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THE WINDOWS 10 UPGRADE TRAP
Microsoft's latest trick to force it on to your PC
Full story p6

Computeractive

ISSUE 466 | 6 – 19 JANUARY 2016

Your friendly guide to technology

What did Einstein know anyway? p49

SYRIAN 'REFUGEE' EMAIL SCAM
Shameless con that exploits your sympathy p14

WARNING! **DON'T TRUST** MICROSOFT'S DEFAULTS
● Off

Change Your Windows 10 SETTINGS NOW!

The 52 hidden settings you must switch (because Microsoft's defaults are not safe) p50

PLUS

THE ONE-CLICK PC FIX YOU NEED TO LEARN p35

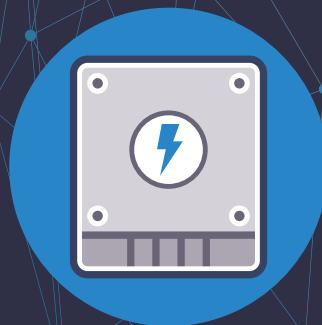**WHICH SOFTWARE DO OTHER READERS USE?** Here's their Top 10 p57

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Welcome

From the Editor

I'd like to propose a new truism: Hell hath no fury like a Windows 10 user whose settings have been changed by Microsoft. Snappy, don't you think? I speak from experience, because I was indeed furious when the first big Windows 10 update, which arrived in November, reverted many of my settings to Microsoft's default.

I wasn't alone. So many of you emailed me to complain that at times it felt like I was working for Microsoft's customer support. Not that I minded, of course. We are here to help, and if we don't, who will (certainly not GuruAid – see page 60)?

As I changed my settings back, I realised that *Computeractive* hadn't explained them in as much depth as we should have. We rectify that in our Cover Feature, which recommends those you should tweak. I hope it helps to alleviate some of your fury.
Daniel Booth
editor@computeractive.co.uk
PS: I'm happy to say that our 2015 Back Issue CD is coming soon. Please visit www.snipca. com/19124 for more details.

p6   p14   p50   p35   p57

THIS ISSUE IN NUMBERS

22.4%
The risk you ran of being hacked in 2015, according to Kaspersky - *p8*

£150
Price of the five-star Nvidia Shield Tablet K1 - *p22*

10GB
Maximum size in Gmail for cloud-storage files - *p58*

HOW TO USE SNIPCA URLs

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

Contents

COVER FEATURE P50

Change Your Windows 10 SETTINGS NOW!

Send massive files for free **p58**

10GB

GURUAID®

GuruAid: friend or foe? **p60**

Stuart's not 'appy **p74**

Nvidia Shield Tablet K1 **p22**

Computer act!ve BUY IT! ★★★★★

Apple iPad Pro **p23**

Computer act!ve GREAT PICK ★★★★☆

OnePlus 2 **p27**

Computer act!ve GREAT PICK ★★★★☆

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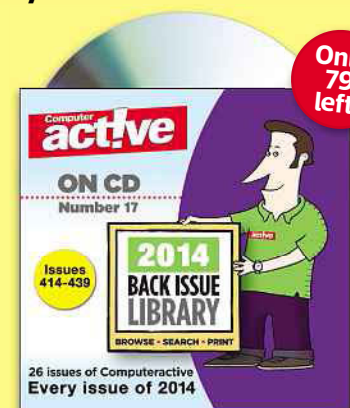
News

New Windows 10 upgrade message 'as bad as malware'

Microsoft has been slammed by technology experts and Windows 7 and 8 users for its latest attempt to persuade them to upgrade to Windows 10. Some critics have even compared the company's tactics to those used by cybercriminals.

Their outrage was triggered by a new message appearing on Windows 7 and 8.1 PCs that seems to suggest users have no choice but to upgrade. Under the heading 'Upgrade to Windows 10' are two buttons giving the options 'Upgrade now' or 'Upgrade tonight' (see screenshot).

At first glance, it looks like you have to upgrade by the end of the day. However, you can simply ignore and close the message by clicking the cross in the top-right corner.

But Microsoft knows many users won't realise this, and will be convinced they must choose between upgrading immediately or when they later turn off their PC.

It was likened to a "salesman tactic" by one angry user on Reddit's

Windows 10 forum (www.reddit.com/r/Windows10). He wrote: "Assume the deal is closed and offer them the car in red or blue".

Microsoft uses another salesman-like ploy in the message by saying that 'Upgrading to Windows 10 will be free for a limited time'. But the message doesn't state the date when the free offer ends, even though Microsoft has announced that this will be 28 July, 2016.

Microsoft will hope many users will be coaxed into upgrading straight away, not realising they still have more than six months to decide.

Microsoft is 'lying to its users'

Critics say that the message should contain a 'no thanks' or 'not now' button. One tech blogger said that Microsoft's marketing is "more reminiscent of malware than a leading technology company". Writing on Forbes.com, Gordon Kelly, accused Microsoft of "selling its users a lie".

This is not the first time Microsoft has used this tactic. An earlier message asked users to 'Upgrade now' or 'Start download, upgrade later'.

Microsoft has defended its aggressive marketing of Windows 10. In a statement to

COMMENT

'Upgrade now' or 'upgrade tonight': what kind of a choice is that? Yes, there's a small cross you can click to close the message, but Microsoft isn't stupid. It knows thousands of PC users, conditioned to click 'upgrade now' to Windows updates, will instinctively select that button. Microsoft's marketing department may approve of this upgrade trap, but it could do lasting damage to the reputation of its new operating system. Many won't stick with Windows 10 if they feel they've been tricked into upgrading.

the website The Inquirer, the company said: "The average user... wants to make sure they've got the most secure and always up-to-date version of Windows, and the feedback we get is that people want that to be as simple and seamless as possible".

But that's unlikely to convince the rising number of Windows 7 and 8.1 users who are becoming increasingly angry by Microsoft's attempts to get them to upgrade.

MICROSOFT TO BAN ADWARE

Microsoft will hope to win back the trust of users irritated by their upgrade messages with a ban on the installation of adware and browser hijackers on Windows PCs. The company said in a blog post (www.snipca.com/19232) that from 31 March all programs that show adverts in browsers must be installed as plug-ins, making them easy for users to remove. Microsoft said it will uninstall any that "fail to comply". The company said it was doing this because "the choice and control belong to the users".

:) **You'll like this...** Facebook is replacing the unsafe Flash plug-in with HTML5 (www.snipca.com/19220)

:(**...but not this** Ofcom says complaints about poor broadband are rising (www.snipca.com/19231)

'Java is unsafe!' Company that makes it forced into confession

The company that makes Java has been publically shamed into admitting that the plug-in leaves users at risk of malware.

Oracle, which is based in California, has been ordered by the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to display a warning about Java's security flaws on its website (www.oracle.com).

The company must make sure this appears on its site for the next two years, and also post a message on Twitter and Facebook linking to it.

By agreeing to these terms Oracle won't need to pay a fine for the flaws.

The FTC accused Oracle of breaking consumer-protection laws by lying about the security of the plug-in. Regulators said that between 2010 – when Oracle bought

Java – and August 2014, the company's updates affected only the latest version installed on PCs.

Crucially, the FTC said, the updates didn't remove many older versions of Java, which were left unpatched on PCs. They contained security flaws that hackers could have exploited.

The FTC said that Oracle "deceived" users by not telling them that old versions of Java remained in place, and that the company knew as early as 2011 that the update process

wasn't working. Oracle formally denies any wrongdoing. The ruling is significant because of how widely Java is used. It is installed on an estimated 850 million computers.

Its safety has long been a concern. In 2013 the U.S. Department of Homeland Security warned users to disable or uninstall Java amid fears that it contained serious flaws.

As well as publishing a warning Oracle must now tell users updating Java that they can remove old versions using its 'Uninstall Tool' (http://java.com/uninstall).

For more information on the ruling read the FTC's blog post at www.snipca.com/19241, titled: 'What's worse than stale coffee? Stale Java'.

All NHS hospitals to get free Wi-Fi to 'cut costs'

Every NHS hospital in the UK is to get free Wi-Fi in order to cut costs, the Government has announced.

The service will be available in all NHS buildings, including GP surgeries. It means patients will be able to go online using phones, tablets and laptops, although probably no sooner than 2020.

Currently some hospitals charge for Wi-Fi, while others don't offer it. Day rates to go online can be as much as £5.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt said that providing free Wi-Fi is an essential part in making the NHS "a world leader in digital healthcare" by the beginning of the next decade.

The Government hopes that medical staff will also benefit from better Wi-Fi because it should mean they spend less time on paperwork, and more on patient care.

Hunt added: "It will give patients and staff the ability to access the services they need as well as freeing up clinical time and reducing overall costs".

There are also plans for patients to wear digital monitors that alert medical staff to problems, such as

when diabetics have hypoglycemic attacks.

The decision follows a report from Martha Lane Fox, a campaigner for greater internet access, that called for the NHS to make better use of digital services (see News, Issue 465).

One of her proposals was, by 2017, for 10 per cent of patients at every GP practice to book appointments and order prescriptions online. She also called for patients to "self-monitor" their conditions using NHS-approved apps. Payment for providing the free Wi-Fi will come from a £1bn technology fund, Hunt said.

News

Update your browser! Microsoft ends support for old versions of IE

Anyone using Internet Explorer (IE) should make sure they are using the latest version of the browser, after Microsoft announced it will soon end security support for older versions. The company has confirmed that from 12 January it will support IE11 only. This means previous versions will no longer receive technical and security updates.

On its website (www.snipca.com/19193) Microsoft explains the risks of using older versions of IE: "your PC may become vulnerable to harmful viruses, spyware, and other malicious software".

Microsoft isn't exaggerating the threat. As soon as support ends, hackers will go all out to exploit this and infect PCs with malware. Recent figures suggest that around 124 million people are still using old versions of IE. They will all be at serious risk from 12 January if they don't upgrade.

Support will continue for IE11 only on PCs running Windows 7, 8.1 and 10. IE11 was never released for XP or Vista. Anyone using XP or Vista should switch to Firefox, which Mozilla still supports on old versions of Windows. Google will end support for Chrome on XP and Vista in April this year.

IE11 will be Microsoft's final version of the browser, having replaced it with Edge (www.microsoft.com/edge) as the default browser in Windows 10.

You should be safe using IE11 for the time being because Microsoft says that the browser will receive security updates for as long as Windows 7, 8.1 and 10 are supported.

If you have automatic updates switched on for Windows you'll probably already have been updated to IE11. To check, open IE, press ALT+H on your keyboard then click 'About Internet Explorer'. A box will appear confirming your version (see screenshot above).

Which browser should you now use? Find out in our next issue - out Weds 20 Jan

Has your money been stolen? Bank hacks rise in 2015

The risk of having your money stolen by hackers rose in 2015, according to leading antivirus company Kaspersky.

In its latest annual Security Bulletin Overall Statistics Report (www.snipca.com/19183), Kaspersky said that it blocked attempts to launch malware "capable of stealing money via online banking" on 1,966,324 computers, a 2.8 per cent increase from 2014.

It also said that five per cent of all attacks on UK users involved a banking Trojan. PC users in Singapore were most at risk of financial malware, followed by those in Austria and Switzerland.

Kaspersky's analysis of online attacks overall in 2015 placed the UK in the 'medium-risk' group. In this category the number of Kaspersky users being attacked while browsing the web was between 21 and 40 per cent.

The UK is near the bottom of this 'medium' list, with a risk factor of 22.4 per cent. Russia is top of the 'high-risk' group with 48.9 per cent, with Germany (32 per cent), Australia (28) and the US (26.4) somewhere between the two.

Kaspersky, whose security software has won the past seven *Computeractive* antivirus group tests (see page 68), has been producing end-of-year bulletins since 2006. They are based on statistics gathered from Kaspersky users who have agreed to submit their data.

The world's gone mad!

Once again, Google's annual list of popular search subjects offers proof that we live in a dumbed-down age. In 2015, more people in the UK searched for details on the new *Star Wars* film than for information about the migrant crisis, the General Election, the birth of Princess Charlotte and the discovery of water on Mars. See all of Google's 2015 lists at www.google.com/2015, though be warned that they contain many celebrities you've never heard of.

Would ISIS win a world war fought online?

Security experts say that terrorists are better prepared for cyber-warfare than governments

World War 3 will be fought online, and ISIS will win. That's the terrifying prediction from security pioneer John McAfee, founder of the antivirus company that bears his name.

In a provocative article for the International Business Times, McAfee says that "the next major war will be a cyber-war". He warns US citizens that they face threats from many enemies, all of whom have "demonstrated some measure of tech savvy". Foremost is ISIS, whose medieval lifestyle, McAfee says, doesn't stop them "using unencrypted social media tools like Twitter to communicate and recruit new members".

The danger doesn't just come from terrorist groups, though. McAfee accuses China and North Korea of having "massive programs devoted to weaponized computing".

The Director of the FBI agrees. In 2014 James B Comey said that there are two kinds of big companies in the United States: "those who've been hacked by the Chinese and those who don't know they've been hacked by the Chinese".

McAfee is scathing about the US government's inability

John McAfee
Guard Against the Impostures of Pretended Patriotism

to cope with a cyber-attack, claiming it wouldn't be able to mount "a credible defence". In a war, hackers would infiltrate the complex network of computers that maintains the national infrastructure of developed countries like the US and UK. The severity of this threat, McAfee argues, means we are "living in a doomsday machine of our own design". Nuclear power stations, cars, planes and financial systems would all be used against us.

So what can be done to prevent this apocalyptic vision from becoming reality? Simple. The US needs to elect John McAfee as its 45th President.

> **We are living in a doomsday machine of our own design**

Yes, McAfee is actually running for the White House as leader of the Cyber Party. Visit the 'Issues' section of his campaign website (https://mcafee16.com/issues, see screenshot below left) and you'll see 'cyber awareness' listed. He wants to boost the "cyber literacy" of Americans so the US isn't "wiped out by more astute nations".

It's hard to imagine many people voting for McAfee next year, but those who do will share his concerns. It therefore benefits him to emphasise the dangers of a cyber-attack. He wants to be seen as an indispensable expert should the worst happen.

But while his talk of 'doomsday' may appear alarmist, he's right to point out the likelihood of future wars being fought on

computers, not battlefields. McAfee warns that America's "unrivalled" military muscle won't matter in a cyber-war. He asks: "What good will tanks, planes and missiles be if you cannot locate the enemy to engage them?"

He compares the West's failure to comprehend the rise of cyber-warfare to how ill-prepared European countries were in coping with Germany's blitzkrieg tactics at the beginning of World War 2.

He's also right to focus on the threat posed by ISIS. They've always been masters of online propaganda, but now they are launching devastating hacking attacks. In November, an ISIS supporter attacked thousands of Twitter accounts, posting online the mobile phone numbers of the heads of the CIA and FBI.

John McAfee won't be the next President of the US, and many will dismiss his warnings as overly pessimistic. But by exaggerating the dangers, he may at least force governments to take them more seriously.

Letters

XP users aren't dinosaurs, but they *should* upgrade

If Windows XP does "everything" that Tom Tottis needs (Letters, Issue 465), then he can't be doing much with his PC. He says there are "good reasons" for staying with XP, but fails to name a single one. That system was already ancient by 2009, when Windows 7 came out. It now feels positively prehistoric! If unearthing old operating

systems was like archaeology, you'd need the world's best carbon-dating technology to locate remnants of XP.

OK, I exaggerate to make my point. But terrifyingly, loads of people still use XP. In fact, even more terrifyingly, loads of companies and councils still use XP. But come on - it launched in 2001 (August 24, to be precise - I just checked on Google). That's so long ago, I can barely remember where I was living, what job I had, or who I was married to. Using the website www.timeanddate.com that you recommended in Issue 464 (Readers' Tips), I worked out that XP launched over 5,200 days ago. That should be 5,200 reasons to upgrade!

I agree that we shouldn't call people like Mr Tottis dinosaurs for using XP. There's no need to be personal and rude. But we should encourage them to switch. I wonder whether they are sticking with XP not because they genuinely like the operating system, but because they are stubborn sorts who think they are sticking two fingers up to the modern world.

Norman Broome

Yes, broadband is as vital as gas and electricity

I agree with Frank Phillips (Star Letter, Issue 464) that nowadays broadband is as important as any other utility. Availability and speed was a factor in our recent decision on where to live in Norfolk; it was never a consideration when we moved house in the past.

We get a decent enough speed, 16Mbps, but odd to say we don't get that other important utility, a mains gas supply! Most other Norfolk villages don't either. So to keep warm and cook people find other ways – electricity, Calor, wood burners, oil.

Maybe this approach should be taken with broadband. Don't wait for BT or the Government or even a collective DIY village scheme. Explore what other options there are and what they cost, such as 4G mobile broadband or, as used in Australia in the outback, satellite broadband.

Peter Rosier

No, fast broadband isn't a human right

Issue 464's 'Star letter' ('Internet access as important as gas and water') was the biggest load of tosh I've ever read in your usually excellent mag.

Anyone who has a phone line has broadband access, and like ours (we live in a city) it's not always fast. I don't know anyone who can't send an email, access Facebook, or watch YouTube videos, even if they buffer occasionally. I know far more people who don't have a gas supply than don't have broadband. The biggest problem I have with a slow connection is downloading software updates, so I just set my PC to 'download' and go away and do something else.

The ability to watch or download films is *not* a necessity. Do we really live in an age where instant gratification is considered to be a human 'right'?

Colin Gray

The countryside needs fast broadband as well

I would like to add my thoughts to the debate regarding rural broadband speeds. Starting with Mark Littlewood from the Institute of Economic Affairs, who says that people living in villages have no right to get fast broadband. He sounds like a typical town dweller, and has no idea about what life is like in the countryside, probably getting all of his information from TV programmes such as *Midsomer Murders*. We aren't all educationally backward yokels or landed gentry.

Where does he think his food comes from? Farmers need to be connected to the internet, as do most rural businesses. Any contact that a farmer has with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural affairs (Defra) is now done via email and on Government websites.

As for Simon Ashwood ('Broadband or rural idyll – you can't have both', Issue 464), I find his arrogance breathtaking. How does he know that it is my choice to live in the country? Just because I live where I do, it does not necessarily follow that I could afford to move to a large town or city. People in rural areas face the same kind of problems as anybody, anywhere,

Do we really need Amazon's drones?

I like Jeremy Clarkson, but I'm not happy to see him promoting Amazon's crazy plan to take over the world by flying drones (News, Issue 465). I can't see how our lives will be improved by having millions of these things swooping over our heads every day. Will we have to duck to avoid them decapitating us? Will they be the technological equivalent of pigeons, buzzing around everywhere? I just don't see the need for them. Are we all now so impatient that we can't wait a mere 24 hours to receive items? Frankly, I'm surprised Jeremy Clarkson

got involved. Normally drones are the kind of thing that get him ranting and raving.

Eric Milne

and without the kind of services that town dwellers have, regardless of the fact that our council tax subsidises the amenities that he enjoys.

To expect the ISPs to provide a reasonable broadband service is not, in my opinion, asking for much. I currently pay BT (we don't have cable out here, just overhead wires) for services advertised as "up to 16Mbps", but rarely get above 5Mbps, so it looks to me like I am subsidising his fast broadband as well.

Rob Wilson

No-brainer? Upgrading to Windows 10 could be 'brainless'

John Lattimore is in danger of insulting a lot of people by saying that upgrading to Windows 10 is a "no brainer" (Letters, Issue 464). I've used Windows 7 for about five years now, and it feels as familiar to me as my own street (where I've lived for 40 years). Why, then, should I throw away all that familiarity just because Microsoft wants me to?

Switching to a new operating system isn't the kind of decision that can be described as glibly as Mr Lattimore did. For something to truly be a 'no brainer' it must require an action so obviously beneficial that refusing to do it would be disastrous. I would like to inform Mr Lattimore that I've been using Windows 7 non-disastrously every day since Windows 10 launched. In my opinion, leaping aboard the latest Windows version without careful planning is brainless, not a no-brainer.

James P Ranson

Don't be scared to sue Apple

Three cheers for Deric White ('Pensioner sues Apple - and wins!', News, Issue 465). Apple may say that its stores are meant to look friendly, but I think they are designed to intimidate you. The impression is that the people working there know everything, and you know nothing. It's tempting to think that a technical problem isn't the result of Apple's incompetence, but your own. I'm grateful to Mr White for showing that it's not necessarily so. Let's hope more people stand up to these arrogant companies.

Gareth Jones

Are BT call centres in Outer Mongolia?

I've been a customer with BT for several years now and had good

Why should my 86-year-old mother use the web just to access the NHS?

I read with some alarm the recommendations of Martha Lane Fox in Issue 465 (News, 'Want to see your GP? Then book an appointment online'). I've heard her talk in interviews before, and found her obsession with the internet borderline tyrannical. I get it that she wants as many people as possible to use the web, but does she really need to go on about it so much? I know she means well, but not everyone loves our 'exciting' new digital future as much as she does.

The Government is partly to blame. Why did it need to commission a report - spending loads of money presumably - to ask whether a 'campaigner for greater internet access' thinks we should encourage more people to go online? Fox was hardly likely to say no.

My biggest concern is her proposal that we use health apps to 'self-monitor' our condition. Is this really about moving the NHS into the digital age, or about saving money? I'm no medical expert, and I don't trust the motives of health apps, so I'd rather speak to a real human being (remember those?) about my painful hip, or persistent cough.

My fear is that in five years, you won't be able to use the full scope of NHS services without going online. I'm sure the Government would see this as progress, but what about those who just don't want to use the internet? What about my 86-year-old mother, who needs regular GP visits, but has never so much as clicked a mouse in her life? Why should she be forced to learn PC skills just so she can access health services that she has a right to?

Lots of questions there. I'm not sure I would like the answers.

Stephen Barrett

The Star Letter writer wins a *Computeractive* mug!

times - and not so good times - with them. I suddenly found I was being charged for landline calls when for years I had free calls in my package. So I rang them and tried to work it out with the young lady. She was very nice and tried to help me, but I must have spent half the time asking her to repeat what she had just said. We finished and to be quite honest I was just as bewildered as before I rang.

In many ways I felt sorry for the girl as she can't help her accent, which in other circumstances I'd find charming. But BT should get clear-speaking operators. Where are their call centres? Outer Mongolia?

So I thought I'd send an email to BT and hopefully get a better understanding of our conversation. But you can't send an email. If you have a problem they suggest going to their question and answer page. Can you ever find an answer that suits your problem? Never. So they suggest I should call them instead. It's just a never-ending carousel.

Roger Thompson

Consumeractive

Can I get a refund for a digital version of a magazine?

Q I wanted a print issue of the magazine *Simply Cards & Papercraft*, and so went online to Pocketmags (www.snipca.com/18985) to buy it. But I mistakenly ordered the digital version. I've not downloaded it, but Pocketmags won't give me a refund; only offering me a download of a different magazine if I want it. Can it do this?

Alice Morland

A It can, but only because Alice didn't contact the company within the 14-day cooling-off period allowed by the Consumer Contract Regulations (CCRs). This law, which replaced the Distance Selling Regulations in 2014, has updated your rights relating to digital content – now treating it the same as physical items bought online.

If you want to reject digital content, such as apps, software, magazines and music, you must tell the retailer within 14 days of purchase. But you're entitled to a full refund only if you haven't downloaded the content. We couldn't find any mention of your rights under the CCRs on Pocketmags' website. Its terms and conditions say digital versions "are non-returnable and non-refundable after purchase". But provided you've followed the CCRs, this is incorrect.

CASE CLOSED

Will I get a smaller refund if I've opened the goods?

Q Whenever I buy presents, before wrapping them I always open the box to check they're OK. But is this such a good idea? I've read that retailers can deduct money from a refund if goods have been opened, so I'm worried I may not get a full refund if I need to ask for one. Should I stop opening the boxes?

Hugh Bent

A Hugh should certainly consider leaving the boxes unopened in future because retailers are allowed to reduce a refund if the goods have been used, or can't be sold again as new.

This seemingly clear-cut definition hides all kinds of legal ambiguities. There's uncertainty about when a fair examination of an item is so thorough it becomes defined as 'use'. Some retailers may argue that opening a box counts as use, if the box is somehow integral to the product.

The law on returns changed in June 2014, when the Consumer Contracts Regulations (CCRs) replaced the Distance Selling Regulations (DSRs). Previously, under the DSRs, retailers couldn't force you to return goods in its original packaging. The law didn't care if this meant retailers couldn't sell returned goods 'as new'. It does now, giving retailers more protection.

Our advice is to be very careful. Don't open goods if there's a picture of the product on the box because this won't be considered a fair 'examination', and retailers won't be able to re-sell the item as new.

Even if there isn't a photo and you open the box containing the item, try not to damage the packaging. Also, don't switch on devices such as a phone, tablet or laptop merely to make sure they work.

Of course, none of this matters if the goods are inherently faulty. In such cases, opening or damaging packaging won't affect your right to a full refund or replacement.

CASE CLOSED

Is Vax offering warranties it won't honour?

Q I was researching types of carpet cleaner and noticed online that Vax was offering six-year warranties. But then I read Brian Kirk's case against Vax in Issue 463 and my heart sank. If Vax has admitted that its six-year promise was a mistake, why is it still allowed to advertise it online?

Maureen Fairbrass

A The simple answer is that Vax wouldn't be allowed to advertise a warranty if it was unable to fulfill it. It would be breaching the Consumer Protection Regulations (CPRs) by making a false statement. The CPRs prohibit unfair trading practices such as 'misleading actions' and 'misleading omissions' that entice consumers to buy when they may not have otherwise.

However, Vax told us that the six-year warranty does apply, but to certain premium models only. The company covers itself on its website by saying that all its products have a warranty of "up to" six years (see screenshot). Legally there's nothing wrong with this claim, but clearly customers find it misleading. We've told Vax it may want to clarify the wording.

CASE CLOSED

Can I use online comments as evidence?

Q A Kindle Fire HD I bought from John Lewis in 2012 has begun to have problems with its USB charging port. My John Lewis warranty has run out, so they told me to go to Amazon. But Amazon wouldn't offer a repair – they tried to sell me a refurbished model. Comments I've read online indicate lots of people are having the same problem. Can I use these as evidence that the fault is inherent, and therefore force John Lewis or Amazon to give me a new tablet?

Ian White

A Unfortunately not. Unverified comments don't provide legal proof that a product is faulty because the judge can't question those who made the complaints.

However, there's one way you *can* use online comments. You'll have to get at least one of the people saying they've suffered the same problem to file a witness statement backing up your claim. These are admissible in the small claims court, and the witness isn't required to attend. However, you have to let the company you're suing know you'll be doing this so they can request evidence.

Ian's next move should be to tell John Lewis that he is getting the Kindle Fire independently tested to assess whether the fault is inherent. If this is proved, Ian should ask John Lewis to refund the cost of the test, and to repair or replace the tablet. If this isn't possible, Ian is entitled to a pro rata refund; meaning John Lewis doesn't have to refund him the full amount because he's used the tablet for three years.

CASE UPDATE

Mediation avoided as PC World refunds reader

If a laptop is so faulty it needed to be repaired four times in four months, then we would expect the retailer to provide a full refund. Happily, that's what PC World has offered *Computeractive* reader Jacob Ninian, whose case we investigated in Issue 464. Initially, after testing Jacob's laptop, PC World accused him of damaging it. Jacob would have had to get his laptop independently examined to prove the fault was inherent.

Jacob had earlier asked us whether it was worth taking PC World to the small claims court because the retailer was showing no sign of helping him. We would have advised him instead to try mediation, in which an independent body attempts to resolve a dispute. This became a more realistic option in October 2015 when new laws were introduced to force retailers to inform dissatisfied customers they are allowed to take their complaint to a dispute-resolution body.

Also, from January 2016, retailers have to provide customers with a link to an online dispute resolution scheme. However, crucially, retailers don't have to agree to mediation; they only need to tell the customer that it's an option.

Mediation can be expensive, with some companies charging about £50 an hour (the exact amount will depend on the size of your claim). Overall, it can work out more expensive than taking a company to the small claims court. It's a confusing picture though, because you are actually offered free mediation if you take a company to court. We'll cover mediation in more detail in a forthcoming Consumeractive.

THIS WILL COME IN USEFUL

Shortcuts to popular searches on Microsoft's website

Internet Explorer
www.snipca.com/18970

Wi-Fi Sense
www.snipca.com/18973

Microsoft accounts
www.snipca.com/18965

Windows 10 apps
www.snipca.com/18967

Service packs
www.snipca.com/18993

Windows Defender
www.snipca.com/18972

Start menu tips
www.snipca.com/18966

Windows 10 FAQ
www.snipca.com/18962

Themes
www.snipca.com/18992

Windows 10 tutorials
www.snipca.com/18964

Wallpapers
www.snipca.com/18975

Windows 10 upgrade
www.snipca.com/18962

What is Cortana?
www.snipca.com/18971

Windows Insider Program
https://insider.windows.com

What's new in Windows 10?
www.snipca.com/18974

Windows Phone
www.snipca.com/19000

Protect Your Tech

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

WATCH OUT FOR...

Email scams from Syrian 'refugees'

What happened?

Email scammers have started to exploit the refugee crisis by sending pleas for help that appear to come from Syrians affected by the civil war in their country.

In a blog post exposing the scam (www.snipca.com/19048), Kaspersky says that the fraudsters hope to take advantage of "the kindness of strangers" by sending emails that tell harrowing personal stories about the devastation in Syria.

Many of the emails purport to come from widows who have huge sums of money to invest following the deaths of their husbands. In one such email the alleged sender, Mrs Haydar, says she needs help to transfer $45.2m. She also wants to leave "this war country Syria" immediately (read all the emails on Kaspersky's blog post.

Other emails offer the recipient financial rewards for helping supposed refugees escape Syria, and set up a business in the UK.

To appear more genuine, the emails have been written to sound like they've been composed by someone who speaks English as a second language. Many scam emails contain unintentional spelling and grammar mistakes, or strange sentence construction. But these new emails deliberately use dubious English to make them seem more authentic.

Another tactic is to provide links to news stories about Syria on the websites of UK newspapers.

What should you do?

You won't be surprised to learn that any email offering you a huge amount of money is a con, so delete it straight away. But it's important not to be complacent. As we revealed in our 'Don't get hacked in 2016' Cover Feature in Issue 465, scammers will try to trick you throughout 2016 by referring to events in Syria and related warnings about terrorist attacks. Kaspersky suggests that this latest attempt could be more effective than many similar scams: "The attention to detail and tone of the emails does just enough to arouse the recipient's interest but not their suspicion".

New tools

Fox Web Security
www.snipca.com/19013

You don't have to share your computer with children to be worried about adult content online. Much of it, particularly sexually explicit material, is vile, and would offend eyes of any age.

We welcome any tool that lets you block it, as Firefox extension Fox Web Security does – though you should tweak its settings. By default, it warns you if a site contains adult content, but doesn't stop it appearing. To change this, in Firefox click the top-right menu button (three horizontal lines), then the Add-ons icon (a jigsaw piece). Next, click Options alongside 'Fox Web Security', then the 'Adult content blocking (parental control)' tab.

