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RUN LIKE NEW**

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- Learn to code like a pro
- BBC 'kills web radio'
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Issue 369

# WebUser

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22 April - 5 May 2015

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Superb tools Chrome & Firefox lack p57



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# Free software without surprises

In a world without free software, our PCs would be dull, barren machines limited to running the occasional program we could afford, and *Web User* would be more of a pamphlet than a magazine. Happily, free software is plentiful, which is great for us but leaves program developers with the conundrum of how to fund their hard work. No-one begrudges them earning money from their products, but free downloads are increasingly suffering from the modern menace of bundled 'crapware' (pardon my language). In this issue's cover feature (page 36), we investigate the tricks being used to

monetise free programs and mobile apps, and explain how you can avoid them. We also discuss why download sites – even the biggest names – can no longer be trusted.

If you've ever fancied being a developer yourself, our Weekend Project on page 58 provides a beginner's guide to programming. Just go easy on the crapware when you release your masterpiece!

**Robert Irvine**  
[robert\\_irvine@dennis.co.uk](mailto:robert_irvine@dennis.co.uk)  
[#webuser](#)




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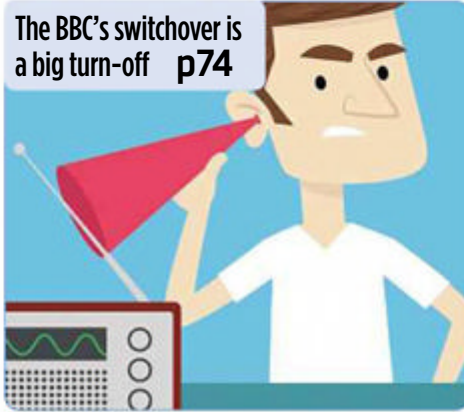
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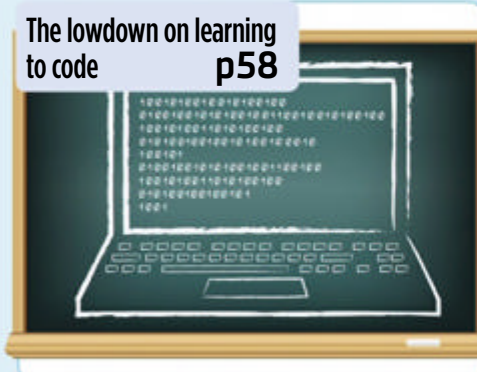
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**PRINTING**  
Printed by Polestar Bicester, Oxon  
Distributors Seymour 020 7396 4000

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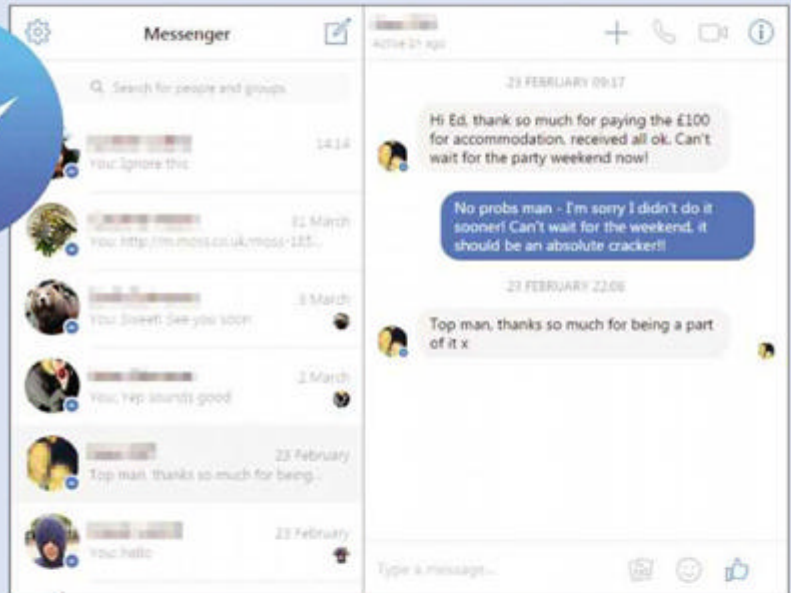
# What's New Online

## Use Facebook Messenger on the web

Last summer, Facebook launched an app for its Messenger service (iOS [bit.ly/iosface369](http://bit.ly/iosface369), Android [bit.ly/andface369](http://bit.ly/andface369)), which lets you talk to people without being distracted by anything else on the site, such as your News Feed. It's proved so popular (600 million users a month) that Facebook has created an online equivalent, turning Messenger into a separate website you can use in any browser.

You need a Facebook account to use the service, but don't have to install the Messenger app on your phone. There's a list of conversation threads on the left, with a large white chat window on the right. Best of all, there are no ads.

One drawback is that you can't yet make voice or video calls through the website, which was one of the key features of the app. However, you can add emoji, stickers and photos; have



group conversations; and send files. If it doesn't take your fancy, you can still send messages from Facebook's website - for now, at least. But remember that when the Messenger

app launched, Facebook removed from its own app the option to send messages. It seems likely that it will do the same for the website.

[www.messenger.com](http://www.messenger.com)

## Find out who will (maybe) win the General Election

[bet2015.co.uk](http://bet2015.co.uk)

Forget opinion polls - many statisticians say that a better indicator of election results is to follow the money being placed at the bookies. The Bet 2015 map does just that, tracking live odds for each constituency to predict the political make-up of the UK come 8 May. You can choose what either 'current' or 'predicted' views, from the top-right corner. There's also a 'gains' options, showing which seats will change hands. When we visited, the site was predicting a lot more SNP yellow in Scotland, and indicated that UKIP leader Nigel Farage will grab Thanet South from the Tories (see screen grab).



## Stream Spotify music through your PlayStation

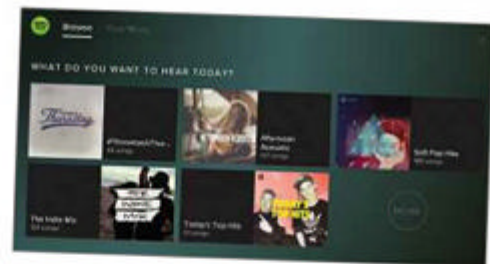
[www.spotify.com/uk/playstation](http://www.spotify.com/uk/playstation)

Spotify's free service is now available on the PlayStation 3 and 4 as part of Sony's new PlayStation Music (which replaces Music Unlimited). It's

the first time you've been able to access Spotify for free on a device other than a PC, phone or tablet. But what you can do depends on which PlayStation you have. For example, only the PS4 lets you choose background tracks as you play games, replacing the original music with tunes from your own collection. Changing the volume and skipping songs can all be done without leaving the game.

You can also control music on your phone or tablet through Spotify Connect ([www.spotify.com/uk/connect](http://www.spotify.com/uk/connect)) by pairing your device with your PlayStation, though this is a paid-for feature that's only available to subscribers.

The interface is split into two sections: in 'Browse', you'll see playlists created by Spotify; while 'Your Music' contains tracks you've added.





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

## Get *Dr Who* episodes on BitTorrent

[bit.ly/who369](http://bit.ly/who369)

*Doctor Who* fans can now download from BitTorrent a digital box set of 12 episodes from the 21st-century incarnation of the show, covering all eight series. The package, priced \$12 (about £8), also includes the documentary *Earth Conquest - The World Tour*, which follows current



Doctor Peter Capaldi and Jenna Coleman (who plays Clara Oswald) on a promotional trip across five continents.

## 5 TO FOLLOW ON TWITTER

[@AppMeerkat](https://twitter.com/AppMeerkat)

Updates from the live-streaming app that's taken Twitter by storm

[@russelltovey](https://twitter.com/russelltovey)

Entertaining thoughts on life from the actor, recently seen in BBC2's *Banished*

[@NASA\\_EO](https://twitter.com/NASA_EO)

Fascinating photos from Nasa's Earth Observatory, many showing the results of climate change

[@FordService\\_UK](https://twitter.com/FordService_UK)

Customer service account for Ford, offering help on motoring problems

[@bbceurovision](https://twitter.com/bbceurovision)

All the Eurovision news and gossip from the BBC ahead of the final on 23 May

## Discover where in Britain you'd be happiest

[bbc.co.uk/happiestplace](http://bbc.co.uk/happiestplace)

If you're not happy where you live, take this BBC personality test to find a location better suited to you. The site asks you questions based on the 'Big Five' character traits - openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism - then



matches your results to areas in the country, based on research

conducted by scientists at the universities of Cambridge and Helsinki. Apparently, we'd be happiest in the West Lindsey district of Lincolnshire, which covers Gainsborough and Market Rasen. Do any *Web User* readers live there?

## Play five drum machines on one website



[html5drummachine.com](http://html5drummachine.com)

Like all the best music simulators, the HTML5 Drum Machine is so easy to use that even someone with no musical ability can create tunes through trial and error. Just select one of the five sounds - hip hop, electro, house, techno or acoustic - choose a pattern, add percussion, then alter the tempo. Once you've finished, you can export the track as a WAV file. The Drum Machine's creators say that "more fun stuff is coming soon". Find out when it arrives by 'liking' their Facebook page: [bit.ly/drum369](http://bit.ly/drum369).

## Use Outlook's new app tools

[bit.ly/outlook369](http://bit.ly/outlook369)

Microsoft has added new tools to its Outlook app for Android and iOS. The People section is now an alphabetical list of contacts, there's a three-day view in Calendar (see screen grab) and you can 'Select all' to perform the same task to all messages in a folder. Read more in the Office blog - just click the link above.



## + Use Instagram's new photo filters

[bit.ly/gram369](http://bit.ly/gram369)

You can change the appearance of your photos using two new Instagram tools, called Fade and Color. Fade lets you create an "aged film effect", while Color lets you tint bright spots and shadows.

## + Save hi-res photos in iCloud

[bit.ly/icloud369](http://bit.ly/icloud369)

The iCloud Photo Library, Apple's new photo- and video-storage app for Macs, lets you automatically save high-resolution images online. You can access them on any iOS 8 device and on your Mac. They are synced across devices, too.

## + Edit Word and Excel in Dropbox

[bit.ly/officeblog369](http://bit.ly/officeblog369)

You can now add your Dropbox account to Office Online to edit and save Word, Excel and PowerPoint files in your browser. Read the Office Blog for more information.

# Need to Know

## Facebook 'breaches EU law' by tracking you on the web

### What happened?

Belgian researchers working for the country's local data authority released a report claiming that Facebook has been tracking people across the web – even if they're not signed up to the social-networking site or have opted out of being tracked.

The report, from a pair of Belgian university researchers ([bit.ly/facebookreport369](http://bit.ly/facebookreport369)), showed that Facebook dropped a long-life cookie on to users' machines if they visited any page on the Facebook domain, whether they were a member of the site or not. Cookies are small identifiers that have many valid uses, such as tracking your shopping cart through e-commerce sites and logging you into services, but they can also be used to track your interests so companies can target you with behavioural advertising.

According to the report, when you visit another page that uses one of Facebook's social tools, such as the widget that lets you 'Like' a page, the implanted cookie alerts Facebook. This means that the social network can see exactly where you go on the web. Under EU law, Facebook is supposed to get your consent for these tracking cookies.

The report also found a new Facebook cookie on Your Online Choices ([www.youronlinechoices.com/uk](http://www.youronlinechoices.com/uk)), a website that lets you opt out of online tracking from more than 100 companies. If you visit the opt-out page of the site, Facebook leaves a fresh cookie to identify you, which it doesn't do for Canadian and US web users who visit



*Your Online Choices lets you opt out of online tracking – but not for Facebook!*



their versions of the opt-out system.

Facebook initially responded by saying the report had “factual inaccuracies”, and later published an in-depth blog post entitled ‘Setting the Record Straight on a Belgian Academic Report’ ([bit.ly/facebookblog369](http://bit.ly/facebookblog369)). This repeated its claim that the report isn't accurate, but also admitted that a bug was responsible for people being tracked by social plug-ins that use its cookies. Facebook said it will be fixing the problem, but didn't address the opt-out cookie, other than to say it honours such requests.

The privacy disagreement comes as Facebook is being sued in a class-action suit over the same issue. This was filed in Austria by one Max Schrems, who has gathered 25,000 other Facebook users to ask for €500 (£360) each in damages, saying the site broke European data laws by infringing users' privacy and taking part in US surveillance programmes, such as the NSA's Prism.

### How will it affect you?

If you use Facebook, you're probably resigned to having your privacy invaded – either by advertisers on the site or by your own friends. But these reports prove it doesn't have to be that way. Facebook may be denying the findings of the Belgian report, but it has been forced to admit to and fix the “bug” that meant cookies were tracking some non-users around the web. That's a good result for privacy.

Additionally, Max Schrems has achieved previous success in pressuring Facebook to adhere to EU data laws.

You can sign up to take part in future rounds of the class-action suit at [europe-v-facebook.org/EN/en.html](http://europe-v-facebook.org/EN/en.html)

If you're not happy with what you're reading about Facebook, there's an easy solution: leave the site. If you aren't quite ready to give it up, you could try protecting yourself from cookies by installing a browser tool such as Privacy Badger from the Electronic Frontier Foundation ([www.eff.org/privacybadger](http://www.eff.org/privacybadger)), which lets you use social tools without being tracked.

### What do we think?

We think Facebook should be begging our forgiveness over this invasive tracking cookie – even if it was a “bug” – and warmly thanking the Belgian researchers who uncovered it, rather than criticising them in a blog post. They're helping to make Facebook a better site, after all.

It's disappointing that Facebook users feel they have to take extreme steps such as filing a class-action suit to get the site to listen to privacy concerns, but given the tone and attitude of its blog post response, we're not surprised. Facebook would be wiser to honestly listen to such concerns and do its best to address them. While a few researchers in Belgium and 25,000 EU users may seem a drop in the ocean of Facebook's one billion members, their views represent the rest of us better than the social network may realise, and it should be making clearer efforts to protect us. It's time for Facebook to err on the side of responsible data use, rather than consistently push the boundaries of privacy infringement.



What we think of this fortnight's top tech stories and rumours

## Google removes adware Chrome extensions

### What happened?

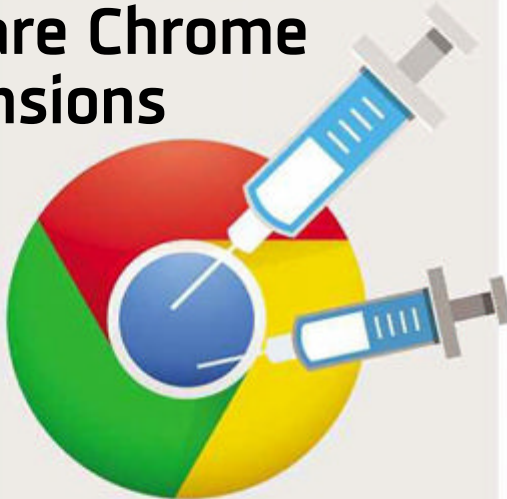
Google removed 200 extensions from its Chrome Web Store after they were revealed to be injecting adverts into web pages opened in the browser. Google's own research showed that one in 20 people who visited its own sites had at least one adware extension, and a third of those visitors had as many as four installed in their browsers.

The report comes as security firm ScrapeSentry singled out one extension, Webpage Screenshot, for collecting an unnecessary amount of user data. The free tool lets you take screenshots of entire web pages, but also tracks your browsing and shares the information with an IP address in the US.

### How will it affect you?

Even if you have one of the ad-injecting extensions installed, it doesn't necessarily mean that your data is being stolen. It may simply slow down the speed at which pages load and expose you to more advertising, which is annoying but not necessarily dangerous.

Still, it's definitely worth getting rid of these



invasive add-ons by removing them from your browser – whether it's Chrome, Firefox or Internet Explorer. If you suspect an extension is responsible for showing more adverts, compare how many are displayed on a page with the add-on switched on or off to find out if it's trustworthy.

Also, as always, make sure you have up-to-date security software installed to catch ad-injecting malware across your PC.

### What do we think?

Although we're pleased that these add-ons have been pulled from the Chrome Web Store, we're disappointed that such tools aren't being vetted more thoroughly by Google in the first place. If extensions can inject ads, they can potentially do plenty of other damage to Chrome users, so we hope this is just the first step Google takes to clean up its web store, and not the last.

See our feature on page 48 for more about dodgy browser tools that you should stop using.

## COMPUTING & Technology Workshops



Inventor School



Quadcopter Design



Robotics & Inventions



Game & Web Design

**Tech Camp London** July/August 2015: Ages 9-17  
1-Week Day Camps, Central London Venue

**Tech Camp UK** August 2015: Ages 9-17  
1-Week Residential or Day Camps, Hampshire Campus

For further info go to: [www.techcamp.org.uk](http://www.techcamp.org.uk)  
or phone: 075 1219 1019

## EE lets users call over Wi-Fi



### What happened?

EE customers can now make phone calls and send text messages over Wi-Fi, even if they don't have a standard mobile connection. This differs from services such as Skype because you won't need to open an app first: just make a call or send a text as usual, and EE will switch to the Wi-Fi network if your mobile connection is weak or non-existent.

### How will it affect you?

So far, the service is only available on selected handsets, including the Samsung Galaxy S6 and Microsoft Lumia 640, with support for iPhones and

other devices on the way. EE said 5 million of its customers will be able to use the service by this summer, but they may have to upgrade to a new handset. Note that the calls and texts aren't free, and will be deducted from your monthly allocation as usual.

### What do we think?

This is a handy way to deal with mobile black spots, with EE's own research suggesting as many as one in 10 of us have a room in our homes with poor coverage. However, it requires a reliable internet connection, which many people in rural areas might not have.

# YouTube to let you pay to remove adverts

## What happened?

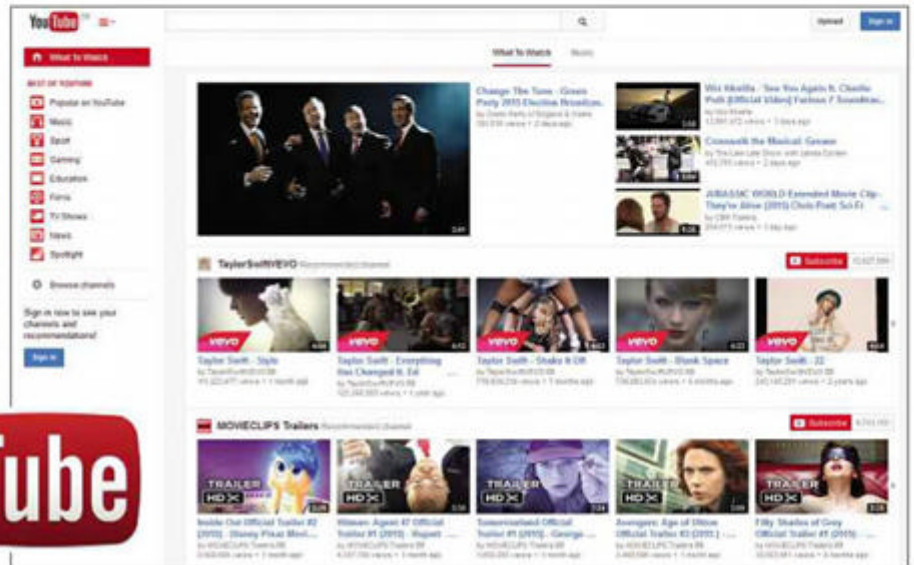
YouTube announced plans to introduce a subscription version of its video-streaming service that will let you pay to remove adverts. The news was revealed in an email to YouTube channel owners, which told them that “by creating a new paid offering, we’ll generate a new source of revenue that will supplement your fast-growing advertising revenue”.

Video creators who don’t want their content included in the ad-free subscription have been told they’ll need to set all their videos to Private, which presumably means they will no longer be able to earn casual ad revenue in the current manner.

Google hasn’t yet confirmed how much a monthly YouTube subscription will cost, but rumours suggest it’s likely to be \$10 in the US, so the price will probably be £10 in the UK (if previous conversions are anything to go by). Channel owners have until 15 June to sign up, so we’d expect YouTube to introduce the subscription this summer.

## How will it affect you?

If you really hate YouTube adverts, you might be prepared to pay a monthly fee to stop them delaying and obstructing your viewing. However, if they bother you that much, you’ve probably already



installed an ad blocker such as Adblock Plus or uBlock, so why pay extra for the subscription service?

For channel owners, it sounds like great news because the subscription service provides a guaranteed means of earning money from videos. Not that they’ll rake in all the profits, of course, because Google intends to claim 45 per cent of the revenue, leaving creators with the remaining 55 per cent.

## What do we think?

Google seems to want things both ways: to make money through displaying

adverts to users, and to make it by *not* displaying ads, which shows great business sense but comes across as rather greedy.

It’s worth remembering that when Google introduced paid-for channels two years ago, very few people coughed up, so we’d be surprised if the subscription option proves popular now, especially as YouTube’s billion users are so accustomed to using the site for free. Hopefully, this won’t mean we get flooded with more adverts than ever, to strong-arm us into paying for the ad-free subscription.



## FIRST LOOK

### Amazon Fire TV Stick [bit.ly/firetvstick369](http://bit.ly/firetvstick369)

Amazon launched its Fire TV Stick in the US nearly six months ago, and it’s now available in the UK. We’ve taken a close look to see if it can rival the likes of Google’s Chromecast and Roku’s Streaming Stick.

Our first impressions were good: like the Chromecast, the Fire TV stick is a compact dongle that plugs neatly into your TV’s HDMI slot. It comes with an HDMI extension cable (which Amazon claims boosts Wi-Fi reception) and a mains USB power adapter, which you need because your TV’s USB ports aren’t strong enough to run the Fire TV Stick. That’s a definite shortcoming when compared to Google’s Chromecast, which needs less

power to operate and is therefore simpler to set up, but it’s more than made up for by the Fire TV Stick’s 8GB of internal storage and ability to install a wide range of apps and games directly to the device. Indeed, its 1GHz processor and 1GB of RAM mean that it can not only install games but run them more smoothly than rival streaming sticks.

The Fire TV Stick’s dual-band, dual-antenna Wi-Fi connectivity should

provide a more stable connection than the Chromecast’s single-band antenna. It also trumps the Chromecast by having a remote, which, though not as good as its Fire TV counterpart’s, lets you navigate menus, and play and pause content, without using your mobile device.

Thankfully, Amazon’s new media-streaming stick doesn’t limit you to using Amazon’s services, and you can watch content from other sources including Netflix, Plex and BBC iPlayer, as well as streaming music through Spotify. Unfortunately, its screen mirroring is limited to

Fire devices but, for £35, we think the Fire TV Stick still represents excellent value for money and is a worthy contender for the Chromecast’s crown.







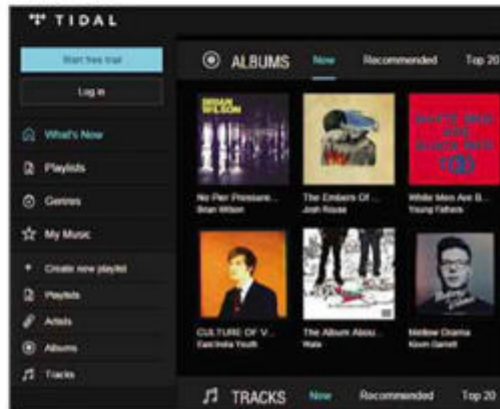
## WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

# Is Tidal going to sweep away Spotify?

You may have heard that there's a new music-streaming service in town. Tidal ([tidal.com](http://tidal.com)), which is owned by rapper Jay-Z and a host of other artists including Madonna, Coldplay and Alicia Keys, has been set up to steal listeners from Spotify. It costs £10 a month for its standard subscription and £20 a month for Tidal Hi-Fi, which offers lossless, CD-quality audio.

Tidal could eventually host an eclectic range of music, but its launch raised questions about just how game-changing the service will be. Although lossless audio gives Tidal one advantage over Spotify, for most of us it will be an extra tenner a month wasted. Spotify currently gives Premium users a bit rate of 320kbps, while Unlimited and Free users get 160kbps and mobile users can opt for a 96kbps bit rate, to save data. Lossless audio, however, will stream from around 400kbps up to around 1,400kbps. It's unlikely that kids sat at the back of the bus playing Jay-Z through their phone speakers will really care about this audio improvement; nor will the average commuter listening through headphones that cost less than six months' subscription to Tidal.

Unlike Spotify, Tidal doesn't offer a free option. While that could be construed as not wanting to annoy listeners with adverts, it also means that



the artists on Tidal don't want to risk giving their music away for free. In contrast, the free version of Spotify lets you discover new artists by casually browsing, while also letting you listen to your favourite songs.

### LIKELIHOOD RATING



**Tidal Hi-Fi's £20 a month will cost you an annual £240, which is twice as much as Spotify Premium and other contenders such as Google Play Music. This (and the arrogance of the multimillionaires behind it) will make the service difficult to sell. Look out for our full comparison of music-streaming services in the next issue of *Web User*.**

## WEBOMETER

### WE LIKE...

#### Google cuts Android malware in half

Google announced on its security blog that in 2014 it cut the number of potentially harmful apps installed on Android devices by half. Fewer than 0.15 per cent of devices that only install from the Google Play app store installed a malicious app.



#### Apple introduces more diverse emoji

The latest version of Apple's mobile operating system, iOS 8.3, introduces hundreds of new emoji, which include more racially diverse characters. A redheaded emoji is still nowhere to be seen, but non-white people are much better represented than before.



### WE DON'T LIKE...

#### Technology is responsible for increase in back and neck pain

Health experts have warned that a rise in laptop technology is responsible for the increase in young people complaining of neck and back pain. The number of 16-24 year olds suffering from 'tech neck' has increased by 60 per cent within a year.



#### Google pulls Maps Pac-Man game

Google has removed its experimental feature that let you play the classic arcade game Pac-Man in Google Maps. This was introduced as an April Fool's Day joke, but we'd have liked it if it had been made permanent.



## What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

### Playbrush

[bit.ly/playbrush369](http://bit.ly/playbrush369) | From £39

Playbrush makes brushing your teeth a fun activity rather than a hygiene chore by turning your toothbrush into a gaming controller. The motion sensors in the device monitor your brushing behaviour and send the data to your phone via Bluetooth, to control the games in the Playbrush app. This means that you can play hands-free simply by scrubbing your molars, and your in-game performance allows Playbrush to offer advice to improve your oral health. Yes, it's aimed at kids, but why should they have all the fun? Funding closes on 9 May, with a target of £35,000.



# Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

### Apple patches a host of security flaws



On 8 April, Apple released security updates for OS X, iOS, Apple TV and Safari. The OS X update is a 'point update' that brings

Yosemite up to version 10.10.3 and introduces Apple's new Photos app and Safari 8.0.5. More importantly, the update patches a multitude of security holes, including remote-code execution, security bypass, denial-of-service and data leakage flaws. Meanwhile, the iOS updates fix a range of vulnerabilities such as bugs that stop your device's lock screen from functioning correctly.

[bit.ly/apple369](http://bit.ly/apple369)

### Government site hacked by Islamists

Islamist hackers took control of a UK government website ([uk-air.defra.gov.uk](http://uk-air.defra.gov.uk)) that normally offers information

about air pollution, according to security firm Bitdefender. The site, which is run by the Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), had its forecasts replaced by a message criticising the UK's involvement in the invasion of Iraq. The site also showed an image of Iraq's former leader Saddam Hussein. It's not clear how the site was compromised, but it appears that it is run on behalf of DEFRA by an outside organisation.

[bit.ly/hacked369](http://bit.ly/hacked369)

### British companies targeted by cybercriminals



Five out of six large companies globally were targeted by cybercriminals in 2014, with UK businesses among the most frequently

targeted, according to a report by security firm Symantec. The Internet Security Threat report also found that

nearly two thirds of all internet-based attacks affected small- and medium-sized businesses, with email remaining a popular method of attack. The report also revealed that a million new malware threats were released online every day last year.

[bit.ly/symantec369](http://bit.ly/symantec369)

### Steam users tricked by fake games



Fraudsters have disguised malicious files as game demos to

try to trick unsuspecting Steam users into downloading malware, according to security expert Graham Cluley. The cybercriminals created a fake page for a real new game called Octopus City Blues on the 'Greenlight' section of the Steam website so that anyone who attempted to download the seven-level demo was directed to a site spreading malware.

[bit.ly/steam369](http://bit.ly/steam369)

## Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

**THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:**  
**Sean Sullivan, Security Advisor at F-Secure**  
([www.f-secure.com](http://www.f-secure.com))



**Q** What's the safest way to check your accounts over public Wi-Fi?

Kieran Fitzgerald,  
Facebook

**A** The best option is to connect via a mobile data network and use an app

that offers good encryption, because mobile networks have better security than Wi-Fi. If you must connect via Wi-Fi, I recommend using a VPN. There's a good reason why corporations require a VPN when their employees connect to business resources. Consumers should take advantage of the same level of security. In fact, many Wi-Fi terms of service suggest that you should do this, so don't just take my word for it!

**Q** Will using a VPN over a mobile network slow my internet to a crawl?

Ben Preston, Twitter

**A** I use a VPN with my iPad on Wi-Fi and don't experience any slowdown. Any VPN service worth its salt should stream high-quality video with no problems. Mobile data networks should work as well as Wi-Fi in most cases, though there could be issues depending on the phone's OS. Some are configured to use Wi-Fi opportunistically (hop on and off) which could cause occasional problems with the VPN connection. Experiment with your settings and you should find a solution. VPN services (such as F-Secure's Freedom) typically offer a free trial, so give one a try and see.

**Q** Are you more likely to get infected by mobile malware while overseas?

Zoe Houghton, Facebook

**A** Generally not, provided that you don't install software from untrusted sources. But the quality and security of ad networks really varies by country. Ads are localised based on your IP address. So apps with ads may expose you to malvertising campaigns when you're browsing overseas that you wouldn't otherwise get from your home IP address.



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# ★ Best New Websites

## Site of the Fortnight

TELEVISION

RELAUNCH

### All 4

[www.all4.com](http://www.all4.com)

When we first heard that Channel 4 was replacing 4oD with a hub for its “digital output”, we pictured an overloaded hotchpotch, so we’re pleased to report that All 4 is quite the opposite. It’s a tidy, speedy way to watch films and TV shows from across the broadcaster’s six channels, both live and on-demand. Split into three sections for catch-up, current and future programming, there’s masses of content including exclusive online shorts and box sets of complete series. Annoyingly, you need to disable your ad blocker and sit through some lengthy commercials, but it’s a fair trade-off for so much free content in one place.

Our rating



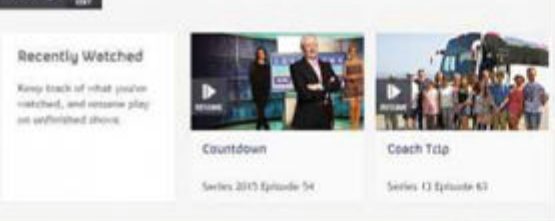
Your letters and numbers, please



SIGN IN

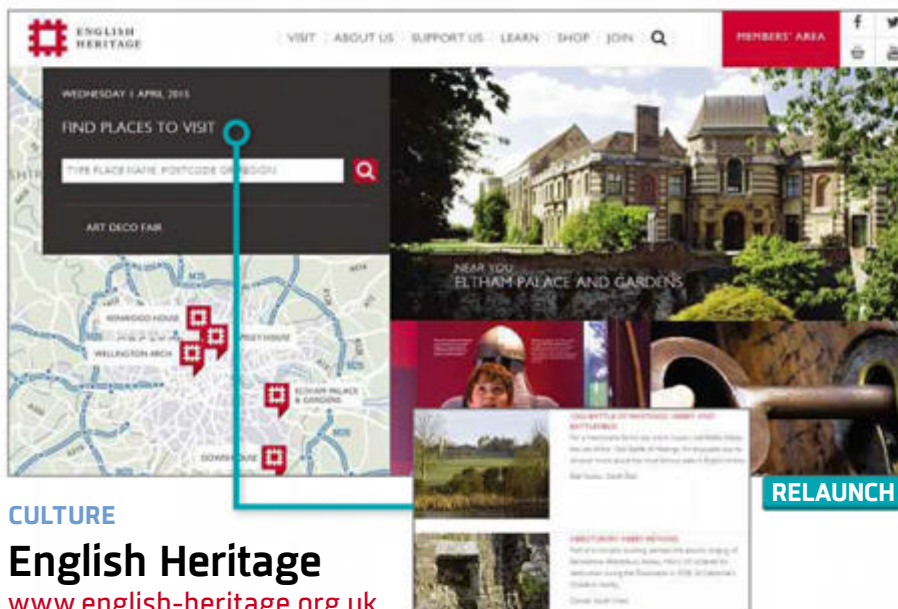
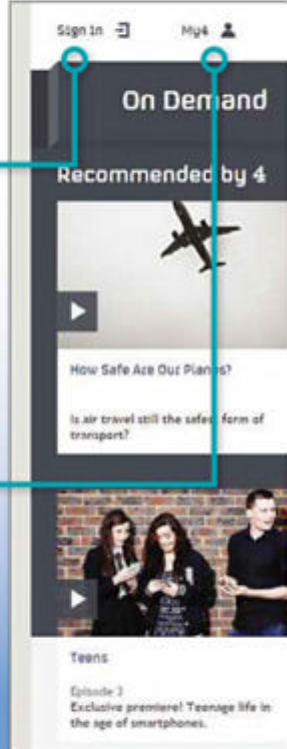
Register with All 4 to stream channels live and download selected shows

History



MY4

Save your favourite series and resume watching programmes you started earlier



CULTURE

### English Heritage

[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

Having just moved from being a public body to a charity, English Heritage has cast off its old shackles to transform its website into a thing of beauty. A modern, welcoming design provides more space to showcase things to see and do, with wonderful high-quality photos. The site detects your location so it can recommend places to visit, and its improved search facility helpfully lets you filter results by type (including castles, gardens and free admission) and facilities, and explore them on a map. Membership has crept up £2 to £41 a year, but that’s a reasonable price to pay for unlimited access to so many beautiful places and this fine website.

