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Issue 512
14 - 27 October 2020
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How you can make sites and apps easier to read, hear and use p40

42
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Get freebies from Audible p48

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Issue 512

Access all areas

As I slip inexorably into middle age, I've noticed some of the clichés about growing older are proving to be true. Modern pop music *does* all sound the same to me, policemen *are* looking younger these days and wearing a flat cap *is* both sensible and stylish. To that list, I can now add 'websites are becoming more frustrating', and I'm sure the fault is not entirely mine.

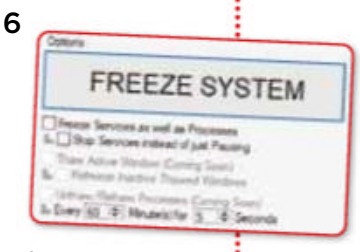
Tiny buttons that are tricky to click or tap, online videos with shoddy sound and dark modes that actually make text harder to read are just a few of my most common annoyances. Fortunately, as Jane Hoskyn explains in this issue's cover feature, there are effective solutions to these problems and other web-accessibility woes.

From adding subtitles to films that don't have them to using screen readers that don't sound like robots and voice-control tools that won't harvest your data, we reveal the best free ways to overcome internet difficulties and enjoy your time online.

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

5 Things you'll learn this issue

1 How to scan a website to view all the hidden trackers lurking in the background page 6



2 How to pause non-essential processes when performing resource-hungry tasks page 29

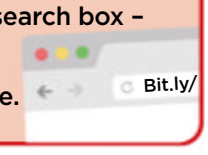
3 How to convert web pages into personal podcasts that you can listen to out loud page 32

4 How to turn your Android device into a webcam for your computer page 36

5 How to access a Wi-Fi hotspot when the login page doesn't load in your browser page 71

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.



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Contents

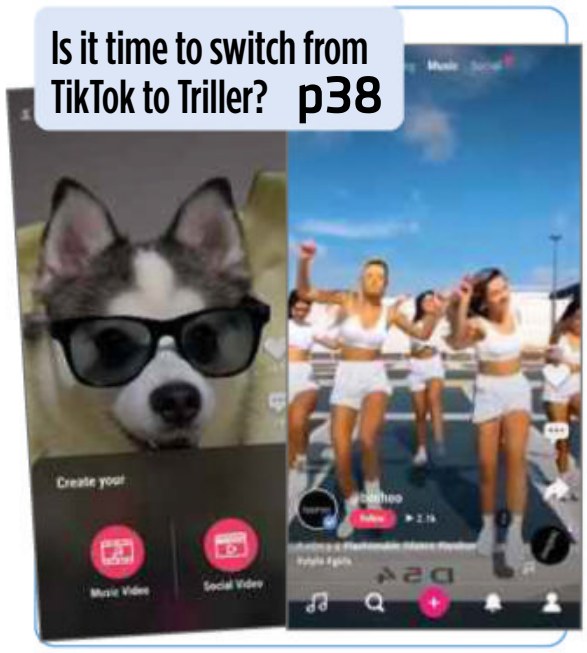
ISSUE 512 14 - 27 OCTOBER 2020

COVER FEATURE

Make the Web ACCESSIBLE

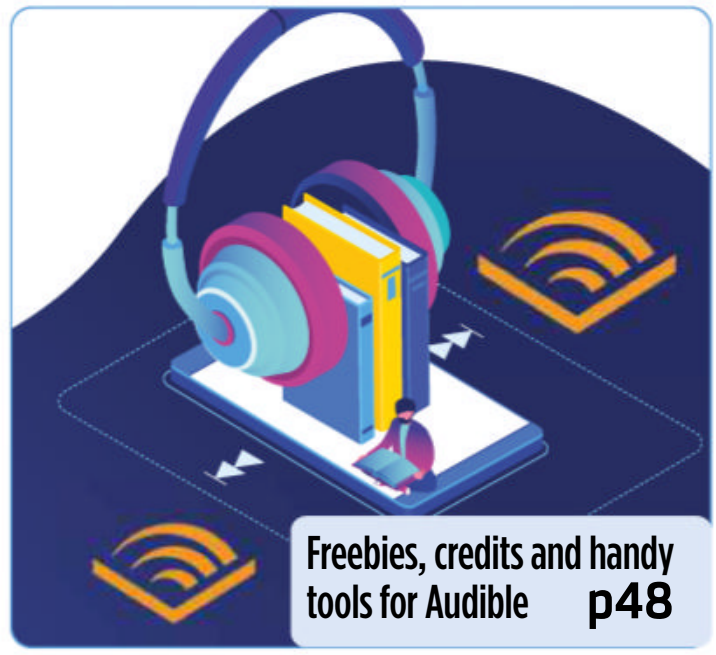
How to make apps and websites easier to see, hear and use

p40



Is it time to switch from TikTok to Triller? p38

An affordable security camera that's packed with features p24



Freebies, credits and handy tools for Audible p48

IN DEPTH Articles on the latest tech topics

38 FAQ
Our guide to Triller

40 COVER FEATURE
MAKE THE WEB ACCESSIBLE
Tools to ease your eyes, ears and fingers

46 Image-editing apps for Android
Six free apps for optimising your photos

48 Secret tips for Audible
10 top tips for Amazon's audiobook service

50 Worst malware of 2020
How to avoid the nastiest threats of the year

REVIEWS Apps, sites and products on test

14 Best New Websites
Discover the relaunched Thomas Cook

22 Product Test
- Honor and Acer laptop head-to-head
- TP-Link Kasa Spot Camera KC-105

28 Best Free Software
Update your system with IObit Driver Booster

32 Best New Browser Tools
Connect your PC and phone with Now Push

34 Best Free Apps
Monitor your camera and mic with Access Dots

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FAVOURITES Must-read regulars

6 What's New Online
Easily switch your energy provider

8 Need to Know
This fortnight's top tech news stories

12 Stay Safe Online
Security advice for PC and mobile

19 Build a Better Site
Expert tips, tools and practical help

20 What to Watch Online
Films and TV shows you can't miss

26 Best Buys
Our pick of the best new products

37 Take a Screen Break
Guess the 1990s films emoji

60 Broadband Deals
Find the best-value package for you

72 Inbox
Tell us your views and opinions

74 Page 404
Barry blasts broadband fault repair

Practical WebUser
16 pages
Workshops, tips, projects and problem solving

52 Workshop 1
Online visual organiser Bublup

54 Workshop 2
Start Menu Manager

56 Workshop 3
Sync your clipboard across your PCs

57 Workshop 4
Remove or hide Windows tools

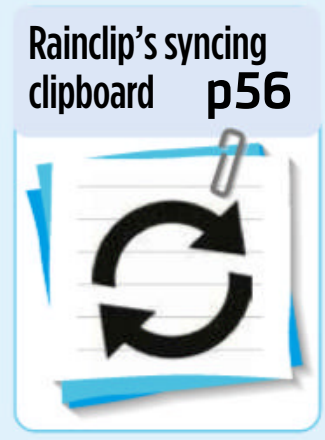
58 Weekend Project
Switch from iOS to Android and vice versa

64 Web User Masterclass
Manage website passwords

66 Ask the Expert
All your technical questions answered

69 Readers' Helpdesk
Solve other readers' problems

70 Readers' Tips
The best tips from our readers



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WEB USER
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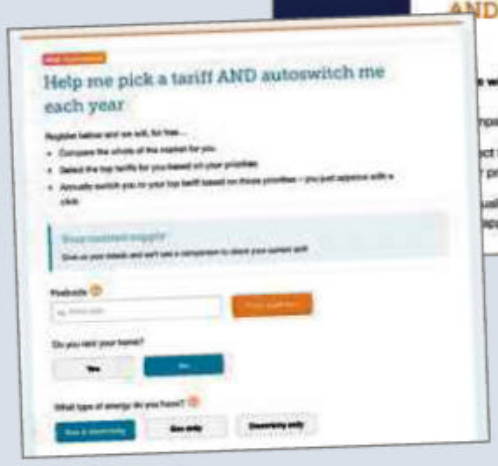
What's New Online

Auto-switch your energy provider

If you can't summon the energy to switch gas and electricity providers when your current deal ends, help is now at hand. MoneySavingExpert.com has launched a new compare-and-switch tool called MSE Autoswitch, which does much of the heavy lifting. It informs you of the best energy deal based on your needs and lets you switch with a single click.



To get started, tell the online tool your current energy provider, where you live, how much you pay and use, and whether your tariff is electricity-only or dual fuel. You're then able to indicate what you're looking for in a tariff so that MSE Autoswitch – backed by TV's financial whizz Martin Lewis – can assess the entire market.

As well as price, you can indicate whether you're more comfortable with a well-known supplier and decide if fixed-rate terms, green energy, customer service and a lack of early exit fees are also important.

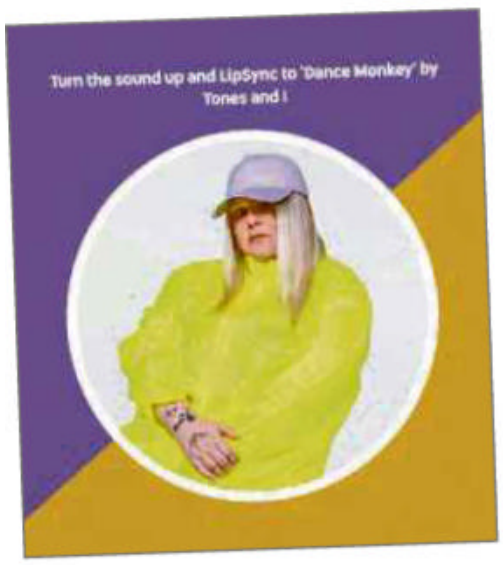
Those details are run through an algorithm to determine the three providers you should be considering, with one of them rated the best. If you like what you see, you can agree to switch at the appropriate time, and even earn up to £25 cashback.
bit.ly/3iczwYh

See how well you can lip sync

lipsync.withyoutube.com

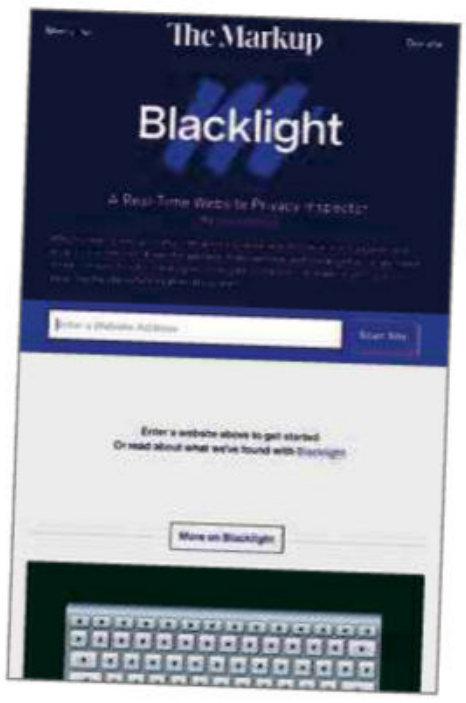
Lip syncing is incredibly popular – you only have to look at the success of TikTok to see the evidence. But how good are you at mouthing the lyrics to a song? Try LipSync by YouTube and you can find out, courtesy of Google's artificial intelligence technology, Tensorflow.js.

Launch LipSync by YouTube in your browser and machine learning will use your device's camera to detect 'landmarks' on your face. You're then encouraged to sing along to the song 'Dance Monkey' by Tones and I, ending with an assessment of how accurate you were.



It doesn't matter if you don't know the song. You can play it as many times as you like to familiarise yourself and Google promises all facial data and processing remain on your own machine. When you're satisfied you've done your best, download your attempt as a soundless GIF before sharing your score with others and challenging them to do better.

View hidden trackers on websites



themarkup.org/blacklight

Whenever you visit a website, it's likely you're being tracked and that information is often used to target you with ads. While GDPR gives you greater control over your privacy, you're often in the dark about who is checking what until you actually land on a site – which is where Blacklight comes in.

Enter a website address and Blacklight will identify third-party cookies, ad trackers, keylogging, session recording, canvas fingerprinting and Facebook code, and check to see whether the site is sending data to Google. This is done in real time by opening a 'headless' web browser and running custom observation software in the background – a process that can take up to a minute to complete.

What you do with the information is up to you but it's sure to be an eye opener: Facebook Pixel, for example, is said to be present on 30% of the most popular websites.

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

Discover how the world's population expanded

urban-expansion.netlify.app

Global population reached a billion in 1804 and there are now seven times that number of people on our planet. This visualisation lets you see how urban populations have expanded over the past 4,000 years by representing the numbers as rising 3D towers that reach for the skies. You can pause the animation at any point.

Celebrate 40 years of the Austin Metro

metro.britishmotormuseum.co.uk

The Austin Metro, which first rolled off the production line in 1980, was a small car with a big army of fans who helped to keep it going for 18 years, first under British Leyland and later by Rover.

Thanks to the British Motor Museum, the car is now being celebrated in an online museum packed with photos, facts and videos covering the Metro's development and marketing. See how it was assembled, view plans of the different panels, gaze at the exterior paint and interior trim guide, and watch classic adverts as you drive deep into the archives.

Create longer videos on Reels

www.instagram.com

Instagram's TikTok rival, Reels, now lets you create videos of up to 30 seconds – twice the previous length. Although that's still short of the minute you get on on TikTok, it's also possible to set a longer 10-second countdown (up from three), so you have more time to get yourself ready for your recording. Clips can be edited and deleted, and the Reels service itself is accessed from within Instagram.

The changes are sure to make the battle for a slice of TikTok's market more interesting, particularly with the rise of services such as Triller (see FAQ on page 38).

Explore an abandoned theme park

bit.ly/33aFJQ4

Listen to this short audio story exploring an abandoned theme park in Berlin and you'll be able to virtually visit the featured locations, thanks to integration with What3Words maps and Google Street View. At certain moments, you can opt to see how the author feels rather than what she's seeing, which makes for an innovative approach to storytelling.

NEW VOICE COMMANDS

Locate your friends

If your contacts share their locations in Google Maps, you can now ask "Hey Google, where is [name]" and Assistant will tell you.

Send a voice recording

Siri can now record and send audio messages to your contacts. Say "Hey Siri, send an audio message" and you'll be asked for a contact before making a recording.

Activate the cheat code

Say "Alexa, up, up, down, down, left, right, left, right, B, A, start" for a special treat. Seasoned gamers will recognise this sequence as the iconic Konami cheat code once used by developers to test their games.

Follow Attenborough on Instagram

bit.ly/34bAGOL

Sir David Attenborough has signed up to Instagram in a bid to save our planet. The beloved broadcaster and naturalist already has millions of followers and he intends to share many videos ahead of his latest book and Netflix documentary, *A Life On Our Planet* (see page 21).

Keep track of COVID-19

www.google.co.uk/maps

Google Maps has introduced a COVID-19 layer in its Android and iOS apps. Tap the top-right button to see a colour-coded seven-day average of new coronavirus cases per 100,000 people.

Pin multiple Zoom videos

zoom.us

A new accessibility feature in Zoom lets you pin multiple video screens during a meeting. It's aimed at people with hearing issues who need a sign language interpreter. Up to nine screens can be kept in place.

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

Need to Know

Google unveils new and updated smart devices

What happened?

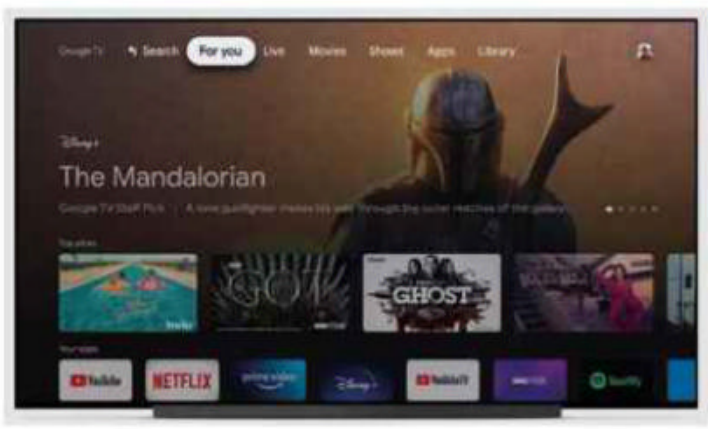
Google wasn't able to hold its annual hardware launch in person this year, but it still had plenty of gadgets to reveal via the half-hour live-streamed event, including two new smartphones – the Pixel 5 and Pixel 4a 5G – an updated Chromecast and the Nest Audio speaker.

Compared to its predecessor, the Pixel 4a 5G has a slightly bigger battery and display (6.2in versus 5.8in), and upgrades from a single to a dual-lens camera on the rear. As its name indicates, it's also 5G-compatible. Those extra features come at a price: the new Pixel 4a 5G is £499, whereas the standard Pixel 4a costs £349.

The Pixel 5 is Google's newest high-end smartphone, following on from the Pixel 4 released in 2019. It, too, supports 5G, and its recycled-aluminium body contains a 4080 mAh battery, 8GB of RAM, 128GB of storage and a 6in HD+ OLED display. It's also water resistant and features wireless charging.

To rein in the cost of the Pixel 5 – it's priced at £599 which, though hardly cheap, is hundreds of pounds less than other manufacturers' top-of-the-range smartphones – some of the fancy features of its predecessor have been ditched. The Pixel 5 doesn't have Face Unlock, a telephoto camera or even the fastest available processor.

Alongside its new phones, Google revealed an update to the Chromecast, its plug-and-play HDMI stick that lets you stream from your phone or Chrome browser to your TV. This version of the dongle still lets you stream content, such as videos, music and photos, from your phone, but it also comes preloaded with a full smart-TV app called Google TV, handy for accessing Netflix and other streaming services, including Amazon Prime Video and Spotify. The Chromecast with Google TV, as it's called, also comes with a remote control that supports Google's voice assistant as well as dedicated buttons for YouTube and Netflix.



The updated Chromecast includes a full smart TV interface called Google TV

The final new smart device is the Nest Audio, which is essentially an updated Google Home speaker that lets you play music from your phone and access Google's voice assistant. Google says it's 75% louder and has 50% stronger bass sound than the first Google Home speaker, while the Media EQ tool automatically tunes audio to optimise what you're listening to, be it music, a podcast or an audiobook. Nest Audio speakers can be connected to stream music throughout your home, and the voice assistant can automatically transfer the podcast you're listening to on your phone to the device as soon as you come in the door.

How will it affect you?

If you're in the market for a new smartphone and are a fan of Pixel handsets, you're in luck: Google's giving you two new ones to choose from. It's also worth considering the Pixel 4a without 5G because signal for the next-generation mobile network isn't ubiquitous yet, and plenty of us will get by just fine on 4G.

As for the other devices, the new Chromecast costs £59.99 and will be available to buy in the UK on 15 October. The Nest Audio will cost £89.99 and arrives on the same date.

What do we think?

We're a big fan of hardware updates that don't cost too much. There are plenty of smartphones out there with cutting-edge features for those people willing to pay a higher price, so it's good to see a company prioritising sensible upgrades and dropping unnecessary and costly features.

Nest Audio may tempt you if you're in need of new hardware, and smart speakers continue to get easier to use, but unless you're a true hi-fi aficionado, you may not notice some of the sound improvements.

Adding Google TV to Chromecast is a great idea, and if you don't yet have a smart TV or you want a second setup – perhaps in your bedroom or kitchen – it could prove very useful. We'll be taking a closer look at the updated device in next issue's FAQ.

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

Amazon's indoor drone raises security fears

What happened?

Amazon has created a flying camera to keep watch over our homes, but security experts are already warning about the privacy implications.

The Ring Always Home Cam is a tiny flying drone that explores your home if it hears a strange noise or knows you're away. The drone only records video when it's hovering around your house, so you'll be aware when it's operating – indeed, Amazon has designed it to be deliberately noisy to provide "privacy you can hear". At its launch event last month, the company also unveiled a camera for cars, which starts to record if the driver is pulled over.

Amazon's other product under the Ring brand, bought in 2018, is its smart doorbell, which has also been criticised on privacy and security grounds. The latest complaints report that the doorbell rings when no one is at the door.

Amazon has said the problem was down to "infrastructure delays" that meant bell pushes were sounding later than expected, adding that the issue has now been sorted.

How will it affect you?

Security researchers have warned that hackers could take over the flying drone to scope out homes for burglaries, with security researchers at Kaspersky saying it raised a "whole new wave of cybersecurity risks". Privacy advocates at Big Brother Watch described the drone as Amazon's "most chilling home-surveillance product yet".

The Ring Always Home Cam will go on sale in the US for $250 (around £193). A UK launch hasn't yet been announced.

What do we think?

All internet-connected security cameras raise security and privacy risks, a fact proven by Ring's camera-enabled smart doorbell, which has faced reports of hackers and even Ring employees viewing videos. Making it fly doesn't make it any more or less dangerous, though we expect to see plenty of stories of hacked Always Home Cams — if anyone actually buys one.

Apple updates its iOS Maps app in the UK

What happened?

If you're an iPhone or iPad user, you may already have spotted a change to Apple's mapping app, with the company rolling out a complete redesign for Maps in the UK and Ireland.

Not only do the maps look different, notably showing more detail while you're exploring an area, but they also include a Street View-style "lookaround" tool, travel guides to many cities around the world and cycling directions — particularly helpful at the moment, as more people get on their bikes.

Another new tool can be found in Maps' directions feature, which now uses natural language for driving instructions. For example, rather than telling drivers to turn left after 200m, they'll be instructed to turn left at the next corner.

The new Maps app also has an updated data source, with Apple now using Ordnance Survey maps for more accurate and detailed information.

How will this affect you?

The update was first announced in the US earlier this year, but is only now making its way to iOS users here in the UK.

Apple rolled out the update at the beginning of October, so anyone using an iPhone, iPad or Mac computer should already have the new version. Everyone else will have to stick with Google or another mapping provider, as Apple still doesn't offer a web-based version of its maps.

What do we think?

It's great to see the competition hotting up in mapping, because Google has long dominated the market. It's just a a shame that no-one aside from iOS users can make use of the rapidly improving Apple Maps app.

We'd love to see a web-based version for use in our browsers as an alternative to Google, or even an Android app (unlikely, we know) – especially since features such as cycling directions and "lookaround" are now included.

Amazon removes smart plug over fire risk

What happened?

Amazon has taken down listings for a smart plug after it was revealed to be a fire risk. In a report by *Which* (bit.ly/which512), the Hickton dual-USB smart plug was found to pose a serious risk to users. The consumer watchdog explained that the device's live connection was situated too close to an energy-monitoring chip. This could cause an electrical discharge between two electrodes, resulting in a fire. Homes with older wiring were identified as being at particular risk.

Kate Bevan, Computing editor at *Which*, said: "Too often we've seen dangerous products being sold on online marketplaces from unknown brands – in many cases originating from China's electronics capital, Shenzhen – that appear to have little accountability and are virtually impossible to contact. This raises big concerns around safety checks and monitoring carried out by online marketplaces like Amazon."

After removing the product from sale, Amazon has encouraged customers concerned about their purchase of the smart plug to contact its customer-service team.

Investigators also suggest that the 'CE' mark found on such devices is misleading. Europeans assume this is a kitemark of quality, indicating conformity to health, safety and environmental standards. However, certain sellers are using the letters to denote 'Chinese export', while others are simply branding products with a fake 'CE'.

Bevan added: "Currently, consumers face a lottery regarding the safety of the products they buy from online marketplaces and whether they meet required safety standards in the UK. That's why it's vitally important that the government gives online marketplaces more legal responsibility for preventing unsafe products from being sold on their sites."

How will it affect you?

You may not have bought this specific smart plug, but there are likely to be thousands just like it for sale online – if you have any in the house, check that they are safe and remove them if they aren't – or, even, if you're not sure. This is especially important if the wiring in your house is old.

Which is championing government legislation but, until that happens, make sure you research any electrical products and, where possible, buy from legitimate manufacturers.

What do we think?

Cheap knock-offs are nothing new. But cheap knock-offs posing a fire risk are a whole different ball game. If the government won't step in, then it's up to retailers such as Amazon and eBay to guarantee that third-party sellers conform to expected safety standards. If they can't or won't, then, as with the offending smart plug in *Which*'s report, they must be removed. Safety first!

FIRST LOOK

Petcube Cam

petcube.com/cam

When you leave a pet alone in the house while you're out, you can never be sure what you're going to walk back into. Even the best-behaved dog may invite her Tramp of a boyfriend over to share a plate of meatballs!

If you're worried about what your pets get up to or you just want to check in with them while you're out and about, the Petcube Cam is a basic – and we mean basic – HD security camera for keeping an eye on the furrier members of the family. While previous cameras in this range have been designed to treat or entertain four-legged friends, the Petcube Cam is focused on surveillance.

Running off the mains is a dinky cube that rests within a sturdy, all-white cradle – it has the look of a bargain-bucket Apple product. Featuring Amazon Alexa support, the indoor camera offers a 120-degree field of view, night vision and sound detection, all at 1080p resolution. Some users have reported that the camera defaults to 720p and, while that's still a clear enough picture for a quick check-in, it's not much consolation if you've been promised Full HD.

Setup is incredibly easy: plug in the USB-C cable, position the camera – the 2m lead allows enough leeway to find the perfect place – then follow the step-by-step guide in the companion app. You're then free to watch your pets or talk to them via the two-way speaker.

Screenshots and videos can be grabbed, but you'll need to pay for cloud storage. Unfortunately, these subscriptions are expensive and you get very few extras in return.

The Petcube Cam is on sale now in the US for $39.99, but the UK price has yet to be confirmed. It's cheap, like a budgie, but doesn't your darling doggie deserve something better?

WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

Is Microsoft buying Sega?

In preparation for the upcoming next generation of consoles, Microsoft has been on a spending spree, buying up game developers – including Obsidian and Compulsion Games – in a bid to strengthen its exclusive line-up. Most recently, the company welcomed Bethesda Softworks, the developers behind *Skyrim* and *Doom*, to the 'Microsoft family', for the bargain price of just $7.5bn.

But rumours are afoot that Microsoft has a new target in sight: Sega. Gamers believe they've discovered several hints that the companies are planning to join forces, including images posted on Microsoft's social-media pages that feature Sega's familiar blue branding.

The acquisition would allow Microsoft to finally gain an edge in the Japanese market, which has long-favoured Xbox rival the Sony PlayStation. In the east, the Sega brand is as omnipresent as ever, and the deal would see brands such as *Sonic the Hedgehog* and *Yakuza* join *Halo* and *Gears of War* in the next-generation console war.

But this is a rumour that's been doing the rounds for years and seems more of a fan theory than dead cert. Sega has long come under fire for refusing to innovate or even capitalise on the popularity of certain titles. Most insiders believe that the idea of Microsoft buying up the business is mere wish fulfilment on behalf of gamers.

LIKELIHOOD RATING

✓✓✓✓✓

We don't doubt that Microsoft would love to own Sega. But Sega has shown no willingness to sell, remaining remarkably quiet on the whole topic. Indeed, the company has seen recent success with its Sega Ages collection: rereleased versions of vintage games from the Master System and Mega Drive eras made available for current gaming platforms.

What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

iUVi Water Purifying Smart Bottle

bit.ly/water512 | From £54

It takes just one minute for the iUVi smart bottle to purify your water using ultraviolet LEDs, and you can expect to get around a thousand hours use from these lights. As well as a lightweight water bottle (it holds 750ml of the liquid of your choice), the creators have squeezed an LED torch and powerbank into the hockey puck-style cap. It's here you control the device, tapping the touch sensor on top to select each action. An early bird pledge of £54 gets you a single iUVi bottle, while £100 nets you two.

WEBOMETER

WE LIKE...

Spotify makes it easier to collaborate

Spotify has updated its Collaborative Playlists feature to make it easier to compile playlists with friends and family. Changes include a new Add User button that lets you invite others to contribute, and avatars next to each playlist submission.

WhatsApp lets you mute chats forever

WhatsApp will now let you mute group chats or individual users forever. Previously, you could only mute for a maximum of one year. WhatsApp will still give you the option to see silent notifications for muted chats so you don't miss anything.

WE DON'T LIKE...

COVID-19 app alerts cause alarm

The NHS contact-tracing app alarmed some users by warning of "possible COVID-19 exposure", without displaying further information. The Department of Health says the bug was caused by the underlying Apple-Google framework and has now been fixed.

5G delay could cost the UK £2bn

The two-year delay to 5G being rolled out in the UK is expected to cost taxpayers an additional £2bn, according to a new report. The hold-up has been caused by the government banning Huawei equipment from the network.

Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

Airbnb error exposed hosts' personal data

Airbnb hosts may have had their personal data, including their addresses and the entry codes for their rental homes, exposed to other users.

Last month, users of the holiday-rental marketplace were redirected to other hosts' inboxes while trying to access messages from their guests. A Reddit user called 'callagem' said that, when logging into Airbnb, they could see another host's messages "including people's addresses and the codes to get in their homes". However, when callagem contacted Airbnb, the company reportedly only advised them to clear their cookies.

Despite multiple users claiming they were able to view the inboxes of "hundreds" of hosts, Airbnb said it does "not believe any personal information was misused and at no point was payment information accessible".

The company also stated that the error was "not the result of a malicious attack on Airbnb infrastructure. It only existed on the desktop and mobile web platforms – not in the mobile app. The users with inadvertent access could not modify the other users' data".

bit.ly/3n3ZdOf

Smart coffee maker hacked with ransomware

A security researcher managed to hack a 'smart' coffee maker so ransomware could be installed on the machine. Martin Hron, a researcher with security firm Avast, conducted an experiment on a first-generation Smarter Coffee Maker to prove how easily Internet of Things (IoT) devices can be hacked.

After tinkering with the coffee maker, Hron found that – when connected to the user's home network – the machine's functions all went off simultaneously and a pre-programmed ransom message appeared on the display. His experiment was so successful that the only way to stop the coffee maker going haywire was to unplug it from the power socket.

"I was asked to prove a myth, call it a suspicion, that the threat to IoT devices is not just to access them via a weak router or exposure to the internet, but that an IoT device itself is vulnerable and can be easily owned without owning the network or the router," Hron wrote in a blog post. "We thought this would be enough to freak any user out".

bit.ly/3n0AmLg

Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

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

Q How worried should Airbnb hosts be about the recent data leak (see story above)?

Robin Metcalf, Facebook

A This kind of accidental data leak is extremely concerning, and one can only hope that whatever caused it to happen has now been fixed by Airbnb. The Reddit user 'callagem', who first reported the problem, has claimed that "it has been fixed now for me". This raises some hope that Airbnb was able to rectify whatever it was that caused the privacy-invading glitch.

However, for those hosts who were shown the wrong inbox, and those account holders whose data was leaked to other hosts, this is bound to have caused a lot of fallout. For starters, anybody whose inbox was leaked, and for whom home entry codes were disseminated, it will now be necessary to update those codes to ensure that

> "The data leaked by Airbnb is highly sensitive, and could easily be exploited by criminals"

their property is not vulnerable to burglars. For this to occur, Airbnb needs to provide clarity over the data blunder by contacting anybody whose inbox was accidentally served to another host. Only then will they understand that there is a potential risk to their personal data and home.

The data leaked by Airbnb is highly sensitive, and it could easily be exploited by criminals for the purposes of engaging in phishing, for example.

The onus is now on Airbnb to explain what happened and to ensure that everyone affected has been informed about their best next steps. If it's found that the data leak was caused due to negligence and improper data protections on Airbnb's part, it could potentially lead to hefty fines.

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

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Breakdown cover from £39: price is for Annual UK Roadside Vehicle Membership. Other levels of cover are also available. Offer is not available for existing Members or at renewal. Cover must be paid by continuous payment method. We'll use your payment details to renew your cover after 12 months. You'll receive a renewal invitation beforehand so you'll have plenty of time to change or cancel your cover. Offer not available in conjunction with any other offer online or in a breakdown situation. If you're buying online please use the website link specified, otherwise you will not receive the offer. **Gift card:** please allow 6 weeks from your policy start date for delivery and processing provided you haven't cancelled your policy. Card is redeemable online so you must have a valid e-mail address. Offer closing date: 31/12/20. **Unlimited call outs:** repeat call outs for the same fault within 28 days will not be covered. 30 minutes attendance: based on an average of all AA attended breakdowns 1 August 2018 – 31 July 2019. **Smart Breakdown and Tap and Track App:** subject to network coverage. **Member Benefits** saving value calculated based on the top 10% of Members by Member benefit redemptions between 01/03/2019 and 29/02/2020. For further information visit: theaa.com/member-benefits. All information correct at time of print September 2020.

Best New Websites

Site of the Fortnight

TRAVEL

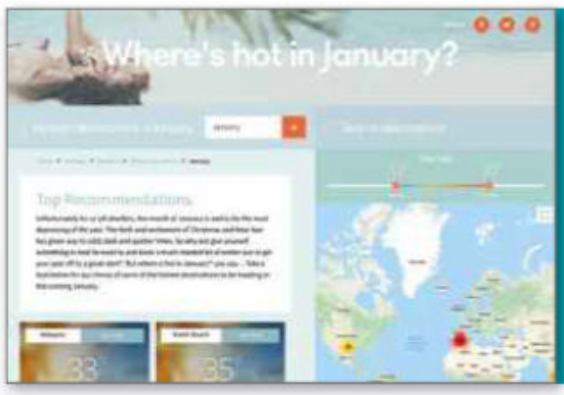
RELAUNCH

Thomas Cook

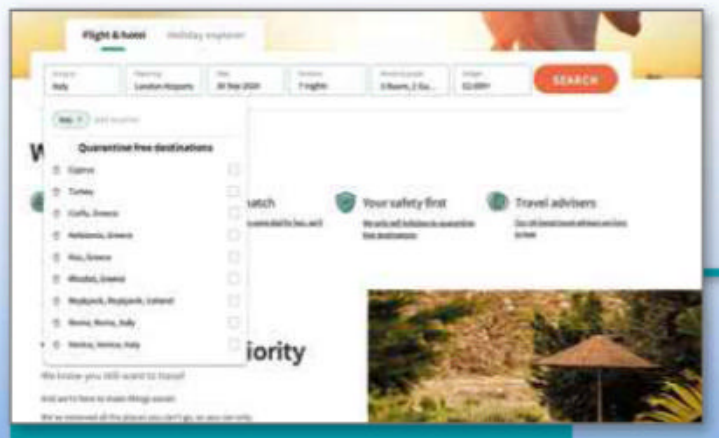
www.thomascook.com

Thomas Cook is back! Having closed a year ago, the 178-year-old travel agency has relaunched as an online-only holiday business. It still offers ATOL protection, which should provide some peace of mind, and booking is straightforward: select a destination, choose a departure airport and enter details of when you want to travel, and the number of rooms and guests. You can select a budget per person, with results neatly displayed alongside Tripadvisor ratings, while the Accommodation pages include reviews and clear flight information. The latter includes the name of the carrier since Thomas Cook no longer charters planes.

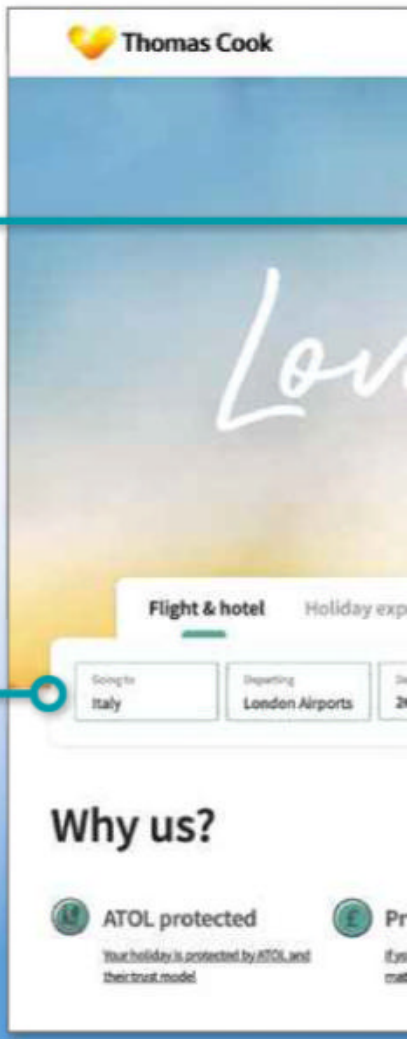
Our rating ★★★★★

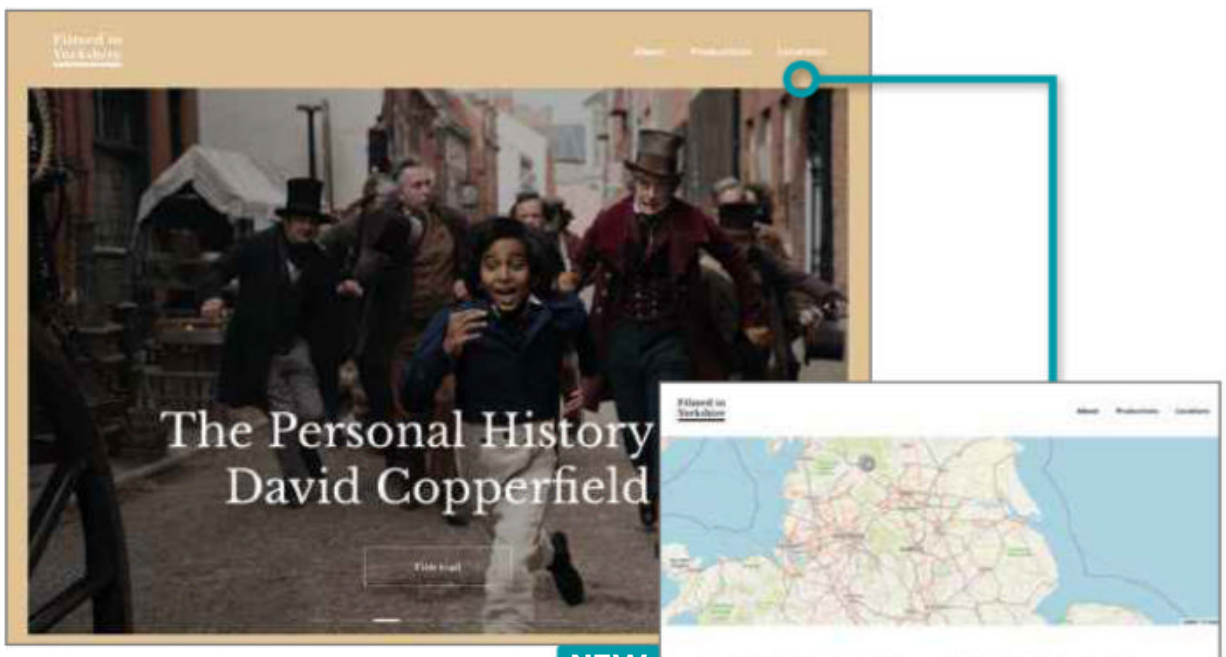


HOT OR NOT
Select a month to see where the best weather is and use the sliders to set your preferred temperature



QUARANTINE-FREE
Thomas Cook can display only destinations that don't require you to isolate due to COVID-19 rules





NEW

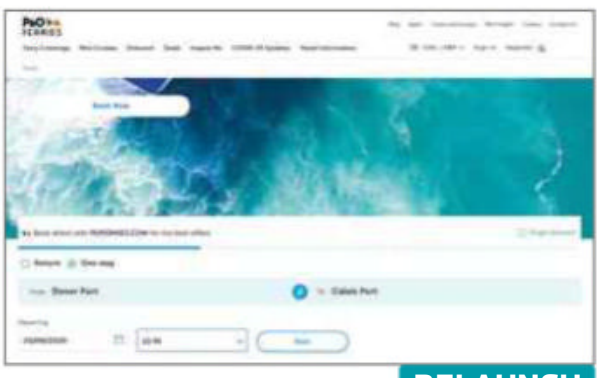
FILM

Filmed in Yorkshire

filmedinyorkshire.co.uk

We're big fans of movie and TV websites that explore the locations they were made in, but few are as satisfying as this effort launched by Screen Yorkshire. As the name suggests, it covers productions filmed in the northern county and, although there are only eight listed so far, there's enough detail to keep you satisfied until a further selection is added. *Last of the Summer Wine* and *Emmerdale* don't yet figure, but you'll find details of *All Creatures Great and Small, Peaky Blinders, Downton Abbey* and some other, higher-brow productions. View the locations on a map, watch a trailer, explore the locations, enjoy the descriptions and discover how to get to each one.

Our rating ★★★★★



RELAUNCH

TRAVEL

P&O Ferries

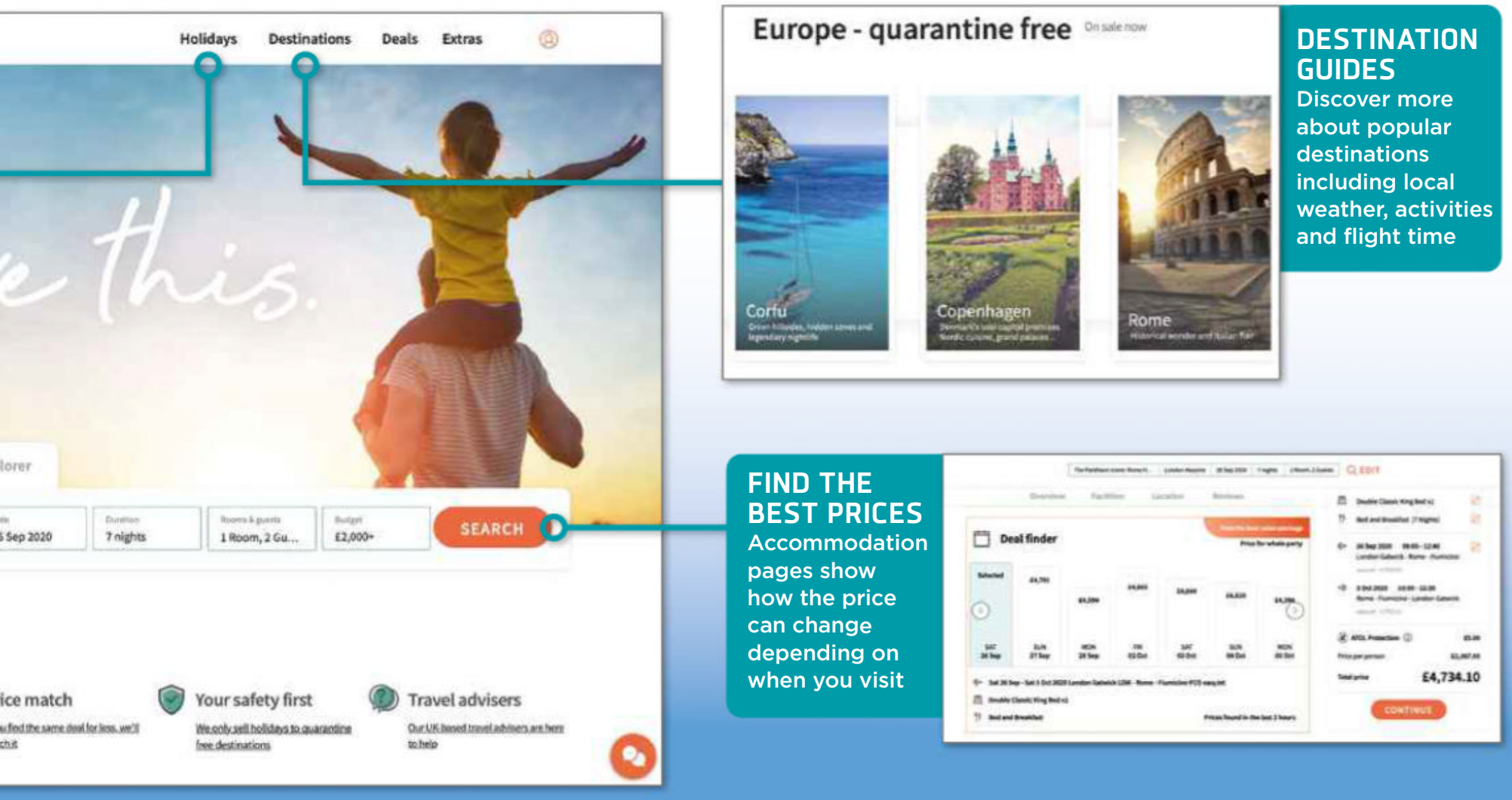
www.poferries.com

Whether you're looking for a standard ferry crossing or a mini-cruise package, P&O Ferries has made booking a trip much easier. The brighter, cleaner-looking site makes it simpler to identify routes, availability and prices, and we like that you can hold fares for 30 minutes – enough time to nail down the finer details of your trip before committing. Offers can be saved to a wallet for later and deals can be booked instantly. You can also explore the ferries to see what's on board, but more work is needed on the drop-down navigation menu because the options feel a bit scattered.

