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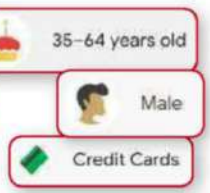

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Homepage

Issue 454

Make your Wi-Fi whoosh!

When good Wi-Fi goes bad, it can feel like the end of the world, as slow downloads, buffering videos and dropped connections combine to drive you screaming from the web, back into the dreaded real world. Look online for help (if you can get online, that is) and you'll find lots of ineffective and pointless advice – who really has the time to build a parabolic reflector out of aluminium foil, like something out of *The A-Team*?

Fortunately, for this issue's cover feature we have our very own A-Team in the form of Jane Hoskyn, who as a freelance writer craves speedy Wi-Fi like a vampire craves blood. Jane has come up with an eight-step guide to getting the fastest and most reliable Wi-Fi possible around your home, using advice that actually works.

From creating a heat map of your Wi-Fi coverage to optimising your settings and upgrading your hardware, we've got all the tips you need to make your Wi-Fi whoosh, without using up your kitchen foil!

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#webuser

abc Average sales, Jan-Dec 2017, 27,156 copies per issue

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What's New Online

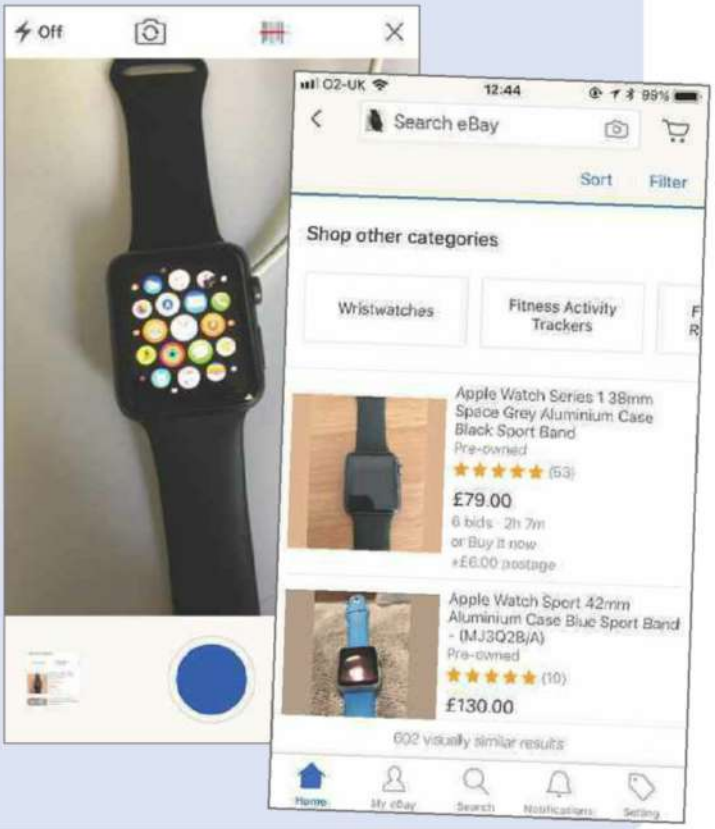
Search eBay using photos not words

Sometimes it's hard to describe the exact item you are looking for on eBay – often you're second guessing the keywords used by the seller and it can take several attempts to find a match. With that in mind, eBay has rolled out a feature called Image Search that lets you upload and use photos instead of words.

Available via the eBay mobile app, Image Search is very easy to use – just tap the camera icon to snap a photo of an item. The company suggests positioning your object in front against a simple background and shooting straight on for the best results. Alternatively, you can choose a picture that's already stored on your phone or tablet, which is handy if you've taken a screenshot of an item on a website.

In either case, artificial intelligence and machine learning use the image to find your desired product while also showcasing similar-looking items. We found that Image Search achieves this very quickly – within seconds of pressing the shutter button on the camera, in fact. You can also use the usual filters and sorting features as you scroll through the results. We can see our wallets emptying that bit faster!

anywhere.ebay.co.uk/mobile

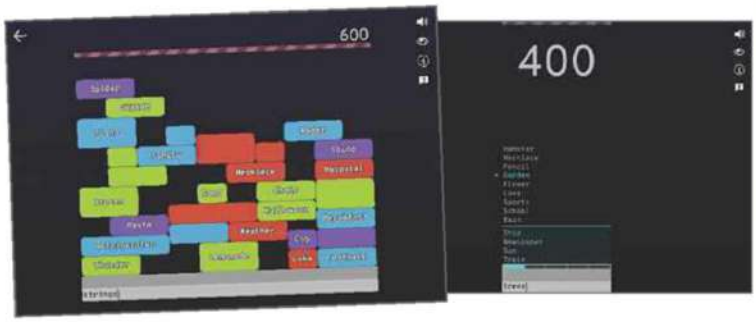


Play an AI-driven word-association game

bit.ly/semantris454

The name of this new Google game is Semantris, which bears more than a passing similarity to Russia's finest gaming export, Tetris. It's an addictive word-association game where you enter a word or phrase related to those displayed on the screen. The game then performs one of two actions depending on the mode: Arcade uses a correctly associated word to scan an ever-growing list before moving related terms to the bottom and eliminating them, giving you points; whereas in Blocks, you hope machine learning will connect your word (for example "hot") with associated blocks (perhaps "sun") to eliminate as many colours as possible.

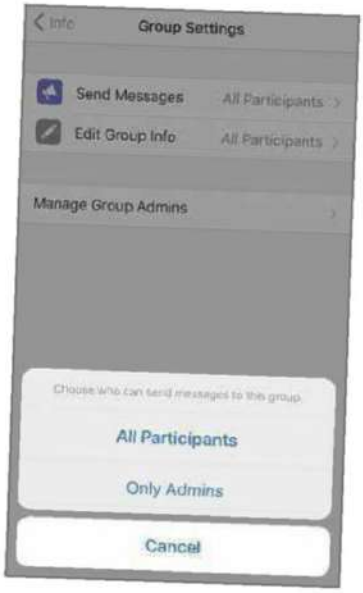
Semantris is very clever, given the AI has been trained using billions of examples of conversational text, and makes light work of natural language understanding.



Create one-way group broadcasts in WhatsApp

www.whatsapp.com

WhatsApp has evolved over time, and it's becoming more than just a secure way to chat with your friends. Many people use it to share important information but one of the problems with open groups is that other users may respond or contribute, causing the impact of the initial announcement to become lost. For that reason, WhatsApp has introduced a new group setting that only allows admins to send messages to a group. The service suggests this will be perfect for schools and non-profit organisations (a headteacher may want to inform parents about events, for example), but should also become popular with brands and news outlets.



To turn the feature on, tap the group name to open Group Info and select Group Settings, then press Send Messages and choose Only Admins. If a group member needs to respond, they can do so by tapping Message Admin.

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

Get extra lives in HQ Trivia

www.hqtrivia.com
The live online trivia game show HQ continues to attract knowledgeable new players to its free-to-play quizzes, and the people behind it are now offering even more incentives to keep us coming back for more. The app has introduced a feature called Streaks that gives you extra lives when you play for three days in a row, and lets more people remain in a game after getting a question wrong.

View the Rosetta comet archive

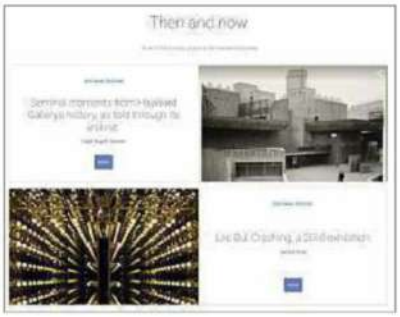
imagearchives.esac.esa.int
Remember that moment back in 2014 when the European Space Agency landed a spacecraft on the comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko? Well, now you can relive both that event and the entire 12-year Rosetta mission via the ESA's new photo archive. Incorporating the final set of hi-res images taken by Rosetta's cameras between late July and 30 September 2016, they include fly-bys of Earth, Mars and two asteroids as well as the comet itself. What's more, you can use any image you like because they're available under a Creative Commons licence. Meanwhile, the Planetary Science Archive (bit.ly/planet454) contains data from the mission's 11 science instruments.

Take an audio-guided road trip

roadtrip.glitch.me
Launch Road Trip in your phone's browser when you go for a drive and it will read entries from Wikipedia about any interesting locations you pass along the way. As such, it acts like a personal tour guide, although the quality of the information relies to a large extent on the opening paragraphs from the Wikipedia articles. We certainly learnt a thing or two about specific areas during our journeys. It's also possible to use Road Trip in your desktop browser at home by manually scouring the map for a location and pressing Next to hear information about it.

Celebrate 50 years of the Hayward Gallery

bit.ly/hayward454
To celebrate the Hayward Gallery's 50th birthday, Google Arts & Culture has curated 50 online exhibitions using newly digitised archive material, including the opening show from 1968 about Europe under dictatorships, and artist takes on architecture. You can also tour more than 1,000 previously unseen architectural plans and photos.



NEW VOICE COMMANDS

Speak to your Sony TV

Ditch the remote for your 4K HDR Sony television running Android TV and use Google Assistant to launch films, TV programmes and music, and access smart features.

Translate languages

Siri can now translate from English to French, German, Italian, Mandarin and Spanish, as long as you have iOS 11. Just ask: "How do I say [phrase] in [language]?"

Play Duplo with Alexa

Say "Alexa, open Lego Duplo Stories" to hear a series of customisable tales based on animals and vehicles, which encourage children to interact using their Duplo bricks.

Catch up with Instagram

www.instagram.com
Worried you may have missed a great photo or video on Instagram? Then update to the latest version of the app to see a You're All Caught Up message after you've viewed all posts from the past two days.

Compare kid book costs

toppsta.com
Toppsta, the online children's book community, now offers a price-comparison tool on its review pages. Click Compare Prices to see how much books cost at Amazon, Foyles, Waterstones and more, complete with delivery costs.

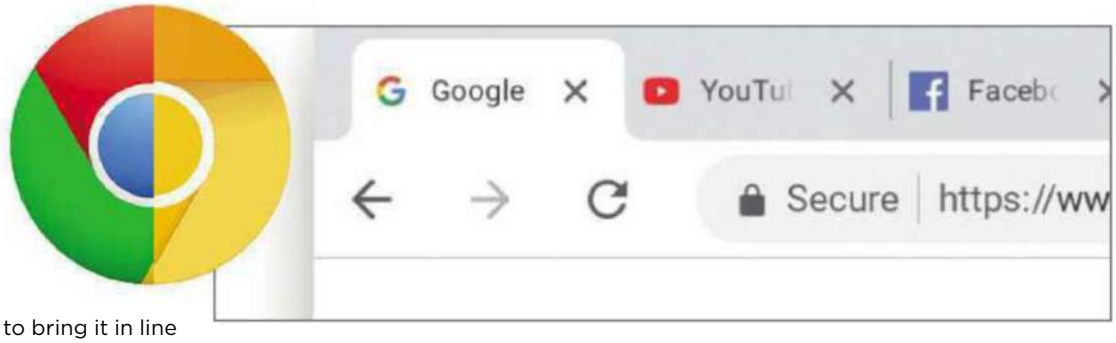
Discover family-friendly towns

bit.ly/yopa454
Estate agent Yopa has launched a simple tool that compares an area's crime rates, schools, pollution and more, using data from a range of sources. Somewhat controversially, it even covers obesity rates.

Tell us your favourite new things at forum.webuser.co.uk

Need to Know

Chrome gets major redesign and adds Spectre protection



What happened?

Google is set to give Chrome a major overhaul – and you can see it now in the experimental preview version of the browser. The changes focus on updating the look and feel of the browser to bring it in line with Google's Material Design aesthetic, a uniform set of design rules across Google's services and software.

The updates include making the address and search bar larger, changing their colour from white to grey and adding support for web-page icons to pop up in the bar when you type in a URL. Google is also tweaking the shape of Chrome's tabs, replacing the current trapezium shape with a round-cornered rectangle. There are also new colours and designs for the tab strip, pinned tabs and alert indicators.

Overall, the look should be brighter and cleaner, and the browser will be easier to use on touchscreen devices, although one Google staffer, Chromium Evangelist Francois Beaufort, told reporters that the changes could take "a while to get used to". That said, based on what the early experimental version looks like, it shouldn't be too challenging to use because the essentials haven't moved and most of the changes apply to colours and outline shapes.

To try the redesigned Chrome now, install the Canary version of the browser

While we're waiting for those aesthetic changes to roll out to everyone, the latest stable version of the browser has introduced a new security feature. Landing in Chrome 67, the Site Isolation feature targets the so-called Spectre vulnerabilities revealed earlier this year, in which flaws in processors can leak cached data. Malicious websites could use the Spectre flaws to target login information or other data from pages open in the browser at the same time.

Site Isolation does what it says on the tin, limiting the processes that can be shared across tabs. It essentially sandboxes attacks to prevent threats from leaping from a malicious site to others that are open in Chrome, effectively stopping attackers using the Spectre flaws via the browser.

How will it affect you?

It's not yet clear when these changes will be implemented in the mainstream, stable version of Chrome. The browser updates automatically, so you shouldn't have to do anything to get the latest version, other than occasionally making sure that you're restarting the browser.

If you want to check out the redesign now, you can install Chrome Canary. This is the experimental version of the browser, for developers who need to get their add-ons and websites working on the browser ahead of mainstream release, but it can be used by anyone, so if you're a keen early adopter, head to bit.ly/canary454 to give it a try. Be warned that Canary can be unstable and have bugs because it's not the final version of the browser.

On the Spectre front, Chrome's developers said in a blog post (bit.ly/spectre454) that Site Isolation will be enabled by default in most versions of Chrome, with 1% of users not getting it automatically because of system clashes. There's a downside to the protection: it chews through as much as 10 to 13% of memory because more processes are running. Because of the seriousness of the Spectre flaw, Chrome's developers believe this trade-off is worthwhile, but are also working to reduce the memory impact.

What do we think?

These constant updates to fix security flaws, boost performance and tweak features and design are what keep Chrome working well and looking fresh, despite the browser not having had a major redesign for four years. The new features may cause a few surprises for users when the updated Chrome browser arrives in the next few months, but it's unlikely that the changes will be major enough to confuse anyone. The URL box at the top will still let you search, the tabs will have a new shape but operate in the same way, and the colours are shifting from white to grey.

That's hardly going to cause a mass panic and drive loyal users to install a rival browser, but it will help keep Chrome looking and feeling up to date. What's more important is the security updates – most of us probably won't notice the Spectre-stopping Site Isolation, but it's an important move toward keep us safe online.

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

Instagram's Q&A feature isn't private

What happened?

Photo-sharing social network Instagram unveiled a new feature that lets posters interact directly with their followers, either by asking a question or letting followers pose their own. While your username isn't shown publicly for other followers to see, the person you're asking the question will see who you are. If you respond, the account you're talking to will see your Instagram account name.

That came as a surprise to some people, who expected the Q&A format to be anonymous, following the lead of other sites such as Ask.fm, which let users send private questions to each other without revealing their identity.

The confusion has led to a flood of complaints from users who thought the feature was anonymous – and used it to make rude and insensitive comments to the recipient, not realising that they could see who was posting the offensive messages.

How will it affect you?

If you want to use the new feature, head to Instagram Stories. Once you've set up a post, click the button to insert an object – where you normally go to add GIFs or polls – and click Questions.

The default is "ask me a question", which lets your followers type a query into the text box. You can ask any question you like by tapping the text to write your own query. To respond to a question, simply tap the box and start typing your comment – but don't forget that the recipient can see who you are!

What do we think?

It's difficult to feel much sympathy for someone caught being rude because they mistakenly believed their identity was hidden – the perceived anonymity of the internet leads many to reveal their true selves.

That said, this design flaw is Instagram's fault. It should have done a better job of clarifying how the system worked when it was rolled out. That so many people were confused demonstrates that a clearer explanation would have been helpful.

Hackers demand porn-view ransom

What happened?

A swathe of scam emails has hit the web demanding a payment in Bitcoin to avoid releasing a video of the victim watching pornography. The message claims to have hacked the victim's computer after they visited an adult site, threatening to send a video of them watching pornographic content to their Facebook and email contacts.

Plenty of such ransom emails land in inboxes, but what makes this attack unique – and more intimidating to its targets – is that the scam message includes your password or an old version you've previously used. That's not because victims have genuinely been hacked in the way described, but because the scammers are using login details leaked in a separate attack.

How will it affect you?

Action Fraud says it's received reports from more than a hundred victims, and there are likely to be plenty more who have been sent the scam email. If you receive a message, don't panic. In this particular scam, the attackers don't have the claimed video – only your old password from a previous leak. You don't need to send the £2,000 in Bitcoin they demand, but you should report the email to Action Fraud to help the cybercrime-reporting centre track such scams.

If the email has a legitimate password, it does mean it has been leaked, so change it at any sites where it's been used. You can check which accounts have been hacked at Have I Been Pwned (haveibeenpwned.com) a site set up by security experts to track big breaches.

What do we think?

What a nasty way to scam web users. This highlights the need to keep a basic level of security, so you need not panic if such a scam does land in your inbox. It's good to see Action Fraud taking such scams seriously and tracking them, and hopefully this will lead to the arrest of the scam's perpetrators very soon.

YouTube steps up the war against 'fake news'

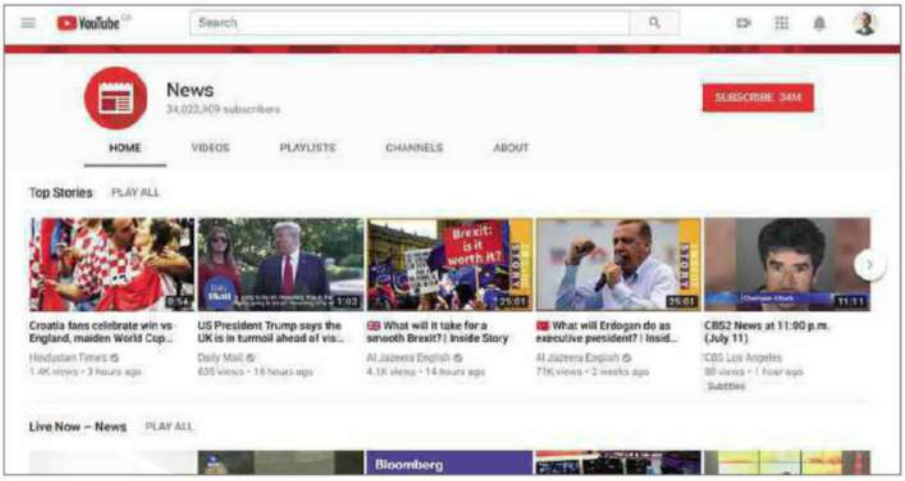
What happened?

They say a lie travels halfway around the world before the truth can lace its boots – in today's globally connected world, it's probably quicker than that. Now, following Facebook's fight against fake news, YouTube has unveiled a string of initiatives to curb the spread of malicious and inaccurate videos.

Pledging to invest £18.8m in journalism, YouTube said in a blog post: "we believe quality journalism requires sustainable revenue streams and that we have a responsibility to support innovation in products and funding for news" (bit.ly/youtubefake454).

YouTube is a popular destination for breaking news, which is fertile ground for 'fake news' – a term popularised by President Trump and linked to outlandish conspiracy theories. Knowing our 24-hour news cycle favours speed over accuracy, unscrupulous content creators use fast-flowing world events, such as the Las Vegas shooting, as an opportunity to release inaccurate – or deliberately misleading – videos masquerading as legitimate news.

Enter YouTube's Top News and Breaking News shelves: a selection of relevant and related videos from established news providers including the BBC, CNN and Fox News. In future, news articles will accompany the videos, along with a reminder that, as events rapidly develop, some information may be incorrect.



You'll also see a new 'authoritative context' box when searching for conspiracy theories, displaying links and text from trusted sites such as Wikipedia and Encyclopaedia Britannica, in a bid to combat misinformation.

How will it affect you?

YouTube's push for reliable and accessible reporting means you should (in theory) see more news you can trust – with different perspectives eliminating bias on all sides of the political spectrum. You may also see fewer 'breaking news' videos in your feed that, bereft of fresh details, serve as little more than ghoulish voyeurism. As usual, a little common sense goes the longest way to solving the so-called fake news panic. And, however noble Google's intentions, the question remains: do you really want it to control your news?

What do we think?

YouTube is treading a thin line here, and parent company Google will be keen to avoid accusations of censorship while curating reliable news content. The scheme itself is similar to Google Newsstand's 'Full Coverage' feature: additional insightful links that inform and add context, so you can make up your own mind. But we'd like to see more information regarding its criteria for judging trustworthiness, and how Google intends to avoid any potential conflict of interest.

FIRST LOOK

Nest Hello

nest.com

As we explained in last issue's FAQ, the Nest Hello is a Wi-Fi doorbell equipped with a camera, speaker and microphone that lets you see who's at the door via a smartphone app. You can also record clips of comings and goings automatically, and even talk to people who come to the door when you're not at home.

Unless you're skilled at DIY, you may need to get an electrician to install the mains-powered Nest Hello or pay the £100 installation fee that Nest itself charges, and if you want to use the doorbell's advanced features – continuous video history, familiar-face recognition and timelapse-clip creation – you'll have to stump up at least £40 per year. That makes the £229 Nest Hello much more expensive than its main smart-doorbell rival, the Ring Video Doorbell 2, which costs a more reasonable £179.

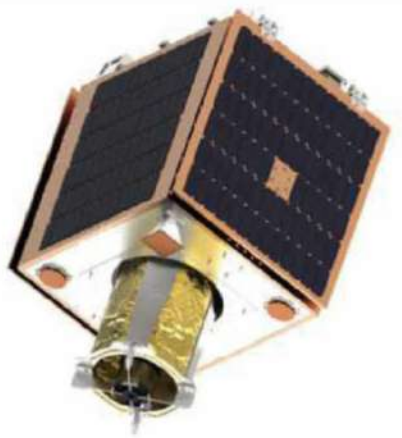
Despite the high price, the Nest Hello has some clear advantages. Because it's a mains-only device, there's no battery to recharge every couple of months, and it integrates with your existing door chime if you have one. Also, its video quality is crisp and clear and it records video 24/7, just like a regular security camera. Footage is saved direct to Nest's servers, so you can review it any minute of the day, unlike the Ring 2, which only records clips when it detects motion.

The one big caveat is that continuous video recording uses a lot of data. In Low quality mode, this equates to 30GB per month, in Medium quality it's 120GB per month, and in High quality it's a hefty 300GB per month.

The Nest Hello is a fantastic product, but it could end up costing you a packet, which may not be worth the expense if you don't actually receive many visitors.

WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

Could Google 'live-stream' Google Earth?



Google could now technically 'live-stream' areas in Google Earth, thanks to a breakthrough camera created by a UK company.

Developed by Earth-i and gliding above the globe at a rate of four miles per second, the 4K Ultra HD camera – aboard the company's VividX2 satellite – takes photos of specific locations from multiple angles to create 3D replicas, with each pixel covering a telescopic 24in of ground. The two-minute, 50fps video is then beamed back to Earth.

Interviewed by Tech Radar, the company's CEO, Richard Blain, said: "Earth Observation data is becoming a major driver in the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution – the era of Big Data analytics. Location data is the foundation on which many big data solutions are being built to drive better decision-making and policy thinking the world over."

It's a commercial product, then, which allows companies to track everything from ports to parcel deliveries. And with police forces already trialling Amazon's facial recognition, government interest is likely, too.

But while the California-based tech giant hasn't yet partnered with Earth-i, Blain believes that technically the camera, capable of capturing colour footage from 300 miles above ground, means a 'live Google Earth' is "entirely possible". Financially, though, the boast is less impressive: Google would need an estimated 1,000 camera-mounted satellites to maintain constant global coverage.

LIKELIHOOD RATING

✓✓✓✓✓

Google loves data, so the company may well investigate licensing the camera technology. However, live-streaming clips of Earth may be a little too invasive, even for Google – especially with data privacy dominating headlines. As it is, Google Earth is refreshed every three years or so, which keeps it up-to-date without feeling like we're under constant surveillance. Moreover, it would take a lot of ad revenue to fund the project – with no guarantee of whether the data has any value.

What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

Smartibot

bit.ly/smartibot454 | From £1

Meet Smartibot, the DIY robot – think Lego, Labo and Raspberry Pi, all rolled into one. This clever, build-your-own AI-powered robot can recognise and track people, control other motorised toys and carry out your orders, all from your smartphone. There's no programming required: just open the app to link control commands to one of up to 14 motors, making it play a miniature drum kit, squirt a water pistol at your neighbours and more. Pledges start from £1, but you'll need to donate at least £35 to get a Smartibot starter kit.

WEBOMETER

WE LIKE...

Microsoft finally updates Notepad

Microsoft's Notepad text editor for Windows has had its first update in years. New features have been added, including an improved search tool, easier navigation and the ability to zoom into and out of notes.

Photoshop coming to the iPad

Adobe is planning to release a full version of its Photoshop graphics software for the Apple iPad in 2019. The app will have a mobile-friendly interface and all the same tools as the desktop version of the program.

WE DON'T LIKE...

NHS still using fax machines

The NHS still relies on fax machines, according to a study by the Royal College of Surgeons, with almost 9,000 in use across the country. Of the 124 NHS trusts polled, only 10 no longer use fax machines.

Elon Musk smears cave diver on Twitter

Elon Musk came under fire after calling a British diver who helped rescue the boys trapped in a flooded cave in Thailand a "pedo" on Twitter. The Tesla CEO subsequently deleted his baseless attack.

Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

Gmail messages read by human third parties

Google has confirmed that private Gmail messages can be read by third-party app developers. Its admission came in response to an article in the *Wall Street Journal*, which accused the tech giant of having a "dirty secret" by allowing hundreds of developers to sift through the inboxes of Gmail users. This intrusion only applies to users who have granted third-party tools access to their accounts, but raises serious privacy concerns because it lets humans read emails, not just machines.

When linking an account to an external service, Gmail users are asked to grant certain permissions, which often include the ability to "read, send, delete and manage your email". These messages are typically processed by computer algorithms, but the *Wall Street Journal* spoke to several companies where the employees of third-party developers had read "thousands" of messages.

Google said only companies that had been vetted could access messages, and only if users had "explicitly granted permission to access email". It said Gmail users could visit its Security Check-up page to review and revoke apps' access to their accounts.

bit.ly/gmail454

Popular Chrome extension tracks your browsing

Stylish – a popular add-on for Chrome and Firefox that allows you to customise the appearance of web pages – has become riddled with spyware. The extension, which has more than 1.8 million users, has been silently collecting and sharing users' browsing data since it was sold to a company called SimilarWeb in January 2017. The script hidden in Stylish's code sends a user's complete browsing history to a remote central server alongside a unique identifier, which SimilarWeb can potentially link to your email address and real-world identity.

Google and Mozilla removed the Stylish extension from their respective stores in response to the discovery. "We decided to block [Stylish] because of violation of data practices outlined in the review policy," said Mozilla software engineer Andreas Wagner.

bit.ly/stylish454

Credit: Alexey Boldin / Shutterstock.com

Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT: David Emm, Principal Security Researcher at Kaspersky Lab (www.kaspersky.co.uk)

KASPERSKY lab

Q What lessons can be learned from the recent Ticketmaster data breach?

Alan Howshall, via email

A With so many people using Ticketmaster to buy tickets for theatre performances, live music and stand-up comedy, it is no surprise that the site has become a target for cybercriminals. It's important for Ticketmaster – and all businesses – to pre-empt any breaches by having an effective cybersecurity strategy in place. Companies should implement measures to secure customer data, so if data is compromised in a breach, passwords and other sensitive details are not made available to cybercriminals.

It seems the weak link in this breach was a third-party supplier. An organisation's security strategy should be able to reassure customers that the private information they entrust to others is stored securely.

> "If we don't password-protect our phones, we make it a lot easier for criminals to access our data"

Consumers have no direct control over the security of their online providers, but they can mitigate the risk of a security breach. We recommend using unique, complex passwords for all online accounts, and opting for two-factor authentication where available.

Q What's the best way to protect the private data stored on my phone?

Stuart Beasley, Facebook

A Our phones and the wealth of data they contain are highly sought-after by cybercriminals. If we don't password-protect our phones, we make it a lot easier for criminals to access our data. By applying a password and using a dedicated security app that includes anti-theft protection, we can protect our personal information, photos and online accounts from both loss and malicious usage.

