



# Windows

## Help & Advice

# WINDOWS 8.1

# POWER TIPS

Your ultimate guide to Windows!

- Customise your PC
- Personalise the desktop
- Shortcuts revealed

### BEGINNERS' GUIDE

Solve technical problems for friends and family



### PLUS HOW TO

- Add vintage effects to photos
- Use Gmail with your Mail app
- Take better screen captures
- Fix OneDrive problems

  
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Windows tutorials



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Help & support



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# Windows Help & Advice

## Welcome

We can all find new ways of doing something in Windows. Quite often you'll discover a new tip that will change the way you've been working for years, and saves you time every time you do it. This month's main feature, starting on page 12, has 100 of these essential tips for you – we guarantee it will improve your PC life! This feature is dedicated to Windows 8.1, but, don't worry, a lot of the tips still apply to older versions of Windows, including Windows 7.

**Graham Barlow** Editor-in-Chief  
[www.facebook.com/windowsmag](http://www.facebook.com/windowsmag)

Another unmissable feature this issue looks at how to survive being the go-to person when your friends and family are having trouble with their PC. See page 62 for how to offer the best help to those persistent callers and keep both them and their PCs happy.

We also have the latest news, views and reviews, as well as some great tutorials to help you get the best out of your Windows PC. Until next time!



**SUBSCRIBE TO THE MAG TODAY AND SAVE - JUST TURN TO PAGE 32!**

We pride ourselves in being the only magazine on the shelves to show you exactly how to get the best from the Windows operating system, whether it's Windows 7 or Windows 8.1. *Windows Help & Advice* also comes with a disc, on which you can find some of the great apps covered in the magazine. If you get a chance, take a look at how you can even read the magazine on your laptop, phone or tablet.



Don't miss our **NEXT ISSUE**, when we show you how to...

- Speed up Windows 8.1 → Store 15GB of photos online for free with Google+
- Create and use Mind Maps to brainstorm ideas → Organise your desktop

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# Windows Help & Advice

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“Each month we include as wide a range of tutorials as possible, to help you use your computer more efficiently and inspire you to try new things”

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Print and digital bundle – only £35.49 for six months

Find out more on page 32



**ON THE COVER**

## WINDOWS 8.1 POWER TIPS

12 100 quick tweaks for a happy PC life



**ON THE COVER**

## 10 FREE MEDIA PLAYERS

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# Discover

▶ NEW THINGS TO DO ▶ AMAZING WEBSITES ▶ FASCINATING FACTS



**TIDAL .WAV** Jay Z's got 99 problems, but the fidelity of his streaming service ain't one

## Soundtrack your life

# How to get access to a huge music collection

The new, artist-backed Tidal means music fans now have three good streaming services to choose from

**Y**ou know that geek has hit the mainstream when a piece of software gets endorsed by Jay Z, Rihanna, Kanye West and Madonna. They're some of the megastars behind Tidal, a streaming service which promises high-quality tunes and fairer pay for its artists.

Tidal isn't the only music streaming service, and paying for a monthly subscription rather than individual downloads has become the dominant way to get music. It makes sense – why spend £120 a year on 12 albums, when you can spend the same on unlimited music?

Spotify is the market leader in this area. For £10 a month you can access its vast repository of albums, which has recently added music legends Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin's back catalogues. We've also found that obscure music is available on the service that isn't available elsewhere.

Tidal's basic service is also £10 a month, but for £20 you can subscribe to Tidal

HiFi. This promises lossless sound quality, which means the music you listen to is indistinguishable from that of the quality of a CD. Tidal also benefits from curated editorial content, something Spotify still hasn't quite got right, and can help you navigate the often choppy waters of modern music.

If you already have a huge collection of MP3s look no further than Google's Play Music. While you can pay £10 a month for a subscription, its advantage is you can upload up to 50,000 MP3 files and play them via the web or its mobile app,

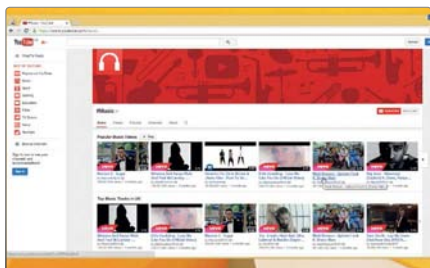
without spending a penny.

The great thing about these music services is you can flit between them until you find something that works for you. Spotify's a great starting point, and brilliant for rarer tracks, Tidal pairs well with the super-duper HiFi, and Google Play Music is perfect if you want the advantages of both a large MP3 collection and a streaming music service.

**"Subscriptions rather than downloads is now the way to get music"**

## YOUTUBE MUSIC Make the most of music vids

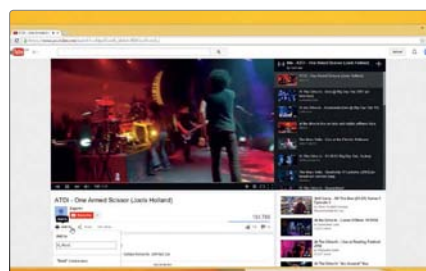
YouTube, Google's streaming video service, is a neat alternative to paid-for subscription services. Not only does it contain almost every piece of music you can think of, often with accompanying video, but it's free. The website recently realised it could be a good music platform unto itself, and launched its Music tab. A subscription service is coming later this year, but for now you can make the most of its content and find the music you love.



**HIT PARADE** Begin by visiting [youtube.com/music](http://youtube.com/music). Here you'll find the UK's most popular music vids



**CHOPIN LIST** Go further down the page and you'll find playlists and all sorts of collections



**ROLL YOUR OWN** Start to create a playlist by clicking the plus button underneath a video

## The Knowledge... + | <>



The Microsoft Surface 3: it's even thinner and lighter

### Microsoft Surface 3

#### So, um, what's surfaced here then?

Groan. I'll pretend you didn't just make that terrible joke. The Surface 3 is Microsoft's latest attempt to crack both the laptop and tablet market in one fell swoop. Like its predecessors, the Surface 3 functions as both, with a handy magnetic snap-on keyboard to transmogrify it from tablet to laptop.

#### Very nice. So what's new about this one then?

The 10.8-inch display is slightly larger, with an HD-plus resolution. Within you'll find an upgraded quad-core processor, 64 or 128GB of storage and 2 or 4GB of system memory. The device is capable of driving up to three connected displays, too, so you can happily connect it to your TV for media playback.

#### That sounds pretty impressive. Is there anything else worth mentioning?

According to Microsoft it's the thinnest and lightest Surface ever, which is pretty impressive considering how thin and light the Surface was anyway. It also boasts 10 hours of battery life, and a full version of Windows rather than the somewhat hobbled RT flavour that shipped on earlier Pros.

#### So what's the main competition for the Surface 3 then?

Apple's iPad is still Microsoft's biggest competitor in this field, but sales have waned recently, dropping 18 per cent in the last year. However, Apple is rumoured to be launching a more Surface-like iPad Pro later this year, which will act more like a computer and less like a tablet.

#### Okay, I'm sold on it. When can I get a Surface and how much is it?

The new Surface is out now, and it'll set you back £420 (64GB storage/2GB RAM) or £500 (128GB storage/4GB RAM). However, if you want to make the most of it you'll need to buy a Surface Pen (£37) and a Type Cover (£100) as well. We recommend hunting around for bundle deals if you're really keen.

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HENRY WINCHESTER  
TECH EXPERT

# WINDOWS INSIDER

## EXPOSING YOUR PC'S SECRETS

### Windows Vista

#### Disable Startup Programs

Programs loading when you turn your PC can cause it to boot up slowly, particularly if it's an older model. They often find their way into your computer surreptitiously, so it can be hard to know what's got in where, but fortunately it's easy to turn off startup programs. Simply open the Start menu and type "msconfig.exe" and click the result. Now choose the 'Startup' tab and you'll see everything that loads when you turn on your PC. Untick the boxes next to anything you don't want to load, such as Spotify or LibreOffice's launcher, then choose 'OK'. Next time you switch on your PC it should boot a lot more quickly.



### Windows 7

#### Videos in Start Menu

We almost have as many videos as we do photos and music files nowadays, but they're neglected in Windows 7's Start Menu. It's easy to quickly open your videos folder, though. Right-click on the Start button and then choose 'Properties'. Choose the Start Menu tab and click 'Customise'. Next you can tick 'Display as a link' to immediately launch the video folder, or 'Display as a menu' to jump straight to recent files. Here you'll also find options to display photo and music folders as menus, so you can access those files more quickly as well.

### Windows 8



#### Get Hold of Old Games

Searching for Solitaire or missing Minesweeper? Unlike previous versions Windows 8 doesn't come with any of Microsoft's classic games preinstalled, but there are graphically upgraded versions waiting in the Windows Store. To find them press the Start button, choose 'Games', and search for 'Microsoft'. You'll find all the classics, such as Minesweeper with a brand-new adventure mode, an achievement-enabled version of Solitaire, and an overhauled Mahjongg. There are also new casual titles, such as Treasure Hunt, Jackpot and Bingo.

#### Struggling to get something to work? Need a tip?

Then email us your woes (to [windowsmagazine@futurenet.com](mailto:windowsmagazine@futurenet.com) with the subject line 'Windows Insider') and we'll share your perfect Windows tweaks in a future issue.

### Tip of the month

### Be at OneDrive

## Get OneDrive on any Windows PC

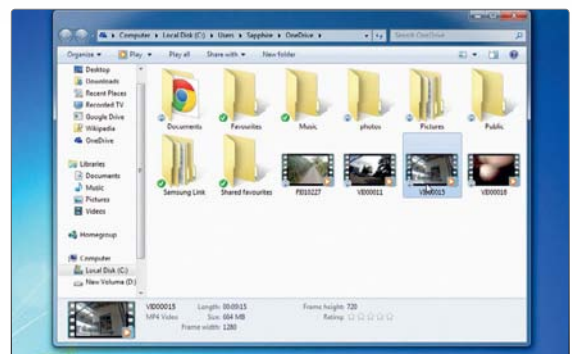
Painlessly back up important files online with Microsoft's free cloud storage system

OneDrive is Microsoft's brilliant cloud storage system, which backs up your important files and folders online so you can access them from anywhere.

It's baked in to Windows 8.1, but it's also available as an almost-invisible addition for Vista, 7 and 8. Visit [onedrive.live.com](http://onedrive.live.com) and choose 'Download'. Next click the 'Download now' link under OneDrive. Run the software, login to your Microsoft

account, and stick to the default settings when asked.

When you next open Explorer you'll see a new folder entitled 'OneDrive' to the left. This functions just like a local folder on your computer, with the added benefit that everything stored here is automatically backed up online. Now you can visit [onedrive.live.com](http://onedrive.live.com) from mobile devices and access content stored in the OneDrive folder.



**IN THE CLOUD** With a very useful 15GB of free storage OneDrive can hold lots of your music and videos to be accessed anywhere



Everyone's talking about...

# What is the 'internet of things' anyway?

We take a look at the smart new tech that looks likely to change our homes, our cars and our lives

If you've been to a technology store recently you'll notice a proliferation of normal items with the word 'smart' in front of them. Smart TVs, smart lightbulbs, smart locks, smart dishwashers – the list is nigh-on endless. These Wi-Fi connected gizmos are part of a bigger movement, dubbed the 'internet of things'.

The 'things' in the phrase can be anything from security cameras to thermostats to cars. The only requirement is they're capable of being controlled by the internet. A smart security camera, for example, could send you a text when it detects movement. They can also work the other way, such as a Wi-Fi coffee machine, which can be activated from anywhere in the world.

These may seem like tech novelties, but smarter home objects can save you money. Hive, the internet-connected thermostat, is a clever system that automatically detects when you're within a certain distance of your home and heats it to a nice temperature for when you walk in

through the door. The company believes this can save you £150 a year.

While it's useful for the average punter, internet of things devices provide an additional feedback loop for companies. Hive's stats have shown the average person living in Scotland keeps their houses at a warmer average temperature than someone in Cornwall. Obviously...



This is just the tip of the iceberg, though: connected cars can send many millions of pieces of data feedback every minute, from the way the driver accelerates to the way thousands of cars take the same corner. This colossal amount of information, termed 'big data', could make cars safer and more economical.

If you're interested in the internet of things we recommend starting small and building up gradually, rather than overhauling your house. A Wi-Fi socket, for instance, is a cheap way to get into the internet of things, while giving you remote power control of whatever you plug into it, which could be a lamp, TV or dishwasher.

Download this... + < >

## Gifprint

gifprint.com

If you ever see a small animation or video on the internet chances are it's a GIF. Created by ISP CompuServe in 1987, the Graphics Interchange Format is a file that can include multiple frames played one after the other, creating the illusion of movement in much the same way as a cinema screen.

The problem is that printing out GIFs removes all the animation, so that funny video of a cat simply becomes a motionless, useless and unfunny picture of a cat. Gifprint has found a way around this by turning the individual frames into a homemade flipbook, a little like the stick figures who adorn the corners of many a school textbook. If you're feeling really clever you can even create custom ones with a small video file and the gif converter available at zamzar.com.



**STOP MOTION** Bring animations to life in the real world with Gifprint

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## THE 60-SECOND QUIZ

*Pens at the ready, your time starts now!*

**1** What does Facebook acquisition Aquila specialise in?  
A) Credit reports  
B) Internet-carrying drones  
C) Driverless vehicles

**2** Google has partnered with Johnson & Johnson to create what?  
A) Smart baby powder  
B) More Johnsons  
C) Surgical instruments

**3** Plays.tv is a new social network targeted at whom?  
A) Children  
B) VHS fans  
C) Gamers

**4** Who closed their Instagram account, complaining they'd been "hounded off"?  
A) Danny Dyer  
B) Katie Hopkins  
C) Stephen Fry

**5** O2's rugby-themed prototype smartphone is made from which material?  
A) Rugby balls  
B) Grass  
C) Jockstraps

**6** Prisoner Neil Moore used what to escape from HMP Wandsworth?  
A) A drone  
B) A fake email  
C) A hacked fire alarm

Answers 1B, 2C, 3A, 4C, 5B, 6B

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE

June 2015

5

Friday

# Facts & figures

Henry Winchester reveals a host of fascinating digital facts



**180  
PETAFLUPS**

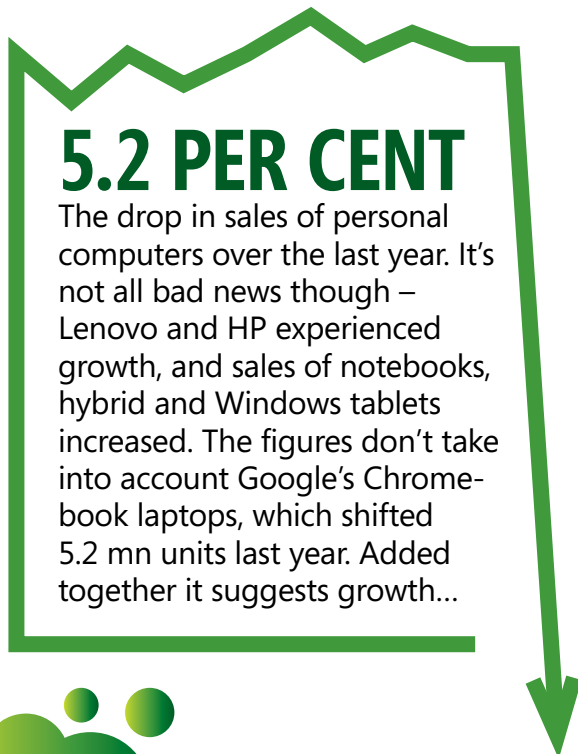
The processing power of Aurora, a supercomputer under development by Intel and Cray. The floating-point operations per second (FLOPS), measures the performance of a processor. Aurora is a thousand times more powerful than your average PC.

**550,000**

Copies of a recent episode *Game of Thrones* were illegally downloaded within 12 hours of its release, according to piracy-tracking company Excipio. The sword, sex and sorcery epic fantasy attracts more than 20 million legitimate viewers on HBO in America and Sky Atlantic in the UK, but the delay in broadcast between the two and its absence from terrestrial channels are cited as reasons for its high level of piracy.

## WHAT ARE PERISCOPE AND MEERKAT?

These are the names given to two mobile apps, which use your device's camera to livestream video onto the internet. Periscope has been created by Twitter, while Meerkat is independent. Periscope currently ranks at 22 in social apps, while Meerkat comes in at 120.



## 5.2 PER CENT

The drop in sales of personal computers over the last year. It's not all bad news though – Lenovo and HP experienced growth, and sales of notebooks, hybrid and Windows tablets increased. The figures don't take into account Google's Chromebook laptops, which shifted 5.2 mn units last year. Added together it suggests growth...

## TOP ETSY FACTS

-  The web's original craft market is about to celebrate its tenth birthday – it was launched in June 2005.
-  The site makes its money by charging \$0.20 for each item listed, and a 3.5 per cent fee for sales completed on the website.
-  76 per cent of US Etsy sellers consider their virtual shop a business, and almost a third make their sole income from the site.
-  In 2013, its terms of service were tweaked to allow manufactured goods. It was a controversial move – but it also led to annual sales of more than a billion dollars.
-  Unusually for a tech company 51 per cent of its staff are female – for Facebook it's just 15 per cent.
-  As well as stocking handmade items, Etsy allows the sale of vintage articles – as long as they're over 20 years old.
-  685 Etsy employees are scattered through its international offices in locations such as Berlin, Dublin, London and Melbourne.
-  The site has 22 million items for sale, ranging from 11p buttons to a £180,000 giant coffee mug.
-  Alicia Shaffer is Etsy's richest seller. The mum-of-three earns \$65,000 a month from handmade socks and scarves.



The amount of hard drive space you need to install *Grand Theft Auto V* on your PC. The whopping size is down to the extra textures, vehicles and characters that make the PC version look spectacular, but it takes about 19 hours to download on an average UK internet connection. For comparison *Grand Theft Auto IV*, released in 2008, weighs in at just over 30GB, while 2005's *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* occupies a mere 4.7GB.




“The tips in this feature will unravel hidden features and customisation options”

# Windows 8.1 Power User tips

Roll up your sleeves with **Mayank Sharma** as he helps you get more out of the latest Windows release – with 100 quick tweaks

**W**indows 8.1 is a wonderfully evolved version of the revolutionary Windows 8 release. It's a direct result of Microsoft paying heed to its customers' feedback and suggestions. Windows 8.1 offers an improved user experience and better integration with Microsoft applications, such as OneDrive and Skype for example.

The original release was criticised for its bias toward touch devices. Windows 8.1, while still built for touch, now offers a better end-user experience to people on traditional non-touch devices. For starters, you are no longer forced to use the Metro interface, as Windows 8.1 boots directly into the Desktop view. Other components critical to the user experience have also been enhanced and have taken on new features and functionalities.

At first glance, Windows 8.1 only looks like a touched-up version of the previous release. In its quest to minimise changes to the default user experience and maintain consistency with the previous release, most of the new functionality is tucked away under the folds. The tips in this feature will unravel these hidden features and customisation options, and help you personalise your Windows 8.1 so it works just as you'd like it to. So, with plenty of advice at hand, it's time to dive in! 

# Start screen

## 1 Show app notifications on the Lock screen

Bring up the Charms bar and go to 'Settings > Change PC settings'. Then navigate to 'Search and apps > Notifications' and toggle the 'Show app notifications switch' to On, which also enables the option to add notifications on the Lock screen.

## 2 Play a slideshow on the Lock screen

Bring up the Charms bar and head to 'Settings > Change PC settings > PC & Devices > Lock screen'. Toggle the 'Play a slide show of pictures on the lock screen' to On and then select a picture source.

## 3 Create a new tile group

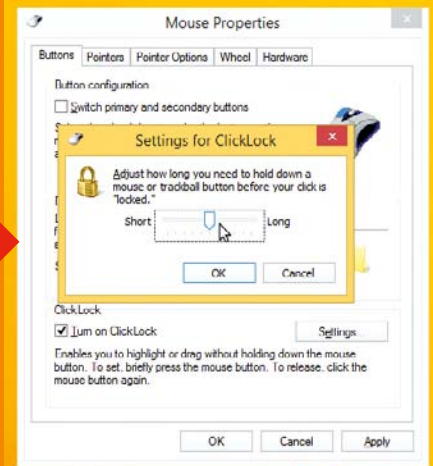
Whenever you want to create a new group of tiles, drag a tile to the right side of the Start screen. When you see a separator, drop the tile to its right. Once the group is created you can then add as many tiles as you would like.

## 4 Set desktop wallpaper for Start screen

To set wallpaper for the Start screen, first of all go to the Charms Bar and then head to 'Settings > Personalise'. This will

## 5 Move with one hand

To simplify the movement of items, head to 'Control Panel > Mouse' and in the Buttons tab, toggle the option to turn on ClickLock. Then press the Settings button and use the slider control to set the time required to lock a mouse button.



then bring up a list of 15 wallpapers that could be used for the Start screen – the default Windows desktop wallpaper is the last one on the list.

## 6 Use quiet hours

To turn off notifications during a certain time period, head to 'PC Settings > Search and apps > Notification' and then use the drop-down lists to define the period of quiet hours you want to use.

## 7 Pin people

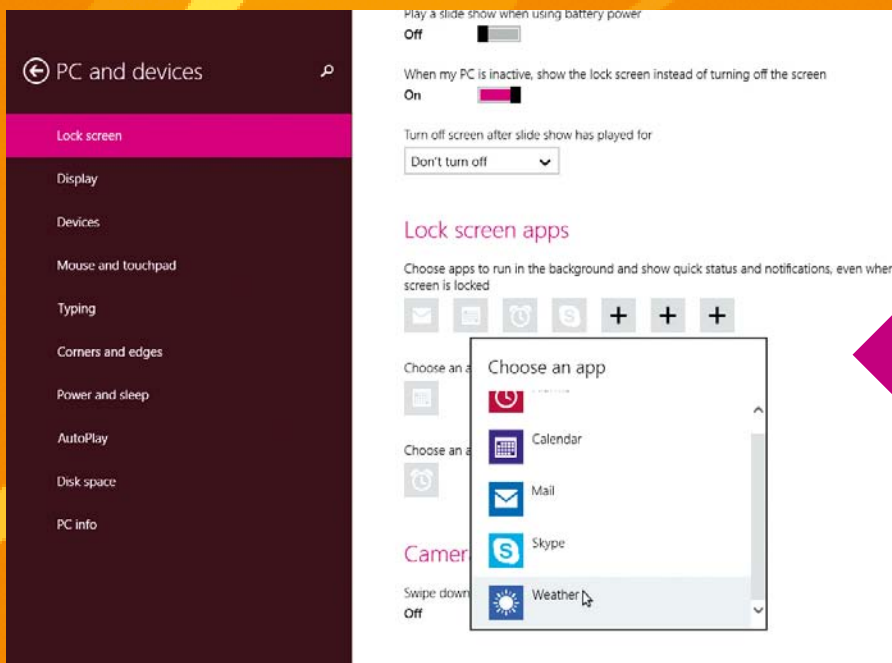
Launch the People app and click on a contact to view their feed. Next up, right-click inside the contact and select the 'Pin to Start' option. The app will let you customise the name of the contact, as well as pick a size for the tile if you wish.

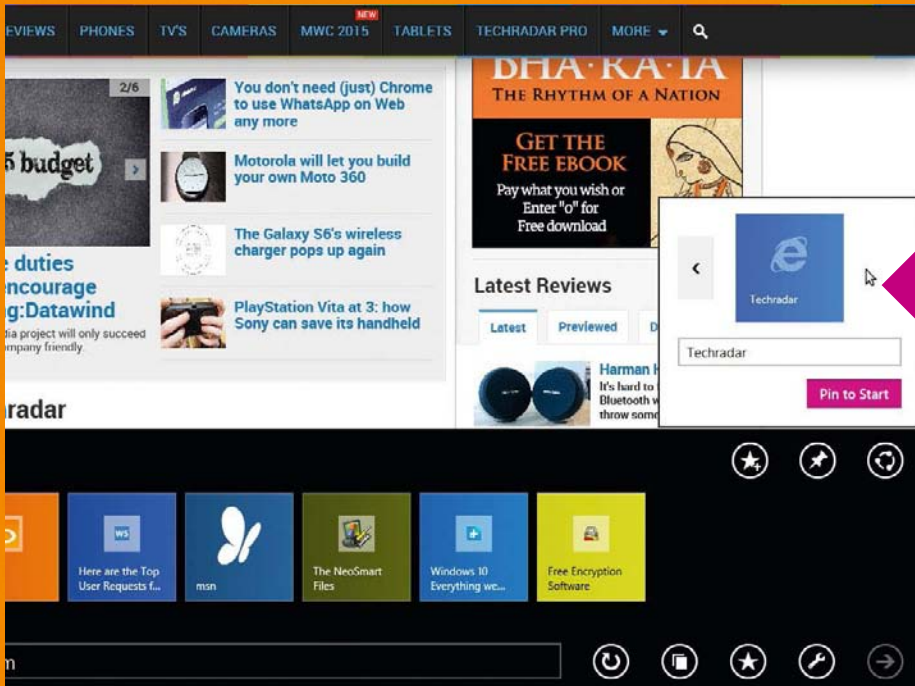
## 8 Pin folders

Similarly, you can pin frequently visited folders from your local computer or

## 9 Add apps on the Lock screen

Bring up the Charms bar and click on 'Settings > Change PC Settings'. Then head to 'PC and Devices', which brings up the settings for the Lock screen. Next, scroll down and click on one of the greyed-out icons and pick the app you want to appear on the Lock screen.





### 18 Pin websites

To pin a frequently visited website to the Start screen, open it in the Metro version of Internet Explorer. Then click the Star favourites icon and select the 'Pin site icon' and choose a tile size for the website.

a network or cloud drive. Just right-click on the folder in File Explorer and select 'Pin to Start'. When you click the folder, it'll bring you to the desktop and open it.

### 10 Pin a playlist

Launch the Music app and click on the playlist you wish to add to the Start screen. From the icons on the top, click on the 'Pin to Start' button and select the tile size for the playlist.

### 11 Arrange programs

The down arrow button on the Start screen lists all the programs on the computer. You can customise the list to display frequently used programs – do this by using the down arrow next to the Apps title and selecting the 'by most used' option.

### 12 Reset the Start screen

To reset the Start screen to its default layout, navigate to '%LocalAppData%\Microsoft\Windows\' and delete the 'appsFolder.itemdata-ms' and 'appsFolder.itemdata-ms.bak' files. To apply the changes, launch the Task Manager, right-click on the entry for Windows Explorer and select 'Restart'.

### 13 Display administrative tools options

To add Administrative tools to the Apps View on the Start screen bring up the Charms bar and click on 'Settings'. Then head to the Tiles menu and toggle the 'Show administrative tools' option to 'Yes'.

### 14 Enable speech recognition at startup

To control your PC with your voice, you'll have to launch the speech recognition

feature at startup. Head to Control Panel > Speech Recognition, click on Advanced speech options and toggle the 'Run Speech Recognition at startup' checkbox.

### 15 Use an animated background

Bring up the Charms bar and head to 'Settings > Personalize'. This in turn brings up a list of static and animated backgrounds, each of which can be customised by changing the background colour and accents.

### 16 Disable Hot Corners

Bring up the Charms Bar and head to 'Settings > Change PC settings'. Then head to 'PC and devices > Corners and edges' and set both options present in the Corner navigation section to 'Off' to disable both hot corners.

### 17 Access advanced Startup screen

Bring up the Charms Bar and click on Settings and then click on Power button. Now press and hold the [Shift] key and click on the Restart option. In a few seconds, Windows will show you a new screen with various options.

### 19 Disable Live Tiles altogether

To collectively disable all Live Tiles, firstly launch the Group Policy Editor and go to 'User Configuration > Administrative Templates > Start Menu and Taskbar > Notifications'. Then look for the 'Turn off tile notifications' and double-click on it to set it to Enable.

### 20 Add app shortcuts to your Start menu

If you feel that you want to switch to a screen similar to the classic Start menu, including shortcuts to your apps, firstly, right-click the taskbar and then choose 'Properties'. Next up you need to switch to the Navigation tab, and in the Start screen section, toggle the 'Show the Apps view automatically when I go to Start' checkbox. And you're done.

### Choose an option

Continue  
Exit and continue to Windows 8.1

Troubleshoot  
Refresh or reset your PC, or use advanced tools

Turn off your PC

# Windows desktop

## 21 Bypass the sign-in screen

To log straight into Windows, on the Start screen type **netplwiz** to bring up the User Accounts window. In the Users tab, unselect the 'Users must enter a user name and password to use this computer' option and click OK.

## 22 Show folders in your navigation panels

To access all the folders on your PC, including local ones and network locations, launch the File Explorer and head to 'View > Options'. Under the General tab scroll down to the Navigation pane section and toggle the 'Show all folders' checkbox,

## 23 Customise Jump List

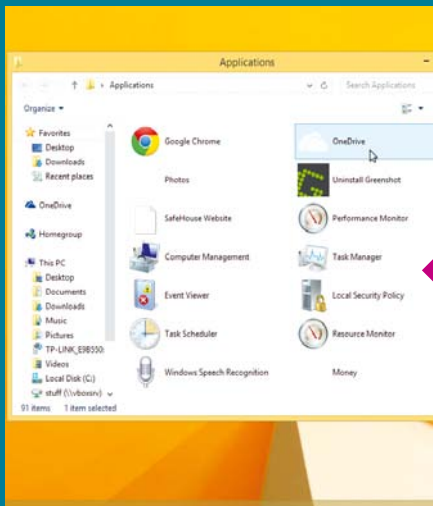
Right-click on an app's icon in the taskbar to display its Jump List. To remove an item from the list, right-click on it and select the 'Remove from this list' option. Please note: pinned items will have to be unpinned before they can be removed.

## 24 Bring Libraries back

By default, the File Explorer doesn't show the Libraries folders in the navigation panel. To bring them back, open File Explorer and head to 'View > Options' and in the General tab toggle the 'Show libraries' checkbox.

## 25 Ease desktop navigation

If you use a mouse and keyboard to control the PC, then you should enable some hidden conveniences. Right-click anywhere on the desktop taskbar and select 'Properties' from the menu that appears. Switch to the Navigation tab and toggle any options that appeal.



## 29 Launch metro apps from desktop

Bring up the run dialog box with the [Win]+[R] hotkey combination and type **shell:AppsFolder**. This will open a hidden applications folder with shortcuts for all installed apps, including Metro apps, which you can then launch from the Desktop view itself.

## 26 Auto-save screenshots

You no longer need a third-party app to take screenshots. Simply use the [Windows]+[PrtSc] key combination to take the screenshot. It will be automatically named and saved in the Pictures library as Screenshot.png for you.

