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## From the Editor

I'm writing this 20 minutes after Boris Johnson announced the second national lockdown. I don't know how society will respond this time, but I suspect many will turn once again to TV-streaming services for entertainment. That's what happened earlier this year, as millions of viewers ventured beyond the BBC and ITV for the first time.

Around that time I received plenty of emails from readers bewildered by the range of TV sticks available. Some had Chromecasts but wanted to know whether Amazon Fire was better. Others wondered if they should wait for

Apple TV. But most had never bought one and just wanted a simple buyer's guide that explained the differences in language they understood.

I vowed then to publish such a guide. What I hadn't expected is that it would coincide with another period of missing loved ones, Zoom quizzes and enforced working from home. Streaming's popularity will no doubt soar again. I hope we can help you decide which device is best for you during this difficult time.

**Daniel Booth**  
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Number of spam emails sent by Studios MG Ltd flogging PPE - p21

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Minimum size of hard drive needed to install Windows 10 - p66

**34x175x175mm**

Dimensions of the five-star Asus Mini PC PN50 - p22



## HOW TO USE SNIPCA URLs

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



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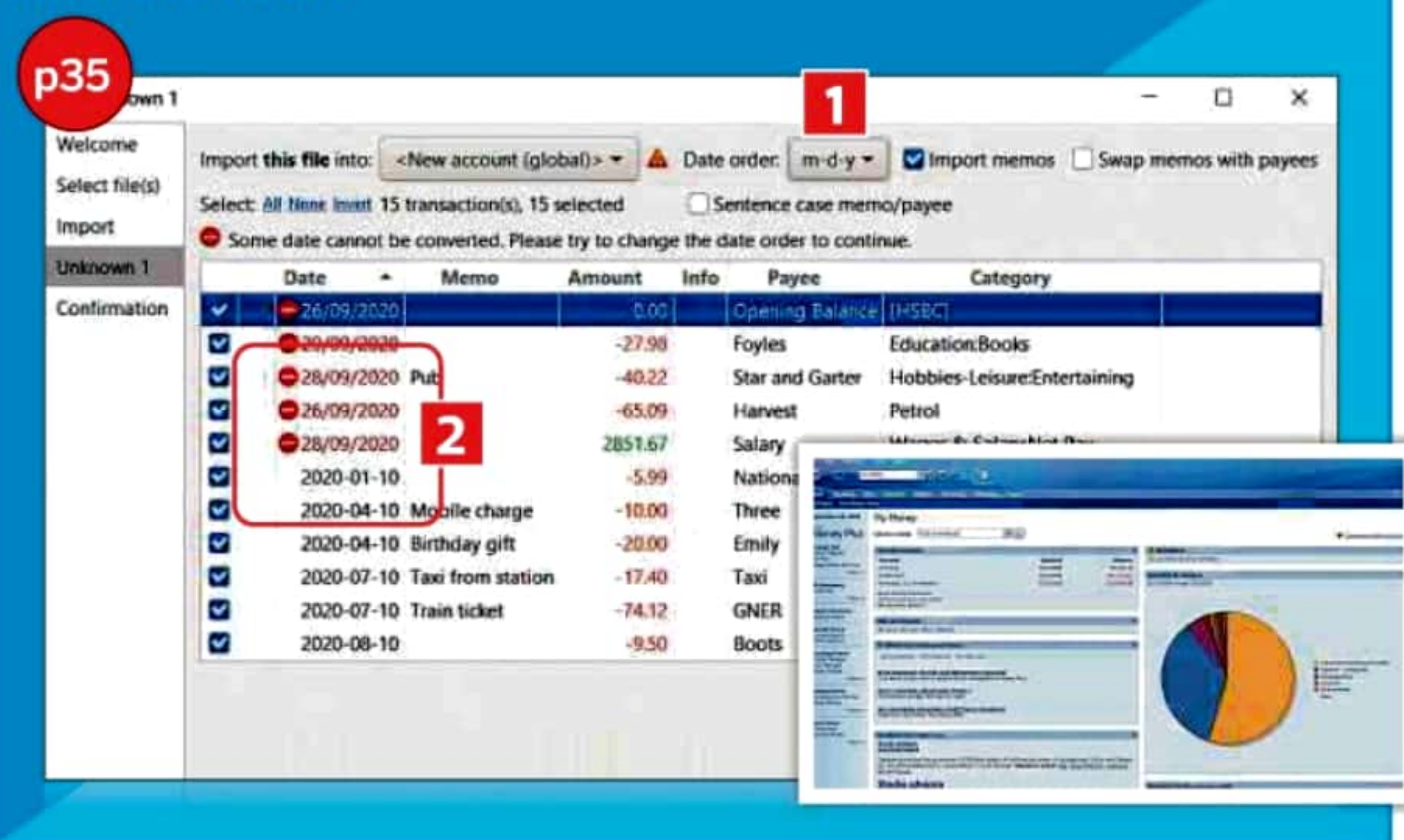
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**DON'T BUY THE WRONG TV STICK**  
Every **NEW** streaming device tested



**COVER FEATURE**  
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## Errors appear after Windows stops auto-installing drivers

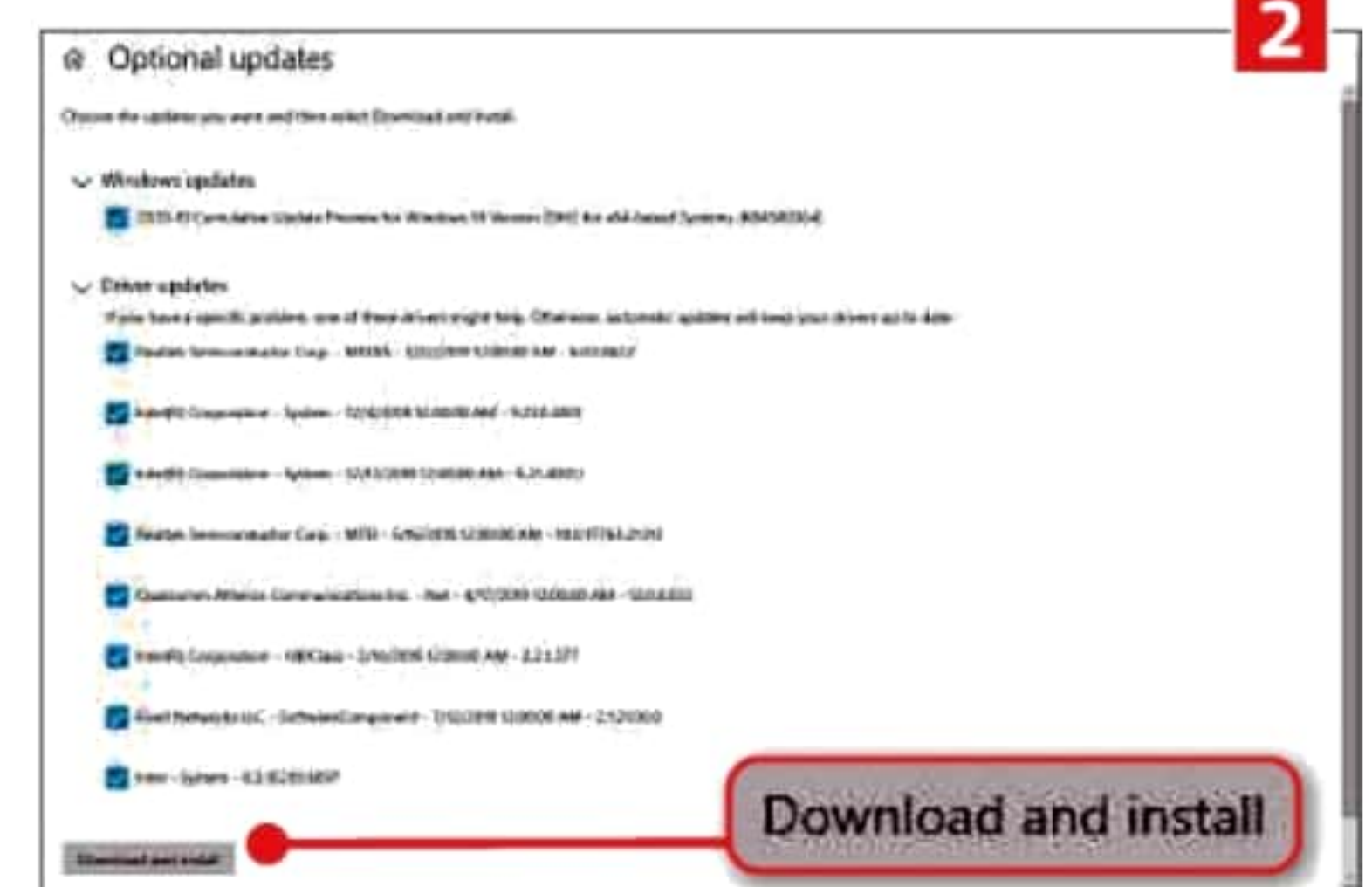
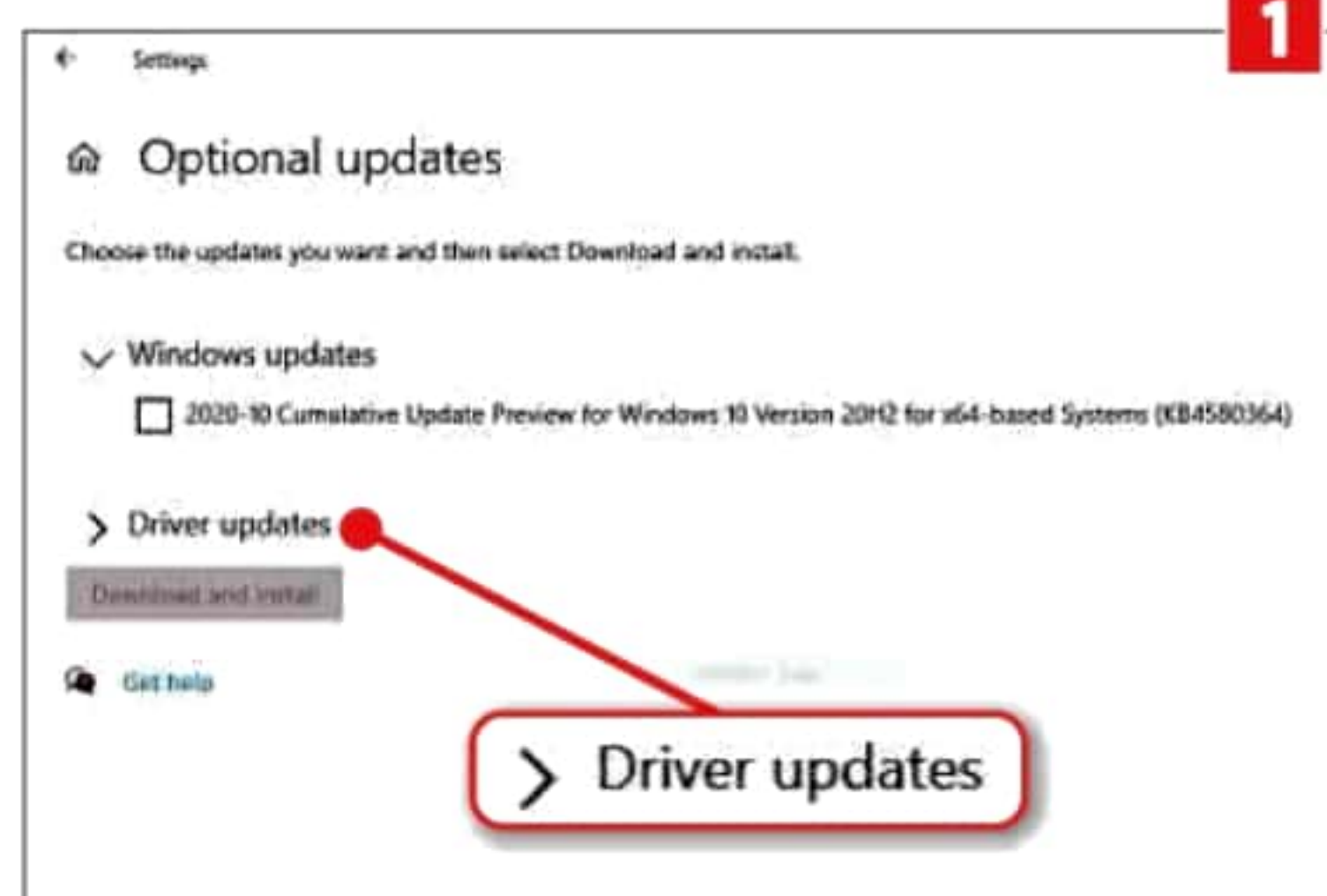
Microsoft has stopped automatically installing some drivers for Windows 10, meaning you'll see 'Driver Not Found' (DNF) error messages until you install them yourself.

The change, which was implemented on 5 November, affects computers running either the May 2020 (version 2004) or October 2020 (20H2) update.

Previously, when you first plugged in a device that requires drivers – such as a keyboard, mouse or webcam – Windows scanned your computer to check whether it had a driver installed that worked with the device.

### WHAT WE THINK

Microsoft means well. After years of indifference, it now realises how powerless users feel in the face of automatic updates, and wants to give them more control over when they install. The problem is that most users will be left guessing why their keyboard or mouse has suddenly stopped working. If they're lucky they may search online and stumble upon Microsoft's help page, but otherwise they'll be left frustrated for days or weeks, until the driver's developer swaps the manual update for automatic. Microsoft must find a better way of letting users know about such disruptive changes.



This method is known as 'plug and play' (PnP) because it lets devices work as soon as you plug them in, without you having to manually look for updates.

If Windows was unable to find a compatible driver, it would then check in Windows Update for new drivers available from the device's manufacturer.

Hardware firms can label their driver updates as either automatic or manual. Until now, Windows would install

both types of update, without you needing to do anything.

But now Microsoft will install these updates only if they've been classified as automatic. If they've been categorised as 'manual', you'll see a DNF error message, and the device that needs the driver won't work.

To get around this, you'll need to install the driver yourself. Open the Settings app (Windows key+I) then click 'Update & Security' to open the Windows Update

page. Next, under 'Check for updates', click the small blue 'View optional updates' link. Click 'Driver updates' on the following page (see screenshot 1), then tick the updates you want to install followed by 'Download and install' at the bottom 2.

Writing online ([www.snipca.com/36573](http://www.snipca.com/36573)), Microsoft said the move was part of an "improved update experience on Windows 10 PCs" that gives you more control over how and when updates are installed.

### WINDOWS 1903 USERS UPDATED AFTER SUPPORT ENDS

Users running version 1903 (May 2019 Update) of Windows 10 will soon be automatically moved on to a more recent version. This process was expected to begin in the summer but was pushed back, probably because Microsoft wanted to avoid further disruption on top of the coronavirus pandemic.

Microsoft will stop supporting version 1903 on 8 December, so most computers

should be updated before then. This is in line with the company's policy of supporting feature updates for 18 months.

Which version of Windows 10 you'll be updated to will depend on your computer's specifications. Microsoft will check how smoothly your PC can run version 20H2 (October 2020 Update), or 2004 (May 2020 Update). If it thinks your computer isn't ready, it will instead update to version 1909

(November 2019 Update). Microsoft will continue supporting this until 11 May.

Hundreds of millions of people still run version 1903, so Microsoft faces a big challenge to move them all to 1909. Latest figures from marketing company AdDuplex show that 22 per cent of Windows users run version 1903, making it the third most popular Windows 10 edition, behind 1909 (32.4 per cent) and 2004 (37.7 per cent).



**You'll like this...** Items stolen from Alan Turing are being returned from the US to the UK ([www.snipca.com/36578](http://www.snipca.com/36578))



**but not this...** Nearly £8m has been stolen this year in PayPal scams ([www.snipca.com/36579](http://www.snipca.com/36579))



# BT pledges 'simple solution' to make USO broadband cheaper

**B**T has said it's working on a "simple solution" to make it easier for customers applying for the Universal Service Obligation (USO) to share costs among their neighbours to make installation of broadband more affordable.

It follows criticism that BT is charging customers too much for installation. Digital Minister Matt Warman said some customers faced "eye-watering" costs, while Ofcom is investigating whether BT is giving quotes that are "higher than necessary".

Many customers have been charged tens of thousands of pounds, with some receiving quotes in six figures. The highest quote so far was £1.1m for installing broadband in Strathconon in the Scottish Highlands.

The USO gives you the legal right to request broadband if

you can't get a "decent" broadband speed, which is defined by Ofcom as 10Mbps while downloading and 1Mbps uploading.

You'll be eligible only if your area isn't due to receive publicly funded broadband within the next 12 months. At present, around two per cent of UK properties (590,000) meet this criteria. You can check your eligibility using BT's postcode search: [www.bt.com/broadband/USO](http://www.bt.com/broadband/USO).

If you're eligible, BT (or KCOM in Hull) will assess how much it will cost to install broadband to your home. The USO will cover the first £3,400 of this. You'll have to pay the rest.

Under BT's new approach, individuals will keep the right to request installation, but will also be given the opportunity to meet any extra costs with others.



BT's announcement came in its first biannual report on the progress it has made on delivering the USO. It said that since the scheme began in March its USO-request website had been visited 50,000 times, resulting in 512 orders from 9,000 applications. These orders have led to broadband being installed in more than 4,000 properties.

However, it noted that there could be over 100,000 properties where installing broadband would cost much more than the £3,400 cut-off cost.

## IN BRIEF

### REMOVE LARGE FILES FASTER IN WHATSAPP

WhatsApp has added new options for removing photos and videos that are taking up too much space. It now groups files into those that are larger than 5MB or have been sent to other members many times. To see these options, open WhatsApp then tap Settings at the bottom right. Tap 'Storage and Data', then Manage Storage.

### SUBSCRIBE TO APPLE SERVICES FOR £14.95

Apple has launched a monthly subscription that lets you use up to six of its services. Called Apple One, it comes in three plans: Individual, Family and Premium. Individual (£14.95) offers Apple Music, Apple TV+, Apple Arcade and 50GB iCloud storage. Family (£19.95) lets five other people use these services and increases storage to 200GB. Premium (£29.95) adds Apple News+ and Apple Fitness+, and boosts storage to 2TB. Read more at [www.snipca.com/36532](http://www.snipca.com/36532).

## Quarter of cyber-attacks on UK are COVID related

**M**ore than a quarter of threats dealt with by the UK's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) in the past 12 months were criminals or nation states trying to exploit the coronavirus pandemic.

In one "despicable" attack in July it worked with allies to prevent Russian spies stealing details of research into a vaccine.

The NCSC revealed the scale of these attacks in its annual



report, covering the period from September 2019 to August 2020. There were 723 incidents of all kinds, nearly 10 per cent more than in the previous period. Almost 200 of these were related to the pandemic.

The report said that protecting the NHS and health-related research has been a priority. It has scanned more than one million NHS IP addresses to look for vulnerabilities that hackers could target, and also worked on the security of the NHS COVID-19 contact-tracing app.

It also thwarted 15,354 coronavirus-related scams, including fake online shops selling PPE (personal protective equipment), test kits and vaccines.

### BBC BLOCKS 280,000 SPAM EMAILS A DAY

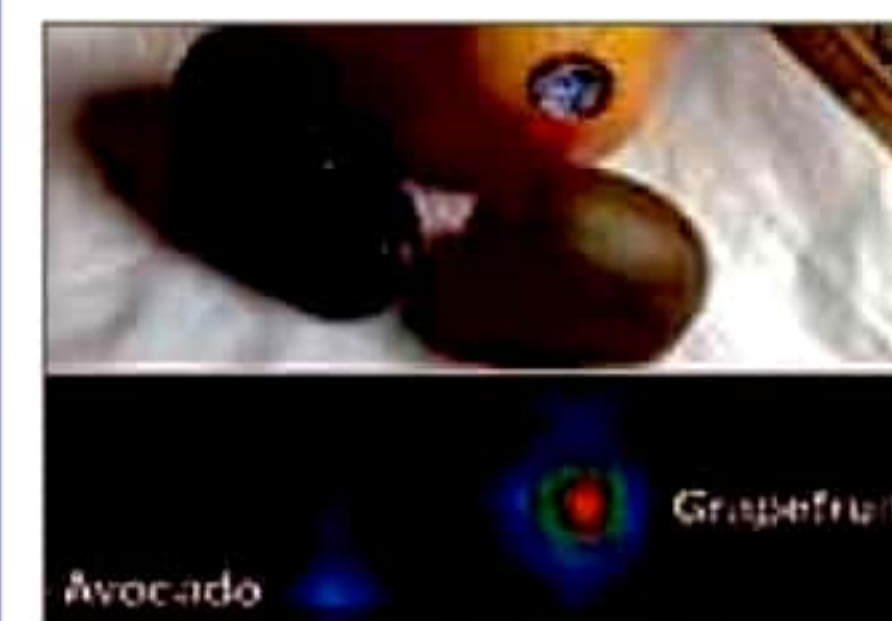
The BBC blocked an average of 283,597 spam and malicious emails a day during the first eight months of 2020. The figures, obtained in a Freedom

of Information request from the Parliament Street think tank, showed that the BBC received over 6.7 million hostile emails a month during the period.

## TOMORROW'S WORLD



Microsoft is developing a 'smart' tablecloth that recognises food placed on it, and suggests meals you can make. It works using an electrode grid embedded in fabric that can identify the shape and composition of objects. Watch it identify kiwi fruit, avocados and grapefruits at [www.snipca.com/36520](http://www.snipca.com/36520). It might even give you an excuse to spill food as you eat.





## IN BRIEF

**SKY LAUNCHES 145MBPS FIBRE BROADBAND**

Sky has launched new Fibre-to-the-Premises (FTTP) broadband packages, available to the 3.5 million customers who can access BT Openreach's fibre cables. Sky Ultrafast costs from £35 per month and delivers speeds of 145Mbps. The Superfast package costs £27 a month for 59Mbps. Visit Sky's site for details: [www.snipca.com/36508](http://www.snipca.com/36508).

**BUY NEW RASPBERRY PI KEYBOARD PC**

Raspberry Pi has released a new computer entirely built into a keyboard. Called the Raspberry Pi 400 (pictured), it comes with a quad-core Arm processor and 4GB of RAM. There's a basic version priced \$70 (£53) that doesn't come with accessories. For \$100 you can buy the 'Personal Computer Kit' which adds a mouse, USB-C power supply, an SD card with Raspberry Pi installed and a micro-HDMI to HDMI cable. Read more at [www.snipca.com/36507](http://www.snipca.com/36507).

**THE WORLD'S GONE MAD!**

Since 2016 Oliver and Olivia have been the most popular names for UK babies. We can't see them being ousted by 'Twifius' or 'Twifia', despite Swiss firm Twifi promising free broadband to parents choosing either name for their newborn. It tempted one couple, who named their daughter Twifia. However, they now feel "ashamed" and want to stay anonymous. Let's hope she forgives them.

## Locked phones banned to make switching networks easier

Ofcom is to ban UK mobile firms from selling phones locked to their networks. The regulator said that unlocking phones was complicated and often discouraged owners from switching networks at the end of their contracts.

The ban, to be implemented in December 2021, will affect Tesco Mobile and Vodafone, as well as BT and its EE mobile division. The other major networks – O2, Sky, Three and Virgin – have already stopped selling locked phones.

Networks had previously argued that locking phones deterred thieves from stealing them in order to commit fraud.



Unlocking a phone is relatively cheap, costing around £10. But Ofcom's research shows that about half of people find it difficult to carry out. Customers report problems such as a long wait

to receive the code needed to move networks, and then often finding that it doesn't work.

The regulator noted that 35 per cent of people who stick with their existing network do so because they are put off by the hassle of switching.

Ofcom's connectivity director Selina Chadha said the decision "will save people time, money and effort – and help them unlock better deals".

Vodafone claimed it's "ready to implement these changes when they come into force", while EE said it will "work with Ofcom to comply with its guidelines".

### MAKE BROADBAND SWITCHING EASIER

Ofcom has told broadband firms to make it easier to switch between fibre networks. Currently, if you want to switch between providers that rely on BT's Openreach network, such as from TalkTalk to Sky, you just need to ask the new supplier

to make arrangements. However, you have to do all the work yourself to switch between actual fibre networks, such as from BT to Virgin Media. Ofcom has given firms until December 2022 to introduce a smoother method of switching.

## New Edge gaining ground on Chrome

Microsoft's Edge browser has had its biggest monthly jump in market share since it relaunched in January.

Figures from NetMarketShare show that during October Edge's market share rose from 8.84 to 10.22 per cent – the first time this year that it has increased by more than one per cent. This coincided with Chrome use decreasing from 69.94 to 69.25 per cent.

Microsoft will see the figures as a further sign that users like the new Edge, though one reason for the



sharp increase might be that the browser was promoted in a taskbar alert as part of the October 2020 Update (version 20H2). The update is also the first version of Windows 10 to come with the new Edge loaded as the default browser.

The company spent 2019 rebuilding Edge to run on Google's powerful Chromium browser engine, before relaunching it in January to wide acclaim. Last October, before the change, Edge's market share was just 5.95 per cent, below Firefox and even Internet Explorer.

It's now comfortably above both browsers as the world's second-most popular browser, albeit still far behind Chrome.

Have you switched from Chrome to Edge? Let us know: [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)



# 75,000 sensitive files extracted from USBs sold on eBay

**B**ank statements, legal contracts and tax returns were among 75,000 files recovered from 100 USB sticks and drives bought by security researchers on eBay.

A team from Abertay University in Dundee used specialist software USB Write Blocker ([www.snipca.com/36564](http://www.snipca.com/36564)) to retrieve files that the sellers thought they had deleted.

Only 32 of the devices had been wiped properly. Partial files were recovered from 26 drives, while all the files were extracted from the remaining 42 devices. Many of the files contained usernames and passwords that criminals could have used to access accounts. None of the drives contained malware, making them safe for buyers to use.

Professor Karen Renaud, from Abertay's Division of Cybersecurity, hopes the

research will remind people of the importance of erasing files fully before selling devices.

"This is extremely concerning, and the potential for this information to be misused with extremely serious consequences is enormous," she said.

She added that if hackers could find the seller's email address in the files they'd be able to "siphon money from their bank accounts or even blackmail a seller by threatening to reveal embarrassing information".

Professor Renaud advised computer users to use powerful software to wipe drives, rather than simply deleting them using Windows.

"What happens is that the file is removed from the index



so that they are effectively hidden from view," she said. "They're still there though and if you know how, you can easily recover them using publicly available forensics tools."

She recommended destroying old USB drives with a hammer if you don't want to sell them.

• We'll explain how to permanently wipe files from your USB sticks in our next issue – out Weds 2 December.

## Control Panel's demise looms as shortcut axed

**M**icrosoft is planning to remove a shortcut that lets you open sections of the Control Panel that it has moved to the Settings page.

The company's long-term aim is to move all Control Panel options to Settings (press Windows key+I), which it sees as a more modern and convenient place for options you need to access regularly.

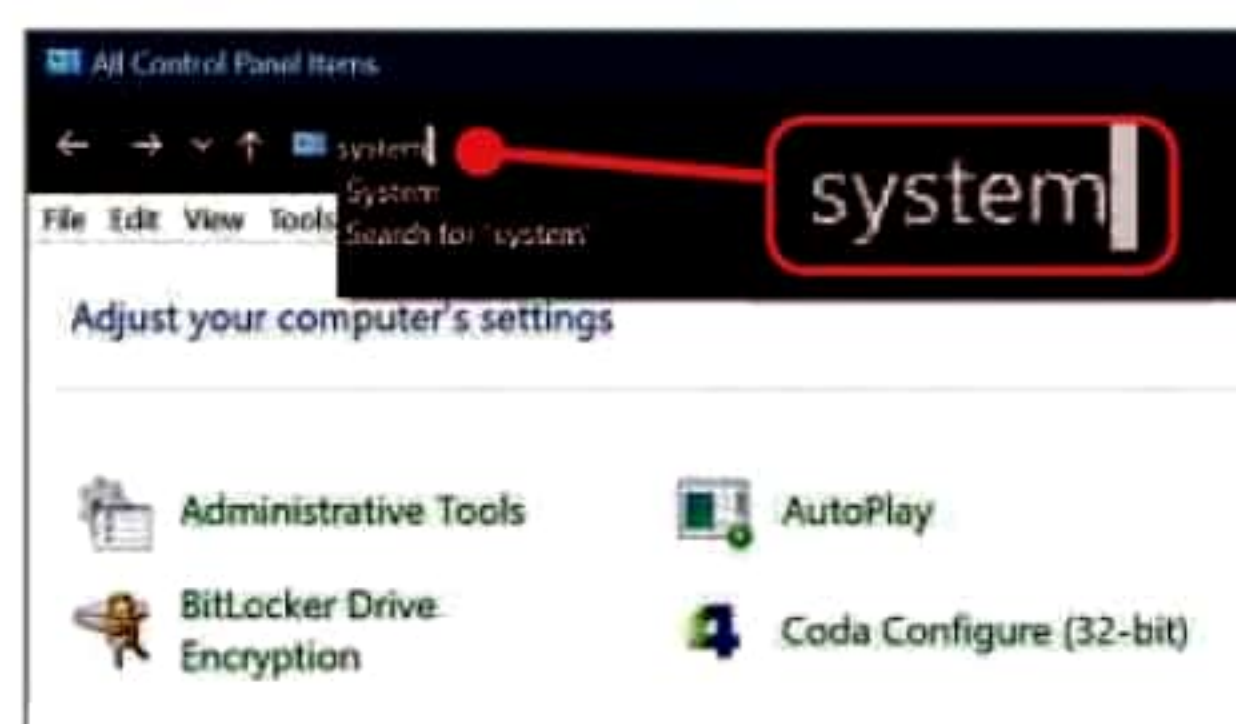
Most recently, in the October 2020 Update clicking the System link in the Control Panel takes you straight to the System section in Settings.

For now, there's still a workaround that lets you bring back System to the Control Panel. You need to

open the Control Panel from the Start menu or via Windows Search, then click a blank area of the address bar at the top. Next, type **system** (see screenshot) and press Enter.

However, this option has been removed in the latest preview versions of Windows 10, available to users signed up to the Insider Programme. Microsoft has also removed the option to right-click within File Explorer and select Properties to open the System section of the Control Panel.

If you try to do this, Windows redirects you to its About page instead,



containing information including your processor, RAM, and the version of Windows you're running.

Microsoft says it has no imminent plans to remove the Control Panel entirely, but there seems little doubt it will eventually be axed in favour of the Settings page.

However, not all users are in favour of the change. Many have complained that Settings shows fewer items on a single page, while the options to filter these are not always shown.

### IN BRIEF

#### YAHOO AXES FREE EMAIL FORWARDING

Yahoo Mail users will soon have to pay to have their emails automatically forwarded to other accounts. Yahoo had provided this feature for free, but from 1 January it will be available only if you sign up for Yahoo Mail Pro (£2.09 a month). Yahoo says it's axing free forwarding to "help ensure free Yahoo Mail accounts remain secure". Read Yahoo's statement at [www.snipca.com/36539](http://www.snipca.com/36539).

#### THREE & VODAFONE HIKE ABOVE INFLATION

Mobile networks Three and Vodafone have become the latest companies to raise prices by more than inflation. Three customers who joined after 29 October will pay an extra 4.5 per cent, while Vodafone customers signing up after 9 December will see their bills rise by the CPI rate of inflation in January 2021 plus 3.9 per cent. Both rises will apply from April 2021. BT, EE and Plusnet have previously announced inflation-busting rises.

#### CLASSIC COMEDIES COME TO BBC IPLAYER

Some of the BBC's best-loved comedies have returned to the iPlayer. You can now watch every episode of *Blackadder*, *The Vicar of Dibley*, *The Royle Family* and *The Catherine Tate Show* by visiting [www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer](http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer) then searching for the show at the top right. Click 'View all episodes' in the search results (see screenshot).





# Question of the Fortnight

## How are romance fraudsters exploiting the pandemic?

Scammers are targeting the lonely and vulnerable during lockdown

**F**or most of us, the COVID-19 lockdowns have been unsettling times, forcing us to worry more about health, jobs and social isolation. But scammers have seen it rather differently. For them, it's been a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to exploit the fears of people. There's lots of cash to be made from this crisis.

One of their most insidious tactics is to target people looking for love on dating websites. They create fake profiles online and come across as witty, compassionate and attentive, offering their victims a new life of love and happiness. But it's all a vile lie. After spending months winning their victim's trust, they pounce by asking for money for what seem like genuine reasons, such as a loan to pay off a debt.



### THE FACTS

- Romance fraud rose by 26 per cent during the summer as scammers targeted people feeling lonely after lockdown.
- On average victims lost £10,000, and more than £66m was stolen in the 12 months to August 2020.
- The top five sites where victims met the scammers were Facebook, Plenty of Fish, Instagram, Tinder and Match.com.

12 months to August 2020.

There were lots of lonely hearts before lockdown, of course. But understandably weeks without human contact led to a surge of people looking for love online.

Police forces across the UK responded to the increase in

mould their personality to suit yours, sharing your interests and dreams, pretending to care deeply about the same things you do. You'll spend hours planning a future together.

What they're particularly good at is eliciting your sympathy for hardships they've suffered. This is where the con really begins because they're softening you up so they can ask you for money.

They often blame current events to make their sob story more convincing, and the pandemic has given them plenty of new ideas. Victim-support charities have warned people about scammers claiming they need money for urgent medical treatment, or because they've unexpectedly been made redundant.

Police also point out that scammers don't just target traditional dating sites. Two of the top five sites where victims met fraudsters were Facebook and Instagram (the other three being Plenty of Fish, Tinder and Match.com).

Not all scammers are getting away with it, however. Recent police investigations identified 38 victims who hadn't reported the crime – indeed, some were still talking to the scammer because they didn't suspect anything.

One such case led to two arrests by the Eastern Region Special Operations Unit (ERSOU), which comprises seven forces in the east of England. Officers are examining computers confiscated during the operation to track down bank accounts that have received stolen money. Police also worked with counterparts in Ghana to locate suspects and repatriate £115,000 to UK victims.

These are considerable successes, but scammers will remain tempted by the millions of potential victims looking for love. That's a lot of lonely hearts to break and bank accounts to rob. Make sure you don't fall for their poisonous charms.

**“Coronavirus has given scammers new ways to make their sob stories sound more convincing”**

They vanish the moment the money reaches their account, leaving their victim penniless, broken-hearted and often embarrassed that they were fooled.

Romance fraud is as old as dating websites themselves, but it's increased markedly during 2020. Action Fraud received more than 600 reports of such scams per month in June, July and August, with victims losing an average of £10,000. In total scammers stole more than £66m in the

scams by running an awareness campaign throughout October. Working with Match Group, which owns dating sites OK Cupid, Plenty of Fish, Tinder and Match.com, they warned the public about the risks of dating fraud, and offered guidance on staying safe.

The most important piece of advice is to “fall for the person, not the profile”. Scammers are masters at creating fake profiles that make them sound like the perfect match. They then



# Protect your tech

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

## WATCH OUT FOR...

## Fake 'Update Word' malware emails

### What's the threat?

Hackers are trying to infect your computer with the Emotet malware by sending emails that urge you to update Microsoft Word. The email, which claims to be from Windows Update, states that you need to update Word in order to open a document that's attached.

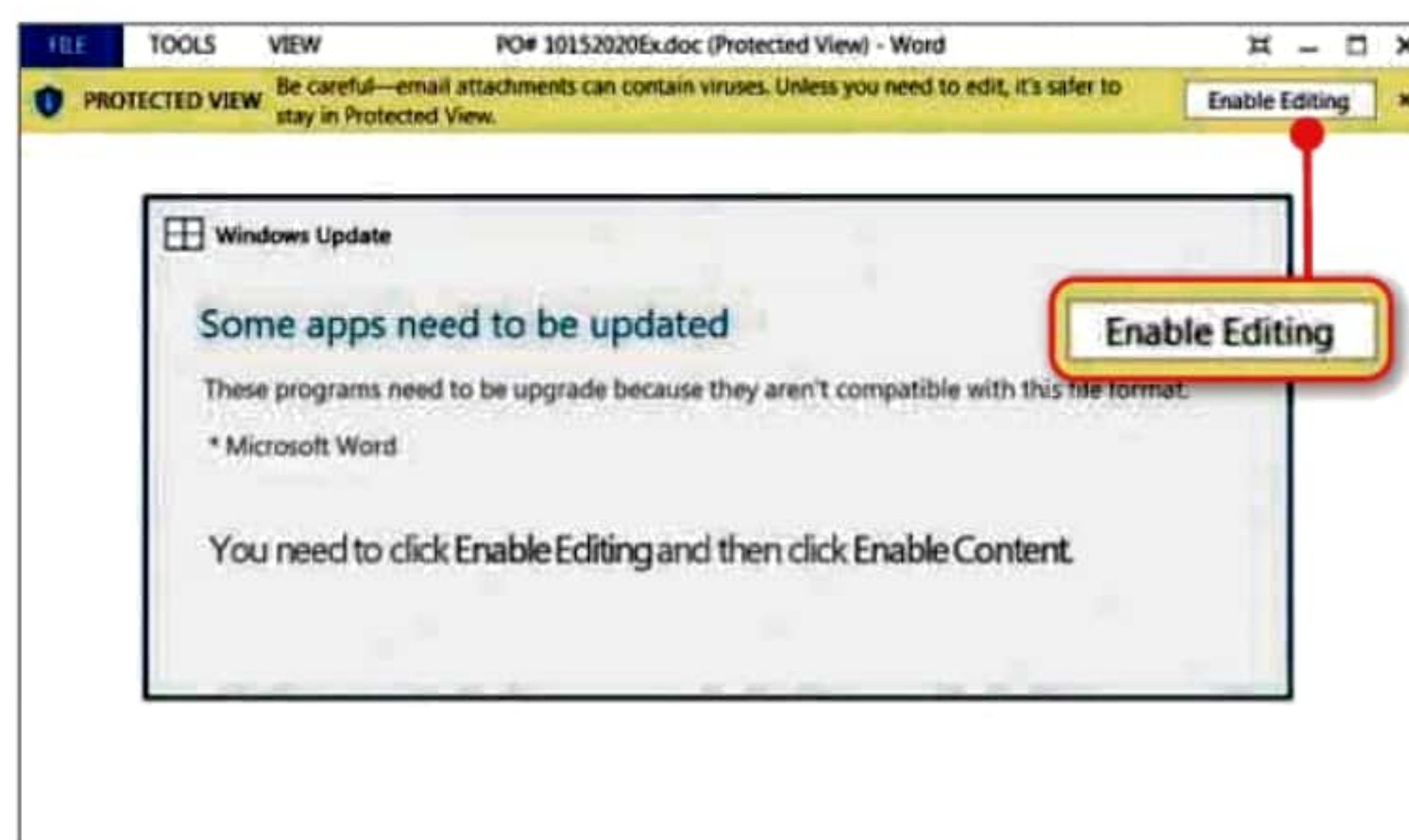
These emails don't mention updating Word in the subject line. Instead, they typically use more newsworthy information, particularly on COVID-19, or alerts about invoices you have to pay.

When you open the email you'll see this message: "Some apps need to be updated. These programs need to be upgrade because they aren't compatible with this file format. \* Microsoft Word. You need to click Enable Editing and then click Enable Content."

The word "upgrade" is missing a final

'd', and there's an asterisk before "Microsoft Word". Microsoft should detect these emails as malicious and show a warning in the yellow bar at the top, saying that email attachments "can contain viruses" and that it's safer to keep documents in 'Protected View'.

The scammers want you to click Enable Editing to disable this protection and run **macros** on your computer. If you do this,



Emotet will be installed on your machine, where it'll cause trouble, such as locking your system with **ransomware** or using your email address to send spam.

### How can you stay safe?

The key to avoiding this is to read then reread the subject line of any email before opening it. If it sounds suspicious or just downright odd, check

who the sender is.

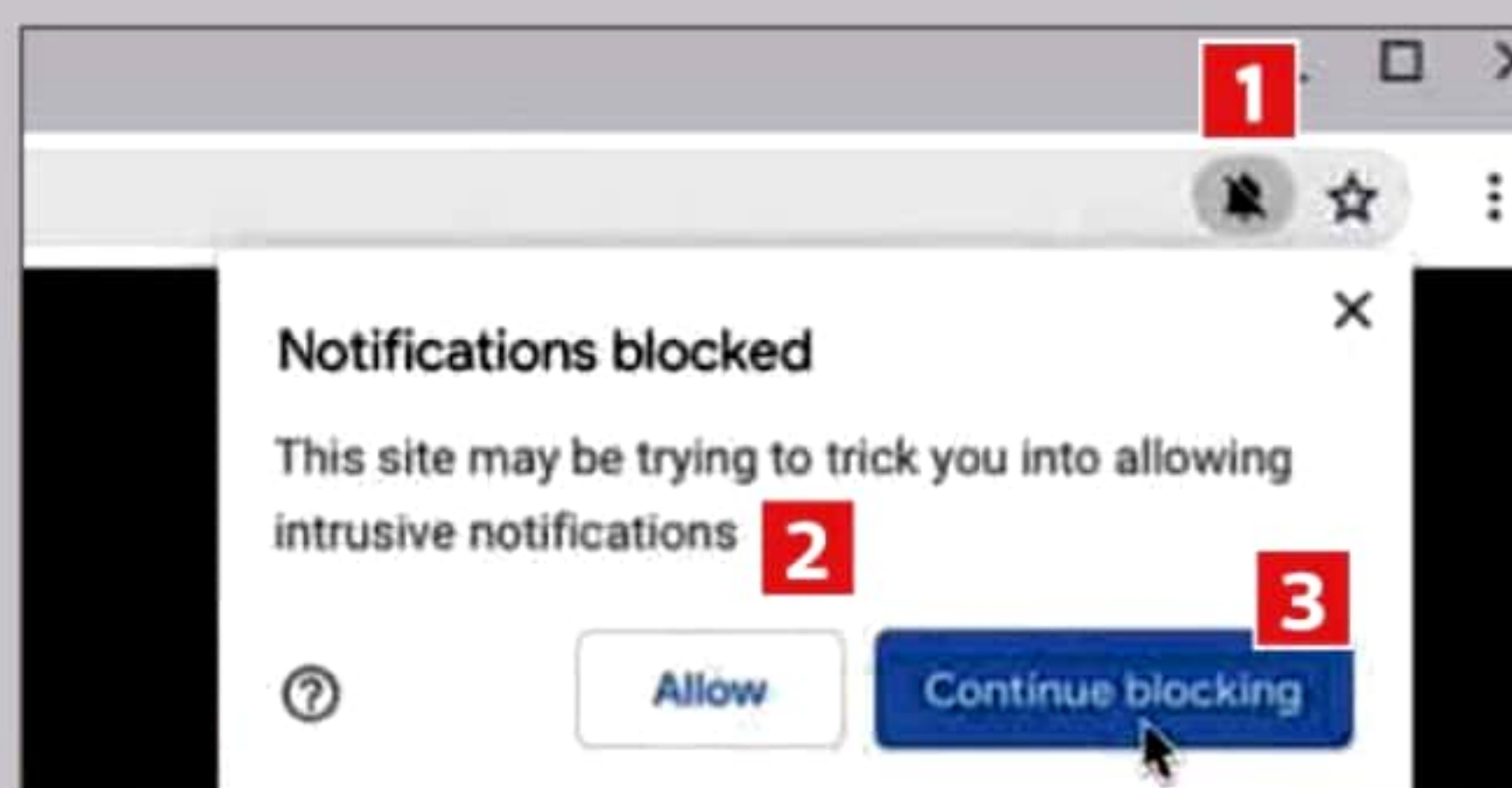
Be aware that hackers are exploiting the current pandemic by sending emails containing all manner of enticing headlines, from discoveries about vaccines to work-from-home policies.

Bear in mind too that Emotet scammers also use messages claiming to be from Windows 10 Mobile, Office 365 and the Windows Office Activation Wizard.

## New tools | Chrome 86's notification alerts

Abusive notifications online are often a lot more subtle than "Hey, big nose!". Instead, sites try to trick you by imitating update messages you might see from Chrome or Windows. Click one and you could end up installing malware or handing over your passwords.

Google added warnings to these sites when it released Chrome 84 in July (see Issue 585, page 7). It has now strengthened this protection in Chrome 86 by also showing warnings when you're on a site that has "a history of sending messages containing abusive content", even if it's not trying to show you a notification at that moment.



The bell icon that Chrome shows when you get a notification will have a cross through it (1 in the screenshot). Click that and Chrome will tell you that the site "may be trying to trick you into allowing intrusive notifications" 2. You can then choose to either allow them or, more sensibly, to continue blocking them 3. Read more on Google's blog: [www.snipca.com/36425](http://www.snipca.com/36425).

## ScamWatch

Readers warn readers

### £35 M&S card is 'complete tosh'

I've read about scammers impersonating money-saving expert Martin Lewis. Now they're pretending to be Marks & Spencer boss Steve Rowe. I saw an advert online claiming Mr Rowe had launched a prize draw to give customers a £35 gift card to celebrate M&S's 135th birthday. You have to click a link and enter your details, including bank info. Now, my wife spends every other day in M&S, but I doubt they'll reward her loyalty with free money! It's complete tosh of course, as reported by my local paper in Leicester: [www.snipca.com/36411](http://www.snipca.com/36411). Consider yourself warned!

Roy Bentall



Warn your fellow readers about scams at [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)



# Letters

Tell us what's on your mind

## Faster broadband is vital for post-COVID world

✉ I don't share Hugh Collins' shoulder-shrugging attitude towards the country's broadband deadlines ('Who cares if UK misses 2025 broadband target?', Issue 592). In the past few months we've seen millions of people start to work from home for the first time. Some of them might return to the office when normal times return, if they ever do. But most of them won't. For this new breed of home worker, fast broadband is essential.



It's not good enough anymore to simply say that if you can browse the web or send emails, that's all you need. Home workers need much faster download speeds to access and work on documents and to take part in video meetings. It's as essential now to their work as a reliable train was to their pre-COVID commute.

The only way out of this disaster is to invest in a digital recovery. There's no going back to the old world of two-hour commutes, packed trains and expensive city-centre office blocks. We need world-beating broadband that will allow workers to be just as productive at home as they were in the office.

Adam Buckland

## Disgusted by PayPal's 'inactivity' fee

✉ I'm disgusted that PayPal is going to hit users with an 'inactivity' fee (News, Issue 592, page 9). I've used PayPal on and off for about 12 years, buying and selling items on eBay. There have been times when I've used it dozens of times a month, while at other times I've not used it for a few years. My use has been very erratic, but why should I be punished for that? This move feels like PayPal is exploiting its dominance as the

main provider of digital payments. It sounds very similar to reports that banks will soon start charging for accounts.

How long before eBay, Facebook and even Google start charging for inactivity also?

Sheila Thomas

## Windows 7 better than Linux for home working

✉ In Issue 592, Helen Winters asked why users are moving from Linux to Windows 7, when the latter is no longer supported by Microsoft. Allow me to give a reason from personal experience. Like millions of others, I've been working from home since March. We're not a big company, and some of our systems still require Windows 7. We're in the process of upgrading this to Windows 10, but the second lockdown has delayed this even further.

At home, I have a Linux PC and a Windows 7 PC. I haven't updated the latter to Windows 10 because I've mostly been using the Linux PC to go online. But when working from home I need to use the Windows 7 machine, like my colleagues. I've barely used my Linux computer because in the evening I'm

exhausted and have no desire to spend even more hours staring at a screen.

To break it into figures, in the 12 months before March I reckon my computer use was 90 per cent Linux, 10 per cent Windows 7. Since March it's been the opposite. How many people worldwide are in similar circumstances? I assume there's enough to account for the switch from Linux to Windows 7 that you implied in your report.

Brian Hoxton

## Boo-hoo for Yahoo Groups

✉ I shed a metaphorical tear when I read about the demise of Yahoo Groups (News, Issue 592, page 8). The ability to chat to like-minded people in these groups was the reason I started using the internet in the first place, back in the dying days of the previous millennium. I made lots of virtual friends who shared my passion for films, books and art. I even met some of them in the flesh. It seemed like a more innocent time for the internet, before all the abuse and hysteria we see on Twitter every day. You can't go back to those days, but I miss them dearly.

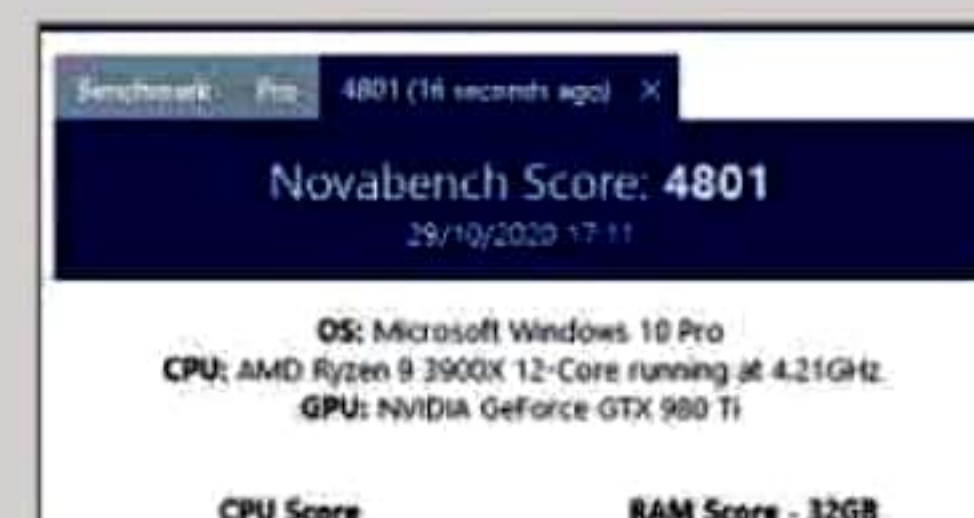
Les James

## My self-built PC is new benchmark to beat

✉ Like Steve Wright (Letters, Issue 591), I used the first lockdown as a chance to build myself a new PC, with very similar specs to his - an AMD Ryzen 9 3900X processor, 32GB DDR4 3200 memory, 1TB NVMe SSD. However, it seems that the GeForce GTX 980Ti graphics card that I carried over from my old PC was enough to give me the edge over Steve's Radeon RX570. As you can see, I scored 4,801 when taking Novabench's benchmarking test (<https://novabench.com/download>).

Because my card is five years old, I look forward to seeing my score beaten by a reader with a GTX20 or 30-series graphics card, or by AMD's new cards when they're released next month. I'm hoping to upgrade in the new year myself.

Geoffrey Brown




✉ I took delivery of my new PC from PC Specialist ([www.pcspecialist.co.uk](http://www.pcspecialist.co.uk)) today and the first thing I did was to run Novabench and got the score 4,795. I always tend to 'over spec' my machines a little to make them future-proof and last a little longer than they would usually. I have just had to replace my last machine after 12 years of use. Not bad I think. Am I the highest score now?

Peter Williams

**CA SAYS** Fantastic effort Peter, but Geoffrey's self-built PC just pipped you, with our highest score yet. However, that 5,000 barrier remains unbroken. Please let us know if yours hits that magical figure.




## Don't you mean OneNote, not OneDrive?

 In Issue 591's feature on whether you should stop using Office now that Microsoft has ended support for Office 2010 (page 63), you suggest buying the Home & Student version "if you aren't bothered about OneDrive storage". Shouldn't this be OneNote not OneDrive? OneNote is included in my Home & Student. I've got OneDrive on my PC, so I assumed it came with Windows 10 as I haven't got Office 365 installed.

Bryan Bayliss

**CA SAYS** Bryan's right that OneDrive does come with Windows 10, but you only get 5GB for free. You have to pay for more – prices start from £1.99 a month for 100GB: [www.snipca.com/36501](http://www.snipca.com/36501). We mentioned that a Microsoft 365 subscription comes with 1TB of OneDrive storage, which you don't get with Home & Student. OneNote does come with Office, but it's a note-taking tool, not storage.

## Did BT cut my speed to avoid paying refunds?


 I think Dave St Pier may have a point in his Star Letter in Issue 591 ('Are ISPs cutting speeds to avoid compensation?'), specifically about BT offering lower speeds at a reasonable price. In September, I rang BT to enquire about either getting another BT Sport and TV deal, or cancelling it before prices increased by £4 on 1 November. The BT sales advisor who answered my call had only been working for BT for six weeks and was obviously keen to impress, and offer me the best deal available.

My existing BT Sport and TV package could not be matched, but the sales advisor noticed that my wife and I's mobile package was also due for renewal along with my broadband within the next two months. I couldn't refuse the sales advisor's offer of Complete Wi-Fi with fibre on the Halo 1 package, with a new Smart Hub 2 router. I also got an extra 2GB of data, boosting it to 4GB, for £1.50 a month less than I had been paying. It was an offer I could not refuse.

The main difference was a slower broadband speed of 58Mbps to 64Mbps, rather than the 64Mbps to 70Mbps that I was on. When I mentioned this, the advisor stated the new speed was similar to what I was already getting. I agreed that my average speed was 64Mbps and

## STAR LETTER

### BT's broadband installation costs made me wince

 Issue 592's 'Question of the Fortnight' rang true to me ('Is BT charging too much for universal broadband?'). I live in a rural cul-de-sac in Yorkshire that's not as cut-off as many others, but it's no thriving metropolis. I've never had a broadband speed faster than 10Mbps, despite endless petitions and local parish meetings.

I had assumed the Universal Service Obligation (USO) would be the answer to my broadband prayers, but at the back of my mind I always wondered whether it would turn out to be undeliverable. My suspicions are beginning to seem justified.

I contacted BT in June about installing broadband using the USO. They came back with a quote that made me wince – just shy of £20,000!



It would've been cheaper to move house to an area with better connectivity.

At no point did BT suggest I team up with my neighbours to bring the cost down. I probably should've realised this was an option, but it's bordering on scandalous that BT doesn't promote this as a solution.

I hope pressure from Ofcom and the Government will force BT to take the USO more seriously. I'd like to see BT forced to give a hypothetical price for broadband when shared among a number of people, in the same way banks have to say how much your mortgage would cost if interest rates rise. That's the only way I'll believe BT when they claim they're "committed" to deliver universal broadband.

Jack Styles



The Star Letter writer wins a Computeractive mug!

sometimes reached 67Mbps.

So, as Dave St Pier said, I believe BT are offering slower speeds on new deals, which includes an even lower speed before they have to pay compensation. In my case, the top speed is 58Mbps to 64Mbps, while the lower speed at which they'd have to refund me is a full 20Mbps less, at 38Mbps.