Our rating



FOOD & DRINK

### Pret A Manger

[www.pret.co.uk](http://www.pret.co.uk)

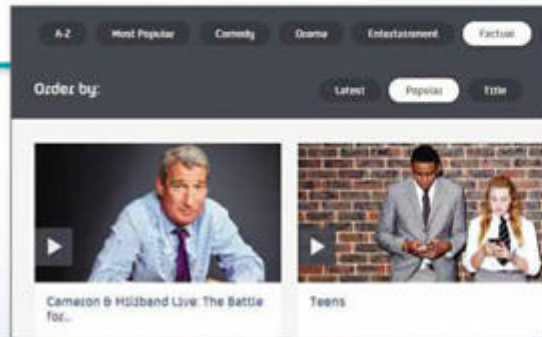
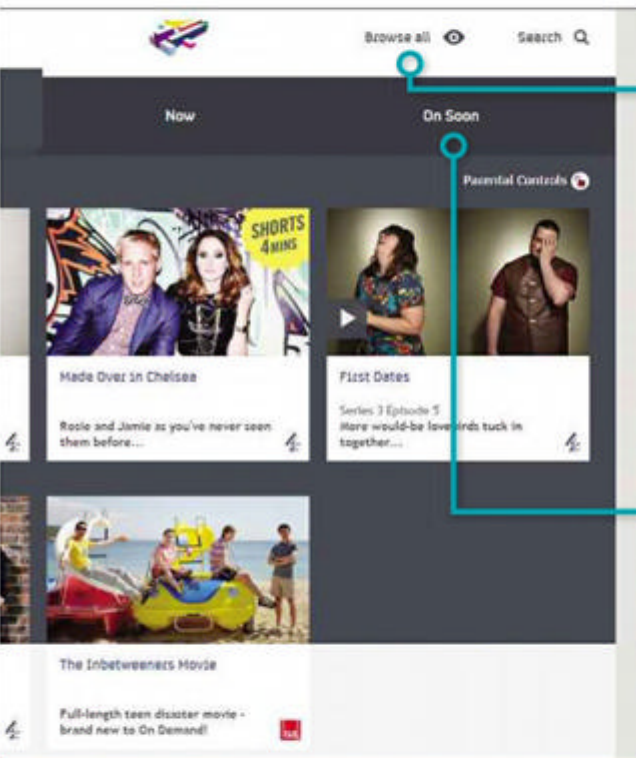
We never used Pret’s old site for much more than checking the soups of the day, so we’re delighted that this bigger, bolder effort gives you more incentive to hang around. As well as browsing more detailed and better illustrated menus, you can learn about the chain’s organic coffee; handmade food; policies on free-range meat and dairy, and sustainable fishing; and its charity work, which includes giving its unsold grub to the homeless. Ordering food online is easy and, like Pret’s staff, the spruced-up site is friendly (“this baguette is dedicated to Sheila”) but not too pushy.

Our rating



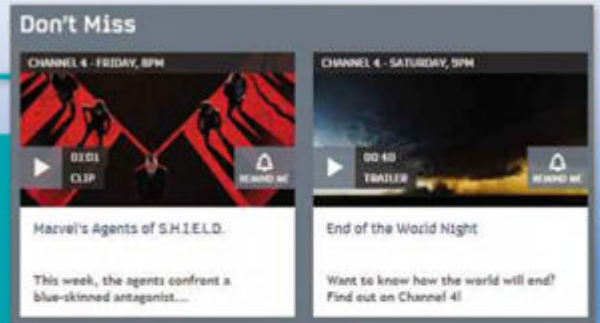


We review this fortnight's best new and relaunched websites and rate them for content, design and features



**BROWSE ALL**  
Explore shows by category and sort them by the most recent or most popular

**ON SOON**  
Watch trailers for forthcoming shows and set reminders for when they're on



**NEW**

**GLOBAL**  
**United Nations Seventieth Anniversary**  
[www.un.org/un70](http://www.un.org/un70)

The UN may conjure up images of boring politicians in suits, but this informative website to commemorate its 70th anniversary is a more engaging affair. It makes excellent use of photos and videos to depict the history and work of the UN, as well as recordings of its radio dramas. Other highlights include timelines of the eight Secretaries-General; details of its current concerns, such as climate change; and the option to share your anniversary wishes on social media.

Our rating 



**NEW**

**PRIVACY**  
**NoFlyZone UK**  
[www.noflyzoneuk.org](http://www.noflyzoneuk.org)

With Amazon planning to launch drone deliveries, our skies could soon get a lot busier, but if you're not keen on having drones buzzing over your home, then this site can help. It lets you request for free that your property be added to a central database as a no-fly zone, for at least six months. Although the site is rather creaky in design, we like that its objections to drones are purely for privacy and safety reasons, rather than a Luddite fear of the future. The site includes plenty of drone-related information, and an outline of the organisations plans to set up a 'Control hub' to log and monitor flights.

Our rating 



**NEW**

**LIFESTYLE**  
**The Pool**  
[www.the-pool.com](http://www.the-pool.com)

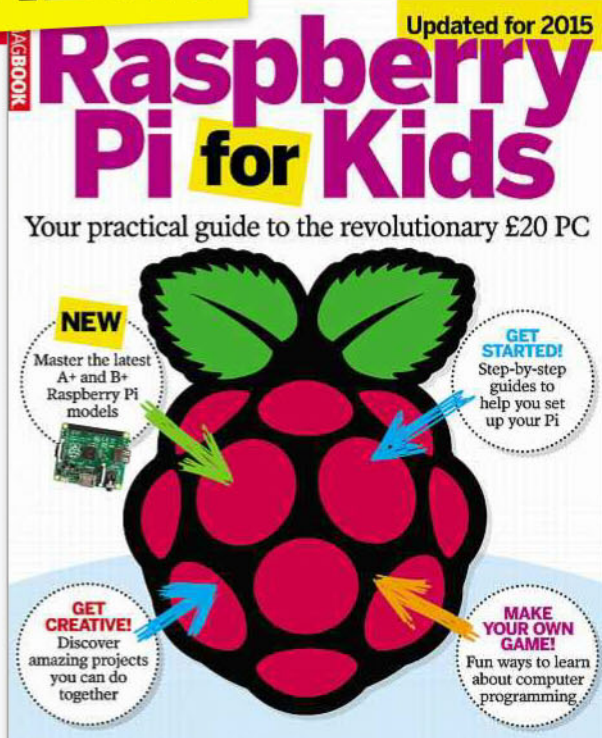
Launched by radio presenter Lauren Laverne and former *Cosmopolitan* editor Sam Baker, this online magazine for women has an innovative structure based around a giant clock on the homepage. New content is "dropped" into the site at appropriate times of day, such as recipe ideas around 4pm and an *Insomniac's* Playlist at half past midnight. The Pool's high-calibre writers treat both serious and frivolous subjects with intelligent attention, and everything is presented beautifully in a sophisticated design. Take a dip in its waters and you could be here all day.

Our rating  

# WebUser Bookstore

**NEW!**

## RASPBERRY PI FOR KIDS



The Raspberry Pi is the incredible £20 British computer that's taking the world by storm. It's ideal for children of all ages to experiment, play games and learn valuable skills. We've updated this 148-page book for 2015 to include instructions on mastering the new Pi models (A+ and B+), helping children learn the coding skills needed to excel at the new school curriculum. We take you step by step through the basics of setting up and configuring the Pi and introduce many fun projects for families.

**BUY IT NOW FROM  
AMAZON**  
at [bit.ly/rasbook](http://bit.ly/rasbook)  
(cheaper than in the shops!)

## THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO GOOGLE HIDDEN TOOLS

Inside the 164-page *The Definitive Guide to Google Hidden Tools*, we lift the lid on Google's most popular tools to reveal more than 430 ways to make them even more efficient, useful and tailored to your needs. These include clever new add-ons for Chrome, amazing free apps for Android and stunning sights in Google Maps.



**BUY IT NOW FROM AMAZON**  
at [bit.ly/wugoogle](http://bit.ly/wugoogle)  
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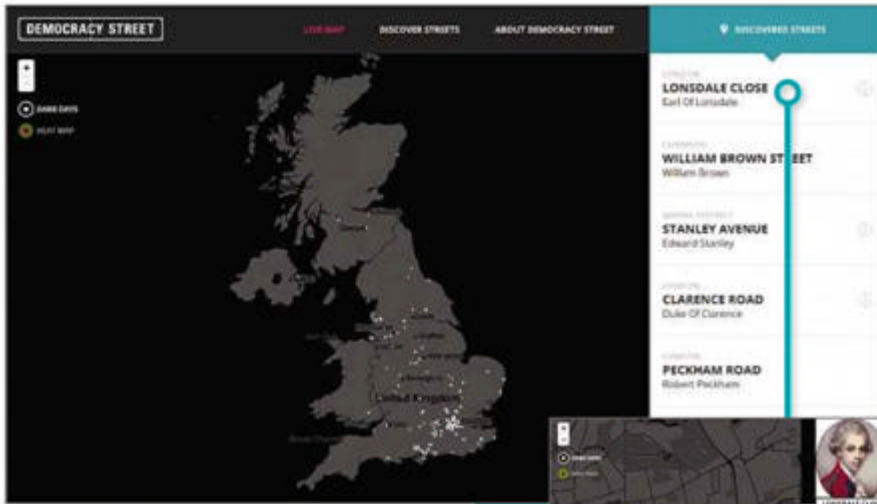
## THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO ANDROID

Inside this 148-page book you'll find all the free apps, expert tips and easy-to-follow Workshops you need to get the most out of your phone or tablet. You'll find buying advice, including reviews of the latest tablets and phones, and everything you need to know about taking your first steps with your new device.



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MAPPING

**Democracy Street**  
democracystreet.com

NEW



Thankfully, this isn't yet another election site, but a "national collaborative arts project" to celebrate 800 years since the Magna Carta was sealed. It lists streets across the UK that are named after Parliamentarians, from Winston Churchill Avenue in Portsmouth to Bute Terrace in Glasgow, and provides biographical information for more than 400 historical figures with links to further details and, if they exist, paintings in the National Portrait Gallery. New 'discoveries' made via mobile devices are pinpointed on an interactive map that will eventually be turned into a giant work of art. Aside from the omission of a search function, it's a superbly presented site and a brilliant way to learn more about the people behind street names in your area.

Our rating



NEW

PHOTOGRAPHY

**British Photography**  
www.britishphotography.org

Want to see some classic British photography from the comfort of your own screen? Then visit this site and feast your eyes on more than 3,000 photos from the Hyman Collection online, spanning the 19th Century to the present day. You can browse by artist, and by themed exhibitions, such as 'Childhood', 'Country Life' and 'Land of Make Believe', and look up details including photo size, the year the shot was taken and captions. It's a shame you can't search by keyword, but there's lots here to enjoy, with stunning work by photographers including Thurston Hopkins, Bert Hardy and Linda McCartney.

Our rating



**+ ALSO NEW**

POLITICS

**BBC Generation 2015**  
bbc.co.uk/generation2015



This site "brings young voices to the election debate", by giving 18- to 25-year-olds a place to share their political views. These are delivered through videos that address topics such as immigration, higher education and why so few young people bother to vote. It's interesting stuff, with a diverse range of contributors.

FOOD

**Heinz Grow Your Own**  
bit.ly/grow369



Now in its third year, this campaign from Heinz encourages families to grow their own tomato plants using seeds given away by the company through its Facebook page. The website gathers photos of the best efforts, including a couple of clever clogs who have planted their seeds inside actual ketchup bottles and Heinz baked bean tins.

POLITICS

**30 Second Pitch**

www.simplepolitics.co.uk



If you haven't yet decided who to vote for, at 30 Second Pitch you can watch short videos of candidates explaining why you should choose them, which you can search by name, constituency or postcode. It's a good, simple idea, but at the time of writing only around a dozen candidates had posted their pitches.

ACTIVITIES

**Canal & River Trust**

canalrivertrust.org.uk



Plan a boat trip on the waterways of England and Wales or just aim for a stroll along the towpath at this excellent site, which provides information, advice and activity ideas, as well as a fascinating history of our canals. It's currently after volunteers to test the prototypes of its new website maps, and is offering a £500 prize in a photo competition.



**WEBSITE SECRETS**

**Uncover source code surprises in websites**

Several websites make fun use of their source code (the language used to create their pages) by hiding pictures and messages in it. You can view the code for any site you visit by either right-clicking the page and choosing 'View source' or 'View page source', or by pressing Ctrl+U. Try this on the KitKat



website ([www.kitkat.com](http://www.kitkat.com)) and you'll uncover the chocolate bar's logo rendered in 'J's and 'W's' and the message: 'STOPLOOKINGATCODEANDHAVEABREAK'. Flickr ([www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)), meanwhile, has hidden its logo and a link to its Jobs page in its source code for web developers to discover. ■

# Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

## Top Tips of the Fortnight

### WordPress 4.2 launches

It's time to check that your WordPress ([www.wordpress.org](http://www.wordpress.org)) software has updated itself. WordPress 4.2, which was up to Beta 3 as we wrote this, should have launched by now. WordPress's update tool should install it automatically, but with security issues often hitting older versions, it's worth double-checking. The average user won't notice much that's new, but several bug fixes should make life easier, including solving a problem with comment editing forms on smaller screens and a fix for several problems with the Press This button.

### Stream live video

It takes a certain type of person to host a live video, but if you have time-sensitive events you want to show off to your website audience, it can drum up a lot of

interest in your site. Twitter recently acquired Periscope ([periscope.tv](http://periscope.tv)), which has an iOS app you can use to broadcast the video. Another option is Meerkat (also iOS-only, [meerkatapp.co](http://meerkatapp.co)), which is also gaining popularity.

Android users aren't so well catered for at the moment, though we expect both services to release Android versions soon. In the mean time, try Tarsii-live (an unashamed Meerkat clone - [bit.ly/tarsii369](http://bit.ly/tarsii369)) or Stre.am ([bit.ly/stream369](http://bit.ly/stream369)). If you're stuck at a PC, use your webcam with Twitcam ([twitcam.livestream.com](http://twitcam.livestream.com)).

### Deal of the Fortnight

We haven't seen many web hosts offering the Ghost blogging tool ([ghost.org](http://ghost.org)), but TSOhost has launched it for just £2.99 per month ([bit.ly/ghost369](http://bit.ly/ghost369)).

## Web-building Helpdesk

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:  
Richard Stevenson,  
1&1 Internet  
([www.1and1.co.uk](http://www.1and1.co.uk))



**Q** Do web hosts use anti-malware tools to scan sites they host to make sure they're safe?

David Robinson, via Facebook

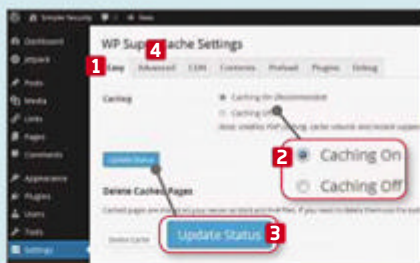
**A** The best web hosts provide a free monitoring service to protect your website from security vulnerabilities.

SiteLock ([www.sitelock.com](http://www.sitelock.com)), for example, protects your site from unauthorised access, malware and other threats from hackers. It actively checks your website for code vulnerabilities and finds them before hackers can cause harm, performing monthly scans of website applications, SQL injection scans and cross-site scripting (XSS). It also lets you display the SiteLock Trust Seal, which provides real-time verification to your visitors that your website (and their data) is secure.



**MINI WORKSHOP** | Speed up your WordPress website  
WordPress: [www.wordpress.org](http://www.wordpress.org) |  10 mins | Any browser

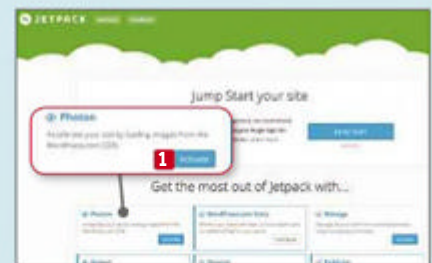
If you run a WordPress site that doesn't seem to respond and download pages quickly enough, try these three free plug-ins to streamline your site and help it load faster than ever



**1** Install Automattic's WP Super Cache plug-in ([bit.ly/wp369](http://bit.ly/wp369)). Click the Easy tab. **1** Caching will be off by default, so select Caching On **2** and click the Update Status button. **3** The Advanced tab **4** provides more options and it's well worth turning on the settings marked Recommended.



**2** Autoptimize ([bit.ly/auto369](http://bit.ly/auto369)) squeezes any superfluous space from your files and combines any that can be linked together. This decreases the number of files that need to be downloaded in order to serve a web page. Go to the plug-in's Settings and tick all the boxes. **1** Click the Save Changes button. **2**



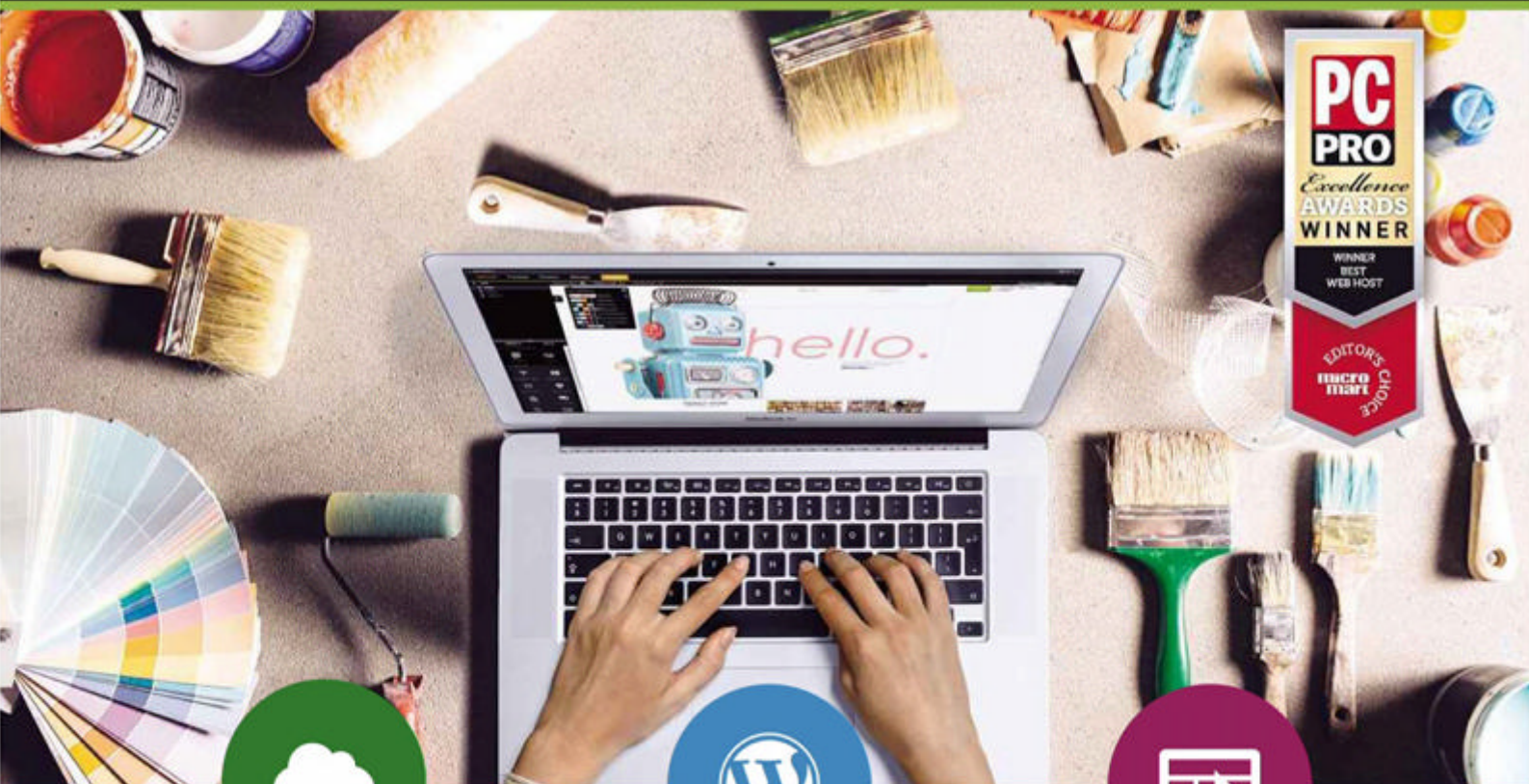
**3** You might already use Jetpack ([bit.ly/jet369](http://bit.ly/jet369)) to get live stats in your Dashboard. Its Photon tool is a CDN (Content Delivery Network) service, which hosts your images on WordPress.com to get them to your visitor's browser faster. From the Jetpack page, find the Photon section and click the Activate button. **1**



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# Group Test

We test and compare the latest products

## Low-cost laptops

Not only can you get a laptop for under £200, you can have a choice of models. **Andy Shaw** looks at the best options

**Y**ou no longer have to spend a fortune to get a new PC. The laptops in this Group Test are a bargain at £200 or less and come with a full version of Windows 8.1. They can't match the performance of more expensive models, and storage space is tight, but they perform basic Windows tasks perfectly well.

You may be thinking that these laptops look a lot like netbooks (last featured in a *Web User Group Test* back in 2011, in issue Issue 271). Manufacturers seemed to have shelved them when tablets took hold of the market, but it now looks as though the budget laptop might be making a comeback.

### HOW WE TESTED

We used the Real World Benchmark test from our sister magazine *PC Pro* to test the laptops. It uses real software (including Microsoft Office and Apple iTunes) to analyse how each laptop performs during regular Windows use. We also fully-charged the battery, then ran a simulation of light browsing, timing how long it took for the battery to drain.

**HP Stream 11 | £179.99 | [store.hp.com/ukstore](http://store.hp.com/ukstore)**

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

**WebUser  
GOLD  
AWARD**

The HP Stream 11 makes a bold statement with its fun, vibrant appearance, and it's available in either blue or magenta. It's solidly built, too, and felt well balanced both on a desk and sitting on our lap.

Its 11.6in screen has a resolution of 1,366 x 768 pixels, as do all the other laptops we've reviewed here. While that's not outstanding, the HP Stream has fantastic viewing angles (so you can still see it even if you aren't sitting squarely in front of the screen), a maximum brightness of 261cd/m<sup>2</sup> (candles per square metre) and reasonably accurate colours, which is great for a laptop that costs under £200.

The laptop is comfortable to use. It has a 96mm-wide touchpad with integrated buttons and a silky-smooth surface, and a well spaced keyboard with good-sized Scrabble-style keys.

There are plenty of ports for plugging in your peripherals, including two USB ports (one USB 3 and a USB 2), an HDMI port for plugging in another screen and an SD card slot for downloading your digital photos and adding extra storage.

You may well need this, because the laptop only comes with a 32GB eMMC flash memory drive. With Windows 8.1 installed, you're only left

with 17.3GB of usable space, though you get a one-year subscription to Office 365 Personal, which includes 1TB of cloud storage (the subscription costs £60 to renew after the first year). The laptop also comes preloaded with a collection of programs, which is a bit annoying because you'll probably want to uninstall most of them to create more space.

HP has built the Stream 11 around the Intel Celeron N2840 processor, which is also used in the Acer and Toshiba laptops reviewed here.

However, this model put in the best performance of the group, coming top in our Real World Benchmark test with a score of 0.4.

Battery life isn't as impressive, coming third overall, but lasting for nearly 10 hours in our light-use test is still a good accomplishment.



**VERDICT**  
★★★★★

The HP Stream 11 is a great-looking, well-built laptop. It has a good screen and a battery that will last all day, although other laptops in this test managed longer. With Windows 8.1 installed, it's more versatile than a Chromebook; it can run lightweight online apps but also use Windows software when web-based alternatives aren't good enough. We think it's the best laptop for under £200 that you can currently buy.



**Acer Aspire ES1-111M | £179.92 | [www.laptopsdirect.co.uk](http://www.laptopsdirect.co.uk)**

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



The ES1-111M came third in our benchmark test with a score of 0.36, although we should point out that our test laptop had 4GB of memory and we'd expect the 2GB model to be a little slower. Its battery life really won us over, though. It lasted 13 hours and 55 minutes in our light-use test, coming second in our chart.



It's a more sombre device than the HP model, with a matte black finish. The screen is bright, clear and readable, with 273cd/m<sup>2</sup> maximum brightness and a good colour display, showing 66.2 per cent of sRGB colours on our colorimeter tests.

The build quality isn't as solid as HP's, with a bit too much flex in the screen and a spongy feel to the keys that we didn't like. For the price, though, it's possible to overlook a few drawbacks, particularly with such an impressive battery life.

**VERDICT**

★★★★☆

The main attraction of the ES1-111M is its battery, which should last all day as long as you're not doing anything too demanding. The laptop doesn't have the flair of HP's model, but it performed well in our tests and offers great value for money.

**Asus X200MA | £199.99 | [www.pcworld.co.uk](http://www.pcworld.co.uk)**

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



If you want more than the 32GB of flash memory offered by our Gold and Silver Award-winners, then opt for the Asus X200MA, which comes with a regular hard drive of 500GB. Even allowing for Windows, that leaves hundreds of gigabytes of space available.



The inclusion of a hard drive means this laptop is thicker than the others we tested (6mm - or 30 per cent - thicker than the HP Stream 11). The extra space on the casing is put to good use, though, with enough room for both HDMI and VGA ports, and it has the most USB ports of all the laptops we tested, providing two USB 2 and one USB 3 port. It also has a Fast Ethernet port.

Performance in our Real World Benchtest was disappointing, though, with the X200MA coming second from last with a score of 0.33.

**VERDICT**

★★★★☆

If you want a cheap laptop with plenty of space for programs and data, the Asus X200MA is a good choice. Its mechanical hard drive takes a toll on the battery life, though, and it's unlikely to last a full day. It also didn't perform as fast as the laptops with smaller flash memory-based storage.

**BEST OF THE REST**

**Toshiba Satellite CL10-B | £200 | [www.argos.co.uk](http://www.argos.co.uk) | ★★★★★☆**

The Toshiba CL10-B has a good overall design but its speakers are tinny. It has the same core specification as the HP Stream 11 and came second in our performance tests. Its battery lasted nearly nine hours, but that only placed it fourth overall. For the price and the performance, we believe the HP Stream 11 is a better option.

**Asus EeeBook X205TA | £169.97 | [www.laptopsdirect.co.uk](http://www.laptopsdirect.co.uk) | ★★★★★☆**

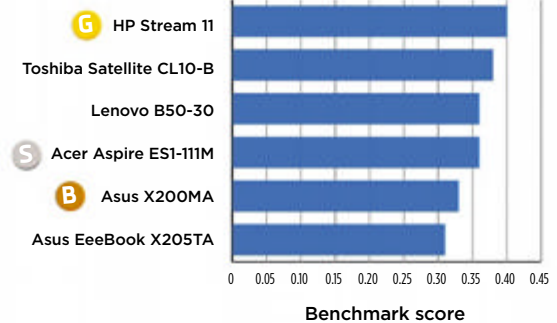
The Asus EeeBook brand harks back to the defunct netbook range, which is a good point of comparison for this budget laptop. The biggest problem, however, is its performance, which put it bottom of our chart with a benchmark score of 0.31. The battery lasted the longest of all the models we tested, but that's not enough to lift it higher in our rankings.

**Lenovo B50-30 | £169.98 | [www.ebuyer.com](http://www.ebuyer.com) | ★★★★★☆**

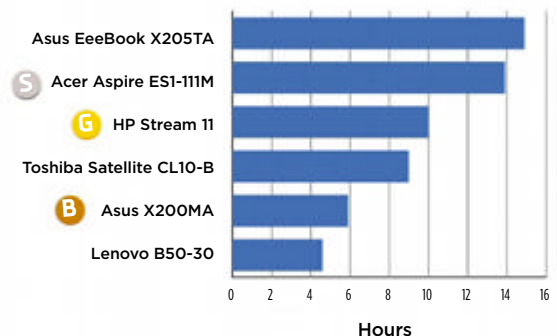
The Lenovo is unique in that it's the only model here with a 15.6in screen, which looks huge next to the 11.6in screens of the others. While this makes the laptop bigger and heavier, it also has more ports and includes a DVD writer. However, its battery life was the worst that we tested, lasting just over four and a half hours.

**TEST-RESULTS CHARTS**

**Real World benchmarks**



**Light-use battery life**



## Group Test Laptops under £200



	HP Stream 11	Acer Aspire ES1-111M	Asus X200MA	Toshiba Satellite CL10-B	Asus EeeBook X205TA	Lenovo B50-30
WEBSITE	<a href="http://www.hp.co.uk">www.hp.co.uk</a>	<a href="http://www.acer.co.uk">www.acer.co.uk</a>	<a href="http://www.asus.com">www.asus.com</a>	<a href="http://www.toshiba.co.uk">www.toshiba.co.uk</a>	<a href="http://www.asus.com">www.asus.com</a>	<a href="http://lenovo.com/uk">lenovo.com/uk</a>
PRICE	£179.99	£179.92	£199.99	£200	£169.97	£169.98
BUY FROM	<a href="http://store.hp.com/ukstore">store.hp.com/ukstore</a>	<a href="http://www.laptopsdirect.co.uk">www.laptopsdirect.co.uk</a>	<a href="http://www.pcworld.co.uk">www.pcworld.co.uk</a>	<a href="http://www.argos.co.uk">www.argos.co.uk</a>	<a href="http://www.laptopsdirect.co.uk">www.laptopsdirect.co.uk</a>	<a href="http://www.ebuyer.com">www.ebuyer.com</a>
PROCESSOR	Dual-core 2.16GHz Intel Celeron N2840	Dual-core 2.16GHz Intel Celeron N2840	Dual-core 2.16GHz Intel Celeron N2830	Dual-core 2.16GHz Intel Celeron N2840	Quad-core 1.33GHz Intel Atom Z3735F	Dual-core 2.16GHz Intel Celeron N2840
MEMORY	2GB DDR3L	2GB DDR3L (4GB tested)	2GB DDR3	2GB DDR3	2GB DDR3L	4GB DDR3L
SCREEN SIZE	11.6in glossy	11.6in glossy	11.6in glossy	11.6in glossy	11.6in glossy	15.6in glossy
SCREEN RESOLUTION	1,366 x 768 pixels	1,366 x 768 pixels	1,366 x 768 pixels	1,366 x 768 pixels	1,366 x 768 pixels	1,366 x 768 pixels
GRAPHICS ADAPTER	Intel HD Graphics	Intel HD Graphics	Intel HD Graphics	Intel HD Graphics	Intel HD Graphics	Intel HD Graphics
GRAPHICS OUTPUTS	HDMI	HDMI	HDMI, VGA	HDMI	micro-HDMI	HDMI, VGA
TOTAL STORAGE	32GB	32GB	500GB	32GB	32GB	500GB
STORAGE TYPE	eMMC flash	eMMC flash	Hard drive	eMMC flash	eMMC flash	Hard drive
OPTICAL DRIVE	X	X	X	X	X	DVD writer
PORTS	3.5mm headphone jack, USB 3, USB 2	3.5mm headphone jack, USB 3, USB 2	3.5mm headphone jack, USB 3, 2 x USB 2	3.5mm headphone jack, USB 3, USB 2	3.5mm headphone jack, 2 x USB 2	3.5mm headphone jack, USB 3, 2 x USB 2
BLUETOOTH	Bluetooth 4	Bluetooth 4	Bluetooth 4	Bluetooth 4	Bluetooth 4	Bluetooth 4
NETWORKING	Single-band 802.11n	Gigabit Ethernet, single-band 802.11n	Fast Ethernet, dual-band 802.11bgn	Single-band 802.11n	Dual-band 802.11n	Gigabit Ethernet, single-band 802.11n
MEMORY CARD READER	SD	SD	SD	SD	microSD	SD
OPERATING SYSTEM	Windows 8.1 with Bing 64-bit	Windows 8.1 with Bing 64-bit	Windows 8.1 with Bing 64-bit	Windows 8.1 with Bing 64-bit	Windows 8.1 with Bing 32-bit	Windows 8.1 with Bing 64-bit
SIZE	300 x 206 x 20mm	291 x 211 x 21mm	302 x 200 x 26mm	289 x 199 x 20mm	286 x 193 x 18mm	380 x 262 x 25mm
WEIGHT	1.29kg	1.29kg	1.24kg	1.1kg	950g	2.32kg
WARRANTY	1 year return-to-base	1 year return-to-base	1 year return-to-base	1 year return-to-base	1 year return-to-base	1 year return-to-base
PART NUMBER	11-d007na	NX.MRSEK.001	X200MA-Kx366BA	PSKVEE-00300NEN	X205TA-BING-FD005BS	MCA2WUK

### OUR VERDICT

We awarded our Gold Award to the HP Stream 11, which put in the best overall performance in our benchmark test of all the laptops we looked at in this Group Test. It also did well in our battery test. The laptop is sleek and attractive, with a good screen, and is excellent value for money.

If battery life is your main priority, then the Silver Award-winning Acer Aspire ES1-111M had the second-best battery in our test. It also came third in the performance benchmark test, proving itself to be a decent all-rounder.

Both these options have limited storage capacity with just 32GB each on a flash memory drive. If you need more, the Asus X200MA comes with a 500GB standard hard drive, which should be more than enough. It's not as strong a performer, but it has enough going for it to deserve our Bronze Award. ■







# Web User's Best Buys

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## HARDWARE

### BUDGET LAPTOP

#### HP Stream 11

£179.99 from [store.hp.com/ukstore](http://store.hp.com/ukstore)

Date tested: April 2015



The HP Stream 11 offers excellent performance and a respectable battery life. It's a sleek, attractive laptop, available in blue or magenta, with a good screen that offers wide viewing angles.

#### KEY SPECS

Dual-core 2.16GHz Intel Celeron N2840 processor ■ 2GB of memory ■ 11.6in non-touchscreen ■ 32GB flash drive ■ 1,366 x 768 pixels resolution ■ Single-band 802.11n Wi-Fi ■ 300 x 206 x 20mm ■ 1.29kg ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

### MULTIROOM SPEAKER

#### Sonos Play:1

£167 from [www.currys.co.uk](http://www.currys.co.uk)

Date tested: March 2015



The Sonos Play:1 offers impressive audio quality and comes with excellent software and great apps that provide seamless integration with music services. It's the ideal speaker to use as a starting point for a home entertainment system.