## 27 Create desktop shortcuts for apps

Since you can't drag shortcuts to the desktop to create them anymore, right click on the desktop and head to New > Shortcut instead. Then use the Browse button to navigate to the app's executable file, which are usually filed under C:\Program Files.

## 28 Display file extensions

By default Windows hides the extensions of known file types. To override this behavior, in the File Explorer head to 'View > Option' and switch to

the View tab. Here look for the 'Hide extensions for known file types' and then uncheck it.

## 30 Access all Bluetooth devices

To do this, right-click on the desktop and go to 'New > Shortcut'. Instead of pointing to a location, type: **%windir%\explorer.exe shell:::{28803F59-3A75-4058-995F-4EE5503B023C}**. This creates a folder that houses all connected Bluetooth devices.

## 31 Display Preview pane in File Explorer

To easily preview files, open the File Explorer, select the View tab and click on the Preview pane option to enable it. Any file you select now, will automatically be previewed in pane on the right-side of the file explorer.



**32 Quick Access menu**  
Windows 8.1 includes a hidden quick access menu which provides access to several system tools. You can bring up the menu by using the [Win]+[X] hotkey, or right-clicking on the extreme bottom-left corner of the screen.

**33 Disable startup programs**  
To remove unnecessary programs from the computer's startup process, use the [Ctrl]+[Shift]+[Esc] hotkeys to launch the Task Manager. Then switch to the Startup tab and right-click on the program you wish to remove, and then select the 'Disable' option.

**34 Disable taskbar preview**  
If you find taskbar preview annoying you can simply disable it. In the Run window ([Win]+[R]) enter **regedit**. Go to 'HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER > Software' and create a 'New > DWORD (32-bit) Value'. Name this value **NoThumbnail** and set its value as 1.

**35 Peek at the desktop**  
You can use the 'Peek at Desktop' option to take a look at the desktop without having to minimise all open windows. To enable it, right-click on the bottom-right corner of the taskbar and toggle the 'Peek at Desktop' checkbox.

**36 Emergency restart**  
To restart quickly, press the [Ctrl]+[Alt]+[Del] hotkeys and in the screen that comes up, press and hold the [Ctrl] key and click on the Power button at the bottom right corner. This will bring up the Emergency Restart option.

**37 Include Files/Folders in Libraries**  
To append files/folders to libraries, open



File Explorer and select the files/folders you want to include in a particular library. Then go to 'Home menu > Easy Access > Include in Library' and select the library you want to append them to.

**39 Shutdown your PC with a single click**  
Do you want a shortcut to quickly shutdown your PC with a single click? This can be really handy if you need to leave your desk in a bit of a hurry. To set one up, right-click on the desktop and go to 'New > Shortcut'. In the location field, type **shutdown.exe -s -t 00** and then name the shortcut. You can now use this shortcut to power off the PC by simply clicking on it.

### Pointer size



### Pointer color

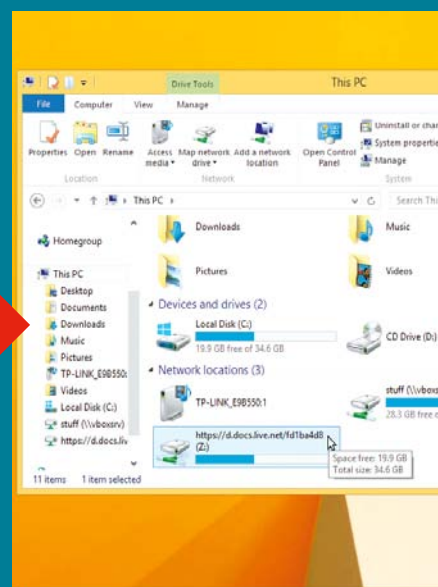


### Mouse keys

- Use numeric keypad to move mouse around the screen  
On
- Hold down Ctrl to speed up and Shift to slow down  
On
- Use mouse keys when Num Lock is on  
On

## 38 Map OneDrive as a network drive

First log in to OneDrive, click on Files and copy the unique id mentioned in the URL after cid. Now open This PC in File Explorer and go to 'Computer > Map network drive'. In the folder field enter <https://d.docs.live.net/ID/> replacing ID with your unique ID.



## 40 Move your cursor with your keyboard

To move your cursor with your keyboard, bring up the Charms bar and go to 'Settings > Change PC settings > Ease of Access > Mouse'. Toggle the 'Use numeric keypad to move mouse around the screen option' to On. Also, enable the option to control speed with the [Ctrl] and [Shift] keys.

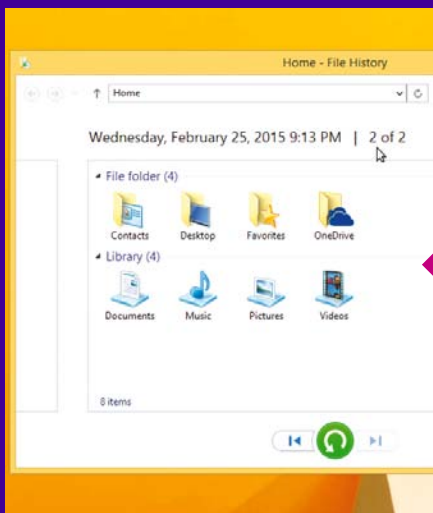
# Windows apps

**41** Control app updates  
If you're on a metered internet connection, it's prudent to turn off automatic updates. Launch the Store app and then bring up the Charms menu and go to 'Settings > App' updates. Here, change the option 'Automatically update my apps' to 'No'.

**42** Clear personal info  
Before you share your computer with someone, you might want to clear personal information from app tiles. Bring up the Charms bar and go to 'Settings > Tiles'. Here, simply click on the Clear button under the 'Clear personal info from my tiles' option.

**43** Disable Bing integration  
The Smart Search feature sends local search queries (i.e. searches on your PC) to Bing. To disable this behavior, bring up the Charms bar and head to 'Settings > Change PC Settings > Search' and apps, and turn the 'Get search suggestions and web results from Bing' option to 'Off'.

**44** Switch to the Reading view  
To minimise distractions while reading an article on the web, the Metro version of Internet Explorer includes a useful



**47** Rescue files with File History

To automatically backup copies of files in your Libraries, type **history** on the Start screen and select 'File History Settings'. Connect an external drive and turn on the 'File History' feature. Windows will now save copies of files every hour.

Reading view. To switch to this view, click on the Read button next to the address bar which appears whenever a page has finished loading.

**45** Access OneDrive files offline  
To view the contents of OneDrive without being connected to the internet, launch the OneDrive app, bring up the Charms menu and go to 'Settings > Options'. Here toggle the 'Access all files offline' to 'On' and wait for the files to sync.

**48** Stop apps from running in the background  
To close Metro apps without leaving traces in the memory, click on top of the screen and drag the app to the bottom. But instead of leaving the app immediately as you might normally do, wait for a few seconds until it turns its thumbnail from an app preview to an icon, then move on.

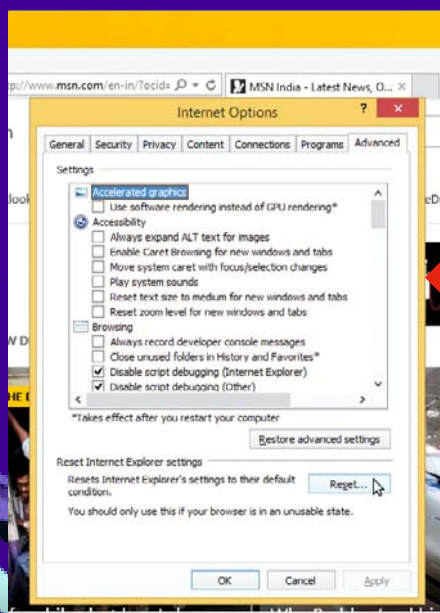
**49** Control apps with gestures  
The Food & Drinks app includes a special mode to navigate the app with gestures. Launch the app, open a recipe and click on the 'Hands-Free mode' button at the bottom. Now wave your hand in front of your webcam to flip pages.

**50** Remove multiple apps  
To uninstall more than one app in one go, hold down the [Ctrl] key and click on the tiles of the apps you wish to remove to select them. Next, right-click on any one of the selected tiles and choose the 'Uninstall' option.

**51** Default to desktop apps  
Windows 8.1 calls on Metro apps to open supported file types. To change this, bring up the Charms bar and head to 'Settings > PC Settings > Search and apps > Defaults' and swap out the Metro apps with an equivalent desktop app.

**46** Disable browser add-ons

Add-ons can slow Internet Explorer and can also be exploited to break into your PC. To disable them, click on the gear icon on the top-right corner and head to 'Manage add-ons'. From here you can individually disable any additional components you like.



### 52 Remove unused wireless networks

To forget old wireless networks, launch the Command Prompt as Admin. The command **netsh wlan show profiles** will list all saved networks. You can then delete them with the **netsh wlan delete profile name="PROFILE"** command, but replacing PROFILE with the name of the network.

### 53 Sync settings with OneDrive

Open the Charms Bar and head to 'Settings > Change PC Settings > OneDrive > Sync Settings'. You'll then be shown a list of items you can sync with the service if you wish. To sync settings, toggle the 'Sync your settings on this PC' item to 'On'.

### 54 Prevent apps from connecting to the internet

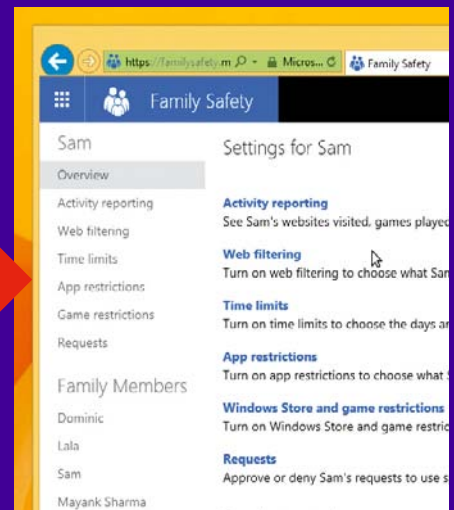
To shield apps from the internet, head to 'Control Panel > Windows Firewall > Allow an app or feature through Windows Firewall'. Then click on the 'Change Settings' button and uncheck the boxes next to the app when connected to Public or Private networks.

### 55 Clear Windows Store's cache

If Windows Store isn't updating apps or is throwing up other errors, it's a good idea to clear its cache and then reset the app to its default state. Type **wsreset**

## 56 Monitor your children

Go to 'Control Panel > User Accounts and Family Safety > Family Safety' and click on 'Manage Family Safety'. You'll then be taken to a website where you need to login using your Microsoft account. Once logged in you can get detailed reports about non-admin users.



on the Homescreen and right-click on the WSRreset.exe tool and choose 'Run As Administrator'.

### 57 Prevent Metro apps from using your webcam and mic

Bring up the Charms bar and head to Settings > Change PC Settings > Privacy. Then go to the Webcam section and turn off the 'Let apps use my webcam' option. Similarly, go to the Microphone section and disable the 'Let apps use my microphone' option.

### 58 Back up Windows credentials

Head to 'Control Panel > Credential

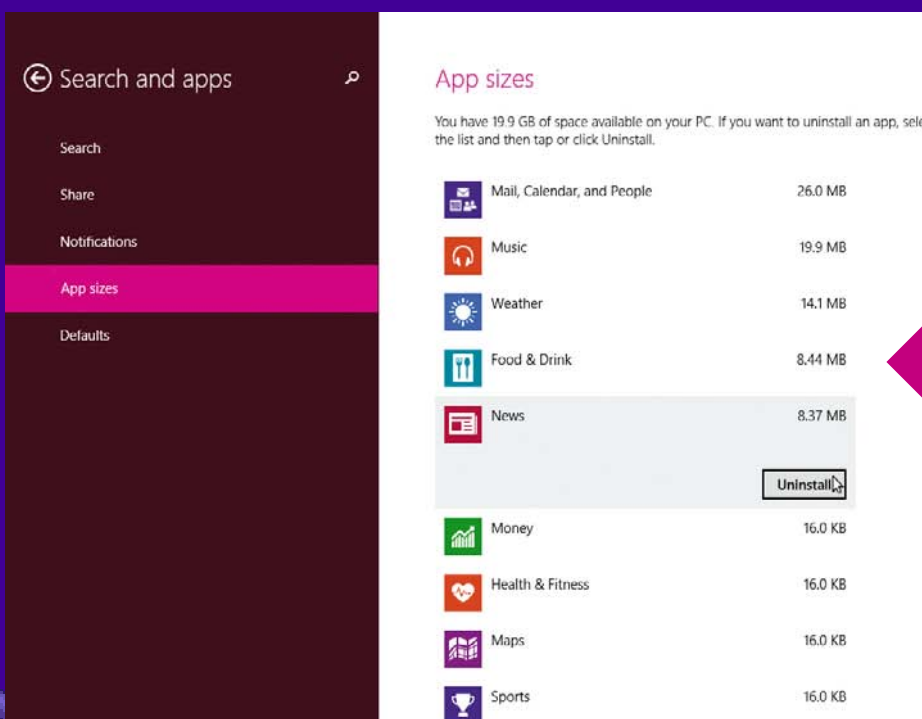
Manager'. Select 'Windows Credentials' and click on 'Back up Credentials'. It'll launch a wizard that'll ask you for the location of the backup file and also lets you protect the file with a password.

### 59 Set your geographic location with ease

Some Store apps, such as News and Weather, display content based on your geographic location. You can set this correctly by going to 'Control Panel > Region > Location'. Here you can use the pull-down menu in the 'Home Location' section to select your country. You may have to set this manually if you travel to different locations often.

## 60 Check apps disk usage

To check how much disk space individual apps are taking up, bring up the Charms bar and go to 'Settings > Change PC settings > PC and devices > Disk space'. Then click the 'See my app sizes' link to get a detailed list.



# Settings & tweaks

## 61 Display a Login Message

Type **secpol** on the Start Screen and then navigate to 'Local Policies > Security Options'. Next, find the options labelled 'Interactive Logon: Message title for users attempting to log on' as well as 'Interactive Logon: Message text for users attempting to log on'. Right-click on each of these, then select 'Properties' and type in your message.

## 62 Enable the Hibernate option

To add the Hibernate option to the Power menu, head to 'Control Panel > Hardware and Sound > Power Options' and click on 'Choose what the Power buttons do'. Then click the 'Change settings that are currently unavailable' link and enable the 'Hibernate' checkbox.

## 63 Temporarily disable notifications

To mute all types of notifications, bring up the Charms bar and go to 'Settings > Notifications'. From here you can select a

preset duration and turn of notifications for either one, three or eight hours.

## 64 Delete old installation files

If you're running out of disk space, you can delete old installation files. Type **disk cleanup** at the Start Screen to launch the tool and click on the 'Clean up system files' button. Then select the 'Previous Windows installations' option, and run a disk cleanup.

## 65 Move pointer to default button

To automatically focus the mouse pointer on the default dialog box buttons, head to 'Control Panel > Mouse' and switch to the Pointer Options tab. Here toggle the 'Automatically move pointer to the default button in a dialog box' under the Snap To section.

## 66 Run system maintenance troubleshooter

To streamline your computer, head

to 'Control Panel > Troubleshooting'. Here scroll down to the System and Security section and click on the 'Run maintenance tasks' option. The tool will detect issues and recommend solutions to resolve them.

## 67 Customise Search

If you don't want Windows Search to index the entire PC, type **indexing** on the Start Screen and then launch the 'Indexing Options' tool. Now click the Modify button to configure the items to index.

## 68 Disable Search indexing

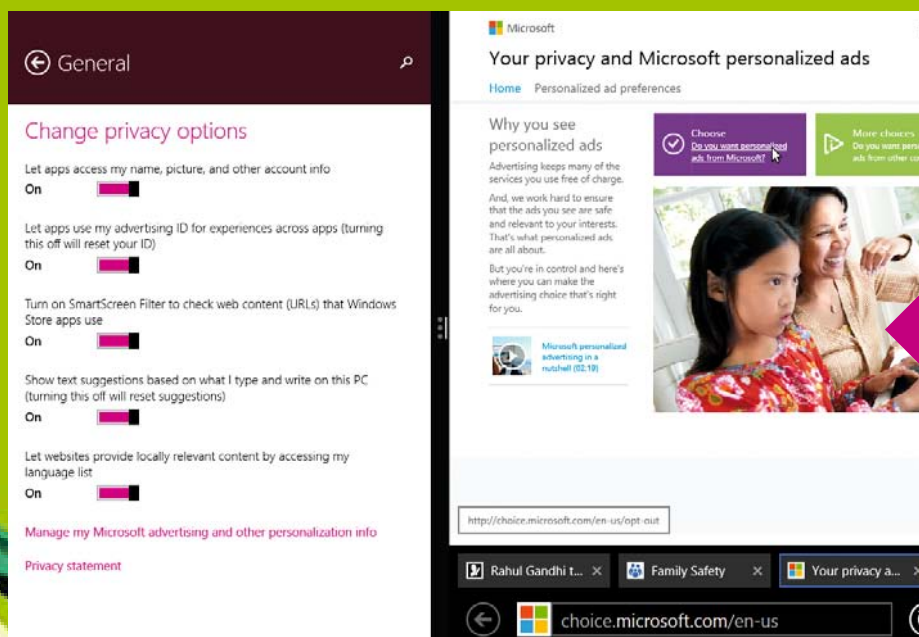
To disable the Search Indexing feature altogether, type **serv** on the Start Screen and select the 'View local services' link from the results. Scroll through the list of services and find Windows Search. Double-click to it and change 'Startup type:' to Disabled.

## 69 Optimise drives

To improve the performance of the drives on your PC, type **optimize**

## 70 Customise Privacy options

Bring up the Charms bar and go to 'Settings > Change PC settings > Privacy'. Here you'll get various privacy-related settings under the General section including the ability to stop apps from accessing your personal data.



## Set up your gestures

Draw three gestures on your picture. You can use any combination of circles, straight lines, and taps.

Remember, the size, position, and direction of your gestures — and the order in which you make them — become part of your picture password.

1 2 3

Start over

Cancel



## 78 Change authentication mechanism

Bring up the Charms bar and head to 'Settings > Change PC settings > Accounts > Sign-in Options'. From here you can replace the password with a easier to remember four-digit PIN or a picture-password.

in the Start Screen and select the 'Defragment and optimize your drives' utility from the results. In the tool select a drive and press the Optimise button.

### 71 Disable Visual effects

Launch the Control Panel and head to System and 'Security > System > Advanced system settings' and click on the Settings button under the Performance section. Then toggle the 'Adjust for best performance' radio button under the 'Visual Effects' tab to turn them all off.

### 72 Control shutdown behaviour

Head to 'Control Panel > System and Security > Power Options'. If you want your change to apply to all plans click on 'Choose what closing the lid does' and use the pull-down menu to change the behaviour to either Sleep, Hibernate or Shutdown.

### 73 Change the Computer name

To rename your PC, bring up the Charms bar and head to 'Settings > Change PC settings > PC and Devices > PC info'. Here click on the 'Rename PC' button and restart the computer.

### 74 Mute all sounds when someone calls

To automatically turn off all sounds when you receive a Skype call, launch the Control Panel and head to Sound. Here switch to the Communication tab and under the 'When Windows detects communications activity' section, toggle the 'Mute all other sounds' radio button.

### 75 Disable SmartScreen

Privacy conscious users might want to disable the SmartScreen feature by going to Control Panel > System and Security > Action Center. Here click on 'Change Windows SmartScreen settings' and toggle the 'Don't do anything (turn off Windows Smartscreen)' radio button.

### 76 Enable network discovery

To make your computer visible to others, go to 'Control Panel > Network and Internet > Network and Sharing Center' and click on 'Change advance sharing settings'. Then go to Private profile section and toggle the 'Turn on network discovery' radio button.

### 79 Switch to a local account

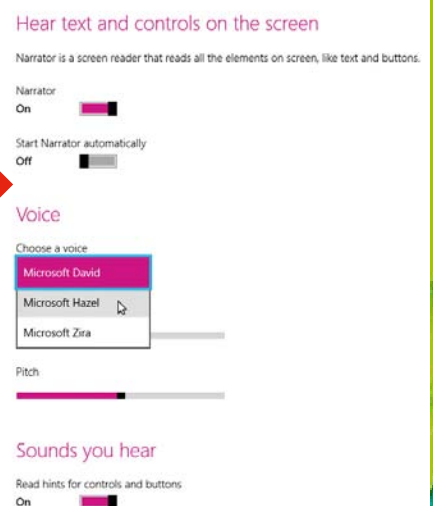
To sign into Windows with a local account instead of a Microsoft account, bring up the Charms bar and go to 'Settings > Change PC settings > Accounts'. Under 'Your account' select 'Disconnect' and in the next step create, and log in to a local account.

### 80 View recently modified settings

If you wish to revert any recent modifications to the computer, simply bring up the Charms bar and head over to 'Settings > Change PC settings' and then click on the 'View recently used settings' link to view all the recently modified settings.

## 77 Enable Narrator

Bring up the Charms bar and head to Settings > Change PC Settings > Ease of Access > Narrator. As soon as you toggle the Narrator slider to On, Windows will helpfully read out the text which has the cursor focus.



# Advanced tricks

## 81 Close any unresponsive apps

Press the [Ctrl]+[Alt]+[Del] hotkeys and select 'Task Manager', which displays all the running apps. Right click on the app that has become unresponsive and select 'End task' to kill the app.

## 82 Create recovery disc

Plug in a USB drive and type **recovery** on the Start Screen and select the 'Create a recovery drive' option from the results. This will launch a wizard which wipes the USB drive and transforms it into a recovery drive.

## 83 Enable the handy Administrator account

By default, the built-in Administrator account is hidden. To enable it, launch the Command Prompt as Administrator and type **net user administrator /active:yes**. Now logout to see the newly added Administrator account on the login screen.

## 84 Speed up the Taskbar preview

Launch regedit and go to 'HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER > Control Panel > Mouse'. Here right-click on the

Set up an account for assigned access

### Assigned access

You can choose an account to have access to only one Windows Store app. To sign out of assigned access, quickly press the Windows logo key five times.

Choose an account to use for assigned access:

Dom

Choose an app that this account can access:

Internet Explorer

## 87 Setup Kiosk mode

To restrict a user to just one app, bring up the Charms bar and head to 'Settings > PC Settings > Accounts > Other accounts' and click on the 'Set an account for assigned access'. Then simply select the account and the application from the list.

MouseHoverTime key, choose 'Modify' and replace the number in the 'Value Data' box with 1. The previews will now show up in 1 millisecond.

## 85 Disable low disk check

Run regedit and go to 'HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER > Software > Microsoft > Windows > CurrentVersion > Policies'. Right-click in right pane and create a new key called

'Explorer'. Inside it create a DWORD (32-bit) Value named 'NoDiskSpaceCheck' with a value of 1.

## 88 Optimise SSD

If you're running Windows on a Solid State Drive, make sure you run the Windows Self Assessment Tool. Type **winsat** on the Start screen and launch the tool as Administrator. Reboot the computer once it's done.

## 89 Decrease the shutdown time

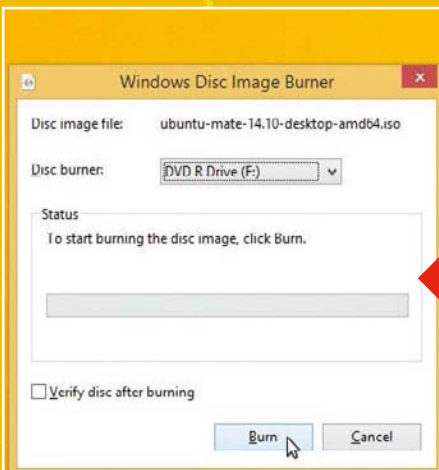
Reduce the wait before killing user processes down to an impressive two seconds. To do this, first launch regedit and then navigate to HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Control Panel\Desktop and create a new DWORD (32-bit) key named WaitToKillAppTimeout, with a value of 2000.

## 90 Disable Action Center notifications

Type **action** at the Start Screen and select the 'Action Center' option from the results. Now click on Change Action Center settings and simply uncheck the types of messages you no longer wish to be notified about.

## 86 Mount ISO images

You don't need any third party software to browse the contents of an ISO image. Right-click on the ISO image and click 'Mount'. The ISO images are mounted as virtual discs and you can access them from the File Explorer.



### 91 Share mobile connection

Bring up the Charms bar and go to 'Settings > Change PC Settings > Network'. Then select a Mobile broadband connection you want to share and toggle the 'Share this connection' option to On. Click on the Edit button to change authentication information.

### 92 Create a system image

Type **file** on the Start Screen and select the 'File History' tool from the results. Then click the 'System Image Backup' link in the lower-left corner to start a wizard, which will let you select the destination drive for storing the backup image.

### 93 Customise the Power User menu

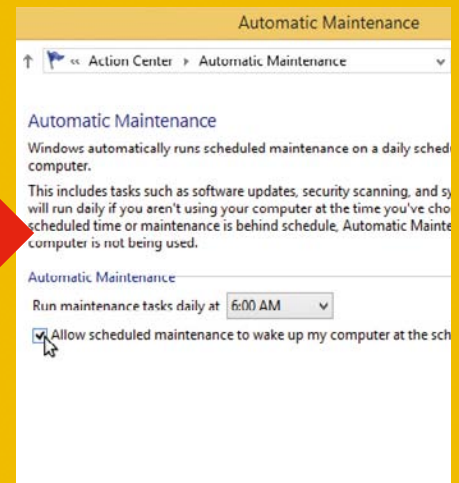
To reorganise and or remove entries go to C:\Users\<username>\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\WinX. Here you'll notice three folders that house entries for the Power User menu. You can move them around or remove them as per your requirements.

### 94 Replace Command Prompt with PowerShell

Type **navigation** on the Start Screen and select 'Navigation properties' from the results. Here, toggle the checkbox labelled 'Replace Command Prompt with Windows PowerShell' in the menu when I right-click the lower-left corner or press Windows key + X'.

### 95 Configure automatic maintenance

Launch the Control Panel and head to 'System and Security > Action center'. Then expand the Maintenance section and click on the 'Change maintenance settings' link and use the drop-down menu to select a convenient time.



### 96 Boot into Safe Mode

In the Run dialog box enter **msconfig** to launch the System Configuration tool. Here, switch to the Boot tab and toggle the 'Safe boot' checkbox under the 'Boot options' section. Upon restart Windows will now boot into the Safe mode.

### 97 Access the 'God Mode'

The God Mode gives you access to all system settings and hidden features of Windows 8.1. To access it create a folder on your desktop and name it GodMode.{ED7BA470-8E54-465E-825C-99712043E01C} Then you should double click on it to reveal a categorised list of all the settings.

### 98 Customise the disk space for protection

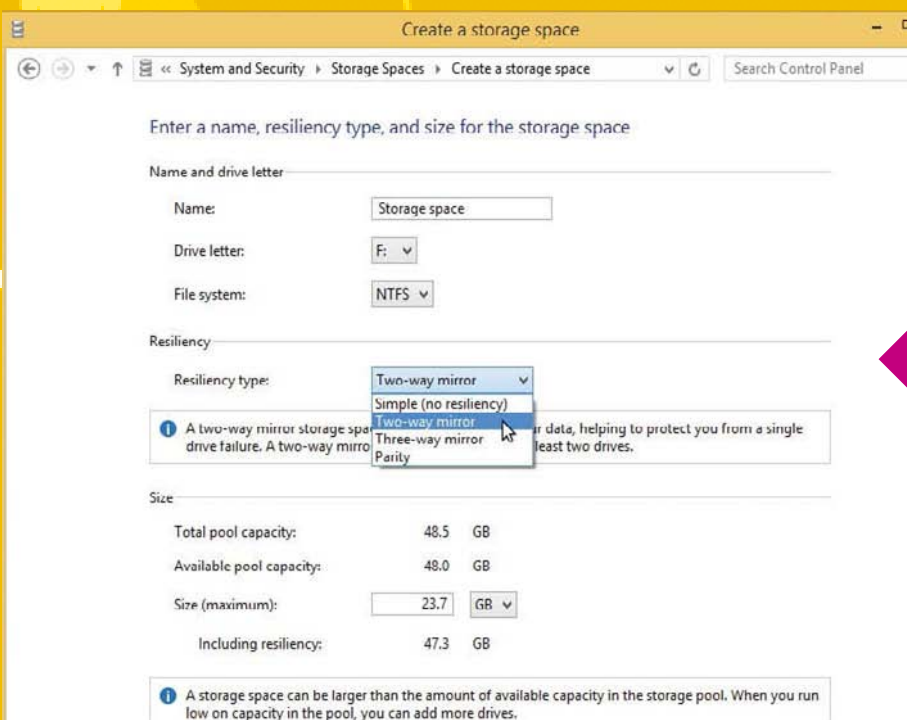
To customise the disk space for protection, first launch the Control Panel and head to 'System and Security > System > System protection'. Now click on the Configure button, found under the 'Protection Settings' section, and use the slider next to 'Max Usage' as per your requirements.

### 99 Enable the Guest Account

Type **user** on the Start Screen and select the 'User Accounts' option from the results. Now click the 'Manage another account' link and select the Guest icon. Then press the 'Turn On' button to enable the guest account.

### 100 Store multiple copies of files

The Storage spaces feature lets you combine multiple disks into one virtual disk. Type **storage** on the Start Screen and select the 'Manage Storage Spaces' option. Then click the 'Create a new pool and storage space' link and select the drives to be included in the storage pool. ■









# Explore

▶ WINDOWS TIPS ▶ INTERNET ADVICE ▶ YOUR DISC SOFTWARE

## Welcome



**Whether you're stuck for inspiration or want to become a master of your**

**Windows computer, our Explore section is the place to come.** Each month we pack it with tutorials covering a range of subjects suitable for all levels of expertise.

This month, Nick Peers shows how to capture your PC's screen – and how to make photos look retro. Ed shows how to keep your PC secure, Ian helps solve common OneDrive problems, and much, much more. There's never been a better time to see how your PC can make your life easier than ever!

**Graham Barlow**  
Editor-in-chief

graham.barlow@futurenet.com

## Full listing...

**26** Learn how to best capture your PC's screen with PicPick

**30** Give your favourite photos an appealing vintage look

**34** Keep vulnerable software up to date with Heimdal

**38** Solve common OneDrive problems with a few clicks

**40** Explore the starry cosmos with WorldWide Telescope

**44** Access Gmail messages in the Windows Mail app

**46** Build a great website with Website X5 Home 11

**50** Learn how to fix hardware problems quickly and easily

**54** Turn yourself into a detective and rid your PC of malware

*Your guide*  
*Cat Ellis says...*

"Go star gazing in your own private observatory and take a tour of galaxies far, far away."

*Turn to page 40 for more*



## Our promise to you...

Get more from Windows, software and all your favourite sites

### Packed with informative tutorials

✓ Every issue, we guarantee to pack the magazine with great tutorials teaching you all the best things you can do with your PC. Each article features step-by-step instructions to make learning new skills fast and enjoyable.

