



BUY THIS SUPERB NEW TABLET p24

It's now our favourite – yours too?

DRAG & DROP LIKE AN EXPERT

Smarter ways to move files p60

WIPE

PC JUNK 

Set a schedule that removes it automatically p38

ISSUE 634 | 22 JUNE – 5 JULY 2022

Computer

active

Ofcom makes the right call – p9

Learn something new in every issue

HACK

YouTube

Block ads, get 4K, download videos, stop buffering – and much more p50



EVERY TRICK YOU MUST LEARN



PLUS

HOW WE ORGANISE OUR PC FOLDERS

Should you follow our structure? p35

FIX A BROKEN PC KEYBOARD



Four solutions explained – see which works for you p62



CUSTOM GAMING DESKTOPS & LAPTOPS



CUSTOM BUILT
TO YOUR SPEC



EASY TO USE
CONFIGURATOR



CUSTOM PCS
& LAPTOPS



AWARD-WINNING
SYSTEMS

WELCOME



**2021
BACK ISSUE CD
NOW ON
SALE!
p34**

From the Editor

I must have YouTube open in my browser for about 40 hours a week, and yet I hardly ever visit the site. That's because I've customised it to run in the background while I work, playing music to help me concentrate. My top three hacks are: one, play it in Brave to avoid adverts; two, install the Music Mode extension to ensure smooth streaming; and three, use Enhancer to control playback speed via my mouse.

YouTube guru Robert Irvine mentions all three tricks in his Cover Feature, which reveals other expert tips such as

bookmarking specific moments in videos, adding a download button to the player, and stopping Google knowing what you've watched.

Actually, there's a fourth hack I use, which is to leave Auto-play switched on, and trust YouTube to learn my tastes. In his feature Robert suggests turning this off to avoid disappearing down YouTube's "rabbit hole", but I'm happy to tumble in - as long as it doesn't lead me to Jive Bunny's greatest hits.

Daniel Booth
editor@computeractive.co.uk

EDITORIAL

Group Editor Daniel Booth
Deputy Editor Robert Irvine
Production Editor Graham Brown
Art Editor Katie Peat
Contributors Dinah Greek, David Ludlow, Jonathan Parkyn,
Chris Paton, Nik Rawlinson, Andy Shaw

ADVERTISING

Advertising Manager Alexandra Thomas
Deputy Advertising Manager Rebecca New

MARKETING AND CIRCULATION

Subscriptions Juber Ahmed
For subscription enquiries ring 0330 333 9493

PRODUCTION

Head of Production
Stephen Catherall
Senior Production Manager
Lawrence Brookes

INTERNATIONAL LICENSING AND SYNDICATION

Computeractive is available for licensing and syndication.
To find out more contact us at licensing@futurenet.com or
view our available content at www.futurecontenthub.com.

Head of Print Licensing

Rachel Shaw

ONWARD RESALE

This publication may not be resold or otherwise distributed, whether at, below or above face value. Nor can this publication be advertised for sale, transfer or distribution.

PERMISSIONS

Material may not be reproduced in any form without the written consent of the publisher. Please address such requests to editor@computeractive.co.uk.

LIABILITY

While every care was taken preparing this magazine, the publishers cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of the information or any consequence arising from it. All judgments are based on equipment available to Computeractive at the time of review. Computeractive takes no responsibility for the content of external websites whose addresses are published in the magazine.

© Copyright Future PLC 2022.

All rights reserved
Images from Alamy and Getty Images

Computeractive is a registered trademark.

Neither the whole of this publication nor any part of it may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without the written permission of the publishers

SUBSCRIPTION DELAYS

We rely on various delivery companies to get your magazine to you - many of whom continue to be affected by Covid. We kindly ask you allow up to 7 days before contacting us about late delivery: subscriptions@computeractive.co.uk.

Distributed by Marketforce

abc Average sales, Jan-Dec 2021 68,144
copies per issue.

Computeractive
Printed in the UK



Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR)
www.futureplc.com
Chief executive Zillah Byng-Thorne
Non-executive chairman Richard Huntingford
Chief financial officer Penny Ladkin-Brand
Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244



THIS ISSUE IN NUMBERS

10,000

Daily victims of 'CCleaner search' attacks - p8

3 days

Battery life of the Nokia G11 phone - p26

£9

Price of Orico's caddy for turning an old SATA hard drive into an external drive - p67



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.

Contents

22 June – 5 July 2022 • Issue 634

- 6 News** New Windows 11 update offered to PCs that don't support it
- 10 Question of the Fortnight** Will Microsoft kill off hard drives next year?
- 11 Protect Your Tech** Chrome-hacking browser extension
- 12 Letters** Treat us like grown-ups over Windows 11
- 14 Consumeractive** Where's my Fitbit refund for recalled watch?
- 16 Grow Your Family Tree** Search service records of Wrens
- 18 Best Free Software** BCUninstaller 5.3
- 21 Named & Shamed** 4K Player for YouTube

Reviews

- 22 Box Cube Mythic** Box PC wins fair and square
- 23 Acer TravelMate Vero** Eco laptop won't cost the Earth
- 24 Samsung Galaxy Tab S8** Android tablet that catches Apple's
- 25 OnePlus Nord 2T** OnePlus phone improves with age
- 26 Nokia G11** Budget phone's cost is its saving grace
- 28 Logitech MX Master 3S** Logitech's mouse just squeaks it
Logitech MX Mechanical Keyboard Serious keyboard for all types
- 29 Magix Movie Studio 2022** Video-editing tool makes the cut
- 30 Buy It/Competition** Win an Anker PowerConf C200 webcam

Journey's end for the hard drive?

p10



Box Cube Mythic

p22



Acer TravelMate Vero

p23



Subscribe now!
See page 58 for our special subs offer



Workshops & Tips

35 How to... Organise your folders like an expert

38 Clean your PC on a schedule

40 Readers' Tips

Open Thunderbird emails in multiple windows

42 Browser Tips Search images using Google Lens more easily

44 Phone and Tablet Tips

Make voice calls easier to hear

46 Make Windows Better Search the registry for a specific key or value

47 Make Office Better

Change page colour and print it

48 In the Club

Create short videos on YouTube

49 What's All the Fuss About?

Turing Image Super Resolution

50 COVER FEATURE

Hack YouTube

Get more from the world's biggest video-sharing site with our expert tips and tricks

60 Drag and drop like an expert

Make Windows' move-and-copy feature suit the way you work

62 Fix a broken keyboard

Don't throw out your faulty keyboard – try these four fixes to ensure your device reverts to type

64 Problems Solved

Why is my PC shutting down on its own?

71 Reader Support

Why can't I use Qwant with Vivaldi?

72 Jargon Buster

74 Easy When You Know How

Robert Irvine creates a photo collage



File like you mean it

HACK YouTube

Block ads, get 4K, download videos,
stop buffering – and much more

COVER
FEATURE
P50



Make key
repairs

p62



New W11 update offered to PCs that don't support it

Microsoft has accidentally offered the first Feature update for Windows 11 to computers that lack the specifications to run the operating system.

In early June it released a preview version of the update (22H2), which is due to be finalised by the autumn.

WHAT WE THINK

If Microsoft ever decides to ease the hardware restrictions for Windows 11, this bungled approach – causing mass confusion – is precisely how it would do so. That's why, at first, we thought it was a sign that restrictions might be lifting, and Microsoft's dismissal doesn't completely dissuade us from that view. In May, Windows 11's market share stood at 10 per cent (www.snipca.com/42238), dwarfed by Windows 10's 72 per cent. Microsoft needs to act fast to change that.

Within hours, Windows 10 users who had previously been unable to install Windows 11 said they were being offered the update.

It was first reported by members of Reddit's Windows 11 page (www.snipca.com/42232), who expressed surprise that they were seeing messages from Microsoft saying 'Windows 11, version 22H2 is ready – and it's free'.

One member, AceRimmer412, posted a screenshot of the message (1 in our screenshot above right), alongside Device Manager showing the computer running an Intel Core i5-7200 processor (2, which Microsoft says isn't supported by Windows 11.

Soon after, on Twitter, Microsoft confirmed it was looking into why this was happening, and that the hardware requirements for upgrading to Windows 11 hadn't changed.

It was responding to a tweet from user Barb Bowman (www.snipca.com/42233),



who said the same message reported by Reddit members had replaced 'does not qualify' when she checked for updates on her Windows 10 computer.

Microsoft's response to her Tweet appears to have crushed hopes that it was loosening the technical requirements needed to run Windows 11.

Group programs in Windows 11 22H2

To get the preview version of update 22H2, you have to be signed up as a Windows

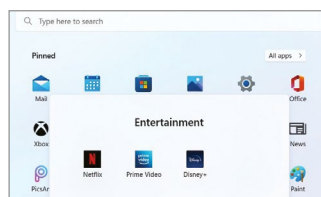
Insider (<https://insider.windows.com>), and be what Microsoft calls a 'seeker'.

This means you have to click the download button to install the update, and shouldn't wait for it to be automatically installed.

One of the most eagerly awaited new tools in 22H2 is the return of folders in the Start menu, letting you group similar programs together.

To do so, you'll just need to drag and drop one program icon on to another, then name the folder.

In our screenshot (left) we've created a folder called Entertainment containing apps for Netflix, Amazon Prime and Disney Plus.



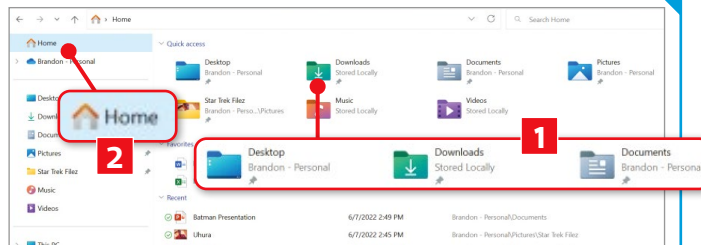
MICROSOFT ADDS TABS TO FILE EXPLORER

Microsoft has introduced tabs in File Explorer in a new preview version of Windows 11, meaning you can jump between folders without opening a new window.

It published a screenshot of the new feature on its blog (www.snipca.com/42235), showing tabs along the top

for Desktop, Download, Documents and more (1).

There is also a "refreshed layout" of File Explorer's left navigation pane (2). This lists the Home button first, followed by folders you've synced with OneDrive, then below that folders you've



pinned for quick access. It's not yet known whether these

changes will appear in the 22H2 Feature update.



You'll like this...

Queen honours man who streamed church services in lockdown (www.snipca.com/42225)



but not this...

Malware is stealing credit-card details from Chrome users (www.snipca.com/42234)

Chrome to block online requests it knows you'll say 'no' to

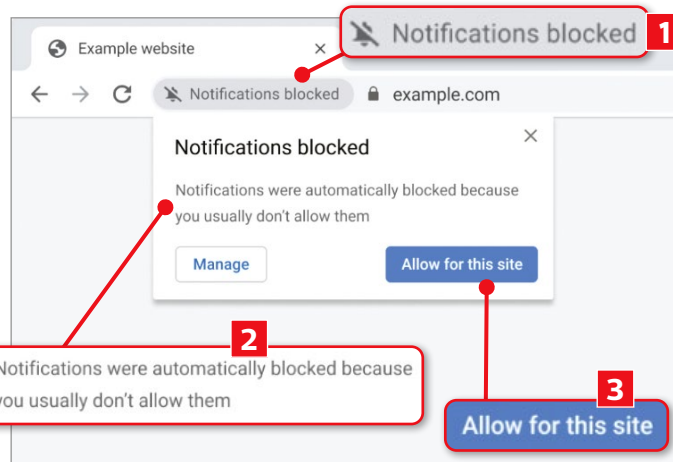
Chrome will soon start automatically blocking “undesired” requests from websites if it ‘learns’ that you normally deny what they are asking for.

For example, if you previously refused permission for a site to know your location, Chrome will remember this and stop that request appearing the next time you visit.

When this happens, you'll see ‘Notifications blocked’ at the far left of your browser address bar (1 in our screenshot) and a message saying that ‘Notifications were automatically blocked because you usually don't allow them’ 2. You can click the blue ‘Allow for this site’ 3 if you want to carry on seeing notifications.

In its blog (www.snipca.com/42239), Google said that while some notifications “help deliver updates from sites you care about”, they can also become a “nuisance”.

It added: “To help people



browse the web with minimal interruption, Chrome predicts when permission prompts are unlikely to be granted based on how the user previously interacted with similar permission prompts”.

Chrome will use **machine learning** methods to identify the permissions you regularly refuse. This is a form of artificial intelligence which learns how to make predictions based on data it receives.

Google said this feature will

start in the next version of Chrome (103), due to arrive on 21 June.

It will also start using machine learning to predict what kind of tools you want to use in the Android version of Chrome based on your typical activity at different times of the day.

For example, it will automatically show the ‘share’ option at times when you often share links, or the microphone icon at times you search using your voice.

Dell launches thinnest ever XPS laptop

Dell has released the thinnest ever laptop in its XPS 13 range – just 13.9mm thick, and weighing 2.59 pounds (pictured).

The most recent XPS 13 devices, released in 2021, were 14.80mm thick, and weighed 2.64 pounds. Dell said that it was able to make the new laptop so thin and light because its motherboard is 1.8 times smaller than in the previous models.

It added that the smaller motherboard has also created enough space for it to build a better speaker system, with a deeper bass.

The screen is 13.4in, with a resolution of 1920x1200

pixels. Dell claims battery life is 12 hours (www.snipca.com/42247), while it should be quieter because it has just one fan, rather than the two in last year's range.

It's powered by a 12th-generation Intel Core processor, **RAM** is from 8GB to 32GB, and you have a choice of a 256GB, 512GB or 1TB **SSD**.

It was due to be released on 16 June. UK prices had yet to be confirmed at the time of press, though it will cost \$999 (around £820) in the US.



Dell also announced a new XPS 13 2-in-1 laptop-tablet, due later this summer, with a detachable keyboard to rival the iPad Pro and Microsoft Surface Pro. The keyboard attaches magnetically, and its reversible hinge allows for 100, 112.5, and 125-degree angles of use.

IN BRIEF

SPOTIFY PLANS TO OFFER AUDIOBOOKS

Spotify has said it plans to start offering audiobooks, alongside podcasts and music. In a statement to investors (www.snipca.com/42242), Spotify boss and co-founder Daniel Ek said audiobooks “will be a massive opportunity” and that just as in podcasting “expect us to play to win”. It follows Spotify's acquisition of audiobook company Findaway last year.

FLIGHT SIM 40TH EDITION COMING IN NOVEMBER

Microsoft is releasing a 40th-anniversary edition of Flight Simulator, containing aircraft from previous versions including the Wright Flyer, Spirit of St Louis and the Airbus A310. It will be available in November for Xbox Series X, Xbox Series S and PC – free to those who already have the 2020 edition. Watch Microsoft's trailer at www.snipca.com/42248.



TOMORROW'S WORLD

Jab this robotic arm in the palm and it will recoil as though in pain. It's a form of synthetic skin created by scientists at Glasgow University, who based it on how the nervous system works. Ultimately, it could be used to build prosthetic limbs that have “near-human levels of touch sensitivity”. Watch it at www.snipca.com/42224.



IN BRIEF

APPLE FINALLY ADDS WEATHER TO IPAD



Apple is finally adding a weather app to the iPad, 12 years after it released the

first version of the tablet and following repeated requests from users. It will be part of the iPadOS 16 update, due this autumn, and will look similar to the iPhone's weather app, with a background that reflects the current weather (pictured). See page 45 for more on iPadOS.

FIRST UK PHONE FOR FIVE YEARS TO LAUNCH

London firm Nothing (<https://nothing.tech>) will launch the first British-designed smartphone for five years on 12 July. The device, called Phone (1), will have a "minimalist design", a frame made from recycled aluminium and transparent glass on the back. The last UK phone maker, Wileyfox, released three phones between 2015 and 2016, but never made a profit and went bust in 2018.

THE WORLD'S GONE MAD!



In 50 years' time we'll be so worried about overpopulation that parents will choose to have virtual children and raise them in the **metaverse**. That's the depressing prediction in AI expert Catriona Campbell's new book *AI by Design: A Plan For Living With Artificial Intelligence*. The hardback costs a mere £56 on Amazon (www.snipca.com/42212). Think we'll spend the money on our **real** kids instead.

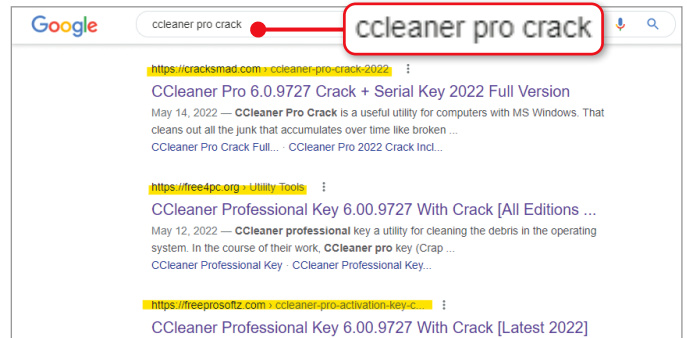
CCleaner searches could hack your PC

Searching for a free version of CCleaner Professional can deliver results that link to malware, security experts have warned.

The malware, called FakeCrack, can steal all the files on your PC, including your personal data.

It was detected by researchers at Avast (www.snipca.com/42220), who published a screenshot showing the fake links highlighted in yellow (pictured). These appear as results for the search term 'ccleaner pro crack'.

Clicking an infected link takes you through a network of internet domains until you arrive on a 'landing page' that links to a legitimate file-sharing service containing a ZIP file carrying the malware.



They added that the hackers are also exploiting searches for pirated editions of "games, office programs, or programs for downloading multimedia content". It's an effective form of attack because criminals can exploit SEO tricks that make their links appear on the first page of Google's results.

Avast is reporting an average of 10,000 hacks every day. Most of the victims are based in France, Brazil, Indonesia and India, though attacks have been spotted in the UK too.

Hackers appear to be increasingly targeting users searching for cracked software, such as in the ChromeLoader attacks that infect browsers (see page 11).

Rather than searching for CCleaner Professional, you can buy it from the official site at www.snipca.com/42219. It normally costs £24.95 after a 14-day free trial, but at time of press it was going for £19.95.

Tools found only in the full version include deleting your browser history automatically, and updating drivers.

MoD to build quantum computer to fight better

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) is building a powerful quantum computer that could help guide military tactics on the battlefield.

It will use single particles of light to solve complex problems at speeds beyond conventional supercomputers.

The MoD will work with British firm Orca Computing, founded by Oxford University graduates. Stephen Till, a senior fellow at the MoD's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, called the partnership a "milestone moment".

He said the aim is to build a quantum machine capable of working inside an armoured vehicle, though it could also be used to analyse images and



other battlefield data.

Orca boss Richard Murray said: "For certain parts of those problems, the complexity will be so vast, so challenging, that it makes sense to solve some of that problem with a quantum system rather than a classical one". He added that the system could be operational in the next two to four years.

Quantum computers are considerably more powerful

than normal machines because they can process data in zeroes and ones simultaneously. This means they can perform incredibly complex calculations with breathtaking speed.

Experts say problems that take normal computers years could be solved by quantum computers in minutes. They're already being used to help tackle climate change and develop new drugs.

Ofcom vows to protect UK's 'essential' phone boxes

Ofcom has introduced stronger rules to keep phone boxes in place in areas where there's a poor mobile signal or frequent accidents or suicides.

It said the changes mean that phone boxes "will be safeguarded against removal if they are still needed by a local community".

A box will also be kept if 52 or more calls have been made from it in the past 12 months, or it's often used to make calls to helplines such as Childline and Samaritans.

Ofcom says that boxes still provide an "essential service in some areas", despite the total minutes in calls falling from 800 million in 2002 to just four million in 2021/22.

It added that almost 150,000 calls were made to emergency services from phone boxes in the 12 months to May 2020. Around 25,000



Universal Service Obligation (TUSO) that BT and KCOM, which serves Hull and surrounding areas, must follow. Both companies will need to consult with local authorities on removing boxes that are the last remaining

calls were made to Childline, and 20,000 to Samaritans.

Currently, there are around 20,000 phone boxes in the UK, down from a peak of 92,000 in 1992. BT has turned many boxes into Street Hub kiosks providing Wi-Fi, while others are being used by local authorities for other purposes, such as storing defibrillators.

The new rules (www.snipca.com/42198) are part of a revamped Telephony

in an area.

Ofcom estimates that its previous rules protected around 5,000 phone boxes, though it says many of these may no longer need to be kept because of the "ongoing decline in call volumes and improvements to mobile coverage".

However, its research indicates that at least 1,400 boxes are in areas without good mobile coverage.

EU forces Apple to use USB-C chargers

Apple may be forced to replace its Lightning port after the European Union said that from autumn 2024 all phones and tablets must use a USB-C charger.

EU policymakers have been keen to enforce a standard charging port in order to make life easier for Android and iOS users who need different cables for different devices, and also to cut down on the amount of unused cables.

The new rule will cover a range of "small and medium-sized portable electronics", including phones, tablets, headphones and headsets, handheld video-game consoles and portable speakers.

Laptops will eventually be

covered, but not until 40 months have passed from the law coming into effect.

In its announcement confirming the law, the EU said it would save consumers "up to €250m (about £213m) a year on unnecessary charger purchases" and cut 11,000 tonnes of waste per year (www.snipca.com/42200).

It's not known whether the UK government plans to pass similar laws, but EU officials say that under the current post-Brexit rules it would apply in Northern Ireland.

Apple didn't comment on the decision, but has previously said the move



would "stifle innovation" and create "an unprecedented volume of electronic waste" because millions of Lightning cables would be thrown away.

However, it recently added USB-C support to the iPad Pro, and it's strongly rumoured that the iPhone will follow in 2023.

Do you agree with the law?
Let us know: letters@computeractive.co.uk

IN BRIEF

THREE HIKES PRICES FOR CALLS AND TEXTS

Pay-as-you-go (PAYG) Three customers will soon have to pay more to make calls, send texts and use data. From 12 July the cost of calls will increase from 10p a minute to 35p; texts from 10p to 15p; and using 1MB of data from 5p to 10p. Three has told customers that they can exit without paying a fee, and claim a refund for outstanding credit by 17 July.

EDGE'S SLEEPING TABS SAVES 39.1MB OF RAM

Edge's Sleeping Tabs feature saves 39.1MB of RAM for every tab it turns off, Microsoft said (www.snipca.com/42196). The tool, introduced in 2020, puts tabs that haven't been used for a while into sleep mode, saving PC resources. Microsoft claims it has put 6 billion tabs to sleep in the past 28 days, saving 273.7 petabytes of RAM. To check it's switched on, type `edge://settings/system` into Edge, then look at the 'Save resources with sleeping tabs' slider.

XIAOMI SELLING FIRST AMAZON FIRE TVS

Chinese manufacturer Xiaomi has released its first range of smart TVs with Amazon's Fire TV built in. Prices for the F2 range start at £399 for 43 inches (www.snipca.com/42197, pictured), rising to £449 for 50 inches and £499 for 55 inches. They're all 4K models, have four HDMI 2.1 ports and can be controlled using Alexa.



Will Microsoft kill off hard drives next year?

It's reportedly forcing PC manufacturers to prioritise SSDs

Visit Microsoft's page listing the system requirements for Windows 11 (www.snipca.com/42250) and you'll see that you need a storage device that's 64GB or larger. But nowhere does it specify what kind of drive that needs to be. As long as it's big enough, why should Microsoft care whether you've got a hard drive or a solid-state drive (SSD)?

Well, it seems that Microsoft might be developing an interest in what's under the bonnet of your computer. A report by Trendfocus, analysts for the data-storage industry, says that PC manufacturers claim Microsoft is asking them to ditch hard drives for SSDs as the primary **boot drive** in all their machines, starting next year.

“To keep costs the same, PC builders would have to downsize from a 1TB hard drive to a 256GB SSD”

Microsoft didn't comment on the report, but it's not hard to see why the company would want all Windows 11 computers to have SSDs. They have many advantages over hard drives, being faster, quieter and smaller, as well as lasting longer and consuming less energy. From Microsoft's perspective, why *wouldn't* you choose an SSD? The faster your computer, the smoother Windows will run.

Many laptops and PCs already come with an SSD for the boot drive, with some



using a secondary hard drive for storing large files, such as photos, music and videos. But

this extra speed comes at a cost. SSDs are getting cheaper all the time, but typically they are still much more expensive per gigabyte than hard drives.

You'll notice this difference if you shop for drives online. Our current favourite SSD, Corsair's MP600 (see page 33), costs £85 for 500GB (www.snipca.com/41547). For that price you could buy almost *three* 1TB Seagate Barracuda hard drives (from www.snipca.com/42254). It's why many users stick with hard drives, sacrificing speed for

capacity.

Manufacturers have to make the same cost calculations when deciding which components to fit inside their computers.

Trendfocus Vice President John Chen told our sister site Tom's Hardware that to keep costs the same, PC builders would have to downsize from a 1TB hard drive to a 256GB SSD – and most don't consider that to be enough capacity for many users. Chen added that building a computer with a 512GB SSD would “break the budget” for many lower-end machines.

Unsurprisingly, manufacturers have knocked back Microsoft's demand. Chen claims that originally Microsoft wanted to push it through this year, but was persuaded to delay it to the second half of 2023. If that date sticks, it'll probably be for

THE FACTS

- PC manufacturers say Microsoft wants them to use SSDs as the boot drive rather than hard drives in all computers built from 2023
- Microsoft's current hardware requirements for Windows 11 include a 64GB storage device, but that can be a hard drive or SSD
- SSDs are more expensive per GB than hard drives

laptops only, with PCs following in 2024, though he said “things are still in flux”.

What does all this mean for you? Whether or not Microsoft gets its own way, you should take it as another sign that SSDs will eventually replace all hard drives (read Issue 626's Cover Feature for more reasons why). If you can afford one for your current machine, we'd suggest upgrading. And if you're looking to buy a new computer, choosing one with an SSD as the boot drive should ensure it lasts longer.

But we can't see Microsoft changing its system requirements to force SSDs on existing users. Yes, there are two features in Windows 11 that do require an SSD – DirectStorage (makes games load faster) and the Windows Subsystem for Android (lets Android apps run in the operating system) – but neither are essential. Microsoft's more pressing concern is getting people to upgrade in the first place.

Protect your tech

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

WATCH OUT FOR...

Chrome-hacking browser extension

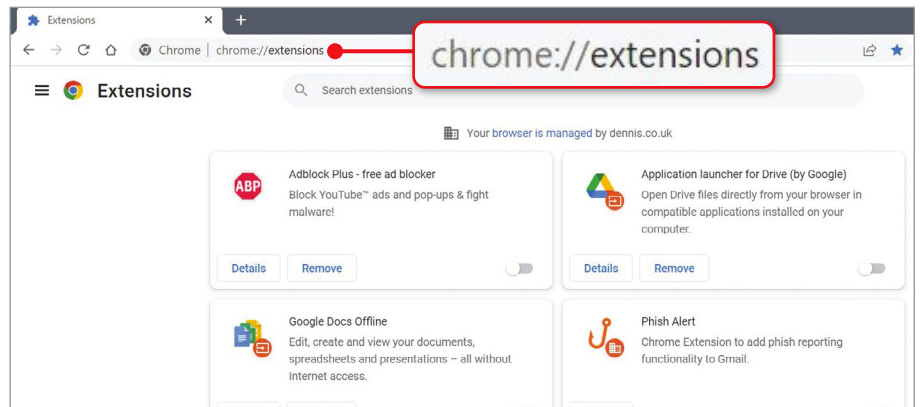
What's the threat?

Hackers are infecting Windows computers with malware that takes over the Chrome browser, showing search results for dodgy sites.

The attacks use the ChromeLoader browser extension, which changes Chrome's settings to show you worthless sites such as fake surveys and adverts, and even pornographic pages. Every time you click a link the scammers get paid.

ChromeLoader has been a threat since at least the start of 2022, but attacks increased sharply in May according to researchers at US security firm Red Canary (www.snipca.com/42194).

They say it's smuggled on to computers as an ISO file and then uses Windows PowerShell to "inject" itself into Chrome. They added that this is a technique "we don't see very often", and that antivirus tools often fail to block it.



If you suspect you're infected and check by typing `chrome://extensions` into Chrome's browser bar (as pictured), the malware tries to put you off the scent by redirecting you to Chrome's Settings (`chrome://settings`).

There's also a Mac version of the malware that installs DMG files, then uses Bash (Apple's equivalent of PowerShell) to infect search results in Safari.

How can you stay safe?

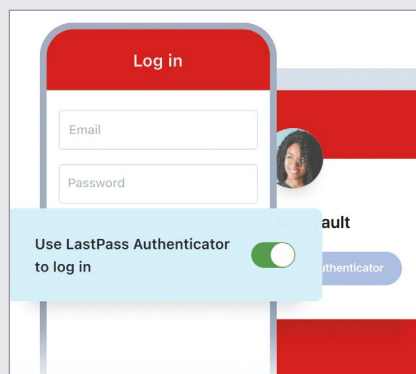
The ISO file is spread via pirated movies and TV programs, as well as paid-for games and software that have been 'cracked' to be made available for free (see page 8 also). Avoid sites that offer such dubious downloads, they're often riddled with malware. One way the cracked games are advertised is through QR codes on Twitter, so avoid scanning those too.

New tools

LastPass's passwordless sign-in www.snipca.com/42190

A password manager encouraging you not to use passwords may seem like commercial suicide, but LastPass knows that it can't fight the inevitable. As explained in Issue 632 (page 10), we're heading into a 'passwordless' future, where the likes of Apple, Google and Microsoft will let you sign in through your phone. LastPass's survival tactic is to let you sign into your vault without having to enter your master password.

This works by logging you in through LastPass's Authenticator app (available for Android and iOS) with a single tap. Once you've paired the app with your vault by moving the slider (pictured), it will grant you access to all the passwords saved inside. LastPass calls this a "set it and forget it" method – ie, once you've set your master password,



you can forget it, safely knowing that Authenticator will remember you. Click the link above for more details, plus full instructions.

LastPass claims it's the first to offer passwordless logins, but we're sure many more password managers will follow suit.

ScamWatch

Readers warn readers



'Terminated' NI number

In June I got an automated phone call claiming there were "unethical financial transactions" associated with my National Insurance number. That sounded suspicious enough, but the message continued to say my number would be "terminated". That sounded utterly ridiculous, so I took no notice, and certainly didn't press 1 as requested. It's one of the least convincing scams I've received. It's interesting though that automated calls seem to be more common these days. I assume scammers are having more success with them. Don't be fooled, fellow readers!

Tom Warhurst



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

Letters

Tell us what's on your mind

Go cashless? We'll end up having to barter

✉ Issue 633's 'Question of the Fortnight' ('Why do we force the elderly to always use apps?') rang a bell for me. Some time ago I wanted to use the car park at one of our local country parks, only to find that all the pay-by-cash machines were out of action and that you had to pay by phone. I followed the complex instructions scrupulously, only to find that my payment was refused at the very last stage. Other frustrated people were experiencing the same difficulty.

I managed to locate one of the park's rangers, who explained that the machines had recently been vandalised and large amounts of cash had been stolen from them. For the time being, it seemed, paying by phone was the only option, but I found myself unable to do so. The friendly ranger said it wasn't really his problem, but that in any case nobody was checking, so I could stay as long as I liked (which I did). This solved the immediate problem, but made me wonder about the increasing trend towards the 'cashless' society. In the event that the government of the day should decide to abolish the use of cash, which many have advocated, all payments would have to be made electronically.

I'm an enthusiastic user of electronic payments, but I'm also very aware that there are many who would be unable to pay for anything. And what would happen should some hostile power decide to attack our electronic systems, or even our national power grid? I can only think we'd be reduced to bartering our possessions. How many potatoes would a small table buy? Could I obtain eggs for my wristwatch? Doesn't bear thinking about, does it?

Alan Turk

Phones more convenient than searching for change

✉ I accept that not everyone wants to use a phone for what you describe

as "everyday tasks", but in many cases I think it's more convenient than the alternative. These days we moan about being forced to pay for parking using the phone, but it wasn't too long ago that

the main annoyance was not having any change to put in the machines. Instead of trying to find a phone signal, you had to search for a rogue pound coin in the back of the car or change a tenner by buying something you didn't need in a nearby shop.

I share the view that both options should be available in car parks: phone and cash. But we're past the point of no return. Councils that have already

removed the cash option aren't going to waste money reinstating them. I expect that by 2025, paying by phone will be the only option, so we'd better get used to it.

Graham Wadsworth

Don't wait on hold – use online chat instead

✉ I wasn't surprised by the report in Issue 633 (page 7) that customers phoning mobile networks are being left on hold for longer. The only thing that shocked me was that the average wait time of two hours, 15 seconds wasn't much longer. The problem has got a lot worse over the past few years. Covid is obviously to blame for some of it, but

companies have now got to stop using that as an excuse.

My advice to anyone fed up with waiting on hold is to switch to a company that offers a fast online chat service. This is now my 'deal breaker' when choosing a new provider, whether that's broadband, TV, energy or anything else. Rather than waiting on the phone, it's so much easier to open a new browser tab on the company's chat page, open a chat box, then wait for an assistant to join. This isn't always instant, but you can get on with other work online while you wait.

Make sure your computer's audio is working properly, because you often get a little beep to indicate that someone has replied. You can then just hop back to that tab to chat with the person. In my experience, the assistants have all been real people, not automated services asking irrelevant questions.

Simon Hull

Why I left Sky Broadband

✉ I've just read Issue 633's Star Letter from Ian Ellison about ditching Sky, and it reminded me of my experience of leaving the company.

I was actually quite happy with the service, but as an ex-O2 broadband customer I was paying Sky for broadband only and not line rental. Changing to a broadband service that included line rental would save me about £12 per month. I made many attempts to do this via the company's website, but I always seemed to end up at a page advising me that I needed to call them. However, I



What's the Issue...?

✉ When did you publish a table explaining the savings you could make by 'unbundling' your TV services?

Adam Beardsley

CA SAYS That was in Issue 628's Cover Feature ('Cancel BT, Virgin & Sky TV'), page 53.

✉ I want a new, cheap phone, and seem to remember a round-up of such devices. Am I right?

Charles Mayhew

CA SAYS Yes, you are. We recommended the best phones for under £100 in Issue 610, page 62 (read it on our Back Issue CD: www.snipca.com/42077).

✉ Where did you explain the risks of upgrading to Windows 11 if your PC is deemed incompatible?

Iain Thomson

CA SAYS It was in our 'Big Windows 11 Dilemma' feature, Issue 625, page 62.

could never speak to anyone because of “staffing issues caused by the pandemic” and was directed back to the website. I believe the problem was caused by me being a former O2 customer.

All this took place in October 2020, and I accept that things were very difficult for businesses during this period. Even so, I was surprised that one of the major communications companies in the UK seemed unable to set up its support staff for home working. The upshot of this was that I changed supplier.

David Johnson

Don't let broadband firms hike prices mid-contract

I must strongly disagree with David Thomson (Issue 631), who says that broadband firms “over-charge to cope with customers leaving”, and that they should be free to increase charges mid-contract. Why are telecoms services able to raise prices during a contract? For all other services, providers can raise their prices whenever they wish, by any amount, but the rises apply only to new customers or those whose contracts are up for renewal. This includes insurance, council tax, the TV licence, service contracts and energy providers (as long as they don't go out of business).

We should aim to keep things simple so customers can easily compare costs, services and performance ratings when choosing a supplier. We don't want to have to find out what the next price increase will be, and when it will be applied.

I know this can be done, because I've experienced it myself. I joined Now TV for my phone and broadband two years ago. It was good value then, and the price didn't increase during the contract, nor when I renewed after 12 months. I'm now contract free and still paying the same monthly charge as at the start of the contract. The speed and reliability have been faultless during this time.

