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Don't download sham software

rom fake news on Facebook to fraudulent fish in restaurants, there's a lot of stuff around these days that isn't quite what it seems. You can't even trust bearded bank robbers not to have scrawled on their facial fuzz with a Sharpie, while Southern Rail maintains the facade of running an actual train service.

The most egregious example of this duplicity is fake software, which pervades the web like the stench of cheap aftershave. In this issue's cover feature (page 38), we name and shame the programs, apps and browser extensions that pretend to be

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something they're not. These worthless tools not only waste your time but can also cost you money and even infect your PC or phone with malware. Follow our advice to ensure you steer clear of these pests.

One thing you can't avoid is your own home, so the last thing you want is your domestic appliances spying on you. On page 46, we explain how to make smart devices mind their own business.

ON THE COVER

Robert Irvine

robert_irvine@dennis.co.uk #webuser



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Group Editor Daniel Booth Deputy Editor Robert Irvine Technical & Reviews Editor Andy Shaw Staff Writer Edward Munn Art Editor Laurence Hallam Production Editor Miki Bereny Editorial Tel: 020 7907 6000 Visit forum.webuser.co.uk for technical and buying advice

ADVERTISING

Tel: 020 7907 6799 Advertising Director Andrea Mason Group Advertising Manager Charlotte Milligan Deputy Advertising Manager Alexa Dracos Account Manager Finan Tesfay

ADVERTISING PRODUCTION

Group Production Manage Stephen Catherall, 020 7907 6054 Production Executive Maisie Harvey, 020 7907 6042

Marketing Manager Rachel Hare Marketing Production Manager Gemma Hills

MANAGEMENT Tel: 020 7907 6000 Managing Director John Garewal MD of Advertising Julian Lloyd-Evans Commercial and Retail Director David Barker CFO/COO Brett Revnolds Chief Executive James Tye Company Founder Felix Dennis

SYNDICATION AND USE OF LOGOS

Syndication Senior Manager Anj Dosaj-Halai Tel: +44 (0)20 7907 6132 Email: anj_dosaj-halai@dennis.co.uk

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Web User is available for licensing overseas.

Licensing & Syndication Assistant Nicole Adams Tel: +44 (0)20 7907 6134 Email: nicole_adams@dennis.co.uk

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Tel: 0844 322 1289

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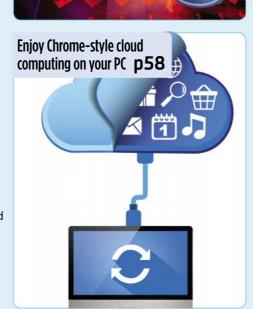
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Tune into international radio stations

here are lots of apps that let you listen to radio stations from around the world but none are as much fun as Radio Garden. This online tool lets you navigate the globe using your mouse to tune into around 8,000 stations mapped by location, zooming in and out to discover something new. Although most of the stations are based in Europe and the US, there are others in Africa, the Middle East and Russia, each one

And that's not all. Click History and you can listen to important and interesting broadcasts from the past. For example, you can learn about the English/French language station La Poste Parisien and hear excerpts from 1937, or listen to Radio Moscow



jingles and the fascinating stories behind them; and another called Stories that brings together audio of individual listeners' experiences of radio. Since more stations are being added

regularly, Radio Garden can only get better, and that's definitely music to our ears.

radio.garden

Broadcast live video on Twitter

twitter.com

Not to be outdone by rivals Facebook and Instagram, Twitter has integrated its Periscope service with its mobile app so you can now broadcast live video simply by tapping the camera icon and selecting Live. Once you've lined up your shot and pressed Go Live, you can stream for up to an hour, with viewers instantly able to watch your live video, comment on it and 'like' it. Any footage you create can be saved to your camera roll and you can block certain users from viewing in the usual way, too. It's certainly a welcome



addition that brings even greater immediacy to Twitter - and. of course. vou can also watch other users' videos.

Watch 4K content on **BBC** iPlayer

www.bbc .co.uk/iplayer

If you were amazed by the stunning quality of the BBC's recent Planet Earth II wildlife series, feast your



excerpt from the Jungle episode in 4K and prepare to be completely blown away. The BBC has made four minutes of footage available in 4K Ultra HD resolution thanks to a decision to film most of the series in this higher-resolution format. Provided you have a fast internet connection, a Panasonic TV or Sky Q, you can open the iPlayer app, select Try Now and enjoy. This 4K option follows in the footsteps of Amazon, Netflix, BT and Sky, but the Beeb has also been specifically looking at a form of HDR called Hybrid Log-Gamma, which provides better-quality pixels. The BBC promises to use this technology at a later date but, in the meantime, you can see the full list of compatible TVs at bit.ly/4kiplayer414.

We highlight 10 of the most amazing and amusing things you can do on the web this fortnight

Convert currency as you shop online

www.opera.com

When a website displays prices in a foreign currency, converting to sterling is an extra hassle you could do without. The latest version of Opera makes this simple by letting you highlight a price to see instantly how much it costs in pounds and pence. It supports 32 currencies based on the daily values from the European Central Bank.



Play a lost Dizzy game



www.dreamworldpogie.com

Forget Mario and Sonic - for many gamers in the late Eighties, eggshaped hero Dizzy was the character of choice. The franchise ended in 1992 but its co-creator Philip Oliver came across the unreleased Wonderland Dizzy in his loft and made the game available online in 2015 (bit.ly/ dizzy414). He's since discovered another unreleased gem - Dreamworld Pogie - originally produced for the NES in 1992, which stars Dizzy's pet. You can play the full game for free in your browser, collecting as many stars and treats as possible.

See how global bias affects Wikipedia entries

wikiwhere.west.uni-koblenz.de

The focus and content of Wikipedia articles can be affected by individual contributors, and Wikiwhere lets you identify geographical bias by analysing pages in different locations around the world. Copy and paste an article's URL into the search box to see a colour-coded map showing the origin countries of edits. You can then repeat this for a foreign-language version of the article for comparison.

The English version of the Crimea entry, for example. has 16 links from both Russia and Ukraine



whereas the French version has four from Russia and 10 from Ukraine.

See how often travel companies apologise

www.sorryfortheinconvenience.co.uk

For everyone driven crazy by the words "sorry for the inconvience" as they stand on a packed platform in the freezing cold, Omid Kashan has created a Twitter scraper that picks up on every apology made by public transport companies.



As well as showing an overall tally, you can discover when specific services last said sorry. Spoiler: it's likely to be a few minutes ago!

TO FOLLOW ON TWITTER

@Tnewyorksecrets

This new account provides a fresh look at New York City with stunning photography

@emrgencykittens

Stay cheerful in 2017 with cute cat videos and photos

@EveryTweet Ever

This parody account riffs on the kind of pointless, repetitive tweets we see all too regularly

@Footy Fooligans

A wry and often hilarious look at football fans' behaviour

@WWE

World Wrestling Entertainment will crown its first UK champion in London on January 15

Go on a UK pub crawl

bit.ly/pub414

Focus your beer goggles on this map showing the location of 24,727 pubs across the UK. It doesn't cover every city, but it's certainly comprehensive and you can view details and reviews of the pubs on pubsgalore.co.uk.

Compare your booze intake

bit.ly/booze414

Get added motivation for a dry January from this BBC tool. Input how many alcoholic drinks you've consumed over the past week to see sobering statistics comparing your intake to other countries.

Find new LibreOffice extensions

extensions.libreoffice.org

This new website collates the huge number of LibreOffice extensions and templates offering extra tools. Browse by category or scroll the lists - and if you're a dab hand at coding, you can submit your own.

Need to Know

Windows 10 to let you delay updates for 35 days

What happened?

Microsoft has already been forced to implement a series of changes to Windows 10 to make it more agreeable to users, and it seems imminent tweaks will make the new operating system even easier to use.

First, a leaked build suggests that Microsoft will finally let you change how updates are installed in Windows 10. At the moment, you have little control over updates, which are downloaded and installed automatically, and there's no option to delay them. However, an upcoming build might change this.

The so-called 'Creators
Update', due for release in April, is
expected to include the ability to 'pause'
updates for up to 35 days. This won't
apply to security updates – which is
good news because it means you won't
be left under threat from hacking
attacks – but it means you can postpone
other updates such as those that add
new features and drivers, so you can
wait until the updates have been tried
by other users before you install them.
This is useful because any reported
flaws tend to be fixed by Microsoft
within days or weeks of being rolled out.

The extra control will be of most use to businesses, because updates can be installed at a time when any potential PC problems will cause the least disruption.



Microsoft has already confirmed some new features in Windows 10



But it also makes it easier to manage the computers of less tech-savvy friends and family because you can install the updates whenever you next visit, so you are around to troubleshoot potential problems in person.

The Creators Update is also expected to affect the Start menu. Microsoft removed the Start menu from Windows 8, then brought it back in Windows 10, adding features that extended it beyond a simple menu to a full user interface for the operating system. A leaked build of the Creators Update shows added support for folders directly in the Start menu. This will let you organise applications more easily and group them together by type – a system already in use on the mobile version of Windows 10 – although this may make the Start menu more complicated.

Another welcome improvement is a Universal Clipboard feature, which lets you sync content that you copy to your clipboard across Windows 10 devices.

How will it affect you?

Although the leaked builds aren't a guarantee of what the Creators Update will look like, they suggest Microsoft has a host of handy tweaks planned for Windows 10. The changes are likely to be welcomed by most users, who will enjoy more control for Windows Updates and better organisation tools for the Start menu.

If these new features are rolled out in the Creators Update, they'll arrive in April and be free for all Windows 10 users via the Update system and be automatically added to your version of the OS. All the changes are optional for users, so they'll benefit anyone who finds the current setup too limiting but hopefully won't require more learning for those of us who are happy to continue using the OS as before.

What do we think?

These changes can be regarded as Microsoft admitting to mistakes with Windows 10, particularly with updates. Forcing through new features was never going to be a popular move, and the company has slowly stepped back from that stance, by offering us increasingly more control. While the Pause setting still doesn't give us full control over how updates arrive on our machines, it's a welcome step that should offer more protection against bugs.

We'd have been happier if Microsoft had trusted us to manage our own updates from the first version of Windows 10, but we have to offer begrudging credit at its willingness to listen to criticism and address the problems.

That said, many users won't even be aware of the Creators Update when it arrives, or take the time to get to know all the new features and settings. By making such changes quietly and in dribs and drabs, Microsoft risks leaving users frustrated by problems, even once they've been solved. Here's hoping the company takes the time to fully highlight and explain tiny tweaks, to ensure users are on board with the improvements.

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

YouTube Red to launch in the UK

What happened?

Google is expected to bring its YouTube Red subscription streaming service to Britain this year, provided the tech giant can sign the necessary copyright deals.

Google owns YouTube and launched the Red subscription service in the US last year. By signing up for the service, you can watch all the videos you like without interruption from adverts and enjoy exclusive access to subscriber-only shows. You can also stream music via the YouTube Music app and save music and videos for offline viewing.

YouTube Red has already expanded to Australia, Mexico, New Zealand and South Korea. Although it hasn't yet arrived on these shores, reports now suggest that Google is in negotiations to extend the service to the UK. For that to happen, Google will need to convince rights holders that the service has proved valuable for musicians and video makers. The subscription service paid out \$1bn to content creators last year.

How will it affect you?

If you use YouTube a lot, Red may be a worthwhile investment because you can avoid ads at the start of videos and stream as much music as you want. In the US, YouTube Red costs \$10 and it's widely expected to cost £10 in the UK – around the same price as rival streaming services such as Spotify.

YouTube Red doesn't yet provide the same amount of exclusive shows as rivals such as Amazon Prime and Netflix, which are also the same price, so it's unlikely to replace both your music and video-streaming services of choice.

What do we think?

YouTube was the first major online streaming service and although it continues to be the most popular source of homemade content, it's fallen behind rivals such as Netflix and Spotify for high-quality programming. The Red subscription service could be what draws many users back, with premium features and a mix of professional and amateur content.



WhatsApp won't work on older phones

What happened?

The WhatsApp messaging app will soon stop working on older phones, although BlackBerry users have received a brief reprieve.

At the end of 2016, the makers of the popular chat app abandoned support for phones running older operating systems, including Android 2.1 and 2.2, iOS 6 and Windows Phone 7. WhatsApp had also intended to end support for BlackBerry OS, BlackBerry 10, Nokia S40 and Nokia Symbian S60, but has instead extended support until the end of June.

The company said that to introduce important new features such as encryption, it needs to stop supporting old phones.

How will it affect you?

If you use one of the mobile operating systems that are scheduled to have support stopped, you're out of luck. You'll need to stop using WhatsApp unless you get a newer phone. While that may sound tough, it's worth pointing out that Android 2.1 was released more than seven years ago. If the handset you're using is that old, there are many other reasons to upgrade apart from WhatsApp, such as ease of use and security.



Apple's iOS 6 is a little newer, released in 2012, but if you have the iPhone 4 or newer, you'll be able to upgrade to iOS 7 and enjoy continued support for WhatsApp. If you're still using an iPhone 3GS, you're surely one of the last stalwarts around with that seven-year-old handset.

What do we think?

It's asking a lot of WhatsApp to continue to support devices that are several years old. Most smartphones only have a lifespan of a few years, and there surely won't be that many people still using a seven-year-old handset.

There are good reasons for hanging on to an old phone, such as financial constraints and sticking with the familiar, but this involves some sacrifices and there aren't many apps that will remain supported after so many years. If your phone is this old, and you want to keep using WhatsApp, we think it's time to bite the bullet and upgrade to enjoy a more stable and secure mobile

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Rise and fall in broadband complaints

What happened?

Ofcom revealed an increase in the number of complaints it received from broadband and landline customers between July and September 2016, compared to the first and second quarters of the year. However, the number it received per 100,000 customers was down significantly compared to the same period in 2015, the regulator said. This suggests that broadband providers are making efforts to improve the quality of their service, which is a positive sign for customers.

On average, Ofcom received 20 complaints per 100,000 broadband customers, while landline companies were responsible for 14 complaints per 100,000. BT performed the worst in both categories, with its Plusnet and EE subsidiaries receiving a higher than average 24 and 20 complaints per 100,000 each in the landline category, compared to the least complained-about company, Sky, which only received six. BT itself also ranked badly for customer service, with 19 complaints.

When it came to broadband,



customers were again least impressed with BT's service (36 complaints per 100,000 cutomers), while Plusnet received 30 and EE had 26. Sky once again performed the best, with only seven complaints, while Virgin came second with 11.

"We expect providers to make it a top priority and work hard to better serve their customers," said Lindsey Fussell, Director of Ofcom's Consumer Group. "If companies let their customers down, we will step in and investigate, which can lead to significant fines."

How will it affect you?

If you're thinking of switching broadband or telephone provider (or both), these figures may help you decide which company to move to, based on the quality of their service over the last year. BT, in particular, seems to be disappointing its internet and landline customers across its various subsidiaries. However, an average of 20 complaints per 100,000 broadband customers may seem negligible, especially as it's a "significantly lower" figure than the previous year.

What do we think?

Although customer service is obviously important, we think

there are also other factors to consider when choosing an ISP - or deciding whether to stick with your current one. These include the monthly cost (of course!), the speed and reliability of the connection (especially compared to what's advertised), and whether the company does enough to protect its users' data. It's certainly useful to know how many people have complained about a company, but we don't think it's valid to make a decision purely on these rankings. After all, some people just like to complain!

FIRST LOOK

Super Mario Run www.supermariorun.com

Nintendo's first official game for iPhone and iPad (the Android release date has yet to be confirmed) somehow manages to distil fun and pump it straight into your mobile device. There isn't a moment of Super Mario Run that isn't enjoyable, even when you have to restart levels because you're a perfectionist and want to collect all the coins. The game costs a relatively steep £7.99, but it's worth every penny.

The main difference between Super Mario Run and previous versions of the franchise is the lack of a 'run' button. Mario runs automatically, so you no longer have control over his forward momentum, but this also liberates the game from conventional

level design.

You progress through Super Mario Run's generous 24 levels simply by reaching each level's goal flag, but a further challenge involves collecting five coloured coins in a single run. This not only changes how you play a level - doing repeat runs to snag each and every one - but also unlocks a

more difficult run of another five coins. If you manage to complete this extra challenge, a black coin run opens, which is not for the faint-hearted. In true Super Mario fashion, the levels get progressively harder and, with no run button, timing becomes everything.

The one irritating flaw is that there is no offline play. For some peculiar reason, Nintendo always wants you to



have an active internet connection to enjoy the delights of Super Mario Run. You can play through a level but can't currently move beyond the end of it without being online.

Despite this annoyance, Super Mario Run is currently the best mobile game money can buy and feels as much at home on iOS as it ever did on



WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

Has the EU blocked the **Snooper's Charter?**

The European Union's highest court has ruled that "general and indiscriminate retention" of emails and communications by governments is illegal, raising the prospect for the Investigatory Powers Act - better known as the Snoopers' Charter - to face a surge of legal challenges.

The European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled that only "targeted" information gathering is justified for state surveillance. This comes in response to a legal challenge originally brought by Brexit Secretary David Davis - when he was a backbench MP - and Labour's Tom Watson, over the legality of GCHQ's bulk collection of personal data.

The finding comes in the wake of the Investigatory Powers Act becoming law, and the clarification of EU standards raises the possibility of legal challenges to be raised against the new domestic legislation.

Watson said the ruling "shows it's counter-productive to rush new laws through Parliament without proper scrutiny. Most of us can accept that our privacy may occasionally be compromised in the interests of keeping us safe, but no-one would consent to giving the police or the government the power to arbitrarily seize our phone records or emails to use as they see fit."

The Home Office responded by saying it will appeal the decision. "Given the importance of communications data to preventing and detecting crime, we will



ensure plans are in place so that the police and other public authorities can continue to acquire such data," said a spokesperson.

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LIKELIHOOD RATING JJJJJ

Sadly, this is more of an obstruction to the Snooper's Charter than an outright block, especially with Brexit likely to diminish whether the European Court of Justice has any say in such matters. However, it does confirm that the Investigatory Powers Act was effectively rushed through Parliament without proper discussion of its legal implications, and suggests the battle is far from over.

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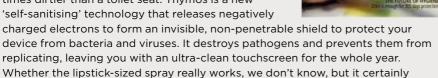
What's new on Kickstarter

.....

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

Thymos GadgetCare bit.ly/thymos414 | From \$47 (£38)

The screen on your phone is filthy - in fact, it's 18 times dirtier than a toilet seat. Thymos is a new





WEBOMETER

WE LIKE...

Twitter to introduce editing feature

Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey has indicated that the social network might finally introduce an editing feature. This means that users will no longer have to delete tweets containing mistakes.



Broadband to be boosted in remote areas

Around 600,000 homes and businesses in rural areas could soon be connected to superfast broadband after the government recouped £440m from 'efficiency savings' and subsidies returned by BT.



WE DON'T LIKE...

Google Pixel camera hit by fault

Users have reported a problem with the Google Pixel's camera app that causes coloured vertical lines to appear before it eventually crashes.



The fault does not appear to affect third-party camera apps.

iOS Messages flaw discovered

An iOS flaw that can disable the Messages app has been discovered by security researchers. The simple exploit involves sending a very long business card to a device so that



the Messages app crashes when it attempts to open it.

sounds intriguing and it's already exceeded its \$20,000 target.

Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

Hackers could hijack plane controls

A security shortfall in an in-flight entertainment system used by several major airlines could allow hackers to take control of a plane's lights and speaker system. Researchers at security firm IOActive found a weakness in Panasonic Aero in-flight

systems. which allowed them to take over a plane's in-flight



displays and show changed maps and altitude readings. The flaw could also be used to control lights and to broadcast messages via a plane's PA system. In some instances, hackers could also allegedly steal credit-card information from automatic payment systems, along with personal data from frequent-flyer memberships.

Ruben Santamarta, a researcher at IOActive, told the BBC that an attack could turn off the cabin's lights and make it seem as if the aircraft was rapidly losing altitude, which would be "shocking" for passengers. While the security flaw allowed researchers to manipulate a plane's in-flight systems, they weren't able to access the general flight systems. However, talking to the BBC. Santamarta did not rule out such a possibility.

bit.ly/plane414

DDoS attacks increase by

Research by the US technology company Neustar has revealed that DDoS (distributed denial of service) attacks are becoming more sophisticated as attackers use new methods to bypass traditional security software and increase the volume of attackers.

The frequency of attacks has increased 40% year-on-year, while multi-vector



attacks have more than trebled in the same period.

These attacks have a particularly disruptive effect because they use a combination of mechanisms to confuse security software and increase attack volume, which means the service is affected for a longer period. This type of attack accounted for more than half of all DDoS activity investigated by

Although using the Internet of Things (IoT) to launch DDoS attacks isn't a new method, it was only used for the first time to bring down a company by Mirai in 2016. This malware uses the logins for IoT devices to enrol them into botnets and use them to launch attacks, without the user's knowledge.

bit.ly/ddos414

Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT: David Gibson, VP of strategy and market development at Varonis (www.varonis.com)





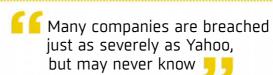
Ben Marsden, Twitter

The fact that this was the second Yahoo security breach to be disclosed

within three months just goes to show how deep some of these major data breaches go. Many companies are breached just as severely as Yahoo, but may never know because they are not actively investigating.

Yahoo says that steps have been taken to secure the accounts that have been breached, but how do we know this is true? What if the remaining accounts were breached without any evidence left behind? You almost have to concede the worst: that the entirety of our data has been compromised.

Perhaps more worrying is that, according to a former security engineer, Yahoo



installed a backdoor that allowed the NSA (National Security Agency) to read all users' emails behind their security team's back. The thing about installing backdoors is that the bad guvs can find them, too.

Companies have a responsibility to their customers and employees to protect sensitive information and disclose any breaches. Quite often, breaches are confirmed not by an organisation's own security team, but by the

discovery and confirmation of leaked data on the Dark Web. Companies should be taking steps not only to safeguard data, but to provide forensic evidence when the worst happens.

In Yahoo's case, the leaked passwords were hashed using a very weak algorithm. However, if users changed their passwords after the last reported breach, they should be safe, since this one happened in 2013.

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Minecraft

minecraft.net

Minecraft is all about construction, so it's only fitting that its website has been completely rebuilt. Previously, it was just a blog with download links for the game, but now it's an all-embracing service packed with news and updates, and feels more relevant to the devoted Minecraft community. The new Culture section highlights amazing creations produced by Minecraft users, while Insider goes behind the scenes to divulge development secrets. The site is full of inspiring, quirky stories, interviews and hints and tips, all wrapped in a clean design. And while it's low on interaction, it's a great hub for Minecraft addicts.

