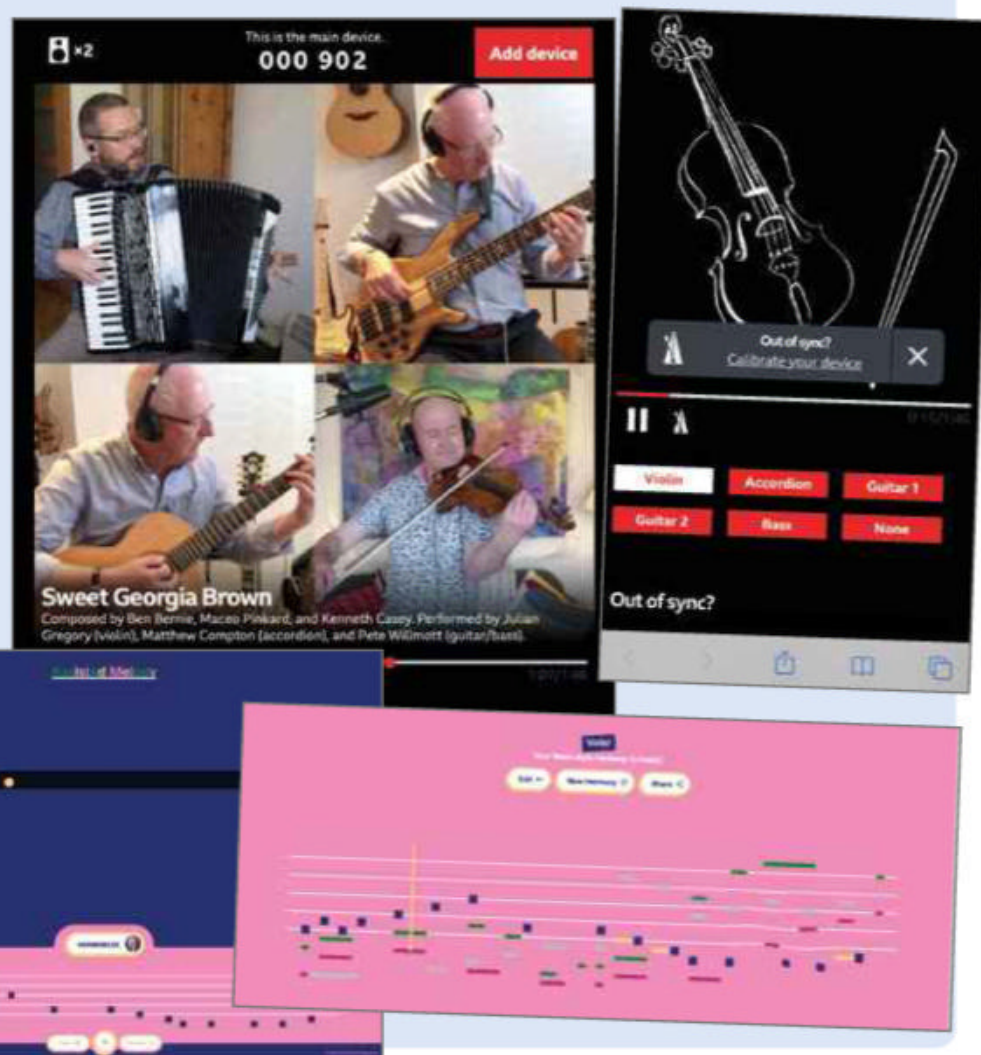
What's New Online

Conduct and compose music online

Listening to an orchestra is one of life's joys, and the BBC's new Philharmonic Pick A Part experiment (bit.ly/2Fsce3o) lets you conduct your own. Simply connect audio devices using the Audio Orchestrator tool and you can hear them play different instruments at the same time.

Since the orchestral music has been recorded in individual parts, all you need to do is start a new session and select Add Device, then use the link or QR code to connect computers, tablets and phones before entering the calibration mode. When you subsequently select a piece of music, it'll play across all your devices, allowing you to select the instrument you want to hear on each one. The more devices you connect, the more engrossing the experience becomes.

If you like what you hear, you may also want to try another new musical experiment, Google's Assisted Melody (bit.ly/2FE4gUo). This lets you compose your own Bach-style harmony using an on-screen piano keyboard. No matter how you tickle the virtual ivories, the Magenta Coconet Machine Learning model - trained on the German composer's chorale cantatas - will create something listenable.



Solve crimes in a hand-drawn city

www.micromacro-game.com

Micro Macro Crime City invites you to become a super sleuth, patrolling the streets to find the scene of a murder. From there, it's a matter of piecing together a series of clues to discover whodunnit in what could be described as a crime-focused spin on Where's Wally.

Created as a promotion for a card-based game, there's certainly much to admire in this online demo. It involves you moving around the map and using your mouse or fingers to zoom in, then clicking a location when you think you have an answer. If your hunch is correct, you'll uncover another clue but it's easy to become distracted by the

comings and goings of the city's inhabitants. As such, while there are only nine stages to complete, it may take a little while to reach the end - but you'll have lots of fun in the process.



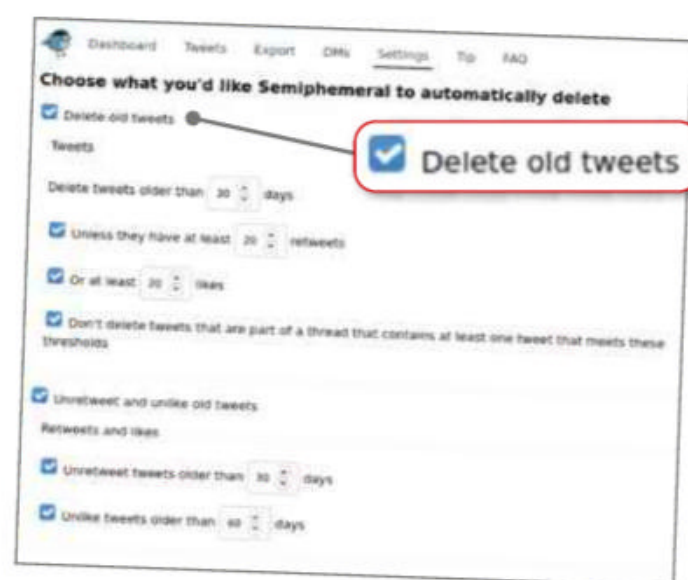
Delete old tweets in bulk

semiphemeral.com

Cleaning up your Twitter account is no fun, especially if you have hundreds of tweets, retweets and likes. With Semiphemeral's online tool, you can automate the process by indicating how long your Twitter actions should remain visible before being deleted.

The only downside is that you need to grant the tool access to your account, which includes letting it see protected tweets and accounts that you follow, mute and block.

If you're comfortable with this, log in using your Twitter account and open the Settings tab. You can create exceptions such as ignoring tweets that have a set number of retweets and likes, or those that are part of a thread with these thresholds. You can also get Semiphemeral to delete direct messages. Until Twitter itself provides similar tools, this should prove useful for many users.



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

Travel the world with a penguin

bit.ly/2Fyo2Rz

By dragging and dropping a penguin called Hopper over circles on a map, Google's new experiment lets you explore destinations across the world. Use the pointer to move Hopper around and take a photo as he dances in front of key landmarks. You also get information about the locations, and can share your snaps.



View thousands of Winamp skins

skins.webamp.org

Winamp was the audio player of choice before Apple and Spotify dominated the music scene. It let you personalise the look of its interface, leading to the creation of tens of thousands of skins – many of which can be viewed in the new Winamp Skins Museum. This makes browsing the 65,681 skins uploaded to the Internet Archive (bit.ly/3c01FjO) much easier. Click Random for a surprise or keep scrolling the list, then interact by clicking Winamp's buttons and listening to songs. If you have a skin that's not in the archive, you can upload that, too.



Watch TV shows together in Messenger

www.messenger.com

Facebook Messenger has been rolling out a new feature that allows you to watch TV shows and movies with friends and family. Rather than view alone, you can start a video call or create a Messenger Room in iOS or Android and swipe up for the menu. Select Watch Together, then find a video and start viewing in real-time.

The video calls can involve up to eight people, enabling you to see and hear each others' reactions. You can also have up to 50 participants in Rooms if you fancy organising a larger social occasion.



NEW VOICE COMMANDS



Send an audio message

Say "Hey Google, send an audio message" on an Android device to send a voice note to friends and family. You can specify the recipient in your command.



Play a music quiz

In iOS 14, you can launch the Shortcuts app and activate Music Quiz – a game that was once popular on early iPods. Allow access to your Apple Music library and guess the songs from the clips.



Start a football chant

Say "Alexa, do a football chant", and the voice assistant will attempt to whip up a match atmosphere by reading or singing a terrace chant for your team.



Find future COVID hotspots

bit.ly/2FyImU2

Imperial College London has been predicting which areas of England and Wales are likely to see an upturn in coronavirus cases. The interactive site shows the colour-coded results and charts the latest changes in new infections.

Browse photos of lockdown

bit.ly/3c16mtL

A community project called Hold Still, championed by the Duchess of Cambridge, invited people to take photos reflecting the COVID-19 lockdown. This site shows the final 100 portraits with commentary on the photographers' motivations.

Discover when you'll die

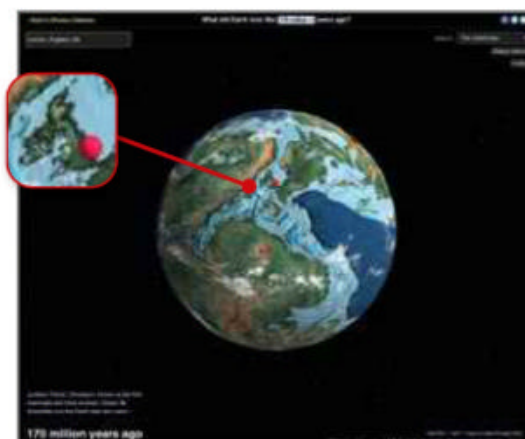
mylongevity.org

Life expectancy in the UK is now over 80 years, but much depends on where you live. This calculator from the University of East Anglia takes this information into account, revealing an age, your risk of a heart attack or stroke, and your BMI.

See your town millions of years ago

bit.ly/2H9mhuJ

There are lots of online tools that pinpoint cities on a spinning globe, but this one takes you way, way back. Using palaeogeographic maps and geoscience data, it shows the position and terrain of your chosen city up to 750 million years ago, while highlighting key moments – such as when the first coral reefs, insects and flowers appeared. You can even see how the globe looked when dinosaurs roamed the planet.



Need to Know

Could the latest Firefox cuts mean the end of Mozilla?

What happened?

Mozilla has had a tough year. In January, the company behind Firefox made 70 of its staff redundant. Over the summer, the open-source developer slashed another 250 jobs as the impact of the coronavirus pandemic forced it to cut investment in feature development. Now, it's closed two of its popular products.

Firefox Send was a browser tool and standalone website that let users send files to each other and encrypt the data. It launched in March of 2019, but was taken offline for repairs after reports that the tool was being used by hackers to distribute malware. Following the recent layoffs, Mozilla has confirmed that Send isn't coming back.

A similar fate has befallen Firefox Notes. This tool let users write quick notes on one device in the Firefox browser and sync them to other devices, again with encryption. That tool will be shut down in November.

Send and Notes are only two tools out of the many pieces of software that Mozilla makes and supports, but the shutdowns are being seen by some industry watchers as signs of the company's wider financial challenges. Mozilla earns most of its money through the default search engine in the Firefox

browser – usually Google, from whom it makes around \$400m a year.

In an effort to supplement its revenue, Mozilla has been trying to expand into subscription products such as a VPN (vpn.mozilla.org) and the read-it-later app Pocket, but the company has had to admit it underestimated the time it would take to launch the VPN.

Both of those revenue models will be threatened by the decline in Firefox browser users. According to StatCounter (www.statcounter.com), Firefox has 4% of the global browser market share, down from 30% a few years ago. The market is now dominated by Chrome, which holds two-thirds of the market, and the resurgent Microsoft Edge.

How will it affect you?

Firefox Send was a handy tool, but other services perform the same function, most notably WeTransfer (wetransfer.com). If you've been using Firefox Notes, the app will cease to function from 1 November, although the browser extension will continue to work. New downloads won't be allowed and

the system will no longer be maintained by Mozilla, the company said, which means it's a good idea to find an alternative, such as Evernote, Google Keep or Microsoft OneNote.

If you have notes you'd like to keep, Mozilla says it will be possible to export them. It's wise to do this before November, and you can find more details at mzl.la/32Oce6r.

It's unclear what the cutbacks and funding concerns will mean for Mozilla in the long term. Given its revenue is largely earned from searches in the browser, more Firefox users are needed to boost income. The focus going forward appears to be on paid-for products, such as VPNs and other web tools. Whether that happens soon enough to keep Mozilla running remains to be seen, but Firefox isn't dropping out of the browser wars yet.

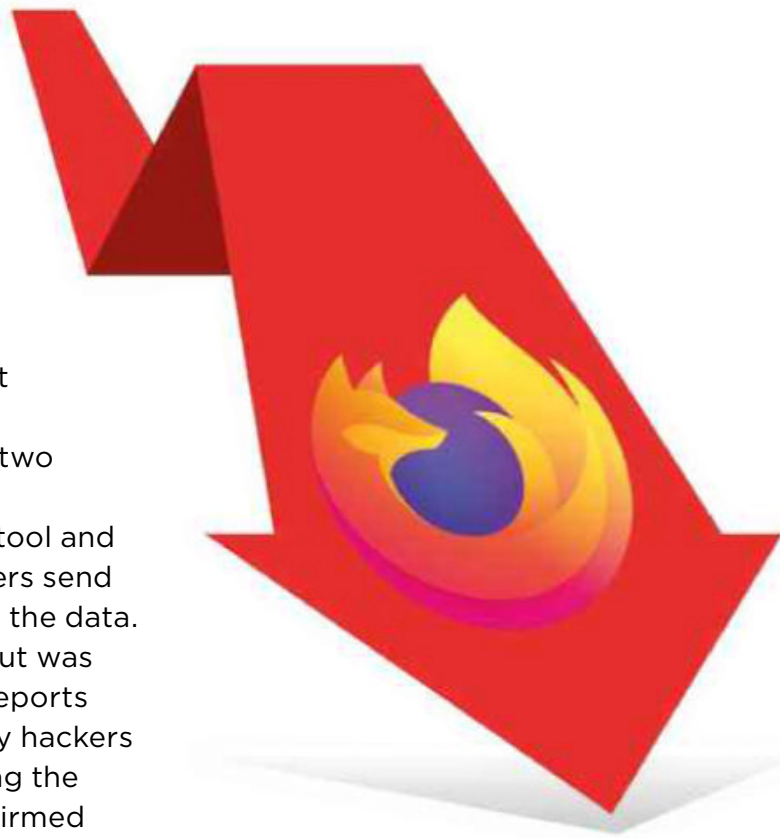
What do we think?

The browser market has changed significantly over the last decade. Back then, Mozilla provided a much-needed rival to the dominance of Internet Explorer but there's now plenty of competition for Microsoft and Firefox hasn't translated its early lead into ongoing success.

It would be sad to see Mozilla and Firefox fade away, and we hope the company can find a way to survive. We need open-source alternatives to big-tech products, but the features have to be as good as corporate rivals, too.

Where Mozilla could find success is by offering reliable web-privacy tools. An affordable, fully trustworthy VPN could prop up the company for long enough to help it find a new way to survive financially without needing to significantly expand the number of people using its browser.

Whatever the solution, Mozilla needs to counter its shrinking user numbers and diminishing revenue, and work fast to avoid meeting the same fate as other lost web brands, such as AltaVista, Yahoo and Netscape.



Mozilla has closed Notes but the service is still available as a Firefox extension

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

Google bans stalkerware from Play store

What happened?

Google has changed the wording of its Play store rules to impose an official ban on stalkerware apps. Previously, the store's terms prohibited the use of Android apps by parents to track their own children, but allowed such apps to be used to track an adult, such as a spouse or partner, without their knowledge. As of 1 October, that rule has been reversed, with Google claiming the wording had been corrected due to a typo.

The move comes amid warnings of a rise in stalkerware – apps that let someone surveil another person's online activity or physical location. Security

firm Kaspersky reported a 373% increase in devices with stalkerware installed over the last year.

How will it affect you?

There are ways to check whether your handset is being spied on. Signs of stalkerware can include a slow keyboard, diminished battery life and the location-services icon always showing as enabled. To install such stalkerware, someone will have needed physical access to your device. That's one good reason to have a private code for unlocking your phone.

If you're worried about stalkerware, delete any apps that you don't use and can't remember installing, or run a

full system restore, backing up your files first. Android devices can be scanned for stalkerware using Kaspersky's antivirus tool (bit.ly/18UiEBm).

On iPhones, look under General in Settings for an option called Profiles & Device Management. That will only be there if someone else is managing your phone, though this may be your employer if it's a device provided by your company.

What do we think?

This type of software can be used by abusers to control



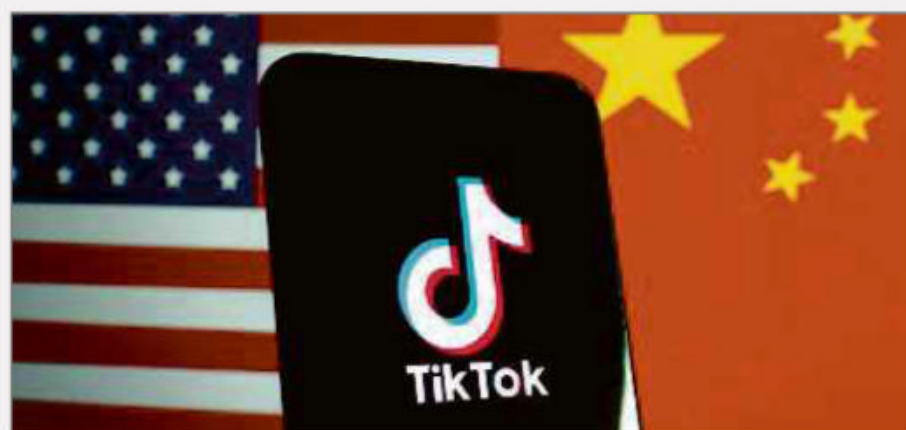
and stalk current and former partners. It's alarming that Google only now noticed the typo that allowed such apps in the Play store – did no-one at the company think stalker apps should be banned until now? That these tools are finally prohibited is good news, but it shouldn't have taken so long.

TikTok avoids US ban with Oracle deal

What happened?

The ongoing battle over TikTok has reached a temporary resolution, with Oracle set to buy a stake in the app and store TikTok's data on its own cloud in the US.

Over the summer, US President Donald Trump raised concerns about security and surveillance regarding two Chinese-owned apps – social-video app TikTok and messaging app WeChat – saying both would be banned from app stores on 20 September. That would mean new users couldn't download TikTok, but could still keep using it without updates until November, when a technical ban would limit the service.



Thanks to the Oracle deal, which could also see retailer Walmart investing in TikTok, that ban has been avoided and the app will remain available, assuming negotiations go smoothly.

How will it affect you?

If nothing trips up the Oracle deal, TikTok should remain on the app stores and continue operating. That said, Trump suggested that

if the deal fell through, the ban would be revived: "I have given the deal my blessing, if they get it done that's great, if they don't that's fine too".

Under the terms of the deal, TikTok will be spun off from Chinese owner ByteDance, setting up a new headquarters in Texas. Oracle and Walmart are each expected to buy a stake in the company before it's listed on the stock exchange, but it

will remain majority-owned by ByteDance. The US government originally pushed for TikTok to be completely freed from its Chinese owners, but they remain in control of the app and its technology.

What do we think?

What a shambles.

Threatening to ban one specific Chinese app, while ignoring the hundreds and thousands of others in app stores, is nothing short of silly. If other countries decided to take a similar issue with apps designed and hosted in foreign countries run by governments known for snooping and surveillance, Silicon Valley would have a huge mess on its hands.

Credit: Ascannio / Shutterstock.com

Tech firms told to stop targeting teens

What happened?

Stop advertising to teenagers. That's the message being sent to Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Apple and Amazon in an open letter to the world's biggest technology firms. MPs, academics and children's-rights groups claim that web companies are abusing kids' privacy and placing those "susceptible" to marketing under increased pressure. They also reiterate that UK law prohibits processing the data of anyone under 13 for the purpose of advertising.

The letter, whose signatories include MP Caroline Lucas and Friends of the Earth, states: "The fact that ad-tech companies hold 72 million data points on a child by the time they turn 13 shows the extent of disregard for these laws, and the extraordinary surveillance to which children are subjected. There is no justification for targeting teenagers with personalised ads any more than there is for targeting 12-year-olds."

Duncan McCann is another signatory – and his inclusion may make Google sit up and take notice. The privacy campaigner is currently engaged in a £2.5bn lawsuit, claiming that YouTube unlawfully harvested children's data, then used that information to advertise to them. The case is the first of its kind in Europe.

On the surface, the letter is a warning over online privacy and data abuse. But



guarding against targeted advertising also carries an environmental subtext with Global Action Plan, an eco-activist charity, which has coordinated the letter's release. According to the group, more advertising means more product consumption, and that in turn puts more pressure on the planet's resources. So, less advertising, please.

Unsurprisingly, not one of the companies addressed in the letter has commented yet.

How does it affect you?

As it stands, 13 is the general cut-off age for tech protections. Once a person reaches that age, they're free to sign up for a full YouTube or Facebook account (and experience the ensuing ads the

rest of us have to put up with). The aim of this letter is to increase ad-based protections across the internet for those up to the age of 18. Everyone wants to feel secure about their children and grandchildren using the internet. If this letter pushes concerns to the front of tech firms' minds, that's no bad thing.

What do we think?

Whether an open letter will facilitate additional protections is up for debate, but it's a debate that needs to be had. How you prevent a child from simply lying about their age is another matter entirely. As ever, vigilant parents and guardians and content-filtering options such as Microsoft Family provide the best protection for kids.



FIRST LOOK

Apple Watch SE apple.co/3hPqUX9

Apple's powerful new Apple Watch Series 6 may be turning heads right now, but it's the Apple Watch SE that's really worth a look. Like the iPhone SE or the new iPad Air 2020, the device is packed with a lot of clever technology found in Apple's top-of-the-line products, but for a fraction of the cost – prices start at £269 for the base model, rising to £400 for the GPS + Cellular version that lets you make calls and send messages on the go.

At a casual glance, you can't tell the difference between the Apple Watch SE and the Series 6. Even the screen size, with its sharp Retina display, and the supposedly 'iconic' design of a rectangle with rounded

corners is identical.

However, the lower price necessitates some cutbacks, most notably in the SE's health-monitoring capabilities.

Think of this as a Fitbit Lite. The always-on screen is gone, as is the blood-oxygen monitoring and built-in electrocardiogram found in the Series 6. However, it still features a heart-rate and sleep tracker, as well as the new Fitness app, which offers exercise presets and an Activity ring that makes it easy to set and see current goals – both of which were shamelessly ripped straight from Google Fit.

The Watch SE is powered by the same



zippy S5 dual-core SiP processor found in the Series 5 watch. A Fall Detection sensor and Emergency SOS, which automatically calls emergency services when you're in trouble, are also included.

Apple has focused heavily on personalisation.

The Watch SE's website features a dizzying array of strap colours and styles, and there's even the option to create your own design through the Apple Watch Studio. If you're not a fitness fanatic, and simply want a smart and snazzy-looking timepiece, the Apple Watch SE could be just what you're after.



WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

Is WhatsApp adding multi-device access?

Internet sleuths believe they've uncovered proof that WhatsApp is preparing to launch what they call "the best feature ever" – multi-device access.

Currently, when you attempt to sign into WhatsApp on more than one device, the app automatically logs you out of the one you were previously using. This means that if you have more than one phone, you need to run more than one account. All that could be about to change, though, as the team at WABetaInfo (wabetainfo.com) has seen leaked images showing the option to link up to four different devices to your WhatsApp account.

They claim the main advantage of such a move is that even when you run out of data on your phone and it's turned off, you can still send messages from a tablet or the desktop app. Speaking of which, the site also says WhatsApp Desktop will be getting a new interface in the near future.

As it stands, it's thought many of the most important multi-device features are in place, including chat-history syncing, muted conversations and



notifications for delivered messages. But a lot of tinkering is needed before multi-device support reaches us – if it ever does. It's not known when or even if this will be available to regular users, but WABetaInfo is confident that "early access to multi-device beta" enrolment is on the way.

LIKELIHOOD RATING



It's surprising that multi-device support isn't already available, though parent company Facebook's excuse is: "it's complicated". Yet we live in the age of Facebook Messenger and Snapchat and constant communication on any and every screen. WhatsApp may have started life as the online equivalent of your phone's text-messaging app, but it needs to evolve to keep up with rivals.

WEBOMETER

WE LIKE...

Amazon Music adds podcasts

Amazon has updated its Music streaming service to include podcasts, allowing Prime and Music Unlimited subscribers and free users to listen to their favourite shows on the web, on their mobile devices and through Echo smart speakers.



iOS 14 warns you of spying apps

A new security feature in iOS 14 warns you if apps are spying on you. An orange dot appears in the top-right corner of your iPhone's screen when your microphone is activated, and turns green when your camera is switched on, too.



WE DON'T LIKE...

Patient dies after hospital hack

German police have launched a murder investigation after a woman died during a cyberattack on Düsseldorf University Hospital. Hackers disabled computer systems and the patient died while being transferred to another hospital.



PS5 pre-orders cause chaos

Sony was forced to apologise after thousands of gamers were unable to pre-order its new PlayStation 5 console. The company admitted that the pre-order system "could have been a lot smoother" and said more PS5s will be available soon.



What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

Redkey USB V3

bit.ly/3iSpBbx | From £20



Back in Issue 466 (bit.ly/webuser466), we looked at the successful Redkey Kickstarter campaign. Now, here's version 3 of the device that promises "military-grade security for your laptop and desktop PC". When you delete a file from your computer, it usually remains accessible to enterprising crooks, but Redkey can completely and securely wipe your hard drive – just plug it in, send the command and after a 60-second countdown, the clean-up begins, with your choice of up to 25 data-wipe standards used by military and defence organisations. A Home version costs £20, while the Professional kit is yours for £30.

Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

18,000 COVID-19 test results leaked online

The initials, dates of birth, geographical areas and sex of more than 18,000 Welsh residents who tested positive for COVID-19 were exposed for 20 hours over the August bank holiday weekend. While the risk of identifying most of the people from the leaked information is low, the data breach exposed the locations of 1,926 people living in nursing homes and other enclosed places.

The breach was caused by human error, according to Public Health Wales, and arose when an employee inadvertently transferred data from positive COVID-19 tests to an a public-facing server, rather than the intended internal, private server.



This exposed the data for 20 hours, until it was discovered and removed.

"We take our obligations to protect people's data extremely seriously and I am sorry that on this occasion we failed," said chief executive of Public Health Wales, Tracey Cooper. "I would like to reassure the public that we have in place very clear processes and policies on data protection."

bit.ly/35O02Vd

Universities warned to prepare for cyberattacks

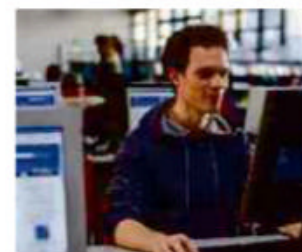
Universities and colleges have been warned of an increase in targeted cyber-attacks. The alert from the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) follows an investigation into a recent spate of attacks on UK academic institutions, including ransomware attacks that disrupted Newcastle and Northumbria universities at the start of September.

The NCSC is recommending that

educational establishments employ a layered system of security measures, with multiple defence mechanisms ready to step in if one is compromised. They are also being advised to implement an incident response plan, in case of a ransomware attack.

"This criminal targeting of the education sector, particularly at such a challenging time, is utterly reprehensible," said Paul Chichester, director of operations at the NCSC. "While these have been isolated incidents, I would strongly urge all academic institutions to take heed of our alert and put in place the steps we suggest, to help ensure young people are able to return to education uninterrupted."

bit.ly/2FH8sCS



Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:
Katy Worobec, Managing Director of Economic Crime at UK Finance
(www.ukfinance.org.uk)



Q Has there been a big rise in online fraud during the coronavirus pandemic?

Darren Wills, Facebook

A During this pandemic, we have seen criminals use sophisticated methods to exploit people's financial concerns, impersonating trusted organisations such

as the NHS or HMRC, to trick them into giving away their money or information.

Criminals have sent emails designed to look like they are from government departments, offering grants of up to £7,500, a 'council tax reduction' or help with applying for Universal Credit. These emails contain links to fake websites that steal personal and financial information from victims.

One of the most shocking scams during the pandemic has involved using the NHS Test and Trace service. Criminals are preying on an anxious public by sending



phishing emails and links claiming that the recipient has been in contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19. These lead to fake websites that are used to steal personal data or infect devices with malware.

There's also been a spate of fake ads for COVID-related products such as hand sanitisers and face masks.

We urge everyone to follow the advice of the Take Five to

Stop Fraud campaign (takefive-stopfraud.org.uk), which encourages people to pause for thought, to keep their money and personal information safe from fraudsters:

- **Stop:** Taking a moment to stop and think before parting with your money or information could keep you safe.

- **Challenge:** Could it be fake? It's fine to reject, refuse or ignore any requests. Only criminals will try to rush or panic you.

- **Protect:** Contact your bank immediately if you think you've fallen for a scam and report it to Action Fraud.



Meet Jessica the intrepid wool grower who is changing the face of sheep farming, one night and one duvet at a time

Fully traceable wool bedding from British Southdown sheep to perfect sleep in support of British wool growers

Sustainable, hypo-allergenic, free from dust mites and just gloriously comfortable sleep all year round - duvets, mattress covers and pillows



Limited offer – Order before 18 October 2020 and enjoy £20 off!
Simply quote coupon code web20

Call Jessica today on 01404 861117
to hear how you could sleep like a lamb

southdownduvets.com

★ Best New Websites

Site of the Fortnight

TRAVEL

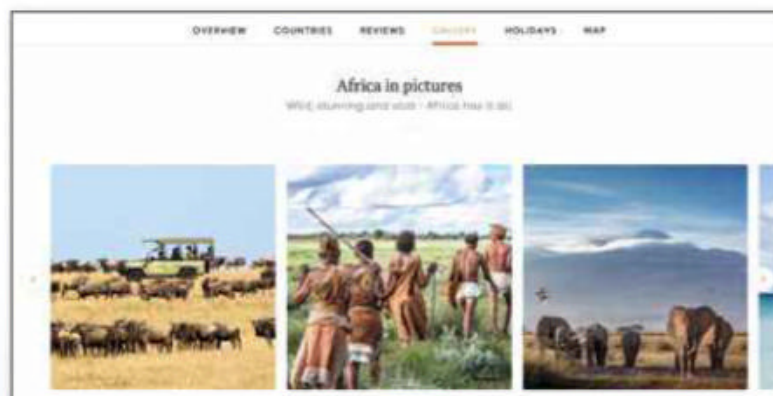
RELAUNCH

Expert Africa

www.expertafrica.com

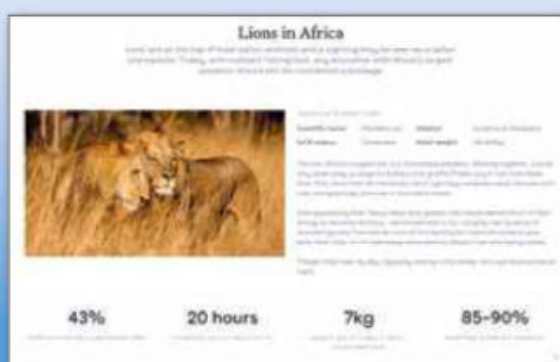
When booking a safari holiday, the most important criteria is whether you'll actually catch a glimpse of the wildlife you've travelled to see. By visiting Expert Africa, you can select a particular animal and not only check how likely you are to make a sighting but where that's most likely to happen. The data is based on two years of wildlife spotting by past travellers, and you can check how many of these visitors reported a sight in each location and how long they stayed in their accommodation. You can also find inspiration for a planned trip to Africa by indicating what you're looking to do and who you're going with.

Our rating



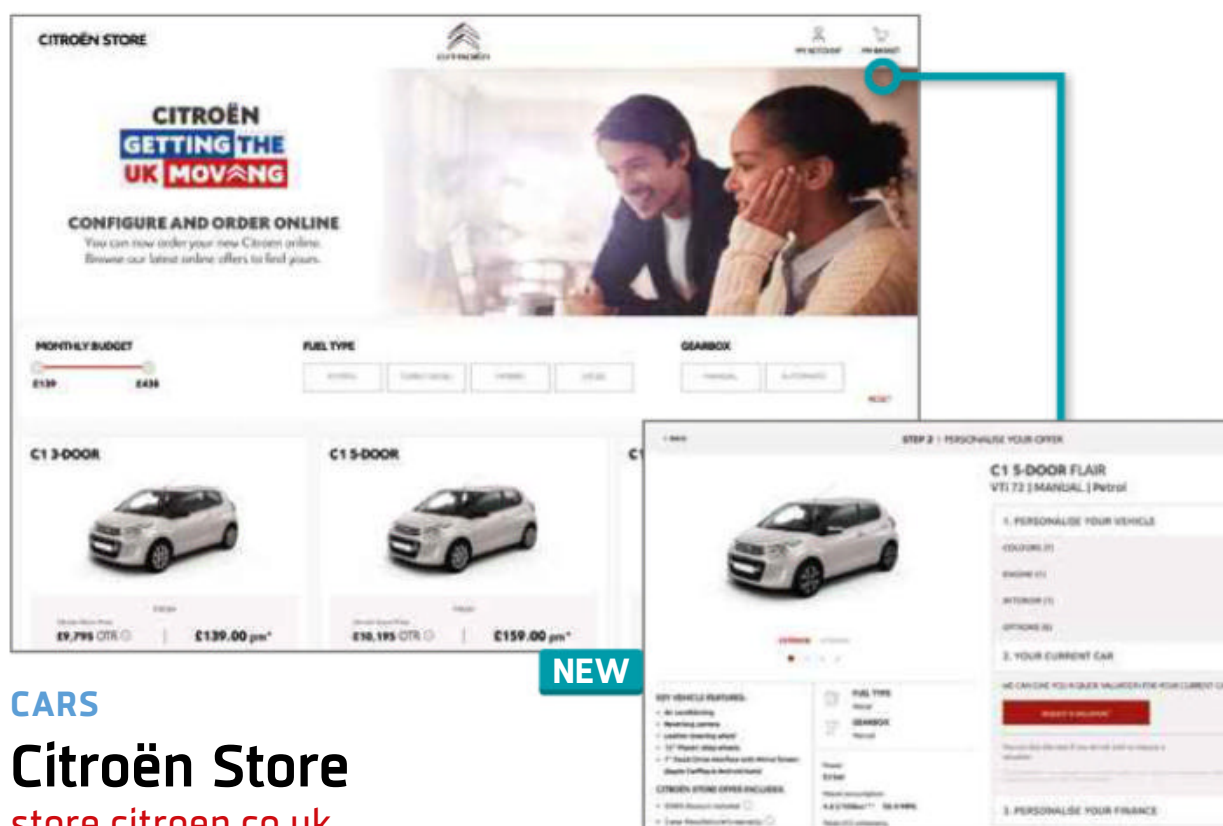
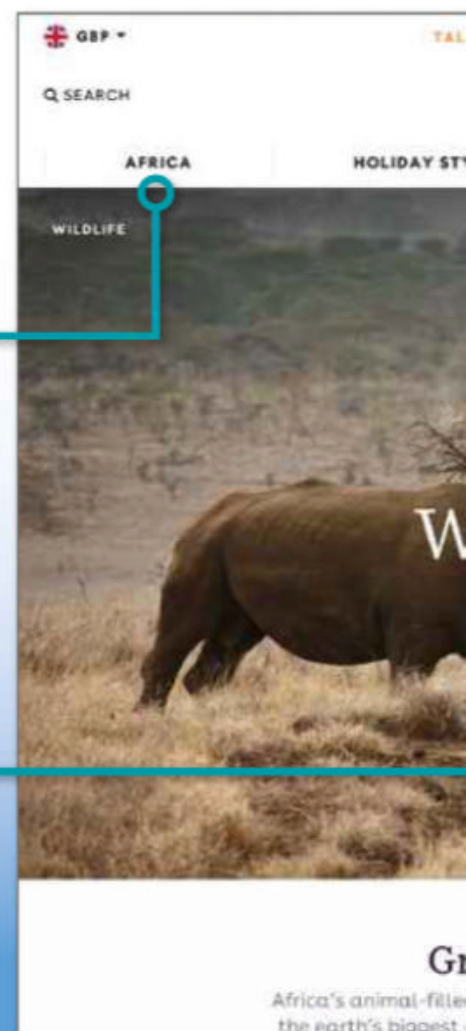
PICTURE PERFECT

As well as maps, you'll find stunning photos to give you a flavour of what to expect on safari



GO WILD FOR WILDLIFE

Get the lowdown on 26 animals, from lions and cheetahs to wildebeest and buffalo



CARS

Citroën Store

store.citroen.co.uk

One of the downsides to ordering a car online is that you can't negotiate a deal face-to-face, but it's still a convenient way of securing a new motor. Citroën is the latest manufacturer to sell cars online in the UK, letting you set a monthly budget, indicate the fuel type and select the gearbox to see a range of suitable cars with on-the-road prices and monthly finance costs. You can personalise your car with a choice of colours and options, and view the results from different angles, both inside and out. The pages are a little cluttered but the journey feels smooth enough, and finance is prominent. You can also request a trade-in valuation for your current car.

Our rating



DIY

Go Trade Local

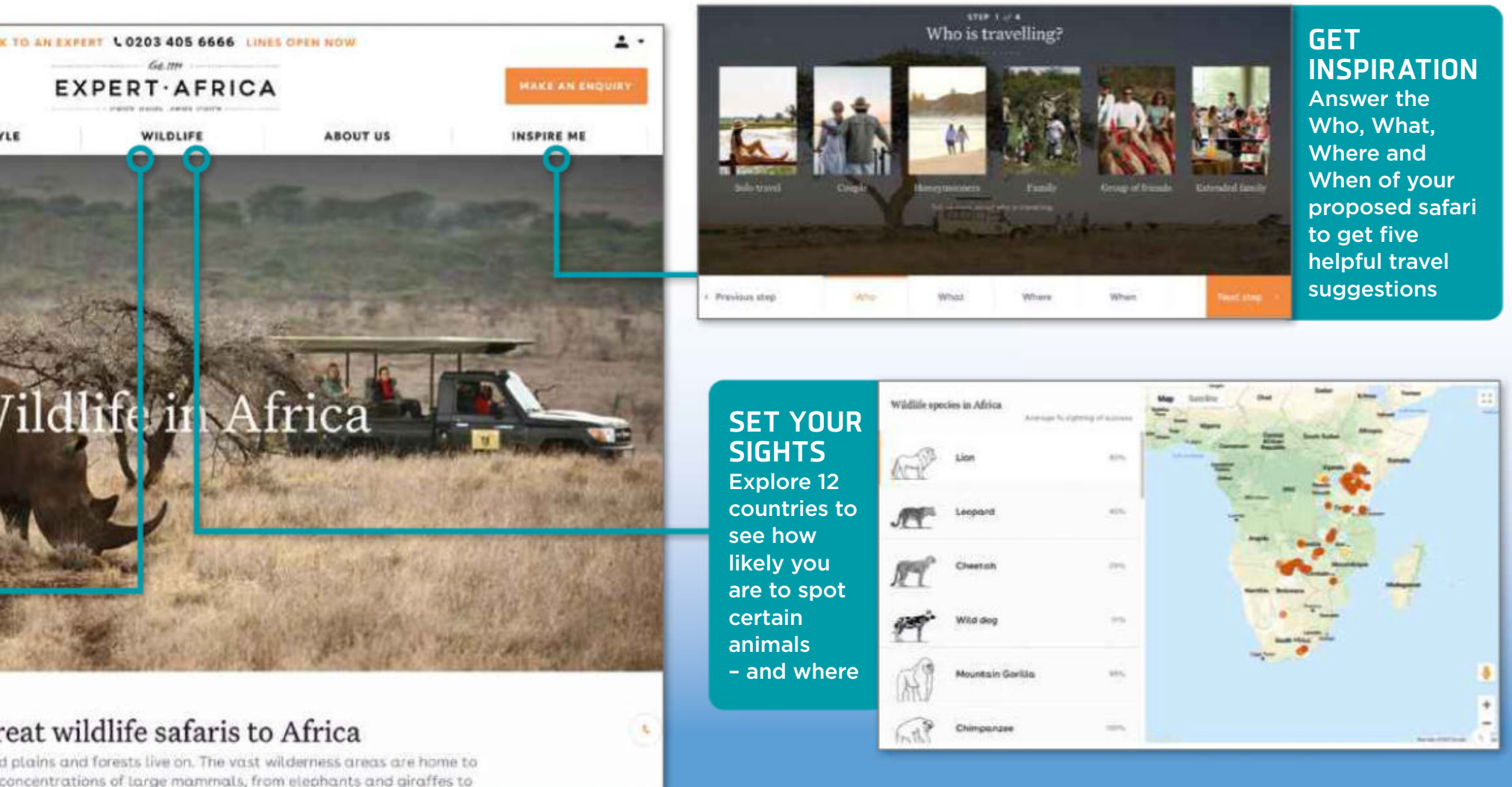
gotradelocal.co.uk

Home DIY has risen in popularity over recent months, but if you want to save money and support the local economy while working on your improvements, head to this new website. It lets you search for equipment, skips and building materials by entering your requirements and location, and compare prices – though results are subject to responses from local suppliers. More than 7,500 companies are already on board and the neat, colourful site makes light work of sifting through them. Results link to Google Maps and include phone numbers, but you can't leave reviews.

Our rating

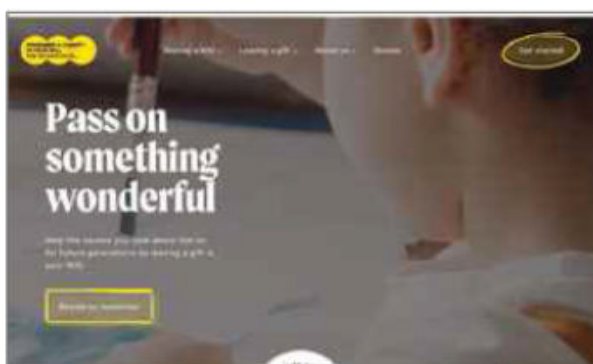
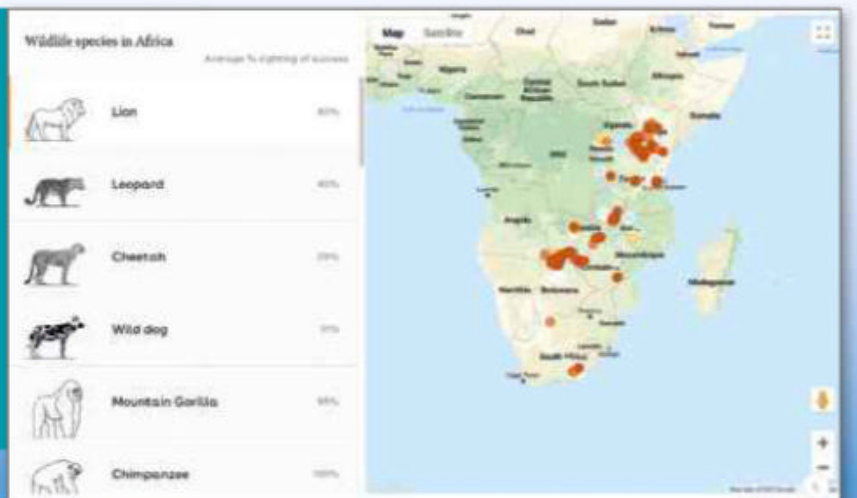


We review this fortnight's best new and relaunched websites and rate them for content, design and features



SET YOUR SIGHTS

Explore 12 countries to see how likely you are to spot certain animals – and where



NEW

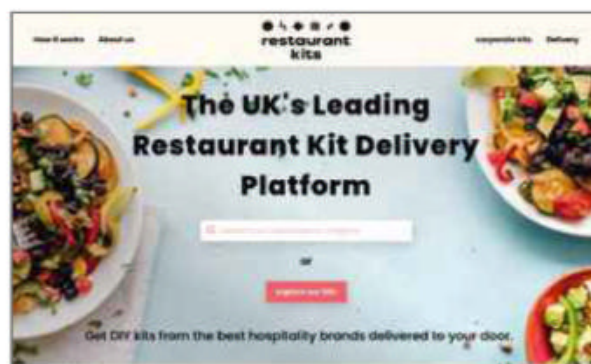
CHARITY

Remember a Charity

www.rememberacharity.org.uk

Charities benefit hugely from people bequeathing money in their wills, so a consortium of will-writers and solicitors has been promoting such initiatives. This website is part of the wider effort, giving advice on writing or updating a will, and explaining how to leave a gift, along with stories of people and animals who have benefited from money raised in this way. You can search for a charity by name, cause or area, to get inspiration. A solid FAQ explains some of the legalities and you can find professional advisers close to you. The site also includes news and podcasts to keep you well informed.