Email us your security questions at webuser@dennis.co.uk

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Best New Websites

Site of the Fortnight

HISTORY

NEW

100 Objects North

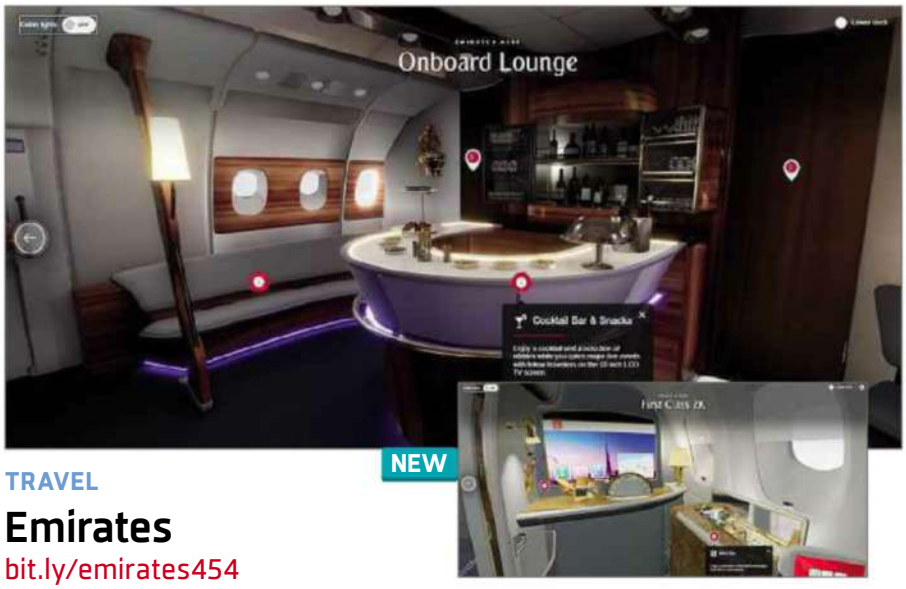
www.100objectsnorth.co.uk

100 Objects North is an eclectic grab-bag of heritage and history, created by museums across the north of England nominating items that best represent the region – anything from Neolithic axes to posters advertising the Blackpool Tower circus. Search by map, timeline, theme and – best of all – size, to see items that are as small as a mouse or as big as a whale! Clicking each exhibit reveals further details, including audio descriptions. The Create My Exhibition mode is ideal for grouping specific exhibits by date, location or theme in your personal online gallery. You can also check out other people's personalised exhibitions.

Our rating ★★★★★

DISCOVER MORE
Download PDFs with extra information and images – although they sometimes offer exactly the same details as the website

CREATE A GALLERY
This button lets you add any items to your exhibition and view them later by clicking the picture frame



NEW

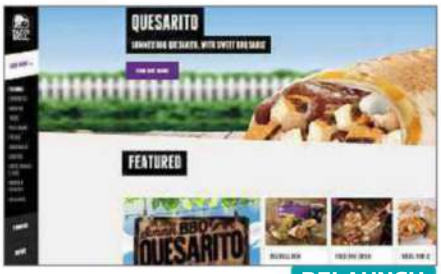
TRAVEL

Emirates

bit.ly/emirates454

Emirates Airline has unveiled the world's first 3D cabin. Both VR- and desktop-compatible, the online experience sees you climb aboard a virtual Airbus A380, no passport required. Swing your mouse across the screen to tour Economy, Business and First Class cabins, clicking the information points to learn more about what's on offer: not only do you discover that the open on-board lounge is designed for mingling, while every seat packs a USB port for your mobile, but you can even check out the range of toiletries in the First Class shower spa and see how everything looks when the cabin lights are switched off. Like a good holiday, it's so chilled and enjoyable that Emirates even makes getting squashed in Economy seem luxurious.

Our rating ★★★★★



RELAUNCH

FOOD

Taco Bell

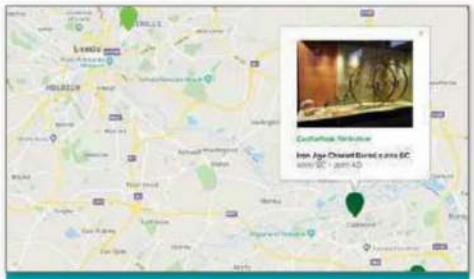
www.tacobelluk.co.uk

Tex-Mex meal-dealer Taco Bell has ol' Blighty in its sights, and is kicking off its British invasion with a flavoursome UK website that's everything you'd expect from a US fast-food chain: big, bold and brash. With eye-catching images and clearly labelled links, the online menu is mouth-wateringly comprehensive, listing all key ingredients and offering vegetarian options and big-box deals for sharing. The online ordering almost puts Taco Bell ahead of the competition although, unfortunately, the service is limited, given that there are fewer than 20 restaurants in the country as yet.

Our rating ★★★★☆

Reviews by Steve Clark

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



LOCATION, LOCATION
Discover the precise location of your exhibits, alongside other selected finds in the surrounding area

VISIT A MUSEUM
If you'd like to see a piece up close and in person, visit the museum's website to plan your trip

RELAUNCH

GAMING

Ubisoft Reflections

reflections.ubisoft.com

Ubisoft Reflections, the UK-based arm of French video-game studio Ubisoft, helped develop some of the most iconic gaming franchises – from Assassin's Creed to The Division. Now, the studio has reworked its website to serve as a recruitment billboard as well as an information portal – apply for careers or sign up as a play-tester in a matter of clicks. Even the sparsely populated blog continues the frenzied 'great place to work' theme. But despite brief descriptions of the games and a link to the UbiStore, there's no info on how the studio contributed to their success.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

NEW

CRIME-FIGHTING

Nextbase National Dash Cam Safety Portal

bit.ly/dashcam454

Dash-cam company Nextbase's new site aims to put the brakes on dangerous driving. If you've filmed dodgy drivers on your dash cam (it needn't be a Nextbase), visit this no-nonsense website to report the incident to the police. Click any region in England and Wales and, if the local police force partners with the platform, upload your footage directly. Not every constabulary is on board yet – though you can still upload your video and file a witness report. There's also a comprehensive and helpful FAQ, but be prepared for a lot of scrolling.

Our rating ★★★★☆

NEW

LEGAL

Delivery Law

www.deliverylaw.uk

Online ordering has skyrocketed in popularity so it's worth knowing your rights. The Delivery Law website, which partners with consumer bodies such as Citizens Advice, is here to assist – whether you're an individual, business or practitioner. You'll find a treasure trove of resources (despite the odd unpopulated page), from legal advice to templated emails. It's a bit toothless regarding excessive delivery charges: consumers are sometimes advised to "abandon [the] sale and go to another website". But, it's all written in large-print, easy-to-follow language that avoids legalese.

Our rating ★★★★☆

Tell us about your website via webuser@dennis.co.uk

BACK ISSUES DISC 2017

Our **2017 Back Issues Disc** containing all 26 issues from last year is now on sale from Amazon

For more information, visit **bit.ly/wudisc17** or search for 'webuser disc' on Amazon

You can still buy our 2016 Back Issues Disc from bit.ly/wudisc16

RELAUNCH

NATURE

Surrey Wildlife Trust

www.surreywildlifetrust.org

The new-look Surrey Wildlife Trust website lets you explore all that the county has to offer, and with 70 nature reserves, there's something for everyone (and everything!). Search for nature reserves in specific areas or, if you fancy insect-spotting or bird-watching, hit the user-friendly 'Great for...' tabs at the top of the screen to filter preferences in the right locations. If you're not too busy applying for the Sussex Wildlife Garden Award, check out upcoming events, grab top tips for observing and caring for wildlife, and find various ways in which you can support the charitable trust.

Our rating ★★★★☆

RELAUNCH

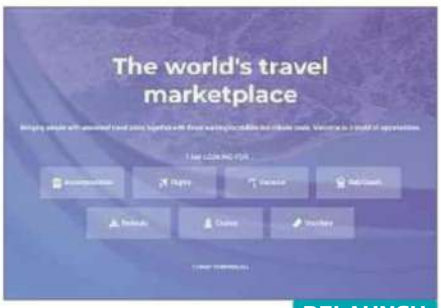
FOOD

Street Food Live

www.streetfoodlive.co.uk

If the first bite is with the eye, then the new Street Food Live website – promoting Europe's only street food event at Excel London on 25 and 26 September – is a real treat. The site mimics a street food stall, with wooden decking featuring a 'menu' of tabs. Skim across the 'counter' for various sign-up opportunities that spring to attention as you hover over them. Navigation is as easy as making cheese on toast (with a street food-style Caribbean kick, of course). Beneath the marinade, though, is a corporate website aimed strictly at food industry professionals.

Our rating ★★★★☆



RELAUNCH

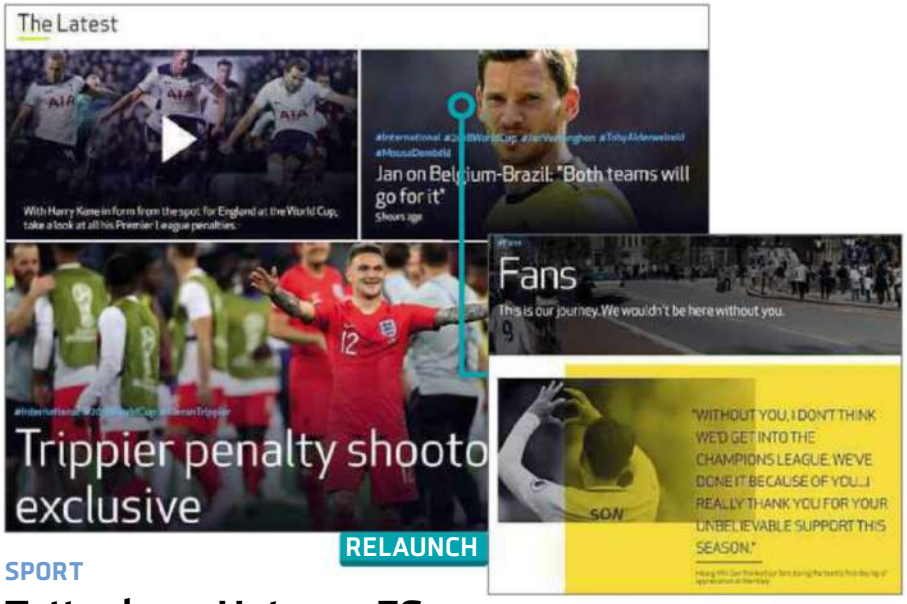
TRAVEL

Transfer Travel

www.transfertravel.com

Transfer Travel calls itself 'the eBay of travel' for obvious reasons: people sell their holidays, hotels and flights, and you make an offer, buy it now or simply keep an eye on the listing. Still very much in the start-up phase – it only launched two years ago – the revamped site looks and feels slick, but many basic UK-to-Europe searches we tried triggered zero results and it lacks the catalogue of listings necessary for its user-generated content. What listings there are could do with a few more images, too, to compete with other holiday and travel sites. The site charges 15% commission on all sales.

Our rating ★★★☆☆



RELAUNCH

SPORT

Tottenham Hotspur FC

www.tottenhamhotspur.com

Coinciding with the unveiling of its new stadium comes Spurs' new website. It's as slick as you'd expect from a top-flight team, with a celebratory homepage cascading with hi-res images of the players, the fans and the latest news from the sidelines. Hiding the old navigation tabs in a hamburger menu makes the site tidier, but the minimalist starting line-up is hardly First Team material, focusing on the latest matches, players and ticket offers while some of its best features lie out of sight. It's possible to locate extras such as the excellent Spurs eCal that syncs match fixtures with your calendar, but the final whistle will blow long before you've tracked them all down.

Our rating ★★★★☆

RELAUNCH

DRINK

Gun Brewery

www.gunbrewery.co.uk

Independent micro-breweries have recently exploded in popularity, and Brighton-based Gun Brewery is looking to play its part with what is, undoubtedly, the most minimal website we've reviewed in months. There are four main tabs at the top of the screen, placed beneath a logo based on the old hobo sign for 'Man with gun lives here' – and that's it. Keep scrolling and you'll stumble across stunning photos of the Sussex countryside, and there's a nice gallery that showcases the small start-up business, but eventually you'll be directed to either discover or shop for Gun's mostly vegan beers.

Our rating ★★★★☆

Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

Top Tips of the Fortnight

Make an 'I'm feeling lucky' button

Have you ever pressed Google's I'm Feeling Lucky button to be taken to a random website? You can add a similar button to your WordPress website, which will take your visitors to a random page within your site. This is a great way to get people looking beyond your latest pages.

Install the Redirect URL to Post plugin (bit.ly/urpo454) and use the 'random' value. You can also use the plugin to build a link to your latest page that doesn't need to be changed when you add something new.

Get social media right

Social media is great for promoting your website and alerting people to new content. The best way to do this is with an eye-catching image, but each site has a different ideal for how big those images should be. For a handy reference for each network, take a look at this guide from Wix at bit.ly/siz454.

If you don't rate your graphic-design skills and could do with some help making the most of your images, take a look at our review of online design tools on page 46 – they're perfect for this kind of job.

Deal of the Fortnight

GoDaddy (uk.godaddy.com) is offering '.uk' and '.co.uk' domains for 1p for the first year if you commit to two years (the second year costs £9.99).

Web-building Helpdesk

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT: Hristo Pandjarov, WordPress and SEO Specialist at SiteGround (www.siteground.co.uk)

Q I don't want to put my email address on my website for spammers to harvest but I'd like visitors to my site to be able to contact me. What's the best way to do this?

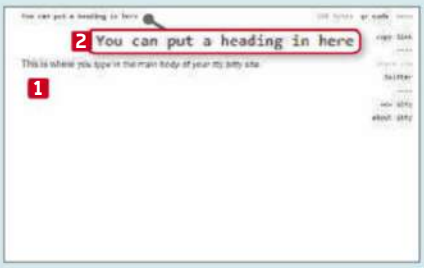
Theo Green, via email

A The easiest way to have your site's vistors contact you is by adding a contact form on your website. There are many plugins and extensions that provide this functionality for every popular content-management system, such as WPForms (wpforms.com) for WordPress. You can create different forms on different pages to find out where on your website your visitors were when they were inspired to contact you. Comments are also a great way to get feedback on particular pages, but don't forget to take anti-spam measures.

MINI WORKSHOP | Make a microsite without hosting

Itty Bitty Site: itty.bitty.site | 10 mins | Any browser

Sometimes you just want to create a small info site you can share a link to, rather than a full-blown website. Itty Bitty Site stores the entire page in its URL, and there's no need to register or pay for hosting



1 Creating a simple text site is very easy. Go to itty.bitty.site, click the haiku and start typing. This is where the main body of your website will go. 1 You can make it as long as you like. If you want to give the page a title, which will appear on the browser tab, click Untitled and start typing your own heading. 2

2 If you know HTML, you can create a simple web page in Notepad or your preferred HTML editor. This lets you use formatting and you can even add images, as long as the pictures are already hosted on the web. Save the site as an '.html' file, then drag it to Itty Bitty 1 to recreate it.

3 Alternatively, you could make a page at Codepen (codepen.io) that includes CSS 1 and JavaScript. 2 Make sure you keep the whole file below 2Kb or so. Save your work, then paste the Codepen address into Itty Bitty. To share a site with other people, just copy the URL from the address bar.

Email us your website building questions at webuser@dennis.co.uk

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What To Watch Online

Pick of the fortnight

NETFLIX

Better watch *Better Call Saul* Season 4

From 7 August

Better Call Saul is the show that proves spoilers don't matter – sort of. We already know what happens at the end of AMC's wonderful *Breaking Bad* spin-off – oily attorney Saul Goodman ("S'all good, man!") turns up as legal (loud)mouthpiece of the Albuquerque underworld, and steals the show from Walter White and co – but the joy is in discovering how and why he got there.

Season 4 sees likeable lawyer Jimmy McGill (the brilliant Bob Odenkirk) morph ever-closer into his brash alter-ego, and creator Vince Gilligan promises an "important" *Breaking Bad* character crossover. Jimmy's relationship with his business partner and on-off girlfriend Kim (Rhea Seehorn) also "deepens and darkens" in the new season, which makes us a bit nervous. Other than that, we don't know what happens next, but it's testament to the power of this show that we really care, despite knowing the ending.

The ensemble cast returns, including Giancarlo Esposito as sinister drug lord Gus Fring, Jonathan Banks as benevolent elder tough nut Mike and Michael McKean as Jimmy's neurotic and controlling brother Chuck. Watch the trailer at bit.ly/saul454.

Find out why *Orange is the New Black*

From 27 July

One of Netflix's longest-running shows returns – and not for the last time. Prison comedy-drama *Orange is the New Black* has already been renewed for a seventh season, due next year. Meanwhile here's Season 6, subtitled *To The Max* in punning reference to its tough new maximum-security setting.

Judging by the latest official trailer for the new season (bit.ly/orange454), the 10 Litchfield Prison inmates who ended up in a bunker after the riot that ended Season 5 – including Piper (Taylor Schilling) and Tasha (Danielle Brooks) – have some terrifying new housemates who we'd definitely want to avoid bumping into on a dark night.

Watch Taliban drama *Six*

From 3 August

Gritty US military drama *Six* follows a team of Navy SEALs who discover an American citizen working among the Taliban in Afghanistan. Season 1 aired on Channel 5 earlier this year, but the rights to the whole series have since been poached by History, which is now showing Season 1 at 9pm on Fridays. The first season ends on a killer cliffhanger, so you'll be grateful History plans to roll straight on to Season 2 on 3 August. And Season 3? Alas that won't be happening, because the show has been cancelled by creator A+E Networks – so enjoy it while you can.

You can watch History on your smart TV with Virgin Media, Sky, BT TV or TalkTalk, or online (and in HD) via TVPlayer (bit.ly/tvplayer454), where a subscription costs from £5.99 per month. Watch the trailer for Season 2 at bit.ly/six454.

Watch the European Championships online

2-12 August

If you've got any energy left after the emotional marathon of the World Cup and the hottest Wimbledon in decades, there's more sport for you – oodles of it, from athletics to triathlon, via swimming, gymnastics and even BMX biking. The inaugural European Championships is a truly cross-continent event, co-hosted by Glasgow and Berlin and partnering with broadcasters from Ireland to Turkey – including, of course, Auntie Beeb.

You can follow the action on the iPlayer live and on demand, but the BBC hasn't released any details ahead of schedule. Never mind, there's plenty to

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

watch on the event's website, where you can download a schedule and stream videos featuring the cities, athletes and mascots Bonnie the seal and Berlino the bear (bit.ly/euro454).

BT TV adds offline viewing for a fiver

BT has finally updated its BT TV app to let customers download films and TV shows to watch offline, anywhere – but it'll cost you.

For an extra £5 a month, BT TV subscribers can upgrade to the new BT TV App Extra service (bit.ly/btextra454) and download all content via the BT TV app (Android and iOS, bit.ly/bttv454), and set recordings while out and about. BT TV App Extra also adds the option to play content on up to four devices in addition to the set-top box. Chromecast, Apple TV and Samsung Smart TVs are currently supported, with Amazon Fire TV coming soon, though there's no word on Roku yet.

The extra fiver may seem steep given that the BBC iPlayer app lets you download content to watch offline completely free, but the Beeb manages this with the licence fee, whereas BT's new service simply brings it in line with Sky's £5 upgrade, Sky Go Extra (bit.ly/skygo454).

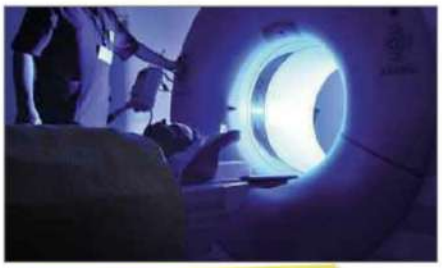
Wince at *The Bleeding Edge*

From 27 July

Not to be confused with 2016's Chinese heart-transplant thriller of the same name (also on Netflix), *The Bleeding Edge* is the latest documentary to cast a critical eye over America's profit-driven health system. This time the focus is on medical instruments (you're wincing already, aren't you?), a $400bn industry apparently unmoved by the lives it ruins and the laws it ignores.

Filmmaker Kirby Dick (*The Invisible War*, *The Hunting Ground*) offers dozens of gruesome case studies of dodgy artificial hips, unsafe implants and robot surgeons, and you need to be strong in spirit and stomach to get through it. But it's an important film, and it'll make you even more grateful for the NHS.

You can watch a Q&A with the director and some of the patients featured at bit.ly/edge454.



Fight aliens in *Extinction*

From 27 July

Feeding our apparently insatiable hunger for post-apocalyptic thrillers, this fortnight's world-ending catastrophe is aliens, in a new Netflix Original film starring Michael Peña (Ponch in last year's *CHiPs* reboot), who plays a maintenance worker battling to save his family from a mysterious extraterrestrial force.

Extinction was scripted by no less than Eric Heisserer (Oscar-nominated screenwriter of *Arrival*) and was originally slated for cinema release in January. However Netflix picked it up and wisely judged that it would make good summertime fodder. Watch the official trailer at bit.ly/extinction454.

In case you missed it...

Sky One announced Season 2 of its star-studded sitcom *Sick Note* too late for our last issue, but the first episode has only just aired (26 July), and there won't be another for a week yet.

Two of the best Essex boys in the biz – Rupert Grint (*Harry Potter*'s Ron) and Nick Frost (Mike from *Spaced*) – star as a sickie-thrower and his doctor, with Don Johnson (yep, from *Miami Vice*) as Frost's smoothie boss and, new in Season 2, Lindsay Lohan as Johnson's daughter. All of Season 1 is available to watch on demand via Now TV (bit.ly/sick454), and new episodes land every Thursday at 10pm. A Now TV Entertainment Pass costs £7.99 a month after a free 14-day trial (bit.ly/nowtv454).

Over on Amazon Prime Video, Season 4 of reality TV drama *UnREAL* arrived on 17 July, with all eight episodes now ready to binge. The latest zeitgeisty satire from Marti Noxon (whose *Dietland* is also causing a stir on Amazon), *UnREAL* is set behind the scenes of a TV dating competition and stars Shiri Abbleby (Liz in *Roswell High*). Watch the Season 4 trailer at bit.ly/unreal4454 and the first three seasons at bit.ly/unreal454.

Acer Chromebook Tab 10

Acer's Chrome OS-powered tablet is cheaper than Apple's iPad, but is it as good?

Google's Chrome OS has become synonymous with laptops, not least because of the pleasing ring of the word 'Chromebook'. But with no keyboard in sight, this Chromebook is definitely a tablet, with a 10in screen and a version of the operating system that's been tailored for touch operation.

The tablet is powered by Rockchip's hexa-core OP1 processor, which runs at 2GHz. It comes with 4GB of RAM and 32GB of storage, which is expandable with a microSD memory card, and supports 802.11ac Wi-Fi and Bluetooth 4.1. Its 9.7in IPS screen, with a resolution of 2,048 x 1,536 pixels (the same as Apple's entry-level iPad), takes up most of the front, and you get a Wacom-branded stylus that slides into the back of the device.

Pricing

At the time of writing, the Chromebook Tab 10 wasn't widely available in the UK, though we found plenty at Central Computers (bit.ly/cbtab454) for £306.22, and a handful of other shops.

When the Apple iPad first launched, it was an expensive piece of kit, but the current entry-level model no longer seems so pricey and while this Chromebook tablet undercuts Apple's £319 alternative, it's by less than £15. That said, the Wacom stylus comes free with the Tab 10, whereas Apple's iPad stylus will set you back another £100.

By comparison, the Samsung Galaxy Tab S2 – our current favourite Android tablet – costs £350. If you really wanted to save some pennies, though, Amazon's Fire HD 10 can be picked up for just £150.

Design and screen

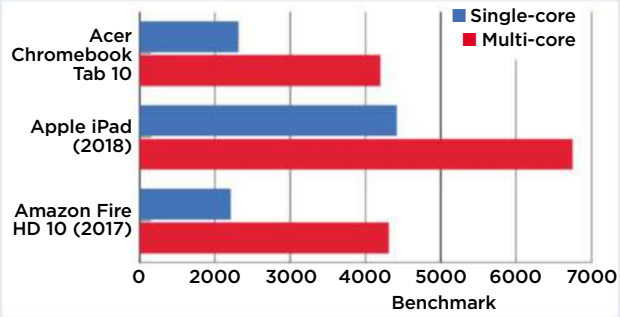
The design is less slick than its similarly priced rivals, with a blue textured plastic rear and chunky bezels on all four sides of the screen. However, at 544g, it's not too heavy to carry around with you.

> "This is the first time we've seen the Chrome operating system make an appearance on a screen-only device"

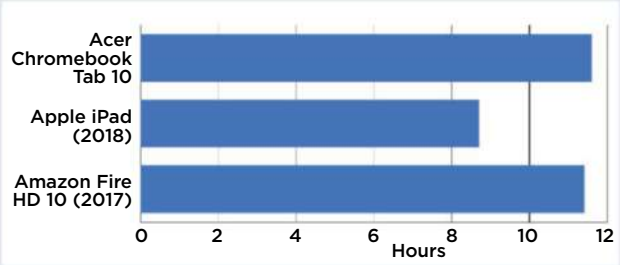
On the lower edge of the device is a solitary USB Type-C port for charging and connecting the tablet to a PC. A 5-megapixel camera sits on the rear with a 2-megapixel selfie-snapper on the front, situated above the display.

According to our colorimeter, the Chromebook's screen is capable of reproducing 82.3% of the sRGB colour standard. We noticed that dark-blue tones look rather muted, though, while red and yellow shades are oversaturated. A maximum brightness of 373cd/m² is good enough for indoor use, but you might struggle to see the screen if you're outside in relatively bright sunshine. However, the contrast ratio of 1,113:1 is good.

CPU performance, Geekbench 4



Battery life (hours)



The stylus is smaller than a standard pencil and slides out from a hole on the bottom-left corner of the device. It's a perfectly good pen but the compact size is best suited to short bursts of work – long note-taking sessions are more comfortable with Apple's chunkier stylus.

Performance and battery life

The Tab 10's Geekbench 4 single- and multi-core CPU scores were 1,311 and 3,193 respectively. To put this in perspective, the 9.7in iPad's scores are a massive 160% and 80% faster than this, and the Acer only just beat the 10in Amazon tablet in the single-core test, falling behind it in the multi-core test.

This wouldn't necessarily be a problem – we know that the iPad is lightning fast and tough to beat – but Chrome OS also feels sluggish here, with the Tab 10 struggling to navigate Google Maps and juggle multiple applications when you've got them open in numerous browser tabs.

It's certainly not worth considering the Tab 10 if you're into serious gaming: it only managed an average 15fps (frames per second) in the GFXBench GL Manhatten 3.0 on-screen gaming benchmark, though it should still be able to cope with casual games that aren't too demanding of the hardware specification.

Where the Tab 10 truly shines, though, is with its long-lasting battery life. We ran our usual looping video test on the device, which runs a video at a standard brightness setting, timing how long it takes to run the battery down from a full charge. It lasted for 11 hours and 37 minutes, which is almost three hours longer than Apple's iPad and two hours more than the Fire HD 10.

Chrome OS

The key point of the Tab 10 is its use of Chrome OS. Previously restricted to Chromebook laptops, this is the first time we've seen the operating system make an appearance on a screen-only device. It looks and feels familiar, with the Launcher and app-tray buttons sitting on the left-hand side of the taskbar, and device-specific settings such as Wi-Fi and screen brightness on the right.

However, it still feels clunky to use without a keyboard. There's no on-screen home button, which means you have to close all your open apps to get to the homescreen, and the search function could do with some work. It doesn't offer split-screen capabilities for multi-tasking, either. In a nutshell, it still needs to mature as a touch-only OS and could do with some updates before it becomes a viable iOS or Android alternative.

There is, however, full support for Google Play Store services, apps and Chrome extensions, and the cloud-based tablet is well-suited to those already committed to Google's online services, such as Gmail and Drive.

OUR VERDICT

★★★☆☆

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

Chrome OS is still a novelty on tablets and its relative immaturity as a touchscreen operating system is a significant obstacle.

It's not exactly cheap, either. You can buy a tablet with similar capabilities running Amazon's version of Android for half the price; or get a much faster and more sophisticated-looking iPad for just a few pounds more.

On the plus side, however, the battery life of Acer's Chromebook tablet is excellent, and it throws in the stylus for free.

The time for Chrome OS to shine on tablets may not be here just yet, but it's still an attractive prospect. We see this first foray as a statement of intent and expect impressive developments to come.

PRODUCT INFO

Acer Chromebook Tab 10

Price: £306.22
Buy from Central Computers:
bit.ly/cbtab454

SPECIFICATIONS

- 64-bit 2GHz Rockchip OP1 RK3399 processor
- 9.7in IPS screen
- 2,048 x 1,536 pixels QXGA resolution
- 4:3 aspect ratio
- 4GB standard memory
- 32GB RAM
- microSD expansion slot
- 5-megapixels rear camera
- 2-megapixels front camera
- 802.11ac Wi-Fi
- Bluetooth 4.1
- 1 x USB Type-C port
- Headphone/microphone socket
- Wacom stylus included
- Chrome OS
- 238 x 172 x 10mm
- 544g

FOR

✓ Cheaper than the entry-level iPad
✓ Bundled Wacom stylus
✓ Lengthy battery life

AGAINST

✗ Display could be better
✗ Performance isn't as good as iPad
✗ Chrome OS needs work

FASTER AND MORE STYLISH

Apple iPad, £319
bit.ly/ipad454

MORE AFFORDABLE

Amazon Fire HD 10, £149.99
bit.ly/fire454

Honor 7S

This super-cheap Android phone looks like a bargain but does it cut too many corners?

Not everyone wants to spend a king's ransom on a high-end smartphone so it's just as well there are some great low-cost handsets out there. Honor is one of the most prolific manufacturers of affordable phones, seemingly coming out with a new model every few months, and this latest is its cheapest yet: the Honor 7S, costing just £99.99.

Build and screen

The phone is available in black or blue. It looks and feels well built, reinforced by a solid backplate that doesn't collect mucky fingerprints. Most of the front is taken up by a 5.45in, 18:9 display, with a resolution of 720 x 1,440 pixels. It's not the sharpest screen you'll find, but it's perfectly usable, and although it doesn't deliver a full HD experience, nor do other similarly priced phones – for that, you'll have to pay around £150.