Our rating





DOWNLOADS Buy the game, try Minecraft Realms and enjoy Telltale Games' Story Mode



MERCH Discover the latest official Minecraft merchandise and buy it in the Store





Explore Churches

www.explorechurches.org

Many of us like to visit churches when we're sightseeing abroad, yet we walk straight past them in the UK. This beautifully designed site lets you enter your postcode to discover interesting places of worship in your area, accompanied by photos and detailed descriptions. You can filter you searches to find specific features, such as churchyards, wildlife and stained glass; rate the churches for atmosphere, architecture and information; and leave comments. Frustratingly, some postcodes sent us to incorrect locations, but we can't fault the compelling themed lists, which bring churches together by type, such as those made of wood or those featured in films.

Our rating





CHARITY

Doctors of the World

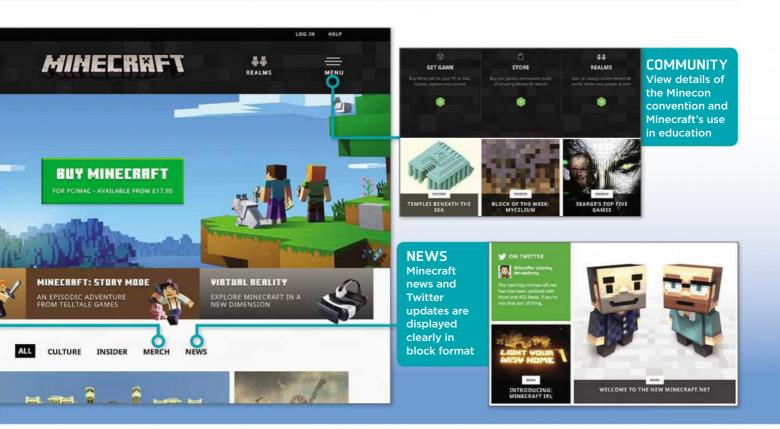
www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk

Doctors of the World is a humanitarian organisation dedicated to providing medical and emergency care to vulnerable people around the globe. As such, its refreshed website is hard-hitting and bold, helping migrants find clinics that grant free healthcare and giving the rest of us an opportunity to pitch in with support and donations. The news and blog section includes information about the charity's campaigns, and you can sign up for its newsletter and opt to receive updates by social media. With a clear layout and concise articles, it's a worthy cause that gets to the point.

Our rating



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





BUSINESS

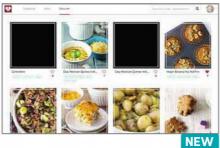
Britain is Great

www.great.gov.uk

To bolster UK exports after the Brexit vote, the Department for International Trade is showing businesses how they can trade globally. This site breaks down the complex subject by offering tailored, comprehensive advice for new, occasional and experienced exporters. While it can feel daunting, the wealth of articles will help you build a great bank of knowledge. A few videos and step-bystep guides would help, but the site offers useful links to free webinars and a Selling Online Overseas service. You can also sign up for a 'Find a Buyer' profile to help generate international sales leads.

Our rating





FOOD

Love To Eat it

www.lovetoeat.it

Foodies looking for inspiration will enjoy this clever site, which provides a way of compiling an online cookbook. By linking your Instagram account, indicating your dietary requirements, following the site and 'liking' recipes, you can keep all your tasty ideas in one place. Love To Eat it sets out the ingredients for each recipe, and you can click through to the host site to see the full instructions. Find recipes by searching, clicking Discover or looking at what's Trending, or try the site's mouthwatering Recipe of the Week suggestion. The explanatory video isn't too hot, but the site's layout is superb.

Our rating





EQUALITY

Gender Pay Gap

bit.ly/gender414

This website from the Office for National Statistics tells you whether men and women in your chosen profession are paid differently. You can use the interactive tool to browse data from 2016's Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, noting the pay gap and the amounts earned. Select an occupation from the drop-down menu, and choose full- or part-time. The data is presented clearly in a table, and also tells you how many women hold particular jobs. Other features include job-level filters, the ability to share on social media and a tool for embedding data elsewhere.

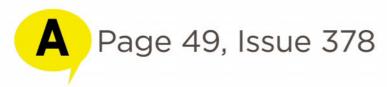
Our rating





WebUser

How do I share Windows 10 apps I've bought with other user accounts on my PC?







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GAMING

Support Streamers

support-streamers.com

Watching other people play games has been a 'thing' for a few years, but with so many streams available, yours can get lost in the crowd. This site promotes Twitch (twitch.tv) streams and claims to boost audience numbers, but being promoted on the site comes at a cost, with a basic Bronze membership priced at \$6.99 (£5.60) and Platinum at \$13.99 (£11.20). The more a streamer pays, the greater their prominence on the site. Subscribers also have access to a forum where they can discuss games, while viewers can click through to the streams. The site feels like a cash-in, however, and it loads at a snail's pace, too.







Glasgow Disability

www.gda.scot

Run by disabled people for disabled people, this site keeps Glasgow's residents up to date with the latest accessibility developments in their city. Find out about forthcoming events, download handy guides, watch videos and get involved in sub-groups such as Drivers For Change, Parts of the site are under construction, but the responsive design works well and the articles are clear, easy to read and do a great job of highlighting relevant links. The donation button could be more prominent, but we like the inspiring stories of those who have been helped by the group.

Our rating





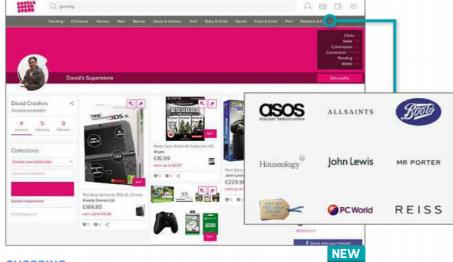
Dunkirk Movie

www.dunkirkmovie.com

Acclaimed director Christopher Nolan is making a film based on the Dunkirk evacuation, which is due for release in the summer. To promote it, Warner Bros has created this site, which carries two emotionally charged videos - the trailer and the announcement - alongside the stunning poster. There's not much else vet, other than a selection of sharing options, but we expect trailers, cast information and other details to be added over the coming months - and perhaps even a history of the event. As it stands, it'll whet your appetite for what looks to be a decent film, but it's unlikely you'll want to return more than once.

Our rating





SHOPPING

Social Superstore

social superstore.com

Social Superstore is a site for budding micro-entrepreneurs, who can now earn up to £1,000 online without paying tax on their income. Backed by former racing driver Nigel Mansell, it lets you create a store, add products from retailers including Boots, Waterstones and John Lewis, and share it over social media. The idea is that others buy items from your shop, earning you commission. It's free to join and easy to use, with a familiar interface that will have you up and running in minutes. Adding items is easy, and you can upload your own images and captions. There are loads of products to sell, too, making it a great way to earn some cash with minimal effort.

Our rating





RETAIL

Buuy

www.buuy.co.uk

This challenger to eBay offers yet another way of selling or auctioning your items directly to others, with the bonus of free listings and no commission on sales of £10 or less. For anything above that amount, this UK-based business will charge you 5% (up to a maximum of £250). This all sounds good, but the site needs some time to mature for those who are looking to buy items. That's because the feedback system is in its early days so it's hard to tell how reputable sellers are. Even so, the item pages will be instantly recognisable to anyone who has used eBay, and more competition should lead to better deals.

Our rating



Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

Top Tips of the Fortnight

Create Amazon links more easily in WordPress

One way of making a bit of money from your website is to provide a link to Amazon using a special affiliate address. When someone buys a product via your website, Amazon will pay you a percentage of the profit. Amazon's new Link Builder Plugin makes this even easier in WordPress. It's still in its beta test phase but is available for anyone to download and use. The plugin lets you search Amazon's products from within WordPress, and provides a variety of quick and simple ways to present the ads. For more info visit Amazon

amazon associates Link Builder Plugin

Affiliates (bit.ly/aalb414) where you can also download the plugin.

Fasthosts's new eShop

Fasthosts (www.fasthosts.co.uk) has launched its eShop Builder for people who want to sell products through their website. The basic service lets you stock up to 1,000 products across 100 categories. and link seamlessly to eBay and Facebook shops, so you can find customers across the web. The shop is automatically configured to work well on mobile devices as well as PCs. Prices start at £30 per month. For more information, go to bit.ly/fh414.

Deal of the Fortnight

Guru (www.guru.co.uk) is offering its shared hosting at half thew usual price. Now at £5.99 per month, the offer lasts for the life of the plan

Web-building Helpdesk

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT: Lawrence Jones, CEO of UKFast



(www.ukfast.co.uk)



Which programming languages should I learn to get a job in web design?

TheClash, via Web User Forums

The web designers we work with are expected to use packages such as Photoshop and Illustrator to create wireframe designs for our pages, which are then handed on to a front-end developer who uses code to bring it to life in the browser. It's not uncommon for one person to do the whole lot, but the key skills I'd recommend for someone starting out as a front-end developer are HTML, CSS and JavaScript. Master these first, then branch out into emerging frameworks such as JQuery, Angular and React. But you need to be willing to keep learning and developing so you

continue to meet the needs of your employer.



MINI WORKSHOP | Check the reliability of your site hosting UptimeRobot: uptimerobot.com | 🕒 10 mins | Any browser

The worst thing that can happen to your website is that it goes offline, because you'll lose potential visitors. Get alerts when your site goes down and log the percentage of up- and downtime using UptimeRobot



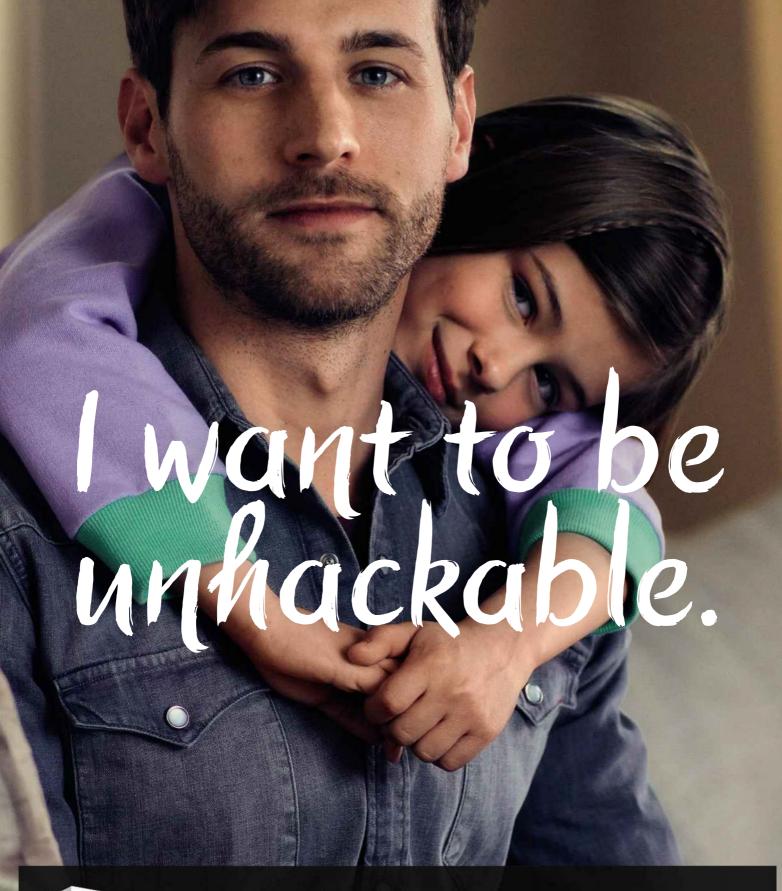
Create an account, verify it by clicking the link in the email you're sent and log in. Click the Add New Monitor button. 1 Next to Monitor Type, select 'HTTP(s)', give the site a name and enter the web address. 2 You can opt to reduce the monitoring interval to more than five minutes. Click the Create Monitor button.

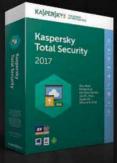


The service will send you an email if it detects that your site has gone down, and another if it comes back online. However, if you want to check how well your site is being hosted, go back to the dashboard. You'll see the Quick Stats page 11 that displays the status of your monitors 2 and the overall percentage uptime logged. **3**



Click the name of the site you're monitoring on the left 11 and vou'll see the current status. 2 the percentage uptime for that site **3** and the response rate, 4 which shows how quickly the site sent information back to UptimeRobot when it was requested.





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We test and compare the latest products

Dual-band Wi-Fi extenders

If your router can't reach the furthest corners of your house, one of these Wi-Fi extenders will push your Wi-Fi signal further

ven a small house or flat can have areas where the Wi-Fi signal drops or even disappears. Something as innocuous as a radiator or a mirror can act as an obstacle to your signal and stop your devices connecting to the internet.

One way of getting Wi-Fi to these hard-to-reach areas is to use an extender. These devices plug into an electrical socket and create a stable connection back to the router. They then extend the Wi-Fi by providing their own network, bridging the gap between your 'deadspot' and the router.

HOW WE TESTED

We set up our router in the living room at the front of our test house and connected a fast NAS (network-attached storage) device via Gigabit Ethernet. The extenders were positioned in the hallway and we measured the download speed of a selection of files from the NAS to four locations around the house, to see how well the extender boosted the Wi-Fi signal on both 2.4GHz and 5GHz networks.

TP-Link RE450 | £44.99 | Buy from Amazon: bit.ly/tpl414

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

We preferred the design of the TP-Link RE450 to the other large-sized models in this Group Test.

There's a certain techy chic to the plasticky antennae and softly glowing blue ring that encircles the WPS button, which turns red if you position the unit too far from the router. It's also the slimmest device we tested: protruding only 37mm from the wall, it's less intrusive than it looks, although the width of the case means you won't be plugging anything else into an adjacent power socket.

Its three aerials maintain an impressively speedy connection. With the extender installed in our hallway, we measured download speeds of 34MB/s from a device connected to it via Ethernet and 15.5MB/s over 802.11ac Wi-Fi, which was faster than any of the other devices we tested. It put in a similarly strong performance throughout the rest of the house.

Performance is generally slower on the 2.4GHz network but the RE450 maintained an above-average speed, keeping the signal stable and consistent when some of the other devices started to stutter and lose the

connection
completely.
If you have
a lot of older
devices that use
2.4GHz, the RE450 can
be configured as a bridge
to connect them to a 5GHz
network (or vice versa), and
you can also use it as a
wireless access point to a
wired network.

Although the RE450 doesn't top the performance tables (see opposite page) across the board, it offers a strong and reliable Wi-Fi connection, which is especially impressive when you consider its price - less than half that of some of the models we tested.

All in all, it's a terrific device as long as you're not expecting blazing 2.4GHz downloads alongside your improved 5GHz performance.

VebUser A great V

A great Wi-Fi extender that put in a strong performance at a price that's hard to resist. The design is a bit on the large side, so it can end up hogging more than one socket, but we think most people will find this a small compromise for a strong Wi-Fi signal all around your home. We found it was better at extending the 5GHz network than the 2.4GHz, but you can use it as a bridge to transfer older devices to the newer network.





WebUse

BRONZE

AWARD

Asus RP-AC66 | £94.99 | Buy from Amazon: bit.ly/asus414

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

The Asus RP-AC66 was a little more stable than our Gold Award-winner but it still wasn't brilliant on the 2.4GHz network. However, its 5GHz performance was great throughout our test house.

As well as boosting your Wi-Fi signal, its web interface lets you set it up as a wireless access point. If you have an Asus router, you can use its Roaming Assist tool to ensure that you're always connected with the best signal.

The biggest problem is its price. It's more than twice as expensive as the TP-Link RE450, yet it doesn't provide much of an improvement in Wi-Fi speed. It's also a huge unit - even bigger than the TP-Link model - so it's not going to go unnoticed when you plug it into a wall socket.



The Asus RP-AC66 does a good job of spreading your Wi-Fi signal around your house. However, it doesn't do this significantly better than the cheaper TP-Link RE450, and its design and size make it less appealing than our Gold Winner.

Sky 0 Booster | £42.47 | Buy from Amazon: bit.ly/skyq414

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

There's a huge caveat with this one: to use it you need to have your broadband supplied by

Sky, from its latest Sky Q Hub. We tested it with a range of other routers, just to be sure. but we got no joy - although it works like a charm with its own equipment. This is the only reason we couldn't give it our Gold Award, but otherwise we found that the Sky Q Booster was the best of the bunch, appearing in the top two across all the tests we performed, on both 5GHz and 2.4GHz frequencies.

The Sky Q Booster looks more like a router than the other devices we tested, connecting to a power socket via a cable, so you can have it sitting on a table or shelf instead of sticking out of a power socket.

VERDICT

Anyone who's already got Sky Q and is suffering from Wi-Fi deadspots should look no further – this brilliant Wi-Fi extender provides the best coverage across the board. It's just a shame the rest of us can't use it.

BEST OF THE REST

We really like the design of the Netgear EX3800 (£42.58 | bit.ly/

socket, so you can still use it to power another device, and is slim enough not to hog a neighbouring socket. It's good value, too, and worked well at short range, but it failed to keep up with our award winners at longer range and performed poorly in our 2.4GHz tests.

Devolo's WiFi Repeater ac (£52.99 | priced but proved slow in our 5GHz tests, coming last in half of them. It couldn't compete with the fastest 2.4GHz models in those tests, either.

The BT Wi-Fi Extender 1200 (£37.99 5GHz tests but performed slower on the 2.4GHz network.

We tested two Linksys devices: the RE6300 (£46.99 | bit.ly/lsys414 | *******) and the RE7000 (£104.99 | cheaper because it's a lower-specified 802.11ac device. It performed well against BT and Devolo's higher-rated devices but wasn't fast enough to topple our winners.

The RE7000's significantly higher price isn't justified by its performance in our tests, which was above average but didn't outpace the cheaper TP-Link RE450 in our 5GHz tests.









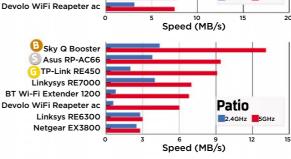


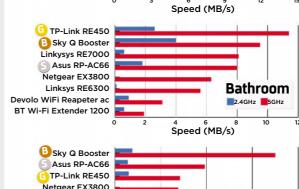


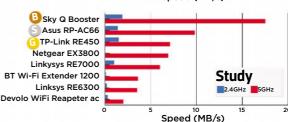
DOWNLOAD SPEED RESULTS CHARTS TP-I ink RF450 **3** Sky Q Booster Netgear EX3800 Linksys RE6300

Asus RP-AC66

Wi-Fi Extender 1200 Linkysys RE7000







Hallway

Group Test Dual-band Wi-Fi extenders

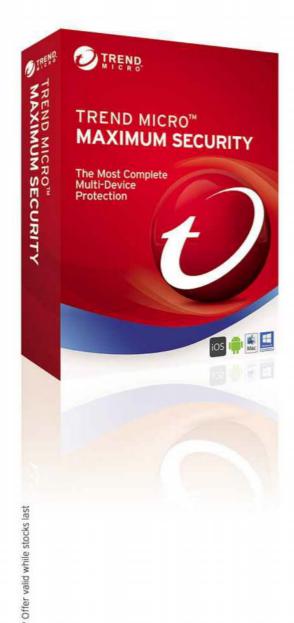
	Web User GOLD AWARD	Web User SILVER AWARD	WebUser BRONZE AWARD	MISSIAN DE LA CONTRACTOR DE LA CONTRACTO	
	TP-Link RE450	Asus RP-AC66	Sky Q Booster	Netgear EX3800	Devolo WiFi Repeater ac
WEBSITE	uk.tp-link.com	www.asus.com	www.sky.com	www.netgear.co.uk	www.devolo.co.uk
PRICE	£44.99	£94.99	£42.47	£42.58	£52.99
BUY FROM AMAZON	bit.ly/tpl414	bit.ly/asus414	bit.ly/skyq414	bit.ly/ng414	bit.ly/dev414
EXTERNAL ANTENNAE	2 x 60mm, 1 x 42mm	2 x 145mm	X	2 x 72mm	X
POWER CONSUMPTION (MEASURED)	3.8W	4.4W	5.6W	3.1W	3.1W
MAINS PASSTHROUGH	X	X	X	1	X
2.4GHz	1	1	1	1	✓
5GHz	1	1	1	1	✓
802.11bgn	1	1	1	1	1
802.11ac	1	1	1	1	1
QUOTED MAX 2.4GHz SPEED	450Mbps	450Mbps	Not stated	300Mbps	300Mbps
QUOTED MAX 5GHz SPEED	1,300Mbps	1,300Mbps	Not stated	450Mbps	867Mbps
WPS BUTTON	✓	✓	✓	1	✓
ETHERNET	Gigabit	Gigabit	Gigabit	Fast	Gigabit
OPERATION MODES	Repeater, access point	Repeater, access point	Repeater	Repeater	Repeater, access point
DIMENSIONS	163 x 76 x 37mm	169 x 85 x 45mm	212 x 141 x 35mm	114 x 54 x 44mm	91 x 59 x 44mm
WARRANTY	Three-years return-to-base	Three-years return-to-base	Not stated	Two-years return-to-base	Three-years return-to-base

OUR VERDICT GOLD AWARD We awarded our Gold Award to the TP-Link RE450, which did a great job of extending our Wi-Fi at a very reasonable cost. It was better at boosting 5GHz than 2.4GHz, and it's too big, but is otherwise a very capable device at a bargain price. If you're willing to pay more, you'll get an even better boost from the Silver Award-winning Asus RP-AC66. This is also a bit on the chunky side and costs nearly twice as much as the TP-Link model, but it manages to outperform its rivals to provide that little extra speed to your network. Sky Q customers should opt for the Sky Q Booster. If this had worked with other routers, we'd TP-LINK have given it the Gold Award, but it's relegated to TP-LINK Bronze due to its lack of general compatibility. However, if you've got Sky Q and are suffering from deadspots, this is the answer to your problems.



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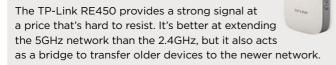
Web User and its sister titles test over 2,500 products every year

HARDWARE

WI-FI REPEATER

TP-Link RE450

£44.99 from bit.ly/tpl414 Date tested: December 2016



KEY SPECS

2 x 60mm, 1 x 42mm antennae = 3.8W power consumption = 2.4GHz (450Mbps) and 5GHz (1,300Mbps) = 802.11ac Wi-Fi ■ WPS button ■ Repeater and access point modes ■ 163 x 76 x 37mm ■ Three-year return-to-base warranty

MONITOR

AOC Q2781PQ

£299.99 from bit.ly/aoc412 Date tested: December 2016



This good-value monitor offers impressive image quality, a lovely design and 178-degree horizontal and vertical viewing angles. You won't need to calibrate it, either. If you're after a monitor with a resolution of 2,560 x 1,440 pixels, buy this.

KEY SPECS

27in flat screen = 2,560 x 1,440 pixels resolution = 1,000:1 contrast ratio = 350cd/m² brightness = 60Hz refresh rate = DisplayPort, HDMI, VGA inputs ■ 330 x 180mm base ■ Three-year collect-and-return warranty

BUDGET TABLET

Amazon Fire HD 8

£89.99 from bit.ly/8hd410 Date tested: November 2016



For its low price, Amazon's Fire HD 8 is a pleasant surprise: it's great for media streaming and web browsing, its battery life is exceptional and it's easy to use. Once it's integrated with Amazon's Alexa voice assistant, it will be even better.

