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Computer

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Welcome



From the Editor

Four months after Windows 10 launched, Microsoft's strategy for pushing the upgrade on to reluctant users has become clear. The company has realised that its greatest weapon is the Update process, through which it will – at some point next year – automatically download Windows 10 on to PCs running 7 and 8. It's a deplorably intrusive move.

We don't blame Microsoft for bullishly promoting its new OS. We think it's an excellent system that everyone should, in due course, upgrade to. But those in charge seem to be suffering from the delusion that they own your PC, and can do what they like with it. In this issue we explain how you can fight back.

Here's news of a more positive update. Many of you have asked us to publish a guide to Android 5.0 and 6.0 – respectively Lollipop and Marshmallow (daft names, I know). Well, it's arrived: our new book *The Definitive Guide to Android 2016*, is on sale now through Amazon (www.snipca.com/18829).

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THIS ISSUE IN NUMBERS

£500

Price of Palicomp's new five-star Windows 10 PC - **p21**



70m

Number of people who play brain-training app Lumosity - **p59**

£1.9bn

New investment by the Govt in cybersecurity defence - **p9**

HOW TO USE SNIPCA URLS

We use snipcas to turn long URLs that are hard to type into ones that are short and simple. They aren't websites themselves, which means they won't be recognised if you type them into Google. Instead, you need to type them into your browser address bar, then press Enter. Doing this will take you to the correct website.

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Stop & Control WINDOWS UPDATES

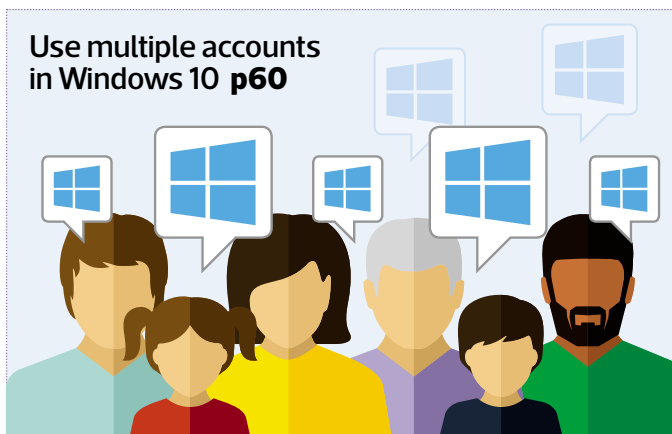
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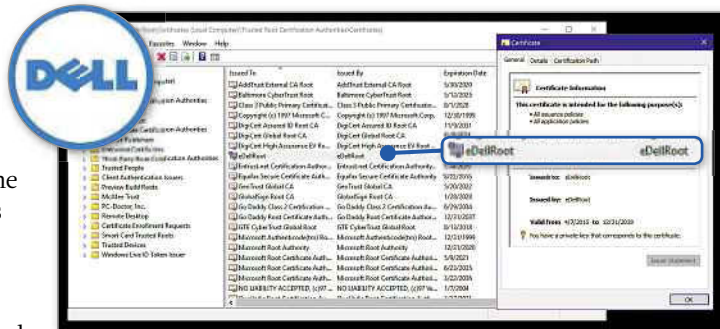
Dell admits PCs come with huge security flaws

Dell has been forced to admit it pre-installed on millions of PCs and laptops a tool that hackers could have exploited to steal users' bank details. It was one of two serious security flaws identified on Dell PCs in the space of days.

First, on Monday 23 November, Dell acknowledged that a security feature on some of its computers, known as a self-signed root certificate, contained a severe vulnerability. Self-signed root certificates are used to ensure that data sent online is encrypted, and therefore safe.

But on some Dell PCs and laptops (mostly the Inspiron, Precision and XPS ranges) sold since July this year, a certificate called eDellRoot also contained the 'key' used to decrypt it (see screenshot). This meant hackers could have exploited this flaw to trick people into visiting fake sites that look genuine.

In these attacks, the padlock



icon in the browser's address field convinces people that it's safe to enter their username and password. If you fall victim to this while banking online, hackers can gain access to your bank account.

In a blog post admitting the flaw (www.snipca.com/18928), Dell said that eDellRoot was added to make it "faster and easier for our customers to service their system".

Dell insisted that the tool isn't "adware or malware" and that it allowed Dell's customer services to quickly identify the model of a person's computer.

The company has released instructions on removing

eDellRoot (see box below), and confirmed it won't be installed on PCs in the future. It also issued a software update that will remove the certificate from affected PCs.

Reminders of Lenovo's Superfish

The second problem, which emerged on 25 November, also involved an unsafe security certificate, although it wasn't pre-installed on computers. This one was unwittingly added to PCs by users who downloaded the Dell System Detect tool between 20 October and 24 November.

Dell says that the tool gives

COMMENT

Some credit has to go to Dell for releasing a fix so quickly, particularly given how reluctant Lenovo was earlier this year to admit the dangers posed by Superfish. But both scandals illustrate that we can no longer take for granted the safety of new PCs. As well as considering price, hardware and operating system when buying a computer, we now have to wonder whether it's riddled with security holes big enough for hackers to exploit. Is it any wonder that sales of computers are plummeting?

users a "more personalised experience" when contacting the company's support website. It has now been replaced by a safer alternative.

Both cases are reminiscent of the Lenovo scandal earlier this year, in which the PC manufacturer was caught installing an unsafe version of the Superfish adware on to some laptops. The company later apologised, and released a tool to remove Superfish: www.snipca.com/18943.

For more advice on staying safe, read the Cover Feature in our next issue: 'Don't Get Hacked in 2016' – out on Weds 23 Dec

HOW TO FIX THE FLAWS

On 24 November Dell released a software update to remove the flawed certificates. To check whether eDellRoot has been wiped from your PC, visit <https://edell.tlsfun.de>, a website that scans your PC looking for the certificate.

To make sure both certificates are removed, use Dell's 'eDellRoot and DSDTestProvider removal tool', which will download automatically at www.snipca.com/18940. You can also

manually remove the certificates, but it is a complicated 27-step process, explained in Dell's blog post: www.snipca.com/18929.

Another option is to run Windows Defender (in Windows 10 and 8.1) and Microsoft Security Essentials (in Windows 7 and Vista), which have been updated to remove both certificates. Read more information at Microsoft's Malware Protection Center: www.snipca.com/18941.

 You'll like this... A new Raspberry Pi mini PC has launched costing just \$5 (www.snipca.com/18917)

 ... but not this ISP Plusnet has been accused of not properly encrypting passwords (www.snipca.com/18944)

Baby boomers stay safer online than under-30s

The idea that younger people know more about technology than older generations has been challenged by new research into online security.

Antivirus company Norton found that so-called millennials – people reaching young adulthood around the year 2000 – are more likely than baby boomers to leave themselves exposed to risk on the internet.

In its 2016 Cybersecurity Insights Report (www.snipca.com/18873), Norton said that 32 per cent of millennials in the UK share their passwords for online services, while only 13 per cent of baby boomers do.

The survey, which questioned 17,125 adults across 17 countries about their online behaviour, also found that just 33 per cent of millennials said they always use a secure password (one consisting of at least eight letters, numbers and symbols). By contrast, 49 per cent of baby boomers always use one.



Younger people are also much more likely to abandon an online account, rather than go through the hassle of closing it.

Many millennials simply aren't worried about the risk posed by poor online security. One in three felt that security breaches no longer have any real consequences – a complacency attributed to their increasing frequency – while one in five thought that their chances of becoming a victim of cybercrime was negligible.

This reckless attitude has led to a much higher incidence of online crime targeting millennials, with 31 per cent reporting they have been a victim, compared with 13 per cent of older people.

In total, of the 1,000 people in the UK surveyed, 44 per cent said they had been a victim of cybercrime.

Twenty-two per cent of respondents said they had experienced cybercrime in the past 12 months, with 15 per cent of these being targeted by **ransomware**.

IN BRIEF

RUSSIAN HACKERS STEAL £520M SINCE 2012

Hackers in Russia stole at least \$790m (around £520m) in the past three years from individuals and businesses in the US and western Europe. This was the work of 160 hackers, all now arrested. However, the criminal gangs have recruited over 1,000 new members, so the true amount of money stolen is likely to be much higher. The figures come from a Kaspersky report that highlights the severity of the threat posed by Russian cybercrime.

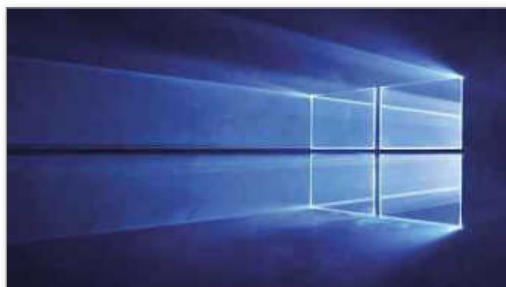
CHANGE YOUR AMAZON PASSWORD

Amazon has asked some customers to reset their password, leading to fears that its security systems may have been breached. In an email to what's thought to be a small number of users, Amazon said that some passwords had been "improperly stored", or exposed to other companies that Amazon deals with. Amazon said that it has "no reason" to suspect fraudulent activity.

Windows 10 to be the 'most widely installed version ever'

Windows 10 is set to be Microsoft's most successful operating system (OS) ever. The prediction comes from technology marketing company Gartner, which said that Windows 10's popularity is being driven by Microsoft's offer of a free upgrade to Windows 7 and 8 users.

Gartner also said that 50 per cent of businesses worldwide will be running Windows 10 by January 2017. If this happens, the early success of Windows 10 would trump even that



enjoyed by Windows 7, which launched in October 2009.

Businesses are preparing to move on from Windows 7, aware that Microsoft will end support for the OS in January 2020. Microsoft's latest estimates, released in October, indicate that Windows 10 is

now running on 120 million computers worldwide.

Earlier this year, Gartner identified another consequence of Windows 10 – a slowdown in global PC sales. Analysts said that for the third quarter of 2015 PC sales were 7.7 per cent lower than in the same quarter in 2014. This was attributed in part to people upgrading their existing PCs to Windows 10 for free, rather than buying a new computer containing the OS.

The world's gone mad!

A robotic cat that purrs when stroked is being marketed as a "companion pet" for lonely elderly people. Made by toy company Hasbro, it rolls contentedly on to its back for a belly rub if you pet it long enough. Unfortunately for robot-cat lovers in the UK (assuming there are any), it's only on sale in the US at the moment. Watch the mechanical moggy giving "comfort and joy" at www.snipca.com/18881.

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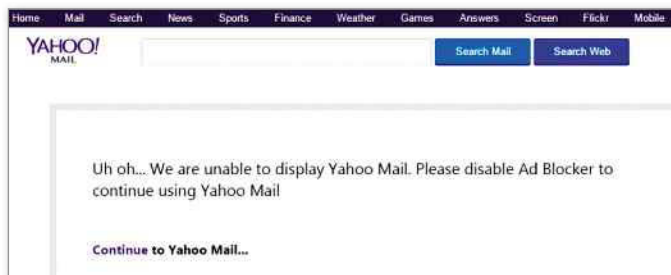
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Do you block adverts? Then Yahoo Mail will block you

Yahoo Mail has started to prevent some users from opening their emails until they disable advert-blocking tools in their browser.

People in the US using AdBlock Plus (<https://adblockplus.org>) in Chrome and Firefox have reported seeing error messages when they attempt to open their inbox (see screenshot).

The message reads: "Uh oh... We are unable to display Yahoo Mail. Please disable Ad Blocker to continue using Yahoo Mail". Several workarounds to the block have been suggested online (see box below).



Yahoo explained the message by saying it is testing "a new product experience" for a "small number" of Yahoo Mail users in the US.

The company is probably gauging how people react to having their emails blocked, hoping the majority will turn off their ad-blocking software.

It's a highly controversial move that will further fuel the debate on ad-blocking tools.

Many web companies have attacked how ad-blockers work. They say that the money they get from advertising helps them to keep their online services free.

Without reliable advertising revenue many websites, particularly those run by magazines and newspapers, would probably start charging people to access them.

Some newspapers, including *The Guardian* and *The Washington Post* in the US, have displayed messages on their websites to ask visitors to disable their ad-blockers.

IN BRIEF

EMAIL WARS

EMAIL WARS
GMIL WARNS YOU ABOUT DODGY EMAILS
Google will start warning Gmail users when they receive an email through an unencrypted connection. In a blog post (www.snipca.com/18834) Google said that it found "regions of the internet" such as malicious servers preventing the encryption of emails. Google is concerned about the dramatic rise of potentially unsafe emails sent to Gmail users from other email providers.

FACEBOOK 'BANS' WOMAN CALLED ISIS

FACEBOOK 'BANS' WOMAN CALLED ISIS
A US woman claimed that Facebook suspended her account because she shares her first name with the terrorist group ISIS. San Francisco-based web engineer Isis Anchalee said that she proved her identity to Facebook three times, including by sending a screenshot of her passport. But it appears that she fell foul of Facebook's controversial 'real-name' policy, which insists people use "authentic" names. Facebook eventually re-enabled her account, and apologised (www.snipca.com/18843).

WATCH OUT FOR XMAS FRAUD ONLINE

WATCH OUT FOR XMAS FRAUD ONLINE
Last-minute Christmas shoppers have been warned about falling for online scams, after figures show there was a rise in internet fraud between December 20 and 23 last year. In total, online fraudsters stole £16m from UK shoppers and businesses last Christmas, up from £9.5m in 2013. Shoppers should in particular be careful when buying mobile phones, which was the most common item involved in online fraud last December.

HOW TO BEAT YAHOO'S BLOCK

If Yahoo extends the block to the UK, you can try getting round it by opening Yahoo Mail in a browser other than Firefox or Chrome, then clicking the top-right Settings cog. In the dropdown menu, click Settings,

then 'Viewing email'. Change the view to Basic, then click Save and re-open Yahoo Mail. You could also try the solutions suggested by Adblock Plus users on their forum: www.snipca.com/18858.

UK to launch cyber attacks on ISIS

The Government will launch cyber attacks against Islamic State (ISIS) as it attempts to thwart the terrorists' plans to hack UK hospitals and other vital infrastructure.

George Osborne said he will double cyber security funding over the next five years to reach £1.9 billion. He said that ISIS's "murderous brutality has a strong digital element".

"At a time when so many others are using the internet to enhance freedom and give expression to liberal values and creativity, they are using it for evil," he said.

While British intelligence



indicates that ISIS doesn't yet have the ability to cause harm to the UK infrastructure, Osborne warned they "are doing their best to build it".

He added: "The stakes could hardly be higher - if our electricity supply, or our air traffic control, or our hospitals

were successfully attacked online, the impact could be measured not just in terms of economic damage, but of lives lost".

Security experts warned that an ISIS cyber attack could have devastating consequences for British businesses and infrastructure.

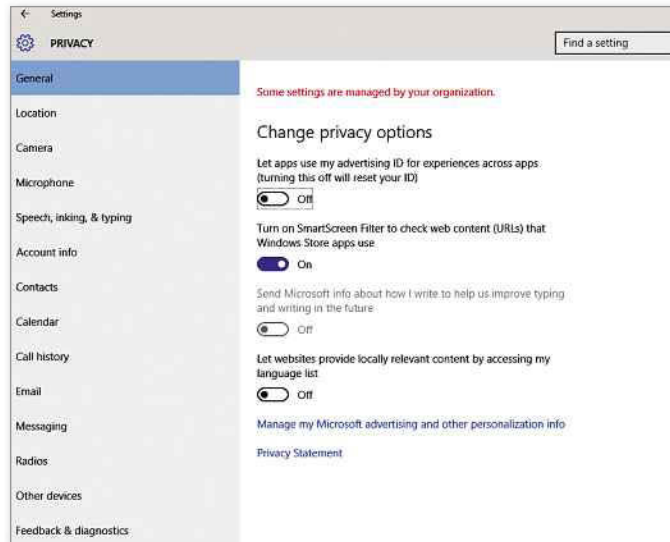
Bitdefender's chief security strategist, Alexandru Catalin Cosoi, said: "A possible worst-case scenario is the crippling of all communication and critical infrastructures, ranging from mobile phone to water supply, electricity and gas".

Why did Microsoft remove its November update?

The strange saga of the 'here today, gone tomorrow' Windows 10 update

Within hours of subscribers receiving Issue 463, several frustrated readers had emailed us to ask why they couldn't find the option to download the Windows 10 'November' update at www.snipca.com/18730. This URL, which appeared in our 'Master Windows 10's updated tools' Workshop, takes you to the Windows 10 download page. It was the correct URL, and the correct website, but between *Computeractive* going to press and the issue dropping on the doormat, Microsoft removed the update download option.

Nobody seemed to know why it had done this. The company's only response was that "future installs should be through Windows Update". Some Windows experts speculated it was because many users had reported problems with the update. For example, it reinstalled apps



upgrading to 10 via the update weren't affected).

The company said that the flaw, which reverted settings to Microsoft's default, affected "an extremely small number of people". The reinstated update contains a fix that keeps all the privacy options as you set them.

“Microsoft admitted that the update changed your privacy settings”

they had previously deleted (see our Cover Feature, page 50). But then on 24 November, just a few days after the update disappeared, it was back. This time we did get an explanation, and even an apology.

Microsoft said it took down the update after realising it was inadvertently altering some privacy settings on Windows 10 PCs, overriding changes users had previously made (Windows 7 or 8 PCs

This of course begged the question – which privacy settings had been altered? Thankfully, Microsoft revealed which ones when announcing the update's return (www.snipca.com/18901). The four changed settings were 'advertising ID', SmartScreen Filter, 'Background apps' and 'Sync with devices'.

The purpose of the last two in this list are pretty self-explanatory (but we'll

explain them anyway).

'Background apps' lets you decide which apps run in the background, while 'Sync with devices' lets you synchronise data between your PC and phone or tablet.

It's less obvious from its name what SmartScreen Filter does. In fact in Edge and Internet Explorer it warns you when you are about to visit a "suspicious" website or download something potentially harmful. In Windows 10, SmartScreen Filter checks the safety of URLs used by apps you install from the Windows Store. It was the latter that the update changed, reverting the setting to 'on'.

Is this something to worry about? Not really. Most people would have had SmartScreen Filter switched on anyway, even if they have no intention of installing apps from the Windows Store.

More disconcerting was that the update changed the 'advertising ID' setting, one of

THE FACTS

- On 12 November Microsoft released the first major update to Windows 10
- Nine days later, Microsoft removed the option to download the update without any explanation
- Microsoft reinstated the update on 24 November, blaming its earlier removal on privacy concerns

the most controversial in Windows 10. It's switched on by default, allowing apps to show you adverts tailored to your interests. Millions of users have disabled it, though this doesn't block adverts – it just means they will be randomly displayed.

The truth is, Microsoft needs to sell a lot of advertising in order to recoup money it lost by giving away Windows 10 for free. It's likely the company's money men weren't too upset that the update re-activated this setting with minimum fuss.

To Microsoft's credit, it did explain how to restore your defaults (same URL as above). For SmartScreen Filter and 'advertising ID', click Settings, Privacy, General (see screenshot); for 'Sync with devices', click Settings, Privacy, 'Other devices'; and for 'Background apps' click Settings, Privacy, 'Background apps'.

Microsoft's transparency is welcome, but we feel slightly nervous about the more substantial updates planned next year. Don't be surprised if they cause bigger problems.

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Broadband or rural idyll - you can't have both

 I'm glad Mark Littlewood had the guts to say what many of us privately think (News, Issue 463). He's right that people living in the countryside have made their own choice about living away from busy cities and all their amenities. If you ask them why they like the countryside, they almost always answer: 'Because I love the peace and quiet'. But that tranquility comes at a cost - the absence of fast broadband. You can't have both.

Simon Ashwood


 Mark Littlewood is overlooking one crucial factor, which is that not everyone has a choice over where they live. I'd love to move to the city, with its faster internet, but it's too expensive. Despite what you may read, not all villages are property goldmines. Some, like mine in Cornwall, are quite poor, with house prices that can't keep up with cities. So until I win the Lottery I'm stuck on 2Mbps internet.

Frances Allison

 I seethed when I read Mark Littlewood's views. He sounds like the classic cynic - somebody who knows the cost of everything, but the value of nothing. I think he should calm himself, though. The Government hasn't a hope in hell of getting everyone in the UK on 10Mbps by 2020. His precious free-market principles can remain undisturbed.

John Bairstow


Lucky to get TalkTalk compensation

 Well done for making TalkTalk 'Villain of the Fortnight' in Issue 463, but frankly I'm amazed the customer you mention got any money back at all. I had loads of trouble with my TalkTalk broadband a few years back, and was promised compensation no fewer than four times (by phone and email). I never got it. I'm no longer a TalkTalk customer.

Tony Armstrong


TalkTalk

Windows update was an emotional rollercoaster

 If Microsoft can really read my emotions (News, Issue 463), then I would love to know what it would have made of my experience trying to install the Windows 10 update. My first emotion was annoyance. Why does it blinkin' well even need an update so soon after launching? Updates are nothing but a pain in the backside. My second emotion was frustration, because the update took ages to install. My third emotion was anger, as I realised the update had removed loads of my favourite programs, including SpyBot and Speccy. And my fourth emotion was fury when I realised it had reinstalled loads of built-in apps I had got rid of (such as the useless browser Edge).

So, quite an emotional rollercoaster. It has a happy ending though, because my final emotion was relief at giving up with the update, turning off my PC, and going to bed with a good book.

Susan Chadwick

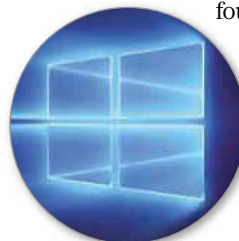
 In Issue 463, Editor Daniel Booth asks us for our opinion on the new Windows 10 update. I would gladly give him my views if only I *could* update. I

tried four times to update, and each time it froze on 44 per cent. Perplexing, to say the least. I searched for help online, and found this on Microsoft's forums:


www.snipca.com/18789.

Apparently, the glitch is the result of an inserted SD card, so I took mine out and... guess what? The update froze at 24 per cent! I've given up for now, and will try again in a few weeks.

Richard Lawrence




Upgrade to Windows 10? It's a no-brainer

 I can't understand why some of your readers continue to be so anti-Windows 10. Let's look at the facts. Assuming we believe Microsoft's claim that this is the final 'new' operating System they will release, that means they will update it like Google and Apple update Android and iOS. So for the foreseeable future Windows 10 is here to stay. It's being offered free to most users, so why would you not want it?

I can understand people preferring to wait until all the bugs are ironed out, but in the longer term it's a no-brainer. Some may object to Microsoft's "aggressive" approach but, come on, just go with it - you know it makes sense!

John Lattimore

Beware leftover USBs when you move house

 I read your warning about using unfamiliar USB sticks with interest (Protect Your Tech, Issue 463), and thought readers would like to hear about how I became a victim of one. When I moved house about five years ago I placed all my USB sticks into a kitchen drawer. But I was careless, and didn't check to see if there were any USB sticks already there, left by the previous owner.

You can probably guess where this is going. A couple of months after moving in, I inserted a USB stick into my PC, thinking it housed lots of portable programs. Instead it crashed my computer. Shocked, I took it out, and



realised it wasn't one of my own, even though it looked similar. It hadn't been left by any visitors, so it could only have been a nasty welcome present from the previous owner (I don't blame him though - it wasn't intentional). My PC did recover, but I learned my lesson. I now mark all my USBs with little stickers, with my initials on them.

George Astley

Microsoft is 'generous, not aggressive'

I don't think Microsoft is being aggressive in its marketing of Windows 10. It could have been a lot more ruthless. Imagine if it had ended security support for Windows 7 on the same day it launched Windows 10. Instead, it has promised to maintain support until 2020, some 11 years after it was first made available. That gives Windows 7 users enough time to weigh up the options before deciding whether to upgrade. I think Microsoft is generous, not aggressive.

Steve Jacobs

Happy with my second-hand Windows PCs

I've got news for Microsoft - I've never bought a brand new Windows PC. I've always managed to pick up a decent machine second hand. So it doesn't bother me that it's banning the sale of new Windows 7 and 8.1 PCs next year, because I was never going to buy one anyway. When I finally upgrade from Vista, I'll scout around for a used Windows 7 PC and be happy with that.

Ted Latimer

Terrorism and emails

I'm not worried about terrorists reading my emails ('Question of the Fortnight', Issue 463) because I never say anything interesting in them anyway. But I am worried about our security services not having enough powers to hack into emails the terrorists send. After the sickening attacks in Paris, we need to make sure that the Government doesn't buckle under pressure from the 'civil liberties' brigade.

Nigel Simmons

Following the terrorist attacks in Paris we live in a different world. We may have to accept that in order to stay safe, some of our freedoms might need to be curtailed. It seems like a simple equation to me - give GCHQ powers to hack communications and we will reduce the chances of a terrorist attack in the UK. Whether terrorists can read my own emails is neither here nor there.

Warren Hatton



STAR LETTER

Internet access 'as important as gas and water'

From a purely free-market perspective Mark Littlewood is right ('Slow broadband in your rural home? Tough!', News, Issue 463). Where you live is your choice, and you should grin and bear the consequences. But he seems to be overlooking the underlying debate about whether the internet should be considered an important utility - like gas, electricity and water.

Fifteen years ago I'd have said no, because back then the majority of people were able to live a fulfilled life without clicking anything online. But that simply isn't true anymore. So much that makes life worth living is now best done on the internet, not to mention all the boring but essential chores you have to do (pay bills, renew your TV licence, and so on).

It's not like TV or radio, which is just entertainment. If there were places in the UK beyond the reach of TV signals, I don't think anyone living there should demand that they receive them by right. The reason the internet is different is that - used properly - it can boost the wellbeing and cohesion of society.

I understand the counter-arguments,



which go something like this: if you don't have water, you will die of thirst. If you don't have electricity to cook food, you will starve. If you don't have gas to heat your home, you will freeze. Whereas if you don't have internet access, you'll survive, albeit without the pleasures of iPlayer, Facebook, YouTube, Skype, webcams, online forums and so on. That doesn't mean you'll rot in poverty, of course not. I spent the first 60 years of my life without any of these 'luxuries'! But nothing in my lifetime has changed society as much as the internet has, and anyone unable to get it is now at a huge disadvantage.

I would ask Mr Littlewood this question: would he be happy for his children or grandchildren to grow up without access to the internet? I suspect not.

Frank Phillips



The Star Letter writer wins a Computeractive mug!

GPs using emails 'risks patient confidentiality'

With regards to the recent debate about the use of technology by doctors, I can confirm that there have been a number of recent improvements in the NHS. However, this progress is all underpinned by Information Governance and doctor-patient confidentiality. While it might seem convenient to have an email correspondence from your GP, one cannot guarantee who is actually reading the patient's emails (or who might have access to them), and that it

won't lead to a breach of confidentiality. Recent improvements have seen certain NHS trusts implementing digital patient notes and remote access to a patient's observation for junior doctors while they are on call, with alerts and tasks being delivered to their smartphone. The next phase will be to standardise digital patient notes so that these can be accessed and shared across healthcare providers - currently patients have multiple sets of paper or electronic notes and the information can be difficult to access. But, as always, until the NHS accepts one standard for managing digital information, this will be developed in different trusts and adopted at different rates.

Dr Chris Kent
Consultant Clinical Oncologist,
Leicester Royal Infirmary

Consumeractive

How do I prove an inherent fault after three years?

Q I bought a Kindle Fire HD tablet from John Lewis in 2012, but I'm now having trouble with the USB port, making it difficult to charge the device. Because it's no longer under warranty John Lewis told me to contact Amazon. I've seen other complaints about this problem online so would this be classed as inherently faulty?

Ian White

A Others' comments online about a problem are useful, but they don't have any legal weight and can't be used as evidence.

Because more than six months has passed since purchase, the burden of proof is on Ian to show that the fault is inherent, and not wear and tear or accidental damage. If he wants to pursue this he'll need to get the tablet examined independently. His contract is with the retailer, which in this case is John Lewis, not Amazon (the manufacturer of the Kindle range). He should tell John Lewis he's getting the tablet tested, and that it will need to replace it or reimburse him if this proves

the tablet is inherently faulty.

CASE CLOSED



Can I get a full refund for a faulty laptop?

Q I bought a laptop from PC World on 13 August this year. The keys were sticking so I tried to return it on 5 September. PC World said customers have only three weeks to return goods, so mine would have to be repaired. They also said that if I took out a £7 monthly service plan it would lend me another laptop until mine was fixed. The laptop is now on its third repair for the same problem and PC World is now saying that it's my fault for downloading viruses. Despite paying monthly for the service plan, I've never been loaned a laptop. PC World says it can loan one only if one is available. I've since bought another laptop. What are my rights?

Jacob Ninian

A We believe Jacob is entitled to a full refund for the laptop and for whatever he's paid toward this service plan.