Our rating



NEW

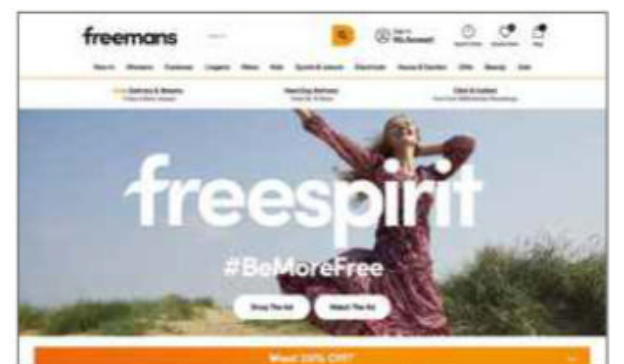
FOOD

Restaurant Kits

restaurantkitsuk.com

Restaurateurs have been welcoming diners with open arms, but they're still looking at other ways to make money. Restaurant Kits is a scheme that offers all the ingredients you need to recreate an establishment's dish in the comfort of your kitchen. Over 20 restaurants have signed up so far and you can choose by food category or the eatery itself. Tempting images lure you in, and you can see exactly what you're getting and how long it takes to prepare, view the delivery time and check the shelf life. Links let you view the restaurants themselves and all ingredients are sent to you by courier.

Our rating



RELAUNCH

SHOPPING

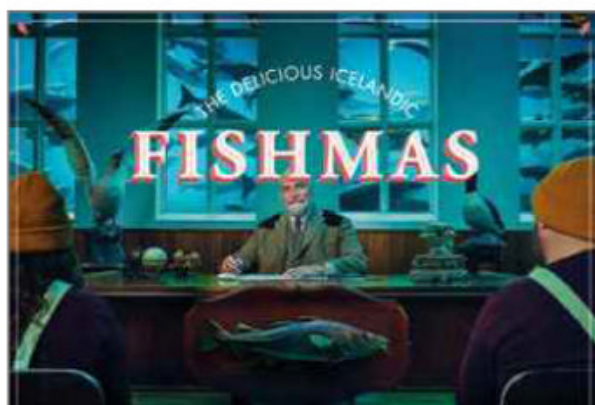
Freemans

www.freemans.com

Freemans has ditched its physical catalogue in favour of becoming a "digital department store", adding third-party brands such as Radley, Seasalt, Joules and Miss Selfridge, and launching a new website and app. It sells everything from clothing, sports and leisure items to homeware, beauty and footwear, letting you shop by brand or category and filter products by price, popularity and rating. You can check for the latest items, but some prices are high: a slimline 500GB PlayStation 4 costs £349 compared to £249 on Amazon. You get 25% off your first order, but that excludes electricals.

Our rating





NEW

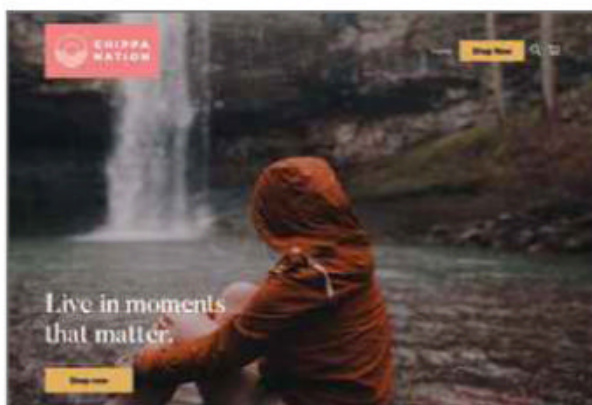
SEAFOOD

Fishmas

fishmas.com

Slade's wish that it could be Christmas every day isn't about to happen any time soon, so why not celebrate Fishmas instead? Created by Seafood from Iceland, it's being promoted in the UK as a twice-weekly "celebration" of the country's seafood. Join Father Fishmas and enjoy a video explaining the "tradition", then view a map of Icelandic fishing grounds and discover 10 recipes, from Cod Ceviche to Haddock Paupiette. Dishes are appetisingly photographed and include lists of ingredients, easy-to-follow videos and written instructions. Recipes can be shared, too, helping you to spread the piscatorial joy.

Our rating



RELAUNCH

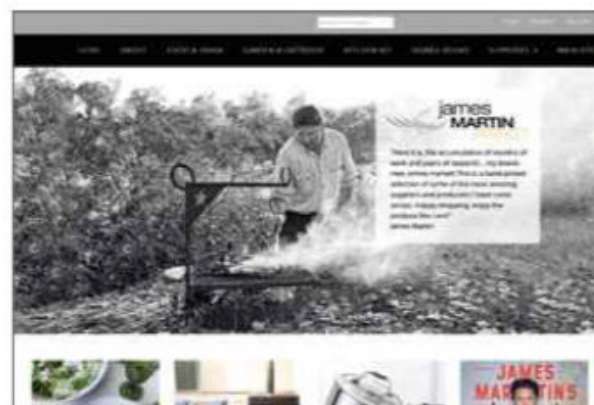
MARKETPLACE

Chippa Nation

www.chippanation.co.uk

Created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Chippa Nation has now moved away from supplying essential items by turning itself into a marketplace for small independent companies. It emphasises sustainability and social responsibility but rather than getting straight down to business, it spends rather too much of the homepage explaining itself. Get to the shopping section, however, and items are neatly categorised and can be filtered by popularity, price or alphabetical order. Shopping options are intuitive and the descriptions are fun and casual, and it welcomes suggestions for expanding its range and improving its service.

Our rating



NEW

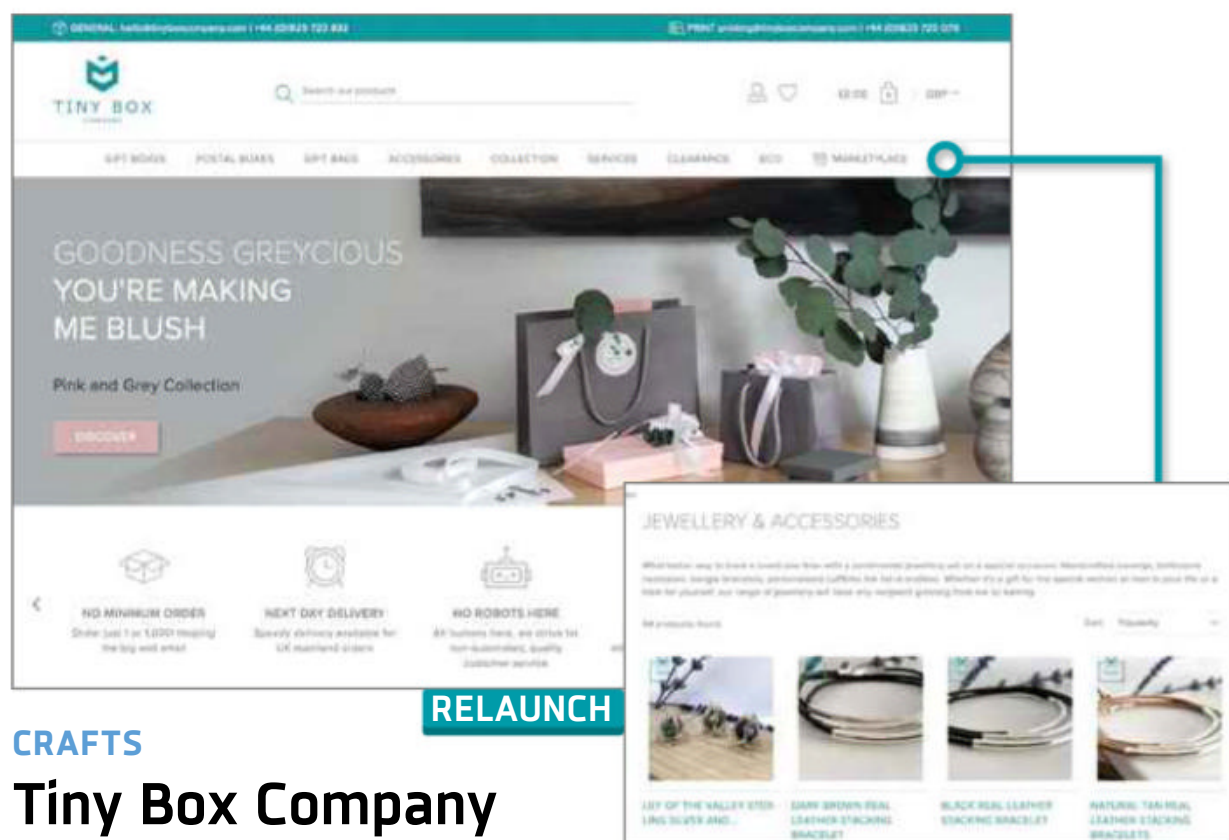
FOOD

James Martin Market

shop.jamesmartinchef.co.uk

TV chef James Martin has unveiled a new online marketplace, packed with items handpicked from the suppliers and producers he's encountered over the years. Product categories include food and drink, kitchen kit, and garden and outdoor, along with a selection of signed books that can have a personal message scrawled inside for an extra £6.50. It's the cherry on top of an already appetising offering and we like that you can shop by product or supplier, which makes navigation and finding what you're after much easier. The products are beautifully described, too, right down to storage temperature and shelf life.

Our rating



RELAUNCH

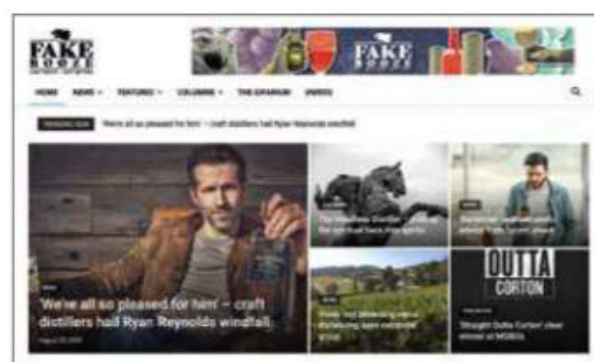
CRAFTS

Tiny Box Company

www.tinyboxcompany.co.uk

Tiny Box, which specialises in eco-friendly gift packaging, has torn the wrapping off its revamped website. Easily navigable with a fresh layout and aimed at crafters turning their hobby into a business, it not only showcases its classy-looking products but offers solid advice about making a good impression. Click Bored and you'll find tips for getting your business off the ground, staying productive and improving communication. There's a link to a YouTube channel full of ideas for kid's crafts, and the site has its own marketplace for homemade gifts with a helpful explanatory video for crafters looking to sell. This is certainly a business that's thinking outside the box.

Our rating



NEW

SATIRE

Fake Booze

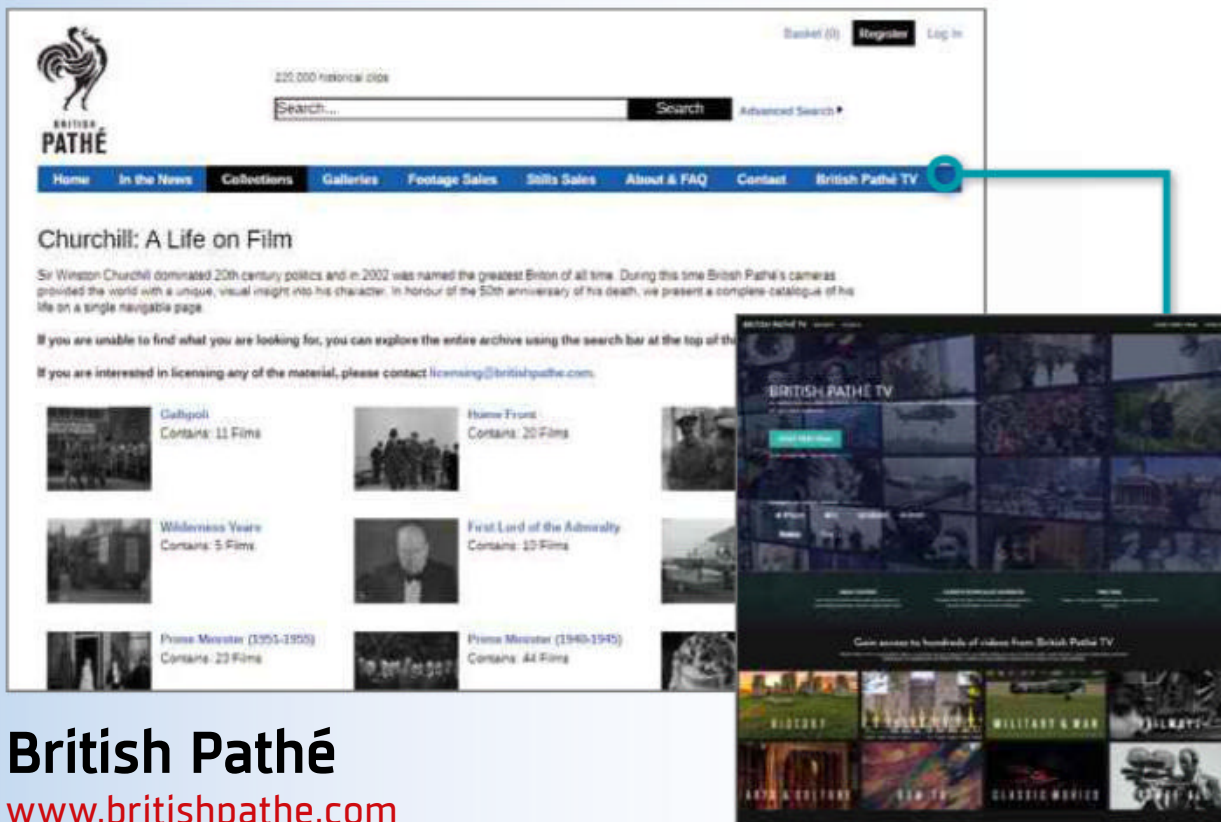
fake-booze.com

Fake Booze – a riff on “fake news” – takes a sideways look at the drinks industry and hopes to make you tipsy with laughter. Adopting a style similar to satirical websites The Daily Mash and The Onion, it serves up offbeat headlines and stories that swerve any hint of pretentiousness. But, as with many such sites, the humour can depend on whether you have a reasonable grip on the themes being explored: “Champagne drug Cristale Meth sweeps Europe,” reads one article, with a quote from a French cop called Don Perignon. It's well put together, though, with videos, GIFs and a newsletter thrown in.

Our rating



ESSENTIAL BOOKMARKS THIS ISSUE: Illuminating history websites



British Pathé

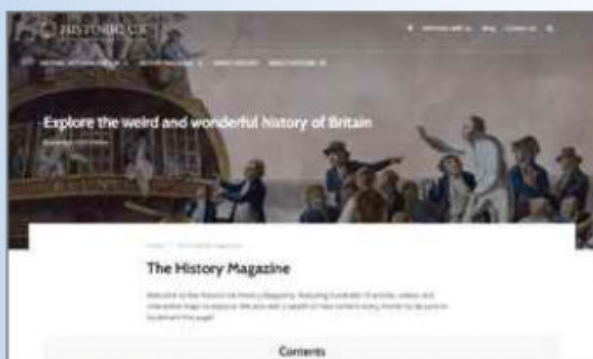
www.britishpathe.com

British Pathé captured more unforgettable historical moments than any other newsreel service of the 20th Century. It has now digitised more than 90,000 of those clips – everything from suffragette marches to Hitler's speeches, Titanic survivors to royal weddings (including Elvis 'The King' Presley's) – and made them free to watch on YouTube (youtube.com/britishpathe) and via this website. You can buy downloads and DVDs of favourite films – use the Advanced Search tool to narrow down dates to mark, for example, a loved one's birthday or your wedding anniversary – and view newspaper photos in the Galleries section. Subscription streaming service British Pathé TV (britishpathe.tv) is also incorporated in the site, charging £4.99 per month.



The Mass Observation Archive www.massobs.org.uk

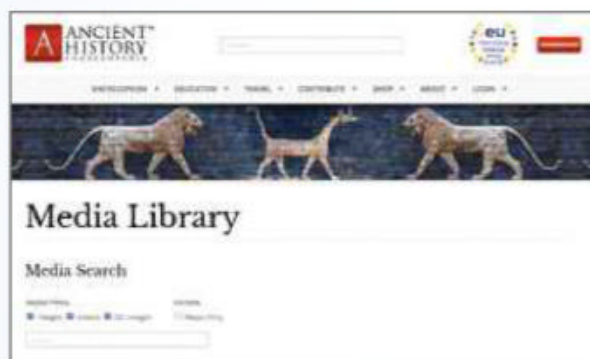
Custard powder, dogs in wartime, Bob Geldof and the average time it takes to drink a pint are among the topics covered in this enormous survey of everyday British life, which began in 1937 and carries on today via email. Much of the best material is stored at the University of Sussex (head for The Archive, then Collections for info on visiting), but plenty of the interviews, questionnaires, letters and journals have been digitised for this fascinating free website. The 'Observing the 80s' collection is a wonderful digital peek at the recent past (bit.ly/3m6jkuz), and you can read daily highlights from the archive on Twitter at [@massobsarchive](https://twitter.com/massobsarchive).



Historic UK

www.historic-uk.com

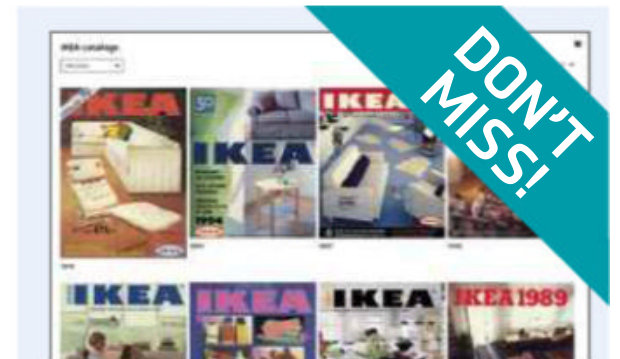
If you envy your grandchildren for having the CBBC show *Horrible Histories*, which brings history alive in a way we O-level students could only dream about, then this British gem is the website for you. Its History Magazine section is free to view online and updated each month with weird, grisly and horribly engrossing historical tales such as the Bradford Sweets Poisoning of 1858, the great London Beer Tsunami of 1814 and – our favourite – the Crossword Panic of 1944. Historic UK also now incorporates a Historical Accommodation Guide to help you find holidays of historical interest in the UK and Europe, and possibly fit in a stay at a 13th Century castle. You'll find a huge index of topics to browse at www.historic-uk.com/Sitemap.



Ancient History Encyclopedia

www.ancient.eu

If you fancy a more academic diversion, Oxford University and the European Commission's e-Learning Initiative are among the venerable institutions recommending this outstanding (and huge) collection of material – mainly articles with free audio versions attached – about the ancient dynasties that laid the foundations of modern civilisation. Our favourite section is the Media Library (under the Encyclopedia menu), where you can explore interactive timelines and maps; view videos and digitised images; and hear newly uploaded audio features such as 'A Brief History of Veterinary Medicine' and 'Plagues and Pandemics in the Ancient and Medieval World, an Introduction'.



Ikea Museum

ikeamuseum.com/en

Go through the keyhole of yesteryear with seven decades of the Ikea catalogue, newly digitised to flick through online for free. The full site is easier to browse if you switch from Swedish to English, but it's more about pictures than words. We were enthralled (occasionally perturbed) to see which sideboards people were buying when we were born, and to track the history of the Billy Bookcase. Elsewhere, you can watch videos of design projects and soundwave research by Ikea engineers. On the downside, the site is even harder to navigate than an Ikea store, so use this link to view the digitised pages: bit.ly/2FkY6rY.

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Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

Top Tips of the Fortnight

Break down site designs

If you've ever looked at a website and wondered how it was put together, we have just the Chrome plugin for you. Show CSS Outline Style (bit.ly/2Hegrbp) puts a button in your browser's extensions area. Click it and the site you're on is broken down into sections, so you can see how its CSS building blocks fit together. If you open Chrome's developer tools, by pressing Ctrl+Shift+I, you can use the highlighter to find out more about each section.



Try WordPress's collaboration tools

WordPress is famous for its website-building tool but it's almost as well known for being a company without a head office – its workers have always worked from home, even before the lockdown. To connect all these employees, WordPress developed a communication tool called P2, which it has now released for anyone to use for free at wordpress.com/p2. If your website is a group effort and you could do with a tool to help you communicate with each other in the background, P2 is well worth considering.

Deal of the Fortnight

SiteGround (www.siteground.co.uk) is offering its StartUp hosting for £7.19 per month, discounted from £14.39 per month.

Web-building Helpdesk

Q I run the website www.fleetcarnival.com. I've removed a page of old committee members from the site, but the page still appears in Google searches. How do I get Google to delete it?

Allan Gibson, via email

A You can remove pages from Google using its Search Console (search.google.com/search-console).

Register your site with the tool, using a Google account, then choose Removals from the menu on the left, select the Temporary Removals tab and click New Request. Fill in the required information. Because the page doesn't exist, it shouldn't reappear after the temporary exclusion.

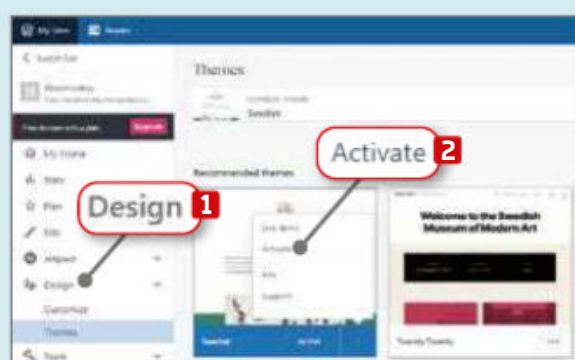
Andy Shaw, Technical & Reviews Editor



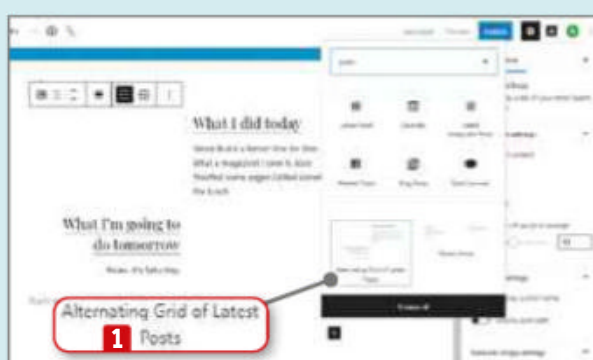
MINI WORKSHOP | Build a WordPress homepage with a great-looking new theme

Seedlet: bit.ly/35V1V2k |  20 mins | WordPress.com/WordPress.org website

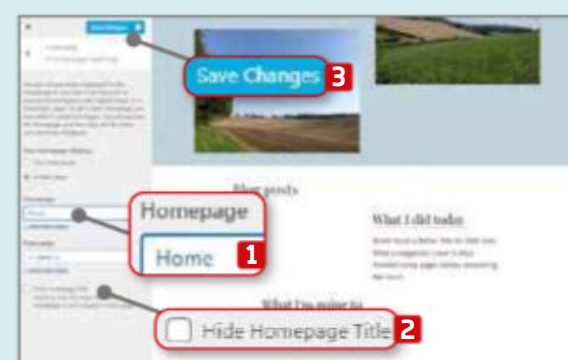
Seedlet is a new WordPress.com theme that is specifically designed to make the most of the system's latest blocks. Here's how to use it to make an attractive homepage for free.



1 Seedlet works with WordPress.com and is also available on self-hosted WordPress.org sites, though it lags behind on some blocks. To install it on WordPress.com, click Design, **1** then Themes in the left-hand panel. Find Seedlet in the 'Recommended themes' section, then click the three-dot menu and choose Activate. **2**



2 WordPress's latest blocks work very well with the theme. For example, to create a page with a list of your latest posts, add a new block and choose 'Alternating Grid of Latest Posts'. **1** Other blocks worth trying are 'Group with Image Overlap' and 'Multi-column Text with Headline'.



3 To make this page your homepage, open the Design menu and choose Customize. Click Homepage Settings and select 'A static page'. Under Homepage, select the name of the page you created. **1** If you don't want your page's title displayed at the top, tick the option to Hide Homepage Title. **2** Click Save Changes. **3**



What To Watch Online

Pick of the fortnight



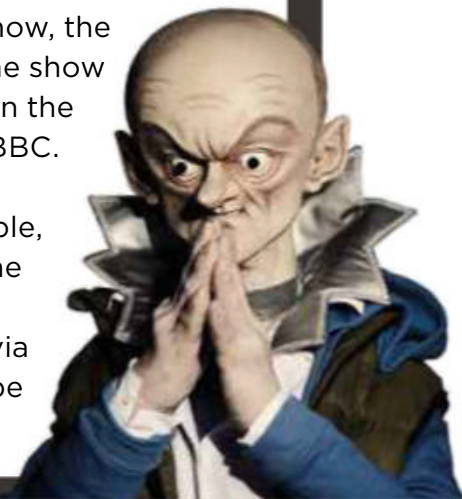
Meet the brand new *Spitting Image* puppets

From 3 October

The COVID-19 virus, Dominic Cummings, Meghan Markle and Mark Zuckerberg – together at last! Yes, it's the new *Spitting Image*, devised during lockdown by original co-creator Roger Law, with comedians Richard Herring and Al Murray among the writers who'll produce topical episodes each week.

Vladimir Putin, Jürgen Klopp, Baby Yoda and Priti Patel are also among more than 100 new puppets in the returning show, the first ever BritBox Original. In true 21st-century style, the show is bypassing traditional TV altogether and will debut on the streaming service, which is run jointly by ITV and the BBC.

As in the 1980s, *Spitting Image* will be written and recorded at the 11th hour to keep it as topical as possible, so its 10 episodes won't arrive as a box set. Instead, one new episode arrives each Saturday from 3 October. Watch brief clips from the first four episodes for free via BritBox at bit.ly/33kMayM and on BritBox UK's YouTube channel at bit.ly/3mm7PPN.



Watch *The Walking Dead* and spin-off *World Beyond*

From 5 October

The Walking Dead finally ends after next year's Season 11, but the zombie show will live on – and on, and on – through its spin-offs.

New *The Walking Dead: World Beyond* arrives on Prime Video on 5 October with a cast of young newcomers, although Andrew Lincoln's Rick Grimes can be glimpsed in the trailers you can watch via Twitter at [@TWDWorldBeyond](https://twitter.com/TWDWorldBeyond). The latest trailer is also on YouTube at bit.ly/3ivYAKG.

On the same day, Now TV adds the second half of *The Walking Dead* Season 10 (bit.ly/2MtysRy, where you

can also watch all previous seasons until 31 October).



Join the Space Race with *The Right Stuff*

From 9 October



The early days of NASA's Space Program are chronicled in National Geographic's new eight-episode show, adapted from Tom Wolfe's classic book (bit.ly/2FCpYbA). *The Right Stuff* debuts on Disney+ with a two-episode premiere on 9 October; further episodes arrive weekly. Catch the latest trailer at bit.ly/3mnZF9A, plus a behind-the-scenes teaser at bit.ly/3kjFyYi.

The 1983 film of *The Right Stuff* is available to rent for £3.49 from Amazon (amzn.to/3hBc9HF),

or you could take the unofficial route and watch it for free on Dailymotion at bit.ly/3iwaX9A.



See the FBI v Donald Trump in *The Comey Rule*

From 2 October

Jeff Daniels, who brilliantly played an FBI agent in Amazon's 9/11 drama *The Looming Tower* (amzn.to/2NKVYOe), now plays FBI Director James Comey in this two-part drama, opposite Brendan Gleeson as Donald Trump. Holly Hunter, Jennifer Ehle and Michael Kelly also appear in the adaptation of Comey's book about the 2016 US Presidential election, *A Higher Loyalty* (bit.ly/32xJuyE). The official trailer



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

hasn't gone down well on YouTube (bit.ly/3mI96qE), perhaps because Trump fans took offence. Judge for yourself when *The Comey Rule* comes to Now TV on 2 October.

N Be even more afraid in *The Haunting of Bly Manor*

From 9 October

Hit horror show *The Haunting of Hill House* (on Netflix at bit.ly/35FuHnJ) is back for a second season, but with a new house, story and characters.

This time we're in 1987, in gothic English house Bly Manor, and the story is based on Henry James' classic thriller *The Turn of the Screw*. Victoria Pedretti (Nell in Season 1) returns, this time playing US nanny Dani Clayton, whose charges are two orphaned children. Scroll down the show's Netflix page (bit.ly/3hJalXL) to watch the spooky teaser for free. All six episodes arrive on 9 October.



Now Watch new shows *Take Two* and *The Family*

From 4/11 October

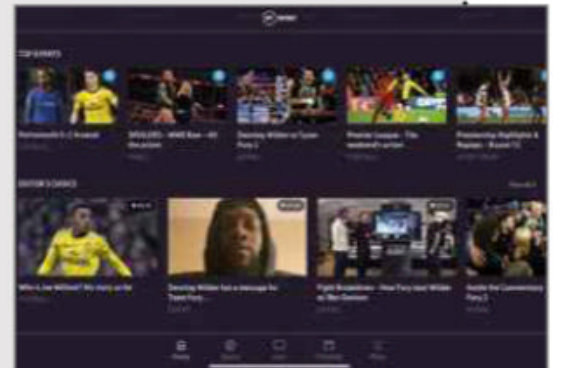
Now TV welcomes a couple of new US shows for Sunday nights. First comes

BT Sport launches on Roku and Fire TV

BT Sport is finally available as an app for Roku and Fire TV, which may offer some comfort if you're wondering whether you'll ever get to see a live match again.

The BT Sport app is already available for Samsung smart TV, Now TV, Chromecast and Apple TV, as well as Android and iOS. It's also launching with the new Android TV platform. Most content requires a BT Sport Monthly Pass (£25, bt.com/monthlypass).

Sky has responded by slashing its £33.99 Now TV Sky Sports Pass to £25 per month (nowtv.com/sports-purchase). Sky's offer is available at the time of writing and may not last long, so catch it while you can.



Take Two, starring Rachel Bilson as a former cop-show actress who teams up with a real-life detective. Watch the trailer at bit.ly/35A9viT.

Arriving the following Sunday is 12-episode mini-series *The Family*, starring Joan Allen and Rupert Graves in a thriller about a kidnapped son (pictured). Watch the trailer at bit.ly/32zNper. Both shows air in the UK on the Fox channel, and you can stream episodes on-demand via Now TV after broadcast.

Now Watch the latest adaptation of *Brave New World*

From 2 October

Aldous Huxley's 1932 dystopian novel (bit.ly/32Bm4IR) has already spawned a couple of TV movies, both disappointing (neither is available online). Perhaps a nine-part show will fare better, especially with familiar faces from *Game of Thrones* and *Downton Abbey* heading the cast? The official trailer (bit.ly/3mJvTD9) suggests 2020's *Brave New World* is worth a look. The full series arrives as a box set on 2 October.



In case you missed it...

The late Dame Diana Rigg is immortalised in *The Avengers*, now available to watch in full via BritBox



along with fellow Terry Nation shows *Blake's 7* and *Survivors*. Films *Doctor Who* and *the Daleks*, *One*

Million Years BC, *Quatermass and the Pit* and *The Man Who Fell to Earth* have also arrived on the service.

Netflix has added a second season of *Criminal*, with *Line of Duty* actors Lee Ingleby and Rochenda Sandall interrogating new suspects Kit Harington, Sophie

Okonedo and Sharon Horgan (bit.ly/32xxZax).

Now TV's September arrivals include *FBI: Most Wanted* (bit.ly/35zILjL) and a new series of *The Russell Howard Hour* (bit.ly/3hyGZ3C).

And if you missed the first *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* jackpot win in 14 years, catch up via ITV Hub at bit.ly/3hVhxWZ.



Group Test

We test and compare the latest products

Affordable smartphones

You don't need to spend a fortune on a new phone. We've tested 13 great-value handsets, costing from £80 to just over £400

After a quiet six months in the world of smartphones, the end of the summer has seen lots of new models appear. Competition is fierce, which makes now a great time to choose a new phone, particularly if you don't mind compromising on some of the latest top-level features in return for a significant discount on the price.

Here, we've tested 13 of the latest affordable phones and picked out our top six to look at in greater detail.

HOW WE TESTED

We put each phone through our usual range of tests, checking the quality of the screen with a colorimeter and using a selection of benchmarking tools to test each device's performance. We also looked at how long it took for the battery to run down while looping a movie.

Google Pixel 4a | £349 | Buy from Google: store.google.com

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

The Pixel 4a is a cheaper spin-off of Google's high-end Pixel 4. It has a polycarbonate body, an octa-core Snapdragon 730G processor, 6GB of memory and 128GB of storage. It doesn't have 5G, which rival phones are just starting to include (see the Bronze Award-winning OnePlus Nord) but even with this omission, the Pixel 4a is an easy phone to fall in love with.

The phone looks and feels great. The fingerprint reader blends seamlessly into the back and the white power button is helpfully prominent. The Pixel 4a is slightly larger than the iPhone SE, with a 5.8in 2,240 x 1,080 pixels screen compared to the iPhone's 4.7in. It uses AMOLED technology, so the contrast is effectively perfect, while brightness peaked at a satisfactory 437cd/m² and it managed to recreate 93.7% of the sRGB colour standard in our tests.

The camera is impressive, too. While it only takes photos at a resolution of 12.2 megapixels,



WebUser
GOLD
AWARD

Google's computational tricks help it take stunning shots. The Super Res Zoom option, for example, produces sharp digital zooms without the need for the expensive extra lenses you get on pricier phones. Portraits are also brilliant and we think the Pixel 4a compares well to the camera on the iPhone 11 Pro Max, a device that costs in excess of £1,000.

The phone also did well in our performance tests. Its Geekbench 5 scores of 552 in the single-core test and 1,591 in the multicore test are lower than the Nord's, but not by much. However, it's significantly slower than the iPhone SE. It performed well in our battery test,

though, lasting 18 hours and 43 minutes – that's seven hours longer than the iPhone, but not quite as long as the OnePlus Nord.

If we have to nitpick, the lack of waterproofing seems like an oversight, as does the absence of expandable memory, though the 128GB of built-in storage is generous for the price.

VERDICT

★★★★★

This mid-priced compact phone is a great all-rounder. Although it isn't as powerful as the iPhone SE, it has a larger screen, superior portrait photography and better battery life. If you want 5G, then the OnePlus Nord is a better choice, but we loved the design and the purity of the Android experience on this Google-made phone.

Motorola Moto E6 Plus | **£79.95** | Buy from Argos: bit.ly/3IVUfmh

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



The Moto range has consistently delivered fantastic budget phones and the E6 Plus continues this trend. The screen has more bezel around the edge than most handsets but it's slim and still looks the part. It charges with an old-style Micro USB port but has space to add an extra 512GB memory card.

The phone's 6.1in IPS screen has a resolution of 1,560 x 720 pixels, so it can't display Full HD. However, brightness peaked at 511cd/m² in our tests, with a respectable contrast of 1,463:1, and it displayed an acceptable 84% of the sRGB colour standard.

Performance is good for the price. It managed 16fps in the onscreen GFXBench Manhattan 3 benchmark. It might struggle to produce smooth graphics in the very latest games but it will handle most things well.

The biggest disappointment is the battery, which only lasted 15 hours and 3 minutes in our rundown test.

VERDICT

★★★★★

If your smartphone budget can't rise above £100, then the Moto E6 Plus is an absolute belter. Sure, compromises have been made to keep costs down, but it still feels a like a lot of phone for such a low price.

OnePlus Nord | **£379** | Buy from OnePlus: www.oneplus.com

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



The Nord is a return to OnePlus's roots, featuring high-spec components in an affordable handset. Competition is tough at this price but the Nord cuts fewer corners than its rivals, such as retaining the Gorilla Glass case both front and back.

Its Snapdragon 765 processor makes it the only device in this Group Test to offer 5G capability. In the Geekbench 5 test, it scored 606 in the single-core test and 1,945 in the multi-core test, slightly ahead of the Pixel 4a.

The 6.4in 2,400 x 1,080 pixels AMOLED screen has perfect contrast, vivid colours and a peak brightness of 304cd/m². Its battery life was the best of our award winners, lasting 20 hours and 22 minutes.

The camera has a vast array of options but is better suited to an enthusiast than a casual photographer, unlike the Gold Award-winning Pixel 4a which is better at instinctively taking the right shot at the right time.

VERDICT

★★★★★

It's a tough call between the OnePlus Nord and the Google Pixel 4a, but the Google model's intuitive camera and pure Android installation gave it the edge. However, for raw power, 5G and a toughened glass case, the Nord gets our vote.

Xiaomi Redmi Note 9 | **£150** | Buy from Amazon: amzn.to/3haJn0c

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



One of the most impressive things about the Redmi Note 9 is that it doesn't settle for a 720p screen, which sets it apart from similarly priced alternatives. Its IPS display has a resolution of 2,340 x 1,080 pixels and looks very sharp as a result. It can produce 93% of the sRGB colour standard, has a maximum brightness of 359cd/m² and a contrast ratio of 1,132:1.

The phone's performance in our tests was good, scoring 1,300 in the multi-core Geekbench 5 test and performing well in the games we tested on it. However, the battery only lasted 15 hours and 44 minutes.

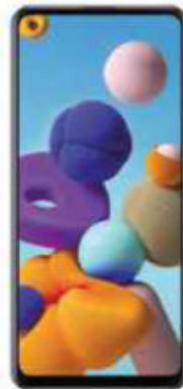
VERDICT

★★★★★

If you can afford more than a Moto E6 Plus, the Note 9 is a great option. While the Samsung Galaxy A21s provides a longer battery life, this model beats it in most other ways, especially the screen.

Samsung Galaxy A21s | **£145** | Buy from Amazon: amzn.to/2ZonMet

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



We often associate Samsung with the priciest Android phones but it also offers a budget range. This plastic phone has an underwhelming 1,600 x 720 pixels screen that reproduced 73% of the sRGB standard, though it's very bright at a maximum of 553cd/m². The Exynos 980 processor didn't knock us out in our performance tests, with a multi-core result of 1,096 in the Geekbench 5 test, but its battery life was impressive, squeezing 22 hours and 48 minutes of life in our rundown test. The camera took good photos but it fell short on video – it can shoot in Full HD but not at 60 frames per second.

VERDICT

★★★★★

The A21s is ideal if you want a Samsung model for a budget price. It can't compete with more expensive rivals on performance or screen quality, but the battery proved to be the best in our tests.

Apple iPhone SE | **£419** | Buy from Apple: www.apple.com

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



Apple's latest affordable phone carries some of the benefits of an iPhone 11 but crams them into the case of an iPhone 8 for a more pocketable device. However, the lack of an edge-to-edge screen is starting to look dated.

The iPhone SE's internal hardware makes it the most powerful phone at this price, scoring 1,330 in the single-core Geekbench 5 test and 3,291 in the multi-core test. We predict this phone will still feel perky in three years time.







It has a great camera but is let down by its battery, which only lasted 11 hours and 35 minutes in our tests.

VERDICT

★★★★★

Reusing an old case design is a compromise worth making when you can pack in so much power. However, the iPhone SE is at the top of our price range and the battery proved disappointing.

Group Test Affordable smartphones

						
	Google Pixel 4a	Motorola Moto E6 Plus	OnePlus Nord	Xiaomi Redmi Note 9	Samsung Galaxy A21s	Apple iPhone SE
WEBSITE	store.google.com	www.motorola.co.uk	www.oneplus.com	www.mi.com	www.samsung.com	www.apple.com
PRICE	£349	£79.95	£379	£150	£145	£419
BUY FROM	Google: store.google.com	Argos: bit.ly/3IVUfmh	OnePlus: www.oneplus.com	Amazon: amzn.to/3haJn0c	Amazon: amzn.to/2ZonMet	Apple: www.apple.com
PROCESSOR	Octa-core 1.8GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 730G	Octa-core 2GHz MediaTek Helio P22	Octa-core 2.4GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 765G	Octa-core MediaTek Helio G85	Octa-core 2GHz Samsung Exynos 850	Hexa-core 2.56GHz Apple A13 Bionic
MEMORY	6GB	2GB	6GB	3GB	3GB	3GB
STORAGE	128GB	32GB (expandable with MicroSD)	64GB	64GB (expandable with MicroSD)	64GB (expandable with MicroSD)	64GB
SCREEN SIZE, TYPE & RESOLUTION	5.8in, AMOLED, 2,240 x 1,080 pixels	6.1in, IPS, 1,560 x 720 pixels	6.44in, AMOLED, 2,400 x 1,080 pixels	6.5in, IPS, 2,340 x 1,080 pixels	6.5in, PLS (IPS), 1,600 x 720 pixels	4.7in, IPS, 1,334 x 750 pixels
CAMERAS	12.2 megapixels rear; 8 megapixels front	13/2 megapixels rear (main/rear depth sensor); 8 megapixels front	48/8/5/2 MP rear (main/ultra-wide/depth sensor/macro); 32/8 MP front (main/ultra-wide)	48/8/2/2 MP rear (main/rear ultra-wide/rear depth sensor/rear macro); 13 MP front	48/8/2/2 MP rear (main/rear ultra-wide/rear depth sensor/rear macro); 13 MP front	12 megapixels rear; 7 megapixels front
WIRELESS DATA	4G	4G	5G	4G	4G	4G
OPERATING SYSTEM	Android 10	Android 9	Android 10	Android 10	Android 10	iOS 13
DIMENSIONS	144 x 68 x 8.2mm	156 x 73 x 8.6mm	158 x 73 x 8.2mm	162 x 77 x 8.9mm	164 x 75 x 8.9mm	138 x 67 x 7.3mm
WEIGHT	143g	150g	184g	199g	192g	138g

ALSO REVIEWED

Cubot Kingkong Mini
(★★★★☆)

Fairphone 3
(★★★★☆)

Honor 9X
(★★★★☆)

Honor 9X Pro
(★★★★☆)

Motorola Moto G8 Power Lite
(★★★★☆)

Oppo A5
(★★★★☆)

Sony Xperia L4
(★★★★☆)

OUR VERDICT

We gave our Gold Award to the fantastic Google Pixel 4a – a solid all-rounder at an affordable price, offering good performance, a decent screen, a camera that works wonders with software and Android installed as Google intends it, with no intrusive add-ons from manufacturers and sponsors.