#### KEY SPECS

Two speakers ■ 802.11n Wi-Fi, 1 x 10/100 Ethernet ■ Android and iOS apps ■ Compatible with UPnP and SMB servers ■ AAC, FLAC, MP3, OGG and WAV ■ 161 x 12 x 12mm ■ 1.8kg

### SSD

#### Samsung 850 Pro 256GB

£136.03 from [www.kikatek.com](http://www.kikatek.com)

Date tested: February 2015



The Samsung 850 Pro is crammed with new technology that makes it faster and more durable than its competitors. You could buy a similarly sized SSD for much less, but in our tests the cheaper models weren't as fast and they don't come with the 850 Pro's generous 10-year warranty.

#### KEY SPECS

256GB (also available in 128GB, 512GB & 1TB) ■ 53p per GB ■ SATA III interface ■ 2.5in drive case ■ 10 years warranty ■ 100 x 70 x 7mm ■ 66g

### TABLET

#### Google Nexus 9

£319 from [play.google.com](http://play.google.com)

Date tested: February 2015



The Nexus 9 is our favourite Android tablet. It has a fantastic screen, even better than the iPad Air 2's, and superb battery life, lasting over 15 hours in our tests. It's cheaper than the latest iPad and comes in 16GB and 32GB capacities.

#### KEY SPECS

8.9in screen ■ 2,048 x 1,536 pixels resolution ■ Dual-core 2.3GHz 64-bit Nvidia Tegra K1 Denver processor ■ 16/32GB storage ■ 4G option costs £60 extra (32GB models only) ■ Android 5.0 ■ 228 x 154 x 8mm ■ 425g

### WINDOWS 8.1 LAPTOP

#### Asus Transformer Book Flip TP300LA

£449.95 from [www.johnlewis.com](http://www.johnlewis.com)

Date tested: January 2015



This touchscreen laptop folds over into a chunky tablet. It's well built, did well in our performance tests and has a fantastic battery life.

#### KEY SPECS

Dual-core 1.9GHz Intel Core i3-4030U processor ■ 4GB of memory ■ 13.3in touchscreen ■ 1,366 x 768 pixels resolution ■ 500GB hard drive ■ 802.11ac Wi-Fi ■ 326 x 232 x 22mm ■ 1.75kg ■ One-year collect-and-return warranty

### WIRELESS ROUTER

#### D-Link DIR-868L

£65.97 from [www.dabs.com](http://www.dabs.com)

Date tested: December 2014



If you're willing to switch your wireless devices to the 5GHz network, the D-Link DIR-868L offers fast and reliable performance at a great price.

#### KEY SPECS

Dual-band 2.4GHz and 5GHz ■ 802.11b/g/n ■ 1,300Mbps theoretical maximum speed ■ Six internal antennas ■ 4 x 10/100/1000Mbps Ethernet ports ■ WPA and WPA2 encryption ■ 1 x USB 3 port ■ 217 x 123 x 102mm ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

All prices correct at time of review

## DESKTOP PC

### Chillblast Fusion Obelisk

**£699.98** from [www.chillblast.com](http://www.chillblast.com)

**Date tested:**  
November 2014

This great all-round desktop PC achieved a good overall performance in both our Windows and gaming tests. It runs quietly, has a good-quality monitor and is packed with great components, including a fast SSD and a generous hard drive.



#### KEY SPECS

Quad-core 4.2GHz Intel Core i5-4690K processor (overclocked) ■ 8GB of memory ■ 5 x USB3, 5 x USB2 ports ■ Gigabit Ethernet ■ 120GB SSD ■ 1TB hard drive ■ 1,920 x 1,080 pixels resolution ■ Windows 8.1 ■ 465 x 430 x 192mm

## KEYBOARD

### Cherry MX-Board 3.0

**£55** from [www.kikatek.com](http://www.kikatek.com)

**Date tested:**  
November 2014

The Cherry MX-Board 3.0 is a hard-wearing mechanical keyboard that's a pleasure to type on. It's quiet for a mechanical model but still makes more noise than a standard keyboard. It doesn't have a lot of features, but it's ideal if you're looking for a standard, good-quality keyboard.



#### KEY SPECS

104 keys ■ 1 x USB port ■ 1.8m detachable cable ■ 2 non-slip surfaces ■ 2 rubber caps for adjustable feet ■ 44.6 x 15.8 x 2.8cm ■ 0.83kg ■ Win-Key lock

## NAS DRIVE

### Asustor AS-202TE

**£199.66** from [www.scan.co.uk](http://www.scan.co.uk)  
**Date tested:** September 2014

This NAS drive put in an excellent performance in our tests, transferring files over our network faster than any of the other devices we tested. It has an impressive range of tools, including an HDMI output for streaming to TV.



#### KEY SPECS

EXT4 file system ■ SATA3 hard drive ■ 2 x 3.5in bays ■ 1 x 10/100/1,000 Ethernet ■ 2 x USB 2 ports, 2 x USB 3 ports ■ 1 x HDMI (1.4a) ■ 1 x 3.5mm mini-jack ■ 230 x 164 x 108mm ■ 1.87kg ■ Two-year return-to-base warranty

## WQHD MONITOR

### AOC q2770Pqu

**£367.96** from [www.dabs.com](http://www.dabs.com)  
**Date tested:** August 2014

The AOC q2770Pqu has an exceptional, high-quality screen and is very reasonably priced. Its settings are preconfigured, so you don't need to tweak them to improve the display, and it has all the ports you'll ever need.



#### KEY SPECS

27in widescreen ■ 2,560 x 1,440 pixels resolution ■ Portrait mode ■ Adjustable stand ■ 2 x 2W speakers ■ DisplayPort, DVI, HDMI, VGA, 2 x USB 3.0 and 2 x USB 2.0 ports ■ 642 x 428 x 245mm ■ 8kg ■ Three-year return-to-base warranty

## HD MONITOR

### BenQ EW2740L

**£194** from [www.ebuyer.com](http://www.ebuyer.com)  
**Date tested:** July 2014

The BenQ EW2740L is an excellent-value 27in monitor with good image quality. It supports MHL, so you can connect a compatible mobile device to it, and has two HDMI ports and one VGA port.



#### KEY SPECS

27in widescreen ■ 1,920 x 1,080 pixels resolution ■ 2W stereo speakers ■ MHL support ■ 2 x HDMI and 1 x VGA ports ■ 320 x 115 x 95mm ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

## CHROMEBOOK

### Acer C720P Chromebook

**£244.81** from [www.ilgs.net](http://www.ilgs.net)  
**Date tested:** June 2014

This fantastic Chromebook provides excellent overall performance, respectable battery life and a good collection of ports. It's got a smart touchscreen, comfy keyboard and touchpad, and starts up in no time at all.



#### KEY SPECS

1.4GHz Intel Celeron 2955U processor ■ 16GB storage ■ 2GB memory ■ 11.6in screen ■ 1,366 x 768 pixels resolution ■ 7.5 hours battery life ■ USB 3, USB 2 and HDMI ports ■ 288 x 204 x 20mm ■ 1.35kg



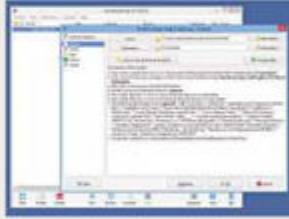
## SOFTWARE & SERVICES

### BACKUP AND SYNC

#### SyncBackFree

Free from [bit.ly/syncback366](http://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

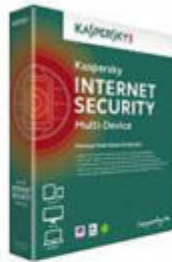
Synchronise: Copy files in both directions ■ Restore back-up files easily ■ Email logs ■ Schedule backups ■ Simple and Advanced mode ■ Runs on Windows 8, 7, Vista, and XP ■ Extensive Help documentation and support

### INTERNET SECURITY

#### Kaspersky Internet Security 2015

£17.99 from [bit.ly/kaspoffer](http://bit.ly/kaspoffer)  
Date tested: January 2015

Kaspersky Internet Security performed near-perfectly throughout our tests last year, with only one unwanted program slipping through. Our sister title *Computeractive* is selling it at the reader-offer price of £17.99 (full price £39.99). Click the link above.



#### KEY FEATURES

Anti-virus and firewall tools ■ Protects online shopping and banking ■ Identity and privacy tools ■ Dangerous-website alerts ■ Advanced parental control ■ Licences for one, three, and five PCs; for one or two years, or pay monthly ■ Multi-Device version for Mac and Android protection

### PHOTO EDITING

#### Adobe Photoshop Elements 13

£81.08 from [www.adobe.com/uk](http://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+ (32- and 64-bit) ■ Bundled photo organiser ■ Content-aware edits ■ Guided edits ■ People-beautifier tools ■ RAW support

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### VIDEO EDITING

#### Adobe Premiere Elements 13

£81.08 from [www.adobe.com/uk](http://www.adobe.com/uk)  
Date tested: December 2014



Premiere Elements 13's 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

### ONLINE STORAGE

#### Google Drive

From free from [drive.google.com](http://drive.google.com)  
Date tested: August 2014



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.

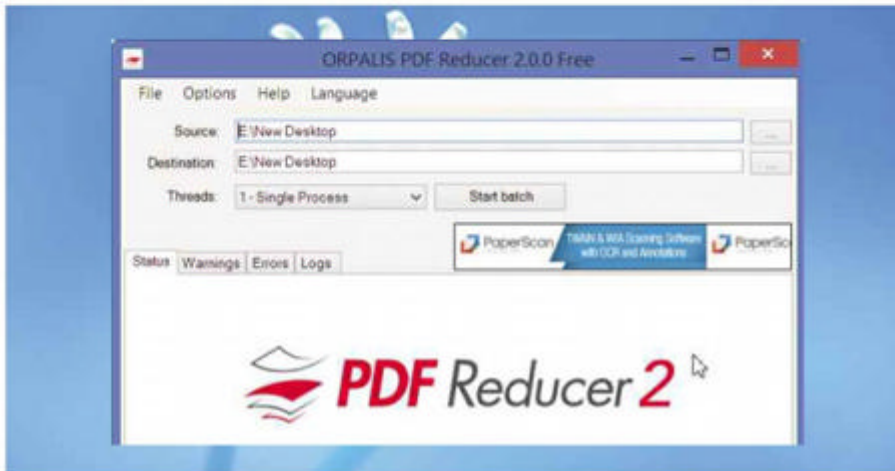
#### KEY FEATURES

15GB free storage ■ Web-based office software ■ Works with Windows XP, Vista, 7 and 8+ ■ Chrome browser add-on ■ Android and iOS apps ■ 100GB extra storage for £1.19 per month; 1TB for £5.97 per month; 10TB for £59.51 per month





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



**PDF TOOL**  
**PDF Reducer Free 2**

[www.orpalis.com](http://www.orpalis.com)

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8+ **File size:** 14.4MB

PDFs present documents exactly as they should look, whatever device they're viewed on, but their file sizes can be on the large side. PDF Reducer Free slims down PDF documents by removing unused objects and resampling any images. The files look much the same afterwards, but are smaller in size. The latest version improves performance, and adds support for MRC (Mixed Raster Content) compression. Be warned that the free edition has an annoying nag screen when you launch it.

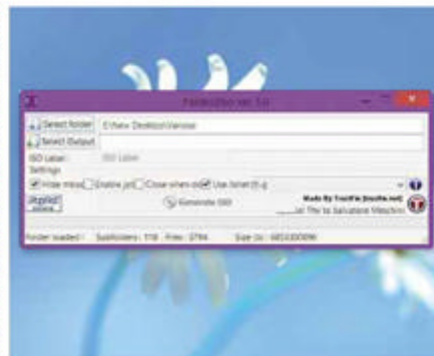


**WALLPAPER SWITCHER**  
**My Daily Wallpaper 7**

[bit.ly/dailywallpaper369](http://bit.ly/dailywallpaper369)

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8+ **File size:** 356KB

This program automatically downloads and applies new Windows wallpaper every day. There are over 350,000 wallpapers available, in more than 50 categories. You can preview images before they are applied, and browse the available galleries. The latest version lets you use your own images; just specify a folder containing some pictures and the program will select them at random.



**ISO MAKER**  
**Folder2Iso 3**

[www.trustfm.net](http://www.trustfm.net)

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8+ **File size:** 2.6MB

Folder2Iso is a portable program that can turn any folder into an ISO image file. You can then write this file to CD/DVD or USB flash drive, or just open it to access the contents. Select the folder to use, set an output directory and choose your options. The latest version of Folder2Iso has been rewritten and can now handle multiple jobs. It can also be controlled through the Windows command prompt.

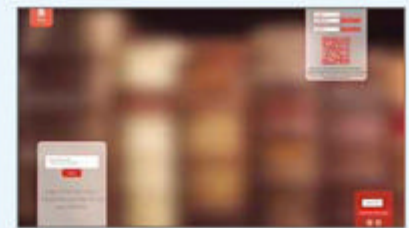
**New Windows 8 Apps**

**Kopy**

[bit.ly/kopy369](http://bit.ly/kopy369)

**Min requirements:** Windows 8+  
**File size:** 588KB

Kopy lets you copy text from one device to another. To use it, you'll need to install a version of the app on your other devices. It's not currently available on iOS.

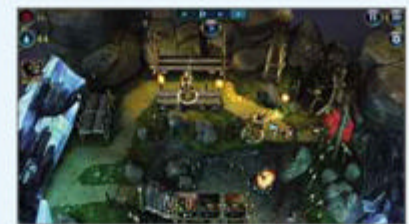


**Prime World: Defenders**

[bit.ly/primeworld369](http://bit.ly/primeworld369)

**Min requirements:** Windows 8+  
**File size:** 250MB

The aim of this game is to defend your locations using towers and magic. There are 26 types of upgradeable defences, and 36 different attacking monsters.

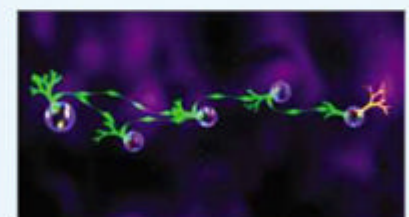


**R.O.O.T.S**

[bit.ly/roots369](http://bit.ly/roots369)

**Min requirements:** Windows 8+  
**File size:** 4.8MB

In this fun, real-time strategy game, you must defeat invasive alien plants on nearby planets before they can uproot you. It's a great looking game and very simple to play.



**IMAGE FIXER**

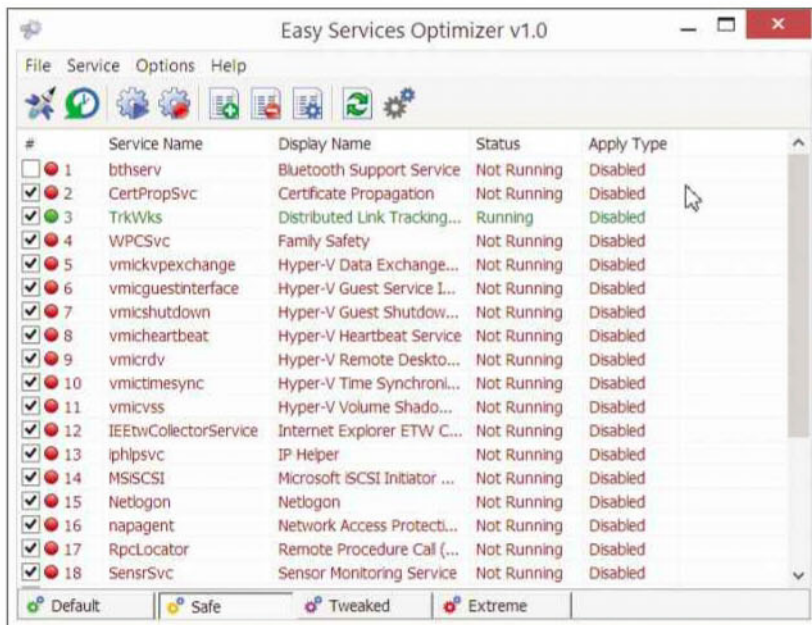
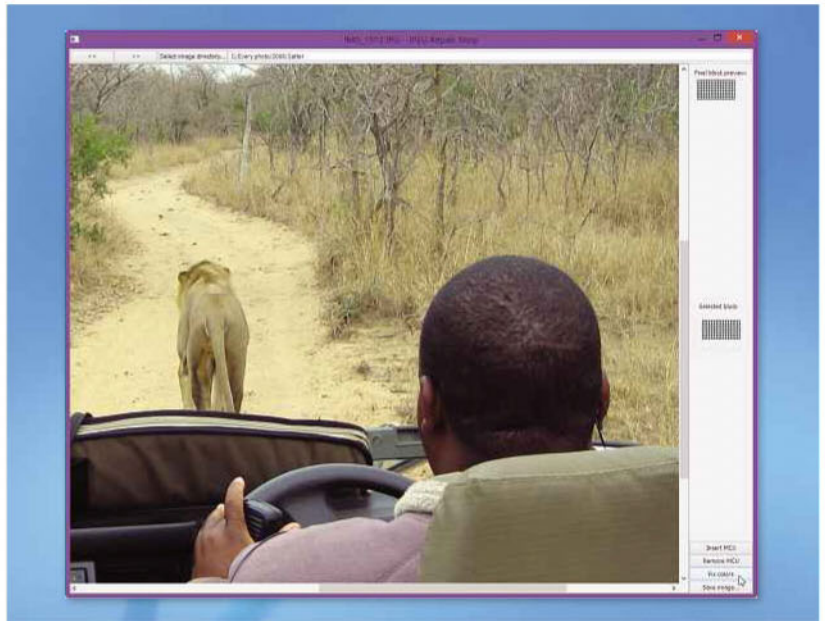
**JPEG Repair Shop**

[bit.ly/jpegrepair369](http://bit.ly/jpegrepair369)

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8+  
**File size:** 16.7MB

JPEG is an excellent and popular image format, but sometimes JPEGs can become corrupted, which prevents the picture from displaying properly. JPEG Repair Shop aims to fix the common causes of corruption, overcoming image displacement and incorrect colouration. To use the software, just browse for a corrupt photo and decide if you want to remove/replace the existing MCU (Minimum Coded Unit), which might be the source of the problem, or attempt to fix the colours.

The website explains how the software works and how to use it. There are also some useful troubleshooting tips. The program can't fix every corrupt JPEG, but it's worth a try.



**SYSTEM TOOL**

**Easy Service Optimizer**

[www.sordum.org](http://www.sordum.org)

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8+  
**File size:** 459KB

Windows loads lots of services at startup, the majority of which are required for the operating system to run properly. Easy Service Optimizer helps you disable unnecessary ones to improve system performance, without completely messing up your computer. There are four profiles available - Default (unchanged), Safe (minimal changes), Tweaked (additional changes) and Extreme (highly optimised, but riskier). Apply a profile, and reboot your PC to make the changes. You can customise the profiles and stop and start individual services as required. You can also add, delete and edit services, but this is something only advanced users should ever play around with.

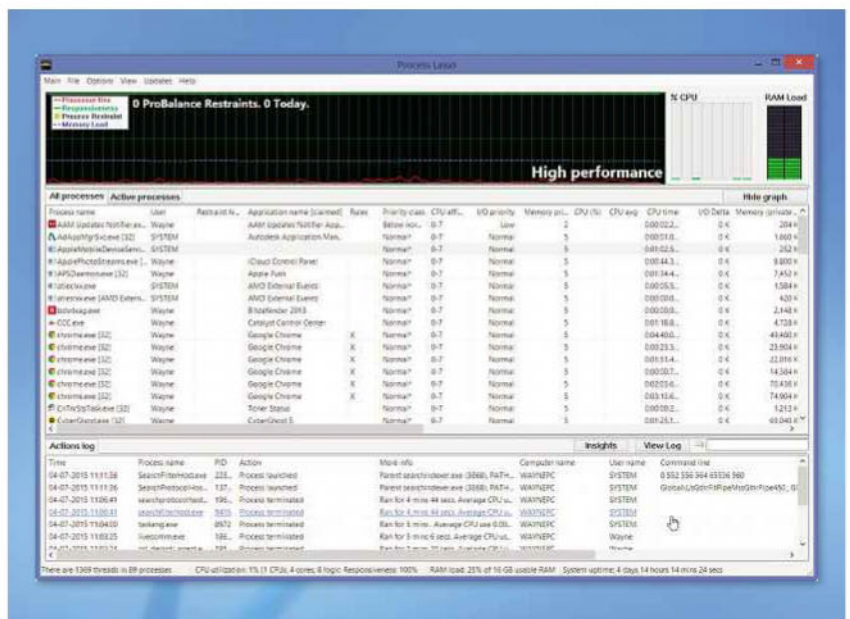
**SYSTEM TOOL**

**Process Lasso 8**

[bitsum.com](http://bitsum.com)

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8+, 64-bit processor **File size:** 1.3MB

The Task Manager in Windows is handy for shutting down unwanted or misbehaving system processes, but Bitsum's Process Lasso is a more advanced solution. It automatically prevents programs from hogging system resources, helping to ensure your system runs as efficiently as possible. You can manage processes manually, switch to the special gaming mode, and have the software automatically lower power usage during idle moments. The latest version is a major update and makes numerous improvements. The biggest change is the inclusion of SmartTrim, a memory optimiser that releases memory from applications that don't require it.







**GAME**

**Cube Escape**

[bit.ly/cubeesc369](http://bit.ly/cubeesc369)

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8+ **File size:** 10.2MB

The aim of this game is to escape from a room that is rapidly filling with water. There are cubes around you that you can make bigger and smaller, and climb upon. You need to act quickly, and choose your route wisely. It's also easy to slide off cubes if you're not careful. Use your left and right mouse buttons to resize cubes, the arrow keys to walk and space to jump.

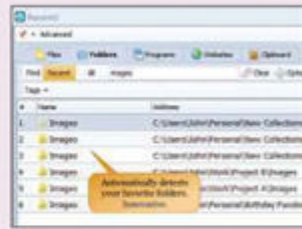
**Don't install...**

**RecentX**

[www.conceptworld.com/RecentX](http://www.conceptworld.com/RecentX)

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8+ **File size:** 10.8MB

Described as an "unthinkable Windows app", RecentX gives you instant access to your files, folders and programs, as well as your clipboard history. However, it's likely to be too much for most users, especially when there are plenty of free, more lightweight program launchers available and this one costs \$29.95 (£20).



**...Install this instead**

**Launchy**

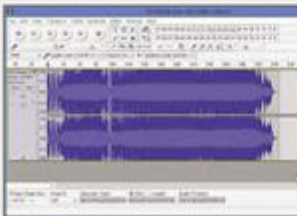
[www.launchy.net](http://www.launchy.net)

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8+ **File size:** 4.5MB

Although it hasn't been updated for a while, our favourite program launcher is the brilliant Launchy, which lets you open programs, documents and websites instantly. Simply press Alt+Space and type the first few letters of the item to find and launch it. By default, Launchy indexes your Start menu, Documents and Music folders, and browser bookmarks, but you can easily add further directories to its database. You can also index all files of a particular format and customise Launchy's interface by applying the 'skin' of your choice. It's easy to use and speedy.



**UPDATED | New tweaks and fixes for your favourite free programs**



**AUDIO EDITOR**

**Audacity 2.1.0**

[audacity.sourceforge.net](http://audacity.sourceforge.net)

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8+ **File size:** 23.1MB

Changes in the latest version of this popular audio editor include the addition of a real-time effects preview, a superior Noise Reduction effect that replaces the old Noise Removal tool, and lots of other general effects improvements. The Meter Toolbars have also been redesigned.



**PHOTO EDITOR**

**Icecream Image Resizer 1.09**

[icecreamapps.com](http://icecreamapps.com)

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8+ **File size:** 15.2MB

Image Resizer does exactly what its name suggests. You can choose a pre-set resizing profile (options include email, Desktop, Facebook timeline cover and iPhone) and adjust the resolution, and aspect ratio. Changes in the latest release include bug fixes, and the addition of several languages.



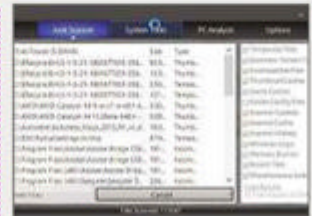
**MEDIA CONVERTER**

**Any Video Converter Free 5.7.9**

[bit.ly/anyvid369](http://bit.ly/anyvid369)

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8+ **File size:** 32.8MB

This program converts videos from one file type to another and can handle all of the main formats. The latest build adds support for splitting FLAC/APE files into separate files and makes some improvements to the user interface. Select the custom install to avoid unwanted changes.



**SYSTEM CLEANER**

**System Ninja 3.0.6**

[singularlabs.com](http://singularlabs.com)

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8+ **File size:** 2.4MB

System Ninja is a powerful free tool that removes junk from your PC, including temporary files, internet cookies and history, thumbnail caches, and more. This update adds detection for Mac OS X video file caches and System Ninja can now clean up after dozens of new programs. ■

**GET FREE SOFTWARE FIRST** subscribe to Web User at [subscribe.webuser.co.uk](http://subscribe.webuser.co.uk)



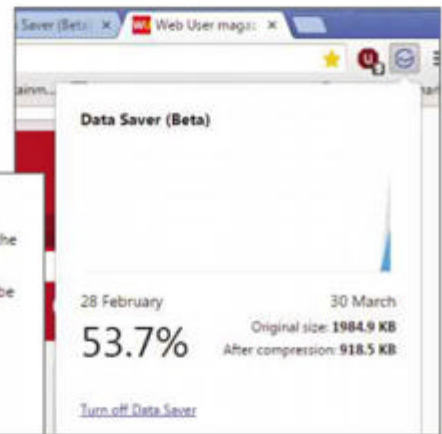
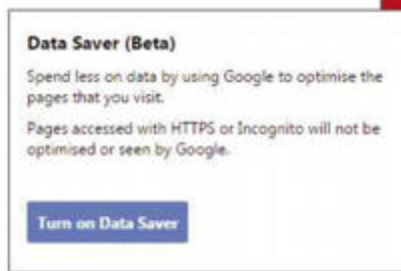
# Best New Browser Tools



## CHROME

### Load pages faster by compressing data

When you're browsing the web over a mobile connection, every 'bit' of data is important - especially if you have a tight monthly allowance. Data Saver ([bit.ly/datasaver369](http://bit.ly/datasaver369)) is a new add-on from Google that reduces your data usage and speeds up page-loading times by compressing content before it's downloaded in your browser. The extension works automatically from the moment you install it and you can click the toolbar button to see the size of a page before and after compression, as well as the overall data reduction, which is often as much as 50 per cent. Data Saver is still in beta, so it's not perfect (the date was more than a month out when we tried the add-on) and it doesn't yet support secure HTTPS pages or incognito pages. However, it seems to work well enough without adversely affecting the quality of online images.

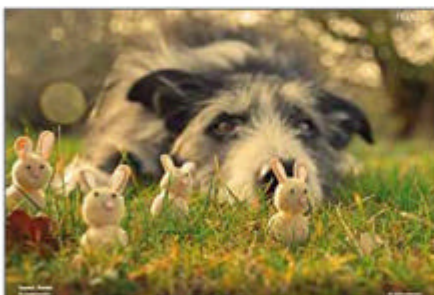


### View Flickr photos on your New Tab page

Last issue, we recommended the brilliant Google Art Project add-on ([bit.ly/googleart368](http://bit.ly/googleart368)), which displays classic paintings on your New Tab page. Now, Flickr has launched its own effort, called Flickr Tab ([bit.ly/flickr369](http://bit.ly/flickr369)) to



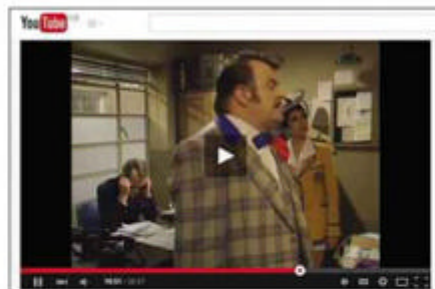
bring some of the best pictures from the photo-sharing site to your browser. The image changes every time you open a new tab and you can click it to see the shot on Flickr and get more information about its photographer, subject,



location and the camera and settings used. The pictures look fantastic but, unlike Google's art add-on, Flickr Tab doesn't provide a shortcut to your most-visited sites, so you'll have to sacrifice that practical benefit for an aesthetic one.

### Pause YouTube videos using the Spacebar

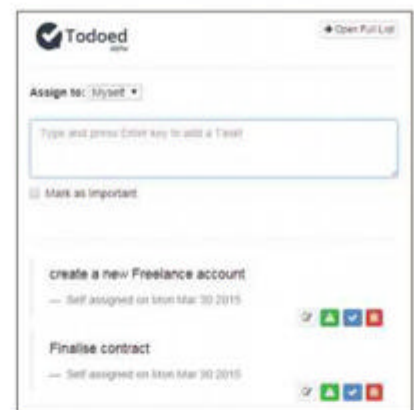
The most useful keyboard shortcut for YouTube is the ability to pause and resume playing videos by pressing the spacebar. Sadly, this trick doesn't always work and sometimes hitting the spacebar simply scrolls the page down so you can no longer see the video player. The new Chrome extension



YouTube Pause ([bit.ly/youtube369](http://bit.ly/youtube369)) solves this problem by ensuring that pressing the spacebar always controls playback rather than the web page, even if you didn't click the video first. It runs quietly in the background and doesn't require any configuration; just hit the bar to make the shortcut work every time.

### Turn any text into a to-do list task

Compiling a to-do list is a great way to stay organised, so long as you have the time to write it in the first place. Todoed ([bit.ly/todoed369](http://bit.ly/todoed369)) makes things quick and easy by letting you turn text in webmail messages, social-media posts and online articles into tasks, simply by right-clicking the relevant words and



choosing 'Add to Todoed'. Alternatively, you can click the add-on's toolbar button and enter the details manually. Tasks can be marked 'important' and 'completed'; edited and deleted; and assigned to yourself or to someone else. You need to register with Todoed via your Gmail account, but this is so you can invite other people to share your to-do list and spread the burden.



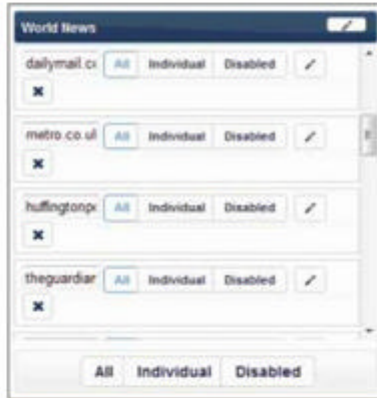
This fortnight's most useful tips and add-ons to help you get the most from Chrome, Firefox, Opera and more



## FIREFOX

### Hide the user comments on any website

If you ever regret scrolling down past a YouTube video or a Mail Online story because of the inane and offensive comments below, you'll appreciate the new Firefox add-on Don't Read The Comments ([bit.ly/comments369](http://bit.ly/comments369)). This automatically hides the comments sections on many popular websites, including the two mentioned above, along with Facebook, BuzzFeed, The Guardian and many more. You can configure the add-on to block comments on other sites, by clicking its toolbar button and choosing Enable. It also lets you hide individual opinions rather than all of them, and disable comment-filtering altogether if you find you miss the ill-informed rants, blatant trolling and occasional pearls of wisdom. For Chrome, there's a similar extension called Shut Up ([bit.ly/shutup369](http://bit.ly/shutup369)).



### Automatically close unused tabs after 20 minutes

Leaving tabs open when you've finished with them wastes valuable memory, but it's easily done. Dustman ([bit.ly/dustman369](http://bit.ly/dustman369)) is a handy add-on that 'empties' your browser to reclaim memory by closing tabs automatically after they've been idle for 20 minutes. By default, it leaves at least five tabs open, which should be enough for anyone. Dustman's Options let you increase or decrease the number of inactive minutes and open tabs, and you can restore closed tabs by selecting them in its drop-down menu. The auto-closing feature can be disabled when you need lots of tabs open.



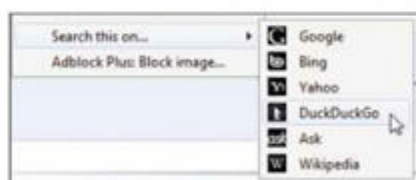
complete picture when exploring Street View (however, it didn't make much difference in Bing's low-quality equivalent Streetside).

### Remove the clutter from Google and Bing Maps

Although you can press F11 to browse maps full-screen in Google and Bing, this prevents you from accessing other tabs and doesn't hide interface elements such as zoom controls, which can obscure your view. To enlarge maps so that they fill your browser, and to conceal any onscreen tools, install Fullscreen Maps ([bit.ly/fullscreen369](http://bit.ly/fullscreen369)), which lets you expand and improve your view at the click of a button. It's especially useful when you're looking at 3D and aerial maps, and for getting the

### Search more sites when you right click

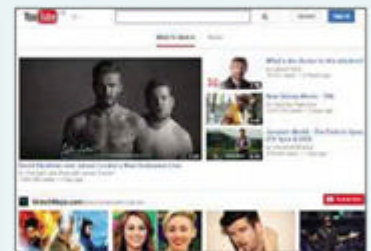
Usually, when you highlight and right-click a word on a web page, you're given the option to search for it using your default search engine, for example 'Search Google for...'. Search This On ([bit.ly/searchthis369](http://bit.ly/searchthis369)) expands the selection to offer six different search tools, including DuckDuckGo and Wikipedia. Just select the one you want and the results will open in a new tab.



## OTHER BROWSERS

### Block all ads in YouTube videos

If you're willing to tolerate adverts on web pages, but hate them interrupting your video viewing, try the Opera add-on Adblock for YouTube ([bit.ly/adblock369](http://bit.ly/adblock369)). It blocks all ads on YouTube, including the ones that play before videos and the banners that pop up during playback. It can also be used to block annotations, if you find them annoying. As with any ad blocker, bear in mind that many small businesses and individuals rely on the revenue adverts generate to fund their content, so you may prefer to use the extension sparingly.