Because Jacob bought the laptop in August, his protection falls under the old Sale of Goods Act (SOGA). This is a shame because Jacob could have benefitted from one of the new laws in the Consumer Rights Act (CRA), which was introduced on 1 October, but applies only to goods bought on or after that date. This states that



retailers have to refund customers after one failed repair.

But Jacob still has rights under SOGA. It states that retailers must carry out repairs within 'a reasonable time' and that any delay must not 'seriously inconvenience' the customer. PC World may argue otherwise, but we think that three repairs in two and a half months, forcing Jacob to buy a new laptop, has seriously inconvenienced him. We've written to PC World to say so.

We're also concerned about the way it appears PC World sold Jacob the service plan. Jacob admits that he didn't read the small print, but we want to know how clear it was made to him that the company may not be able to loan him a laptop due to stock shortages. If that's the case, what's the point of a service plan?

CASE ONGOING

Do I have to pay return delivery charges?

Q I bought a harmonica for £120 from www.brendan-power.com. It arrived with the cover plate bent, which means that one note won't play. The company has refused to pay my return postage of £7.25 because I failed to email them an MP3 recording of the problem, as they requested. I was also told an "absolute beginner" could have repaired the harmonica. Surely this is beside the point?

Dave Elliott

A Yes, it is completely irrelevant. A customer shouldn't be expected to repair a damaged item. More importantly, Brendan-power must pay Dave the £7.25 to return the harmonica because it has an inherent fault. In cases like this, you're entitled to a refund for all costs: the purchase price, the original delivery fee, and whatever it costs to return the item.

Also, within the first six months, you don't have to prove that a fault is inherent



– the onus is on the company to prove that it's not. This means Dave doesn't have to email an MP3 to the company. However, there's no harm in him recording an MP3 in case he needs evidence later.

CASE ONGOING



We stand up for your legal rights

Contact us so we can investigate your case

Email: consumeractive@computeractive.co.uk

Write: Consumeractive, Computeractive, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD
Please include both your phone number and address.
Unfortunately, we can't reply to all your letters.

Will I get a refund if I reject a Christmas present?

Q I've seen a really good online deal from Currys for a laptop I'd like to buy for my son for Christmas. If it turns out he doesn't want it, and there's nothing wrong with it, does the new Consumer Rights Act (CRA) let me reject it for a full refund?

Tim Murdoch

A It depends when and why Tim decides to reject the laptop. The CRA doesn't let you reject goods simply because you've changed your mind. Only the Consumer Contract Regulations (CCRs) allow this, and you have just 14 days to do so. That means Tim shouldn't buy the laptop before mid-December if he wants to give his son the option of returning it for a refund soon



after Christmas Day.

Tim should also bear in mind that if his son doesn't want to keep the laptop, he must return it to Currys within 14 days of telling the company that he is rejecting it. His son should also be careful when opening his presents on Christmas Day,

because the CCRs let you *examine* goods only, not *use* them. He certainly shouldn't run the initial set-up on the laptop. In other cases we've investigated, PC World – part of the same company as Currys – have deemed setting up a laptop as 'use'.

The CRA, which was introduced on 1 October, does let you reject goods, but only if they have an inherent fault, and only within 30 days of purchase. Before the CRA, you had to return faulty items within a 'reasonable' time, which was often considered to be 30 days. But because this was never cemented in law, retailers sometimes insisted that customers had only seven or 14 days to return items. This 30-day period is now legally established by the CRA.



CASE UPDATE



Reader takes PC-repair shop to court over 'fake iPad screen'

When customers aren't satisfied with how a retailer says it will resolve a complaint, they can take the company to the small claims court. That's what *Computeractive* reader Sandy Mann plans to do, after refusing to accept a new iPad screen from her local shop Computers Repairs Conwy (CRC).



After cracking her iPad screen Sandy paid CRC £80 for a replacement (as we reported in Issue 461). She claimed that the new screen was not an official Apple product, and therefore a fake. CRC's owner told us that the screen's supplier told him that it was genuine.

He promised Sandy he would fit another screen, and offered a full refund if she wasn't happy with it. But Sandy declined this because CRC couldn't guarantee it would be authentic. Her next move is to take CRC to the small claims court, where a judge may say that the company breached the contract it had with Sandy, and order it to pay the cost of the iPad being repaired by Apple.

However, the judge may decide that CRC's offer was reasonable, leaving Sandy with £80 and an iPad that still has a cracked screen. The judge may also conclude that Sandy bears some responsibility for using CRC rather than sending the iPad for repair using her insurance. We'll let you know what happens.

THIS WILL COME IN USEFUL

Broadband speed info

BT

Download speeds and checker
<http://diagnostics.bt.com/speedtest>
Service status
www.snipca.com/18673

EE

No service-status checker
Speed checker
www.snipca.com/18681

Plusnet

Service status
www.snipca.com/18676
Speed checker
www.snipca.com/18677

Sky

Download speeds
www.snipca.com/18670



Service status

<https://servicestatus.sky.com>
Speed checker
www.snipca.com/18669

TalkTalk

Service status
www.snipca.com/18679
Speed checker
www.snipca.com/18675

Virgin Media

Download speeds
www.snipca.com/18671
Service status
www.snipca.com/18672
Speed checker
www.virginmedia.com/testmyspeed

Zen Internet

Service status
<https://status.zen.co.uk>
Speed test
<http://speedtest.zen.co.uk>



Protect Your Tech

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

WATCH OUT FOR...

Ransomware that 'exposes' your data

What happened?

Cybercriminals have started using a sinister new tactic to force **ransomware** victims to pay up. As well as locking your PC, hackers are now threatening to publish your personal details online.

This approach has been spotted by German antivirus company Botfrei (www.botfrei.de/en). It said that hackers are using the Chimera ransomware to target computers in German businesses (see screenshot). If this new strategy proves successful, the hackers will almost definitely start attacking members of the public worldwide.

Chimera sneaks on to PCs in **phishing** emails that urge you to click a link to download a Dropbox file, supposedly containing information on a job application or business offer. Once



Chimera is on your PC, it encrypts all your connected drives and demands a ransom of 630 Euros in **Bitcoins**.

What's still unknown is whether the hackers are actually able to carry out their threat of publishing personal information. The ransom message tries to scare victims by claiming that photos and other data will be published online,

but Botfrei says that there's no evidence that this has actually happened. Security experts examining Chimera say it works no differently to previous ransomware attacks, which all lacked the ability to publish victims' details.

What should you do?

Whether Chimera is capable of publishing your details or not, what really matters is that you regularly back up your most important data. This is the best defence against ransomware, and you're going to need it more than ever because we think Chimera is likely to target UK users next year. As scams go, we fear that scaring people with the threat of public exposure may well prove successful, and hackers will turn their sights on millions of English-speaking PC users next.

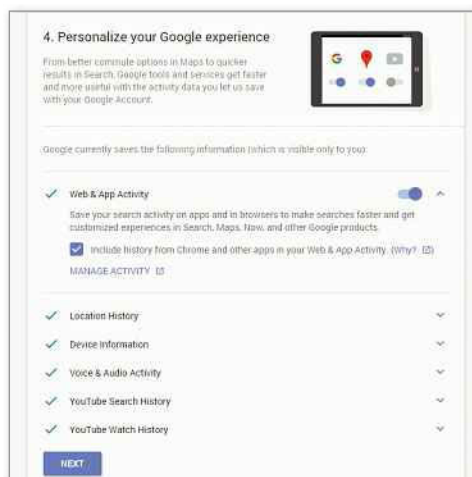
New tools

Google's 'About me'
<https://aboutme.google.com>

If you want proof of how greedily Google devours your data, look no further than its new 'About me' tool. Visit the site and anyone with a Google account (including Gmail and

YouTube) will see their name and date of birth. Google wants you to add more details, such as your phone number, by clicking the red 'plus' button at the bottom right. Alternatively, you can just tell Google to go mind its own business.

Google says the site makes it easier for you to control what personal data other people see online. And it does. But that's not the reason to use it. Instead, click the blue 'Go to privacy checkup' link to change how Google tracks you on the web. The most important sections are 4 – which lets you alter how much of your online activity Google saves (see screenshot) – and 5, where you can opt out of adverts targeted according to your interests.



ScamWatch

READERS WARN READERS

PayPal scam looks genuine

I was almost caught out by a PayPal scam which I think is new. I received an email that looked professional and error-free. I had no reason to believe it wasn't from PayPal. It told me that there had been unusual activity on my account, and suggested I update my profile. With all the high-profile hacks recently, including TalkTalk, I instantly thought 'oh no', and clicked the link, which sent me to a 'profile update' page. It was only when they asked for credit-card details that it dawned on me that it was probably a scam. I found evidence of it online: www.snipca.com/18586.

Larry Havers

Warn your fellow readers about scams at letters@computeractive.co.uk

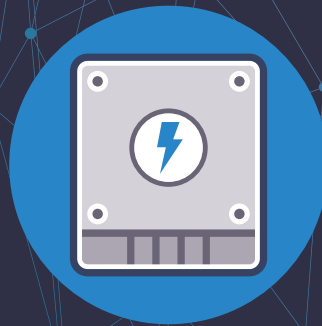


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BROWSER

Opera 33

www.snipca.com/18735

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8/8.1 or 10



Opera may not be as well-known as other browsers like Firefox and Chrome, but it offers similar features, such as **extensions**, cross-device syncing, and apps for your tablet and phone (there are various versions of the Opera app for Android, iOS and Windows). But it's also got a few unique tricks up its sleeve – more than ever in this new version.

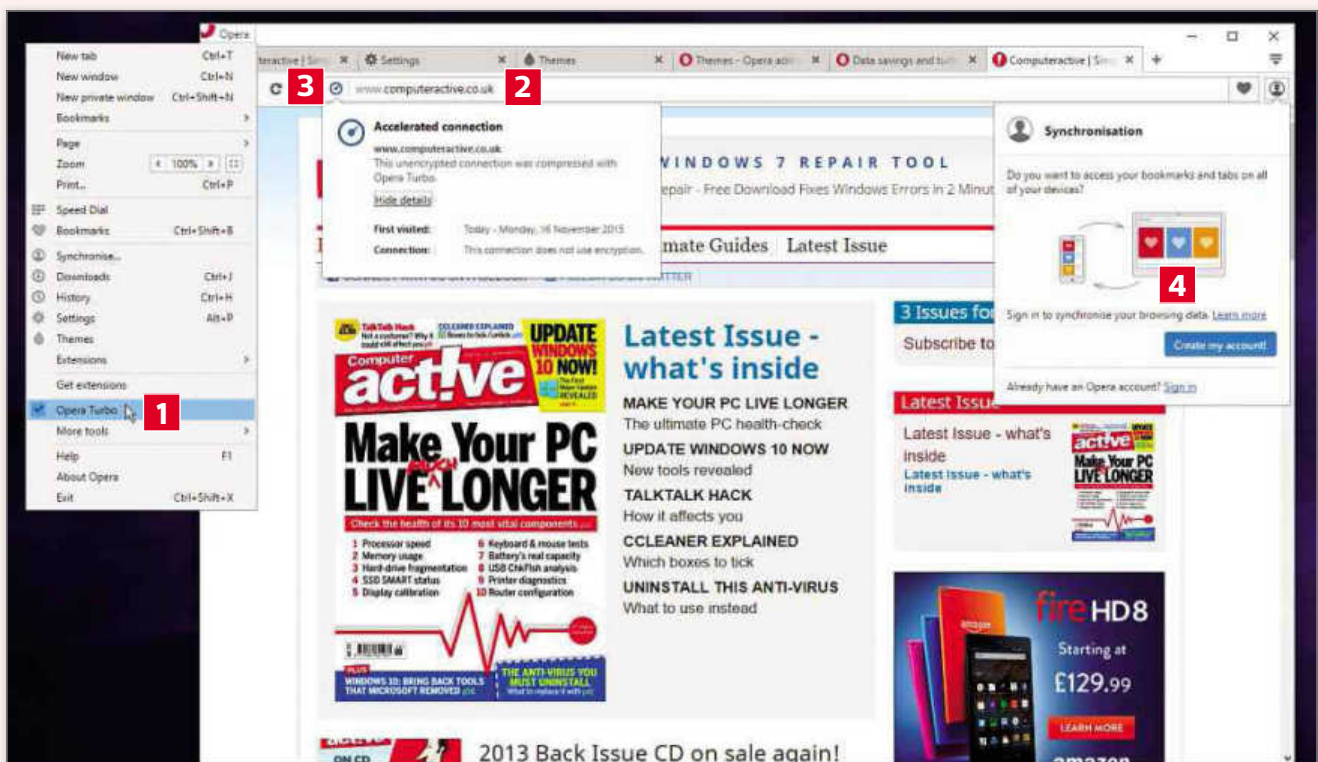
Opera 33 not only sports a swanky new logo (see above right) and a rejigged user interface, but it also offers some big performance improvements. Its underlying engine uses less memory, making it run better on older computers.

But by far the most interesting and useful feature Opera has introduced is its Turbo browsing mode. When enabled, Turbo

cleverly compresses web pages, crunching images and other data so they load much faster and use less bandwidth.

Though Turbo mode effectively sends you smaller versions of the images and other media featured on a web page, Opera claims that you won't notice the effects of this compression – on most screens, at least. In other words, photos will look virtually the same as they do when they're uncompressed.

There are no **PUPs** to worry about in Opera's installer. However, if you want to stop Opera storing and sharing your data (see our 'Who's selling your data?' feature in Issue 463), click the Options button and untick 'Share usage data to help improve Opera'.

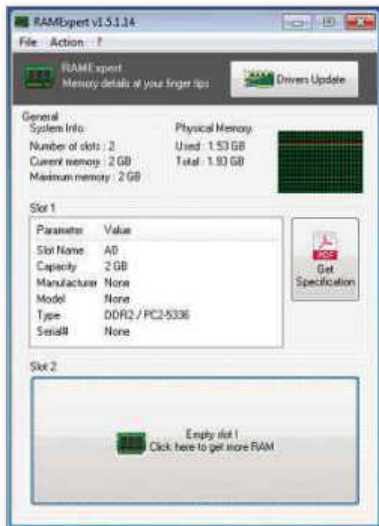


1 To enable Turbo browsing, click the Opera button and then click the Opera Turbo option towards the bottom of the menu.

2 If this is the first time you've enabled Turbo, you'll see a page of information. To visit a website, type its URL into the address bar or click its bookmark.

3 Once the page has loaded, you'll see a blue speed-dial icon next to the web address. Click this to make sure that Turbo is used to speed up the page load.

4 To switch Turbo off, click the Opera button and then click Opera Turbo. To enable syncing, click the user icon and click 'Create my account!'.



SYSTEM TOOL

Portable RAMExpert 1.5

www.snipca.com/18738

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8/8.1 or 10

Upgrading memory is a cheap and easy way to boost your PC's speed, but you first need to know what type of RAM you require. This free tool, now updated to support Windows 10, offers all the information you need, including the number of memory slots in your PC and what type of RAM modules you need to buy. Click Action, Export and then click Text to save the information about your PC's memory to a printable text file for reference. Also available as a portable tool, which means you can run it without installing any files on your PC.



TEXT-TO-SPEECH

Balabolka 2.11

www.snipca.com/18754

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8/8.1 or 10

This brilliant free tool turns typed text into audio files, so you can hear the words being spoken out loud. Paste text from anywhere – documents, web pages, ebooks – into Balabolka's main window, then click Play to hear it read aloud.

Alternatively, click File, then Save Audio File to export the spoken text to a WAV file that you can play back later, burn to disc or use to narrate a video you're editing. Balabolka won't install any annoying junk, but if you'd prefer not to install anything at all there's a portable version too (www.snipca.com/18755).

WHAT SHOULD I DOWNLOAD?

We tell you what software to use

How can I convert an old PC into a jukebox?

Q I've got an old PC that I'd like to turn into a music jukebox. I used a computer-style jukebox in a pub recently and was really impressed by it. The screen display was laid out in a simple format, with icons for 60s, 70s, 80s and so on, along with the option to choose an artist by name or song title. Can you recommend a free program with similar features?

Eric Gerrard

A Most current music-player software lets you search by artist, album or song title. But to organise and browse your library by decade, you'll need a tool that can create automatic playlists based on specific criteria, such as a date range or songs you've 'starred'.



iTunes (www.snipca.com/18759) can do this, but we wouldn't recommend using it on an older PC because it's a memory-hog. Foobar2000 (www.snipca.com/18661, see Best Free Software Issue 463) is far more lightweight, though its auto-playlist process is convoluted. Give it a go if you're a confident software user; otherwise choose something simpler such as Windows Media Player. It's still available in Windows 10, even though Windows Media Center (WMC) has gone. In the Start search box type **windows media player**, and a setup window will open. To create Auto Playlists, click Library, 'Create playlist', then 'Create auto playlist'.

Another free program to try is Music Bee (www.snipca.com/18758, see screenshot; click the 'Direct' link). To create a 60s playlist, for example, right-click Playlists and select New, then New Auto-Playlist. Underneath 'match all', select Year and then select 'in range' from the dropdown menus, then type **1960** in the first box and **1969** in the second. Click Save.

Do you need our advice on what software to use? Just email us at letters@computeractive.co.uk

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Reviews

New products tested by our experts

LAPTOP | £600 From PC Specialist www.snipca.com/18832

PC Specialist Cosmos IV 15.6in

A fast Windows 10 laptop for less than you'd expect

When you think of a laptop nowadays, you probably think of something like a MacBook Air. Incredibly slim, conveniently light, and neatly carved out of a single piece of aluminium. Everything is perfectly designed and engineered into place. And that's where it's staying, because you can only buy a MacBook Air with a minimal set of features, and not even a trained engineer could shoehorn in anything else.

“This is a machine made in the old-fashioned style. You get to choose what goes inside and outside”

This isn't that kind of laptop. The Cosmos IV is a chunky black plastic slab, its industrial lines clumsily interrupted by ports, grilles and sockets. From the side, the lid looks like someone found a Mk2 Ford Escort bonnet in a skip and bent it to fit their Volvo. The DVD drive fascia is nearly the right shape, but the wrong colour. Nobody uses the analogue VGA monitor port any more, and it's too big for modern laptops – but they've wedged one in anyway, as well as the HDMI socket that supersedes it.

Now that Wi-Fi is standard, most laptops leave you to use a USB adapter if you want a wired network connection – but the Cosmos IV has an Ethernet socket too. And in case two USB 3.0 ports aren't enough, there's also an eSATA interface for fast external storage.

You might think all this makes the Cosmos IV a bit of a mess, or you might just be grateful that all these features still exist. This is a machine made in the old-fashioned style, and that means you get to choose what goes inside as well as



what's on the outside. PC Specialist builds each unit to order, and installs your preferred version of Windows, including Windows 10.

We picked what we reckoned was the best-value configuration, and it makes up in performance what it lacks in portability. A quad-core Intel i5 processor from the latest Skylake series (see 'What's All the Fuss About?', Issue 459) is more than adequate for web browsing, video and multitasking between several office apps. A sensible 8GB of memory ensures there's little hesitation even when returning to a program that's been idle for some time.

This is helped by Windows being installed on a built-in 128GB SSD, which is much quicker than a mechanical hard drive. About 70GB is left free for more programs and files, and for the rest of your stuff there's a 1TB hard drive installed too. That bulky case begins to make sense. And there's more, because they've also crammed in a proper graphics card, the Nvidia GeForce 940M, with 2GB of its own memory. That means you can run 3D games in Full HD, at least with their quality settings turned down a bit, and even the fanciest new titles will work if you compromise on resolution.

You'll want headphones or speakers for

this PC, because the built-in audio is poor. But the usefully big 15.6in 1920x1080-pixel screen is bright and vibrant, with dark blacks for high contrast. The keyboard isn't backlit, which will be annoying when you need to work or play in dim light, but feels pleasant and accurate to type on, and we found the touchpad, a frustratingly weak point of some affordable laptops, very responsive.

Intel's Skylake chips are designed for power efficiency, but the Cosmos IV's battery still lasted us only four-and-a-half hours, and that would plummet with heavy use of 3D graphics. It's really too heavy to carry around regularly anyway, but quite practical to move around the house or take on trips in the car. And, if you squint, it doesn't look that awful. For the money, you'd be pushed to find a more capable laptop.

VERDICT: It's neither the prettiest nor the most portable laptop, but the performance is hard to beat in this price bracket



ALTERNATIVE: Dell Inspiron 15 5558 £549 This looks nicer, but performance doesn't quite match the Cosmos and there's no SSD



SPECIFICATIONS

2.3GHz Intel i5-6300HQ quad-core processor • 8GB memory • 128GB flash storage • 1TB hard drive • Nvidia GeForce 940M graphics • 15.6in 1920x1080-pixel screen • Webcam • 802.11n Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.0 • 1x USB 2.0 port • 2x USB 3.0 ports • Gigabit Ethernet port • HDMI port • Windows 10 • 31x374x252mm (HxWxD) • 2.5kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/18837

PC | £500 from Palicomp www.snipca.com/18748

Palicomp AMD Shockwave

A Windows 10 desktop PC that puts plenty of power at your fingertips

What is it with PC makers and military hardware? In Issue 462, we tested Chillblast's Fusion Drone, which to our disappointment bore no resemblance to a nuclear-powered unmanned aerial vehicle. Palicomp's Shockwave comes in a rugged black case that actually does look as if Prince Andrew should be demonstrating it to an audience of Saudi officials. LED lighting behind the grilles even emits an eerie green glow. But it's really quite harmless.

Like the Drone, the Shockwave is based on AMD's Athlon X4 860K processor. Palicomp has **overclocked** this from 3.7 to 4GHz, making it run even hotter. But where Chillblast installed a water-cooling system to prevent meltdown, this machine just has AMD's regular **heatsink** and a plastic fan.

We monitored the processor during our speed tests, and it wasn't affected by overheating. Within the Sharkoon VG5-W case the fans were never noticeably loud, although the Shockwave wasn't as silent as the Drone. But it did edge ahead in the benchmark tests. For a £500 desktop PC, this is pretty powerful. Just don't expect miracles: when editing video, for example, you'll still have to wait for effects to render.

Unlike its rival Intel, AMD also makes dedicated **graphics cards**, and the Radeon R7 370, which costs around £100 by itself, is becoming a popular choice for its impressive games performance. The Drone had it fitted with 2GB of its own memory, while the Shockwave doubles that to 4GB. This allowed us to run current 3D games smoothly at Full HD **resolution**, with some quality settings turned down for the most demanding – not bad at all in this price bracket.

A 1TB hard drive with 8GB of **flash**

SPECIFICATIONS

4GHz quad-core AMD Athlon X4 860K processor
• 8GB memory • 1TB hybrid drive • AMD Radeon R7 370 graphics card • 4x USB 3.0 ports • 4x USB 2.0 ports • Gigabit Ethernet • HDMI port • DisplayPort • 2x DVI ports • Windows 10 Home • 430x200x445mm (HxWxD) • Three-year warranty
www.snipca.com/18748



storage provides decent capacity with a bit of extra speed, and you also get a DVD writer built in. There's room to add up to six more internal drives on the fast **SATA 3** connection as well as two **PCI-Express** and one basic PCI slot for expansion. You might want to order a Wi-Fi card because it's not included in the price. The standard 8GB of memory can go up to 32GB. One missing feature is a fibre-optic audio output for modern amplifiers: you only get traditional 3.5mm jacks.

How to choose between the Fusion and the Shockwave? Palicomp's three-year warranty covers only labour after the first year, while Chillblast's covers both parts and labour for two years and then labour for three more. Chillblast will pick up your machine for service free of charge in those first two years; Palicomp only includes this for the first week.

Remember the warranty is in addition to your statutory rights, which say that if your PC goes wrong any time in the first six months, it's presumed to have an inherent fault that the supplier must fix at its own expense. You're also entitled to a free repair if a problem appears within six years and you can prove that it's due to a defect, not just normal wear and tear. We'd like to see all retailers being clearer about this, but extra cover like Chillblast's is very welcome.

On the other hand, Palicomp's PC clearly gives you a little more performance for your money. Overall, it represents a great deal.

HOW WE TEST

Computeractive is owned by Dennis Publishing, which owns a hi-tech facility for testing the latest technology. You'll often read references to our benchmark testing, which is a method of assessing products using the same criteria. For example, we test the speed of every PC and the battery life of every tablet in exactly the same way. This makes our reviews authoritative, rigorous and accurate.

Dennis Publishing also owns the magazines *PC Pro*, *Computer Shopper*, *Web User* and *Micro Mart* and the website Expert Reviews (www.expertreviews.co.uk). This means we can test thousands of products before choosing the most relevant for *Computeractive*.

FAIR AND IMPARTIAL

Our writers follow strict guidelines to ensure the reviews are fair and impartial. The manufacturer has no involvement in our tests.

OUR AWARDS



We award every product that gets five stars our Buy It! stamp of approval. It means we were extremely impressed by the product, and we think you will be too.



Every product that gets a four-star review is given the Great Pick award. We highly recommend these products, although they just fail to meet the high standard of our Buy It! winners.

PRICES

Our reviews contain a link to the best price we found online at the time of press.

VERDICT: You don't need Intel inside for a reliable system – the Shockwave shows an alternative processor can give you plenty of power per pound



ALTERNATIVE: Chillblast Fusion Drone **£500**

With a mostly similar specification in a slightly more understated case, this is also a good buy



TABLET | £399 from Lenovo www.snipca.com/18728

Lenovo Yoga Tab 3 Pro

Your home-entertainment centre in a tablet



Lenovo makes two different product lines called Yoga. One is a series of Windows laptops that fold up to work like tablets. This item belongs to the other group, which are proper tablets, running Google's Android software. When we reviewed the Yoga Tablet 2 Pro (see Issue 454), we marvelled at its built-in video projector. This new version takes that feature a step further.

“An innovative tablet let down by unreliable software”

Despite the bigger model number, the Tab 3 Pro is smaller than the 2, and just a bit bigger than an iPad Air. The new screen is better: although it only covers 84 per cent of the sRGB colour range – while the iPad exceeds 100 per cent – you wouldn't guess it when you see how bright and vivid it looks. With a similar resolution to Apple's Retina display, it's also really sharp.

The projector is built into a cylindrical section along the edge of the tablet, which acts as a hinge for a built-in stand. But the image now comes from the

middle rather than the end as in the earlier version, so the hinge can be used to adjust the projection angle. Combined with automatic correction for the 'keystone' effect – ensuring the image is vertically square on your wall – this makes it quick to set up.

It's still not ideal: the image isn't as bright or sharp as from a full-size projector. But if you close the curtains, you can watch a film quite comfortably at a size of up to 70 inches. Just make sure mains power is at hand, because the battery could run out in two hours.

In normal use – without the projector – the Yoga Tab Pro 3 lasted us 12 hours (Lenovo quotes up to 18). Its Intel processor is very capable, but not all Android apps work with it, and as in previous reviews we found Lenovo's version of Android didn't feel sufficiently smooth. It's software glitches like this that so often prevent Android tablets feeling as practical and enjoyable to use as iPads.

SPECIFICATIONS

Intel Atom x5-Z8500 quad-core processor • 16GB flash storage • 10.1in 2560x1600-pixel screen • 5-megapixel webcam • 13-megapixel rear camera • microSD slot • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Android 5.1 • 179x247x9.2mm (HxWxD) • 665g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/18728

The hardware is attractive, though. Although there's a lot of plastic, the faux-leather back feels good. Both of the cameras are decent, and the four built-in JBL speakers are much better than you'd expect, even if there's not much bass and we couldn't detect any benefit from the 'virtual Dolby Atmos' surround sound. The 16GB of storage may not be enough, but unlike with the iPad, you can add a microSD card to expand it.

VERDICT: A genuinely innovative Android tablet that would be fun to own, if only the software was more reliable



ALTERNATIVE: Samsung Galaxy Tab S2 9.7 £400
At the same price, this is a better Android tablet all round, if you don't need a projector



WHAT SHOULD I BUY? We solve your buying dilemmas

What's the best OCR scanner?

Q Over the years, I've accumulated a lot of work printouts for which I no longer have the digital files. Is there a scanner supplied with OCR software that could help me to digitise it all?

Martin Carson

A There are various types of scanners, and most come with some kind of optical character recognition (OCR) software, which converts printed words into editable

text. But models designed for high-volume business scanning are expensive. The most affordable scanners today are those built into multi-function inkjet printers, which have a flat scanning glass under a lid, much like a photocopier.

If you have more than a few pages to scan, you'll save a lot of time by choosing a model with an automatic document feeder (ADF). Brother's MFC-J5320DW (pictured) is relatively compact and



currently discounted to a reasonable £80 (www.snipca.com/18805). It comes with a 35-sheet ADF and a basic version of Nuance's PaperPort software, which performs OCR and helps manage your pile of documents.