It's a close call between this and the OnePlus Nord, however, which managed to snag our Bronze Award. The Nord is a brilliant phone that offers faster performance than Google's, along with a tougher case and 5G capability. As long as you're fine with a more complex camera and a steeper learning curve, it's a great alternative.

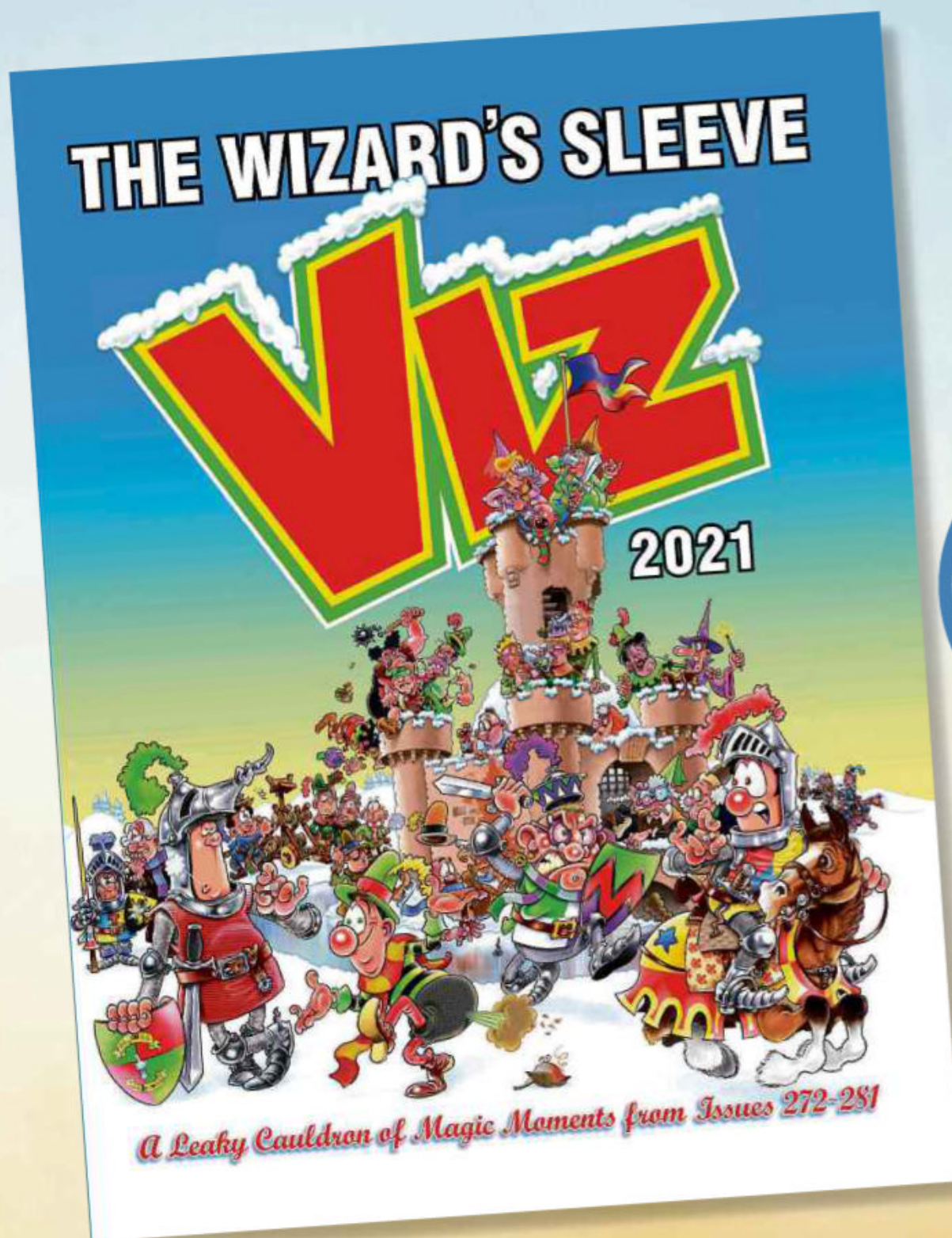
Those on a tighter budget should look to our Silver Award winner. The Motorola Moto E6 Plus is a cracking phone for £80 and the best smartphone you'll find for under £100. ■

**WebUser
GOLD
AWARD**





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**Source: ABC figure experienced during a dream after eating a large amount of cheese



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HARDWARE, SOFTWARE & SERVICES

SMARTPHONE

Google Pixel 4a

£349 from store.google.com

Tested: Issue 511

This mid-priced compact phone is a great all-rounder. It offers plenty of storage, has a high quality screen, takes excellent photos and provides impressive battery life.

KEY SPECS

Octa-core 1.8GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 730G processor ■ 6GB RAM ■ 128GB storage ■ 5.8in, 2,240 x 1,080 pixels resolution screen ■ 12.2-megapixel rear camera, 8-MP front ■ Android 10 ■ 144 x 68 x 8.2mm ■ 143g ■ 1-year return to base



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



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, 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



Gold Award winners

The best from our software tests

AUDIO EDITOR

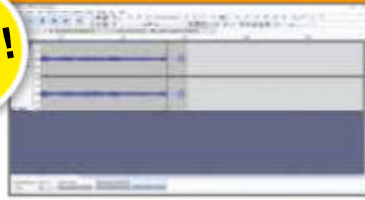
Audacity

NEW!

Free from www.audacityteam.org

Tested: Issue 510

Audacity is still the best free audio-editing software around. It has all the features of professional, paid-for alternatives, with no annoying limitations or paywalled extras.



RADIO-STREAMING APP

BBC Sounds

Free from bit.ly/soundsand509

Tested: Issue 509

This marvellous app gives access to all national and local BBC radio stations, along with podcasts, catch-up content and special mixes.



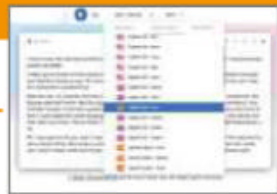
TEXT-TO-SPEECH TOOL

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.



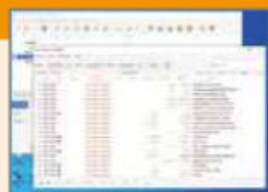
BANKING SOFTWARE

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.



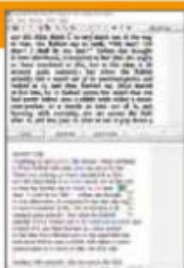
OCR SOFTWARE

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.



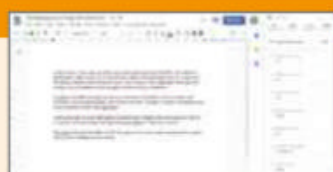
GRAMMAR CHECKER

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.



WebUser

BACK ISSUES DISC 2019



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Best Free Software

VIDEO EDITOR

Shotcut 20.09.13

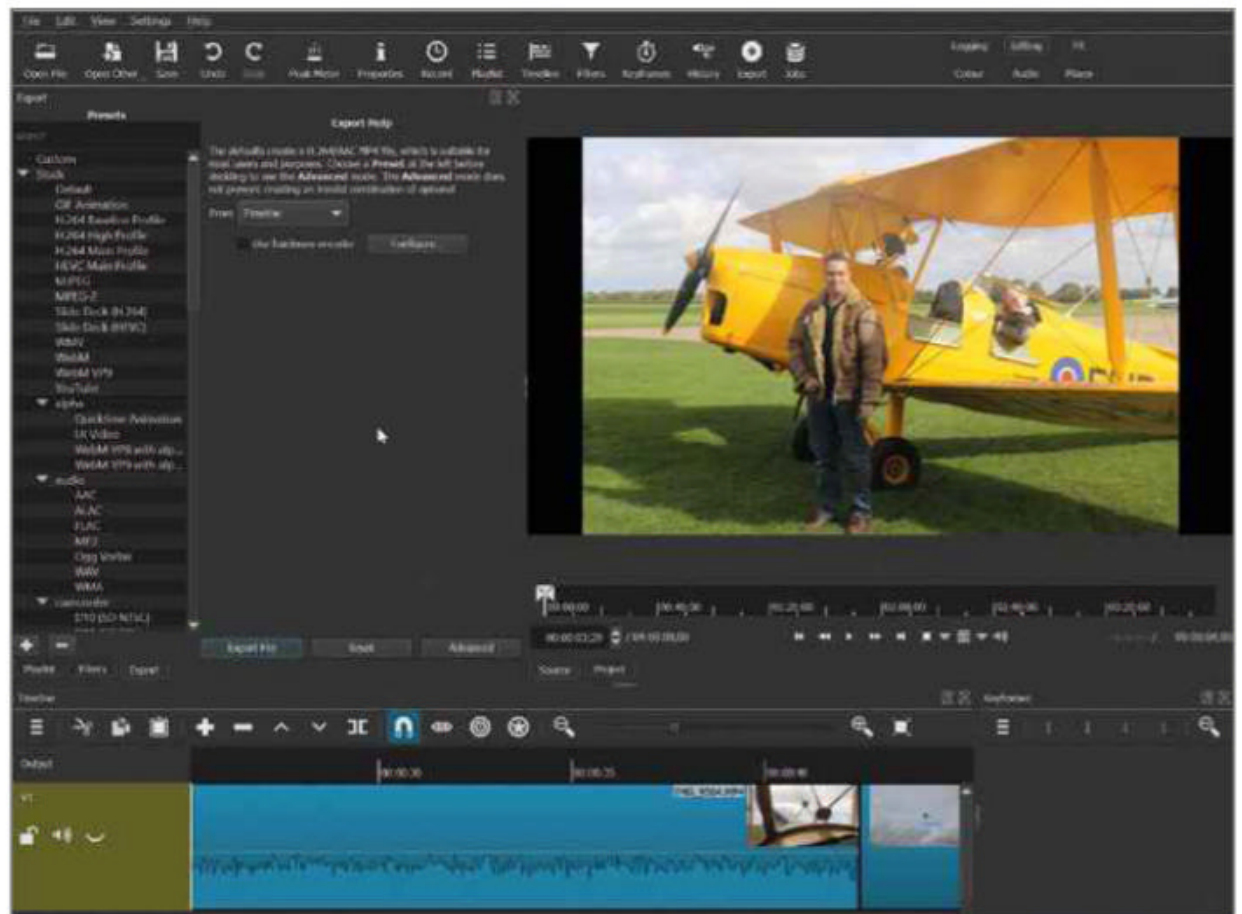
www.shotcut.org

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

File size: 86.8MB

If you want to turn your scrappy smartphone footage into a top-quality movie, you need a powerful video editor – and these aren't cheap. Shotcut however, is an accomplished, free, open-source solution that's available for all the main platforms – Windows, Mac and Linux. It has the standard multi-track timeline interface, can handle all the major video, audio and image formats, and supports up to 4K quality.

Shotcut's timeline can handle clips of different resolutions and frame rates, and the software offers unlimited undo/redo, so you can experiment as much as you like, then roll back the changes if required. There are plenty of effects,



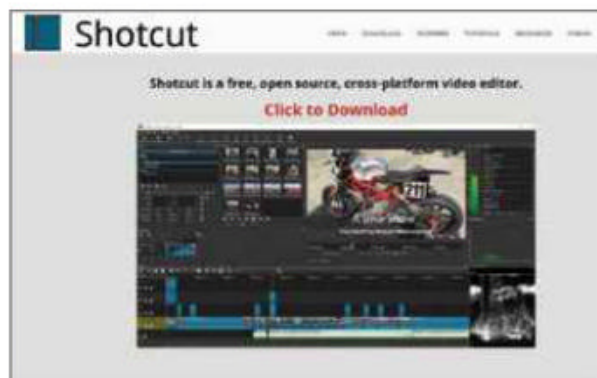
filters and transitions you can apply to your projects, including Blur, Brightness, Diffusion, Glow, Invert Colours, Mirror, Old Film, Saturation, Sepia Tone, Wave, Lens Correction, Sharpen and Stabilize.

This release of the program introduces a new Blur filter called Pad, which anyone who shoots a mixture of landscape and portrait videos will appreciate. If you add some portrait videos to your timeline, it adds a blur effect to replace the black bars at the

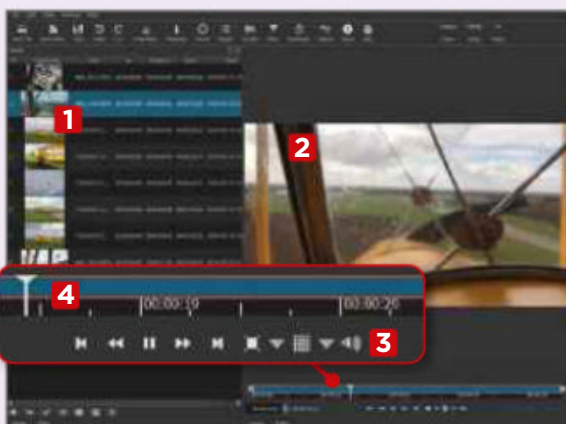
right and left sides.

There's also a new Rich Video Filter that writes rich text directly on the video preview, new stock layers with a quick switcher and improved timeline performance.

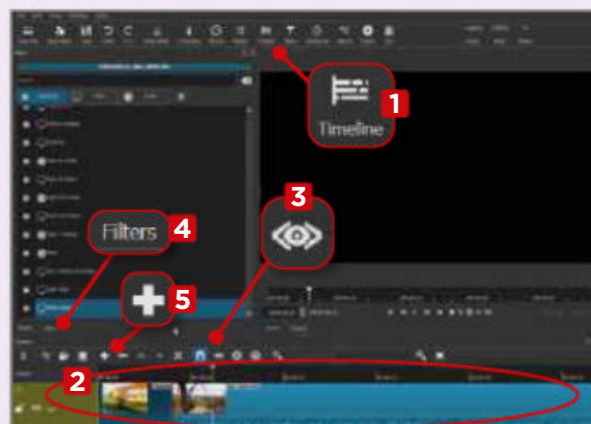
The new version of Shotcut also addresses a security vulnerability that could have allowed an attacker to install a malicious update. It replaces some old HTML5-based filters with rewritten versions, too, for smoother editing.



MINI WORKSHOP | Edit your videos with Shotcut



1 To get started with Shotcut, drag and drop some videos and/or photos to the playlist. **1** Double-click a clip and it will appear in the preview window. **2** Use the controls below **3** to play the video, fast forward or rewind it, and zoom in. To cut part of the video, use the sliders to mark the section you want to remove. **4**

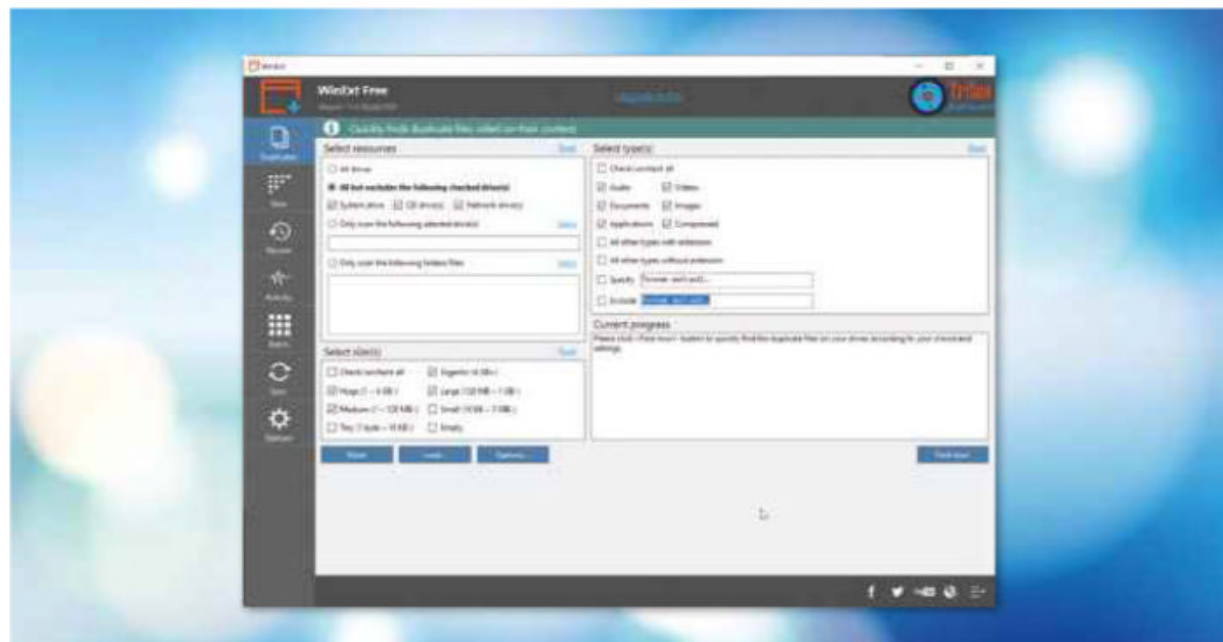


2 Click the Timeline button **1** at the top to open the timeline at the bottom of Shotcut's main window. **2** Drag clips from the playlist to the timeline. If you want to preview your movie, click the eye icon first. **3** To apply some effects, click the Filters button, **4** then click the plus symbol **5** under the filters box.



3 You can browse the filters **1** for Favourite, Video or Audio. Select one – such as the new Blur: Pad **2** – and the options for it appear below, allowing you to configure the filter as needed. Here, you can see the blurred sides that replace the black bars. **3** Finally, save your project and export the finished movie. **4**

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



DUPLICATE FINDER

WinExt 11

www.trisunsoft.com/we

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10 **File size:** 1.5MB

This duplicate file finder has an interface that's clearly 'inspired' by CCleaner's, showing all the available features in a strip down the left-hand side. It can also show you which files and folders are using the most space, list Windows activity and perform batch operations, such as deleting or renaming a group of files. The latest version improves the reloading speed after deleting and moving duplicate files, and gains a new text filter to track down items more quickly.

New Windows 10 App

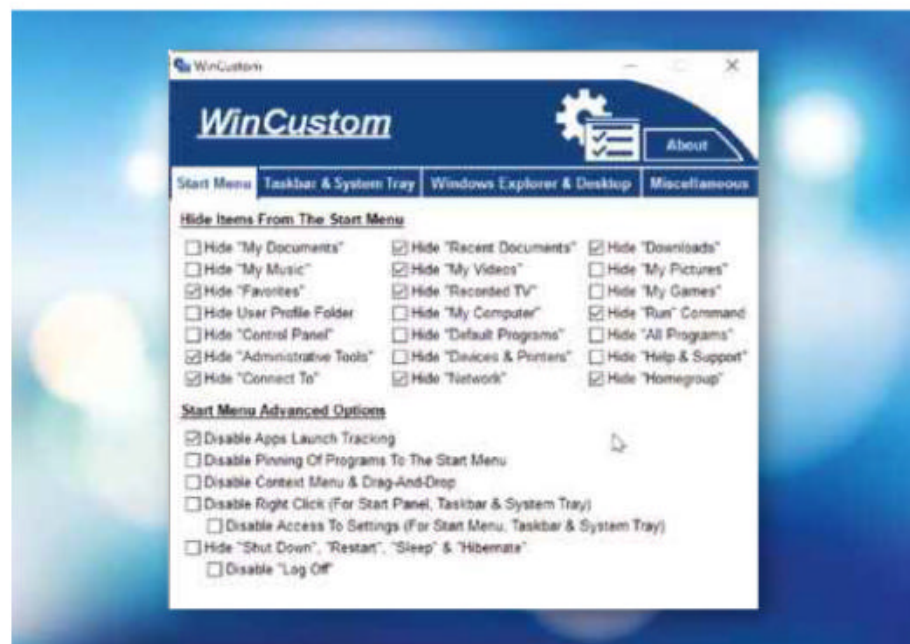
Expressive Pixels

bit.ly/32wsb19

File size: 32MB

This open-source app from Microsoft lets you create, share and display static and animated images on LED displays or your PC. It's very easy to use and you can create square or round animations in the simple, pixel-based editor.

Expressive Pixels uses a timeline for animation and supports layers for more advanced creations. You can share content and download third-party animations through the community gallery.



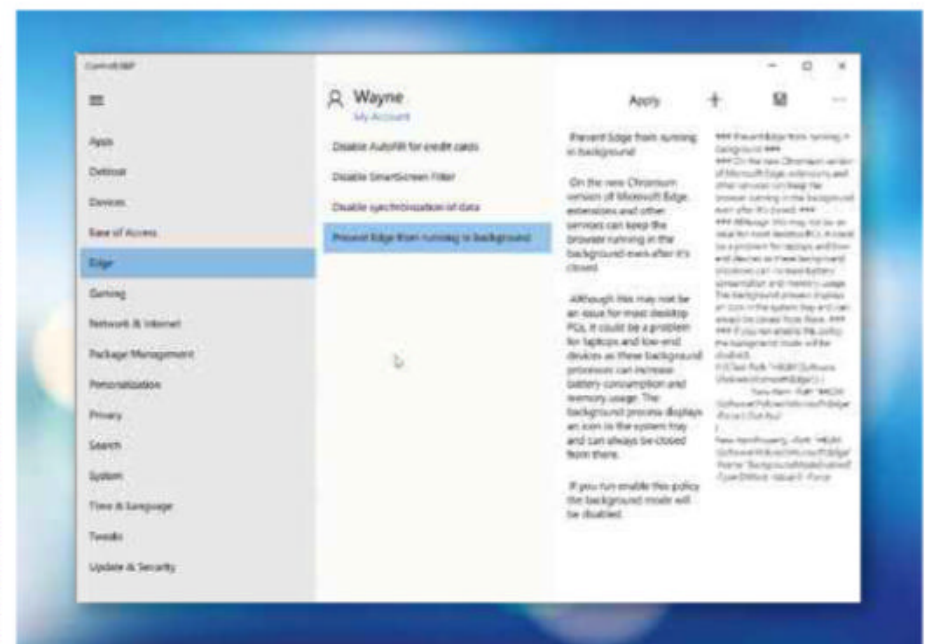
SYSTEM TOOL

WinCustom

bit.ly/2FyvrjE

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10 **File size:** 918KB

WinCustom lets you customise various elements of Windows, such as the Start menu, taskbar and system tray, Windows Explorer and desktop. The different settings are sorted into tabbed categories and you can just tick or untick the options on offer. There's also a miscellaneous section that lets you disable features such as the Task Manager, Windows Update and Windows Mail. WinCustom doesn't require installation – you just run the file and make your choices.



SYSTEM TOOL

ControlUWP

bit.ly/3bXOXns

Min requirements: Windows 10 **File size:** 362KB

Disappointed by Windows 10's new Settings app, an enterprising developer has created his own version. ControlUWP provides a simple front end for the main settings in Windows. Just select one of the categories on the left – which include Apps, Debloat, Devices, Edge, Gaming, Network and Internet, Privacy and Tweaks – then pick a category and choose an option on the right to find out more about it. Double-clicking a setting will enable or open it.

BOOT MANAGER

Safe Mode Launcher

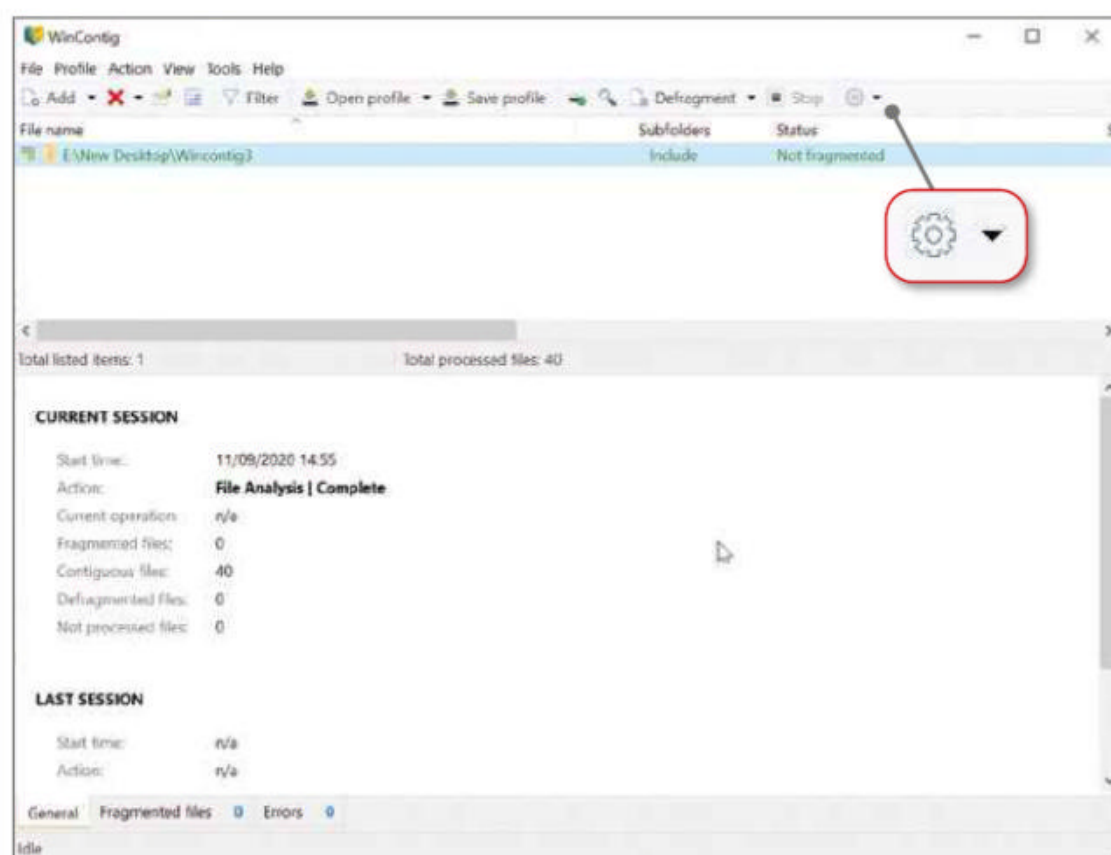
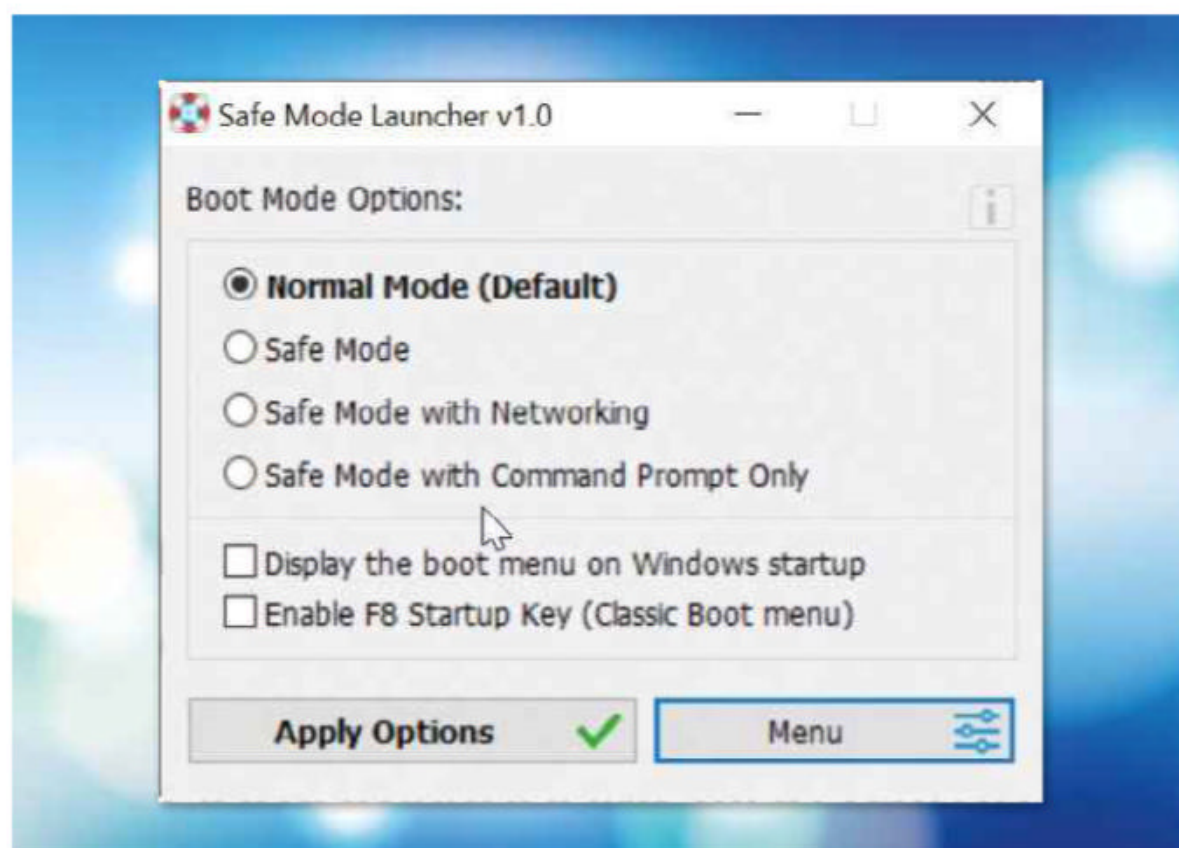
www.sordum.org

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 943KB

Safe Mode is a light version of Windows that only loads the bare minimum of drivers and services that are essential for the operating system to run. If Windows won't start, or there's a problem that's stopping it from running normally, Safe Mode can help you troubleshoot the cause.

The process for getting into Safe Mode varies depending on the version of Windows you're running. This small tool provides a front end for the boot-mode options and can restore the traditional F8 startup option that was removed from Windows 10. It also links to the main Windows troubleshooting tools.



FILE DEFRAGMENTER

WinContig 3

bit.ly/wincontig413

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 1.2MB

WinContig is a portable tool that can specifically defrag individual files and folders, rather than tackling the entire drive. In this updated version, you can now change the media type associated with a physical disk and filter out files based on the number or size of their fragments. In addition, there are three new user-requested features: you can close the program by hitting Esc; show the profile name on the title bar; and highlight the row of the currently processed item.

The default interface language is Italian but you can change this by clicking the cog button, selecting 'Interfaccia' on the left and choosing English from the 'Lingua' drop-down menu.

BROWSER

SlimBrowser 14

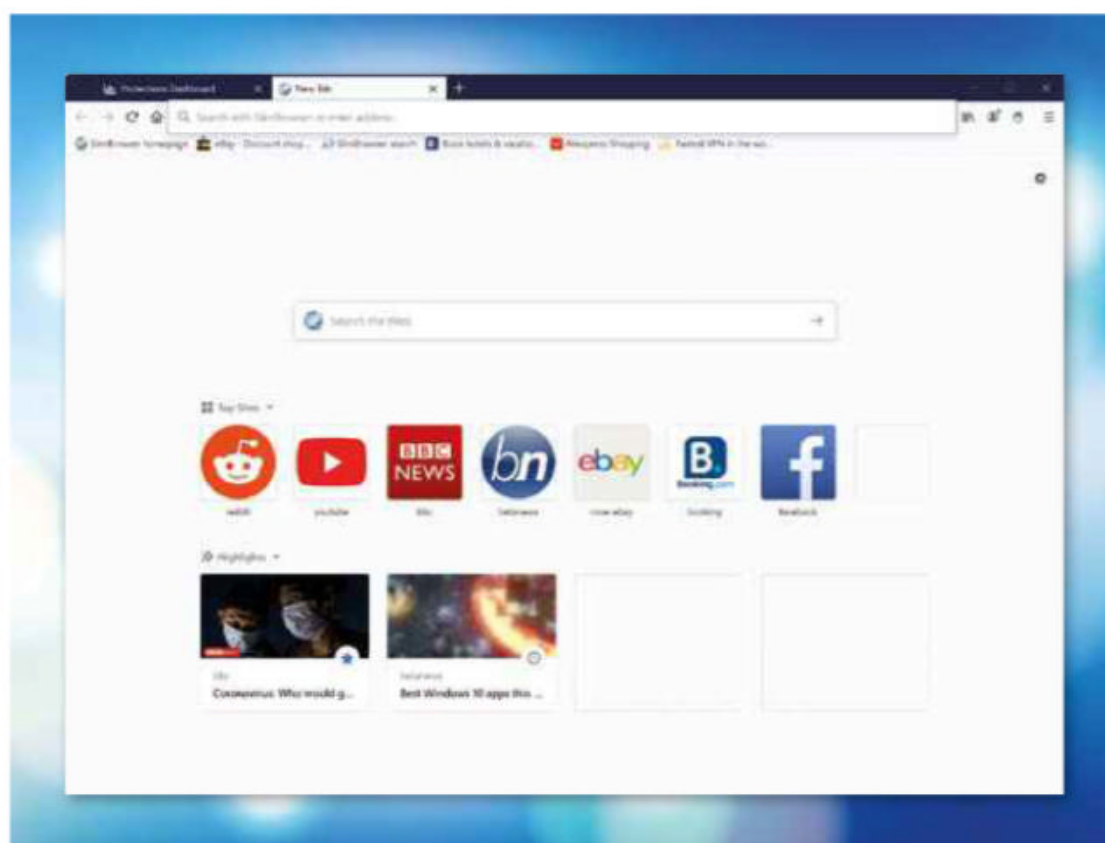
www.slimbrowser.net

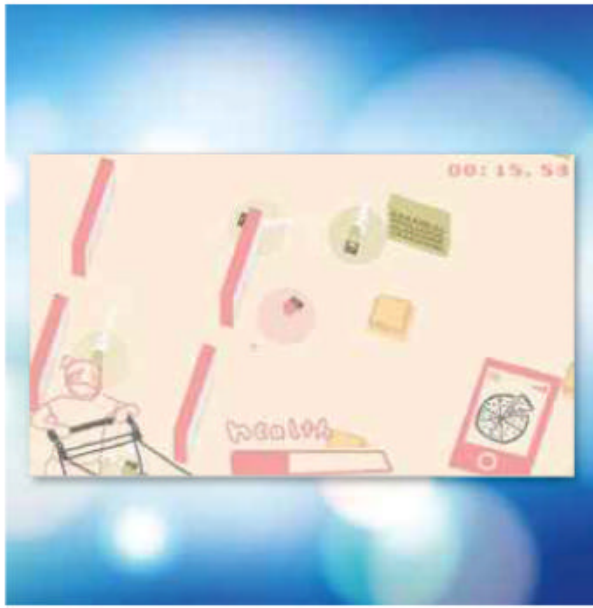
Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 50.4MB

If you're looking for a new web browser, try FlashPeak's SlimBrowser, which is built on Firefox's Gecko rendering engine, blocks ads automatically (though you can disable this feature if it's not required) and comes with a tool that speeds up downloads by splitting files into sections and downloading them concurrently. It can also download YouTube videos in MP4 or MP3 format, translate text, upload and frame photos and share content directly to Facebook. It even brings you the weather forecast.

This new version has a Protections Dashboard that provides a personalised summary of tracking protection, data breaches and password management.





GAME

Grocery Story

bit.ly/2FypdAv

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 8MB

This simple arcade game has a topical COVID-19 twist. The aim of Grocery Story is to do your weekly shop while wearing a mask and social distancing. Items you need to buy appear in the main window, and you just need to steer your trolley to the appropriate shelf to collect them while avoiding the many less-conscientious shoppers speeding around the aisles.

✓ Install this program...

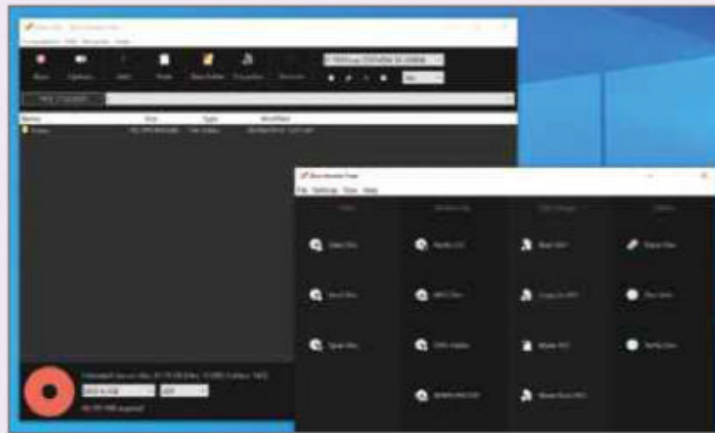
BurnAware Free

www.burnaware.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8/10

File size: 8.5MB

The free version of BurnAware can write to CDs, DVDs and Blu-rays, produce audio discs and video DVDs, create and burn image files, erase rewritable media and more. Updated earlier this year with new icons, a dark theme and a redesigned interface that displays better on high-resolution screens, it also improves audio-track conversion and speeds up the burning and data-verification processes. For more features, you can upgrade to BurnAware Premium for \$19.95 (£16.54). The free version comes bundled with extras, but these are easily declined.



...Not this one ✗

ImgBurn

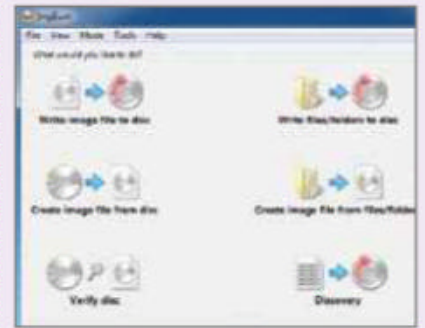
www.imgburn.com

Min requirements:

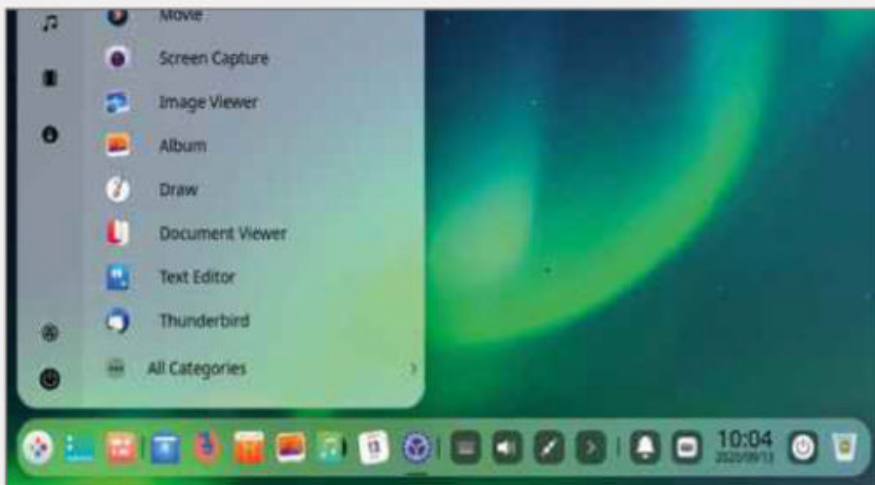
Windows XP/Vista/7/8

File size: 2.9MB

Free disc-burning software often comes bundled with extra tools that you don't want or need, but the last official version of ImgBurn sank even lower by including notorious adware OpenCandy in its download. This once-useful program hasn't been updated since 2013, so if you come across it online, it's best avoided.



OTHER OPERATING SYSTEMS What's new for Linux and macOS



LINUX DISTRO

Deepin 20

www.deepin.org

Min requirements: 2GB+ RAM, 50GB disk space

File size: 2.6GB

There are lots of attractive Linux distros around, but Deepin is easily one of the most beautiful. With this latest version, the open-source operating system has switched to Debian 10.5 as its base, and gains a modern new look (with rounded-corner windows), a new app manager and support for enhanced biometrics, so you can unlock the OS with your fingerprint – if your PC supports this. It also includes a very long list of fixes and improvements.



MEDIA PLAYER

VScenePlayerLite

apple.co/3hycA5c

Min requirements: macOS 10.15+, 64-bit processor

File size: 3.2MB

This video player for Mac can display multiple playing videos at the same time – either copies of the same file or different ones. You can control the playback for each video separately and switch to showing any of them full screen. VScenePlayerLite also works with multiple monitors.

Any open videos can be saved as a scene for reopening another time, and there's a paid-for version with more features available for £5.99.

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

Best New Browser Tools



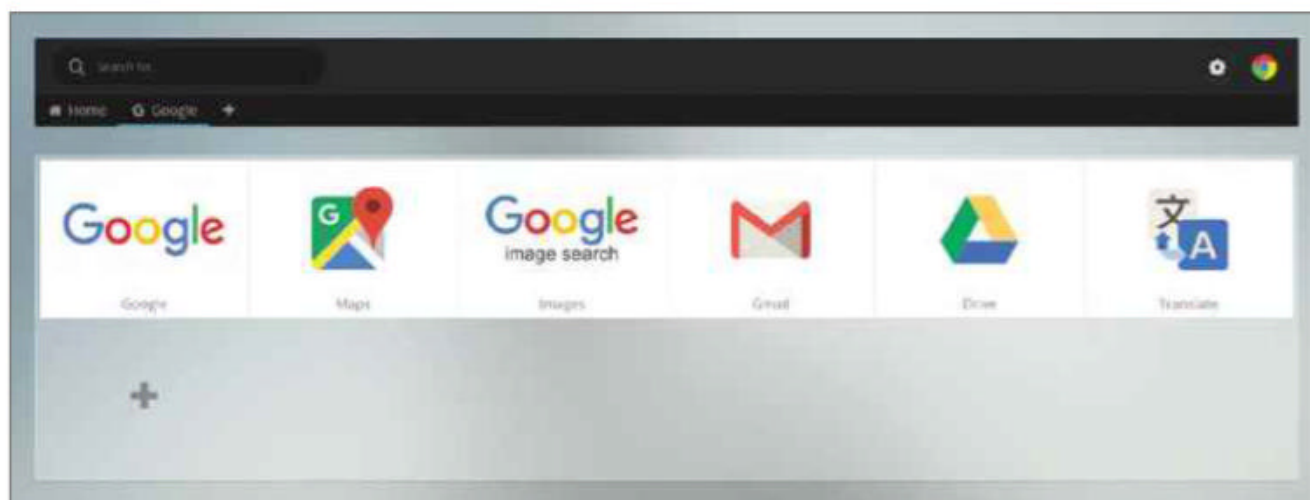
CHROME

Manage bookmarks from your New Tab page

Despite its vulpine name, Foxy Tabs (bit.ly/2ElyLOL) doesn't bring Firefox-like functionality to Chrome's New Tab page. Instead, it's more akin to Opera's excellent Speed Dial.

Open a new tab and you'll see a small grid of links. While most browsers let you quickly jump to recently viewed or popular websites, they're disappointingly short on features: they often can't be personalised or they only display a limited number of links. Foxy Tabs suffers none of these restrictions.

Particularly useful is the groups feature – by default, you'll find the Home group and a Google one, with links to priority services such as Maps and Drive. Click the plus sign and you



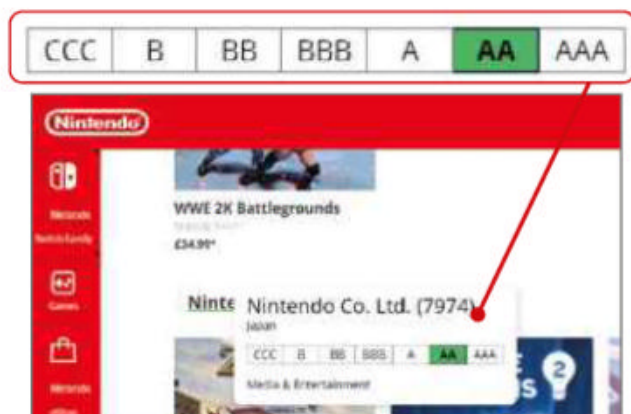
can create and manage your own collection of links.

Finally, the Settings menu offers further options for tweaking the New Tab page's appearance, from colours to grid size, and lets you manage bookmark imports, exports and backups.