### Find open tabs instantly in Vivaldi

When you have lots of tabs open, their titles can disappear, making it difficult to identify them. The new browser Vivaldi ([www.vivaldi.com](http://www.vivaldi.com)), which featured in a Workshop in Issue 365 ([bit.ly/webuser365](http://bit.ly/webuser365)), offers a clever built-in solution to this problem. To find an open tab among the clutter, just press F2 to open the Quick Commands box and type a keyword that you know appears in the title of the page. Click a result to open the relevant tab. Note that Vivaldi is still a 'technical preview', so not all its features work as smoothly.



# Best Free Apps

## App of the Fortnight

### PHOTOS

## Layout from Instagram

[bit.ly/layout369](http://bit.ly/layout369)

**Min requirements:** iOS 7

**Size:** 4.8MB



Creating perfect photos is no longer just about choosing the right camera settings but about what you do to shots afterwards, which is why Instagram, the social media app that transforms the look of your images, has been such a big hit. Layout is Instagram's latest offering, and lets you combine multiple shots into a single image.

The app gives you two choices. Firstly, you can use the Photo Booth option to access your device's camera and take photos that are instantly placed into one of the app's nine layouts.

Alternatively, you can select up to nine pictures from the camera roll

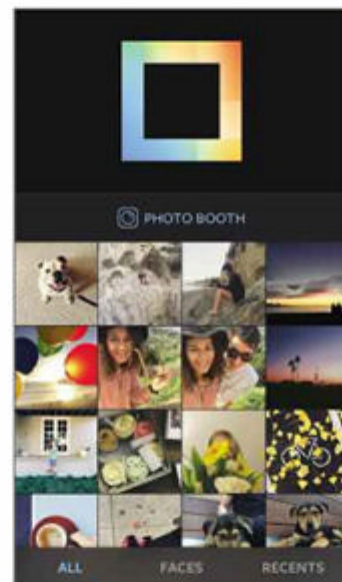
**NEW**

on your iPhone or iPad, with the app showing a preview of how they will appear in the finished layout. By selecting the Faces tab, you can see only those images containing people. You can then overlay, mirror, resize or flip the photos to produce something unique.

There are sliders on the side of the images that let you adjust their size and you can pinch to zoom in on finer detail.

Once the images are saved, they can be imported into Instagram, where you can manipulate them with creative tools and filters.

An Android version of Layout is due out in the next few months.



Our rating



### SHOPPING

## MySupermarket – Grocery Shopping List

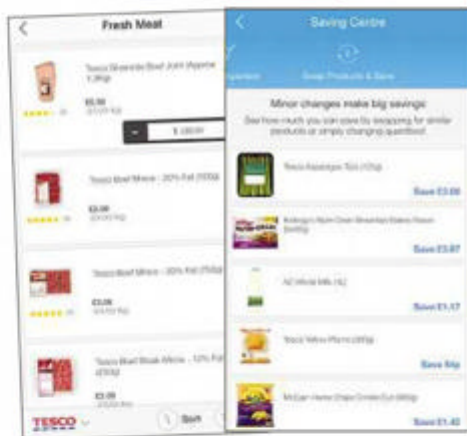
[bit.ly/mysupermarket369](http://bit.ly/mysupermarket369)

**Min requirements:** iOS 7

**Size:** 24.4MB

MySupermarket helps you save money on your weekly shop by creating shopping lists to discover the cheapest places to buy from. It features most of the major supermarket chains including Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury's and Aldi, and also lets you compare prices at Boots, Superdrug and Poundland. This update to its iOS app introduces a handy Saving Centre feature, which maximises your chance of bagging a bargain. Once you have created a list, it suggests swapping products for own-brand alternatives, highlights available bulk purchases and tells you which other stores are selling the item for less. You can also now set up multiple lists, which are combined in the app's new Mega List feature. Hopefully, the updates will be applied to the MySupermarket's Android app in due course.

**UPDATED**



Our rating



### FOOD

## FoodKeeper

[bit.ly/foodkeeper369](http://bit.ly/foodkeeper369)

**Min requirements:** Android 4.4, iOS 7

**Size:** 19.3MB

Have you ever taken something out of the cupboard or fridge and wondered if it was still safe to eat? With FoodKeeper, you can instantly find out and avoid a dicky tummy. Created by the US Department of Agriculture (but equally useful in the UK), the app gives you an edible time frame, typically showing how long food will last in a fridge, cupboard or freezer. The categories cover various food stuffs including baked goods, dairy products and seafood, and there is also a section offering general cooking information. You can then set a reminder or go to the Ask Karen section to submit specific questions and read other people's food-related queries.

**NEW**



Our rating





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

## NEWS

### Nuzzel

[bit.ly/nuzzel369](http://bit.ly/nuzzel369)

**Min requirements:**

Android 4.0.3,

iOS 7

**Size:** 4.5MB

Finally available on Android, Nuzzel is a free social RSS reader that pulls in stories that have been shared by your connections on Twitter and Facebook. It focuses on a set time period – anything from one hour to the past 24 hours – and lets you browse the headlines and intros of articles before deciding whether you want to tap and read more. Although you can only link one Twitter account, each of the stories can be shared directly from the news feed. You can also select whether you want to only see stories shared by your friends or to expand this to friends of friends.



Our rating



## PRODUCTIVITY

### Office Lens

[bit.ly/office369](http://bit.ly/office369)

**Min requirements:**

iOS 8, Windows

Phone 8

**Size:** 11.8MB

Unusually for a mobile app, Office Lens was first launched on Windows Phone, but that's because it was created by Microsoft to work with OneNote. It's now available for iOS, so you can use your iPhone to scan documents such as whiteboards, sticky notes, business cards and receipts. Office Lens uses optical character recognition to search your scans for specific keywords, and lets you easily clean up glare and shadow, and convert images into Word, PowerPoint or PDF files. If you want to use the app on Android, you'll need to join the Preview community at [bit.ly/officeandroid369](http://bit.ly/officeandroid369).



Our rating



## ROUND UP | Quick bites

### Evernote

[bit.ly/evernote369](http://bit.ly/evernote369)

**Min requirements:**

iOS 7

**Size:** 63.7MB

The iOS version of the popular note-taking app has some interesting new features, including the ability to dictate notes into the Apple Watch and automatically capture business cards, documents and whiteboards.



### ColorChat by OPI

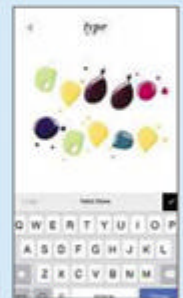
[bit.ly/colorchat369](http://bit.ly/colorchat369)

**Min requirements:**

Android 4.0, iOS 7

**Size:** 94.8MB

Created by nail lacquer manufacturer OPI, this supremely silly app converts your written messages into splashes of colour that you can share on social media, effectively turning your words into blobs.



### Google News & Weather

[bit.ly/googlenews369](http://bit.ly/googlenews369)

**Min requirements:**

Android 4.0

**Size:** 19.8MB

As well as pushing news and weather notifications to your Android device, this excellent Google app now includes a Suggested For You section, which flags up stories it feels will be of interest to you.



## TOOL

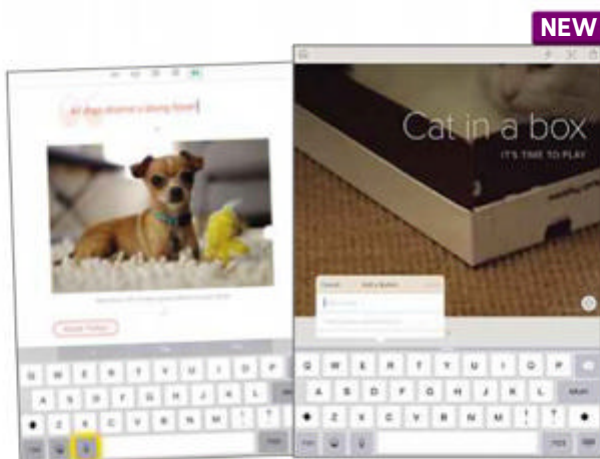
### Adobe Slate

[bit.ly/slate369](http://bit.ly/slate369)

**Min requirements:** iOS 8

**Size:** 83.8MB

Adobe Slate is an impressive, visual storytelling app for the iPad, which lets you effortlessly combine images and words on a pre-designed page before sharing the result online. For a free app, it definitely packs a punch, providing professional-looking themes ranging from vintage and whimsy to chic and crisp, while giving you the ability to add URLs, insert photo grids and produce easily adaptable designs that work well on any device. It's a linear process, but the pages can be previewed at any time and they can also be uploaded to Adobe's servers at the touch of a button. You can categorise your creations and share them with friends on social media or by email. Although it's still early days, we'd love to see video embedding included in future versions of Slate. As it stands, the app is perfect for creating newsletters and reports, and the results are always high quality.



Our rating



## HEALTH

### Fitbit

[bit.ly/fitbit369](http://bit.ly/fitbit369)

**Min requirements:** Android 4.0, iOS 7, Windows Phone 8.1

**Size:** 19MB

Fitbit's updated app lets you keep an eye on your food intake while you watch your overall health. Its food database covers all manner of grub and it has a good handle on portion sizes and nutritional value. You simply indicate the number of servings you have eaten; select breakfast, lunch, dinner or snack; and input the date.

The app's barcode scanner makes the inputting process much quicker and the results are displayed on a neat bar chart that looks at the number of calories in versus the calories out for each day of the week. When combined with the app's other monitoring features, it'll get you trim in no time.



UPDATED



Our rating



## VIDEO

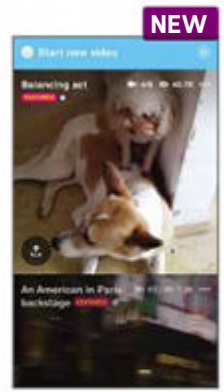
### Riff: Make Videos With Friends

[bit.ly/riff369](http://bit.ly/riff369)

**Min requirements:** Android 4.3, iOS 8

**Size:** 4.2MB

Riff is a collaborative video-making tool from Facebook that lets you capture and share clips, and then ask other people to complete them. Friends can add to the videos, which in turn gives their friends access to the clips, and so on. Facebook hopes Riff will spark a new craze and provides a selection of public videos to give you the idea, although starting your own is easy enough. Just create a new topic or select one of the suggestions and, after a brief countdown, you're ready for action with the app and can choose who you want to collaborate with. Videos can be slow to load and it's not entirely intuitive, but we're certain it will unleash some off-the-cuff creativity over time.



NEW



Our rating



# 5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

## TRAVEL

### Make My Day by Lonely Planet

[bit.ly/makemyday369](http://bit.ly/makemyday369)

**Min requirements:** Android 4.0.3, iOS 8

**Size:** 12MB

**Price:** Free (with in-app purchases)

If you're planning a jaunt to Barcelona, London, New York, Paris, San Francisco or Tokyo, this app suggests various activities, broken into morning, afternoon and evening. There are "must-see" attractions, transport options, suggested eateries and maps.



newspaper, you can take a photo of it, highlight your favourite part using Snaplight and share it with others. You can also highlight photos you've already taken and saved to your Camera Roll.



## TOOL

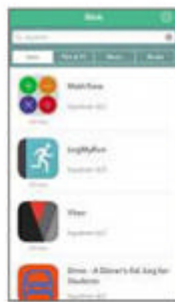
### Blink: Better Affiliate Links

[bit.ly/blink369](http://bit.ly/blink369)

**Min requirements:** iOS 8

**Size:** 1.7MB **Price:** £3.99

If you run your own blog or website, affiliate linking can prove to be a nice little earner. This app lets you generate links to items on the iTunes Store, App Store, iBook store and Mac Store, which you can then place on your blog or site.



## WEATHER

### Carrot Weather – Talking Forecast Robot

[bit.ly/carrot369](http://bit.ly/carrot369)

**Min requirements:** iOS 8

**Size:** 10.7MB **Price:** £2.29

Although this abusive weather app addresses you as "meatbag", it's also fun, with lots of animated flourishes, a robotic, sarcastic voiceover and secret locations for you to unlock. The forecast page is packed with meteorological information.



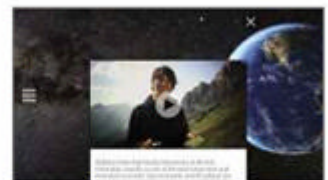
## SPACE

### Brian Cox Wonders Compilation

[bit.ly/briancox369](http://bit.ly/briancox369)

**Min requirements:** Android 4.2 **Size:** 45MB **Price:** £2.39

Brian Cox stars in this interactive travel app, taking you on a journey through a 3D universe. With two-and-a-half hours of video from the BBC, lots of photos and narration by Cox, it's an insightful, interactive gem.



## PHOTOS

### Snaplight – Photo Highlighter

[bit.ly/snaplight369](http://bit.ly/snaplight369)

**Min requirements:** iOS 6.1 **Size:** 1.2MB **Price:** 79p

If you spot an inspirational quote in a magazine, book or

Make My Day  
by Lonely Planet



Blink: Better  
Affiliate Links



Snaplight –  
Photo Highlighter



Carrot Weather –  
Talking Forecast Robot



Brian Cox Wonders  
Compilation







## Best New TV Apps

### TV & FILM

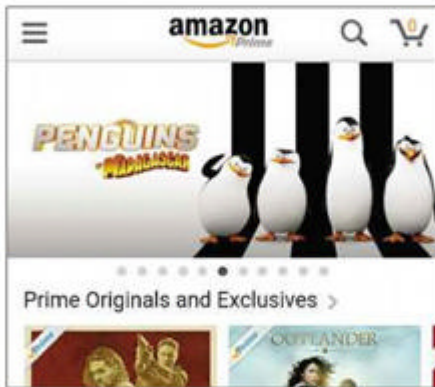
#### Amazon Prime Instant Video

[www.amazon.co.uk/getappstore](http://www.amazon.co.uk/getappstore)

**Min requirements:** Android 4.0

**Size:** 20.4MB

Great news for Amazon Prime members: you can finally use the Instant Video streaming service on Android tablets other than the Kindle Fire. However, it's not as straightforward as it could be because the app isn't in the Play store. Instead, you'll need to go to Settings, Security on your device and allow installation apps from unknown sources, then visit the link above and download the Amazon Appstore app. Find and install the Prime Instant Video app and you're ready to go. The service lets you stream thousands of TV shows and films at no extra cost if you're a Prime member, and rent and buy titles.



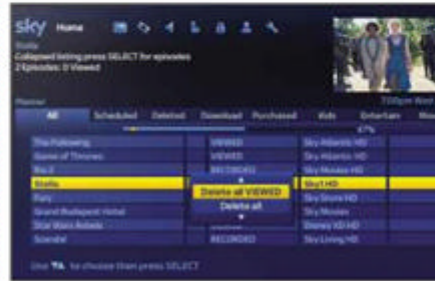
### TV

#### Sky EPG

[www.sky.com/tv](http://www.sky.com/tv)

**Min requirements:** Sky+HD box

**Size:** N/A



Sky has given its EPG (electronic programme guide) a long overdue makeover to make recording and browsing shows even easier. A new Scheduled tab groups the programmes you have set to record, while a feature called Smart Series Link automatically records new episodes of your favourite shows as soon as future series are broadcast. Other welcome tweaks include placing your most recent recordings at the top of the planner to save you endless scrolling, and an option to delete whole series in one go. Sky has also extended its energy-saving Eco mode by 50 per cent, to automatically switch off your box from 2.45am to 5.45am, and added contrast and bold-lettering settings for the partially sighted.

### TV

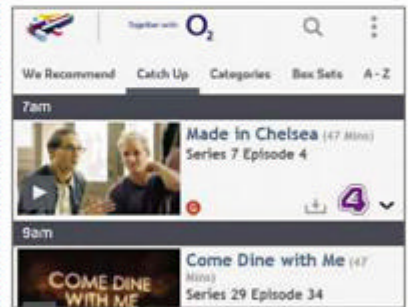
#### All 4

[bit.ly/all4369](http://bit.ly/all4369)

**Min requirements:** Android 4.04, iOS 7.1, Windows Phone 8

**Size:** 33MB

As well as being our 'Site of the Fortnight' (see review on page 14), Channel 4's new video-streaming service is available on mobile devices, and - contrary to what we reported last issue - this includes Android and Windows Phone, as well as iOS. Although, unlike the All 4 website, you can't stream channels live, there's plenty to keep you entertained, including catch-up content from the last 30 days, short films that you won't see on TV and shows from Channel 4's archive. If you're on Android or iOS, you can even download some programmes. Note that the app won't work on rooted or jailbroken devices.



## Don't install...

### My Device Info

[bit.ly/mydevice369](http://bit.ly/mydevice369)

Although this app provides useful information about your Android device, it spreads it out over too many screens and has a black-on-green colour scheme that makes the text hard to read. My Device Info isn't as detailed as other system-info apps, and its adverts are very distracting. We find its wealth of five-star reviews on the Play store highly suspicious.



## ...Install this instead

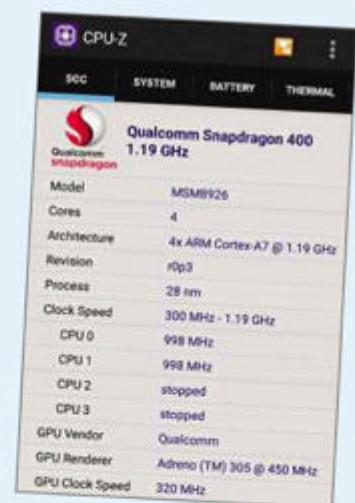
### CPU-Z

[bit.ly/cpuz369](http://bit.ly/cpuz369)

**Min requirements:** Android 2.2

**Size:** 1.1MB


This Android version of the popular system-info tool for Windows tells you everything you need to know about your phone or tablet in one place. Just launch the app to browse comprehensive details of the inner workings of your device, from the processor type and speed to the screen resolution and available storage. You can also get statistics about your battery, including its current temperature, and view advanced data relating to the various sensors. CPU-Z is for information purposes only, but it's a useful means of comparing your phone or tablet's specifications with those of other devices.



COVER  
FEATURE

# Download FREE SOFTWARE

With **NO** Catches



Are you getting more than you bargained for from free software? **Wayne Williams** explains how to download the programs and apps you want, without any nasty surprises

**W**hen we look for programs to include in our Best Free Software section each issue, we endeavour to find software that is new, free and not dangerous to your PC's health. Unfortunately, these days a lot of free downloads come bundled with 'crapware' or have limitations that might not be immediately obvious at first glance. A system tool might, for example, find problems with your PC, but require you to upgrade to a paid-for 'pro' version before it can fix them. Is it unreasonable to expect something that is described as 'free', to actually be free? We think not, but

fortunately there are ways of avoiding the various tricks and traps to ensure that you only download 'pure' free software and apps.

In this feature, we provide tips and advice on avoiding unwanted extras, look at how 'free' apps might end up costing you a small fortune, and reveal how to find out if a program is clean or not, before you download it. We also explain why genuinely free software is getting ever harder to find and, in our Instant Expert on page 42, examine one of the most controversial 'PUPs' (potentially unwanted programs), OpenCandy.



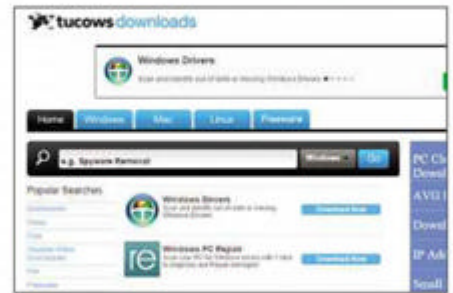
## Why you can't trust download sites

When you want to download a free program, you can either get it from the author's site, or from a public software repository such as Download.com ([download.cnet.com](http://download.cnet.com)). Developers like to have their programs hosted on these sites, because it reduces the amount of bandwidth they have to pay for. If a developer is offering a free program, every time someone downloads it from their site, it eats into their bandwidth allocation, and may cost them money. But if someone downloads it from another source, they don't have to worry about bandwidth costs, and can also get the program to many more people than they would from hosting it privately.

Sadly, in recent years, sites you could once trust to give you the software you want without any catches have turned to the dark side. This is primarily because they need to cover their costs and advertising may not generate enough revenue. As a result, the majority of download sites now offer programs with bundled crapware, or PUPs (potentially unwanted programs). Download.com is probably the worst offender, because it uses its own installer, provided by parent company CNET. This offers a ton of unwanted and often intrusive junk before you even get to install the software you want, and makes rejecting the bundled extras difficult by using sneaky tricks, such as

making the 'Decline' button appear greyed out. Thankfully, not every program on Download.com uses this installer, but a huge proportion does, despite widespread criticism. As a rule, if the Download Now button for a program has Secure Download below it, you'll be fine, but if it's labelled Installer Enabled you should click the 'Direct download' link instead. If you can't see one, get the program from another site instead.

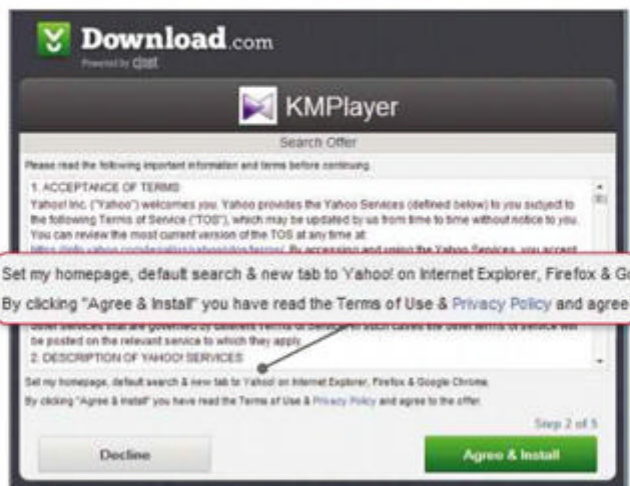
Interestingly, we've found that downloading programs in Chrome seems to bypass the Download.com installer in most (if not all) cases. But if you use Firefox or another browser, you should be extra careful. As an experiment, we downloaded the media player KMPlayer from Download.com in Firefox, by clicking the Installer Enabled download link. If we hadn't clicked



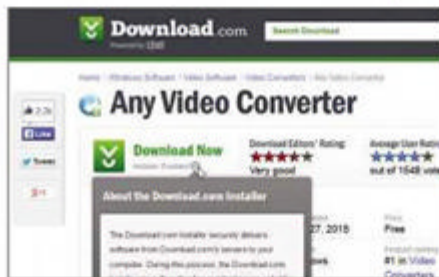
from the internet - almost everything in their top downloads list is a scammy fake scareware application" ([bit.ly/tucows369](http://bit.ly/tucows369)). Even the respected open-source repository SourceForge has a scheme called DevShare ([sourceforge.net/devshare](http://sourceforge.net/devshare)) that pays developers if they agree to allow their software to include "other relevant offers" during the installation process. Many developers who are struggling to make ends meet find it hard to say no to

a program that promises to turn "project downloads into a source of recurring monthly revenue", especially if all they have to do is agree to let it happen. However, other developers dislike the deceptive nature of the bundling process and prefer to fund the development of their free software through voluntary donations.

Even download sites that don't wrap programs in their own crapware-infested installers can't be fully trusted. The problem is that, even if a download site plays things as



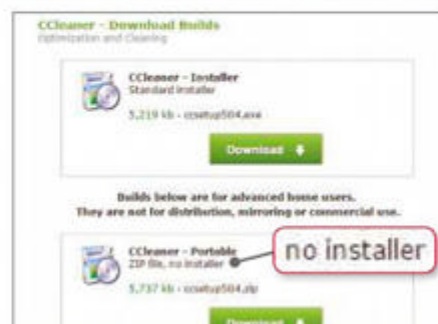
straight as possible, it may still offer programs with bundled extras, purely because so many 'freeware' developers now go down the bundleware route to make money. The download sites might (and should) alert you to the fact that a program comes with 'offers', but the chances are they won't shout about it, so you'll need to keep your eyes peeled.



Decline when installing the program, our homepage, search engine and New Tab page would have been changed to Yahoo in all our browsers (see above). Tucows ([www.tucows.com](http://www.tucows.com)) also bundles junk with the programs it offers for download, and has been described by the tech-tips site How-To Geek as "an abomination that should be removed

## How to avoid unwanted extras

Where possible, don't download programs from sites such as Download.com or Tucows, but instead get them from the software author's site. This won't guarantee that they are free from bundled junk, but at least you won't have to worry about a third-party installer serving up adware or other unwanted surprises. Some programs come in both installer and portable versions, for example *Web User*

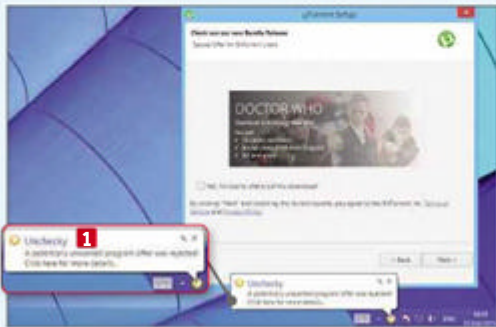


favourite CCleaner offers a choice of 'builds' at [www.piriform.com/ccleaner/builds](http://www.piriform.com/ccleaner/builds). Selecting the portable option will ensure you get only the software you want, because there's no way for bundled programs to be installed if there's no installer in the first place. If you can't find a portable version on the author's site, try browsing the impressive selection of installer-free software at [PortableApps.com](http://PortableApps.com)

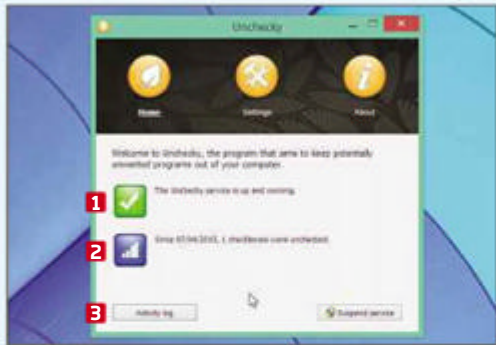


## MINI WORKSHOP

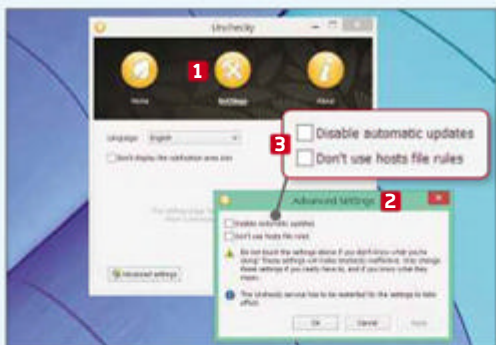
# Avoid bundled junk using Unchecky



**1** Once installed, Unchecky ([unchecky.com](http://unchecky.com)) runs continuously in the background - you won't even know it's there (although there's an icon in the System Tray indicating it's active). Install a program with bundled junk or offers, such as uTorrent, and Unchecky will alert you when it declines something. **1**



**2** Double-click the Unchecky icon to open the program window. Here you can make sure the software service is running **1** and also see how many checkboxes have been unticked to date. **2** Open the Activity Log **3** to see the declined offers. It will show you which programs the bundled software came with.



**3** You can temporarily suspend the service at any time. The Settings button **1** lets you hide the System Tray icon, and access Advanced Settings. **2** These let you disable automatic updates and tell the software not to use 'hosts file rules'. **3** You should only change these settings if you're sure you know what you're doing.

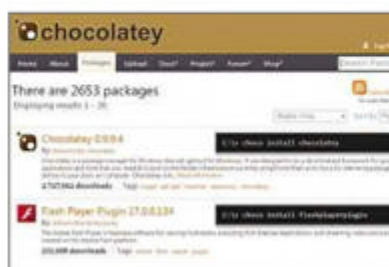


([portableapps.com](http://portableapps.com)).

Another option is to download and install software through Ninite ([ninite.com](http://ninite.com)). This excellent site offers the latest versions of dozens of popular programs including web browsers, messaging tools, media players, imaging software, security programs, online storage and more. Select all the software you want from the website and click Get Installer. Ninite will then generate a single installer that will install your chosen programs in the simplest way possible, and without any fuss. Most importantly, all the programs offered are completely free of bundled toolbars, browser hijackers and other rubbish. You won't find everything you want at Ninite, but it's a more trustworthy means of downloading big software names than the likes of Download.com.



Alternatively, try Chocolatey ([chocolatey.org](http://chocolatey.org)), which isn't as simple as Ninite (it uses the Command Prompt in Windows rather than a standard interface), but is even faster. It lets you download junk-free installers for thousands of popular programs from its website, including Adobe Reader, Paint.NET and VLC Media Player, by entering a command such



as `choco install vlc`.

Chocolatey takes a while to get used to, but it's an effective means of avoiding devious installers.

When you download a program installer from a website, it's vital to pay close attention during the installation process - don't just keep blindly clicking the Next button. Always select the Custom install option, rather than the standard ('recommended') choice as this will reveal any hidden, automatically installed rubbish. It's



also worth installing the brilliant free tool Unchecky ([unchecky.com](http://unchecky.com)), which runs quietly in the background and only springs into life when you try to install a program that includes bundled junk. It automatically deselects any pre-ticked boxes that aren't relevant to the software you're installing, and additionally blocks any potentially unwanted system or browser changes. You do still need to keep your wits about you while installing programs, because as good as Unchecky is (and it's updated regularly), it isn't infallible and can miss things. See our Mini Workshop (left) to find out how to use Unchecky.





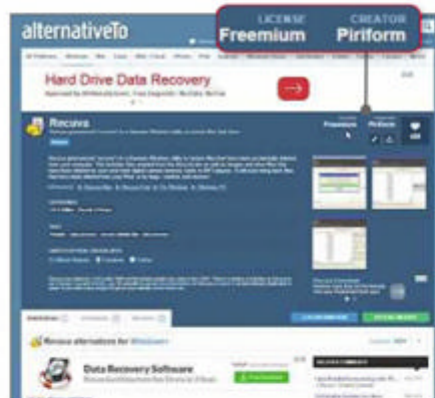
**Download free software not 'freemium'**

There used to be three main categories of software – free, paid-for, and demo/shareware, but now there's another to watch out for. Freemium, first coined in 2006, is a term made up from the words 'free' and 'premium', and describes software which is free to use, with no time restrictions, but which offers paid additions that expand or improve the experience. Freemium games are a great example of this model. The game is given away free, and can be played without costing you a thing. However, you're likely to have limited resources that quickly run out, which means you have to keep taking breaks from playing while you wait for them to build up again. The process can be speeded up by spending real money – again and again. Other freemium games charge money for supplementary items, such as character clothing. A freemium game might be free to download, but you can end up spending a fortune in the long run, especially as many of these games are aimed at younger players who may not think twice about how much their in-game purchases are costing mum



and dad. Only a small percentage of freemium users end up buying something, according to Freemium.org ([www.freemium.org](http://www.freemium.org)), but those that do can get milked for every penny.

It's not just games that use the freemium model – there are plenty of programs which are free, but which charge you for additional features. These aren't as bad as freemium games, however, because the upgrades tend to be a one-time thing, rather than a regular occurrence.



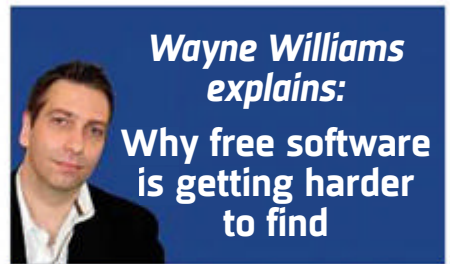
The trick to avoiding these is to look out for tell-tell 'Buy Now' links on the website and in the software. Make sure you find the right download button for the free version (some developers produce free and freemium versions of their software, but make the former harder to find). Instead of using Google to find programs, use a trusted source such as Alternativeto ([alternativeto.net](http://alternativeto.net)), which highlights whether a program is commercial, free, open-source or freemium.

**Avoid apps with in-app purchases**

Late last year, the Apple App Store replaced the 'Free' button next to iOS apps with no upfront cost with a 'Get' button. That's because many so called 'free' apps have a cost in the form of in-app purchases. When browsing the store, you'll see there are three variations of this 'Get' button. There's the plain 'Get', which denotes an app is free, there's 'Get+' (a small plus sign in the upper left corner), which means that app is universal and available for iPhone and iPad, and then there's 'Get - In-App Purchases', which means – you guessed it – that you might have to spend money at some point.

If you're browsing the App Store on your iPhone or iPad, select the item you're interested in and scroll down to the In-App Purchases section. Open this

Item	Price
1 Viber credit pack	£3.99
2 Viber credit pack	£0.79
3 Viber credit pack	£7.99
4 Love Is All You Need	£1.49
5 Despicable Me Sticker Pack	£1.49
6 Eve and Freddie In Love Sticker Pack	£1.49
7 Young Love Sticker Pack	£1.49
8 Love Sticker Pack	£1.49
9 The Smurfs Sticker Pack	£1.49
10 Pooh & Friends Sticker Pack	£1.49



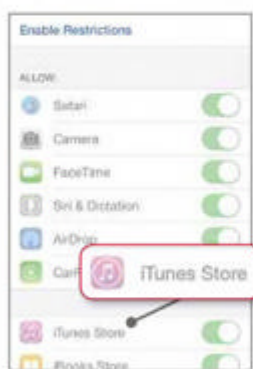
There's a saying that's repeated a lot when it comes to free products and services: "If you're not paying for the product, you are the product". That's not necessarily the case, but there is a grain of truth in it. While some people code for the fun of it, most developers would like to be paid at least something for their efforts. Software creators can make money from downloaders in several ways. They can include ads in the product or on the hosting site, they can ask for donations, they can push paid-for pro versions, or in-app purchases, or charge for support (as the big Linux distributions do). Or, of course, they can agree to bundle crapware with their products, which is often the easiest and most lucrative solution.