Printer makers count on getting most of their profit from selling you ink, so if you don't use the inkjet part, you've lost nothing – in fact, quite the reverse.

✉ Do you need advice on what you should buy? Email us at letters@computeractive.co.uk

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WE FIX IT!**

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SPLASH IT!



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*Terms and Conditions apply

 **ShieldX2**

shieldx2.com

Best new Christmas gadgets

Stuck for Christmas present ideas,
or don't know what to ask for
yourself? Then feast your eyes on
these nine innovative gift ideas...



Scosche strikeDRIVE EZTIP

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www.bubbleit.com
www.cpc.farnell.com
£19.99

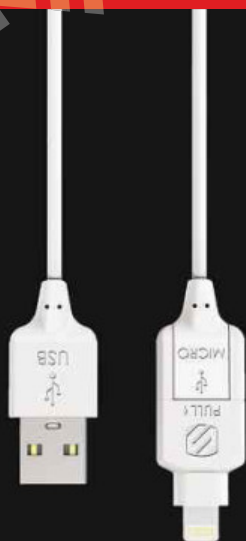
If you've ever lost your patience while trying to plug a charger into your phone or tablet, you'll appreciate the strikeDRIVE EZTIP. With this Reversible Micro USB Connector, it doesn't matter which way up you insert the connector, because either way will see it fit securely into your device, saving you time and hassle, and preventing possible damage. The 12W, 2.4 Amp strikeDRIVE EZTIP connects to your car's power socket using a three-foot coiled cable, so it won't get tangled or get in your way.



Scosche magicMOUNT XL Tablet Headrest Mount

www.mobilefun.co.uk
www.bubbleit.com
www.cpc.farnell.com
£34.99

Rather than balancing your phone or tablet on your dashboard, get a Scosche magicMOUNT XL Dash/Window lets you mount your mobile device any surface, so you can use it just as happily at home or at work, as you can in the car. Just slip the supplied MagicPlate behind the battery cover or case of your phone or tablet, and it locks to the stand using high-powered magnets, with no need for a cradle. You can then angle your device as required.



Scosche smartSTRIKE

www.mobilefun.co.uk
www.bubbleit.com
www.cpc.farnell.com
£19.99

Why carry two long and cumbersome cables around with you, when you can use a Scosche smartSTRIKE instead? This innovative two-in-one cable charges and syncs both Apple devices with Lightning connectors and Android devices with microUSB connectors. The slim barrel design allows you to slide the cable easily into any protective case, and its three-foot length gives you ample scope to keep using your device while it's charging.



August DVB500 Smart TV Box

www.idaffodil.co.uk
£87.45

This stylish set-top box comes with a variety of popular apps pre-installed, including Netflix, BBC iPlayer, Facebook, YouTube and Skype, and you can install more from the Play store. You can also watch live Freeview channels in HD, record your favourite shows to a USB drive or SD card and view videos and play videos, music and photos using the built-in multimedia player. For endless entertainment from your sofa, stick the August DVB500 on your Christmas list.

Yamaha MusicCast Trio

<http://uk.yamaha.com/en/dealers>
£899.95

Enjoy your favourite songs in every room in your home at the touch of a button using Yamaha's brilliant new MusicCast system. This lets you play music from your PC, NAS drive or mobile device, and from streaming services such as Spotify and internet radio on any MusicCast device, and either listen to the same song or different tracks throughout your home. It's controlled via an easy-to-use Android or iOS app, streams over Wi-Fi and Bluetooth and is compatible with a wide range of audio formats.



Elgato Aavea

www.elgato.com/aavea
From £39.95

Don't suffer winter lights that are too bright or too dim – get perfect lighting throughout the day with Aavea. This dynamic mood light is controlled using your smartphone, iPad or Apple Watch, allowing you to transform the ambience of a room while lifting no more than a finger. Aavea can cycle through different colour combinations using one of its pre-defined light scenes and includes an option to wake you up as gently as possible. The battery-powered, wirelessly charged Aavea Flare illuminates the inside and outside of your home for more than eight hours on a single charge.



Scosche magicMOUNT XL Tablet Headrest Mount

www.mobilefun.co.uk
www.bubbleit.com
www.cpc.farnell.com
£34.99

It's not just drivers who want to use their tablets in the car, but back-seat passengers, too. Scosche's magicMOUNT XL Tablet Headrest Mount uses powerful magnets to hold your device securely in place, once you've inserted a MagicPlate into its case. The mount comes with both large and small MagicPlates, which means you can use it with any size of tablet or phablet, and lets you attach your device in landscape or portrait mode, and any angle in-between.



August MS515 Bluetooth Stereo Speaker

www.idaffodil.co.uk
£32.45

This portable Bluetooth stereo speaker set is the perfect gift for audiophiles, combining a unique design, a 10W output and an impressive 15 hours of battery life. The two speakers pair with your phone, tablet, smart TV or laptop, and non-Bluetooth devices can be connected through the 3.5in audio-in socket. The superb sound can be boosted further using EQ apps for Android and iOS, and you can adjust the volume and skip through tracks using your phone or tablet.



iStorage datAshur Pro

istorage-uk.com
From £69

To prevent anyone from accessing your private data, keep it stored on an iStorage datAshur Pro. Described as the world's most secure USB flash drive, it protects your files using a 7-15 character PIN code and military-grade AES 256-bit hardware encryption. The device locks automatically when you disconnect it from a USB port, includes a rechargeable battery and is dust- and water-resistant. It's available in capacities of 8GB to 64GB, and requires no software or drivers.



Reviews

PHONE | £400 from Carphone Warehouse www.snipca.com/18756

Google Nexus 6P

Google shows how Android phones should be done

Google, whose Android software is used by the majority of phones and tablets not made by Apple, only makes two phones itself. Actually, it doesn't even make them, just sticks its Nexus logo on them. The Nexus 5X, which we tested in Issue 463, is manufactured by LG in South Korea. Its big brother, the 6P, comes courtesy of Huawei in China. We still can't adequately explain how to pronounce 'Huawei', but if you have children who leave toys lying around on the stairs, you'll say it eventually.

Not only is it bigger, with a huge 5.7in screen, but the 6P feels completely different from the cheaper 5X. Just 7.3mm thick and clad in aluminium, it's reminiscent of an iPhone at the front and sides, but the back is something else: smoothly curved, and with a protruding black camera bar that forms a sort of snorkel. It's a bold move to include a 'love it or hate it' feature like this on a flagship phone. Below that is a fingerprint scanner that unlocks the device.

“Bold design, great camera and decent performance”

The camera itself takes an Apple-like approach, with a modest 12.3-megapixel resolution but plenty of features, including 240-frames-per-second slow motion, and excellent automatic exposure. Video is limited to Full HD rather than 4K. Our pictures were well balanced and detailed, even indoors, and there's a two-tone LED flash. The 8-megapixel front camera is also good. Colour balance has also been improved on the high-resolution screen, which looks more natural than the old Nexus 6

SPECIFICATIONS

5.7in 2560x1440-pixel screen • 12.3-megapixel rear camera • 8-megapixel front camera • 32GB flash storage • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.2 • 3G/4G • Android 6.0 • 160x78x7.3mm (HxWxD) • 178g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/18757



and covers the whole sRGB spectrum.

The Nexus 6P's eight-core Snapdragon processor runs the latest version of Android (6.0, also known as Marshmallow), very smoothly, and 3D games are no problem. Unlike some devices, it doesn't get hot in normal use. However, despite its large battery, we barely managed 12 hours of video playback, which is mediocre for a big phone. At least the USB Type-C port means charging is simple and quick – taking about 90 minutes to charge fully. You'll need an adapter cable to attach standard USB chargers or other accessories, and data transfer is only at USB 2.0 speeds.

More disappointingly, there's no microSD slot for memory cards, so the basic 32GB of storage – of which Android takes up 7GB – might not be enough if you like to keep a lot of photos, videos and apps. But the 64GB version is still good value at £50 extra.

VERDICT: The slightly retro design won't be for everyone, but this is a top-class Android phone at a very competitive price



ALTERNATIVE: Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge+ £600 The curved screen makes this a more cutting-edge phone, but it costs a lot more for a similar specification



The best... PC speakers

Trust Raina 2.1 Subwoofer Speakers

£15 from Argos

www.snipca.com/18823

The usual configuration for PC speakers is '2.1' – a subwoofer box containing the amplifier and a bass speaker, plus two full-range stereo speakers. Trust's set is about the cheapest you'll find. Does it sound amazing? No. But it's fine for games and online radio.



Creative GigaWorks T20 Series II

£56 from Amazon

www.snipca.com/18824

These stereo speakers don't come with a subwoofer, instead relying on 'BasXPort technology' (a hole in the top), to boost low frequencies. It works, and they sound great for all kinds of audio, as long as you don't expect wall-shaking explosions or beats.



Edifier M1550 5.1

£55 from Amazon

www.snipca.com/18825

If your PC supports 5.1 surround sound, it'll have extra jacks for 'centre' and 'rear' output. The centre speaker goes on the desk in front of you and a pair of rear speakers sit behind you. This budget 5.1 set sounds pretty good, with a decent rumble from its wooden-cased subwoofer, and it comes with a chunky volume control.



Samson MediaOne 4a

£109 from Scan

www.snipca.com/18822

This pair of powered stereo speakers gives you a hi-fi sound without breaking the bank. They could even be used for audio production, although serious mixers will need something pricier. Bass isn't big, but it's punchy. Leave the grilles on for a discreet black tower look, or take them off for two-tone styling.



PHONE | £137 from LambdaTek
www.snipca.com/18772

Acer Liquid Jade Z

High performance at a low price

Five hundred quid for a phone? You must be joking, you might think. I don't need all that, you might think. Retina this, fingerprint scanner that – who cares, as long as you can make calls, send texts and install a few apps? So you buy a budget smartphone. You turn it on. And then you remember it isn't really a phone at all, it's a computer. Features aside, that extra you pay is for performance: the ability to do the same things, but with less staring at the screen waiting (often praying) for them to actually happen.

Most smartphones run Google's Android software, and the cheaper they are, the more they struggle to do it. Even the simplest task, like scrolling down a web page, can be alarmingly slow and jerky. Here's a phone, though, that breaks the mould. Its MediaTek **processor** is as powerful as those in phones costing twice as much. The nearest we've seen in this price bracket is the Vodafone Smart Ultra 6, and the Liquid Jade Z beats it. 3D games aren't its strong point, but everything else works gratifyingly smoothly.

In other respects, you get what you pay for. The 5in screen is sharp, but colours are quite dull and it doesn't get very bright. The case is nice and slim, but feels more like a plastic office chair than a high-tech accessory. Photos from the 13-megapixel camera show lots of detail, but their high-contrast look makes shadows too dark. Indoors, things get very grainy.

You'll soon be spending another tenner on a **microSD card**, given the miserly 8GB of storage, most of it eaten up by Android. Version 4.4 is installed, and although this will be upgradable to 5.0 (Lollipop), don't expect to see 6.0 (Marshmallow) on this phone. Finally, battery life won't get through a full day: in our video playback test it conked out after eight hours 20 minutes.

SPECIFICATIONS

5in 1280x720-pixel screen • 13-megapixel rear camera • 5-megapixel front camera • 8GB flash storage • microSD card slot • 802.11n Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.0 • 3G/4G • Android 4.4 • 143x70x7.9mm (HxWxD) • 110g • One-year warranty
www.snipca.com/18771

VERDICT: It's a good budget choice if you want a phone primarily to make calls on. Don't expect much more, though



ALTERNATIVE: Vodafone Smart Ultra 6 £100 It's incredibly good value, but as the name implies, it's only available on one network



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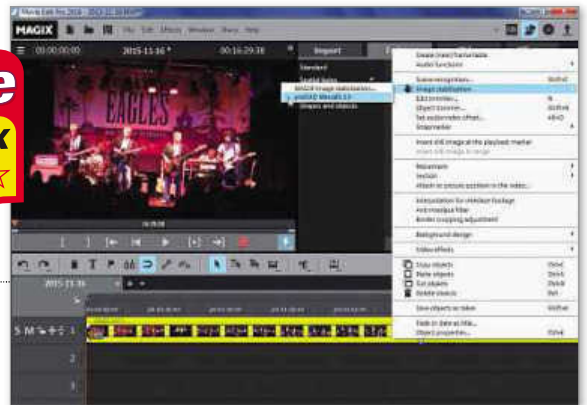
Price excludes delivery charges. LINDY Electronics cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions.

Reviews

VIDEO EDITOR | £50 from Magix www.snipca.com/18779

Magix Movie Edit Pro 2016

Flexible video editing on a budget



Movie Edit Pro takes video from an attached camera – or files stored on your PC – at up to **4K resolution**. You arrange clips in order, then trim them and add effects and transitions. The end result can be burned to a DVD (if your PC has a DVD writer drive), saved to a file, or uploaded straight to YouTube, Facebook and Vimeo.

Your edit can be displayed as a timeline – such as in a professional video program – or more simply as a storyboard. Imported clips are listed at the top right, and tabs at the top let you access fades and transitions, titles and special effects. A version for smartphones and tablets,

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Windows 7, 8 or 10 • 2GB memory (8GB recommended) • 2GB hard-drive space • Quad-core processor and dedicated graphics card recommended for HD/4K editing • www.snipca.com/18779

Movie Pro Touch, is also available, so you can shoot footage on your device, do a quick edit on the touchscreen, then transfer the project to your PC.

A new video stabilisation **plug-in** does a good job of fixing obvious camera shakes, within reason, as well as some of the glitches that can creep in during fast movements. Improved object tracking helps you create those clever captions that blend into a scene, or pixelate a face while it's moving around. If your PC has a proper graphics card – and you'll need one for 4K editing – it'll be used to keep videos running smoothly without waiting for them to render.

The Plus edition (£70) adds multicam editing to switch between footage from

up to four cameras, beat-based editing to fit video to a music track, and more templates, while the Premium version (£90) adds more advanced special effects.

VERDICT: This reasonably priced program is straightforward enough for casual use, but enables serious editing when you need it



ALTERNATIVE: Serif MoviePlus X6 £61

A few pounds more, but just as easy to use as Movie Edit Pro and likely to run better on older PCs

MUSIC STUDIO | £45 from Magix www.snipca.com/18780

Magix Music Maker 2016

A quick way into all kinds of music



There are plenty of affordable Windows programs for digital music enthusiasts – including Steinberg's Cubase Elements, Cakewalk Music Creator and Ableton Live Intro – but nothing quite like Apple's GarageBand for those of us who just want to dabble without a lot of complications. Music Maker includes some of the kinds of features you'd find across all of these, at a relatively basic level.

You can arrange songs just by dragging some of Music Maker's thousands of loops – short snippets of music in styles such as rock, pop and dance – on to the multi-track timeline, or connect a USB keyboard and play the included software instruments to create songs from scratch. The program can also record live

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Windows 7, 8 or 10 • 2GB memory • 7.5GB hard-drive space • www.snipca.com/18780

instruments and vocals (preferably using an external microphone), and it supports standard loop and effects formats, so it's easy to add more sounds.

New features in the 2016 edition include the ability to control software instruments from an iOS or Android device, which is fun, and a virtual accordion, which is lovely if you like the sound of accordions. There's a powerful 'cinematic synth', a fancy graphic equaliser, an extra drum machine, 2,000 new loops, and an on-screen keyboard that plays only correct notes. Now that really is magic.

Music Maker 2016 Live (£70) adds on-screen pads for hip-hop and electronic dance music performance as well as extra sounds and an unlimited number of tracks. The Live Performer

edition (£140) includes a two-octave hardware keyboard with drum pads, while Control (£120) comes with a plain four-octave keyboard.

VERDICT: You get plenty for your money, and the neat user interface makes it all reasonably easy to get to grips with



ALTERNATIVE: Steinberg Cubase Elements 8 £69 If you're more ambitious and don't mind having more to learn, this is a more future-proof choice

CAMERA | £189 from Amazon www.snipca.com/18796

Veho Muvi K2NPNP

An action camera with lots of extras

Trademark lawyers hate it when you use brands to reference a whole category of products. But we still do it. Most of us have a Hoover, possibly made by Zanussi. Or maybe a 'Dyson' ... with 'Vax' written on the front. Some names just stick in the mind, and almost anything is better than 'vacuum cleaner'.

So it is with 'action cameras'. You'll see these strapped to bikes, helmets, canoes, snowboards and anything else that moves. Their owners call them GoPros, but GoPro isn't the only company that makes them. This one is from Veho, whose name you might recognise from the Southampton football strip.

“ It gives you a comprehensive outdoor-shooting kit ”

The Muvi K2 shoots Full HD video and, unusually, 16-megapixel photos. Like other action cameras, it can be controlled from your iOS or Android phone or tablet, but it comes with a little LCD screen that clips on to the back, so you can check what you're filming. You can find the K2 for as little as £130, which is great value. We tested the K2NPNP bundle, which includes an impressively chunky rugged case that's fully waterproof.

The case is big and fiddly, with mysterious buttons and replaceable mist filters, but it does a good job. A whole array of mounts is provided to attach to almost anything, and you can use GoPro mounts, too. The whole lot comes in an even bigger box with a carry handle.

Once you learn the controls, the K2 is straightforward to use, and it's easy to

SPECIFICATIONS

1080p Full HD video • 16-megapixel photos • 2in screen • microSD card slot • Wi-Fi • Mini USB port • Mini HDMI port • 40x60x23mm (HxWxD) • 84g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/18797



switch between still and moving pictures. The results are more than good enough for casual and semi-pro use. Video goes up to 60 frames per second (fps), allowing 2x slow motion, or 120fps at a lower 720p resolution. You can set a gravity sensor to start shooting when the camera moves, so you don't miss anything. The 8GB microSD card will only store 90 minutes of footage, but extra 32GB cards in this format cost under a tenner. The rechargeable battery, rated at four hours, lasted us two and a half, which is actually very good; it's not sealed in, so you can carry a spare.

Inevitably, competition comes from GoPro. The Hero+ LCD – with its built-in rugged case – is more compact, though not quite as waterproof. At the time of writing, Currys is selling it with a carry case and a 32GB microSD card thrown in for £199 (www.snipca.com/18798). Both cameras are great buys.

VERDICT: If you don't need the smallest camera, the Muvi gives you a good-value comprehensive outdoor-shooting kit

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: GoPro Hero+ LCD £199
GoPro's equivalent model – with a rugged non-removable case – gives you similar video quality and battery life



COMING SOON



WINTER 2015

Printers can be cheap, but ink is dear, partly because it comes in cartridges that the print head carries around as it prints. Canon's Pixma G series pumps ink from tanks that can be refilled. Launched in India (from £100), the printers will compete with Epson's EcoTank (£180).



WINTER 2015

As Apple's iPad Pro (pictured) arrives to challenge Microsoft's Surface Pro 4, others will join the battle of the supertables. Samsung may be among the contenders, with leaks revealing a prototype 12in slab running Windows 10 with stylus support and a 4K screen.



MARCH 2016

When Apple announced the oversized iPad Pro (see above), it didn't mention the expected upgrade to the iPad Air 2. Having missed the pre-Christmas window, the next likely time slot for an iPad Air 3 would be around March.



2016

The OnePlus X is great value, resembling an iPhone 5 but selling for just £200. Performance isn't amazing, and the Oxygen software is based on Android 5.1.1 rather than 6, but it has beautiful build quality. For a chance to buy it, sign up at www.snipca.com/18841.



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www.snipca.com/14981 *At time of press



Our pick of products that have won the Buy It award

LAPTOP

Asus X555LA-XX290H
£295 from www.snipca.com/18151
Tested: Issue 446



Asus has made all the right choices with this budget Windows 8.1 laptop. Its comfortable keyboard, fast performance, respectably lengthy battery life and bright screen are all the more impressive given its low price.

ALTERNATIVE: Asus Chromebook C200

A cheap Chrome OS ultra-portable laptop with a bright screen, lengthy battery life and a great keyboard. £208 from www.snipca.com/17296

DESKTOP PC

NEW ENTRY

Palicomp AMD Shockwave
£500 from www.snipca.com/18748
Tested: Issue 464



Proving that you don't need an Intel processor, Palicomp has built an excellent PC around AMD's Athlon X4 860K and Radeon R7 370 graphics card, narrowly beating Chillblast's Fusion Drone.

ALTERNATIVE: CCL Nebula 200i A
A great all-round Intel i5 system in an attractive cube-shaped case. £600 from www.snipca.com/18844

TABLET

Apple iPad Mini 4
£319 from www.snipca.com/18100
Tested: Issue 460



The 2015 update to Apple's 7.9in tablet greatly improves the screen and camera, boosts performance, and makes it worth the £100 extra over the iPad mini 2 (still a good budget buy). Go for the £399 64GB version if you can, though.

ALTERNATIVE: Apple iPad Air 2 The 9.7in option is still slim and light, also has Touch ID and Apple Pay, and the range of apps beats Android. £399 from www.snipca.com/18139

PHONE

Apple iPhone 6s
£539 from www.snipca.com/18240
Tested: Issue 461



It may look like last year's model, but this update is stronger and faster, with a higher-resolution camera, time-saving 3D Touch features and an excellent screen. The bigger 6s Plus has better battery life.

ALTERNATIVE: Moto X Play Motorola's fun phone may be plasticky but it runs Android 5 smoothly. The screen, camera and battery life are all big pluses. £250 from www.snipca.com/17934

ROUTER

Trendnet TEW-812DRU
£112 from www.snipca.com/15855
Tested: Issue 427



An incredibly fast 802.11ac router that's also one of the cheapest we've seen. It's superb and it's the router to buy if you're ready to make the jump to 802.11ac.

ALTERNATIVE: Linksys WRT1900AC
More expensive, but even faster and with loads of features too. £176 from www.snipca.com/14950

E-READER

PRICE DROP

Amazon Kindle Paperwhite
£85 from www.snipca.com/17776
Tested: Issue 458



With a new high-resolution screen, the affordable Kindle lacks only automatic brightness adjustment and page-turn buttons (you have to swipe the screen). It's great value as long as you're happy to buy your books from Amazon.

ALTERNATIVE: Kobo Glo HD As good as the Paperwhite, but with more storage, and slightly more compact, this is the independent e-reader to pick. £110 from www.snipca.com/17889



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KRONOS 700 - AMD GAMING PC

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- : RADEON R9-380 2GB GDDR5
- : 8GB DDR3 - 1600MHz
- : 1TB SATA III Hard Drive
- : Microsoft Windows 10 (64Bit)

FROM **£589.99**



PHANTOM 700 - Intel Gaming PC

- : Intel i5 6500 3.20GHz Quad Core Skylake CPU
- : NVIDIA GTX960 2GB GDDR5
- : 8GB DDR3 - 1600MHz
- : 1TB HDD / 8GB SSD Seagate Hybrid Drive
- : Microsoft Windows 10 (64Bit)

FROM **£689.99**



PHANTOM 800 - Intel Gaming PC

- : Intel i5 6600K 3.50GHz Quad Core Skylake CPU
- : NVIDIA GTX970 4GB GDDR5
- : 16GB DDR4 - 2400MHz
- : 250GB SSD + 2TB SATA III Hard Drive
- : Microsoft Windows 10 (64Bit)

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SECURITY SOFTWARE

Kaspersky Internet Security 2016

£19.99 from www.snipca.com/17874

Tested: Issue 437



Kaspersky Internet Security 2016 has won our past six antivirus tests. Compatible with Windows 10, the 2016 edition is available at an exclusive reader discount on our Software Store. Go to the link above for a one-device licence, or buy a three-device licence for just £39.99 at www.snipca.com/17903.

ALTERNATIVE: Avast Free Antivirus

Almost as good as Kaspersky, but sometimes blocked legitimate software. Free from www.snipca.com/16493

WEB-DESIGN

Xara Web Designer Premium 11

£70 from www.snipca.com/16955

Tested: Issue 453



This visual web-design program makes creating sites more like laying out a document than writing HTML code, and sites can be 'responsive', meaning they look right on both big and small screens without extra work. A basic version is also available for half the price.

ALTERNATIVE: Serif WebPlus X8

Comes with lots of templates, but creates separate desktop and mobile versions instead of responsive sites, and can be slow to use. £90 from www.snipca.com/14964

COMPETITION

Win 1 of 2 Crucial BX200 SSD 480GB



Crucial's powerful and fast range of BX200 SSDs provides sequential read and write speeds of up to 540MB/s and 490MB/s respectively on all types of data. Additionally, compared with a standard hard drive, it is more than 13 times faster and 40 times more energy efficient - resulting in longer battery life and a cooler, quieter PC. To enter, email your address to cacomp@dennis.co.uk with 'crucial' in the subject line by midnight 22 December.

Crucial's BX200 SSD is available in three sizes - 240GB, 480GB and 960GB, priced £66.99, £116.99 and £234.99 respectively. You can find out whether they will work with your PC on Crucial's website: <http://uk.crucial.com/gbr>.

MULTIFUNCTION PRINTER

Canon Pixma MG6650

£76 from www.snipca.com/17334

Tested: Issue 455



It may look like something that James Bond would have to defuse, but this low-cost, all-in-one printer is an excellent choice. Running costs are reasonable too - buy the XL cartridges and running costs work out at 7.7p per colour page or 2.4p for black and white. This makes it very affordable to run.

ALTERNATIVE: Canon Pixma MX495

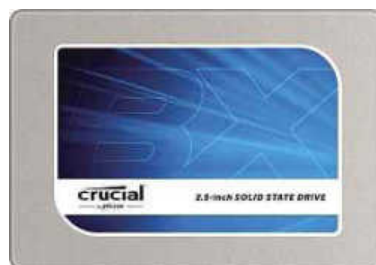
It's slow, and black ink is pricey, but this cheaper MFP has a paper feeder and fax too. £48 from www.snipca.com/17174

SOLID-STATE DRIVES

Crucial BX100 1TB

£235 from www.snipca.com/16017

Tested: Issue 445



A blindingly fast, high-capacity SSD at a lower price than ever before. If you've been put off buying a SSD because of the cost, then now is finally the time to take the plunge.

ALTERNATIVE: Samsung 850 Pro 256GB An even faster SSD, but it is much more expensive per gigabyte. £110 from www.snipca.com/16498

SECURITY CAMERA

Y-cam HomeMonitor HD

£135 from www.snipca.com/11646

Tested: Issue 420



A home-security camera that's well priced and easy to set up. Plus, it has great picture quality, useful apps and there's no need to subscribe to any extra services. It's a worthy successor to the original HomeMonitor, our previous favourite security camera.

ALTERNATIVE: D-Link Wireless N Day & Night Camera A good-value security camera with excellent night vision. £94 from www.snipca.com/15275



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Run your own personal cloud from the comfort and security of your home



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DS215j features a dual-core CPU, supports up to 12TB of data and consumes less than 14w when active while the DS115j offers a stable storage environment for users with no need for raid, consuming less than 11w when active.

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Synology apps available on

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Synology's Media
Accolades



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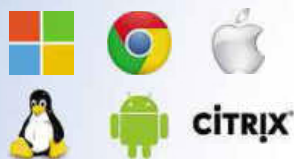
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Workshops & Tips

PULL OUT & KEEP
Issue 464

Edited by Sherwin Coelho

14 pages of easy-to-follow workshops and expert tips

35 Fix Windows 10 problems in one click
38 Resume broken downloads

40 Stop your router being hacked
42 Download Google Maps to use offline

PLUS

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44 Phone & Tablet Tips
46 Make Windows Better

47 Make Office Better
48 Secret Tips For... Android 6.0

Fix Windows 10 problems in one click

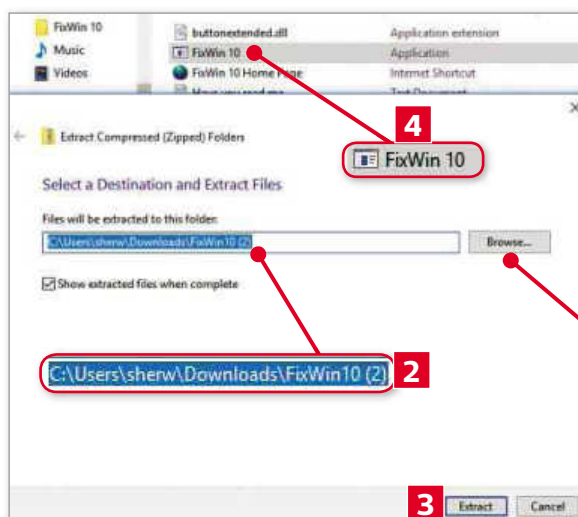
What you need: FixWin 10, Windows 10 **Time required:** 30 minutes

In Issue 439's Workshop 'Fix 50 Windows 8 problems with one click' (page 40) we explained how to make the most of the free tool FixWin. There's now a new version called FixWin 10 that's specifically designed to resolve problems with Microsoft's latest operating system.