The screen measured a peak brightness of 415cd/m^2 and contrast ratio of 1,407:1. Colours are pleasant and vibrant, and the viewing angles are excellent. Even colour accuracy and sRGB coverage are acceptable, which is as much as you can reasonably expect from a phone this cheap.

The volume rocker and power button sit on the side of the device, with the micro-USB charging port at the bottom. There's a 3.5mm headphone jack at the top and the speaker is embedded into the front of the phone, which projects sound directly towards you.

We like the 3-in-1 tray on the left edge, which allows you to simultaneously install two 4G SIM cards plus a microSD card with a capacity of up to 256GB. The latter is an essential addition, since the phone comes with only 16GB of internal storage.

Inside there's a 1.5GHz quad-core processor but unfortunately, coupled with just 2GB of RAM, it isn't enough to make Android 8.1 Oreo run perfectly smoothly.

Performance

Given the low price of the Honor 7S and its lightweight internal components, we weren't expecting it to fly through tasks or smoothly handle multiple apps simultaneously, but even so, performance is stilted and disappointing. In everyday use, the phone feels a lot less responsive than its competitors, which is our biggest barrier to recommending it.

The single 13-megapixel camera at the back and 5-megapixel camera on the front sound decent, but we found the image quality disappointing, even in good lighting conditions. Try and snap something in low light and photos become blurry and noisy.

The phone's battery life, at least, is good. It lasted 10 hours and 33 minutes in our video rundown test, which is longer than we've seen on any similarly priced rival phone.

> "It's not the sharpest screen you'll find, but it's perfectly usable, although it doesn't deliver a full HD experience"

PRODUCT INFO

Honor 7S

Price: £99.99
Buy from Amazon:
bit.ly/hono454

SPECIFICATIONS

- 5.45in 1,440 x 720 pixels resolution 18:9 ratio display
- 3,020mAh battery
- Dual-SIM and microSD slots
- Android 8.1

FOR

✓ Very low price
✓ Good battery life
✓ 18:9 display

AGAINST

✗ Frustratingly slow
✗ Shocking camera
✗ No fingerprint reader

OUR VERDICT ★★★☆☆

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

The Honor 7S is so cheap that it's tempting to forgive its faults, but they're simply too big to overlook. The sluggish performance is a constant annoyance, and other phones in this price range take vastly superior photos.

If you really need to stick near the £100 mark, your best bet is to spend another £9 and get the Vodafone Smart N9 (bit.ly/voda454) instead. But if you can go a little higher, the Motorola Moto G6 Play (bit.ly/moto454, £159.99) is a much better choice, with snappier performance, a great camera and a battery that lasts five hours longer.

PC Specialist recommends Windows Windows 10

pcspecialist

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HARDWARE

PHOTO PRINTER

Epson Expression Photo HD XP-15000

£251.96 from bit.ly/epsonexp450
Tested: Issue 450

Epson's XP-15000 lacks some of the features of a true all-rounder but it prints photos beautifully, all the way up to size A3+.

KEY SPECS
5,760 x 1,440dpi maximum print resolution ■ 250-sheet input capacity ■ Double-sided printing ■ Colour touchscreen ■ USB, Ethernet, Wi-Fi connectivity ■ 479 x 370 x 159mm ■ 8.5kg ■ Three-years return-to-base warranty

SMART THERMOSTAT

Honeywell Evohome

£199 from bit.ly/honevo449
Tested: Issue 449

The Honeywell Evohome is a powerful multi-zone smart heating product that lets you control all the radiators in your central heating system. This will save on heating bills, but it may take a while before you recoup the cost of the initial outlay.

KEY SPECS
Remote thermostat ■ Battery-powered ■ Hot-water support ■ Individual radiator support ■ Alexa voice-assistant support ■ IFTTT support ■ 13.9 x 2.1 x 10.1cm ■ 898g

LAPTOP

Asus ZenBook UX410

£539.95 from bit.ly/asuszb447
Tested: Issue 447

This laptop, with its compact aluminium body and impressive design, feels built to last. Performance was middling, though it's fine for everyday tasks, and the screen looks fabulous.

KEY SPECS
Dual-core Intel Core i3-7100U processor ■ 4GB memory ■ 128GB storage ■ 14in 1,920 x 1,080-pixels screen ■ USB-C, USB 3, 2 x USB 2 ports ■ 802.11ac Wi-Fi ■ Windows 10 Home ■ 323 x 223 x 19mm ■ 1.4kg ■ 1-year return-to-base warranty

MONITOR

BenQ GL2580HM

£109.99 from bit.ly/benq445
Tested: Issue 445

This BenQ monitor's stylish slim bezel and attractive design are matched by its solid performance and good-quality colour display. However, it's not suited to serious gamers.

KEY SPECS
24.5in screen ■ 1,920 x 1,080-pixel resolution ■ 16:9 aspect ratio ■ 16.7 million colours ■ 50-76Hz refresh rate ■ 1,000:1 native contrast ■ 2ms response time ■ HDMI, DVI and VGA ports ■ Two 1W speakers ■ 42.6 x 55.7 x 17.5cm ■ 4.4kg

PC

Palicomp AMD Gravity RYZ1

£799.99 from www.palicomp.co.uk
Tested: Issue 443

This is the best PC we could find for under £800. It's powerful, well built and well balanced, so long as you're happy to use an overclocked processor.

KEY SPECS
AMD Ryzen 5 1600 processor ■ Asus Prime B350M-A motherboard ■ 8GB DDR4 memory ■ GeForce GTX 1060 graphics card ■ 240GB SSD ■ 1TB hard drive ■ 475 x 468 x 230mm tower case ■ Windows 10 Home 64-bit

SMARTPHONE

Samsung Galaxy S8

£506.99 from bit.ly/sams442
Tested: Issue 442

The Samsung Galaxy S8 is a terrific all-rounder. It's fast, looks wonderful, has a superb camera and boasts one of the best screens we've ever seen on a phone.

KEY SPECS
Octa-core 2.3GHz Exynos 8895 processor ■ 12-megapixel rear camera, 8-megapixel front camera ■ 4GB RAM ■ 64GB storage ■ 5.8in 1,440 x 2,560-pixel screen ■ Android 8 ■ 68.1 x 148.9 x 8mm ■ 155g ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

All prices correct at time of review

SOFTWARE & SERVICES

VIDEO-EDITING SOFTWARE

Adobe Premiere Elements 2018

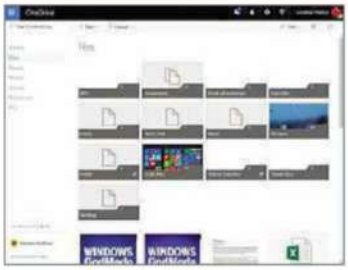
£86.56 from
www.adobe.com/uk
Tested: Issue 453

With its clean interface and sackful of special effects, Elements performs just about every action you'll ever need from a consumer-level video-editing suite. It's a powerful beast and rendering is super-speedy, even when exporting at 4K – but note that it only runs on 64-bit systems.

KEY FEATURES
Automatic editing ■ Image stabiliser ■ Surround-sound support ■ Stop-motion capture ■ Variable-speed control ■ Unlimited timelines ■ DVD disc authoring (no Blu-ray support) ■ 4K support ■ Requires Windows 7/8.1/10 or MacOS (64-bit versions only)

CLOUD-STORAGE SERVICE

Microsoft OneDrive



From free from
onedrive.live.com
Tested: Issue 438

If you use Windows 10 or Microsoft Office, then OneDrive is a no-brainer. It's simple to use and already integrated into your PC. Recent improvements have added some excellent new features though we wish Microsoft would increase its free storage allowance. OneDrive also integrates well with both Android and iOS.

KEY FEATURES
5GB free storage ■ Web-based Office Web Apps including Word and Excel ■ 10GB maximum file size ■ Android, iOS and Windows 10 apps ■ Up to 50GB extra storage for £1.99 per month; Office 365 and 1TB of storage from £5.99 per month ■ Files expire after one year of inactivity

Web User Gold Award winners

TAB MANAGER

OneTab

Free from bit.ly/onet453
Tested: Issue 453
OneTab shrinks all your open tabs to a single page in just one click. It's simple and clean, and lets you customise it to your precise requirements.

PODCAST APP

Castbox

Free from castbox.fm
Tested: Issue 452
Castbox is a smartly designed app for dedicated podcast listeners, offering incredible choice and an excellent search tool.

IMAGE VIEWER

PhotoScape X

Free from bit.ly/psx451
Tested: Issue 451
PhotoScape X does what most image viewers do, only better. It's fast, practical and intuitive, and packed with useful tools.

VIDEO DOWNLOADER

4K Video Downloader

Free from bit.ly/fkvd450
Tested: Issue 450
Simple and effective, 4K Video Downloader supports multiple formats and isn't bundled with any annoying extras.

WINDOWS SEARCH TOOL

Agent Ransack

Free from bit.ly/agent449
Tested: Issue 449
Agent Ransack's extensive search filters, options and simple interface deliver reliable results.

WEB USER
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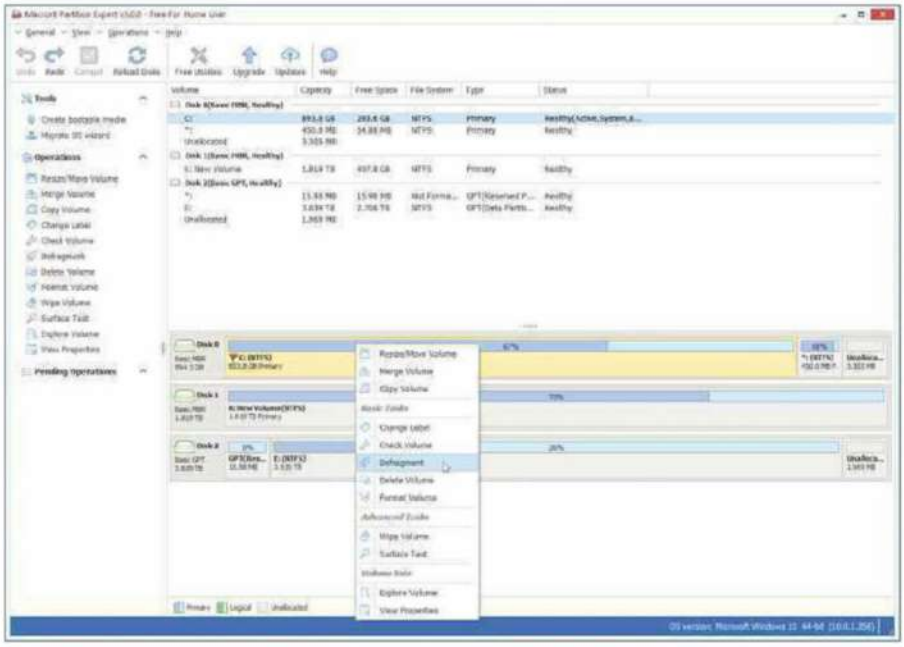
Best Free Software

DISK-PARTITIONING TOOL

Macrorit Partition Expert Free Edition 5

bit.ly/mpart454

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8.1/10 **File size:** 10.1MB



These days, you can pick up a 4TB hard drive for less than £100, which should offer more than enough storage space for most home users. Although there's no need to partition a drive, doing so gives you separate sections for all your storage needs – you can have a partition for your system, one for games and another for photos and so on.

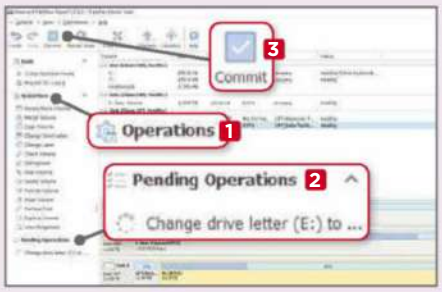
There are plenty of disk-partitioning tools to choose from – Windows even comes with its own – but Macrorit Partition Expert Free is an excellent choice that offers a host of handy extras: it lets you create new NTFS or FAT32 volumes on MBR or GPT drives, and resize, copy, move, format and delete partitions, as well as change their drive letters and labels, and check for errors.

The program is fully portable, so it doesn't require installation, and resizing partitions is simple and quick. If you change your mind while running an operation, you can cancel the process with no loss of data. Additionally, the software can convert an MBR drive to GPT, wipe free or unallocated space and convert primary partitions to logical, and vice versa. It doesn't support dynamic disks nor Apple Bootcamp partitions, however.

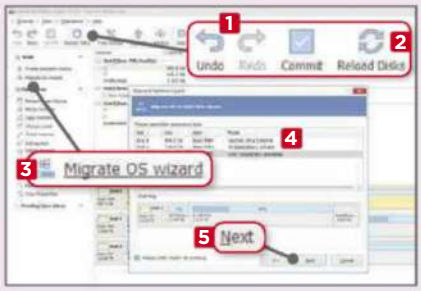
The interface in this version has been given an appealing makeover, and it's now easier to migrate your operating system from one partition or drive to another. A number of bugs have been fixed, too. For more features, such as the ability to create a 32- or 64-bit WinPE bootable disc, upgrade to one of the paid-for editions, starting from £30.

MINI WORKSHOP | Manage your partitions using Macrorit Partition Expert Free

1 Run the software and it will scan your system for any drives in or connected to your system. Information about each drive is displayed, including the volume, capacity, free space, file system, type and status. **1** You can also view the partitions in the section below, **2** which are colour-coded to indicate primary, logical and unallocated partitions. **3**



2 Select a drive or partition on the right-hand side of the interface, and the operations available on the left will update accordingly. **1** Click one and a new window opens, allowing you to perform the required task. Pending operations are shown at the bottom of the panel. **2** Click the Commit button **3** to action the queued task(s).



3 You can undo and redo any changes you make, **1** and reload the disks, **2** which is useful if you connect another USB drive later. The new Migrate OS Wizard **3** lets you copy your operating system from its current location to a new HDD or SSD. Select the required destination drive, **4** then click Next **5** and follow the steps.

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

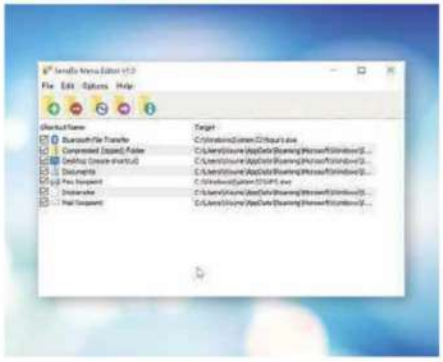
START-MENU TOOL

Classic Start

bit.ly/cstart454

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10 **File size:** 7.1MB

Classic Shell – which reinstated the traditional Start menu in Windows 8.1 and 10, and a toolbar and status bar in Windows Explorer – was retired at the end of 2017, but Classic Start continues where it left off. This fork of the program offers all the same features found in Classic Shell, including the option to customise the Start menu and taskbar, configure Windows' search settings and manage Start-menu controls. Look out for a workshop about Classic Start in the next issue of *Web User*.



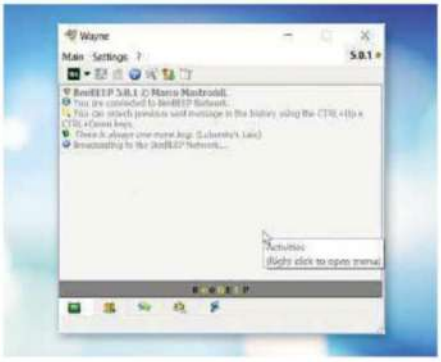
SYSTEM TOOL

SendTo Menu Editor

bit.ly/sendto454

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8.1/10 **File size:** 949KB

The easiest way to send files to a specific location – such as a USB flash drive – is to use Windows' right-click Send To menu. It's not difficult to add new shortcuts to this feature, but this free tool simplifies the process. You can add and remove shortcuts, rename them, and even hide all drives from the menu. The program doesn't require installation and both 32- and 64-bit versions are included in the download.



CHAT TOOL

BeeBEEP 5

bit.ly/bbeep454

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10, MacOS or Linux **File size:** 9.6MB

BeeBEEP is a secure instant-messaging tool that lets you talk and share files with anyone on the same local area network, be it at home or in the office. It works across Windows, Mac and Linux, and Version 5 improves encryption and adds desktop sharing. You can send screenshots from chats and messages to offline users, and create groups. Transferred images can be previewed with a double-click.

New Windows Apps

Screen Shot Tool Pro

bit.ly/screen454

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 21.4MB

Screen Shot Tool Pro lets you capture whatever's on your screen. You can edit screenshots, add text and drawings, share the results and upload grabs to Dropbox, OneDrive and Google Drive.

Uber

bit.ly/uber454

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 190KB

Uber has had an official Windows app since 2014, but it has now turned it into a Progressive Web App (PWA). This is essentially a web page that behaves like a native app and loads more quickly.

Audio Trimmer

bit.ly/atrim454

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 23.75MB

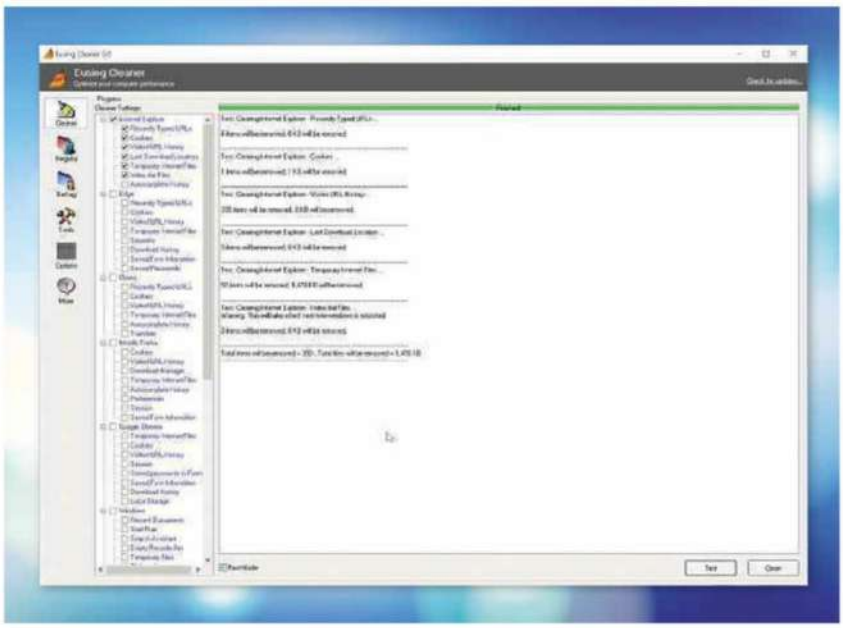
Audio Trimmer is a very simple app that can trim MP3 audio files with the minimum of fuss. Simply load an MP3, use the slider to choose which sections to cut, then click the Trim button.

SYSTEM CLEANER

Eusing Cleaner 5

bit.ly/eusing454

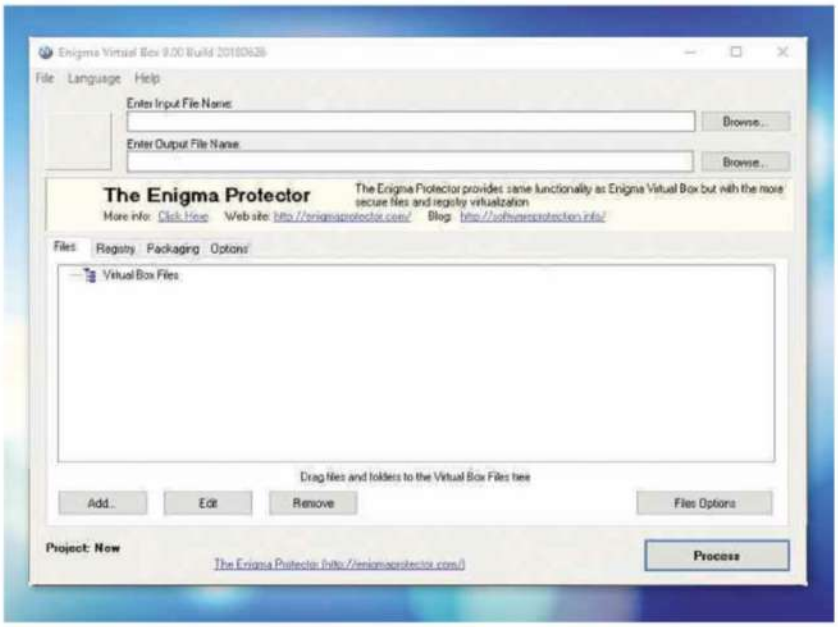
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8.1/10 **File size:** 1.6MB



If your PC is running a little slowly, a tool such as Eusing Cleaner may be able to help liven it up a bit. This free program removes junk files, and repairs and defrags the Registry. It can also manage Windows startup, back up the Registry and also back up Windows itself.

The cleaner lets you choose which areas to target and you can run a scan whenever you like or schedule regular automatic cleans – time intervals range from every 15 minutes to every eight hours, or when Windows starts or shuts down.

The software is also able to remove cookies, and overwrite deleted files to prevent their recovery.



PORTABLE SOFTWARE CREATOR

Enigma Virtual Box 9

bit.ly/enigma454

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8.1/10

File size: 6.9MB

Portable versions of software are handy because they can be carried around and run from a USB memory stick. However, not every program you want to use will be available as a portable app and that's particularly true of a lot of commercial software.

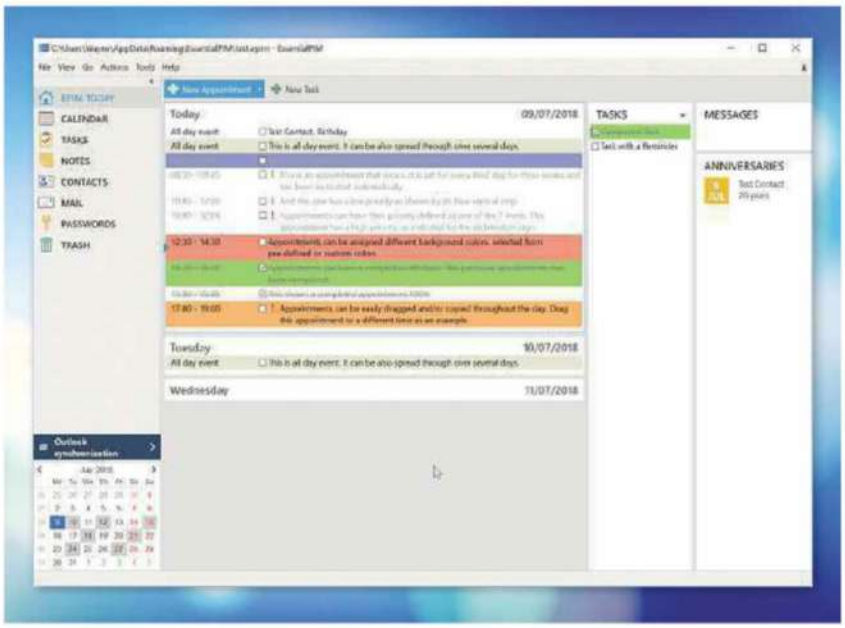
Enigma Virtual Box can package up your existing installed software so it can be run directly from a USB drive. Performance has been enhanced in this latest version, with major improvements regarding file and Registry operations, and it can handle the loading of thousands of virtual files much quicker now. There's also a handy new drag-and-drop feature for input files.

PERSONAL-INFORMATION MANAGER

EssentialPIM Free 8

bit.ly/epim454

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8.1/10 **File size:** 12.6MB



EssentialPIM is a powerful personal-information manager that can help you keep on top of everything, from your contacts and email, to calendars, tasks, notes and passwords. The latest release has its own adaptive anti-spam filter, and lets you add the current date to your printouts. You can now manually reorder events in the Week/Week Agenda/Month/Year view, and the find-and-replace feature has been improved in the Notes section. Meanwhile, password entries now support custom fields.

The free version of EssentialPIM has several limitations compared to the paid-for edition but it should be fine for most users' needs.

GAME

Atic Atac

bit.ly/atic454

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8.1/10
File size: 50.3MB

If you owned a ZX Spectrum back in the 1980s, you'll no doubt be familiar with Atic Atac. The classic arcade-adventure title from Ultimate Play the Game takes place in a haunted castle where your task is to locate the Golden Key of ACG. This faithful remake has been created using the internal machine code from the original game.

Don't install...

Movie Creator: Free Video Editor

bit.ly/creator454

Min requirements: Windows 8.1/10
File size: 72MB

Clearly targeted at people who miss Microsoft's no-longer-supported Windows Movie Maker, this ad-populated horror is available from the Windows Store. It's ugly and counterintuitive, and far from worthy of its user reviews, which have somehow awarded three out of five stars – three more than it deserves.

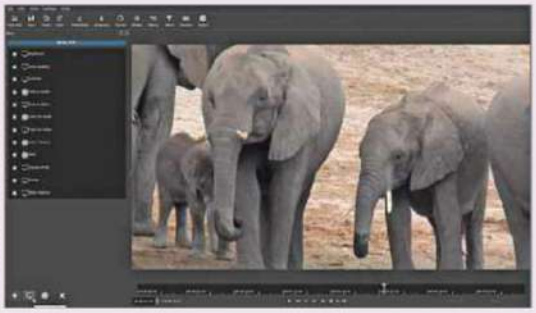
...Install this instead

Shotcut

shotcut.org

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10, MacOS or Linux **File size:** 184MB

Shotcut is an excellent free video editor that works on all desktop operating systems. Its interface feels instantly familiar and is very easy to use, providing all the editing features you could wish for. All the latest media formats are supported, with 4K resolution, and you can import video directly from your webcam. There are plenty of effects, filters and transitions, including Blur, Old Film and Wave, as well as video-compositing and blending modes. Shotcut is simple enough for beginners to master but has plenty of tools for experienced video editors.



UPDATED | New tweaks and fixes for your favourite free programs

ASTRONOMY SOFTWARE

Stellarium 0.18.1

stellarium.org

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8.1/10, MacOS or Linux
File size: 167MB

This new release of the open-source desktop planetarium improves Hierarchical Progressive Surveys [HiPS] support; updates plugins, code, data and GPS handling; and adds rise, transit and set times for celestial objects.

SYSTEM CLEANER

CCleaner 5.44

www.ccleaner.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8.1/10
File size: 15.1MB

The ever-popular Avast-owned system-cleaning tool gets updated on a monthly basis. The latest version improves cleaning for Internet Explorer and Firefox, but less welcome is the addition of a pop-up advert that tries to persuade free users to upgrade to the paid-for Pro edition.

DISC-AUTHORING TOOL

AnyBurn 4.2

www.anyburn.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8.1/10
File size: 1.5MB

This lightweight free tool makes it quick and easy to write files and folders to disc, create or rip audio CDs, generate and write image files, and copy discs. This latest release of the software adds better support for high DPI displays. It also fixes some minor bugs and enhancements.

DISK TOOL

WizTree 3.25

antibody-software.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8.1/10
File size: 3.4MB

WizTree is a speedy disk analyser that checks any drive and shows files and folders as colour-coded blocks so you can identify those that take up the most space. The latest version fixes a problem where the 64-bit build might have crashed when displaying messages on certain PCs.

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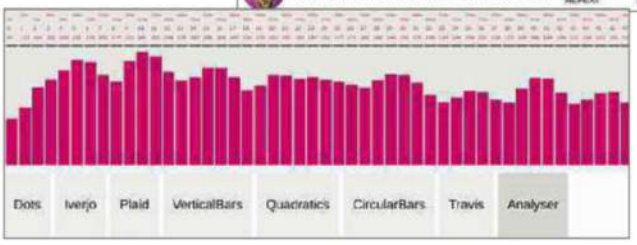
Best New Browser Tools

CHROME

Watch YouTube videos without leaving the page

When you click a thumbnail in your YouTube search results, or a recommendation in its sidebar, the site take you to the relevant page so you can watch the video, which means you need to click back afterwards to keep browsing. That's not exactly difficult, and can be circumvented by right-clicking a thumbnail and opening the video in a new tab, but now there's an even easier way thanks to InstantView for YouTube (bit.ly/instant454). This new Chrome extension plays any video you click in a pop-up overlay, which means you don't lose your current page. Alternatively, you can switch to its movable and resizable miniplayer to keep watching as you browse. InstantView lets you choose between a light and dark theme, offers a fancy 'visualiser' (pictured) for audio-only music videos, and retains YouTube features such as comments and a Repeat button in its overlay.



Rediscover old bookmarks on new tabs

If you're anything like us, your Bookmarks folder will be full of web pages you once saved so you could revisit them later – and then promptly forgot about. A new Chrome extension called WayTab (bit.ly/waytab454) lets you rediscover neglected bookmarks by showing you a random one every time you open a new tab. It doesn't actually open each saved page, but instead provides a link to it, along with the date you bookmarked the page, so you can decide whether or not you want to go back there.

Magnify specific content on web pages

Chrome's built-in zoom function offers an all-or-nothing approach, allowing you to make web content easier to view by magnifying the entire page. For a more selective magnification tool, look no further than Lenz (bit.ly/lenz454), which adds a handy magnifying glass to your browser. Move this around a web page to zoom the content directly below it. You can specify your preferred glass size and power in the add-on's control panel and choose whether or not to distort magnified text. Select the Wander option to have the glass float around your screen like a bubble.