Now, under the 'Action for dangerous main request' heading, you can choose
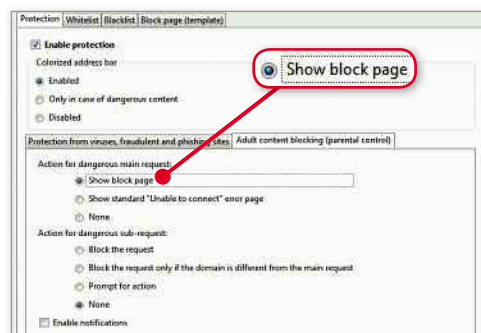
what message the extension will show instead of an adult website. You can choose to see an 'unable to connect' error message, which is meant to disguise your attempt to visit adult content. You may prefer to select the 'Show block page' button, because it tells you, unambiguously, that the website 'is not allowed'.

ScamWatch
READERS WARN READERS

'Virgin Media' billing scam

In early December, I received a scam email. It was apparently from 'Virgin Media', and the subject line was 'Your Virgin Media billing details are incomplete'. I am a Virgin Media customer, so I thought at first it was genuine. It asked me to click a link to update my billing information, but I moved my mouse over the sender's email address, and that revealed the true source (cedbeens.com). I found evidence of the scam on Virgin's Community forums: www.snipca.com/19012. Virgin Media customers can report scams at http://netreport.virginmedia.com.

David Jones

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

Best Free Software

Brilliant new programs that won't cost you anything

IMAGE-EDITING PROGRAM

Paint.net 4.0.6

www.snipca.com/19045

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

Paint, Microsoft's built-in image-editing program, has always been a bit limited. Windows 10 retains Paint and adds a new Photos app. If we're being honest, neither offer much more than basic levels of control over your images. At the other end of the scale, a professional-grade image-editing program, such as Photoshop CC (with its minimum subscription cost of £9 per month), is almost certainly overkill for most users.

Nestled snugly between these extremes is Paint.net – a capable image editor that goes way beyond what's offered by Windows, but isn't bloated with unnecessary features that just bamboozle users. It also happens to be free with absolutely no strings attached.

We've sung Paint.net's praises in the past, and now there's a brand new version that adds a load of new features, including larger brush sizes and custom shapes. Importantly, Paint.net

has also been updated to work with Windows 10.

Download and install the program from the link above (click the blue 'Download Now' link in the box under the 'Download' heading). The program requires a Microsoft component called .NET Framework 4.5 in order to work. If you don't already have this installed on your computer, you'll be prompted to download it during setup.

Paint.net comes with a powerful selection of tools for improving, fixing, cropping and resizing your images. Better still, it provides the opportunity to expand the program's capabilities and effects further via its support for plug-ins. There are hundreds of free ones available, but it's important to make sure you only install those from Paint.net's official source. Below we explain how to safely add them to the program.
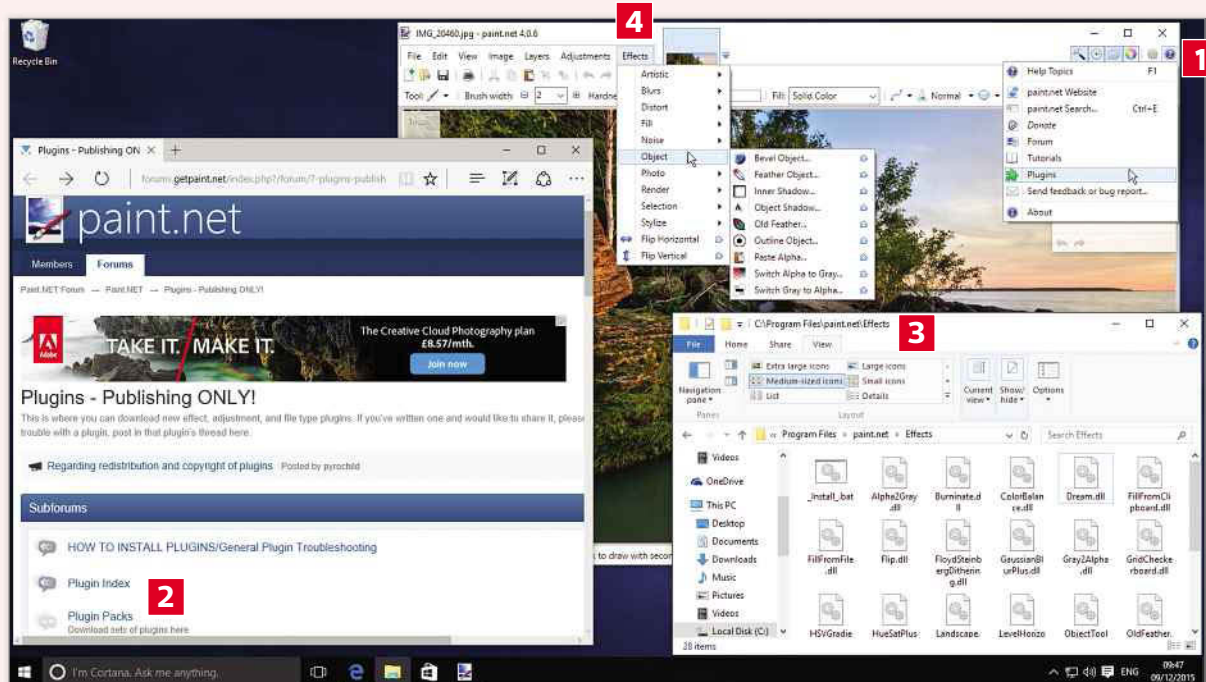
1 Open Paint.net, then click the Help (question mark) icon at the top right and select Plugins from the dropdown menu. This will launch Paint.net's official plug-ins page in your browser.

2 Browse the Plugin Index for an effect or tool of your choice, or select a Plugin Pack, such as BoltBait's Plugin Pack for PdN, which include multiple bundled plug-ins.

3 Download the zip file (you may be prompted to donate money, but this is optional). Extract the contents and copy the files within to **C:\Program Files\paint.net\Effects**.

4 Close Paint.net and relaunch it. You should now be able to find your new plug-ins by clicking Effects and looking through each sub-category. Downloaded plug-ins will be marked with a jigsaw icon.
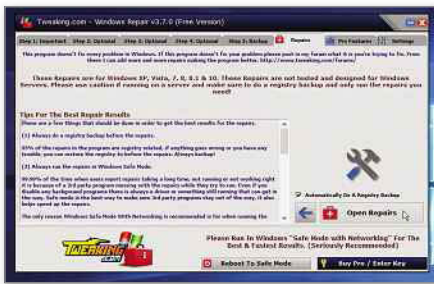
TROUBLESHOOTING TOOL

Windows Repair Free Portable 3.7.0

www.snipca.com/19047

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

Fixing Windows problems can be a frustrating experience, especially if you're not certain what's causing them in the first place. If only there was one single, easy-to-use tool that could automatically check for and repair dozens of different problems, including corrupt file permissions, Registry errors, Windows Update glitches, all in one go. Step forward Windows Repair Free. Click the Direct Download button under 'Portable', then unzip and run the program. Windows Repair Free's tabbed interface will take you through a sequence of optional troubleshooting steps before conducting a series of automated repairs (preferably in Safe Mode). It isn't guaranteed to cure every PC problem, but if you're having trouble, Windows Repair Free is definitely worth a try. The latest version includes updated support and fixes for Windows 10, but look out for any fake 'Download now' adverts when downloading the program.

ADMIN TOOL

NirSoft MMCSnapInsView 1.00

www.snipca.com/19046

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

The Microsoft Management Console (MMC) is a powerful set of Windows tools that let you monitor and configure your computer. The problem is that individual MMC

components – known as 'snap-ins' – are scattered across different areas of the operating system, so it's often hard to find the one you want. MMCSnapInsView – yet another great tool from Nirsoft – provides a very simple way of viewing and accessing all of MMC's components in one place. You can view information about each snap-in and even open multiple snap-ins at once by Ctrl-clicking the ones you want, then right-clicking and selecting 'Open Selected SnapIns In MMC'.
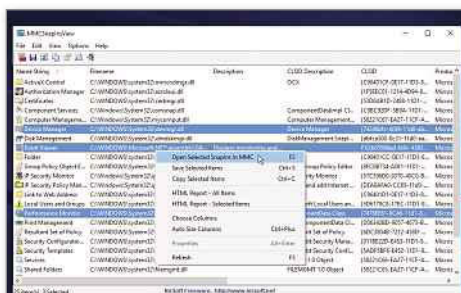
How can I make my own greetings cards?

Q I have been using Corel Print House to design and print my own greetings cards for some time. Last year, however, I encountered compatibility problems when I tried to run the program in Windows 8.1, and I realise that the situation is unlikely to improve when I eventually move to Windows 10. Can you please suggest an inexpensive (or free!) and uncomplicated alternative for this task that will work in Windows 8.1 and 10?

Colin Hague

A You could try HP's free program Photo Creations (www.snipca.com/19060). The program lets you design all manner of printable items, including invitations, calendars and greetings cards for all occasions. It's easy to use, lets you either print yourself or order prints from HP, and works fine in Windows 8.1 and 10. However, certain 'premium editing features', including image enhancement, custom borders and advanced text designs, require a small fee (£6.49) to unlock.

Another solution would be to create your designs using a free image editor, like Paint.net (previous page), then import your image into Word and use free downloadable templates – such as those offered by Avery at www.snipca.com/19059 – to incorporate your designs into a printable greetings card.

You could also try using an online service, such as www.funkypigeon.com, to design your own personalised greetings cards and order prints to be delivered. You can choose your preferred templates, upload your own images, and personalise your messages using online tools. This route isn't free, but prices start at £1.79 per card, which isn't bad if you factor in the money you'll save on printer ink.

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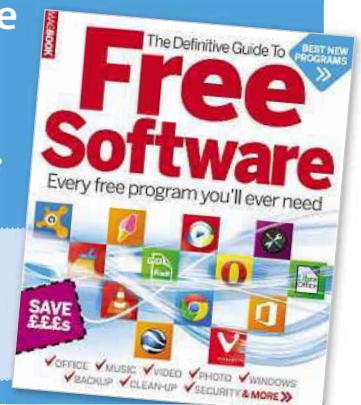
Reviews

New products tested by our experts

Microsoft
Lumia 950

Windows 10 finally goes mobile

Windows 10 isn't just big news for PCs. This was meant to be the upgrade that would unify Microsoft's operating system across desktop PCs, laptops, tablets and phones. Instead of the full-on software on your computer and limited, sort-of-compatible apps on your mobile devices, you'd have the same thing everywhere. It's obviously the way things should be.

Unfortunately, it's not quite what we've got. When Windows 10 arrived for PCs and tablets, it didn't work on phones. Now, after a short delay, there's a distinct mobile edition. This phone, under the Lumia brand name that Microsoft acquired when it took over Nokia, is the first to run it. More models from Microsoft and others are sure to follow.

> **You can use the phone as a desktop PC, but why would you want to?**

There's no fingerprint sensor to wake up the Lumia 950, but you can set up Windows 10's 'Hello' feature to recognise your face when you peer at it. Once the screen comes on, it looks more like an updated version of Windows Phone 8.1 than a phone version of Windows 10. As before, your home screen is filled with Live Tiles that you scroll through vertically.

However, thanks to Microsoft's new Universal Apps system, everything does feel very consistent with the PC version of Windows 10. And the underlying promise is that app makers can write a single program that adapts to all devices. This is demonstrated in the Photos, Mail and Calendar apps, which feel familiar but are nicely reworked for the phone display.

Microsoft Office didn't convince us, though. You get special versions of Word, Excel and PowerPoint – known as Office Mobile – with a user interface designed for small touchscreens, which means you have to relearn where everything is. Unlike Apple's equivalent apps, these aren't free: you'll need an Office 365 subscription (from £6 a month, www.snipca.com/17852) to use all the features. Not many other apps have been redesigned for Windows 10 Mobile yet. Maybe it'll catch on, but the history of Windows Phone suggests maybe it won't.

In an unexpected twist, you can use the phone as a desktop PC. A feature called Continuum lets you plug a monitor or TV into the Lumia (with an adapter), add a Bluetooth keyboard, and pretend you're using a PC. Apps scale up for the big screen. You use the phone as a trackpad. It's a clever way of doing something we're not sure we'll ever want to do.

Even though the Lumia 950 has a decent processor, Windows 10 Mobile sometimes feels juddery. The battery can charge wirelessly, which is handy, but lasted us only 10 hours of video playback. The sharp AMOLED screen has good colour reproduction, but doesn't go bright enough. You get a reasonable 32GB of storage, plus a microSD card slot for up to 200GB more. And the best feature is the stabilised 20-megapixel camera, which takes pictures with exceptional subtlety. Video, at up to 4K resolution, is also good, although you can't lock exposure for more professional results.

The camera in the middle of the rear panel has a metallic porthole – the only decorative feature on an otherwise minimalist exterior. Elsewhere, the matt black or white plastic finish doesn't feel top of the range. The awkwardly tilted Windows logo is apologetically small, and you could easily mistake the word 'Microsoft' on the front for a label saying 'Microphone'. If this had been designed by satirists to suggest a corporate dinosaur out of touch with consumer fashions, they couldn't have done a better job.

VERDICT: For £120 less than an iPhone 6s, this is almost an excellent phone, but only consider it if you're a big Windows 10 fan who doesn't already use iOS or Android

★★★☆☆

ALTERNATIVE: Samsung Galaxy S6 **£350** Excellent value at current prices, this comparable Android phone only disappoints by omitting a microSD slot

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PC | **£650** from Currys www.snipca.com/19072

HP Pavilion 23-q110na

An all-in-one PC that doesn't have it all, after all

A computer built into a monitor is a good idea, but it can still be a waste of space. Although you're losing the big box, you're not gaining anything: these machines are basically laptops with bigger screens and no keyboard, so performance won't match a similarly priced tower desktop PC. And of course you can't carry them around, unless you're one of those brave people on the internet who uses your iMac in Starbucks (www.snipca.com/19076), at a pizza restaurant (www.snipca.com/19077) or on the train (www.snipca.com/19075).
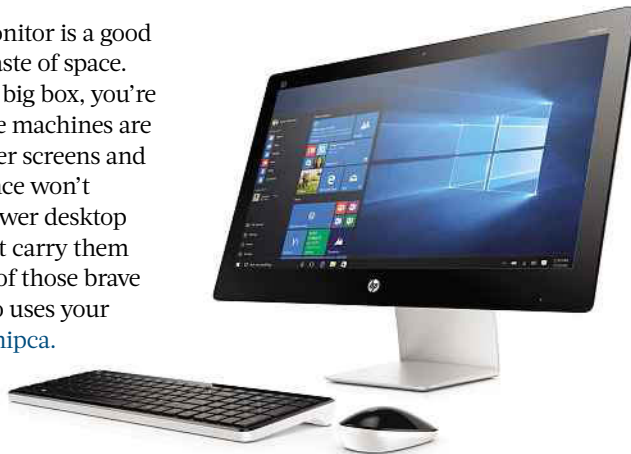
> **A bright, vibrant touchscreen can't compensate for poor performance**

So you'll need good reasons to choose an all-in-one PC. HP's looks handsome, even if its curved back and tilt stand (reminiscent of a certain fruit-branded rival beginning with 'A') are finished in silver and white plastic rather than aluminium. For the money, though, it looks positively classy.

The same can't be said of the included wireless keyboard and mouse, which look as if someone fully intended to push the boat out with their design, but didn't quite get round to it. The mouse works fine, but it's far too big a lump for the few buttons it offers. The keyboard shares the same glossy black coating, which gets greasy and dusty if you so much as look at it, let alone lay a finger on it. The keys, meanwhile, have a soft and spongy action that takes the joy out of typing.

Still, those parts can be replaced if they bother you. What really matters is the 23in touchscreen, and it's actually very good. It's bright, and the vibrant colours will do justice to your photos and videos. For films and games, the built-in audio is loud and clear enough without having to add external speakers.

The Pavilion 23's problem is performance. The model we tested had a mid-range AMD processor with a sensible 8GB of RAM, which should have been adequate. However, due to the sluggish 1TB mechanical hard drive, Windows 10 didn't feel as smooth and speedy as we'd have liked. Loading *The Guardian*'s home page took five seconds on our fast broadband, plus another three for it to stop juddering as we scrolled around.

AMD's R6 integrated graphics card is more powerful than you might expect, so we got older 3D games such as Dirt Showdown playing smoothly at Full HD resolution on medium quality settings. HP also makes the same system without a touchscreen and with Intel Core i5 processors, or with a dedicated AMD Radeon graphics card for £150 more.

With plenty of connections, including a couple of fast USB 3.0 ports and the latest 802.11ac Wi-Fi, you'll have no trouble putting the Pavilion 23 at the centre of your setup. But disappointing performance and tacky input devices make it a less attractive prospect than it initially seemed.

SPECIFICATIONS

1.8GHz AMD A10-8700P quad-core processor • 8GB memory • 1TB hard drive • DVD writer • 23in 1920x1080-pixel touchscreen • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.0 • Webcam • 4x USB 2.0 ports • 2x USB 3.0 ports • Gigabit Ethernet • Windows 10 Home • 451x568x193mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty
www.snipca.com/19073

VERDICT: It's not bad value and looks good from a distance, but the Pavilion 23 is more of a compromise than we'd like in an ideal world

★★★☆☆

ALTERNATIVE: Palicomp Intel i5 Revolution **£700** An overclocked PC that comes with a Samsung keyboard and mouse. A fast Windows 10 option

Asus Transformer Book T100HA

It's a hybrid, but neither one thing nor the other

Transformer was, as some of you may know, the second studio album by Velvet Underground singer Lou Reed (co-produced by David Bowie). This affordable laptop is hardly a walk on the wild side, but it does come in white, pink, blue or a flattering grey. The name refers to the way it converts from notebook to tablet by detaching its magnetically connected keyboard. So will the T100HA give you a perfect day? (That's our final Lou Reed reference – promise.)

> ❝ The keyboard connects via Bluetooth, so won't work if you turn off Bluetooth to save battery ❞

We should point out at the start that very few of the low-value Windows 10 portable laptops have fully convinced us. But being able to unclip the touchscreen and use it by itself is undeniably useful. Chest-level YouTube-watching is hard on the arms with a conventional laptop, but if you love to watch things on TV, holding the T100HA at that height is quite practical: without the keyboard, it's only slightly heavier than an iPad.

The display is decent, though not Retina-sharp, with good brightness, high contrast and acceptable colour. There's a camera on the back and a webcam on the front, so you can take pictures and videos. Forget about doing so at night, though, because photos get hopelessly grainy in low light.

Getting the keyboard on and off is simple, and Windows 10's Tablet mode means software works as intended in both formats. As well as small magnetic horns that bend from the hinge to clip the two halves together, there is an electrical docking connector.

This combination keeps everything firmly attached, but the interface only transfers data from the keyboard's USB 2.0 port, into which you might plug a mouse; the keyboard itself connects via Bluetooth, so won't work if you turn off Bluetooth to save battery or for use during flights. Talking of battery life, the keyboard unit uses very little power, but if you forget to charge it along with the tablet it'll eventually run out. The tablet lasted us 11 hours, or nine using Wi-Fi.

Where the keyboard really fails is, simply, in not being a good keyboard. While the screen section has a metal back, the keyboard is plastic, and the slippery, rattly keys and unresponsive trackpad certainly aren't very much fun. Although the stiff hinge lets you adjust the relative angle of the screen and keyboard as you would with a laptop, the heavier tablet section tends to make the whole thing tip backwards.

Performance is also a mixed story. The Intel Atom processor is a fairly new model that promises to cope both with Windows 10 and even a bit of gaming, though not the most demanding 3D action. In our benchmark tests, it wasn't far off the capability of Apple's A8 chip, as used in the iPad Air 2, for most purposes. In practice, though, it seems to be held back by the T100HA's flash storage, which is generously large, at 64GB, but so slow it could almost be a mechanical hard drive. It's like putting a wagon wheel on a Porsche. So there are stutters and pauses where an iPad would be smooth.

Ultimately these flaws were all too much. Although it's an achievement for Asus to offer a machine such as this for such a low price, we wouldn't advise you to ignore the drawbacks.

SPECIFICATIONS

1.44GHz Intel Atom Z8500 quad-core processor • 2GB memory • 64GB flash storage • 10.1in 1280x800-pixel screen • 2-megapixel webcam • 5-megapixel rear camera • 802.11n Wi-Fi • USB 2.0 port • USB Type-C port • Windows 10 Home • 20x265x175mm (HxWxD) • 1.04kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/19081

VERDICT: Many people say that it's impossible to produce a desirable Windows 10 hybrid for £200. This doesn't prove them wrong

★★★☆☆

ALTERNATIVE: Toshiba Satellite C40-C **£200** It doesn't come apart, but if the tablet aspect isn't essential, this larger laptop is a better buy
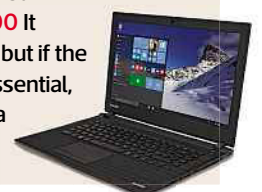
Asus C201 Chromebook

Who needs Windows 10 anyway?

The latest Asus Chromebook ticks all the boxes: it looks like a proper laptop, but weighs less, costs less and the battery lasts longer. The 11.6in screen is just big enough to be practical, and uses old LCD technology that means colours are dull and everything goes weird if you look at it from the wrong angle. So this isn't the best machine for editing photos or watching films. But then that's not the point of it. For typing and surfing the web, via the Chrome OS (Google's lightweight equivalent of Windows), it's fine.

The keys feel a bit squishy, and the compact layout means there's no room for luxuries like a separate Delete key (to erase forwards, as opposed to Backspace). But it's still a proper keyboard, and the stiff hinge lets you tilt the screen to whatever angle suits you. The touchpad works well, too. Battery life is quoted at 13 hours, more like you'd expect from a phone than a PC. We found 12 hours was more realistic – and this fell further with the screen turned up to full brightness – but this is still excellent. If you do have to charge it on the move, you'll need the charger that comes with it. This is because, although it has a microUSB port like a mobile device, a standard mobile charger doesn't provide enough volts. But it'll take less than an hour to fully charge from empty, which is impressive.

You can plug in a microSD card to supplement the C201's 16GB of flash storage. But there's little point, since Chrome OS expects you to work online using web apps, which load from the internet rather than being installed on your computer. Besides Google's own office programs, there are lots of others available, including creative, games and social-media software.

You can also access anything you normally can through a web browser. And, unexpectedly, the C201's Rockchip processor, based on technology from British company ARM, handles web content faster than some budget Windows 10 laptops with Intel chips.

SPECIFICATIONS
Rockchip RK3288C quad-core processor • 2GB memory • 16GB flash storage • 11.6in 1366x768-pixel screen • Webcam • MicroSD card slot • 2x USB 2.0 ports • MicroHDMI port • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.1 • Chrome OS • 18x287x194mm (HxWxD) • 0.98kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/19067

VERDICT: Chrome OS won't be for everyone, but the nippy C201 shows why it can make sense not to weigh down a low-cost laptop with Windows

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: HP Stream 11 £180 With Windows 10 and twice the storage, this similar-sized laptop lasts up to 10 hours but can feel a bit slow

Nvidia Shield Tablet K1

Don't believe the hype: it isn't just for gamers

This is the second attempt at a tablet from Nvidia, the company best known for its PC graphics cards. And it's for gamers. You can tell because it says on the box 'for gamers', with a picture of it running a game. In other images, it's hiding behind a game controller. Its home page is titled 'New Shield Tablet K1 for Gamers'. Yes, Nvidia, we get the message.

But we disagree. Gamers might like to keep the Shield Tablet K1 all to themselves, especially given that it sold out as soon as it appeared shortly before Christmas and is only now coming back into stock. But that would be a waste, because we all have more in common with gamers than we're ready to admit.

For example, 'K1' refers to Nvidia's powerful Tegra K1 processor, a serious rival to the A8X chip in Apple's current iPad Air 2 (which costs more than twice as much as the Shield Tablet K1). It means everything runs very smoothly. In our tests, web pages loaded and scrolled as fast as on Samsung's Galaxy Tab S2, which, again, is far more expensive.

> ❝ Aimed at gamers, but this will satisfy everyone's needs ❞

If you do play all-action 3D games, that will work the processor harder, meaning shorter battery life. Even so, the Shield Tablet K1 can still keeping going for over five hours of demanding gaming, which isn't bad at all. Lay off the gaming, and you'll get much more: 12 hours 39 minutes, to be precise, in our moderate-use test. That's better than an iPad.

Gamers might like to add the £50
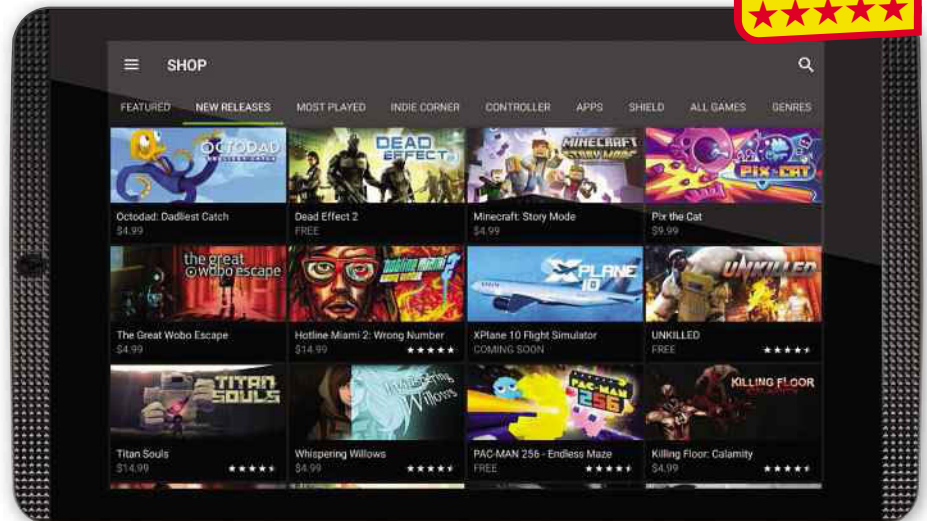
Shield Controller, but you can also play games using the touchscreen. Moreover, to ensure you don't drop it in all the excitement, the Shield Tablet K1 has a matt black finish and stippled rubber panels over the speakers at each end. That extra grip could save you a trip to the screen-repair shop. The speakers, which are loud and bassy, give a proper sense of stereo and are therefore great for watching videos on the widescreen display. Its Full HD (1920x1080-pixel) resolution looks very sharp, and although it only covers about 80 per cent of the sRGB colour range, we found it brighter than other tablets under £200.

You might think buying a tablet aimed at gamers means having to put up with a lot of unnecessary game-based elements. But you'd be wrong. While other tablets come stuffed with pointless extra software, this arrives with just a basic version of Android, which is ideal. The main additions are Nvidia's GeForce Now and GameStream. GeForce Now gives you access to 50 exclusive online games for £7.49 a month; if you don't want it, don't sign up. For PC gamers, GameStream lets you play compatible games from your PC on the Shield Tablet K1 over Wi-Fi, which is handy. A couple of corners have been

cut to give you all this for £150. The £15 stylus included with the previous Shield tablet now isn't, but you probably never wanted it anyway. There's only 16GB of storage, but you can add more on a microSD card. And finally, there's no mains charger. You can either pay £18 for Nvidia's power adapter or provide your own. It's true that standard USB chargers work with lots of mobile devices, but we don't think it's acceptable to leave out such an essential part.

Despite this misjudgement, the Shield Tablet K1 is excellent value.

SPECIFICATIONS

2.2GHz Nvidia Tegra K1 processor • 16GB flash storage • 8in 1920x1080-pixel touchscreen • 5-megapixel rear camera • 5-megapixel webcam • 802.11n Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.0 LE • Android 5.1 • 126x221x9.2mm (HxWxD) • 390g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/19090

VERDICT: Gaming may be Nvidia's thing, but whether or not it's yours, this is still a great mini-tablet at a low price

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE: Google Nexus 7 **£110** The 2013 model of this slightly smaller tablet is due for replacement, but until then it's a decent choice at a huge discount

Apple iPad Pro

A bigger tablet with a new way to draw

Computer active GREAT PICK ★★★★☆

If the smaller iPad is the iPad mini, this should be the iPad maxi. The maxiPad, if you will. All right, maybe not. But this is a better tablet for all sorts of users, not just 'pros'. And with the Apple Pencil, it becomes a whole different kind of computer.

The design matches the iPad Air 2, a rounded aluminium slice. But there are now two speaker grilles at each end; the stereo output shifts according to which way round you're holding the tablet, and it sounds great. In the centre of one side is the Smart Connector, a new magnetic interface for the Smart Keyboard. The Home button, with its Touch ID fingerprint sensor, and the Lightning port remain unchanged, as does the battery life (around ten hours).

The 12.9in screen feels much, much bigger. Like the 9.7in iPad Air 2, it has 264 pixels across and down each inch, and that gives a grand total of 2732x2048 – nearly three times more dots than a Full HD screen. Not only does it look super-sharp, but its colour accuracy is excellent, beating previous iPads.

Inside is Apple's own A9X chip, which is more powerful than the processors and graphics cards in many laptops. Every app works smoothly, and even tasks like editing HD video in iMovie won't keep you hanging around. You can shoot video with the rear camera, which also does slow motion and 8-megapixel photos.

The iOS 9 operating system isn't as flexible as Windows 10, but the new Slide Over and Split View options help to make your work space more practical by showing two apps at once. While Microsoft's similarly sized Surface Pro 4

only comes with a trial period for Microsoft Office, Apple gives you its equivalent apps for free.

What's not free is the £79 Pencil. This has a fine nib that senses both pressure and angle, and works with a layer of sensors built into the iPad Pro's screen to make it respond exceptionally quickly and precisely. It gets close to the subtlety of a real pencil, letting you draw very fine lines and control shading. Some lovely apps, including Apple's own Notes, make the results look real, too. The Pencil is easy to charge, but there's nowhere to stow it.

Apple's Smart Keyboard (£139) is firmer than Microsoft's Type Cover, but can prop the iPad Pro at one angle only, and currently comes with American keyboard labels, although you can simply ignore these. Logitech already has an alternative (£110 from www.snipca.com/18916), and others will follow. Unlike Microsoft, Apple doesn't support a trackpad, so you still have to touch the screen to select things or move the cursor, and text editing isn't quite as slick.

VERDICT: It's pricey, especially if you opt for the Pencil, Smart Keyboard and a larger storage option, and it won't replace a PC. But the iPad Pro is a wonderful tablet

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Microsoft Surface Pro 4 **£749** With more storage, the Windows 10 tablet is arguably more practical (see page 20). Its stylus is included

SPECIFICATIONS
Apple A9X processor • 32GB flash storage • 12.9in 2732x2048-pixel touchscreen • 8-megapixel rear camera • 1.2-megapixel webcam • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Touch ID fingerprint sensor • iOS 9 • 306x221x6.9mm (HxWxD) • 713g • One-year warranty
www.snipca.com/18914

The best…
Touchscreen gloves

The North Face Denali Etip Gloves
£30 from www.snipca.com/18957
Touchscreen gloves mimic your skin's conductivity to work like fingers. The Denali have very responsive tips on all four fingers and the thumb. Being thick gloves, they're a bit too clumsy for typing, but you'll stay warm.

