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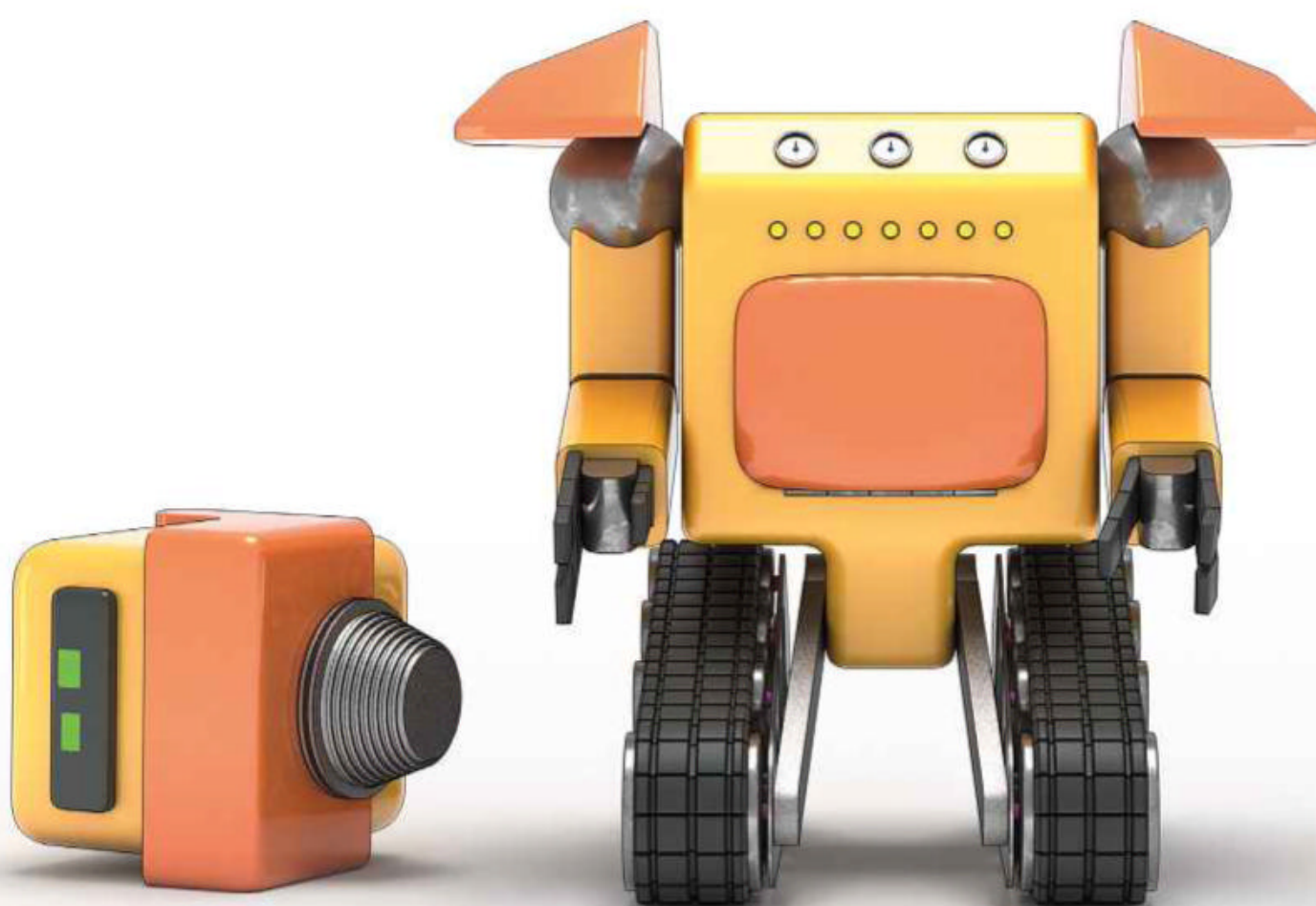
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Patch up your troubles in an old PC

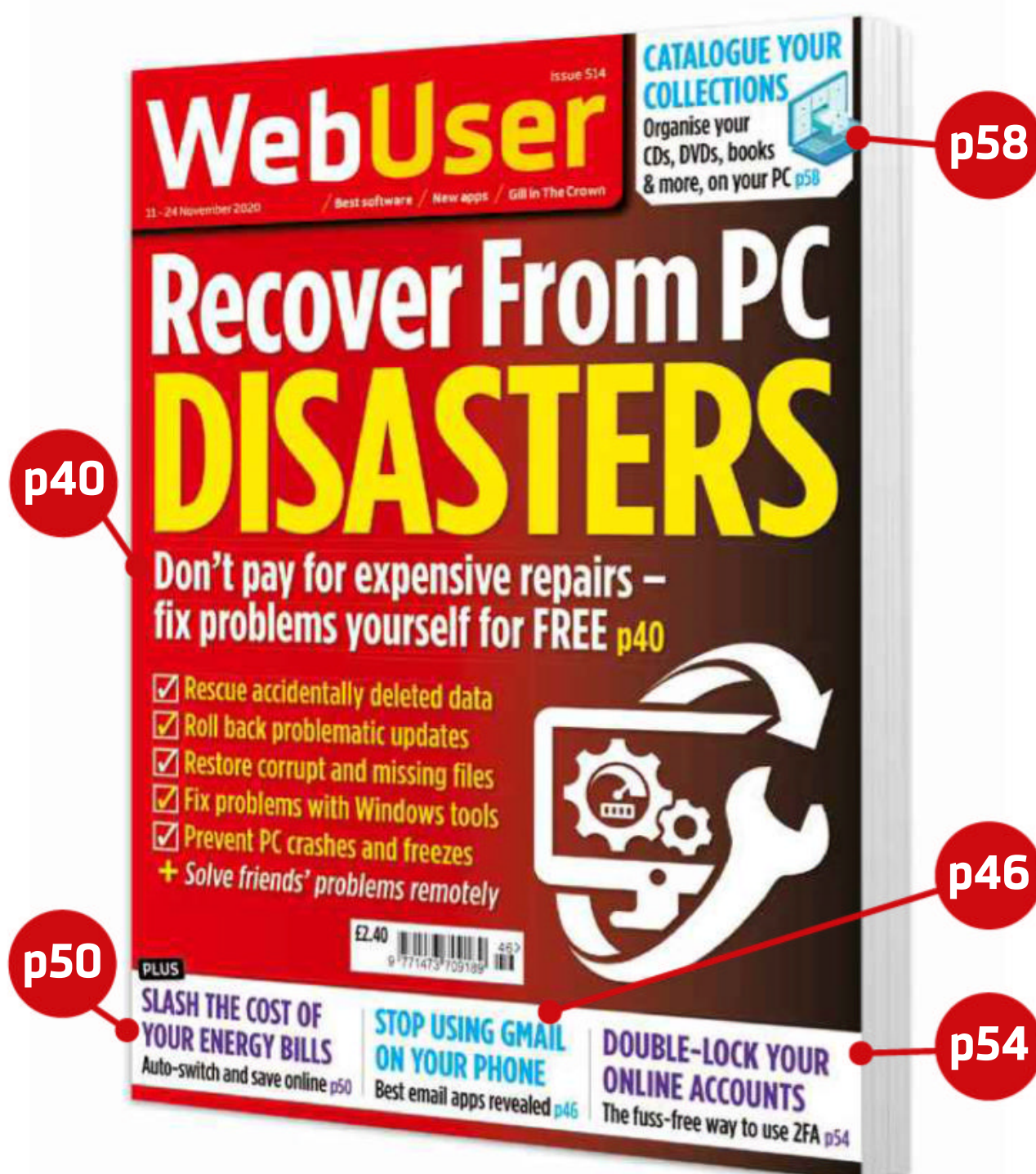
As we stagger toward the end of a terrible year, it's hard to not to speculate what else might go wrong. The coronavirus has caused a devastating loss of lives and jobs, Sean Connery has just passed away and soon we'll be awash with cheesy Christmas ads and novelty songs. All this and a national lockdown, too (or "tighter restrictions", if you're in Scotland). 2020 can "do one", as the kids say.

In such trying times, the last thing you need is your PC telling you a program can't start because a vital DLL file is missing, or a Windows update breaking an important

feature. With most computer-repair shops currently closed, the only solution to these problems is to fix them yourself.

Fortunately, as we explain in this issue's cover feature, DIY troubleshooting is easier than you'd think. For many common errors, you don't even need to install extra software, because Windows itself provides the fixes. We show you where to find them, and how to apply them.

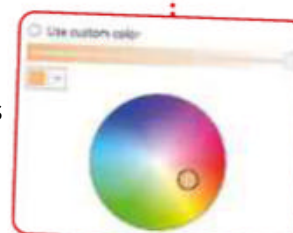
Robert Irvine, Editor
editor@webuser.co.uk
[#webuser](https://twitter.com/webuser)



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



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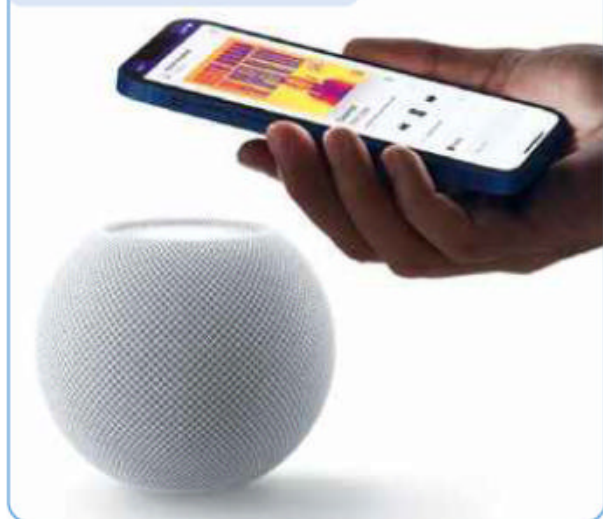


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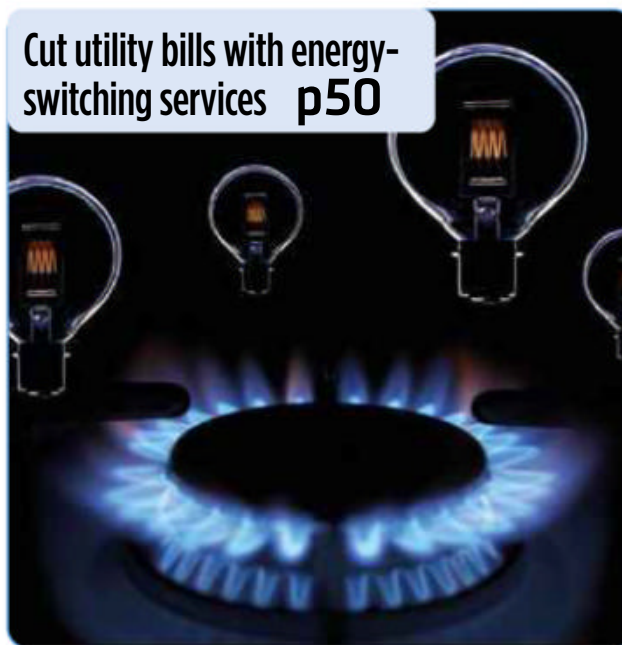
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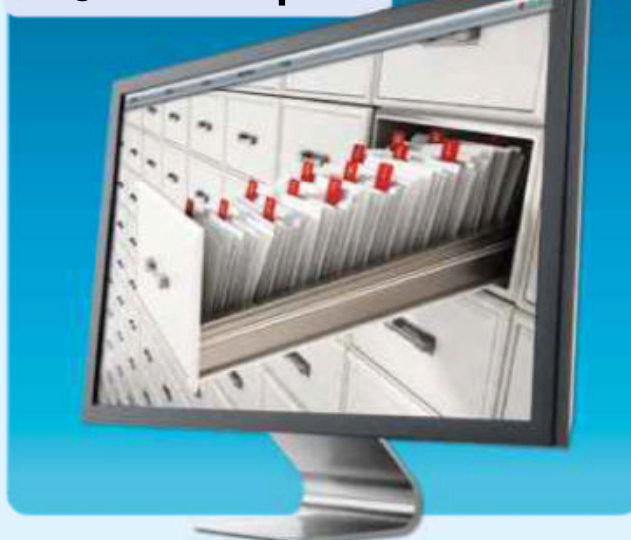
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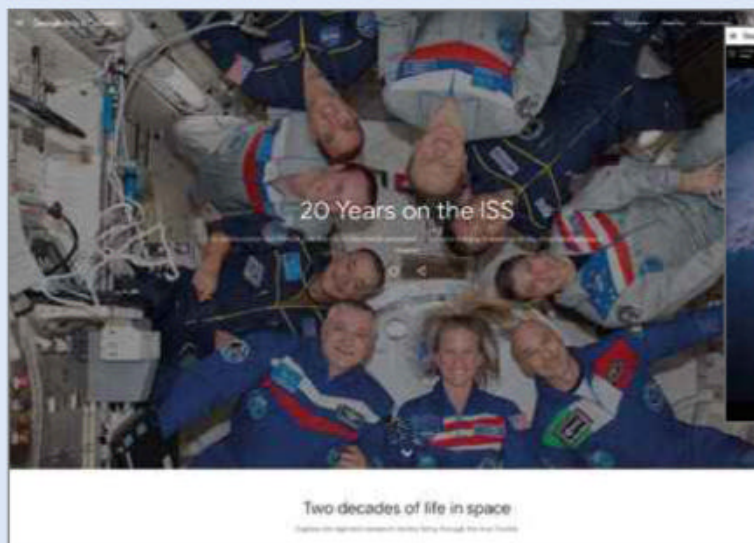


What's New Online

Celebrate 20 years of the ISS

Humans have now been living and working on the International Space Station (ISS) for two decades, ever since a US astronaut and two Russian cosmonauts set foot inside the low-orbit structure on 2 November 2000. To celebrate this milestone, NASA has collaborated with Google on an engaging online project that lets you explore a detailed 3D model of the modular space station and get answers to any questions you have about the ISS.

You can browse a history of the ISS complete with stunning images, a dramatic video of key moments and a brief insight by astronaut Tom Mashburn, who explains how residents prepare for sleep. You can also embark on a 360-degree virtual tour of the interior of the space



station, including the Cupola, where stunning views of Earth have been enjoyed by many visitors over the years.

The site underlines the importance of the work being carried out by ISS, by emphasising its research. Check out six cutting-edge projects currently being explored on board, such as how microgravity affects fluids and whether plants grow in space.



Indeed, the goodies just keep coming, from a NASA-themed colouring book to a machine-learning experiment that uses hundreds of thousands of photos. It's truly out of this world.

bit.ly/35Jycb8

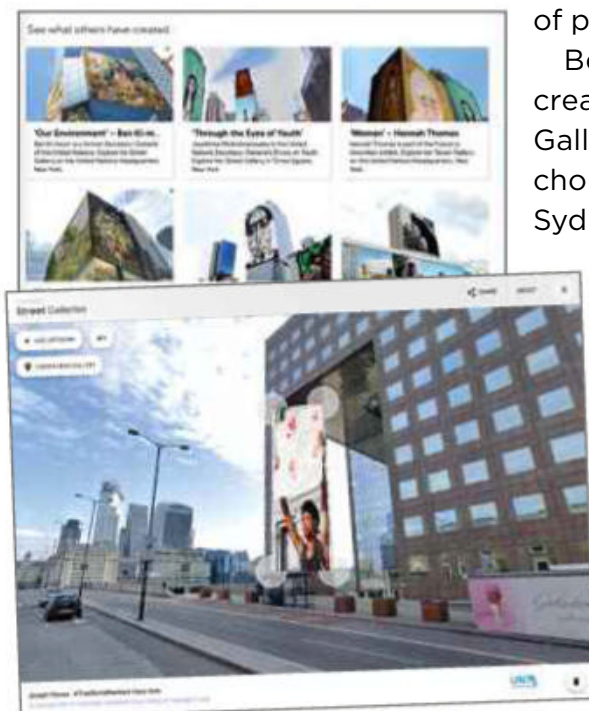
Create a public art gallery

bit.ly/31RDBf0

To mark 75 years of the United Nations, Google Arts & Culture has created an online gallery packed with more than 500 artworks focused on people's hopes for the future. Explore the exhibitions and learn about the idea behind each one, from data-driven illustrations and political cartoons to murals in the desert and portraits of Yazidi women. You can then discover more about the artists and view global images

of people and landscapes.

Best of all is the ability to create your own Street Galleries. Pick a city from a choice of 10 (London, Paris, Sydney, New York, Bangkok, Beirut, Dubai, Johannesburg, Mumbai and Tokyo), explore the surroundings and add some art. You can filter the different collections by landscape and portrait, then use the handles in the corners of the images to make each artwork fit perfectly on a building.



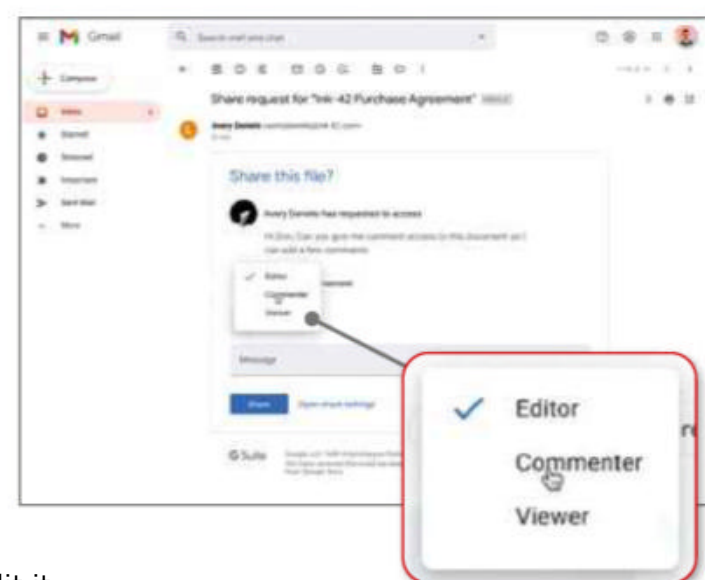
Grant access to Drive files in Gmail

mail.google.com

One of the main benefits of Google Drive is how easy it makes sharing files. You're offered a number of options that determine the level of access the recipient will have – whether they can view the file, comment on it or edit it.

From time to time, a recipient will email asking for greater access. This previously entailed going back into Drive and altering the settings, which is easy enough unless you've got multiple Drive accounts or you can't remember a login, in which case it's more of a hassle.

Google is now letting you grant access from within the body of a Gmail message – this works on the web version as well as in the iOS and Android apps – to make the process quicker and easier. To use the function, you need to have dynamic email turned on – go to Gmail's settings and ensure there is a tick next to 'Enable dynamic email'.



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

Enjoy an immersive horror drama

monster.pilots.bbcconnectedstudio.co.uk

This 30-minute multi-sensory audio tale lets you combine three or more laptops, phones and tablets to create a surround-sound experience. Designed to be enjoyed at night with the lights turned down, Monster also adds visuals as it seeks to create a haunted house in your own home. Be warned that it uses flashing lights, however.



NEW VOICE COMMANDS



Play Spotify podcasts

Enjoy Spotify podcasts on Google Assistant-enabled devices by setting Spotify as your default podcast provider and saying: "OK Google, play [podcast name]".



Better control your HomePods

If you have an Apple HomePod (see page 38), you should update its system software to 14.1 so you can use Siri to stop alarms, timers and media on the smart speaker.



Say a prayer with Alexa

Cambridge University Press has added the Book of Common Prayer to Alexa so you can ask: "say morning prayer," "say the Lord's prayer", "give me the Apostles' Creed" and "Recite the Grace".

Teach Alexa to answer questions

alexaanswers.amazon.co.uk

Amazon's digital assistant Alexa is smart, but us humans can still teach it a thing or two. The company has been asking US users to help build Alexa's intelligence for the past couple of years, and now it wants assistance from the UK, too. Sign in using your Amazon account, look through the questions currently stumping Alexa and answer any you can. Star ratings are used to assess the quality of the suggestions. Whenever Alexa shares your answers, you'll gain points and a place on a leaderboard, unless you want to contribute anonymously.



Explore a Pompeii village in VR

bit.ly/3mtxfu4

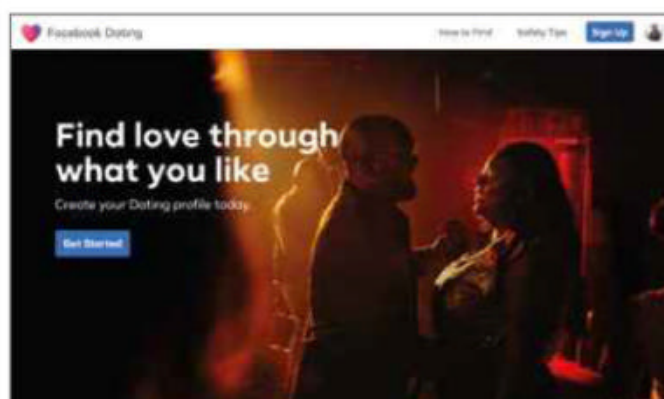
The Grand Palais in Paris is hosting a major exhibition about the buried city of Pompeii, but you don't have to attend the event to see what a house would have looked like prior to the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD. Explore the property in 360 degrees, and watch as it transforms from its current dilapidated state to the splendour of its heyday. The video is accompanied by sound and can also be enjoyed on a VR headset via a downloadable MP4 file. You can also watch a video (in French) of how the experience was created.



Find love on social media

www.facebook.com/dating

Facebook already knows so much about you, so why not use its new Dating service to set up a profile and let it use your preferences, activities, groups and events to help you find love? Share Stories from Facebook and Instagram, or use a Secret Crush tool to select nine friends in the hope that they've chosen you. Virtual dates can be conducted via Messenger video calls.



Listen to bilingual podcasts

bit.ly/3oE2eG0

Duolingo has created the world's first bilingual true-crime podcast. Mixing English and Spanish, El Gran Robo Argentino runs over six episodes, with interviewees asked to speak slowly and use vocabulary appropriate for language learners.

Mute WhatsApp chats forever

www.whatsapp.com

WhatsApp is removing the option to mute conversations for a year - by allowing you to do so forever. Activating it means you'll never receive notifications of a new chat unless you unmute. Just tap a group or contact and select Mute, Always.

Read Beano strips for free

bit.ly/37SazzS

Unlock your inner child (or pass the link to a kid) and read a selection of comic strips from the pages of *The Beano*. None are more than five panels long and you can rate them for laughs while discovering more content featuring the characters.

Scammers use Google Drive for phishing scams

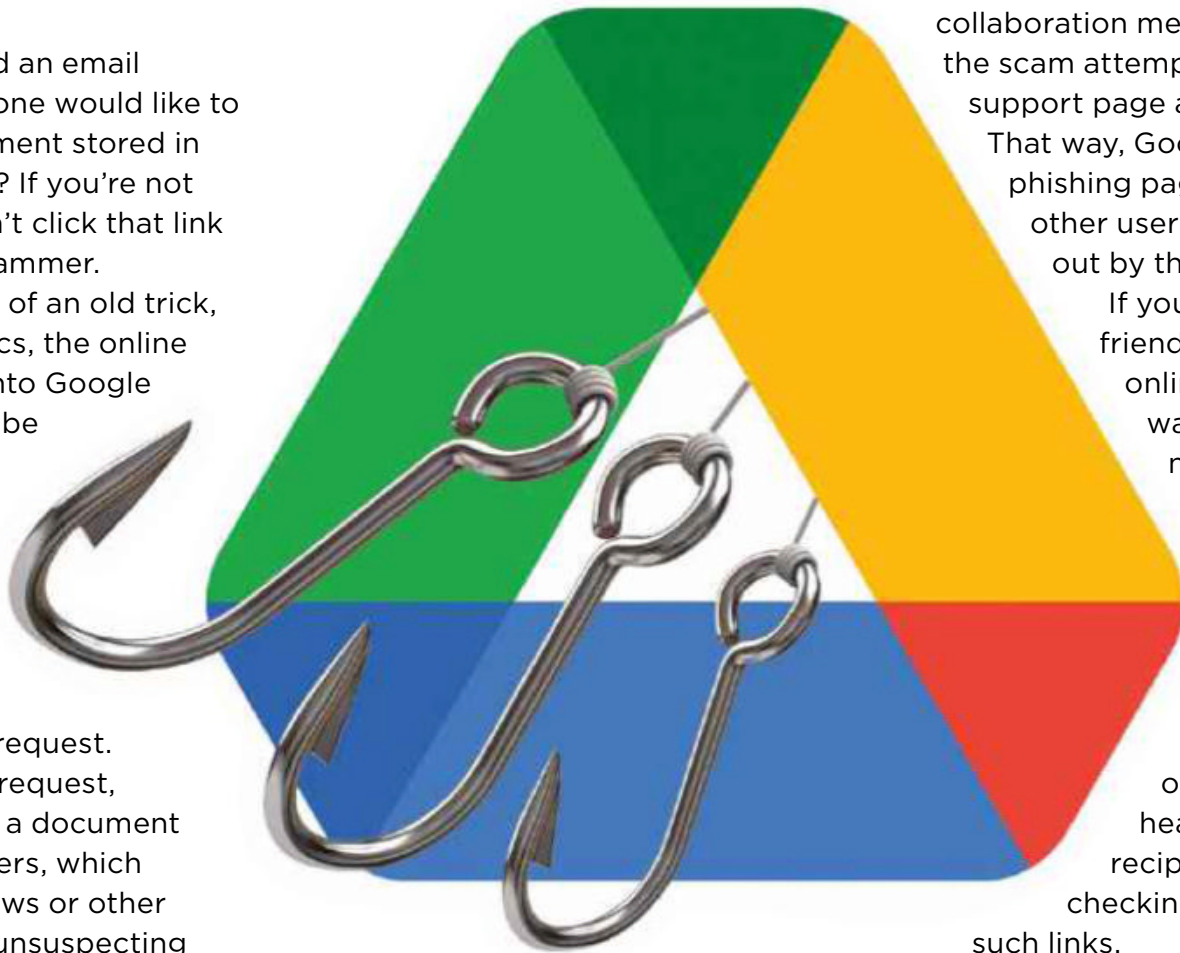
What happened?

Have you ever received an email notification that someone would like to collaborate on a document stored in Google Drive with you? If you're not sure who it's from, don't click that link – it could be from a scammer.

This is a new version of an old trick, which uses Google Docs, the online word processor built into Google Drive, to target would-be victims with an invitation to edit. That email slips easily past spam filters, even in Google's own Gmail service, because it looks like a legitimate request.

If a victim clicks the request, the Google Doc opens a document created by the scammers, which contains fake prize draws or other tricks to convince the unsuspecting recipient to click malicious links, install malware or enter their bank details. This is similar to any phishing attempt that slips into your email inbox, but because the initial email comes from Google itself, it's difficult to spot.

This type of scam isn't new, but it appears to be on the rise, though it's unclear how many victims have been caught out by this specific phishing



collaboration message, you can report the scam attempt to Google via a support page at bit.ly/scams514.

That way, Google can delete the phishing page to help prevent other users from being caught out by the scammers.

If you have family and friends who aren't as careful online, it may be worth warning them about this new style of attack, because reports suggest it's becoming more popular among scammers. And if you send a collaboration request of your own, email a heads-up message so the recipient gets in the habit of checking in before clicking such links.

technique. Google has been alerted to the Google Drive phishing attempts, and is working on a solution.

How will it affect you?

As ever, the online safety advice remains the same: it's unwise to click a link if you don't know who it's from. That said, it's easy to see how a link coming from Google itself via a Drive notification could catch you out, especially if you frequently use Drive to collaborate on files. If you don't recognise the person who is requesting you look at a document, don't open the link until you've checked with them.

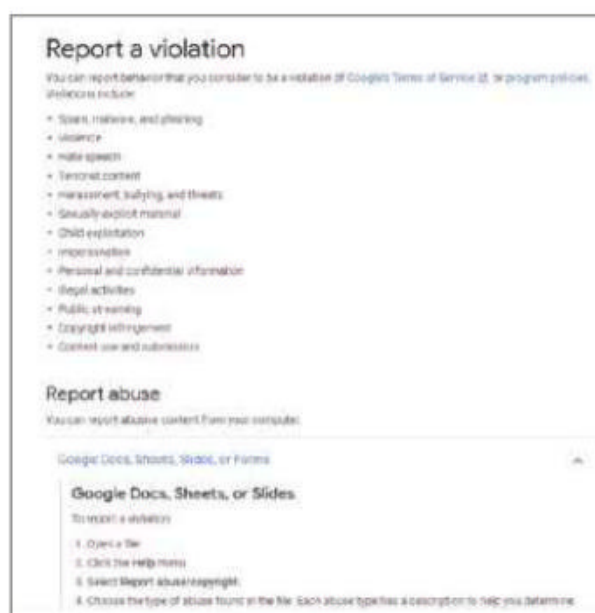
But if you do fall for this phishing scam, don't panic. Clicking that Google Drive notification will only take you to a Google Doc – from there, the scammers will have to trick you into clicking yet another link, this time a malicious one. This is often disguised as an invitation to a giveaway, discount or warning about your bank account. So if find yourself in an unexpected Google document, simply close the browser tab or window.

If you receive a suspicious

What do we think?

The better legitimate online organisations become at protecting users from scam and fraud attempts, the more clever attackers need to be. Indeed, previous phishing scams have used Google Calendar invites in the same way. But while this is a devious way to dodge spam filters to get a malicious link in front of would-be victims, it's easy to avoid. If you don't know who sent you something, be it a Google Drive request or anything else, don't open the email or click the link.

It's not an easy attack for Google to defend against because any protections it puts in place could make Google Drive less convenient to use. Of course, the best way to stop attackers from using this technique is to ensure it isn't successful – if web users aren't caught out frequently enough to make it pay, scammers will simply move on to more lucrative methods. The harder we make their work, the less money they can steal, and the less likely they'll be to attempt online fraud in the first place.



You can report Google Docs and Drive scams to Google through its support page

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

PayPal to accept Bitcoin payments

What happened?

PayPal has confirmed that it will let users buy and sell cryptocurrencies directly from their accounts, marking a major step into the mainstream for Bitcoin and its rivals.

However, the current plans only extend to American PayPal users – Brits will have to wait and see if support for cryptocurrency wallets will be added. PayPal suggested it would expand its support for virtual currencies from early next year, but didn't specify which countries that could include.

As well as Bitcoin, PayPal will also allow transactions through Ether and Litecoin.



How will it affect you?

Once the service launches, PayPal users will be able to hold Bitcoin and other currencies in their accounts, using them to pay for online purchases. However, the merchant won't be paid in Bitcoin. Instead, the Bitcoin will be exchanged for local

currency at current rates, with a fee of 2.3% applied for smaller transactions under \$100.

There are some limitations to the service – most notably, it won't be possible to

move the cryptocurrencies to a different wallet. You can only top up a single digital wallet and spend its contents.

What do we think?

This service will make it easier to buy using Bitcoin, but also more costly. That 2.3% fee means you'll be

paying extra for everything you buy using Bitcoin, and the total sums in your account will depend on the often wildly fluctuating value of digital currencies. Of course, anyone with a Bitcoin stash can already cash it in for pounds, which can then be used to pay for products and services via PayPal.

That said, digital currencies are starting to gain the attention of central banks, so it's smart for PayPal to start exploring how payments could work in the future. And if you've always wanted to have a dabble with Bitcoin, PayPal's foray into the field is a safe and easy way to participate.

Credit: grejak / Shutterstock.com

NHS COVID-19 app updated to fix problems

What happened?

The NHS COVID-19 contact-tracing app has been updated amid concerns about notifications falsely warning users they've been in contact with infected people.

The app has two main features: scanning QR codes in public places in case an outbreak is traced to that spot, and using Bluetooth to track users' locations to determine whether they've been in close proximity to people who later test positive.

After the first version of the app was scrapped in the spring, the government opted to use a contact-tracing system based on a framework developed by

Apple and Google.

The government said that 19 million people have downloaded the app to date.

How will it affect you?

Previously, a bug in the app meant that people were sent "ghost" notifications, suggesting they had been in contact with an infected person but providing no other information. This was then followed by a second notification saying no further action was needed. Following the recent update, these unnecessary notifications will be removed, so you only get an alert if action is required.

Alongside that change, the accuracy of the algorithm behind the app is being improved, as part of wider efforts to limit the spread of

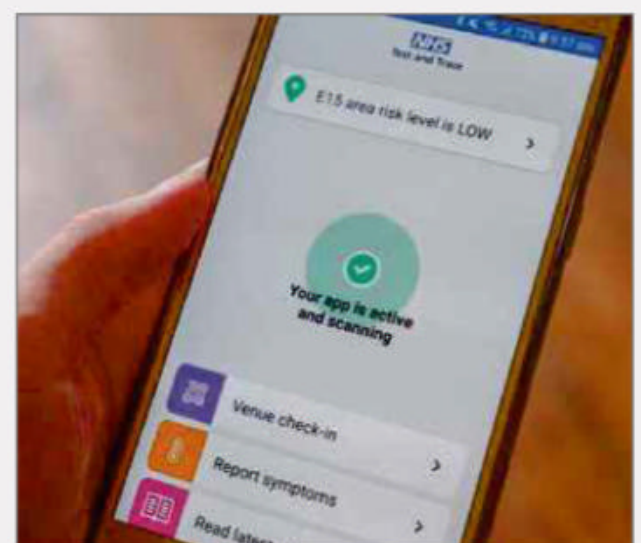
the disease.

There's nothing to force people to heed those warnings – and, indeed, no way for the government to know who has been told they could have been infected. This is good news for privacy but also raises a public health challenge.

What do we think?

We're pleased that the NHS app is still being tweaked and improved. As a new technology, bugs are sure to be found and better ways of operating uncovered.

That said, the many



unnecessary notifications, along with other reported flaws in the app that displayed alarming notifications, will have reduced public trust in the system. This could mean people ignore the warnings that they should quarantine or seek a test – and that's not helpful for any of us.

Credit: Esther Barry / Shutterstock.com

Network-locked phones to be banned

What happened?

Phones that are locked to specific mobile networks are to be banned from sale from December 2021.

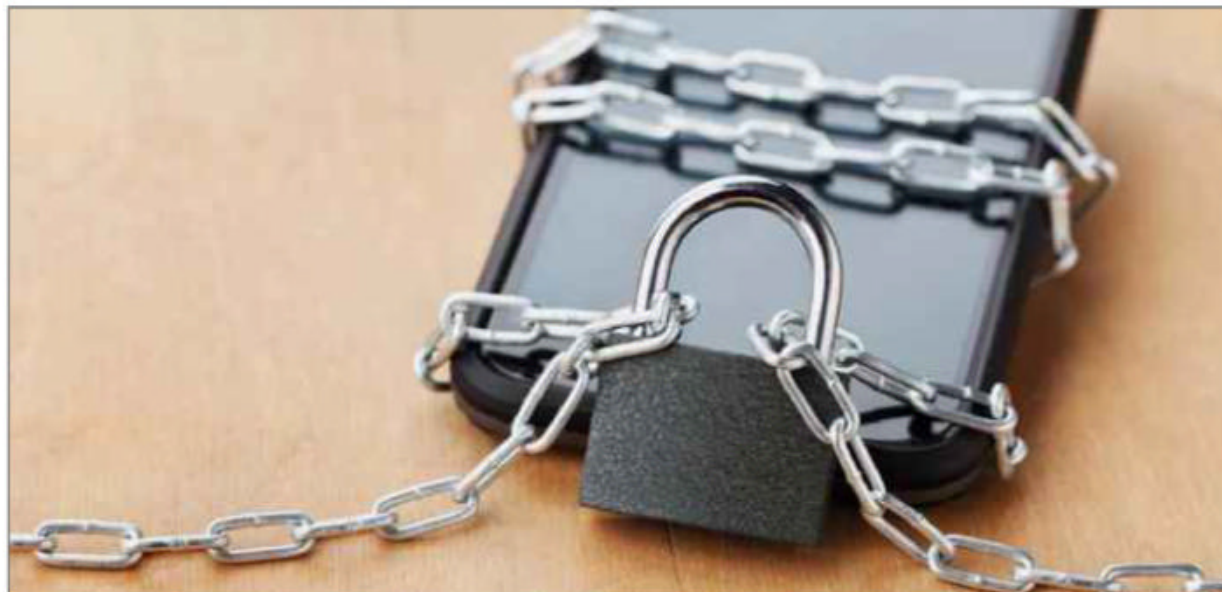
For years, it's been the scourge of anyone looking to get a decent deal on a phone upgrade – you pick the device you want, but then discover that it can only be used on one or two networks. Security was wheeled out as the excuse for locking phones to networks, as operators previously claimed that the measure deters theft and fraud.

Ofcom strongly disagrees with this practice. Stating that users find unlocking phones to be complicated, which stops them switching at the end of their contracts (and potentially paying more for the privilege), the regulator has decided to force all UK mobile phone operators to sell unlocked phones that can be used on any network. All you need is the right SIM card.

Selina Chadha, connectivity director of Ofcom, believes the ban “will save people time, money and effort – and help them unlock better deals”.

In response, EE confirmed: “We’ll work with Ofcom to comply with its guidelines”. Vodafone stated: “We stand ready to implement these changes when they come into force”.

In addition to the ban on locked phones, network providers will also be



forced to make all communications available in accessible formats upon request, let customers walk away from a deal if it changes substantially before they sign the contract and include a summary of key points in any contract.

How will it affect you?

The biggest impact will be for customers on Vodafone, EE, BT and Tesco Mobile, and those looking to join them; O2, Virgin, Three and Sky Mobile already only sell unlocked phones. You’ll no longer need to visit a market stall to get your phone unlocked – which is bad news for those independent traders providing the service.

Ofcom estimates that it costs around £10 to unlock a phone in this way, and

about half of all users who try to free up their device run into trouble. This includes long wait times to receive the required codes, which don’t always work as expected. Ultimately, the regulator’s decision should make it easier to find the device and plan that work for you.

What do we think?

It’s about time this ban was introduced. It’s staggering that only half the UK’s major network providers sell unlocked phones by default, and that the other half have long pretended the reason for locking handsets was due to the security – rather than financial – concerns. This is an excellent decision in the name of consumer choice.



FIRST LOOK

Apple One

www.apple.com/uk/apple-one

“Even better together”, said Apple as it finally launched its complete subscription package, Apple One.

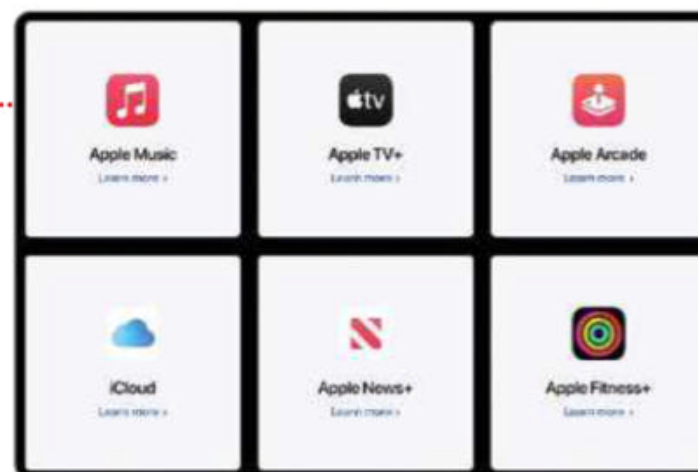
For some time now, Apple’s crown seemed to have slipped and the company has been playing catch-up. A lack of tech innovation has seen rivals steal the company’s ideas – and its thunder – and pull level with its product line. Beyond the familiar iOS and uber-secure ecosystem, what difference is there between today’s iPhones and a premium Android handset? Very little, except maybe a few quid on the price tag.

Apple One is another catch-up move, following – rather than setting – a trend the company once led when it first introduced its own subscription

service. But if you’re part of Apple’s walled garden, this is still a welcome step.

There are three subscription tiers: Individual (£14.95), Family (£19.95) and Premier (£29.95). All of them let you consume as much music, TV and games (through Apple Arcade) as you fancy, but offer a marked difference in iCloud storage. Sign up to an Individual account and you’ll get a mere 50GB, and while the Family account provides a more generous 200GB, you’ll be sharing that among a possible six members of the plan.

The allowance jumps significantly to 2TB if you opt for the Premier account. This, too, can be shared with five other people, and also adds Apple News and the Apple Watch-based Fitness+ – “a new fitness-powered experience”



that’s expected to arrive before the end of the year.

Compared to other subscription packages, Apple One is excellent value. A Spotify + NetFlix + Google Play Pass combo would alone cost you three-pence shy of £21. And that’s just for one person. If you’re already tied to one or two apps in Apple’s package (and many people will be), it’s a no-brainer. And Apple One also makes it much easier to manage your subscriptions overall.



WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

Is Microsoft redesigning Windows 10 (again)?

Credit: tanuha2001 / Shutterstock.com

When Windows 10 launched back in 2005, Microsoft made it clear that it would be an evolving operating system. Now, it appears the company is planning an extensive redesign, code-named Sun Valley.

Rumours abound that many 'top-level interfaces' – the parts of the system that most of us use – are going to receive a major update. This includes the Start Menu, Action Centre and File Explorer. Microsoft is also updating the code for the Taskbar. It's not a complete replacement of the OS, though, because most of the changes are believed to be based on Windows 10X, but built for desktop PCs.

Insiders expect the update, which will be an evolution of Microsoft's Fluent Design, to feature improved animations, new features and a modern face-lift that makes navigation easier and more intuitive. It's also thought that many older interfaces (think Control Panel) will be enhanced to allow a consistent, system-wide dark mode.

It's interesting to note that when the Windows Devices & Experience team got a new boss back in February, the company promised it would "reinvest" in the platform. Sources believe that the rumoured update is the result, with



Chief Product Officer Panos Panay determined to "move people from needing Windows 10 to loving and wanting Windows 10".

There's no word on when Sun Valley may launch. Many believe we won't see the fruits of the redesign until near the end of 2021.

LIKELIHOOD RATING



Microsoft has continued to tweak and refine Windows 10, but we haven't seen a large-scale overhaul for a long time (and, for some areas of the system, we haven't seen any changes at all). It's about time it was modernised, and Sun Valley looks to be a user-centred first step in that direction.

WEBOMETER

WE LIKE...

Google Play introduces app comparisons

Google is testing a feature that lets you compare Android apps in the Play store, to make it easier to find what you want. The comparisons will be based on criteria including ease of use and whether the app supports features such as offline playback and casting.



Wayback Machine adds fact checking

The Internet Archive has started adding fact-checking labels to pages archived by its Wayback Machine tool. The labels will appear on articles that contain false or misleading information, and direct users to online reports that provide factual details.



WE DON'T LIKE...

Google's new VPN has restrictions

Google has launched its first VPN, but it's only available in the US and you can't use it for free. To get the VPN, you need to subscribe to the company's Google One 2TB Plan, which costs \$9.99 a month or \$99 per year.



AI confuses a bald head for the ball

An AI camera designed to track the action during football matches repeatedly mistook the bald head of a linesman for the ball, during a game between Inverness Caledonian Thistle and Ayr United. This caused fans watching online to miss Caley Thistle's only goal.



What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

Buffalito

bit.ly/34KJg8s | From £15

Buffalito, from BuffaloGrid, combines a power bank and lamp in a rugged, handheld unit. Its 5V output provides a full charge to your phone in 50 minutes, while its light offers an impressive 160 lumens, with three brightness settings that last around four hours. The device comes with accessories to use it as wearable torch, bike light or bedside lamp, and backing the project also supports the 'Get Power, Give Power' campaign to bring grid power to the developing world. A £15 pledge gets you one Buffalito with accessories and three mounting attachments.





Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

2020 is worst year ever for security breaches

The number of private records exposed in data breaches and leaks has surged to 36 billion so far this year, across almost 3,000 separate incidents, further extending 2020's status as the worst year on record for hacks.

The last three months have added an additional 8.3 billion exposed records to the tally, with the 36 billion total representing twice the number of records leaked throughout 2019.

Two breaches alone exposed over a billion records each, while four breaches exposed over 100 million records between them, according to research by Risk Based Security. "The quagmire that formed in the breach landscape this spring has continued through the year," said Inga Goddijn,



executive vice president at Risk Based Security.