Check companies' ethical credentials

Paper Trail (bit.ly/3689X8v) is an add-on that wants to help you "hold companies accountable". It's based on Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) ratings, which measure a company's sustainability and societal impact, to give you a good idea of whether you're buying from a business baddie or a firm that plays fair.

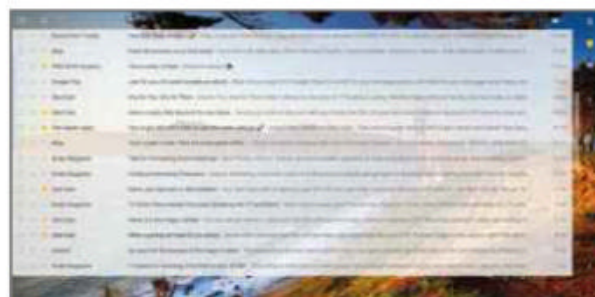
The extension recognises the names of businesses on whatever page you're on – you don't need to be on the company's own website to try it – and underlines it. Whenever you see this, hover your mouse over the business name to view the company, its location and what it does. Most usefully, there's a colour-coded grading system based on ESG ratings, ranging from CCC (the absolute worst) to AAA (the best), helping you buy better.



Clean up Gmail's interface

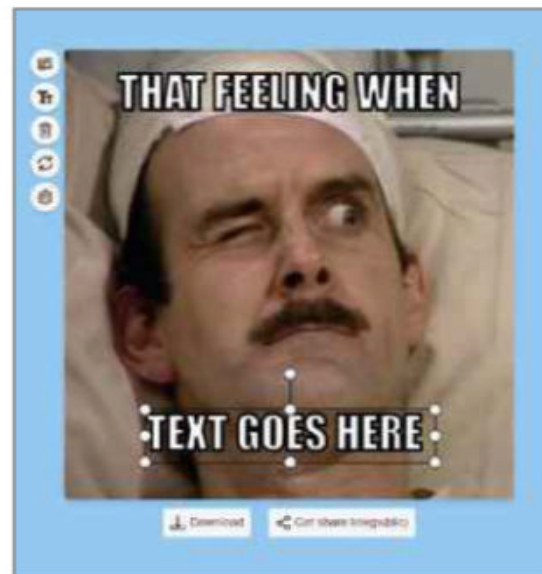
It may be the most popular email provider, but Gmail can still feel a bit cluttered. Simple Gmail Screen (bit.ly/30dICPB) offers to tidy up the interface. Immediately after installation, you're asked to make two choices – you can return to these any time by clicking the extension's toolbar button. For both the header menu and left-hand sidebar, you can leave them in place or switch to the much cleaner auto-hide option, which tidies both away until you move your cursor to the top or left of the screen to reveal them.

These two tiny tweaks may seem like an anti-climax, but seeing the add-on in action makes you realise just how focused Gmail becomes when the settings are applied. It's like a breath of fresh air.



Create your own memes

Easy Peasy Memes (bit.ly/3mEgZrh) lets you create your very own memes using images on any website. As its name



suggests, it's very simple to use.

Start by grabbing your image in one of two ways: either click the extension's toolbar button, then choose 'Screenshot to Meme', which lets you grab a selected area of your screen; or right-click any image and choose Easy Peasy Memes, which gives you two options – Screenshot Meme, which is the same as 'Screenshot to Meme'; and 'Generate Meme from Image', which is the easiest choice to use.

Once exported, you can add and resize your own text to the image. By clicking the Photo icon, you can also upload your own images. When you've finished your meme, click Download or 'Get share link'.

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



FIREFOX

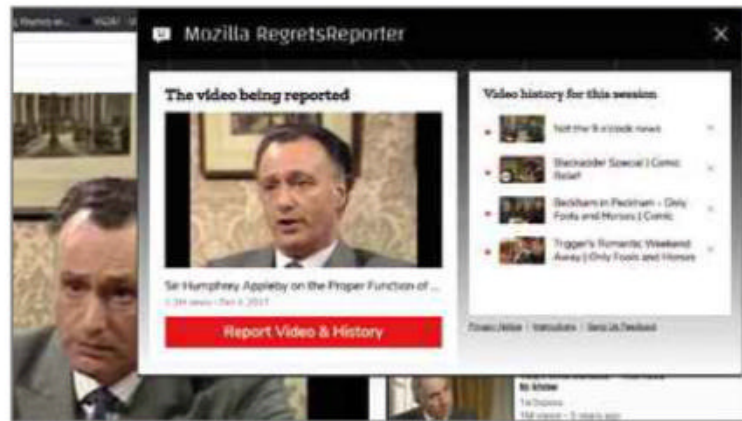
Report bad YouTube recommendations

YouTube, like most of the internet, is guided by algorithms: unseen number-crunching technology that is meant to collect your data to make amazingly accurate guesses at the type of content you want to see. Sadly, it's utterly flawed.

Regrets Reporter (mzl.la/3mG1IGw) from

Mozilla asks us all to "work together to make recommendation engines on the internet more trustworthy", by turning "everyday YouTube users into YouTube watchdogs". When YouTube suggests questionable content in its recommendations, open the extension to report it along with the breadcrumb trail of videos that led you there.

Using the add-on won't alter YouTube's current behaviour, but it's hoped that it will help uncover how it operates behind the scenes. The tool is also available for Chrome (bit.ly/3chlfbk).

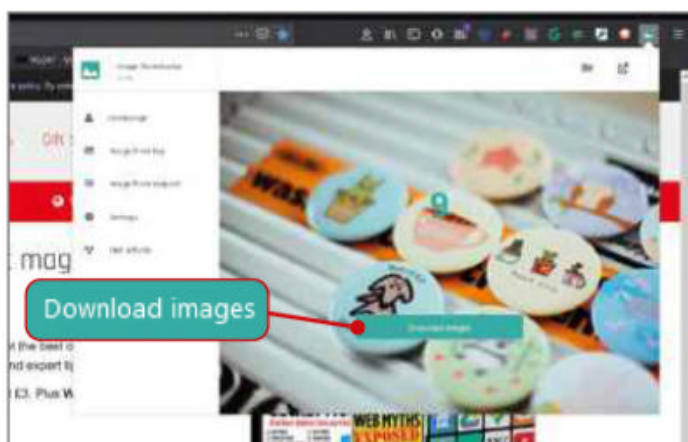


Download every image on a page

The Image Downloader (mzl.la/32Nc8Mk) browser tool makes downloading images quick and easy. With one click of its toolbar button, you can instantly download every image on a page in one go. Alternatively, images can be viewed and downloaded separately by selecting 'Image from request'.

Under Fast Actions, you can generate a download button to turn on the 'slider' that displays all images on the current page. Choosing this opens a sidebar displaying individual images to be copied or saved while you continue using the extension for other tasks.

Click the extension's toolbar button to visit the dashboard. Here, all open tabs



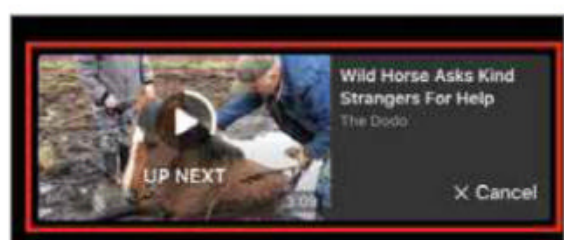
are displayed in a grid. By clicking into each one, you can grab your images directly without the need to switch tabs. You can also view any saved images you have.

Stop online videos autoplaying

Auto Halt (mzl.la/2EkCImG) is a tool that prevents videos from autoplaying *after* your current video has ended.

While it's easy enough to stop this annoyance on YouTube – just hit the Autoplay toggle button – other sites still insist on launching further videos that leave you frantically hunting for the X button.

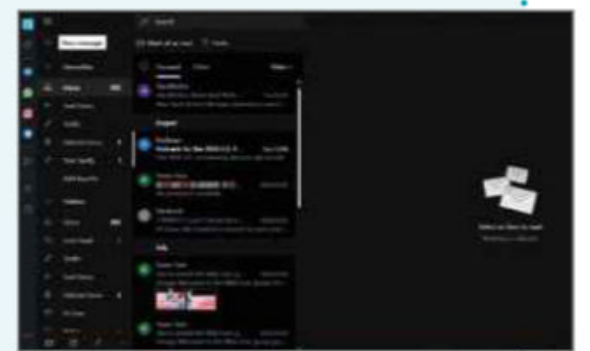
This add-on cleverly scans websites for elements such as tick boxes and automatically 'clicks' them, tricking the site into stopping the video. It's currently compatible with YouTube and Facebook, as well as Twitch and Gfycat. We're hoping more sites will be added to the list soon.



OTHER BROWSERS

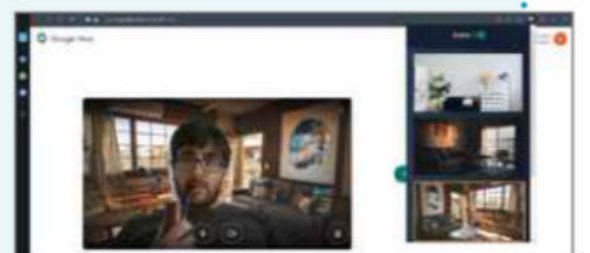
Get a better Outlook dark mode

Dark Mode for Outlook (bit.ly/2FZi1gp) reckons it can outdo Microsoft with an extension that "applies a better dark mode" to the email service. To get the best results, install the browser tool then, on Outlook.com, click the cog wheel and switch on dark mode there as well. Having both these themes applied together ensures emails display in dark mode and turns certain inbox elements black and white. The add-on also strips away ads from the sidebar, and is available for Chrome, Edge and Firefox, too.



Add backgrounds to Google Meet

If you'd like to position yourself in a more exciting setting than in front of a bookcase or a white wall when joining Google Meet, Virtual Backgrounds for Google Meet (bit.ly/3hKz03q) adds a new background to your video calls. Just before you join your meeting, click the extension's toolbar button to choose between four des-res spaces. The effects aren't as good as those on Zoom – as you move, you'll notice a jagged strip surrounding your head, as if your picture has been poorly cut out of a magazine. But it's a fun tool if you fancy a change of scenery.



Best Free Apps



App of the Fortnight

MOBILE OS

iOS 14

apple.co/2ZNeTeR

Apple (varies)

Okay, so it's not *technically* an app, but there are so many new tools and improvements in Apple's new mobile operating system that we thought we should cover iOS 14 in some detail and explain why you should download it if you have a compatible handset (an iPhone 6 and up, basically). There's a new version of iPadOS out too, but we don't have space to cover that here.

The new App Library is essentially the equivalent of the app drawer in Android. Instead of displaying all your apps as icons on your Home screen, you can reduce clutter by relegating less frequently used tools and games to the library.

Home-screen widgets are another new feature. Previously, widgets were housed on their own dedicated screen, but you can now display large, dynamically updating widgets anywhere you like. Smart Stacks are groups of widgets stacked on top of each other that you can flick through or leave for the OS to intelligently display at the right time or location.

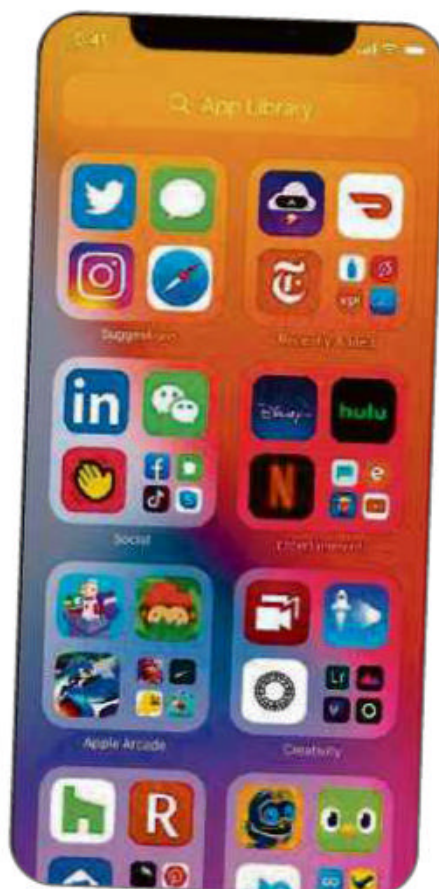
Voice assistant Siri no longer takes up the entire screen when you invoke it – instead, a small Siri interface appears at the bottom of the screen. And you can now choose your own default web browser and email application, should you wish.

The handy new Back Tap feature lets you assign a function to a double or triple-tap of the rear of your device, while App Clips lets you download just part of an app via NFC tags and QR

codes, instead of installing the whole thing.

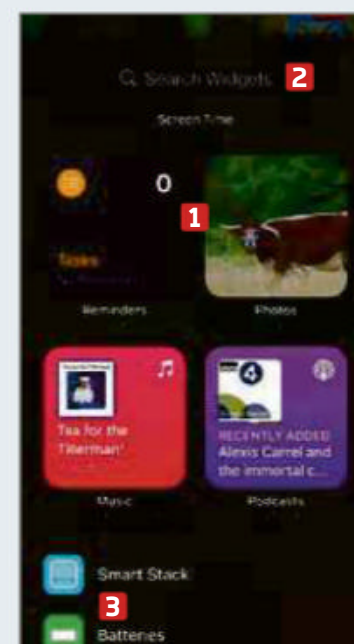
Other improvements include a major update to the Maps app and a new built-in Translate app (see opposite page).

NEW

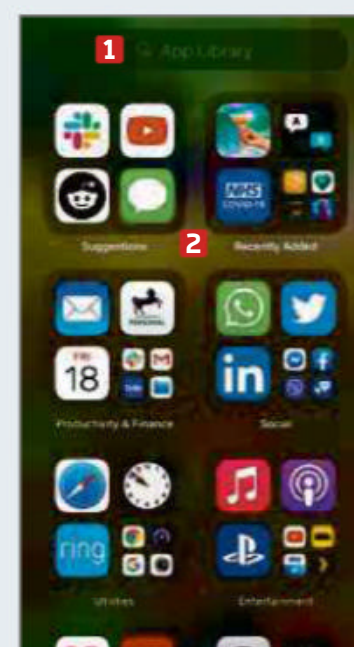


MINI WORKSHOP Try iOS 14's best new features

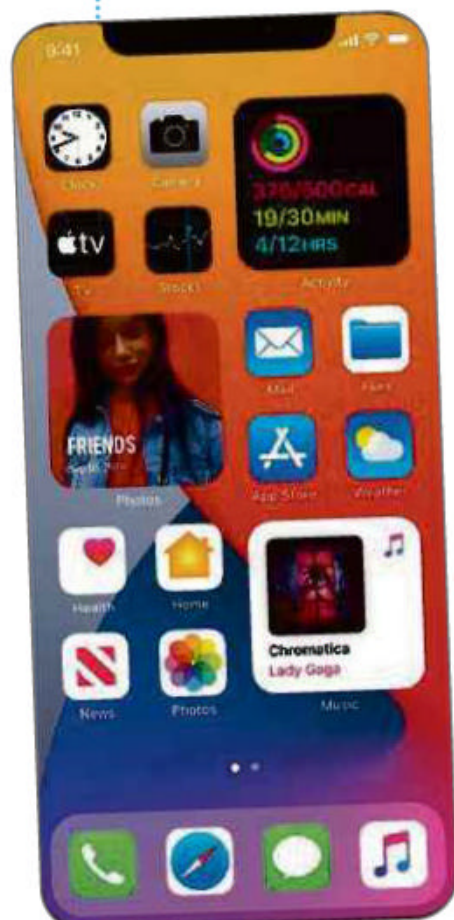
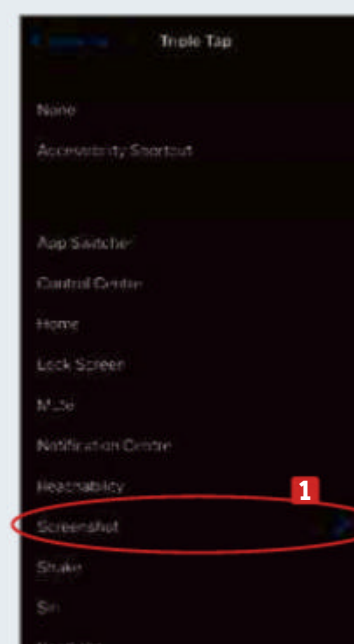
1 To add a Home-screen widget, press a blank area of the screen until the icons start jiggling, then tap the top-left '+' button. You'll see a selection of example widgets. **1** Either search **2** or scroll down to find a specific app or widget, **3** then select it and choose a size (small, medium or large). Tap Add Widget. You can drag the widget wherever you want.



2 Press any app on the Home screen, tap Remove App, then select 'Move to App Library'. This sends it to the library without uninstalling it. To explore the App Library, swipe left through your Home screens until you see the App Library screen. Tap in the Search box **1** to look for a specific app or browse through the automatically generated categories. **2** Swipe downward to reveal a full alphabetical list of your installed apps.



3 To assign a function to the new 'Back Tap' gesture, choose Settings, Accessibility, Touch, Back Tap. You can assign separate functions to double- and triple-taps – select either option, then scroll through the list of available functions **1** and press to set the one you want – taking a screenshot, for example, or turning your iPhone's volume up or down. Note that Back Tap only works on the iPhone 8 or newer.



Our rating



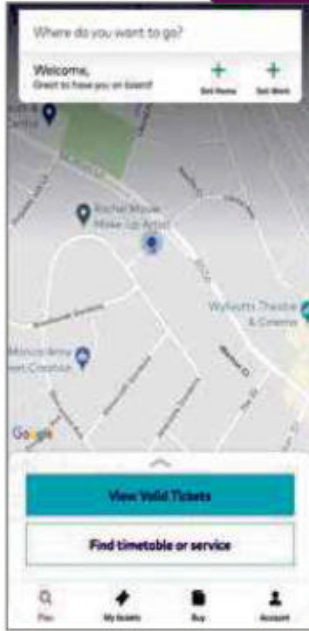
This fortnight's top free and paid-for apps for Android and iOS phones and tablets

TRAVEL

Arriva

bit.ly/3iJdwFk
apple.
co/2ZPUbLf
7 11

Arriva's new app is – currently, at least – something of a missed opportunity. It's designed to make it easy to get around, allowing you to plan your travel, find out when the next bus is due and book digital tickets in advance of your journey. Sadly, many users are complaining that the payment system doesn't work and that some of the features of the previous app – such as saving your favourite stops – are no longer available. Hopefully, Arriva will address these issues in future updates.



Our rating



TOOLS

Translate

14

iPhone owners who upgrade to the latest version of Apple's mobile operating system, iOS 14 (see opposite page), will discover a new app icon on their Home screen after installation. Translate is a new first-party iPhone app that aims to make it easy for speakers of different languages to communicate with each other, rather than constantly needing to look up words and phrases. It's very simple to use (just tap to select the languages, then tap the microphone icon and start speaking), supports 12 different languages and lets you download them to use offline.



Our rating



SHOPPING

Lidl Plus

bit.ly/3krrdt4
apple.
co/3kofw6g
5 11.2

Savvy Lidl shoppers will want to download this new app from the supermarket chain, which acts as a digital reward card. It also unlocks the potential for even more savings, thanks to money-off coupons every Thursday and further savings in the shape of loyalty rewards earned whenever you hit monthly spending targets. Other benefits include scratch cards every time you shop and digital receipts to help you track your spending without wasting paper. You can even read the latest Lidl leaflets and catalogues digitally, too.



Our rating



GAME

Buck this Virus

bit.ly/2REZokw
4.4

By now, many of us are beginning to show signs of COVID-19 fatigue. Local lockdowns, social distancing and other disruptions to our way of life are beginning to take their toll. But there is one way to get your own back and relieve some of the tension that has been building up over the last few months: by blasting the hell out of swarms of evil virus-like enemies in this shoot-em-up game. Buck this Virus is an unashamedly daft arcade-style shooter game, in which you have to survive wave upon wave of coronavirus-shaped bad guys across various levels. It's free to play, but in-app purchases raise money for relevant charities. If only defeating the real virus was as easy.



Our rating



MUSIC

Poolside.fm

apple.co/2F7dJAp
11

The British summer may be over but if you still need a little sunshine in your life as we head into autumn, then try tuning into this feel-good, retro-inspired music app. Based on the website of the same name, Poolside.fm presents itself in a uniquely nostalgic style that apes mobile devices of yore (think old Nokia models) and lets you listen to various curated playlists featuring sunkissed tunes. You can customise the app's pixelated theme and stream music to speakers via AirPlay. Poolside.fm is currently iOS-only but the developer has promised that an Android version is on the way.



Our rating



5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

LOCATION

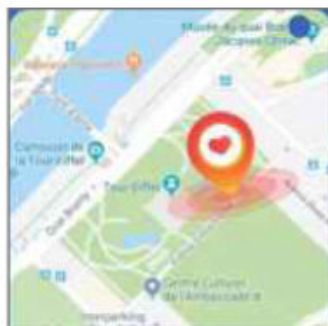
Fake GPS Location

bit.ly/3iIWcQP

Price: 59p



Want to pretend to your friends that you're sunning yourself in the Balearics, instead of sitting at home watching TV? Then try this app, which lets you spoof your current location.



GAMES

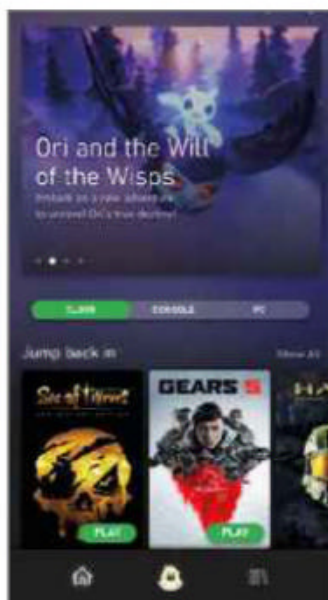
Xbox Game Pass

bit.ly/3hId4Wz

Price: £10.99 per month



Microsoft's Xbox Cloud Gaming platform is finally out of beta on Android. You need an Xbox Game Pass Ultimate subscription and a compatible controller to stream and play games on your device.



GAME

The Last Campfire

apple.co/3iD2aml

Price: £4.99



From the developer of



No Man's Sky, The Last Campfire is a beautiful adventure game, in which you play a lone ember trying to get home. You need an Apple Arcade subscription to play.

TOOLS

Shortcut Manager

bit.ly/3c9LsZm

Price: 59p



This tool lets you create handy shortcuts for apps, tasks, device settings, web pages – almost anything, in fact. You can customise your shortcuts using icon packs or your own photos.



WEATHER

Carrot Weather

bit.ly/2XaqDYG

Price: £4.99



Weather nerds will love this incredibly detailed, highly accurate and beautifully designed weather app, which has just been updated for iOS 14 and now offers five stackable Home Screen widgets (see page 34).



Fake GPS Location



Xbox Game Pass



The Last Campfire



Shortcut Manager



Carrot Weather



✓ Install this app...

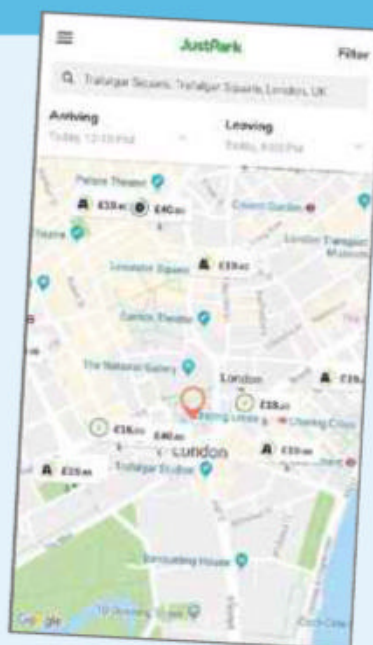
JustPark

bit.ly/2H5Ndv6

apple.co/2Ei5epa



Ever followed your sat-nav all the way to your destination, only to find there's nowhere to park? Well, JustPark solves this and many other parking-related problems. As the UK's largest parking network, JustPark boasts 1.4 million spaces in over 45,000 locations across the country, including car parks, parking meters and driveways. You can plan your journey by locating the nearest parking spot, view local restrictions, such as congestion charging, check out real-time availability of spaces and even pre-book a space using Google Pay or Apple Pay. You can set expiry reminders and easily extend your stay if you need more time.



...Not this one

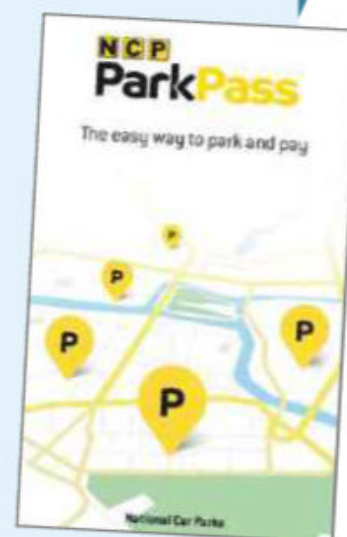


ParkPass NCP

bit.ly/35M7XIT

apple.co/3c8OPjj

ParkPass sounds promising at first, offering ticketless parking at 250+ NCP car parks, along with many of JustPark's features, such as expiry reminders, remote extensions and a car park locator. Not only that, but it also offers exclusive discounts to users of the app. If it's mostly negative user reviews are to be believed, however, ParkPass is extremely buggy, preventing account holders from logging in, hanging on payment and other problems.





Take a Screen Break



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



**WIN A
WEB USER
2019 BACK
ISSUES DISC!**



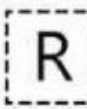
Email your answers to
editor@webuser.co.uk
- one correct entry
will win a disc












CAN YOU GUESS THE VIDEO GAMES FROM THE EMOJI?




1



2



3




4







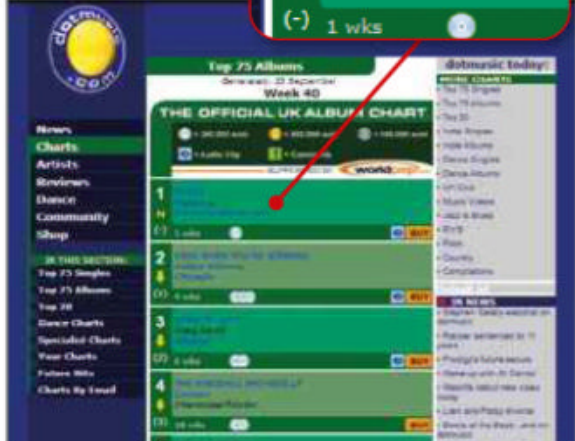

5





6




GUESS THE WAYBACK MACHINE YEAR

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

WayBackMachine

COMPETITIONS

WIN 1 OF 4

Verbatim 512GB Store 'n' Go Mini SSDs

Verbatim's Store 'n' Go Mini SSD is a super-small and lightweight drive in a stylish black 3D surface design. It's available in 512GB and 1TB capacities, weighs just 35g and has a USB3.2 Gen 1 interface for data-transfer speeds of up to 5Gbps. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'Verbatim' in the subject line. For more information, visit www.verbatim-europe.com and follow Verbatim on Instagram [@verbatim.europe](https://www.instagram.com/verbatim.europe).



**WORTH
£74.99
EACH**

WIN 1 OF 2

snakebyte Esports Starter Kits

PC gaming firm snakebyte has started selling its first ever Esports Starter Kit, comprising a cutting-edge gaming keyboard, precision mouse and esports mouse mat. It's the ideal package for anyone wanting to get into esports as a hobby. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'snakebyte' in the subject line. For more information, visit mysnakebyte.com and follow snakebyte on Twitter [@snakebytegear](https://twitter.com/snakebytegear).



**WORTH
£74.99
EACH**



FAQ

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

Neuralink

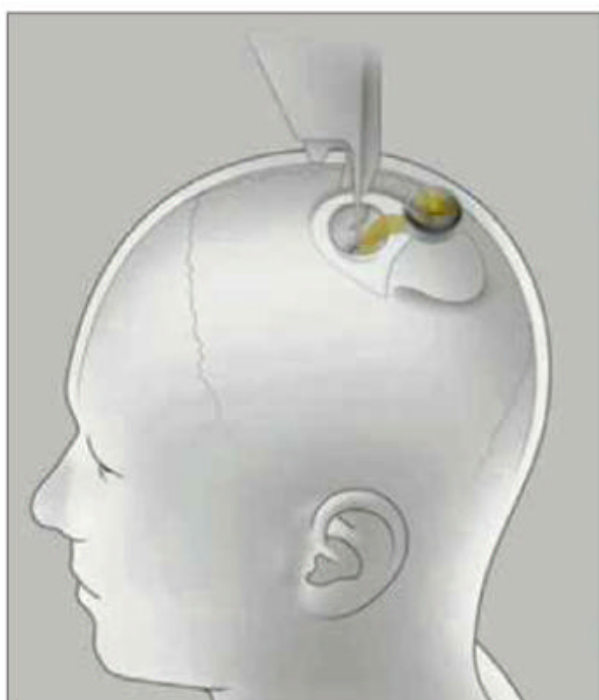
Why would you want a chip inserted in your skull? **David Crookes** takes a look at Elon Musk's latest brainwave

What is it?

Neuralink (neuralink.com) is an ambitious neurotechnology company that's aiming to upgrade nature's most complex organ – the human brain. Founded by serial entrepreneur Elon Musk, it hopes to surgically implant tiny devices deep inside the skull, offering the potential to treat brain disorders and other medical problems, and give us the power to interact with and control machines using our minds.

Isn't this the stuff of sci-fi?

Yes, and the idea is either utopian or dystopian, depending on who you talk to. Musk refers to it as a "Fitbit in your skull, with tiny wires", but this is no easy install. The company would need to insert 3,072 electrodes connected to 96 thin, flexible threads into your brain. These are between four and six μm (micrometre, which is one thousandth of a millimetre) in diameter, making them far finer than human hair, and they are connected to a brain-to-machine chipset called N1, measuring just 23mm by 8mm. Musk says the implant that transmits neural signals is called the Link.



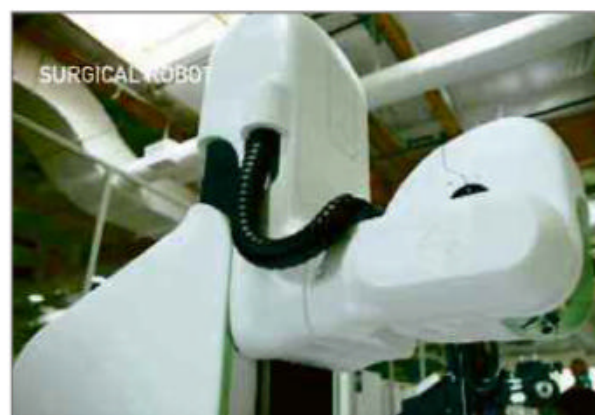
The Link device connects to your brain to monitor its activity and stimulate neurons



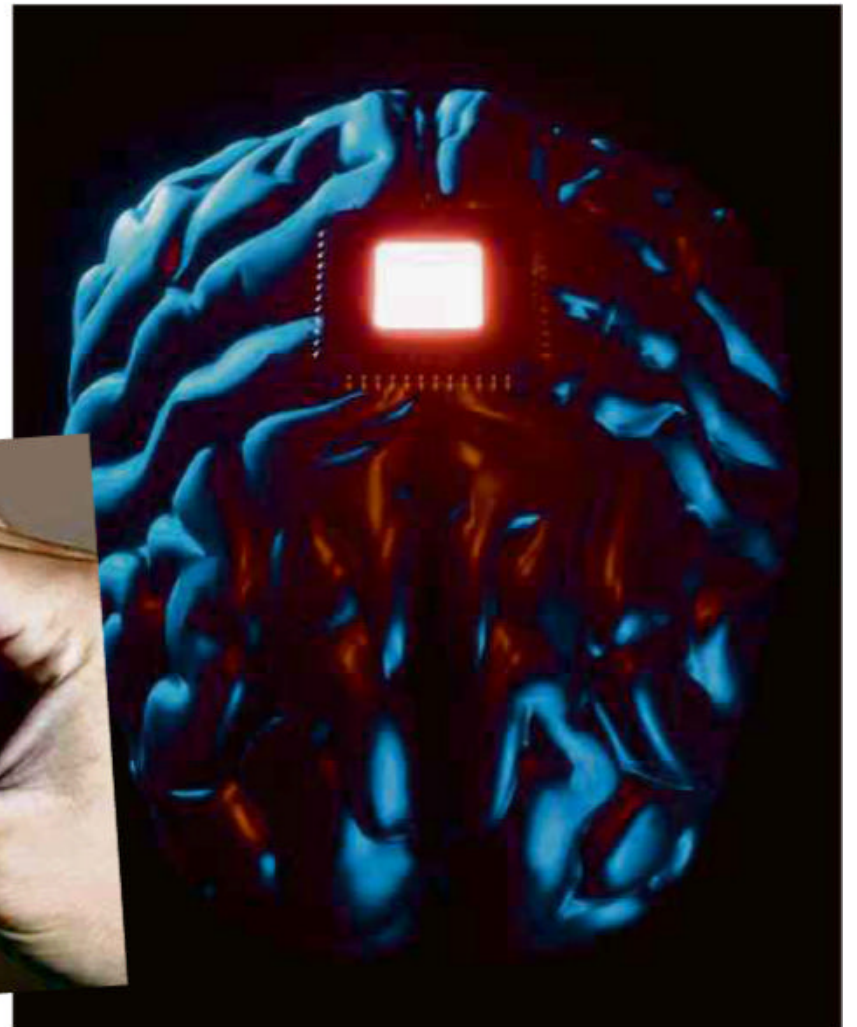
Mind-blowing! So how does it work?

The human brain has 86 billion neurons, which send and receive information through electric signals via synapses. With Neuralink, each individual thread of the device will be connected in the brain, allowing it to monitor the activity of 1,000 brain neurons. Although that sounds like a small sample, amplified signals are recorded and interpreted as digital instructions, and information is sent back to the brain to stimulate electrical spikes. Data in the prototypes has been transmitted via a wired USB-C connection but the goal has been to create a wireless system.

It'll also be possible to have more than one device implanted in a single brain, reading information from different areas.



A surgical robot drills into your skull to insert and connect threads to The Link



Credit: Aleksandra Sova / Shutterstock.com

But how is the chip inserted?

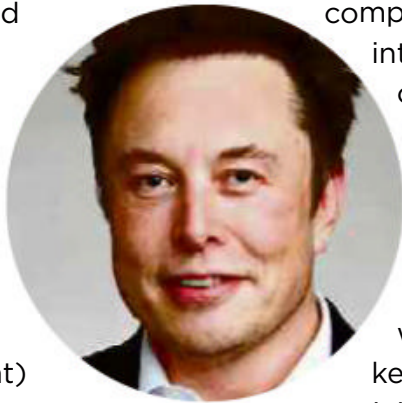
Rather than rely on human hands for such a complex procedure, a surgical robot has been developed that is capable of inserting six threads into the brain every minute. That equates to the implantation of 192 electrodes, given there are 32 per thread and this is done by making a small incision of 2mm, dilated up to 8mm, and drilling through the skull. Tiny needles make the insertions, using a microscope to ensure that no veins or arteries are touched. Once the threads are inserted, they're connected to the Link, which is placed on the brain's cortical surface. The procedure should take between one and two hours.

So what can it actually do?

The Neuralink website discusses being able to control an iOS device or a Bluetooth keyboard or mouse just by thinking about what you want to do. An app has been developed to train your brain to perform actions such as moving a cursor, and it will contain games that help improve your speed and accuracy.

The Neuralink team's main focus is helping people with disabilities, most notably those with paralysis. It says the technology could enable them to regain their independence by allowing them to simply think of an action and see it

carried out, letting them fully operate a computer, control artificial limbs, write documents or express themselves with art. The computer is also exploring how the technology could aid seizures, brain damage, Parkinson's disease, dementia, stroke patients and even hearing and sight problems. "It could return your eyesight, even if you've lost your optic nerve," Musk (right) told an interviewer.



technology this year, but so far it has only been tested on rats, monkeys and pigs. A monkey has apparently been able to interact with a

computer and, in August, Musk introduced a video of a pig called Gertrude, who had the chip implanted in her brain for two months.

While Gertrude ate and sniffed around, the Link sent wireless signals which were charted on a graph keeping track of her neural activity in real-time. When

such signals were fed into a computer, it became possible to predict Gertrude's movements.

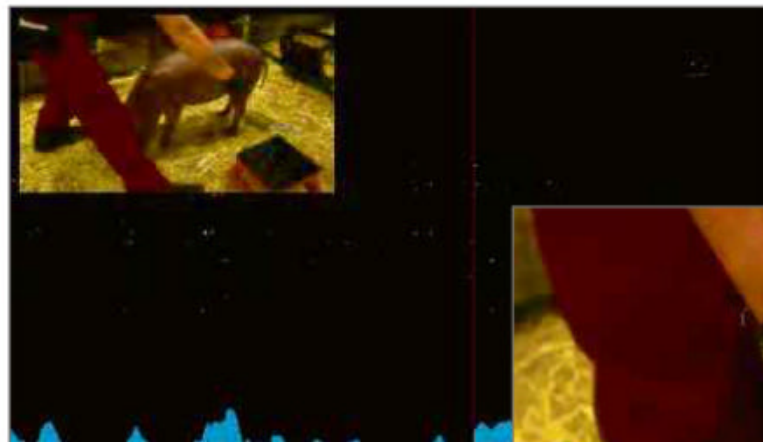
The Link also contains sensors measuring orientation, angle and inertia, as well as pressure and temperature sensors.

Does Neuralink offer consumer-based benefits?

The company has discussed the possibility of streaming music directly into users' brains and Musk says there could come a time when humans don't need to actually speak to communicate. Neuralink could speed up the process of writing by removing the need to tap a keyboard using your fingers, allow you to drive a car without touching the wheel, and play games or enjoy experiences by streaming them to your mind.

Has it been tested on humans?

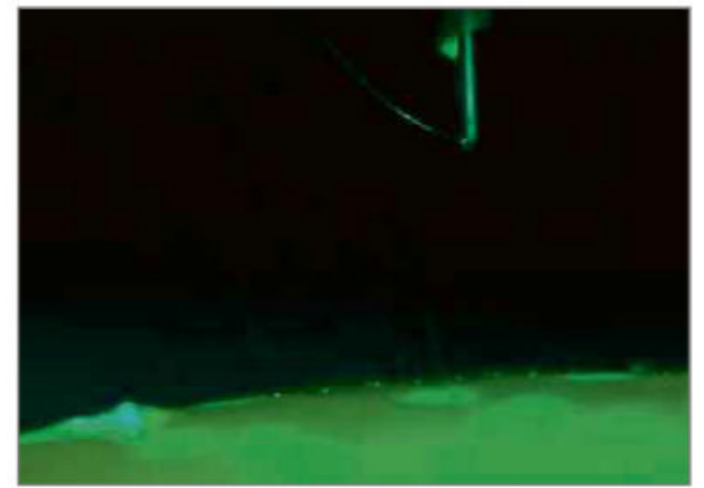
No. Musk was hoping to start human trials with a view to rolling out the



Musk stuck a chip in the brain of a pig called Gertrude to demonstrate how Neuralink will work

Has it been officially approved?

Neuralink received designation as a breakthrough device by the US Food and Drug Administration in July, but it still needs to go through the required approvals and safety testing before it can be implanted in humans. There are obvious concerns about placing electronics inside people's heads and there need to be studies looking at the long-term effects, especially since the company expects a device to last 10 years. Is it durable enough? Could it cause infection? Would heat



The Link device has been safely removed from the brain of another test pig

from the device be damaging and how many Links could one brain take? These are questions that can't currently be answered with 100% certainty. Gertrude seems fine, though.

Can the device be removed?

Yes, and Musk also demonstrated another pig (name unknown) that has already had a Link implanted and then removed. The animal appeared to be perfectly normal with no signs of brain damage, which opens up the possibility of being able to upgrade the tech – though we're struggling to imagine too many people wanting to undergo an operation every time Neuralink brings out a new version of its device.

How much will an implant cost?

Since Neuralink's technology is still at an early stage (it's at version 0.9), you're not going to be turning up at a clinic to have one of its devices implanted into your brain anytime soon. That means we have no current idea of how much the brain chips will cost, although they are likely to be expensive. As you can imagine, this throws up an ethical problem: rich people are likely to be first in the queue and that could open a cultural gap. Could we be on the path of providing superhuman capabilities for the few at the expense of the many?

DOES NEURALINK HAVE ANY RIVALS?

Elon Musk is not alone in his desire to combine human brains with machines. Deep-brain stimulation surgery was approved in 1997 for the treatment of tremors and advanced symptoms of Parkinson's disease. Meanwhile, a speech system was developed at Columbia University in New York City last year using a mix of AI, speech synthesisers and scanning technology to convert brain patterns into speech (go.nature.com/2Zlwpq6).

In 2016, researchers at John Hopkins University used an electrode array implanted in the brain of an epilepsy patient to control a prosthetic limb (see right, bit.ly/2ZgNotV), and an implantable brain-computer has also been shown to help patients overcome severe paralysis (bit.ly/337bHLW). It's proving to be an exciting area of technology and science.



Killed by Google

PRINTER SERVICE



Google Cloud Print

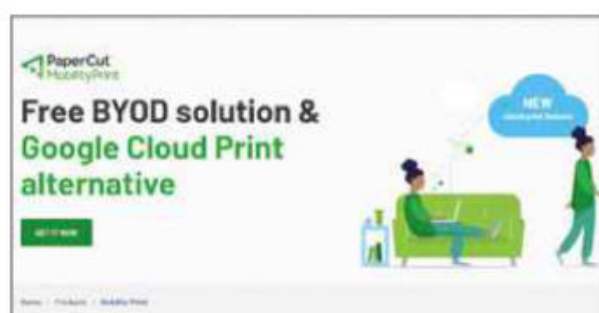
www.google.com/cloudprint

Lifespan: 2010-2021

WHY GOOGLE KILLED IT: Cloud Print, Google's cloud-based printing solution, makes it possible to send web pages to printers from any device. Google announced plans to kill the service off late last year, with an execution date of 1 Jan 2021. The company didn't give a clear reason for the closure, although it did say that Chrome OS, its cloud-based operating system, would be offering improved built-in printing controls.



WHAT TO USE INSTEAD: Google suggests switching to one of its free printing partners, the best of which is PaperCut Mobility Print (bit.ly/3mkYesD). There's even a handy guide (bit.ly/3ixh7WV) that helps you migrate to the service from Cloud Print.



MUSIC SERVICE

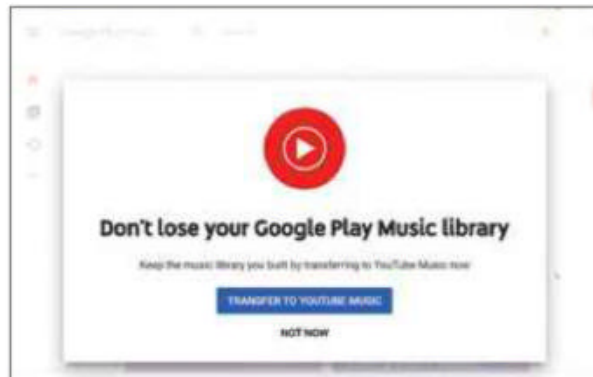


Google Play Music

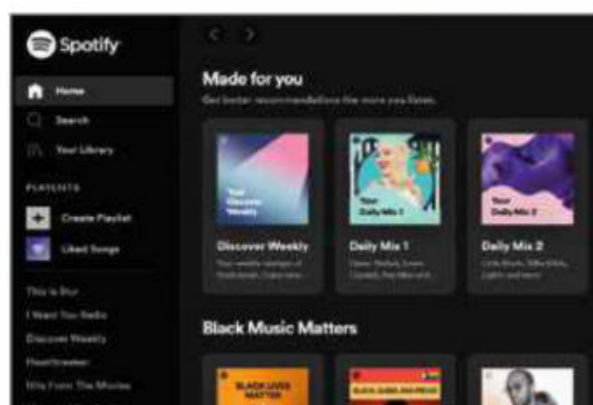
play.google.com/music

Lifespan: 2011-2020

WHY GOOGLE KILLED IT: Google currently has two music-streaming services – Google Play Music, which is the default music player on many Android devices, and YouTube Music – but it now only wants one. Google has been warning users for a while that it will be shutting down Play Music and, in a blog post in August (bit.ly/35wAjk5), it confirmed that YouTube Music will replace the service by December 2020.