KEY SPECS

Quad-core 1.3GHz processor ■ 8in 1,280 x 800 pixels resolution screen ■ 2-megapixels rear camera ■ 16GB storage (12.09GB free) ■ MicroSD memory card slot ■ Fire OS operating system = 214 x 128 x 9.2mm = 341g

CHROMEBOOK

Acer Chromebook R11

£229.99 from www.amazon.co.uk Date tested: October 2016



The Acer Chromebook R11 laptop has a keyboard that flips behind its touchscreen, so it can also be used as a tablet. It's not hugely powerful but it runs all the web apps you might need and its battery lasted over eight hours in our tests.

KEY SPECS

Dual-core 1.6GHz Intel Celeron N3050 processor ■ 2GB of memory ■ 11.6in touchscreen ■ 1,366 x 768 pixels resolution ■ 16GB eMMC drive ■ 1 x USB 2, 1 x USB 3 ports ■ 802.11ac Wi-Fi = SD card reader = 295 x 203 x 20mm = 1.2kg

WINDOWS 10 LAPTOP

Acer Aspire One Cloudbook 14

£199.98 from www.pcworld.co.uk Date tested: September 2016



The Cloudbook 14 is as good a laptop as you'll get for less than £200. It's not particularly fast and doesn't have a brilliant display, but it's fantastic value, especially because it includes a year's subscription to Office 365 Personal.

Dual-core 1.6GHz Intel Celeron N3050 processor ■ 2GB of memory = 32GB SSD = 14.1in non-touchscreen = 1,366 x 768 pixels resolution ■ 1 x USB 3, 1 x USB 2 port ■ 802.11n Wi-Fi ■ 339 x 235 x 17.9mm ■ 1.6kg ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

E-READER

Amazon Kindle (2016)

£69.99 from www.amazon.co.uk Date tested: August 2016

The highly capable Kindle is lightweight, great for reading and matches its rivals for

usability and content. Despite the lack of a front light, it remains the best e-reader you can buy for less than £100.

KEY SPECS

6in E Ink Pearl screen ■ 800 x 600 pixels resolution, 167 ppi ■ Optical touchscreen ■ 4GB storage ■ 160 x 115 x 9.1mm ■ 161g = No front light = £10 less with Amazon Special Offers = Up to four weeks' battery life (if used 30 minutes per day)

SOFTWARE & SERVICES

INTERNET SECURITY

Kaspersky Internet Security 2017

£19.95 from bit.ly/kaspersky2017 Date tested: August 2016

Kaspersky is rock solid at protecting your PC from the worst of the web, and has come top in eight of our most recent tests, blocking all malware with its robust defences. Use the URL above to save £15.04 on the software (normal price £34.99).



KEY FEATURES

Antivirus and firewall tools ■ Protects online shopping and banking ■ Identity and privacy tools ■ Dangerous-website alerts ■ New software updater ■ Secure-connection VPN ■ Advanced ad-blocking system ■ Multi-device version ■ Compatible with Windows 10

ONLINE STORAGE

Google Drive

From free from drive.google.com Date tested: January 2016

Google Drive is easy to use and has lots of free storage. The Windows software integrates with Explorer, so saving and syncing files is like keeping them in any other PC folder.



KEY FEATURES

16GB free storage ■ Web-based office software ■ Works with XP, Vista, 7, 8+ and 10 ■ Chrome browser add-on ■ Android and iOS apps ■ 100GB extra storage for £1.36 per month; 1TB for £6.01 per month; 10TB for £60.16 per month

WEB DESIGN

Xara Web Designer 11 **Premium**

£69.99 from www.xara.com Date tested: November 2015

Xara Web Designer 11 is a great tool for anyone who wants a good-looking website without having to use HTML

or CSS code. The interface is easy to use and the software includes all the tools you need to create flexible sites that change depending on the size of the screen.



KEY FEATURES

90+ templates ■ WYSIWYG design ■ Create responsive websites = Embed codes = Add HTML = Online editing = FTP uploader ■ Hosting (requires registration) ■ Browser preview (Chrome, Firefox, IE, Opera)

BACKUP AND SYNC

SyncBackFree

Free from bit.ly/syncback366 Date tested: March 2015

SyncBackFree is very capable software that gives you plenty of control over how it can be used. If you know what you



need from your backups and you're prepared to spend some time configuring the options, SyncBackFree has everything you need.

KEY FEATURES

Synchronise: Copy files in both directions ■ Restore backup files easily ■ Email logs ■ Schedule backups ■ Simple and Advanced mode ■ Runs on Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8 and 10 Extensive Help documentation and support

PHOTO EDITING

Adobe Photoshop Elements

£81.08 from www.adobe.com/uk

Date tested: December 2014

With its tidy interface and pop-out trays, Adobe Photoshop Elements provides



everything an amateur photographer needs and helps you quickly find the right editing tools.

KEY FEATURES

Compatible with Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8+ and 10 (32- and 64-bit) ■ Bundled photo organiser ■ Content-aware edits ■ Guided edits ■ People-beautifier tools ■ RAW support

VIDEO EDITING

Adobe Premiere Elements

£81.08 from www.adobe.com/uk Date tested: December 2014

Premiere Elements' superb interface makes its many features neat but accessible. You won't find better video-editing software for the price.



KEY FEATURES

Automatic editing ■ Export to multiple video formats ■ Burn to DVD and Blu-ray ■ Image stabiliser ■ Stop-motion capture ■ Motion tracking ■ Musical scores and sound effects ■ Upload to YouTube and Vimeo

Best Free Software

ANTI-MALWARE TOOL

Malwarebytes 3.0 Free

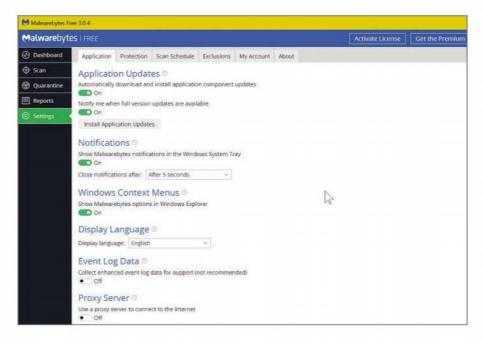
www.malwarebytes.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/

Vista/7/8+/10 File size: 49.6MB

We have some good news and some bad news for fans of the popular Malwarebytes Anti-Malware program. Let's start with the good news: Malwarebytes has combined its antimalware, anti-exploit, anti-ransomware and web-protection tools into a single suite, which will keep your PC safe from harm. The downside, however, is that if you want all this functionality, you need to subscribe to Malwarebytes 3.0 Premium, which costs £39.99 a year for one PC, and a further £10 for each additional PC. If you don't want to subscribe, you'll get a 14-day trial of all the new features, after which the





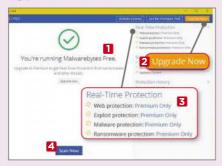
software will revert to a straightforward on-demand scanner, much like before.

Although the free version is obviously far more limited than the all-singing all-dancing Premium option, it's still a good piece of software and provides a solid second line of defence alongside any other anti-malware software you have installed. The latest edition benefits from several improvements, too, such as a smarter interface that places all the program's options in a sidebar on the left. As you might

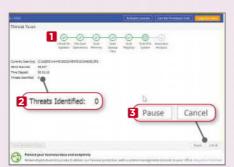
expect, Malwarebytes makes it very easy to upgrade to the Premium version should you choose to.

The software's performance has been boosted, and scans are now up to four times faster than they were in the previous version. The software checks for updates automatically and if you're running it in Windows 10, you'll probably appreciate the Windows Action Centre integration. Malwarebytes says fewer reboots are required after the program has removed malware, too.

MINI WORKSHOP | Remove malware using Malwarebytes 3.0



Malwarebytes shows you at a glance that you're running the free version, 11 and provides a prominent link for upgrading to the paid-for edition. 2 All the real-time protection options 3 are in the premium version. To check your PC for malware, click the blue Scan Now button 4 and the software will get to work.



The threat scan 1 checks for updates, runs pre-scan operations and then scans the memory, startup files, Registry and system files, before running heuristics analysis to identify unknown threats by their behaviour. Any threats it finds are shown on the left of the screen. 2 You can pause or cancel the scan at any time. 5



The Scan II section on the left shows you a summary of your last scan. You can export this or view the report. Quarantine 2 shows any threats the software has found and moved for safety. 3 You can browse the logs under Reports 4 and configure the software updates and notifications under Settings. 5

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



PDF READER

Gaaiho Reader 4

bit.ly/gr414

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 File size: 48.6MB

Many PDF readers offer only some of their features for free, but not the lightweight Gaaiho Reader. This software lets you preview, open and manage PDFs with ease. It provides lots of viewing options, a complete set of annotation tools and the ability to add a signature or password. The latest version even lets you create PDFs online.

Ignore the Try Free button that appears when you open the reader, because that's just part of an advert for the paid-for PDF Suite.



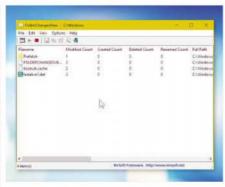
SYSTEM TOOL

Kaspersky Software Updater 2

bit.ly/kas414

Min requirements: Windows XP/ Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 57MB

This program looks for updates to any software installed on your PC and helps you download and install the latest versions. You can update programs one at a time or all at once, or choose to exclude any software you don't want to update. By default, the program scans your PC once a week, but you can change this frequency to suit your needs, or switch to manual scans only.



FOLDER MONITOR

FolderChangesView 2

www.nirsoft.net

Min requirements: Windows XP/ Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 65.8KB

With this tiny tool, you can monitor any drive or folder on your PC and see the files as they're modified, created and deleted – all in real time. It's interesting to see what goes on in the background while your PC is working, and it can help you identify any resource hogs and malware infections. The new version is compatible with Windows 10 and adds an option to 'Show Tray Balloon on Every Change'.

New Windows Apps

Animated Puzzles Star

bit.ly/apstar414

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 129.54MB

This jigsaw-inspired puzzle game involves placing pieces to complete an animated picture. The pieces can be rotated, which makes the puzzles even harder, and there are new challenges every day.



PicsArt — Photo Studio

bit.ly/picsart414

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 53.3MB

The new version of this imageediting program introduces 'Magic' photo effects that transform digital snaps into works of art. There's also a daily Challenges page with competitions to enter.



Timesheet+

bit.ly/timesheet414

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 1.7MB

If you have trouble managing your daily life, this time planner will help. You can view your schedule by week or month, drag and drop events and back up your data to OneDrive.



Best Free Software

DISC-AUTHORING TOOL

Ashampoo **Burning Studio 2017**

www.ashampoo.com/uk

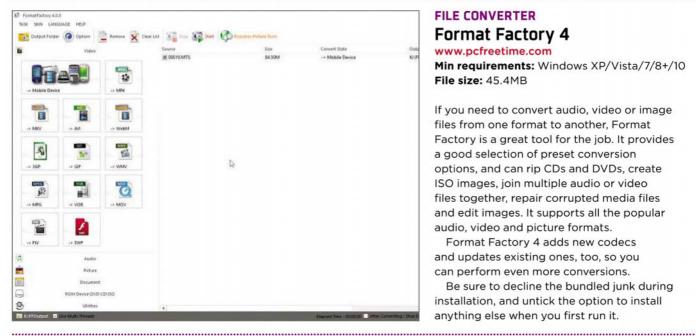
Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10

File size: 73.1MB

It may be a cut-down version of Ashampoo's paid-for Burning Studio 18, but this versatile free disc-authoring program can do most of the tasks you'd expect of it. You can write data to CDs, DVDs and Blu-ray discs; create (and rip) audio discs; make and burn disc images; and even print covers and labels.

Ashampoo has redesigned the software for the new 2017 version and claims that it offers a better user experience as a result, although the layout is similar to last year's interface. It's been optimised for Windows 10 but will run without any problems on Windows 7 and 8+ too





FILE CONVERTER

Format Factory 4

www.pcfreetime.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10

File size: 45.4MB

If you need to convert audio, video or image files from one format to another, Format Factory is a great tool for the job. It provides a good selection of preset conversion options, and can rip CDs and DVDs, create ISO images, join multiple audio or video files together, repair corrupted media files and edit images. It supports all the popular audio, video and picture formats.

Format Factory 4 adds new codecs and updates existing ones, too, so you can perform even more conversions.

Be sure to decline the bundled junk during installation, and untick the option to install anything else when you first run it.

SYSTEM TOOL

Windows Update Blocker

www.sordum.org

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10

File size: 387KB

Windows 10 gives you less control over system updates than previous versions of Windows. This helps keep your system safe, but it also means that updates can be installed without your knowledge. Windows Update Blocker lets you disable automatic Windows updates, and has a Protect Service Settings option that stops the operating system interfering with your preferences. There's no need to install the software - just unzip the program and run it.

Update Blocker will be of greatest use to Windows 10 owners, but the software works with older versions of Windows, too, so any PC owner can block unwanted updates that might mess up their computer.







GAME Winds of Revenge

bit.ly/winds414

Min requirements: Windows XP/ Vista/7/8+/10 File size: 100MB

In this game, you're angry at your boss (possibly for demanding last-minute changes), and the best way to take revenge is to smack him square in the head with a paper aeroplane. To start the game, enter the lift and press the level-select button. Exit to a new floor, find the paper aeroplane and launch it at your boss. You'll need to steer it around obstacles to hit your target.

Don't install...

My Quick Launch

bit.ly/quick414

Min requirements:

Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10

File size: 793KB

When you consider the number of free Windows launchers available, it's astonishing that My Quick Launch has a nerve to charge \$35 (about £28) to help you find and open your own files and folders. True, there's a 22-day free trial (not even a whole month!) and a strippeddown Lite version, but the program doesn't offer any tools you won't find elsewhere, and Chrome flags it as dangerous.



...Install this instead

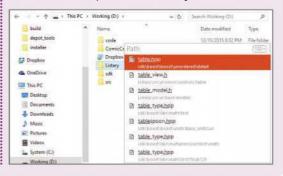
Listary

listary.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10

File size: 3.3MB

This powerful Windows search tool and launcher runs discreetly in the background and can be summoned instantly with two taps of the Ctrl key. It keeps an up-to-date index of all the files on your PC, which is how it's able to deliver its comprehensive search results much more quickly than Windows. Its performance improves over time, too, because it learns to offer more relevant suggestions to your queries. Listary works very well alongside File/Windows Explorer, and you can type commands to launch Command Prompt or shut down your PC.





UPDATED | New tweaks and fixes for your favourite free programs



SYSTEM CLEANER

CCleaner 5.25

www.piriform.com/ ccleaner

Min requirements:

Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10

File size: 8.4MB

The latest version of this popular system-cleaning tool adds support for Firefox web extensions and improves Firefox history and cache cleaning, as well as Chrome and Opera session cleaning. Edge extensions management has also been improved.



IMAGE MANAGER

ImBatch 5.2

www.highmotionsoftware. com

Min requirements:

Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10

File size: 14.6MB

ImBatch lets you make multiple changes to batches of photos by queuing tasks and performing them automatically. The new functions include a 'Gradient Paint' batch task and an improved Curves task. The update also fixes minor bugs in the software.



IMAGE EDITOR Paint.NET 4.0.13

www.getpaint.net

Min requirements:

Windows 7/8+/10

File size: 6.7MB

Paint.NET is one of the best free photo-editing tools available. This update to the program fixes various bugs and high-priority problems, including issues with the canvas-size dialogue boxes. Also, the latest version of Paint.NET should no longer crash when you type in a negative zoom level.



PRIVACY CLEANER

PrivaZer 3.0.14 www.privazer.com

Min requirements:

Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10

File size: 7.2MB

This powerful tool for removing traces of your activities from your PC has been updated and is now even better at protecting your privacy. As well as offering improved memory cleaning, it now cleans LibreOffice activity and traces of file transfers more thoroughly.

GET FREE SOFTWARE FIRST subscribe to Web User at subscribe.webuser.co.uk



Best New Browser Tools

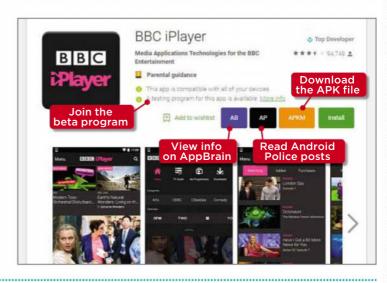


CHROME

Add new features to the Google Play store

The Google Play store prides itself on simplicity – just click the Install button to download an app to your phone or tablet. Toolbox for Google Play Store (bit.ly/play414) is a new Chrome extension that preserves this simplicity while adding clever new features to enhance your Android experience. The extra buttons let you download an app's APK file to your PC; view in-depth information about the app on alternative app store AppBrain (www.appbrain.com); and provide more information about the app on the Android Police blog (www.androidpolice.com).

Best of all, Toolbox also tells you if an app offers a beta-testing programme so you can try the latest version before everyone else – for example, BBC iPlayer is always looking for 'testers'. You can choose which extra options to show or hide by clicking the add-on's toolbar button.



Swap Donald Trump for kittens and burgers

Whatever your views on the new US President, Donald Trump's face has become so ubiquitous over the last year that you're probably sick of seeing his orange fizzog. Give your eyes a well-earned break from the Trumpmeister by installing Make America Kittens Again (bit.ly/kittens414), which replaces pictures of the President with photos of cute baby cats. That's the theory, at least – we found it only worked on a handful of sites, leaving us 'feline' unimpressed elsewhere. More effective

is the similar
Make Trump
Burger Again
(bit.ly/
burger414),
which swaps
Trump's face for
photos of a





Donald Trump Is Choosing His Cabinet. Here's the Latest List.

juicy burger. Unlike the kittens add-on, the picture is always the same, but the burger does look especially tasty.

Hack YouTube to improve your viewing

There are lots of add-ons that change YouTube settings to enhance your viewing experience, but few are as simple and effective as ImprovedTube (bit.ly/improved414). Click its toolbar button while browsing the video site to access dozens of useful hacks, neatly organised into clear categories such as Player Settings, Appearance Settings and Playlist Settings. Options include setting the default video quality, volume and playback speed; changing the size of the player and the opacity of the background; and turning off auto-play for individual videos, playlists and YouTube's annoying Up Next feature. Certain features, such as assigning



keyboard shortcuts to player controls, can only be unlocked by upgrading to the paid-for version.

Forward emails by text message

Have you ever sent someone an urgent email, then had to text them "check your inbox!" in case they missed it? If so, you'll appreciate Send Your Email to SMS (bit.ly/ send414), which lets you forward emails as text messages. Install the extension, select an email and click the phone button at the top of your inbox. Click Create Account, grant CloudHQ (the add-on's developer) access to your Gmail account (don't worry, it can't read your messages) and it will create a special code for the email. You then enter the person's phone number (including the +44 UK dialling code) along with an optional message, and click 'Send as Text Message' to forward them the email in SMS format.





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



FIREFOX

Open websites in a secure environment

Firefox has a private mode that stops details of websites you visit being saved to your PC, but it doesn't make you anonymous online. For total protection from hackers, trackers and other web nasties, you need AnonTab (bit.ly/anon414), which is described as being a cross between the popular add-ons NoScript and HTTPS Everywhere. Available for Firefox and Chrome, this handy tool lets you open specific



web pages in a secure and private environment that masks your IP address, blocks scripts and encrypts all incoming and outgoing connections. This prevents your data from being leaked and your online activities being spied on, as well as stopping malware infection on risky sites. To use the add-on, simply right-click a link and choose 'Open Link in AnonTab' to view the page securely in a new tab. Other pages won't be affected, and closing the tab exits the safe environment.

See which photos people like on Facebook

Having a nose around someone's news feed to discover the type of things they 'like' can be time-consuming and tedious. Facebook Liked Pics (bit.ly/ liked414) makes things easier by letting you see every photo 'liked' by a person on Facebook in one place, which is useful if you're planning to buy them a surprise gift, want to learn more about their hobbies and interests, or are merely curious about what their sense of humour is like. Just click the toolbar button when viewing someone's profile to discover which photos they've publicly liked. You don't need to be friends or even be logged into Facebook for the add-on to work. The developer also offers tools for seeing every photo someone is tagged in (bit.ly/tagged414) and every image they've commented on (bit.ly/commented414).



Shrink images before you share them

One of the downsides to the latest multi-megapixel cameras is that they create very large image files, which can be slow to upload to photosharing sites or send as email attachments. Shrunked Image Resizer (bit.ly/shrunked414) is a clumsily named but very handy Firefox add-on that lets you make your pictures smaller without using an image-



Small | Bes

editina program. It automatically detects when you select a photo to share and gives you a choice of

three sizes: small, best fit and original. Click one to resize the image, and

upload or email it as you would normally. You can go into the add-on's Options to specify the minimum file size, and the balance between size and quality. There are also options to preserve the photo's EXIF data and set default sizes for specific websites. Shrunked Image Resizer has been updated to work with the latest version of Firefox.

OTHER BROWSERS

Hide anything on any website

Even the best websites include annoying elements, from flashing adverts and awful logos to obstructive social-media widgets and smug byline photos. A new Opera add-on called Hide It (bit.ly/hide414) lets you instantly banish online irritations, so you can browse the web in peace. Simply hold down the Shift key on your keyboard and click an offending item on a web page to make it disappear. Refresh the page to restore any elements you've removed. You'll soon wonder how you ever got by without Hide It.





The latest update to the innovative Vivaldi browser, which we named one of our top programs for 2017 in Issue 412, makes it easier to see when you have new messages and other notifications on webmail services and social networks. When you pin a tab containing one of these sites to the browser, Vivaldi will now show the number of unread notifications in the tab's title bar, so you can quickly see which service requires your attention. It also saves you having to open sites individually to find out what's new. You can download Vivaldi 1.6 from vivaldi.com.





Best Free Apps —

App of the Fortnight

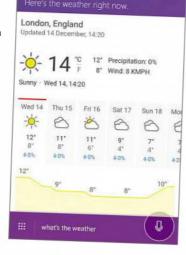
PERSONAL ASSISTANT

Cortana

bit.ly/cortanadroid414 **19** 4.4

Search the internet, set reminders and interact with your PC using the new Android version of the Windows 10 'personal assistant', which also launches on iOS very soon.

Let's get a big criticism out of the way: Cortana's headline feature - voice control - doesn't seem to work on all devices until you launch the app manually. This is a pain because similar tools, such as OK Google and Apple's Siri, let you control your



device without having to tap anything. The app-launching command "Hey Cortana" had no effect on our Android phone but, that said, it's easy enough to launch the app, tap the microphone and then start talking.