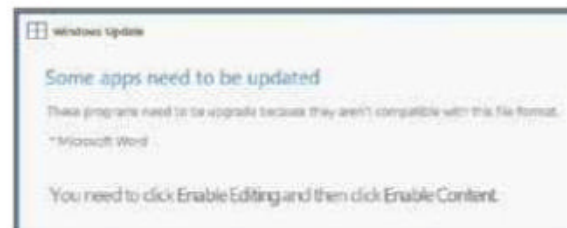
The vast majority of incidents (77.5%) were attributed to 'outside' hackers or cybercriminals. Of those breaches that originated from within companies, 67% were deemed the result of human error, including missing devices or misconfigured databases, while 13% were regarded as malicious. Ransomware was involved in 21% of reported breaches during 2020.

bit.ly/3mujz22

Emotet spreads via fake Windows Update

The notorious malware Emotet is now using a fake Windows Update message to trick victims into installing the Trojan on their computers.

The convincing-looking message states that "some apps need to be updated" – it usually cites Microsoft Word – to open a 'document' attached to the email. If a user follows the instructions, malicious



macros install Emotet on their PC. This could then lead to the installation of further threats, such as Trickbot, QBot and ransomware such as Ryuk. The message tells the recipient to update Word by clicking the Enable Editing and Enable Content buttons, which trigger the malicious macros.

Emotet is so successful because it's forever evolving and gaining new features, and there are usually no signs of infection until it's too late. To avoid being infected with Emotet, never open email attachments unless you know what they are, never enable macros in Word and other Office programs, and make sure your anti-malware protection is up to date.

bit.ly/2HN3INs

Credit: Bleeping Computer

Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

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



Q What should I do if criminals use my name and card details to buy things online?

Jane Lawrence, Facebook

A If you have reason to believe that you have fallen victim to identity fraud, you must act at once. When

criminals use your identity to make purchases, to open accounts or to take out insurance or contracts, those debts are accumulated in your name and will affect your credit rating.

Start by contacting a credit reference agency such as Equifax, Experian, Callcredit or ClearScore. These services check your credit file for signs of abuse or fraud. If you believe that your card has been stolen, or your bank accounts are being illegally accessed and used to make purchases, contact your bank at once to freeze your assets.

Your bank will launch an investigation and will report any suspected wrongdoing

“ Always report suspected identity fraud to the affected organisations **”**



to the police. However, it's still a good idea to directly report financial and identity fraud to the police.

You should also always report any suspected identity fraud to the organisations that you believe have been affected. This goes for the suspected theft of official documents such as driving licences, passports and birth certificates, which must be reported to the respective agencies and the police. Ask

the police for a crime reference number, and additionally report the crime to CIFAS (the UK's fraud prevention service, www.cifas.org.uk)

If you're not sure who to contact when your documents or other information are lost or stolen, contact Action Fraud for advice by calling 0300 123 2040 or visit its website (www.actionfraud.police.uk).

Switch to the AA for a different kind of breakdown service

- ✓ Unlimited call-outs mean we're there when you need us
- ✓ Tap & track app lets you follow our Patrol to your side
- ✓ We'll usually fix you within 30 minutes of arrival
- ✓ Upgrade to Smart Breakdown to track engine faults in real time
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a year

and get a

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AA

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: 31/01/21. **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 October 2020.

★ Best New Websites

Site of the Fortnight

SOCIETY

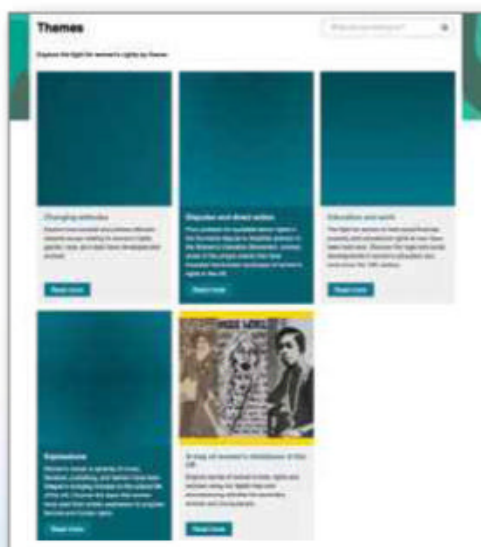
NEW

Women's Rights

bit.ly/3kzR7eE

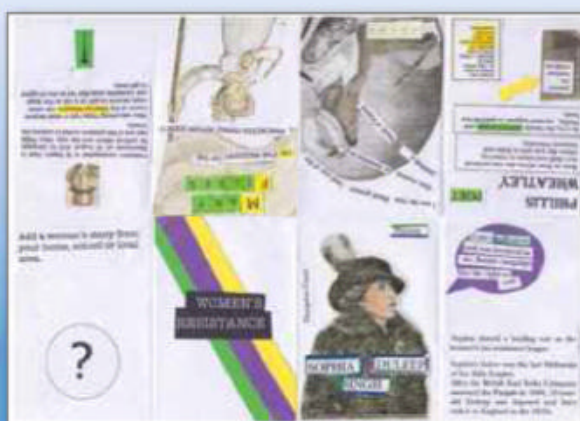
The British Library's Unfinished Business season is now casting light on the fight for women's rights in a landmark exhibition running until 21 February. This website forms part of the overall package by letting you explore photos, printed material, videos and audio recordings spread across four themes. The material can also be viewed by creator, date and publisher and, as well as displaying large zoomable images, you can read in-depth explanations of the content. There's also a digital map of women's resistance, which covers 60 UK locations and – as a helpful touch – the site links to support for anyone affected by the issues raised.

Our rating



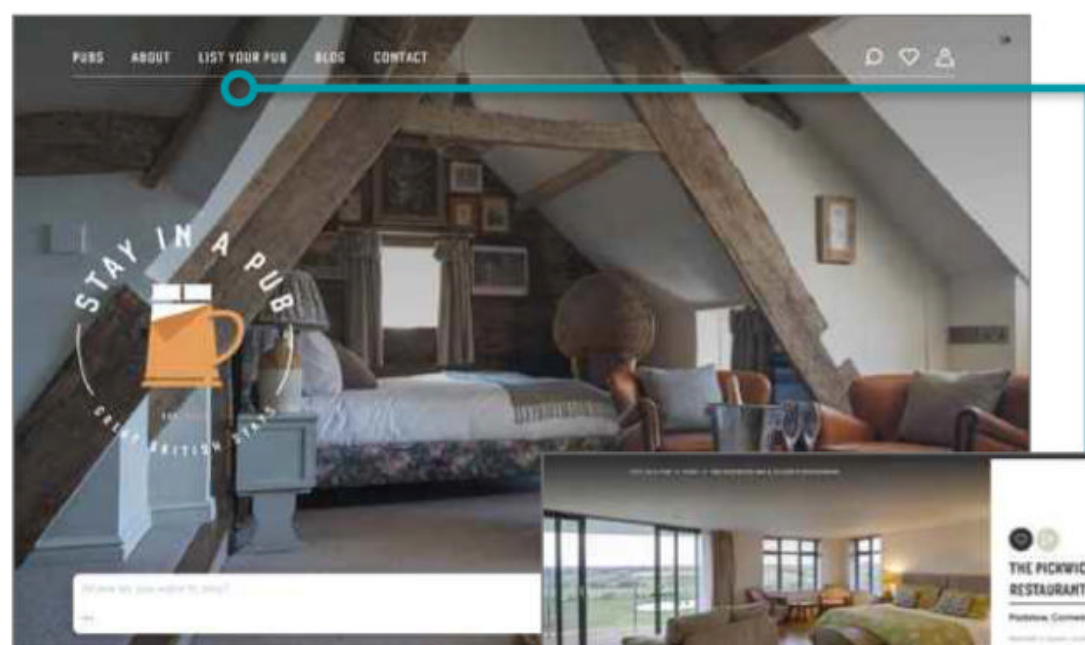
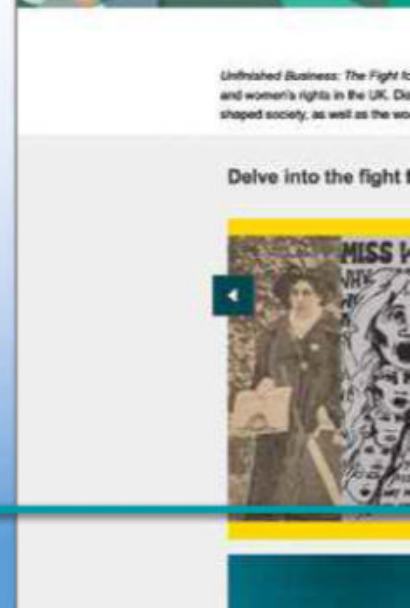
EXPLORE THEMES

Discover more about changing attitudes, disputes and protests, education and women at work



SAVE CONTENT

Browse the map to select stories and images, then download and print them to produce your own magazine



ACCOMMODATION

NEW

Stay In a Pub

stayinapub.co.uk

In some parts of the country, you can only sink a pint while gobbling down a meal, but you can also support UK pubs by choosing them as a place to stay. At this new site, you can view more than 1,500 public houses offering accommodation and, judging by the beautiful images for each one, your stay is likely to be very pleasant indeed. Indicate where and when you want to stay, refine the results by budget, activities and facilities, then read the descriptions, check out sample menus and browse maps, facility lists and links to local area guides. Bookings are made via Stay In A Pub, each pub's own site or Booking.com, and we raise a toast to such fine work.

Our rating



RELAUNCH

CULTURE

The Fitzwilliam Museum

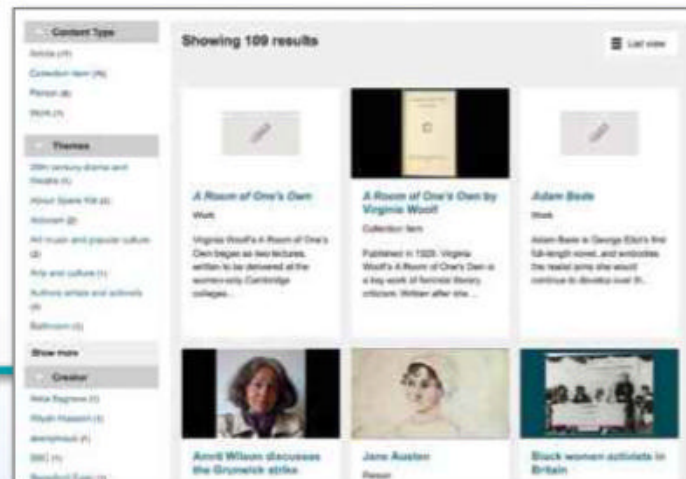
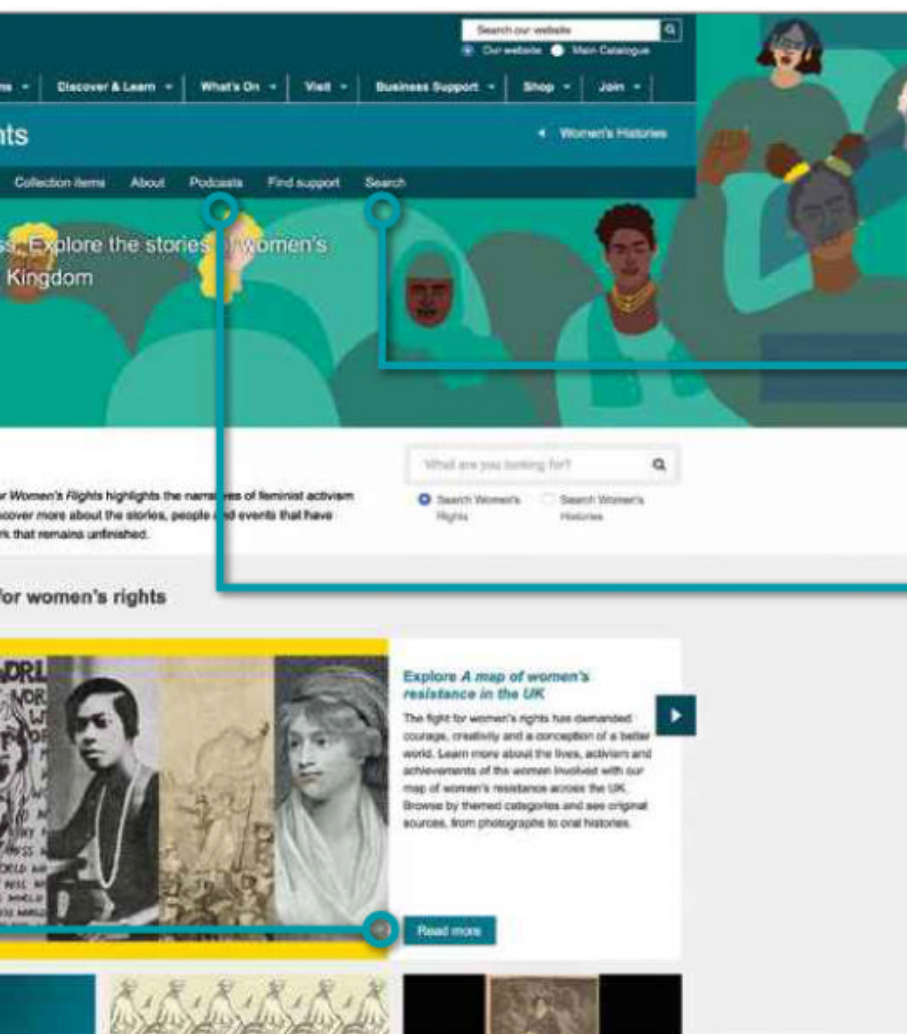
beta.fitz.ms

The University of Cambridge's art and antiquities museum has unveiled Fitzvirtual, which revamps much of its old content to make it more attractive to visitors. It succeeds by neatly sectioning areas of interest such as news and things to do, while highlighting collections and shining a light on its research. Visiting the galleries virtually in 360-degrees makes a huge difference and you get to potter around 24 different locations. The site is still in beta, but the smart new interface makes it more user-friendly, with an option to see visual results and sort content by the last update.

Our rating



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

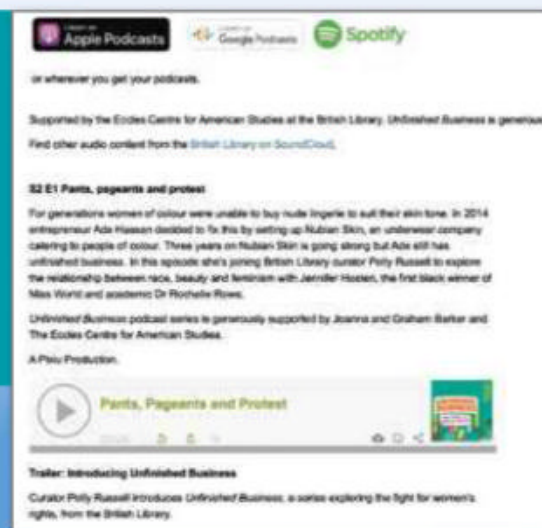


SEARCH

The site's choice of filters and different ways to display results makes it easy to find items of interest

LISTEN

You can listen to free podcasts featuring star names such as Jameela Jamil and Victoria Pendleton



TRANSPORT

Metro Memories

www.metro-memories.co.uk

The Tyne and Wear Metro is taking a trip down memory lane to celebrate its 40th anniversary. As such, it has asked passengers of the light rail network to share their recollections, resulting in an fascinating selection of stories and images, such as the time the Flying Scotsman pulled up alongside a metro train and the construction of Newcastle's Central Station. Some of the memories have been taken from the Metro owner's own archive, and employees have been sharing memorable days at work. Better categorisation of the material would make for easier navigation, however.

Our rating



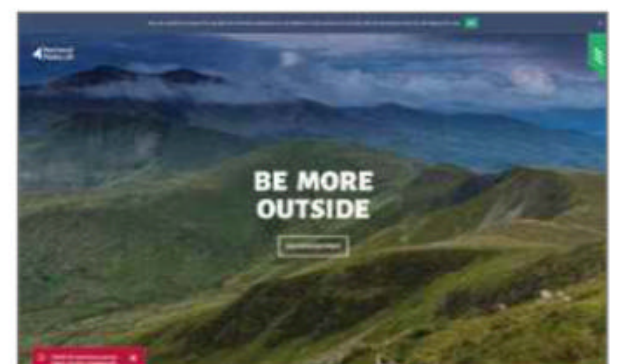
FASHION

Levi's

www.levi.com

On the face of it, this redesigned website offers familiar fare: clothes for women, men and children. But interspersed are details of the clothing company's eco-credentials, such as puffers made from plastic bottles. A Discover tab includes an explanation of Levi's' humanitarian initiatives, and enhances the retail offering thanks to jeans guides, a history of denim, a regularly updated blog and details of its loyalty programme. Best of all is the Tailor Shop, which lets you personalise clothes and accessories. Sign up with the site to get 10% off your first order.

Our rating



OUTDOOR

National Parks UK

www.nationalparks.uk

There are 14 National Parks in the UK, and this site makes exploring them easier than ever. Pick an area from the interactive map to discover hints and tips to inspire a potential trip. The site is full of fun facts, well-shot videos and lavish images (including a selection taken from the National Park UK Instagram account). There's even a section for people who have never previously visited the UK's magnificent parks, where you'll find information about the most suitable clothes to wear, travel information, the ins and outs of the countryside code and whether Wi-Fi is generally available.

Our rating





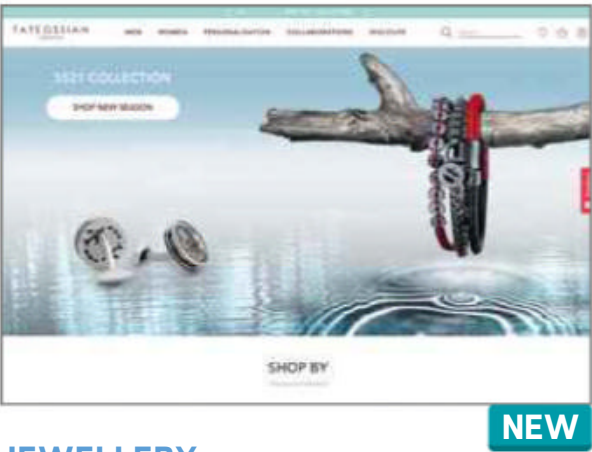
RELAUNCH

HISTORY

British Empire & Commonwealth Collection becc.bristol.gov.uk

Until 2012, Bristol was home to the British Empire & Commonwealth Museum, but while new physical material continues to be collected, around 10% of its objects, artworks, films, and paper and sound archives are now being showcased online. Featured collections include photos taken by specific people and images collated by theme. You can find items by using keywords or browsing the categories, media formats and world regions, but navigation can feel clumsy and the overall design is basic. Still, it's an amazingly rich resource – just be aware that some content could be considered offensive!

Our rating ★★★★★



NEW

JEWELLERY

Tateossian London tateossian.com

The Tateossian website's beautiful presentation showcases its jewellery collection in a stylish manner, and you can view items up close at various angles while learning about the products' finer details. The company encourages interaction by asking its customers to share photos of themselves wearing Tateossian jewellery on Instagram, for the chance to be featured in the website's gallery, and there are handy two-minute reads, which include information about booking video calls with a store for a personalised shopping experience. Checkout is simple and you can stay updated by subscribing to the newsletter.

Our rating ★★★★★



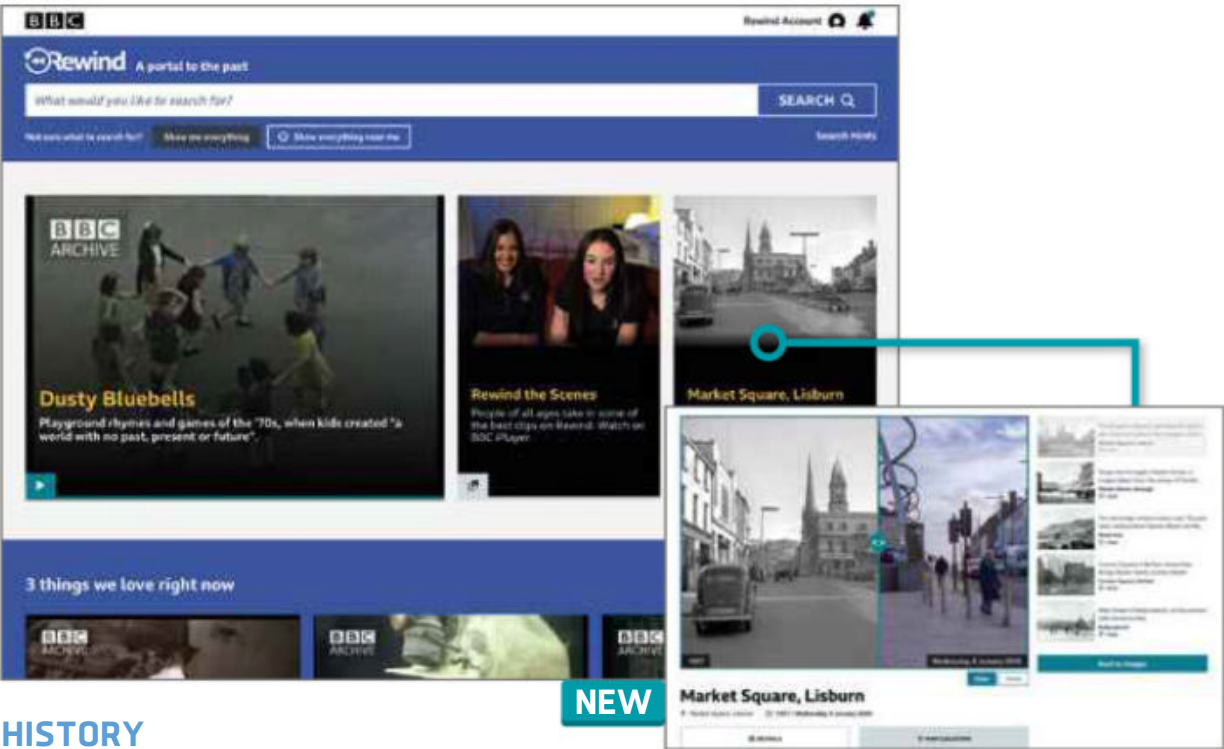
RELAUNCH

VIDEO GAMES

PUBG Lore lore.pubg.com

One of the more popular video games in recent times has been PlayerUnknown's BattleGrounds, otherwise known as PUBG. It was the catalyst for the last-man-standing, mass-combat, battle royale craze also seen in titles such as Fortnite. This official hub, aimed at gamers aged 18+, lets you delve into the game's back stories, discover more about the characters and get the lowdown on key artefacts. The game's studio promises to include clues for future projects and upcoming games, with regular fresh content. It's a well-designed accompaniment to the game, fleshing out its narrative to lure in more players.

Our rating ★★★★★



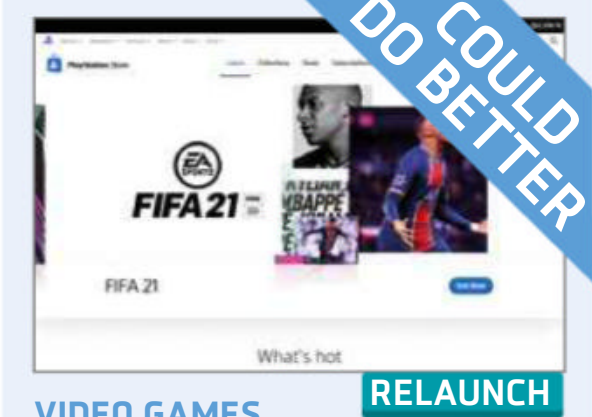
NEW

HISTORY

BBC Rewind bbcrewind.co.uk

Having spent many months delving into the BBC's archive, researchers have pulled together more than 13,000 videos from the 1950s through to the 1970s. Consisting of documentaries, news broadcasts and lifestyle shows, they concentrate on the history of Northern Ireland and offer the chance to catch a famous face or two. Browse the highlights on the homepage or delve deeper by using the speedy search engine or clicking a button to show content relevant for your local area (assuming you live in Northern Ireland). There's also a selection of "then and now" images going back 100 years. Just use the slider on each one to see how the country has changed.

Our rating ★★★★★



RELAUNCH

VIDEO GAMES

PlayStation Store store.playstation.com/en-gb

Sony's new store lets you discover, buy and pre-order titles for the PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5 and PlayStation VR. However, to snap up games for its previous consoles – including handhelds – you'll need to visit the Store on the machines themselves. If that feels frustrating, then so is the purchasing process. Previously a case of selecting a platform and filtering, there are now more clicks involved, filters have been axed and even the wishlist has vanished, along with screenshots and file size details. The design of the sites is certainly cleaner, though.

Our rating ★★★★★

ESSENTIAL BOOKMARKS THIS ISSUE: Mind-blowing science sites



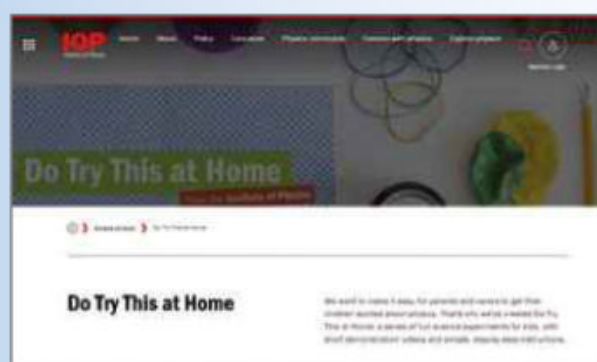
PeriodicTable periodictable.com

The periodic table of elements is a design classic, a pub-quiz mainstay and a gateway to the world's current scientific knowledge. The PeriodicTable website lets you explore all the chemical elements currently recorded, from hydrogen to Lawrencium. Click one to discover the scientists associated with it, the items and processes it's used for, and to see graphic representations of what it does under certain chemical conditions. Created by scientists including BBC filmmaker Max Whitby, who also makes bespoke furniture incorporating the periodic table (118displays.com), the site is heavily geared towards selling merchandise (including hand-made face masks). However it also features expert technical data and photos, so it's a useful source of knowledge.



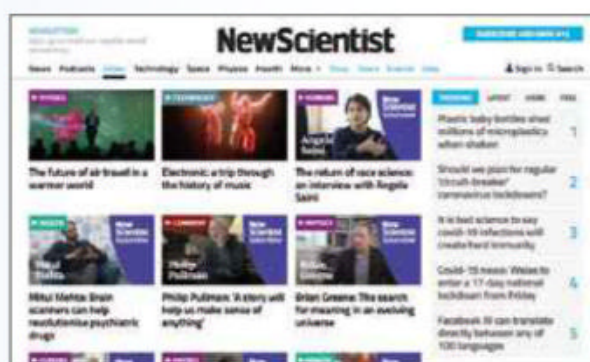
ExplainThatStuff www.explainthatstuff.com

This "online book" from UK science writer Chris Woodford (www.chriswoodford.com) is the kind of resource we wish we'd had as students. In hundreds of richly-illustrated articles, it explains the how and why of everything from graphene and power transformers to the physics of cruise ships. To get an idea of the content's exceptional quality, click 'Random article' and prepare to become engrossed, or click Timeline then choose an article about a major tech advance from the last 5 billion years. Chris keeps the site constantly updated to demystify new technology and support the current school curriculum, so it could be the only science class you need.



Institute of Physics www.iop.org

Discover the current state of quantum mechanics, astronomy and bioengineering – or get a crash course in basic physics – from this highly regarded UK site. The best content for us non-professional scientists is hidden in the 'Explore physics' section (www.iop.org/explore-physics), whose Do Try This At Home videos (bit.ly/35gzAl9) are a must-see if you pine for the days of blowing up the science lab. We love the 'Technology in our lives' pages (bit.ly/34eBXWp), which explain the physics of innovations such as Bluetooth, motion capture and touchscreens. To explore the site's wealth of academic articles and datasets, click the topics across the middle of the homepage – 'Atomic and molecular', 'Business and innovation' and more.



New Scientist www.newscientist.com

Get the very latest news from the world's science community – everything from COVID vaccine developments to whether there are or aren't signs of life on Venus – from the venerable magazine's website. As you might expect, most of the articles are behind a paywall, with full access costing £3.81 per week (or more, if you want the print magazine as well). However, there's plenty of free content to enjoy, including a couple of crosswords. The best free stuff can be found in the Video section, which is brimming with investigative films and interviews with scientific luminaries such as James Lovelock and Richard Dawkins, and authors including Ian McEwan and Bill Bryson. You can subscribe to the free New Scientist Weekly podcast here, too.



Compound Chem www.compoundchem.com

Cambridge chemistry teacher Andy Brunning moonlights as an infographic designer, creating quirky designs that illustrate the chemistry of everyday things from fireworks to booze, and the difference between soap and body wash. Use the Infographics Index, search tool or Archives page to browse the site's hundreds of designs, and check out the recently added Coronavirus section for five detailed posters that set out the science of antibodies, COVID tests and hand sanitisers. The Shop section links to Amazon and RedBubble for books, mugs and notebooks, and you can follow Andy on Twitter at [@compoundchem](https://twitter.com/compoundchem).

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Build a Better Site

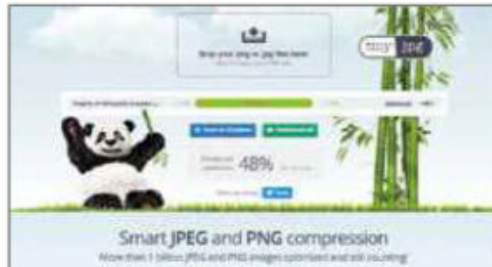
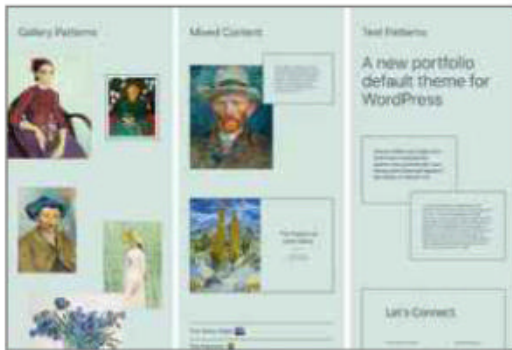
Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

Top Tips of the Fortnight

New WordPress theme

The next version of WordPress is progressing through its beta stages and is due for release early next month. The highlight of version 5.6 is the new WordPress theme, an annual event that's designed to show off new WordPress features at their best.

This year, the Twenty Twenty-One theme is a 'portfolio' site. This is usually used to showcase things such as photos but, here, it utilises WordPress's recent block tools to provide a wide variety of design options. Find out more about the theme at bit.ly/31TpsxP.



Compress JPEG and PNG files

If your website uses a lot of images, you probably invest a lot of time processing them, to make them smaller and faster to load. When you're short on time, you could use TinyJPG (tinyjpg.com) instead. The site compresses both JPG and PNG image files and, in our experience, does a great job of squeezing files down in size without significantly compromising their appearance.

Deal of the Fortnight

Hostinger (www.hostinger.co.uk) is offering 90% off its Single Web Hosting package, down from £11.99 per month to £1.19.

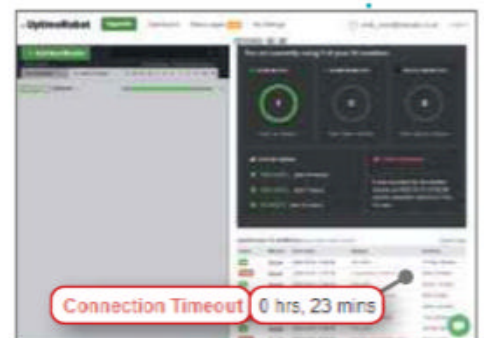
Web-building Helpdesk

Q I am worried that my web host isn't keeping my website online all the time. On recent occasions, it's been unavailable when I've tried to access it, only for it to come back soon after. Is there a way of checking on my host?

Matt Brand, via email

A If you use WordPress, you can install the free JetPack plugin (jetpack.com), which has a 'Downtime monitor' tool that emails you when your site goes down, and again when it comes back, so you can see how long it's been unavailable. For non-WordPress sites, Uptime Robot (uptimerobot.com), can monitor 50 websites for free and lets you see stats on how they've performed in recent weeks.

Andy Shaw, Technical & Reviews Editor



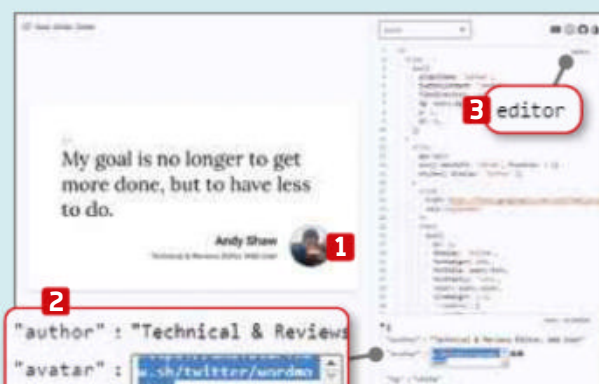
MINI WORKSHOP | Create scalable code-based cards for your website or social media

Microlink Cards: cards.microlink.io/editor | 10 mins | Any browser

Microlink Cards is a handy website that lets you create sophisticated-looking 'cards' that you can add text and links to, for decorating your site or promoting your content on social media.



1 Click the drop-down arrow **1** to choose from a selection of preset designs. The default text and design appears in the main window. **2** On the right, you can see the CSS code that created it **3** and some 'query variables' you can change **4** to control the text and colours.



2 Scroll through the variables and you'll usually find the content, which you can change to your own. Here, we've added our own avatar **1** and changed the name and job title. **2** If you know CSS, you can also tweak the code in the 'editor' section. **3**



3 When you've finished, you can click the Download link **1** to open the image in a new window that you can add to a social-media link. If you're adding it to your website, click the Embed button **2** and copy the HTML, JavaScript or other code, depending on your preference.



What To Watch Online

Pick of the fortnight

NETFLIX

Relive the 1980s with Diana and Maggie in *The Crown*

From 15 November

It's over a year since Netflix sent fans of *The X-Files* into meltdown by unveiling Gillian Anderson as Margaret Thatcher in Season 4 of *The Crown*, which also features Emma Corin as Lady Diana Spencer. In spring, Netflix released a teaser for the new season, which focuses on the late 1970s and early 80s: bit.ly/3ovOcGj.

Finally, one lockdown later, the actual episodes are upon us. Most of the cast stays the same, with Olivia Colman as the Queen and Helena Bonham Carter as Princess Margaret. However, judging by the latest trailer (bit.ly/34veikF), the spotlight will be on Charles (Josh O'Connor) and Di and their "fairy tale" marriage. Watch all 10 episodes, plus previous seasons, from 15 November on Netflix at bit.ly/3e09nLI.

Fortuitously, the new season was filmed along with last year's Season 3, so it was finished (just!) when lockdown began in March. But we'll have to wait a while for the final two instalments. Imelda Staunton is due to play the Queen in Seasons 5 and 6, with Dominic West rumoured to be Charles. But this being 2020, what'll actually happen is anyone's guess.



Watch the final season of Marvel's *Agents of SHIELD*

From 13 November

Buffy the Vampire Slayer creator Joss Whedon brings Marvel's 'Strategic Homeland Intervention, Enforcement and Logistics' (SHIELD) superheroes to the screen for a final batch of 13 episodes. Season 7, which sees a decoy of Agent Phil Coulson (Clark Gregg) jumping through time to prevent the Chronicoms colonising Earth, is available exclusively via Disney+ in the UK.

Watch the latest trailer at bit.ly/2J4aoa7, then catch the first two episodes from 13 November at bit.ly/31LWzDO. Eleven further episodes arrive weekly. A Disney+



subscription costs £5.99 per month from www.disneyplus.com.



Get festive with *Lego Star Wars Holiday Special*

From 17 November



Forty-two years on from the 1978 cult classic *Star Wars Holiday Special* (which you can watch in full via YouTube at bit.ly/35FnLFA), comes this Lego version set after the events of 2019's *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* (on Disney+ at bit.ly/2Hiv1la). Rey, Finn, Poe, Chewie and the droids gather for Life Day festivities, and find themselves joined – thanks to a few timeline-jumping shenanigans – by Luke, Darth Vader and Yoda. There's no trailer, but you can see sneak peeks on YouTube at bit.ly/3e3606E.



Remember 60 years of *Coronation Street*

From 19 November

ITV goes *Corrie* mad next month, with the venerable soap celebrating its 60th anniversary on 9 December. But BritBox gets in there first, with a selection of shows including drama-documentary *The Road to Coronation Street*, about the show's origins; biographical film *Against The Odds: The Pat Phoenix Story*; and greatest-hits collection *Coronation Street: 60 Years in 60 Episodes*.

Also coming this fortnight to BritBox is 2019's three-part *War of the Worlds* adaptation starring Rafe Spall, available from 20 November.



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



Watch the 2020 ATP tennis finals

11-15 November

London's O2 Arena is hosting the ATP Finals for the last time, with Stefanos Tsitsipas defending his title, before the tournament moves to Turin in 2021. Amazon again streams the action live, allowing Prime subscribers in the UK and Ireland to watch live and on-demand without having to worry about additional fees (amzn.to/3e4v657). Documentary series ATP Uncovered 2020 (amzn.to/2TxIsxC) is also included with Prime, as are ATP highlights and press conferences.



Celebrate the 40th anniversary of *Children in Need*

13 November

The BBC's fundraising spectacular hits 40 this year, and despite a few inevitable tweaks – masks, perspex screens and safe distances between hosts –

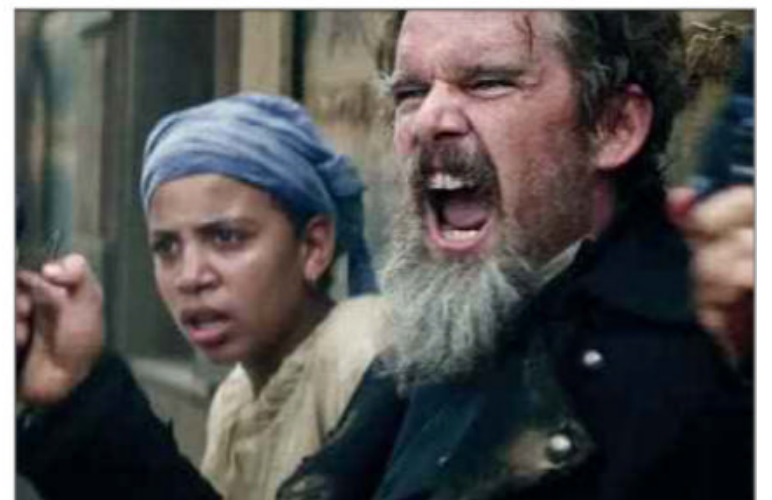


Watch Ethan Hawke in miniseries *The Good Lord Bird*

From 18 November

Ethan Hawke received ecstatic reviews for his role as mid-19th century abolitionist John Brown in this seven-

part mini-series, which boasts a rare 100% score on reviews aggregator Rotten Tomatoes. Hawke's Brown is on a holy crusade to end slavery in this darkly comic drama, based on the novel by James McBride (amzn.to/3kFSGrE). The Showtime drama airs on Sky Atlantic in the UK, so you can watch it via Now TV with an Entertainment Pass.



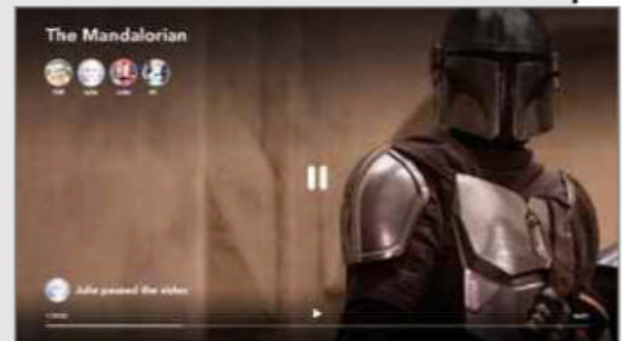
You can watch the official trailer at bit.ly/2J9qIq5.

Disney+ finally brings GroupWatch to UK

British Disney+ subscribers can finally watch shows and films together while apart, thanks to the launch of Disney+ GroupWatch in the UK and Europe.

The feature, already available in the US, Canada and Australia, lets you sync your viewing with distant friends and family members, letting you pause, play and fast-forward in tandem. Up to seven people can watch together, using the Disney+ website and apps for mobile, TV-streaming sticks and smart TVs.

Like similar tools in Netflix and Spotify, each person in a GroupWatch session needs their own subscription. But unlike Netflix's offering, GroupWatch won't let you chat while watching, though you can share reaction emoji. Find out more from the Disney Plus+ Help pages at bit.ly/3e3NTxC.



In case you missed it...

The BBC and HBO's adaptation of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy is now on its second



series on the iPlayer at bbc.in/3jAZB3T. Eight new episodes tell the story of the second novel,

The Subtle Knife, which promises more daemons than Series 1. The trailer is on YouTube at bit.ly/3oEM27p.

If you're in need of a laugh (aren't we all?), you'll be glad to find a newly-expanded collection of classic sitcoms on the iPlayer, including

The Vicar Of Dibley, *The Catherine Tate Show* and *The Royle Family*. *Gimme Gimme Gimme* and *Blackadder* (all of it) will arrive shortly.

BritBox has just added 10 years' worth of ITV's 1980s *First Tuesday* documentary films and 10 more Film4 titles, including *A Room With A View* and *Brassed Off*.

Product Test

We test and compare the latest products

Nokia 5.3

Nokia's latest budget phone costs just £150, but doesn't compromise on features or performance

Just when you think that budget smartphones can't get any better, another unbelievably affordable and well-rounded handset comes along to prove you wrong. With the Nokia 5.3's multiple cameras, large IPS display and speedy performance, it's hard to think of another phone this affordable that could possibly compete.

At first glance, you'd never guess that the Nokia 5.3 was only £150. The plastic casing may feel cheap but the phone's build is far from flimsy and, at 180g, it's not too heavy.

The top half of the phone's rear is dominated by a circular camera arrangement that strongly resembles the design on budget Motorola phones, such as the Moto G8. Inside this raised module there are four cameras and, right in the middle, a single LED flash.

Directly below the rear cameras is a recessed circular fingerprint reader. However, this actually failed to read our fingerprint on several occasions and we found it faster to unlock the phone using a PIN or pattern, or via face recognition.

On the left-hand edge, Nokia has included a Google Assistant shortcut button,

which we deactivated in the phone's settings after accidentally pressing it several times. Above that is the dual-SIM and microSD tray. On the opposite edge, you'll find the power button and volume rocker, with a 3.5mm headphone jack located on the top. Finally, the bottom edge houses the phone's speaker and USB-Type C charging port.

The 6.5in display is coated in a protective layer of Corning Gorilla Glass and the bezels surrounding the edges are slim enough to not be a distraction. However, Nokia has opted for a centrally-placed teardrop notch for the front-facing camera, which won't be to everyone's taste. You can't conceal the notch with a black bar within the display settings, so you're stuck with it unless you decide to download a third-party notch-hiding app.

Display

The phone has a 6.55in IPS LCD panel with an HD+ resolution of 1,600 x 700 pixels. This works out to a density of 268ppi, which puts it on par with the Moto G8 Power Lite's screen. Both phones have a maximum brightness of 426cd/m², so they're quite bright, though



“It effortlessly skips around its Android operating system, running several apps simultaneously, without slowing down”

screen glare becomes a problem in direct sunlight.

The Nokia 5.3 only has one display profile, which covers 80.5% of the sRGB colour standard. That's roughly in the same ballpark as the Moto G8 Power Lite and Samsung Galaxy A21s, and it's about as good as you can expect from a £150 handset.

Colour reproduction is vibrant on the whole and, thanks to the phone's relatively high 1,444:1 contrast ratio, textures are sharply defined.

Performance and battery life

The phone really comes into its own when measuring performance. Nokia has equipped its handset with 4GB of memory, 64GB of storage and an octa-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 665 processor – a combination that excelled in our CPU performance benchmarks. In the GeekBench 5 test, the phone recorded single-core speeds of 311 and multi-core speeds of 1,402, putting it way ahead of the Moto G8



“ With decent build quality and a large 6.5in screen, the Nokia 5.3 looks like a phone that costs twice the price ”

Power Lite. It even managed to beat the more expensive Samsung Galaxy A21s.

In fact, its performance is right up there with the regular Moto G8 and Redmi Note 9, which cost £30 and £50 more than the Nokia 5.3. During our time with the phone, we never had any issues with its responsiveness or loading times. It effortlessly skips around its Android operating system, running several apps simultaneously, without slowing down.

It's also adept at running games. In the GFXBench Manhattan 3 graphics benchmark, it managed an impressive 33fps in the on-screen segment and 20fps during the off-screen test. That puts it neck and neck with the standard Moto G8, and means it's twice as capable as its direct competitor, the Moto G8 Power Lite. Two of our favourite Android games, Call of Duty: Mobile and PUBG Mobile, both run perfectly on the Nokia 5.3, which was a pleasant surprise. They're demanding titles and budget phones tend to struggle with them, but the 5.3 ran both without loading or overheating issues.