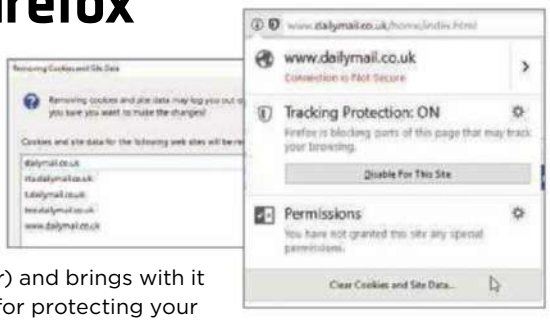
Filter phobia-inducing photos from the web

If you suffer from arachnophobia (fear of spiders) or ophidiophobia (fear of snakes), the last thing you want when browsing the web is to stumble across a photo of your *bête noire*. Fortunately, you can prevent any unwanted phobic reactions by installing a new Chrome extension called Phobia Deflector (bit.ly/phobia454), which uses artificial intelligence to detect and automatically block pictures of spiders and/or snakes. It's very easy to use – just select your phobia(s) and the add-on will remove all related images from pages, so you can browse the web untroubled by any eight-legged and no-legged creatures.

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

FIREFOX

Try the new privacy tools in Firefox

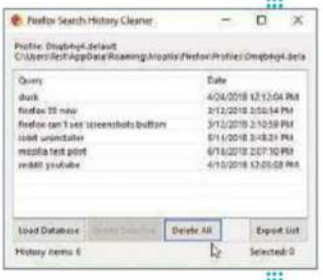


Firefox 61 has only just been released – see our Masterclass on page 64 for the lowdown – but version 62 is already imminent (due for release on 5 September) and brings with it some useful new tools for protecting your privacy. These include an option to clear the data and cookies stored by a particular site in a couple of clicks, rather than going through the hassle of installing an add-on or delving into the browser's privacy settings. Just click the shield icon in your address bar and select 'Clear Cookies and Site Data' at the bottom of the panel, then click OK to delete all data stored for the websites listed – note that this may also log you out of those sites. In the same address-bar panel, there's another handy new option that lets you switch tracking protection on or off with a single click, to stop sites following you around the web.

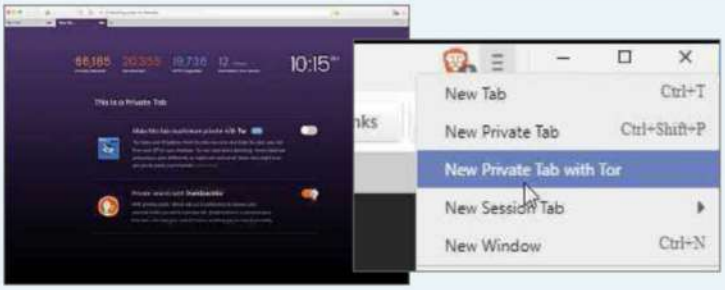
You can try these forthcoming features right now by downloading the Firefox 62 beta from bit.ly/ffbeta454.

Delete your search history in Firefox

Firefox's Clear Recent History box – which you can access either by going to Tools, Options, Privacy & Security, Clear History or by pressing Ctrl+Shift+Delete – has the annoying quirk of bundling your form and search history into a single option. This means that you can't clear details of your searches without also deleting auto-fill form data, which you might prefer to save. Help is at hand from a new free tool called Firefox Search History Cleaner (bit.ly/search454), which lets you clear your searches without touching your form data – either the whole lot or specific queries. It also lets you export your search history as a text file.



OTHER BROWSERS



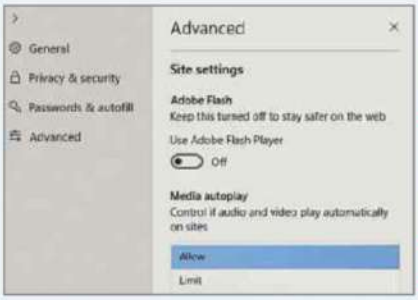
Boost your privacy by opening tabs in Tor

All major browsers now offer a privacy mode that prevents details of the sites you visit from being stored on your computer, but such modes don't conceal your activities from your ISP, employer or cybercriminals. So bravo to Brave browser (www.brave.com), which has introduced an innovative new feature that lets you open private tabs using the anonymity network Tor. To use this option, simply click the menu button in the top-right corner and choose 'New Private Tab with Tor' or right-click a link and select 'Open Link in New Private Tab with Tor'.

Tor significantly boosts your privacy by masking your IP address and preventing anyone from tracking which sites you visit. When you open a tab in Tor, Brave automatically switches to DuckDuckGo as its default search engine, though you can choose from one of its other 19 search providers if you prefer. It's also possible to have Tor tabs open alongside regular ones and those in 'standard' private mode. In return for this new option, Brave is contributing back to the Tor network by running its own relays and adding bandwidth to ensure users can keep browsing smoothly in private mode.

Edge adds the option to block autoplay

Unlike Chrome and Firefox, Edge has so far failed to address the growing nuisance of autoplaying videos on the web. Although it lets you stop Flash content playing automatically (go to Settings, 'View advanced settings' and turn off Adobe Flash Player), most videos are in HTML5 format so they still slip through. Fortunately, Microsoft is fixing this annoying problem in a forthcoming Windows 10 update, which will be released in September or October and is already available to Windows Insiders. This lets you easily block autoplay content in Edge: click the three-dot menu button and choose Settings, Advanced, then find the option Media Autoplay and set it to Limit or Block.



Best Free Apps

Apps of the Fortnight

TOOLS

NEW

Notes by Firefox
Firefox Lockbox

bit.ly/notes454
bit.ly/lockbox454
(varies) 10.3

We're bending our own rules this issue in honour of the fact that Firefox has released not just one but two new experimental apps under its Test Pilot scheme. Regular Firefox users may already be aware of Mozilla's Test Pilot releases for its desktop browser, but Notes by Firefox for Android and Firefox Lockbox for iOS represent the developer's first experiments for mobile devices.

Notes by Firefox, as the name suggests, is a note-taking app for making to-do lists, taking memos and so on. It's a relatively straightforward tool, with none of the extras that you'll find in Evernote and OneNote, but it's advantage is that it automatically syncs all your notes with your Firefox browser, so you can pick them up on your desktop or while you're out and about, just by signing in with your Firefox account. We demonstrate how to set it up and use it in our Mini Workshop (right). It also provides end-to-end encryption and lets you dictate notes.

Currently, Notes by Firefox is only available for Android devices. On iPhones and iPads, however, users get exclusive access to Mozilla's other new tool – Firefox Lockbox – a password manager aimed at existing Firefox users who have already saved credentials to their desktop browser. Lockbox lets you sign into websites and apps on your mobile, and syncs your saved usernames and passwords using secure 256-bit encryption. You can search or sort your password list by name or recently used, and it works with other browsers on your iOS device – including Safari – and supports Touch ID and Face ID on compatible models. Both these experimental apps are technically in beta, so be prepared for occasional quirks.

Our rating ★★★★★

MINI WORKSHOP

Set up and sync Notes by Firefox

1 You'll need the latest desktop version of Firefox to use any of its Test Pilot tools, so make sure your browser's up to date, or download and install the current version from mozilla.org/firefox. You'll also need a Firefox account so, if you don't yet have one, head to bit.ly/firefox454 to set it up. Now go to testpilot.firefox.com and click Get Started under Notes. Click 'Install Test Pilot & Enable Notes', 1 then click Add. 2

2 On your PC, Notes appears as a sidebar in your desktop browser. 1 You can click the Sidebar icon in the top toolbar 2 to toggle Notes on and off, or use the Alt+Shift+W keyboard shortcut. To enable syncing with the mobile app, click 'Sign in to Sync' 3 and enter your Firefox account details. Now open Notes by Firefox on your Android device and sign in there, too.

3 To open a note you created on your PC, just tap it in the list of notes. 1 To create a new note, tap the plus button in the Android app 2 or click '+ New Note' in the desktop-browser sidebar. Notes are synced automatically in the background, but you can force a sync by tapping the three-line menu button, 3 then pressing the sync icon at the bottom.

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

TOOLS NEW

Driving Detective

bit.ly/driving454

4.1

Most modern phones have a Do Not Disturb function to stop you fiddling with your mobile while driving, but it's easy to forget to switch this on when you hop behind the wheel. Driving Detective automatically senses when you're in a moving vehicle and toggles Do Not Disturb on for you, switching it off again when your journey's over.

Our rating ★★★★☆

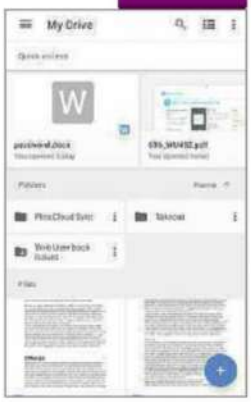
STORAGE UPDATED

Google Drive

bit.ly/drivedroid454
bit.ly/driveios454

(varies)

9



The web version of Google Drive recently received a bit of a facelift, adding elements of Google's Material Design. The latest update to the mobile app isn't as drastic, but it does add one very handy new feature for users of Microsoft Office – the ability to view and open password-protected Office files. This brings the mobile app more in line with the web-based version, which has had this ability for a while now. The new update also adds bug fixes and performance improvements.

Our rating ★★★★☆

GAME NEW

PUBG Mobile beta

bit.ly/pubg454

(varies)

The PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds (PUBG) mobile app is constantly being updated – the most recent version introduced a first-person view and season passes. But if you like to have access to the latest features before everyone else, you should download the dedicated beta version of the app, which has just been released by the developer, where players can field-test new gameplay modes, weapons and more before they're released into the wild. The beta is currently only available for Android.

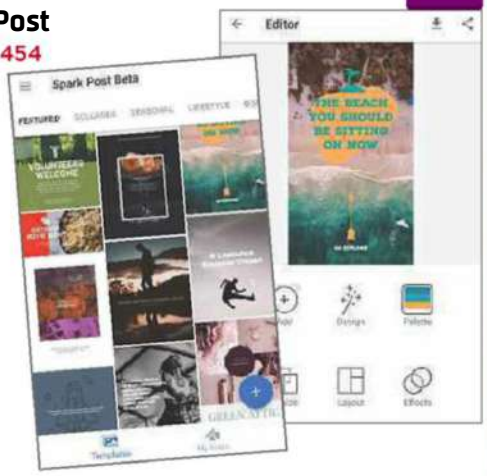
Our rating ★★★★☆

DESIGN TOOL NEW

Adobe Spark Post

bit.ly/sparkdroid454
bit.ly/sparkios454

5 10



You don't have to be a professional graphic designer to give flow to your creative juices and produce eye-catching results, whether you're making a party invitation, compiling a photo collage or enhancing a social-media post. Brand new for Android and recently updated for iOS, Adobe's Spark Post is designed to make it easy to produce great looking graphics in just a few taps. It provides an enormous library of templates for you to customise as you see fit – simply browse to select a design, then tap Remix to open the editing tools and let your creativity run riot.

Our rating ★★★★★

RADIO NEW

BBC Sounds

bit.ly/soundsdroid454
bit.ly/soundsios454

5 11

The BBC's on-demand radio content is already available via its iPlayer Radio app and, of course, you can subscribe to or stream the corporation's many podcasts via your preferred third-party podcast app. BBC Sounds is a new app that aims to bring all the Beeb's live and on-demand radio, music and podcasts together into a single personalised experience. It's designed to learn from your listening habits, giving you instant access to your favourites and making recommendations based on your preferences. It's early days for this app and several key features – such as offline listening – are currently missing, but it's certainly a promising start.

Our rating ★★★★☆

5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

CAMERA

Moment

bit.ly/momentdroid454
bit.ly/momentios454
Price: £1.79 (Android), free (iOS)
7 10

New to Android, this pro camera app has been available for iOS for a while. It offers full manual control, RAW support, live histogram, precise focus control and more.

TOOLS

Identify Dog Breeds Pro

bit.ly/dogbreed454
Price: 89p
5

Don't know your Shih Tzu from your Cockerpoo? Just point your device's camera at the mystery mutt, and this app will identify the correct breed for you. Most of the time.

MUSIC

Drums

bit.ly/drums454
Price: from £6.99
4.4

Want to learn to the drums? Now you can practise without annoying your neighbours using this great app. The basic drumkit is free, but you can pay to unlock more drums and songs.

GAME

Spitkiss

bit.ly/spitkiss454
Price: £1.29
(varies)

This disgusting-but-cute puzzle game is currently in beta on Android and due for full release soon (on iOS, too). Gameplay involves flinging your character – a little black blob of spit – from one alien lover to another, over 80 trippy levels.

ENTERTAINMENT

Detect-O-Gromit (D.O.G 2)

bit.ly/gromitdroid454
bit.ly/gromitios454
Price: £1.99 (Android and iOS)
5 8

Don't visit Bristol this summer without this app, which will help you track down and log all 67 of the giant Aardman sculptures scattered around the city on the Gromit Unleashed 2 trail.

Moment | Identify Dog Breeds Pro | Drums | Spitkiss | Detect-O-Gromit (D.O.G 2)

✗ Don't install...

Around Me Places Tracker

bit.ly/aroundme454

We often warn against installing apps that don't work properly or are so stuffed full of ads, they're impossible to use. Around Me Places Tracker manages to be guilty of both. It's supposed to point you in the direction of your nearest restaurants, banks, doctors and so on, but instead provides a random list of locations that you can't sort by distance – that's assuming you've even made it past the barrage of ridiculously aggressive advertising.

...Install this instead ✓

World Around Me

bit.ly/wamdroid454
bit.ly/wamios454
4.4 9

A much more successful and up-to-date take on the same sort of idea, World Around Me (WAM to its friends) lets you search for nearby venues – such as bars, banks, cinemas, petrol stations and so on – by category or by keyword. It also flags up where Wi-Fi is available, lets you read user reviews and provides useful information about venues, including opening hours, contact details and more. Brilliantly, it works by using augmented reality – just select your category, then point your camera in the direction of the dots on the map to see any relevant venues nearby.

Take a Screen Break

Give your eyes a rest from your browser by taking our fiendish fortnightly challenges. Can you guess our Eighties-song emoji and our web year?

WIN A WEB USER 2017 BACK ISSUES DISC!
Email your answers to webuser@dennis.co.uk – one correct entry will win a disc

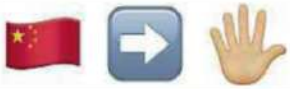
CAN YOU GUESS THE EIGHTIES SONGS FROM THE EMOJI?

1

2

3

4

5 

6

GUESS THE TECHNOLOGY YEAR

Can you work out which year the following tech news stories occurred in? No cheating!

1 The first Apple iPad goes on sale in the UK. It features iOS 3.2, a 1GHz processor, a 9.7in touchscreen and up to 64GB of storage.

2 A Coventry woman becomes an internet viral sensation when she is captured on camera trapping a cat called Lola in a wheelie bin.

3 Steve Jobs writes his famous memo 'Thoughts on Flash', in which he criticises Adobe's plugin for failing to adjust to the mobile era.

4 The UK's best-selling internet mag celebrates the release of Firefox 4 by providing a complete guide to Mozilla's exciting new browser.

5 Microsoft launches the Kinect, a revolutionary motion-sensing device for its Xbox 360 games console. It quickly sells out in UK stores.

COMPETITIONS

WIN 1 OF 4
KitSound Exert Sports Headphones

WORTH £39.99 EACH

KitSound's Exert Sports Headphones have been designed to stay in place during the heaviest workouts. They are resistant to sweat and light rain, and the detachable ear cups are easy to remove when they need a wash. To enter, email webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'exert' in the subject line. For more information, visit www.kitsound.co.uk and follow @KitSoundUK on Twitter.

WIN...
Painter 2019

WORTH £359.99

The new version of Corel's Painter 2019 is faster and has a more modern design, including a dark theme and 650 new icons that are easier on the eye. It also has 36 new brushes and five new patterns. To enter, email webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'painter' in the subject line. For more information, visit www.painterartist.com and follow @CorelPainter on Twitter.

FAQ

Everything you need to know about the most interesting new technology trends and events

MacOS Mojave

Could the latest version of Apple's desktop operating system tempt you away from your Windows PC? **David Crookes** takes a sneak peek

What is Mojave?

Mojave is Apple's latest operating system for its Mac computers, which is promised to be a "huge leap forward" over previous versions. Announced at Apple's Worldwide Developer Conference (WWDC) in June, it's set to replace MacOS High Sierra and will be an important release for the company. After all, it's the main rival to Microsoft's Windows 10 operating system, which Apple is keen to better.

Doesn't the name sound familiar?

Wow, you've got a good memory. Yes, Microsoft actually used the name Mojave Experiment in an advertising campaign 11 years ago when it sought to head off the backlash over Vista. It asked people to try a new Windows version called Mojave, only to reveal it was Vista after all – the point being that people had become blinded by negative media coverage. In this case, however, Mojave follows the trend, started in 2013, of naming Mac operating systems after Californian landmarks. Although Mojave is officially MacOS 10.14 and the 15th release since the Mac operating system was introduced in 2001, it is also a desert in America's most populous state.

Microsoft used the name Mojave to prove that Vista wasn't completely rubbish

Great. So what's new?

Quite a lot actually, since the new OS heralds both the end of an era and the beginning of a new one. For starters, this will be the final version of MacOS to officially support 32-bit apps because Apple has long wanted developers to create 64-bit apps that access more memory and run more quickly (bit.ly/macos454). At the same time, it is bringing iOS apps to the desktop, giving the Mac App Store a welcome spring clean and introducing a new Dark Mode.

Which iOS apps are coming to MacOS?

Apple is releasing News, Stocks, Voice Memos and Home apps for MacOS and they closely resemble their iOS equivalents, letting you read the latest articles from leading publications, keep a watchful eye on the markets, create personal notes that are accessible across your Apple devices and control Homekit-enabled accessories such as thermostats and lights. Apple will also start to make cross-platform porting available to third-party developers at some point next year, which should make a big difference to the number of available Mac apps.

The Home app in Mojave lets you control all your smart devices in one place

What's happening with the Mac App Store?

Apple remains keen for developers to use the Mac App Store so it can profit from sales while ensuring downloads are safely

Get loads of great tools from the Mac App Store including Microsoft Office 365

vetted for viruses. For that reason, the store has been fully redesigned in much the same way as the iOS App Store has, with increased emphasis on helping users find apps that fit their purpose. There will also be some new additions: Microsoft is going to sell Office on the Mac App Store while Adobe will make Lightroom CC available.

What's this Dark Mode, then?

Dark Mode is a much-vaunted new feature that uses darker colours and themes within Apple apps as well as in the menu bar, other user-interface elements and the dock (the list of icons that run across the bottom of the screen). Enabled via System Preferences under the General tab, it looks rather striking. The idea is that it accentuates the content you're viewing by allowing the controls to recede into the background – the Trash bin becomes dark, for example, while the wallpaper adjusts by allowing the desert to become lit by moonlight.

You'll also be able to toggle Dark Mode automatically depending on the time of day, reducing eye strain for night-time computer use. Expect third-party developers to follow suit by allowing their apps to be used in this mode, too.

The new Dark Mode in Mojave reduces eye strain and looks rather nice, too

Best to keep the desktop clean, then?

Yes, if you want a good view of that dynamic wallpaper. Thankfully, keeping the desktop uncluttered will be easier than ever with another new feature called Stacks, which piles similar items together. This should make it easier to find particular file types and, since you can also sort them by date and tags, should be useful in all kinds of ways.

Is browsing being enhanced, too?

It is indeed. Under the hood there are some new security measures that prevent your online activity from being tracked. These include blocking social-media Like and Share buttons and only allowing sites to see simplified information about the Mac you're using. Security also goes beyond that by automatically generating strong passwords when you create a new account online. It will flag any password it spots that you've used more than once, giving you a gentle prod to alter it.

Safari will also be enhanced by favicons (small icons that represent websites) on the browser's tabs to make it easier to switch between pages.

Sounds good. Who can I tell?

Your friends and family, especially if you use FaceTime. Mojave is introducing Group FaceTime which allows up to 32 people to converse at once. People can jump in after a conversation has got underway, and there are options for both video and audio. Since group chat works across iOS devices, Apple Watch and the Mac, it puts FaceTime in a strong position against rivals such as Skype and Facebook Messenger.

Mojave's Group FaceTime feature lets you talk to lots of people at once

Is Mojave better than Windows?

That depends. It's not easy to choose one operating system over the other because they both have distinct advantages and disadvantages. Mojave feels more polished and intuitive, and its built-in software is slick and accomplished. But if you're a gamer or someone who wants wide compatibility, then Windows wins hands down.

You also have to factor in the need to own a Mac to run Mojave, and these computers don't come cheap. That said, many people who try a Mac stay loyal and never go back to Windows.

So when can I get Mojave?

Mojave is set to be released in the Autumn but you can check out the public beta now (see below). To use Mojave, you must have a MacBook dated 2015 or newer, a mid-2012 or newer version of the MacBook Air or MacBook Pro, a late 2012 or newer model of the Mac Mini or iMac, or a 2017 iMac Pro. You can also use Mojave with late 2013 Mac Pros.

Don't try installing it on a PC, though, because it won't work.

TRY MOJAVE BEFORE EVERYONE ELSE

The beta version of Mojave is available to download now. Here is how you can install it. Make sure you back up your Mac using Time Machine before installing the new OS

1 Sign up to the beta program

Go to the Apple Beta Software Program website (bit.ly/beta454) and click the Sign Up button. Enter your Apple ID and password and agree to the terms.

2 Enrol your Mac

Select Enroll Your Devices at the top of the screen. Ensure the MacOS tab is highlighted, then scroll down and click 'Download the MacOS Public Beta Access Utility'.

3 Select MacOS public beta

Open the downloaded file and double-click MacOS PublicBetaAccessUtility.pkg. Once it has completed, the Mac App Store should open. Click Download.

4 Install Mojave

Your Mac will restart, then launch the installer. Click Continue, agree to the terms and select the drive to install the beta to. Click Install, then OK and restart your Mac.

Your Best Wi-Fi EVER!

COVER FEATURE

Don't put up with slow, weak and unreliable internet. **Jane Hoskyn** provides an eight-step guide to boosting your home Wi-Fi, with advice that actually works

Fifteen-odd years ago we were still dialling up the internet via a spaghetti junction of cables to a soundtrack resembling a donkey caught in a storm of bleeps and static. Nowadays, we have superfast wireless broadband, 24 hours a day, with no more cables and no more donkeys. We're in Wi-Fi heaven. Or are we?

Your Wi-Fi is a shadow of its potential self. It's slower than your ISP promised, with weak spots and patchy signals. The web is littered with tips for boosting it, from the blindingly obvious (move your router from behind that massive concrete post) to the downright daft (make a parabolic reflector out of tin foil). Many tips are useless and even the one that usually works – turning your router off and on again – is only a short-term measure.

In this feature, we've filtered out the gimmicks to focus on practical tips that produce results. First, we explain how to test your Wi-Fi's speed and range, and find out what's holding them back; then we reveal how to achieve the speeds you're paying for – and beyond.

Read on to discover eight essential strategies for getting the best possible Wi-Fi speed, strength and stability in every corner of your home.

1 MEASURE YOUR WI-FI SPEED

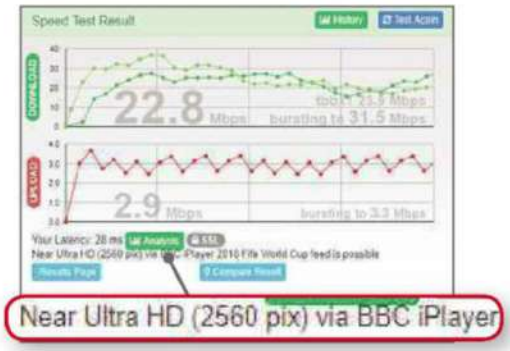
Test your broadband speed

If your Wi-Fi is slow, it doesn't necessarily follow that your broadband is slow. So before you go switching ISPs, take Wi-Fi out of the equation and measure your wired broadband.

Plug your computer into your router via an Ethernet cable, then run Ookla's free online tool Speedtest (www.speedtest.net), which measures the speed of data travelling between your computer and a nearby internet server. After a minute or so, it reveals your current download and upload speeds in Mbps (megabits per second, or 'megs'). Create a free account to save your results so you can spot patterns over different times, devices and locations. For example, you'll notice a speed dip in the evening as people flock online after work.

Get an accurate measure of your broadband speeds with Speedtest

Comparison site Thinkbroadband (bit.ly/tbspeed454) is good for a second-opinion speed test. It also estimates the fastest speed available to you ('burst' speed), and provides an example of what your speed can deliver, such as 'Near Ultra HD (2560 pix) via BBC iPlayer 2018 Fifa World Cup feed is possible'. That pleasant surprise almost made us forgive Thinkbroadband for wanting our postcode and ISP details.



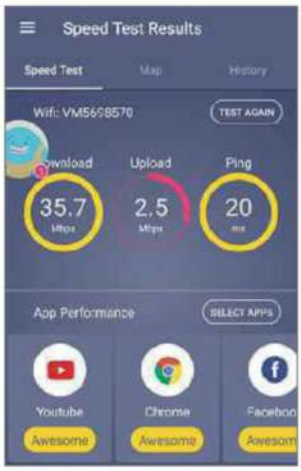
Thinkbroadband shows you top speeds and what you can use them for

Test your Wi-Fi speed

Now switch to Wi-Fi and run the tests again to see how well your speeds stand up. If there's very little difference between your wired and wireless speed results, then your Wi-Fi is doing its job properly. If there's a big difference, there's work to be done.

To measure your Wi-Fi speed on other devices and in other rooms, use the free Android app Meteor (bit.ly/meteor454). It automatically logs your results on a timeline and map so you can trace patterns, and lets you compare Wi-Fi speed with mobile internet (3G and 4G).

Meteor is Android-only, unlike Speedtest's own free app (Android and iOS, www.speedtest.net/apps), but you're unlikely to get accurate test results on iOS anyway, because Apple blocks access to data stored on iPhones and iPads.



Use the Meteor app to test your Wi-Fi speed and app performance

WHY IS YOUR UPLOAD SPEED SO LOW?

The law is pretty relaxed about the speeds your ISP can promise you. So relaxed that it's practically snoring. Until two months ago, providers could advertise any speeds so long as they were available to a mere 10% of their customers. Since 23 May, speeds must be "available to at least 50%... at peak time" (Advertising Standards Authority, bit.ly/speedasa454).

That's a step forward, but the rules still only apply to download speeds. As you'll see from your test results using the tools on this page, upload speeds are much slower, especially on Wi-Fi. That's why streaming video works fine, but uploading a video to Facebook seems to take all afternoon.

Our tips will help you optimise the speeds available to you, but the only people who can increase these available speeds are ISPs and government ministers. There's no technical reason why upload speeds are slower – ISPs could easily offer 'symmetrical' speeds, as they did when it was 56K each way, but they choose not to – probably to discourage file-sharing and limit bandwidth usage. That's understandable, but it's also unfair to honest customers who end up paying through the nose for high-speed Wi-Fi.

2 ANALYSE YOUR WI-FI RANGE

Discover your Wi-Fi sweet spots

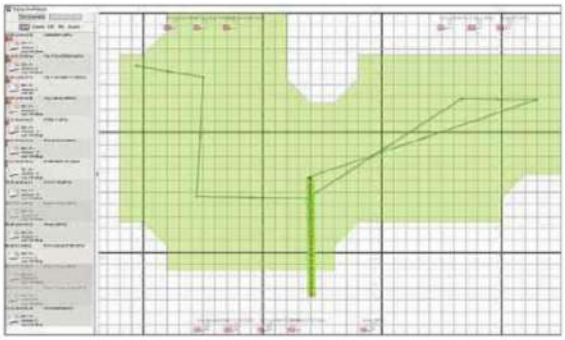
The free Android app WiFi Signal Strength Meter (bit.ly/wifimeter454) uses a clever real-time display to show how weak or strong your Wi-Fi signal is as you walk from room to room. You'll get your highest readings next to your router and your lowest in your garden, as you might expect, but you'll also find less obvious results: a dead zone behind a particularly well-built wall, for example, or a strong patch in the room above your router. Position your device in a sweet spot for an easy Wi-Fi boost.

Use WiFi Signal Strength Meter to sniff out the best spots for going online – it also tells you your router's IP address

The free app opens with an annoying full-screen ad, but it quickly disappears without you needing to tap anything.

Map your Wi-Fi coverage

Create a useful (and easy to understand) map of your home's Wi-Fi dead zones and sweet spots using the free PC program Ekahau HeatMapper (bit.ly/heatmapper454). Install it on your laptop, then walk around your house clicking the program window as you go. Your Wi-Fi signal is measured with each click, so by the end of your tour you'll have a colour-coded map that shows where Wi-Fi coverage is strongest (green), where it's weakest (red), and where it's in between (yellow and orange). You can even import a floorplan of your house and build the heatmap on top of it.



Use Ekahau HeatMapper with a laptop to create a colour-coded map of your home's Wi-Fi

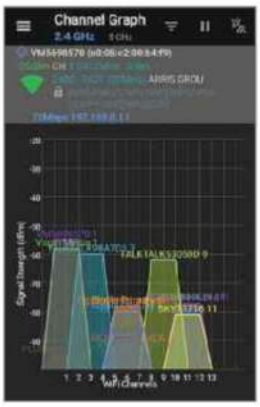
The main flaw with HeatMapper is that it records signals from all the networks it detects, including those you can't connect to. So if you're in a built-up area, your map may include too much green to accurately represent your own router's coverage.