So if your PC keeps crashing, you struggle connecting to the internet, your printer doesn't work or you're running out of storage space, FixWin 10 will help you fix any of these problems (and around 70 others) with the click of a button.

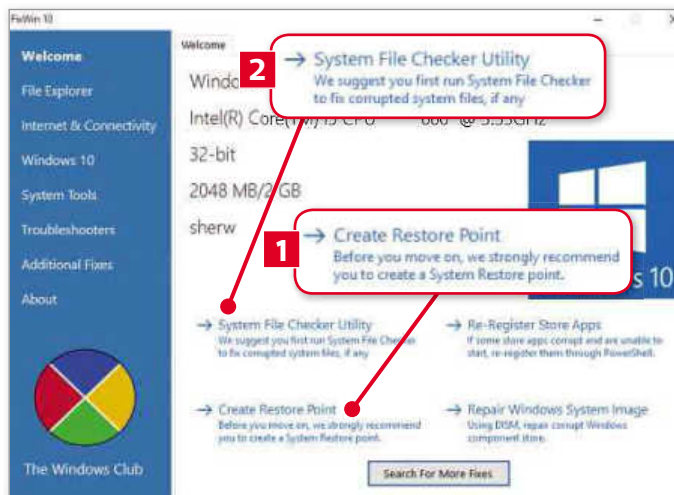


STEP 1 The download process for FixWin 10 differs slightly depending on which browser you use. We're using Windows 10's new browser Edge, but it's just as easy in Chrome, Firefox and Internet Explorer. Go to www.snipca.com/18705, scroll down and click the blue Download File button **1**. You'll see a message at the bottom of your browser window **2** when the download is completed. Click Open **3** to see four files, double-click the FixWin 10 setup file, then click 'Extract all'.

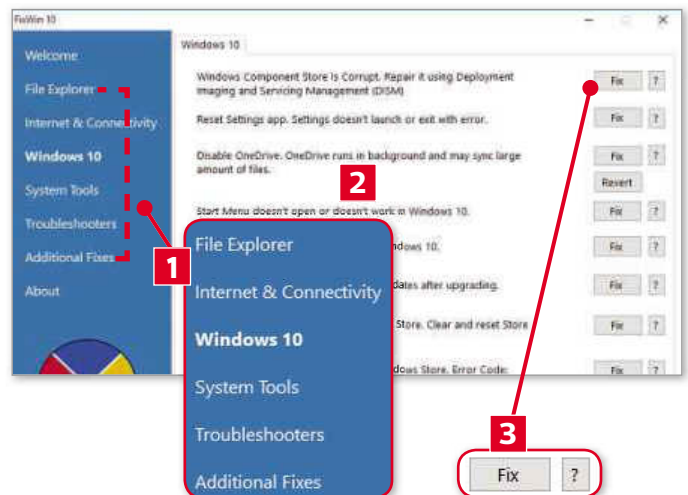


STEP 2 Next, click Browse **1**, select a location for the folder's contents on your PC (your Downloads folder **2**, for example), ensure 'Show extracted files when complete' is ticked, then click the Extract button **3**. When the folder opens, launch the FixWin 10 setup file **4**, then click Yes to open the program. FixWin doesn't create a Desktop shortcut, so you'll need to launch this setup file every time you want to use it. The program opens on a Welcome screen providing basic information about your PC (version of Windows 10, processor, hard drive and so on).

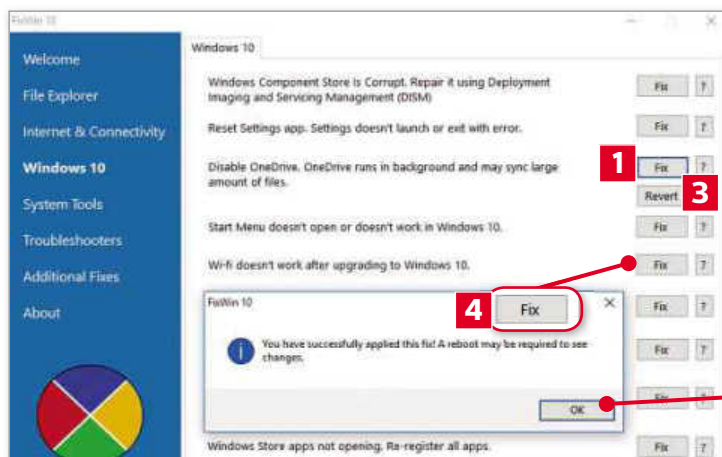
Workshops



STEP 3 Before using FixWin, it's a good idea to create a **system restore point** so you can undo any changes you make if you're unhappy with them. Click that option **1**. After a few seconds, you'll see a 'Restore point has been created successfully' message. Click OK, then click System File Checker Utility **2**. This will scan your PC and fix any corrupted files. You'll see a message informing you the scan is taking place in the background. Click OK to see a Command Prompt window showing the progress of the scan. It takes about 10 minutes and you'll need to restart your PC if any problems are detected.

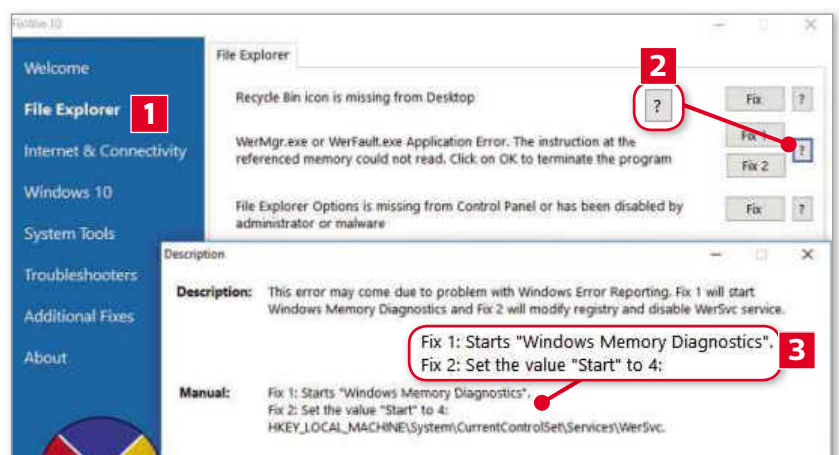


STEP 4 FixWin 10 contains six sections **1**, each containing a number of fixes **2**. Every fix has two buttons **3**. The question mark (?) button describes the problem in more detail and explains what FixWin will do if you click the Fix button. In most cases, clicking Fix will simply change a value in your PC's Registry or add a command to your PC's Command Prompt. First, click the Windows 10 section to see a list of common problems reported by users after upgrading their operating system.

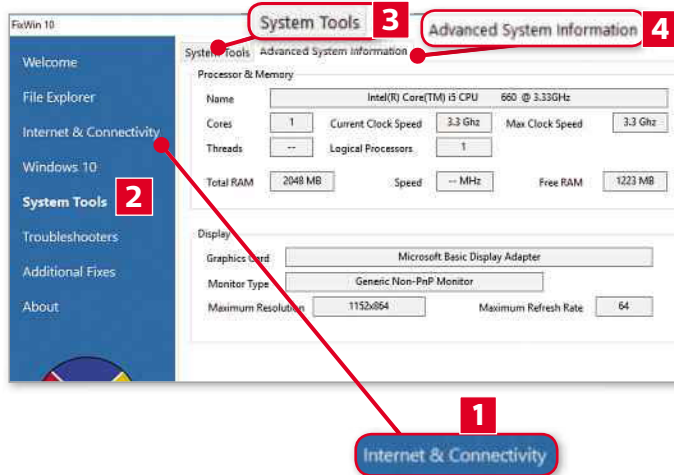


STEP 5 Windows 10 hogs a lot of your hard drive, but syncing OneDrive can slow your PC further. If you don't use Microsoft's cloud-storage service, click the 'Disable OneDrive...' Fix button **1**, then click OK **2** to confirm your changes upon reboot. Some options (like OneDrive) also have a Revert button **3**, letting you undo the action. If your Wi-Fi doesn't work in Windows 10, then simply click the 'Wi-fi doesn't work after upgrading to Windows 10' fix **4**. Work through the list in this section to fix any other problems you have with Windows 10.

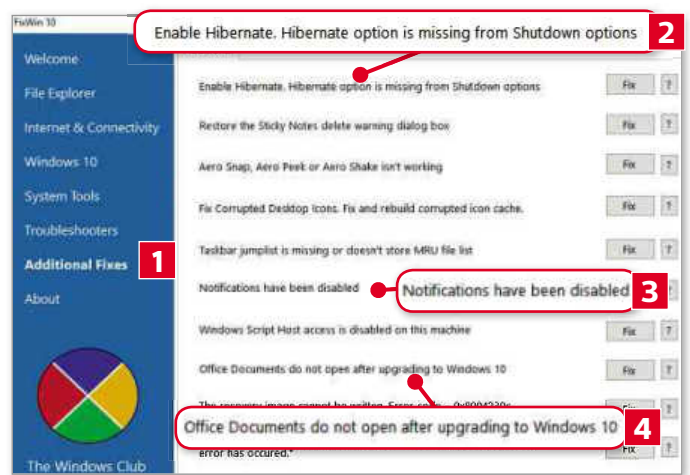
STEP 6 Next, click File Explorer **1** to see fixes for problems associated with File Explorer, Recycle Bin and your folders. Some options include a choice of two fixes, so click the question mark button **2** to see what each fix does **3**. In this section you can recover a missing Recycle Bin icon, fix a problematic DVD drive and restore folder thumbnails in File Explorer. Don't worry if your problems aren't resolved instantly because many fixes require you to restart your PC before coming into effect.



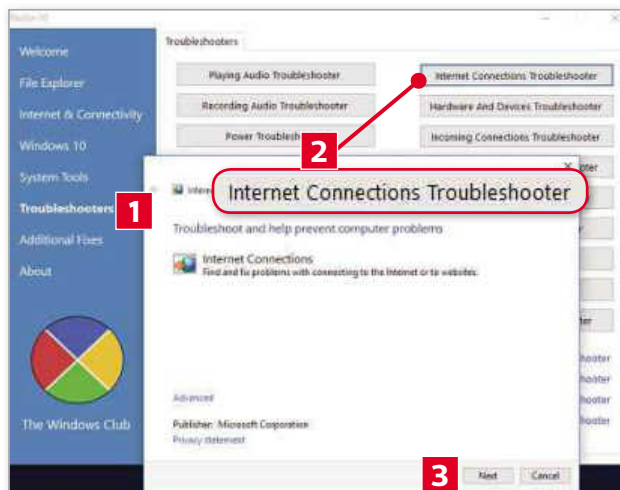
Fix Windows 10 problems in one click



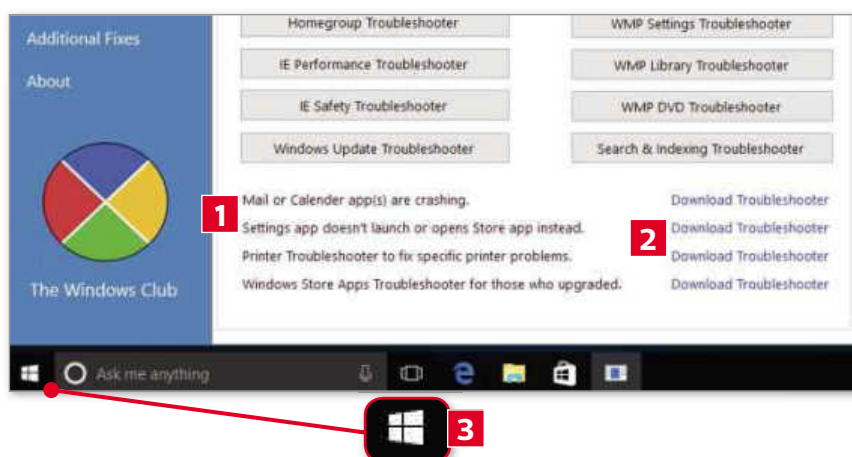
STEP 7 Internet & Connectivity **1** addresses glitches with your broadband, Wi-Fi and firewall, which may be blocking certain content. If you use Internet Explorer, you can apply a fix that lets you download two files simultaneously (third fix from the bottom). System Tools **2** contains two tabs. The System Tools tab **3** offers fixes for your PC's Administrator, Command Prompt, Registry Editor, Device Manager and Windows Defender. The Advanced System Information tab **4** provides detailed information about your PC, including RAM and screen resolution.



STEP 8 If you don't find a fix elsewhere, you should check the Additional Fixes section **1**. This includes, for example, the time-saving option of adding Hibernate to the 'Shut down' button **2**. You can also fix disabled Windows 10 notifications **3**, corrupted Desktop icons and Office files that won't open **4**.



STEP 9 The Troubleshooters section **1** doesn't contain Fix buttons. Instead, it uses Windows' built-in Troubleshooter to address common hardware, software and network problems (including those relating to printers, audio recording/playback and Windows Update). For example, if you can't connect to the internet after applying some of the fixes above, click Internet Connections Troubleshooter **2**, then click Next **3**. Windows will begin scanning your PC for possible causes. If it's a driver-related problem, for example, you'll be taken to a website, where you can download and install the appropriate driver.



STEP 10 The Troubleshooters section also has four options at the bottom **1**. These deal with problems relating to printers and misbehaving apps (Mail, Calendar, Settings and Windows Store). To fix any of these, click the relevant Download Troubleshooter link **2**. This will either open a web page containing information about how to resolve the problem, or direct you to a web page from where you can download a relevant file that will fix the problem. Finally, click the Start button **3**, Power, then Restart to apply any pending changes. ●

Resume broken downloads

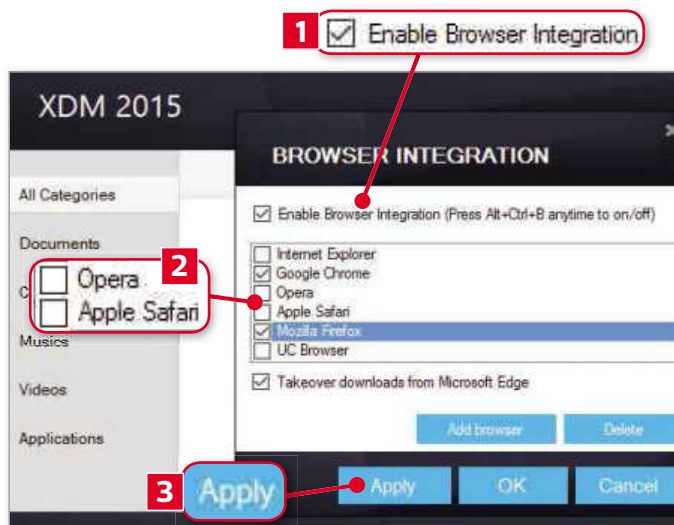
What you need: Xtreme Download Manager; Windows 7, 8 or 10 **Time required:** 20 minutes

If you're downloading a large file (for example, an HD video or a huge setup file) and your internet connection fails midway through the process, you'll need to restart from the beginning. But not if you use Xtreme Download Manager. It's a brilliant, free program that lets you resume a

broken download from its last completed point. It also organises your downloaded files by category (documents, videos, programs) and lets you download YouTube videos in a few clicks. We also noticed that it downloads files much faster than using a web browser.



STEP 1 To download and install Xtreme Download Manager (XDM), go to www.snipca.com/18722, click the Windows Installer link **1**, then run the setup file **2** (it doesn't contain any adware). When it loads, you'll see the program's features as a slideshow. Keep clicking Next until you need to click 'Launch XDM!' (alternatively, just click Skip). XDM requires a tool called FFmpeg – which automatically detects YouTube videos and gives you the option to download them – so click 'Install Now!' to download it. When that's done, click Close, then OK.



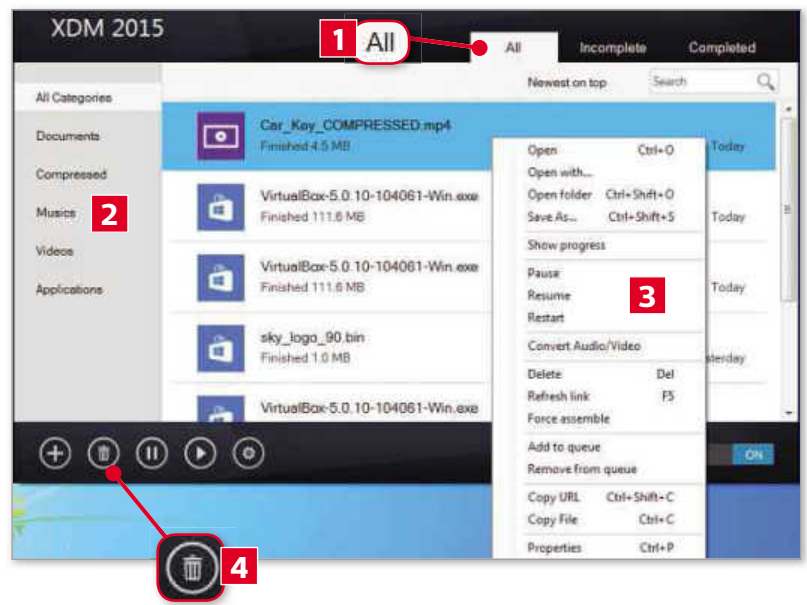
STEP 2 You now need to activate the YouTube Download option, so click Enable, OK, Yes, then OK again. Lastly, you need to integrate XDM with your browser(s) to be able to download files from it. In the Browser Integration window, tick 'Enable Browser Integration' **1** to select all the listed browsers. Now double-click the browser boxes to unselect the ones that you don't use **2**. If you use Windows 10, then tick 'Takeover downloads from Microsoft Edge'. Finally, click Apply **3**, then click OK (twice).



STEP 3 Close XDM because it will automatically appear the next time you download a file. The program doesn't create a Desktop shortcut; instead it sits in your Taskbar's notification centre. Now download any file as you normally would (by clicking its relevant 'Download' link). Whereas previously the file would immediately start downloading within your browser, you'll now see a New Download window **1**, with three options. Click Download Now **2** to begin. You'll see its progress as a percentage, along with three options below – Hide, Preview and Pause.

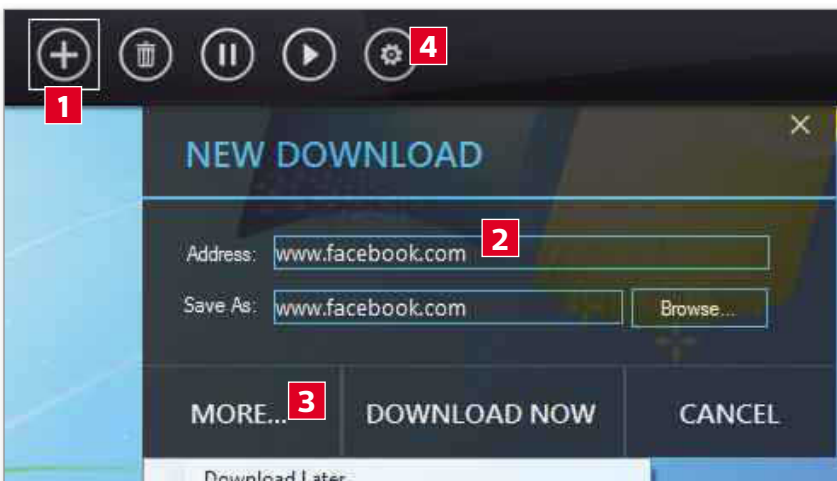
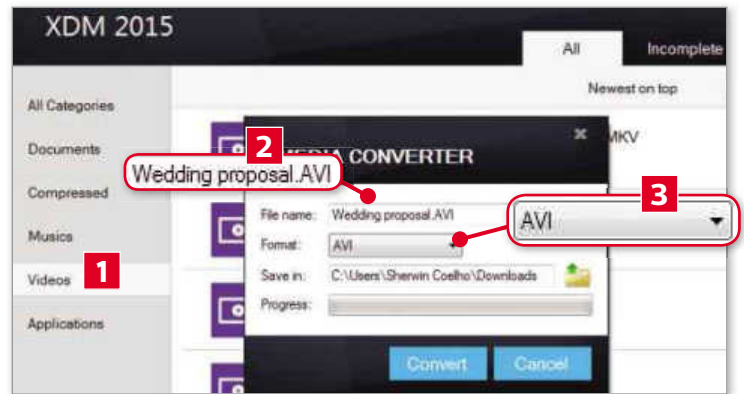


STEP 4 If the download is interrupted for any reason (for example, if your internet connection fails or you cancel the download by clicking Pause), the New Download window will disappear. Unlike browsers, XDM saves your broken download to its most recent point and lets you resume it. Once your connection returns, open your Taskbar's notification area, and launch XDM **1**. Now click the Incomplete section **2**, select the file you were downloading **3**, then click the Play button **4** to resume downloading it. After that's done, you'll see the option to open the file or open its parent folder.



STEP 5 All your files are still downloaded to your PC's Downloads folder (which is the default). However, XDM has categories that let you quickly locate a particular file. Click the All tab **1**, then click any of the categories **2** to see its relevant downloaded files. Double-click the file you want to open. Right-click any of the files to see a menu **3** with a list of options – including to open the file with a specific program on your PC, copy it, or copy its URL. To delete a downloaded file, simply select it, click the bin icon **4**, then click Yes.

STEP 6 Every time you watch a video on YouTube, XDM saves its link in a small Download Video menu, which appears at the bottom right of your screen. Click the menu to see a list of your watched videos, select the video you want to download, then click Download. You can also convert these downloaded videos (from the default MP4) to another format using XDM. To do that, open XDM, locate the video (in the Videos section) **1**, right-click it, then click Convert Audio/Video. Here, you'll see options to change the converted file's name **2**, its format **3** (XDM supports many popular video formats, including AVI, WMV and MPEG) and its default download location. Click Convert to begin.



STEP 7 By default, XDM also saves the links of YouTube videos you watch on other websites (such as Facebook) to the bottom-right Download Video menu. To stop this happening, click the '+' button at the bottom left of XDM **1** to see the New Download window. Now type the website name (for example, www.facebook.com) in the address field **2**, click the More button **3**, then click 'Don't capture downloads from this address'. The Settings buttons **4** has useful options. For example, if you're downloading a large file and want to automatically shut down your PC after it has finished, select Advanced on the left, tick 'Shutdown computer after download completes', then click Save. ●

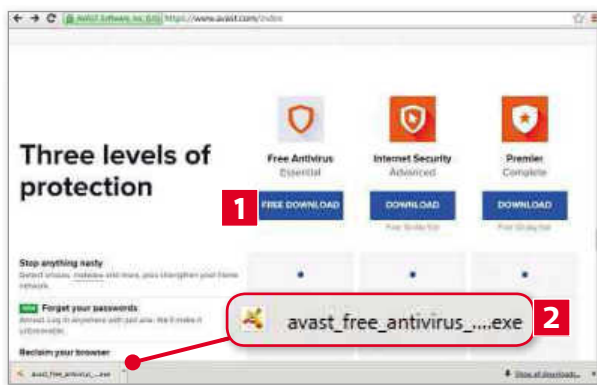
Stop your router being hacked

What you need: Avast Free Antivirus 2016; Any version of Windows (XP to 10)

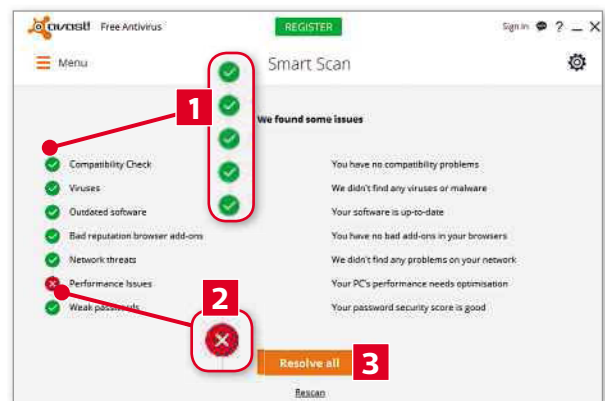
Time required: 30 minutes

Avast's latest free antivirus (2016) is the first version to come with a home-network scanner. This scans your router and any connected devices (for example, PCs, tablets, phones, printers and scanners), keeping them safe from hackers.

It also lets you find and update obsolete drivers on your PC, disable unsafe browser **add-ons** and create a **rescue disk** to fix a corrupted PC. Another new feature is a built-in password manager that lets you securely store your passwords within Avast.

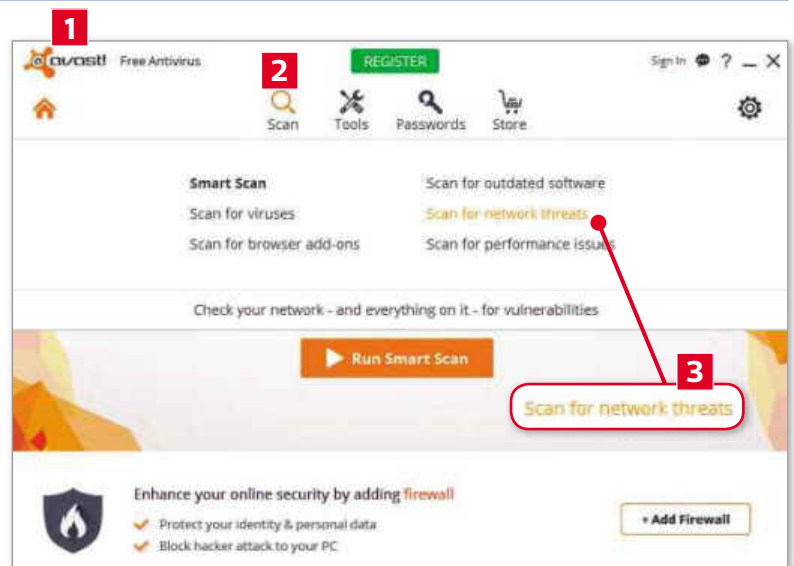


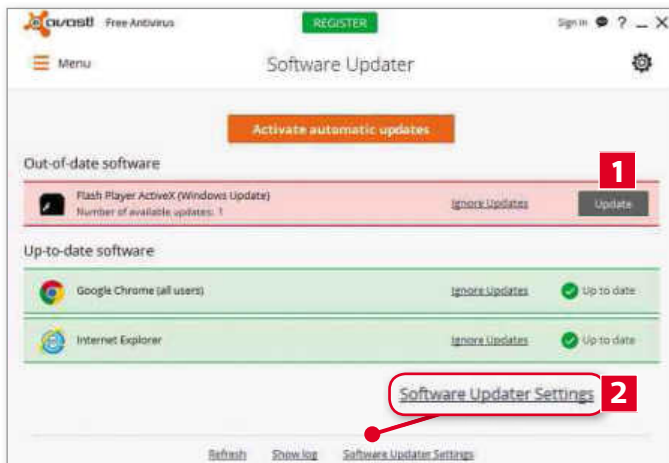
STEP 1 To download Avast Free Antivirus 2016, go to www.avast.com, scroll down the page and click the blue Free Download button **1** below Free Antivirus Essential. Now run the downloaded setup file **2**, then click Install. When the program loads, click Continue twice, then click the 'No, I don't want to protect my Android phone' link at the bottom. Avast 2016's new Smart Scan runs a quick, general check diagnosing seven PC problem areas – including viruses, outdated software and network threats. Click Run Smart Scan to start the process.



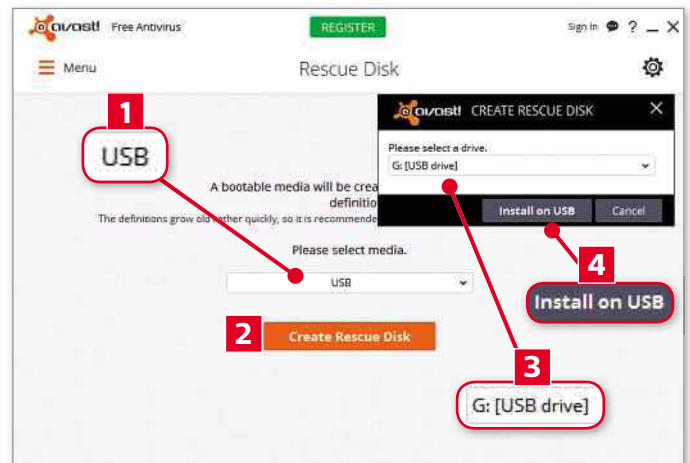
STEP 2 After the scan, you'll see ticks beside those areas where no problems were found **1** and crosses beside those that need fixing **2**. Click 'Resolve all' **3**. You'll now see more detailed information about the problems detected; click Resolve to fix them. If your PC is running slowly, for example, then Avast may suggest downloading its (paid-for) PC optimisation tool (Avast Cleanup). Instead, you should close the window, then install and run the free CCleaner (www.snipca.com/18760), which does the same job.