Mujjo Touchscreen Gloves
£24 from www.snipca.com/18952
These thin woollen unisex gloves come in a choice of colours and are woven through with conductive threads, so you can use any part of any finger. An alternative design (about £27 from www.snipca.com/18953), in black only, adds a cuff for a smarter look and silicon dots to help grip your phone.

Mujjo Leather Touchscreen Gloves
£100 from www.snipca.com/18956
For the ultimate in quality, Mujjo's waterproofed lambskin glove, lined with cashmere, is 'infused with nanotechnology', which we think means particles of silver. Users report that these work well but the thumbs are too generously cut, so you may be left with a squishy bit at the end.

TouchAbility Grip Gloves
£10 from www.snipca.com/18961
Available in black, navy or red, these acrylic woollen gloves are woven with stainless steel for all-finger touchscreen use and also have hundreds of PVC dots to stop your phone slipping. Although the style is basic and the sizes a little tight, they're practical and good value.

Reviews – smartwatch round-up

£270 from Amazon www.snipca.com/19122

Huawei Watch

GREAT PICK ★★★★☆

Rigorous design adds some class

There's not much to choose between this and the Moto 360 2 (see below), but Huawei, a big Chinese company that won't be familiar to many UK buyers, has taken a little more care with a few features to make its Android Wear watch stand out. Both charge wirelessly, but the Huawei Watch lasted us longer, nearly managing two days with the display constantly on. It has a barometer, so fitness apps know when you're climbing stairs, but there's no GPS.

The AMOLED screen is sharper and more colourful than Motorola's, with a strong sapphire glass. You can choose from several watch-face designs, all of them very classy. Huawei's minimalist case design is stylish, as well as comfortable to wear. But the luxury look is reflected in the price.

VERDICT: If you want a classy watch, Huawei's model fits the bill. Even the cheapest version has the feel of a high-end designer product

★★★★☆

£249 from Very.co.uk www.snipca.com/19123

Samsung Gear S2

An alternative to Android Wear

Samsung was the first big company to launch a modern smartwatch, and used its own software, Tizen, which worked with Samsung phones only. The new Gear S2 still uses Tizen rather than Android Wear, but does work with other phones that have Android 4.4 or later.

The Gear S2 is extremely well made, although from a distance the Standard model, with its rubber strap, could be mistaken for a basic sports watch. Close up, it feels like a luxury product and the screen looks great. While the Apple Watch has a knob, the Gear S2's bezel turns to operate some functions, such as scrolling through messages.

Unfortunately, too many aspects of the software are confusing, voice recognition is unreliable, and the apps aren't as good as Android Wear's.

VERDICT: Tizen handles some notifications better than Android, but overall it doesn't work as well

★★★☆☆

£202 from Amazon www.snipca.com/19120

Motorola Moto 360 2

GREAT PICK ★★★★☆

A traditional-looking watch that's good value for money

The Apple Watch (from £299) is the best smartwatch overall, and the best choice if you already use Apple devices (keep in mind that almost all smartwatches must be paired with a mobile phone). Most other smartwatches are based on Google's Android Wear software, and work well with Android phones. Although Android Wear on the latest watches can now pair with iPhones, Apple doesn't let them work with many features.

This second version of Motorola's Moto 360 watch exemplifies a trend for traditionally styled round-faced watches using Android Wear. It works smoothly, and the battery lasts a full day with the screen set to stay on all the time (the Apple Watch only comes on when you look at it). There's a heart-rate monitor but no GPS, except in the Sport edition.

The main point of a smartwatch is to buzz or ping when you get a message or other notification, then show you the details on its face so you don't need to get your phone out. Android wear does this quite well, although some apps make notifications hard to read.

The Moto 360 2 looks great, with a choice of styles and straps. As with most smartwatches, the front is entirely taken up by an LCD touchscreen that displays a choice of watch faces; you can download alternatives or use apps to design your own.

VERDICT: The Moto 360 2 is our favourite non-Apple watch so far. But we're still not convinced that most people will get £200's worth of use out of a smartwatch

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVES: If you want to spend less, consider the older models still on sale, such as the Moto 360 (£149), LG's G Watch Urbane (£170), the rectangular Asus ZenWatch (£150) or the more basic Pebble Time (£130)

Reviews

Epson EcoTank ET-2500

The beginning of the end of the inkjet rip-off?

Thanks to advances in silicon-chip production, computer technology gets cheaper all the time. But printers are mostly boxes of cogs, so the only way to make *them* cheaper is to cheat. And that's what printer manufacturers have been doing – shifting the price from the hardware to ink, which comes in tiny quantities in wastefully packaged cartridges. As a consequence, printing one page of text and colour graphics typically costs between 6-10p.

With Epson's EcoTank system, that figure falls to less than half a penny. And you won't even pay that until you've used up the ink that comes with the printer, which should last you about two years. In return, you do pay more for the machine – in this case about three times the price of a conventional multi-function printer (MFP). But keep in mind that one set of extra-large cartridges could cost you around £50. EcoTank bottles cost less than half that for around 10 times more ink.

The ET-2500 is rather basic. It has USB and Wi-Fi connections, and

accommodates a scanner, but the onboard controls are limited, and there's no automatic double-sided (duplex) printing or options for borderless photos. The appendage on the right-hand side (much like a lean-to shed) is where you'll find the ink tanks. Refilling them from Epson's satisfyingly large ink bottles can be a bit fiddly, so you have to take care to match the colours.

While most printers keep track of the levels in their cartridges, the ET-2500 just gives a warning when it thinks you're low on ink, so you'll need to keep checking manually. In other respects, it works like a standard MFP. The software is easy to set up; just make sure you have a USB cable handy, even if you're planning to use it wirelessly, because it's needed to configure the Wi-Fi settings.

Over USB, the ET-2500 lived up to Epson's modest speed claims, managing 7.5 pages per minute (ppm) of black text, or 16.4ppm at draft quality. That's not bad, but colour printing was slow, with our five pages of graphics ambling out at 2.8ppm. A single 6x4in photo at high quality took four minutes. Monochrome

photocopies were acceptably fast at 15 seconds, but colour copies took 36.

An A4 page scanned at a fax-quality 150 dots per inch (dpi) in just 11 seconds, but more detailed scans were slower: a 6x4in photo at 1200dpi took more than two minutes, although it did look great. Print quality was less convincing, with slightly drab colours and not the sharpest text, but still quite decent.

SPECIFICATIONS

5670x1440dpi maximum print resolution • 9.2ppm quoted speed (mono) • 4.5ppm quoted speed (colour) • 1200x2400dpi maximum scan resolution • USB • 802.11n Wi-Fi • 169x489x300mm (HxWxD) • 4.6kg Three-year warranty www.snipca.com/19104

VERDICT: This is an underwhelming printer, but we love the idea of scrapping overpriced print cartridges, and it really does work out cheaper

★★★☆☆

ALTERNATIVE: Canon PIXMA MG6650 £65 This excellent MFP with duplex is faster and easier to use, but if you print a lot it'll soon cost you more

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WHAT SHOULD I BUY? We solve your buying dilemmas

What's the best portable hard drive for photos?

Q I'm a keen photographer and for many years have used a portable hard drive with a built-in screen to back up and view my photos. My 74.5GB Vosonic reads SD cards and is adequate for a fortnight's trip. But what could replace it? My ideal budget would be £100-£200.
Len Morris

A Multimedia drives like this have become less common. The most popular equivalents

now, such as the Atomos Ninja range, are aimed at videographers and quite expensive. It might help to think laterally. A second SD card is a more portable backup medium than a hard drive. Any Android tablet that supports USB OTG ('on the go') should connect to your camera's USB cable with an OTG adapter (around £10). Amazon's Fire 7 tablet (£50 from www.snipca.com/19097 – see image) fits the bill, and has a microSD slot that'll take 32, 64 or 128GB cards (around £10 to £50). To copy directly to

this from the camera you'll need an app such as ES File Explorer (free from www.snipca.com/19099). We haven't tried this combination, but Cornwall-based photographer Toby Abbs has: see www.snipca.com/19100. A pricier tablet such as Samsung's Galaxy Tab S2 8 (£300 from www.snipca.com/19101) would give you better display quality.

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

PHONE | **£289** from OnePlus www.snipca.com/19095

OnePlus OnePlus 2

It's the best-value phone you couldn't buy – except now you can

GREAT PICK ★★★★☆

Based in China, OnePlus is a small manufacturer with a unique business plan. In 2014, they announced a phone with a better specification than anyone else is offering for the price, and invited people to apply for an invitation to buy it. It's a bit like backing a crowdfunded project, except that OnePlus is a real company that actually makes phones, not a man in a shed in Ohio who's got a video of one that he carved out of soap.

OnePlus' original phone got positive reviews and sold well, and their latest, the £199 OnePlus X, has generated a lot of interest. Now the mid-priced OnePlus 2 is available to buy without an invitation. Just make sure you get the EU version, not the one made for China.

> **Competes with high-end devices like the iPhone 6s, which costs twice as much**

The OnePlus 2 is marketed as a 'flagship killer', meaning it's intended to compete with high-end devices such as the iPhone 6s, which costs twice as much. That's quite believable when you get your hands on it. The magnesium alloy frame – similar to aluminium – feels expensively sturdy, and the buttons fit precisely, including a three-way mute switch. The black 'sandstone' rear panel is easy to grip without collecting fingerprints, and there are four optional snap-on covers in wood or Kevlar (£20).

Like iPhones, the OnePlus 2 has a fingerprint reader in the Home button so you don't have to use a password to unlock it, although it can be a little slow to react and there's no contactless payment feature. The USB Type-C port for data and charging handily works both ways round, much like Apple's Lightning connector. The 13-megapixel camera on the back is very good, featuring laser autofocus. It's slightly slow to take a picture, not brilliant in low light, and lacks the iPhone 6s' Full HD slow motion, but it does shoot 4K video and has optical image stabilisation, which Apple only builds into the larger iPhone 6s Plus.

At 5.5in, the OnePlus 2's touchscreen is slightly bigger than the iPhone 6s, and its 1920x1080-pixel resolution matches the 6s Plus. It's not as sharp or colourful as Samsung's screens, and only covers 88 per cent of the sRGB colour range, but it's display is more than adequate.

OnePlus' OxygenOS software, based on version 5.1.1 (Lollipop) of Google's Android, works in a very standard way, with only a few tweaks, including the ability to tweak the sound quality. It runs smoothly on the OnePlus 2's impressively powerful eight-core Snapdragon 810 processor; web pages don't load as fast as they do on an iPhone 6s, but 3D games are no problem, although they can make the phone rather hot. The battery just about lasts a full day of normal use, comparable to an iPhone and better than some of the top Android models, which can go for over 15 hours.

While OnePlus promises it won't go back to an invite system for the OnePlus 2, that doesn't mean it'll never go out of stock. At the time of writing, the 16GB version, at £50 less, wasn't available. But paying £289 for this 64GB version also gets you an extra gigabyte of RAM, taking it up to a generous 4GB. That means it should run even more smoothly, especially when flicking between apps, as well as providing a comfortable amount of space for all your photos and videos, so it's worth the extra.

The only reason we're not making this phone a 'Buy it!' is that OnePlus' website doesn't clearly describe warranty and returns policies that comply with UK law and some users have reported problems with customer service. When we tried the online chat support, we were number 39 in a queue, and after 10 minutes we were still at 31.

SPECIFICATIONS

5.5in 1920x1080-pixel screen • 13-megapixel rear camera • 5-megapixel front camera • 64GB flash storage • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.1 • 3G/4G • OxygenOS • 152x75x9.85mm (HxWxD) • 175g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/19096

VERDICT: It may not be a familiar brand, but OnePlus has proved it can deliver great phones, and this one is a bargain

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Google Nexus 5X £339 This comparable phone has a better camera, but it's ugly and has a quarter of the storage yet costs £50 more

Reviews

Corel Paint Shop Pro X8 Ultimate

More retouching tools for less money – but it still ain't pretty

Corel's PaintShop Pro has been around for almost as long as Adobe Photoshop, offering a capable alternative at a much lower price.

In the past few years, though, Adobe has fought back by changing its pricing. Instead of paying over £500 to buy Photoshop, you now rent it as part of the Creative Cloud Photography plan for just £8 a month, accompanied by the Lightroom photo manager. Professional photographers will import their pics into Lightroom, where they stay neatly archived, and dip into Photoshop for more advanced retouching.

This latest version of PaintShop Pro is clearly designed to meet Adobe's challenge head-on. Previously, a big limitation was its poor handling of 'raw' images. More advanced digital cameras give you the option of storing raw files instead of (or as well as) the usual JPEGs. The difference is that they're recorded without any of the colour tweaks, lens correction and noise reduction that help to make snaps look good straight out of the camera.

> ## Of the raw formats we tried, it could only read half

That's a good thing for serious photographers who want to control everything themselves, and it can also help if you're just starting to experiment with your camera's manual settings: if you get the exposure wrong, a JPEG will probably be ruined, but a raw image can often be fixed.

Rather than improve PaintShop Pro's horrible raw processing, Corel has chosen to throw in a whole extra app, AfterShot 2 (pictured). This is more like Lightroom, turning Paint Shop Pro X8 into a direct equivalent of Adobe's bundle for £80,

cheaper than a year's Creative Cloud. At the time of writing, Corel had discounted this to £60, and we found it selling on Amazon for as little as £45. At this price it has no competition.

But that doesn't mean you should buy it. Raw processors need to understand your particular camera, and of the 14 raw formats we tried, AfterShot 2 could only read half. PaintShop Pro itself imported them all, but it has two entirely different ways to handle raw files, one in the Adjust mode and the other in Edit, and both are rubbish and confusing.

When we could use AfterShot 2, it provided a good set of 'non-destructive' options to adjust images, with masking to correct specific areas, as well as very usable sorting and rating features. Notice, though, that you don't get all the features of AfterShot Pro, which Corel sells separately. And what's most annoying is that you can't select a photo in your AfterShot library and choose to edit it in PaintShop Pro X8; you have to export a copy of it first and open that.

If you don't shoot raw, you could still use AfterShot 2 as a photo manager, but the lack of integration with PaintShop Pro makes that less than ideal. Compare with Adobe's Photoshop Elements 14, which provides closely connected Organizer and Editor modules.

Some of PaintShop Pro X8's new features will be familiar to Photoshop Elements

users. Magic Move automatically patches up the background when you move, or remove, an object. It works reasonably well – but Photoshop Elements' Content-Aware Move works better.

Still, overall PaintShop Pro has a more complete set of tools than Adobe Photoshop Elements, and the inclusion of AfterShot 2 makes it look good value against its other main rival, Serif PhotoPlus X8, which sells for similar discounted prices. Corel's Ultimate edition also includes Perfect Effects 9.5, a retouching plug-in, although this confusingly overlaps PaintShop Pro's own features. If you don't need either of those extras, buy the standard edition of PaintShop Pro X8, which is £15 lower.

VERDICT: You get plenty for your money, especially at current discounts, but PaintShop Pro still seems like an incomplete assemblage of unrelated features

★★★☆☆

ALTERNATIVE: Serif PhotoPlus X8 **£80** With decent built-in organiser and raw processor modules, PhotoPlus feels less cluttered. It can also be found heavily discounted

SMART LAMP | **£70** from Amazon www.snipca.com/19147

Philips Hue Go

A gentle splash of colour for your room

We can't work out if Philips didn't twig that Hue Go sounds like the name Hugo, or intended the pun to mean something, or didn't care. It's now the name of a little hemispherical 'smart' lamp that can be controlled from your phone or tablet as part of a 'connected' home. Ideal for a bedside table, it has a button on the bottom that switches its built-in LEDs to steady or shifting colours (see images) or a flickering flame effect. The bottom is identified by a bump that lets you angle Hue Go so that it casts its light on a wall (see main image); it can also lie flat, like a bowl.

> " It makes the small area around it more pleasant to be in "

You can leave Hue Go plugged in, but if you want to move it around, as the name proposes, it contains a rechargeable battery that'll keep it going for three hours. It's too small and dim to serve any practical purpose, but Hue Go is a lovely thing that makes the small area around it more pleasant to be in.

The price isn't outrageous for a designer lamp, but you're not getting the full benefit unless you also have a Hue Bridge. This £50 box is the brains of the Hue concept, connecting to your Wi-Fi network to enable all the Hue gadgets in your home to be controlled from your Apple or Android phone, tablet or watch. Hue lightbulbs fit in ordinary sockets, so you could control all the lights in your house from the Hue app, which supports so-called 'recipes' that let you switch from one lighting setup to another at preset times or on command. You'd need to spend quite a lot of money, though.

Hue also works with Apple HomeKit, so other compatible accessories can trigger lighting changes, and with Philips' own Ambilight TVs, so all the lights in your living room can change colour in sync with what's happening on screen.

Like other 'internet of things' devices, the Hue Bridge gets updates over the internet, which can add new features. In December, though, Philips used an update to prevent lights from other manufacturers working with it. Users weren't happy, and we're pleased to say Philips reversed the decision, so the Hue Bridge can still control a wider range of gadgets.

VERDICT: It's pricey, but Hue Go is a nice home accessory by itself and a good way to dip a toe in the Hue 'ecosystem'

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Elgato Avea Flare **£90**
Coming soon to the UK, Avea products connect to your phone or tablet without a bridge, but the system isn't as flexibly controllable as Hue

SPECIFICATIONS
240v PowerLED table lamp • 300 lumen output (dimmable) • Wi-Fi • 79x150x150mm (HxWxD) • 900g • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/19148

SPRING 2016
Dell will unveil a new line of products, which we're guessing will be Windows 10 laptops and/or tablets. Given the company's history of decent and affordable PCs, there'll be a lot of interest in these, and they could set a trend for the year's new launches.

SPRING 2016
LG has three new Minibeam LED projectors on the way, including one with a rechargeable battery that lasts two-and-a-half hours (long enough to show most films). More projectors like this could make PCs a viable alternative to TVs.

SPRING 2016
When Apple announced the oversized iPad Pro, it didn't mention an update to the iPad Air 2. March would be a likely time slot for an iPad Air 3. An obvious addition would be support for the iPad Pro's Pencil and waterproofing.

MID 2016
DVDs stopped looking clever when we got 1080p Full HD, and now Blu-rays have been overtaken by 4K TVs. The disc industry's answer is Ultra HD Blu-ray, offering a sharper picture and more realistic colour. The first players will appear this year, and drives in PCs will follow.

NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE 20 Jan

Palicomp Intel i5 Raven
A PC was never more suited to the living room

Asus ZenBook UX303UA
The best Windows 10 laptop yet?

These and much more…

Buy It

Our pick of products that have won the Buy It award

LAPTOP

Asus X555LA-XX290H
£320 from www.snipca.com/18151
Tested: Issue 446

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

ALTERNATIVE Asus Chromebook C200
A cheap Chrome OS ultra-portable laptop with a bright screen, lengthy battery life and a great keyboard. £210 from www.snipca.com/17296

DESKTOP PC

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

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

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

TABLET

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

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

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

PHONE

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

It may look like the 2014 model, but this update is stronger and faster, with a higher-resolution camera, time-saving 3D Touch features and an excellent screen. The bigger 6s Plus has better battery life.

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

DIGITAL CAMERA

Panasonic Lumix DMC-GF6
£330 from www.snipca.com/17548
Tested: Issue 405

This compact, interchangeable-lens camera is small and reasonably priced, yet it has well-designed controls, a wide range of available lenses and shoots excellent quality photos. The GF6 really is unbeatable value.

ALTERNATIVE: Sony A5000 A rival CSC with better low-light performance, although its controls and range of available lenses aren't quite as good. £249 from www.snipca.com/15854

E-READER

Amazon Kindle Paperwhite
£110 from www.snipca.com/17776
Tested: Issue 458

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

ALTERNATIVE: Kobo Glo HD As good as the Paperwhite, but with more storage, and slightly more compact, this is the independent e-reader to pick. £110 from www.snipca.com/19158

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* DS716+ can be scaled up to 7 drives with Synology DX513 for more storage

SECURITY SOFTWARE

Kaspersky Internet Security 2016

£19.99 from www.snipca.com/17874
Tested: Issue 437

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

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

PHOTO EDITING

Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 6

£104 from www.snipca.com/16952
Tested: Issue 453

Adobe's Photoshop is ideal for image manipulation, but Lightroom is the better choice for managing and tweaking photos. The first choice of professionals, it's easy for anyone to use, combining technical and artistic adjustments with rating, keywording and archiving.

ALTERNATIVE: Adobe CC Photography Plan Rather than buying Lightroom, you can subscribe for a reasonable £8.57 a month (paid annually) to use Lightroom and Photoshop www.snipca.com/17270

SMART TV

Samsung UE40H5500

£397 from www.snipca.com/19160
Tested: Issue 446

A 40in smart TV with great picture quality and apps for all the terrestrial TV catch-up services. It has plenty of extras too, such as recording to USB storage, playing media files stored on a NAS or USB stick and plenty of HDMI ports.

ALTERNATIVE: Sony KDL-43W755C
Excellent image quality, stylish looks and a 43in screen. £460 from www.snipca.com/18153

PC MONITOR

Dell UltraSharp U2412M

£199 from www.snipca.com/15271
Tested: Issue 378

An exquisite monitor with superb image quality, an adjustable stand, a high resolution and even a built-in USB hub. It costs a little more than other monitors, but it's money well spent. It's easily the best value monitor we've seen and is the one by which all others are judged.

ALTERNATIVE: AOC i2360PHU A good quality budget 23in monitor that's easily adjustable and has a built-in USB 2.0 hub too. £128 from www.snipca.com/16706

ROUTER

Trendnet TEW-812DRU

£112 from www.snipca.com/15855
Tested: Issue 427

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

ALTERNATIVE: Linksys WRT1900AC
More expensive, but even faster and with loads of features too. £180 from www.snipca.com/14950

NAS

Synology DiskStation DS215j

£134 from www.snipca.com/16187
Tested: Issue 449

This two-drive NAS enclosure has it all – fast performance, easy configuration and plenty of extra features. Its only flaw is that installation is a little fiddly – but if you want quality network storage, then this is the obvious choice.

ALTERNATIVE: Synology DS414j
A four-drive NAS that's generally fast, easy to set up and use. £253 from www.snipca.com/16707

HOMEPLUGS

Devolo dLAN 1200 Triple+ Starter Kit
£119 from www.snipca.com/15369
Tested: Issue 444

Devolo's latest HomePlug adapters are the fastest we've ever seen. They're also well designed too, with a passthrough socket so you can still power another device and the design should avoid skirting boards and other obstacles.

ALTERNATIVE: D-Link PowerLine AV2 1000HD Gigabit Starter Kit Fast (speeds of up to 1000Mbps), much cheaper and very easy to set up, but the lack of a passthrough socket is frustrating. £43 from www.snipca.com/17836

WEB-DESIGN

Xara Web Designer Premium 11
£70 from www.snipca.com/16955
Tested: Issue 453

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

ALTERNATIVE: Serif WebPlus X8 Comes with lots of templates, but creates separate desktop and mobile versions instead of responsive sites, and can be slow to use. £90 from www.snipca.com/14964

MULTIFUNCTION PRINTER

Canon Pixma MG6650
£76 from www.snipca.com/17334
Tested: Issue 455

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

ALTERNATIVE: Canon Pixma MX495 It's slow, and black ink is pricey, but this cheaper MFP has a paper feeder and fax too. £41 from www.snipca.com/17174

SOLID-STATE DRIVE

Crucial BX100 1TB
£325 from www.snipca.com/19159
Tested: Issue 445

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

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

SECURITY CAMERA

Y-cam HomeMonitor HD
£131 from www.snipca.com/11646
Tested: Issue 420

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

ALTERNATIVE: D-Link Wireless N Day & Night Camera A good-value security camera with excellent night vision. £85 from www.snipca.com/15275

Workshops & Tips

Edited by Sherwin Coelho

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

Add a one-click button for PC help

What you need: TeamViewer; Any version of Windows (XP to 10); Android or iOS
Time required: 45 minutes

The latest version of TeamViewer, our favourite free program for remotely accessing your PC, has loads of new features. It lets you access your remote PC quicker than ever and speeds up the transfer of files. Best of all, it lets you request help from anyone who also has TeamViewer installed on their PC by simply clicking a button. This is a godsend for those who regularly rely on family or friends for help. Likewise, the updated TeamViewer mobile app makes it easier to remotely access your PC from any phone or tablet.

STEP 1 To install TeamViewer on your PC, go to www.snipca. com/19051 and click the Download button below the All-In-One version in the Windows tab, then run the downloaded setup file. Now select 'Installation to access this computer remotely (unattended)' **1**, select 'Personal/Non-commercial use' **2**, tick 'Show advanced settings' **3**, click 'Accept – next' **4**, then click Yes. On the next screen, ensure 'Use TeamViewer Meeting Add-In for Outlook' is ticked (this lets you add the one-click help button), then click Finish. When the program finishes installing, you'll see three TeamViewer windows.
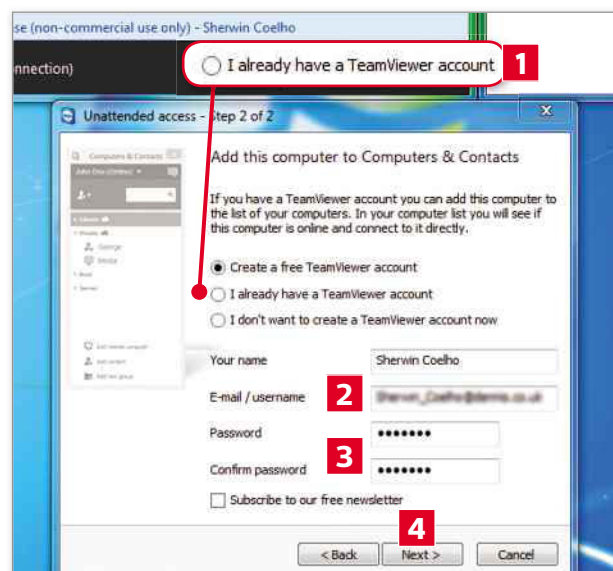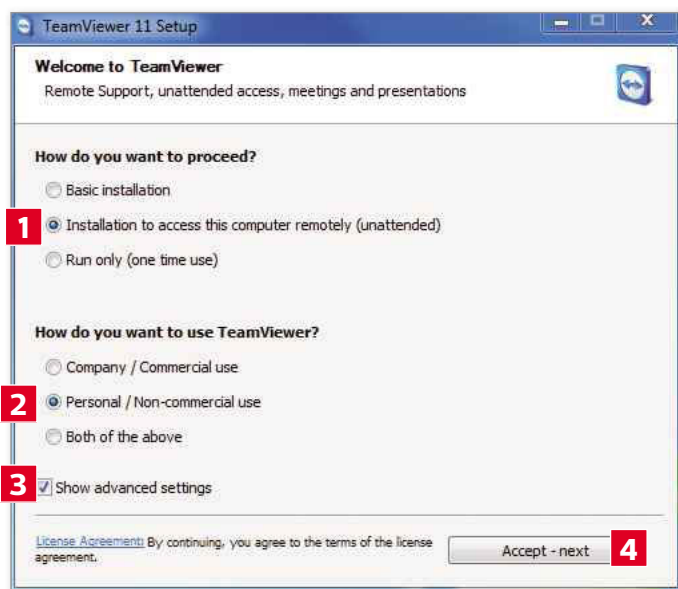
STEP 2 In the 'Unattended access' window, you'll be prompted to set up a name and password for your PC (this will be displayed on the computer being used to access yours). Type and confirm a password, then click Next. You now need to set up a TeamViewer account. If you already have one, then select 'I already have a TeamViewer account' **1** and log into your account. If you don't, enter your name, email address **2** and a password (twice) **3**, then click Next **4** and Finish. Now go to your email inbox, click the emailed link from TeamViewer to validate your account, then close your browser.

STEP 3 Anyone who regularly helps you fix PC problems will also need to install TeamViewer on their PC (following Step 1). However, on the setup screen, they'll need to select 'Basic installation' instead of 'Installation to access this computer remotely (unattended)'. Once the program has installed, they'll need to create or log into their TeamViewer account. Once they're set up, you'll need to ask them for their TeamViewer ID and password **1** so you can open channels of access between the two PCs.
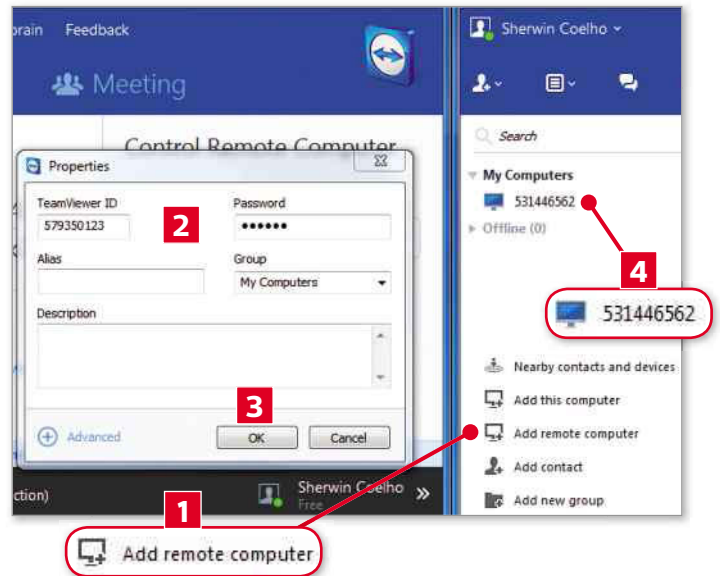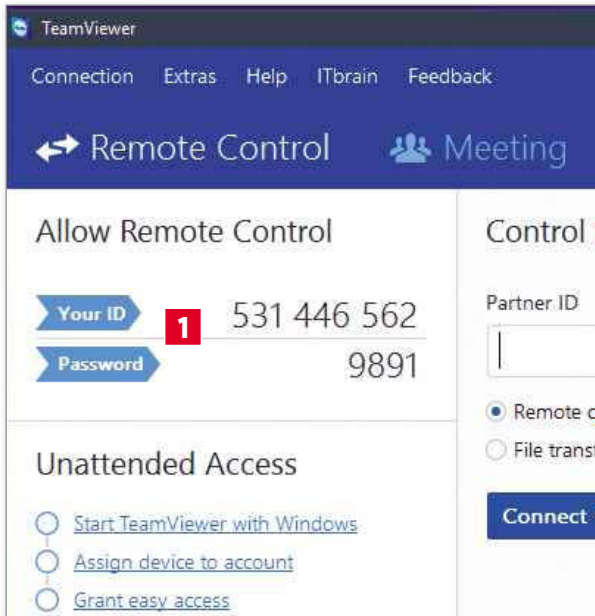
STEP 4 Now on your PC, click 'Add remote computer' **1**, type their TeamViewer ID and Password in the relevant fields **2**, then click OK **3**. Their PC will now appear in the My Computers section **4**. Previous versions of TeamViewer let you control other people's PC, but this version also lets you request remote help from another TeamViewer user. There are two ways to do this. One method involves right-clicking the PC under My Computers, then clicking 'Presentation – prompt for confirmation'.