### Customise Windows to work your way

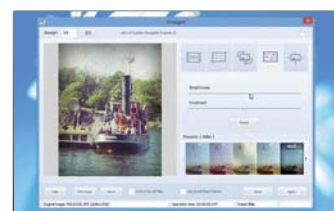
✓ We all know how to do the basics but getting the most from Windows isn't always easy. Our dedication to the operating system means you get the very best tips and tricks for all versions of Windows.

### Get more from your favourite websites

✓ We all have our list of favourite sites but often we miss out on great features because they're difficult to use or hidden from sight. We'll show you how to do more online, for a more satisfying web life.

### Use our full software to try new things

✓ Our exclusive industry access enables us to pack your free disc with full commercial software. From speed-up and security software to superb photo apps, there's always something new to try on your PC.



# Learn how to... Capture your PC's screen



Your guide *Nick Peers* says...

"PicPick is the best free screen capture tool for Windows – find out how to make use of it"

## At a glance...

### SKILL LEVEL

- ▶ Anyone can do it
- ▶ Straightforward
- ▶ Tricky in parts

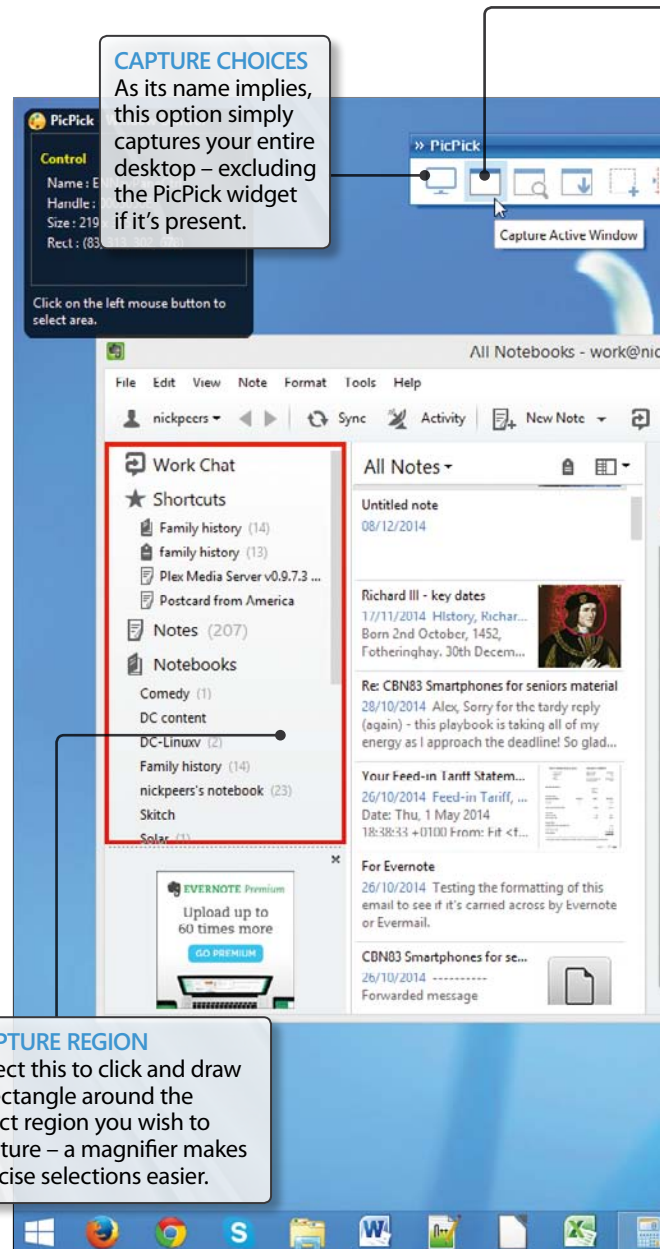
### TIME TAKEN

- ▶ 20 minutes

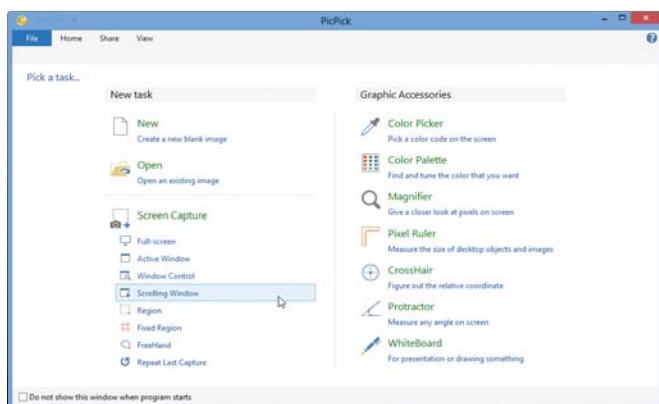
### SUITABLE FOR

- ▶ Windows 8.1
- ▶ Windows 7
- ▶ Windows Vista
- ▶ Windows XP

**N**ot all screen-capture tools are equal. While most will capture all or part of your screen, there's always some annoyance – a key feature is missing, it doesn't work the way it should, or you have to jump through hoops to get the shot you want. PicPick changes all of that. It's the most comprehensive free screen capture tool we've seen, offering no less than seven different ways to capture all or a select portion of your desktop. It even ships with a built-in image editor that boasts an intuitive ribbon interface and all the key tools you need to tweak your grabs before saving or printing them, sending them to another program (like Word) or even sharing them online in a variety of different ways. Everything is designed to work quickly, easily and within a single program – read on to find out how it works.

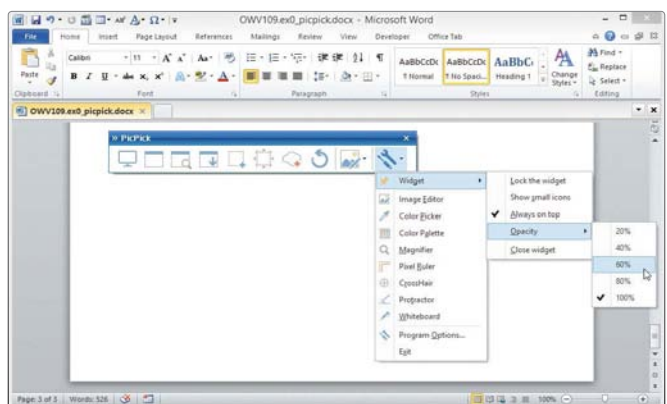


## Step-by-step | Capture and edit screenshots



### 1 First steps

You'll find the Home Edition of PicPick, which is free for non-commercial use, on the cover disc. The installation wizard is straightforward – just follow it through, then leave 'Launch PicPick now' ticked before clicking Finish. The main PicPick window will appear, revealing all available tools including all seven capture modes. This is just one way you can access these tools.



### 2 Screen capture

The main PicPick window is a little clunky for screen capture, so close it. Instead, right-click the program's new pinned Taskbar icon and choose Screen Capture to reveal a floating widget. This sits on top of the other windows, giving you easy access to any capture mode. Click its 'Settings' button and choose Widget to make it smaller, more transparent or lock it into position.

# Explore

## Capture your PC's screen

### ACTIVE WINDOW

This option automatically grabs the window that's currently in focus, so select your chosen window before clicking.



### NICK'S BEST TIP!

Send your capture to your favourite image editor under 'Program Options > Auto Save'.

### GET FREEHAND

Click to draw a shape around the area to capture – this is copied into a box with white background.

### Jargon buster!

**▶ Screen capture**  
The process of taking a picture – known as a screenshot – of all or part of your computer's desktop.

**▶ Region**  
An area of the desktop that's selected for capture by clicking and dragging the mouse over the desired part of the screen.

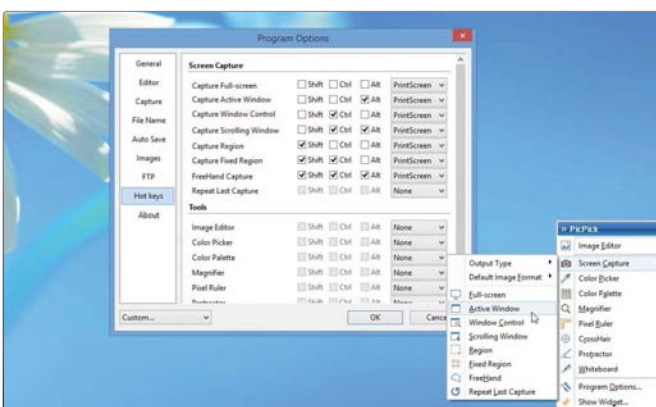
**▶ Widget**  
A small – often floating – application that offers a subset of features found in its parent program. In PicPick's case, its widget provides easy access to its screen capture tools.

### FIXED REGION

Click, select the width and height of your selection box, then position it before clicking; press [Esc] to change the dimensions.

### WINDOW CONTROL

Capture all or part of a specific window by moving your mouse over it. Use the red rectangle as a guide before clicking to capture.

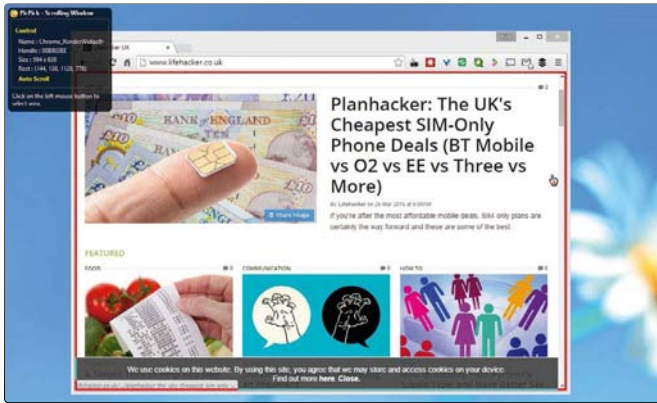


### 3 More ways to capture

Alternatively, if you prefer, you can access all of these tools by right-clicking the program's Taskbar Notification area icon. You can also capture screens using a variety of hotkeys based around the [Print Screen] key on your keyboard – for example, [Alt]+[Print Screen] captures the currently active window. Review – and edit – these keyboard shortcuts via 'Program Options > Hot keys'.

### 4 Set capture output

By default any screen captures are sent to PicPick's image editor for editing and annotating. You can choose different outputs via the 'Output Type' button or 'Screen Capture > Output type' menu – send to clipboard or printer, save directly as a file (use the Default Image Format menu to pick your file type), share online via various services or send to another program.



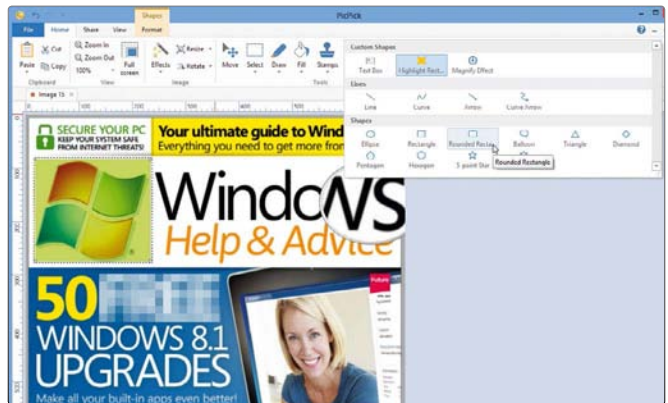
**5 Capture options**  
The annotation reveals most of the capture options available. The only option not covered is Scrolling Window, which works in a similar way to Capture Window Control. When you click to select a window with a scroll bar it should automatically scroll down that window and capture the document or web page. It's a little flaky, however, and won't work with every program.



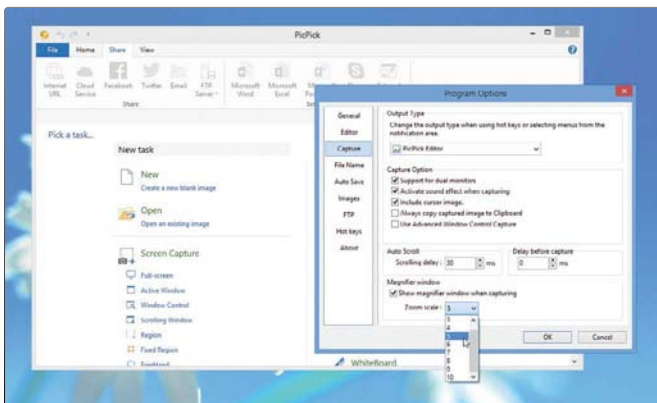
**6 Post-capture actions**  
Once you've captured your screen, what then? If you choose Image File, you'll be prompted to choose a format (GIF, BMP, PNG or JPG) and filename. Select one of the online sharing options and you'll be prompted to log into the relevant account the first time you access it. Choose 'PicPick Editor' and the grab will appear in PicPick's editor, ready for editing or marking up.



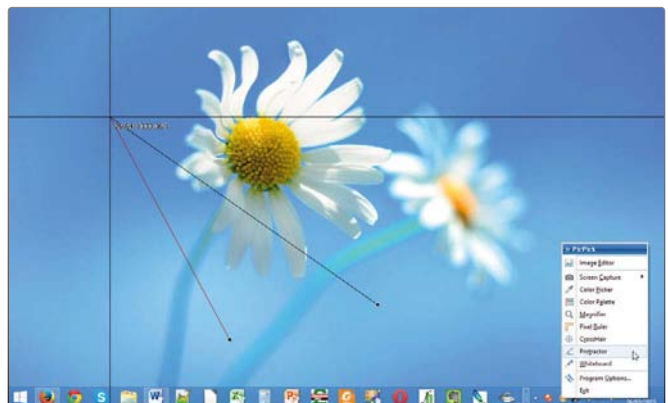
**7 Edit in PicPick**  
Use the white square drag handles that surround the image to crop, by clicking and dragging them to their desired position. Click the Image button on the Home tab to rotate, resize and access various lighting controls and effects – you could, for example, use the Select tool to select a portion of the image and then choose 'Image > Effects > Pixelate' to hide it from view.



**8 Mark up image**  
Use the Draw tools to access brush, eraser and marker tools for labelling parts of your image. Stamps allow you to place symbols – including mouse cursors – on the image, while Shapes is where you should go to add text boxes, highlight areas or even magnify part of the image to show off a specific detail. Once complete, save your image or use the Share tab to place it online.



**9 Tweak program settings**  
Switch to the File tab and choose Program Options to fine-tune PicPick. Visit the Capture tab for some useful options: choose 'Use Advanced Window Control Capture' for precise window selection, or use the Auto Scroll scrolling delay to try and improve the performance of the Scrolling Window tool. You can also include the cursor image with a screen snap.

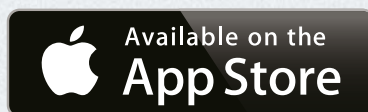


**10 And there's more**  
You've mastered PicPick's screen capture and editing tools, now try its add-ons. WhiteBoard allows you to turn your desktop into a presentation, annotating whatever parts you like. Measure the size and angle of desktop elements using the Pixel Ruler and Protractor tools, or pick a colour using the Picker and Palette. Don't forget the Crosshair and Magnifier tools too. ■



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# Learn how to... Give photos a vintage look



Your guide *Nick Peers* says...

"Vintager applies ageing effects to your photos to give them a look from a bygone era"

## At a glance...

### SKILL LEVEL

- ▶ Anyone can do it
- Straightforward
- Tricky in parts

### TIME TAKEN

- ▶ **10** minutes

### SUITABLE FOR

- Windows 8.1
- Windows 7
- Windows Vista
- Windows XP

**N**ostalgia really isn't what it used to be, particularly where photos are concerned. Dig out old photos and the signs of ageing all add extra charm and ambience to the scenes they portray. Modern digital photos aren't subject to the ravages of time, but thanks to a wonderful free tool called Vintager you can inject some nostalgia into your recent snaps and see how they might have aged had they been shot on film.

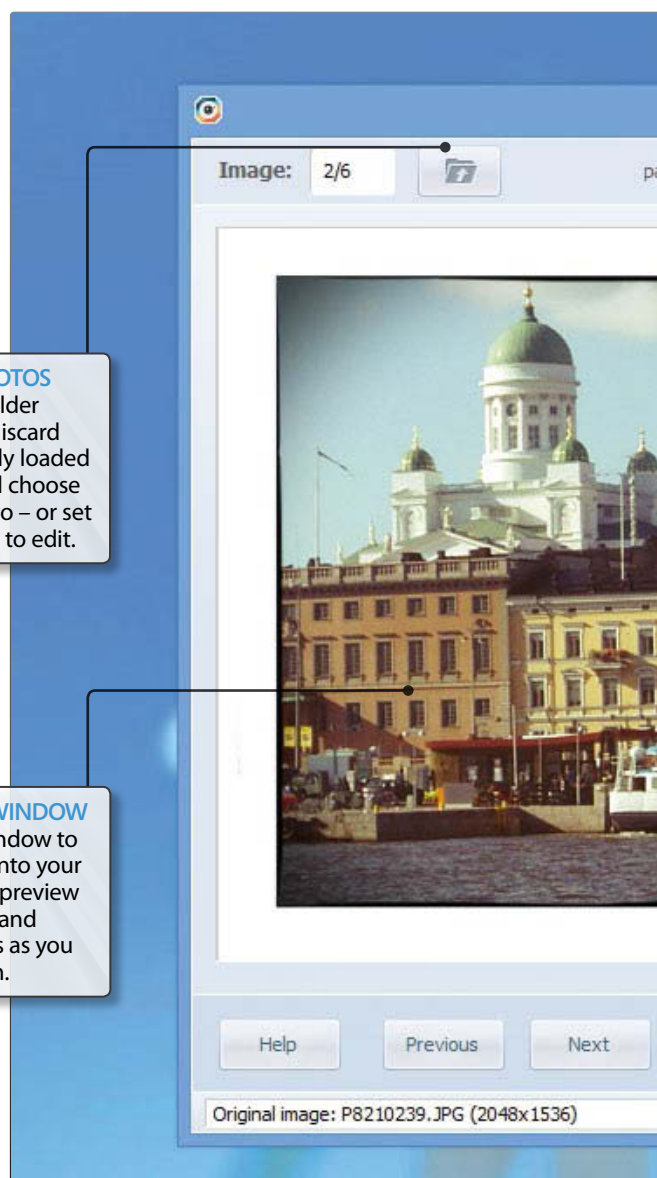
It's simple to use: Vintager gives you a choice of 17 filters to try. Many apply different coloured filters to inject some age and washed-out ambience, such as Blossom, Coconut or Mint. Others go further: Candela adds a layer of artificial scratches, while Billie ages the photo by darkening it. You can then fine-tune these settings to get the perfect shot – read on to find out how.

### SELECT PHOTOS

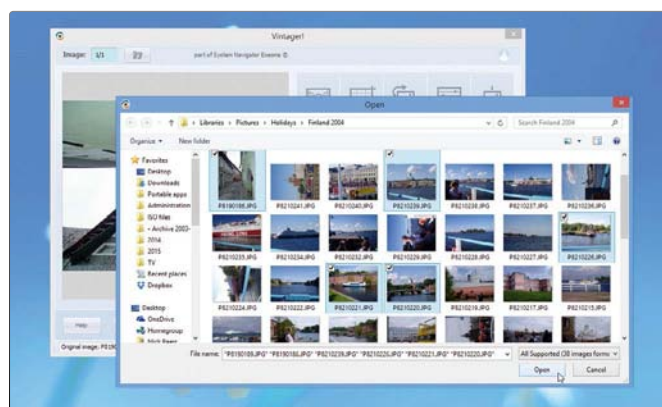
Click this folder button to discard the currently loaded images and choose a new photo – or set of photos – to edit.

### PREVIEW WINDOW

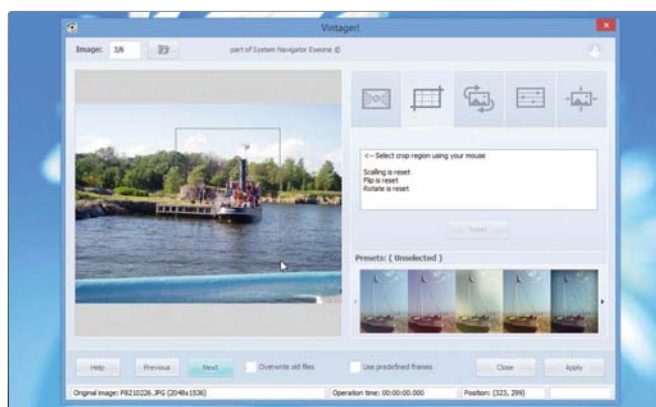
Use this window to both crop into your image and preview the effects and image edits as you select them.



## Step-by-step | How to use Vintager to age your photos



**1 Select photos to age**  
Grab Vintager from your free disc, or download and install it from [www.exeone.com/vintager](http://www.exeone.com/vintager). Once installed, leave 'Launch Vintager' ticked and click 'Finish'. When the main window opens, click the folder button next to Image to pick the photo or photos you want to edit. If editing multiple photos, hold [Ctrl] as you click each one to select it. Click 'Open' when you're done.



**2 Crop, rotate, resize**  
The first of your selected photos will appear in the preview window. First, use the 'Crop' tab to select part of the photo using your mouse if you want to focus in on a specific part of the image. Use the 'Rotate' tab to rotate or flip the image, and finally the 'Resize' tab to shrink the size of the finished photo – click the anchor button before you begin to preserve its aspect ratio.

# Explore

## Give photos a vintage look

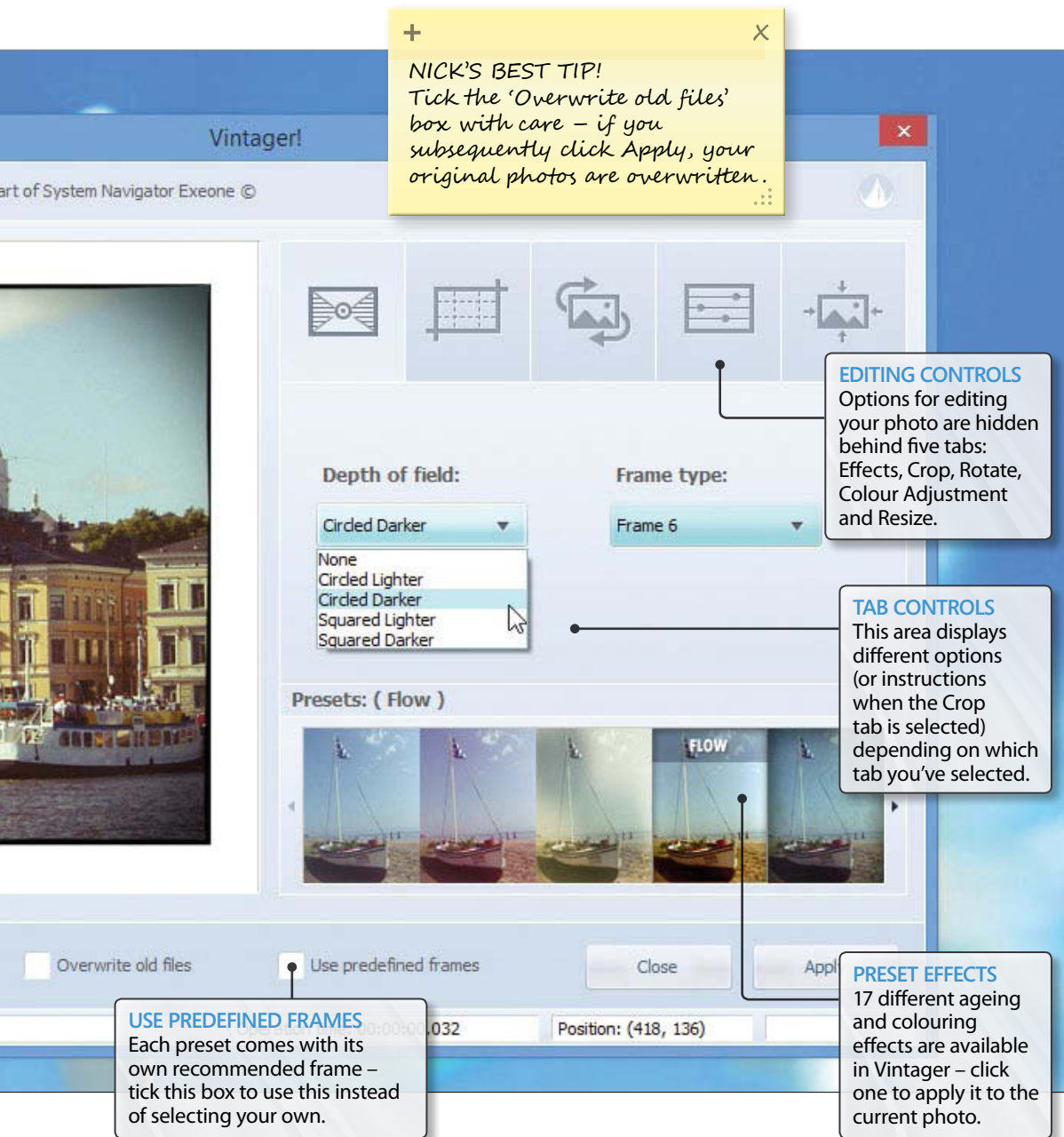
### Jargon buster!

► **Aspect ratio**  
This is the proportional relationship between an image's height and width. When one is resized, the other must also be resized proportionally so the image doesn't look squashed or stretched.

► **Depth of field**  
The distance between the nearest and furthest objects in a photo that both appear suitably sharp. Anything outside this area appears blurred.

► **Frame**  
A virtual representation of a physical photo frame that is used to add more ambience to the photo.

**NICK'S BEST TIP!**  
Tick the 'Overwrite old files' box with care – if you subsequently click Apply, your original photos are overwritten.

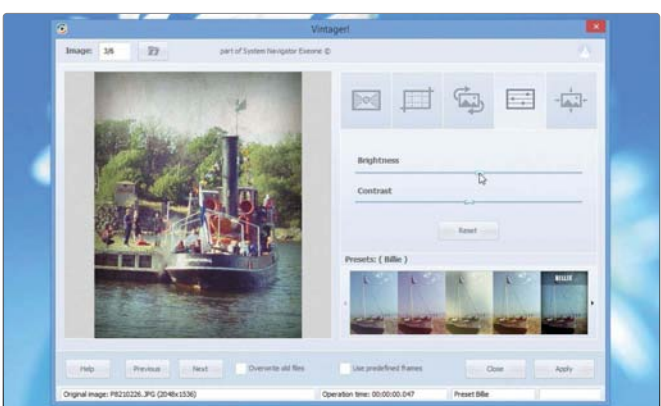


**EDITING CONTROLS**  
Options for editing your photo are hidden behind five tabs: Effects, Crop, Rotate, Colour Adjustment and Resize.

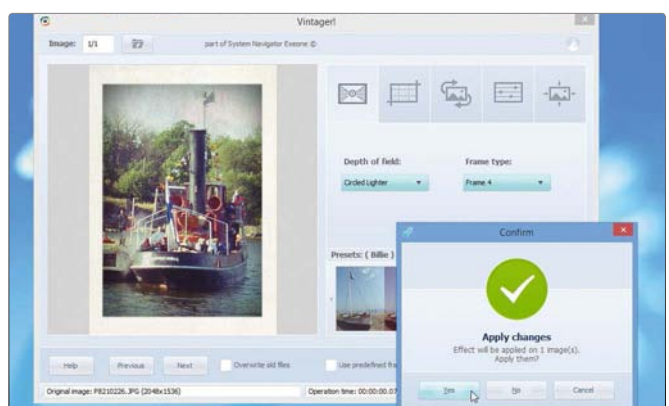
**TAB CONTROLS**  
This area displays different options (or instructions when the Crop tab is selected) depending on which tab you've selected.

**PRESET EFFECTS**  
17 different ageing and colouring effects are available in Vintager – click one to apply it to the current photo.

**USE PREDEFINED FRAMES**  
Each preset comes with its own recommended frame – tick this box to use this instead of selecting your own.



**3 Apply effect**  
Now click one of the five visible preset buttons beneath the editing controls to apply an ageing effect to the photo – more effects are hidden away, so use the arrow to the right of the preset to navigate between them all. Once you've found an effect you like, use the Colour adjustment tab's 'Brightness' and 'Contrast' sliders to fine-tune the photo's lighting until you're happy with it.

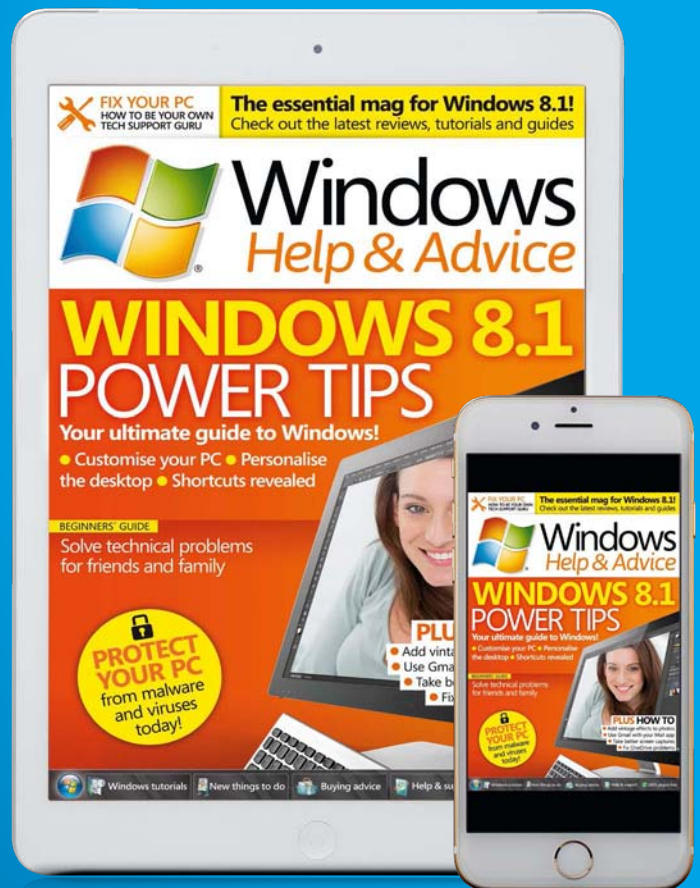


**4 Frame and apply**  
Switch back to the first tab: use the 'Depth of Field' menu to lighten or darken the edges of your picture, and the 'Frame' menu if you want to pick your own frame rather than go with the 'Use predefined frames' option. Once done, click 'Apply' – after confirmation, copies of the photos will be saved to the same folder as the originals unless you've ticked 'Overwrite old files'.



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# Learn how to... Stay secure with Heimdal



Your guide *Ed Ricketts* says...

"Keep vulnerable software up to date automatically – and keep malware at bay!"