The big problem for developers is that we, as consumers, expect 'free' to be, well, 'free'. Ad blockers kill off one revenue stream, and most people won't donate money for software they can get for nothing simply by clicking a different button. If developers make certain features available for a paid upgrade, there's a good chance consumers will look elsewhere for a free alternative rather than handing over money. As a result, a growing number of software makers now choose the junk-bundling route as they'll get paid whenever a downloader installs a third-party program – either deliberately or (as is more likely) accidentally. Because this kind of bundling is so commonplace these days, developers are more likely to go with it than not because that's what their rivals are doing. Ad network OpenCandy ([opencandy.com](http://opencandy.com) – see page 42) displays 'recommended' (also known as unwanted) apps in more than 100 million installers every month, and claims that 95 percent of all installs worldwide are now monetised. Sadly, this doesn't leave that many truly free programs out there for us.

to view the list of potential costs. If you're viewing the store in iTunes, the In-App Purchases are listed on the left.

Although you may be able to resist spending money on these extras, it's likely that your children or grandchildren won't be as strong willed. Obviously, they'll need to know your App Store password (or for you to be logged in permanently), but if you want additional protection you can disable in-app purchasing altogether. Go to Settings, General, Restrictions and tap 'Enable Restrictions'. You'll be prompted to enter a Restrictions Passcode. This should be different from the passcode you use to unlock your device. Scroll down and make sure 'In-App Purchases' is selected. If you want to disable purchasing completely, turn off 'iTunes Store', 'iBooks Store', and 'Installing Apps'.

If you have an Android device, apps that offer in-app purchases will be labelled as such. You can see a summary of costs listed under 'In-app Products' in the 'Additional Information' section of



the app description. It might not tell you exactly what each purchasable item is, or its cost, but instead provide a price range from the cheapest to the most expensive.

## NAMED AND SHAMED – 5 of the worst bundled surprises

### uTorrent

The popular BitTorrent client uTorrent included a Bitcoin-mining tool called Epic Scale in its installer, which uses a host's system to earn money for third-party companies.

### Superfish

Chinese computer giant Lenovo bundled Superfish adware on a number of its consumer notebooks last year, and it's also been detected in more than 200 browser add-ons ([bit.ly/superfish369](http://bit.ly/superfish369)). Superfish breaks HTTPS security, making webmail and online banking vulnerable.

### Comodo

Security firm Comodo promoted a program called PrivDog which



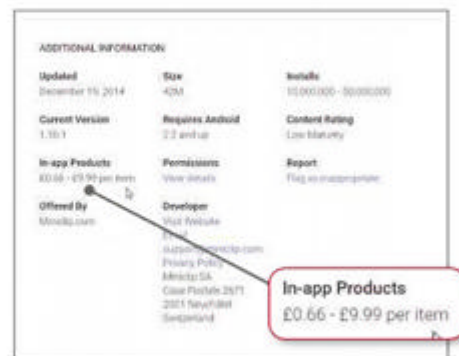
replaces adverts in web pages with its own ads from 'trusted sources' and which, like Superfish, breaks the security of HTTPS connections. Comodo didn't distribute the dangerously insecure version of the software, but the fact it did distribute a version is bad enough.

### Lavasoft

Publisher Lavasoft used SSL Digestor, a

Additionally, before you install something through the Play Store app on your device, you'll see the in-app purchases listed on the 'App permissions' screen.

To prevent in-app purchases on Android, Google recommends password-protecting the Play Store app. Open the app, tap the Menu icon and open Settings. Select 'Require authentication for purchases' and choose 'For all purchases'.



## Scan files for surprises before downloading

Downloading a program you've never heard of, from a site you're not familiar with, is a risky business. Although your anti-virus software should protect you from any hazardous malware, there are steps you can take before you even get to the downloading stage. The free online tool VirusTotal ([www.virustotal.com](http://www.virustotal.com)), which is owned by Google, can check any file against more than 50 top anti-virus engines, including big names such as AVG, Bitdefender, F-Secure, Kaspersky, Malwarebytes, Panda and

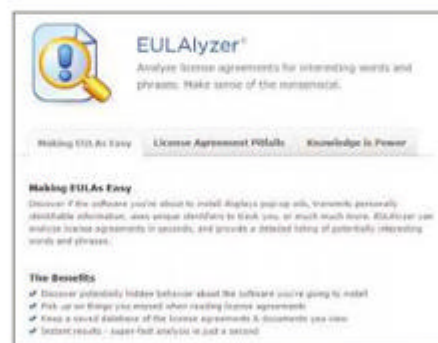


Sophos. But more importantly, it can check a site or download URL, so you can be sure the file is safe before you click the Download button. Just copy and paste the web address into the box and click 'Scan it!'.

If you want to make sure a file hasn't been tampered with - for example, when malware has been added to a harmless program - you can use MultiHasher ([www.abelhadigital.com/multihasher](http://www.abelhadigital.com/multihasher)) to analyse it for changes to its 'checksum' (a unique identifying code). The program also lets you run a query through VirusTotal.

Program installers usually display an EULA (End User Licence Agreement) at the beginning of the installation process. If you check this carefully - something few of us do, unfortunately - you might find a second EULA for an ad network, which is responsible for bundling crapware with the program

you want. OpenCandy (see our Instant Expert on page 42) is notorious for this. To avoid being tricked by crafty EULAs, you can use the excellent free tool EULalyzer ([bit.ly/eulalyzer369](http://bit.ly/eulalyzer369)) to skim through the agreement for you. It will display any potential areas of concern in the EULA, so you can abandon installation if the terms sound suspicious.





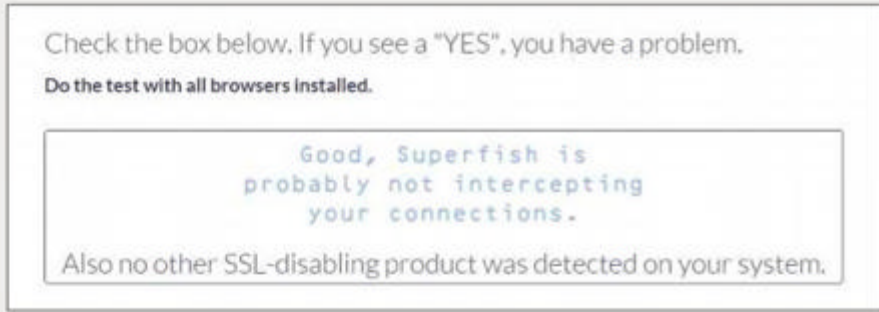
flawed traffic interception engine from Komodia, in its Ad-Aware Web Companion privacy software. The same sub-component was used in Superfish. Even after it was removed in an update, traces remained.

**CNET**

The owner of popular download site Download.com was found to be

including several HTTPS-hijacking adware in its installers. You can read more about it at How-To Geek ([bit.ly/howtogeek369](http://bit.ly/howtogeek369))

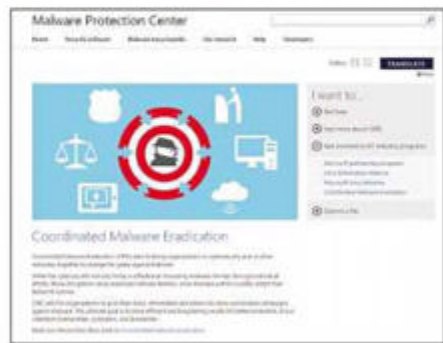
Worried that you might be affected by one of more of these nasty surprises? Go to [filippo.io/Badfish/](http://filippo.io/Badfish/) and it will test your browsers for these vulnerabilities.



**Look out for verified clean software**

People are understandably wary of downloading free software when there's the risk of getting unwanted junk bundled in with it, and there's usually no way of knowing whether a download is free from crapware until you come to install it. This is where initiatives like the Clean Software Alliance, a proposed initiative from Microsoft and the Anti-Malware Testing Standards Organisation ([www.amtso.org](http://www.amtso.org)), come in. The idea is that if a software firm agrees not to bundle unwanted extras with their programs, they can display a logo that shows their applications to be clean. Digital Exhaust and Coordinated Malware Eradication are similar ideas.

Unfortunately, not much seems to be happening with these initiatives at the



moment, but hopefully things will progress in the future.

Many download sites also display '100% clean of malware' verification badges next to programs, although that doesn't necessarily mean that they won't come with bundled extras. ■

**What you say...**



We asked *Web User* readers how they avoid dodgy downloads. Here's what you told us...

Download directly from the creator's website or use a link scanner before you click Download.  
*Matt McCallion*

Just be vigilant when downloading. Instead of clicking Next, Next, Next, read what you're doing!  
*Jason 'Boz' Bowyer*

Unfortunately, a lot of things are not downloadable from the creator's website, but from third-party sites such as Download.com. And as a result, lots of things come with added rubbish.  
*Gerrit Max*

Always choose Custom install and read what you're agreeing to.  
*James McGinnis*

I'm using a Chromebook here. Virus? Malware? Nope!  
*Paul Chapman*

Scan the download website - and the download itself - using VirusTotal.  
*Arc Anum*

Use Softpedia, FileHippo and, where possible, the creator's website. Look for the Advanced/Custom Install.  
*The Mole*

Use a Mac.  
*James McGinnis*

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- LOCK YOUR BROWSER**  
Prevent add-ons from changing your settings

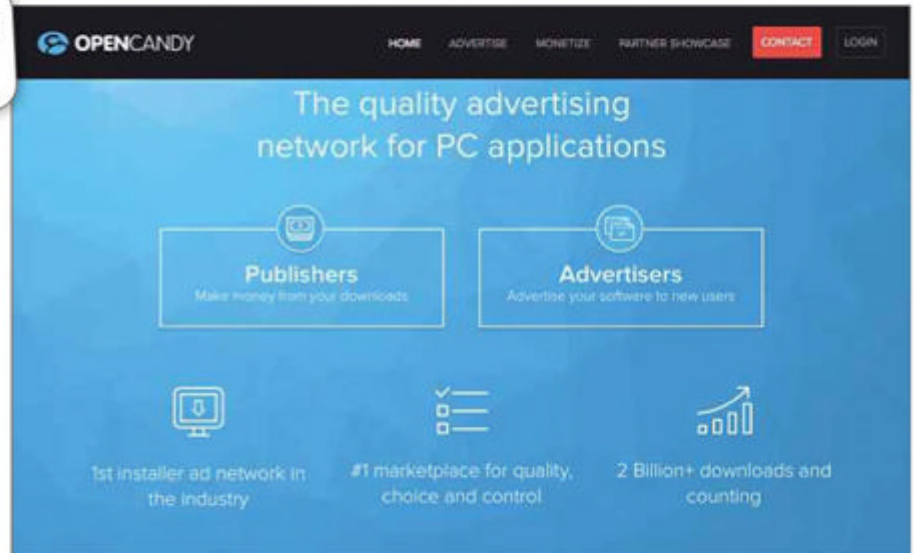
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# Instant Expert

## Our guide to OpenCandy



One name that frequently crops up as a PUP (potentially unwanted program) is OpenCandy, although its makers strongly deny that it's malware. **David Crookes** takes a closer look



### What is it?

OpenCandy ([opencandy.com](http://opencandy.com)) is an advertising plug-in that many software developers now include within their installers. It allows them to recommend other developers' tools during the installation process, and give users the option of accepting or declining the additional software. If a user decides a recommended product looks interesting and accepts it, the extra program is then automatically installed.

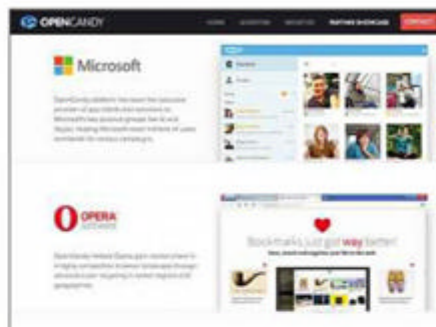
### Who is behind OpenCandy?

The idea came to life in 2008 when the team behind Stage6, a video-sharing website owned and operated by DivX ([www.divx.com](http://www.divx.com)), noticed that the DivX player gave users the option of installing the Yahoo Toolbar. In the first nine months, this generated 250 million downloads and netted DivX \$15.7 million (£10.6 million). Eight of the Stage6 team decided this would be a good basis for a business and went on to set up OpenCandy.

### Who uses the OpenCandy platform?

Some of the biggest names in computing. Wikipedia lists more than 60 programs that have integrated OpenCandy into their installers, including lots of popular and respectable applications ranging from AOL Instant

Messenger and CutePDF to Winamp and uTorrent. On its website, OpenCandy also highlights several high-profile names that advertise via its service, such as Microsoft, Opera, AVG and PasswordBox. Microsoft, for example, has used OpenCandy to advertise Skype, giving users the option to quickly download and install the software when they install another program. Opera, meanwhile, has used OpenCandy to increase take-up of its browser.



### Why do companies use OpenCandy?

Quite simply, to make money, because more and more people appear reluctant to buy software. OpenCandy is akin to an advertising network and developers pay a small fee every time someone installs their software via a recommendation. This cash is then split between OpenCandy and the developer who

allowed the program to be advertised with the installer of their product. Also, as we've seen in this issue's cover feature (page 36), including bundled 'offers' with software helps to fund its development and keep it free.



### Do people actually accept its offers?

OpenCandy spans more than 180 countries and it claims its advertising model leads to up to 50 times higher payouts than display advertising. It also says that 95 per cent of software installers are now monetised, and that it achieves "100 million installs per month" ([opencandy.com/monetize](http://opencandy.com/monetize)).

### So why do some people think OpenCandy is a problem?

The main complaint is that OpenCandy is attempting to capitalise from users who



don't pay attention when they install software. Rather than read every word on the screen, a great many of us skip over a program's terms and conditions, agree to everything and click Next from window to window until the program finishes installing. This is potentially dangerous because you might unwittingly accept the installation of extra items you would otherwise never have considered. You'll only realise these unwanted tools are on your PC when they start making changes to your system.

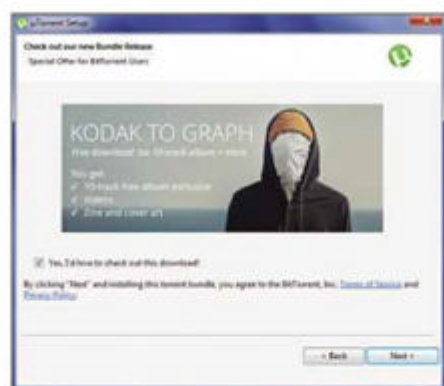


### What are the consequences of this?

If you're not paying attention, you could end up with all kinds of unwanted software cluttering up your hard drive. Your browser's search engine may also be changed, which can scare you into believing that your machine has been infected by malware, when it's actually something you accidentally agreed to.

### Is OpenCandy illegal, then?

No, because it doesn't install anything on your computer without asking for your express permission. If you're eagle-eyed and decline all the offers, OpenCandy won't install anything apart from the program you originally set out to install.



### But isn't OpenCandy morally wrong?

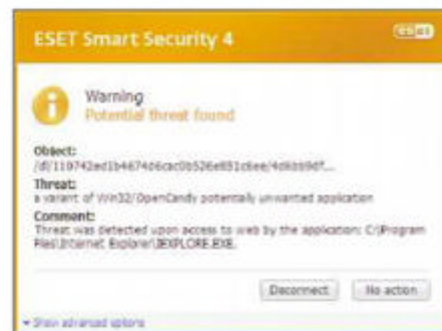
That is open to debate and is certainly controversial. Officially, OpenCandy says in its FAQs: "we do not play clever games or trick users into installing software", but those who have experienced it say

otherwise. The 'Accept Offer' options on recommendation pages are sometimes in exactly the same position as the Next button on other pages, making it look like they are a fundamental part of the installation. Certainly, in most cases, the acceptance options are pre-ticked. More sneakily, an OpenCandy End User License Agreement can also be bundled with the EULA of the program you're downloading so that when you accept it, you are in fact granting OpenCandy permission, too. This is why it's so important to be on your guard.



### Isn't this some sort of malware?

This is where things become murky again. As we've already explained, OpenCandy is asking for permission even though many people may not notice it. However, once it has a hold of your computer, it does seek to install products. The programs it recommends are based to a degree upon the software you



already have on your computer, so it stands to reason that the only way it could possibly work this out is by scanning your machine.

If nothing else, OpenCandy is adware. Indeed, some security companies, including Malwarebytes and ESET, actually flag it as such and let you remove it as you would other threats. The company behind OpenCandy says that the only reason it is detected as a threat by some security tools is because an unscrupulous company once bundled it with their software without including the EULA.

### Does OpenCandy gather any information?

Yes. It sends anonymous statistics about installations to developers but it promises that it doesn't gather or share any personally identifiable information. It collects your time zone, language settings and details of the software installed on your system, including the operating system and the default browser. OpenCandy says it also records the IP address of a computer during the installation (and uninstallation) process for geographical information. It says this data is used to make better recommendations.

### Are computers being put in danger?

It would appear not. OpenCandy says that every program it recommends through its service is carefully vetted so that only programs which are entirely safe are let through. But, for many users, that misses the point. Ultimately, If you're not carefully noting each stage of an installation, OpenCandy is a potential nuisance, putting programs on your computer that you then have to go to the trouble of uninstalling. As we say in our cover feature, people should be able to simply download the programs they want without any hidden surprises.

## HOW CAN I AVOID INSTALLING OPENCANDY?

There are a few tricks you can try to completely avoid installing any unwanted programs via OpenCandy, all of which the company is very open about

- Disconnect your computer from the internet while you're installing any software. OpenCandy is a cloud-based service that accesses the web for current recommendations; if you don't have an internet connection, it shouldn't bother you.

- When you install a program on your PC, use Ninite ([ninite.com](http://ninite.com)). This generates its own installer, which unticks any unwanted extras, so there's no chance of you unwittingly accepting an unwanted offer.
- Run the program installer from the command-line using the command `/NOCANDY`.
- Delve into your firewall and add a domain block for `*.opencandy.com` to stop the program accessing the web.

# Best free office suites

Why pay for Microsoft Office when you can get a powerful, full-featured office suite for free? **Rob Beattie** looks at six of the best options

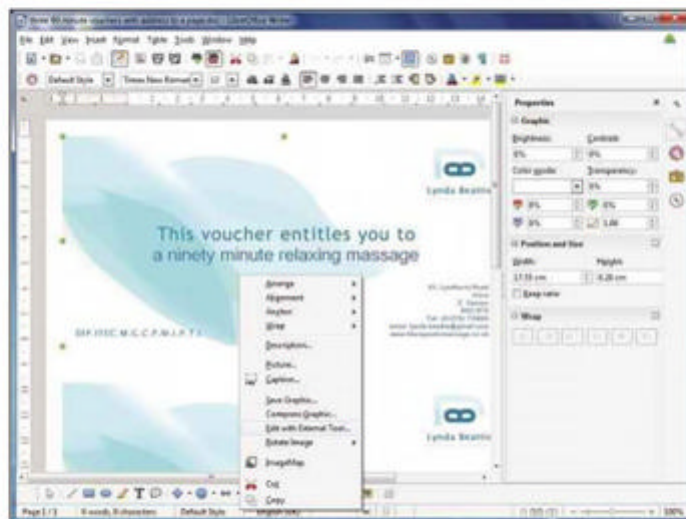


**LibreOffice** | [www.libreoffice.org](http://www.libreoffice.org) | ★★★★★  
 FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★☆ EASE OF USE ★★★★★☆



### What we liked

LibreOffice gives you the feeling that you're using a proper, professional product that's comparable to Microsoft Office, but completely free. It has much of the same look and feel (especially if you prefer the pre-2007 version of Office, without the ribbon bar) and many of the same functions; useful as they are, none of the other office suites we've reviewed comes close. The standard download includes seven tools - Writer, Calc, Impress, Draw, Base, Math and



Charts - while FreeOffice and WPS Office only offer word-processing, spreadsheet and presentation programs. Interoperability with Microsoft Office is generally good across all the modules, so you shouldn't experience any problems opening files.

LibreOffice makes extensive use of its Sidebar to compensate for the lack of a ribbon and here you'll find formatting options and other useful tools. Arranging the screen like this makes perfect sense and makes better use of space than FreeOffice's

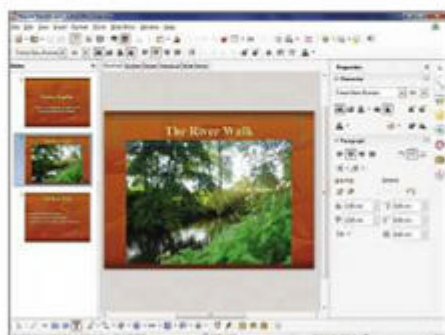
equivalent, which is mainly used for tips and to promote its paid-for version.

The interface is consistent across all programs in the suite; many of your favourite Microsoft Office keyboard shortcuts work just fine; and we also liked the Carlito and Caladea fonts, which are designed to mimic Office's default fonts, Calibri and Cambria.

### How it can be improved

The developers need to keep on top of Microsoft Office file formats and although copyright restrictions prevent

LibreOffice from copying Office's ribbon, we'd prefer its interface to have a flatter, more modern look.



### OUR VERDICT

Despite the occasional compatibility problems with complex documents, spreadsheets, presentations and databases, LibreOffice is a remarkable piece of work that stands toe-to-toe with Microsoft Office any day.



**WPS Office Free** | [bit.ly/wpsoffice369](http://bit.ly/wpsoffice369) | ★★★★★☆

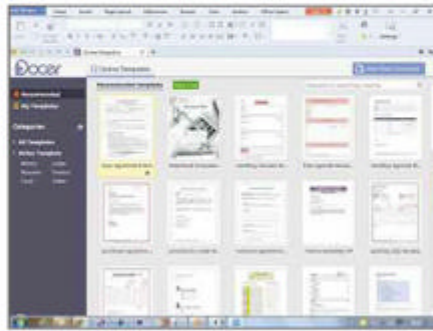
FEATURES ★★★★★☆ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★☆ EASE OF USE ★★★★★☆

WebUser  
SILVER  
AWARD**What we liked**

WPS Office's Metro-style interface makes you feel like you're using software that's up to date and cared-for. It has a good level of Microsoft Office compatibility (although creators of complex documents who swap files back and forth may experience some problems) and it's fast.

We particularly liked the Skin Management feature, which lets you change the look and feel of WPS Office with a single mouse click, and the selection of templates. These include attractive and useful document layouts, as well as good starting points for presentations and spreadsheets. There's also a paragraph-formatting control that lets you adjust indentations and spacing by dragging the highlighted edges with your mouse pointer.

WPS Office's spreadsheet supports over one million rows and 16,000 columns, and has a wide range of built-in formulas, while its presentation tool offers more than 50 transition styles and handles PowerPoint presentations.

**How it can be improved**

The latest version of WPS Office, from [www.wps.com](http://www.wps.com), forces you to download a trial version of the Home Premium Edition that reverts to the free version after 30 days, with no indication as to which features you'll lose. That's why we've reviewed an older, free version.

**OUR VERDICT**

Although it can't compete with LibreOffice in terms of features, WPS Office has a smart interface, good compatibility with Microsoft Office and useful templates.

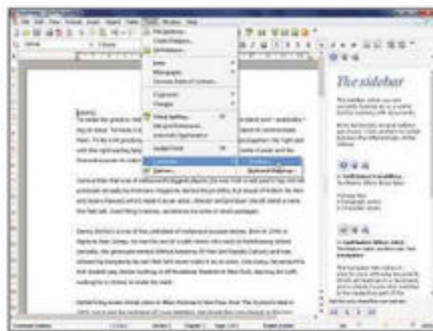
**SoftMaker FreeOffice** | [www.freeoffice.com](http://www.freeoffice.com) | ★★★★★☆

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

WebUser  
BRONZE  
AWARD**What we liked**

As with WPS Office, SoftMaker provides a word processor, spreadsheet and presentation tool, but while it lacks the same good looks and configurable interface, its familiar 'Office 2003'-style layout makes it very easy to find your way around.

Unlike LibreOffice, there's no unified 'dashboard', but no matter which program you're working in, the other two can be accessed directly from the toolbar. There are neat touches elsewhere as well, including a 'Save As PDF' icon on the toolbar and a continuous page view which is useful for browsing long documents. Compatibility with Office is generally good and, like the other suites reviewed here, FreeOffice will open password-protected documents and spreadsheets, has a decent mail-merge tool and offers a 'master styles' feature in the presentation program that's as easy to use as the one in PowerPoint.

**How it can be improved**

You have to sign up with a valid email address to get your licence code which seems unnecessary for a free program. Conditional formatting created in Excel sometimes gets lost and the word processor needs a grammar checker.

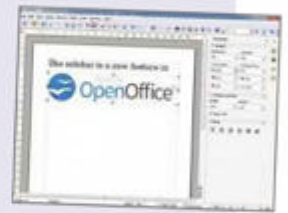
**OUR VERDICT**

This is a solid Microsoft Office alternative for people who only need word processing, spreadsheet and presentation tools, but it lacks the visual pizzazz of WPS Office.

**BEST OF THE REST****Apache OpenOffice**

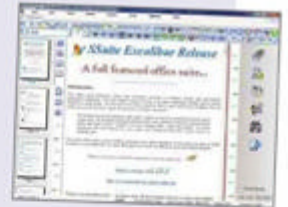
[www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org)

We've only omitted OpenOffice from the top three because it's so similar to LibreOffice, with which it shares a tortuous history (they originate from the same suite). Although in many ways it's still the same product, LibreOffice is updated much more frequently these days and OpenOffice is beginning to fall behind. However, it remains a great free office suite.

**SSuite Excalibur**

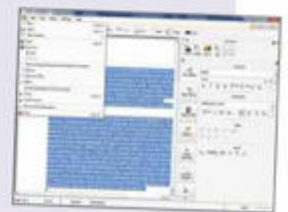
[www.ssuitesoft.com](http://www.ssuitesoft.com)

This suite offers a word processor and spreadsheet (with a few bolt-ons), but offers precious little compatibility with Microsoft Office. However, it reads and writes RTF and XLS files, as well as offering its own proprietary formats. It's worth looking at if all you need is a word processor and spreadsheet combo – wear your sunglasses, though, as the interface is rather garish.

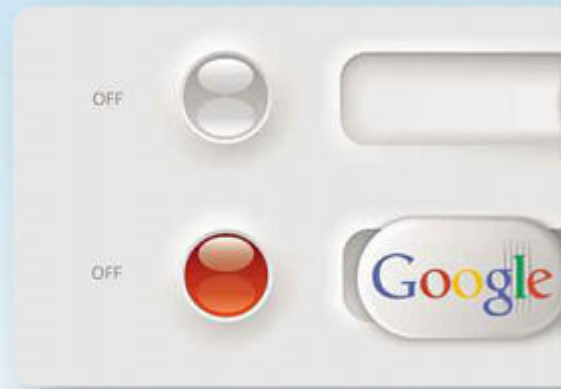
**Calligra**

[www.calligra.org](http://www.calligra.org)

Probably thanks to its origins in the Linux world, Calligra's the wackiest suite of the bunch. You get Braindump (mind-mapping), Flow (diagrams and flowcharts), Karbon (vector illustrations), Kexi (database), Krita (painting), Plan (project management), Stage (presentations), Sheets (spreadsheet) and Words (word processing) – everything you get with LibreOffice plus a couple of extras. Sadly, Office compatibility is uneven – opening a password-protected DOCX document crashed the program – and performance is a bit sluggish. There's plenty of bang-for-no-bucks, though, and an unusual interface that makes good and consistent use of the sidebar.



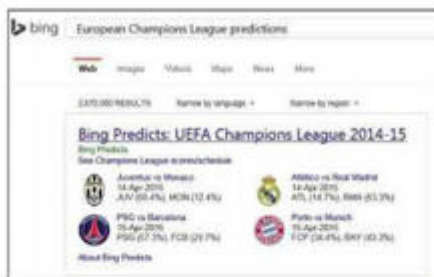
# 10 reasons to switch from Google to Bing



Just because nearly 90 per cent of us use Google to search the web, doesn't mean it's always the best choice. **Rob Beattie** reveals 10 brilliant things that Bing does better than its rival

## Bing can predict the future

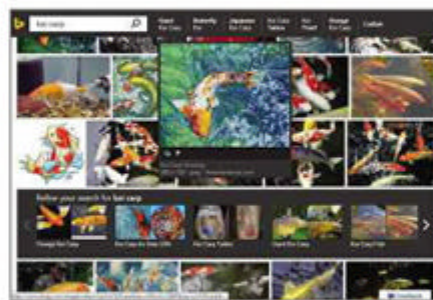
While most of us use a search engine to find out about stuff that's already happened, Bing Predicts ([www.bing.com/explore/predicts](http://www.bing.com/explore/predicts)) tries to foretell the results of events that have yet to occur – such as football matches, horse races and TV talent shows. It makes its educated guesses by analysing the popularity of a particular outcome – the preferences of pundits, news outlets and analysts and of people on social media – and then combines them to estimate the likely result. To see these frequently accurate estimates in action, just add 'predictions' to your search query – for example, 'European Champions League predictions' – to see what Bing thinks will happen. Apparently Real, Juventus, Bayern and, surprisingly, PSG are all set to go through (you'll know if they did by the time you read this). Try the same thing with Google and it merely takes you to the official UEFA match predictor.



## More sophisticated image searches

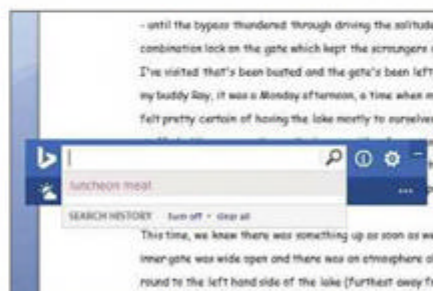
At first glance, Bing's image search feature looks very like Google's. Look again, though, and you'll notice several useful, time-saving features, including the option to refine a search from within the results (for example 'koi carp' to 'koi carp tattoos'); pop-up enlargements, as opposed to Google's clunky slide-out

lightbox; and a Favorites option that lets you save image searches so you can run them again with a single click. We also like that you can filter photos of people to show only faces or head-and-shoulders shots.



## Search the web from your Desktop

Why switch to a browser when you want to find something if you're connected to the internet anyway? Bing Desktop is a smart, Windows 8-style gadget that gives you instant access to Bing's search box from your Desktop or taskbar. More than that, you can also turn on 'inline' searching, so when you highlight a word in a document, you can search for it online without opening your browser first. You can download Bing Desktop from [www.bing.com/explore/desktop](http://www.bing.com/explore/desktop) (but watch out for its attempts to reset your browser defaults, such as your search engine and homepage).



Once upon a time, Google Desktop did much the same thing (though with less visual panache) and could also search the files on your PC. However, it was discontinued in 2012 as part of the company's push to drive users towards the cloud.

## View timelines of famous people

Often, when you search for a famous historical figure, you're not after specific information but want a general overview of their life, the lives of their contemporaries and the important events of their time. While Google produces neat summary panels to the right of the main search results, Bing goes one better and includes a proper timeline that highlights key events and dates in a notable person's life.



## Smarter and faster video searches

Although Google can find you plenty of videos, you'll be lucky to see four or five results depending on the size of your display. Bing arranges its video search results much more sensibly in a grid, so more are displayed on the page. Better still, when you hover your mouse pointer over one of the thumbnails, it'll start playing a preview of the clip so you can see at glance if it's the one you're looking for. Bing also scours a diverse





subject. This image changes every day and you can download the pictures to use as Desktop wallpaper. It doesn't detract from the business of searching and it's a nice visual touch, particularly when Microsoft makes the photo interactive. You can browse and search a gallery of past images at [www.bing.com/gallery](http://www.bing.com/gallery).

## Share your thoughts on the future of Bing

It's only a small gesture – and who knows whether they'll pay any attention – but the new site Bing Listens ([binglistens.uservoice.com](http://binglistens.uservoice.com)) has a feelgood factor that's missing from the Goliath-like Google. Here, you can suggest ways in which the service could be improved, comment on other peoples' ideas and vote them up or down. Interesting suggestions posted by users so far include the ability to search only content posted online in the last 24 hours; image searching based on a picture you upload or link to; and having relevant discount codes displayed next to items available for purchase.



This asks you to type five search queries and pick the set of results you like best, without knowing whether they've been generated by Bing or Google. Sceptics have pointed out flaws in the comparison process, but it's worth having a go – and you may be surprised at the results.

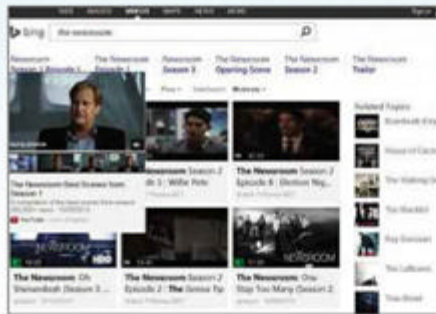
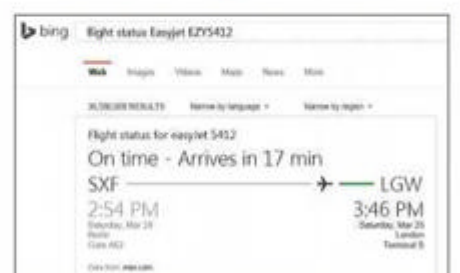
## View instant, detailed search results

Sure, Google has an auto-complete feature that tries to guess what you're searching for before you've finished typing, but it's nothing like as polished as Bing's Snapshot. Start typing something into the search field and you'll see a photo, plus links on the right to whatever content Bing thinks is relevant – a biography and quotes for a person or images and video for an animal. If it's appropriate, Bing also lists information about the search term in the news and on social networks.



## Track flights from the search box

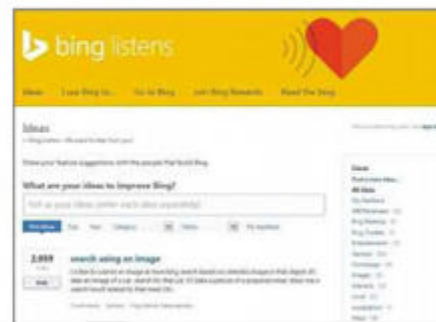
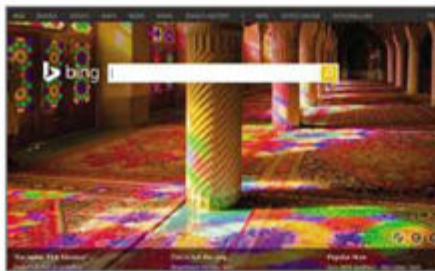
If you're heading off on holiday and you want to make sure that your flight isn't cancelled or delayed, just type 'Flight status' and the name of the airline and flight number into Bing's search box, and press Enter. Bing will return a summary of that plane's current status – no muss, no fuss. ■



range of sources (not just YouTube) and lets you filter its results to show only free or paid-for content.