STEP 3 In this new version of its software Avast has redesigned the interface. To return to the main screen at any time, click the Avast logo **1**. The program has four categories along the top – each containing a number of options. For example, to run a detailed scan of your PC's router and internet connection, click Scan **2**, then click 'Scan for network threats' **3**. This checks all the devices connected to your home network. Click Resolve and follow the steps to fix any problems.

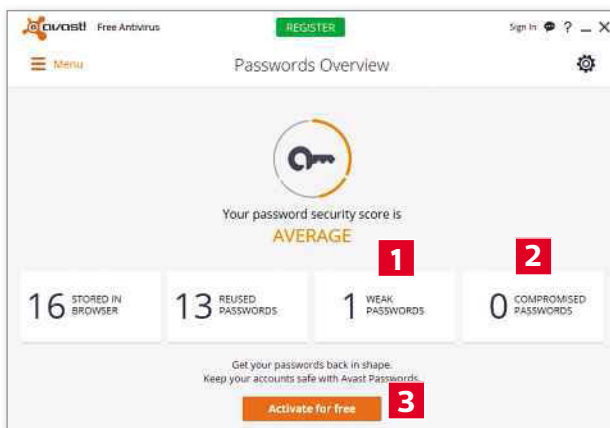




STEP 4 Your PC's security can also be compromised by programs that have not been updated and unsafe browser add-ons. Go to the main screen, click Scan, then 'Scan for outdated software'. Click the Update button **1** beside any flagged up as out of date. Now click the Software Updater Settings link **2**, tick 'Allow update of system-wide products for administrators only', then click OK. This will notify you about programs that need updating. Now go to the main screen, click Scan, then click 'Scan for browser add-ons'. You'll see options to disable any unsafe add-ons following the scan.

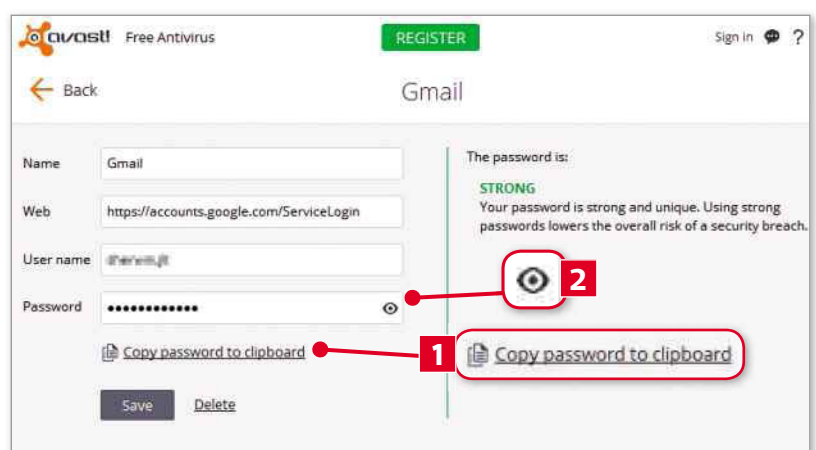


STEP 5 Another new feature is the ability to create a rescue disk (USB or CD), which you can use to scan and fix your PC if it becomes corrupted. First, insert a blank USB stick (over 500MB) or a blank CD into your PC. Next, click Tools on the main screen, then Rescue Disk. Select the inserted device in the dropdown menu **1**, click Create Rescue Disk **2**, select your inserted drive **3**, then click 'Install on USB' **4**. The process can take up to 30 minutes; click OK when it's finished. Now if you suspect your PC has become corrupted, restart it, insert the rescue drive, and press the relevant key to enter your PC's Boot Menu. Next, go to the Boot section, select the rescue disk drive and press Enter to scan and fix your PC.



STEP 6 To use Avast's new password manager click the Passwords section in the main section, then click Overview. This will check the passwords saved in your default browser and warn you of any weak **1** and compromised ones **2**. Click those boxes to see which accounts those passwords relate to. Next, click 'Activate for free' **3**. This lets you create a master password that safeguards your other passwords. Click Continue, type (and retype) your master password (ensuring it has a mix of upper- and lower-case letters and numbers), then click Create Main Password.

STEP 7 Now click the 'Install extension' link below your default browser (Avast supports Chrome, Internet Explorer, Firefox and Opera). That browser will now open. Click the Enable Extension link within it. The next time you log into any website within that browser, you'll see the option to save your password to Avast. To access these saved passwords, click the Passwords section in Avast's main screen, then click Passwords. You'll see all your saved accounts listed. Click an account, and you can copy its password **1** and paste it into the website login page. If you forget an account's password, click the eye icon **2**, then enter your master password. ●



Download Google Maps to use offline

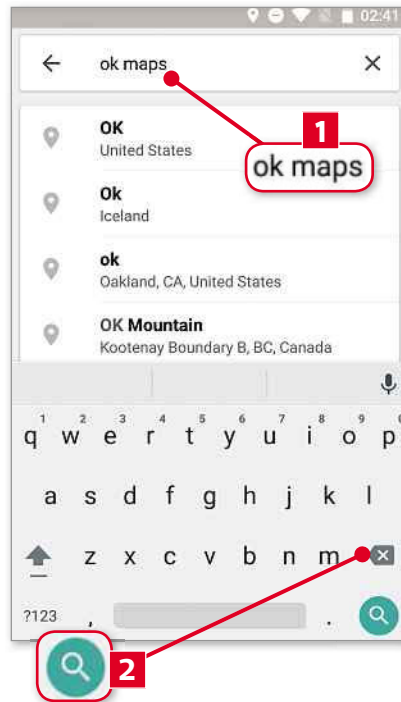
What you need: Android device **Time required:** 10 minutes

Google Maps for Android now lets you download areas of maps to use offline. This is particularly useful if you're travelling abroad because it lets you receive step-by-step directions without a mobile network. Depending on the size and nature of the area,

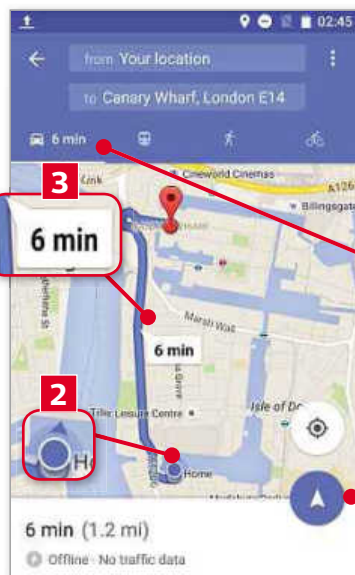
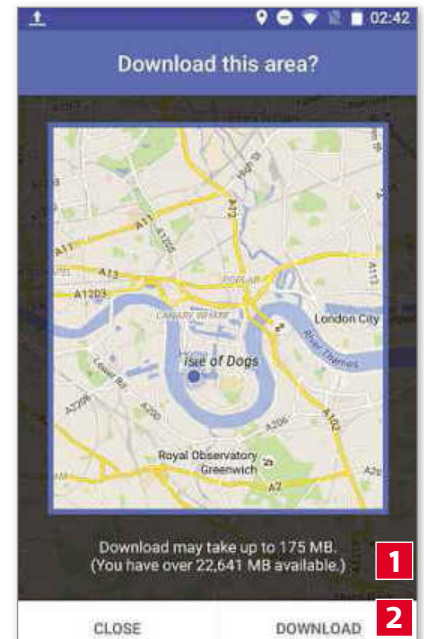
downloaded maps can take up a few hundred MB, so only download them when you're likely to need them. Try to download maps using a Wi-Fi network to ensure a speedier download and to save mobile data. The maps are automatically deleted after 30 days.



STEP 1 Now open Google Maps, type the name of the area you want to download offline (for example, Canary Wharf), then tap the relevant autosuggest option to see that area. Pinch or expand your screen to select the precise area you want to download for offline use. Next, tap the 'x' in the search field at the top (to clear the field), type **ok maps** into it **1**, then tap the Search icon **2**.



STEP 2 If your selected area is more than 50km by 50km, you'll see a message telling you to zoom into a smaller area. After doing that, you'll see a notification about how much space the downloaded map will take up and the available space on your device **1**. You can zoom in and out of this area and move to the left or right. When you're happy with your selection, tap **Download 2**, name your offline map, then tap Save.



STEP 3 Now whenever you're within that downloaded area and don't have network, simply open the Maps app and navigate to any place within that area. Tap the car icon **1** to see your location **2** and time from destination **3**. To start your navigation, tap the blue arrow icon **4**. Search for any restaurant or business within the downloaded area and you'll see its location as a red pinpoint. Tap the restaurant/business name at the bottom to see more info, including its opening hours and contact number.

NEXT ISSUE

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23 Dec

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- Monitor your home online when away
- Never miss a software update in 2016
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TIP OF THE FORTNIGHT

Find out how many 'days' old you are

Being an old softy and one of those people that just love Christmas, I wanted a way to count down the days to Christmas Day and came across a

wonderful website called www.timeanddate.com. In the 'Calculators & Timers' section at the bottom left, click 'Date-to-Date Calculator'. As its name

suggests, you can enter any two dates in the Start Date and End Date fields, then click the green 'Calculate duration' button (see screenshot) to work out the number of days between them.

For a bit of fun, I entered my date of birth in the first field, clicked the Today link in the second and realised I was 20,542 days old. I realised that my dad, (who's 81) is only 64 days away from his 30,000th day! I'm planning to surprise him with a cake on that day, but not sure where I'll get that many candles!

Dave Henry



The winner of every Tip of the Fortnight wins this exclusive Computeractive mug!

NAVIGATION

Send directions from your PC to your phone

As a builder, I rely a lot on the Google Maps app on my Android phone to get me from one job to another. To save time working out my directions between jobs I've started using a new, useful 'Send to Phone' option in Google Maps. This lets you send directions from your PC to your Android phone.

First, go to maps.google.com on your PC, click 'Sign in' at the top right and log in with your Google account. Now type your destination in the search field at the top left and select the correct autosuggest option. Next, click the Send To Your Phone option, then select your device (see screenshot below). On your device you'll see a notification offering two options - Navigate and Directions. Tap the one you want to use.

Gary Cornwell



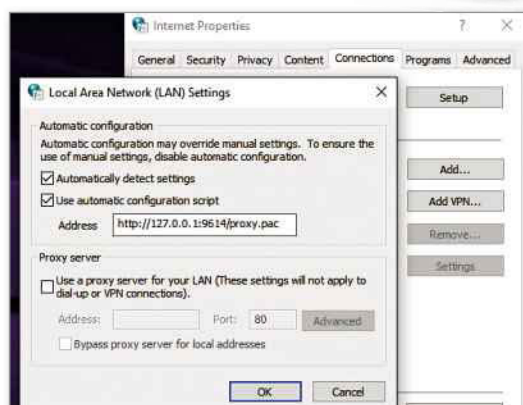
NETWORK SOLUTION

Restore Windows 10's broken internet connection

I updated my PC to Windows 10 a few weeks back. It did take some getting used to, but I can now say with some confidence that I don't miss Windows 8.1 at all. However, one problem has plagued me since upgrading - my internet connection keeps cutting out whenever I boot up my PC. I noticed this when I opened the Windows Store and saw an 'error code', which I copied and pasted into Google to find a fix.

If you're having problems connecting your PC to the internet and your broadband connection is working fine, open the Windows Store. If you see a 'The error code is 0x80072EFD, in case you need it' message at the bottom, then this is how to restore your connection.

First, try following the steps outlined by Microsoft here: www.snipca.com/18833, which worked for me. But I've subsequently found another simpler 10-second fix. Press the Windows key+R to open the Run dialogue box, type inetctl.cpl into it, then press Enter. Now click the Connections tab, then click the 'LAN settings' button at the bottom. Next, tick 'Automatically detect settings' at the top, and untick 'Use a proxy server for your LAN' in the 'Proxy server' section (see screenshot above



right). Finally, click OK twice and you'll notice your connection will have been restored.

Frank O'Connor

KEYBOARD SHORTCUT

Take screenshots quickly in Windows 8 and 10

I stumbled upon an easy way to take screenshots on my new Windows 10 PC. This involves pressing three keys simultaneously - the Windows key, the Function key (to the left of the Windows key) and the Print Screen key. Upon pressing these three keys your screen will blink once. The first time this happened, I thought that something had gone wrong with my PC, but this is just your PC's way of indicating that a screenshot has been taken. Open File Explorer, click the Pictures folder and you'll find a Screenshots folder containing all your files.

Brian Locke

Phone and Tablet Tips Brilliant things to do on your device

ANDROID

Save precious storage space



Most phones and tablets come with only 16GB of storage space, which isn't a lot when you have to fit in an operating system. Aside from that, photos and videos are the main storage hogs. Google Photos (www.snipca.com/18781) – our favourite photo and video backup service – has now added a useful option that lets you set the app to automatically delete media files from your device that are older than 30 days and have already been backed up.

To do this, open the app, tap the three lines at the top left, then tap Settings at the bottom. Next, tap the new 'Free up device storage' option. The app will now find all your device's media files saved to Google Photos and tell you how much space can be freed up by deleting them. Tap Delete, then Delete again to do that. Google says this feature will be added to the iOS app 'soon'.

ANDROID & iOS

Use Google's improved voice-search tools



Google's search app (Android: www.snipca.com/18782; iOS: www.snipca.com/18783) has added a number of new features to its ever-expanding arsenal. The app was always good at providing answers to basic questions. For example, you could always tap the app's mic icon, then ask 'How old is Jeremy



Clarkson?' and get the answer (55).

But now, the type of questions (and answers) that the app can deal with has been expanded. For example, you can ask the app superlative questions, such as 'Who are the tallest Liverpool players?' and get Liverpool players listed according to their height (tallest first). Ask 'What are the most populated cities in the UK?' to see a similar type of list (see screenshot above). You can also ask questions about a particular point in time. For example, try asking 'What songs did The Beatles record in 1969?'

iOS

Add the iCloud Drive app to your home screen



Apple's iCloud Drive cloud-storage service has a simple website (www.icloud.com) you've always been able to access via

your device's settings. However, iOS 9 now lets you add the app to your homescreen. To do that, open Settings, tap iCloud on the left, then tap iCloud Drive on the right. Next, ensure the iCloud Drive slider is turned on, then tap the 'Show on Home Screen' slider to turn it on.

iOS

Use Firefox's reading mode



Mozilla has launched a Firefox browser app for iOS devices. If you currently use Firefox on your PC or on an Android device, the app will sync your bookmarks and browsing history across all your devices. The new app also has a useful reading mode that strips away adverts and web videos and lets you customise your reading experience by tweaking the interface and font.

Install and open the app (www.snipca.com/18784), swipe through the introductory screens, then tap 'Sign in to Firefox' and log in (if you already have a Firefox account). Alternatively, tap Start Browsing to skip the log in. The app has five icons across the browser bar at the top. The first contains tiles of websites you frequently visit; the second (star) icon contains websites you've bookmarked; the clock icon lists your browsing history; the cloud icon contains websites you've bookmarked on another device; and the book icon contains your reading list.

To use the reading mode, first open any

Best New Apps

What you should install this fortnight

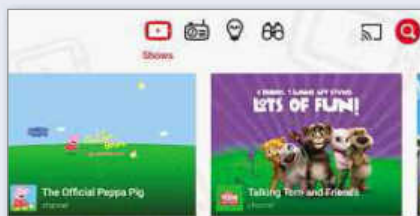
YouTube Kids

Free

Android: www.snipca.com/18786

iOS: www.snipca.com/18787

This child-friendly YouTube app makes the website easy to use and excludes 'adult' content. There are four categories – Shows, Music, Learning and Explore. Your child won't need to log in and you can set a timer to control how much they use it.



ClearView Gestures

Free

Android: www.snipca.com/18785

ClearView Gestures lets you draw a simple gesture on the screen to launch a specific action.

For example, you can set it to call a particular family member when you draw the letter 'A', or to open your device's settings when you draw an 'S'. You can also use it to launch apps and send text messages.

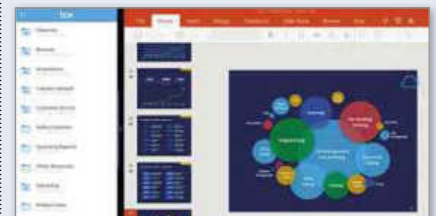


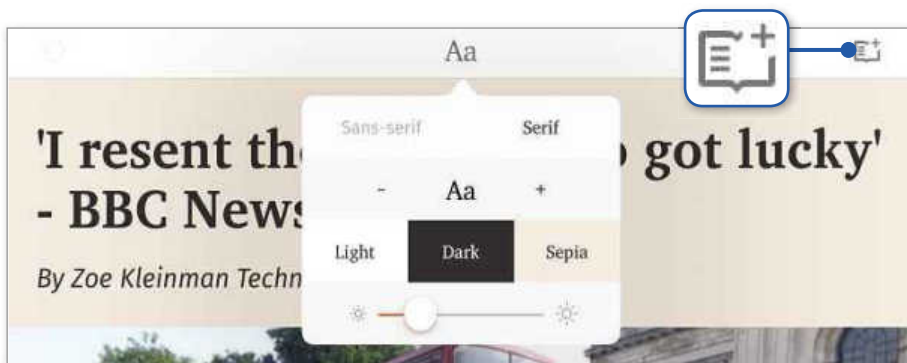
Box

Free

Windows Phone: www.snipca.com/18788

Box gives you 10GB of free cloud storage. You can create and edit Office files directly from within the app, and share files and folders instantly by sending a link. You can also pin your 'favourite' files to the Start screen for easy access – features that you won't find in Microsoft's OneDrive.





article, then tap the small book icon that appears in the URL bar. The article will now open in a reading-mode view (minus adverts and video clips). Tap the A icon at the top to see options for customising the mode's font style, font size, page theme and brightness (see screenshot above). To save this article offline, tap the small '+' symbol (see top right of screenshot). To access your offline articles, tap the tab number at the top right, the '+' symbol (also top right) to open a new tab, then the book icon.

WINDOWS PHONE

Make your battery last longer

Windows Phones have a setting that lets you conserve your device's battery by turning off apps that run in the background (including Facebook and Maps that constantly update content and track your location). However, this setting isn't turned on by default.

To activate it, open your Notification Centre, tap All Settings, scroll down to the 'system' section, then tap 'battery saver'. Here, you'll see options to automatically conserve your phone's battery when it has less than 20 per cent



charge (see screenshot below left). Tap the 'Now until next charge' slider to immediately start conserving battery. Tap 'usage' at the top to see as a percentage which apps are the biggest battery drains. If you want to permanently stop any of these apps from running in the background, tap the app, then tap the slider below it.

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO ANDROID

Our new 148-page book tells you everything you need to know about Android, including the best apps and tips for the Lollipop and Marshmallow updates.

NEW!

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 at www.snipca.com/18829

Games With Kids

What to play together on your phone and tablet

AGES 0-5

Lola's Learning World*

£2.49 www.snipca.com/18790 (Android)

Free www.snipca.com/18791 (iOS)

Your toddler needs to choose an animal avatar and complete tasks located on different islands. The games will teach your kids to recognise and compare colours, objects and numbers through basic maths and matching-up challenges.



AGES 6-10

Smash Hit*

Free www.snipca.com/18792 (Android)

Free www.snipca.com/18793 (iOS)

Smash Hit is all about timing and accuracy. You need to tap the screen at the right time to break the glass obstacles in your path and progress through each of the 50 levels. Your concentration levels will be tested because you need to hit moving obstacles that appear out of nowhere.



AGES 11-16

Reverse Charades*

Free www.snipca.com/18794 (Android)

Free www.snipca.com/18795 (iOS)


In this party game one person guesses the word/phrase, while their team acts it out. You can create up to four teams, select the number of rounds, set how long each one lasts and how many times teams can pass.



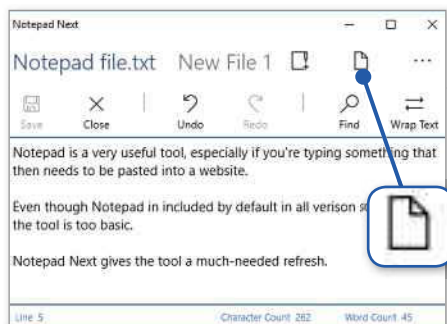
*Contains in-app purchases

WINDOWS 10

Use improved version of Notepad

 All versions of Windows come with Notepad, but the tool has always been very basic. For example, it only lets you undo your last action (not actions previous to that), it doesn't provide a word count, you can't search for words within your file and you can't create another Notepad file within the same window. If you have Windows 10, you can use the new, free app Notepad Next to do all of these things.

To download it, open the Windows Store, search for **notepad next**, download it, then click Open to launch the program. You'll see large buttons for common actions listed at the top and your line, word and character counts at the bottom. To open a new file within the same window, simply click the 'New file' icon (see screenshot below).

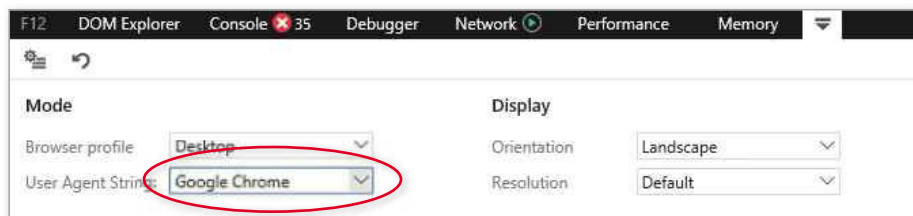


WINDOWS 10

Hack Edge to use with WhatsApp Web

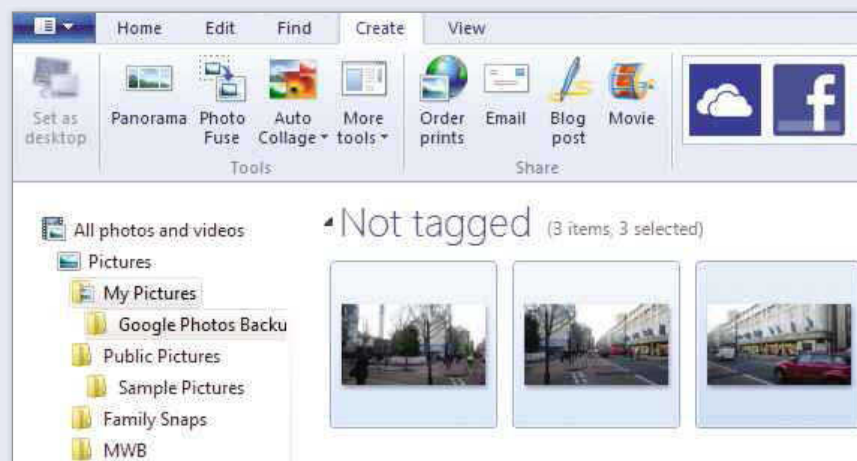
 Previously, we showed you how to sync your WhatsApp Messenger phone conversations to your PC browser using WhatsApp Web (see Workshop, Issue 445, page 42). This feature only works in Chrome, Firefox, Opera and Safari. However, if you use Windows 10, there's an easy hack you can carry out so you can use WhatsApp Web with Edge, Microsoft's new browser.

Open Edge and go to web.whatsapp.com. Ignore the message saying you can only use the supported browsers (instead of Edge) and click Edge's More button (the three dots at the top right). Next, click F12 Developer Tools. A new section



WINDOWS 7, 8, 10

Create a panorama using Photo Gallery




 You usually need an advanced photo-editing program and a degree of technical know-how to merge adjacent views into a panoramic photo. However, Microsoft's free program Photo Gallery can do this for you with excellent results. For convenience, save the photos you want to merge (in the order you want them to appear - from left to right) on your Desktop.

Photo Gallery is part of Microsoft's Windows Essentials package. To download it, go to www.snipca.com/18850, click the purple 'Get it now' button, run the setup file, then click

'Choose the programs you want to install'. Now untick all programs except 'Photo Gallery and Movie Maker'. Click Install and follow the prompts.

Open Photo Gallery and drag and drop the photos from your Desktop into it (see screenshot). Next, click the Create tab at the top of the program, then move your cursor over each of your photos and click the box at their top left to select them. Finally, click the Panorama option at the top left. You'll see a 'Stitching panoramic photo' pop-up message. When that's finished, you'll see the option to rename and save the panoramic photo to your PC.


(with nine tabs) will open. Click the Emulation tab, change the User Agent String dropdown menu to Google Chrome (see screenshot below), then close the section. Immediately you'll see a QR code on your screen.

Now open WhatsApp on your phone, tap the three dots at the top right, then tap WhatsApp Web. This will activate your phone's camera displaying a square border. Point the camera at the QR code on your PC screen (making sure it's

inside the border) and your phone's WhatsApp messages will now sync to Microsoft Edge.


WINDOWS 7, 8, 10

Cycle through PC locations in Command Prompt

 Command Prompt lets you specify which PC location (file or folder) you want a command to be carried out in. Thankfully, there's an easy way to automatically cycle through your PC's locations (rather than typing them into Command Prompt). Open Command Prompt (using the search field). By default, it opens in **C:\Users\your name**. Keep pressing the Tab key to cycle through your locations until you reach the one you want, then type your command.

OFFICE


Check whether add-ins are destabilising your program

 You're probably familiar with browser **add-ons** that extend the functionality of Chrome and Firefox. Office programs (Word, Excel and PowerPoint) have similar tools called 'add-ins' that let you add extra features. To use add-ins, click the Insert tab, then click Store in the 'Add-in' sections at the top. Like browser add-ons, Office add-ins can sometimes make your programs unstable. So if, for example, a program is loading slowly or crashing frequently, there's an easy way to check whether an add-in you recently installed is to blame.

To do this, hold down the Ctrl key, then launch the faulty program. You'll see a pop-up prompting you to launch the program in Safe Mode – click Yes. The program will now open minus any add-ins. If it opens without problems and works fine, then you know the add-ins are responsible for any instabilities. To remove the faulty add-in, simply reopen the program, click the Insert tab, then click 'My Apps' (in the 'Add-ins' section). Now right-click the add-in, click Remove, then Remove again.

WORD


Create your own 'cover pages'

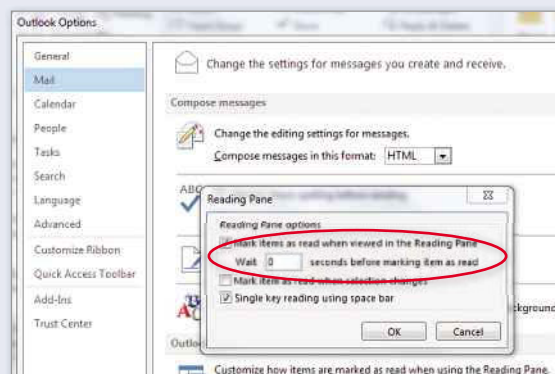
 If you tend to lay out the first page of your Word document in a particular way (your name, address, an image or graphics, for example), then there's an easy way to



OUTLOOK

Change the 'read' status of your emails

 Whenever you receive a new email in Outlook, the number next to your Inbox at the top left will increase by one and the new email is formatted in bold in your Reading Pane. By default, when you click to read this new email in your Reading Pane, it won't lose its bold formatting and the number next to your Inbox won't decrease. It's only when you click another email (an older one, for example) that the formatting changes and the number decreases – indicating that the email has been 'read'. It's easy to change this default setting so that Outlook shows an email as 'read' when you click it.




Click File at the top left, then Options. Next, click Mail on the left, the Reading Pane button, then tick the 'Mark items as read when viewed in the Reading Pane' box (see screenshot). Type in the field below to set how many seconds after clicking the email you want the formatting and number to change. Click OK twice.

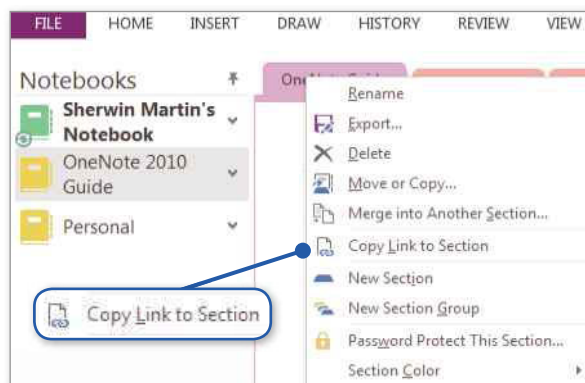
save this template as a 'cover page' that you can reuse whenever you want. The easiest way to do this is by using Word's Cover Page option. If you click the Insert tab, then the Cover Page dropdown menu at the top left, you'll see a selection of cover pages that you can click to add. It's easy to create and add your own page to this group.

First, open a new document and lay out its first (cover) page the way you want. Now select every element on the page, click the Insert tab, the Cover Page dropdown menu, then click 'Save Selection to Cover Page Gallery' (see screenshot left). Next, name your cover page, then click OK. The next time you want to reuse this page for a document, simply click the Cover Page dropdown menu, then click the page you created.