The Nokia 5.3's only weak

performance element is its battery life. On a full charge, the 4,000mAh battery kept the device going for 14hrs 55mins in our video-playback test. That's over five hours less than the Moto G8 Power Lite, and nearly eight hours less than the Samsung Galaxy A21s. It isn't devastatingly bad but it means you'll need to recharge the phone at least once a day.

Camera

The phone has five cameras – one on the front and four at the rear. The selfie camera is a standard 8-megapixel affair, and that quadruple rear snapper consists of a primary 13-megapixel, a 2-megapixel

depth sensor, a 5-megapixel macro lens and a 5-megapixel ultra-wide camera. This is not dissimilar to the Moto G8 Power Lite's triple rear-camera setup, which includes a 16-megapixel sensor but doesn't have the ultra-wide lens.

By default, the rear camera shoots in Auto-HDR at a resolution of 4,208 x 3,120 pixels. Unless there's an excess of light pouring into the lens, pictures come out looking natural, and the finer details of vegetation and brickwork are captured faithfully.

Both the rear and selfie cameras record video in 1080p at 30fps, though there's no image stabilisation.

OUR VERDICT



Nokia has outmanoeuvred Motorola to produce the best smartphone you can buy for £150. With decent build quality and a large 6.5in screen, the Nokia 5.3 looks like a phone that costs twice the price, and its performance in our tests exceeded some of the top budget smartphones on the market.

The excellent quadruple

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

rear camera is another major selling point, though you'll still get a better camera if you're willing to spend a little more on a Xiaomi Redmi Note 9 or Samsung Galaxy A21s.

PRODUCT INFO

Nokia 5.3

Price: £149.99

Buy from Nokia:

nokia.ly/3jgt0jz

SPECIFICATIONS

- Octa-core Qualcomm SM6125 Snapdragon 665 processor
- 4GB of memory
- 64GB of storage (upgrade to 512GB with microSD)
- 6.55in, 720 x 1,600 pixels IPS screen
- 13-megapixels rear camera, 8-megapixels front camera
- 802.11 b/g/n/ac Wi-Fi
- USB-Type C port
- microSD up to 512GB
- 4,000mAh battery
- Android 10
- 164 x 77 x 8.5mm
- 180g

FOR

- ✓ Affordable
- ✓ Great quad-camera
- ✓ Snappy performance

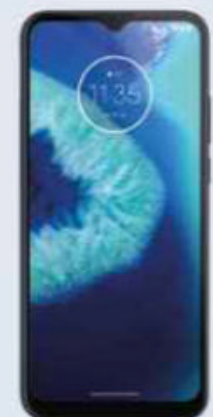
AGAINST

- ✗ No gyroscope
- ✗ Average battery life

BETTER BATTERY

Motorola Moto G8 Power Lite, £149.99

bit.ly/3dUxTOj



BETTER CAMERA

Xiaomi Redmi Note 9, £179

bit.ly/3oiAhDt



Chromecast with Google TV

The new Google Chromecast offers a handy remote, 4K resolution and an on-screen interface, but is the extra price worth the upgrade?



The original Chromecast was a forerunner in the now ubiquitous TV-streaming world. An inexpensive dongle you plugged into your TV, it let you control what you wanted to watch from your Android phone, bringing the wealth of internet content to your living room screen. This latest version works on the same principle, and brings a few extras, including a remote control that lets you

use an on-screen interface instead of your phone for choosing what to watch.

Hardware and remote

The device connects to an HDMI socket on your TV, and to the mains through a USB-Type C port. It supports resolutions of up to 4K and costs £59.99, which is a tenner more than 4K rivals from Roku (Streaming Stick+, £49.99, bit.ly/34f0ZEM) and Amazon (Fire TV Stick 4K, £49.99, amzn.to/34dMW2q).

The bundled remote control is small, light and sits comfortably in your hand. It works over both Bluetooth and infrared: the former for controlling the Chromecast; the latter for operating your TV. Below the circular navigation control are buttons for Back, Home, Google Assistant (voice search and control) and Mute, along with YouTube and Netflix shortcuts, and buttons for power and source switching. Volume is adjusted on the right-hand edge and the Google Assistant microphone is positioned at the bottom.

Using the Google Assistant voice search is very effective. Just hold down the button, say the title of the movie or TV show you want, or the name of the channel, and up it pops a second or two later. Like Roku, this also works with YouTube videos, and you can

“Google TV is clever enough to search for content across all your installed apps”

even search for more generic content, such as “action movies” or “films starring Arnold Schwarzenegger,” which all give sensible results.

Interface and Google TV

The on-screen interface looks and behaves similarly to Netflix, with horizontally scrollable carousels offering various categories of content. The front end is split between five main homescreens, all of which pull out content from various services. It’s responsive and easy to find your way around, despite the overwhelming number of

videos to watch.

Google TV is clever enough to search across all your installed apps to find suitable content, which it presents in an easy-to-digest list, though it often places Google Play’s paid-for options above free alternatives on services you’re already subscribed to.

Most streaming services can be accessed through the device, but Channel 4’s catch-up service All 4 is currently a glaring omission. You also won’t find Apple TV+, Now TV or BBC Sounds, though most other services of note are present.

PRODUCT INFO

Chromecast with Google TV

Price: £59.99

Buy from Google:
bit.ly/2HTPnOO

SPECIFICATIONS

- 4K HDR up to 60FPS
- Dual-band 802.11ac Wi-Fi
- Bluetooth
- HDMI and USB-Type C ports
- Android TV OS operating system
- 162 x 61 x 12.5mm
- 55g

FOR

- ✓ Remote control
- ✓ Effective voice search
- ✓ Simple, intuitive user interface

AGAINST

- ✗ No Now TV, Apple TV+ or All 4
- ✗ Pushes Google Play content
- ✗ Pricier than rivals

OUR VERDICT



Chromecast with Google TV is a little pricier than competing devices, yet it doesn’t provide access to every TV app, and misses some obvious ones. For a more comprehensive choice of channels, you’re better off with a Roku Streaming Stick+.

However, if you’re thoroughly wedded to Google devices and crave

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

a handy, well-designed remote, this is the best Chromecast to date. It’s also the only streaming device that currently supports Google Play Movies & TV in full 4K.

SEASON'S READINGS



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HARDWARE, SOFTWARE & SERVICES

TABLET

Apple iPad 10.2in

£329 from bit.ly/ipad513

Tested: Issue 513



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

Hexa-core 2.49GHz Apple A12 Bionic processor ■ 10.2in Retina screen, 2,160 x 1,620-pixels resolution ■ 1.2-megapixels front camera, 8-megapixels rear camera ■ 32GB storage ■ 3GB RAM ■ 802.11ac Wi-Fi ■ 251 x 174 x 7.5mm ■ 490g

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

INKJET PRINTER

Canon Pixma TS8350

£162 from bit.ly/canonts505

Tested: Issue 505



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

KEY SPECS

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

MESH WI-FI SYSTEM

Netgear Orbi RBK50

£299.99 from bit.ly/orbi503

Tested: Issue 503



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

KEY SPECS

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

EXTERNAL SSD

SanDisk Extreme Pro 500GB

£131.99 from bit.ly/sandisk501

Tested: Issue 501



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

KEY SPECS

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

Gold Award winners

The best from our software tests

WINDOWS DOCK

Winstep Nexus

NEW!

Free from bit.ly/nexus513

Tested: Issue 513

Winstep Nexus is easy to control, and provides shortcuts to all your most used items in one place. It can be customised with themes to look and work exactly the way you want.

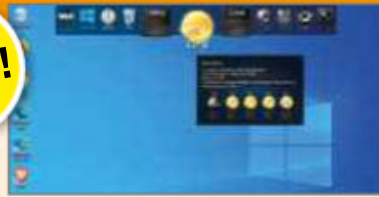


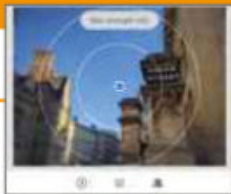
PHOTO-EDITING APP

Snapseed

Free from bit.ly/snapseed510

Tested: Issue 512

Whatever your experience level with image editing, Snapseed helps you turn any photo into a work of art. It offers an array of useful options, from editing tools to preset filters.



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.



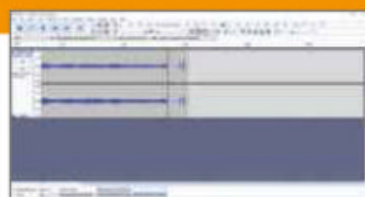
AUDIO EDITOR

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.



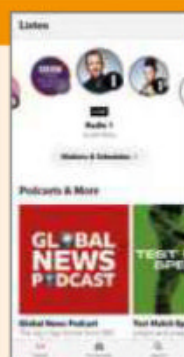
RADIO-STREAMING APP

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.



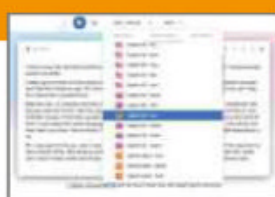
TEXT-TO-SPEECH TOOL

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.



WebUser

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Best Free Software

SYSTEM TOOL

IObit Advanced SystemCare 14

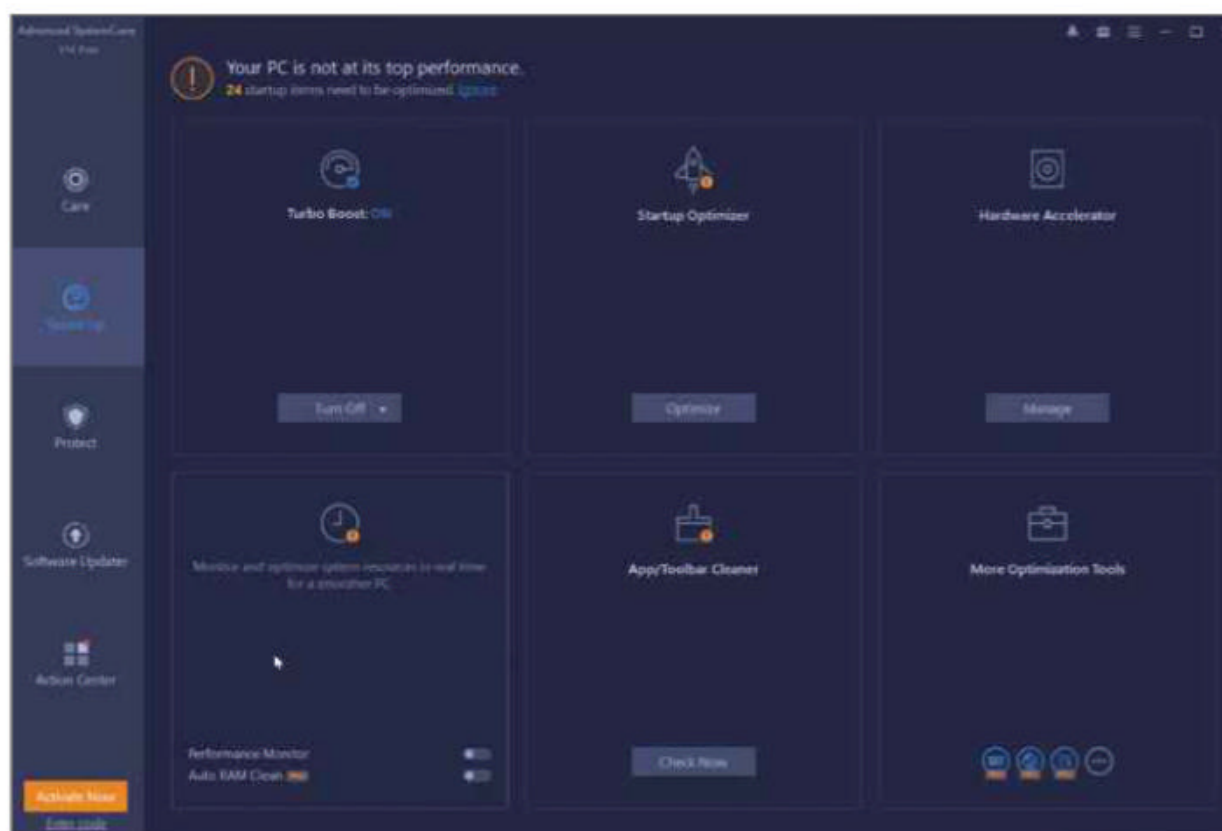
bit.ly/advanced489

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 47.1MB

Advanced SystemCare is a powerful all-in-one toolkit that cleans your system, boosts performance, protects your privacy and fixes all manner of annoying PC problems. It's designed to be very easy to use – just click the big Scan button on the home screen and it runs through a series of tasks in sequence. You can then fix any problems it finds.

There's a Speed Up section, which can boost system performance, and a Protect area that prevents your browser homepage from being changed. The Software Updater scans your system looking for outdated versions of



programs and gives you the chance to update them.

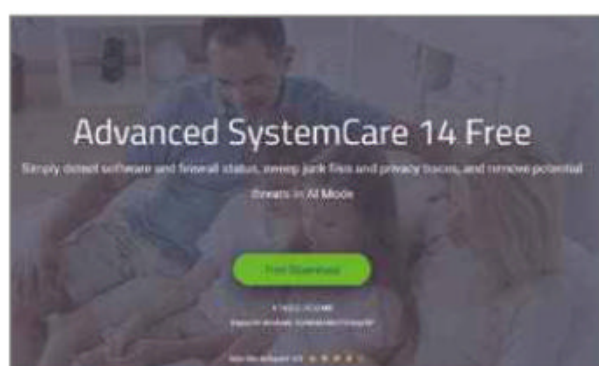
IObit rolls out a new version of its software every autumn, and the headline change in Advanced SystemCare 14 is a new AI Mode, which saves you time and effort by choosing the most appropriate cleanup and speed-up scanning options.

The interface has been redesigned to make it cleaner and easier to use. The modules, which used to be accessed in a strip along the top, have been moved to a bar on the left, and the selectable

cleaning options under the Scan button now slide into view when you switch from AI to Manual Mode.

Performance has also been improved. IObit Advanced SystemCare can now find and remove more junk files, manage startup better and report on the status of your existing anti-malware software and firewall.

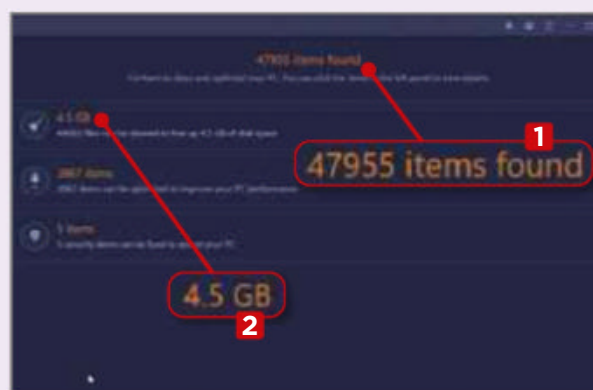
The free edition of the program contains most of the tools you're likely to need, but you can unlock more features by upgrading to the paid-for Pro version for £18.37 a year.



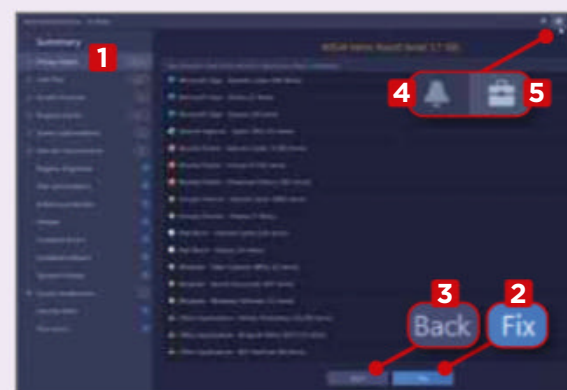
MINI WORKSHOP | Optimise your PC with Advanced SystemCare 14



1 Open Advanced SystemCare and click Care **1** in the left-hand column. You can choose between AI Mode (which selects all the cleanup and speed-up tasks for you) or Manual Mode. **2** If you choose the latter, you can select the individual tasks you want to include **3** or just Select All. **4**

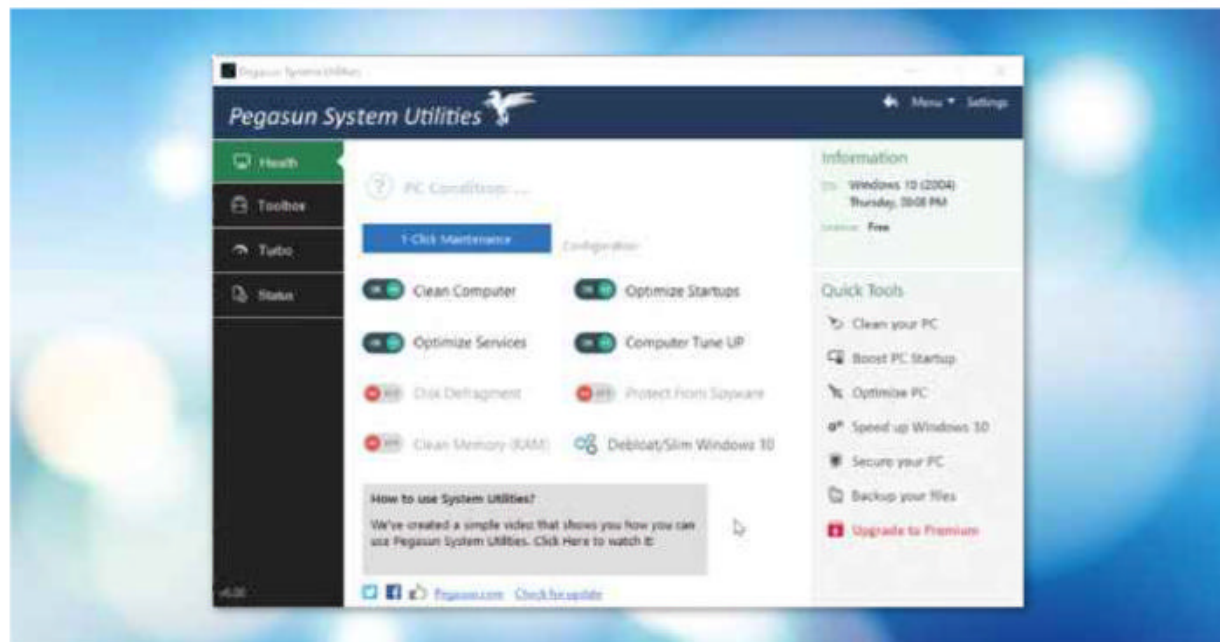


2 Click the Scan button and the software will run through the chosen tasks in sequence. This will take a while, but you can skip any stage or halt the scanning process at any time. When the software completes its scan, you'll be presented with a screen showing the number of problems/items found, **1** and the amount of space that can be reclaimed. **2**



3 Click any section in the left-hand panel to drill down into the results. **1** Deselect any sections you don't want to include, then click Fix. **2** You can also click the Back button **3** to return to the main screen. The Notifications section **4** at the top shows you the software's findings, and you can access individual tools in the Toolbox. **5**

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



SYSTEM TOOL

Pegasun System Utilities 6

pegasun.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10 **File size:** 7.8MB

This program's tools are designed to help clean and optimise your PC. There's a customisable 1-Click Maintenance option that runs through a sequence of fixes in order, or you can launch the various utilities separately. These include Clean Computer, Optimise Startups, Computer Tune-up and Disk Defragment.

This version has an improved interface and freshly tweaked tools. Upgrading to the Premium edition for \$19.99 (£15.32) unlocks additional features.

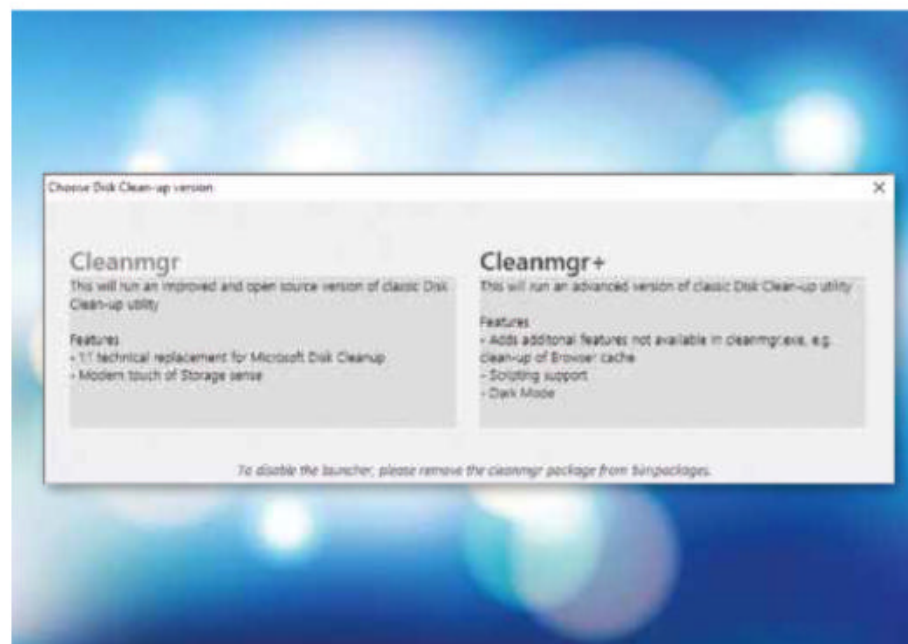
New Windows 10 App

TinyImage

bit.ly/34rofzw

File size: 6.9MB

TinyPNG (tinypng.com) and TinyJPG (tinyjpg.com) are free web-based tools that reduce the size of photos saved in either of those image formats. TinyImage is an unofficial desktop app that lets you do the same thing, without having to upload or download your photos. You need to get the free Developer API key from the TinyPNG site to use it – just copy and paste this into the box in TinyImage's Settings.



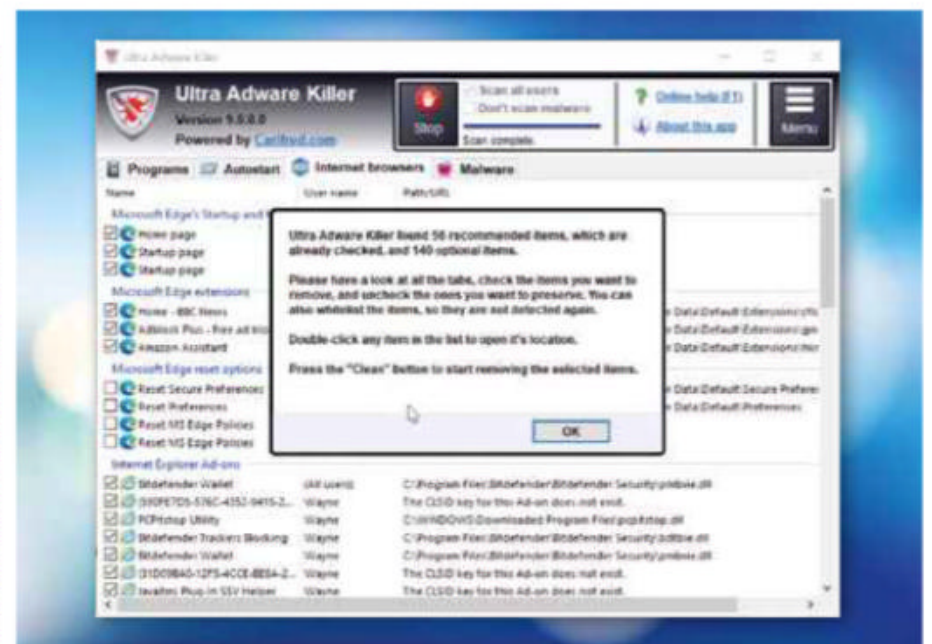
SYSTEM CLEANER

Cleanmgr+

bit.ly/3dVCCzC

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10 **File size:** 232KB

Microsoft is planning to retire its Disk Clean-up tool from future versions of Windows 10, replacing it with Storage Sense. The open-source Cleanmgr, released last year, is a Disk Clean-up clone that adopts the design of Storage Sense. Cleanmgr+ offers that same tool but includes an extended version (based on a community-maintained fork called BurnBytes) with additional features, scripting support and a dark mode. Select the version you require from the launcher.



MALWARE CLEANER

Ultra Adware Killer 9

bit.ly/2QuOVJP

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10 **File size:** 9.7MB

Ultra Adware Killer can find and remove adware and malware on your system. You can set it to work across all your user accounts, or just the current one. To use it, click the Scan button and it will show you what it's found and where. It can remove browser toolbars, add-ons, plugins, unwanted search providers and hijacked homepages, potentially unwanted programs (PUPs) and malware. This new version tweaks the interface and lets you turn off the anti-malware scan.

FIREWALL

Simple Firewall 4

bit.ly/37A9Rak

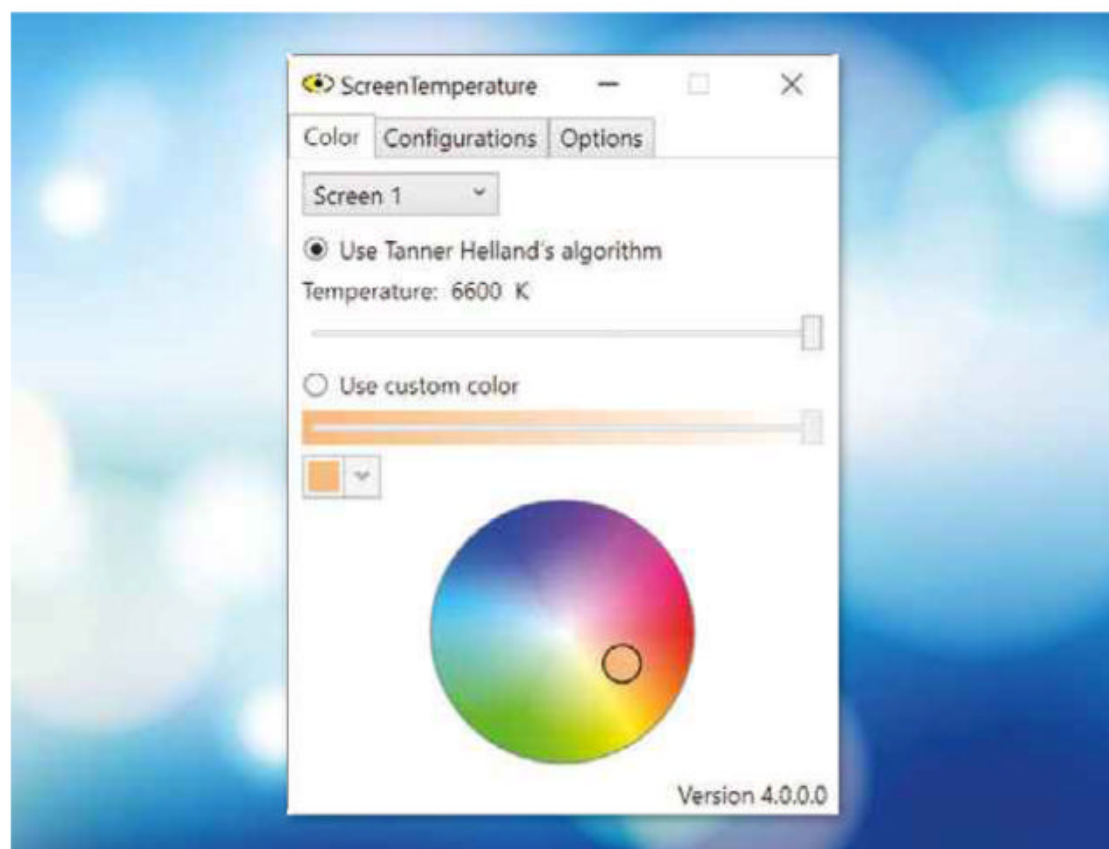
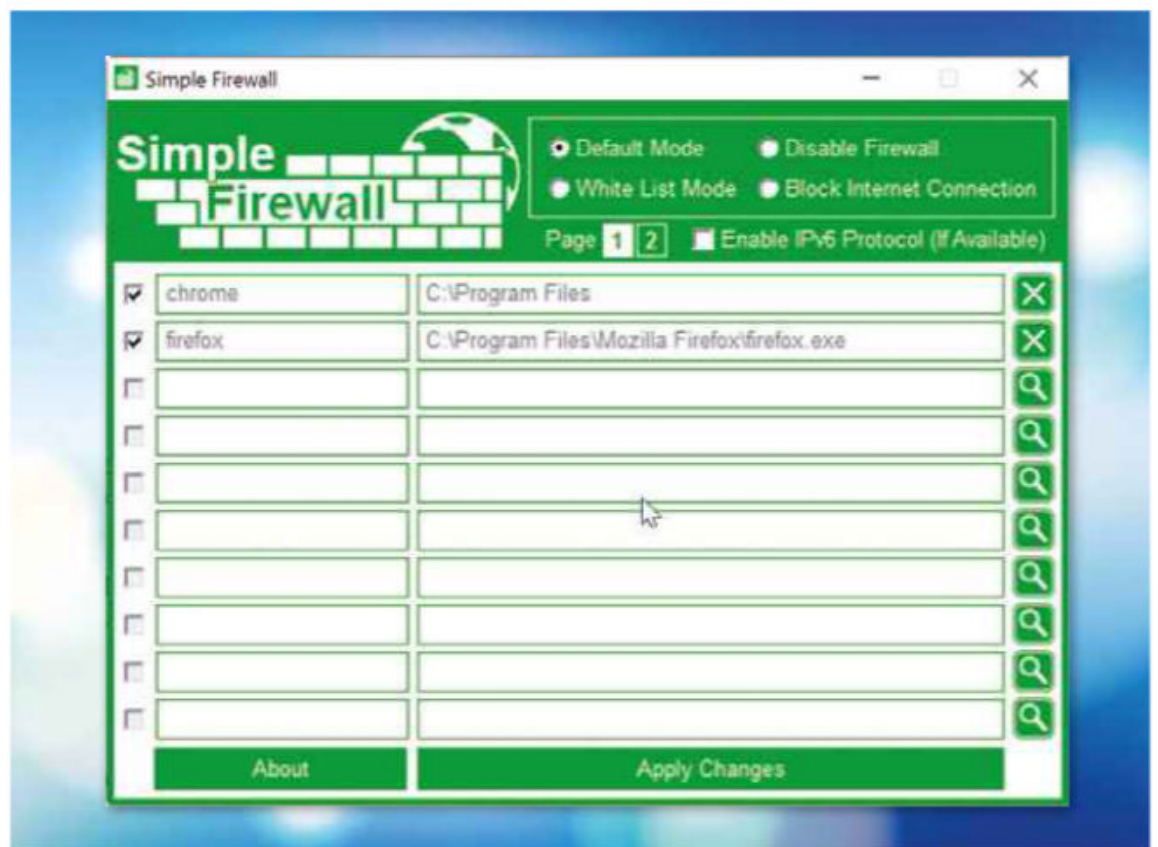
Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 1MB

A firewall keeps your system safe from threats by controlling incoming and outgoing connections on your PC. Windows comes with its own firewall, but there are better third-party tools available.

Simple Firewall is designed to be very easy to use and offers a choice of four modes – Default (allows all apps except those you specify), White List (blocks all apps except those you allow), Disable Firewall (turns it off) and Block Internet Access (stops all apps going online).

You need to run the program in Administrator mode, and ensure you don't have any other active firewalls on your PC.



SCREEN TOOL

ScreenTemperature 4

bit.ly/37INOOG

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 1.7MB

Ideally, for the benefit of your eyes, you should adjust the brightness of your monitor based on the time of day – brighter during daylight hours and darker in the evenings.

ScreenTemperature lets you choose and set the best 'temperature' or colour for your screen. You can create and save multiple configurations and assign a keyboard shortcut to each one. It offers multi-screen support, and you can change each screen individually – useful if you want to carry out some photo editing and need accurate colour representation on one display, but apply a more soothing tone to another.

This latest version of the software has undergone a major redesign.

SYSTEM TOOL

Extended GodMode

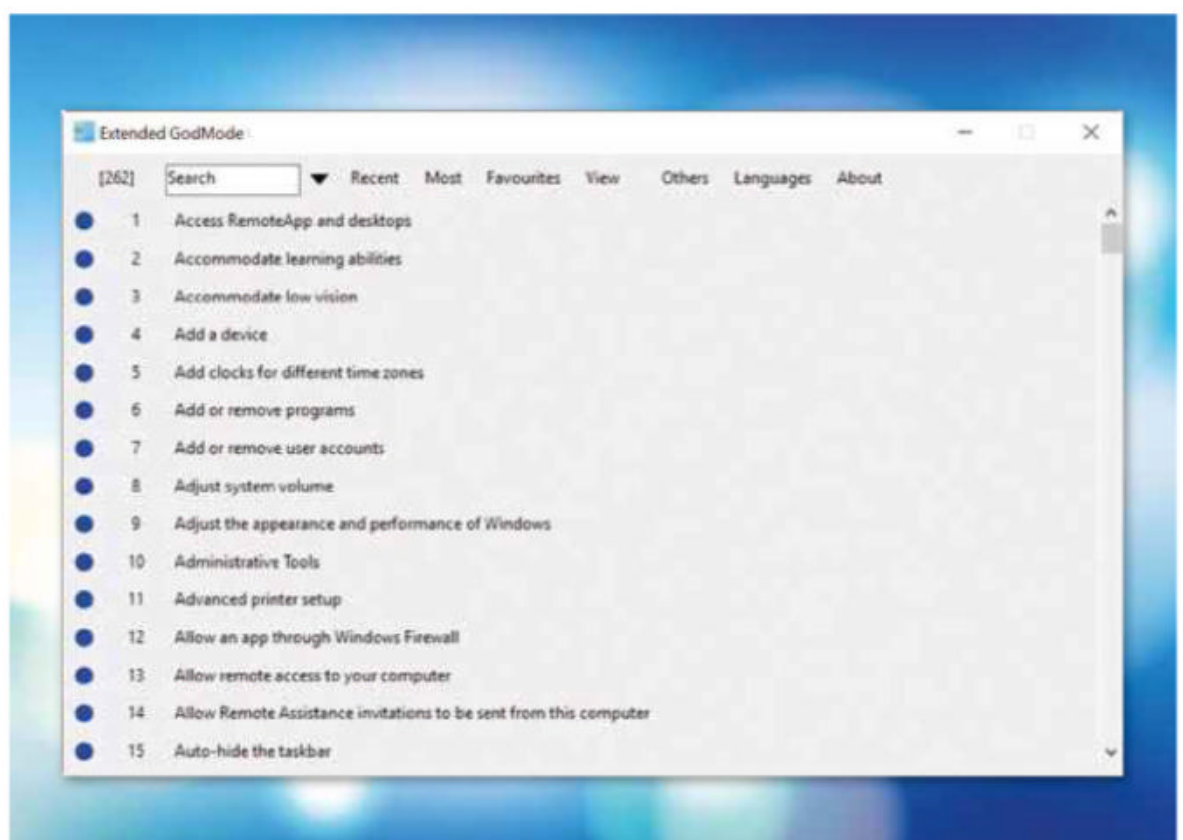
bit.ly/2JanbYV

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 419KB

God Mode is a hidden feature, available in Windows 7 onwards, that displays all the operating system's admin tools and control options on a single screen. To activate it, you need to create a new folder and name it using a special string.

Extended GodMode is a tiny, portable program that provides access to all the God Mode features but supplements them with additional Control Panel and Admin Tools elements. It also offers extra features including a powerful search tool, the ability to 'favourite' items, dark mode support and quick access to each item from the software's system tray icon menu.





GAME

Hungry Babushkas

bit.ly/3kpTlx7

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 21.4MB

In this fun tower-defence game, your task is to protect a cake from hordes of hungry – and very fast – babushkas. Each type of defence, from spikes and bonfires to cannons and laser-shooting crows, costs a certain amount of (virtual) money. There is a choice of game modes on offer – Classic, Tower Lotto, Limited Money, Hardcore and Unlimited Money. This last option offers very little challenge but it's great fun for throwing an entire arsenal at the field of play and watching the carnage unfold.

✓ Install this program...

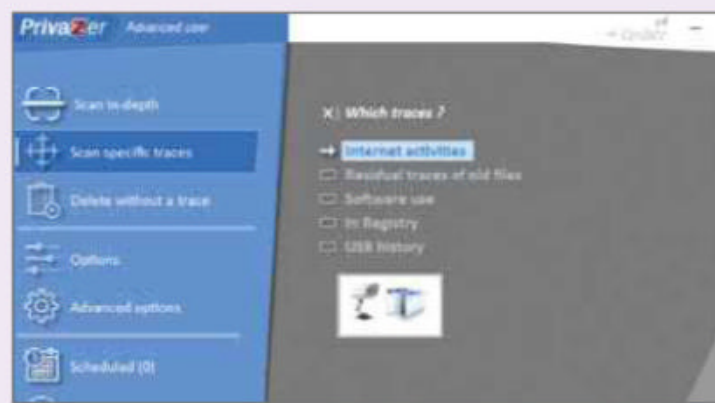
PrivaZer

privazer.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 18.7MB

PrivaZer can remove all traces of private usage data lurking on your PC. It offers more than 100 scans and cleanups, targeting browsers, cookies, the Registry, RAM, messenger programs, the Recycle Bin and much more. It can also remove previous versions of Windows and old Windows updates, which frees up a lot of space. Usefully, the program allows you to adapt its scans to suit your particular needs, based on the kind of computer user you are (basic or advanced) and what you want the software to clean or leave alone. You can choose between installer and portable versions of PrivaZer.



...Not this one ✗

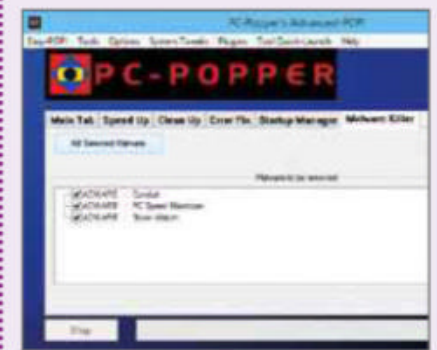
PC-Popper

www.pcpopper.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

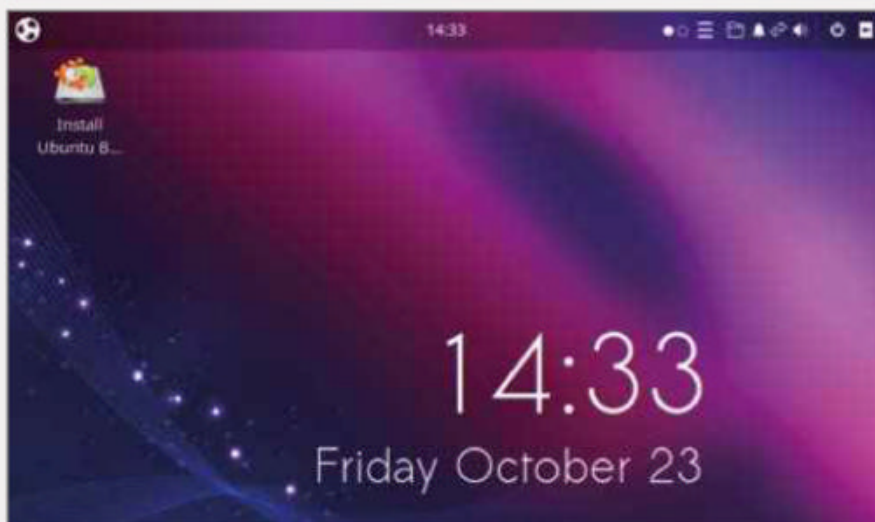
File size: 840KB

Described as “the powerful optimisation program that makes your PC run how it should”, PC-Popper sounds like a promising cleanup tool. You'll change your mind, however, when you see its ugly website, which doesn't use HTTPS encryption and encourages you to click Buy Now without telling you that the tool costs \$49.95 (£37.50).



OTHER OPERATING SYSTEMS

What's new for Linux and macOS



LINUX DISTRO

Ubuntu Budgie 20.10

ubuntubudgie.org

Min requirements: 4GB RAM, 64-bit processor

File size: 2.4GB

The final version of Ubuntu 20.10 (Groovy Gorilla) has just been released, along with variants including Kubuntu and Xubuntu. Ubuntu Budgie 20.10 is based on that operating system but comes with the Budgie desktop. Originally developed by the Solus project, this desktop environment integrates tightly with the GNOME stack, but has been designed to be simple and elegant. It also includes additional features including the Raven notification and customisation centre.



SCREEN RECORDER

Record It 1.5

bit.ly/3orW2R9

Min requirements: macOS 10.10 or later

File size: 12.1MB

Record It is a lightweight screen recorder for macOS that you can use to create application tutorials and more. It can record part or all of your screen, and lock onto a particular window, even if it gets moved or covered. The app can also record an iOS screen using AirPlay, and recordings can be saved as videos or as GIFs. This new version lets you customise the default audio/video storage location, and it will now automatically save the video when you quit the app straight after recording.

Best New Browser Tools



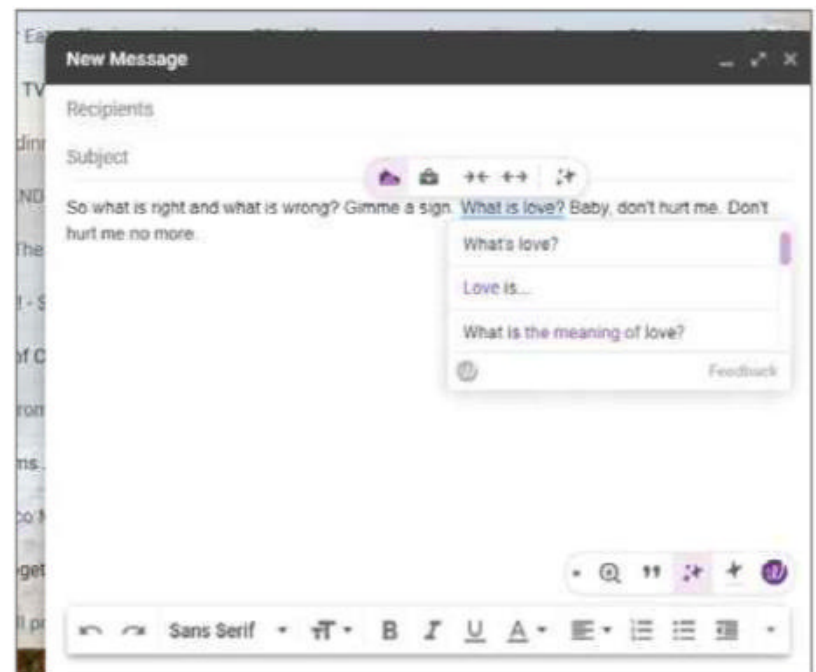
CHROME

Improve your communication using AI

Don't mistake Word Tune (bit.ly/2HDWU4O) for Grammarly. Yes, it's an AI-powered tool that helps "make your writing more clear, compelling and authentic," but this isn't just another grammar- and spellchecker.

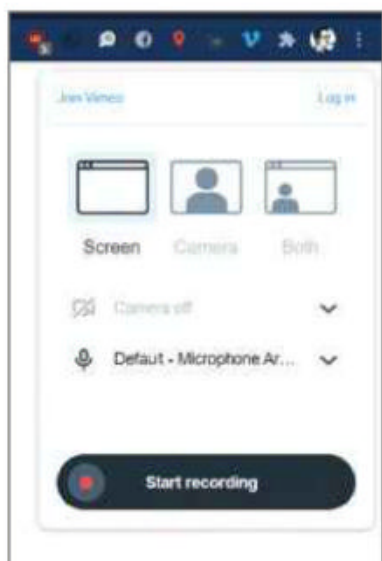
Working across Gmail, Google Docs, Outlook, WhatsApp and Slack, as well as social-media sites, this extension lets you choose better ways to say what you mean. Suggestions are based on sentences similar to those elsewhere on the web. Clicking the Trainer and Briefcase icons provides recommendations for striking a more professional or conversational tone. In some instances, such as in Gmail, the toolbar permanently stays on-screen; for others, you need to double-click a word, phrase or sentence, then select the best tool for the job.

The free version of Word Tune includes Rewrite, for finding new ways to change a sentence, and the alternative word- and phrase-checker Word Explorer. Everything else is kept behind a \$10 (£7.60) monthly subscription.