Henry Pitura

Only arrange delivery for when you're at home

I have sympathy with Michael Sharp concerning items being left in puddles by couriers (Issue 633). The simple fact is that this wouldn't have happened if he'd been at home when the courier knocked on his door. I've been ordering things

STAR LETTER

Treat us like grown-ups over Windows 11

There's been some debate recently about whether *Computeractive* has written too much about Windows 11. For me, the question is more about the *nature* of the content, not how many pages you devote to it. Now that the initial hype has died down, we need unbiased, jargon-free advice on the operating system, and in particular the updates that add new features. You should aim your guidance both at Windows 10 users who are unsure about upgrading, and those who *have* upgraded and want to get more from the new system.

In my opinion, you probably got a little overexcited about Windows 11 in your early coverage, but have since calmed down and now adopt a more measured tone, with your characteristic slice of cynicism. For example, you've explained how to bypass Microsoft's hardware restrictions, but also detailed the risks of doing so. This approach treats us like adults, giving us what we need to make an informed decision. I'm looking forward to your verdict on the first Feature update for Windows 11

when it arrives.

Readers who use Windows 10 have to understand that Microsoft has moved on from that system, so there's not a lot more to be said about it. That doesn't mean you should give up on it, because support will continue until 2025, but at some point those people will have to make the leap to Windows 11, so it pays to stay informed.

Gary Charles

CA SAYS The launch of a new version of Windows always presents us with a challenge. As Gary says, we have to write about what's new without alienating readers who'd rather stick with the existing version. Microsoft's focus is now entirely on Windows 11, so we'll tell you about the new features that appear in forthcoming updates. But we'll also continue to offer tips, tricks and advice for Windows 10, which remains an excellent system. Please let us know if you think we're not getting the balance right.

The **Star Letter** writer wins a **Computeractive** mug!



online for years and nothing has ever gone missing or been left outside because I only order items when I know I will be in. It's common sense. I have never understood the logic of people who are at work all day but order items that will be delivered during the day when they are not going to be in.

Lawrence Ashman

Use Alexa and lamp to simulate daylight

I liked David Ludlow's 'How I Use' on Alexa routines (Issue 631, page 20), though I want to point out that the sunset and sunrise options he says he'd like to see are already available, together with time 'offsets'. These are very useful. I use them to turn a grow lamp on and off to simulate daylight hours.

What I'd like to see is better integration between Alexa and Ring cameras – which shouldn't be too difficult because they're both owned by Amazon. Without two routines (one to start and one to stop) you can't get the camera to display when it detects motion. The Ring doorbell automatically shows the camera feed when someone presses the button but not when it detects motion.

Bob Sheppard





We stand up for your legal rights

Where's my Fitbit refund for recalled watch?

Q I've been waiting two months for a promised £224 refund on the recalled Fitbit Ionic smartwatch (pictured) I bought two years ago for £249. This means I can't take advantage of a 40-per-cent discount offered to me on the new Fitbit Sense watch. This offer closes soon, so can you help?

Mike Rogers

A We'll try because Mike's certainly entitled to the refund. Fitbit recalled the Ionic model in March because it "can overheat, posing a burn hazard" (see www.snipca.com/42117). It added: "The health and safety of Fitbit users is our highest priority. We are taking this action out of an abundance of caution for our users. We will offer a refund to Fitbit Ionic customers". If the watch had injured Mike then he'd be able to sue Fitbit under the Consumer Protection Act 1987.

Legally, Fitbit is entitled to offer a partial refund to reflect the time Mike has used the smartwatch, though we think it has a nerve to do so considering that the watch could have burnt him at any time.



LEAD CASE



However, the refund has no legal bearing on whether Mike takes up the discounted offer for the Fitbit Sense. We understand that he's waiting for the money so he can afford the Sense (£200 from www.snipca.com/42118), but technically this is a separate issue.

That said, we'll certainly mention it to Fitbit. After all, the company should count itself fortunate that Mike still wants to buy one of its watches given the risk posed by the Ionic, and the delay in refunding him. The sooner it refunds him, the quicker he can put the money back in its coffers.

CASE ONGOING

Can Sonic refuse refund of unpacked fridge?

Q I placed an order online with Sonic Direct (www.sonicdirect.co.uk) for a Samsung American-style fridge freezer. However, my disabled wife doesn't have the strength to open the doors. Sonic refused to take it back saying it had been used. What are my rights?

Phil Harrison

A Phil's rights rely on how the Consumer Contract Regulations are interpreted. These state that goods bought online can be rejected for any reason within 14 days as long as you haven't "used" them. The law says you're allowed to "examine" your goods, which we think covers Phil's wife attempting to open the fridge. Sonic pointed out that the fridge had been unpacked, but Phil said that the delivery men had to do that to get it inside the house.

Perhaps Sonic would have a case if he'd filled the fridge with food, but even then it couldn't have refused to take it back – though it would have been allowed to reduce his refund because it wouldn't have been able to re-sell the fridge as new. Happily, after receiving a legal letter from Phil's wife, it has picked up the fridge and refunded him.

CASE CLOSED

CASE UPDATE

Virgin refunds reader after months of mix-ups...



Virgin Media has been busy dealing with our readers's problems recently. In the Credit Where It's Due box opposite,

Gervais Sawyer reveals how it helped to boost his broadband speed, while here we're happy to say that it has paid Anne Gerald the £13 it owed her.

As we explained in Issue 633, Anne should be credited £13 to her account each month as part of a discount offer after signing up to the company's Volt package

(www.snipca.com/41996), which upgrades you to the next-level broadband speed, and doubles your O2 data. But this discount wasn't applied in January, and when she contacted Virgin it couldn't even understand what the problem was, let alone suggest how to fix it.

It's also concerning that Virgin ignored four complaint emails she sent. When she checked her account online, it wrongly showed that



no messages had been sent. Anne was so frustrated that she considered a complaint to both Ofcom and the Communication and Internet Adjudication Scheme (CISAS, www.cedr.com/consumer/cisas).

In the end, Virgin's refund has satisfied her. The company didn't tell us why it hadn't resolved the problem earlier, but it paid up soon after we contacted it, so we assume it quickly realised it was in the wrong.

Contact us so we can investigate your case

✉ **Email:** consumeractive@computeractive.co.uk
Please include your name, phone number and address.

Can I prove that I didn't rip off Amazon?

Q I bought a £799 e-scooter for my grandchild as a Christmas present, but then decided it wasn't safe for him. It was never unpacked, and I tried to return it to Amazon in January. However, Hermes didn't pick it up until 10 March. But before then Amazon got in touch to claim that I *had* returned it and refunded me, before later cancelling the refund claiming that I actually returned a rusty second-hand scooter, which it has now destroyed on safety grounds. What should I do?

Terence Pendry



A Terence should start chargeback procedures with his credit-card company. He can provide

evidence that the e-scooter was returned, so it shouldn't object to a refund.

Amazon has treated him appallingly. It was bad enough that it didn't arrange for the e-scooter to be picked up until March, but then falsely claiming he sent back the wrong scooter was inexcusable.

In effect, Amazon was accusing him of fraud, causing severe distress. It's such a strong claim that Amazon needs to back it up with dated photographic proof, which we suspect it won't be able to do. We've contacted the company for more details.

CASE ONGOING

Will Dropbox charge me for lost account?

Q Recently my computer had to be repaired by PCSpecialist and a new motherboard was installed. However, since then I seem to have lost my Dropbox Plus plan for online storage (www.snipca.com/42119). Can they still charge me?

Don Williams



A Yes, we think Dropbox will try to charge Don, but first we should absolve PCSpecialist of any blame. Access to Dropbox depends on your email address and password, and wouldn't have been affected by a replaced motherboard.

Instead, the problem is that Don no longer has access to the email address he used to create his account. This means he can't respond to any emails Dropbox sends him to authenticate it.

Don's solution was to

set up a new Dropbox Plus account linked to his new address, reasoning that because his annual subscription was due to be renewed in June he would be losing only a month's subscription.


What concerns us is that Dropbox might continue to charge Don for his old account because it's a rolling subscription and he hasn't been able to cancel it.

Sensibly, he has told his bank to prevent the subscription from being renewed on his credit card, as he is legally allowed to do. In the meantime we'll ask Dropbox to cancel the old account.

CASE ONGOING

CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

...and increases reader's broadband to 130Mbps

 My new PC from CCL (www.cclonline.com) has a lightning-fast SSD, but my internet with Virgin Media was painfully slow at just 10Mbps, even though I was paying for 130Mbps.

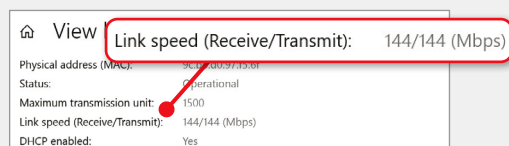
I spoke to Virgin's support team, who were very helpful. Inevitably I had to wait while they performed lots of tests, but they eventually diagnosed that the Ethernet adapter had been set to a download speed of just 10Mbps. We reset that to 1000Mbps and now we're

motoring. I know that Virgin are expensive, but this kind of service makes it worthwhile.

Here's where he told me to look: open Settings (press Windows key+I), click 'Network & Internet', then click 'View hardware and connection properties' and check the 'Link speed' (see screenshot). Would you have found that on your own?

Gervais Sawyer

 Has a company impressed you with its customer service? Please let us know: editor@computeractive.co.uk



Contact
Virgin Media

• Online www.virginmedia.com/contact-us
• Phone 0345 454 1111

Grow Your Family Tree



If your female ancestors served on the home front during the wars, follow **Chris Paton's** advice to...

Search service records of Wrens

One branch of the Royal Navy that's often overlooked is the Women's Royal Navy Service, affectionately nicknamed Wrens.

Formed in 1917, its initial purpose was to release men for service at sea by taking over many of the support duties on the mainland. Recruits took on a variety of roles, including telegraphists, weapons analysts and radar plotters. By the time the Wrens first disbanded in 1919, its numbers had exceeded 5,000.

The service proved so useful that in 1939 it was reactivated for World War 2, and continued until 1993, at which point women were fully integrated into the Royal Navy.

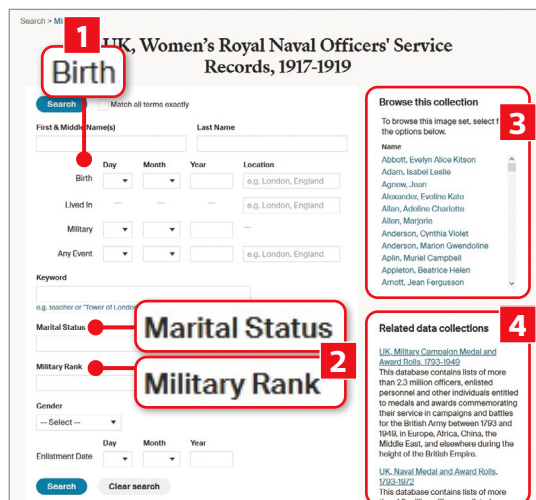
Dive into Ancestry's new Wrens collection

Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk) recently digitised the service records of 558 Wrens and presented them as the 'UK, Women's Royal Naval Officers' Service Records, 1917-1919' collection, which you can access with a subscription. From the home page, click the top menu and select the Card Catalogue option, which opens a new search page. At the top left, type the name of the collection into either the Tile or Keywords box, then click Search and open the link that appears.

Now type a person's name (you may need to try both married and maiden name), and date of birth (1 in screenshot right). You can also add marital status and military rank 2, although these may overcomplicate your search.

Records are indexed in alphabetical order, so you can browse them manually if you prefer 3. At the bottom right you can search for related military collections 4, including the 'UK, Women's Royal Air Force Service Records, 1918-1920' and 'UK, Women's Army Auxiliary Corps Service Records, 1917-1920'.

Record sets can be incredibly long - we received 75 pages of records when searching for 'Evelyn Alice Kitson Abbott', for example. Using the arrows on the left and right, we were able to move between pages to see letters, telegrams, handwritten notes and official reports regarding her service. A reference on page 18 (pictured below right) noted that Abbott wished to leave the Wrens in 1918 to seek "more permanent service" with the Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF), demonstrating the value in being able to check the records of the other services.

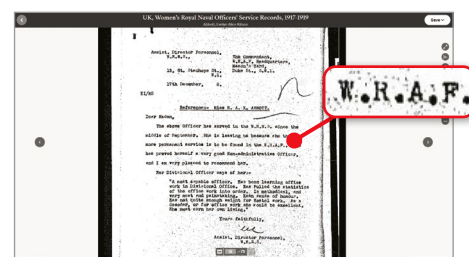


Search by name or date of birth, or look through the alphabetical records

Browse records at the National Archives

If Ancestry doesn't have what you're looking for, try the bigger collection at the National Archives (TNA, www.snipca.com/42115), where you can buy copies of records for £3.50 each. The site adds some useful background details to the records, such as explaining that the abbreviation SNLR in the discharge notes means 'Services no longer required'.

It also notes that many officers who resigned for personal reasons may not be included - for these you need to look through another collection in the archives, numbered ADM 321 (www.snipca.com/42181).



This document confirms that Evelyn Alice Kitson Abbott wanted to join the WRAF

Your Genealogy Problems Solved

My grandfather used to write for the weekend edition of Glasgow's *Evening Times* in the 1930s, but I can't find this title in the British Newspaper Archive. Where else should I look?

Angela McIntosh

The Newspaper Archive (www.snipca.com/42179) holds the largest collection of UK newspapers, but you could also try the

Mitchell Library in Glasgow (www.snipca.com/42180). The *Evening Times* appears in Google's News Archive (<https://news.google.com/newspapers>) from the 1950s on. Note that articles printed at weekends may only appear in a first edition, to be replaced in later editions by sports results.

Have a genealogy question for Chris? Email letters@computeractive.co.uk with 'Grow Your Family Tree' in the subject line.



The award-winning Tecra A40-J

Embrace mobile working with confidence



Life on the go is the new normal for many professionals. Whether you have a fleet of 10 or 10,000 devices, Tecra is the smart choice.

Created for the new mobile worker

Designed to tick every box for mobile workers and IT managers alike, this 14" notebook packs enterprise-ready security and management technology into an exceptionally portable, reliable and stylish chassis. Modern professionals will be proud to carry the Tecra A40 around. Slim bezels result in a compact footprint, but the device nevertheless incorporates a large backlit keyboard with excellent typing feel and a roomy touchpad.



Tecra A40-J spec:

Windows 10 Pro 64-bit

A choice of Intel® Core™ i5/i7 processors

35.6cm (14.0"), non-reflective full HD high brightness eDP™ IPS display with LED sidelighting

Up to 16GB RAM and up to 512GB HDD

Up to 9h38min battery life

For more information, visit:
uk.dynabook.com/laptops/tecra/tecra-a40

Best Free Software

Robert Irvine recommends new programs that won't cost you a thing

PROGRAM UNINSTALLER

BCUninstaller 5.3

www.snipca.com/42187

What you need: Windows 7, 8.1, 10 or 11

BCUninstaller - or Bulk Crap Uninstaller, to give its rather crude full name - should be familiar to many *Computeractive* readers. In Issue 627's 'Stop using rubbish software' Cover Feature (page 52), we recommended it as the best alternative to the overrated Revo Uninstaller, and it's constantly getting better at removing unwanted tools from your computer. Because it's an **open-source** program, the developer can rely on help from users to report bugs and offer suggestions for refinements to features. As such, version 5.3 includes a raft of welcome tweaks.

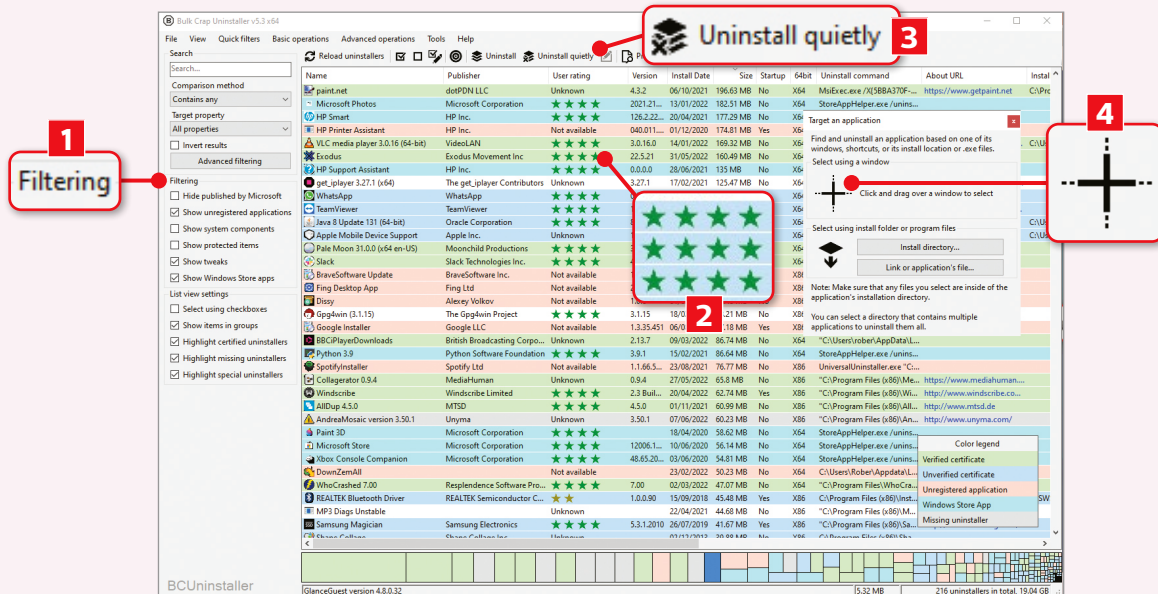
One minor but significant change is the renaming of the 'Nuke an application' function, which lets you drag a crosshairs icon from BCUninstaller's toolbar over a program's window to begin the uninstallation process. This is now called 'Target an application', which is perhaps more tasteful in light of current fears about Russia, but it works in the same way. The developer has also removed an unnecessary UpdateHelperLink component from

BCUninstaller's download file, reducing its size from 110MB to 75MB.

Other improvements include deeper scanning of sub-folders on your hard drive to detect unregistered applications that most uninstallers miss, and greater clarity in the way BCUninstaller displays details in its list of installed software. We particularly like the way you can now resize the window for the Uninstall Wizard that guides you through the removal process, so that it doesn't obstruct other windows.

BCUninstaller beats rival free tools by letting you uninstall multiple programs at once and thoroughly wiping leftover registry entries and other junk files. Its handy 'Uninstall quietly' option removes programs (and optionally creates **system restore points**) without you needing to click or confirm anything.

You can install the software on your hard drive or opt for a portable installation if you'd rather run BCUninstaller from a USB stick so that it leaves no trace on your PC.

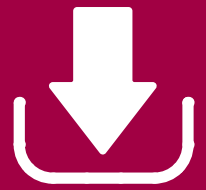


1 Use the Filtering options on the left-hand side of the window to specify which programs BCUninstaller should list. These include unregistered applications (highlighted in pink), which version 5.3 does a better job of finding.

2 As well as telling you the name, publisher, version number and install date of each program on your PC, BCUninstaller now includes a user rating that lets you see at a glance whether or not an entry is worth keeping.

3 Click the 'Uninstall quietly' option on the toolbar to remove a program without having to click the usual confirmation buttons. You can also access this option by right-clicking an item or by pressing Shift+Delete on your keyboard.

4 The 'Target an application' option (formerly 'Nuke an application') lets you quickly uninstall a program by clicking the target button on BCUninstaller's toolbar, then dragging the crosshairs icon over the unwanted application's open window.



PRIVACY TOOL

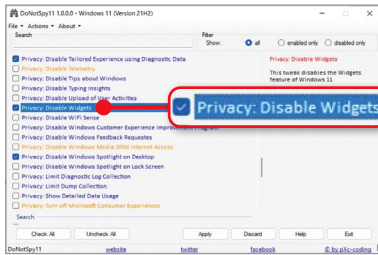
DoNotSpy11

www.snipca.com/42182

What you need: Windows 10 or 11

In our cover feature for Issue 627 (page 53) we advised ditching the previous version of this program - DoNotSpy10 - in favour of O&O ShutUp10++ (www.snipca.com/41006).

Thankfully, this update addresses some of our complaints. DoNotSpy11 provides 158 privacy settings to stop Windows spying on you, and explains clearly what each one does so you can decide whether or not to enable it. These include tweaks to Office that block surveys, feedback buttons and features that share your data with Microsoft. As you might expect from the name, DoNotSpy11 includes specific settings for Windows 11, so you can disable Widgets (see screenshot) and Spotlight on Desktop. Annoyingly, you still need to pay \$5 (£4) for the Pro version if you want to save your preferences as a profile. DoNotSpy11 triggers a Microsoft Defender SmartScreen warning, but it's safe to use so just click 'More info' then 'Run anyway'.



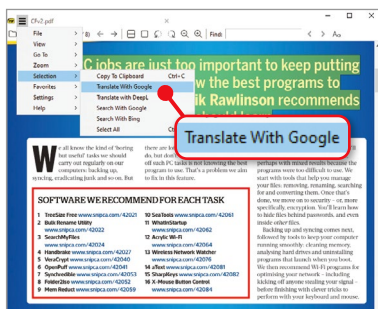
PDF READER

Sumatra PDF 3.4.5

www.snipca.com/42183

What you need: Windows 7, 8.1, 10 or 11

Lightweight, speedy and simple to use, Sumatra PDF is one of our favourite free PDF readers, and this latest version adds several features that make it even better. The most notable is the ability to translate foreign text in PDF files using an online service. Select the text in the document, then click the menu button in the top-left corner followed by Selection. Choose either 'Translate With Google' (see screenshot) or 'Translate with DeepL' to open the relevant website, which will then detect the language and translate it into English.



The other big addition is Command Palette, which gives you easy access to all the program's options. To open it, click View then Command Palette in the main menu, or press Ctrl+K. Sumatra 3.4.5 also introduces support for custom keyboard shortcuts - see the help page at www.snipca.com/42184 for more information.

WHAT SHOULD I DOWNLOAD?

We tell you what software & apps to use

How can I listen to podcasts on my phone?

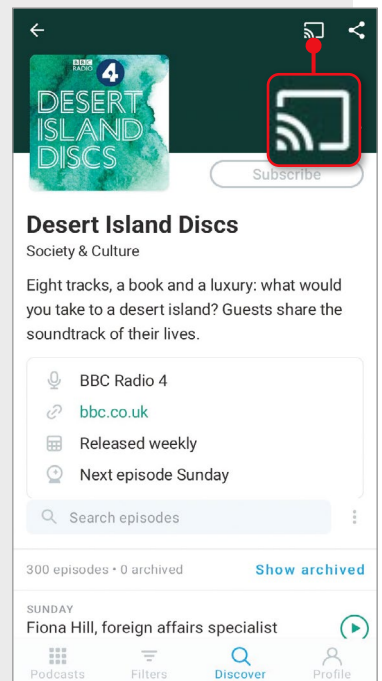
Q I'm a keen podcast listener, and until recently I used the default Apple Podcasts app on my iPhone to listen to them. Recent updates have made its interface difficult to use, however, which has put me off. Can you recommend a decent podcast app so I can finally ditch Apple's?

Kev Williams

A There are lots of good podcast apps to choose from, but our favourite is Pocket Casts (www.pocketcasts.com). Available for Android and iOS, it's packed with useful features for podcast fans, including the ability to create filters, so you can quickly find relevant episodes to listen to. It automatically generates an Up Next queue of your favourite shows, which you can sync across devices, and includes options for trimming silence from podcasts and adjusting their playback speed. The app has built-in support for streaming content to smart speakers (see screenshot), and much more. It's also a great way to discover new podcasts that match your interests and tastes.

After dropping its subscription charge a few years ago, Pocket Casts is free to use, although a paid-for Plus version offers extra features such as Windows, macOS and web apps, and 10GB of cloud storage. This costs \$1.19 (95p) a month or \$11.99 (£9.60) a year after a 14-day free trial.

Alternatively, try Overcast (www.snipca.com/42193), which is available only for iOS and offers a smart yet simple way to find, listen to and manage your podcasts. It was redesigned earlier this year (see Issue 629, page 44) and is completely free to use.



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

HOW I USE...

ImageMagick



Why bother to open loads of images when you need to convert them all? David Ludlow explains how he uses a much smarter method

These days, I take more photos on my phone than with my dedicated camera. I have an iPhone, and I'm very happy with the quality of its photos, but it doesn't always work seamlessly with my Windows 11 PC.

One of the best things about the iPhone is its sharing menu (although Android has something similar). I can select a number of photos and send them to a specific folder in Google Drive, which then synchronises the images to my PC. You can use other cloud services such as Dropbox, too.

It's all very clever and convenient except for one flaw: the iPhone uses the `.heic` image format by default. Unfortunately, iPhones are the only devices that support this format. My Windows PC certainly doesn't know what to do with it. One solution is to open each file in a photo-editing program and save it as a JPEG, but I prefer to use ImageMagick, a free image-editing tool that you control from Command Prompt

To download it, visit www.snipca.com/42122, then click Windows

```
imageconvert.bat - Notepad
File Edit View
magick mogrify -format %1 *.%2
del *.*%2
```

David created a batch file to convert HEIC files to JPEG

WHAT I'D LIKE TO SEE IN IMAGEMAGICK

I'd like ImageMagick to be aware of the type of photo it's cropping and apply rules based on whether it's in

```
Administrator: Command Prompt
G:\My Drive\David's Documents\2022\Test images>dir
Volume in drive G is Google Drive
Volume Serial Number is 1983-1116

Directory of G:\My Drive\David's Documents\2022\Test images

18/05/2022 10:33 <DIR> .
18/05/2022 10:29 <DIR> ..
18/05/2022 10:09 2,924,431 IMG_1734.HEIC
18/05/2022 10:09 2,102,830 IMG_1749.HEIC
18/05/2022 10:09 1,800,037 IMG_1746.HEIC
18/05/2022 10:09 4,943,289 IMG_1733.HEIC
18/05/2022 10:09 2,502,194 IMG_1744.HEIC
                    5 File(s) 14,272,781 bytes
                    2 Dir(s) 336,557,826,048 bytes free

G:\My Drive\David's Documents\2022\Test images>imageconvert jpg heic 1
G:\My Drive\David's Documents\2022\Test images>magick mogrify -format jpg *.heic 2
G:\My Drive\David's Documents\2022\Test images>del *.*heic 3
G:\My Drive\David's Documents\2022\Test images>
```

Command Prompt shows these commands when David runs the Batch file

Binary Release, top-right. Next, click the blue download link under the Version heading. Once the program has installed, right-click the folder containing your images and select 'Open in Terminal' to open Command Prompt.

I type the following command to convert the images to HEIC: `magick mogrify -format jpg *.heic`. This leaves me with the original files and the new JPEGs. To remove the originals I type `del *.*heic`. But rather than having to do this every time, I automate the process by creating a **batch file** (this has the `.bat` file extension). The best way to do this is to open Command Prompt as an administrator (right-click Command Prompt in the Start menu and select 'Run as administrator'). Then I type `notepad c:\windows\system32\imageconvert.bat`. When prompted, I

click the option to create the file.

By creating the batch file in this folder, I can run it anywhere by typing the name of the file in Command Prompt, and I don't have to copy it to the folder containing my images.

I enter two commands in the `.bat` file, each on a separate line: `magick mogrify -format %1 *.*%2` and `del *.*%2` (see screenshot below left). I then save the file.

Next, I use Command Prompt to navigate to the images I want to convert, but this time I use the command `imageconvert`. This runs the commands I saved as a batch file, and also lets me select the output format and the type of files I want it to convert, deleting the originals.

Look at the screenshot above for an example. Typing `imageconvert jpg heic` (1) triggers the batch file, producing first the command `magick mogrify -format jpg *.heic` 2, which converts the images, and then `del *.*heic` 3, which deletes old `.heic` images. It's ingenious tricks like this that put the magick into ImageMagick.

landscape or portrait. For example, I'd like portrait photos cropped from the top and landscape shots cropped from the middle.

Named & Shamed



Barry Collins puts the boot into tech villains, jargon-spouting companies and software trying to trick you

SOFTWARE WARNING!

4K Player for YouTube

If you've got a stunning 4K monitor or laptop screen, of course you want to watch YouTube videos with a picture so sharp you could cut your finger on it.

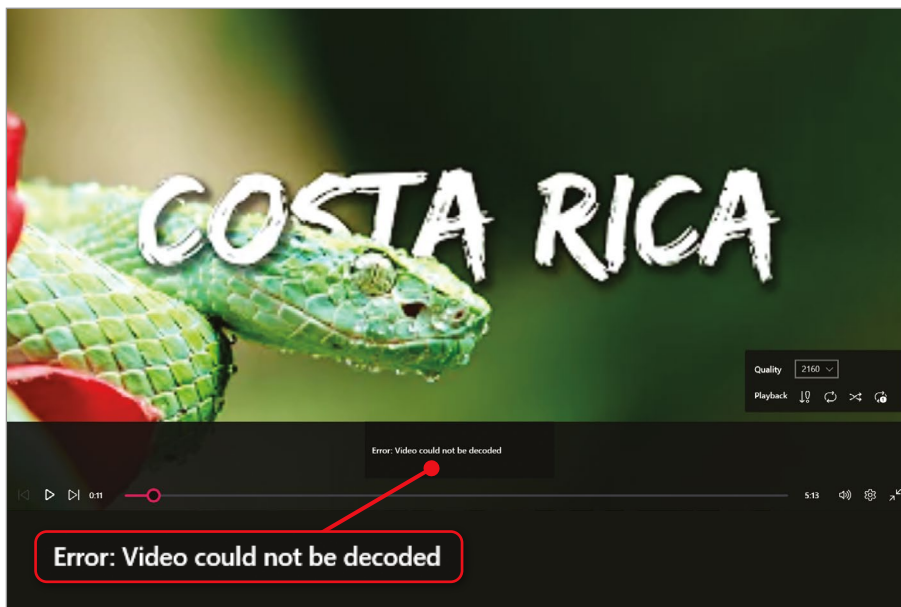


Alas, YouTube rarely defaults to 4K even when you've got a high-res screen, which is probably why apps such as '4K Player for YouTube' nudge their way into the Microsoft Store. But if you're looking to up your YouTube game, give this dismal app a swerve.

The clear implication of the app's title is that it will play YouTube videos in glorious 4K, but it does nothing of the sort. When I clicked play on several videos in this £3.29 app, it started playing at 720p – well below the resolution of my laptop screen.

Worse still, when I used the app's settings to manually boost the quality to 4K, it crashed or threw up error messages (see screenshot). Yes, '4K Player for YouTube' absolutely fails to do what it says on the tin.

Even if it did work perfectly, it's still a complete waste of code. It offers no



'4K Player for YouTube' is nothing of the sort, as this error message shows

advantage over simply going to the YouTube website and selecting 4K for yourself – as we explain in our Cover Feature on page 50. Of course, it's only worth doing if you've got a screen to match.

Much like the Audacity clones I highlighted in the last issue, type

YouTube into Microsoft Store's search and you're engulfed by a phalanx of YouTube player apps, few of which seem to do anything more than piggyback on a well-known brand.

It's time Microsoft dealt with these pathetic copycats. If they won't, maybe YouTube's lawyers will instead.

WHAT ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT?



WHAT THEY SAY

Microsoft (www.snipca.com/42111)

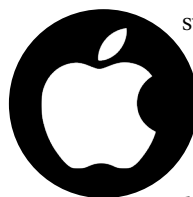
"We are enabling metaverse experiences at all layers of our stack, so customers can more effectively model, automate, simulate and predict changes within their industrial environments, feel a greater sense of presence in the new world of hybrid work and create custom immersive worlds to enable new opportunities for connection and experimentation."

WHAT THEY MEAN

Confused by the metaverse? Us too. But we hide it behind smart-aleck jargon.

BARRY'S VILLAIN OF THE FORTNIGHT

Apple



"Ask them. Ask them every time. Make them tell you to stop asking them if they get tired of your asking them." That was Steve Jobs' attitude to ensure Apple's customers were told about privacy and payment changes. But the company seems less concerned these days.

Previously, if an app developer wanted to put up the price of a subscription, it had to ask your permission to continue that

subscription. Now, developers can increase prices by up to 50 per cent without seeking your permission.

These new rules are for the US, and it's not clear whether they'll apply in the UK. The government recently proposed legislation to clamp down on rogue subscriptions, but it probably won't cover Apple's new measure.

We'll warn you if this unfair policy crosses the Atlantic.



PC | £1,090 from Box www.snipca.com/42112

Box Cube Mythic

Magic square

You may know Box (www.box.co.uk) as an electronics retailer rather than a PC manufacturer, but the Sutton Coldfield company has actually been building PCs for 20 years. This is the first time we've reviewed one, however, so let's see how it fares.

“Easy to configure, performs well in Windows and can play the odd game”

Box builds the Cube Mythic around the six-core Ryzen 5 5500 processor and an RTX 3060 graphics card. While this particular configuration isn't one of the six Mythic models listed on Box's website, the above link will take you straight to the specification we put together. All Box's PCs are easy to configure, so it's simple to recreate.

We took the basic £979.99 model with a Ryzen 5 5500 processor, upgraded the graphics card from an RTX 3050 (which added £100 to the price) and swapped the 1TB hard drive for a 2TB model (a bargain for an additional £10). It already came with a 500GB M.2 SSD and 16GB of RAM.

The ease with which Box's website lets you create your ideal PC is impressive. There aren't hundreds of options, but you

can easily shave off a few pounds or bump up a specification, safe in the knowledge that the system will work. It's simple to use and the changes you make are clearly displayed, as well as any difference in cost.

We put the PC through our standard performance tests. The PC that comes closest to it is the similarly priced Cyberpower Infinity X123 RTX (£1,000 from www.snipca.com/41829, reviewed in Issue 632). For the extra £90 you pay, you get a significant performance boost with the Cube Mythic, which scored 7,348 compared with the Infinity's 5,870 in our tests. There's no real difference between the two in general Windows tasks (6,760 versus 6,769, respectively).

It's the superior graphics card that really pulls the Mythic ahead, though. The RTX 3060 outpaces the Infinity's RTX 3050 by 30 per cent on average in our gaming tests, and performs comfortably with 2K resolutions. It should even work well in 4K if you don't turn the graphical settings up to the max. If you play Microsoft Flight Simulator, for example, this PC is well up to the task.

However, spending hundreds of extra pounds for better graphics performance isn't for everyone. If you never play games but would like to boost your Windows performance, we still recommend our current favourite, the Wired2Fire Ultima WS Home Office Workstation (£750 from www.snipca.com/41500, see Issue 630), which achieved a blistering multi-core score of a 9,545. It's useless for games, though.

We only really have two gripes about the Cube Mythic. First, it lacks a USB-C port. Second, it doesn't use any extra cooling, and when the processor is running at full pelt, the basic case-mounted fans crank up and can become noisy.



However, that's arguably a small price to pay for such a solid all-round PC.

SPECIFICATIONS

Six-core AMD Ryzen 5 5500 processor • 16GB memory • Nvidia GeForce RTX 3060 graphics card • 500GB M.2 SSD • 2TB hard drive • Wi-Fi 6 • Bluetooth 5.1 • 1x Gigabit Ethernet port • 1x HDMI port • 1x DVI-D port • 4x USB 3.0 ports • 4x USB 2.0 ports • Windows 11 Home • 425x200x400mm (HxWxD) • Three-year warranty www.snipca.com/42112

VERDICT A great all-round PC, ideal for anyone looking to boost their Windows performance and play the odd game



ALTERNATIVE Wired2Fire Ultima WS Home Office Workstation £750
Ditch the graphics card and you could get a more powerful Ryzen 7 5700G processor for less money



LAPTOP | £839 from Ebuyer www.snipca.com/42126

Acer TravelMate Vero

Green machine

Back in Issue 624 (page 22) we reviewed the Acer Aspire Vero laptop, which is designed so that it's easy to repair and built from environmentally friendly materials. The TravelMate Vero looks more like a regular business laptop, with its black chassis, but it retains many of the green credentials brought to the fore by its more colourful stablemate.

Its key selling point is that much of it is constructed from post-consumer recycled (PCR) materials, with 30 per cent of the chassis and 50 per cent of the keycaps produced from PCR plastic. That's pretty much identical to the Aspire Vero.