## Stunning daily photos on the homepage

Whereas Google is strictly businesslike when it comes to search – blank page, Google logo, empty search box – Bing displays an attractive, interesting photo on its homepage together with a couple of links at the bottom of the screen so you can find out more about the

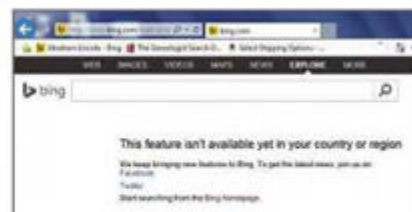


## See if Bing can beat Google

It's odd to think of Microsoft as the underdog but in the fight for search supremacy, it's a long way behind Google. So full marks to Bing for having the chutzpah to provide the fun 'blind test' Bing It On ([www.bingiton.com](http://www.bingiton.com)).

## WHAT BING GETS WRONG

You'll find plenty of anti-Microsoft critics ready and willing to bash Bing but we think it measures up well in comparison to Google. It's certainly worth revisiting if you haven't tried it in a while – especially for finding images and videos, and predicting the outcome of sporting events. However, it gets a firm thumbs down for not sharing its Bing Rewards scheme ([www.bing.com/rewards](http://www.bing.com/rewards)) with the rest of us. Currently, US customers can earn points (and



100GB of OneDrive storage) for searching with Bing, and these can be redeemed – like store card points – for real goods and services. But not if you live in the UK. No fair!



# BROWSER TOOLS you should **STOP** using

Outdated plug-ins and add-ons compromise the security and stability of Chrome and Firefox. **Robert Irvine** explains why and how you should remove them

## **FLASH** [get.adobe.com/flashplayer](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer)

### What's wrong with it?

Barely a week goes by without another security flaw being discovered in Flash, which leaves Adobe doing more patching than a patchwork-quilt factory. In 2012, the company had to introduce its own 'Patch Tuesday'-style monthly security update just to fix frequent vulnerabilities in Flash. And earlier this year, three serious 'zero-day exploits' (previously unknown security holes), which allowed hackers to infect your PC with Trojans, were discovered in the space of a month ([bit.ly/flash369](http://bit.ly/flash369)).

Add to this the well-known performance problems – such as Flash crashing and taking your browser with it – and it's clear why you should opt out of this buggy old plug-in.

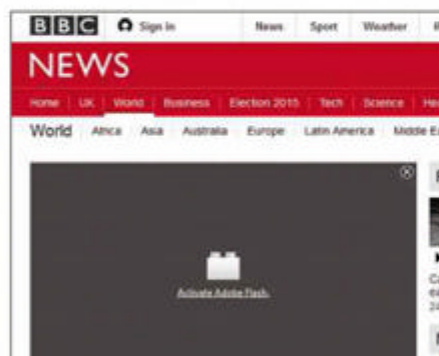
### What can I use instead?

A lot of web content that once used Flash, such as videos, games and animations, is now rendered in HTML5, which is built into all modern browsers. YouTube recently announced that it was ditching Flash for HTML5, and Mozilla is developing a tool called Shumway that converts Flash content into HTML5. You can test Shumway by installing the add-on and trying the demos at [mozilla](http://mozilla).

[github.io/shumway](http://github.io/shumway), which include rendering this fearsome tiger.

### How do I remove it?

Sadly, as some sites still use Flash, including BBC News, if you remove it, you won't be able to see certain content. Instead, you should disable the plug-in and choose whether or not to run it when you encounter Flash. To do this in Chrome, go to Settings, 'Show advanced settings', Privacy and click 'Content settings'. Scroll down to Plug-ins, select 'Click to play' and click Finished. In Firefox, go to Tools, Add-ons, Plugins and select 'Ask to Activate' next to Shockwave Flash.



## **JAVA** [www.java.com](http://www.java.com)

### What's wrong with it?

Once regarded as a "key building block of the web", Java has long served its purpose and, like Flash, its security vulnerabilities now make it more of a hindrance than a help. A few years ago, there was a significant increase in the number of malicious attacks targeting Java, and Oracle (the company that owns Java) was slow to patch known flaws. This led to Mozilla blocking Java in Firefox, and for security experts such as Graham Cluley to recommend that users disable the plug-in immediately ([bit.ly/javaflaw369](http://bit.ly/javaflaw369)). Java has never really recovered from this bad publicity, and remains neglected by Oracle.





## What can I use instead?

Nothing, and generally you shouldn't need to unless you're visiting a particularly old website or using a program that's based on Java (which will run separately from your browser). One place you'll use it without realising is on your Android phone, because Google's mobile operating system was written in the Java programming language, as are most Android apps.

## How do I remove it?

As with Flash, you can choose to run Java only when you need it, but it's best to disable it altogether. In Firefox, go to Tools, Addons, Plugins and choose 'Never activate' next to the Java entries; and in Chrome, type `chrome:plugins` into the address bar, press Enter and disable Java from there.



## What's wrong with it?

Once touted as Microsoft's more versatile alternative to Flash, Silverlight unfortunately replicated some of the same problems as Adobe's plug-in, being slow to load, prone to crash and delivering less than perfect video playback. However, that hasn't stopped many big names from using Silverlight, including Netflix (until 2013), Amazon (for Prime Instant Video) and, of course, Microsoft itself, including in Bing Maps. But with the last new version released four years ago and Windows 8 supposed to herald a new "plug-in free" era, it seems that Silverlight is on its way out.

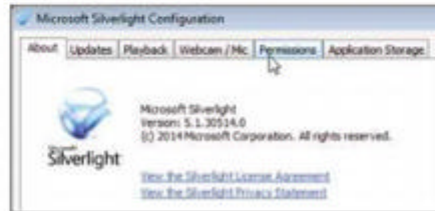
## What can I use instead?

Like Flash, Silverlight is gradually being phased out in favour of HTML5, with reports suggesting that Microsoft will drop support altogether by 2021. This means that you're less likely to need the plug-in than a few years ago.



## How do I remove it?

You can either run Silverlight only when you need it by choosing 'Click to play' or 'Ask to Activate', or disable it altogether, on your browser's Plug-ins page. Alternatively, you can choose precisely which sites can display Silverlight content. Type `Silverlight` into your Start menu or screen, press Enter, then click the Permissions tab, press and click Allow or Deny for all listed sites.



## What's wrong with it?

With more than 1.3 million users, the image-enlargement tool Hover Zoom is probably the most popular Chrome extension to turn to the dark side. As it states on its page on the Chrome Web Store, you're now required to grant the extension permission "to collect browsing activity to be used internally and shared with third parties", which should immediately set alarm bells ringing. Hover Zoom is regarded as adware by the security tool Extension Defender ([www.extensiondefender.com](http://www.extensiondefender.com)), because the data it collects (albeit anonymously) can be used to target you with ads.



## What can I use instead?

If you find Hover Zoom useful but don't like the idea of being spied on, you can stop it collecting data by going into the add-on's Options and deselecting the option 'Enable anonymous usage statistics'. If you still don't trust it, switch to Hover Zoom+ ([bit.ly/hoverzoomplus369](http://bit.ly/hoverzoomplus369)), which proudly proclaims itself to be a "spyware-free version of Hover Zoom" and works in exactly the same way.

## How do I remove it?

It's easy to get rid of Hover Zoom, and it won't leave any traces of adware behind. Just right-click its icon on the toolbar and select 'Remove from Chrome'. Alternatively, click the menu button,

choose 'More tools', Extensions, then scroll down to the Hover Zoom entry and click the dustbin icon next to it.



## What's wrong with it?

There once was a time when McAfee SiteAdvisor was an essential security tool, but it now feels like a bloated memory guzzler that slows down your browser and displays scary red warning messages on perfectly safe sites. McAfee clearly thinks SiteAdvisor is past it, too, because it recently renamed the add-on WebAdvisor and gave it a new look that ditches the cumbersome old toolbar. However, at the time of writing, the transition was still in progress, meaning that SiteAdvisor is still widely available across the web.



## What can I use instead?

There are several good alternatives to SiteAdvisor, which work in a similar way but are less heavy-handed and don't patronise you with warnings saying: "Whoa! Are you sure you want to go there?". The best is probably WOT (Web of Trust, [www.mywot.com](http://www.mywot.com)), which is available for Chrome, Firefox and Internet Explorer, and protects you from scams, untrustworthy links and dodgy stores, as rated by its community. We also like Bitdefender's TrafficLight tool ([bit.ly/traffic369](http://bit.ly/traffic369)), which scans links (including ones posted on Facebook and Twitter) for malware, trackers and phishing attacks, and forewarns you before you click them.













## How do I remove it?

As well as disabling or removing the SiteAdvisor add-on in your browser, and resetting your search engine, you should uninstall it through the Control Panel in Windows. You may need to restart your PC to complete the removal.

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3		Plusnet: Broadband & Calls	<b>£9.99</b> (£2.50 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	<b>£30.00</b>
4		Sky: Broadband & Calls	<b>£7.50</b> (12 months HALF PRICE)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	<b>£45.00</b>
5		Virgin: Broadband & Calls	<b>£17.50</b> (12 months HALF PRICE)	18 months	50Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited**	<b>£105.00</b>
6		TalkTalk Fibre Broadband	<b>£13.50</b> (£5 for 6 months)	18 months	38Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	<b>£111.00</b>
7		Plusnet: Fibre Broadband & Calls	<b>£14.99</b> (£3.99 for 6 months)	18 months	38Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	<b>£113.88</b>
8		Sky: Fibre Broadband & Calls	<b>£20.00</b> (12 months HALF PRICE)	18 months	38Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	<b>£120.00</b>
9		EE: Fibre Broadband & Calls	<b>£19.95</b> (£9.95 for 6 months)	18 months	38Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	<b>£179.40</b>
10		Virgin: Broadband & Calls	<b>£30.00</b> (£24.50 for 12 months)	18 months	152Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited**	<b>FASTEST</b> <b>£294.00</b>

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\*\* Fair-usage or restriction policy applies.

Data supplied by [www.broadbandgenie.co.uk](http://www.broadbandgenie.co.uk). Correct as of 7 April 2015.

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# Take a Screen Break

It's difficult to keep up with the fast pace of technology, but you might recall more than you think. This issue we're asking you to look back to **2003**



**1** Google was doing rather well for itself by 2003. Which rival tech company approached the search engine with the offer of a merger?  
**Google**

**2** And which blogging platform did Google take over in February 2003?

**3** Which digital music store launched in the US in April 2003 and sold one million songs in its first five days?

**4** Which company received a \$750 million payout from Microsoft over the latter's "anti-competitive" promotion of Internet Explorer?

**5** Which then-popular search engine was bought by Yahoo in 2003 and shut down 10 years later?

**6** In 2003, Nokia launched what is still claimed to be the most popular mobile phone ever (pictured), with 250 million handsets sold. But what was the phone's model number?



**7** Which ISP was told off by the advertising watchdogs in April 2003 for describing its 128Kbps internet service as "high-speed broadband"?

**8** In 2003, an email program called Minotaur was released by Mozilla. What was it later renamed?

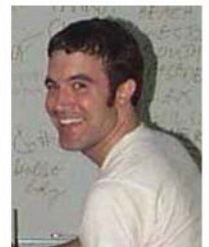
**9** The first instalment of which first-person shooter game franchise (pictured) launched on 29 October 2003?



**10** What was the most popular search term of 2003, according to Yahoo: Harry Potter, Britney Spears, Al-Jazeera or Kazaa?

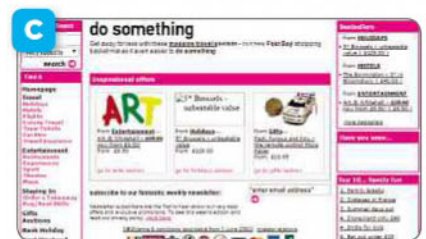
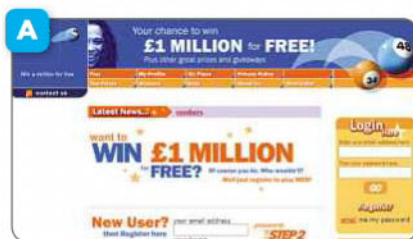
**11** The social network MySpace

launched in 2003, but what was the first name of its president (pictured), who gave everyone joining the site their first friend?



**12** The first public version of Skype was released in August 2003, but which company bought it two years later? Clue: it wasn't Microsoft!

## CAN YOU IDENTIFY THESE POPULAR WEBSITES FROM 2003?



Get the answers online at [www.webuser.co.uk/quiz369](http://www.webuser.co.uk/quiz369)

## COMPETITIONS

**WIN 1 OF 4 STM Grip 2 for iPad Air case**

Designed to fit the first-generation iPad Air, STM's Grip 2 has a wide kickstand to make it easy to use when typing and viewing. The impact-resistant polycarbonate shell protects your iPad from day-to-day mishaps, while the on/off front cover automatically wakes and turns the device off. To enter, email your address to [webusercomp@dennis.co.uk](mailto:webusercomp@dennis.co.uk) with 'grip' in the subject line. For more information visit [www.stmbags.com.au](http://www.stmbags.com.au) and follow STM on Twitter.



**WORTH £39.95 EACH**

**WIN 1 OF 5 TP-LINK RE200 WiFi Range Extender**

Earning a four-star review in Issue 368, TP-LINK's RE200 is an extremely affordable way to boost bad Wi-Fi speeds and eliminate dead spots around your home. It's a dual-band device, operating on the 2.4GHz (802.11b, g and n) and 5GHz (802.11n and ac) bands. To enter, email your address to [webusercomp@dennis.co.uk](mailto:webusercomp@dennis.co.uk) with 're200' in the subject line. For more info visit [uk.tp-link.com](http://uk.tp-link.com) and follow TP-LINK on Twitter (@TPLINKgaming).



**WORTH £34.99 EACH**





# Practical WebUser

17 pages of workshops, tips, projects and problem solving

## Discover VLC Media Player's new features | [www.videolan.org/vlc](http://www.videolan.org/vlc)

VideoLAN recently updated its hugely popular media player with big improvements and great new features. Here's what you need to know

**V**LC Media Player can recognise and play most audio and video files (including CDs and DVDs) without the need to install any additional codecs. It can also display photos in a slideshow and stream media files over the internet.

The latest release (version 2.2, also known as "Weatherwax") is a major update and adds several new features,

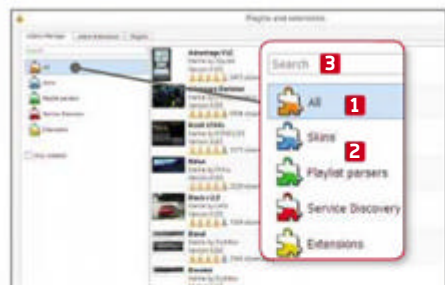
including automatically rotating vertical videos taken on phones; and resuming video playback so you can pick up where you left off. There's improved support for new HD codecs; built-in subtitle downloading; and the ability to find and install extensions and themes from within the program. The new build also makes better use of your PC's hardware acceleration capabilities.



**1** Videos recorded vertically on a smartphone look terrible when played back on a horizontal screen, such as your TV or YouTube. VideoLAN is fighting back against this "vertical video syndrome" and automatically rotates clips onto their sides, **1** to encourage people to film in landscape mode.



**2** If you want to watch your vertical videos without having to tilt your head, go to Tools and click 'Effects and Filters'. In the 'Adjustments and Effects' box, select the Video Effects tab, **1** then the Geometry tab. **2** Tick Transform **3** and select 'Rotate by 90 degrees'. **4**



**3** VLC Media Player supports extensions that let you add extra features. To do this directly through the software, go to Tools, click 'Plugins and extensions' and click the option to look for add-ons online. You can browse the full selection, **1** filter the options **2** or search for an add-on by name. **3**



**4** Select an extension to find out what it does. **1** Click the Install button **2** to add it to VLC. You can view all running add-ons under the Active Extensions tab. **3** and see all VLC's plug-ins from the Plugins tab. **4**



**5** If you have to stop watching a video part-way through, VLC can resume playback from that point the next time you open it. This feature only works on local files (not video streams) and the videos must be longer than three minutes. Click Continue **1** when you restart the video to resume where you left off.



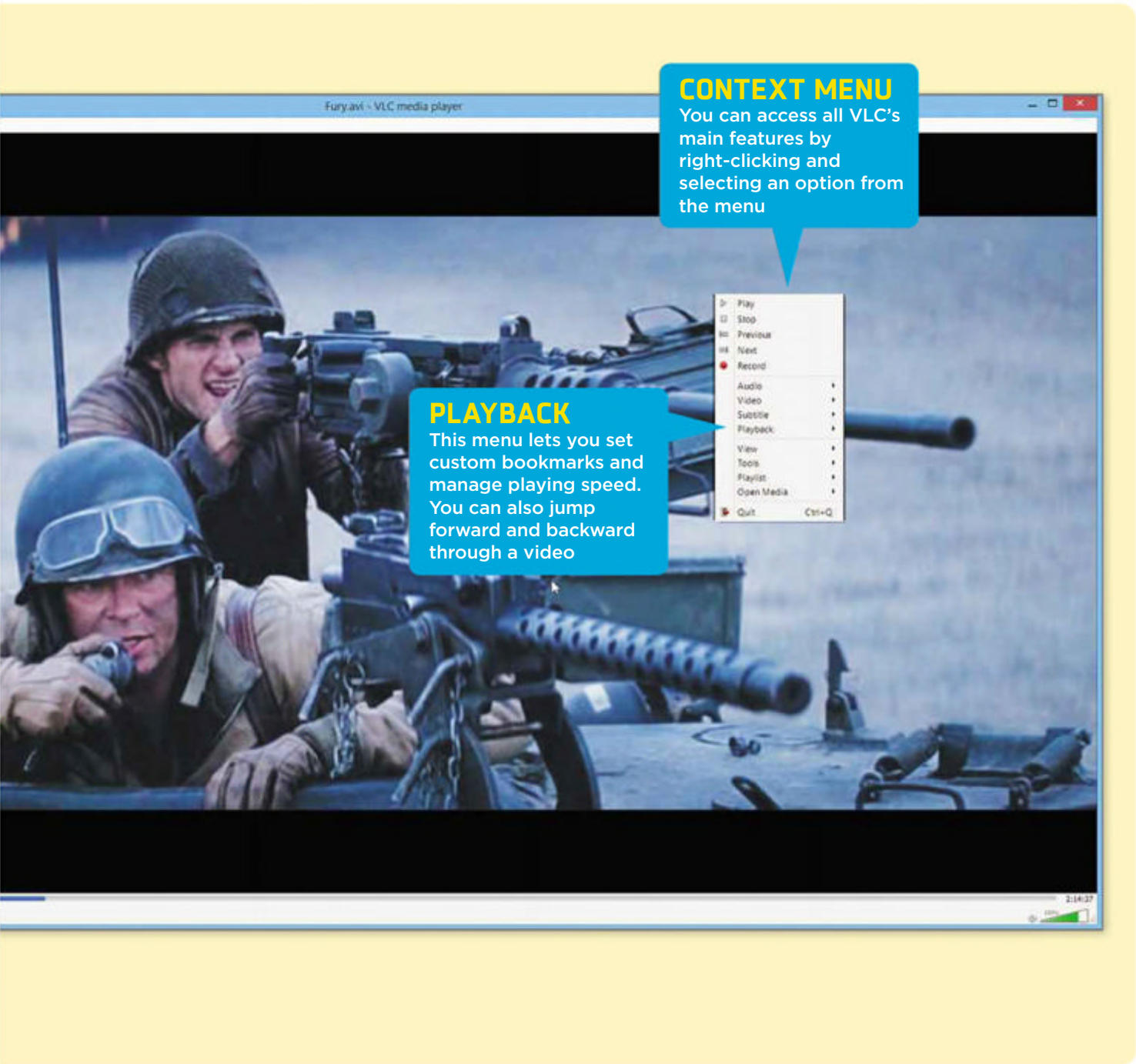
### VIEW

The View menu lets you open the playlist window, download subtitles and switch between VLC's available interfaces

### FULLSCREEN

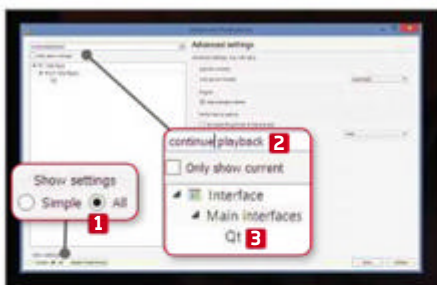
Click the button to toggle the video between windowed and full-screen modes



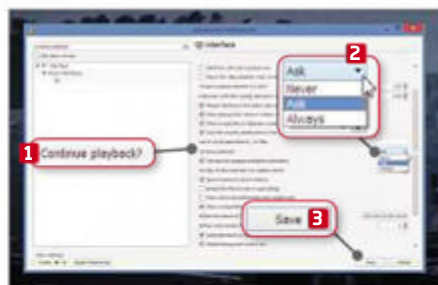


**CONTEXT MENU**  
You can access all VLC's main features by right-clicking and selecting an option from the menu

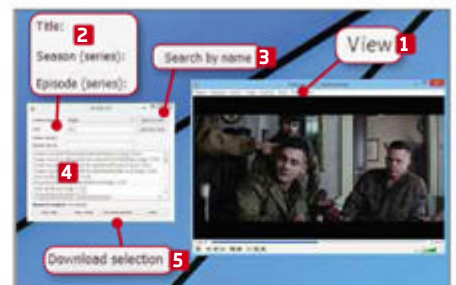
**PLAYBACK**  
This menu lets you set custom bookmarks and manage playing speed. You can also jump forward and backward through a video



**6** You can customise this feature by going to Tools, then Preferences. Make sure the Interface tab is selected and click 'All' **1** under 'Show settings'. Search for 'continue playback' in the search box, **2** then click Qt. **3**



**7** Find 'Continue playback?' in the list of options. **1** There's a drop down box **2** where you can set your preferences for the resume feature. Click the box and choose between Ask (the default), Never (disables the feature) or Always (picks up from where you left off every time). Click Save. **3**



**8** VLC Media Player has a new add-on for downloading subtitles. Start playing a movie and go to View, **1** 'Download subtitles'. Enter the name of the video, along with Season and Episode details if it's a TV show. **2** Click 'Search by name', **3** select a match from the list **4** and click 'Download selection'. **5**

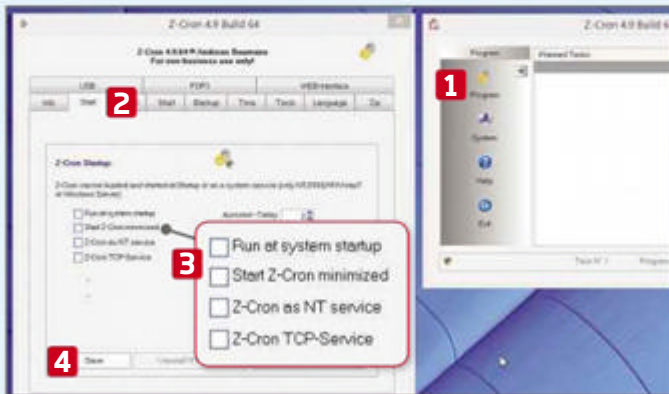


# Automate tasks on your PC using Z-Cron

Z-Cron: [www.z-cron.com](http://www.z-cron.com) | 20 mins | XP, Vista, 7, 8.1

**W**indows comes with a built-in scheduler that lets you set up and manage tasks. You can use it to launch a program at a particular time and run a variety of other jobs. It's easy to use, but it's a bit limited.

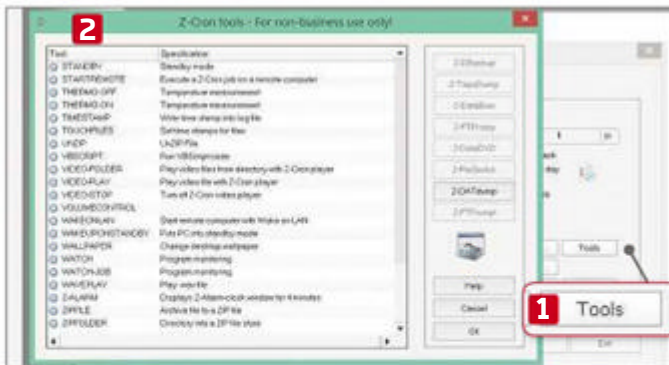
Z-Cron ([www.z-cron.com](http://www.z-cron.com)) is a similar tool to Task Scheduler, but it's much more advanced. You don't have to sign into your computer for it to carry out actions (though the PC does need to be running), and it can perform lots of different tasks, including downloading a file at a set date and time (useful if you want to download something in the early hours of the morning when your internet connection is at its fastest); and running a full virus scan whenever you go offline. It can also shut down your PC at a set time, check a particular web page for updates, create a System Restore point, delete old files, send an email, lock your PC, empty the Recycle Bin, play music, turn the network adapter on or off (killing internet access after a set time), print a document, unzip a file and much more.



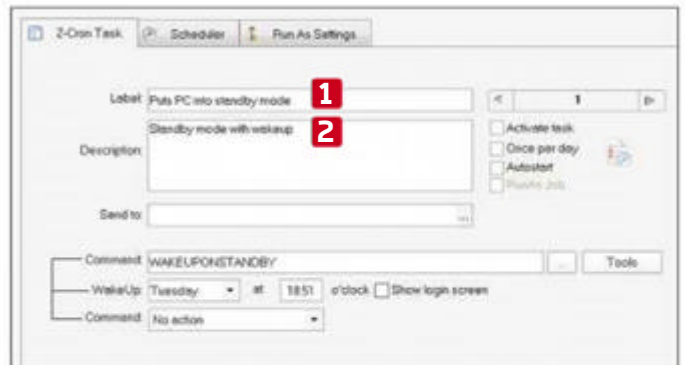
**1** By default, Z-Cron only runs when you launch it, but it makes sense to have it running all the time so it can perform tasks. To set it to start automatically when you turn on your computer, click Program, **1** then click the Start tab. **2** Choose a startup option **3** and click Save. **4**



**2** There are buttons for Desktop (minimises the program to the notification area), **1** Task (for creating and scheduling jobs), **2** Log File (lists what's happened) **3** and Today **4** (current planned tasks). Program **5** lets you configure the software, and System **6** lists your OS details.



**3** To create a task, click the relevant button in the sidebar. In this example, we are going to put the PC into standby mode at 2am, wake it again at 7am, then have the program play a music track. Click the Tools button **1** to bring up a list of all the available actions. **2**



**4** Scroll down and select the WAKEUPONSTANDBY tool in the list, then click OK. The task label **1** and description **2** will be filled in automatically for you. If you want to put the PC into Hibernation mode instead (and wake it up), use the PC-TIMER option.

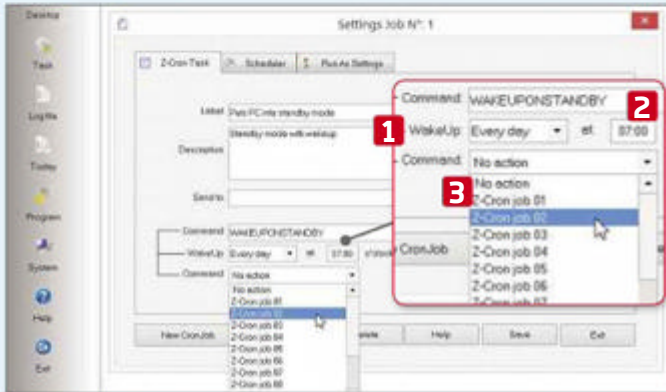




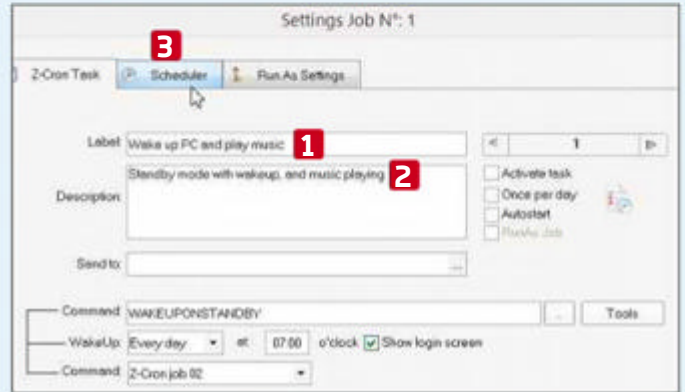
**EXPERT TIP**

**Wayne Williams says**

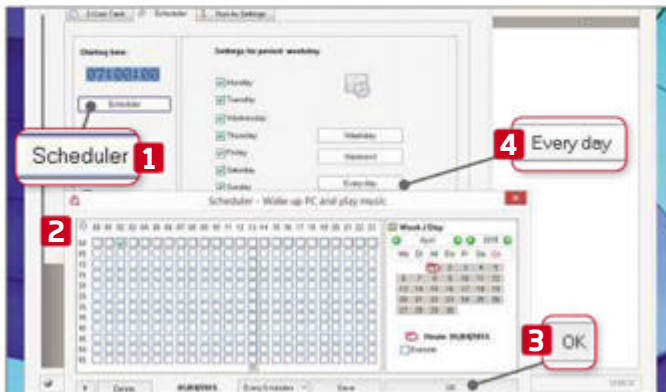
Click the Tools button to see a selection of options on the right, including Z-DBackup, Z-DataBurn, Z-DataDVD and more. These are all greyed out and can't be selected because the modules haven't yet been installed. Go to [bit.ly/extras369](http://bit.ly/extras369) to download and add the missing software. Once installed, restart Z-Cron. You can now access the new modules through the program.



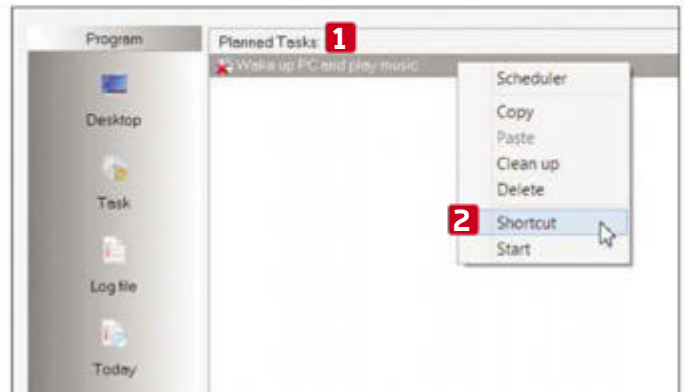
**5** Choose when you want the PC to wake up. This can be a particular day of the week or every day. **1** Set the wake-up time. **2** When your PC wakes up, you can have it run a set task (play a music track or perform a scan, for example). You can choose a job from the Command menu. **3**



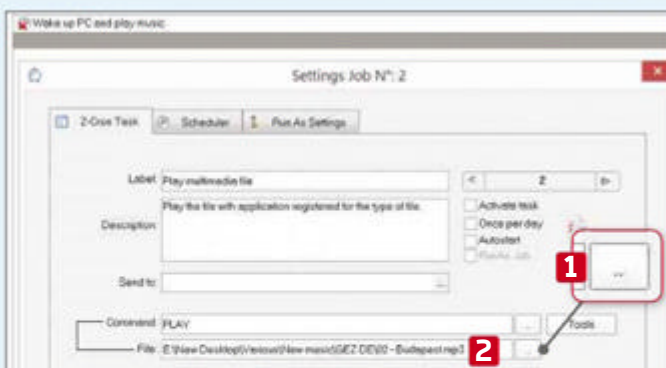
**6** Since we haven't yet created the task for playing music, we'll select 'Z-Cron job 02' and set it up. Change the job name (to 'Wake up PC and play music') **1** and add an optional description. **2** Click the Scheduler tab **3** to set when the PC should go to sleep.



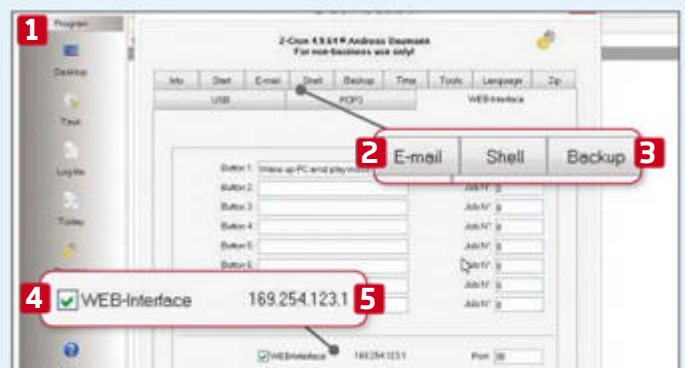
**7** Click the Scheduler button **1** and set the time (hours run along the top, minutes down the side). **2** Click OK **3** and opt to save the schedule. Next, choose which days to run it. Select 'Every day' **4** (you can untick days, such as Saturday and Sunday, for example). Click Save.



**8** The job will now appear under Planned Tasks. **1** Right-click it to manage it from the menu. You can create a shortcut on the Desktop **2** that will let you run the task manually. Now we need to create the job that will play music. Click Task, and change the job number to 2.



**9** Click the Tools button, select the PLAY option and click OK. All the details will have been filled in for you, but you can change them if you like. Click the browse button **1** next to the File box and locate the MP3 file you want to play. **2** Set a schedule and save the task.



**10** The Program button **1** lets you check for updates, configure your email server (to send messages), **2** back up settings **3** and activate the web interface. **4** With this last feature turned on, you can remotely access and run your tasks. Enter the IP address **5** into your web browser.