Capture your screen with Vimeo

Vimeo Record (bit.ly/3mAngmV) is a screen and webcam recorder from YouTube's closet rival. It's very easy to use: just click its toolbar button and select whatever it is you want to record:



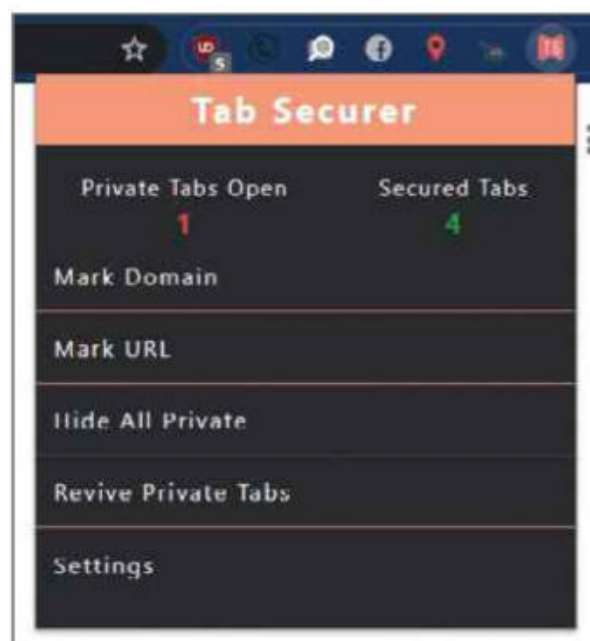
you, your screen, or both. You can choose which camera (or camera app) and microphone the extension should use, then click Start Recording.

If you opted to capture your screen, you'll be prompted to select either the whole thing or a

specific window or browser tab. The only downside to the extension is that you need a Vimeo account to download, edit and share videos, but this is free to sign up for.

Hide browser tabs to keep them private

Tab Securer (bit.ly/3kGVGno) is a smart way to protect your open tabs without locking your computer. The add-on was originally designed to mask specific tabs during screen-sharing Zoom calls,



but with Christmas around the corner, it's also useful for keeping your present purchases private.

Tab Securer lets you conceal tabs that show a specific URL or an entire domain. Once you've selected all the tabs to hide, click Hide All Private. To restore a hidden tab, click Show Tab or reveal all by choosing Revive Private Tabs.

All the masked addresses are saved – to manage them, go into the extension's settings – so you don't need to reselect them every time you open your browser.

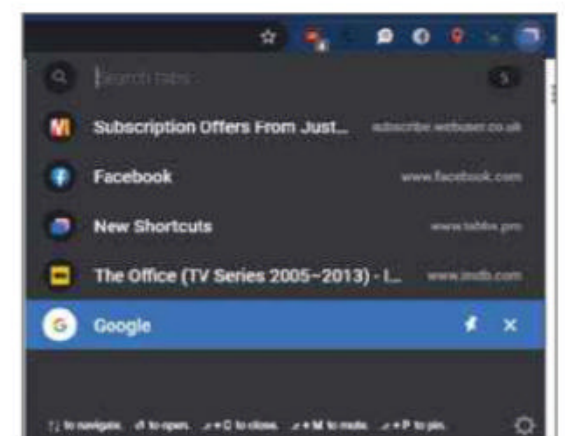
Speed up tab navigation

There's nothing especially new about Tabbs (bit.ly/3kACqIh), a browser tool

that lets you quickly see and search all your open tabs. But we like its fresh, bold design and that it delivers on its promise to help you "navigate Chrome tabs like a pro".

Similar extensions often suffer from design elements that leave a lot to be desired – tiny fonts, a cramped interface, tabs huddled together like baby creatures sheltering from a rainstorm. Tabbs dispenses with such flaws by making it much easier to swiftly jump from tab to tab, or search for specific words featured on any page.

There are also lots of keyboard shortcuts for speedier navigation and it's well worth going into Tabbs' settings to see the full list (for both Windows and macOS). The shortcuts include the ability to mute and pin tabs, and snooze them to free up memory.



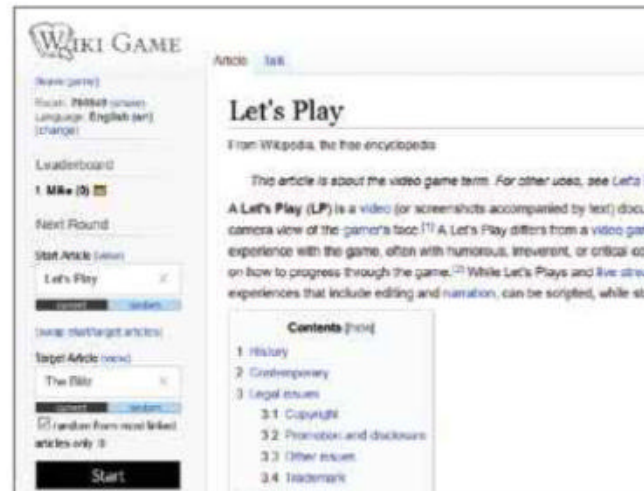
This fortnight's most useful tips and add-ons to help you get the most from Chrome, Firefox, Opera, Edge and more



FIREFOX

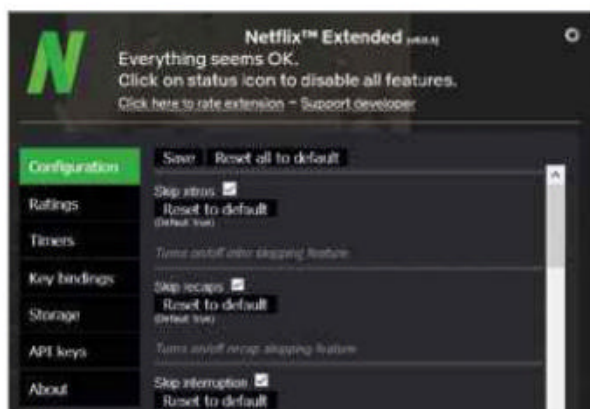
Play the WikiRacing game on Wikipedia

Many moons ago, we used to play the *Six Degrees of Separation* game on IMDb. Begin by choosing a starting film or actor, then, in the fewest clicks possible, attempt to reach a target film or actor. So, to get from *The Italian Job* to *Terminator 2*, your route might be from Michael Caine, who starred in *Inception* with Leonardo Di Caprio, who was in *Titanic* directed by James Cameron who also directed *T2*.



WikiRacing takes that concept and applies it to Wikipedia, and the Multiplayer Wikigame extension (mzl.la/2HlxMcO) is the easiest way to play the game. It adds a sidebar to the encyclopedia that lets you set a start and end point, which can be randomised, and make rules such as changing the time allowance or banning specific articles. You can compete with others and try to climb the leaderboard.

Dive straight into your favourite shows



Despite its counterintuitive name, Netflix Extender (mzl.la/2G8ukrg) doesn't stretch out the time you spend on the video-streaming site. Instead, it's built to get you into your favourite shows much faster.

Its options include letting you automatically skip TV show recaps and intros; speed up the time it takes to start the next episode in a series; and pause playback automatically when you move to a non-Netflix tab. Titles can be hidden from your search results by clicking 'thumbs down' on the thumbnail, and you can add your own ratings to videos. The add-on also offers a few keyboard shortcuts.

All these options can be switched on or off by hovering

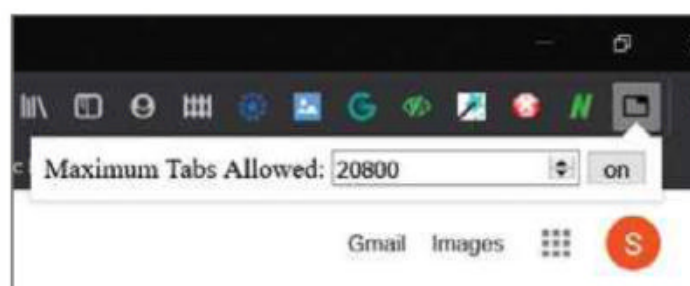
over the green light on the playback bar, then clicking the cog wheel. To fully turn off the add-on, just click the green light.

Limit the number of open tabs

Tab Limiter (mzl.la/37Nlqem) admirably sticks to its remit by doing nothing more than limiting your tabs.

It's an extension built for serial tab-openers that lets you prevent more tabs from being opened above a certain number. By default, this is set to an eminently sensible seven. You're free to change this, though – just click the add-on's toolbar button and set your own upper limit in the text field. You can also turn off Tab Limiter here, by switching the On button to Off.

Once the add-on is running, any attempt to open further tabs results in a slight shake and flash of the screen, as if you've incorrectly entered a password.

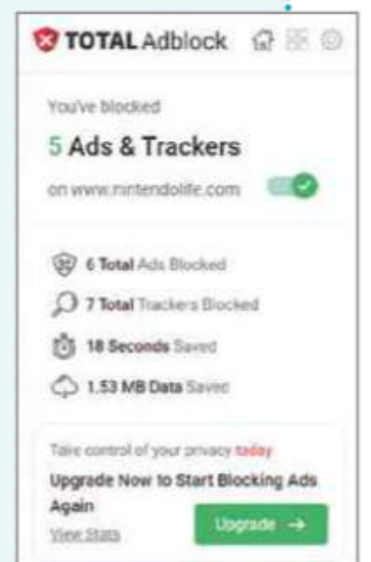


OTHER BROWSERS



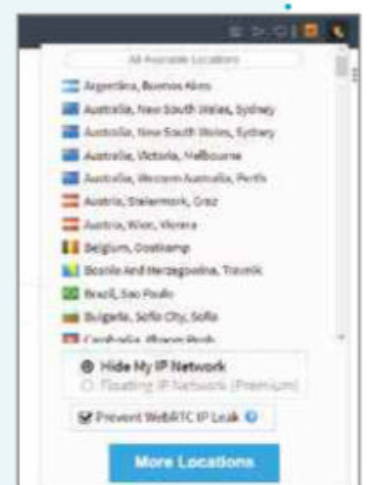
Block net nasties in Edge

Total Ad Block (bit.ly/34Et6OO) is one of the most popular ad-blocking extensions for Chrome, so we're pleased to see it arrive on Edge. Visit any web page and, when you click the extension's toolbar button, you can see how many ads and trackers have been blocked. Within the settings, you can whitelist sites and allow 'acceptable ads'. There's also the option to turn on Quiet Mode, which banishes website notifications. A premium subscription is also available, but most users won't need it.



Mask your true location

Hide My IP (bit.ly/2JaAkkq) is a free VPN add-on that lets you "surf anonymously, unblock websites and secure your browsing". It's basic, but you can upgrade to the full premium VPN, which also lets you access supported streaming sites. To start masking your location, click the extension's toolbar button and select a country. The nation's flag is then displayed on the toolbar. Note that some of the 130 locations are locked behind the premium subscription. On the plus side, there's no registration, and no time or bandwidth limits.



Best Free Apps



App of the Fortnight

VIDEO

Clips

apple.co/34G8t3Q

14

When it comes to creating video content on an iOS device, there's no shortage of choice, from the operating system's built-in camera app to the many third-party video cameras and editing tools available from the App Store. But if there's one option that's easy to overlook, it's Apple's own Clips app.

Introduced in 2017, Clips is aimed at people who enjoy creating short-form videos for sharing via messaging or social media. You can record clips from within the app or import recordings you've made elsewhere, then add filters, effects, titles, animations and more. If we're honest, Clips has never been much of a favourite of ours. Yes, it's easy to use, but it's also somewhat simplistic in terms of what can be achieved – or, at least, it was.

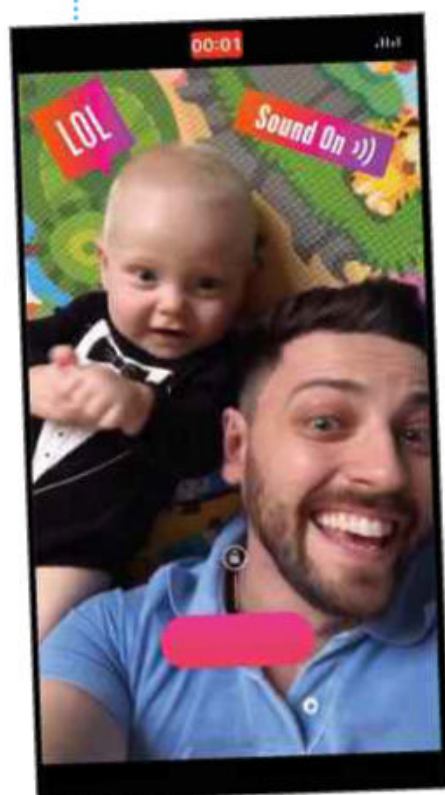
But Apple has just released a massive (version 3) update for Clips, which adds a huge number of new features. For starters, it's now possible to record and create videos in a wide variety of different sizes, including 9:16 vertical and 4:3 horizontal. Selfie clips can now be recorded in landscape mode, too, while iPad users can record in both portrait and landscape mode. Clips also now supports the Apple Pencil for adding text to labels and posters.

Apple has included a ton of new content to add to your videos, including new text and shape stickers, as well as soundtracks and improved posters – animated graphics that you can use for title screens and so forth – which now automatically adapt to your project's orientation.

In addition to all that, Clips now supports editing and sharing HDR video,

which makes it ideal for anyone with a shiny new iPhone 12, since Apple's latest handset can record HDR videos.

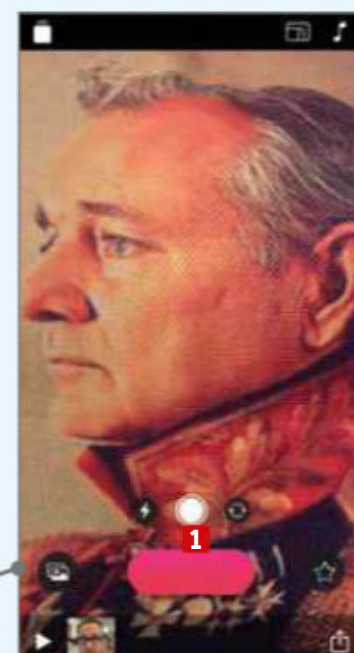
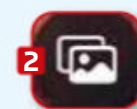
UPDATED



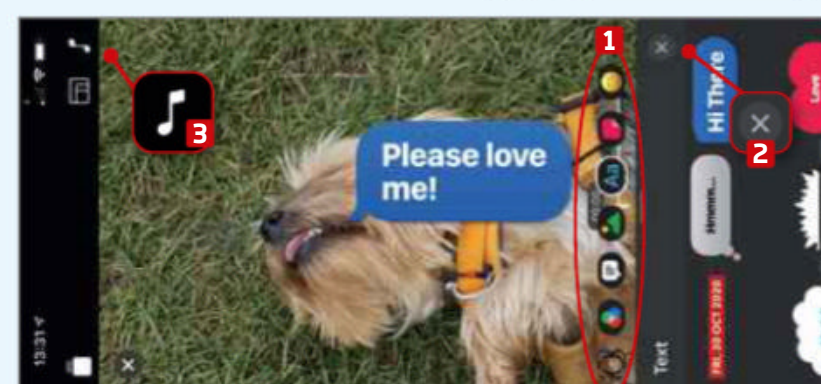
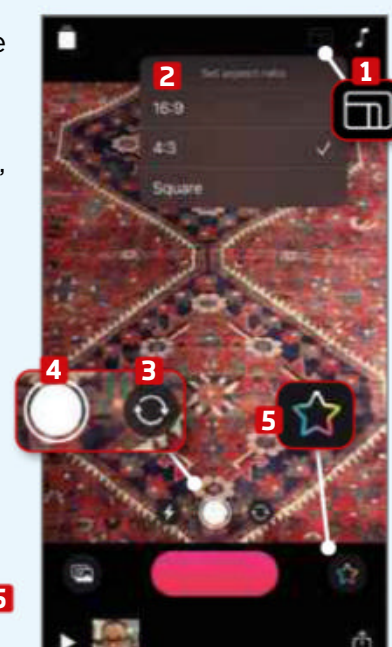
MINI WORKSHOP

Record and edit a video in Clips

1 Install (or update) Clips from apple.co/34G8t3Q, then launch the app. To record a new clip, press and hold the big red button at the bottom of the screen. **1** Release the button to stop recording. To import an existing clip from your camera reel, tap the photo icon in the bottom-left corner, **2** then browse for a clip and select it to import it into the app.



2 To select a different shape for your video, tap the aspect-ratio icon in the top-right corner of the screen, **1** then select the shape you want from the drop-down menu. **2** To switch between the front and rear-facing cameras, tap the Rotate button. **3** Pressing the shutter button **4** takes a photo – you'll be asked to tap the red button to add the photo to your project. Next, press the coloured star icon. **5**



3 A row of icons appears **1** for adding filters, titles, text, stickers, emoji and more. Tap the X button **2** to return to your project. To add music, tap the musical-note icon, **3** then select Soundtracks for Apple's music or My Music to select your own. To switch between landscape and portrait mode, simply turn your device horizontally or vertically.

Our rating



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

VIDEO

YouTube

bit.ly/1eNcaYe
apple
apple.co/3cr54XT
android (varies)
11

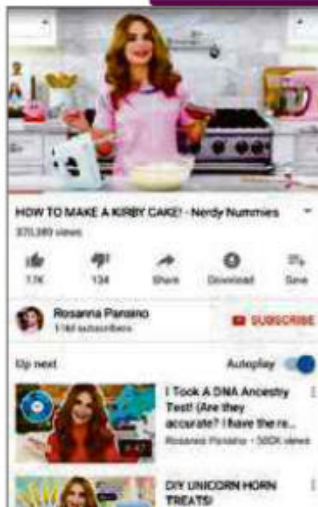
YouTube launched chapters earlier this year, which break long videos into sections. The latest update to its mobile app lets you browse chapters in a list view by tapping the chapter title in the player. Each of these has its own thumbnail preview, heading and timestamp – tap the chapter you want to skip to it. Further improvements come in the shape of a more accessible closed-captions (subtitles) button that's now just a tap away, and enhanced gesture support – simply swipe up to enter full screen and down to exit.



Our rating



UPDATED



KIDS

Do Not Touch

bit.ly/3kCYIsS
apple
apple.co/3oHR6aP
android 7
11

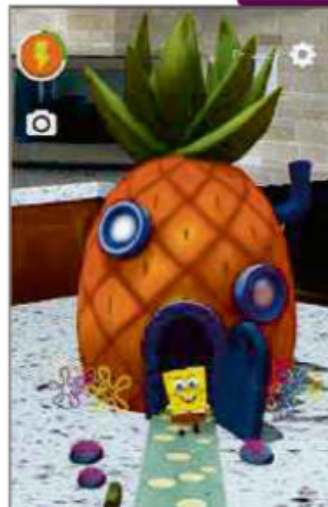
Nickelodeon – home to Spongebob Squarepants and other kids' TV favourites – has just released its first augmented-reality app in the UK. The app, which has been available in the US for a while, leverages the star power of Nick's various intellectual properties to bring characters and animations into the real world via clever AR trickery. Children can interact with animated elements by tapping their screens. There are also various mini games to play and collectables to unlock. Further content is promised via regular updates.



Our rating



NEW



SECURITY

Quad9 Connect

bit.ly/3jFnSpC
android (varies)

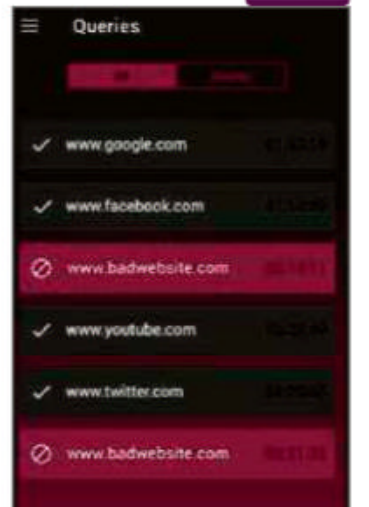
Quad9 Connect is a tool that aims to improve your privacy by securing your DNS requests. The app essentially overrides your device's existing DNS settings for both mobile and Wi-Fi networks, replacing them with Quad9's own worldwide network of DNS servers, using TLS encryption to prevent your connection from being intercepted. Quad9 is a non-profit organisation, so the app is completely free and there are no ads or in-app purchases to contend with. However, Quad9 Connect is still at the Early Access stage, so you may experience a few quirks.



Our rating



NEW



TRAVEL

Pathfinders by Lonely Planet

bit.ly/2TFdFyF
apple.co/2HNaMJW
android 5
12.2

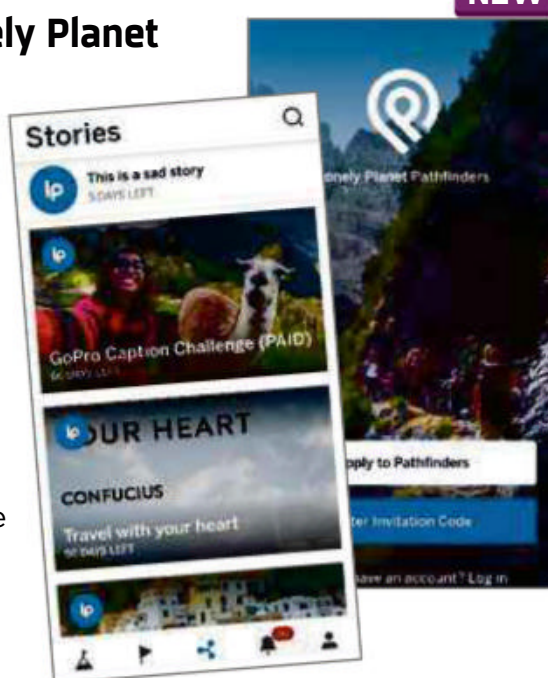
"Are you a Pathfinder?" asks pathfinders.lonelyplanet.com, to which our response is "What on Earth is a Pathfinder?". Well, apparently, it's someone who loves to travel and share their experiences with others. That's according to Lonely Planet, the trusted guidebook brand, which is now allowing travellers to submit their own stories and photos via the Pathfinders app. There's even a chance you might get paid for your content if it's used. Granted, many of us aren't currently travelling as much as we used to, but once the world returns to some sort of normality, roaming content creators could find this app useful – not to mention lucrative.



Our rating



NEW



AUDIO

Dolby On

bit.ly/3mtl8fE
apple
apple.co/2HNBKRq
android 7.1
12

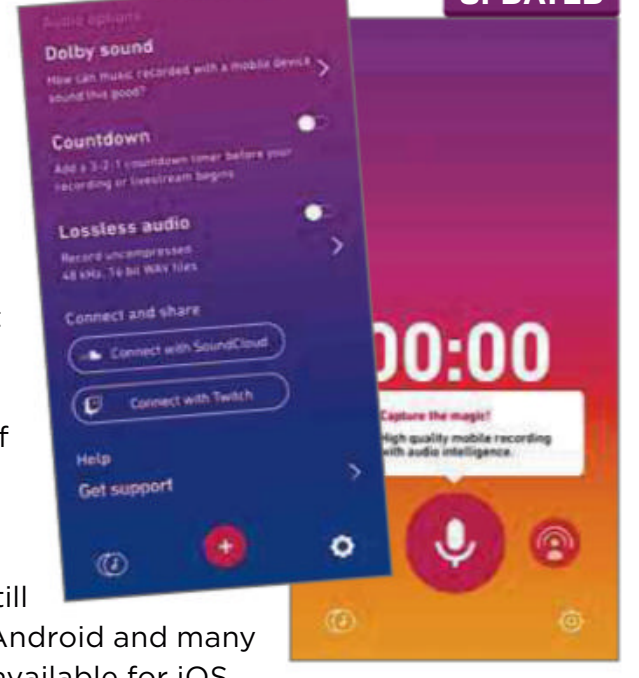
Regular readers may remember that this excellent audio recording tool received our 'App of the Fortnight' accolade back in Issue 502. At the time, the app was still in Early Access on Android and many features were only available for iOS users. That's all changed now, thanks to the latest update, and Android users can now apply Dolby's automatic audio improvements to files that are imported, as well as to sound recorded within the app. Noise-reduction editing tools have been improved, too, with sliders providing more precise control. iOS users also get new features, including a batch-delete option and a soundcheck tool for live streamers.



Our rating



UPDATED



5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

GAME

Unmemory

apple.co/3jDJQt7

Price: £5.99

 13

This interactive noir mystery offers an immersive storytelling experience via text-driven gameplay, puzzle elements and nostalgic 1990s imagery, as your character attempts to solve clues and track down a murderer.



indie game involves you harnessing the power of magnetism to navigate treacherous environments and manipulate objects across 50 different levels. More content is promised soon.

LIFESTYLE

The Social Horoscope Community

bit.ly/37UJyM7

Price: £2.99

 4.4  8

This curious fusion of traditional horoscopes and modern social networking aims to combine daily predictions from astrologers with data from real people all over the world. Why? The answer is written in the stars.



PHOTOS

Hydra

apple.co/3jLRdhT

Price: £4.99

 10

This advanced camera app for iOS specialises in HDR and low-light photography. It's been updated to add support for the ultra-wide angle camera on more recent iPhone models, along with other improvements.



REFERENCE

V for Wikipedia

apple.co/3jIOAxB

Price: £2.99

 13.1

You may balk at the idea of paying for Wikipedia, but this third-party app is beautifully designed and offers unique features, such as articles about nearby places, bookmarks and an image gallery.



GAME

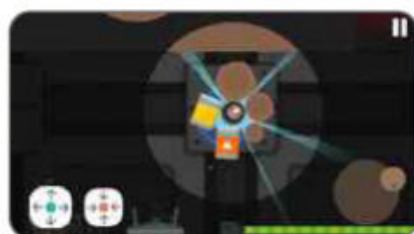
OrbaDrone - Faded Light

bit.ly/382aEAO

Price: 89p

 4.4

This quirky physics-based



Unmemory



Hydra



OrbaDrone - Faded Light



The Social Horoscope Community



V for Wikipedia



✓ Install this app...

SpeedTest Master

bit.ly/3kCZiH4

 5

Fast, stable connection speeds are more important than ever right now, with many of us working from home, communicating via video calls and consuming more online entertainment. A reliable speed-test tool is essential for diagnosing problems and making sure you're getting the speeds you're paying for. SpeedTest Master can quickly measure your broadband or mobile data speed, and provides detailed data, along with real-world examples of what your speeds equate to. In addition, there's an on-board Wi-Fi hotspot detector for locating connections while you're out and about, and a signal strength test to help you find the best spot in your home.



...Not this one

SpeedTest

bit.ly/3mCuJIm

SpeedTest blatantly cribs both its name and icon logo from other popular speed-testing tools, such as SpeedTest Master and Speedtest by Ookla - but that's where the similarity ends. In our tests, SpeedTest gave us wildly inaccurate ping and broadband download speed results in a number of scenarios, and has an unfortunate habit of crashing when attempting to test upload speeds. Which, all in all, makes it pretty blooming useless!





Take a Screen Break

Take a rest from your browser with our fiendish fortnightly challenges. Can you solve our ABBA-song 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 ABBA SONGS FROM THE EMOJI?

1



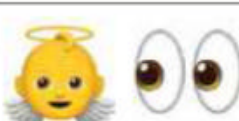
2



3



4



5



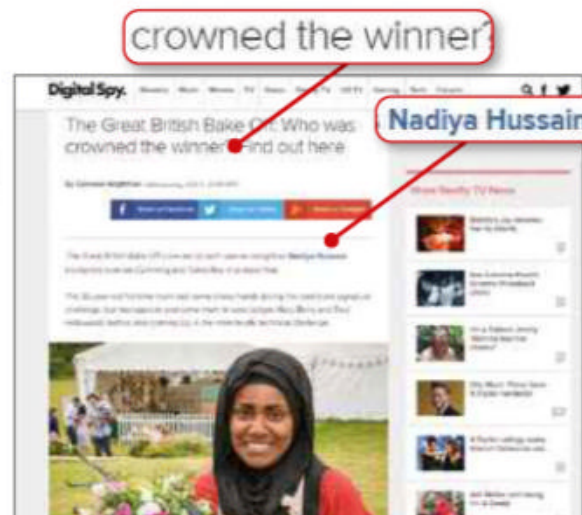
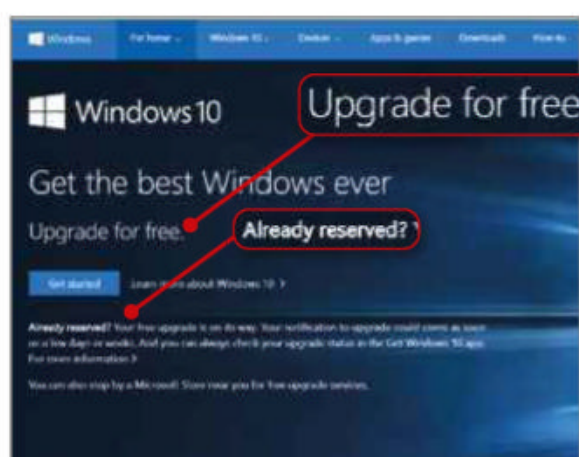
6



GUESS THE WAYBACK MACHINE YEAR

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

WayBackMachine



COMPETITIONS

WIN 1 OF 6 TP-Link KC-105 Kasa Spot cameras

TP-Link's new KC-105 Kasa Spot security cameras give crystal-clear 1080p video and provide instant activity alerts. You can set activity zones, so you don't get pestered by pointless alerts. There's also 30ft night vision and two-way audio.

To enter, email your home address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'Kasa' in the subject line. For more information, visit www.tp-link.com/uk and follow [@TPLINKUK](https://twitter.com/TPLINKUK) on Twitter.



**WORTH
£39.99
EACH**

WIN... AVM's FRITZ!Box 7590 & FRITZ!Repeater 3000

AVM's FRITZ!Repeater 3000 is the company's first Wi-Fi repeater available in the UK. Thanks to Mesh Wi-Fi, it works brilliantly with the FRITZ!Box 7590 router to boost signals throughout your home. To enter, email your home address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'FRITZ!' in the subject line. For more info, visit en.avm.de and www.facebook.com/fritzboxinternational, and follow [@AVM_INTL](https://twitter.com/AVM_INTL) on Twitter.



**WORTH
£324**

HomePod Mini

Does the world really need another smart speaker? Apple thinks so, and has rolled out the spherical HomePod Mini. **David Crookes** lends an ear



Shown actual size

What is it?

Three years after unveiling its original HomePod smart speaker, Apple has introduced a new version that's smaller in both size and price. Standing at just 8.5cm (3.3in) tall and sporting a spherical design, the Mini is less than half the size of its older sibling but includes the same set of features. Most importantly, it's big on sound – something that's sure to be music to the ears of audiophiles.

Sounds good. Will I be impressed?

The HomePod has yet to be beaten as the best-sounding smart speaker on the market, and it appears the HomePod Mini is set to cement that position – albeit in a more compact form. It uses the Apple S5 chip that's found in the Apple Watch Series 5 and Apple Watch SE, which isn't

quite as powerful as the HomePod's A8 but is nevertheless able to process complex software algorithms to optimise the Mini's sound in real time. It means the device can create a rich level of detail that's generally only found in larger speakers, producing balanced, fine-tuned audio, no matter how high or low you set the volume.

Won't the sound get in the way of using Siri?

No. The Mini includes a three-microphone array which listens out for the words "Hey Siri" and any subsequent command you give. By having a fourth, inward-facing microphone, sound coming from the speaker is isolated and this enables the device to detect your voice, even if music is blaring out at a high volume.

If you don't fancy talking, you can walk

over to the Mini and use the backlit Touch surface on top to press and hold for Siri. This surface also displays icons that let you adjust the volume and tap to play, double-tap to skip forward or triple-tap to skip back.

But the output is still mono, isn't it?

Yes. Just like the HomePod, the HomePod Mini is a mono speaker and it doesn't reproduce stereophonic sound – that is, it's not separating the music into two channels. You could, however, buy two HomePod Minis and, as you may expect, Apple encourages you to do so. In this case, both smart speakers will recognise each other and sync to deliver stereo sound, automatically creating left and right channels. Indeed, if you want to get the full benefit of the HomePod Mini's sound capabilities, it's worth having more than one.

Can I have them all around my house?

Since the HomePod Minis sync, you could create a multi-speaker home – even going as far as having one in every room of your home. With this setup, you can tell Siri to play the same song on all your speakers at the same time, which means you won't miss a beat as you go from room to room.

Will I be forced to use Apple Music?

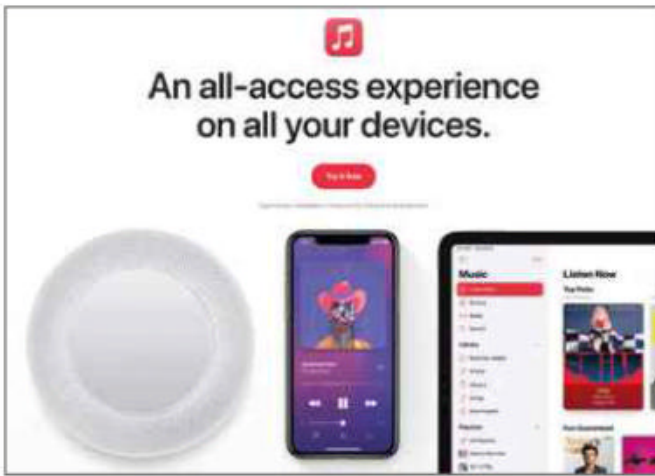
Apple Music is, of course, supported but



The device houses a full-range audio driver with force-cancelling passive radiators



Communicate with Siri using your voice or by tapping the speaker's screen



You can stream songs from Apple Music via the HomePod Mini but not Spotify yet

it's also possible to listen to radio stations, thanks to the HomePod Mini's integration with services such as TuneIn. Apple has also confirmed that you'll be able to use rival third-party music streaming services, such as Amazon Music (and the US-only platform Pandora). There was a bit of a hoo-hah online because Spotify wasn't mentioned, but it's rumoured that support for that service will be added soon. If an iOS app has an AirPlay option, you'll be able to beam it to the HomePod Mini.

Are the speakers only useful for music?

Not at all. Ask Siri questions and it will identify who is issuing the commands before tailoring the answers and requests for up to six individual users. This is great if you want to listen to messages, reminders and calendar appointments – just ask Siri “What’s my update?”.

But will it aid communication?

Yes, it will. You can use the HomePod Mini to make and receive hands-free calls but, more than that, it comes with a new Intercom feature. Designed to work in homes that have multiple HomePod and HomePod Minis, it allows people living together to chat internally. Pop one in a kid's bedroom, for instance, and you can ensure that your voice is heard as you invite them to leave their games console and nip down for dinner. The Intercom also works with the iPhone, iPad, Apple



You can make hands-free calls and chat with members of your household

Watch, AirPods and CarPlay.

Does it integrate with other Apple products?

Oh yes. As well as allowing you to find Apple devices that you may have misplaced, and letting you view the results of web searches on your iPhone, the speakers can be used to pump sound from Apple TV or a Mac. You can also start listening to music on your iPhone, then bring it close to a HomePod Mini to stream its audio to instantly begin playing on the smart speaker.

Will the Mini work with the larger HomePod, too?

Indeed it will, and it also integrates with products that form a wider smart home. The HomePod and HomePod Mini can act as hubs, from which you can control other smart devices compatible with Apple's HomeKit, to switch lights on and



Apple promises to respect your privacy and not collect voice data through the Mini



Bring your iPhone close to the Mini to continue listening to music through the speaker

off, for example, or control the heating. It's also possible to use Siri Shortcuts that you create on your iPhone or iPad to perform specific tasks.

What about my privacy?

Apple stresses that it takes your privacy and security seriously, promising to only send to its servers any information that is spoken after Siri is activated. It won't associate requests with an Apple ID and it says it won't sell your personal data. If you request to hear private information contained in notes or messages, these will be processed on the device with the data kept separate from Apple.

How much does it cost?

Although preorders have been open since 6 November, the HomePod Mini will go on sale on 16 November, costing £99. You have a choice between a white or space-grey model. You will also need to own an iPhone SE, iPhone 6S or iPod Touch (7th generation) or later, running iOS 14; or an iPad Pro, fifth-generation iPad, iPad Air 2 or iPad Mini 4 running iPadOS 14.

HOW DOES IT COMPARE WITH ITS RIVALS?

The HomePod Mini's main rivals are Amazon's Echo range and Google's Nest speakers, both on sale for £89.99. The new, fourth-generation spherical Echo supports Dolby Audio, allows for stereo processing, streams from Amazon Music, Apple Music and Spotify, and acts as a smart home hub. Echo's main feature, however, is the inclusion of Alexa –

Amazon's personal digital assistant, which offers more 'skills' than Siri.

Then there's Google's new Nest Audio (reviewed in Issue 513), which delivers punchy audio and room-filling sound. It's not a 360-degree speaker, so the sound is more directional, but it provides native BBC radio playback, includes the excellent Google Assistant and, as a bonus, the outer fabric is made from recycled plastic bottles.



Recover From PC DISASTERS

**COVER
FEATURE**

There's no need to splash out on expensive repairs when something goes wrong with your PC, because you can usually fix it yourself. **Wayne Williams** reveals the best free solutions to specific Windows problems

In a year when the coronavirus has negatively impacted every area of our lives, the last thing we need is for our computers to start playing up. But the more time we spend on our PCs and online, the greater the risk of things going wrong – from crashes and corrupt files to lost data and buggy updates.

Fortunately, for every problem Windows throws at you, there's usually a solution and it's often one you can try without needing to download and install additional software. The operating system has its own troubleshooting tools built in, but it doesn't make it obvious where to find them.

In this feature, we reveal the best free ways to recover from common PC disasters, to save you having to splash out on premium downloads, new hardware or expensive repairs.

Over the following pages, we show you how to overcome data disasters, software setbacks, faulty features, hardware horrors and network nightmares.



Data disasters

I've accidentally deleted an important file

This is something that happens to the best of us – that heart-stopping moment when you accidentally delete a file you shouldn't have. If you're lucky, you should be able to simply fish it out of the Recycle Bin – panic over. But if it's not there, you'll need to dig a little deeper.

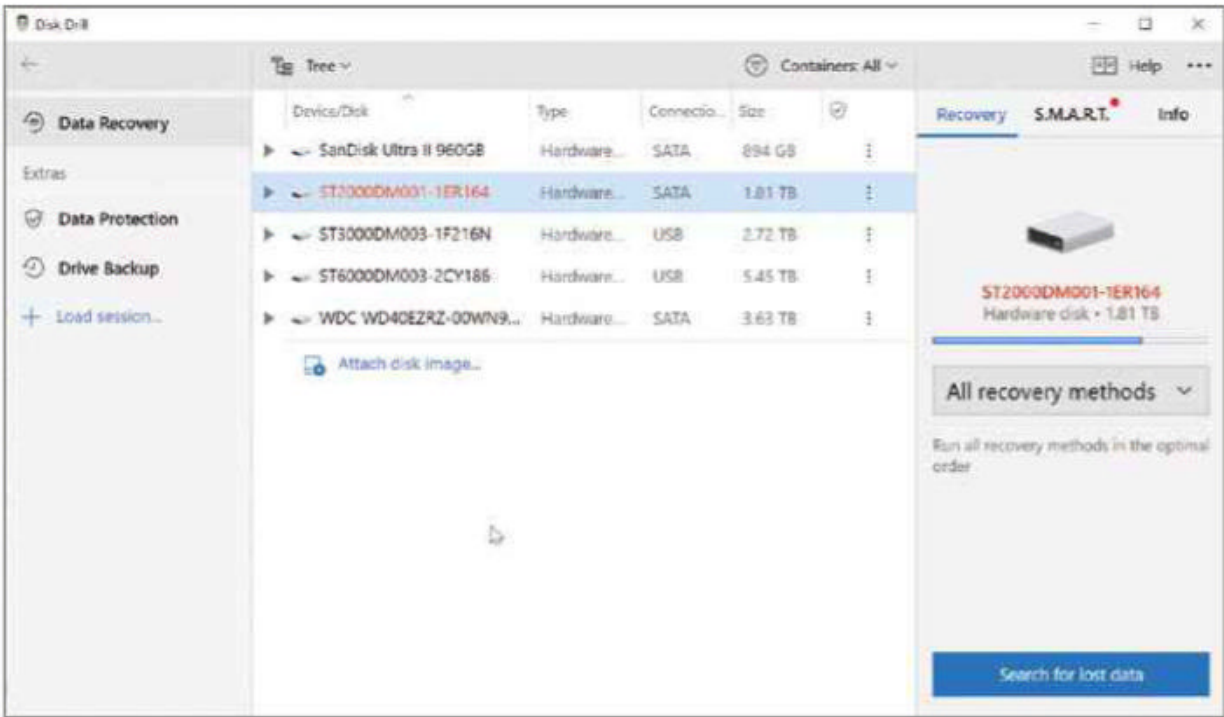
The good news is that when you delete something, Windows simply removes the reference to it, not the data itself (that's only properly deleted when you overwrite its position on the drive).

Microsoft's new Windows File Recovery command-line tool, for Windows 10 version 2004 or newer, can retrieve most deleted files for you. It's not as easy to use as a dedicated tool such as Recuva (www.ccleaner.com/recuva), but it works very well and doesn't take long to master.

Download the Windows File Recovery app from bit.ly/34rofzw. It offers three different recovery modes – Default, Segment and Signature. Follow Microsoft's comprehensive guide 'Recover lost files on Windows 10' at bit.ly/2HCoEWO.

I need to recover data from a failed SSD

The advent of Solid State Drives (SSDs) revolutionised storage by delivering much faster speeds and greater reliability (due to the absence of moving parts) compared to traditional mechanical hard drives. Over the years, SSDs have got better – and more affordable – but they're not invulnerable and, when they do fail, it's often without warning. If you have a backup plan in place, then losing your SSD is nothing more than an inconvenience; if you don't, it can prove a disaster.



Disk Drill can rescue data from a failed SSD, but you may need to pay

It's possible to recover data from a failed SSD in some (but not all) cases, although recovery can be complicated by the TRIM command, which is used to tell an operating system which data blocks on an SSD can be wiped. Many data recovery-tools can restore deleted files from an SSD.

Try Disk Drill (bit.ly/3kAOpHy), or EaseUS Data Recovery Wizard (bit.ly/3cc4Nbq). Be warned, though, that most free versions limit the amount of data that can be recovered, so you might have to upgrade to a paid-for edition to rescue all your recoverable files.

I formatted a hard drive with important data on it

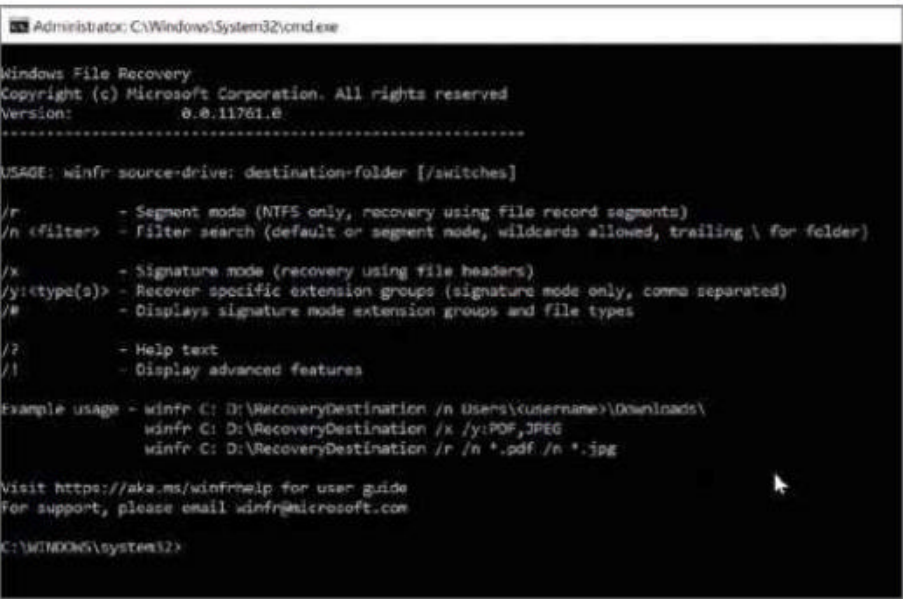
If you have more than one drive installed in your PC, it's important to make sure you select the correct one

when performing any major tasks, such as formatting or partitioning. Fortunately, if you performed a standard format (rather than a secure one, which overwrites the drive numerous times), you should still be able to recover your data.