Our rating ★★★★☆

Reviews by David Crookes

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



NEW

MOTORING

Retro Motor

www.retromotor.co.uk

Launched to celebrate modern classic cars, Retro Motor offers a nostalgic journey through motoring's recent past. Take it for a spin and whizz through reviews of iconic Ford Capris, Rover Minis and Reliant Rialtos, while reminiscing about launches, cars that didn't hit the mark and offbeat retrospectives such as a celebration of Skoda. Enthusiasts can pick up hints and tips about caring for old cars, and the news section keeps you informed about events in the retro motoring community. As time goes on, we'd expect to see more video content added, but the site is well on its way.

Our rating ★★★★☆

RELAUNCH

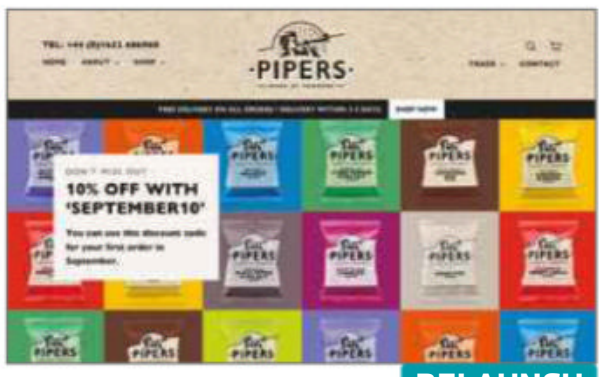
BOOKS

Faber Children's

faberchildrens.co.uk

Designed to support parents and teachers, this site from publisher Faber & Faber goes beyond simply showcasing children's books. For example, you can select a recommendation to read an extract or download a PDF activity sheet. In some cases, there are also videos and trailers to help kids better engage with a story. The authors are listed with links to their social-media accounts and personal websites. New book catalogues are also available (including those aimed at adults), and there's a page dedicated to getting published if you reckon you've got a winning idea.

Our rating ★★★★★



RELAUNCH

FOOD

Pipers Crisps

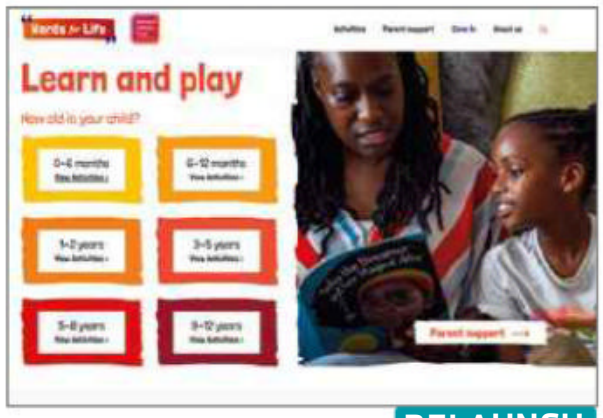
www.piperscrisps.com

Piper's superior range of crisps includes tasty twists on ready salted, salt & vinegar and cheese & onion, but there are eight other tastebud-tangling flavours on offer if you're feeling adventurous. Visit the brand's revamped online store to discover more about the crunchy snacks, checking their ingredients and nutritional information before bagging yourself a box or two. If you've tried the delicious crisps before – and there are no paltry 25g bags here – you can leave a review. Otherwise, feast your eyes on a great-looking site and check out the Pipers' story, which includes graphics and video.

Our rating ★★★★☆

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

Best New Websites



RELAUNCH

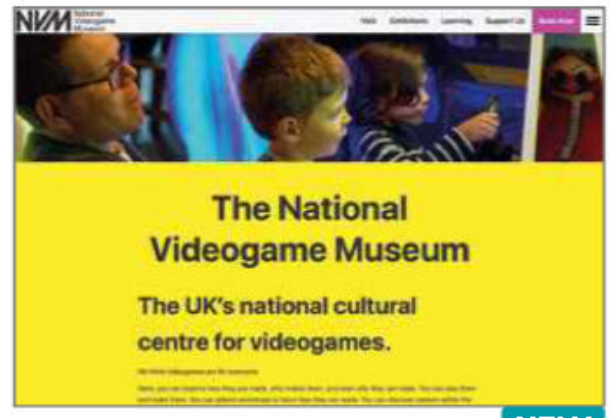
LEARNING

Words for Life

wordsforlife.org.uk

The National Literacy Trust aims to boost literacy skills among disadvantaged children and, with its new Words for Life site, it's offering a wide range of activities for kids under 12. Select an age group to find singalongs, videos and tips for engaging young minds, along with advice on subjects to discuss. There's also a section for students aged 13 and over with articles about improving public-speaking skills and writing a CV. Quick-activity suggestions help parents, grandparents and carers jump straight to a task, and the well-presented site also aims to delve into monthly themes, starting with happiness and wellbeing.

Our rating ★★★★☆



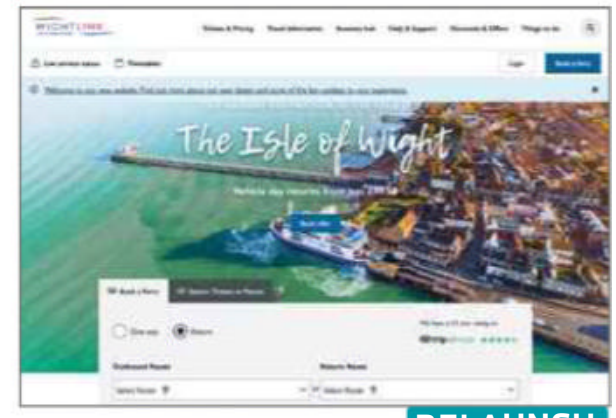
NEW

VIDEO GAMES

National Videogame Museum thenvm.org

The National Videogame Museum in Sheffield has, like all venues, been adversely affected by the pandemic, but its reopening has launched a newly redesigned website with lots of info about the museum's efforts to keep visitors safe. Clear COVID advice dominates the homepage and a robust booking system is in place with plenty of options to suit most visitor combinations. There's a solid taste of what's on offer, though we'd like longer descriptions and more photos. Some crucial information, such as the full list of current games, feels hidden – but part of the fun of a visit is discovering unplayed gems.

Our rating ★★★★☆



RELAUNCH

TRANSPORT

Wightlink

www.wightlink.co.uk

When ferry company Wightlink was redeveloping its website, it canvassed the opinions of commuters, regular travellers and even those who had never set foot on a ferry before, to work out what its customers (and potential passengers) need when booking ferries to and from the Isle of Wight. The result is a user-friendly website that displays a prominent link to the live service status, easy access to timetables and homepage options to book one-way and return journeys, with a tab for season tickets and passes. Isle of Wight postcodes are recognised so travel details can adapt and the design is commendably intuitive.

Our rating ★★★★★

NEW

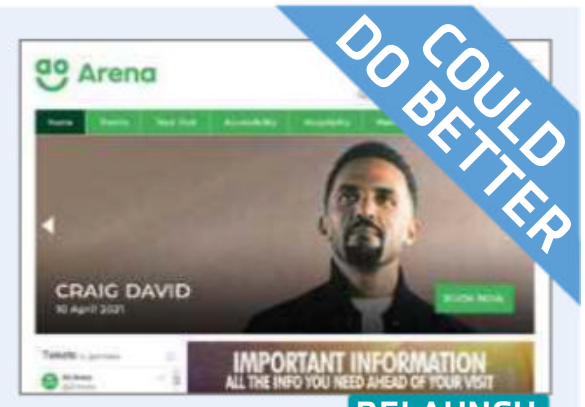
NEWS

The New European

www.theneweuropean.co.uk

The *New European* newspaper launched in 2016 in the wake of the EU referendum and now, with Brexit mere weeks away, it's revamped its site. Claiming that the old version was thrown together when the paper was only set to be around for a short time, the redesigned site is more mobile-friendly and has a wider remit, as it explores the impact of global politics and COVID-19. A Brexit news section remains, alongside stories about Westminster and Europe, but the content would benefit from further categorisation. Headlines need revising, too – some frustratingly taper away. The regular podcasts are worth a listen – depending on your political point of view!

Our rating ★★★★☆



COULD DO BETTER

RELAUNCH

MUSIC

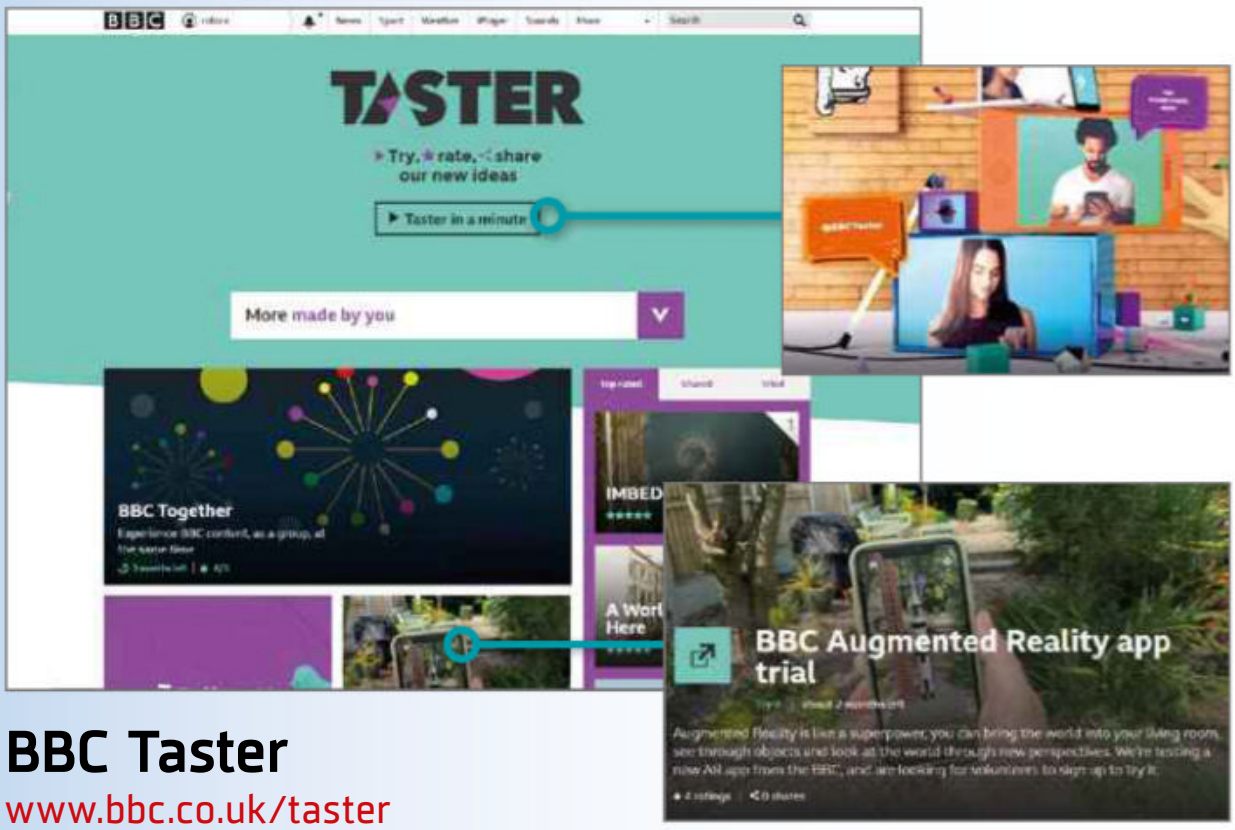
AO Arena

ao-arena.com

Manchester Arena – attacked by a suicide bomber in 2017 – is now AO Arena, and the sponsorship deal has led to a redesigned website, now adorned with the electrical retailer's minty-green colour scheme. You can view the venue's forthcoming events, but the site doesn't categorise them so you'll have to keep scrolling to find something of interest, and we found the short lists of hotels and restaurants disappointing Event descriptions are also poor, but the listings at least link to Deezer, so you can hear artists' tunes, and booking takes you straight to Ticketmaster.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

ESSENTIAL BOOKMARKS THIS ISSUE: Excellent experiment sites



BBC Taster

www.bbc.co.uk/taster

The BBC prides itself on innovation, even if that's not always reflected in the TV schedules, and Taster provides a showcase for its quirkier side. This site rounds up the Beeb's latest experimental ideas and asks you to rate them out of five, so it can see which projects are worth pursuing. Recent examples include BBC Together, which lets you stream videos in tandem with friends and family; Auntie's new Augmented Reality app (currently iOS only); and the Pick a Part orchestral experience we featured in last issue's What's New Online. We also love the Computer Literacy Project Archive, which gathers clips from 1980s TV shows about computing. All Taster's 'pilots' can be shared on social media, and the site's bold, colourful design makes it a joy to browse.

Hack to Help: COVID 19

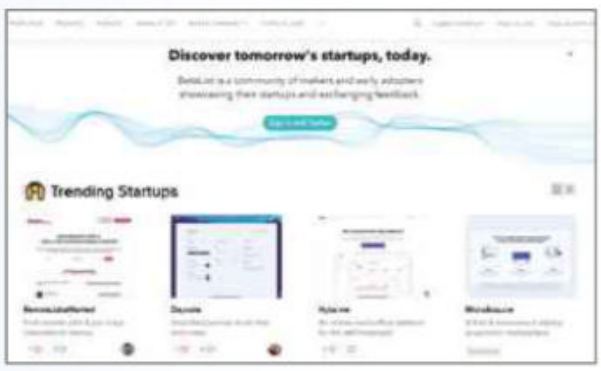
bit.ly/2ZZknTR

We often include Experiments with Google projects (experiments.withgoogle.com) in our What's New Online pages, and now the site has added a section for coronavirus-themed tools. Some, such as a QR-code sign generator and a Google Sheets-based voicemail organiser, are aimed at businesses, while others help individuals cope with the challenges posed by the pandemic: Cupboard Calculator lets you plan your 'pantry' in case of food shortages; Android tool Sodar uses augmented reality to keep you socially distanced; and Wash Your Lyrics provides a fun way to scrub your hands. Creators can submit their own COVID-hacking projects to the site.

Microsoft Garage

microsoft.com/garage

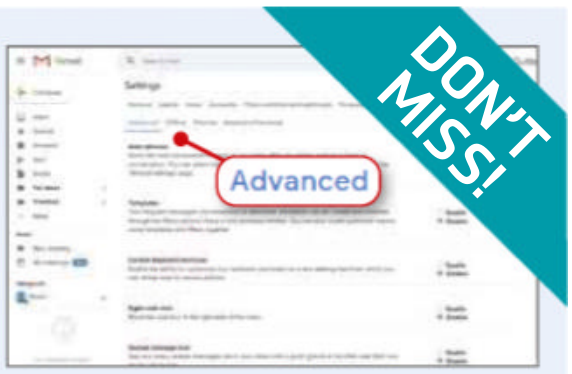
Bill Gates and Paul Allen famously started Microsoft in a garage, and the company's Garage site encourages its employees to develop experimental projects "they are passionate about". The site introduces the teams behind these projects, offers updates on the latest developments via its blog and – most importantly – provides details of the latest experiments, which are mostly AI-based desktop and mobile apps. Recent releases include Sketch Pal, a lightweight sketching app for digital artists, and Digital Marketing Center, which helps small businesses promote themselves on multiple online services. Visit the Wall of Fame section to explore Garage's most successful projects, such as the brilliant Microsoft Launcher and Mouse Without Borders.



BetaList

betalist.com

BetaList lets you in on the cutting edge of technology by showcasing "tomorrow's startups, today". Tools that are now household names – such as IFTTT and Pinterest – were given their first platform on the site and several new betas are added every day. When we visited, the latest projects included online journal/to-do-list Daynote, speedy screen-capture tool Veed and the intriguing GramGram, which lets you send prints of Instagram photos to friends and family who don't use the web (sadly, US-only at the moment). BetaList's simple interface makes it easy to browse the experiments, and you can leave comments and ratings via Twitter. Note that some projects require you to request access from their developers.



Gmail Advanced

bit.ly/3ck2uUN

Gmail Labs used to let you try experimental tools being tested for the webmail service, but it hasn't been updated for years and the option has been removed from Gmail. You can still try a handful of these experiments via the link above or by clicking the cog, choosing 'See all settings' and selecting Advanced. Options include creating templates from frequently sent messages; 'Right-side chat', which moves the chat box to the right-hand side of your inbox; and 'Unread message icon', which displays your unread email total in Gmail's browser tab. To activate a feature, choose Enable then Save Changes.

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

Computer active

READER OFFER!

ADD A DISC FOR £6.95!

Buy Windows 10 Home for just £29.99!

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

To buy **Windows 10 Home**, visit **bit.ly/win10discount** and click the red Buy Now button on the right. If you have any questions about your purchase, please email **editor@computeractive.co.uk**.

Windows 10 Home NOW ONLY £29.99*

*Normally £119.99

Buy it on our Software Store at bit.ly/win10discount

Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

Top Tips of the Fortnight

Give WordPress a dark mode

If you have a WordPress website, why not give your visitors the chance to switch from your regular daytime theme to a cool dark mode as the days draw in? The easiest way to do this is with a plugin. Try Dark Mode for WordPress (bit.ly/3cMqQGV), which is simple to set up and provides your visitors with a choice of light and dark themes at the click of a button.

Sign up for privacy-centered analytics

Google Analytics (analytics.google.com) is a great tool for gathering data on your visitors and is available for free, but it's often criticised for invading people's privacy. As an alternative, Cloudflare (www.cloudflare.com) is creating a privacy-centred

analytics tool that promises to provide key information about what your visitors are doing on your site without compromising their privacy. It's currently only available to existing Cloudflare customers but will eventually become free to everyone via a simple line of JavaScript that you can add to your site's code.

For more info, read the blog post at bit.ly/30oonxi and join the waiting list for the free JavaScript version at bit.ly/33kvtF0.

Deal of the Fortnight

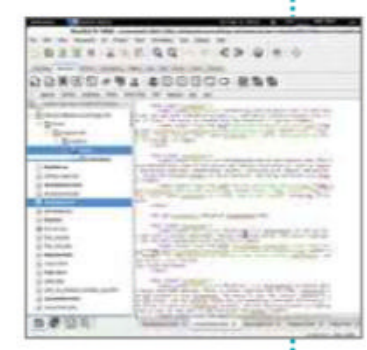
If you're feeling creative, Hover (www.hover.com) is offering 88% off '.design' and 75% off '.art' domains.

Web-building Helpdesk

Q **My website, built in BlueGriffon (bluegriffon.org), has a lot of images. I'd like to add the height and width of each image to the code, which I've heard will help my page load faster and better, but BlueGriffon doesn't let me do this.**

Philip Goddard, via email

A If you're familiar with HTML, and it sounds as if you are, you could try using Bluefish (bluefish.openoffice.nl). This is an HTML editing tool, so you could design your site directly using the software or import the current site and edit the raw HTML code. You'll still have to manually enter the height and width ratios of each image, though.



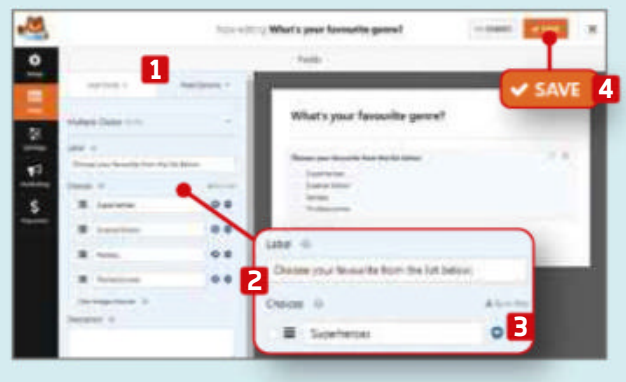
Alternatively, if you know how to use Python, someone has helpfully written a script to automate this process at bit.ly/2GujQ5C.

MINI WORKSHOP | Add a survey widget to your WordPress website

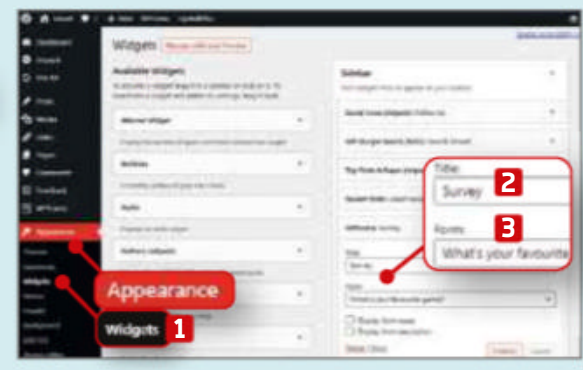
WPForms Lite: wpforms.com | 10 mins | WordPress.org website

The hardest thing about running a website is not knowing what your readers are thinking. Find out by adding a simple multiple-choice survey widget with WPForms Lite.

1 Install the WPForms Lite plugin by clicking Plugins, then Add New. Search for WPForms to find 'Contact Forms by WPForms'. Install and activate this, and a new WPForms menu item is added to your dashboard. 1 Open it and choose Add New. 2



2 Give your form a name in the Form Name box, then click the 'blank form' link. In the Standard Fields section, choose Multiple Choice. A form template is created. 1 Click the Label and Choices boxes to edit them. 2 To add more choices, click a plus button 3 to create another answer option below. When you've finished, click the Save button. 4

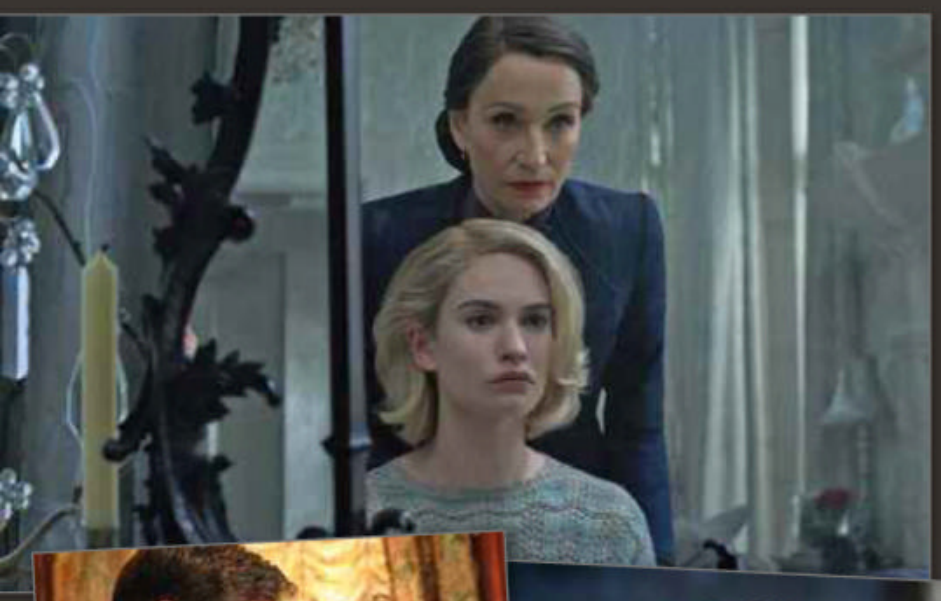


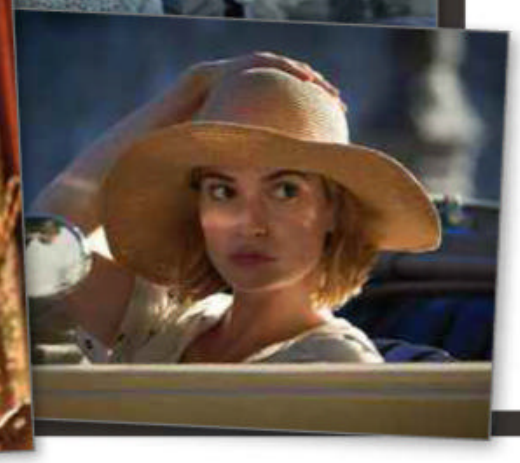
3 Return to the WordPress dashboard and click Appearance, then Widgets. 1 Choose WPForms and the widget location – we're using our Sidebar. Give it a title, 2 choose a Form from the drop-down list 3 and click Save. The free version doesn't collate responses but you'll get an email every time the form is submitted.

What To Watch Online

Pick of the fortnight

NETFLIX





Go back to Manderley in Netflix's *Rebecca* adaptation

From 21 October

Kristin Scott Thomas is an inspired choice to play sinister housekeeper Mrs Danvers in the latest version of Daphne du Maurier's 1938 novel (bit.ly/33jPr2G). Netflix insists its *Rebecca* is not a remake of Alfred Hitchcock's 1940 film, which cast Laurence Olivier as handsome widower Maxim de Winter and Joan Fontaine as his young bride. De Winter is played this time by Armie Hammer (*Call Me By Your Name*), while Lily James (*Downton Abbey*) is the nameless young woman struggling in the shadow of the first Mrs de Winter, Rebecca, and her torch-bearer Mrs Danvers. The film is directed by Ben Wheatley, a young British filmmaker with a knack for dark comedy – much like Hitch himself.

The sumptuous trailer gathered 1 million views and 20,000 likes in its first fortnight on YouTube (bit.ly/2Gh3ihb), so hopes are high. The impressive supporting cast includes Keeley Hawes, Bill Paterson and Ann Dowd (Aunt Lydia in *The Handmaid's Tale*). Watch *Rebecca* on Netflix at bit.ly/2G5WXFM.

See Hugh Grant's dark side in *The Undoing*

From 26 October

Hugh Grant and Nicole Kidman team up with the director of *Bird Box* and the writer of *Big Little Lies* for HBO's glossy psychological thriller, which you can watch in the UK via Sky Atlantic and Now TV with an Entertainment Pass.

In the six-part series, based on the 2014 bestseller *You Should Have Known* (bit.ly/33fWQQD), Grant plays a suave British pediatric oncologist – very much the Hugh Grant we know and love, judging by the trailer (bit.ly/3ik5GRw). But he may be hiding a terrifying secret, hints HBO's teaser (bit.ly/36obMhE). Donald Sutherland co-stars, along with Sofie Grabol (*The Killing*) and Edgar Ramirez (Gianni Versace in *American Crime Story*). Episodes arrive weekly, a day after airing in the US.

Watch the new season of *Star Trek: Discovery*

From 16 October

It's 18 months since the Season 2 finale of *Star Trek: Discovery*, or 900 years and 18 months if you're Commander Burnham, last seen entering a wormhole and finally now emerging after a coronavirus-shaped production delay. Thirteen new episodes arrive week-by-week on Netflix, the day after they air on CBS in the US. The latest trailer is free to watch on Netflix at bit.ly/2SsrAYB.

Watch *The War of the Worlds* live (ish) on stage

From 16 October

A hologram of Liam Neeson competes for star billing with a 35-foot flying saucer in the stage version of Jeff Wayne's *The War of the Worlds* (www.thewaroftheworlds.com), which you can watch for free for one weekend.

The two-day treat comes courtesy of YouTube channel, The Shows Must Go On (bit.ly/3n4YoVC), launched by Andrew Lloyd Webber when lockdown began in March.

Companies including the Royal Opera House, Cheek By Jowl and RSC are also streaming performances for free. What's On Stage has a constantly updated roster of links at bit.ly/33npU93.

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

You can also watch free live and on-demand streams of talks with David Byrne, Tilda Swinton and other luminaries at the London Film Festival, streaming at www.youtube.com/BFIfilms until 18 October.

Take to the floor for *Strictly Come Dancing*

From 17 October

The sequins and spray-tans are finally back for an 18th series of *Strictly*. The pre-recorded launch show arrives on the iPlayer on 17 October, followed a week later by the first live show. Stream the action via the Beeb's *Strictly* site at bbc.in/31RgUrl, where you can also meet this year's contestants, watch the recent Best Of shows and vote for your favourites.

Untangle a new batch of *Unsolved Mysteries*

From 15 October

In the 1980s, NBC show *Unsolved Mysteries* was a huge hit among fans of true crime and the paranormal. So it's fitting that the producers of *Stranger Things* have teamed up with the original creators for this Netflix reboot.

The first six episodes ('Volume 1') arrived in July, and Volume 2 now follows it with a mix of true-crime talking heads and ghoulish reconstructions. Watch all 12 episodes, along with Volume 1's free trailer at bit.ly/3idW9LS.

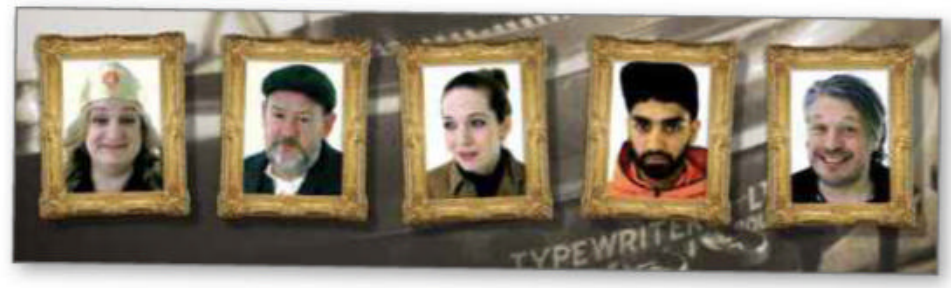
The original 1980s version wasn't shown in the UK, but it's now available on-demand via Amazon Prime Video (amzn.to/33nDFVf) and YouTube (bit.ly/33irKry).

Welcome *Taskmaster* to its new Channel 4 home

From 15 October

BAFTA-winning comedy challenge show *Taskmaster* moves from Dave to Channel 4 for its 10th series, so you can watch it via All 4 (www.channel4.com). Greg Davies and Alex Horne return to oversee a new quintet of contestants: Johnny Vegas, Richard Herring, *The IT Crowd*'s Katherine Parkinson, *This Country*'s Daisy May Cooper and stand-up Mawaan Rizwan. Meet them all on YouTube at bit.ly/3l1ZG1v.

If you've never seen *Taskmaster* before, you can catch up with nine previous series of demented challenges via UKTV Play at bit.ly/33jzQAo, all free to watch.



BBC Red Button news gets a reprieve

The BBC has reversed its decision to axe its Red Button TV text service, following a campaign by people with disabilities and viewers with no online access.

The Red Button text switch-off, announced a year ago as part of a cost-cutting drive, triggered dismay among users who relied on it for on-screen news headlines, sport results and weather reports. Plans to remove video content from BBC Sport and BBC News TV apps, and move it to the iPlayer, will still go ahead. Find out more from the BBC Blog at bbc.in/3iqKEB2.

Meanwhile the BBC Sounds app (bbc.in/37ER4bG) now works outside the UK. If you live overseas, you've previously only been able to listen to BBC Sounds via its website (www.bbc.co.uk/sounds).

In case you missed it...

David Attenborough's career-spanning documentary, *A Life On Our Planet*, is now on Netflix following a limited cinema release. Watch the official trailer at bit.ly/2S97FO9.

Over on iPlayer, *Top Gear* is now on Series 29 at bbc.in/36oozkc, while *Have I Got News For You* is on Series 60 at bbc.in/30F8RgX and *The Apprentice* has spawned a new 16-part show *The Apprentice: Best Bits*, streaming via the iPlayer at bbc.in/3n7xlc3. There's plenty of vintage Attenborough on the iPlayer, too, at bbc.in/3l6alrY.

Billie Piper stars in the second season of Jordan Peele's *The Twilight Zone* revival, which joins Season 1 on Now TV at bit.ly/3n18uGO. You can watch the latest trailer at bit.ly/344YFyQ.

Product Test

We test and compare the latest products

Honor MagicBook Pro

We test two new £850 laptops to find out which one offers the best value for money

Honor, a subsidiary brand of Chinese manufacturer Huawei, is best known for its smartphones. It's a relative newcomer to laptops, but has created quite a splash with its MagicBook range.

Acer, meanwhile, is a Taiwanese company that's well established as a reliable brand in the laptop market. Its machines are almost as ubiquitous in shops as laptop stalwarts HP and Dell.

Here, we've looked at two similarly priced laptops, one from each company, to see which one offers the best deal.

PRODUCT INFO

Honor MagicBook Pro

Price: £849

Buy from Honor:

bit.ly/2Hr7741

SPECIFICATIONS

- AMD Ryzen 5 4600H processor
- 16GB of memory
- 512GB SSD storage
- 16.1in 1,920 x 1,080 IPS display
- 369 x 234 x 16.9mm
- 1.7kg

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

Design, build and screen

The MagicBook Pro is Honor's flagship model, just launched and available for £849 direct from Honor. There's only one configuration, unlike the Acer's Swift 3, which is available in a range of specifications. The Swift laptop we tested cost £849.99 direct from Acer, though you may find it for less elsewhere. However, when shopping around for prices, check the list of specifications to ensure you're not buying a cheaper model with different components.

> "The MagicBook Pro flew through our 4K media and SSD speed tests, outperforming vastly more expensive laptops"

The headline specs for the Honor laptop are an AMD Ryzen 5 4600H processor with 16GB of memory and a 512GB SSD drive. The Acer opts for Intel instead, with a Core i7-1065G7 processor, only 8GB of memory but a similar 512GB SSD.

Honor has supplied its laptop with a 16in screen – compared to the Acer's 14in display – so the overall size of the device is larger. However, both screens have resolutions of 1,920 x 1,080 pixels, which means the Acer's looks sharper, because the density of the pixels is higher.

Both screens are vivid and bright, though the Honor has the edge with a peak brightness of 345cd/m² and an excellent 97.8% of the sRGB colour standard, ahead of the Acer's 291cd/m² peak brightness and 93.7% of the sRGB standard.

These laptops fall into the category of ultrabooks – light, thin laptops that are designed to be easily portable. The Honor is a hair's breadth under 17mm thick and weighs a mere 1.7kg. With its smaller screen, the Acer package is even more compact, measuring 15.9mm at its thickest point and weighing just 1.19kg. Both are well suited to being carried around, though the Acer will slip into a smaller bag.

Both chassis are made of strong metal but the Honor's is robust, unyielding and feels very well made. The Acer is reasonably sturdy but we thought the lid and wrist rest could take a little more reinforcement.

The Honor has plenty of ports for attaching peripherals, with USB-C, HDMI and a standard USB port on the left edge; and two standard USB ports plus a 3.5mm headphone socket on the right edge. The Acer doesn't quite keep up, though its smaller frame only loses a single USB port on the right.

Performance

We put both laptops through a barrage of performance tests. The Honor laptop flew through our 4K media benchmark, producing a score of 221. This is a phenomenal

VS

Acer Swift 3 SF314-57 (2020)

result that even outpaced a £2,499 Dell XPS 15, which scored 191 in the same test. The Acer, however, only managed a score of 87, perhaps hampered by having less memory.

To test the graphics speed, we ran the GFXBench Car Chase benchmark. Here, the results were closer, though the Honor still did better overall with frame rates of 51fps on-screen (where the 3D graphics are displayed) and 54fps off-screen (which measures the raw processing power of the graphics without sending them to the screen). The Acer managed 47fps on-screen and 47.4fps off-screen. That pricey Dell, by the way, managed 37.2fps and 182fps respectively.

We also tested the raw speed of the SSD drive, because this reflects in the overall impression of speed that a laptop gives. In the AS SSD/BlackMagic Disk Speed Test, the Honor recorded a read speed of 2,765MB/s and a write speed of 2,144MB/s. We've only ever seen one drive faster than this, and that was on a £3,789 Apple Macbook Pro. The Acer wasn't as fast, with a read speed of 1,567MB/s and write speed of 1,382MB/s.

> "With its 14in display, the Swift 3 is smaller and lighter, and has a higher pixel density, resulting in a sharper screen"

Battery life and webcam

We'd expect a more powerful battery in the Honor because the laptop's larger size leaves more room to accommodate a bigger unit. This proved to be the case, with the battery lasting 9 hours and 15 minutes in our video-rundown test. However, the Acer also fared well, lasting 8 hours and 10 minutes. Neither laptop is pushing the boundaries of battery technology but there's enough juice here to get you through a working day if you don't have access to a power socket.

Given the results of our tests, you could be forgiven for thinking that the Honor has won this contest hands-down, but we have one niggle: the location of the webcam. It's disguised as a function key and sits between the F6 and F7 buttons on the keyboard. Tap it and it pops out. The main drawback is that from such a low angle, anyone you are chatting with is going to get a clear view of the inside of your nose.

OUR VERDICT

Head-to-head reviews can involve some push and pull, with one product nudging ahead in one aspect, and the other balancing with a different feature or test result. That hasn't happened here, and it's not because the Acer is a bad laptop, but rather because the Honor MagicBook Pro is a very, very good one.

For the same price, Honor provides a larger screen and a significant boost in performance. Put simply, the MagicBook Pro offers phenomenal value for money and is well worth considering if you're after a laptop for under £1,000.

PRODUCT INFO

Acer Swift 3 SF314-57

Price: £849.99
Buy from Acer:
acer.co/3mH1Y8d

SPECIFICATIONS

- Intel i7-1065G7 processor
- 8GB of memory
- 512GB SSD storage
- 14in 1,920 x 1,080 IPS display
- 320 x 217 x 15.9mm
- 1.19 kg

★★★★☆

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

TP-Link Kasa Spot Camera KC-105

Andy Shaw reviews an affordable, feature-packed security camera

Unbox TP-Link's Kasa Spot camera and you'll instantly appreciate its sturdy, functional design. The camera unit is permanently attached to its base with a stiff ball socket, providing stability and a good range of movement to help you get the best viewing angle on your home. It can be tilted back at a 90-degree angle, which turns the stand into an effective wall mount. There are hooks provided for a pair of supplied screws, and even a template sticker you can attach to the wall to guide you when drilling holes.

Best of all, the supplied USB cable is a generous 3m, long enough to reach a power socket, even if you want the camera positioned at height.

Setup, viewing and storage

The device uses TP-Link's Kasa app, which is reassuringly simple to set up. Just plug the camera into a power socket and the app does the rest. You may need to switch your phone to the camera's Wi-Fi network to pass on your network's details, but the app guides you through this process. However, if you don't have a smartphone to run the app on, you can't set up the camera.

There are a number of ways to store the video it collects. A microSD card slot lets you record 24/7, though there's no card included so you'll have to buy this separately. You can also set the camera to alert your mobile if it detects any movement. Alternatively, you can sign up to TP-Link's Kasa Care online video storage service (bit.ly/3cPVm2C), which saves 30 days of recordings for £2.99 per device, or £9.99 for a multi-device setup of up to 10 cameras.

You can watch live footage on your phone at any time, and two-way audio lets you talk to anyone in the room. You can also set up detection zones, which can block out movement captured through a window beyond your property's boundaries, for example, and the software is able to distinguish between people and other creatures, such as pets. We set up the camera in a wide room and its 130-degree lens adequately captured movement, even on the peripheries.

Integration and video quality

The app integrates neatly with Google Assistant and Amazon Alexa, but that's only useful if you have a smart device with a screen, such as the Google Nest Hub or the Amazon Echo Show, which you can then use to request a live feed.

We were impressed with the quality of the video captured. During the day, the images were sharp and clear and the night vision worked well, too. Video is recorded at 15 frames per second, so while it's fine for its intended security use, you won't want to use it for anything else.

PRODUCT INFO

TP-Link Kasa Spot Camera KC-105

Price: £38.99
Buy from Amazon:
amzn.to/2GzyVT6

SPECIFICATIONS

- 130-degree viewing angle
- Night vision to 30 feet
- 1080p resolution
- H.264 video compression (15fps)
- 2-way audio
- 89 x 59 x 50mm

FOR

✓ Affordable camera
✓ Reasonably priced online subscription
✓ Good quality footage

AGAINST

✗ Requires smartphone to set up
✗ No free online subscription

OUR VERDICT

★★★★★

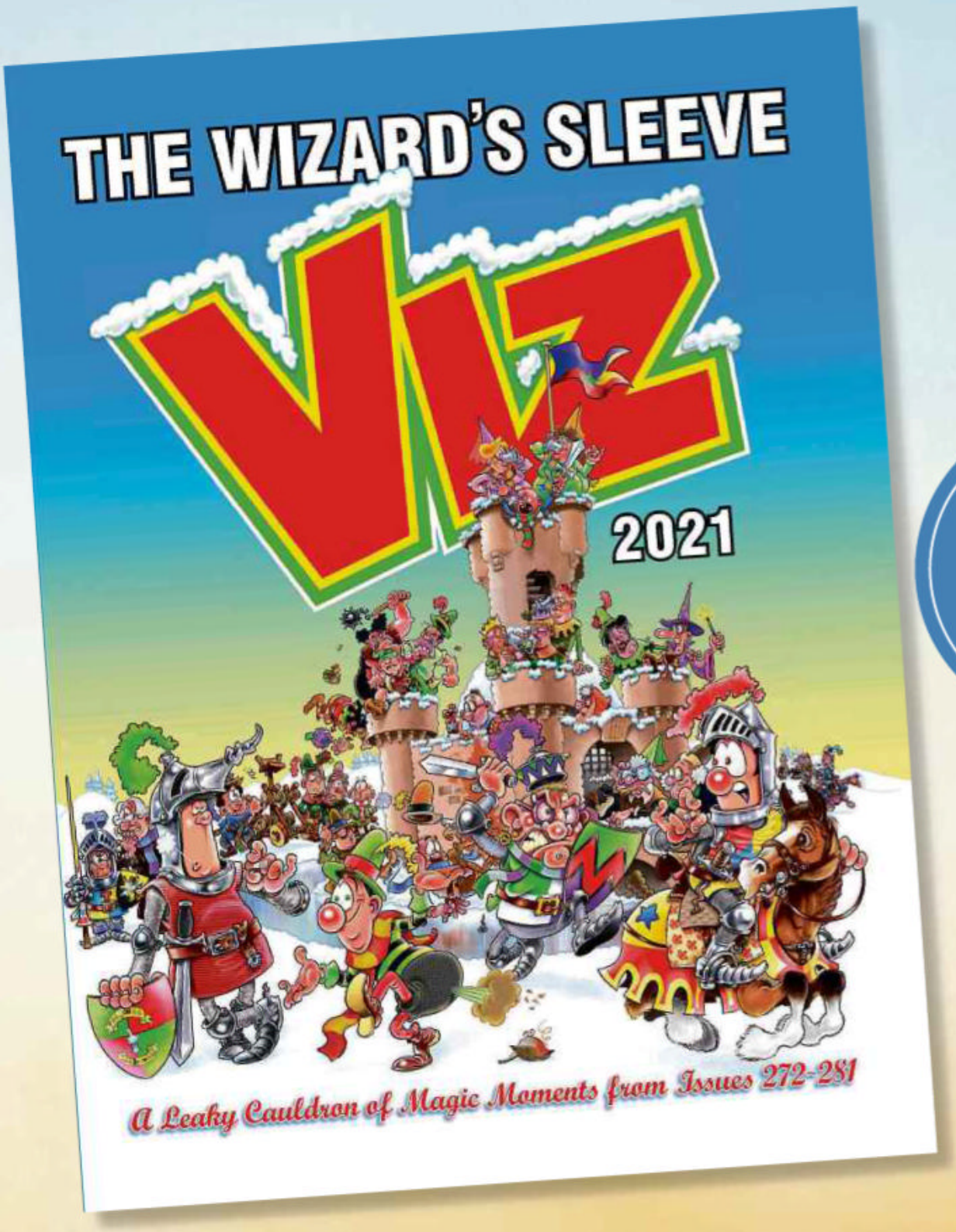
This Wi-Fi powered security camera ticks a lot of boxes, with local picture storage limited only by the capacity of the microSD card you insert. It also uses reasonably priced online storage that becomes better value as you add more devices. Setup and everyday use is simple, all driven through a handy smartphone app, and the quality of footage is more than sufficient to help you catch intruders red-handed.