STEP 5 The second method – the one-click help button – uses the Outlook add-in mentioned in Step 1, which appears in all your programs (including Office), and even in Windows/File Explorer. Open a program/Explorer, click the TeamViewer add-in **1**, then click the PC you added **2**. As long as the other person is using TeamViewer, they'll see a message inviting them to 'join your meeting'. They'll need to click Join to remotely access your PC's screen. By default, they won't be able to remotely control your PC. However, whenever they click on an area of your PC, you'll see a big blue mouse with their PC's name below it.
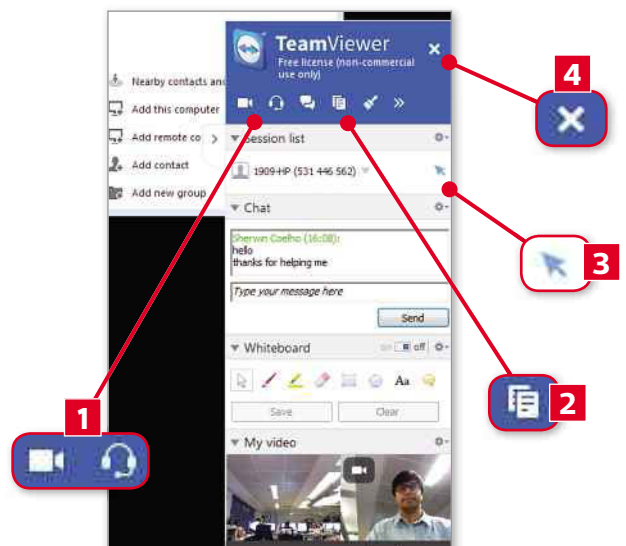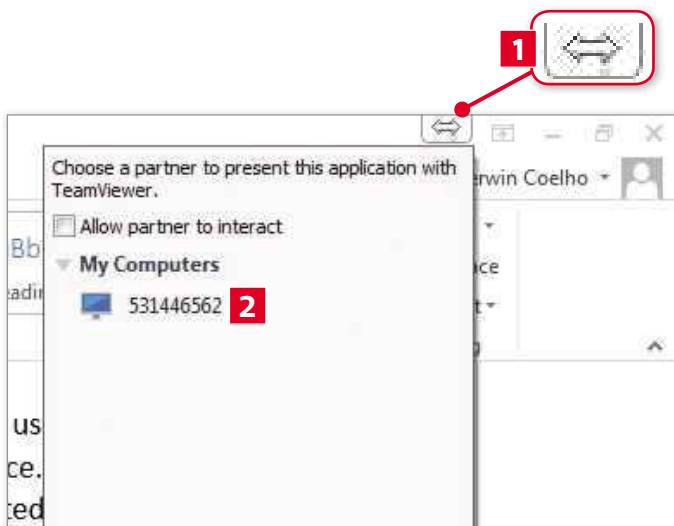
STEP 6 While they're accessing your PC, you'll see a TeamViewer connection window near to your PC's notification area with options to start a video or voice conversation **1**. This can help you explain the problem in more detail as they work on it. You can also transfer files across PCs by clicking the 'File transfer' icon **2**, then dragging and dropping the file into the field provided. If you're happy letting them take remote control of your PC, then simply click the cursor icon **3** beside their PC name. When they've fixed your problem, you can close the TeamViewer window **4**, then click 'Leave meeting'.
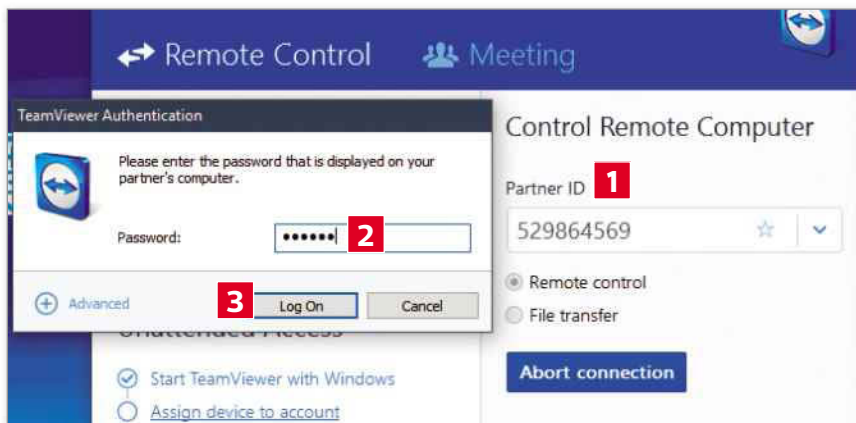
STEP 7 TeamViewer really comes into its own if you need to remotely access files on your home PC when you're away. For this to work, TeamViewer needs to be running on both PCs, and you'll need your home PC's TeamViewer ID and Password. Open TeamViewer on the remote PC and log into your account. Enter your home PC's ID **1**, click the blue 'Connect to partner' button below, enter your password **2**, then click Log On **3**.

STEP 8 Your remote PC's Desktop will turn black (this speeds up the connection between the PCs). The new TeamViewer interface has a number of tabs at the top. The Actions tab **1** offers options to remotely lock or reboot your PC. If you experience any display problems while accessing your PC remotely, click the View tab **2**, select 'Best fit' **3**, then choose 'Auto select' **4**. Click the Communication tab to see options to start a voice call, a video call, or chat (text), if you are communicating with someone on your home PC.
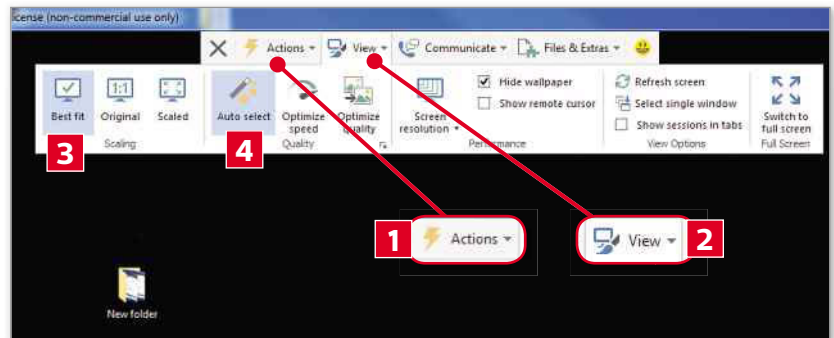
STEP 9 To access home-based files on your remote PC (or vice versa), click the 'Files & Extras' tab **1**, then click 'Open file transfer'. You'll see a 'File transfer' window with two sections – the left-hand section **2** contains the drives on the PC you're using and the right section **3** contains the drives on your remote PC. In the left-hand section click the location where you want to save the file (Desktop, for example), then navigate to where the file is stored on your remote PC (right-hand section), select it, then click Receive **4** to begin the transfer. You'll see a message in your PC's notification area when that's done. Close the remote access window **5** when you've finished.
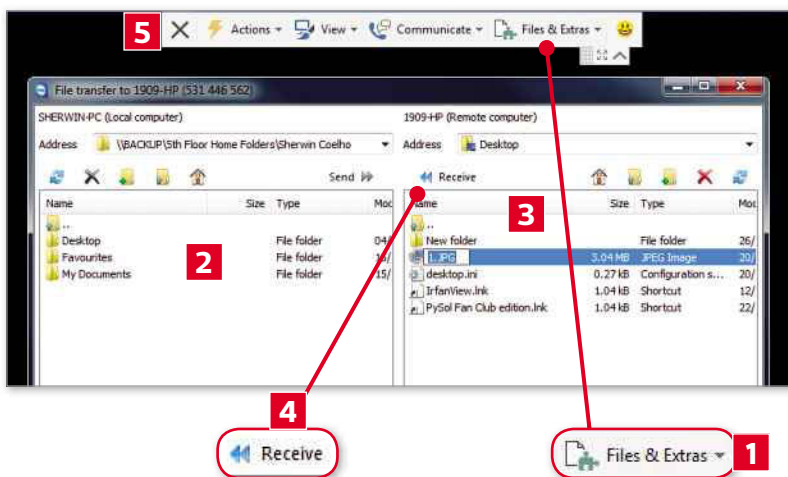
STEP 10 You can also use the free 'TeamViewer for Remote Control' mobile app (Android www.snipca.com/19052; iOS www.snipca.com/19053) to remotely access your home PC via your phone or tablet. Install and open the app, swipe across the introductory screens, enter your PC's ID in the field provided, tap the Remote Control button, enter your PC's password, then tap OK, Continue. The spanner icon **1** lets you remotely lock or reboot your PC; the Start icon **2** lets you open the Start menu; and the cog icon **3** tells you how to select, open, and drag and drop items from your PC to your device. Close the connection **4** when you've finished. ●

Edit your holiday videos on your tablet

What you need: Android or iOS (phone or tablet) **Time required:** 30 minutes

Most free video-editing apps have severe limitations – usually a prominent watermark or limits on the length of your video. Adobe Premiere Clip (new to Android) doesn't have any of these restrictions. What's more, it's now available for free for the first time.

It's brilliant for combining your holiday photos and videos into a stunning montages and comes with 2GB of space to store your finished projects, which should be more than enough.

STEP 1 Go to www.snipca.com/19105 and tap the relevant button (Android or iOS) for your device (we're using an iPad for this Workshop). Before using the app you need to create a free Adobe account. If you have one already, tap Sign In **1**, then log into your account. If not, tap Sign Up For Free **2** and create an account. After signing in, tap the tickbox to agree to the T&Cs, then tap Continue. You'll now see a grid of videos created by other Adobe users that you can tap to watch.
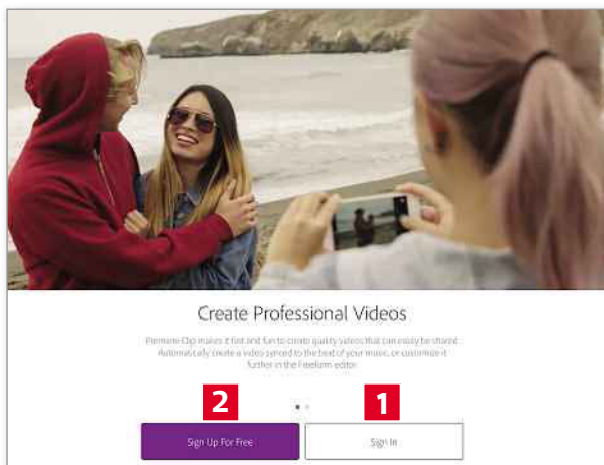
STEP 2 Tap the '+' symbol **1** to see options to import videos in three ways: from your device, from Adobe Lightroom (if you have it), or from your files and folders **2**. Alternatively, you can take a photo or shoot a video from scratch **3**. We'll use footage taken on our device, so tap 'On my iPad' **4**, then tap OK. Now tap All Photos to see thumbnails of your photos and videos (recent files appear first). Tap to select the ones you want to add to your montage, then tap Add at the top right.
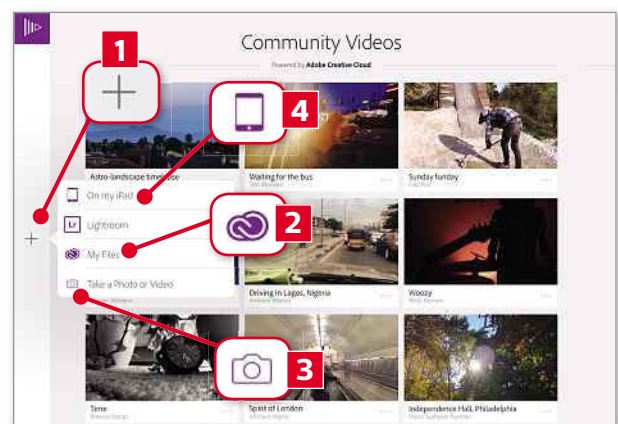
STEP 3 You now need to choose your 'project type'. Automatic **1** creates a video montage of your files for you and adds a soundtrack from music on your device or from the app itself. If you prefer this method, go to Step 4. Freeform **2** gives you more control, letting you arrange your clips, trim them, add background music of your choice and apply filters. If you prefer this method, skip to Step 6.
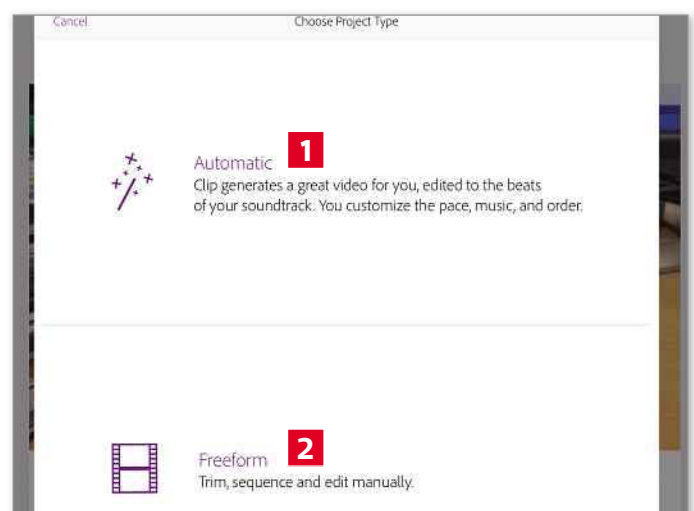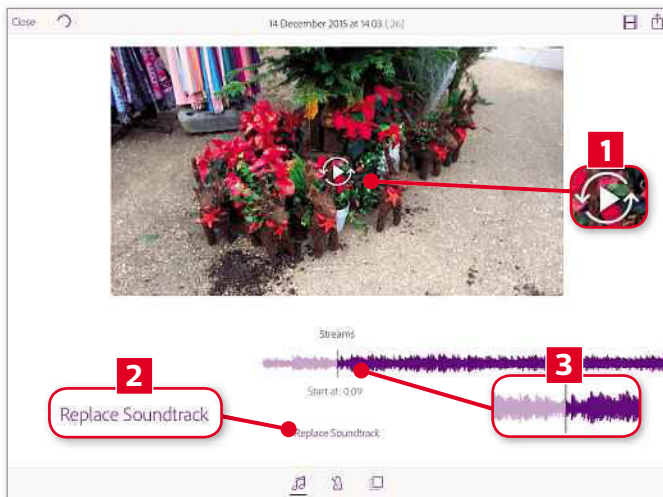
STEP 4
After you've selected Automatic, wait until your video has been created, then tap the Play icon **1** to watch it. To change your soundtrack, tap Replace Soundtrack **2**, then tap Songs and select a track from your device, or tap Premiere Clip Themes and tap the Play icon beside one of the app's 10 tracks to listen to them. Tap Add to select the one you want. The track starts from the beginning by default, but if you want to start it from another point, drag its waveform to that point **3**.
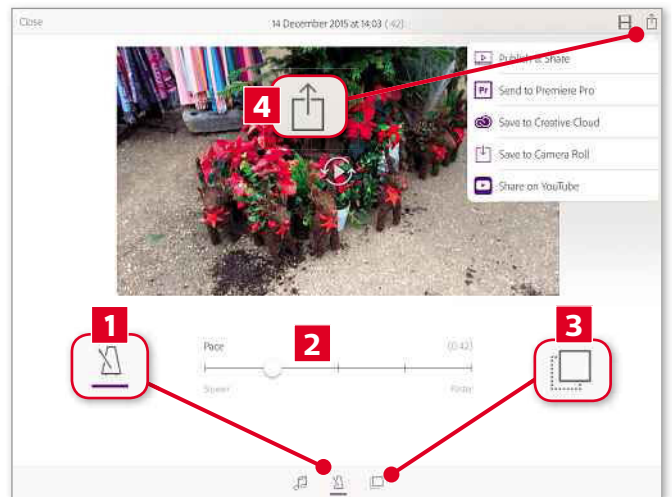
STEP 5
The metronome icon **1** lets you play your video at different speeds by tapping points on the slider **2**. To change the sequence of your files, tap the third icon **3**. You'll see your files (as tiles) lined up in order. Simply tap and hold a tile, then drag it to the left or right to reposition it. To delete a file from the montage, tap it, then tap the 'X' icon in its top-right corner. Tap Done at the top right when you're happy. Now play your video and check you're happy with the changes. If you are, tap the Share icon **4**, then tap 'Save to Camera Roll' to save the video to your device.
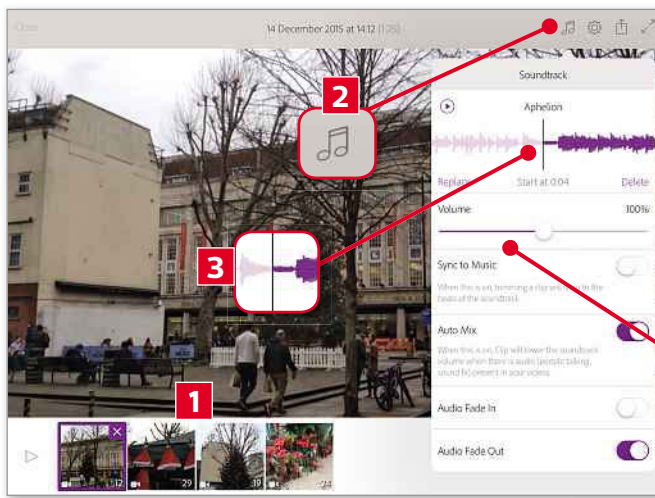
STEP 6
If you tapped Freeform in Step 3, you'll see thumbnails of your files **1**. Tap and hold a thumbnail, then drag it to the left or right. To trim a video, tap its thumbnail, then adjust its start and end points on the timeline that appears. To add a soundtrack to your clip, tap the music-note icon **2**, then tap Songs and select a track from your device. Alternatively, tap Premiere Clip Themes to listen to one of the app's 10 tracks. Tap Add to select the track you want. Now move the waveform **3** to adjust the point at which the track starts playing. You can also change the volume and synchronise the beats of the music to play as your clips change **4**.

STEP 7
Next, tap the cog icon **1**. Adobe has 30 video filters, including Nori (a black-and-white effect) and Retro (a vintage, sepia-toned effect). To add a filter, tap Normal **2**, then select the one you want. The sliders below **3** let you fade in to the start of your montage, fade out at the end and cross fade between clips (one clip fades out as the next fades in). The final slider lets you zoom in on photos to give static images a sense of motion. When you've finished, tap the share icon **4**, then tap 'Save to Camera Roll' to save your montage to your device. ●
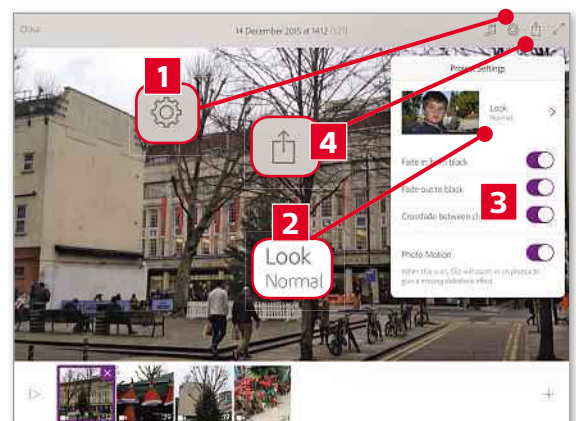
Create your own online quiz (and answer ours!)

What you need: Any web browser **Time required:** 30 minutes

QuizUp is a popular trivia website and app that lets you challenge friends or QuizUp members (over 75 million) to a multiple-choice quiz on any topic. We'll show you how to do this below. In the process, we've also created our very own quiz about technology in 2015. To tackle it, simply go to www. snipca.com/19068, create a free QuizUp account, then click Play (we've given you one answer – see Step 5).

STEP 1 Your quiz needs to have at least seven questions, so before creating it, ensure you know what topic you want it to be about, and have your questions prepared. While it's not mandatory to add images to your questions, it's a good idea to do this because it makes the quiz more visually interesting. So, for convenience, create a QuizUp folder on your Desktop **1** and add the images for all your questions there.
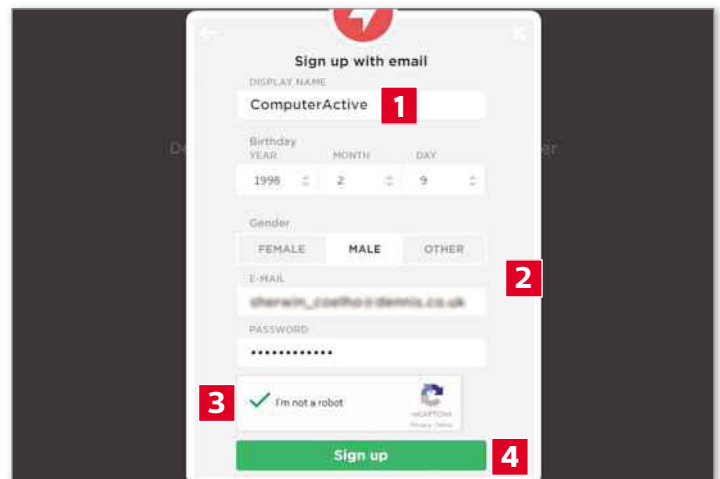
STEP 2 You first need to log into your QuizUp account, so go to www.quizup.com/en. If you already have an account, click Log In and do that. To create an account, click Sign Up, then click 'I'll do this later, let me in'. This gives you the opportunity to add the topics you're interested in. You'll see options to sign up with your Facebook account, or via Google or email. If you select 'email', you'll need to select a display name **1**, enter your personal details **2**, tick to confirm you're a person (not a robot!) **3**, then click 'Sign up' **4**.

STEP 3 To start creating your own quiz, click the pink 'Start here' button on the left, then click 'Let's do this!' Now name your quiz topic **1**, then click Next. Give your quiz a descriptive tagline **2**, then click Next again **3**. Click Next once more (to set your language as English). Now click the category dropdown menu and choose a category for your topic. There are 17 listed (including History, Movies, Nature and Science). If you don't see a relevant category listed, set it to General and click Next.

STEP 4 You now need to add an appropriate icon for your topic. Thankfully, QuizUp has many customisation options making this process easy. Move your cursor over the colour grid on the left **1**, then select the one you want. Next, select one of the categories on the right **2** to see a list of relevant icons, then click to select the one you want. If you're struggling for the right icon, click Randomize **3** to see randomly generated icons. Click Next **4** to proceed.
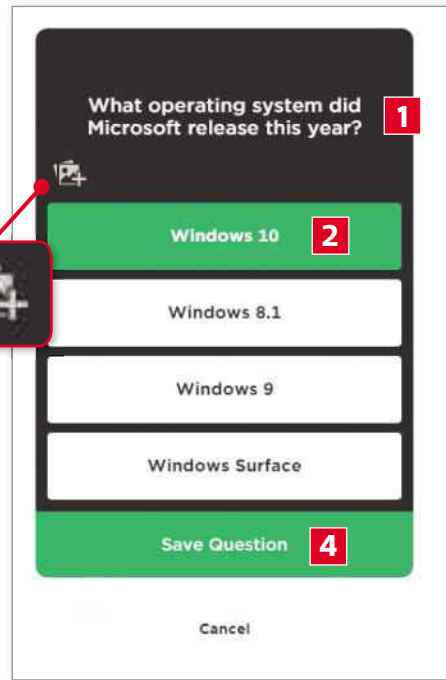
STEP 5 Now click '+Add a New Question' and type your first question in the field at the top **1**. You'll see four tiles for your answers. Type the right answer in the green tile **2**, and the three wrong answers in the white ones. If you want to add an image to the question, click the small image icon **3**, navigate to the relevant image in the QuizUp folder on your Desktop, then click Open to add it. Move your cursor over the image to see a zoom slider that you can use to better focus on a particular area. When you've finished, click Save Question **4**.
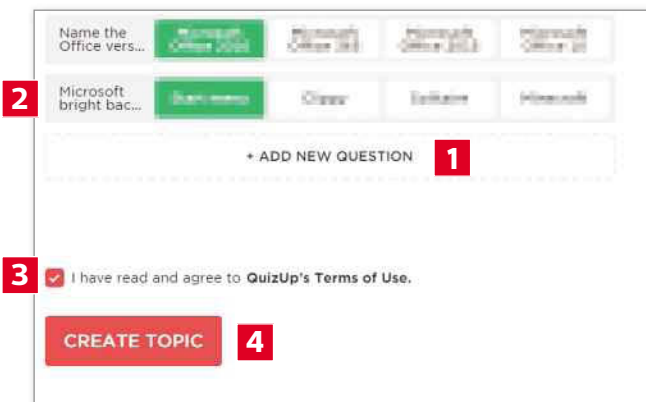
STEP 6 Now click '+Add New Question' **1** and repeat Step 5 to add at least six more questions. When people take the quiz, they'll see any seven (randomly selected) questions. Likewise, your answers, too, will appear shuffled. To edit a question, click it **2**, then make the changes you want. When you're happy with your quiz, tick the 'Terms of Use' box **3**, then click Create Topic **4**.
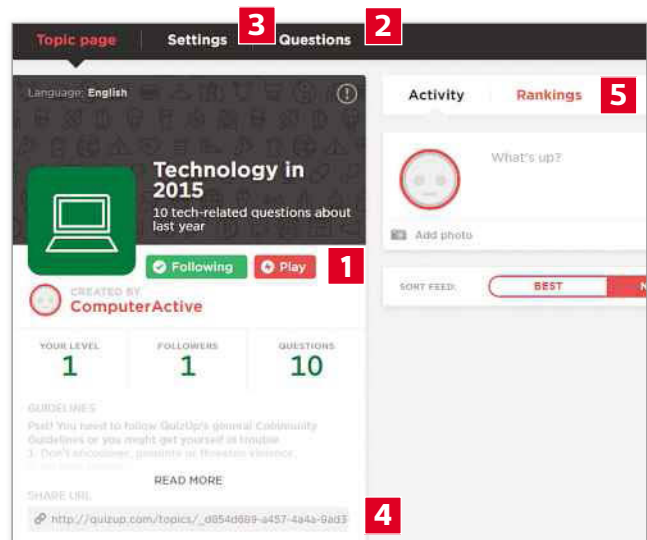
STEP 7 To get an idea of how your quiz appears online, click Play **1**, then click 'Play now'. QuizUp will pair you with a random opponent. You get 10 seconds for every question and points are based on how quickly you select the right answer. Click the Questions tab **2** to edit your questions or add more. The Settings tab **3** lets you edit your quiz name, tagline and its icon. Now copy the URL **4** and share the quiz with your friends, using email or Facebook. As they complete it, their ranking **5** will appear in the list. Don't forget to take our 'Technology in 2015' quiz (see Intro). ●

Create to-do lists from your emails

What you need: Gmail **Time required:** 15 minutes

We've all opened an email, then forgotten to reply to it or act upon it (paying a bill, for example). To prevent this, use Handle – a useful Chrome extension that lets you convert Gmail messages you need to act upon into handy to-do lists that appear in your inbox. You can specify exactly when you want to see each item and quickly add them to your list from any website within Chrome.

STEP 1 To install the Handle extension, open Chrome, go to www.snipca.com/19089 and click the '+Add To Chrome' button beside 'Handle for Gmail and Google Apps', then the 'Add extension' button. You'll see an orange + symbol added to the right of your Chrome toolbar **1**. Click it, then click 'Sign up with Google' **2**. Now either select your email address (if it's listed) **3**, or click 'Add account' **4**, log into your Gmail account and click Allow. Next, open Gmail and log into your account. You'll see an orange 'H' icon at the top right. Click it to bring up the Handle section.
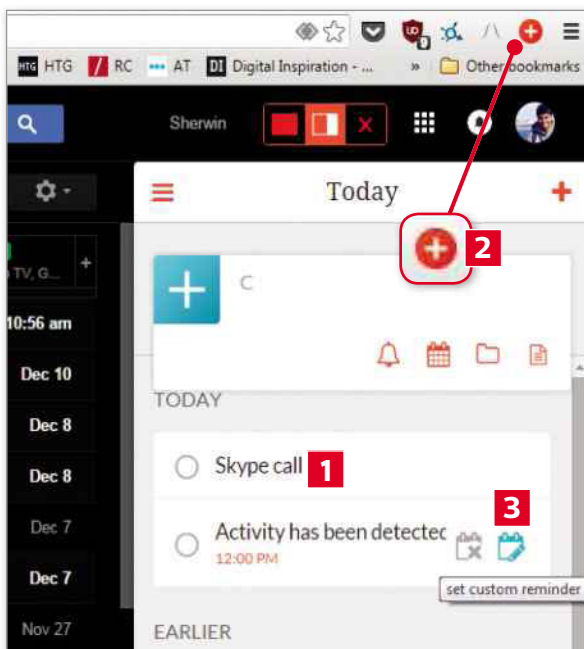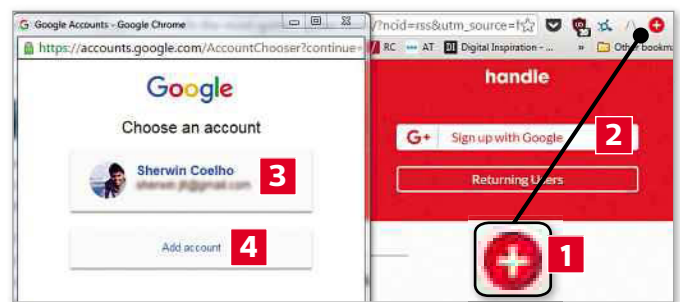
STEP 2 To convert an email into a 'to-do list item' open the email, then press the 't' key. Your email will now appear within Handle. Click Save to add it to your list – here we've added 'Skype call' **1**. You can also add items to your Handle list by clicking Chrome's Handle toolbar icon **2** within any website, typing a description of the action, then pressing Enter. By default, you will receive a reminder on the same day you listed the action. To be reminded later, move your cursor to the item, click the 'set custom reminder' icon **3**, then type when you want to see a reminder within Gmail (for example, type tomorrow, on Thursday, or this weekend).
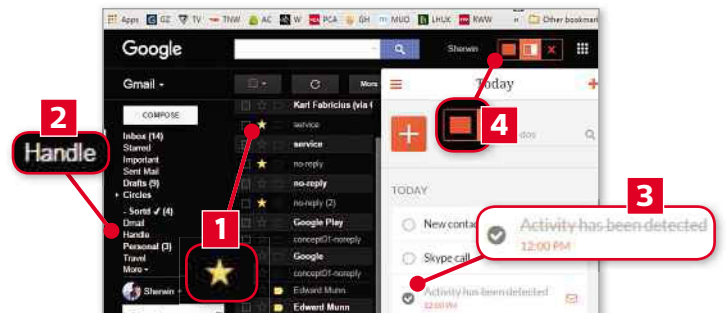
STEP 3 Now, whenever you log into Gmail, you'll see your pending to-do items – arranged by date. Emails you've added to Handle appear in your inbox with a 'star' icon **1** and in a dedicated Handle folder **2**. Once you've completed an action in your list, tick it **3**. To make your to-do list full screen, click Handle's square icon **4**. You'll see your list on the left. A calendar on the right displays entries for that day as orange lines. To see future entries on the calendar, click the Week or Month tab at the top right.