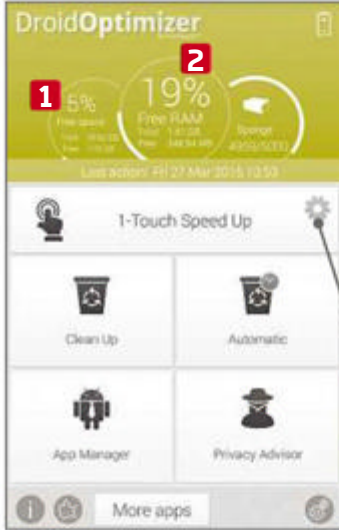
# Speed up Android and keep it free from junk

**D**roid Optimizer won our App of the Fortnight in Issue 366 of *Web User* ([bit.ly/webuser366](http://bit.ly/webuser366)), thanks to its standout features such as 1-Touch Clean Up, which clears the cache of your Android phone or tablet and stops background apps at

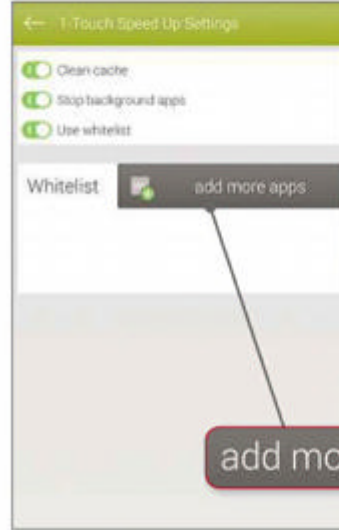
the touch of a button. In this Workshop, we show you how to take advantage of its best tools, which also include a Junk Finder, Auto Start Manager and Auto Clean Up.



**Droid Optimizer:** [bit.ly/droid369](http://bit.ly/droid369) | 10 mins | Android 2.3+

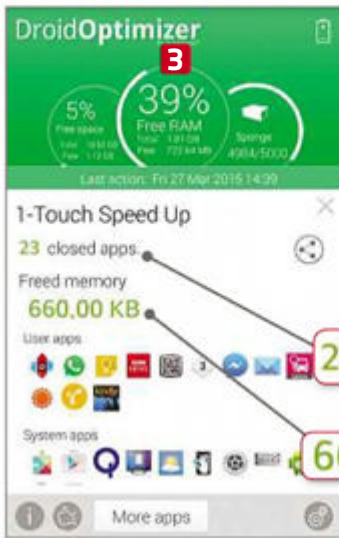


**1** Download and run Droid Optimizer. The homescreen shows your device's total free space **1** and memory (RAM). **2** Tap the settings cog next to 1-Touch Speed Up **3** to configure this tool, which, by default, cleans your cache and stops background apps.

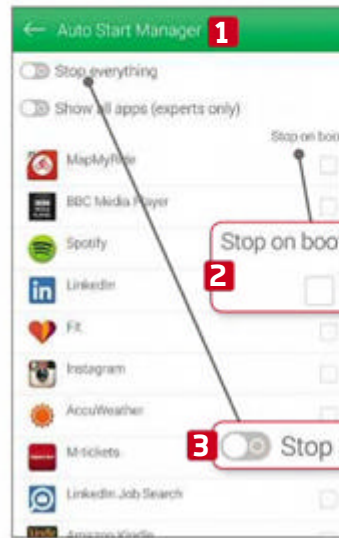


**2** You can use 1-Touch Speed Up's whitelist to prevent it from closing certain apps. Tap 'add more apps', **1** tick the boxes next to the apps you want to keep open and select the WI+ icon to exclude them. You can remove apps by expanding them and selecting 'Remove from whitelist'.

add more apps **1**



**3** Once you've configured 1-Touch Speed Up, you can use it simply by tapping its name. It displays the number of apps it has closed **1** and the memory that's been freed up. **2** The RAM figure at the top of the page **3** updates to reflect these changes.

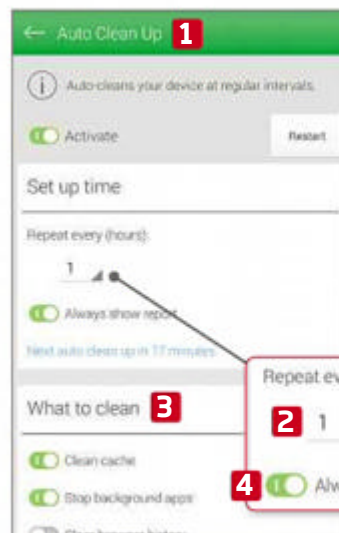


**4** To access the advanced tools, select Clean Up. Auto Start Manager **1** lets you stop apps launching on startup. Select individual apps from the list by ticking the boxes **2** or set the app to 'Stop everything'. **3**

Stop everything **3**



**5** The Junk Finder is also in the Clean Up menu, and can be used to identify large files that are taking up a lot of space on your device. You can specify the size of files that you want it to look for. **1** After you tap Scan, **2** the results will be presented in four different categories.



**6** Auto Clean Up **1** can be found in the Automatic menu. It lets you set the app to clean up your device automatically at specific intervals. **2** You can choose what the app cleans **3** and whether it shows you a report every time. **4**

Repeat every (hours): **2** 1  
Always show report **4**





# Try out Windows 10's new Spartan browser

**S**partan is the codename of the new browser that Microsoft is including in Windows 10 to replace Internet Explorer. It's more stripped-back, with none of the clutter that built up in IE over the years. Spartan has just

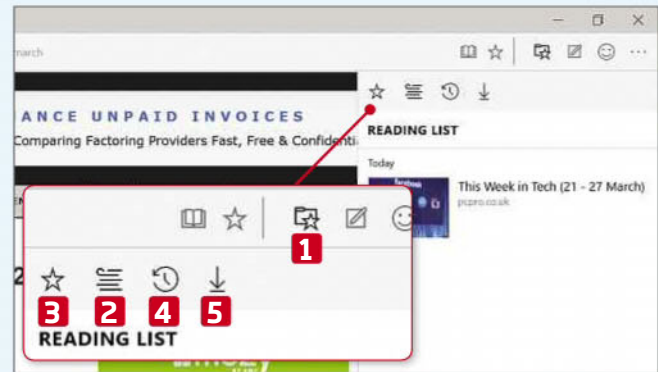
made its debut appearance in the latest Windows 10 Technical Preview (Build 10049). In this Workshop, we show you how to use some of the new browser's best features.



Spartan: [bit.ly/windows369](http://bit.ly/windows369) | 10 mins | Windows 10



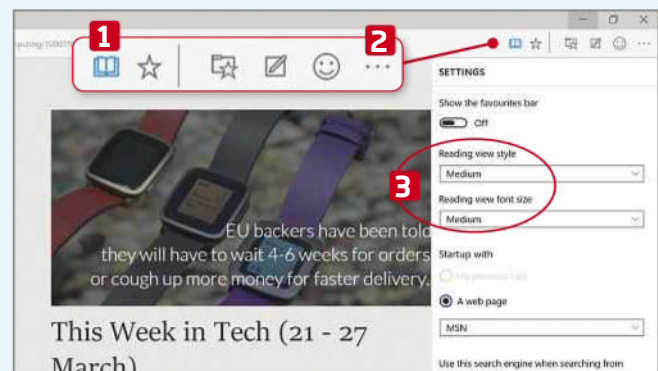
**1** Spartan's Reading List saves pages, so you can read them later, and it's linked to your Favorites. To add a page, click the Favorites star **1** and choose the Reading List tab. **2** A thumbnail will be chosen automatically **3** but you can rename the page if you wish. **4** Click Add. **5**



**2** To access items later, click the Favorites folder, **1** then the Reading List icon. **2** Articles you've saved will be listed below. You can also access Favorites, **3** History **4** and Downloads **5** from here.



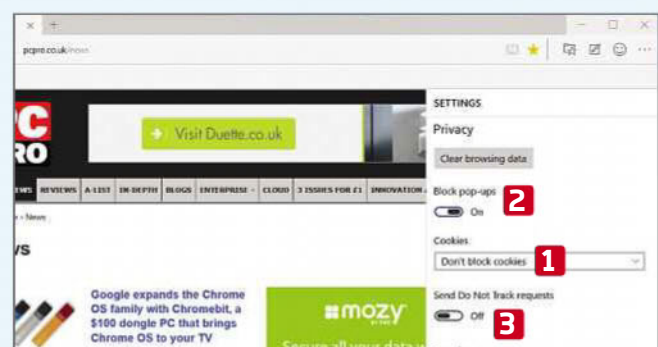
**3** Click 'Make a Web Note' to write on screen with a pen (choose the colour and size), **1** highlight, erase, type or focus on a particular section of the page. **2** Click the Save icon **3** to save it to Favorites or Reading List. The Share button **4** sends it to other apps (currently, only OneNote).



**4** Reading View strips out the key images and text on the page and shows them in a format that's easier to read. Just press the Reading View icon **1** to switch it on or off. To change colours, click the menu button, **2** select Settings and choose from 'style' and 'font size' options. **3**



**5** You can explore more of Spartan's tweaks in the Settings menu. You can opt to display the Favorites Bar, **1** although this isn't yet displaying properly. **2** Save Favorites to it by choosing the folder from the 'Add to Favorites' icon.



**6** Scroll down through the rest of the features to switch various options on or off, such as Flash, filtering, page prediction, cookies, **1** pop-up blocking **2** and Do Not Track. **3** You can also control your Start page from here.

# Weekend Project

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



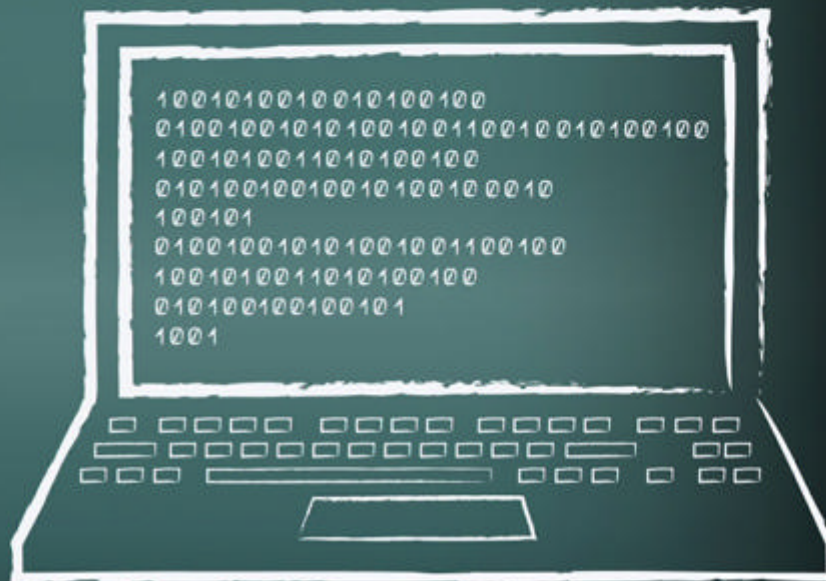
How to...

## Learn to program like a pro

Programming or coding a computer is a great skill to develop. **Wayne Williams** guides you through the resources that can help you learn

**E**ven if you don't code for a living, there's a good chance that you will have dipped into programming at some point in your life. You may have learned BASIC on a microcomputer at home or at school in the Eighties, and even progressed to mastering "machine code". You might have built your own website in HTML and learned a little JavaScript along the way, or picked up a Raspberry Pi and turned your hand to Python, the programming language the Pi is named after.

There are lots of different programming languages, some easier to learn than others, and whether you want to brush up on your skills or learn a new one from scratch, there are plenty of resources on the web that can help.



### Why learn to code?

There are three main reasons why you might want to learn a new programming language. For fun (and to challenge yourself); for work (possibly to land yourself a new or better job); or for a project, such as building a mobile app. Coding for a living can be lucrative, providing you stick at it. According to the government's National Career Service, the starting annual salary for a programmer (for software, games, web or mobile) is around £25,000, but it can

rise to between £30,000 and £50,000 as you become more experienced and take on greater responsibility. If a mobile app you've created takes off, you could make millions of pounds, although there are plenty of well-designed and well-coded apps that have failed to find any kind of meaningful audience.

### Which language to learn?

There are hundreds of programming languages to choose from. If you've never touched computer programming before,

Scratch is a good place to start: we'll show you how it works in our Mini Workshop, opposite.

Scratch will teach you some basics that will come in useful later and it's very easy to get started with, but you'll soon want to move on to something more sophisticated. Unless you need to learn a niche language for a particular reason, we'd recommend you move on to a widely used language, such as JavaScript, Python or PHP. The language you choose will depend on what you





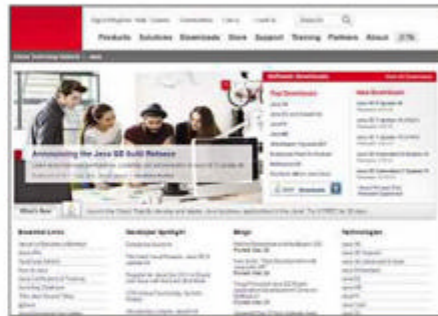
want to do. JavaScript is useful if you want to make programs that work on the the web, for example; Python is simple to learn and a popular language for fun projects; and PHP is often used to interact with other things - WordPress sites are coded in PHP because it integrates well with the databases used to store the pages.

The top programming languages, in no particular order, are:

- Java** - Used for building enterprise-web applications and native Android apps
- JavaScript** - Good for building modern websites (it comes built into modern browsers)
- Python** - A great multi-purpose language that can be used for everything
- C#** - Used for programming on Microsoft platforms and services, and the game-development engine Unity
- C++** - Typically used for creating PC software and games
- C** - Useful for writing light, tight code
- PHP** - Used in data-driven websites and for building web apps - it needs to be installed on a server
- SQL** - A special language used specifically for accessing databases
- Ruby** (and **Ruby on Rails**) - typically used in the creation of web apps
- Perl** - A powerful, flexible language that has been in use for over 27 years and is also good for making web apps

### Where to learn to program

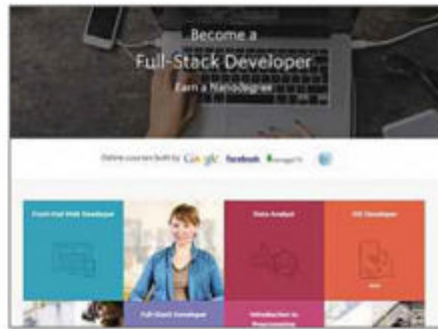
There are websites dedicated to all the different languages that can help you learn to program. If you want to master JavaScript, try W3Schools ([www.w3schools.com/js](http://www.w3schools.com/js)), which has a tutorial designed to guide you from the basics to



Oracle's website has a vast collection of information on Java



Learn Python the Hard Way is a good introduction to programming



Udacity offers courses developed by tech companies such as Google and Facebook



MIT offers free course materials you can find on its website

more advanced coding. W3Schools can also teach you PHP ([www.w3schools.com/php](http://www.w3schools.com/php)) and SQL ([www.w3schools.com/sql](http://www.w3schools.com/sql)). Java students should head to Oracle's site at [bit.ly/java369](http://bit.ly/java369), while those wanting to learn Perl should start at [www.perl.org](http://www.perl.org). Would-be Python programmers are catered for at [www.python.org](http://www.python.org) (or, even better, work through Zed Shaw's excellent book *Learn Python the Hard Way* at [bit.ly/python369](http://bit.ly/python369)).

All of these sites will get you started and take you well beyond the beginner's phase.

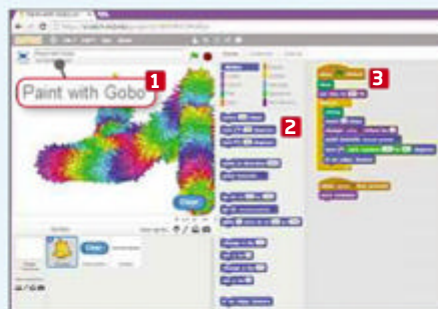
There are also sites that can teach you multiple languages. One of the best is Codecademy ([www.codecademy.com](http://www.codecademy.com)), a fantastic website that has interactive guides that teach JavaScript, jQuery, Python, Ruby and PHP. There are also courses for making a basic website, creating an interactive website and building a Rails application. Sign up and then choose if you're interested in learning job skills (to make sites and apps), learning specific languages or something else.

We'll show you how to get started with

## MINI WORKSHOP | Learn to code with Scratch



**1** If you don't know the first thing about programming, Scratch is a great place to start. It's aimed at children aged between 8 and 16 but is used by people of all ages. Go to [scratch.mit.edu](http://scratch.mit.edu). The website lets you view (and adapt) featured projects, **1** and you can try it out for yourself. **2**



**2** To adapt a project, select one you like the look of and read the information about it. To make changes, click the 'See inside' button at the top right. This shows all the elements used in the program. You can change the project name **1** and try out the program. **2** The code structure is on the right. **3**



**3** You can create or change sprites (the graphics used in the program), **1** and explore the different available scripts (actions). **2** To make a program in Scratch, you drag scripts into the main window and arrange them in sequence. To learn to create your own program, go back to Try It Out and follow 'Getting Started with Scratch'.



# Weekend Project

Codecademy in our Mini Workshop, below.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is one of the most famous centres of learning in the world, and you can learn how to code through the MIT OpenCourseWare site ([ocw.mit.edu](http://ocw.mit.edu)). This is a vast repository of genuine MIT course content, including lecture notes, assignments and downloadable course content. A good example of the sort of thing that's available, for free, is the course in Effective Programming in C and C++ ([bit.ly/mit369](http://bit.ly/mit369)), which was originally taught in January 2014.

There are coding courses you can take for free at Coursera ([www.coursera.org](http://www.coursera.org)). Simply pick a topic, then choose a course. The length of the course is shown on the right and can take anything from four to 12 weeks.

Other sites to explore include Stanford University's Udacity ([www.udacity.com](http://www.udacity.com)) which offers courses built by Google, Facebook and other companies; and Udemy ([www.udemy.com](http://www.udemy.com)) which has paid-for courses on all the main coding languages. Prices range from £35 for a



The Raspberry Pi comes with Scratch and Python pre-installed



You'll need a Mac to create iOS apps with Apple's programming language Swift

beginner's course in C# to £233 for a starter course in PHP. Code School ([www.codeschool.com](http://www.codeschool.com)) has paid-for and free courses available covering JavaScript, HTML/CSS, Ruby, Git and iOS. It costs \$290 (around £196) a year for unlimited access to all courses and screencasts, or you can pay monthly and leave at any time. It offers high-quality video lessons, with 'gamification' features to make learning more fun. Young coders should check out Tech Camp ([techcamp.org.uk](http://techcamp.org.uk)), which offers a wide range of courses and workshops to get children programming, including robotics and app design.

## Try programming a Raspberry Pi

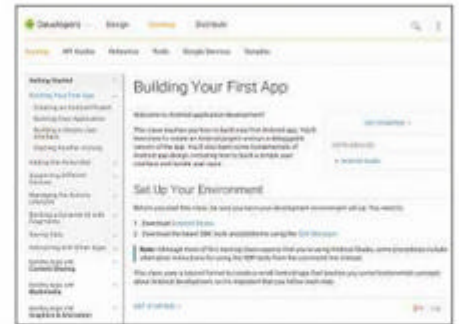
Although it's found a massive following outside the education system, the bare-bones, credit card-sized Raspberry Pi computer was conceived as a low-cost way to get children coding again, as they did in the Eighties and Nineties. If you're

struggling to learn to program, then it's a good place to start, with free resources available at [bit.ly/pi369](http://bit.ly/pi369). The new Raspberry Pi 2 Model B costs just £25.

## Learn to code mobile apps

If you want to write apps for iOS, you can program them in different languages, although Apple's Swift programming language ([bit.ly/ios369](http://bit.ly/ios369)) is the preferred choice. This is only available on OS X, though, so you'll need a Mac if you're serious about making iOS apps. Download Xcode ([bit.ly/xcode369](http://bit.ly/xcode369)), which provides all the necessary tools including Swift and the Xcode IDE (Integrated Development Environment) graphical interface, iOS SDKs (Software Developer Kit) and an iOS Simulator.

If you want to write Android apps, everything you need, including a guide to building your first app, can be found on the Android Developer site ([bit.ly/android369](http://bit.ly/android369)).



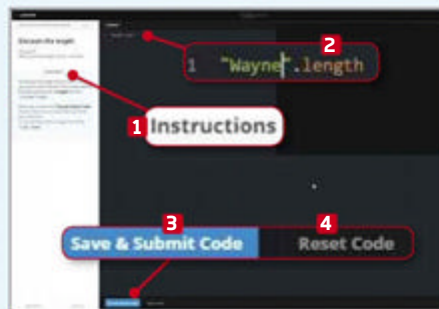
Get started creating Android apps with Google's own guide



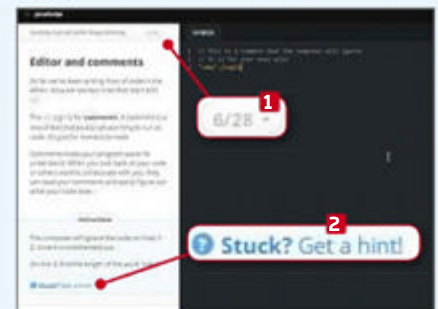
## MINI WORKSHOP | Learn JavaScript at Codecademy



**1** Codecademy can teach you the fundamentals of JavaScript, which it refers to as the "programming language of the Web." The starter course takes 10 hours to complete and you can enrol at [bit.ly/cajs369](http://bit.ly/cajs369). You can read a synopsis of each stage. **1** Simply click the Start button **2** to begin.



**2** Lesson instructions are shown in the sidebar. **1** Read what you need to do and follow the directions. The code you write is entered in the main pane. **2** Click 'Save & Submit Code' **3** or press Ctrl+Enter to submit your answer. If you make a mistake while typing, you can delete it in the window or click 'Reset Code'. **4**



**3** The initial challenges are very easy, but they get harder as you progress through the lessons. When you get an answer right, click 'Start Next Lesson' to move on. You can jump directly to later lessons using the drop-down box at the top. **1** If you get stuck, you can request a hint. **2**

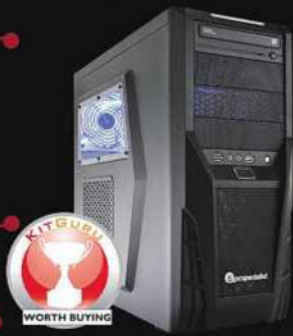
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How To... use a Raspberry Pi to block ads on all your devices

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# Web User's Top Tips

Our experts show how to use HandBrake to convert any video or DVD to any format, to play on any device

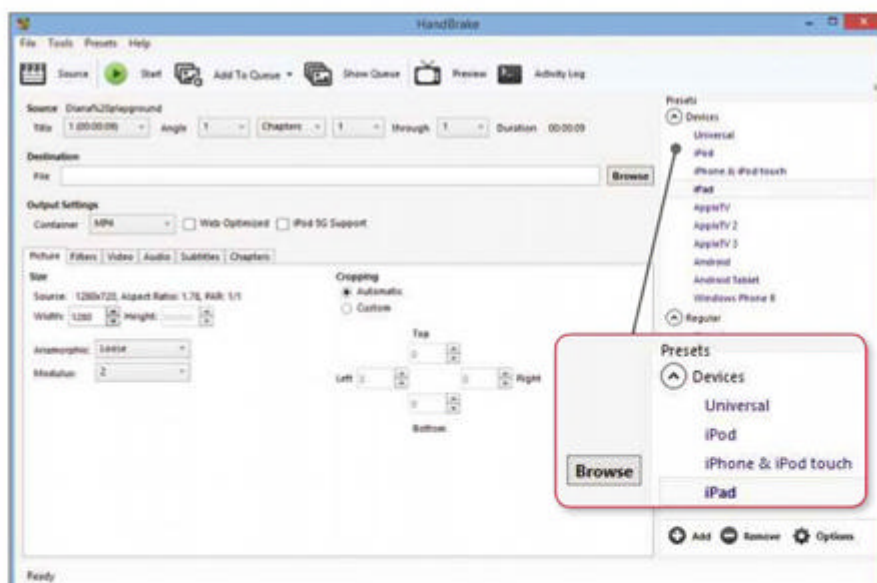
## TOP TIPS FOR HANDBRAKE VIDEO CONVERTER

### Use a preset to convert all your videos faster

**H**andBrake ([handbrake.fr](http://handbrake.fr)) makes it easy to convert videos from one format and size to another. Its presets configure all the settings automatically, simplifying the task to just a few clicks of the mouse.

Start HandBrake and click the Source button. Select File, then find and select the video file you want to convert. Click the Browse button to the right of Destination and select the folder and filename for the converted video. A logical place to store your clips is the Videos folder.

Select a preset on the right, such as iPad, iPhone or Universal (for a video that will play on any device), then click Start. It takes anything from a few minutes to a few hours for the process to complete, depending on the length of the video.



Select a preset on the right to have all the settings automatically configured

### Rip DVDs and Blu-ray

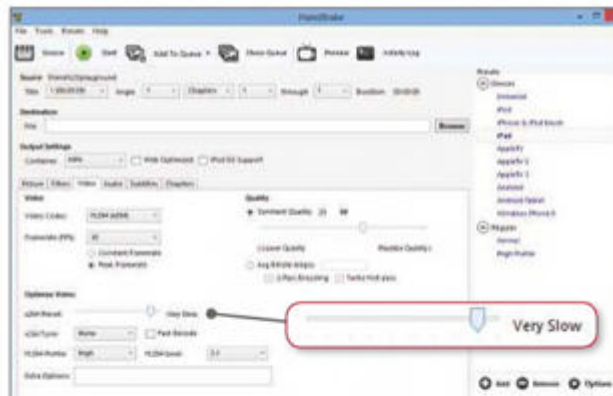
HandBrake can copy and convert DVDs to other formats, but it doesn't work on discs that have copy protection, as Hollywood movies often do. It is perfect for everything else, though, and old DVDs of home movies capturing family events, weddings, birthdays and so on can easily be converted to view on your phone or tablet, or shared online at YouTube, Facebook and other sites.

Insert the disc in the drive and if it starts playing, click the player's Stop button and quit. Run HandBrake and click the Source button in the toolbar. Select the DVD to scan it. When this is

done, click the Browse button to the right of Destination. Select a folder to save the movie to, such as Videos, then enter a filename and click Start.

### Compression vs speed

Are you in a hurry to convert your videos or can you leave HandBrake running for several hours? On the Video tab, under Optimise Video, you'll find a slider that lets you choose how long HandBrake spends compressing the video. If you drag the slider across to Very Slow, it will obviously take a long time to convert the video, but the resulting file will be much smaller. Drag the slider to the Ultra Fast end of the scale and the video conversion is up to 10 times faster, but the file size will be much bigger.



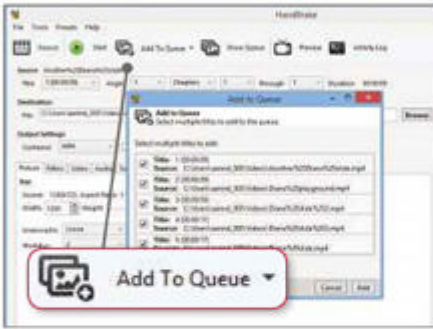
If you have the time, you should optimise the video very slowly to get the best results

### Batch conversion

The speed at which videos are converted can vary, but the main factors are processing power and video length. If you have a low-powered PC or lots of long videos to convert, you could be waiting hours for each one to complete. Set up a batch conversion and you can let it run overnight or when you are doing

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.





You can queue up several videos at a time for Handbrake to convert

something else.

Click Source and select a video to convert. Choose a preset or manually select the conversion settings. Instead of clicking Start, click Add To Queue. After adding all the files you want to convert, click Start and leave HandBrake to carry out the task.

## Picture size vs quality

The Picture tab shows the picture size of the source video and, below it, the size of the video it will be converted to. They don't have to be the same and the video picture size can be made larger or smaller. A video can always be viewed full screen no matter what size of screen you play it on. The video will be automatically scaled up if the picture is too small or scaled down if it is too big.

You can manually set the picture's dimensions on the Picture tab. There is no benefit to making it larger than the screen it will be viewed on; in fact, this is best avoided because it makes the file much larger. However, there are some benefits to making it smaller. If the video is HD quality (1,920 x 1,080 pixels) but you want to convert it to watch on a tablet, laptop or TV with a small non-HD screen, you can reduce the resolution. This will make the converted file size smaller. It's a good idea to do this if you need to save space on your PC's hard drive or device's storage.

Selecting standard DVD quality (720 x 576 pixels) as the output picture size will reduce the size of an HD-resolution video file. The playback quality will be no worse than a normal DVD. The space savings are considerable with a long movie, and the resulting file can end up being a fifth of the size.



Match the picture width to your device's screen. The height is set automatically

## TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

### Clean up poor-quality videos

Old videos and low-light footage can often be marred by noise, grain and other imperfections, and instead of smooth areas of colour, the picture often displays dots and blocks.

Poor-quality videos can be cleaned up using HandBrake's Denoise and Deblock features. Select the Filters tab and, next to Denoise, select NLMeans. Denoising reduces the image quality slightly, so select Ultralight or Light in the Preset menu. Deblocking is set using a simple slider, but don't overdo it. Use the preview function to check the effects of these filters on the video quality before you convert it.



Use the Denoise and Deblock controls to repair poor quality videos

### Work with ISO images

The best way to convert DVDs is to transfer them first to your computer's hard drive. This will make the conversion four times faster than if you do it directly from the DVD. You can also run HandBrake several times to convert the movie to different formats. A CD/DVD burner that creates ISO files will do the job, such as ISO Workshop ([bit.ly/iso369](http://bit.ly/iso369)) or Burnaware Free ([www.burnaware.com](http://www.burnaware.com)).

Insert a DVD into the drive and, if it starts playing automatically, quit the player. Run ISO Workshop and click the Backup Disc icon on the homescreen. Click the Browse button under 'Save to image file' and select the filename and folder for the ISO file. In HandBrake, click the Source button and select File. Go to the folder with the ISO image and select it. You can then proceed as normal.

### Preview videos

When converting a movie from one format to another, the size, frame rate, encoding parameters and more can be changed. If you want to take the guesswork out of how the finished

movie will look, try previewing the result before you start.

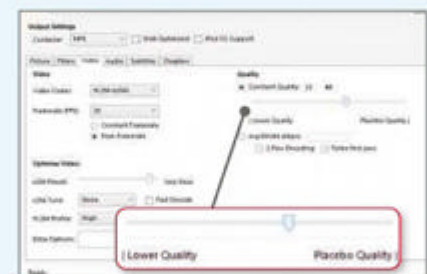
HandBrake's Preview tool uses the popular free media player, VLC (see page 52 for our Workshop on how to use the latest version). If you don't already have it installed, get it from [videolan.org](http://videolan.org). To make sure HandBrake is configured to use it, go to Tools, Options and find VLC Player in the General section. If it's not there, click the Browse button and select VLC.exe to find the correct path. It is usually in C:\Program Files or C:\Program Files (x86).

Once VLC is installed and HandBrake is configured, click the Preview button in the toolbar. There is an option to set the duration, which refers to the number of seconds of video you want to convert. The default of 30 is fine. Longer previews are available but they take more time to create. Previews are stored in the destination folder; if you don't want to install VLC, just open the folder and play the preview clip in Media Player.

### Quality vs file size

The quality slider on the Video tab has two purposes: one is to improve the quality of the converted video and the other is to reduce the file size. You can't do both so you'll have to choose between reducing the file size or increasing the quality.

Drag the slider down to 10 to increase the file size and quality, or drag it up to 30 for a smaller file size and lower quality. This is useful if you want to create videos for uploading to the web and need the file to be as small as possible. Check the quality using the preview facility to make sure it is good enough.



The Quality slider balances the size and playback quality of the final file

# 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](mailto:webuser@dennis.co.uk)



## WINDOWS 8

### Quicker access to basic settings

**Q** One of the most useful widgets on my Nexus 7 tablet and Android smartphone lets me instantly control settings such as volume, Bluetooth, Wi-Fi and so on. Can I get the same facility on my Linx 10 tablet, which runs Windows 8.1? Is there an app or a shortcut I could put on my Desktop?

**Mike Morris, via email**

**A** Windows 8.1 doesn't support widgets but, if you swipe in from the right and tap Settings, you can press and drag the volume icon up or down to adjust the sound, and tap the



**Bluetooth is still accessed in Windows 8.1 via the Charms bar and PC settings**

speaker icon and tap again to mute or unmute. The Brightness icon can be pressed and dragged up and down to adjust the screen brightness. Swipe from the right, tap Settings and tap the network icon to turn the Wi-Fi on or off. Unfortunately, Bluetooth is harder to get to. Swipe from the right, tap Settings, 'Change PC settings', 'PC and Devices', then Bluetooth.

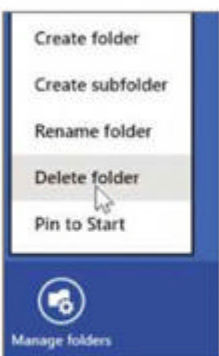
## EMAIL

### Remove Mail folders

**Q** I used to use a browser to access Hotmail and Outlook, but now I find the Mail app on my Windows 8.1 PC more convenient. A long time ago, I set up folders in the Mail app to organise emails, but I no longer need one and would like to delete it. How do I do this in the Mail app? There are no menus, so no obvious way to delete folders.

**D Lawson, via email**

**A** Although Windows 8 Start screen apps don't have menus, the panels that appear at the top and bottom provide access to various functions. Right-click an empty space in the Mail app and a panel opens at the bottom with around 10 icons. Click the one on the left, 'Manage folders'. Some folders can't be deleted: right-click the screen, then



**You can remove Mail folders by clicking the 'Manage folders' button**

left-click 'Manage folders' while viewing the Inbox, and you'll see that there is no option to delete the folder. But if you open a folder that you created yourself, you'll find the 'Manage folders' menu has a 'Delete folder' option.

## MUSIC

### DJ music software

**Q** Is there any software or search engine that can match or find similar MP3 songs by BPM (beats per minute)? Also, is there any software that can automatically mix songs for me?

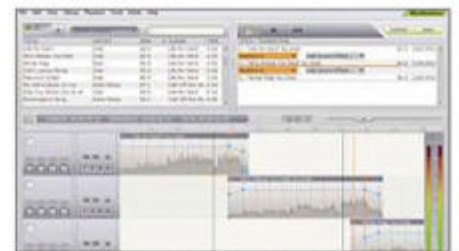
**Vladan, via email**

**A** Dave Tompkins' Music Database ([bit.ly/dave369](http://bit.ly/dave369)) has music organised by beats per minute, so you can select 120BPM, for example, and see a long list of matching music. Given that the songs are from his personal CD collection, it's surprisingly comprehensive.