“It's good for the planet and performs well, but screen and battery underwhelm”

The case of the TravelMate Vero is easy to open – simply remove nine crosshead screws – making it a doddle to fix any hardware glitches or to upgrade components at a later date. Should anything go wrong with the Wi-Fi, speakers, SSD or battery, any IT technician worth their salt could source a replacement and repair it.

Be aware that 8GB of its internal memory is soldered on to the motherboard, so should that ever fail you'd need to replace the whole board.



There is another 8GB memory module, however, which can be replaced, making 16GB of RAM in total.

The TravelMate Vero is built around the 11th-generation Intel Core i7-1195G7. It scored an impressive 5,148 in our PCMark 10 benchmark, which tests general Windows performance. By comparison, the Aspire Vero notched up 4,955 in the same test, while the Acer TravelMate Spin P4 (reviewed in Issue 633) managed 4,497.

That's a very reasonable result for a laptop at this price, so you may be wondering if there's a 'but' coming. Yes, and it concerns the IPS screen. It only covers 58 per cent of the sRGB colour standard, though its matt-coated surface is effective at eliminating reflections and is bright enough for indoor use, maxing out at 282cd/m². The subdued colours are disappointing, though, and prevent the TravelMate Vero from getting a top rating.

The battery only lasted seven hours 30 minutes in our light-usage tests, rising to nine hours 30 minutes in our best-case scenario idle test. Ideally, we'd be looking for more.

On the plus side, it has plenty of USB connections, with three USB 3.0 and one USB-C port. You'll also benefit from a Gigabit Ethernet port and an HDMI output.

SPECIFICATIONS

Four-core Intel Core i7-1195G7 processor • 16GB RAM • Intel Iris Xe graphics • 15.6in 1920x1080-pixel IPS screen • 512GB SSD • Wi-Fi 6 • Bluetooth 5.1 • 1x USB-C port • 3x USB 3.0 ports • 1x HDMI port • Windows 11 Pro • 17.9x363x239mm (HxWxD) • 1.8kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/42126

HOW WE TEST

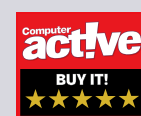
Computeractive is owned by Future PLC, which employs a team of specialist technical reviewers. You'll often read references to our benchmark testing, which is a method of assessing products using the same criteria. For example, we test the speed of every PC and the battery life of every phone and tablet in exactly the same way. This makes our reviews authoritative, rigorous and accurate.

Future PLC also owns the magazines *Maximum PC*, *PC Pro* and *T3*, and the websites Laptop Mag (www.laptopmag.com), TechRadar (www.techradar.com) and Windows Central (www.windowscentral.com). This means we can test thousands of products before choosing the most relevant for *Computeractive*.

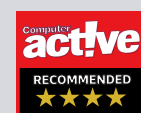
FAIR AND IMPARTIAL

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 Recommended 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 A decent laptop with good Windows performance and a design that helps both the environment and repair technicians, though the screen is disappointing



ALTERNATIVE

Acer TravelMate Spin P4 £839 This smaller laptop has a screen that flips right over, converting it into a tablet



TABLET | £699 (256GB) from Currys www.snipca.com/42240

Samsung Galaxy Tab S8

Out of this world

Samsung's Galaxy Tab S8 is an Android tablet with an 11in screen and is clearly intended to compete with Apple's mid-range iPads. You can buy the 128GB version for £649, but for just £50 more the 256GB edition is much better value. It's a natural successor to the S7 – and replaces the S7+ as our favourite Android tablet.

While the Tab S8 is essentially a mid-range tablet, nothing about it feels compromised. Weighing 503g and just 6mm thick, it feels sturdy and comfortable to use. On the back, a modest bulge accommodates the rear camera, and around the edges you'll find a power button that doubles as a fingerprint reader and a handy **microSD card** slot. Alas, there's no headphone jack – you're limited to **USB-C** or Bluetooth if you want to use headphones.

“A strong performer with a stunning screen and durable battery”

The screen is a regular **LED** panel, but it's still bright and vivid, with a sharp resolution of 2560x1600 pixels and an impeccably smooth 120Hz **refresh rate**. A peak brightness of 463cd/m² is effectively on par with the iPad's 472cd/m², meaning the tablet is always usable, even outdoors in direct sunlight. Colours are excellent, too. We measured 101 per cent colour coverage of the **sRGB** standard in Natural mode, and a stunning 158 per cent in Vivid mode.

Qualcomm's Snapdragon 8 Gen 1 processor provides plenty of power for most tasks, and the standard 8GB of **RAM** keeps everything quick. During our tests we didn't experience any slowdowns, even when we opened over 20 Chrome browser tabs, streamed music and watched YouTube videos at the same time. Our performance **benchmark** test resulted in a multi-**core** score of 3,228, which is not far off the standard iPad



(3,387), though it's nowhere near the 7,476 of an M1-equipped iPad Pro.

In everyday use, the Tab S8 feels pleasingly unfussy. Samsung's version of Android 12 includes a few tweaks and custom apps, such as Samsung Notes, but if you don't like something, you can disable or ignore it. A few bundled tools connect the tablet to Samsung phones, watches and more, while Samsung's DeX Mode lets you hook up the S8 to a big screen and use an interface that's more like a desktop.

You can also connect any Bluetooth or USB keyboard, or alternatively buy the official Slim Book Cover Keyboard for £119 (www.snipca.com/42135) – although when we tried this out we found it too small and cramped to use comfortably for long periods.

Samsung's active S Pen stylus is included, and we love how substantial and manageable it feels. Drawing and taking notes is smooth and precise, with no noticeable lag. We just wish there was a slot for the S Pen to slide into when not in use. Instead, it snaps on to a magnetic charging strip at the back of the tablet, which is far from ideal and raises the risk

SPECIFICATIONS

Eight-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 8 Gen 1 processor • 8GB RAM • 11in 120Hz 2560x1600-pixel resolution IPS touchscreen • 128GB or 256GB storage • 13-megapixel rear camera • 8-megapixel front camera • Wi-Fi 6E • Bluetooth 5.2 • USB-C connector • Android 12 with One UI 4.1 • 254x165x6.3mm (HxWxD) • 503g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/42240

that it will get knocked off and lost.

The Galaxy Tab S8's cameras are another big plus point. Up front there's a 12-megapixel **ultrawide** selfie cam, while on the back you'll find a 13-megapixel auto-focus lens and a 6-megapixel ultrawide lens. These do a great job of capturing fine detail and natural colour.

Despite all these high-quality components, the Galaxy Tab S8 doesn't burn through the battery. We picked it up in the morning with an 80 per cent charge, used it for a day's work, and put it down with at least 20 per cent left.

In our formal tests a full charge provided 12 hours 52 minutes of continual web browsing over Wi-Fi – quite a bit longer than the iPad (11 hours 59 minutes). It recharges quickly too, with the included 45W charger taking it from zero to 23 per cent in 15 minutes, and to 45 per cent in 30 minutes.

VERDICT A brilliant Android tablet that's as good as Apple's similarly priced iPads, and includes a stylus

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE Apple iPad Air £569

Apple's mid-range tablet is a similar proposition to Samsung's but arguably has a better range of apps



PHONE | £369 from Amazon www.snipca.com/42185

OnePlus Nord 2T

Small change

We reviewed the OnePlus Nord 2 in Issue 613, but now OnePlus has launched a successor. It's not different enough to merit a whole new model number, but has a few tweaks over the Nord 2 that make it worth a look, particularly since the launch price of £369 is also a little lower than the Nord 2's £399.

On the outside it's almost exactly the same size as the Nord 2, give or take the odd fraction of a millimetre, with dimensions of 8.2x73x159mm. It also weighs a gram more at 190g. This makes the Nord 2T feel relatively compact in the pocket. Together with the familiar curved rear, it sits just as well in the hand.

“Lower price and decent performance for a modest upgrade”

The screen is the same model that appeared on the Nord 2 – a 6.43in AMOLED display – though it has new light sensors that are better at adjusting the brightness of the screen to the ambient lighting conditions. It's not the sort of thing you'll notice unless you have both phones side by side, but it's a welcome tweak nonetheless.

It's a nicely proportioned, sharp screen, with a resolution of 2400x1080 pixels and a smooth 90Hz refresh rate. It has a reliable in-display fingerprint sensor you can use to unlock the phone, and is a pleasant display to use and view media content on. The camera, too, is the same as on the Nord 2, taking crisp pictures in most lighting conditions.

Inside, the processor has seen an upgrade from the MediaTek Dimensity

SPECIFICATIONS

Eight-core MediaTek Dimensity 1300 processor
• 8GB RAM • 128GB storage • 6.43in 90Hz
2400x1080-pixel AMOLED screen • 50-megapixel
rear camera • 8-megapixel ultrawide camera •
32-megapixel front camera • Wi-Fi 6 • Bluetooth 5.2 •
Android 12 with OxygenOS overlay • 8.2x73x159mm
(HxWxD) • 190g • One-year warranty
www.snipca.com/42185



1200 to the Dimensity 1300. The new chip is designed to run more efficiently than the 1200, though the differences in our benchmark tests was small. It returned a single-core score of 576 and a multi-core score of 2,757. The Nord 2 was slightly faster in the multi-core test with a score of 2,808.

It's significantly faster than the much cheaper Nokia G11, reviewed on the next page, but you'd expect that given the difference in price. However, it's a long way behind the £549 Realme GT2, our current Buy It choice for Android, which scores 3,562.

In general use we were able to get through a long day of moderate usage with around 40 per cent charge remaining. On a more intense day, which involved four hours and 15 minutes of screen-on time, including some gaming, we were left with 30 per cent. It's not outstanding but it's acceptable. It's made somewhat better by the inclusion of an 80W charger, which can charge the phone from one to 67 per cent in just 15 minutes.

VERDICT A decent smartphone for the price, but it's surprisingly similar to the model it succeeds



ALTERNATIVE Xiaomi Poco F3 £269 For better performance and a lower price, look no further than the cheaper Xiaomi Poco F3, but be aware that its camera doesn't take such good photos



CHOOSE THE RIGHT SPECS

Backhaul



What is it?

Mesh Wi-Fi uses a series of router-like devices to spread Wi-Fi around your home. Data is passed between them, to help your Wi-Fi cross greater distances. The units in some mesh Wi-Fi systems communicate with each other on a separate radio channel, usually referred to as the backhaul. Others just use the same radio channel that your various devices connect to.

How does it work?

Mesh systems that use a dedicated backhaul simply cordon off one of their radios for communication between the mesh devices. This is usually one of the faster 5GHz networks. It's worth looking out for because it means, on a tri-band mesh system for example, you may only have the equivalent of a dual-band network available, because the devices you connect to your Wi-Fi aren't able to use the backhaul channel directly. However, it's usually considered a better system because none of the bandwidth you expect to devote to your connected devices is being used by the mesh network itself, so it should be faster.



What are the specs?

Look for mesh devices with "dedicated backhaul" or 'dedicated connection' in their specification. Most of the Netgear Orbi range (pictured), for example, have a backhaul, but some cheaper models from other manufacturers don't.

Note that some can also use their Ethernet ports to create the backhaul, if you can wire all your devices together using cable. However, this is unlikely to be the case in most homes unless you're also using powerline adapters (in which case you might not need a mesh network at all).

Can I change it later?

No. Mesh routers either use a backhaul or they don't. It's not something you can add later.

SMARTPHONE | £199.99 from Nokia www.snipca.com/42164

Nokia G11

Built to last

Some people are happy to pay a small fortune for a smartphone with all the latest features. For the rest of us, it's worth making a few compromises to get a significantly more affordable handset, such as the Nokia G11.

The phone's most impressive feature is its 6.5in screen, which offers a smooth 90Hz refresh rate. It looks great when viewed indoors, although you might have to adjust the settings when using it out in the sunshine, because it's not particularly bright. For the price, however, it's rather good.

As you might expect, overall performance is less impressive. The Unisoc T606 processor and 3GB of RAM are good enough to run a web

browser and basic phone apps, but the G11 won't perform well in more demanding apps or games.

In our benchmark tests it achieved a single-core result of 312, and a multi-core result of 1,135. These are low scores compared with those of pricier phones,

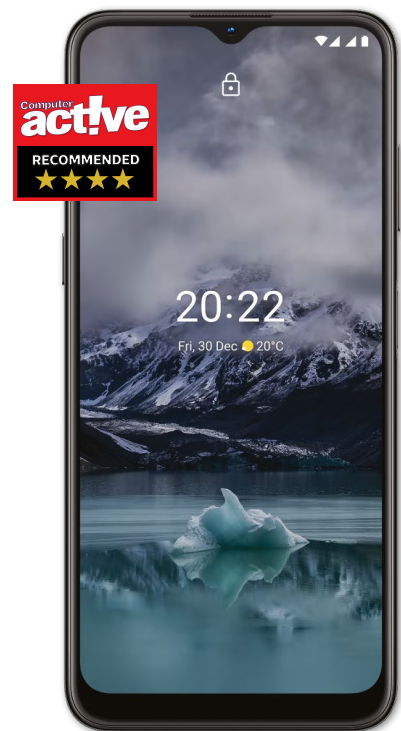
though the G11 is still faster than the £124 Motorola Moto G22 reviewed last issue, which managed 171 in the single-core test and 960 in the multi-core test. There's not much room for apps on the G11's 32GB of built-in storage, but there is a microSD card slot for adding more if you wish.

The upside to such modest performance is that the G11 doesn't place huge demands on the battery. The phone lasted into a third day during our tests. It comes with a standard version of Android 11, and while Nokia has added a handful of optional apps, including Spotify, Netflix, and ExpressVPN, they're kept neatly together in a folder.

The main camera has a 13-megapixel sensor with a 2-megapixel macro lens, while the selfie camera on the front is an 8-megapixel model. Neither is particularly outstanding. Photos shot using the main camera lacked detail and were rather dark. You can use built-in

SPECIFICATIONS

Eight-core Unisoc T606 processor • 3GB RAM • 32GB storage • 6.5in 90Hz 1600x720-pixel screen • 13-megapixel rear camera • 8-megapixel front-facing camera • Wi-Fi 5 • Bluetooth 5.0 • Android 11 • 8.5x76x165mm (HxWxD) • 189g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/42164



processing to brighten photos, but we found this often went too far and made the colours look odd.

VERDICT A long battery life and a reasonable screen, but the overall performance and camera quality give away its budget price



ALTERNATIVE

Motorola Moto G22 £142
Comes with more storage space and a slightly better camera



WHAT SHOULD I BUY?

We solve your buying dilemmas

Can I plug in a second monitor?

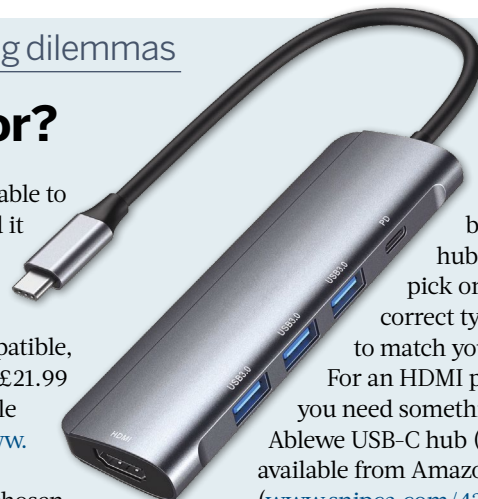
Q I'm working from home on a Lenovo X13 laptop. I've connected a monitor to the laptop's HDMI port to get more screen space. Is it possible to hook up another monitor, perhaps by using a hub?

Simon

A The Lenovo X13 laptop has a Thunderbolt 3 USB-C port, which can carry a video signal to a monitor. If your second monitor also has a USB-C port, you can use a

compatible USB-C cable to connect the two and it should work seamlessly. The cable needs to be Thunderbolt 3-compatible, though, such as the £21.99 Anker cable, available from Amazon at www.snipca.com/42167.

However, if your chosen monitor has only standard video ports, such as HDMI, you



will need to buy a USB-C hub. Make sure you pick one with the correct type of video port to match your monitor.

For an HDMI port, for example, you need something like the Ablewe USB-C hub (pictured), available from Amazon for £18.99 (www.snipca.com/42166).



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

Enjoy your conservatory all year round



**2 FREE
PANELS**

*Quote ref
ca0522

Transformed in one day with Green Space UK's insulated roof panels

INSTALLED IN 1 DAY

"What a difference a day makes as the saying goes, and yes, that's all it took to install."

Mr & Mrs Barber, Wells

WARMER IN WINTER

"There is no doubt that the conservatory is much warmer than previously, and no, the room is not darker either!"

David Birch, Chichester

USABLE ALL YEAR ROUND

"The conservatory is now used throughout all seasons of the year and is far more comfortable to sit in whatever the weather outside."

Mr & Mrs Gibson, Portishead

MOULD & CONDENSATION

"This is the best thing we have done in this house. Used to run with condensation and now zero."

Karen Thomas, Chippenham

COOLER IN SUMMER

"You could have fried an egg on the table in there in the summer, I now look upon the conservatory as a new room. It is quiet, restful and cosy."

Carol Doyle, Surrey

ENERGY EFFICIENT

"I've already turned the underfloor heating down. Lovely job guys, thank you!"

Anne Bird, Bristol

QUIETER IN BAD WEATHER

"For the first time in 10 years we do not have to close the door to the conservatory when it rains, as the noise is minimal and before I found it difficult to hear the TV over the loudness of the rain on the old roof."

Mr & Mrs Bailey-Webb, Warsash

"It's the best home improvement we have ever made. Our conservatory is now our dining room in the garden."

Mike Millis, Middleton On Sea



GRAND
DESIGNS LIVE

ideal
HOME SHOW

8k+ HAPPY
CLIENTS

Get a price for your conservatory roof

0800 08 03 202

www.greenspaceconservatories.co.uk



Terms and Conditions apply. Green Space UK, Unit 8 BH24 1PD, Registered No. 8542786, as shown on FCA authorisation, trading as Green Space UK, is a credit broker and is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Applies to orders of 8 panels or more. Not to be used in conjunction with any other marketing offer

MOUSE | £119 from Amazon www.snipca.com/42141

Logitech MX Master 3S

A more sensitive mouse

Logitech's top-of-the-range MX peripherals are designed to offer the best quality and performance for people who spend a lot of time sitting at their computers. This mouse and the MX Mechanical Keyboard (reviewed below) are available separately, so you don't need to buy both if you're happy with your existing keyboard or mouse.

The 3S is a development of the MX Master 3, which went on sale three years ago. The two mice look almost identical, but the 3S has a more sensitive sensor (increasing from a maximum of 4,000dpi to 8,000dpi) and significantly quieter

SPECIFICATIONS

200-8,000dpi • 7 buttons • 2.4GHz wireless dongle included • 125x84x51mm • 141g • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/42141

buttons, though they still have a lovely tactile quality when pressed.

The shape and feel of the mouse haven't changed at all, which is great because it's one of the most comfortable mice we've ever used, as long as you're right-handed. The high-profile curvature of the mouse makes it comfortable under your hand. Textured palm and thumb rests provide adequate grip, and the buttons sit perfectly where your hand naturally falls.

A USB-C port on the front of the mouse lets you plug it in to recharge the battery. You won't have to do this too often, though, as the battery should last for 70-days, even if you use the device a lot.

At £119, this certainly isn't a cheap mouse, but it is one of the best around.



If you spend a lot of time sitting at your computer and want to treat your hands to a little luxury, the MX Master 3S is a great choice.

VERDICT It's not cheap, but this mouse is one of the best, most comfortable mice you can lay your hands on

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE

Logitech Lift Vertical £70 Anyone who suffers from RSI might prefer this upright mouse for an even



KEYBOARD | £150 from Amazon www.snipca.com/42142

Logitech MX Mechanical Keyboard

True to type

As well as a new mouse (see review, above) Logitech's MX range features a pair of new keyboards. The larger model (£169.99) has a number pad on the right, while the smaller unit (£149.99) ditches the extra keys for a more compact design, but otherwise they're identical.

Both keyboards are sleek and well built, with full-size keys that have slight depressions on top, so your fingers slip into place as you type. Mechanical switches provide a reassuringly tactile snap when the keys are pressed. Fold-out feet at the back of the keyboard let you adjust the typing position from horizontal to an angle of eight degrees.

SPECIFICATIONS

USB-C charging • 2.4GHz wireless dongle included • Bluetooth • 26x434x132mm with number pad, 26x313x132mm without number pad (HxWxD) • 828g with number pad, 612g without number pad • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/42142

The keyboard works well in its default state, but if you want to take advantage of its advanced features, you'll need the supplied Logi Options+ software. This lets you assign keys to app-specific presets for a wide assortment of useful programs, including office suites, image editors and video-editing tools. You can also change the basic functions of the keys. We found this useful, because it allowed us to change the only thing we didn't like about the keyboard, which was the inclusion of an emoji function button. Devoting a button to such a superfluous function seems odd on an otherwise serious keyboard.

Another brilliant feature is Logitech Flow, which lets you switch your mouse and keyboard between computers simply by moving the cursor off the edge of one screen and onto the other. It works



even between computers running Windows and macOS, and lets you copy and paste between them. This is

VERDICT A serious keyboard with a serious price, marred only by the unnecessary frivolity of an emoji function key

★★★★★

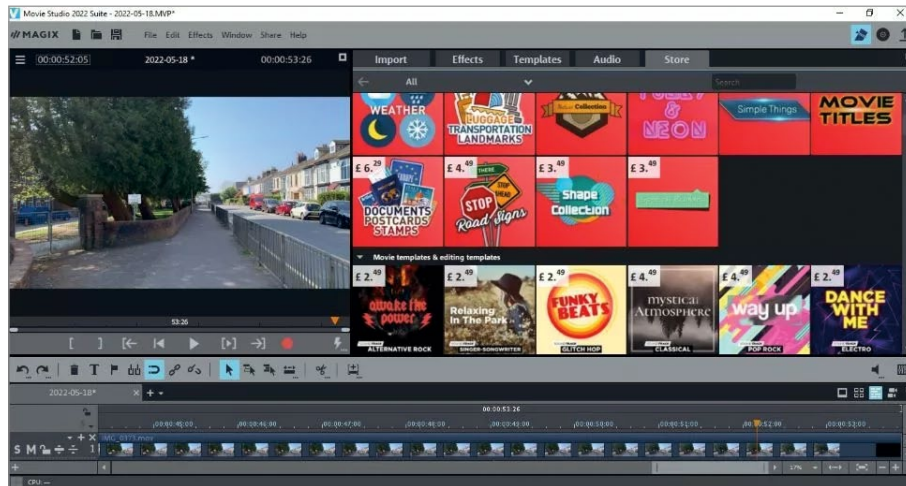
ALTERNATIVE Logitech Pop Keys £90 A more colourful and portable alternative that's lighter to carry and switches neatly



VIDEO-EDITING SOFTWARE | From £31.99 from www.snipca.com/42202

Magix Movie Studio 2022

Power play



Movie Studio 2022 is the new name for German developer Magix's video-editing software, previously known as Movie Edit Pro Premium. Magix hasn't reinvented the wheel, though, and the new software looks very similar to the previous version.

This is good, because the software has always been well designed and reasonably easy to use, despite being powerful and packed with features.

“Enough new tools to justify upgrading from the 2021 version”

One of the best new features is the tool for moving video clips around the preview window, which makes it easier to create collages and split-screen effects. The handles you use to manipulate footage are bigger in this version, giving you more control when tweaking a clip's position and scale. There's also a better clip-rotation tool, which lets you centre the rotation wherever you like. This is especially useful when incorporating videos from phones and tablets.

The biggest changes are under the hood, however. It can now take advantage

of graphics hardware from Nvidia, AMD and Intel to provide more processing power, so if you have a separate graphics card in your PC, the software will run smoother and process your videos faster. This means you can use your phone or camera's highest resolution, up to 8K, and still preview your edits in real time. These improvements are good enough to justify upgrading to the 2021 version.

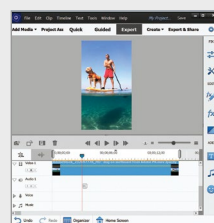
Three versions of the software are available. The Standard version costs £31.99 and consists of the main program and around 900 transitions and effects. The Platinum version (£54.99; £46.99 if you're upgrading from previous version) adds another 600 effects and integrates animated maps into your videos. The Suite edition (£61.99; £48.99 if you're upgrading) adds some lighting effects.

VERDICT New version is more powerful but just as easy to use



ALTERNATIVE Adobe Premiere Elements

£86.56 Offers even more help for beginners, as well as tools for blending phone and camcorder footage easily



DO I REALLY NEED...

HDMI 2.1a?

What is it?

A new version of the HDMI standard for cables and ports that sends video and audio data between devices. HDMI cables are often used to link a set-top box to a TV, or a PC to a monitor.

What does it do?

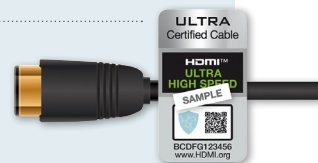
HDMI 2.1a carries more data than earlier versions, but it's also the first to carry power too. However, unlike USB, this won't power any connected devices. Instead, it helps maintain a strong signal over longer distances. Current HDMI cables degrade the signal over distances greater than three metres.

What's the catch?

Both the devices and the cable (pictured) will need to be compatible with the new standard, and there aren't any available yet.

So can I do without it?

You'll only really need it if you're sending video in 8K resolution or better between two devices using a cable that's more than 3m long. Since most HDMI devices sit next to the screen you want to view them on, it seems unnecessary for most users.



NEXT ISSUE

On Sale **Weds 6 July**

Dell XPS Desktop 8950

Desktop PC with the latest 12th-generation i5 processor



Microsoft Surface Laptop Go 2

An affordable Windows 11 laptop

These and much more...

Subscribe to Computeractive at www.getcomputeractive.co.uk

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Windows 10 or better • 4GB of RAM • 2GB of storage space www.snipca.com/42202

Buy It

Find out what other products we liked.
Buy our new 2021 **Back Issue CD**:
£17 from www.snipca.com/42077



Our pick of products that have won the **Buy It** award

LAPTOP

Lenovo Yoga Slim 7 (256GB)

£579 from www.snipca.com/41099

Tested Issue 601



Weighing just 1.16kg, this is an excellent lightweight laptop with a great screen and an AMD processor faster than many Intel rivals. It has two USB-C ports, two USB 3.0 ports and a microSD card reader. The battery lasts for nearly 16 hours.

ALTERNATIVE Dell XPS 13 New Intel CPUs and a taller screen make this a more powerful, all-round slim laptop. Prices start at £769 from www.snipca.com/40042

PRICE
DROP

DESKTOP PC

Wired2Fire

Ultima WS Home Office Workstation

£750 from www.snipca.com/41500

Tested Issue 630



With an overclocked eight-core chip and a 1TB SSD, this PC performs Windows tasks at a blistering speed. It comes with Wi-Fi 5, and has plenty of ports, including five USB 3.0 and three for monitors (DisplayPort, HDMI and VGA).

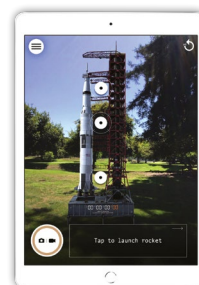
ALTERNATIVE Palicomp Intel Mercury Over two years old and with a slower processor, but still a mighty PC with a speedy SSD. £600 from www.snipca.com/34223

APPLE IPAD

Apple iPad 10.2in

£319 from www.snipca.com/36178

Tested Issue 566



The basic iPad is great value, especially now it's been updated with a powerful A13 processor and iPadOS 15. It includes Scribble handwriting recognition with the £89 Apple Pencil. Storage isn't expandable; consider 256GB at £459.

ALTERNATIVE iPad Mini With an even better, but smaller, screen than the 10.2in iPad, the Mini also supports the Pencil and has 64GB of storage. £479 from www.snipca.com/33050

ANDROID TABLET

Samsung Galaxy Tab S8

£699 from www.snipca.com/42240

Tested Issue 634



Samsung has replaced its own Tab S7+ to become our favourite Android tablet. It's fast with a stunning 11in screen, and has a longer battery life than the iPad. You can pay £649 for 128GB, but the 256GB version is better value.

ALTERNATIVE Lenovo Tab P11 Pro It's slower than the Tab S7 and the screen is duller, but has a detachable keyboard so you can use it as a laptop. £599 from www.snipca.com/41101

NEW
ENTRY

APPLE IPHONE

Apple iPhone 12

£679 from www.snipca.com/36582

Tested Issue 595



Released in 2020, this model has a modest increase in already exceptional processing power plus even better photos and videos from the front and twin rear cameras. It comes in a redesigned case with aluminium frame and even tougher glass. Consider paying the £50 extra for 128GB of storage.

ALTERNATIVE iPhone SE With a single camera and smaller screen but the same powerful A13 processor and 64GB storage as the iPhone 11, it's great value. £419 from www.snipca.com/34773

ANDROID PHONE

Realme GT 2

£549 from www.snipca.com/41667

Tested Issue 631



China's Realme has made a phone with a powerful processor, excellent battery life, bright screen and a 50-megapixel camera that takes great photos. It's more expensive than our former favourite (below), but its superior performance justifies this extra cost.

ALTERNATIVE Xiaomi Poco F3 This remains an excellent phone, with 6GB RAM and 128GB storage. The only phone under £450 that's faster is the iPhone SE. £309 from www.snipca.com/41102

Now's the time to tackle your iPad (or Android tablet)

Tablets – iPads and Android tablets – can be great once you know how to use them. It's amazing all the things they can do.

And possibly the best thing tablets can do for you is help you keep in touch with family and friends. I don't just mean letting you send emails instead of writing paper letters, though that can be handy.

In just a few taps of the screen you could be talking to them as if they were sat right there beside you.

But when you buy a tablet, there's something missing.

It's not the charger (hopefully!).

It's not a case, though it's usually a good idea to buy one to protect your new tablet.

It's a manual – something to show you how to use the thing. The manufacturers seem to assume that you'll just know how to use it, as if by magic. It's "intuitive," they say.

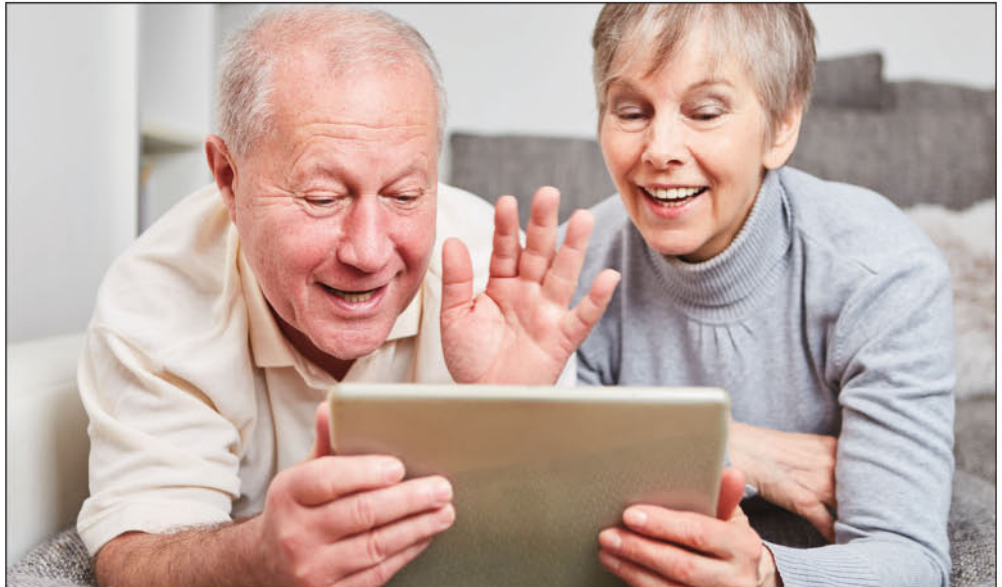
Well, it can be. In parts. But there are other things you simply need to know how to do. It's not obvious that you have to swipe from the top of the screen, pull up from the bottom or tap with two fingers instead of one.

Who would know you had to use two fingers and pull them apart on the screen or rotate them... or that they'd bury the option you want behind three little dots?

Things like that you just can't know – someone has to explain it to you.

But if you do ever find a book about it or get someone to tell you, they always seem to assume you already know how to do it. Daft, really – you wouldn't be asking if you did. But they whizz through it so fast you can't possibly take it in. Not to mention the steps they leave out because "everyone knows that"!

That's where a set of books from a small, employee-owned company based in Cumbria comes in. They're called The Helpful Book Company and lots of their customers say they certainly live up to their name!



These helpful books mean there's nothing to fear about using tablets – from sending a quick email to video calling your family and friends.

They've published *iPads One Step at a Time* and *Android Tablets One Step at a Time* – and these books have proved hugely popular with all sorts of people who have a tablet – but who aren't experts at using it.

Whether you're frustrated with the very basics, want to know what else it can do for you or wish you knew how to do some of the slightly fancier things, this book might be just what you need.

It explains everything nice and simply, in plain English, without all the confusing jargon and gobbledegook. And it has lots of pictures showing exactly what to do – where to tap the screen and so on.

.....
 "Plain English without all the confusing jargon and gobbledegook"

The company has already published books about computers and smartphones that

have helped thousands of people. But they actually started much smaller – the author wrote some notes to help his Mum and Dad on their PC and realised that other people might find them useful too. Several thousand happy people later, he decided to bring out a book on tablets as well – and if you've ever been frustrated with your tablet, it's worth finding out more.

As a small independent publisher, the books aren't in the shops or available on Amazon, but you can get a free information pack telling you about what's covered in the books, who they're suitable for and how to get hold of them.

Just ring 01229 777606 today (lines open weekdays 8am-5:30pm and Sat 9am-3pm). Or post back the coupon below or email your name and address to PC0622@helpfulbooks.co.uk

Yes, please send me a free info-pack about: *iPads One Step at a Time* and *Android Tablets One Step at a Time*
 It's free & there's no obligation.

Or call: **01229 777606**
 Quote 'PC0622A'

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Post to **The Helpful Book Co, 13B Devonshire Rd Est, Millom, Cumbria, LA18 4JS** or call **01229 777606**
 We use the details you give us to send you information on the products mentioned. We store the details securely and only share them with the Royal Mail for posting the information. Full privacy notice at www.helpfulbooks.co.uk/privacynotice

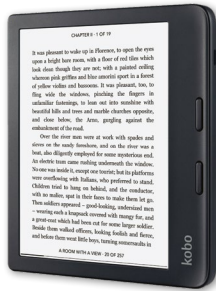
Our pick of products that have won the **Buy It** award

EBOOK READER

Kobo Libra 2

£160 from www.snipca.com/40645

Tested Issue 624



A fantastic 7in screen, 32GB of storage and Bluetooth connectivity make this a rival to Amazon's Oasis ebook reader, yet it's £70 cheaper. Battery life is superb – we managed 54 hours of use per charge. It supports OverDrive, so you can borrow ebooks from libraries.

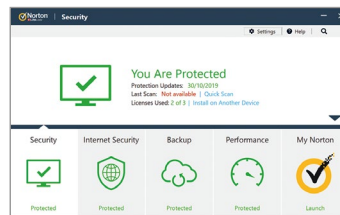
ALTERNATIVE Amazon Kindle This low-cost option remains a good choice, especially now it has 8GB of storage. £70 from www.snipca.com/41103

SECURITY SOFTWARE

Norton 360 Premium

£24.99 from www.snipca.com/33247

Tested Issue 629



Norton has always performed strongly in our antivirus tests, regularly making the top three. Owned by US firm NortonLifeLock, it's available at a discount on our Software Store. Click the link above for a 10-device, two-year licence. Other versions are available, including Norton 360 for Gamers.

ALTERNATIVE Bitdefender Total Security Another top performer that we're offering at a discount. £19.99 from www.snipca.com/41141

WEBCAM

Logitech C925e Business Webcam

£69 from www.snipca.com/41104

Tested Issue 608



Despite the name, this webcam is also great for home users. Its standout feature is automatically adjusting itself to keep your picture looking sharp. It offers a 78-degree field of view, which is fine for everyday video chats with one person in front of the camera.