Cortana's voice recognition is superb. It's fast, intuitive and much more accurate than OK Google, whose catchphrase seems to be "I didn't quite catch that". Tell Cortana what you want - say, "what's the weather like?" or "how do I get to Amarillo by 8pm?" - and it'll display the answer full-screen or retrieve links from Bing. Ask it to open an installed app and it'll present a button.

Cortana is also a bridge between your PC and mobile device, via your Microsoft account. For example, you can set a reminder on your PC and receive the notification on your Android phone. If you miss a call on your phone, Cortana will send a missed-call notification to your PC.



The app has been much improved for its UK release, a year after its US launch. It now includes a Quick Actions panel of popular options, and its appearance has been tidied up. However, if privacy is your top priority, you may have some reservations: for the app to work at all, you have to let Microsoft collect data about your search history and texts. Another downside is Cortana's use of Bing, which is still

no match for

Google search.

NEW

MINI WORKSHOP

Control Cortana for Android using your voice

Install and launch Cortana. Tap Allow for location access and again for file access. Tap Agree to let Microsoft collect data. Sign into your Microsoft account. When Cortana asks: "I'm Cortana, you are?", type your name. Finally, the default screen opens, showing a news feed 1 and search bar. 2 Tap the dots 1 to hide the news feed. Tap the person icon 4 for Settings and account.



To set up voice control, launch Cortana Mic, a separate app that's installed automatically along with Cortana itself. Tap Allow for microphone access. Say a word, such as "hello". Cortana displays the word and repeats it back to show it's registered your voice. To ask another question, tap the microphone 11 and speak. Your question appears in the bar below the results. 2



To open the Quick Actions panel, tap the grid 11 in Cortana or Cortana Mic. To set a reminder on your device and PC, tap 'New reminder' 2 or tap the microphone and say "new reminder". Enter a note and time, an optional location and photo, and tap Remind. Swipe across the panel for more Quick Actions, such as setting alarms and playing music - you can even get it to tell you a joke!



Our rating

This fortnight's top free and paid-for apps for Android, iOS and Windows phones and tablets, and smart TVs

VIDEO

Hyper News bit.ly/ hypernews414 **4**9

Watch a fresh batch of news videos offline every day, using this new current-affairs spin-off from video app



Hyper (www.watchhyper.com).

Whenever you're connected via Wi-Fi, Hyper News automatically downloads a new video every hour for watching later. So each morning you'll have a fresh set of clips to watch while you're on the train or out and about, without having to worry about data or buffering. Videos are drawn from a decent number of third-party sources, from National



Our rating



SOCIAL

DriveTribe www.drivetribe



Former Top Gear presenters Clarkson, Hammond and May have launched a social network for petrolheads: we

reviewed the website last issue, and now here's the app. DriveTribe is like a motoring version of Facebook, with more than 7,000 groups - here they're called 'tribes' - to join, including Vintage Modders, Selfies With Cars and I Love Motorbikes. Get a constantly updated feed of posts, articles, photos and videos from your Tribes, and contribute your own

content. Even those of us who prefer pushbikes can see this is a great app, destined to grow and grow.

Our rating



24.8K > 621 > 349K >

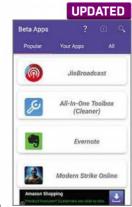
JEREMY CLARKSON®

APPS

NEW

Beta Apps bit.ly/beta414 **#** 4.1

Most apps were betas once. During that developmental stage, selected users could enjoy yet-tocome features and help get the



app ready for public launch. Many popular apps, including Evernote and Instagram, continue to run parallel beta versions, and Beta Apps makes it easy to find and join these experimental phases. The app has just been updated with a much-improved search feature for discovering betas in different categories. It no longer posts a big 'exit ad' when you close it, but the ads that litter other

screens have forced us to dock at least one star off our rating.

Our rating



SECURITY

Trusted Contacts

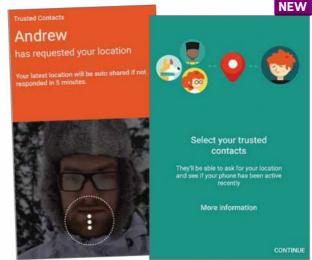
Geographic to Mashable,

added in coming months.

with more likely to be

bit.ly/trusted414 4.4

This fortnight's new Google app makes it easy for trusted friends and family to find you in an emergency. Choose up to six trustees who can send a request for you to get in touch. If you don't respond within five minutes, Google automatically sends them your current location. It's very easy to set up, and



provides vital reassurance for loved ones if you're elderly, travelling alone or suffer from a medical condition - and could even be a lifesaver. You can also use it to share a journey with a friend in real time.

Trusted Contacts has great intentions but there are some clear downsides. You may trust your family, but that doesn't mean you want them to request your location. We have the same misgivings about Apple's iOS app Find My Friends (bit.ly/find414) - but if you're keen to try Trusted Contacts, it's due to launch on iOS soon.



Our rating



GET THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO ANDROID

Our updated Android MagBook is packed with 148 pages of apps, workshops and advice to unlock the full potential of your tablet and phone.



Discover how to:

- Master new tools in Lollipop and Marshmallow
- Stop apps leaking your personal data
- Record anything on your phone and tablet
- Prevent updates from wrecking your device
- Remove hidden junk so it never comes back
- Switch from iOS without

Order it now from Amazon at bit.ly/androidbook2016

Best Free Apps

ENTERTAINMENT

BBC Earth Colouring

bit.ly/bbcdroid414 bit.ly/bbcios414



Use virtual paints and brushes to colour intricate line drawings based on stills from the BBC's blockbuster TV series Planet Earth 2. The colouring tools are excellent, and let you produce high-quality results with light, shade and texture, using a vast



palette of colours. You can save your creations, share them online or print them before and after they're coloured in. The main drawback is that you only get three

drawings for free; a further 33 are available for an in-app purchase of £2.99, but it's a shame to see in-app purchases so prominent in an app that will have so much appeal for kids.



Our rating



TEXT TOOL

Clip Layer bit.ly/clip414 (varies)

Microsoft's second new Android app of the fortnight makes copying and pasting text between apps much easier. Launch it while running another app, then select text to share or save to a clipboard. It also integrates with Wunderlist (www .wunderlist.com) to let you access your clippings online. Clip Layer works with most apps, but not all



- we couldn't get it to select text from BBC News, for example. What's more, you'll need to set Clip Layer as Android's default 'Assist app' so that it takes preference over any other app when you long-press the Home key. This means sacrificing Google Now, the usual default Assist app.



Our rating



NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

CAMERA

Composition Cam

bit.ly/compcam414

Price: 99p

9 5

Perfect the shapes, lines and perspective of your photos - and mimic the layout of famous paintings and film stills - using this innovative library of viewfinder overlays.



PRODUCTIVITY

All Hours

bit.ly/allhours414

Price: £1.49

GAME

This app provides opening hours for shops, pubs, restaurants and other establishments - perfect for finding out what's still open nearby when the pub shuts. It supports Google Maps, Uber and other useful apps for enjoying a night out.

Retro Winter Sports 1986





Play six winter sports - ski jump, biathlon, bobsled, speed skating, curling and slalom - in the blocky graphic style of Eighties computer games. Choose your nation, then compete against the computer or up to eight friends.

MUSIC

Korg Kaossilator bit.ly/korg414

Price: £15.99

Create simple melodies and sophisticated compositions by tapping, swiping or rubbing your screen. Korg's app has finally reached Android after amassing devoted fans on iOS (bit.ly/ korgios414).



SCIENCE

Space by Tinybop bit.ly/spacetiny414

個7 Price: £2.29 Explore the solar system by zooming

around planets, hurling meteorites, collecting space rocks and more. Space is the eighth science education app from the brilliant Tinybop (tinybop.com/apps).







All Hours



Retro Winter Sports 1986

Composition Cam



Korg Kaossilator

Space by Tinybop

bit.ly/retrodroid414

Price: £1.59 (Android),

bit.ly/retroios414

£1.49 (iOS)



Best New TV Apps

KIDS TV

BBC iPlayer Kids

bit.ly/kids414 4.1 8

Named one of the best new apps of 2016 by both Apple and Google, BBC iPlayer Kids now supports Chromecast, which should delight young viewers and parents alike. There's now no need for squabbles over who gets to hold the tablet while watching In the Night Garden, Clangers or Timmy Time, because all your favourite CBeebies and CBBC shows can be cast to the biggest screen in the house. As well as streaming programmes on catchup, you can download them to your device to watch offline, and there are no adverts to tempt youngsters with sugary treats and expensive toys. You can also set up multiple profiles to ensure that your kids see the most suitable content.



DATING

Tinder

bit.ly/tinder414

Min requirements: Apple TV



We can understand the appeal of browsing through the Tinder dating app on your television rather than your phone - after all, physical imperfections and tacky home furnishings are much easier to spot on a larger screen. But it's hard not to raise an eyebrow at Tinder's suggestion that you "invite friends and family, set the playlist to shuffle and put out the chips and dip", to make choosing a mate an entertaining communal experience akin to watching Strictly Come Dancing. The app lets you - or perhaps your Auntie Maureen – swipe through your potential matches using your Apple TV's touch-sensitive remote control. and click the trackpad to view profile information. It's an unusual way to start a relationship, but at least your next partner will be pre-approved.

VIDEO

Vimeo

bit.ly/vimeo414

Min requirements: Apple TV, Android TV

This high-quality alternative to YouTube has long been available for Android and iOS phones and tablets, as well as Roku devices. Now it has launched on Android TV and Apple TV, too, so you can enjoy its professionally made videos on your HD TV. The new apps make it easier to browse Vimeo from your sofa and watch its ad-free content as the creators intended. The home screen highlights the best new videos, as picked by the Vimeo team, and you can follow your favourite filmmakers, channels and categories from the app, and stream a personalised feed of great videos. If you start watching something on your mobile device, you can pick up where you left off on your TV, and vice versa.



X Don't install...

Jailbreak VPN

bit.ly/jailbreak414

There are lots of free VPNs available, but if you want unlimited data, high-speed connections and a flexible choice of servers, you usually have to pay for them. You certainly shouldn't



cough up £58.99, however, which is the ridiculous cost of Jailbreak VPN. It may be "the world's fastest VPN and proxy" (although it isn't) but it looks shoddy, doesn't work properly and has the temerity to boast about its "unbelievable price". What tosh!

...Install this instead

CyberGhost VPN

www.cyberghostvpn.com

4 69

Unlike most free VPN apps, CyberGhost doesn't limit your data usage or your ability to choose different server locations. If you just want to encrypt your connection, joining a VPN is as quick and easy as tapping a button, with no need to set up an account or fiddle with any settings. When you want to access a website that's only available in a specific region, CyberGhost lets you change the server location from Automatic to a country of your choice

at any time. Locations on offer include the UK, France, Germany and the US, and the app helpfully tells you how many servers are available in each country.







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

Our guide to Sky Mobile

Sky is now offering SIM-only mobile packages with an interesting twist. David Crookes finds out what all the fuss is about

What is it?

Sky has launched a new mobile network, which it hopes will prove strong competition for Vodafone, EE, O2 and Three. Operating in a similar fashion to Giffgaff (www.giffgaff.com), Sky Mobile is promoting itself as the most flexible company on the market while promising to provide transparent pricing. It is also offering a number of unique features with which it hopes to attract customers from rival networks.

Has it built its own network?

No. Sky Mobile (sky.com/getmobile) is what is known as an MVNO - a mobile virtual network operator. This means that it piggybacks on another provider's service - in this case, O2's. Like Giffgaff and Tesco Mobile, which also have deals with O2, Sky Mobile has access to the network's 2G, 3G and 4G spectrum. But unlike other MVNOs, it exerts great control over its new offering, right down to having its own customer-service team.

What's so special about Sky Mobile?

All the deals are SIM-only. If you're not already a Sky TV customer, you'll be charged £10 per month for unlimited calls and texts, unless you opt for the Pay As You Use service which costs 10p per minute to talk and 10p per text. Sky customers, meanwhile, get free UK calls and texts. Everyone has a choice of three data packages. The 1GB tariff costs £10 per month, 3GB is £15 and 5GB is £20.

What about data and mobile roaming costs?

Sky has yet to divulge how much it will



Sky Mobile's colourful SIM card should be easy to find if you drop it



charge to make calls and use the internet abroad. But the EU currently has capped limits (you can't be charged more than 5 euro cents above the domestic price for making a call in Europe) and, from 15 June, the cost of calling will be the same as in the UK. However, there will be extra costs outside the EU.

Are the prices competitive?

Sky Mobile's closest competitor, Giffgaff, charges £7.50 monthly for 1GB (plus an extra £2.50 if you want 500 UK minutes and unlimited texts included). It offers 4GB for £15 with 1,000 minutes and unlimited calls and texts, and has a very appealing £20 package that offers unlimited calls, texts and data (although the small print says speed restrictions kick in after 6GB). However, Sky Mobile has an extra trick up its sleeve.

Go on then — what's the trick?

The unique selling point of Sky Mobile is that you can roll over any unused data from one month to the next for up to three years. So if you use just 2GB of your 4GB package during your first month, you can redeem the remaining 2GB for use in the second month, then on into the next month and so on.

You're also notified when you reach



data you don't use can be rolled over to the next month

your monthly data limit and can alter your plan each month. This means you can decide the tier and mix of data, texts and calls that works best for you as you go along, perhaps increasing your data allowance during the summer when you're out and about more often.

On the downside, you are tied into a 12-month contract whereas Giffgaff only commits you for a month at a time.

Can I share my data with other people?

Sky Mobile has a family option that lets five people take individual SIMs and pop any unused data into a "piggybank". These spare gigabytes can then be redeemed by anyone in the group. Registering five SIMs will, Sky Mobile claims, save Sky TV households up to £600 each year on their mobile bills.



Watch TV shows and films anywhere and anytime using Sky Mobile

But do we actually needs loads of data?

According to research by Sky Mobile, 83% of data traffic on phones is now via Wi-Fi and more than 50% of data bought in the UK goes unused, wasting £2bn annually. For a lot of people, the bottom-tier data tariff may well be enough, depending on how much video or music you stream (these being the two biggest data hogs).

Are there any bonuses for having Sky TV?

Absolutely. Sky+ television customers get Sky Go Extra for free with Sky Mobile. This usually costs £5 per month so it represents an annual saving of £60. Sky Go Extra lets you download programmes to watch offline and can also be used to stream live and ondemand shows over Wi-Fi to an Xbox or PlayStation, effectively turning those consoles into additional Sky boxes. There is also a feature called Sync that allows Sky Mobile customers to create a personal playlist of selected content, which is then synced from a Sky+ (but not Sky Q) set-top box to view on a phone or tablet.



Sky Go Extra lets you download your favourite TV shows to watch offline

Will the reception be good enough?

In March, Ofcom tested the streaming capabilities of EE, Vodafone, O2 and Three using the James Bond film Spectre. It found that it successfully streamed in HD 97% of the time on EE's 4G network but 87%, 86% and 85% on Three, Vodafone and O2 respectively. EE has made a big thing of this, saying Sky Mobile customers won't get the best



Will Sky Mobile customers have trouble streaming disappointing Bond films?

streaming experience. It also reckons O2 customers will suffer when Sky Mobile users join because of the extra strain on the network. O2 insists that its investment and uSwitch award for Best Network Coverage in 2016 will give customers great service. It told the website Mobile World Live (bit.ly/ mobile414) that EE was a "rattled rival" and just jealous.

But is Sky Mobile relying entirely on mobile coverage?

Actually, no. According to Vince Russell, who is Sky's director of converged products, there is a future possibility that Sky Mobile will offer voice calls over Wi-Fi in areas where a mobile connection isn't available

Will Sky Mobile remain a SIMonly service?

There are plans to roll out contract



Sky Mobile will offer phones as well as SIM-only deals later this year

packages involving mobile handsets in the Spring. Sky Mobile says it has been negotiating deals with Apple and Samsung to offer their handsets. but whether or not that is going to translate into any exclusive deals remains to be seen. We would guess that neither of these companies would want to restrict their devices to one provider, even if that's only on an early-access basis.

When can I sign up?

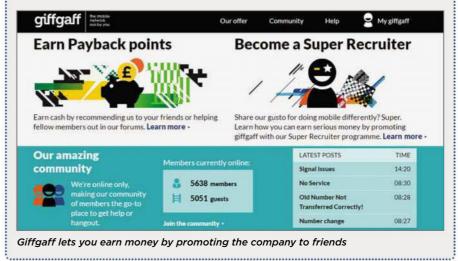
Sky is letting anyone pre-register for a SIM, even if you're not an existing customer, and 46,000 people have already signed up. Sky Mobile officially launches this month - it may already have done so by the time you read this.

MAKE MONEY BY SHARING FREE SIMS

Sky Mobile is similar to Giffgaff because both services provide inexpensive, transparent SIM-only deals and piggyback off the O2 network. But one area in which Giffgaff excels is the way it encourages its users to get involved. The company is able to keep costs low because it is run by its customers who answer queries from users online

It also incentivises its members though a scheme called Payback (www.giffgaff.com/payback).

By handing out free SIM cards to friends, family and work colleagues, you earn points that can be traded for credit, exchanged for cash or donated to charity. Each activated SIM gains you 500 points - equivalent to £5. If you sign up more than 15 activated members, you become a Super Recruiter (www.giffgaff.com/superrecruiter). This earns you extra cash when your recruits top up or buy a goodybag (a data and call plan) for the second and third times.



FAKE SOFTWARE, TOOLS& APPS You Must Never Download











Don't get duped by dodgy downloads. **Wayne Williams** explains how to protect yourself from the growing menace of fake programs, snake-oil software and scam apps

ust as you shouldn't judge a book by its cover, so you shouldn't trust a program or app merely by its name. It may be called PC Cleaner Pro or Virus Shield, but rather than cleaning or protecting your computer or phone, it might do absolutely nothing (at best) or infect your device with malware (at worst).

Sadly, there is now more fake software around than ever, and it's very easy to be fooled by a bogus tool's official-looking website, logo and user reviews. In this feature, we explain how to avoid downloading and installing these fraudulent and useless tools.

Over the following six pages, we explain exactly what fake software is, where it comes from and what it looks like, and take a look at some of the worst examples of 2016. Our practical fake-software survival guide on page 42 explains how to detect and remove any examples you may have accidentally installed.



> Fake software FAQ

You've undoubtedly come across fake software, even if you didn't recognise it as such. Here we answer the most common questions about this menace

What do you mean by fake software?

Fake or rogue software is a program or app that either claims to do one thing but does another, or does nothing at all. Fake security apps are the most common culprits. They promise to keep your system safe from threats but instead infect it with exactly the kind of malicious software they're meant to protect against, or scare you into paying to fix a problem they falsely claim to have found on your system.

Where does it come from?

Scammers develop fake programs and spread them across the web. A lot of fakes come from Russia and China, where cybercrime is less closely monitored than in Western countries.

The people behind rogue software sometimes create a convincing-looking website for you to download it from directly or, if they get lucky, sneak it on to a reputable software repository such as Google Play or the Apple App Store. Lots of websites now offer PC programs for download and many don't bother to check a tool's veracity – in some cases, they just run a quick antivirus scan and if that's clean, they'll host the program.

Fake software is advertised aggressively across the web - you might be warned that your system is infected or has "X number of problems" that can only be solved by downloading

Like a Matryoshka doll, fake software may contain more than meets the eye

a particular piece of software. Naturally, a link to the miracle-cure program is provided for you and the download may even try to start automatically.

What do these fakes look like?

Some programs or apps have a name that sounds like a known piece of software – Pokémon Go Ultimate, for example – and have the cheek to use a virtually identical logo, although they don't bear any resemblance to the product in question when you run them.

A rash of fake shopping apps arrived on the App Store just before Christmas, using popular store names and logos.

Other fakes just opt for a generic-sounding name - such as Clean PC Smart - and have an interface that looks like a genuine product. These

can easily fool the unwary, as do software-hosting sites that don't bother to look too deeply into a program's provenance.



It might look and sound genuine, but that doesn't mean it does what it says

Is it really that dangerous?

Yes, it can be. Some fake security software infects your PC, smartphone or tablet with a Trojan, ransomware or other nasty malware. Other rogue tools try to get you to part with money by

upgrading to a 'pro' version to fix a problem 'found' by the free edition, such as removing a security threat, cleaning up junk or updating a driver.

Some fake software is even cleverer and behaves as if it's doing what it claims to do (even though it isn't) before eventually – once it's gained your trust – directing you to call a premium-rate helpline. Alternatively, it may prompt you to enter some personal details to download the program in the first place – such as your email address, and maybe a phone number and password – which will then be used to try and steal your identity.

Many fake mobile apps exist solely to display annoying pop-ups ads, although others can steal personal information or

> even lock your device. Some fake shopping apps try to fool you into entering your credit card details, which they then send to cybercriminals.

How common is fake software?

It's difficult to say for sure because many fake programs go undetected. Wikipedia's list of known rogue security tools (bit.ly/

wiki414) includes just under 300 products, and that's only security software – there are many other types of fake programs to be aware of.

As part of a review process, Apple recently removed a lot of fake apps from its App Store, but more are appearing all the time. The Windows App store is also home to lots of bad apps, even though Microsoft is making ongoing efforts to clean up the store.



Wikipedia's list of fake security software contains nearly 300 entries

> Worst fake software of 2016

Plenty of new rogue programs have emerged over the last 12 months. Here, we pick six of the worst examples for PC. Mac and mobile

Clean PC Smart

This program claims to be an all-in-one PC optimiser. Registry cleaner, disk cleaner, startup manager, drive defragmenter and more. It certainly looks the part, so it's no wonder that many download sites were happy to host it. However, an investigation by tech-news site BetaNews (bit.ly/cpcs414) showed that the software only pretended to clean up the problems it found and didn't actually delete anything. If you ran a scan after a clean, this snakeoil suite reported that everything was fixed even though it wasn't.

Some of the personal details collected by Clean PC Smart were uploaded to a server, and it's believed that the software also tries to con its users into calling a support number.



Clean PC Smart was one of the biggest snake-oil software scams of 2016

ScanGuard

The tech-help site Bleeping Computer (www.bleepingcomputer.com) warns PC users about a program called ScanGuard. This tool first surfaced in 2016, and apparently requires you to purchase a paid-for version for \$49 (£39) after finding 'threats' with the free scan. The discussion thread at bit.ly/sguard414

lists lots of examples explaining why you should steer well clear of ScanGuard. These include adverts that take you to a dubioussounding site called Smart Web User (no relation) that tries to convince you to buy other (possibly fake) security programs.



ScanGuard uses the old trick of scanning for free but charging to fix

PC TuneUp Maestro

PC TuneUp Maestro from CompuClever is another reportedly dodgy program with a convincing sounding name, and is described on the company's website as being

the "most advanced suite of PCmaintenance software tools available today". It promises a free scan, but requires you to upgrade to the paid-for version to use all its functions, and comes bundled with other unwanted software. You'll find instructions on how to remove PC TuneUp Maestro at MalwareTips (bit.ly/ malwaretips414).