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

Viz

2021 ANNUAL

OUT NOW



RRP £12.99

Enjoy all the best bits from issues 272-281 of Viz Comic, Britain's funniest* and best-selling** magazine.

Available from Amazon, WHSmith, Waterstones and other good bookshops.

*Winner, Britain's Funniest Magazine, Viz Comic Magazine Awards, 1979-2020

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

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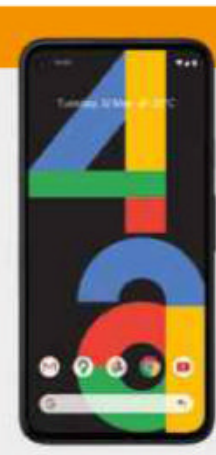
HARDWARE, SOFTWARE & SERVICES

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

All prices correct at time of review

Gold Award winners

The best from our software tests

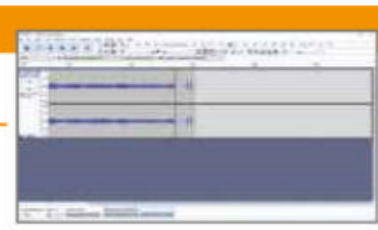
BLOATWARE REMOVER

Bloatbox

Free from bit.ly/2ZEAXs0
Tested: Issue 511
This tiny portable tool has one mission: to remove unwanted software and apps that Microsoft installs with Windows. It helped us reclaim nearly half a gigabyte of hard-drive space.

AUDIO EDITOR

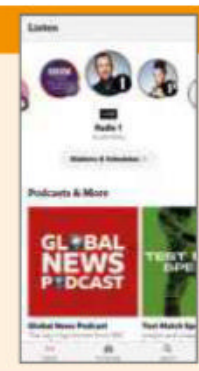
Audacity



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

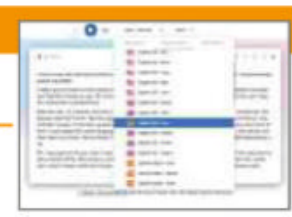
BBC Sounds



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.

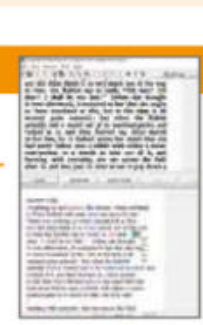
BANKING SOFTWARE

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.

WebUser

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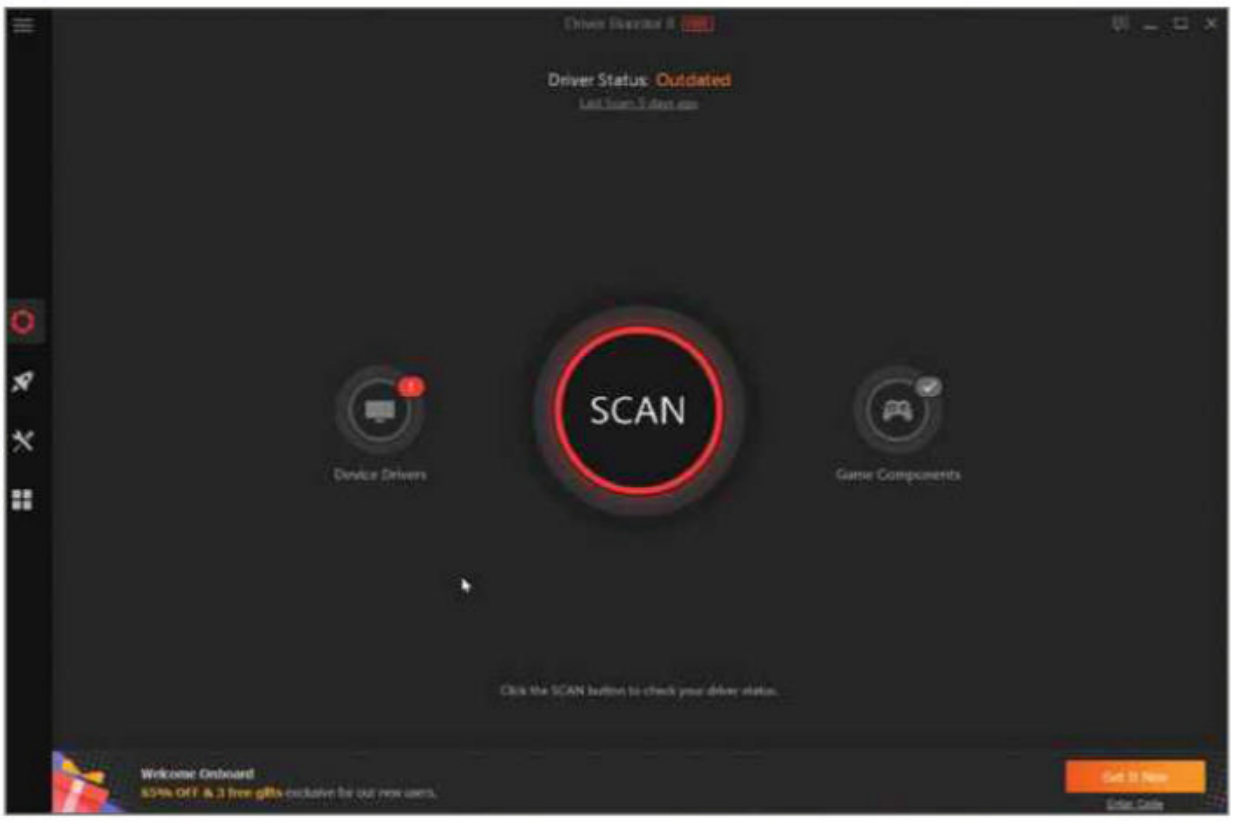
Best Free Software

SYSTEM UPDATER

IObit Driver Booster 8 Free

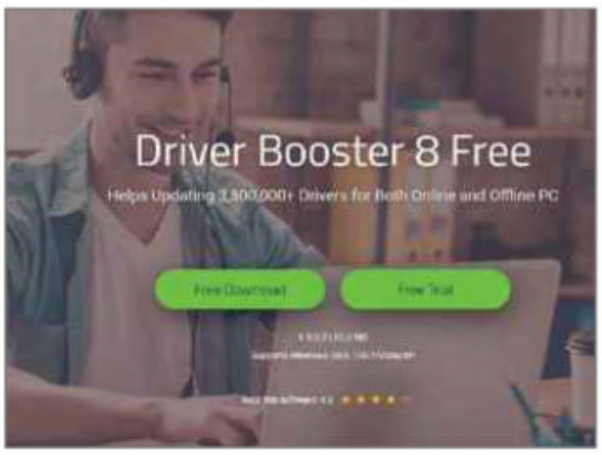
bit.ly/2xNgYuq

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10
File size: 25MB



Although Windows – especially Windows 10 – does a reasonable job of ensuring you always have the latest hardware drivers installed, it isn't perfect. Having missing, incorrect, outdated or broken system drivers can lead to all sorts of problems, including slowdowns, freezes and even crashes. IObit's free Driver Booster helps you avoid calamity by scanning your system for outdated or missing drivers, then letting you update individual items, or everything it's found, with a single click.

The software also comes with a useful Game Boost feature, which frees up memory and disables unnecessary apps and services to speed up gaming, and a Tools section that can fix common problems such as missing sound, bad screen resolution and network failure. Additionally, Driver Booster can find outdated programs on your system, but you'll need to install the free IObit Software Updater program to actually download the latest versions (or update them manually yourself).

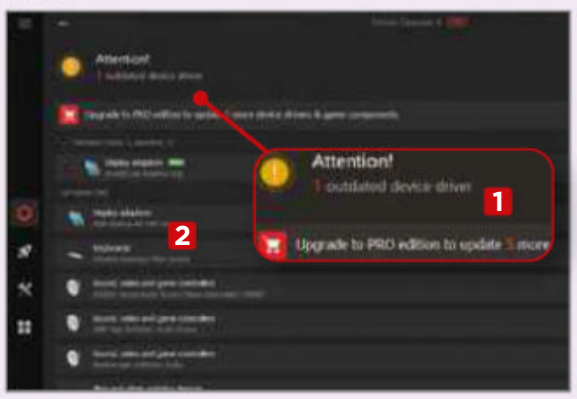


The latest version of Driver Booster increases the size of the driver database, but the most notable new addition is support for offline updating. This allows the program to install drivers without a network connection, which is useful if you have missing or faulty network drivers that stop you getting online. You'll find this new Offline Driver Update feature in the Tools section.

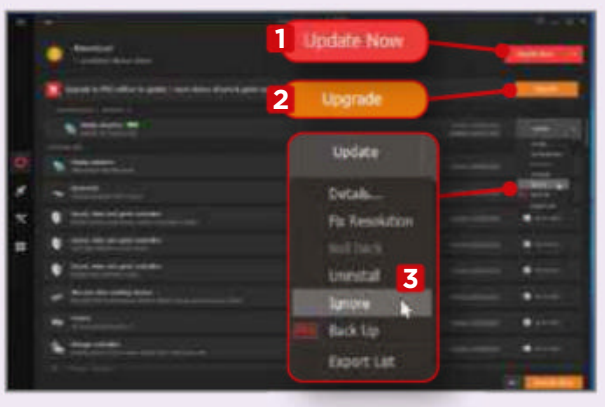
The only drawback to the Offline Driver Update tool is that while you can access it and export the required device information, you can only download the drivers for offline installation if you upgrade to the paid-for Pro version of Driver Booster, which costs £18.01 a year for three PCs.

Be sure to decline the bundled offers during installation.

MINI WORKSHOP | Update your drivers using Driver Booster 8



1 To get started, run Driver Booster and click the Scan button in the centre of the screen. The software will scan your PC for problems or missing drivers, then present you with its findings. The banner at the top 1 shows a summary with the number of drivers available to update. The full list of found items is displayed below. 2



2 To install up-to-date drivers, click the red Update Now 1 button. Alternatively, click the Update button next to an individual item 2 to install the latest driver for it. Clicking the down arrow next to the button will show you the driver details, and give you the chance to uninstall or ignore it. 3

3 Next, click Tools. 1 From here, you can fix common problems such as network failure and bad resolution. 2 You can also access other tools including the new offline driver updater, 3 although you'll need a Pro version to download the drivers. Check for new versions of installed programs with the Software Updater. 4

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

DVD RIPPER

WonderFox DVD Ripper Speedy 16

bit.ly/340iRIC

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10 **File size:** 44.7MB

This cut-down version of DVD Ripper Pro can create backups of your video discs. Just select a source from the main menu – DVD Disc, ISO Image or DVD Folder – and it will locate the main movie ready for exporting. You can easily add or remove subtitles, crop or trim the video, apply effects and adjust the video quality. The free version of DVD Ripper limits you to saving video files in MPEG format but, on the plus side, several bugs in the program have now been fixed.

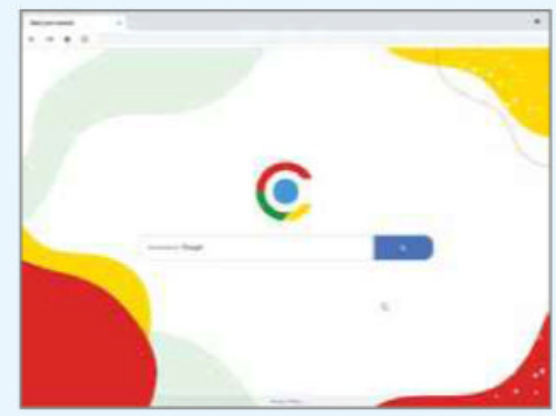
New Windows 10 App

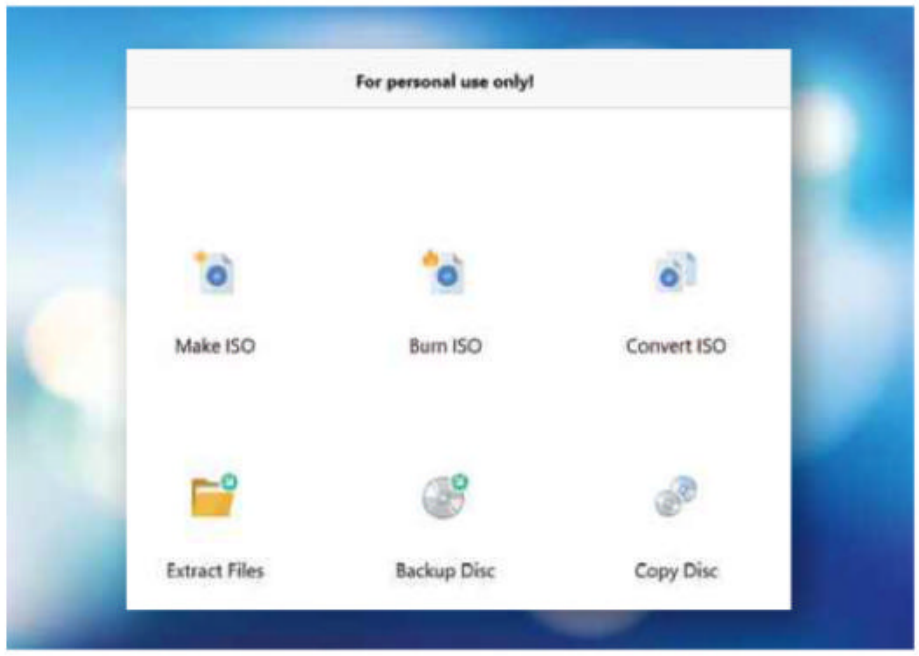
Chromee Lite Browser

bit.ly/2Schyu9

File size: 5.5MB

Don't let the name fool you – this product isn't related to Google Chrome. Instead it's a very simple, very lightweight browser that lets you open new tabs and enter a site URL or run a Google search. And that's all it does – there's not even a right-click context menu. If you don't need any of the many features found in other browsers, Chromee Lite is definitely worth a look.





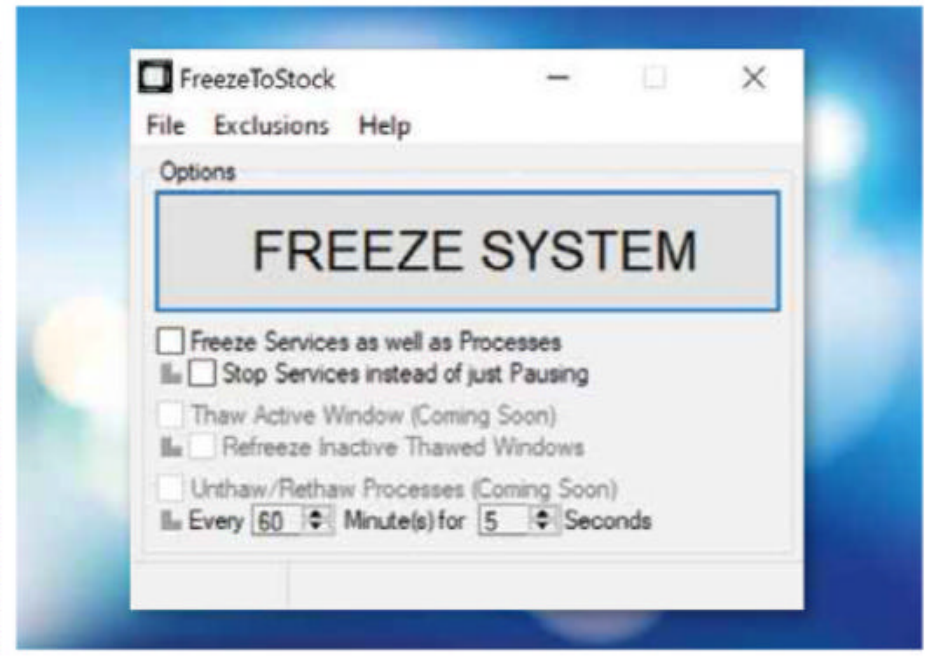
ISO TOOL

ISO Workshop 10

www.glorylogic.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10 **File size:** 3.8MB

If you download an operating system from the web, it's likely to be in image file format. ISO Workshop lets you view and extract files packaged in this way, convert one image format to another (IMG into ISO, for example) and make ISO image files from your own content. The program has been given a makeover and there's now a 64-bit build. The DVD-RW and BD-RE erase function, disc support for M-Disc and 128GB Blu-ray XL have also been improved.



SYSTEM TOOL

FreezeToStock

bit.ly/2S2i7qC

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10 **File size:** 983KB

If you need to perform a processor-intensive task, such as gaming or video editing, FreezeToStock can boost your system performance by temporarily pausing non-required processes and services, including open browser tabs. To use it, just click the Freeze System button. You can freeze services as well as processes, and choose to completely stop them instead of simply pausing them. Clicking Unfreeze System will restore everything to how it was.

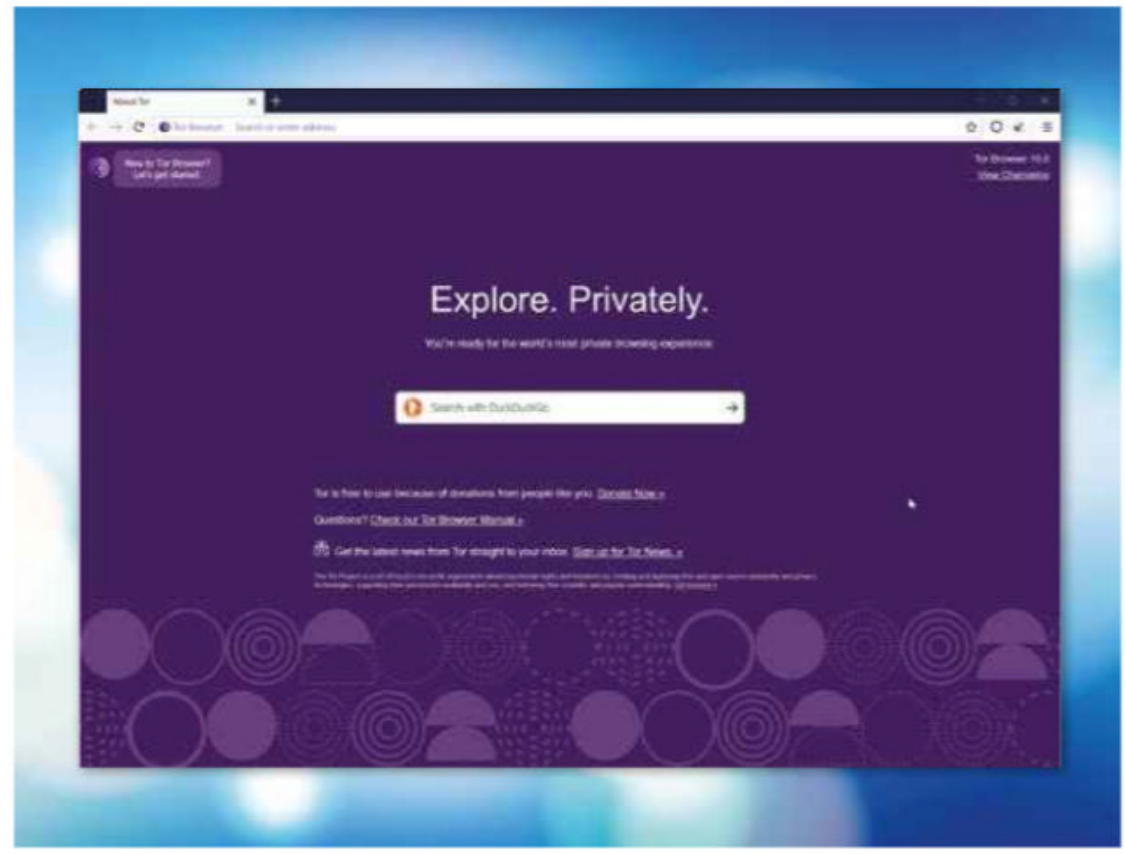
Best Free Software

SECURE WEB BROWSER

Tor Browser 10

www.torproject.org

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10, macOS or Linux **File size:** 69.1MB



Based on the same engine as Mozilla Firefox, this secure browser uses the Tor network to protect your browsing and disguise your location. It also comes with a number of privacy-focused add-ons, and you can adjust the security level of the software, choosing from Standard, Safer and Safest. As well as browsing the standard web, you can use Tor Browser to go to sites that use 'onion' addresses – the so-called dark web.

This updated version of the browser is based on the new extended support release of Firefox and comes with the latest builds of Tor and NoScript (the latter controls JavaScript). It also fixes lots of bugs.

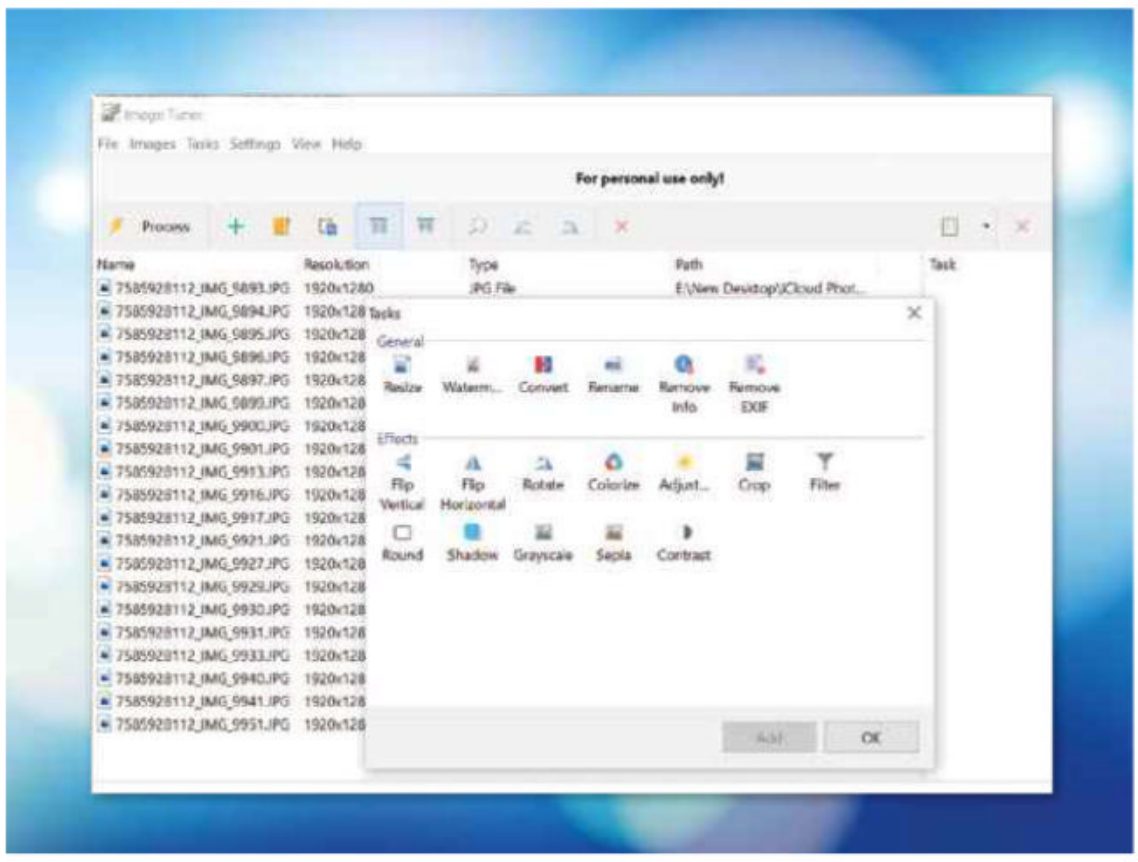


PHOTO EDITOR

Image Tuner 8

www.glorylogic.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 3.1MB

Image Tuner is a powerful photo editor that can make changes to whole batches of images at the same time, including resizing and renaming them, stripping out or updating information, and converting them from one format to another (JPEG to PNG, for example). It can also apply some simple effects and actions, such as flip, rotate, colourise, crop, filter and add borders.

The new version of Image Tuner comes with a 64-bit build and has a smarter interface with new icons. There's also a new Contrast effect and better support for high-DPI images, while performance has been improved and processor usage reduced.

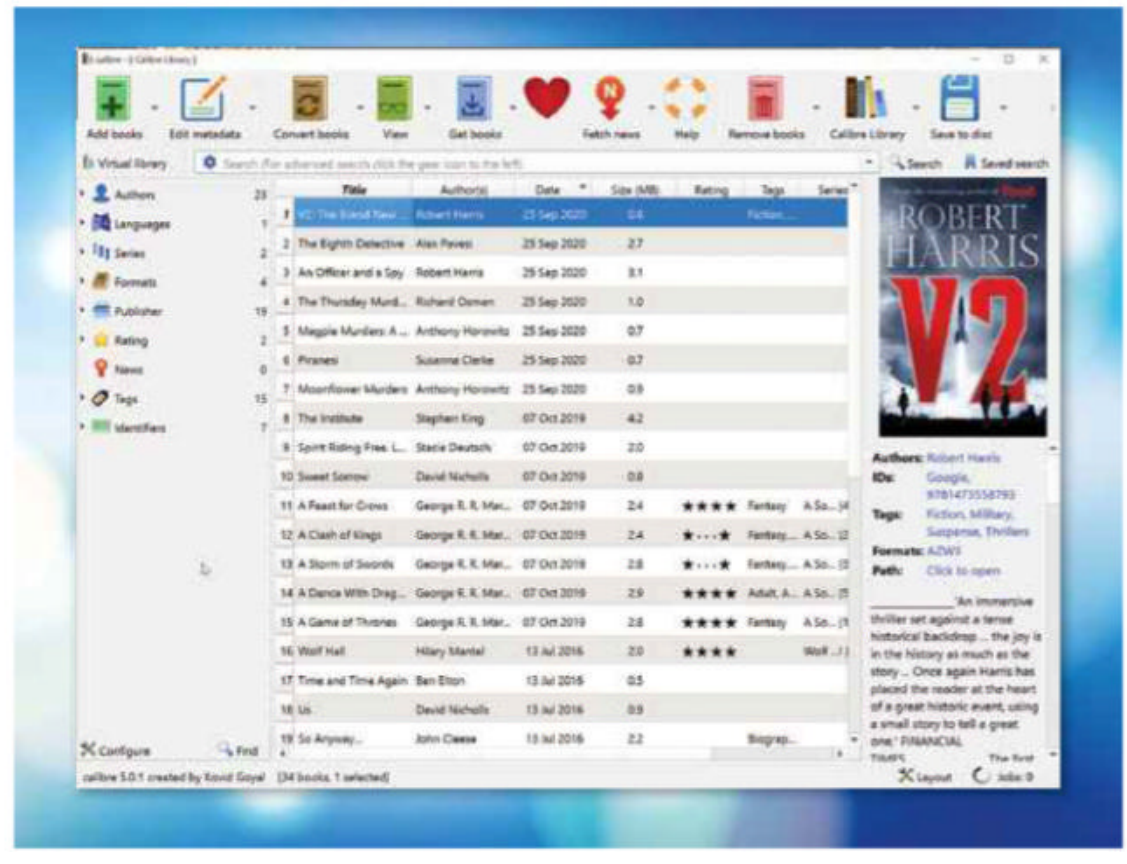
EBOOK READER

Calibre 5

calibre-ebook.com

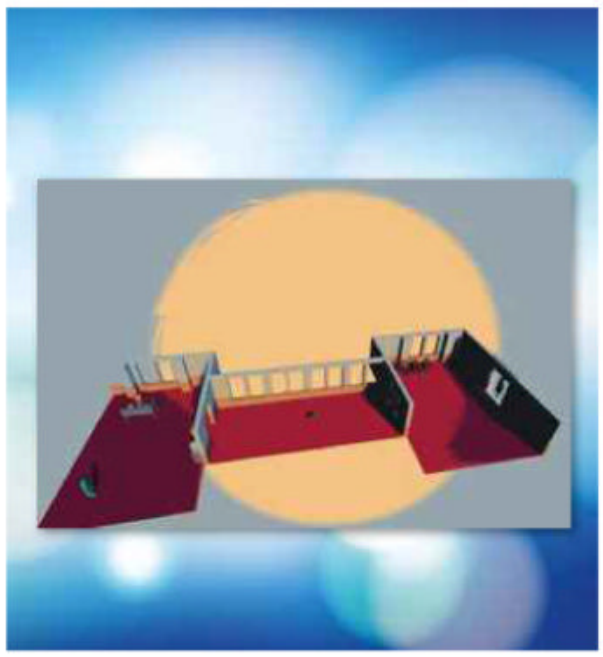
Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 108MB



Calibre is a fantastic free tool for browsing and managing your ebook collection. It can handle all the popular formats and comes with a built-in ebook viewer, as well as support for all major hardware readers, including Amazon Kindle, iPad, Android tablets and Kobo. You can add books, edit the information about them and filter your library by various criteria, including title, author, language, series, formats, publisher and rating. Books can also be purchased directly from a selection of retailers.

This major new version of Calibre, the first in a year, brings several big changes, including a dark mode and highlighter support in the viewer.



GAME

Future Rewind

bit.ly/36fA6Cm

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10
File size: 90.1MB

In this clever puzzle game, you play as Rick Rewind, a time agent from The Bureau of Temporal Corrections. The idea is to complete the game's levels in reverse, which means guiding your future self back to your past self while avoiding other time agents. The game starts off easily enough, but soon gets quite tricky.

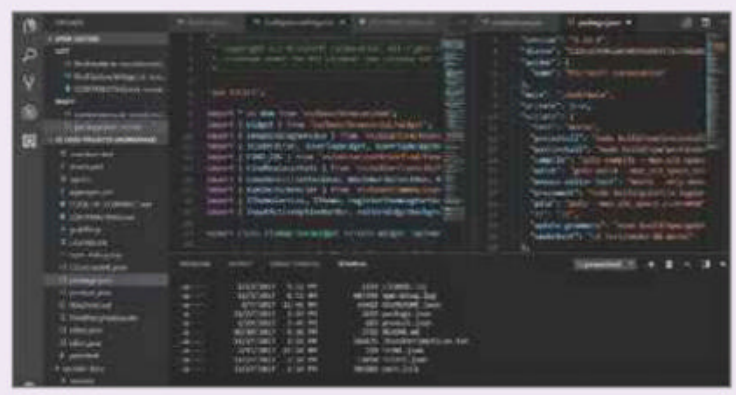
✓ Install this program...

Visual Studio Code

code.visualstudio.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8/10, macOS or Linux **File size:** 61.1MB

If you're just starting out with code-editing software, whether to build a website in HTML or take on a more advanced project, such as JavaScript coding, your best option is Microsoft's Visual Studio Code. This free program – which is halfway between a basic text editor and professional software – is a powerhouse for veteran coders, but welcoming enough for beginners. This is helped by its clean, intuitive interface, well-stocked toolbar at the top of the screen and a sidebar containing all the coding tools you're likely to need. There's also a handy built-in feature for checking your formatting.



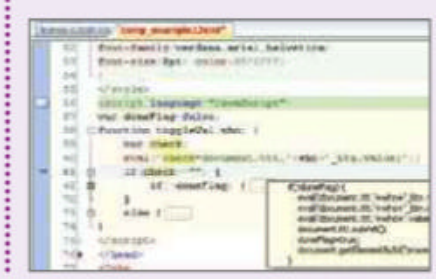
...Not this one ✗

HippoEdit

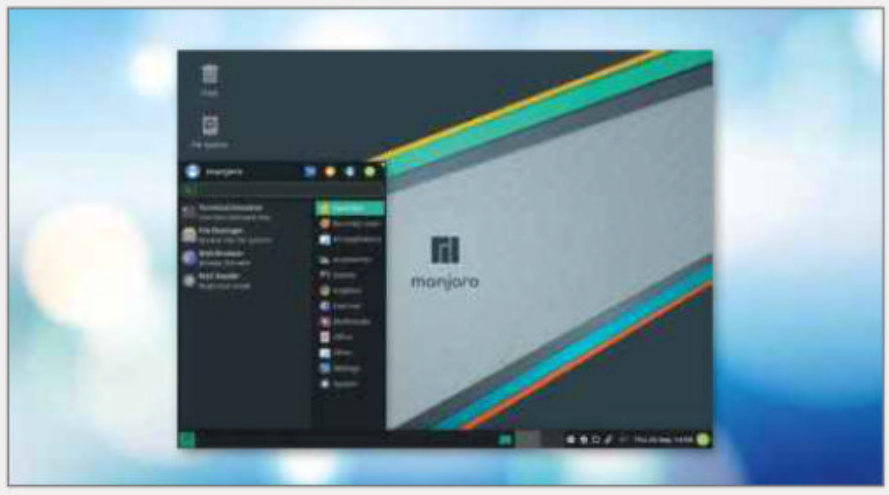
hippoedit.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8/10
File size: 6MB

HippoEdit is a lightweight text editor for programmers that offers lots of useful coding features. However, despite its friendly cartoon logo, the software's lack of handholding makes it more suitable for advanced users. There's also the matter of cost – a single HippoEdit licence costs a jaw-dropping £39.95 (£35.90), though a 30-day free trial is available.



OTHER OPERATING SYSTEMS What's new for Linux and macOS



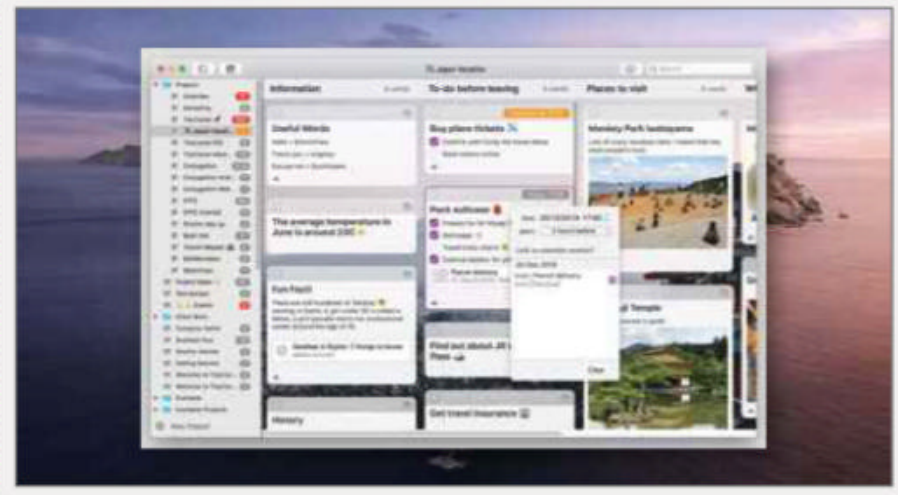
LINUX DISTRO

Manjaro 20.1 'Mikah'

manjaro.org

Min requirements: 2GB RAM, 20GB hard drive space
File size: 2.6GB

The Arch-based Manjaro is one of the best Linux operating systems around – suitable for both newcomers and experienced computer users – and this update (which is built on Linux Kernel 5.8), improves things even further. It comes in a choice of three desktop editions (DE) – Xfce, KDE Plasma, and Gnome – all of which have been updated with new features. The Xfce edition remains the flagship version and comes with a new theme called Matcha.



PROJECT PLANNER

TidyCards

tidy-cards.com

Min requirements: macOS 10.12.0 or later
File size: 29.2MB

TidyCards is a handy personal project planner for Mac that streamlines your work by helping you track all your to-do tasks and information. You can add, organise and quickly find everything, include links, photos, emails and other files, set due dates and get reminders, and create checklists. There's a paid-for Pro version for £19.99 that includes additional features such as printing, customisable backgrounds and the ability to search by tags. ■

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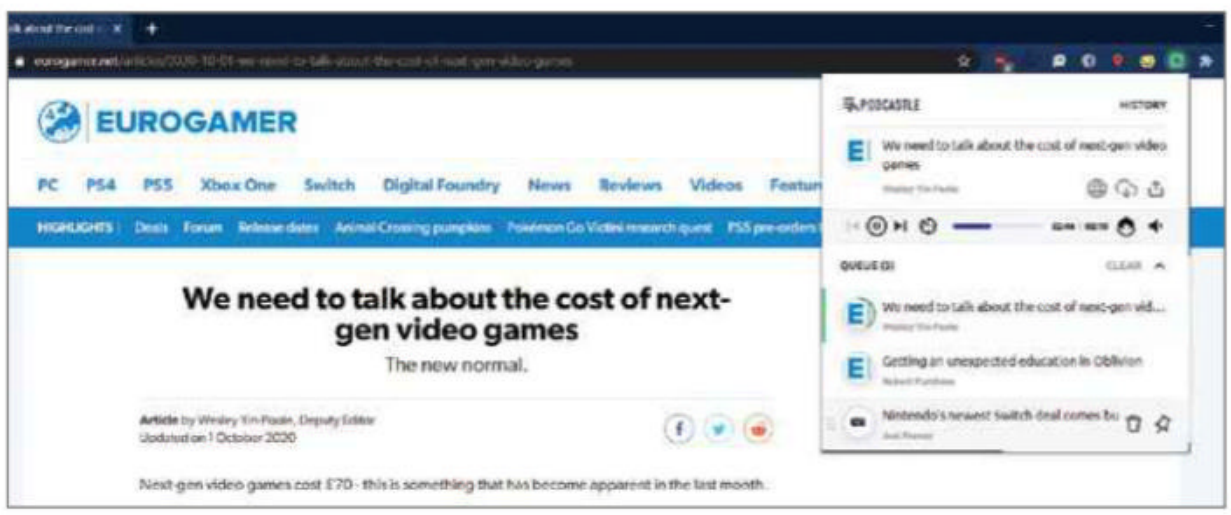
Best New Browser Tools

CHROME

Turn online articles into audio ‘podcasts’

So, you’re a news junkie. Your browser is forever chock full of tabs you line up and prepare to read. The trouble is that, even a prolific reader like you doesn’t have enough time in the day to get through all those articles, blogs and reports. At which point, it’s time to install Podcastle (podcastle.ai).



At first glance, this extension is little more than a text-to-speech reader – a very good one, with two fairly natural AI voices that won’t jar while reading aloud, but nothing a veteran *Web User* reader hasn’t seen (or heard) before. However Podcastle goes further by letting you create ‘podcasts’ from multiple web pages. Open each article, select Convert To Podcast and it’s automatically added to your listening queue. You’re also able to download audio, share it, visit the article link and alter the reading speed, too.

See our cover feature on page 40 for other useful text-to-speech tools.

Stop pop-ups and overlays spoiling the web

Pop Up Off (bit.ly/popup512) is an open-source extension built to discreetly banish an infinite number of navigation bars, pop-ups and overlays that get in the way of what you’re trying to read or watch online.

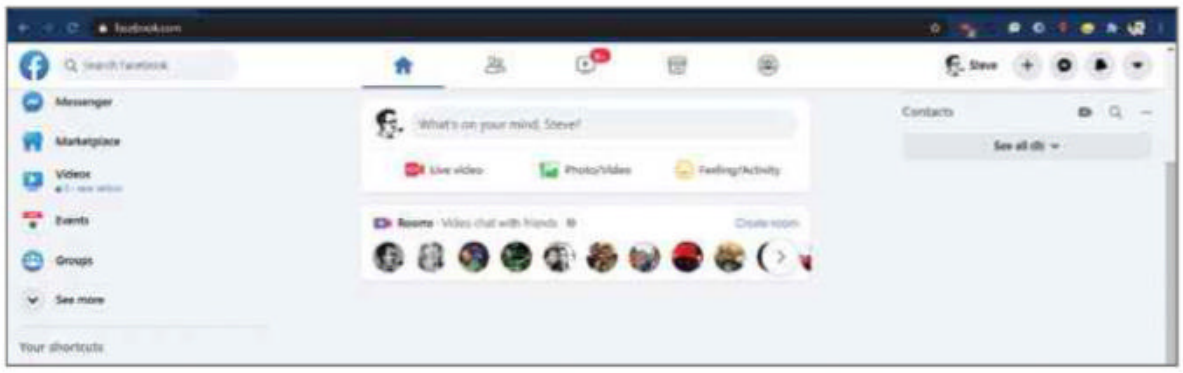
The add-on offers two modes: Hard is a ruthlessly efficient pop-up and overlay killer, while Easy works a little slower, and is more forgiving of certain on-screen clutter.

Pop Up Off is also available for Edge (bit.ly/popedge512), Opera (bit.ly/popera512), and Firefox (bit.ly/popfox512).

Get rid of Facebook’s News Feed

It may seem bizarre for an extension to strip away Facebook’s biggest draw, but that’s exactly what Hide Facebook News Feed (bit.ly/feed512) does. It lets you use Facebook on your own terms.

With the extension installed, you’re free to visit friends’ profiles, respond to messages and check out groups without encountering a hideous stream of unthinkable thoughts, recycled opinions and memes that never needed sharing in the first place.



Originally designed to prevent the drip-feed of biased information during the forthcoming US Presidential election, the developer readily admits that it hasn’t been tested with all Facebook configurations. However, we experienced no issues – and, more importantly, no news feed – during our tests.

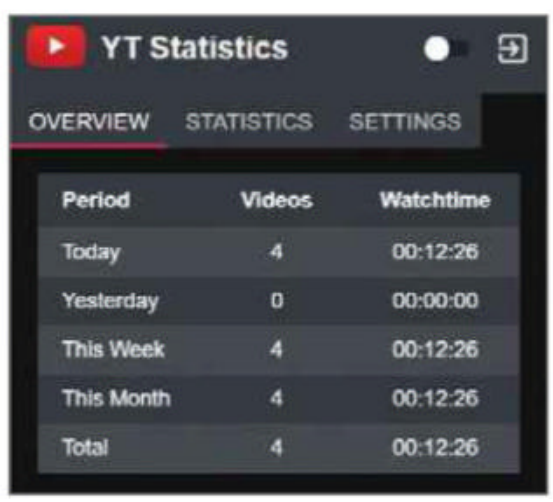
If you prefer to keep your News Feed in place, check out Custom Reactions for Facebook (bit.ly/custom512), which switches hearts and thumbs-up ‘likes’ for your own icons.

See how long you’ve wasted on YouTube

Watchtime Tracker (bit.ly/watchtime512) is a great extension for anyone who fears they’re spending too much time watching chaff on YouTube. It’s not too dissimilar to screen-time apps on your phone, except instead of clocking app usage, it’s strictly for videos.

Click the extension’s toolbar button to view how many videos you’ve watched over the course of a day, week and month, and for how long. The Statistics tab breaks down videos into a pie chart of your top channels, and signing up means data is synced across devices.

For gaming enthusiasts, click the Twitch toggle switch – it’ll tell you the same stats for Amazon’s game-streaming service.



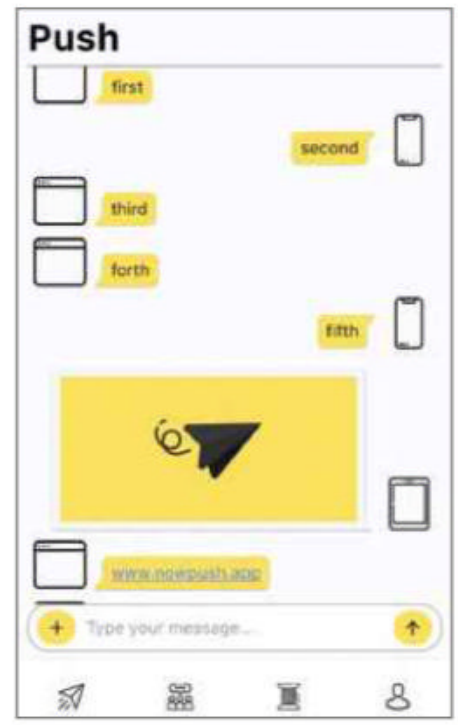
This fortnight's most useful tips and add-ons to help you get the most from Chrome, Firefox, Opera, Edge and more

FIREFOX

Connect your PC and phone

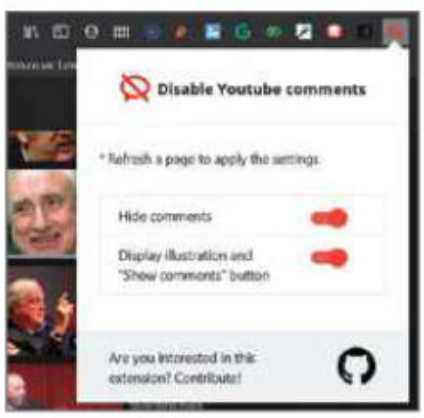
Given that most of us now use multiple devices, you'd think it'd be easy to start something on your computer, then pick it up on your phone. Technology, alas, has other ideas. Sure, there's Microsoft's Your Phone and Timeline (which is getting binned on Android anyway), and tools such as Google's Nearby Share, but these still have their faults and restrictions.