ALTERNATIVE Anker PowerConf C300 Good image quality, crisp audio and lots of features. £66 from www.snipca.com/41105

PC MONITOR

Iiyama ProLite XU2492HSU-B1

£165 from www.snipca.com/39701

Tested Issue 618



This 23.8in screen is superb value, with a resolution of 1920x1080 pixels. Colour is good, covering 88 per cent of the sRGB colour range. Connect your computer via HDMI, DisplayPort or VGA, and there's a USB hub to connect your mouse and keyboard.

ALTERNATIVE AOC 27P2C This also has a 1920x1080 resolution but it's 27 inches, so pixel density is lower. But you'll only notice if you look really closely. £302 from www.snipca.com/41609

ROUTER

Netgear Nighthawk RAX80

£300 from www.snipca.com/39013

Tested Issue 603



This is the fastest Wi-Fi 6 router we've ever tested, transferring data at speeds of 520Mbps in the same and adjacent rooms of our test house. Also works with Wi-Fi 5, and comes with four spare Ethernet ports and two USB ports.

ALTERNATIVE Asus RT-AX82U Slower than the Nighthawk on Wi-Fi 6, but faster on Wi-Fi 5, so a better choice for older devices. Has four Gigabit Ethernet ports. £195 from www.snipca.com/41106

PRINTER

Epson EcoTank ET-1810

£160 from www.snipca.com/41232

Tested Issue 627



An inkjet printer that comes with enough ink to print 4,500 mono and 7,500 colour pages, making it exceptionally cheap to run. It's not the fastest printer, but quality is good, especially on photo paper – we've never seen better on an inkjet.

ALTERNATIVE Brother DCP-J1140DW Compact multifunction model with rare features at this price, including double-sided printing. £133 from www.snipca.com/41480

COMPETITION

Win 1 of 4 Anker PowerConf C200 webcams

Winner of a Recommended award in Issue 633, Anker's PowerConf C200 webcam delivers great 2K video-chat quality, and is easily attached to the top of your screen. It's superbly built, has a simple plug-and-play setup, and comes with clever software to fine-tune how it works. When you're not using it, you can slide its privacy cover to ensure you're not visible.

The versatile C200 lets you adjust how much it can see by

selecting the lens's viewing angle. Without losing any image quality, you can choose from a 65°, 78°, or 95° field of view to show just your face or include what's behind you.

It also has two specialised mics that pick up your voice while simultaneously reducing background noise for crystal-clear audio.

To enter this competition, answer the question at www.snipca.com/42205 and




submit your details. It runs until midnight Tuesday 5 July.

You can buy the **Anker PowerConf C200** webcams from Amazon priced £80 (www.snipca.com/42016). For more information on other Anker products, including speakerphones, headsets and microphones, visit <https://uk.ankerwork.com>.

MESH ROUTER

BT Whole Home Wi-Fi

£170 from www.snipca.com/26990

Tested Issue 496



BT's set of three discs, managed from an Apple or Android app, connects to your broadband and spreads high-speed Wi-Fi all around the house. Reception is far better than a single router, and the price is lower than any rival.

ALTERNATIVE Zyxel Multy X

These two pillow-shaped boxes are powerful enough for most homes and provide four Ethernet ports apiece. £266 from www.snipca.com/41109

SOLID-STATE DRIVE

Corsair MP600 Pro LPX 500GB

£84 from www.snipca.com/41547

Tested Issue 630



In our tests, this M.2 SSD hit speeds of 7,364MB/s and 6,870MB/s when reading and writing data – astonishingly fast scores. It's compatible with the new PCIe 4.0 standard, which is twice as fast as PCIe 3.0. The 1TB model costs £140; 2TB costs £280.

ALTERNATIVE Crucial MX500 500GB

As fast as an SSD can get in the traditional 2.5in SATA format, this is a great-value upgrade. £58 from www.snipca.com/37304

SMART SPEAKER

Google Nest Audio

£65 from www.snipca.com/36475

Tested Issue 593



Produces a rich, clear sound, and better understands your questions than Amazon's Echo devices. You can use Google's app to control audio from other units around your home (pair two of them for £130). The clever Ambient IQ tool increases the volume if it detects external noise, such as a hairdryer.

ALTERNATIVE Amazon Echo (4th generation)

The latest version of the Echo changes the shape from a cylinder to a ball, which improves sound quality – though the Nest's is still superior. £65 from www.snipca.com/41111

PRICE
DROP

Computeractive 2021 Back Issue CD

ON SALE NOW!

BROWSE, SEARCH AND PRINT ISSUES 596-621

CONTAINS
**ALL 26
ISSUES**
FROM 2021

Computer
active

2021 BACK ISSUE CD

NUMBER
24

26
ISSUES OF
COMPUTERACTIVE
EVERY ISSUE OF 2021

Buy it from us now at
www.snipca.com/42077

Workshops & Tips

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

35 Organise your folders like an expert

38 Clean your PC on a schedule

40 Readers' Tips

42 Browser Tips: Search images using Google Lens more easily

PLUS

44 Phone & Tablet Tips

46 Make Windows Better

47 Make Office Better

48 In the Club: Create videos on YouTube

HOW TO...

Organise your folders like an expert

by Nik Rawlinson

What you need: Windows 10 or 11 **Time required:** Two hours

If you've been using a computer for around 20 years (or longer), you'll remember how important it once was to keep your files organised. Hard drives were less common and – where they existed – were much smaller than the multi-gigabyte behemoths we take for granted today. This meant that a lot of files were stored on floppy disks and, when they got full, archived to **Zip drives** or **CD-ROMs**. If you ever wanted to find your work again, without a long and frustrating search that required multiple disk checks, you had to label everything with care.

Once you found the relevant disk, it might still take you a while to pinpoint the file you wanted – particularly pre-

Windows 95 when file names could be no longer than eight characters, with a three-character extension.

Thankfully, things are much easier today. With a large hard drive at your disposal, you can carry on saving your files in the same location for years on end. And, because you are no longer restricted to eight characters, you have the luxury of giving your files long, descriptive file names. Combine this with Windows' integrated search tools, which help you find any file on any drive (including those you've synced from online storage), and it's easy to start getting sloppy.

There's no shame in saving every file to your Documents folder and relying



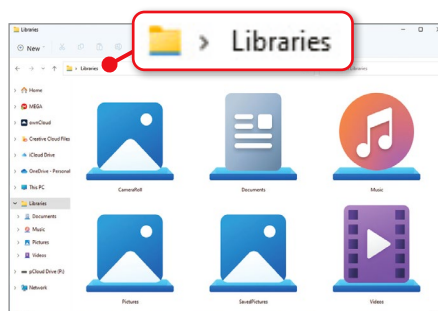
on Windows to keep track of things. However, with a little forethought, you can easily devise a more logical folder structure that will help you get to the content you need more quickly, without always having to search for it.

Here, we reveal the process we use for organising files on our own computers here at *Computeractive*, where we deal with dozens of documents every day.

1

Organise your folders using Libraries

Windows already goes to great lengths to simplify the process of keeping your files in order. Open a new File Explorer window and make sure the Navigation pane's Libraries section is visible. If the Navigation pane isn't visible, you can reveal it in Windows 10 by switching to the View tab and clicking 'Navigation pane'. In Windows 11, click the View button, hover your cursor over



The Navigation pane in File Explorer gives you direct access to your folder libraries

Show and click 'Navigation pane' in the fly-out menu.

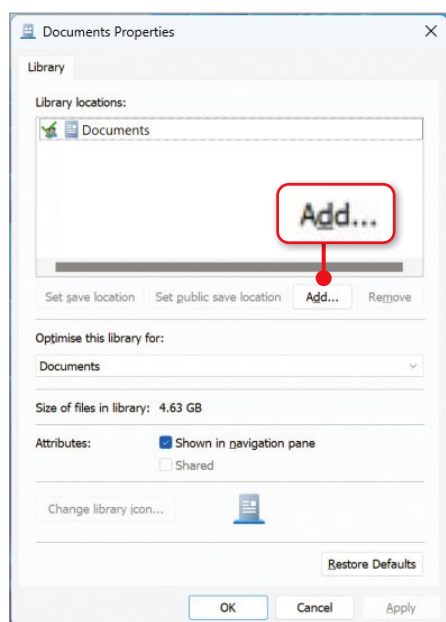
The Navigation pane's Libraries section includes what appear to be dedicated folders for Documents, Music, Pictures and so on (see screenshot left). However, these aren't actually folders at all – instead they are shortcuts that let you view multiple directories simultaneously.

For example, right-click the Documents library and select Properties in the context menu. This opens a box showing

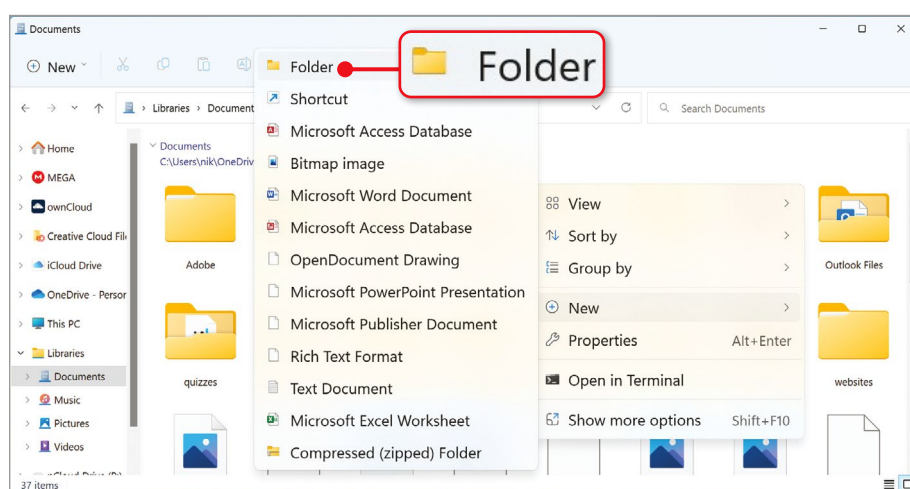
which folders are included in the library – which, in our case, is the Documents folder in our OneDrive account. To add another folder to the Documents library, click ‘Add...’ (see screenshot below), then navigate to the folder and choose ‘Include location’, followed by Apply, then OK. From now on, when you click Documents in the sidebar, you’ll see the contents of both folders, with a dividing line between them so you can still tell them apart.

Libraries are particularly useful because – being a core Windows feature – many programs use them to provide more direct access to your files. It’s therefore worth making sure that, when you reorganise your folders, the folder you want to use for documents is within the Documents library so you can access it quickly.

In our case, we’re going to continue storing our documents in OneDrive, which can be accessed via our Documents library. This is because our Microsoft 365 subscription includes a terabyte of online storage, making it easy to access our files from any machine, anywhere. If you’re not a 365 subscriber, don’t worry. These tips work just as well without OneDrive, because all we’re really doing when organising files in our OneDrive folder (and any sub-folders within it) is moving them around on our local hard drive, as you would with a regular folder. The difference is that any changes we make on our local drive will be mirrored online by the OneDrive program running in the taskbar.



You can add folders to existing libraries to make certain file types easier to find



Create a dedicated folder to temporarily store your files to make building a new folder structure less complicated

2 Move files you want to organise into a single folder

If you’ve been using your PC for a number of years, you may have thousands of documents to organise. If the idea of organising them fills you with dread, you may be tempted to archive them to an external drive or USB stick and start anew. While that’s one solution, we don’t think it’s ideal. We’d certainly advise making a backup before you start organising, in case you lose anything in the process, but it’s worth keeping as many of your files as you can close at hand – as long as your hard drive isn’t close to full.

With that in mind, we’d recommend first creating a new folder called ‘to organise’ at the root of your Documents folder. Do this by opening Documents, right-clicking a blank area in the main section of the window and hovering your cursor over New. Click ‘Folder’ in the sub-menu (see screenshot above), type **to organise** then press Enter.

Now select everything in the Documents folder by pressing Windows key+A, then hold down Ctrl while clicking the ‘to organise’ folder so that it is the only item not selected. Drag your selection of files into ‘to organise’ so that the new folder is now the only item inside Documents. This gives you a blank canvas with which to work.

3 Organise your folders using logical names

When organising your files and folders, picture a series of funnels, which each become narrower as the contents become more specific.

While you might first head for your Documents folder when you need to refer to some previous work you’ve done, this might be home to four sub-folders – for example, letters, creative, family and work. Inside letters, you may choose to create sub-folders for 2022, 2021, 2020, 2019 and so on. Alternatively, if you only write to a handful of correspondents, but do so frequently, it may make more sense to organise things by recipient. In that case, rather than years, you’d have, for example, Bupa, Saga, LNER, doctor, residents’ association, and so on.

It’s important to stress that at this stage of the organisational process, there’s no right or wrong answer: it’s just essential that you devise a system that fits with your own particular way of working, then stick with it so your structure remains logical and consistent.

For example, if we needed to check a letter that we wrote to our dentist cancelling an appointment at the start of the pandemic, we could logically click through Documents to letters, to 2020, then March, then Dentist. But that only works if we remember that the reason we cancelled was the Covid outbreak.

If, in five years, we need to refer to a cancelled crown replacement that’s now causing us problems, there’s no guarantee we’d remember that the pandemic was the reason for its cancellation. In that case, it would be more logical if we forgot about creating date folders at all – at least for the dentist – and organised our letters to that particular recipient at Documents\letters\dentist instead.

It therefore pays dividends in the long run if you spend some time thinking at

this point about what's likely to be the most logical structure for long-term use.

4 Keep your files and folders in order

Once you've decided on an appropriate folder structure, you should think about the options you'll use to keep your files and folders in order.

By default, Windows sorts your Downloads folder by descending order of date, so your most recent additions always appear at the top of the list. All other folders, including those used for documents, are sorted alphabetically (or, in technical terms, ascending by name). You can use this to your advantage if you get into the habit of naming new files and renaming old files with a Japanese-style data prefix. This sets the year first, then the month, then the date.

So, if we return to our dentist example, we might rename that letter cancelling our crown replacement early in the pandemic as **2020-03-28 crown replacement cancellation.docx**. That way, it would naturally appear before **2021-08-17 crown appointment confirmation.docx**. Had we not included dates in the file name, the second letter, which was written after the first, would instead have appeared before it in the file list, because 'crown appointment' comes before 'crown replacement' when ordered alphabetically (ascending by name).

Windows uses what's known as ASCII, the American Standard Code for Information Interchange, when ordering files. This was developed in 1961, and although it's been expanded, and supplemented by other standards, such as Unicode (the Universal Coded

How I organise my files

The technique outlined in this article describes the process I use for organising my own files. I frequently prefix folders I need speedy access to with an at symbol (@) to push them to the top of a file list, but I avoid using any other special characters if I can, because I don't want to have to work out which takes precedence.

This makes it quicker and easier to find my files, and keeps the folders on my hard drive organised into a logical and tidy structure.



Nik Rawlinson



How do you organise your files?

Please let us know: letters@computeractive.co.uk

Character Set) in the decades since, it's still an important feature of operating systems and software. ASCII was the first broadly accepted definition of the order in which each of the characters – not just numbers and letters – should be handled in compliant computers.

Each character was given a number, with capital A being 65, capital Z being 90, lower-case 'a' is 97, lower-case 'z' 122, and so on. Although some operating systems, including Linux, distinguish between upper- and lower-case characters in file names, Windows doesn't. So, while file.doc, File.doc and FILE.doc could all be different files on a Linux system, they would overwrite one another on a Windows computer.

Most of the web is powered by computers running Linux, which is why using the wrong case when typing a web address can result in a 'page not found' error. Therefore, you can't use upper and lowercase to change the order in which files are displayed, but you can use special characters.

ASCII places numbers before letters (so our date-prefixed files will always be listed before any that don't have a date attached), and several special characters before numbers. These include !, % and +. So, if you always want a particular file to appear at the top of a directory listing, you can do so by preceding its name with ! (see screenshot below left). Adding !! will make it sit higher in the list than another file name with a ! at the start, and !!! will place it higher still.

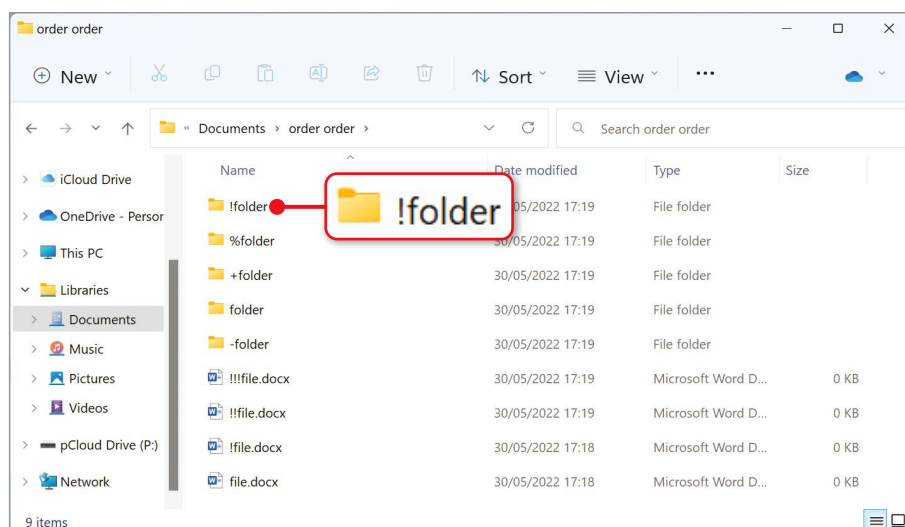
Similarly, if you want to keep track of older versions of files you've edited, we recommend creating a folder called 'old' inside any relevant directory, into which you can drag outdated copies.

Because a lot of the documents we work with go through an editing process, this is a technique we find particularly useful, as it allows us to track when particular changes were made. Having multiple revisions of a document is also a useful way of proving that you are the originator of a piece of work, should someone later try to claim that the finished product is their own.

5 Drag and drop your files into place

Now that you've established your more logical folder structure, open two File Explorer windows side by side. One should show the contents of the 'to organise' folder to which you moved all of your files, and the other should show the contents of the Documents library. Drag files from the former to the latter, dropping them in their new, more logical locations, and renaming them, if necessary, as you go.

See our feature on page 60 for advice on how to drag and drop files like an expert.



Use special characters at the start of file names to push important files to the top of a folder

Workshop

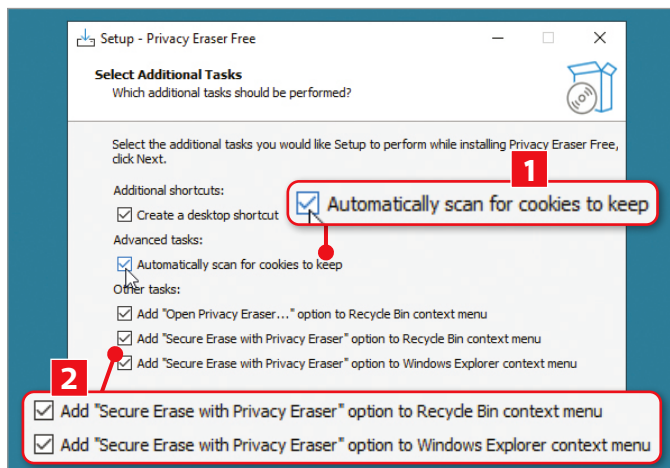
Clean your PC on a schedule

What you need: Privacy Eraser

Time required: 20 minutes

Regularly removing junk files from your computer helps to keep it running smoothly, frees up valuable hard-drive space and can protect your privacy (from prying eyes who may want to see which files you've recently opened or websites you've visited). However, regularly cleaning up your **temporary files**, activity logs and data **caches** can be a hassle and is a task that's easily

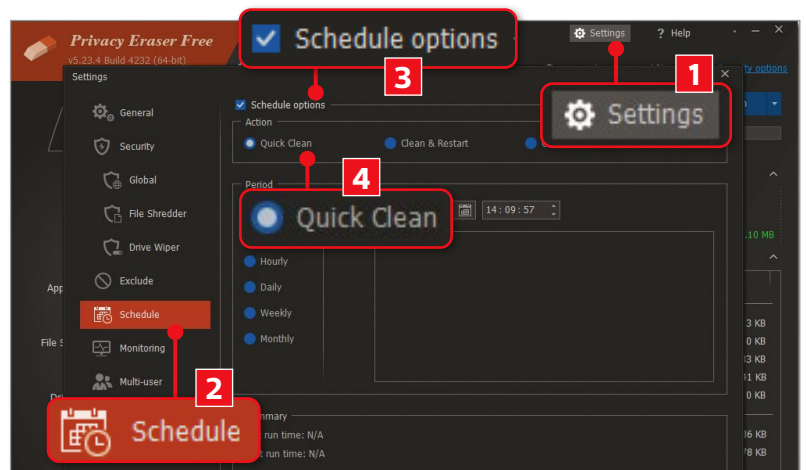
overlooked. One solution is to use Privacy Eraser, which we recommended in Issue 632 (page 18). This free program lets you remove junk manually, but also schedule clean-ups to run automatically at a frequency of your choice. You can choose exactly which items you want to purge from Windows, browsers and other installed programs, and let Privacy Eraser do the hard work for you.

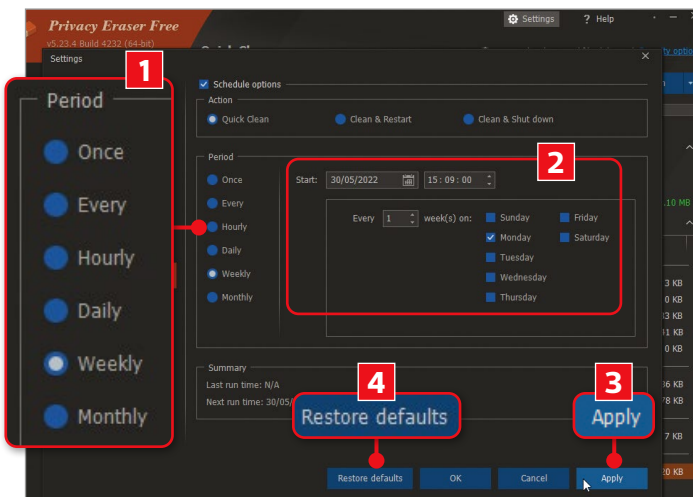


STEP 1 Download Privacy Eraser from www.snipca.com/42127 – make sure you click the green Free Download button not the yellow Upgrade Now button, which is the paid-for version. When you install the program, you'll be given the option to 'select additional tasks'. We recommend ticking the box to 'Automatically scan for **cookies** to keep' **1**, so you're not signed out of websites after a clean-up. You can also add 'Secure Erase with Privacy Eraser' options to your Recycle Bin and File Explorer right-click menus **2**.

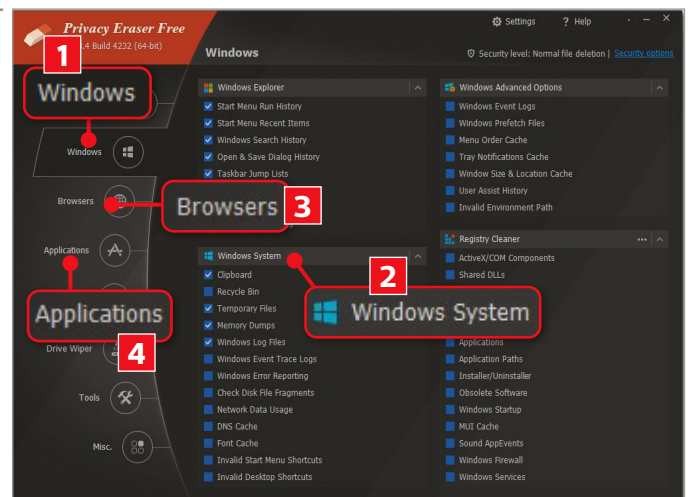
STEP 2 Launch Privacy Eraser and click the large Scan button in the centre of the home screen. This will search your computer for junk files and tell you how much hard-drive space you can reclaim by deleting them **1**. Your first scan is likely to take a while, but – as we'll explain later – you can speed up future scans by setting the program to ignore certain data. Once the scan is complete, either click the Quick Clean button **2** to make Privacy Eraser remove the junk now or leave the clean-up until you've created your schedule.

STEP 3 Next, click the Settings button in the top-right corner **1**. When the Settings panel opens, click Schedule **2** in the menu on the left and tick 'Schedule options' **3**. In the Action section, choose the type of clean-up you want to schedule. Select 'Quick Clean' **4** to delete any junk that Privacy Eraser finds without interrupting your other activities; 'Clean & Restart' to reboot your PC after the clean-up and remove leftover traces; or 'Clean & Shut down' to switch off your computer once the clean-up is complete.





STEP 4 In the Period section **1**, select how frequently you want Privacy Erase to clean junk from your PC. You can specify an exact time and date to start the clean-up and schedule the program to run hourly, daily, weekly or monthly – if you choose one of the latter two options, select the appropriate day of the week or month **2**. Once you've made your choices, click the Apply button **3** at the bottom of the 'Schedule options' panel to create your schedule, then OK to exit. To cancel your schedule, click 'Restore defaults' **4**.

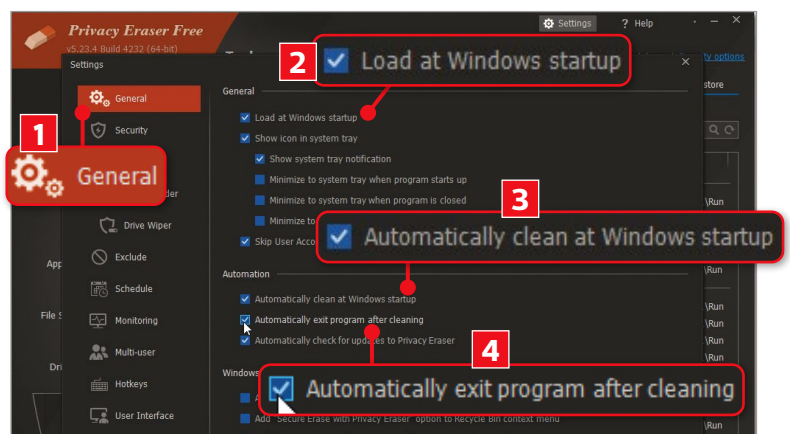


STEP 5 You can now choose which elements you want to purge from your PC in your scheduled scan. Click the Windows tab **1** on the left to decide which Windows junk you want to clean, including File Explorer data, temporary files **2** and the Registry. Click the Browsers tab **3** to select items to delete from each of the browsers you use, such as cookies, browsing history and caches. Finally, click the Applications tab **4** and tick the programs you want to clear of junk (Privacy Eraser will have detected your installed software).



STEP 6 Click the Tools tab **1** to access some handy extra features. These are unrelated to your schedule, but can help you further clean and speed up your PC. For example, the Windows Startup Manager **2** lets you prevent specific tools from running automatically when your computer starts (by selecting them in the list and clicking Disable **3** or Remove). You can use the program's Uninstaller **4** to get rid of unwanted programs with a single click, and delete your most recent **system restore point** to free up space – though we don't recommend this in case you need to roll back your system.

STEP 7 As an alternative to creating a schedule, you can simply set Privacy Eraser to clean your PC automatically when Windows starts. Click the Settings button in the top-right corner and click General **1**. Ensure that 'Load at Windows startup' is selected **2**, then – in the Automation section – tick the 'Automatically clean at Windows start-up' box **3**. To prevent Privacy Eraser from continuing to run in the background once its task is complete, select 'Automatically exit program after cleaning' **4**. Click Apply or OK to confirm.



TIP OF THE FORTNIGHT

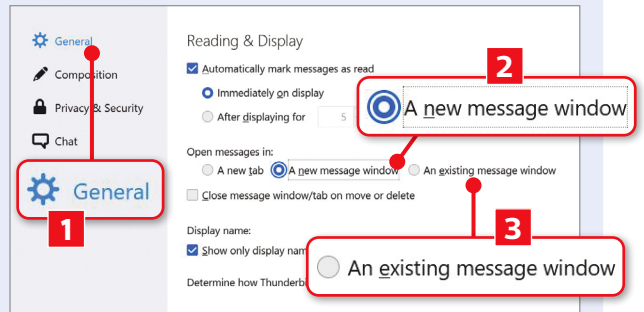
Open Thunderbird emails in multiple windows

After years of using Thunderbird (www.thunderbird.net) for my email, I've just discovered how to open multiple messages so that each appears in its own window. The default setting opens multiple messages in a single window, which keeps the interface looking neat and tidy but can feel restrictive, because you can see only one email at a time.

To remedy this, first select Tools, then Preferences. If you can't see the Tools option, try pressing the Alt key. Make sure General is selected

on the left (1 in screenshot), then scroll down to the 'Reading & Display' section, where you'll find a setting labelled 'Open messages in'.

The default option is 'A new tab', but I select 'A new message window' 2. Now each email you open will appear in its own window. You could also choose 'An existing message window' 3, which opens a new window when you select an



email, but closes the previous one.

Toby Coleman



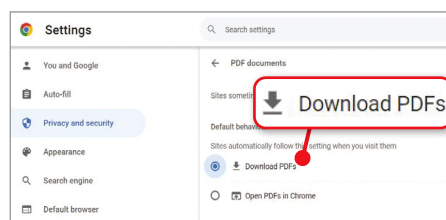
Toby wins a copy of our 2021 Back Issue CD

Buy it from us www.snipca.com/42077

BROWSERS

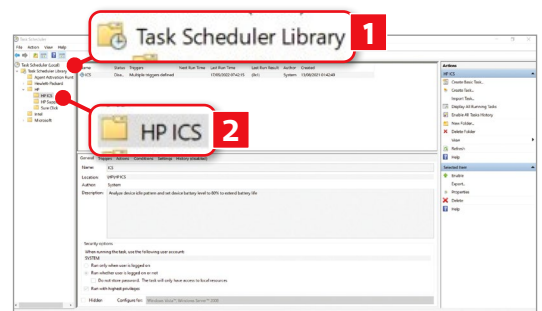
Force Chrome to download PDFs

I often have to edit PDFs that I've downloaded from the internet. One trick I learned a while ago is to ensure Chrome always downloads PDFs rather than opening them in a new tab. This requires making a change to Chrome's settings, so click the top-right icon (three vertical dots), then Settings followed by 'Privacy and security' on the left.



Next click 'Site settings' in the middle, then 'Additional content settings'. Finally, click 'PDF documents' and select 'Download PDFs' (see screenshot below left), rather than the default option, 'Open PDFs in Chrome'.

PN Thomson



HARDWARE

Disable HP's Intelligent Charging Scheduler

Since I last wrote to *Computeractive*, I've swapped my ageing MacBook running Windows 7 in VirtualBox for an HP ZBook Fury running Windows 10 Pro. However, I was alarmed to discover that the battery was running down completely in about an hour. The

fan never stopped, no matter how much I tweaked the power settings.

On an HP forum (www.snipca.com/42171), I learned that many others were having the same problem. The culprit turned out to be an HP service called 'Intelligent Charging Scheduler' which my Task Manager had red-flagged.

Why I stopped using...

A hard mouse pad

Last Christmas I was given a Logitech G440 hard mouse pad (£23 from www.snipca.com/42175) by someone who mistakenly thought I played lots of games. Apparently, hard pads are better for gaming because you can move the mouse faster.

And what I use instead...

The mouse skidded over the hard surface like a skater on ice - it was far too speedy for me. I've just entered my 75th year, so my hands aren't quite as

nimble as they once were. I never realised that the texture of a mouse mat could make so much difference. For a while I thought the mouse was to blame, or perhaps some missing drivers.

I bought a 'soft' replacement in the form of Logitech's Studio Series (£7.99 from www.snipca.com/42178, pictured). It's made from recycled polyester, which creates a little friction as you move your mouse, slowing it down so your movements are more precise. It's perfect for me - and cheap, too.



Alan Bell

Tell us why you stopped using a website, app or program: letters@computeractive.co.uk

HP's support team provided a solution. First press Win+X, select Computer Management, then click the dropdown arrow next to Task Scheduler. Next, select Task Scheduler Library (1 in screenshot below left), followed by HP then 'HP ICS' (2) and disable it in the window on the right. Finally, restart your PC.

I have no idea what triggered the problem. Deleting the latest Windows updates had no effect.

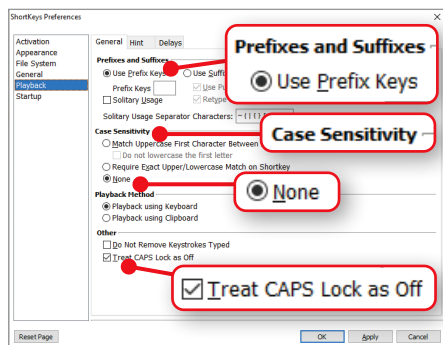
Pam Crane

SOFTWARE

Perform regular tasks quickly using keyboard macros

✓ I love using ShortKeys to create keyboard macros that work across all my programs. If you pick a suitable prefix when setting up your macros, it's a fantastic time saver. Set it up as I have done (see screenshot below) and you won't have to type the // prefix to run the macro. I've created a macro that adds my email address anywhere in Windows, and one that adds the date and time. I use the free ShortKeys Lite (www.shortkeys.com/lite), which gives you 15 macros to use. You're allowed to change these, but you can't exceed 15 unless you pay \$34.95 (around £28) for the full version.

Tom Boyd



SECURITY

Make sure Microsoft Defender is working properly

✓ I recently upgraded my laptop to Windows 11 and chose to use Microsoft Defender as my antivirus because I'd already set it up across all my PCs. The Defender logo appeared on my taskbar with a tick, and a message confirmed that no action was required.

However, a few days later when I wanted to scan a file I'd downloaded, I discovered that the antivirus component wasn't working. This is apparently a known bug in Windows 11. It seems that Microsoft has chosen not to publicise the

Reader recommends...

Acer Aspire XC-1660 PC

£549 from www.snipca.com/41827

✓ I was pleased to see this tower PC get a four-star 'Recommended' review in *Computeractive*, (see Issue 632, page 22) because I bought it in March and have been pleased with its performance. I prefer desktop PCs to laptops, but I can't afford a really powerful machine, so finding one for less than £550 was a nice surprise.

Your review mentioned some of the benefits that attracted me to this PC, namely that it doesn't use much energy, and so would help keep electricity bills down. I don't play



games, so the lack of a graphics card didn't bother me. I just want a solid PC that runs Windows well.

I also wanted easy access to its ports. I use the USB-C and USB 3.0 ports on the front almost every time I turn on the PC. The headphone jack is on the front too, which is handy. My only quibble is that all six of the other USB ports are at back, but I can live with that.

Stuart Coleridge

✉ Want to recommend hardware or software to fellow readers?
Email letters@computeractive.co.uk

issue despite the obvious dangers of using a PC without antivirus, especially when you think you're protected. I found details of the problem on Microsoft's Community Forum, as well as how to fix it: www.snipca.com/42169.

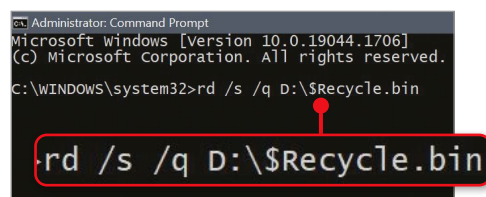
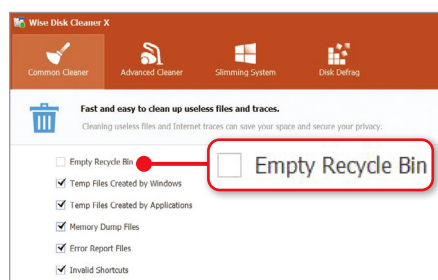
Bill McLachlan

SOFTWARE

Stop 'Wise Disk Cleaner' emptying your recycle bin

✓ I've only just tried Wise Disk Cleaner (www.snipca.com/39803), which you recommended in Issue 618 (page 19). I found it easy to use, but on rebooting my PC, I discovered that my recycle bin was empty. I thought this might be due to a recent Windows 10 update, but then I checked Wise Disk Cleaner's settings and found that 'Empty Recycle Bin' was ticked in the Windows System folder. Unticking this did the trick (see screenshot below).