Instead of solving your computer problems, PC TuneUp Maestro will add to them

Fake Flash

A fake version of Adobe Flash was found to be affecting Macs in

April last



Adobe Flash has inspired a slew of fakes

year (bit.ly/fakeflash414). It installed potentially unwanted programs, including MacKeeper (see opposite page), on infected computers. There have been several fake versions of Flash over the years.

Fake Super Mario Run games

Super Mario Run was released as an iOS exclusive and although it's due to come eventually to Android, the gap is being filled by a rash of knock-offs. Mario Run Jumper was quickly spotted and pulled from Google Play but Jumper Mario Run was still available at the time of writing. Both, as you might expect, are very poor quality.



Fake Mario Run apps for Android are springing up on Google Play

Fake software, tools and apps

COVER FEATURE

MacKeeper

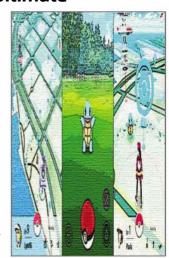
If you want to keep your Mac safe from malware (and yes, even Apple devices can get infected) then you might be tempted to install an antivirus program such as MacKeeper. Except this particular program has a few problems. At the end of 2015, a researcher reported that the software leaked details of 13 million customers on the web (bit.ly/mkleak414). As if that wasn't bad enough, users have said that the software doesn't do what it claims to do, exaggerates threats, fails to detect and remove legitimate malware, and destabilises Mac systems. Sadly, MacKeeper is still being aggressively pushed across the web and remains difficult to remove. The Apple advice site iMore explains why you should avoid MacKeeper at all costs (bit.ly/mkbad414).



MacKeeper proves that it's not just PCs that suffer fake software

Pokémon Go Ultimate

Pokémon Go was unquestionably the hit mobile game of 2016, so it inevitably led to a string of fake Pokémon products, such as Pokémon Go Ultimate. According to security firm ESET (bit.ly/ pokegu414), this app - which was available for Android users to install from Google Play - locked users' screens, forcing them to remove their phone's battery and reboot. Upon restarting, the app (Called Pi Network at this point) ran in the background, clicking



You caught more than cute creatures after installing Pokémon Go

ads to generate revenue for its creators. Pokémon Go Ultimate, which was removed from the store shortly after its discovery, was just one of three fake Pokémon apps identified by ESET. The others found on Google Play (also since removed) were Guide & Cheats for Pokémon Go and Pokemongo.

Security firm Proofpoint also discovered a 'backdoored' version of the Pokémon Go app for Android (bit.ly/pokegone414) that gave the attacker complete control over an infected phone.

Adblock Plus Pro

The Google Chrome Web Store is home to plenty of bad browser extensions, including several apps using the Adblock Plus name, none of which have anything at all to do with the company behind the popular ad blocker. One such example is the

Adblock Plus Pro extension, which even uses the same logo.

> AdBlock Plus Pro sounds genuine, but it's a fake



uBlock Pro/Plus

As with Adblock Plus, uBlock Origin has also inspired several bogus versions with names, logos and descriptions that mimic the original, some of which are still in the Chrome Web Store. Make sure you stick to the real thing.



Don't be fooled by fake uBlock Origin extensions

Football 2016

Rolling out in time for the European Championships, Football 2016 was one of a handful of FIFA knock-off apps from the same dodgy developer (along with Football 2016 - 2025 and Soccer 2016) that was designed to do nothing but display adverts and collect user data.

Fake Prisma apps

The image-editing app Prisma turns your photos into works of art. Before it was available on Android, there were several successful fakes in the Play store that showed adverts, tried to scam users into parting with money and - in a couple of cases - contained Trojans that downloaded malware (bit.ly/fakeprisma414).



Google has removed lots of fake Prisma apps from the Play store

Some of these are still floating around the web, so beware.

Windows Activation Pro

This deceptive malware locks your computer and asks you to enter your Windows product key. It looks like a genuine pop-up window, and includes a customer support number. You won't get any help from calling this

number, of course, just people trying to scam you out of money.

Don't be fooled by this fake Windowsactivation tool



> Detect & remove fake software

Fake software sounds worrying, but it's easy to avoid if you know how. Here, we reveal how to spot rogue tools and give them the runaround

Avoid trials and crippled software

Some security programs offer to scan your system for free, but then require you to upgrade to a paid-for 'pro' version to fix the problems they claim to have found. There's no way of telling whether the identified problems are genuine and if parting with your money will actually fix them, so it's best to avoid this sort of program altogether because it's very probably a scam. Stick with either genuine freeware products - which might be missing some elements of their Pro versions, but will still fix any problems found during a scan - or just buy a well-known paid-for product to begin with.

Find out what other users think

The best way to determine whether a program is genuine and does what it claims to do is to find out what other users think about it. A forum on a developer's website might contain interesting insights (and if a developer's site has a forum, that's usually a good indication that it's reputable). The excellent site Should I Remove It (www.shouldiremoveit.com) gives good guidance on which software to uninstall, based on other people's experiences. The results can be interesting: PC TuneUp Maestro rightly rates one star, but only 49% of users removed it.

It's worth searching for a program you're thinking of installing to see whether it's been rated or not.
Unfortunately, lots of programs aren't yet listed - there are no entries for Clean PC Smart or ScanGuard, for example.



Check Should I Remove It to see how other users treated a program

Avoid APK files from unknown sources

If an Android app isn't available in Google Play or the Amazon App Store, you may be tempted to download it from another source. These apps come packaged in APK format and to install them you need to change your phone's settings to allow apps from 'Unknown sources', which should cause alarm bells

to ring.



Where possible, avoid installing APK files from unknown sources

Sometimes apps are banned for simple reasons – for example, Google banned Adblock Plus a while back following a change in its terms and conditions – in which case downloading the app in APK format from the trusted developer's site is acceptable. But never download an APK file unless you trust its source and content 100% – it's far too easy for malware to be added to the download.

Don't install a fake by mistake

Rogue software often makes its way on to PCs by being bundled with legitimate software, so always pay attention when installing a new program and untick or decline anything not related to the core software. Just because a Decline button is greyed out, doesn't mean you can't click it. The brilliant free tool Unchecky (unchecky.com) runs in the background and monitors program installations. If it detects unwanted changes or bundled junk, it will decline it for you.



Use Unchecky to deselect bundled junk when installing software

Spot the fake warning signs

Fake products pretending to be affiliated with a real program or app may use the same logo or icon as the

genuine software, but there are often clues to be found, such as a lack of actual screenshots, or screenshots that look nothing like the real thing. Also, check to see if the developer is who you'd expect it to be. Pokémon Go, for example, is developed by Niantic (a Google company), while Pokemon Go Ultimate was from Jtrl. You will often find third-party Windows 10 apps for services such as YouTube and Facebook that actually do what they say. However, they usually don't offer much beyond what you can get online, and installing them grants the developer access to information about your account, which you probably don't want to share.

If it's a security program, check the reviews (assuming there are any genuine ones – see below) and whether the developer has created any other software previously, and if the website has been around for a while or is brand new. Also, look to see if there's an EULA (End User Licence Agreement) or any detailed information about the program. Genuine software will have both.

A poorly written description containing bad grammar and spelling mistakes on the company website or in the program could also suggest a dubious source. That said, we regularly encounter quality programs from reputable smaller developers that suffer from these errors.

Beware of fake user reviews

Reviews can be useful for finding out if a program is any good, but knowing if the comments are genuine or not can be tricky. If a developer has gone to the effort of making a fake product, then it's likely they'll promote it with fake reviews. If possible, check to see if a reviewer who has left a glowing summary has reviewed anything else previously. If they haven't, that should raise suspicions, as should anyone who has only reviewed products from the same developer.

Look for similar phrasing in reviews. Different reviewers saying pretty much the same thing is a red flag, as is anything too gushing. We've seen many bad mobile security apps described as the "best app ever". If the best app on someone's phone is one that claims to protect it from viruses – a problem

Fake software, tools and apps



HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS

Fake news is a huge problem and although sites such as Facebook have promised to crack down on it, they've had very limited success so far. The truth is that people on social-networking sites simply don't take the time to validate the source of a story and will blindly share anything they think is interesting. Many people never even make it past the headline before liking and sharing something. A recent Huffington Post article (bit.ly/fakenews414) identified



Use BS Detector to highlight fake news stories on the web

five types of fake news - 100% false; slanted and biased; pure propaganda; misusing the data; and imprecise and sloppy.

You can fight back against fake news yourself by always considering the source of the story and its plausibility. Newspapers aren't immune from running fake stories - the Express tells us every year, without fail, that we're in for the worst winter in a century (maybe one year that will actually be true!). A new browser add-on called BS Detector (bsdetector.tech) alerts you to unreliable news sources, and gives a reason why the content is not to be trusted. It's available for all the major browsers, including Chrome, Firefox, Opera, Safari and Microsoft Edge.

.....

99.95% of users never encounter - then what else do they have installed? Some really, really bad apps, presumably!

Apps sometimes ask users for five-star reviews, which can skew their rating. Also, don't be fooled by a vast number of positive reviews - it's easy and cheap for a developer to buy tens of thousands of app downloads with ratings and reviews. Negative reviews, even if there aren't many of them, are often far more telling than positive ones and will paint a more genuine picture.

Scan programs before you download them

If you think a program might contain malicious content, it's worth scanning it before you download it. One way to do this is to use VirusTotal (www.virustotal .com). Right-click a file's download link and copy the address. Go to VirusTotal, click the URL tab, paste in the address and click 'Scan it'.

If you've already downloaded a suspicious file but haven't yet clicked to install it, use VirusTotal Scanner (www .securityxploded.com) to check it on the

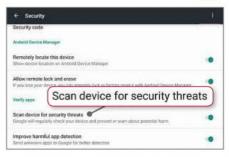


Scan suspect files for malware before vou download or install them

VirusTotal service. This uploads a digital fingerprint of the file (called a hash), rather than the item itself.

Scan apps on your phone

You can protect yourself from malicious apps by installing a security scanner. All the big security firms including Bitdefender, ESET and Malwarebytes offer Android apps for detecting and removing threats. Android itself can also warn you about potentially harmful apps on your device through the



Make sure your Android device automatically scans apps for threats

app-verification feature. Check that this is activated by opening Settings and tapping Google under Personal. Tap Security and make sure 'Scan device for security threats' is enabled.

Remove fake software

Some fake programs and apps can simply be uninstalled in the same way as normal software, but others require more perseverance and going into Safe Mode. To do this in Windows 10, click Start and go to Settings. Select 'Update & security', Recovery. Under 'Advanced startup', select 'Restart now'. The 'Choose an option' screen will open. Select Troubleshoot, Advanced options, Startup Settings, Restart. Select 4 or F4 to start your PC in Safe Mode, or 5 or F5 for Safe Mode with Networking. Use Malwarebytes (www.malwarebytes .com) to detect and remove the bad software. Bleeping Computer also offers advice for removing specific bad programs (bit.ly/bcadvice414).



Run Malwarebytes in Safe Mode to get rid of stubborn fake software

on sale Wednesday 25 January 2017

We reveal the hidden causes of a sluggish internet connection and get you back up to speed



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Best free camera apps

If you don't like the default camera app on your Android phone, why not download one of the many great alternatives from the Google Play store?

Edward Munn

rounds up six of the best







Open Camera | bit.ly/open414 | ★★★★☆

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

What we liked:

WebUser GOLD AWARD Moments after installing it, we knew Open Camera would be a contender for our Gold Award because it offers almost every photo tool you could ever

need in an interface that's simple and intuitive. When you launch the app, a clear but inconspicuous strip of controls lets you switch between the front and back cameras, change from photo to video mode and adjust the exposure to an appropriate level. Tapping the three-dot button in this



strip opens a simple pop-up menu containing all the other important settings you might need. From this, you can pick the flash mode. focus mode, ISO, white balance and scene mode (including

activating HDR
- High Dynamic
Range - mode)
along with
adjusting the
current photo and
video resolution.
There are also
quick shortcuts to
activate a timer,
burst shooting
or an overlay grid.

Other features visible from the viewfinder include

a simple vertical slider that lets you change the digital zoom and a handy spirit level to help you avoid taking snaps with wonky horizons. Lastly, Open Camera displays the time, along with the remaining battery life and storage of your device, which can all be useful when you're shooting long videos.

Despite its impressive array of tools, Open Camera's simple, intuitive interface never feels crowded. Unlike some rivals, it only offers important features with no unnecessary gimmicks. By opening the app's full Settings menu, you can activate further handy options including voice control and geotagging, as well as customising which controls are displayed in the viewfinder.



How it can be improved:

Open Camera's HDR mode isn't automatic, so if you want to take landscape shots containing bright and dark elements, you'll have to activate it manually. We'd also like to have a panoramic mode.

OUR VERDICT

If you want a powerful camera app to replace your device's default app, Open Camera comfortably beats most of the competition. It's free of ads and offers an unrivalled selection of tools that are easy to use.

......

Camera MX | bit.ly/cameramx414 | ★★★★☆

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

What we liked:

Camera MX is a slick camera app that offers all its key tools for free (although there's

a fee for some of the effects packages). It has a simple interface and offers a range of unique options such as a rotating grid (which turns green to notify you when your image is level) and time-lapse video.

Unlike some of the apps in our round-up, Camera MX also offers a High Dynamic mode for free, helping you to better capture scenes with both bright and dark areas. The app's standout feature is undoubtedly Live Shot, which captures a short snippet of video after you take a photo, so you can see any snaps you've taken come to life by tapping them in the camera roll. You can also skip through the video frame by frame to pick out any stills that you want to save.



Unlike its rivals, Camera MX also comes with its own built-in photo manager and full-featured editor, so you can tweak your photos' white balance, brightness and saturation, along with various other attributes.

How it can be improved:

Camera MX lacks the manual controls for ISO, focus and white balance offered by our other award winners and, as with Open Camera, there's

no panoramic mode. The app is also supported by adverts.

.....

OUR VERDICT

Camera MX is probably the fastest camera app we tested but it lacks some of the manual controls of its competitors. If you're not worried

BEST OF THE REST

Camera Zoom FX Free

bit.ly/camzoom414

Like A Better Camera, Camera Zoom FX Free is the free version of a premium app. Although we love its simple layout and speedy performance, it withholds too many of its features unless you pay £2.99 to upgrade to the Premium version. If you're in the market for a paid-for camera, the free version is worth trying as a demo, but otherwise we wouldn't recommend it.



VSCO

bit.ly/vsco414

VSCO is not only a camera app but also an image editor and social network for sharing your best snaps. Unfortunately, we found its

camera mode too simplistic and it lacks most of the powerful features offered by the other dedicated camera apps in our round-up. The app has some nice editing tools, but you're better off capturing your shots with another app first.



Camera360

bit.ly/threesixty414

Camera360 is clearly aimed at the teenage market, as demonstrated by its dedicated selfie mode, animal stickers and beautifying feature.

It has some useful tools including live filters, a depth-of-field effect and the option to choose your photo's aspect ratio before you take it, but there's lots of unnecessary clutter that most users will find irritating.



about these, we wouldn't hesitate to recommend it.

A Better Camera Free | bit.ly/abetter414 | ★★★★☆

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

BRONZE AWARD

What we liked:

Although this is a free version of a premium app, A Better Camera Free has

an abundance of tools. Along with basic controls (for switching cameras, adjusting zoom and enabling the self-timer), there are useful manual options for adjusting the ISO, white balance and focus mode. There's also a spirit

level so you can ensure your photos aren't crooked.

Tapping the S in the bottom-right corner of the app's viewfinder lets you pick from a range of advanced shooting modes including Burst, Night and Best Shot, which takes a series of shots and automatically picks the best one.

HDR is restricted to the paid-for version of the app, but there's a free alternative called DRO (Dynamic Range Optimization), which similarly enhances



the quality of your snaps. Like Open Camera, the app's main settings menu offers an extensive range of customisation options for the viewfinder interface.

How it can be improved:

Several of A Better Camera's key features - including HDR mode and Panorama mode - are only available for the one-off upgrade fee of 99p. We found the app's interface confusing at times and the frequent prompts

to upgrade were annoying.

OUR VERDICT

A Better Camera offers an impressive range of free tools and upgrading to the Premium version is cheap. We'd struggle to recommend it over our other award winners unless you're willing to pay for the upgrade.

STOP YOUR HOME SPYING ON YOU—

The gadgets you love could be secretly collecting and sharing your personal data. **Robert Irvine** explains how to protect your privacy from smart devices

Turn off voice recognition until you need it

One of the cleverest things about smart televisions and voice assistants is that you don't need to press any buttons or even be near them to get something done. You can simply shout across the room: "open Netflix", "what time is it?" or "play music by Budgie", and they'll do your bidding. The downside to this 'always-on, always listening' approach is that it invades your privacy, because these devices don't only listen out for specific commands – they potentially hear everything you say.

In 2015, Samsung smart TVs were revealed to be eavesdropping on viewers' conversations. The company's own privacy policy stated: "Please be aware that if your spoken words include personal or other sensitive information, that information will be among the data captured and transmitted to a third party". The policy and feature were later amended, but not before critics deemed them "Orwellian".

Amazon's voice-activated Echo speaker has raised similar concerns, because its seven microphones listen



You can mute Amazon Echo's microphone to stop it listening to everything you say

constantly for you to say "Alexa, [command]". This poses a privacy risk, especially as the device could feasibly be taken over and controlled remotely by hackers or government snoopers.

Both Samsung and Amazon insist that their devices only capture voice data once they've been activated – by pressing a button on the remote-control or speaking a 'watch word' – but if you're really concerned, you can switch off voice recognition until you need it and use the remote instead. To do this on a Samsung TV, go to Settings, Smart Features and disable the option. For an Echo, press the microphone-mute button on top of the device. The same steps should work on similar products.

Cover your mic and camera

In June 2016, a photo of Mark Zuckerberg prompted much online discussion because it revealed that the Facebook CEO puts tape over the



Mark Zuckerberg tapes up his webcam and microphone, but not his smug mouth

microphone and webcam on his company laptop, presumably to foil spies. Although some people called the billionaire paranoid, others agreed that it was a good idea. especially after it was discovered that hackers had been using remote-access



You can buy patches to cover your webcam and keep out spies

Trojans to spy on and record their oblivious victims.

You can protect yourself against unauthorised surveillance by following Zuckerberg's example and covering your webcam with Gaffa tape and inserting a dummy jack plug (such as one from a headphone cable) into the microphone socket to stop the built-in mic picking up sound. Naturally, you'll need to remove these whenever you want to use either device, but at least it'll stop Cortana springing into action when you say: "Hey, Cortana's rubbish, isn't it?". You can also buy privacy patches for your webcam for a fiver per pack (bit.ly/cover414), and these also work for phones, tablets and other camera-enabled devices.

Change the password

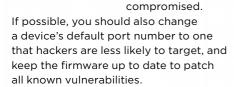
Several reports in recent years have highlighted the threat of hackers using smart devices, including children's toys, baby monitors, fitness trackers and

Stop your home spying

even web-connected vibrators(!) to spy on people in their own homes. In most cases, the security flaws were merely discovered rather than exploited, but it's still enough to make you worry. When digital-toy company VTech was hacked in December 2015, the breached data included young users' names, genders, addresses, profile photos and chat logs, as well as audio recordings of conversations between children and their parents.

The best way to ensure your gadgets don't betray you is to change the default username and password.

> It's all too easy to skip this step with the intention of doing it later, but by then you might already be at risk. The usual advice applies about choosing a strong password and not using the same login details for different online services in case a security breach at one company leads to other accounts being



Disconnect from Wi-Fi

Has this young VTech

she the hacker?

user been hacked or is

The whole point of smart devices is that they're constantly connected to the internet so they're ready to obey your every command. But do you really need them to be online all the time, especially if it compromises your privacy and gobbles data? If you don't use your TV's 'smart' features, for example, you can remove it from your Wi-Fi network and still watch your favourite programmes as you would on a standard telly. The process of disabling Wi-Fi on a smart television varies between manufacturers and models - older Samsung sets used to require a factory reset, but now you can go to Menu, Network and switch it off there. On a Sony Bravia TV, go to Home, Settings, Network and set Built-in Wireless LAN to Off.



Alternatively, you can leave Wi-Fi connected but turn off your smart TV's tracking features, which enable it to make recommendations based on your viewing habits and activity. To do this on a Samsung set, go into your Smart

Hub settings and decline the 'recommendations privacy notice'. If you have a Panasonic TV, go to Menu, Network, My Home Cloud Settings and choose Notice, 'Stop collecting information'. On a Sony TV, you can opt out of tracking during setup by selecting Disable Upload Data.

Install a security app on your phone

Most smart appliances including lights, speakers, coffee machines, thermostats and fridges - are controlled from an

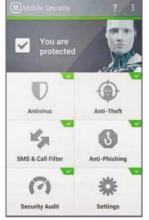
app on your phone or tablet, which means that if your mobile device is hacked, other gadgets in your home are Turn off Wi-Fi if you don't use smart features on your smart TV

at risk. You might be thinking: "what's the worst they can do - encrypt my cheese with ransomware?" but attackers could not only steal your data but also use your appliance as part of a botnet to wreak havoc online. At the end of 2016, hundreds of thousands of unprotected Internet of Things devices were infected with Mirai malware and conscripted into a huge botnet

that performed a series of distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks.

This is why it's essential that you have reliable, up-to-date security software installed on the phone or tablet you use to control your smart

> devices. There's certainly no shortage of apps to choose from, although we'd recommend Avast Free Mobile Security for Android and iOS (bit.ly/ avast414), which offers a powerful antivirus engine, junk cleaner, web shield, Wi-Fi scanner and much more. If you're happy to pay for your security software, ESET Mobile Security for Android (bit.ly/eset414) costs £9.99 per year for premium features including realtime protection, scheduled malware scans and an



ESET Mobile Security protects your phone and the devices it controls

anti-phishing filter, and has a threatdetection rate of 99.7%, according to AV-Test (www.av-test.org).

UPDATE YOUR ROUTER

You may not think of your router as a 'smart device', but as the conduit between the internet and all the Wi-Fi connected gadgets in your home, it's actually the smartest of them all. That's why malware such as Mirai targets routers specifically, and why it's so important to protect them. You can check how secure your router is by using the tests listed at Router Security (bit.ly/router414). These include the DNS Leak Test, which tells you if your internet traffic is being routed through a server other than your ISP's, and GRC Shields Up (bit.ly/shields414), which highlights flaws that could make your router easy to hack. Now that routers



Use Shields Up to identify security weaknesses in your router

are currently at greater risk than ever before, it's essential that you make sure you're using the latest firmware from the manufacturer.