4 HACK YOUR ROUTER SETTINGS

Switch to a less crowded Wi-Fi channel

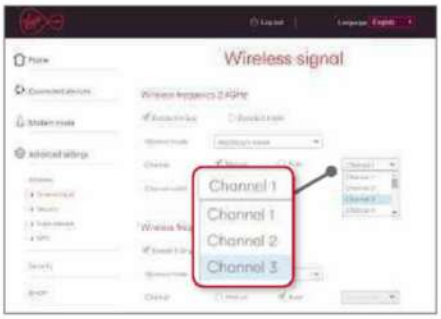
Like radio waves, your wireless signal travels via a frequency band and channel, which don't respond well to overcrowding. If your neighbours' routers are using the same band and channel as yours, your Wi-Fi will get slow and patchy.

To find out which channel you're on – and switch to a less congested alternative – use the free Android app WiFiAnalyzer (bit.ly/wifian454), which detects all nearby networks and displays them on a graph to show how strong their signals are and which channels they're using. You can also see a star rating for different available channels. Tap Export to send the details to your PC via email.



Find a less busy channel with WiFiAnalyzer

You can't use WiFiAnalyzer (or any app) to change channels, though. For that, you have to go via your router settings. The process differs with each manufacturer, but in most cases you type your router's IP address (which you'll find in most of the apps we've mentioned) into your browser's address bar, then enter your router-settings password. This isn't the same as your Wi-Fi key – look it up at www.routerpasswords.com if you've never changed it. Most new routers are set to choose a channel automatically, but you can override this by clicking Manual, then choosing a channel from a drop-down menu (see screenshot, above).



Change channel and switch frequency bands via your router settings

Channels 1, 6 and 11 on the 2.4GHz band are commonly said to be the least congested, because they're the furthest apart. But it ain't necessarily so. Channel 6 is a popular choice in our crowded little neighbourhood, as you can see from our WiFi Analyzer screenshot, left. Channel 3 is less busy, and its users are enjoying stronger signals. The measurements may be entirely different where you live.

Switch to a faster Wi-Fi band

All routers and channels used to be on the 2.4GHz band, but 5GHz came along a couple of years ago to give it a run for its speed. Newer dual-band routers let you choose either, and tend to switch to 5GHz automatically because it's faster. But the older 2.4GHz band uses longer wavelengths that are better at penetrating walls, ceilings and other obstacles (including you), so it gives you better Wi-Fi range.

WiFiAnalyzer also reveals all nearby routers using a particular band

Congestion comes into play again, too. If everyone on your street is using 5GHz, then your Wi-Fi will be faster on 2.4GHz. WiFiAnalyzer can reveal which bands your neighbours are using. Tap the triangle icon, then 2.4GHz or 5GHz, and Apply to see how nearby networks are using that band. You can then switch bands via your router settings.

3 FIND OUT WHAT'S BLOCKING YOUR WI-FI

Spot bandwidth hogs

Bandwidth is like a motorway – the more people and devices try to cram on to it, the slower they all go. The free version of GlassWire (www.glasswire.com) displays a real-time graph of all the software and processes currently fighting it out for a share of your bandwidth, alerting you when anything goes over a certain data-usage limit.

GlassWire's free app Data Usage Monitor (bit.ly/glassdroid454) does much the same for your Android apps. It now has a real-time Speed Meter tool that sits in your notifications bar revealing your data usage, so you can easily spot bandwidth hogs. You can also set it to sound an alert every time an app accesses your network and begins using Wi-Fi or mobile data.

See which processes are hogging bandwidth and slowing your Wi-Fi

Expose network intruders

The portable free NirSoft program Wireless Network Watcher (www.nirsoft.net) displays a list of all devices currently connected to your network. It's a handy tool for spotting bandwidth-hogging hardware in your own home, such as smart TVs and games consoles, and for unmasking Wi-Fi thieves who are leeching off your network – piggybacking neighbours, for example.

If you suspect you have an uninvited Wi-Fi guest, leave Wireless Network Watcher running and enable its Beep On New Device option to get an alert whenever a new device connects.

Catch Wi-Fi intruders by setting Wireless Network Watcher to Beep On New Device

GlassWire offers a similar intruder-spotting function, but only if you upgrade for $39.99 (£30).

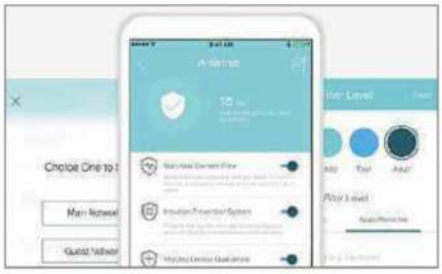
More troubling still is DNS hijacking, where hackers take control of your router settings. F-Secure's free online Router Checker (bit.ly/fsecure454) checks for suspicious DNS activity with one click, while Bitdefender's free Home Scanner tool (bit.ly/homescan454) helps you find and fix weak passwords and connections.

5 UPGRADE YOUR ROUTER

Replace your ISP router

Regularly rebooting your ISP's default router is about as effective a long-term Wi-Fi strategy as regularly jump-starting a cheap old car. It'll get you moving, but if you're serious about power, you'll need a better model.

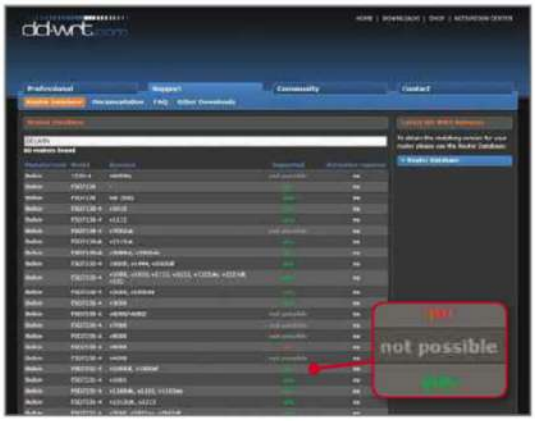
Not all ISP routers are bad. For example, the latest Hub 3 from Virgin Media and new Smart Hub from BT beam your Wi-Fi far and fast. But they're only offered free to new customers on certain contracts, and they can't match third-party routers for flexibility and extra features. Our current Best Buy, the £200 TP-Link Deco M5 (bit.ly/tplink454), comes with built-in antivirus and parental controls; Amazon Alexa/Echo and IFTTT support; its own app; and dedicated mesh support (see opposite). Other features to look for include built-in file sharing, VPNs, printer sharing, multiple ports (USB and Ethernet) and advanced encryption (ideally WPA2-AES).



TP-Link's Deco M5 router comes with its own app and antivirus protection

Double your bandwidth with simultaneous dual-band

If your router is dual-band, it can access 2.4GHz and 5GHz at the same time, which means you'll get double the bandwidth, more than double the channels and will be able to browse the internet on the 2.4GHz band and stream 4K films on the 5GHz band, without either one slowing down the other. If you live in a device-heavy house, you should consider a tri-band router, such as the £175 Netgear R8000 Nighthawk (bit.ly/netgear454), which gives you one 2.4GHz band and two 5GHz.



Discover if a router supports DD-WRT firmware – and get much more info besides – at dd-wrt.com

Soup up your router using DD-WRT firmware

Keeping your router's firmware up to date via its settings is an important part of Wi-Fi maintenance, and the best firmware update you can give your router – if it supports it – is DD-WRT. DD-WRT is open-source firmware that brings support for additional features. For example you can add QoS (Quality of Service) settings, advanced encryption and create secure VPNs using OpenVPN.

To find out if a router can run DD-WRT, and for download details, see the Router Database at dd-wrt.com – it's a great source of information about routers of all makes.

6 BOOST YOUR WI-FI DEVICES

Upgrade your devices to 802.11ac

Today's routers use the latest industry standard, 802.11ac (Wireless AC). Wireless AC came along in 2013 to replace the slower 802.11n, which replaced the even slower 802.11g in 2009. If your router isn't 802.11ac, it's time to get a new router.

Prioritise bandwidth-heavy devices and tasks to avoid interference

Upgrade your old laptop to the latest Wi-Fi standard with a £20 USB dongle

You'll get amazing Wi-Fi if *all* your wireless devices use 802.11ac, but don't go around replacing everything you own. Instead, spend £20 on an 802.11ac USB adapter (like this Netgrear One: bit.ly/adapt454) to effectively upgrade your 802.11n games console and 802.11g notebook – and add dual-band support to boot.

Prioritise data-heavy devices

If your router offers a QoS (Quality of Service) option – or if you've added it using DD-WRT firmware – then use it to divvy up your bandwidth more effectively between multiple wireless devices. Set QoS to prioritise devices and tasks that need a lot of bandwidth, while relegating those that don't. If, for example, you prioritise your streaming TV and relegate your smartphone, you can then watch live 4K sport while your phone chugs away updating apps – without interfering with your viewing.

7 EXTEND YOUR WI-FI SIGNAL

Stretch your Wi-Fi using an extender

As its name implies, a Wi-Fi extender makes your Wi-Fi signal go further. It looks like a mini router and effectively works as an outpost for your main router, picking up its signal and re-broadcasting it. Extenders (aka boosters or repeaters) tend to slow down your Wi-Fi, but at least they're cheap (under £15 for this Netgear Mini N300: bit.ly/netmini454; generic models are even cheaper).

Extenders like the Netgear Mini re-broadcast your Wi-Fi signal for greater coverage

Create a HomePlug network

HomePlugs (aka powerline adapters) are electric plugs that send your broadband to each other through your mains electricity. One plug goes next to your router, and the other goes wherever you like, as long as it's on the same electrical circuit. The second unit then broadcasts a Wi-Fi signal – with a new network name – from wherever you've plugged it in. You can buy extra secondary units and plug them into every socket of your house if you want (see image, right).

HomePlugs cost more than extenders, but they're better at stretching your signal without losing strength or speed. Devolo's dLAN 500 Powerline Starter Kit is a bargain at £25 (bit.ly/devolo454), but the £130 model (bit.ly/devo454) – with 802.11ac, dual-band and 1200Mpbs – is a sound investment if you have a good router, good electrics and a need for a Wi-Fi signal in your loft or extension.

Get superb Wi-Fi from every plug socket using Devolo's HomePlugs

8 GET WI-FI EVERYWHERE WITH A MESH NETWORK

Create your own Wi-Fi system

A mesh network is a series of 'nodes' (basically mini routers) that bounce your router's signal wirelessly to each other to create a blanket of consistent, fast Wi-Fi that fills every nook and cranny of your home.

A ticket to this Wi-Fi heaven is pricey but not outrageous. The best mesh bargain, the Tenda Nova MW3, starts at just £80 (bit.ly/tenda454). But the best buy is BT's super-fast, tri-band Whole Home Wi-Fi system, currently £200 for a triple pack (bit.ly/btwifi454). It's really easy to set up – just place the units around your house, then press a button to pair them with your router.

Some routers, such as the TP-Link Deco M5, are specially designed to support mesh networks. But mesh systems will work with most modern routers, including ISP hubs. Check compatibility before you buy.

Dish out super-fast internet to every inch of your home with BT Whole Home Wi-Fi

Get your best Wi-Fi ever from Google

Google Wifi, the tech giant's own mesh system, finally launched in the UK last year. It blankets your home with Wi-Fi, just like BT Whole Home Wi-Fi, and – this being Google – adds a layer of clever machine learning and cloud-based analysis on top.

Google Wifi records (and encrypts) data about your Wi-Fi signal, then uses it to automatically perform many of the tricks we've suggested in this feature. For example it intelligently switches to the least-congested channel, and employs smart 'band-steering' – seamlessly switching devices between 5GHz and 2.4GHz for the best possible performance.

It also lets you run speed tests, use parental controls and even set up a private guest network for any friends and family who may be visiting. It's currently £129 for a one-pack starter system, rising to £329 for a three-pack (bit.ly/googlewifi454).

Google Wifi intelligently boosts your Wi-Fi as well as getting your whole house covered

COMMON MISTAKES THAT MUCK UP YOUR WI-FI

Here are a few DON'Ts that sap the stability and strength of your signal

Keep your router by your cordless phone base

Cordless landline phones are among the biggest interference offenders. Doorbells, baby monitors and Bluetooth speakers, too – especially on 2.4GHz – and even your microwave.

Hide your router

Sticking your router in a cupboard keeps it dust-free and stops the cat sitting on it, but it also plays havoc with your signal – best to leave it out in the open, as high up as possible.

Blame your router

A Wi-Fi signal is only as good as the device that picks it up. Don't go spending hundreds on a mesh system when in fact the problem is your ancient tablet – consider upgrading that first.

Enable MAC address filtering

Another security myth that you'll find all over the web, but that actually wastes your time and simply makes it harder to access router settings. See bit.ly/mac454 for information about the MAC delusion.

Disable SSID

Hiding your network name from neighbours will do nothing to keep hackers away and will actually slow down your signal because it makes it harder for devices to connect to your network.

NEXT ISSUE on sale Wednesday 8 August 2018

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Best online design tools

An online design tool can jazz up anything that combines text and images, from party invitations to Facebook posts. **Andy Shaw** tests six of the best free options for creating eye-catching designs

Desygner | desygner.com | ★★★★★

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

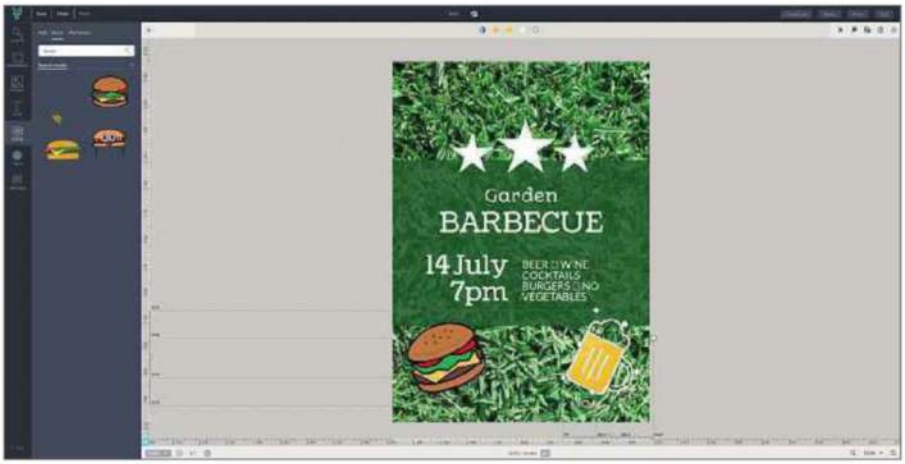
WebUser GOLD AWARD

What we liked:

Online tools are getting ever closer to replicating the installed programs they're designed to replace, and Desygner is a great example of this. It does everything you'd expect of simple design software, but for free and from within your browser.

Start by choosing the type of item you want to design. At the top of the list are social-media standards, such as Facebook cover images and recommended sizes for Twitter posts, while further down you'll find real-world creations, such as posters and invitations, and options for jokey projects, such as spoof certificates and wanted posters.

You can begin your project with a blank canvas or upload a pre-designed template. There's a good selection of free templates but many more that are locked, although you may find some of these for free if you look for them in a different size. Anyway, it's easy to recreate the paid-for templates because most of the component images and fonts are available for free within the tool – just drop your own images, shapes and text onto your design, then tweak various components including colour, size and opacity. Desygner even takes over your browser's right-click menu, providing a range of useful options, which makes it feel even more like a full program installed on your computer.



There's a paid-for version of the service, which costs $6.95 (around £5.25) per month, but we'd be surprised if you ran up against enough insurmountable blockages with the free version to make this worthwhile.

How it can be improved:

The interface is slightly more confusing than some of the other tools we tested, because the various options are divided between a menu on the left and a toolbar at the top. Also, please change the name – we think it's horrible.

OUR VERDICT

Desygner is the closest approximation of a software design tool that we could find on the web. Slick and powerful, it lets you create great-looking designs in a matter of minutes. There are a few barriers in the free version because of paid-for blocks, but you're not as aggressively locked out of key tools as you are with some of its rivals.

Canva | www.canva.com | ★★★★☆

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

What we liked:

It was a close-run contest between Canva and Desygner. Canva pulls back a little from fully emulating desktop software: it offers lots of great tools and options, but with a simpler interface that's more aligned with its web origins.

Sign into the website and it suggests a handful of templates it thinks you might like. You can either pick one of these and start experimenting, choose a blank canvas or explore Canva's selection of ready-made designs. This latter feature appears to provide more free options than the other tools we've reviewed here, but every now and again you'll still run up against paywalls. There are plenty of micropayments on offer, too, which invite you to pay $1 (around 75p) for individual stock images to use in backgrounds, for example – a system that appeals more to the casual user than someone paying for a subscription.

Designing with the tool is very simple: Every element on the page gets its own

resizable box – just click and drag to move or resize them, and the text size will grow and shrink as you change the shape of the surrounding box.

How it can be improved:

Canva isn't quite as powerful as Desygner, which lets you create your own lines and shapes, but it offers some attractive tools beyond the paywall. However, $9.95 (around £7.50) per month is a high price for access.

OUR VERDICT

Canva is a lovely design tool that's easier to use than Desygner, but many of its features are locked out of the free version. We'd be more tempted if the price was lower.

Crello | crello.com | ★★★★☆

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

What we liked:

Crello feels a lot like Canva but it lacks some of our Silver Award-winner's flair. It has more obstacles to overcome in its free version – for example, all the background clipart costs 99¢ (75p) each. However, these are the only costs you'll incur and there's no subscription service – you just pay as you go for any pre-designed content that you use – and we didn't find anything that cost more than 99¢.

Creating your own designs – or editing Crello's – is a simple process, with each element on a page appearing in its own resizable box. Simply place everything you want on the canvas, then arrange the position, order and layering just how you want it, and you'll be well on the way to a finished design.

Crello has a few clever tricks up its sleeve, too, such as the option of uploading your own fonts, although it's questionable whether you'll need this because the site already offers plenty of its own.

How it can be improved:

Crello looks as if it'll cost more to use than other online design tools because it's littered with micro-transactions, but this benefits casual users because you get all the tools without any subsciption-only barriers. Crello should make more noise about this.

OUR VERDICT

It's simpler than Desygner and not as slick as Canva, but Crello is a solid design tool. It looks heavy on micro-payments but these never get in the way, and it's a cost-effective alternative if you're only creating a few items.

BEST OF THE REST

Snappa

snappa.com

Snappa is aimed at image design for online purposes – you could use it to produce something that would work as a birthday-party invite, but it's really designed for your website, blog or social-media account. We like that its text tool has a shadow option, which is useful for making text stand out on graphics, but the free version only lets you download five images per month.

Stencil

getstencil.com

Stencil lets you create 10 images a month on its free account, which is plenty if you want to create the occasional invite, but may not be enough for a stream of eye-catching header images for your website. We assumed this limit meant we wouldn't hit a paywall but we soon did, while trying to load a template. There are just too many blocks on its free tools to make Stencil much use.

Vectr

vectr.com

Vectr is available as both a web-based tool and a downloadable program you can run on your PC. It's completely free but has no templates: you start with a blank canvas that you fill yourself. This makes for a steep learning curve and is best suited to someone who already has some design skills.

Fantastic free apps you can use OFFLINE

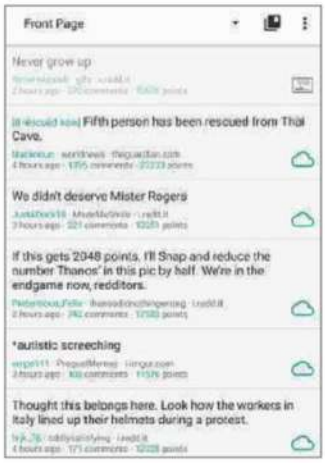
Don't let a flaky internet connection or a tight mobile-data allowance spoil your enjoyment of the web. **Steve Clark** looks at the best apps you can use without being online

CATCH UP ON YOUR FAVOURITE THREADS

REDDIT OFFLINE

Android

bit.ly/redditdroid454



Back in May, it was announced that Reddit had become the third most popular site in America – and it's not hard to see why. It's an anarchic social sharing site that bills itself as 'the best of the internet in one place' – from right-on trends to off-colour jokes (and everything in-between). To keep up to date with your top threads, download the unofficial Reddit Offline app, available on Android, which is specifically designed for offline use. It's free, has no ads and lets you download content using a comprehensive download scheduler, so you can read your favourite posts when you're unconnected.

DISCOVER EVERYTHING WIKIPEDIA HAS TO OFFER

KIWIX

All platforms

www.kiwix.org/downloads

Wikipedia doesn't yet offer a full offline version, but the open-source Kiwix is on hand to showcase all the world's knowledge, even without Wi-Fi. It's available on everything from Android and iOS to Raspberry Pi, and even Windows Mobile – that's because Kiwix is as much a social project as it is an offline resource, being used in African schools without internet access, and circumventing oppressive governments to keep citizens informed. Download the app, plus the Wiki content you need (from sources including Wikipedia, WikiSource or WIkiQuote) and you're good to venture down the Wikipedian rabbit-hole for hours on end.

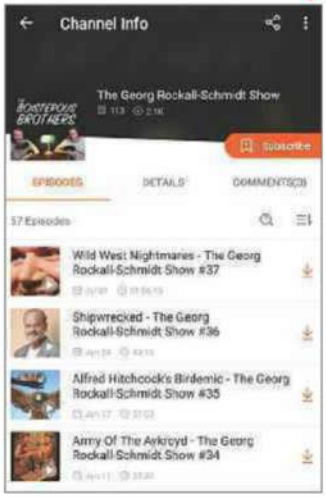
LISTEN TO TOP PODCASTS

CASTBOX

Android, iOS

bit.ly/castboxdroid454

bit.ly/castboxios454



In Issue 452 (bit.ly/webuser452), we recommended Castbox as our favourite podcast app – and if you've been steadily building your library since then, it's simple to download your shows for offline listening. This is particularly handy considering the average length of a podcast is 30 minutes and uses around 1MB of data every minute. Just navigate to your chosen podcast, press the Download icon and it's yours to listen to at will – with the option to auto-delete within an hour of finishing it, so you don't run out of space. And, as with Netflix (see opposite), you can store your shows on an SD card, keeping your smartphone's internal memory clear.

PLAN THE PERFECT HOLIDAY

TRIPADVISOR

Android, iOS

bit.ly/tripdroid454

bit.ly/tripios454

Whether you're planning a short city break or losing yourself on a sun-soaked beach, TripAdvisor helps you make the most of your holiday, without gobbling all your data – just search for and download your city guide in-app. Be warned, though: TripAdvisor's offline features work best once you've already planned half your vacation, since certain features aren't supported offline: forums are a non-starter, user-generated travel guides won't load, and when checking hotel availability or flights, the app stubbornly refused to recognise any airport, anywhere in the world. But maps and reviews – arguably the most important factors of trip-planning – are available on demand.

TRANSLATE 59 FOREIGN LANGUAGES

GOOGLE TRANSLATE

Android, iOS
bit.ly/translatedroid454
bit.ly/translateios454

If you're travelling abroad, be sure to pack the new AI-based Google Translate app. Capable of translating 59 languages, including English, German, Chinese and Arabic, it's a big step up from Google's previous patchy offline translation dictionary. Each language pack clocks in at around 40MB – just find the one you want in the app's settings and tap its Download icon. Perfect for chattering your way across exotic lands without worrying about your mobile data.

SHARE FILES FOUR TIMES FASTER

FILES GO

Android
bit.ly/filesdroid454

Google's handy free storage manager has, like Apple's AirDrop, long featured offline sharing – but a recent update now makes it four times faster to share encrypted files. There are two small caveats: all users must have Files Go and they'll need to be in your vicinity. Still, it's a zippy transfer process with speeds of around 490Mbps and you don't need to connect to a network. Better yet, the lightweight app won't take up too much space on your phone, and it uses the simple interface that defines all Google products.

NEVER GET LOST WHEN YOU CAN'T GET ONLINE

HERE WEGO

Android, iOS
bit.ly/heredroid454
bit.ly/hereios454

Here WeGo is another holiday essential if you're travelling abroad and want to avoid a massive, data-driven phone bill. Previously the preserve of Nokia and Windows Mobile users, the map app comes with all the usual features, such as route-planning, location tracking and offline maps that span the globe. It's true that Google Maps also features an offline option that lets you customise an area you wish to download (unlike Here's country-wide downloadables), but these files expire after a set amount of time if not updated, which isn't much use if you're trying to save data.

BINGE-WATCH ALL YOUR FAVOURITES ON-THE-GO

NETFLIX

Android, iOS, Windows 10
www.netflix.com/app

Movies and TV shows tear through your data, but now the Netflix app lets you download many films and programmes for offline playback – just use the 'Available to Download' option under the Downloads tab. Pick a title, click the Download icon and it's yours for anywhere between 48 hours and seven days. You can even save downloads to an SD card if your phone is short of internal storage, while the new 'smart downloads' feature for Android automatically deletes episodes you've watched and downloads new ones when you reconnect.

READ THOUSANDS OF BOOKS, WHEREVER YOU ARE

AMAZON KINDLE

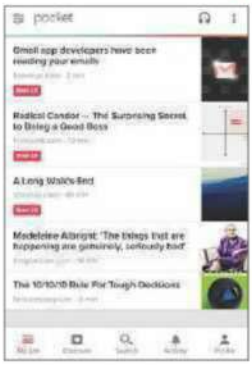
Android, iOS, Chrome
bit.ly/kindleapp454

Amazon's Kindle, which helped corner the ebook market back in 2011, has always been offline-friendly: download a book to read on the tablet any time, and it automatically syncs your bookmarks once you re-establish an internet connection – ideal for cross-device bookworms. But while Amazon's dedicated e-readers have fallen (slightly) out of favour, you can still crack open your favourite novel using the Kindle smartphone app. You can read your Kindle library offline on desktops, too, by grabbing the Kindle Cloud Reader browser extension.

NEVER MISS THE NEWS

POCKET

Android, iOS, Chrome, Edge, Firefox
getpocket.com



News junkies will get a real kick out of Pocket, the nifty tool that lets you read and save web pages – literally popping them in your 'pocket' for later. Pocket's offline capabilities are already set up: the app automatically syncs your Saved articles and downloads them over Wi-Fi, deciding whether it's best to show you the article or web version of a news story. Pocket's offline function works in apps for Android and iOS, as well as via the Chrome extension – perfect for when your Wi-Fi drops out at home but you still want your news.

DOWNLOAD ANY WEB PAGE IN CHROME AND EDGE

If you'd like to read your favourite websites offline, both Chrome and Edge offer two useful options.

In either browser's mobile app, long-press any link to see the option to download the link. In the desktop version of Edge, you can also right-click to 'Add to reading list', which is available offline and syncs across devices.

One alternative, in both the desktop and mobile versions of the browsers, is to disconnect your device, then navigate to your desired web page. Chrome and Edge display the option to download the page next time you're online. Press this and let it do its work, then once you're offline again, you'll be able to view the page.

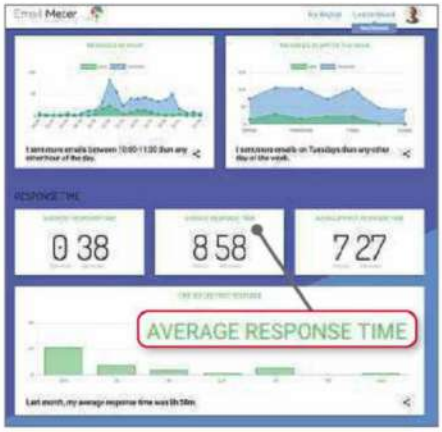
CALCULATE EVERYTHING *you do online*

How many emails do you send each month? How often do you check your phone? **Robert Irvine** reveals how to get statistical about your web activities

Count how many emails you send and receive

Email services such as Gmail show you the number of unread messages in your Inbox, but to get really interesting statistics about your messages you need Email Meter (www.emailmeter.com). This online tool generates a detailed report based on your last month of Gmail usage, which includes such interesting data as the number of emails you sent and received; your busiest days and times for messages; and your average response time – ours was a rather sluggish 8 hours 58 minutes! You can also see which email addresses you interacted with most frequently, and the best time to contact those recipients for a quick response.

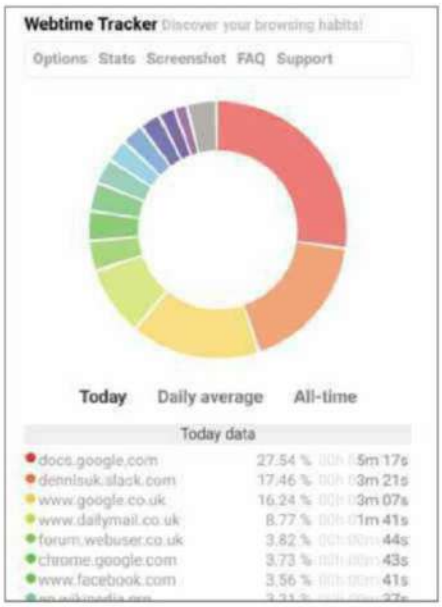
Email Meter is free to use, delivers its reports both online and via email, and lets you export its data as a spreadsheet. You can also create custom reports for specific dates. And if you're concerned about privacy (especially in light of recent revelations about third parties reading private Gmail messages), the website clearly states that "we do not actually read, process or store the body of your emails and have no plans to ever do".