Dave Cadman



SOFTWARE

Reclaim lost disk space using TreeSize Pro

✓ I always read your articles on how to remove bloatware and unnecessary files that hog disk space. Recently, I noticed that my data drive (D:) was running out of space more often than usual. I opened TreeSize to see what was going on, and found that just over 100GB was missing from use.

I tried various tools to reclaim this space without success, so I concluded that my Recycle folder on D: was corrupt. I reclaimed all the space by running Command Prompt as an administrator and typing the following command: `rd /s /q D:\$Recycle.bin`.


I've been using TreeSize Professional (€47.95 for 12 months, about £41) for more years than I care to remember, and I still find it invaluable. It's also useful for identifying large video files that need editing. You can compare the paid-for version with the free editions at www.snipca.com/42168.

Jackson Eagleson

Browser Tips

CHROME & EDGE

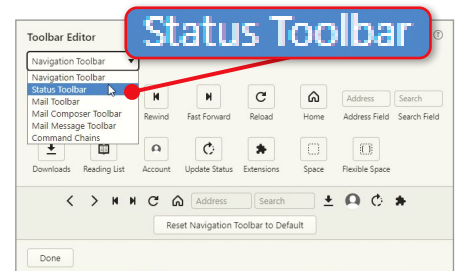
Search images using Google Lens more easily

 In Issue 629 (page 40), we wrote about a new option in Chrome that lets you right-click an image on a web page to search for it using Google Lens, so you can identify the subject of the picture. Version 102 of the browser, which was released last month, improves this feature by displaying results from Google Lens in a side panel on the right of the current page, rather than opening them in a new tab. These include a button to 'Find image source' to see pages that include the image (1 in our screenshot below), and visual matches for the picture on other sites.

Usefully, the side panel also includes a

Text button (2) that lets you copy and look up text contained in an image, and a Translate option (3) that lets you convert words from a foreign language into English and hear how they're pronounced. As before, at the bottom of the search results, you'll see a message that reads 'Didn't find what you were looking for? Retry with Google Images', with a button to 'Try It'.

Microsoft has added a similar, Google Lens-style feature to the latest version of Edge (also 102), which finds pictures from Bing Images. Right-click an image on a web page, choose 'Search in sidebar for image' and a side panel will open that shows you other sites on which the picture can be found, as well as visually similar images.




and choosing Edit then Remove. Click 'Done' to confirm your choices or 'Reset Navigation Bar to Default' to undo them.

The Toolbar Editor also lets you customise the Status Toolbar along the bottom of the browser by choosing that option in the dropdown menu (see screenshot above). Buttons include Capture Images (for taking screenshots), Panel Toggle (for showing and hiding Vivaldi's side panel) and Clock.










VIVALDI

Customise the the top and bottom toolbars

 We've often praised Vivaldi as the most customisable browser. The latest update – numbered 5.3.2679.3 – introduces additional options for tailoring its toolbars to suit your needs. Right-click the main Navigation Toolbar at the top of the browser and choose Customise Toolbar to open a new Toolbar Editor. This lets you add extra buttons to the toolbar, including Downloads, Reading List, Extensions and Update Status by dragging and dropping them into place. You can remove existing toolbar buttons by right-clicking them

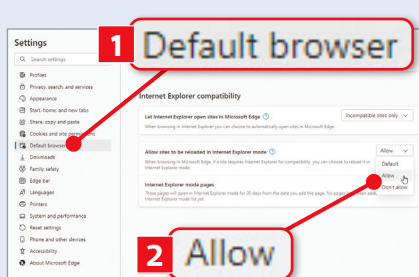
CHROMIUM

Insert special characters when typing online

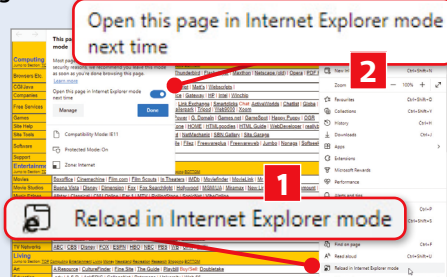
       Webmail services and social media-sites make it easy to insert emoji in your messages, but it's more difficult to use a special character that's not available on your keyboard, such as a Euro sign (€), fraction such as three-quarters (3/4) or a diacritic mark like a cedilla (ç), circumflex (â) or acute accent (é). One solution is to use an Alt key code to enter the character (see www.alt-codes.net) or the Character Map, that's built into Windows. An even easier

WORKSHOP Use Edge's Internet Explorer mode

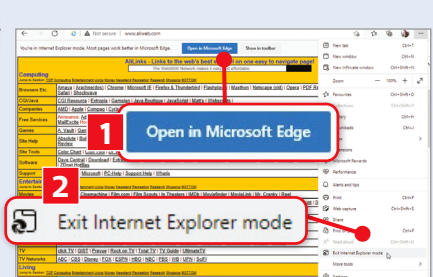
Microsoft officially retired Internet Explorer on 15 June, but you may occasionally come across old websites that only display correctly in that browser. Here's how to view them in Edge.



1 When you encounter a site that works best in Internet Explorer, click Edge's three-dot menu button and choose Settings, then 'Default browser' (1). Click the dropdown menu next to 'Allow sites to be reloaded in Internet Explorer mode' and choose Allow (2).



2 Click 'Restart' to relaunch Edge and reopen the old website. Now click the three-dot menu again and select 'Reload in Internet Explorer mode' (1). To always view the site using IE, select the option to 'Open this page in Internet Explorer mode next time' (2).



3 Click Done to confirm and browse the website using IE. To switch back to viewing the site in Edge, either click the 'Open in Microsoft Edge' button at the top of the browser (1) or click the three-dot menu again and select 'Exit Internet Explorer mode' (2).

BEST EXTENSION FOR...

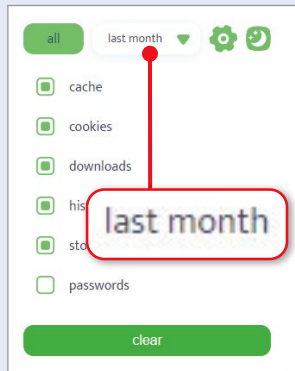
Clearing browser data

Smart Clean

Chromium

www.snipca.com/42106

Deleting data such as cookies, browsing history and cached images and files helps protect your privacy and blitz junk, but it also involves delving into your browser's settings every time. Smart Clean makes things easier by letting you clear these elements, as well as



passwords and downloads, at the click of a button or by using the keyboard shortcut Alt+C. You can choose the time frame for data deletion, from the last hour to the last month (see screenshot) or 'all time', and go into the extension's settings for useful extra options. These include playing a sound to confirm data removal, and deleting selected items automatically after

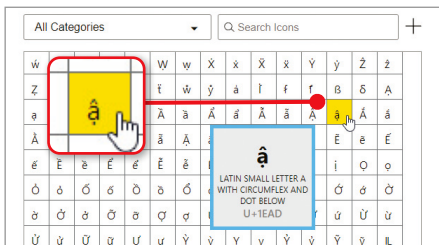
a specific time or when your browser starts. You can also **whitelist** sites so that their cookies are never cleared, and delete autofill data you've entered in online forms.

If you don't like that, try... Clear Browsing Data

Firefox

www.snipca.com/42108

This extension performs the same function as Smart Clean, but for Firefox. It lets you delete browsing data including cookies, history and **cache** with a single click, directly from your browser toolbar.



method, however, is to install a new extension called Special Characters (www.snipca.com/42098).

This tool lets you search more than 150,000 special characters across categories including Diacriticals, Cyrillic, Greek, Currency Symbols, Egyptian Hieroglyphs and Dingbats. Click the one you want to use (see screenshot above) to copy it to your clipboard, then press Ctrl+V to paste the character into your online message or document. The extension saves your most recently used icons for easy access and even lets you add your own custom characters.

CHROMIUM & FIREFOX

Search YouTube comments and transcripts



The user comments that appear below YouTube videos are often inane and even offensive, but they can also contain useful and interesting information.

Unfortunately, you can't bookmark a comment, so you may need to keep scrolling – and wade through a lot of waffle – to find the one you want.

To make things easier, install the extension YCS – YouTube Comment Search for Chromium browsers



(www.snipca.com/42101) and Firefox (www.snipca.com/42102), which helps you find relevant comments in a jiffy. It adds a new section below the video player that tells you the number of comments posted by users and lets you search for words that appear in them. You can filter the comments by date and time posted, number of likes and replies, and those made by the creator of the video.

YCS also lets you search video transcripts so you can jump straight to the moment when specific keywords appear – just click the dropdown menu next to the search box and select 'Trpt video' (see screenshot above). You can save your comment and transcript search results as a text file by clicking the extension's toolbar button and choosing 'Export cache'.

See our Cover Feature on page 50 to discover more ways to hack YouTube.

CHROMIUM

Control Netflix using hand gestures



When you're eating while watching Netflix on your computer, you run the risk of soiling your keyboard and

mouse with greasy fingers. An ingenious new extension called Freeze (www.snipca.com/42105) helps prevent this from happening by letting you control the streaming service using hand gestures.

Install the add-on, start playing a TV show or film on Netflix, then click Freeze's toolbar button, choose Activation and switch it on. Grant Netflix access to your

webcam and hold your hand about 60in (1.5m) from the lens. Make the 'rock-and-roll devil horns' salute (see screenshot below) to pause and resume playback, form a fist to mute the volume and make a two-finger victory sign to skip the programme intro.

Freeze doesn't collect your data or recognise anything apart from hand gestures, and can be switched off with a single click or when you close the Netflix browser tab. It also works with YouTube videos, if you grant YouTube access to your camera, to save you touching your keys or mouse buttons with grubby mitts.



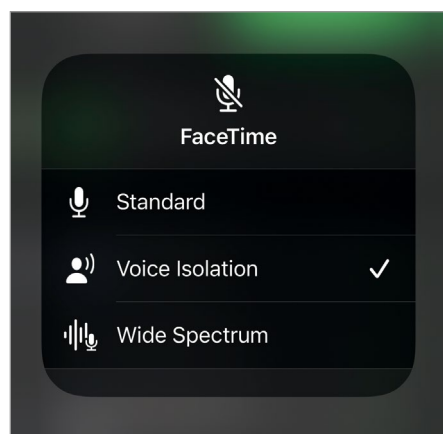
Phone and Tablet Tips

iOS

Make voice calls easier to hear

The iPhone is a miraculous device, packed to the gills with advanced technology, but making actual phone calls can sometimes feel like its Achilles heel. As of iOS 15, however, there's a solution for one of the iPhone's weaknesses – voice clarity. A somewhat hidden feature called Voice Isolation intelligently filters out background sounds and ambient noise, making it easier for your voice to be heard clearly by the person you're talking to. This is particularly useful if you're calling someone from a bustling environment, such as a railway station.

Voice Isolation works on all recent iPhone models, from the iPhone SE (2nd gen) and iPhone XS onwards. There is a small catch, however – it's only available during FaceTime video or audio calls.



Currently, it's not possible to enable it in standard voice calls. If you're calling another Apple user, this won't be a problem, as they'll be able to receive your call via their device's FaceTime app. But it means that if you're calling an Android user, you'll need to share a link with them first (tap the Create Link button in FaceTime). And this trick won't work at all when making calls to landlines.

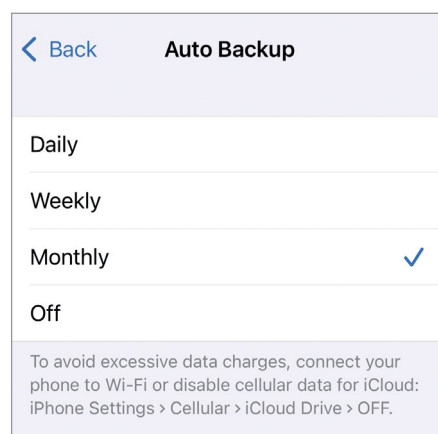
To enable Voice Isolation, launch FaceTime. Just before making your call, open the Control Centre (swipe down from the top right of your screen, or up from the bottom, depending on your model). You'll see a Mic Mode option here. Tap this, select the Voice Isolation option (see screenshot below left), then return to FaceTime to make your call.

ANDROID & iOS

Recover deleted WhatsApp messages

If you've ever accidentally deleted or lost an important WhatsApp message, then you may have wished there was a magic button to bring it back. Well, there is – sort of. The process is fiddly and there are conditions you'll need to bear in mind before you proceed (we'll get to these later).

First, you'll need to make sure that automatic backup is switched on – this makes regular backups to iCloud in iOS or Google Drive in Android. From the Chats screen, tap Settings (iOS) or the three-dot menu, then Settings (Android).



Tap 'Chats', 'Chat backup'. On an Android device, tap 'Back up to Google Drive', on an iPhone, tap Auto Backup. In both cases, select how often you want to back up – Daily, Weekly or Monthly (see screenshot above).

Assuming backup has been enabled, restoring lost messages involves uninstalling WhatsApp from your device, then reinstalling it from your app store. During the initial setup process, you'll be prompted to restore from a backup, if one is available. Do so to restore all your messages – including the lost ones.

There are a couple of big caveats, however. Firstly, you can only restore messages that have been deleted since the last backup was made – you'll see the date and time of the latest WhatsApp backup on the 'Chat backup' page. Additionally, if you've received messages

BEST NEW APPS

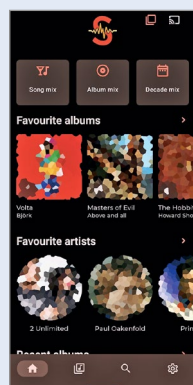
What you should install this fortnight

Symfonium

Free*

Android www.snipca.com/42207

The ideal media player for anyone whose music collection is split across



multiple libraries, Symfonium can pull music files from your device's storage as well as from Plex, Kodi and others and play or stream them. The latest update adds support for Subsonic and more. Costs £3.49 after free trial.

Infinite Painter

Free*

Android www.snipca.com/42208

iOS www.snipca.com/42209

Proving that Apple users don't have a monopoly on top-notch creative tools, Infinite Painter is a brilliant painting and drawing app for Android tablets and iPads. Upgrading to the Pro version (£8.99 iOS, £7.49 Android) unlocks lots of extra tools.

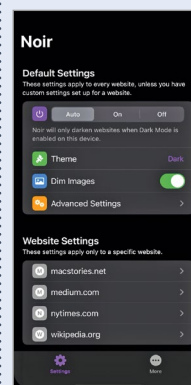


Noir

£2.49

iOS www.snipca.com/42210

Recently updated, Noir is a useful Safari extension that forces every website you



visit to display in dark mode – perfect for preventing eye strain or for night-time browsing. The latest version lets you select page-specific settings for websites and set up a custom schedule, among other improvements.

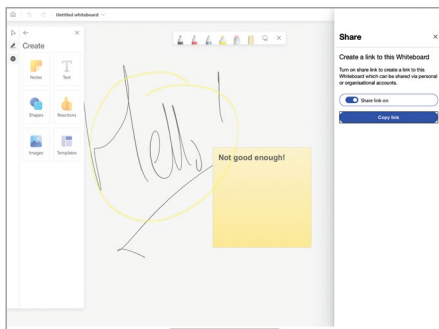
*Contains in-app purchases

Brilliant things to do on your device

since the last backup was made, you will lose these during the restore process. As such, we'd only recommend using this method in emergency situations, where restoring a lost message is essential.

ios Get iPadOS 16 features now

At its recent WWDC event, Apple announced (among other things) iPadOS 16. In addition to new multitasking options and a dedicated weather app (see page 8), Apple demonstrated a new iPad tool called Freeform. This was billed as a kind of digital whiteboard where you can scribble handwritten notes, add images and other files, and share or collaborate with others. It sounds useful, but you don't have to wait until Apple officially releases iPad OS 16 this autumn in order to gain these abilities, since Microsoft's excellent free Whiteboard app (www.snipca.com/42203) does more or less the same thing – and it's available right now.



Get Whiteboard from the App Store and run through the setup, signing in with a Microsoft account when prompted. Start a fresh whiteboard, select a pen type from the top toolbar and use your finger (or an Apple Pencil if you have one) to write on the board (see screenshot above). Tap the plus (+) icon on the left to open the Create pane, from where you can add notes, shapes, text and images, or select one of Microsoft's templates.

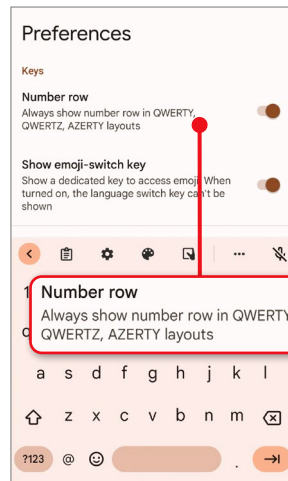
To collaborate with others, tap the Share icon in the top right, then enable 'Share link on' and tap 'Copy link' – you can now paste the link into an email or message and send it to anyone you want.

ANDROID Add a row of number keys to your keyboard

If you get annoyed at having to tap the number button every time you want to switch to typing numbers,

Google's keyboard for Android – Gboard – has a way to add a permanent row of number keys above the top row of letters.

You'll need Gboard installed for this, which comes preinstalled on most Android devices. But if, for some reason, you don't have it, head to www.snipca.com/42204 to grab it, then make sure it's selected as the default keyboard under Settings, System, 'Language and



input', 'On-screen keyboard'. Now, open an app where you can use the keyboard – Gmail, for example – and start typing. When the keyboard appears, tap the cog icon above the keys, then tap Preferences. Now tap the slider next to 'Number row' to enable it (see screenshot left).

Return to the app you were using and you'll now see an extra row of number keys along the top.

BEST APPS FOR...

Camping and caravanning

SiteSeeker

Free

Android www.snipca.com/42213

iOS www.snipca.com/42214

SiteSeeker is the official app from The Camping and Caravanning Club. You'll need to join the club (£45) to take full advantage of all the tools on offer, but many features are available for free, including the ability to browse 1,600 club camp sites across the UK and download maps for offline use. Members get access to exclusive offers and further camp sites.

Best For Caravanning club members

Searchforsites

Free

Android www.snipca.com/42215

iOS www.snipca.com/42216

Designed with motorhome owners in mind, this free app lists 31,000 campsites in the UK and Europe. Icons on the map denote different types of site. Tapping one provides details including prices and amenities. Maps are downloaded so the app can be used without Wi-Fi.

Best For Motorhome owners

AllTrails

Free*

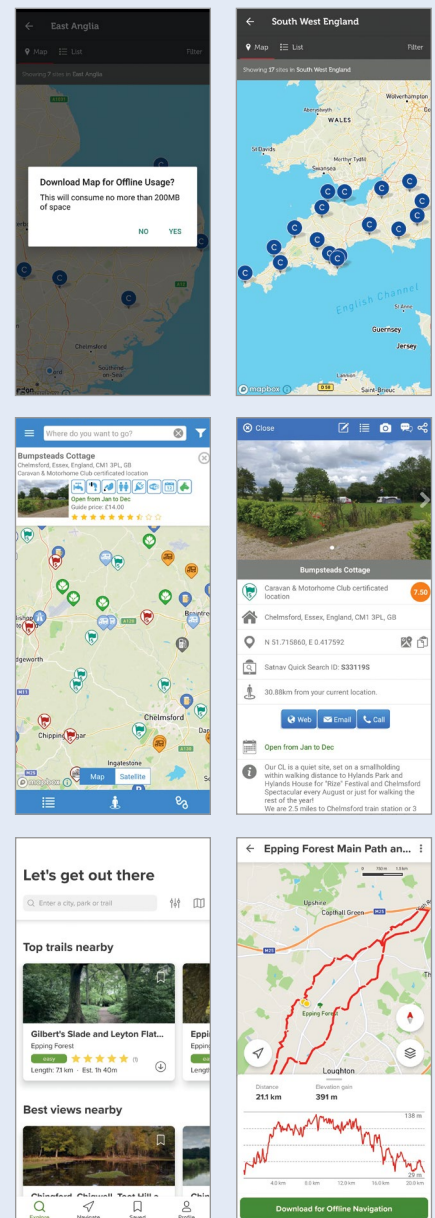
Android www.snipca.com/42217

iOS www.snipca.com/42218

This app features 300,000 maps of trails to walk, run or cycle, complete with user reviews. It uses your location to find nearby trails, or you can search by location. The Pro version (from £30) adds offline maps, overlays (for weather, pollen count and more) and the ability to print maps.

Best For Finding walking routes

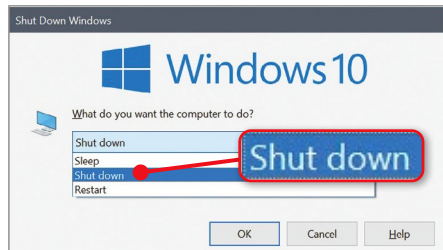
*Contains in-app purchases



WINDOWS 10 & 11

Press Alt+F4 to quickly shut down

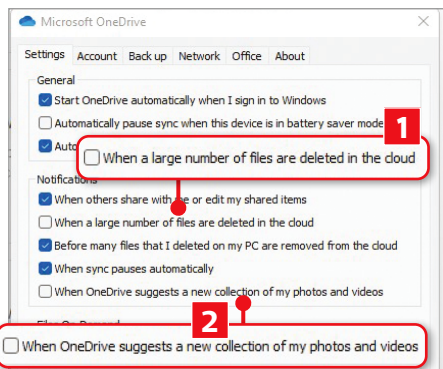
Pressing the Alt+F4 keyboard shortcut closes the program you're currently using, but it can also give you a quick way of restarting, sleeping or shutting down your computer. First, you need to make sure you're not using a program, so press Windows key+D to go to your desktop, or Windows key+T to highlight the first item on your taskbar. This frees up the Alt+F4 shortcut to open the Shut Down Windows box. From here, you can select your option (see screenshot below), then press OK.



WINDOWS 10 & 11

Turn off OneDrive notifications

OneDrive has all its notifications turned on by default, which can overwhelm you with alerts that you don't need. To turn these off, check to see if you have the OneDrive desktop app installed – it's the cloud icon in your taskbar. If so, click it, then the top-right cog followed by Settings. In the box that appears make sure the Settings tab is selected, then look in the Notifications section, where you'll see that all five options are selected. Choose which ones you don't want notifications for – in our screenshot below, we've unticked alerts for when a large number of files are deleted **1** and when OneDrive suggests a new collection of photos and videos **2**. Click OK to confirm the changes.



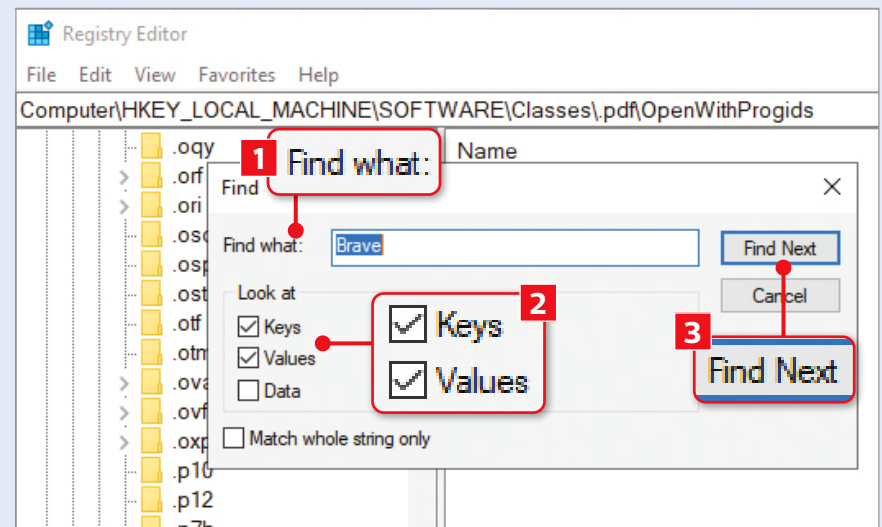
WINDOWS 10 & 11

Search the registry for a specific key or value

Unless you know the exact 'path' to navigate, trying to find a specific key or value in the Windows registry is like looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack.

Thankfully, there is a quicker way to find entries to tweak by using the Registry Editor's hidden search function. You can activate this by pressing Ctrl+F on your keyboard or by

clicking the Edit menu and choosing Find. Type the text you want to locate in the 'Find what' box **1**, and specify whether to look in registry keys, values or both **2** for matches (looking in 'data' is likely to prove more confusing than helpful). Click 'Find Next' **3** to view the first match, then press F3 to move on to the next one. The more precise you are about the key or value name, the faster your search will be.



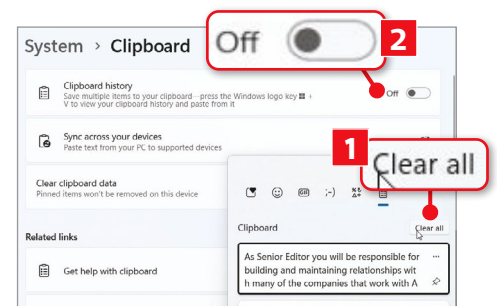
WINDOWS 10 & 11

Stop Windows storing your Clipboard history

The Clipboard is an essential part of Windows, allowing you to easily copy and paste content from one place to another, but it's also a privacy hazard. Anyone who uses your PC can simply press Windows key+V to open your Clipboard history and see the last 25 items you've copied.

For this reason, it's wise to regularly clear your Clipboard or stop Windows storing your copied content altogether. This is especially true in Windows, which stores your history in the cloud so it can be synced across devices.

In Windows 10, click the three-dot icon in the top-right corner of a Clipboard item and either click Delete to remove only that item or choose 'Clear all' to completely wipe your history.



Windows 11, makes things easier with a dedicated 'Clear all' button at the top of the Clipboard (1 in our screenshot above). Both operating systems let you 'pin' important content to stop it being deleted from your history.

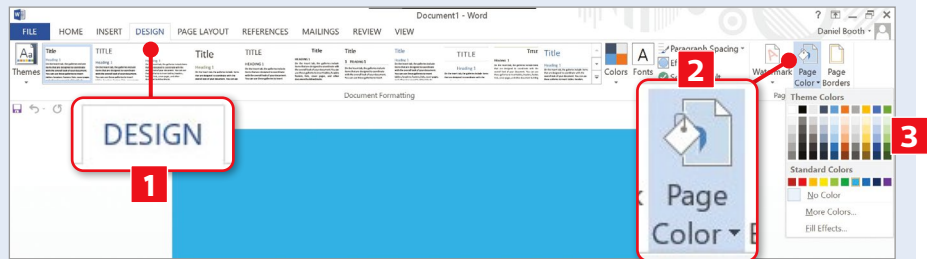
To prevent Windows from storing your Clipboard history, other than the most recent item you copied, press Windows key+I to open the Settings app and click System then Clipboard. Switch off the 'Clipboard history' option **2** to protect your copied content from prying eyes.

LIBREOFFICE WRITER & MICROSOFT WORD

Change page colour and print it



To change Word's default colour of white, open a document, click the Design tab (1 in our screenshot), then click Page Color (2) in the Page Background at the far right. You can now pick a colour from the Theme and Standard sections (3). To print this coloured page you'll have to change a setting in Word. Click File at the top left, then Options (or More, Options) at the bottom. Now click Display on the left, and in the Printing Options section, right, select the 'Print Background



Colors and Images' option. Click OK.

In LibreOffice Writer, click the Format tab, followed by Page Styles, then the Area tab. Now click the Colour button, followed by the Pick button, then choose

your colour and click Apply.

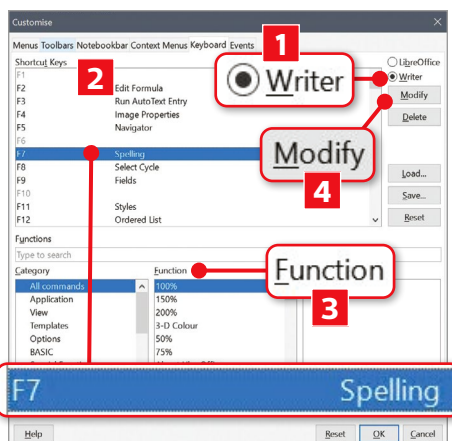
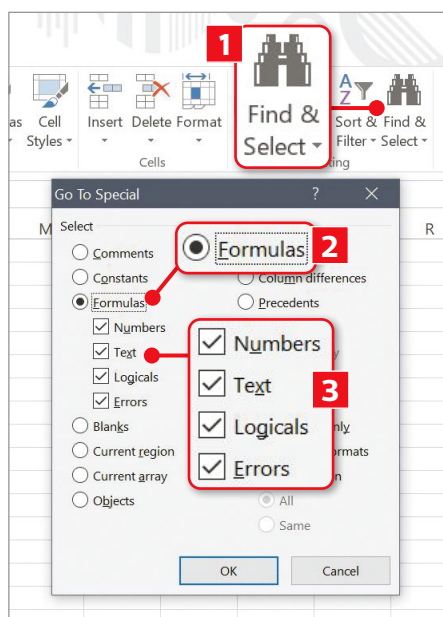
To print, click File at the top-left of the main toolbar, then Print. Click the LibreOffice Writer tab and tick 'Page background'.

MICROSOFT EXCEL

Find cells with formulas and replace them



If you need to see which cells have a formula in, click the Home tab, then in the far-right Editing section click 'Find & Select' (1 in our screenshot below), followed by Go To Special. Select the Formulas option (2) and it'll tick Numbers, Text, Logicals and Errors below (3) – referring to formulas that contain these elements. Untick any of these to narrow your search, then click OK. You can also find and replace cell values in Excel. Click 'Find & Select', followed by Replace. Now enter what you want to replace, and use the Within, Search and 'Look in' dropdown menus to narrow where you want to search for text.



LIBREOFFICE

Change what keyboard shortcuts do

LibreOffice tools have lots of useful keyboard shortcuts built in, but you can change them to gain more control over what they do. Open a document in LibreOffice Writer, then click Tools, Customise, and click the Keyboard tab in the box that opens.

At the top right you'll see Writer selected (1 in our screenshot above) because the shortcuts you're seeing are for that tool. Scroll the Shortcut Keys list for a shortcut you want to change (it's F7 for Spelling in our example (2)), then in the Function box (3) choose what you want that shortcut to do instead.

Click the Modify button (4) and you'll see your new option appear in the Shortcut Keys box.

To change shortcuts that work across all LibreOffice tools, select the LibreOffice option at the top right, above Writer.

ONLYOFFICE

Create your own caption styles

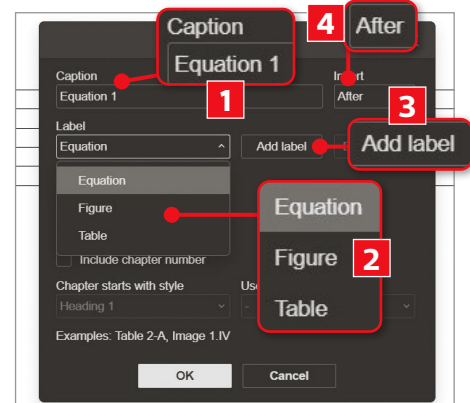


One way you can save time while using OnlyOffice is by creating your own format for different types of caption. Once you've added what you need to caption, right-click it then click Insert Caption. It will be automatically named Equation 1, Figure or Table in the field at the top (1 in our screenshot below), though you can change this in the Label dropdown menu (2). If none of these fit, click 'Add label' (3) and type your own, then click OK.

In the top-right Insert menu, select whether you want your captions to appear before or after the element (4). Also click the Numbering menu to pick a style for your captions, such as 1,2,3 or A,B,C.

Make any further tweaks, then click OK. To apply this caption throughout a document, click the Home tab, then the down arrow at the far right. This opens the Styles menu.

Now right-click the blue Caption link and select 'Update from selection'.



In The Club



Run a club or society? Here's how your tech can make it easier

Create short videos on YouTube

Video-sharing site TikTok has become a global phenomenon, with its short videos even propelling the UK's Eurovision runner-up, Sam Ryder, into the limelight. Part of the reason for TikTok's success is that its videos are intentionally short: creators have to work out how to get their point across in under 10 minutes.

However, TikTok is popular mostly with the young, and your club members will probably be more familiar with YouTube. So, we recommend trying its Shorts service, which lets you record videos that are either 15 or 60 seconds long (nothing in between). Once you've recorded it, you can upload it to your YouTube channel to promote your club or an event.

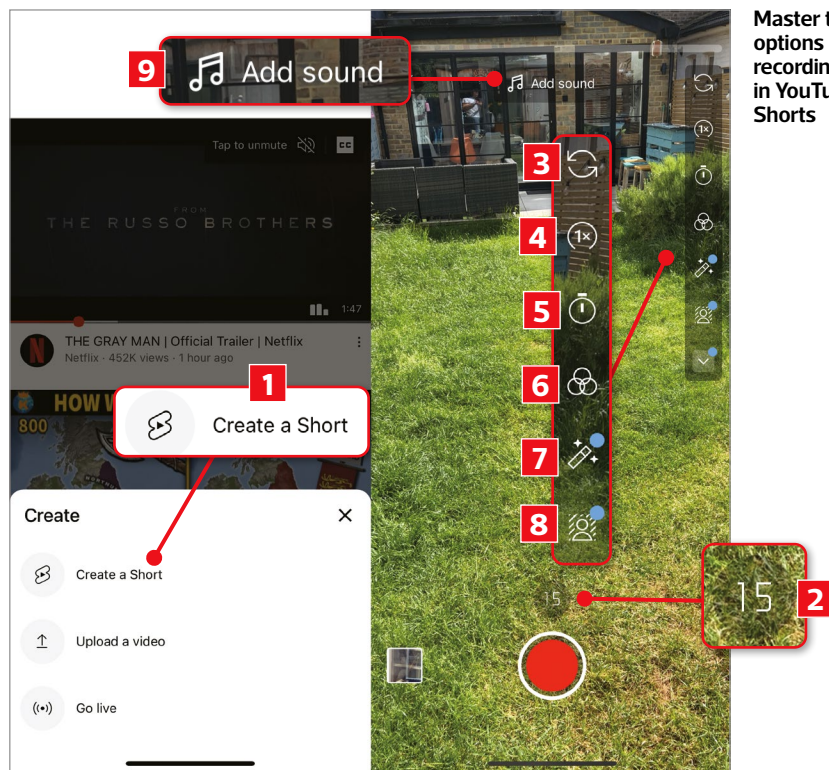
To start, open the YouTube app on your phone or tablet, then tap the '+' button at the bottom of the screen, followed by 'Create a Short' (1 in our screenshot right). You'll see the live video on the screen, with a red circle at the bottom. Above is a counter, which defaults to 15s (seconds) 2. Tap this to increase the length to 60s.

Now look at the icons on the right. The top one 3 switches between front and back cameras. The next down 4 lets you change the camera mode between slow-motion and high-speed, then there's a countdown timer 5: three, 10 or 20 seconds before the recording starts.

The next option is to add a video filter 6, followed by an automatic retouch to boost image quality 7. The cut-out person icon is the greenscreen mode 8, which selects a fake backdrop to shoot your videos against. Finally, tap the bottom arrow to turn on your phone's light if you're shooting somewhere dark.

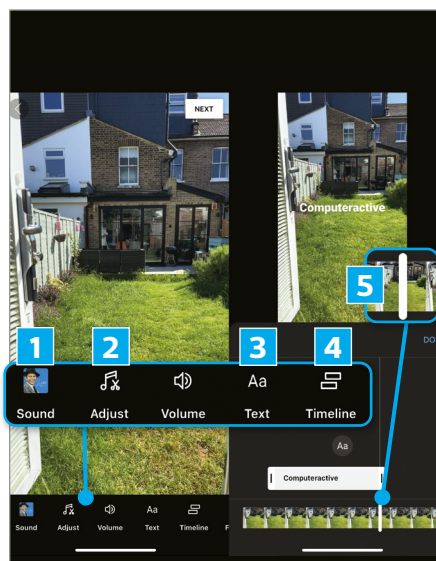
At the top, hit 'Add sound' 9 to pick a music track. There's a huge choice of popular (and less popular) tracks to choose from. The benefit of choosing music at this stage is that it will act as an audible cue of when it's time to change shots.