Paul Croft


## How was it ever legal to play games while driving?

 I'm glad the Government is planning to ban motorists taking photos and playing games, but how was this even legal in the first place? I realise that today's smartphones are much more



advanced than the 'dumb' phones we had years ago when calling was made illegal, but even back then you could take photos and play basic games (remember Snake?). I suspect those making our laws lacked the technological savviness to comprehend what people could use their phones for, or to grasp how phone technology would develop in the following years. This shows a lack of foresight from the people who are supposed to be keeping us safe.

Kieran Turnbull

 The problem with Paul Crossley's proposal ('Make it illegal for phones to work in cars', Issue 592) is that there will always be some exceptional life-or-death moments when drivers will need to use their phones, such as to call someone if they feel threatened by a passenger. It would be up to the police or the courts to decide whether this was a justified use of their phone. However, I accept that it would be the kind of defence that's open to abuse, as many legal loopholes are.

Simon Arden





We stand up for your legal rights

## Shouldn't a smart TV last longer than two years?

**Q** In November 2018 I bought a Samsung Series 7 smart TV (pictured) from Argos for £453. Over the months, dark patches developed, which now cover around 50 per cent of the screen. Neither Argos nor Samsung will help, but surely it should last longer than two years?

Duncan Walker

**A** Yes, we think it should too. We can't say with certainty what the problem is, but it sounds like dead or stuck pixels. Sometimes one or two stuck pixels can be fixed manually, but any more than that and the whole screen usually needs replacing. But manufacturers don't always accept that one or two stuck pixels count as inherent faults – some will help you only if there are seven or more stuck pixels.

Samsung decided back in 2005 that it would exchange any TV set with faulty pixels within the 12-month warranty period. The problem for Duncan is he's outside of the warranty period.

However, with up to 50 per cent of his



TV screen affected, he has every right to claim that it's inherently faulty. He should therefore contact Argos and insist that, as the retailer, it must assist him under the Consumer Rights Act. Because he's owned the TV for more than six months, Duncan will need to get it examined to prove the fault wasn't caused by damage or wear and tear. He should also take photos of the TV and post it on Samsung's customer forums ([www.snipca.com/36343](http://www.snipca.com/36343)) for advice.

We've asked Samsung whether the problem is likely to be caused by dead pixels. If it says this is the case, we'll pass this on to Duncan so he can show it to Argos.

LEAD  
CASE

CASE ONGOING

## Should Microsoft refund me for botched update?

**Q** An automatic Microsoft update meant my PC wouldn't boot. I had to pay a local dealer £49 to reinstall Windows. Can I get a refund from Microsoft for this botched update?

Don McBeth

**A** The Consumer Rights Act is clear that suppliers of digital upgrades – Microsoft in this case – are responsible for any problems. Like physical goods, digital content must be fit for purpose, as described and of satisfactory quality. If not, then consumers are entitled to a repair or replacement. If these aren't possible, then the consumer must be refunded. Additionally, if this content affects devices or other downloads, you'd be entitled to further compensation.

However, Don will have to prove that the problem was caused by the update. The local repair shop should be able to provide a report that shows this, though Microsoft might not accept it as evidence. We've also asked Don which specific upgrade he's referring to and if he has any more information about the problem so we can pass this on to Microsoft.

CASE ONGOING

### CASE UPDATE

## Reader still simmering after oven door finally fixed



Computeractive reader Jim Abernethy is finally cooking again after the door fell off his AEG oven (see Issue 592), but fixing it took longer than it should have done.

He couldn't remember where he bought the cooker, so rather than asking the retailer for a refund (under the Consumer Rights Act), he had to use AEG's five-year warranty. But he was having problems getting hold of the company. He tried ringing, but this only went to a recorded message advising him to



ring another number and leave a voicemail message. He was unable to do this. We did manage to leave a message after taking on his case, but we never heard back from AEG.

Instead we got in touch with AEG through their PR company and asked a customer-

support worker to ring Jim and arrange a time to fix his cooker. They did this, but the wrong door was sent, so Jim had to wait another week until he could cook again.

This was a mess from start to finish. Not only was AEG's phone support useless, it compounded the frustration by sending Jim the wrong part. We asked AEG why it was asking customers to leave a message rather than talk to an advisor, but it didn't comment. Jim himself is still simmering with anger at how badly he was treated.



## Why won't Dell refund overheating laptop?

**Q** I bought an XPS 13 (2020) laptop (pictured) for £1,449 directly from Dell at the end of April 2020, but within the first month the laptop began overheating. Initially, Dell's support team appeared to have solved the problem by remotely fixing it, but my XPS 13 has started to overheat again. Dell has refused to take the laptop back or give me a refund, but I'm so concerned



that it's a fire risk that I'm not using it. What are my options?  
Keith Morris

**A** Keith should use the Consumer Rights Act (CRA) to get a refund, repair or replacement. When he first emailed us, fewer than six months had passed since purchase, which means he wouldn't need to prove that the overheating is an inherent fault. Instead, Dell would have to prove that it was caused by wear and tear or by Keith damaging the machine.

What's less clear is whether Dell's attempt to fix the problem remotely counts as the one and only repair it's allowed to carry out by law. If so, then Dell must refund Keith without

attempting another repair. Dell should have pointed this out to Keith, rather than refusing point blank to take the laptop back for testing.

If the laptop did catch fire, Dell as both the manufacturer and seller would be liable not only under the CRA for goods not fit for purpose, but also face fines under the General Product Safety Regulations. Keith might also be able to claim under the UK Consumer Protection Act, which lets consumers bring civil claims against manufacturers for unsafe products that cause damage, death or injury.

**CASE CLOSED**

## Why is PayPal ignoring request for refunds?

**Q** In June, I paid £17.43 for a hydro power washer from a website that turned out to be run by a Chinese company. I only received a garden hose adapter and after opening a dispute with PayPal I posted the item back to China. However, PayPal claimed I didn't supply the tracking information for the item and closed my case without refunding me. I can prove I did give

PayPal this info, so could you add my case to the ones you've sent to PayPal recently?  
Carolyn Sheehan

**A** We'll be happy to do this. It seems that the emails we've been sending to PayPal recently haven't been getting through to the right people, but we've now got a more direct line of communication. We hope this will lead to successful resolutions.

Carolyn said she was unable to appeal PayPal's decision through the Resolution Centre, as we had previously advised other readers to do. To do this, you log into PayPal and click the top-right

Settings icon (a cog). Next, click Help at the top, followed by 'Resolution Centre' at the bottom right of the box that appears. Normally, from here, you'd look for the Appeal button next to the case you want to dispute, but Carolyn couldn't see this button. We've asked PayPal why that was.

It's worth remembering also that while PayPal has its own buyer and seller protection schemes, it's also regulated by the UK's Financial Services Authority. This means that you can take your case to the Financial Ombudsman Service if you feel PayPal has treated you unfairly ([www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk)).

**CASE ONGOING**

### CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

## Amazon refunded mower that was too fast for me



Because of my arthritis, keeping our lawn tidy with a hover mower became impossible, so we've been paying £30-£40 a time to get it done, which is quite a lump to come out of our pensions!

I thought a self-propelled mower would make the job easier, so I bought one from Amazon (the Einhell Petrol Lawn Mower GC-PM 46 S, pictured). But it ran too fast – I couldn't keep up with it!



The manufacturer told me they couldn't adjust the speed, so I explained my problem to Amazon. They were sorry the mower didn't meet my requirements, and offered to pick up the mower for free, refunding me in full. When I mentioned that I had opened some oil that I also bought, they said that was no problem. I've used Amazon for around 20 years because their prices are highly competitive and on

odd occasions when I've needed it, their customer service has always been excellent.

Dave Pearce

✉ Has a company impressed you with its customer service? Please let us know: [editor@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:editor@computeractive.co.uk)

**Contact:**  
Amazon

• **Online chat** [www.snipca.com/36294](http://www.snipca.com/36294)  
• **Phone** 0800 279 7234



# Grow Your Family Tree



Preserve your family history for future generations as **Nick Peers** shows you how to...

## Back up your tree to a USB stick

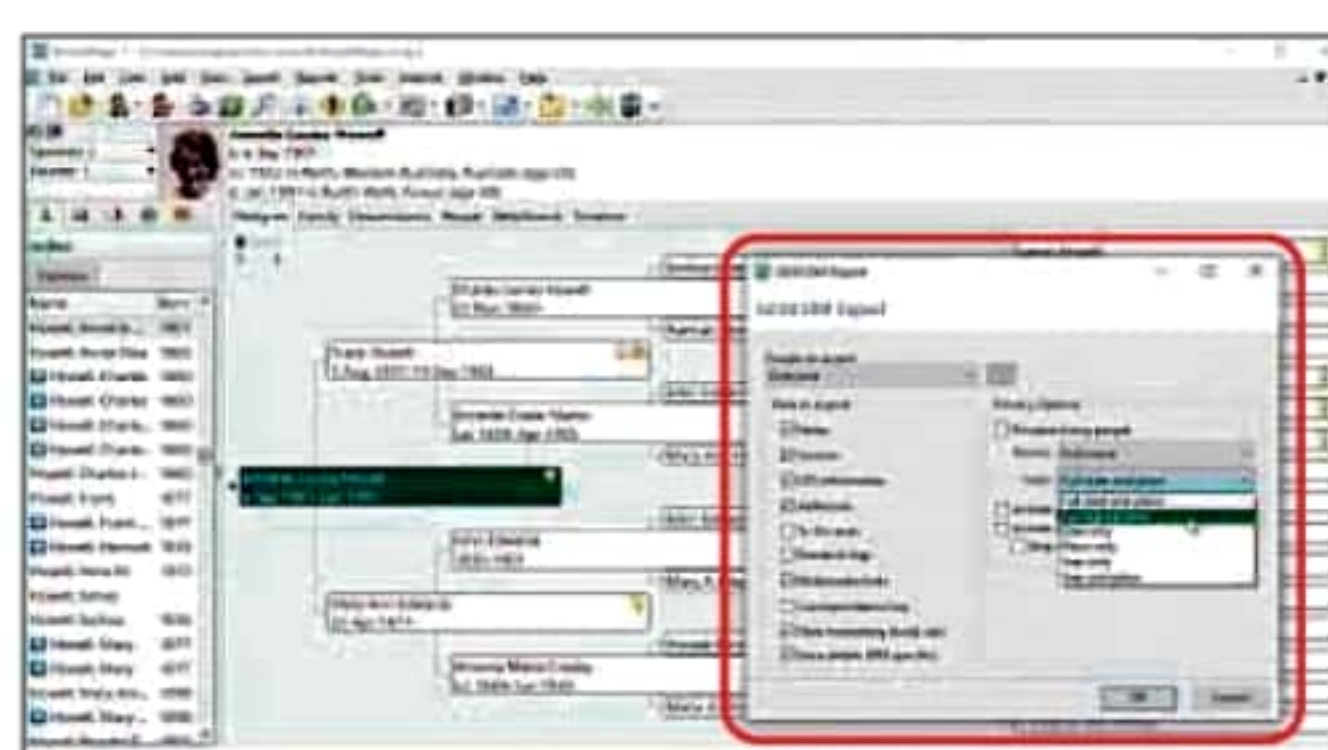
Computeractive reader John Drakeford got in touch to ask how he can preserve his family research – currently stored on Ancestry – for future generations to access. He'd like to create a local copy on a USB stick, and store another copy online. However, while Ancestry lets him download his research in the standard **GEDCOM** format, it doesn't take photos. He wanted to know if there's a solution.

### Download your Ancestry tree

In John's case, the easiest way to export his tree – including all photos – is to buy Family Tree Maker 2019 (£79.95, [www.mackiev.com/ftm](http://www.mackiev.com/ftm)) or RootsMagic (£19.95, [www.rootsmagic.co.uk](http://www.rootsmagic.co.uk)).

As RootsMagic is by far the cheaper option, we'll focus on that. After installing the program, open it and create a new file. Click Tools, File Options, Ancestry and set the 'Ancestry domain to use for viewing' to UK. Click OK, then select Internet followed by 'TreeShare for Ancestry', then click 'Sign in'.

After entering your username and password, click 'Sign In' again. You'll see two options – choose 'Download an Ancestry Tree', select your tree from the list and click 'Download Ancestry Tree'.



Choose which personal details to exclude from your file when you export your tree

Now wait while the tree is downloaded and imported, followed by your photos and other media items. Click 'Close' when it's complete.

### Create a GEDCOM backup

You'll now have a copy of your Ancestry tree on your PC – including all your images – ready to copy to your USB stick. You should do this in the GEDCOM format because it's recognised by all genealogy programs, and so won't limit your relatives to just using RootsMagic. The file will contain links to your images that can be recreated after the file is imported into another program.

First, you need to create your GEDCOM file in RootsMagic. Click File, Export, then make sure 'Multimedia links' is ticked. Next, look at the privacy options



The 'Find what' box in Notepad will be prefilled when you edit your GEDCOM file

on the right (see screenshot above left). Use these to decide which data you want to include in your exported file. You may want to exclude some details of living people for privacy reasons. Click OK when you've done this and a GEDCOM file will be created in the same directory as your RootsMagic\_media directory.

One final step: by default, RootsMagic records 'absolute' paths to image files in GEDCOM files – for example, **C:\Users\username\Documents\RootsMagic\_media**, where 'username' is your personal user folder. This means that the links will be broken when you copy the GEDCOM file and RootsMagic\_media folder to your backup device. These need to be converted to 'relative' paths.

To do this, open Notepad and click File, Open. Set the file type to All Files then open your recently created .ged file. Scroll down to the first reference to a file path – select everything before RootsMagic\_media (so 'C:\Users\username\Documents\') and choose Edit, then Replace. You'll see the 'Find what' box is prefilled with your selection as shown in the screenshot above. Click 'Replace All' and all the media links will change to 'RootsMagic\_media\filename.jpg'. Save your changes.

From here, copy both the GEDCOM file and the RootsMagic\_media folder into the same parent folder on your backup drive. As long as they remain stored together, your family will be able to easily import everything into another program.

## Your Genealogy Problems Solved

I've just read Issue 590's column ('Find an adopted ancestor's birth name'). I have a relative who was formally adopted but his record in FreeBMD's birth index ([www.snipca.com/35879](http://www.snipca.com/35879)) is not marked with an 'S'. Have I misunderstood something?

Richard Bellchambers

It appears a birth index entry is only marked 'S' if the adoption document registers a name change. In Richard's

case, his relative had been adopted by his birth mother and her new husband, but his surname wasn't officially changed to his stepfather's in the document. This means the birth certificate – which was stamped 'adopted' – hadn't been superseded by new information, so the 'S' wasn't required.



Have a genealogy question for Nick? Email [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk) with 'Grow Your Family Tree' in the subject line.



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# Best Free Software

Will Stapley recommends new programs that won't cost you anything

## VIDEO EDITOR

### Shotcut 20.10

[www.snipca.com/36554](http://www.snipca.com/36554)

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

DaVinci Resolve is a powerful video editor (see our Workshop on page 38), but it does involve a steep learning curve and, even on powerful computers, can run slowly at times. Shotcut is a far less demanding editor. The installation file measures just 77MB compared to Resolve's 1.7GB, and it runs well even on low-powered PCs. To download Shotcut, go to the link above and click either of the Windows Installer links.

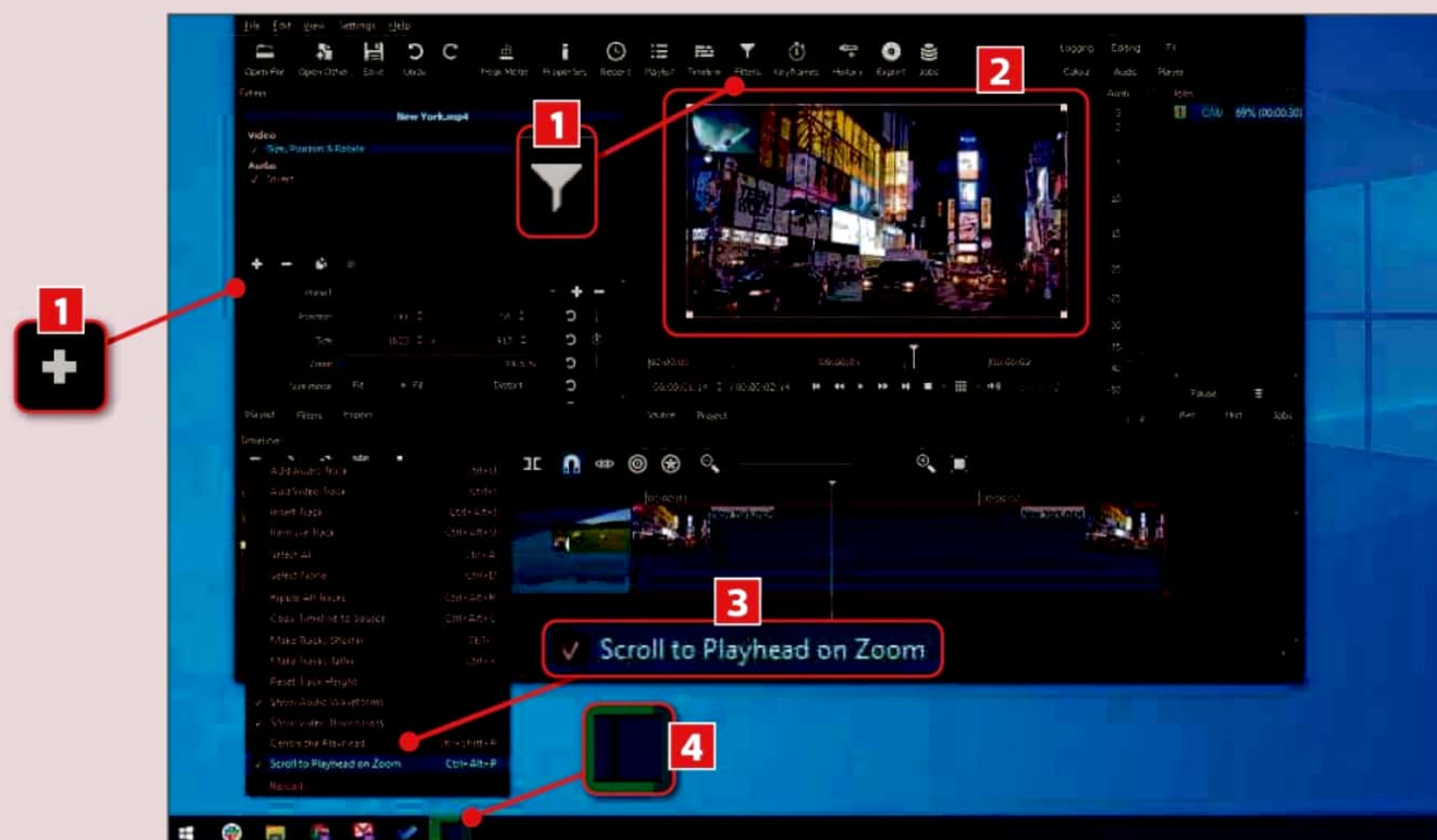
In previous versions, if you zoomed in on the Timeline view at the bottom, you'd often lose the playhead position (the point at which you paused the clip that you're editing), leaving you to scroll left and right to locate it. Shotcut now makes it easy to keep your place with the new 'Scroll to Playhead on Zoom' feature – you can switch this on and off by ticking/unticking the relevant option (see 3 below) or by pressing Ctrl+Alt+P.

There's also a new Invert filter, which lets you reverse the

polarity of audio files, which is targeted at audiophiles looking to fine-tune their clips. However, as we also discovered, you can use it to create some interesting effects.

Start by adding the same audio clip to two separate audio tracks on the timeline, then apply an effect to the first track before applying the Invert filter to the second track. The latter effectively silences the original audio, leaving only the remnants of whatever effect you applied. We found it worked particularly well with the Reverb filter, creating a whispering effect.

Finally, exporting video projects can take a long time in any editor (particularly if you have a slow PC). This version of Shotcut helps by adding a progress bar to its icon on the taskbar, meaning you don't need to open the Shotcut window to check how the export is going.



**1** You can try the new Invert filter by selecting the clip you want to apply it to, then clicking Filters, followed by the '+' icon and searching for **invert**.

**2** The 'Size, Position & Rotate' filter now lets you reposition items in the preview window by holding down Ctrl, then dragging with your mouse. You can also resize them using the edges of the box.

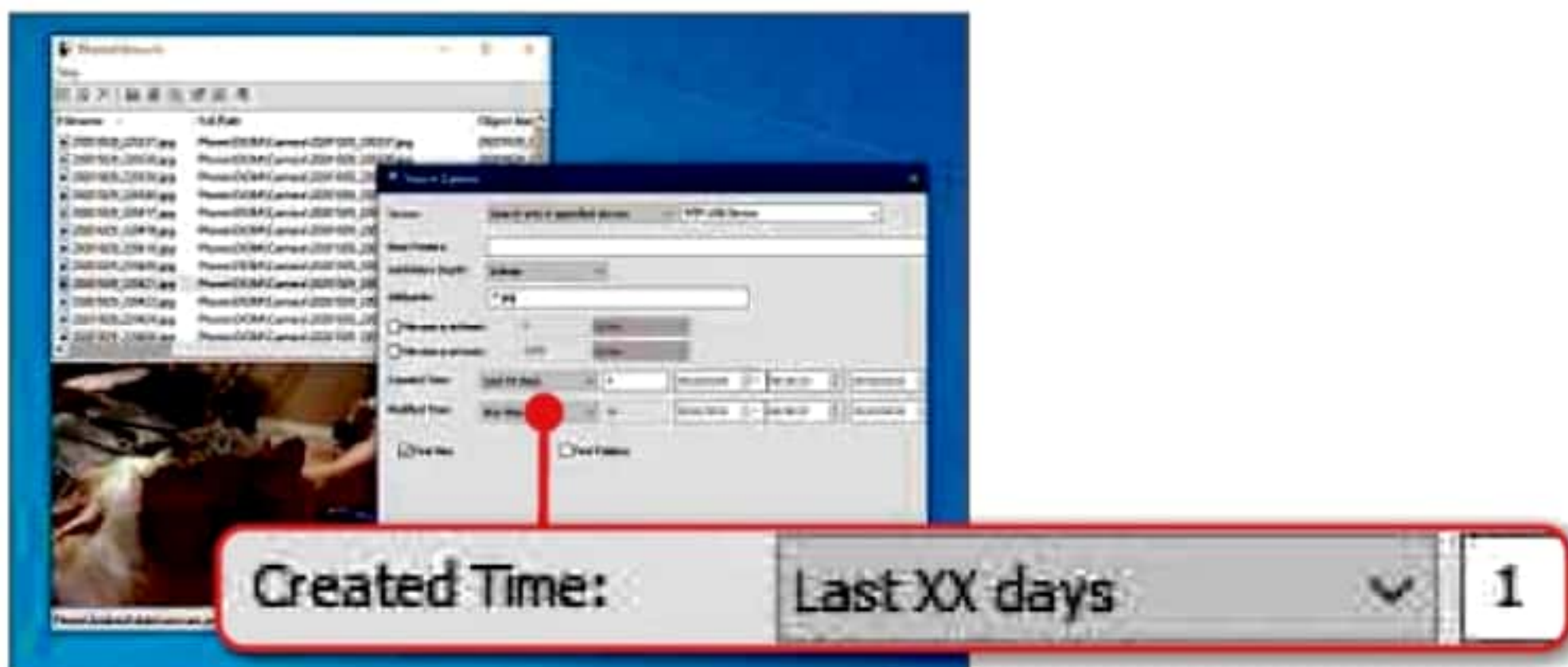
**3** Tick the 'Scroll to Playhead on Zoom' option in the Timeline menu to keep your current position on the timeline in focus when zooming in.

**4** When you're exporting a project, the Shotcut icon will now show a green progress bar (similar to that of Chrome or Edge when downloading a file).





## FILE MANAGER



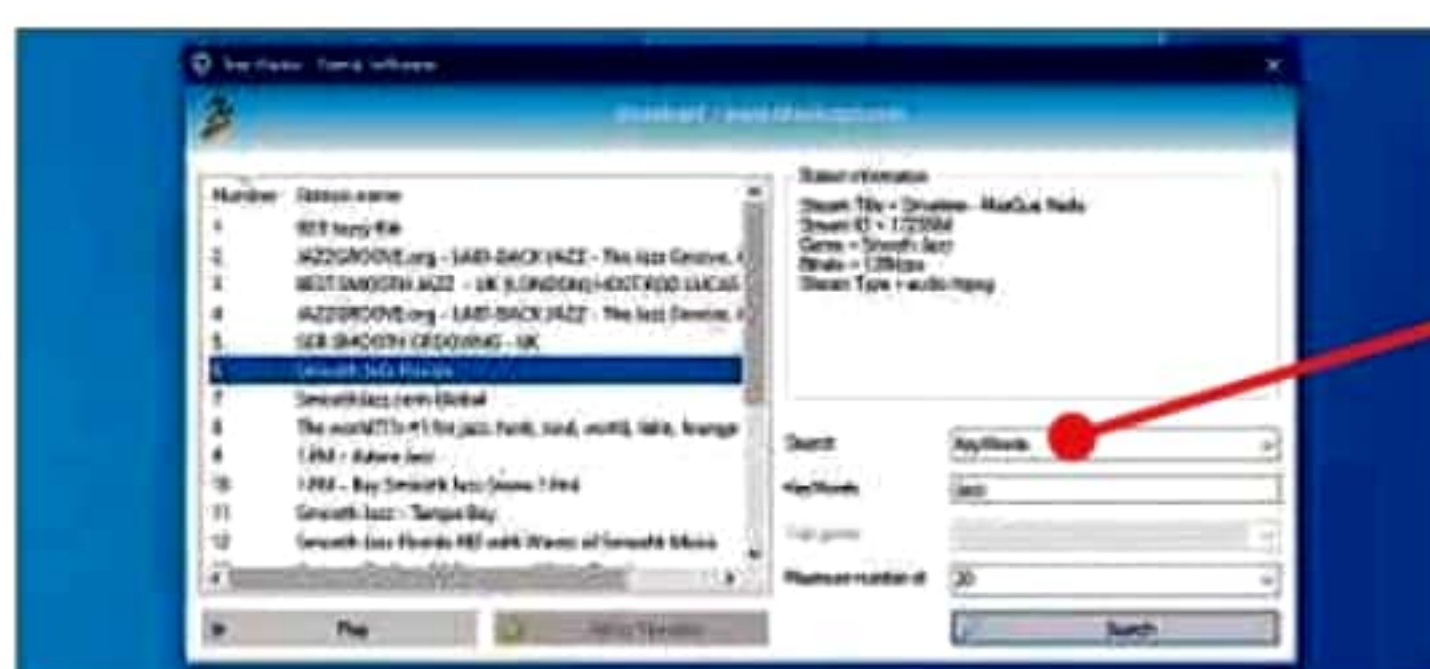
### MobileFileSearch 1.25

[www.snipca.com/36488](http://www.snipca.com/36488)

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

Your phone is probably full of all sorts of files – photos, videos, PDFs and so on. Connect your phone to your PC using File Explorer and you might struggle to find the one you want. NirSoft's MobileFileSearch helps by letting you search for files on your phone using a range of criteria, including when they were created (see screenshot) or modified, file extension or size. To use it, plug your phone into your PC (ensure the phone is unlocked and that you grant your PC access when prompted), then choose what you want to search for. Click 'Start Search' and the results will appear in a separate window. This version adds a preview pane (press Ctrl+P to open it) that displays **JPEG** and **PNG** files in the results – we'd like to see this expanded to other files, such as PDFs, in a future release.

## INTERNET RADIO



### Tray Radio 14.0.2

[www.snipca.com/36489](http://www.snipca.com/36489)

**What you need:** Windows 10

There's no shortage of websites that let you stream internet radio stations, but most include annoying ads. Tray Radio is a far simpler alternative. It runs directly from your system tray and gives you access to a wide range of stations. This version adds all stations that use the Shoutcast streaming service (over 85,000 worldwide). To search them, right-click the Tray Radio icon, then select Shoutcast. Click the Search dropdown menu, select Genre or KeyWords (see screenshot) and choose what to look for. Your results will appear in the pane on the left – select the one you want, then click Play. Left-click the Tray Radio system-tray icon for playback controls, along with a graphic equaliser and the option to record streams.



## WHAT SHOULD I DOWNLOAD?

We tell you what software & apps to use

### What can I use to convert HEIC files to JPEG?

**Q**

I would like to convert HEIC image files created by my iPhone to the JPEG format. Can you recommend the best tool to do this?

David Newland

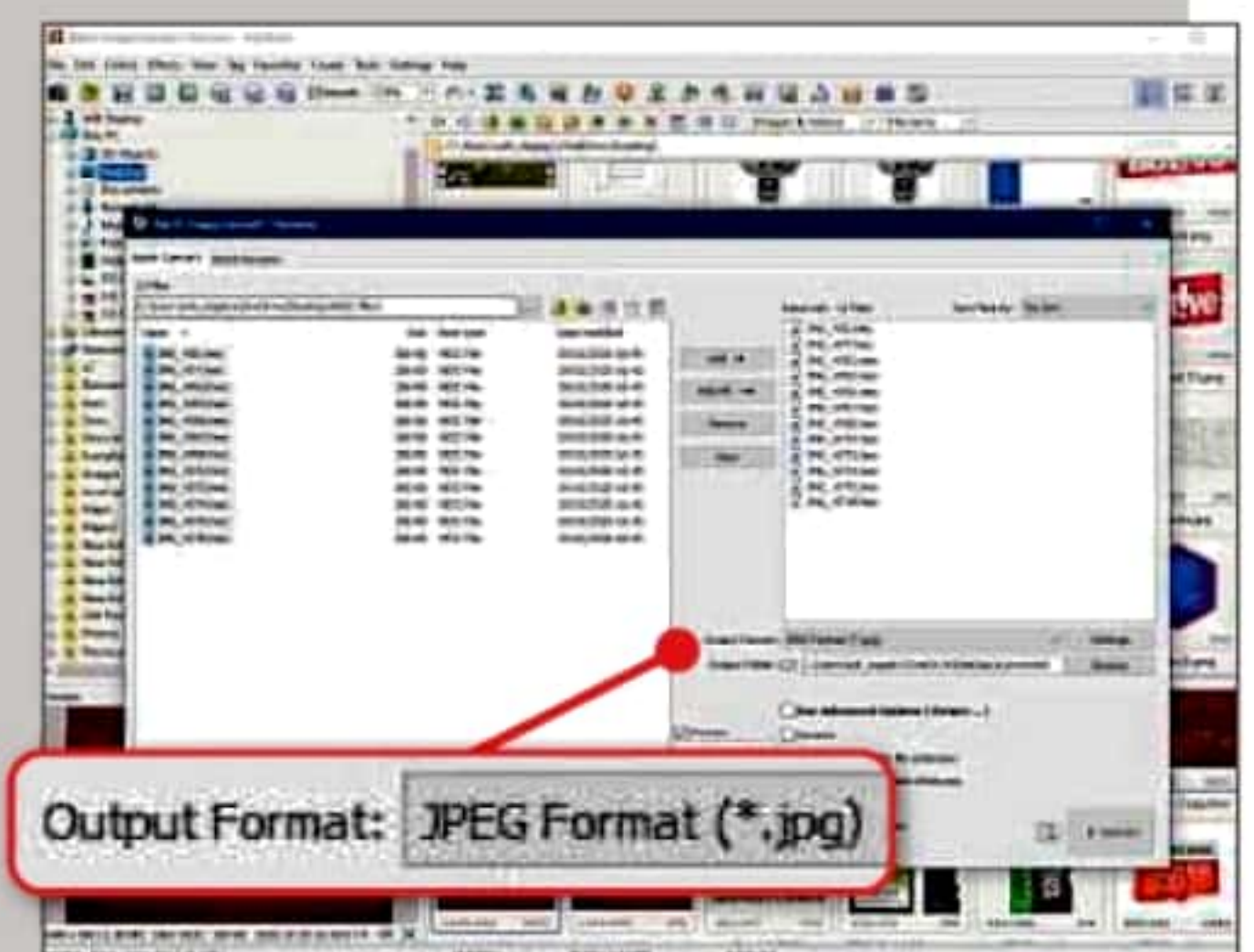
**A**

Although the HEIC image format used by iOS devices is more space-saving than JPEG (reducing image sizes by around 50 per cent), it's not as widely supported – particularly with older programs. One option is to use an online tool, such as CloudConvert ([www.snipca.com/36490](http://www.snipca.com/36490)) – you'll need to create a free account to convert more than 25 images per day. Click the red Select File button, locate the HEIC files on your PC that you want to convert, then click Convert.

It's reasonably fast, taking just 15 seconds to convert twelve HEIC files when we tested it. However, you may not be comfortable uploading your photos to a website to convert them.

One alternative is FastStone Image Viewer ([www.snipca.com/36491](http://www.snipca.com/36491) – click the small Download button under the EXE heading). Once installed, run the program then open the Tools menu and select Batch Convert Selected Images. In the left-hand pane of the window that opens, select your HEIC files (hold down Ctrl to select multiple files), then click Add. If you want to add an entire folder, click Add All. In the Output Format dropdown menu, select 'JPEG Format (\*.jpg)' (see screenshot), then click Browse and choose where to save your files. Finally, click Convert. The process is much faster than CloudConvert, taking just one second to convert the same selection of images.

If, going forward, you want to save all photos in the JPEG format instead of HEIC, go to Settings on your iOS device, then tap Camera, Formats and select Most Compatible instead of the default High Efficiency (but be aware they'll take up twice the storage space).



Do you need our advice on what software to use? Just email us at [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)



## HOW I USE...

# Ultimate Windows Tweaker

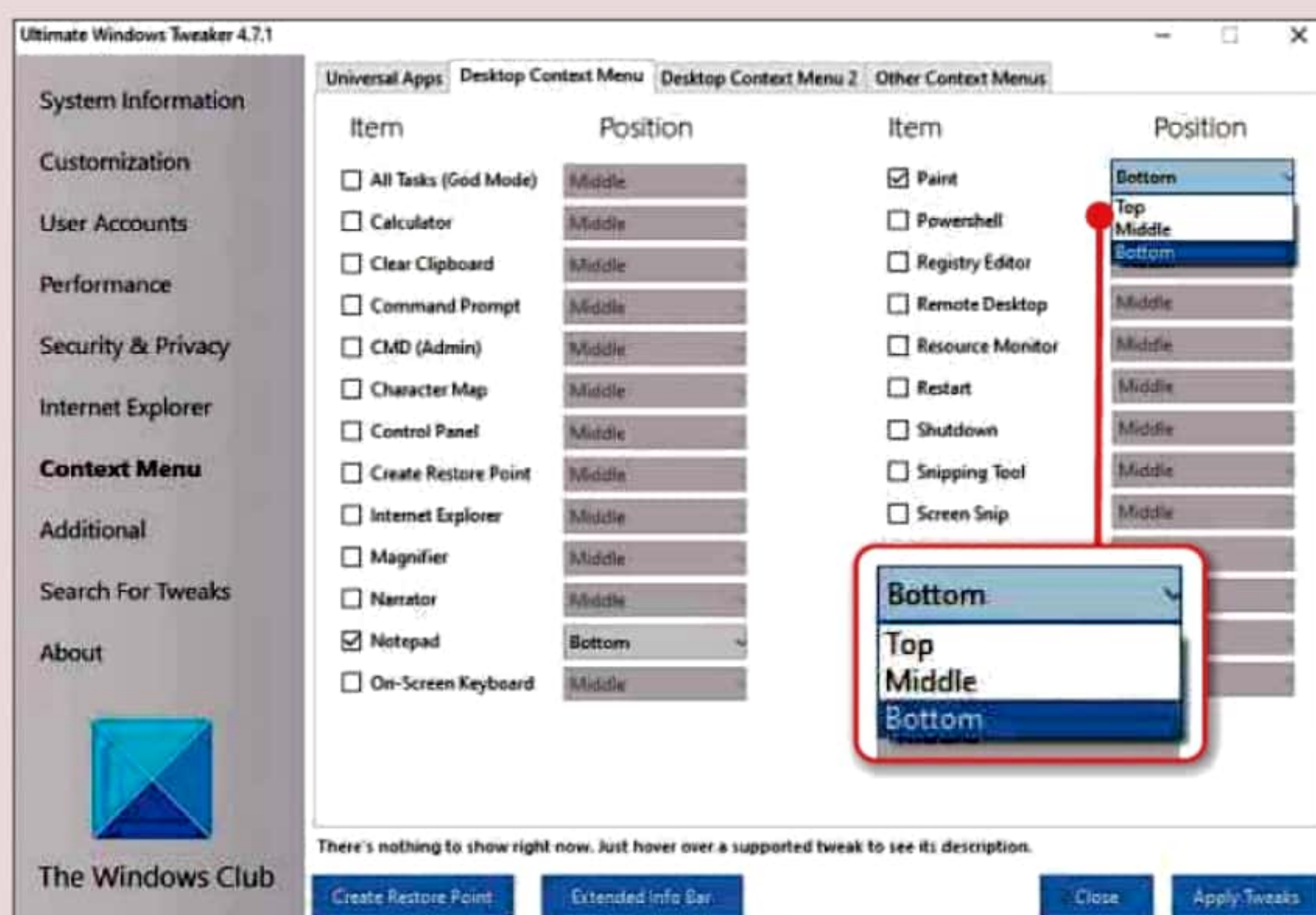
Will Stapley reveals how this small tool makes a big difference to his desktop



I'm terrible at making wholesale changes to my daily routine. That 6am run never really took off (turns out it's both cold and dark at that time), and the less said the better about my promise to always tidy up after myself. Instead, I've realised making small changes is the way to go – and in the digital world, that's exactly what Ultimate Windows Tweaker (UWT) lets me do. Its design might be a little chaotic (lots of settings spread over multiple sections and tabs), but if you know where to look it can make a big difference to your desktop.

To download it, go to [www.snipca.com/36481](http://www.snipca.com/36481), then scroll to near the bottom of the page and click the dark-blue Download button.

I know I'm in the minority but I still make use of Notepad and MS Paint, the latter on almost a daily basis because it resizes, crops and annotates images much quicker than more advanced



When adding extra shortcuts to your desktop's right-click menu, you can choose where each one should appear

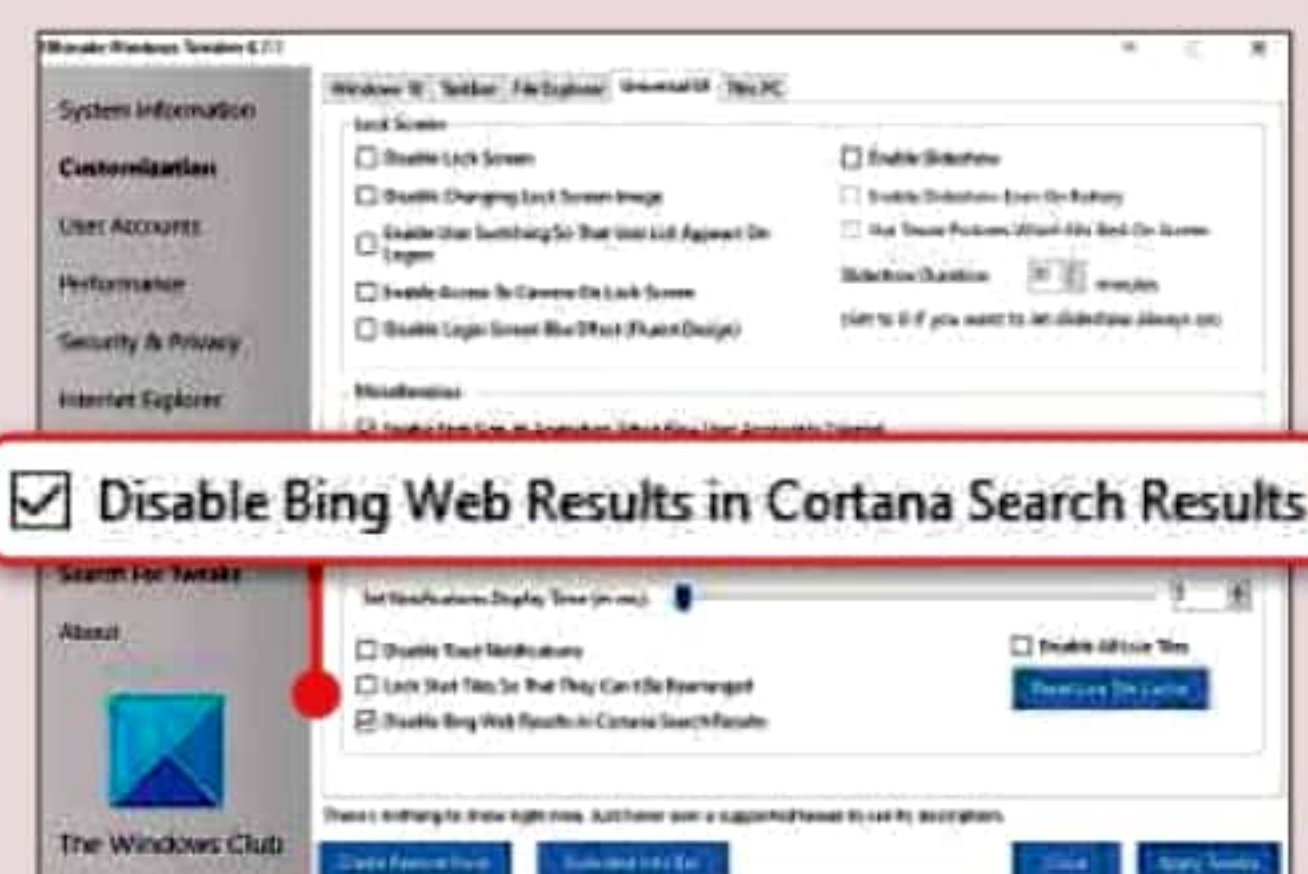
editors. Instead of pinning these programs to my taskbar (which is chock-full at the best of times), I've used UWT to add them to the menu that appears when I right-click the desktop.

I did this by going to the Context Menu section, selecting the Desktop Context Menu tab, then ticking the Paint and Notepad boxes (there are lots of other programs that you can add besides these two). Using the dropdown box next to each, I can choose where they should appear in the menu – I've set both to the bottom (see screenshot above). As with other changes in UWT, I had to click Apply Tweaks before moving to other settings (UWT only applies settings for the page you're currently viewing).

I've also used UWT to make searching via the Start menu less annoying. You may feel differently, but I loathe Windows' attempts to push my searches online using Microsoft Bing. If I want to search the web, I'll open my browser (and probably use Google or DuckDuckGo, not Bing).

When I search using the Start button, I just want to get results for files on my PC, nowhere else. I was therefore delighted when, earlier this year, UWT added a new setting to do just that. To turn it on, I headed to the Customization section, selected the Universal UI tab, then ticked 'Disable Bing Web Results...' at the bottom (see screenshot left).

Finally, it's worth mentioning that before making any changes in UWT I always create a **system restore point**. You can do this directly within UWT by selecting the System Information section, then Create System Restore Point. Although the system restore process can take a while, I like knowing that I can quickly reverse all changes if needed.



UWT can stop suggested web searches appearing in your Start menu search results

## WHAT I'D LIKE TO SEE IN UWT

UWT received a much needed upgrade earlier this year, but it still shows its age in places, not least with an entire section devoted to Internet Explorer. It would be great if UWT included similar web-related options, but for Microsoft's

latest Edge browser instead of IE. I'd also like to see an option to restore *all* settings to the Windows default. Although I can do this using a system restore point (as explained right), it would be much easier to quickly reset everything within UWT.



# Named & Shamed

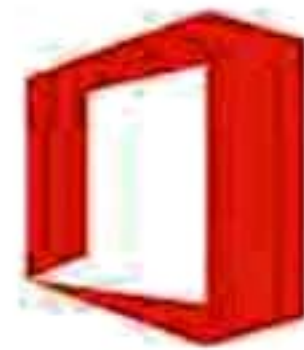


Jonathan Parkyn puts the boot into tech villains, jargon-spouting companies and software stuffed with junk

## WARNING: JUNK AHEAD

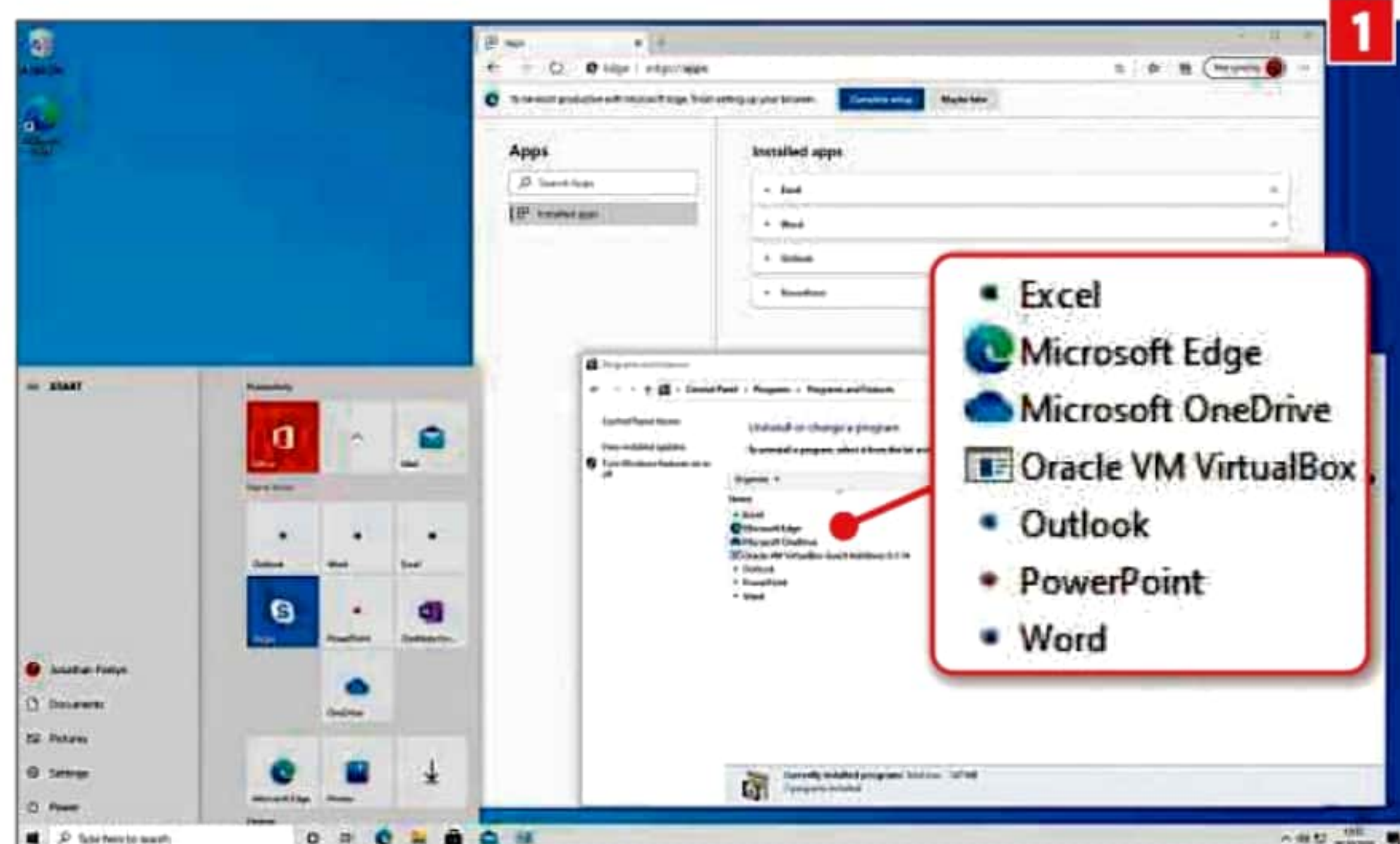
### Junk offender: Microsoft Office web apps

I like to keep Windows 10 free from Microsoft junk – unwanted preinstalled apps, Start menu adverts, and so on. So, imagine my surprise when I booted up one of my test PCs (which has a clean copy of Windows 10 and nothing else), only to discover its Start menu was full of Microsoft Office programs. I've nothing against Office, but I'd never installed it on this PC. What was it doing there?



Looking for answers, I checked under Settings, then Apps and, sure enough, I found recently installed entries for Word, Excel, Outlook and PowerPoint (see screenshot 1). However, clicking one of the new Start menu icons didn't open the relevant program. Instead, it launched Microsoft's Edge browser and took me to Office online. So, Windows hadn't randomly installed full Office programs on my PC – it had added Office's web apps to Edge, instead.

Web apps are effectively just shortcuts to online tools – in this case online versions of Office programs (the ones at



1 Microsoft found a way of installing web versions of Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint and Word on to Jonathan's PC...

<https://onedrive.live.com>). Numerous other users have recently reported the same problem, and Microsoft has since confirmed a 'bug' in a recent Edge update as the culprit.

The company has now blocked the offending update, but not before installing web apps on many people's PCs without their permission. Type `edge://apps` into Edge to see if they've been installed on your PC. They're easy to remove – click the X button next to them in Edge or uninstall them by opening Settings (press Windows key+I), clicking



2 ...so he uninstalled them through the Apps section in Settings

Apps, then clicking the program and selecting Uninstall (see screenshot 2). Sadly, none of this alters the fact that Microsoft found another way of sneaking clutter on to your PC.

### WHAT ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT?

#### WHAT THEY SAY

##### Dropbox

[www.snipca.com/36380](http://www.snipca.com/36380)

"Hybrid approaches may also perpetuate two different employee experiences that could result in barriers to inclusion and inequities with respect to performance or career trajectory. These big-picture problems are non-starters for us."



#### WHAT THEY MEAN

We want staff to continue working from home. It's for their benefit, not ours. Honest.

### JONATHAN'S VILLAIN OF THE FORTNIGHT Studios MG Ltd

In Issue 592, I shamed Digital Growth Experts Ltd for spamming the public with offers of hand sanitisers. It looks like it wasn't the only company that thought it could exploit the pandemic to make a quick buck. In April, London-based Studios MG Ltd bought up heaps of personal protective equipment (PPE), then sold it on at a massive mark-up, marketing them via spam emails.



It sent at least 9,000 spam emails, but it may have been a lot more. A database of key evidence was conveniently deleted before investigators from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) could get their hands on it. After concluding that the firm "broke the law and invaded people's privacy" ([www.snipca.com/36373](http://www.snipca.com/36373)), the ICO fined it £40,000. We suspect it won't be last.





**MINI PC** | £320 from Amazon [www.snipca.com/36359](http://www.snipca.com/36359)

## Asus Mini PC PN50

Adds up to a little bargain

About the size of a thick paperback, the Mini PC certainly lives up to its name. It's supplied 'barebones', ready to add memory and storage before installing your own copy of Windows or another operating system. Already on the motherboard is a choice of processors from AMD's very capable Ryzen 4000 series, in our case the six-core 4500U. This is a laptop chip, but fairly powerful, and the latest 802.11ax (Wi-Fi 6) wireless networking is built in too, so you've got the makings of a proper general-purpose PC, whether for your study or living room. What you don't have is room for a graphics card, but the 4500U's integrated Radeon Graphics 384SP will get some 3D games running smoothly at up to 1080p.

### “Compact computer leaves little room for improvement”

Getting at the insides of such a small system is often fiddly, but after turning the PN50 upside-down and removing four ordinary screws, we found popping off the base panel revealed the whole motherboard with nothing in the way. There are two SO-DIMM memory sockets for up to 64GB of DDR4 RAM, which you can buy anywhere for under £30 per 8GB, and room for one SATA or NVMe SSD in a standard M.2 socket plus one 2.5in SATA drive, either SSD or a hard drive.

The 2.5in drive mounts handily on the base itself, sliding on to a connector when you reattach it, which means you don't need to use brackets, and there's room for



a normal full-size 2280-format M.2 SSD (the rival Zotac Zbox Nano can only take a hard-to-find 2242). One USB 3.0 port on the front and a pair on the back are each accompanied by one USB-C, supporting faster 10Gbps Gen2 data transfer and DisplayPort monitors. With HDMI and DisplayPort sockets also provided, you can connect up to four 60Hz 4K screens. There's a Gigabit Ethernet port as an alternative to Wi-Fi, and headphone/mic, microSD card and infra-red inputs on the front, so you could add a remote control.

After fitting 8GB of memory and installing Windows 10 on a 1TB SSD, we found the 4500U chip faster than most mid-range laptops, scoring creditably in photo and video editing, and multitasking. Overall, our PN50 was four times quicker than the Zbox CA621 Nano with a Ryzen 3200U (£269 from Ebuyer [www.snipca.com/36362](http://www.snipca.com/36362)), making it better value for a more versatile PC at the expense of barely audible fan noise.

#### SPECIFICATIONS

2.3GHz AMD Ryzen 5 4500U six-core processor • Requires memory and storage • 3x USB-A 3 Gen1 ports • 2x USB-C 3 Gen2 ports • Gigabit Ethernet port • 802.11ax Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 5.0 • HDMI and DisplayPort outputs • MicroSD card reader • 34x175x175mm (HxWxD) • Three-year warranty [www.snipca.com/36363](http://www.snipca.com/36363)

Various retailers offer the PN50 pre-configured. For example, £540 would get you 8GB of memory, a minimal 128GB SSD for speed and a 2TB hard drive for your media collection (Ambros, [www.snipca.com/36360](http://www.snipca.com/36360)). A Windows 10 Home licence adds over £100, but isn't immediately necessary. Use another PC to download the installer from Microsoft free of charge ([www.snipca.com/36361](http://www.snipca.com/36361)) and, using any 4GB or larger USB stick, create a bootable drive. Plug this into the PN50, start it up and install Windows 10 on to the SSD. Except for a little nagging message, it'll work fine without a product key until you get round to shopping for one.

**VERDICT** A very small PC at a very reasonable price with very practical performance

★★★★★

**ALTERNATIVE** Zotac Zbox CA621 Nano £269 Fanless design makes this tiny PC totally silent, but CPU and SSD are limited





**LAPTOP** | £879 from Ballicom [www.snipca.com/36375](http://www.snipca.com/36375)

## Lenovo ThinkBook Plus

### Lifts the lid

Laptop makers have tried all kinds of ways of adding extra screens – built into the touchpad, running in a strip opposite the main screen, or in the case of Lenovo's Yoga Book even replacing the keyboard. The businesslike ThinkBook Plus simply makes the outside of the lid a screen as well as the inside. Rather than a colour LCD, it's a black-and-white touch-sensing E Ink display (pictured below), like on an Amazon Kindle. Except, at 10.8in, it's much bigger.