## At a glance...

### SKILL LEVEL

- ▶ Anyone can do it
- ▶ Straightforward
- ▶ Tricky in parts

### TIME TAKEN

- ▶ 15 mins

### SUITABLE FOR

- Windows 8.1
- Windows 7
- Windows Vista
- Windows XP

**T**here are stacks of antivirus, anti-malware and other security products on the market, and it's important to have one you trust installed and working at all times. Heimdal is a little different, though. It's a small, lightweight program that's designed to work together with your existing antivirus program, and continually monitors any third-party software installed on your PC that might be vulnerable to hacks.

Upgrade to the paid-for Pro version and Heimdal can do even more. It analyses and blocks malicious links to keep you safe from phishing attempts, scans for and deletes malware, and checks all internet traffic to ensure that sensitive data, such as passwords and credit card details aren't being sent to known hacking servers.

Let's see how both the free and Pro versions of Heimdal work...

### TURN IT OFF AND ON AGAIN

Modules enables you to turn on and off specific parts of Heimdal individually, such as malware detection.

### TWEAK IT

In Advanced, change parameters such as how often Heimdal scans your PC and whether to update software automatically.

### KEEPING TABS

Statistics shows you everything that Heimdal has done up until now, including updates applied and so on.

### STOP THE ROT

The Malware tab is pretty simple – most of the time (hopefully!) it should be empty, indicating no malware has been discovered.

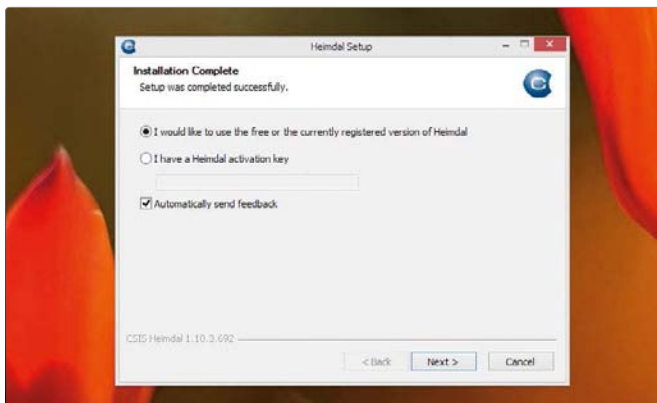
### KEEP IT CURRENT

The Software tab shows you which plug-ins are being monitored on your PC and whether they're up to date.

### OVERVIEW

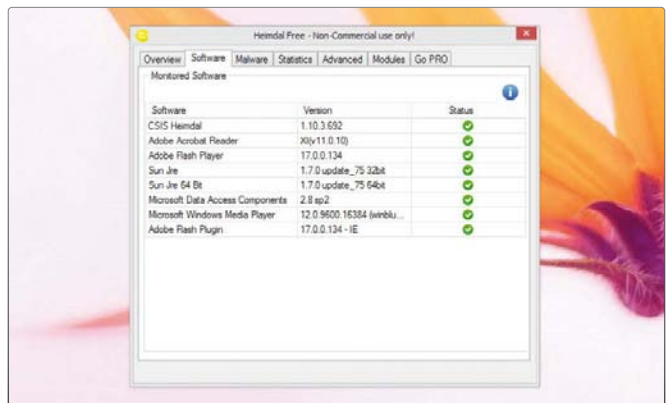
Gives you an at-a-glance look at the state of your PC's health according to Heimdal, with a percentage score for safety.

## Step-by-step | Using Heimdal



### 1 Getting the software

Heimdal Free is a tiny program, which you can find on this issue's disc or at <https://heimdalsecurity.com>. From the website, just click the 'Get It Now' link, then download the file and run it. During setup, make you choose the option 'I would like to use the free or currently registered version of Heimdal' to install the free version. We'll also look at a way to try the Pro version.



### 2 First run

When Heimdal Free first starts it'll do a scan of your PC to look for known vulnerable programs – particularly plug-ins such as Adobe Flash, which are constantly being updated. By default it then automatically downloads updates for any that need it; click the Software tab to see what's been done. There isn't much else you can do with the Free version, so let's go Pro...

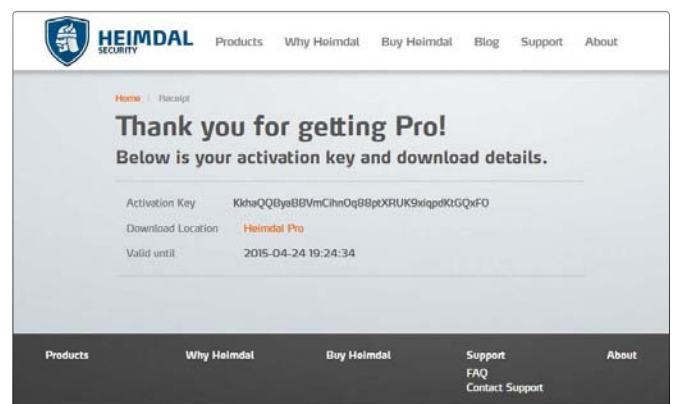
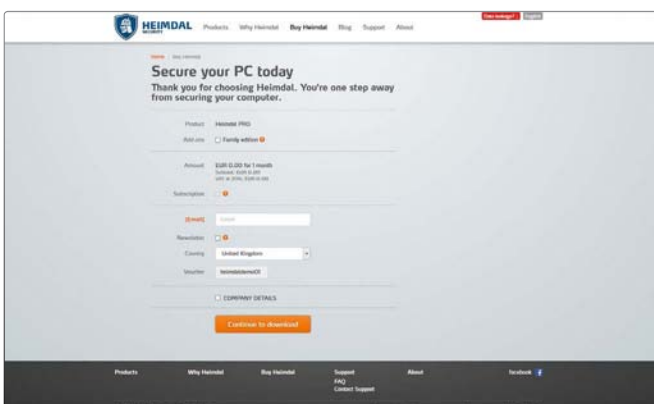
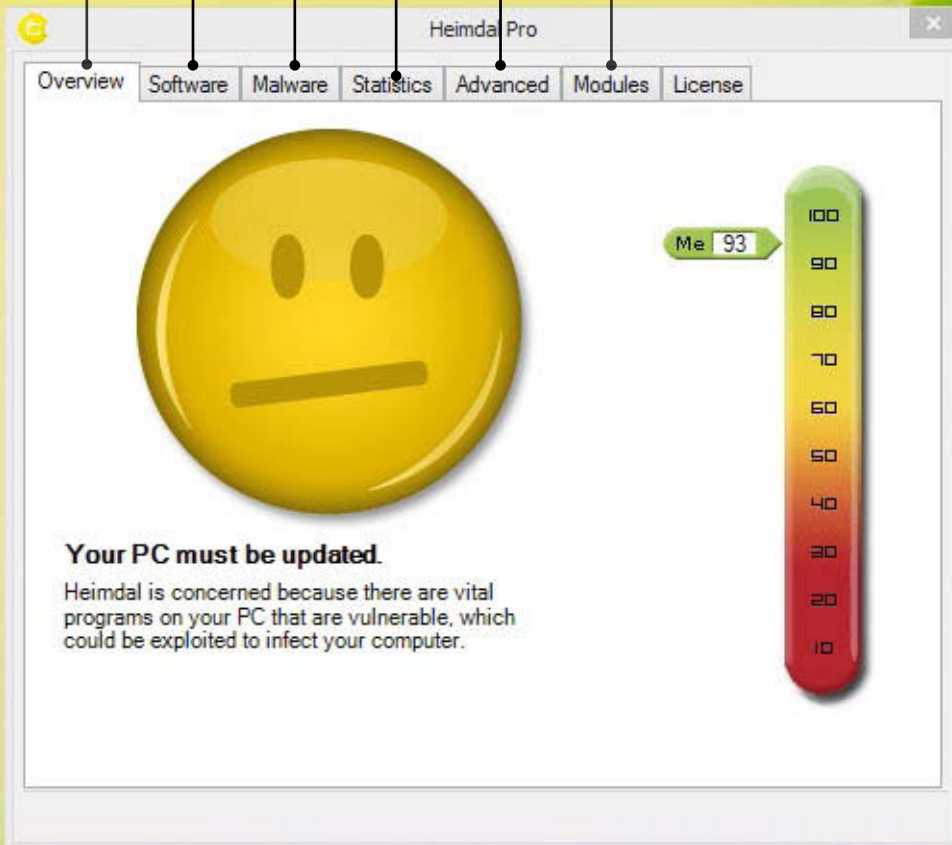
### Jargon buster!

► **Secure DNS**  
DNS (Domain Name System) is the internet's method of determining where data should go. Heimdal checks DNS requests so your data isn't sent to known hacking locations.

► **Malware**  
Any hostile or intrusive software such as viruses, trojan horses, spyware and so on.

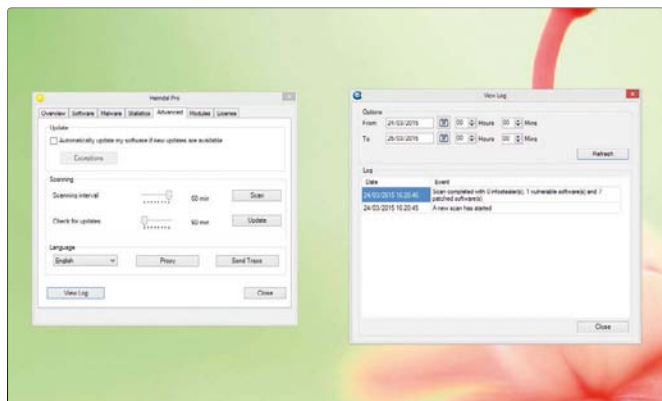
► **Phishing**  
Any attempt to get personal information such as usernames or passwords by posing as a legitimate website.

**ED'S BEST TIP!**  
Heimdal doesn't include an antivirus tool – so keep your existing antivirus installed when using it.

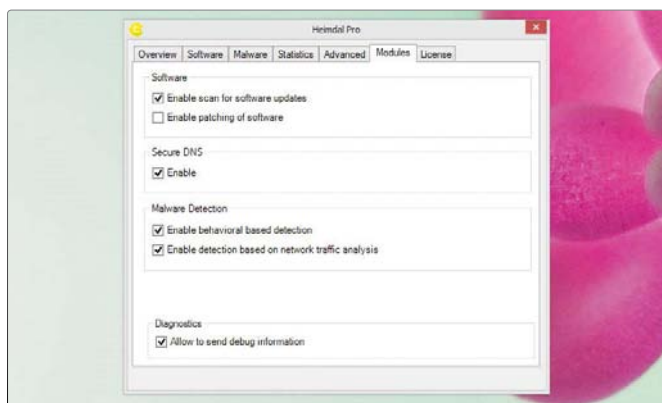


**3 Get a Pro trial**  
Although the Heimdal Security website doesn't shout about it, there's a way to get a free month's trial of Heimdal Pro. Go to the website and click the 'Buy Heimdal' link. Change Country to 'United Kingdom' and in the Voucher field, enter **heimdaldemo01**. Click 'Apply' and the price changes to 'EUR 0.00 for 1 month'. Now enter your email and click 'Continue to download'.

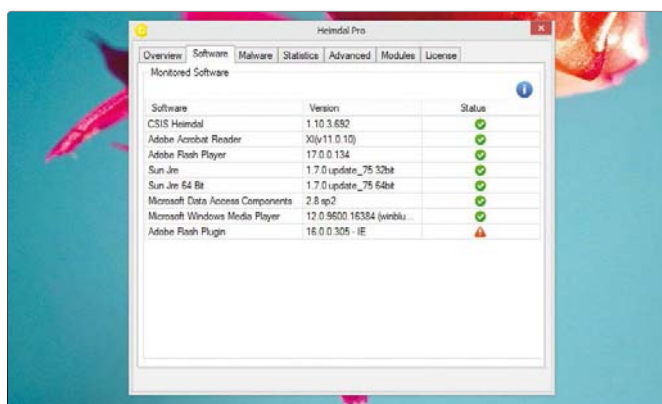
**4 Activate!**  
The next screen displays your activation code for the free month's trial – copy and paste this and keep it somewhere safe! You'll also see the date your trial expires. There's no need to download the software again – your activation key works with the free version you've installed. Just copy and paste your key in the Go PRO tab of the software to activate it.



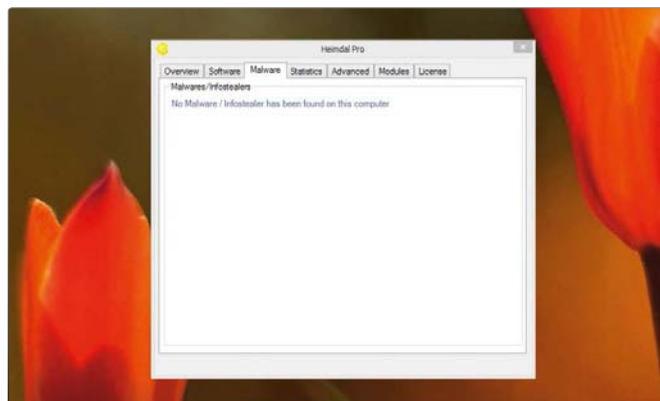
**5 Fine-tuning** You can go to the Advanced tab to customise Heimdal's operation. If didn't want automatic download updates but still want to know about any that are available, untick the box under 'Update'. You can change the frequency of scans for PC checks and software updates – the default 60 minutes is a bit excessive. 'Proxy' and 'Send Trace' are advanced options for special cases.



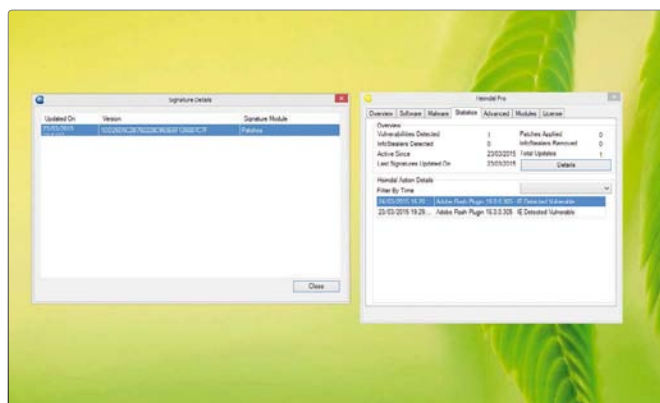
**7 Customise at will** In the 'Modules' tab, turn on or off parts of Heimdal. The 'Software' section is similar to the options in 'Advanced'. Having 'Secure DNS' enabled means Heimdal can check ingoing and outgoing traffic to ensure data isn't being sent to known phishing sites. 'Malware Detection' lets it look for suspicious behaviour on your PC, as well as unusual network activity.



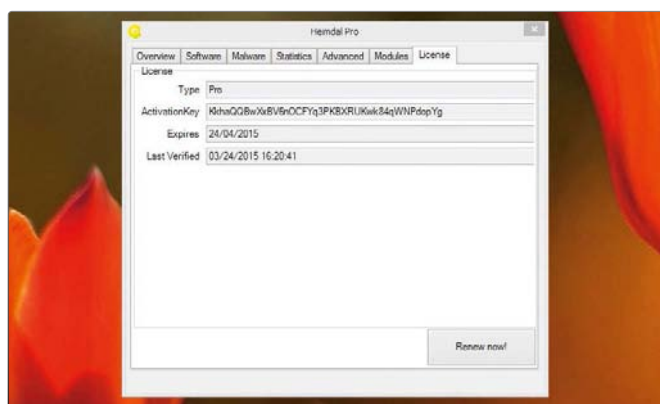
**9 Alert, alert** Occasionally Heimdal won't be available to automatically update certain programs itself, particularly more complicated ones such as Flash browser players, which often need to be installed manually. In that case, you'll see the red '!' icon in the Software tab, indicating a failed update. Try to update it yourself as soon by going to the relevant site such as adobe.com.



**6 Badness begun** In the Malware tab, there should be very little to see – at least, that's the ideal! If Heimdal does detect any known malware or 'info stealers' (programs that try to steal your personal details such as passwords) on your PC, it will attempt to eradicate them and pop up a message to let you know. You can check out exactly what it's done in this section.



**8 What's going on?** The Statistics tab shows you everything that Heimdal has done to date, including vulnerabilities detected, any software updates it has applied, and when it last updated its own data or signatures. Click the 'Details' button to see a full list of all updates Heimdal has applied to itself. Here, it detected a vulnerable Flash plug-in twice, because we've turned off automatic updates.



**10 Want more?** Finally, the License section (only shown in the Pro version) displays your activation key, the date your licence expires, and when the software last verified the licence over the internet. If you find Heimdal is useful, remember you can always buy the full version after your month's trial expires – it costs €34 for a year's subscription. Just go to the main Heimdal website to purchase. ■

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Learn how to...

# Solve common OneDrive problems



Your guide *Ian Evenden* says...

"Annoying errors from Microsoft's cloud backup tool can be repaired with a few clicks using a simple app from the company's website"

## At a glance...

### SKILL LEVEL

- ▶ Anyone can do it
- ▶ Straightforward
- ▶ Tricky in parts

### TIME TAKEN

- ▶ **10** minutes

### SUITABLE FOR

- Windows 8.1
- Windows 7
- Windows Vista
- Windows XP

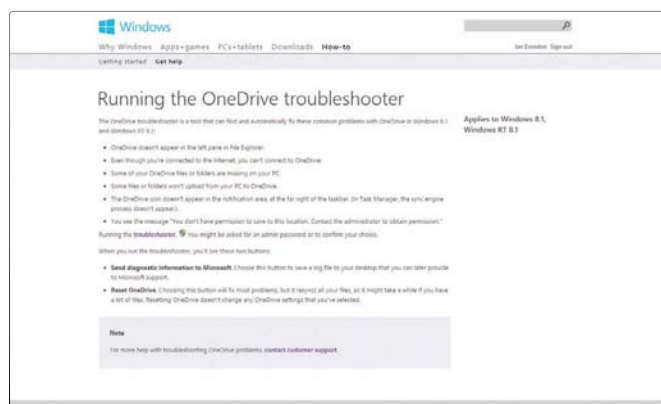
**O**neDrive gives you 15 free gigabytes of cloud storage and file-syncing apps that work on almost every platform. It's a good deal for Windows users and an integral part of the latest version of the operating system, but it's a complex bit of network programming and things can go wrong.

If OneDrive starts misbehaving, Microsoft provides a tool to repair the common problems that occur. The OneDrive Troubleshooter can be downloaded from the Microsoft website and will analyse your OneDrive installation for the most frequent problems.

As OneDrive is the default saving location for documents under Windows 8.1, and also backs up your photos, losing access to the system can prevent the syncing of your work to other devices, as well as potentially ruining your backup plans. Let's see how to fix it.



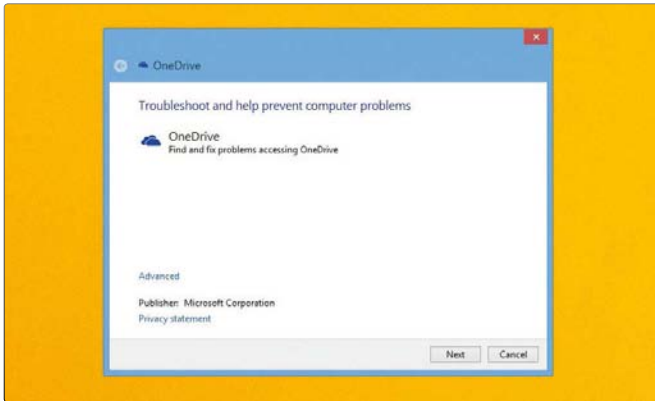
## Step-by-step | Troubleshoot OneDrive



**1 Get the app**  
Getting the app onto your computer is easy, but you'll need to be online. If your OneDrive woes are a symptom of a network outage, this needs to be fixed before you can continue. If your connection is working, go to <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-gb/windows-8/onedrive-troubleshooter> to read about the app, or <http://go.microsoft.com/?linkid=9835055> for a download.

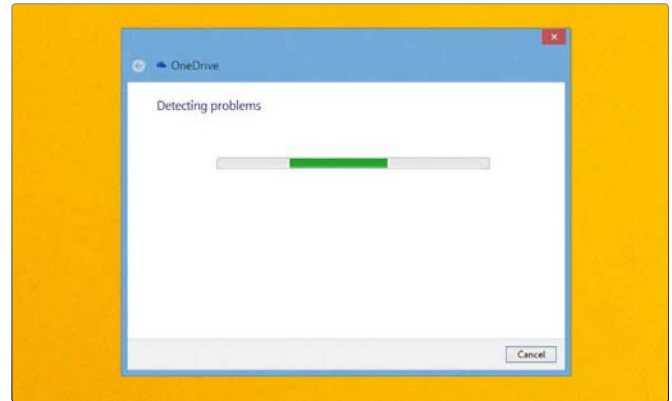


**2 No need to install**  
Once the file has downloaded to your PC, there's no installation routine. Run the file from your browser's download queue (click the filename at the bottom of the screen in Chrome, click 'Save' then 'Open' at the bottom of the screen in Internet Explorer, and click 'Save File' followed by the filename in Firefox). Or find the file in the folder it's been saved to and double-click it.



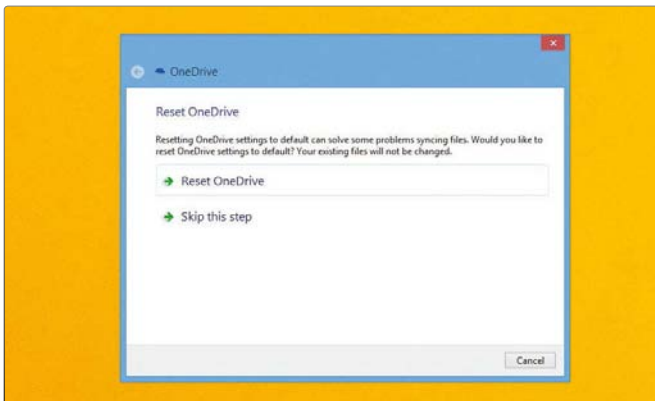
### 3 Advanced

When the app opens, you'll be presented with a window with little more on it than a Next button. It's worth clicking the 'Advanced' link, though, as this enables you to turn off automatic fixing of problems – if there's something you don't want the app to 'fix', such as a setting you chose for another reason, this is your chance to regain control over the process.



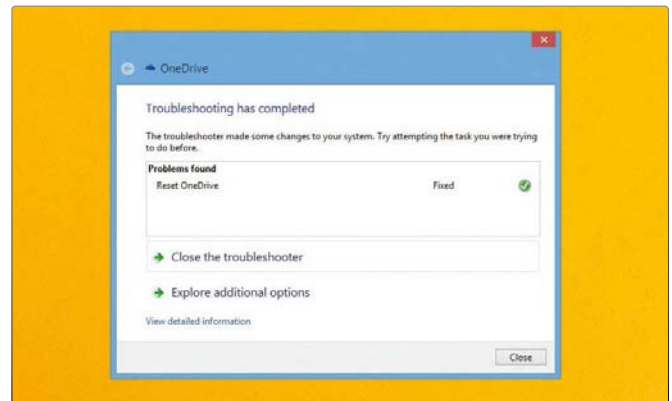
### 4 Scan for problems

You might be asked for an Admin password. Click 'Next', and the troubleshooting app will begin detecting problems. The detection process shouldn't take long, but if your computer has become disconnected from the internet, this is the stage at which it will fail. If it takes more than a few minutes, it suggests your computer is having trouble connecting to Microsoft's servers.



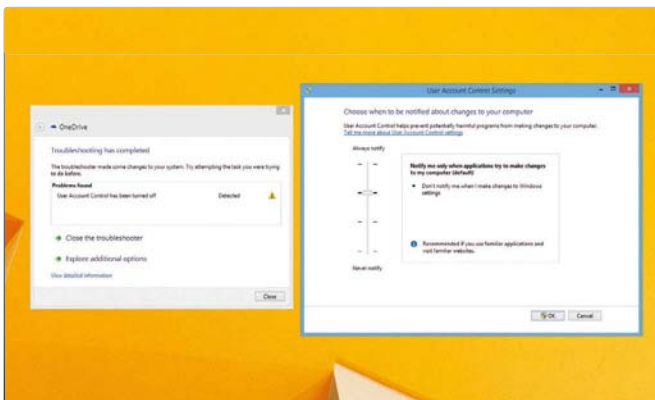
### 5 Reset?

When the detection process is over, you'll be offered the choice to reset OneDrive. This will fix many problems, but also means the app will re-synchronise your files, so if you have stored data in the cloud and a slow internet connection, this option can take a while to complete. The good news is you can still work in other apps as it does it, but nothing you do will be backed up.



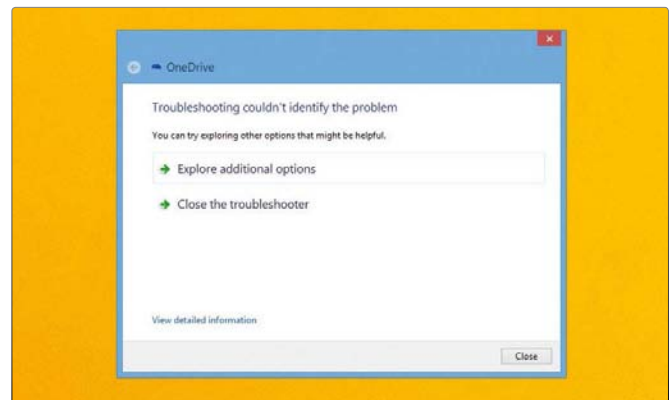
### 6 What's wrong?

If you opt not to reset, and unticked automatic fixing of problems in the advanced settings in Step 3, you'll be presented with a list of what's wrong. If you're on a computer administered by someone else, you may not be able to fix some of these. Others, such as the User Access Control, can be fixed manually from the Control Panel. Or you could let the app do it for you.



### 7 Make repairs

The troubleshooter is a well-behaved program, and as we turned off automatic fixing of problems in step 3, it pops up the segment of the Control Panel for us to make the repair ourselves. On our PC, the problem was User Account Control had been turned off, something OneDrive can't abide and a security risk for the PC. We return it to its default setting, and all is well again.



### 8 Read more

Once everything is fixed, you're given two last options. You can explore further options, which closes the troubleshooter and opens Windows Help so you can read more about the settings that were causing problems. Or you can choose to close the troubleshooter. The downloaded file might be worth keeping if you're a regular OneDrive user, as you might need it again. ■

Learn how to...

# Explore the cosmos with WorldWide Telescope



Your guide *Cat Ellis* says...

"Go star gazing in your own private observatory and take a tour of galaxies far, far away"

## At a glance...

### SKILL LEVEL

- ▶ Anyone can do it
- ▶ Straightforward
- ▶ Tricky in parts

### TIME TAKEN

- ▶ 1 hour

### SUITABLE FOR

- Windows 8.1
- Windows 7
- Windows Vista
- Windows XP

**W**orldWide Telescope is an incredible program that puts the universe at your fingertips. It was created using images and information gathered by telescopes, probes and satellites, which are combined to create an interactive view of the sky that you can explore from your desktop.

Astronomers use WorldWide Telescope to see the universe in many different wavelengths (including visible light, infrared and gamma radiation), and there's access to much more data via the Astrophysics Data System. Right-clicking an object gives you more information, such as recent papers and Wikipedia entries.

Despite its complexity, it's easy to navigate. Simply click and drag to pan around the sky, use your mouse wheel to zoom into an area that looks interesting, and right-click something that catches your eye. Let's turn our eyes to the starry skies.



## Step-by-step | Embark on an interstellar voyage



### 1 Get started with the web client

WorldWide Telescope is available as an HTML5 web app and a downloadable Windows app. We'll start with the web version, so visit [worldwidetelescope.org](http://worldwidetelescope.org), scroll down and click 'Explore WWT on the web'. A message appears asking if you want to share your location. This is optional, but the information will let you explore the sky as you'd see it from outside your own front door.



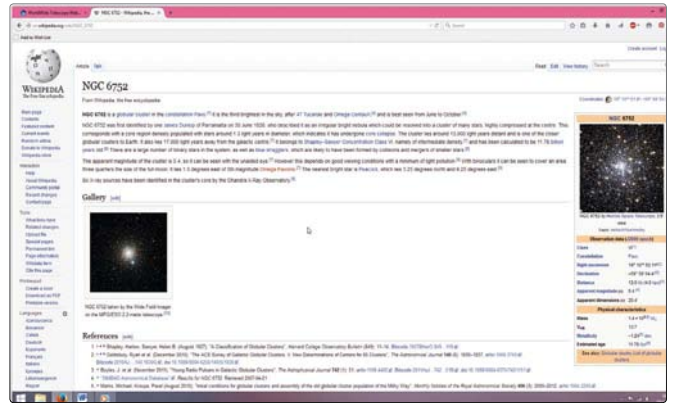
### 2 Begin exploring

Read the notes on how to navigate, then click 'Close'. You'll see an image of the sky with constellations highlighted – click and drag to pan around. The list of celestial objects at the bottom of the screen changes as you move. Select one to explore in more detail. Here I chose Mercury. Click and drag to spin the planet, and use your mouse wheel to zoom. The detail is incredible!

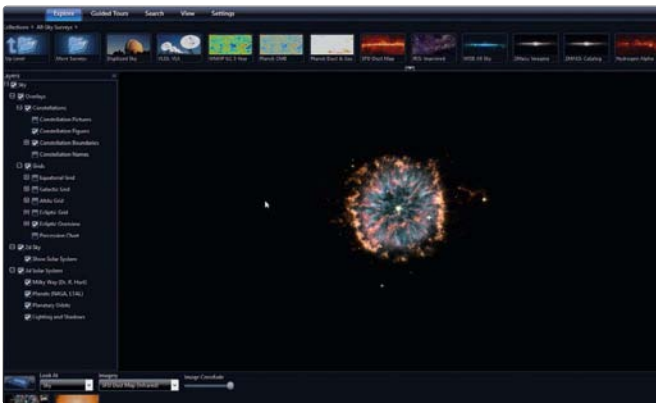




**3 Pick a star**  
Let's take a look at a constellation. Click 'Constellations' in the top left, then pick one from the menu. Here I've chosen Ursa Major. Make sure 'Sky' is selected under 'Look at', then right-click one of the stars to learn more about it. Click 'View object' and the display will zoom right in to show you the star up close. You can also see research papers on the star, look it up online and more.