When you're ready, hit the red record button at the bottom. Tap the button



Master these options before recording video in YouTube Shorts

again to stop. You'll see that the timeline at the top will be marked with a vertical white bar. This is because YouTube Shorts lets you use multiple clips for one complete video. You can start and stop



Before uploading it to YouTube, add music and captions to your video

recording as many times as you like up to the time limit.

Tap the backwards arrow to remove a clip. If you want to insert a clip you've already recorded, then tap the thumbnail (to the left of the record button) and select it from your phone.

Once done, tap the big tick and you'll see options running across the bottom. Sound (1 in our screenshot left) lets you add a music file (if you didn't already), or change it.

The Adjust button 2 lets you choose which part of the song you want played over your video.

Tap 'Text' 3 to add text to the video, such as captions, and Timeline 4 to adjust the bar around your text, and 5 to select when it appears and disappears. Tap 'Next', then upload your video to YouTube.

You can choose to make the video Public (anyone can see), Unlisted (you have to share the link for people to watch it), or Private (only people you select can view it).

What's All the Fuss About...



Turing Image Super Resolution

Look sharp - Microsoft is enhancing the images we view online

What is it?

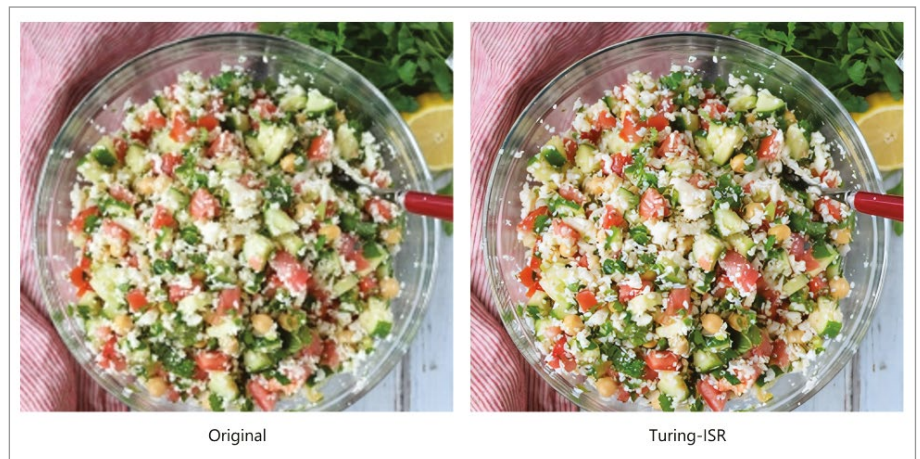
Turing Image Super Resolution (T-ISR for short) is a new technology from Microsoft that uses artificial intelligence (AI) to improve the quality of online images. This includes low-resolution photos captured with substandard cameras, pictures with small dimensions and images that are overly compressed.

What does that have to do with Microsoft?

In a blog post (www.snipca.com/42123), Microsoft says that low-quality images can spoil our memories and experiences. "We can all probably think of a time when we had the perfect image – a prized portrait of a family member to be framed or the best screenshot to illustrate your point in a presentation – but could not use it because the quality was too low". T-ISR fixes this problem through the power of 'deep learning' – see our main picture for 'before' and 'after' examples.

Sounds useful. How does it work?

We wish we could tell you the finer details, but Microsoft's explanation of how Turing Image Super Resolution works is rather technical, citing the use of "human eyes as the north star" and "perceptual and GAN loss" (no, us neither). Slightly clearer is that when developing T-ISR, Microsoft's Project Turing team (<https://turing.microsoft>



www.snipca.com) 'downscaled' a large number of high-resolution images to make them low-res and studied the data that was lost by reducing the number of pixels. They also applied distortions to images such as blurring, compression and gaussian noise (which randomly scrambles pixels).

The results trained the AI model to identify low-quality and distorted images and work backwards to restore missing data and 'upscale' pictures to make them much sharper.

Can T-ISR identify the subject of images?

Sort of. Although T-ISR isn't intended to recognise the subject of images like Google Lens (<https://lens.google.com>) does, Microsoft says it does a "very good job" of cleaning up noise based on their content. "For example, noise around a person's face [is] handled differently than the noise on a highly textured photo of a forest".

Additionally, rather than restore lost data to an image based solely on the surrounding pixels, Turing Image Super Resolution uses a 200-layer convolutional neural network (a type of AI that analyses visual imagery) to recover pixels for specific image types and scenes.

Enough of the jargon, how can I see T-ISR in action?

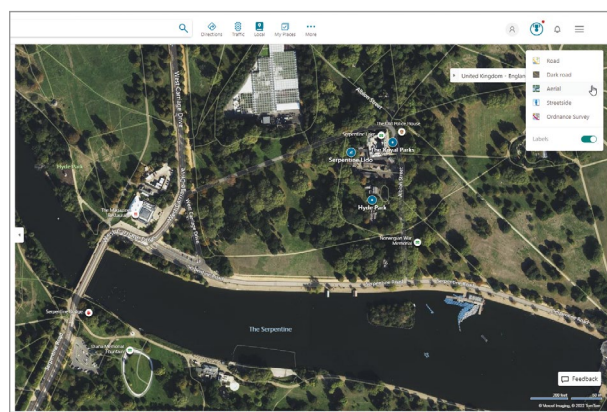
Turing Super-Resolution is already being used by Microsoft's mapping service Bing Maps (www.snipca.com/42124) to improve the quality of its aerial imagery for "most of the world's land area" (see image below left). Microsoft says it enhances photos of all types of terrain and that in side-by-side tests with the original imagery, users prefer the 'super-resolved' versions 98 per cent of the time.

T-ISR is also coming to Microsoft Edge to improve the quality of images you see on web pages. Microsoft hopes this will make Edge "the best browser for viewing images on the web" and tempt users away from Chrome. You can try it now by installing the Canary preview build of Edge from www.snipca.com/42125.

Microsoft says its ultimate 'mission' for Turing Super-Resolution is to turn any program where people view, consume or create media into an HD experience.

Do I need to turn on T-ISR manually?

No, the AI technology works automatically, wherever it detects low-quality and distorted images. However, some Edge Canary users have found an option to disable T-ISR in the 'Privacy, search and services' section of the browser's Settings, if its sharp dose of reality proves too much.



Bing Maps is already using Turing Image Super Resolution to improve the quality of its aerial imagery

HACK YouTube



YouTube is an endless source of entertainment, but it can also be frustrating, annoying and invasive. **Robert Irvine** reveals every secret trick to make the video-sharing service work better

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Skip ads and sponsored messages in videos
- Stop YouTube playing videos automatically
- Hide recommendations based on your viewing
- Add download buttons to YouTube videos
- Adjust playback speed to watch videos faster
- Bookmark specific moments in videos
- Increase your default video resolution to 4K
- Switch to a tracker-free version of YouTube

More than 30 million people visit YouTube every day to watch clips of TV shows, music videos, the latest 'viral' content and much more, making it the second most popular website in the world (after Google Search). Sadly, we suspect that many visitors have recently reached the same conclusion we have: YouTube is getting worse.

From unskippable ads and sponsored messages before almost every video to irrelevant 'recommendations' and poor streaming quality, the YouTube website and app have become increasingly frustrating and irritating to use. The once innovative service now reserves its best features – such as the ability to download videos and play them in the background

– for its £11.99-per-month Premium subscribers – and has started removing options that viewers find useful, such as the dislike count.

With so much great content to watch for free, YouTube is difficult to ditch completely – unlike Google Search (see Issue 632, page 50). The good news is that there are plenty of ways you can 'hack' the video-sharing site to improve your viewing experience, either by installing special extensions in your browser or by tweaking hidden settings.

Here we explain how to fix common YouTube annoyances, add clever new features to the site, improve your streaming quality and protect your privacy so Google doesn't watch *you* while you're watching YouTube.

MAKE YOUTUBE LESS ANNOYING

Block adverts in YouTube videos

YouTube seems to show more adverts than ever these days, sometimes making you sit through two or even three non-skippable ads before you can start watching a video. It may also interrupt your viewing with ‘mid-roll’ commercial breaks, especially during longer content, and even play an ad after a video has finished. Many standard ad blockers can no longer combat this nuisance, so unless you pay £11.99 per month to subscribe to ad-free YouTube Premium, there seems to be no escape.

Thankfully, there is a solution in the form of ‘Adblock for Youtube’, a brilliant extension for Chrome and other Chromium browsers (www.snipca.com/42128) and Firefox (www.snipca.com/42129). Once installed, this add-on automatically blocks all adverts that appear before, during and after YouTube videos, with no need for any configuration - though you can disable ad blocking if you want to support specific content creators.

Occasionally, there’s a brief pause before a video starts playing, but otherwise the only indication that an ad has been blocked is a tiny ‘cleaned by Adblock for Youtube’ message under the bottom-right corner of the player (see screenshot below). The extension works on YouTube videos embedded on other sites, and can also block annoying annotations that obscure your view.

Alternatively, you can switch to using the privacy-focused browser Brave (<https://brave.com>), which includes a built-in ad blocker that *does* block most YouTube adverts. The powerful content

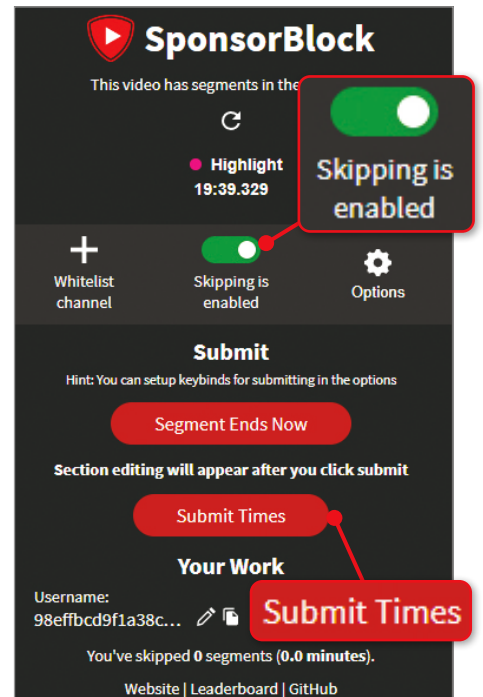
blocker uBlock Origin (www.snipca.com/42138) is also very reliable at filtering in-video ads.

Blocking ads in the YouTube mobile app isn’t as easy, and the only real way to avoid them is to switch to an alternative app such as NewPipe (<https://newpipe.net>). See our box on page 57 for more information.

Skip sponsored messages on videos

Ads aren’t the only intrusion when watching YouTube videos - an increasing number of clips are now preceded by lengthy sponsored messages that advertise products and services, or encourage you to subscribe to a channel. These sponsorship messages are able to bypass ad blockers and, although they help to support content creators, they can really test your patience.

You can avoid many of these sponsored messages by installing ‘SponsorBlock for YouTube’ (www.snipca.com/42131), which is available for all the main browsers. This extension lets you automatically skip sponsored intros and outros, subscription reminders and “other annoying parts of YouTube videos” that it identifies from its ever-expanding database (see screenshot above right). It’s a **crowdsourced** tool, which means users can improve its effectiveness by reporting any paid-for promotions they encounter. Click its toolbar button and choose Segment Starts Now when a promotional message begins, then Segment Ends Now when it’s over. Click the button to Submit Times, and SponsorBlock will add the segment to its database. You can **whitelist**



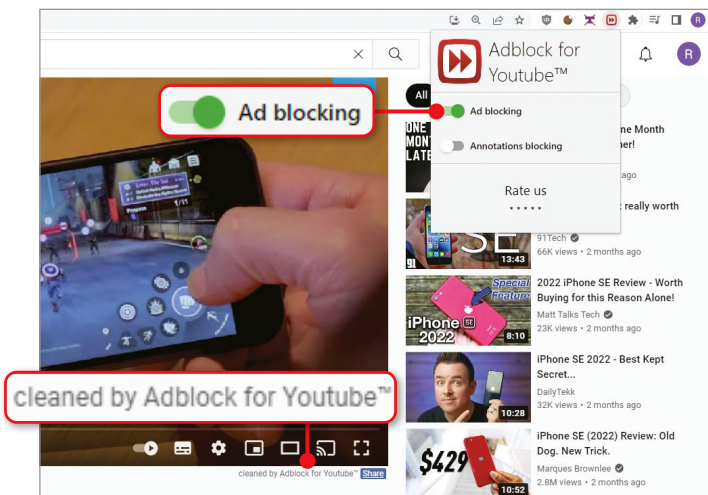
SponsorBlock automatically detects and skips sponsored messages in YouTube videos

If you don’t like the ‘info cards’ that appear at the end of videos, asking you to subscribe to the creator’s channel, you can disable them without an extension. Click your profile picture in the top-right corner of the YouTube site and choose Settings, then ‘Playback & performance’ and untick the ‘Info cards’ option.

Stop YouTube videos playing automatically

Some people like the way YouTube automatically plays a related video when you finish watching the current one, because it saves you having to search for another clip manually. But for the rest of us, auto-playing videos are more of an annoyance than a convenience, because they drag you down a YouTube ‘rabbit hole’ and divert your attention from more important tasks. Happily, you can disable auto-playing content and stop YouTube stealing your precious time. When watching a video on the YouTube website, click the Auto-play switch in the controls along the bottom of the player to turn it off - the icon will change from a ‘play’ to a ‘pause’ symbol and confirm that ‘Auto-play is off’ (see screenshot [1](#) on page 52). The same switch is available in the YouTube app for Android and iOS, but appears at the top of the video player.

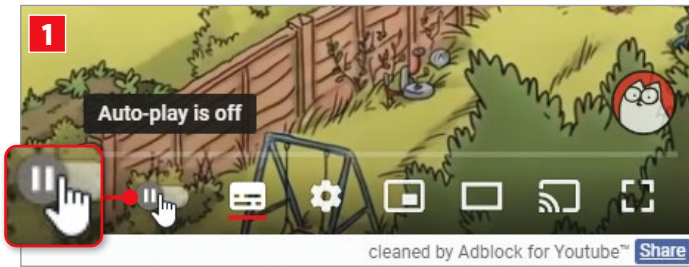
Another way to disable Auto-play is to tap your profile picture in the top-right



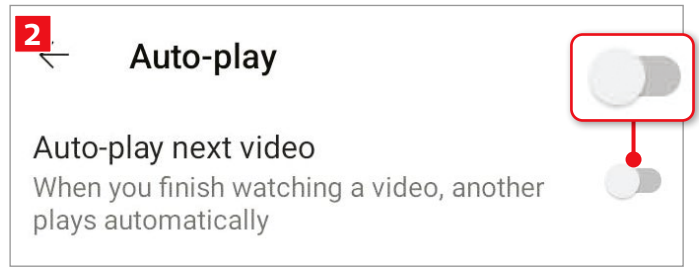
You can avoid adverts before, during and after YouTube videos using ‘Adblock for Youtube’

YouTube channels to allow them to show sponsored messages or disable skipping temporarily.

SponsorBlock’s developer claims the extension now has more than three million users who have saved nearly 585 years between them by skipping sponsored segments around 570,000 times (www.snipca.com/42132).



You can switch off Auto-play when watching a YouTube video...



...and via Settings in the YouTube app for Android, iOS and smart TVs

corner of the app's home screen, choose Settings then Auto-play, and switch off 'Auto-play next video' (see screenshot 2). You'll also find this option in the YouTube app for smart TVs, so you can stop videos auto-playing on your big screen.

Restore the dislike count to YouTube videos

Last November, YouTube decided to drop the 'dislike' count from video pages, so you could no longer see how many viewers had clicked or tapped the thumbs-down button. Its official reason was to protect content creators from being unfairly targeted by internet trolls, while still privately being able to see how many people disliked their work. The downside for YouTube users is that you can no longer tell at a glance if a video is likely to be poor quality and not worth watching, because there's no counterbalance to the number of 'likes'.



Restore the dislike count to its rightful place below YouTube videos

You can fix this by installing Return YouTube Dislike in Firefox, Chrome, Edge, Brave and other Chromium browsers (www.snipca.com/42133). This restores the dislike count to its rightful place below the video player (see screenshot above), so you can see how many times a clip has been downvoted - as well as upvoted - and click to express your own opinion.

The extension has a five-star rating in the add-on stores and more than two million users, so clearly YouTube underestimated the popularity of negativity.

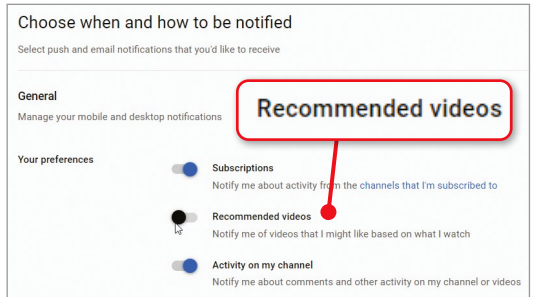
Stop YouTube recommending videos

Another way YouTube tries to keep you watching indefinitely is to recommend further videos to watch as soon as you've finished watching the current one. These suggestions are based on your viewing history, but don't always reflect your tastes - especially if you sometimes open videos accidentally. To stop YouTube recommending videos, click or tap your profile picture in the top-right corner of the website or app and choose Settings. Select 'Notifications' and switch off the option 'Recommended videos' (see screenshot above right).

Alternatively, if you don't mind recommendations but find YouTube's suggestions inaccurate or intrusive, you can reset and depersonalise them. Click the History link on the left-hand side of the YouTube website - or go to Settings, 'History & privacy' in the mobile app - and select 'Clear all watch history' and 'Clear all search history'. You can prevent YouTube from recommending videos based on what you watch in future by choosing 'Pause watch history'.

Activate dark mode in YouTube

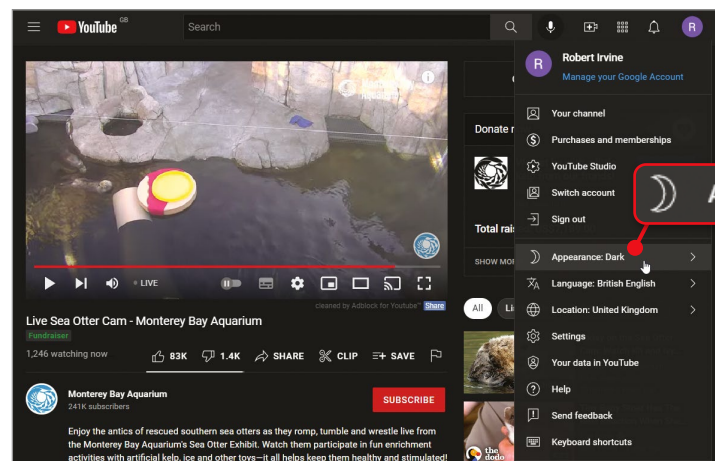
When you're watching YouTube at night, the glare of its white background can take its toll on your eyes and distract you from



Prevent YouTube from tempting you to watch its recommended videos

the video you're viewing. To make things easier on your vision and create a more cinematic experience, transform all that white into black by activating YouTube's dark mode. On the website, click your profile image in the top-right corner, select Appearance (see screenshot below) and choose 'Dark theme' to turn out the lights. In the YouTube mobile app, press your profile picture, choose Settings and select General. Tap 'Appearance' (Android only) and apply 'Dark theme' there.

For a more nuanced approach to mood lighting, install 'Turn Off the Lights' (www.snipca.com/42136) in your browser. Click the extension's lightbulb toolbar button when viewing a video, and everything else on the page will fade to dark. Then click again to bring the lights back up. You can customise the dark theme in the add-on's Options and use speech recognition to switch it on and off.



Protect your eyes when viewing videos at night by applying YouTube's dark theme

ADD USEFUL FEATURES TO YOUTUBE

Add download buttons to YouTube videos

Google won't let you download videos from YouTube unless you subscribe to YouTube Premium, which is perhaps not surprising when you consider how much money the site makes from ads. Its terms of service forbid you to download content without permission from YouTube or the respective rights holder, and Google has banned YouTube-downloading extensions from the Chrome Web Store (though there are plenty of tools for grabbing videos from other sites).

However, there's lots of content on YouTube that you *are* permitted to download, such as public domain videos that aren't copyrighted, clips covered by a Creative Commons licence (www.snipca.com/42201) and homemade videos that friends have shared with you.

You can download such videos in Chrome using an extension called Tampermonkey and a **script** called Local YouTube Downloader. Install Tampermonkey from the Chrome Web Store (www.snipca.com/42143) then head to the Local Video Downloader page on the user-script site Greasy Fork: (www.snipca.com/42144). Click the 'Install this script' button, select 'I already have a user script manager, let me install it!' and click Install.

Now when you open a YouTube video page, you should see a 'Download high-resolution mp4 in one click' link below the player (see screenshot below) - ignore the official Download button, which prompts you to subscribe to YouTube Premium. Click this link and, after a short delay, Local Video Downloader will merge the video and

audio, and download the result as an MP4 file.

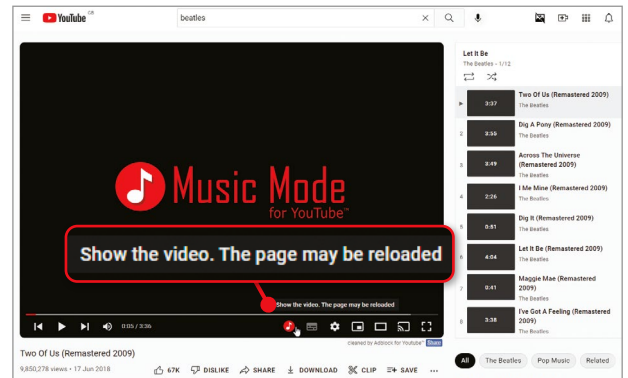
If that sounds like too much hassle, you may prefer to use a browser that supports YouTube-downloading extensions, such as Easy Youtube Video Downloader Express for Edge (www.snipca.com/42145) and Firefox (www.snipca.com/42146).

This places a Download As button below YouTube videos that lets you grab videos in MP4 format (though to download in Full HD 1080p you must upgrade to the Pro version). You can also save just the audio as an MP3.

An alternative is to download YouTube videos using a third-party program such as 4K Video Downloader (www.snipca.com/40998). This lets you copy and paste the URLs of YouTube videos, then download them in a choice of resolutions and formats.

Listen to music on YouTube without the videos

Although Google's official music-streaming service is now YouTube Music (<https://music.youtube.com>), most of us still use the main YouTube website to find and listen to old and new songs on our computers. Indeed, the site has more listeners than Spotify and Apple Music combined. The trouble is that when you only want to listen to music in the background, the accompanying videos can be distracting and many aren't worth viewing - especially when they're just a photo or a cobbled-together collage.



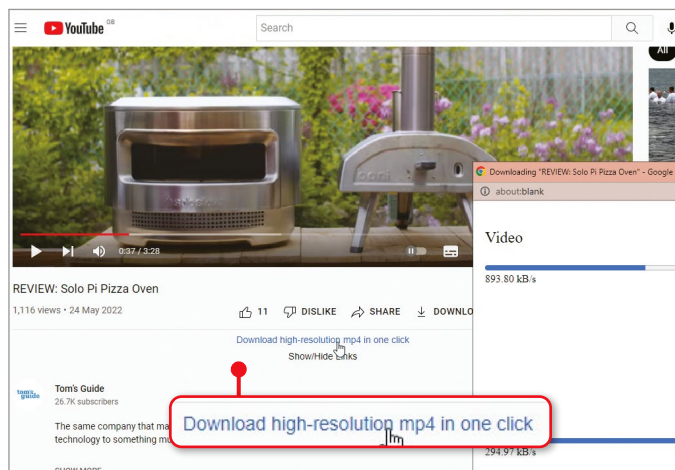
Music Mode for YouTube lets you listen to songs without the accompanying videos

You can hide these unnecessary visuals and turn YouTube into the biggest and best jukebox in the world by installing an extension called 'Music Mode for YouTube' (www.snipca.com/42140) in Chrome and other Chromium browsers. This blocks videos so that only the audio plays. It can also hide the thumbnail images for videos and skip ads, saving you **bandwidth** and preventing interruptions to your listening.

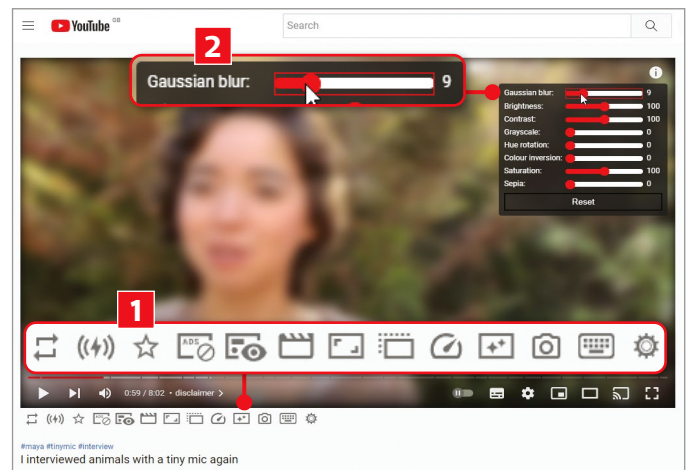
Music Mode also works on YouTube Music and on YouTube videos embedded in other sites. You can switch it on and off easily by clicking the 'Show/Hide the video' icon that the extension adds to the YouTube player's controls (see screenshot above) or by clicking its toolbar button.

Adjust playback speed, apply filters and more

One of the most useful and versatile tools for hacking YouTube is 'Enhancer for YouTube' (www.snipca.com/42147 - see screenshot below), which is available for Chrome (and other Chromium browsers), Edge and Firefox. This excellent extension



You can use a Tampermonkey script to add download links to YouTube videos in Chrome



'Enhancer for YouTube' adds lots of useful and clever features to the video player, including filters

READER OFFER!

ADD A
DISC FOR
£5.95

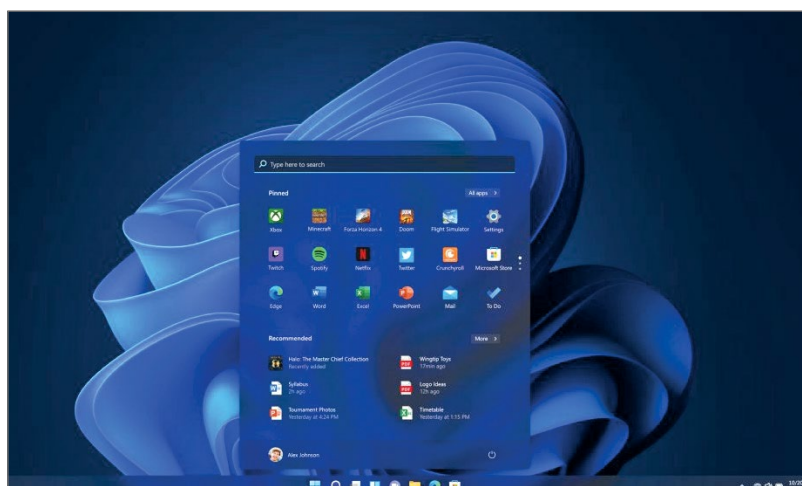


Buy **Windows 11 Pro** for just **£79.99!**

In this special offer you can buy **Windows 11 Pro** for just £79.99 – that's £140 cheaper than Microsoft's full price of £219.99.

To buy **Windows 11 Pro**, visit www.snipca.com/41588 and click the red **Buy Now** button on the right.

If you have any questions about your order please email
editor@computeractive.co.uk



JUST SO YOU KNOW...

This offer can be used by one person only, and expires at midnight on **5 July, 2022**. It's a lifetime licence for one computer.

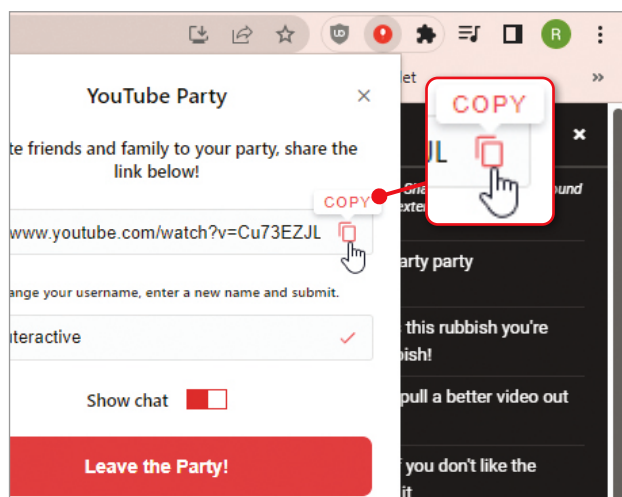
inserts a panel of new options below the YouTube player (1 in screenshot on page 53) that let you loop videos, boost the volume, switch to cinema mode, pop out the content to a floating player window (see page 56) and fix several annoyances we covered in the previous section, such as skipping ads and removing info cards. You can also use keyboard shortcuts to toggle these features on and off.

However, our favourite option in Enhancer lets you control the playback speed of videos by pressing Ctrl and scrolling your mouse wheel - scroll up to whizz through the content much faster or down to view it in slow motion. This is much more convenient than using YouTube's own playback controls (which you access via the Settings cog), and you can set your preferred speed in the add-on's Options.

Other useful features include the ability to capture screenshots of videos with a single click of the Screenshot button, and to adjust the picture quality using video filters such as Brightness, Contrast and 'Gaussian blur' (2). If you only install one extension for hacking YouTube, it should be this.

Watch YouTube videos with friends and family

Watching YouTube videos tends to be a private experience, but there are times when you may want to watch along with other people, such as during an online presentation or when playing recordings of family events, full-length films or nostalgic playlists. Install YouTube Party (www.snipca.com/42150) in any Chromium browser and you can sync your viewing with that of friends and relatives anywhere in the world, to enjoy and discuss videos at the same time.



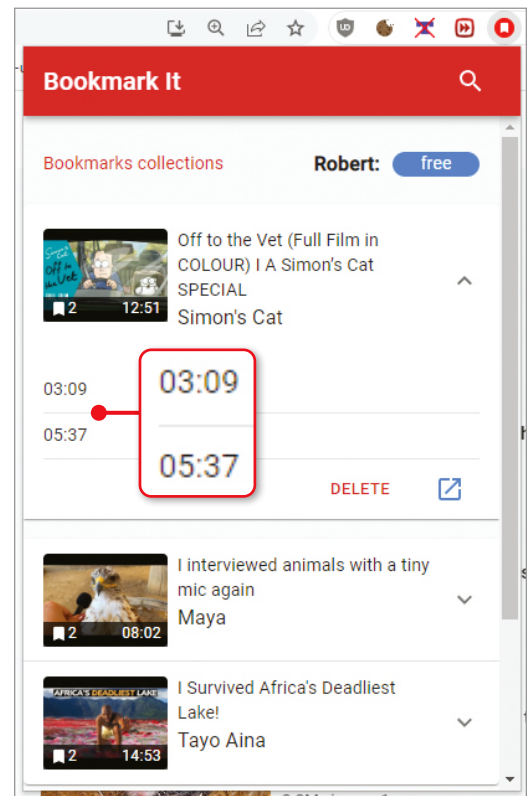
YouTube Party lets you watch and discuss videos with friends all over the world

The extension is very easy to use - simply open the video you want to watch with other people, click the YouTube Party toolbar button, enter a username and click 'Start the Party'. Copy and paste the link provided (see screenshot below left) into an email or social-media message, send it to your participants and ask them to install the add-on. When they click the link, they'll automatically join the watch party, and you can all talk about what's happening on-screen in the chat panel that opens on the right-hand side of your browser. To return to viewing the video privately, click the toolbar button again and choose 'Leave the Party'.

Bookmark specific moments in videos

The simplest way to revisit a specific moment in a YouTube video is to click the three-dot button below the bottom-right corner of the player and choose 'Show transcript'. You can then scroll through the transcript and click a timestamp to jump to that point in the video. However, an even better option is to bookmark the best parts of videos, so you can access them instantly later. That's the idea behind Bookmark It (www.snipca.com/42151).

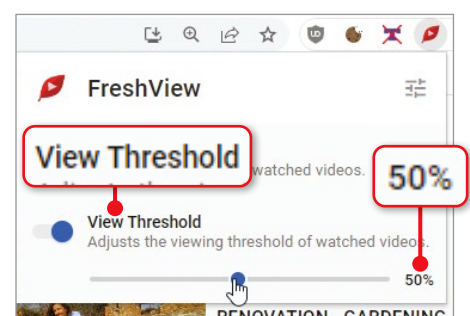
Available for Chromium browsers and Firefox, this extension lets you save specific moments in YouTube videos, with the option of adding notes to these bookmarks. To use Bookmark It, click its toolbar button and choose Log In/Register to sign up for a free account (you can use your Google account to save time). Now start playing a YouTube video and, when you get to a good bit, press **b** on your keyboard to create a bookmark and add a comment. Press 'Enter' to save or Esc to cancel. You can access your bookmark collection by clicking Bookmark It's toolbar button, and click the timestamps (see screenshot above right) to revisit your saved moments in the relevant videos. Click 'Delete' to remove bookmarks once you've finished with them.



Save interesting moments in YouTube videos and revisit them later using Bookmark It

Hide videos you've already watched

There are some YouTube videos you'll want to play again and again, but for many others, once is enough. You can usually tell which clips you've already watched by looking at the red progress bar along the bottom of their thumbnail images, but wouldn't it be better to hide these videos so you can focus on new content? That's the purpose of 'FreshView for YouTube' (www.snipca.com/42152), which automatically removes videos from YouTube's homepage, search results, channels, playlists and recommendations once you've seen them. Usefully, you can specify a 'view threshold' so that FreshView removes a clip only after you've watched more than, say, 50 per cent of it (see screenshot below).



Hide videos you've already seen by installing FreshView for YouTube

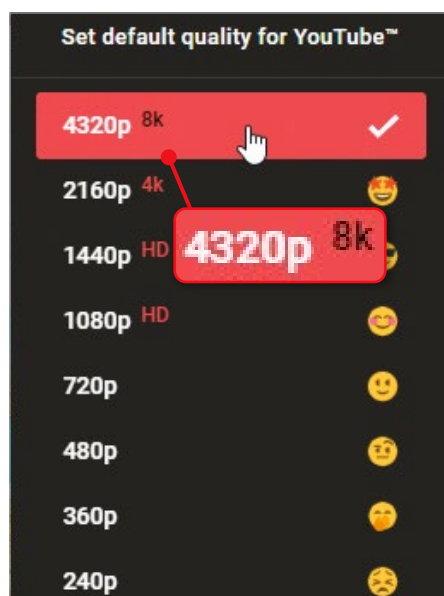
IMPROVE YOUTUBE'S STREAMING QUALITY

Play YouTube videos in 4K and 8K

YouTube automatically adjusts the streaming quality of videos, based on the current speed of your internet connection. If it's really slow, you may only get standard definition (360p or 480p), but otherwise the default quality is 720p high definition. You can change this manually by clicking the cog icon below a video and selecting a resolution option from the Quality menu. However, you may decide that you *always* want to stream at the highest quality. There are lots of extensions that let you override YouTube's settings to stream in 4K or even 8K, where available, but our favourite is 'Auto HD/4k/8k for YouTube'.

Install this add-on in your Chromium browser (www.snipca.com/42155) or Firefox (www.snipca.com/42156), then click its toolbar button and set your preferred quality for YouTube videos. The options go up to 4320p, or 8K (see screenshot below), but note that the quality will default to 1080p (HD) on videos where 4K or 8K aren't available. Click 'Auto' to return to using YouTube's automatic setting. The brilliant extension 'Enhancer for YouTube' (see page 53) has a similar option - click its Options cog, tick the 'Automatically select a playback quality' section and set your preference, up to 8K.