Now Push (bit.ly/push512) is an extension that promises to do what these other tools can't: seamlessly bridge the gap between your devices. Install the browser tool and sign in using your Google or Apple ID, then get the app from your app store and do the same. You'll then have the ability to send messages and reminders, create private conversations and share files. Bonus points to Now Push for the end-to-end encryption for all messages.



Block annoying YouTube comments

So, you've installed Hide Facebook News Feed on Chrome (see left), but are still faced with the cesspit that is the YouTube comments section. For the sake of your sanity, install the Disable YouTube Comments add-on (bit.ly/youtube512).



Now, when you scroll down, you'll see nothing but a sea of tranquillity. That's not to say it completely strips away that oasis of community and respect that comment sections are known for. Click the add-on to reveal two base settings: one lets you switch on comments (though you'll have to refresh the page), while the other adds an icon to the comments section with a button to show comments.

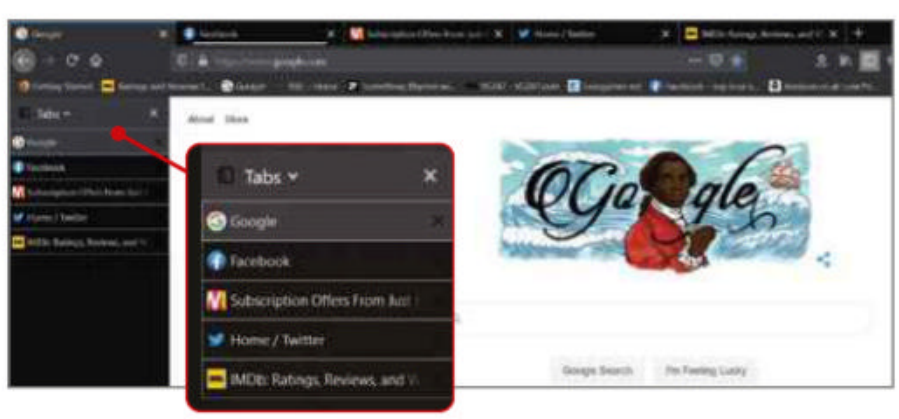
We'll look at other ways to hide and disable comments in our next issue.

Add sidebar tabs to Firefox

There's a reason why, when we make lists, we go from top to bottom, not side to side. It's clearer to read and easier to manage. The same is true of your tabs but, for some reason, most browsers only display open tabs from left to right at the top of the screen – although Microsoft says it plans to roll out vertical tabs to Edge soon.

Right now, the only way to get around this is through an add-on such as the excellent Sidebar Tabs (bit.ly/sidebar512). You can reorder tabs by dragging or dropping, or – if you're feeling extra-adventurous – use the drop-down menu to switch between tabs, bookmark and history.

To keep things simple, there are only two settings: closing the sidebar and shifting it from the left to the right-hand side of the screen.



OTHER BROWSERS

Force Facebook to revert its layout

We never tire of extensions that force social-media sites to display their old, familiar and usually better designs. That's exactly what Revert Site (bit.ly/revert512) does in Edge. It works by tricking Facebook into thinking you're using an old and out-of-date browser, so it displays the old-style Facebook layout in response. This also removes dark mode, should you have it turned on, since it wasn't an option back in the day. To switch between classic and new designs, click the extension's toolbar button, then untick the box marked 'Switch back to the old Facebook design?', which automatically reloads the page.

Get The Camelizer for Opera

The Camelizer – the browser tool version of the excellent Camelcamelcamel.com site – is finally available for Opera users. This extension makes it easier than ever to bag a bargain by displaying the latest pricing for products on Amazon and comparing it with previous prices. It works on Amazon's Australian, US and European sites, too. Data is neatly laid out, with customisable sections for first- and third-party sellers. Don't forget to set up a price watch, so The Camelizer can email you when the price is right.

Tell us your favourite add-ons at www.facebook.com/webusermagazine

Best Free Apps

App of the Fortnight

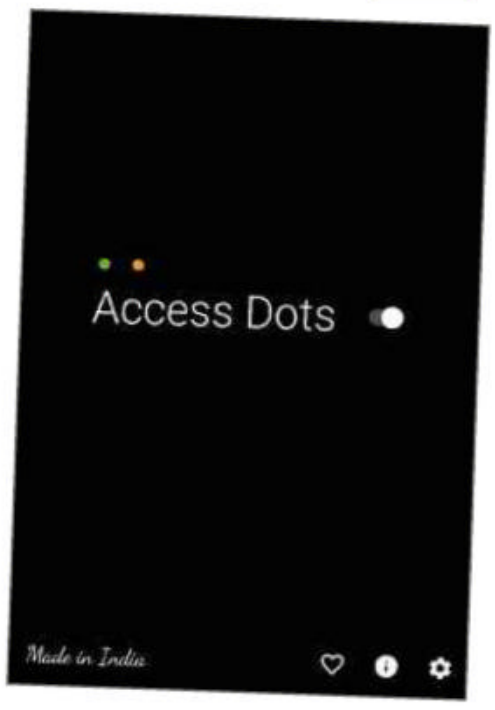
PRIVACY

NEW

Access Dots

bit.ly/2BpKgTF

7



We could fill an entire issue of *Web User* with an examination of the relative pros and cons of iOS and Android (see our Weekend Project on page 58). But sometimes one mobile OS clearly has the edge over the other.

Take iOS 14, for example. Last issue, we highlighted some of the operating system's new features, including the ability to add widgets on the Home screen. But Android users have been able to do this for years and, in retrospect, it seems frankly absurd that iPhone users have only just been granted this function.

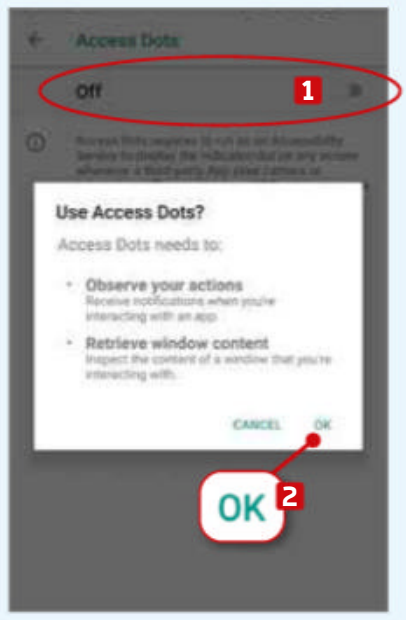
Where iOS often comes out ahead, however, is in the area of privacy. And there's one brilliant new iOS 14 feature in particular that now feels like it's sorely missing from Android – a new status bar indicator that alerts you whenever an app accesses your camera or microphone.

iOS 14 users will now see a green dot in the status bar when their device's camera is being accessed, and an orange dot when an app is accessing the mic. In most cases, you'll only see these symbols when you've knowingly granted an app access – such as a video-chat app. But they also serve as a very handy alert, should any apps attempt to access your camera or mic without your knowledge, or silently in the background.

Currently, Android lacks this privacy feature. Google may implement a similar function in a future update but, in the meantime, Access Dots is here to plug the gap. The app is currently in Early Access, but it perfectly replicates the iOS feature on an Android device and even adds some useful extras, including a handy access log and the ability to customise the size and colour of your dots.

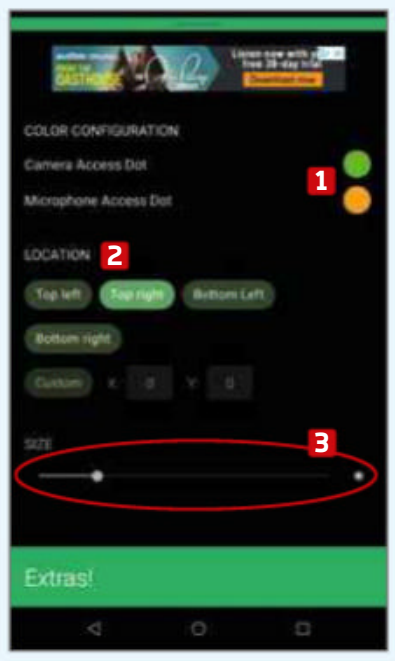
MINI WORKSHOP

Monitor your camera and mic using Access Dots



1 Launch Access Dots and press the switch in the middle of the screen to enable it on your device. You'll be taken to the Accessibility service settings, where you need to tap the Access Dots entry, then tap the switch 1 to enable the service. In the pop up that opens, press OK 2 to confirm your choice. This is important – Access Dots won't work properly if this setting isn't turned on.

2 To test whether Access Dots is working, open an app that uses the camera or microphone. With apps that access your device's camera, you'll see a small green dot toward the top of your screen 1 (though you can select an alternative location – see below). For apps that access the microphone, you'll see an orange dot instead. Dots will display when apps secretly access your camera or mic in the background, too.



3 If you find the dots hard to see, you can customise their default appearance. Open Access Dots and tap the Settings cog, then press either the Camera Access (green) or Microphone Access (orange) dot 1 and select a new colour from the picker. Tap one of the preset options under Location 2 or use the X and Y coordinates to set a custom location. Use the Size slider 3 to make the dot bigger or smaller.

Our rating ★★★★★

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

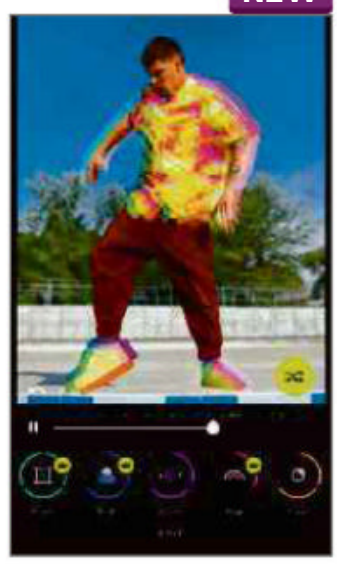
VIDEO

NEW

Beatleap

apple.co/2GviMOA

12



Currently iOS-only (though an Android version is apparently in the works), Beatleap is a video-editing app for the TikTok generation. It's designed to make it quick and easy to create engaging videos set to music by automatically syncing the visuals with the beat. Just select your clips, choose some tunes and, well, that's pretty much it. If you want to make any further edits or style things up with fun effects and filters, Beatleap has you covered.

See our FAQ on page 38 for details of another TikTok-rivalling video app, Triller.

Our rating ★★★★☆

HEALTH

NEW

TaoZen

bit.ly/34hIRJl

apple.co/33p94GN

5 11

Whether you want to sleep, meditate, focus or just chill, TaoZen aims to help you by letting you create the perfect soundscape for your mood. Choose from one of the available audio presets – which include water, binaural and more – or create your own custom sound mix. The app also helps to incentivise your relaxation by tracking your progress and providing you with goals. The free version comes with a modest selection of sounds, but you'll need to pay to buy more sound packs from the app's built-in catalogue.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

NOTES

UPDATED

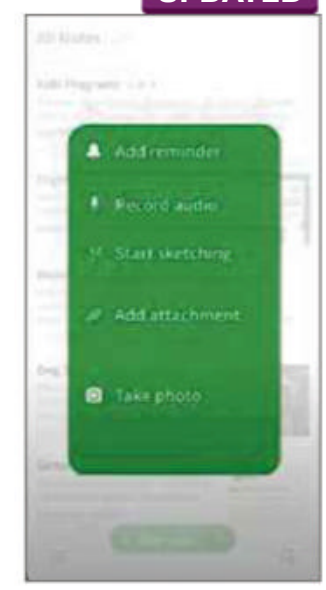
Evernote

bit.ly/2ShkjKK

apple.co/2SitmLx

(varies)

13.2



The popularity of this note-taking app has waned in recent years, but Evernote clearly hopes to regain relevance with this massive makeover for its iOS app. Version 10 offers a cleaner interface, simpler navigation and easier ways to create and customise notes. Adding photos, audio and other content to your notes is quicker than ever, thanks to a new multi-function Insert button. A powerful Search tool lets you find specific notes in seconds. Power users will still need to pay £4.99 per month for Evernote Premium, though.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

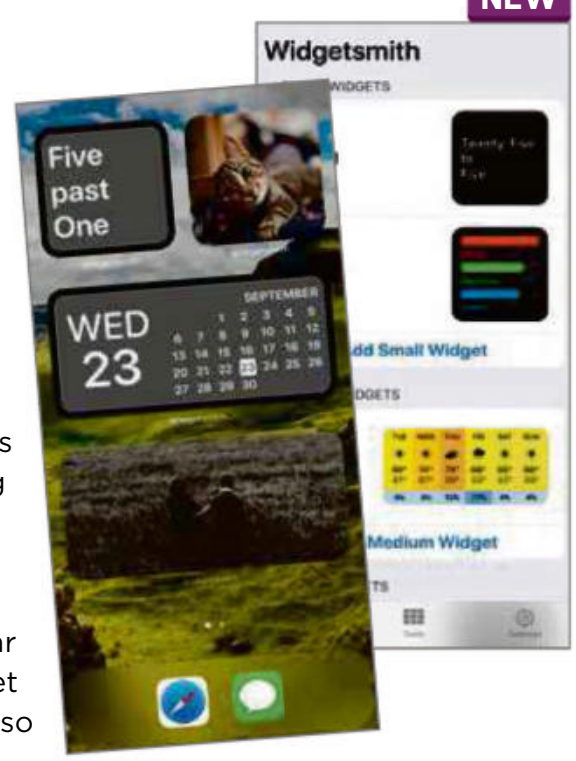
TOOLS

NEW

Widgetsmith

apple.co/36oEFtR

14



Last issue, we explored the new features in iOS 14, including the ability to add widgets to your Home screen. Widgetsmith capitalises on this feature, offering a selection of smart-looking widgets for your device, including clock, weather, calendar and stocks. Each widget is highly customisable, so you can get the exact look you want. And you can even schedule widgets to display on-screen by defining rules – for example, you could set a weather widget to display in the morning, then switch it to your calendar for the rest of the day. Some advanced features require a monthly subscription of £1.99.

Our rating ★★★★☆

MEDIA PLAYER

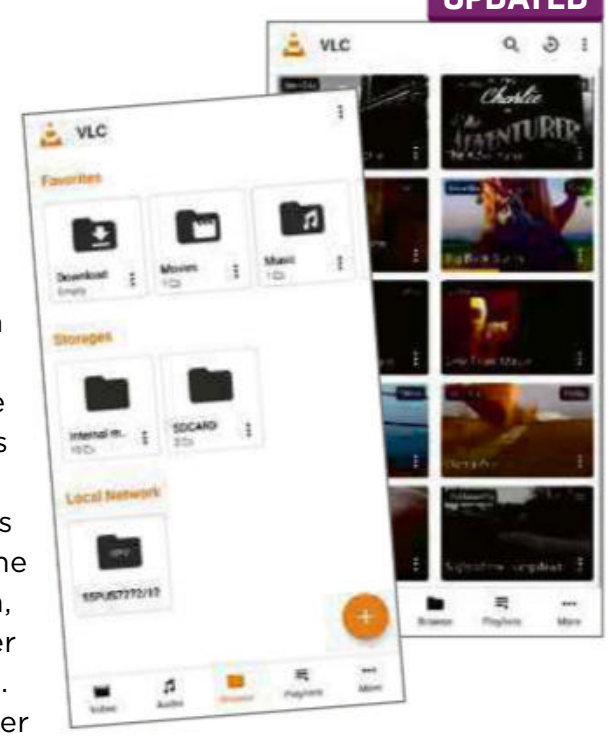
UPDATED

VLC

bit.ly/3hLLKI0

apple.co/3I7BomQ

(varies) 9



The Android version of this classic media player has received a major update. The most notable change is a redesign of VLC's interface, which relocates all the app's navigation icons to the bottom of the screen, making it much easier to use with one hand. The app's video-player interface has been completely refreshed with a more modern look and useful additional features, such as a one-tap screen-orientation option. Helpfully, VLC's settings have been simplified and it's also now possible to organise videos into custom groups. Meanwhile, a new sharing option lets you share video and audio content with friends.

Our rating ★★★★☆

5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

GAME

The Pocket Arcade

bit.ly/34hlpfp

Price: £3.99 6

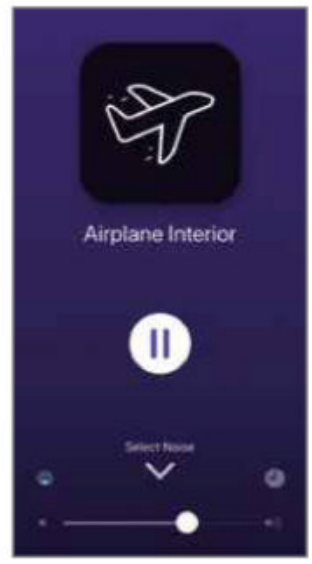
Described as a "love letter to arcade games from a bygone era," this app harks back to simpler times (and games) via a selection of fun, playable retro arcade cabinets.

HEALTH

Dark Noise

apple.co/3l77sHD

Price: £5.99 13.1



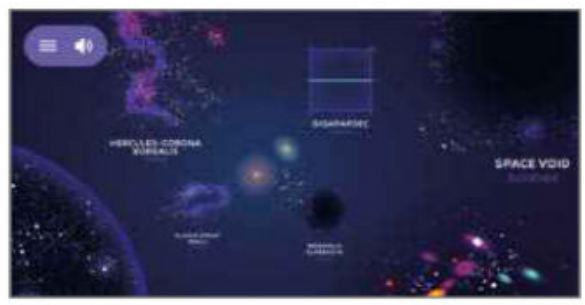
Recently updated for iOS 14, Dark Noise plays ambient sounds to help you sleep. Notable additions include home screen widgets, a timer and integration with Apple Health's Wind Down feature.

EDUCATION

Universe in a Nutshell

bit.ly/2XaqDYG

Price: £3.29 (Android), £2.99 (iOS)



(varies) 11

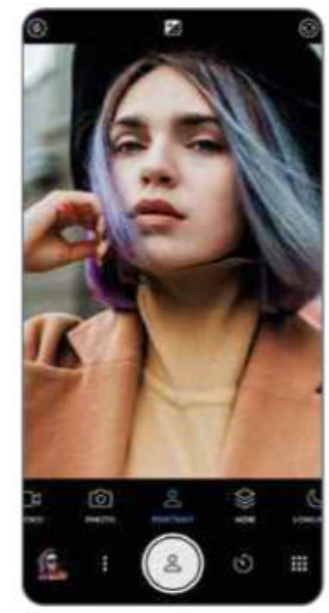
This clever app lets kids learn about the universe around them by zooming out from the tiniest bacteria to the biggest black hole. Each item is beautifully illustrated and accompanied by fun facts.

PHOTOS

ProCamera

apple.co/36pd6kc

Price: £8.99 13.1



Already a firm favourite of photo enthusiasts, this advanced camera app has been updated to add manual controls in video mode, stereo audio recording, support for external microphones and more.

GAME

Truberbrook

bit.ly/34lcjxU

apple.co/3jr8tK7

Price: £4.99

6 13

This oddball sci-fi adventure transports you to a parallel 1960s Germany to unravel a strange mystery. Clever puzzles, claymation-style visuals and an atmospheric soundtrack make this game a unique experience.

The Pocket Arcade

Dark Noise

Universe in a Nutshell

ProCamera

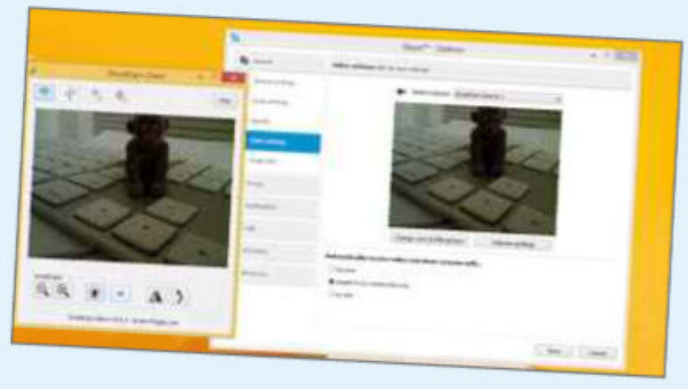
Truberbrook

Install this app...

DroidCam

bit.ly/17Q59j3

5



With many of us still working from home, a good webcam for video meetings is a definite boon. But if you don't have one, or if the built-in camera on your laptop is rubbish, you can save some cash by using your Android phone as a webcam. Several apps let you do this, but DroidCam is one of the best – largely because it's straightforward to set up.

Download and install the client for your PC (from www.dev47apps.com), connect your phone to your computer via USB (or Wi-Fi) and you're good to go. The Premium version (£4.99 from bit.ly/3cRh0DR) offers 720p quality and extra features.

...Not this one

USB/Web Camera

bit.ly/3cRRsGy

If you're looking to use your phone as a webcam, this app might initially seem like it fits the bill. But it turns out that USB/Web Camera is designed for connecting a USB webcam to your phone or tablet – fairly redundant, given that practically every Android device has at least one camera built in anyway. Furthermore, the app doesn't work with many common webcam models, which only serves to make it even more pointless.

Take a Screen Break

Take a rest from your browser with our fiendish fortnightly challenges. Can you solve our 1990s-films emoji and guess our 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 NINETIES FILMS FROM THE EMOJI?

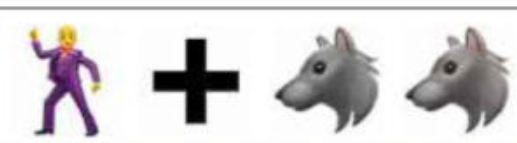
1

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?

COMPETITIONS

WIN 1 OF 2
D-Link DIR-X1560 Wi-Fi 6 router

WORTH £99.99 EACH

D-Link's DIR-X1560 Wi-Fi 6 Router has combined dual-band speeds of up to 1.5Gbps, delivering optimal Wi-Fi experience to all your devices, whether you're streaming video, playing online games or browsing the web. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk. For more information, visit www.dlink.com and www.facebook.com/mydlinkHomeUK.

WIN 1 OF 8
Kitsound Funk 25 True Wireless Earbuds

WORTH £29.99 EACH

KitSound's Funk 25 True Wireless Earbuds come with a pocket-sized magnetic charging case, for up to 16 hours of play time on the go. Each set comes with three different sizes of earbud – small, medium and large – so you can find the best fit.
To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk. For more information, visit kitsound.co.uk and follow @KitSoundUK on Twitter.

FAQ

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

Our guide to Triller

Time has ticked away for TikTok and the latest buzz is about Triller. **David Crookes** provides the lowdown on the social-video app

What is it?

Triller (triller.co) is a social-video app that's been growing in popularity thanks to the uncertainty surrounding TikTok's future in the US (see last issue's Need to Know). It works in a similar way to its rival, letting users film themselves singing and dancing along to their pick of songs while allowing creators to produce personal video blogs. Other users can view these by scrolling through the media content on their mobile phone, commenting on and liking any they see.

So a new kid on the block, then?

Actually, no. Triller has been around since July 2015, building a name for itself as a way of speedily producing music videos. Its popularity has soared this past year thanks to TikTok users scrambling for an alternative: first, when TikTok was banned in India following a dispute with China and now with the US accusing its Chinese owners ByteDance of posing a national security threat. Triller has certainly been quick to capitalise on its rival's woes, attracting top influencers to the platform in the hope that others will follow.

The app has now been downloaded more than 120 million times across the globe and it has overtaken TikTok in the Apple App Store. As it stands, Triller has about 27 million active daily users to TikTok's 50 million, and the gap is narrowing.

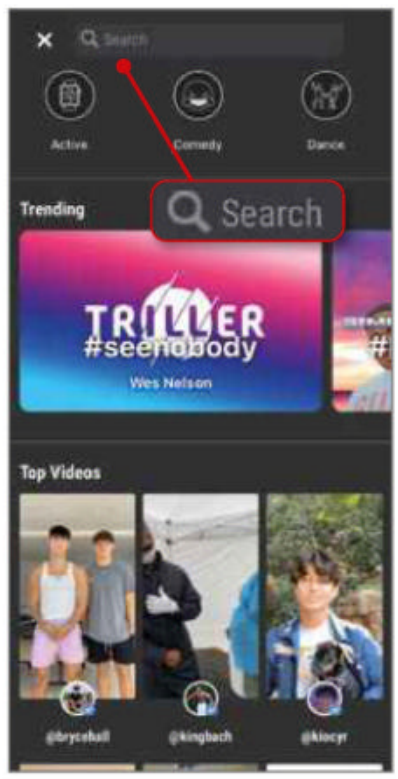
But who's using it?

Donald Trump, for starters. The US President joined Triller in August and gained 100 million views for his debut video, although this number may have been boosted using bots. Even so, this helped to raise awareness of Triller and it's become the platform of choice for the likes of top TikTok users Josh Richards and Charli D'Amelio. Having been lured by attractive compensation and equity packages, they rub shoulders with fellow former TikTokers Noah Beck and Griffin Johnson, as well as more widely known celebrities such as Justin Bieber, Dynamo, Rita Ora and, er, Tom Malone from Gogglebox.

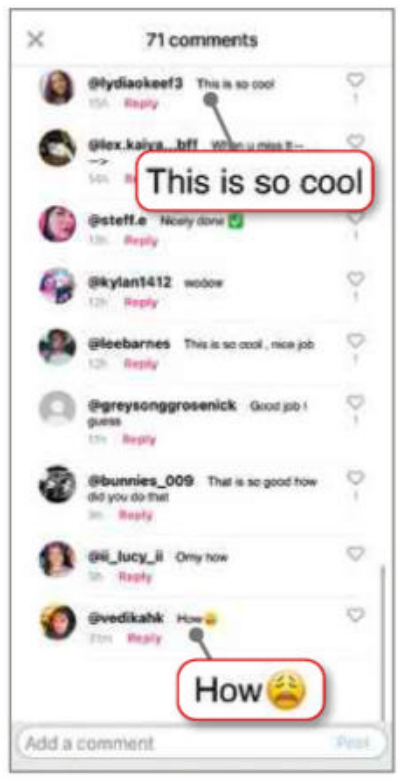
What's thrilling about Triller, though?

The main attraction is how easy it is to use. Like TikTok, you don't need to sign up to view the content – simply install the iOS or Android app and scroll through the videos. You can 'like' clips by tapping the hearts and share videos to other social networks. There are also options to download videos to your device, see the top-rated, trending and recommended videos, and search by word or username.

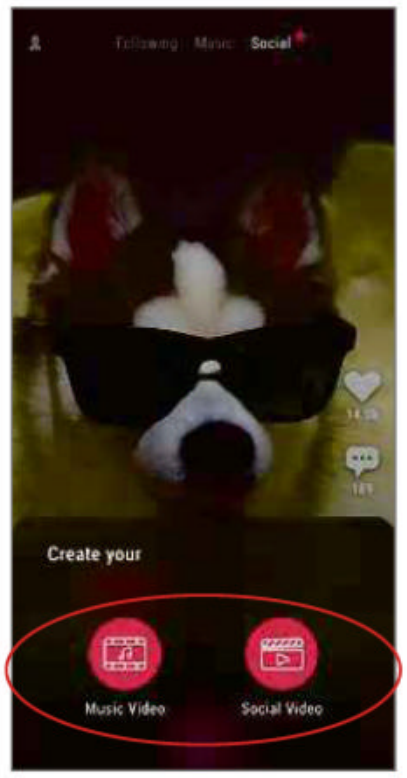
British magician Dynamo is one of the most famous names to join Triller



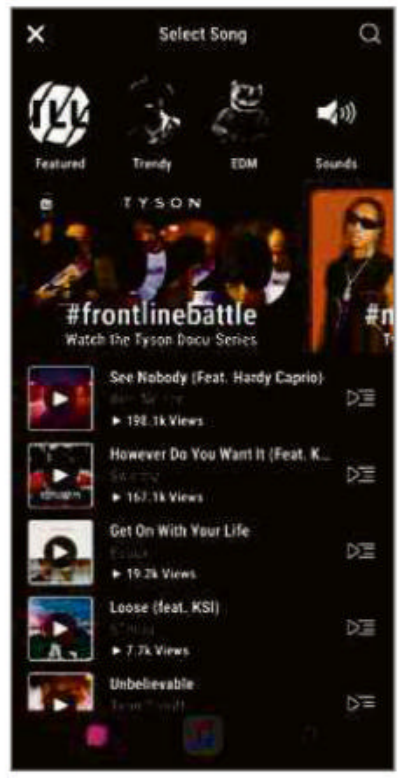
Search Triller to find videos or see what's currently trending in the app



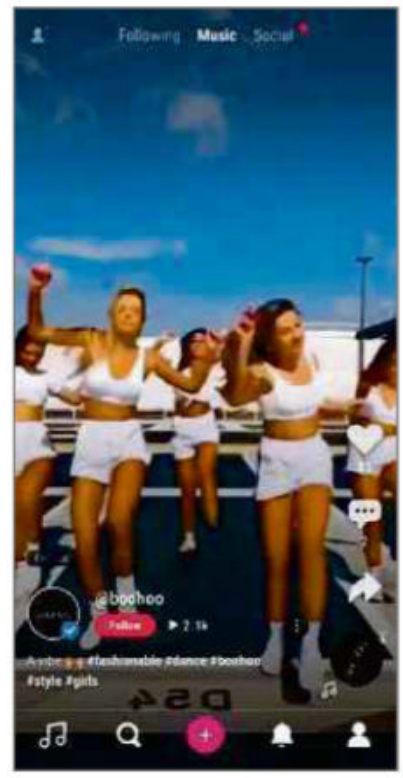
Triller users comment on each other's videos with the usual text- and emoji-speak



Triller lets you choose between creating a music video or a social one



You can choose officially licensed songs when creating your music video



Verified users can earn money via Triller's Gold payment system

Is it all about music?

No. There are three main sections: Social, Music and Following. Tapping Social displays popular videos on any topic, while Music is exclusively about the tunes. Following, as you might guess, shows you content from people you're interested in. You'll have to register to produce your own video, and to follow a creator, leave a comment or directly message someone.

How do I create a video?

Well, first you need to register via a social-media login such as Facebook or Twitter, or by entering your email address or phone number. You can then press the Plus button and choose between creating a music or a social video.

If you want to create a music video, you'll find a vast library of songs along with a search engine to filter your choices. You can then start filming, and the process is the same as with other social-video apps: there are over 100 visual filters, including ones that add text, drawings and emoji; buttons to set the speed of your video at slow, normal or fast; and a countdown, so you can ready yourself before filming begins. It's also possible to create multiple takes to add variety to a video.

As with TikTok, the videos fill the screen and are designed to run vertically. You can film using both front and rear cameras on your phone, and also grab content from your device's camera roll.

Am I likely to find a song I like?

Triller has struck deals with some of the world's largest publishers, including Universal Music Group, Sony Music, Warner Records, Columbia and Island. You can also import a song from your own library of tunes – there's a partnership with Spotify and you can use Apple Music, too.

Triller's roots are in Hip-Hop, however, and this has been cemented with investment from rappers Snoop Dogg, Lil Wayne and Tyga, as well as music managers. Artists have been creating exclusive content for the app and their songs tend to be favoured (unlike TikTok, which tends to show trending content).

Triller uses artificial intelligence to edit your music videos for you, chopping the content into chunks and then figuring out how best to present them.

Can I monitor who's watching?

Yes, there's an activity button that lets you check on your followers and read the comments that people leave. This section also lets you keep an eye on the activity of the people you're following – a level of social engagement that's likely to have you coming back for more. Indeed, Triller claims to have the highest level of engagement of any social-music platform, with users spending an average of 20 minutes each day on the app.

Is anyone making money from Triller?

Aside from the movie producer Ryan Kavanagh who co-owns the website? Sure. If a user becomes recognised as a significant influencer by Triller, they will become verified, allowing them to accept the app's currency, Triller Gold and Gems. Gold can be bought by users via an in-app purchase for between 79p and £83.99, and this can be donated to verified users. They, in turn, can cash out in Gems, which helps fans support their favourite artists.

What data will Triller collect from me?

Triller grabs your name, age, date of birth, gender, address, email address, phone number, image and username and password. It can also access information on Facebook and Twitter, and read location and device information. However, in Triller's settings, there is an option to turn off data collection.

Is there any danger that Triller could be banned?

It's unlikely. Triller has offices in Los Angeles, New York, Paris, San Francisco, Faro and Orlando, so there's no question of user data being directly passed to the Chinese government, as has been the accusation levelled at TikTok. In fact, Triller has mentioned this in the past, saying it is "laser-focused on the protection of our community from the prying eyes of nefarious parties or political agendas".

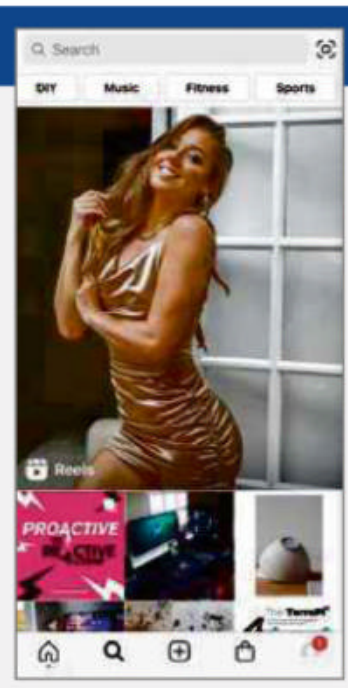
Of course, TikTok hasn't been banned in the UK so whether or not we're going to see a wholesale switch here remains to be seen.

WHAT ABOUT INSTAGRAM REELS?

Instagram is also hoping to capitalise on TikTok's uncertain future with its own rival called Reels. Available within the Instagram app by pressing the Camera icon and selecting Reels, you can use it to record videos up to 15 seconds long and enhance your footage with filters, effects and music.

Visiting the Explore page lets you scroll through other users' efforts, and many of the features you'd expect from a social platform – including likes, messaging and commenting – are available.

The biggest stand-out feature of Reels is its integration with the Instagram ecosystem. However, you can't directly upload songs or remix other users' videos, as you can with TikTok.



Make the Web ACCESSIBLE

COVER FEATURE

Tiny text, muffled sound and fiddly controls can make browsing websites and operating apps hard work. **Jane Hoskyn** reveals how to make them all easier to see, hear and use

When YouTube announced this summer that it would no longer let users improve its automatically generated subtitles, we were dismayed – and so were the half-million people who signed a petition calling for YouTube to change its mind.

YouTube blamed users for the decision to ditch Community Captions, saying not enough of us used the tool. But the furore over its loss shows how important accessibility features are to web users. "Subtitles aren't just for deaf people," tweeted one user (who is deaf), triggering more than 76,000 likes (bit.ly/3ibAKmu). If you've ever streamed TV in bed next to a sleeping partner, watched a downloaded film on a train or tried to hear Hollywood dialogue above the din of CGI explosions, then you'll sympathise.

Accessibility is a vital ingredient of the web. It makes sites, streams and apps available to everyone, including the growing number of us with some degree of hearing and vision loss, not to mention anyone who finds devices' tiny text and buttons tricky to control.

For this feature, we've rounded up the most useful and ingenious ways to get the best out of your favourite websites and tools, without having to strain or squint.

TURN ON SUBTITLES & SIGNING WHEN STREAMING

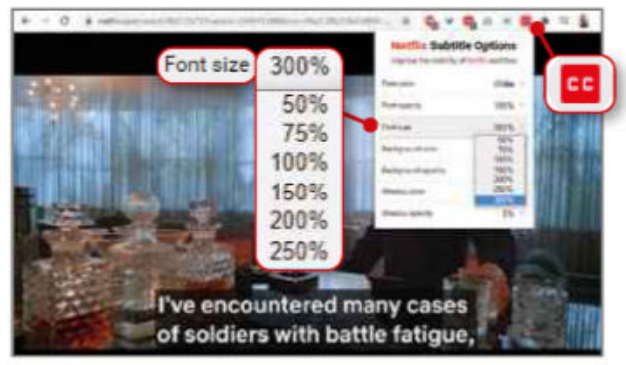
Enable YouTube's automatic subtitles

Despite what some responses to the #DontRemoveYouTubeCCs hashtag suggest, YouTube hasn't removed subtitles completely and still automatically adds AI-generated captions to videos that feature speech. To enable these captions, click the subtitles icon next to the player window's Settings cog. If the icon isn't there, it means there are no subtitles available for that video.

Unfortunately, the captions aren't very good. As The British Deaf Association says: "The standard of YouTube's auto-generated captions is poor and should not be considered as a viable substitute (for the ditched Community Captions tool)." To sign the petition to restore Community Captions, go to bit.ly/2HAlKlB.

Meanwhile, you can at least create subtitles for your own YouTube videos. Use free software such as www.aegisub.org to generate a subtitles file, then include the file when uploading your video via studio.youtube.com.

YouTube's standard subtitles are auto-generated and don't always make sense



Make Netflix's captions bigger than its options allow by using a free extension

Get Netflix subtitles on all your devices

Netflix's subtitles are significantly more accurate than YouTube's AI-generated efforts, and you can enable them on downloads as well as on-demand streams by clicking or tapping the subtitles icon. Depending on the film or show, you may also see language and audio-description options.

To customise the subtitles to suit your preferences, go to www.netflix.com/YourAccount, click your profile if applicable, then click Change next to 'Subtitle appearance'. Click the Font and Shadow drop-down menus to see previews. The 'Window' option lets you add a box behind the text for even easier reading. Netflix will remember your preference for next time, whatever device you're watching on.

If you're happy to watch in your browser, you can use an extension for further customisation. Netflix Subtitle Options (Chrome, bit.ly/30fzd90) automatically integrates with Netflix as soon as you install it, then lets you configure the text size, colour, style and background of subtitles.

Watch classic TV with subtitles via BritBox

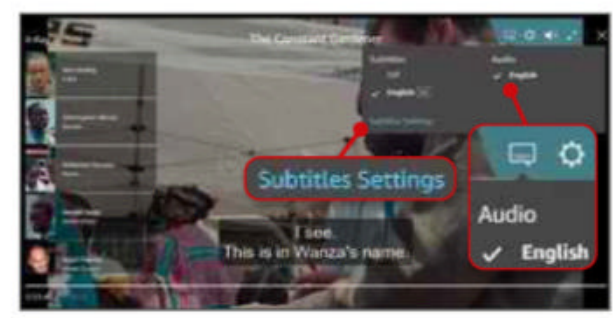
When BritBox launched in the UK last winter, barely any of its shows came with optional subtitles. We found this maddening, given that BritBox specialises in vintage British TV shows that often have low-quality audio. But the streaming service has caught up, and you'll now see a CC icon on nearly every film or show, which lets you toggle captions on and off. BritBox remembers your preference next time.

Now TV also now offers subtitles for most shows and films, but you have to enable them every time you watch. Disney+ and Apple TV+ have both offered subtitles since their launch.

At last, subtitles on BritBox's vintage box sets! Click CC to toggle them on and off

Find Amazon Prime Video's captions

Amazon tends to rely on filmmakers to provide captions rather than creating them in-house, so many films don't have them. To check before playing, hover over a film's thumbnail and look for the speech-bubble icon (or, in the mobile app, tap the thumbnail and look for 'Languages: Audio, Subtitles'). You can then enable and disable subtitles during playback by hitting Pause, clicking the subtitles icon and choosing 'English CC' (or your preferred language, if available). Customisation options are available under Subtitles Settings.

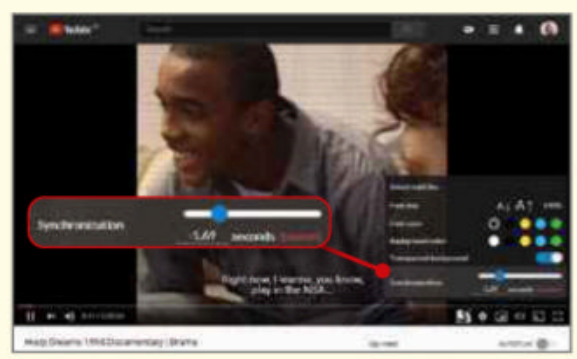


Follow Amazon's films with captions and click Subtitles Settings to tweak the text

The steps differ slightly on smart TVs and TV sticks, where you may have to enable subtitles or closed-captioning in the device Settings before looking for the speech-bubble icon in the Amazon app. Unlike Netflix, Amazon doesn't sync your preferences across devices.

FIND MISSING SUBTITLES FOR FILMS AND SHOWS

Amazon Prime Video, Now TV and BritBox have improved their subtitle provision, but you'll still come across films and TV shows that lack the option. The easiest tool for finding and adding subtitles is the browser extension Substital (Chrome and Firefox, substital.com). Click Substital's toolbar icon on any page that contains streaming video to automatically find a matching subtitles file uploaded by a user. The extension then automatically displays it over the on-demand stream, without interfering with the website. Use the 'Synchronization' slider to nudge the subtitles into sync with the audio (see screenshot).



Alternatively, you can download a subtitles file. The best sites for TV and film subtitles are www.subscene.com and www.opensubtitles.org, both of which stock thousands of files created and uploaded by users, which are all free to download. Then upload the file to Substital, and use the slider to get it in sync.

Watch BBC iPlayer shows with sign language

The Beeb repeats many programmes with a British Sign Language interpreter in the frame, and these signed versions often remain on the iPlayer long after the non-signed versions expire. To find all current signed shows and films, go to bbc.in/3n4myzB on the website or the Signed category in the BBC iPlayer app (tap Menu on the main screen, then swipe under Categories).

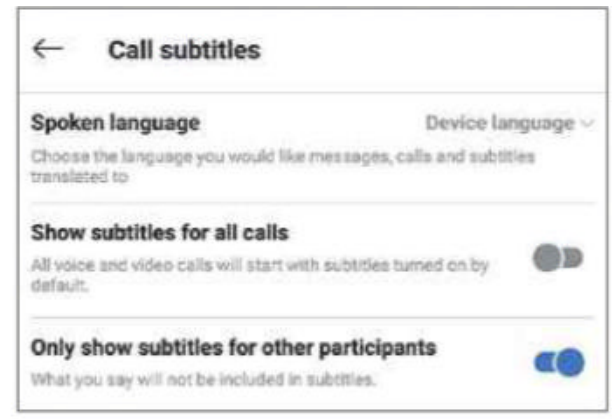
The BBC offers accessibility via an excellent selection of signed shows

Nearly all iPlayer films and shows have subtitles, too. Hover your mouse over the video player to show the controls, then click the subtitles icon. In the iPlayer app, tap 'S' in the player controls. This works with downloaded shows as well.

Add live captions and signing to your video chats

Skype's mobile app (www.skype.com/get-skype) can now display AI-generated subtitles while you're in a video or audio call. Tap the three-dot menu and select 'Turn subtitles on' during a call or, to keep them on by default, go to Settings, Calling, 'Call subtitles', 'Show subtitles for all calls'. Tap 'Only show subtitles for other participants' to avoid seeing your own words spelled out.

Google Meet (meet.google.com) also provides real-time captioning and transcription in your browser and on your phone and tablet. Zoom (zoom.us/download) is a few steps ahead and has



You can now switch on live captions in Skype's mobile app - voice calls included

just added the option to keep a sign-language interpreter's window in view for all participants, a feature that Google Meet users have been requesting (bit.ly/2Gdxaeu).

Zoom lets you enable live subtitles in its desktop version as well as its mobile app, and saves a downloadable transcript. The PC version also lets you (and other participants) add your own subtitles, as well as using AI-generated captions. Find out more from Zoom's support site at bit.ly/2S2UsWY.