Email Meter creates a free monthly report containing stats about your Gmail usage

Track how long you spend on different sites

Have you ever wondered how much of your day you waste idly browsing Facebook, Amazon, Mail Online and other favourite sites? Probably not, or else you'd try to cut down, which is why Webtime Tracker (bit.ly/webtime454) is such a useful and fascinating productivity tool. It monitors exactly how long you spend browsing different sites, both today and over time, and provides you with a daily average. The add-on presents its data as both a colour-coded doughnut chart and a list of domains, and lets you click an entry for additional information such as where it ranks in your all-time most visited sites, and the days you visit it most and least. Usefully, you can set Webtime Tracker to stop monitoring when you've been idle on a site for a specific length of time, and export the data it collects as a CSV file.



Monitor how much time you spend on specific sites using Webtime Tracker

StayFocusd stops you wasting time online by limiting your access to sites

For a stricter approach to time management, install StayFocusd for Chrome (bit.ly/stay454), which restricts how long you spend viewing time-wasting sites each day and blocks them when you reach your limit (10 minutes, by default). You can set the extension to operate only between certain times on particular days, and make it ask you to complete a challenge when you try to bypass its blocks. It even has a Nuclear Option that blocks all sites for an hour when you should be working, which can't be disabled.

For Firefox, try the similar tool LeechBlock (bit.ly/leech454); or for passive time-monitoring without aggressive blocking, install Mind the Time (bit.ly/mind454).

Estimate how long content will take you to read

It's easy to lose large chunks of your day to online articles that prove to be more in-depth and interesting than you anticipated. Some sites, notably the web magazine Medium (medium.com), now provide estimated reading times at the top of each page, so you know how long you're committing your attention for. Medium bases its read times on the average reading speed of an adult – roughly 275 words per minute (WPM) – and adds 3-12 seconds for each image.

Medium is a popular online magazine that provides read times for every article

Enter your WPM speed to get more accurate estimates for reading time

You can gauge how long it will take you to read other online content – including news stories, blog posts and Wikipedia articles – by installing the Chrome extension Instant Reading Time (bit.ly/reading454). This displays a number on your toolbar indicating how many minutes it will take you to read the current page. If you find its estimates to be way off, take the reading test at MyReadSpeed (www.myreadspeed.com), then go into the add-on's Options and enter your WPM figure to increase its accuracy.

Measure and benchmark your phone usage

It's a curse of the modern world that everyone seems to be glued to their phone all the time, but could you be just as bad as them without realising? Find out by installing the brilliant free Android app AntiSocial: Phone Addiction (bit.ly/antisocial454), which calculates precisely how long you spend performing certain tasks on your phone, so you can identify and better manage activities that are hogging your time and attention. The data the app gathers – anonymously, in case you're worried about privacy – includes the number of minutes you spend using social apps such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat; the total amount of time you use your phone per day, week and month; the number of times you unlock and check the device; and the apps you open most frequently and waste the most time on.

AntiSocial tracks your phone usage and compares it with others

AntiSocial then benchmarks this data against other users of the same gender and age as you, and gives you a score that reveals whether your phone usage is excessive, perfectly normal or below average. All this info is presented in a clear and colourful fashion that makes it easy to block or limit access to addictive apps. There's also a version of AntiSocial that lets parents monitor and control their children's phone usage (bit.ly/parental454).

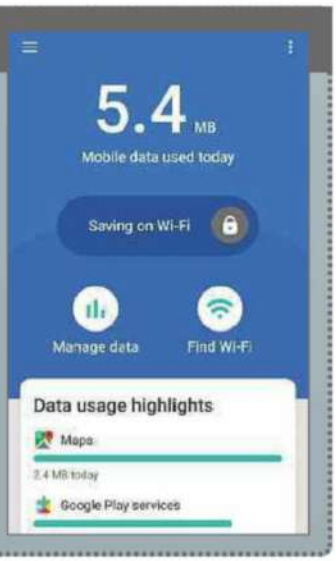
You can audit your iPhone activities with the similar if not as comprehensive app Moment (bit.ly/moment454), which tracks how long you use your phone for each day, the apps you spend most time on and how often you pick up your device. It then helps you create daily limits and offers 'nudges' when you approach them. ■

MONITOR AND MANAGE YOUR MOBILE DATA

If you're on a limited data plan with your mobile network (or an 'unlimited' one that uses throttling), there's nothing worse than realising you've unwittingly gone over your monthly allowance – especially when it's due to a random app running in the background. Android has a built-in tool (in Settings, Wireless & Networks) that tracks how much data you use and the apps responsible, but it's not very sophisticated, so Google has created a separate app called Datally (datally.google.com).

This excellent free tool monitors and minimises the amount of mobile data you use in a number of clever ways, compressing web content using Google's Data Saver technology and letting you limit the background data consumed by unnecessary apps.

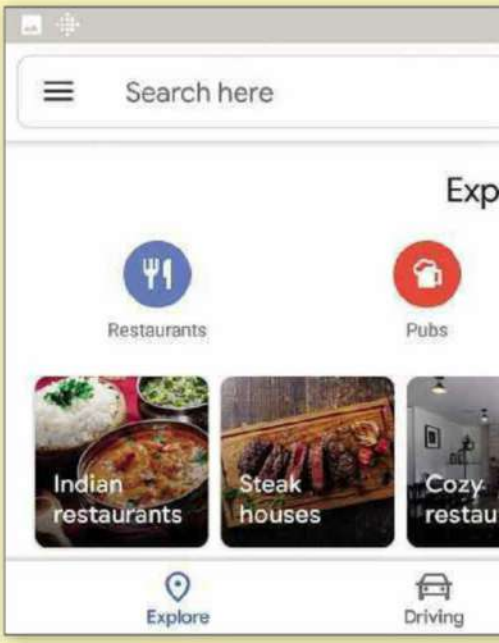
Datally provides detailed metrics about how apps installed on your phone use your data – including their usage history, trends over time and per-app consumption – so you can instantly see the worst apps for pushing you towards (and over) your monthly limit. Datally also offers a built-in Wi-Fi finder that saves you megabytes on the move by letting you connect to a nearby hotspot instead of 3G or 4G.



Explore new areas in Google Maps on Android and iOS

Google has updated its Maps mobile app with a new Explore tab. Here's what you need to know

Google Maps: maps.google.co.uk | 10 mins | Android iOS



The most recent addition to the mobile version of Google Maps helps you find great places all over the world to eat, drink and visit. The app looks a little different depending on the device you're viewing it on – iPhone, iPad, Android phone or tablet – but all versions work in the same way.

The more you use Maps, the more accurate its suggestions become. Rate a place you've visited, and specify your food and drink preferences, and it will use the information to build a picture of what you like, which helps the app serve up better recommendations. You can even follow an area and Google will alert you when anything interesting happens there – such as a new restaurant opening.

1 The new Explore tab offers recommendations for restaurants, bars and cafés in any location, whether it's somewhere you're currently at or a location you're planning to visit in the future. Tap Explore at the bottom **1** and a drawer for that area will open. **2** There are buttons for Restaurants, Coffee, Events and More. **3**

2 You can jump straight to one of the sections by tapping the relevant button. Dragging upwards on the drawer handle reveals a selection of nearby places and events. **1** The best restaurants in your target area will be shown in The Foodie List. **2**

3 Google Maps' Explore features work best if you have Location History turned on. When you select a restaurant or bar from the suggestions, a match rating **1** shows how likely you are to enjoy it, based on previous places you've visited. Tap 'Your match' to see comparable venues.

4 You'll also be shown your stored interests, which is how Your Match works out its score. If the information is incorrect (shows you like steak when you're a vegetarian, for example), tap the 'Not right?' link **1** to customise the details. You can also do this by tapping the menu button, opening Settings and tapping Exploring Places.

5 Explore also provides access to curated Lists. Trending Weekly: London, for example, shows a number of lists, such as where to watch football (the World Cup was on at the time of writing), **1** essential rooftop bars (because the weather was sunny) **2** and the top places to eat. **3**

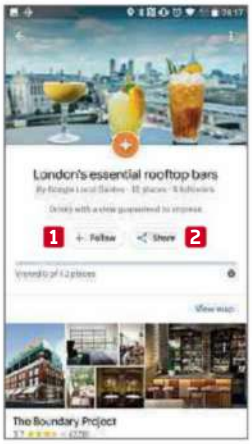
EVENTS
Tap here to see a list of events on in the currently selected area. You can filter the suggestions by date

MORE
You can select any of the categories – Food & Drink, Things to do, Shopping, Services – and then a subcategory, such as Restaurants, Bars, Coffee and Brunch

LISTS
A selection of food and drink lists appear near the top. Swipe through to view the choices and tap one to open it

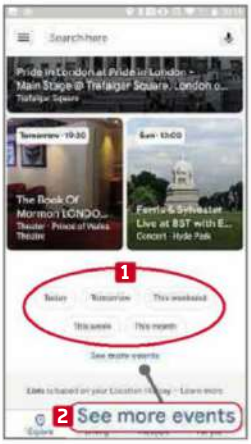
FOR YOU
Provides suggestions for places you'll love in your favourite locations. You can add and follow areas from here

6 Although Trending Weekly includes 17 lists in our case, only a few are displayed. Tap 'See more lists' below to access the rest. Open any list to view its contents. Scroll down to explore the places and tap something to get its details. You can follow a particular list 1 or share it. 2



7 Scroll down the Explore page to see any major events scheduled to occur in that area this week. 1 Tap any of the suggestions to find out more information, such as the location, opening hours and website. You'll also be able to get directions. Only the three main events will be shown here.

8 The Android version of Maps (but not the iOS one, at the time of writing) lets you choose when to look for events. Select Today, Tomorrow, 'This weekend', 'This week' or 'This month' 1 by tapping the relevant button. To view all the available events, tap the 'See more events' link. 2



Create a bootable USB drive in minutes – for free

Rufus: bit.ly/rufus454 | 15 mins | Windows 7, 8, 10

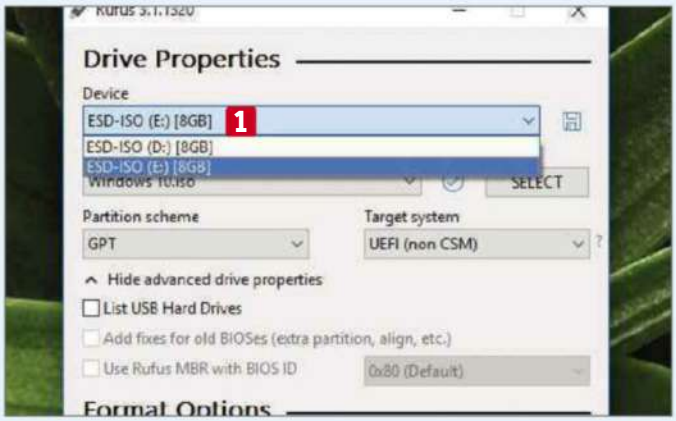
Creating a bootable CD or DVD is a straightforward burn-and-boot affair, but it's not so easy when you're looking to place a bootable ISO file on a USB memory stick. That's where Rufus comes in. Rufus (Reliable USB Formatting Utility with Source) is small and lightweight, but powerful enough to quickly create a bootable USB memory stick using ISO files. It's ideal for creating USB installation media or running an alternative operating system on a computer with no CD/DVD drive. Because it creates bootable drives so quickly, you can easily keep up with an OS's regular updates. We're fans of Rufus for four reasons: it's faster than other tools we've tried; it's available as both a regular and portable download; it's easy to use; and it's free.

EXPERT TIP

Steve Clark says

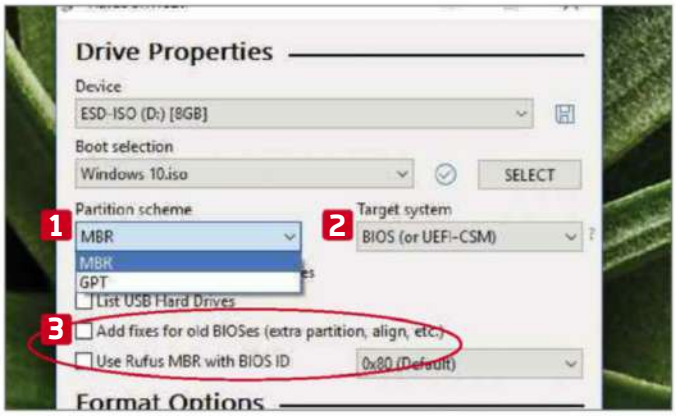
Use Rufus to dual-boot your PC using a virtual hard drive (VHD) in a partition of your main hard drive. Search the Start menu or Control Panel for Computer Management and click Disk Management in the sidebar. When Windows has loaded all the drives, right-click Disk Management, choose Create VHD and determine the size of your virtual hard drive. Once completed, you'll find the VHD available under Rufus' Device drop-down menu.

1 First, you need an ISO file of your chosen operating system. You can get a Windows 10 ISO at bit.ly/win10454 **1** and download the Windows 7 ISO from bit.ly/win7454 but you'll need a product key. Follow the on-screen prompts to create installation media for another PC, and save the file as an ISO. The latest version of Rufus no longer supports XP or Vista.

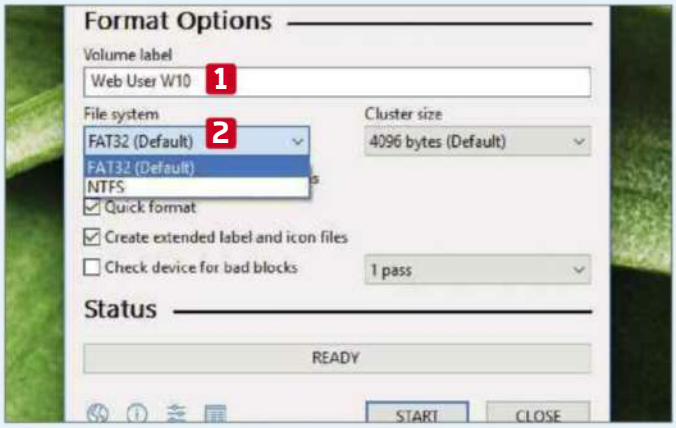


2 With your ISO saved to your computer, insert your USB memory stick. A 64-bit OS needs a USB that's at least 8GB; the 32-bit version should be fine on a 4GB device. Open Rufus and it automatically finds your stick in the Device section, **1** sometimes under the name No Label. Back up any files and folders from the memory stick before proceeding.

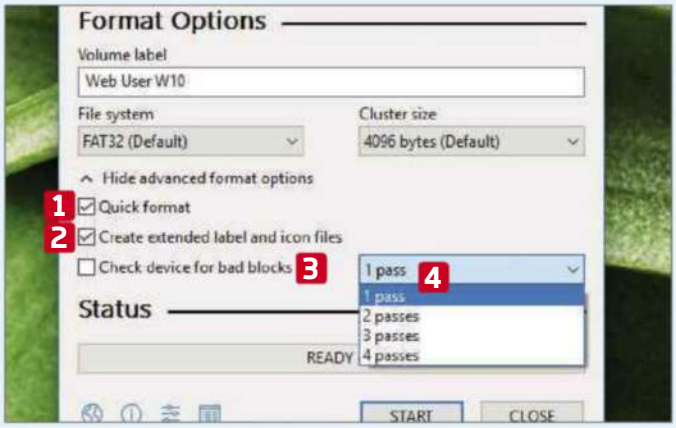
3 The drop-down menu under 'Boot selection' **1** offers a range of existing boot loaders and operating systems. The latest version includes ARM64 support for UEFI:NTFS. To create a bootable ISO, choose 'Disk or ISO image.' **2** Now, press the Select button, **3** which lets you navigate to the location of your ISO. Double-click the ISO file and press OK.



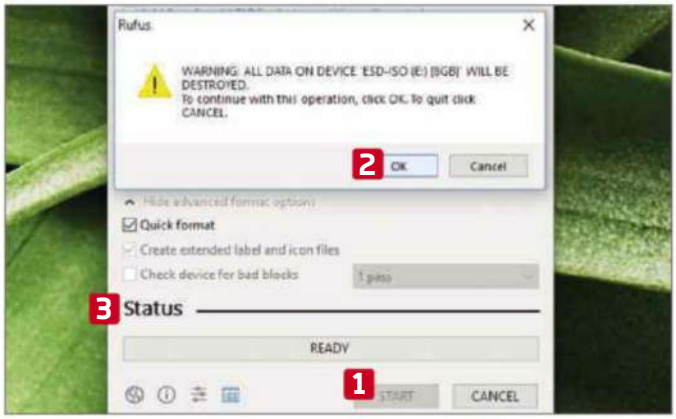
4 Once your ISO is selected, Rufus automatically updates 'Partition scheme' **1** and 'Target system' **2** to the modern GPT and UEFI, respectively. If you'd prefer the traditional MBR and BIOS set-up, change GPT to MBR in the 'Partition scheme' drop-down. This opens further BIOS-specific tickboxes: **3** 'Add fixes for old BIOSes' and 'Use Rufus MBR with BIOS ID.'



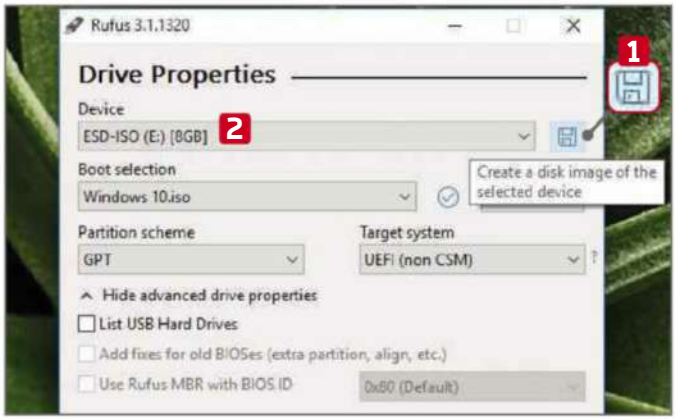
5 You can now alter your Format Options. First, rename the 'Volume label', 1 so you can identify the drive in future. Next, choose your 'File system': 2 NTFS is ideal for Windows-only households but FAT32 is better for a mix of computers because it's also compatible with MacOS and Linux.



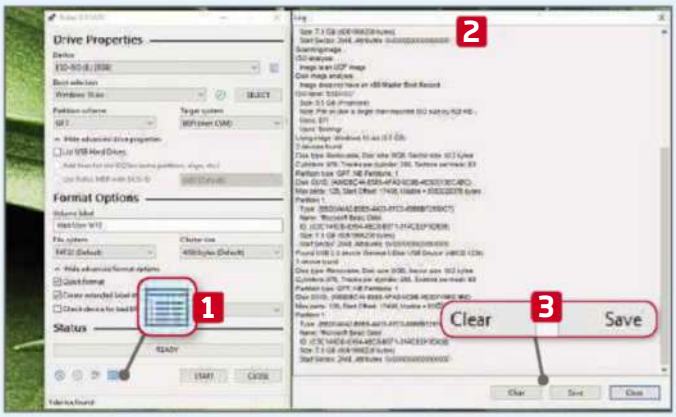
6 If it's not already showing, click 'Show advanced format options'. Make sure 'Quick format' 1 and 'Create extended label and icon files' 2 are ticked. Untick 'Check device for bad blocks' 3 because it makes copying slower and you only need it if you think your memory stick is corrupted. When checking for bad blocks, you can set the number of 'passes'. 4



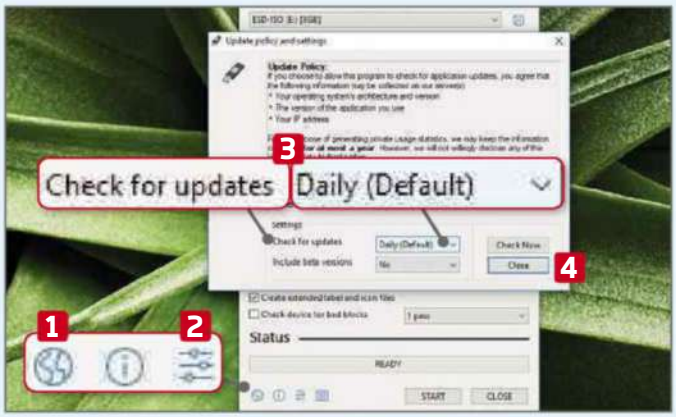
7 With your options selected, click Start. 1 Immediately, you're confronted with a pop-up warning that 'All data on Device will be destroyed.' This is because Rufus will be re-formatting the drive. Click OK 2 and the tool starts 'Copying your ISO files'. If you've chosen to check for bad blocks, this progress is reported in the Status bar, too. 3



8 Armed with a bootable drive, you can clone the contents of your USB – this makes it easier to transfer the same operating system to other drives if you want to make more copies. Click the Save icon 1 to create your disc image. Select a target location, rename the file and press Save to create the clone. 2



9 Rufus comes equipped with a dedicated log to track everything the program does in real time. Click the Folder icon at the bottom 1 to reveal the current version of Rufus, your USB stick and an activity tracker. 2 The log can either be cleared or saved. 3 To hide the log, click X or click the Folder icon again.



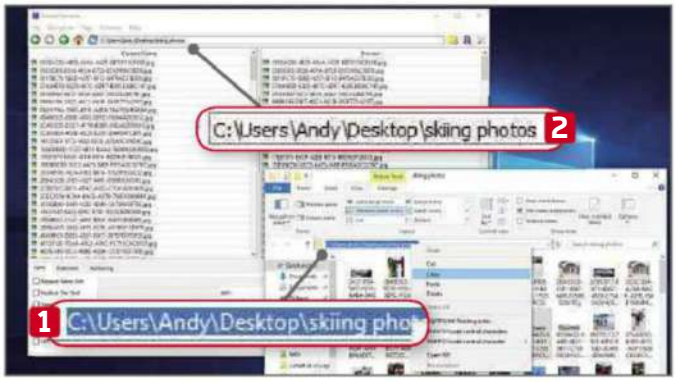
10 There are two additional settings you can tweak. Click the Globe icon 1 to launch a list of supported languages – selecting a new language reloads the tool. Open the Settings 2 to determine how often Rufus checks for updates: daily, weekly or monthly. 3 You can opt out if you're uncomfortable with the tool's minimal data collection. 4

Sort photos taken on different cameras

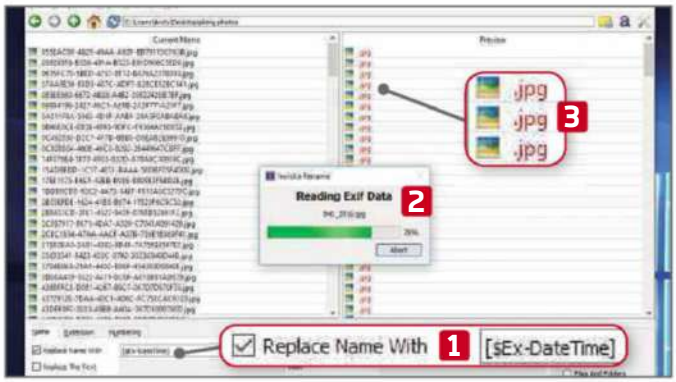
It's common these days for each family member to own their own camera but if you're storing all the photos on one computer, it can be a headache sorting them into chronological order. Inviska Rename helps you organise the photos in your Pictures folder in the order they were taken in, rather than lumped together by camera name.

Inviska Rename: bit.ly/inv454 | 10 mins | Windows 7, 8, 10

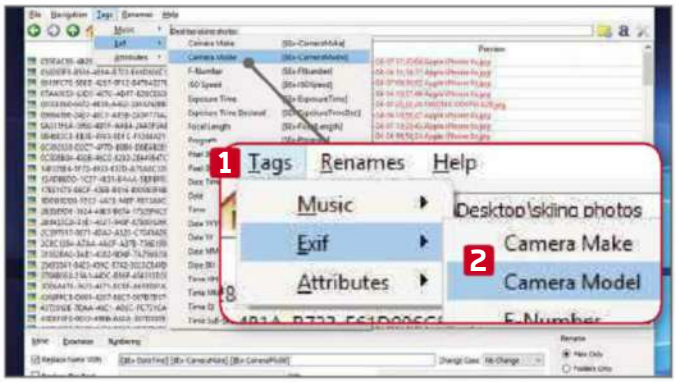
1 Gather together all the photos you want to sort. 1 If there's a risk they might have duplicate names because they're called something generic, such as img_xxxx.jpg, 2 put each camera's photos in separate folders. Make sure you separate them from any photos you don't want renaming.



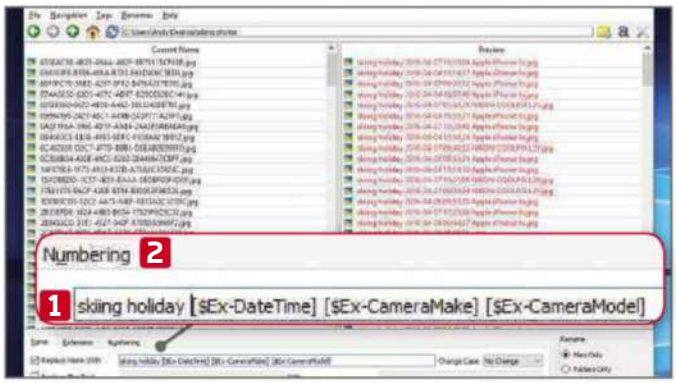
2 Click File, Open Directory and find the folder containing the first batch of photos you want to convert; or, if you have the folder open, click in the location bar 1 to reveal and highlight the path, then copy (Ctrl+C) it to the clipboard, click inside Rename's location bar 2 and paste it in (Ctrl+V).



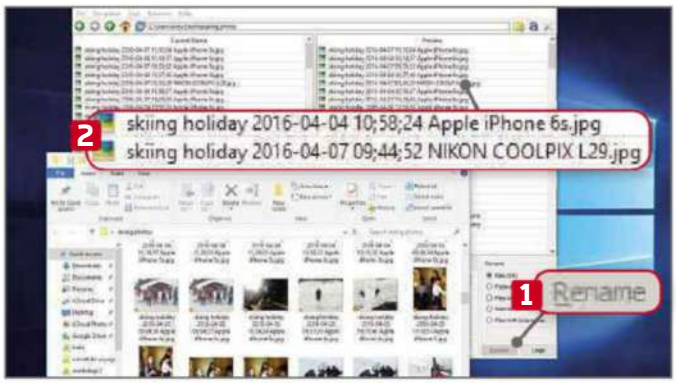
3 Tick Replace Name With 1 and type `[$Ex-DateTime]`. The program examines the Exif data of the files, 2 which is where the camera stores information such as when and where the picture was taken. When it's finished, the list of blank '.jpg' files 3 is replaced by versions with the date added.



4 If your folder contained files from more than one camera, you can add the make and model to the file name, too. Add a space after the existing phrase in the Replace Name With box and open the Tags menu. 1 Click Exif, then choose Camera Make, Camera Model or both from the list. 2



5 If your various cameras are the same model or you don't want the date at the front of the file name, you can insert something more meaningful. Click in the Replace Name With box and type it in the appropriate place. 1 The Numbering tab lets you add consecutive numbers to each photo. 2



6 Click the Rename button 1 and the files in the folder will be renamed. 2 Repeat the process with other folders for other cameras. As long as there's something different appended to the file names, you can merge the contents of the folders without worrying about anything getting overwritten.

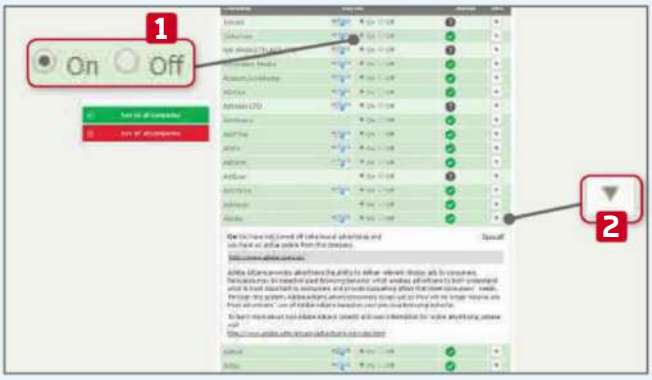
Take control of the ads Google shows you

Despite being famous for its search engine, Google makes its money from advertising. To do this, it collects data about you, your browsing habits and your interests. The more the company knows about you, the better it can target its ads, and the more likely you are to click and buy. By tweaking its ad settings, you can control what Google knows about you and block irrelevant ads.

Google: adssettings.google.com | 10 mins | Any browser

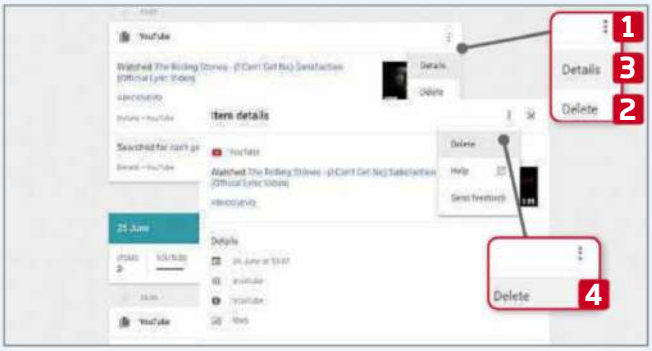
1 Navigate to adssettings.google.com to see your current 'Ad personalisation' settings. To stop all tailored ads, toggle the switch to Off **1** or turn off specific categories by clicking each 'factor' button. **2** Google will still display adverts, but they won't be tailored to you.