### “Unique laptop with two screens for typing and writing”

Using the included software and a supplied stylus – which clips on magnetically (though not very securely) when not in use – you can read and annotate PDFs on a surface that's as easy on the eye as a piece of paper and uses hardly any battery. In fact, because E Ink isn't backlit and retains its appearance until changed, you can keep an image of your choice permanently displayed without draining any power. It's the ultimate way to customise your laptop lid.

On the inside is a very ordinary 13in Full HD screen, which covered an acceptable 92 per cent of sRGB colours, but with too little accuracy for graphics work. It's not especially bright, either, but punchy enough for general use and watching videos, accompanied by decent



built-in speakers.

As we'd expect from Lenovo, the keyboard and trackpad are great, and there's a webcam – in the proper place – as well as a fingerprint sensor for login. This isn't an ultra-slim laptop, but very portable, and external connections are adequate, although the single USB-C port is also used for charging and there's no memory card reader. The i5-10210U processor, a solid choice for general work, is accompanied by a very fast SSD. The battery lasted 9 hours 30 minutes of video playback.

Although a stiff carry case is included, we felt a bit nervous about the E Ink screen being so exposed. A bigger problem is that it's limited in what it can do. Cleverly, it can convert your handwritten notes to editable text, which you can copy to the Windows clipboard and paste into programs on the main screen. But there's no Kindle Reader support for Amazon purchases, only generic ebooks and PDFs, and you can't use it for other programs. Although handwriting is quite responsive, accessing menus is painfully slow. Still, being able to switch from the Windows 10 screen to read and mark up documents on a paper-like display is an appealing idea.

#### SPECIFICATIONS

1.6Hz Intel i5-10210U quad-core processor • 8GB memory • 256GB SSD • 13.3in 1980x1080-pixel screen • 10.8in E Ink touchscreen • Webcam • USB-C port • 2x USB-A 3 ports • HDMI output • 802.11ax Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 5 • Windows 10 Pro • 17.4x308x217mm (HxWxD) • 1.4kg • One-year warranty [www.snipca.com/36366](http://www.snipca.com/36366)



#### HOW WE TEST

Computeractive is owned by Dennis Publishing, 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.

Dennis Publishing also owns the magazines *PC Pro*, *Computer Shopper* and *Web User* and the websites Expert Reviews ([www.expertreviews.co.uk](http://www.expertreviews.co.uk)) and IT Pro ([www.itpro.com](http://www.itpro.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** They haven't quite perfected it, but this is a worthwhile innovation at a reasonable price



**ALTERNATIVE** HP Envy x360 £800

This fold-back touchscreen laptop with comparable specifications and pen is an alternative approach





PC | £2,000 from Scan [www.snipca.com/36382](http://www.snipca.com/36382)

## Scan 3XS Gamer RTX

Game for anything



Like London house prices, when you think the performance of **graphics cards** has got so ridiculous that it'll have to calm down a bit now, it goes up another 30 per cent. This is the first PC we've seen with the new Nvidia RTX 3080 GPU, and that's the kind of increase in **frame rates** we saw with the previous top-of-the-range RTX 2080 Ti. The RTX 3080 isn't even the highest option, sitting below the 3090. That's reflected in the 3080's price, with versions comparable to this one starting at a surprisingly reasonable £700, stretching upwards for **binned** units (selected for maximum performance) with advanced cooling.

“This is an excellent all-round heavy-duty PC that's suitable for extreme gaming”

Seen through the glass side panel of the 3XS Gamer RTX's **LED**-lit Fractal Design Meshify C case, the RTX 3080, with its huge **heatsink** and twin fans, looks like a computer in itself, which of course it is, containing a mind-boggling 28 billion transistors. In terms of gaming history, that's 500 times more than the Nvidia graphics in the first Xbox, launched 19 years ago.

So here we are in the future, and if you want to run the latest games with high-quality settings on a **4K** monitor, using advanced enhancements like **raytracing** and **DLSS** (deep-learning super-sampling), this is the GPU to aim for. It's not cheap, though, and Scan has made room for it in a £2,000 budget by

### SPECIFICATIONS

2.9GHz Intel i7-10700 eight-core processor • 32GB memory • 10GB Nvidia GeForce RTX3080 graphics • 1TB SSD • 2TB hard drive • USB-C Gen2x2 port • 8x USB-A Gen1 ports • Gigabit Ethernet • HDMI, DVD and DisplayPort outputs • Windows 10 Home • 413x217x453mm (HxWxD) • Three-year warranty [www.snipca.com/36382](http://www.snipca.com/36382)

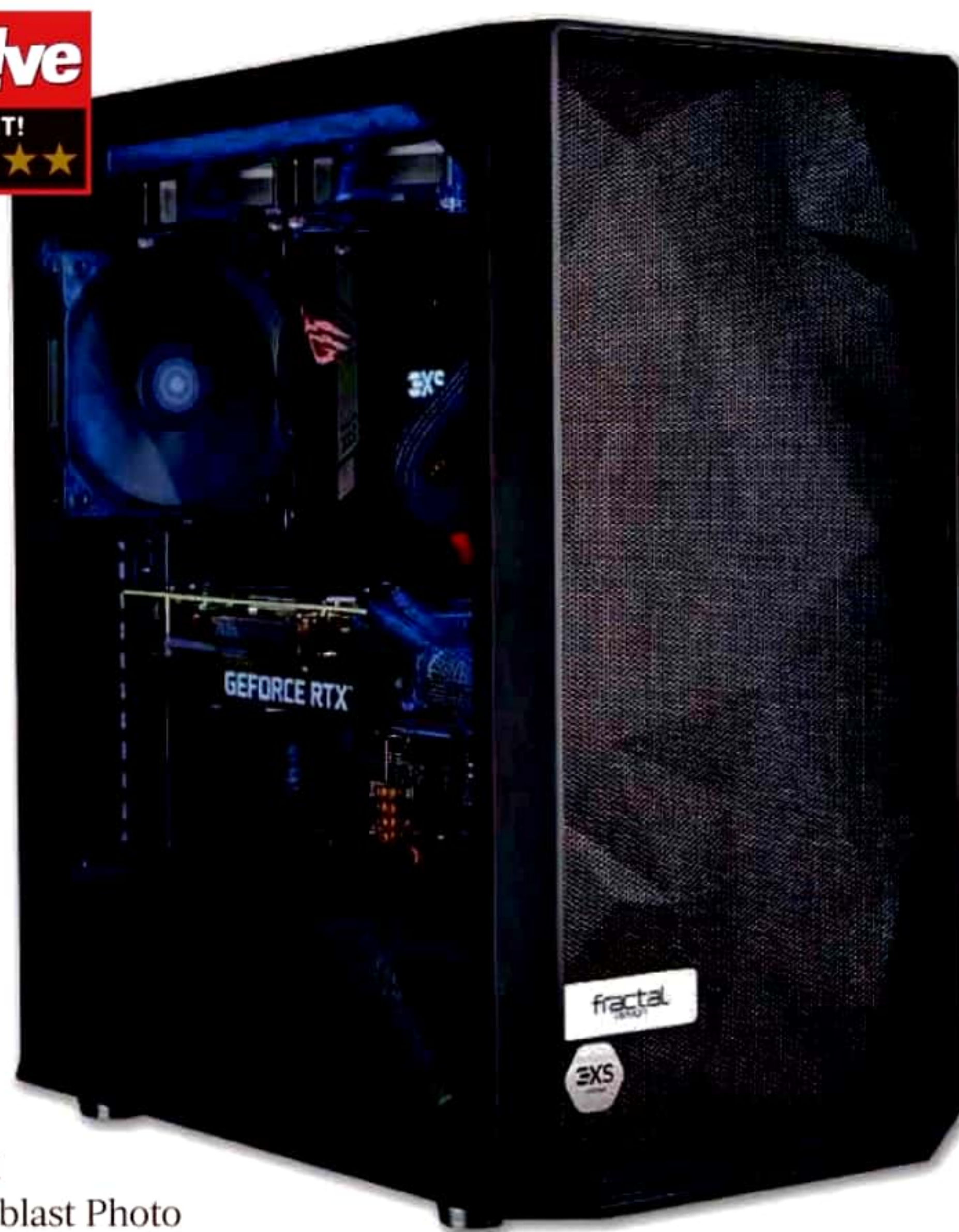
settling for an Intel i7-10700 processor, rather than an i9 or one of AMD's potentially even faster Ryzen chips. In our non-gaming tests, we saw solid mid-range results rather than anything cutting edge.

Among cheaper systems we've seen recently, the AlphaBetaPC Quiet PC i7-2070 (£1,699 from [www.snipca.com/36137](http://www.snipca.com/36137), see our review, Issue 591, page 24) **overclocks** the higher-powered i7-10700K chip to a base speed of **4.8GHz**, which the 10700 processor can only rise to in short bursts, while the Chillblast Photo Zen (from £1,530, [www.snipca.com/35840](http://www.snipca.com/35840), see Issue 589, page 22) turned in scores up to 50 per cent higher with its Ryzen 7 3700X – and you can easily find 3800X or even higher Ryzen options in this price bracket.

Despite not being overclocked, the i7-10700 is fitted with a **water cooler** – perhaps to offset the heat escaping from the GPU – which makes noticeable little fridge-type noises from time to time, although this is generally a fairly quiet gaming PC.

Opting for Intel also means you don't get the benefit of the new **PCIe 4** interface, which is supported by the RTX 3080 and some of the latest Ryzen motherboards, but not with the Asus ROG Strix B460-H motherboard paired here with the i7. In practice, there's still enough bandwidth to do full justice to the RTX 3080 – just be aware that a PCIe 4 system would be more future-proof.

There's a spare **M.2** slot as well as the one occupied by the installed 1TB **SSD**, and with a 2TB hard drive also included, and a 3.5in bay handy to take another, you won't be short of storage. There's a total of eight 5Gbps **USB 3.0** Gen1 ports, including two on the front, and one **USB-C** which, unusually, supports



20Gbps Gen2x2 for very fast external SSDs such as the WD Black P50 Game Drive (£240 for 1TB from Amazon [www.snipca.com/36385](http://www.snipca.com/36385)).

This is an excellent all-round heavy-duty PC, the only caveat being that if you don't need extreme gaming performance, your money could be better spent elsewhere. If the GPU is your priority, the 3XS Gamer RTX beats anything we've seen before, and it's set up here in a well-built system from a respected supplier with a long guarantee.

**VERDICT** The next generation of graphics cards arrives in style, overshadowing a less impressive chip

★★★★★

### ALTERNATIVE

AlphaBetaPC Quiet PC i7-2070  
£1,699 Similar configuration with previous-generation RTX 2070 Super graphics





PC MONITOR | £325 from Amazon [www.snipca.com/36427](http://www.snipca.com/36427)

## Asus ProArt Display PA278QV

Glazed oeuvre



This is a 27in monitor with 2560x1440 pixels, also known as 1440p – sharper than 1920x1080 Full HD, but nowhere near 4K (3840x2160). If you've shopped around recently, your first question will be why it costs over 300 quid, when screens with this spec start at under £200. The answer is that it's aimed at graphics professionals, and arrives with industry standard Calman and Pantone certifications promising highly accurate colour without any manual adjustment.

That's not quite as impressive as it sounds. The colour space within which this calibrated reproduction is offered is plain old sRGB: standard for web design, but much smaller than P3, favoured by video editors, or Adobe RGB, which encompasses more of the CMYK and Pantone colours available in print.

Many designers do manage with sRGB monitors, and it's not unusual now to see these achieve high accuracy – meaning that, though they display a smaller range of colours, you get the right ones. Colours outside the range will appear duller than they should.

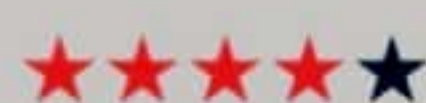
Asus claims 100 per cent coverage of sRGB and Rec 709, the similar older video standard, with a Delta E score below 2 (a higher Delta E means more inaccuracy). Our own test meter found the PA278QV covered 94.9 per cent of sRGB, which we'll call near enough. But the Iiyama XUB2792QSU-W1 (£259 from Amazon [www.snipca.com/36022](http://www.snipca.com/36022), see our review, Issue 590, page 25) covered 98 per cent with an average Delta E of 1.63.

Iiyama's screen also costs 60-odd quid less, with the same resolution, a USB 3.0 hub (with two ports rather than the ProArt's four) and similar basic stereo speakers. For games, both support

FreeSync with AMD graphics cards, but have limited refresh rates, Asus' 75Hz marginally improving on Iiyama's 70Hz. Each has an adjustable stand that can pivot to portrait, but the ProArt's is more elegant.

Certification does mean you can rely on your particular unit working correctly, and the PA278QV adds comprehensive fine-tuning via clear on-screen menus – although to maintain calibration, you'd want to leave it alone. There's also a choice of blue light reduction settings, and the matt finish cuts reflections. Its QuickFit Virtual Scale feature displays an outline or ruler to compare your artwork to physical sizes such as A4, a helpful tool that software alone can't offer, and very handy for print designers. Overall, this is a good-quality mid-priced option if you want a general purpose colour-accurate screen.

**VERDICT** A well-made mid-range monitor with reliable but not exceptional colour reproduction



**ALTERNATIVE** Iiyama XUB2792QSU-W1 £259 Similar spec for less, lacking the sticker promising you needn't calibrate it



### SPECIFICATIONS

27in IPS LCD • 2560x1440-pixel resolution • HDMI, mini-DisplayPort and DVI inputs • FreeSync • 2W stereo speakers • 4-port USB-A 3 hub • 532x615x226mm (HxWxD) • Three-year warranty [www.snipca.com/36445](http://www.snipca.com/36445)

## CHOOSE THE RIGHT SPECS

### Storage



#### RELEVANT TO

PCs, laptops, smartphones, tablets

#### What does it do?

Storage keeps information permanently, unlike memory (RAM), which only holds it while you work. The common types are hard drives and flash memory.

#### How does it work?

A hard drive consists of one or more metal platters accessed by an arm, like a record on a record player, but instead of grooves, data is stored as magnetised areas. The arm has to move to the area required. Flash memory consists of chips that are like RAM but retain data. Flash memory is built into phones and tablets and is the basis of solid-state drives (SSDs).

#### What are the specs?

The SATA III interface in PCs has a bandwidth of 6 gigabits per second (6Gbps), enabling about 600 megabytes to be transferred (600MB/s). This is more than enough for hard drives, which top out at about 200MB/s. They come in 2.5in (like the WD Blue model pictured) or 3.5in packages. External drives connect via USB 3.0 Gen1 (5Gbps). SSDs up to 500MB/s are also available in 2.5in SATA format and as USB drives. Faster SSDs, which can exceed 3GB/s, come in NVMe format, a small circuit board that connects to an M.2 socket on the internal PCIe interface. Externally, USB 3 Gen2 (10Gbps) enables up to 1GB/s; USB 3.0 Gen2x2 (20Gbps) and USB-C Thunderbolt 3 (40Gbps) are rare.



#### Can I change it later?

Any desktop PC will have at least four SATA connectors and two or more drive bays. Recent motherboards add one or two M.2 sockets. Only older laptops have SATA bays. Some take NVMe upgrades, but often SSDs can't be swapped. Most mobile devices, but not Apple's, can be expanded with microSD cards.



**SMART WATCH** | From £395 Amazon [www.snipca.com/36402](http://www.snipca.com/36402)

## Samsung Galaxy Watch 3

Round the clock

On paper, the big difference between this and the Apple Watch is that it's designed for use with Android phones. In reality, the big difference is that it *looks* like a watch. Rather than a rectangular screen, Samsung has started with a traditional round face and made the display to fit. Slimmer but broader than its predecessor, the Galaxy Watch 3 – only the second version, confusingly – is really quite pretty, featuring a rotating bezel to select options. At 400 quid, it's slightly pricier than Apple's £379 starting point (see our review, Issue 592, page 28), but options like a larger size (as tested here) and 4G data (requiring a contract with EE or Vodafone) add only small amounts to the price. More colours are available direct from Samsung.

The Watch 3 matches the Apple Watch Series 6's blood oxygen (SpO2) meter as well as the pulse rate detector, but its electrocardiogram (ECG) feature is still awaiting approval. Like the Series 6, it can tell if you've fallen, can monitor your sleep and is waterproof for swimming, although you have to



remember to set 'water lock mode'. Comprehensive data is generated during running and other exercise, although the Samsung Health app lacks a few heart-rate options, like the ability to connect a Bluetooth chest strap monitor.

Beyond fitness, the range of apps available is far smaller than Apple's, and the weak processor doesn't lend itself to anything fancy. But you do get basics like notifications, phone calls (via your phone) on the built-in speaker and mic, and NFC for contactless payments.

For music on the move, you can store Spotify playlists and music files from an Android phone internally to play when there's no data connection. The battery easily lasts two days, shorter than the original Galaxy Watch but longer than the Apple Watch, and it's compatible with iPhones as well as Android, give or take a few features. If you want to spend less, consider the Galaxy Watch Active2 (from £249, Amazon [www.snipca.com/35267](http://www.snipca.com/35267), see our review, Issue 584, page 28).



### SPECIFICATIONS

1.4in circular Super AMOLED touchscreen • Optical heart sensor • 802.11n Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 5.0 • GPS • Optional 4G • Requires Android 5 or higher device or iPhone 5 with iOS 9 or higher • One-year warranty [www.snipca.com/36412](http://www.snipca.com/36412)

**VERDICT** Not quite as many features for the money as with the Apple Watch, but it's a smart watch that feels like a *real* watch



**ALTERNATIVE** Galaxy Watch Active2 From £249 This slimmer, plainer watch has most of the same features and is good value



### WHAT SHOULD I BUY?

We solve your buying dilemmas

## What's the best replacement for my old iPod?

**Q** My iPod Classic of 15 years has come to the end of its life. For the last few years I haven't been able to add music because Apple no longer supports it. But what do I replace it with? I don't want to throw away my Bose SoundDock. All I need is something to play music, not turn the kettle on or run the vacuum around the house or call Australia! Just something simple, if that's possible. What do you suggest?

Ron Cushing

**A** Although it can indeed call Australia and operate smart appliances, the seventh-generation iPod touch (£199 from Apple [www.snipca.com/36395](http://www.snipca.com/36395), pictured) is also an excellent music player. You can stream music to it live from internet services over your home Wi-Fi, or transfer files from a Mac running macOS 10.11.4 or a PC with Windows 7 or later. You'll need a 30 pin-to-Lightning adapter for your SoundDock – about a fiver from Amazon, or upgrade to wireless input using a 30-

pin Bluetooth adapter. Bose no longer sells an adapter, but alternatives include Ziocom's (£20 from Amazon [www.snipca.com/36394](http://www.snipca.com/36394)), which has positive user reviews. The new iOS 14 is probably the final update it'll accept, but should keep you going for several years.



Do you need advice on what you should buy? Email us at [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)



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**MOUSE** | £80 from Logitech [www.snipca.com/36460](http://www.snipca.com/36460)

## Logitech MX Anywhere 3

Field mouse

This is the travel version of the MX Master 3 (£100 from Logitech [www.snipca.com/34651](http://www.snipca.com/34651), see our review, Issue 579, page 28), one of the best mice you can buy. What makes it a travel version is a very different design that's smaller, simpler and lighter, although not so light that it doesn't feel like a proper mouse. What justifies it costing 80 quid is a variation on the same hardware and software extras. The electromagnetic MagSpeed scroll wheel makes it easy to navigate at exactly the speed you want, whether ratcheting through text or smoothly panning. There's no separate horizontal roller, but a shortcut button switches the main wheel to do this. The

### SPECIFICATIONS

Wireless mouse • 2.4GHz USB receiver • Bluetooth LE • Optional software requires Windows 7 or macOS 10.8 or higher • 34x65x101mm (HxWxD) • 99g • Two-year warranty [www.snipca.com/36460](http://www.snipca.com/36460)

scroll-wheel button and the four others can be assigned to tasks using Logitech's Options software.

As with the MX Anywhere 3, 'Darkfield' laser tracking ensures accurate cursor control on any surface, and a silicone side grip helps prevent the mouse escaping from your hand. You can switch at will between three paired devices: one PC or Mac using the supplied plug-in USB radio receiver, and two Windows, iPadOS, Chrome or Linux devices via Bluetooth. The internal battery should last a couple of months, and if you forget to top it up, a three-minute USB-C charge will get you through another day. Available in off-white, dark grey or pink, the MX Anywhere 3 isn't as radical as Microsoft's snap-flat Arc Bluetooth Mouse (£60 from Amazon [www.snipca.com/36461](http://www.snipca.com/36461)) but has more features and feels less weird.



**VERDICT** Surprisingly pricey for a general-purpose wireless mouse, but excellent for travel or regular use



**ALTERNATIVE** Microsoft Arc Bluetooth Mouse £60 A more basic but reliable mouse that stows flat and pops into shape



**SOLID-STATE DRIVE** | £95 from Amazon [www.snipca.com/36464](http://www.snipca.com/36464)

## Kioxia Exceria SATA 1TB

Top storer

Kioxia is the new name for Toshiba's memory division, hence the Kioxia Exceria SATA, which sounds like one of those CBeebies programmes featuring excitable cartoon animals. This internal SSD comes in a standard 2.5in package for connection to the old-school SATA III interface, so it'll fit any desktop PC in the same way as a hard drive but is limited by SATA's 6Gbps ceiling.

Its quoted maximum rates of 555 megabytes per second (MB/s) read speed and 540MB/s writing promise less than a quarter of the throughput we see from the latest NVMe SSDs, connected via the M.2 PCIe sockets available on modern

### SPECIFICATIONS

960GB SSD • 2.5in format • SATA III • 7.2x101x70mm (HxWxD) • 46g • Three-year warranty [www.snipca.com/36465](http://www.snipca.com/36465)

motherboards, but still more than three times what you'd get from a mechanical hard drive. At less than 100 quid for a terabyte – well, 960GB formatted – it qualifies as a budget option.

Our tests found write speed fell a little short of the quoted figure in a basic file transfer, but held up relatively well in harder tasks involving batches of very small files, and beat Kioxia's own target with very large files – the easiest to handle. Read speeds, however, fell a little way behind, the opposite of what we'd expect but a result of the Exceria's architecture.

Overall, results were better and more consistent than we've seen in some low-priced rivals, and for significantly better performance than a hard drive without breaking the bank, this is a good buy. The 240GB and 480GB versions,



which we didn't test, have the same quoted speeds.

**VERDICT** Not an outstanding performer among SSDs, but effective high-speed storage at a reasonable price



**ALTERNATIVE** Samsung 870 QVO £101 Similar specs, but slightly slower in testing; capacities up to 8TB are available





**SMART SPEAKER** | £90 from Google [www.snipca.com/36475](http://www.snipca.com/36475)

## Google Nest Audio

Good egg

Having renamed its Home Mini smart speaker the Nest Mini, Google has replaced the medium-sized Google Home with the Nest... Audio. Presumably, market research showed that Google Home users kept forgetting that it was an audio device, and would just stare at it, trying to remember why it was in their house. It was pretty odd-looking, to be fair, with a white plastic top sliced off at a jaunty angle.

The Nest Audio's shape is simpler: the base is a rounded rectangle, and it extrudes upwards before tapering off at the top. It's covered in a durable monotone fabric (in chalk or charcoal), through which a row of four LEDs shines at the front to let you know it's active. As before, it's not battery-powered and comes with a mains adapter. At 175mm high (less than 7in), it's dinky, but instead of the previous single speaker it has a bigger 3in woofer plus a 3/4in tweeter.

The resulting sound is louder, richer and more detailed. Heavy metal would be asking too much, but it suits a wide variety of music as well as speech, and you can pair two units for stereo (discounted to £160). Via the companion app, you can control playback from multiple units around the house. As well as streaming music direct from online services via Wi-Fi, you can use the Nest Audio as a Bluetooth speaker, but there's no analogue input or output jack.

A **Media EQ** feature tunes the output to



enhance whatever kind of audio is playing, and **Ambient IQ** adjusts volume for background noise. Changing the volume yourself can be hit-and-miss, since the three touch sensors on the top edge aren't marked.

A proper switch on the back mutes the three microphones that enable voice access to Google Assistant, which we found reliable.

It's always been smarter than Amazon's Alexa, understanding questions better and less often interrupting while you're trying to say what you want. But it's still not compatible with as many home automation products, lacking Amazon Echo speakers' support for the Zigbee Wi-Fi control standard.

### SPECIFICATIONS

802.11ac Wi-Fi • Bluetooth • 3x microphones • 75mm woofer • 19mm tweeter • Mains adapter • Requires Wi-Fi, Android 5 or iOS 12 or higher device (app required for setup) • 175x124x78mm (HxWxD) • 1.2kg • One-year warranty [www.snipca.com/36478](http://www.snipca.com/36478)

**VERDICT** Unless you need Amazon's wider range of integrations with other products, this is an excellent smart speaker that sounds great

★★★★★

**ALTERNATIVE** Amazon Echo £90

Look out for our upcoming review of the new fourth-generation version of this rival Alexa smart speaker



### DO I REALLY NEED...

## Satellite broadband?

### What is it?

In places that aren't cabled for internet access, one solution is satellites for transmitting TV/communications signals.

### What does it do?

Pioneered by companies like HughesNet, satellite internet services transmit data in radio signals to and from a satellite.



SpaceX, founded by Tesla's Elon Musk, is building an array of solar-powered low-orbit satellites called Starlink (pictured). A beta test programme uses a Sky-like dish, installed anywhere with a clear view, and promises speeds of 50 to 150Mbps, comparable to a decent UK landline. It costs \$499 (£385 without VAT) up front plus \$99 (£76) per month.

### What's the catch?

Tests put speeds at 10 to 60Mbps download and 5-18Mbps upload. Starlink must launch thousands more satellites and there are also concerns about interference.

### So can I do without it?

For anyone without a fast landline, this could be life-changing – if it works.

### NEXT ISSUE

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Top i7 chip and RTX graphics – in a laptop



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

### LAPTOP

**Honor MagicBook 14**  
**£550** from [www.snipca.com/34688](http://www.snipca.com/34688)  
**Tested** Issue 580



Using an AMD Ryzen 3500U processor, this lightweight metal laptop beat Microsoft's Surface Laptop 3 with Intel's i7-1065G7 in our tests. The 14in Full HD screen lacks colour accuracy but looks decent. For the money, it's a great buy.

**ALTERNATIVE Dell XPS 13** New Intel CPUs and a taller screen make this a more powerful, all-round slim notebook, although prices now start at a steep £1,600 from [www.snipca.com/35349](http://www.snipca.com/35349)

### DESKTOP PC

**Palicomp Intel Mercury**  
**£600** from [www.snipca.com/34223](http://www.snipca.com/34223)  
**Tested** Issue 576



If you don't need advanced gaming, your money's well spent here on a six-core Intel i5-9600K processor overclocked to 5GHz. 16GB of memory and a full terabyte of fast SSD storage round off a powerful PC with good expansion potential.

**ALTERNATIVE Chillblast Fusion Onyx Ryzen** Adds decent 3D graphics and a 6GB Nvidia GeForce GTX 1660 Super. £1,150 from [www.snipca.com/34675](http://www.snipca.com/34675)

### APPLE IPAD

**Apple iPad 10.2in**  
**£329** from [www.snipca.com/36178](http://www.snipca.com/36178)  
**Tested** Issue 566



The basic iPad is great value, especially now it's been updated with a powerful A12 processor and iPadOS 14. It includes Scribble handwriting recognition with the £89 Apple Pencil. Storage isn't expandable; consider 128GB at £429.

**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. £399 from [www.snipca.com/33050](http://www.snipca.com/33050)

### ANDROID TABLET

**Samsung Galaxy Tab S6 Lite**  
**£349** from [www.snipca.com/35795](http://www.snipca.com/35795)  
**Tested** Issue 582



Competing with Apple's cheapest 10.2in iPad, this slim aluminium tablet comes with an S Pen stylus and a generous 64GB of storage at a reasonable price. It's less powerful, but a great buy if you prefer Android.

**ALTERNATIVE Amazon Fire HD 8** Now with USB-C and 32GB of storage, this plastic-cased tablet is more limited, with no stylus option, but good for the money. £90 from [www.snipca.com/35336](http://www.snipca.com/35336)

### APPLE IPHONE

**Apple iPhone 11**  
**£599** from [www.snipca.com/32938](http://www.snipca.com/32938)  
**Tested** Issue 565



At over £400 less than the new iPhone 12 Pro, this has two rear cameras rather than three, but it's a superb phone for the money and takes fantastic photos and video. With full-day battery life, the only flaw is its 64GB of unexpandable storage – 128GB is £50 extra.

**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. £399 from [www.snipca.com/34773](http://www.snipca.com/34773)

PRICE  
DROP

### ANDROID PHONE

**Google Pixel 4a**  
**£349** from [www.snipca.com/35796](http://www.snipca.com/35796)  
**Tested** issue 588



Still only one camera on the back, but it takes some of the best photos around. In other respects the 4a is a thoroughly modern phone that runs Android very smoothly, with 128GB of storage, fingerprint reader and all-day battery.

**ALTERNATIVE Xiaomi Redmi Note 9** Ridiculously good value, with a big OLED screen, triple camera, fingerprint reader and 128GB. £170 from [www.snipca.com/36179](http://www.snipca.com/36179)



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## GET IT EARLY

# BEAT LOCKDOWN

Hello,

I'd like to thank you for continuing to read *Computeractive* during this difficult year. It's been an unsettling time for everyone, but I'm glad we could provide a semblance of normality.

Getting to the shops has been tricky during the regional and national lockdowns, so it didn't surprise me that we saw a rise in people subscribing to *Computeractive*. It must have been a comfort to know you could rely on the magazine dropping through your letterbox once a fortnight. A big thank you to everyone who signed up.

As I write this, we've just entered a second national lockdown, with many non-essential shops closing. We're already seeing another rise in subscriptions, so we're putting additional effort into our deliveries to make sure you get your copy on time (several days before it goes on sale in the shops).

If you're thinking of subscribing, please see details below. And if you have any questions about subscribing, please don't hesitate to email me: **editor@computeractive.co.uk**.

Kind regards,  
Daniel Booth



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# Buy It

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

## EBOOK READER

**Amazon Kindle (2019)**  
**£70** from [www.snipca.com/31621](http://www.snipca.com/31621)  
**Tested** Issue 555



Now with built-in light and audiobook support, this budget model is fine for most users, though limited by its 4GB of storage. The Paperwhite (£120) is even sharper, waterproof, and has bigger storage options as well as a cellular data option (£100 extra).

### ALTERNATIVE Kobo Clara HD

Not waterproof, but has more lighting options to avoid blue light. £110 from [www.snipca.com/32586](http://www.snipca.com/32586)

## SECURITY SOFTWARE

**Kaspersky Internet Security 2020**  
**£14.99** from [www.snipca.com/21532](http://www.snipca.com/21532)  
**Tested** Issue 564



Kaspersky Internet Security has won our past nine antivirus tests and the 2020 version is now available at an exclusive reader discount on our Software Store. Go to the link above for a one-year, one-device licence or buy a two-year, two-device licence for just £26.99.

### ALTERNATIVE Norton 360 Deluxe

Almost as good as Kaspersky, but blocks more legitimate software. £15 from [www.snipca.com/32069](http://www.snipca.com/32069)

## PHOTO EDITING

**Serif Affinity Photo**  
**£49** from [www.snipca.com/23739](http://www.snipca.com/23739)  
**Tested** Issue 498



Designed for both full-time professional image retouchers and the rest of us keen amateurs, this is a beautifully designed and comprehensive program for both Windows and Mac users, although so far it performs better on Macs.

### ALTERNATIVE Xara Photo & Graphic Designer

For all-round design and drawing plus photo filters, this affordable app has a lot to offer. £50 from [www.snipca.com/26514](http://www.snipca.com/26514)

## PC MONITOR

**BenQ GL2780**  
**£148** from [www.snipca.com/34834](http://www.snipca.com/34834)  
**Tested** issue 581



This budget 27in screen offers accurate sRGB colour with good contrast, plus auto brightness and low blue light modes. Speakers are built in. Using TN LCD rather than IPS, it needs to be viewed straight on, but works well for games too.

### ALTERNATIVE Philips Brilliance

**241B7QPIEB** With a great picture, stylish design and speakers, this 24in Full HD IPS is an excellent smaller screen. £180 from [www.snipca.com/34869](http://www.snipca.com/34869)

## ROUTER

**D-Link DIR-1960**  
**£105** from [www.snipca.com/32849](http://www.snipca.com/32849)  
**Tested** Issue 564



Giving us download and upload speeds of 460Mbps and 375Mbps respectively, this is phenomenal value. Even two floors away we got 329Mbps and 284Mbps. It has four Ethernet ports for wired devices and a USB 3.0 socket to share storage via your network.

### ALTERNATIVE Synology RT2600ac

Comprehensive sharing features, controls and plenty of add-on apps complement excellent long-range performance. £225 from [www.snipca.com/30710](http://www.snipca.com/30710)

## PRINTER

**Epson Expression Premium XP-6105**  
**£119** from [www.snipca.com/35017](http://www.snipca.com/35017)  
**Tested** Issue 554



With many leading all-purpose printers having sold out during lockdown, this white version of the XP-6100 wireless six-ink printer/scanner/copier is a good choice for photos first and text second. It's easy to use and speeds aren't bad, but ink costs can work out high.

### ALTERNATIVE Epson EcoTank ET-2711

This inkjet printer/scanner/copier isn't cheap but will save you a lot on ink (1p for two colour pages). Photo quality isn't the best, but scans are good. £180 from [www.snipca.com/36183](http://www.snipca.com/36183)



## COMPETITION

# Win 1 of 8 Creative Pebble V3 PC speakers



Creative Technology's new Pebble V3 is the latest addition to the popular PC speaker series. Retaining the same elegant, minimalist design to adorn any desktop setup, these USB-C speakers have improved features like louder and clearer audio, along with Bluetooth 5.0 connectivity as an ideal solution for your home.

They come in the familiar 2.0 speaker system, which retains the same 45-degree elevated driver design which is specifically angled to offer users a better listening

experience. Custom-tuned, 2.25in full-range drivers provide louder and richer audio than its predecessor Pebble V2.

On top of that, users can further amplify the audio with the built-in gain switch that can maximize the acoustical power of the Pebble V3 without distortion. It can also be seriously loud when needed – when plugged into a 10W USB-C port, a USB-C power adapter or a 5V 2A USB-A power adapter, it pumps out audio which is 50 per cent

louder than the original Pebble.

To enter this competition, email your address by midnight 1 December to [cacomp@dennis.co.uk](mailto:cacomp@dennis.co.uk) with 'Pebble V3' in the subject line. Good luck!

You can buy the Creative Pebble V3 for £34.99 from <https://uk.creative.com>. Also visit the site for details of Creative's other products, including gaming headsets and portable speakers. Follow Creative on Twitter for regular updates: [@creativelabs](https://twitter.com/creativelabs).

### MESH ROUTER

PRICE  
DROP

**BT Whole Home Wi-Fi**  
**£192** from [www.snipca.com/26990](http://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. £260 from [www.snipca.com/27309](http://www.snipca.com/27309)

### SOLID-STATE DRIVE

**Samsung 970 Evo Plus**  
**500GB**  
**£96** from [www.snipca.com/31265](http://www.snipca.com/31265)  
**Tested** Issue 552



Although its price has fluctuated since we tested it at £99, this is a very fast (over 3GB per second) M.2 SSD unfazed by tests that make others slow to a crawl. Also consider the Adata XPG SX8200 Pro if you find it a bit cheaper.

**ALTERNATIVE** Crucial MX500 500GB  
As fast as an SSD can get in the traditional 2.5in SATA format, this is a great-value upgrade. £50 from [www.snipca.com/30188](http://www.snipca.com/30188)

### WEB DESIGN

**Xara Web Designer**  
**Premium**  
**£70** from [www.snipca.com/34150](http://www.snipca.com/34150)  
**Tested** Issue 453



This visual program makes creating sites more like laying out a document than writing HTML code, and sites can be responsive, meaning they look good on big and small screens. A cheaper, basic version is also available for £35.

**ALTERNATIVE** Incomedia WebSite X5 v13 Evolution  
It may feel basic, but this program outputs efficient HTML code and responsive pages. £39 from [www.snipca.com/31179](http://www.snipca.com/31179)



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**44** Phone & Tablet Tips

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## HOW TO...

# Export your financial data from Microsoft Money by Nik Rawlinson

**What you need:** Microsoft Money **Time required:** 60 minutes (or longer if you have multiple accounts)

For years, Microsoft Money (pictured right) was the world's best personal finance software. It had an attractive interface, was easy to use, and had loads of features. First released in 1991, it steadily gained in popularity as its tools and abilities were enhanced, right through to the release of Money Plus in 2007.

However, in spring 2010 Microsoft released Money Plus Sunset Deluxe which, while it maintained many of the core features, dropped some of the most attractive elements, including automatic statement downloads and online bill

payments. Support was also limited to 'online self-help', rather than being actively supported and developed by Microsoft itself.

That decision frustrated millions of users, who couldn't understand why Microsoft would abandon such a popular program. Money Plus Sunset Deluxe is still available to download for free from Microsoft's website at [www.snipca.com/36349](http://www.snipca.com/36349). For the purposes of this feature we installed it on the latest version of Windows 10 and it worked flawlessly. However, rather than showing you how



to set up your accounts in the program, we'll walk you through the process of unlocking your existing Money data so you can start working with it using an alternative tool.

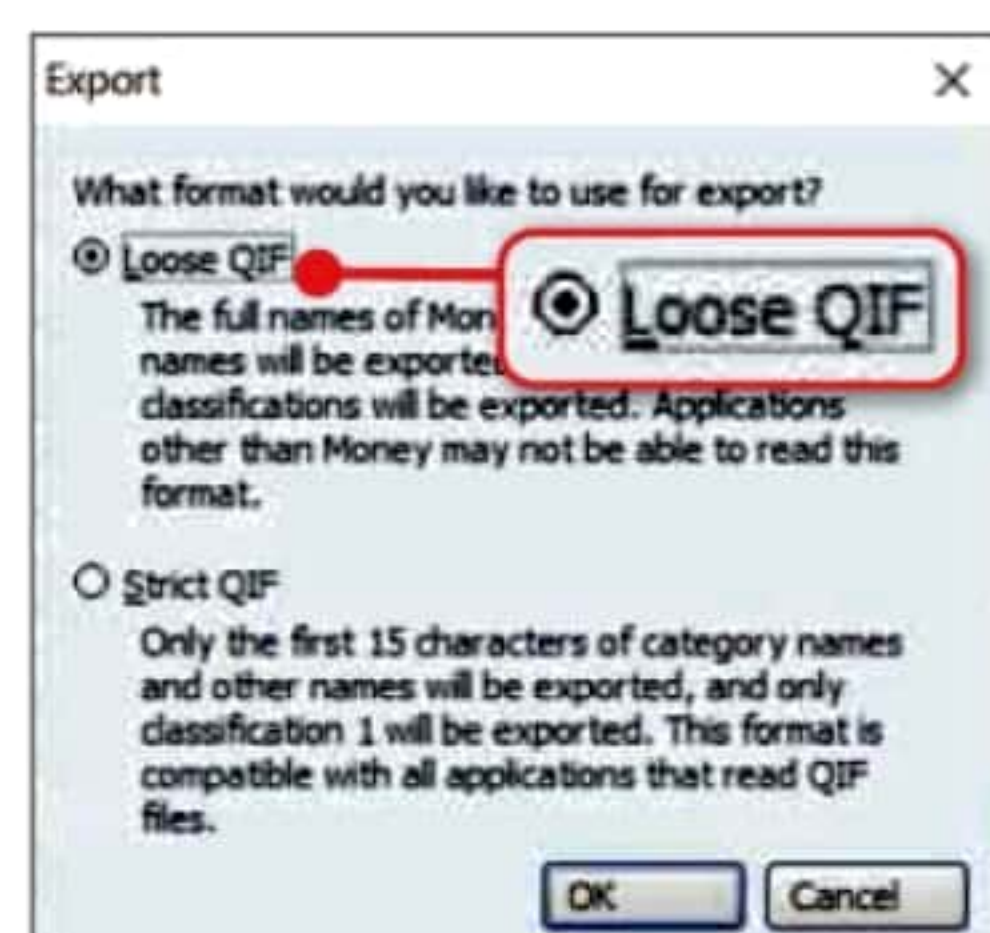
**1**

### Move your data from Microsoft Money into a spreadsheet

If you don't want to use a personal finance program – or you just want to create a financial backup you can easily access – the simplest solution is to export your data in a format that you can open using a spreadsheet like Excel or LibreOffice Calc. Money's export format is QIF (Quicken Interchange Format). So, once you've exported your data, you'll need to convert it. Thankfully, it's a straightforward process.

Start within Money by clicking File followed by 'Export...' and when asked

which format you'd like to use, choose Loose QIF (see screenshot below). As Microsoft Money explains below the option, while this is more comprehensive it can't be opened by *all* third-party



You can export Loose or Strict QIF data, but the latter will trim some of your category names

programs, but don't worry – we'll sort that out in a moment. The alternative, Strict QIF, can be opened by a wider range of rival tools. However, a balance needs to be found somewhere. Extending compatibility usually means adopting the lowest common denominator, as would be the case with Strict QIF. This would result in all of the fields, like the categories you've used to index your financial data, being trimmed down if they're more than 15 characters long.

Click 'OK', then navigate to the folder to which you want to export the data. Change the file name if you like (but retain the .qif extension) and click OK.



Choose whether you want to export your 'Regular' data, which comprises bank accounts, credit cards and so on, or your 'Investment' accounts, then click OK. If you have more than one account set up in Money, you'll now be asked which one you want to export. Select it in the box that appears, and click Continue to complete the process.

The file you've just exported contains a table of **plain text**. However, if you open it in Notepad or a spreadsheet you'll find it difficult to navigate. You therefore need to convert it, which you can do with 'QIF to CSV Converter' (free from [www.snipca.com/36350](http://www.snipca.com/36350)). Download and unzip it, then install it by double-clicking 'setup.exe'.

As explained on the download page, the program requires .NET Framework 3.5 Client Profile, which you can download from Microsoft at [www.snipca.com/36351](http://www.snipca.com/36351). You'll see an error message if this isn't installed, in which case place the downloaded .NET Framework in the same folder as the 'setup.exe' file and run the installer again. We didn't need to do this, as the Framework was already installed on our PC.

When the installation has finished, run 'QIF - CSV Converter for MS Money 2001', which you'll find at the top of your Start menu. Click the 'Click to Continue' button on the first box that pops up, then click Open QIF File. Navigate to and select the file you exported from Money, and 'QIF to CSV Converter' will lay out its contents in a table, which is much easier to read. Click 'Save File', then give the file a name (preserve its .csv extension, which stands for Comma Separated Values) and store it somewhere easy to find.

We were able to open our CSV file in Excel without any further action (see screenshot below). However, if you open it in LibreOffice Calc you'll see another box. Select 'Separated by' in the Separator Options section (1 in our screenshot

Number	Date	Payee	Payment/Deposit	Amount	Category
1	26/09/2020	Opening Balance	£0.00	£0.00	BUSINESS
2	26/09/2020	Harvest	£0.00	£0.00	Food
3	26/09/2020	Salary	£2,800.00	£2,800.00	Wages & Salary
4	26/09/2020	Star and Gator	£0.00	£0.00	Utilities
5	26/09/2020	Travel	£1.00	£1.00	Travel
6	26/09/2020	National Trust	£1.00	£1.00	Travel
7	26/09/2020	Gifts	£1.00	£1.00	Gifts
8	26/09/2020	Gifts	£1.00	£1.00	Gifts
9	26/09/2020	Gifts	£1.00	£1.00	Gifts
10	26/09/2020	Gifts	£1.00	£1.00	Gifts
11	26/09/2020	Gifts	£1.00	£1.00	Gifts
12	26/09/2020	Gifts	£1.00	£1.00	Gifts
13	26/09/2020	Gifts	£1.00	£1.00	Gifts
14	26/09/2020	Gifts	£1.00	£1.00	Gifts
15	26/09/2020	Gifts	£1.00	£1.00	Gifts
16	26/09/2020	Gifts	£1.00	£1.00	Gifts
17	26/09/2020	Gifts	£1.00	£1.00	Gifts
18	26/09/2020	Gifts	£1.00	£1.00	Gifts
19	26/09/2020	Gifts	£1.00	£1.00	Gifts
20	26/09/2020	Gifts	£1.00	£1.00	Gifts

Convert your Money data from QIF to CSV so you can open it in an Excel spreadsheet

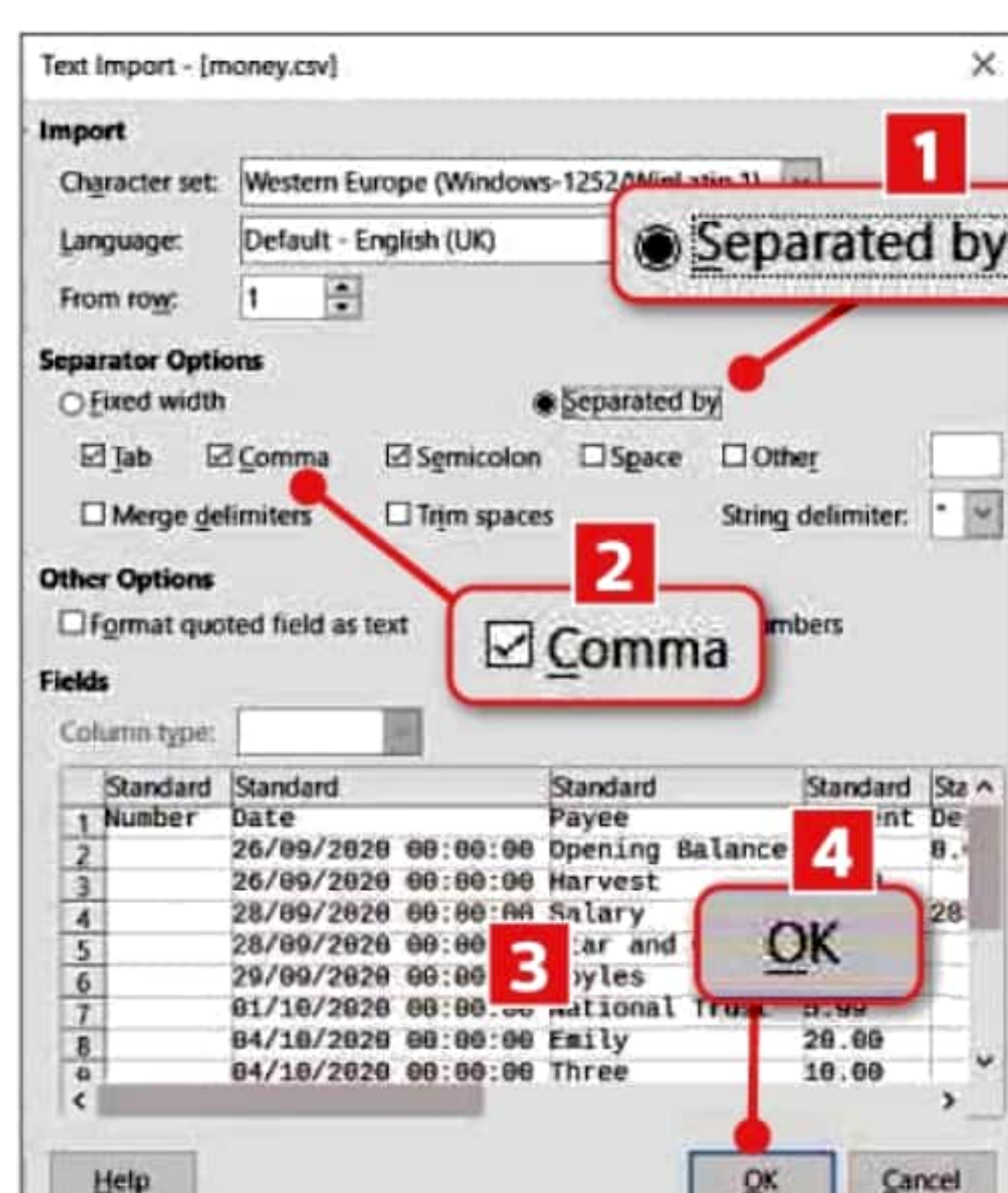
## How I use accounting software

I was a Microsoft Money user for years but now use neither software nor a website to manage my personal finances. However, I do use FreeAgent ([www.freeagent.com](http://www.freeagent.com)) to manage my *business* accounts. It's proved to me that using a comprehensive yet easily understood tool for keeping your finances in order is still the best way to get a clear picture of how things stand.

Nik Rawlinson



How do you manage your personal finances?  
Please let us know: [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)



LibreOffice Calc previews the results of your settings before importing your data

above), and make sure there's a tick beside Comma 2 in the section below. You'll see a preview of the result in the window 3. Click 'OK' 4 to open the file in Calc.

You'll notice that column B, showing the date of each transaction, also includes a **timestamp**, which is set to midnight for every record. This isn't required so, to tidy things up, trim it down to just the relevant date. Whether you're using Excel or Calc, click in cell I2 and type `=DAY(B2)&"/"&MONTH(B2)&"/"&YEAR(B2)` (you can cut and paste this from our Pastebin account: [www.snipca.com/36371](http://www.snipca.com/36371)), then press Enter.

The result will be the date from cell B2, without the timestamp. Copy cell I2 and paste it in every cell in column I for which there's a financial record. In each instance, the three B2 references in the formula will be updated to point to the relevant cell in column B for that row. So, where the formula is pasted into I3, I4 and I5, for example, the references will automatically update to draw the day,

month and year from cells B3, B4 and B5.

Now, go back to cell I2 and hold down the Shift key while pressing the down cursor key. This selects all of the cells into which you copied the formula. Press Ctrl+C to copy their contents. Now click in cell B2, which is the first of your dates.

In LibreOffice Calc, press Ctrl+Shift+V to open the Paste Special box, then click the Values Only button, which is the left-most of the three buttons at the top of the box. This replaces all of the date and time values in column B with just the date.

In Excel, click Home above the ribbon, then click the down arrow below Paste on the far-left side (don't click Paste itself). Now click the left-most icon below Paste Values to once again replace all the dates and times with just the date.

Whichever spreadsheet you're using, you can now delete column I by right-clicking the 'I' in the header row, followed by Delete (in Excel) or Delete Columns (in LibreOffice Calc).

## 2

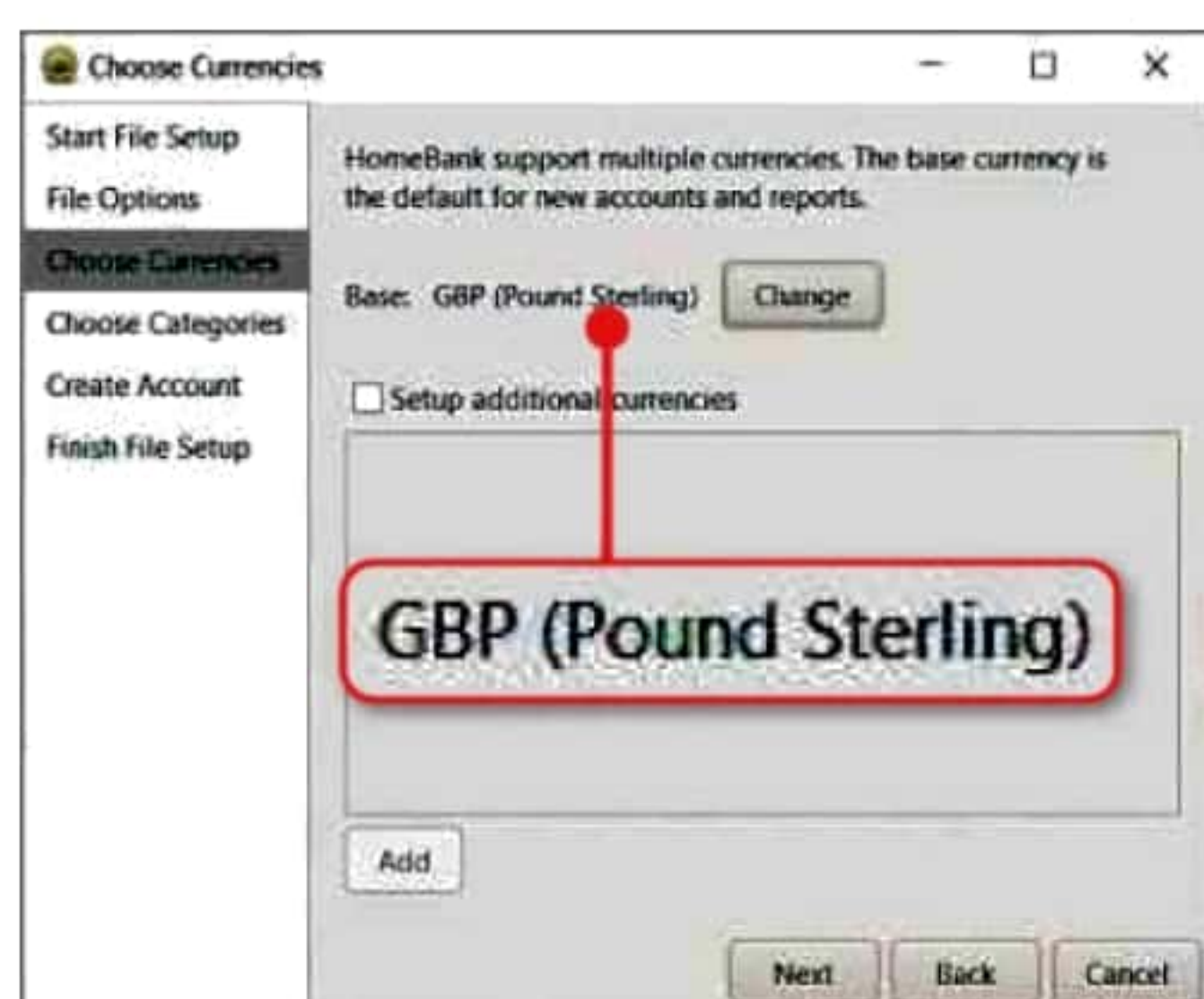
### Move your data from Money to HomeBank

The excellent HomeBank (free from [www.snipca.com/36352](http://www.snipca.com/36352)) gives you more flexibility than a spreadsheet, and is a superb modern replacement for Microsoft Money. Launch the downloaded file and follow the instructions. When asked whether you want to install on 'desktop' or 'portable device', choose whichever option works best for you.