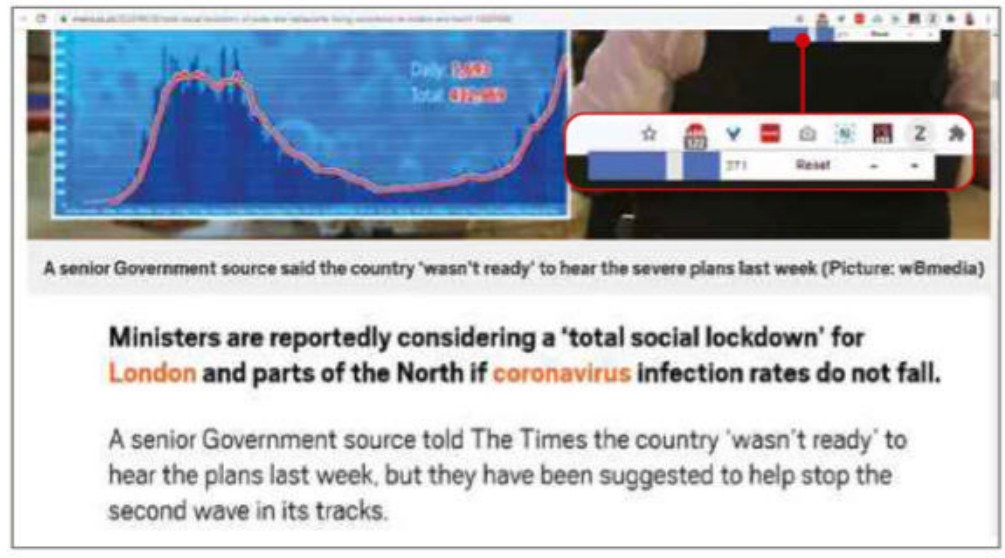
MAKE WEBSITES EASIER TO READ

Enlarge tiny text on websites and apps

Windows 10 has a built-in Magnifier tool (search for 'magnifier') that you can move over web pages to enlarge tiny text such as links and photo captions. However, it's fiddly to use and there are easier alternatives online. The free extension Zoom (no relation to the chat service, it works with all major browsers, bit.ly/349ZGpq) lets you zoom in and out of any web page using a quick and easy slider.

On your phone and tablet, you can "pinch" the screen to zoom in and out or switch to an easier three-tap zoom gesture by going to Settings, Accessibility and toggling on 'Magnification gestures' (Android; Fire OS) or Zoom (iOS).

Many apps and mobile sites disable


A senior Government source said the country 'wasn't ready' to hear the severe plans last week (Picture: wBmedia)

Ministers are reportedly considering a 'total social lockdown' for London and parts of the North if coronavirus infection rates do not fall.

A senior Government source told The Times the country 'wasn't ready' to hear the plans last week, but they have been suggested to help stop the second wave in its tracks.

Use the Zoom extension's slider to make web text and images bigger

zoom, and you can't zoom your home screen. To get around this on Android, install the free app Big Font (bit.ly/1756mQi) to scale your device's font size to up to 1,000% (10 times bigger). It works with text in apps and mobile websites, as well as system text. Reading Glasses (bit.ly/30752kh) lets you zoom with one tap of a giant button, and has buttons that sharpen text.

For iPhone and iPad, Magnifying Glass With Light (apple.co/3mKL3l0) lets you zoom using a slider, as well as pinching,

DOES DARK MODE DO YOUR EYES MORE HARM THAN GOOD?

It's long been assumed that the glare from your screen can strain your eyes and give you headaches. Hence the popularity of dark mode, which inverts the display to white text on black, dims the screen and lets you overlay warm colours.

But if you have astigmatism (as half the population does), this is really bad news because your eyes will struggle to read white on dark. Even non-astigmatic eyes read better in 'positive polarity' (black text on a white background), because the pupils don't have to dilate as much. That means easier focusing and less eye strain (bit.ly/3jfCGLZ).

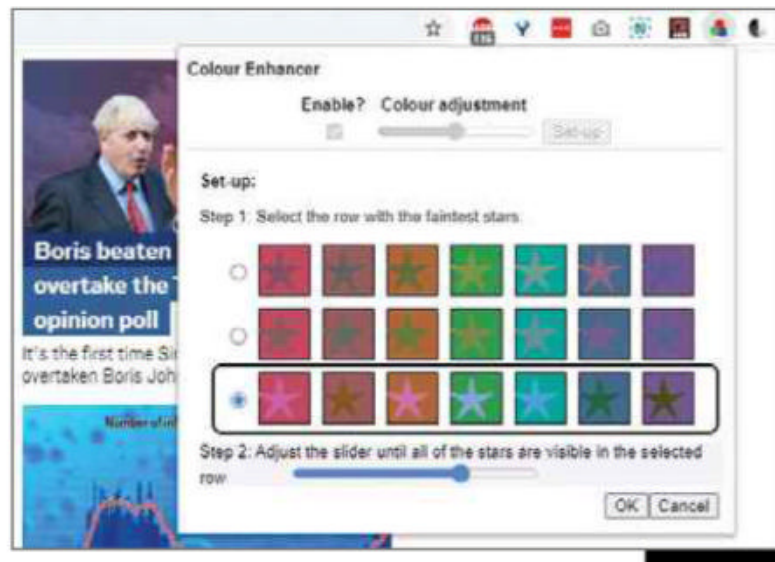
Meanwhile blue light, supposed enemy of restfulness, has been shown to be vital for mental performance and healthy eyesight. If your eyes feel sore after reading from a screen for too long, researchers suggest it's because you were blinking less, and frowning while focusing. So ditch dark mode and get blinking!

and can also magnify text on paper, using your device's camera. BigMagnify (apple.co/3mR5QTV) also has a zoom slider, plus filters to make on-screen text sharper and clearer.

Boost colour-contrast for easier reading

One in 12 men and 1 in 200 women have some degree of colour-vision deficiency. The free online test at www.eyeque.com/color-blind-test reveals if you're affected. Even if you're not, colour contrast makes on-screen text much easier to read.

Windows 10 has a 'High-contrast' option (search for 'contrast') that you can apply to your PC's text, but it won't work with most websites. Browser extension Colour Enhancer (Chrome bit.ly/1FhP0Wc) displays a visual grid that you can use to adjust text colour and background (see screenshot, right).



Small colour-contrast tweaks make the web more readable, as the Colour Enhancer tool reveals

High Contrast (bit.ly/32RQerz), also for Chrome, automatically switches a page to inverted colour (white on black), but the toolbar icon lets you choose a different filter, such as Increased Contrast or 'Yellow on Black'. Press Shift+F12 to link a filter to a specific website.

To boost colour-contrast on your phone and tablet, use the free app NowYouSee (Android bit.ly/2EsroF4, iOS apple.co/3kKZ28u). Swipe left and right to cycle through various colour filters which, for example, help you tell red from green.

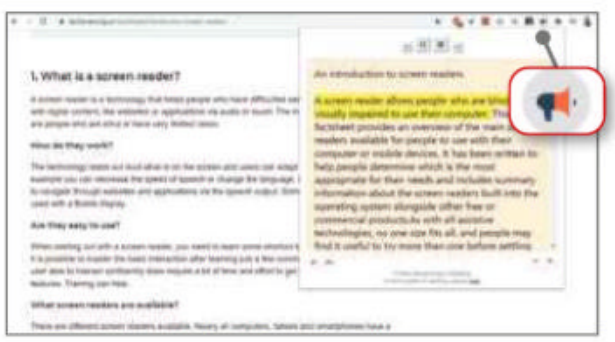
LISTEN TO THE WEB READ ALOUD

Use a screen reader while browsing

Screen-reader tools free you from squinting by converting on-screen text into audible speech, like your own personal narrator.

Windows 10's built-in screen reader, Narrator, has a pleasant voice ('George' by default in the UK) but it makes a mess of reading web pages. We had better luck with Read Aloud (Chrome and Firefox, readaloud.app), which reads any web page at a clear and easy-to-understand pace with one click of its toolbar icon. It also displays a large-text transcript and easy controls. However, it has a rather grating robotic US twang and no customisation options.

The Chrome extension Selection Reader (bit.ly/36nKuaS) has a UK accent and reads only the text you select.



Web extension Read Aloud vocalises text and makes the words easier to see

Let your phone or tablet do the talking

The excellent built-in screen readers on Android and iOS offer different options depending on the device, but are all great at articulating what's on screen and explaining how to navigate.

Android Voice Assistant dictates or explains whatever you tap and highlights it in blue

Head for Accessibility in Settings, look for Voice Assistant or TalkBack (Android) and VoiceOver (iPad, iPhone and Apple TV), then tap to enable. You'll notice changes to familiar controls – for example, on our Samsung phone, Voice Assistant replaced the usual one-tap and swipe with double-tap and two-finger swipe. The friendly UK accent explained everything and read out any text we tapped, including links and button text. Relevant interactive elements were highlighted with a blue outline.

You can configure gestures in Voice Assistant or VoiceOver Settings, along with options such as password reading (this is turned off by default, for security reasons), vibration feedback and a braille keyboard. To find out more about the options, see the official accessibility overviews for Android (bit.ly/3kynSIP) and iOS (apple.co/3hRQDyq).

Hear (and record) books and articles out loud

Free Android app @Voice Aloud Reader (Android, hyperionics.com/atVoice) adds numerous extra screen-reader options, including the ability to create a reading list by integrating with Pocket (getpocket.com); setting a sleep timer; waking the voice up by inserting headphones; and downloading its narrations as sound files.

Read Aloud (Android, bit.ly/33asLSm) lets you create a playlist by pasting text, entering a URL or opening a file – such as an ebook or document – then reading chosen items out loud for you, even when you're offline. Like many screen-reader apps, it supports Google Text-to-Speech (bit.ly/3n3ZEZ5) to let

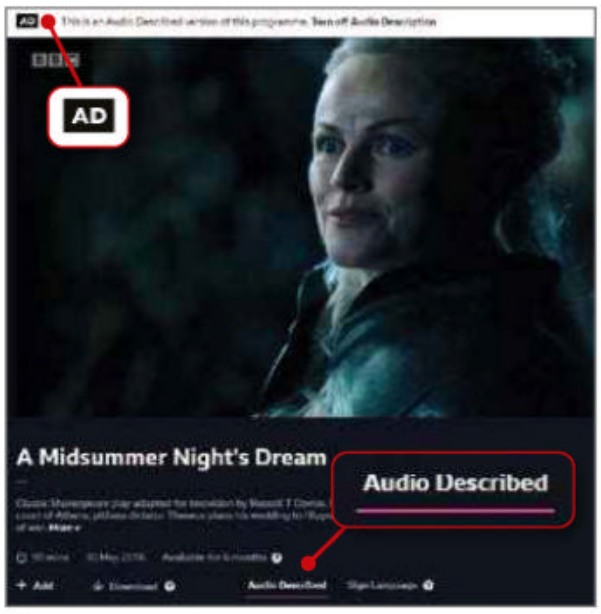
Give your eyes a rest and let free app @Voice read out pages of tiny text

you customise the voice and speed.

For iOS, Voice Aloud Reader (apple.co/33dz3Ru) reads out web pages and documents in custom voices, and can narrate any text you've scanned with your iPhone or iPad's camera.

Get audio descriptions of online films and shows

The BBC iPlayer has always offered an audio-described option for many of its films and shows, with a narrator explaining the action in between the dialogue. Go to bbc.in/3cA5fRW on the iPlayer website or the Audio Described category in the app to see the current selection. Click Audio Described below the player to toggle it on and off.



Hear all the on-screen action by switching on the iPlayer's audio description

Netflix and Amazon Prime Video both display an AD icon on the main info pages of titles with optional narration. The process is the same on both sites: play the film or episode, click the subtitles icon and click Audio Described.

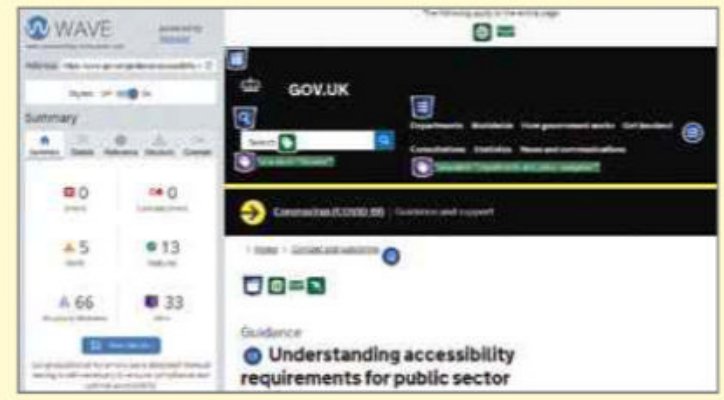
Hear foreign-language films in English

Netflix Subtitles Reader (Chrome, bit.ly/36cal5y) automatically converts subtitles using text-to-speech technology and speaks them out loud, in a language of your choice. This makes it ideal for translating foreign-language films whose English subtitles you struggle (or don't want) to read. Toggle it on and off by clicking the extension's icon, then Start or Stop. Bear in mind that the add-on automatically generates speech using AI, so it doesn't always sound altogether human or get the pronunciation right ("sake" pronounced as "saké" made us giggle).

Get foreign films translated and spoken out loud by Netflix Subtitles Reader

TEST YOUR OWN WEBSITE'S ACCESSIBILITY

NHS apps and local council websites are now legally required to meet strict accessibility standards. Under the Public Sector Bodies Accessibility Regulations, which came into effect on 23 September, sites must have accessible colour contrast, keyboard shortcuts and more (gov.uk/accessibility-regulations).



The same laws don't apply to your website, but you can use the latest Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1, bit.ly/309cVWj) to make your site useful and enjoyable for as many people as possible.

Enter any page's URL in the free online WAVE tool (Web Accessibility Evaluation, wave.webaim.org) to automatically highlight potential problems. WAVE's browser extension (Chrome and Firefox) lets you check all elements of your site. To find out how your site performs with assistive technologies such as screen readers, use the free Tota11y Toolkit (Chrome and Firefox, khan.github.io/tota11y). To check colour contrast against WCAG 2.1 standards, use the free Contrast Checker tool (contrastchecker.com).

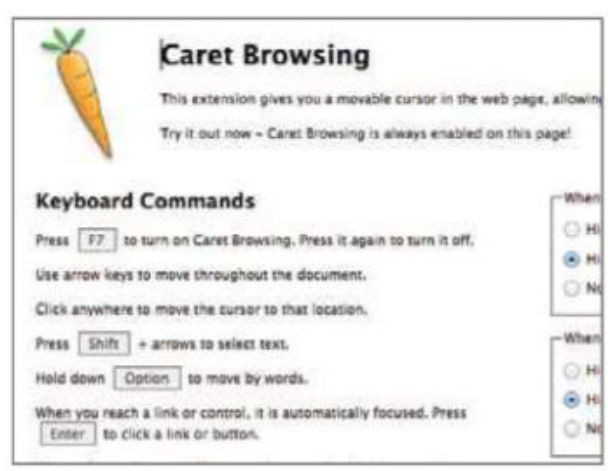
If your site includes interactive elements such as toggles and shopping carts, you'll want to ensure they meet Accessible Rich Internet Application (ARIA) standards. There's a library of ARIA-compliant widgets, along with their free code, at bit.ly/33TEBQ4.

MAKE THE WEB EASIER TO OPERATE

Ditch your mouse for pain-free gestures

Computer mice certainly weren't designed with delicate wrists in mind. You can shell out for special supportive mouse pads (amzn.to/3kVJQFD), but the best solution is to use the keyboard instead. Many keyboard shortcuts work across browsers in websites – for example, press Space to toggle Play and Pause in a video stream, and Ctrl+D to bookmark a page – but many others are specific to individual browsers. For Chrome shortcuts, see bit.ly/2S95hXx; for Firefox, mzl.la/30gaql0; and for Edge, bit.ly/3jeVgEa.

To remap even more mouse gestures to your keyboard, the Chrome extension Caret Browsing (bit.ly/2Hcw2bg) lets you select text, scroll through pages and click links, all by tapping keys to move a cursor around the screen.



Give your wrists a rest and use your keyboard to navigate with Caret Browser

Browse the web using your voice – privately

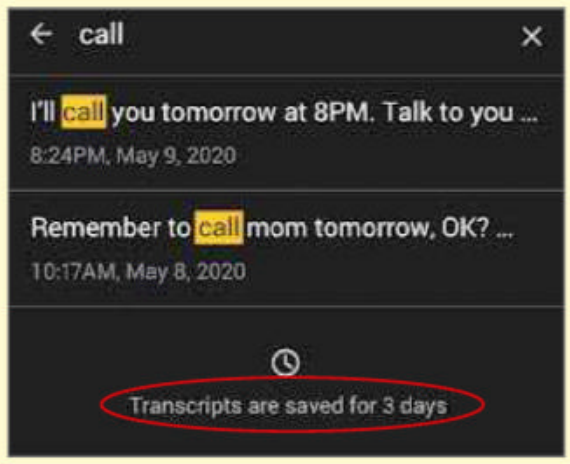
Chrome's voice-search tool has been around for six years – just click the microphone icon in the Google search bar, then speak. Mozilla has gone a step further with its new Firefox Voice tool, which lets you navigate the entire web using your voice. And, unlike Google and Amazon, this open-source tool doesn't store voice recordings by default.

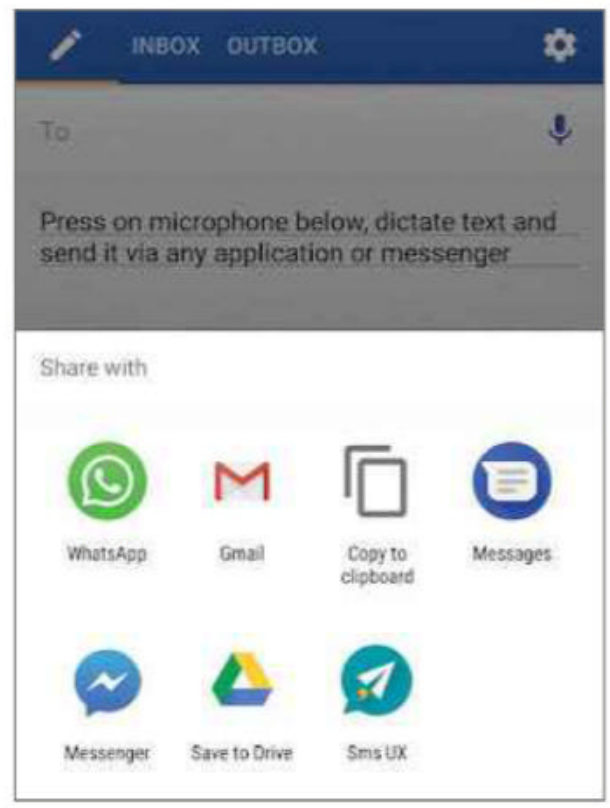
APPS THAT MAKE THE REAL WORLD ACCESSIBLE

Websites and apps can be hard work if you're hearing or sight is impaired, but they can also be your best accessibility friend. The free Android app Live Transcribe (bit.ly/2ttyEaP) effectively displays text and audio subtitles for real-life conversation, using technology that's similar to Google Translate. You can save your transcripts for searching later, which is handy if you struggle to remember the details of what's been said.

Letmetalk (Android, bit.y/2FTopGi) lets users communicate using pictures rather than words. It has more than 9,000 easily understood stock photos, and lets you add photos from your device.

Several free apps can describe the world around you by "seeing" through your device's camera. Lookout by Google (Android, bit.ly/2PU4uZA) is particularly good at recognising people and animals; TapTapSee (Android and iOS, taptapseeapp.com) is great for navigating obstacles around you; and Envision AI (Android, bit.ly/2HovoI5) can read documents and handwriting in 60 languages. The iOS app iDentifi (getidentifi.com) is an AI-based audio-recognition app that can identify, out loud, whatever you point it at – which is useful for all of us.





Dictate your messages, then copy them to whichever app you want

The tool is still quite new, only works with the desktop Firefox browser and is limited to understanding English, but it's free for everyone to try. After installing the extension from voice.mozilla.org/firefox-voice and allowing the permissions (of which there are many, as is explained on the same page), you can then activate Firefox Voice by clicking the microphone icon on your toolbar. The first time you use it, make sure to click 'Don't allow' to avoid having your recordings saved.

LipSurf lets you command the web by using voice alone

The best Chrome tool for full web browsing by voice is LipSurf (bit.ly/3kYtlZs). This fabulous extension has more than 100 preset commands such as checking Gmail messages and switching between tabs, and you can add your own. Advanced features such as speech-to-text dictation require an upgrade to LipSurf Premium ($6 per month, which is about £5).

Write text messages using voice or braille

Hands-free controls are built into Android and iOS. Apple's Voice Control app (iOS 13+) is particularly good, and displays a full list of commands – from swipes to screen locking – when you speak the words: "Show me what to say" (apple.co/3nc674e). On iPhone 6s and later, you can dictate text instead of using the keyboard (apple.co/3kYwfNX).

On Android, Google Assistant lets you perform all basic actions by voice, including making calls and sending text messages. But it is fiddly to set up, and you may find it easier to use an app. For example 'Write SMS by voice' (Android, bit.ly/3jdVOu7) converts speech to text for sharing via any messaging app (see screenshot, above). If you don't mind paying £8.99, e-Dictate Pro (Android, bit.ly/3n0JqQ9) is a more powerful alternative, with excellent speech-recognition and editing tools.

Android's free Accessibility Suite has a basic braille keyboard built in (bit.ly/3ewFEtB). If you have an external braille display, it'll work with Google Assistant and the TalkBack screen reader by installing the free Google tool BrailleBack (bit.ly/3n1O3JR). ■

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Best photo-editing apps for Android

After Adobe Lightroom began irretrievably deleting users' photos, **Steve Clark** decided it's time to look at the best Android alternatives for enhancing your images. Here, we test six free contenders

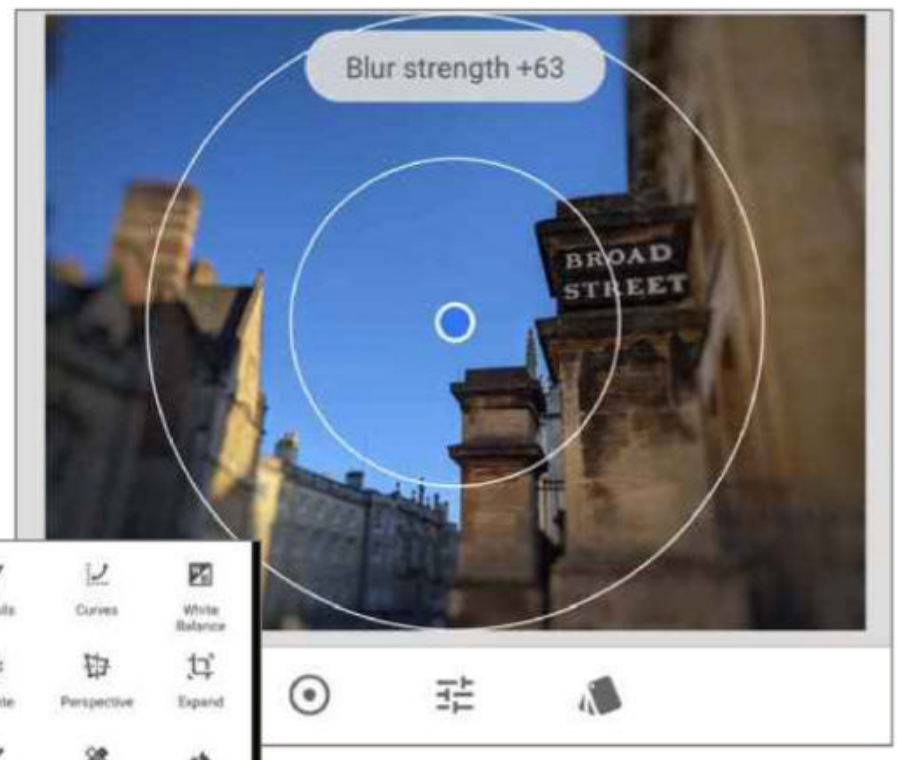
Snapseed | bit.ly/1WyHUF7 | ★★★★★

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

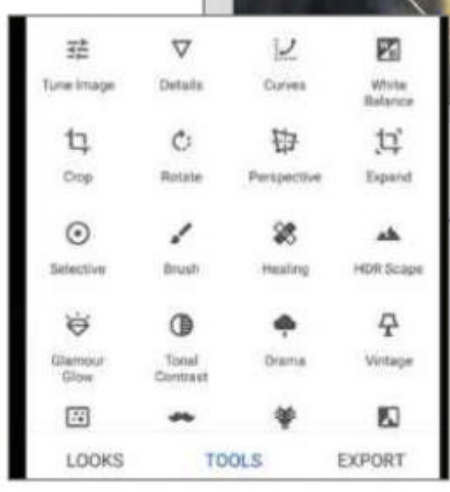
WebUser GOLD AWARD

What we liked:

Photo-editing apps have one major drawback in that they don't offer the fine-tuning dexterity offered by a desktop computer and mouse, so they need to be thumb-friendly, whether for making sweeping alterations or performing minor adjustments.



A good photo-editing app offers a wide range of tools and ensures you don't accidentally delete your photos with one slip of your finger. Thankfully, Snapseed, which was bought by Google back in 2012, absolutely delivers on its promise of professional-level photo editing on your phone or tablet.



When you open the app, you're presented with a large preview of your image with the standard selection of filters ranged below. Select one, then tap the tick to apply it and see it instantly previewed.

Where Snapseed excels is in its comprehensive line-up of photo-editing tools, ranging from the basic image tune-up to more advanced edits, such as lens blur and a very clever perspective tool. Most of these are controlled via an invisible slider – just roll your thumb from one side of the screen to make precise changes to, for example, the filter strength or the brightness; and press and hold to switch between different options. The current settings are displayed at the top of the screen. You can pinch the screen to zoom in, which makes finicky edits a lot easier on your phone.

Once you've made your changes, you can choose to Share, Save or Export your image. Before you do, however, it's worth heading into Snapseed's settings to set your format and image quality.

How it can be improved:

Snapseed is chock full of preset filters that add moody, noir-inspired effects or summery vibes to your snapshots, but they are randomly lumped in with all the other tools and and we feel they could be better organised.

OUR VERDICT

Whether you're a snap-happy novice or a serious shutterbug, Snapseed cleverly and intuitively turns any photo into a work of art with an abundance of options, from editing tools to preset filters.

VSCO | bit.ly/2AcQsfV | ★★★★☆

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

WebUser SILVER AWARD

What we liked: VSCO looks, feels and performs like an app that's built for professional photographers, yet it's straightforward enough to remain accessible to casual snappers.

The app has all the usual effects and tools you'd expect from a photo editor, but its stand-out feature is Recipes. This option lets you save edited images to your Recipe book as a template for future enhancements, so you can apply the "unique editing formula" of an older photo to a new one. However, the free version limits you to just one Recipe at a time. Any images you've worked on are held in the Studio.

The app has an Instagram-style social side, which lets you browse the galleries of other users and share your own edited images with friends. Its handy Organise feature lets you rearrange your presets, tools and recipes to prioritise your favourites.

How it can be improved: VSCO isn't the most intuitive tool we've come across, so it's worth spending time getting to know how it works. The app offers plenty of effects and editing tools for free, but some are locked behind an annual subscription of £19.49. This gives you access to a massive presets library, as well as video editing, and lets you save 10 Recipes.

OUR VERDICT

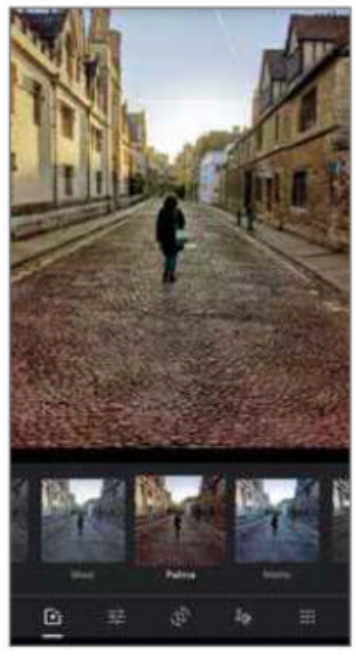
VSCO is easy to use but takes time to master. The free version provides a well-stocked toolbox of editing options, but you need to sign up for membership to get maximum value from the app.

Google Photos | photos.google.com | ★★★★☆

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

WebUser BRONZE AWARD

What we liked: Don't be quick to dismiss Android's default image app. Google Photos may not be a photo-editing powerhouse, but it has a good set of basic tools, including crop, rotate and preset filters for making colours pop or turning images black and white.



Open a photo in the app and tap the Sliders icon to reveal five options, starting with filters. Rather than adding sparkles and bunny ears to the subjects, most of the filters provide minor adjustments to lighting and contrast, and you'd be hard pushed to spot the difference between some of them. Tapping a filter twice applies it and opens a slider that lets you fine-tune the effect. If you find the filters too subtle, a second option lets you modify a photo's light, colour and focus to bolder effect.

Elsewhere, there are options to draw on photos and add your own text. Like we said: it's basic, but it's also simple to use.

How it can be improved: Google Photos doesn't pretend to be a dedicated photo editor. While the app provides a handful of advanced settings, it's best suited to quick fixes and tweaks. That said, we'd like to see Google introduce more filters and customisation options.

OUR VERDICT

Google Photos is primarily an image viewer, so don't expect to create masterpieces. However, it's brilliant for simple edits, such as rotating photos. Since it's automatically linked to your Google Drive, everything's backed up by default.

BEST OF THE REST

Photoshop Express

bit.ly/1qozZrg

Under normal circumstances, we wouldn't hesitate to place Adobe's Photoshop Express in our top three. It's hands-down one of the best image-editing apps, with tons of tools and effects, including a quick-fix for blemishes, a collage maker and great-looking filters. But we'd have said the same about Lightroom before Adobe's update played havoc with users' photos. Until we have assurances that our images are in safe hands, we can only tentatively recommend it.

Polarr

bit.ly/36ieCEA

In Issue 503 (bit.ly/webuser503), we included Polarr in our round-up of the best online image editors, stating that it was "ideal for touching up images". The same is true of the app version, which includes a specific Retouch option. Elsewhere, you can tweak a photo's lighting, colouration and toning, add effects, and sharpen everything up. It's not especially powerful but it is simple. Editing is controlled via sliders for greater accuracy.

PicsArt

bit.ly/30i6XCE

If you're looking for a less serious photo editor, you won't go wrong with PicsArt. So long as you don't mind the ads and being persistently hassled to sign up for premium membership, you're free to make all the usual edits, alongside fun stuff such as adding or creating stickers. It's just a shame a lot of the tools are locked behind a paid-for subscription.

Secret tips for Audible

Amazon's audiobook service has soared in popularity this year, as locked-down web users sought new forms of entertainment. **Robert Irvine** explains 10 ways to get more from Audible

1 Reclaim credit for unwanted books

Audible's £7.99 subscription gives you one credit every month to spend on an audiobook and lets you 'roll over' unused credits up to five times. Running out of credits means you have to pay the full price for books, so if you're not enjoying a recent purchase, why not return it and reclaim that precious credit? Go to your account page (www.audible.co.uk/account), click Purchase History and select Return Title next to the unwanted book. Audible won't approve if you return books too often, so make sure you listen to samples before buying.

If you often run out of credits, consider upgrading to Audible's £119.99, 24 credits per year subscription, which works out at £4.59 per book. You can also buy bundles of three extra credits for £18 (so £6 a book), once you've completed your free trial.

2 Make your credits go further

If, on the other hand, you have a lot of spare credits, you can buy audiobooks for other people by selecting 'Give as a gift' on the store page. Choose how to send the gift – via email or as a code on a printed card – and click 'Buy with 1 Credit'. Alternatively, Audible lets you

pause your account for up to three months without losing any credits (or earning new ones) via www.audible.co.uk/contactus.

3 Get extra freebies through Prime

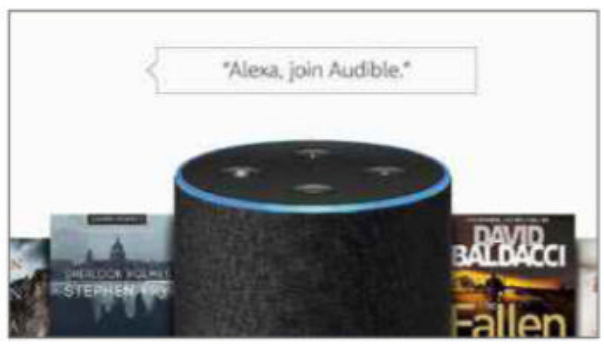
If you're an Amazon Prime member, you're given two free credits to spend on audiobooks, rather than just the one, during your 30-day Audible trial. Cancel (Audible not Prime) before the trial is up, and both those free books are yours to keep forever. Prime subscribers also get discounted prices and can download Audible Original Podcasts (www.audible.co.uk/podcasts) for no extra cost, whereas standard Audible members need to pay for certain series.

4 Send friends and family free audiobooks

If you've just finished listening to a particularly good audiobook, you can share it with a friend or family member without them needing to pay for it – they don't even have be an Audible subscriber. Just go into your Library on the Audible website or in the mobile app, click or tap the three-dot button next to the book and choose 'Send this book' – this can be via email, WhatsApp or text message. You can share as many books as you like, provided you own them, but each recipient can only download one title for free (the same applies to books shared with you). Sent books remain in your Library afterwards.

5 Listen to books on your Echo

Amazon makes it easy to listen to Audible books on its Echo smart speakers and displays, which means you can sit back and enjoy the story without the encumbrance of headphones. Simply say "Alexa read my book" to carry on from where you left off, or "Alexa read..." followed by the title of a book in your library. You can also use voice commands to play, pause and rewind, skip chapters, change the narration speed and buy audiobooks –



see bit.ly/3hT76T2 for the full list. If you're not already an Audible subscriber, say "Alexa, join Audible" or "Alexa, start a free Audible trial".

Audiobooks can also be streamed to Sonos speakers by selecting 'Connect to device' in the Audible app.

6 Improve Audible's audio quality

By default, audiobooks are saved to the Audible app at Standard quality, so they download quickly and don't use too much storage space. For the best possible sound, switch to High quality instead, provided you have enough room on your Android or iOS phone or tablet. Just tap the menu button in the app and choose Settings (in My Library on iOS), Data & Storage and select High under Download Quality. To conserve your mobile data, choose to download 'Audio data only on Wi-Fi' and, optionally, split your audiobook downloads into multiple parts.

7 Simplify playback while travelling

A good audiobook makes a long car journey more bearable, but it's both dangerous and illegal to be fiddling with your phone while driving. For this reason, the Audible app offers a special Car Mode that makes the app easier to operate on the road.

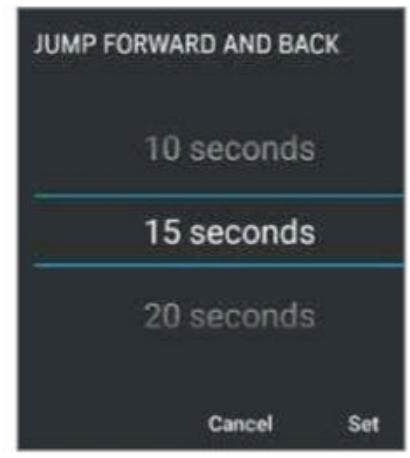
To activate this, either start playing an audiobook (before you set off) and tap the car icon at the top of your screen or go to Settings, Player and enable Automatic Car Mode. This will turn the feature on automatically when your mobile device connects to your car stereo via Bluetooth. You can then tap the middle of the screen to pause and resume playback, the lower-left corner to skip back 30 seconds and the lower-right corner to add a bookmark.

8 Switch to Button-Free mode

Another way to simplify Audible's controls when you're listening on the go is to tap the three-dot icon in the top-right corner and choose Button-Free. In this mode, you simply tap the screen to pause and restart playback, swipe left or right to go back or forward 30 seconds, and either long-press (Android) or swipe down (iOS) to add a bookmark.

9 Change Audible's jump settings

The Audible app's playback controls let you jump back or forward 30 seconds in the audiobook you're currently listening to, but if this is too long or short a time for your needs, you can change the default. Tap the three-dot button on the Now Playing screen and choose 'Player settings'. Then, under 'Jump forward and back', select a different length of time – from 10 seconds to 90 – and tap Set.



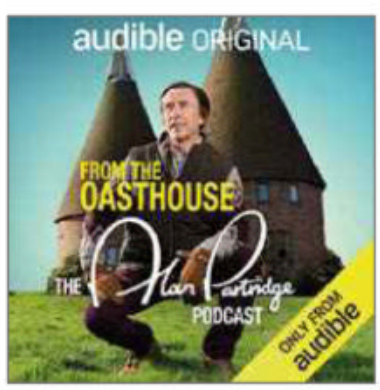
10 Sign up for daily-deal alerts

Audiobooks outside of your monthly credit allowance can be expensive – sometimes more than £30 – but you can save money through Audible's Daily Deals. These include one time-limited discount every day, usually priced at £1.99 or £2.99, plus two-for-one deals, price drops and more. Check out the latest offers at www.audible.co.uk/deals or sign up for email alerts – click Email Preferences on your account page and tick Audible Daily Deals.

AUDIBLE HIGHLIGHTS What to get for free with your 30-day trial

From the Oasthouse: the Alan Partridge Podcast

adbl.co/2G0RC1U

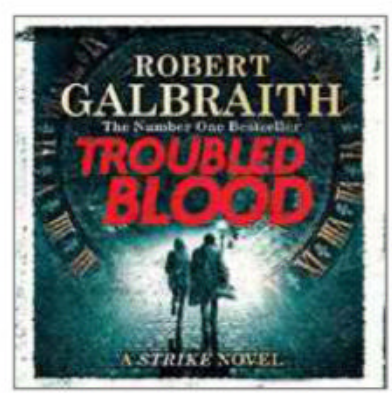


This Audible Original features 18 episodes (nearly seven hours) of North Norfolk's most famous broadcaster (aka Steve Coogan), sharing his hilarious views and unique insights on everything from cows to combovers.

Usual price: £19.99

Troubled Blood

adbl.co/3iYpURV

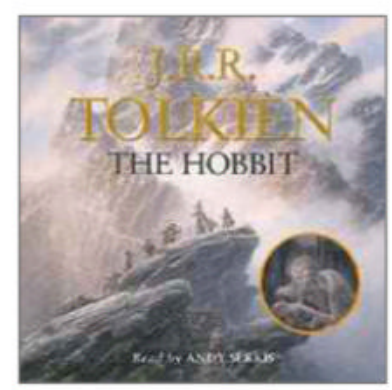


The controversial fifth book in the Cormoran Strike series by Robert Gailbraith (aka JK Rowling) follows the private detective tackling a 45-year-old cold case. It's nearly 32 hours long in audio form, which should last you through the next lockdown.

Usual price: £29.99

The Hobbit

adbl.co/2G2FEoF



Narrated by Gollum himself, actor Andy Serkis, this new, unabridged version of JRR Tolkien's classic tale of Bilbo Baggins' journey – a prelude to *The Lord of the Rings* – has already scored hundreds of five-star reviews from Audible listeners.

Usual price: £12.99

Send us your Audible tips at webuser@webuser.co.uk

THE WORST MALWARE OF 2020

COVID-19 isn't the only virulent infection to have been spreading rapidly this year. **Wayne Williams** reveals the nastiest malware threats of the last 12 months and explains how to avoid them

EMOTET

What it does

Emotet started life as a banking Trojan designed to steal sensitive information, and has since evolved into a modular, self-propagating platform that can deploy spam campaigns and spread other strains of malware. It's the number one cybersecurity threat today, though its activity tends to slow during the summer months while its developers add new features and capabilities.

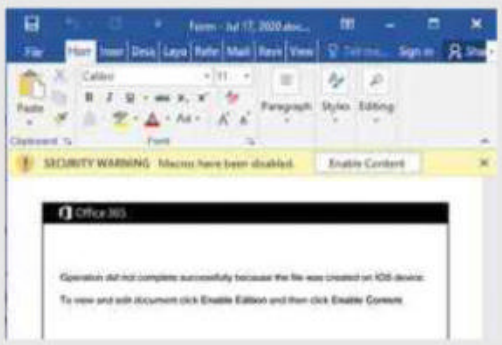
How it spreads

Em an spread through phishing and spam emails (often using the names of controversial public figures to fool you into clicking links), and via malicious websites and attachments. It can also make itself look like a message from one of your (infected) contacts, then spread from one system to another over a network.

Deviously, Emotet can tell if it's being run in a virtual machine and lay dormant on a computer in a bid to thwart anti-malware developers.

How to avoid it

There are usually no obvious signs of an Emotet infection. However, if your PC starts behaving oddly, it's worth checking it with an up-to-date antivirus scanner. To be on the safe side, make sure macros are disabled in Microsoft Office.



Credit: Malwarebytes

Emotet is currently the biggest malware threat and uses devious ways to spread

JOKER

What it does

Joker is a premium dialler that disguises itself as a legitimate Android app in the Google Play store. It sends messages to expensive phone numbers and subscibes victims to premium services without their knowledge or consent. It can also download additional malware to an infected device.

How it spreads

You become infected by installing what appears to be a legitimate app, complete with convincing looking user ratings. Google has removed hundreds of such apps over the years, but new versions sneak past the search giant's vetting process with annoying regularity, thanks to small changes to Joker's code.

How to avoid it

Don't blindly install apps from Google Play – always read the reviews carefully. Check your phone bill regularly to make sure you haven't been signed up for any services without your knowledge. If you have, try to unsubscribe. Identify and remove the infected app from your phone by working out which one it's most likely to be.

Joker disguises itself as legitimate apps and subscribes you to premium services

AGENT TESLA

What it does

Agent Tesla is a RAT emote Access Trojan – that logs yo keyboard activity and clipbo content, and attempts to steal personal information and login credentials from email clients, web browsers and the Windows Registry. It then sends all harvested data back to the attacker.

Agent Tesla has been around since 2014 but, in recent years, it's evolved and become more popular. Most recently, it was found to be stealing Wi-Fi passwords.

How it spreads

Like a lot of malware, Agent Tesla is spread through phishing campaigns and has been widely used in coronavirus-themed spam, with messages appearing to have originated from WHO (World Health Organisation). It's also been found in malicious Office documents.

How to avoid it

Don't click any links in emails or Office documents if you're not certain where they'll take you. Get into the habit of scanning documents with your antivirus program rather than blindly clicking them. Be sure to avoid opening documents with a double extension, such as 'covid19.doc.rtf'.

Credit: SentinelLabs

Agent Tesla spreads through phishing emails to steal your personal data

DRIDEX

What it does
Dridex is a financial Trojan that tries to steal a victim's passwords, banking details and personal information. It can monitor activity on your PC, download other malicious files and take screenshots. It's been active since at least 2014.

How it spreads
Usually, you get infected with Dridex through phishing emails and malicious files. However, it can also be installed via another piece of malware, such as Emotet.

How to avoid it
Dridex is designed to be very hard to spot. Take the steps we've mentioned previously, such as not clicking links in emails or opening mysterious documents.

Dridex can be blocked by security software such as Malwarebytes

Credit: Malwarebytes

RYUK

What it does
Ryuk is named after a character from Japanese comic book series *Death Note* and is a particularly nasty form of ransomware. It mostly targets businesses and enterprise organisations, and encrypts all files before generating a ransom note demanding payment in Bitcoin. It can manually delete both system backups and shadow copies, making it almost impossible to recover from.

How it spreads
Ryuk can be installed by an attacker who has gained access to the system, but is more commonly introduced by other malware, such as Emotet or TrickBot. Once running, it will attempt to disable any antivirus software.

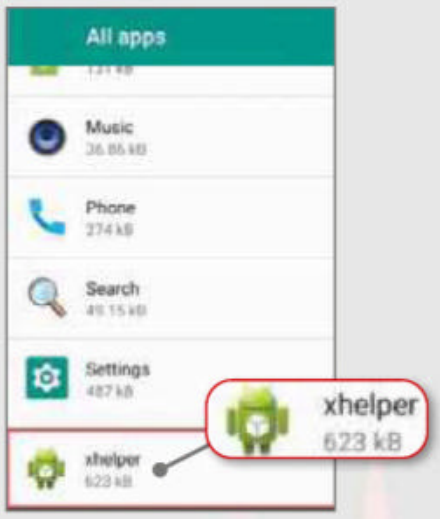
How to avoid it
Ryuk targets firms that have the funds to pay up, but you could still get infected, especially if you succumb to the likes of Emotet. Make sure your antivirus software is running and up to date, and that any backups you make are stored offline or away from your network.

XHELPER

What it does
This malicious Android app has been around since March 2019 and displays ads on your device and attempts to download other apps. It can hide and reinstall itself if removed and, until early this year, was impossible to fully remove – even surviving factory resets.