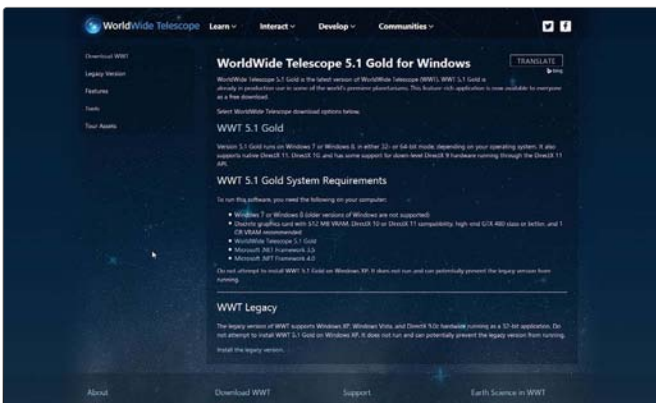
**4 Go deeper**  
Use your mouse wheel to zoom out again. Now explore on your own. Pan around and find a patch of sky to explore and zoom in. Right-click when you see something interesting and zoom in for a closer look. Here I've found a spherical collection of stars called NGC 6752. It's visible from Earth, so I could use the right ascension and declination to find it with a telescope.



**5 Cosmic dust**  
You can explore the sky using surveys listed in the top menu. Zoom out again and click 'SFD dust map'. Cosmic dust used to be an annoyance to astronomers because it obscured the objects they were trying to see, but with infrared astronomy it can give us lots of information about the formation and lifecycles of stars and planets. Try to find a nebula made by a dying star.



**6 Take a tour**  
Thousands of astronomers have collaborated to make WorldWide Telescope an extraordinary tool, and several have put together virtual tours of celestial objects and events. Select 'Guided tours' from the top menu, then choose a tour and click 'Play'. You can pause the tour, or right-click anything that looks interesting to take a closer look and learn more about it.

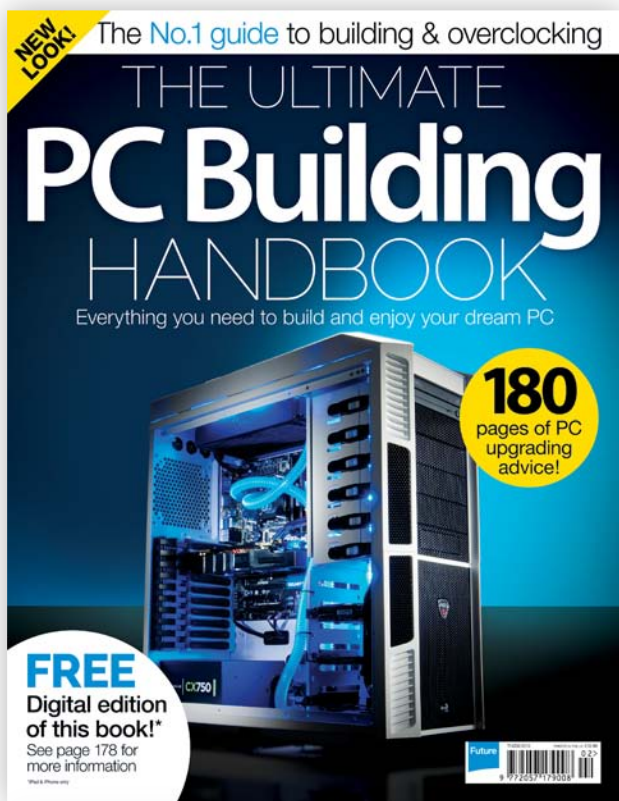


**7 Install the Windows app**  
You can do even more with the downloadable Windows application. Return to the WorldWide Telescope homepage, scroll down and click 'Download WorldWide Telescope'. Save the file when prompted. Click 'Next', accept the licence agreement and click 'Next' again. Deselect the Microsoft Excel add-on option and click 'Next' three more times. Click on the desktop icon to open it.



**8 No place like home**  
While you're using WorldWide Telescope, take a moment to visit Earth. You can choose from several views (the Earth at Night options are particularly impressive) from different years. You can zoom right in to find your house, then move all the way out and begin exploring different galaxies again. It's an amazing tool that makes you feel very powerful, but also very, very small. ■

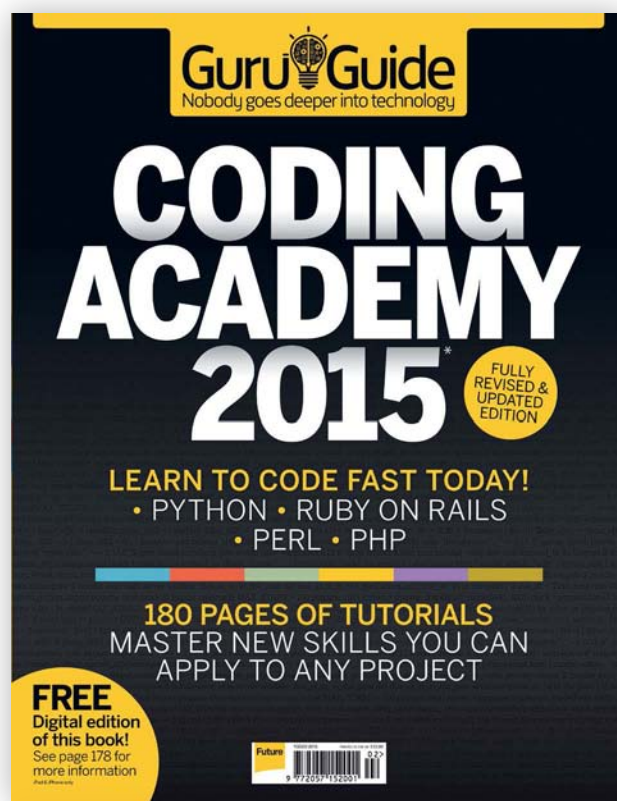
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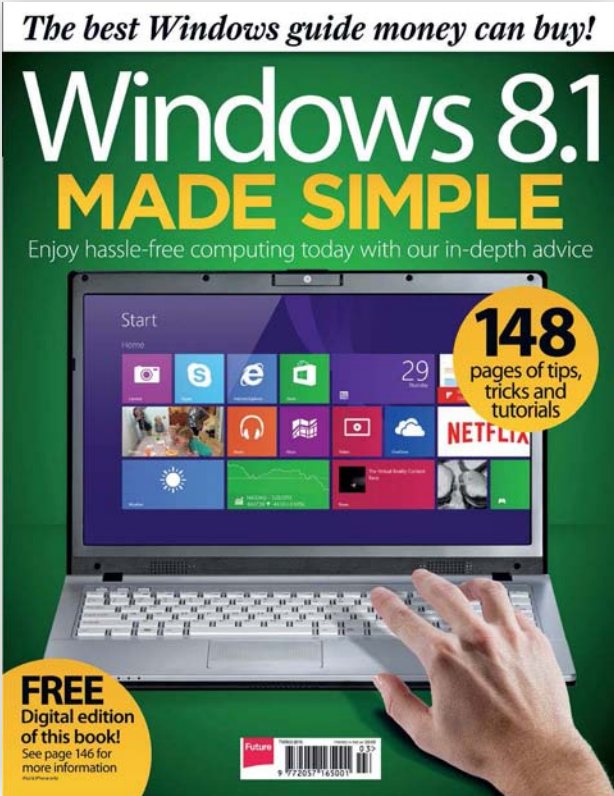
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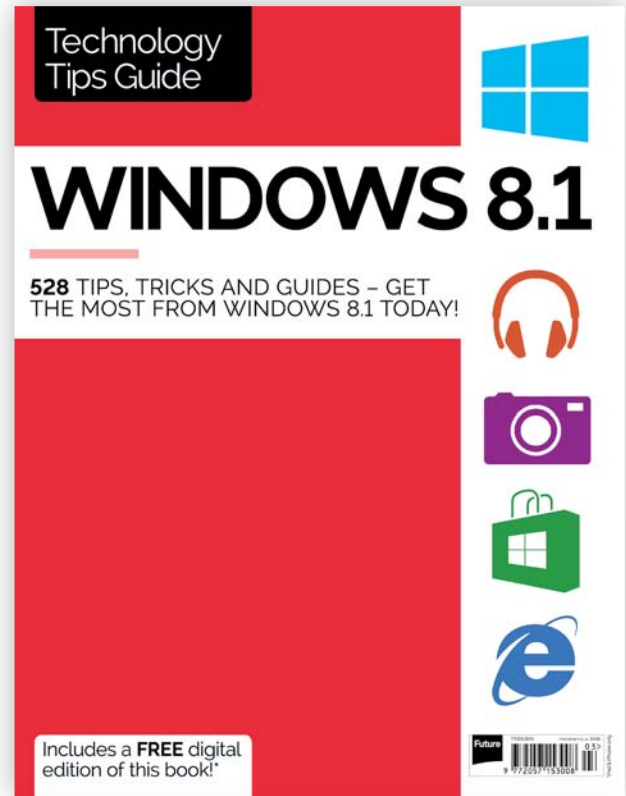
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## Windows 8.1 Made Simple

This guide has everything you need to get more from your PC. We start with the basics of setting up a new Windows device, then look at the first things you'll need to know. It's your ultimate guide to using Windows 8.1. Keep it near your PC as we're sure you'll keep coming back to it time after time.

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Learn how to...

# Integrate Gmail into Windows 8.1's Mail app



Your guide *Nick Odantzis* says...

View your emails and calendar notifications in Windows, without touching your web browser

## At a glance...

### SKILL LEVEL

Anyone can do it  
Straightforward

▶ Tricky in parts

### TIME TAKEN

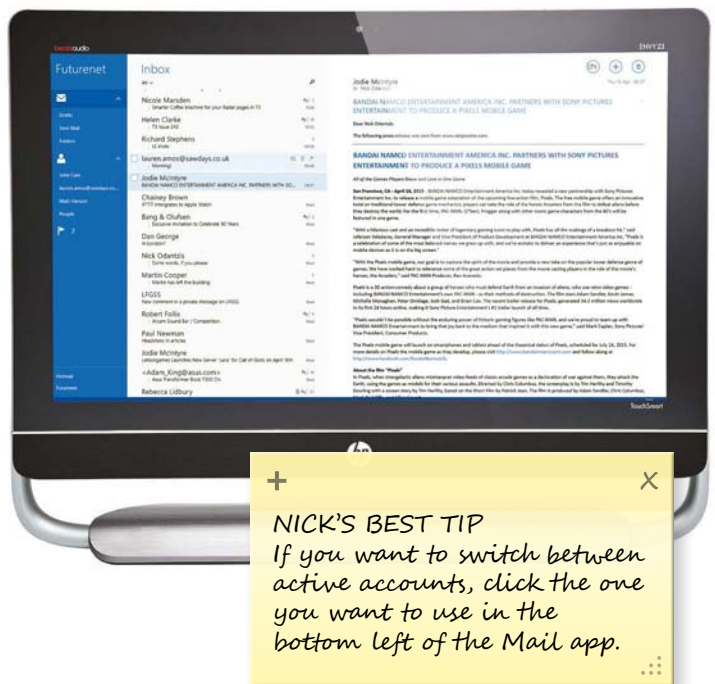
▶ 30 minutes

### SUITABLE FOR

- Windows 8.1
- Windows 7
- Windows Vista
- Windows XP

Unfortunately, there's no Google app in Windows, and it doesn't look like one will ever see the light of day, so unless you normally access all your Google services – Mail, Calendar and more – within a web browser, you can't view your emails or check what's happening in your diary in Windows without loading up the web and logging in each time. That is unless you know the secret way to add them... And, we're going to show you how, so you can view Gmail from within the Windows Mail app (or Outlook.com). We will also show you how to view your crucial calendars from Google in your Outlook.com calendar.

The real advantage of doing this is that you can view all your emails and calendar entries in one place, within Outlook, whether they're from Gmail or Outlook.

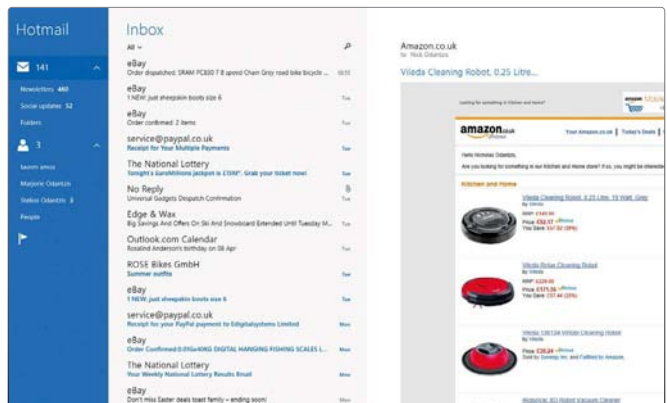


## Step-by-step | Get access to Gmail services within Windows



### 1 Find Mail app

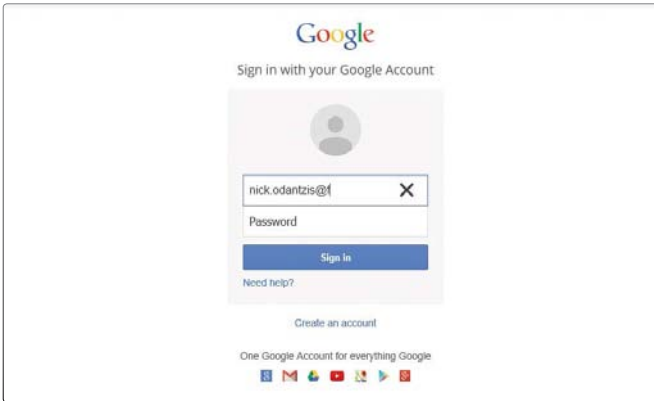
First, open the Mail app from the Modern UI interface (the tiled screen), or you can just search for it by using the Windows+[Q] shortcut, typing Mail and hitting 'Enter' when it appears in the menu. Once you're inside the app, point your mouse cursor in the top-right corner of the screen to open the charms bar and click on the Settings option that appears.



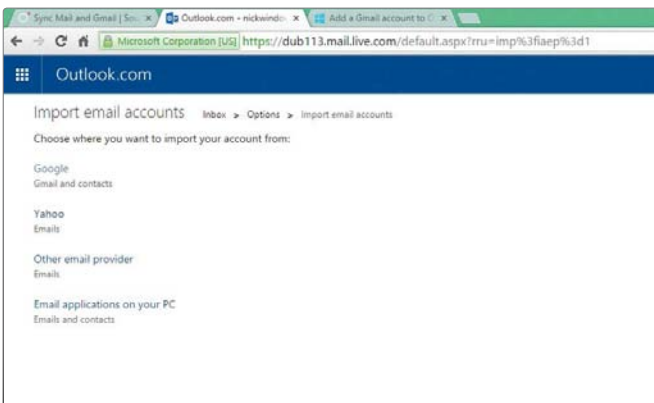
### 2 Choose account

On the new side bar that appears, click on Accounts. This is where you'll normally see all the accounts connected to the Mail app, but there might not be any here. To connect a new one, click 'Add an account' and then select the account type you'd like to add; in this case it's the Google one that we want to connect, but if you'd like to add other accounts just follow the same procedure.

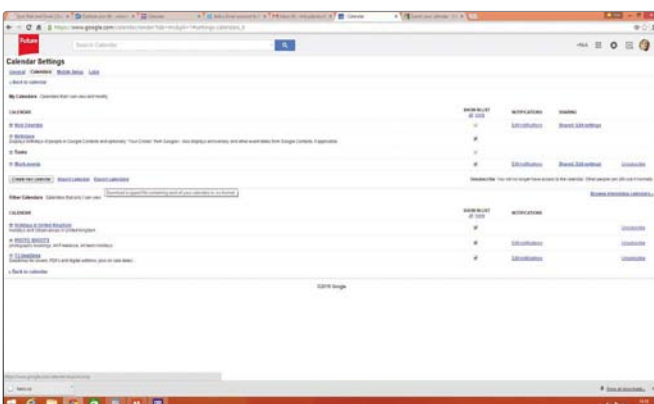
# Explore Integrate Gmail into Windows



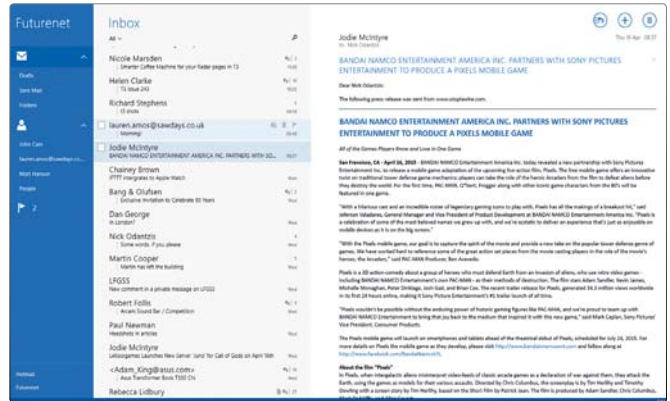
**3 Sign in**  
In the window that appears, enter your login details for the Google account that you normally use – so an email address and your password. Then click 'Sign in' to give the Mail app access to your account information. You'll need to allow Mail to access some of your Google settings, so click 'Accept' when prompted. Click 'Yes' to allow Windows to remember your sign in information.



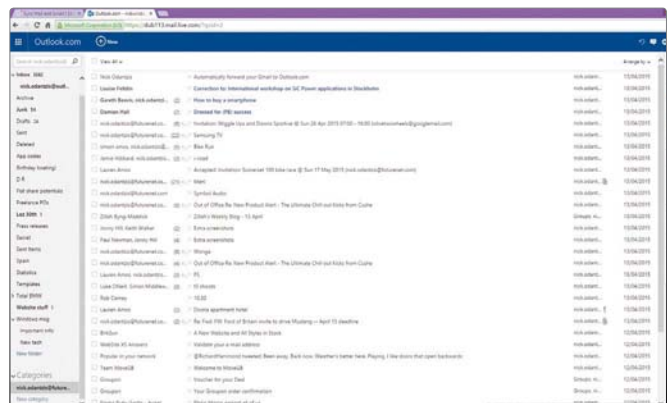
**5 Outlook.com and Gmail**  
Although you've connected Gmail to Outlook, you'll still need to import your Gmail settings. Go to [www.outlook.com](http://www.outlook.com) and log in using the same Microsoft account you use for your PC. Click on the settings cog in the top menu, choose 'Options > Import email accounts' and click on Google. Finally, click Start to import Gmail into Outlook.com. Sign into your Gmail account once more.



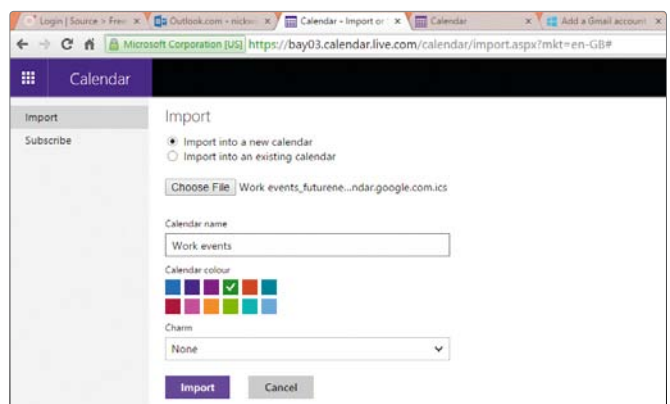
**7 Export your calendars**  
You can also access your Gmail calendars from within Windows – sign into your Gmail account, go to your Calendar (or head to [www.google.com/calendar](http://www.google.com/calendar)), click the arrow next to My calendars and choose 'Settings'. Then click 'Export calendars' to save a file to your PC containing an ICS file for each of your calendars. Unzip the file not forgetting where you put the ICS files.



**4 Get Gmail everywhere**  
Now click on 'Connect' to access Gmail in all the other areas you would use your Microsoft account, such as on Outlook.com – the web version of the Mail app. Sign in and you'll be taken to Mail. You'll see your Gmail emails, as well as any other folders you normally use. Don't worry if you can't see another email account you have connected, you can switch between them any time.



**6 Importing emails**  
The import process could take some time, depending on how many emails you have in your account. Once it's finished, you'll see that your Gmail emails are merged with your Outlook ones, which might not be entirely to your liking. To see your Gmail emails on their own, click on your email address under the 'Categories' heading in bottom of the left hand menu.



**8 Import calendars to Outlook**  
Go to Outlook.com, click on Calendar on the main menu. Click 'Import' then hit the 'Choose File' button. Navigate to where you saved the ICS files, open one of them and give it a colour, name and charm, if you like. Finally, click on Import and you'll see your Gmail calendar within the Outlook.com calendar. You should now have all your Gmail activities synced with Windows. ■

Learn how to...

# Build an impressive-looking website



Your guide *Nicholas Odantzis* says...

Put a touch of the professional into your first website by using WebSite X5 Home 11

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**SEE PAGE 61**

## At a glance...

### SKILL LEVEL

Anyone can do it  
Straightforward  
▶ Tricky in parts

### TIME TAKEN

▶ **60** minutes

### SUITABLE FOR

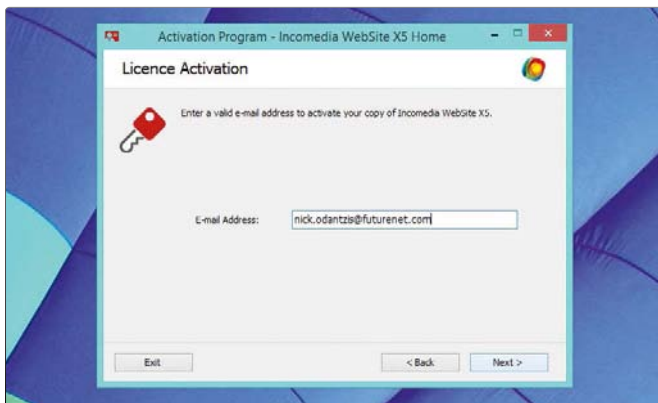
Windows 8.1  
Windows 7  
Windows Vista  
Windows XP

**B**uilding your own website is the ideal way to place yourself front and centre on the internet. Whether the site is for your small business or just a fun project for friends and family, by doing it all yourself you can choose exactly how you want your site to look, with its own feel that will make you stand out from everyone else.

However, if you've never built a site before, it can seem daunting. We've secured a free version of WebSite X5 Home 11 with this issue of Windows Help & Advice, and it makes setting up your own site really easy. There's no code to deal with, and you don't need to have a flair for design either – the building blocks are provided for you, so – essentially – all you have to do is choose how you want your site to look, and then it's up to you to add the content. In the end, you'll have a smart, professional website that you'll be proud of.



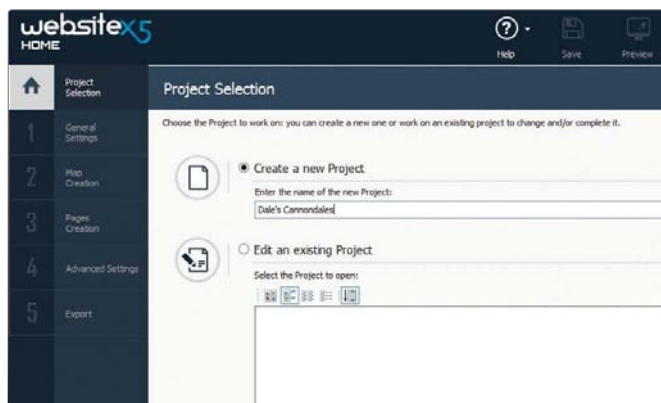
## Step-by-step | Build your own website



**1 Install WebSite X5**  
Download your free Website X5 Home 11 from <http://go.website5.com/wintnthm11en>. When you get to the Home Activation, prompt click 'Next' and enter your email address to receive your unique key with which to activate WebSite X5. If you want access to some handy extras for your website, you can also register your details on the next screen.

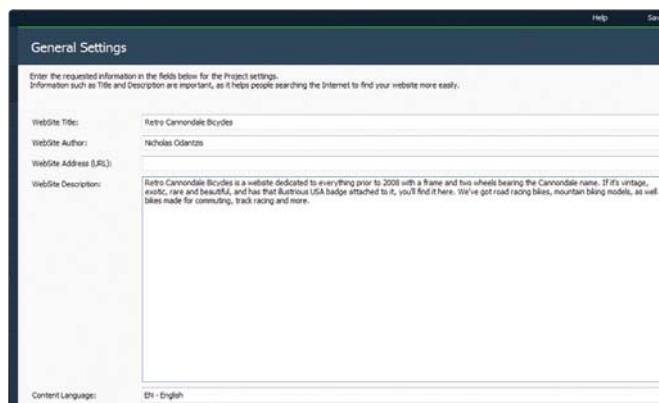


**2 Activate and launch**  
Go to your email inbox and click on the link you have just received, return to the X5 prompt and hit 'Next'. Now your copy will be activated for use. On the final screen hit 'Start' to begin making your website. WebSite X5 will open in its own window, and on the Home screen you'll see information, such as settings, tutorials and questions posted by WebSite X5 users.



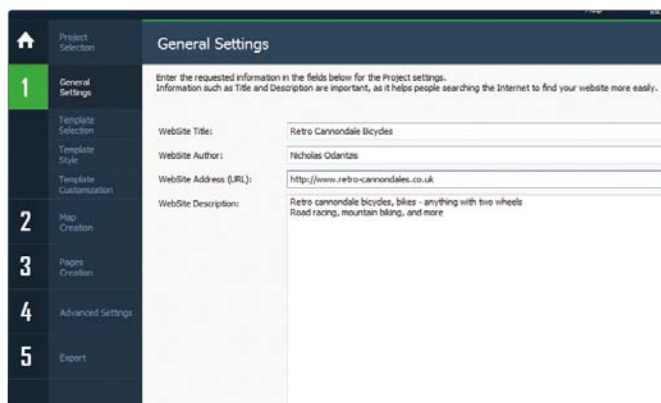
### 3 Start creating

Before you get to the extras on the home screen of X5, go right ahead and start creating your site by clicking the Start button in the top-right of the window. You'll be taken to the Project Selection area, so first give your site a name underneath where it says 'Create a new Project'. Don't worry if you can't think of anything inventive just yet, you can always change it later.



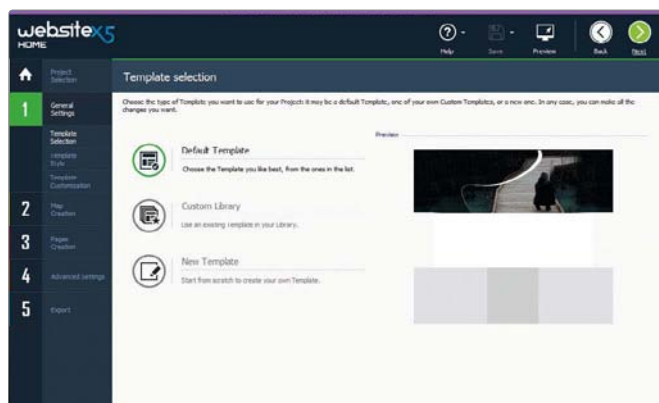
### 4 Maximise search results

Click the 'Next' button in the top-right corner to go to the 'General Settings' area. Then enter information about your website to make it searchable. Give your site a name to make it easier for people to find it on search engines. In the Website Description, give as much info about your site as possible – the keywords will make your site appear higher in search rankings.



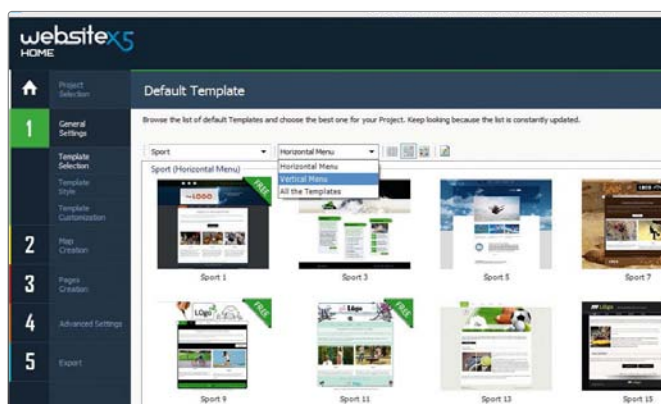
### 5 Name your site

Now give your website a unique URL. For maximum search results, be sensible and spell out what your website offers. For example, for vintage hats, try [www.vintage-hats.com](http://www.vintage-hats.com), as long as it's not been taken. Before you go any further, click 'Save' button to ensure you don't lose everything you've added so far. Your project will be saved to the default projects folder. Click 'Next'.



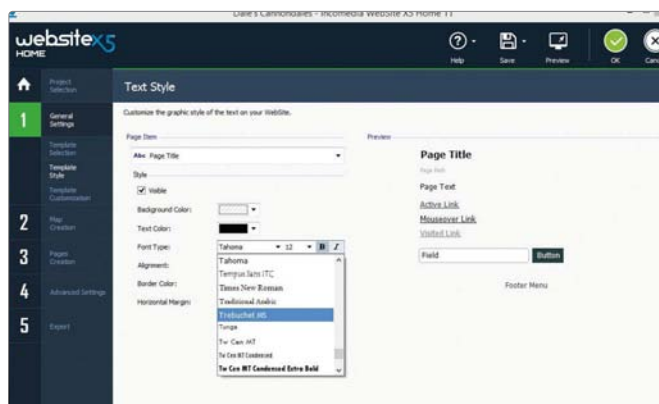
### 6 Choose a look

In the Template selection area you can decide how you want your website to look. Use the Default Template, which allows you to choose from the ones provided by Website X5. Click on 'Default Template' and you'll see a bunch of choices – click on one to see a preview and click 'OK' to use it. If you've upgraded your version you can even create a new template from scratch.



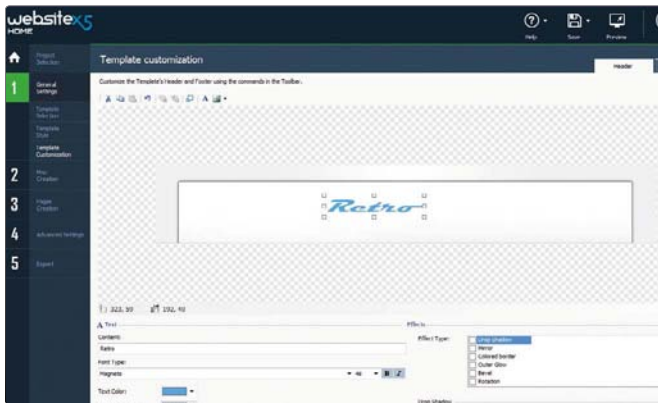
### 7 More templates

The default style of template uses the Health category. You can change it by using the drop-down menu above the templates – choose from a variety of themes, including sport, business and more. You can even change the menu from horizontal to vertical in the menu next to the themes menu and the preview will update. Click 'OK' after you've made changes, then click 'Next'.