If you're going to use HomeBank only on one computer, the former option will probably be more convenient because it will run like any other program installed on your PC. However, if you regularly work across several different machines and don't know which one you'll be using when you next want to use HomeBank, opt to install it as a portable



## Export your financial data from Microsoft Money



Make sure your currency is set to 'GBP Pound Sterling' when setting up HomeBank



In HomeBank choose which type of account you want to set up



HomeBank shows your income and expenses as a 'doughnut' chart

app on a USB stick. That way, it won't rely on files stored on your hard drive and can run anywhere. We opted for 'desktop' to install it on our PC.

When you first run HomeBank, you'll need to create a file to store your data, so click 'Create a new file', followed by Next. Type something into the 'Title' box that will identify the file (My Accounts, for example). Click 'Next' and make sure 'GBP (Pound Sterling)' is shown beside Base (see screenshot). If it isn't, and you want to work in Pounds (or it is shown, but you want to use an alternative), click Change and choose the currency your accounts are managed in. Click Next.

Like Money, HomeBank lets you organise your spending and income into categories. Leave the box beside 'Setup categories for my language' ticked then click Next to import a base set of categories.

You now need to create your own account. In Microsoft Money, the data we exported had been organised under an account called HSBC. Although there's no obligation for us to choose the same name here, it makes sense to do

so – particularly if we want to track different accounts named after various financial institutions. So, we're entering HSBC in the Name field and we've selected Bank from the menu beside Type (see screenshot above). Other options here are Cash, Asset, Credit Card and Liability. Select whichever is appropriate for your data, then click Next followed by Apply.

To open the data you exported from Money, click File and select Import, then navigate to the exported .qif file. By default, HomeBank is set to use American date formats, in which the month comes first and the date comes second (m-d-y, see 1 in our screenshot below). As you can see, this caused errors with our data as the numbers 26, 28 and 29 appeared in what HomeBank thought was the month column 2. To fix it, click the dropdown menu beside 'Date order' and select 'd-m-y'.

Date	Info	Payee	Category	Tags	Status	Expense	Income	Balance	Memo
26/09/2020		HSBC				£ 0.00	£ 0.00	£ 0.00	
26/09/2020		HSBC				£ 0.00	£ 0.00	£ 0.00	
26/09/2020		Harvest	Petrol			£ -65.09	£ -65.09	£ -65.09	
26/09/2020		Star and Garter	Hobbies-Leisure:Entertaining			£ -40.22	£ -40.22	£ -105.31	Pub
26/09/2020		Foyles	Wages & Salary:Net Pay				£ 2,851.67	£ 2,746.36	
29/09/2020		National Trust	Hobbies-Leisure:Cultural Events			£ -5.99		£ 2,740.37	
01/10/2020		Three	Phone-Wireless						
04/10/2020		Emily	Gifts						
07/10/2020		Taxi	Travel-Vacation:Travel						
07/10/2020		GNER	Travel-Vacation:Travel						
08/10/2020		Boots	Miscellaneous						
08/10/2020		Pets at Home	Pet Care:Food			£ -20.10		£ 2,561.27	
09/10/2020		Texaco	Petrol			£ -70.22		£ 2,491.05	
10/10/2020		Sainsbury's	Groceries			£ -25.80		£ 2,465.25	
12/10/2020		Greggs	Food			£ -1.99		£ 2,463.26	

Remove useless or duplicate data in HomeBank, like the first two rows here showing zero values

Next, click the dropdown menu to the left, beside 'Import this file into', and select the name of the account you created as part of the setup process. In our case, that's HSBC. Click 'Next' followed by Apply. You'll now see a 'doughnut' chart breaking down your spending into familiar categories (see screenshot at the top of page).

To examine your finances in greater detail, double-click the name of your account in the top-left window. As you can see from the screenshot above our records have two useless lines at the top of the list, detailing income and spending of £0 each. Neither is necessary, so we removed them by clicking them, then clicking the 'Delete selected transactions' button, which is the last on the row at the bottom of the window. Click 'Delete' to confirm.

So far, you haven't saved your work, so press Ctrl+S, choose a save location and give the file a relevant name. You can add new transactions manually by opening the account they relate to and clicking Add on the button bar at the bottom of the interface. If your bank lets you export your transactions as a QIF file, you can also import them in batches using the process outlined above.

Date	Memo	Amount	Info	Payee	Category
26/09/2020		0.00		Opening Balance	[HSBC]
29/09/2020		-27.98		Foyles	Education:Books
28/09/2020	Pub	-40.22		Star and Garter	Hobbies-Leisure:Entertaining
26/09/2020		-65.09		Harvest	Petrol
28/09/2020		2851.67		Salary	Wages & Salary:Net Pay
2020-01-10		-5.99		National Trust	Hobbies-Leisure:Cultural Events
2020-04-10	Mobile charge	-10.00		Three	Phone-Wireless
2020-04-10	Birthday gift	-20.00		Emily	Gifts
2020-07-10	Taxi from station	-17.40		Taxi	Travel-Vacation:Travel
2020-07-10	Train ticket	-74.12		GNER	Travel-Vacation:Travel
2020-08-10		-9.50		Boots	Miscellaneous

Change HomeBank's US month-day-year date format (1) to avoid errors in the Date column (2)



# Workshop1

## Blur objects in your videos

**What you need:** DaVinci Resolve; Windows 10

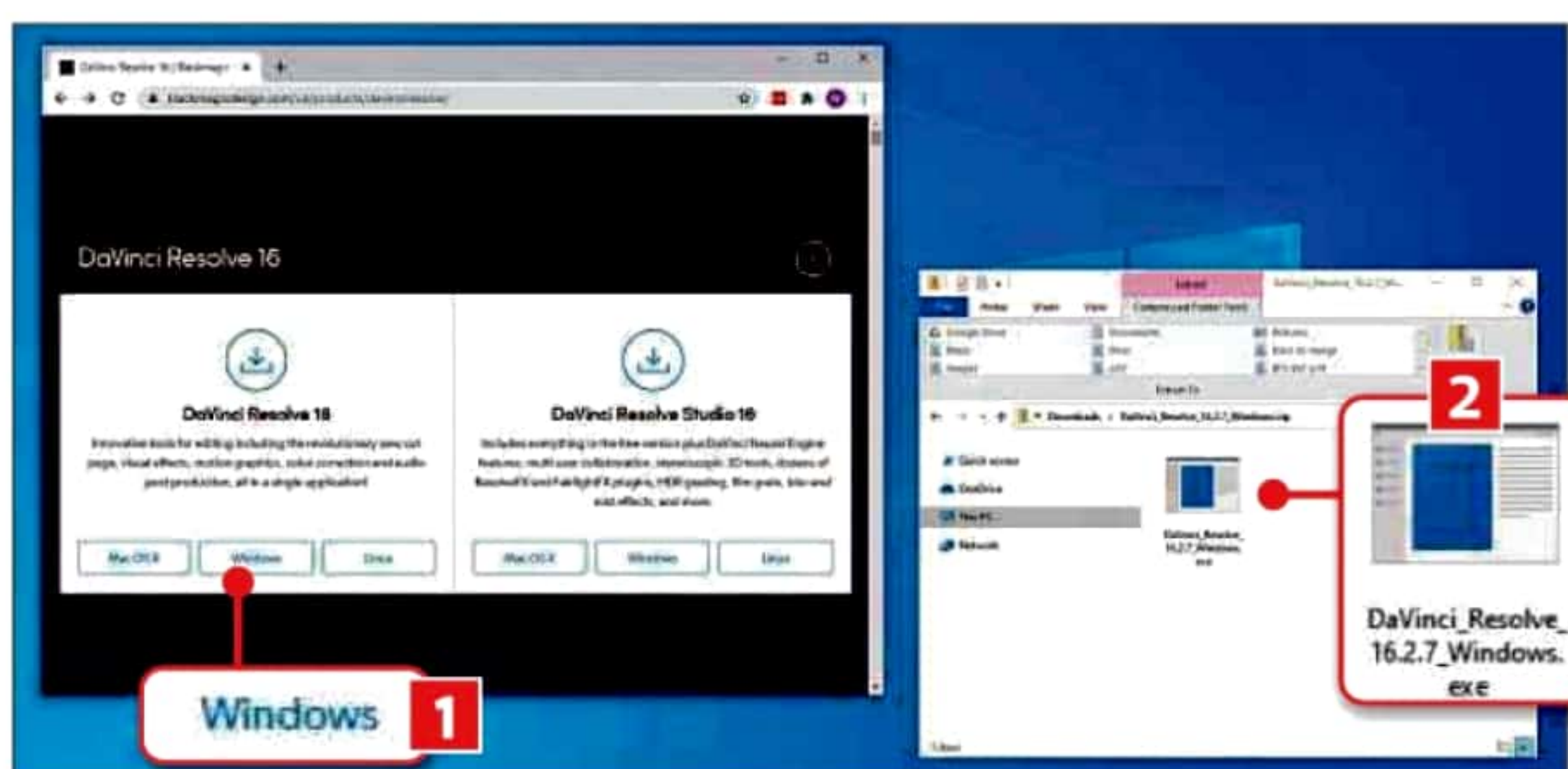
**Time taken:** 30 minutes

**W**hen you share a video with friends or upload it to a public website such as YouTube, you might not want people to view *everything* in the clip. For instance, if you're posting a video for a local club, some members may not want

their faces appearing in it, or in a video of your home you may want to hide family photos. DaVinci Resolve lets you choose what you want to blur, and will then track those objects as they move, meaning they stay blurred at all times.

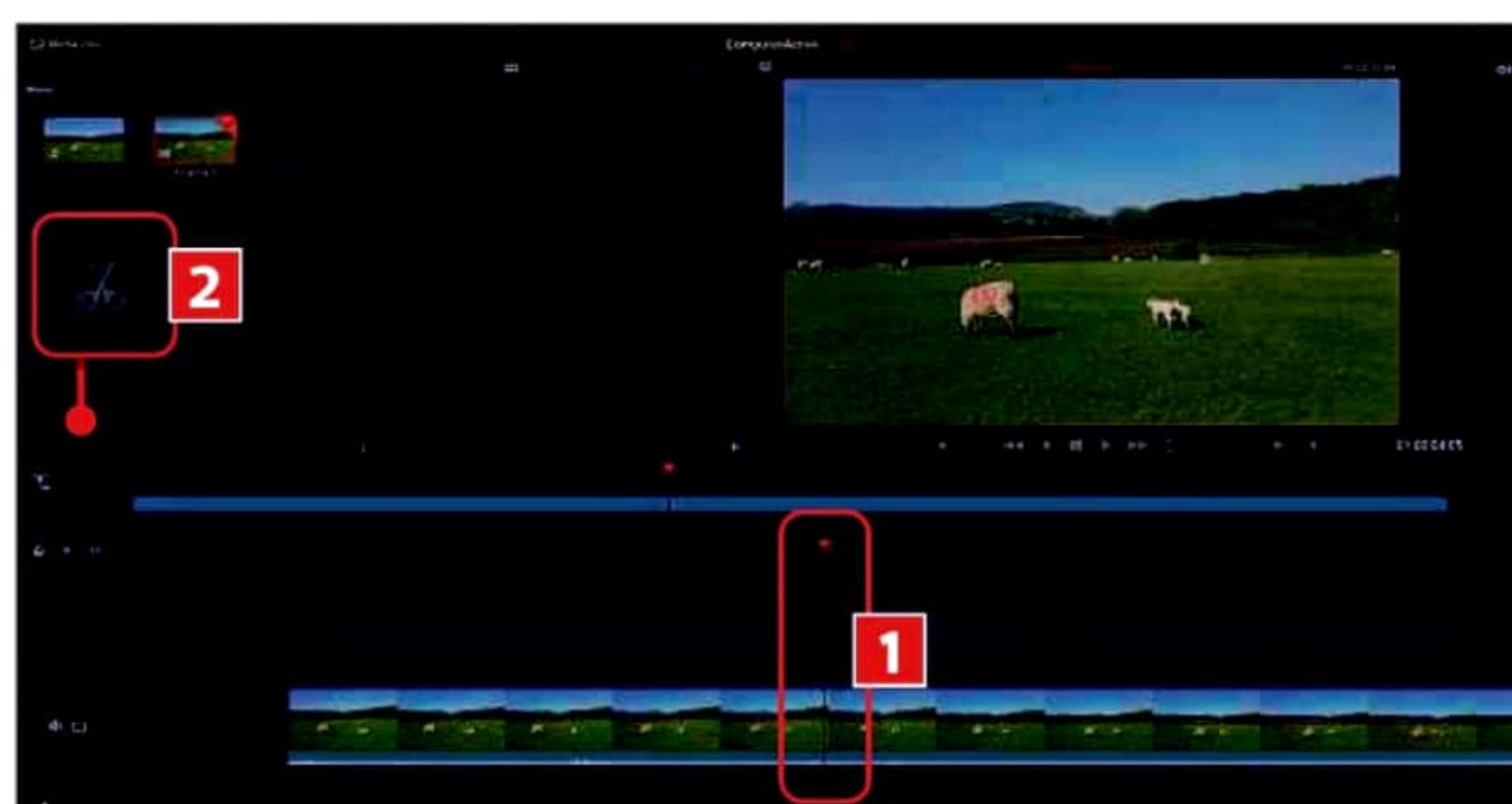


**STEP 1** Download Resolve from [www.snipca.com/36462](http://www.snipca.com/36462) (select the free Resolve option for Windows **1**, not Resolve Studio, which is paid-for). The website will prompt you to enter personal details (these aren't checked) and the file will start downloading as soon as you've entered them. The **ZIP** file is large (over 1.5GB), so it may take a while to download – once complete, double-click the **EXE** file **2** within it. It can take some time for the installation process to start, so don't double-click it again if you think nothing is happening (as we did), otherwise you'll just end up running it multiple times.

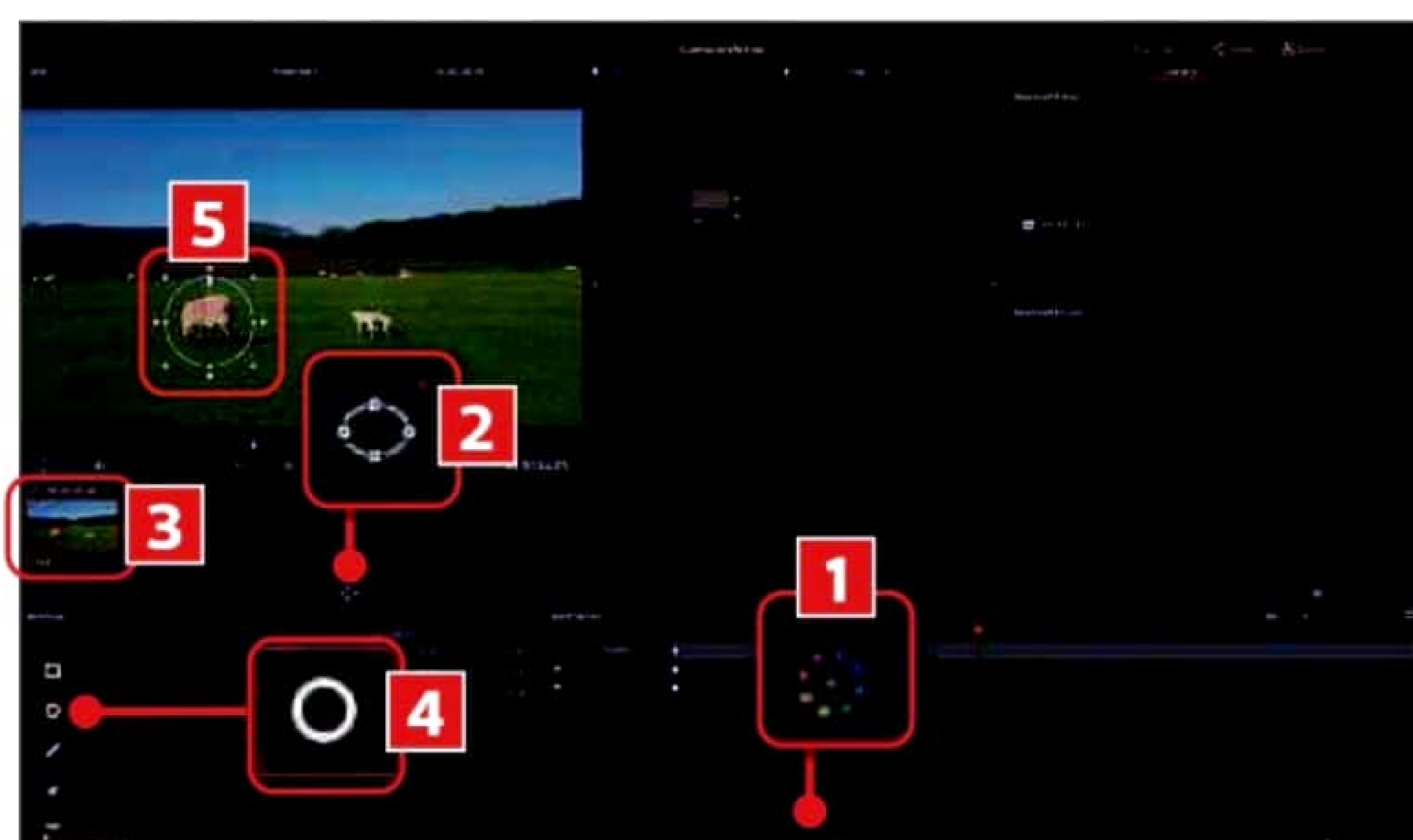


**STEP 2** If you're using Resolve for the first time, you'll need to work through the setup process, though you can leave all settings at their defaults. Create your new project (either by clicking New Project in the window that appears when you open Resolve, or from the File menu), then click the Cut **1** option at the bottom. To add your clip, open File Explorer (press Windows key+E), locate your clip, then drag it into the top-left section of the Resolve window **2**. Now drag the clip on to the timeline **3**. In our example, we want to focus on the lambs but blur the ewe.

**STEP 3** If the object you want to blur is present throughout the entire clip, you can skip to Step 4. If not, you'll need to split your clip so that the section featuring the object is contained within its own separate clip. Staying within the Cut window, drag the red bar on the timeline **1** to the point where the object first appears, then click the Split Clips button **2**. Next, drag the red bar to the point just after the object no longer appears, and click the Split Clips button a second time.







**STEP 4** Select the Color option **1**. Click the Window button **2** (this may already be selected). If you split your clip in Step 2, make sure you select the clip containing the object you want to blur **3** just below the preview window. Now choose a shape for your blur (we've opted for a circle **4**). Your chosen shape will appear in the preview window **5**. Drag the centre of the shape so it sits over the object, then resize it by dragging the corners. You need your object to be contained within the inner section (you can adjust this later, so there's no need to be too precise).

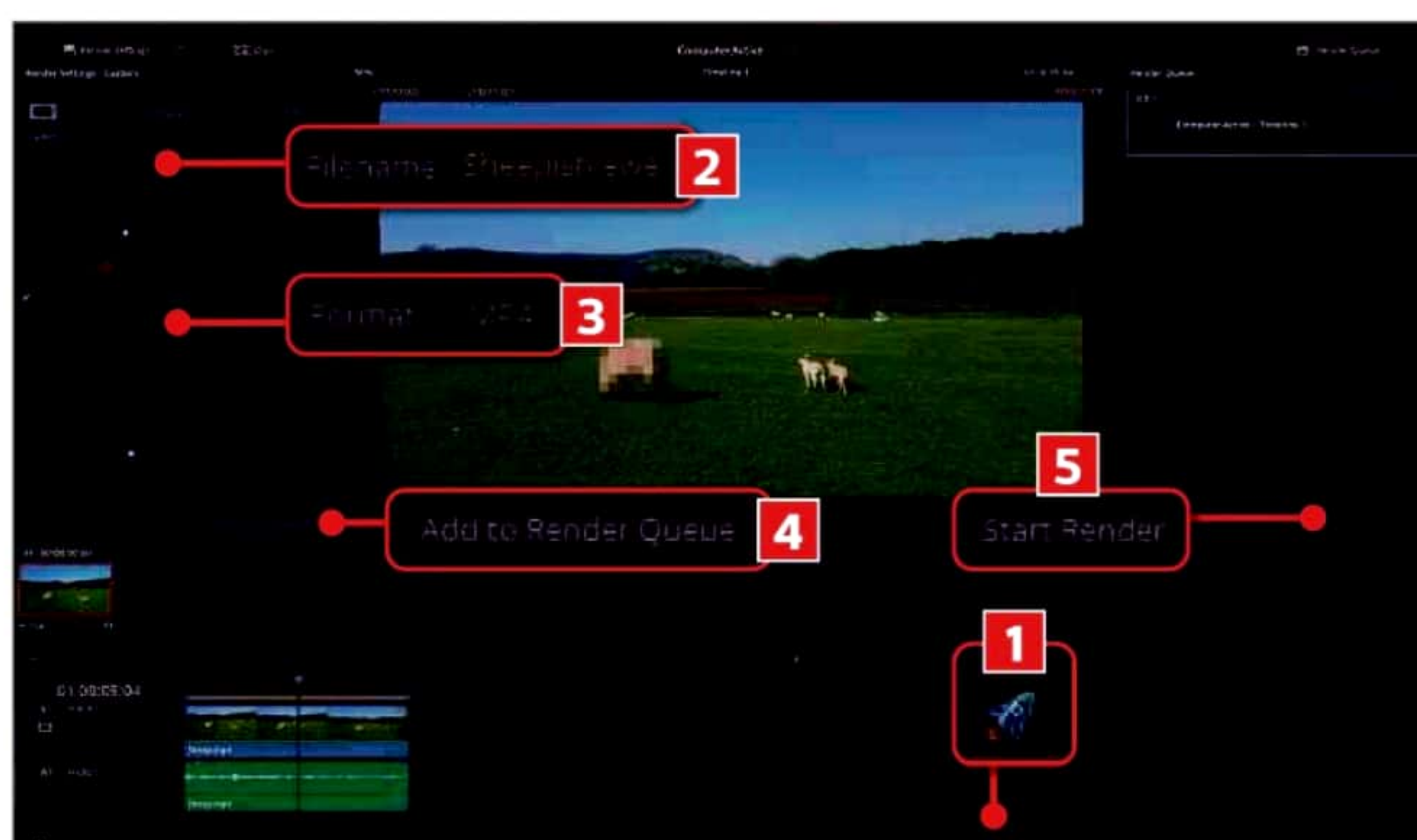


**STEP 5** Click the Tracker button **1**, then press the Play button **2** and let the entire clip play. The shape you chose should now follow the object as it or your camera moves. If not, try adjusting the shape, making sure its centre is in the middle of the object, then press Play again. Once it is tracking the object correctly, stay in the Color window and click the OpenFX button **3** to open the OpenFX library **4**.



**STEP 6** You'll see several blur options in the ResolveFX Blur section, including a basic Box Blur. In our example, we're using a Mosaic Blur. Drag your chosen blur effect on to the small window in the middle section **1**. Click the preview window's Play button **2** to see how the effect looks **3**. Don't worry if the audio and video are a little choppy - this will be resolved when you export the clip. If you want to change the effect, use the options in the Settings window top right. In our example, we've used the Pixel Frequency slider to decrease the size of the pixels **4**. You can also fine-tune the area of the blur by returning to the Window options, as in Step 3.

**STEP 7** When you're happy with the blur effect, it's time to export your clip. Click the Deliver button **1** and give your clip a name **2**. It's best to save the video as an MP4 file, which is compatible with all media players, so click the Format dropdown box, then select MP4 **3**. Leave the other settings at their defaults, then click 'Add to Render Queue' **4** and choose where to save it. Next, click Start Render **5** to begin the export process. It took just over a minute to export our 10-second clip, so if you're exporting a large clip you may have to wait an hour or so.





# Workshop 2

## Automatically save and back up your photos

**What you need:** Google Backup & Sync; Windows 7, 8.1 or 10

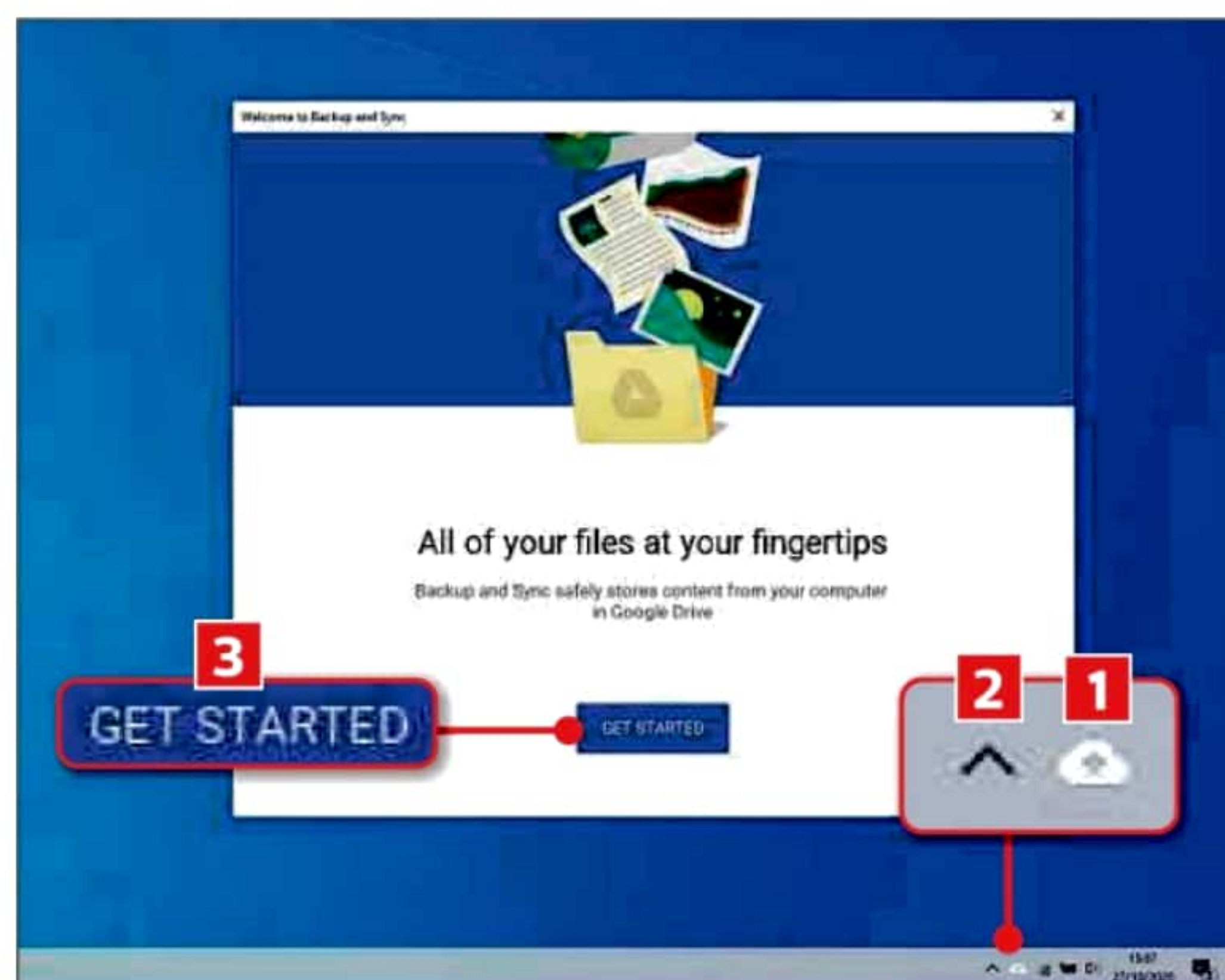
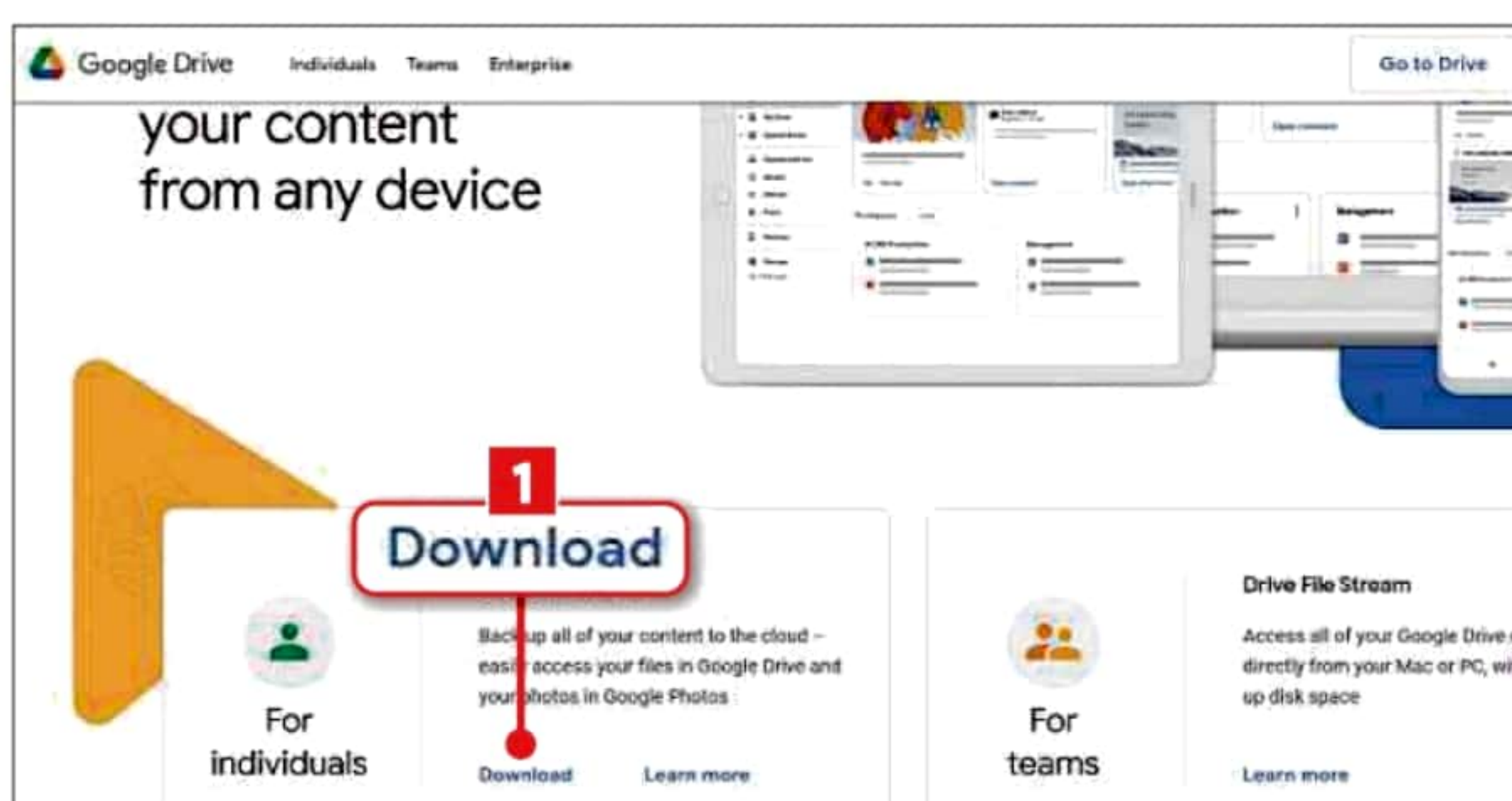
**Time required:** 20 minutes

**H**ave you got photos on your hard drive that you know should be backed up, but for whatever reason you haven't got round to it? You're not alone. Don't wait until disaster strikes before doing something about it. In this

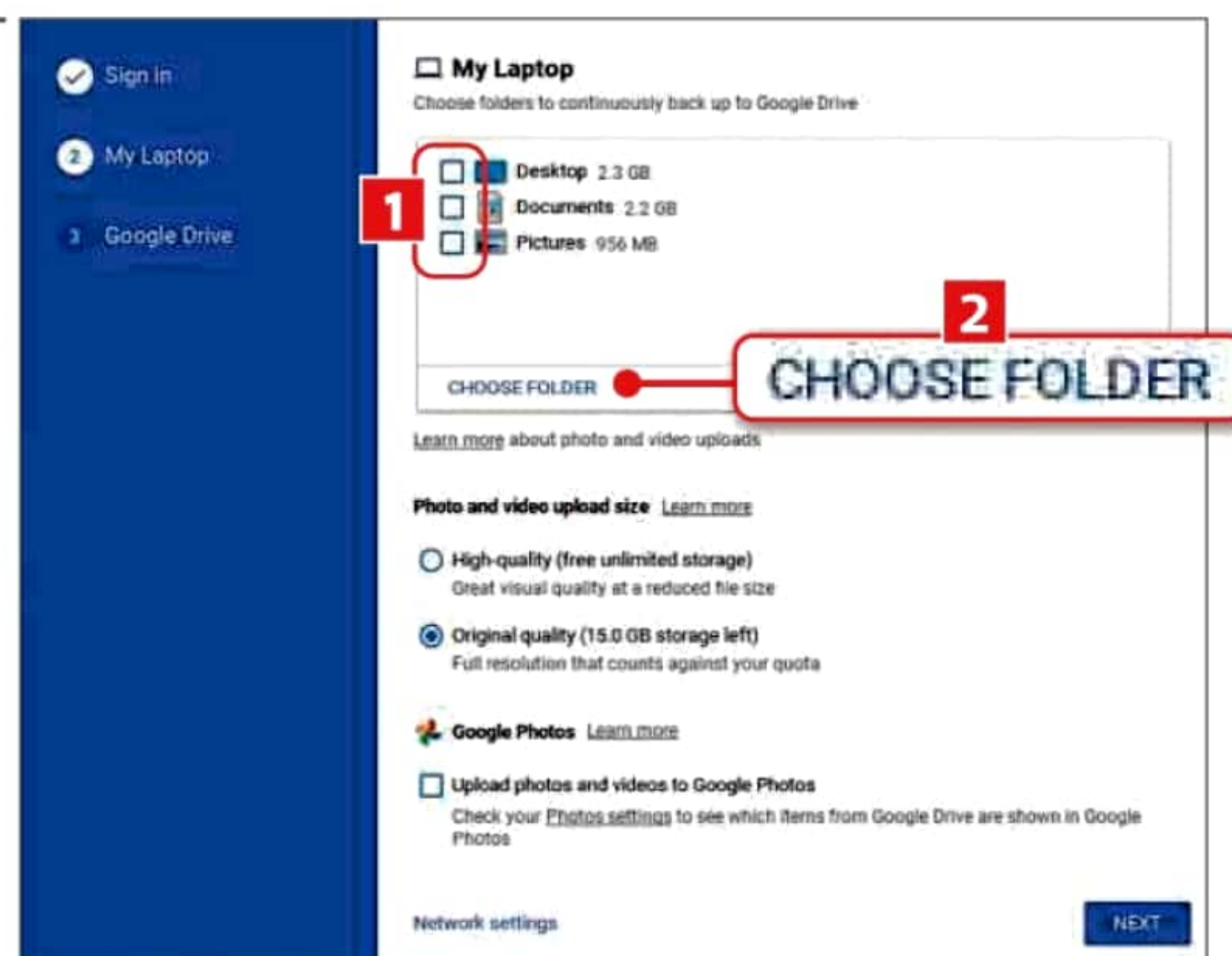
Workshop, we'll show you how to create a backup process for your *entire* photo (and video) collection. You can then sit back and relax as your photos, including any new ones you add, are backed up automatically.



**STEP 1** If you don't already have a Google account, create a free one at [www.snipca.com/36480](http://www.snipca.com/36480). Next, you need to download Google's 'Backup and Sync' tool from [www.snipca.com/36477](http://www.snipca.com/36477). Scroll down the page, then select Download **1** in the 'For individuals' section. The download is meant to start when the next page opens, but we had to use the 'Click here to retry' link to get it to download. Open the **EXE** file when it's downloaded, then follow through the process.

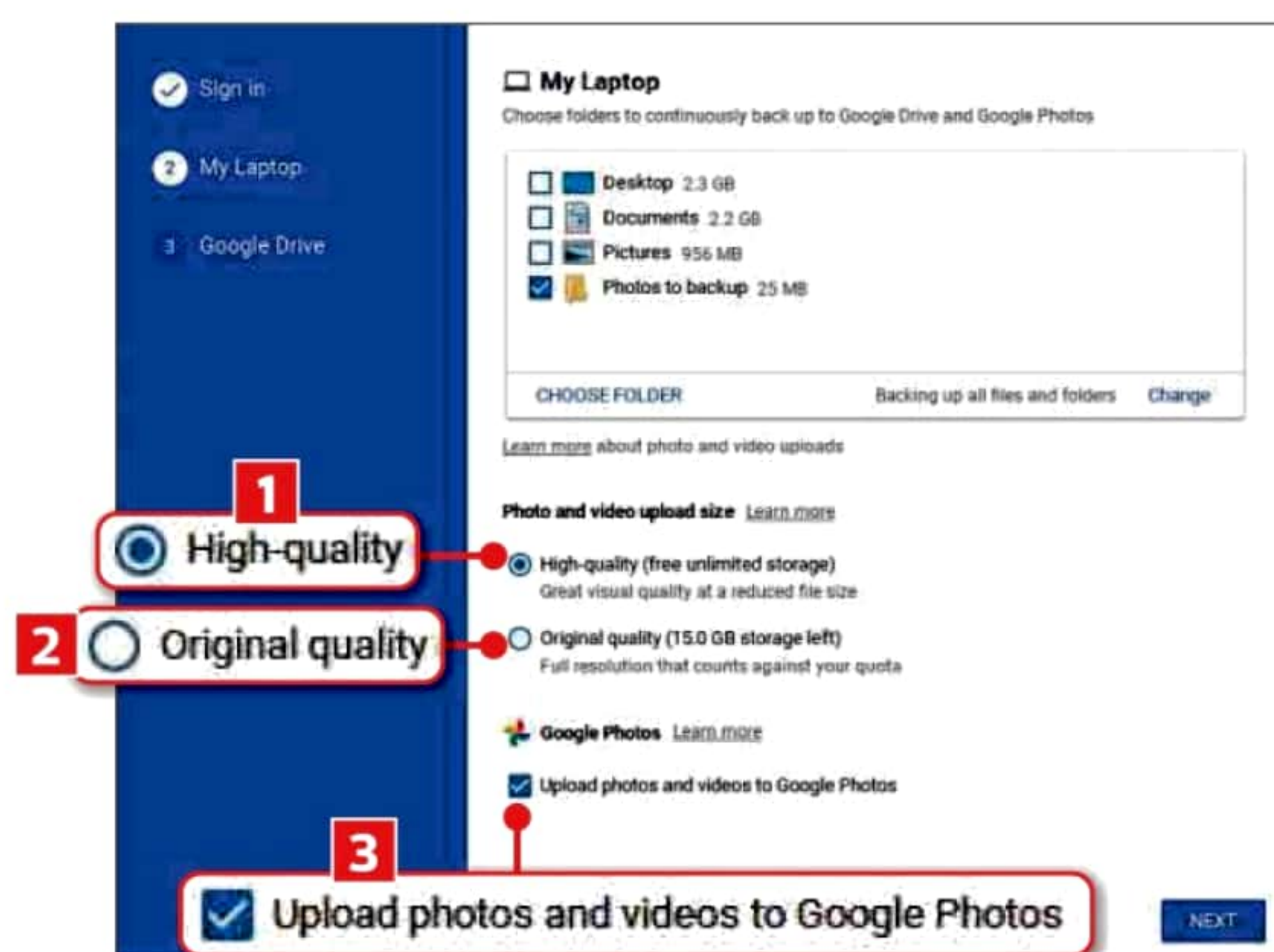


**STEP 2** After a few seconds, the 'Backup and Sync' icon **1** (a white cloud) should appear in the system tray at the bottom-right corner of your desktop. If you can't see it, click the small up arrow **2** to the left of the system tray. Don't confuse it with Microsoft's OneDrive icon, which is also a cloud (hovering over a system-tray icon reveals the name of the program it's associated with). Click the 'Backup and sync' icon to open the tool. The setup window will appear the first time you do this (it may take a few seconds). Click 'Get Started' **3**.

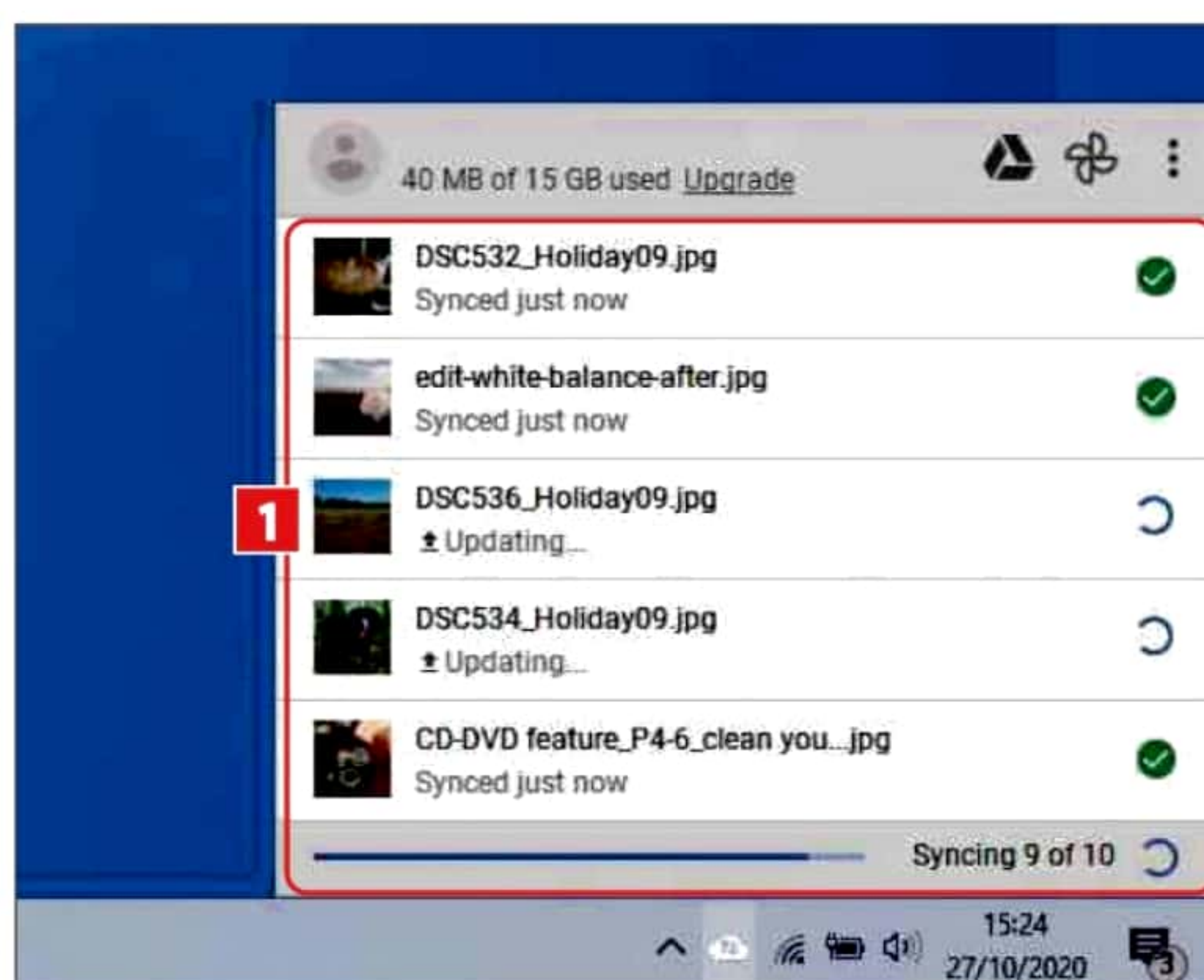


**STEP 3** In the next screen, enter your Gmail address, then your password, followed by Got It. By default, the tool will backup *all* files in your Desktop, Documents and Pictures folders. However, we just want to use it to backup a specific folder that contains all our photos. To do this, remove the ticks from the default options **1**, then click Choose Folder **2** and select the folder you want to backup (all sub-folders will also be backed up). 'Backup and sync' will show a 'Validating' message while it checks the folder. Once complete, you can add additional folders if needed.

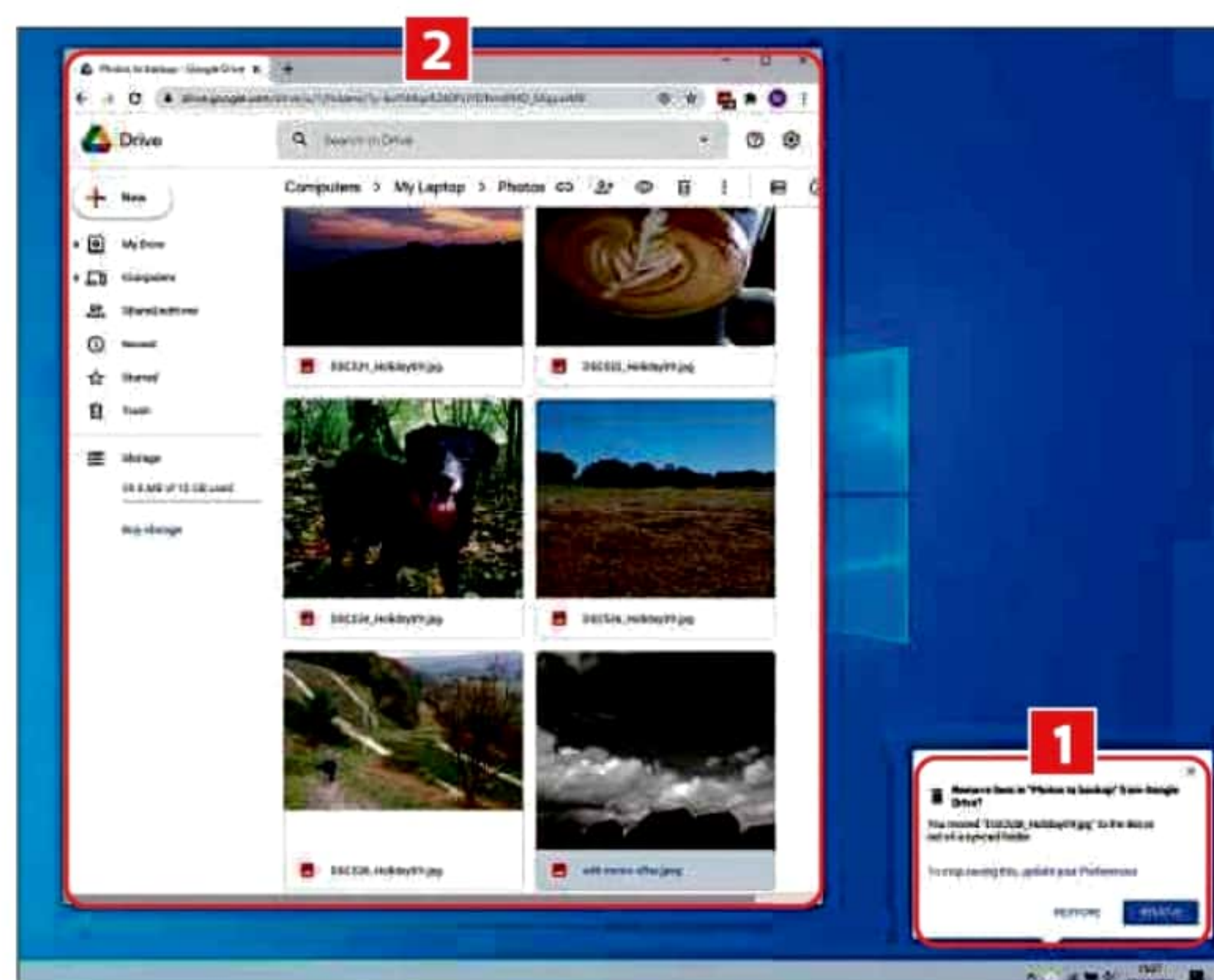




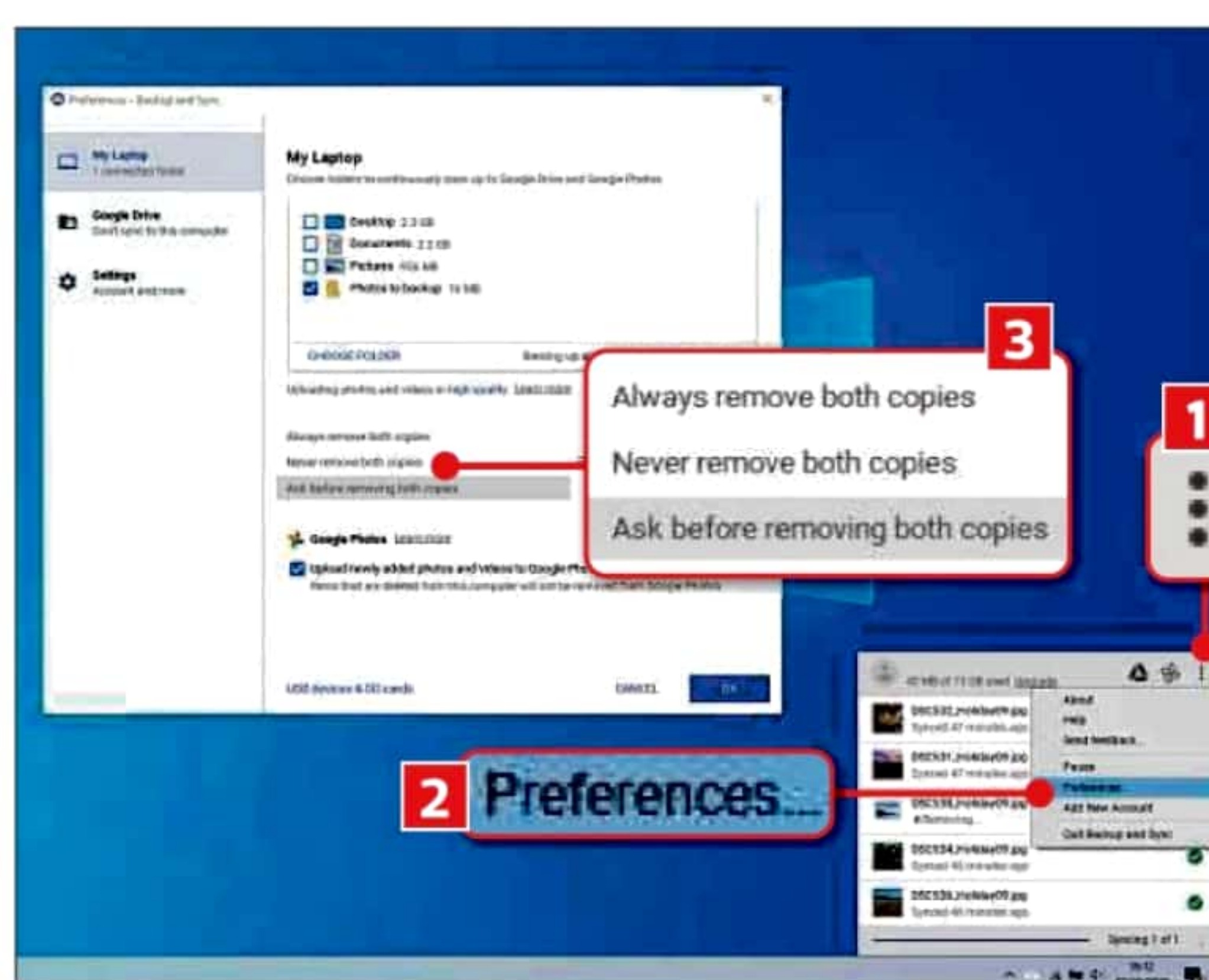
**STEP 4** You can now choose how to backup photos. 'High-quality' **1** means any photos you back up won't count towards your 15GB Google Drive storage limit – effectively meaning you can backup unlimited photos for free. To do this, the backup tool will compress your photos. However, it's almost impossible to notice any difference between them and the originals. If you'd rather not have them compressed, select 'Original quality' **2** (though you'll be limited to 15GB). We also recommend ticking the 'Upload photos and videos to Google Photos' option **3**, which lets you view your photos on any device and easily search them. Click Next when you're done.



**STEP 5** 'Backup and Sync' can also sync all files in your Google Drive account to your PC. Since we're only using the tool to backup our photos, we'll turn this feature off by removing the tick from the 'Sync My Drive to this computer' box. Click Start, and the tool will start to scan the folders you chose in Step 3. How long this takes depends on the speed of your internet connection and how many photos you're backing up, but you can check on progress **1** by clicking the 'Backup and Sync' icon in the system tray.



**STEP 6** If you delete a photo on your PC (or Google Drive), you'll see a notification **1** asking whether you also want to remove it from Google Drive (or your PC) – only click Remove if you're happy for both copies to be deleted. You can also now view your photos in both Google Drive **2** (<https://drive.google.com>) and Google Photos (<https://photos.google.com>). Following a change by Google last year, these two services are no longer linked, so if you delete a photo in one, it won't also be deleted in the other.



**STEP 7** You can change your backup settings at any time by clicking the 'Backup and Sync' icon, followed by the three vertical dots **1**, then 'Preferences...' **2**. As well as adding or removing folders to be backed up, you can change what happens when you delete a photo from your PC, as explained in the previous step. Click 'Ask before removing both copies' and you can change it to either 'Always remove both copies' (so deleting a photo on your PC will also delete it from Drive, and vice versa) or 'Never remove both copies' (photos won't be deleted on both automatically) **3**. Click OK to save your changes.



# Readers' Tips

## TIP OF THE FORTNIGHT

### See when Num, Caps and Scroll Lock are on

In response to William Lyons' query in Problems Solved in Issue 590, page 68 ('Can I disable Num Lock?'), I wouldn't recommend removing key tops to disable certain **toggle keys**. If the toggle key starts in the wrong state, it might be tricky to flip it back.

I had this kind of difficulty knowing the state of Num Lock, Caps Lock and Scroll Lock on my laptop. My solution was a small program called Keyboard LEDs (<https://keyboard-leds.com>). It either shows you permanently whether these Lock keys are activated, or can show you when they are on but remain hidden when they are off.

You can move its display anywhere



on your screen, or set it so that its icon changes colour in the notification area. The third icon from the left (showing red, white and blue **1**) appears when all the locks are on (left to right are Num, Caps

and Scroll). You can change these colours to ones you prefer. This is what it looks like when the three locks are off **2**.