How it spreads
Attackers direct Android users to apps hosted outside the Play store that can be sideloaded on phones and tablets, bypassing Android's built-in security. Once installed, the apps install the xHelper Trojan.

How to avoid it
If you start getting bombarded with annoying pop-up ads or notification spam, there's a good chance you have xHelper on your phone. Remove it by installing and running Malwarebytes for Android (www.malwarebytes.com/android) or by following the steps for removing the Trojan at bit.ly/332tFk4.

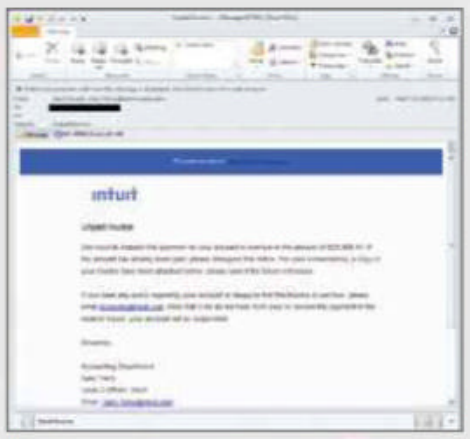


xHelper was once impossible to remove but you can now get rid of it

TRICKBOT

What it does
Trickbot, like Emotet, started life as a banking Trojan and has similarly become more flexible and modular. It can steal personal information, gather details about the infected device and network, and download further malicious content. It can also create scheduled tasks in Windows, to keep itself running without your knowledge, and even disable Windows Defender.

How it spreads
Trickbot can be spread via phishing campaigns, in malicious Office documents and as a secondary payload through the likes of Emotet. It can also spread across a network by infecting other devices.



Trickbot can disable Windows Defender to steal your bank details

Credit: Malwarebytes

How to avoid it
Watch out for signs of changes to your system or network, and for unauthorised account access. Don't open emails or documents from unknown sources. If you suspect you've been infected, remove the threat using antivirus software, change your passwords and contact your bank.

WILL MY ANTIVIRUS KEEP ME SAFE?

Provided you have a decent anti-malware software installed, keep it up to date at all times and run regular full scans, you should be safe from all the major threats we've covered in this feature.

That said, there are also dedicated free tools available – including ones from the main security firms – which can detect specific threats and keep you safe. These include EmoCheck (bit.ly/2SbrODj), which can find and block Emotet, and Emsisoft's range of free ransomware-decryption tools (bit.ly/3csMlMS).

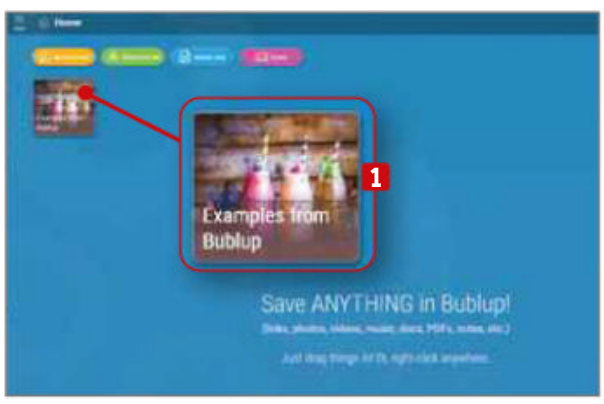
Visually organise files you store in the cloud

Bublup lets you save, store and share interesting items and files in attractive visual folders, like Pinterest. Here's how to use the service

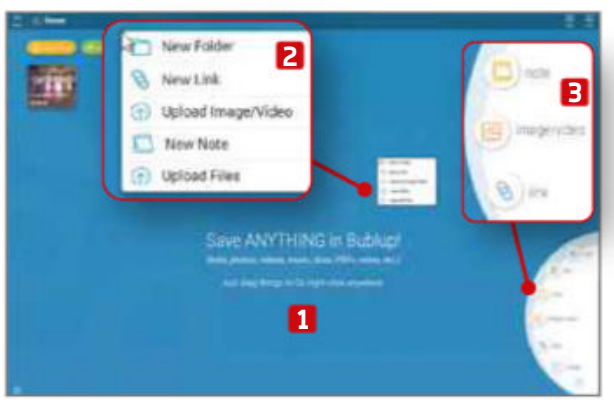
Bublup: www.bublup.com | 20 mins | Any browser

Pinterest (www.pinterest.co.uk) is a visual social network that lets you group items by category in pinboards. If you like the look of the site but would rather create your own shareable projects, Bublup is a free service that lets you group together photos, videos, GIFs, PDFs, links, notes and other files on any topic – whether it's travel, recipes or research. You can then turn your collections into Rolls – web pages you can share with anyone.

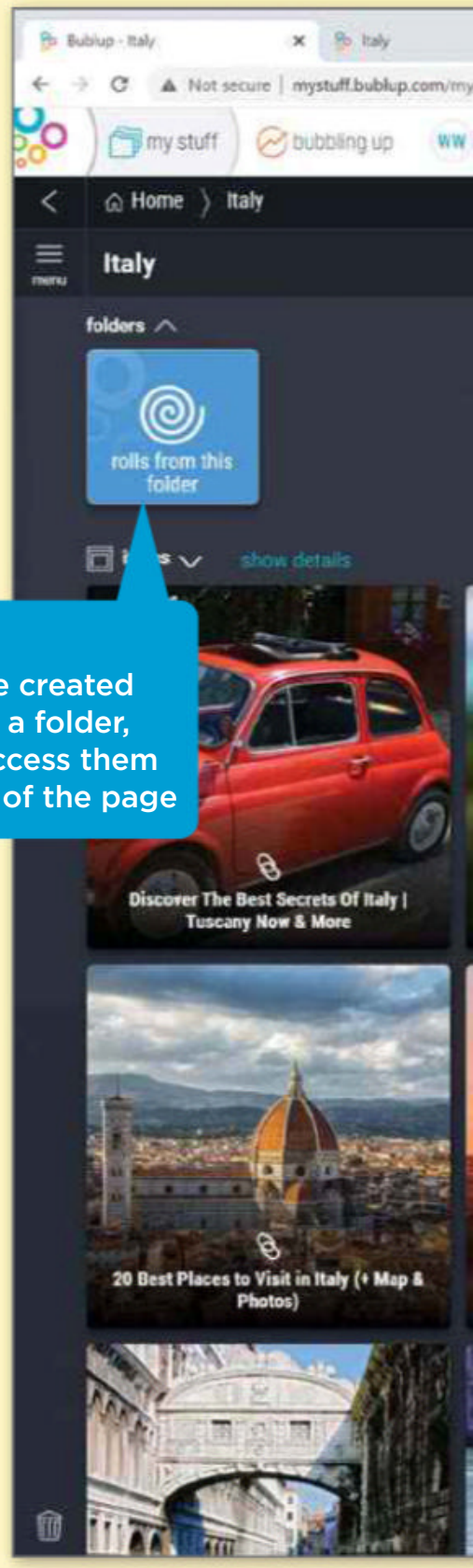
There are free and paid-for options. The free (Standard) subscription gives you 3GB of storage with a maximum 3GB cap on individual files. If you want more space and extra features, you can upgrade from $2.99 (£2.32) a month.



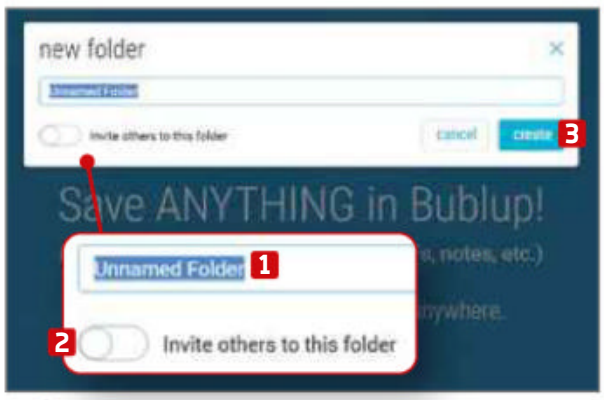
1 Create an account and verify your email address. It's worth exploring the examples provided, 1 to get an idea of what you can create. These include example folders for Exercise, Gift Ideas, Healthy Living, Recipes and Travel & Vacations. Double-click a folder to view its contents.



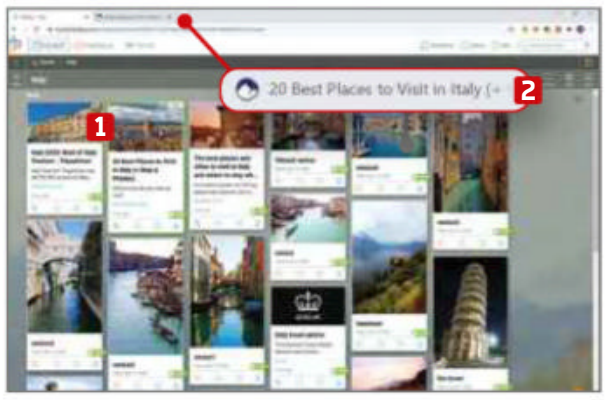
2 Once you've explored the possibilities, get started by dragging a file to the main window 1 or by right-clicking anywhere and selecting the type of content you want to add from the context menu. 2 Alternatively, click the plus sign in the bottom-right corner to open a carousel of options. 3



ROLLS
If you have created Rolls from a folder, you can access them at the top of the page

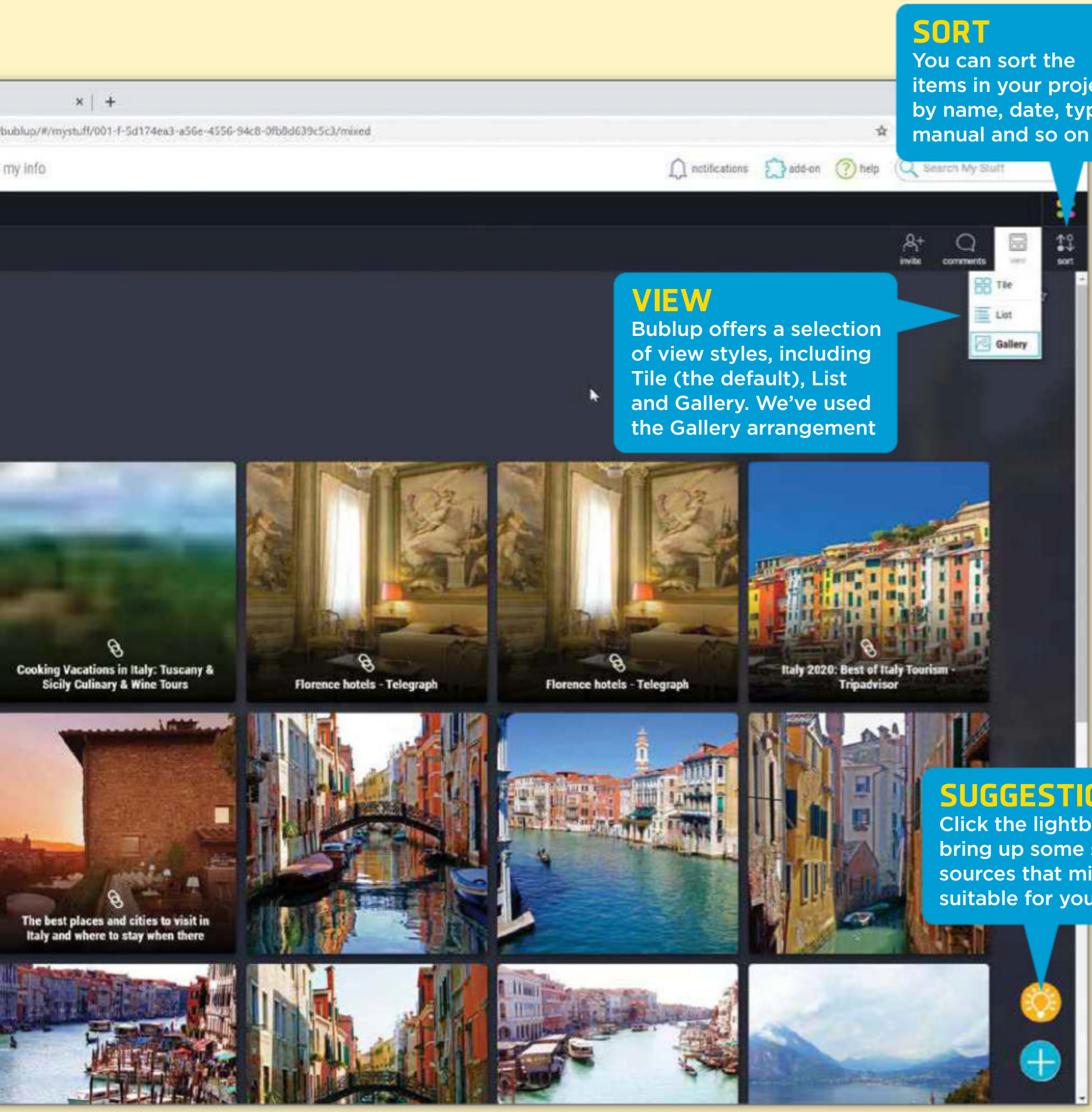


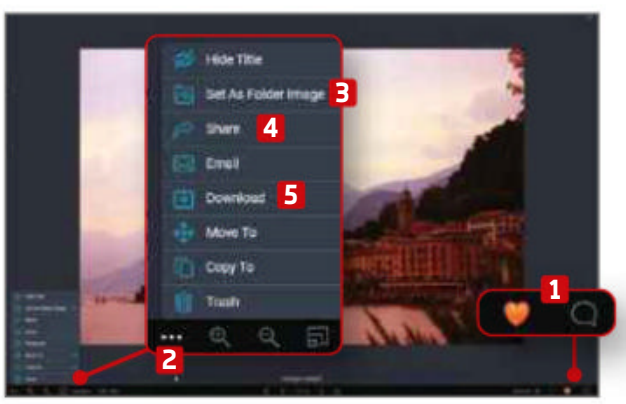
3 Click the option to create a new folder and, in the box that opens, enter a name for your collection. 1 If you want to collaborate with others, toggle on the 'Invite others' switch. 2 You can either send your collaborators a link or invite them by entering their username or email address. Click 'create'. 3



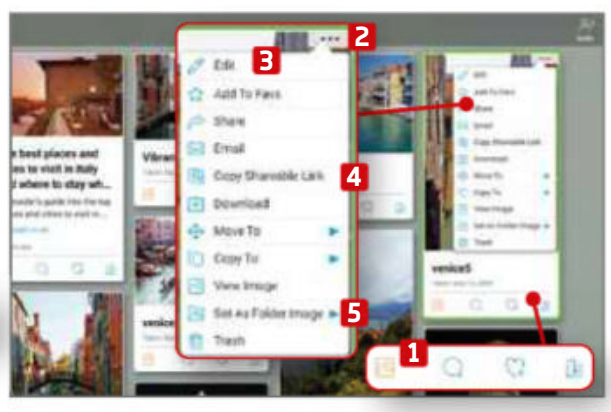
4 Your new folder appears top-left next to the examples. Double-click it and you can start to add content. As you add links, photos, notes and other items, they appear in the folder. 1 You can reorder them by clicking and dragging. Double-clicking a link opens it in a new tab. 2

5 Double-click an image to open it in the same tab. You can zoom in and out, 1 and adjust the picture quality – Best, Better or Medium (Faster Loading). 2 You can switch to another of your images (and also the main photo of any websites you've added), 3 and start a slideshow playing. 4

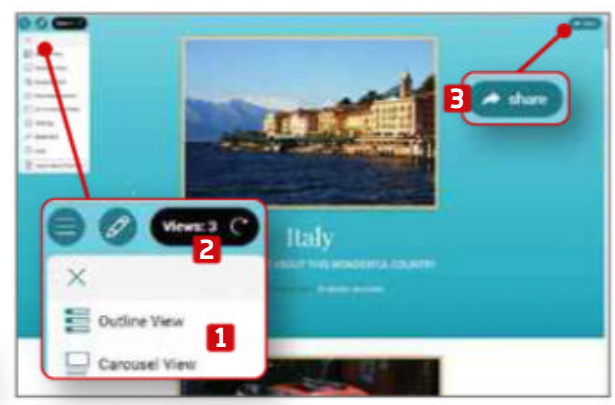




6 You (or anyone you share your creation with) can add an emoji or comment to items. 1 Click the bottom-left three-dot button 2 to open a context menu. From here, you can perform various actions, including setting the file as the folder image, 3 sharing it 4 and downloading it. 5



7 Each thumbnail in your folder has icons across the bottom that let you view the item, add a comment or an emoji, or open the detail view. 1 The thumbnail's top-right three-dot button 2 opens a menu that includes options to edit, 3 copy the shareable link 4 and set it as the current folder image. 5



8 Click the bottom-right plus icon or the top-left menu button and select the Roll option. This produces a web page that contains everything in your folder, which you can share with anyone. You can change the layout style, 1 see the number of views an item has received 2 and share it. 3

Add anything to your Start menu

Start Menu Manager: bit.ly/2RZKrcY | 30 mins | Windows 10

The Start menu, introduced in Windows 95, became an integral feature of Microsoft's operating system until its fall from grace with Windows 8's full-screen debacle. While the Windows 10 version repaired some of the damage, the Start menu has lost some of its lustre over the years.

Start Menu Manager returns the feature to its former glory. This handy program lets you add almost anything to the Start menu, from a simple web link that opens in your preferred browser to a powerful series of linked commands that can launch programs, open files and even run Command Prompt instructions.

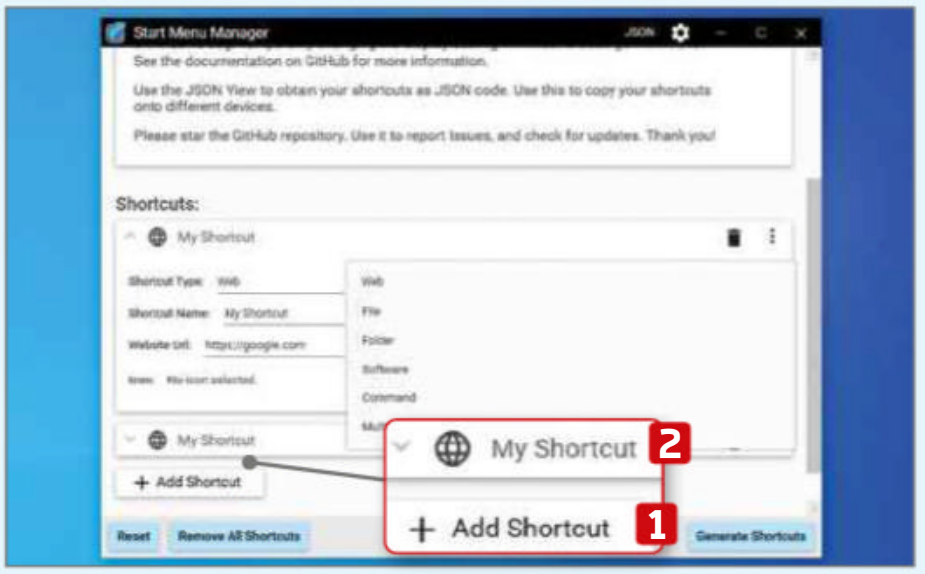
The software is a personal project, available for free via GitHub, though it occasionally nags you to donate.

EXPERT TIP

Andy Shaw says

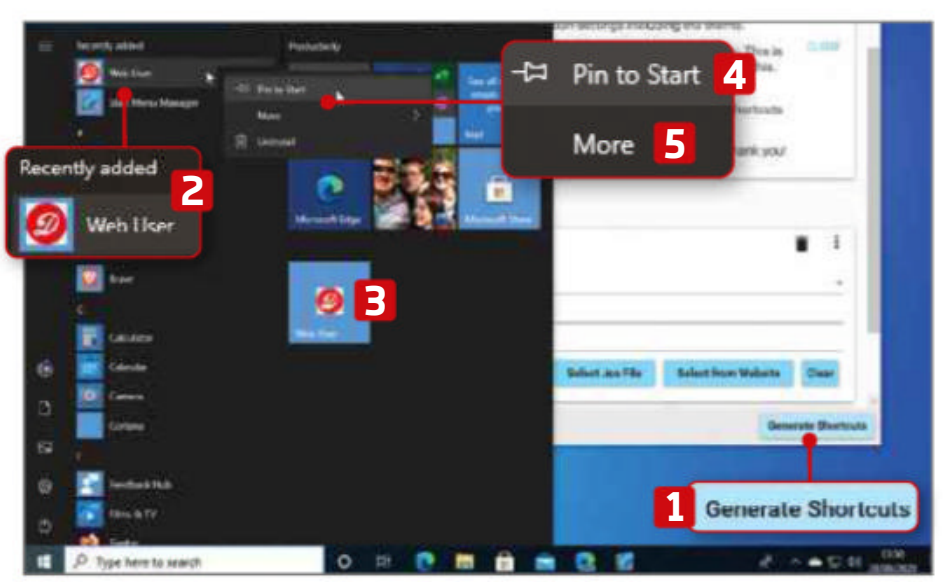
You can use any icon for your shortcuts but the Windows ones have the advantage of being recognisably familiar. Open File Explorer, choose the C: drive (or wherever you have Windows installed) and enter `*.ico` in the search box. Right-click the icon you want and select 'Open file location'. Click the file location to select it, then copy and paste it into the box that appears in Start Menu Manager when you click 'Select .ico File'.

1 The software is only available through GitHub so installation is different to normal. Go to the software's Releases page at bit.ly/2RZKrcY and download the MSI installer file. Double-click it and Windows will flag it up as an unknown file. Just click 'More info', **1** then click the 'Run anyway' button. **2**

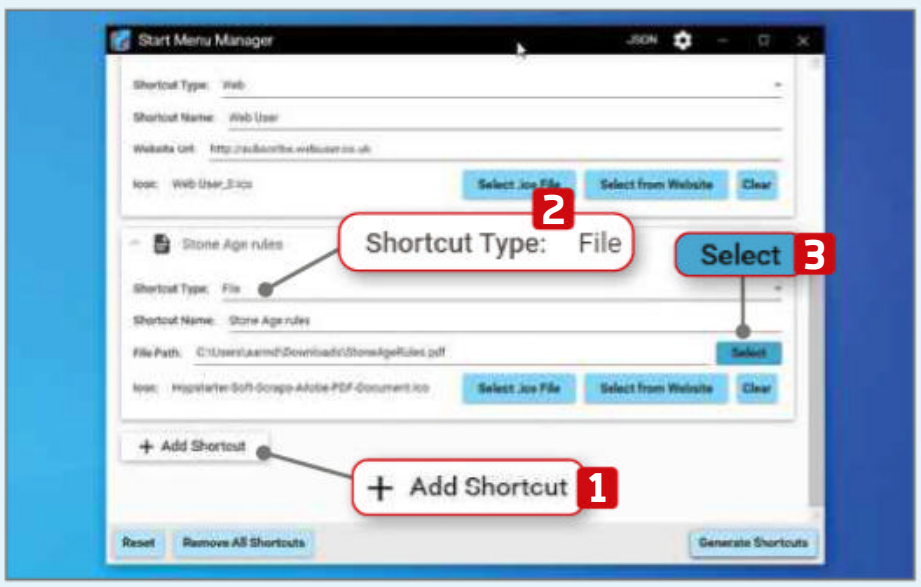


2 Type `Start Menu Manager` in the search box and click it when it appears. Add your first shortcut by clicking the Add Shortcut button. **1** This creates a new bar labelled My Shortcut **2** displaying a globe icon (the default for a Web shortcut). We'll start by making a link to your favourite website.

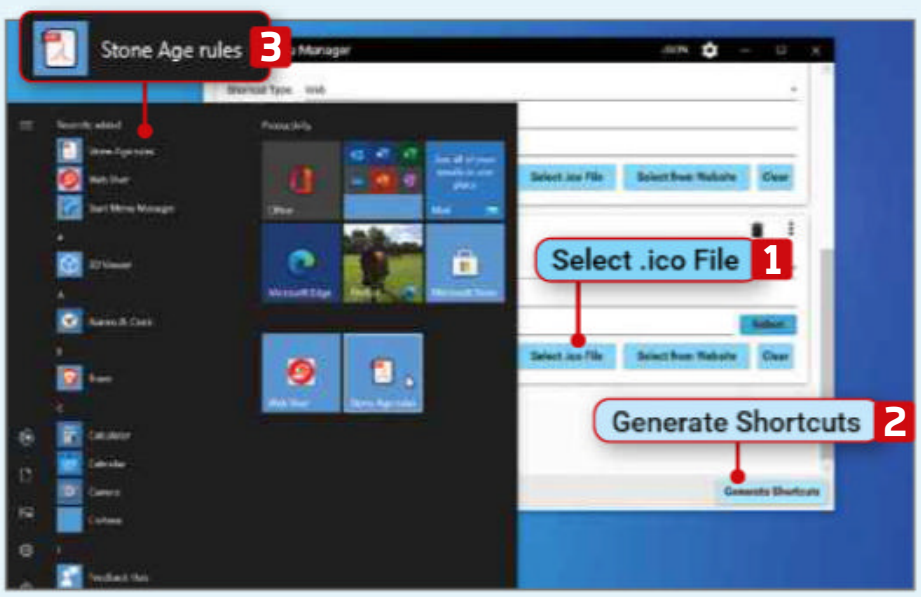
3 In the Shortcut Name section, **1** type the name you want to appear in the Start menu, then enter the site's URL in the box below. **2** To choose an icon for the shortcut, click the 'Select from Website' button. **3** Type the site's address in the box at the top, **4** click the magnifying glass **5** and double-click your chosen icon to add it to the shortcut.



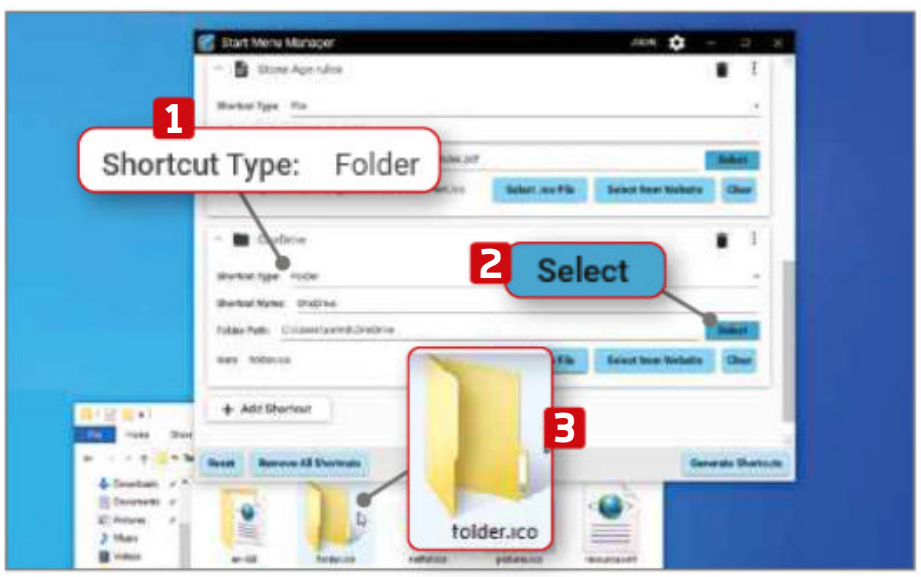
4 Click the Generate Shortcuts button **1** and open the Start menu. Your shortcut appears in the 'Recently added' section. **2** You can pin a larger icon to your main menu **3** by right-clicking the shortcut and selecting 'Pin to Start'. **4** You can also pin it to your Taskbar by clicking More. **5**



5 To create a shortcut to a file, click the Add Shortcut button 1 to bring up another form to fill in below the previous one. Choose File from the Shortcut Type drop-down menu, 2 then click the Select button 3 to browse for the relevant file. Give the shortcut a name.

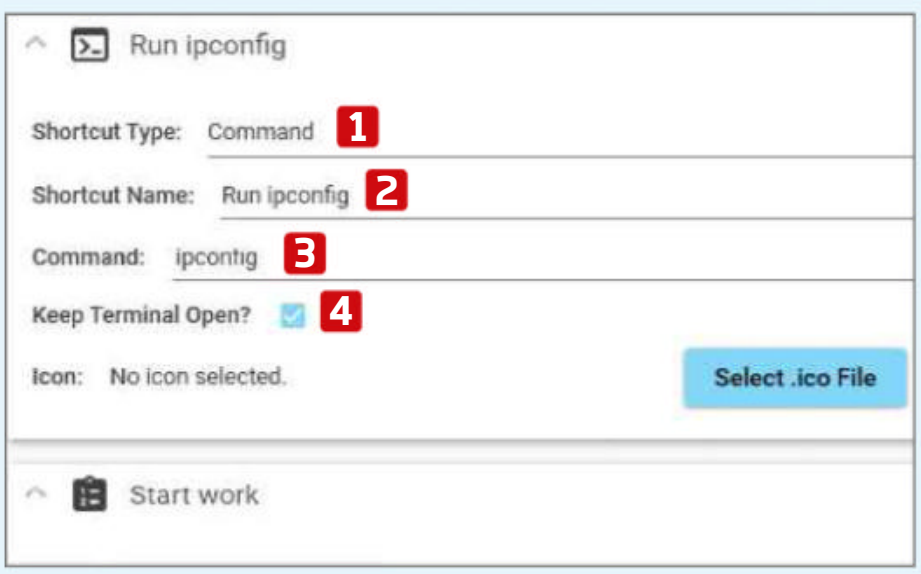


6 For this file, we've downloaded an icon from the internet – just search for 'ICO files'. Download the icon to somewhere handy, then click the 'Select .ico File' button. 1 As in Step 4, click the Generate Shortcuts button 2 to add it to your Start menu. 3 It doesn't matter if previous shortcuts are still listed.



7 The Folder option is a useful way to add a link to a folder in the Start menu. Choose Folder in Shortcut Type 1 and click Select. 2 Choose a folder from the Browse For Folder window and give it a name, then find and choose an icon. In this instance, we used the regular Windows folder icon 3 (see our Expert Tip, left).

8 The Software shortcut is a handy way to add programs that wouldn't otherwise make it to your Start menu, such as portable apps that don't force any changes on your PC. Choose the Software type, 1 then name it, 2 select the path to the file 3 and choose an icon. 4



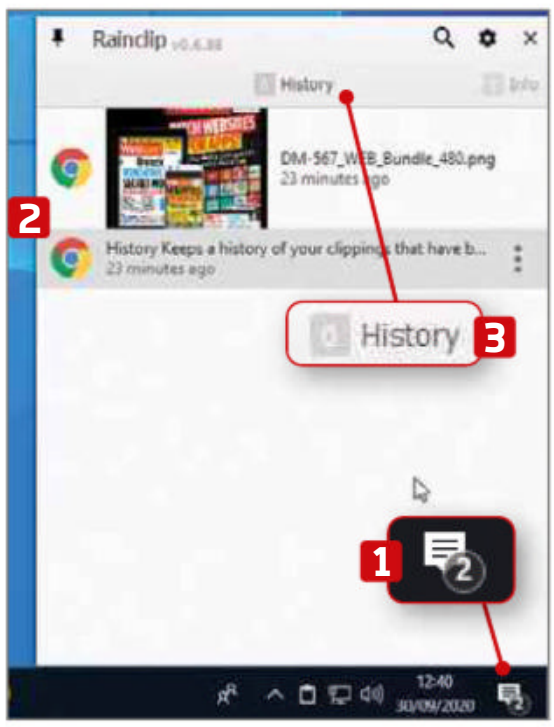
9 If you regularly use a Command Prompt tool, you can create a shortcut with the Command type. 1 Give it a name 2 and type the command below. 3 Tick the box 4 to keep the Command Prompt window open after the command has finished running.

10 The final shortcut type is Multi-Action, which lets you string together any of the other shortcuts in a group. Select the type and name it, 1 then click the Add Action button. 2 From here, you can choose from any of the other shortcut types and set them up as before.

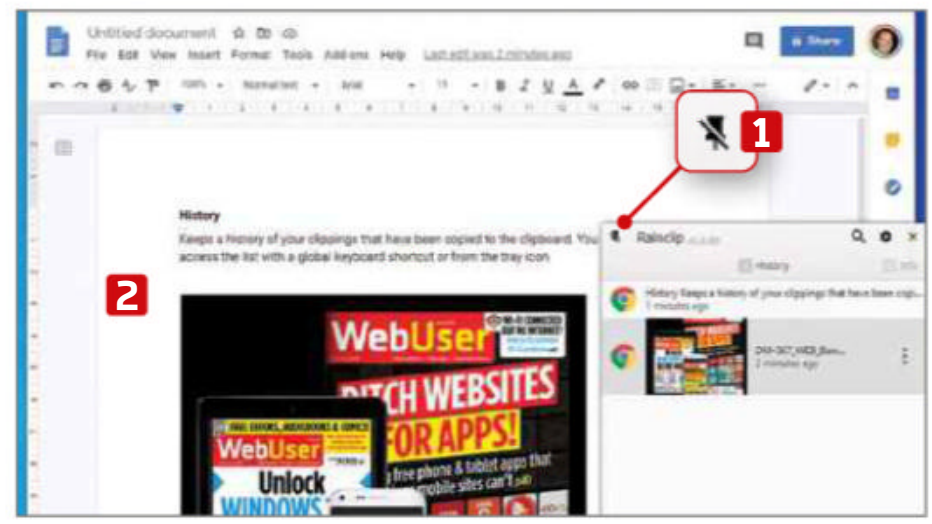
Sync your clipboard across all your PCs

There are lots of alternatives to the Windows Clipboard that tweak and improve its basic features, and Rainclip is one of the best. Not only does this handy tool increase the number of clipped items you can access at any time, it also provides editable templates for repetitive tasks and time-saving keyboard shortcuts. Best of all, it syncs with Google, so you can copy items from one PC to paste into another.

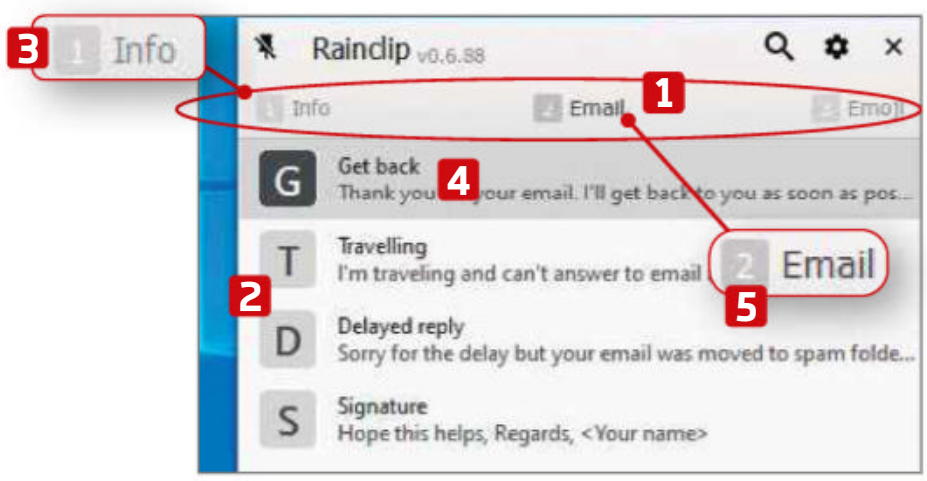
Rainclip: www.rainclip.net | 10 mins | Windows 8, 10 Mac OS



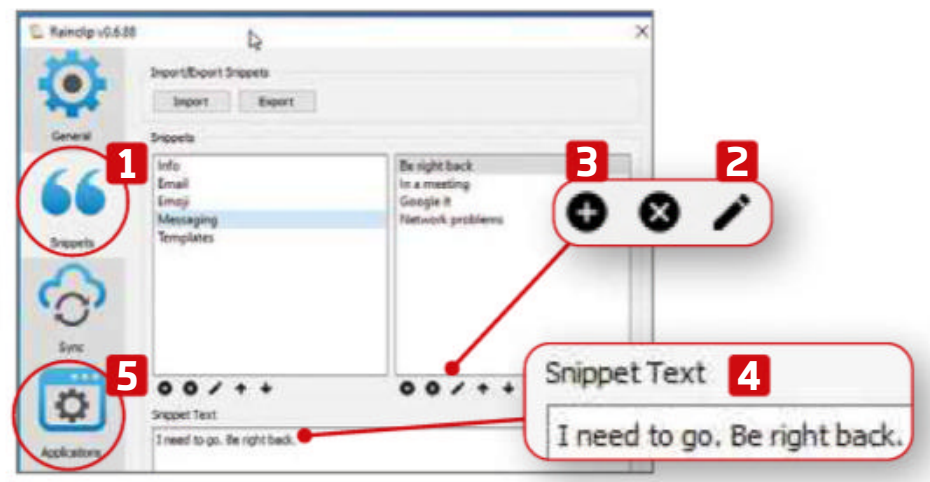
1 Install the software and it appears in the notification area of the taskbar. 1 Select some text and an image from a web page, and copy it to the clipboard (we use the keyboard shortcut Ctrl+C). Click Rainclip's icon and the pop-up window displays all your copied items (up to a maximum of 20). 2 These are stored in the History tab. 3



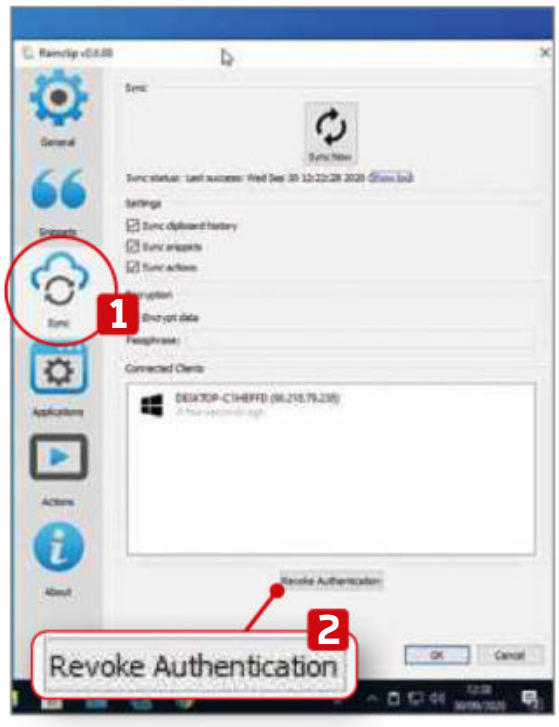
2 We found the software works best if you pin it 1 on top of other programs while you're working with it. Position your cursor where you want the content to be pasted, then click the Rainclip item you want to add. The copied content appears in your work as if you'd pasted it normally. 2



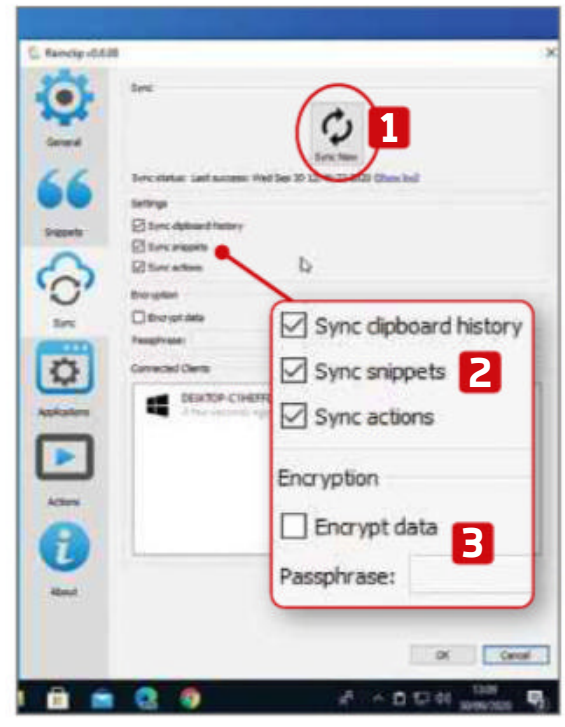
3 Rainclip's tabs 1 contain pre-configured templates 2 that can be used in a variety of different situations. Click Info 3 to scroll through them. The grey squares show the relevant keyboard shortcut – so, to paste a message saying you'll get back to someone later, you can either click the relevant template 4 or just press 2 (for Email), 5 then G.



4 Click the cog icon in the top-right corner to open Rainclip's Settings. Select the Snippets tab 1 to edit 2 an existing template or add your own. 3 The text for your snippet is entered in the box below. 4 You can also control which software can access your clips from the Applications tab. 5



5 To sync your Rainclip clipboard with Google Drive, open the Settings, choose the Sync tab 1 and click the Authenticate button. Google Drive opens so you can log into your account and confirm that you're happy to give Rainclip access. If you ever want to disconnect Rainclip from Google, click the Revoke Authentication button. 2

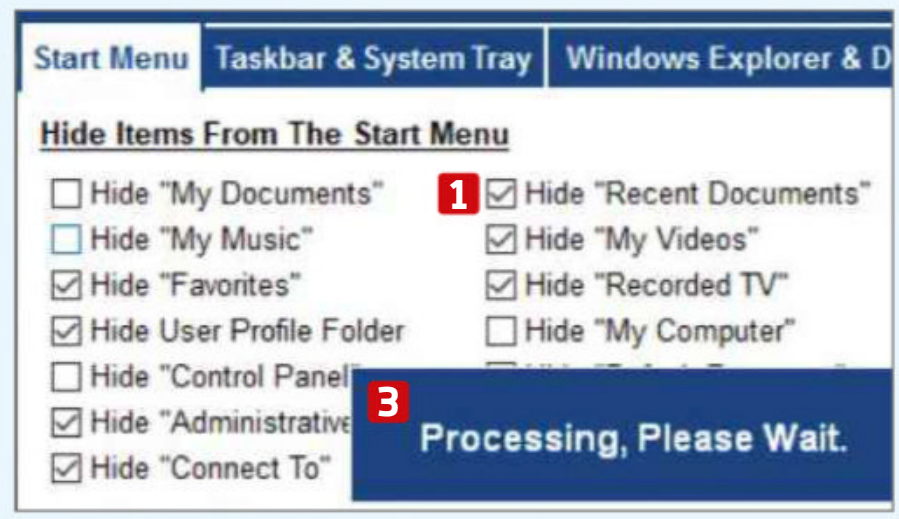


6 Install the software on any other PCs you want to share your clipboard with and repeat the process from Step 5. Your clips should sync across your devices automatically. If it's taking too long, you can give it a prod with the Sync Now button. 1 You can also control what information is synced 2 and encrypt it with a password. 3

Remove or hide Windows tools you don't like

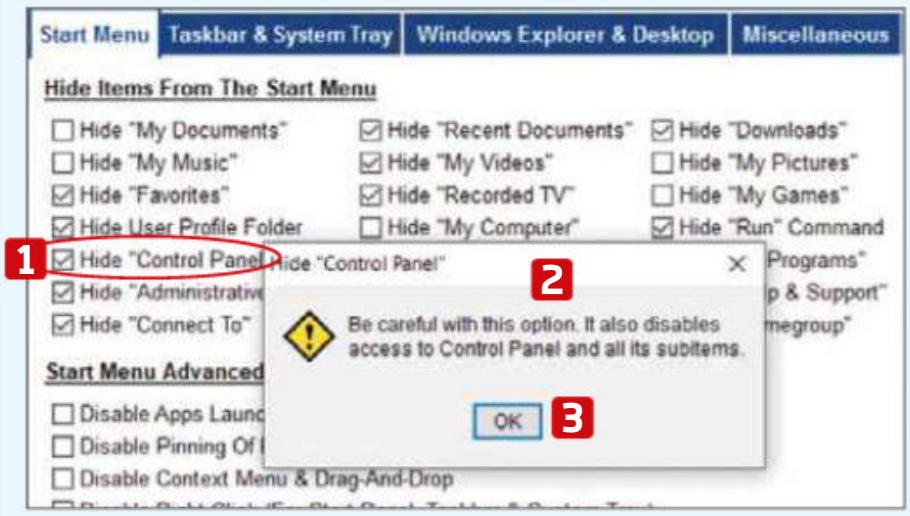
Windows is littered with programs, icons and options. WinCustom makes it easy to disable any you don't need and stop other people making changes to your PC. In this workshop, we look at some of the more obvious things to remove or hide, but it's worth exploring WinCustom's options for yourself, to customise Windows to suit your preferences. Be sure to make a backup first, just to be safe.