2 Based on your interests, Google tries to guess your age and gender. Alter them by clicking the estimated age range **1** and gender, **2** then Update. **3** Now click Add Birthday, and select Male, Female or Add Customised Gender. Note that this means giving Google more personal details.



3 Many sites partner with Google ad services – click 'Control ad personalisation on other websites and apps...' to decide which sites can access this data. Turn each On or Off **1** or click the arrow **2** to explore the company and find out if they store active cookies on your device.

4 If you delete the cookies on your computer, you'll need to re-select your ad settings. To force Google to keep your current settings, install its IBA Opt-out extension (bit.ly/cookie454). **1** Available on Chrome, Firefox and IE, it saves your preferences, even if you clear out your cookies.



5 Select My Activity from the Ad Settings menu. To remove daily activities, open the three-dot menu **1** and click Delete. **2** To remove an individual entry on days where multiple activities exist, select Details. **3** Then, in the pop-up, click the three-dot menu and choose Delete. **4**

6 Choose 'Activity controls' in the sidebar of the Ad Settings page. Toggle each switch **1** to set what Google tracks for 'personalised experiences', such as Location History **2** and Device Information. Turning off Web & App Activity **3** stops Google seeing which Android apps you use.

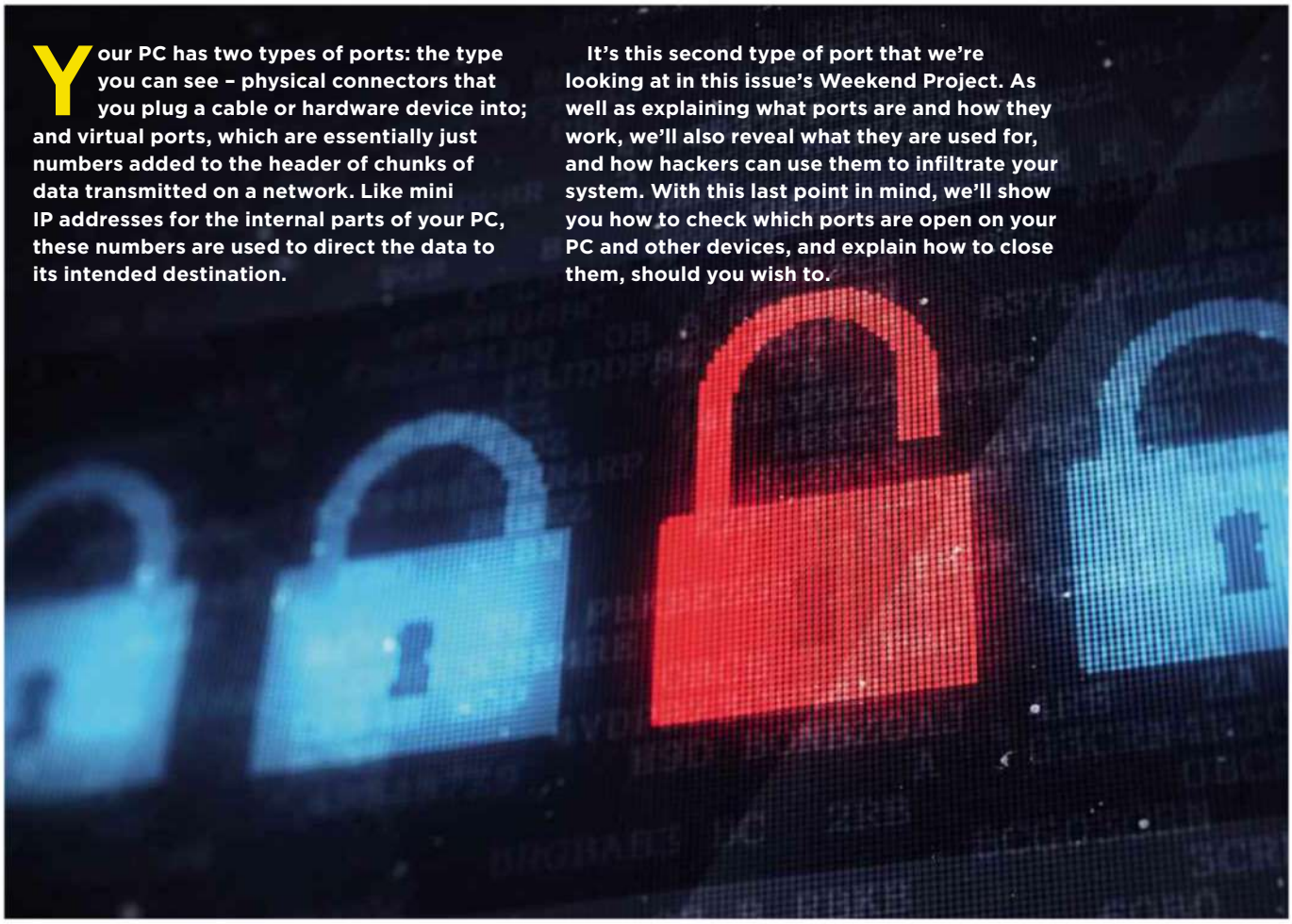
Weekend Project

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

How to...

Take control of your system's secret ports

Wayne Williams shows you around the virtual ports that open your PC to external communications – and make it vulnerable to hackers



Your PC has two types of ports: the type you can see – physical connectors that you plug a cable or hardware device into; and virtual ports, which are essentially just numbers added to the header of chunks of data transmitted on a network. Like mini IP addresses for the internal parts of your PC, these numbers are used to direct the data to its intended destination.

It's this second type of port that we're looking at in this issue's Weekend Project. As well as explaining what ports are and how they work, we'll also reveal what they are used for, and how hackers can use them to infiltrate your system. With this last point in mind, we'll show you how to check which ports are open on your PC and other devices, and explain how to close them, should you wish to.

What are ports?

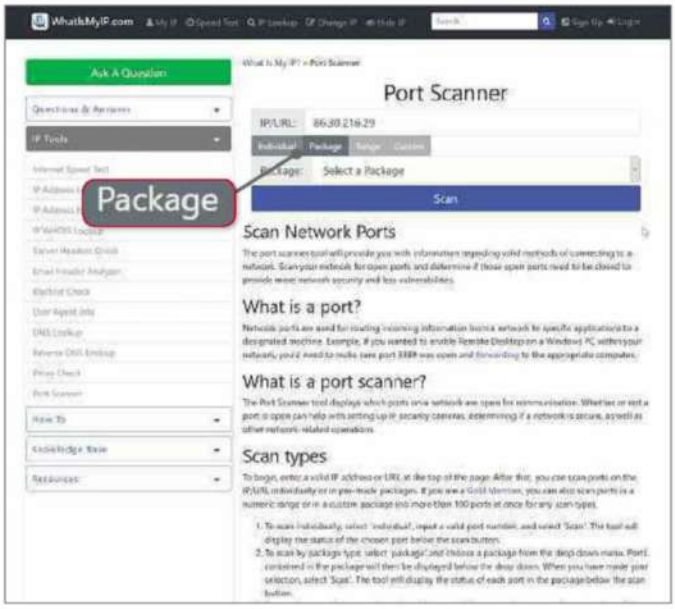
Each computer has an IP address – a unique number assigned to it that identifies that particular computer from among the millions of other devices accessing the internet – and each IP address has thousands and thousands of ports. Data transmissions use either TCP (Transmission Control Protocol) or UDP (User Datagram Protocol), and there are a total of 65,535 TCP ports and another 65,535 UDP ports available.

The programs and services on your computer work by sending data to a specific port on a remote device's IP address. Similarly, when data is sent to you, it's accepted by a port on your computer. The type of port – TCP or UDP – will depend on which of the two protocols is being used to send and receive data.

For a simple example of how ports operate, imagine you are browsing the web. To view a web page, your browser needs to retrieve it from the web server where it's stored. The HTTP protocol uses TCP port 80 by default (the more secure HTTPS uses port 443), so this is the port the web server listens to. Your operating system picks a random source port to send the request from and specifies the destination port – port 80, in this case.

The web server sees the incoming

PortChecker Port Scanner offers an easy way to check the status of all the common ports



WhatIsMyIP .com's port scanner lets you choose packages of ports to scan

request, authenticates it and sends the requested data back to your PC via your device's original source port. It will then disconnect and listen out for any other incoming requests.

The reason why your PC has so many different ports available is so that incoming and outgoing information is correctly routed to whichever application or system process has requested it. Think of the IP address as your home town and the individual ports as the houses. Data – like items in the post – needs to be delivered exactly where it's addressed to.

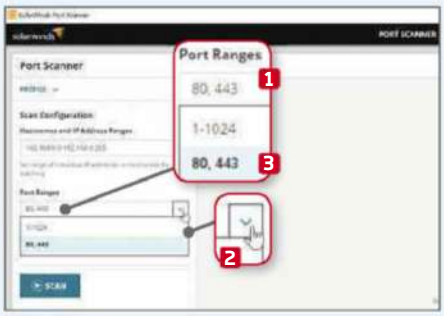
For the most part, you don't really need to concern yourself with ports because your operating system handles them automatically. However, there will be cases where the ports you want open are closed, and ports you'd rather have closed are open.

COMMON PORT NUMBERS

There are thousands of TCP and UDP port numbers, but system ports (which run from 0 through 1,023) are the ones used for most common tasks. Here are some of the more frequently used ports:

20 FTP (File Transfer Protocol) – data transfer and forwarding
21 FTP (File Transfer Protocol) – signalling
22 SSH (Secure Shell) – secure login
23 Telnet – remote login
25 SMTP (Simple Mail Transfer Protocol) – email routing
53 DNS (Domain Name System) – translate URL to IP address
80 HTTP (Hypertext Transfer Protocol) – web pages
110 POP3 (Post Office Protocol) – basic email collection
143 IMAP (Internet Message Access Protocol) – advanced email sending and collection
161 SNMP (Simple Network Management Protocol)
194 IRC (Internet Relay Chat) – basic messaging
443 HTTPS (HTTP Secure) – encrypted web pages

MINI WORKSHOP | Scan a network for open ports with SolarWinds Free Port Scanner



1 Fill in the required details on the SolarWinds site (you can make this up rather than give away your real identity, if you like), then download and run the program, agreeing to the terms. The software scans your network to detect all the IP addresses to target. **1** You can manually enter your details if you prefer.

2 By default, the program only scans the well-known ports, but you can change this to focus on individual ports or a range of your choosing. Just type in the numbers you want to scan. **1** Click the arrow to the right of the Port Ranges box **2** to open a drop-down menu where you can select ports 80 and 443 (HTTP and HTTPS). **3**

3 Advanced Scan Configurations **1** lets you choose whether to scan TCP, UDP or TCP and UDP. You can use specific DNS servers **2** and detect the operating system **3** if you wish. Click Scan **4** to begin the check. The results will appear in the main window, showing the number of ports that are open, closed or filtered. **5**

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3	sky	Sky: Broadband	£25.00 (£38.99 after 18 months)	18 months	36Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited	£300.00
4	Virgin media	Virgin: Broadband	£29.00 (£38.00 after 12 months)	12 months	108Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited	£348.00

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Data supplied by www.broadbandgenie.co.uk. Correct as of 10 July 2018.

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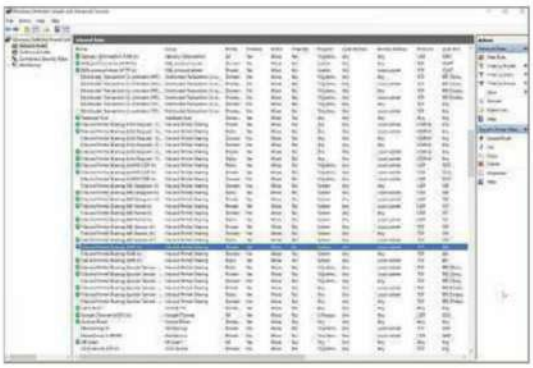

You can take control of your printer's ports through the Windows firewall

If the wrong ports on your printer are open or closed, it won't work properly

Keep unused ports closed

Certain ports, such as port 80 (HTTP), tend to be locked down but other common ports – like those listed in the box on page 59 – could be open and vulnerable to hackers. An open port essentially means that it's active and the computer is listening for connection requests, and it's much like an open door to your PC, allowing attackers to potentially exploit vulnerabilities.

We show you how to open and close your computer's ports in our Mini Workshop, below.

To avoid problems, ports that aren't in regular use should be either closed or 'stealthed'. Closed ports refuse incoming connections, while stealthed ports simply don't respond to requests, which makes them appear closed to any data attempting to gain access. You can check which of your computer's ports are open, and close or stealth any of them, by using a port scanner. There are web-based and software scanners available.

A good web app to try is PortChecker Port Scanner (bit.ly/pcps454). It's very easy to use and checks up to 36 of the most common ports. Visit the website and you should see your IP address filled in automatically. You can then run a quick scan of 13 ports or a long scan of 36 ports. The long scan, as its name suggests, takes a while to complete, so be patient. Alternatively, you can run the excellent Port Scanner from WhatIsMyIP.com (bit.ly/portscan454) which offers several types of scans: individual ports of your choosing, 'packages' (basic, web, games or malicious), a range of ports or custom.

If you prefer to use a software scanner, SolarWinds Free Port Scanner (bit.ly/solar454) is very good. We show you how to use it in our Mini Workshop on page 59.

Ports on printers

Network printers also have ports that you might want to check. SolarWinds Free Port Scanner can scan your printer as part of a network scan, then show you the status of its ports. If you find some ports closed that should be open, you may be unable to print to the device. If a hacker manages to gain access to your printer, they could send offensive or spam messages to it, fill up the print queue so you can't print, or maybe even view previously printed content via the printer's memory. In truth, this is very unlikely to happen, but if you do want to make changes to the ports, click Inbound Rules in the Windows Firewall, then look for the File and Printer sharing rules. Scroll to the right to see the Local Ports list. Be sure you make a note of any changes you make so you can reverse them if your printer stops working properly.

MINI WORKSHOP | Open and close ports

1 SolarWinds Free Port Scanner lets you explore the status of your ports. Once the scanning has completed, click one of the IP addresses or devices. **1** You can sort the list by Port or Status, **2** or search for a particular port. **3** Here, UDP port 80 is filtered, while the TCP equivalent is open. **4**

2 Once you know the status of your ports, you can go about changing them. You can do this through your router – just log into the router page (check your router or manual for details on how to do this) and look for any settings to do with port blocking. Here, you can create rules for managing ports. **1**

3 Another option is to use the Windows firewall. Type `windows firewall` into the Windows search box and click Enter, then Advanced Settings on the left. Select Inbound Rules, **1** click New Rule **2** and select Port. **3** Click Next and choose TCP or UDP, then specify the port(s) and choose whether to allow or block.

NEXT ISSUE **How To...** Turn an old PC into a single-use device

On sale Wednesday 8 August

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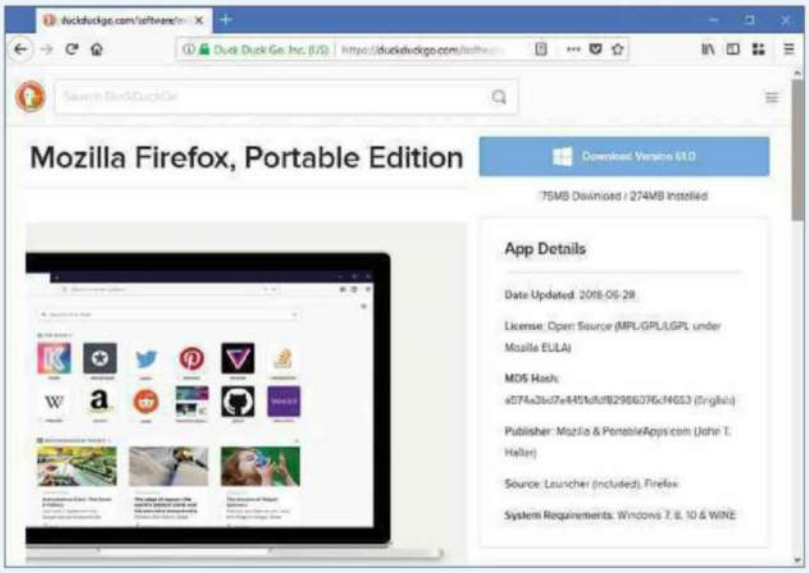
Web User Masterclass

Uncover new features in the latest version of Firefox

Try the portable version of Firefox

There's more than one way to get your hands on the latest version of Firefox. The standard installation option is available to download from Mozilla at www.mozilla.org, but if you just want to give it a go without making it your primary browser, try the portable version. Because it doesn't need installing, it won't leave a load of Windows clutter, and if you want to get rid of it, just delete the folder you're keeping it in. You can also use it to keep old versions of Firefox, either for reference or so you can go back if there happens to be something wrong with the latest version.

You can download the latest portable version of Firefox from DuckDuckGo (bit.ly/ffpo454). Run it to unpack it in the Downloads folder, then open the FirefoxPortable folder, right-click FirefoxPortable and select 'Pin to Start' or 'Pin to taskbar'. It's then ready to use.

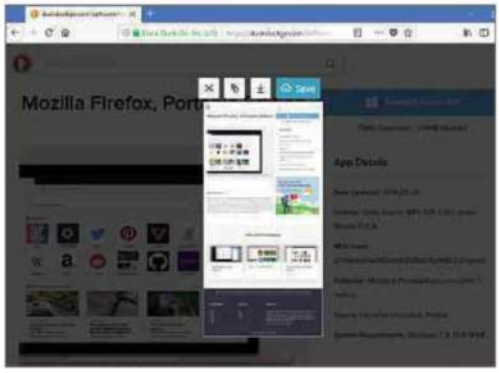


Try Firefox by installing the portable version from DuckDuckGo

Use the new screenshot tool

Windows has built-in tools for taking screenshots (such as the Print Screen key) but it only captures what you can see, which can be a bit blunt. Some web pages, for example, don't fit on your screen and you need to scroll to see the full content.

Firefox's built-in screenshot tool can capture and save a whole web page, including areas that are off the screen. Go to the web page you want to take a screenshot of and click the three-dot menu to the right of the address box. Click 'Take a Screenshot' to see buttons for 'Save full page' and 'Save visible'. Move your mouse around the page to highlight individual objects such as images and boxes of text. These can be selected for saving. You can also click and drag over the page to select a specific area.



Take screenshots of whole web pages and save them online

Whichever method you use to take a screenshot, several buttons appear: Copy sends your screenshot to the clipboard; Download saves it locally; and the Cloud button saves it online at screenshots.firefox.com. This last option isn't private but the URL includes a series of letters and numbers that are difficult to guess, so it's unlikely to be seen by anyone other than you and the people you share it with.

Images saved online can be edited with some basic tools: they can be cropped, or you can use the pen and highlighter to make marks on them. Click the button 'Expires in 14 days' and you can set the expiry time from 10 minutes to never.

If you see words that `look like they've been typed in a typewriter`, follow the instructions and type them exactly as they appear, paying close attention to spaces and punctuation.

Configure the homepage

Firefox Home appears when you first launch or open a new tab, and it has some useful customisation features. Open the menu, click

Configure what appears on the Start page from the Options menu

Options, then select Home on the left. In the Firefox Home Content section, you can choose whether to include Web Search, Top Sites (your most-visited pages), Highlights and Snippets. You can set how many rows of top sites are displayed, or even switch it off and go back to using your favourite page or a search engine's homepage.

Send a page to mobile

Click the three-dot button in the address bar to open a menu of useful options, including 'Send Tab to Device'. If you have Firefox installed on a phone or tablet, and have a free Firefox account, you can send the current web page to the device and continue browsing there.

Become a Test Pilot

Firefox is constantly being developed and its experimental features are available to try at testpilot.firefox.com. We published a Workshop on its Color tool in Issue 453 (bit.ly/webuser453).

Side View is another interesting experiment, which shows two web pages side by side. Click Get Started, then Enable Side View on the next page. A sidebar opens on the left. To send a page you're visiting across to this sidebar, click the Side View button in the Firefox toolbar. You can then browse other pages or sites in the main window while keeping the original site open in the sidebar. Because the sidebar is narrower than the main window, it often loads the mobile version of a website, so it still looks good even if your screen is narrow. You can adjust the sidebar's width by hovering your mouse between the sidebar and the main window. When it changes to a double-headed arrow, click and drag it to your preferred width.

The Notes Test Pilot is a useful experiment if you use the internet for research. It opens a sidebar on the left that lets you create and store notes as you browse the web. Click the left arrow at the top of the sidebar to close the example note, then click New Note to create one of your own. Notes are synced across all your computers if you have a Firefox account.

Keep a web page open in the sidebar while browsing another site

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

Access sites in containers

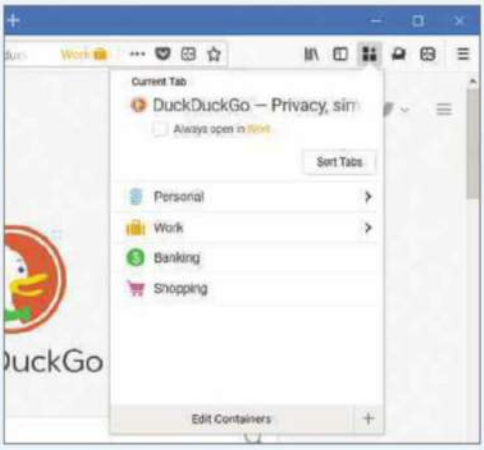
Websites store information in cookies, which is helpful if you don't want to have to enter your username and password every time you visit a site that requires a login, but less so if you have multiple accounts with that site and aren't given the option to choose which account you want to use.

Containers is a useful new Firefox add-on from Mozilla (bit.ly/ffcon454) that lets you log into sites with different accounts on different tabs. Its 'containers' set a boundary for website activities within each tab, a bit like a sandbox.

For example, creating containers for work and personal use would keep your browsing activities separate. It could also be useful if you share your PC with others, because they'll be able to shop and use social networks as themselves instead of you.

Install the add-on and you'll see four containers: Personal, Work, Banking and Shopping. To create more, click the plus tab button to open an ordinary tab, but click and hold it to display a list of containers, then select the one you want to create.

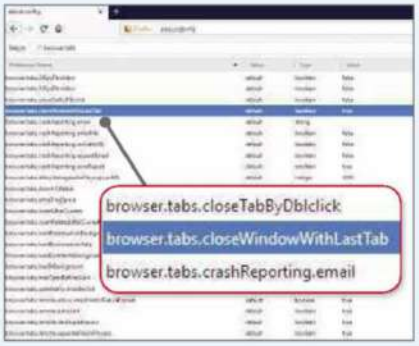
It's possible to assign a container to a particular website so they always open together, which is useful for keeping browsing activities or site logins separate. Right-click an empty part of the web page to display a menu. Go to Firefox Multi-Account Containers at the bottom and select 'Always Open in This Container'.



Create containers and open sites within them to maintain your privacy

Browser tab tricks

Firefox's extensive range of configuration options make it easy to customise the browser. For example,



There are lots of new tab settings you can change in `about:config`

type `about:config` into the address box, press Enter, accept the warning, then type `browser.tabs` into the search box at the top. Double-click 'browser.tabs.closeTabByDblclick' to change it from False to True, and you can now close tabs by double-clicking them. You may find it more convenient than clicking the close button, which requires more accuracy.

When the last tab is closed, do you want Firefox to close or stay open? Set 'browser.tabs.closeWindowsWith LastTab' to either True or False, depending on your preference.

If you try to close Firefox when there are tabs open, do you want to be warned by a pop-up message or just have the browser close straight away? Set 'browser.tabs .warnOnClose' to True or False.

As tabs are opened, they're placed in the browser's title bar, which slowly disappears. It saves vertical screen space, but it can make moving the window by clicking and dragging a bit awkward. If you prefer Firefox to have separate title and tabs bars, double-click 'browser. tabs.drawInTitlebar' to change it from False to True.

An alternative to displaying the full title bar in the browser is to show just a few pixels at the top, so the window can still be picked up and dragged. Double-click 'browser.tabs.extraDragSpace' to toggle it from False to True.

When your mouse hovers over a tab, Firefox loads or refreshes the content in the background. Some people find this speeds up switching tabs, others say it slows it down. To try it both ways, double-click 'browser.tabs.remote.warmup .enabled' and switch between True and False.

Ask the Expert

Roland Waddilove, computer programmer and PC journalist since 1981, answers all your technical questions. Email us for help at webuser@dennis.co.uk

GENERAL PC

Keep the Windows Calculator on top

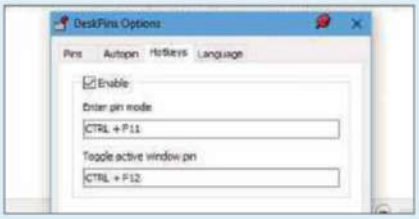
Q I use the Windows Calculator app a lot, but my laptop's 13in screen is too small to have Word or a browser and the Calculator visible at the same time. I do a calculation, then switch programs, which hides the calculator under a mess of windows. It's a pain.

Kev Baker, via email

A There are a few tricks you can try. Pressing Alt+Tab switches to the last-used app and brings its window to the top. You could also use extra desktops in Windows 10 to spread out your windows so they don't overlap. Press Ctrl+Windows+D to create a new desktop, then press Ctrl+Windows+left/right arrow keys to switch from one to another.

A better solution might be to use a tool that forces a window to stay on top of the others. DeskPins (bit.ly/dp454) is a good example. The screenshot on the website is from XP, but it still works in Windows 10.

Click the DeskPins icon in the taskbar and the mouse cursor becomes a pin. Then click the window you want to pin on top of all others.



Use DeskPins to ensure a window stays on top of all others

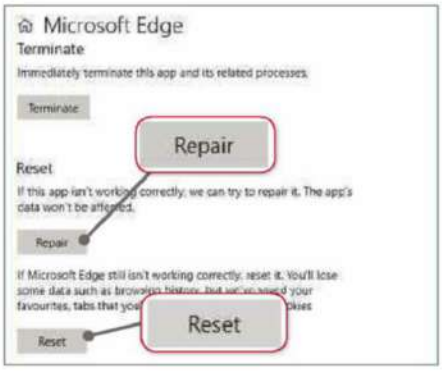
GENERAL PC

Get Edge back online

Q Since I updated my PC to Windows 10 version 1803, I can't browse the web using Microsoft Edge, even though the internet is connected and working. I tried resetting Edge but with no luck.

Robert Cull, via email

A Try resetting your Wi-Fi connection. Open Settings (Windows+i) and go to 'Network & Internet', then WiFi. Click 'Manage known networks' and select the network you're using, then Forget.



You can't uninstall built-in apps, but the Repair and Reset buttons can fix problems

Click the Wi-Fi icon in the taskbar and connect to your network again. Also, open Troubleshooting in the Control Panel and click 'View all'. Run the Internet Connections troubleshooter.

If Edge is the problem, try its Repair and Reset options. Open Windows Settings and click Apps. In the 'Apps & features' section, find and click Microsoft Edge. Click the 'Advanced options' link, then scroll down and click Terminate. Below, you'll see Repair and Reset buttons. Try both to see if they fix Edge.

GENERAL PC

Restore OneDrive connection

Q I'm running Windows 8.1, which has OneDrive software built in, but my OneDrive account has stopped working. The software loads but then says it can't connect to the internet, even though my browsers and email software work. I've tried reinstalling the app, but it uses the old settings and still doesn't work.

Microsoft support says my account is corrupted and a fix needs to be applied at their end, but six months later I'm still without access. I can use another profile with a second OneDrive account, but this involves the inconvenience of moving files and resetting apps. Surely there is a solution, such as deleting a file in AppData or changing a Registry setting?

Gerry, via email

A If Microsoft says a fix is needed at their end, then perhaps nothing will help. However, it's worth uninstalling and reinstalling OneDrive to make sure. Find Command Prompt in the Start menu and right-click it. Select the option to run it as an administrator. In the command prompt window, type:

```
cd \windows\syswow64
```

Press Enter, then type:

```
onedrivesetup.exe /uninstall
```

and press Enter again.

Close everything, then restart Windows. Use File Explorer to go to

C:\Windows\syswow64

Run OneDriveSetup.exe by double-clicking it. If the file isn't there, you can download it from the OneDrive website (onedrive.live.com).

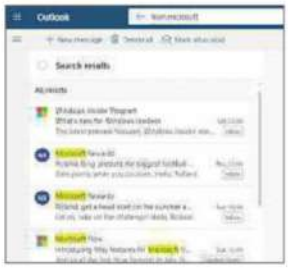
If this doesn't work, try Google Drive or a similar alternative. Go to drive.google.com, click the cog icon at the top and download 'Backup and Sync'. You get twice as much free storage space and it works just like OneDrive, syncing with a folder on your hard drive.

EMAIL

Differentiate similar emails

Q I've used Windows 7 and GMX (www.gmx.co.uk) for my email for years. During that time, I've received a number of messages that have the same sender and subject, which makes it hard to know what's in them without opening them. It would be helpful if I could add a note or edit the subject to add some information about its content. I can't be the first to encounter this problem. Do you have any suggestions, even if means using a different service?