Richard Taylor



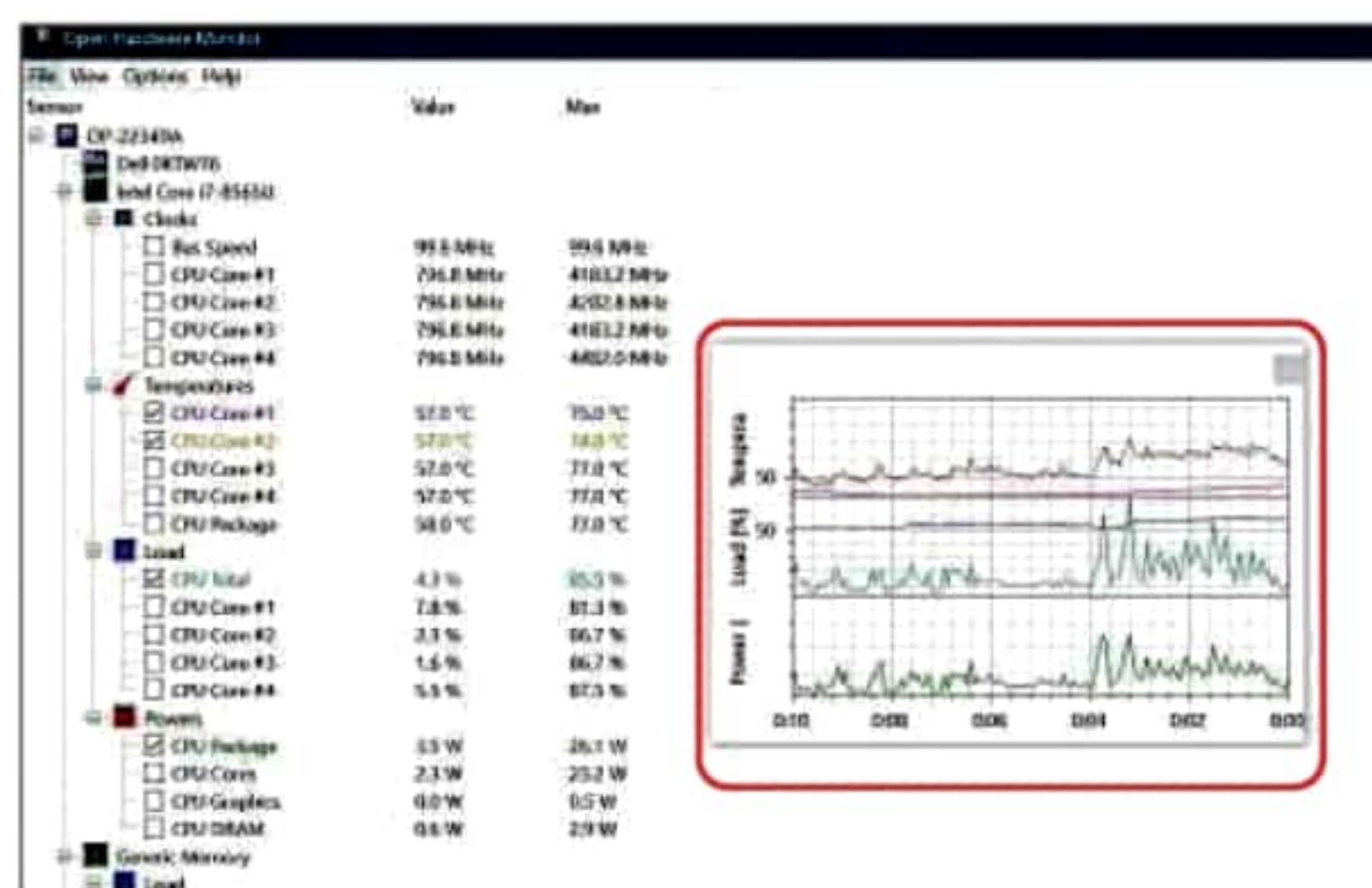
Richard wins a copy of our 2019 Back Issue CD Buy it on Amazon [www.snipca.com/33711](http://www.snipca.com/33711)

## SOFTWARE

### Show your laptop's temperature on a chart

✓ I love programs that show me how my computer is performing. It's like having the equivalent of a car's dashboard on your desktop. So I want to thank you for introducing me to Open Hardware Monitor ([www.snipca.com/36237](http://www.snipca.com/36237)) in Issue 591 (page 19). I've been using it to make sure my laptop doesn't overheat. Sometimes it gets so hot it feels like it might leave a burn mark on my desk.

One interesting way to monitor the rise and fall of my laptop's temperature is to



click View at the top of the program and tick Show Plot. This brings up a graph showing a zigzagging chart (see screenshot above), like the fluctuations of a share on the stock market.

Don Kenwood

## PHONES

### Check your coordinates using Google Maps

✓ When I'm out on my countryside rambles I often check the Google Maps app on my Android phone to see what my latitude and longitude coordinates are. It's easy – just long-press the screen and select a location until the red pin appears. The coordinates will show up in the Android search bar when you drop this pin on the map (see screenshot above right).

My walking buddy (hello Frank) tells me that on iPhones, once you've dropped the red pin, you also have to tap the Dropped Pin box at the bottom of the app. This brings up a menu of

## Why I stopped using...

### Microsoft Edge's 'Read aloud'

✓ Following *Computeractive's* advice I switched from Chrome to Edge, and think it's a great browser. But I didn't find its 'Read aloud' tool very accurate.

### And what I use instead...

What I like about text-reading tools is that they're so easy to test and compare – you just press play and wait to see if



you can understand it. **NaturalReaders** ([www.naturalreaders.com](http://www.naturalreaders.com)) makes this easy. You don't have to download anything – just click the blue 'Go To Online Reader' button then cut and paste

the words into the website.

You can select a voice at the top. I settled on 'Gabriel' (see screenshot), which sounds the most 'normal'. It's certainly better than 'Charles', which sounds like a drunk Hugh Grant impersonating a sober Hugh Grant. Or should that be the other way around?

Jeff Lehman

✉ Tell us why you stopped using a website, app or program: [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)



## Handy hints and tips from your fellow readers

✉ Email us your tips: [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)



information, with the coordinates shown at the bottom.

Keith Pollard

### PRINTERS

#### Remove excess printer ink using syringe

✓ In Issue 589 (page 67), you suggest that Michael Hoskins should contact Epson if he cannot solve his problem ('How do I stop black lines appearing on my Epson photos?') using the printer's built-in cleaning options.

I don't have the same model of printer, but I might be able to offer a solution. I have an Epson Stylus Photo R1900, an old A3 printer I got from Freecycle ([www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org)) because the former owner had blocked nozzles that were causing ugly lines to appear.

In my experience, using the cleaning process in the printer's settings more than twice will actually make the problem worse. This is because the pressure of the ink during the cleaning process consolidates a stubborn blockage. There are several jet-cleaning kits advertised on Amazon, which apparently work well. But I used my own method, and have successfully unblocked jets on friends' printers.

You need: kitchen roll, a syringe, (similar to those sold in pet shops to administer medication, [www.snipca.com/36267](http://www.snipca.com/36267), pictured above left), a six-inch plastic tube, (the type sold in pet shops to power aquarium air stones), rubber gloves, and a bottle of undiluted screen wash from Halfords.



### Reader recommends...

#### Lenovo ThinkPad L14

From £560 [www.snipca.com/35640](http://www.snipca.com/35640)

✓ I'm one of the thousands (probably millions?) who'll now be working from home, following the changes forced upon companies by COVID. I needed a new machine for home that was powerful enough to cope with lots of spreadsheets being open at the same time.

I've used ThinkPads on and off at work for over 20 years, so I was keen to have one for my home office. The L14 model you reviewed in Issue 587 (page 22) seemed the right choice, particularly because it comes with Wi-Fi 6 built in. I know there's a lot of hype about Wi-Fi 6, but I do think it'll revolutionise home connections. In my estimation, any device without Wi-Fi 6 will feel obsolete by the



middle of next year.

It's early days, but I think I made the right purchase. The laptop is certainly chunky, but it's also bursting with ports, which I need because I have loads of drives and gadgets that need connecting. It's also faster than anything I've used at work in the past few years.

Joseph Reed

✉ Want to recommend hardware or software to fellow readers?

Email [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)

First you need to move the print head from its dock to the middle of the printer. Turn the printer off, turn the head and when it starts to move, pull out the power cord at the back of the printer. The print head will now move freely. Below the head you'll see a channel, about 2cm wide. Fold a sheet of kitchen roll into a narrow strip then lay it down in this channel. Draw up a little of the washer fluid into the syringe and saturate the paper.

Mike Cleverley

### PHONES

#### Transform your iPhone keyboard into a touchpad

✓ I recently stumbled upon a shortcut on my iPhone that may be worthy of inclusion in Readers' Tips, and go some way to repay the useful advice I've received over the years from others.

I've always had difficulty positioning the insertion point when editing text on my iPhone. Quite by chance I discovered that by pressing and holding the spacebar the keyboard is transformed into a touchpad permitting the insertion point to be accurately positioned.

I wouldn't be at all surprised to learn that every 10-year-old iPhone user is aware of this, but it may benefit fellow septuagenarians.

Jim Livingstone



### SOFTWARE

#### Reconnect USB hubs attached to your computer

✓ Like Marie Patterson (Issue 592, page 42), I use NirSoft's USBDeview program ([www.snipca.com/35844](http://www.snipca.com/35844)) to check which USB devices I have installed. I love NirSoft's tools. I've never found one that's not easy to use.

Marie explained how to make the program show USB hubs you have connected to your PC. With another tweak you can also reconnect all the devices on the hub that you previously disconnected. First you have to turn on 'Display USB Hubs', just as Marie instructed, in the Options menu at the top. Then you have to click File at the top left and click 'Reload USB Hub' (see screenshot above).

If anyone else has tips for NirSoft programs, please share them with *Computeractive*. I want to learn them all!

Roger Anderton



# Phone and Tablet Tips

## iOS Fill in forms on your iPad without typing

 The latest release of iPadOS runs on every iPad Pro, iPad Mini 4 (2015 and later), iPad Air 2 (2014 and later), and all standard iPads released since 2017. If you haven't yet upgraded, we'd recommend checking whether it's available on your device. To do so, open Settings and tap General, followed by Software Update. If an update is available, tap 'Download and Install'.

iPadOS 14 doesn't support the iOS App Library, which lets you remove rarely used apps from the home screen and store them in the App Library, rather than deleting them (see 'Phone and Tablet Tips', Issue 591). We think this is a missed opportunity, but it does introduce the Scribble feature, which may revolutionise how people can use their iPad.

Scribble lets you draw, write and scrawl on your screen using the Apple Pencil, stylus and lets you make more accurate annotations. Enable it by opening

Settings and tapping Apple Pencil, then tapping the slider beside Scribble (see screenshot below).

Scribble works in text boxes and apps, so it's a great tool for filling out online forms and can be more convenient than using the on-screen keyboard. Simply write and, after a moment's processing, it will convert your text – including any that's handwritten – into typed text. To delete a word, scribble through it, and scribble over a larger area to delete entire lines or paragraphs. Drawing a horizontal line across a section of text selects it (which we find much easier than swiping through using a finger), and drawing a vertical one through it inserts a space character.

So, if you wrote 'icecream' but wanted 'ice cream', drawing a vertical line between 'e' and 'i' would split them. It works in reverse, too, such that drawing the same vertical bar through the gap in the middle of 'letter box' would close it up to make 'letterbox'.

It also offers a quick way to add a few

words in the middle of a sentence: simply long-press with the tip of your Pencil where you want the extra words to go, and an input box opens up within the sentence, where you can write the required words.

## iOS Tour your favourite city without leaving home

 With partial or total lockdowns likely to be part of our lives for the foreseeable future, Apple Maps' new virtual-tour feature, Look Around, couldn't have been better timed. Although not yet covering all UK cities, we were able to explore Edinburgh, Falkirk and London, none of which are yet included in Apple's official list of supported cities ([www.snipca.com/36400](http://www.snipca.com/36400)) so we expect the number of available areas to grow quickly.

To use it, zoom in by pinching out on the map, and keep zooming until a binoculars icon appears. Tap this to open a view of your selected location in a



## BEST NEW APPS

### What you should install this fortnight

#### Weather Widget

Free\*

iOS [www.snipca.com/36413](http://www.snipca.com/36413)

Apple's iOS 14 has a weather widget built in, but we prefer the more comprehensive forecast provided by this alternative app. You can choose from a wide range of styles, and display



a small square widget, which fits neatly among your app icons, a wide widget or a large square on your home screen (see screenshot), which is great for serious weather watchers.

#### Adobe Illustrator

Free\*

iOS [www.snipca.com/36414](http://www.snipca.com/36414)

Adobe is gradually releasing its PC desktop programs to iPad. The latest to arrive is Illustrator, which is one of the best-known graphic-design tools for Windows and macOS. Although the app is free to download you'll need to pay a £9.99 monthly subscription if you don't have Adobe's Creative Cloud



membership. If that's too pricey, check out Vectormator X ([www.snipca.com/36409](http://www.snipca.com/36409)), which is free.

#### BBC Sounds

Free

Android [www.snipca.com/36415](http://www.snipca.com/36415)

iOS [www.snipca.com/36416](http://www.snipca.com/36416)

There's a new version of the BBC Sounds app, which builds on the success of its predecessors with easier navigation. As well as content that's



available on one of its broadcast channels or in general podcast directories, the app offers a range of exclusive content, and makes it easy to bookmark and subscribe to your favourite programmes.

\*Contains in-app purchases



floating window (Edinburgh in the screenshot below left) and swipe around in the view to look around, or drag the map to change the location. Tapping the double-headed arrow button opens the view in full screen, so you can navigate through the landscape in much the same way as you would in Google Street View.

## ANDROID & iOS

### Identify a song by humming its melody



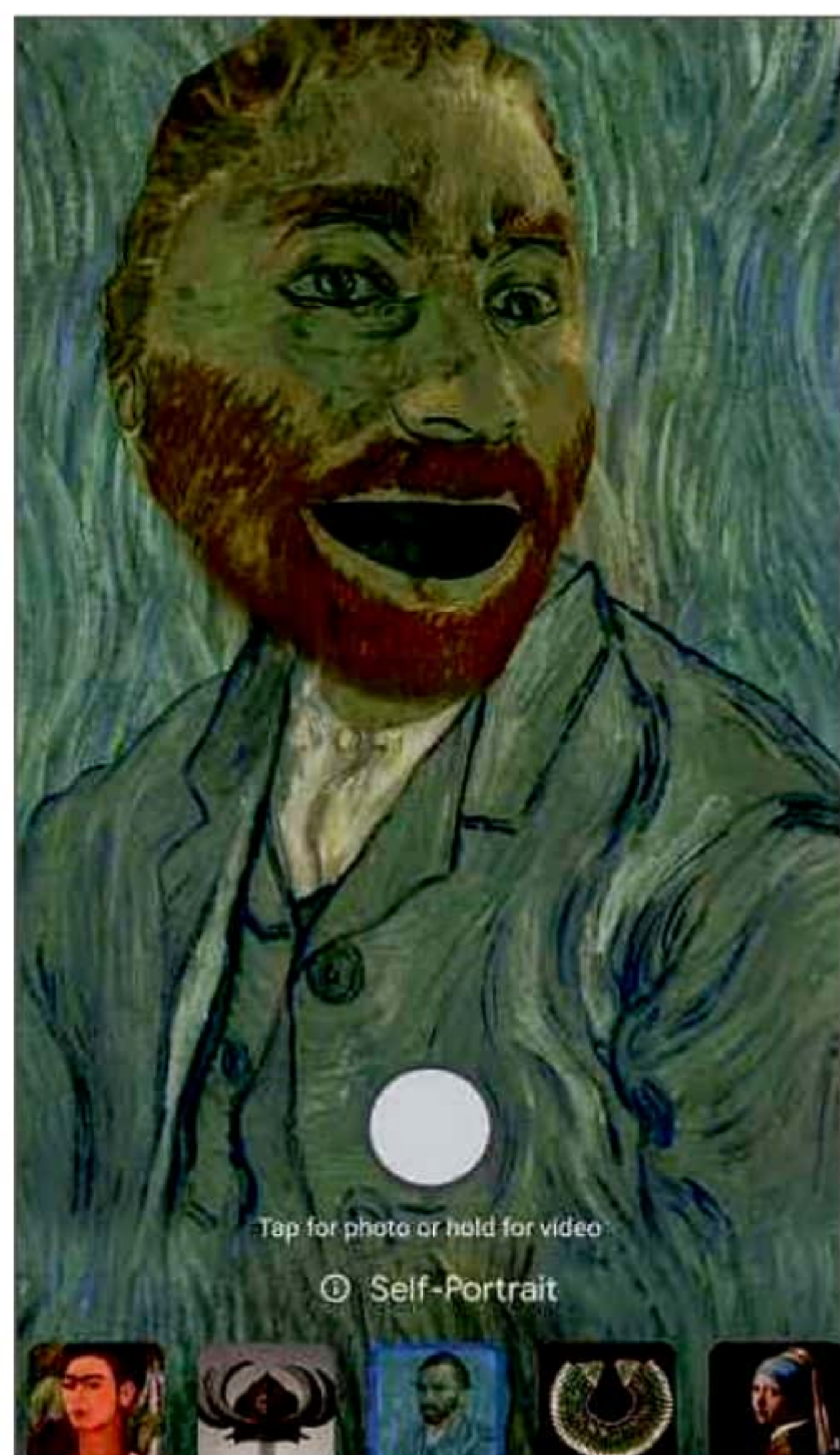
Apps like SoundHound for iOS ([www.snipca.com/36390](http://www.snipca.com/36390)) and Android ([www.snipca.com/36391](http://www.snipca.com/36391)) have long been able to identify songs playing on the radio or in a shop, simply by listening and comparing what they hear to a database of tracks. But what if the song's in your head? Google has the answer. The Google app for iOS ([www.snipca.com/36392](http://www.snipca.com/36392)) and Android ([www.snipca.com/36393](http://www.snipca.com/36393)) will now listen while you hum, and guess your tune. Tap the mic icon at the end of the search box to get started.

## ANDROID & iOS

### Put yourself in a work of art



Google's free Arts & Culture app for iOS ([www.snipca.com/36396](http://www.snipca.com/36396)) and Android ([www.snipca.com/36397](http://www.snipca.com/36397)) just keeps getting better. Not only does it put some of the world's most impressive and important artworks in the palm of



your hand, allow you to zoom in, understand their background and motivation, and use **augmented reality** to see how they'd look in your home; it now also lets you feature in five key works.

These include the chance to recreate Van Gogh's self portrait of 1889 using your own expressions (see screenshot below left), wear *the Girl with a Pearl Earring's* head scarf or hold Frida Kahlo's monkey. Just tap your preferred artwork, position yourself in view of your phone's front-

facing camera, and wait a couple of seconds. Once it's worked you into the picture, you can move your phone around to see the effect from different angles.

It won't teach you as much about art as other features like the four things you didn't know about *The Scream*, or the painting crossword in which you drag images into boxes rather than letters, but it's an interesting, unusual way to experience five important works.

## BEST APPS FOR...

### Tracking a lost phone

#### Tile

Free\*

Android [www.snipca.com/36404](http://www.snipca.com/36404)

iOS [www.snipca.com/36405](http://www.snipca.com/36405)

If you've attached a Tile fob to your keys so you can find them using your phone, you can also use the system in reverse to locate a missing phone. Pressing the button on the fob makes your phone ring. If you've installed the Tile app on more than one phone, you can also use it to locate a missing phone using the on-screen map.

**Best for** Locating more than just your phone



#### Find my Device

Free

Android [www.snipca.com/36403](http://www.snipca.com/36403)

Google's free app for locating online Android devices works with more than just phones and tablets: it can also find lost Pixel earbuds. As with all of the apps featured here, it requires an active Wi-Fi or mobile connection to display your missing gadget on a map. When it's located it, you can play a sound to make it easier to find or, if it's a phone or tablet, lock it remotely to protect your data.

**Best for** Finding Android devices



#### Life360

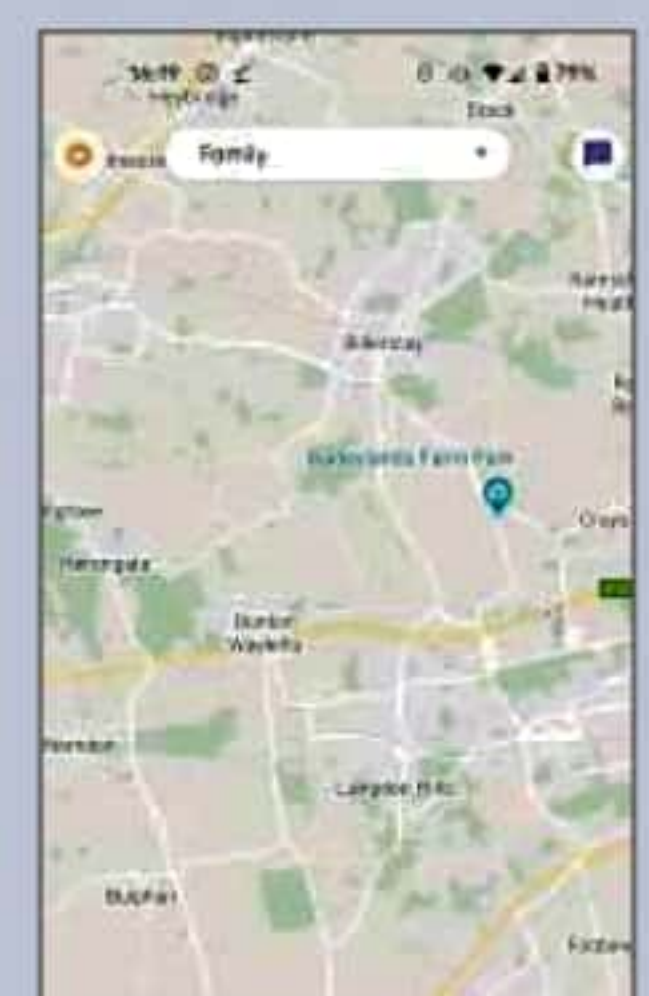
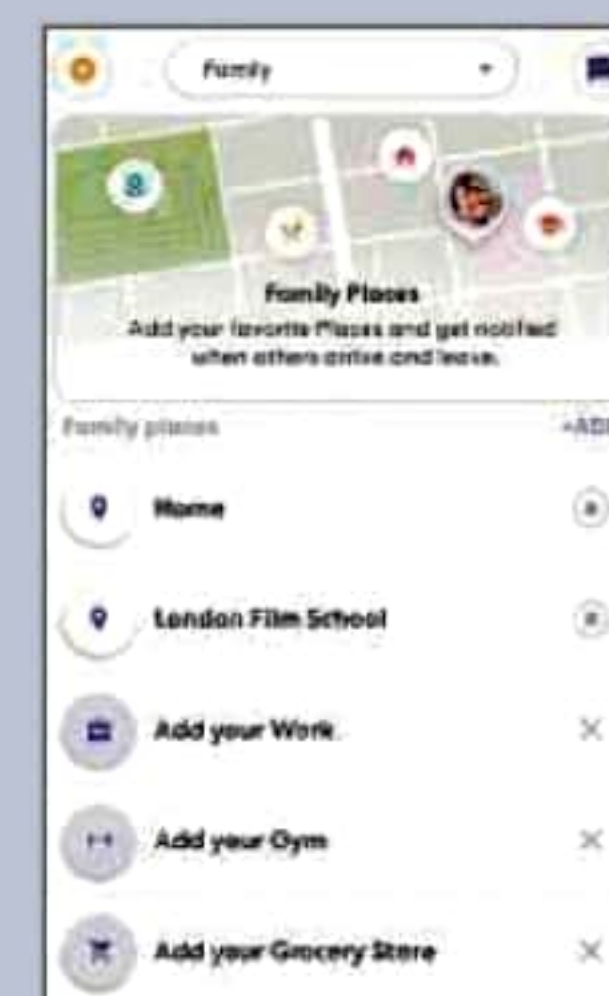
Free\*

Android [www.snipca.com/36406](http://www.snipca.com/36406)

iOS [www.snipca.com/36407](http://www.snipca.com/36407)

Life360 lets you track more than just your phone. By setting up what's known as circles, you can also keep tabs on family members – and they on you – so everyone knows that each other is safe. Of course, what it's really tracking is the app on each person's phone so, if you lose yours, or it's stolen, everyone in your circle can help you locate and recover it.

**Best for** Keeping your family safe



\*Contains in-app purchases

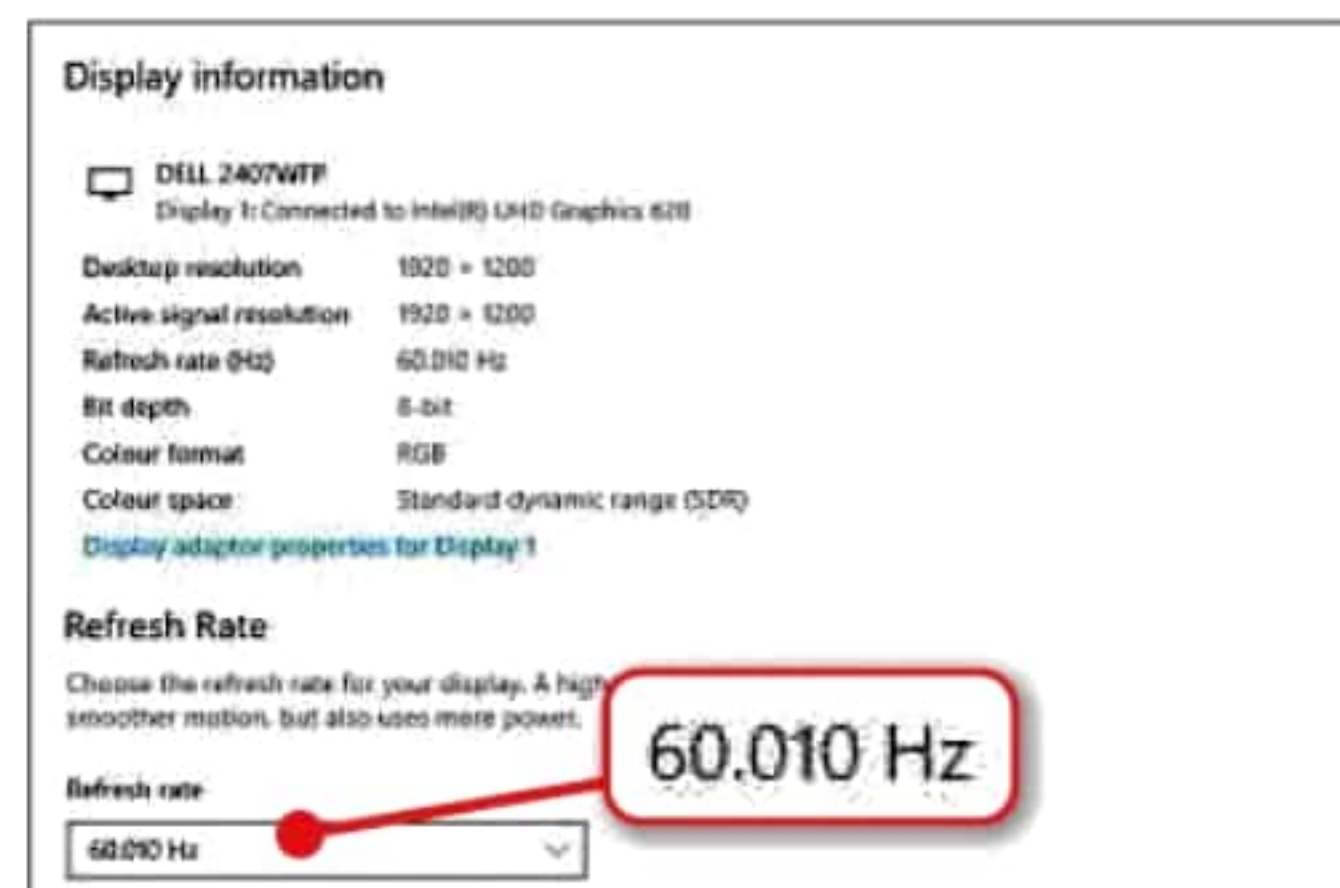


### WINDOWS 10

#### Change your monitor's refresh rate



The October Update adds a new feature to the Settings app, letting you change your monitor's refresh rate. Measured in Hertz (Hz), this determines how many times your display updates (or refreshes) every second – a refresh rate of 60Hz means it updates 60 times every second. Games in particular benefit from high refresh rates, resulting in smoother action.



In general, it's best to set the refresh rate to the highest setting available (Windows will limit this depending on what your monitor is capable of). Of course, if you experience problems running a higher refresh rate – such as a flickering display (though this is only usually a problem with old CRT monitors) – you can change it back to what it was.

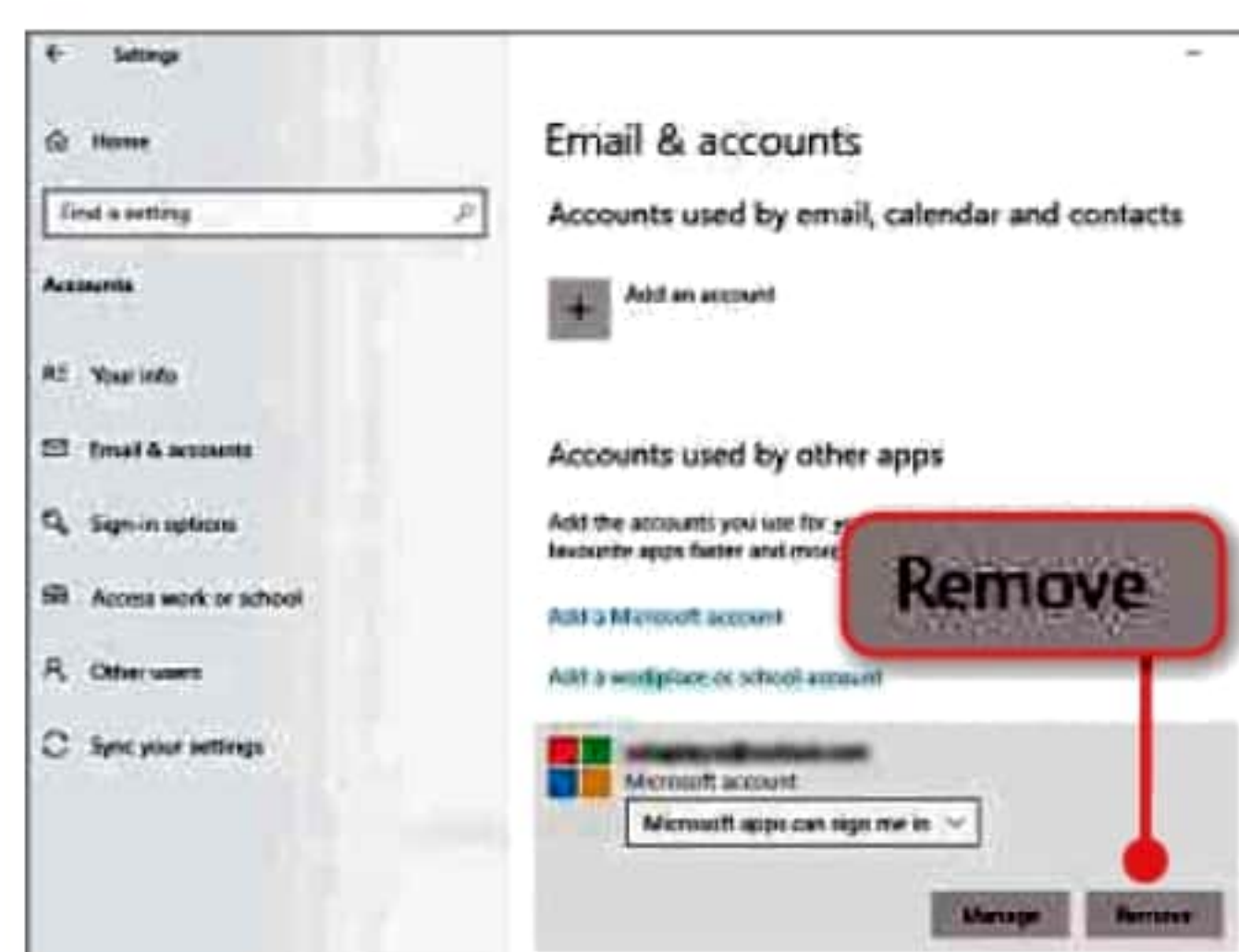
To access the new setting, press Windows+I to open the Settings app, then select System, Display and scroll down on the right and click 'Advanced display settings'. In the next window, click the 'Refresh rate' box to change the setting (see screenshot above).

### WINDOWS 10

#### Check which accounts Windows is using



When you log into the Microsoft Store, Outlook.com or other Microsoft services, Windows will offer to remember your login details. If you let someone else use your PC, you



### WINDOWS 10

#### Check if you've got October Update

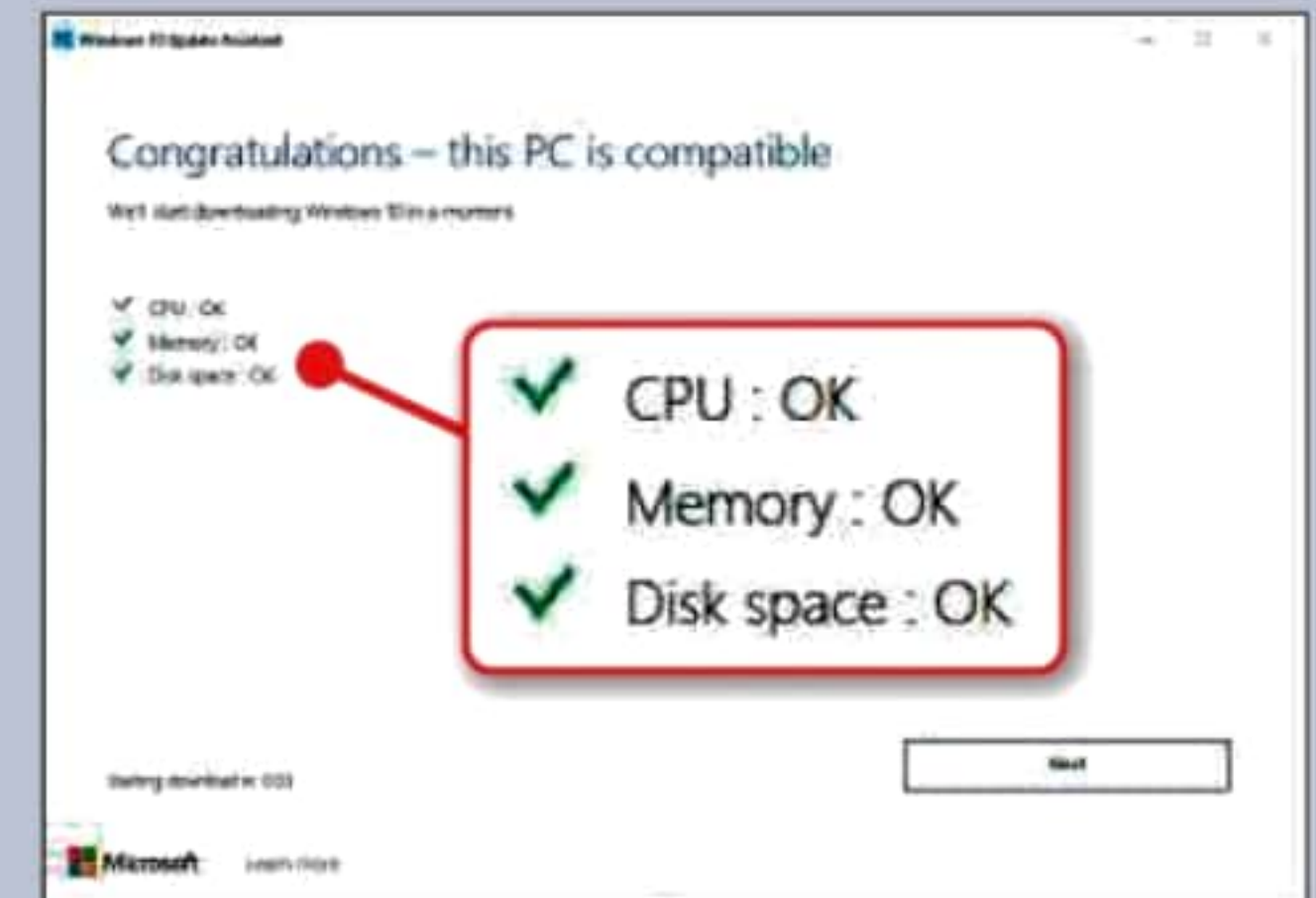


Most Windows 10 computers will have received the latest October Update by now. If you're not sure whether yours has, click Start, type **about** and click 'About your PC' from the list. In the window that appears, scroll down to the 'Windows specifications' section.

If the version number is listed as 20H2, it means you've got the latest update (the '20' refers to 2020, and the 'H2' October). If you instead see 20H1, it means you're still running the April Update version of Windows from earlier this year.

To push the October Update through, it's best to use the Windows Update Assistant by going to [www.snipca.com/36482](http://www.snipca.com/36482). You should see an 'Update now' button under the heading 'Windows 10 October 2020 Update'.

Click this, then run the EXE program that downloads. The update process will check that your PC is compatible with the update (see screenshot).



Assuming it is, the update will be downloaded and then installed. If not, the update assistant will explain why and tell you how to resolve the problem (though in some cases it may be because your processor isn't supported).

Along with some useful updates to Edge (turn to our Feature on page 60 to find out more), the October Update brings a redesigned Start menu, app logos on action centre notifications, and smoother transitioning between normal and tablet mode when using a touch-screen PC.

may find Windows has saved their account details, making it easy for you to accidentally use it in future.

To find out which accounts Windows has stored, go to Settings (Windows+I), Accounts, then click 'Email & accounts'. Look under 'Accounts used by other apps' and you'll see all saved accounts. If you spot one you don't want Windows to use, select it, then click Remove (see screenshot below left).

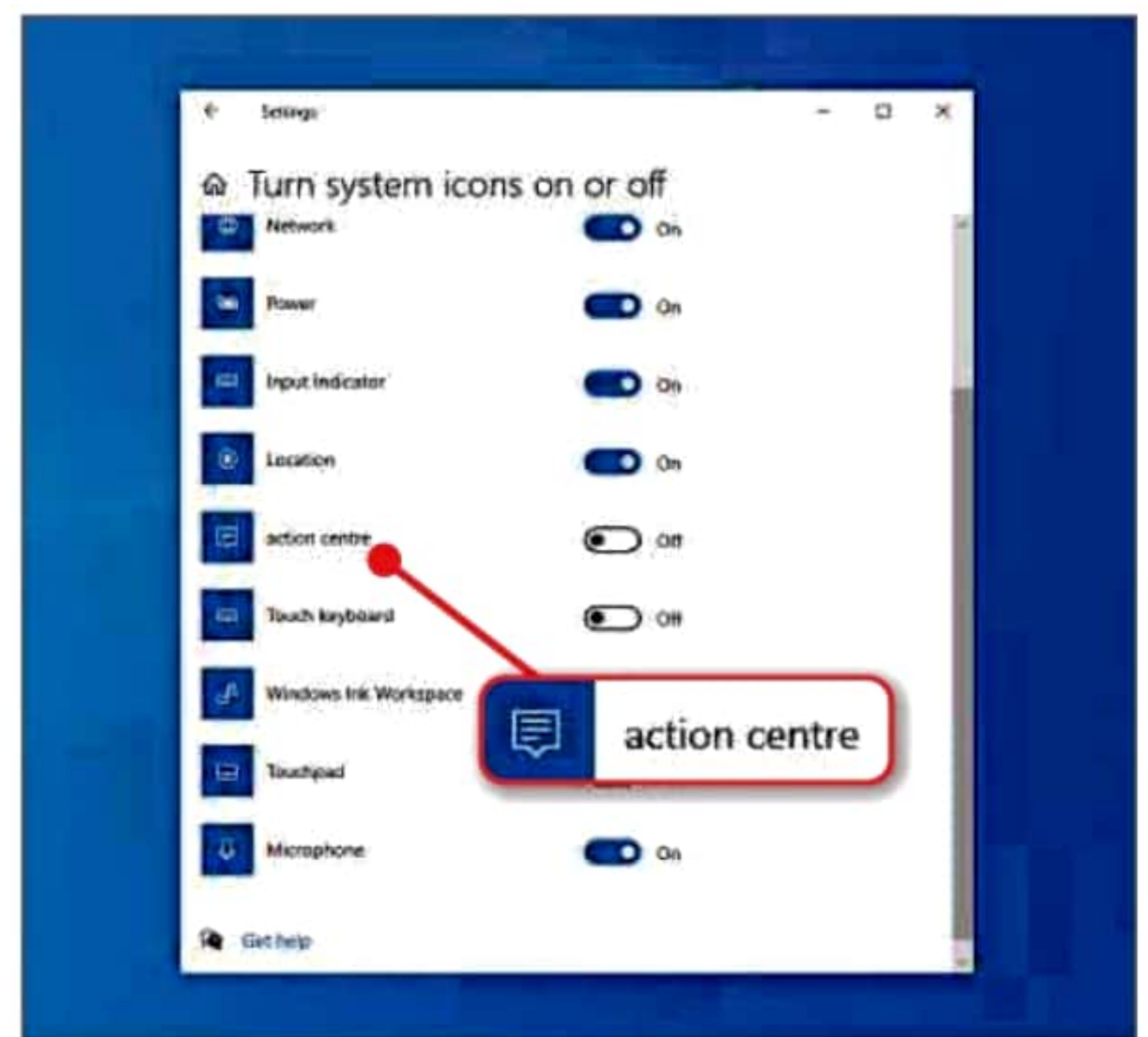
### WINDOWS 8.1 & 10

#### Free up space on your taskbar



If you frequently have lots of programs open simultaneously, your taskbar will start to feel cramped. Removing the search box lets you reclaim a large portion of taskbar space (right-click the taskbar, click Search, then untick 'Show search box'), but there are other ways to get even more space back.

One you might not have thought of is removing the 'action centre' icon, which sits at the far right of the taskbar. First,



right-click the taskbar, select 'Taskbar settings', then scroll down to the 'Notification area' section and click 'Turn system icons on or off'. In the next window, find the 'action centre' option and click its slider so it reads 'off' (see screenshot above). When you do this, the button will disappear from your taskbar.

You can still open the action centre when needed – just press Windows key+A and it'll appear on the right-side of your desktop as normal.



### LIBREOFFICE WRITER

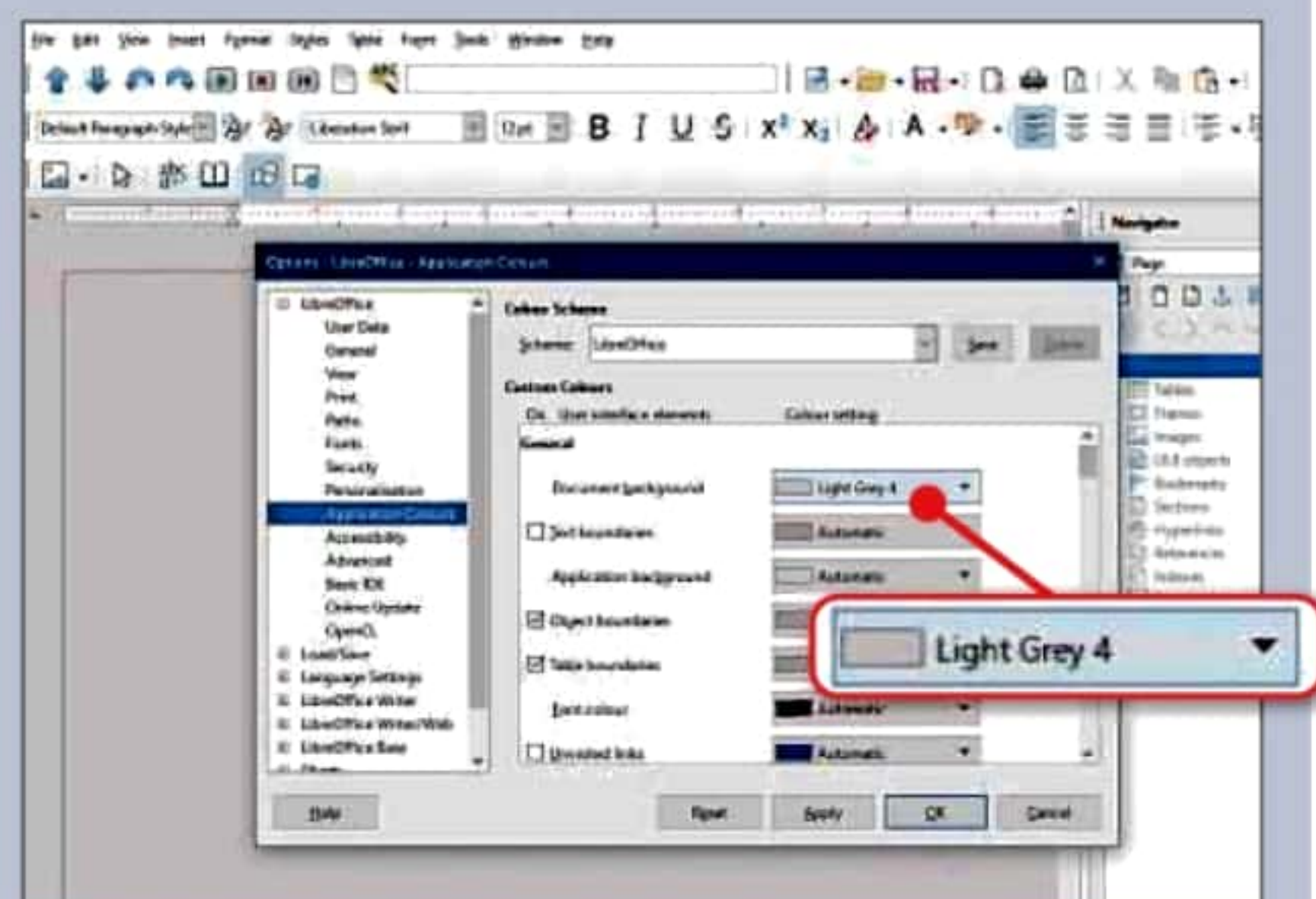
## Change the background colour of documents



If you find the bright white background of documents in Writer a little too dazzling, you can change them to light grey (or any colour of your choice). Within Writer, open the Tools menu, then select Options. Open the LibreOffice section in the left-hand sidebar, then select Application Colours. On the right side of the window, click the dropdown menu next to 'Document background', then choose the

colour you want and click OK (we opted for 'Light Grey 4' – see screenshot). The background in Writer will now refresh to display the colour you chose.

This change will also be replicated across other LibreOffice tools (Calc, Draw, Base and so on). It also only applies to documents viewed with the program on your PC – if you print your document or email it to someone else, it will retain the usual white background.



### MICROSOFT EXCEL

## Use a formula to colour-code relative values in Excel...



Both Excel and Calc let you change the formatting of cells based on the contents of other cells. To demonstrate how you can make use of this we're going to use a spreadsheet of quiz results. With all the results in, we want to decide what pass mark to set, thereby finding out which teams will make it through to the next round. Using conditional formatting in Excel, we can try different pass marks and quickly see which teams would make the cut with each one.

First, select all the cells you want to include in the conditional formatting – in our example, we need to select all the quiz scores in column B. Next, select the Home tab, click Conditional Formatting, then 'New Rule...'. In the window that opens, select 'Use a formula to determine which cells to format' (see screenshot below). You now need to enter the formula for conditional formatting based on the first cell in your selection, which in our example is B3. We therefore start by typing `=B3>=`, then complete the formula by clicking the cell containing

the pass mark we want to try (35 in cell E3). Finally, you need to choose how cells that meet our criteria should be formatted. Click 'Format...', then choose a colour (we opted for green). Click OK to apply your formatting.

In our example, all teams with a score greater than or equal to 35 are coloured green. If we change our pass mark value, the colour of the cells changes accordingly.

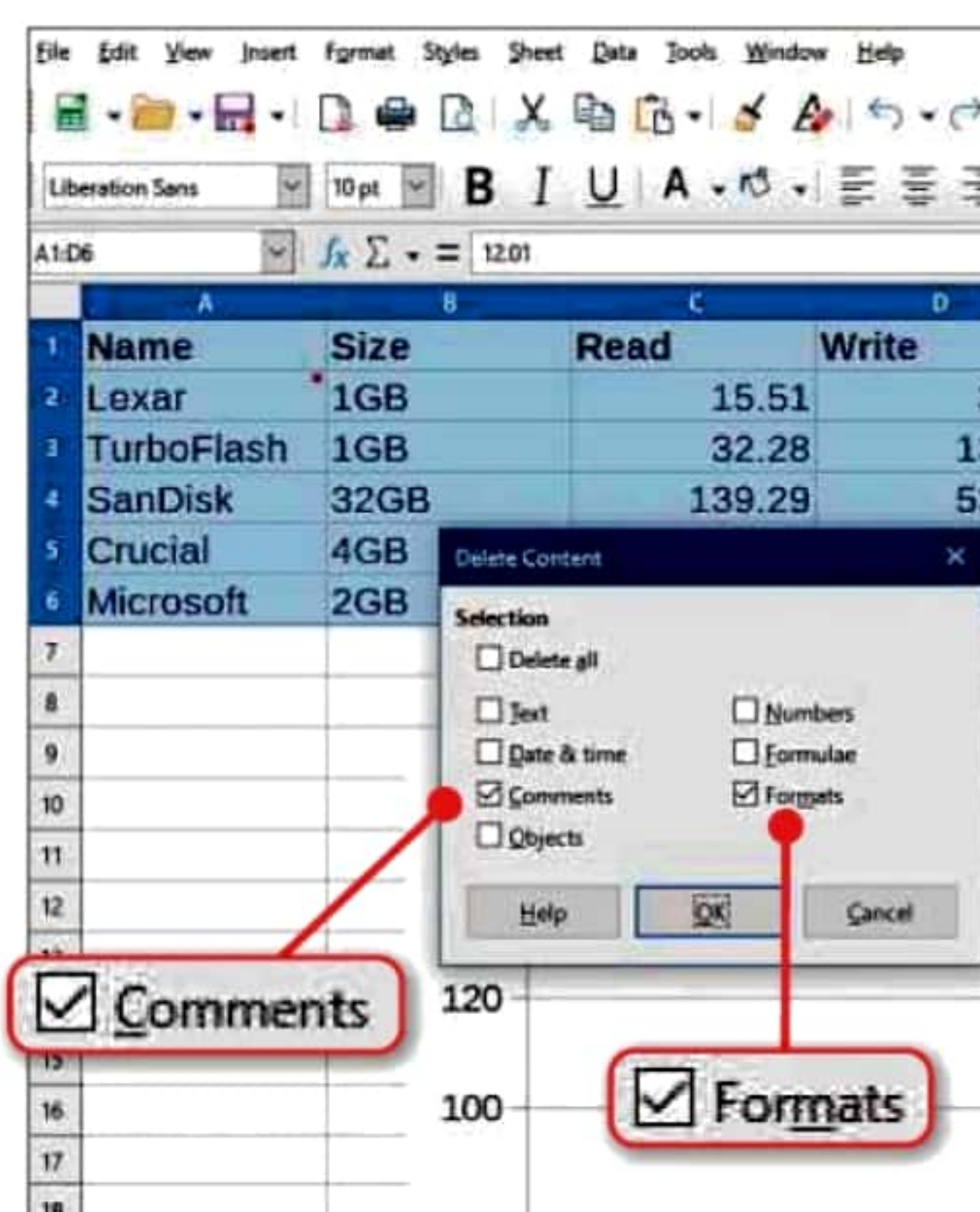
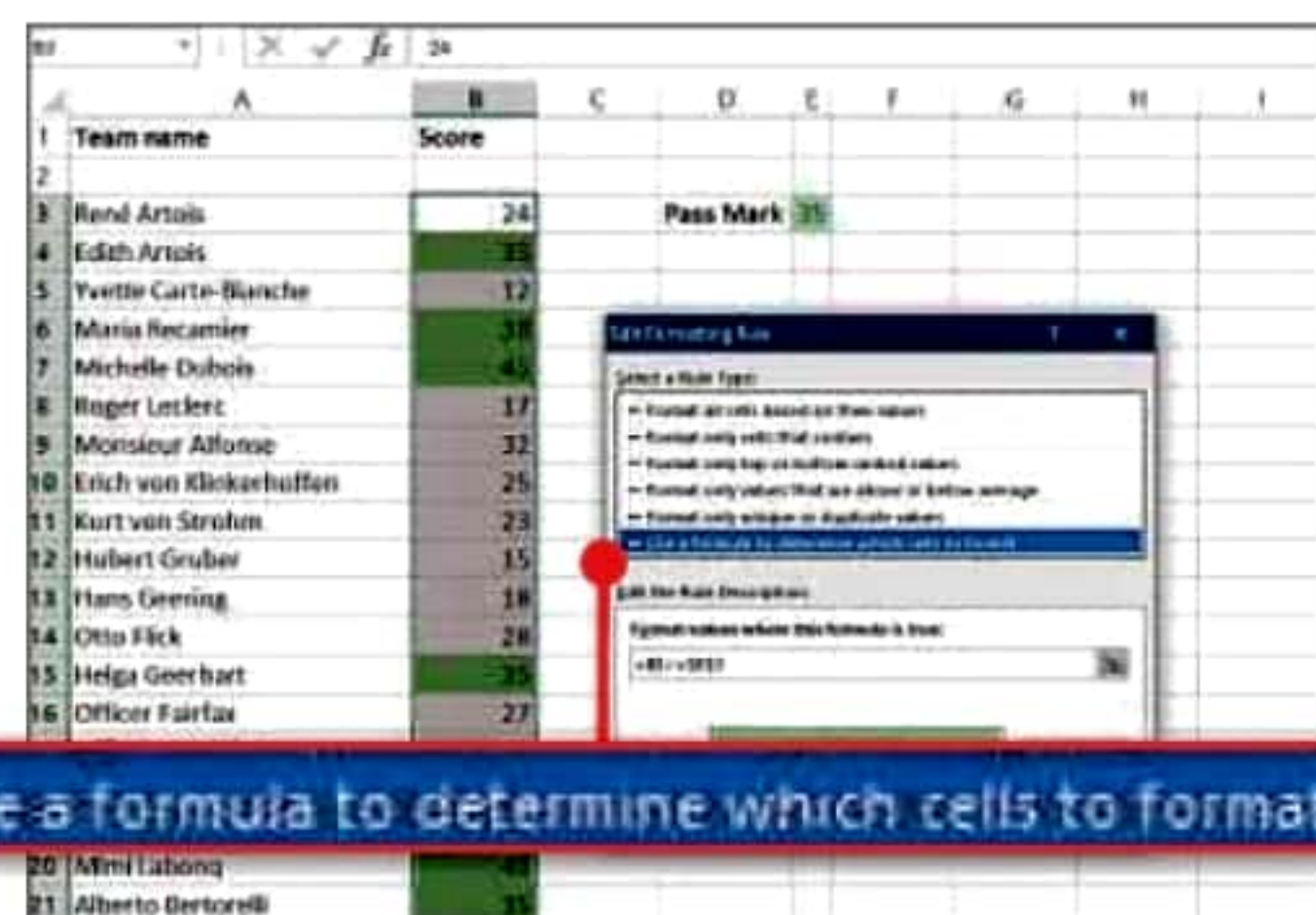
### LIBREOFFICE CALC

#### ...and in Calc



You can achieve the same outcome in Calc, but the process is a little different.