You can increase the video quality in YouTube's mobile apps by tapping your profile picture and choosing Settings then 'Video quality preferences'. Select 'Higher



You can force YouTube to play videos at 4K or 8K resolution where available

picture quality' for Wi-Fi and for mobile networks - though bear in mind that this will use more data. To set a specific resolution, tap the Settings cog in the top-right corner of a video and choose Quality, then Advanced.

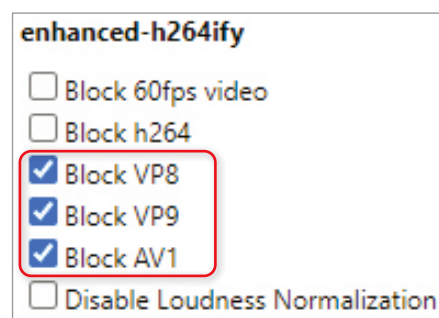
Stop YouTube videos buffering

If YouTube videos often 'buffer' - which means the video freezes during playback because the data stream can't keep up - the problem may be a slow internet connection or a lack of memory or processing power on your PC. Reducing the video quality using one of the methods described in the previous tip can help prevent buffering, but if not, Enhanced-h264ify (www.snipca.com/42165) may do the trick.

Available for Chromium browsers and Firefox, this extension stops YouTube using VP8 and VP9 *codecs* to stream videos, and makes it use a format called H.264 instead (see screenshot above right). This format is 'hardware accelerated' by *GPUs* to deliver smooth video playback using less processor power, which is especially useful on older, lower-spec PCs. It also lets you stop videos playing at 60 frames per second (fps), which can cause problems on less powerful computers.

To check whether a video is likely to cause buffering problems, right-click it and choose 'Stats for nerds'. A panel will open revealing your current connection speed and your 'Buffer Health', which shows how much data YouTube is preloading to prevent playback hitches.

If videos keep buffering on your phone or tablet, try switching to 'Data saver' mode on the 'Video quality preferences' screen. This will reduce the picture quality but make streaming smoother.



Enhanced-h264ify can stop YouTube videos buffering on older computers

You can set this mode to activate automatically when your connection is slow by tapping 'Data saving' in Settings and enabling 'Data-saving mode'.

Resize the YouTube video player

As well as its standard player, YouTube lets you view videos full-screen, in 'cinema mode' (which stretches the player to the width of your browser) and in a mini player in the bottom-right corner of your browser. These are useful, but we prefer the flexibility of 'Enhancer for YouTube'. This extension provides a pop-out video player that you can resize to strike the best balance between visibility and quality, and lets you watch videos while visiting other sites.

Simply click the 'Pop-up player' icon in the extension's control panel to move the video to a floating player window, which you can then move around your screen and resize by dragging its corners or edges. The player has its own taskbar button, so you can open it independently of your browser. To set a default size for the pop-up player, click the extension's Options cog, scroll down to 'Pop-up player' and choose your preferred dimensions in the dropdown menu (see screenshot below).



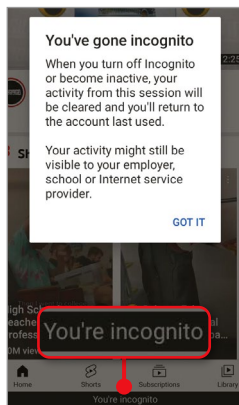
Resize the YouTube video player for the best balance between visibility and quality



PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY WHEN WATCHING YOUTUBE

Watch videos in Incognito mode

The YouTube apps for Android and iOS feature a handy Incognito mode that lets you search for and watch videos without the details being stored and used to target you with ads and recommendations. To switch to this mode, which behaves as if you're signed out of your Google account, tap your profile picture in the top-right corner of the app and choose 'Turn on Incognito'. You'll see a message



confirming that "you've gone incognito" and a black bar along the bottom of the

app that says "You're incognito" (see screenshot left). Incognito mode switches off automatically after you've been inactive for 90 minutes, or you can exit it manually by tapping your profile picture again and choosing 'Turn off Incognito'.

To go

incognito on the YouTube website, you need to switch to your browser's private mode. However, this will prevent you from viewing age-restricted videos that require you to be signed into your account. You can beat that restriction by installing the extension 'Age Restriction Bypass for YouTube' (www.snipca.com/42170), although it's available only for Edge and Firefox.

Switch to a private version of YouTube

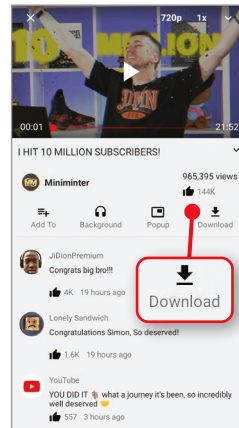
Watching videos on YouTube means being watched yourself, because Google tracks your viewing habits to target you with adverts. You can protect your privacy by switching to an alternative

Ditch the YouTube app for NewPipe

If you have an Android phone or tablet, you can enhance your YouTube experience, remove ads and protect your privacy by switching to a free app called NewPipe (www.snipca.com/42153).

This alternative front-end for YouTube lets you browse and watch exactly the same videos, but without Google spying on you. It uses less battery power and data than the official YouTube app, and lets you use Premium-only features for free, including downloading videos at HD quality and playing content in the background while you use other apps.

The main catch is that NewPipe isn't available from the Google Play Store, so installing it is a bit of a hassle, but definitely worth it. First visit www.snipca.com/42154



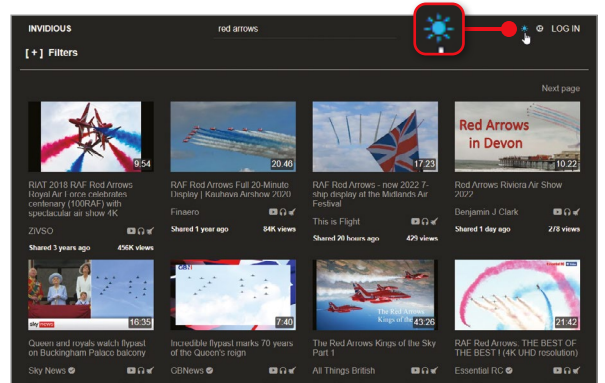
in your mobile browser and tap the Download F-Droid button. If warned that the "file might be harmful", select 'Download anyway'. Tap to open the F-Droid APK file and choose Install then Open. Press the search icon in the bottom-right corner, search for **NewPipe** and tap the button to install the app. If you see a warning about installing unknown apps, tap Settings and switch on the option to 'Allow from this source' (F-Droid). Tap 'Install' and NewPipe will be installed on your phone or tablet.

Open the app for an ad-free YouTube experience, with a Download button below videos (see screenshot) that lets you save them to your Android device.

front-end for YouTube that's free of ads and trackers. The best option is Invidious (www.snipca.com/42172), which ceased operation two years ago but lives on through other 'instances' (websites) that have adopted its source code, such as this one: www.snipca.com/42173.

Invidious provides a clean, Google-free YouTube experience, complete with a large video player, one-click dark mode (see screenshot above right) and the ability to download audio and video.

Alternatively, FreeTube (www.snipca.com/42174) is an open-source YouTube player for Windows, macOS and Linux that lets you watch, search and download videos on your desktop, without ads or



Invidious is an alternative front-end for YouTube that's free of ads and trackers, and has a one-click dark mode

tracking. It also offers Chromium and Firefox extensions that open YouTube videos directly in FreeTube.

On an Android device, you can protect your privacy by switching from the YouTube app to NewPipe (see box above). www.snipca.com

NEXT ISSUE On sale Wednesday 6 July

WHY YOUR Wi-Fi IS STILL SLOW

Mistakes you're making - and where to position your router



PLUS

- Don't ditch your CDs How to make them last longer
- Best batch files to create Automate boring tasks

ONSALE
Weds
6
July

Subscribe to Computeractive at www.getcomputeractive.co.uk

BEST DEAL

PRINT + DIGITAL

- **First 6 issues for £6** then £33.39 every 13 issues
- Available on **Android and iOS** devices
- **Download and search** each issue
- **Save 16%** on the print edition and **81%** on the digital edition
- **Free LED flashlight**



PRINT ONLY

- **First 6 issues for £6** then £28.39 every 13 issues
- Get your issues **before they're available in the shops**
- **Save 16%** on the shop price
- **Free LED flashlight**



YOUR FREE LED FLASHLIGHT

Subscribe today and receive a **FREE 64GB USB drive**. This handy, compact companion is ideal for transporting files from device to device and its 64GB capacity means it can hold up to 15,200 10 Megapixel images, or 16,000 MP3 files.

Gift limited to first 50 subscribers



WHAT OUR SUBSCRIBERS SAY ABOUT COMPUTERACTIVE

“An easy way to learn about technology all around us and which software and hardware are good buys. Plus it has workshops to get your head around things.”
– **Will Gortoa**

“I read, trust and totally rely on Computeractive because it covers so many aspects of computing that no one else does – or maybe don't even know about! It is without doubt the best computer/technology magazine available anywhere.”
– **Nigel Marchant**

Computer
active

6 ISSUES FOR £6

+ FREE 64GB USB drive

Start your subscription today with a 6-issue trial for £6, then pay from just £2.18 for each issue thereafter (saving 16% on the shop price). You'll also get your copies **delivered free to your door every fortnight** and a free welcome gift!



ORDER SECURELY ONLINE

Visit our website or scan the QR code with your phone for quick access to our online store.

computeractive.co.uk/offer

Quote Offer Code: **D634QR**

Please allow 28 days for delivery, UK only. Future Publishing Limited reserves the right to limit offers of this kind to one per household.



SCAN ME

Drag and drop like an expert



Drag-and-drop is one of Windows' most important features, and with a little tweaking and some extra tools, it can do much more than move files around. **Nik Rawlinson** explains how

Drugging and dropping files to move or copy them from one location to another is such a common action that most of us don't give it much thought. You simply hold down your left mouse button to select a file, direct your cursor to where you want to place the item and release your finger - job done. But there are clever ways you can customise the drag-and-drop function to better suit the way you use your computer. As we explain, these include changing the default drag-and-drop action, adjusting the sensitivity and preventing drag-and-drop mistakes.

Control what happens when you drag and drop

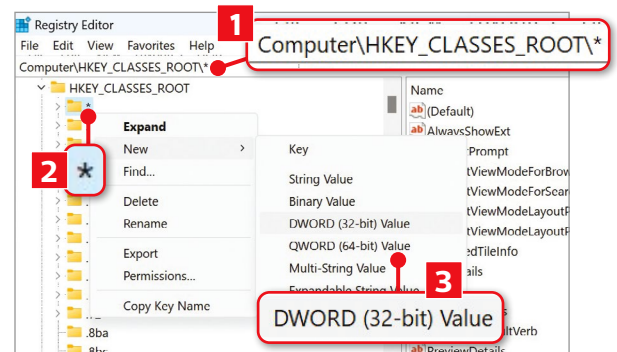
When you drag and drop a file in Windows, the result depends on where you're dragging the item from and to. If you drag a file between folders on the same drive, for example, you move it from one to the other. However, if you

drag a file between drives, it remains in the original location, and Windows creates a copy on the destination drive.

Using the Ctrl, Shift and Alt keys while dragging files changes these default behaviours, as shown in the table below. This means you can choose to move, copy or create a link to a file rather than simply accepting the default action.

Change your default drag-and-drop actions

If you only ever want to copy, move or create links to files when dragging and dropping, you can change Windows' default drag-and-drop behaviour by editing the registry. This is the database where Windows stores all your settings, so before you make any changes, it's important that you create a **system restore point** to which you can roll back if



Create a new value in the Windows registry to adjust how drag-and-drop works

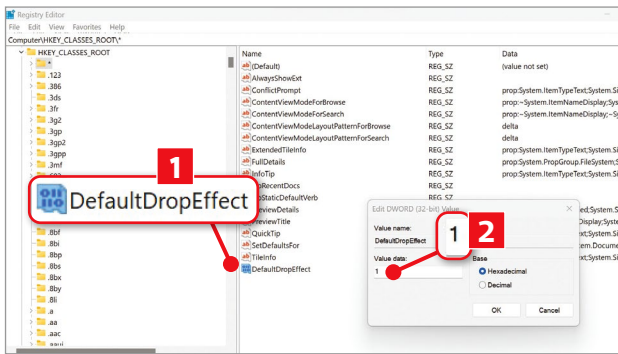
anything goes wrong. To do this, press the Windows key and type **restore**, then click 'Create a restore point'. Switch to the System Protection tab if it's not already selected, and click 'Create...' at the bottom. Give the restore point a name (such as **registry edit**), then click Create.

Now press the Windows key again, type **regedit** and select Registry Editor. When Windows asks if you want to allow this app to make changes to your device, click Yes.

Click the address box at the top of the Registry Editor window (1 in screenshot above), select its contents and replace them with **Computer\HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT**. Now, right-click the * in the sidebar (2), hover your cursor over New on the pop-up menu and click 'DWORD (32-bit) Value' in the sub-menu that appears (3).

This adds a new entry to the Registry Editor's main pane, with its name already

	Between folders on the same drive	Between locations on different drives
Drag and drop	Move file	Copy file
Drag and drop + Ctrl	Force-copy file	
Drag and drop + Shift	Force-move file	
Drag and drop + Alt	Create link to original file	
Drag and drop using right mouse button	If you can't remember the shortcuts above, use the right mouse button instead of the left when dragging. This will display a menu with copy, move and shortcut options when you let go.	



selected. Replace this with **DefaultDropEffect** (1 in screenshot above) and press Enter. Now double-click DefaultDropEffect and, in the 'Value data' field on the box that appears 2, type 1 if you want the default drag-and-drop action to be copying files between locations, 2 for moving them, and 4 for creating a shortcut in the new location that links to the original file. Click OK to close the box.

You now need to perform the above edit a second time in a different location. Scroll down the sidebar until you reach AllFilesystemObjects. Right-click this heading, then hover your cursor over New on the menu, and click 'DWORD (32-bit) Value', as you did last time. Again, replace the name of the new entry in the main window with DefaultDropEffect, then double-click it and type the same number as you did above into the 'Value data' box. Click OK.

Open two File Explorer windows and drag a file from one to the other. When you let go of your left mouse button, the result should comply with the changes you made to the registry, either copying, moving or creating a shortcut to the original file.

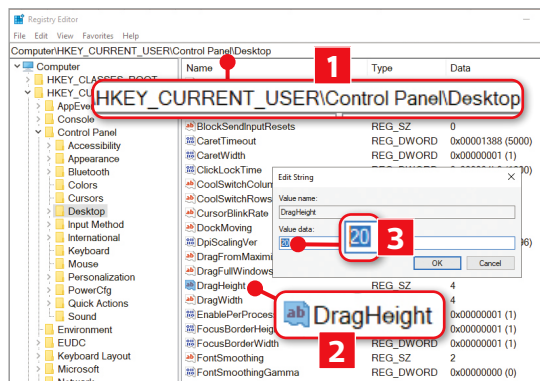
You can specify whether to move or copy items by default, or create shortcuts

Make drag-and-drop less sensitive

If you ever have trouble launching files or clicking links, it could be because you're moving the mouse very slightly when you press the left button. Windows

interprets this as a drag, rather than a click, so when you let go of the button it effectively ignores what you've done. To make this problem less likely to happen, you can change the number of pixels the mouse has to move before Windows interprets it as a drag (which, at its default setting, is just four pixels).

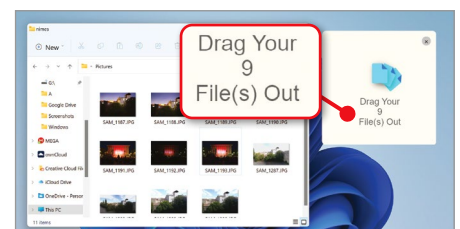
Open the Registry Editor and navigate to the key **HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Control Panel\Desktop** (1 in screenshot below). Double-click the DragHeight value 2 in the main pane and change the 'Value data' from 4 to 20 pixels 3 – or type a larger number if this isn't enough to solve the problem. Click OK, then repeat the operation for the DragWidth entry.



Change how far you must move the mouse before Windows detects that you're dragging

Install a drag-and-drop helper

After changing the default drag-and-drop behaviour, we suggest you test it by opening two windows side by side and dragging files from one to the other. This isn't always convenient – particularly if you have a low-resolution monitor. What's more, if you want to drag and drop files from several places to a single location, you'll have to spend time clicking back and forth in Explorer, and constantly switching your focus. A new free program called DropPoint can help you overcome these problems, by providing a space-saving staging post that lets you copy multiple files from different locations simultaneously.



DropPoint lets you stack files from several locations, so you can paste them all at once

To install it, go to the website at www.snipca.com/42137, click Download Now, then click 'Download for Windows'. Launch the download from your Downloads folder and extract its contents by clicking 'Extract all' on the Windows 11 toolbar, or Compressed Folder Tools followed by 'Extract all' in Windows 10. Once extracted, launch DropPoint.exe. When we did this, Windows displayed an alert warning us that Microsoft Defender SmartScreen had prevented an unrecognised app from starting. To get round this, we clicked 'More info', then 'Run anyway'.

Once DropPoint is up and running, it adds a new floating window to your desktop. Open a File Explorer window, find a file you want to copy, then drag it on to the DropPoint window. Next, navigate to a different folder in File Explorer and repeat the process of dragging a file on to DropPoint. As you continue dragging files to DropPoint from various locations on your computer, the program stores them temporarily, with a number on the window indicating how many it is holding (see screenshot above).

Finally, navigate to where you want to copy those files, and drag the blue stack of files from the DropPoint window into File Explorer. DropPoint will copy each of the files to your chosen location in one operation, no matter where the original files are stored. **ca**

Double-check your drag-and-drop actions

Have you ever mislaid a file or folder by dropping it in the wrong place while moving it? A free tool called DragDropConfirm can help you avoid annoying slip-ups like this by asking you to confirm your drag-and-drop action before Windows carries it out. Go to the program's GitHub page at www.snipca.com/42139 and click Code, followed by Download ZIP. Launch the downloaded file, extract its contents, then navigate to the Installer folder and launch DragDropConfirm_installer.exe.

As with DropPoint, Windows prevented the installer from running when we launched it, but we got round this by clicking 'More info' followed by 'Run anyway'.

Once you've installed the program, reboot your PC. Now, whenever you drag and drop a file between drives – which deletes the file from its original location – DragDropConfirm will ask you whether that's really what you want to do, which could save you unintentionally moving and losing files.

There are more moving parts in a keyboard than in any other piece of hardware in or connected to your PC.

Some of these can be prodded and flexed thousands of times a day, so it's no wonder that, eventually, they're prone to fail. Letters can rub off keycaps (see box opposite to find out what we mean by this term), the keycaps can get loose and – if you're very unfortunate – they can detach from the underlying mechanism entirely.

If you have an external keyboard, the simplest solution is to buy a new one and take your old keyboard to a local recycling centre (find your nearest one at www.snipca.com/42206). You can pick up a Microsoft Wired Keyboard 600 with a UK layout for less than £12 on Amazon (www.snipca.com/42188).

But that's not always the best option. If you want a wireless keyboard, or one with an **ergonomic** curve, you're looking at spending considerably more. And, if you're using a laptop, swapping the keyboard might not even be possible. You'll need to find an alternative solution. Here we explain the four best options.

Solution 1

Reseat an existing keycap

The keyboard pictured below is on an ageing laptop. After 14 years' service, the '?' question-mark key has popped off through a bit of rough treatment. Fortunately, the mechanism beneath it is still in good condition, and the latches on the underside of the keycap itself aren't broken.

If you look closely at the front of the mechanism still attached to the laptop, you'll see that there are two stirrups,



One of the keys has popped off our old laptop keyboard, but the mechanism still works

Fix a BROKEN keyboard

Don't bin your old keyboard just because it has missing or malfunctioning keys. **Nik Rawlinson** explains four fixes, so you can decide which works best for you

which align with the claws on the keycap. At the back of the mechanism, there's a pinched section that matches the angled blocks on the keycap. Repairing the key is therefore fairly easy: we first angle the keycap so the angled blocks sit in the pinched section, then press firmly but evenly on the front of the keycap to snap the claws back over the stirrups (pictured right).



This was an easy fix, but it only works if your keycap and mechanism are still in good condition, as ours were

Solution 2

Replace the mechanism and key

If the keycap and/or mechanism are broken, you'll need to find replacements. Fortunately, this isn't difficult – as long as you know what you're looking for. Several online stores specialise in replacement keys and keycaps for a variety of mainstream manufacturers, allowing you to purchase exactly the keycap and mechanism you need.

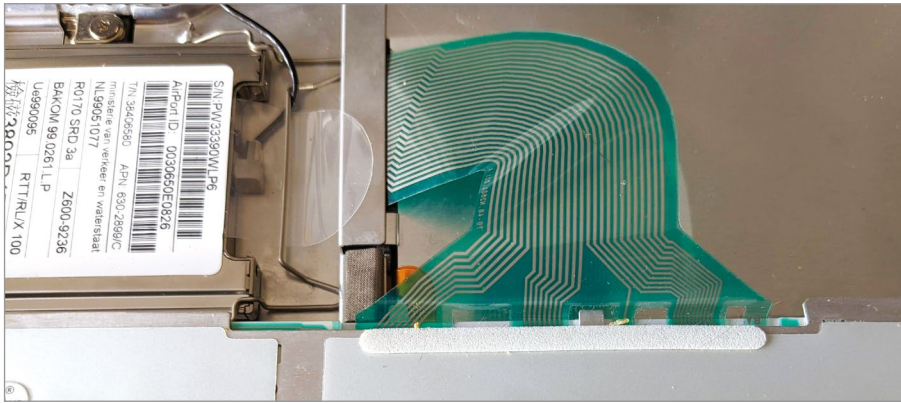
Laptop Keys UK (www.laptopkeys.co.uk) sells replacements for Acer, Asus, Dell, Fujitsu and Lenovo laptops among others, with individual keys costing around £2.60 with free postage. Laptopkey Europe (www.laptopkey-europe.com) also sells these brands, as well as Eee PC, Compaq, Packard Bell and Sony, among others. Keys cost around €3

(£2.60) and postage is €4.80 (£4.10) for orders below €16 (£13.70).

When replacing the mechanism and key, start by positioning the mechanism so it sits within the button space, with the switch protruding through its centre. Press the mechanism into position, and make sure it is secure before repeating the steps above for attaching the keycap.

If you have several broken keys, you might want to consider swapping the keyboard entirely. Keyboards 4 Laptops (www.keyboards4laptops.co.uk) has an inventory covering more than 1,000 models, costing around £35 to £40.

Replacing a laptop keyboard involves opening the case and detaching the ribbon cable connecting the keyboard to the motherboard (pictured above right) This won't be possible on all devices – in particular those with a



Lifting up the keyboard on this laptop reveals the ribbon cable connecting it to the motherboard

moulded shell that wraps around the front and back. We've also found ourselves having to remove other components, including drives, when removing keyboards in the past, and know from experience how easy it is to pinch the ribbon in the casing, or between other components, when reassembling. You may want to call on an expert rather than risk causing further damage.

Solution 3 Redecorate the keycap

We would never recommend removing a keycap without good reason, as you risk breaking the mechanism beneath. So, if the character on top of the keycap has been rubbed away but the key is otherwise working, it makes more sense to refresh – or redecorate – the keycap, rather than replace it.

Amazon sells vinyl keycap stickers, which can be stuck on any keys with missing characters, and you can pick up a two-pack, for laptop and PC keyboards, for £7.99 (www.snipca.com/42191). Note that these stickers are non-transparent, so if you have a backlit keyboard you will lose the lighting in that key.

If that's a deal-breaker, you have two options to ensure your keys are properly



Some of the colour has rubbed off the 'A' key on this keyboard, allowing light to leak through

lit. The first is to revert to Solution 2 and buy a replacement keycap and mechanism. The second is the cheaper and easier option of colouring in the worn sections using a permanent marker.

As you can see from the photo below, the 'A' key on our Apple MacBook has started to rub away, allowing light to leak through where it should be blocked. This is one instance where using a marker would be the simplest solution.

Solution 4 Remap a faulty key using PowerToys

If the damaged key isn't one you use very often, you can assign its function to an alternative button using Microsoft's brilliant PowerToys suite of tools. If you don't already have this installed, visit www.snipca.com/42192 and click the 'PowerToysSetup-0.59.0-x64.exe' link under the Assets heading, which was the latest version at the time of writing.

Once downloaded, open the program and ensure you're running it in **Administrator mode** (if not, select that option and restart). Click 'Keyboard Manager' in the left-hand menu, followed by Open Settings in the main window, and switch on Enable Keyboard Manager. Click 'Remap a key' and, in the window this opens, click the plus-sign button (+).

Select the damaged key from the dropdown menu under Physical Key, then click Type below Mapped To and press the button that you want to assign to that function.

Make sure you choose a key you wouldn't often use. In the screenshot right, for example, we're setting the back-quote button (`) as a stand-in for the Volume Down key.

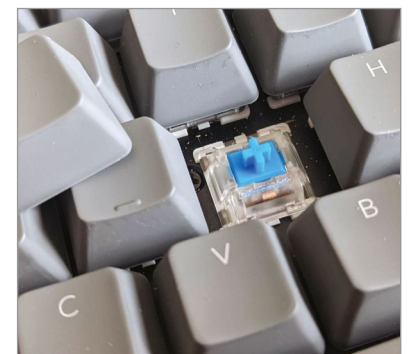
Click 'OK' twice to save the new keyboard shortcut.

The key parts of a key

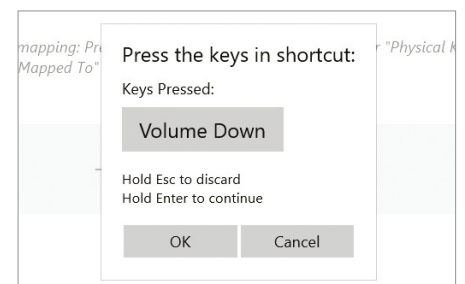
In this feature, we've talked about keycaps, switches and mechanisms, but it's easy to get them confused.

To clarify, keycaps are the surfaces that you touch when typing. They literally 'cap' the whole key (which comprises the keycap, mechanism and switch). Below the keycap comes the mechanism, sometimes called a retainer, which is typically a hinge of two parts that keeps the keycap level and lifts it back up at the end of a press.

The switch (pictured below) sits at the bottom of the pile, often poking up through a hole in the mechanism so it can touch the back of the keycap. When you press a keycap, you're actually pushing the switch and completing a circuit that tells your computer which character to produce. In some more expensive keyboards – particularly mechanical keyboards beloved of gamers and prolific writers (this one included) – the mechanism and switch may be a single component.



Windows will warn you that you have overwritten the native function of your newly assigned key and will no longer be able to access the character printed on it, but you can delete the shortcut to undo the change. Click 'Continue Anyway' to confirm that you are happy with the new setting. **ca**



PowerToys lets you redefine how individual keys behave should one stop working

Problems Solved

Our experts solve all your tech problems

PROBLEM OF THE FORTNIGHT

Why is my PC shutting down on its own?

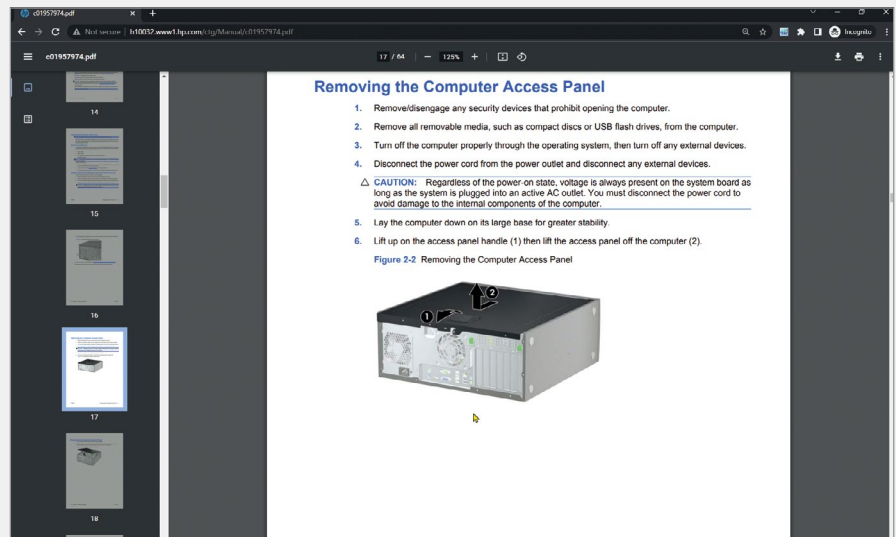
Q I have an HP Elite E8000 tower PC that I bought in 2015. Recently, it has begun closing down after an hour or so, even when not being used. I suspected it could be the motherboard battery, so I bought a new CR2032 cell and installed it. Initially, I thought that might have resolved the problem, but sure enough, after an hour or so, the PC closed down again. I have checked in the relevant areas of Settings to ensure 'Never' is selected for shutting down the power to both screen and the computer – but that doesn't seem to help. I have a 'system repair' DVD and the PC starts up from that if I leave it in the drive. Would you know why this is happening, please? Do I need to called in a local 'PC doctor'?

Derek Vivian

A Faults like this are always difficult to diagnose, simply because of their infrequency and apparent randomness. We will say that it is unlikely a dead CMOS battery on the motherboard would ever cause a problem of this nature, but you will have done no harm in replacing it.

However, investigating our suspicions will involve another mission inside the

Use compressed air to blast away dust that may be clogging the fans and other components



The digital manual explains how to access components in the HP Elite E8000

machine. As you've already opened up the case, you're evidently confident doing that, but, as you might need to remove more components, we'd suggest looking at the hardware manual. If you don't have yours, a digital version is free to download from the HP website at www.snipca.com/42066 (see screenshot above).

We say this because your problem bears all the hallmarks of a heat fault. Various components inside a PC, including both the processor (CPU) and

the **graphics card** or chip (GPU), are designed to halt themselves if they detect that they're getting too hot. This, in turn, typically happens as a result of dust-clogged fans, which might no longer create sufficient airflow for cooling – or could even cease entirely to spin. That could manifest itself by the machine simply stopping in its tracks or shutting down.

There's no great mystery behind fixing this problem. So, yes, while you could call in a local technician to do the job for you, with the direction of the aforementioned manual, a screwdriver and a can of compressed air (around £8.50 from www.snipca.com/42107), you should be able to do this yourself (pictured left).

You need in essence to strip down the machine to the point where you can access the key components and their cooling fans, and then use short blasts of compressed air to dislodge and clean out the dust. If you're confident enough to detach the fans before doing this, all the better: you can take them outside for a clean, ensuring the built-up dust doesn't re-settle on other components.

Is it worth docking my old hard drive?

Q After 10 years I've replaced my old laptop. Before doing this I removed the hard drive, which is a Toshiba MQ01ABD100. I'm wondering whether it's worth getting a hard drive dock for this, and using it as a backup storage device? If so, what should I buy?

Doug Thompson

A Certainly, this is easy to do, and not terribly expensive. A caddy like the pictured Orico model (around £9 from www.snipca.com/42103, pictured) would be all you'd need to turn your old SATA hard drive into an external model that connects via USB. Just open up the caddy, slide in your drive and you're good to go.

Whether it's worth it is a different matter. Your particular hard drive model was eventually available in capacities up to 2TB. However, we doubt very much that a decade-old laptop had this top-end spec. More likely a model of that vintage has 500 or even just 320GB capacity. While 320GB isn't zero storage, it's not a whole lot by today's standards.

Knowing that faster, higher-capacity external hard drives are themselves pretty cheap might make you pause for thought.

A basic Toshiba Canvio model, for example, has 1TB of storage and runs at about twice the speed of your old hard drive (around £37 from



Doug's hard drive could slot into this Orico caddy

www.snipca.com/42104).

So, we'd say it's a close call – and a judgement that only you can make.

How do I redact PDFs?

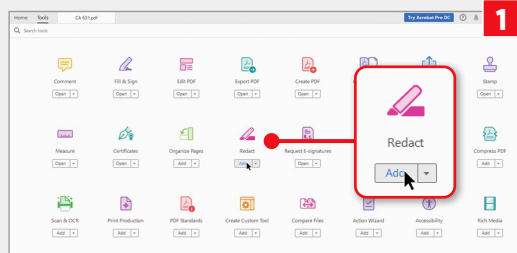
Q I want to forward a PDF document but need to redact some words first. Is there any software I can use to highlight and blank out words, or is there another way to achieve the same result?

Jules King

A The PDF standard was invented by Adobe, which also makes the Adobe Reader tool that you likely already have installed and are using to view PDFs. In that app, if you select the Tools tab you'll see an option that, enticingly, is labelled Redact. Sadly, you'll also see it has an

Add button (see screenshot 1). This indicates that the Redact feature, along with many others, is restricted to Acrobat – the paid-for version of Adobe's PDF tool.

There's no way around that, but if you don't mind a little extra faff then the PDF.online tool (<https://pdf.online>, coincidentally enough) will do the job. First, click the 'Redact PDF' option and then click Select File. Choose your file and click Open. Now just click and drag to mark words you want to redact 2. If you make a mistake, use the Control (Ctrl) + Z



Adding the Redact feature in Adobe Reader means upgrading to the paid-for version of Adobe's PDF tool

keyboard shortcut to undo.

When you've finished, click the 'Apply redactions' button and then wait a few moments while the website works its magic. Finally, click the Download button to save the redacted PDF to your computer 3.



Using PDF.online, click and drag to mark the words you want to redact (2), then click 'Apply redactions' and download the blacked-out PDF (3)

How do I disable low-data mode?

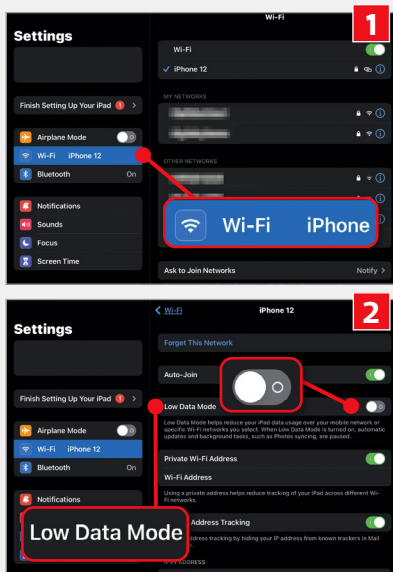
Q I have an iPad and an iPhone that I use for all the usual stuff.

On a recent camping weekend I realised I'd forgotten to download one of the Netflix shows I wanted to watch. No bother, I thought, I'll just tether my iPad to my iPhone. I do this for email and browsing and it's fine.

However, when I tried to stream the Netflix show my iPad refused, showing a warning about being in low-data mode.

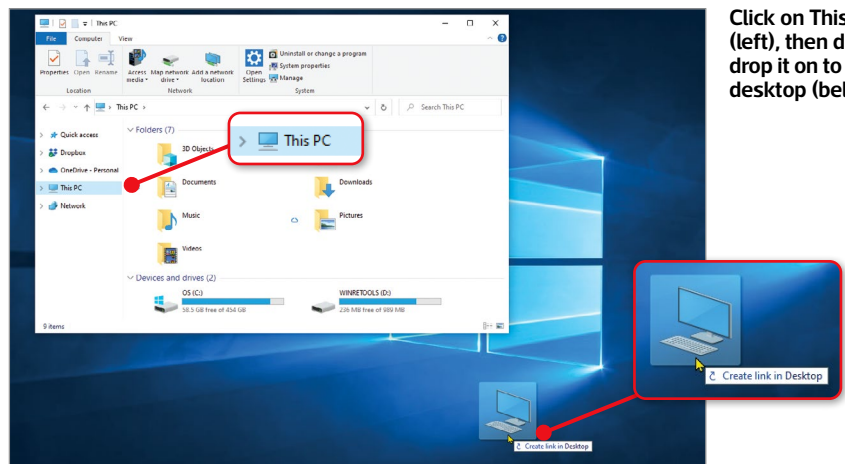
I could still do other internet stuff on my iPad, but not streaming. I looked at the Personal Hotspot option on my iPhone, but couldn't see any option that might change this. Any ideas?