WHAT TO USE INSTEAD: Although Google would like you to switch to YouTube Music, and is making it as easy



as possible to do so, now is the perfect time to move to a better choice. Spotify (www.spotify.com) has a huge library of songs, with both free and paid-for tiers – and, like Play Music, it lets you import import and play locally stored audio files. See bit.ly/3hzH32Z for details.

MESSAGING APP

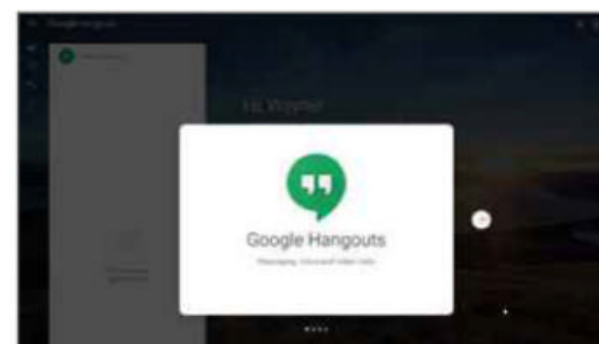


Hangouts

hangouts.google.com

Lifespan: 2013-2020

WHY GOOGLE KILLED IT: Google has a number of different messaging apps and is trying to streamline its offerings. It shut down Allo last year (more on that later) and is killing off Hangouts Classic – its most popular messaging app, with more than a billion installs on Android – in December 2020. It might seem strange for Google to shut down its most successful service, but the company is focusing on business communication, which in the light of the pandemic-fuelled rise in working from home, seems like a smart bet.



WHAT TO USE INSTEAD: Google wants you to communicate using Android's built-in Messages app, or either of

Still mourning Picasa or Google Reader? Dry your eyes as Wayne Williams reveals the best free alternatives to the many popular programs, services and apps that Google has abandoned in recent years

It's become a fact of web life that Google giveth and Google taketh away. Just as you've become reliant on one of its free tools for managing your photos, streaming your music library or getting your daily news fix, the search giant decides to put it permanently on ice.

Sometimes this happens because

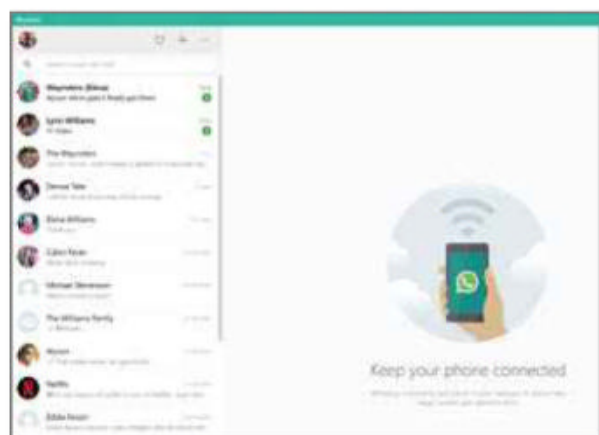
Google has launched what it believes to be (but often isn't) a superior service, while at other times it's simply because Google has lost interest in that product, even if its users haven't. It is running a business, after all.

Fortunately, few Google tools are unique, and there are usually

good alternatives available for its abandoned products. In this feature, we round up the best free replacements for tools that have been consigned to the Google graveyard over the last seven years, or that are about to be killed off very soon.

We also explain how to save your data from Google before it's too late.

Hangouts' direct successors – Google Meet or Google Chat (its Slack alternative for businesses). There are much better choices available, however. WhatsApp ([whatsapp.com](https://www.whatsapp.com)) is packed with features including voice and video calls, is available for your phone, computer and the web, and your friends are probably already using it.



WEB APPS



Google Chrome Apps

chrome.google.com/webstore

Lifespan: 2010-2020

WHY GOOGLE KILLED IT: Not to be confused with Chrome extensions, Chrome Apps are hosted or packaged web applications that run using Google's browser. They are downloaded from the Chrome Web Store and look much like a typical desktop app. The chances are you don't use these, and that's the reason Google decided to pull the plug on them. Support for them on Windows, Mac and Linux will end in December 2020 (Chrome OS users will continue to have access), and they will be killed off entirely by June 2022.



WHAT TO USE INSTEAD: Chrome Apps are a nice gimmick, but in truth they don't serve any great purpose. Rather than installing an app and running it in your browser, just navigate to the actual online service. You'll get pretty much the same experience.

DONATION APP



One Today

onetoday.google.com

Lifespan: 2013-2020

WHY GOOGLE KILLED IT: Google has a non-profit arm ([google.org](https://www.google.org)) that aims to solve some of humanity's biggest challenges. One Today was an Android app that made it possible for users to donate money to charities and see exactly how that donation was going to



be spent. Google killed it off at the start of February 2020, explaining that "in the last few years, we have seen donors choose other products to fundraise for their favourite non-profits".

WHAT TO USE INSTEAD: Thinking of You (www.thinkingofyouapp.com) is a free app for Android and iOS that lets you send a thought to someone you know, along with a donation to one of its many supported charities, including Shelter, Stroke Association, Make-A-Wish, Kidney Research UK, Parkinson's and Children with Cancer UK. You can also donate directly to charities, and Thinking of You gives all transaction fees to the charities on its app.



DATA SAVER



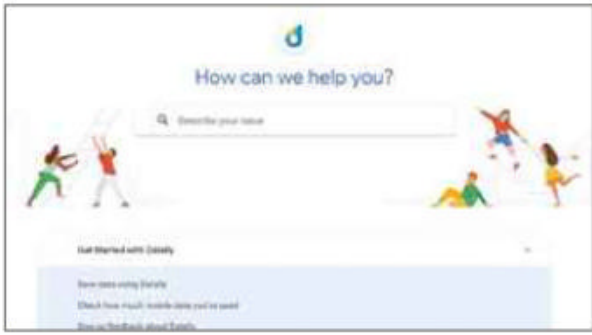
Datally

support.google.com/datally

Lifespan: 2017-2019

WHY GOOGLE KILLED IT: Google's Play store is home to millions of Android apps, including many produced by the search giant itself. Datally was a useful free app (called Triangle when it originally launched in June 2017), that





helped users manage their mobile data by viewing and blocking the activity of installed apps. Google never gave a reason for why it pulled Datally from the Play store in October last year, but it's not the only app to vanish in this way.



WHAT TO USE

INSTEAD: Data Usage – Data Manager (bit.ly/33xryU3) is a good free alternative for Android that can display daily data usage for apps you use and warn you if you go over your limit. It hasn't been updated in over a year, but it still works fine with newer versions of Android.

VR HEADSET

Google Daydream
bit.ly/3km553s
Lifespan: 2016-2019



WHY GOOGLE KILLED IT: There was a time when virtual reality seemed destined to be the next big thing, and if you couldn't afford a full-fledged headset such as the Oculus Rift or the HTC Vive, you could just drop your Android phone into a VR headset like Google Daydream instead. Developers didn't flock to it however, and consumers didn't buy it in any great numbers either, so Google ceased development, stating: "There hasn't been the broad consumer or developer adoption we had hoped, and we've seen decreasing usage over time of the Daydream View headset".

WHAT TO USE INSTEAD: If you can afford it, buy a dedicated headset; if you can't, you can pick up cheap phone-based VR headsets from Amazon and eBay. There's also Google's own Cardboard viewer (bit.ly/33BanRU) which costs from just £15 (it's only made

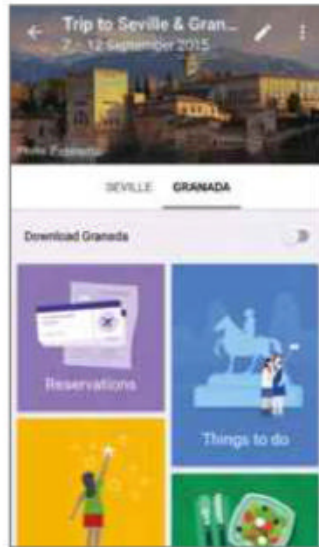


out of cardboard, after all) and works with both Android devices and iPhones.

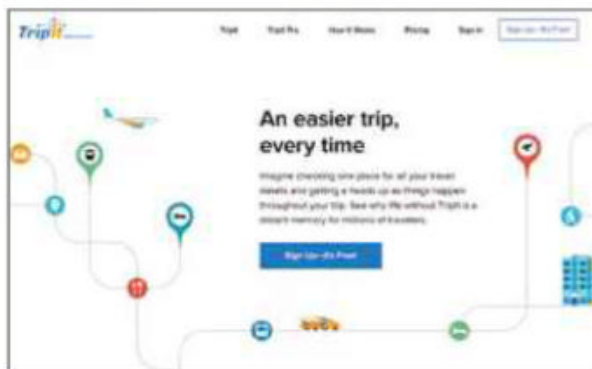
JOURNEY PLANNER

Google Trips
bit.ly/2RsSYoz
Lifespan: 2016-2019

WHY GOOGLE KILLED IT: This app for Android and iOS was designed as a trip planner that could pull information on upcoming excursions from Gmail and offer day guides to over 200 major cities. Google killed off the Trips app, but still offers much of the same functionality in in Google Maps and on the web at google.com/travel.



WHAT TO USE INSTEAD: Triplt (www.tripit.com) is a very similar app available for Android and iOS that helps you organise your travel plans (when you have some again). Just forward your confirmation emails to Triplt and it will build a master itinerary for you, and provide travel stats and carbon footprint details. It also helps you get around and lets you keep colleagues and friends informed of where you are.

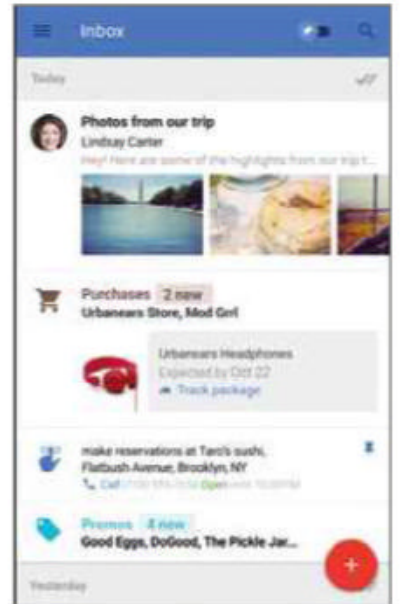


EMAIL

Inbox by Gmail
bit.ly/3izlD7w
Lifespan: 2015-2019

WHY GOOGLE KILLED IT: Inbox by Gmail provided a different way to

access the search giant's webmail service, and was designed to cut through the junk in a busy inbox and present you with only what's important. You could even snooze emails for a later time. In shutting down Inbox, Google said it had been "a great place to experiment with new ideas", but it now wants to focus on just Gmail.



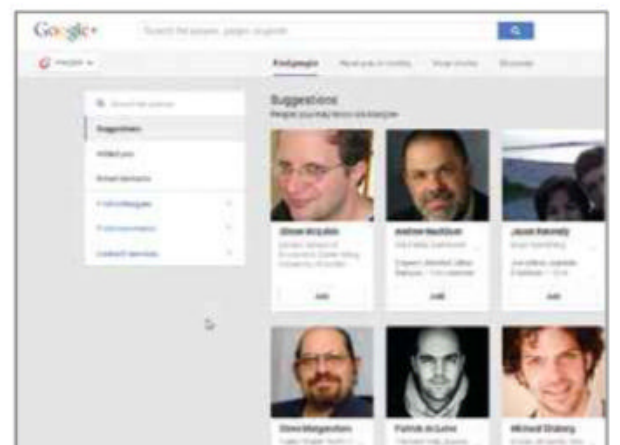
WHAT TO USE INSTEAD: If you miss Inbox's clean design, then you can bring it back by installing Simplify Gmail (bit.ly/2FZBIBe). This Chrome extension was created by Michael Leggett, Gmail's lead designer from 2008 to 2012, and the co-founder of Google Inbox.

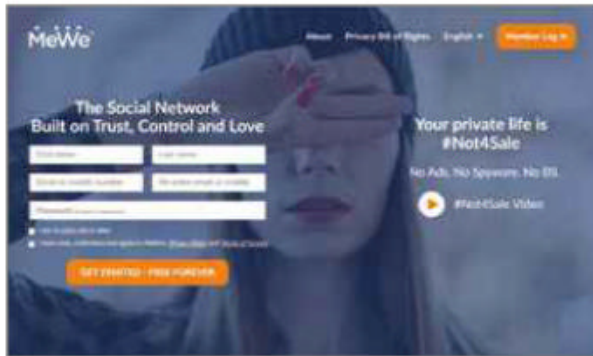


SOCIAL NETWORK

Google+
plus.google.com
Lifespan: 2011-2019

WHY GOOGLE KILLED IT: Google+ was the search giant's attempt to take on Facebook and Twitter, and although Google did everything possible to push it – including integration with the company's other services, such as YouTube and Google Drive, and continual redesigns to make it easier to use – few people were interested and Google eventually threw in the towel, citing "low user engagement".





WHAT TO USE INSTEAD: Facebook or Twitter would be the obvious choice, but there are lesser-known services to consider such as the currently invite-only Webtalk (www.webtalk.co) or MeWe (mewe.com), which is a privacy-focused social network with no ads.

URL SHORTENER



WHY GOOGLE KILLED IT: Google's URL shortener was a useful service for shrinking long, unwieldy web addresses and making it easier for people to share links and measure traffic. Despite its popularity, Google made the decision to shut it down in 2018 (bit.ly/3kmiica) due to competition from other services and people moving from "desktop web pages to apps, mobile devices, home assistants, and more".



EXPLORE THE GOOGLE GRAVEYARD

If you want to know more about all the products Google has killed off over years, including older software, hardware and services that we haven't covered in this feature, then visit Google Graveyard (killedbygoogle.com) and Google Cemetery (gcemetery.co). These websites round up everything that Google has abandoned in its 22-year history. The latter has some interesting information on the average product lifespan (four years, typically) and suggests its own Google alternatives, too.



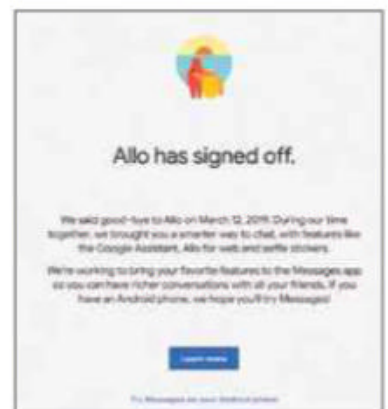
WHAT TO USE INSTEAD: Bit.ly (bit.ly) is our preferred choice of URL shortener. It lets you shrink long URLs, customise the links, and view the number of clicks for each one – so you can quickly see how many people have looked at things you've shared. It's free to use, but the paid-for version offers extra features.

CHAT TOOL



WHY GOOGLE KILLED IT: Rather than be put off by the surfeit of mobile

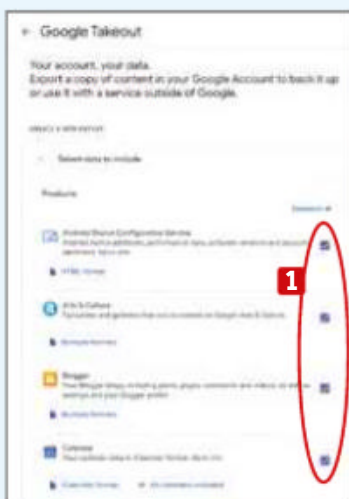
messaging apps, in 2016, Google decided the world needed two more and rolled out Allo – with Google Assistant baked in – and Duo (for video calling). While Duo still exists (for now), Google killed off Allo in 2019 to focus instead on its Messages app.



WHAT TO USE INSTEAD: You could use WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger or any of the many other available chat apps. Telegram (telegram.org) is a good alternative to Allo, but focuses more on speed and privacy.



MINI WORKSHOP | Download your data from Google

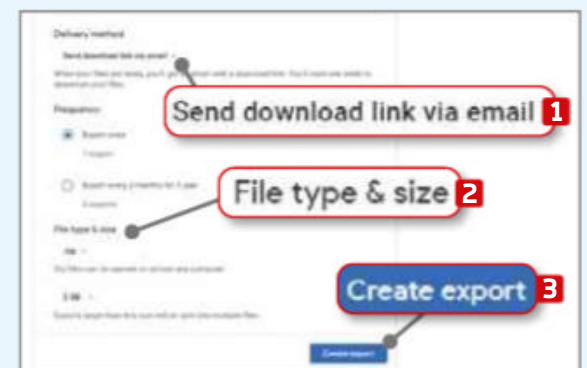


1 Worried that Google might close your favourite service and take your data with it? The company usually gives

fair warning but if you want to be safe, you can export all the data Google has on you via its Takeout service. Log into your Google account, then go to bit.ly/3kizrnd. All services will be selected. **1**



2 You won't want to download data from all Google's services. In fact, you probably won't even know what some of the selected options are. Click the 'Deselect/Select all' link, **1** then scroll down the list and select the important services you're worried about losing, **2** such as Calendar, Contacts, Drive, Photos, Mail and Maps.



3 Click the Format button under an item to change what format the data should be saved in (if given a choice), and customise any other options. At the bottom, click 'Next step' and choose a delivery method **1** and the archive format to save the data in. **2** Click 'Create export' **3** to save the content.

AUDIO STREAMER



Chromecast Audio

bit.ly/2ZDOfoq

Lifespan: 2015-2019

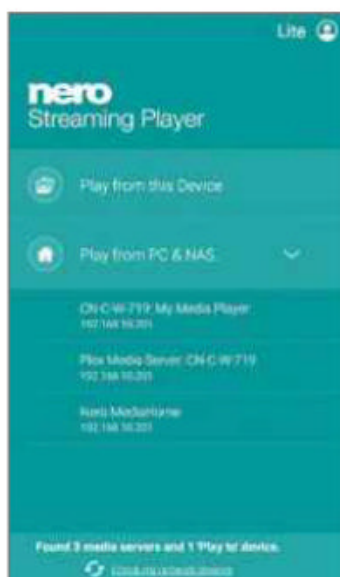
WHY GOOGLE KILLED IT: Although Google's Chromecast is best known as a device that can stream video content directly to your television set, there was also a version that could be used to cast audio directly to your speakers from an iPhone, iPad, Android device or PC. It

cost £30 and came with a 3.5 mm analogue stereo patch cable and power adapter, but was killed off after the company introduced its own range of Google Assistant-powered smart speakers. The technology lives on in the main Chromecast, however.

WHAT TO USE INSTEAD: A smart speaker such as Amazon's Echo or Google's own Home/Nest is great for playing audio, but if you want to 'cast' music from your other devices, then the Roku Express streaming media player (£25 from Amazon) is ideal. It can stream video at up to 4K Ultra HD,

and also lets you cast music (and photos) to your TV.

For a software solution, try Nero Streaming Player for Android (bit.ly/3iwEEYh) or iOS (apple.co/3iyMGj8). The free app can cast music (as well as photos and videos) to your smart TV or any other UPnP/DLNA compatible Media Player.



VIDEO EDITOR

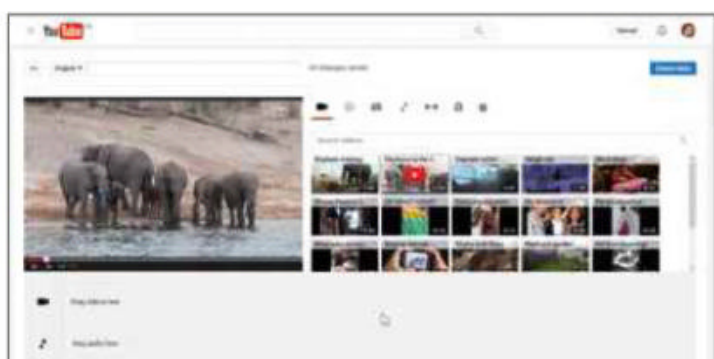


YouTube Video Editor

youtube.com

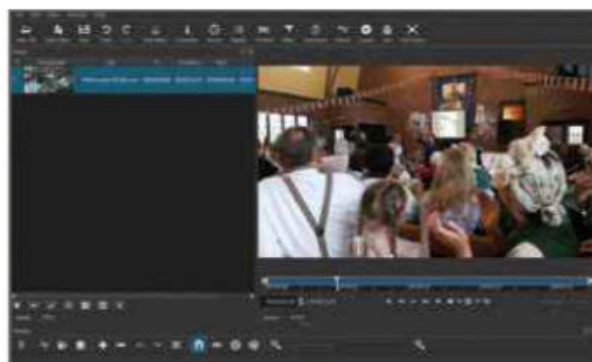
Lifespan: 2010-2017

WHY GOOGLE KILLED IT: YouTube Video Editor was a web-based tool you



could use to edit and enhance your movies and apply some effects before sharing them on YouTube. While it was a great idea, YouTube says as few as 0.1% of creators bothered with it (many probably didn't know it existed in the first place), so Google decided to drop it.

WHAT TO USE INSTEAD: It's better to edit video directly on your PC rather than in the cloud, and Shotcut (www.shotcut.org) does this with no fuss. Available for Windows, Mac and Linux, this free tool can handle all the main media formats and the editing is done on a multi-track timeline. When you've finished making your movie, go to the Export tab and select YouTube to upload and share your video in MP4 format. See page 28 for details.



DIGITAL ASSISTANT

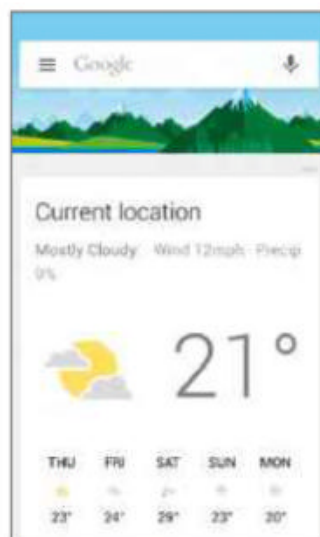


Google Now

bit.ly/3c2rgc0

Lifespan: 2012-2016

WHY GOOGLE KILLED IT: Google Now was a card-based search system for iOS and Android that let you view all sorts of relevant information. Cards would appear when you needed them, and it integrated with your installed sites and apps. Google Now also served as the first iteration of its digital assistant, and was summoned by tapping your phone's button or by saying "OK, Google". It was eventually replaced by Assistant, which offers two-way spoken interaction.



WHAT TO USE INSTEAD: If you're heavily invested in Google's ecosystem, use Google Assistant. If Apple is your preferred choice, then Siri will be more suitable. For everyone else, Amazon Alexa (amazon.co.uk) is the digital assistant you should opt for. It's embedded in a number of Amazon

products, such as Echo and Fire TV, and can do everything from answering questions and giving you the news to controlling your lights and reading you audiobooks.



PHOTO ORGANISER

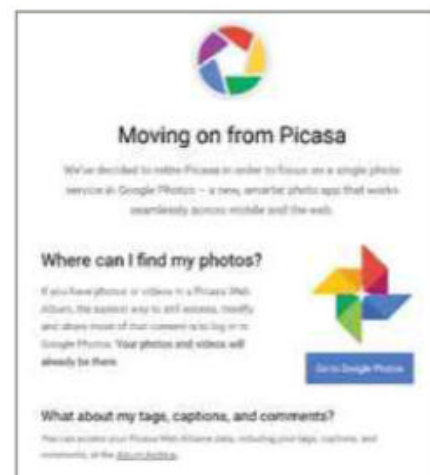


Picasa

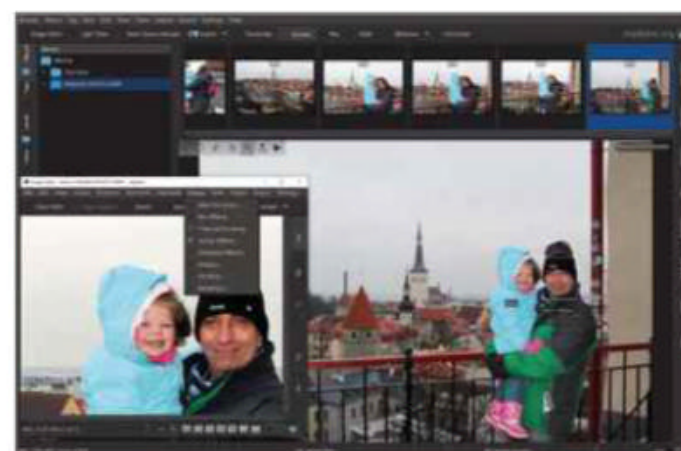
picasa.google.co.uk

Lifespan: 2002-2015

WHY GOOGLE KILLED IT: Picasa was a big favourite of the Web User team, as well as many of our readers, and provided an easy way to organise and edit your photos. It included lots of fun extras such as face recognition, collages and filters, but was eventually replaced by its cloud-based successor, Google Photos.



WHAT TO USE INSTEAD: While you can (and probably do) use Google Photos to back up your phone's photos to the cloud, there are desktop services that are more in keeping with Picasa's original design, features and spirit, such as DigiKam (www.digikam.org), which was recently updated and now lets you organise your photos by face. See last issue's Workshop 1 for details.



SOCIAL NETWORK

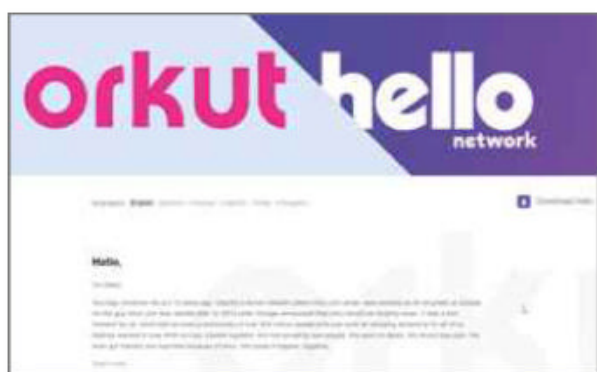


Orkut

www.orkut.com

Lifespan: 2004-2014

WHY GOOGLE KILLED IT: Before Google+ became Google's main focus, the search giant had Orkut, an online community that was created by



employee Orkut Büyükkökten. It was designed to help users stay in touch with friends and was hugely popular in India and Brazil.

It's not hard to guess why Google closed it. As the company's engineering director Paulo Golgher said in a blog post: "Over the past decade, Facebook, YouTube, Blogger and Google+ have taken off, with communities springing up in every corner of the world. Because the growth of these communities has outpaced Orkut's growth, we've decided to bid Orkut farewell."

WHAT TO USE INSTEAD:



While the obvious choices are Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, you should also consider the Android/iOS app-based Hello (hello.com), which is a new social network

founded by Orkut Büyükkökten and a small group of ex-Google engineers. It's different from other services in that it aims to tie people together, based on their common interests.

FEED READER



Google Reader

reader.google.com

Lifespan: 2005-2013

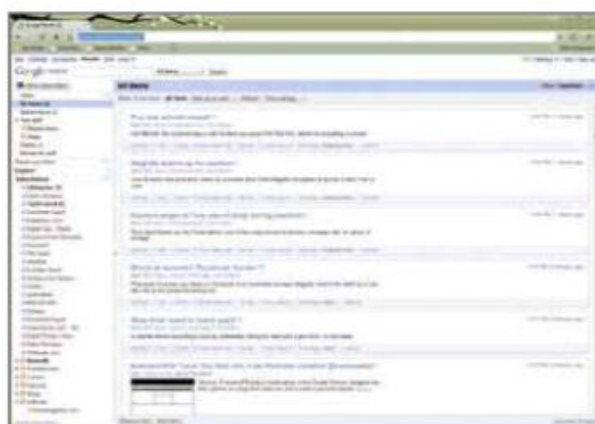
WHY GOOGLE KILLED IT: Subscribing to RSS/web feeds using Google Reader could save you a serious amount of time

WHAT WILL GOOGLE KILL NEXT?

Google likes to keep us guessing when it comes to killing off its services and history tells us that even popular products aren't safe from the chop. Duo is very likely to join Allo in the Google Graveyard in the next year or so, to be replaced by Meet, and a lot of people are expecting Stadia (stadia.google.com), its new cloud-gaming service, to fail sooner rather than later due to competition from rivals. Google has spent a lot of effort and money in pushing YouTube Music but if it doesn't succeed in rivalling Spotify, there's a good chance it will be abandoned, too.



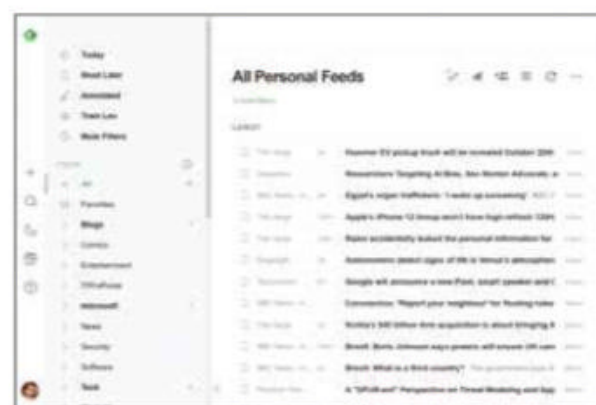
There have even been rumours that Android and Chrome OS could be cast aside in favour of a new cross-platform operating system called Fuchsia, but news of this project's development has gone very quiet of late.



and effort, especially if you visited a lot of websites on a daily basis. Instead of having to go to each site individually, Reader would fetch all the latest headlines for you, aggregating them in an easy-to-read layout. Also, because it was web-based, you could view your subscriptions from anywhere, including on your phone.

Sadly, in 2013, Google made the shocking decision to kill off Reader, stating: "While the product has a loyal following, over the years usage has declined".

WHAT TO USE INSTEAD: In the run-up to Reader's closure, plenty of rival services surfaced as potential successors, but many have since fallen by the wayside. One that has continued to serve users well is Feedly (feedly.com) which lets you add and organise feeds and tweets, has light and dark modes, and offers mobile apps and browser add-ons. The free version is perfectly adequate for most users, but there's a paid-for Pro edition with extra features and speedier feed updates from \$6 (around £4.50) per month. ■



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Best free Windows bloat-busters

Even when you perform a clean installation of Windows, it litters you with unwanted software (bloatware). **Andy Shaw** tests six programs that remove these unwelcome space hogs from your PC



Bloatbox | bit.ly/2ZEAXs0 | ★★★★★

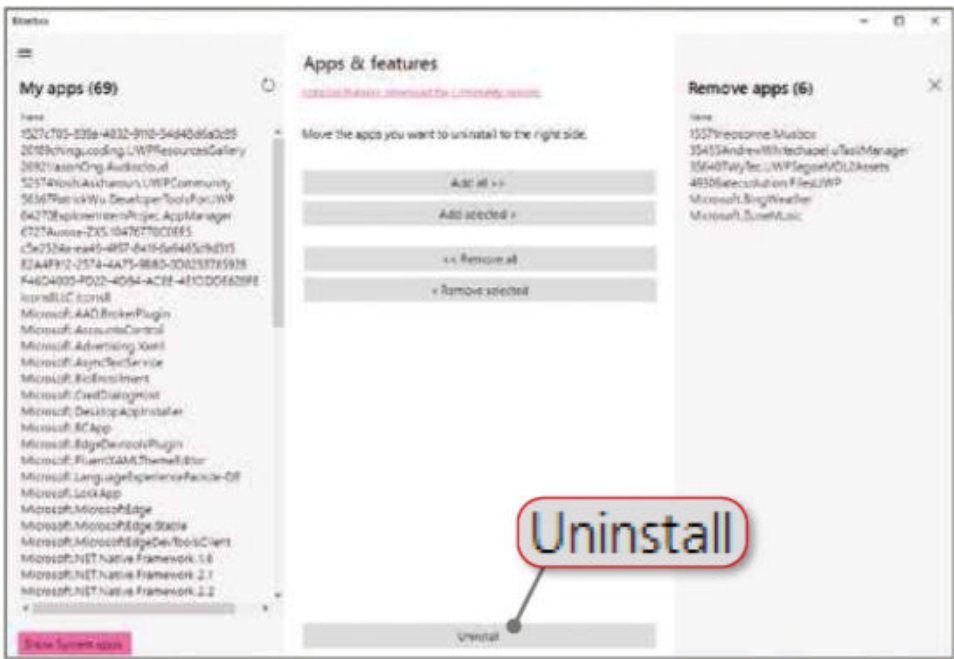
FEATURES ★★☆☆ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★★★



What we liked:
Bloatbox is a tiny (109KB) portable program with a single mission: to remove the unwanted programs that Microsoft installs with Windows.

Bloatbox's interface is split into three columns. On the left is a list of all the Microsoft software on your PC that you might not want or need. We say 'might' because the list is presented without any explanations or recommendations, so it could include software that you may find useful, such as Microsoft Photos for viewing pictures. There's also a link at the bottom that you can click to add system software to the list. These are programs that Microsoft has deemed essential, such as the Windows Calculator – but if you don't need these tools, there's no reason to keep them.

You can choose to remove everything in the list, in which case the whole lot is moved to the 'Remove apps' column on the right; or pick and choose individual items. Once you're happy with your selection, click the Uninstall button at



the bottom of the centre panel and Bloatbox will run the necessary scripts to remove the unwanted software. Afterwards, you're presented with a list of what's been uninstalled and whether any of the scripts failed.

We tested all the software in this group by installing each tool in turn on an identical copy of a virtual machine. We did this after using Windows' own uninstaller to cull some of the more obvious bloat, so we could see by comparison how much better these programs managed the task.

Bloatbox reclaimed nearly half a gigabyte of space by running its

standard set of suggested items to remove. On a small hard drive, that may be enough to give your data the breathing space it needs.

How it can be improved:
Bloatbox is easy to use if you know what you're doing, but it can be overwhelming for novices. It would be helpful if the software explained what each of the tools and services in its bloatware list does, so users can make a more informed decision about what to remove.

OUR VERDICT

Microsoft still insists on cluttering Windows with apps and tools that many of us will never use. Thankfully, Bloatbox is on hand to curb these excesses. However, you should only remove programs that you recognise, and the software doesn't offer any information to help with your selection. We advise making a full backup before you start, just to be on the safe side.

IObit Uninstaller | bit.ly/2DeHNeH | ★★★★★

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

WebUser
SILVER
AWARD

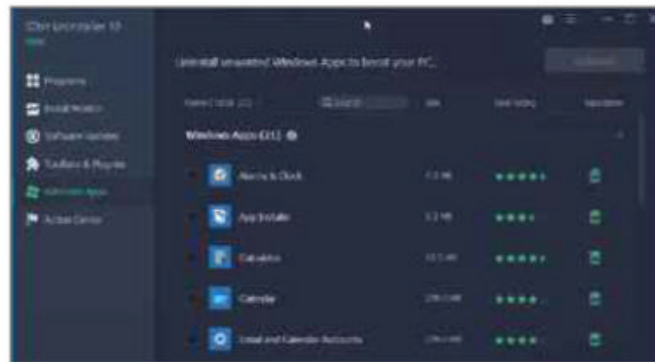
What we liked:

Our regular readers will be familiar with IObit Uninstaller – we’ve often recommended the tool for removing stubborn programs and clearing up leftover Registry entries.

The program’s interface is clear and simple to use, with a panel of options that includes a Windows Apps tab for debloating the operating system. Clicking this brings up a list of pre-installed programs that come with Windows, and Uninstaller suggested ticking around 75% of them to save 2.7GB of space. You can organise the programs by size to help you make efficient decisions on what to remove, based on the space you’ll save.

How it can be improved:

Uninstaller’s initial estimate of 2.7GB was reduced to 1.6GB by the time it had finished its work, and even this was optimistic – our analysis suggested it only removed about 150MB. We could have improved this with more tweaking



but it’s annoying that the software exaggerates its estimates by so much. Also, watch out for the bundled extras during installation. We were offered Opera, which certainly isn’t malware, but the irony of an uninstaller that tries to install more software wasn’t lost on us.

OUR VERDICT

IObit Uninstaller is a useful tool to have around if you’ve ever regretted installing something on your PC and struggled to get rid of it. It’s overkill as a debloating tool, but a good choice if Windows bloat is only part of your problem. However, we found that it exaggerated its effectiveness.

Windows 10 Debloater | bit.ly/2XM4Tjg | ★★★★★

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

WebUser
BRONZE
AWARD

What we liked:

If Bloatbox didn’t exist, we’d be singing the praises of Windows 10 Debloater. It’s a similar proposition, providing an interface that runs a series of scripts, working in the background to remove unwanted Windows junk. You can customise the list of items to remove, then click a button and it’s gone.

The program also has a selection of extra tools, some of which are useful (disable Cortana, Uninstall OneDrive), while others look like padding (enable and disable dark mode).

Running the software without any customisation to the list restored about 150MB of space on our PC. That’s not a huge amount but it compares well to IObit’s effort – and remember that we’d already removed some of the easy stuff with Windows’ built-in uninstaller.

How it can be improved:

Debloater’s interface is very basic: a grey window with randomly arranged



grey buttons that summon intimidating-looking PowerShell scripts. However, this is work-in-progress software, which you have to download from GitHub, so we’ll forgive its rough edges and lack of design.

OUR VERDICT

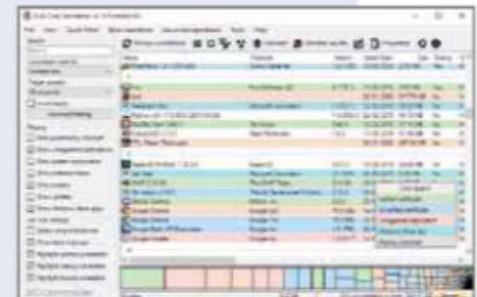
Windows 10 Debloater does a serviceable job, but we’d love to see its interface developed. It’s a few steps behind Bloatbox in this regard and, as a result, is a little more complicated to use. Still, for a GitHub work-in-progress, it shows a lot of promise.

BEST OF THE REST

BCUninstaller

bcuninstaller.com

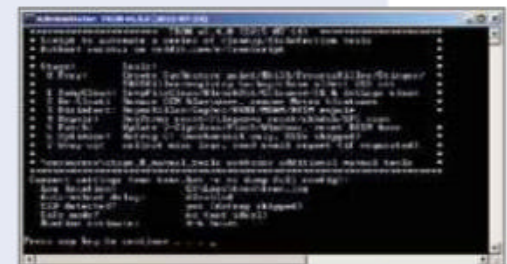
BCUninstaller (the BC stands for Bulk Crap) is designed to remove all manner of irksome software, and can either be installed or run portably (though we did have to install a .NET service before we could start using it). This means that all your software will show up on its list, not just the useless extras that came with your PC, though its logical, automatic colour coding helps filter out the programs you’ll want to keep. However, after running it, we found our system had actually lost storage rather than gaining any.



TronScript

bit.ly/3muJeZd

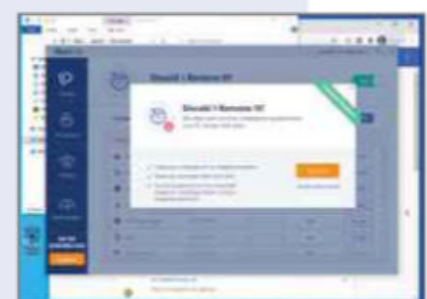
Tron is a larger collection of scripts that aims to automate 85% of the tasks you might need to perform to give a tired, old PC a new lease of life. Part of this is a debloating module which, you’re told – if you read the long and condescending instructions on its Reddit page – you can run independently. However, the whole download is nearly 600MB in size, so downloading it purely to run a debloat seems pointless.



Should I Remove It?

www.shouldiremoveit.com

This is an unusual option because you have to install antivirus software to get this bloat-buster as a by-product. We thought we’d try it anyway and downloaded the free version. However, it was only after installing it that we discovered the bloat-busting element is only available if you upgrade to the paid-for version. Best avoided.



Best free email newsletters



Email newsletters have been enjoying a renaissance during the pandemic. **David Crookes** rounds up the best daily and weekly inbox digests you should subscribe to



Stay on top of the news

Rather than pick up a copy of a daily paper, you can sign up to a newsletter and get the headlines delivered straight to your inbox. Why not start with The Guardian's weekday Morning Briefing (bit.ly/35mVSU7), one of a number of newsletters the website offers? Others cover science news, feature rundowns and global dispatches. Or check out the many newsletters from The Telegraph (bit.ly/2FiWJKK), which include the twice-daily bulletin Front Page AM & PM, a weekday COVID-19 briefing and a twice-weekly slice of Good News.



The Telegraph offers several newsletters but some are only for paid subscribers

Some of The Telegraph's newsletters require you to sign up for a subscription if you want to click the links and read the full stories on the website. But there are plenty of free alternatives, such as the one from the *i* newspaper (inews.co.uk) and The Morning Call,

a guide to domestic and global politics created by

Ann Friedman's newsletter offers a personalised take on the week's events



Stephen Bush, political editor of the *New Statesman* (bit.ly/3bJEHx6).

For the latest on Westminster politics and policymaking, we recommend London Playbook from Politico (politi.co/35lGWp8) and, for a more personal news perspective, The Ann Friedman Weekly (bit.ly/2ZqeY7Z), which is by an American freelance writer who has built a newsletter empire. Friedman pulls together weekly highlights of online journalism, presenting them as links within her chatty prose, and offers a paid-for newsletter for \$5 per year that includes exclusive articles and pie charts on frivolous topics.

If you scroll to the bottom of many local newspaper sites, you're likely to find a newsletter option. This is the case for most titles owned by Newsquest (bit.ly/3bHBk9Y), JPI Media (bit.ly/3bJ9n1p) and Reach (bit.ly/3k017NF), which cover most of the country.

Keep yourself entertained

Entertainment is certainly well covered by newsletters and one of the longest-running is Popbitch (popbitch.com) which, as the name suggests, serves up salacious gossip and tasty trivia about celebrities. Founded in 2000, its eye-opening stories are accompanied

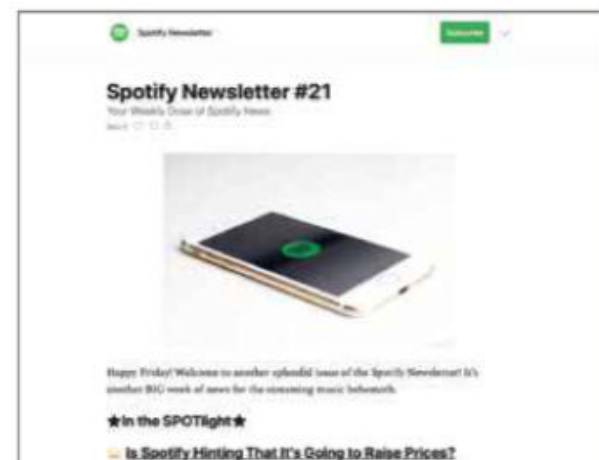


Popbitch provides scurrilous celebrity gossip as well as fun links and bad jokes

by links to quirky online content and jokes, but it's not for the easily offended!

If you prefer more straightforward reporting. *Empire* magazine has a weekly round-up of movie news and reviews (bit.ly/2RcaNYV), while Rotten Tomatoes gives you the lowdown on the latest films and TV shows (www.rottentomatoes.com). To find out what's on TV, sign up for the best of Freeview (www.freeview.co.uk), which is emailed every Friday. We also like Radio Times' recommendations of streaming and on-demand shows (www.radiotimes.com/newsletter), and its other newsletters dedicated to soaps, drama, sci-fi and film. If you enjoy historical film footage, sign up for Archive Picks by British Pathé (bit.ly/3ictQ18) which arrives in your inbox every fortnight.