As before, select the cells you want to include in the conditional formatting. Next, open the Format menu, select Conditional, then 'Condition...'. In the window that appears, click the first dropdown menu and select 'Formula is' then, in the box to the right, type `B3>=` (change B3 to whichever is the first cell in your selection), then click the cell you want to reference it to – as with our example in Excel, this is E3. Next, click the Apply Style dropdown box and choose what colour you want the cells matching the formula to be (we chose the Good style, which applies a green background – see screenshot below).



### LIBREOFFICE CALC

## Delete cells based on their type of content



If you want to delete a group of cells, you just select them then press the Delete key. However, what if you only want to delete cells in your selection that contain numbers? Or perhaps only those with formulas? Calc lets you do this by pressing the Backspace button instead of Delete. When you do this, a window will appear, in which you can specify which cells should be deleted. You can now tick multiple boxes – in our example, we want to remove all formatting and any comments attached to the selected cells, so we ticked the Formats and Comments options, and left all others unticked (see screenshot above). Once you've made your choices, click OK.



# In The Club



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

## Share your club's Gmail account

**G**mail is ideal for communicating with your club members – you can access your emails from any computer, and with 15GB of free storage you're unlikely to run out of storage space. You may also want to share your club email account with other members, allowing them to read and send emails on behalf of your organisation. One option is to simply share your club's Gmail password, however this will also give people access to its associated Google account. This means that once they've logged in, there's nothing to stop others viewing, editing and deleting anything in there. Also, their search history and any pages they visit while logged in will be recorded to the account. And if they forget they're logged in, they may inadvertently sign up to other web services using your club's Google account. Fortunately, there's a much safer way to share Gmail – Google calls it 'email delegation'.

### Choose who you want to share your Gmail with

First, log into your club's Google account, then open Gmail and click Settings (cog icon in the top-right corner). Click the 'See all settings' option at the top of the sidebar that opens on the right, then click the 'Accounts and Import' tab. Scroll down to the 'Grant access to your account' section, then select 'Add another account'. In the window that appears, type the email address of the person you want to share the account with (or

delegate), then click Next Step. Gmail only lets you share your account with other Gmail users, so if the person you want to share it with doesn't already have a Google account they'll need to set one up at [www.snipca.com/36467](http://www.snipca.com/36467).

In the confirmation window that opens, click 'Send email to grant access'. You can repeat this process to add as many delegates as you like. We'll show you how to revoke access a little later.

Your chosen delegates will then receive an email with a link to accept or reject your offer. When they accept the request, they'll be directed to a web page where they then need to click Confirm.

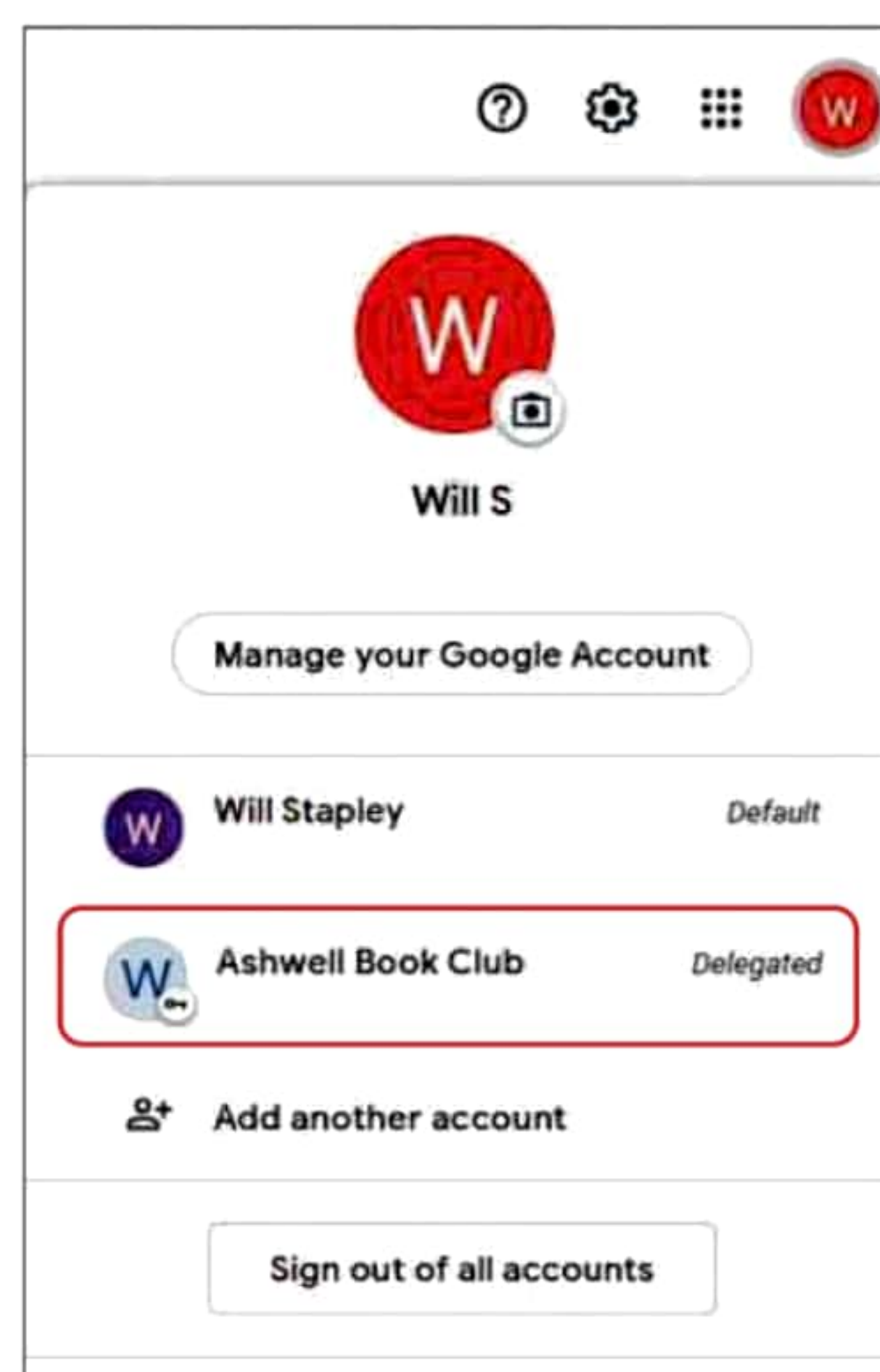
### Access club Gmail as a delegate

Your delegates will then be able to view your club's Gmail account by first logging into their own account, then clicking their profile photo (or initial letter of their name) in the circle, top-right. Your club's Gmail account will appear in the list of options marked Delegated (see screenshot above right). When they click this, they'll see your club's Gmail inbox. Google says it can take an hour or so for the account to appear once someone has accepted a delegation offer, but in our tests it only took a couple of minutes.

When accessing your club account, they'll see a key icon in the Google account logo, top-right (see screenshot below left) – this indicates they don't have full access to it. They can read and send emails, but won't be able to change any account settings. They can then return to their own Gmail account by selecting it from the account menu as before.

### Change delegates' options and revoke access

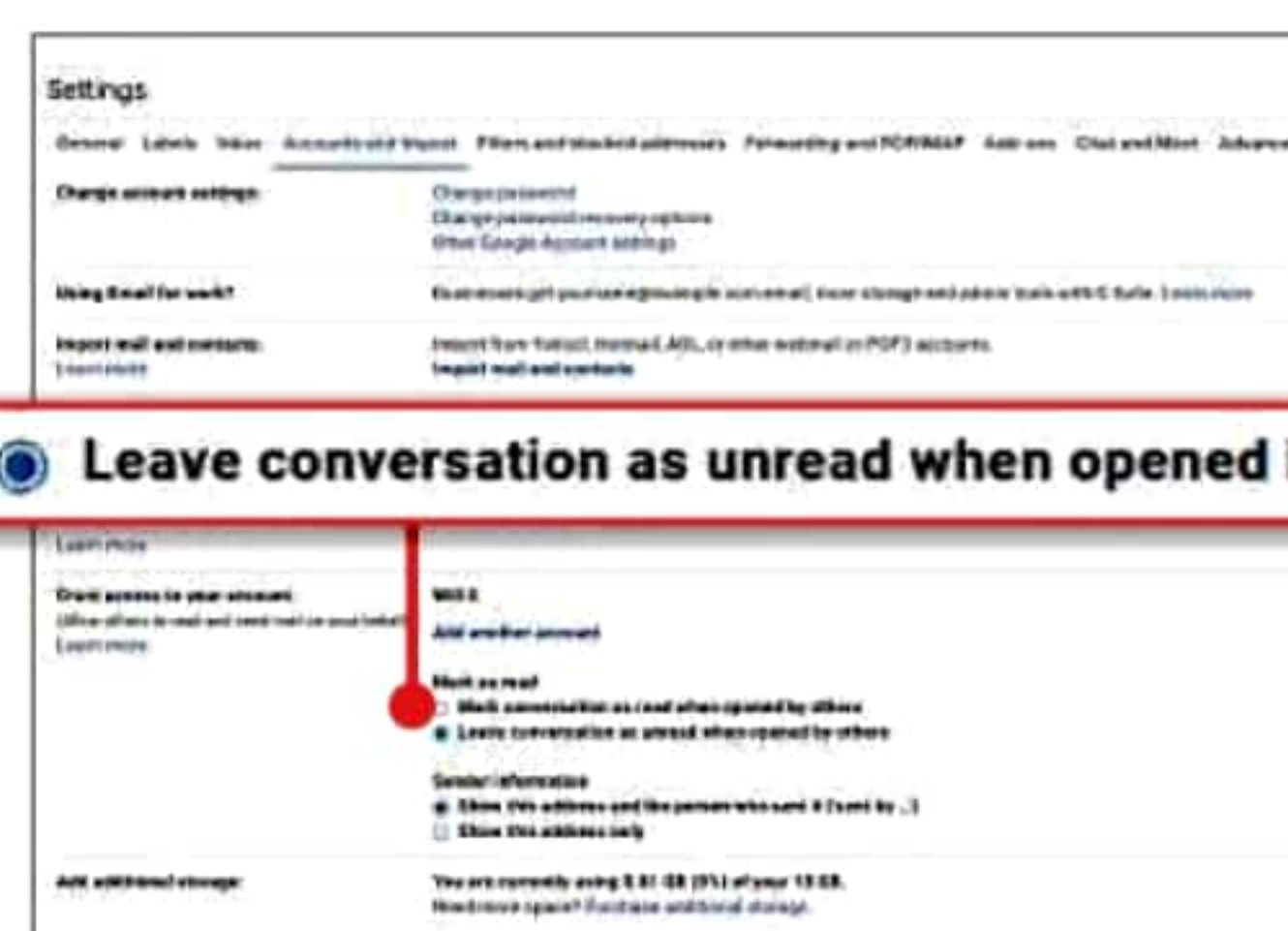
By default, any email sent by a delegate will show their address, as well as your club's, in the email's From box. If you'd prefer to hide their email address, return to the 'Accounts and Import' section in your club's Gmail account settings, scroll to the 'Sender information' section, then



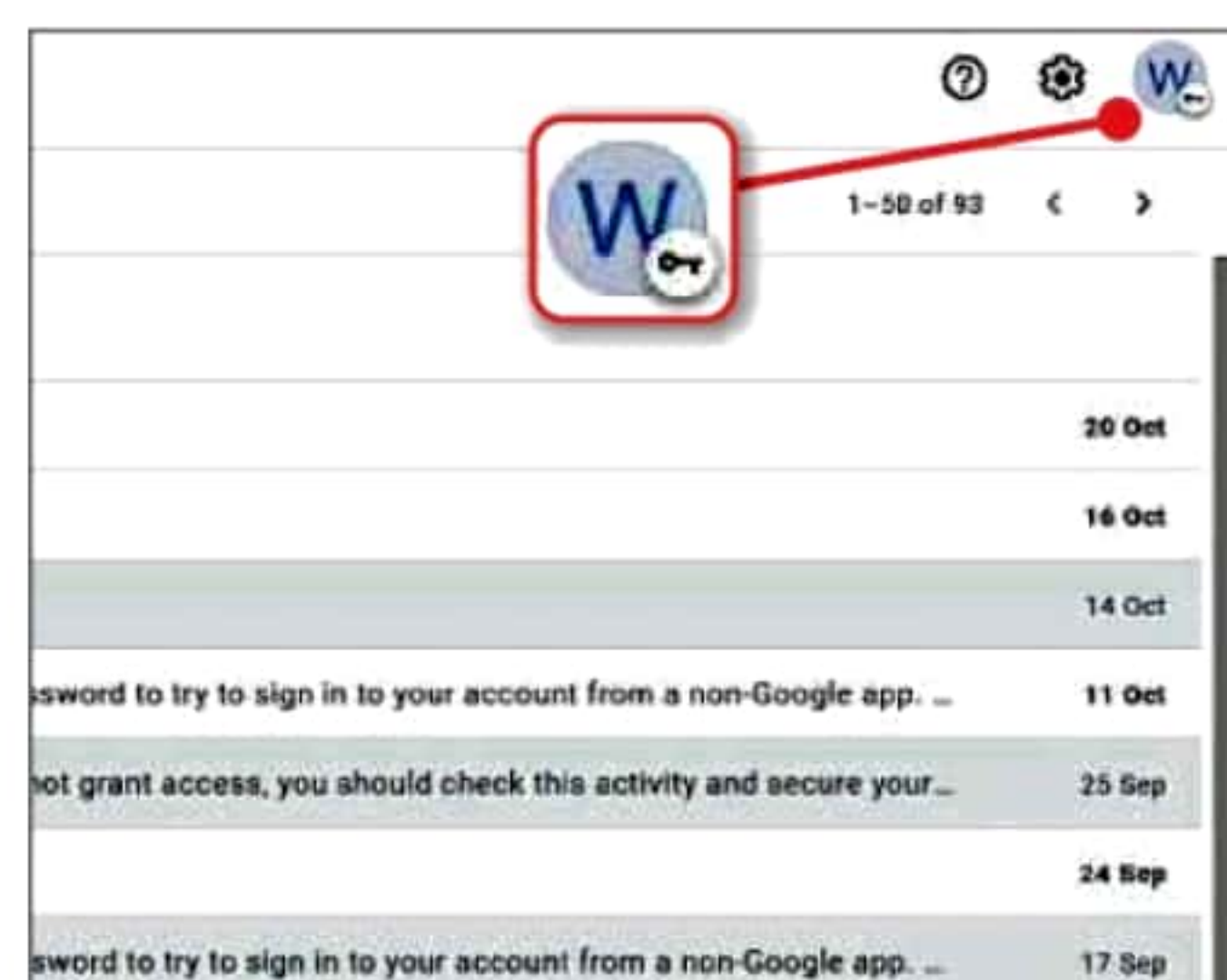
Your delegate will see your club's Gmail account as an option when they click their own account icon

select 'Show this address only...'. You can also prevent emails being marked as read when a delegate reads them. To do this, select 'Leave conversation as unread when opened by others' in the 'Mark as read' section (see screenshot below).

When someone leaves your club or gives up certain duties, you'll need to revoke access to the club's Gmail account. Staying in the 'Account and Information' section of your club account, go to the 'Grant access to your account' section, then click 'delete' next to their name.



Select this option to prevent delegates from marking emails as read when they open them



The small key icon on your Google account logo indicates you are accessing a Gmail account as a delegate

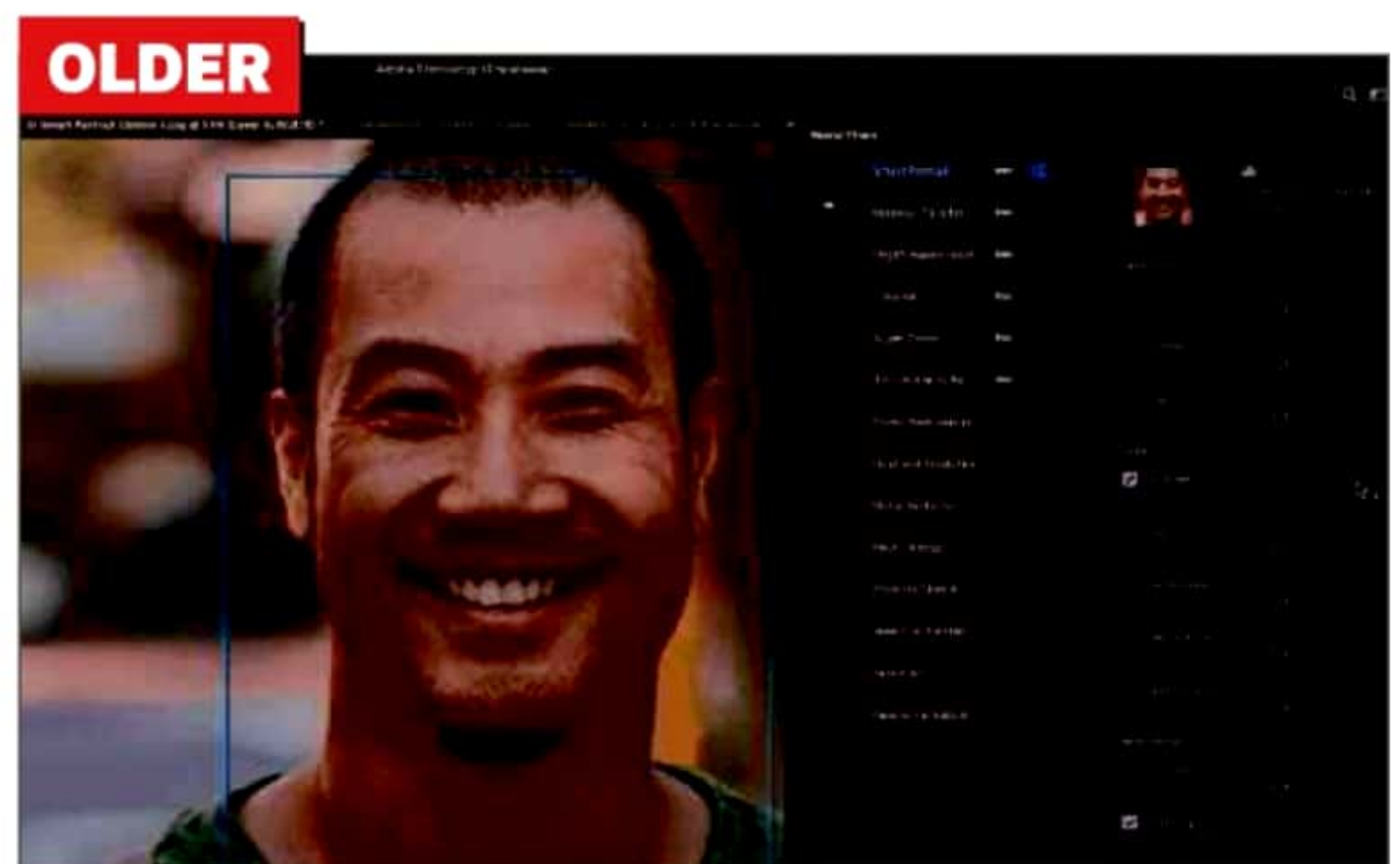


# What's All the Fuss About...



## Neural Filters

Adobe can make you look as old or young as you want to be

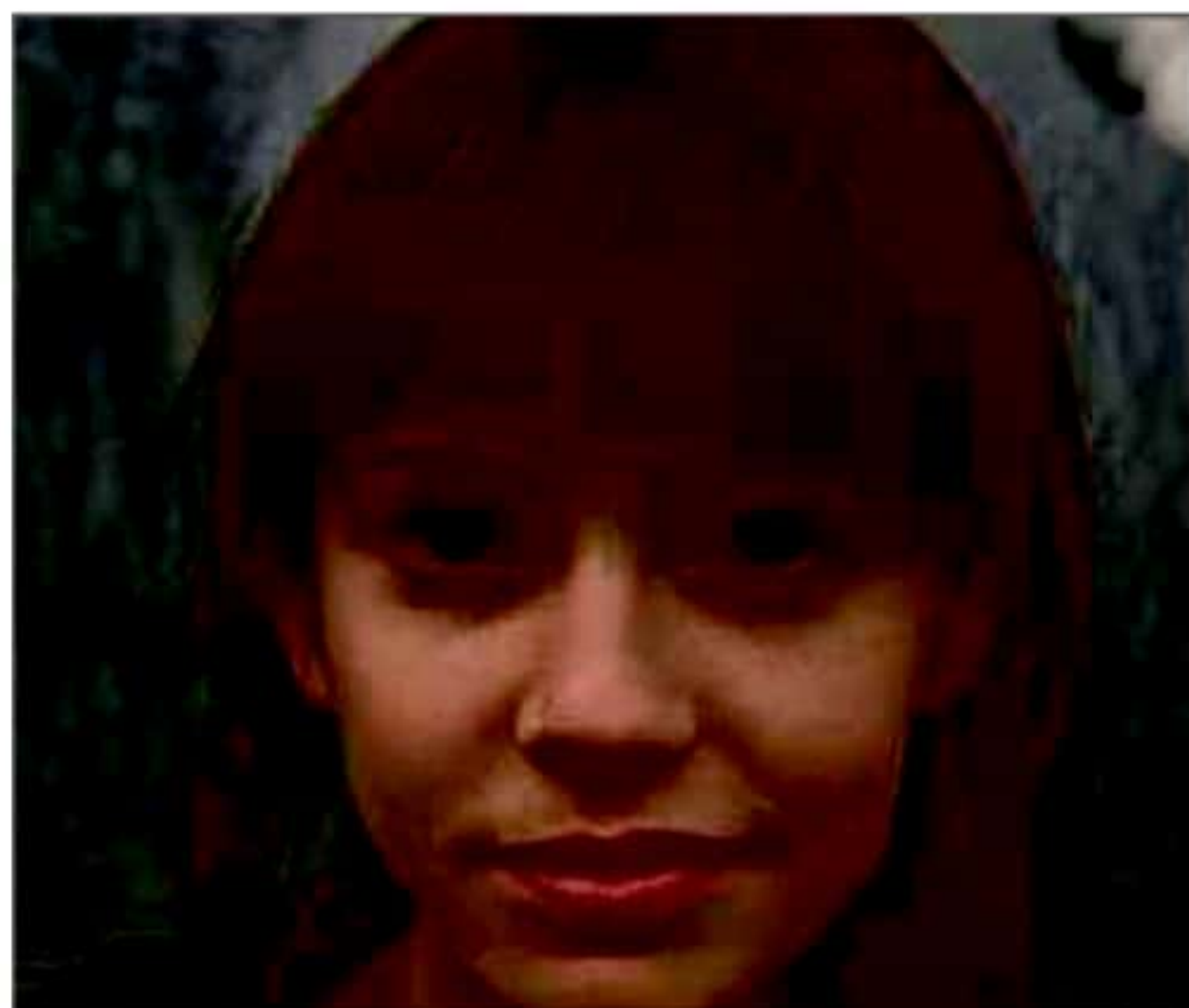


### What are they?

Adobe's new photo-editing technology for changing ages and expressions in images. With just a few clicks you can make someone 30 years older, change where they're looking, or turn a sneer into a smile. It's the standout feature in Photoshop 22, released in October.

### How does it work?

Using **machine learning** – a form of artificial intelligence (AI) in which software learns from its mistakes to make better predictions and produce more accurate results. More specifically, it uses generative adversarial networks (GANs), which would take us several issues to explain fully. Its key purpose is to generate digital data from nothing. In particular, it has mastered the ability to create fake photographs of what look like real people. See that woman below, for example?



She seems pleasant. Shame she doesn't exist

### Yes. What about her?

She doesn't exist. She was created by GAN software after analysing thousands of portraits. Looks realistic, doesn't it?

### Yes, very. Are Adobe's filters as good as that?

They seem to be. Take the poor chap above, who goes from a full head of black hair to thinning grey with a quick shift of the 'Facial age' slider (watch the magic at [www.snipca.com/36449](http://www.snipca.com/36449)). The effects take mere seconds to be applied. Also, have a look at the photos above right of the young man in that fetching yellow and white shirt. Using neural filters, that surly expression in the original has been turned into a lovely smile (maybe he's remembered he's kept the receipt for the shirt).

### So there's a filter for smiles?

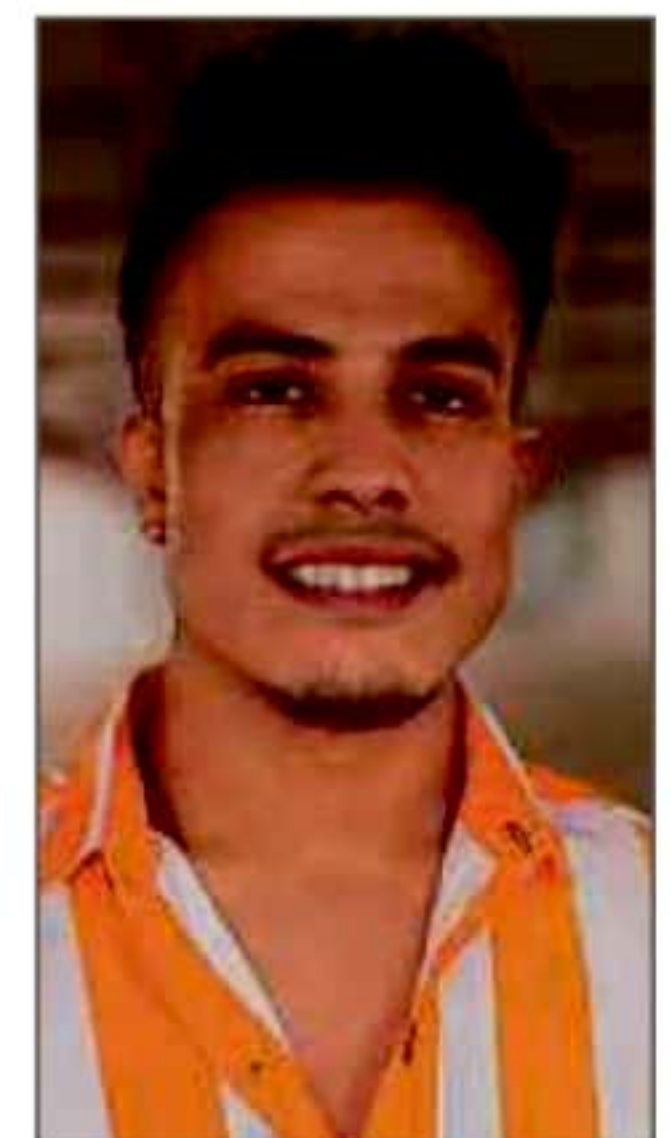
Well, it's called 'Happiness', but yes it manipulates the face to show a smile, tweaking the eyes and eyebrows accordingly so it looks genuine. Because the filters are controlled through sliders, it's easy to make small adjustments. There are also sliders for Anger and Surprise. We don't know whether making someone 100-per-cent happy, angry and surprised at the same time would crash the software, but it's worth a try.

### How are the filters different to Photoshop's existing tools?

The key difference is the machine



Cheer up, it might never happen...



... oh good, you have!

learning that powers the filters. This learns from its errors to produce more realistic results, which Adobe says makes Photoshop "the world's most advanced AI application". The speed of the tweaks is impressive too. Adobe has squeezed complex actions into a couple of sliders, creating effects that normally take hours.

### But will I need to subscribe to Photoshop to use them?

Afraid so – it costs from £19.97 a month ([www.snipca.com/36452](http://www.snipca.com/36452)). But now that machine-learning is part of a mainstream image-editing program, it will start to appear in cheaper (and eventually free) programs. Some of the filters are still in **beta** and Adobe admits they "may not produce the result you need every time". This could be Adobe's polite way of saying that you may not enjoy knowing what you'll look like in 20 years' time.



# DON'T BUY THE WRONG TV STICK

With so many options, it's easy to end up buying the wrong streaming stick. **Will Stapley** reviews the latest options and sorts the Hollywood blockbusters from the B-movie flops



**F**rom TV programmes and films to live sports and the latest 3D games, everything is being streamed these days. The old TV schedules are becoming less important as more people than ever get their

entertainment fix via the internet. And because of Covid lockdown restrictions, even big-budget movies are getting released on streaming services rather than at your local cinema.

A streaming stick lets you enjoy all this and more on your TV – and there are plenty to choose from. To satisfy this increased demand now we're all spending more time at home, a wide choice of new sticks has hit the market over the past few weeks with prices ranging from as little as £25 right up to £199.

But which device best suits your needs and streams the kind of content you want to watch? Here we'll explain your options so you can find out where to get the best sports coverage, movie choices or classic dramas from yesteryear.

We'll outline which streaming services are available on which devices – take a look at our quick-reference table on the page opposite to find out more. In the following pages, we'll dig deeper into what each of the paid-for streaming services has to offer.

Even if you already have a smart TV or Freeview box with streaming services built in, you may find these are slow, have poorly designed interfaces and force you to use your TV's remote control to navigate them, which is rarely ideal and mostly quite awkward.

In contrast, as we'll explain, streaming sticks are fast, easy to use and – in most cases – come with their own remote control that lets you say what you want to watch rather than type it.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Get a dual-band streaming stick that works in every room
- Stream the latest TV programmes and films in 4K
- Watch live and on-demand Sky content without a contract
- Mirror your PC or mobile device's display to your TV



## WHO STREAMS WHAT?

The table below shows which services are available on the streaming sticks from six of the most popular manufacturers. There's no shortage of free content on services such as **ITV Hub** and Channel 4's **All 4**, and as long as you have a TV licence, the **BBC iPlayer** offers a vast library of programmes at no extra cost. However, you'll need to subscribe to a paid-for streaming service to watch the latest films and drama series – such as *The Crown*, which is exclusive to Netflix. Before we take a look at the streaming sticks in more detail, we'll detail how much the various streaming services cost and what you can expect to watch on them.

### On-demand services

If you already have an Amazon Prime subscription (£7.99 per month or £79 annually) you don't have to buy Amazon's Fire TV stick to stream **Prime Video** – as you can see in our table below, only Now TV sticks can't stream Prime. **Netflix**, which is available on all sticks, offers a similar range of content to Prime Video

and costs from £5.99 per month – though we recommend going for the HD package, which is £3 extra.

**Disney+**, which launched in March this year, lets you stream old classic family films as well as the latest *Star Wars* releases. Last month, it added a new GroupWatch feature, letting you and six others watch a film together remotely. **BritBox**, meanwhile, is home to BBC and ITV programmes that are not available via their free services (including the new series of *Spitting Image*). Both BritBox and Disney+ cost £5.99 per month. **Apple TV+** is just £4.99 and is different to others in that it only has original content exclusive to Apple TV).

**Google Play** and **Sky Store** both provide an alternative to subscription-based viewing, letting you rent (around £2 to £4) or buy (£7 to £10) individual movies and TV programmes.

### Sky

If you want to watch Sky (including sports, movies and entertainment channels), you can avoid a long-term Sky

contract and instead buy daily or monthly **Now TV** passes, giving you access to live and on-demand Sky content.

An Entertainment pass (Sky One, Sky Atlantic, Gold and more) costs £9.99 per month; a Cinema pass (all Sky Movies channels) is £11.99 a month; and all Sky Sports channels £33.99 per month. If you only want to watch a single sports event, you can get Sky Sports day passes for £9.99.

### BT Sport

With Premier League and Champions League football among its highlights, BT Sport offers a range of live and recorded sporting coverage over four channels. The basic price is £25 per month, but there are ways to get it cheaper. If your broadband is provided by Plusnet you can get BT Sport for just £10 per month (HD costs an extra £3 – find out more at [www.snipca.com/36422](http://www.snipca.com/36422)). EE customers can get it for £15 per month – sign up at [www.snipca.com/36423](http://www.snipca.com/36423) (before doing so, check out our box on [page xx](#) for how to get six months free).

						
	Amazon	Apple	Google	Now TV	Nvidia	Roku
<b>Prime Video</b>	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
<b>Netflix</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Now TV</b>	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
<b>Sky Store</b>	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓
<b>Disney+</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
<b>BritBox</b>	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
<b>Google Play</b>	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
<b>Apple TV+</b>	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
<b>BT Sport</b>	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
<b>BBC iPlayer</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>ITV Hub</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
<b>All 4</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
<b>YouTube</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓





## AMAZON FIRE TV

Amazon's Fire TV range offers four options: three sticks that plug directly into your TV's **HDMI** port (or via the included extension cable) and a Cube with a built-in smart speaker and connects to your TV via an HDMI cable.

### Search for content easier

At £29.99 the **Fire TV Stick Lite** ([www.snipca.com/36417](http://www.snipca.com/36417)), which launched in September, is priced in line with the cheapest sticks from Google and Roku. As with other Fire TV Sticks, the Lite's remote control comes with built-in voice control. There's no need to preface your commands with "Alexa...", as you would with Amazon's Echo smart speakers. Instead, just press and hold the microphone button at the top of the remote while saying what you want.

This makes searching for content so much easier. Instead of painstakingly entering the name of a program using the remote control, you can simply say something like "Play *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*". Unlike the other models in the Fire Stick range, including the next cheapest **Fire TV Stick** (£39.99 from [www.snipca.com/36418](http://www.snipca.com/36418)), you can't control your TV's volume or on/off status with the Lite's remote.

Amazon also plans to release a new 'show me' feature that lets you display content on your TV via an Echo. So you could say "Alexa, show me the weather",

then have a local forecast appear on your TV screen.

### Missing services

One area where the Fire TV range disappoints is in its lack of support for a number of popular streaming services. As our table on page 51 shows, you get the usual selection of terrestrial services (iPlayer, ITV Hub and so on), along with Netflix and Amazon Prime Video (assuming you're a Prime member), but there are notable omissions including Sky Store, Now TV, BT Sport and Google Play. Whether this is a deal breaker depends on your opinion of these services, but with similarly priced devices from Roku offering a better selection, it's a shame Amazon can't follow suit.

There is some good news, though. Following a dispute with Amazon in 2018, Google removed its YouTube app from the Amazon app store. However, the two recently made up and the YouTube app returned a few months ago (you can download it by searching for **youtube** within your Fire TV's menu).

### Watch 4K content

If you have a TV capable of displaying 4K video (also known as Ultra HD), and you want to make the most of it, you'll need to opt for the **Fire Stick TV 4K**, which costs £49.99 from [www.snipca.com/36418](http://www.snipca.com/36418).

This doesn't mean *all* video you play with it will be 4K, only content that is available in that resolution. There is plenty of 4K content on Prime Video and Netflix, but aside from a few trials you won't find iPlayer, ITV Hub or All 4. As with other streaming sticks, Fire Sticks need to be powered by USB. However in our tests, this 4K version couldn't draw enough power from our TV's USB port, so we had to instead use the included mains adapter.

### Dual-band wireless

Impressively, all Fire Sticks include **dual-band** wireless networking, so they'll be able to connect to your router's 2.4GHz or 5GHz network – usually whichever is stronger. In our tests, we didn't experience any buffering, even in rooms far from our router.

### Smart speaker-streamer

The top-of-the-range Fire TV Cube ([www.snipca.com/36420](http://www.snipca.com/36420)) combines Amazon's Echo smart speaker with the Fire TV Stick 4K. In contrast to the other Fire Sticks, this one is designed to sit next to your TV set and connects to it via an HDMI cable. You can use it as you would a standard Echo speaker (to set timers, read the news, play music and so on) and to control Fire TV, but it also comes with the same voice-controlled remote control should you want to use that instead.

## Fire TV options



### Fire TV Stick Lite

£29.99

[www.snipca.com/36417](http://www.snipca.com/36417)

★★★★★

**Verdict:** Despite the low price, you get a dual-band streaming stick with a remote control that does voice commands. Like the other Fire Sticks, it lacks support for some services



### Fire TV Stick

£39.99

[www.snipca.com/36418](http://www.snipca.com/36418)

★★★★★

**Verdict:** Unless Dolby Atmos audio or the voice-enabled remote control are important for you, opt for the cheaper Lite version instead.



### Fire TV Stick 4K

£49.99

[www.snipca.com/36419](http://www.snipca.com/36419)

★★★★★

**Verdict:** Only consider this if you have a 4K TV. And even if you do, you may want to take look at the 4K Roku Premiere, which is £10 cheaper.



### Fire TV Cube

£109.99

[www.snipca.com/36420](http://www.snipca.com/36420)

★★★★★

**Verdict:** An uneasy mix of two devices. You'd be better off buying a Fire TV stick and Echo speaker separately.



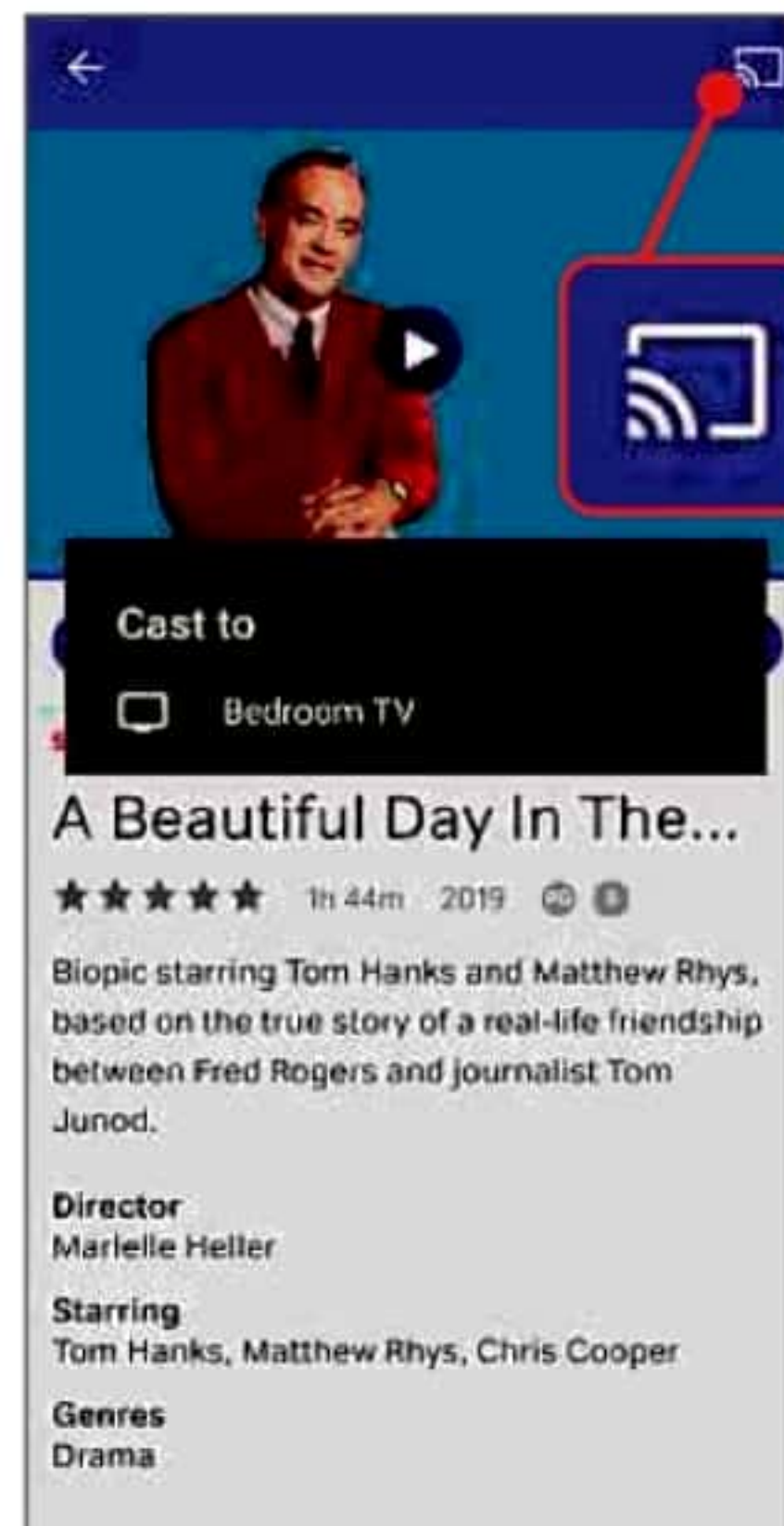
## GOOGLE CHROMECAST

The puck-shaped **Chromecast** (£30 from [www.snipca.com/36434](http://www.snipca.com/36434), pictured below) works in a different way from other streaming devices. Instead of streaming content directly on the stick, it serves as an intermediary between your TV and other devices on your home network – a process known as ‘casting’.

If you want to stream a film on Netflix, for example, you first need to install and open the Netflix app on your phone or tablet, go to the film/programme of your choice, then tap or click the Cast button (see screenshot right) and select your Chromecast from the list that appears. The Netflix content will then play back on your TV screen, and you’ll be able to use your phone to pause, fast-forward and so on.

This may sound sound convoluted, but it actually works very well and almost all streaming services support casting (Apple TV+ is the only major service that doesn’t). There are some downsides, however. Because the basic Chromecast doesn’t come with a remote control, you’ll need to use the device you’re casting from to control playback. And if your casting device’s battery runs out, your viewing will end abruptly. What’s more, it doesn’t support 4K video, so you’re limited to HD streaming.

Although none of these are serious flaws, they’re worth bearing in mind before purchasing.



**Chromecast lets you cast programmes from your phone or tablet to your TV**

control playback. It’s voice-enabled, but in our tests we found it misheard our commands more often than the Alexa equivalent on Fire TV remotes.

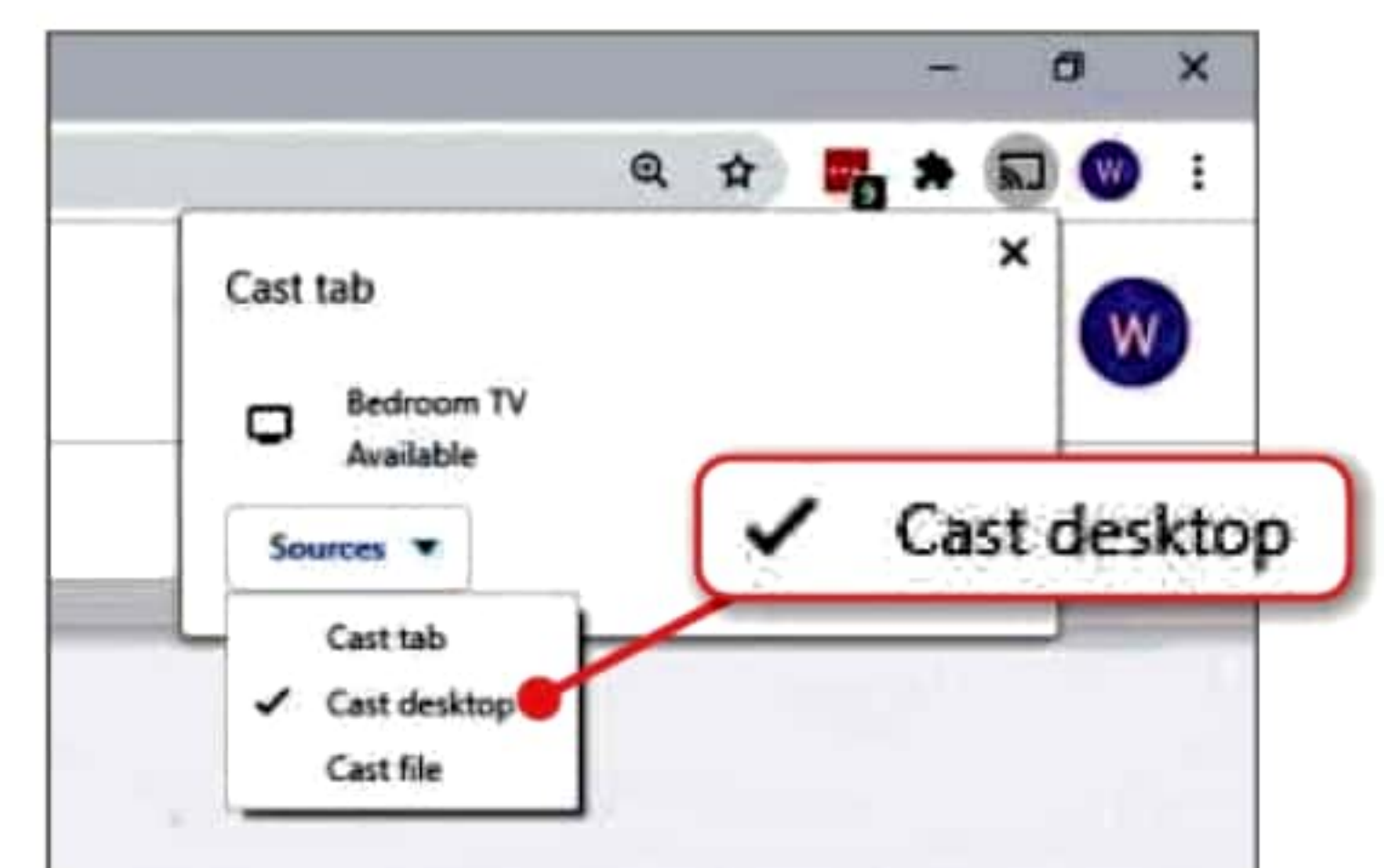
As its somewhat awkward name indicates, this Chromecast also comes with Google TV. Based on Google’s Android TV (the operating system used on many smart TVs), this lets you install and browse apps, and provides recommended viewing suggestions based on what you’ve watched previously. In our tests, it worked smoothly, reacting quickly to our commands via the remote control and loading apps in no time.

For an additional £30, you can buy this Chromecast with six months of Netflix’s Standard package thrown in (which lets you stream to two devices in HD and would otherwise cost you £53.94). Note that this Netflix package doesn’t support 4K streaming – for that you need Netflix Premium, which costs £11.99 per month.

### Cast your phone, tablet and PC screen to your TV

While both Chromecasts are primarily designed as media-streaming devices, they also have other uses. If you want to see your Android device’s display on your TV (whether to go on virtual journeys with Google Maps on a bigger screen or browse the BBC News app without having to strain your eyes), you can do so by going to the Google Home app, tapping the icon for your Chromecast, then tapping ‘Cast my screen’. Everything you do on your Android device will now be **mirrored** on your TV. This doesn’t work with iPhones or iPads.

You can do the same thing with your Windows desktop using Google’s Chrome browser. Click the menu button (three vertical dots), ‘Cast...’, then select your device, click Sources and choose ‘Cast desktop’ (see screenshot below).



**Chromecast lets you stream your Windows PC desktop to your TV screen**

### Stream using Google TV

Unlike the basic Chromecast, the recently launched **Chromecast with Google TV** (£59.99 from [www.snipca.com/36435](http://www.snipca.com/36435)) lets you stream directly from apps (iPlayer, Netflix and so on) installed on it. Disappointingly, some services (including All 4 and Now TV) don’t offer apps for Chromecast. You can still watch these, but you can only do so by installing the relevant app on your phone or tablet, then casting it to your Chromecast. Hopefully, these apps will be added soon.

‘Chromecast with Google TV’ also comes with a remote control, so there’s no need to keep your phone handy to

## Chromecast options



**Chromecast**  
£30

[www.snipca.com/36434](http://www.snipca.com/36434)

★★★★★

**Verdict:** Supports almost every streaming service, but not everyone will like the lack of a remote control and the need to stream media from other devices.



**Chromecast with Google TV**  
£59.99

[www.snipca.com/36435](http://www.snipca.com/36435)

★★★★★

**Verdict:** Comes with a voice remote control, 4K support and the excellent Google TV software, but it’s also twice the price of the basic Chromecast.



# READER OFFER!

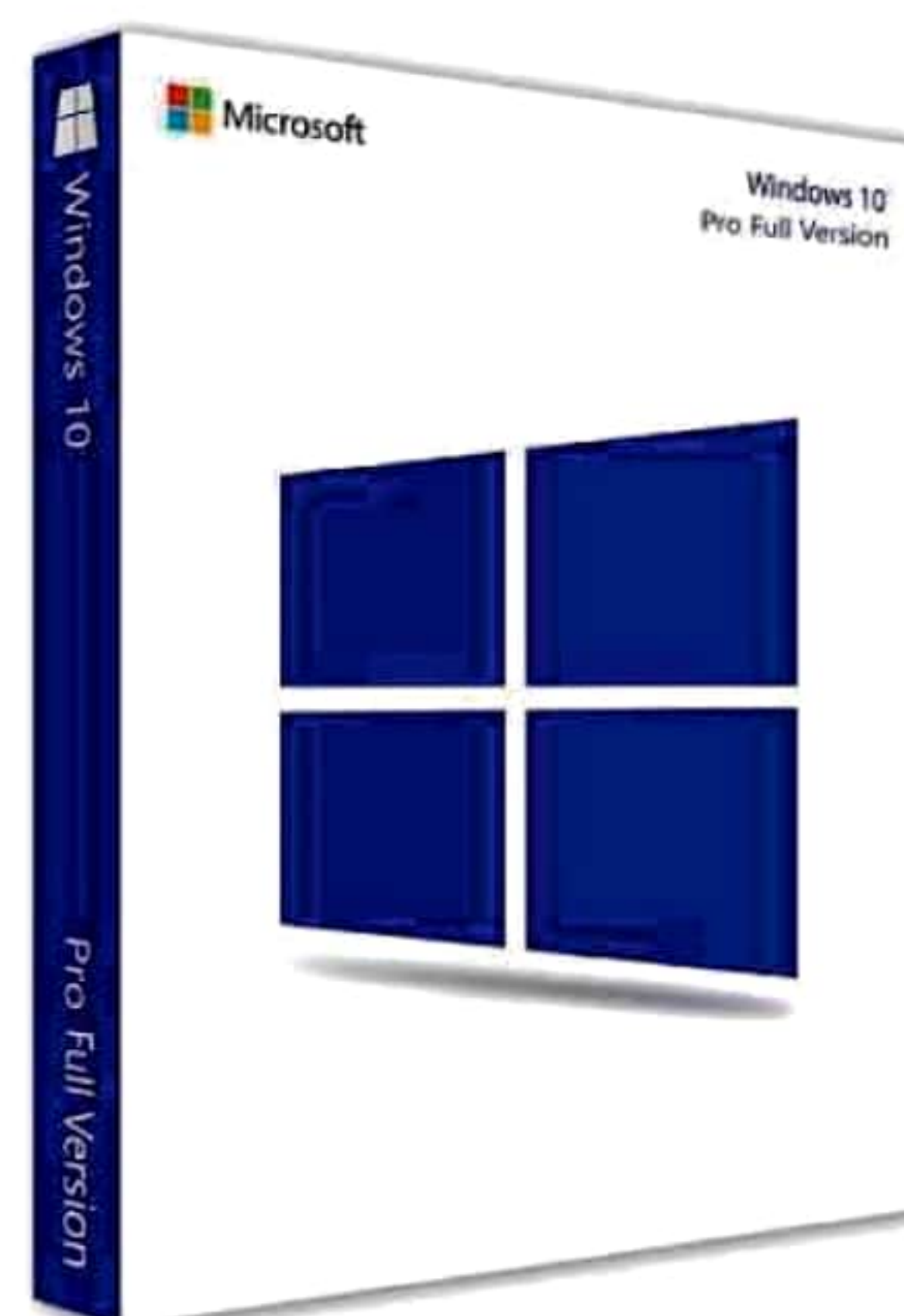


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### JUST SO YOU KNOW...

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## ROKU

Like Chromecasts, Roku's sticks have support for a wide range of streaming services. You can get everything from Sky channels with Now TV, through to Netflix, Prime Video and (added this September) BT Sport. In fact, the only major streaming service not supported is BritBox – and you're really not missing out on too much there.

The **Roku Express** ([www.snipca.com/36428](http://www.snipca.com/36428)) is the cheapest option, at £29.99. In contrast to similarly priced sticks from Google and Amazon, it's single-band and will therefore only connect to 2.4GHz Wi-Fi networks, not the faster 5GHz networks. This was a problem when we tested it on a TV set in an upstairs bedroom, with the slow connection causing Netflix video to occasionally buffer.

The Express is the only Roku device that doesn't come with a USB power adapter. If you have a spare USB port on your TV, you can power it using this (it worked fine on our Sony Bravia set). However, if your TV can't supply sufficient power or lacks a spare port, you'll need to plug it into the mains using a USB power adapter. You may have an old phone charger that you can use; otherwise you'll need to buy something like Amazon's USB power adapter (£11.99 from [www.snipca.com/36432](http://www.snipca.com/36432)).

### Infrared remote control

Unusually, the remote control included with the Express and the £39.99 **Roku Premiere** ([www.snipca.com/36429](http://www.snipca.com/36429)) uses infrared (IR), which means it requires a



The Roku app lets you use your phone as a remote for any Roku device

direct line of sight – much like your TV's remote control. Consequently, both the Express and Premiere devices need to be placed in front of or to the side of your TV set (they are box-shaped, so sit easily on a table), not neatly tucked away behind the TV as with rival streaming sticks. If your TV stand is kept tidy, this won't be a problem, but if random objects cover the IR receiver, it'll block the IR signal and prevent the remote from working.

There's no voice control on the IR remote either. You can get around this by installing the Roku app on your Android or iOS device ([www.snipca.com/36433](http://www.snipca.com/36433)), which lets you use your phone as a remote (see screenshot above) and issue voice commands.