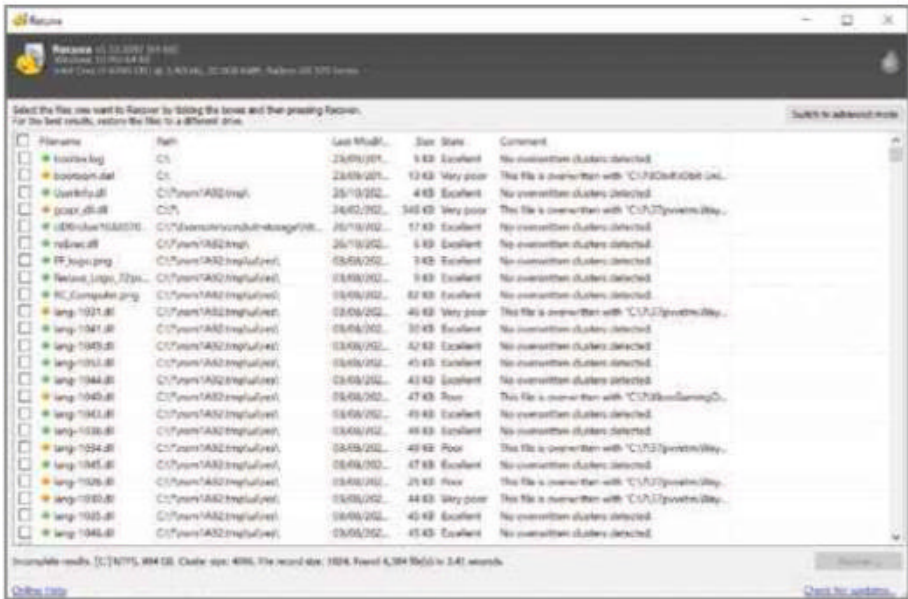
“When you delete something, Windows simply removes the reference to it, not the data itself”

Dedicated recovery tools, such as the previously mentioned Recuva (www.ccleaner.com/recuva), can

locate files on formatted drives and evaluate the likelihood of you getting them back. Provided you don't install anything on the drive, which could overwrite the files (you should run Recuva from a USB memory stick rather than installing it), and originally used the Quick Format option, there's a good chance you'll be able to retrieve your most important data.



Restore deleted files using Microsoft's new Windows File Recovery app



Formatting a hard drive doesn't necessarily mean you've lost all the data stored on it

Software setbacks

My PC won't start after a Windows update

Windows updates are supposed to fix problems, tighten security and sometimes add new features, but occasionally they actually cause errors and can even stop your PC starting properly. There are two different types of update – Quality Updates, which include bug fixes and security patches, and Feature Updates (like the Windows 10 October 2020 Update) that introduce bigger changes and new features.

If your problem is caused by a Quality Update, you can fix it by booting into Safe Mode (see our Mini Workshop, below), then going to Settings, Update & Security, View Update History and clicking the Uninstall Updates link. Select the update you think is the cause of your woes, then click Uninstall.

Removing a Feature Update requires a different route and you have to act quickly – once it's installed, you only have 10 days to roll it back because Microsoft will remove the old files to free up disk space. To remove the update, go to Settings, Update &



Uninstall an update if it prevents your PC from booting into Windows

Security, Recovery, then scroll down to Go Back to the Previous Version of Windows 10. Click the Get Started button to begin the removal process.

If your PC can't get into Windows at all, there is another option. Hold down the power button as your PC tries to boot, turn it off and then turn it back on again. The Recovery Options screen should appear. Click Troubleshoot, select Advanced options and click Uninstall Updates. This should give you the option of uninstalling either the latest Quality or Feature update. Select the option you require and, hopefully, this will get you back into Windows.

There are various ways to try to solve this, beginning with the obvious advice: turn your PC off and then on again.

Next, check for malware, as this can sometimes cause these errors. Rolling things back to the last restore point in System Restore might also fix the issue.

If none of that works, right-click the Start button and launch the Command Prompt (or PowerShell) in Admin mode. Type `sfc /scannow` and press Enter. The System File Checker will launch, scan your PC for problems and repair any corrupt Windows files, including DLLs. Be patient because the process can take a while to complete.

If that doesn't do the job, type `DISM /Online /Cleanup-Image /RestoreHealth` in the Command Prompt window and press Enter. DISM (Deployment Image & Servicing Management) is similar to SFC, but it may repair issues where the other tool fails.

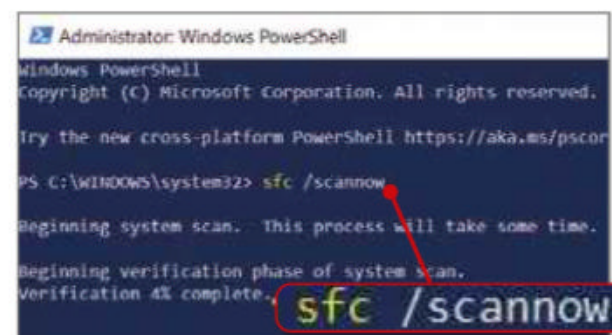
Finally, you can try registering the missing DLL file. In a Command Prompt window, type `regsvr32 [name of DLL file]` and press Enter, then reboot your computer.



Windows updates bring new features but they can also cause problems

I keep getting errors about missing DLL files

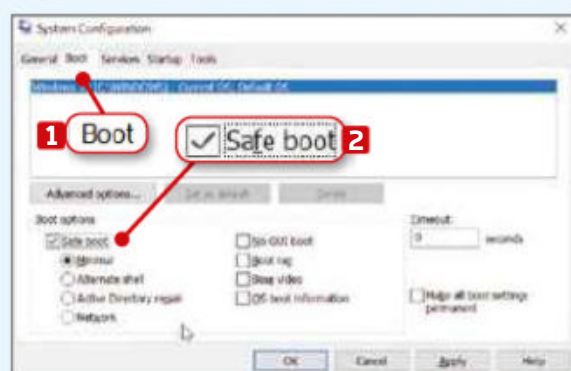
DLL (Dynamic-Link Library) files contain a set of instructions for performing common actions in Windows, and can be accessed by any program on your system that needs them. Unfortunately, DLLs can go missing, become corrupted or get replaced by incorrect versions, which is when you see these errors.



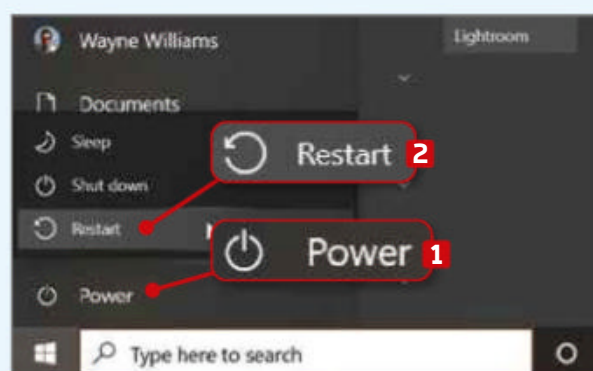
Running the System File Checker may help you replace missing DLL files



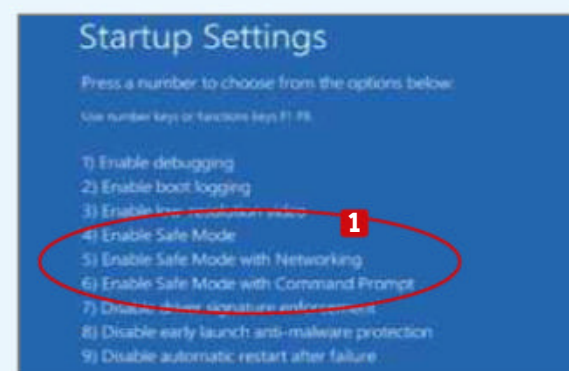
MINI WORKSHOP | How to boot into Safe Mode in Windows 10



1 There are a few ways to access Safe Mode in Windows 10. If you can get into the operating system, type `msconfig` in the Windows search box and press Enter. Select the Boot tab **1** and, under 'Boot options', tick 'Safe boot', **2** then click OK. Restart your PC and the recovery menu should load.



2 Another way to launch Safe Mode from within Windows is to click the Start button, hold down Shift, click the Power button **1** and select Restart. **2** You can also hold down Shift, then select Power, Restart from the Windows sign-in screen. As before, this will take you to the recovery menu.



3 If you can't get into Windows at all, turn off your PC, restart it and, as it tries to run the OS, restart it again. Do this three times to load the Windows recovery menu. Click Troubleshoot, 'Advanced options', then click 'Start up Settings' and click Restart. Choose the Safe Mode option you require. **1**

Faulty features



Fix problems with the Windows search facility using the Search troubleshooter

Windows Search has stopped working

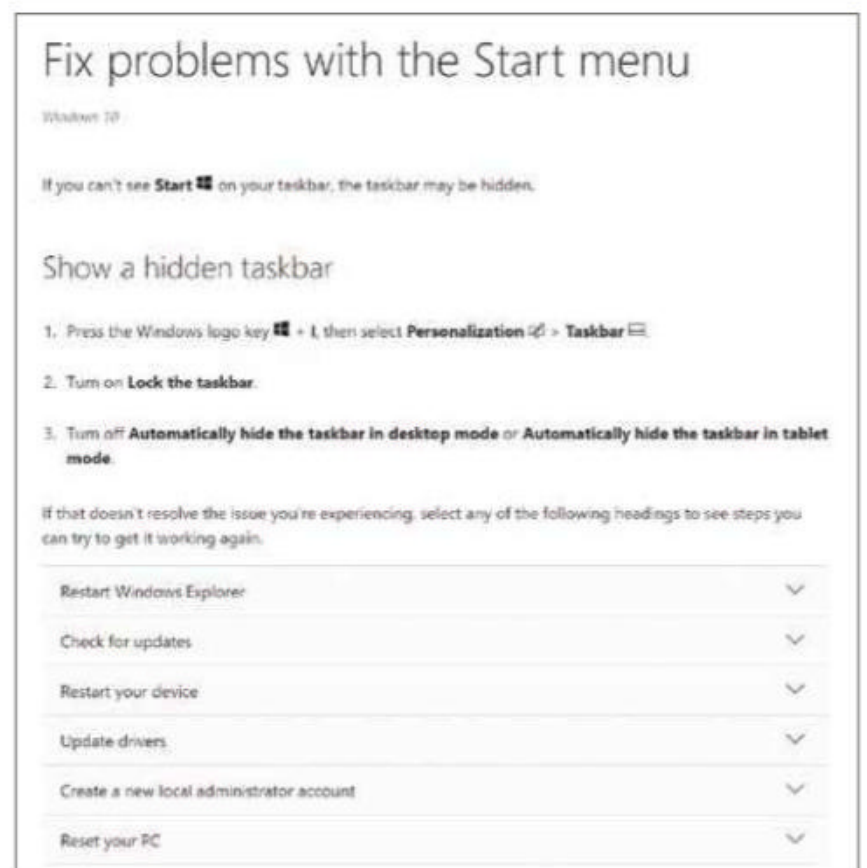
Windows' built-in Search function can save you a lot of time and effort. Type something into the box next to the Start button and it can quickly find and open an installed app or a particular file on your PC, or search the web (using Bing). If you use Search regularly, you'll be completely lost if it suddenly stops working. There are a couple of reasons why this could happen, ranging from an update issue to a rogue third-party app. Earlier this year, Search went down for Windows 10 users due to a Microsoft services outage.

If Search stops working for you, there are a couple of things to try. The first is to use the built-in Search troubleshooter. Open Settings, click Update & Security and select Troubleshoot on the left. The Troubleshoot settings page will open. Click the 'Additional troubleshooters' link at the bottom, then scroll down and click the 'Search and Indexing' option. Now click the 'Run the troubleshooter' button. You'll be asked what the problem is, and the troubleshooter will perform some tests to try to solve the issue.

Another option is to use the new Indexer Diagnostics tool, which you can download from the Microsoft Store (bit.ly/2HzScF4). This provides useful information on the Search Indexer, and clicking the 'Search is not working' button on the left will restart and reset the feature for you.

The Start menu isn't displaying properly

If you rely on the Start menu to access programs and settings, it's particularly annoying if it stops working. For unknown reasons, Microsoft removed the built-in Start menu troubleshooter, but there's a support article you can follow at bit.ly/34rCVyO that might fix the problem, or you can try reregistering the Start menu by right-clicking the



Microsoft suggests several solutions if your Start menu has disappeared or won't open

taskbar and selecting Task Manager. Go to File and select 'Run new task'. Type `powershell` in the box and tick 'Create this task with administrative privileges'. Click OK. Windows PowerShell will open. Type in the following (or copy and paste it from pastebin.com/7iYCuygm):

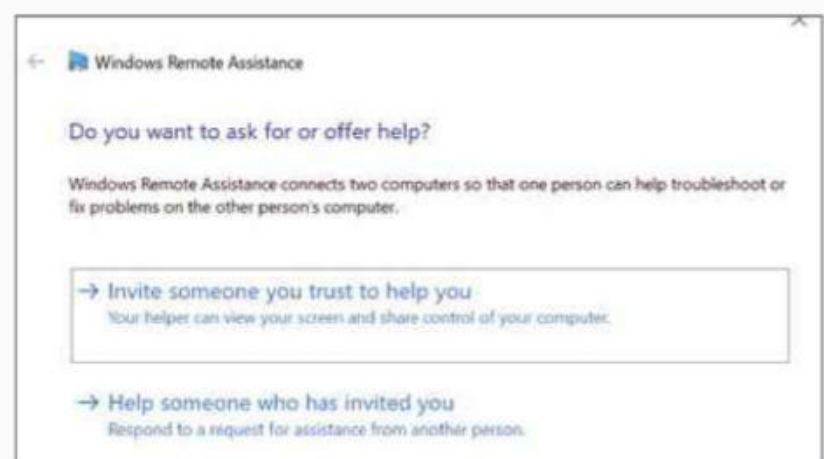
```
Get-appxpackage -all
*shellexperience* -packagetype
bundle | % {add-appxpackage
-register
```

HELP OTHER PEOPLE WITH REMOTE ASSISTANCE

If you're the go-to person for fixing other people's computers, it can be a pain having to go to their house to take a look at their PC – and thanks to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, that might not even be an available option right now.

Thankfully, it's possible to provide remote help to friends and family from the comfort of your own home. You could use a third-party tool such as TeamViewer (teamviewer.com), but Windows comes with a Remote Assistance feature built-in.

To use Remote Assistance, get the person you're going to help to type `remote assistance` into the Windows box and then click the option that appears at the top. In the box that opens, they will need to select the option to 'Invite someone you trust to help you'. Remote Assistance works by means of an invite and a password system. For security reasons, it's best to share the required details by phone. To provide help, just launch the feature on your own PC and click 'Help someone who has invited you'.



Hardware horrors

My PC freezes when playing games or editing video

If this problem occurs while you're carrying out a graphically intensive task, it's likely to be a problem with your video card (or onboard graphics) overheating. We suffered a similar problem that was caused by one of the fans on the card not spinning properly, which led to a build up of heat inside in the case. We sorted the card's stuck fan and added an extra fan to the PC case for more cooling. You could also try removing and reseating the graphics card, and making sure any power connectors are firmly in place.

It's also worth making sure you have the very latest graphics drivers installed. You can get these from the card manufacturer's website, or by using a free program such as Driver Booster (www.iobit.com).



If your PC keeps freezing, make sure you have the latest graphics drivers

My hard drive is making a lot of noise

This is a problem that affects mechanical hard drives (not SSDs) and can be the sign of impending drive failure. In everyday use, your drive should only emit a gentle whirring that speeds up when in heavy use. Any clicking, grinding or whistling indicates a possible problem.

Start by checking the S.M.A.R.T. (Self-Monitoring, Analysis, and Reporting Technology) status for your hard drive by using a program such as CrystalDiskInfo (crystalmark.info). If the



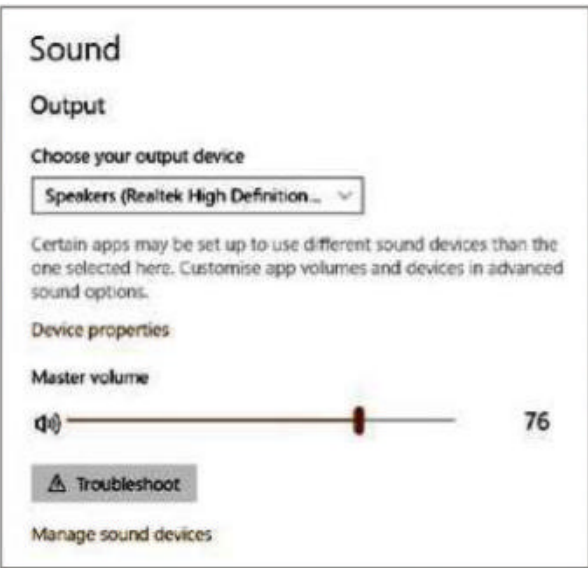
A horrible noise can be a sign that your hard drive is about to pack in

status says everything is fine, check to make sure the drive is tightly screwed into the chassis and the noise isn't being caused by it rattling in the case. If CrystalDiskInfo reports a problem, back up all your important data immediately and buy a replacement drive.

I've got no sound on my PC

What's that you say? You can't hear any sound? There are some obvious things to try first, such as checking that your speakers are plugged in and turned on (and up). Click the speaker icon in the system tray, then click the arrow at the top of the volume control and make sure the correct sound source is selected.

If that doesn't fix the problem, right-click the speaker icon and select Sound Settings, then check the options on the page that opens. There are some advanced sound settings to play around with, and you can run a troubleshooter. The same troubleshooter can be accessed by right-clicking the speaker icon and selecting the option to 'Troubleshoot sound problems'.

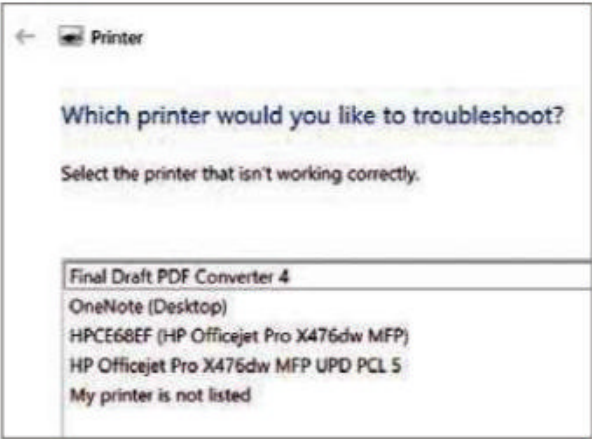


There are several ways to troubleshoot sound problems on a silent PC

I can't print anything

Printers typically only go wrong at precisely the moment when you desperately need a hard copy, such as a ticket for an event that doesn't accept mobile versions. Try the usual things first – check the connection (wired or wireless), turn the printer and/or your PC off and then on again. Also, make sure you're printing to your actual printer, and not a PDF printer (an option that turns anything you print into a PDF).

If that doesn't fix things, open Settings, click Update & Security, click Troubleshoot and open the 'Additional troubleshooters'. You'll find a Printer troubleshooter near the top. Run this and it will check the Spooler service and



Running Windows' Printer troubleshooter can fix your printing problems

ask you which printer you're having problems with, if you have more than one. Select the printer in question and it will attempt to fix the problem.

I'm locked out of my router

Routers don't tend to have many problems and most update themselves automatically, but accessing your router settings lets you perform various useful actions, such as changing the SSID name, creating a guest network, prioritising certain connected devices and changing your security level.

The usual way to access the router settings is to log in via your browser (the address will be in the manual or printed on the router itself), then enter your username and login. If you forget either of these, the default login details should also be in the manual or on the router. If they aren't, you may be able to find them using Router Passwords (www.routerpasswords.com), which has the default details for most models.

If you've changed the default logins, you will need to reset your device to the factory settings so you can log in with original details. The process for this varies depending on the router but it usually involves pressing and holding down a button on the back of the device, or inserting a paperclip into a reset hole for 30 seconds. The lights on the front of the router will change to indicate when the reset is in progress.



If you're locked out of your router, you can reset it to factory settings

Network nightmares

I can't get online at all

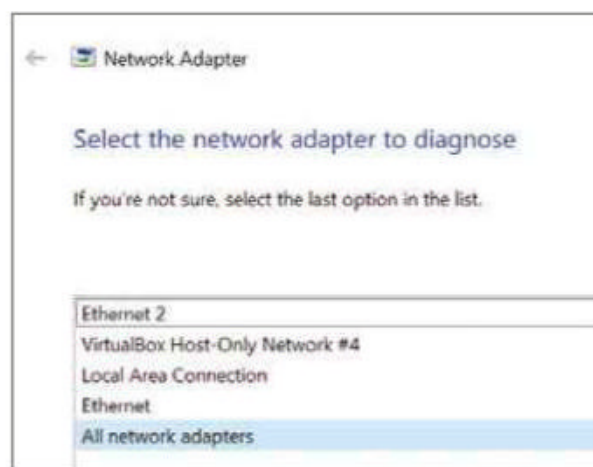
The sudden death of your internet connection can be caused by all manner of things, starting with an issue with your ISP, so check to see if there's a known problem in your area. If your provider says there isn't, there's a number of solutions you can try.

First, unplug your router, wait for a short while, then plug it back in. It's also worth turning your PC off and on again. If neither of these does the trick, try one of Windows' troubleshooting tools.

Go to Settings, Update & Security, Troubleshoot and click the 'Additional troubleshooters' link. Try running the Internet Connections troubleshooter, and if that doesn't solve the issue, try the Network Adapter troubleshooter.

If you still get no joy, type `cmd` into the Windows search box and press Enter to launch the Command Prompt window. Type in the following commands, pressing Enter after each one:

```
netsh winsock reset
ipconfig /release
netsh int ip reset
ipconfig /renew
ipconfig /flushdns
```



If you can't connect to Wi-Fi, try the Network Adapter troubleshooter

No networks are showing

Windows will connect automatically to your home network, or any known networks when you're out and about. If it doesn't, check to make sure Wi-Fi is enabled. Click the Network icon at the bottom-right of your taskbar and, if the Wi-Fi quick action is off, click it to turn it back on. If it's showing that it's in Flight mode, disable this option.

If no networks are shown as being available, restart your router and/or Windows – that should do the trick.

Failing that, go to Settings, Update & Security, Troubleshoot, then click the 'Additional troubleshooters' link and run the Network Adapter troubleshooter to fix the problem.

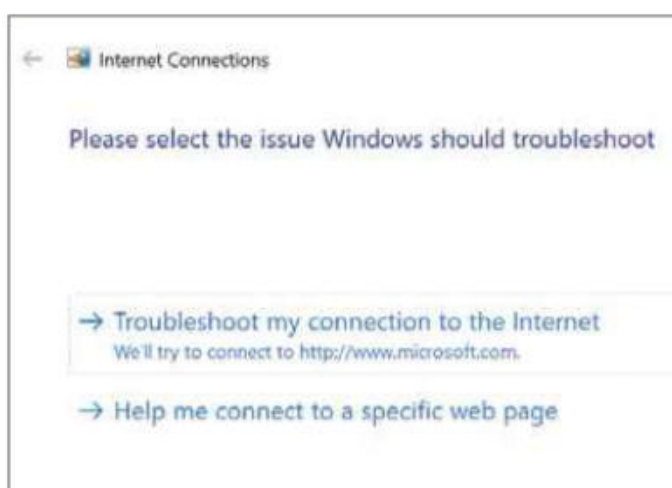
I've lost my wireless password

The devices you use to connect to the internet will handily remember your login details, so you don't have to. But what happens when a device forgets the password, and you can't remember it either? If it's your home Wi-Fi network you're trying to connect to, the password may be on your router. Check the back or underside for a sticker.

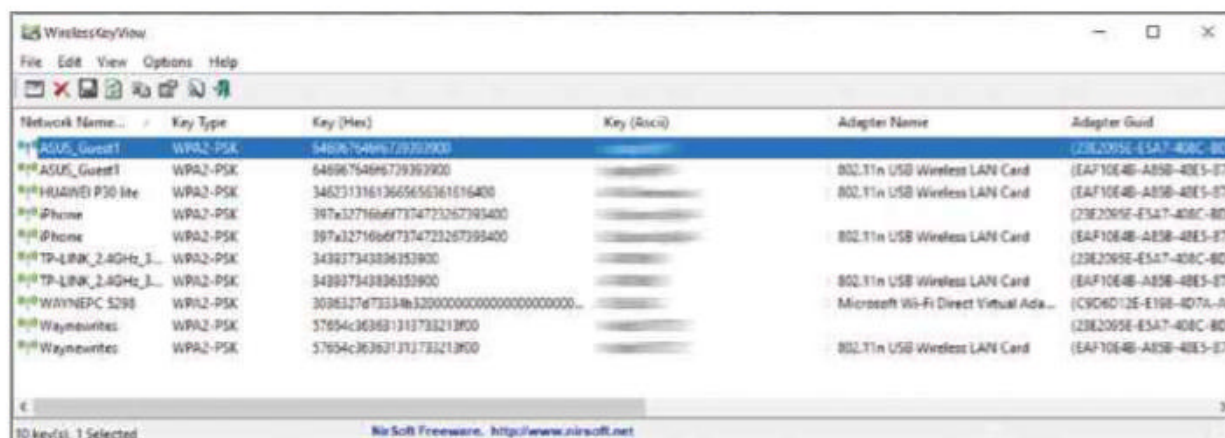
If you've changed the default – which you should do for security purposes – then this password won't work. Some routers, like the Google WiFi mesh system, can show you the current password in the app you manage it with, but if you don't have that option, then you might be able to track it down via the Windows Control Panel.

Press Win+R to open a Run box, then type `ncpa.cpl` and press Enter. In the window that opens, double-click the wireless network adaptor icon, click the Wireless Properties button and select the Security tab. Tick the 'Show characters' box.

Another option worth trying is the free WirelessKeyView tool from NirSoft (nirsoft.net). Run this – no installation is required – and it will show you all the keys stored on your computer using the Wireless Zero Configuration service. ■



You can fix most internet problems yourself, unless your ISP is to blame



Recover a lost Wi-Fi password using NirSoft's WirelessKeyView tool

NEXT ISSUE

on sale Wednesday 25 November 2020

WHO TARGETS YOU ONLINE?

We reveal who is harvesting your data from the web and how you can stop them



PLUS...

WINDOWS 10 UPDATED

What's new and what's changed in the October 2020 Update

SPEED UP STREAMING

Browse and search all your TV and film services in one place

SET UP A VIRTUAL PC

Why you should run programs and devices in a virtual machine

VISIT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE AT
FACEBOOK.COM/WEBUSERMAGAZINE

Best email apps for Android and iOS

Looking for an email app that makes managing messages easier, no matter what device you're using? **Steve Clark** tests six of the best



Outlook |  bit.ly/2G04HsG |  apple.co/3mmx4Rq | ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★★★

**WebUser
GOLD
AWARD**

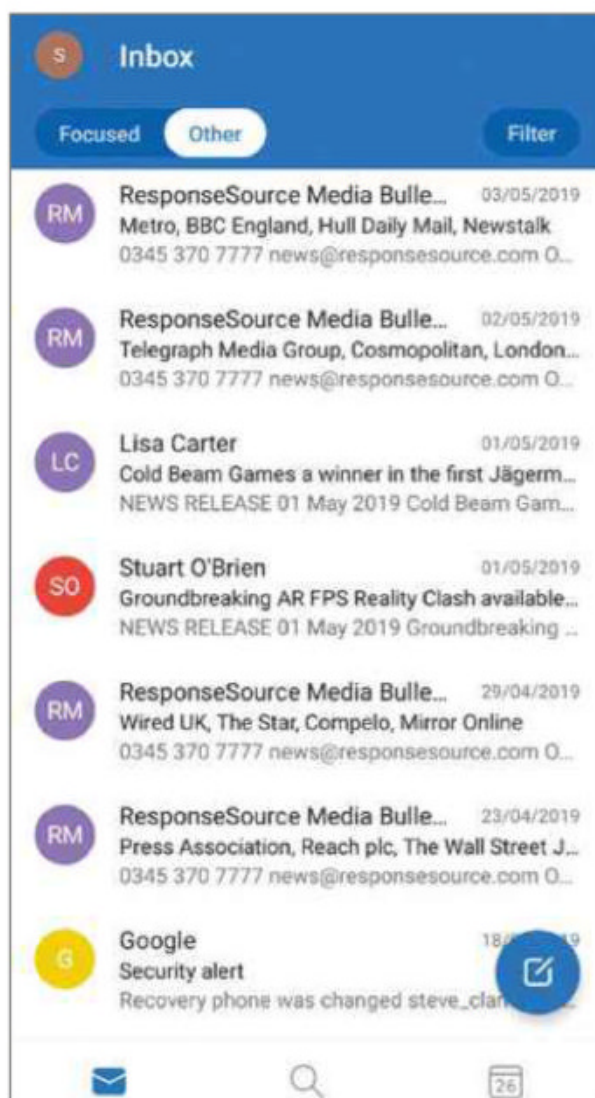
What we liked:

Most people probably use either Gmail or Outlook as the default email app on their phone. Both work across Android and iOS; both support multiple email accounts; both link up with your phone's calendar; and both sync across accounts and devices with no fuss.

However, we reckon Outlook knocks Gmail for six, even if you have a Google account. As a free tool for checking email, there's little difference between them, but Outlook has more features and offers a more coherent experience across all your different devices. It's also much better at juggling more than one email account, which is such an unpleasant experience in Gmail that we think the six alternatives we've listed here do it much better.

As with Windows Mail on your PC, Outlook also contains your calendar. Productive types will appreciate not having to switch between two apps to keep abreast of your schedule. However, if you already use a different calendar app, Outlook's doesn't get in the way if you choose to ignore it.

The app is relaxed about letting you connect beyond the Microsoft sphere,



with options to add email accounts from providers such as Gmail and iCloud. Enter the Settings and you'll discover the ability to connect your Google Drive, Dropbox and Box storage accounts,

alongside OneDrive. You can also expand the calendar using integrated calendar apps from Evernote, Facebook, Meetup and the so-called Interesting Calendars, which imports key sporting events across the Premier League, PGA and F1.

Then with one tap, you're back in your inbox.

How it can be improved:

Microsoft places a lot of emphasis on boosting productivity (that's why you have your calendar and email together), but one glaring omission is made all the more obvious in our current pandemic state: Microsoft Teams. Gmail has Meet built into its app and it's a baffling decision to leave Teams out of Outlook. We'd also like to see support for iCloud, and better personalisation of signatures.

OUR VERDICT

As a standalone email app, Outlook provides an excellent experience that does everything you'd expect, and includes a host of useful productivity features. As a souped-up, multi-account, multi-device app, it's superb.

Edison | mail.edison.tech | ★★★★★

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

WebUser
SILVER
AWARD

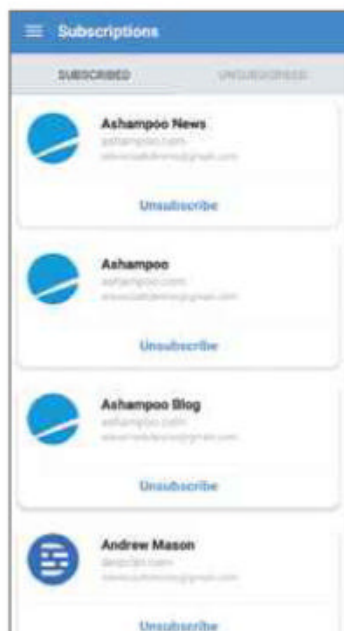
What we liked:

One of the first claims made by Edison's app during the simple sign-in process is that it's lightning

fast. 'How fast can email be?' we scoffed. In actual fact, *everything* happens at an exceptional, near-instantaneous speed.

Edison's design takes its inspiration from Outlook, across Android and iOS. Like Microsoft's own email app, it includes a Focused Inbox that cleverly shifts all your important emails to your main inbox and tucks away less important ones to be dealt with in your own time.

However, Edison is no mere clone. There's the built-in assistant, for starters. Tap 'Travel', for example, and Edison searches for any travel plans in your inbox. It also introduces one of the best features in any email app: one-tap unsubscribe.



Most email apps let you swipe left or right for quick actions. Edison adds further swipes for performing extra actions. Accessibility is also well-handled, with a 'tT' at the top of every email for resizing the font.

How it can be improved:

Edison's poor integration with cloud storage may partly be due to its commitment to privacy and security, which promises no targeted ads and aims to store as much data as possible locally. That seems like a fair trade-off to us.

OUR VERDICT

"Lightning fast" is a bold claim but Edison really is super speedy. If you're migrating from Outlook, you'll find the interface reassuringly familiar, and there are some fantastic features included.

Spike | www.spikenow.com | ★★★★★☆

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

WebUser
BRONZE
AWARD

What we liked:

Spike feels like its built for the modern age. While its inbox interface is traditional and

familiar, emails are handled like instant messages, so it looks like WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger. Your 'chats' appear in bubbles to the left of the screen with replies displayed on the right. This conversational layout makes tracking email threads easy – it's surprising that Microsoft and Google haven't pinched the idea as an optional extra.

Support for iCloud, Gmail, Outlook, Exchange, Yahoo and any IMAP account is pleasing, and you can add multiple accounts if you need to. You can also connect various cloud-storage services, so you can attach files. But while Google Drive, OneDrive and Dropbox are featured, iCloud isn't. That could be a deal-breaker for some.



Spike is also available on Windows, macOS and in your browser, and helpfully includes a built-in calendar and a notes app.

How it can be improved:

The biggest drawback with Spike is that unlimited message history, 100GB of storage and a host of other benefits are going to cost you £5 a month. This isn't excessive, though, and if you're not too fussed about keeping very old emails, then it's ability to store up to 15,000 messages for free will more than suffice.

OUR VERDICT

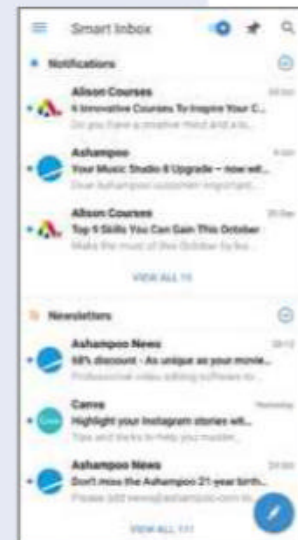
Spike's conversational user interface makes checking and responding to emails less formal. It's packed with extras, and multi-account support is good, though the exclusion of iCloud storage lets it down.

BEST OF THE REST

Spark

sparkmailapp.com

With its heavy emphasis on team emails, Spark is primarily built for businesses. But that's no reason to shrug it off – especially since the free version has everything you'd expect from a personal email app. All the premium paid-for features are heavily focused on company collaboration. You can sign in using all the usual email accounts, leading you to a Smart Inbox that knows which emails are important; and Smart Search, which finds messages using 'natural language'.



Yahoo Mail

bit.ly/1sIJMeJ apple.co/2p28891

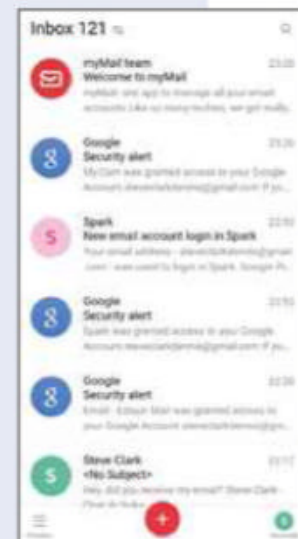
It may be slow, but Yahoo excels at customisation. You can set default tabs at the bottom of the screen, such as starred emails or those with attachments, and the colour-wheel brings personalisation beyond light and dark themes. But there's lacklustre account support – you can sign in with Yahoo, Gmail, Outlook, Office 365 and AOL, but that's your lot. It's an odd decision to skip iCloud, especially since the app is available in Apple's App Store.



My Mail

bit.ly/3JEYQd apple.co/2HFxt2H

My Mail's fresh design has folders swooping up from below, overlaying your inbox without taking you away from it (which makes the app much quicker). Core navigation buttons are found at the bottom of the screen, in thumb-friendly fashion, which is something other email apps could do with implementing. Sadly, like Yahoo, it's a tad limited in the accounts department, with no support for iCloud.





When you're injured, ill, lost or in danger, a personal safety app can quickly get you the assistance you need. **Jane Hoskyn** reveals how to turn your phone into a life-saver

Let trusted contacts 'walk you home'

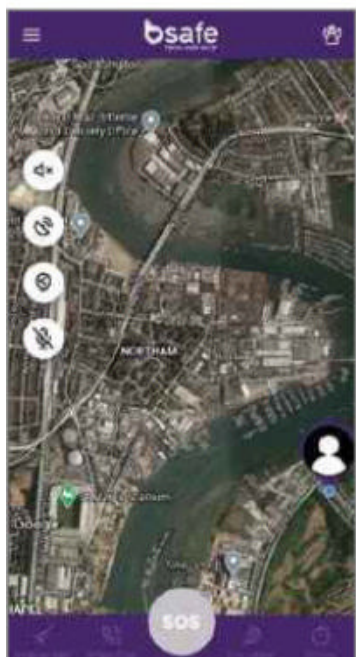
Google's Trusted Contacts app offered an easy but effective way for anyone in a potentially risky situation – hikers, elderly people, those waiting for public transport after dark – to be protected by loved ones.

But Google has killed off Trusted Contacts, just as the nights draw in, and has buried a similar tool in Google Maps (bbc.in/2G3JwpM). The new, free app bSafe (Android phones, iPhone getbsafe.com), designed by an assault victim and her father, provides a more accessible alternative. Tap the SOS button (or say "SOS") to instantly let members of your 'safety network' (which you can configure under the guardian-angel icon) track your location. You can opt to let them see and hear you, and record the video or audio stream to your device. There's also a Fake Call feature that sets your phone to call you, which could prove handy for escaping a dangerous or even

dull social situation!

Although bSafe is a US app, it works in the UK and dozens of other countries. After installing, add your phone number, including UK code, then verify via a 2FA text message to ensure no one can use the app pretending to be you.

Give loved ones real-time access to your location



Get help in the middle of nowhere

Apps such as bSafe rely on you to set up the app by inviting contacts to be your 'guardians', and then use GPS to share your location. But what if you injure yourself while out walking in a remote spot, off the GPS and postcode grid, and you need help?

What3words (Android, iOS, web what3words.com) divides the entire world into 10ft squares, each one referenced by a specific three-word code, such as 'hill.frost.grow'. You don't need a phone signal to share your current three-word location with emergency services or someone you know, but you do need mobile data.

Police are so impressed with What3words that they're urging everyone to download the app (bit.ly/37VcF23), and firefighters also sing its praises (bit.ly/3jp7qtm). It's now built into the offline navigation app Here (www.here.com), with more integrations set to follow.

If you're stuck far from a street address, What3words brings help to your precise location



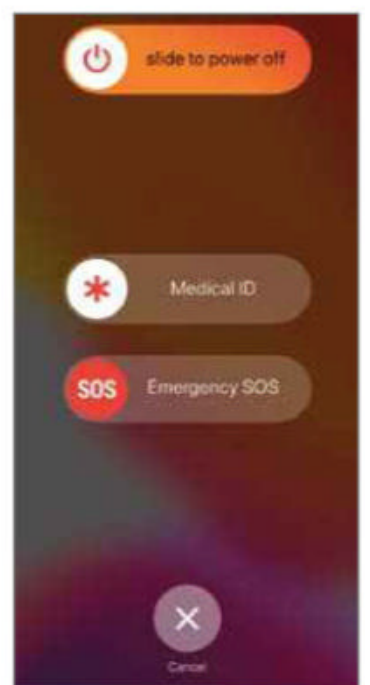
Call Emergency Services without dialling

If you have an iPhone (8+), you'll find a 999 auto-call button built into your device.

Emergency SOS (apple.co/2Tjv93z) automatically calls 999 (or the emergency number in your country), and sends your current location to any emergency contacts you've chosen via the Health app.

Location services are turned on automatically and temporarily. To use it, press and hold the side button and one of the volume buttons, then swipe the Emergency SOS slider (see screenshot, above) to call your local emergency services. Or keep holding the side button and volume, and your iPhone will make the call automatically.

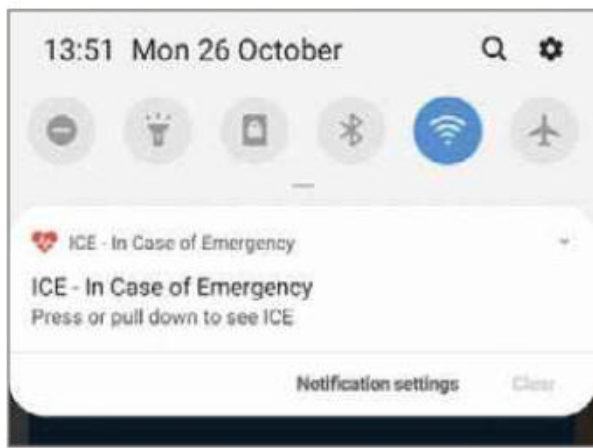
For Android, the new app Emergency Call (bit.ly/3onm3Rx) adds a one-tap screen to your phone that automatically dials 999 in the UK.



Make sure you know the shortcut to the emergency services panic button built into your iPhone

Add medical info to your lock screen

If you ever need a paramedic, you can make their work much easier by telling



ICE adds an 'in case of emergency' shortcut that doesn't disappear when you clear other notifications

them your medical condition, allergies, blood type and any medication you're on. Both Android and iOS let you display this information on your lock screen: on Android, tap 'About phone' in Settings then open 'Emergency information' (bit.ly/31HFZoL); on iOS, go to Medical ID in the Health app, then toggle on Show When Locked for maximum visibility (apple.co/2TsJ7Ak).

For a smarter alternative, use the free app ICE, short for 'in case of emergency' (Android bit.ly/3dLHTJM). Instead of displaying your medical information to all and sundry, it adds an inconspicuous permanent notification. Paramedics will know to tap it, then tap the message, to see your details.

Ask Alexa, Google or Siri to call emergency contacts

Amazon's smart assistant Alexa has a new feature that phones an emergency contact when you say "Alexa, call for help", but it only works in the US. The rest of us can add the function – and more – via the superb app My SOS Family (Android, iOS www.mysosfamily.com), which supports Google Assistant and Siri, as well as Alexa.

My SOS Family lets you choose



several loved ones who will be instantly alerted by text, call and email when you press the Help Me button. You can also set an SOS Timer for up to 24 hours, after which time an

Alert your loved ones with one tap of My SOS Family – or by asking your voice assistant

alert is sent unless you cancel it manually (for example, after a night out). For more discretion in dodgy situations, you can use a Bluetooth device or headphone buttons as a remote panic button.

Unfortunately, the full service is only free for the first 30 days; after that, your contacts only get an email rather than a text and call. To continue the full service, you have to pay a £3.49 monthly subscription, or £4.99 for a one-month pass.

Check your symptoms and get medical help

The NHS COVID-19 app (covid19.nhs.uk) isn't having an easy time. The coronavirus-tracking tool is now failing to send virus-exposure alerts, according to reports (bbc.in/35GQqds). But it is still the best app for checking your symptoms if you feel unwell, and for finding out if you've come into contact with the virus.

For help with symptoms beyond COVID, the Ask NHS app (Android, iOS, web www.sensely.com/asknhs) is an essential resource. Not only does it help you assess medical emergencies,



Get help quickly from an NHS doctor by using the Ask NHS app

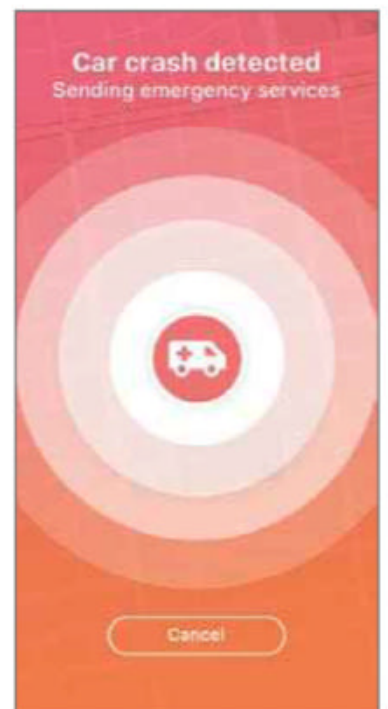
including chest pain, but it can also get you an on-screen NHS GP appointment much quicker than your local surgery.

If you suffer from seizures, Seizario (Android bit.ly/3kC2H9i) is a must-have emergency app for logging events and alerting trusted contacts.