● If you want to convert Outlook emails into to-do list items, use Todoist (www.todoist.com). It's available as a free program, Outlook add-in, browser extension and Android and iOS app.

NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE 20 Jan

- Use the best alternative to Windows Explorer
- Install Windows 10 without unwanted extras
- Edit PDFs in Windows 10
- Find the meaning of words in one click

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Readers' Tips

TIP OF THE FORTNIGHT

Create keyboard shortcuts for phrases you type often

Every time my mum remotely logs into her work account, she needs to enter all her personal details - name, address, mobile number and some security answers. I wondered if there was a way to simplify this process for her, and stumbled across a brilliant free portable tool called QuickTextPaste. It basically lets you create your own keyboard shortcuts for any phrases (or long words) you commonly type.

To download it, go to www.snipca.com/19157 and click the QuickTextPaste.zip link at the top of the page. Open the downloaded zip file, click the setup file within to launch the tool, then click Run. You'll see a small window with example shortcut options. To delete any of these, simply click a shortcut within the list, then click Delete.

It's easy to add your own text (word

or phrase) and create a shortcut for it. To do this, type your text in the field provided, change the dropdown menus at the bottom to create a shortcut, then click Add (see screenshot right). Add as many of these shortcuts as you want. Your text entries will appear in alphabetical order within the list.

Now whenever you want to add text, simply use the shortcut you created, then select your word or phrase from the QuickTextPaste pop-up menu that appears. I've created a simple list of keyboard shortcuts for my
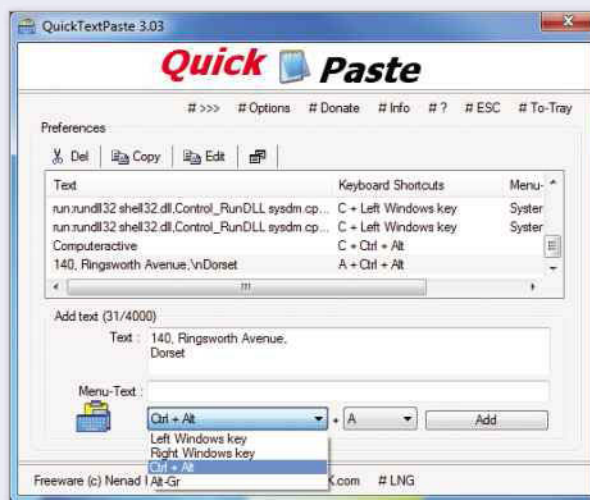
mum, printed this out and stuck it beside her PC so she knows which keyboard shortcut to use for what text.

David Buchan

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

PDF READER
Read PDFs at night without straining your eyes

Despite retiring a few years ago, I recently started working on a freelance consultant basis and, as such, my job requires me to proof several PDFs a week. Household chores keep me busy during the day, so I prefer working at night. However, I find that the bright screen glare at that time affects my sleep and gives me a headache. A friend who was visiting over the Christmas holidays observed this and told me a helpful way to read PDFs at night without letting the screen glare affect you. It involves turning on a (lesser-known) setting within Adobe Acrobat Reader that lets you convert your file to white text on a black background.

To do this, open Acrobat Reader, click
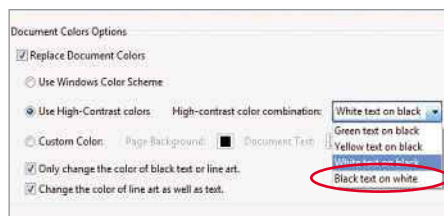
Edit at the top left, then click Preferences. Now click Accessibility on the left, then tick Replace Document Colours at the top. Next, select 'Use High-Contrast colors', click the 'High-contrast color combination' dropdown menu, select 'White text on black' (see screenshot below left), then click OK. Immediately, your PDF's text colour will change from black to white and the background will turn black. This is an ideal night-time setting. To switch back to reading normally, simply untick Replace Document Colors, then click OK.

Martin Price

EXCEL
Use Excel to find your age

In Issue 464, Dave Henry was awarded with the 'Tip of the Fortnight' when he told readers about a website he came across that lets him find out how many 'days' old he is (www.timeanddate.com). You can do the same thing in Excel provided you know a simple formula.

Open Excel and enter your birth date in cell A1 (for example, type 22 September 1954). Now click inside cell

A2 (Excel will change your date format in cell A1, but don't worry about that). Type the current date into A2 using the same date format. Now click inside cell A3, click the Function field at the top of Excel, type the formula =(A2-A1) into it, then press Enter. Cell A3 will now display the number of days between the dates in cells A2 and A1.

Tom Inglis

FILM RECOMMENDATIONS
Find the right movie to suit two different tastes

My partner and I waste more time deciding which movie to watch/rent than actually watching/renting it. Our film tastes are radically different because I prefer action movies, while she likes tear-jerking romantic ones. She recently told me about a new website called www.datenightmovies.com, which proved to be a helpful solution to our problem. You each specify a film you like and the website gives you a list that you both may like. Its spot-on movie recommendations have saved us a lot of time – both in terms of debating and watching.

Brian Bailey

Phone and Tablet Tips Brilliant things to do on your device

ANDROID & iOS
Create an album that anyone can add photos to

Google recently added a new feature called Shared Albums to its popular Photos app. This lets you create an album, then share it with other users, who can then add their own photos and videos to it.

To create a shared album, open Google Photos (Android www.snipca.com/19127; iOS www.snipca.com/19128), tap the '+' symbol at the top right, then tap 'Shared album'. Now tap to select all the photos and videos you want to add to it, then tap Create at the top right. Name your album, then tap Share at the top right. Next, tap the 'Let others add their

photos' slider to turn it on (see screenshot below left), then select which app you want to use to share your album. Finally, select the people you want to share the album with.

The recipients will receive a link to the album. When they tap it, they'll see an option to install Google Photos (if they don't already have it); otherwise they'll see your album with a blue Join button. After tapping this, they can add their photos and videos to your album by tapping the '+' symbol at the top, selecting the relevant files on their device, then tapping Done. You'll see a notification telling you they've added to your album. Tap this to open the album and see their photos and videos.
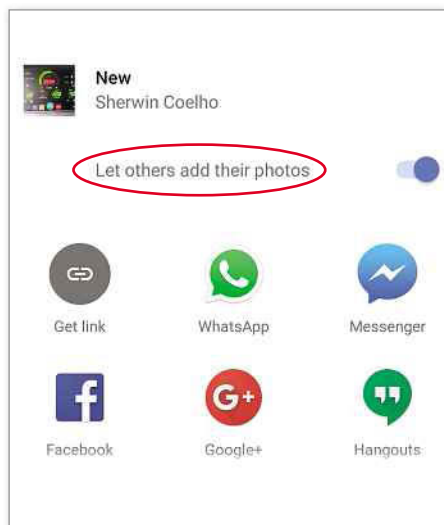
ANDROID & iOS
Use CityMapper to plan your journey by public transport

CityMapper (Android www.snipca.com/19129; iOS www.snipca.com/19130) is one of best public transport apps. At the moment it covers only a handful of cities, including London, Manchester and Birmingham in the UK, and 13 other European cities, including Paris and Amsterdam.

The app was recently updated with a new feature that lets you select a particular bus stop or railway/tube station, then find out when the next service is due to arrive. Open the app,
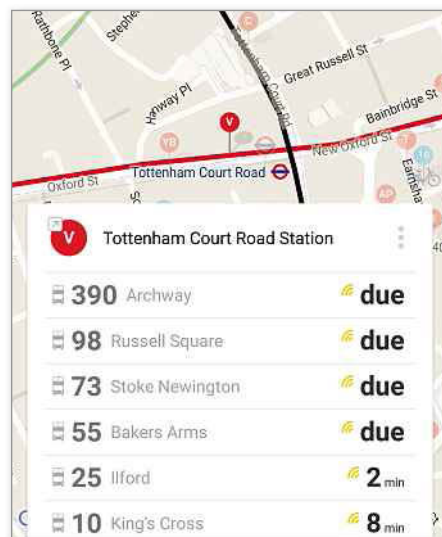
then tap the map at the top. Bus stops are marked as red circles with the stop name (Z5, E, A, B, etc). In London, the Underground and National Rail stations are represented by their respective logos. Tap a specific stop/station on the map to see a live schedule of services, showing their final destinations and time to arrival (see screenshot above).

ANDROID
Take screenshots faster in Android 6.0

Sharing screenshots is the best way to illustrate a technical problem to a friend. On most Android versions, you take a screenshot by pressing a combination of the sleep and volume buttons – depending on your

Best New Apps What you should install this fortnight

Adobe Photoshop Lightroom
Free
Android: www.snipca.com/19131
iOS: www.snipca.com/19132
Adobe's video-editing app Premiere Clip recently became available for free (see page 38) and its Photoshop Lightroom has now followed suit. The photo-editing app lets you make simple edits (crop, rotate, add filters) and more complex ones (modify colour, tone and white balance).

ShareTheMeal
Free
Android: www.snipca.com/19133
iOS: www.snipca.com/19134
This charity-based app developed by the United Nations can literally help you to save someone's life. It lets you donate a certain amount (min 35p) either on a one-off or recurring basis. This then is put toward feeding the 20,000 starving Syrian children living in the massive Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan.

Focus by Firefox
Free
iOS: www.snipca.com/19135
If you browse the web using Safari, and you're worried about organisations keeping track of your browsing activity, then this is the app for you. It lets you block over 5,000 web trackers, such as those used to show targeted adverts.

device. However, if you've updated to the latest version of Android (6.0, Marshmallow), there's an easier way.

To check which Android version you're using, open Settings, scroll to the bottom, tap 'About phone/tablet', then look under 'Android version'. If it says Android 6.0 or later, you can take screenshots by tapping and holding the circular home button at the bottom of your screen. By default, this brings up Marshmallow's new feature called 'Now on tap', giving you relevant information about whatever is on your screen. Tap the Share icon and you'll see your screenshot, with options to share it using compatible apps.

WINDOWS PHONE
Use an SD card to free up storage space on your phone

Many phones come with a limited amount of storage – and much of this is then taken up by the operating system. If you have a Windows Phone, it's a good idea to use an SD card and transfer your apps and games to it, thereby freeing up space on your device.

To do this, open Settings, scroll to the 'system' section, then tap 'storage sense'. Now tap 'phone', then 'apps+games'. You'll see a breakdown of your apps

and games based on the amount of space they take up (largest first). Tap the circular 'select' button at the bottom (see screenshot left), tick all your apps and games, tap 'move' at the bottom, then tap 'yes'.
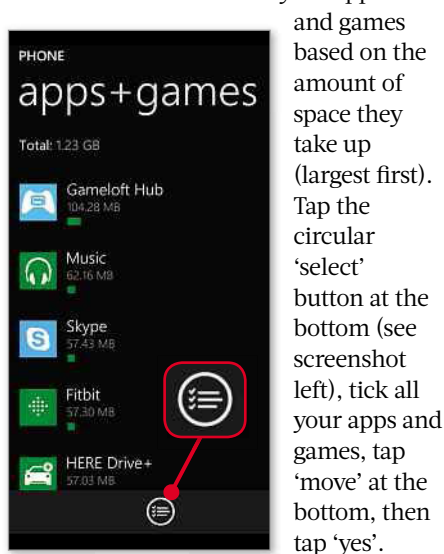
iOS
Speed up your slow iPad

After owning your iPhone or iPad for a while, you'll probably start to notice that it performs more slowly than before. Simple tasks like opening or switching between apps can take significantly longer than when your

device was new. This happens because your device constantly stores information from your apps as a cache. As this builds up, your device slows down. It's basically the same problem that plagues older PCs. Thankfully, there's an easy way to clear your cache without installing a third-party app.

Press and hold your device's sleep/wake button at the top (top right on newer iPhones and iPads) until you see the 'slide to power off' screen. Now press and hold the circular Home button at the bottom of your device for a few seconds until you're taken to your device's homescreen. It won't seem like anything has happened, but open an app or try switching between apps and you'll notice that your device has become much more responsive.

Games With Kids
What to play together on your phone and tablet

AGES 0–5
The StoryToys Jigsaw Puzzle Collection
Free www.snipca.com/19136 (iOS)
This app contains 320 puzzles depicting popular children's classics, including *The Jungle Book*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Puss in Boots*. Your child will win a trophy for each puzzle they complete and each level of difficulty they master (four in total).

AGES 6–10
ZType*
Free www.snipca.com/19137 (Android)
Free www.snipca.com/19138 (iOS)
ZType is an addictive, Space Invaders–style game that will teach your child to type. You need to save your spaceship from destruction by correctly typing (and thereby blasting) words as they fall from the sky. One spelling mistake and you're doomed.
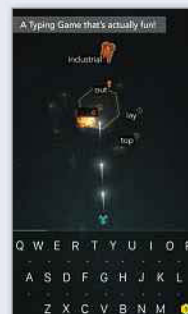
AGES 11–16
Monument Valley*
£2.99 www.snipca.com/19139 (Android)
£2.99 www.snipca.com/19140 (iOS)
This is a visually stunning puzzle that's easy to play, but difficult to master. You need to help Princess Ida travel through several large and complex monuments by tapping, rotating and moving the buildings' various elements.

*Contains in-app purchases

Make Windows Better

Hide folders by disguising them to look like something else

In past issues we've showed you how to hide your folders so no one can find them. However, this won't prevent someone who knows how to reveal hidden folders from accessing them. Alternatively, you can hide your folders (but keep them in plain sight) by disguising them to look like something else – a system file, for example. To do this, right-click the folder you want to disguise, click Properties, the Customize tab, then the Change Icon button at the bottom. Now select another icon (see screenshot below), click OK, Apply, then OK again.

Install all of Windows 7's games on Windows 10

Windows 7 was the last version of the operating system that came with advert-free PC games built in. In Windows 8, you had to reinstall individual games (as apps) from the Windows Store. Microsoft brought back a few games (such as Solitaire) with Windows 10, but these contain adverts and you need to pay to remove these.

Thankfully, there are a couple of ways you can get all your Windows 7 games (in the same format) in Windows 10. Before upgrading, you can copy the installation files for each game to a USB stick and install them after upgrading to Windows 10. An easier way is to download one setup file containing all the games from cloud-storage site Mega, where they're saved as a zipped file. Then you simply extract the setup file and select which games you want to install on Windows 10.

To do this, go to Mega's website at www.snipca.com/19161, then click the
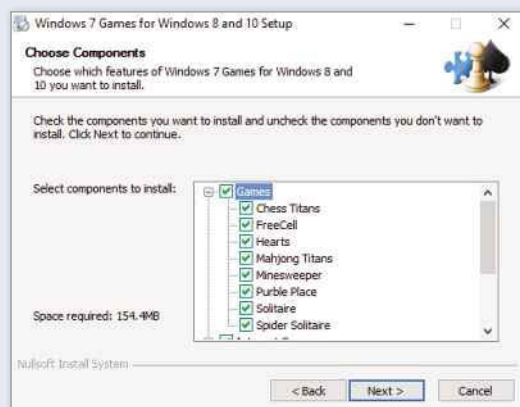
'Download through your browser' link. Once the zipped folder has downloaded, click the 'Win7GamesForWind10-Setup' file, then click Run, Yes, OK and Next. All the Windows 7 games are ticked by default (see screenshot). Untick the ones you don't want, click Next, then Install. Once it's installed, click Next, then Finish.

To play a game, open the Start menu, click 'All apps' at the bottom, then look at the 'Recently added' section at the top to see all your installed games. Double-click one to start playing it – just as you would in Windows 7.

Charge your phone even when your laptop lid is closed

If you need to quickly charge your mobile device, you can simply connect it to your laptop using a USB cable. The drawback of this method is that you have to keep your laptop's lid open. If you close it, your PC will switch off and your device will stop charging. Thankfully, there's an easy way to change this default setting so your laptop doesn't switch off when you close the lid.

To do this, press the Windows key on your keyboard, type device manager, then click this option. Now click the triangular icon to the left of 'Universal Serial Bus controllers' (at the bottom) to expand it. You'll see a list of all the USB ports on your PC. Right-click the first one, then click Properties. Now click the Power Management tab, untick 'Allow the computer to turn off this device to save power' (see screenshot below) and click OK. Repeat this process for all other items in the 'USB controllers' list.

Change your Windows 10 profile picture

If you've upgraded to Windows 10 using your Microsoft account, you'll notice your account profile photo is the same as your Microsoft (Hotmail or Outlook.com) account (to see this photo, open the Start menu and look in the top-left corner). To change this photo, right-click it, then click 'Change account settings'. Next, click the Browse button below your photo, navigate to the image you want on your PC, then click 'Choose picture'.

If you have a webcam, you can also take a photo of yourself and set that as your profile picture. To do that, click the Camera button to launch your webcam, then the camera icon to take your photo. Move the image border to zoom into the area that you want, then click the tick icon at the top to save this as your new account profile picture.

Make Office Better

Expert tips for every program

POWERPOINT

Preview your presentation and rearrange your slides faster

While playing your slideshow from the beginning is the best way to present it, it's not necessarily the best way to check your presentation because you can't rearrange slides if you feel that you need to.

A better alternative is to use PowerPoint's Reading View option to preview and check your presentation. To do that, click the Reading View icon at the bottom right of PowerPoint. Your presentation will start playing in full screen and you can use the left and
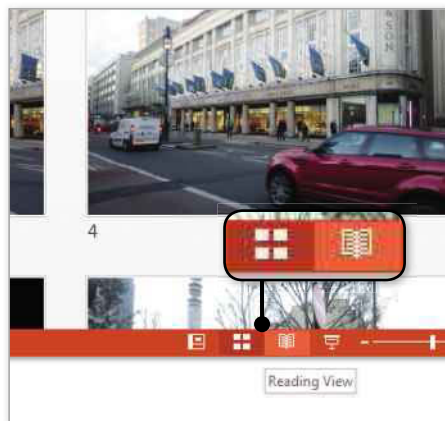
right arrow keys to navigate between slides (just as if you were playing your slideshow). Even better, you can rearrange slides quickly in this mode. To do that, click the icon with four small squares (to the left of the Reading View icon – see screenshot above). Your slides will now appear as tiles. Simply click and drag the tiles to rearrange them, then click the Reading View icon again to switch back to that mode.

EXCEL

Speed up navigation within a longer spreadsheet

If you have an Excel sheet with data running across hundreds of lines, then getting to the top or bottom using only the arrow keys on your keyboard can be very time consuming. This is because those keys only jump one cell at a time. A faster way to speed up the navigating process using your keyboard is to keep the Ctrl key pressed, then press and hold the up (or down) arrow key. This will jump across multiple rows at a much quicker speed, making the process faster. You can also use the Ctrl+ (left or right) arrow key combination to move in that direction.

WORD

Use images as bullets points

It's easy to add bullet points to your text, but did you know that you can also use images as bullet points? The process is very easy and it can inject some style into your documents. To do this, first click the Bullets dropdown menu (at the top left of the Paragraph section in the Home tab), then click Define New Bullet (see screenshot right). Now click the Picture button. You'll see two options – 'From a file' and Bing Image Search. To add an image from your PC, click Browse beside the first option, navigate to the image, then click Insert and OK.

To add an image from Bing, click inside the Search Bing field and type what image you're looking for. By default, you won't see proper high-res images of your term. For example, if you searched for 'Big Ben', then you'll see sketches or drawings of Big Ben because
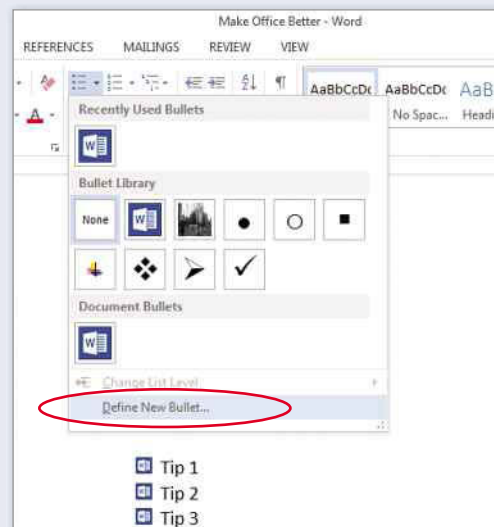
these are more appropriate to use as bullet points. If you want to see the actual image, then simply click 'Show all web results' at the bottom. You'll now see high-res images. Select the image that you want, then click Insert and OK

The images you've added will now appear as options within your Bullets dropdown menu.

OFFICE

Make Office programs easier to use on a touchscreen

Laptops with touchscreens (such as the Microsoft Surface) and convertible laptops (such as the Lenovo Yoga and Microsoft Surface Book) are becoming very common. These let you type using your keyboard or by bringing up the onscreen keyboard. If you tend to use the touchscreen more than your keyboard, then you should

activate Microsoft Touch Mode to make your Office programs easier to use. Doing this will make your Office tab buttons bigger and add more space between the various options on your Ribbon, so there's less chance you'll accidentally tap something else.

To activate this mode, open Word, Excel or PowerPoint and look at your Quick Access Toolbar (QAT) at the top left. You should see either a circular icon with a border or an icon of a finger.
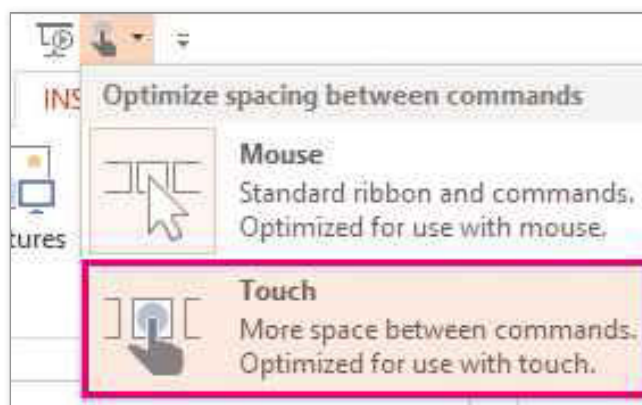
Tap either icon, then tap Touch to turn on the mode (its set to Mouse by default – see screenshot left). If you don't see these icons, then press and hold any item on the QAT until you see a menu of options. Next, tap Customize Quick Access Toolbar, tap Touch Mode, then tap Add.
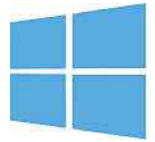
Windows 10 Task Manager

Speed up startup, reveal hidden information and rescue unsaved data

Diagnose and fix slow performance

The Performance tab has several useful tricks stuffed up its sleeve. First, try double-clicking on any blank part of the left-hand pane, which reduces all the performance statistics down to a tidy summary view (alternatively, right-click and choose 'Summary view').

To see a summary of a particular performance chart double-click in the right-hand pane, or right-click and choose 'Graph summary view'. Repeat either action to revert to the full view. Finally, it's useful to tick 'Always on top' in the Options menu to keep these summaries in permanent view when you're trying to diagnose performance problems.

Rescue unsaved data

If a program is unresponsive, you can use Task Master to look behind the scenes and rescue any unsaved data. Select the Details tab, then right-click the affected program and choose 'Analyze wait chain' (see screenshot above right). Look for entries coloured red: these are processes that have stalled and are causing the problem. You should always wait a few
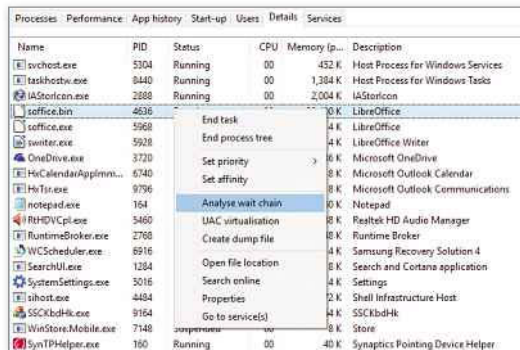
Using this right-click option might enable you rescue unsaved data stuck in frozen programs

minutes to see if these processes and the affected program recover but, if you're certain the freeze is permanent, ending troublesome processes might enable the associated program to spring back into life – giving you the opportunity to save your data. To do this, select a faulty process then click 'End process'.

Reveal hidden information

Most Task Manager tabs show only a part of all the information that's available. To see what else is on offer, right-click any column heading – then tick the relevant boxes to reveal more information. In the Details tab, for example, right-click and choose 'Select

columns' to reveal the 'Speed up slow startup' box, which can be used to make Windows faster.

Monitor network traffic

Task Manager has a hidden tool that you can use to monitor how much data is flowing across both wired and wireless networks. Choose the Performance tab then select WiFi in the left-hand pane (see screenshot below). Now right-click in the right-hand pane and tick 'View network details'. If you're worried about your broadband speeds, check the 'Link speed' row to see how fast your various networks are performing.
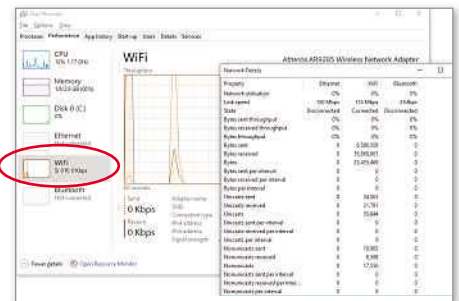
Open this hidden info pane to see how fast your various network connections are performing

Speed up urgent tasks

It's generally best left to Windows to manage its own multi-tasking, but if you need to speed up a particular operation – video editing, for example – then Task Manager can help. Select the Details tab, right-click the relevant tool, point to 'Set priority' and click an option higher than Normal. You can use this same method to slow down processes you consider less important, further boosting the speed of other important tools.

Gather troubleshooting statistics

Trying to isolate the cause of a problem? It can be useful to record key information about your computer as text. Select the Performance tab, followed by the relevant category in the left-hand pane, then right-click in the right-hand pane and choose Copy. Press (Ctrl)+V to paste this information wherever it's needed – into an email to a PC technician, for example.

Speed up slow startup

Task Manager's Start-up tab is no secret – it's right there in plain view. And you've probably worked out already that it shows the programs and processes that launch with Windows. But it also has hidden features that helps you identify anything that slows your PC's startup.

First, right-click any of the column headings and tick 'CPU at start-up' – this adds a new column with that heading. Next, click that new heading to sort the column by greatest first (indicated by a little down arrow above the heading). The items at the top are those that take the longest time to load, measured in milliseconds (so 11,284ms
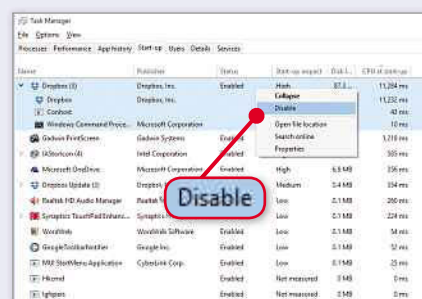
means 11.2 seconds).

Now look at the item name: if it has a right-pointing arrow then click this to see a breakdown of everything the item is doing during startup. Slow or unwanted items can be disabled by right-clicking them and choosing Disable – you should research online anything you're unsure about.

Quantum dots

Einstein wouldn't have liked it, but scientists say they have created an internet that's impossible to hack

What are they?

Semiconductor crystals so mind-bogglingly small – between two and 10 nanometres (10 to 50 atoms in diameter) – that they start behaving very oddly.

How oddly?

So oddly that even Albert Einstein refused to believe it was possible (he described the phenomenon as "spooky"). Here's a quick lesson in quantum physics. In this subatomic world very weird things happen. One of the weirdest is that particles can be connected by a mysterious force even if they are separated by vast distances. In this process – called quantum entanglement – one particle can affect how another behaves. For example, if one particle spins clockwise, its partner will spin counter-clockwise.

A team of scientists based at the universities of Glasgow, Stanford, Tokyo and Würzburg recently demonstrated how these connected particles can be used to encrypt data that becomes impossible to hack when sent over the internet.

Are you sure hackers couldn't find a way?

Only if they altered the laws of physics by stopping particles affecting each other. Hackers are clever, but not *that* clever.

What did the scientists actually do?

Just the sort of everyday task we all perform: they 'entangled' the spin of an electron stored in a quantum dot with a single photon that was sent across two kilometres of standard fibre-optic cable. Next, they encoded information in these particles in the form of qubits, which are the quantum equivalent of binary bits - ones and zeroes - in conventional computing.

Because these particles are linked, any attempt by hackers to intercept the data would change its properties, making the
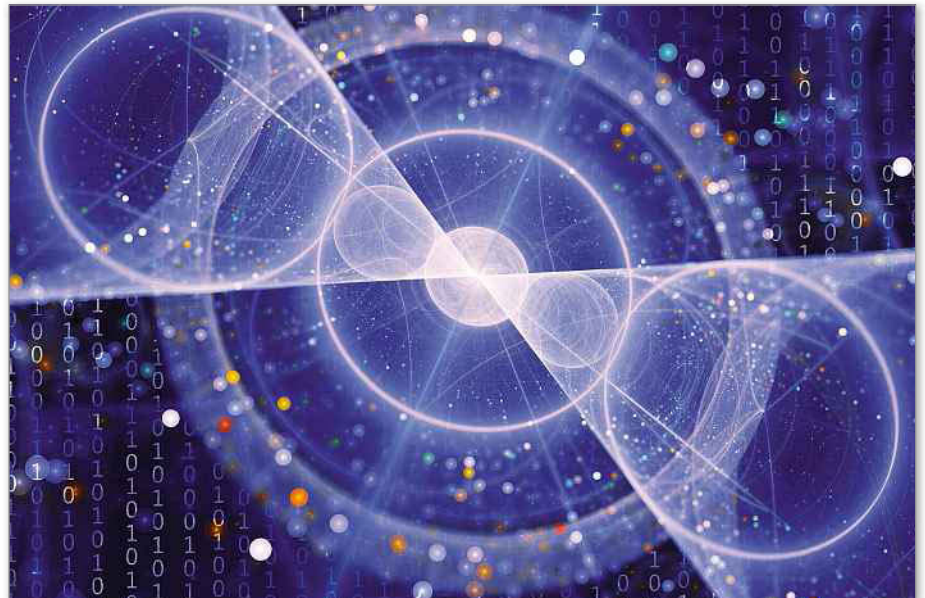
attack easy to spot. Furthermore, the information is impossible to copy because at the quantum level particles exist in all possible states until they are observed or measured (the famous Schrödinger's cat paradox). By observing the data, hackers would fundamentally change it, making it useless to them.

Doesn't this require specialised equipment?

Not anymore. What's important about the recent experiment is that it shows how information can be sent on standard fibre-optic cables - the type already used worldwide. The scientists who conducted the research claim that the technology could be commonly used by communications companies "in the near future".

Quantum dots – as seen in these dials – can be used to produce better screen quality on TVs

Can quantum dots be used for anything else?