Unsync accounts you no longer use

Remove printers you no longer use from your PC

Printing a document in Windows can be unnecessarily confusing if you still have old printers you no longer use installed on your PC. To remove a printer from Windows 10, open Settings and click Devices, 'Printers & scanners'. Click the printer you want to get rid of, then select 'Remove device'. In Windows 7, open the Control Panel and click 'View devices and printers'.

If you have any problems with this method, try using the Windows program-removal tool to manually uninstall any software related to the printer. To do this, press Windows+R and type appwiz.cpl. Click the program you want to remove and select Uninstall.

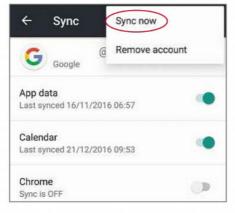
To make sure you've uninstalled the drivers for the printer, press Windows+R, type devmgmt.msc and click OK to open Device Manager. Click the Printers button, then right-click the device you want to remove and select Uninstall.



Disconnect old Android devices from Google

If you leave your Google account logged in on an old Android device, your private data is visible to anyone who gets their hands on it. Thankfully, removing a Google account is very simple and you don't need to wipe the device completely to do so.

Open the Settings app on the device, scroll down and tap Accounts, then Google. Choose the Google account you



want to remove and a page will load displaying its Sync settings. Tap the menu button (or More) from this menu, then choose 'Remove account'.

If you've logged into your Google account on a friend's phone or given someone an old device without signing out first, you can remove your account remotely by visiting security.google .com/settings/security/activity. This page displays a list of all the devices (including PCs and Macs) that you've recently used to log in. Click a device and you'll see the option to 'Remove device access'.

If you're unfortunate enough to lose your Android phone or tablet, and you're worried that it might have fallen into the wrong hands, you can wipe it remotely using Android Device Manager. Go to

bit.ly/device414 in any browser, log in when prompted and use the drop-down menu to select the device you want to wipe. Android Device Manager shows the device's location. and you can either lock it or make it ring before you proceed. If you're confident that you won't get the device back and

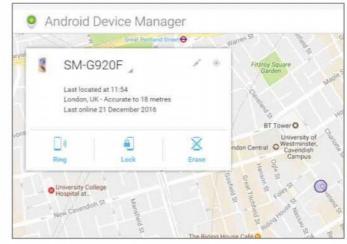
you're not worried about losing any of the files on it, click the Erase button and follow the on-screen instructions to wipe the device completely.

Clear defunct networks from your Wi-Fi

Every time you join a Wi-Fi network, your device saves its details so you can connect automatically whenever you're in range. Although this is convenient, you can end up with a long list of redundant networks, and joining one without realising could leave you vulnerable to security risks.

To delete saved networks from your Android device, open the Settings app, tap Wi-Fi and make sure Wi-Fi is turned on. Tap the menu button, select 'Saved networks', then tap any saved network and delete it by choosing Forget. To remove a saved network from an iPad or iPhone, you need to be within range of it. Open Settings and select Wi-Fi. Tap the network you want to remove and choose 'Forget This Network'.

There is an option to delete all network settings if you want to start again with a clean slate, although this also clears your phone network settings. To do this, open Settings, then General and choose Reset, followed by 'Reset Network Settings'. You'll be prompted to enter your Passcode, after which iOS



If you don't remove old accounts and services from your devices, you may compromise their performance and your privacy. Edward Munn explains how to deal with old configurations





deletes all network settings.

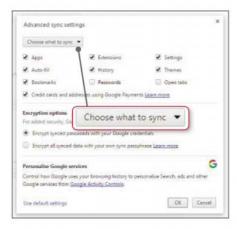
To clear saved networks from a PC. click the network icon on your

taskbar and choose 'Network settings'. Next, scroll down and click 'Manage Wi-Fi settings' and, under 'Manage known networks', click the network you want to delete, then select Forget. Next time you're within range of the network, your PC or mobile device will no longer join it automatically. You can still join it manually by entering the key.

Stop your browser syncing your data

The easiest way to stop Chrome syncing data with other devices is to sign out of your account. Click the three-dot button and choose Settings. Next, click 'Disconnect your Google account' and Sign Out. Your data - including bookmarks, history and settings - will remain on the browser unless you tick the box to clear this information, but no further information will be synced to your Google account.

If you only want to stop some data (such as passwords) syncing, click



'Advanced sync settings' and select 'Choose what to sync' from the dropdown menu. You can then customise the sync settings before clicking OK to save the changes. If you need to sign out of Chrome remotely, use the tool mentioned in the tip 'Disconnect old Android devices from Google'.

Remove offline devices from Spotify

Subscribers to Spotify Premium can save music to enjoy offline on up to three devices at a time. If you have problems saving music to a device, you may be able to fix this by removing an old device from the 'Offline devices' list. To access this, visit www.spotify.com/ account/overview on your PC and click 'Offline devices' in the menu on the left. Click Remove next to any device you no longer want to save music to, and you'll then be able to save music on another, new device.



Stop other people using your Netflix account

It's not unusual to log into Netflix on a friend's PC or smart TV so you can watch your favourite films and TV series together. However, Netflix only lets you log into six devices at once, and you can only stream content to two devices at any given time. So, if you forget to sign out of your account, you may start experiencing problems when streaming content on your own devices.

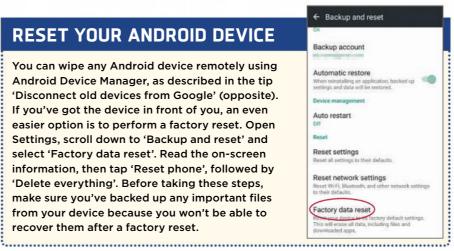
Fortunately, there's an easy way to remove all devices from your Netflix account so that anyone who was logged in will no longer be able to use it. From your browser, log in to www.netflix.com, open My Account from the drop-down menu and click 'Sign out of all devices' under the Settings section.

You'll need to log back in on all your own devices, but that's a minor inconvenience for regaining control of your account.



RESET YOUR ANDROID DEVICE

You can wipe any Android device remotely using Android Device Manager, as described in the tip 'Disconnect old devices from Google' (opposite). If you've got the device in front of you, an even easier option is to perform a factory reset. Open Settings, scroll down to 'Backup and reset' and select 'Factory data reset'. Read the on-screen information, then tap 'Reset phone', followed by 'Delete everything'. Before taking these steps, make sure you've backed up any important files from your device because you won't be able to recover them after a factory reset.





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	Provider	Package name	Monthly price	Contract length	Broadband speed	Allowance	First-year cost*
1	Virgin media	Virgin: Broadband	£35.25 (£18.00 for 12 months)	12 months	50Mbps max speed	unlimited *	£216.00
2	E	EE: Broadband	£28.50 (£19.50 for 18 months)	18 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited *	£234.00
3	sky	Sky: Broadband	£27.40 (£22.40 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	○○ unlimited	£268.80
4	TalkTalk For Everyone	TalkTalk: Broadband	£22.95	24 months	17Mbps max speed	○○ unlimited	£275.40

Terms & Conditions apply - see ISP sites for details

* Fair-usage or restriction policy applies.

Data supplied by www.broadbandgenie.co.uk. Correct as of 20 December 2016.



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

In the next issue of our sister title Computeractive... SNEAK

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WHY YOU MUST NOT USE WINDOWS SECURITY - The antivirus software you should run instead

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WEB USER WORD SEARCH

Can you find the following messaging services in the grid on the right? Names may appear vertically, horizontally or diagonally, and forwards or backwards

ALLO GMAIL IMESSAGE MESSENGER SIGNAL **SKYPE SNAPCHAT TELEGRAM VIBER** WHATSAPP

E	S	R	I	Y	N	V	E	S	T	R	P
P	ı	E	F	T	A	G	N	Q	E	E	P
Y	G	В	A	W	A	A	M	Н	L	G	A
K	N	ı	C	S	P	L	T	P	E	N	S
S	A	V	S	C	A	I	W	В	G	E	T
G	L	E	Н	L	F	A	T	L	R	S	A
E	M	A	L	J	Z	M	Y	E	A	S	Н
ı	T	0	G	Y	L	G	A	V	M	E	W
X	R	D	G	K	Y	E	X	L	D	M	A
M	Z	A	X	ı	Z	S	C	F	G	M	J
C	Y	S	Z	ı	A	Н	В	В	F	X	W
U	X	D	M	K	S	В	Z	E	U	X	L

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COMPETITIONS

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The 2017 version of MAGIX Movie Edit Pro makes it easier than ever to edit videos, add superb effects

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All Gear4 cases are made from D3O materials commonly used in the military, which lock together on impact to absorb shocks, then return to their flexible state. A new design for the iPhone 7 (normal and Plus size), the Carnaby case comes in Gold, Rose Gold

and Silver. We're giving away six normal-sized cases in silver. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@ dennis.co.uk with 'carnaby' in the subject line. For more info visit www.gear4.com and follow @GEAR4 on Twitter.





Practical WebUser

16 pages of workshops, tips, projects and problem solving

Shoot 360-degree photos and view them in VLC | bit.ly/vlc414

VLC 360 gives VLC Media Player the ability to open 360-degree videos and photos. Here's how to create your own content to view in VLC

60-degree photos and videos have become increasingly common, due in part to the growing popularity of compatible cameras from companies such as GoPro. With a 360-degree video, you can interact with the media as it plays, so you can pan around, look up and down, and even zoom in and out of the picture. VLC 360 is a special preview version of the software that can display

.....

these 360-degree photos and videos. Creating your own 360-degree images to view through the software is easy, and you can do it for free using a smartphone or tablet.

VLC 360 includes a full version of VLC Media Player 3.0. which is still a work in progress. Install it with caution, because it may overwrite an existing stable version of VLC if you have one installed.



The easiest way to create 360-degree photos is to use Google's apps. If you have a recent Android phone, skip straight to Step 6. If you use iOS, install Street View (bit.ly/sphere414) on your device and tap the camera button. You can then choose to link an external 360-degree camera, 11 import photos 2 or use your device's camera.

Select the option to use the built-in camera and tap Open Camera. A circle 11 and a solid dot appear on the screen. Move your phone until the circle is over the top of the dot and wait a couple of seconds while

the app captures the image.





Move your phone to the right, keeping it level, and look for the next dot. Repeat the process once the app has captured the next image, moving your phone again and finding the next dot. Continue the process by pointing your

phone up to cover the sky and down to cover the ground. Tap the tick button 11 when you've finished.

Photo **Spheres** created in the app are designed to be shared on Google Maps. This is why the next screen gives you the option to blur any parts of the image - faces or car number plates, for example - by tapping and

holding those areas of the photo. If you only intend to view the image in VLC 360, you can skip this step.



If you want to publish your Photo Sphere to Google Maps, tap the orange strip. 11 If not, tap the share icon on the right. 2 The app will warn you that privately shared Photo Spheres may look flat in some products.



Ignore this and tap Share Privately. Choose how you want to send your image to your PC, then skip to Step 7.





If you have an Android device that runs 4.4 (KitKat) or newer, you can create a Photo Sphere directly from Google Camera, which is even easier. Open the camera, swipe in from the left, select Photo Sphere from the options 1 and capture the scene. The app saves the image to Photos.



Once you've transferred your photo-sphere image to your PC, drag and drop it on to VLC Media Player. An entry for your image will appear in the playlist. Double-click this to load the image. It may appear in the corner of the screen. If so, click the relevant button 1 to switch to full-screen mode.



To look around the image, click and drag with your mouse or use the arrows on your keyboard. Zoom in and out using your mouse's scroll wheel or the PgUp and PgDn keys. You can look up, down and side to side. Clicking the Stop button 11 takes you back to the playlist screen.



Stop downloads from slowing down your PC and network

Deluge: deluge-torrent.org | 🕒 20 mins | 🎥 XP, Vista, 7, 8, 10 🐞 MacOS X 🔬



itTorrent's ability to download files from multiple sources is great for getting the fastest downloads but it can use up a lot of bandwidth, which can make your internet and PC feel slow for other tasks. However, you can tweak your BitTorrent software's settings to stop it hogging resources.

To demonstrate this, we've used Deluge, our Silver Awardwinner from Issue 404 (bit.ly/webuser404). We chose this over the Gold Award-winning uTorrent because the latest version of that tool includes a potentially unwanted program in its installer. One of the great things about Deluge is that as well as letting you set the amount of bandwidth being used by your downloads, it can use plugins to provide more control. In this Workshop, we show you how to take advantage of its default settings and plugins.

You may need to download and install Microsoft Visual C++ 2008 Service Pack 1 Redistributable. The Deluge installer takes you to the download page if you don't yet have the pack.

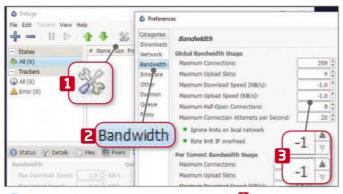




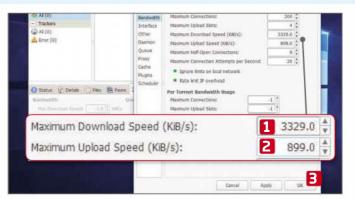
Find out how much bandwidth you have before you set the amount to devote to Deluge. Go to Speedtest.net (www .speedtest.net) and click Settings. Deluge operates in Kilobytes per second (KB/s) so change Speedtest's Speed Measurement to Kilobytes in the drop-down menu. • Click Save.



Click the Take A Speed Test button, then Begin Test. Note your Download Speed 🗓 and Upload Speed. 🔼 These figures can fluctuate so you should run the test at different times over the course of the day to get an average.



In Deluge, click the Preferences button 11 and choose Bandwidth. 2 The current Maximum Download Speed and Maximum Upload Speed are set to -1, **B** which is unlimited. At this setting, BitTorrent hogs bandwidth from other tools and users on your network, slowing everything down.



Set the Maximum Download Speed to somewhere between 80-95% of your bandwidth speed, 11 depending on how much you want to devote to Deluge when your downloads are at their busiest. Set the Maximum Upload Speed to 80% of your measured Upload speed. 2 Click OK. 3

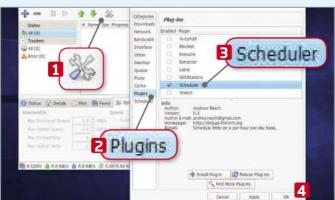




EXPERT TIP

Andy Shaw says

The Deluge plugin WebUI lets you use a browser to control the software. When using Delugesiphon for Chrome (bit.ly/ds414) or Bit Torrent WebUI+ for Firefox (bit.ly/btwu414), you can click links to torrent files to automatically start them downloading. You can also type http://localhost8112 into the address bar to access a browser-based version of the interface. The default password is deluge.



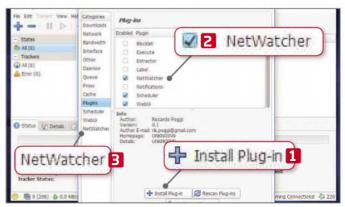
Deluge has some built-in plugins, including Scheduler, which automates when your download speeds can be maxed out and when they should be throttled back. Click the Preferences button, 1 select Plugins, 2 tick Scheduler 3 and click OK. 4



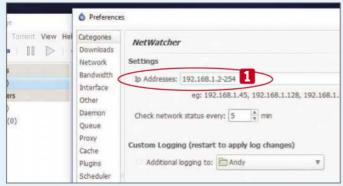
Scheduler appears in the Preferences window 1 and as a button on the main screen. 2 Click an hour of the day to change it to yellow 🖪 and it will use the configurable Slow Settings 4 instead of the program's defaults. Click again to turn it red 5 when you want it to block downloads completely.



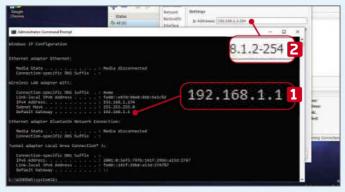
There are more plugins available from other developers. NetWatcher is worth installing - it pauses downloads if another device tries to use the internet on your network. Download it from the Deluge forum at bit.ly/nw414 by clicking the 'Download egg' link, 11 then clicking the link it leads to.



In the Plugins section of Preferences, click the Install Plug-in button. • Browse to the EGG file, select it and click Open. Find the plugin in the list above and tick its box. 2 With NetWatcher, a new option is added to the Preferences Window. B Click it to configure it.



You can enter a range of IP addresses into the box 11 to capture all the devices on a network or you can enter individual IP addresses if you prefer. This might be preferable if you have a device that's particularly reliant on speed, such as a set-top box that streams TV.



To find your network's IP range, open Command Prompt and type ipconfig. Look for the Default Gateway address, 11 replace the last number (usually '1') with 2-254. 2 If you'd rather throttle (slow) downloads than pause them, try the NetWatcher 2 plugin instead (bit.ly/nw2414).



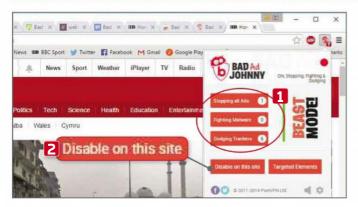
Block all ads, malware and trackers

ad Ad Johnny is a no-nonsense ad blocker that rejects the concept of 'acceptable' ads, blocking 100% of adverts, malware and trackers by default, to keep you safe on the web and speed up your web browsing.

This handy extension also gives you an impressive amount of control, letting you disable blocking for individual sites with one click and create URL whitelists and blacklists.

Bad Ad Johnny: bit.ly/badad414 | 10 mins |

Chrome



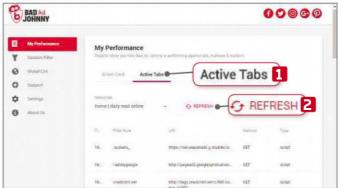
Install Bad Ad Johnny and an icon appears in Chrome's toolbar. Click it to see counters for the ads, malware and trackers Bad Ad Johnny has blocked for your current tab. 1 Click 'Disable on this site' 2 to disable Bad Ad Johnny on the current site for the duration of your visit.



You can disable Bad Ad Johnny completely by clicking the red circle or stop any of its individual tools by clicking their respective counters. 🔁 Disabling these functions prompts a humorous voice alert, but you can mute this by clicking the speaker icon. 3



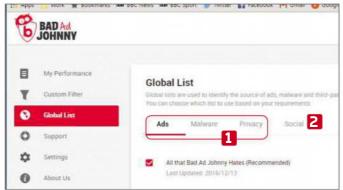
To block specific HTML elements on a site, click Targeted Elements, then select Close and click the element you want to block. By default, Bad Ad Johnny blocks that element on the current site only, 11 but you can select the Generic option 2 to block it on all sites.



Click the Settings cog in the bottom-right corner to load a more detailed summary of Bad Ad Johnny's performance over time. To see what's being blocked on your current tabs, click Active Tabs 1 and select one from the drop-down menu (you may need to click Refresh). 2



Click Custom Filter 1 to place specific URLs on the blacklist or whitelist, and to manage any Targeted Elements 2 you've blocked (see Step 3). To manage the global lists that Bad Ad Johnny uses to block adverts, malware and trackers, click Global List. 🔁



Bad Ad Johnny's recommended lists are enabled by default under the headings Ads, Malware and Privacy. There are also lists for blocking annoyances on social networks, which you can select or remove as required. 2



Film your next video with multiple cameras

sing an extra camera to capture footage makes any video - from YouTube to a Skype chat - look more professional. ManyCam (bit.ly/mc414) links webcams and phone cameras to build a multi-camera studio from your

existing hardware. The free version is restricted to two video sources and a standard-definition video stream, though you can upgrade for \$19.99 (around £16).



ManyCam: bit.ly/mc414 | 🕒 10 mins | ಿ 7, 8, 10, 🐞 10.9+ 🖣



During installation, click Options to stop the software launching with Windows. You need an account to connect your devices' cameras - click 'Create one now' in the box. If your camera shows a black screen, right-click it and choose your camera 11 from the pop-up menu.



To use a mobile device as a second camera, find the ManyCam app in your device's app store. Download and install it, then use it to sign into your account. Right-click the plus symbol on the PC software, choose ManyCam Mobile and select your device from the list. 1



Click the video-camera icon 1 when you're ready to record. To switch between your two cameras, hover over the thumbnail of the camera that's not in use. Click Trans 2 to fade into the camera or Cut 3 to switch straight to it. Transition in the right-click menu has different types of fade.



You can drop in other elements, rather than a second camera. Right-click the thumbnail to bring up the range of options, which could be anything from YouTube videos 1 (enter the URL of the video you want to use) or your own Desktop, 2 which is great for instructional demos.



The tabs across the bottom provide tools for adjusting different elements of the video, though some are only available if you upgrade. For example, on the Image tab, you can select Picture in Picture mode 11 which overlays one of your cameras in a box over the other. 2



As well as recording a video, you can live stream it to other services, such as YouTube and Facebook, and to video-chat tools such as Skype. To use it in Skype, for example, go to Tools, 11 Options, then 'Video settings'. 21 In 'Select webcam', choose ManyCam Virtual Webcam.

Weekend Project

Get to grips with some serious PC DIY to boost your computer's performance





Turn your Windows PC into a cloud computer

Why let Chromebooks have all the fun? Wayne Williams shows you how you can enjoy the benefits of a cloud computer on your Windows PC



hromebooks, which run Google's Chrome OS, have two major advantages over Windows PCs: everything is done in the cloud, which means you don't have to fill your hard drive with bloated software; and because your computer needs less memory and power to run programs, the hardware is lowerspec and therefore more affordable. If you have a spare old PC, or one that's running slower than it should, you can speed it up by mimicking a Chromebook – stripping Windows 10 back to its basics and replacing your bloated old software with online alternatives.



Is it better to be in the cloud?

Large hard drives of 1TB or more have become much cheaper over the last few years, and there are plenty of affordable USB memory sticks to choose from, but local storage isn't always the best option. Working in the cloud requires far fewer resources, and storing your files online means they are easily accessible from any PC. Fast, reliable Wi-Fi is commonly available so you'll rarely be stuck without

a working internet connection. Even if you can't find a Wi-Fi hotspot, you can always turn your mobile phone into a private, portable one.

Slim down Windows

You can strip back Windows to free up space on your hard drive. Microsoft's

Slim down Windows by removing any features you don't use



operating system comes bundled with extra tools that you don't need and lots of apps you'll probably never use. Remove unwanted features by clicking Start and typing Programs and features. Launch it and select 'Turn Windows features on or off'. You can remove Internet Explorer, Windows Media Player, Microsoft Print to PDF, Work Folders Client, XPS Services and XPS Viewer, and anything else you don't need. Make sure you don't disable anything important, though.

To remove unwanted Windows 10 apps, click Start, Settings, System and select 'Apps & features' on the left. Select an unwanted app, then click its Uninstall button. You can bulk-remove your unwanted apps using IObit Uninstaller (bit.ly/iob414).



IObit Uninstaller lets you uninstall any unwanted Windows apps

What you should move to the cloud

Chromebooks run all apps and services in the cloud, but Windows PCs give you the choice of working online or off. Some apps are perfectly suited to work in the cloud, but for those that aren't, we provide some alternatives on page 61.