Create a circle of support

Free app Life360 (Android, iOS www.life360.com) creates a private group where you all look after each other, even if you're isolating

or social distancing. You and your 'circle' can coordinate all your locations with a one-tap check-in, and – depending on how visible your circle members want to be – view each other's current location on a real-time map. To avoid the need for "did you get home OK?" texts, you'll each receive an automatic text when a member of your circle arrives at or leaves a destination. Life360 can also help you find rendezvous spots and friends' homes, locate each other's lost or stolen phones and even automatically detect if you or a circle member is involved in a vehicle accident. ■

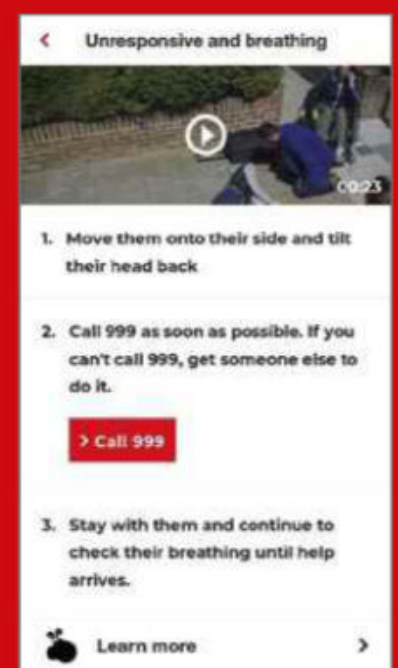


Life360 can even automatically detect a car crash and send for help

TURN YOUR PHONE INTO A FIRST AID GUIDE

The step-by-step guides and videos in the free British Red Cross app (Android, iOS bit.ly/3onjUpb) work offline, so you can get (and give) help wherever you are. There's also a Call 999 button where appropriate (see screenshot, right). The St John Ambulance app (Android, iOS bit.ly/3jxgdt8) has offline audio guides, which you may find easier to follow in an emergency than videos and written guides.

If you're off on a hazardous hike and are worried about making it home in one piece, make sure you're equipped with The Offline Survival Manual (Android bit.ly/2kQh2Qr). As well as guidance on dealing with wounds, stings, sprains and other outdoor injuries, it explains how to make a fire, build a shelter and avoid poisonous plants.



Switch your energy provider online

There are now almost as many energy-switching services as there are providers. **Robert Irvine** tests six sites that promise to slash the cost of your gas and electricity



MSE Autoswitch | bit.ly/3m5zcuL | ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★★★

**WebUser
GOLD
AWARD**

What we liked:

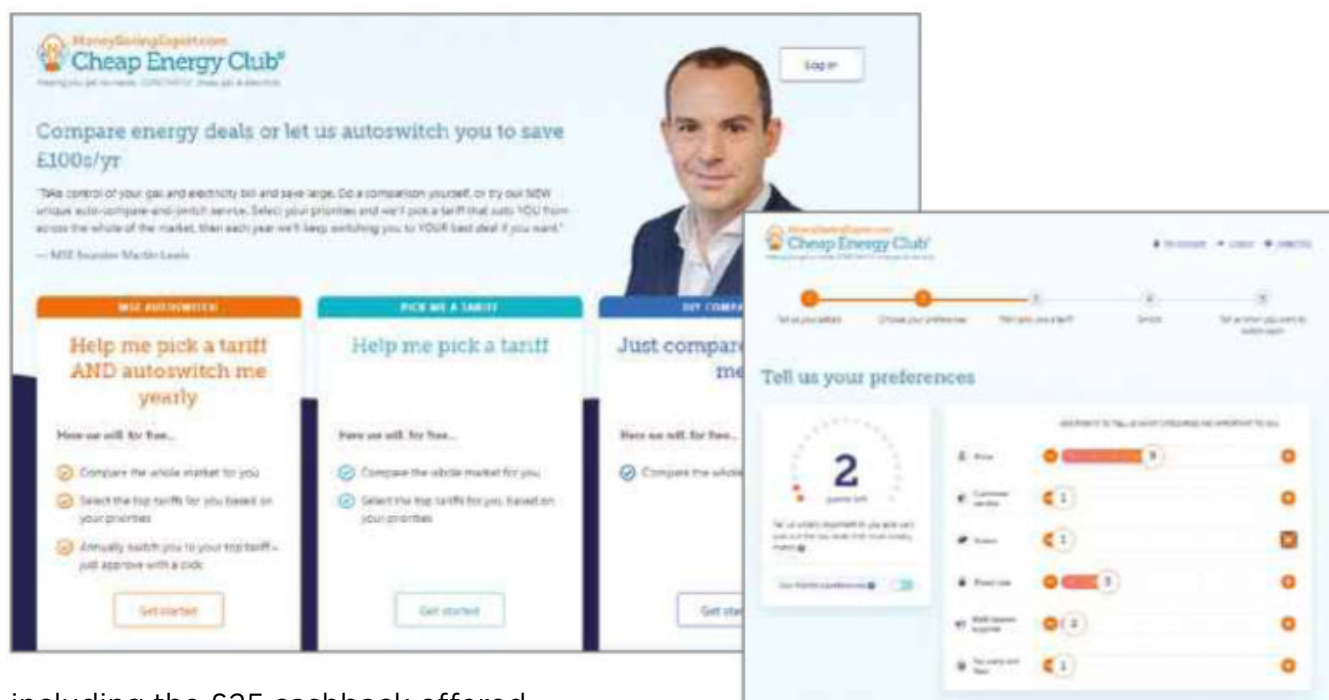
MoneySavingExpert.com's auto-switching energy service only launched in September, into an already crowded marketplace. However, we

believe it's the best option for reducing the amount of money you fork out on gas and electricity.

Adopting the accessible and trustworthy approach we've come to expect from Martin Lewis and his team, the site is specifically designed for those of us who put off changing providers because it seems like too much hassle.

To get started, simply enter your postcode and provide a few details about your home and current tariff, including how much energy you use or pay for every month, quarter or year (this can be estimated if you don't know). Instead of focusing solely on finding you the cheapest tariff, MSE uses a points-based system, which gives you 21 points to allocate to criteria such as customer service, green energy, no exit fees and fixed rates (and price, too, of course). Alternatively, you can use preferences chosen by Martin himself.

The site will then recommend the best tariff for your needs, which saved us a whopping £155 per year with Eon,



including the £25 cashback offered to MSE users. It also suggests two runners-up and lets you view the full range of deals by clicking 'See all tariffs'. Certain results are affiliate links to help fund the site, but these are clearly marked as such with asterisks.

Select 'Switch & get cashback' and you'll be taken to MSE's parent site, MoneySupermarket, to enter your details and set up your transfer.

How it can be improved:

Whereas other services switch you automatically when a cheaper tariff becomes available, MSE Autoswitch only

moves you once a year, to ensure you avoid exit fees. However, it will email you when a better deal becomes available.

OUR VERDICT

Although switching your energy provider isn't as difficult as it used to be, MSE Autoswitch makes the process commendably painless, while ensuring that you get the best tariff for your needs. It could save you hundreds of pounds a year on your gas and electricity bills.

BillBuddy | Billbuddy.co.uk | ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★☆ EASE OF USE ★★★★★

WebUser
SILVER
AWARD

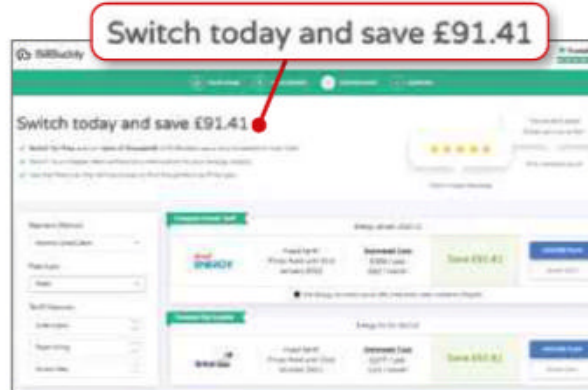
What we liked:

BillBuddy makes finding and switching to a better energy deal incredibly quick and easy, and it's completely free to use.

Although the site earns a referral fee from the suppliers it recommends, it doesn't unfairly promote certain companies over others, and its results are more comprehensive than the other free services we tried.

Logically, the top result is always the cheapest overall tariff, which for us meant a tidy saving of £91.41 a year from Shell Energy. Below this are matches for the cheapest big supplier, if you'd rather not trust a small one, and the next cheapest green tariff, followed by a further 30 suggestions. These include useful information such as unit cost, cancellation fees and whether you'll need a smart meter. To switch, click Choose Plan and enter your details.

BillBuddy also lets you compare broadband and mobile deals (with home and car insurance coming soon), though these results direct you to the companies' own websites. You can also



get online support through a chatbot.

How it can be improved:

Getting your initial quote involves working through a series of question screens, when a single page would be preferable. There's no mobile app, either, presumably because of an unrelated one called Bill Buddy.

OUR VERDICT

Simple, speedy and free to use, BillBuddy cuts the cost of your energy bills without you needing to shop around. It doesn't compare every tariff available, but you can't argue with the savings it finds.

Switchd | switchd.co.uk | ★★★★★☆
FEATURES ★★★★★☆ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★☆ EASE OF USE ★★★★★☆

WebUser
BRONZE
AWARD

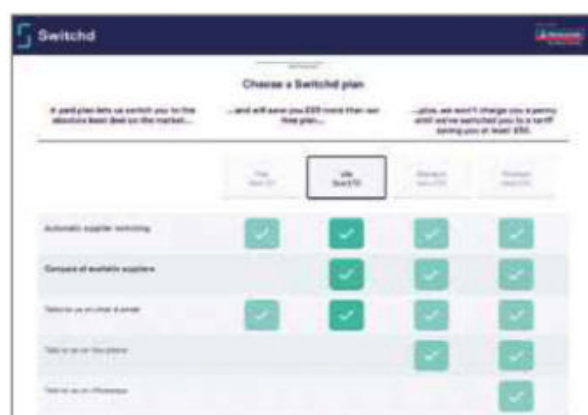
What we liked:

Supported by the Nationwide Building Society, Switchd initially impressed us with an annual £130 saving on our energy bills (with Eon). The catch is that, unlike our other

award winners, you need to sign up for a paid-for plan to get the full discount. The free option would only save us £37.

The cheapest plan, Lite, costs £1.99 a month (paid in six-month instalments once your first switch is initiated) and searches all available suppliers and more than 27,000 tariffs for the best deals. You can specify preferences such as green and fixed-rate tariffs, and whether you're happy to pay by direct debit, and choose not to switch automatically if you'll be charged an exit fee or if the saving is below a certain amount (from £50 to £200).

Switchd is the only service in this group to offer its own mobile app, but for phone support or a 'dedicated support agent', you need to pay £3.49 or £4.99 for Standard or Premium plans.



How it can be improved:

Switchd's registration form is spread over several pages and requires more personal information upfront than rival services, such as date of birth. You also need to provide regular meter readings to ensure your bills aren't estimated.

OUR VERDICT

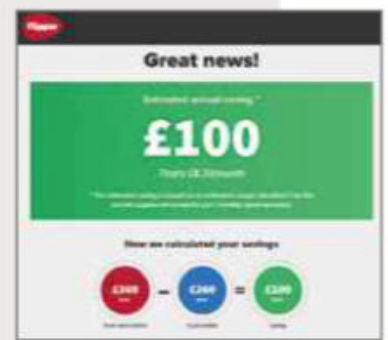
If you want to automatically switch energy suppliers as cheaper tariffs become available, then Switchd Lite is worth the subscription fee, giving you access to the full range of suppliers and savings.

BEST OF THE REST

Flipper

flipper.community

Flipper claims to be the original energy auto-switching service, and charges an annual fee of £30 with assurances that its recommendations are comprehensive, impartial and not based on commission. Its smart, easy-to-use website quickly finds you the cheapest deal (a £100 saving for us) and, once you sign up, keeps checking every month, prompting you to 'flip' when you can save over £50.



Look After My Bills

lookaftermybills.com

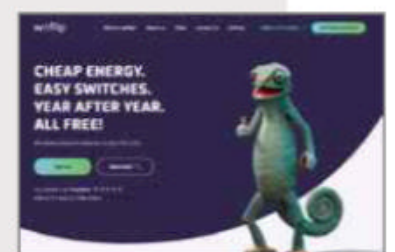
Famous for receiving a £120,00 investment on *Dragons' Den*, Look After My Bills is a fast and efficient way to switch energy providers. It's free to use, offers a 14-day cooling-off period after you switch and, if your current tariff charges an exit fee, the site will wait until your contract ends before moving you. On the downside, it only recommends a single 'best' deal, based solely on the suppliers it earns commission from. Our search only appeared to cover 12 companies and the saving of £36 a year was easily beaten by other services in this group.



WeFlip

www.weflip.com

Owned by GoCompare, WeFlip's chameleon mascot and promise to make energy switching less boring put a friendly face on "flipping" providers. Sadly, like many free services, it only searches the small number of suppliers who pay the site commission, and recommends a single tariff – in our case, saving just £35 a year. We like the single-page online form, but the negative reviews on Trustpilot, especially for customer service, give pause for thought.



NEXT ISSUE
Switch your
internet
provider



Practical WebUser

16 pages of workshops, tips, projects and problem solving

Organise your notes and ideas

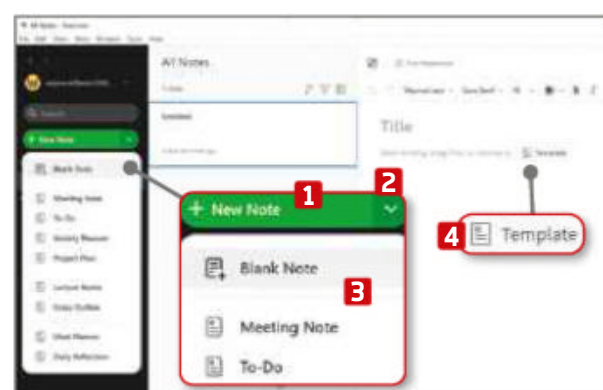
Popular cross-platform note-taking app Evernote has been updated with a new interface and extra features. Here's what you need to know

Evernote: evernote.com | 20 mins | Any browser

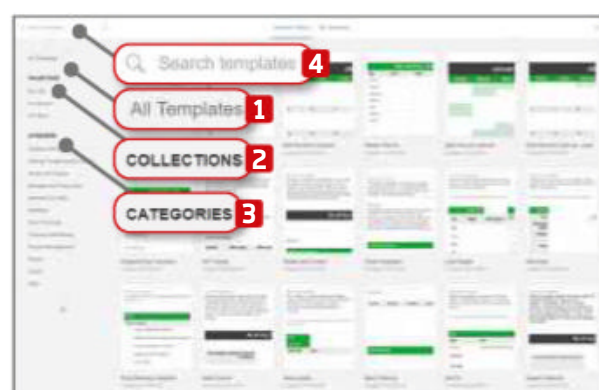
Evernote made its debut in 2008 and has undergone many changes since then. With this major new release, Evernote 10 has been rewritten and its interface has been completely overhauled, to make it cleaner and more consistent across all the platforms it's available for: Windows, macOS, Android, iOS and the web. In addition, there are

new formatting tools, a faster search facility that provides real-time results and the ability to change the default width for notes. There's also a new sketch tool and support for dark mode.

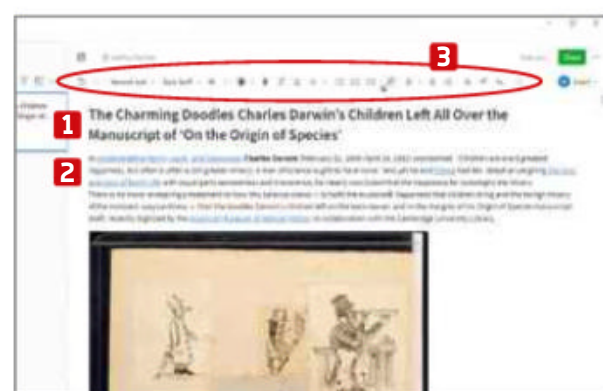
Evernote's free plans are limited to two devices, offline access via desktop only and a 60MB monthly upload limit. The Premium service costs £4.99 per month.



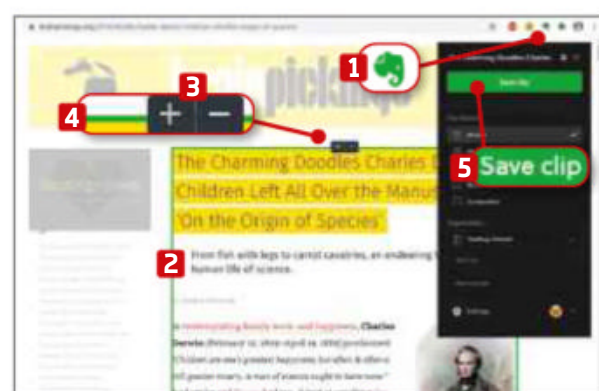
1 To get started with Evernote, click the green New Note button. 1 Clicking the arrow 2 opens a drop-down menu where you can choose the particular type of note you want to add. 3 You can start writing a new note, drag some files to the interface or choose one of the available templates. 4



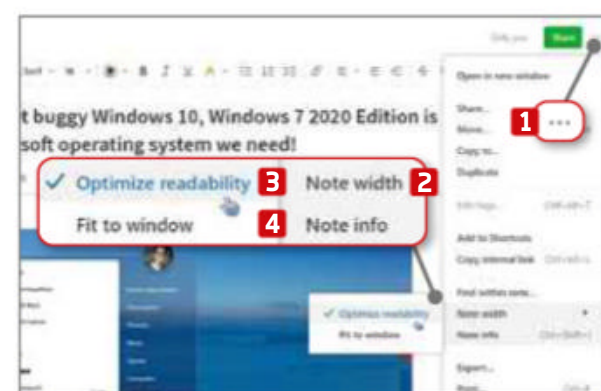
2 The Template Gallery gives you access to layouts for any kind of note. You can browse all the templates on offer, 1 or view them by collection 2 or by category. 3 You can also search for a template by name. 4 Select one and it opens, ready for customising.



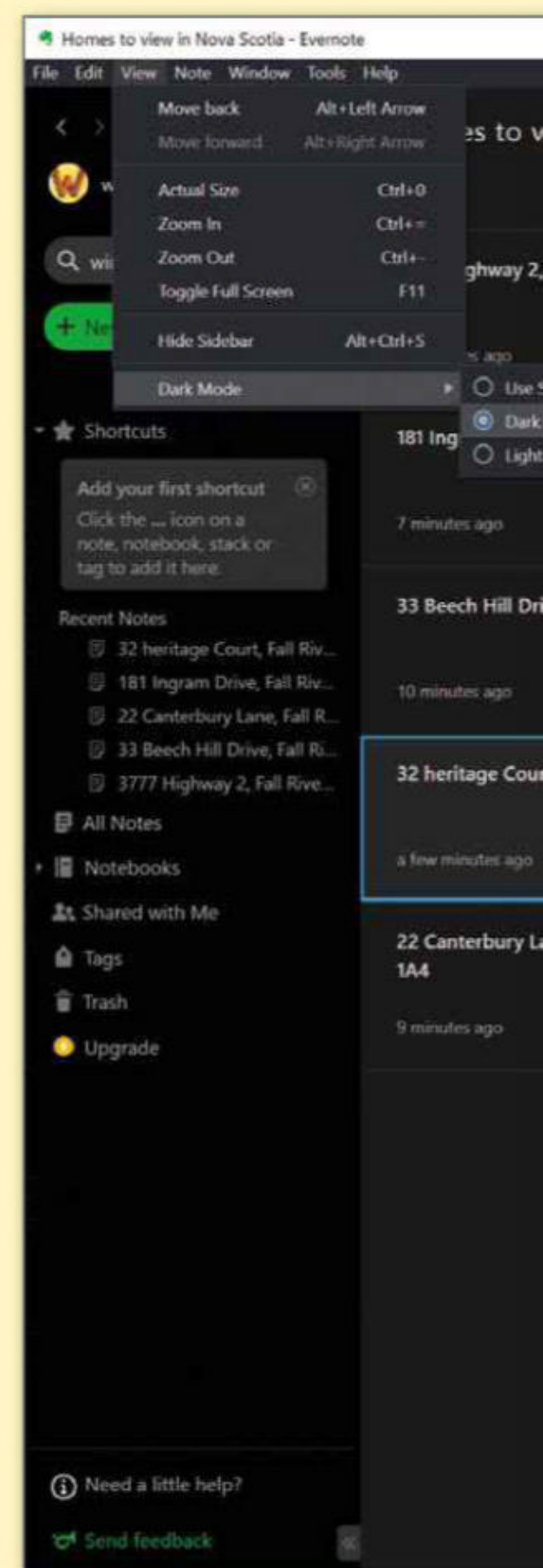
3 If you want to add a web page to Evernote, there are two options. The first is to copy and paste the headline, 1 followed by the body text. 2 You can use the new formatting bar 3 to customise the article text, change the typeface, size and colour, and insert links.



4 The second option is to install Web Clipper in your browser (bit.ly/2HA9Zvo). Visit the page you want and click the Web Clipper icon. 1 You may need to sign into Evernote and refresh the page. Choose what to save. 2 You can expand or shrink 3 the green selection box. 4 Click 'Save clip'. 5



5 A new feature in this latest version of Evernote is the option to change the default width for your notes. Click the three-dot menu button 1 and select Note Width. 2 You can switch between 'Optimise readability' 3 (which makes columns narrower) and 'Fit to window'. 4



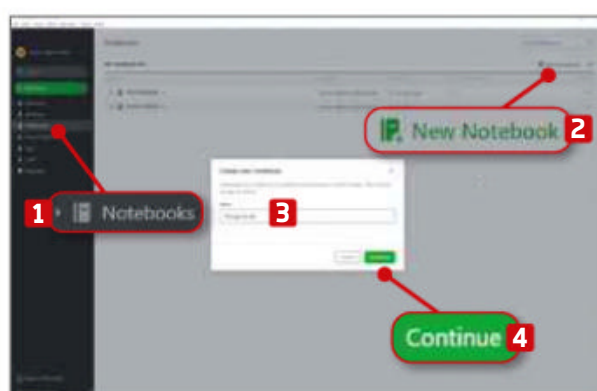


DARK & LIGHT MODE
To enable this feature in Evernote, go to View, Dark Mode and select the theme you want

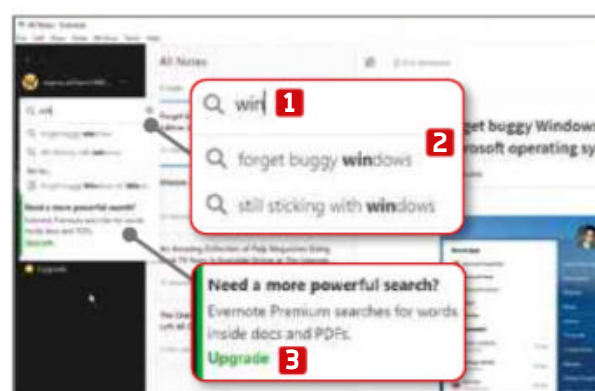
HIGHLIGHT
You can highlight any text using the highlighter tool in the formatting bar above your notes. Click the down arrow next to the button to select a colour

SHORTCUTS
Click the menu button to add a note to your Shortcuts. You can access saved Shortcuts from the bar on the left

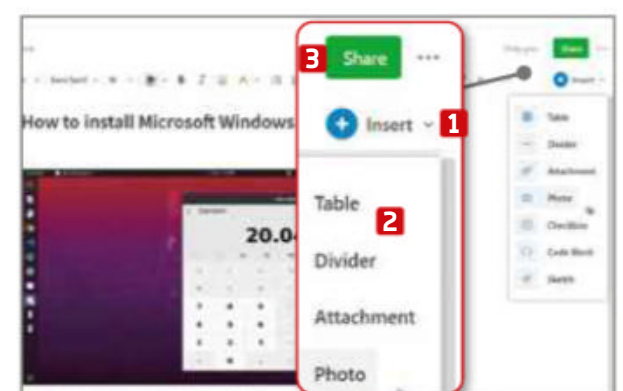
TAGS
To find notes faster, you can create tags for them by clicking the Add Tag button. Tags can be accessed via the sidebar



6 You can add as many notes as you like but, after a while, it might get messy. To solve this, Evernote lets you create separate notebooks for different purposes. Go to Notebooks **1** and, in the new window that opens, select New Notebook. **2** Give the notebook a name **3** and click Continue **4** to create it.



7 Evernote's search facility has been enhanced in this new version. To use it, start typing something into the Search box. **1** Results appear and are refined as you continue to type. **2** To look inside Documents or PDFs, you need to upgrade to the paid Pro version. **3**



8 You can add additional elements to notes by clicking the Insert button **1** and making a selection from the menu. **2** To let other people access your notes, click the Share button **3** and enable the shareable link, or invite them by entering their email address and clicking Send Invitations.



Get secure two-factor authentication in Windows

WinAuth: winauth.github.io/winauth | ⌚ 20 mins | 🇬🇧 Windows 7, 8, 10



EXPERT TIP

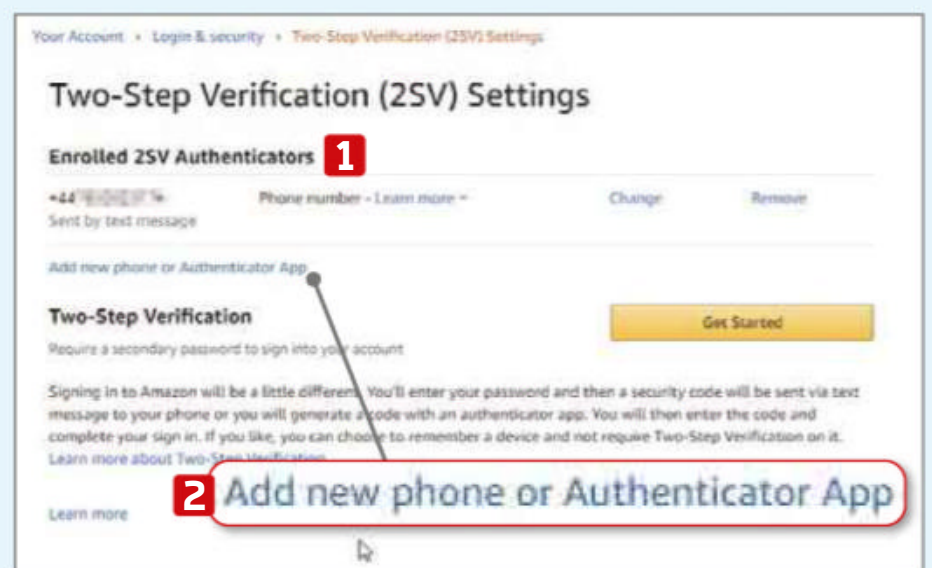
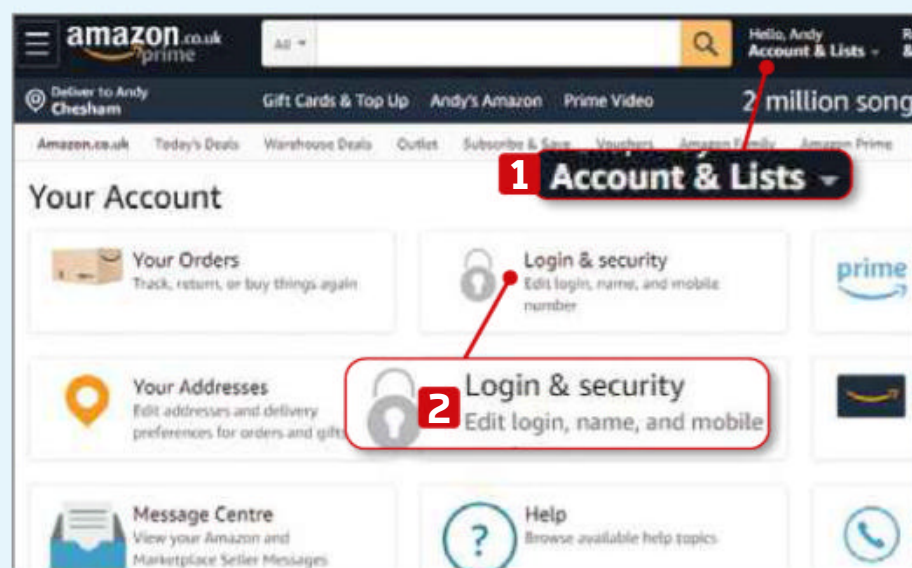
Andy Shaw says

The downside of using WinAuth is that it's tied to running in Windows so, if you're away from a PC, you won't be able to open your accounts, even if you have access to the software on a USB memory stick or online storage. For this reason, it's probably best not to use WinAuth to secure accounts you might need to use while you're out, such as Google or Microsoft accounts that are linked to webmail services.



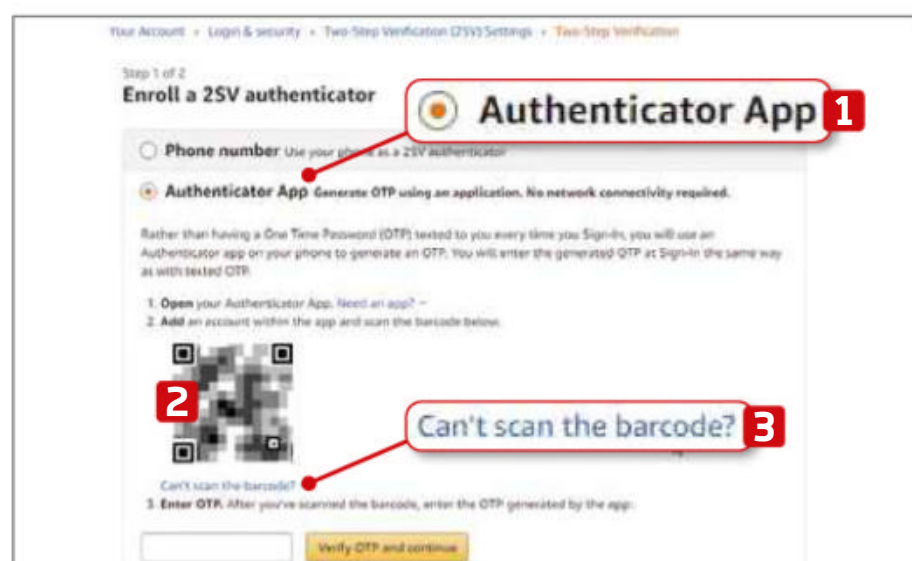
Two-factor authentication (2FA) adds an extra layer of security to your online accounts. With the system enabled, you log in twice – once with your password and then with a unique code. This second login is often generated by an app on a smartphone or mobile device, such as Google Authenticator (bit.ly/1ker5x7) or Microsoft Authenticator (bit.ly/2vhES1D), to create a one-off additional passcode.

This works well when you're out and about with your mobile device, but it can be a hassle when you're just working from your PC and don't have your smartphone to hand. In such cases, WinAuth offers an alternative. It's a portable program you can run from anywhere, on any Windows PC, to create a unique, ever-changing extra passcode.



1 Visit the website you want to use two-factor authentication on. Here, we're using Amazon, but the same applies to most 2FA-compatible sites. Sign into your account in the usual way, then look for the account's security settings. On Amazon, click 'Accounts & Lists', **1** then Your Account. On the page that opens, click the 'Login & security' button. **2**

2 Next to 'Two-Step Verification (2SV) Settings', click the Edit button. You may already have a mobile phone listed under Enrolled 2SV Authenticators **1** but you need to add a new one for WinAuth, so click 'Add new phone or Authenticator App'. **2** You may have to enter your password or a code sent to your phone to get this process started.

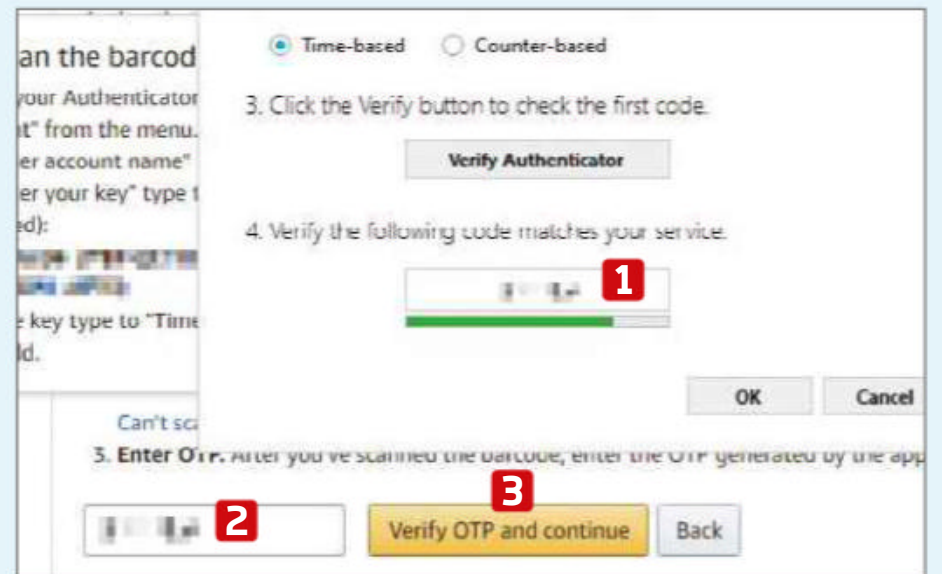


3 Select the Authenticator App section. **1** It presents you with a QR code **2** (we've blurred the codes in this Workshop for security purposes). If you were using a mobile device, you could just scan this. However, you can't do this on your PC so click the 'Can't scan the barcode' link. **3**

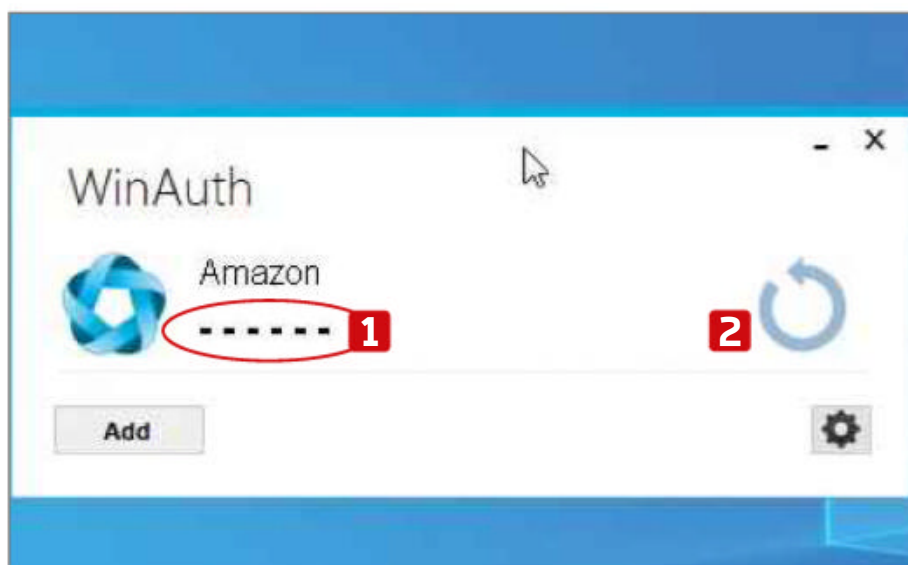
4 The pop-up window displays a key – a long string of text and numbers. **1** Highlight it with your cursor and copy it by pressing Ctrl+C. Now you can open WinAuth by double-clicking the WinAuth.exe file. Click the Add button **2** and choose Authenticator. **3**



5 Give the Authenticator a memorable name (we've simply used 'Amazon') **1** so you can find it again. Paste the code you copied in Step 4 into the box **2** (any spaces will be ignored automatically) and leave the type of authenticator as Time-based. **3** Click the Verify Authenticator button **4** to display a code. **5**



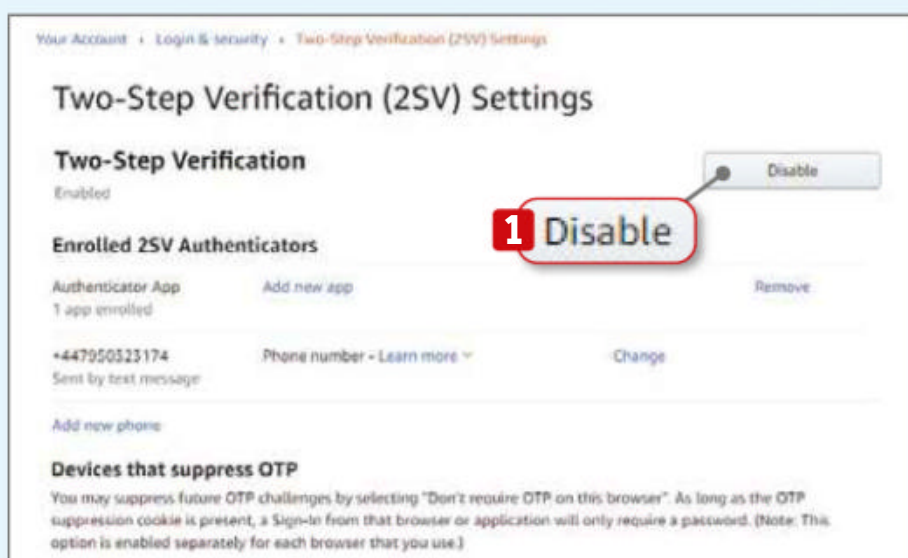
6 The generated passcode is time-limited, and only gives you a few seconds to copy it back to Amazon. If you wait until the green bar gets to the end of the box, a new code appears. **1** Quickly tap the six digit code into the Enter OTP box, **2** then click 'Verify OTP and continue'. **3**



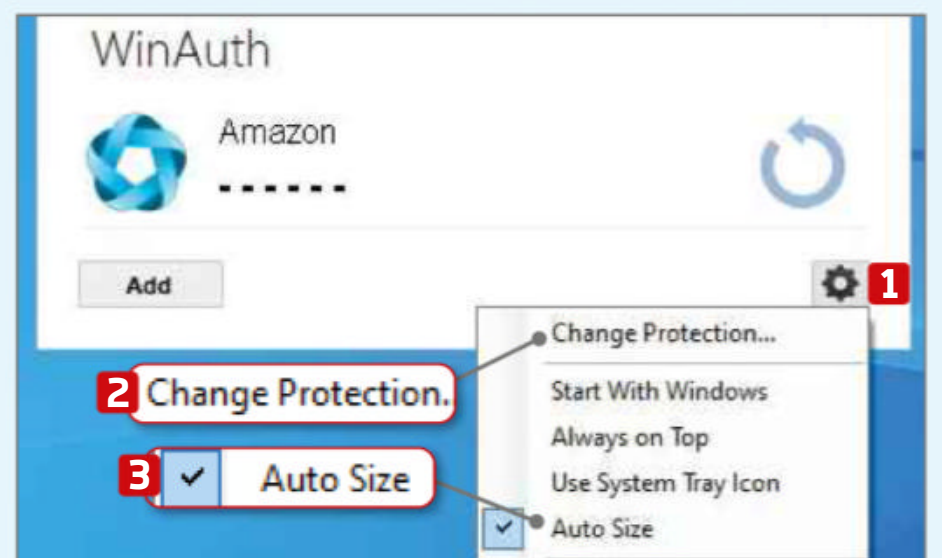
7 Back in WinAuth, click OK. You're invited to add protection to WinAuth by locking it with a password. Now, the WinAuth window shows you the key you'd currently need to log into your Amazon account in the next few seconds. It won't constantly recalculate the key, however, so if it shows dashes, **1** click the reload button. **2**



8 Go back to Amazon. You should now see Authenticator App added to the list of Enrolled 2SV Authenticators. **1** Click the Get Started button. **2** Choose the Authenticator app option, then get a code from WinAuth and enter it in the box. Click 'Verify OTP and continue'.



9 The next time you sign into your account, you need to enter your usual password and the current WinAuth passcode. To switch this off, log into Amazon using the method in Steps 1 and 2, then click Disable. **1** Other sites will behave slightly differently, but it's a similar process. To lock more sites, repeat the process by adding a new Authenticator.



10 Clicking the cog button **1** in WinAuth opens the customisation menu. To set a new password, choose Change Protection. **2** The next four options let you control whether WinAuth launches with Windows, always sits over other windows, disappears to the notification area of the taskbar and can be resized. **3**

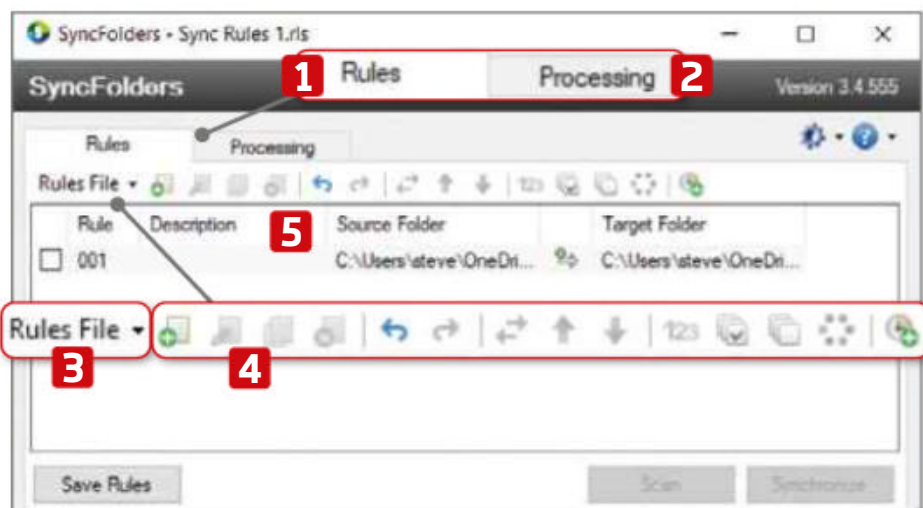


Keep two folders synced automatically

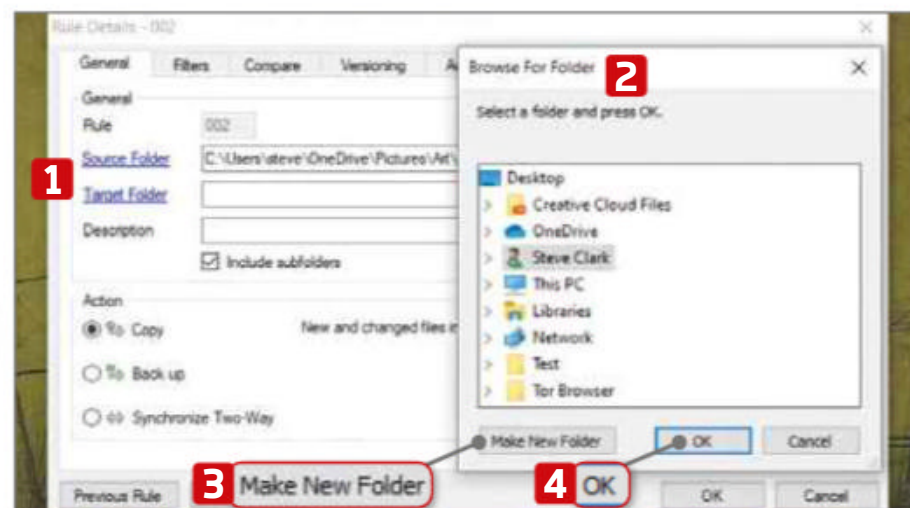
SyncFolders lets you synchronise the files contained in any two of your folders. This means you won't waste time copying and pasting files from your primary folder to your backup or USB drive, or constantly uploading individual files to

the cloud. It's a very effective tool that's easy to use and packs plenty of options to control how, where, what and when files are synchronised.

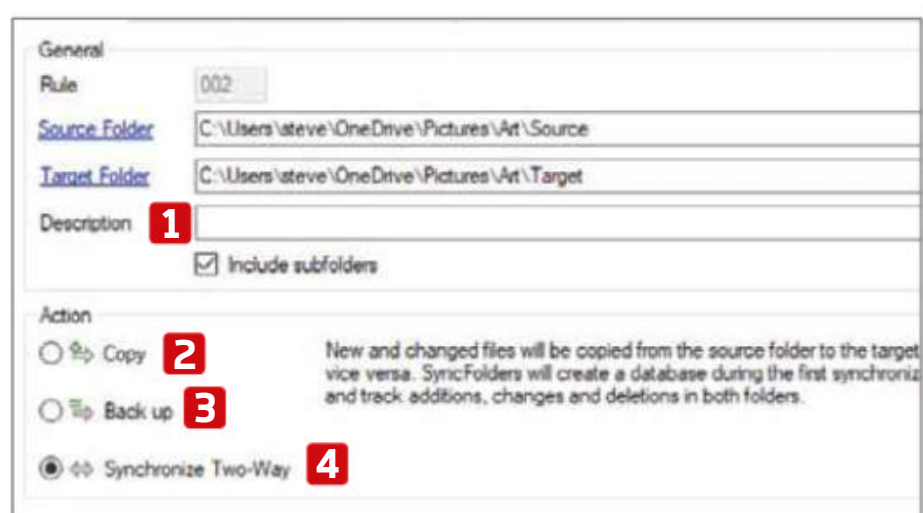
SyncFolders: www.syncfolders.elementfx.com | 10 mins | 7, 8, 10



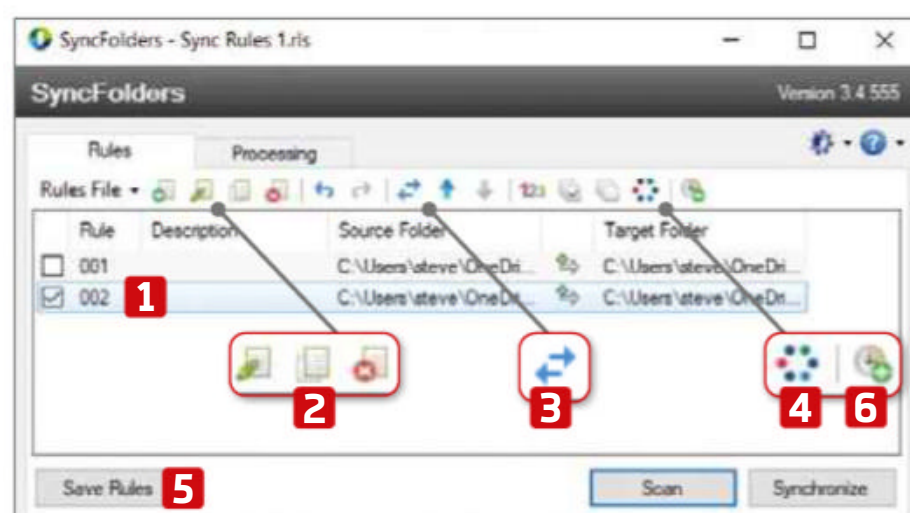
1 Launch SyncFolders and you'll see two tabs: Rules **1** and Processing. **2** The Rules tab contains a drop-down menu labelled Rules File, **3** where you can upload files and import rules. Running alongside is a toolbar of actions, **4** with a panel of columns below, **5** where your sync rules are listed.