Yes, and if you've got a Kindle Fire tablet, you may have seen what they can do - which is to emit light that produces brighter, more precise colours than was previously possible. Amazon built quantum dots into the HDX 7 and 8.9 models of its tablet, while Sony, Samsung and LG have all made LED TVs with them. These work by sitting on top of the backlight layer on screens in order to produce richer whites that contain all the colours of the spectrum. The results are images that look more realistic than ever.

What's that got to do with internet security?

Nothing. The potential for quantum dots to improve encryption has only recently been taken seriously. Another use could be to make phones and tablets charge faster. In November, researchers at Vanderbilt University in Nashville said they made quantum dots out of iron pyrite - also known as fool's gold - that could fully charge devices in just 30 seconds. Not bad for an object that's 10,000 times narrower than a human hair.

Change Your Windows 10 SETTINGS NOW!

Microsoft's default settings in Windows 10 aren't as safe as they should be.
Jonathan Parkyn explains what they do, and tells you which to disable

Every version of Windows has had settings that needed tweaking, whether it's changing the Desktop background to a photo of your grandchildren, or switching off a feature you don't like. But Windows 10 takes this to a worrying new level. No previous version has had more default settings that Microsoft has simply got wrong.

We've said it before, but it's worth repeating: we like Windows 10. It's a fast, modern operating system (OS) with some great tools. But whether you've recently upgraded or you're planning to soon, there are dozens of settings you need to change. Some, such as Microsoft's Wi-Fi sharing feature, could leave your data vulnerable to hackers. Others, such as a secret keylogger that records everything you type, compromises your privacy.

Here, then, is our ultimate checklist of all the settings Windows 10 users need to change - 52 in total. In each case, we'll explain what the default setting is and the reasons why Microsoft wants you to leave it that way. Then we'll show you what we recommend changing it to and why.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Protect your privacy and stop Windows 10 spying on you
- Re-enable the features that Microsoft doesn't want you to use
- Block unwanted updates and stop background downloads
- Banish annoying adverts and nuisance notifications

PRIVACY AND SECURITY

Send Microsoft info about how I write

Windows 10 default: On Microsoft wants to record and analyse how you write so it can "improve typing and writing in the future".

We recommend: Off This is effectively the same as letting Microsoft install a keylogger on your PC, letting the company record everything you type. We suggest opting out by clicking Start, Settings, Privacy, then General and switching 'Send Microsoft info about how I write to help us improve typing and writing in the future' to Off (see screenshot above right).

Location

Windows 10 default: On Some Windows 10 apps, including Maps and Weather, use your current location to provide you with relevant information.

We recommend: Off for specific apps. It's possible to disable Location altogether (click Start, Settings, Privacy, Location, Change, then click the switch to Off), but this will limit the abilities of certain features, particularly on the Maps app. A better option may be to leave Location on, then scroll down and switch off all the apps listed underneath, apart from the ones you know you'll use.

Camera, Microphone

Windows 10 default: On Windows allows apps to access the cameras and microphones that are built into many tablets and laptops, or webcams and headsets attached to desktop PCs. This is in order to provide certain functions, such as voice recording.

We recommend: Off for specific apps. As

Turn off this setting to stop Microsoft tracking what you type

with Location, both these settings can be switched off altogether by clicking Start, Settings, Privacy and then either Camera or Microphone. But it's more likely that you'll want to leave both enabled and then choose which trusted apps to allow from those listed in each case. Skype, for example, would be pretty useless without access to your camera or microphone.

Speech, inking & typing

Windows 10 default: On Microsoft wants to gather information about you – what you type, who you contact, where you go and more – in order to "personalise your experience" (see www.snipca.com/19085).

We recommend: Off If you find this setting a little creepy, then disable it by clicking Start, Settings, Privacy, then 'Speech, inking & typing' and 'Stop getting to know me'. Bear in mind that doing this will effectively render Cortana useless.

Account info, Contacts, Calendar, Messaging, Radios

Windows 10 default: On All five of these settings are enabled, allowing apps to access your personal information across several different apps.

We recommend: Off for specific apps. Click Start, Settings, then Privacy and check each of these five settings to make sure that there aren't any apps you don't want accessing personal information listed under the 'Choose apps that can access...' section. Some apps should be left enabled. For example, under Contacts you may wish to leave 'Mail and Calendar' enabled, so that you can access your contacts when using the Mail app. But many, including

Microsoft's mysterious 'App connector', can be safely switched off.

Feedback & diagnostics

Windows 10 default: On By analysing data about your PC and the way you use it, Microsoft hopes to be able to identify and fix problems, or tailor Windows to suit people's needs.

We recommend: Off Assuming you don't want Windows to hassle you with endless feedback requests, click Start, Settings, Privacy, then 'Feedback & diagnostics' and select Never underneath 'Feedback frequency'. To limit how much information about your computer use Microsoft can monitor, choose Basic from 'Diagnostic and usage data' below. However, bear in mind that Microsoft recently admitted it will automatically
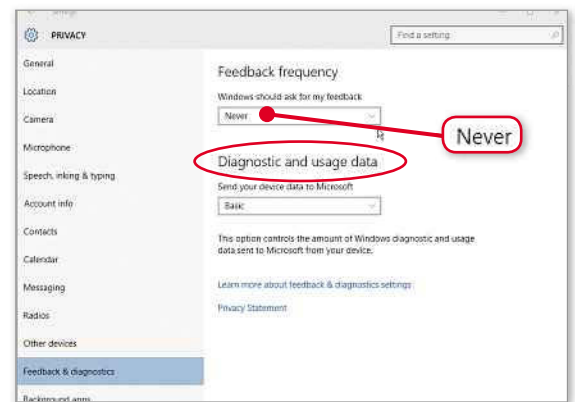
Select 'Never' to stop Microsoft pestering you with feedback requests

collect some diagnostics information about your PC *whatever* your setting (read more at www.snipca.com/18847).

WiFi Sense

Windows 10 default: On Microsoft wants to make it easy for Windows 10 users to connect to their friends' Wi-Fi networks, so it shares an encrypted version of your private wireless security key with other Windows 10 users you know, letting them connect automatically.

We recommend: Off WiFi Sense works by sharing your Wi-Fi security key with people in your contacts list but, currently, you can't choose which ones – it's all or nothing. That means even people you don't really know could end up with access to your Wi-Fi, which isn't safe. To switch WiFi Sense off, click Start, Settings, 'Network & internet', then WiFi. Scroll down and click 'Manage WiFi settings'. Under WiFi Sense, make sure both options are set to Off.

WHY DOES WINDOWS 10 HAVE SO MANY SETTINGS?

One of the reasons is that Windows 10 spreads them across so many different areas of the OS. Microsoft would argue that the new Settings app replaces many Control Panel items and simplifies them. But the Control Panel is still there and houses at least 41 items (sometimes more, depending on your system), compared with around 45 found in Windows 7. And this is in addition to more than 60 in the Settings app.

Choose how updates are installed

Windows 10 default: '**Automatic (recommended)**'. Microsoft is so keen to keep all its users' PCs up to date that the default setting for Windows Update is to download and install updates whether you want them or not.

We recommend: '**Notify to schedule restart**' You can choose *when* updates are installed, so that you don't suddenly have to stop whatever you're doing and reboot your PC. Click Start, Settings, 'Update & security', Windows Update, then 'Advanced options' to change the setting to 'Notify to schedule restart' (see screenshot above right). For more ways to manage updates read Issue 464's Cover Feature: 'Stop and Control Windows Updates'.

Metered connection

Windows 10 default: **Off** Windows 10 automatically assumes that your internet connection allows for unlimited data.

We recommend: **On** If you pay for your internet connection by the gigabyte, then enabling this setting will prevent background downloads eating into your data allowance. But even if your connection isn't pay-as-you-go, there's another reason you may want to switch this on. If Windows thinks your connection is metered, then it won't force updates on you unless you download them manually. Currently, this only works on wireless connections. Click Start, Settings, 'Network & internet', WiFi, then click 'Advanced options' and click the button under 'Set as metered connection'.

Updates from more than one place

Windows 10 default: **On** Windows 10 uses peer-to-peer technology – similar to BitTorrent – to take the strain off Microsoft's own servers. It does this by making Windows 10 users upload Windows and app updates to other users' PCs over the internet.

We recommend: **Off** There's no evidence to suggest this setting is unsafe, but it could mean you waste gigabytes of personal bandwidth - and all just to save Microsoft money. Click Start, Settings, 'Update & security', Windows Update, 'Advanced options', then either switch the setting off altogether, or choose the 'PCs on my local
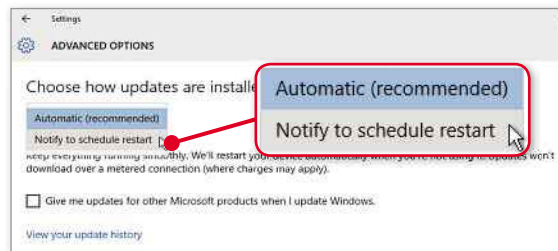
For more control over Windows Update choose 'Notify to schedule restart'

network' option. The latter will actually save bandwidth if you have multiple Windows 10 PCs, because updates will be downloaded and shared with your PCs.

Give me updates for other Microsoft products when I update Windows

Windows 10 default: **Off** Unless you activate this option, Microsoft will assume you want updates for Windows 10 only, not its other products, such as Office.

We recommend: **On** While Windows updates can be annoying, they're generally a good idea because they fix problems, add features and make your computer safer. The same goes for all the other software on your PC, so if you own other Microsoft programs or devices – Office, for example – it's worth switching this setting on so that you get their latest updates. Click Start, Settings, 'Update & security', Windows Update, 'Advanced options', then 'Choose how updates are delivered'.

Backup

Windows 10 default: **Off** Despite having several different built-in backup options, Windows 10 leaves them all disabled unless you do something about it yourself.

We recommend: **On** Backing up is such an important part of running a PC but, amazingly, Windows 10 still fails to enable backup when you first set up your computer. To enable it yourself click Start, Settings, 'Update & security', then Backup. To use Windows 10's File History
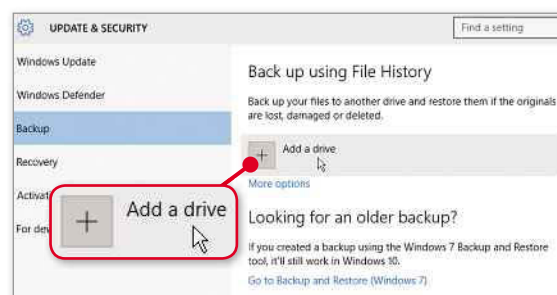
Plug in a USB then click 'Add a drive' to make Windows 10 continuously back up your data

feature, plug in a USB hard drive, then click 'Add a drive' and follow the prompts. This backs up your data continuously in the background. If you'd prefer to use a more familiar scheduled backup instead, click 'Go to Backup and Restore (Windows 7)' and click 'Set up back-up'.

System Restore

Windows 10 default: **Off** For reasons we've yet to fathom, Windows 10 disables System Restore altogether.

We recommend: **On** System Restore is a feature we've relied on since Windows XP. It provides a way of rolling back your system to a time before a troublesome update or program was installed, instantly fixing disastrous PC problems. To re-enable it, right-click Start and select System, then click 'System protection'. In the window that opens, click your system drive (usually C:), then click configure. Next, click 'Turn on system protection' and use the slider to allocate a small percentage of your hard-drive space (around two per cent) to System Restore, then click OK.

PERFORMANCE, SPEED AND INTERFACE

Visual Effects

Windows 10 default: 'Let Windows choose what's best for my computer' Windows 10 uses a lot of fancy effects to make it attractive to use, but these all consume system resources. By default, the OS manages these automatically.

We recommend: Off You may notice a significant improvement in performance if you disable Windows 10's visual effects. Right-click Start, then click System, 'Advanced system settings'. Now click the Settings button under Performance, select the 'Adjust for best performance' option at the top, then click OK (see screenshot right). The effect will be more noticeable on some PCs than others; if you don't notice any difference, you can always switch back.
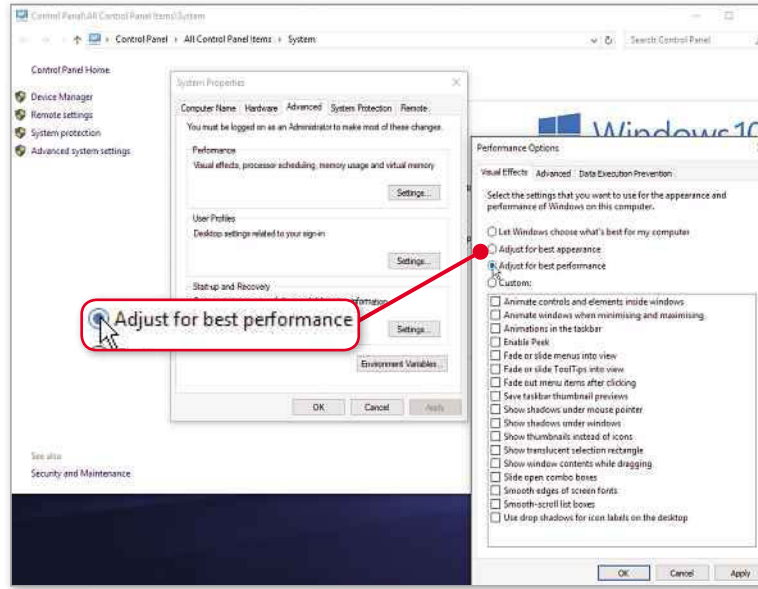
Select 'Adjust for best performance' to turn off visual effects – it may speed up your PC

Start-up items

Windows 10 default: Enabled Windows 10 allows programs to add themselves to your PC's start-up unless you choose to disable them, the idea being that important programs are ready to go as soon as your computer starts.

We recommend: Disable as needed. Not all the programs that get added to your start-up are as important as they think they are. Right-click the taskbar, then click Task Manager. Click 'More details' if shown, then click the Start-up tab and work through the list. Click any items you don't need, then click Disable. If you're not sure what an item does, right-click it and select 'Search online'.

Hibernate

Windows 10 default: Disabled Hibernate is a way of shutting down your computer so it saves all your programs and files.

We recommend: Enabled Hibernating

Tick Hibernate to turn on this valuable setting, which Microsoft disables by default

can be a massive time-saver, as it lets you carry on working exactly where you left off when you restart your PC. To add Hibernate to the options available from the Start menu power button, right-click Start then select Power Options. Click 'Choose what the power buttons do', then click 'Change settings that are currently unavailable'. Next, tick the Hibernate box under 'Shut-down settings' (see screenshot below). While you're there, check that 'Turn on fast start-up' is ticked, too. This is another time saver, though it's normally enabled by default. Click 'Save changes'.

Task View and Search bar

Windows 10 default: Enabled Microsoft is so desperate for you to use the new features in Windows 10 that it has stuck two of them – Task View and Cortana's search bar – permanently to the taskbar.

We recommend: Disabled You can tidy up your taskbar by disabling both. To disable the Task View button, Right-click the taskbar, then click 'Show Task View button' to untick it. To disable the Search bar, right-click the taskbar and select Cortana, then choose 'Show Cortana icon' to replace the Search bar with an icon, or choose Hidden to hide it altogether. Bear in mind that this won't disable features themselves – you'll still

You can remove Task View and the Cortana search bar from your taskbar

be able to use Task View by pressing Win+Tab, for example.

Quick Access view

Windows 10 default: Enabled The new default view in File Explorer is intended to help you get to your most recently or frequently used files and folders quickly.

We recommend: Disable (optional) This one's down to personal taste. Quick Access is actually quite useful, but takes some getting used to. If you don't like it, bring back the old My Computer-style view of all the drives on your computer by clicking the File Explorer icon on the taskbar. Make sure the ribbon is visible (click the down arrow in the top right if not), click the View tab, then click Options. On the General tab of the window that opens, choose This PC from the 'Open File Explorer to' dropdown menu and click OK.

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NOTIFICATIONS AND ADVERTS

Let apps use my advertising ID for experiences across apps

Windows 10 default: On You are given a unique advertising ID that Microsoft uses to provide you with targeted advertising across all the apps you use.

We recommend: Off If you'd rather not be tracked and targeted by advertising, then switch this setting off – you'll find it in Start, Settings, Privacy, General (see screenshot right). Switching this off won't stop adverts, but it will reset your advertising ID and prevent companies targeting you.
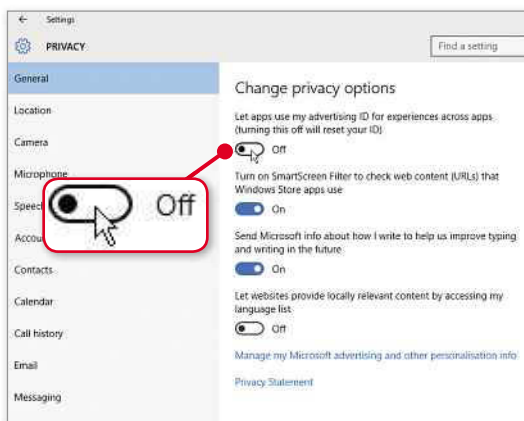
Disable this setting to prevent companies targeting you with adverts

Don't want to buy Office? Uninstall the 'Get Office' app to stop Microsoft pestering you

Let websites provide locally relevant content by accessing my language list

Windows 10 default: On The theory here is that advertisers are able to provide you with adverts in your own language.

We recommend: Off What this setting does is allow websites you visit to know which languages you have installed on your PC. Disable it by going to Start, Settings, Privacy, General and switching it off.

Occasionally show suggestions in Start

Windows 10 default: On Microsoft makes money from any apps sold in the Windows Store, so it tries to persuade you to buy from there wherever possible. Since the November update, this has included the Start menu, where ads for 'Suggested apps' now appear under your 'Most used' apps.

We recommend: Off Seeing adverts in your Start menu feels invasive; to banish them, click Start, Settings, Personalisation,
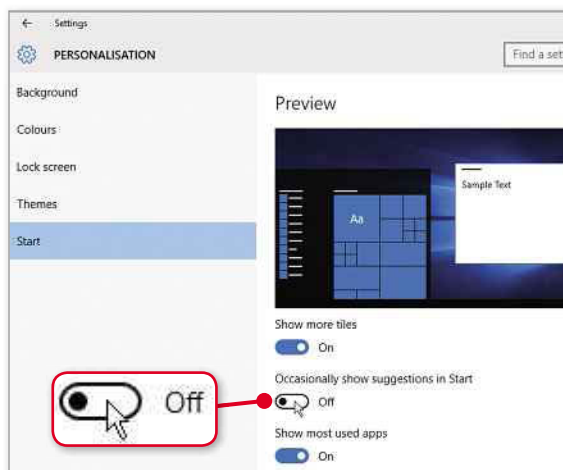
Microsoft wants to show you adverts in your Start menu – here's where to turn them off

then click Start on the left and switch the 'Occasionally show suggestions in Start' setting to Off (see screenshot below).

Personalised ads

Windows 10 default: On Microsoft wants to show adverts that are relevant to you whenever you use your web browser or sign into your Microsoft account.

We recommend: Off Amazingly, there are two key Windows 10 privacy settings that aren't available in Windows 10. Instead, you'll need to go to: http://choice.microsoft.com. Click 'Sign in' and log in with your Microsoft account. You'll see two options – 'Personalised ads in this browser' and 'Personalised ads whenever I use my Microsoft account'. Switch both off (see screenshot above right).

Get Office

Windows 10 default: Enabled Microsoft wants you to buy Office, so it displays 'Get Office' messages in your Notifications.

We recommend: Disable. These annoying notifications are essentially ads caused by a app that comes preinstalled with Windows 10. Uninstalling the app is an effective way of silencing them for good, so click Start, 'All apps', scroll to Get Office, right-click it and select Uninstall.

Show me tips about Windows

Windows 10 default: On Your PC will deliver occasional 'helpful' tips to you via the Action Centre, in order to point you towards new features and tools.

We recommend: Off You don't have to put up with being

hassled by unnecessary notifications. Some people have reported that disabling them dramatically boosts performance, too (read this Reddit forum post www.snipca.com/19094). Click Start, Settings, System, then 'Notifications & actions' on the left. Switch the setting (just under the Notifications heading) to Off.

Show app notifications

Windows 10 default: On Apps are allowed to send you notifications that appear as pop-ups near the notification area, as well as in the Action Centre and the lock screen.

We recommend: On, but Off for specific apps. Some notifications are useful but, with Windows 10's default settings, it's easy to end up drowning in annoying alerts. To fix this, click Start, Settings, System, then click 'Notifications & actions'. Leave the global 'Show app notifications' setting On, but scroll down and check the list of apps shown below, switching to Off any you don't need notifications from.

Show notifications on the lock screen

Windows 10 default: On With this enabled, you can view notifications you've received without logging in.

We recommend: Off The trouble with this setting and the one below it ('Show alarms, reminders, and incoming VOIP calls on the lock screen') is that other people can see the emails, calendar appointments, missed calls and other personal information that lock-screen notifications may contain. You may feel more comfortable switching these off, particularly if you use your PC at work or in public. Click Start, Settings, System, then click 'Notifications & actions' and scroll down to disable both settings. ▶

Off

APPS AND PROGRAMS

Windows Store App updates

Windows 10 default: On The Windows Store app checks for and downloads any updates for your apps so that you don't need to think about it.

We recommend: Off While this option may be convenient, it won't necessarily work for everyone. If you're on a capped or metered internet connection, for example, you may prefer to monitor or control the bandwidth these updates use up. Open the Windows Store from the taskbar icon, then click your account icon and select Settings. Switch 'Update apps automatically' to off.

Windows Store Live Tile

Windows 10 default: On With this enabled, the Windows Store's Start menu Live Tile will display new or featured apps and games that you might be interested in.

We recommend: Off This is another way for Microsoft to push Windows Store advertising at you. If you're fed up with this hard sell, open the Windows Store app and navigate to its settings as described in the previous tip, then switch 'Show products on tile' to Off.

Default apps

Windows 10 default: Windows 10 apps Unless you specify otherwise during setup, Windows 10 will set its new apps as the defaults for music, photos and more, while Edge will become your default browser.

We recommend: Your own favourite programs and tools Getting you to use its own apps is another way that Microsoft will try to sell you stuff, because its Groove Music and Film & TV apps are tied directly into Microsoft's own online entertainment stores. To switch back to your preferred programs, click Start, Settings, System, then 'Default apps'. Now click each of the apps listed and choose the program you want instead. If the program you want isn't listed, you may need to install it. For even more control, scroll down and click
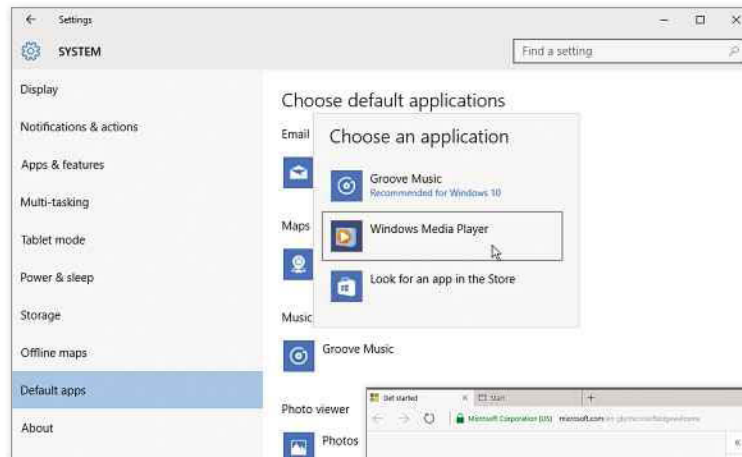
You don't have to stick with Windows 10's default Desktop apps

'Choose default applications by file type'.

Background apps

Windows 10 default: On Windows 10 allows its built-in apps – plus many of those you download from the Windows Store – to run in the background all the time, so that they can remain connected and up to date.

We recommend: Off for certain apps. In some cases, it can be very useful to have an app running in the background. With News running, for example, you can get the latest headlines from your Start menu Live Tile without actually having to launch the app. But the more apps you run, the more memory you'll consume, as well as battery life if you're on a laptop. We'd suggest limiting background apps to a minimum, so click Start, Settings, Privacy, 'Background apps', then scroll through the list switching off any you don't need.

Edge – Privacy and services

Windows 10 default: Edge, the web browser that comes built into Windows 10, is set to allow all cookies. It also speeds up your browsing by showing suggestions and using predictions as you type in the search or address bar.
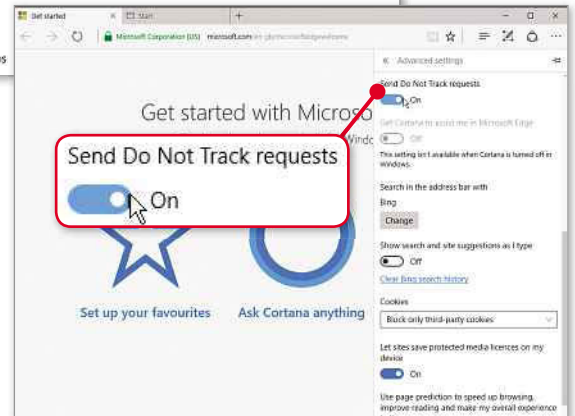
Don't let websites track you when you browse the web using Edge

We recommend: If you've started using Microsoft's new web browser since switching to Windows 10, or if you're an Internet Explorer user who's looking at Edge to plug the gap when IE is finally phased out, then there are some settings you'll need to change.

Click the three-dots top right, then click Settings, 'View advanced settings'. Under 'Privacy and services', switch on 'Send Do Not Track requests' – this will stop many websites from tracking your movements. Under Cookies, we'd suggest opting for 'Block only third-party cookies'. And, if you'd rather not send Microsoft data about your web browsing habits, you should turn off 'Show search and site suggestions as I type' and 'Use page prediction to speed up browsing, improve reading and make my overall experience better'. **ca**

Your most popular programs of 2015

Thanks to how we shorten URLs, we can work out which software you've downloaded most over the past 12 months. Here's your top 10…

NUMBER 1

One of the things we dislike most about the internet is typing long URLs into our browser bar. We know you're not keen on it, either. That's why in every issue we use our Snipca URL-shortening to shrink web addresses, turning unwieldy beasts like the link for Microsoft's Windows 10 forum (http://answers.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/forum/windows_10?tab=Threads) into manageable snippets: www.snipca.com/19031.

Because it's our very own service, we can monitor how often each Snipca is clicked. That gives us an accurate indication of which programs, websites and online tools you're most interested in – so we can give you more of the same. Here's our top 10 of your most clicked software in 2015, with last year's top program continuing to lead the pack.

For the purposes of this list, we're not counting Windows 10 as software. Snipcas related to Windows 10 were so popular this year that they deserve a chart all of their own. You'll find some of these on page 13.

1 AdwCleaner
www.snipca.com/16022
AdwCleaner's second consecutive year in the top spot is a reflection of how effectively it removes adware from your PC. Its biggest update came in April, which we marked by making it the lead program in Best Free Software (Issue 447, page 16). Since then it has been updated to work with Windows 10.

2 Autoruns for Windows
www.snipca.com/15791
We get lots of emails from readers worried about unexpected items launching when they turn on their PC, so it's not surprising that Autoruns is popular. It's always been great at revealing the programs that start automatically, and in 2015 teamed up with VirusTotal to let you check files for malware – see Secret Tips, Issue 451, page 48.

3 Google Earth Pro
www.snipca.com/15715
Previously a £260 download, Google Earth Pro became free in January 2015, and quickly became one of your favourite programs. One of the best things you can do with it is record a 3D virtual tour of anywhere in the world (assuming Google has mapped it), as we explained in our lead Workshop in Issue 445 (page 35).

4 PC Decrapifier
www.snipca.com/16331
The popularity of this junk-removal program is symptomatic of one of the year's biggest scandals – manufacturers stuffing their PCs with system tools that are at best pointless, and at worst malicious. It took pride of place in our 'Remove built-in junk' Cover Feature in Issue 449.

5 Belarc Advisor
www.snipca.com/17465
All year you've loved programs that lift the lid on your PC, to reveal what's really going on inside. Belarc Advisor does just that, analysing your hardware and software to help you identify problems. It is the program you clicked most in Issue 462's Cover Feature: 'Make your PC live longer'.

6 SlimDrivers
www.snipca.com/15419
As the launch of Windows 10 approached, thousands of you wanted to make sure your PC was in the best condition to receive the upgrade. One program that helped make this possible was SlimDrivers, which scans your system looking for out-of-date drivers. It first appeared in 2015 in our 'Make your PC run like new' Cover Feature (Issue 444).
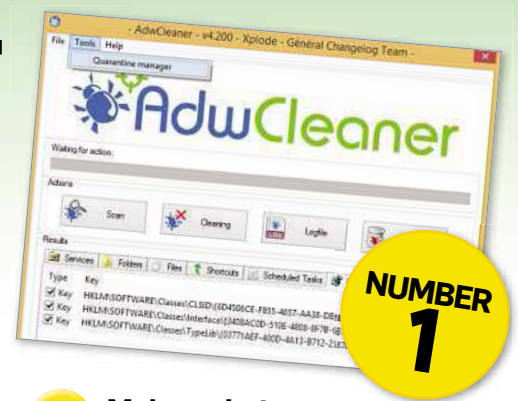
7 Malwarebytes Anti-Rootkit Beta
www.snipca.com/15810
Some of the most important programs are security tools that protect you from threats your antivirus can't. Of those we recommended in our 'Remove hidden malware' Cover Feature (Issue 446), Malwarebytes' rootkit-attacking software was your top download. It's still in beta, but it's highly effective.

8 Reason Core Security
www.snipca.com/16566
Another tool that works alongside your antivirus is Reason Core Security, which warns you when a program you're about to download comes riddled with junk. Thousands of you downloaded the software following our Workshop on it in Issue 451 (page 42).

9 IObit Uninstaller
www.snipca.com/17838
Talking of junk, we've often slated IObit's programs for containing plenty, and told you to steer clear. But the company cleaned up its act in 2015, and you quickly forgave it for past misdemeanours. In fact, you liked it so much that no other uninstaller in Issue 458's Cover Feature ('Software you must uninstall now') was clicked more.