SWITCH TO THESE ONLINE VERSIONS

Office

This is a no-brainer. There are plenty of Office suites you can use online and Google Docs (docs.google.com) is the obvious choice, although Office online (www.office.com) is a better option if you prefer Microsoft's products. Office's free online suite is a slimmeddown version of the paid-for Microsoft Office. It offers most of the features you need and if you already use the full suite - at work, perhaps - you'll be able to access all your documents through OneDrive. We show you how to get set up with Microsoft's Office Online in our Mini Workshop, below.



Google Docs provides online office tools for documents, spreadsheets and more

Fmail

Most people use a webmail service to access their personal mail and it's becoming increasingly rare to find anyone still using email software. However, if you've not yet made the switch, it's definitely worth trying webmail is very convenient, doesn't take long to get used to and will free up a lot of drive space.

Photos, videos and music

Photos (and videos) can hog your hard drive, so moving them to the cloud will free up space, let you share your memories and make them accessible from any device. Previously, we would have suggested Flickr, which offers 1TB of storage for free, but Yahoo has proved unreliable at protecting its users' privacy, so we recommend trying some different services. Google Photos (photos.google.com), for example, offers unlimited free storage for 'High quality' images up to 16 megpixels (or 1080p video). We show you how to get started with Google Photos in our Mini Workshop on page 61. To make absolutely sure you never lose your photos, you could store copies on multiple storage services.

You can stream your music from cloud-based services, too, instead of keeping them stored on your computer, and your videos can be uploaded to sites such as YouTube.

System cleaner

CCleaner (www.piriform.com/ccleaner) is an excellent free PC-cleaning tool, but you don't need to download it because it's available to use on the web as CCleaner Cloud (www .ccleanercloud.com). In many ways, the online version is better because it lets you manage and maintain up to three PCs remotely (including ones belonging to friends and family). It can also remove junk and disable

MINI WORKSHOP | Create documents for free with Office Online



Go to the Office Online site (bit.ly/ msoffice414) and click any of the tiles - Word, Excel, PowerPoint or OneNote - to open the relevant app. [1] Click the 'See more' link 2 to access other Office apps, including Sway, Mail, Calendar, OneDrive and Docs.com.

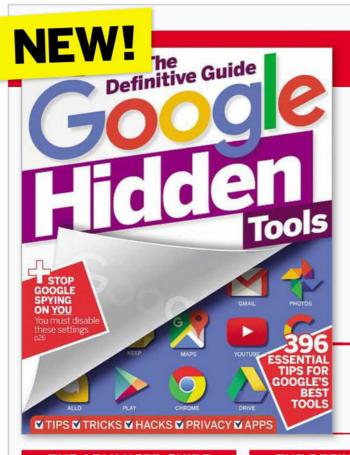


Your chosen Office app will open in a new tab. You need to sign in with a Microsoft account or sign up for a new one. You can now create a new blank document 1 or choose a ready-made template. 2 Any previously accessed items will appear in the sidebar. El



The online app will load and you can use it as you would the Office software. There's a Chrome add-on available that makes it easier to view, edit and share files. 1 Access the editing tools you require from the ribbon interface. 2 You can save the document to OneDrive or download a copy to your PC.

WebUser Bookstore



THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO GOOGLE HIDDEN TOOLS

In the new and updated Definitive Guide to Google Hidden Tools, the experts at Web User and Computeractive lift the lid on Google's most popular services to reveal more than 390 ways to make them even more efficient, useful and tailored to your needs. You'll find clever new add-ons for Chrome, smart hacks for YouTube and handy tools and tricks for Google Maps, Drive, Gmail and more. It's an essential guide to unlocking the hundreds of secret settings, options and tools that Google offers.

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at bit.ly/defguidegoogle

THE ADVANCED GUIDE TO WINDOWS 10

Our must-have manual for Windows 10 has 196 pages packed with expert advice



to customise Windows 10 so it works exactly how you want it. It's also the ideal troubleshooting guide, providing fixes for every conceivable problem. Don't turn on your PC without it!

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at bit.ly/advancedw10

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO ANDROID

Get the most from your Android device with our 148-page book. It explains all



you need to know about the latest versions of Android (Lollipop and Marshmallow), reveals the best apps for everything you'll ever want to do, and exposes dodgy ones that slow your device and drain the battery. It also tells you how to stay safe.

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THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO WINDOWS 10

This 148-page book is the perfect way to get started with Microsoft's fantastic



operating system. You'll learn how to master all the new tools and software, and how to upgrade without losing anything. It has been updated to include fixes for problems that have appeared since Windows 10 launched.

BUY IT NOW FROM AMAZON

at bit.ly/guidetowindows10



Manage your computers and remove junk using CCleaner Cloud

unnecessary startup programs, defrag drives and repair Registry problems.

Photo-editing

While free photo-editing programs such as Paint.NET are very good, there are plenty of excellent webbased alternatives including PixIr (pixlr.com) and BeFunky (bit.ly/ befunky414). It makes a lot of sense to edit your photos in the cloud if you plan to share them online afterwards.



BeFunky lets you edit your photos online and offers loads of useful tools

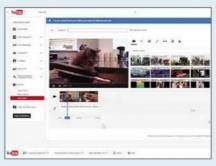
STICK WITH THIS PC SOFTWARE

Storing personal files

Cloud storage has a wealth of benefits but if you're worried about your privacy, you shouldn't upload any sensitive documents or private photos. Google Drive, for example, may be perfectly safe now, but it's impossible to quarantee whether that will still be the case in the future. The recent Yahoo hack shows that even the biggest and most trusted brands can fall foul of hackers.

Video-editing tools

You can edit your videos online using YouTube's editor (bit.ly/yte414) and WeVideo (www.wevideo.com), but these services are only practical for short clips. An entire holiday video will be far too large and you'll need a lot of resources to edit it properly



YouTube's video editor is good, but no match for an editor installed on your PC

in the cloud. It's a much simpler and slicker process to carry out this kind of work on your PC, which has more memory and processing power to devote to the task.

Antivirus options

You can use online antivirus tools such as VirusTotal (www.virustotal.com) and ESET Online Scanner (bit.ly/ esetscan414) but for peace of mind, we recommend you run a local program to protect your computer from dubious downloads.

Media player

You can stream a lot of content in your browser, but if you want to watch downloaded videos or music, or access media you've recorded yourself, then vou will still need to install and run a media player such as VLC (www .videolan.org).

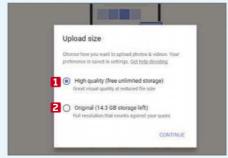


ESET Online Scanner limits you to a one-time scan

MINI WORKSHOP | Move your images to Google Photos



If you have a load of photos on your hard drive, you can easily migrate them to Google Photos. Log into photos.google.com using your Google credentials. It's worth creating a new account so you have the maximum free storage available to you. Click the Upload button 1 and select the folder that contains your photos.



In the 'Upload size' window, select 'High quality'. 1 This will reduce the quality of the images slightly, if they are over 16 megapixels, but you'll have unlimited storage. If you want to keep some photos in their original resolution, you can select that instead. 2 These will eat into your free 15GB quota.



The images will upload in the background, which may take a while depending on the number of photos and the speed of your internet connection. Once it's done, you can view images by date (under Photos) 1 or by album. 2 You can also search for items by entering details of the image content ('hat' or 'blue', for example).

NEXT ISSUE

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Web User's Top Tips

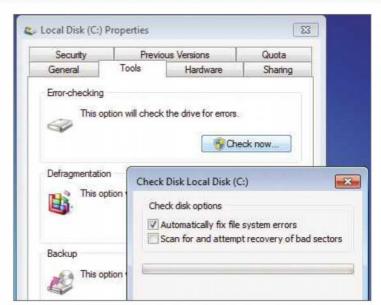
Follow these tips from our experts to repair disk faults using Windows and command-line power tools

TOP TIPS FOR CHECKING AND FIXING YOUR HARD DRIVE

Test your hard drive's health

ard drives have become much more robust and reliable since the old days when manufacturers recommended that you shouldn't even move them around too much. Even so, one of the first things you should do when your PC develops a problem is to check the hard drive, even if only to eliminate it as a possible cause.

Open Explorer and select This PC in the sidebar to display the drives. Right-click each drive and select Properties on the menu. Select the Tools tab, find the 'Error checking' section and click the Check button. In Windows 10, click 'Scan drive' - even if it says you don't need to. In Windows 7, click 'Scan now', then Start. The drive will be scanned the next time you start Windows, and any problems found are repaired automatically.



If your PC is having problems, you should check the drive for errors. In Windows 7, tick the top option and restart your PC

Spot missing Windows files

Windows is made up of thousands of files and problems can occur if any are missing or corrupted. It might not be obvious that you have files missing because Windows error messages don't make it clear and they can be tricky to decipher. However, you can use the Windows SFC (System File Checker) tool to make sure that all Windows files on the hard drive are present and correct.

In Windows 10, type command prompt into the taskbar search box. In Windows 7, go to Start, All Programs, Accessories. In both cases, right-click Command Prompt and select 'Run as administrator'. Then, to check the drive, type sfc /scannow and press Enter.

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.

Check out Chkdsk

Using Windows to check the hard drive works well but experienced users can go a step further and check the drive from the command prompt. Chkdsk (short for 'check disk') offers a range of tools that can fix hard-drive errors.

Launch Command Prompt as an administrator and, at the prompt, type chkdsk /? to see a comprehensive list of all the tools. Windows 10 has more

than Windows 7, but both provide straightforward ways to check your drive. The next few tips cover some of Chkdsk's most useful tools.

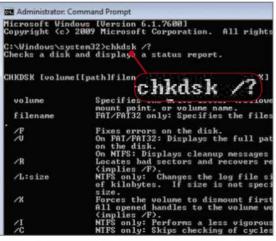
How to use Chkdsk

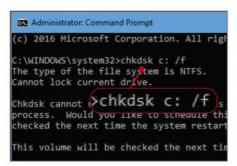
The basic command for checking and fixing a hard drive is chkdsk c: /f. The /f stands for 'fix', and you can replace c: with any drive letter. The process won't start immediately

> because many Windows files are locked when they're in use. Press Y to schedule a check when you next start Windows - ideally, pick a time when you don't need to use your PC. Type exit and press Enter to close the command window, then restart Windows when you're ready to run the scan.

Chkdsk takes several

minutes to run and displays Type chkdsk /? to see tools and information for the Chkdsk command





Check your hard drive for errors using this Command Prompt tool

its progress as it works. You can watch it run several passes and report that the hard drive is OK or that it fixed faults. Windows restarts automatically when Chkdsk finishes.

Sweep for bad sectors

Chkdsk checks the filing system that's used to store and keep track of the files on your hard drive. It does not check whether the files can actually be read. Drive errors are almost always due to filing-system faults rather than hardware errors, which are rare. But if you think your drive is failing, you can check that every sector can be read. There are a lot of sectors on a hard drive, so it can take several hours to complete this test (just before you go to bed is a good time to start). It should only be run on mechanical disks, not solid state drives (SSDs). When you're ready to start, type chkdsk c: /f /r.

Windows 7 users can start this process from within Windows. Rightclick a drive in Explorer and select Properties, Tools, 'Check now'. Tick the option to 'Scan for and attempt recovery of bad sectors', then restart Windows to set it going.

Scan without restarting

Windows 7 has to be restarted before it can scan the hard drive because, as we mentioned earlier, it can't otherwise access any Windows files that are being used. Windows 8 and 10, however, can check a hard drive even when Windows is running - just type chkdsk c: / scan. Chkdsk fixes all minor errors and anything that can't be repaired is logged and scheduled to be fixed automatically when the files are not in use.

Speed it up in Windows 10

Scanning hard drives for errors is a slow process but you can speed it up in Windows 10. At the command prompt, type chkdsk c: /scan /perf, then press Enter. The /perf stands for performance and the command dedicates all available processing power and memory to the task so it can progress at maximum speed.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

Perform a Spotfix

Restarting Windows to fix errors is slow and tedious, so improvements were made to Windows 8 and 10 to take some of the pain out of the process. The drive is now automatically checked on a regular basis and is self-healing, so minor problems are automatically fixed when the drive is scanned, even if Windows is running.

Serious problems are logged and scheduled to be fixed later. Using chkdsk with the /spotfix parameter will fix those errors immediately. You can also use the options /forceofflinefix and /offlinescanandfix.

For example:

chkdsk c: /spotfix chkdsk c: /scan /forceofflinefix

chkdsk c: /offlinescanandfix

All these Chkdsk variations do more or less the same thing and must have exclusive access to the hard drive, so Windows can't be running at the same time. You are prompted to restart Windows to run an offline scan and fix. These commands are rarely needed, however, so stick to using chkdsk c: /f unless you have a very specific reason not to.

Make FAT drives fitter

The hard drive that Windows boots from (usually C:) always uses the NTFS filing system, but external hard drives and USB memory sticks can use any format. They are usually formatted using the FAT filing system because a FAT formatted drive can be used with any operating system -Windows, MacOS or Linux.

The Chkdsk commands we've covered so far all work with

FAT-formatted drives but there are also some commands unique to FAT. Files are stored in clusters and large files require several clusters that are linked together in a chain. Sometimes the links become lost, broken

or corrupted, but you can fix them with the command:

chkdsk e: /freeorphanedchains Change the e: to the drive letter of the external drive you're fixing. This won't work if the drive has been formatted using NTFS.

Monitor drive activity

When the computer is running slowly for no apparent reason, it could be because the hard drive is being overburdened. This problem affects mechanical drives, not SSDs. To see how much the drive is being pushed, right-click an empty part of the taskbar and click Task Manager.

Windows 10 and 8 show much more information than Windows 7. Find and click the column labelled Disk to sort the programs by disk usage. If the computer is slow, then the programs at the top of the list will be the culprits because they are putting the most stress on the hard drive. Check the usage straight after starting the PC and when it shows a lot of disk activity. Give it about five minutes to settle, after which the PC should become more responsive.

Keep an eye on resource usage

The Task Manager contains a powerful tool called Resource Monitor. In Task Manager, select the Performance tab, then click Open Resource Monitor at the bottom. There are four sections: CPU, Disk, Network and Memory. Click the Disk tab to view a live display of the files being read from and written to. Run a program, such as a browser, to see all the files it accesses, the amount of hard drive space being used, the number of bytes read and written, and more.



If you're feeling very technical, monitor your hard drive activity with Resource Monitor

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



ONLINE STORAGE

Retrieve photos stuck in the cloud

I store my photos in iCloud and Dropbox. Both are full and I keep being asked to pay for more capacity but I'd rather store all my pics on my PC or an external drive. My question is, how do I get them all back on my PC? Emailing them to myself takes forever.

Rick Hanson, via email

Both iCloud and Dropbox limit the free space for storing photos and you have to pay a subscription to get more. Google Photos provides free and unlimited space for images up to 16 megapixels in size. Install it on your phone and tablet, and it will automatically upload and store photos as you take them.

To access your photos in any online storage - including Dropbox (www .dropbox.com), Apple (bit.ly/ic414)



Sync a folder on your PC with Dropbox online storage using the free app

and Google (drive.google.com) install their apps on your computer. In Windows 10 or 8.1, you can also use Microsoft's OneDrive (download it for Windows 7 from onedrive.live.com).

All these apps create a folder on your hard drive that automatically syncs with your online storage. This syncing can initially take an hour or more depending on the number of files and the speed of your internet, after which you can use Explorer to copy and move files in the usual way. Just drag them to an external drive to create a backup.

Books can be read online or downloaded in Kindle and EPUB formats, and read on your computer, phone or tablet. Get Freda (bit.ly/ freda414) from the Windows Store and you can download and read these ebooks on your computer.

BROWSERS

Fix IE scripting errors

I upgraded from Windows 7 to 10 a few months ago and, ever since, I've had a 'scripting error' message in Internet Explorer 11. Why is this and what do I do to stop it occurring?

Jay Taylor, via email

This error may be caused by incorrect settings in Internet Explorer. Click the gear icon and select

Internet Options. then select the Security tab and click 'Reset all zones to default level'. If this button is disabled it means the default level is already set.



Click the Reset button to fix script problems with Internet Explorer

Select the General tab and click Delete in the 'Browsing history' section to delete any temporary internet files that are stored. Tick all the options in the next window and click Delete.

Finally, select the Advanced tab and click 'Restore advanced settings' followed by Reset. Make sure that the two 'Disable script debugging...' options are ticked and 'Display a notification about every script error' is not ticked.

Internet Explorer 11 is an outdated browser and there are better alternatives. Microsoft Edge comes installed with Windows 10 but many people prefer Google Chrome (www.google.co.uk/chrome).

EBOOKS

Browsing for free books

I wanted to download some books and tried getting them from The Pirate Bay (thepiratebay.org) but my ISP blocked me. Is there any other way I can get my books?

Keith Howard, via email

The Pirate Bay is known for illegal software, movies, music and other media, and should be avoided. There are many legal ways to get books for free - for example, find and join your nearest library at www.gov.uk/joinlibrary. Now go to the Windows Store on Windows 10 or 8, Google Play Store on Android phones and tablets, or the Apple Store on iPhone and iPad. Search for an app called OverDrive. Once it's set up, this app lets you borrow and read ebooks from your library.

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You can borrow ebooks for free from your library using the OverDrive app

GENERAL PC

Solve Windows Update problems

Since 30 August, updates on my Windows 7 PC have mostly failed. I've run the update troubleshooter several times, which often fixes one problem and then stalls. I've tried to download missing updates manually, but the updater stalls. I have to wonder if this is because I reserved my Windows 10 update but did not install it.

Chris Emerson, via email

There isn't a simple fix and you must work through the following solutions to fix Windows Update. Press Windows+R, type cmd and press Enter. Type sfc /scannow and press Enter to check your PC's Windows files.

Download and run Microsoft's System Update Readiness tool from bit.ly/ sys414. Make sure you get the right version: for most 64-bit users, it's the one labelled 'x64-based (64-bit) versions of Windows 7 SP1 and Windows 7'.

Microsoft has a script to reset Windows Update Agent at bit.ly/ wua414. Download the ZIP file, extract the contents and double-click ResetWUEng.cmd to run it. If it still isn't working, go to bit.ly/reset414. There is a Windows Update Troubleshooter that can be downloaded and run, and also a long and detailed guide to manually resetting Windows Update.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Keep picture quality high

When I recently uploaded pictures for my Vistaprint (www.vistaprint .co.uk) wall calendar, a warning triangle appeared in the top-left corner saying my pictures were of poor quality and I should try an alternative. I checked the picture sizes on my PC (I can't see a way to find this on my iPad), and the pictures with the warnings were all less than 200KB, while the good ones were 2-3MB. Yet, all the pictures look the same quality when viewed on my iPad. Why does this reduction in picture size happen and how can I prevent it?

Rick Hanson, via email

If your iPhone or iPad only has 16GB of storage, this can quickly fill up with the operating system, apps, music, videos and photos. There is an option to store photos in iCloud, where the original full-size images are stored online and the photos on the iPhone and iPad are replaced with smaller

low-resolution copies. This frees up storage space and lets you take more photos.

When you view or edit photos, the original high-quality full-resolution image is downloaded. It sounds like the low-res copies have been uploaded to Vistaprint instead of the originals. Download the photos for your calendar from iCloud (www. icloud.com or install iCloud on your PC (bit.ly/ic414). Check that you are using the original highresolution version of your images before uploading them to Vistaprint.

Alternatively, on your iPad or iPhone,

go to Settinas. iCloud, iCloud Photo Library Photos and select the Automatically upload and store your entire libr in iCloud to access photos and videos from all option to Last updated at 13:38 'Download and Keep Optimise iPhone Storage Originals'. Download and Keep Originals This replaces the low-res photos

Download and store original-quality photos on vour iPhone or iPad

originals. However, you should bear in mind that this could require several gigabytes of storage space and you may not have room.

GENERAL PC

Fix a malfunctioning trackpad

The trackpad on my laptop hasn't worked since I upgraded to Windows 10. It doesn't bother me much because I prefer using a wireless mouse, but it would be useful to get it working again for those occasions when my mouse battery dies.

Steve Baker, via email

There may be an option on your PC that's set to disable the trackpad when a mouse is being used. Right-click the Start button and select Control Panel. Select the 'Small icons' view and click Mouse. Select the ClickPad Settings tab and clear the tick against the option 'Disable internal pointing device when external USB pointing device is attached'.

If that doesn't work, then it's almost certainly a driver problem. It's likely that the trackpad's driver isn't compatible with Windows 10. Right-click the Start button and select Device Manager. Expand 'Mice and other pointing devices', right-click the ClickPad entry and select Update Driver Software. A new driver is installed automatically, if one is available.

Synaptics is one of the most common trackpad manufacturers. You can download the latest drivers from its website (bit.ly/syna414).

BROWSERS

Restore Chrome updates

My old Windows XP PC displays a warning that Chrome has stopped receiving updates because it is no longer supported. However, I am also getting this message on my Windows 10 PC. Is support for that also being stopped? Or have I somehow got the wrong version of Chrome?

A Davies, via email

on vour

device

with the

Chrome on Windows 10, 8.1 and 7 is fully supported and you should get updates every month or two. The browser is now up to version 55 and you can check you have the latest one by going to the menu and selecting Help, then About Google Chrome.

The warning message can appear if you are using Chrome in compatibility mode, which mimics older versions of Windows so you can run old software



Compatibility settings let old programs run but only use them when necessary

on the new OS. This may have been accidentally switched on for Chrome.

Right-click and delete any Chrome icons on the taskbar and Desktop. In Explorer, go to C:\Program Files or C:\Program Files (x86), then open Google\Chrome\Application. Rightclick Chrome.exe and click Properties. Select the Compatibility tab, clear all the tickboxes and click OK. Launch Chrome. It should no longer display the update message. Right-click the icon in the taskbar and select 'Pin to taskbar' to permanently add its icon.



This fortnight Roland is installing smart lighting, so he can turn his lights on and off even when he's not at home

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

GENERAL PC



Apps that run in the background can take their toll on your PC's processor, memory. internet connection. hard drive and so on. To keep your PC running smoothly, it's a good idea to disable any background apps you don't need.

Go to Start, Settings, Privacy, 'Background apps' to see a list of all the apps that can run in the background.



Each one has a switch to allow or block it.

winner WebUs

It's worth checking this list even if you think nothing is running because some apps, such as Candy Crush, run in the background by default.

J Foley, via email

Disable background apps to stop them draining your PC's resources



version with new tools. The Mail app in Windows 10 has changed significantly since it was released, and now offers a choice of colour schemes. To see them, click the settings gear icon at the bottom, then click Personalisation. First there was 'Light mode', then 'Dark mode' and now you have the option to 'Use my Windows mode', which replicates the Windows colour scheme. There's also a 'Use my Windows accent colour' option. You can change the accent colour in Windows Settings, Personalisation, Colours.