N Bradley, via email



Outlook shows the first few words of each email in the inbox

A The only option in GMX is to turn on the preview pane so you can see an email's content as soon as you select it. Click the icon in the top-right corner of the inbox and select either 'E-mail preview below' or 'E-mail preview right'.

You still can't see a message's content from the inbox list without selecting it, though, so if that's what you want, there are some popular alternatives, such as Gmail (mail.google.com) and Outlook (outlook.live.com). Both services show the subject plus the first few words of the message, which may be enough to help you tell one message from another.

GENERAL PC

Run installation as administrator

Q My subscription copy of Issue 451 (bit.ly/webuser451) arrived yesterday and I decided to try Softmaker Office (www.softmaker.com) as shown on page 28. All went well until I reached the installation stage, when a message informed me that I didn't have administrator rights and that the installation couldn't continue. I haven't come across this before, even though I've installed hundreds of programs.

I've tried sorting out my user account and getting online advice, but to no avail. Is this a problem with this software, or is it likely to be a blip in my operating system? I use Windows 10 Home with the April 2018 update.

Besley Simmonds, via email

A Some applications need administrator rights to install or run, which usually triggers a pop-up message asking for approval. It's not clear why this isn't happening here, but there are a couple of possible solutions.

The setup program may have been corrupted when you downloaded it, so delete it and download it again. Instead of double-clicking the program to install it, right-click it and select 'Run as administrator'. Even though you may be logged in with an administrator account, you sometimes need to specify that you want to run a program as an administrator. It's a security thing.

EMAIL

Block spam

Q How can we stop all the spam messages we get?

Robert Gleadhill, via email

A Your email came via Gmail, so we're surprised you're receiving a lot of spam because Google is good at filtering it out. It may be that you have unknowingly signed up to email marketing lists. Online stores, free trials, websites and many other things on the internet often require you to provide an email address. You then end up on a weekly or even daily mailshot.

Most emails have an 'unsubscribe' link at the bottom. It may be small and hard to find, but it should be there. Click it. These usually work nowadays, as long as the sender is legitimate, and should reduce the amount of mail you receive.

Social networks can also be very demanding, sending email updates or phone notifications every time someone in your network so much as sneezes. Go to Facebook, click the top-right menu button (a downwards arrow), then click Settings, Notifications on the left. In the Email row, click Edit and switch everything off. Repeat with other social networks, such as Twitter and Pinterest.

Gmail can automatically sort email into categories, which helps keep your inbox tidy. Click the cog icon and select Configure Inbox. There are options to add tabs for social, promotions, updates and forums. Turn them all on, and your main inbox, Primary, will receive a lot less mail. Nothing is lost – the other messages are available from the tabs if you need them.

Add tabs to Gmail to filter unimportant messages from your inbox

GADGETS

Make room for satnav data

Q I bought a satnav for my car but it doesn't have much memory, and with the maps installed, I can't update it. Google suggests deleting some apps and music, but there are only three apps on the device. I bought an update called Traffic Online, but this won't work because of the shortage of memory.

Robert Cull, via email

A A few satnav systems run on an Android device, which is basically a small tablet that runs apps. We suspect this is the type of device you have. Your options are limited, but the first thing to do is to look at the documentation or box it came in to see if it accepts memory cards. It's an easy way to boost a device's storage capacity.

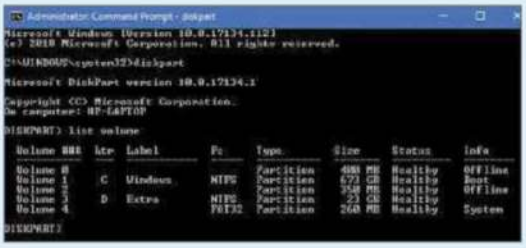
If there's no expansion slot, go into the device's settings. We can't give exact instructions without knowing the make or model, but look for apps and uninstall any you don't need. The maps app may have old updates that you can delete to make room for new ones.

GENERAL PC

Exorcise phantom drives

Q An extra hard drive has appeared in Explorer. I'm supposed to have a C: and a D: drive, but now there's an E: drive as well, which I can't access. Where did this phantom drive come from and how do I get rid of it?

J Hunt, via email



Use Diskpart to view your hard drive's partitions and remove unused drive letters

A When you install Windows, the installer splits your hard drive into sections called partitions. Some of these are reserved for Windows: one contains Windows itself and should be accessible, but the others aren't designed to be seen by the user.

Sometimes Windows mistakenly assigns a drive letter to a hidden partition. Even if you can access it, you shouldn't. Either ignore it or remove its link. To do this, right-click the Command Prompt on the Start menu and click 'Run as administrator'. In the Command Prompt window, enter `diskpart` to run the disk-partition tool. Type `list volume` to see a list of all the partitions on the drive by number: Volume 0, 1, 2 and so on.

Type `select volume X` where X is the number of the volume to remove. Then type `remove letter=X` where X is the letter, such as E. Type `exit` and `exit` again to finish.

This fortnight, Roland has been sitting in front of a fan to keep himself and his computer from overheating

Your Top Tips

Our pick of the best advice from our readers. To get help or offer it to others, visit forum.webuser.co.uk

TOP TIP

Back Issues disc winner

GENERAL PC

Create a Guest account in Windows 10

Guest accounts no longer exist in Windows 10 but I've found a way to create an account that works in the same way. Find Command Prompt in the Start menu and right-click it to 'Run as administrator'. Type `net user Visitor /add /active:yes` and press Enter. This creates the Visitor account, although you can rename it and call it whatever you like, except Guest, which is unavailable.

Now type `net user Visitor *` and when it asks for a password, just press Enter twice. You then need to remove the Visitor from the Users group by typing `net localgroup users Visitor /delete` and add it to the Guests group by typing `net localgroup guests Visitor /add`. Once you've closed the Command Prompt, the new Visitor user will be available, so you can lend your laptop out without worrying that someone can access your files.

Mark Gresham, via email

This secret trick creates a Windows 10 Guest account

GENERAL PC

Remove a redundant printer driver

Has anyone ever used Microsoft XPS Document Writer? I read it was meant to be an alternative to PDF that never caught on, yet there it is, clogging up my list of available printers. To remove it, open Windows 10 Settings (Windows+i) and go to Devices, then 'Printers & scanners'. Click Microsoft XPS Document Writer and click 'Remove device'.

Do you need XPS Document Writer? If not, turn it off

If you're running Windows 7, open the Control Panel, then 'Programs and Features'. Click 'Turn Windows features on or off' and clear the tick box next to Microsoft XPS Document Writer.

Jon Kirby, via email

EMAIL

Let Outlook reply to emails

Summer's here and lots of people will be going on holiday. If you don't want your contacts to think you're ignoring them while you're away, you can use Outlook.com's automated email response to tell people that you'll get back to them when you return. Or you could reply with an alternative contact, if there's someone else who might be able to help.

To set this up, go to the Outlook.com website (outlook.live.com) and click the cog icon. Click the link at the bottom, then 'View full settings' and, on the next page, select Email in the first list and 'Automatic replies' in the second list. You can then switch on automated responses and set the start and finish date.

There's an option to only send the message to contacts, which is useful if you don't want random people knowing that you're away. Write the response you want sent to people and click Save. You can now relax on holiday without having to check and respond to emails.

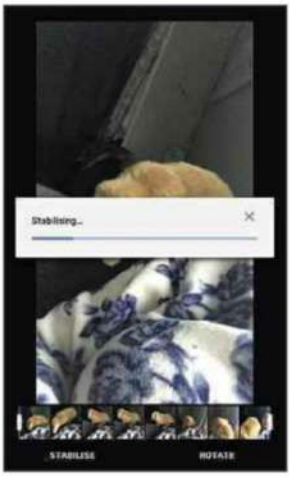
Bill Norton, via email

Outlook's automated responses can deal with emails while you're on holiday

VIDEO

Stabilise your Android videos

No matter how steady I hold my phone when filming with the camera, every video results in a nausea-inducing blur. To overcome this, I use Google's Stabilise function. Open your shaky video in the Photos apps. At the bottom of the screen, tap the icon that looks like three horizontal slider controls and choose the Stabilise option. The tool works in real-time, so don't close it while it's working. When it's done, you'll have a video that won't make you feel like you're riding a waltzer at the fair.



Smooth shaky video footage with Google's Stabilise function

I should point out that there are alternatives out there, but Google's built-in tool works just fine for me.

Richard Carp, via email

GENERAL PC

Sound advice

Did you know the sound output from applications can be individually set? To see this, open the Windows 10 Settings app (Windows+i) and click System. Scroll down to 'Other sound options' and click 'App Volume and device preferences'. Below the master volume is a list of apps that can output audio.

'System sounds' is always there because Windows uses sound to notify you of events and problems, but there's also a list of apps. You might need to open some before they appear in the list, but it should list software such as Edge, Groove Music, the video editor in the Photos app, and so on. You can set the audio volume to a different level for each app. If you have multiple output options, such as speakers or headphones, you can choose where the sound should be sent. I have system sounds set low but sounds for other apps turned up.

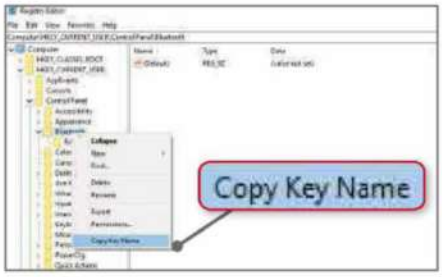
Lewis Prescott, via email

GENERAL PC

Create Registry key shortcuts easily

I spend a lot of time editing the Registry and putting in entries. Registry Shortcuts (bit.ly/regkey454) is a tool that does exactly what it says on the tin. Install the program, then type `regedit` in the Start menu to open the Registry Editor. In the left-hand sidebar, right-click the key you want, choose Copy Key Name and open your chosen shortcuts folder. Click Paste and your key becomes a shortcut in the folder.

Ian McNeil, via email



Registry Shortcuts provides a quick way to add entries your Registry

SOCIAL

Rank your Facebook comments

When you post something on Facebook, the comments you receive are shown in the order they were posted. You can change this so they are displayed in order of rank, with the most relevant comments first. Go to the Facebook menu (the down arrow in the top-right corner) and click Settings, then select 'Public posts' and click 'Comment ranking' to expand the section. Set it to On and you should see the best comments appear first.

Rank the comments to your Facebook posts and put the best first

Karen Gray, via email

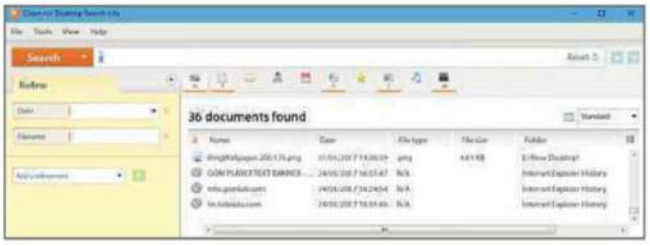
GENERAL PC

Search files with this free tool

Regarding the article 'Best free Windows search tools' in issue 449 (bit.ly/webuser449), I've found a wonderful free tool called Copernic (www.copernic.com) that I use when I need to find the odd word or name embedded in my files. The only complaint I have is that sometimes, when the word is contained in several files, it returns too many suggestions!

Overall, it has saved me hours of work trying to find a word in a file that isn't mentioned in the file's name.

Lynnette Hammet, via email



Is this the search tool you've been looking for?

MOBILE

Get a Morse code keyboard

If you fancy a little Android fun, I highly recommend Gboard's Morse Code keyboard. It's currently in beta, so you'll have to sign up as a beta tester on Google Play's Gboard page (bit.ly/gboard454) from your phone (it doesn't work on PC). Scroll to the bottom of the page to the box 'Become a beta tester'. Once you've joined, change your Gboard language to English (US) through the System settings. You'll get a selection of keyboard options and right at the end, you'll find the Morse code layout. Select it, open the Gboard again and press the globe icon. You can now choose the Morse code keyboard and type your messages in dots and dashes (Gboard translates it into understandable text for you). The keyboard even helps you learn Morse code, which is cool. Or should I say, "-.-. --- --- .-.."!

Brush up on your Morse Code with Google's keyboard

Will Benjamin, via email

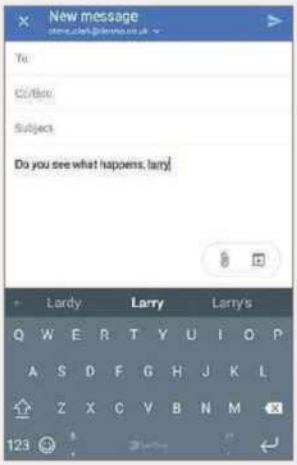
BLUNDER OF THE FORTNIGHT

MOBILE

Use correct punctuation in SwiftKey

I'm a stickler for proper grammar and punctuation, even when texting on my phone. After you recommended SwiftKey, I downloaded it, but for ages afterwards, if I forgot to capitalise a word, I wouldn't be able to rest unless I deleted it, switched Caps on, then correctly typed it out again. Until last night. It turns out that, so long as you don't press the spacebar and the cursor is still next to the word – you'll know because the word is underlined – you can tap the Shift key once (to capitalise the first letter) or twice (for all caps). Now, when you click the spacebar, your word will automatically capitalise as per your request.

Rosie Chalk, via email



Get to grips with capitals in SwiftKey

Have you managed to fix a PC-related disaster?
If so, please send your story to webuser@dennis.co.uk

WebUser Reader Offer

NEW!

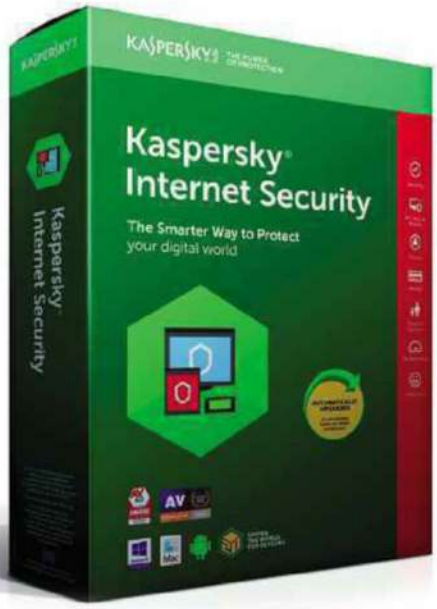
OFFER OF THE FORTNIGHT

Kaspersky Internet Security 2019 - on sale now

Our sister title *Computeractive* is now selling the new and improved 2019 edition of the multi-award-winning antivirus Kaspersky Internet Security at a special discount for readers

WHAT'S NEW IN KASPERSKY 2019:

- ✓ Finds and removes dodgy browser extensions
- ✓ Identifies software that needs to be updated
- ✓ Gives you more control over which adverts are blocked
- ✓ More advanced options to keep malware off your PC



SINCE WINDOWS 10 LAUNCHED 18,642 READERS HAVE BOUGHT KASPERSKY SOFTWARE FROM THE SOFTWARE STORE

One PC for one year NOW ONLY £19.99*

Normally £34.99

Buy it from our Software Store at bit.ly/kaspersky1pc

Three PCs for two years NOW ONLY £39.99

Normally £79.99

Buy it from our Software Store at bit.ly/kaspersky2019

* while stocks last

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Readers' Helpdesk

Our pick of the best solutions posted on our reader forums. Visit forum.webuser.co.uk – it's friendly and free!

GENERAL PC

Find File Explorer files easily

Q I just bought a reconditioned computer with Windows 10 Pro installed and I'm really confused about where my files are in File Explorer. I transferred the files and folders from my backup external hard drive using EaseUS ToDo Backup Free (bit.ly/todo454). When I click File Explorer, I have Documents folders under OneDrive and This PC. I assumed the latter was my main Documents file. However, after doing some work and saving the files, I couldn't find them. Searching via the search box on the taskbar, I found them in another Documents folder under User – this also has a Documents folder in it that contained the old files, but not the new ones. I have OneDrive set up, but it's only copying files from This PC.

I just want one place to find all my documents that's easily navigable, and that automatically backs up to my systems. I'm scared to delete anything in case I lose the lot!

Stonehenge, Web User Forums

A I use Microsoft's SyncToy (bit.ly/synctoy454) together with an external hard drive. This program lets you 'echo' what's on your hard drive, and is very straightforward to use. Click View, followed by Navigation Pane and put ticks against Navigation Pane and Show Libraries in the drop-down menu. The Libraries show copies of files stored in the User file under the same names. You can read and write files from and to Libraries, and whatever you add or delete will be replicated in the User files on the hard drive, and vice versa. The theory with OneDrive is that anything you change, add or delete from the Libraries or User files is replicated in the OneDrive file and synced to the cloud.

roy5051uk, Web User Forums

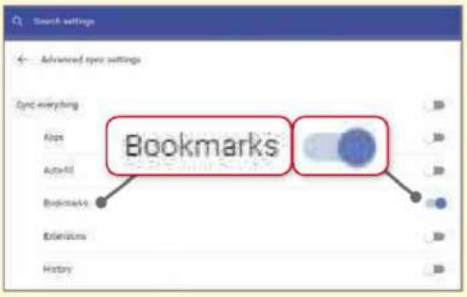
SyncToy manages folders and back-ups locally if you'd rather not use cloud services

BROWSERS

Retrieve lost Chrome bookmarks

Q All my bookmarks have disappeared and I'm now just seeing a blank page. How do I get them back?

suttyjosie, Web User Forums



Keep bookmarks safe by enabling sync in Chrome

A If you're using Chrome and have the sync settings switched on, they may still be saved on Google's servers. Reinstalling or updating Chrome should encourage it to refresh them back on to your PC. I have Chrome running on five PCs and the personal information, such as my bookmarks, is synced across them all when I'm signed into my Google account.

To switch on the sync settings, open the browser's menu and choose Settings. Scroll down to People and click Sync. From here, you can choose what you want to sync or simply opt to 'Sync everything'.

Bedstor, Web User Forums

BROWSERS

Force IE to remember passwords

Q I've set Internet Explorer 11 on a Windows 10 Pro computer to remember my username and password for a frequently used site. For security reasons, I recently decided to change the password but when I visited the site to log in, the old password automatically appeared. I changed to the new password and clicked 'Remember my user name and password', but the next time I visited the site, I had to change the old password to the new one again.

Windows won't store the changed password. I've no idea where the passwords are stored to try manually changing it or deleting it to start from scratch again.

Castman, Web User Forums

A Assuming you have changed the passwords in the site's account page, open Control Panel and select the Credential Manager, then click the Web Credentials tab. You can type Credential Manager into the search box on the taskbar and press Enter if that's easier.

See what's saved for the website in question by clicking Show to reveal the password. If the old one is displayed, click Remove and follow the prompts. Close the Credential Manager and go back to the website in Internet Explorer. Log in with the new password, opt to remember it and return to the Credential Manager to double-check that it's now remembered the correct one.

Moonshine, Web User Forums

Use Credential Manager to check that your saved passwords are up to date

Inbox

You can let us know your views via:
webuser@dennis.co.uk, www.facebook.com/webusermagazine, www.twitter.com/webusermagazine and forum.webuser.co.uk

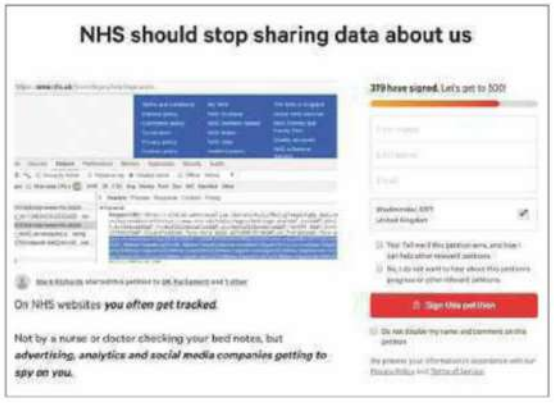
Star Email

Back Issues disc winner

Stop Facebook tracking our NHS data

Thanks for your 'Boycott Facebook, Google & Amazon' feature in Issue 448 (bit.ly/webuser448). My Facebook account is dead and gone and I'm even eyeing up a privacy-focused Purism phone. However, it's sad to say that this is all a bit late.

Back in 2010, the MP Tom Watson raised concerns that Facebook was tracking data on the NHS website (bit.ly/nhstrack454). Well, it didn't stop and when I looked last October, I discovered that it wasn't just Facebook but other companies – including AppNexus, Scorecard Research, Twitter, Yahoo Ads, Google DoubleClick and Microsoft Bing – were all getting varying degrees of information about what we were looking up on the site.



Often, the information gathered was identifiable to an email address or social-media account and one company, WebTrends, was even getting form data from medical questionnaires. Subsequently, I raised concerns with NHS Digital, Public Health England and NHS England (they and others run different parts of NHS Choices (www.nhs.uk), so making a complaint can be complicated). I also complained to the ICO and asked Matt Hancock MP to look into this.

Things improved a bit but there's still lots of tracking and we need to get it removed.

I have raised a petition on the subject at bit.ly/petition454 and you could ask your MP why Facebook was sent this data for over seven years and is still on some NHS sites.

Mark Richards, via email

We need a united front against Luddites!

I can't believe that you gave the Star Email in Issue 452 to BE Singleton, who bellyached about not being allowed to continue using Windows 7 without being encouraged to upgrade to Windows 10, and said that magazines like yours should "condemn companies like Microsoft and encourage them to sort the problems out". What problems? I have several PCs that run Windows 10 successfully and without problems, and have done so since it launched in 2015.

I came to PCs in 1982 with MS-DOS and have had every Windows operating system since version 1 in 1985 – a truly useless bit of kit. But hey, things have moved on, and Microsoft has done a marvellous job getting us to where we are today. No doubt, there are people out there who still use Windows 95 or ME, or floppy disks or typewriters, and would love to have Compuserve, Betamax or LaserDiscs back. But don't let these Luddites' opinions influence you.

I think Microsoft has been very reasonable in announcing an end date to its support of Windows 7. Windows 10 is the best PC operating system for the modern age and people who experience problems with it frequently do so because their computer hardware or broadband service also needs upgrading. In other words, technology moves on in both software and hardware. So get used to it and move on, too.

Clive Davies, via email

Microsoft must stop forcing updates on us

Following BE Singleton's comments, I think Microsoft needs to reassess its policies because it is now hitting everyone with a big stick.

I bought a custom-built rig two years ago and it had no bloatware, just the Windows 10 operating system. Following certain updates, I now have 24 individual Microsoft-related items that I don't want but can't remove because the uninstall

Quiz Answers: Issue 453

1. *Hello Goodbye*
2. *Paperback Writer*
3. *Ticket to Ride*
4. *She Loves You*
5. *Can't Buy Me Love*
6. *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds*

WINNER!
Well done to **Jason Brearsley** who wins a Web User Back Issues Disc

TECH YEAR
2001

option is greyed out. You can no longer choose which updates you want and have to take everything. What right does Microsoft have to dictate what I use my PC for? I paid for it, after all.

Keith Norton, via email

Always read the manual for new devices

Regarding Barry Collins' column in Issue 451, in which he states that it should be an embarrassment to Microsoft that people still need a magazine to explain how to use Windows. It's not Windows that is to blame, it's the users' own fault. People don't take the time to learn how to use devices properly. It's not rocket science – just read the instructions. They rip open the box, jump straight in and then wonder why they can't get their new TV, microwave, phone or other device to work.

At 55 years old, there is not one thing I have been unable to do with a PC or phone or a VHS recorder, because I have this amazing ability to read text.

Stan Elliott, Bangor Co Down

Pinterest won't let me unsubscribe

I'm amazed at the number of emails I get that have an unsubscribe link that doesn't work. Pinterest, for example – I found this amusing for a while but the website's emails are just a nuisance now. I can't count the number of times I have clicked 'unsubscribe' with no effect.

Aren't organisations that do not respond to such requests breaking the law? It would be useful to have advice on what to do in these circumstances.

Mike O'Donnell, via email

***Web User* says:** You are correct that allowing users to easily unsubscribe is a key element of the new GDPR rules. Pinterest says that if its 'unsubscribe' links aren't working, you should let the company know (bit.ly/pinterest454).

What you say...

GOOGLE SAYS YOUR EMAILS CAN SOMETIMES BE READ BY THIRD-PARTY APPS (bit.ly/gmail454). WILL THAT PUT YOU OFF USING IT?

And use what instead? Outlook? Oh wait, that's Microsoft. More spies. No, I love Google products. There's a price to pay for anything 'free'.

Gary Olsen

I'm a fan of Gmail. If you don't want third parties accessing your email, then don't connect to their service.

Pamela J Anderson

I don't use Gmail for anything private, but I think it's wrong that third parties can read emails. How would folks react if the postman/woman delivered letters that had been opened?

John Hewett

Tried Gmail and hated it. I use Outlook on my Android phone and eM Client on my PC.

Geoffrey Boow

MAPLIN HAS CLOSED ALL 200 STORES (bit.ly/maplin454). WILL YOU MISS SHOPPING THERE?

No, half the reason they went under is their staff had no knowledge of what they were selling.

Ian Maddock

Nope, because they were overpriced, and you can get things much cheaper on Amazon or eBay.

Mark James Gregory

Yes, they sold some great small electrical items, such as Ethernet cables. Some stock was weirdly overpriced, though.

Scott Alexander Winchester

I loved Maplin. They sold pretty much everything. There's no real other places to buy tech from. Online it is.

Andrew Wakeman

DO YOU APPROVE OF THE UK SINGLES CHARTS INCLUDING YOUTUBE VIDEOS (bit.ly/charts454)?

Do people take notice of the charts now? Gone are the wonderful days when you watched your fave record climbing the charts for a few weeks!

Caroline Sharman

No, no, no. It will be complete drivel!

Goldmaster @imthegoldmaster

No, but I'm 'old school'. Chart music always used to be counted by record sales, but now it's digital downloads.

Brian Brown

The chart needs to reflect trends of how young people consume music. YouTube is as much a part of that as digital downloads and Spotify.

Martin Phillp

BLACKBERRY HAS RELEASED ITS "MOST ADVANCED" PHONE EVER – THE KEY2 (bit.ly/berry454). DO YOU STILL USE A BLACKBERRY?

Yes, a BlackBerry Z30. It's a wonderful operating system. Shame BlackBerry abandoned it and us app developers.

Paul Wallace

I got a Z10, but regretted it within six months because many apps were no longer supported. I now have an iPhone and would not go back.

Sean Cooper

The missus had a couple, but when she got her first iPhone, she wondered why she didn't switch before.

Si Mellor

A 4.5in display? Think I'll pass! I have a Xiaomi Redmi Note 5 Pro – possibly the best budget phone of 2018.

Roland Davison @ROLY5573

Page 404

Barry Collins isn't fooled by the short memories of those who market the latest gear

Technology that goes around comes around

"There is no such thing as a new idea. It is impossible. We simply take a lot of old ideas and put them into a sort of mental kaleidoscope."

Clever chap, that Mark Twain. If he was around today, he'd make a damned fine tech reviewer. Because as much as tech companies would like to convince us otherwise, new ideas really are exceedingly thin on the ground.

For the past few weeks, rumours have been sweeping the tech gossip blogs about a 'new' Microsoft Surface mobile device with an 'innovative' clamshell design. The Andromeda will, according to the Microsoft internal documents breathlessly reported by the teenagers writing the tech news, create a "new and disruptive" device category.

"It's a new pocketable Surface device form factor that brings together innovative new hardware and software experiences to create a truly personal and versatile computing experience," the documents waffle on.

Similar swathes of screen inches have been devoted to rumours of a Samsung handset with a folding clamshell design. "Excited for the future of folding smartphones?" reads the headline on the *Evening Standard* story covering this astonishing breakthrough. To which my initial reaction is: no, not really, I've seen it all before.

Those of us old enough to remember the days when you used to have to beg your mum to get off the landline so that you could read the latest news on the internet will remember devices such as the Nokia Communicator and the Psion V – clamshell, pocketable devices that truly did define a "new and disruptive" device category.

> "They bang on about the difference between a 19.5:9 aspect ratio and an 18.5:9, like it's the difference between night and day"

Sure, the technology differs. Today's proposed devices have dual-colour touchscreens instead of mono screens and keyboards, and you'd hope they'll be a damned sight thinner than the bricks of yesteryear. But they're not new ideas, just old ideas getting another turn on the merry-go-round.

Screen manufacturers are the masters of this dark art. Remember about 15-20 years ago when they convinced us that curved screens were as old-fashioned as Frank Bough's knitwear and what we all needed were massive flat screens we could hang on our walls? Now it's the other way around. They're trying to flog us "immersive" curved screens that wrap around like a pair of ski goggles. Sure, the screens are concave rather than the old convex tellies that we used to watch *Bullseye* and *Grandstand* on, but is anyone really buying this nonsense? And don't get me started on UHD, HDR and all the other acronyms they're throwing into screen marketing these days.

I sympathise with the marketing wonks, I really do. It must be a tough gig when the company unveils its latest smartphone – a black slab of glass identical to the last one – and asks you to come up with a way of convincing the public to pay a grand for it. That's why you hear them banging on about the difference between a 19.5:9 aspect ratio and an 18.5:9 one like it's the difference between night and day. Guys, it doesn't make a blind bit of difference.

To complete the Mark Twain quote I started with: "We keep on turning and making new combinations indefinitely; but they are the same old pieces of coloured glass that have been in use through all the ages."

Illustration: Andrew Torrens

Do you agree? Let us know at webuser@dennis.co.uk

WebUser

SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

FOR MORE INFO SEE PAGE 62

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