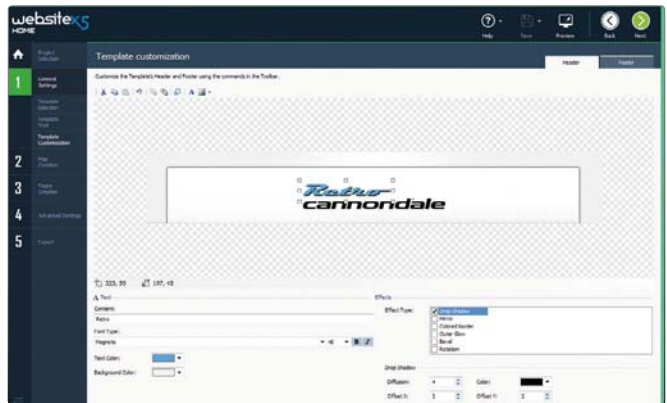


### 8 Change website text

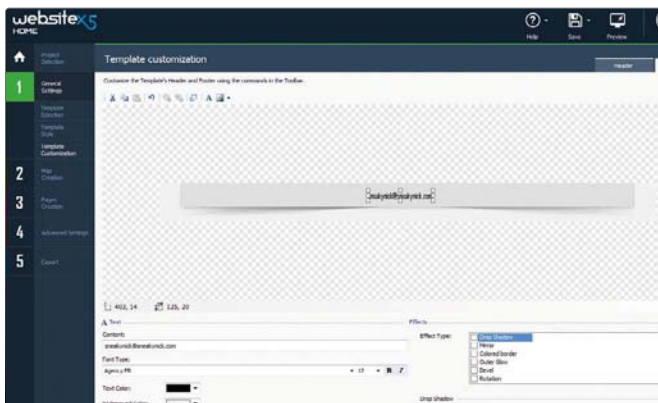
You can skip this step and leave things as they are, or change the way the text looks and works when visitors interact with it. Click on 'Text style' to modify things such as page text and mouseover links – select the one you want to edit from the 'Page Item' drop-down menu and select it. Click on 'Template Style' again – you can also edit the way the main menu and drop-down work.



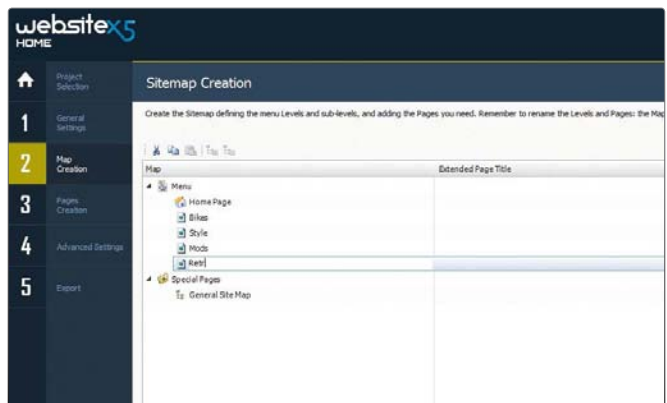
**9 Add a header**  
Your website header is the first thing people see when they visit your site. And it defines the site's overall style. In the left hand-menu, click 'Template Customisation' to edit it. This will look different depending on the template you've chosen. You can enter the name of your website here by clicking the text icon. A text box will appear, which you can move around to suit.



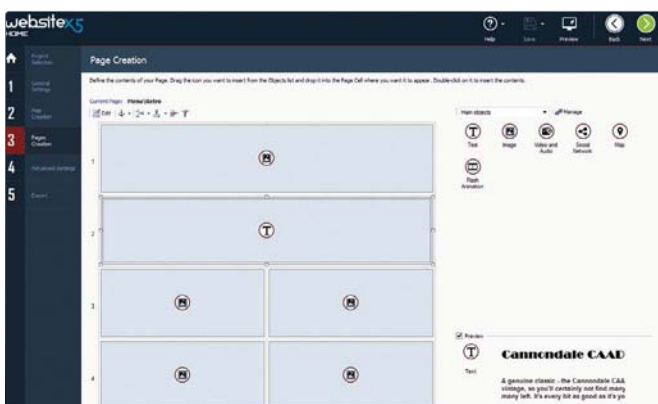
**10 Edit the header**  
You can adjust the text to suit using the options below. First, type the name of your site into the Content box. Then change its size, colour and font type. You can even add effects, such as a drop shadow. Play around with it until you're happy. If you already have a logo that you'd like to use, click the image button and choose 'Image from file', find the image and open it.



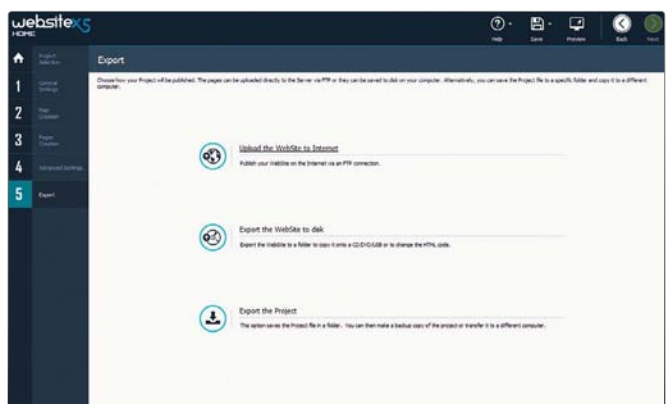
**11 Add a footer**  
Click the 'Footer' tab in the Template Customisation area to edit the footer. The footer could be as simple as an email address, or you might want to put an image there. As with the header, hit the text box to add plain text, or use the image option to add any kind of image to the footer. As this can take a bit of time to get right, don't forget to hit 'Save' when you're done, then click 'Next'.



**12 Menu changes**  
In the Map Creation, you can change how your menu works. Right-click a heading and select 'Rename' to change what the menu item says, or use the arrows to change the positions. You can add a new page or website level (which can contain more pages), or remove any you don't want. Click 'Next' to add content. The page you select will be the page you edit on the next screen.



**13 Add content**  
Your website is split into several frames, and within each of these you can add a specific type of content, such as text or images. Drag the content button into the frame. If you want to change the way content appears, drag the edges of the box. You can also add more rows or columns using the editing tools above. To edit each content area, or add text or images, double click it.



**14 Publish your site**  
You're now ready to publish online. Skip the advanced settings section if you're worried about adding a welcome page or advertising message, and go straight to 'Export'. Click 'Upload the WebSite to Internet' – you'll need the FTP address as well as your username and password. Get in touch with your hosting company for this information. Sites such as 1and1.co.uk offer web hosting. ■



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Learn how to...

# Fix hardware problems



Your guide *Matt Hanson* says...

“Most of us have encountered a hardware problem, but Windows will help you identify and correct it quickly and easily”

## At a glance...

### SKILL LEVEL

Anyone can do it

- ▶ Straightforward
- Tricky in parts

### TIME TAKEN

- ▶ 30 minutes

### SUITABLE FOR

- Windows 8.1
- Windows 7
- Windows Vista
- Windows XP

One of the most amazing things about PCs is that they come in all shapes and sizes, from slender Windows 8 tablets to portable and powerful laptops, all the way up to hand-built gaming PCs packed with the most powerful components known to man.

The huge variety is fantastic, but it also means we sometimes come across hardware problems. There are so many possible combinations of parts from dozens of manufacturers, sometimes they can have trouble talking to one another.

This can be frustrating and it's not always obvious where the problem lies. But don't worry – there are a number of tools built into Windows that will let you find out what's gone wrong quickly and easily, and help you fix or replace any problem parts.

I'll show you how to use them, and suggest some common problems and solutions. Let's get going!

### CONFIGURE A DEVICE

Click this option to get Windows to scan for hardware problems and attempt to fix them automatically.

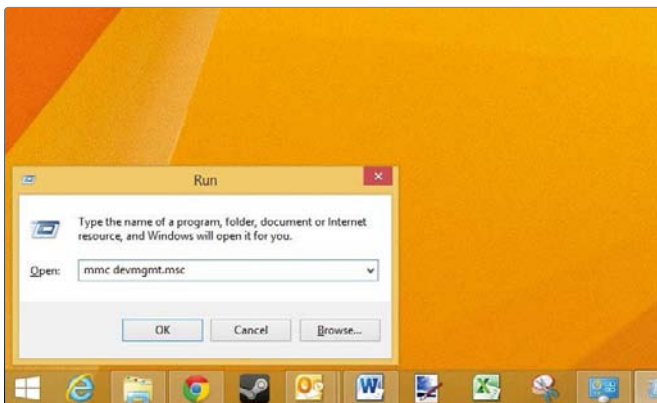
### TROUBLESHOOT AUDIO PLAYBACK

If you're having trouble hearing sounds through your speakers or headphones, run this troubleshooter to find out what the problem is.

See also

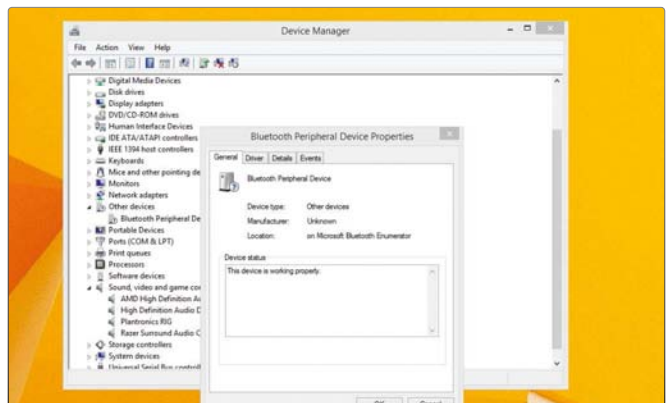
- Action Center
- Help and Support
- Recovery

## Step-by-step | Identify and resolve hardware issues



### 1 Open Device Manager

If your computer has started to act a bit strangely recently, the first thing to do is see what might be causing the problem. As long as Windows will start correctly, you can check out the Device Manager by pressing [Windows]+[R] on your keyboard and typing `mmc devmgmt.msc`. You can also open Device Manager through Windows' [Control Panel](#).



### 2 View your devices

Device Manager lists all the hardware and components that are currently installed. If there are any problems a yellow or red icon appears by the device, letting you know something is up. Right-click on a device and select 'Properties'. Under 'Device status' you'll see a notification telling you whether the device is working properly, and if not, what the problem might be.

# Explore

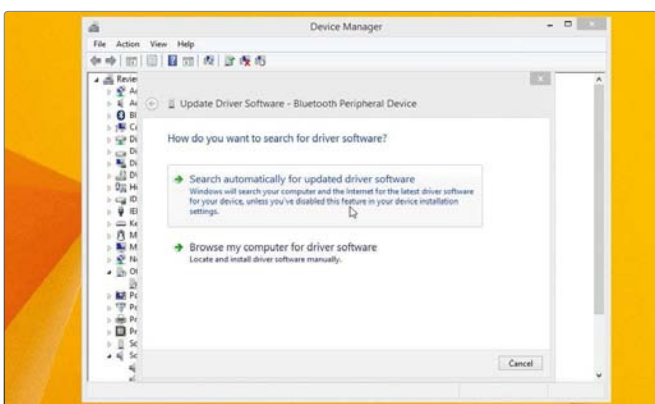
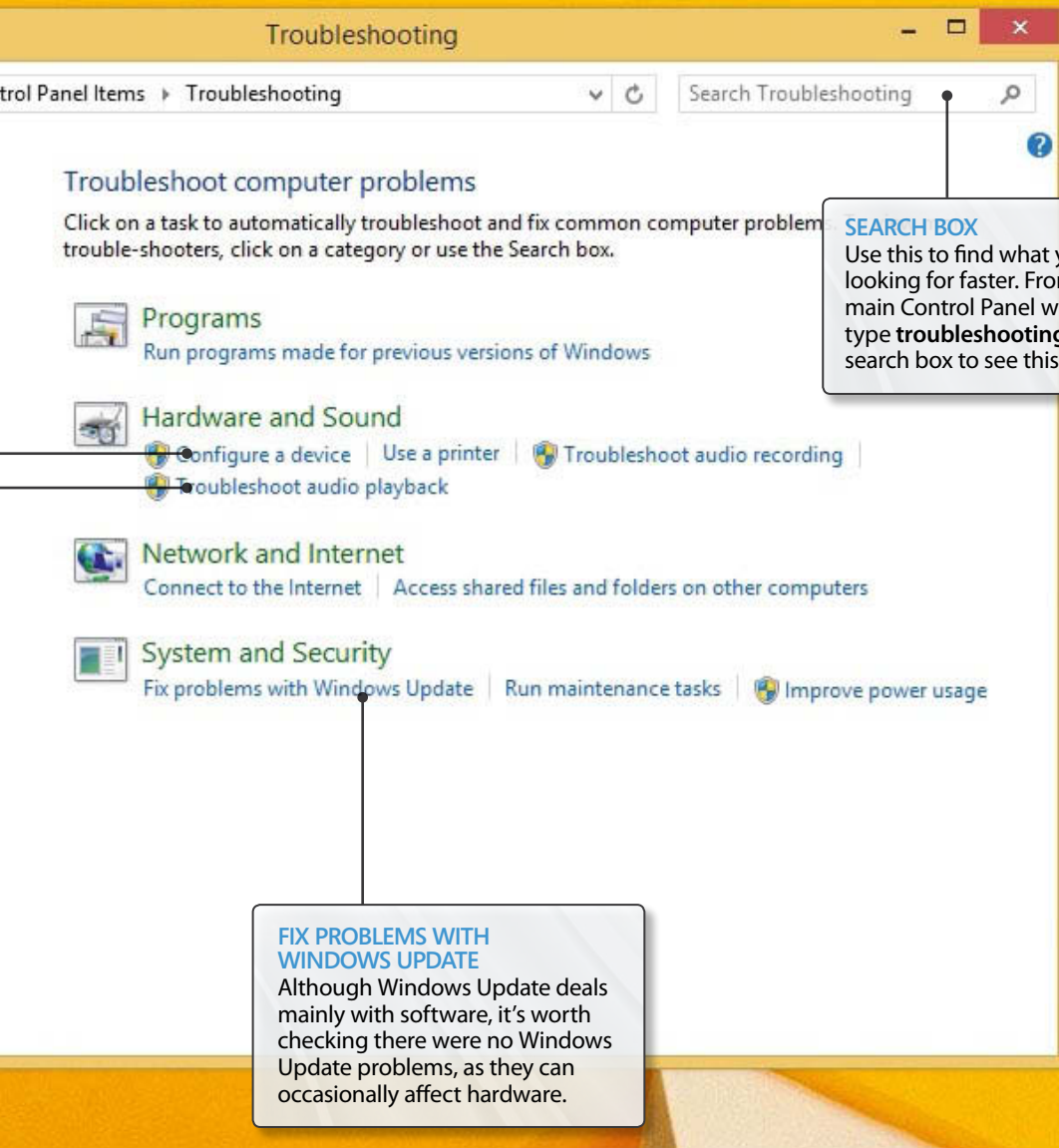
## Fix hardware problems

### Jargon buster!

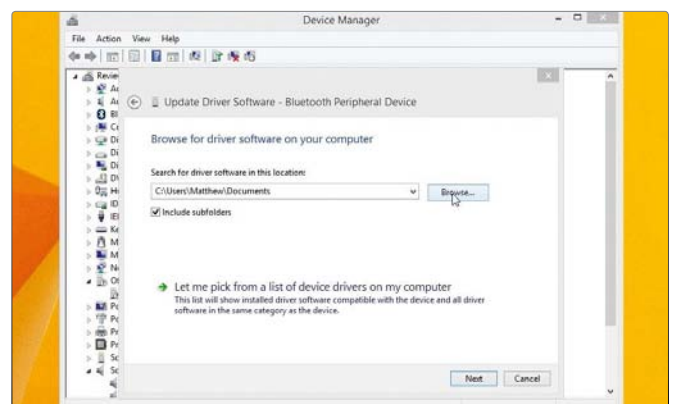
► **Control Panel**  
A part of Windows that contains lots of useful and powerful tools. In Windows XP, Vista and 7 you can get to it by clicking the Start menu, and selecting 'Control Panel'. In Windows 8, go to the desktop and bring up the Charms bar, then select 'Settings > Control Panel'. You can also type **control panel** into the Start search bar.

► **Troubleshooter**  
A step-by-step guide that takes you through the process of identifying and fixing any problems.

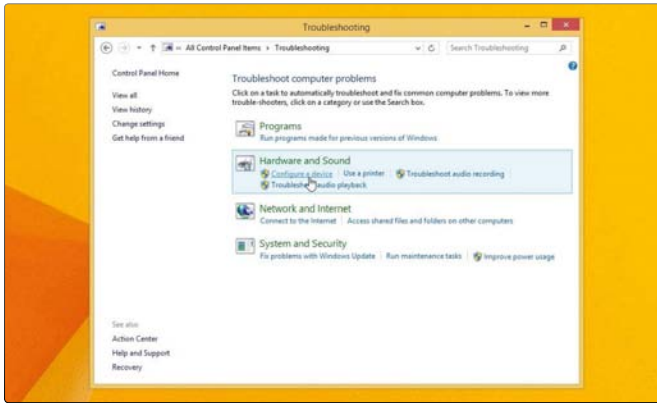
► **RAM**  
This stands for random-access memory and is an essential part of modern computers. It lets Windows access stored information quickly, and the more RAM you have, the more data your PC can use quickly.



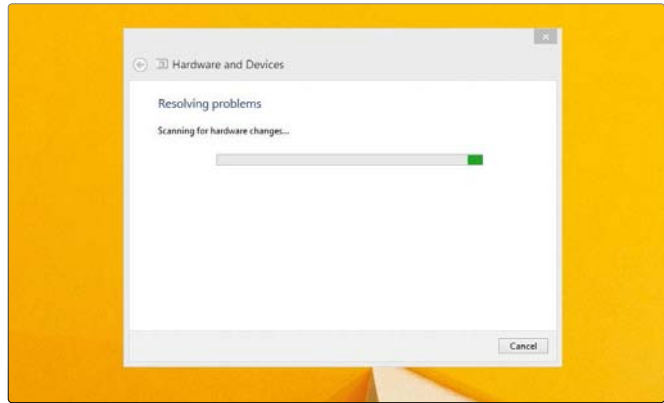
**3** **Automatically update your drivers**  
Faulty drivers are the source of many hardware problems, but you can easily update them from the Device Manager. Right-click on a device then select 'Update driver software'. First, try 'Search automatically for updated driver software'. Windows will check your computer, and online, for the best drivers, and install them automatically. If that doesn't work, try the next step.



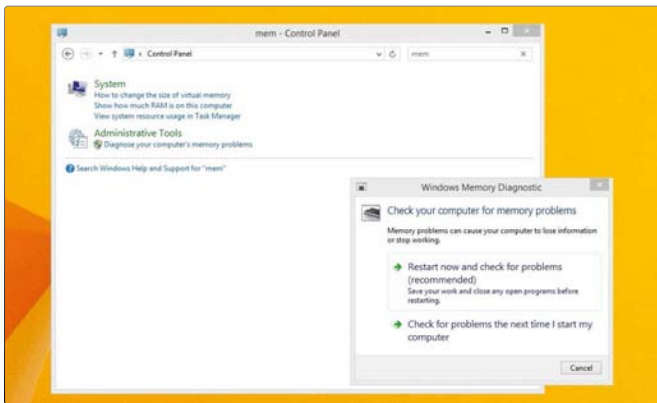
**4** **Update your drivers manually**  
You can also install drivers manually. If your device came with a DVD containing drivers, insert that. You should also check the manufacturer's website to see if there is a new driver available to download. Once done, go back to the Update Driver Software page and select 'Browse my computer for driver software'. Click 'Browse', then select your DVD drive or your Downloads folder.



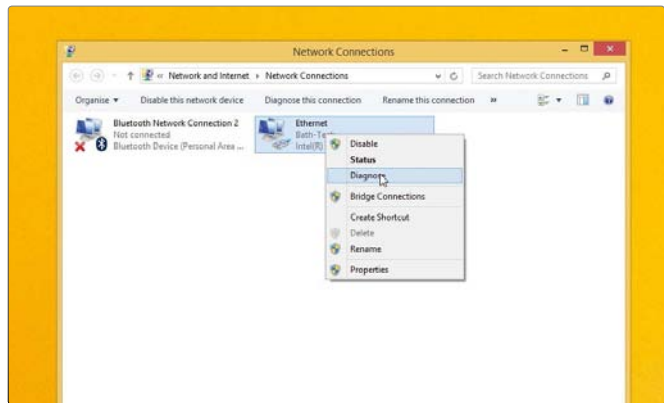
**5 Open the troubleshooter**  
 Another way to find solutions to hardware problems is to use the Hardware and Devices **Troubleshooter**. Open up the Control Panel, then in the search box in the top-right hand corner of the window type **troubleshooter** and press [Enter] on your keyboard. Under Troubleshooting click 'Find and fix problems', then select 'Configure a device'.



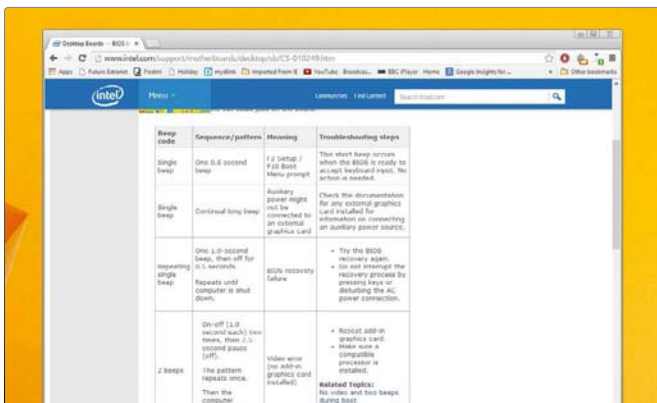
**6 Follow the steps**  
 With the Hardware and Devices Troubleshooter open, click 'Next' to begin. Windows will now scan your system and attempt to fix any problems it finds. When it does, you'll see a list of changes it has made, and you should be able to continue working. You can also select 'Explore additional options' or 'View detailed information' for more clues about what has gone wrong.



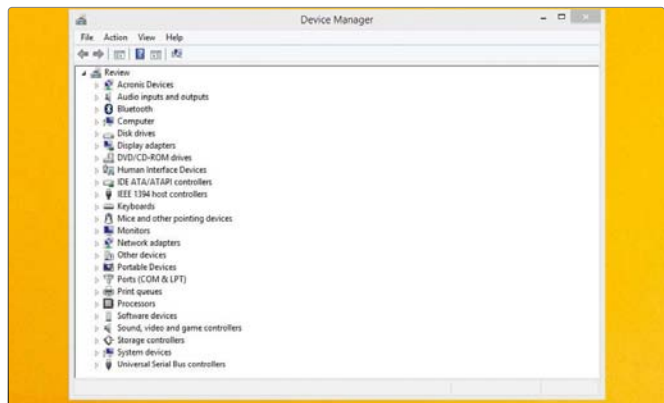
**7 Solve memory problems**  
 If something is wrong with its **RAM**, your PC can be plagued with problems. You can identify and fix these issues by opening the Control Panel and typing **memory** into the search box. Under 'Administrative tools', select 'Diagnose your computer's memory problems'. You can either restart Windows now and check for problems, or have it check next time you start your computer.



**8 Fix your network adapter**  
 Can't connect to the internet? Unplug your modem from the power supply, wait 20 seconds, then plug it back in. Once it has restarted, try connecting again. If that doesn't help, type **network** in the Start menu (or the Start screen in Windows 8). Click 'Network > Network and Sharing Center > Change adapter settings'. Right-click your network connection and click 'Diagnose'.



**9 More serious issues**  
 Sometimes a hardware problem is so severe that Windows won't start. When you turn on your PC, a long beep or a series of short beeps can inform you what is wrong. For example, one long beep tells you that the graphics card is not powered properly. It varies according to the manufacturer, so you may need to search the internet, or take it to a store to be fixed.



**10 Troubleshooting tips**  
 Following these steps you should now be able to fix any hardware problems you encounter. Start with the most obvious problem, such as a driver error, then work your way through each step. You'll hopefully hit the solution as you go. Unfortunately, some serious problems may require the help of a professional to either fix or replace the faulty hardware. ■

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# Learn how to... Rid your PC of malware



Your guide *Christian Hall* says...  
"If your PC is behaving strangely, malware could be to blame. It's time for some detective work"

## At a glance...

### SKILL LEVEL

- ▶ Anyone can do it
- Straightforward
- Tricky in parts

### TIME TAKEN

- ▶ 40 minutes

### SUITABLE FOR

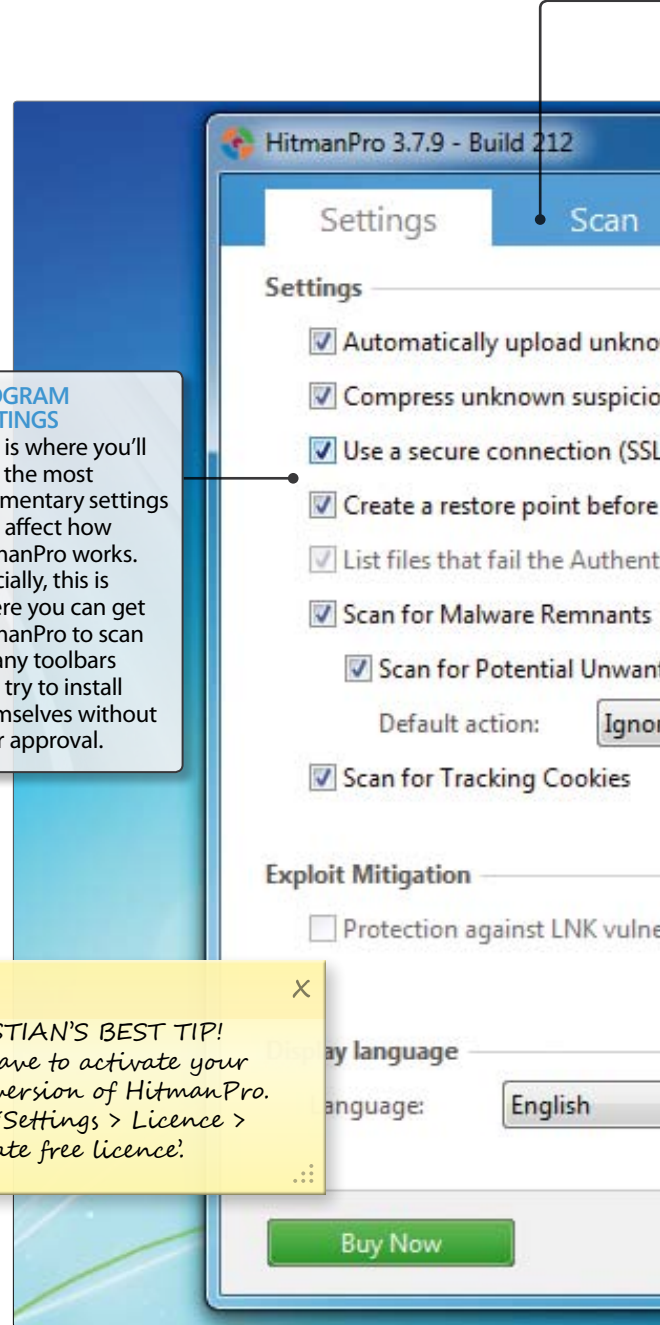
- Windows 8.1
- Windows 7
- Windows Vista
- Windows XP

**Y**our internet security suite or advanced antivirus program is always the first line of defence in combating internet-based threats. But while a virus or trojan will almost certainly be caught, less obvious **malware** can fall through the net. We don't usually recommend using a second security suite, but HitmanPro is a great tool for getting a second opinion on possible malware.

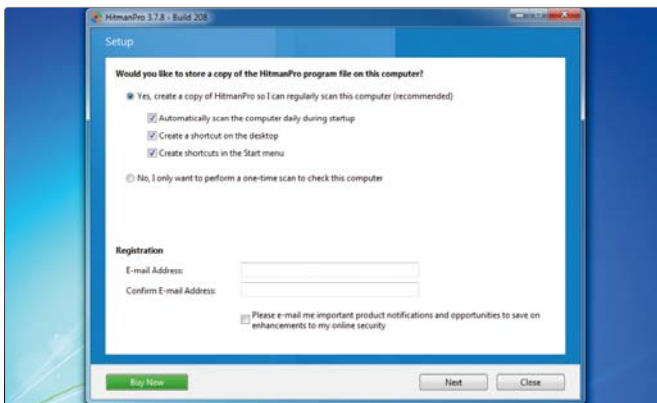
HitmanPro has a **behavioural scan** tool, which it uses to check your computer for potential virus activities or suspicious files that have the characteristics of malware. For the files that are classified as suspicious, HitmanPro sends a request to the Scan Cloud for confirmation that these files are indeed malicious. If the file is unknown, HitmanPro uploads it to the Scan Cloud, where it is scanned using the antivirus programs of five different vendors. I'll guide you through all of its main options.

**PROGRAM SETTINGS**  
This is where you'll find the most rudimentary settings that affect how HitmanPro works. Crucially, this is where you can get HitmanPro to scan for any toolbars that try to install themselves without your approval.

**CHRISTIAN'S BEST TIP!**  
You have to activate your trial version of HitmanPro. Go to 'Settings > Licence > Activate free licence'.

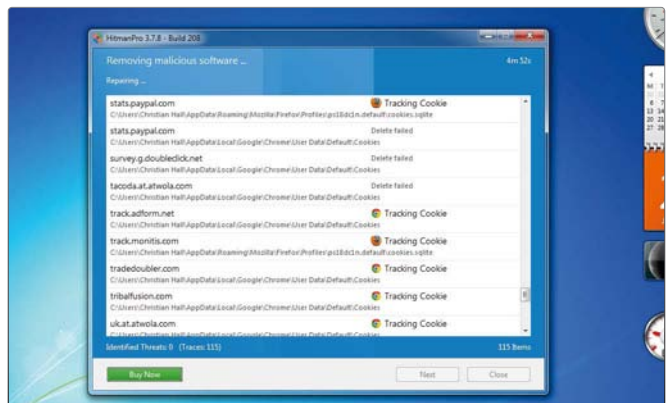


## Step-by-step | Stop malware in its tracks



### 1 Install and set up

HitmanPro is free for a month and can be downloaded from [surfright.nl/en/hitmanpro](http://surfright.nl/en/hitmanpro). During the installation process you can opt to scan your computer on startup. I recommend checking this option for extra security. Note that HitmanPro doesn't actually need to be installed – it can be run straight from a USB drive, a CD/DVD, a local hard drive or a NAS drive.



### 2 Auto removal

Choose 'Next' on the Install screen, then click 'Next' again when you reach the main interface. You'll initiate a Quick Scan by default, which will look at every folder on your PC for pesky malware that might have slipped through your standard security suite's net. If you see 'Delete failed' in the list of identified files, you need to close the web browser that you currently have open.

**SCAN OPTIONS**

This tab will let you schedule a malware scan in much the same way you'd set up a regular antivirus scan using your main security suite.