WinCustom: bit.ly/2FyvrjE | **10 mins** | **Windows 7, 8, 10**



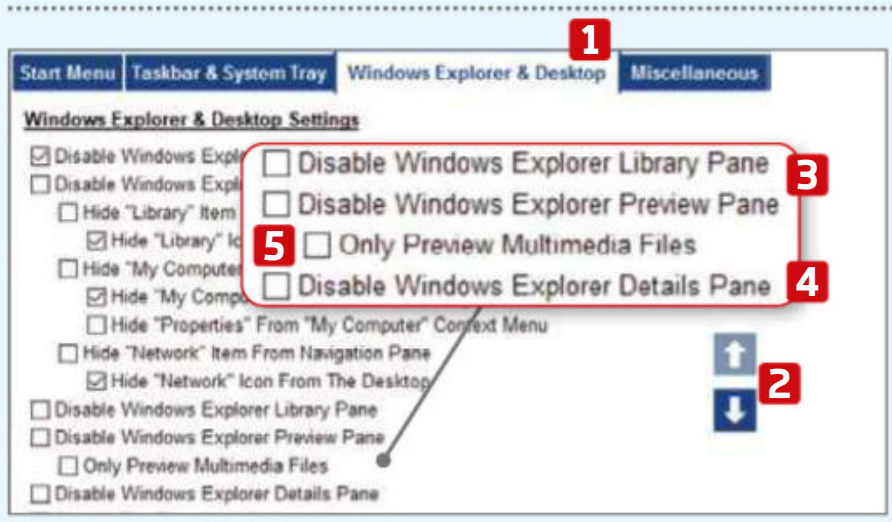
1 Open WinCustom to see four main tabs: Start Menu, Taskbar & System Tray, Windows Explorer & Desktop and Miscellaneous. 1 Click each tab to view related actions and controls, organised into subcategories. 2 Depending on your current setup, some of these are already ticked. 3

2 The tool is very simple to use – locate a specific action, tick the box 1 and wait for WinCustom to process the change. 3 You can only choose one option at a time, and any changes you make take effect instantly. To reverse a change, simply untick the box.



3 Some actions come with a 'warning'. For instance, activating 'Hide Control Panel' 1 in the Start Menu tab alerts you that doing so 'disables access to Control Panel and all its subitems'. 2 You have no choice but to click OK. 3 However, you can switch it back again by unticking the box.

4 If you share your PC, use WinCustom to lock it down and prevent changes. For example, Taskbar Settings 1 in Taskbar & System Tray 2 lets you block anyone from modifying, resizing and moving the Taskbar; 3 and hide recently opened files when right-clicking Taskbar icons. 4



5 Windows Explorer & Desktop 1 has the most options – use the arrow keys 2 to cycle through pages. Here, you can tweak Windows Explorer's appearance. Click to disable the Windows Explorer Library Pane, Preview Pane 3 and Details Pane 4 or Only Preview Multimedia Files. 5

6 Miscellaneous 1 lets you ditch some of the preinstalled Windows tools forced on you, such as Mail, Messenger 2 and Marketplace. 3 Think carefully before disabling more advanced options such as Task Manager 4 and Windows Update, 5 though.

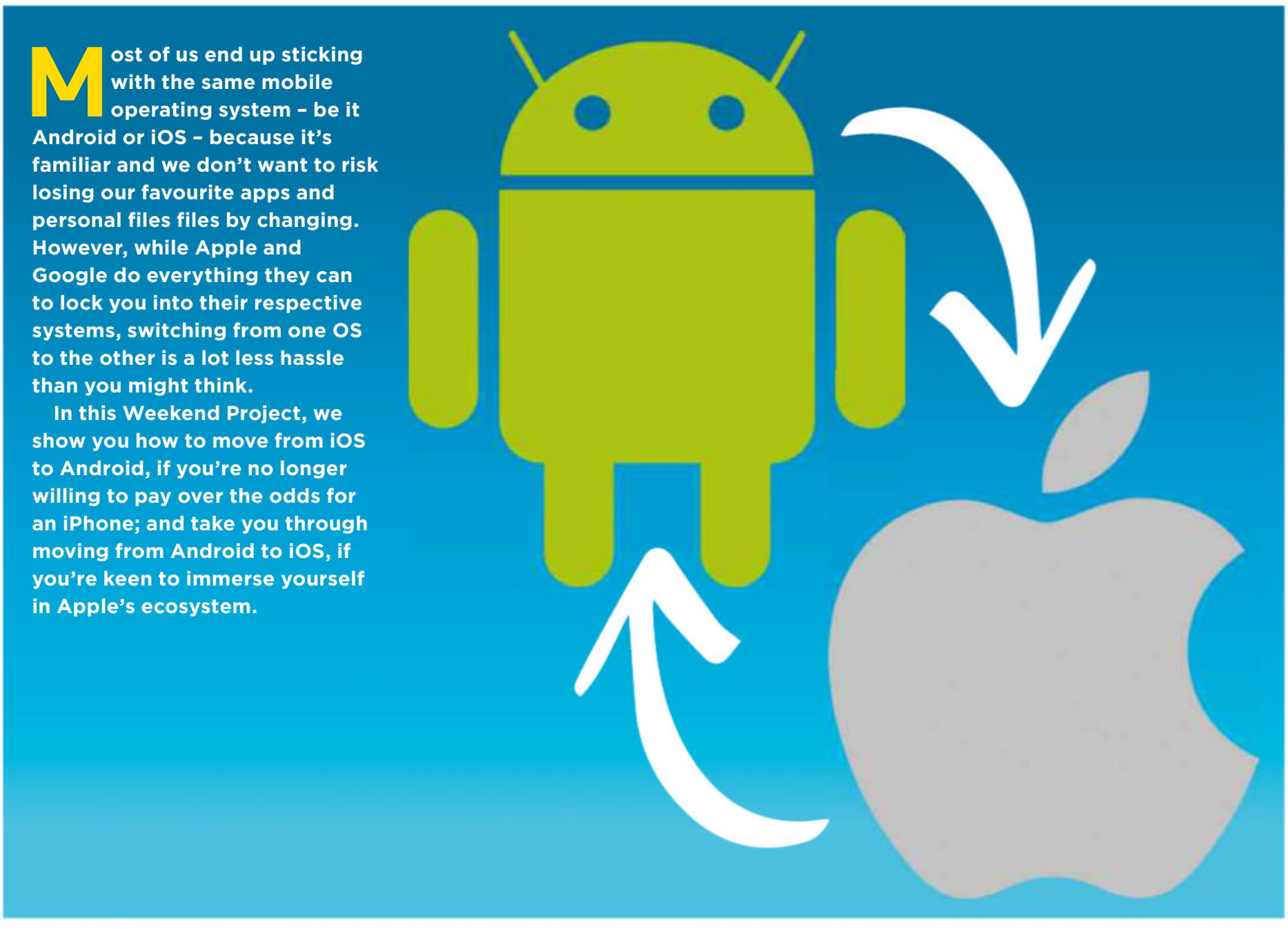
Weekend Project

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

How to...

Switch from iOS to Android and vice versa

Don't let fear of switching operating systems stop you getting the device you want. **Wayne Williams** guides you through the process



Most of us end up sticking with the same mobile operating system – be it Android or iOS – because it's familiar and we don't want to risk losing our favourite apps and personal files files by changing. However, while Apple and Google do everything they can to lock you into their respective systems, switching from one OS to the other is a lot less hassle than you might think.

In this Weekend Project, we show you how to move from iOS to Android, if you're no longer willing to pay over the odds for an iPhone; and take you through moving from Android to iOS, if you're keen to immerse yourself in Apple's ecosystem.

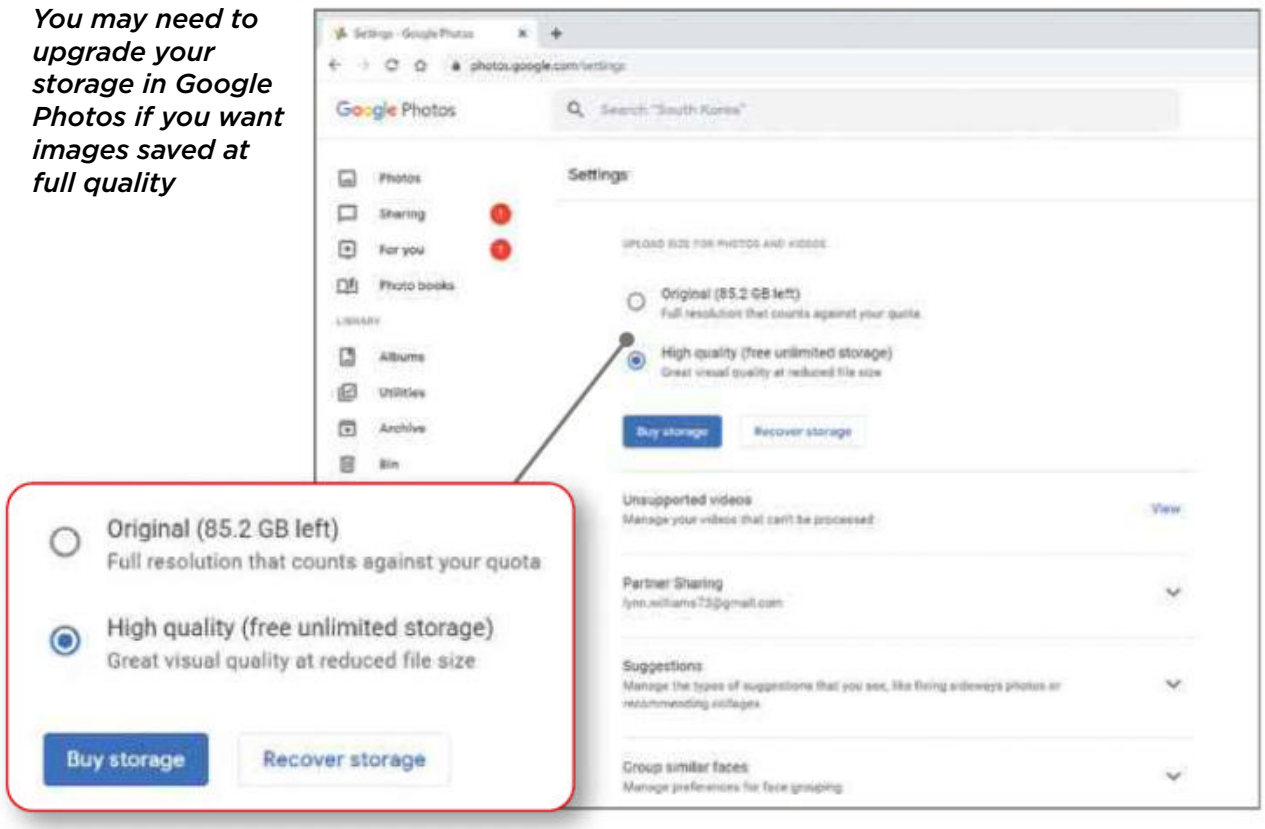
What you need to do first

It's worth carrying out an audit on your old phone, to decide which apps you need and which you can live without. You'll need to reinstall most of the apps on your new phone but, thankfully, all the main ones store data in the cloud, so the likes of Gmail, Facebook, WhatsApp and Spotify will connect to your existing account and pick up your data from exactly where you left off. According to a recent survey by Statista, Google Play is home to 2.7 million Android apps compared to the App Store's 1.82 million iOS apps, but you should be able to find most of the ones you want.

The biggest downside to switching operating systems is that paid-for apps or games you've purchased will have to be bought again for your new OS. Owning something on iOS doesn't provide a licence to run it on Android, and vice versa.

Next, do some housekeeping in advance and delete any unwanted content on your old phone, including any photos and videos you don't need. Back up the rest to the cloud (or your PC), if you haven't already. We recommend Google Photos for cloud backup because you get unlimited image storage for free, though the catch is that your photos are stored at 'high-quality',

You may need to upgrade your storage in Google Photos if you want images saved at full quality



which has a slightly reduced file size. You can store your images at the original quality but these pictures will count against your Google Drive storage, so you might need to pay for more space.

To switch between Original and High-Quality options, open your browser and go to photos.google.com/settings. This page shows you how much storage you have remaining. If you don't have enough, you can try to recover some space by compressing original items to high-quality, or you can buy additional storage. You get 15GB for free, while 100GB on a Google One subscription costs just £15.99 a year. You can also upgrade to 200GB for £24.99 a year, or 2TB for £79.99 a year.

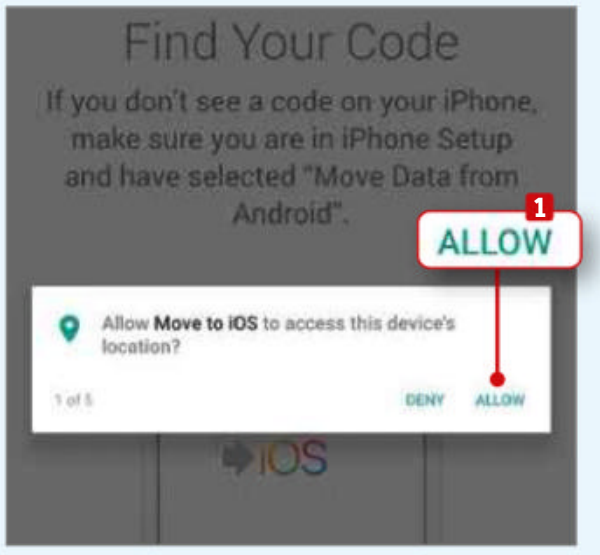
On iOS, you can use Apple iCloud to back up photos and videos stored on an iPhone or iPad, but you only get 5GB for free. To upgrade, 50GB costs £9.48 per year, 200GB costs £29.88 per year and 2TB costs £83.89 per year.

Switch from Android to iOS

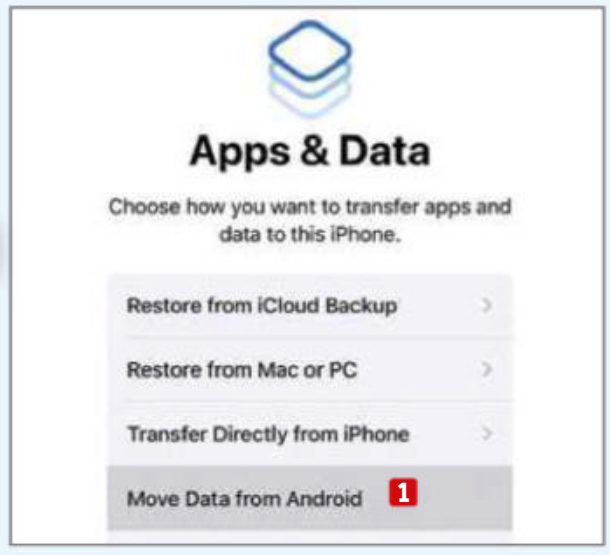
Whether you've bought a new (or second-hand factory reset) iPhone or iPad, switching to it from an Android device couldn't be easier. You could pop into any Apple Store and have them do the task for you, but Apple has an app called Move to iOS you can use instead. Download this for your Android device from the Google Play store at bit.ly/2ifZhNh. The app can securely transfer all manner of personal content, including contacts, messages, photos, videos, mail accounts, website bookmarks and calendars. It even copies over some free apps if they're available on both Google Play and the App Store.

Android users will appreciate iOS 14's adoption of widgets for iPhone and iPad

MINI WORKSHOP | Switch from Android using the Move to iOS app



1 Connect your Apple and Android devices to a power source and install the Move to iOS app on your Android phone or tablet. Launch it and you're greeted with a welcome screen. Tap Continue and agree to the terms and conditions. Next, allow all the requested permissions. 1 It needs these to copy over the content.



2 Begin the setup process on your Apple device. When you get to the Apps & Data screen, you are asked how you want to transfer apps and data to the device. Select 'Move Data from Android'. 1 Back in the Move to iOS app on your Android device, you're asked to enter a code. Tap Next.

3 Your iOS device should now display the six-digit code. Enter this into the app on Android. 1 Provided they both match, the Transfer Data screen appears and you can choose what you want to copy over. Tap Next and wait until your Apple device completes the process. Finalise setting up your new phone.

Broadband Deals

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	Provider	Package name	Monthly price	Contract length	Broadband speed	Allowance	First-year cost*
1	Shell Energy	Shell Energy: Fast Broadband	£21.99	18 months	11Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited	CHEAPEST £263.88
2	sse	SSE: Unlimited Fibre + Line Rental Only	£23.00	18 months	35Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited	£276.00
3	sky	Sky: Superfast Talk and Line Rental	£25.00	18 months	59Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited *	£300.00
4	Virgin media	Virgin Media: Big Bundle + Fibre Broadband + Weekend Calls	£29.99 (£62 after 12 months)	18 months	108Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited	£359.88

Terms & Conditions apply - see ISP sites for details
* Fair-usage or restriction policy applies.

Data supplied by www.broadbandgenie.co.uk. Correct as of 28th September 2020.

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

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On sale Weds 21 Oct

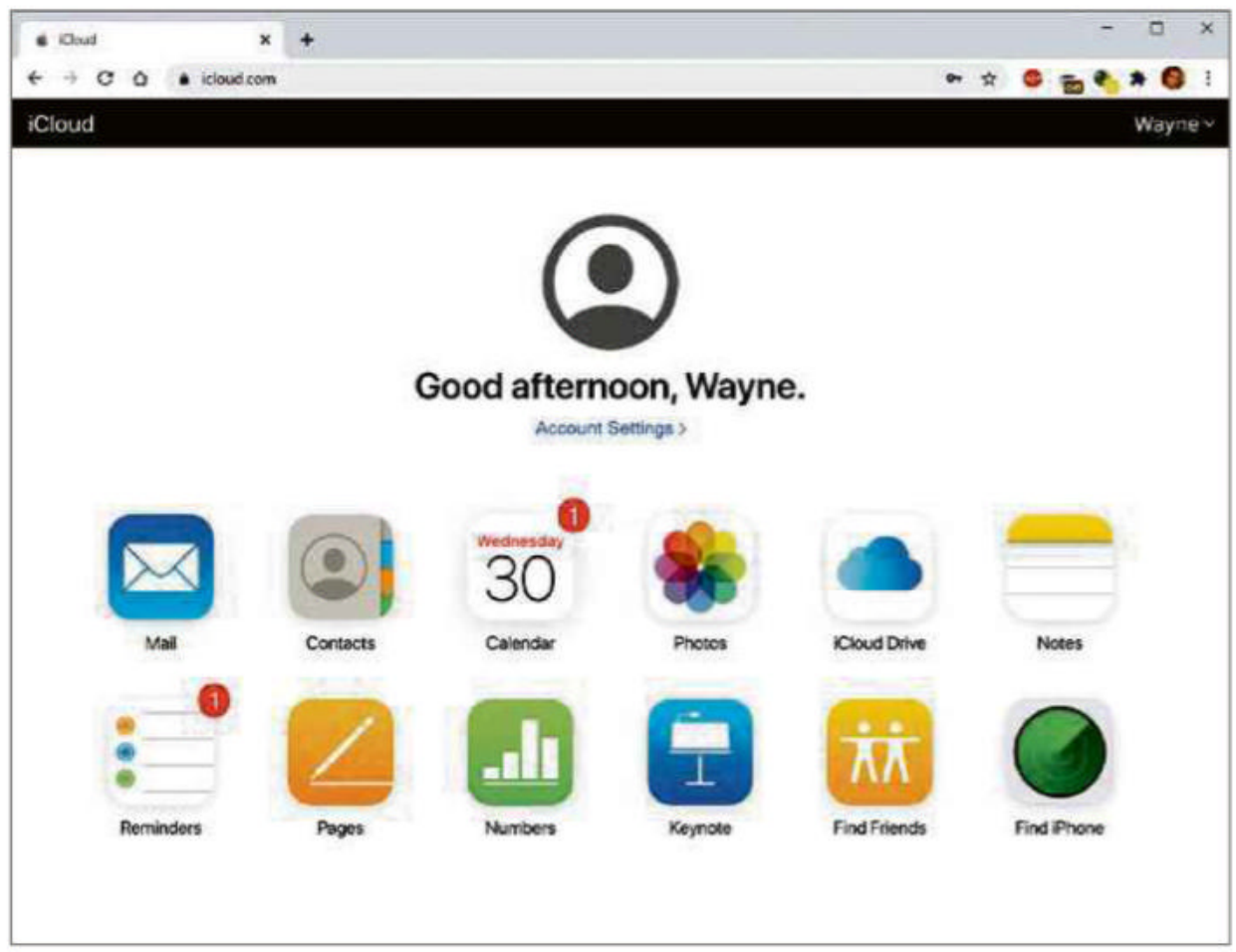
Don't set up your iPhone or iPad before using the app because Move to iOS is designed to work with a fresh device. We show you how to use the app in our Mini Workshop on page 59.

Apple's recently released iOS 14 introduces some new features that Android users will be familiar with, such as widgets, and it now makes it possible for you to choose new defaults for your web browser and email client. For example, if you're happy using Google Chrome and Gmail, you no longer need to move to Safari or Apple Mail.

Switch from iOS to Android

There are plenty of excellent Android handsets to choose from, and switching from iPhone isn't particularly hard. There's no Google equivalent to Apple's Move to iOS app, but the Google Drive - Online Backup app (apple.co/3kXWu7c) lets you back up your camera roll, contacts and calendar. We show you how to do this in our Mini Workshop, below.

Alternatively, it's likely that Apple has backed up your important content to iCloud because this is the default setting. You can access and download this content from www.icloud.com on your PC or Mac. Sign in with your Apple account details and choose what you need. To download your contacts, click the relevant button, then click the cog in the bottom-left corner and choose Select All. Click Export vCard to save the contacts to your desktop. You can import this vCard file into the Google equivalent at contacts.google.com.



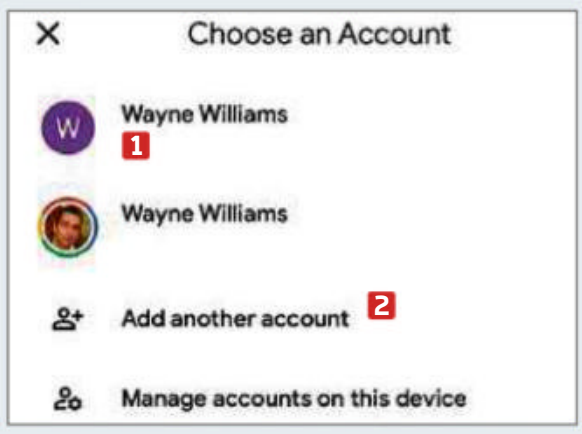
You can export data from iOS, such as contacts, through Apple iCloud

Erase your old device

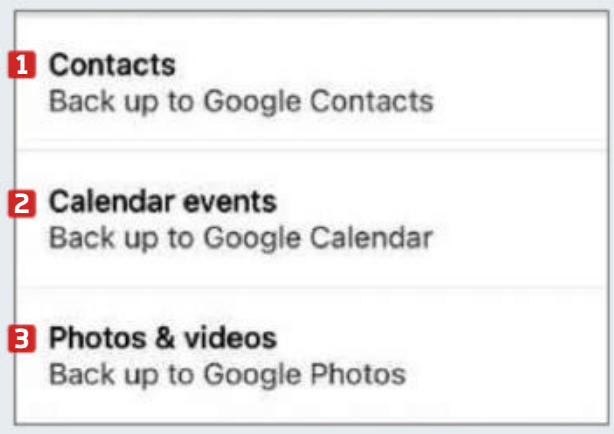
If you're planning on selling, giving away or otherwise disposing of your old phone, make sure you wipe it properly beforehand. To reset an Android device, open the Settings menu and tap 'Backup & reset' under System. Tap 'Factory data reset', then tap 'Reset phone' (or 'Reset tablet'). You need to enter the pattern, PIN or password used to unlock the device. Tap 'Delete everything' to remove all data from the internal storage. When that's done, reboot your device.

To reset an iPhone or iPad, go to Settings, General. Scroll to the bottom of the screen and tap Reset, then select 'Erase All Content and Settings'. You'll be prompted to enter your passcode and Apple ID to complete the reset process.

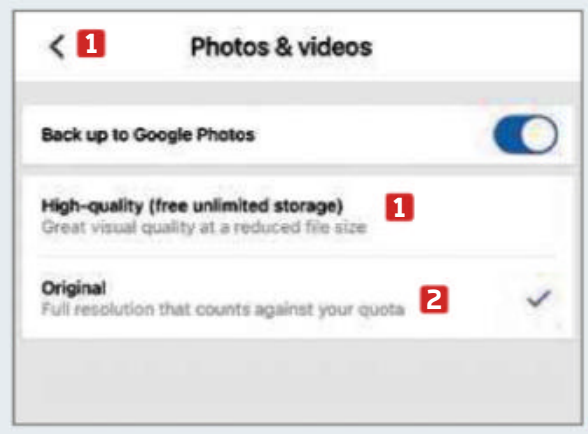
MINI WORKSHOP | Use Google Drive to switch from iOS to Android



1 Install the Google Drive - Online Backup app on your Apple device and open it. Sign in with your Google Account details. If you have more than one account, make sure you choose the correct one. 1 You can add a different account or create a new one if you like. 2



2 The app logs you into Drive for that account and displays all your files. Tap the menu button in the top-left corner to open the menu, then select Settings and choose Backup on the next page. You can now decide whether to include your contacts, 1 calendar events 2 and photos. 3



3 Go into each section you want to back up and make sure it's enabled. For Photos & Videos, choose between High-Quality (free unlimited storage) 1 and Original. 2 Tap the arrow 3 to return to the main screen, then tap Start Backup. Make sure your phone is connected to a power source as this may take several hours to complete.

NEXT ISSUE **How To...** Connect your mobile devices to your TV

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Web User Masterclass

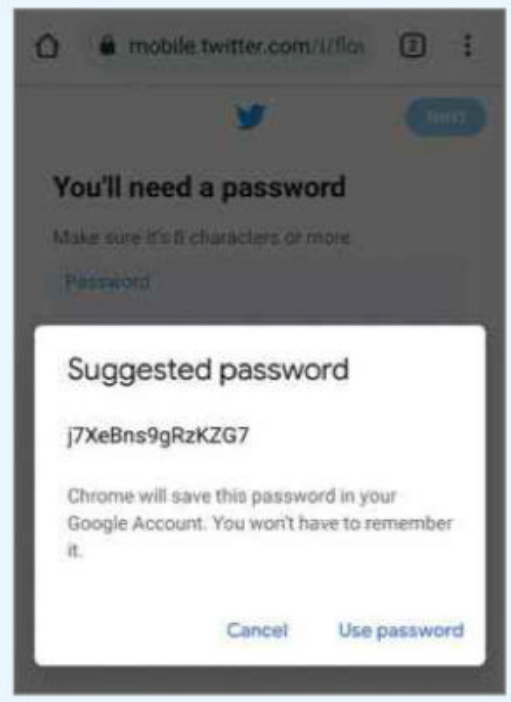
Manage your website passwords from your browser

Get password suggestions

A strong password consists of a sequence of random letters, numbers and punctuation symbols. If you can't come up with one of your own, right-click a password box on a web page in Chrome and select the option to generate a complex password. It's stored automatically, so you don't have to remember it. In Firefox, left- or right-click a password box to generate a password. Edge will soon have this feature, too.

On an Android phone, tap the password box on a web page. Just above the keyboard, tap the option to generate a password. Once you've confirmed that you want to use the password, it's automatically entered and saved to your Google account, so it will sync with Chrome on your PC.

Apple has its own password manager called Keychain that's connected to its iCloud service, but you can link it to other password managers and browsers, including Chrome, to generate strong passwords. From your iPhone Settings, choose 'Passwords & Accounts', then AutoFill Passwords to select an account.



Passwords saved on Android and Chrome on a PC are synced across all your devices

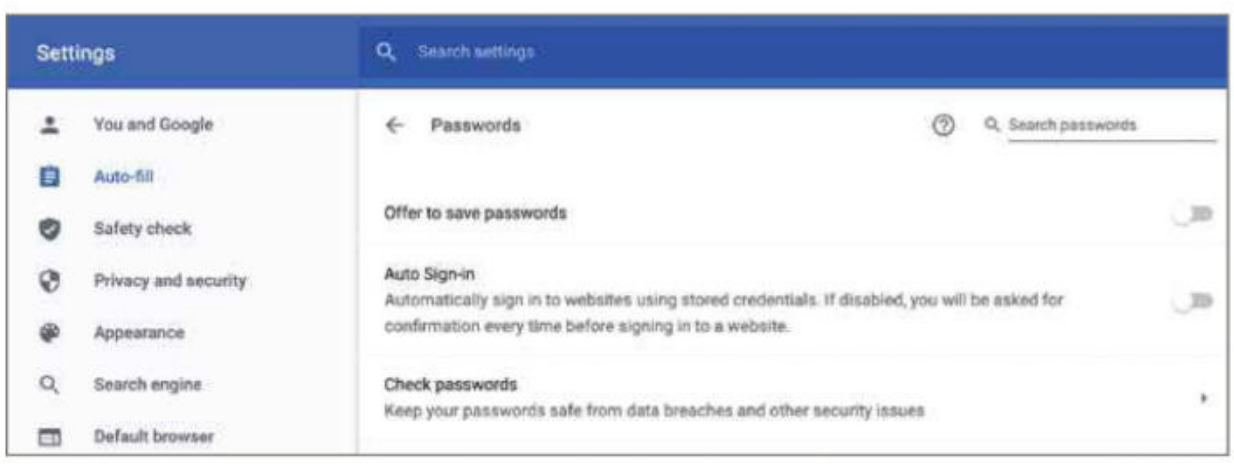
If you see words that `look like they've been typed in a typewriter`, follow the instructions and type them exactly as they appear, paying close attention to spaces and punctuation.

Enable and disable browser passwords

Open Chrome's Settings and, in the Auto-fill section, click Passwords and use the switches to enable the password manager (the tool that offers to save passwords) to automatically sign in when you visit a website.

You may want to turn this off if you're using a separate password manager, so you don't get two pop-ups (one for your separate password manager and another for Chrome's) every time you click a password box. However, it's not a bad idea to store your passwords in two places and have a backup if something goes wrong. Edge's password manager can be accessed in a similar fashion to Chrome's.

In Firefox, open the menu and click Options, then select 'Privacy & Security' in the sidebar and scroll down to the 'Logins and Passwords' section. Here, you'll find tick boxes that enable or disable Firefox's password manager and its password suggestions.



Set up Chrome to save your passwords and automatically log you into websites

Manage passwords online

Go to passwords.google.com to view or edit your Chrome passwords, and enable or disable the Chrome password manager. This works even if you are using another browser or computer, such as a work PC.

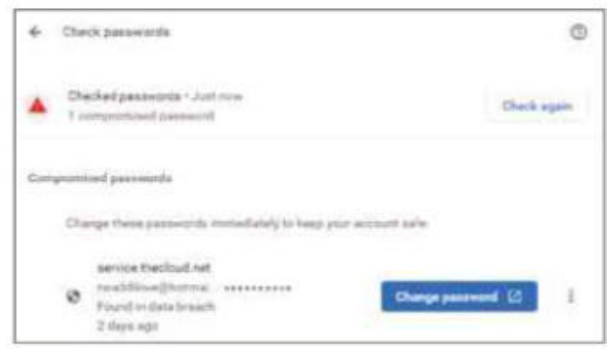
Have your passwords been stolen?

Browsers can check if any of your stored passwords have appeared in a security breach and been leaked online, making them accessible to hackers. In Chrome, go to Settings, Passwords and click 'Check passwords'.

Chrome can also alert you automatically when a password has been stolen or leaked by a website security breach. Open the menu and click Settings, 'Privacy and security', then Security. Under 'Safe browsing', select Enhanced or Standard protection.

In Firefox, open the menu, choose Options, then 'Privacy & Security'. Scroll down to 'Logins and Passwords', then tick 'Show alerts about passwords for breached websites'.

Edge doesn't have this feature,



Check whether your passwords have been leaked in a website security breach

but haveibeenpwned.com can check your email address against known website breaches to see if your passwords have also been compromised.

Update a password

If you change a password from within your account after logging into a site, you need to update the information in your password manager. If you fail to do this, the next time you log into that site, the auto-fill password will be incorrect.

If a site needs a different password to the one that your browser has saved, it usually asks if you want to replace the saved one. If it doesn't, open the Chrome menu and click Settings, then Passwords. Find the relevant website in the list and click the eye icon, then enter your Windows login password or PIN and type the replacement. Edge is almost identical.

In Firefox, open the menu and click your username/email at the top, followed by 'Logins and Passwords'. Like Chrome, Firefox lists all the websites it has passwords for and selecting one shows the URL, username and hidden password. Click Edit to change it.

Browser passwords vs password manager

Chrome, Edge and Firefox store passwords both in the browser and in an online account at Google, Microsoft and Firefox respectively. The problem is that they are specific to each browser, so aren't shared across other browsers. You have to find the password in the Settings of one browser, then copy it across to the other.

This is particularly problematic if you use Chrome on a Windows PC and Safari on an iPhone or iPad, because each browser stores its passwords independently. One solution is to use the same browser across all your devices. Alternatively, most independent password managers offer add-ons for all the major browsers, so your passwords are available when you switch between Chrome, Firefox, Edge or Safari.

The second problem with using a browser's password manager is that they are limited to storing only passwords. A password manager add-on or app, however, can store much more information, such as secure notes, passport details and sometimes files, too. For example, along with your bank's login details, you might want to store your account number and sort code, the PIN for your credit or debit cards, your telephone banking password and so on. These kinds of password managers can securely store and encrypt any information you want.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

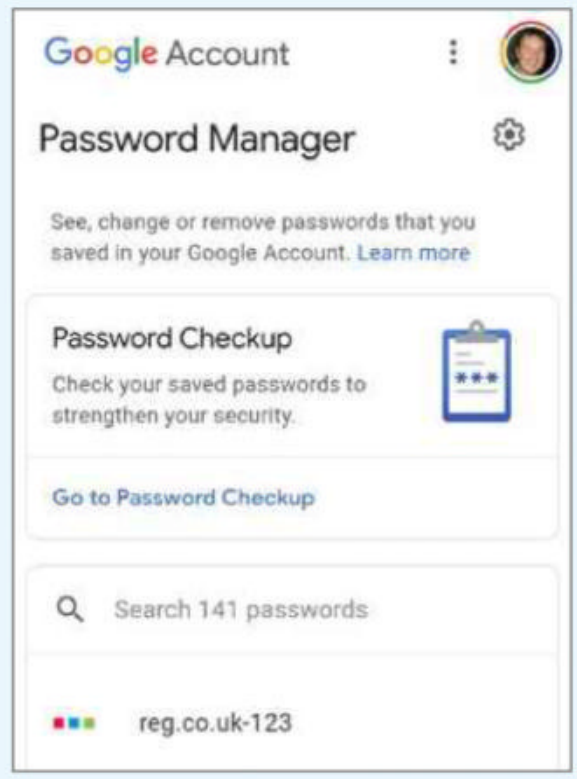
Manage passwords on Android phones

Different phone manufacturers run different versions of Android, so each device will have its own way to access its password features. Open Settings, search for 'password' and see what results are returned.

On a Samsung phone with Android 10, for example, this search turns up Password Manager. The long way to get to this is to go through Settings, Google, Auto-fill, 'Auto-Fill with Google', Account, then Passwords.

Tap Password Manager to see a Password Checkup feature that flags up any logins that aren't strong enough, have been reused on multiple sites or have been involved in a security breach. All your Google passwords are listed and tapping a site lets you view, change and delete its username and password.

Tap the cog icon for options to save passwords and automatically sign into sites. There's also an option to export passwords and save them elsewhere. If, for some reason, you can't access Chrome settings or passwords on your computer, you can do so on your phone instead.



Enable password management in Android to check for security breaches

Back up browser passwords

Any data stored in a single location is at risk, so it's worth backing up your passwords and keeping a copy for safety. Open the Chrome Settings menu, go to Passwords, click the three-dot button to the right of the Saved Passwords heading and use the 'Export passwords' option. Logins are saved as plain text in a CSV file that can be read in Notepad. Encrypt it for security with Encrypto (macpaw.com/encrypto) or store it in KeePass (keepass.info). Use the same method for Edge.

In Firefox, open the menu, click your account name at the top, then 'Logins and Passwords'. Click the three-dot button in the top-right corner and select Export Logins.

Add KeePass to your browser

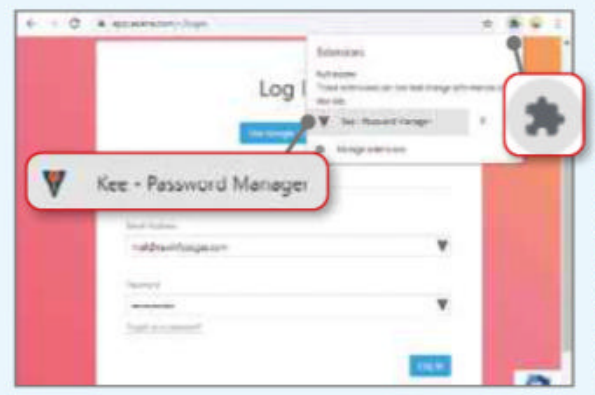
KeePass (keepass.info), which won our Gold Award in Issue 499, lets you store passwords and other info in an encrypted database. However, it doesn't auto-fill login forms on web pages, and doesn't sync between computers and phones.

However, you can fix this with plugins. In Chrome or Firefox, go to bit.ly/3mLgdZp and download KeePassRPC.plgx. Move the file to the KeePass Plugins folder at: C:\Program Files (x86)\KeePass Password Safe 2\Plugins

Now close KeePass and run it again.

In your browser, go to www.kee.pm and click the Chrome or Firefox button to get the Kee Extension. When it installs, two windows appear: one supplying a code and another asking for it. Copy the code from one to the other to authorise the extension to access your KeePass database.

With your website logins stored in KeePass, Chrome and Firefox can automatically fill in login forms with your username and password. Click the jigsaw-piece icon on Chrome's toolbar and click the Kee extension to view logins and add new ones. To share your passwords across separate computers, store the KeePass database on OneDrive.



Integrate KeePass with your browser to automatically log into websites

Ask the Expert

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

WINDOWS

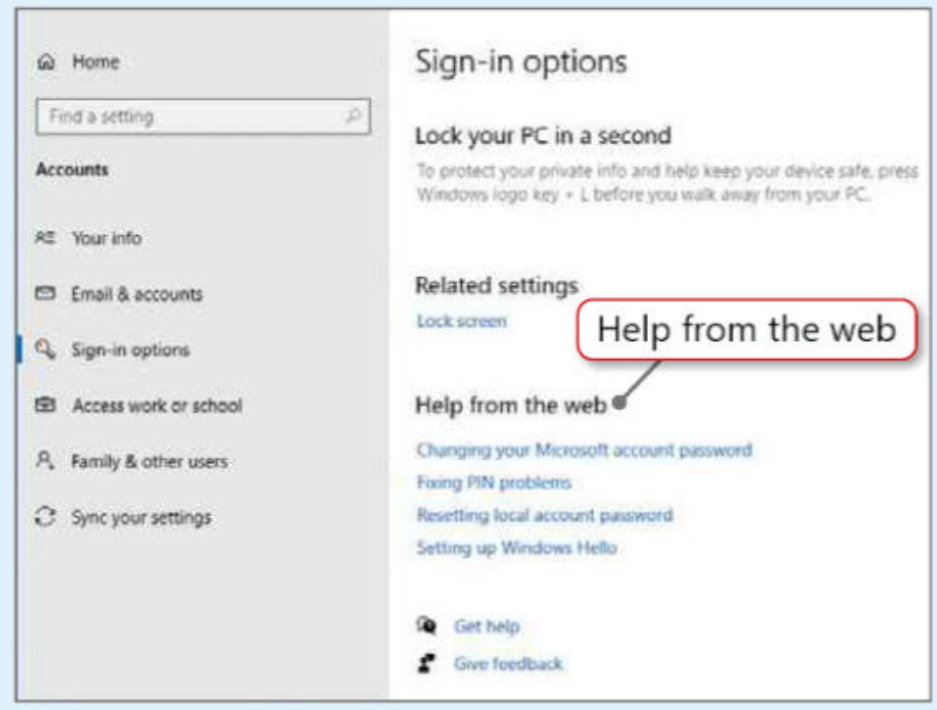
Recover a lost password

Q To the best of my knowledge, I have never set a password for starting Windows 10 on my Dell laptop. However, I have a PIN code that I use when it says "Incorrect password" or something similar.

There are two icons at the lower left and the bottom one is highlighted. If I click the top one, I can use my PIN code to start up. How do I find the correct password, assuming that it may have been set up before I received the laptop from Dell?

Dave Rhodes, via email

If you forget your login or Microsoft password, use the 'Help from the web' links



A It's common to use the password for a Microsoft account to log into Windows 10, such as the one you use for the OneDrive website, Outlook email, Mail and Calendar, Xbox Live and so on.

The password may be stored in the Credential Manager, or it might be stored in your browser if you've ever used one of Microsoft's web services. Open the Control Panel and click Credential Manager. Select Web Credentials, then click any Microsoft site or service to expand the section. Click Show next to the password and enter your PIN. The password is then displayed. Try logging into Windows with it, because it should also be your account password.

Another place to look is in your browser. In Chrome, for example, open the menu and click Settings. Click Passwords, find a Microsoft website, click the eye icon and enter your PIN to view the password.

If no password can be found, open Settings, Accounts and choose 'Sign-in options'. In the 'Help from the web' section, there are links to find or change your Microsoft account password and to reset a local account password. Follow the instructions because there's no other way to recover or reset it.

MOBILE

Restore iPad app after reset

Q I was very interested to read about Greg Jones' problem with a slow iPad in Issue 509 and your suggestion that he should reset the device. I have a similar situation, albeit with a much older iPad 2. I would like to reset the device to see if it improves performance but I have one complication.

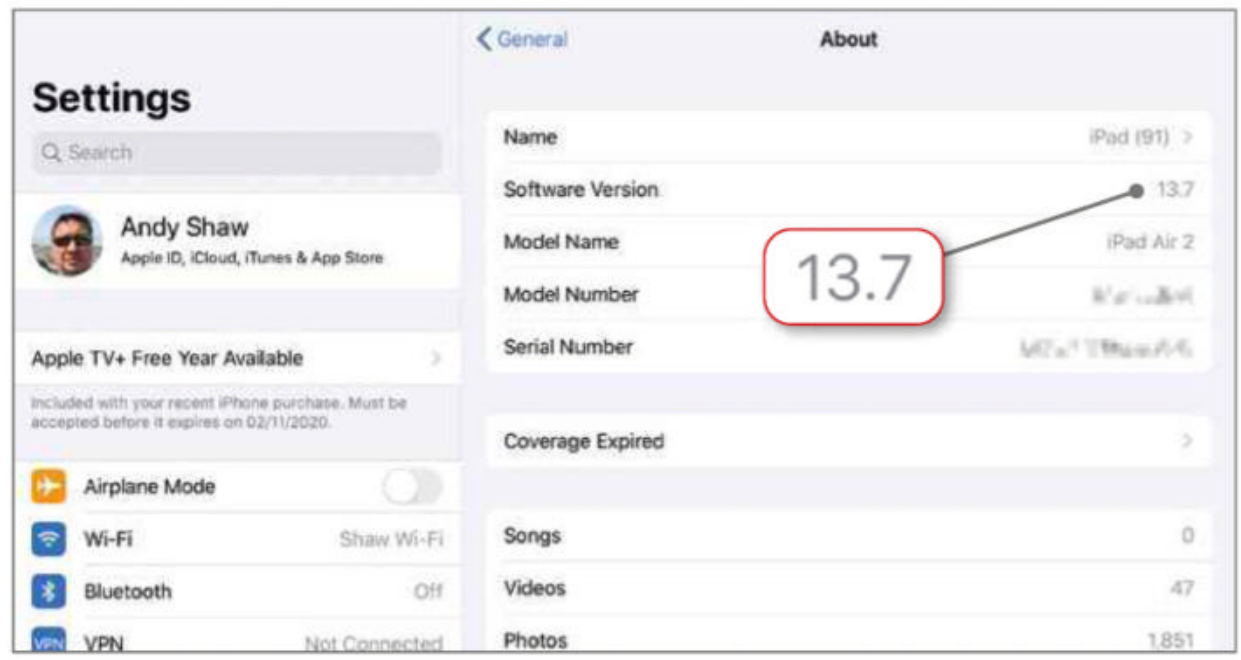
You say in your response that Greg would have to download his apps again. One of my apps, Sawday's Special Places to Eat and Drink - Pubs, which I use on a regular basis, is no longer available in the App Store.