### Watch 4K for less

If you have a 4K TV and want to enjoy 4K films, you'll need to give the Roku Express a miss because it's HD-only. The Premiere is able to stream 4K – it also happens to be the cheapest 4K streaming device you can buy (£10 cheaper than the Fire TV Stick 4K and £20 cheaper than Google's 'Chromecast with Google TV'). However, the Premiere also has the same IR remote control and 2.4GHz limitations as the Express. Our advice is to spend a little extra and opt for the **Roku Streaming Stick+** (£49.99 from [www.snipca.com/36430](http://www.snipca.com/36430)), which is dual-band, supports 4K and comes with a superior remote that uses Wi-Fi (so it doesn't need a clear line of sight). It also lets you use voice commands.

### Boost your audio

At £129, the **Roku Streambar** ([www.snipca.com/36431](http://www.snipca.com/36431)) is significantly more expensive than Roku's other sticks, and for good reason. It's a package that includes a Streaming Stick+ and a soundbar – an elongated speaker that's designed to sit under your TV. Although it can't deliver the same level of bass or surround-sound as more expensive models such as the Denon DHT-S216 (£169 from [www.snipca.com/36426](http://www.snipca.com/36426)), it's a huge improvement on the tinny speakers that plague most modern TVs. In our tests, it delivered rich audio that was far better than our Sony Bravia TV's speakers.

It'll also work with other video sources, so you can use it when watching Freeview or DVDs.

## Roku options



### Express

£29.99

[www.snipca.com/36428](http://www.snipca.com/36428)

★★★★★

**Verdict:** The remote control and lack of dual-band is disappointing, but this cheap stick benefits from excellent support for streaming services. Great if you're on a tight budget.



### Premiere

£39.99

[www.snipca.com/36429](http://www.snipca.com/36429)

★★★★★

**Verdict:** The cheapest 4K streaming stick you can buy, but the remote is poor. Spend a little extra and get the Streaming Stick+.



### Streaming Stick+

£49.99

[www.snipca.com/36430](http://www.snipca.com/36430)

★★★★★

**Verdict:** Everything you'd want from a streaming stick: excellent choice of streaming services, voice remote control, dual-band, 4K and more.



### Streambar

£129.99

[www.snipca.com/36431](http://www.snipca.com/36431)

★★★★★

**Verdict:** A good option if you want a hassle-free way to add a streaming stick and superior audio to your PC, though serious audiophiles will want their own soundbar.



## NOW TV

Although you can access Now TV on other streaming sticks, only the **Now TV Smart Stick** (£24.99 from [www.snipca.com/36444](http://www.snipca.com/36444)) lets you pause live channels. It's limited in that you can only pause for up to 30 minutes, but that should be enough to ensure you don't miss any action if you need to answer the door during a live football match.

The Smart Stick looks similar to Roku's Streaming Stick+ and the similarities go beyond looks, because the software powering the Smart Stick is actually developed by Roku. This also means you can use the same Roku app to control playback on the Now TV Smart Stick – not that you need to, because the Smart Stick comes with a decent, voice-controlled remote control.

Infuriatingly, the Smart Stick doesn't come with an **HDMI** extension cable, which means it plugs directly into a USB port on your TV. As a result, when we tried to attach it to our wall-mounted TV,

there wasn't enough room behind the TV set, meaning we had to use the extender from another stick (if you don't have a spare one, they cost around £6 for a pair on Amazon [www.snipca.com/36441](http://www.snipca.com/36441)).

Now TV doesn't have any 4K content, so it's no surprise that the Smart Stick is HD-only. This also means you won't be able to watch 4K content on the stick's Netflix app. It's disappointing that Prime Video, Google Play and BritBox aren't available. Additionally, content is limited to **720p** HD as standard.

If you want **1080p** – and a smoother, 50 frames per second on Sky Sports channels (double the usual rate) – you'll need to buy a Now TV Boost pass, which costs £3 per month. It's an annoying requirement, but one you'll want if you watch sport. When we added the pass halfway through a football match, the difference was astonishing, with much clearer video.

Finally, don't buy the Smart Stick from

### Now TV option



#### Smart Stick

£24.99

[www.snipca.com/36444](http://www.snipca.com/36444)

★★★★★

**Verdict:** It's cheap and lets you pause live Sky channels, but lacks Amazon Prime Video and there are better (albeit more expensive) alternatives.

Now TV's website. Instead, go to Amazon where you'll find it for the same price but with one-month passes for Sky Cinema and Sky Entertainment included.

## APPLE TV

Like iPhones, iPads, Macs and pretty much all other Apple equipment, Apple TV is relatively expensive. You can get it in HD or 4K, with **Apple TV HD** is £149 ([www.snipca.com/36446](http://www.snipca.com/36446)) and the **Apple TV 4K** £179 ([www.snipca.com/36447](http://www.snipca.com/36447)). Apart from a series of small holes to improve airflow on the more powerful

4K version, the two look identical (as you can see below).

Out of all the sticks we tested here, the Apple TV was by far the easiest to set up. Using the voice-enabled remote control (with a panel at the top you can swipe instead of pressing arrow buttons), we entered our Apple ID, after which it

detected our TV was 4K and adjusted the video settings on the Apple TV accordingly. It even programmed the remote so it could control our TV set's power and volume.

The software behind Apple TV is equally polished. If you've ever used an iPhone or iPad, you'll feel instantly at home; even if you haven't, you'll find it easy to navigate the menus. We liked the way Apple TV didn't drown us in confusing options, and finding what you want to watch is easy. Both the HD and 4K versions come with a free year of Apple TV+, so you won't be short of programmes to choose from. Support for other services is good, with only Sky Store and Google Play missing.

Both the HD and 4K versions support dual-band Wi-Fi. They also have Ethernet ports, letting you connect them to your router via a wired connection – great if you suffer from poor Wi-Fi signals at home.

As impressive as Apple TV is, however, we can only recommend it if you already use Apple devices. It will connect seamlessly with them, letting you stream content to your TV, mirror your screen and more. If you don't use Apple devices, save yourself £100 and buy a similarly performing alternative, such as Roku's Streaming Stick+.

### Apple TV options



#### Apple TV HD

£149

[www.snipca.com/36446](http://www.snipca.com/36446)

★★★★★

Easy to use, but if you're spending this much you might as well spend a little more for the 4K version – even if you don't have a 4K TV set yet.



#### Apple TV 4K

£179

[www.snipca.com/36447](http://www.snipca.com/36447)

★★★★★

As impressive as the HD version, but with 4K support. If you want to add TV to an existing collection of Apple devices, this is the kit to opt for.





## NVIDIA SHIELD

Whereas the streamers we've looked at so far are primarily designed to stream TV, Nvidia's Shield focuses instead on gaming. So if you enjoy occasional gaming, the Shield is a good way to get a streaming stick and console in one. It's available in two formats: the small, cylindrical **Shield TV** (£149 from [www.snipca.com/36454](http://www.snipca.com/36454)) and the larger **Shield TV Pro** (£199 from [www.snipca.com/36455](http://www.snipca.com/36455)). The differences are mainly in their gaming capabilities, which we'll come to in a moment.

Both have voice-enabled remote controls, support 4K streams, and will even upscale (that's industry jargon for 'improve') HD content to near 4K quality. In our tests, the upscaling worked impressively well, adding definition to HD programmes, though it only works with video content, not games. Streaming options are limited, however, with Now TV, BT Sport, ITV Hub, All 4 among the notable absentees.

As well as letting you download Android games from the Google Play store, Shield links up with Nvidia's GeForce Now service so you can stream games to your TV direct from Nvidia's

### Nvidia Shield options



#### Shield TV

£149

[www.snipca.com/36454](http://www.snipca.com/36454)

★★★★★

Reasonably priced, but with only 8GB of RAM you'll constantly be clearing space for new games.



#### Shield TV Pro

£199

[www.snipca.com/36455](http://www.snipca.com/36455)

★★★★★

For those who want to combine streaming and gaming. This will also give you more storage and RAM, along with easier upgrade options.

servers (see what's available at [www.snipca.com/36451](http://www.snipca.com/36451)). To keep this service running smoothly, Nvidia manages demand by limiting how long you can play. The free GeForce Now package limits

you to one-hour sessions. The Founders package (£4.99 per month) increases this to six hours. With both, you can start a new session after your time's up, but it can be a frustrating experience, particularly with the free package.

The Shield TV has just 8GB of storage, which you can upgrade using the **microSD card** slot, while the Shield TV Pro has 16GB along with two USB ports, letting you easily add a large external hard drive or wired controllers. The Shield TV also only has 2GB of **RAM** compared with the Pro's 3GB; the latter is required by a small number of games (see the list at [www.snipca.com/36453](http://www.snipca.com/36453)).

Given their focus on gaming, it's a shame neither Shield comes with a game controller. You can get an official Shield controller for £59.99 on Amazon ([www.snipca.com/36450](http://www.snipca.com/36450)), though the Shield also works with most other console controllers – so if you have an old Xbox One or PlayStation 4 controller you'll be able to use that instead. **ca**

### What I use to stream TV

A glutton for punishment, I follow my football team Brighton & Hove Albion when they're live on TV, including any of their matches on BT Sport. I save £10 per month by getting BT Sport through EE (my phone provider). However, because I don't buy BT Sport directly from BT, I can't watch it on the BT Sport channels on my YouView box (I've no idea why BT made this decision). It's not a problem, though – I simply cast the BT Sport app from my phone to my Chromecast, then watch the action on my TV.

There's a problem with my Chromecast, though. I bought it in 2015, meaning it's

a first-generation model that only works with 2.4GHz Wi-Fi. I occasionally use it upstairs, and the poor Wi-Fi connection often causes video to buffer. I was very tempted to upgrade to the excellent Roku Streaming Stick+ (see page 55), but instead decided to save £20 and just go for the newer Chromecast (see p53), which is dual-band. Unlike the 'Chromecast with Google TV', it doesn't come with a remote, but I'm happy using my phone to control playback. Plus, if I want to issue voice commands, I can do so using the Google Home app on my phone.

**Will Stapley**

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# Master Edge and Chrome's new tabbing tools

There's more to browser tabs than you might think.  
**Jonathan Parkyn** reveals the brand new tabbing tools that will transform how you browse the web

Back in the early days of the internet, few browsers offered tabs. If you wanted more than one web page open you'd have to open multiple browser windows and clumsily switch from one to another. Introduced by Opera and Firefox at the turn of the 21st century, tabs allow you to switch quickly and easily between several web pages, all neatly contained within the same browser window.

However, there is a downside: having too many tabs open can make it hard to find the one you're looking for and can eat into your PC's resources, making it run slowly. Thanks to some great new features, Edge and Chrome help you manage your tabs more efficiently – here we look at some of the best.

## Organise tabs into groups



If you often have multiple tabs open, both Edge and Chrome have a new feature that helps you manage them – tab groups.

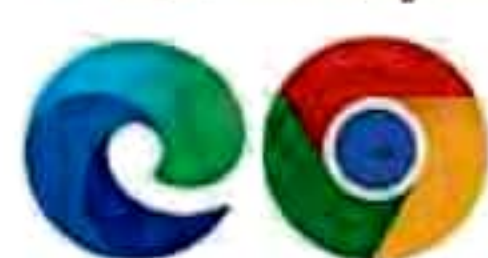


Edge and Chrome let you organise similar tabs into groups

To create a group, right-click a tab heading and select 'Add tab to new group'. Type a name for your group where it says 'Name this group' (in Edge, you need to first right-click the coloured circle that appears), then choose a colour and press Enter. To add another tab to the same group, right-click its heading and select 'Add tab to group', then select your chosen group from the list. Right-click a group's coloured circle for options including to move the group to a new window (see screenshot below left) or close it.

Chrome has an extra trick, letting you collapse groups so they take up less space (all you see is the coloured circle). Simply click a group's circle to collapse and expand it.

## Preview your tabs



The more tabs you have open, the narrower their headings are, making it hard to find the one you want. Tab previews in Chrome and Edge combat this by displaying thumbnails of each tab when you hover over its heading, but in both browsers this feature is 'experimental', meaning you need first to enable it. Experimental features are still in development, so might not work perfectly, but we didn't encounter any problems in our tests.

To enable tab previews, type `chrome://flags` (Chrome) or `edge://flags` (Edge) into the address bar, then press Enter. Scroll to the Tab Hover Cards and Tab Hover Card



Make it easier to spot the tab you want by enabling Tab Hover Cards

Images options and select Enabled in the dropdown menu next to them (see screenshot above). Click Relaunch (Chrome) or Restart (Edge).

## Press Alt+Tab to view your open tabs

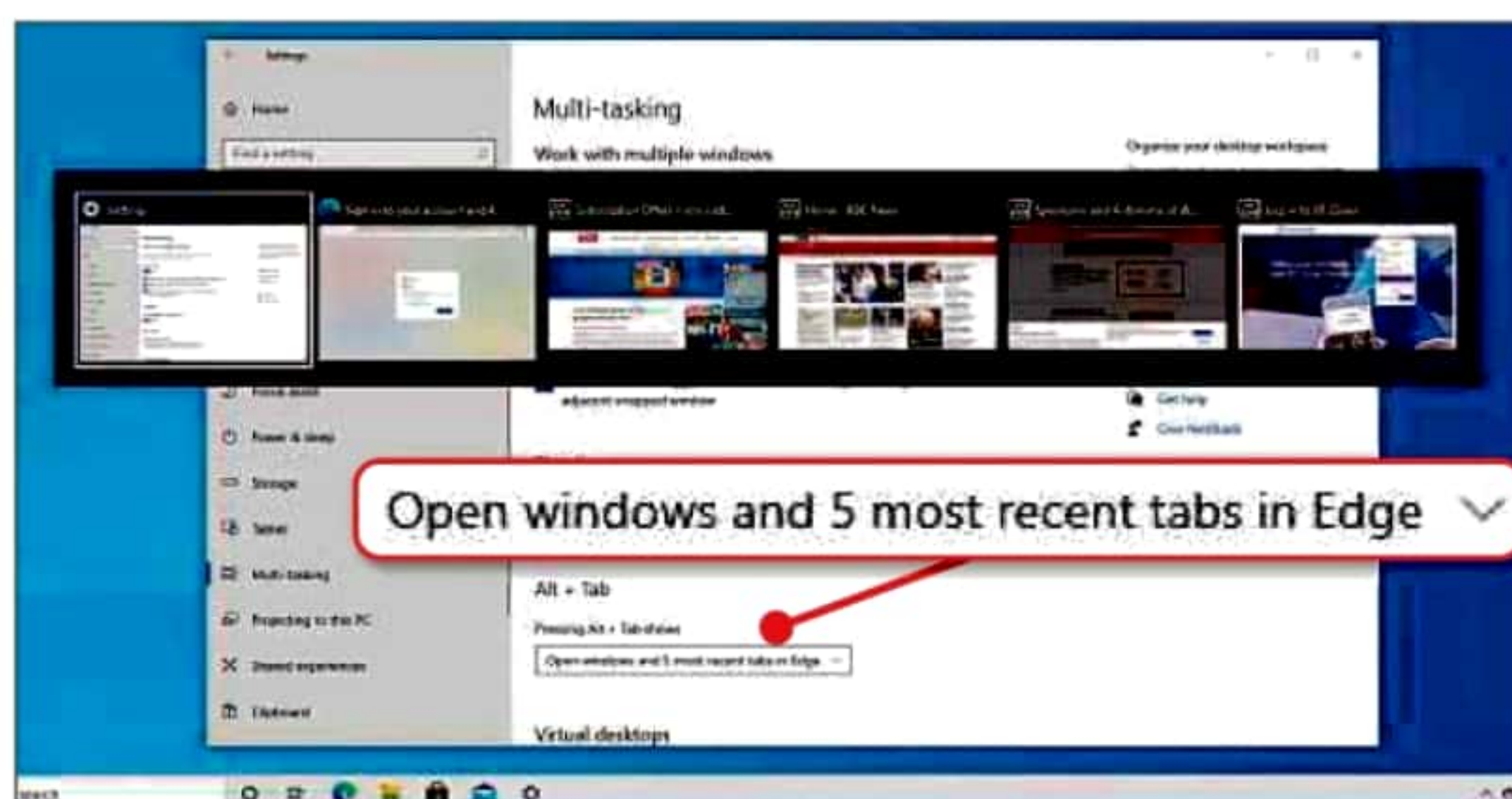


Have you got around to installing the October Update for Windows 10 yet? If you use Edge, there's one really good reason to get it: the update includes a new feature that lets you press Alt+Tab to cycle through open browser tabs (see page 46 for how to get the October Update).

Many of you will be familiar with Windows' Alt+Tab keyboard shortcut, which normally lets you switch between open program windows, representing each with a small thumbnail preview. With the October Update, you can also use Alt+Tab to switch between your Edge browser tabs.



If you've installed the October Update, you can choose to view Edge tabs when using Alt+Tab



To set this up, click Start, Settings, System, 'Multi-tasking', then select what you want to see by opening the 'Pressing Alt+Tab shows' dropdown menu. You can choose to display all program windows and all Edge tabs, open windows and recent Edge tabs (see screenshot), or just open windows only.

## Preview tabs pinned to your taskbar



The October Update brings another Edge-related improvement: you can now preview Edge tabs that you've pinned to the taskbar. Previously, you could only pin tabs to the taskbar – to do this, click the menu button (three dots) on the tab you want to pin, 'More tools', then 'Pin to taskbar'. But other than providing a shortcut for your favourite sites, it doesn't offer many benefits. Now, however, the tab's pinned taskbar icon will have a line below it when there are any instances of it running in one of your Edge browser windows, complete with thumbnail previews so you can quickly access the tab you want.

## Share tabs between devices



Chrome's new tab-sharing tool lets you send a web page from one device to another – useful if you're reading something on your PC and want to send it to your Android phone to continue reading elsewhere.

First, make sure you're signed into the same Google account in Chrome on your PC and on your phone. Next, open the tab on your PC, then click the URL in the



Chrome lets you open a website on your PC, then continue reading on your phone

address bar, and a small laptop icon will appear on the right (see screenshot below left). Click this, then select your other device from the 'Send to your devices' window. To share a tab from Chrome on your Android phone, tap the menu (three dots), select Share, then select 'Send to your devices' and choose your device. On newer phones you may need to tap the menu button, Share, then choose Chrome in the 'Apps list' before you see the 'Send to your devices' option.

## Search your tabs' contents



You can search the contents of websites by pressing Ctrl+F, but wouldn't it be great if you could also search for open tabs using keywords? With Chrome you can – but you'll need to carry out a minor tweak first.

If you don't already have one, you first need to create a desktop shortcut for Chrome. Open your Start menu, scroll to Google Chrome and drag it to an empty space on your desktop. Now, right-click this shortcut and select Properties. In the window that opens, click inside the Target field, add a space to the end of the existing text, then type `-enable-features=TabSearch`. Click OK, close any open Chrome windows, then relaunch Chrome by double-clicking its desktop shortcut. You'll now see a small down arrow to the right of your tab bar. Click this (or press Ctrl+Shift+E) and type a keyword to search for it among your open tabs.

## Use vertical tabs



You'll be used to seeing tabs appear along the top of your browser, but if you're using a widescreen monitor you may find they fit better down one side – something you can do in Edge. You'll need to use the Canary or Dev version of Edge (both are beta releases). You can download them from [www.snipca.com/36483](http://www.snipca.com/36483) and run them alongside the full version of Edge.

We recommend the Dev version, which is the more stable of the two. Once installed,

# Master Chrome and Edge tabs in five steps

## 1 Open searches in a new tab

Type your keywords into the address bar as normal, then hold down Alt when you press Enter.

## 2 Duplicate tabs

Right-click the tab heading and select 'Duplicate tab' (Edge) or Duplicate (Chrome).

## 3 Mute tabs

Silence auto-playing videos by right-clicking the offending tab (it will show a speaker icon) and selecting 'Mute tab' (Edge) or 'Mute site' (Chrome).

## 4 Pin tabs

Keep your favourite sites open in any browser window you launch. Right-click each tab heading and select 'Pin tab' (Edge) or Pin (Chrome).

## 5 Reopen closed tabs

Closed a tab by mistake? You can quickly reopen it by pressing Ctrl+Shift+T.



You can view your tabs on the side of your browser in the Dev version of Edge

open Edge Dev, type `edge://flags` into the address bar, then search for the Enable Fullscreen Dropdown setting and enable it. Restart the browser, then click the small icon of a two-pane window in the top-left corner. Your tabs will now appear in a new pane running down the left side of the window. You can click the button with a left arrow at the top of the tabs to collapse the tabs pane, while the two-pane window icon to the left of this (see screenshot above) lets you revert to tabs along the top of the screen.

Microsoft only recently added this feature to the Dev version (previously it was only available in Canary), indicating it's on its way to becoming a feature in the full version of Edge – though exactly when remains to be seen. **ca**



**C**onnecting your laptop to an external monitor, keyboard and mouse can make it easier to use. However, your desk may get overrun with wires and you'll need to plug each device into your laptop individually, then unplug everything when you want to take your laptop elsewhere.

Moreover, if you have a relatively new laptop, it may not have enough ports to connect to every device you want to use. The current trend towards slimmer, lighter laptops might be good news for business travellers who work on the road, but the resulting lack of ports (many have just one or two USB ports and nothing else) aren't ideal for those who mostly use them at home.

A docking station (or dock, for short) can resolve these problems and more. You could, for example, leave your external devices (monitor, keyboard, mouse and so on) permanently plugged into your dock, then quickly connect your laptop to them all using just one USB cable.

In this feature, we explain the difference between hubs and docks, what makes docks that connect via **USB-C** (small, oval connections) so versatile, and what your options are if you have an older laptop that only has USB-A (larger, rectangular) ports.

### What is a hub?

A USB hub increases the number of USB ports at your disposal. You plug the hub into a spare port on your laptop, then plug additional devices into USB ports on the hub itself. A hub is similar to a dock but it has limitations. It only works with USB devices, so you can't use it to connect your laptop to devices that use other types of connection, such as a monitor. And because a hub effectively splits the power from one USB port across four others, devices like external hard



Add extra USB ports to your laptop with this Ugreen dock



# Why you must buy a USB-C docking station

Whether you want to expand your laptop's existing ports or simply make it easier to use, a docking station is an essential piece of kit. **Nik Rawlinson** explains what to look for and why USB-C versions are best

drives may struggle to draw enough power to work.

If more USB ports is all you need and your laptop only has USB-C ports, the Ugreen USB-C Hub Adapter (£13 from [www.snipca.com/36468](http://www.snipca.com/36468), pictured left) converts a single USB-C port into four **USB 3.0** ports. If your laptop *doesn't* have a USB-C port, or you need to use its one USB-C port for power supply, you should consider Sabrent's USB-A version (£6 from [www.snipca.com/36469](http://www.snipca.com/36469)).

### Why do you need a USB-C dock?

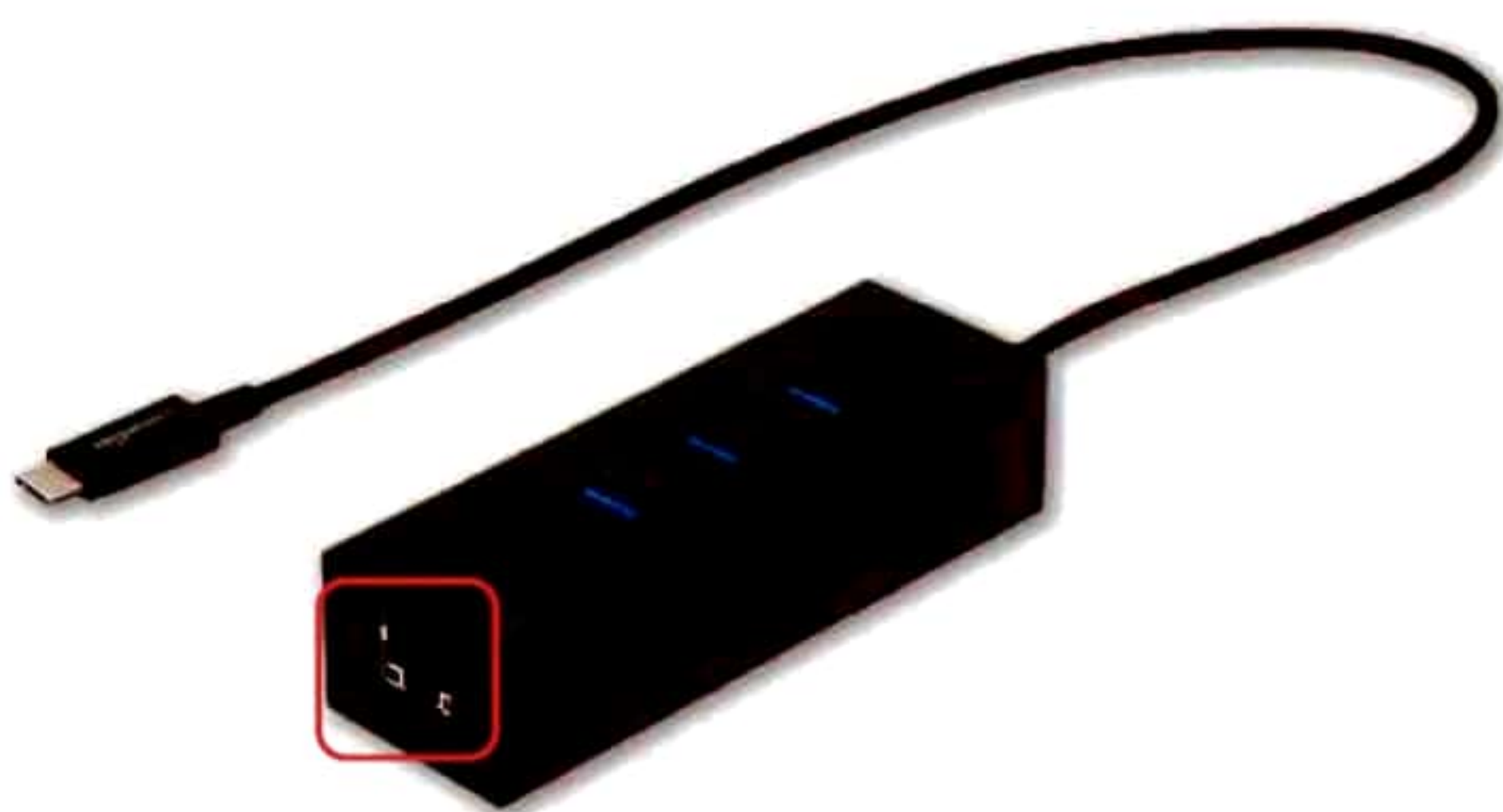
For anyone who wants to connect more than just USB devices, you'll need a dock rather than a hub.

The latest USB-C standard is more flexible than older versions, allowing the

latest connections to carry **network traffic**, video, power supply, and data sent to printers and external drives. So, while the first USB standard in 1998 had a maximum speed of 12 megabits per second (Mbps) and took nearly two minutes to transfer 30 photos and 50 minutes to copy a 4GB DVD, the latest USB-C connections run at 40 gigabits per second (Gbps), and can transfer that same DVD in roughly a second and the photos in the blink of an eye.

This level of speed allows your USB-C connection to transfer more types of data than ever and makes docks a practical solution for connecting to a range of external devices. It also ensures that a lack of ports on a particular model shouldn't put you off when choosing your next laptop.





Add a wired networking port to your laptop with this AmazonBasics USB-C adapter

## What types of port should you look for on a dock?

Start by looking at the devices you use most often, then look for a dock that matches your requirements.

### Ethernet

Although wireless is more convenient, your laptop will usually enjoy a faster, more stable connection with a wired Ethernet connection. The problem is Ethernet ports have largely disappeared from modern laptops. You can resolve this with AmazonBasics USB-C dock (£18 from [www.snipca.com/36470](http://www.snipca.com/36470), pictured above). Its Ethernet port lets you connect your laptop to a powerline adapter or directly to your router, along with three USB ports. This is not powered, however, so you might not be able to connect external hard drives to it.

### Video

As we mentioned earlier, USB-C can also be used to carry display signals, letting you connect your laptop to a monitor, ideal if you find your laptop screen too small for certain tasks. This Anker hub (£22 from [www.snipca.com/36471](http://www.snipca.com/36471), pictured below) has an HDMI output and

Turn a USB-C port into HDMI, memory card and two USB 3 ports with this Anker hub



This Plugable dock will power your laptop and connect it to various devices



two USB 3.0 ports. It also has SD and microSD card readers, letting you take the memory card out of a camera or phone and insert it into your computer directly, where it behaves like an external drive.

### Power

If your laptop is charged via its USB-C port, you should consider a dock that will power it, along with any other devices you've attached. Even if your laptop has a traditional, circular power port, you may still be able to charge via its USB-C port (check its manual to find out). However, to do this, your dock needs to support Power Delivery (sometimes referred to as PD) and provide the power required by your specific laptop. Take a look at your laptop's charger or check its manual to find out its power requirements.

Docks that can power laptops tend to be expensive, however. StarTech's 60W USB-C Multiport Adapter ([www.snipca.com/36472](http://www.snipca.com/36472), pictured below) costs £60 and can deliver 48W to power a laptop – enough to power our Dell unit, which requires 45W – and 12W to power any devices you connect to the dock's other ports, which comprise two USB-A ports, HDMI, Ethernet and a card reader.

If you don't already have one, you'll need a USB-C to USB-C cable to attach the dock to your laptop (such as Ugreen's,



This StarTech USB-C dock connects your laptop to several devices and keeps it charged

## How I use my dock

As someone who has spent the last decade working on the move, I make a habit of buying the smallest, most portable laptop I can. My main laptop (of the three that I switch between) has just a single USB-C port, so I use a Lenovo dock to increase this to three USB 3.1 ports, one HDMI, two memory card slots and a pass-through USB-C port with power delivery. Although it's no longer on sale, it's very similar to this £20 Novoo dock from [www.snipca.com/36438](http://www.snipca.com/36438), pictured)

It's given me the freedom to choose a laptop that suits my lifestyle while benefiting from the features commonly found on much larger devices. Better yet, since it doesn't care what operating system my laptop has, I can use it on laptops running Windows, Linux and macOS, depending on what I'm doing.

Nik Rawlinson



£9 from [www.snipca.com/36473](http://www.snipca.com/36473)). It also doesn't come with a power supply, so you'll need to connect your laptop's existing power adapter to its USB-C port. If you want a more versatile dock that has its own power supply, this £170 option from Plugable ([www.snipca.com/36443](http://www.snipca.com/36443), pictured above left) is one of the most versatile you'll find. It can deliver up to 60W of power via its USB-C port and comes with Ethernet, two HDMI, one DVI, five USB and audio in/out.

The same manufacturer has a cheaper dock for USB-A laptops (£100 from [www.snipca.com/36474](http://www.snipca.com/36474)), which adds VGA to the video outputs, but won't power your laptop. **ca**



# Problems Solved

Our experts solve all your tech problems

## PROBLEM OF THE FORTNIGHT

### How do I access my old Zip drive?

**Q** I have an old Iomega Zip drive and disks that I can no longer access. I was wondering if you could point me in the direction of some **drivers** to download? I have tried to download drivers from various sites but am told they need updating. I have access to either Windows 10 or 8.

John Pearce

**A** How much pain do you want to endure? We ask because we suspect you have one of the original Zip drives. Internal models were connected via an **IDE/PATA** interface, while external models hooked up using a cable to the computer's parallel (printer) port.

Modern PCs have neither of these things, though they can be added to desktop models. An IDE/PATA-to-USB adapter costs around £23 from Amazon ([www.snipca.com/36230](http://www.snipca.com/36230)), while a **PCIe** expansion card to add a parallel port costs about the same ([www.snipca.com/36231](http://www.snipca.com/36231), pictured right).

We should also say that several years ago we investigated whether the use of a parallel-to-USB adapter cable might do the job. However, in discussions with a reader, we subsequently discovered that these are wired only for ancient printers, and will not allow a Zip drive to communicate properly

with a PC. So scrub that option, whether or not you have a laptop or desktop PC.

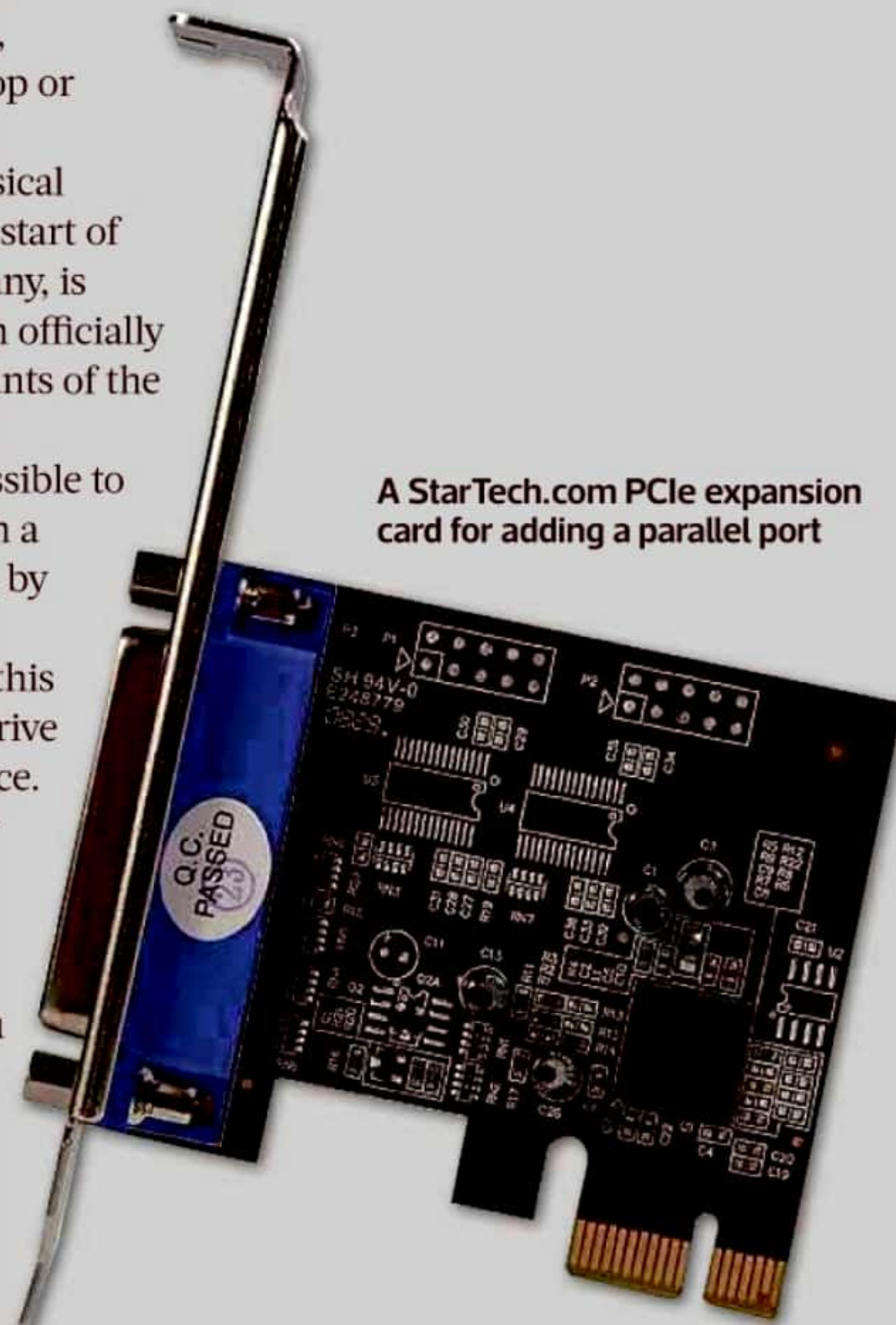
Investing in any of these physical interfaces would merely be the start of the process. Iomega, the company, is long-dead, so no drivers remain officially available for these ancient variants of the Zip drive.

Our research suggests it's possible to install these outdated drivers on a Windows XP **virtual PC**, hosted by the likes of VirtualBox ([www.virtualbox.org](http://www.virtualbox.org)) – and then use this to communicate with the Zip drive via an installed physical interface. However, you'd need to have or otherwise obtain a copy of XP, so that is also likely to be a non-starter for you.

In the unlikely event that you do get that far with this route, then first install the drivers you've downloaded into your virtual Windows XP PC. Next, you need to tell XP how to detect your 'legacy' Zip drive via the physical interface. That needs to be done in Device Manager. Press Windows key+R, then type **devmgmt.msc** and press Enter.

Next, under the Ports heading, right-click 'Printer Port (LPT1)' and choose Properties followed by

A StarTech.com PCIe expansion card for adding a parallel port



the Port Settings tab, and then tick 'Enable legacy Plug and Play detection'. Click OK.

After all that, your Zip drive will hopefully appear as the next available drive letter in File Explorer. Understand that this is all theory, as we do not have any of these ancient Zip drives to test all this with. For that reason alone, we'd advise against spending any money here: we're simply not sure if any of this would work.

One thing that should work, though, is one of the later variants of the Zip drive, which connect via USB. These are no longer manufactured but we did find a couple on eBay, one of which ended up selling for £31 (see screenshot left) – that's a ballpark second-hand price.

Such a drive should just plug in and work on any Windows 10 PC, and is likely to prove the simplest and cheapest solution here.

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Back to home page | Listed in category: Computers/Tablets & Networking > Drives, Storage & Blank Media > Floppy, Zip & Jaz Drives

Bidding has ended on this item.

lomega zip 100 external drive - translucent blue + **USB** and power cable See original listing

Condition: Used

Ended: 17 Sep, 2020 15:07:32 BST

Winning bid: £30.99 [ 13 bids ]

Postage: £3.10 Economy Delivery

Item location: London, United Kingdom

Seller: chiupe189 (58 ★) | Seller's other items

Sell one like this

Old Iomega Zip drives with USB connectivity can still be found on sale second-hand



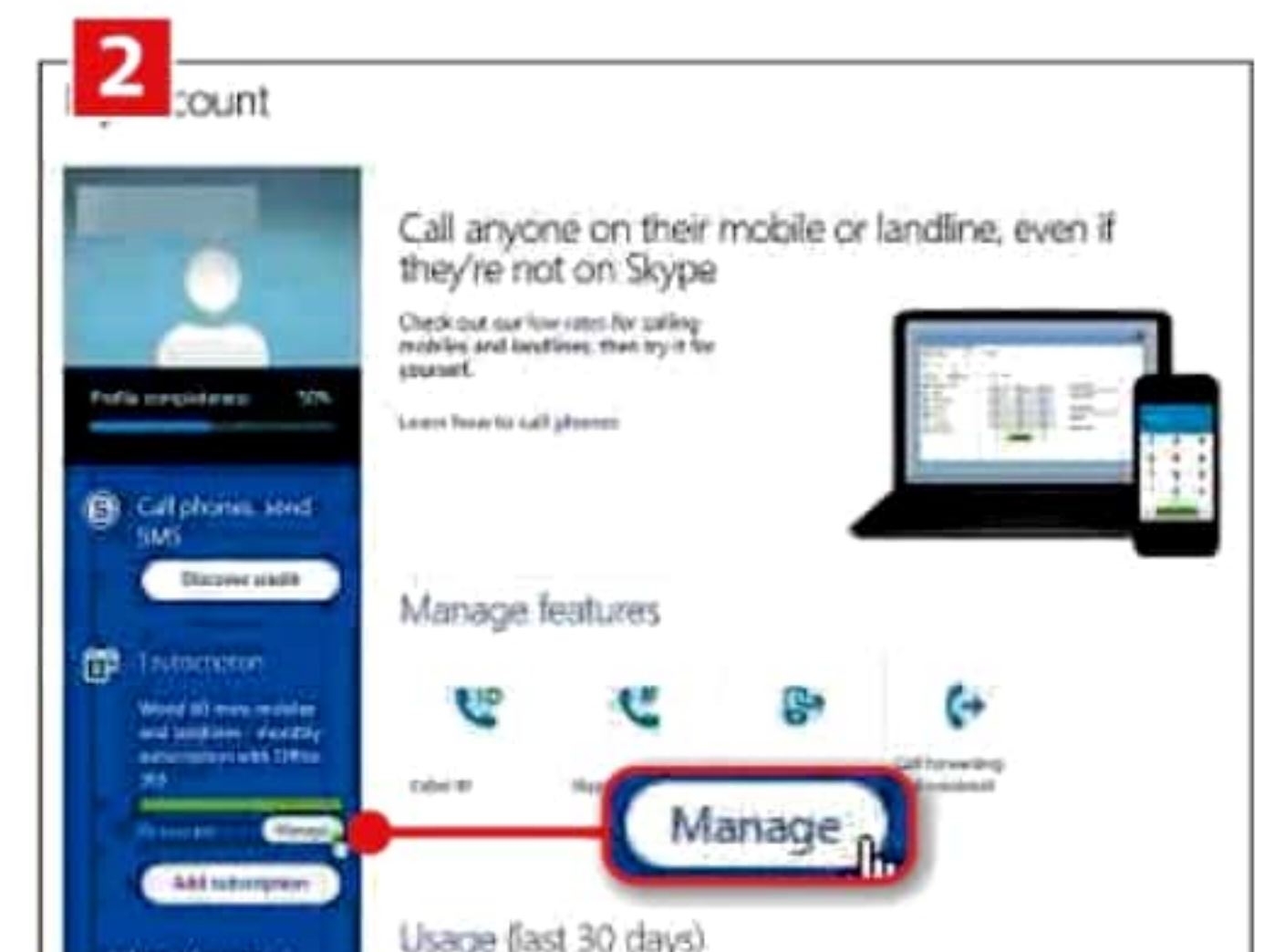
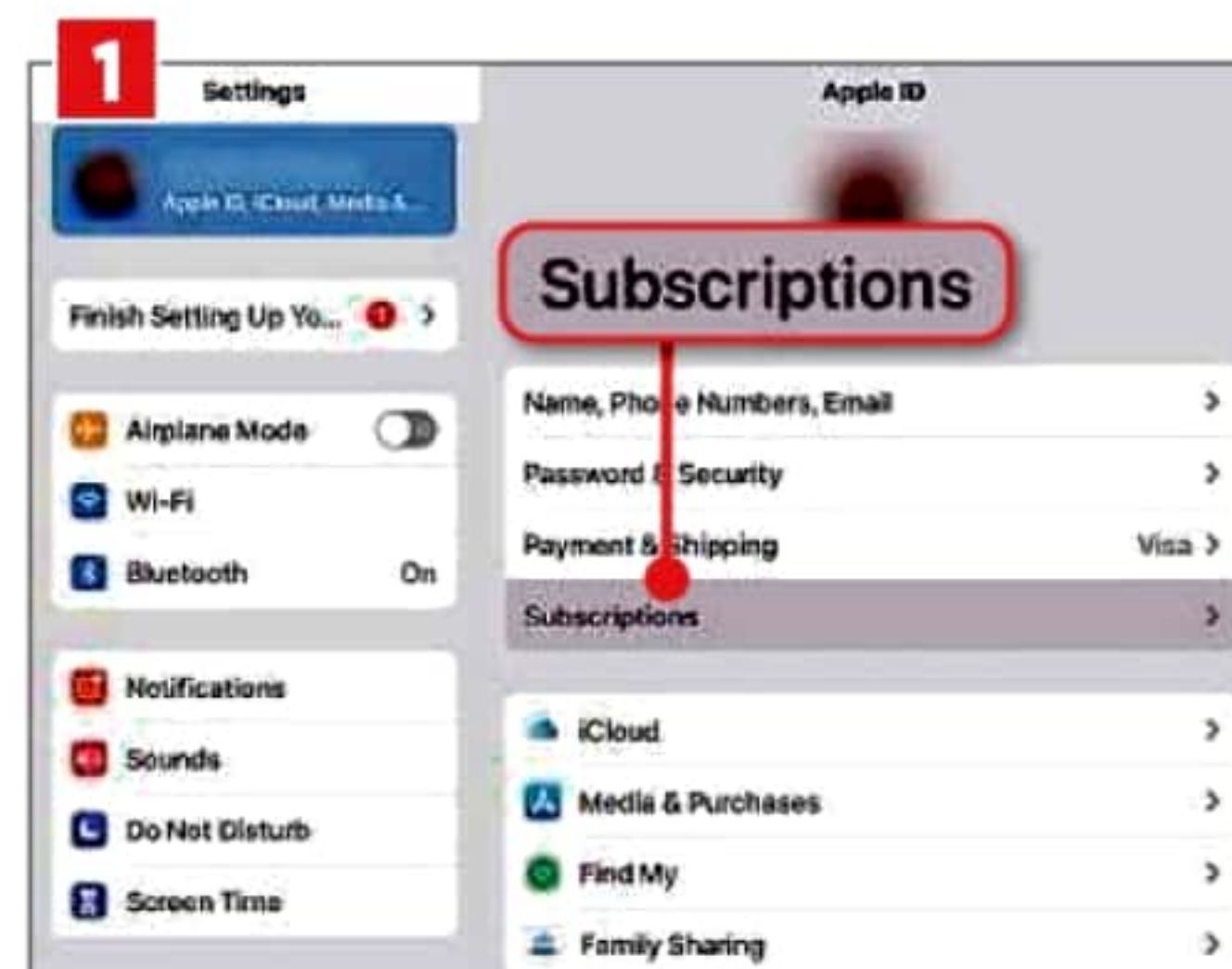
## How do I cancel my Skype subscription?

**Q** During the pandemic I tried to use a few programs to communicate with my family, signing up for a free trial with Skype. I soon realised that my family preferred Apple FaceTime, because they use iPads. This is where my problem started. I tried to cancel my subscription but seemed to go around in circles. It was also confusing as the site seemed to want to cancel other facilities used in Microsoft 365, prior to cancelling Skype. Meanwhile, Microsoft is happily helping themselves to more fees. Please could you help me to cancel my subscription? I'd normally ask my sons to help but with Covid rules they're reluctant to come inside the house.

Ted Arnold

**A** As noted in Issue 589's Cover Feature, 'Cancel Old Software & Services', companies delight in making cancelling digital subscriptions as confusing as possible. Indeed, Skype is particularly bad, as there are various ways to use the service – including as part of a broader Microsoft 365 subscription – and various ways to sign up.

If it's the case that you signed up for a



To cancel Skype on Apple devices go to 'Subscriptions'; in Microsoft 365 click 'Manage'

Skype subscription using an iPad or iPhone then, because of rules enforced by Apple, this particular commitment can be cancelled only from within iPadOS (on an iPad) or iOS (iPhone). In either case, launch the Settings app then tap your name followed by Subscriptions (see screenshot 1). Next, tap the entry for Skype followed by Cancel Subscription.

Alternatively, you need to do it via your Microsoft Skype account page, which you'll find at <https://secure.skype.com>. If you signed up for a Microsoft 365 package then you'll see that you have a 'free' Skype subscription that includes 60 minutes of calls. Because this is part of a

bundle, it cannot be cancelled on its own. If that's the case, skip to the next paragraph. If not, click the Manage button, then click the 'Cancel subscription' link.

If your Skype subscription is part of a Microsoft 365 bundle then, to stop the company taking its monthly dues, you'll need to cancel that broader subscription. To do that, first log into your Microsoft account at <https://account.microsoft.com>. Next, under Subscriptions, click 'All subscriptions'. Then, under Microsoft 365, next to the subscription description, click the Manage link 2 followed by 'Upgrade or cancel subscription', and then 'Cancel subscription'.

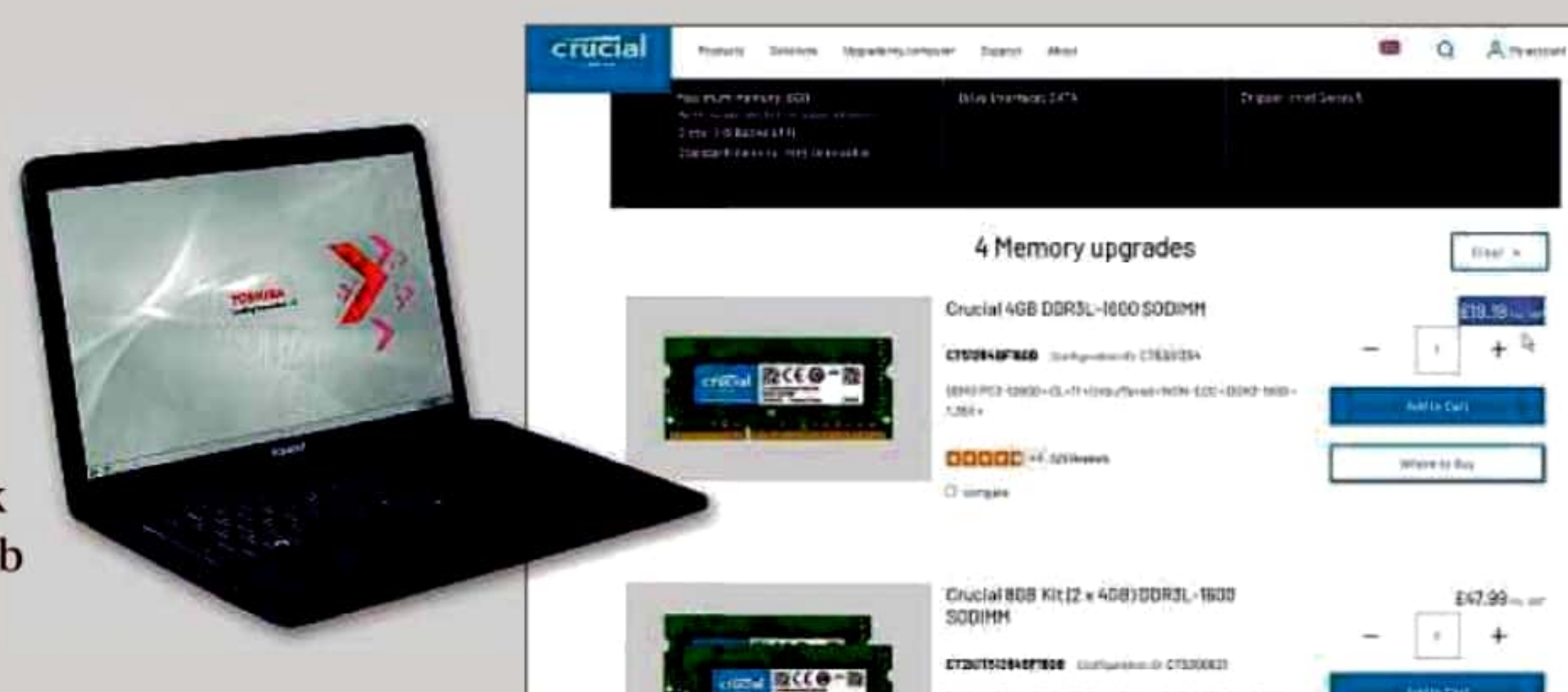
## Can I speed up my laptop?

**Q** I'd be interested in advice regarding my laptop. It's a Toshiba Satellite C660 running Windows 10. It's quite quick to load but it struggles to manage web pages with lots of info. What part should I replace?

David Salter

**A** We don't know the full model name of your laptop but Toshiba's C660-series (pictured above) date back up to a decade, with the most recent being around seven years old. They're also basic computers, pitched at the budget market – so we're not surprised that it's struggling with modern websites.

Regardless, there's only so much you



Crucial System Advisor will tell you which memory module to buy for your laptop

can do to speed up any laptop. You could fit an SSD to replace the hard drive but it sounds like, save for websites, the machine's running reasonably well. As such, we'd focus on the memory.

A laptop of this vintage probably came with 4GB of RAM, and it is likely that this can be upgraded to a maximum of 8GB. This is an easy, affordable job – and one that'll speed up many everyday operations, including visiting memory-

hungry modern websites.

Visit the Crucial System Advisor tool ([www.snipca.com/36300](http://www.snipca.com/36300), pictured above) and input your exact laptop model: it'll tell you which memory modules to buy for your machine. Expect to pay around £20 for an additional 4GB module. Fitting is usually a question of unscrewing a panel on the laptop's underside and slotting the new module(s) in place.



## Why can't I click Outlook links?

**Q** Since my computer crashed last year, clicking links in Outlook emails results in a message that says the operation has been cancelled due to restrictions placed on the computer, and that I should contact the administrator. I am the administrator! I've had a local IT company remotely access my computer but they were unable to fix the issue. Now, any links I get in emails have to be opened using my iPad. What do you suggest I do?

Gordon Wright

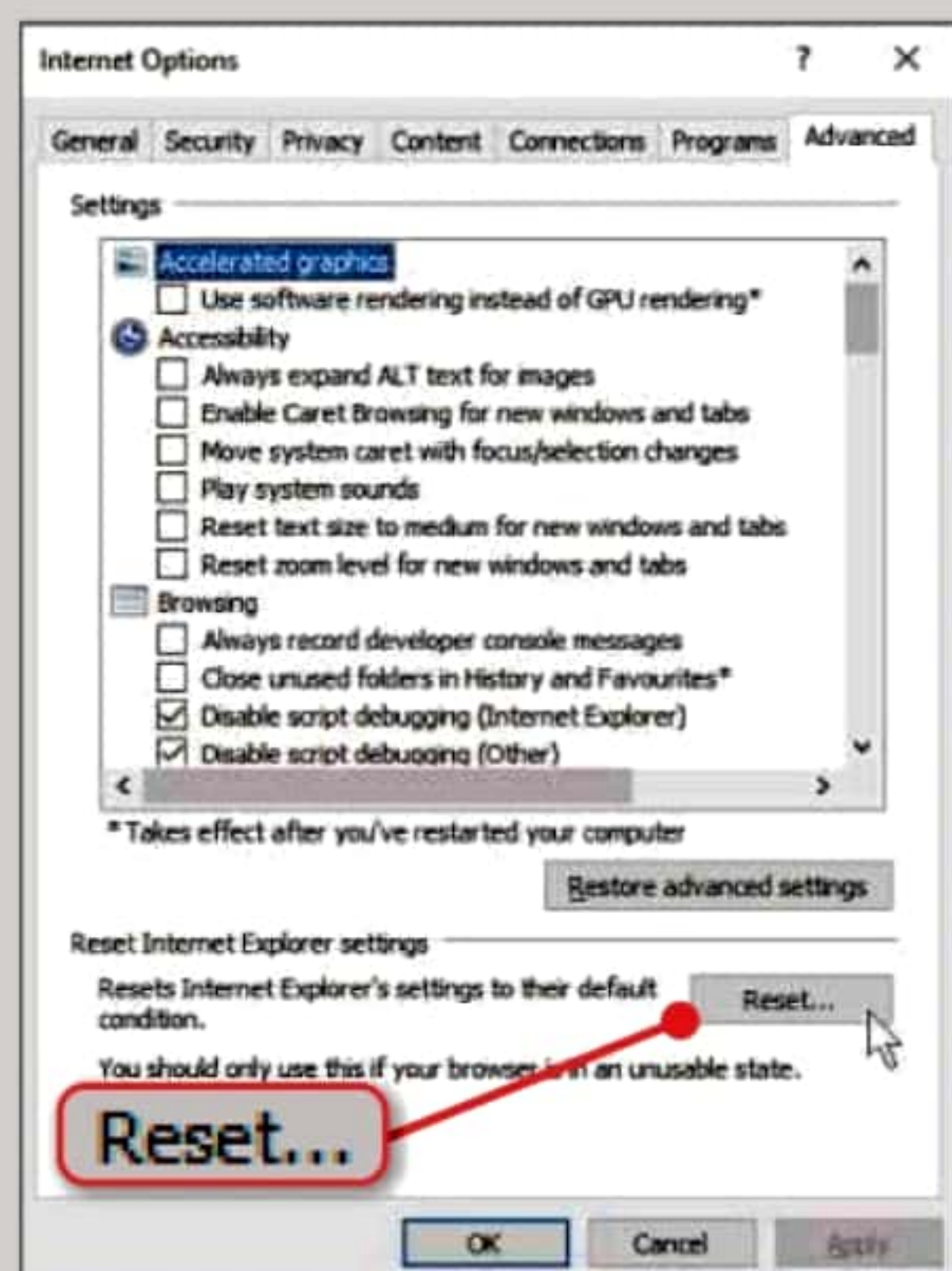
**A** This is actually an old bug that affects only some versions of Outlook.