10 CCEnhancer
www.snipca.com/15280
We know you love CCleaner, so it's no shock that you also love a tool that gives it more options. CCEnhancer appeared in Issue 443's Cover Feature ('Hack your software') and, with AdwCleaner, is one of only two programs to feature in the top 10 for 2014 and 2015. **ca**

LAST YEAR'S TOP 10

- AdwCleaner
- Process Hacker
- Clean Master
- Wise Care 365
- Driver Booster
- CPU-Z
- CCEnhancer
- DNS Benchmark
- MyUninstaller
- Glary Utilities

Send massive files for FREE
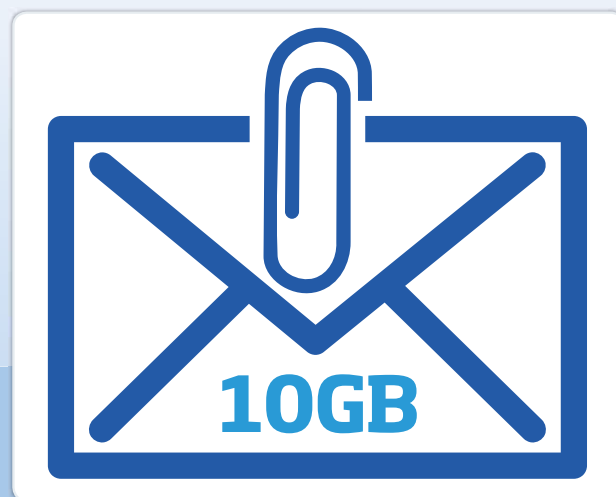
Do your huge files keep bouncing back to you on email? **Jonathan Parkyn** shows you how to break through the size barrier

10GB

Emailing attachments to friends and family is a quick and easy way to share photos, documents and much more. But if you've ever tried to attach anything larger than a few megabytes, you'll know that email isn't necessarily the best way to share big files – they often just bounce right back with a big, shouty 'UNDELIVERABLE' stamped all over the subject field.

So, what do you do if you want to send that large video clip of the family you filmed over Christmas, or a sprawling album of recent holiday photos? Well, don't go popping USB sticks in the post just yet; here are some easy ways to send big files to anywhere in the world – and it won't cost you a penny.

Add files from cloud storage to webmail

As a rule, webmail services tend to be more generous than standard email services when it comes to large attachments. Gmail currently has an attachment limit of 25MB, while Outlook.com lets you send files up to 20MB. However, just because you can send large attachments, it doesn't always mean that the recipient will get them. If you are sending from Gmail, say, to someone whose email service caps attachments at a lower size, then your 25MB files could end up being rejected by your recipient's servers.

Both Gmail and Outlook.com offer a clever way around this. You can insert files (up to 10GB) from online storage instead of attaching them. In Gmail, once you've typed your message, instead of clicking the paperclip icon to attach a file, click the Google Drive icon next to it (see screenshot below left). Click Upload, then 'Select files from your computer' and navigate to the file on your computer. Highlight it and click OK, then click Upload. Once it's uploaded, click Send. It doesn't matter what your recipient's attachment limit is. They don't even need a Google Drive account – select the 'Anyone with the link: Can view' option when prompted, then click 'Share & send'. The recipient will receive a link to view or download the file.

You can do the same in Outlook.com by clicking Insert, followed by 'Share from OneDrive' when composing your message.

Send directly from cloud storage

But what if you don't use Gmail or Outlook.com? No problem, you can still send people large files via cloud storage. With Dropbox, for example, you can share a file from within the service itself or create a link that you can send by email.

You will need a Dropbox account, however, but it's free and straightforward – sign up at www.dropbox.com. Next, sign in, click Upload and add the file you want to share. Once it's been uploaded, click the file, then click the Share button to the right. A window will then open showing a link to the file – if you want, you can just copy and paste this link into an email.

Alternatively, type the email addresses of your intended recipients in the box under 'Share this link to' and Dropbox will send a message for you. Either way,
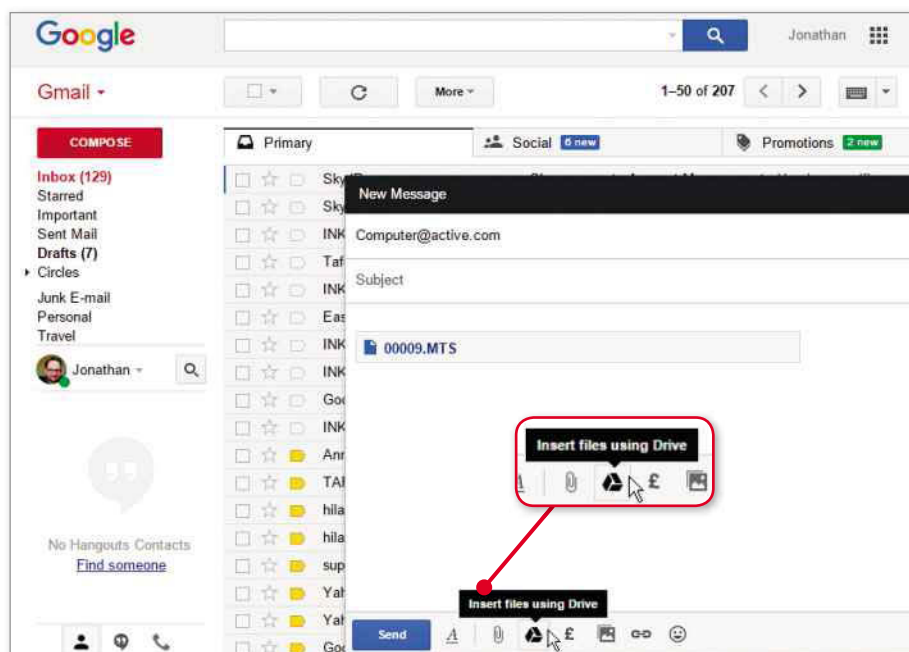
Send huge files in Gmail by inserting them from Google Drive – just click this icon

ZIP IT UP

Large files you're struggling to email can often be made smaller by using a compression tool. Windows has one built in – just right-click a file or folder and select 'Send to', then 'Compressed (zipped) folder'. Zipped files can then be uncompressed at the other end by right-clicking and selecting 'Extract all'.

However, the zip file technique employed by Windows isn't the most powerful type of compression. Other formats, such as 7z and RAR, can be more effective, but require a third-party tool, such as PeaZip (free from www.peazip.org – see screenshot). The person on the other end must use a similar tool to uncompress them. Because of the way compression works, you may find that certain types of file respond better than others. File types that are already compressed, such as MP3 audio files and JPEG photos, may barely reduce in size.

your recipients will be able to use the link provided to download the file directly from your Dropbox themselves – even if they don't have a Dropbox account.

You can upload files of up to 10GB via the Dropbox web interface and there's no file-size limit if you use Dropbox's desktop tool (www.dropbox.com/install) or mobile app (Android www.snipca.com/18998; iOS www.snipca.com/18999). The size of the files you upload or share is, ultimately, limited by the size of your storage, and Dropbox only offers 2GB of space for free. If you regularly send files larger than this, you could consider paying for more space, or you could use Google Drive instead, which provides 15GB of free storage and has similar sharing options.

Send via a file-transfer service

If you don't have a cloud-storage account (or would rather not use it for sharing files), then you could opt for a dedicated file-transfer service, such as WeTransfer (www.wetransfer.com), MailBigFile (www.mailbigfile.com) or Hightail (www.hightail.com). These services let you

upload large files and send a notification to recipients telling them to download it. All three offer both free and paid-for services. Hightail's free offering is the most restrictive because you need to sign up for an account before you can send anything, plus individual file sizes are limited to a maximum of 250MB. You can send 2GB files in WeTransfer and MailBigFile without even registering.

Post it on YouTube – privately

If the files you want to send are videos or photos, then you may not need to send them at all. Instead you could post them online, either on a social network, such as Facebook, or on video and photo-sharing services, such as YouTube (www.youtube.com) and Flickr (www.flickr.com).

In most cases, photos and videos you upload to services such as these are made public by default, but it's possible to make them private and only allow specific people you've invited to view them. With YouTube, for instance, upload your video file, then log into your Video Manager page, click the video, then click Edit. Select Private from the dropdown menu in the lower section of the page (see screenshot left), then type the email addresses of anyone you want to invite to view the clip and click Share.

Send via BitTorrent (it *is* legal)

Don't worry, we're not advocating illegal file sharing. Peer-to-peer systems like BitTorrent aren't actually illegal in themselves, and were originally designed for

Inviting people to a private YouTube page is a great way to share large videos

exactly the purpose we're describing – transferring large files securely and quickly for non-commercial reasons.

Sending files via torrents is completely free. There are no size limits or timeouts, and you don't have to worry about privacy because you're sharing files directly, rather than storing them on someone else's servers. The only downside is that you and everyone you send files to requires a special tool called a torrent client, such as uTorrent (download free from www.utorrent.com, making sure you deselect any unwanted extras while installing).

Managing torrents can get a bit technical, too – you may need to configure firewalls and open ports on your PC – so we wouldn't recommend this route unless you and your friends regularly need to share large files. If you fancy giving it a go, however, check out uTorrent's own guide to sending large files to friends and family at www.snipca.com/18996. ca

Why you should never use GuruAid

Tech service GuruAid claims to help with any PC problem – but could it all be a scam? Computeractive reporter **Nicole Kobie** investigates

Search for tech support online, and you may see a large advert from a company called GuruAid perched above the results, offering you help with products made by Microsoft, Kaspersky and other big-name tech companies. But you won't get the help you need from GuruAid – quite the opposite. You don't need to dig very deep online to see numerous complaints about the company. Indeed, several *Computeractive* readers have emailed us with serious allegations against GuruAid, including charging hundreds of pounds for no service and leaving PCs pretty much unusable.

Worried by these accusations, we took a closer look at GuruAid, and here we reveal everything you need to know about the controversial company.

GuruAid's search confusion

Carry out a Google search for 'Avast tech support' and at the top you'll see an advert for GuruAid, with an 0800 (apparently UK) number described as '24/7 Support for Avast – Avast Help & Support by GuruAid' (see screenshot below). Likewise, search Bing for 'UK support AVG' and you'll see adverts for various third-party support firms, including GuruAid. Below AVG's own listing is another for 'technical support to troubleshoot and fix problems with AVG antivirus', listing a GuruAid phone number.
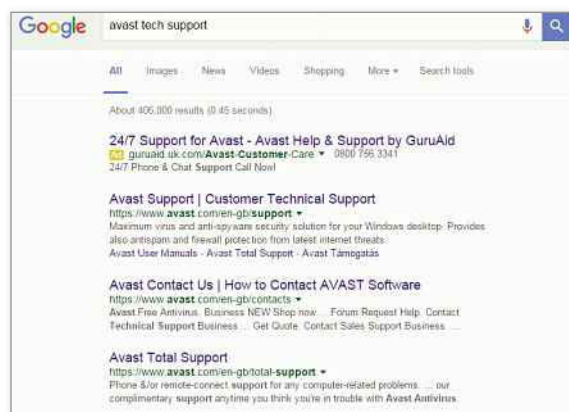
What's happened here is that GuruAid has bought Google and Bing adverts tied to certain search terms (such as 'Avast') to confuse users into calling its helpline. These adverts appear even if you use an ad-blocker like Adblock Plus.

GuruAid's helpline is neither free nor an official Avast helpline. Neither of these points is made clear in the recorded message you hear before your call is answered.

What do other companies think of GuruAid?

Security companies Avast and AVG have both received complaints from customers confused by third-party support firms like GuruAid. Kaspersky, maker of our highest-rated antivirus (AV) product, has even launched its own search-engine adverts urging users not to call third-party support firms, making it clear it offers its own local-rate support line.

"GuruAid has taken advantage of customers that

The McAfee logo on GuruAid's home page doesn't mean the security company backs the site

don't realise their search results are paid adverts," Kaspersky told us. "GuruAid then charges exorbitant fees for support that Kaspersky provides free." Kaspersky added: "We are in no way affiliated to this provider."

Google didn't respond to our request for a comment. Microsoft-owned Bing did respond, but didn't answer our questions relating to GuruAid. Instead it issued a generic statement saying: "Online scams and fraudulent advertising are an industry-wide issue, and one that we take seriously".

So... who runs GuruAid?

Anyone landing on the firm's website could be fooled by the McAfee Secure logo at the top of the page (see screenshot above). McAfee doesn't back GuruAid – the logo merely indicates that the website itself is free from malware. And many of the people writing positive reviews about the firm have posted no other reviews anywhere else on Google. That alone should set alarm bells ringing.

GuruAid is the tech-support division of

Search for Avast tech support on Google and the top results are adverts for GuruAid

What happened when we rang GuruAid?

GuruAid doesn't merely trick you into phoning their expensive helpline. As many of you have discovered, it also charges for unnecessary work and can even damage your PC.

One of many *Computeractive* readers who found that GuruAid did more harm than good is William Deakin, who phoned GuruAid for help installing Kaspersky Internet Security 2016. A technician said "junk" would need to be cleared from his PC before the program could be installed – a task they said they'd be willing to do every 15 to 20 days if he'd pay £240 for two years of support.

William agreed to these terms, and allowed GuruAid remote access to his PC. The next day, he noticed that Kaspersky wasn't installed – and he couldn't log into his online banking site. Later that day, he couldn't start Windows at all. GuruAid refused to refund his money.

Reader Joe Austin also contacted GuruAid, thinking it was an official Dell service. He sought advice on choosing a card reader to upload photos from his digital camera.

GuruAid told him he didn't need a card reader, just new drivers. While installing them, GuruAid presented Mr Austin with a long list of problems found in his PC,

and promised to fix them if he coughed up $179.99 (£120) for their annual plan. Trusting the technician, Mr Austin paid up – and soon found his PC didn't work at all.

We called GuruAid posing as a PC user having problems. An advisor told us factory reset laptop was booting slow (it wasn't) because of too many temporary internet files. GuruAid tried to trick us into paying a one-off £80 installation fee for Chrome and Windows Defender (already on our PC) to avoid pop-ups. We declined, shocked by the extortionate fee charged for such basic tasks. Make sure you don't get caught out by similarly outrageous fees for technical 'help'.

Lester Inc, a US-based firm, which in 2003 merged with Enlink Infotech, a call-centre company based in India. That Indian call centre is what you're calling when you phone GuruAid's number. The UK address listed on the site is a marketing office that also acts as the base for CEO Rajiv Samant's handful of other businesses.

Now for the relatively good news. Lester Inc and GuruAid *are* legitimate companies – many online support firms aren't – and Lester Inc is registered in the UK. We spoke to the company's regulations director Rita Quick and she sounded genuinely horrified at the accusation that GuruAid was a "scam". However, she shouldn't be surprised, given people's experiences.

GuruAid defends itself – but we're unconvinced

Given the prevalence of the company's search-engine adverts, it does seem unbelievable that senior staff have never Googled their own brand and seen the numerous complaints levelled against them. What's more, they received a letter from the Connecticut Better Business

Bureau (www.bbb.org/connecticut) in 2013 citing complaints similar to those experienced by a number of our readers. The Bureau told us: "Despite changes the company has implemented, the pattern of complaints continues".

In its own defence, GuruAid pointed to its quality-control systems, which are in place to ensure "agents do not misrepresent the cause of the problem to get a sale". They admitted "slip ups" are possible but "rare", and warned it's easy to post "one-sided and factually incorrect" complaints online.

There have also been reports that GuruAid has been cold-calling people. This page from security firm McAfee (www.snipca.com/19079; see screenshot right) quotes several numbers to watch out for. The caller usually claims problems had been detected on the user's machine, and can be fixed for a free.

GuruAid said it never makes such cold calls, claiming scammers are pretending to be from GuruAid, including "freelancers" wishing to abuse its name.
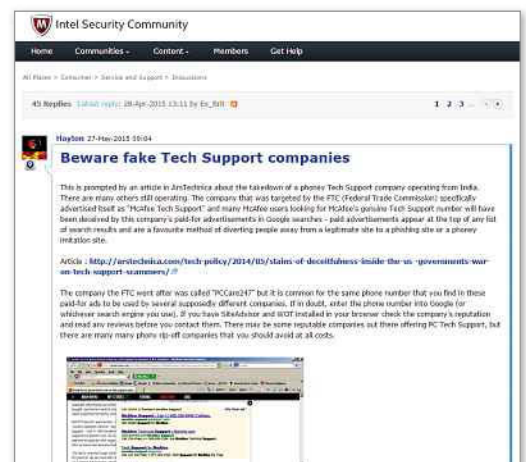
McAfee links to reports on scam tech help and lists numbers used for cold calling

What you must do

While GuruAid may technically be a legitimate business, we think it is an irresponsible one that makes money by exploiting people's lack of technical expertise. Avoid it completely.

If you do need to turn to third-party tech support for anything, you can often do so for free. You can buy Kaspersky Internet Security 2016, the highest-rated AV tool in our lab tests, for £19.99 from our Software Store (see page 68). All the installation help you need is on Kaspersky's site, and the program will keep your PC safe for a year.

If you have trouble with Kaspersky, Avast, AVG or any other software, go to its own website and phone the number on the Contact page. Many products also have live chat tools where a member of the (real) company will walk you through solving any problem. You can then copy and paste the conversation for future reference. **ca**

GuruAid is a tech support division of Lester Inc, a legitimate US-based company

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STEP 3   Choose whether to create an optional Zinio account

STEP 4   Enter your Apple ID password to confirm

Subscribe to *Computeractive* today and save on the single issue price

Problems Solved

How do I stop adverts in Skype?

Q My computer uses Windows 7 Professional, with the Firefox browser and Google as my home page. Following a recent internet purchase, my Skype homepage now shows adverts related to the vendor's site, which I do not want. Why does this happen, and how can I get rid of this annoyance?

Arnie Williams

A This happens because – like so many other companies – Microsoft (which owns Skype) likes to track users' online activities and then target them with adverts at every turn. The best solution would be for Microsoft to stop foisting these unwanted, targeted ads at Skype users – but that's not going to happen any time soon. So, you'll need to take action.

First, launch the Internet Properties box by clicking Start, typing inetcpl.cpl and pressing Enter. Now choose the Security tab, then click to select 'Restricted sites' icon in the 'Select a zone...' section. Next, click the Sites button, type https://apps.skype.com into the 'Add this website to the zone' field and click Add. Repeat for http://www.msn.com/en-gb. Click Close.

Now switch to Skype, open the Tools menu and click Options. Click Privacy in the left-hand navigation pane then, in the right-hand pane, clear the tick from the box labelled 'Allow Microsoft targeted ads, including use of Skype profile age and gender'. Click Save.

That's actually all you need to do to stop Skype displaying ads. However, it does have a couple of side-effects – both of which can be resolved if they bother you. The first is that it disables the Skype Home page. This is unlikely to be a concern, but if you need to see the Skype Home page, then just visit http://apps.skype.com/home and log in with your Skype credentials.

Select the 'Restricted sites' option to stop adverts from appearing in Skype

The second problem is that in some versions of Skype you'll still see placeholders where the now-blocked adverts would normally be displayed. This is of no consequence, but does looks bit odd, and it can be fixed.

First, press Windows key+E to launch Windows Explorer (or File Explorer in Windows 8.1/10). Press the Alt key to show the menu bar, then choose 'Folder options' from the Tools menu. Choose the View tab and then, under 'Hidden files and folders', select the 'Show hidden files, folders, or drives' button. Click OK.

Now use Windows Explorer to navigate to **C:\Users\[Your Username]\ App Data\Roaming\Skype\[YourSkype Username]**. Right-click the file called 'config.xml' and choose Edit: this opens the file in Notepad. Press Control (Ctrl)+F to open the Find box, type <AdvertPlaceholder> and click Find Next. Click the cross to close the Find box, click and drag to select the whole line (<AdvertPlaceholder>1</ AdvertPlaceholder>), then press Delete (Del), or right-click and choose Delete. Close Notepad by clicking its cross, then click Save.

Left to its own devices, Skype will simply restore the deleted line next time you launch the program. Write-protecting the file will stop it from doing so: in Windows Explorer, right-click 'config.xml' and choose Properties. Select the General tab, tick 'Read-only', then click OK.

Can I select web text using the keyboard?

Q I struggle to use the mouse, and I find it particularly hard to select text using it. This isn't a problem in Microsoft Word because I've learned to click roughly where I need to and then use the arrow keys and Shift. I'd like to do this on the web too, as I often need to copy text from websites. Is it possible? I use Internet Explorer 11 in Windows 7, but I also have a new Windows 10 laptop and have been dabbling with Edge.

Eve Collier

A Yes, you can do this – using a hidden feature called Caret Browsing. It's easily enabled in Internet Explorer, just by tapping F7. In the Caret Browsing dialogue box that appears, tick 'Don't show this message again', followed by Yes to confirm. You can now click on any web text before holding down Shift and using the cursor (arrow) keys to select – just as you do in Word. Leaving the feature enabled can cause problems for some navigation techniques, so disable it by tapping F7 again.

Caret Browsing works in exactly the same way in Edge. However, there's an additional option to make it permanent (rather than having to enable it for each session, as with Internet Explorer). Click the menu icon (three dots, top right) followed by Settings, 'View advanced settings', then scroll down to 'Always use caret browsing' and flip the switch to On.

Use Caret Browsing to select web text using your keyboard
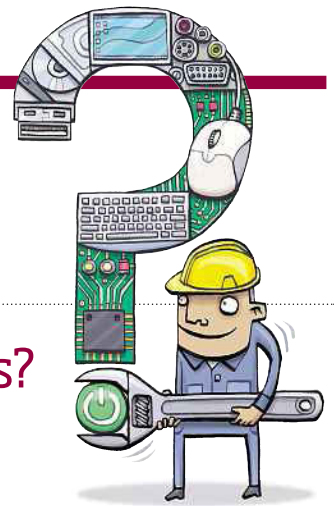
How do I stop flickering in slow-motion videos?

Q I recently treated myself to Apple's new iPhone 6s and have a strange – albeit intermittent – problem when I use the slow-motion video mode. Sometimes the slow-mo works really well, but other times the screen seems to flicker, even before I hit the record button. If I move a bit or change the position of the phone, I can sometimes stop this flickering, but if the screen is flickering when I hit record, then the recorded footage captures that flickering. Video at normal speed always seems to work fine. Is this a fault, or am I just doing something wrong?

Lee Weeks

A This is not a fault but a side-effect of filming under certain types of lighting, such as fluorescent tubes. These are a good example because you might sometimes notice the high-speed flicker, or your ears might tune in to the gentle hum caused by the alternating current (AC) supplying the power. Many forms of artificial illumination produce similar high-speed flicker – but human persistence of vision means that we don't notice it.

When you set your iPhone to record in slow motion, it's literally capturing the

natural flicker that your own eyes don't allow you to see. This is also why moving your phone sometimes seems to make the flicker stop: you're moving sufficiently away from the troublesome light source, or by turning around your back obscures the bulb's imperceptible quivering.

So, one practical solution is to shoot your slow-motion clips elsewhere, and preferably outside and in daylight – as the sun is effectively a flicker-free light source. If you must film indoors, then

To stop flickering in slow-motion videos, try shooting in natural light or adjusting the number of frames per second

you'll need to experiment to find a location where the lights aren't flickering.

You could also try changing the slow-motion speed. This won't eliminate flicker in all scenarios, but altering the number of frames per second (fps) your iPhone captures will sometimes counteract the frequency that's causing the problem. In iOS 9 or 9.1, launch Settings from the home screen, tap 'Photos & Camera', followed by 'Record Slo-mo', then choose '120 fps' or '240 fps' as appropriate.

Also, if you experience similar problems when taking still shots, tap the concentric-circle icon in the viewfinder window – this disables the new Live Photos feature, which employs a form of slow-motion video.

Why is my script stuck in a loop?

Q I use three data folders quite a lot, but they are deep in the folder structure, such as C:\Users\MyName\Documents. Some of my programs won't see Libraries as shortcuts so I made a batch file using the substitute command – subst – to turn some of these folder paths into drive letters. I saved this batch file to the Windows Desktop.

If I double-click it, the Command Prompt window opens but my script just seems to repeat itself – executing over and over again. It's the same when run as an administrator. The content must be valid because if I open the script, copy it to the Windows Clipboard, open a Command Prompt
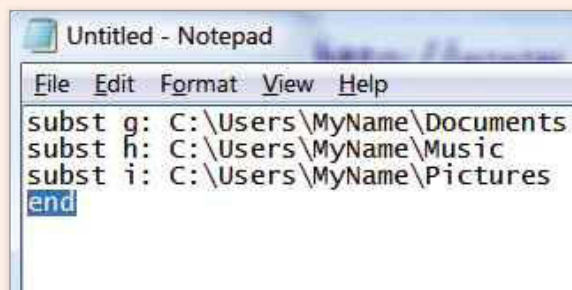
window, and paste it in, it works. What am I doing wrong?

Nigel Ogilvie

A We think you gave your batch file the name 'subst.bat' or 'subst.cmd'. That would cause a loop because when you run the subst from the Desktop you're in effect opening

Rename your batch file to stop your script getting stuck in a loop

a Command Prompt window with the Desktop folder as the prompt. When your batch file then calls for the 'subst' command, your PC finds the subst.bat (or subst.cmd) file first – because that's in the Desktop folder. When you do it manually, you're not opening the Command Prompt window into the Desktop folder, so it works.

The solution is to rename your batch file, to something like 'folders.bat' or 'folders.cmd'. We'd also suggest you edit the code to add the command 'end' to the end of your script – that'll stop any other unintended loops.

Problems Solved

Where's the rest of my Windows 10 Start menu?

Q My installation of Windows 10 in place of Windows 7 went smoothly. However, my one difficulty is that my Start menu only has a left-hand pane – not the right-hand pane containing tiles that I see in your magazine's screenshots. Can you help?

Dave Sport

A We're not sure how this has happened, but there is one possibility: when you were running Windows 7 perhaps you installed a replacement for Microsoft's Start menu. Many people have done this in Windows 8/8.1 because it lacks a traditional Start menu, but tools like Classic Shell (www.classicshell.net) also work in Windows 7, letting you make all sorts of customisations. Classic Shell (and other tools like it) will continue to work in Windows 10 – so maybe that's your culprit.

If you want the full Windows 10 Start menu experience, tiles and all, then go to your Control Panel to uninstall any such tools (press Windows key+X, then click Control Panel followed by 'Uninstall a program' under Programs).

Alternatively, it could be that some upgrade quirk led to Windows 10 wiping all tiles from your menu. To add some, click Start followed by 'All apps', then right-click an app and choose 'Pin to Start'. When you've added a few, you can resize the Start menu just by dragging and dropping the top or right-hand border.
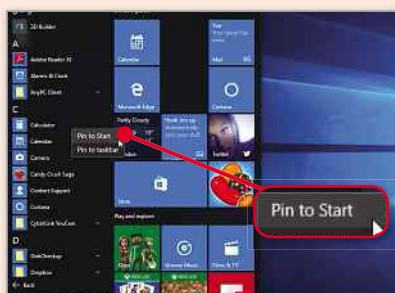
Click 'Pin to Start' to add tiles to your Start menu

How do I set Number Lock on Windows 10 launch?

Q I have recently upgraded from Windows 7 to 10. I now find I have to press the Number Lock key every time I want to use the numeric pad, while in Windows 7 it was set on all the time. Is there a way to do this?

Joe Jarvie

A There are a couple of possibilities. The quickest way – assuming it works – is to enable Number Lock while you're still on the Windows 10 login screen, and then shut down your PC before logging in.

If Number Lock still won't stay on you'll need to carry out a quick tweak in the Windows Registry. It's quite simple but it's always sensible to back up before delving into the Registry, so do that first.

Next, press Win+R, then type regedit and press Enter. Use the left-hand pane to navigate to the following key: **HKEY_USERS\.DEFAULT\Control Panel\Keyboard**. Then, in the right-hand pane, right-click 'InitialKeyboardIndicators' and choose Modify (see screenshot). The figure in the 'Value data' box should be '2147483648'. Change this to '2147483650' and click OK.

If the InitialKeyboardIndicators entry doesn't exist, right-click a blank part of the right-hand pane and choose New followed by String Value. Type InitialKeyboardIndicators as the new string value's name and press Enter, then follow the steps above to set its value to '2147483650'. Close the Registry Editor, then restart your PC.
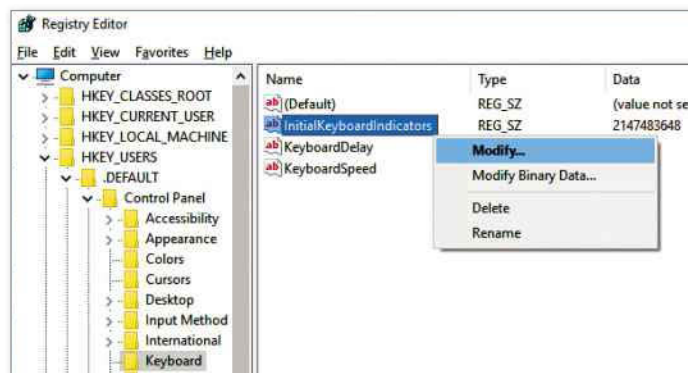
Carry out this Registry tweak to ensure your PC's Number Lock is on by default

How do I type a tick mark?

Q I've been *Computeractive* subscriber since the beginning and this is the first time I've had to cry for help. I have to fill in some hospital questionnaires, which come as PDF files, but I can't find how to type a tick mark. I have no problem with typing in all the text fields, but the tick is eluding me. I'm reluctant to download software without recommendation because I could get more than I bargained for. Can you help?

M Macleod

A You insert tick marks in a variety of ways but the method that works across Windows programs is Alt codes. This means holding down the left-hand Alt key while typing a numbered code on your keyboard's numeric pad. You'll also need to use an appropriate font (that is, one that includes a tick mark).

So, for instance, in the popular font Wingdings, typing Alt+0252 will 'type' a tick. In MS Gothic, Alt+10003 or Alt+10004 will do the job.

Press the Alt key plus the relevant code for your font to type a tick mark in questionnaires

Why won't McAfee protect Microsoft Edge?

Q Having updated to Windows 10, when I launch Microsoft Edge, my McAfee security software displays the message: "Edge does not yet allow browser extensions, which enable McAfee to protect your personal information and identity. We recommend using Internet Explorer so McAfee can continue protecting you. To help you we'll unpin Edge from your taskbar and pin Internet Explorer". The buttons are 'Fix now' and 'Accept the risk'. Can you explain what is going on?

Arthur A Dixon

A This is McAfee warning you that it can't see everything Edge is up to, because Edge does not yet support extensions – and McAfee uses these to connect with the browser. Without this protection, you might in theory be more exposed to malicious websites and phishing attempts.

If you click 'Fix now', McAfee will delete the Edge icon from your Windows 10 Taskbar to dissuade you from using it, but Edge itself will
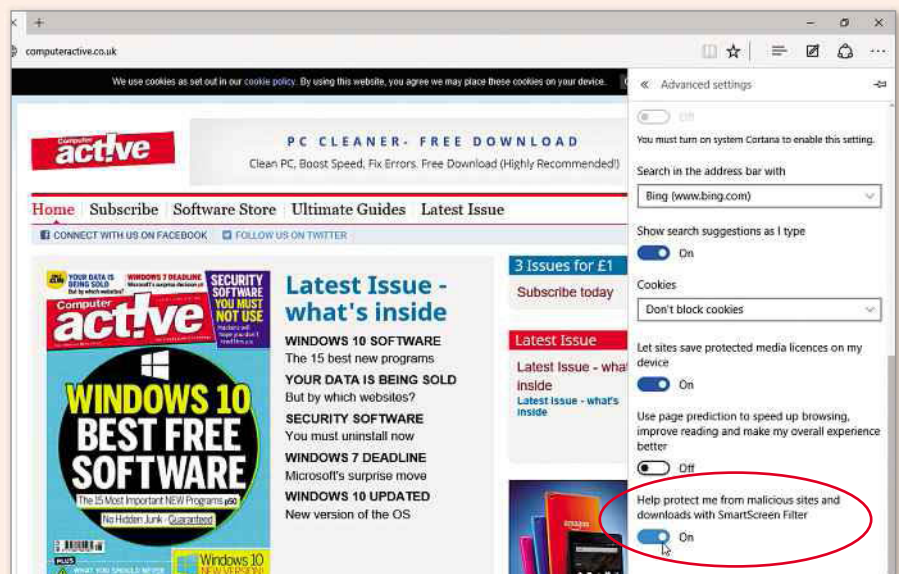
Use Edge with SmartScreen to remain protected from malicious websites and phishing attacks

remain installed on your PC. If you click 'Accept the risk', Edge will remain on the Taskbar. Either way, you'll still be able to use Edge, but without McAfee's protections.