**Jargon buster!**

► **Malware**

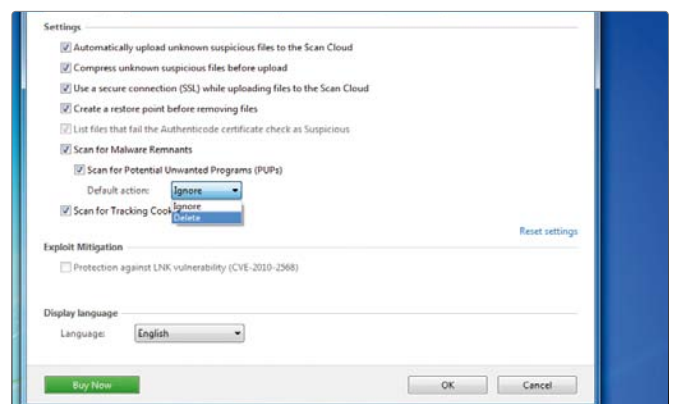
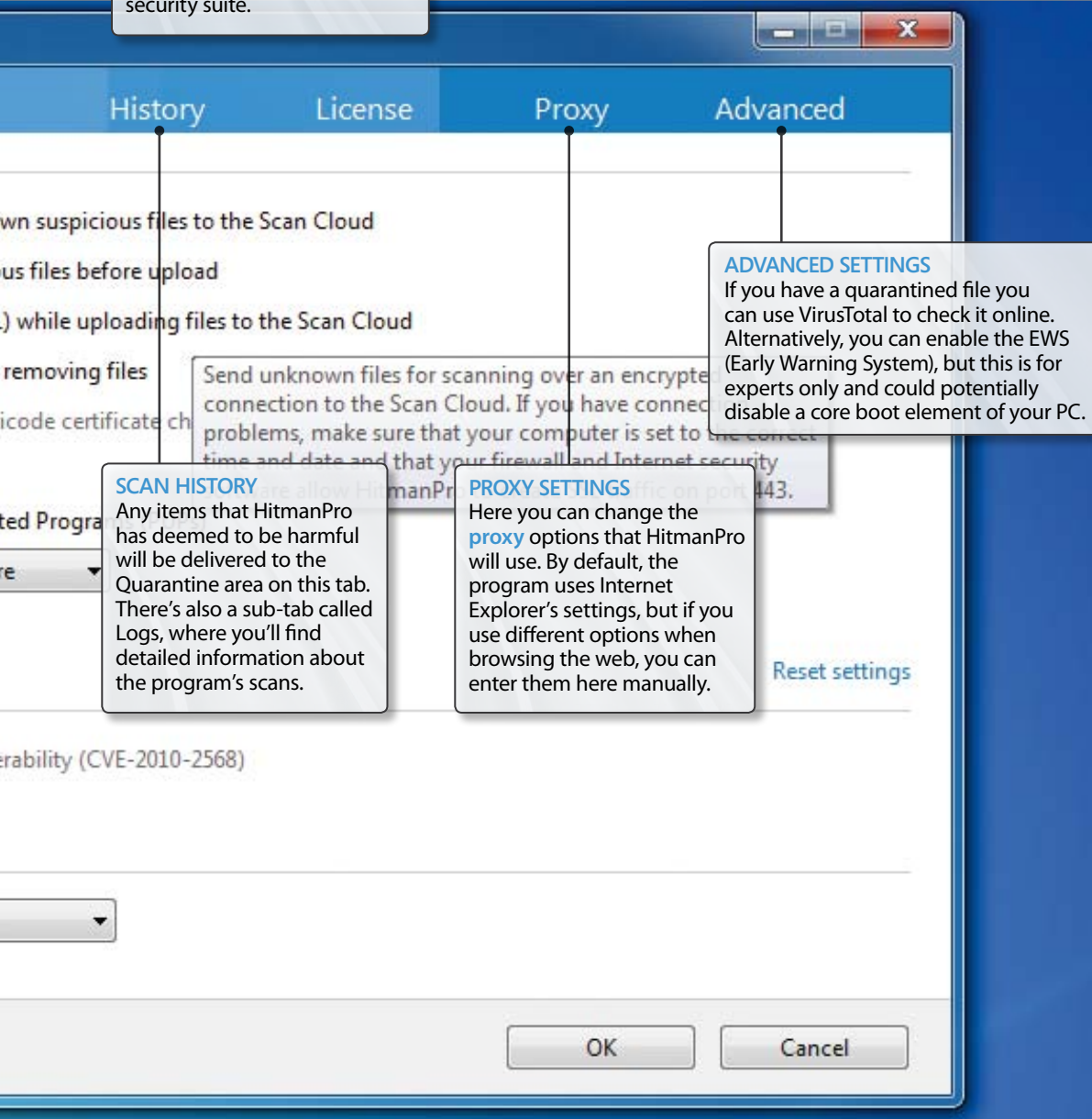
A catch-all term to describe malicious software that finds its way onto your PC. It can mean any threat, but here we use it to mean malicious programs other than viruses and trojans that are primarily found through the internet.

► **Proxy**

An intermediary server connecting your PC to an end destination server via the internet. Proxy servers are most commonly used to help a PC get access to servers that it normally wouldn't be able to access.

► **Behavioural scan**

Using a clever series of algorithms, it's possible for some software programs to identify files and apps that pose a threat, even if it's not initially obvious that they are up to something malicious.

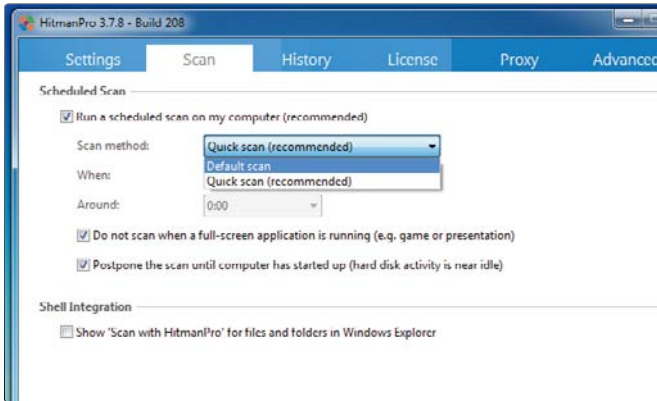


**3 Report status**

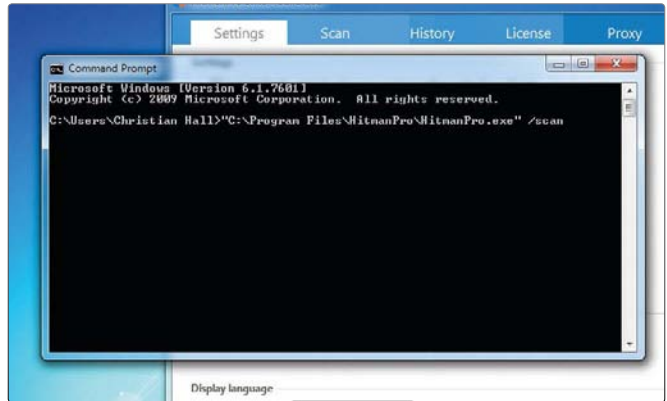
When the scan has run, the program will automatically remove any browser tracking cookies and alert you if it's found any other threats that need your attention. The total number of objects scanned and the time of the scan are displayed, and you can save the report log by clicking on the option in the bottom left corner of the window. Tap 'Close' and your scan is complete.

**4 Delete unwanted programs**

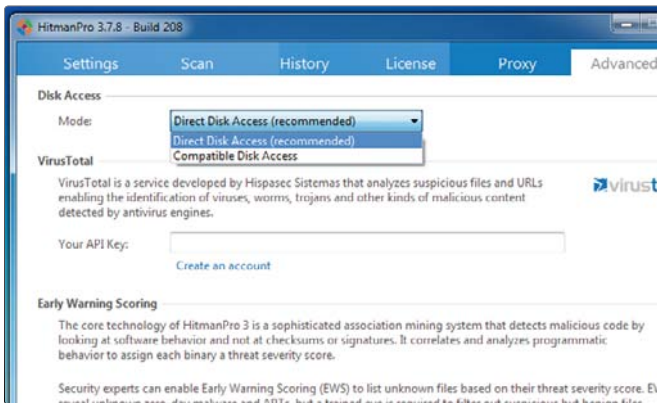
Once your scan is finished, choose 'Settings'. You'll be taken to the Settings tab by default, with an option called 'Scan for Potential Unwanted Programs (PUPs)' already selected. Below this you'll see a drop-down menu. Select 'Delete' if you want HitmanPro to automatically remove add-ons such as browser toolbars that were added when you installed other programs.



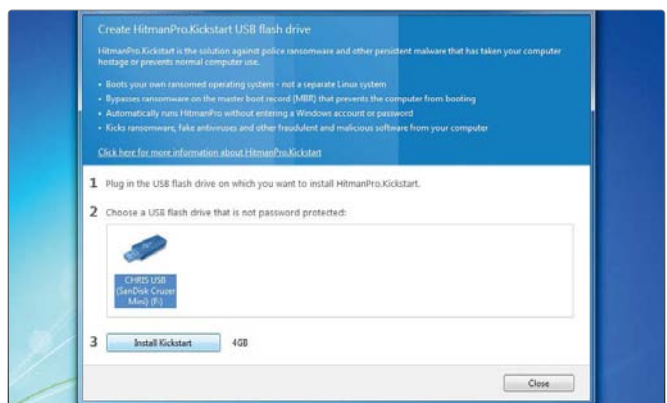
**5 Scan preferences**  
 On the second tab, you can change how HitmanPro scans your PC. You'll find all the usual options, such as when to perform scans and what type of scan to carry out (default or quick), but there are also a few unusual options, such as the ability to prevent scans when a fullscreen program is in use, or to add a 'Scan with HitmanPro' option for files and folders in Windows Explorer.



**6 Quick commands**  
 You can also use HitmanPro via the command line. Click 'Start' and search for **command prompt**. Now type **C:\Program Files\HitmanPro\HitmanPro.exe** followed by a command (such as **/scan**). One of the most useful commands is **/fb** (Force Breach mode), which terminates non-essential processes. You can find a PDF containing the full list of commands at <http://bit.ly/LarvDj>.



**7 Explore advanced features**  
 Under the Advanced tab you'll see an option called Disk Mode. Leave this set to 'Direct disk access (recommended)' to allow HitmanPro to scan your PC when you start Windows. In the VirusTotal section you can choose to use HitmanPro's partner VirusTotal service to analyse files or URLs. You can sign up for it within HitmanPro using the link provided.



**8 Grab Kickstart**  
 From the main screen, choose the 'Kickstart' icon. You will be asked to insert a USB stick. Do so, then select it from the list (if there's more than one attached) and click 'Install Kickstart'. You'll be alerted that the USB stick will need to be formatted before the program can be installed. This will delete everything on the stick, so make sure it doesn't contain anything important



**9 Rescue a ransomed PC**  
 If you ever encounter malware that holds your PC hostage by encrypting your data until you pay a fee, you can insert the USB stick that contains Kickstart, enter the boot menu of the BIOS and select it. You now have a choice of two ways to boot. The default option here skips the master boot record, bypassing the ransomware so you can start Windows and run HitmanPro.

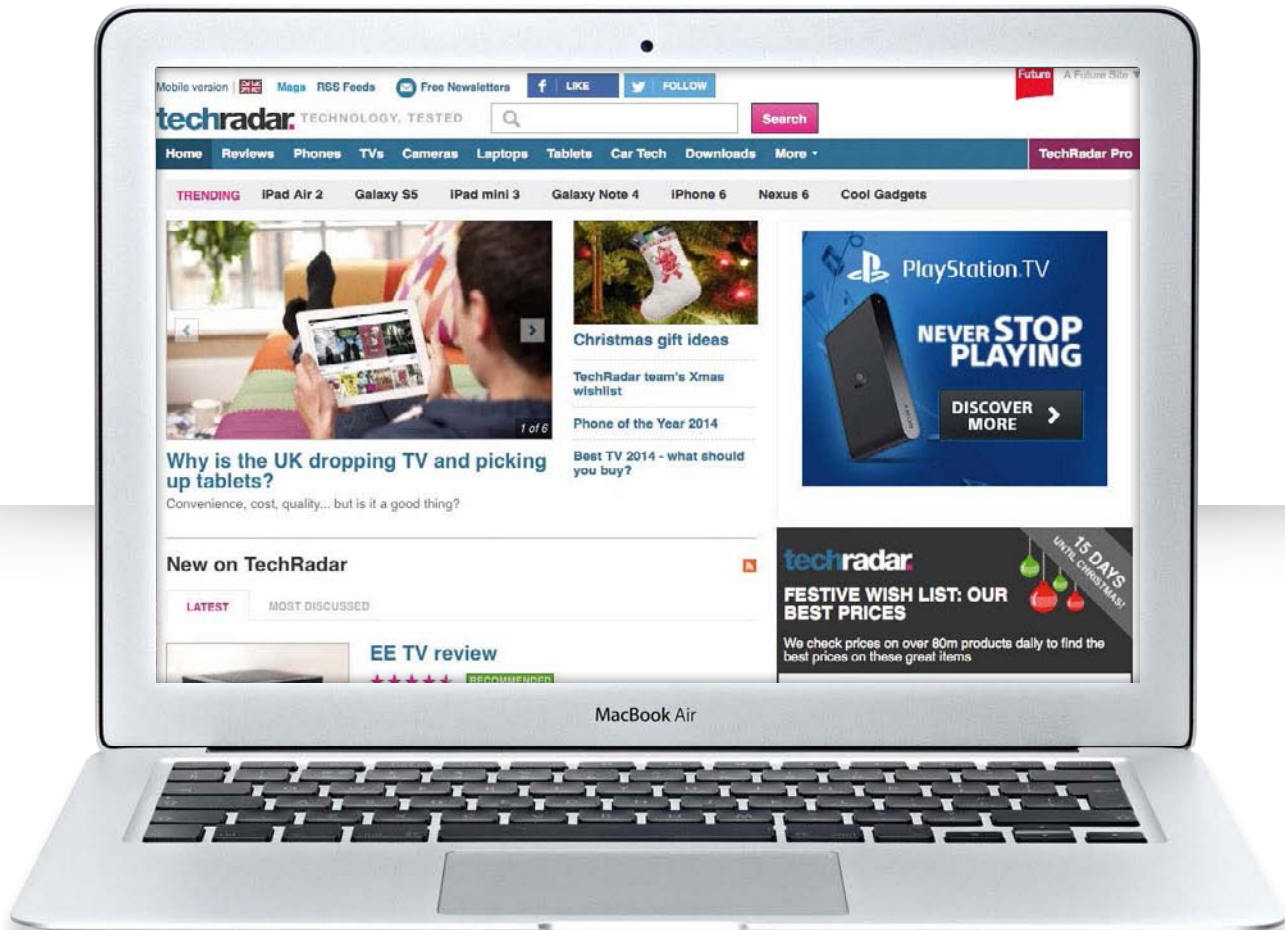


**10 Stay safe**  
 If you need to remove a threat from your PC, you'll have to buy the full product, but you can use the VirusTotal tool in the meantime. You can schedule scans in HitmanPro by day of the week and time, but if you'd rather use the Windows Task Scheduler to plan your regular maintenance, simply follow the instructions provided at <http://bit.ly/Lfj8qe>.



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# 10 FREE MEDIA PLAYERS

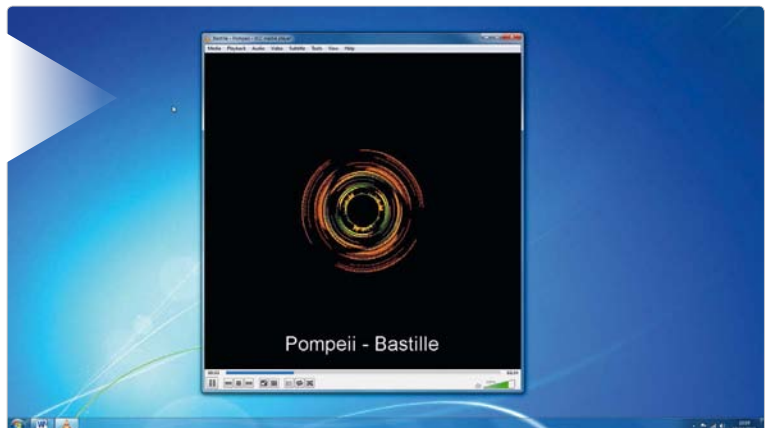
If you're looking for an alternative to Windows Media Player, here's our roundup of the best music and video players out there

## 1 VLC MEDIA PLAYER

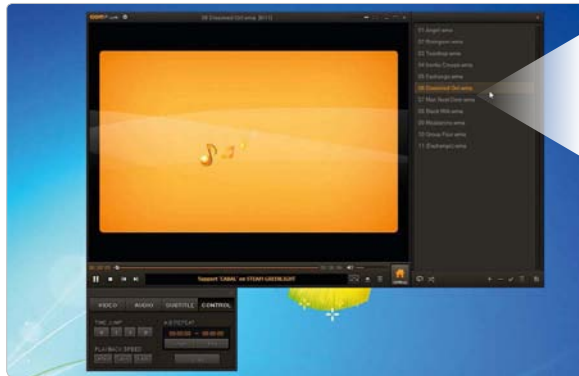
VLC ([videolan.org](http://videolan.org)) will handle pretty much any media file you can throw at it. Its default interface will be familiar if you've ever used Windows Media Player, but you can give it a different look by downloading free 'skins' from VideoLAN's website.

Using VLC is easy as pie and it includes some nice little extras like colourful patterns that move in time with your music, and subtitles for TV shows and films. It even supports gestures for quick navigation, and the website offers a range of user-created add-ons.

VLC was created by a nonprofit organisation with the help of volunteers, so you might like to make a small cash donation to support future updates if it becomes your main media player.



**NO FRILLS** VLC Media Player has a simple interface that's easy to master, but includes some little extra touches, such as visual effects that move in time with your music



**MODULAR DESIGN** With GOM Media Player, you can decide which playlists and menus you want to see, and position them yourself

## 2 GOM MEDIA PLAYER

GOM (gomlab.com) looks fantastic, with only a discreet text ad at the bottom and a couple of toolbars to avoid during installation. The first time it runs, it asks you to choose a playback option (normal, high-quality and TV output) to ensure it works well with your media setup, which is a thoughtful touch.

Have a poke around the menus and you'll find lots of interesting bonus features, including the ability to cut the vocals out of songs to create your own karaoke tracks. In fact, the sheer wealth of options could be a little overwhelming for newcomers, but it's well worth taking the time to explore them all.

## 3 SMPLAYER

If you've got a stack of DVDs sitting beside your PC, take a look at SMPlayer (smplayer.sourceforge.net). We particularly like its built-in YouTube support, which lets you search for and stream high-res videos straight to your desktop. You can also download subtitles from the Opensubtitles.org database, which is a feature we'd like to see in all players. SMPlayer remembers the settings for your files, so if you close a video, you can re-open it and pick up where you left off. There are also some nifty features for audio playback, including the ability to turn your favourite songs into karaoke tracks by stripping out the vocals, as in GOM.

When installing SMPlayer, select 'Custom' if you don't want the Amazon browser bar or Outfox.tv.



**MOVIE STAR** SMPlayer is a brilliant free music and video player, and includes built-in support for high-resolution YouTube content



## 4 ZOOM PLAYER

Zoom Player (inmatrix.com) has a stylish modular layout that lets you mix and match menus to your heart's content. It's beautifully designed too, with a range of colour schemes.

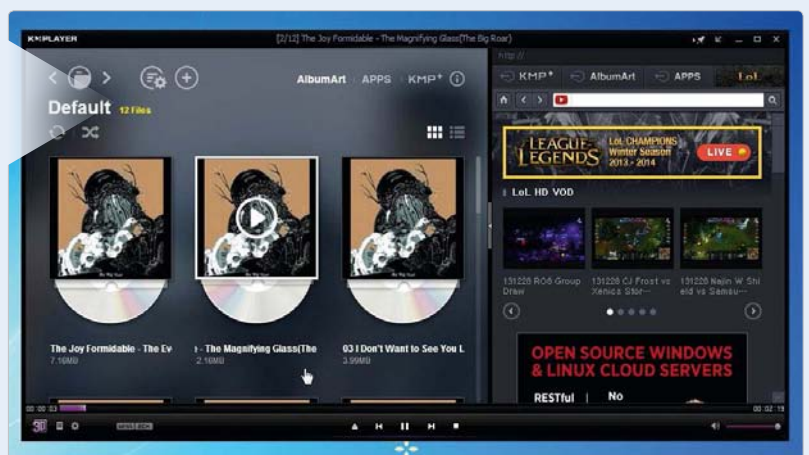
Zoom works with all versions of Windows, and can detect and install missing components that could stop your videos playing properly. It organises your files into neat categories, and will fine-tune the sound and picture to suit your hardware. If that sounds a bit complicated, there are video tutorials on the developer's YouTube channel to help you find your feet.

## 5 KMPLAYER

KMPlayer (kmplayer.com) stands out thanks to its brilliant support forums, where you can chat with other users, learn about updates and report any bugs. Many languages are catered for, including Chinese, Polish and Farsi.

Again, it's important to take care during the installation if you don't want to add the Ask toolbar to your browser or join the Paltalk Network (clicking 'Decline' won't stop the player installing).

The player is slick and professional-looking, but there's lots of advertising, with extra pop-up ads appearing at the bottom periodically. If you can overlook these, it's a feature-packed program that can handle a huge variety of media files, and can even connect to your social media accounts.



# 6 EASY-DATA MEDIACENTER

When you fire up EDM (easy-data.no), you could be forgiven for thinking you'd travelled back to the mid-1990s. It's a competent player, but it's no looker. To jazz it up, you can take your pick from a range of wallpapers (though the default stars are the most tasteful), or try a full-screen psychedelic effect.

Another quirk is that the 'Get artist information' link takes you to the band's Wikipedia page rather than scouring the web for track titles, as you might expect.

It's an odd one, no question. But if you have a taste for retro software, it might be just the ticket.



**OLD FAVOURITE**  
With 18 years of development under its belt, RealPlayer is a pleasure to use



# 7 REALPLAYER

RealPlayer (real.com) has been around for a long time – even longer than Winamp. It's available for just about every operating system there is (both desktop and mobile), and is packed with features. You can listen to internet radio, sync music with your phone, download videos from the web and share them via social media, and lots more.

The player scans your PC for media, which eliminates the need to load everything manually. Unfortunately it also attempts to install browser toolbars and a Norton trial, so read the text carefully before you click anything.

RealPlayer looks very smart. Some options, such as 'Clean up media library', are actually links to the paid-for version of the player, but if you're enjoying the free edition it might be worth considering the upgrade.

# 8 JETAUDIO

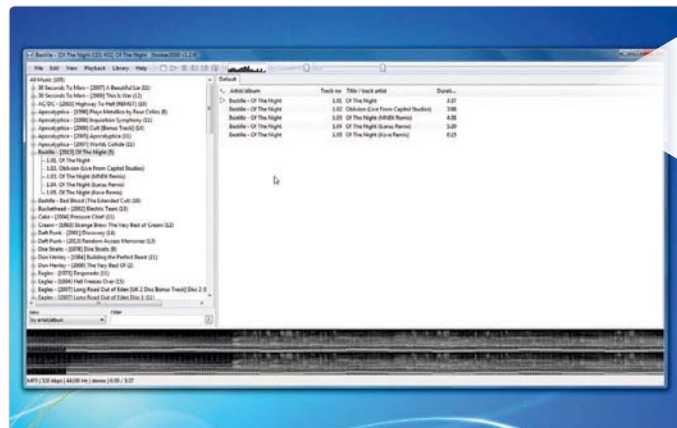
JetAudio (jetaudio.com) is a hefty download, so if your internet connection is a bit poky, you might want to consider one of the more lightweight options such as VLC or MPC Home Cinema. JetAudio is also a bit sneaky – although we were careful during the installation process, we still ended up with two unwanted programs installed on our PC in addition to the media player. They're easy to remove, but it's hassle we would rather avoid.

Once you're past that, this is a great little media player that would make a fine addition to your desktop. As its name suggests, it's designed chiefly for music rather than video. We like the modular design, which lets you choose which controls and playlists you'd like to display, and arrange them however you like. You can also rip music from your CD collection and convert file formats, which is very handy.

# 9 MPC HOME CINEMA

Sometimes you don't want to mess around with fancy interfaces – you just want to relax with your favourite music or grab some popcorn and enjoy a film. That's where Media Player Classic Home Cinema (mpc-hc.org) comes in. The player downloads and installs in moments, making it ideal if your internet connection is a bit on the slow side.

Its interface is pared down to the bare minimum, but it can still fulfil all your media-playing needs. Best of all, its system requirements are very modest. It will even work on a 10-year-old PC running Windows XP.



**MUSIC TO YOUR EARS** The team behind foobar2000 have focused their energies on doing just one thing very well, and the result is a fantastic free music player

# 10 FOOBAR2000

We're very impressed with foobar2000 (foobar2000.org) – a modest player that's frugal with your PC's resources, making it great for older PCs. It doesn't look especially glamorous, but everything is arranged in a neat and sensible way. Your library is arranged down the left-hand side, much as it is in Windows Media Player, and your current playlist is in the centre. A little equaliser at the bottom is the only nod towards embellishment.

When downloading foobar2000, ignore any large green buttons on the website labelled 'Download now' – these are cunningly disguised ads. Instead, select the 'Download' tab from the menu at the top of the homepage, then grab the latest stable version (the player is updated regularly).

The only drawback is that foobar2000 doesn't support video, so you'll have to try one of the other players here if you're more of a film buff than an audiophile. ■



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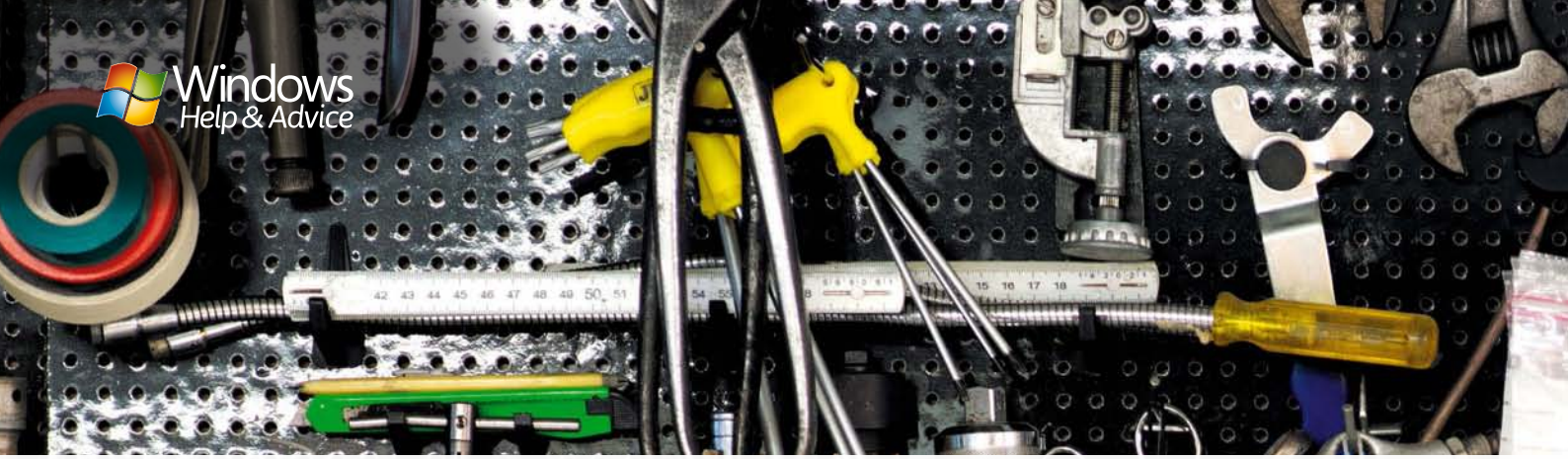
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# HOW TO BE A TECH GURU



# LUIS VILLAZON REVEALS HIS TECH SUPPORT SECRETS

**E**xpert' is a relative term – by which I mean it's a term that our relatives use. "Ask Luis, he's the computer expert," my mother-in-law will say, to anyone who will listen. I've spent more than 20 years fixing other people's problems, so I'm used to being called an expert, but the reality is that every family has its own expert.

To qualify, you just need to be the youngest adult in the room that owns a PC. Sooner or later, your grandma or your uncle or your sister-in-law will mention that their laptop is broken or iTunes keeps crashing and you'll feel guilted into taking a look at it. Whether or not you ultimately manage to fix it makes no difference – you'll still be the computer expert. After all, you've just spent a frustrating Sunday afternoon downloading drivers or booting in and out of Safe Mode, so you must know what you're doing.

But this is no way to live. Nobody wants to be that sort of expert. It's not

effective and the hourly rate is terrible. There are people who enjoy pointlessly fiddling with computers, but you aren't one of those people and neither am I. What we both want is to spend the minimum time fixing computers and the maximum time using them. It doesn't matter whether you are fixing your own computer, doing a favour for a relative or even fixing computers professionally, the goal is always to find the quickest, simplest fix that works.

That's the difference between an expert and a guru. A guru can listen to a long, rambling list of unrelated symptoms and decide which ones need fixing and which don't. A guru Googles quickly for the right answer. A guru understands when to spend time on a problem and when to spend money. Most importantly, a guru doesn't spend his spare time swapping RAM or reinstalling Windows – he spends it playing PC games. A guru enjoys all of the kudos of being an expert, with none of the hassle – and I am going to teach you how to be one. ▶



“There is no ‘weird old trick’ that Microsoft doesn’t want you to know about speeding up your PC”

**Let’s start with your own PCs. You need two: a desktop and a laptop. The laptop should be cheap and the desktop should be mid-range. You may be tempted to combine the two and get an expensive laptop: don’t. The desktop is for games, which means you need a large monitor, a respectable graphics card and CPU, and good speakers. If you try to do this on a laptop, you will end up paying far more for the same performance – and using an external monitor, speakers and mouse on a laptop, just turns your laptop into an unwieldy desktop. You want to be able to upgrade the graphics card once during the working life of a games PC, and this is all but impossible to do with a laptop.**

Once you free your laptop from gaming duties, you can get by with a £400 model that will do all the workaday tasks, such as sofa surfing, email, word processing and spreadsheets. This ring-fences the activity most likely to cause computer problems (that is, gaming) from all the other things you need a computer for, and it means that whichever one breaks, you’ve

got another one to use for Googling solutions.

Put the desktop PC on the table, not the floor, and turn the case so it faces sideways. If you have it with the front facing towards you, like most people do, the rear becomes a stagnant tangle of cables that never gets dusted. Some of that dust will get pulled back into the case and coat your motherboard, which means the poor clearance interferes with case ventilation.