ONENOTE

Create Desktop shortcuts for your notebooks and sections

 If you use a particular notebook or section within OneNote a lot, then you should create a Desktop shortcut for it for easy access. To create a



shortcut for a notebook, click the notebook dropdown menu at the top left of OneNote, right-click the notebook you want, then click 'Copy Link to Notebook'. Likewise, to create a shortcut for a notebook section, right-click the relevant section tab at the top, then click 'Copy Link to Section' (see screenshot above).

Now right-click any blank area on your Desktop, move your cursor to New in the menu, then click Shortcut. Click inside the location field and press Ctrl+V to paste your copied shortcut link, then click Next. By default, the shortcut is named New Internet Shortcut, so rename it, then click Finish. Now, whenever you double-click this shortcut, it'll take you straight to your desired notebook or section.



Android 6.0 (Marshmallow)

Find apps that slow you down, customise Quick Settings and play a secret game

Translate with a single tap

Come across text in a foreign language that you don't understand? Simply install the free Google Translate app (www.snipca.com/18486) and then, exclusive to Marshmallow users, you'll have the ability to translate on the go. Just tap, hold and drag to select the text, as you would when copying and pasting, then tap Translate in the pop-up menu for your translation (see screenshot right). If the option doesn't appear, tap the three dots to see more options – you'll find Translate there.



Install Google Translate to use Marshmallow's exclusive ability to translate with a tap

Customise Quick Settings

Swipe down from the top with two fingers and you'll open Android's Quick Settings pane. That's nothing new, but the ability to customise it is. With Quick Settings open tap and hold the cog icon for a few seconds until the 'Congrats! System UI Tuner has been added to Settings' message appears. Now tap your home button, followed by Settings, and then the newly added System UI Tuner, followed by Quick Settings. Next, tap 'Add tile' to add icons, or remove one by dragging and dropping it on to Delete. You can also rearrange an icon's position by dragging and dropping.

Enable status bar battery percentage

Want to see at a glance how much battery life you have left? Follow the previous tip to enable System UI Tuner then, in the System UI Tuner page within Settings, swipe the 'Show embedded battery percentage' switch to its On position.

Find the memory hogs

Apps that use a lot of memory can slow down your device – and Marshmallow has a new option that makes it easy to find these. Tap Settings followed by Memory to see the list, which by default shows the biggest users of memory over

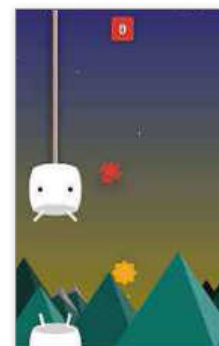
the past three hours. Tap the down arrow to change this time period, or to order the list by overall use tap the menu (three dots) then tap 'Sort by max. use'. Tap an app to see more information, then tap the 'i' icon for even more options – including the ability to uninstall the app.

Use Doze to save your battery

Doze is a significant new feature of Marshmallow, putting all apps into a kind of stasis to stop them from sapping your battery. That's great, but usually this can also prevent apps from acting in the way you want – even suppressing notifications you consider important. Doze lets you control which apps are affected. Tap Settings, followed by Battery, then the menu at the top right (three dots) and choose 'Battery optimisation'. Now tap the down arrow alongside 'Not optimized' and choose 'All apps'. Now just tap an app you want to exclude, followed by the 'Don't optimise' button, and then Done.

Unlock a secret game

Google typically includes a hidden feature in each big new Android version, and Marshmallow's Easter egg is a proper treat – a full, playable version of the popular Flappy Bird game. To unlock it, tap Settings then tap 'About phone'.



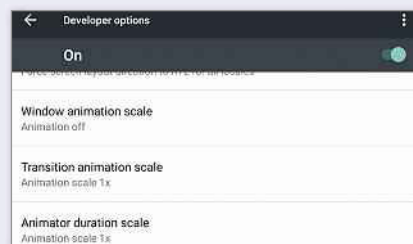
Using a secret code will reveal this hidden free game in Marshmallow

Now tap the 'Android version' heading three times – an M logo will appear. Tap this M once to change it to the Android Marshmallow logo. Tap this logo several times then stop, and tap and hold it. If you get it right, the game appears. Now tap once to play, then keep tapping to keep the android airborne. Happy flapping!

Enable Developer Options

Android's biggest secret weapon is a bunch of hidden tools known as Developer Options. The feature isn't itself new but every Android user should enable it, and there are a few new options unique to Marshmallow.

Tap Settings followed by 'About phone'. Next, tap 'Build number' seven times in quick succession and you'll see a 'You are now a developer!' message. Now go to Settings and tap 'Developer options'. There's loads to explore here but two great options are 'Aggressive Wi-Fi to Mobile handover' and, if you're on an unlimited data plan, 'Mobile data always active'.



Enable both and everything you do online will feel quicker, because your phone will flit between Wi-Fi and 3G/4G when one or the other's signal is low. Also set all the animation scale options (see screenshot) to make every window and menu appear instantly.



Surround Wi-Fi

There's a new way to guarantee a reliable connection from cellar to attic

What is it?

A term coined by US router company Luma (<https://getluma.com>) to describe a new form of Wi-Fi. The technology connects several routers around your home to extend coverage, similar to how wireless speaker systems like Sonos play music in different rooms.

How does it work?

You plug a Luma router into your modem, then open its app on your phone or tablet to find out the best place to position others. These connect with the first router in order to 'surround' your home in a blanket of Wi-Fi, helping to eliminate dead spots and the need to re-connect as you walk from room to room.

Is it different to using Wi-Fi range extenders?

Yes. Range extenders aren't routers – they simply pick up then repeat the Wi-Fi signal of your router. By contrast, each router operating through Surround Wi-Fi



is connected to each other, creating what is known as a 'mesh' network.

Luma is very keen that you don't mix up the two. On its website the company says that its routers have "very little in common with today's extenders". Now don't ask again.

OK, but are they better than range extenders?

That remains to be seen. We're certainly in no hurry to bin our range extenders, having seen some impressive results from them recently. Our sister title *Web User* tested 11 extenders in July, awarding Gold to the Netgear Nighthawk AC1900 (currently £140 from Amazon: www.snipca.com/18648). Silver went to the Linksys RE6500 (£70 from Amazon: www.snipca.com/18687).

But extenders aren't perfect, are they?

No. The main drawback is that they effectively halve your **bandwidth** because they rebroadcast the signal in both directions between the router and the computer. This affects the streaming speed of music and video, but not simple web browsing.

So should I ditch my extender?

Not just yet, because the Luma routers are available only in the US. And in any case, their appeal lies in more than

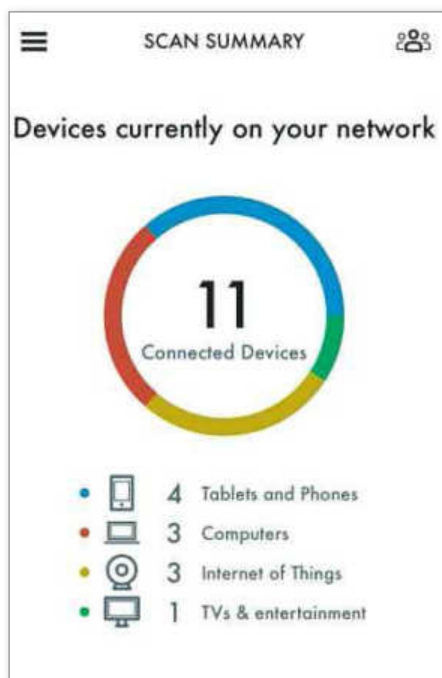
simply boosting your Wi-Fi. Like Google's new OnHub router (<https://on.google.com/hub>), the Luma devices make it much easier to control your Wi-Fi from one place. Using the app you can set parental controls, block people trying to access your Wi-Fi, and see which devices in your home are connected to the web (see screenshot below left). You can even see what website someone else on the network is visiting, which may lead to some family fall-outs. We hope it's as easy as Luma makes it look in this video: www.snipca.com/18649.

Do Luma's routers look nice?

We think they're more pleasing on the eye than most of the black boxes sitting in our living rooms, but you can judge for yourself in the main photo (above). As you can see, they are literally jumping for joy at the prospect of bathing your home in Wi-Fi. Luma's slick marketing will try to convince you that the routers are as exciting as a new laptop, phone or tablet, which is just as well because they cost about the same.

But how expensive exactly?

Well, they're not cheap – a pack of three costs \$499. That converts to around £330, but as with most tech they will probably cost more in the UK. If so, most people will stick with their uglier – but cheaper – range extenders.



Luma's app tells you which devices are using your Wi-Fi

Stop & Control WINDOWS UPDATES

Microsoft has been causing chaos recently with its flawed updates for Windows. Jane Hoskyn explains how to regain control of your PC

Windows Update are two words guaranteed to strike fear into the heart of any PC user. You've already spent what seems like half your life staring at the message "Installing update 1 of 128... Installing update 2 of 128" before you can actually use your computer. Then there's a second wave of updates to fix all the bugs in the first wave.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Find out what Microsoft has downloaded behind your back
- Delete all update junk in Windows 7, 8/8.1 and 10
- Uninstall the Windows apps that Microsoft brought back
- Reinstall programs you lost in the Windows 10 update
- Configure Windows Update to block unwanted updates - even in Windows 10

Microsoft has now surpassed itself with Windows 10's first big update, which has horrified many users. The automatic update - codenamed Threshold 2 and now known as the somewhat more prosaic 'November update' - arrived on the 12th of that month. An early Christmas present for your shiny new operating system (OS), you may think. But once the wrapping was off and the update installed, many users found they lost far more than they gained.

Has Microsoft gone too far?

As we reported in Issue 463 (News, page 6), the November update gave with one hand and took away with the other. The stuff it gave wasn't what you wanted, and the stuff it took away included third-party software you'd relied on for years. Microsoft's arrogance was astonishing. Perhaps it felt Christmas needed a goodwill antidote? Of course, Microsoft's impertinence is

nothing new. The company has spent months funnelling unwanted gigabytes of Windows 10 files on to Windows 7 and 8/8.1 computers. And while Windows Update problems go back to 2008 and beyond (see the SevenForums site, www.snipca.com/18799), it seems to be getting much, much worse. At least you could switch off automatic updates in Windows 7 and 8/8.1; you can't in Windows 10, unless you disable Windows Update completely (tip: don't!).

You don't have to be a conspiracy theorist to see where this is heading. It looks to us like a warm-up for Microsoft's grand plan: automatically installing Windows 10 on all Windows 7 and 8/8.1 PC's next year. Now we don't *know* that for sure, but all signs currently point that way.

Over the next few pages we'll show you how to fight back and regain control over Windows Update, whatever version of the OS you're using.

WHAT HAS WINDOWS UPDATE DONE TO YOUR PC?

The case of the missing programs

The apparent deletion of third-party programs from users' computers may be the most disgraceful side-effect of Windows Update we've ever seen.

Actually, "side-effect" is too polite a term. This was an assault on Microsoft's rivals. The programs weren't removed for compatibility reasons either – users who've reinstalled the tools since the November update have found that they run without a hitch.

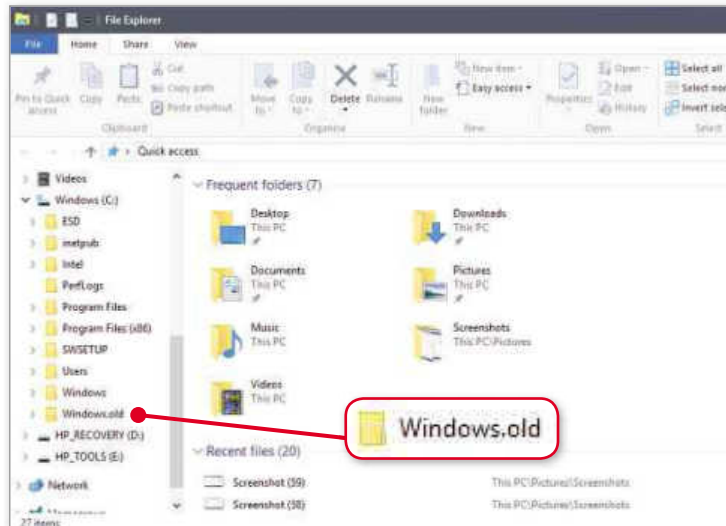
Expunged programs included CPU-Z and HWMonitor (both made by CPUID: www.cpubid.com/software.html); Speccy (by Piriform, maker of CCleaner: www.piriform.com) and spyware-killer SpyBot Search & Destroy (<https://www.safer-networking.org>) – all big *Computeractive* favourites. See the full list of missing programs on page 6 of Issue 463. For the full furious fallout from other users, see online forum Reddit (www.snipca.com/18800).

Moreover, there were no release notes or explanations at all with the November update, just a self-congratulatory blog (www.snipca.com/18853).

Find your missing programs

Now for some good news. We've found the programs you thought you'd lost. They're no longer fully installed, so you can't run them from 'All apps' or by searching from the Start menu. But their essential remnants are stashed in a system folder, created by Microsoft during the November update.

The folder is easy to find. Open File



The November update didn't completely delete your tools – it hid them in an obscure system folder

Explorer, hover over 'Windows (C:)' in the list of folders and drives on the left, then click the tiny arrow that appears. You'll now see folders it contains, including Program Files, Users, Windows – and a new one called 'Windows.old'. Click this folder and you'll see another Users folder, where you should find the "old" programs Microsoft decided to shuffle off into obscurity.

It is possible to recover programs from 'Windows.old', but we'd recommend installing them afresh instead. This way, you can be sure you're getting the latest versions, and that Microsoft hasn't interfered with any settings. We'll go into more detail on replacing missing or hidden programs later in this feature.

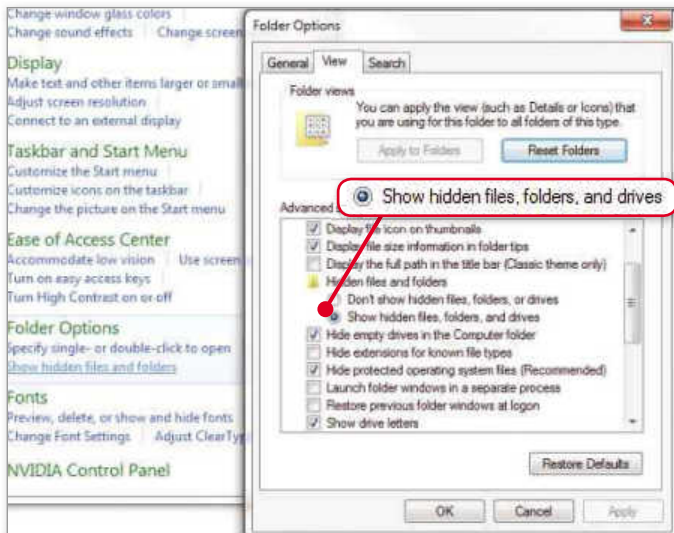
Find out if there's Windows 10 junk on your Windows 7 or 8 PC

Windows 10's November update is only

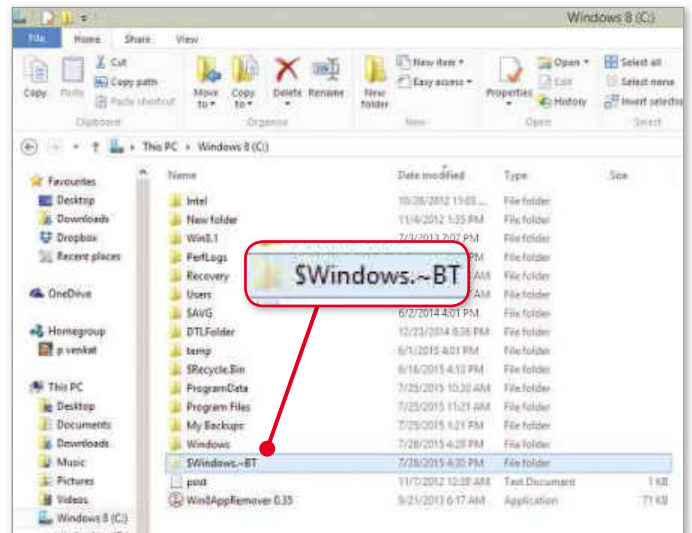
the latest Windows Update scandal to infuriate you this year. Following an uninvited visit from Windows Update in September, millions of Windows 7 and 8/8.1 users found a whopping hidden system folder containing Windows 10 files. And we mean whopping – the files took up 6GB of space, which is bigger than many portable hard drives.

As mentioned in our report on the first 100 days on Windows 10 (Issue 461), the folder was merely a pre-emptive gift from Microsoft, containing files you might need one day. It didn't do anything other than hog space and slow down users' PCs. Just like the November update, this was an automatic, uninvited download. It arrived whether you'd registered your interest in Windows 10 or not.

That's so arrogant it actually made



Before you can check for Windows 10 junk, you have to set your PC to show hidden files and folders (see page 52)



Windows Update hid this huge system folder on millions of Windows 7 and 8/8.1 PCs

us laugh, but it's seriously damaging behaviour by Microsoft. Older PCs, especially those running Windows 7, may be unable to cope with a sudden influx of data. Even if your PC is in great condition and you do intend to upgrade to Windows 10 at some stage, you don't need these pre-emptive downloads – all the files you need are online (www.snipca.com/18803), and our sister site Alphr has full instructions for downloading and installing them (www.snipca.com/18804).

To see if you've got the rogue folder, first you'll have to un-hide system folders in Windows Explorer. You can do this via the Control Panel. Click 'Appearance and Personalization' and then, under Folder Options, click 'Show hidden files and folders'. In the window that opens, click the View tab, scroll down the list under 'Advanced settings' and click 'Show hidden files, folders, and drives', then click OK (see screenshot bottom left, page 51). If you see the folder '\$Windows.~BT' in your C: drive, you've got the pointless Windows 10 files.

Removing the folder and its contents is no easy business, because Windows Update downloads it again the next time it runs. See our Workshop in Issue 460 for help with removing it.

YOU CAN'T CUT EDGE

While Windows Update was busy nicking users' favourite programs, it was also restoring their least favourite apps. No 'Do you want this app back?', no OK button, no nothing. Just a great big automatic waste of people's time.

According to several apoplectic Reddit contributors (www.snipca.com/18801), the November update restored default apps – including the much-disliked Edge browser, and unwanted game apps such as Xbox (see screenshot) – that people had spent time and effort getting rid of in their supposedly customisable new OS.

The update also reverted key PC settings to Microsoft's defaults, overriding any changes you'd made. Have you spent time changing your file associations, for example setting PDFs to open in Acrobat



Reader instead of the dreaded Edge? Bad luck. Windows Update has changed the default back to Edge – which is now your default browser again, too.

Some reports suggest that these annoyances are mere bugs, and they'll be fixed by incremental automatic updates. That remains to be seen, so keep an eye on our News pages for the latest.

REMOVE ALL WINDOWS UPDATE JUNK

Obliterate Windows Update leftovers

Littering PCs with junk isn't a new hobby for Windows Update. It's been at it for years. If you've been using Windows 7 on the same PC for a while, there could be several gigabytes of useless Windows Update leftovers clogging up your hard drive.

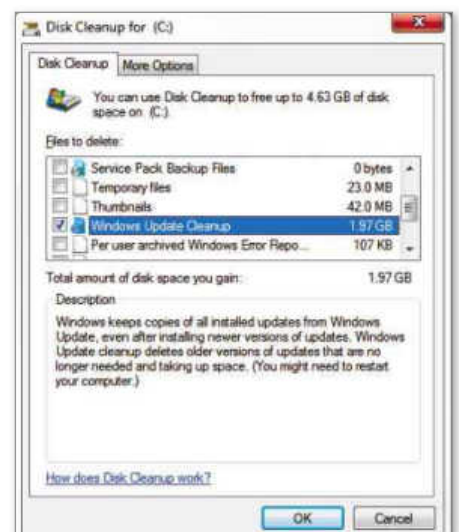
It's not just temporary files, caches and the like. Windows actually keeps copies of all installed updates from Windows Update, even after it's installed newer updates or newer versions.

To see how much update junk you've collected, and to obliterate it for good, use Disk Cleanup. This useful and often

overlooked tool is built into 7, 8/8.1 and 10, and works in the same way in all versions. Better still, it's recently been updated to include a new Windows Update Cleanup tool that deletes old updates your OS doesn't need.

To get started, type **disk cleanup** into Start and click Disk Cleanup in the results. In Windows 7 and 8/8.1, the tool automatically starts scanning your local hard drive (C:). In Windows 10, you'll need to choose the drive ('disk') you want to scan. When the scan is done, you'll see a list of CCleaner-style tick-boxes that represent dispensable Windows junk.

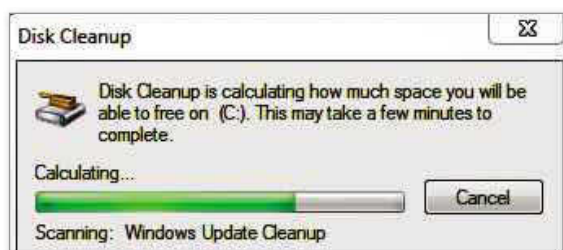
There's no 'Windows Update Cleanup' box – until you create one with a couple more steps. Click the 'Clean up system files' button (you'll need admin privileges on the PC), and the initial scan will run again, but it'll be more thorough and take longer. Eventually the tick-box window will open again – and this time you'll find a



Disk Cleanup now supports Windows Update Cleanup, a tool for obliterating old, obsolete update files

Windows Update Cleanup box included (scroll down to see it).

To its right you'll see how much space old, obsolete updates are taking up on your computer. On our relatively clean, recently wiped Windows 7 PC, old



Run Disk Cleanup to quickly scan for Windows junk

updates were already taking up 1.97GB (see screenshot, page 52 bottom right).

Tick the box, along with any other junk you want to clear (some are pre-ticked, such as ‘Temporary files’), then click OK. Restart your PC for the clean to complete.

Delete apps Windows Update brought back

It’s annoying – even a little scary – to delete a program or file, restart your computer and find that the “deleted” item is still there. This is the kind of behaviour we often see from browser hijackers and other dodgy files, and we recommend using the powerful free tool AdwCleaner (www.snipca.com/18811) to get rid of them.

Microsoft gave no hint whatsoever that its November update would automatically restore Microsoft apps you’d uninstalled, so their return was disconcerting.

Unfortunately, there’s no ‘Ctrl+Z’-style way to undo Windows Update (oh, if only) and restore the customisations you’d set but Microsoft wiped out. For example, to get rid of the rebounding default apps you’ll just have to uninstall them again.

Some Microsoft apps, including Office, Money, Skype, Windows Media Player and News can be uninstalled simply by right-clicking them in the ‘All apps’ list and then clicking Uninstall. This should also work for apps that were pre-installed by your PC maker.

Other Microsoft apps – such as Mail, Messaging and Xbox – need a more persuasive approach. You have a couple of options. First, use the free portable tool 10AppsManager (www.snipca.com/18830). We mentioned the



The PowerShell tool works with Command Prompt to let you remove built-in apps

program in our last Cover Feature (Issue 463), but unfortunately it seems to have disappeared from the site we mentioned on that occasion – the apps directory UpToDown (www.snipca.com/18831). Worry not – it still exists and still works. Download it from its developer, The Windows Club (www.snipca.com/18830). Scroll down the page and click the blue Download File button.

Save and extract the ZIP, then right-click the program file (‘10AppsManager.exe’) and select ‘Run as administrator’. Click Yes when prompted by Windows.

The simple, square program window contains a grid of Microsoft apps, including some – Xbox, Mail and Calendar – that you can’t uninstall by right-clicking in the ‘All apps list’. In 10 Apps Manager, click the app you want to remove, then click Yes.

10AppsManager can’t remove all built-in apps, however. An even more powerful

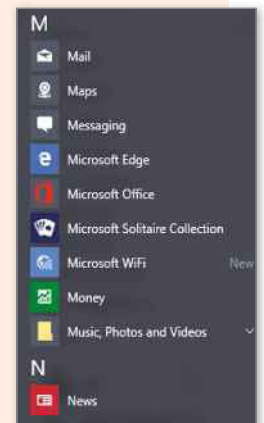
CAN YOU LEARN TO LIVE WITH DEFAULT APPS?

Windows Update can’t force you to love your default apps, but it can force them to stay on your computer. So should you just learn to live with them? That’s what you’ve been doing for years with the default apps on your iPad, iPhone and Android tablet and phone, after all.

Android lets you uninstall updates and roll back to the original version of a default app (such as Google) and clear its cache and data, but you can’t remove the app itself. Apple’s iOS lets you do barely anything to its pre-installed Apple apps. You can’t even remove the icons from your screen.

By contrast, Windows 10’s pre-installed (and now re-installed) apps take up very little space relative to hard-drive size, and their effect on your PC’s performance is minimal.

So while Windows Update deserves a slap for putting back apps you didn’t want, ultimately it’s not a war worth fighting. On your fast, flexible Windows 10 PC, they do very little harm – and one day you may even find one of them useful.



option is to use Windows PowerShell and the Command Prompt (find instructions here: www.snipca.com/18826). Microsoft’s TechNet site also has information and tips on using PowerShell with the Command Prompt to get more control over Windows 10 and its updates (www.snipca.com/18878).

But even that strategy won’t edge out Edge or drive out Cortana. You could dig deep into Reddit (www.snipca.com/18827) for Registry hacks that may get rid of these irritants, and they may even work. But we’d bet our last tuppence that they’ll be back with the next automatic Windows 10 Update.

The only real solution to keeping unwanted Microsoft apps off your PC, at least temporarily, is to tweak your Windows 10 Update settings. We’ll show you how in the next few pages.



Remove stubborn Windows 10 apps quickly and easily using free tool 10AppsManager

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BRING BACK THE TOOLS WINDOWS UPDATE REMOVED

Restore programs from Windows.old

As mentioned on page 51, the November update saw Microsoft move some of your favourite programs to the mysterious 'Windows.old' folder.

It is possible to restore programs from this folder. Microsoft hasn't yet updated its site to explain how to do this in Windows 10, just Windows 8.1 (www.snipca.com/18835). Funny how Microsoft is so eager to impose dramatic OS updates but can't update its own website with vital information.

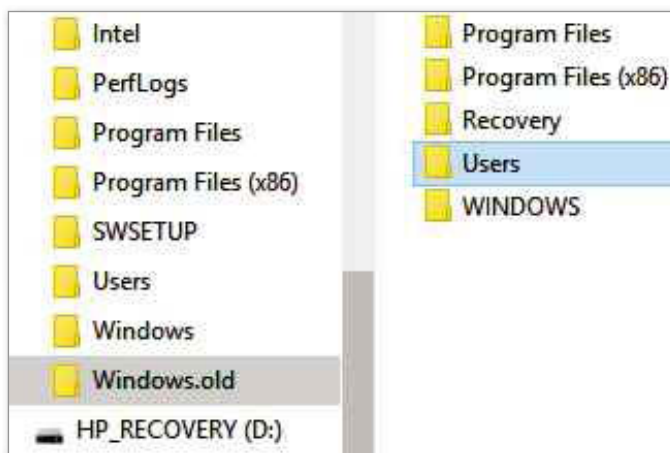
Luckily, the steps used to restore programs in Windows 8.1 seem to work in Windows 10 as well – up to a point. In short, open the Windows.old folder, open Users and then open your username folder. Find your missing program files and copy and paste them back into Program Files or on to your Desktop.

We tried this and found it hit and miss at best. You can't just make a program work again simply by pasting it on to your Desktop. Instead, we recommend emptying the Windows.old folder completely and reinstalling your lost programs from scratch.

Uninstall missing programs first

We recommend reinstalling your missing programs from their developers' sites rather than messing around with Windows system folders. But first, you should completely uninstall them and their leftovers.

Uninstalling previous versions of programs – and their leftover files – is



You can restore programs from 'Windows.old', but there are better solutions

always a wise move before you install software. But it's especially important in this case, because you have no way of knowing what Windows Update did to the programs it moved.

Install and run the free tool IObit Uninstaller (www.snipca.com/18839), then scroll through its list of your installed programs and **plug-ins**. If you

spot one of the programs that was kidnapped by Windows Update, click the Uninstall (or 'Quick Uninstall') button next to it. Wait a few moments for the program to be removed.

IObit will then automatically check for leftovers in your Registry. If there are none, you'll see a box saying so. That's it, job done.

If there *are* leftovers, tick the top box in the window that opens (see screenshot bottom left) – this automatically ticks all the sub-boxes as well – and then click Delete to get rid of them all.