Confusingly, the fix is to be found in Internet Explorer (IE) – even if you don't use that browser.



So, first, fire up IE then click the Settings cog at the top right and choose 'Internet options'. In the box that appears, click to select the Advanced tab and then,

in the 'Reset Internet Explorer settings' section, click the Reset button (see screenshot below). In the new box that appears, tick the square labelled 'Delete personal settings', then click Reset.



Click 'Reset' in the 'Reset Internet Explorer settings' section

## Can I upgrade Vista to Windows 10?

**Q** I have a laptop with Windows Vista. Can you tell me if it's possible to upgrade to Windows 10?

Robert MacLachlan

**A** We don't know your laptop's make, model or specifications, so it's impossible for us to say for sure if it'll run Windows 10. Microsoft's minimum system requirements, detailed at [www.snipca.com/36301](http://www.snipca.com/36301) (see screenshot 1), state the need for at least a 1GHz processor, 1GB of memory and 16GB of available hard-drive space – but higher is better. Those are the basic hardware requirements, but Microsoft offers no free upgrade path from Vista.

This means Vista users must buy a copy of Windows 10 (or, at least, first upgrade to Windows 7 or 8/8.1 before they can get their hands on a free copy of 10, from [www.snipca.com/36302](http://www.snipca.com/36302)).

It's unlikely that you have a spare copy of Windows 7, 8 or 8.1 floating around, so you'll probably need to buy a copy of Windows 10. Microsoft charges a minimum of £120 for this 2 (Windows 10 Home, [www.snipca.com/36303](http://www.snipca.com/36303)).

However, you can get it much cheaper by shopping around. Currently, for example, our Software Store is selling



Minimum requirements for Windows 10 (1), which costs £119.99 on the Microsoft website (2)

Windows 10 Pro for just £39.99. Visit [www.snipca.com/34720](http://www.snipca.com/34720) for details 3. We have a limited number of copies available, so you'll need to be quick.

But one final warning: Vista cannot be upgraded directly to Windows 10. Unless you're upgrading first to Windows 7/8/8.1 then the only option is to perform a **clean install** of Windows 10. This means wiping Vista and all your personal files and folders, so be sure to back up your stuff before beginning.



Our Software Store is currently offering Windows 10 Pro for just £39.99

**Q: Do I really need to install Windows updates?**

**A: Issue 566, page 69 – find it on our 2019 Back Issue CD**

Buy it from [www.snipca.com/33711](http://www.snipca.com/33711)





## Why do my SD cards show as 'write protected'?

**Q** I'm running Windows 10 Pro on my main PC. All my **SD cards**, whether formatted in my Panasonic camera or on my Windows 7 or 10 laptops, show in my main PC as 'write protected', even though the locking switch on all of them is in the unlocked position. The cards can be read, formatted and written to on my laptops. I need help!

Glyn Foster

**A** This could be a physical problem with your main PC's card reader, or a fault with a **driver**, or some other Windows flaw. The first thing to try, if it's possible, is to add another card reader to your main PC. If this works, disconnect it again and try removing the drivers for the original card reader.

Press Windows key+R then type **devmgmt** into the Run box and click OK. Your card reader should either appear under 'Disk drives' or 'USB controllers'. Right-click it, select Uninstall, then choose to delete the

One solution to 'write protected' SD cards is to create a new registry entry

driver software.

If the original card reader still isn't working properly after a reboot, the mechanism that detects the card's lock switch position may be stuck, obstructed or broken. Try using a torch to look inside the slot, concentrating on the side that the card's lock switch is on. If there's a build-up of dust, try blowing in compressed air, or putting a vacuum cleaner to the slot.

Some people report that gently teasing the metal arm at the right of the slot can work, but this should be a last resort. If you're going to try it, use fine-nosed pliers to create a tiny hook at the end of a straightened paper clip. Turn the PC off and disconnect it from the power first. Try to hook the far end of the arm out only a millimetre or so. Be extremely gentle: the arm is very fragile.

If you tried a second card reader and



this didn't work, the problem rests with Windows, and may be fixed by adding a new registry entry. Press Windows key+R, then type **regedit** and run the Registry Editor. Navigate to **HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet**, then right-click Control, select New, Key and name it StorageDevicePolicies (1 in the screenshot above). Now right-click that key, select New, 'DWORD (32-bit) Value', then right-click the entry and name it WriteProtect (2). Double-click the entry and set the 'Value data' to 0 (3). Click OK, then reboot.

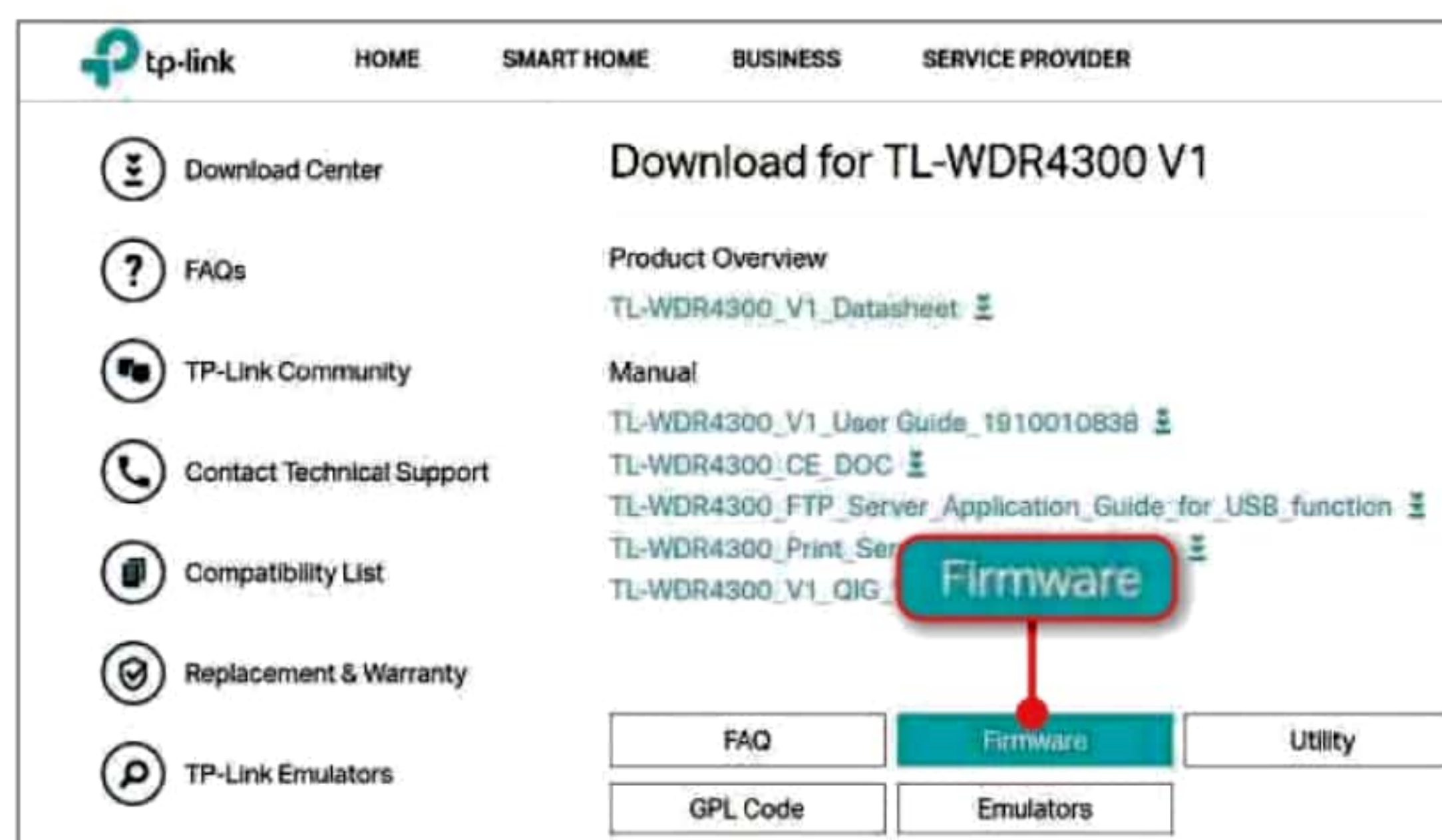
## Why has 2.4GHz vanished from my router?

**Q** I've had a TP-Link TL-WDR4300 router for some time. I configured its 2.4GHz and 5GHz wireless networks with separate **SSIDs**, and set up my devices to prefer the 5GHz one. The idea is we get 5GHz speeds when within range, but things fall back to the more stable 2.4GHz network further away.

That all worked fine apart from some occasional problems where the wireless networks would temporarily disappear. Rebooting the router always brought them back up, but recently the 2.4GHz network has disappeared altogether. I've checked in the admin menu that both frequency ranges are enabled, and tried turning the router off and leaving it for several minutes, but we can only see the 5GHz network.

Is the 2.4GHz network dead?

Colin Gibbs



Click the 'Firmware' button on TP-Link's site to see if there is a more recent version of it

**A** The TL-WDR4300 uses separate **chipsets** to provide its 2.4GHz and 5GHz networks, so it is conceivable that one has failed. However, we suspect it's more likely that there's an odd **firmware** or configuration problem.

Log into the router, open the System Tools menu, select 'Backup & Restore' and create a backup of your settings. With this done, visit TP-Link's site ([www.snipca.com/36241](http://www.snipca.com/36241)) and click the Firmware button (see screenshot above) to check if there's a more recent version of the router's firmware. If so, download

it, click Firmware Upgrade, then select the downloaded file and click Upgrade.

After rebooting the router, log back in and choose Factory Defaults from the System Tools menu. Make a note of the default login settings displayed on the right, then click Restore to restore all settings to their defaults.

Finally, log back in and either manually recreate your settings, or restore them from your backup via the 'Backup & Restore' menu. If this doesn't encourage the 2.4GHz network back to life, it's probably gone for good.



# Problems Solved

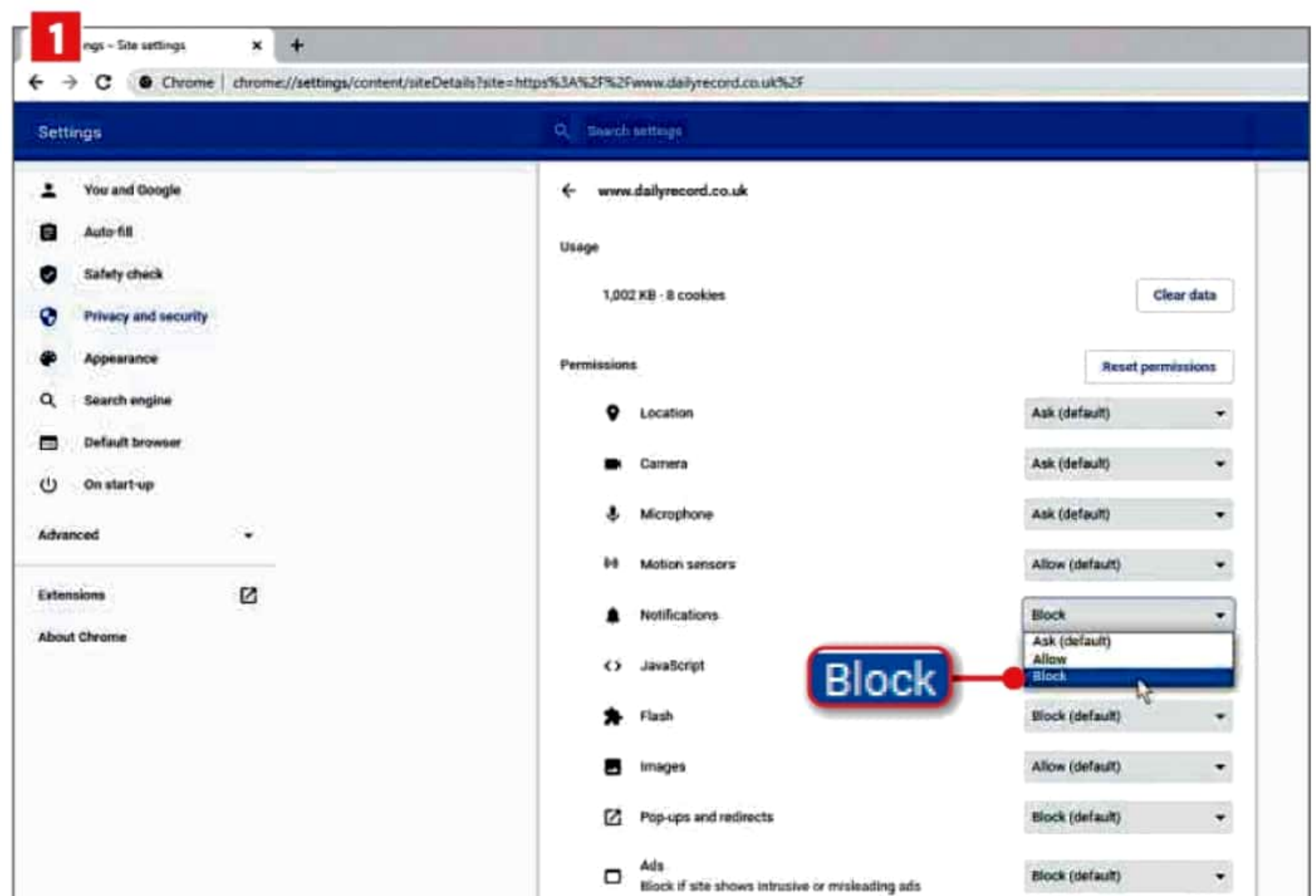
## How do I stop these newspaper pop-ups?

**Q** In Chrome or Firefox I now get pop-ups from a UK newspaper website. The only way I've found to deal with them is to click them, causing the relevant page to display. I suppose I must have clicked something to make this happen in the first place. Is it possible to block all messages from this site? I'm running Windows 10.

Dave Sherwood

**A** It's a bane of the modern internet that every other website seems to want to send notifications. It's also far too easy to accidentally accept them: one hurried click on Allow, and the site can send you notifications with abandon. Evidently, you fell into this trap not just once, but twice – once in Chrome, and again in Firefox.

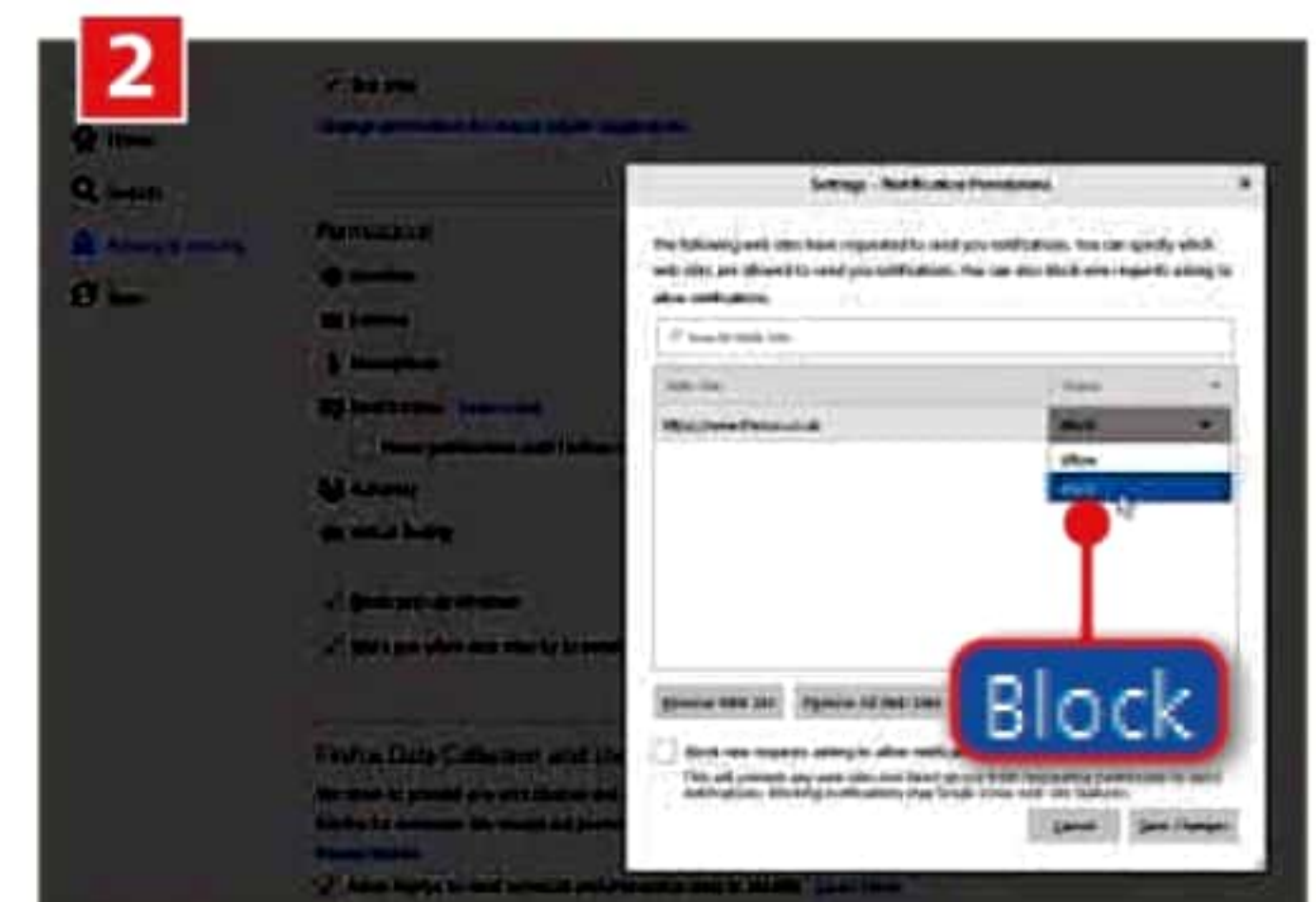
To disable notifications from this newspaper, open Chrome then click the menu button (three dots, top right) followed by Settings. Now click 'Privacy and security' followed by 'Site settings'. Next, under 'Recent activity', look for the offending site. Click its entry and, under Permissions, open the dropdown menu



To stop website notifications in Chrome, choose Block in 'Privacy and security' settings

alongside Notifications and choose Block (see screenshot 1).

In Firefox, first open the menu (three horizontal lines, top right) then choose Options. Next, on the left, click 'Privacy & Security' and then, on the right, scroll down to the Permissions section. Here, alongside the Notifications entry, click the Settings button. Now, next to the offending website, click to open the Status dropdown menu and choose Block 2. Finish by clicking Save Changes.



In Firefox choose Block in the browser's Permissions settings

## Why can't I swipe-type on my iPad?

**Q** On my iPhone 8 the keyboard lets me move my finger around to 'swipe type' words. I find this really useful. I've just got one of the new iPads but this feature doesn't seem to work. Any idea why?

Paul Thrower

**A** Yes, because for whatever reason Apple does not allow this feature to be used on the iPad's full-sized keyboard. If you want to use it, you'll need to shrink your iPad's on-screen keyboard to iPhone size, so it becomes a mini 'floating' panel (see screenshot 1). To do this, using two fingers or thumbs drag inwards from the left and right edges of the big keyboard until it morphs into the smaller one. Reverse the gesture to take it back to full size.



Incidentally, you'll also need to ensure the 'Slide on Floating Keyboard to Type' feature is enabled. To check, launch Settings then tap General followed by Keyboard. Next scroll down to the bottom to check this slider is turned on 2.

To use the 'swipe type' feature on a new iPad reduce your keyboard to a floating panel (1) and turn on this option (2) in Keyboard settings

Slide on Floating Keyboard to Type





## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN...

### Rescue and recovery drives?

**Q**

A friend has told me that I should get a rescue drive in case something goes wrong with my new PC. Online advice suggests that I can create one in Windows 10, but most of these articles refer to a recovery drive. Basically, I'm confused about the differences between these terms. Can you clear things up?

Peter Cornwall

**A**

We suspect we're as guilty as any anyone else in sometimes using the terms 'rescue drive' and 'recovery drive' interchangeably.

However, if we're adhering to Microsoft's current branding then, specifically in relation to Windows 10, the appropriate name is recovery drive. This is because the resulting media is produced using the Recovery Drive tool that's part of the operating system. Note, though, that this tool made its debut in Windows 8/8.1: before that, Windows 7 offered the option to create a 'system repair disk'.

As well, we should say that 'disk' in any of these contexts can mean a CD or

Recovery Drive

#### Create a recovery drive

Even if your PC can't start, you can use a recovery drive to reset it or troubleshoot problems. If you back up system files to this drive, you'll also be able to use it to reinstall Windows.

☒ Back up system files to the recovery drive.



Tick this box to copy both the rescue tools and all of Windows 10 to your USB stick

DVD or, perhaps more commonly these days, a USB stick. With all this in mind, we wouldn't worry too much about the idea of fixed definitions for any of these terms, because the meanings are definitely more than a little fluid. Besides, the main purpose of any such a drive is the same – and that's to get a PC that won't start into some kind of working state so that repairs can be made, or so that Windows can be installed afresh.

To create a recovery drive in Windows 10, click Start then type **recovery** and click 'Create a recovery drive'. In the first box that appears we'd advise ticking the

box labelled 'Back up system files to the recovery drive' (see screenshot) because this will copy both the rescue tools and all of Windows 10 on to the drive. This makes it possible to reinstall the operating system from your recovery drive, should the need arise. Now just click Next and follow the prompts. You'll need a USB stick (like the Kingston DataTraveler 100 G3 model pictured above) that's at least 16GB.

Want to know the difference between technical terms? Email [noproblem@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:noproblem@computeractive.co.uk)

## Can I change the OneDrive icon colour?

**Q**

For various reasons I'm still running Windows 7 on a desktop PC, with Microsoft 365. After one Windows Update, probably getting on for two years ago now, the OneDrive icon in the notification area became invisible, except when OneDrive is busy – as the little 'Processing changes' blue circle appears where I know the OneDrive icon should be. Although it doesn't interfere with the operation of OneDrive, it still bugs me, and I can't find any way of changing the colours of the icon to make it visible again. I wonder if you can?

David Hobbs

**A**

We can't but we do know the cause of the problem, and can offer a workaround.

The invisibility of the icon is because the OneDrive icon is now substantially white (like a cloud). On a typical Windows 7, 8 or 10 taskbar that's fine,



Make your OneDrive icon permanently visible in Windows 7's notification area

because the notification area isn't by default white. However, the 'Show hidden icons' pane in Windows 7 that acts as an overflow area for the notification area which you can access by clicking the little up arrow is coloured white. So, when the OneDrive icon is displayed here it effectively disappears, save for when it's active and the little blue circle appears (see screenshot).

The workaround is to set the OneDrive icon to permanent display, in the main notification area. To do this, first click the 'Show hidden icons' arrow, then click Customize. Next, in the notification area

Icons box, scroll through the list to find the Microsoft OneDrive entry. Click to open its dropdown menu and then choose 'Show icon and notifications'. Click OK and your OneDrive icon should now be permanently displayed in the main notification area, and thus permanently (and actually) visible.

## Next Issue

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- What is this mystery entry on my right-click menu?
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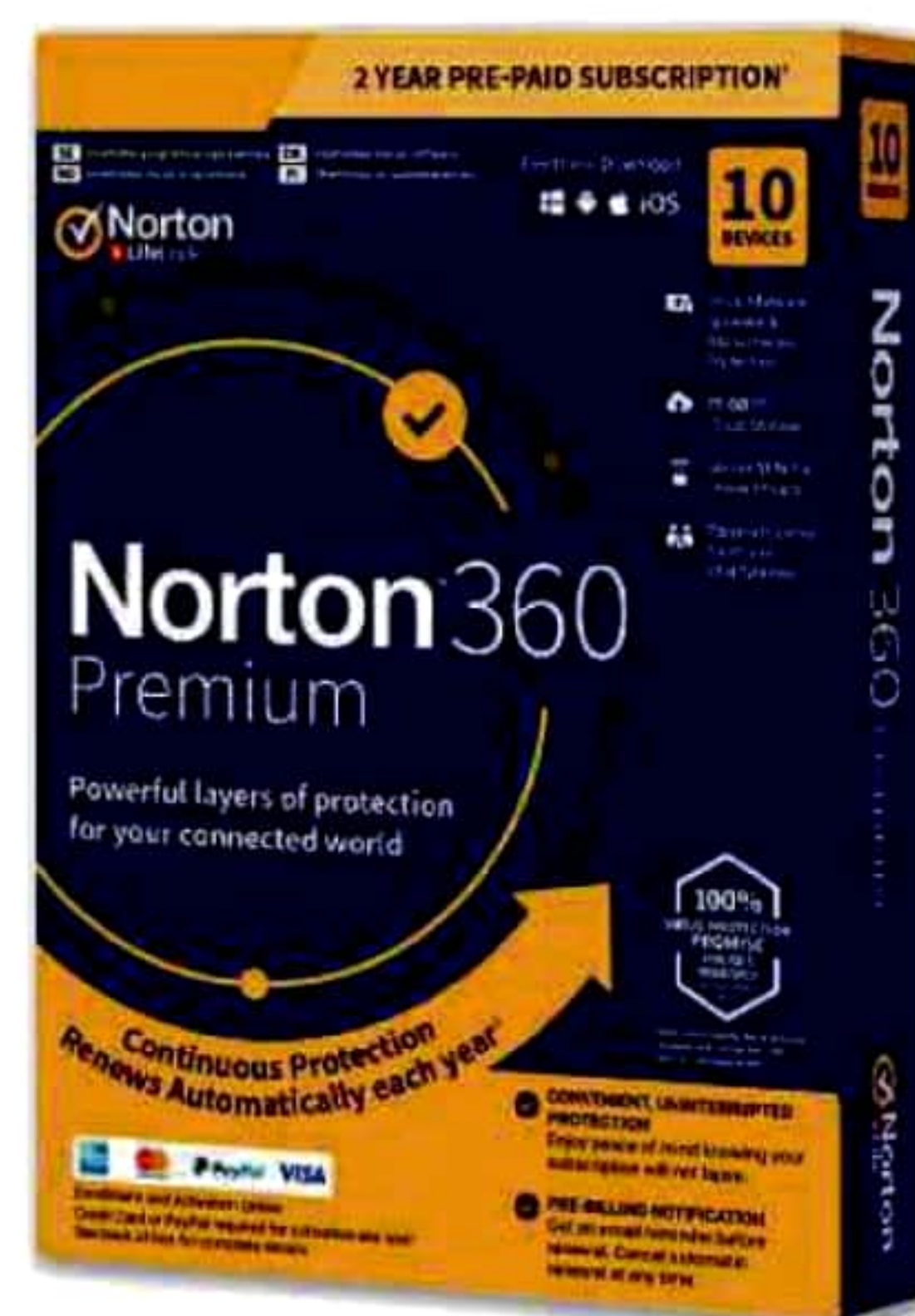
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Having a problem with our recommended software or expert tips? Email [editor@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:editor@computeractive.co.uk) and we'll do our best to help

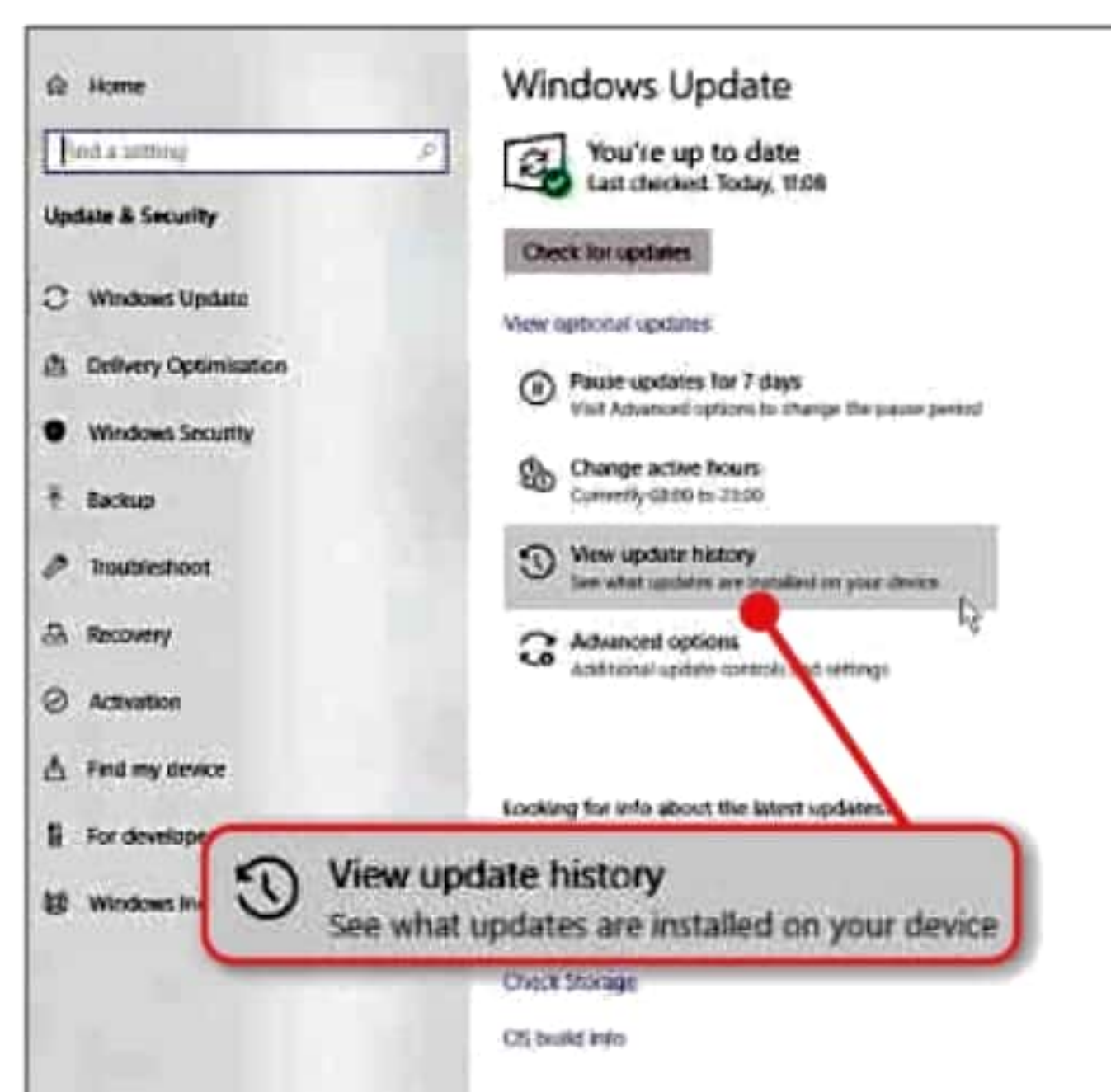
### Where's my Windows update?

**Q** My Windows 10 PC tells me it's up to date, with version 2004 and operating system build 19041.508. However, having read the story in Issue 590's News section (page 7) I'm wondering why I appear to be missing the mentioned KB4576754 update? How does one even find these numbers? They don't seem to be locatable and not in any information given in the Windows 10 System page. Even though I believe I am up to date, my computer still operates relatively slowly – especially at start-up. Any advice or comments?

Richard Avery

**A** The KB4576754 update is in effect an enforced upgrade to the new Chromium-based Edge browser. As such, it affects only those who up to now have stuck with the old Edge. In other words, if you've previously installed the new Edge – as we imagine you have, not least because we've been actively encouraging our readers to do so – then you would never see KB4576754 as an installed update, because you already have what it brings.

To see a list of installed KB numbers, first click Start followed by the Settings cog, then 'Update & Security' followed by Windows Update. Now click 'View update



Click this option to see a list of Windows updates already installed on your PC

history' (see screenshot below left) then, if needed, click to expand the various categories, such as Feature Updates or Quality Updates. The KB numbers are listed next to each entry.

### Why can't I move files to my Safe Folder?

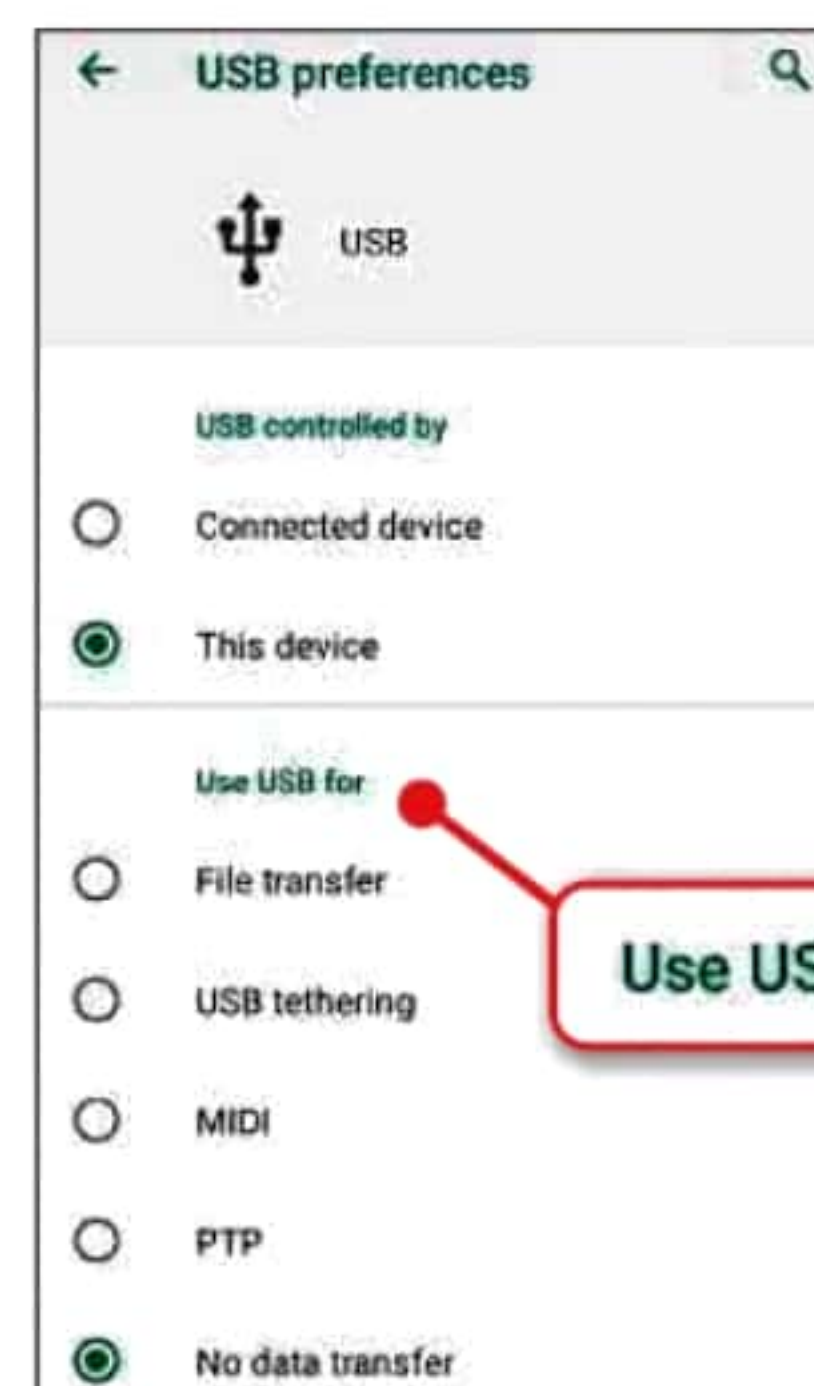
**Q** In Issue 589's Phone and Tablet Tips pages you explained how to use the Safe Folder feature in the new Google Files app to protect sensitive files. I have to say that this would indeed be a very secure guard, because I have spent several hours trying but cannot move a document into the Safe Folder. I do have the Google Files app and have successfully used it to create a Safe Folder, as per your instructions. However, when I tap the More button it does not show a 'Move to safe folder' option. How do I do this last step?

Jeff Evans

**A** Like many things in Android, using this feature isn't always the easiest process. It's compounded here by the fact that the method of operation changes depending on how you're using the Files app. With hindsight, we could have been a little clearer in the various different ways in which files can be moved to the Safe Folder.

So, if you're viewing the Files app in grid view (the little icon with six square dots), then you first need to select the file (or files) you want to move by long-pressing them. Next, tap the More button (three dots, top right) and you should see the 'Move to safe folder' option has appeared.

If you're using Files in list view (the little icon with three dots and lines) then, to move a single file, tap the down arrow next to the file and then tap 'Move to safe folder'. To select multiple files, first tap the down arrow then choose Select. Then tap to select each file before tapping Move followed by 'Move to safe folder'.



If your 'Use USB for' options are greyed out, connect your phone to your PC

### Why are my transfer options greyed out?

**Q** I read the 'How to... Drag and drop between Windows and your phone or tablet' article in Issue 590 (page 35), and thought it would help me transfer photos and so on from my Android phone to my Windows 10 laptop. However, following your instructions, my efforts were soon thwarted. After getting to the 'Use USB for' part the split screen duly appeared (as described, see screenshot above), but 'File transfer' and all of the other options were greyed out. As such, I could get no further. Where did I go wrong?

Mike Salisbury





**A** The problem here is that on some phones those options are left unavailable until the physical cable connection is made to the PC. So, while we did say that the cable needed to be connected between your phone and PC, we suggested doing that after having made the 'Use USB for' setting. Unfortunately, in your case, that won't work.

Instead, you'll need to attach the cable first – at least at the phone end. When you do this, after a moment all the options will become available, so you can proceed with our instructions as published. Apologies for any confusion.



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# Jargon Buster

**3G/4G/5G** Technologies that deliver faster mobile broadband.

**4K** Video with a resolution of at least 3840x2160 pixels.

**720p/1080p** Common types of high-definition video of 1280x720, and 1920x1080 respectively.

**802.11ax** Wi-Fi standard with speeds up to 10 times faster than 802.11ac. Also called **Wi-Fi 6**.

**Add-on** A program that adds extra features to your browser.

**Adobe RGB** A wider colour space than sRGB.

**Ambient IQ** Google technology that enhances sound depending on your environment.

**Augmented reality** Lets you view the real world on a screen and add elements from the digital world.

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

**Beta** A version of software that's being tested.

**Binned** Categorising processors and graphics cards based on their performance.

**Blue light** Light given off by PC and phone screens. Can disrupt sleep patterns.

**Browser engine** Turns website code into pages you can interact with.

**CRT** Cathode-ray tube. Tech used in older, non-flat-screen TVs and PC screens.

**Calibration** Process of checking that colours are accurate on a monitor.

**Chipset** Refers to the microchips on a motherboard that link the processor with other components.

**Clean install** An operating system installation that overwrites all other content on the hard drive.

**Core** Units on a processor that carry out program instructions.

**DDR4** The newest commonly used type of computer memory.

**Delta E** A measurement that shows how the human eye perceives different colours.

**DisplayPort** A new socket for connecting monitors.

**DLSS** Nvidia tech that makes PC games play more smoothly.

**Driver** A file that tells Windows how to work with an external device.

**Dual band** A router that can work at two radio frequencies.

**E-ink** Special type of ink used to display content in electronic devices.

**EXE** A program file designed to run in Windows.

**Firmware** Software stored on hardware to control its operation.

**Frame rate** The number of still images, or frames, shown per second to create a moving image.

**FreeSync** AMD's tech for varying the screen's refresh rate to avoid two frames being shown at once.

**GEDCOM** A file format used by genealogy programs to share data.

**GHz** Gigahertz. A measure of how many instructions a chip can process per second.

**Gigabit Ethernet** A very fast networking standard that can transfer data at up to 1,000Mbps.

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

**HDMI** Connection that transmits high-definition video and audio.

**Heatsink** A block of metal used to dissipate the heat from a PC chip.

**IDE** Interface used to connect hard drives and optical disc drives.

**IP address** A unique set of numbers used to identify computers and websites on the internet.

**JPEG** A common type of image file created by most digital cameras.

**LCD** Technology used to create almost all flatscreen monitors.

**LED** Light-emitting diode. An electronic device that emits light.

**M.2** A standard specification for internal PC expansion cards.

**Machine learning** Teaching computers to learn by themselves.

**Macro** Automated series of commands that can be run at any time.

**Media EQ** Google's system for optimising audio that Nest is playing.

**MicroHDMI** Miniature version of HDMI found on phones and tablets.

**MicroSD card** A small type of memory card.

**Mirror** To display on your TV what's on your PC or tablet screen.

**Network traffic** Data moving across a network.

**NFC** Technology that allows two devices to communicate by being placed near to each other.

**NVMe** An interface that lets solid-state drives work faster.

**Overclock** Make a processor work faster to boost performance.

**P3** A colour space that has a wider spectrum than sRGB.

**PATA** Parallel ATA. An interface for connecting hard drives to a PC.

**PCIe** A faster version of PCI - a slot on the motherboard for cards.

**Plain text** Text in a document that doesn't contain any formatting.

**PNG** A format for images that shrinks file sizes without discarding data.

**Polarity** Where one audio waveform sits in relation to another (ie, above or below the median line).

**Product key** A serial number that must be typed in before a program will launch for the first time.

**RAM** Used for data storage while the PC is switched on.

**Ransomware** Malware run by hackers who lock files on your PC and demand a payment to release them.

**Raytracing** Provides realistic lighting in an image by recreating how light behaves.

**Read speed** How long it takes a hard drive to 'read' data, and respond to it.

**Refresh rate** The number of times per second that the image on your monitor is redrawn (in Hz).

**SATA** Interface for connecting hard drives to a computer.

**SD card** Type of memory card.

**SO-DIMM** The memory chips used in laptops.

**sRGB** A standard RGB colour space for use on monitors.

**SSD** Storage that, unlike a hard drive, uses no moving parts.

**SSID** A name used to identify a wireless network.

**System restore point** Collection of system files stored at a given date to which Windows can revert.

**Timestamp** The time which an event is recorded by a computer.

**Toggle key** Turns a function on and off.

**Tweeter** A speaker designed to produce high audio frequencies.

**USB 2.0/3.0/3.1** Faster successors to USB.

**USB-C** A new connector that's reversible.

**VGA** An older standard socket for connecting a monitor to a PC.

**Water-cooling** Lowering a PC's temperature using water rather than fans.

**Widget** A small program that runs on the Windows desktop.

**Woofer** Speaker designed to produce low-frequency bass sounds.

**Write speed** How long it takes a hard drive to save data.

**ZIP file** A file that contains compressed documents or files.



# Easy when you **Know How**

Keen to find out if his prose needs polishing,  
**Daniel Booth** tries to...

## Improve his writing using Grammarly

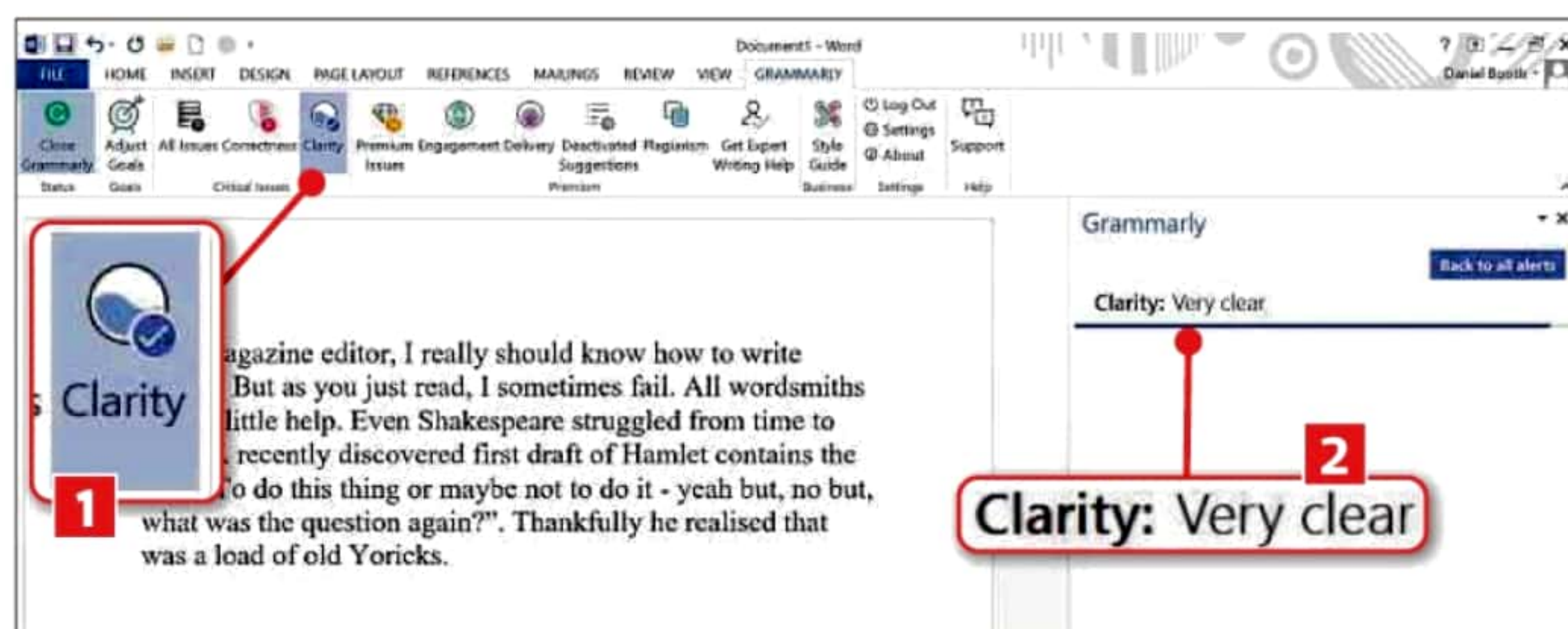
**A**s a magazine editor, I really should know how to write proper. But as you just read, I sometimes fall short. All wordsmiths need a little help. Even Shakespeare struggled from time to time. A recently discovered first draft of Hamlet contains the line: "To do this thing or maybe not to do it - yeah but, no but, what was the question again?". Thankfully he realised that sounded like a load of old Yoricks.

“  
Sadly there's no option  
to 'Avoid the kind of  
befuddling jargon  
used by Microsoft'  
”

With no ye olde internet to help him, the Bard of Avon had to rely on his wit, erudition and inspiration. I have no such excuse. There are loads of online tools designed to polish your writing, the most famous being Grammarly. For years, I've ignored its adverts imploring me to improve my writing, assuming (arrogantly?) that it was better suited to semi-literate graduates who think punctuation is as outdated as brown flares and permed mullets.

But what if I'm wrong? What if Grammarly could eradicate all those long-winded, rambling, meandering, tortuous, convoluted, labyrinthine, serpentine sentences in which I use too many words that mean the same thing?

First, I created a Grammarly account at [www.grammarly.com/signup](http://www.grammarly.com/signup). It asks you to personalise the advice it provides by selecting whether your writing is for school, work or 'other projects', then choose specific help, such as with 'Spelling and grammar', 'Sounding



So, that's clear then – Daniel's writing is very clear...

fluent' and 'Conciseness'. Sadly, there's no option to 'Avoid the kind of befuddling jargon used by tech companies, particularly Microsoft'.

Next, you can ask it to identify when your writing is making you sound angry, forceful, defensive, friendly, informative or neutral. I then chose English as my language, only to be told that to get those advanced tips on making my writing more concise, fluent etc, I'd need to pay £10.99 a month. Sneaky trick, Grammarly. Get people to think 'Hmm, yes, I do want my writing to be concise and fluent', then hide the cost until you've answered all the questions.

I thought about writing an angry, forceful, defensive email to complain, but carried on registering a free account and installed Grammarly's Chrome **add-on** ([www.snipca.com/36569](http://www.snipca.com/36569)) for when I'm writing in Google Drive. It adds a green 'G' to your browser bar, and tells you the tool is in **beta**.

I clicked the green 'Turn it on' button and saw a red circle at the bottom with the number 10 inside. I hovered over this, then clicked '10 critical in Grammarly' and a column appeared on the right suggesting grammatical improvements. These were disappointingly basic, though – mostly suggesting unnecessary commas.

At the top I saw 'Premium suggestions', available only to paying users. I grudgingly clicked it and was met with a long charge sheet of alleged grammatical crimes (wordy sentences, misusing semi-colons and more). But that advice wasn't worth

paying £131.88 a year for.

I removed the add-on and installed Grammarly's Windows tool for Word ([www.grammarly.com/office-addin](http://www.grammarly.com/office-addin)), which places a Grammarly heading at the top of your document. I clicked this to open Grammarly's toolbar, followed by 'Open Grammarly' at the top left, and signed into my account. I then saw the same advice that had been offered by the Chrome add-on, split into basic (free) and premium (paid-for). Disappointed, I returned to the toolbar, clicked Clarity (1 in our screenshot), and was reassured that Grammarly found my writing to be 'very clear' 2 (good job too, otherwise I'd have to fire myself). But other improvement tools (Engagement, Delivery, Plagiarism) required payment.

Those tools tell you who Grammarly's real audience is: marketing professionals writing newsletters, press releases and blogs. Presumably, they somehow left university without knowing how to string a sentence together, and now realise that their bosses expect them to have literacy skills higher than the average eight-year-old.

So my first instinct was right: I don't need Grammarly. Nor, I suspect, do you. I receive dozens of emails from readers every day, most of them eloquent, wry and polite, with few misplaced commas. You don't need to outsource your grammar to expensive software.

✉ Which tools do you use to improve your writing? Let us know: [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)





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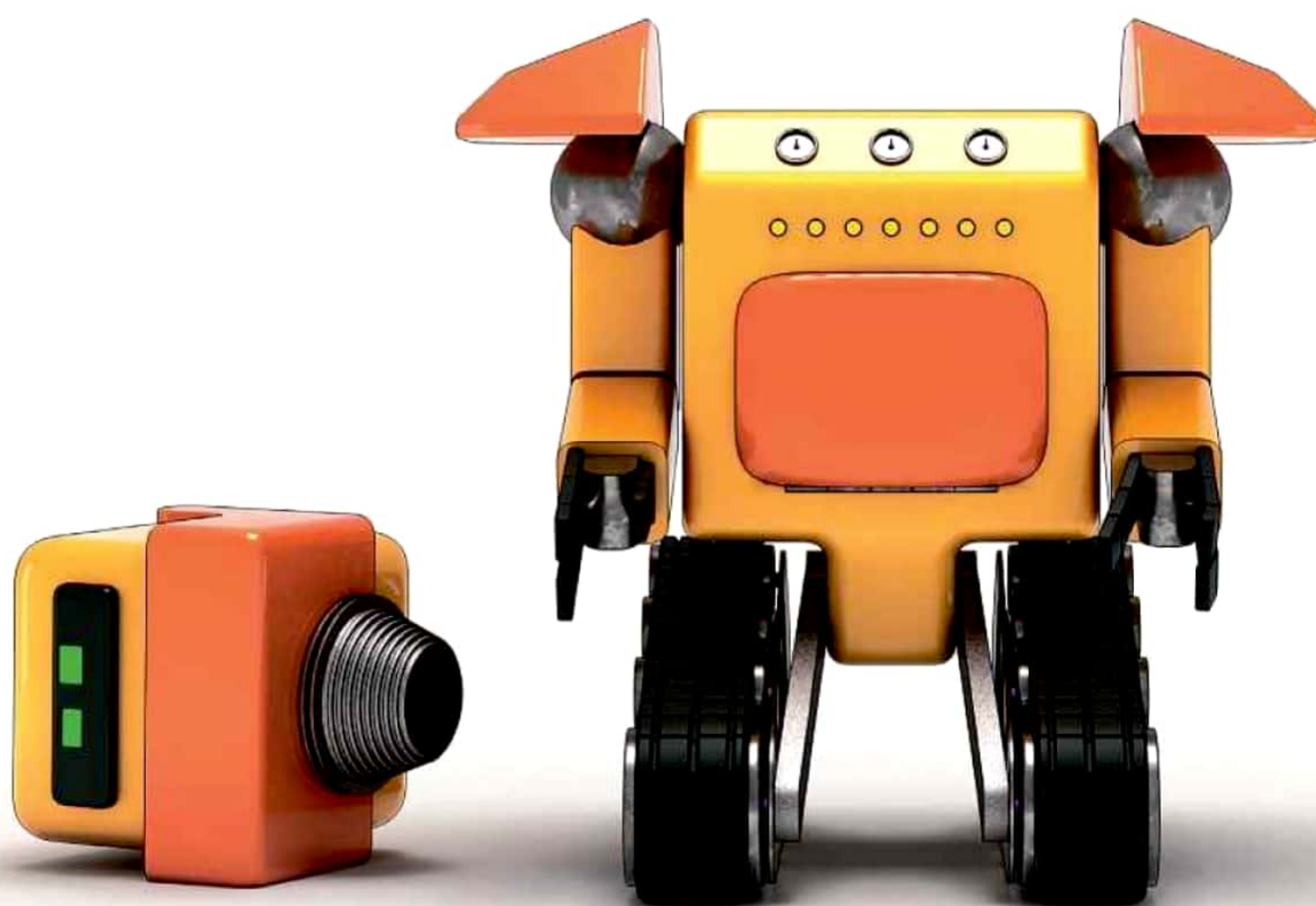
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