As for music, tastes differ wildly so we would advise visiting the website of your favourite artist to see if they offer a newsletter. For broader music news, Off Your Radar (www.offyourradar.com) recommends one album every Monday that you may not have considered, while Spotify's newsletter (spotify.substack.com) provides an interesting insight into music streaming, which Penny Fractions also does well (bit.ly/2FrX5De).



Get a weekly dose of Spotify news and updates by subscribing to its newsletter

Don't get left behind by tech



IT Pro keeps you abreast of technology news with a focus on security stories

Technology moves fast and it can be hard to keep up with the latest developments. Two Web User sister sites – IT Pro (www.itpro.co.uk) and Expert Reviews (www.expertreviews.co.uk) – offer daily updates covering the biggest tech news stories, online security advice and reviews of the latest products.



Import AI helps you keep track of the latest artificial intelligence developments

If you're interested in artificial intelligence, enter your email address into Jack Clark's website (jack-clark.net). The Strategy and Communications director for OpenAI has a newsletter called Import AI, which succinctly summarises the week's main machine-learning happenings.

Save money every week

For happy eaters who love nothing more than a delicious dinner, there's no better way to raise the spirits than with a weekly fill of recipes from some of the best cooks around. The Happy Foodie (bit.ly/2Fj0tvM) from Penguin Books brings you inspiring meals and desserts from the likes of Jamie Oliver, Nigella Lawson, Mary Berry, Yotam Ottolenghi and Nadiya Hussain, and mixes them with food news and competitions.



MSE's weekly Money Tips newsletter is packed with useful advice and offers

whether you should be switching providers and the week's best buys. You can also get stuck into a money-related moral dilemma, take part in a poll and read musings from three blogs.

But don't rely on just this one source. Check out Which Money Week (bit.ly/35mvCct) for more money-saving tips and deals, then get yourself a £17 Quidco cashback bonus by signing up for the Be Clever With Your Cash newsletter (bit.ly/3iu3LuR), written by Andy Webb from Channel 5's *Shop Smart Save Money*. For free stories about personal finance, it's worth subscribing to Money For The Masses (bit.ly/3hi5vG3).



Get tips about personal finance sent to your inbox from Money For the Masses

Enjoy recipes and eat well

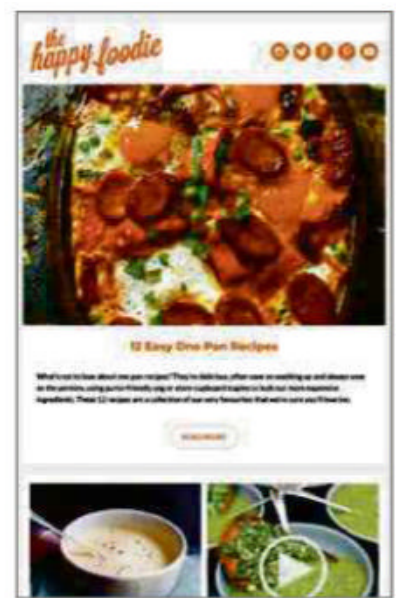
There's also the excellent BBC Good Food (bit.ly/2FrxxOA) and The Edgy

Veg for meat-free and non-dairy inspiration (bit.ly/2ZqxgWC).

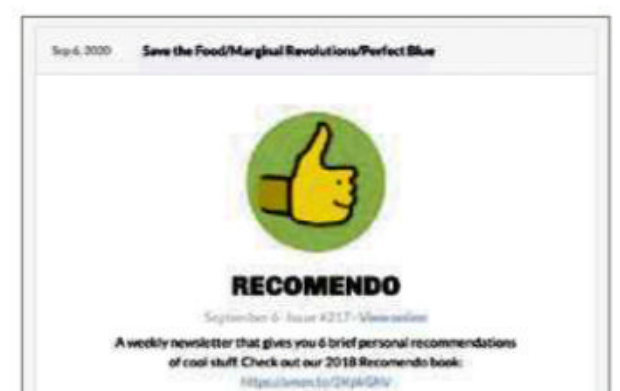
Improve your knowledge

If you fancy spicing up your newsletters with a random treat, sign up for Rekomendo (www.recomendo.com), which offers six recommendations for cool stuff each week – anything from the best search engines for comparing measurements to the most-edited Wikipedia entries – guaranteeing an element of surprise in your inbox.

More random facts can be found over at Now I Know (nowiknow.com), a daily newsletter that's been around since 2010. It's written by Dan Lewis who once tweeted as Big Bird for Sesame Workshop and it aims to teach you something new every day – such as that carrots were once purple and that cats don't mix with salad ingredients. ■



The Happy Foodie provides a weekly fix of delicious recipes from famous chefs



Receive a fun surprise in your inbox every week by signing up for Rekomendo

START YOUR OWN NEWSLETTER

Newsletters are booming in popularity and that's due, in part, to dedicated platforms such as Substack (substack.com), Revue (www.getrevue.co) and Mailchimp (www.mailchimp.com), which make sending out mass emails, about any topic that you like, easier than ever.

Substack, for example, gives you a website for your posts, allows you to make use of audio, video, images and GIFs and sets you up with your own email list. You can then choose whether to charge for your newsletter (keeping 87% of the revenue) or send it out for free (in which case Substack is free to use).



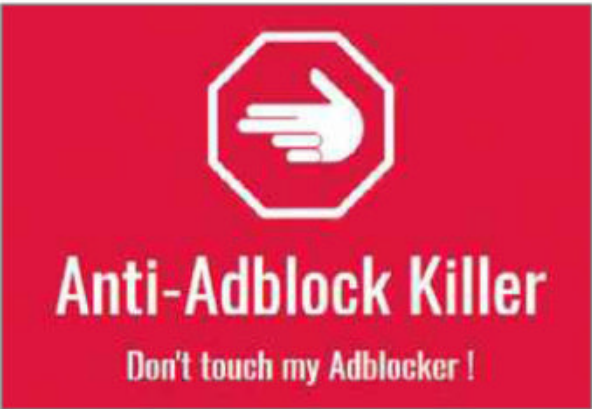
New posts are easily created using the simple built-in tools and you can keep an eye on your subscribers as your newsletter grows in popularity.

DITCH ADD-ONS FOR SCRIPTS

Don't let bloated and dodgy extensions threaten the speed and security of your browser – switch to lightweight user scripts instead. **Robert Irvine** rounds up 10 of the most useful tools



Stop sites disabling your ad blocker
Many websites now detect when you're using an ad blocker and either ask you to disable it temporarily or force you to do so to access their content. If you resent being told what to do, install the script **Anti-Adblock Killer** (bit.ly/337hHUV), which disguises that you're using an ad blocker so that sites don't refuse you entry. It's compatible with Adblock Plus, Adblock and uBlock Origin, although the team behind the tool stresses that it isn't a "universal solution for all anti-adblock scripts", especially as the script hasn't been updated for a few years.



Hide ads on YouTube automatically
Adverts at the start – and sometimes in the middle – of YouTube



HOW TO USE SCRIPTS

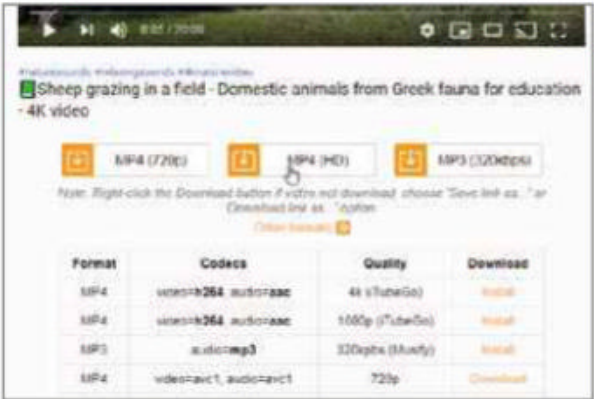
Unlike extensions, you can't add user scripts directly to your browser, so you'll first need to install a script manager – the most popular ones are Tampermonkey (for Chromium browsers, Firefox and Safari, www.tampermonkey.net) and Greasemonkey (just for Firefox, www.greasespot.net). This manager makes it easy to turn scripts on and off, tweak their settings and remove them, simply by clicking its button on your browser toolbar.

Not all scripts are safe to run. Like dodgy add-ons, malicious ones can steal your private data and perform actions on your behalf. For this reason, you should only install

scripts from trustworthy sources such as Greasy Fork (greasyfork.org) and OpenUserJS (openuserjs.org), where they're reviewed by other users to confirm that they're safe and work as promised.

videos are irritating when you're in a rush to watch something, but they're a fair trade-off for free entertainment. **Auto Close YouTube Ads** (bit.ly/2FapN6V) makes your viewing experience more bearable by skipping and muting YouTube ads automatically, without depriving video creators of revenue. Install the script, head to YouTube and it will spring into action, marking ads as viewed without displaying them. You can customise how it hides and mutes ads – such as waiting a few seconds – via your script manager's settings.

Download video and audio from YouTube
For obvious reasons, Google doesn't allow YouTube downloaders in



the Chrome Web Store (although it permits such tools for rival services), but it can't stop you using a script to grab content from the site. **YouTube Downloader** (bit.ly/337UO3R) is one of the best, placing buttons below YouTube's media player that let you download videos in high-definition MP4 format, MP3 audio at up to 320Kbps and many other options, in a single click.

It works with all the main browsers, with no ads and no need for any third-party tool other than your script manager.

Exclude websites from search results

If your search results on Google, Bing, Startpage.com or DuckDuckGo often include websites that you never visit – perhaps because they're useless, offensive or spammy – you can install a script to stop them appearing again. **Google Hit Hider by Domain** (bit.ly/3hbCfRh) lets you permanently remove search results from specific sites (despite its name, it doesn't only work with Google) simply by clicking the Block button next to them. You can remove a domain from the script's Blocked list, should you change your mind later.

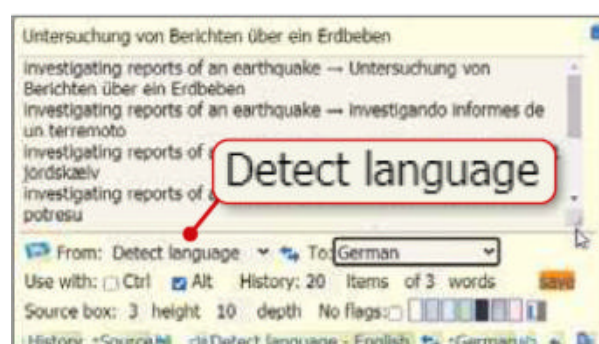


View endless Google search results

Tired of having to click to view the next page of Google search results when you reach the bottom of the current set of 10? Then you need a script called **Endless Google** (bit.ly/3iazgtJ) which, as its name suggests, lets you keep scrolling through Google results endlessly – or at least until you reach the last one – without needing to click anything.

Translate languages on the fly

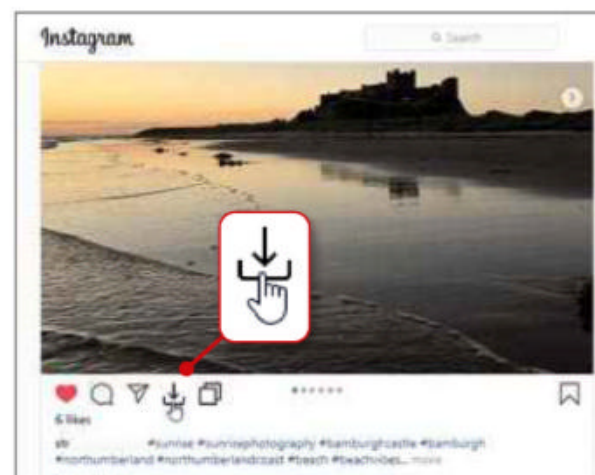
The official Google Translate add-on (translate.google.com) lets you right-click text on a web page to translate it, but if you'd prefer not to install an extension, **Translate.google Tooltip** (bit.ly/35hbPLF) offers the



same functionality in script form. Just highlight a word or phrase, press Alt while clicking it and select the 'A' icon that appears. A large 'tooltip' will open that translates the text into the language(s) of your choice, from Afrikaans to Zulu. It keeps a record of all your previous translations and even lets you hear how the words and phrases are pronounced.

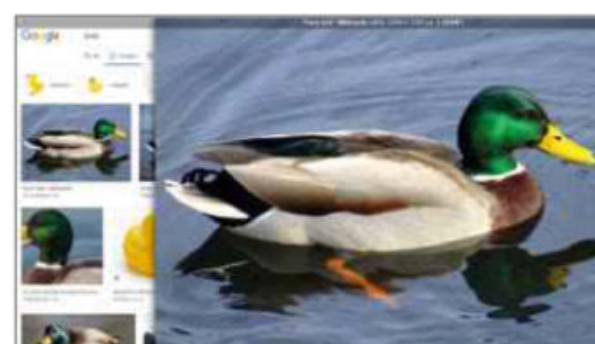
Download Instagram photos and videos

Instagram doesn't make it easy to save content from your favourite accounts when you're perusing the social network in your browser, which is where a script called **Instagram: Download Photo & Video** comes in handy. This tool places a download button below every post on the Instagram website, which allows you to save images in JPEG format and videos as MP4 files in a single click. Unfortunately, the script doesn't work in Firefox, where the button opens content in a new tab instead of downloading it to your hard drive.



View image previews by hovering

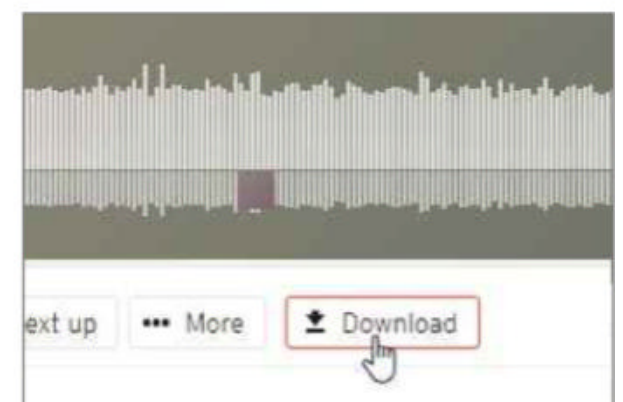
Rather than clicking thumbnails or links to view photos full-size, save yourself time and trouble by installing **Mouseover Popup Image Viewer**. Similar to the browser extension Hover Zoom+ (bit.ly/3idXfYL), this handy script displays pop-up previews of images (and some videos) when you hover your mouse over the thumbnail or link. You can download the enlarged picture by pressing D while the pop-up



is displayed, open it in a new tab by pressing T and use the script's customisation options to adjust the size and border colour of the preview, apply a delay or fade-in transition, and decide how long the preview appears for.

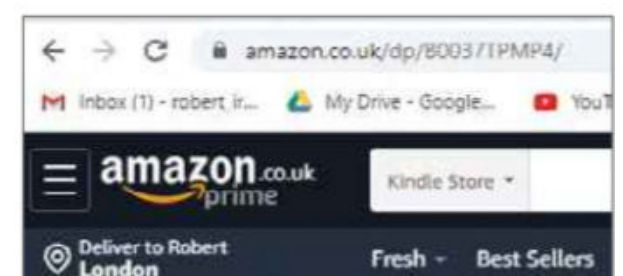
Download songs from Soundcloud

Much of the music and other audio content on Soundcloud is only available to stream online, unless you subscribe to Soundcloud Go for £5.99 per month. **Soundcloud Downloader Clean** (bit.ly/33aTtZZ) beats this restriction by adding a Download button below the audio player that lets you save tracks to your hard drive in MP3 format, to listen to offline. The script works whether you're logged into your Soundcloud account or not, but can't be used to download full songs that are only available to Go subscribers – instead, you'll just get a 30-second preview.



Shorten Amazon links before sharing

If you've ever copied and pasted a link to an Amazon product page, you'll know the URL can be ridiculously long, containing a jumble of letters, numbers and punctuation after the item name. Although you can use a URL-shortening service such as Bitly to solve this problem, an even easier option is **Amazon Short URL**



(bit.ly/2F3CK2U). This script automatically cuts Amazon links down to the bare minimum: just 'amazon.co.uk/dp/' followed by the product's numerical ID. It certainly makes sharing links to products by email much cleaner, and it's compatible with all Amazon stores. It also works when linking to films and TV shows on Prime Video. ■



Practical WebUser

16 pages of workshops, tips, projects and problem solving

Edit your photos with PhotoDemon

Open-source image editor PhotoDemon recently received a major update and gained a number of useful new features. Here's how to use it

PhotoDemon: photodemon.org | ⌚ 20 mins | 🖥️ 7, 8, 10

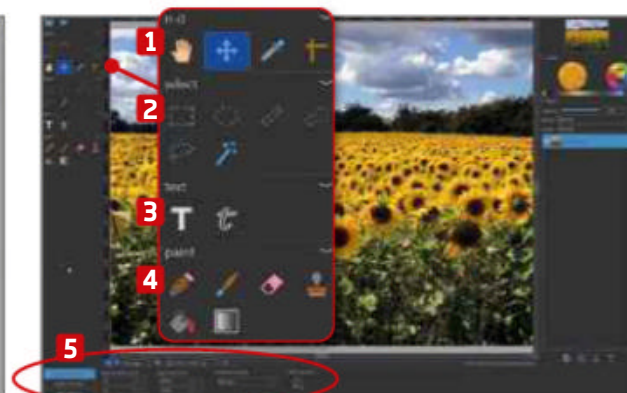
PhotoDemon is a portable photo editor designed to be carried around and run on any computer from a USB flash drive. It's easy to use, highly customisable and comes with all the tools you're likely to need, including advanced features such as content-aware resizing, layers (to build up complicated creations), levels, multi-channel curves,

shadow/highlight recovery and full support for Adobe Photoshop (PSD) files. Drag a PSD file to the program and it opens instantly, along with any layers and blend modes.

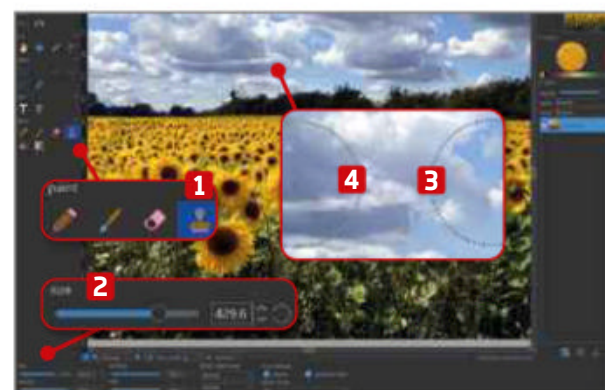
The latest version follows 30 months of development and gains new clone, pattern and gradient tools, additional filters and effects, and support for animated GIFs.



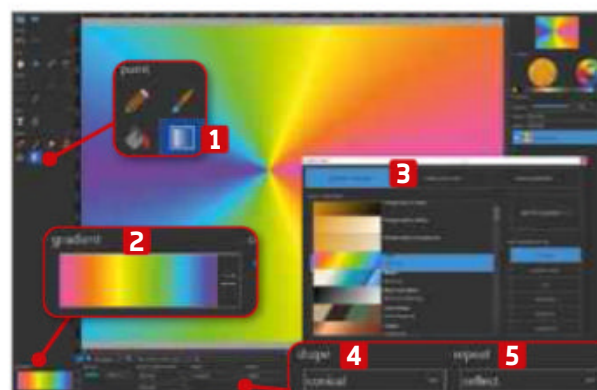
1 When you first run the software, the Theme and Language box opens. Here, you can change the default language, **1** switch between dark and light themes, **2** select an interface accent colour **3** and choose between colourful or black-and-white icons. **4** Click OK to start using the program.



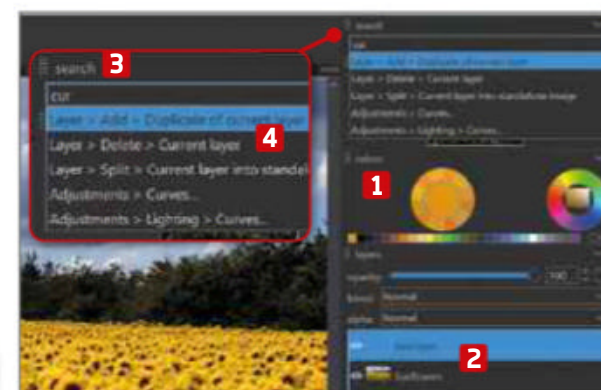
2 Drag and drop a photo to the main window to open it. The toolbox on the left includes non-destructive tools (such as move and eyedropper), **1** selection tools, **2** text tools **3** and paint tools. **4** When you select a tool, its options appear, **5** so you can adjust the settings as required.



3 PhotoDemon includes a new clone stamp tool **1** that lets you paint over part of your image with content from elsewhere, to remove marks and blemishes. Select the brush, adjust its size, **2** then hold down Ctrl and click a part of the image to use as the source. **3** Click to paint over the destination area. **4**



4 Click the new Gradient tool, **1** then click the box **2** to pick a preset from the gradient editor or make your own. **3** The Shape drop-down **4** gives you a choice of different methods (including diamond, square and spherical), while Repeat **5** lets you pick different edge-wrapping modes.



5 The right-hand toolbar includes the colour selector **1** and layers palette. **2** There's also a new search bar, **3** to help you find all the software's tools, adjustments, effects and other features. Possible matches appear and update as you type. **4**

SAVE LOSSLESS COPY

Click this button to save a copy of your work without overwriting the original image

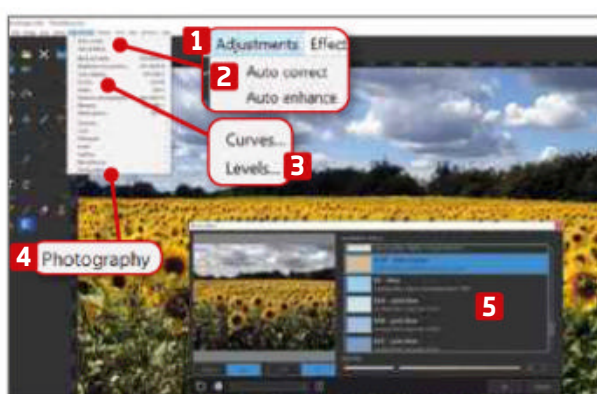
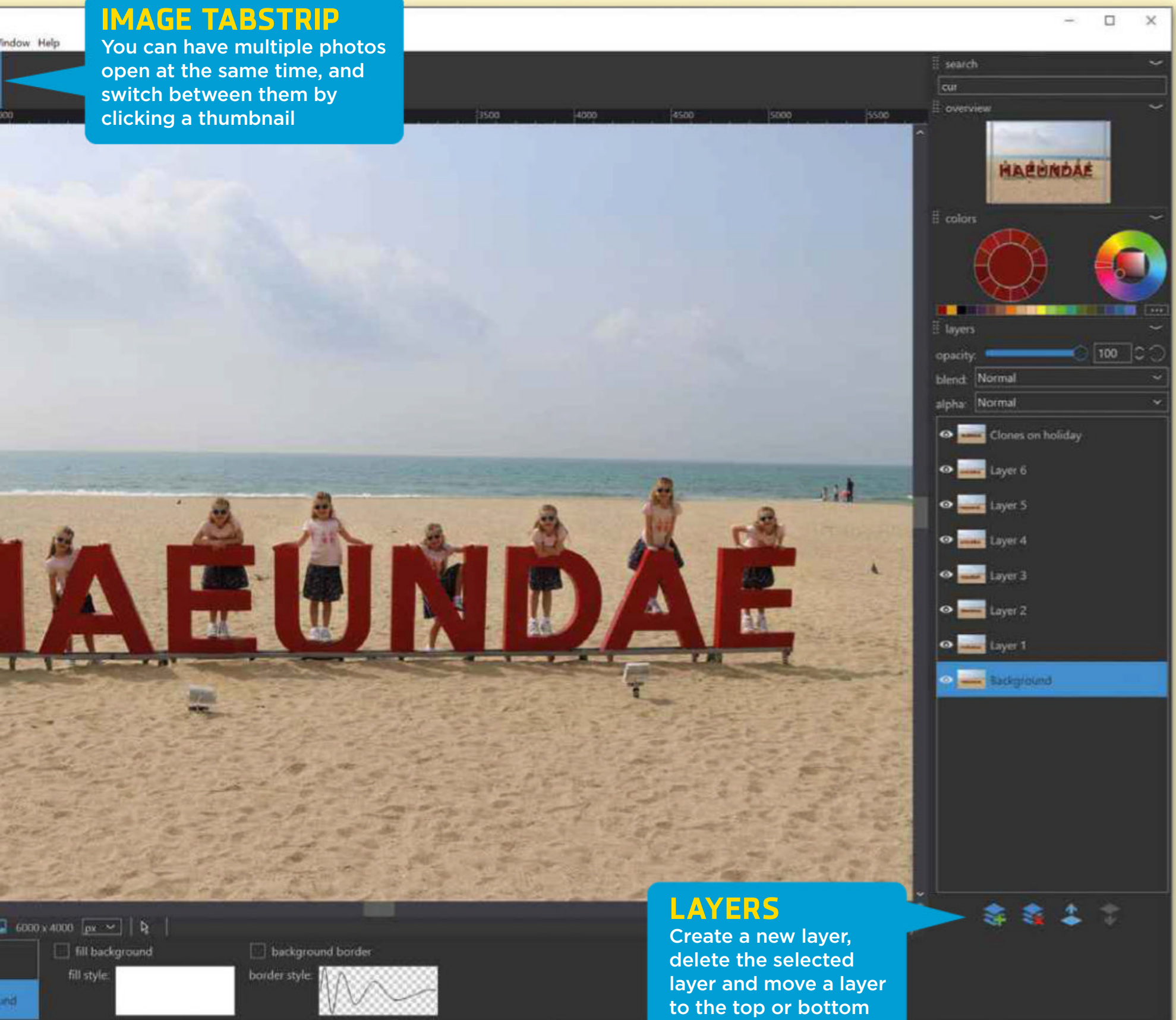
TEXT

PhotoDemon has basic and advanced text options. The latter lets you customise text in various ways, such as adding a fill background

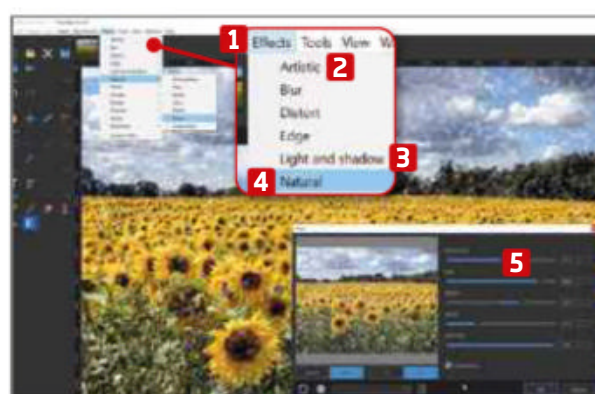


IMAGE TABSTRIP

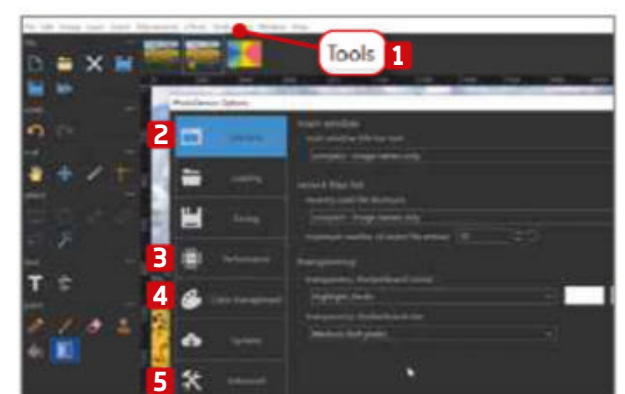
You can have multiple photos open at the same time, and switch between them by clicking a thumbnail



6 Alternatively, you can access the adjustments through the dedicated menu entry in the bar at the top. **1** From here, you can run the auto-correct and auto-enhance tools, **2** access curves and levels, **3** and manage lighting effects. Select the Photography option **4** to apply Photo Filters. **5**



7 PhotoDemon has a well-stocked Effects menu. **1** Artistic **2** includes coloured pencil, oil painting and stained glass, while 'Light and shadow' **3** has black light, rainbow and sunshine. Natural **4** lets you apply effects such as fog, snow and underwater. All the effects have settings you can play around with. **5**



8 Customise the program's look and behaviour by selecting Options from the Tools menu. **1** From here, you can tweak the interface **2** and manage performance. **3** 'Colour management' **4** lets you choose colour profiles, and Advanced **5** lets you set the temporary file location and reset program settings.



Get easy access to hidden Windows settings

Win10 All Settings: bit.ly/2RnUkBd | ⌚ 20 mins | 🇬🇧 7, 8, 10



EXPERT TIP

Steve Clark says

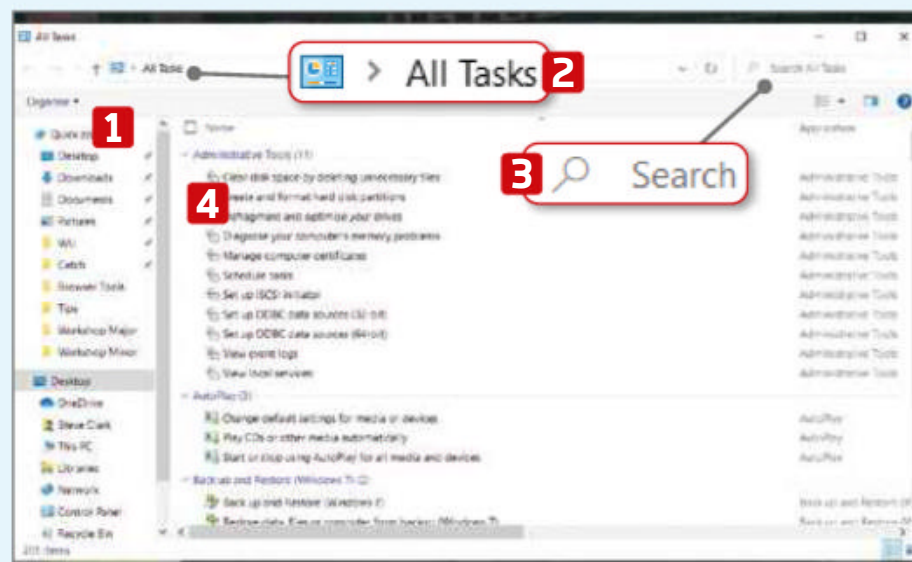
Although it's called Win10 All Settings, its developer claims the program also works with Windows 7 and 8 – indeed, one of the God Mode options is to create Windows 7 backups. However, not all the tools work in older versions.

If you want even more features, Win10 All Settings occasionally directs you to the developer's other tools. You can find these in the Tools section of the main menu.

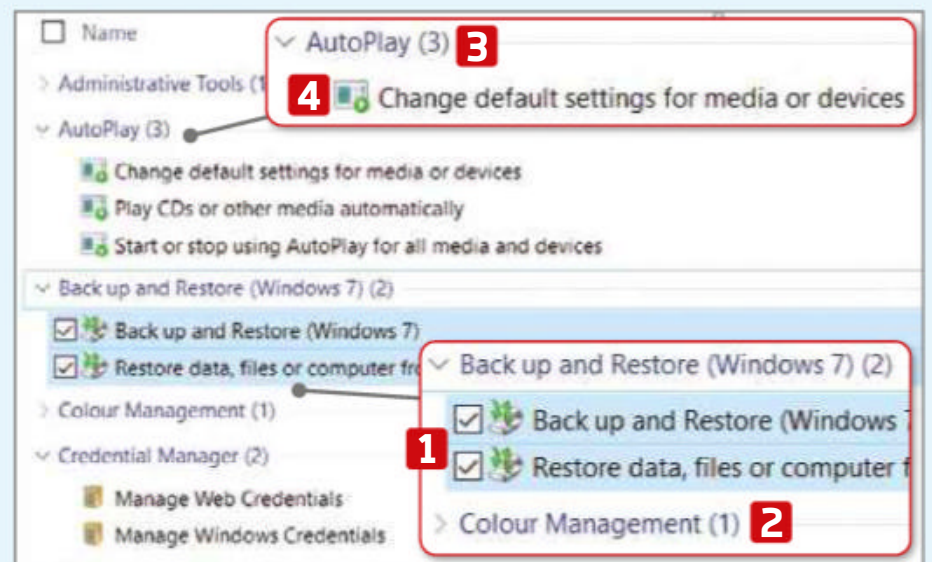


For some reason known only to Microsoft, most of Windows' system settings are tucked away in various obscure locations, forcing you to hunt around in the Control Panel, Settings app and everywhere in between to find what you need.

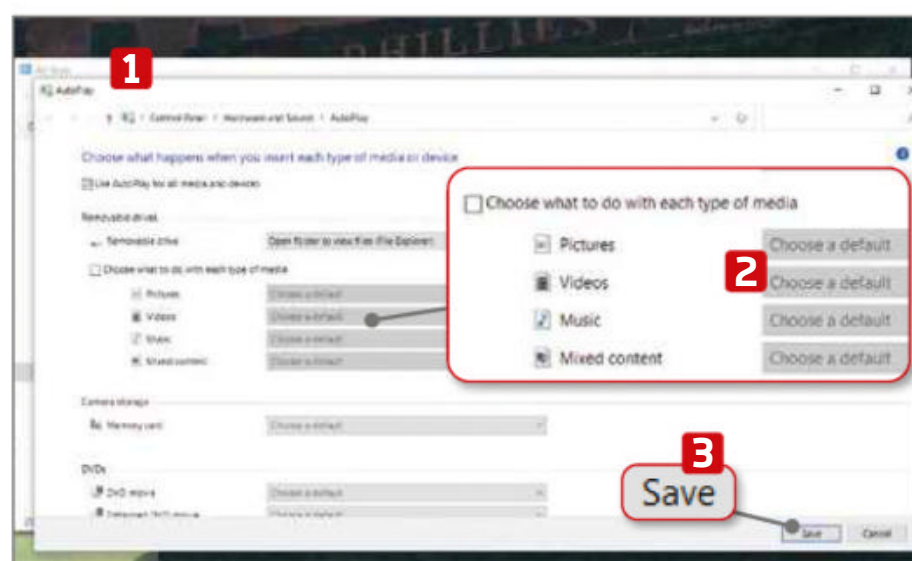
Win10 All Settings provides an interface through which you can control all of Windows 10's hidden settings, bringing them together in one place and positioning them within easy reach. It also unlocks God Mode, which lets you take total control of your computer. This features over 200 tweaks, from managing accounts to adjusting sound settings. It's perfect for fine-tuning your PC to make Windows 10 work just for you – as uniquely and as precisely as possible.



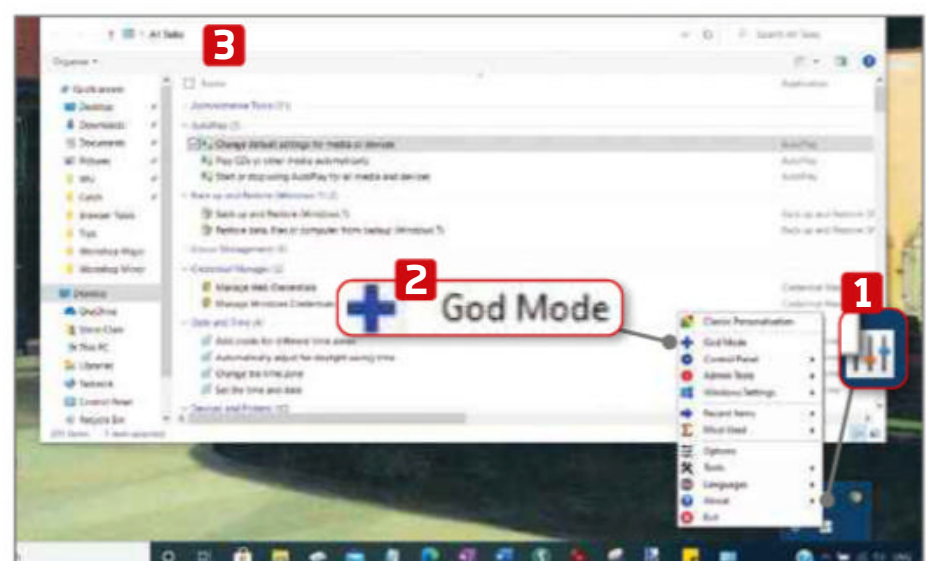
1 When you first run the program, you're greeted with the All Tasks window. As with File Explorer, there are links to computer locations and folders on the left, 1 with an address bar 2 and search box 3 at the top. The main pane lists 201 settings or tasks 4 you can modify, under categories ranging from Administrative Tools to 'Programs and Features'.



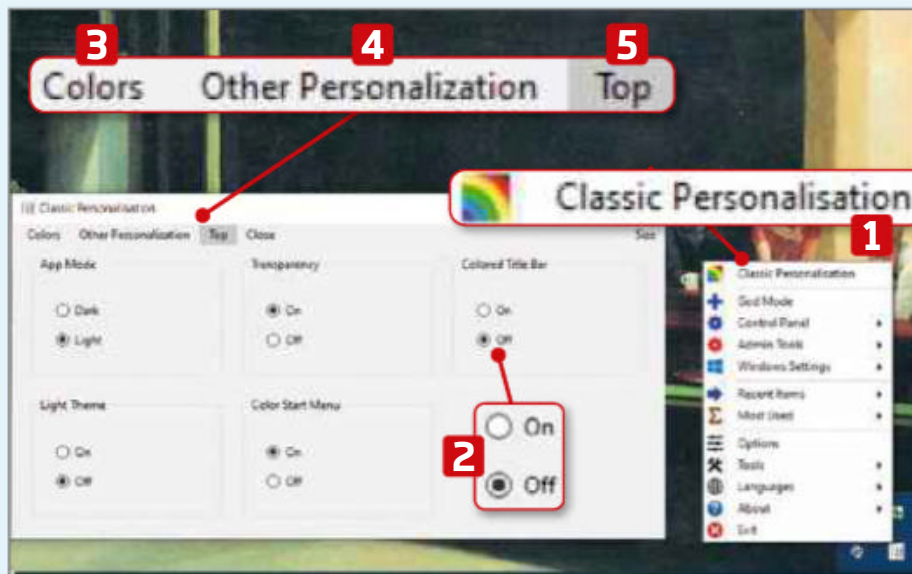
2 Click a category heading to select all the options in that section; 1 or double-click to close its menu of options. 2 Double-clicking an individual option lets you view and change its current settings. For example, to change the autoplay defaults, locate the AutoPlay section, 3 then double-click 'Change default settings for media or devices'. 4



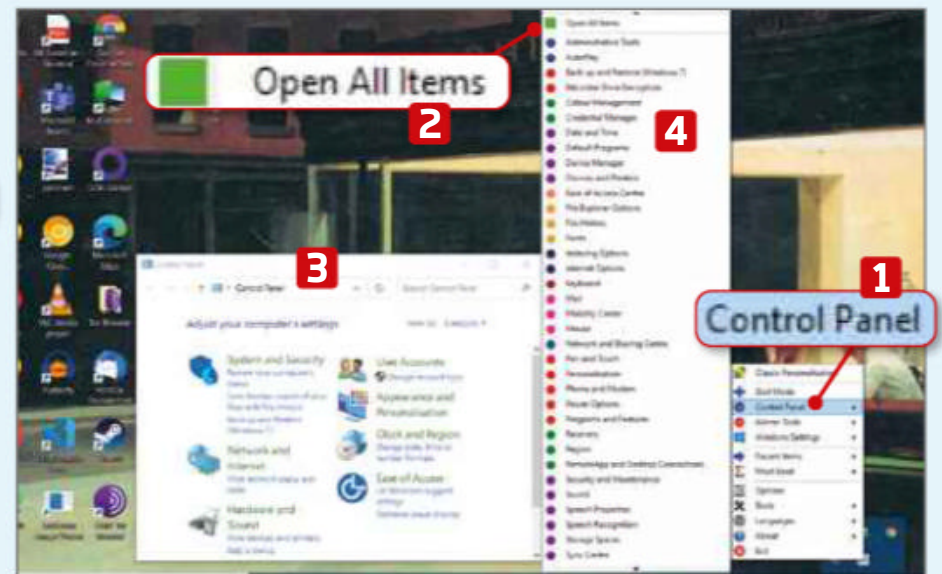
3 This opens the familiar-looking Control Panel window. 1 However, rather than now having to hunt through each Control Panel option, Win10 All Settings takes you straight to the setting you need. For the Autoplay example we're using, click the drop-down menus 2 to make any changes to the current setup, then click Save. 3



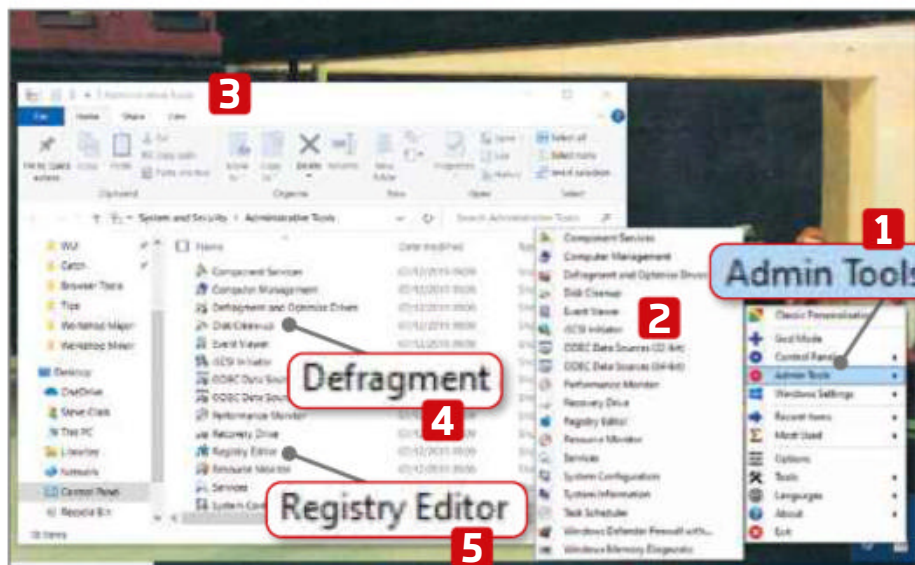
4 Win10 All Settings is housed in the notification area of the taskbar. Right-clicking its icon opens a context menu 1 with a list of options including God Mode. 2 Selecting this – or simply clicking the icon – reopens the All Tasks window. 3 See Step 10 for an even quicker way to do this.