The best way to restore programs is to download them from the maker's site

Reinstall missing programs from scratch

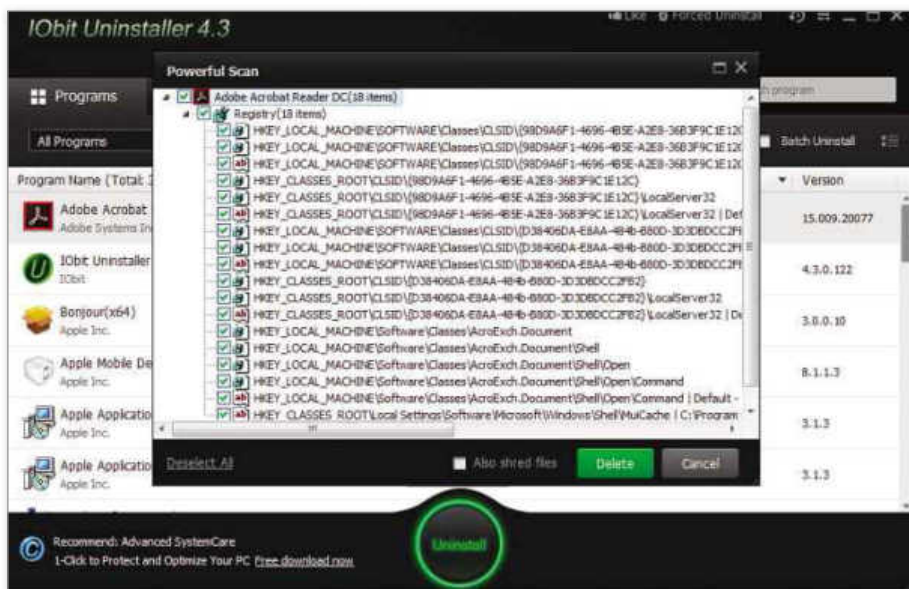
On page 51 we mentioned some of the programs the November update meddled with – including *Computeractive* favourites Speccy and CPU-Z – and gave links to their developers' sites. In the box on the next page you can find links for all the programs Microsoft removed, along with links for portable versions of the programs if available.

By downloading and installing programs from their makers' sites, you can be sure you're getting the latest (and legitimate) version. You can also see release notes of the kind Microsoft couldn't be bothered to include with the November update, and get help from the developer and other users.

Use portable programs

No-one outside of Microsoft (or perhaps even inside Microsoft) knows what the next big update – codenamed Redstone and due in spring 2016 – will bring. You'd be forgiven for assuming it'll just remove all your reinstalled programs and put back all those unwanted apps – again.

To help ensure the next update makes



Remove previous installations and Registry leftovers before you reinstall a program

you slightly less angry, keep portable versions of the programs Windows Update seems to dislike.

CPU-Z, Speccy, HWMonitor and SpyBot all have portable versions. Find all the download links in the box below. These portable programs can be run directly from the program file (usually an **EXE** file, which may need to be extracted from a ZIP file first).

You can then copy and move this EXE – or the ZIP, which may include helpful extras such as release notes and help files – to useful storage locations such as a USB stick, external hard drive, Google Drive and more.

USB sticks are the most useful option because they let you run the tools easily and safely on older computers, such as your old XP laptop, without the need to go online.

The main downside of portable programs is that they can't be patched automatically, so you'll need to make sure you're using the latest version. It's also good practice to upload portable program

files to the free web tool VirusTotal (www.virustotal.com) to check they're malware-free before you run them.

The upside is that Windows Update can't touch them. The next big Windows 10 update can sweep away as many installed programs as it likes – but it can't take away the portable tools you've stored on your USB.

Make up your mind, Microsoft

In early November Microsoft launched a Media Creation Tool that would let users install the November update manually or save it as an **ISO** for installing later.

The tool was free to download (www.snipca.com/18877), then Microsoft removed it, frustrating everyone trying our 'Master Windows 10's updated tools' Workshop. A few days later it was back, with Microsoft blaming a bug that changed privacy settings (see 'Question of the Fortnight', page 10).



Download the portable ('ZIP') version of CPU-Z to keep it safe from Windows Update

WHERE TO GET THE PROGRAMS MICROSOFT TOOK AWAY

In Issue 463 (News, page 6) you'll find the full list of programs Windows Update swept away with its self-serving broom.

Some of these programs we can happily live without; others we'll fight to get back. So here's where to get the latest versions of the programs we didn't want to lose. Some are available in various versions: installable, portable and even as Android apps (we couldn't find any official equivalents for iOS).

CPU-Z

Installable: www.snipca.com/18854; click 'Setup English'
Portable: www.snipca.com/18854; click 'ZIP English'
Android: www.snipca.com/18880
More info: www.cpubid.com

HWMONITOR

Installable: www.snipca.com/18859; click 'Setup English'
Portable: www.snipca.com/18859; click 'ZIP English'
More info: www.cpubid.com

SPECCY

Installable: www.snipca.com/18855; click first Download button ('Installer')
Portable: www.snipca.com/18855; click second Download button ('Portable')

More info: www.piriform.com/speccy

SPYBOT

Installable: www.snipca.com/18857; click red Download button. No need to click Donate or Upgrade; this is free software.
Portable: www.snipca.com/18860 (PortableApps.com). You may find many more useful portable system tools on PortableApps.com site, but always test the files in VirusTotal first.



More info: www.safer-networking.org

8GADGETPACK

Installable: 8gadgetpack.net; click blue Download button (ignore the 'Update Drivers Now' button at the top; it's an advert). There are no unwanted extras in the installer. The program adds a configurable gadgets sidebar to Windows 10 (see screenshot; for some reason it thinks we're in New York).

AND THE PROGRAMS WE'VE LOST FOR GOOD... PERHAPS

PCMeter (http://addgadgets.com/pc_meter). We downloaded this to our Windows 10 PC but it wouldn't run.

Adobe Creative Suite (www.snipca.com/18861). This can still be downloaded from some **mirror sites**, but it's unlikely to run in Windows 10. Even Mac OS X – the natural home of Adobe's graphics tools – removed Adobe CS from users' computers following "free" OS updates a couple of years ago. This wasn't Microsoft's fault,

but Adobe's. Adobe wanted users to switch to the new subscription service, Adobe Creative Cloud (www.snipca.com/18863), instead.

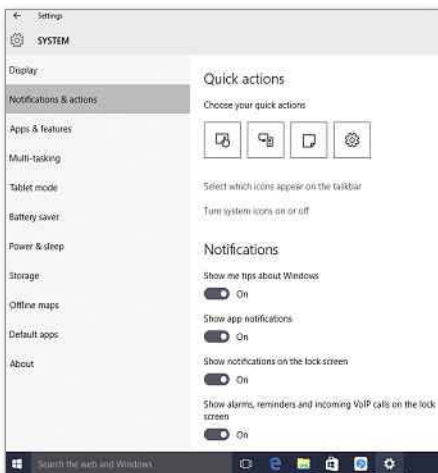
If you've ever lost a very expensive version of Adobe Creative Suite 5 after upgrading a Mac, you'll understand Windows 10 users' fury. Adobe CS is not cheap, and suddenly it's completely useless following an update that gave Windows users no warning of its consequences for certain software.

TAKE BACK CONTROL OF WINDOWS UPDATE

Fix your violated Windows 10 settings

Missing programs, resurrected apps, and unwanted reinstalled drivers are just some of the things you didn't ask for in Windows 10's major update, but you got them anyway. It all suggests that Microsoft wants to crack down on user control – and can leave you feeling that it's not even your computer anymore.

However, it is possible to restore many of the settings affected by November's update. The simplest method is by going to Settings in the Start menu, then clicking System. Click links in the menu on the left to configure items including 'Default apps', 'Notifications and actions' (where you can get rid of unwanted 'tips about Windows') and Display (where you can adjust brightness, text size and so on).



Restore settings such as notifications, default apps and text size in System Settings

Uninstall unwanted drivers and updates

You can remove any driver that's surplus to your needs in Windows 10 by uninstalling it along with its associated software. Right-click the Start button (Windows 10 logo), then click Device Manager in the list that appears. You'll also find useful system tools such as Command Prompt and Run in this list.

Device Manager contains a list of driver types. Click the little arrows next to each type to see the drivers, then right-click an unwanted driver and click Uninstall. When the uninstall box opens, tick 'Delete the driver software for this device'.

It's just as easy (though potentially risky) to uninstall an unwanted Windows update. Type **installed** into the Start search box and click 'View installed updates'. Here, you'll see a list of updates,

AUTOMATIC UPDATES: FRIEND OR FOE?

Windows 10 was sold to us as a powerfully customisable system. Building on the flexibility of Windows 8.1, Windows 10 would supposedly give you the freedom and tools to create the OS you'd always wanted.

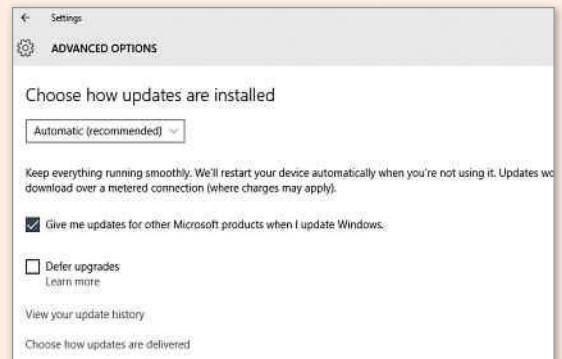
The November update did bring good news for users of the Enterprise and Education editions of Windows 10, who now have more freedom to configure and defer Windows updates (www.snipca.com/18870).

But the rest of us have less control over Windows Update than ever before. Is Microsoft's ultimate goal to turn your PC into its eyes, ears and voice, Big Brother-style, with no third-party upstart tools getting in the way?

FRUSTRATING BUT SAFE

Microsoft's apparent control-grab isn't all bad. One of its more extreme critics on Reddit (www.snipca.com/18864) suggests: "Just disable the Windows Update process and be done with it". Don't do that! Seriously, don't.

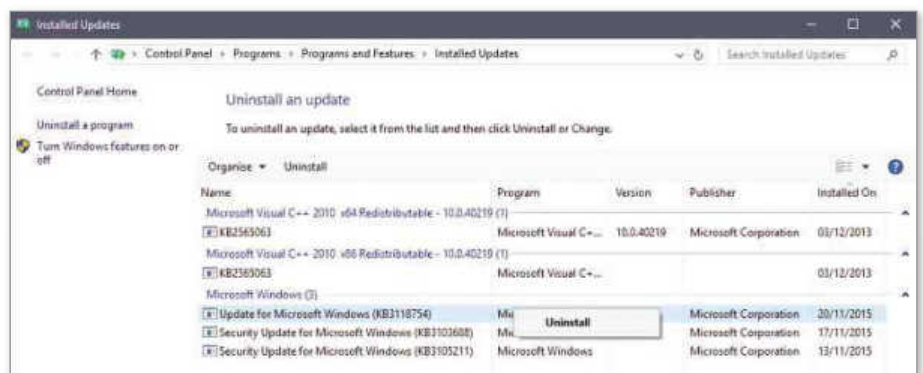
You can use various Registry hacks to cancel or modify automatic updates in



Windows 10, and we'll explain a simple option on page 58. But please approach all these hacks with caution.

Windows Update can be a pain in the neck, but it's far more useful alive than dead. Its main job is to keep you safe by patching security holes, thereby protecting you from malware. If enough people switch off Windows Update, cybercriminals could use their unpatched PCs to create a **botnet**, spreading malware worldwide.

Let's face it, an uninstalleable 'Groove Music' app is annoying, but it's a lot easier to live with than the consequences of switching off the automatic security updates that keep you safer in Windows 10 than ever before.



Uninstall updates only if you're sure you can lose them safely, and never uninstall security updates

including security updates and the November update. You may need to scroll to the right of the window to see the installation dates. You can uninstall an update by right-clicking it and clicking Uninstall.

Note that security updates are vital for keeping your PC safe, so please don't uninstall them unless you have hard evidence for doing so.

Hide unwanted updates from Windows Update

As you'll have gathered by now, the trouble with removing unwanted items is that they'll bounce back with the next big Windows update.

However, you can "hide" certain items from incremental updates, which happen regularly between the big updates like the one we saw in November. You can do this ►

using a tool made by none other than Microsoft itself. Go to the relevant Microsoft Support page (www.snipca.com/18868), click the blue 'Download the "Show or hide updates" troubleshooter package now' link towards the bottom of the page, and then open the file, which has the catchy name 'wushowhide.diagcab'.

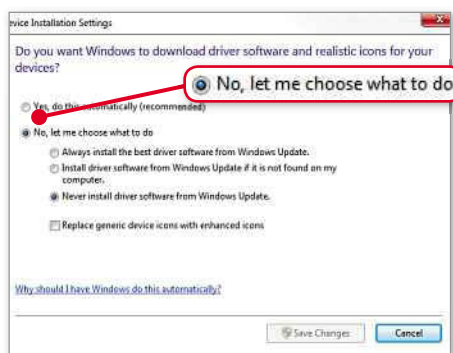
The program window opens automatically. Click Next to scan for installed updates, then click 'Hide updates' and tick any you want to "hide" from Windows Update.

Now for the bad news. This tool was first launched during the Insider Preview testing phase, and while it still exists and works, it's not as effective as it was. Now, if you hide an item, it will be blocked from reinstalling – but only until, in Microsoft's words, "a new driver or updated fix is available". So you can hide unwanted updates – but the next incremental update may force them back on to your PC.

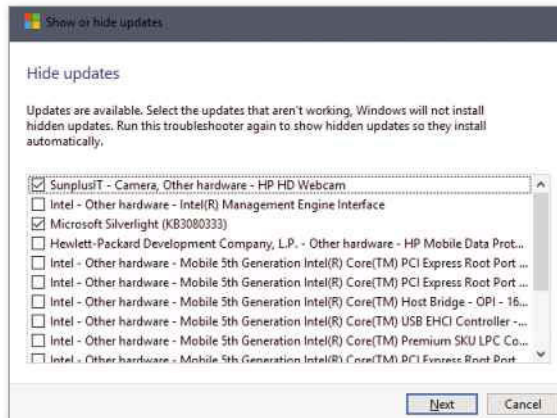
Take back driver control

In Windows 8/8.1 and more so in 7, you have plenty of control over the drivers you update – which drivers, where to download them from and when to install them. In fact in Windows 7 the default setting was (and still is) 'No, let me choose what to do – Never install driver software from Windows Update'.

Windows 10, by stark contrast, sets all drivers to install automatically by default.



In Windows 7 you can choose which drivers to install – and when – by default

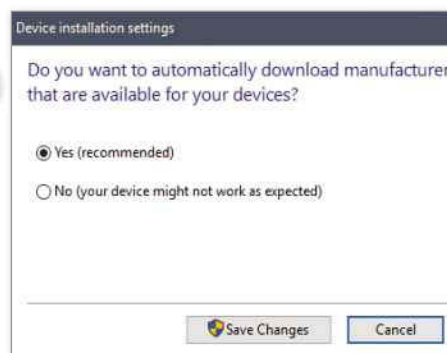


You can 'hide' unwanted updates using Microsoft's troubleshooter tool

You can remove and hide them, but like the Terminator they'll be back. Microsoft is now your boss.

Your only alternative to full automatic driver updates is to switch them off altogether, which we think is mean-spirited of Microsoft and potentially hazardous. To do this, type **installation** in the Start search box and click 'Change device installation settings' (same goes for Windows 7 and 8/8.1). In Windows 10, you're then asked: 'Do you want to automatically download manufacturers' apps and custom icons?'. 'Yes (recommended)' is selected by default; no surprises there. The only other option is 'No (your device might not work)'. Click it, and then click Save Changes.

That's it – all or nothing. If you change your mind, repeat the steps above and click 'Yes (recommended)' to restore



In Windows 10, you have no control by default – your alternative is no driver updates at all

automatic driver downloads.

The screenshots at the bottom of the page compare the default download options in Windows 7 (left) and Windows 10 (right). We've not changed any options, typifying the differences between update settings throughout Windows 7 and Windows 10.

Tweak Windows Update without disabling it


You can switch off Windows Update in Windows 10, as suggested by our angry friend in Reddit (see box page 57). Here's how, *if you really want to*. Open the Control Panel, type

services in the search box and then click 'View local services'. In the box that opens, scroll to Windows Update, right-click it and click Properties. Then open the 'Startup type' dropdown box, click Disabled and then OK.

That's it – you won't get any more updates, and your PC will turn into a playground for cybercriminals. At the risk of repeating ourselves, we strongly advise against doing this. Instant, automatic security updates are a huge advantage of Windows 10.

Instead, tweak Windows Update to give you a little more control. In the 'Startup type' dropdown box, select 'Automatic (Delayed start)' to ensure your PC doesn't suddenly do a restart while you're in the middle of something.

Alternatively, open Settings, click 'Update & Security', 'Advanced options', and then select 'Notify to schedule restart' from the dropdown box. Next time an update is due (major or otherwise), you'll get an alert offering you to change to delay restart, so you've got time to save your work.

You may notice an option to 'Defer upgrades' in Settings – this is only available to members of the Insider Program. You can still join the free Program (<https://insider.windows.com>) to get **beta** updates in advance, to defer your updates – and to get the chance to tell Microsoft exactly what you think. 

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Stay mentally fit with brain -training apps



As new research shows how apps can help you stay mentally fit, Daniel Booth recommends five you should try

We all know that as we get older, we should try to stay physically active. Well, the same is true of our brains. We need to keep challenging that ageing grey matter to make sure our mental alertness doesn't deteriorate.

Do computer games count as mental exercise? Some medical professionals have always been sceptical, saying that the alleged benefits, such as boosting IQ and preventing dementia, have been exaggerated by game companies in order to fuel a multi-billion pound industry.

But new evidence suggests that games really *are* good for you. In a study funded by the Alzheimer's Society, researchers at the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience at King's College London found that brain-training games could have "significant" benefits for older people carrying out everyday tasks.

The research involved almost 7,000 adults aged over 50 and claims to be the first to evaluate the impact of computer-based brain training on how well people can perform their daily activities (read more on the Alzheimer's Society's website: www.snipca.com/18763).

Inspired by this research, here we recommend five of the best brain-boosting apps. None, sadly, is completely free - you have to pay to unlock extra levels and games. But you can

typically play for long enough before being forced to pay to judge whether it's worth the money.

Lumosity

Android: www.snipca.com/18764

iOS: www.snipca.com/18765

Probably the best known brain-training app, Lumosity is now played by 70 million people. The reason for its success becomes clear within minutes of playing: you're given a tough mental workout, testing your problem-solving abilities and memory recall, but at no point does it feel like a chore. It helps that the games are short, mostly around 30 seconds, leaving you plenty of time every day to tackle the *Times* crossword.

Elevate

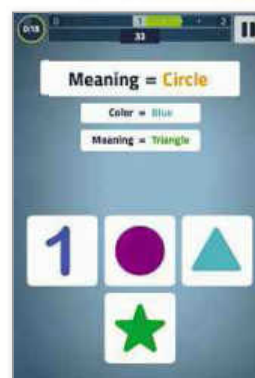
Android: www.snipca.com/18768

iOS: www.snipca.com/18769

Elevate's creator, Jesse Pickard, says he wants to help you "get to a better place". By this he means boost your mental agility, not pay your moving expenses to a villa in the south of France. But his self-help jargon hasn't put people off - over 5 million people installed Elevate

within five months of its launch last year, and Apple named it the best iPhone app of 2014.

We can see why. Its games aim to improve how you speak, listen, write and read by testing your grammar and increasing your vocabulary. Everyone at *Computeractive* is using it, so buy our next issue to see if it really works!



Make sense of this? Then you should try NeuroNation

NeuroNation

Android:

www.snipca.com/18775

iOS:

www.snipca.com/18776

This feels the most scientific game here, with the type of questions you'd expect in a Mensa test. Just tackling the problems makes you feel smarter, regardless of whether you resolve them or not. We echo the thoughts of the 2007 World Memory Champion Gunther Karsten,

who said: "I don't know any other program that is equally intensive and effective".

Peak

Android: www.snipca.com/18773


iOS: www.snipca.com/18774

Sudoku fans, look away now. This app wants you to swap your grid-filling number crunching for its suite of games that boost memory, sharpen attention and develop mental agility. At the end, it shows your brain "in a nutshell", revealing what you're good at. It showed that our language skills are fine, but we need to improve our, erm, um... sorry where were we - oh yes, we need to improve our focus.

Happify

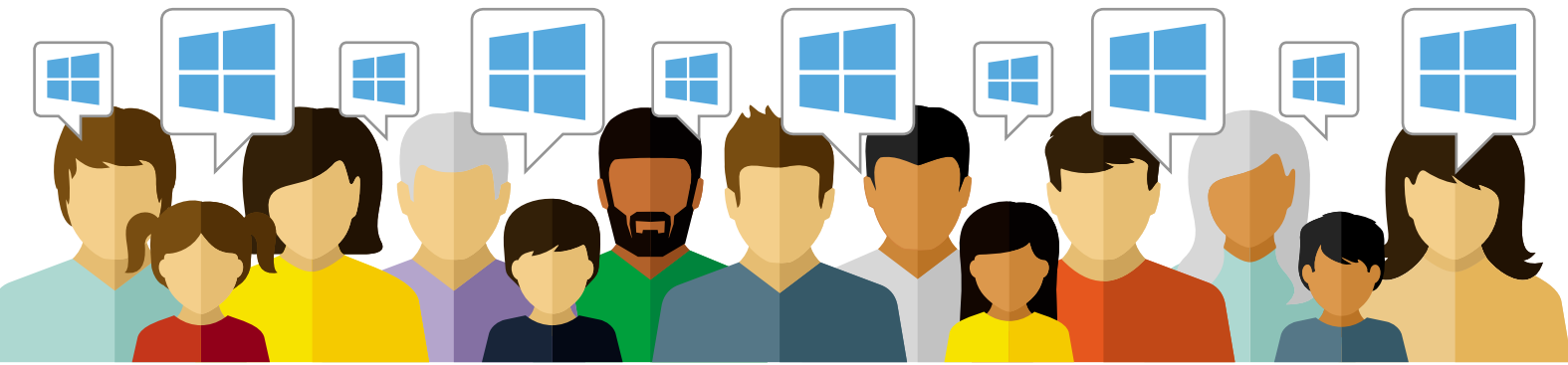
Android: www.snipca.com/18777

iOS: www.snipca.com/18778

Let's end by giving our brain a rest and concentrate on "emotional" fitness. That's the aim of Happify, which offers games to "banish negative thoughts". You can't beat the logic - the happier we are, the more we'll enjoy life, hopefully boosting our physical and mental wellbeing. Happify claims that 86 per cent of its users feel better within two months. Email us in February and tell us if *you* do. 



Lumosity tests your memory and problem-solving skills



—Use multiple accounts in— **Windows 10**

In Windows 10 you can create separate accounts for everyone in the family.
Barry Collins reveals why this is such a great idea

Before Windows 10, most PCs were operated from a single user account. That means the computer belongs to one person, and one person only.

Windows 10 now allows every family member (and friends, colleagues or people visiting for the weekend) to set up their own dedicated account. Each separate account owner can have their own private email account, document folders, Desktop wallpaper, Windows apps and customised Start menu.

It's not the same as setting up virtual PCs – which is where you are effectively creating an entirely new system inside the same physical hardware – but the benefits are similar and it's much quicker and easier to do. Here we'll show you how.

Set up accounts for family members

When you're setting up a new account, Windows 10 makes a distinction between family members and 'other' users. The main reason for this is to allow adults to monitor their children's accounts: giving them permission to download apps, set times they can use the computer and so on. But you don't have to have children,



You'll be asked to choose whether the account is for a child or adult for safety features

or even grandchildren, to find this feature useful.

If you're in a household of adults and grown-up children, it doesn't really matter which option you choose. Your main decision will be whether you want to use a Microsoft account or not.

If you'd rather not, you can set up a completely local account. This means you won't be able to sync settings, bookmarks and so on across different PCs using your Microsoft account, and it can make buying Windows Store apps more tricky. But if you're determined not to give Microsoft your email address and other

details, choose 'Add someone else to this PC' under 'other users'.

If other family members are happy to use a Microsoft account, open Settings from the Start menu and choose the Accounts option. Click the 'Family & other users' tab on the left-hand side of the window that appears, then click 'Add a family member'. You'll now be asked whether you're setting up an account for an adult or a child, and prompted to enter the new user's email address. You'll then be asked to set up a Microsoft account (if you don't already have one registered to that email address), then follow the on-screen instructions.

Turn a standard account into an admin account

By default, the person who first set up the PC will be the 'administrator' and any secondary accounts added will be given 'standard' status.

Standard account holders have fewer privileges: they can't install most software without the administrator's password; they can't view the personal folders (documents, photos and so on) of other account holders; and they have limited access to PC settings.

FIVE BEST REASONS TO USE WINDOWS 10 ACCOUNTS

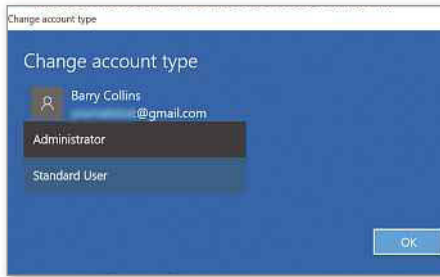
1 You save money by buying one Windows 10 PC and turning it into a computer everyone can use in their own way, in private.

2 No one account holder can see another account holder's browser history – so nobody's going to spot those surprise holiday plans.

3 Every family member can have their own Windows settings, Desktop wallpaper and Start menu set-up, making it feel like their "own" PC.

4 Security is greatly improved by preventing standard account holders from inadvertently installing software (including associated adware).

5 Standard account holders can't view each other's personal folders, so your files can't be accidentally deleted by other people.



If you find standard accounts too restrictive, it's easy to switch to admin

The original idea was based on letting kids use their parents' computers without creating havoc, but these standard account privileges may seem somewhat restrictive for those of us who just want to share our computers with family members. For example, if you want to install a program when the administrator is out of the house, you can't.

Thankfully, you can upgrade a trusted secondary account holder to administrator status. The original administrator needs to do this. Go to Settings, Accounts, then 'Family & other users' and select the relevant account-holder's name. Click 'Change account type' and select Administrator.

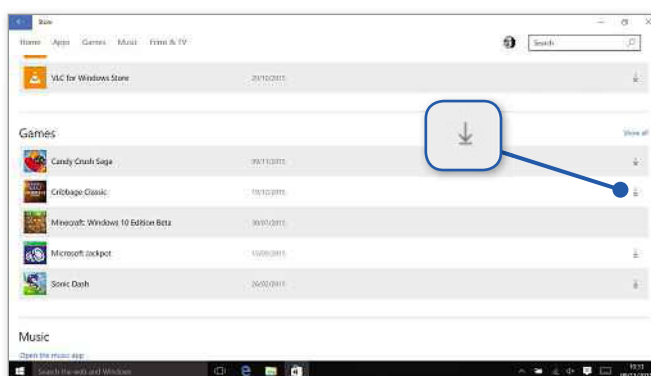
Add a temporary guest account

If you have friends or extended family members coming to stay, you can set them up with their own accounts on your PC. These guest accounts don't give them access to your files, email and so on.

Go to Settings, then User Accounts and select 'Add someone else to this PC' under 'Other users'. If the guest already has a Microsoft account, they can enter their email address or phone number to retrieve all the settings, bookmarks and apps that are stored in their account.

If your guest doesn't have a Microsoft account, or if they don't want the fuss of registering an account with Microsoft, click the small 'I don't have this person's sign-in information' link at the bottom of the screen requesting an email address. Then on the next screen, click the tiny 'Add a user without a Microsoft account' link (see screenshot above right) at the bottom. You'll be asked to choose a username and password for the new account.

Download apps to secondary accounts by clicking the arrows

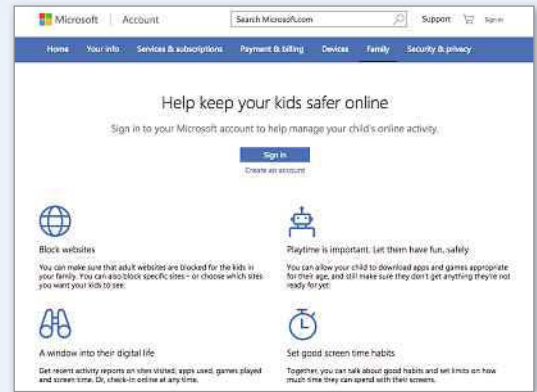


ACCOUNTS FOR YOUR GRANDCHILDREN

Say what you like about kids spending too long staring at screens, but you have to admit - if you're babysitting your grandkids, your PC will suddenly look like a very good way of keeping them amused.

Windows 10 lets you set up child accounts. These accounts are designed to prevent youngsters installing software, moving files around and messing up your settings.