Microsoft has said it'll add support for extensions to Edge at some point in 2016. However, a built-in feature called

SmartScreen does much the same as what McAfee would do, so if you want to continue using Edge, just check that it's enabled. Click the menu icon (three dots, top right), then click Settings followed by 'View advanced settings', scroll to the bottom, then flip the SmartScreen Filter switch to On.

What's the line in your Command Prompt tips?

Q I've been following your series of tips on using the Command Prompt to make use of hidden features. Some of the tips include a symbol for which I don't know the name – it's a kind of vertical line. I have no idea how to type this. I'd give an example command, but obviously I can't type the symbol. You used it for the first time in

the second tip (in Issue 454, page 59). What is this symbol and how do I type it into a Command Prompt window? My PC runs Windows 8.1.

John Bealey

A This is commonly known as the pipe symbol and, on many keyboards, you'll find it above the backslash key. That's the key with the '\' symbol, which is usually just to the left of Z. To type the pipe, just hold down Shift, then tap the backslash key. Alternatively, some keyboards have another key with a few weird-looking

symbols, which sits just to the left of the '1' key. If your pipe symbol is here, type it by holding down the Alt Gr key (to the right of the spacebar), then tapping this key.

If your keyboard doesn't have either of these keys, then a third way to type a pipe is to execute what's known as an Alt code: that basically means holding down the left Alt key, while typing a number on your keyboard's numeric pad. The Alt code for pipe is 124. So, make sure the numeric pad is enabled (by pressing Num Lock or NmLck), then hold down the left Alt key and type 124.
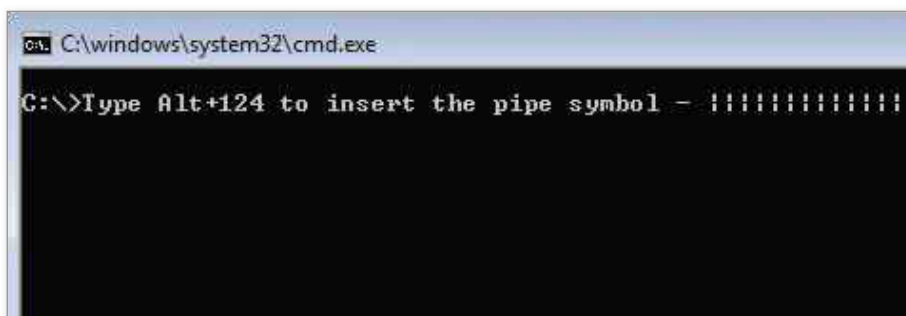
The pipe symbol can be typed in various ways, including by pressing the left Alt key and typing 124

Android 6.0 (Marshmallow)

Fix failed upgrades, solve wireless-connectivity problems and bring 'bricked' devices back to life

Marshmallow upgrade unavailable

Have you forced a manual check for updates? Launch Settings, tap 'About phone' (or 'About'), followed by 'System updates', then 'CHECK FOR UPDATE' (or similar). If an update to Android 6.0 isn't offered, then in most cases you'll just have to wait – and possibly for a long time. Unfortunately, some Android manufacturers take weeks or months to issue the latest updates, if at all. If you're tired of waiting it may be possible to download the Marshmallow system image and manually upgrade. It's quite complicated and the method can vary a lot between devices, so you'll need to search on Google for the latest instructions for your device.

Upgrade failed or phone unusable

How you recover from a failed upgrade depends on what went wrong. If your device is working normally, then just try again, but make sure your device is plugged into the mains and has a reliable internet connection – Wi-Fi is generally better than 3G/4G, and usually cheaper. If your device crashed and is either frozen on one screen or won't turn on, reset it by holding down the power key and volume-down rocker for around 10 seconds. If this doesn't work and you think your device is 'bricked', try booting into Recovery mode: hold down both the volume controls (up and down), then hold the power button for about five seconds. You'll enter a text-based interface that you navigate using the volume rocker and power
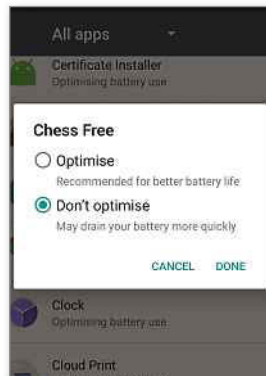
If an app's notifications or other functions aren't working as expected, stop Doze optimisation

button. From here you can reboot your device, or wipe it to restore it to factory conditions – but the precise method depends on your device. For Nexus devices, see Google's instructions at www.snipca.com/18729.

Notifications work intermittently

Feel that notifications are less reliable in Android 6.0? You're not imagining it: a new battery-saving feature called Doze has the side-effect of stopping some apps from behaving how you want them to. From your home screen, tap Settings, then Battery, followed by the menu button (three dots, top right). Choose 'Battery optimization', tap 'Not optimized', then choose 'All apps'. Tap the app whose notifications are affected, choose the 'Don't optimise' button, then tap 'Done'.

Can't connect to 3G, 4G or Wi-Fi

Wireless-connectivity problems aren't new for Android, but Marshmallow hasn't done much to fix them. If you

Fix troublesome wireless connections in Marshmallow's Quick Settings pane

can't get a signal, then try turning the relevant connection on and off. Swipe down with two fingers from the top of the screen to open Android's Quick Settings pane, then tap the Wi-Fi or mobile-connection icon as appropriate. Wait for a few seconds, then tap the icon again to switch the antenna back on. If you still can't connect, try resetting your device by holding down the power and

down-volume buttons for about 10 seconds. Finally, if this doesn't work, launch Settings, tap 'Backup & reset', followed by 'Network settings reset', then 'Reset settings'.

USB connection doesn't work

With earlier Android versions you could connect your device to your PC via USB and – so long as you'd entered the device's passcode – use Windows Explorer to navigate the folders. In Marshmallow, you have to do a bit more work. From the home screen, swipe down from the top left, tap 'USB for charging' and then choose either the 'Transfer files (MTP)' or 'Transfer photos (PTP)' button – depending on what you want to do.
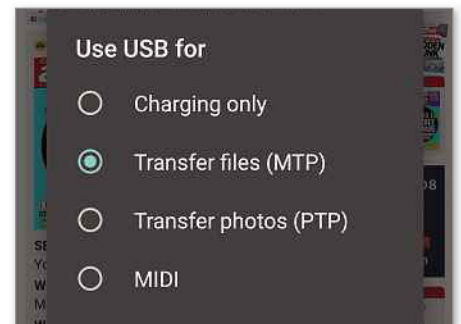
USB connection not working in Marshmallow? Choose one of the Transfer options

Camera app won't launch

There's no single fix for the 'Can't connect to the camera' error message in Android 6.0 – it's simply a bug that Google needs to squash. While we're waiting, the one sure-fire way to clear it (until the next time) is to restart your device: just hold down the power button, tap Power off, then switch back on. You can also take some preventative steps to stop it occurring. If you're using apps other than Camera that make use of your device's lens, then close them before launching Camera: just tap the Recents button (the square, bottom right), then swipe left or right across the app's thumbnail.

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Colours 14ml each	£4.99

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PGi520	Black 19ml	£9.99
CLi521	Colours 9ml	£8.99
PGi525/CLi526	Set of 5	£42.99
PGi525	Black 19ml	£9.99
CLi526	Colours 9ml	£8.99
PGi550/CLi551	Set of 5	£37.99
PGi550	Black 15ml	£9.99
CLi551	Colours 7ml	£7.99
PGi550/CLi551XL	Set of 5	£54.99
PGi550XL	Black 22ml	£11.99
CLi551XL	Colours 11ml	£10.99
PG540	Black 8ml	£10.99
PG540XL	Black 21ml	£15.99
CL541	Colour 8ml	£13.99
CL541XL	Colour 15ml	£15.99
PG545XL	Black 15ml	£13.99
CL546XL	Colour 13ml	£15.99
Compatibles:
PGi5	Black 27ml	£4.99
CLi8	Colours 13ml	£3.99
PGi5/CLi8	Set of 5	£19.99
PGi520	Black 19ml	£4.99
CLi521	Colours 9ml	£3.99
PGi520/CLi521	Set of 5	£19.99
PGi525	Black 19ml	£4.99
CLi526	Colours 9ml	£3.99
PGi525/CLi526	Set of 5	£19.99
PGi550XL	Black 25ml	£4.99
CLi551XL	Colours 12ml	£3.99
PGi550/CLi551XL	Set of 5	£19.99
BCi6	Colours 15ml	£2.99
PG40	Black 28ml	£12.99
CL41	Colour 24ml	£16.99
PG50	Black 28ml	£12.99
CL51	Colour 24ml	£14.99
PG510	Black 11ml	£13.99
CL511	Colour 11ml	£15.99
PG512	Black 18ml	£13.99
CL513	Colour 15ml	£15.99
PG540XL	Black 21ml	£13.99
CL541XL	Colour 15ml	£14.99
PG545XL	Black 15ml	£11.99
PG546XL	Black 21ml	£12.99

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No.16 Fountain Pen Inks
Originals:
No.16	Set of 4	£22.99
No.16	Black 5.4ml	£7.99
No.16	Colours 3.1ml each	£5.99
No.16XL	Set of 4	£42.99
No.16XL	Black 12.9ml	£14.99
No.16XL	Colours 6.5ml each	£11.99
Compatibles:
No.16	Set of 4	£14.99
No.16	Black 12ml	£4.99
No.16	Colours 12ml each	£3.99

No.18 Daisy Inks
Originals:
No.18	Set of 4	£22.99
No.18	Black 5.2ml	£7.99
No.18	Colours 3.3ml each	£5.99
No.18XL	Set of 4	£42.99
No.18XL	Black 11.5ml	£14.99
No.18XL	Colours 6.6ml each	£11.99
Compatibles:
No.18	Set of 4	£14.99
No.18	Black 12ml	£4.99
No.18	Colours 6.5ml each	£3.99

No.24 Elephant Inks
Originals:
No.24	Set of 6	£41.99
No.24	Colours 4.6ml each	£7.99
No.24XL	Set of 6	£64.99
No.24XL	Colours 8.7ml each	£11.99
Compatibles:
No.24	Set of 6	£22.99
No.24	Black 7ml	£3.99
No.24	Colours 7ml each	£3.99

No.26 Polar Bear Inks
Originals:
No.26	Set of 4	£29.99
No.26	Black 6.2ml	£8.99
No.26	Colours 4.5ml each	£7.99
No.26XL	Set of 4	£49.99
No.26XL	Black 12.1ml	£14.99
No.26XL	Colours 9.7ml each	£13.99
Compatibles:
No.26	Set of 4	£14.99
No.26	Black 10ml	£3.99
No.26	Colours 7ml each	£3.99

T0481-T0486 Seahorse Inks
Originals:
Set of 6		£69.99
Colours 13ml each		£16.99
Compatibles:
Set of 6		£19.99
Colours 13ml each		£3.99

T0541-T0549 Frog Inks
Originals:
Set of 8	£105.99
Colours 13ml each	£14.99
Compatibles:
Set of 8	£27.99
Colours 13ml each	£3.99

T0591-T0599 Lily Inks
Originals:
Set of 8	£89.99
Colours 13ml each	£11.99
Compatibles:
Set of 8	£27.99
Colours 13ml each	£3.99

Many more in stock!

Photo Papers

We carry a massive range of papers (sheets & rolls) at competitive prices. Below are some examples of the selection we stock.

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Photo Satin 200gsm:
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A4 100 sheets +100 FREE	£19.99

Photo Glossy 200gsm:
6x4 100 sheets +100 FREE	£9.99
A4 20 sheets	£6.99

Premium Pearl 270gsm:
6x4 50 sheets +50 FREE	£6.99
A4 20 sheets +20 FREE	£8.99

Premium Gloss 270gsm:
A4 25 sheets OFFER	£8.99
A3 25 sheets OFFER	£15.99
A3+ 25 sheets OFFER	£19.99

Smooth Pearl 310gsm:
6x4 100 sheets	£14.99
7x5 100 sheets	£17.99
A4 25 sheets	£12.99
A4 100 sheets	£39.99
A4 250 sheets	£84.99
A3 25 sheets	£25.99
A3+ 25 sheets	£35.99

Smooth Gloss 310gsm:
6x4 100 sheets	£14.99
7x5 100 sheets	£17.99
A4 25 sheets	£12.99
A4 100 sheets	£39.99
A3 25 sheets	£25.99
A3+ 25 sheets	£35.99

PermaJet

Smooth Pearl 280gsm:
6x4 100 sheets	£12.99
7x5 100 sheets	£18.99
A4 50 sheets	£18.99
A4 50 sheets	£18.99
A3 50 sheets	£35.99
A3+ 25 sheets	£28.99

Oyster 271gsm:
6x4 100 sheets	£12.99
7x5 100 sheets	£18.99
A4 50 sheets	£18.99
A3 25 sheets	£22.99
A3+ 25 sheets	£28.99

Gloss 271gsm:
6x4 100 sheets	£12.99
7x5 100 sheets	£18.99
A4 50 sheets	£18.99
A3 25 sheets	£22.99
A3+ 25 sheets	£28.99

Double Sided Matt 250gsm:
A4 100 sheets	£24.99
A3 50 sheets	£27.99

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Premium Gloss 255gsm:
6x4 40 sheets +40 FREE	£9.99
7x5 30 sheets	£9.99
A4 15 sheets +15 FREE	£9.99
A3 20 sheets	£29.99
A3+ 20 sheets OFFER	£24.99

Ultra Gloss 300gsm:
6x4 50 sheets	£9.99
7x5 50 sheets	£12.99
A4 15 sheets	£11.99

Premium Semi-Gloss 251gsm:
6x4 50 sheets	£8.99
A4 20 sheets	£14.99
A3 20 sheets	£29.99
A3+ 20 sheets OFFER	£24.99

Archival Matte 192gsm:
A4 50 sheets	£14.99
A3 50 sheets	£33.99
A3+ 50 sheets	£44.99

Heavyweight Matte 167gsm:
A4 50 sheets	£11.99
A3 50 sheets	£34.99
A3+ 50 sheets	£44.99

Canon

PP-201 Plus Glossy II 275gsm:
6x4 50 sheets	£9.99
7x5 20 sheets	£11.99
A4 20 sheets	£11.99
A3 20 sheets	£27.99
A3+ 20 sheets	£36.99

SG-201 Semi-Gloss 260gsm:
6x4 50 sheets	£9.99
A4 20 sheets	£11.99
A3 20 sheets	£27.99
A3+ 20 sheets	£42.99

More Ink Cartridges...

EPSON

T0711-T0714 Cheetah Inks
Originals:
Set of 4	£32.99
Black 7.4ml	£8.99
Colours 5.5ml each	£8.99
Compatibles:
Set of 4	£14.99
Black 7.4ml	£4.99
Colours 5.5ml each	£3.99

T0791-T0796 Owl Inks
Originals:
Set of 6	£72.99
Colours 11.1ml each	£12.99
Compatibles:
Set of 6	£19.99
Colours 11.1ml each	£3.99

T0801-T0806 Hummingbird Inks
Originals:
Set of 6	£49.99
Colours 7.4ml each	£8.99
Compatibles:
Set of 6	£19.99
Colours 7.4ml each	£3.99

T0871-T0879 Flamingo Inks
Originals:
Set of 8	£66.99
Colours 11.4ml each	£9.99
Compatibles:
Set of 8	£27.99
Colours 11.4ml each	£3.99

T0961-T0969 Husky Inks
Originals:
Set of 8	£69.99
Colours 11.4ml each	£8.99
Compatibles:
Set of 8	£27.99
Colours 11.4ml each	£3.99

hp

Originals:
No.38	Colours 27ml each	£26.99
No.300	Black 4ml	£10.99
No.300	Colour 4ml	£12.99
No.301	Black 3ml	£9.99
No.301	Colour 3ml	£11.99
No.350	Black 4.5ml	£11.99
No.351	Colour 3.5ml	£14.99
No.363	Black 6ml	£13.99
No.363	Colours PC/PM/PM each	£8.99
No.363	SET OF 6	£39.99
No.364	Black 6ml	£7.99
No.364	PB/C/M/Y 3ml each	£6.99
No.364	SET OF 4	£21.99
No.364XL	Black 14ml	£13.99
No.364XL	PB/C/M/Y 6ml each	£12.99
No.364XL	SET OF 4	£49.99
No.920XL	SET OF 4	£46.99
No.932XL	SET OF 4	£43.99
No.950XL	SET OF 4	£69.99
Compatibles:
No.15	Black 46ml	£4.99
No.21	Black 10ml	£7.99
No.22	Colour 21ml	£11.99
No.45	Black 45ml	£4.99
No.56	Black 24ml	£9.99
No.57	Colour 24ml	£12.99
No.78	Colour 36ml	£9.99
No.110	Colour 12ml	£10.99
No.300XL	Black 18ml	£14.99
No.300XL	Colour 18ml	£16.99
No.301XL	Black 15ml	£14.99
No.301XL	Colour 18ml	£16.99
No.337	Black 21ml	£10.99
No.338	Black 21ml	£10.99
No.339	Black 34ml	£12.99
No.343	Colour 21ml	£12.99
No.344	Colour 21ml	£14.99
No.348	Photo 21ml	£12.99
No.350XL	Black 30ml	£14.99
No.351XL	Colour 20ml	£16.99
No.363	Black 20ml	£6.99
No.363	Colours 6ml each	£4.99
No.363	SET OF 6	£24.99
No.364	Black 10ml	£4.99
No.364	Colours 5ml each	£3.99
No.364	SET OF 4	£15.99
No.364XL	Black 18ml	£8.99
No.364XL	Colours 11ml each	£7.99
No.364XL	SET OF 4	£31.99

More Epson inks >>>

Albums & Frames

We now stock a comprehensive range of frames, mounts, albums and accessories. The full range can be viewed on our website, with detailed close-up images of each product to help you choose the perfect way to display your printed photographs. Below is just a tiny sample of what we offer.

Grace Albums Available in Burgundy or Blue.

Travel Albums Over a dozen designs in stock.

Grafton Albums Available in Burgundy or Blue.

Baby Albums Multiple different designs available.

Emilia Frames Distressed wood shabby chic effect. Blue or White.

Rio Frames Handcrafted solid wood with 30mm wide profile, in four colours.

Frisco Frames Simple, basic design available in a huge range of sizes & colours.

Memo Style Albums:
Grace 6x4 100 photos	£5.99
Grace 6x4 200 photos	£9.99
Grace 6x4 300 photos	£14.99
Grace 7x5 100 photos	£7.99
Grace 7x5 200 photos	£13.99
Grace A4 100 photos	£15.99
Grafton 6x4 200 photos	£9.99
Grafton 7x5 200 photos	£13.99
Baby 6x4 200 photos	£9.99
Travel 6x4 200 photos	£8.99

Traditional Style Albums:
Grace 29x32cm 100 pages	£14.99
Grafton 29x32cm 100 pgs	£14.99
Baby 29x32cm 100 pages	£12.99

Accessories:
Photo Corners Pack of 250	£2.99
Photo Stickers Pack of 500	£1.99

Plastic Bevel, Glass Front:
Frisco 6x4 seven colours	£1.99
Frisco 7x5 seven colours	£2.29
Frisco 8x6 seven colours	£2.79
Frisco 9x6 seven colours	£3.49
Frisco 10x8 seven colours	£3.79
Frisco 12x8 seven colours	£4.59
Frisco A4 seven colours	£3.99
Frisco A3 seven colours	£8.99

Wood Bevel, Glass Front:
Emilia 6x4 two colours	£4.99
Emilia 7x5 two colours	£5.99
Emilia 8x6 two colours	£6.99
Emilia 10x8 two colours	£7.99
Emilia 12x8 two colours	£8.99
Rio 6x4 four colours	£5.99
Rio 7x5 four colours	£6.99
Rio 8x6 four colours	£7.99
Rio 10x8 four colours	£8.99
Rio 12x8 four colours	£9.99

Memory

SDHC & SDXC

Sandisk Blue 33X (5MB/s)
4GB	£3.49
8GB	£3.99
16GB	£5.99

Sandisk Ultra 266X (40MB/s)
8GB	£4.99
16GB	£6.99
32GB	£12.99
64GB	£24.99

Sandisk Extreme 400X (60MB/s)
16GB	£10.99
32GB	£17.99
64GB	£34.99

Compact Flash

Sandisk Ultra 333X (50MB/s)
8GB	£11.99
16GB	£15.99
32GB	£24.99

Sandisk Extreme 800X (120MB/s)
16GB	£26.99
32GB	£32.99
64GB	£47.99
128GB	£94.99

MicroSDHC & SDXC

Sandisk Ultra 320X (48MB/s)
16GB	£6.99
32GB	£12.99
64GB	£24.99

Readers & Cases
Delkin USB2 Card Reader	£9.99
Delkin USB3 Card Reader	£19.99
Delkin SD Card (x8) Case	£6.99
Delkin CF Card (x4) Case	£6.99

Batteries
BP-511 for Canon	£12.99
LP-E6 for Canon	£16.99
LP-E8 for Canon	£12.99
LP-E12 for Canon	£12.99
EN-EL3E for Nikon	£14.99
NB-2L/LH for Canon	£9.99
NB-6L for Canon	£9.99
NB-10L for Canon	£12.99
NP95 for Fuji	£9.99
NPW126 for Fuji	£12.99
EN-EL3e for Nikon	£14.99
EN-EL14 for Nikon	£19.99
EN-EL15 for Nikon	£24.99
BLN-1 for Olympus	£24.99
BLC12 for Panasonic	£23.99
FW50 for Sony	£24.99
BX-1 for Sony	£14.99
AA 1300mAh (4)	£3.99
AAA 1100mAh (4)	£3.99

Filters

Screw-type Filters
46mm UV / Haze	£4.99
49mm UV / Haze	£4.99
52mm UV / Haze	£4.99
55mm UV / Haze	£5.99
58mm UV / Haze	£6.99
62mm UV / Haze	£7.99
67mm UV / Haze	£8.99
72mm UV / Haze	£8.99
77mm UV / Haze	£11.99
Skylight Filters from:	£6.99
Circular Polarising Filters from:	£14.99
ND4 and ND8 Filters from:	£11.99

P-Type Square Filters
49-82mm Adapter Rings	£4.99
Filter Holder	£5.99
ND2 Filter	£12.99
ND2 Grad Filter	£13.99
ND4 Filter	£12.99
ND4 Grad Filter	£13.99

Broadband Deals

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	Provider	Package Name	Monthly Price	Contract Length	Broadband Speed	Allowance	First-year Cost*
1	TalkTalk	TalkTalk: Broadband	£7.50 (FREE for 18 months)	18 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	**CHEAPEST** £0.00
2	EE	EE: Broadband & Calls	£9.95 (£1 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited **	£12.00
3	plusnet	Plusnet: Broadband	£9.99 (£2.50 for 12 months)	18 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£30.00
4	sky	Sky: Broadband	£10.00 (per month)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£120.00

Terms & Conditions apply - see ISP sites for details
*First-year cost does not include line rental. Cost is calculated at monthly price x12 with all introductory offers subtracted. Additional charges incurred outside of free inclusive calls not included in first-year cost.
** Fair-usage or restriction policy applies.
Data supplied by www.broadbandgenie.co.uk. Correct as of 10/12/2015

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

Jargon Buster

1080p Of the common types of high-definition video, this is the best quality: 1920x1080 pixels.

4K Video with a resolution of at least 3840x2160 pixels.

802.11ac A standard for wireless networks that allows for much higher transfer speeds than 802.11n.

Add-in Microsoft's name for tools that can be added to Office software.

AMOLED Active-Matrix Organic Light-Emitting Diode. An alternative technology to LCD for creating flat-panel displays. Most commonly used in smartphones, tablets and smartwatches.

Android Wear A version of Google's Android operating system designed for smartwatches and other wearables

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

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

Browser hijackers Programs that change your default browser, its homepage and search engine, without prior warning, when you install them.

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

Cookie A small text file stored on your computer by a website. Used to store browsing preferences, website log-in details and so on.

Crowdfunding A process where a company gets the financing to launch a new product from prospective customers online.

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

Dpi Dots per inch. A measure of printed image quality, or the size an object will be shown on screen.

Eight-core A standard processor has one core, but most modern processors are dual-, quad- or even eight-core, making them faster.

Extension A program that adds extra features to your browser.

Factory reset To restore a device's settings to those set up by the manufacturer when brand new.

Firewall A piece of software or hardware that prevents unauthorised access to a PC over a network, such as the internet.

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

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

HDMI High-definition media interface. A type of connection that transmits high-definition video and audio signals. It is found on many new TVs, media PCs and high-definition products such as Blu-ray disc players and the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 games consoles.

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

JPEG Joint Photograph Experts Group. A common type of image file created by most digital cameras. Some image quality is lost with each save.

Keylogger A piece of malicious software that records all the letters and numbers typed on a PC in an effort to find passwords or other valuable information.

Laser autofocus A way of focusing when taking a shot that sends a laser beam to the photo's subject.

LCD Liquid-Crystal Display. The technology used to create almost all flat displays from digital watches to televisions.

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

Megapixel A measure of the amount of detail that can be recorded by a digital image. A one-megapixel image is made up of a million dots (pixels).

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

Micro USB A miniature version of USB, often found on smartphones, tablets and portable hard drives.

NAS Network-attached storage. A hard drive attached to a network that can be shared by other PCs.

Noise Visible dust-like speckles that appear in some camera and TV images. In photos, they are caused by the camera's own sensor. In TV images, they can be caused by the TV's processor or by a flaw in the broadcast signal itself.

Optical image stabilisation A mechanism built into digital cameras that compensates for any shaking or vibrations that occur during shooting.

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

Peer-to-peer A way to connect two or more computers without a central file server so they can share and swap files.

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

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

Processor The processor – or central processing unit – is the brain of a computer.

RAM Random-access memory. The computer's working area, used for data storage while the PC is switched on.

Raw A format for digital photos that stores the image exactly as the camera captured it, without compression or optimisation.

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

Retina Apple's marketing term for extremely high-resolution displays.

Rootkit Software that gives a malicious user administration rights and access to a computer.

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

Server A computer on a network, that distributes info to other PCs.

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

SSD Solid-state drive. Storage that, unlike a hard drive, uses no moving parts.

Trojan A malicious computer program that's disguised as a different, harmless program. For example, a Trojan may be disguised as a game but it's actually a program that steals your internet username and password.

USB 2.0 Faster successor to USB that's used by devices such as external hard drives.

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

USB Type-C A tiny physical connector that can support various USB standards, such as USB 3.1 and USB power delivery (USB PD).

Videographers A person who works in the field of video production — recording moving images and sound on video tape, disk, and other electro-mechanical device.

Web apps Programs that aren't stored on your computer, but on a web server instead and run through your web browser.

Web tracker Tools websites use to track what you're doing online.

White balance Adjusts the balance of colours in the image to produce natural-looking images.

Bust more jargon on our 2014 Back Issue CD: www.snipca.com/14981

The Final Straw

STUART ANDREWS is *Computeractive*'s Mr Angry

This issue Stuart Andrews wants to stop tapping…

Pointless apps

I once thought that phone and tablet apps were just amazing. There we were in a new era of lightweight, mobile computing, throwing off the shackles of those big, bloated computers with their complex features that nobody used. Apps were compact, streamlined, smart and – best of all – cheap. They did the jobs you wanted doing faster, and handled tasks you never thought a computer could.

> **Too many apps simply run down your battery and throw up pointless notifications on an hourly basis**

I remember it well: the giddy rush of getting my first proper smartphone or tablet, then installing a flurry of apps that would make my device worthwhile. I read the hyperbole in app reviews that everyone devoured at the time, then installed the apps which – the reviews assured me – would revolutionise my life.

There used to be a sort of aura surrounding the latest apps, as if being unaware of Instagram, Evernote or Flipboard marked you out as backward – nay, Neanderthal – in terms of digital competence. And then there were the games: Angry Birds, Cut the Rope, Plants vs. Zombies, Peggle, Flight Control. Even David Cameron was playing them. Why weren't you?

Only six or seven years down the line, apps have lost their charm. I still have 48 of the damn things clogging up my Android phone and 33 weighing my iPad down, but how many do I actually use? On my phone, Google's Inbox, Twitter, Maps, Facebook Messenger and the National Rail app see regular action – maybe WotWine if I'm at the supermarket buying plonk.

On my iPad? Only the browser, the Kindle and Kobo ebook readers, Skype, BBC iPlayer, Channel 4's equivalent and Netflix ever see the light of day. I quite like these apps, but have they changed my life? Nah, not really. And I can barely remember the last time I installed a new app.

So what happened to this brave new world of mobile apps? Perhaps it lacks the ambition of old. I started to realise the apps I was downloading didn't really do anything different from what I already had. Then there are the apps that claim they'll help me work and live better, but which lack the capabilities I'm looking for. Word-processing apps *look* lovely, but where's the word-count tool? To-do list apps have dozens of features, but are so laborious to use they become just another tedious thing 'to do'.

Sure, I can use Snapseed or Luminance to adjust photos on my iPad, but it's a full-time job getting photos on there in the first place. And when I've finished polishing them up, most of my photos have that kind of generic, Photoshopped-to-hell-and-back look about them. Basically, they look like the photos everybody else has polished up using the same apps. And while games like Angry Birds were brilliant for their time, their successors seem to have run out steam. Any creativity is being diverted away from interesting new game ideas toward ways to get us all coughing up cash for pointless extras.

Most apps are way more hassle than they're worth, while still radiating a misplaced sense of self-importance. They demand access to your location, your contacts and your camera like they're the only app that matters. Too many simply run down your battery and throw up pointless notifications on an hourly basis.

Many involve signing up to some account or other, ensuring that long after you've ditched the app, you'll still be plagued by emails about new features and enhancements. In a way, apps have become like the worst kind of girlfriend or boyfriend; the one who drives you crazy while you're with them, but after you've dumped them keeps telling you it'll all be different if you'd just give them one more chance.

Maybe this explains my reluctance to install new apps. I don't want the disappointment now or the annoyance later. Maybe a revolutionary app is just around the corner, but until it arrives, I'll stick with what I know.

Do you agree with Stuart? Let us know at letters@computeractive.co.uk

Next issue Stuart finally cheers up and bids farewell to The Final Straw