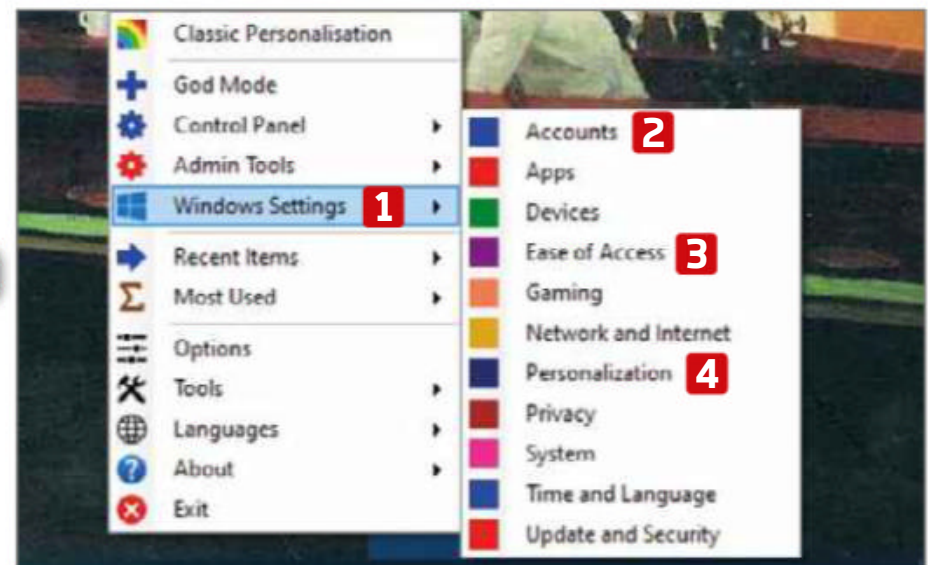
5 This same menu's Classic Personalisation option **1** lets you use the On/Off **2** and Dark/Light buttons to change the display. Click Colors **3** to open Windows 10's 'Appearance and Personalisation' menu. Other Personalization **4** lets you download more tools from the developer, while Top **5** forces the software to stay on top of other windows.



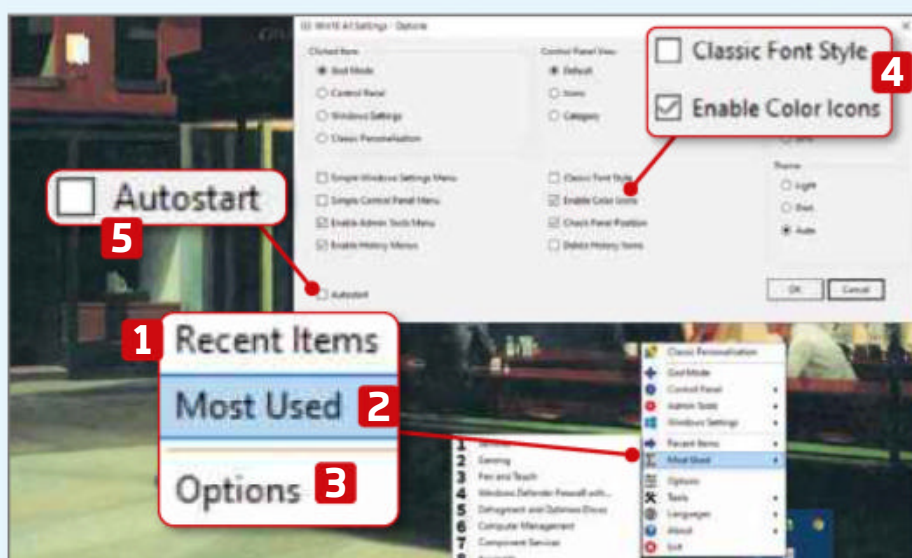
6 The Control Panel option **1** brings all the old Control Panel tools within easy reach. Selecting the Open All Items option **2** opens the standard Control Panel overview window. **3** You can click any of these headings **4** to open its settings in a separate window, although some, such as 'Pen and Touch', may not work on non-tablet devices.



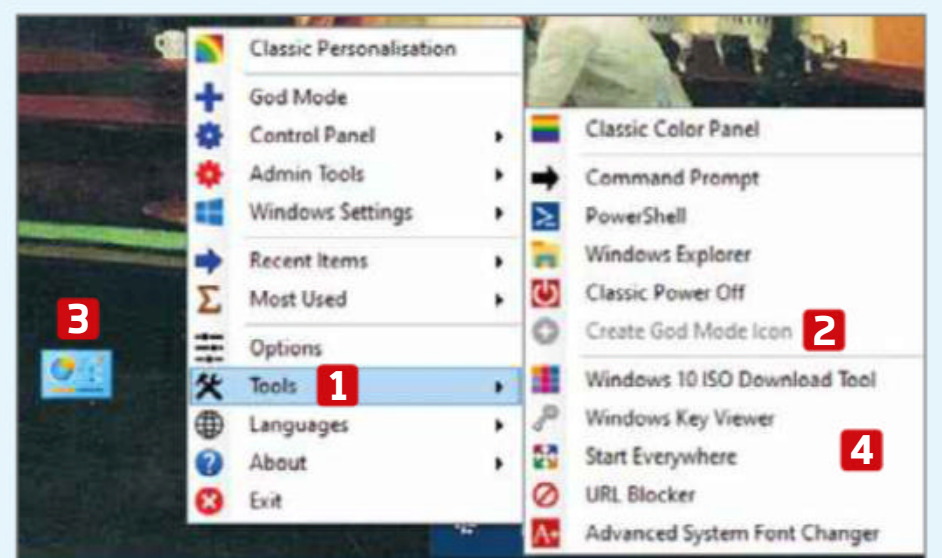
7 Next down the list is Admin Tools. **1** All these options **2** lead to the Control Panel's 'System and Security' administrative tools **3** but using Win10 All Settings means you won't have to go looking for them. Clicking any option here opens its specific settings menu. You can then make changes or run programs such as Defrag **4** or the Registry Editor. **5**



8 Windows Settings **1** is the last of the main options. From here, you can quickly jump to locations such as your Account profile, **2** 'Ease of access' settings **3** and your PC's Personalization. **4** These are the same options you get in the general Windows Settings app, usually reached by clicking the cog wheel or pressing Windows+i.



9 There's no way to pin your favourite options to make tweaking settings even easier, but you may find them in the Recent Items **1** and Most Used **2** sections. Below this, the Options menu **3** offers some interface tweaks for Win10 All Settings, including colours, fonts **4** and themes. Tick Autostart **5** if you want it to run at startup.



10 Tools, **1** located near the foot of the context menu, lets you open Command Prompt, run shutdowns and more. The most useful of these is Create God Mode Icon, **2** which creates a desktop shortcut to the main All Tasks window. **3** The bottom section of the Tools menu contains links to the developer's other programs. **4**

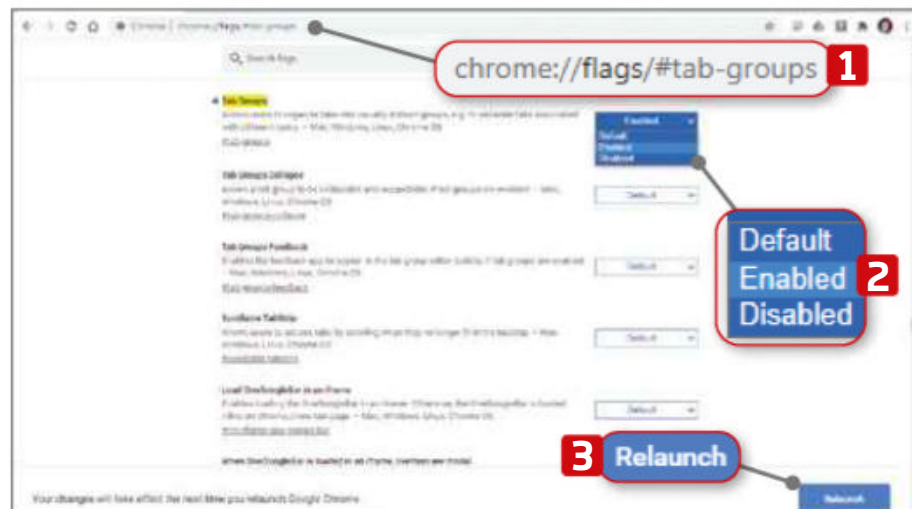
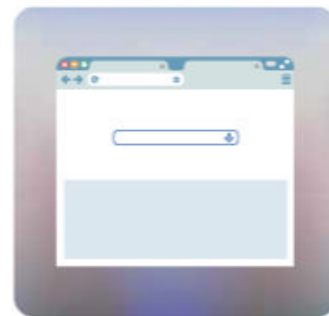


Sort your tabs with Chrome's Tab Groups

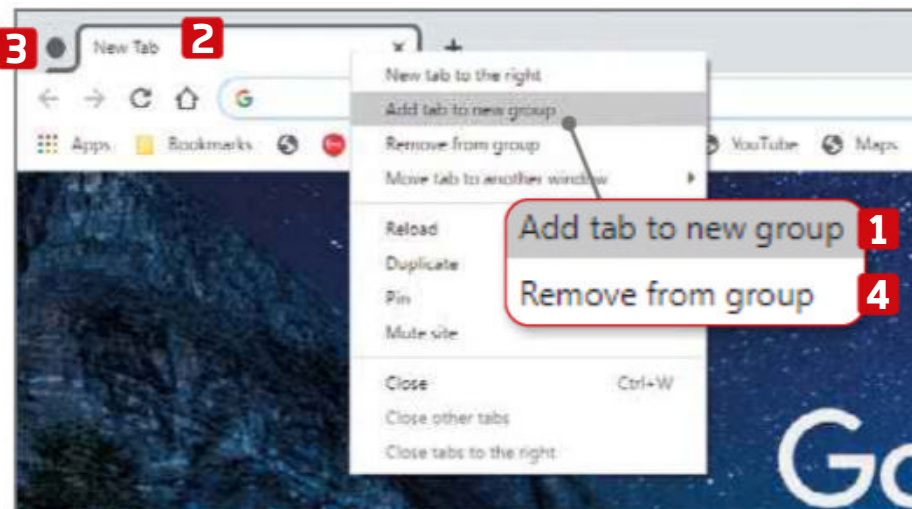
Chrome's Tab Groups is a new tool that lets you manage multiple tabs at a time. No more searching through every open tab until you find the one you want – just arrange your tabs in separate collections and you can stay on top of

Google Chrome: www.google.co.uk/chrome | 10 mins | Chrome

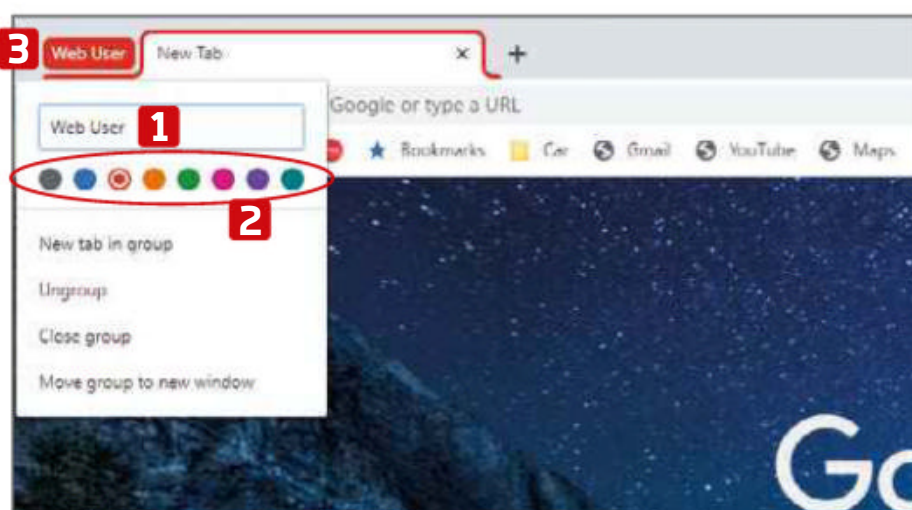
everything without getting overwhelmed. The feature has been floating around in beta for a while but Google has now rolled it out to all Chrome users.



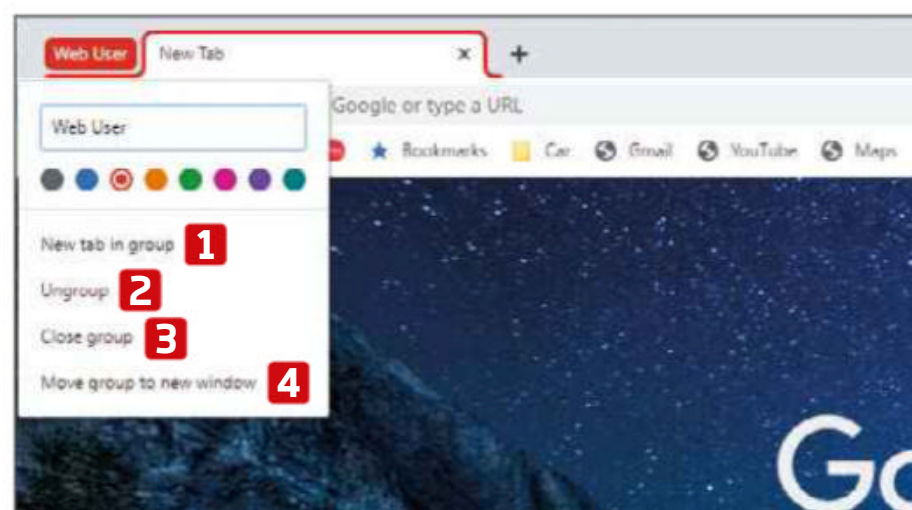
1 If you don't have Tab Groups yet, turn it on via Chrome's experimental flags. In the address bar, type `chrome://flags/#tab-groups`. **1** Enable Tab Groups. **2** Now, go to `chrome://flags/#tab-groups-collapse` and enable this option, too. Relaunch the browser when prompted. **3**



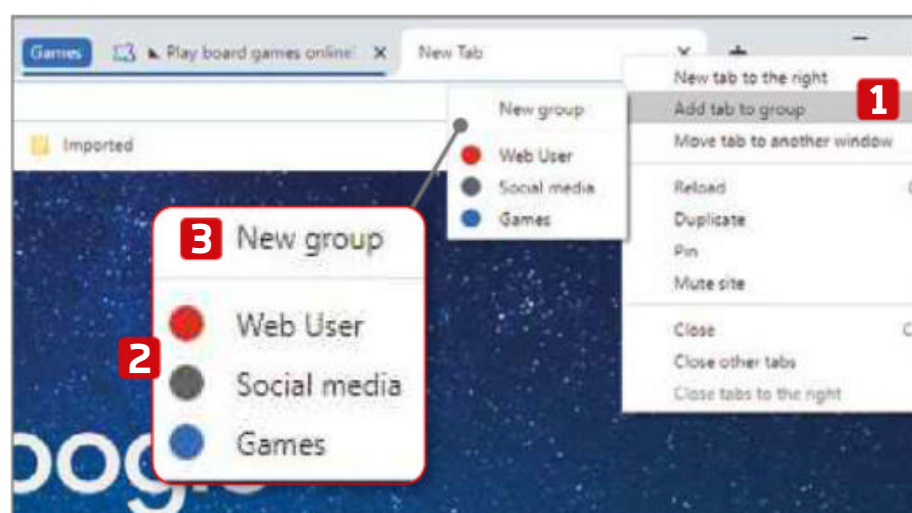
2 Open a new tab in Chrome. Right-click it and select the option: 'Add tab to new group'. **1** By doing so, the tab is sectioned off into its own group, denoted by a coloured line **2** and a large dot. **3** To cancel the selection, right-click the tab again and choose 'Remove from group'. **4**



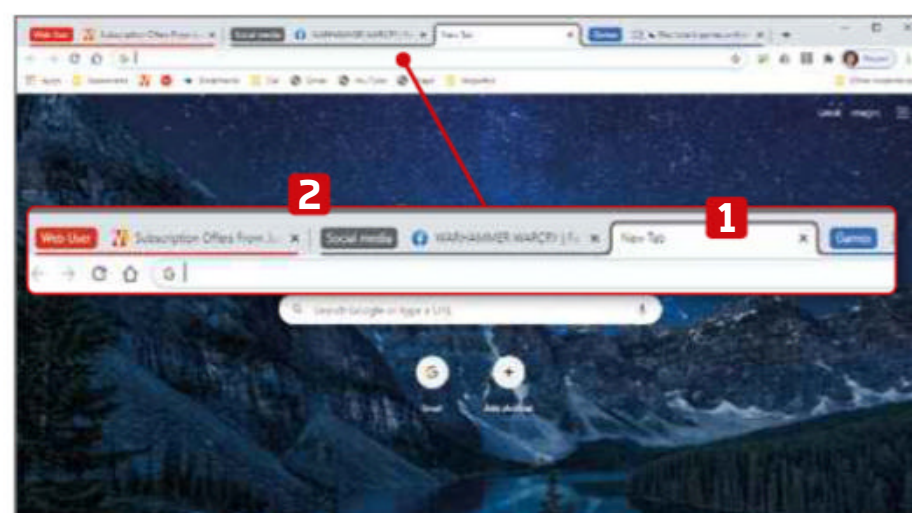
3 With your group created, click the coloured spot. This accesses a tab-group management menu, which lets you name your group **1** and pick a new colour **2** to differentiate it from other groups. Once you set a name, this replaces the dot, **3** making the group even easier to identify.



4 Beneath this are four further options. 'New tab in group' **1** lets you quickly add a new tab. Ungroup **2** keeps all your tabs open but deletes the group, while 'Close group' **3** removes the group and closes the tabs. Finally, 'Move group to new window' **4** does exactly that.



5 Let's say you have a tab you want to move into a group. Start by right-clicking the tab – it doesn't matter if it's already in a group or not – and hover over 'Add tab to group'. **1** The option expands, so you can choose to add it to any of your existing groups **2** or create a 'New group'. **3**



6 There's an easier way to add tabs to an existing group: simply drag and drop the tab **1** to any grouped tab. **2** It's also worth noting that when you open a link in a new tab via a grouped tab, that page is automatically added to the existing group.



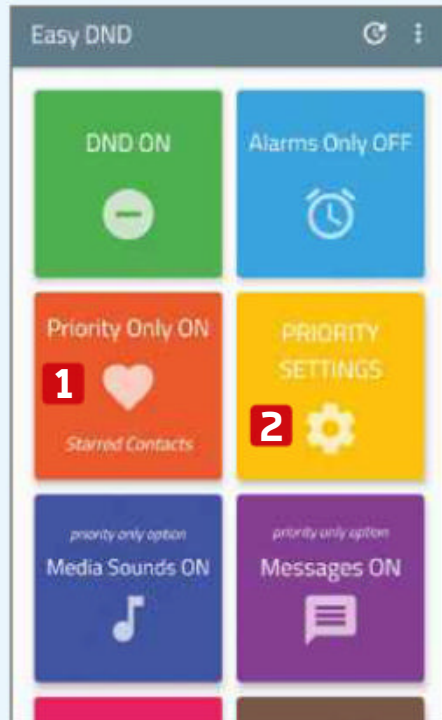
Get Android 11's best features today

Android 11 introduces a host of built-in features, such as a handy tool for controlling notifications and permissions, and a simple screen recorder. This is great news if you have a recent phone and your manufacturer supports the

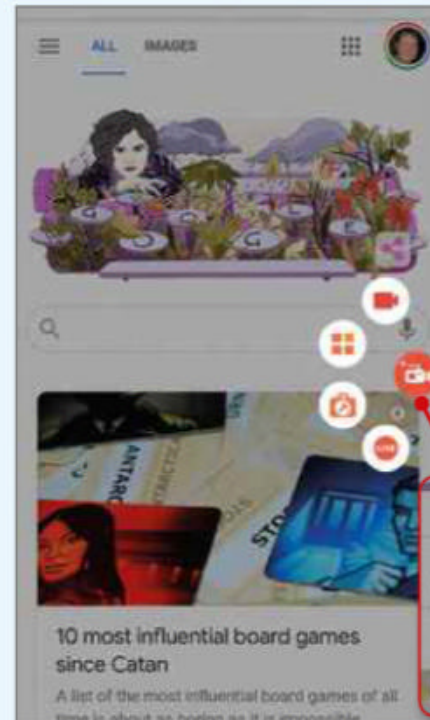
update, but there's no need to fret if you can't get it. We've found five great apps that bring some of Android 11's best features to older versions of the mobile OS.



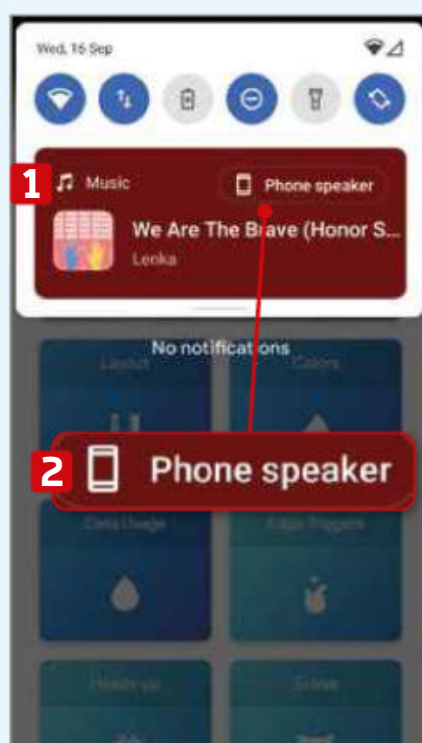
Google Play Store: play.google.com | **20 mins** | **Version varies with device**



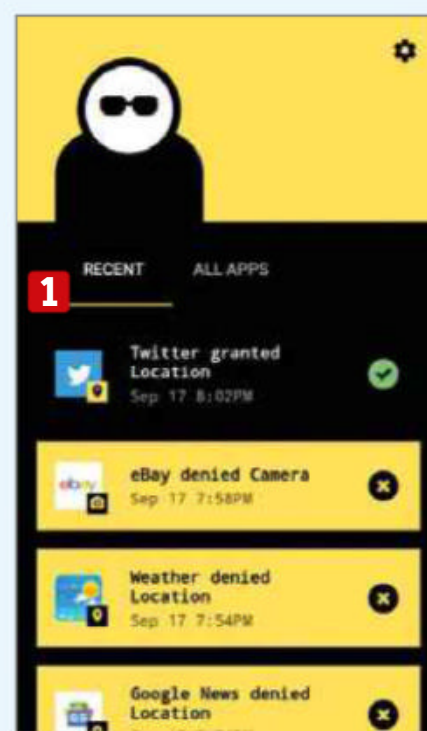
1 Android 11 adds new options to its Do Not Disturb tool, but you can add these features and more without the update by installing **Easy DND** (bit.ly/2W7b8Ao). This app lets you block notifications and events more selectively, such as letting through calls from people in your contacts or those you've added to your favourites. **1** Tap Priority Settings **2** to set it up.



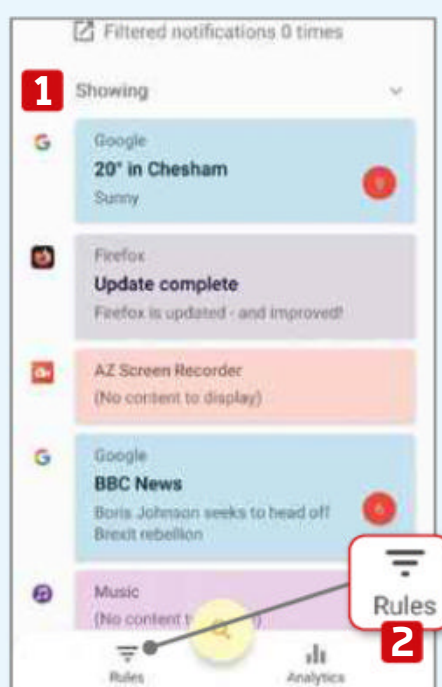
2 There are lots of apps that let you record your screen, but **AZ Screen Recorder** (bit.ly/35UN1th) is one of the best. When running, it superimposes a camcorder icon on your screen. **1** Tap this, then tap the camera **2** to start recording. To shut it down and get your screen back, drag the camcorder icon to the middle of the screen and drop it on the cross that appears.



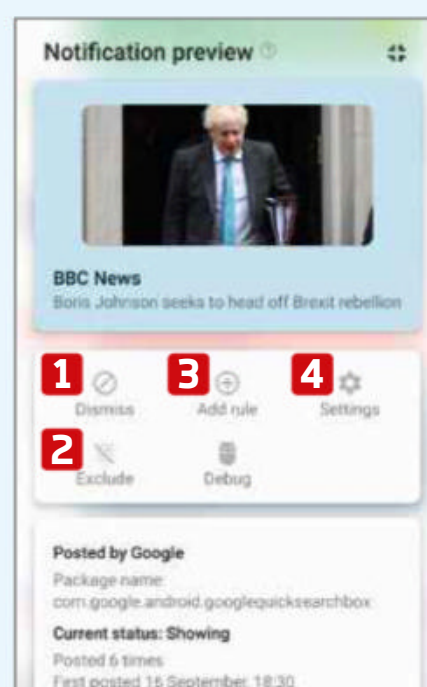
3 **Power Shade** (bit.ly/3c6PfXb) brings a range of visual enhancements to your phone, but we're using it here to emulate Android 11's music player, which updates the feature to make it accessible from the Quick Settings menu. Pull down from the top while a track is playing to access the app's music-player interface **1** and select which speakers to use. **2**



4 Android 11 introduces temporary app permissions, so when an app asks for your location or to access the camera, you can allow the action on a one-off basis rather than as a permanent setting. **Bouncer** (bit.ly/2NkzFct) is a brilliant app that performs the same job (for a one-off payment of £1.79). When an app asks for a permission, Bouncer jumps in and controls the duration. You can see a summary of its actions on its home screen. **1**



5 **FilterBox** (bit.ly/3hDq1AS) brings Android 11's notification history to any Android phone. You can try it for free, but after 30 days it costs a one-off fee of £3.19. Open the app to see a list of all the notifications you've been sent. **1** You can add rules **2** to filter these, or to remove any you aren't interested in.



6 Tap an item to see more detail. From here, you can dismiss individual messages **1** or exclude all similar notifications in the future. **2** Tap 'Add rule' **3** if you want to set up something more precise, such as only showing the selected notifications at certain times or on particular days. You can also go straight to Android's notification settings. **4**

Weekend Project

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



How to...

Add extra ports to your hardware

If you don't have enough of the right ports to connect all your devices to your PC, **Wayne Williams** shows you how to add more

Most hardware manufacturers do their best to cram multiple ports into their devices, but you'll often find you don't have enough to suit your needs. A laptop might have three or four USB ports, which is generally sufficient, until you suddenly need to plug in an external hard drive or a portable desk lamp. Smart TVs, too, often don't have enough HDMI ports for all the devices we want to connect, such as games consoles, set-top boxes, Blu-ray players and so on.

Instead of juggling your peripherals, connecting and disconnecting devices as and when you need to use them, this Weekend Project shows you how to ensure that your hardware has all the ports you need.



Add ports to a desktop PC

One of the reasons why desktop PCs have become so popular is their modular construction, which lets you customise your computer by plugging in additional components and easily replace older technology with newer parts. That's still true – mostly – for today's desktop PCs.

USB ports

If you don't have enough USB ports,

you can add some more (usually two or four) by installing an expansion board. If you'd prefer to install extra ports where they're more easily accessible, you could buy a 5.25in USB front panel, which sits in the space that used to be occupied by DVD or CD-ROM drives, but is now typically covered by a blanking plate.

You can replace old USB-A ports on your PC with new USB-C ones, or mix and match them. For example, one of

our office PCs has six USB 3 ports and four USB-C ports.

We show you how to install extra USB ports in our Mini Workshop on page 61.

Graphics ports

Installing a new graphics card will not only give you a performance boost while gaming and watching videos, but it can also add new graphics ports for plugging in monitors. The type of graphics ports



If your card has a choice of ports, you can use these to create a multi-monitor setup, which can provide a significant boost to your productivity. You can use one screen for your main task and another for peripheral activities such as email, Facebook, Slack and so on.

We show you how to fit a new graphics card in our Mini Workshop, below.

If you don't want to open the case of your PC or you have a laptop that doesn't easily allow you to upgrade its

Any type of port you can install in a desktop PC can be added with a hub, and that includes graphics ports. The Plugable UD-3900H USB 3 Dual Monitor Horizontal Docking Station (bit.ly/3c40Feo) costs £90 and comes with HDMI and DVI ports for connecting two external monitors at up to 1,920 x 1,080 pixels (or a single screen at 2,560 x 1,440 pixels). In addition, the hub includes six USB ports (2 x USB 3 and 4 x USB 2 ports for older devices), a Gigabit Ethernet port and audio connections (in and out). It's powered by a 12V adapter. Your PC will need a spare USB 3 connection to plug the docking station into.

Modern TVs have multiple HDMI ports for connecting various devices, which you can switch between by using the remote's AV button. If you don't have enough ports (which is four in most cases), you can get more by adding an HDMI switch. This is essentially a splitter that offers (for example) three extra HDMI ports. You plug the output cable

A close-up photograph of the SATA power connector on a hard drive. A red number '1' is placed over the correct connection point for the SATA power cable. The image shows the internal components of the drive, including the SATA power connector and the SATA data connector.





A close-up photograph of a person's hand, wearing a black leather watch, pointing their index finger towards the RAM slots on a computer motherboard. The motherboard is populated with several RAM modules. A red number '1' is overlaid on the image, indicating the first step in the process.

The screenshot shows the Windows 'Display' settings window. On the left is a sidebar with navigation options. The main area is titled 'Display' and 'Recommend your display'. Below this, there's a section for 'Resolution' with a dropdown menu showing '1920 x 1080 (Recommended)'. A red circle and the number '1' highlight this dropdown. Further down, under 'Scale and layout', there's a section for 'Display resolution' showing '1920 x 1080 (Recommended)'. A red circle and the number '2' highlight this section.

3 Turn on your PC and Windows should start. Install the supplied software, including drivers. You might want to download the latest software from the developer's site. We've connected two screens to our card. By right-clicking the Windows desktop and selecting Display Settings, we can detect the screens **1** and adjust the resolution. **2**

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Add network ports to your router

Although most homes rely on Wi-Fi, there are benefits to having a wired network. If your Wi-Fi fails, for example, or you want the fastest, most stable connection on a PC that's close to your router, then Ethernet is the best solution.

Most routers come with a number of Ethernet ports but, if you need more, you can add them with a network switch. These, like the HDMI switches discussed previously, are usually inexpensive. For example, the TP-Link TL-SG1005D 5-Port Desktop Gigabit Ethernet Switch/Hub will set you back around £13 on Amazon ([amzn.to/3hEUmPE](https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B073HJYUPE)). It's very easy to get up and running – simply connect the switch to your router and it instantly provides five additional Ethernet ports. There's nothing to configure and it's an easy, affordable way to expand a wired home network. ■



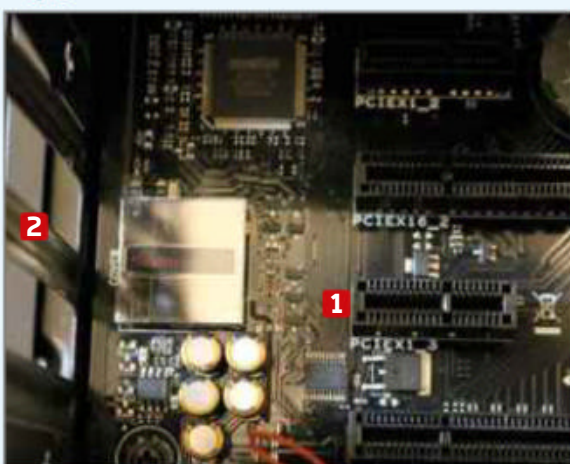
Add extra ports to the back of your TV with an HDMI switch

TP-Link's switch lets you add extra Ethernet ports to your router

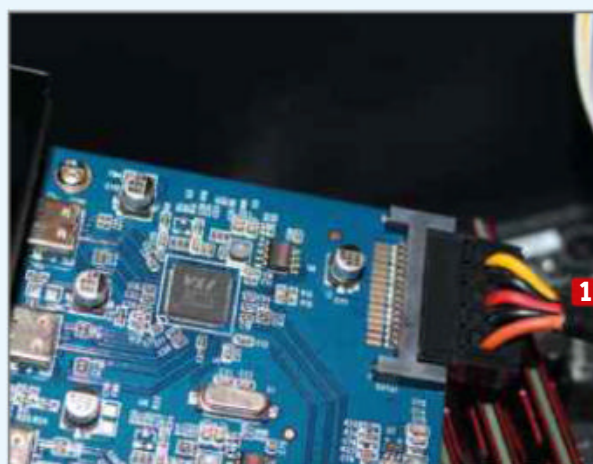
into an HDMI port on the back of your set, then press a button on the front of the switch to hop between the three new inputs it offers. While this setup won't appeal to everyone – having to physically press a button rather than use a remote control is a hassle – it's easier than having to swap over the cables at the back of your TV. You can pick up a reasonably good HDMI switch for around £15.



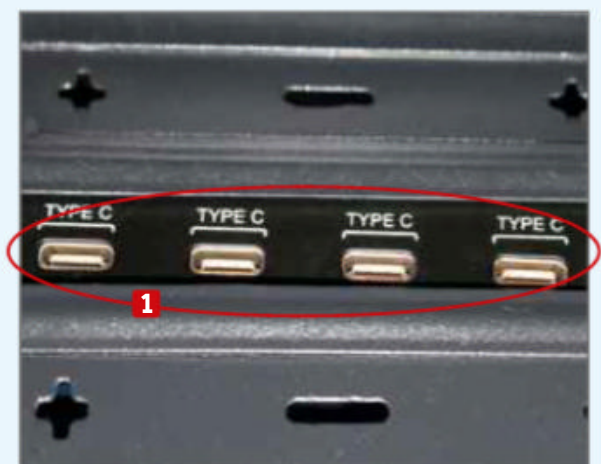
MINI WORKSHOP | Add USB-C ports to your PC



1 Adding a USB-C expansion board to your desktop PC is easy. Turn off your PC and, after earthing yourself, open the case. Locate a free PCI-Express (PCIe) expansion slot. **1** Unlike a graphics card, the USB-C expansion card is quite small. If it's a new slot that hasn't been used before, you need to remove the backplate. **2**



2 Connect a SATA cable **1** to the board to add power to the ports. This means you can use the ports to charge devices, such as your mobile phone. Insert the USB-C expansion card into the spare slot and push down until it clicks firmly into place. Screw the card's plate to the case to keep it secure.



3 We now have four USB-C ports on the rear of the PC. **1** Put the case back together and power up the computer. The new card should be recognised and work immediately. If it doesn't work, install any drivers that came with the card. Failing that, power down again and check that the card is inserted properly.

NEXT ISSUE

How To... Switch from iOS to Android, and vice versa

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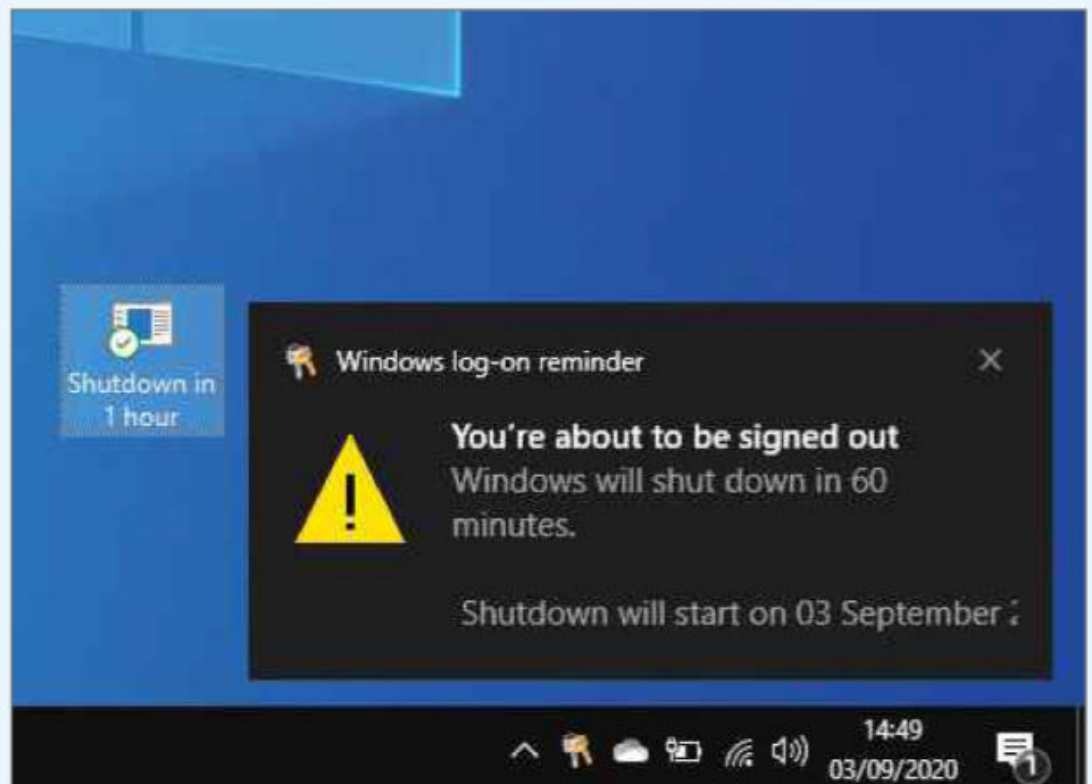
Schedule programs and alarms, and automate tasks in Windows

Use a timer to shut down your PC automatically

Do you ever leave your computer on, hoping to return to it later, but then forget to shut it down when you go to bed? You can shut down automatically with a timer. Press Windows+R and type `shutdown /s /t xxx` replacing xxx with the number of seconds to wait. To shut down in five minutes, for example, enter `shutdown /s /t 300`.

You might find it useful to create one or more desktop shortcuts with preconfigured times. Right-click the desktop and select New, then Shortcut. In the location box, type `shutdown /s /t 3600` (for example) and click Next. Enter `Shutdown in 1 hour` for the name and click Finish.

Run it when you want to shut down in one hour and you'll see a notification on the screen. If you change your mind, press Windows+R and enter `shutdown /a`. The 'a' is for abort. You could create several desktop shortcuts with different lengths of time.



Create one or more shortcuts to shut down your PC after a set length of time

Set alarms in Windows

When you're busy browsing the web, watching YouTube or playing a game, you can easily forget the time. The Windows 'Alarms & Clock' app can remind you of events, such as the time of an appointment, when a TV show is starting or when your favourite football team is about to kick off.

Open 'Alarms & Clock', select the alarm tab and click the plus button in the bottom-right corner. Set the alarm time at the top and click the alarm name below to name it. You can pick an alarm sound, set a snooze option, if you want, and get the alarm to repeat on whatever days of the week you choose.

Don't forget to turn up the sound

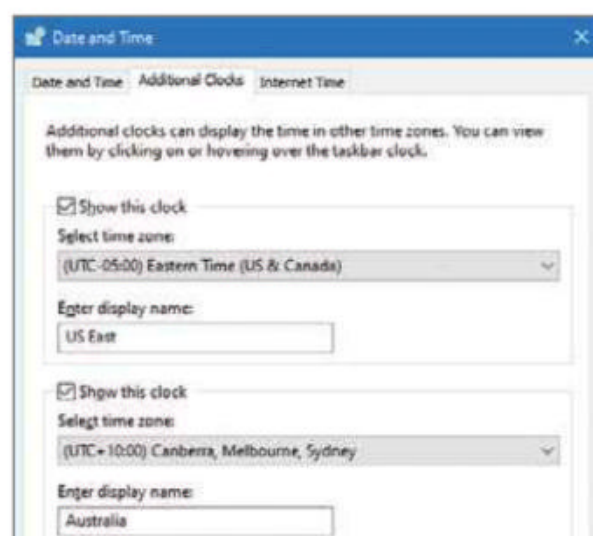
If you see words that look like they've been typed in a typewriter, follow the instructions and type them exactly as they appear, paying close attention to spaces and punctuation.

volume, so you hear the alarm as well as see the notification on the screen.

Show multiple clocks

The Windows taskbar contains a single clock, but you can add more if you have friends or relatives in other countries or want to follow sporting events abroad.

Open the Control Panel and choose one of the 'icons' views, then click 'Date and Time'. Two more clocks can be added from the Additional Clocks tab



See what time it is anywhere in the world by adding time zones to your taskbar

by ticking the 'Show this clock' box. Add a clock, select the time zone - such as 'Eastern Time (US & Canada)' - then name it something descriptive. Click OK or Apply. Nothing appears to change in the taskbar but, when you hover your mouse over the clock, the other time zones appear in a pop-up list.

The taskbar clock only allows two extra time zones, but the 'Alarms & Clock' app lets you track more. Open it from the Start menu and select the world clock tab. Click the plus button at the bottom, search for a city anywhere in the world and add the time and place to the map.

Set a timer in Windows

The 'Alarms & Clock' app has a timer tab that's useful if, for instance, you've just put your Sunday roast in the oven. Click the plus button in the bottom-right corner and add a timer, so you don't get so engrossed in your computer that you forget about your deadline.

Some people like to work in



half-hour bursts, which is called the Pomodoro Technique (bit.ly/35f51hk). Set a timer for 25 minutes and get on with your work, then take a five-minute break when the alarm goes off. You can then start the timer again and work for another 25 minutes.

Use Calendar events instead of alarms

'Alarms & Clock' can be used to alert you to an event later today, but not tomorrow or any other day. Also, if you aren't sitting in front of your computer at the right time, you won't get the alert. Using the Calendar app is better. A Calendar event is like an alarm, but you can set one for any day, any year, and be notified – even when your PC is off – through your Microsoft account.

Open the Windows 10 Calendar app and click the cog icon at the bottom, then click Manage Accounts and add your Microsoft account, if necessary. Click the clock to the right of the taskbar and type the name of an event under the Today heading. Click the suggested start and end times to change them, then enter a location, if you want, and click Save.

At the time of the event, your PC shows a notification and plays a sound. If you have the Outlook app on your iPhone or Android device, you're alerted on that, too – even when you're away from the computer or it's switched off.

To create an alarm for any day in the future, click the clock in the taskbar, type the event name and click the More Details button. A form appears in which you can enter an alternative date, along with other details. Another method is to open the Calendar app and click any day, then fill in the form with the event name, time and if you want to be reminded before the event, such as 10 minutes before Liverpool kicks off or the Grand Prix starts.

All you need is an Outlook email

account, so this works in Windows 7 too. Go to outlook.com, click the calendar icon at the bottom of the left-hand pane and create new events by clicking in the calendar. Your phone will alert you when the event occurs.

Add events in Windows and get notifications on your phone via your Microsoft account



TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

Schedule programs to run anytime

Windows has a built-in Task Scheduler that can be set to perform actions at a specific time and date. It's used by Windows and other software to perform tasks such as checking for updates, running regular tools and so on. You can also use it to run any program you want, at a time and date of your choosing. To explain how it works, we'll use it to run Disk Cleanup on a daily schedule, to clean-up junk files on the hard drive.

Click Start, type 'schedule' and open Task Scheduler. In the Actions section, click Create Basic Task. Enter a name for the task, such as **Disk Cleanup**, with a short description, such as **Delete junk files to get more drive space**. Click Next and, on the next screen, choose when it should run, such as Daily, Weekly, 'One time' and so on. Click Next, then select the date and time to run the program.

Click Next, then choose an action, such as 'Start a program'. Click the Browse button and select the following:

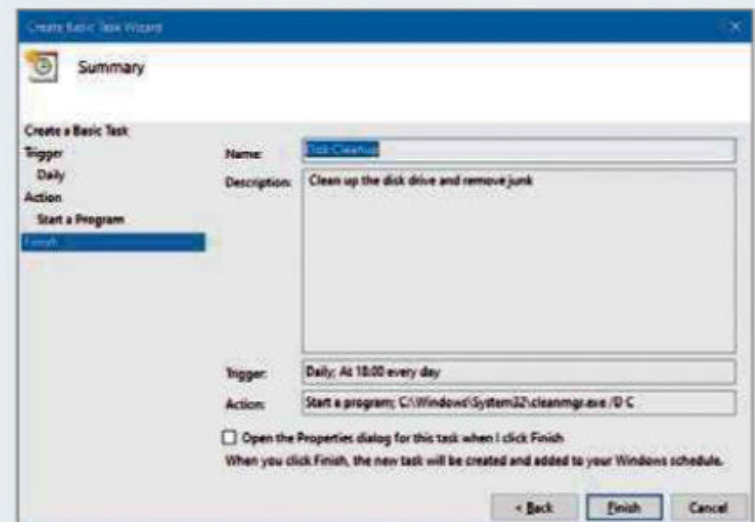
C:\Windows\System32\cleanmgr.exe

This is the Disk Cleanup program. In the 'Add arguments' box, enter /D C which means you're setting C: as the drive to clean. Click Next and Finish.