Find the BPM ([songbpm.com](http://songbpm.com)) is a website that searches for any artist and track and, if it can find the song, shows the beats per minute. Meanwhile, the DJ Cheat Sheet ([www.djcheatsheet.com](http://www.djcheatsheet.com)) shows playlists for songs arranged in order from 70 to 130BPM. The site only seemed to work in Firefox, though.

Beat Match City ([www.beatmatchcity.com](http://www.beatmatchcity.com)) is a blog by a former DJ who has music organised by BPM – just use the links on the left-hand-side of the web page. PaceDJ ([www.pacedj.com](http://www.pacedj.com)) is an iPhone and Android app that is actually designed for runners; it lets you enter the BPM for a workout, then lists all the songs that match.

MixMeister ([www.mixmeister.com](http://www.mixmeister.com)) for PC and Mac is designed for DJs and is probably your best choice. It costs \$66.99 (around £45) but it has all the features you need. It scans your music library and displays all the songs. Click the BPM column header to sort songs by beats per minute. Tracks can be dragged to a playlist and there is a 'Snap to beat' option on the Tools menu that automatically fades one track into another while matching the beat. The same company has a \$3.99 (£2.70) tool that calculates the BPM of any song. Just drag and drop the song onto the program window.



**MixMeister matches the beat of songs that are currently playing and next in the queue**

## EMAIL

### Sky's new mail settings

**Q** I use MailStore Home to archive my emails and had no problems until Yahoo took over Sky email. Now I cannot find the correct server address to connect and archive. Can you advise me which server address I should use?

**Alan Lesley-Bayne, via email**

**A** Your username is your Sky Yahoo Mail address and your password is your Sky Yahoo Mail account password. The incoming mail server (POP3) is [pop.tools.sky.com](http://pop.tools.sky.com) and the outgoing mail server (SMTP) is [smtp.tools.sky.com](http://smtp.tools.sky.com). Email communications are carried out





through numbered ports. Normal incoming email traffic is through port 110, but Sky Yahoo Mail requires an encrypted connection (SSL) which uses port 995. The outgoing port is 445. The authenticate setting should be set to 'clear text'.

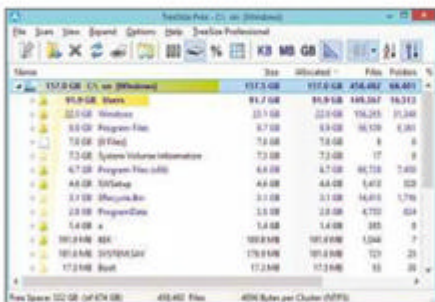
It sounds complicated, but all email software provides access to these settings, although some are hidden on advanced tabs or windows. Enter these settings into MailStore and it should work fine.

**HARDWARE**

**Missing hard drive space**

My Toshiba Equium A100-337 laptop runs Windows Vista Home Premium. According to its hard-drive properties pie chart, there is 45.4GB of used space and 8.94GB of free space out of the total 54.4GB. These figures are totally wrong and 45GB seems to have disappeared. I have run anti-virus and anti-malware scans, and deleted anything that's unnecessary from this machine. How do I recover this lost drive space and bring my PC back to normal?

**Will, via email**



Use TreeSize Free to find out which folders are using the most drive space

An old and well-used copy of Windows could easily require 30GB of space or more, so the 45.4GB figure could be correct. Windows requires a page file to store temporary data, which can use a couple of gigabytes of drive space, and laptops create a hibernate file to store the computer state when you close the lid, which could account for another couple of gigabytes. Add software installations that weren't removed properly, junk and temporary files, and that could explain where your space has gone.

Get a copy of TreeSize Free ([bit.ly/size369](http://bit.ly/size369)), go to the Scan menu and select the hard drive, C:. It can take five minutes or more to complete, then you'll see a list of folders and the amount of space they occupy. Expand each folder to see the space required by any

subfolders displayed. Drill down to see where all the space is being used.

To clean up the computer, check there are no files in the Pictures, Videos and Music folders, then run a program such as Wise Disk Cleaner ([bit.ly/wise369](http://bit.ly/wise369)) or Eusing Cleaner ([bit.ly/eusing369](http://bit.ly/eusing369)). You may be able to recover a little extra drive space, but probably not a great deal.

**GENERAL PC**

**Problems with panoramas**

Many thanks for a most interesting workshop on the updated ICE (Image Composite Editor, Issue 366, [bit.ly/webuser366](http://bit.ly/webuser366)). I'd found it very easy to use in the past and it produced good results. I downloaded the necessary software plus the additional Visual C++ needed, then successfully installed the updated ICE. Everything appears to work OK with one exception. It returns the following error message, "Preview is unavailable (could not create Direct3D 9 texture from shared handle)".

I continued and used Auto Crop and exported the JPEG image to a file. The Panorama was excellent, so the software does what it promises. Can you explain the preview problem? Is it something to do with my 64-bit Vista Ultimate operating system? My computer is seven years old and has an Asus 768MB Nvidia GeForce 8800GTX graphics card.

**Eric Page, via email**

The error message indicates an incompatibility or missing function and the prime suspects are Windows, DirectX and the video card driver. Run Windows update and install every

update available, including optional ones. DirectX is automatically updated these days, but it is a good idea to check the version. Press Windows+R, type dxdiag and press Enter to run the DirectX diagnostic tool. The DirectX version will display on the System tab - you should have DirectX 11. If an older version is installed, go to [bit.ly/dx369](http://bit.ly/dx369) and download it, making sure you select the version for 64-bit Vista.

Now use dxdiag to see whether it is working correctly. Go to the Display tab and, under DirectX Features, check that everything is enabled. If it isn't, go to the Control Panel, select 'Appearance and Personalisation' in Category view, and click 'Adjust screen resolution' under Display. Click the Troubleshoot tab in 'Advanced settings', then click 'Change settings'. Drag the Hardware acceleration slider to Full.

If you skipped a DirectX version, by jumping from 8 to 10, for example, you may have missed software in DirectX 9 that's now causing the error message. Go to [bit.ly/dxinst369](http://bit.ly/dxinst369) and install DirectX 9, and go to [www.geforce.co.uk](http://www.geforce.co.uk) to update the video driver.



Use the display troubleshooter to check that hardware acceleration is on Full

**GENERAL PC**

**Stop high drive usage**

Windows 8.1 is very slow at times. I ran Task Manager and, on the Performance tab, it shows very little processor activity, but the hard drive is at 100-per-cent activity all the time. Something is using the drive and is not letting other programs run properly. What can I do about it?

**Sean Watson, via email**

For about five minutes after Windows starts, there's a lot of drive activity, so check after it has settled down to see if the drive usage is still at 100 per cent. There could be a fault with Windows search indexing,

which can get stuck. Go to the Control Panel and, from one of the icon views, click Indexing Options. Click the Advanced button and click Rebuild in the Troubleshooting section to delete the old search index and create a new one. Drive activity is high while it does this, but it will stop once it has finished.



Try rebuilding the Search Index if your hard drive won't settle



This fortnight... When Roland hasn't been answering your problems, he's been solving them for friends and family

# 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](http://forum.webuser.co.uk)



## TOP TIP

### HARDWARE

## Optimise laptop power settings

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I have seen many laptops, both at work and owned by friends, with power settings that were not configured for optimum performance. When the laptop is running on battery power, you usually want the battery to last as long as possible. But when the laptop is plugged into the mains, there is no need to save power and it should be configured to run as *fast* as possible. Here's the way I do it: click the battery icon on the taskbar and select 'More power options'. Select the 'Power saver' plan to set the maximum battery savings. Click 'Change plan settings' and then 'Change advanced power settings'. All the power settings are listed and if you expand each one, there are two further settings, one for when the laptop is running on the battery and one for when it is connected to the mains. The 'Power saver' plan is already selected, so go through each of the power settings and choose the 'Plugged in' option to



### Configure your laptop for maximum battery life or maximum performance

give you maximum performance. Save the plan afterwards.

The laptop then automatically selects the 'Power saver' settings when it's running from the battery and your manually set maximum performance settings when it's plugged in, giving you the best of both worlds.

**Bill Harding, via email**

### WINDOWS

## Create handy Windows shortcuts

If you often access the System Configuration Utility and the Registry Editor by typing `msconfig` and `regedit` into the Start menu or screen, here's a handy tip that will let you access the tools with a single click. Right-click the Desktop, select New then Shortcut and type `msconfig` or `regedit` into the



A shortcut to `msconfig` lets you access System Configuration with one click

box before clicking Next and Finish to create a shortcut to your chosen tool. You can also create a shortcut to the temporary files folder in this way by typing `%temp%` into the location box.

**Job769q, Web User Forums**

### WEB BUILDING

## Transfer images from Word to the web

I have some documents created in Microsoft Word that were created several years ago and which contain text and images. I wanted to post them on my blog, not as a Word file download, but as a blog post. I initially tried taking a screenshot of each picture in the Word document and then pasting it into a photo editor, cropping the image and saving it, but this took a long time. However, a web search turned up a good

tip for getting images out of Word documents - just save it as a web page.

Go to the File menu and select Save As, then choose where to save the document. But before clicking the Save button, select Web Page in the 'Save as type' list. The text is saved to an HTML file, which wasn't actually much use for my blog as it was easier to copy and paste text from the document. However, the images in the document are saved to a separate folder and are then easily accessed.

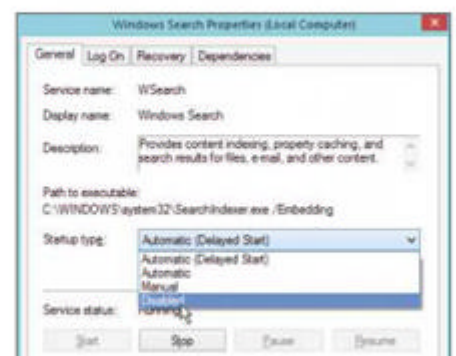
**Alan Kirby, via email**

### GENERAL PC

## Speed up Windows by disabling search

If you can live without Windows' built-in search facility, you can speed up your hard drive with a simple tweak. Open an Explorer window and select Computer or This PC in the left panel. Right-click the hard drive and click Properties in the menu. Clear the tick from the box at the bottom that's labelled 'Allow files on this drive to have contents indexed...'

Next, press Windows+R and type `services.msc`. Find the Windows Search service and double-click it. In the new window set the 'Startup type' to Disabled. Restart Windows to finish. Some people have found that this cures a slow PC, but others may only



Disable the Windows Search service if you do not intend to use it





notice a small speed boost.

**Sam Johnson, via email**

**Web User says:** Try this and replace Windows built-in search with one of the search tools we reviewed in Issue 368 ([bit.ly/webuser368](http://bit.ly/webuser368)).

**BROWSERS**

**Use WhatsApp on your PC**

I'm a big fan of the mobile messaging app WhatsApp ([web.whatsapp.com](http://web.whatsapp.com)), because it lets you stay in touch with friends anywhere in the world at little or no cost. However, one of my frustrations with the app was that I could only use it on my mobile phone, when my PC's larger screen and full-size keyboard would have been much more convenient. Thankfully, the app's developers recently introduced WhatsApp Web, which lets you log into the chat service from



**WhatsApp Web lets you use the messaging tool from your Desktop browser**

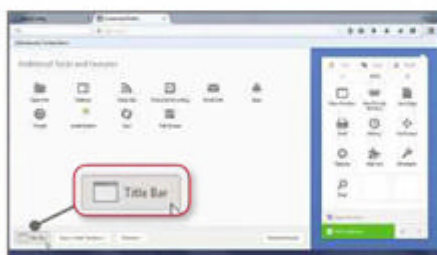
your desktop browser. It's compatible with Android, Windows Phone and Blackberry devices and you can use it in Firefox and Opera as well as Chrome. To use the service, simply tap the menu button on your phone and choose WhatsApp Web, then visit [web.whatsapp.com](http://web.whatsapp.com) with your PC and scan the QR code with your smartphone. Your browser will then refresh to show all of your WhatsApp conversations.

**Tom Mitchell, via email**

**BROWSERS**

**Hide the Firefox Title Bar**

For most people, Firefox's tabs appear right at the top of the browser's window. If they do not, this might be because you have either the Title Bar or the Menu Bar activated. To disable the Menu Bar, click View, Toolbars and untick Menu Bar (or right-click the top of the browser and untick Menu Bar). To disable the Title Bar, you need to click the browser menu, select Customize and then click the Title Bar button. If this doesn't work, you can



**Firefox's Title Bar can be toggled on and off from its Customize menu**

type `about:config` into the address bar and press Enter, click 'I'll be careful, I promise' and set 'browser.tabs.drawInTitlebar' to 'true'.

**Madeline and Moonshine, Web User Forums**

**SOFTWARE**

**Lock your Caps Lock key**

Don't you hate it when you accidentally press the Caps Lock key and then type an entire sentence before realising you'll need to delete it and start over again? Thankfully, I've discovered a free, lightweight program called Lock State ([bit.ly/lockstate369](http://bit.ly/lockstate369)), which makes this problem a thing of the past by letting you lock your Num Lock, Caps Lock and Scroll Lock buttons to their current state. If you still want to be able to use the keys and would prefer not to lock them, the program simply notifies you when one of the keys has been pressed with an on-screen display and an optional sound alert. Lock State can even save the state of your keys between sessions, which is very handy if you like to use a specific configuration.

**Dan Barton, via email**

**WINDOWS 8.1**

**Improve Windows 8.1's Start screen**

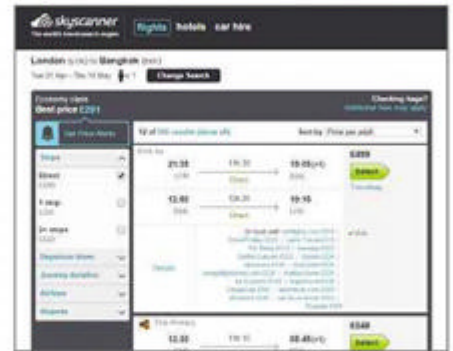
If you can't wait to wave goodbye to Windows 8.1's Start screen when the stable release of Windows 10 is made available, this tip may make your next few months a little more bearable. Personally, I think one of the reasons Windows 8 feels so clunky is that there is no consistency between the Desktop and the Start screen. On older versions of Windows, the majority of your Desktop would still be visible when you open the Start menu, while in Windows 8 it fills the entire screen and feels entirely separate. In Windows 10, you'll be able to choose which version of the Start screen you prefer (big or small), but until then I find that giving the Start screen the same background as your Desktop provides a little more consistency even if it offers no real, tangible benefit. To make your Start screen background match that on your Desktop, open Settings from the Charms bar, tap Personalize and click the preview of your Desktop background. When you update your Desktop image, the Start screen image will be synced and kept up to date, too!

**Ian Roberts, via email**

**TRAVEL**

**Find the cheapest flights**

Skyscanner ([www.skyscanner.net](http://www.skyscanner.net)) is a really handy website if you're booking a holiday and want to find the cheapest



**Skyscanner helps you to find the cheapest flights on a particular date**

flights available. Simply enter the cities you're flying from and to, and the dates on which you want to fly and the search engine returns a range of options from different airlines. From the results page, you can easily identify the length of each journey as well as the total cost of the flights. There are also filters so that you can see if it's cheaper to include one or more stops in your trip. My favourite feature, however, is the flexible date option that lets you see the cheapest flights in an entire month or even year. This is really handy if, like me, you're retired and don't mind when you go away!

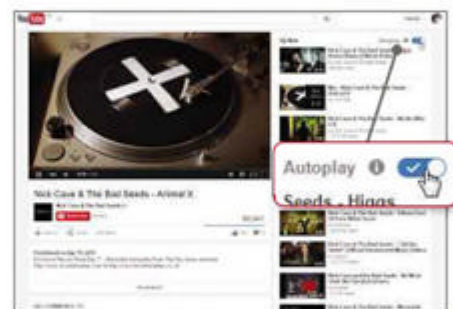
**Andrew Wilkinson, via email**

**WEBSITES**

**Turn off YouTube's Autoplay feature**

If you've used YouTube recently, you might have noticed that when a video finishes, it's followed promptly by another video that you didn't click on. This turns the website into a personalised TV channel, of sorts, with a never-ending stream of similar content on show. Helpfully, the website even shows you the video that's 'Up Next' in the top of its sidebar. However, this feature can be really irritating if you only want to watch one video at a time. Luckily, turning it off is as simple as switching Autoplay off using the blue switch in its sidebar. You can also cancel the video by clicking the countdown that loads between videos or scroll down to view the comments, so that the player is no longer on view.

**Rob, via email**



**YouTube's Autoplay feature can be switched off from its sidebar**



# Readers' Helpdesk

Our pick of the best solutions posted on our reader forums. Visit [forum.webuser.co.uk](http://forum.webuser.co.uk) – it's friendly and free!

## BROWSERS

### Why can't I print my Yahoo emails from Chrome?

**Q** I cannot print emails directly from Yahoo and a notification appears saying that a pop-up blocker in Chrome might be causing the problem. I use Adblock Plus ([adblockplus.org](http://adblockplus.org)) and have it set to block the ads on Yahoo, so could this have something to do with it?

**NE5, Web User Forums**

**A** If you're trying to use Yahoo's own print option by selecting Print from the More menu, then it'll be Chrome's built-in pop-up blocker causing your problems. Click the Print button again, clear the failure message that appears and you'll see a symbol resembling a window with a red cross in your address bar. Click it and select 'Always allow



*Chrome can be set to allow all future pop-ups from your current domain*

pop-ups from...' to stop Chrome blocking pop-ups from Yahoo in the future.

**Succulent95, Web User Forums**

## WINDOWS

### Can I stop programs loading on startup for a specific user?

**Q** The PC I'm using has two user accounts – one for my parents and one for my nephew. However, my parents want to block some of the startup items, most of which are useful to my nephew. Can this be done?

**mrmatt, Web User Forums**

**A** I suspect that when you installed those programs, you made them

available to all users instead of one particular user. To resolve this, you could try reinstalling them in the appropriate user account using the 'custom install' option to make sure they are only available to that user. If it doesn't give you that option, you can stop the programs from launching on Startup using System Configuration by typing `msconfig` into the Start menu and choosing its Startup tab. Once they're disabled, you can set them to launch only in your nephew's user account by typing `shell:startup` into the Start menu and adding shortcuts to the programs to his personal startup folder.

If you're struggling to identify where a program is being activated from, Codestuff Starter ([bit.ly/codestuff369](http://bit.ly/codestuff369)) will help you find this information. It should list all of the programs that launch on Startup and you can also use it to disable them. Autoruns ([bit.ly/autoruns369](http://bit.ly/autoruns369)), which is seen by many as the definitive tool for managing startup items, is also well worth a look.

**Joe\_London, succulent95 and alanwood, Web User Forums**



*Startup items can be added for one user by opening `shell:startup` from the Start menu*

## HARDWARE

### What is an active USB cable and do I need one?

**Q** I am relocating my office and need USB extension leads to connect my PC to my Epson and Canon printers. While looking at cables, I came across a comment on a basic USB extension lead noting that the cable was not suitable for printers and that an 'active' cable would be required. What is an active cable and why would I need this for a printer?

**grumpyoldman, Web User Forums**

**A** In nearly every case, the longer the wire, the greater the chance of signal degradation. Beyond about five metres, USB cables require a signal booster to make sure that they still work effectively. Active cables are often only bus-powered, but some will require mains power adapters. For



*USB cables longer than 5m must be powered to maintain the signal strength*

more information, visit: [bit.ly/usb369](http://bit.ly/usb369). An alternative option is to use a USB-to-Ethernet adapter like this one ([bit.ly/ethernet369](http://bit.ly/ethernet369)) to extend your cables. This particular adapter is only USB 1.1 though, so make sure that's fast enough for your printers. Some routers have built-in USB ports that you can use to connect your printer and print wirelessly, so this is also worth considering. Lastly, you could try using a Powerline adapter ([bit.ly/powerline369](http://bit.ly/powerline369)) to pass the USB signal via your mains wiring.

**succulent95, Sneakybeaky, Space\_Cowboy and Izzit, Web User Forums**

## SOFTWARE

### Why are all my photos duplicated in Picasa?

**Q** All of my images in My Pictures seem to be duplicated in Picasa. With more than 1,000 photos potentially duplicated, I'm worried about how much unnecessary space this is taking up on my hard drive. If I delete the files from Picasa, will this solve the problem or should I just uninstall the program?

**kingfisher171, Web User Forums**

**A** Picasa just provides another way of viewing the pictures already on your computer, so there are no duplicates and you don't need to delete anything. You can uninstall Picasa if you wish, but your





## SOFTWARE

## How can I stop LibreOffice from crashing?

**Q** I have used LibreOffice on my Windows 8 Desktop PC without any problems until recently when opening it caused my PC to freeze. I have reinstalled LibreOffice, but this has not resolved the problem. Can anyone help?

**duffer, Web User Forums**

**A** A potential fix is to rename LibreOffice's 'user' folder. To do this, navigate to it when the program is closed by pressing Windows+R and typing %UserProfile%\AppData\Roaming\OpenOffice\4 before pressing Enter. The window that opens shows the 'user' folder, which you can rename to something like user\_backup. After you've renamed the folder afresh, a new user folder is created when you next open LibreOffice and create a new document. If this solves your problem, it was probably caused by a corrupted original user folder. The 'user' folder holds information such as changed preferences, so it's not uncommon for users to make a copy of a good user folder and keep it handy for when unwanted oddities and quirks suddenly happen. This is similar to Microsoft Word users who might make a copy of a known, good Normal.dot file for similar reasons.

**Moonshine, Web User Forums**

**Web User says:** See our comparison of free office software on page 44 for more about LibreOffice.



**CCleaner's Duplicate Finder helps you find unnecessary duplicates on your hard drive**

pictures will remain where they are. I know someone who mistakenly assumed that the photos she was viewing in Picasa were duplicates and deleted them. Unfortunately, this meant that she actually deleted the photos in My Pictures and she lost them for good when she emptied her Recycle Bin. A quick way to check for duplicate files without installing other dedicated third-party software is to use CCleaner ([www.piriform.com/ccleaner](http://www.piriform.com/ccleaner)). Click Tools and Duplicate Finder, leave the Search settings at their default and select the drive(s) you want to check before clicking Search. You will see a lot of duplicates, some of which are required to be duplicated, so only delete media files (photos, videos, music) if you decide to get rid of anything. I'd recommend you back up everything first (chaotic or not),

as that way you can always start again.

On the subject of uninstalling Picasa, it has its plus points, especially if your pictures are scattered about and you want the option to view them all in one place. If you want to try something else, then Fast Stone Image Viewer ([bit.ly/faststone369](http://bit.ly/faststone369)) and XnView ([bit.ly/xnview369](http://bit.ly/xnview369)) are both excellent alternatives.

**ianrj, tornado, izzit and Stewart40, Web User Forums**

## SECURITY

## Do I need Java installed on my PC?

**Q** Java keeps popping up on my PC with a message saying that I need to update it, but I'm sure I read something about Java being a security risk and that it wasn't needed anyway. Should I update it or should I uninstall any instances of Java I find on my PC?

**RobthePrince, Web User Forums**

**A** There have been a lot of security issues with Java over recent months and you'd probably get on fine without it. Personally, I keep it installed but it's disabled in my browsers. On the very rare occasions when it's needed, it's easy enough to re-enable it temporarily and disable it again later. To disable Java in

your browser, open the program, go to the Security tab and make sure that 'Enable Java content in the browser' is unticked. If you decide to do this, you should still make sure you have the latest version installed and if you have a 64-bit version of whichever OS you run but use both 32-bit and 64-bit browsers, make sure you have both versions of Java installed. If, however, you want to uninstall Java altogether, these instructions from its website ([bit.ly/javaremove369](http://bit.ly/javaremove369)) should be useful.

**Madeline, Web User Forums**

**Web User says:** See our 'Browser tools you should stop using' feature on page 48 for more about Java.



**You can disable Java content in your browsers using the program's Security tab**

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### Hey BBC, if it ain't broke don't fix it!

**W**as there really any need for the BBC to overhaul its BBC News website yet again? It only did this a few years ago, and there was nothing wrong with the current one. I assume the changes are to make it "more responsive" so that it works better on phones and tablets, which is the excuse virtually every site now uses for ditching a perfectly fine design in favour of a characterless one. But surely there's already a good BBC News app to use on mobile devices, so why do they need to mess up the site for everyone else?

Don't get me wrong, I'm not opposed to change, and I realise that



Turkey away shirt



BBC News

websites need a lick of paint now and again, or we'd all still be living in 1998. But when it's BBC licence payers' money that's being used to fund unnecessary redesigns, then I believe we should have a say in the matter. I'd love to know who the BBC consulted to help it develop the brash new site which, with its red stripe

on a white background, looks like a football shirt. I now find using BBC News is like being shouted at, which distracts from the important stories, while making you focus on frivolous videos about birds and such.

One of the best things about the BBC is that it usually implements changes gradually (apart from the recent sacking of Jeremy Clarkson, of course!). I know I must sound like a Luddite, but I don't see why mobile users are being prioritised over PC visitors, and why a site that millions of people were happy with has been 'dumbed down'.

*Ellis Brennan, via email*

### Upgrading your PC requires extra power

I usually let errors in your magazine slide because they are for the most part minor and will do little harm overall. However, the Weekend Project in Issue 367 ([bit.ly/webuser367](http://bit.ly/webuser367)) about upgrading your PC was a step too far. You made a half-baked attempt to show people how to upgrade their GPU (graphics processor) and nowhere in the article have you mentioned that in all likelihood it will also be necessary to upgrade the power supply (PSU), which is an unforgivable omission.

I suspect most of your readers own off-the-shelf PCs equipped with the most basic PSU, which will not power most of the GPU upgrades mentioned in the article. This means that installing a GPU will not be as straightforward as your readers may think.



I also note that you do not mention removing old drivers when changing from Nvidia to AMD, which should also be done, and that you advise using the driver disc that came with the new GPU. This is nonsense because the drivers contained on said disc will invariably be out of date.

So there are three points where I feel you were in error, with the first being a major mistake.

*Glenn Faulkner, Edinburgh*

**Andy Shaw, Web User Technical & Reviews Editor, says:** I think you may have missed some of the article, because on page 60, under the heading 'Increase the power', we explained that you might need a new PSU if performing the recommended upgrades. The Weekend Project was intended to be a jumping-on point for people who are interested in upgrading. Unfortunately, on this occasion, we didn't have the room to go into all the details that everyone upgrading a PC might need to know.

### Get tough with motorists on the phone

In reference to Roger Whitcomb in 'What you say' (Inbox, Issue 367), who suggests that motorists who get caught using a

mobile phone while driving should get six points on their licence. I personally think drivers who text or use their phones should get an automatic three-year ban and that their insurance should be trebled. If they kill anyone, they should receive a 15-year prison sentence.



*Keith Heathfield, ex-police officer*

### Beware of time-wasting buyers on eBay

Barry's column about eBay time wasters in Issue 366 ([bit.ly/webuser366](http://bit.ly/webuser366)) struck a chord with me. In the past couple of months, I have had the same treatment from a couple of total time wasters. You know the story: you check your listing on eBay, see it has been sold, send an invoice to the buyer and then contact them with all the necessary details.

I waited in on three separate occasions for a supposed buyer who promised to pay cash on collection to collect their item (it was far too heavy to post). The excuses he gave each time were pathetic - more fool me for waiting in more than



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once! I reported him to eBay, who promised to look into the matter, but he is still trading.

Ever since then, I will only accept PayPal payments, not cash on collection. I do not give out any address details or telephone numbers until I see the payment in my PayPal account. I would like to see eBay ban these people from trading and, if they default on payments, then eBay should be responsible for paying the seller.

It's a shame that the term 'legal binding contract' can't be part of eBay's terms and conditions, which should state that if you agree to buy something, you must pay within 24 hours or legal action will be taken.

*Tim Hudson, via email*

## Watch out for unscrupulous sellers, too

Following a reference to 'Buyer beware' in Barry's column in Issue 366, I had an online 'Buyer beware' experience, too.

I purchased a satellite receiver from a Glasgow-based retailer, through Amazon Marketplace. The receiver was found to be defective within the 12-month warranty period; it had two defects, in fact. I contacted the retailer and complained, and was asked to return the receiver, at my expense, which I did. After some email correspondence, I was offered a 50-per-cent refund, which I refused. I then attempted to get the retailer to comply with the terms of the 12-month warranty, by offering me either a full refund or a replacement receiver, but they failed to reply, which is how it stands at the moment.

I've attempted to get assistance from my local Citizens Advice Bureau and the Trading Standards Department. Their advice is not helpful and it appears that they don't want to know. All the email correspondence has been saved.

Sadly, it appears that the consumer these days is completely helpless in this situation, unless you resort to an expensive solicitor. So again: 'Buyer beware' when buying on the internet!

*Derek Wellings, via email*



## DO YOU APPROVE OF MPs BEING GIVEN A FREE IPAD AIR AND LAPTOP?

It's better than letting the robbing bunch buy their own and then claim twice the cost back on expenses.

*Christopher R Hyomes @ChrisHyomes*

If it's done to save money and paper then it's a good idea, plus documents will be available on demand and can be digitally signed.

*Paul @abertawejack*

No way. They get paid too much as it is and they're not working in a dangerous environment like my hubby is, whose pay is rubbish.

*Lorraine Thorpe*

It's taking the mickey out of taxpayers. Why not give them to families who can't afford them?

*Shawn Adams*

And how long will it take for half of them to be left in taxis and on trains?

*John Wells*

## DO YOU AGREE WITH AN AUSTRALIAN WOMAN BEING CHARGED BY THE POLICE FOR BARING HER BREASTS ON STREET VIEW (bit.ly/sv369)?

It's funny she did it, but stupid to charge her when people do much worse stuff and get away with it.

*Andrew Clennell*

My goodness, can't people just have a bit of harmless fun in this day and age? That said, she shouldn't have done such a thing in front of her children.

*James McGinnis*

What made this stupid woman even

think that the world would want to see her knockers in the first place?

*Steve Hamilton*

A storm in a K-cup.

*David Elsdon*

## DO YOU LIKE THE RELAUNCHED BBC NEWS WEBSITE?

No, it looks less structured, like a site that hasn't fully loaded.

*David Fleming*

It's a complete dog's dinner! I used to be able to navigate with ease. Now it's bland and lacking in most ways. Utter rubbish and a waste of my tax.

*Richard Bond*

No, not really. Too cluttered, too much info. Why change it?

*Matthew Lock @lockylive*

It's okay. I just need to get used to it.

*Chris Cole*

## WILL YOU TRY THE SPARTAN BROWSER NOW IT'S AVAILABLE IN THE WINDOWS 10 PREVIEW?

I'm curious, but I feel it will still fall below the standard set by Chrome and Firefox.

*Matt McCallion*

Yep, you can't knock it until you've tried it. They've made it minimal like Chrome, but there's still no reason for me to ditch Google's browser.

*Si Mellor*

I'll try it, but it will need to support an advert blocker for me to use it regularly.

*Ethel Ethel @EthelEthel*

I'll definitely give it a go. After all, Internet Explorer wasn't all that bad.

*Paul Wallace*

I'll try it, but the moment it starts playing up I'm installing Chrome.

*Iain James Lewis*

# ! Page 404



Barry Collins fears that the BBC's switchover will doom internet radio in years to come

## Why I've switched off my internet radio

Sometimes, we're just too clever for our own good. Light-switches aren't good enough any more, we have to have colour-changing bulbs controlled by an app. The 'smartwatch' is so smart that it can't tell the time by sunset because its battery has died. And now you can't even turn on the radio and listen to Terry Wogan, at least not if you were mugged into buying the wrong type of internet radio.

Almost since the day Marconi legged it down the Patent Office, radio has been a blissfully simple technology. The broadcaster sticks a 20ft transmitter on the roof, and anything from a car stereo to a kitchen portable to a crystal radio set knocked together by a 10-year-old can pick up the signal. I'm simplifying, of course, but not by much. Analogue radio just works, and has done so for almost a century.

Then, at the turn of this century, we decided that wasn't clever enough. What we needed was digital radio, first in the form of the vastly over-hyped DAB and then 'internet radio'. Of course, there's no such thing as 'internet radio', in the same way that there's no such thing as 'internet television' or 'internet photos'. What you have is a bewildering set of competing formats, each capable of being broadcast at different qualities (or bit rates, to use the technical term).

Somehow, the BBC ended up supporting several of these. So, for example, Radio 3 was being streamed on some devices at super-high quality 320Kbps via a system called Shoutcast, while also being broadcast to others in



Windows Media Format, at a much lower bit rate. The quality of the listening experience varied wildly depending on which stream your radio was compatible with.

Finally, the BBC grew tired of supporting all these different formats, and decided to standardise on just one, with a fallback MP3 stream for some devices. But when this big switchover occurred in February, many listeners were left stranded.

Some internet radios (up to 5 per cent, by the BBC's estimates) don't support the new standards the BBC has opted for, so those glorious high quality Radio 3 streams were shunted down to average quality MP3, and many live sports broadcasts were removed from internet radio because of rights issues.

“ There's no such thing as 'internet radio', just as there's no such thing as 'internet television' or 'internet photos' ”

The BBC was forced into a grovelling apology (they must have a department dedicated to this by now), with senior product manager Jim Simmons pleading that he was "honestly upset" that the BBC had "caused this disruption", and it was doing its best to serve a "massively disparate set of users, from iPhones to Squeezeboxes, all with very different expectations and desires".

Internet radio manufacturers will doubtless fall in line and support the latest, non-proprietary standards on their latest devices, but it's tough luck if you backed the wrong horse last time - your internet radio has just become an overpriced doorstop. And who's to say it won't happen again when Jim Simmons' successor decides to move to another new format in five or 10 years' time?

So keep a hold of that trusty old FM portable that's sat on your kitchen windowsill. Chances are it will outlast any of the flashy new internet radios you'll find on the shop shelves this year.



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