Philip Porter



Select Wi-Fi (1), then move the Low Data Mode button left to its off position (2)

A Yes, the option to control this is actually on the iPad, not the iPhone. On your iPad, first tap Settings followed by Wi-Fi (see screenshot 1). Then, on the right, to the right of the entry for your tethered iPhone, tap the little blue icon with the lowercase 'i' in a circle. Then, also on the right, tap to flip the Low Data Mode switch to its Off position 2.



Click on This PC (left), then drag and drop it on to the desktop (below)

How do I pin 'My Computer' to the taskbar in Windows 11?

Q I've recently had to replace my desktop PC. On my new unit I did a clean install of Windows 11. That went fine, but I cannot find out how to get the My Computer icon on to my taskbar. The right-click on the icon does not work. I used this facility very regularly in Windows 10. After getting Windows 11 up and running on my new PC, I allowed Microsoft to perform an automatic upgrade on my laptop. This was successful and to my surprise the My Computer icon stayed on the taskbar, just as it did in Windows 10. So, it looks like a clean install inhibits the installation of My Computer on to the taskbar but an automatic install allows it to stay? Any help or guidance appreciated

Ian MacDonald

A We need to be clear from the off that the My Computer icon doesn't officially exist in Windows 10 – at least, not in its original guise. That's because Microsoft renamed it This PC, as part of File Explorer (itself renamed from Windows Explorer).

However, that doesn't mean you didn't have an icon on your Windows 10

desktop (or taskbar) that you thought of as My Computer, or indeed was actually called that (for reasons we'll explain). This is because the This PC icon can be made to appear on the desktop. It's also possible to add it to the taskbar, including in Windows 11, as we'll also explain. Upgrading a Windows 10 PC that already has some or all of these elements would keep them in place.

But with a clean Windows 11 install, you must configure them afresh, which is where you're at with your new PC. So, to do this, first press Windows key+E to summon File Explorer. Now click on This PC and then drag and drop it to the Windows desktop to create a shortcut (see screenshot above). This will be called 'This PC - Shortcut'.

You can press F2 to rename, calling it 'My Computer' if you wish. It is possible that you did one or both of those things on your older laptop.

Now, to put this same shortcut on the taskbar, simply click it and then drag and drop it in place. Incidentally, with this done you're now free to delete the desktop shortcut if it's not required, as the taskbar icon will remain in place.

Q: Should I pay for driver updates?

A: Issue 609, page 65 – find it on our 2021 Back Issue CD

Buy it from www.snipca.com/42077



Why can't I delete or find this file?

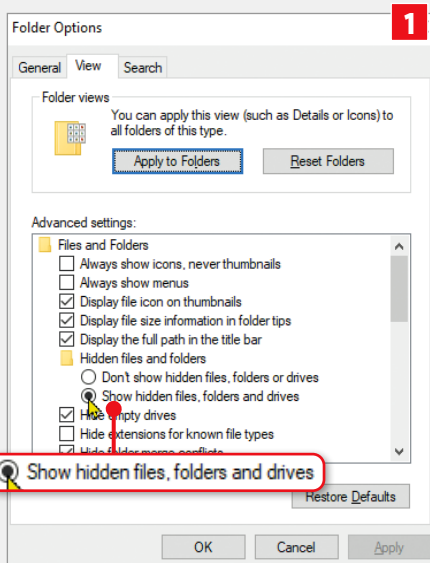
Q I cannot delete the hiberfil.sys file as it is being used by another process, or it says that the computer cannot find it. So, I'm sort of caught between a brick and a hard place. I'm running Windows 10.

Alan Buxton

A We're not sure why you want to delete this, but for the benefit of readers who don't know what it is, it relates to the Hibernate function that has long been part of the Windows operating system.

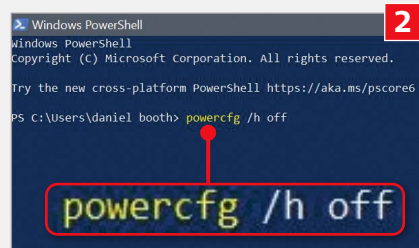
While it can be deleted, as a rule of thumb if it exists on a drive then it means the Hibernate function is enabled. This means hiberfil.sys will just be recreated the next time your computer goes into hibernation. Moreover, hiberfil.sys is considered a system file, meaning it is ordinarily hidden, or sometimes will be removed by Windows itself.

That explains why you can't delete it, and Windows sometimes says it



can't find it.

It is possible to set File Explorer to show hidden system files. First, in the View tab, click Options followed by 'Change folder and search options'. In the Folder Options box that appears, click View and then, under 'Hidden files and



Select 'Show hidden files, folders and drives' (1). Type 'powercfg /h off' (2)

folders' select 'Show hidden files, folders and drives' (see screenshot 1), then click OK.

However, while this will let you see the file, Windows won't let you delete it if it's in use – and Windows decides when that is.

The 'correct' solution is to disable the Hibernate function itself, which in turn will automatically delete hiberfil.sys files. To do this, press Windows key+X then click 'Windows PowerShell (Admin)'.

Then, in the PowerShell window type `powercfg /h off` and press Enter.

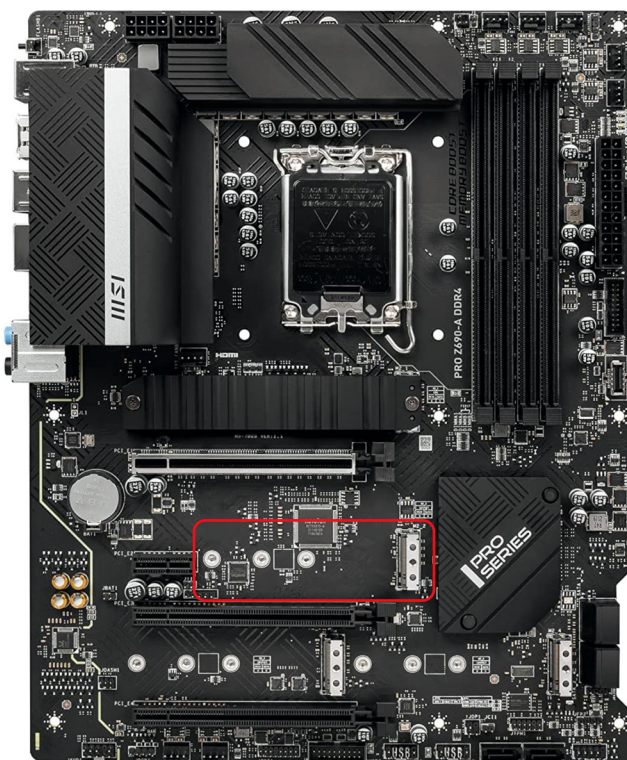
Is an external SSD a bad idea?

Q I don't feel comfortable opening my PC to add another SSD, but the second drive is filling up so I need more storage. I've read articles about putting games on an external SSD and even contacted the company who built my PC, six years ago, but everyone says it's not recommended. However, no one actually says why. Do you know why it might not be a good idea?

Keith Norton

A The answer can be as simple or as complicated as you like. As we prefer to keep things easy, we'll take the straightforward approach – which is to say that it's a matter of performance.

There are almost endless complicating factors, but, in simple terms, any drive fitted internally is likely to be connected to an interface that



Any drive connected internally, such as this M.2 interface, will enable fast transfer speeds

enables very fast transfer speeds, such as M.2 (pictured). Externally, for many if not most PC users, the interface will usually be USB. The very latest versions of this standard, with bandwidth of up to 40Gbps, will theoretically support today's fastest SSDs. However, right now, few PCs are equipped to achieve those speeds. Your six-year-old model certainly won't be.

So, you can attach an SSD externally via USB and it'll work fine. However, doing so will likely create a bandwidth 'bottleneck' that will prevent it running at its fastest speed.

That might not be noticeable for everyday tasks, but expecting ultra-fast loading from a USB-attached SSD could lead to disappointment. In these circumstances, a modern hard drive is likely to be just as swift – or slow, depending on your perspective.

Can I still upgrade to Windows 10?

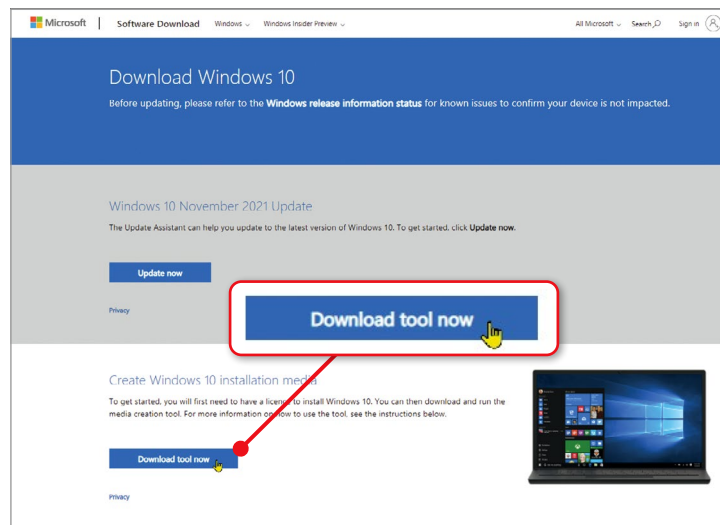
Q I have a desktop computer running Windows 8.1, which I know is not going to be supported from January next year. I'd like to upgrade it to Windows 10. Is this still possible? Advice in plain English would be appreciated. It's an eight-year-old Zoostorm PC, incidentally. I do not know if it came with a licence, but it didn't include a Windows disc.

Dave Parish

A Zoostorm has been around for a while, so we imagine its copy of Windows 8.1 is legitimate. If it is, you have a valid licence.

Don't worry about the lack of a Windows disc – that's common. And the last bit of good news is that Microsoft is still allowing free upgrades from Windows 8.1 to Windows 10.

While you should certainly back up your PC, there's really not much complicated about making the move to



Under the 'Create Windows 10 installation media' heading, click the 'Download tool now' button

Windows 10. First, visit www.snipca.com/42070 and, under the 'Create Windows 10 installation media' heading, click the 'Download tool now' button (see screenshot above).

Now just double-click the downloaded file to launch Microsoft's media-creation tool, which will in turn allow you to create a Windows 10 installation USB stick or DVD disc. Just boot (start) your

PC from this stick or disc to launch the upgrade process.

Finally, while you didn't ask about Windows 11, we should say that we doubt that a Windows 8.1-era computer is likely to be up to Microsoft's minimum requirements for its newest operating system (www.snipca.com/42071) – so we think Windows 10 is as far as you can go.

Why won't my calendars sync?

Q I have an iPhone and an iPad and would like to synchronise the calendars so that they are always up to date on both devices. I have tried to follow several suggestions but have so far been unsuccessful. Notes seem to synchronise quite happily, but the calendar is proving to be stubborn.

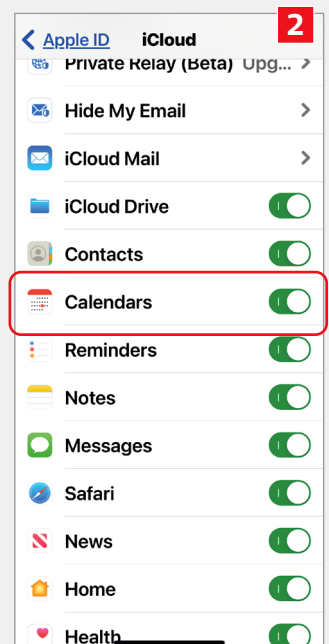
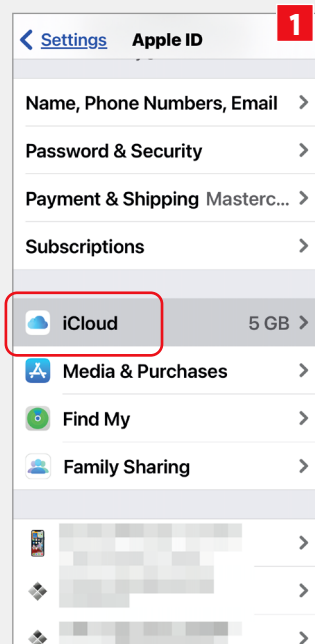
Richard Press

A This should be easy. You didn't tell us what you've tried so far but, if you've visited Apple's main help page on this subject, at www.snipca.com/42072, and been guided by that, then we suspect you might have missed the solution. That's because, while Apple's advice covers what we think to be the cause of your problem, it does so only a little way down the page – and even then only by directing visitors to a different support page.

In other words, while the fix is pretty straightforward, Apple makes it tricky to find. Our guess is that, simply, the calendar-synchronisation option is switched off on one or both of your devices.

To check, first launch the Settings app on your iPhone or iPad. Next, at the top, tap your name. Then, tap iCloud (see screenshot 1). There, you need to ensure that the Calendars switch is in its On position 2. You now need to repeat these exact same steps on your second Apple device.

We think that in your case that's all there will be to it. However, as noted, we don't know what you've tried, so it's



Select iCloud (1) and ensure Calendars is in the On position (2)

possible you had already found this buried switch.

If so, feel free to get back in touch with us detailing what methods you've attempted – as that might give us further clues as to the root cause.



WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN...

USB-C and Thunderbolt?

Q Looking to buy a new laptop to replace my old one, I've found myself trying to figure out many alien aspects of modern models. Sometimes it's exciting, like the prospect of at last getting a machine with an SSD. But it's also confusing. In particular, I'm struggling to understand the difference between USB-C and Thunderbolt. They look the same, and seem to do the same things, but apparently they are different standards? Can you help me make sense of it? I just need to know the essentials.

Donald Burke

A We're not surprised you're confused because here the technology industry has piled muck upon mess. As such, there is no 'simple' answer – but let's try!

Despite plenty of misuse, the term USB-C – or USB Type-C, in full – primarily describes the physical socket. So, every USB-C socket is literally the same shape and size. But the data and currents that flow through that socket, and any cables you might attach to one,



USB-C and Thunderbolt – the latest versions offer data-transfer speeds up to 40Gbps

must adhere to certain protocols – and those protocols may differ.

Thunderbolt, invented by Intel and Apple, is one such protocol. To date, it has seen four major revisions, to reach Thunderbolt 4. USB is a distinct protocol, traditionally with broader industry support. It too has had four major

revisions in its history, though also dozens of minor ones. It's now at USB4. That styling, without a space, is the choice of the USB Implementers Forum (USB-IF, www.usb.org), incidentally, not ours.

Both Thunderbolt 4 and USB4 employ the USB-C connector and offer data-transfer speeds up to 40Gbps. They also both support video signals and device charging, and more besides. Thunderbolt 4 makes more of these elements' actual requirements, while the USB-IF is less stringent in this regard.

So, Thunderbolt 4 is the 'better' standard overall but, functionally, USB (and particularly USB4) is generally very similar.

However, while machines with Thunderbolt 4 typically also offer USB4 support through the same USB-C socket, don't assume that a machine with a USB-C socket offers either. Many computers don't work with anything above USB 3.2, for example.

Want to know the difference between technical terms? Email noproblem@computeractive.co.uk

Is my old laptop fixable?

Q I have an HP Pavilion DV7 laptop, which apparently is no longer supported by HP. It was working fine until recently, when switching it on resulted in nothing but fan whirr and the Caps Lock key flashing. A local technician managed to clone the

hard drive on to another computer, but said that this is likely to be a processor or motherboard fault and economically unviable to repair. But I'd like your expert, unbiased opinion. Could there be a solution using a 'fixit' stick?

John Courtney

Don't be tempted by the idea of a 'fixit' stick patching things up. These are typically scammy devices that offer little to no value. We're afraid it's time to accept that your 14-year-old laptop is done.

Be consoled by the fact that its data has been salvaged.



A We never like to be the bearers of bad news. However, this HP model (pictured) dates back to around 2008 and, as your local tech chap says, it's almost certainly not worth spending any time or money enacting hardware repairs on such an old machine – assuming even that broken parts are available, which for a laptop is highly unlikely.

It is unlikely to be worth spending money or time to repair a roughly 14-year-old HP Pavilion DV7

Next Issue

ONSALE
Weds
6 July

- Can I add TPM 2.0?
- How do I stop the taskbar blocking Chrome?
- Can I limit my son's bandwidth?
- ...And many more

Subscribe to Computeractive at www.getcomputeractive.co.uk

READER OFFER!

**NOW
CHEAPER
THAN
EVER!**

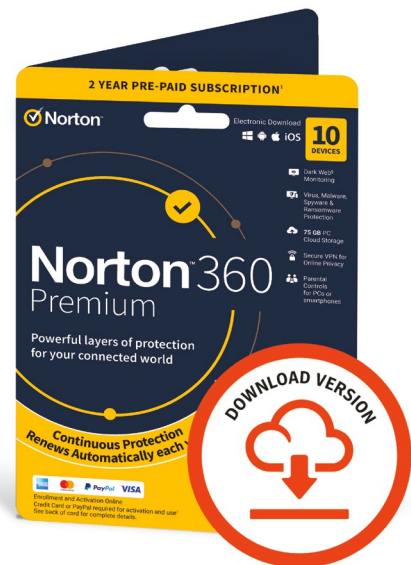
Norton 360 Premium 10 devices, 2 years

We're delighted to announce an outstanding new Reader Offer for the antivirus software Norton 360 Premium. For just £24.99, you'll protect
10 devices for two years

WHAT YOU GET

- ✓ Real-time malware protection
- ✓ Secure VPN
- ✓ 75GB PC Cloud Backup
- ✓ Webcam hack alerts

PLUS Monitors the dark web for your personal information



Norton is made by NortonLifeLock Inc – a standalone company dedicated to consumer cyber safety. It has always performed strongly in *Computeractive* antivirus tests, so we highly recommend it.

10 devices for two years NOW ONLY £24.99*
Normally £179.99

Buy it from our Software Store at www.snipca.com/33247

*while stocks last



Reader Support

Having a problem with our recommended software or expert tips? Email editor@computeractive.co.uk and we'll do our best to help

How can I set the Files app as my default?

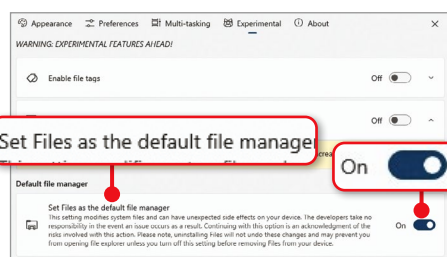
Q I read with interest Issue 631's Workshop (page 38) on adding tabs to File Explorer using the Files app (www.snipca.com/41679), as this appeared to be something I would find very useful. It installed without any problems and is very easy to use, but I can't seem to make it the default app. All my other programs, such as Office and Affinity Suite, still launch File Explorer when I open files. It seems the only way to do this is to use the **sideload** version of the tool. Is that right?

Bill Feasey

A The ability to set the Files app as your default file manager on your PC is a new feature that's being trialled in version 2.1. As you mention, it's only currently available in the 'sideload' version of the tool - in other words, the version available from the developer's website, rather than the one in the Microsoft Store.

To get this version, visit the official Files website (<https://files.community>) and click the down arrow next to the Download Files button. In the menu that opens, select the Sideload Package option. Run the downloaded file to install Files, then launch it. Next, click the settings cog in the top left and select the Experimental tab in the window that opens.

Here, you can click the slider next to 'Set Files as the default file manager' (see screenshot below) to enable the feature. However, we should warn you that the



Set the Files app as your default file explorer, but be aware the feature is experimental

experimental nature of this feature means it may not work as expected. When we tried it, for example, we found that it broke some of our PC's functions - we couldn't launch our Documents or Pictures folders from the Start menu, for example. Not only that, but we were still offered File Explorer windows when we browsed for files from within other programs.

Our advice would be to stick with the safer Microsoft Store version of the tool for the time being until this feature is more stable.

Why can't I use Qwant with Vivaldi?

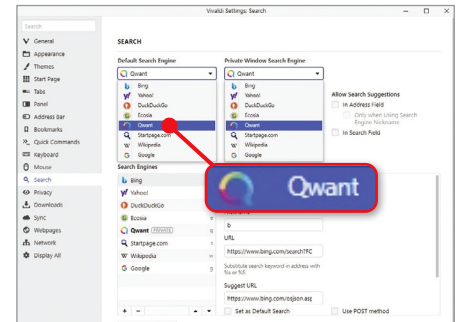
Q I tried to follow your tip in Issue 631 (page 43) on using Qwant within Vivaldi to search the web privately. But when I open Vivaldi's settings there is no option to select Qwant. I'm using Vivaldi version 5.2.2623.46 and it's fully up to date. Any thoughts please?

Peter Ratcliffe

A To try and replicate your problem, we installed the latest version of Vivaldi, and found it was possible to select Qwant as the search engine without any problems. The version of Vivaldi we used in our tests was slightly newer (5.2.2623.48) than the one you mention, so it may just be that support for Qwant was, for some reason, disabled in the version you used. Try updating your browser to see if this fixes the problem.

Having said that, when we looked back at our original instructions in Issue 632, we'll admit that they could perhaps have been a bit clearer. So, here's a more comprehensive explanation.

In Vivaldi, click the 'V' icon in the top-left corner and select Settings. Now click where it says Search (just below Mouse) in the left-hand pane of the Settings window. On the right, you should now be able to select Qwant from the dropdown



Click the 'V' icon, select Settings, then click the Search tab to set Qwant as your search engine in Vivaldi

menu (see screenshot above) for either the Default Search Engine or Private Window Search Engine - or both.

If neither solution works, we'd suggest uninstalling Vivaldi from your system, then installing the latest version from <https://vivaldi.com>.

Can I use a VPN and Tor Browser at the same time?

Q In Issue 632's 'Stop Using Google Search' Cover Feature, you suggest using the special 'onion' version of DuckDuckGo in **Tor Browser**. But you don't suggest using a **VPN** and Tor at the same time. Why not?

Kris Paul

A It is indeed possible to use both a VPN and Tor at the same time, but we wouldn't really advise it. As we mentioned in our Cover Feature in Issue 631 (Master Your VPN) using either a VPN or Tor separately can have a detrimental effect on the speed of your connection. Using both together has the potential to slow your connection to a crawl - and the privacy benefits of doing so can be relatively minimal.

However, should you want to give this belt-and-braces approach a go, we'd suggest starting with the 'Onion over VPN' feature offered by our Silver award-winning VPN, NordVPN (www.snipca.com/41663) or ProtonVPN's 'Tor over VPN' option (www.snipca.com/41737).

Jargon **Buster**

1080p Of the common types of high-definition video, this is the best quality: 1920x1080 pixels.

2K A screen with 2048x1080 pixels.

4K Video with a resolution of at least 3840x2160 pixels.

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

8K Video with a resolution of 7680x4320 pixels. Currently the highest resolution available.

Administrator mode Allows you to make changes to a computer that will affect other people who use it.

AI Artificial Intelligence. Intelligence demonstrated by a machine rather than a human being. Often used to describe technology that can perform human-like tasks.

AMOLED Active-Matrix Organic Light-Emitting Diode. An alternative technology to LCD for creating flat-panel displays. Most commonly used in smartphones, tablets and smartwatches.

APK Android Package Kit. The file format Android uses to install apps.

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

Batch file Commands that are processed in sequence, often without requiring input from the user.

Benchmarking Comparing software and products with an accepted standard.

Boot drive When it starts the computer looks on one drive for instructions. This is normally the hard drive, but in case of problems other boot drives can be used.

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.

cd/m² Candela per square metre. Standard unit of brightness.

Clean install An operating system installation that overwrites all other content on the hard drive.

CMOS Complementary metal-oxide semiconductor. Can refer to both a type of image sensor chip used in some digital cameras and another chip on computer motherboards that stores the date and time.

Codec Short for Compressor/Decompressor. A file that tells a computer how to record or play a type of media file.

Cookie A small text file stored on your computer by a website. Used to store browsing preferences, website log-in details and so on.

Core Units on a processor that carry out program instructions.

Crowdsourcing Obtaining ideas, information or money from a large group of people, usually online, rather than from more traditional sources.

DMG Disk image files for Apple Macs, similar to ISO files on Windows PCs.

Domain These are used to identify one or more IP addresses.

Driver A file that tells Windows how to work with an external device.

Dual band A router that can work at two radio frequencies: 2.4GHz and 5GHz.

Emoji A small fun graphic that can be inserted into a text message or email.

Ergonomics A term used to describe efficiency and health for people while in their working environment.

Ethernet A standard used for almost all wired computer networks.

EXE A program file designed to run in Windows. Has the file extension .exe.

Extension A program that adds extra features to your browser.

GHz Gigahertz. A measure of how many instructions a chip can process per second. 1GHz is equal to 1,000MHz.

Gigabit Ethernet A very fast networking standard that can transfer data at up to 1,000Mbps.

GPU Graphics Processor Unit. A chip designed to create 3D graphics, but which can also be used for other computing tasks.

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

Greenscreen Filming a person with a green background so scenes and effects can be added behind when editing.

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

HDMI 2.1 Provides more bandwidth, nearly tripling what the current 2.0 standard provides.

HEIC High-efficiency image container. Apple's default image format for iOS.

IPS A screen technology. Monitors that use it have wider viewing angles and better, more accurate-looking colours than monitors that do not use this technology.

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

JPEG Joint Photograph Experts Group. A common type of image file created by most digital cameras.

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

M.2 A standard specification for internal PC expansion cards.

Machine learning The science of teaching computers how to learn by themselves, without further human input.

Macro camera Lets you take sharp, detailed, close-up photos of small objects.

Metaverse A virtual-reality space where users can interact with other people.

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

MP4 A type of digital movie file often used for portable players.

Noise Visible dust-like speckles that appear in some camera and TV images. In photos, they are caused by the camera's own sensor. In TV images, they can be caused by the TV's processor or by a flaw in the broadcast signal itself.

Open source Software that can be modified by anyone, rather than just by the employees of the company that created it.

Petabyte 1 million gigabytes, or 1,000 terabytes.

NET Microsoft's tool for building software.

PNG Portable Network Graphics. A format for images that shrinks file sizes using compression but without discarding any data.

PowerShell A Windows tool for automating commands.

QR code Quick Response code. A barcode that can be read using smartphones and dedicated QR-reading devices.

Quantum computer A device that uses the principles of quantum physics to make calculations much faster than conventional computers. Instead of bits, they use qubits, which can recognise data as both zeroes and ones at the same time.

RAM Random-access memory. The computer's working area, used for data storage while the PC is switched on. Its capacity is measured in megabytes (MB): the more memory your PC has, the more things it can process simultaneously and the faster it will seem. Any data in RAM will be lost when the power is switched off.

Refresh rate Measured in Hertz (Hz), the number of times per second that the image on your monitor is redrawn. Slight changes in the image each time it is updated combine to give the illusion of movement. For a steady image, the higher the refresh rate, the less flicker you will see. A refresh rate over 85Hz is generally accepted as being flicker-free.

SATA Serial ATA. An interface for connecting hard drives and optical discs to a computer.

Script A short program that is stored on a web server to control part of a website. For example, a script could check that a date you have entered is valid, or move words across the screen.

SEO Search engine optimisation. Improving where your site appears in search results.

Sideload To install phone/tablet apps without using the official Android or iOS stores.

Source code Program instructions written in a high-level language that are readable by people but not computers.

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.

Temporary file A file created by a browser to store website data. In the days of limited main memory, these were the only way to store large amounts of interim data that the application was generating. Today, main memory is often used instead. Temporary files typically have a .TMP or .TEMP file extension.

Tethering Turning a phone into a modem to give internet access to a computer.

Thread Smallest sequence of instructions that can be managed by your processor. PCs consist of multiple threads.

Tor Browser A web browser designed for anonymous surfing.

Tri-band A router that broadcasts on three radio bands – one on 2.4GHz, two on 5.0GHz.

Troll A person who writes deliberately offensive or insulting comments online in order to generate an angry response.

Ultrawide Offering a field of view that's wider than traditional digital cameras.

USB 2.0/3.0/3.1 Faster successors to USB.

USB-C A new connector that's reversible, letting you plug it in upside down.

Virtual PC A Windows tool that enables you to run a second 'virtual' operating system on a PC – for example, running a version of Windows 7 in a Windows 10 computer in order to use older programs.

VPN Virtual private network. Keeps all internet communication safe and private.





Whitelist A list of allowed websites, email addresses and applications used by security software to ensure you only visit safe websites and download safe programs.

ZIP file A file that contains compressed documents or files.

Zip drive A high-capacity disk drive launched by Iomega in 1994. They could store 100MB or 250MB of information on sturdy pocket-sized disks. These were used for backup, as extra storage or to transfer files between machines or users. Iomega discontinued them in 2003.

Broadband Deals

Call **FREE** on **0800 542 4709** to switch your broadband today

	Provider	Package Name	Monthly Price	Contract Length	Broadband Speed	Allowance	First-year Cost*
1		Shell Energy: Fast Broadband	£17.99	18 months	11Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited	CHEAPEST £215.88
2		Shell Energy: Superfast Fibre Broadband	£21.99	18 months	35Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited	£263.88
3		Sky: Superfast + Line Rental	£26.00	18 months	59Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited*	£312.00
4		Virgin Media: Big Bundle + Fibre Broadband + Weekend Calls	£29.99 (£59 after 18 months)	18 months	54Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited	£359.88

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

Computeractive may receive a commission for purchases made through these listings.

Data supplied by www.broadbandgenie.co.uk. Correct as of 30/05/2022



Broadband Genie's helpline is powered by Dixons Carphone, the Ofcom-accredited switching service

Easy when you **Know How**



Seeking to share his holiday snaps in a fancy formation, **Robert Irvine** tries to...

Create a photo collage

So I'm back from my trip to America, which means I can finally stop droning on about it (well, after this column). I ate lots of hamburgers and fries, enjoyed a stunning view of New York from the 86th floor of the Empire State Building, won \$60 in a Las Vegas casino, strolled the surprisingly grubby Hollywood Walk of Fame and much more, but I won't bore you with further details. I took plenty of photos for that purpose, which I plan to inflict on friends and family over the next week or so.

Rather than share a whole album or an endless slideshow of holiday snaps, I thought it would be nice – and more merciful – to create a collage of highlights. This would allow me to present my travel experience in a smart, unified manner and would be easier for people to ignore if they weren't interested.

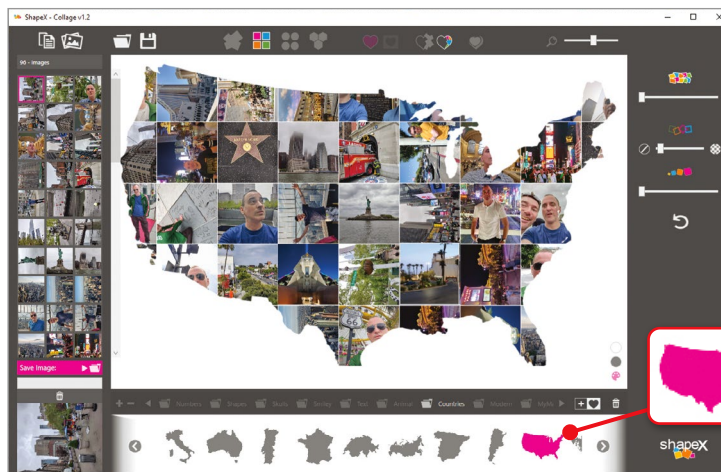
“

A collage is easier for people to ignore if they aren't interested in your photos

”

Because I'd taken most of the pictures with the camera on my Android phone, they were automatically saved to Google Photos, which offers its own collage option, so I tried that first.

On the Google Photos website (<https://photos.google.com>), I clicked Utilities in the left-hand menu, chose Collage under Create New and selected the images to include. However, you can only use a maximum of nine, and the resulting collage is just a basic grid, so I quickly disregarded that option.



Robert used ShapeX – Shape Collage Maker to arrange his holiday snaps in a USA-shaped layout

I then checked out several online collage makers, including 'free' tools from BeFunky (www.snipca.com/42113) and Adobe Express (www.snipca.com/42114). These seemed easy enough to use, but they lock most of their templates behind paid-for subscriptions – and I wanted design flexibility, darling.

Next I came across an article that recommended using the GNU Image Manipulation Program (GIMP, www.gimp.org) to create fancy photo collages. I generally avoid GIMP because it's a large download, is tricky to use and has a silly acronym for a name, but decided to give it a shot.

At 245MB, the **EXE** file was actually smaller than I expected, but on opening the program I found it as confusing as ever. The instructions I'd found online involved importing all the photos as separate layers, moving them into the desired positions in the collage, 'rescaling' them to fit and other tedious tweaking.

Seeking a simpler solution, I tried several other free programs before discovering one called ShapeX – Shape Collage Maker (www.snipca.com/42121). This requires **.NET** framework to be installed, which I already had, but you can get it from Microsoft at www.snipca.com/42120 if you don't.

After launching ShapeX, I clicked the

Load Images button and selected the holiday photos I wanted to use in my collage, holding down Ctrl as I clicked each one. By default, the software arranged these into an 'X' formation, but there were a lot more interesting options in the toolbar along the bottom of the window, organised into categories such as Animals, Shapes and Numbers. In keeping with the theme of my trip, I chose Countries and selected the USA design, which instantly presented my photos in the shape of that country (see screenshot above).

For some reason, the developer of ShapeX has decided not to label any of the program's buttons but I eventually worked out that I could add more images by clicking the overlaid-photos icon top left; change the shape of the tiles using the buttons in the centre of the top toolbar; adjust the size, borders and gaps with the sliders on the right; and click the arrow button to refresh the layout. I was then able to save my collage as a large **PNG** or **JPEG** file, without the watermark imposed by rival tools.

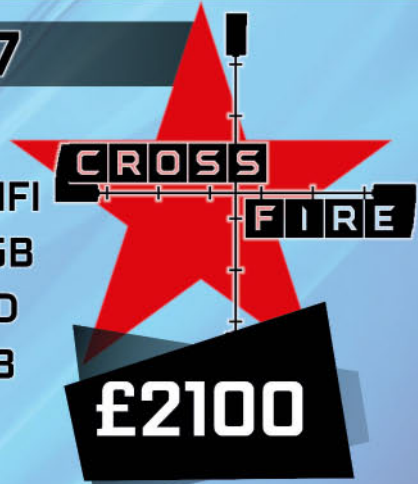
It's true that a basic grid collage would provide a clearer view of my holiday snaps, but ShapeX is more creative and fun, and lets you stick your face all over the place.

✉ Need help with your photo collages?
Let us know: noproblem@computeractive.co.uk



AMD CROSSFIRE - FAC7

- CPU - AMD Ryzen 5 5600X
- MOB - ASUS TUF X570-Plus WIFI
- RAM - 16GB DDR4 3600Mhz RGB
- STO - 1TB NVME M.2 + 2TB HDD
- GPU - NVIDIA RTX3080 TI 12GB
- PSU - 850W PSU Gold PSU
- O/S - Windows 10/11 Home



PC BUDGET BUY - FAC3

- CPU - AMD Ryzen 5 5600G
- MOB - ASUS PRIME A520M-K
- RAM - 16GB DDR4 3200Mhz
- STO - 480GB Sata3 SSD
- GPU - AMD VEGA 8 Graphics
- PSU - 500W PSU 80+
- O/S - Windows 10/11 Home



PC OF THE WEEK - FAC1

- CPU - AMD Ryzen 5 3600
- MOB - ASUS PRIME B550M-K
- RAM - 8GB DDR4 2666Mhz
- STO - 240GB Sata3 SSD
- GPU - AMD RX 6600 8GB
- PSU - 600W PSU 80+
- O/S - No Operating System





SEE YOUR OPPONENTS BEFORE THEY SEE YOU



Enjoy a large overview while gaming on the 43" iiyama G-Master G4380UHSU-B1 Red Eagle gaming monitor.

The 4K resolution, together with DisplayHDR 400 support provides incredibly sharp, vivid, and clear images. As a result, you can experience the view of landscapes, skylines, and other environments with the smallest visible details. Featuring 0.4ms MPRT response time and supporting 144Hz over DisplayPort, the monitor allows you to make split-second decisions and game with smooth-moving images, even in demanding situations.

4K
1ms
144 Hz
VA

AMD FreeSync Premium