Is there any way that I can back up this app before the reset, so I can reinstall it afterwards?

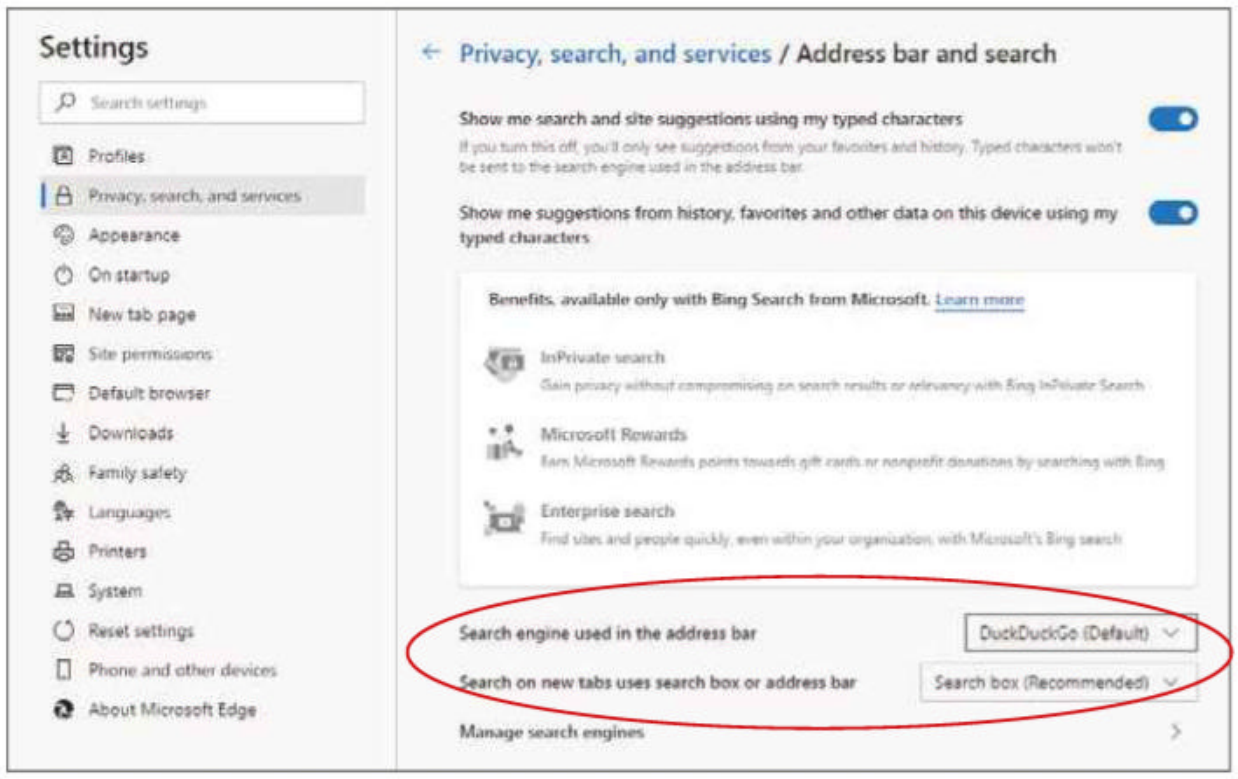
Phil James, via email.

A There's no way to back up a single app before a reset and then restore it afterwards. Apps have to be downloaded again. The apps you currently have installed on your iPad may not be available and, even if they are, the latest versions may run poorly on older devices.

The iPad 2 is stuck on an old version of iOS – version 9, we think – whereas the latest is version 14. Even if apps are still available, they are unlikely to work



Check your iOS version by opening the Settings app, then choose General and About



Choose which search engine to use when typing into Edge's address box

on iOS 9. Many apps require a minimum of iOS 10 or 11.

We wouldn't recommend resetting an iPad 2. An iPad Air (2013) and later, or an iPhone 6 (2014) and later, should be fine, because they run iOS 12, which is supported by all apps. They still have the processing power to run modern apps, with the exception of a few games.

BROWSERS

Customise Edge to be more like Internet Explorer

Q My internet use is very basic – just searches, purchases, emails and some software downloads. However, I enjoy delving into the settings and tweaking them to suit my preferences.

I am still using Internet Explorer because I prefer it to any other browser. My homepage is set to "about:blank", which cuts out Microsoft dross, and I like having Norton Safe Search and Ask.com as my search engines. Elsewhere, I've disabled the old version of Edge, PDFs are opened with SlimPDF and I've blocked the new version of Edge from downloading. I don't like Google Chrome because it collects so much data.

Now it's all going wrong because Internet Explorer is being retired. I have spent some time trying the new version of Edge and I could manage with it, after changing many of the settings. However, there are two things I don't like.

My first problem is "My Feed". I find all those little boxes jigging about and vying for attention annoying. I've tried to turn them off but I only get a message saying: "We are sorry but we cannot change this at present. Please try later". Annoying, but I expect that even if I could remove them, they'd come back the next time I opened the browser. They always used to reappear on the old version of Edge.

Another annoyance is Edge throwing Bing at me at every opportunity. I see the alternative search engines, but would really like to use Norton Safe Search and Ask.com by default with Edge. However, I've had no success trying to set that up.

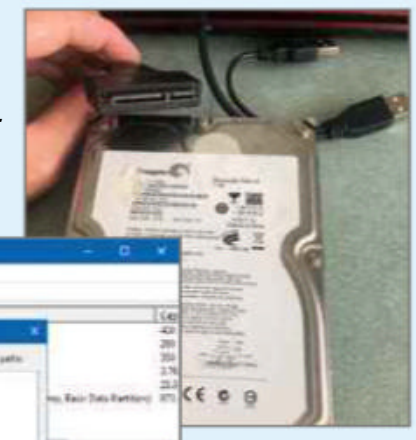
Brian Ashford, via email

A Edge is very customisable and you can configure it however you like. Click the three-dot menu button and select Settings, then choose 'On startup' on the left and 'Open a new tab'. Now open a new tab and click the cog icon in the corner. Select Custom on the menu that appears, turn off the quick links and greeting, then set the background to off. Under Content, select 'Content off' from the drop-down menu.

Return to Settings and select the 'Privacy, search, and services' section. Scroll down to the bottom and click 'Address bar and search'. Next to 'Search engine used in the address bar', click the menu on the right to list all the search engines you have ever visited, and select the one you want to use, such as Ask.

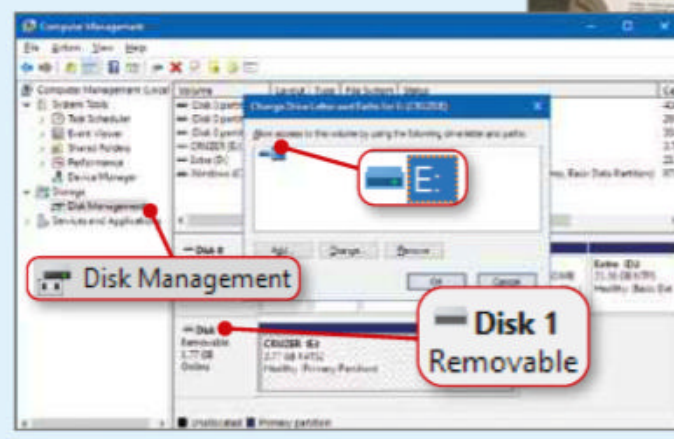
HARDWARE

Revive a broken hard drive



Connect a bare drive to a laptop with a SATA/IDE to USB cable

Q I managed to rescue an old portable hard drive that had come apart from its casing and for which I'd lost the cables. As you can see from the photo I've supplied, I managed to find what I think is the correct lead I need to connect it to my laptop and rescue all my data.



Right-click a drive in Disk Management to add or change a drive letter

However, when it's plugged into the laptop, I don't get any response from the drive. I'm running Windows 10 and all other devices seem to work fine.

Jonathan Buckley, via email

A You need a USB to SATA/IDE data cable to connect a bare external drive to a laptop's USB port. It looks like you may have the right cable, but double-check it anyway.

Some drives can run off the power supplied through the USB port, but others need a separate power supply. When the drive was in its original casing, did it need a power supply? Are you using one now? You should be able to tell whether the drive is powering up by feeling if it vibrates or gets warm, or by listening for sounds that it is starting up and spinning.

Let's assume you have the correct cable and the drive is powering up. When a USB drive is detected, Windows should assign it a drive letter so it can be accessed in Explorer. If you can't see a drive, you may need to manually assign a drive letter.

Open Explorer, right-click This PC in the sidebar and select Manage. Expand Storage and select Disk Management. In the lower part of the main pane, there is a graphical display of drives and partitions. If the drive is visible, right-click the name in the first column – Disk 1, Disk 2 or whatever it's called – and you're given the option to assign a drive letter or change it. Set a drive letter that's different to any you have used before, such as G or N.

After assigning a drive letter, the drive appears in Explorer and can be accessed as normal.

Ask the Expert

If you don't see the one you want, close Settings, visit the website and conduct a search, then return to 'Privacy, search, and services', where it will now be added to the list. Select it.

Your selected search engine will now be used when you type anything other than a URL into the address box.

EMAIL

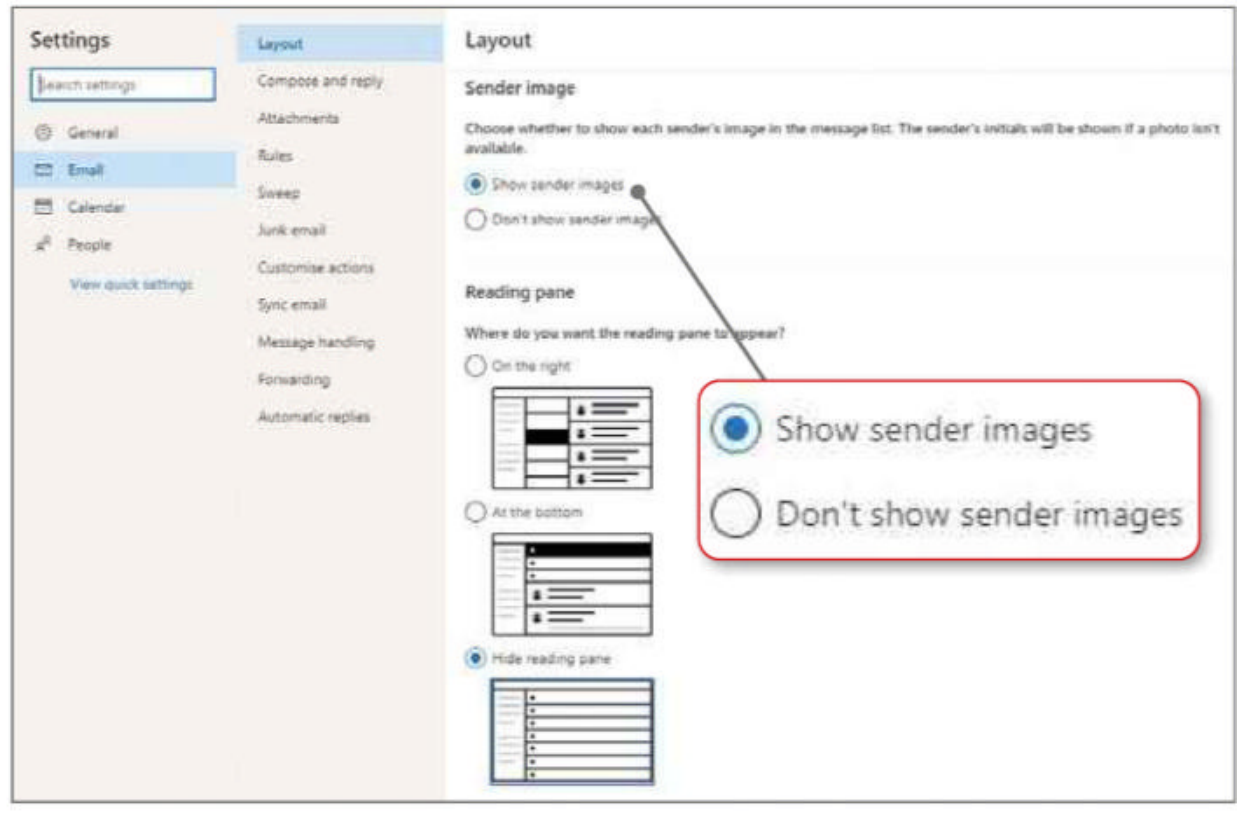
Remove the initials from Outlook

Q My Outlook webmail inbox displays a coloured circle containing the sender's initials next to each email. Since the sender's name is always displayed anyway, it seems like a pointless widget. Can it be removed to give more space for the message snippet – the two lines of text showing the start of the message?

Kevin Hartley, via email

A The circle is designed to show a photo of the sender (the one set in their Microsoft account). However, few people (or companies) bother to attach a photo to their contact information – or they have a non-Microsoft email account – so you get a coloured circle with their initials instead.

To remove these icons, click the cog icon in the top-right corner of the Outlook website, then click 'View all Outlook settings'. Select Email in the first column and Layout in the second, then scroll down to 'Sender image'.



Choose whether to display images of your email contacts, taken from their Microsoft accounts

Select 'Don't show sender images' and click Save at the bottom.

The coloured circle with initials will no longer appear, but this doesn't actually save any space because it's replaced by another button for selecting messages.

WINDOWS

Rearrange taskbar icons

Q I have a number of icons on my taskbar, such as battery power, speaker, Wi-Fi and so on, but others are hidden away in the small box that only appears when you click the arrow.

I often need to access those hidden icons so is there any way to move them to the taskbar?

Gary Newcombe, via email

A You can choose which icons appear in the taskbar's notification area and which are hidden in the pop-up panel. The quick and easy way to do this is to simply click and drag icons to wherever you want them. Drag them from the pop-up panel and drop them on the taskbar, or drag them from the taskbar to the panel.

Another method is to right-click an empty part of the taskbar and select 'Taskbar settings' from the menu. Under 'Notification area', click 'Select which icons appear on the taskbar'. Use the switch at the top to force all icons to show on the taskbar or use the on/off switches next to each item to show or hide them.

Choose which icons you want to see on the taskbar

WINDOWS

White screen of death

Q I've heard of blue screens and green screens appearing in Windows, but I sometimes get a white screen when I run the Photos app. It doesn't happen all the time but it's too regular for my liking. It appears when I try to view my photos – instead of opening the image, I just get a white screen. How can I fix it?

Mary Davies, vie email

A You could try resetting the app. Open Settings and click Apps, then scroll down to Microsoft Photos. Click this, then click the 'Advanced options' link. In the Reset section, there are two buttons: Repair and Reset. Try the first and, if that doesn't solve the problem, try the second.

To fix Microsoft Windows app problems, terminate, repair or reset them

There may be a update available that fixes the problem. Open the Store app, click the three-dot icon in the corner and select 'Downloads and updates'. Click 'Get updates' to see if there is one for Photos.

This fortnight, Roland powered-up his 2006 Windows XP PC for the last time before taking it to be recycled

Readers' Helpdesk

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

READERS RESPOND

Back Issues disc winner

BROWSERS

Manage bookmarks using Symbaloo

Q I'd like to add a bookmarking tool to your recommendations to Frank in Issue 510 (bit.ly/2FPy4xh). I've been using an educational tool called Symbaloo (www.symbaloo.com) for years. It's an excellent icon-based bookmarking tool that provides multiple tab pages and lets you organise your bookmarks by subject.

Rod Lightbody, via email

Symbaloo uses icons to bookmark sites

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.

WINDOWS 10

Q On some sites, my screen begins to flash black when I switch between browser and Office apps. Is this a problem with my graphics hardware?

Cal Monaghan, via email

ANDROID

Q Can anyone recommend any decent alternatives to Google's default apps for sending standard SMS text messages?

PJ, via email

ANDROID

Bring back Android's screenshot feature

Q I take a lot of screenshots on my phone to share with friends and family. They're often jokes I don't want to download or news posts I see on social media. Android 10's screenshot function was great – just press and hold the power button – but I recently upgraded to Android 11 and the option has been replaced with smart home controls.

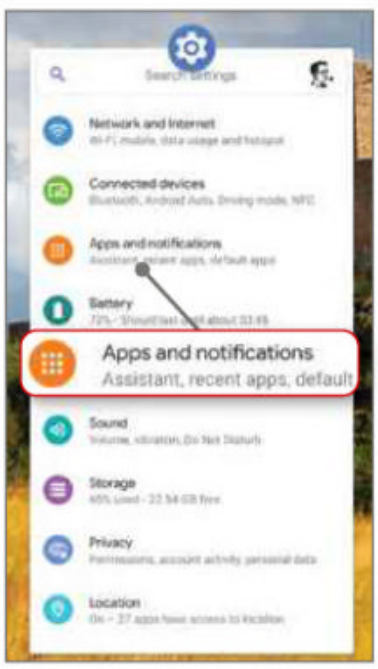
If I ask the Assistant to "take a screenshot", I receive a notification telling me I need to turn on the option to let the Assistant do it (which I've already done). What is going on here?

Bill Franken, via email

A For all the great new features Google has introduced in Android 11, the change to the screenshot function feels like a step backwards. One way to improve the new setup is to open Settings and go to System, then Gestures, or search for `gestures`. Change your 'System navigation' from 2- or 3-button navigation to 'Gesture navigation'. Now, when you swipe up and hold to view open apps, you'll see two options at the bottom: Screenshot and Select (for area-specific screen-captures).

Google Assistant should be perfectly capable of taking screenshots so it's worth double-checking your settings. From Settings, head to 'Apps and notifications', Advanced, 'Default apps', then 'Digital assistant app'. Switch on 'Use screenshot', then open your phone's Assistant Settings and go to the Assistant tab. Scroll down to 'Assistant devices', select your phone and turn on 'Use screen context'.

Steve Clark, Features Writer, Web User



Google changed the settings you need to activate to take a screenshot in Android 11

PRINTING

Improve your printouts

Q My printer is an Epson XP 215 and I'm using an Honor 9 Lite mobile. Unfortunately, the prints I'm getting with the Epson iPrint app are very grainy, even at small print sizes. The app doesn't allow much in the way of settings – there are no options for paper type or print quality. Should I use a different app?

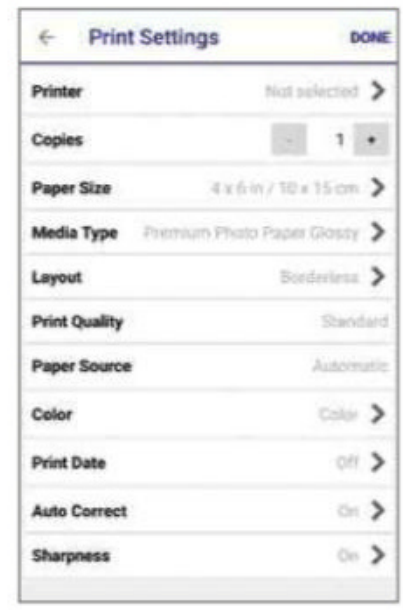
Don, via email

A If you're struggling with grainy prints – assuming that the images you're printing are high resolution – the first thing to check is the printer itself. Epson suggests running a nozzle check and cleaning the print-head. While there are ways to alter iPrint's paper type and quality – press the cog wheel after selecting your files – we prefer Android's built-in wireless printing tool.

Open a photo or document and click the Share button. Scroll down to the Print icon, connect and select your printer from the drop-down menu, and you're good to go.

This is also useful because you can test whether it's the app or the printer that's causing your printing problems.

Steve Clark, Features Writer, Web User



If your printing app isn't getting the most from your printer, try Android's built-in tool

Your Top Tips

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

TOP TIP

Back Issues disc winner

BROWSERS

Control downloads in Edge

Chromium Edge has some new download settings that readers might like to know about. It lets you determine what action is taken when a file is downloaded – you can either save the file or just open it straight away.

Edge is finally getting browser download options

First, make sure your browser is up to date by clicking the three-dot icon and selecting 'Help and feedback', then About Microsoft Edge. Afterwards, go to Settings, Downloads and toggle on the option 'Ask where to save each file before downloading'.

The other new action is to delete downloads directly from the Edge downloads page. Just go to `edge://downloads/all`.

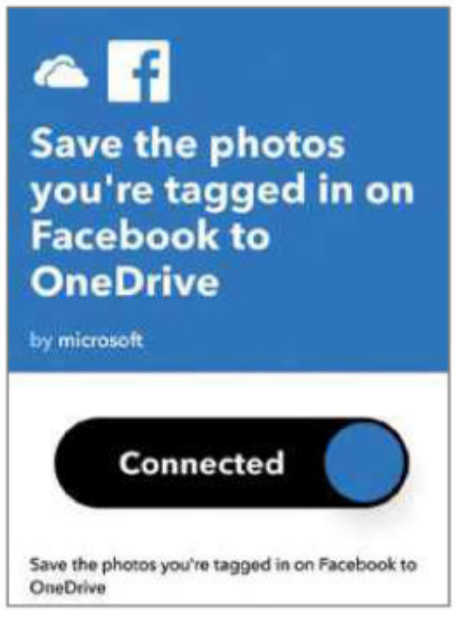
Gary, via email

PHOTOS

Send Facebook photos to OneDrive

The free If This Then That (IFTTT) smartphone app is capable of performing certain actions automatically. Tap Explore in the app and type OneDrive to see lots of useful OneDrive automation tools.

One of my favourites is 'Save the photos you're tagged in on Facebook to OneDrive', created by Microsoft. It's very easy to set up – just tap your photo on the home screen and open your account settings. You have to link your Facebook account (authorise its access), then find the OneDrive item in IFTTT and turn it on using the switch. Now, if anyone tags you in a Facebook photo, the image is saved to OneDrive, which is – in turn – synced to your PC, so you can access the photo on your computer.



Automatically save Facebook photos you are tagged in to OneDrive

Helen Morton, via email

ANDROID

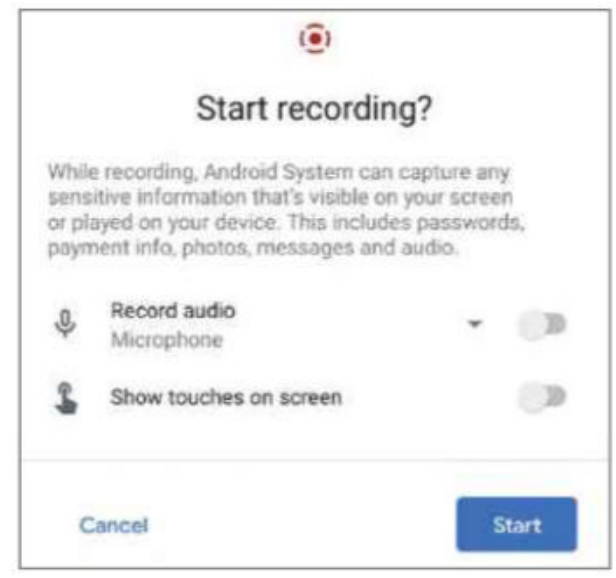
Try Android 11's latest features

My Pixel phone recently updated to Android 11 and, after playing around with it for a few days, I thought it might be helpful to shine a light on some of the new features I've found.

Notification History is an excellent addition that lets you go back to any notifications you accidentally swiped away. It's not turned on by default, so make sure you go to Settings, 'Apps and notifications', then Notifications to set it up. It's also much easier now to control connected smart devices by pressing and holding the power button, then tapping a device to control its settings, volume and so on.

A very simple screen recorder has also been added, and can be found by pulling down the notification drawer (or Quick Settings bar). Finally, you can now schedule Dark theme via the settings, so your phone's screen is bright when there's sunlight and dark during the evening and at night.

Joshua Chung, via email



Android 11 brings a collection of new tools and features

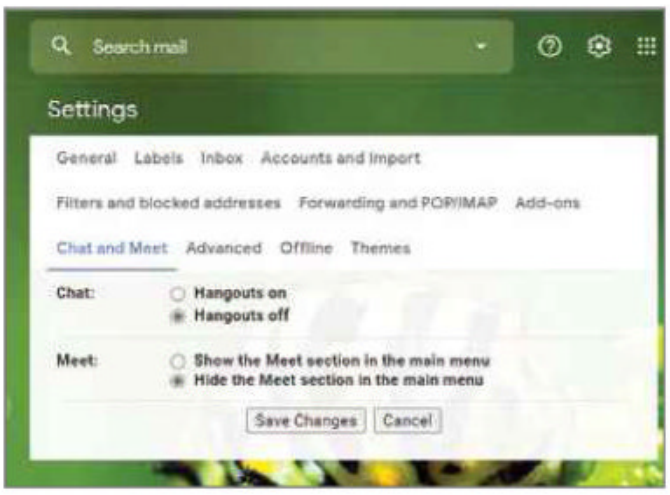
EMAIL

Hide Meet and Hangouts

With so many people working from home, video chats and meetings have become increasingly popular. Google has, of course, got in on the action. If you open Gmail in a browser, Google Meet appears in the bottom-left corner. You might also see Hangouts – an older video, audio and chat app.

If you never use these chat tools, hide them by clicking the cog icon to open the menu in Gmail, then click 'See all settings'. Click 'Chat and Meet' in the menu bar at the top, then turn off both Meet and Hangouts. Click Save and they disappear from the sidebar in Gmail.

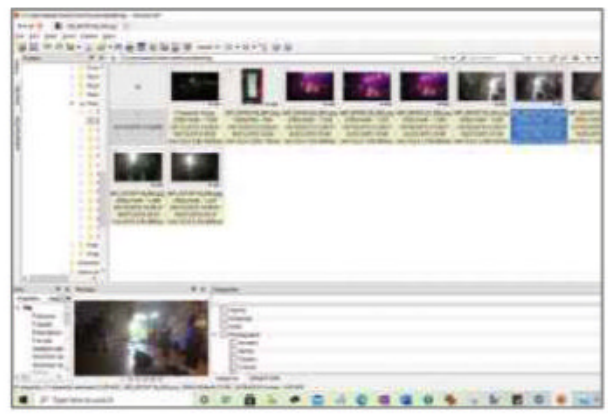
If you use Gmail on your Android phone and want to remove the annoying bar that has appeared at the bottom of the screen since Google started pushing



Hide Google Meet and Hangouts in Gmail if you never use them

Meet, tap the menu button, swipe to the bottom and tap Settings. Tap your email address, find the Meet heading and clear the tick from the box next to 'Show the Meet tab for video calling'. Removing this leaves more space for your emails.

Jamie Philbin, via email



XnView is a popular choice for viewing images in all formats

zoom so you can see all the picture's details. As you'd expect, there's also an option to view the EXIF and Histogram data in the sidebar.

I especially like XnView MP's use of tabs, similar to Paint.net (www.getpaint.net), for navigating images. It's perfect for my needs and I fully recommend it.

Colin Gosden, via email

but has a few tweaks – most notably, download sizes are a lot smaller.

Another interesting feature is that you can install the extension in different browsers (Chrome and Firefox, for example) and enable the option to 'Allow access to file URLs'. This means that if you save a web page in Chrome, you can open it in Firefox.

There are two ways to save a web page. If the Single File Z extension is in your address bar, click the extension's button. After processing the page, you can save the HTML file to your PC. The other method is to right-click the page. Single File Z appears in the drop-down menu and hovering over this provides multiple save options. As well as simply saving the page, you can save selected areas, along with open, pinned or all tabs. There's even an auto-save option.

David Banks, via email

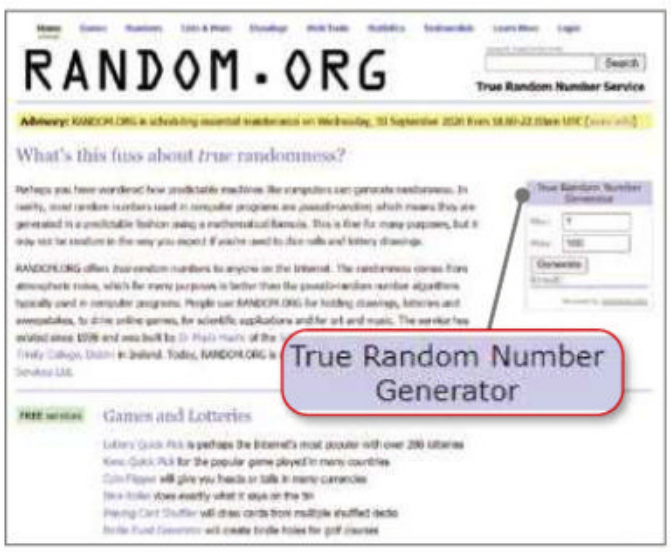
FUN

Generate random numbers

Most apparently random strings in computers aren't random at all, they just give the illusion of randomness. Random.org, however, is truly random. The website features lots of different categories for creating random things, such as randomly generating lottery numbers, coin flips, colours, times, music and even unguessable passwords.

If you just want to see how it all works, visit the website and click the True Random Number Generator.

J Lynne, via email



Anything can happen at random.org

SOFTWARE

Choose the best WebP image viewer

I hope I'm not too late to the party, but I would also like to make a suggestion for a WebP image viewer. My preferred choice for ages has been XnView MP (www.xnview.com), which is available for Windows, macOS and Linux. This software lets you view and edit images, with filters and colour adjustments.

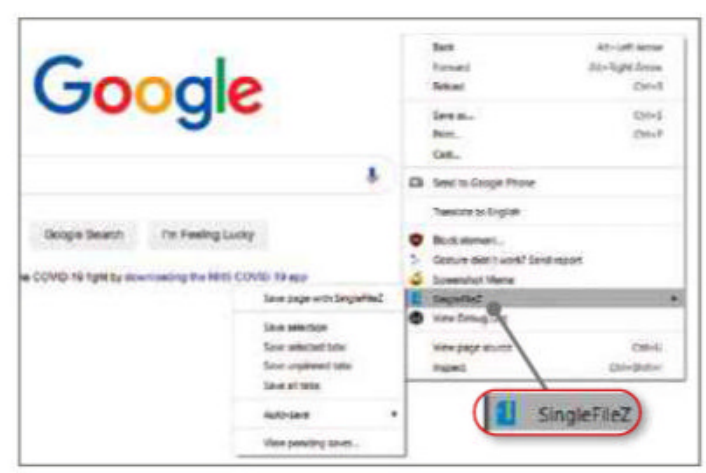
Helpfully, given the large size of WebP images, the program has a powerful

BROWSERS

Save whole web pages offline

I've discovered a great browser tool that lets you save web pages, so you can come back to them, even when you're offline. It's called Single File Z (bit.ly/368oDUW), and its GitHub page has links to the Firefox and Chrome add-ons.

If the name seems familiar, it's because it's an off-shoot of the Single File extension (bit.ly/2Qh9ypQ) for Firefox, Chrome and Edge, from the same developer. This newer Z version is similar



Single File Z adds extra functions for saving web pages

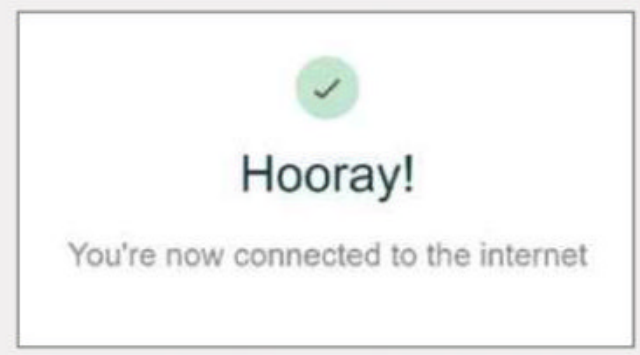
BLUNDER OF THE FORTNIGHT

INTERNET

Log into hotspots more reliably

In the past, I've had trouble using my laptop with public Wi-Fi hotspots. Some hotspot services display a welcome page you have to log into or click through before they let you connect to the web. Occasionally, this doesn't appear, so I can't click the button to get internet access. In theory, visiting any website should automatically trigger a hotspot's login page, but sometimes it doesn't.

After struggling numerous times, I've discovered I can enter `http://fixwifi.it` in the address bar to trigger a login page. I find that 'http' sites often trigger public Wi-Fi login pages more reliably than 'https' sites.



Get online fast with Fix Wi-Fi

Alternatively, if you've used a particular hotspot before, the login page might appear in the browser's history. Start typing it, even if you can't fully remember it, and it may appear as a suggestion after a few keystrokes. You can then click this to log in.

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

Inbox

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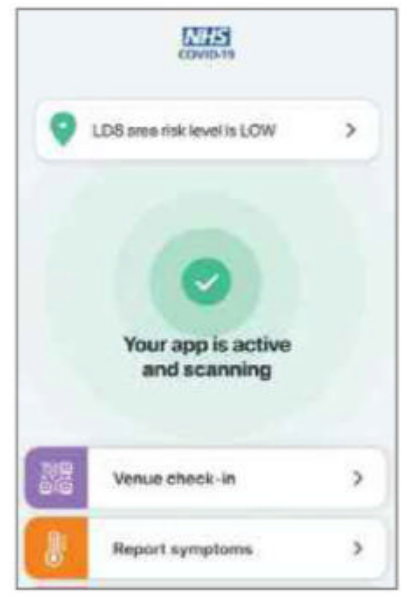
Back Issues disc winner

Tech obsolescence leads to identity problems

We can draw interesting conclusions from two articles in Issue 510 of *Web User*. On page 35, in your review of the long-awaited NHS COVID-19 test-and-trace app, we find that it requires Android 6. Therefore, owners of previous versions of the system will be left out. We could speculate that those owners might be of an older generation and thus more vulnerable to the virus but, in any case, they would be unreachable.

Meanwhile, on page 40, in her splendid article on the three Rs of 'Repair, reuse and recycle', Jane Hoskyn points out the deliberate, built-in obsolescence of various tech items. But, as we can see, even government agencies encourage (force?) people to dump their old phones if, as in the case of the NHS app, they want to look after their health. Therefore, Jane's suggestion of passing on old phones would be of limited use as many essential services would then be inaccessible.

Recently, I had a related experience of problems caused by obsolescence. The government commissioned the Post Office, among other organisations, to provide an ID-verification service – in my case, to register with HMRC. After the website failed to recognise my perfectly valid bank cards, it directed me to the Post Office app to take a photo of my driving licence and a selfie. But the app proved to be designed for an unspecified version of Android that was newer than the one running on my phone (4.4).



Therefore, I remain unidentified, but it seems I am in the good company of no lesser person than Cambridge statistician Sir David Spiegelhalter, who was also hit by the not-fit-for-purpose ID-verification scheme!

J Zarach, Shropshire

Blue cabbage beat the AI chatbot

I enjoyed your fascinating FAQ about GPT-3 artificial intelligence in Issue 510.

I recently tried to contact a firm I'd bought a technical product from. After going round and round the website looking for an email address, I tried the 'chat' box. When I asked for an email address to contact them, it replied immediately with three options: "Is this a complaint?", "Do you want to buy more?" and "Contact us". Selecting the last one sent me back round the website.

Assuming that the chat box was AI, this time I entered: "I want a blue cabbage". It immediately responded with: "I don't understand. Here is our contact email". I'm pleased that I got an email address for sending my enquiry, though I've not yet heard back from the company.

John Beattie, via email

"Alexa stop breaking the weather"

Voice assistants are a boon to many but anathema to others. Personally, I really like my Amazon Echo and find Alexa to be a very useful assistant.

However, have you ever listened to Alexa's Met Office weather forecast? The forecast is delievered with expression but, for reasons I cannot fathom, the end of one day's section is run straight into the beginning of the next.

What one hears at the end of the daytime report is: "Maximum temperature 18 degrees tonight (pause) showers...". What it should say is "Maximum temperature 18 degrees (pause). Tonight showers...". Without fail, the daytime temperature is always followed without a break with the word 'tonight'.

Amazon is difficult to contact at the best of times. Do you think you could ask their software engineers to fix this annoying flaw?

Anne-Marie Nicol, Perth, Scotland

Quiz Answers: Issue 511

1. Pac-Man
2. Double Dragon
3. Manic Miner
4. Super Mario Bros
5. The Secret of Monkey Island
6. Sonic the Hedgehog

WINNER!

Well done to **Steve Teller** who wins a Web User Back Issues Disc

WAYBACK MACHINE

2000

Is Startpage still safe to use?

In Issue 510's feature 'Hack your favourite websites', the 'Search Google without being spied on' tip suggests Startpage as a privacy-focused search engine. I used Startpage for years but dropped it after reading about the involvement of Privacy One Group, which is owned by the advertising technology company System1.

No mention of the investment and change of board members is made on www.startpage.com. The same company, System1, has also apparently purchased the Waterfox web browser.

I am not qualified to pass comment on Startpage's present privacy claims, but I now use DuckDuckGo as the default search engine in my Firefox browser. I'd be interested to read *Web User's* opinion regarding the current Startpage situation.

MC of Somerset, via email

Web User says: We understand your privacy concerns about Startpage now being owned by System1. The search engine addresses the issue on its support page at bit.ly/2EEr2v9, stating that "Startpage has not changed the way it serves ads" and that "users' IP addresses are not shared with any party". The company stresses that the search engine will continue to operate independently from System1, to "remain the world's most private search engine".

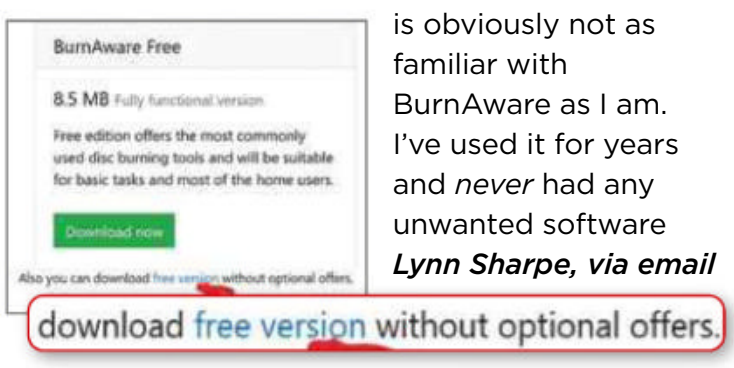
Burnaware isn't 'bundleware'

I refer to the 'Install this program' box in your Best Free Software section in Issue 511, which isn't as clear as it could be, or as helpful, regarding BurnAware.

You say to "Be sure to decline the bundled junk when installing", but you don't get any bundled software if you use the version from the download page (www.burnaware.com/download.html), which doesn't include "optional offers".

Please see the image below to point you in the right direction, as your writer is obviously not as familiar with BurnAware as I am. I've used it for years and *never* had any unwanted software

Lynn Sharpe, via email



What you say...

HAVE YOU INSTALLED THE NHS COVID-19 CONTACT-TRACING APP?

I've installed it and have used it in a few places so far. I've been impressed with how quick and easy it is to use.

Ben Samworth

I'll only use it if I can trust what they do with my location and data. At the moment, I don't trust the government and suspect they might use my data to benefit their friends. However, I can see how the additional features would be useful if they are kept up to date.

Caroline Chapman

Yes, I got the app as soon as it was available. I don't mind what they use the information for because I see it primarily as a tool for keeping me as safe as possible, in much the same was as washing my hands and wearing a face mask do.

Brian Clegg

No, I am still in lockdown at home so it's not neccessary because I am not going anywhere. Even if I weren't in lockdown, I doubt I would use it because it is far from being anywhere near as effective as other apps globally, never mind my concerns about the government's use of my data.

Rich Grove

I haven't been out since 11 March, so I have no contact with anyone else. Prior to that, even if I did go out, I would never take my mobile phone with me because I don't want to be mugged. The app is a bit of a chocolate teapot, if you ask me.

Jan Swanton

As far as I can see, the app will only work properly if people are able to get test results quickly, so they can share the result if they are infected with the coronavirus and can let people they've been in proximity with know that they need to self-isolate. That clearly isn't happening at the moment.

Paul Giddings

Nope. I never leave Bluetooth on full time because it kills the battery. Also, I don't think my version of Bluetooth is compatible with the app.

Iain Kenworthy-Neale

HOW OFTEN DO YOU TURN ON SUBTITLES WHEN STREAMING TV SHOWS AND FILMS (see page 40)?

With my hearing, I often turn on subtitles, although I don't always leave them on. If I have to rewind something I'm watching, I turn on the subtitles to see what was said, then turn them off again.

Phil Ówen

I have subtitles on permanently in the settings of every device I use to watch TV. If a programme is subtitled, they're there; if not, I find something else to watch.

Gary Olsen

There's so much mumbling in TV dramas these days, especially on the BBC, that I find if I don't turn on subtitles, I end up missing important dialogue.

Sarah Beasley

Subtitles are handy for when you're catching up with the news in bed and don't want to wake your partner!

Gillian Beattie

I only turn on subtitles if I can't understand what the characters are saying. This often happens because the audio quality is poor or the actors are speaking in unintelligible street slang.

Colin Briers

Not often. I don't like to read when I'm watching TV!

Nat Grove

Page 404

Domestic web connections aren't built for a nation of homeworkers, warns **Barry Collins**

Broadband backup isn't fit for business

As I type, the government is shooing us all back to our kitchen tables and spare bedrooms, as the great "return to the office" is reversed by a second spike in COVID-19 infections. Homeworking is back and will be for many months – if not permanently, once cash-strapped companies decide they can do without those expensive open-plan disease-spreaders.

One of the minor miracles of the first lockdown was that the broadband network coped remarkably well. Millions of impromptu Zoom meetings failed to drag down broadband networks – indeed, the biggest spikes in traffic were caused by the release of updates to video games, not the office chinwag with Nigel and Sophie.

However, there is one aspect of the broadband network that is definitely not fit for business: fault repair. Most domestic internet connections are on Openreach's Level 1 repair tier. This means that after you've reported a fault to your broadband provider, Openreach should fix the problem by 23:59 on the working day after next. So, if you find your broadband is down at 8am on Tuesday morning, Openreach has until the stroke of midnight on Thursday to repair it. That's up to two days of lost work, assuming everything happens as it should.

> "What's the point of a broadband backup that takes a day or two to arrive by post?"

It doesn't, of course. Openreach's performance figures for July-September 2019 – before the added complications of COVID were thrown into the mix – show that 86% of lines are fixed within one working day, but only 88% are fixed within two. That means more than one in 10 people are waiting three working days or more to get back online, during which time you may have been fired by an unsympathetic boss or reduced to a quivering broadband-less wreck.

There are ways around this problem. Most broadband providers offer business-grade connections with same-day repair targets, but these don't come cheap. A less costly alternative is BT's Halo package, which provides backup in the form of a 4G mobile router. But here's the catch: they don't send out the router until you report a problem! What's the point of a broadband backup that takes a day or two to arrive by post?

If you want to guarantee business continuity, you'll have to take matters into your own hands. You can use your smartphone as a mobile hotspot, but that's only a very short-term fix and will chew through your mobile data.

A better option is a dedicated 4G router, such as the Netgear LTE Modem, which you can get for around £130. Pair that with a dedicated mobile data SIM card (Giffgaff will sell you 80GB of data for £20, for example) and you have a ready-made backup.

Some expensive routers are also fitted with 4G SIM card slots that allow your landline connection to fall back on mobile data if the main connection goes down. Beware, however, that most broadband providers get ratty about supporting anything but their supplied routers, so you'll be on your own if you get a problem with it.

But it begs the question: now that homeworking has become a big thing, why aren't major broadband providers offering 4G backup in their own routers? Especially providers such as BT, who have their own mobile network (EE) to fall back on. It's time these big companies had our backs covered when we need it most – not a day or two later.

Illustration: Andrew Torrens

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

WebUser

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FOR MORE INFO SEE PAGE 62

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