Select Task Scheduler Library in the sidebar and your task will be in the list, along with several other scheduled tasks. It will run automatically on the day and time you set. Right-click it if you ever need to change or delete it.

Schedule events with yTimer

If you find Task Scheduler too complicated or it doesn't have the features you need, try yTimer (bit.ly/3jLiD8m). This free tool lets you schedule a specific time to perform an action or set a countdown in



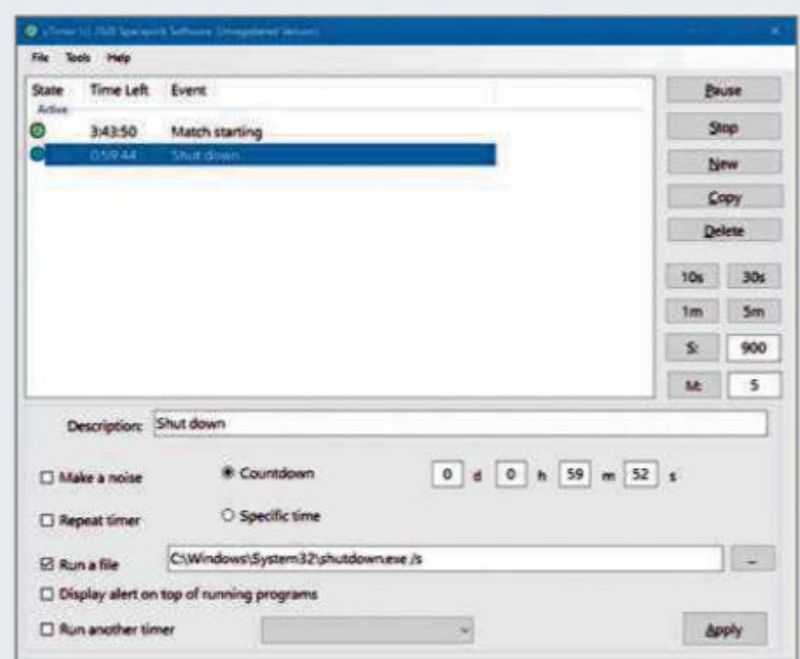
Task Scheduler can run programs at a specific time and day

days, hours and minutes.

Unzip the yTimer download, open the folder and run the file called 'yTimer2'. There's no installation. If a warning appears, select 'More info', then 'Run anyway'. We checked the download on VirusTotal (www.virustotal.com) and it reported it as clean.

Click the New button and, below the task list, set the parameters such as the description, whether to make a noise or display a message, and if the task should run a file. Select Countdown and set a period of time, such as one hour or 3 days, 2 hours and 4 minutes. Select 'Specific time' to run it at a set time of the day, such as 16.30.

You can also automatically run another timer, to chain with the first, so one event triggers another. The snooze function of many alarms works this way, so that when an alarm sounds, you can ignore it for another 10 minutes.



yTimer is an alternative to Task Manager that's free, easy to use and has more options

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



SECURITY

Help Credential Manager remember passwords

Q I am running Windows 10 with the latest 2004 update installed and have noticed that most of my Web Credential passwords are missing from the Credential Manager. It's not a massive problem because I have most of them stored in my browser, but I am wondering if you can shed any light on how to retrieve the missing passwords? It seems that any new passwords are not being saved to Web Credentials, either.

Steve Barr, via email

A Are the passwords being remembered, even though they don't appear in Credential Manager? Can you log into websites and services? If logins still work and passwords are remembered, we would advise you not to worry about them not being in Credential Manager.

If you use Chrome, open the menu, select Settings and click Passwords. Are they there instead of Credential Manager? If so, click the three-dot button to the right of Saved Passwords and export them to create a backup.

If you use Edge, click the three-dot button in the top-right corner to open the menu and click Settings. Select

Profiles, then Passwords to see a list of stored passwords. Open Control Panel, click Credential Manager (in one of the 'icons' views) and select the Web Credentials tab to see another list of passwords.

You might assume that they should both be the same but they usually aren't. Some passwords appear in both lists, but some only appear in one. There's no way to export passwords from Credential Manager – to make a backup, for example – but on Edge's passwords page, the three-dot menu button provides access to an export option.

If your missing passwords aren't in Chrome, Credential Manager or Edge, they are lost.

We recommend using a password manager to remember passwords – there are apps and extensions available for all devices, including computers, phones and tablets. KeePassXC



Credential Manager provides a place to store passwords but a password manager is more useful online

(keepassxc.org), KeePass (keepass.info), Bitwarden (bitwarden.com) and LastPass (www.lastpass.com) are popular options. They all have extensions you can use in conjunction with your browser.

A search in your phone's app store will also show these popular password managers and a basic account is free. You can access PC and phone passwords on either device, which Credential Manager can't do. Credential Manager is more of a business tool for connecting to company networks, shared drives and other resources.

STORAGE

Lost and locked JPEG Files

Q I used a SanDisk Cruzer Blade USB drive to back up more than 8,000 JPEG photos in the SanDisk SecureAccess Vault. When I tried to open them again, I got the message, "Invalid Parent Path in Archive". I contacted SanDisk, but they had no explanation for why this had happened.

I copied the locked files and carried out SanDisk's advice, deleting the settings folder and so on, but I still can't access the files. In the end, SanDisk

suggested I pay a specialist to resolve the problem. I still have copies of the 8,000 locked and inaccessible JPEG files.

Kevin Mallon, via email

A Kevin sent us a copy of a long conversation with Sandisk support offering several suggestions, but no resolution, so we won't repeat that. We found other people with the same problem, so this looks like a bug.

One solution that worked for some people is to open the secure vault folder and delete any files named index.dat,

index.dat (1) and so on. Run the SecureAccess program afterwards, then enter your password and log in. An error message is displayed because the index .dat file cannot be found and you are asked if you want to repair it. Go ahead.

It could take minutes or hours (most likely hours, with 8,000 files). When it's finished, you should have access to your files. Some people found that the error occurred again and again, so it might be worth moving your files out of the encrypted storage and putting them elsewhere.



Use VeraCrypt to create encrypted storage for private files

VeraCrypt (www.veracrypt.fr) can be used to create a file that works like an encrypted drive and it can be moved, copied, renamed or deleted, so is very flexible. It can encrypt the whole drive, too, so this may be a better option.

HARDWARE

Stop a PC from requiring double-booting

Q I reloaded Windows 10 on my Dell XPS 8900, along with all the programs and applications I need, and it runs like a dream, except that it won't boot up the first time in fast-boot mode. Instead, it just hangs on the Dell logo screen until I hold down the power button to turn it off. The second time, it boots without any problems.

I have now turned off fast boot and everything runs perfectly. I can live with this, but I'm worried because something is causing the problem and I'd like to be able to sort it.

I have tried restoring BIOS settings to factory defaults, removing the CMOS battery and holding down the power button before installing a new battery.

Terry Pinchin, via email

A Fast startup isn't compatible with all computers and yours may be one it simply doesn't work with. Click Start, Power and look for a Hibernate option. If there isn't one, it probably means the computer can't hibernate. Fast startup is a type of hibernation, which is similar to sleep mode but subtly different.

When the computer is shut down with fast startup enabled, it basically logs you out of your account and then hibernates, which saves the current state of the computer's hard drive. When the PC is started, it resumes from hibernation very quickly because it only

needs to reload the last computer state, rather than every driver, service and program from the hard drive.

The reason why the computer works the second time is because it performs a proper restart, stopping every driver, service and app. The PC then boots without fast startup and everything is loaded from the hard drive.

For those that haven't used this feature, open the Control Panel, click Power Options and then 'Choose what the power buttons do'. Click 'Change settings that are currently unavailable'. Fast startup is enabled by ticking the box.

One of our Windows 10 computers doesn't even have a fast startup box to tick. Presumably it's not compatible with this feature and therefore normal startup is the only option.

The inability to use fast startup could be caused by drivers, but updating

them is not guaranteed to work and there is always a small risk that updating drivers could cause a separate problem. Go to www.iobit.com and get Driver Booster Free, which is very easy to use. If you are more technically minded, try www.driverscloud.com, where you can scan your computer and find and download drivers. Select English (EN) in the language menu, if necessary.

We would simply use a normal startup and avoid fast startup. The only downside is that it takes a bit longer to get to the desktop when you power on.

WINDOWS

Update drivers to update Windows

Q Earlier this year, I purchased the upgrade to Windows 10 Pro and the installation seemed to be fine. However, I have since tried to install version 2004 of Windows 10 Pro twice without success. I checked today for updates and the PC is reported as up to date. However, when I checked the OS build info, the response was:

Edition: Windows 10 Pro

Version: 1909

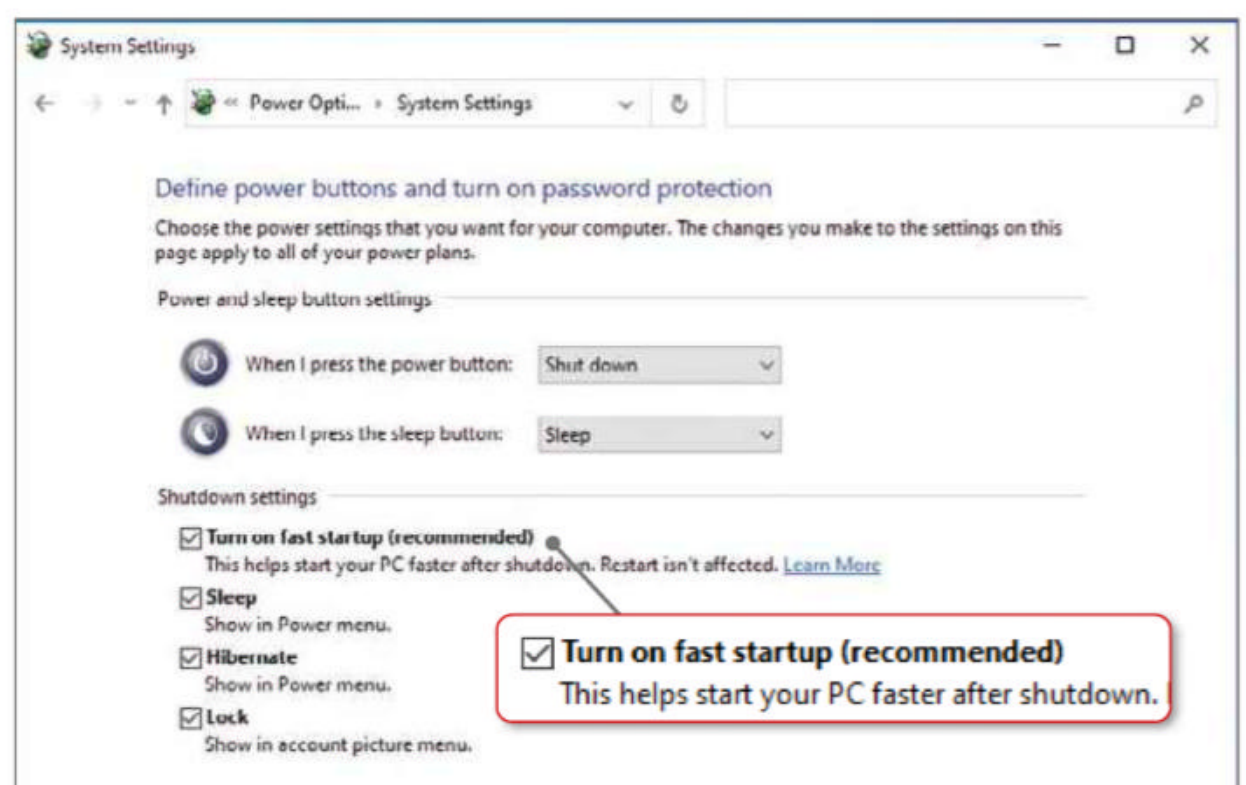
Installed on: 27/7/2019

OS Build: 18363.1049

I then checked the Upgrade history from my previous attempt to upgrade the May 2020 update and the record showed that the upgrade had failed. I checked again today and the history had no content whatsoever. How do I resolve this problem?

Keith Marquis, via email

A We looked at our PC running the latest Windows 10 beta, installed only a few weeks ago, and it says Installed on 13/12/2019. That date is so wrong it isn't even close – not even



Choose whether to use fast startup in the Control Panel options



the correct year – so we wouldn't worry too much about the installed date. The OS Build should be right, though, and Windows 10 2004 is 19041.x, which is not what your info is showing.

Microsoft uses an algorithm to work out who should get the latest update and when. It's constantly being updated and, as problems are fixed, Windows becomes available for more PCs. There's an interesting post on the Microsoft site at bit.ly/2QleHbN that lists current and previous problems.

Nearly every update problem is related to a driver, so there's a good chance that updating them will fix the Windows 2004 update failure on your computer, although there is no guarantee. Driver Booster Free (www.iobit.com) or Drivers Cloud (www.driverscloud.com) can help you update drivers. We recommend performing a full system backup on an external hard drive before doing this, using a tool such as EaseUS Todo Backup Free (www.easeus.com), Macrium Reflect Free (www.macrium.com/reflectfree) or something similar.



Delays in getting new versions of Windows are often because of incompatible drivers

After you've updated your drivers, open Settings and go to Windows Update. It's nice to have the latest version as soon as it is released but not

every computer gets it straight away. If you can't get it yet, there might be a very good reason. Some PCs have to wait for months.

BROWSERS

Retire Internet Explorer

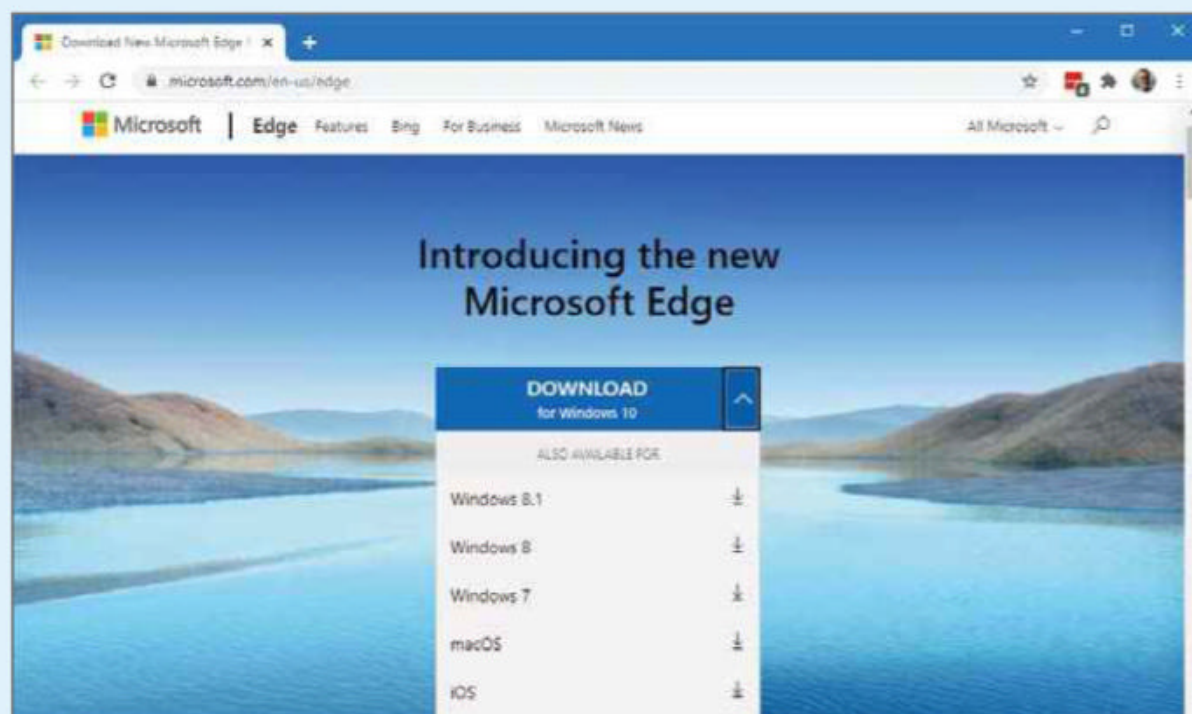
Q Re Issue 509 (bit.ly/2ZnbAL5), Need to Know: "Microsoft finally kills off Internet Explorer". Being an old dinosaur, I am still using IE, so I would appreciate some advice. Is it possible to copy all my favourites to Edge or any other browser?

It occurs to me that I should remove IE to eliminate any residual security threats. If this is correct, what should I do to make sure everything is secure?

Alan Smith, via email

A Less than 3% of people still use Internet Explorer to browse the web. Not only is it slow, but it's incompatible with many popular websites, so switching to a new browser will make a tremendous difference and you'll be able to access all websites with a noticeable improvement in speed.

We assume you're using Windows 7. Windows 10 comes with the Edge browser built in, but you can download versions for Windows 7 and 8.1 from www.microsoft.com/edge. This may automatically import your



Users still clinging to IE should consider switching to Edge or another browser

favourites but, if not, click the three-dot button in the top-right corner to open the menu and select Favourites, then Import. Select the browser to import from – in your case, Microsoft Internet Explorer – and tick all the boxes to import everything, then click the Import button. Edge got off to a bad start in Windows 10, but the latest Chromium-based version is great.

Chrome is currently the most popular web browser and it can be downloaded from www.google.com/chrome. If you

are still running IE on Windows 7, there is a chance you have the 32-bit version of Windows. In that case, scroll down to the bottom of the page and, under Chrome Family, click Other Platforms. You'll find a link to download Chrome for 32-bit Windows.

Internet Explorer is part of the Windows 7 operating system and should not be removed. To stay secure, just keep your PC up to date through Windows Update.



This fortnight Roland has been playing a lot of games, which he claims to be "testing"



Readers' Helpdesk

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

WINDOWS

Turn off logins at startup

Q I followed your instructions for switching off the Windows 10 lock screen but it didn't work. I also tried turning off sign-in entirely, with no success. While there is a 'Require sign-in' option, it just refers to 'being away' from the PC, not when booting up. I just want to go straight to my desktop without any hassle. How do I do this?

John Douglas, via email

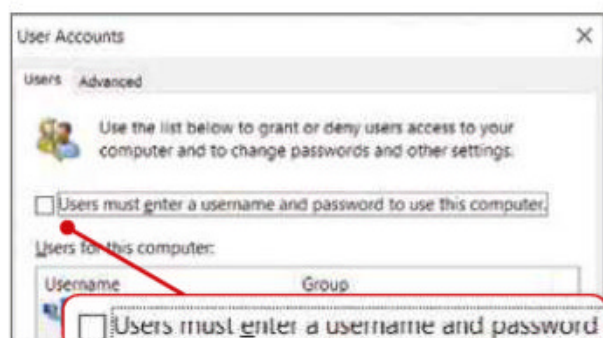
A We're not sure why this Registry edit didn't work on your PC, and we urge you to try again. For those that missed it, open the Registry Editor and go to:

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Policies\Microsoft\Windows

You should see the Personalization folder (note the US spelling, with a 'z'). If not, right-click the Windows folder and select New, Key to create it. Now, right-click Personalization and choose New, then 'DWORD (32-bit) Value'. Name this **NoLockScreen** and set the value to 1. You can revert to the old setting by changing the value back to 0.

You're right that the 'Require sign-in' option won't work when booting up, only once the computer is idle. To change this, press Windows+R and type **netplwiz**. Untick the box 'Users must enter a username and password to use this computer', then click Apply. You're now prompted to enter your username (the full email, if applicable) and the account password. Click OK and, when you restart your PC, you'll go straight to the desktop.

Steve Clark, Features Writer



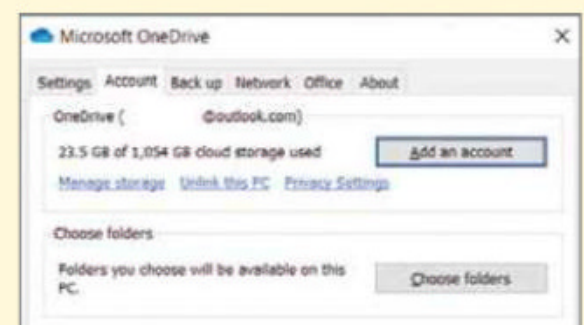
Untick this option to remove lock screens and logins

READERS RESPOND

STORAGE

Ensure OneDrive saves your files

A In Issue 508 (bit.ly/33apnFW), C Heller asks why their OneDrive isn't syncing and requires constant sign-ins. I also had this problem and the best solution I found was to unlink OneDrive, then re-link it to the same account. To do this, open OneDrive in File Explorer, then right-click it and Select Settings. On the Settings tab, ensure 'Start OneDrive automatically when I sign in to Windows' is ticked. Click the Account tab, then click 'Unlink this PC', restart your computer



Click 'Unlink this PC' if you need to refresh your OneDrive sign-in

and link your OneDrive account again.

Failing that, try repairing the Office suite by opening 'Apps and features' and selecting Office, then 'Advanced options' and Repair.

V Singh, via email

CAN YOU HELP?

webuser@webuser.co.uk

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

HARDWARE

Q I noticed social media was ablaze with the news of Intel's new 11th generation CPUs. Is it worth getting one when they become available?

PB Lyle, via email

ANDROID

Q Is there any way to have two clocks on my Android Home screen for different time zones? I'm using Microsoft Launcher, if that helps.

Martin Brady, via email

ANDROID

Create custom gestures

Q I love using gestures on my phone – they make it so much easier to navigate the device and perform certain actions. However, I'd like to create my own, so that, for instance, two taps and a downward drag would open a specific app or change a setting. Is there any way to do this? I looked at the Android settings, but only found the default ones.

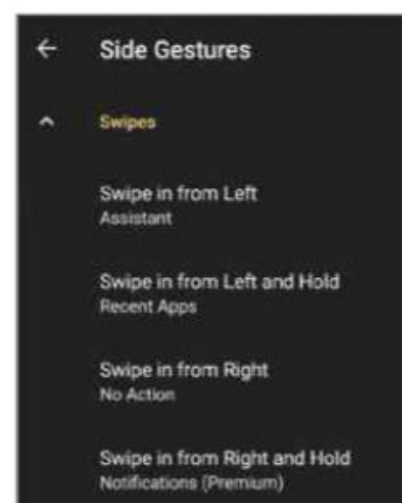
Kels Doyle, via email

A The best way to customise gestures is to use an app. Unfortunately there aren't any good free ones, but if you're happy to pay, we recommend XDA's Navigation Gestures (bit.ly/2QSRGTu). You get a small number of customisable

gestures for free, but the £1.39 premium add-on gives you many more options. It adds three new buttons you can assign commands to and control with gestures. Tap the cog icon to assign actions such as swipe left and hold, to perform specific functions. Have a play and see how you get on.

Steve Clark, Features Writer

The Navigation Gestures app lets you create your own gestures for frequent actions



Your Top Tips

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



TOP TIP

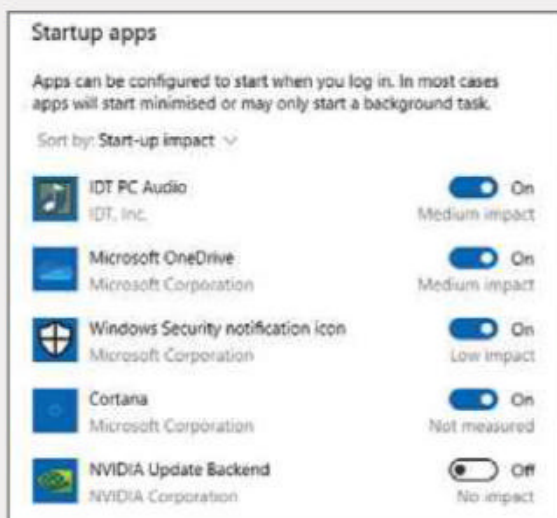
WINDOWS

Manage your startup apps

Programs that load with Windows can sometimes cause problems. Even if they work perfectly, they can still delay your PC's startup.

Right-click an empty part of the taskbar, click Task Manager and select the Startup tab to see everything that loads with Windows. Right-clicking a column heading opens a menu showing all the possible columns that can be displayed. If they're not all ticked, you might not be seeing all the information that's available to you. Tick all 10 options – you may then need to make the Task Manager window wider to fit them all in.

The 'CPU at start-up' column shows how many milliseconds of processor time a startup item uses (1,000 milliseconds is 1 second). The 'Disk I/O at start-up' shows the amount of hard drive activity. Avoid anything that uses a lot of processor or hard-drive resources at startup. If you're not sure what something does, right-click its name and select 'Search online' to



See all the apps that start with Windows in the Settings app

open a browser with search results.

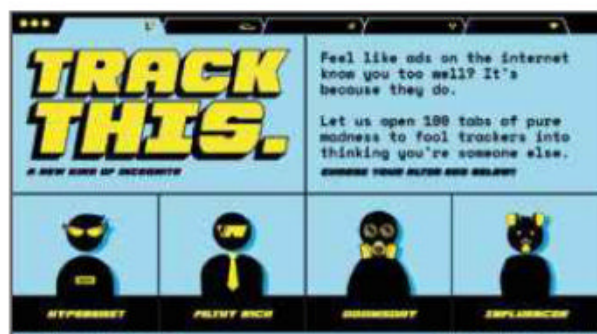
With every Windows 10 update, more items are moved to the Settings app. Open Settings, click Apps, then click Startup on the left to see a list of apps that launch with Windows. There are switches that let you turn them on or off, and a Sort menu that can list them in order of impact.

James Miller, via email

PRIVACY

Hide your identity from advertisers

I've just found the greatest website ever for throwing online advertisers off your scent. It's created by Mozilla and called Track This (trackthis.link) – imagine Arnold Schwarzenegger saying the phrase in an action movie and you'll get a flavour of the site's intent.



Fool advertisers and make all the online ads you see irrelevant

Online ads are based on your previous searches. This website fools the advertisers by opening hundreds of links in your browser, so they don't know who you are or what you're really interested in. As a result, they will display ads for completely unrelated products.

You can pick between four different profiles: the super-hip Hypebeast, the Bond-like Filthy Rich, the paranoid Domsday Prepper and the shallow Influencer. After choosing your alter-ego, all the ads you see will now be relevant to precisely no one.

Joshua Chung, via email

SOFTWARE

View WebP images

In response to Peter Feore in Issue 510, who recommended Light Gallery and wanted to know which other software is

best for viewing WebP images. I have a recommendation. FastPreview (bit.ly/3IJ3INx) is an open-source tool available for 32- and 64-bit computers that, I find, lives up to its name: it's very quick. Simply right-click an image to open it using the tool. It also lets you view any available EXIF data by double-clicking the photo's icon and choosing the FP tab. I hope that helps.

Pat Jensen, via email



FastPreview is one reader's favourite tool for opening and viewing photos

SOFTWARE

Mute video and audio at a stroke

In case anyone missed it, Microsoft recently released a couple of new versions of PowerToys, which you can download from bit.ly/32SEP9B. The most notable addition I've found is the Video



Quickly turning off your video and mic has never been so easy



Conference Mute tool. It's only available in the pre-release version, but lets you mute video, audio or both using the following keyboard shortcuts: Windows+N to toggle audio and video on or off; Windows+Shift+O to control video; and Windows+Shift+A to switch your mic on or off.

These shortcuts are all customisable, so you can change them to a different configuration so long as it's unique to that action. A notification is displayed to let you know the operation was successful.

Neil Oliver, via email

WINDOWS

Find 'Quick access' on the taskbar

Open File Explorer and, at the top of the sidebar, you'll find the 'Quick access' area. Some folders are already listed but you can use drag-and-drop to add more.

What you might not realise is that if you right-click the File Explorer icon in the taskbar, the Quick Access folders appear on a menu as pinned items. So, if File Explorer isn't running and you want to see a Quick Access folder, right-click the File Explorer taskbar icon and select it on the menu.

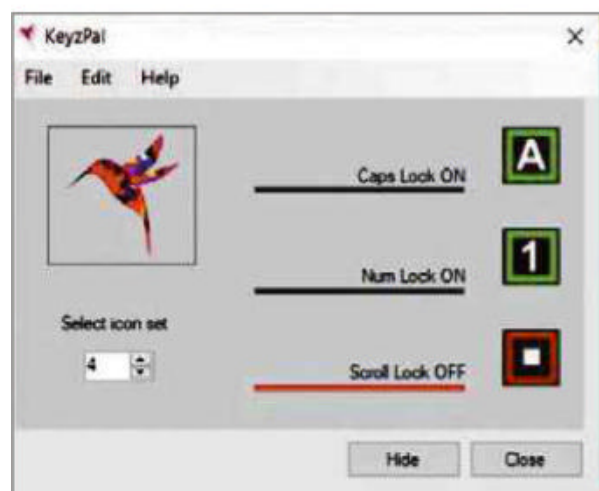
Chris Clark, via email

SOFTWARE

Install a Caps Lock indicator

KeyzPal (bit.ly/3jFzZ6n) is a great tool if your keyboard doesn't have lights to indicate when Caps Lock and Num Lock are on. The software adds icons to the system tray – an 'A' (for Caps Lock) and a '1' (for Num Lock) – so you can see at a glance when these options are on or off. You can pick between four different icon design sets, too.

By default, KeyzPal shows you the status for Caps Lock and Num Lock, but you can also turn on the Scroll Lock alert in the settings. 'Normalize keys', also in the settings menu, allows KeyzPal to turn off Caps Lock and others after a set amount of time. Unlike other similar programs I've tried, KeyzPal doesn't



KeyzPal makes it easier to notice when you have Caps Lock turned on

annoy you with unwanted bleeps and only offers visual cues.

Michael Bissell, via email

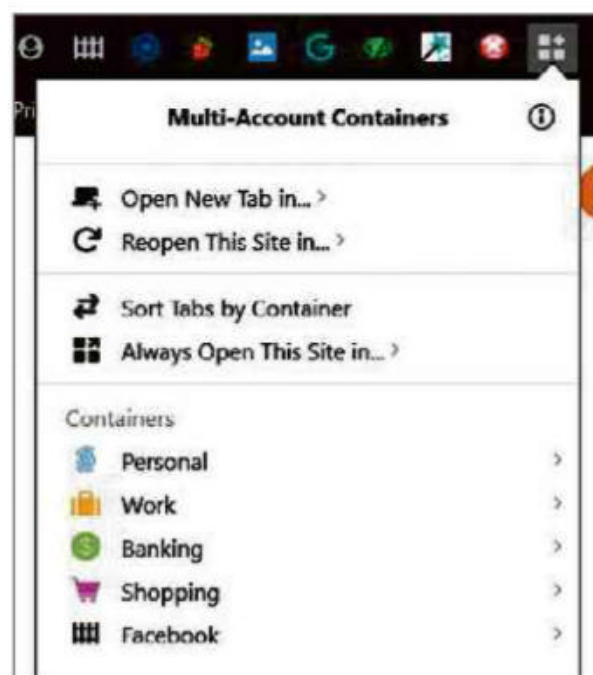
BROWSERS

Isolate accounts with Firefox Containers

I've long been a fan of Firefox's Containers tool, so I was overjoyed to discover the Multi-Account Containers add-on (mzl.la/2TvpVo3) Mozilla has just released. This lets you run multiple accounts on a single site within one browser, instead of switching between browsers or going incognito, as I used to.

By opening the extension, you can open new tabs in a specific container, set certain sites so they always open in a set container and even create your own.

David French, via email



You can now keep your online identities separate in Firefox

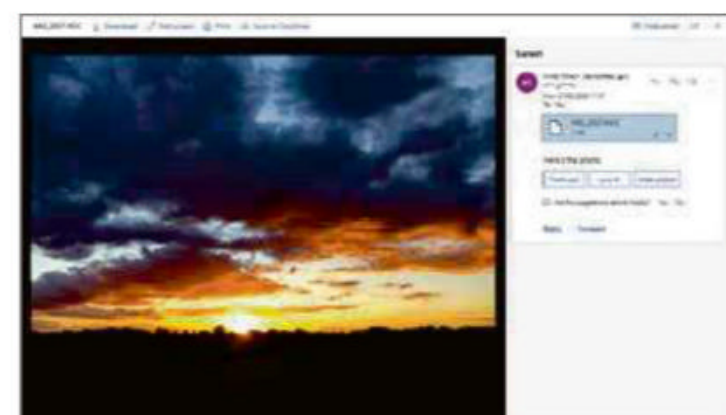
EMAIL

See all Outlook webmail attachments

An overstuffed inbox is likely to contain hundreds of photos, PDFs and all manner of other files that have been attached to emails, but how do you locate an attachment you know you've received but can't find? In Outlook webmail (outlook.com), click the paperclip icon at the bottom of the left-hand panel to see a file listing showing filenames, email subject, sent and received dates, and the folder each item is in – if you've sorted your emails into folders.

Click a file attachment to display it on the screen. A dual-pane window appears with a large view of the attachment. Click the three-dot button on the right, where the email is displayed, to see the usual options for Reply, Forward, Delete and so on. Attachments can use up a lot of storage space, so if you're running short, list all the attachments, then download and delete them to make room.

Matt Thompson, via email



View and preview attachments from within Outlook webmail

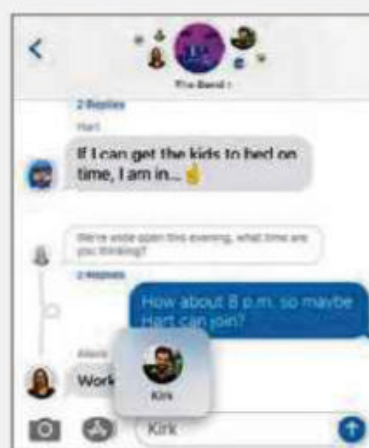
BLUNDER OF THE FORTNIGHT

iOS

Use iMessage's new inline replies

It's easy to lose track of spiralling conversations on your iPhone and end up missing crucial messages as they get swamped by the back-and-forth banter. I once missed an important meeting because of this. However, it turns out that group conversations needn't be so infuriating, thanks to Messages' inline replies.

This feature, which became available in iOS 14, lets other members reply to specific messages,



Make group chats more manageable with this trick, new to iOS 14

rather than clutter up the main chat. These separate conversations are tucked away in a thread behind a Replies button – just tap it to read them. To begin a reply, find a message in your group chat, then tap and hold it. You should see a range of options, including Reply. Tap this and write your response. You'll be helping everyone to keep on top of more important messages.

Kevin Granger, via email

Have you managed to fix a PC-related disaster?

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



Star Email

Lack of spare parts spoiled my repairs

I read your excellent 'Repair, reuse and recycle' feature in Issue 510 and hope to try some of the suggestions. However, it's a shame that manufacturers don't all share your enthusiasm for protecting the environment.

The option to repair assumes that there is a supply of spare parts, while the option to reuse or recycle assumes that the product will remain working for a reasonable length of time.

I had a Canon Pixma MP970 printer/scanner which used to produce beautiful prints from my camera and was a very adequate scanner for my needs. Unfortunately, I bought it just before it was removed from the current products catalogue.

No problem, I thought. But about



18 months later, it stopped working and my local repair man said it needed a new print-head unit.

The print-head unit is a simple 'click in and out' component, so I decided to source one myself. After being much messed about, I finally managed to speak to the right person at Canon.

She seemed incredulous that I should be trying to get spare parts for a printer that was "so old". It appears that once a Canon product is no longer current, the supply of spare parts dries up, so my printer was not repairable and, for use as just a scanner, it was inconveniently large on my desk. There would be no point repairing it now, because my local stockists no longer sell the ink cartridges.

I recycled it as a rather elegant door stop, until the opportunity came to practise my shot-putting skills beside the skip at the local council dump. Needless to say, Canon is not high on my shortlist when considering what to buy next.

Mike Gosling, via email

Back Issues disc winner



Our future depends on the internet, not HS2

I totally agree with Barry Collins' column "Give full-fibre broadband the green light" (Page 404, Issue 509). The only virtue to HS2 was to temporarily boost the economy with jobs. However, the effects of the coronavirus have made the option of working remotely from home distinctly viable and desirable.

It makes sense to avoid a daily commute into big cities for the occasional face-to-face meeting, to sit in "glass fronted, hugely expensive, air-conditioned atriums", as Barry puts it, which cost the Earth's resources to maintain. HS2 is already redundant. The need for high-speed travel in a very limited area of the UK was already out of date and the future revolves around the internet.

Children's education very much relies on the availability of an online facility. The next generation will expect a full-fibre broadband network as a given, yet we are dragging our heels and refusing to grasp the nettle to fully provide this necessary and important facility.

We are all now realising that our future lies on different "lines" to the ones that the HS2 was designed to provide.

Joan Harvey, via email

In praise of Barry and broadband

I delight in reading Barry Collins' columns - everything he writes is such common sense.

There's a lot to be said for reading *Web User* starting from the back!

Out in the sticks, just north of



Quiz Answers: Issue 510

1 **Heartbreak Hotel**



2 **(You're the) Devil in Disguise**



3 **Return to Sender**



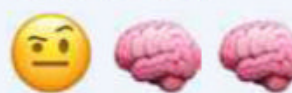
4 **Jailhouse Rock**



5 **Burning Love**



6 **Suspicious Minds**



WINNER!

Well done to **Ewan Lawson** who wins a *Web User* Back Issues Disc



WAYBACK MACHINE

2014





Aberdovey on the coast of Wales, my home – a converted church – has FTTP (fibre to the premises) internet. This is because the telephone service was delivered by pole, and broadband followed. Wales had a huge programme of distribution that even managed to reach my neck of the woods. Fortunately, HS2 goes nowhere near.

Ivan Drake, via email

Devilishly good at digging trenches

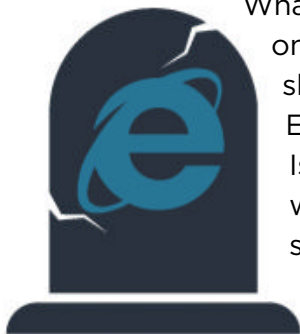


I had to laugh at your FAQ about rural broadband in Issue 507, and the machine you pictured with the caption 'Openreach uses sophisticated equipment to install fibre broadband more quickly'. We were using a trench-digging machine

called Trench Devil 40 years ago. It was a great machine with a winch we fastened to the van to dig a trench about a foot deep. The hardest part was back filling.

David Ollerearnshaw, Facebook

We're better off without Internet Explorer



What on Earth is Paul Giddings on about, saying that we shouldn't "dismiss Internet Explorer's legacy" (Star Email, Issue 510). It was an awful web browser, riddled with security holes. If you ask me, we're better off without it!

The only reason IE was so popular is because it was built into Windows, in a deliberate attempt by Microsoft to stop users trying alternative browsers such as Netscape and Opera. This led to the infamous 2001 'antitrust' court case, in which the US government accused Microsoft of illegally monopolising the PC market.

IE certainly didn't attract users on its own merits – it was slow, always crashing and blatantly copied features, such as tabbed browsing, from its rivals. It also failed to support extensions and emerging web standards, unlike Chrome and Firefox, and this backward-looking attitude ultimately – and thankfully – led to its fall from grace.

The new Edge browser seems decent enough, but please don't expect me to mourn Internet Explorer's demise!

David Sweeney, via email

What you say...

WHICH TOOLS DO YOU WISH GOOGLE HAD NEVER KILLED OFF (see page 40)?

Picasa, definitely. They bought it from another company, lost interest, closed it down and then forced users to switch to Google Photos. They should have just left it alone!

Karen Rowley

Google Reader. No reason for Google to kill it off and nothing has ever come close to replacing it. One of its worst decisions ever.

Trevor Hines

Google Inbox – I still haven't found anything nearly as good – and Google Reader. Old Reader is a kind of replacement but not as good. Also iGoogle and Picasa. Both are irreplaceable and I still miss them. So many sad goodbyes.

Nat Grove

Sorry for being a killjoy but I can't think of anything Google has abandoned that I miss.

John Hewett

DO YOU THINK PEOPLE ON UNIVERSAL CREDIT SHOULD PAY LESS FOR BROADBAND (bit.ly/3kkyHOU)?

Yes, because broadband is essential these days for looking for jobs, managing your finances and applying for benefits. Without it, people will be stuck. However, once they get back to work, they should pay the same as everyone else.

Paul Giddings

I think saying that all people on Universal Credit should get cheap broadband is too sweeping a statement. It needs to be judged

on a case-by-case basis, depending on their individual circumstances.

Helen Chater

Broadband should be free for those who can't afford it. Labour proposed a similar plan last year, but it seems to have been forgotten about during the coronavirus crisis.

Keith Chard

Wi-Fi is freely available everywhere these days, so they should still be able to get online. But if they have kids, I suppose cheap home broadband is necessary.

Mark Frobisher

DO YOU CARE WHICH VERSION OF ANDROID OR IOS YOUR PHONE IS RUNNING?

Yes, there is usually at least one feature in each version that I want – for example, full control of the shortcuts when the Share option pops up in Android 10. This means I am inevitably playing a waiting game for the next version to arrive.

Rich Grove

Not much seems to change from one Android version to another. Certainly nothing to sulk about if you have to wait a few months for the update.

Mike Caswell

Yes, I do care and I'd given up ever getting off version 9 of Android. This was especially annoying because it had already been rolled out by the manufacturer to the exact same model of phone in a different region. However, as I was writing this, the Android 10 update finally appeared in my notifications. Yay!

Caroline Chapman

Google always says the new version of Android is better and faster than one it replaces. It's all a scam.

Jayme Carne

Samsung devices tend to get the latest Android version in the new year, January or February time.

Stuart A Hordern

! Page 404



The fixing of review scores in app stores is a major problem, says **Barry Collins**

Don't look to the stars for app reviews

"Have you enjoyed this magazine? Jolly good, then just click the button below and give us a nice five-star rating. We've even filled the five stars in for you, just in case you can't count, so all you need do is press Submit. That's lovely, thanks."

We've all seen pop-ups worded like the above appear in apps, but according to a brilliant report in the *Financial Times*, that's not even an iota's worth of the skullduggery used to tempt people into giving apps a great review.

If you pay attention, you'll note that

those "please give us five stars" prompts are meticulously timed to make sure you're in the best possible mood when you come to rate an app. If you're playing a game, that invitation to rate will appear just after you've posted a new high score. Got a winning wager on the 3:45 at Kempton Park? Well done you! Why not celebrate by giving your

that don't do this". We are all being played like fiddles.

Still, we place an awful lot of faith in those user reviews. The difference made by a few stars is remarkable. The 'conversion rate' – the number of people who see an app's listing and then click to install it – increases by

"Your news app won't ask for a review if you're reading a story about a train crash or a tax hike, in case it's clouded your mood"

770% from a one-star review to a five-star review in the mobile app stores. Even a modest increase from three to four stars sees the conversion rate spike 89%, according to the figures from customer-satisfaction consultancy Apptentive, published in the *FT*.

Higher ratings and a good conversion rate are also key factors that both Apple and Google are looking for when it comes to ranking apps in their search engines. Both companies want people to install good quality apps, after all, so they'll prioritise the most highly rated ones in the search rankings, where they're most likely to be found by potential customers. When the success of an app hangs so much on user reviews, it's little wonder the app developers are using every little psychological trick they can think of to maximise their scores.

User ratings are being gamed to such an extent that it's impossible to trust them. Yet it's understandable why 4,563 five-star reviews of an app can convince you of its merit, perhaps even more so than a single, independent review in a magazine such as this.

The wisdom of the crowd is very persuasive – even when that crowd is being lured like children dancing to the tune of the Pied Piper.



WebUser

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OFFER**
FOR MORE INFO SEE PAGE 62

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