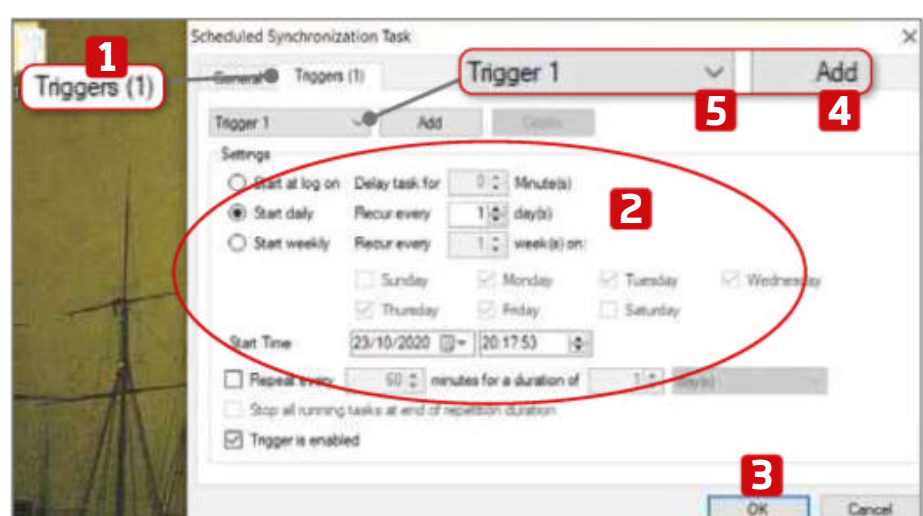
2 Create a sync rule by clicking the page icon with a green plus sign. This opens the Rule Details box, where you choose both a Source and a Target Folder. **1** Click each one and, as the dialogue box suggests, Browse For Folder **2** or create a new one. **3** Click OK **4** to confirm.



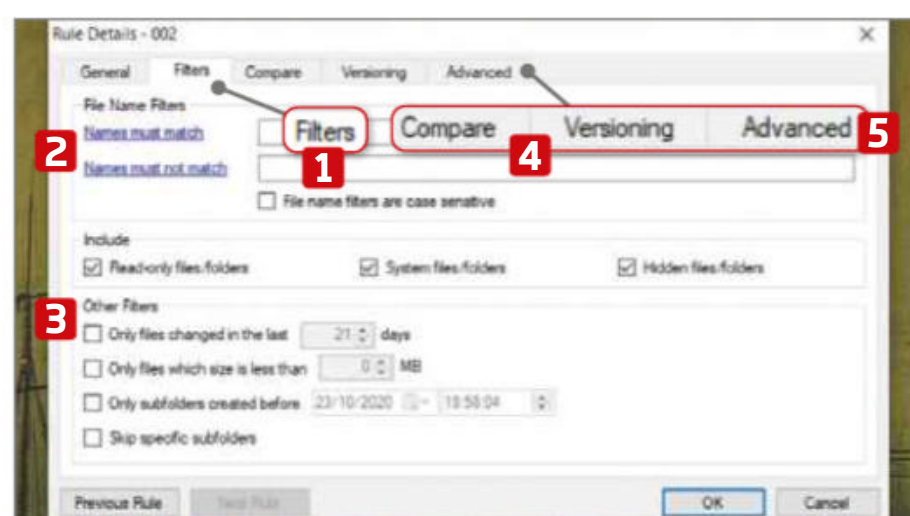
3 Back in Rule Details, add a rule description. **1** Under Action, Copy **2** just copies files from Source to Target; 'Back up' **3** saves Target files if they've been modified in the Source; and Synchronize Two-Way **4** syncs both ways, so if you edit a Target File, this will be reflected in Source. Click OK.



4 Your rule is added to the task list **1** and makes new actions available to edit, copy and delete the rule, **2** and use 'Swap Source and Target Folder'. **3** Rule Colors **4** lets you personalise your rules. Click Save Rules **5** when you're done, then click the clock icon **6** to synchronise schedules.



5 In the Scheduled Synchronization Tasks window, click the 'Task is enabled' box and go to the Triggers tab. **1** Schedule syncing using the date and time fields, **2** then click OK. **3** Once you create a trigger, click Add **4** to make more and use the drop-down arrow **5** to switch between them.



6 Double click any rule. Besides General, there are four tabs: Filters **1** is used to determine when syncing occurs, based on filename matches **2** and recent edits; **3** Compare and Versioning **4** are used to set rules if there's a sync conflict; and Advanced **5** offers additional sync settings.



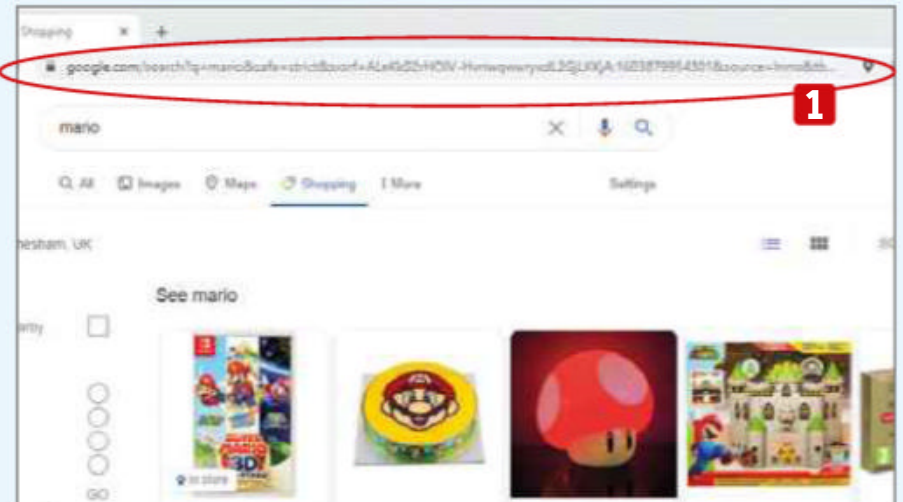
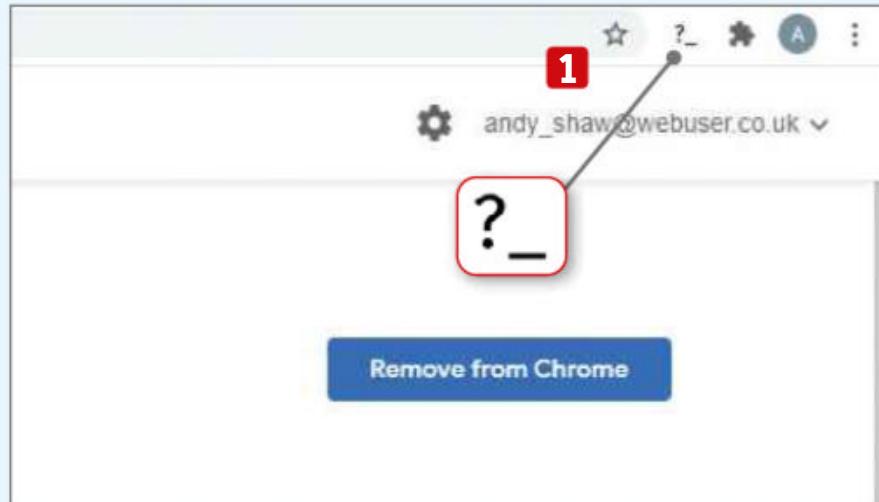
Strip trackers from links before you click them

Many websites use URL tracking to follow you around the web. This is when the address of a link you click is loaded with information about you that is then carried forward to the next site, such as the site you've come

from and what you searched for. Neat URL is a browser add-on designed to strip this private information before you pass it on.

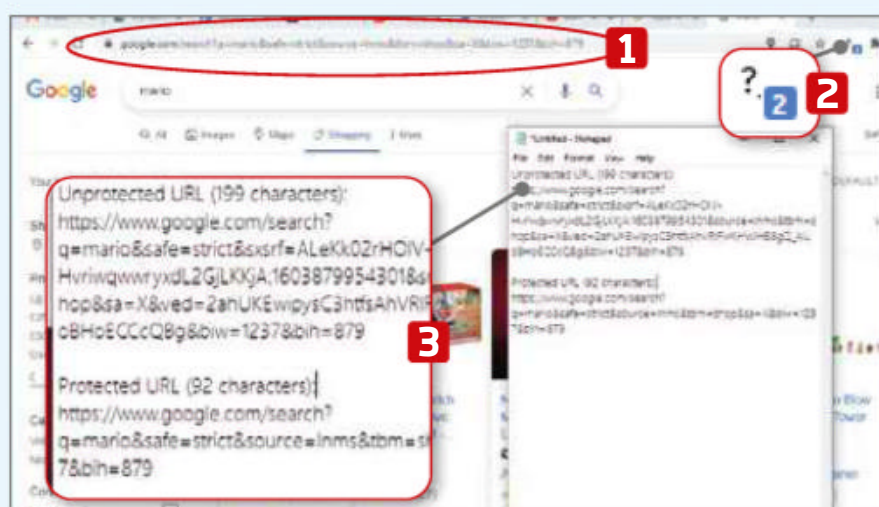


Neat URL: bit.ly/3oAo90P mzl.la/31I67zz | 10 mins | Chrome Firefox



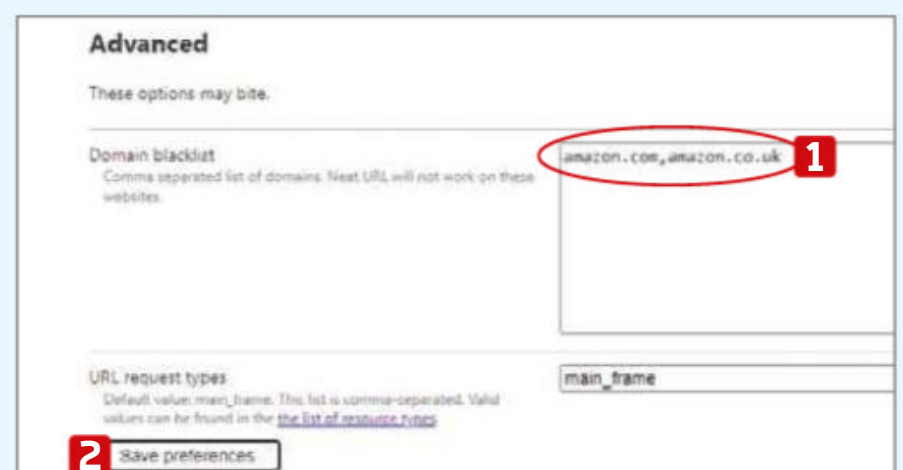
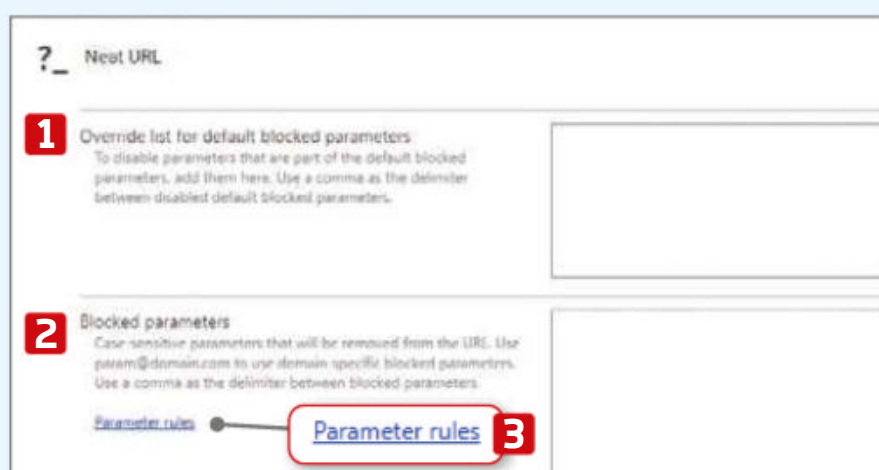
1 Download and install the extension from the appropriate link for your browser. Its toolbar button looks like a question mark and an underscore. **1** Left-click the icon to toggle it on or off. When it's off, it displays a diagonal red line through the icon.

2 The extension works automatically, stripping URLs of a wide range of tracking information. For example, if you use Google to search for the best price for an item, Google adds a fingerprinting code. **1** In our example, the unprotected browser shows a URL of 199 characters.



3 With Neat URL switched on, the fingerprinting information is stripped out automatically, creating a URL of just 92 characters. **1** A blue box indicates the number of elements removed. **2** Our Notepad window shows the two URLs, so you can see the difference. **3**

4 To access the extension's settings in Chrome, right-click its symbol and choose Options. In Firefox, choose Preferences instead. At the top, there's a list of all the sites and trackers that Neat URL already strips. **1** Use the boxes below this section to tweak the default list.



5 In 'Override list for default blocked parameters', **1** you can type individual parameters from the main box to override the block and let them through. To block more parameters, add them to the 'Blocked parameters' box. **2** Click 'Parameter rules' to find out how to format them. **3**

6 To allow domains that Neat URL blocks (you may want to support sites that earn essential revenue through Amazon links, for example), add them to the Domain blacklist box, separated by commas. **1** After making any changes to the settings, click the Save Preferences button. **2**

Weekend Project

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



How to...

Create a digital catalogue of your physical collections

Wayne Williams shows you how to catalogue your collections so you never lose track of what you've got

Whether you own a collection of specialist items you've accumulated over the years – stamps, coins, autographs, wine, old computers – or you've got a growing library of CDs, DVDs, books or computer magazines, it can be useful to catalogue the contents, so you can see at a glance the details of each item. If it's a film collection, for example, you could include the release date, genre, cast and more.

Having a catalogue also makes it easy to share details of your collection with others and, if you lend people items, to keep a record of who has what and how long they've had it for.

Depending on the type of collection you own, you can create your catalogue in a spreadsheet or opt for a database.



What you need

There are lots of ways to catalogue a collection, ranging from a spreadsheet (such as Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets) to more advanced databases. For this Weekend Project, we'll be using TreeLine (treeline.bellz.org). It's available for both Windows and Linux, and is what's known as an Outliner or a PIM (Personal Information Manager). Its aim is to store any kind of information and

organise it using a tree structure.

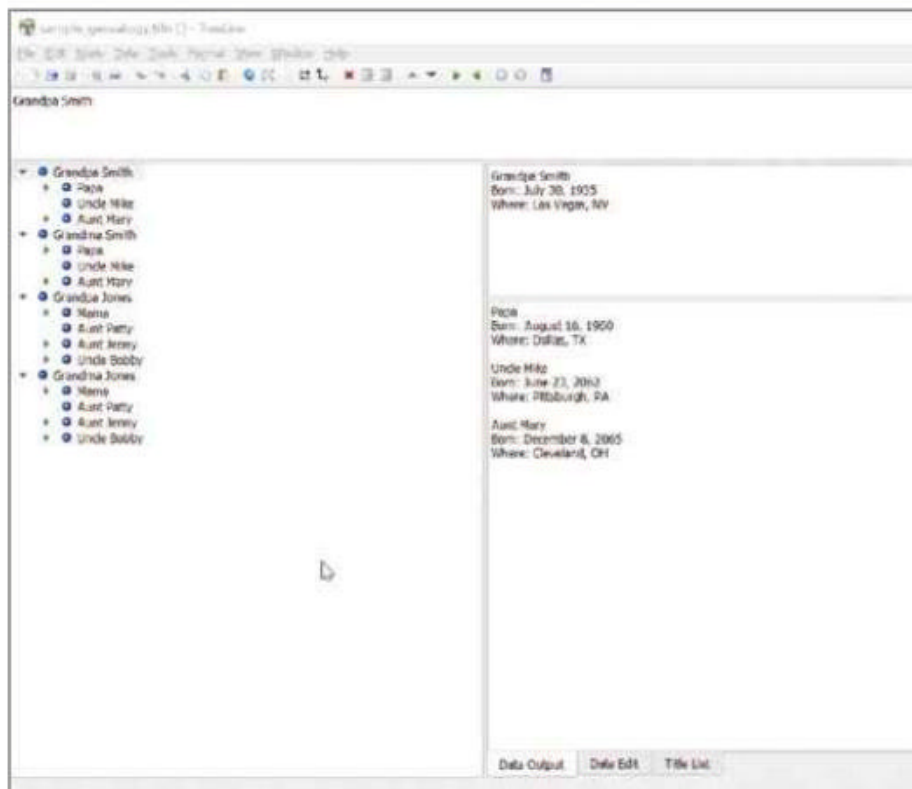
The latest version of TreeLine works well with Windows 10 and, although it doesn't have the most exciting interface and isn't hugely intuitive, once you understand how it works, you'll find adding new items a breeze.

Install TreeLine

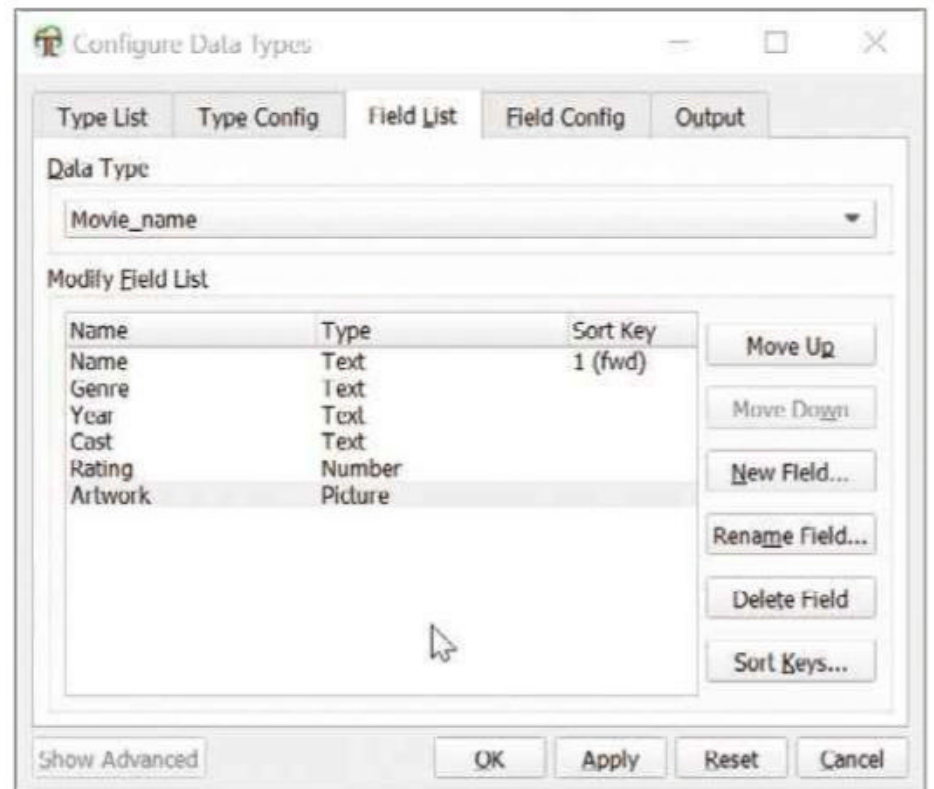
When you first install TreeLine, you have the option to save the configuration file

to the home or program directory:

choose the former if you want to access the database from the PC you've installed the software on; or the latter if you plan on creating the catalogue on a USB memory drive so it can be carried around with you (just be sure to back up your data regularly). For Windows, you can install the software like any other program (keep the option to 'Create an uninstaller' ticked when installing).



Use TreeLine to make a simple family tree – there's a sample genealogy style included that you can customise



Add as many fields as you need in the Field List section of the Configure Data Types box

Choose a catalogue template

TreeLine offers a choice of different templates, depending on what you want to use the software for. These are Default (Single Line Text), Long Text (for a more thorough description), Contact List, Book List and ToDo List. You can use these to get started, to give you an idea of how the program works, but they aren't totally necessary because they only vary slightly from the default template. You can also open a sample file for different styles – such as basic longtext, basic contacts, genealogy and bookmarks – for inspiration for your own catalogue. Follow our Mini Workshop, below, to set up the software.

Once you've set up the style of your catalogue and given it a name, click the

Type Config tab in the Configure Data Types window and choose to allow HTML rich text formatting, text bullets or a table for field data. We haven't opted for this in our example, but it's something you might want to consider.

Organise and set up fields

You now need to add the fields you want to specify for your collection, such as Genre, Year, Cast and Rating. Click Field List and add the various options. Make sure the correct Data Type is selected in the drop-down menu if you have more than one ('Movie_name', in our example) and click the New Field button on the right. Enter a name for the field and click OK, then repeat the process and keep adding fields until you're done. You can

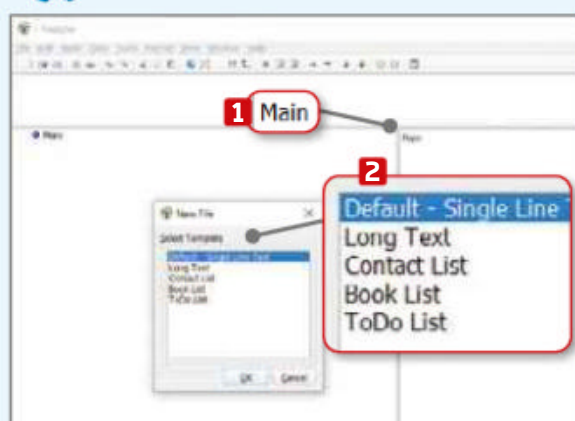
return here later if you want to add new fields or change existing ones, but it's better to try and have it set up correctly from the start.

Once you've filled all your entries, click the Field Config tab, which is next to Field List. Select an item in the drop-down menu and choose a Field Type. Options here include Text, HTML Text, Number (useful for ratings), Date, Choice and Picture.

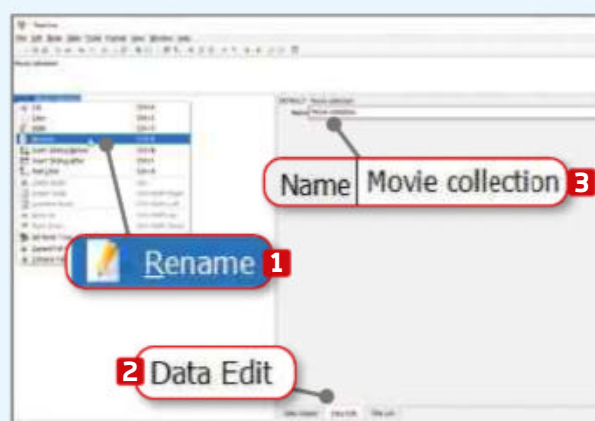
You may need to customise the Output Format string, which can seem confusing, but clicking the Format Help button presents you with a list of options in a drop-down box. Select 'Date', for example, and you can pick what you want to display from day, month, year, weekday, month name, week number,



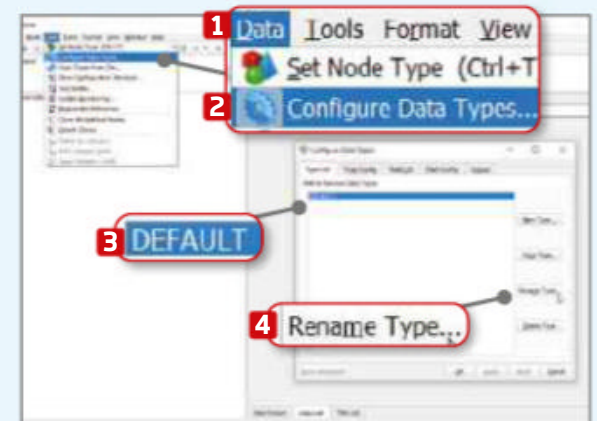
MINI WORKSHOP | Set up your catalogue in TreeLine



1 Run the program and it opens on a page that's ready to customise. The word 'Main' appears **1** because it's the root of your document. If you want to create a particular type of list, go to File, New and select the one you want. **2** You can also load sample files through File, Open Sample.







2 For our collection, we'll be cataloguing movies. Right-click where it says Main in the left-hand pane and select Rename. **1** Enter the title for your collection. This name now appears in all the panes. Click the Data Edit tab **2** and the title field is displayed in the right-hand panel. **3**



3 Now choose the type of data you want to add to your inventory. Click Data **1** in the menu bar and select Configure Data Types. **2** Select Default **3** in the new window, then click Rename Type **4** and give it a suitable title, such as 'Movie_name' for a movie collection.

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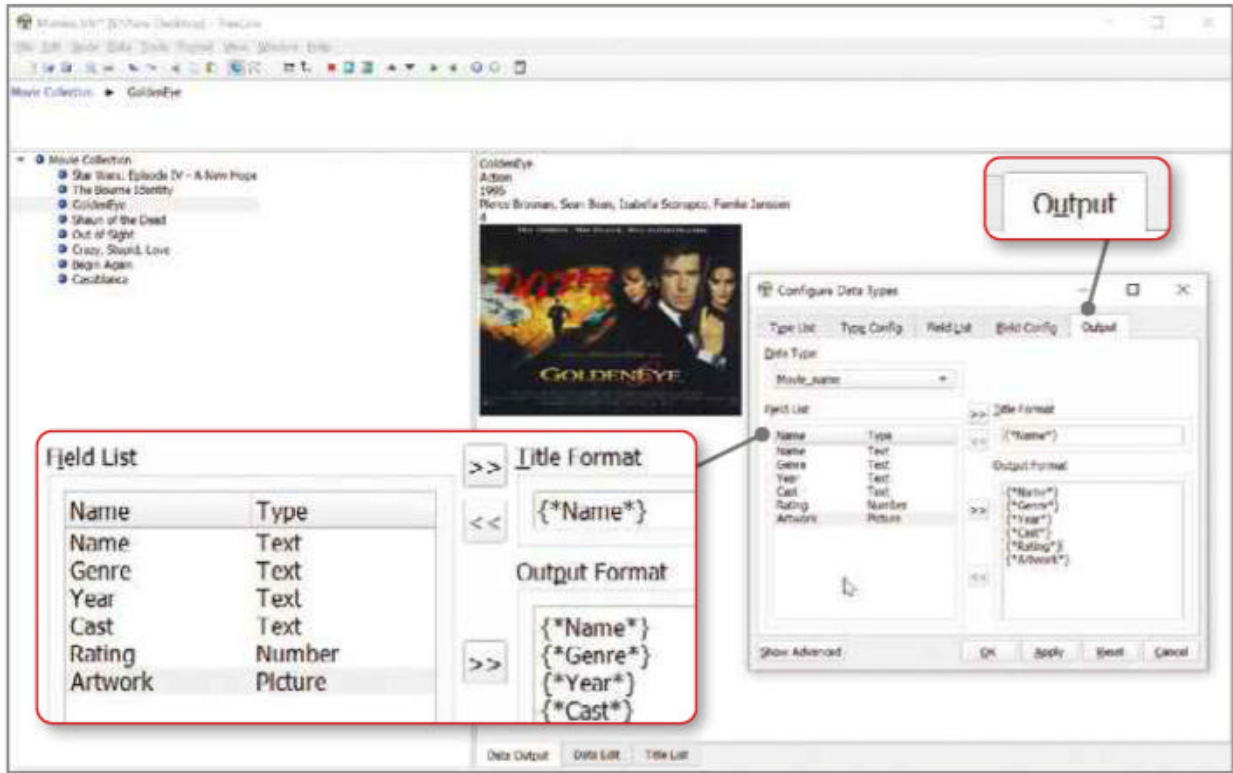
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You can decide which fields to include when outputting your catalogue

which is disabled by default. You can also assign keyboard shortcuts and customise the program's toolbars, fonts and colours.

View your catalogue

In the Configure Data Types box (which is launched from the Data menu), you can customise which fields your exported list displays by clicking the Output tab.

Select the fields you want to include from the Field List panel and use the arrows in the centre to move them to the Output Format box, adding a return after each one. Now go to the File menu in the main interface to export your catalogue in various formats or print a hard copy. ■

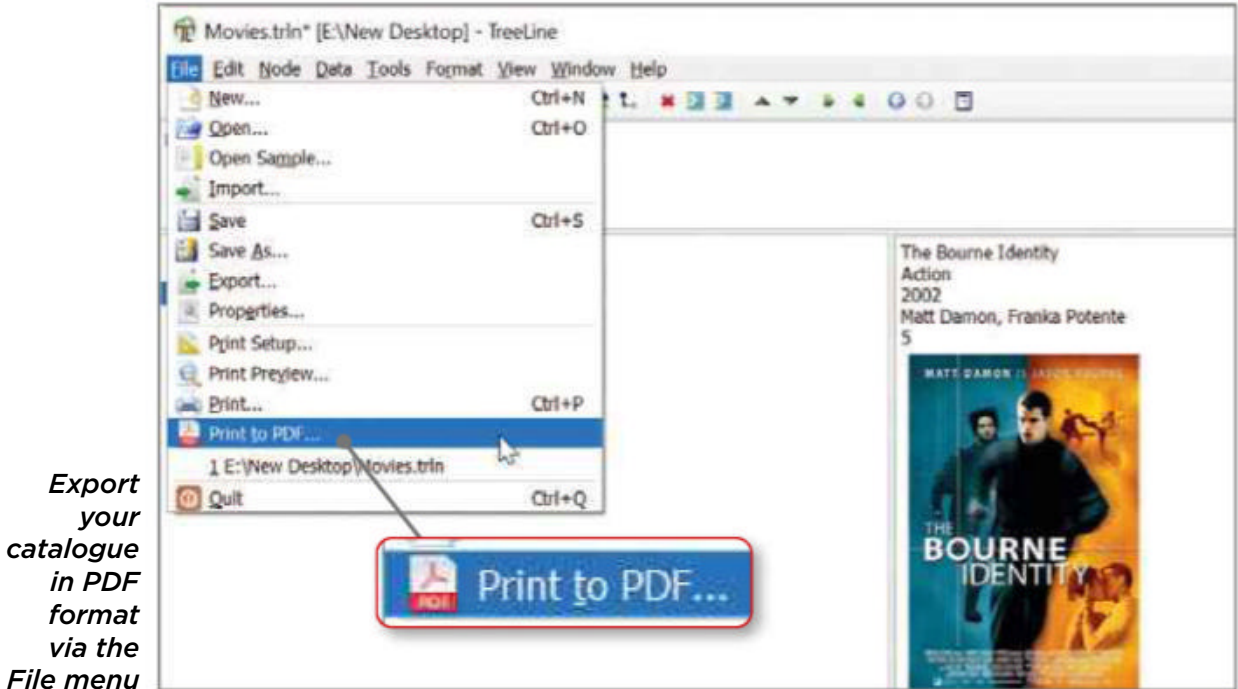
day of year and so on. You can also manually tweak the format.

Customise each Field in turn, applying the changes, and click OK when you've finished. We show you how to add entries to your database in our Mini Workshop, below.


Tidy up your catalogue

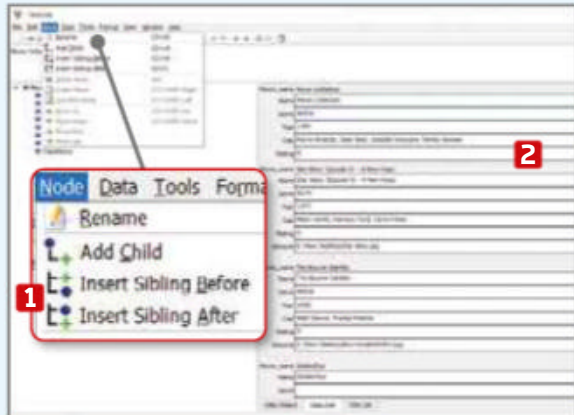
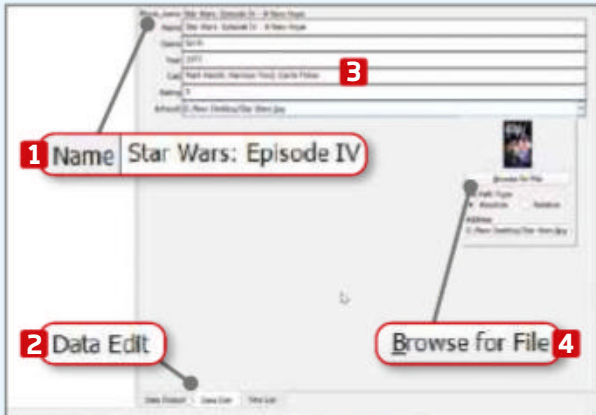
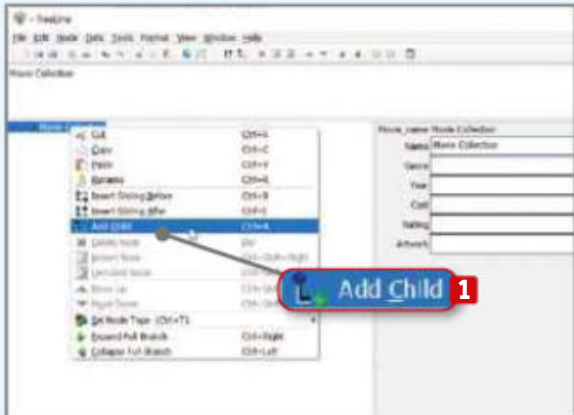
The Tools menu at the top lets you Find or 'Find and Replace' text, which can come in handy once your catalogue grows to a significant size. There's also a Text Filter and a Spell Check available.

The General Options provide some customisation tweaks, such as configuring the number of undo levels and how often auto-save should kick in,



Export your catalogue in PDF format via the File menu

 **MINI WORKSHOP** | Add entries to your catalogue



1 Once you've filled in all the fields and customised them, you can begin adding your items to the database. In the main interface, right-click the node on the left and select Add Child from the context menu. **1** You can use the keyboard shortcut Ctrl+A to perform the same action.

2 This 'child' entry is the first item in your collection. Give it a name **1** and make sure the Data Edit tab at the bottom is selected, **2** then fill in the details. **3** We've included an Artwork field (with the type set to 'Picture'). To add an image, browse for the file. **4**

3 With the child name selected on the left, go to Node and select to add a sibling, either before or after the current entry **1** (pressing Ctrl+B or Ctrl+I will also generate siblings). Fill in the details for all the items you add. **2** By clicking the Child heading, you can fill in multiple items at the same time.

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Web User Masterclass

Customise how Windows works by tweaking the taskbar and its windows

Hide program windows and taskbar tools

Despite its name, Taskbar Hide (bit.ly/34bRjLe) doesn't only hide the taskbar. In fact, it provides several different functions, many of which don't even involve the taskbar.

Launch it and it displays a list of running programs with an icon toolbar across the top. Select a program by ticking its box, then click the first computer icon in the toolbar to hide that window. It can't be opened again until the second computer icon in the toolbar is clicked to unhide it.

Click the monitor icon in the toolbar to display options to show or hide the Start button, task window (all the program icons on the taskbar), system tray and clock.

Customise the way Windows works with Taskbar Hide



Boost system menus

SmartSystemMenu (bit.ly/3kiGdd5) is one of our favourite Windows tweaking tools. It provides various functions to make using programs and windows easier. Go to github.com/AlexanderPro and click SmartSystemMenu. Click Latest under Releases on the right-hand side and download the Zip file. There's no installation to perform, just unzip it and run it whenever you need it.

To use SmartSystemMenu, right-click an empty part of the title bar of any window (Notepad, for example) to get an enhanced context menu with extra features, along with the usual Windows menu options.

Select Roll Up from this menu and the window compacts like a roller blind to show just the title bar, freeing up space

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.

on your desktop. Select it again to unroll it. Transparency, lets you choose a setting from 0 to 100% to make a window see-through, while Always On Top prevents a window from being hidden below other windows.

Selecting Resize provides more than a dozen pre-set window sizes, while Alignment lets you position the window in a specific area of the screen: top-left, bottom-right, middle-center and many more. It's a quick way to resize and position the windows on your desktop.

Tidy up the taskbar

Taskbar icons are left-aligned, with new ones added to the right end as programs are run. CenterTaskbar is a visual tweak that simply repositions these icons at the bottom-centre of your screen.

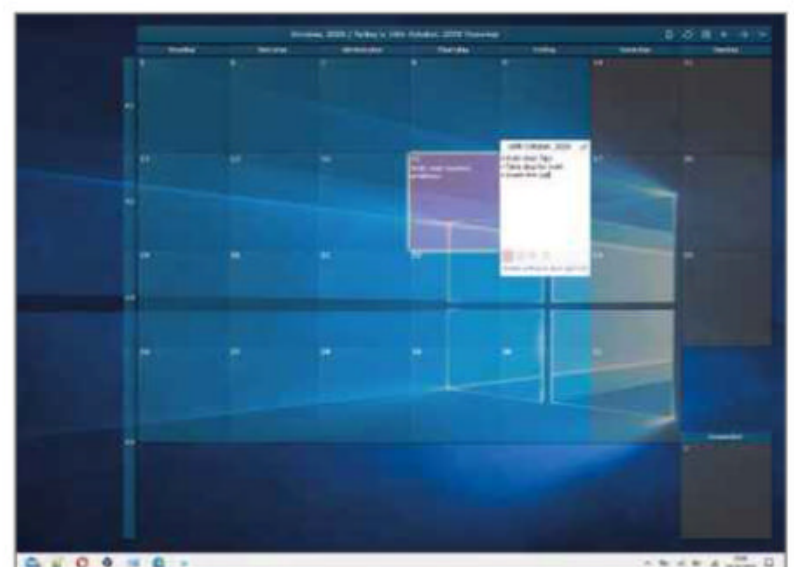
Go to bit.ly/3dGaO1E and click the Latest button in the Releases section in the column on the right. Your browser may flag it as potentially unwanted, because Windows doesn't

know what it is, but it's perfectly safe.

If Windows displays a security message when you run CenterTaskbar, click 'More info', then 'Run anyway'. We checked it with [VirusTotal.com](https://www.virustotal.com) and 70 antivirus programs said it was fine. Right-click its icon at the right side of the taskbar to quit.

Add a space-saving calendar

The built-in Windows 10 Calendar provides a quick and easy way to manage your schedule, and clicking



Turn your desktop into a big calendar and add appointments and to-do lists



the taskbar clock pops up a handy mini version. However, for a more convenient, customisable and visually pleasing option, we recommend Desktop Calendar (www.desktopcal.com), which saves you opening a window by displaying it on your desktop.

The calendar displays the current month and double-clicking any day lets you enter various elements such as appointments, to-do tasks, reminders and general information. Use the toolbar at the bottom of the small window when typing in the calendar to set the colour, make a list, cross off to-do items when done and more. Click the edit icon (pencil and clipboard) to set up repeating calendar events.

Desktop Calendar doesn't interfere with any icons or program windows on your desktop. You can still click and drag them, and double-click shortcuts to open files and folders or run programs.

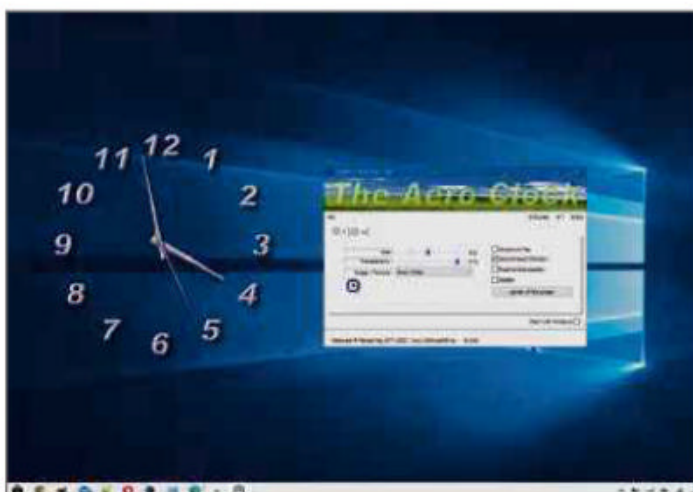
The software starts automatically when installed. Click the 'V' in the top-right corner to open a menu with options to set the position and size, import and export calendar contents, and access other settings.

Add a desktop clock

There's a clock on the taskbar but if you've set your taskbar to hide, you won't be able to tell the time at a glance. One solution is to add a desktop clock, such as Aero Clock (bit.ly/35d9Lmd).

Click the Download button at the top and choose a download. We selected the 64-bit Zip, which runs without installing anything. Click and drag in the middle of the clock to move it around, and use the configuration window to set the size, colour and texture for the clock's numbers and hands.

There's an option to start the clock automatically with Windows or it can be run manually when you need it. Another useful option is to make it permanently sit on top of other windows. A small clock in the corner of the desktop that can't be hidden could be useful.



Add a clock to the Windows desktop to keep an eye on the time

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

Keep windows on top

A common problem when working on a small screen, such as a laptop, is that having several windows open at the same time means they overlap each other. More annoying still, windows can end up buried underneath other windows, so you can't see or click them.

PinMe (bit.ly/375RjOL) is a simple tool that performs several functions, one of which is to keep a chosen window permanently on top to prevent others from covering it. PinMe comes in a compressed RAR file, so you'll need 7-zip (7-zip.org) or PeaZip (peazip.github.io) to open it. The archive contains both 32- and 64-bit folders – just drag the one you need to the Downloads folder, then open it to run the software.

You won't notice anything happening but PinMe is working in the background. Whichever window is currently on top can be kept in position by pressing Ctrl+E. Try this out by launching Calculator from the Start menu and pressing Ctrl+E to make it always visible. Now, when you open various other windows – programs, web browsers and so on – Calculator stays on top, permanently available for whenever you need to perform a calculation. PinMe adds an icon in the notification area of the taskbar, though it might be hidden in the overflow pop-up panel. Right-click it to show the menu.

Each window on the desktop

appears as a menu and there are options to make it the top window, move it to the top if it's not already there, or move it to the bottom. Think of the desktop windows like a stack of cards – you can move any one to the top or bottom of the pile.