Dave Russell, via email

GOOGLE

Avoid the crowds

Here's a tip for avoiding crowded shopping centres during the sales, theme

parks in the summer and other busy venues. To bypass the rabble, search for the venue in Google to see whether it's busy or not. Search for your local shopping centre, for example, and scroll down the page of results until

you get to



Google now shows when places are quiet or busy

the 'Popular times' section. Here, you'll see a chart showing the busiest times for that day, while swiping left and right shows other days of the week. You can use this information to plan your visit for when it's quietest. It doesn't work for everything but when I tested it with my local supermarket, the busy and quiet times it showed were spot on.

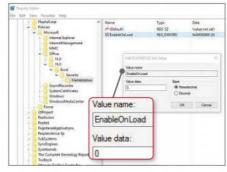
Andrew Martin, via email

SOFTWARE

Stop Office blocking unfamiliar files

I sometimes download a spreadsheet of transactions from my bank. Recently, however, an update to Microsoft Excel 2016 stopped these XLS files opening. Now, when I want to view the contents, I have to right-click the file, select 'Properties', choose the General tab and tick Unblock. It's a pain, especially as Excel still warns me that the file has come from an external source and asks me if I want to enable editing.

I looked for a way around this problem, and an answer to an apparently



Set EnableOnLoad to 0 to stop Office blocking files from external sources

unrelated question about large Word files taking a long time to save provided a possible solution using a Registry tweak. This worked, and I no longer have to unblock Excel files that come from external sources.

To perform this fix, you have to modify the Registry, so back it up before you make any changes and make sure you know how to restore it if a problem occurs. Open the Registry Editor and navigate to the following Registry key:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\ Policies\Microsoft\Office\16.0\Excel\ Security\FileValidation

If you can't see this key, you can create it yourself. Next, double-click REG_DWORD: EnableOnLoad. Set its value to 0 and restart your PC. You'll now find you only get two warnings about external files instead of three. Incidentally, this Registry tweak also helps with slow loading and saving of large Office files.

John Chapman, Web User Forums

EMAIL

Redecorate the Mail app

Windows 10 apps update in the background, so it's not always obvious when your PC has downloaded a new



BROWSERS

Drag and search

When I'm browsing the web, I often come across words and phrases that I need to look up. An easy way to do this is to click and drag over one or more words on the page, hover your mouse over them, then right-click and choose 'Search Google for...' whatever it is you've highlighted. I've also found that you can drag the highlighted text to the address box and drop it there.

Chrome does this better than Firefox because it performs the search automatically and shows the results instantly. With Firefox, once you've dropped the text in the address box, you must press Enter to perform the search.

Mike Moore, via email

SOFTWARE

Design and print your own greetings cards

In issue 411. Anne Ellis asked about making her old Microsoft greeting-card software run on a Windows 10 PC. As well as providing some excellent advice to get the old program running, Roland suggested some websites for making creating cards. I'd like to suggest Greetings Island (www.greetingsisland .com), which is similar to some of the sites Roland mentioned, and free. After creating your card, you can download it (along with envelopes) as a PDF and print it yourself.

Another possibility, if you prefer to use software installed on your PC, is Serif CraftArtist Compact (bit.ly/sca414). You can download this software for free but you have to pay to use some of its premium features.

Nigel Head, via email



Greetings Island lets you customise and print greetings cards for any occasion

SOFTWARE

Auto-write documents

If you need to produce dummy text for a fake document, letter or anything else, you can create it automatically with barely any typing. Start Microsoft Word, create a new blank document, type =rand(10, 7) and press Enter. This creates 10 paragraphs of seven sentences each. You can substitute any numbers in the brackets: the first is the number of

paragraphs and the second is the number of sentences in each paragraph.

Alan Corbett via email

SERVICE PROVIDERS

Beware of upgrading to Sky Q

I have a word of warning for any readers who are thinking of upgrading to Sky Q, the company's new Ultra HD set-top box. Although it is a great bit of kit, now that my fibre broadband and phone deal are both with Sky, its cancellation team won't offer me any kind of deal to keep me as a customer.

In the past, I always managed to get a better deal because my services were separate, but this time the man on the phone told me that because I was paying a premium subscription of over a hundred pounds, there was no way I would be offered anything. He even suggested going to BT or Virgin for my phone and broadband for a year and then coming back to Sky to get a better deal. This seems ludicrous to me, especially as I've been a customer for over 16 years, so I thought I'd warn other loyal Sky customers that they upgrade to Sky Q at their own risk!

Lenny Russell, via email



Getting the latest kit from your ISP might limit the deals available when you renew

BROWSERS

Prompt Wi-Fi login page

When using a public Wi-Fi network, you sometimes need to sign in before you can access the internet. However, your browser might not open the login page, which means it will simply fail to load the pages you try to view. If this happens, you can try entering the router's Default Gateway, which is usually 192.168.1.1 or 192.168.1.254. Doing this should load the login page so you can sign in and use the internet. Alternatively, try entering www .google.com/#, which sometimes produces the same outcome.

> Jack Gold and Cantrel, Web User **Forums**

SECURITY

LibreOffice vulnerability

Today I ran Kaspersky's Vulnerability Scan, which can be found in the 'Other tools' section of the paid-for program. I hadn't used it before and, when the scan was complete, Kaspersky indicated that there was a vulnerability in my version of LibreOffice and asked me to download



The beta version of LibreOffice is available to download from its website

the latest version. I tried installing what seemed to be the latest version from the LibreOffice website, but on running the scan again, Kaspersky still found issue with it. After further searching, I found a beta version - LibreOffice Dev 5.3.0 Beta 2. I downloaded it and this time the scan passed the test. So, if you have LibreOffice and Kaspersky, try scanning it to see if your version suffers from the same problems.

fossewayfella, Web User Forums

Find old chats quickly in Telegram

I use Telegram (telegram.org) to chat to my other half. Because it works across all operating systems and devices, I've found that it provides me with a fairly comprehensive record of most things we've said (and therefore done). The only problem is that it's not always easy to track down old conversations. Scrolling back takes forever, so in the past I would have to guess a keyword

that might have appeared in a conversation and look for it using the app's search function.

Thankfully, I recently discovered a new tool in the app that lets you jump back instantly to vour messages from any day in the past. Simply tap the



Telegram lets you browse vour previous correspondence by date

three-dot button, tap Search and you'll see a small calendar symbol above the keyboard. Tap this, pick the date you want and select 'Jump to date'. Next time you're looking for an important piece of information that someone has sent you through Telegram, this trick should help you to track it down more easily.

Ed Wright, via email



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

Why won't my PC boot?

My PC sometimes fails to boot and goes into start-up repair, saying it is 'Checking disk for errors', then 'Attempting repairs'. After maybe 5 to 10 minutes of this, it boots successfully.

My main hard drive is a two-year-old Corsair 120GB SSD. The Corsair toolbox is installed, but it won't let me optimise the SSD, saying this will be managed by Windows. Meanwhile, Windows says the drive's firmware is up to date. Is it the SSD that's playing up or could it be the motherboard? Should I try any other testing software?

dave1510, Web User Forums

The 30-day free trial of Hard Disk Sentinel (www.hdsentinel.com) provides a written report on the status of your drives. It works with internal and external models, and both SSDs and standard mechanical hard drives. When you've completed the scan, uninstall the program right away to stop its clock, so you can reinstall it again if you need it.

It's also worth checking your memory with MemTest86+ (bit.ly/mem414) or, if you're comfortable unplugging and reinstalling RAM modules from your PC, you can try booting with only one of them installed (and repeating the process with all your RAM modules) to see if any of them are faulty.

These kinds of intermittent problems can be difficult to diagnose. However, because your PC ran a startup repair,



Hard Disk Sentinel tests the performance and health of hard drives and SSDs

SECURITY

Why is Kaspersky suspicious?

I've had Kaspersky Internet Security (www.kaspersky .co.uk) on my laptop since April with no problems, but in the past few days I've received a number of notifications stating that a 'suspicious action was blocked' in apps including Google Installer, Real Downloader and Windows Explorer. The 'Action' tab of Kaspersky also contains various messages including 'Read memory from other processes', but I don't know what they mean. Does anyone know how I can resolve this? If I try to make an internet purchase, will I be safe?

tjsdp, Web User Forums

Safe Money Remember my choice for this website

> Kaspersky Safe Money protects you when making online transfers and payments

> A quick look at Kaspersky's support forum (at bit.ly/kasp414 and bit.ly/kaspe414) should put your mind at rest. The consensus is that these notifications are nothing to worry about and one user even suggests that they can be expected when using Kaspersky Safe Money. You can hide future pop-ups by ticking the box for 'Do not show this again'.

> > Mouse, Web User Forums

it's worth checking Event Viewer (start typing event from the search box or Start menu) to see if any more information was logged. I'm not sure if a memory-dump file will have been created but download BlueScreenView (search for it from www.nirsoft.net) to analyze any it finds. If you use CCleaner (www.piriform.com/ccleaner), make sure 'memory dumps' is unticked or they won't be saved.

Cantrel, Web User Forums

GENERAL PC

What's wrong with my keyboard?

My Samsung notebook's keyboard sometimes stops working in various applications including Cortana. When this happens, the mouse and touchscreen keyboard continue to work, and sometimes the keyboard also starts working again, but I usually have to restart my PC. I looked the problem up, and Microsoft suggests updating the keyboard driver, but there are no updates available from Samsung. Can anyone suggest how to fix this?

W3bus3r41, Web User Forums

In case you need to revert back to your previous configuration, it's always a good idea to create a restore point before making changes to your drivers. Now, try uninstalling your current driver by opening Device Manager, expanding the Keyboards section and right-clicking the appropriate device to select Uninstall'. Next, restart your PC from the Start menu and Windows will detect your keyboard and set up the correct driver for it when it boots.

Mouse and Cantrel, Web User Forums



Uninstalling a device prompts Windows to reinstall the latest drivers when it restarts









Star Email

Mug/

Saddened by Yahoo's tragic demise

h Yahoo, what are we going to do with you? Just as the dust was settling after the last massive hack, along came an even bigger one, and any remaining hope that the company was going to sort itself out quickly evaporated.

Let me take you back to 1999, before Google had made it really big and when most of us used screechy 56k modems to get online rather than silent and super-speedy broadband. Yahoo UK & Ireland was one of the first websites I ever used, and I duly made it my homepage and signed up for a free Yahoo Mail email address.

I'd invite friends to join me for a chinwag in a Yahoo Chat room (remember those?) and use Yahoo's brilliant (so I thought) search engine to



find interesting new websites to bookmark. Later came Flickr for sharing my photos, Yahoo Messenger for instant messaging and - my personal favourite - Yahoo Groups, which was a terrific way to find free stuff in your area.

So I take no pleasure at all in the tragic demise of this once-great web company. <u>`</u>

To be hacked once is unfortunate, but to suffer security breaches again and again is a clear and disastrous sign of complacency over users' data. Say what you like about Google, it has always placed great emphasis on security - from encryption to twofactor authentication - and would certainly never put the details of a billion or more of its users at such risk.

Aside from changing its logo a few years ago, Yahoo has done little of interest to retain its users lately, so with that and its lax security, it's hardly surprising that the company is struggling. This is a real shame, because I still have a nostalgic affection for Yahoo. If only the feeling were reciprocated.

Brian Dyer, via email

Who really owns our PCs?

I'm not a tech junkie and came to computers fairly late, but one thing in particular has hit me right between the eyes. I purchased a piece of electronic equipment (a laptop) and naively thought that this made it my property - after all, I paid for it. How wrong could I be? Without any irony whatsoever, my laptop refers to me as the 'administrator', but in reality all I am is the 'janitor', who gets to tidy up and take out the rubbish occasionally.

The real owner of the laptop I bought and paid for is the provider of the operating system - in this case, Microsoft. Microsoft controls the operating system, and other software manufacturers get to play around with it.



I also own a printer, and the other day a notice appeared from the manufacturer asking for my permission to collect a truckload of non-personal information on how I use my printer. I declined, but I couldn't help feeling that doing so would make absolutely no difference (rather like the 'Do Not Track' request).

I don't consider myself old, but I'm old-fashioned when it comes to privacy. What I do in my own home with my own belongings (including my computer and peripherals) I believe should be my

business and mine alone unless I decide otherwise. Is it just me, or does anyone else think tech companies go too far?

This, of course, is where Web User (and, dare I say, Computeractive) comes in handy. Where would I be without these magazines? Up the technology creek without an antivirus, I suspect.

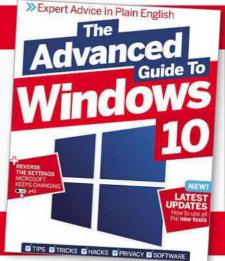
By the way, I chuckled all the way through Barry's column in Issue 412, 'The glitch that stole Christmas'. So true to life - at least in my case!

M Belshaw, via email

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Sound advice about Auslogics Disk Defrag

In the 'Best Free Software for 2017' feature in Issue 412 of *Web User* (bit.ly/webuser412), there was a section called 'Software to avoid in 2017'. One of the programs to avoid was Auslogics Disk Defrag.

I've been using Auslogics for as long as I can remember. It's a good defrag program, without doubt, but now it has developed the nasty habit of including Auslogics Boost Speed in its updates.

I ran Malwarebytes earlier



this week, and the scan revealed 37 potentially unwanted programs (PUPs), all of which related to Boost Speed.

Enough is enough, so I removed Auslogics,

leaving me to rely solely on Windows' defrag for cleanups.

So *Web User*'s recommendation to avoid Auslogics Disk Defrag is sound advice that I certainly endorse.

George, Web User Forums

Stop bundling junk

I'm sure most of us PC users accept that there has to be some sort of tradeoff for software to be completely free. Programs don't create themselves, after all, but require people to spend time and money developing them from an initial idea to the finished product. I would certainly be annoyed if something I'd been working on for months was eagerly snapped up by thousands of people but yielded no financial reward. However, I wish software developers could find a way to earn money from their efforts that didn't involve foisting bundled junk on users' computers. It's easy to miss those tiny pre-ticked boxes during installation and end up with your browser's settings hijacked and annoying shortcuts appearing all over your Desktop.



If you ask me, there should be a big warning next to the Download links for programs that come with extra rubbish, so that you can take care to look out for and decline it. I know you can use Unchecky to avoid bundled junk, but I've found that it doesn't always work. Sometimes it's impossible not to accept the junk, in which case I simply cancel the installation.

Colin Farmer, via email

Snoopers can't be trusted

So the Snooper's Charter has become law (*Need to Know*, Issue 412). That's very bad news. I oppose it not because I have anything to be ashamed or frightened of, and not because I'm a threat to national security (at least, I hope I'm not), but simply because I don't want these creeps prying into my private life.

I don't trust their ability to keep the information they harvest secure, and I don't trust them or my ISP not to sell the juicier morsels to whoever is prepared to give them money. I stress the word "private" because that's how I would like my private life to be. Fat chance.

Mike Gosling, Northants



Fake news is nothing new

There's been a lot of fuss lately about 'fake' news stories appearing on Facebook and other websites, but I fail to understand why this is such a big deal. The newspapers in Britain - particularly the tabloids - are notorious for getting their facts wrong and for exaggerating and embellishing stories so they can sell more copies through hyperbolic headlines. Why is it such a surprise that made-up articles are appearing online, too? As for claims that fake news influenced the Brexit vote and the US election - well, if people are stupid enough to believe blatant lies,

Chris Townsend, via email

Netflix downloads are all HD

then frankly they get what they deserve!

I love the magazine. It's the best of its kind by far – always relevant and full of useful information.

I was pleased to read in Issue 412 that Netflix is finally allowing downloads. This is something many of us have been waiting for. When you say it doesn't work on all mobile devices, I believe this is because it only works on devices that can

stream HD. So it works on my

Samsung Galaxy Tab 4 but not my S5. *Pete Bannigan, via email*

indows 10 shouldnit be se-

Windows 10 shouldn't be so overbearing

In your main feature in Issue 412, 'Best Free Software for 2017', Jane Hoskyn makes some excellent points about the current state of software. She specifically mentions the tendency of Windows 10 to block certain tools from companies other than Microsoft, claiming that they're unsafe when they're not. I have found

Our 2015 Back Issues Disc is on sale now from Amazon, visit bit.ly/wudisc15









this to be true with several programs that worked quite happily in Windows 7, and that I have relied on for years.

Of course. Microsoft is to be commended for making Windows 10 its "safest operating system ever" and for advising caution when you try to install software, but it risks being overbearing.

Scaring users into thinking a program is potentially dangerous takes away freedom of choice, and means they may miss out on lots of perfectly good tools.



Could it be, I wonder, that Microsoft would rather we stick to using apps from the Windows store, from which it no doubt profits through affiliate deals and advertising? Hopefully, this isn't the case because I see no reason why we can't happily use traditional software and modern apps side by side.

Geoff Townsend, via email

The cost of good broadband

Regarding the news that more than 1.4 million homes in the UK can't get decent broadband, the only way to get speedy broadband in my area - rural west Wales - is to have a satellite connection. It's dearer than other methods but there's no line-rental charge.

People in Wales were once entitled to a grant of up to around £1,000 from the Welsh government if they lived in a 'not spot' or a 'slow spot' - somewhere with a connection of less than 2Mbps. This paid for everything you'd need to set up the satellite connection. We were lucky enough to get one, although I don't know if the grants are still available.

Our package gives us 'up to 20Mbps' and I'm sure we don't always get that, but whatever we get, it's a lot better than our previous maximum of 45.2Kbps through a dial-up connection.

Madeline, Web User Forums



What you say...

REPORT (bit.ly/4g414) CLAIMS THE UK'S 4G **COVERAGE IS 54TH IN THE WORLD, BEHIND COUNTRIES SUCH AS ALBANIA AND PERU.** WHAT SPEED DO YOU GET?

I did a 4G speed-test the other week and it was 38Mbps. That's faster than my home fibre broadband!

Andrew Duerden

Had big problems trying to get even 3G with O2 in Dawlish, Devon.

Grange Jonesy

My 4G speed at home - in Cardenden, Fife - is 0.05Mbps. Thank God for home broadband.

Cunningham Hutchison

@chutchyhutchy

4G? We struggle to get any kind of phone signal at work (Yorkshire).

Steve Askew

We haven't got 3G in Denbigh and other parts of north Wales yet.

Marian Davies

It's 25Mbps in rural Maidstone, and 65Mbps in town. It's quicker than the 6Mbps I get with my home broadband.

Rob Goldring

ILL YAHOO'S REPUTATION EVER RECOVER FROM THE **RECENT HACKS?**

No chance. Not telling us until it's too late isn't helping to keep accounts secure. I'm closing mine once I've moved my photos from Flickr.

Wolf Simpson @Dark_Wolf

It's hard to find a company that hasn't been hacked now. Yahoo's reputation is hurt more by its lack of innovation.

Rich Grove @Rich_Grove

If Yahoo and TalkTalk were to have a penalty shootout to decide who was the most incompetent, I think we'd still be waiting for an answer. I wouldn't touch either with rubber gloves and rubber-soled shoes.

Si Mellor

Who the hell still uses Yahoo anyway? I have an account but never log in. It's years since I last accessed the website.

.....

Christopher John Sharp

ICROSOFT'S CORTANA IS NOW AVAILABLE ON ANDROID AND iOS (bit.ly/ cortana414). WHAT'S THE FIRST THING YOU'D ASK IT?

Could you please go and bother someone else?

Chris Cole

What would happen if an irresistible force met an immovable object?

Stephen Parry @StephenParry80

How do I delete Cortana?

Steve Ellis @gb022621

Cortana on Android? What's the point? We already have Google, and some phones have proprietary services. Do we need another?

Gary Olsen

AVE YOU EVER DONATED MONEY TO WIKIPEDIA OR **ANY OTHER SITE?**

Yes, to Wikipedia, because it is advert free and I use it a lot

Jenny Jacks @JenJacks3

For the past two years I have donated to Wikipedia because I use it a lot and would be lost without it.

Stuart A Hordern

Yes, I donate every year to Wikipedia. I would miss it if it wasn't there.

Chris Armstrona

Nope. And certainly not to Wikipedia - the most unreliable source.

Joanne Evans

A Page 404

Barry Collins vilifies firms that buy only the best bits of bankrupt tech companies



Time to stop the tech vultures

y smartwatch is about to get a lot dumber. Pebble - the American company that made cheap, flexible smartwatches with a battery life that you could count in days rather than hours - has effectively gone to the wall. Turns out those watches were perhaps a little too cheap, after all.

However, not everyone's done so badly out of Pebble's demise. Just as the company exhaled its last gasp, rival fitness-band maker Fitbit swooped down and picked the choice cuts from the carcass. Fitbit's \$40m bought it Pebble's intellectual property and a few dozen developers, leaving all the ugly bits on the roadside.

As Pebble explained in a strangely upbeat email to customers, all warranties were immediately cancelled, the technical-support team were "no longer available" (a polite way of saying 'fired') and "Pebble functionality or service quality may be reduced" in the future. And while a subsequent blog post from Fitbit did stress "no one on this freshly-formed team seeks to brick

Pebble watches in active service", it also pointed out that the company was evaluating whether 'smart' features such as dictation.

messaging and weather forecasts could be continued. I'm clinging to the hope that the £150 device on my wrist may still be able to tell the time.

To be fair, things could be worse. Pebble's balance sheet reportedly made BHS's pension scheme look flush, and had the company completely gone to the wall I'd now be staring at nothing

but a blank screen on my wrist. But it certainly leaves a bad taste when companies get to pick and choose which bits of failed firms they want to keep and can jettison the rest. Fitbit gets all the choice assets and none of the liabilities: that cannot be right.

And it's not only new owners who are allowed to scavenge the prime cuts when companies head to the knacker's yard. Several British PC makers have pulled a similar stunt over the years, too. Web

that the £150 smartwatch

to tell the time

User's lawyers have banned me from naming names through fear of legal action, so let's just think of a firm that

sounds like Crime Computers. Or Shiny. I'm clinging to the hope Both these wellknown brands went bust, only for their on my wrist may still be able previous owners to purchase the company's assets the next day, washing

their hands of all the customers they owed money to. They then continued to trade via the same websites, from the same warehouses as before.

I spent a lot of time during the Grime and Whiny meltdowns answering calls from distraught readers who wondered why the £1,000 they'd paid for a new PC to help their kids with their homework

had gone up in smoke with the 'old' company, while the 'new' company trading under the same name continued to flog the same models to other customers. The companies' hand-picked administrators would mutter the same mealy-mouthed excuse every time: it's all perfectly legal. And it still is.

Tech's a volatile, low-margin business and even well-run companies will go bang from time to time. But when they do, we need laws preventing the vultures from swooping down for the best bits and leaving the rest to rot. You want the brand name, the stock, the assets? Then you have to take on at least some of the liabilities, too, starting with the everyday customers.

Do I think it will happen? Not anytime soon. But then I soon won't know what

time it is anyway...



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