It also gives you (as administrator) a range of controls over children's accounts, including limiting the hours in which they can use the PC, and the option to block or allow access to certain websites. Parents and grandparents will even get a full list of



every website the child visits, plus an alert if they attempt to visit an "adult" site.

Child accounts can even be managed remotely using another PC or tablet via the site <https://account.microsoft.com/family> (see screenshot).

Share programs and apps with other users

Any traditional PC software, such as Microsoft Office, that's already been installed on the PC by the administrator will be available to all account holders.

When the administrator installs software in future, they will be asked if they want the program to be available to every user on the PC or just to themselves.

Windows Store apps aren't shared, but there is a workaround for this. If the administrator has already paid for an app or game, he or she can share it with a new account holder after taking a few steps. In the new account, open the Windows Store and then click the account holder's profile icon next to the search bar. Click the account at the top of the dropdown menu, click the account holder's name and sign them out. Then sign in again, this time with the administrator's account details.

Now go to My Library and you'll see a list of apps owned by the administrator. Click the little arrow to download any of




Click the tiny blue link to create a user account without handing over an email address

these to the new account (see screenshot below left). Make sure the administrator signs out again when you've got all the apps you need.

Create accounts for certain apps

There's a new option in Windows 10 called 'Assigned access', where a user account can access only one specific Windows Store app. For example, you could create an account just for the Netflix app (www.snipca.com/18724), Dropbox (www.snipca.com/18725) or the Kindle app (www.snipca.com/18723).

To set up assigned access, create a secondary account (see above) and then go to Settings, Accounts, 'Family & other users' and click the small 'Set up assigned access' link at the bottom of the page. Choose the user account and app, then restart your PC. 

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Problems Solved

PROBLEM OF THE FORTNIGHT

Has 7-Zip installed malware on my PC?

Q I followed some online advice and installed 7-Zip (www.7-zip.org), because it's apparently one of the best programs for compressing files. I use it to reduce the size of the photo archives generated during my various birdwatching expeditions, and I have to say it all seems to work very well. However, soon after I installed it I noticed a new option on the right-click menu in Windows. Well, two new options – but only one concerns me. Right below the 7-Zip entry is one called 'CRC SHA'. If I click this a sub-menu opens with lots of cryptic entries, such as 'CRC-32' and 'SHA-1'. I have no idea what these options are or what this menu is for, or even if it relates to 7-Zip. Obviously, I daren't click any of them.

However, I think it appeared around the same time I installed 7-Zip, and it's directly beneath 7-Zip in the menu. Has 7-Zip installed malware on my PC? Or have I picked up an infection from somewhere else?

Bernie Withers

A 7-Zip has not installed malware on your PC and you have not picked up an infection from elsewhere. This sub-menu was added by 7-Zip, though that fact wasn't made clear – and nor was the purpose of the options it contains.

You can use this sub-menu to generate what's known as a 'cryptographic hash' code. If you then send this file to someone, they can do the same at the other end to check that it's your original file. If their hash code doesn't match yours, the file has somehow changed en route.

That might be of use to you if you share your photos but, in the context of software downloaded from the



Hide 7-Zip's CRC SHA right-click option by unchecking its box in the Tools options

internet, the real point of cryptographic hashes is to enable users to verify that they're downloading original code.

Let's say you download a program and notice that the developer has published an SHA1 hash code for it. Once the file has downloaded to your PC, you can right-click it, point to the CRC SHA menu added by 7-Zip and then choose SHA1. A box will open with a hash code. If this matches the one published by the developer, then you know the file is legitimate.

The other options in the CRC SHA menu are merely different types of hash function. If you come across a download with a CRC-64 or SHA-256 hash, you'd use the relevant option to check that the file is legitimate.

So, the CRC SHA sub-menu does no harm and you might find it useful. However, if you don't wish to use it, you can hide it. In 7-Zip open the Tools menu and choose Options. Now select the 7-Zip tab and clear the tick from the 'CRC SHA >' box. Click OK.

What's causing this startup message?

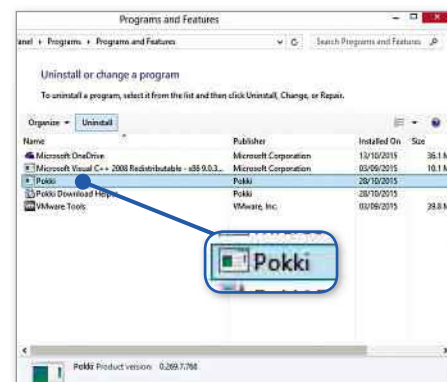
Q Every time I start my Windows 8.1 computer a message pops up saying "The Start menu was updated to the latest version", along with a list of things that are new. This pop-up has no claimed ownership, so I don't trust it – and there's only an OK button so I can't clear it. What does it mean, how might it have got there in the first place, and how can I now get rid of it?

John Hall

A It means you might've installed something that's come with a potentially unwanted program (PUP). We've said before that PUP is something of a misnomer because virtually always such tools are actually unwanted, if not downright harmful.

In this case, because of the specific wording of the message you're seeing, we think you have Pokki. This isn't harmful but is very typical of a PUP, and we'd recommend removing it. Fortunately, it's pretty easy to do.

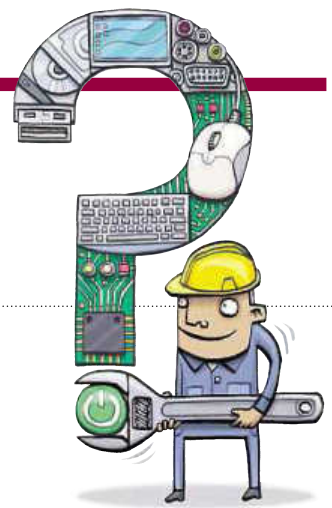
In Windows 8.1, press Windows key+X, select Control Panel, then click 'Uninstall a program', under Programs. You need to uninstall up to four items: Pokki, Pokki Download Helper, Host App Service and Start Menu. Depending on how you picked up this PUP, only one or two of these might be present. Click each entry to select it, then click Uninstall followed by Yes. Now restart your PC.



Remove typical PUPs like Pokki via your Control Panel's 'Uninstall a program' section

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✉ Email us your problem and we'll try to help: noproblem@computeractive.co.uk



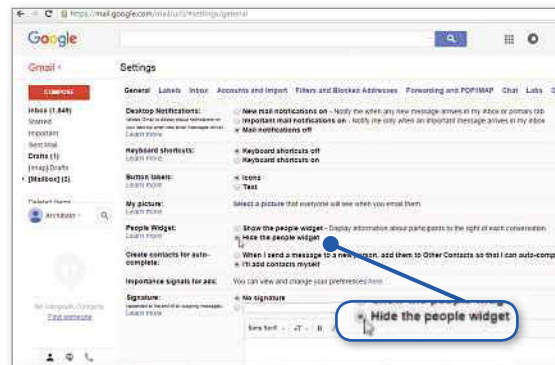
How do I stop Gmail showing old photos?

Q We're in the middle of buying a flat and my wife urgently needed to send me a legal document to check. The scanned document's file was about 7MB but my work email blocks attachments over 5MB. So I had the bright idea of having her send it to my Gmail account, as I know this can handle larger files.

It worked, but the moment I opened her email at work I was embarrassed to see a bunch of old personal photos appearing down the right-hand side of the Gmail window under the heading 'Recent photos'. Neither of us uses Gmail very often and these photos aren't recent, but where did these photos come from and how do I stop Gmail displaying them?

Ryan Watson

A We're assuming you don't often delete emails because Gmail has dredged up these photos from your old email exchanges with your wife. In an effort to be helpful, Gmail displays



To avoid displaying recent photos on the right-hand side of your Gmail emails, click this option in General settings

thumbnails of the last few images sent to you by the current contact. In this case, the 'Recent photos' were quite simply the last images your wife sent to you via Gmail, which was some years ago by the sounds of it.

In fact, the entire right-hand column in Gmail is reserved for what Google calls the People widget. Other information can appear here, including Google+ details and summaries of recent emails.

The People widget can't be modified, but it can be disabled. Click the cog icon at the top-right and choose Settings. Now select the General tab, scroll down to the People Widget section then select 'Hide the people widget'. After that, scroll down a bit

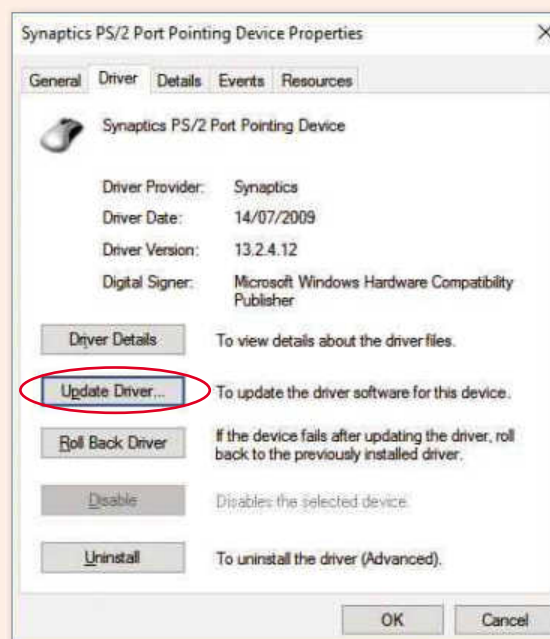
further and click Save Changes. If you'd prefer to keep the People widget but just remove the offending photos, you'll need to delete the related emails (Gmail doesn't let you delete only attachments). A quick way to find the relevant emails is to click in the Gmail search bar, type `from:yourwife@heraddress.com has:attachment` and press Enter. Tick the unwanted emails then click Delete.

Why won't my grandson's laptop work at home?

Q I upgraded my grandson's laptop to Windows 10, and it all went well. But when my grandson took his laptop home, it always failed to boot beyond the Windows Desktop. All it does is reboot, and display some message about a 'DPC watchdog violation'. When I bring the laptop back to my house, it boots fine. Any idea what could cause this strange behaviour?

Ian Jackson

A This is strange, but we have an idea of what might be happening. Are you connecting different external devices at either home address? For example, perhaps you set up the laptop using your own keyboard and mouse, and then



reconnected these when trying to fix it? Or perhaps your grandson is attaching devices at his home? Devices such as external hard drives and memory sticks

If your upgraded Windows 10 laptop fails to boot, identify problem external devices and update their drivers

can cause this type of problem. Use trial and error to find out which device is causing the problem. For example, it might be that the laptop works fine with your mouse, but crashes without it because its built-in touchpad's drivers are clashing with Windows 10. With the offending device identified use your grandson's normal setup to launch Windows 10, then press Windows key+X and click Device Manager.

Right-click the problematic device, choose Properties followed by Driver and then click Update Driver (or Roll Back Driver if no new drivers exist).

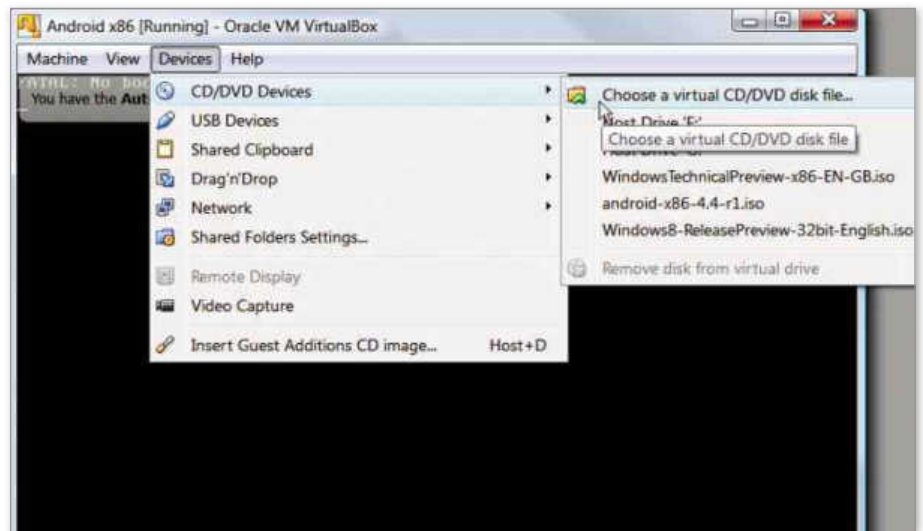
Problems Solved

Can I try Android on my PC?

Q You have often suggested trying operating systems in VirtualBox. Can I try Android this way?
John Edmonds

A Yes. Obviously you must first install VirtualBox, so download the latest version from www.virtualbox.org. For the Android operating system download the Android-x86 project from www.snipca.com/18336 – just click the green Download button to download the ISO file.

To install Android you need to set up a new **virtual computer** and then ‘mount’ the downloaded ISO file. In VirtualBox, click New, type a name for your virtual Android computer, set Type to Other and Version to Other/Unknown, then click Next. Set the memory to at least 512MB (or more if your system can spare it) then click Next. Select the ‘Create a virtual hard drive now’ button then click Create.



Set up Android to run on your PC using VirtualBox

The next few boxes that appear do have options you can change if you want, but if you're in a hurry, just click Next (twice) and then Create.

Now select the new virtual computer and click Start. In the virtual computer window, open the Device menu and point to 'CD/DVD Devices' followed by 'Choose

a virtual CD/DVD disc file' (see screenshot), then navigate to and select the ISO file downloaded earlier. Open the Machine menu, select Reset and your Android setup will begin. If you want to try it without a full install, just choose 'Live CD - Run Android x86 without installation'.

Why won't Android 6 Marshmallow connect to my PC?

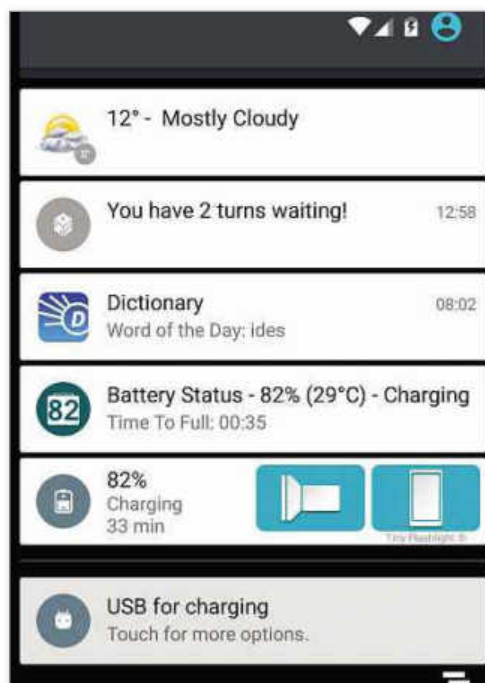
Q My Nexus 5 has always worked perfectly when connected by USB to my Windows 7 PC, letting me drag and drop files. I found this function very useful, because it let me use my smartphone as a portable drive. However, having upgraded to Android 6 (Marshmallow), from Android 5, this function no longer works. When I connect my phone now, Windows Explorer still opens and knows that my Nexus 5 is connected, but when I click the Nexus 5 icon I can't see any files or folders. Do you know why this is?

Steve Gabriel

A Yes – Google has changed the way that the Nexus 5 responds when connected by cable to a PC. We're not entirely sure why it has done this, but it's probably for security reasons.

In order for your smartphone's file system (and therefore your files and folders) to be accessible on your computer, you must now give

permission via your phone. This will appear as a notification on the lock screen but, if you have a lot of notifications there, it'll be pushed to



Tap the 'USB for charging' option on your Nexus 5 phone to drag and drop files from it to your PC

the bottom of the list – and therefore won't be visible on screen. Alternatively, if your Nexus 5 displays its home screen when you connect, the notification is sent direct to the notifications panel, so you won't see it at all.

From your lock screen, tap the plus '+' symbol to see hidden notifications or, from the home screen, swipe down from the top-left. Next, tap 'USB for charging' followed by the 'Transfer files (MTP)' button. If you just want access to the photo folders, instead choose 'Transfer photos (PTP)' – because this makes it a bit easier to navigate.

• See page 48 for Secret Tips for Marshmallow

NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE
23 Dec

- Is this mystery file related to Windows 10?
 - Can I install my Kaspersky software on my Android tablet?
 - How do I read library ebooks on my Hudl?
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Here's one Christmas ad that won't make you cry...

No matter how hard we try, we'll never be able to persuade you that security software is a suitable Christmas present for the man on the Moon.

He will always prefer a telescope sent by a little girl with a big heart. In fact, nobody deserves to receive security software for Christmas. Crucial though antivirus is, it's not really a gift that says, 'I love you'.

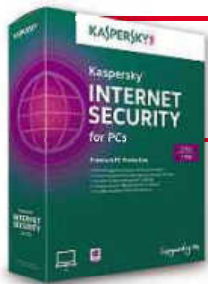
Instead, it's the kind of 'boring but useful' present you should buy for yourself. After all, would you trust your beloved auntie to choose the right software? She's so much better at picking socks.

The right software, as far as we're concerned, remains Kaspersky Internet Security 2016. It's won our past seven antivirus Group Tests, scoring 100 per cent in our most recent laboratory analysis. It's compatible with Windows 10, too.

That's why we've set up an exclusive reader offer for the software, selling it at half price. It is a limited offer, though. Like all the best products at Christmas, it may sell out before the big day.

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BBC iPlayer

Fix poor video quality, find the missing HD option and disable your VPN

Error message says you're outside the UK

If iPlayer tells you you're not in the UK when you are, check whether you've installed VPN software such as CyberGhost (www.cyberghostvpn.com – see screenshot below). Tools like these mask your computer's IP address to make it look like you're connecting from a different country. So, try disabling any VPN tool you have installed.

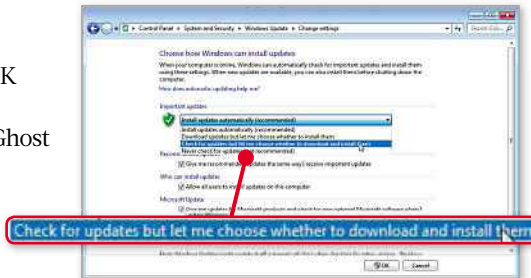
However, it could be that the router has picked up a non-UK IP address from your internet service provider (ISP): they sometimes do this when their UK-based IP address stocks are running low. Log into your router by typing your IP address (something like 192.168.0.1 or similar) into your web browser's address bar. Now look for options to release and renew the 'lease' on the IP address. If you can't find these, call your ISP and ask them to issue a UK-based IP address to your router. If all else fails, unplug your router for a while; or just wait a day, because many ISPs automatically expire and renew IP address leases every 24 hours.



If iPlayer thinks you're not in the UK, disable your VPN tool or renew your IP address

Video stops playing or is poor quality

BBC iPlayer uses adaptive bit rates, which means it sends less data when your connection slows down. The intention is to keep the picture moving, by reducing quality. If it happens often, your



Manually controlling Windows Update can prevent sporadic playback stutter

connection might not be fast enough to run iPlayer at the best quality. Click 'Watch in SD' to switch from high definition (HD) to standard definition (SD). Also, try to spot if there's a pattern when the quality drops. Perhaps Windows Update runs at the same time you watch *EastEnders* every day? In Windows, click Start, type windows update then click Windows Update, followed by 'Change settings'. Open the dropdown menu and choose 'Check for updates but let me choose whether to download or install them' (see screenshot above). This isn't an option in Windows 10, but you can trick it to stop downloading updates. Click Start, Settings, 'Network & internet' then WiFi. Click 'Advanced settings' and switch on 'Metered connection'. Windows updates are important for the security of your PC, so this should be a temporary measure.

Downloads app goes blank

Using the iPlayer Downloads program in Windows 10? If you notice that the playback window goes blank when you exit full-screen mode, you're not alone – it's a bug that the BBC knows about. It doesn't have a fix yet, but ensure your graphics card drivers are up to date, and also clear the iPlayer Downloads cache: click Settings followed by 'Clear cache' in the Advanced section.

The HD option is missing

If you're certain that a show was broadcast in HD then you might just have

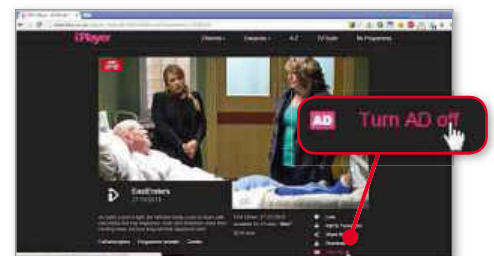
to wait a while: live programmes can take some time to appear on iPlayer. Even then, standard definition versions are added first, followed by HD quality.

Can't download to smartphone or tablet

BBC iPlayer is like any other app: it has some minimum requirements. For Apple devices, this means a device running iOS 7 or later, so if you're using an older iPhone or iPad you might be out of luck. To check if your Apple gadget is upgradable, tap Settings followed by General and then Software Update. Android users have less to worry about here, as iPlayer will theoretically work with devices from Android 2.3 (Gingerbread) onwards. However, there are numerous Android devices that are simply incompatible with iPlayer – see the BBC's list at www.snipca.com/18500.

Strange voices talk over programmes

You've accidentally clicked the 'AD' rather than 'HD' playback button. AD stands for 'Audio Description', which is a great feature if you have impaired vision, but an annoyance otherwise. Not all programmes have it but where they do iPlayer positions the AD button right below the HD button. They look almost identical, so it's easy to click or tap the wrong one. To disable it, just click or tap the AD button or the 'Turn AD off' link (see screenshot below). If you're watching in full-screen mode, you'll need to exit that first – on a PC, just press Escape (Esc).



If you hear commentary of the on-screen action, click this link to disable audio descriptions

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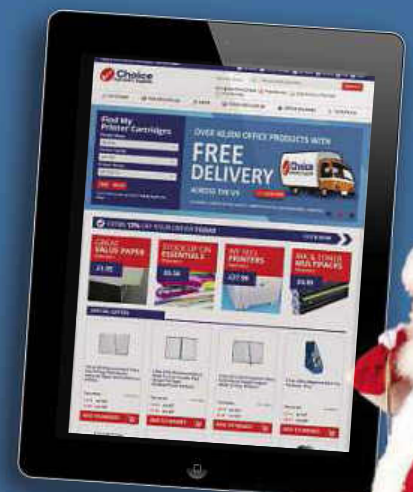
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720p A common resolution of high-definition video: 1280x720 pixels.

Add-on See Extension.

ADF Automatic Document Feeder. A device that feeds sheets of paper into a photocopier or scanner, one by one.

Bandwidth A measure of how much information can be transferred through a connection at one time.

Beta A version of software that's being tested. Beta versions are often released so problems can be ironed out.

Bitcoin A digital asset and payment system. The system lets users transact directly without needing an intermediary.

Botnet A group of infected computers connected together via the internet, and used to infect other PCs, send junk email and perform other criminal tasks.

Cache A temporary space for storing information. Can be memory used on a computer processor, or space on a hard drive used by a web browser.

Driver A file that tells Windows how to work with a peripheral device.

eSata External Sata. A relatively rare type of connection for external hard drives.

EXE A program file designed to run in Windows.

Extension A program that adds extra features to your browser.

Flash storage A data storage device that includes flash memory with an integrated USB interface.

Graphics card A component in a computer that produces the image shown on the monitor.

HDMI High-definition media interface. A type of connection that transmits high-definition video and audio signals.

Heatsink A block of metal used to help dissipate the heat from a computer chip.

HTML Hypertext Markup Language. The language used to write most web pages.

IP address Internet Protocol Address. A unique set of numbers, used to identify computers and websites on the internet.

ISO file A type of image file that contains all the data from a CD or DVD disc.

PCI Express A faster version of PCI, used by modern graphics cards.

Phishing A form of internet fraud that tries to trick you into revealing personal details.

Plug-in A small program that adds extra features to your web browser or to other applications, and is loaded only when it's needed.

Processor The processor – or central processing unit – is the brain of a computer. Processors now are tiny and are capable of carrying out millions of calculations every second.



LED Light-Emitting Diode. An electronic device that emits light. Used on almost all electronic devices, and to provide the backlight for some LCDs.

MicroSD A small type of memory card. Can be converted to SD size using an adapter.

Mirror site A website that contains the same downloadable software as others, so it's available from more than one place.

Overclocking Making a processor work faster to improve performance at the cost of it getting hotter and requiring more power.

PUP Potentially Unwanted Program. A program that may not be desired, despite the user consenting to it being downloaded. Examples include unnecessary plug-ins, toolbars and browser hijackers.

Quad core A computer that has four processors on a single chip, which allows it to operate faster than standard (single-core) computers.

RAM Random-access memory. The computer's working area, used for data storage while the PC is switched on. RAM's capacity is measured in megabytes (MB).

Ransomware Malware run by hackers who take over your PC and demand a payment to release it.

Rescue disk A disk used for scanning and repairing an infected PC that can't be fixed by other means.

Resolution The amount of detail shown in an image, whether on screen or printed.

SATA 3 Also known as SATA 600. The latest and fastest version of the SATA interface for connecting internal storage devices to a computer.

SD card Secure Digital card. A popular type of memory card.

Server A computer on a network, such as the internet, that distributes information to other PCs.

sRGB A standard RGB colour space for use on monitors, printers and the internet.

SSD Solid-state drive. Storage that, unlike a hard drive, uses no moving parts. Faster but more expensive than conventional hard drives.

System restore point The collection of system files stored by System Restore on a given date and time to which Windows can revert if a problem occurs.

USB 3.0 An even faster version of the USB standard used to connect devices to a computer.

Virtual computer A software-based computer running inside another computer. Often used to emulate another operating system – for example, running Windows XP as a virtual machine inside Windows 7.

VPN Virtual Private Network. A technology for keeping all internet communication safe and private even on insecure networks.

WAV Also known as a Wave file and saved with a .wav extension. An audio file, used for recording music and other sounds to disk. Because they are uncompressed, WAV files can be very large.

The Final Straw



STUART ANDREWS is
Computeractive's Mr Angry

This issue Stuart Andrews is being bamboozled by...

Error messages

I suppose I should be pleased that error messages are getting friendlier. Sure, Windows 10's stability (or lack thereof) hasn't always filled me with confidence, but at least when things go pear-shaped it tells me something that sounds like it's been written by a human being.

'The server stumbled, page could not be loaded' is easier to take than 'Windows store error, exception xxxgetstuffed', even if it means you'll be jumping through hoops for the next two hours just to get a few updates to download. And while I'm not a big fan of 'We couldn't complete the updates. Undoing changes. Don't turn off your computer', at least it explains roughly what's gone wrong.

It hasn't always been thus. I've been using Windows since the dark days of Windows 3.1, where getting any work done involved some passing familiarity with the MS-DOS command line. Then you'd get beauties like an endless scroll of 'Not reading drive A. Abort, Retry, Fail?' or that most helpful of messages, 'General Failure'. When General Failure was in town you knew his comrades Major Fault and Captain Cock-Up could not be far behind, and on that count Microsoft never let you down. Basically, you were

“
When General Failure
was in town you knew
his comrades Major
Fault and Captain
Cock-Up weren't
far behind
”

stuffed. In those days, developers wrote error messages for other developers, and – with no Google to help – the odds against you decoding their technobabble were longer than the Great Wall of China.

Things hardly improved in the Windows 95/98 era, when I worked as a reviewer and had to make sense of pre-release software and hardware. It was rare that a week went by without the good old 'Blue screen of death' (BSOD) informing me ominously that 'A fatal exception has occurred'. If you were

really unlucky, your PC might reset itself and then go into a deadly spiral of further blue screens and resets. Otherwise, it might sit there, waiting gormlessly for you to turn it off and on again, when what you really wanted to do was turn it off permanently with a sledgehammer. I sometimes think Microsoft considered this a Windows feature. The way error messages came and went without any good

reason would leave the user in a near-constant state of suspense.

If you didn't get the good old BSOD, then you might get equally impenetrable messages informing you that you were the victim of one of a bewildering range of Windows Protection errors, or that (a personal favourite) 'The action could not be completed. The action could not be completed'. Clearly Microsoft thinks saying it twice makes an unknown error less annoying.

Meanwhile, nothing quite brightens up your day more than waiting hours for a program to install only to be told 'Unable to start the program. One of the installed components may be missing'. I respond by hissing, "Some of *your* installed components may go missing, you little [expletive deleted]".

So why do the new error messages still drive me up the wall? Because some of them are as much use as an inflatable dartboard. It's all very well for Office to inform me, 'Something went wrong. Sorry, we ran into a problem', but it doesn't actually tell me anything about the problem, what caused it or what I need to do to fix it. Ditto the now-legendary 'Something happened. Something happened'.

Most of all though, these new error messages remind me of the kind of cheerful, agreeable but utterly useless nonsense you get when you phone the water company to find out why there's nothing coming out of your tap. When an update won't install I don't want a cute quip or some vague reassuring message. No, I want to feel that this is a known problem that's being fixed. And I certainly *don't* want to have to type the error code into Google. In fact, there's only one thing I really, really want: how about software that, you know, just works?



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