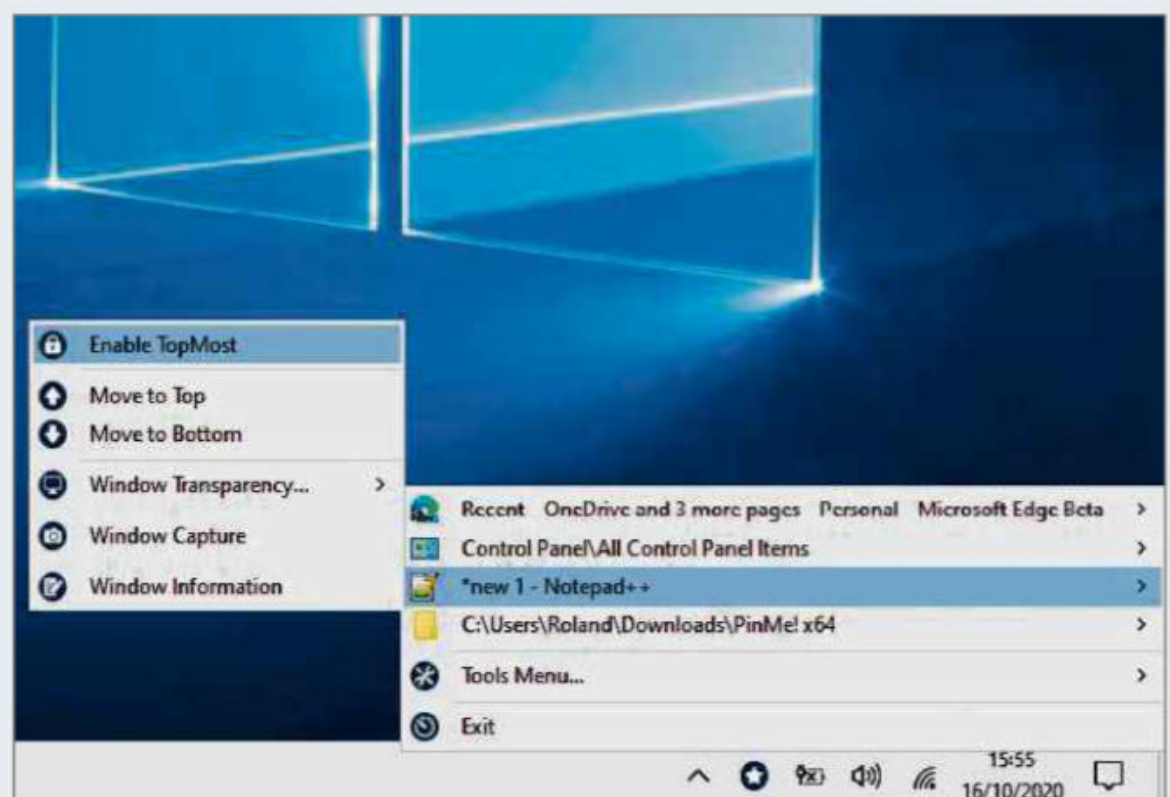
See-through windows

Having one window set permanently on top of others still means that the rest remain obscured from view. One solution is to make the overlapping window transparent, so you can see whatever is behind it.

This is another option available in PinMe. The opacity of windows can be set from 10% (almost completely transparent) to 100% (no transparency). Right-click the PinMe icon in the notification area of the taskbar, hover your mouse over Tools Menu and click Enable Windows Transparency.

Right-click PinMe again to list the desktop windows, then move the mouse over one and a submenu appears. Move your mouse over the Window Transparency menu and select a percentage on the next menu.

PinMe has an extra feature for laptop users: you can push up or pull down with two fingers on the trackpad to adjust the transparency of the topmost window. For example, if Explorer or a web browser is covering other windows, you can simply pull down with two fingers to see what's underneath.



Make a window stay on top and set its transparency with PinMe

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



EMAIL

Delete stubborn emails in Yahoo and IE

Q I recently reset my laptop to a previous date and I now have problems deleting emails from my Yahoo account with Internet Explorer (I know, I'm a bit behind the times!). I've used restore points before and never had this problem.

I can view sent emails but, when I select to delete them, they don't go to the Deleted Items folder and just stay in my inbox. I can, however, select them and move them to the Archive folder, but they can't then be deleted from there, either.

Have my email settings been changed? How do I repair this?

Mike Nunn, via email

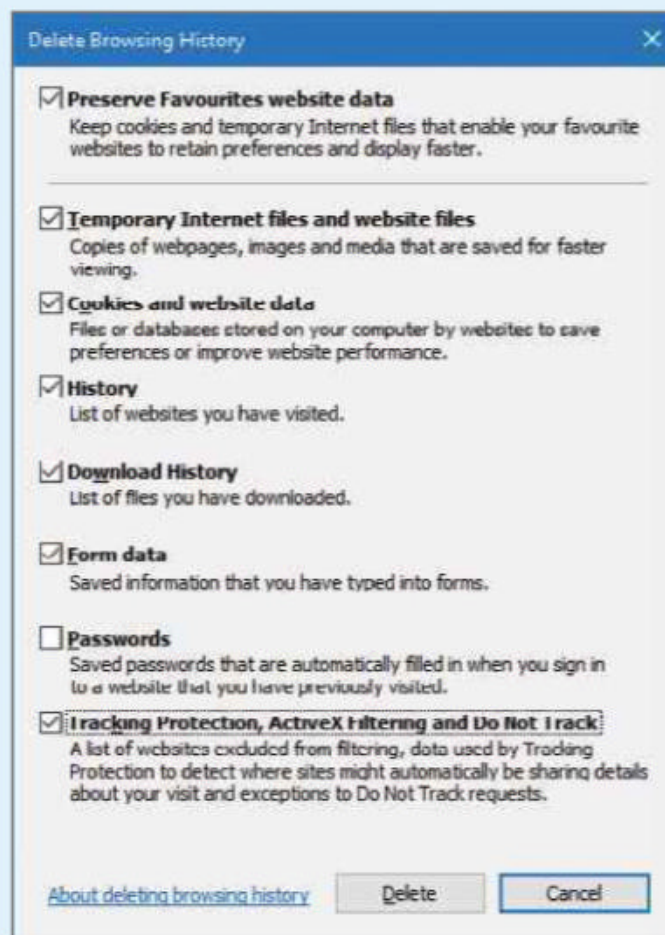
A How did you reset your laptop to a previous date? Did you restore a backup? That could replace Internet Explorer's cache and browsing history with an older version, which could confuse Yahoo Mail. Click the cog icon

Problems with websites and services may be fixed by deleting caches and history

in Internet Explorer and go to Safety, then InPrivate Browsing. This opens a new window with no browsing history or cache. Go to Yahoo Mail and try deleting the messages again.

If that works, click the cog icon in Internet Explorer and go to Safety, then 'Delete browsing history'. Select everything except passwords and click Delete. Yahoo should now be fine.

If InPrivate Browsing doesn't work, it may be a compatibility problem with Internet Explorer, which no longer works with some sites. Go to www.google.com/chrome and download and install the latest version of Chrome. If you have 32-bit Windows, scroll down to the



bottom of the page and click 'Other platforms' for a version that will work on your PC.

VIDEO

Create DVDs for free

Q I'm a member of a dispersed religious community. Central to our usual pattern of life are regular meetings but, during lockdown, we have been unable to meet in person and have resorted to Zoom. This has been useful but many members are elderly and not tech savvy. I know that some of them are feeling isolated.

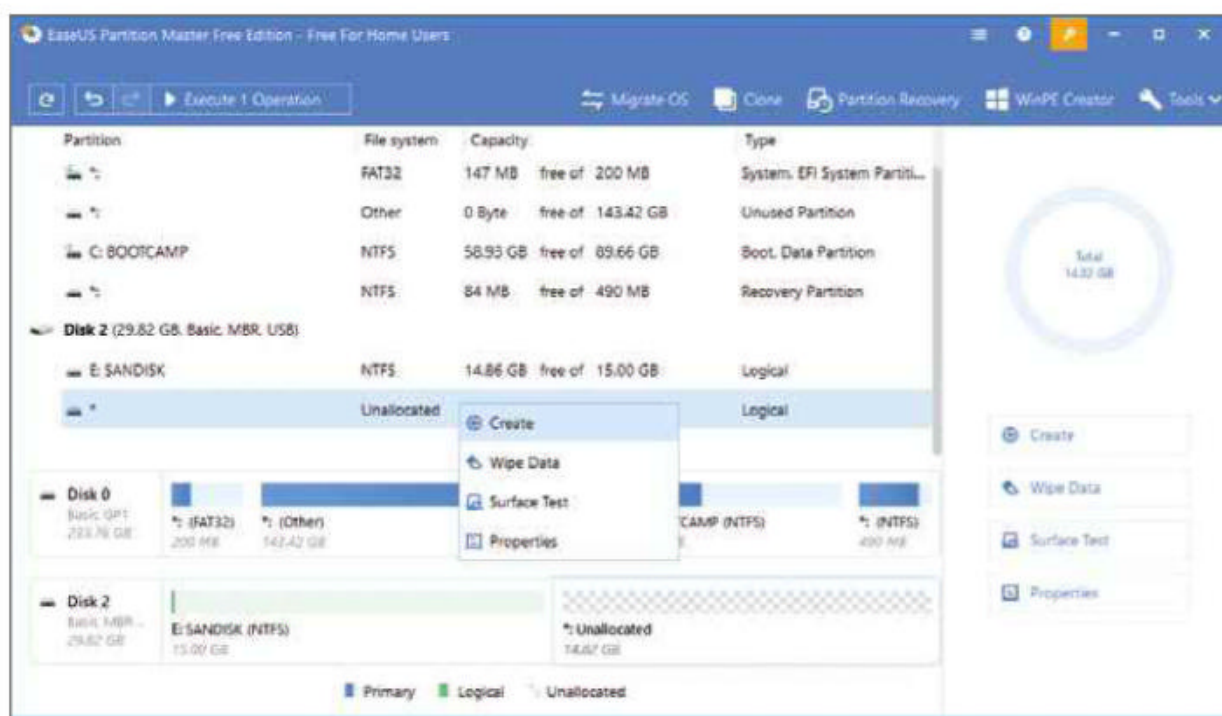
Some of our members have access to a DVD player attached to their TV. Zoom records meetings to an MP4 file and I'd like to transfer this to a regular DVD (Region 2) to send through the post, so these members can keep in touch.

There are programs to convert MP4 to DVD, but the free ones often limit the length of the recording or add a watermark advertising their product. Do you know of any free programs that are available and fully functional?

John Chesworth, via email



Create DVDs from videos with DVDStyler, and add menus and titles



Use Partition Master for creating, deleting and repairing disk partitions

A DVDStyler (www.dvdstyler.org) is a free open-source DVD maker. It not only lets you burn discs, but also has tools for creating interactive menus, so the viewer can skip sections they aren't interested in. Multiple audio tracks and subtitles can also be added.

There are other programs you might want to look at, such as WinX DVD Author (www.winxdvd.com/dvd-author), which has similar features to DVDStyler. BurnAware Free (www.burnaware.com) is more of a general-purpose CD and DVD burner, but it can create video DVDs. DVD Flick (www.dvdflick.net) is worth a look because it can burn almost any video to DVD, and add audio tracks and menus.

You mention Region 2 DVDs. Regions are only used with commercial copyright DVDs, so that a movie can be released exclusively in one part of the world. Regions don't apply to DVDs you create yourself, which should be capable of playing on any DVD player, regardless of its region setting.

HARDWARE

Recover a malfunctioning SSD drive

Q I inadvertently unplugged my PC from the mains while it was still switched on – I thought I was unplugging something else. When I replaced the plug and turned on the PC, I discovered that drive C: was no longer available and the operating system wouldn't load. I removed the drive and connected it to my laptop, but I still couldn't see it.

I eventually replaced the drive with a new SSD and reinstalled Windows 10. Fortunately, my data was stored on an additional drive, D:, which was unaffected by the interrupted mains power supply.

Reconnecting the broken drive to the PC and using Disk Management, I found

the drive shown as unallocated/not initialised. Trying to initialise the drive results in an error message "Data error (cyclic redundancy check)". I have tried scandisk at the command prompt to recover the drive, but to no avail.

This has been an expensive lesson to learn. I've now labelled all my plugs to prevent a similar accident. Meanwhile, I am now left with my old 128GB SSD that I can't use – unless you can suggest a way to fix it?

Roger Copeland, via email

A Cutting the power to a PC doesn't usually cause problems. Most of the time, nothing bad happens and only occasionally do disk errors arise. You

were just unlucky.

The Windows Disk Management utility is good, but it's not the most powerful tool available and an alternative program may still stand a chance of reviving your old drive. Try the free versions of EaseUS Partition Master (bit.ly/2Eg7cFv) and AOMEI Partition Assistant Standard (www.diskpart.com).

The paid-for versions of these programs provide extra tools, but you may find the free ones do what you need. For example, in Partition Master, try the Wipe Data and Surface Test options. Delete all partitions on the disk to remove everything and start with a clean drive. Then create a partition, format it and assign an unused drive letter, such as G or H.

Some drive manufacturers have special tools for managing, monitoring and repairing SSDs, such as Samsung Magician (bit.ly/34UZKdh) and Intel Solid State Drive Toolbox (intel.ly/375oKRE). However, they only work with the manufacturer's own drives and, even then, only with certain models. If you know the make and model of your drive, check whether the manufacturer provides its own tools to fix it.

SECURITY

Avoid telephone scams

Q I am one of those people who believe – unwisely, no doubt – in wasting the time of scam callers. I frequently receive recorded message calls, supposedly from Amazon.

HARDWARE

Save TV shows from a Humax hard drive

Q I have one of the early Humax Youview boxes that can record TV programmes. I am concerned that the hard drive will eventually fail and I will lose all my treasured recordings. I believe I may be able to copy items via the analogue scart socket to a DVD recorder, but this will lose quality and take a lot of effort. Is there a way to copy everything directly to my PC via an HDMI lead?

Paul Rowe, via email

A It depends on your computer but if it's a recent and reasonably powerful model, a USB 3 capture device should work. These are small boxes, like a big thumb drive, that plug into the PC's USB 3 port. A cable



Capture cards are designed to capture video from games consoles but can also record from HDMI TV boxes

then connects the device to the HDMI socket on whatever you want to record from, such as a TV box or Xbox.

Search for "usb 3 capture card" on Amazon, for example, and you'll see plenty of options. Prices range from about £15 for budget models to £100 for top-of-the-range devices.





Ask the Expert

The messages relate to renewal of Amazon Prime accounts and invite me to “press 1” to speak to someone.

On receiving a second such call yesterday, I played along by pressing 1. The message was repeated and I pressed 1 again. I was put through to a manager and I carried out his instructions, but only up to a point.

That point was when I had downloaded AnyDesk (www.anydesk.com). Opening the app displayed Amazon Prime Servers with two boxes below: one contained a number and the other said Accept, which the caller was trying to get me to select.

Here’s my two-part question: is AnyDesk legitimate? I believe it is. And if so, how come it opens with Amazon Prime Servers already displayed? I do not have an Amazon Prime account.

I told the scammer I wasn’t going to give him control of my computer and I put the phone down, then uninstalled AnyDesk and performed a full scan.

Martin Bowley, via email

A AnyDesk is legitimate software with 250 million downloads and 400 million sessions a month. It’s designed for companies and lets an IT person take over an employee’s computer to monitor it, fix problems, install software and so on.

It works remotely over the internet,



AnyDesk is legitimate software but could be used by a criminal to take over your PC

which is especially useful these days with so many people working from home, and allows a company’s IT department to remotely maintain and repair its computers, no matter where they are located.

AnyDesk can be branded with a company’s name and logo, which means a scammer can easily add Amazon’s branding to make the software look legitimate.

If you had run this software, it would

have taken over your computer. You could have been locked out, your drive might have been encrypted and your files would be held to ransom. Private information could have been stolen, bank accounts accessed and more.

It may seem like fun to wind up these people and waste their time, but you are dealing with criminals who are often part of large and well-funded gangs. In our opinion, it’s better not to mess with them – just put the phone down!

WINDOWS

Dual-boot Windows XP and 7

Q I have two hard-drive partitions, labelled C: and D:. Is it possible to have Windows XP installed on C: and Windows 7 on partition D:, both on the same hard drive? I’d like to have the choice of which of the two operating systems to launch because I have a number of older programs that I would like to keep using.

I was advised by a Currys PC World employee that it can’t be done – you have to have one or the other. If you can confirm this, then I will give in gracefully and stop trying.

T Wilson, via email

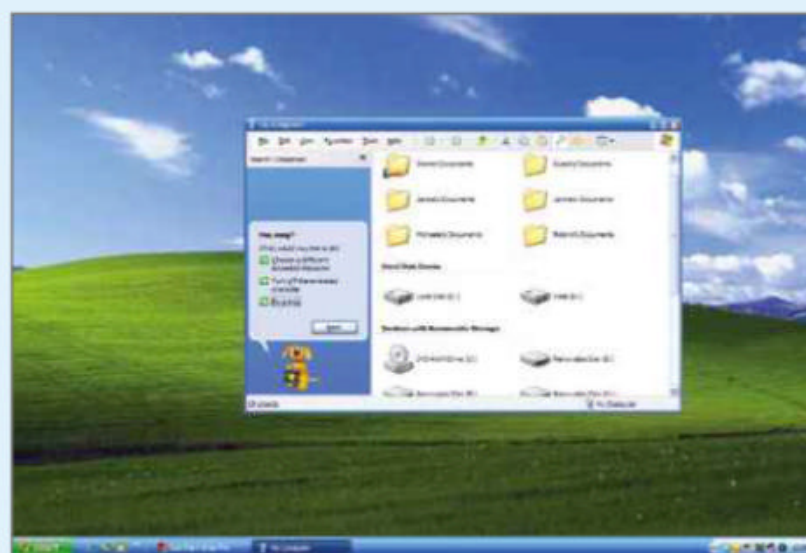
A It is a long time since we dual-booted XP and 7, but it is possible. The general rule is to install the older operating system first, then create a partition within it to install the newer operating system. The Partition Master and Partition

If you need Windows XP to run old software, try installing the operating system on a partition

Assistant Standard free tools mentioned in Roger Copeland’s reply (see page 67) are useful for this. Shrink the C: drive to create at least 40GB of space, then create a new partition in the unallocated space.

Run Windows setup from the installation disc and pay close attention to where it will be installed. Do not accept the default C: drive or the current Windows installation will be overwritten. Select the new, empty partition you created.

The main problem with dual-booting



is that installing a second copy of Windows can overwrite the boot loader of the first one, making it unavailable. Installing XP on Windows 7 can do this, but installing 7 on XP should be fine. Either way, if you end up with only one copy of Windows, use EasyBCD (neosmart.net/EasyBCD) to create a boot menu. The software is free for personal use.



This fortnight, Roland has been trying out the new features in iOS and iPadOS 14



Readers' Helpdesk

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

WINDOWS

Fix 'password incorrect' error

Q Whenever I start or restart my computer, I get the message 'Username or password incorrect. Try again', before I've even done anything. I can start the computer by clicking an icon on the left and entering my PIN, but I would prefer to start without a password. I turned off 'use my info to automatically finish' but that doesn't work. I leave the computer in hibernation all the time because of this.

Dave Rhodes, via email

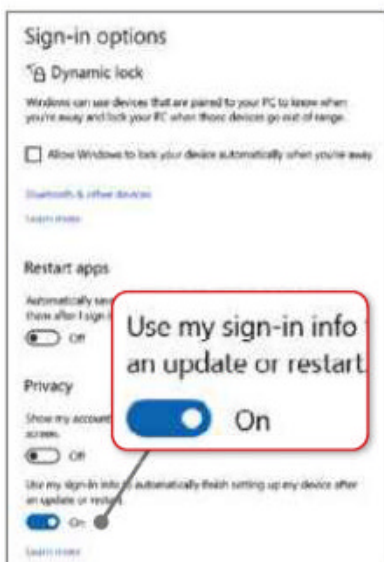
A You're probably seeing this message due to what Microsoft calls its 'improved boot-up experience'. Essentially, when your computer needs a restart, Microsoft uses your login details – from the first time you signed in – to restart and put you back where you were without requiring a second login.

To stop this happening again, go to Settings, Accounts, 'Sign-in options', then scroll to the bottom and toggle off 'Use my sign-in info to automatically finish setting up my device'. This should stop the 'password incorrect' message.

However, this still means you need to sign in every time. Another reader recently solved this problem (thanks for the tip, John!). In the Registry Editor, go to **HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE** and expand Policies, Microsoft, Windows, Personalization. If you don't see the

Personalization folder, create it and, within it, make a new DWORD (32-BIT) called **NoLockScreen**. Set the value to 1. Now open the following location:

Control your sign-in options from the Settings app



READERS RESPOND

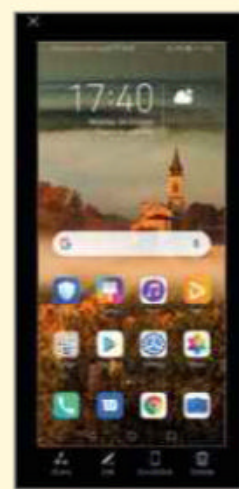
ANDROID

Take screenshots with a swipe

A Bill Franken asks how to take screenshots in Android 11 (bit.ly/webuser512). I'm using Android 11 on a OnePlus 8 and I can still take a screenshot by pressing the power button. Perhaps it's device-specific? Also, if you search for Screenshot in settings, you get the option to use three-finger swipe to take a screenshot.

Stan Elliott, via email

Try the power button or a three-finger swipe if you're struggling to take a screenshot in Android 11



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.

ANDROID

Q How do I use an Amazon Music playlist as an alarm sound on my Android device?

Ken, via email

iOS

Q I'd love to stream my Xbox to my iPhone, but Apple and Microsoft won't let me. Is there a workaround?

Stu 'Stewpot' Morris, via email

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Authentication\LogonUI\TestHooks

Create another DWORD (32-BIT), call it **Threshold** and set the value to 0. You may need to turn off 'Require sign-in' in Settings, then press Windows+R and type **netplwiz** to untick the 'Users must enter a username and password to use this computer' box. See Issue 511 (bit.ly/37RrJh7) for more details.

Steve Clark, Web User

MOBILE

Add files and folders to your Android home screen

Q I recently upgraded to an Android 10 phone. Is there a way to create shortcuts on the Home screen to provide quick access to a folder or photos?

Robin Macey, via email

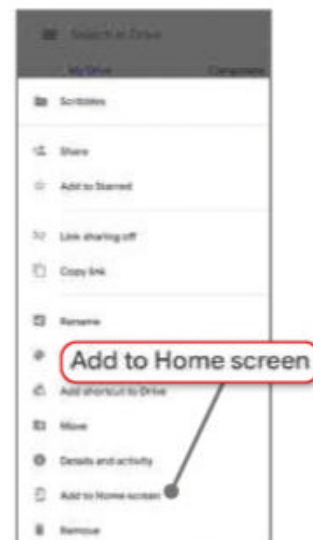
A There are several ways to pin folders and files to your home screen. You could use a file-manager tool such as

Total Commander (bit.ly/2zTPcKn), but the easiest solution is through Google Drive. Open the app (it's pre-installed), then create your folder, tapping the Plus to upload the files you want. Now, go back to Drive's main screen, where you can see all your folders. Tap the three dots and scroll down to tap 'Add to Home Screen', then 'Add automatically'. The file is now pinned to the phone's main Home screen and can be moved like any other app.

You can use the same method for individual files and photos you upload to a Google Drive folder – tap the three dots and choose to add it. To delete any pinned item, long-press it and choose Remove.

Steve Clark, Web User

Google Drive lets you add shortcuts to files and folders to your home screen



Your Top Tips

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



TOP TIP

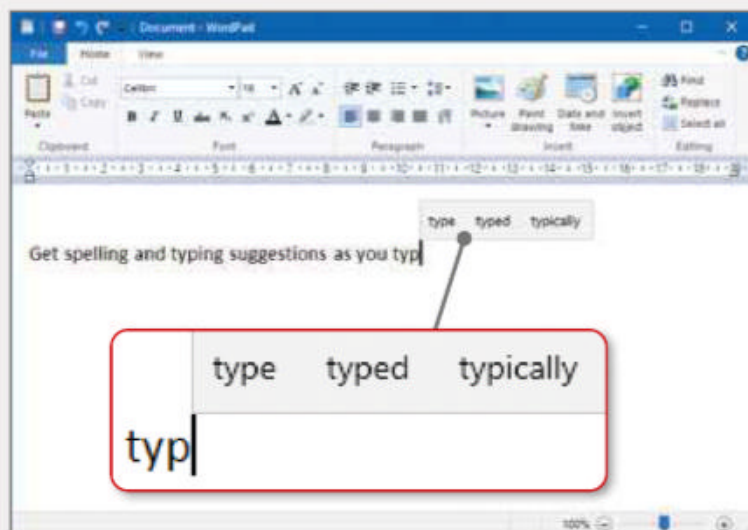
WINDOWS

Get suggestions as you type

I have always had trouble with spelling and some words just don't seem to stick. Also, the faster I type, the more mistakes I make. There is a great feature in Windows 10 that helps with typing. It can show you the correct spelling and even suggests words to use next to the word you're typing.

Open the Settings app and click Devices, then click Typing on the left and turn on all the switches. To see what this does, open WordPad, Notepad or even your browser (because it also works on websites). As you type, words appear above the cursor. If you type an incorrect spelling, the correct one is displayed and you can either click it with the mouse or correct your typing as you go.

Sometimes the feature predicts the word you want to type next. Press the



See typing suggestions and spelling corrections as you type

up arrow, then left or right to select the word you want, then tap the spacebar to enter it. This is really useful if you're slow at typing or you're typing a long word that's hard to spell.

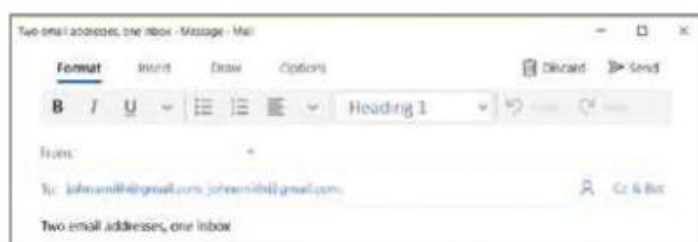
There's also a shortcut for ending a sentence – double-press the spacebar to add a full stop followed by a space.

Jon Foster, via email

EMAIL

Send emails to your alternative Outlook account

Many moons ago, I remember reading in your magazine that Gmail treats full stops in the first part of an email address as if they weren't there – for example, johnsmith@gmail.com and john.smith@gmail.com both go to the same inbox. Well, I've just discovered that Outlook also lets you add dots. Unfortunately, unlike Gmail, you can't do the old johnsmith+junkmail@gmail.com trick, but



This trick gives you multiple email addresses with one inbox

the dots definitely work.

I find this useful because I use my own 'dotted' email for throwaway sign-ups. If you're feeling especially tricky, you could try setting up a rule to redirect these emails to a specific folder, too.

Potter, via email

OFFICE

Open Word docs in Google

If you have a Google account, you can create and store documents using Google Docs at Google Drive (drive.google.com). I used this in the past but, because it saved documents in the '.gdoc' format that only works with Google Drive, I always had to export everything I wrote to Microsoft Word. I then had two files and they sometimes got out of sync, which was annoying.

Now, Google Docs reads and writes Word files, so you don't have to convert

them. Drag a Word '.docx' file from Explorer to Google Drive in a browser, or save one from an email. Double-click the Word file in the browser and Drive shows a preview with a button at the top to 'Open with Google Docs'. This used to create a copy in the Google Docs file format so you could edit it, but now, when you edit the document in Google Docs and quit, there's no Google Docs duplicate – just the Word file with all your edits.

I was confused the first time this happened but it makes viewing and editing Word files so much easier.

Graham Roberts, via email

WI-FI

Make your own QR code for Wi-Fi

If you're anything like me, when friends and family ask 'What's your Wi-Fi password?', you're filled with dread. I'm a security-conscious type and I never like divulging the password in case it gets misused, so I was over the moon to discover QiFi (qiifi.org). Simply input your Wi-Fi details and it generates a unique QR code that your guests can scan to connect. No more security worries, because it stores this information locally, and no more annoying questions like 'Did you say B or D?'.



Use this site to generate a QR code for your home Wi-Fi



WiFi supports most QR readers but you can always check the site to make sure. I imagine those who rent out holiday properties would also find this site helpful.

NJ, via email

SECURITY

Keep your phone safer

Since March, when I started walking more because of lockdown, I've found two iPhones on the street. Both were locked with passwords, so I left them where I found them in the hope that their owners retraced their steps. How much easier it would be if they had put a contact number on the lock screen. I do this on my Android phone and would expect iPhones to have a similar function. I put the following message: 'In case of emergency or lost, please contact', followed by my home phone number. It could just as easily be the number for your partner, friend or family member.

Graham, via email

WINDOWS

Start programs as an admin

It's a bit confusing, but even if you're the only person who uses your computer and have an admin account, you're still not in admin mode when programs run. Click a program on the Start menu and it's always run in standard mode. This is a security feature that was introduced in Windows 10. However, if you hold down Shift and Control and then click a program in the Start menu, it starts in administrator mode. You can tell admin mode has worked because the screen is dimmed and a message appears asking your permission to run the software.

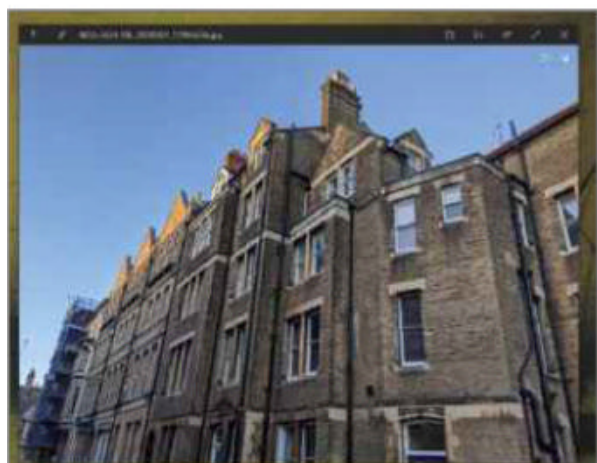
Most programs don't need admin mode but some are better for it. For example, you can do more in Command Prompt if you're in admin mode.

David Oliver, via email

WINDOWS

Preview files before opening

Quick Look is a Windows app that copies one of Apple's best features: the ability to preview files without having to open



Why open files when you can take a quick peek to check their content?

them. I found this particularly useful, having spent a lot of time opening multiple files, only to find they're not the ones I'm looking for. Hopefully this doesn't see me in *Blunder of the Fortnight*!

As with the macOS version, all you need to do is highlight a file and press the spacebar. After doing so, you can scroll to zoom into the file or use the tools along the ribbon to pin it, open it, share it and force it to stay on top. The software supports most common file types, including almost every image, audio and video format, Microsoft Office files, compressed files, PDFs, HTML and even email files.

Quick Look is available as both a Windows 10 app (bit.ly/34uJuk3) and a program from GitHub (bit.ly/37J9wly).

Lionel Briggs, via email

BROWSER TOOLS

Stop pop-ups and overlays

No-one likes a pop-up, do they? I doubt even developers and designers like them, despite insisting on littering their websites with them.

If you want to give your ad-blocker a helping hand, you should definitely try



Clean up websites with the Pop Up Off extension

Pop Up Off. It doesn't just remove pop-up boxes, it cleans everything on the page, including overlays, social buttons, cookie notifications and most other on-screen clutter that distracts, annoys and makes browsing a real pain.

The browser tool is available for Chrome (bit.ly/3ilxjd9), Firefox (mzl.la/2JOS8hS), Edge (bit.ly/34e32b8) and Opera (bit.ly/36m5san), so there's no excuse not to use it.

Joshua Chung, via email

BLUNDER OF THE FORTNIGHT

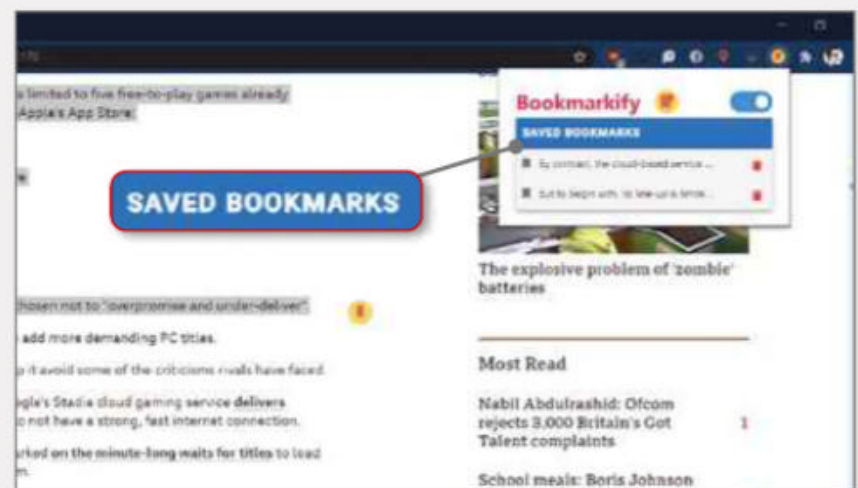
BROWSERS

Bookmark specific sections of a web page

I've wasted a lot of time filling up folders with bookmarks, then endlessly scrolling through them until

I find that one little section I need. I tried using a highlighter tool to make it easier to find what I needed, but it still required far too much time rolling the mouse wheel.

Now, I've started using Bookmarkify (bit.ly/2TtmTOB), a Chrome browser tool that's also available for Edge (bit.ly/35PAuFR) and Firefox (mzl.la/35zOh31). It's really simple to use: highlight any section of a webpage and the Bookmarkify icon appears. Click this and the section is saved locally. You can retrieve any bookmark



Jump to the part of a bookmarked page that you actually want

by opening the Bookmarkify browser tool and viewing the list (or deleting bookmarks you no longer need). If you have several mini-bookmarks on one page, you can jump to them by clicking Bookmarkify's coloured dots next to the scrollbar.

Ben Ronson, via email

Have you managed to fix a PC-related disaster?

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



Star Email

Apple's new iPhones aren't worth the money

I found it amusing that Issue 513 was bookended by a news story about Apple's new iPhone range and a letter from a reader asserting that "Apple quality is worth the extra money".

Clearly, if the most exciting innovations Apple now has to offer are one phone with a smaller screen and others with 5G connectivity (which is unavailable in most of the UK) and a "LiDAR laser scanner" (whatever that is), its extortionate prices are increasingly difficult to justify.

As several of your recent product reviews show, it's perfectly possible to buy a smartphone with a decent camera, ample storage and a good-



sized screen for less than £200. So why on Earth some people are still prepared to pay hundreds of pounds more for a phone, just because it's from Apple, is quite beyond me.

I don't doubt that Apple produces

high-quality hardware, but so do many other manufacturers who don't try to rip off their loyal customers. If the company really wants to innovate, it should produce a budget phone that doesn't skimp on features, but won't cost the equivalent of a monthly mortgage payment.

Of course, that will never happen while people are still happy to pay Apple's ridiculous prices. I'll stick with Android, thank you, which at least gives you the choice between high-end, mid-range and more affordable phones.

Patrick Coleman, via email

Back Issues disc winner



New Edge won't save my passwords

Following your recommendations, I've tried the new version of Microsoft Edge several times but have always returned to Google Chrome after a few days.



The main reason for this is that Edge seems incapable of storing my login details for any site. I have set it to save

usernames and passwords in Settings, by selecting 'Offer to save passwords' and 'Sign in automatically' in the Passwords section, but nothing seems to work.

In some cases, the login data is saved, but this only shows when you click Sign In on the site. On some sites this is never shown, so I have to look up my user details before I can log in.

This also happened with the old Edge, and I raised the problem with the Microsoft Community way back in 2017, but no relevant answers were forthcoming. So I will stick with Chrome for the foreseeable future and hope that eventually Microsoft sorts out the problem. Incidentally, I never had this issue with Internet Explorer!

Roy Phillips, Frome

What's happened to your Bitly links?

I notice that the format of the Bitly links you use in the magazine has changed over the last few issues, from user-friendly English to gobbledygook.

I gave up on the WonderFox link (Issue 512, page 29) when all my upper- and lower-case letter and number options failed, and just Googled the website instead. Is there a reason for the change or was it a case of 'it ain't broke, but let's fix it anyway'?







Bob Hubbard, via email

Web User says:

Unfortunately, Bitly has changed its policy regarding the creation of custom links. Previously, we could edit all shortened URLs to include a plain-English word and the relevant issue number, but Bitly now only allows us to create 50 custom links per month for free. Above this amount, there's a fairly hefty subscription fee, which we are unable to budget for. Apologies for any inconvenience this causes to you and other readers.



Quiz Answers: Issue 513

- The Masque of the Red Death** 
- The Turn of the Screw** 
- At the Mountains of Madness** 
- Interview with the Vampire** 
- The Woman in Black** 
- Pet Sematary** 

WINNER!

Well done to **James Head** who wins a Web User Back Issues Disc



WAYBACK MACHINE

2002



We don't know the true cost of HS2

I wish to take issue with Alan Heasman (Inbox, Issue 513), who is of the opinion that HS2 is the be-all and end-all of modern day commerce.

As I see it, the estimated cost of HS2 is somewhere in the region of £90bn, and what will we get for this? Jazzy new carriages and 20 minutes saved on a journey between London and Manchester. That's always supposing a few flakes of snow don't bring the whole thing to a standstill, as usually happens.

He also suggests that huge numbers of "doctors, nurses, construction workers

and shop assistants" will find HS2 of great benefit, as they cannot work from home. But how many of them will use HS2? More to

the point, how many will be able to afford to buy a ticket?

The government's spin doctors are plucking mythical figures out of the air about how much HS2 will pump into the economy, but there are two factors they always shy away from. First, how and where will that money come from? And second, how much is a ticket likely to cost? Train travel in the UK is already prohibitively expensive for most people and HS2 is not going to be cheap!

Ron O'Brien, via email

Saved by the doorbell

I enjoyed reading Barry's column about Ring doorbells in Issue 513 ('My Ring



doorbell doesn't chime with me'). At the start of this year, I briefly considered buying one, but lockdown restrictions

meant I barely left the house for several months, so I no longer saw the point.

After all, it's not that difficult to get up and answer the door or look through the peephole to see who's there. Barry's experience with phantom and delayed rings, and the privacy concerns surrounding Amazon's use of Ring data, confirm that my decision was correct.

Sometimes 'dumb' technology really is superior to the 'smart' kind!

Anne Arnold, via email

What you say...

HAVE YOU HAD PROBLEMS WITH THE NHS COVID-19 CONTACT-TRACING APP?

Yes, I've had notifications that I've been in contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus, but when I tap them they disappear. I assume it's an error in the app.

James McFarlane

Having Bluetooth enabled all the time runs down my phone's battery. Since installing the app, I'm having to charge my phone three times a day.

Sarah Ellis

No, because I refuse to use it. I don't want the government tracking me.

Ray Gilbert

Considering the rapid rise in infections and deaths, I fail to see the point of installing this app. It doesn't seem to be helping much!

Brian Chatham

WHEN DID YOU LAST SWITCH YOUR MOBILE NETWORK (see page 10)?

I haven't switched mobile networks in 14 years. I'm happy with Three.

Brian Brown

I switched around six years ago. Despite living in London, we frequently couldn't get reception in our own house with O2. No such issues since switching to Vodafone.

Rich Grove

I have no reason to change provider. For £10 a month on O2 pay-as-you-go, I get unlimited calls and texts, and 15GB of mobile data. I've been buying SIM-free phones for years, as I don't like being tied down to contracts.

I have just bought a SIM-free Honor 9X phone from Argos.

Kevin Gadget Man Benton

I switched to a 1p-a-minute plan, as I find the big boys ridiculously pricey.

Glenn Faulkner

It's the increasingly long contracts that I find an issue. To cover the cost of ever more expensive handsets, 12 months went to 18 months, then to 24, and now batteries aren't lasting the distance! After 18 months, my phone is starting to show the strain.

Caroline Chapman

I've never switched. I have always negotiated a better deal when my contract came to an end.

David P-Smith

HAVE YOU RECEIVED SCAM EMAILS PRETENDING TO BE FROM AMAZON OR PAYPAL RECENTLY (bit.ly/2Jgtj1l)?

These scam emails aren't new. I immediately delete these messages, then check the actual website to make sure everything is in order. It always is.

Gavin Green

I've been getting this type of scam email for years, usually to an email address that's not associated with the account.

Caroline Monroe

I've had plenty of these scam emails and text messages over the years. I forward the texts to Three Mobile's spam number (7726). With the emails, I go to Virgin Media's server and block them there. This means they don't even reach your phone, as blocking them on your mobile only diverts them to the trash.

Geoffrey Boow

Yes, I had a very convincing looking email from PayPal saying my account had been suspended. I didn't believe it, and forwarded the message to PayPal at spoof@paypal.com and Action Fraud at report@phishing.gov.uk.

Colin Fellowes

! Page 404



Microsoft's behaviour leaves **Barry Collins** wondering who owns his computer

No thanks a bundle, Microsoft

I've got builders working on my house at the moment. Other than drinking enough tea to send Tetley's share price soaring, they're doing a stand-up job. If, however, they were to suddenly stick up a billboard in my living room promoting, say, the local kebab house, we'd have words. No more than words, mind, as they are arms-like-tree-trunks builders and I'm a spindly keyboard jockey.

Microsoft, on the other hand, has no such compunction about slapping adverts all over my wallpaper. I fired up Windows after a recent update and was somewhat taken aback to find a full-screen advert for the company's Edge browser plastered across my screen. Not to mention an Edge icon on my Taskbar and another on the desktop. Microsoft is proud of its web browser and it's not going to let us forget it.

It's not only in-your-face promos that Microsoft is using to nudge you towards Edge, either. Go to change the default browser in Windows 10's settings and you'll find Microsoft Edge at the top of the list of otherwise alphabetically ordered options, with a none-too-subtle "Recommended for Windows 10" label attached to it. Microsoft might believe its browser is the cat's pyjamas, but using the operating system's settings to suggest it's somehow superior or better suited to Windows 10 than rivals is cheeky, to put it mildly.

Microsoft has other ways of shoving stuff under our noses. As we reported last issue, it used the most recent Windows update to sneak a load of Office web app icons into the Windows



10 Start Menu – although the company subsequently apologised for the move, claiming that “a bug led to transitioning these tiles from being a pinned site to an app”.

Presumably that's the same bug that's also managed to install Disney Magic Kingdoms, Gardenscapes, Music Maker Jam and Candy Crush Friends into my Start Menu tiles and listings, as I've sure as hell never installed them. Or is it because Microsoft is taking a cut from app developers to push their wares? I'll wait for the press statement.

Microsoft has more form than a Grand National winner when it comes to dodgy bundling. It spent the turn of the century fighting its own government and then the EU over the coupling of

Internet Explorer with Windows, then paid billions of pounds in fines and has been forced to implement various remedies over subsequent years.

Perhaps it's a sign of how far Microsoft's star has fallen that the company feels it can get away with such behaviour again. Note that when the US Congress hauled big tech's top executives over the coals recently, Microsoft wasn't even invited for a gentle barbecuing.

Effectively, this boils down to Microsoft believing it owns Windows and can do what the hell it wants with it. We, the poor punters who pay for it, are merely paying for a licence to use Microsoft's bloated advertising hoarding.

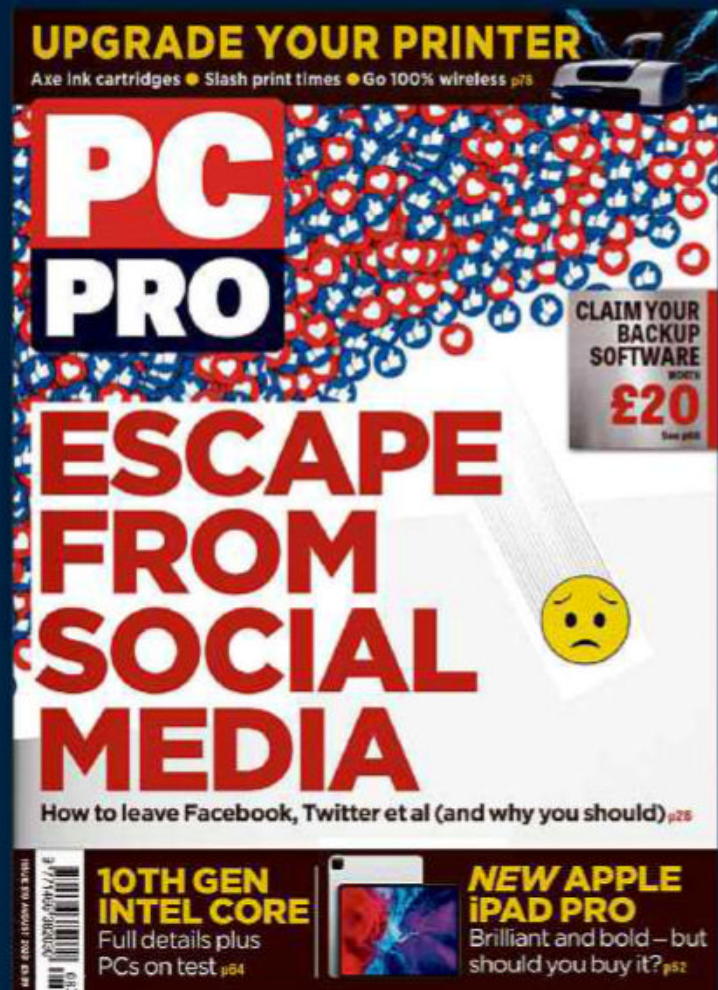
Sooner or later, I suspect the courts will be asked to decide who has control of our desktops: us or Microsoft. I have a feeling we're not going to like the answer.

“ Microsoft has more form than a Grand National winner when it comes to dodgy bundling ”

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