Back up both of your PCs once a month without fail. These should be complete clones of the entire hard disk using Acronis True Image (£40, [acronis.com](http://acronis.com)) onto an external USB drive that is at least as large as the internal drive in your PC. Use a different backup drive for each PC.

Also, don’t keep your documents on the internal hard disks at all. Put them in cloud storage, like Microsoft OneDrive, Dropbox or Google Drive. This entirely saves you from the responsibility of backing up those small, important, frequently changing files, which is most of what you need a backup for in the first place. Those clone drives are just there for disaster recovery.

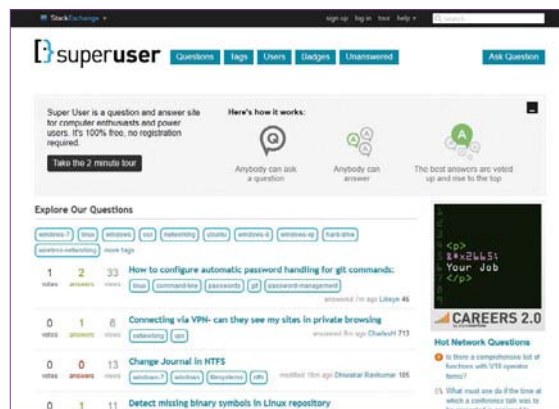
## SURPRISING ADVICE

If you’re giving advice to others, it should be: “don’t build your own computer”. From a support perspective you’re just making things hard for yourself. It’s also much harder to claim on the warranty if something doesn’t work, because all the manufacturers will blame each other for any incompatibility.

Don’t ever reformat and reinstall Windows. This is the last apple at the bottom of the troubleshooting barrel. It takes ages, the PC is never the same after and it won’t fix the issue. If you’re desperate enough to reinstall Windows, you’re desperate enough to get a new PC – which will fix the problem.



Answers at Stack Exchange can usually be trusted



## How to Google

News just in: not everything on the internet is true

Knowing the right answer isn’t an especially useful skill. Being able to find the right answer is much more valuable and recognising the right answer when you come across it, is even better.

‘Google-fu’ is a martial art that gets better with practise, but here are some quick tips to help you sharpen your searches.

Don’t Google the question, Google the answer. “Watch Dogs crashes randomly” will give you dozens of forum posts from complaining gamers, but the answers will mostly be a mixture of bland boilerplate advice, requests for detailed crash logs,

and suggestions of things to try, with replies saying that this didn’t help. Instead, Google “Watch Dogs patch notes” and you can quickly skim the list of bug fixes to see if any of them address your problem.

Ignore search results that are YouTube videos. These are almost always just a collection of suggestions culled from other forums, and a video is much harder to skim quickly and the comments section offers very poor feedback to help you decide whether any of the fixes work.

Avoid slideshows. “8 tips to Watch Dogs running smoothly” is just a way for commercial sites to generate page views. Six tips will be generic things like

“upgrade your RAM” and “install the latest drivers” and the other two won’t apply to you.

Use the wisdom of crowds. Don’t look for a single forum post with a definitive “right” answer – skim all the sites on the first page or two of search results and look for common patterns. If a fix is confirmed on several sites, it’s more likely to be reliable.

Know which sites to trust. Search results from [stackexchange.com](http://stackexchange.com) are really valuable as they use a rigorous voting system for the answers. Game developer forums and [answers.microsoft.com](http://answers.microsoft.com) are the next tier down. Sites such as [answers.yahoo.com](http://answers.yahoo.com) and [answers.com](http://answers.com) are garbage.





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Don't update your drivers, either. This is the first item on every troubleshooting flowchart ever. But this is a stalling tactic dreamt up by customer support hotlines to get you to go away for a few hours.

Unless you know of a specific bug in your current driver release you are personally experiencing and the release notes for the new version explicitly mention that this bug has been fixed, you are simply adding one more variable into the mix. New drivers are as likely to introduce new bugs as fix old ones.

With this foundation laid, your PCs will definitely never ever break or crash. When they inevitably do anyway, you will find that all computer problems fall into one of five categories.

## 1 SPONTANEOUS BREAKAGE

**"It was working fine until I dropped it"**

The first category is for computers that abruptly transition from working to not working. This could be the entire computer refusing to boot up at all, or it could be that you can't connect to Steam, or maybe Watch Dogs has scrambled textures. It doesn't matter what stopped working. The important part is that it stopped suddenly.

Spontaneous breakage is the easiest problem to diagnose. It occurs because something changed. Either a hardware component failed or you added something that was incompatible. Identify the last time you can definitely say the PC was working, and the problem must lie with something that changed since then. Uninstall any new software or restore your PC back to the previous full backup and see if the problem goes away. Then repeat any Windows updates and reinstall programs one by one until it returns.

If you haven't added anything recently and the PC broke anyway, you can be sure a hardware component has failed. If the PC won't boot, you can usually tell which component is dead by how far into the boot

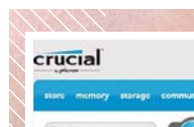
Clone the entire hard disk to get the most comprehensive backup possible



sequence the PC gets (see the normal sequence of events on page 71). If you aren't sure, you should replace the RAM, PSU, graphics card and hard disk – in that order. This is so you check the easiest components first, not the most likely. Your assessment of likelihood is probably wrong, and you'll save time in the long run if you get into the habit of checking the easy things first. You might think a game with messed-up textures can only be caused by a faulty graphics card, but RAM and PSU faults can both cause this as well, and they are both much cheaper to replace.

You'll replace some perfectly good components this way. So buy upgrades, rather than exact replacements. That way, all your wrong guesses are at least upgrading your PC – and you can hang on to the parts.

No one ever made their PC worse by adding more RAM



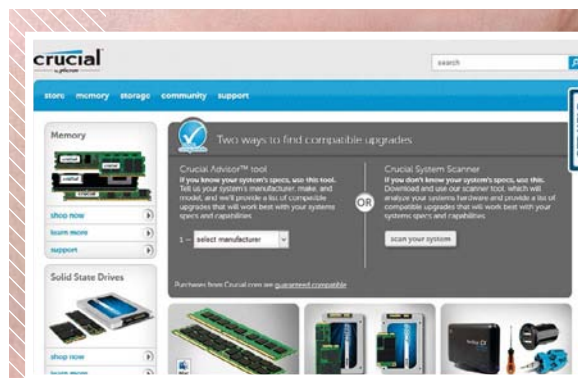
## 2 REPRODUCIBLE CALAMITY

**"Every time I try to use it, it just crashes"**

If you can reliably crash an application or generate one of those error messages that end-users were clearly never meant to see, then congrats! You have found a bug.

Finding bugs is a well-paid job, so if you enjoyed finding it consider a career in software quality assurance – though you have only found one so far, so don't get too carried away. There is generally nothing you can do about a bug except report it to the developers (if they give you an easy way to do this) and hope and/or pray that it gets fixed in the next version.

In reality, it's like voting in a general election: it's your duty, but it doesn't actually make any difference. In the meantime, you'll just have to work around the bug, but at least you don't need to waste any more time looking for a solution. After all, most of the developers won't, either. (That's satire, that is.)





## Avoiding the experts

How to avoid being fobbed off and brow-beaten by the well-meaning clueless

The guy in the shop is not a computer expert. He's just someone with good interpersonal skills. If your mum wants to set up her Gmail account in Windows Live Mail, he can help. If you come to him with your weird Blue Screen error, you'll be given some misleading flannel and then steered towards a sale.

The woman in the call centre is not an expert, either. She's working from a troubleshooting flowchart of simple solutions to common problems. Her goal is to get rid of you as quickly as possible, so she can keep her call

stats up. These are not bad people, they just aren't the droids you're looking for.

There aren't really any experts anywhere. There are just people who have come across the same problem as you, and people who haven't and are guessing loudly. To be a Tech Guru you need to start filtering out this noise.

The only reason for visiting a computer shop is to see if you like the keyboard on a specific laptop. The only reason for ringing a customer support line is for broadband connection problems. Everything else you must fix

yourself, armed only with the internet.

Online is the only place you are likely to come across honest answers. In the real world the people who know them are tucked away doing well-paid jobs far away from grubby customers. But online you can get their help for free.

Don't waste time soliciting it directly. Skim forums for similar questions and triangulate the suggestions from the most well-informed replies. If your problem is common enough, someone else will have asked. If it isn't, you won't find the answer by posting.

## 3 CREEPING BADNESS

**"It's just keeps on getting worse and worse"**

'Badness' nearly always means your PC is getting slower. And normally, the solution is just to put up with it. Like promises of youthful skin and powerful erections, the solutions offered on the internet to speed up your PC are all scams for the feeble-minded. There is no 'weird old trick' that Microsoft doesn't want you to know about for speeding your PC up. Microsoft is extremely invested in making your PC run as well as possible, and if removing old entries from the Registry made a significant difference, Windows would already do it for you automatically.

You can make your PC run a little faster by upgrading your RAM to the maximum it supports, removing programs from the start-up group (especially your antivirus software) and uninstalling programs you don't need. But most of the slowdown comes from the inexorable bloating

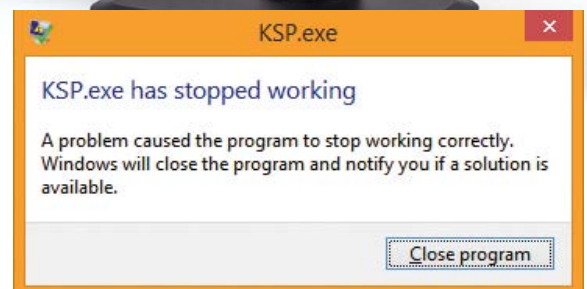
from Windows updates building up over time. If you want a noticeably faster PC, buy or build a new one.

People complain heat output has got worse over time – especially from a laptop. Older laptops run hotter because they are trying to run newer games on older hardware, so the CPU and graphics card are running at full power often. They have also collected dust on the motherboard and fan blades, which interferes with cooling. You can't do anything about the former, except upgrade. I'd argue you shouldn't do anything about the latter either. I've never dismantled a laptop and felt things were in better shape afterwards.

If your laptop is running hotter, don't use it on the bed, and hope the graphics card doesn't blow before it's time to upgrade. Remember, heat by itself isn't really a problem.



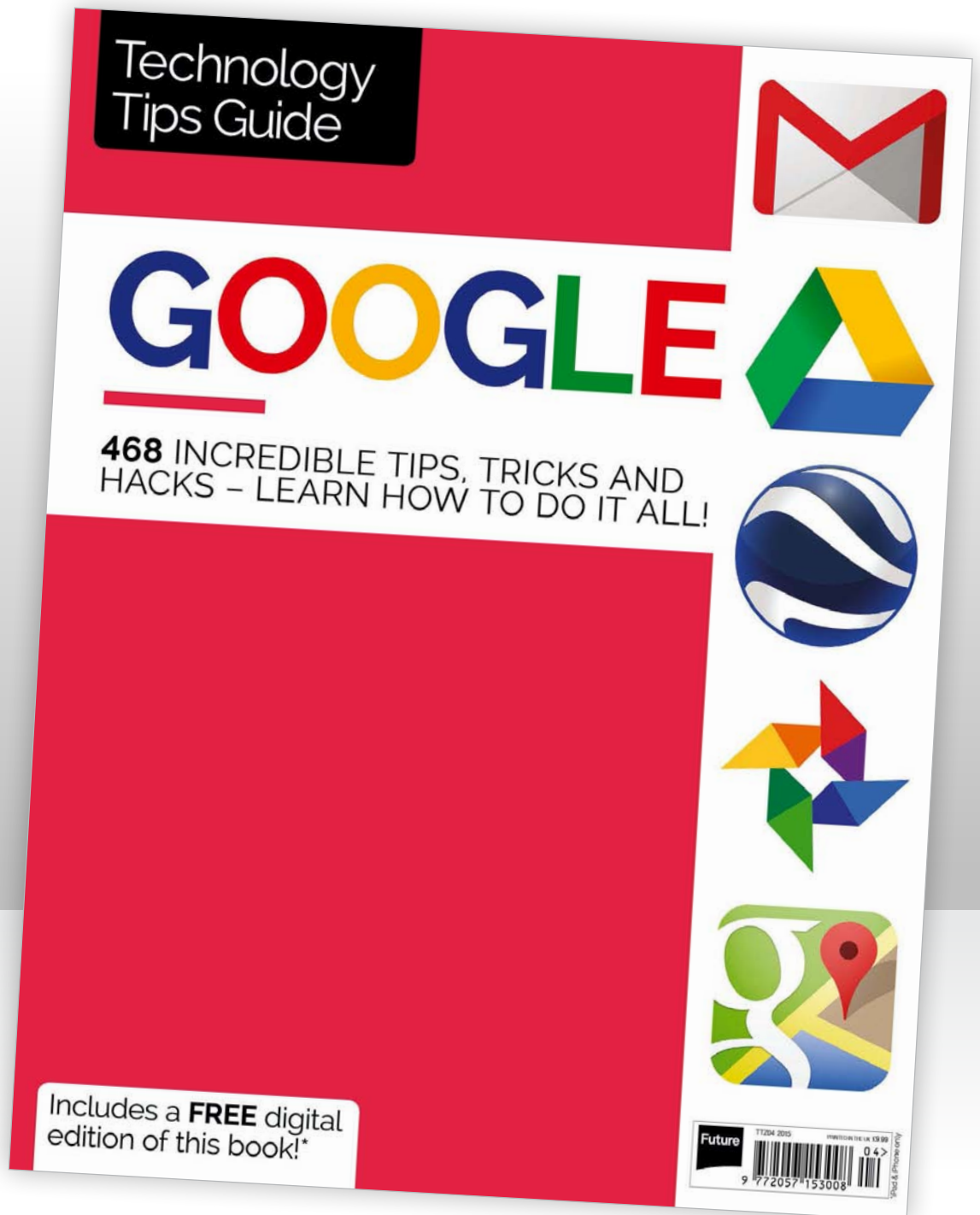
Don't try and level your PC up, like a character in an MMO



Abrupt game crashes are usually bugs in the game or its mods

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# 4 RANDOM WEIRDNESS

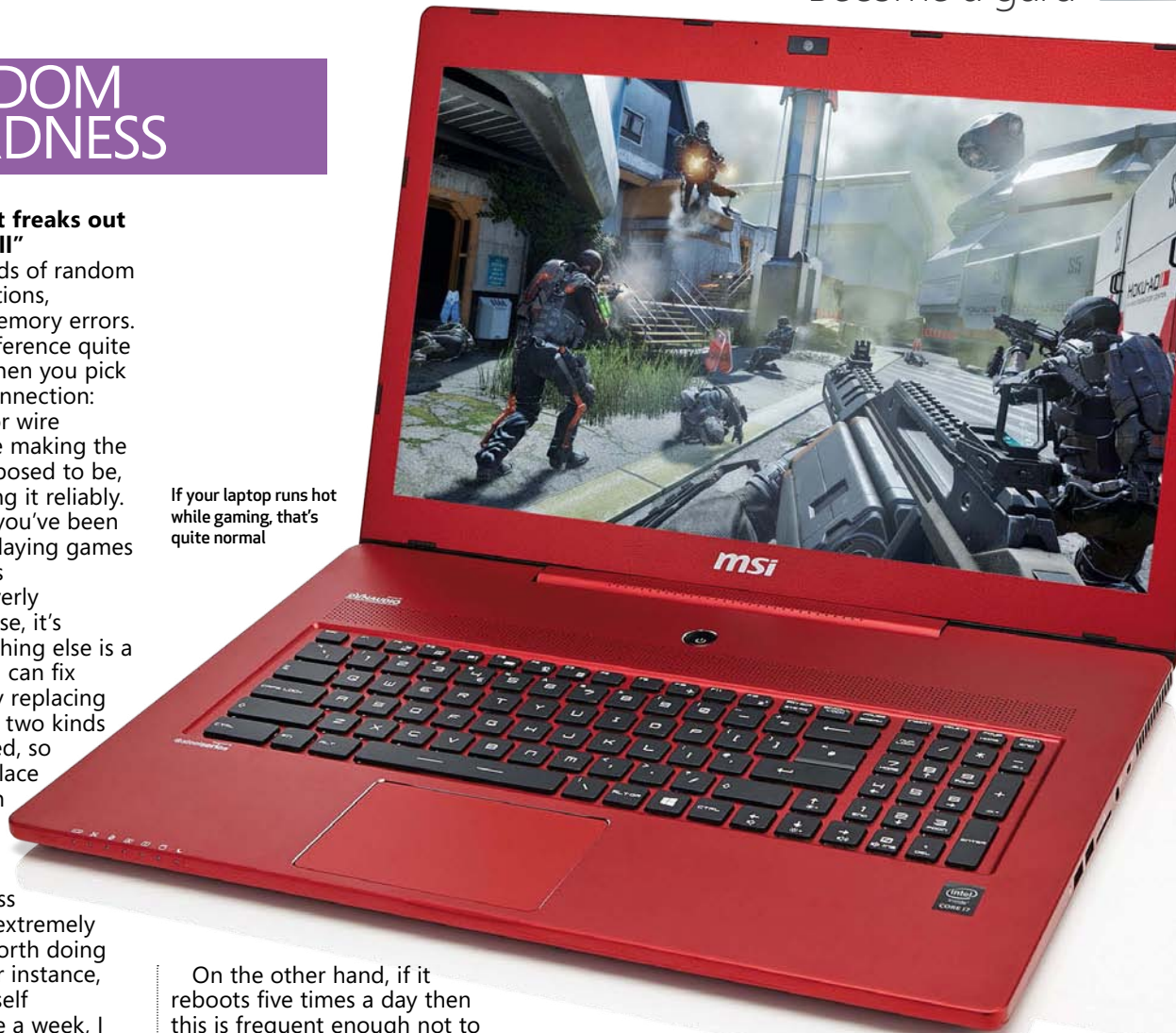
## “Sometimes it just freaks out for no reason at all”

There are three kinds of random fault: loose connections, overheating and memory errors. You can tell the difference quite easily. If it freaks when you pick it up, it's a loose connection: some component or wire internally isn't quite making the connection it's supposed to be, or at least isn't doing it reliably.

If it freaks when you've been watching films or playing games for a while, perhaps accompanied by overly enthusiastic fan noise, it's overheating. Everything else is a memory glitch. You can fix memory glitches by replacing RAM and the other two kinds usually can't be fixed, so you should just replace the RAM anyway, in case you were wrong about which kind you have.

Random weirdness that happens only extremely occasionally isn't worth doing anything about. For instance, if my PC reboots itself spontaneously once a week, I would rather take a few calming breaths and get on with my life than waste several days hunting down a fault that is extremely hard, if indeed possible, to reliably reproduce.

If your laptop runs hot while gaming, that's quite normal



On the other hand, if it reboots five times a day then this is frequent enough not to count as random, and more to the point it's damned annoying. You can treat this sort of fault as Spontaneous Breakage and take appropriate measures by referring to that section.

# 5 OMINOUS PORTENTS

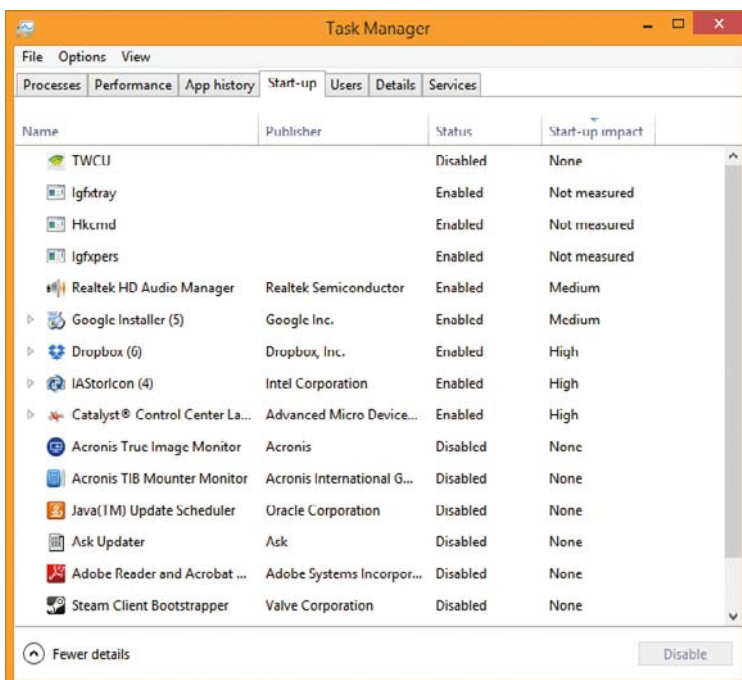
## “I'm sure it's infected”

I have learned to listen to the symptoms, not the diagnosis. Some people are convinced their PC is constantly under attack and see every unexplained behaviour or error message as irrefutable evidence of a virus infection or a hacker. If you are one of those people, then stop it!

Provided Windows is updating automatically and you have changed the admin password on your broadband router from the factory default, avoiding viruses and hacking is mostly a question of not being an idiot when you click links.

If your browser homepage has changed by itself, or you can't open google.com, then you may have a browser hijack. This is malware, but it isn't a virus or Ebola. Download the Microsoft Malicious Software Removal Tool and be done with it.

Removing start-up junk is one of the few go-faster tips that works



BONUS CATEGORY

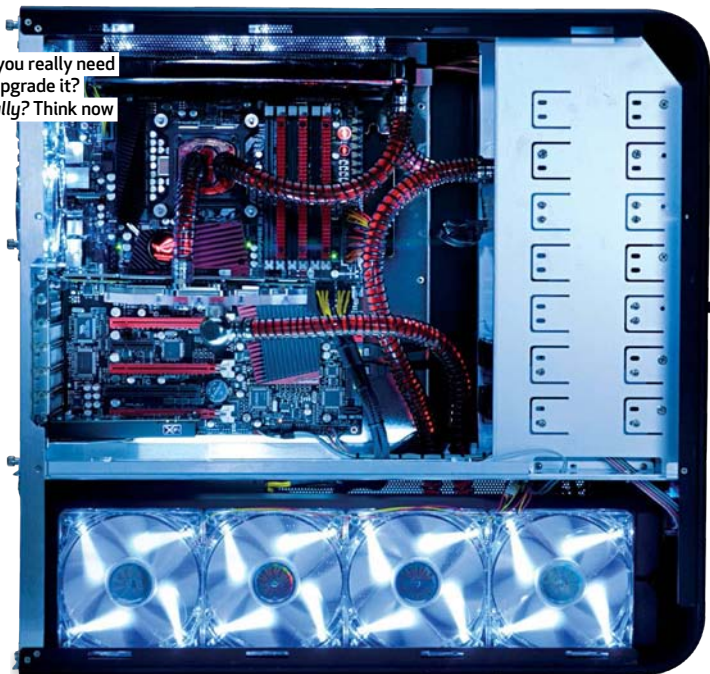
# RAINBOW CHASING

## "I just want to try out the latest cool thing"

A PC is like a character in an MMO. When you start at level one, you fight wolves and gradually you upgrade your equipment and can take on several wolves at once. But no matter how powerful you become, there will always be new gear you could get, and Chromium Ultra-wolf Den Mothers that you could be fighting. Rainbow-chasing is when you make life hard for yourself by trying to fix problems that don't exist. Overclocking your PC, just to get a bigger number in your benchmarking tool, say, or configuring a RAID0 array of disks, when hard disk performance isn't even a bottleneck for you. A lot of "What's the best way to upgrade?" type of questions are examples of rainbow chasing.

Upgrading is generally a good thing but there are two pitfalls you need to watch for. Don't upgrade your PC for the sake of it. You should upgrade so that you can run new software that exists now. Not so you'll be ready for any new software that might come along in the future. You can't tell how long it will be before something comes along that you need new hardware for

Do you really need to upgrade it? Really? Think now



– and by the time it does, your upgrade might not be graded far enough up. Secondly, you need to know when to upgrade the components and when to upgrade the PC.

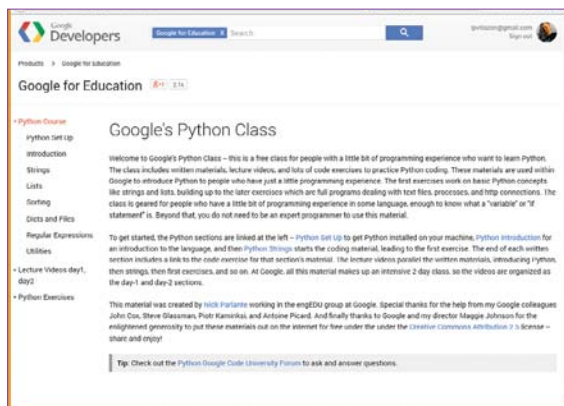
Here's what I do. With every other version of Windows, I will buy a new desktop or laptop

with that version preinstalled. On the odd-numbered releases of Windows, I'll just upgrade the existing machine. When I buy a PC, I'll specify one notch above the current mid-range for CPU and graphics card, and get the maximum RAM that Windows currently supports. I normally get whatever the default hard disk size is at the time. After a year, if I want to run an application that needs more RAM or a faster graphics card, I'll upgrade. If it needs a faster CPU, I'll get a whole new PC. I have never run out of disk space on any PC ever.

A very common question for a Tech Guru is "Which new laptop do you recommend?" And the correct answer is to look at *Windows Help & Advice* magazine. The magazine regularly reviews laptops,



Learning Python is straightforward, useful and free



## Learn to program

It's like pilates for your brain

Programming is an extremely helpful skill for a Tech Guru. Lots of command line operations become easier if you know a little programming, particularly in Linux – but much more importantly, it teaches you what a computer really is.

Programmers are like Neo: they don't see files and icons, they see resource handles. Memory isn't just a quantity, like the fuel in your tank. It's a collection of discrete integers and floats and strings. When you understand how the house is built, you'll know which walls you can

safely remove and which will bring the ceiling down on your head.

Programming means debugging, and the mindset you for it is the same as for diagnosing every other computer problem. Programming is like classical music theory for computer troubleshooting. You can teach yourself to strum some chords without it, but you won't become a great musician that way.

As soon as you can write a simple program, more complicated programs lose their mystique. And if you can write even a modestly useful app or a mod for a game, then your computer

itself will be demystified to a degree that's impossible to overstate. Programming is such a useful skill that it should be compulsory for all five-year-olds, never mind aspiring Tech Gurus.

Happily, programming is easier to learn now than ever. Python is a good language to learn first – it's a widely used, serious language, but designed to be readable and simple.

You can learn the basics for free in a few weekends at [developers.google.com/edu/python](http://developers.google.com/edu/python) and [learnpythonthehardway.org](http://learnpythonthehardway.org). (Don't be put off by the 'hard way' part.) If you can complete a sudoku you can learn Python.



## What should happen

Understand a normal boot sequence to recognise anomalies

When your PC is switched off but still plugged into the mains (or laptop battery), the motherboard still receives power on the 5-Volt standby rail, providing power to the circuitry that monitors the power button.

Pressing this button signals the motherboard to tell the power supply (PSU) to fire up and pulls the voltage to 0V on the reset pin for the CPU. This puts the CPU into a known start state, with default values loaded into all the registers, and sets the instruction pointer to the start address of the BIOS.

Between 0.1 and 0.5 seconds later, the voltages from the PSU have stabilised and it signals this by putting +5V on the Power Good line. The tells the motherboard to release the reset line, which allows it to return to +5V.

The CPU begins executing the Power On Self Test (POST) in the BIOS or UEFI code. This initialises the RAM and the PCI bus. If there's a problem you'll receive a series of beeps – a single beep indicates a pass, and control then passes to the video card, which executes its

routine. Once the video subsystem is working, control comes back to the BIOS or UEFI and you'll see a summary screen or pretty splash screen.

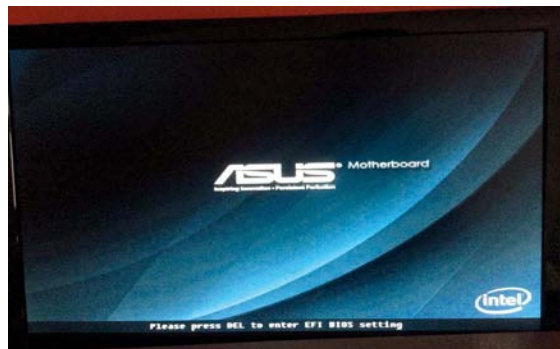
While this is displayed, each drive is checked until it finds a bootable one. Control passes to the boot loader program stored on this disk, which copies the Windows kernel and basic drivers into RAM. The Windows logo appears, the boot loader copies the registry into RAM and loads remaining drivers. The boot loader hands off to the Windows kernel and the login screen appears.

tablets and sometimes full PC desktop systems. You'll also find many other gadgets represented in our pages. This leaves the question of how much you should pay for such things. The right price for a graphics card is £200. For a laptop, it's £400 for a basic machine and £1,000 for a fancy one. For a motherboard it's £100, although the only reason to upgrade is when you upgrade the processor as well, and if you are doing that, you may as well look at a whole new machine – that way you'll get a much better PC, with less hassle.

### HELPING OTHERS

As a Tech Guru, you have to do more than diagnose the problem. You must also consider who is asking for your help and choose the best solution. By that, I of course mean the best solution for you.

For family members, you need the quickest resolution, because they will come back to haunt you if you don't fix it on the first try. Swapping RAM modules around is a quick and safe thing to try, but reformatting and reinstalling Windows will be much like cutting the head off



If you can boot this far, the motherboard is probably fine

a hydra: you may fix the original problem but three more will grow in its place, as you try to restore all the drivers for their 15-year-old printers and off-brand sound cards.

With friends and neighbours you are much less invested, so wherever possible you should recommend new kit. My experience is that this is generally what they are hoping you will do anyway. Your pronouncement will be used as bargaining leverage with their spouses or parents, to justify a big spend. If you try and save them money, they will resent you for it and the next time their PC breaks, you'll be blamed for not euthanising it last time.

If you are fixing computers for customers, your overriding priority is to safeguard their data. Before you so much as open Device Manager, you should clone their entire hard disk onto a removable drive of your own. This will feel like a ridiculous precaution every single time, until you actually need it, whereupon it will feel like the best advice anyone has ever given you. Remember: if data is lost for any reason while you are sat in front of the keyboard, you will be blamed. Cloned hard disks are like save points: you can afford to be more adventurous, if you know you can hit F9 and reload.

Is that all? Are you really a Tech Guru now? Of course you are! Gurus don't have all the answers, they just know how to remain calm under fire while they look for one. They know where to look and they know the answer when they see it. You can do all these things and all that you need now is the self-confidence to carry it off.

If anyone tries to call you an expert, by all means deny it. But if they call you a guru, just smile knowingly and humbly. ■



# Support


▶ WINDOWS HELP ▶ HARDWARE FIXES ▶ SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS ▶ INTERNET TIPS



Do you have a PC problem? Get in touch...

Email full details of your problem to the support team and we'll do our best to help [windowsmagazine@futurenet.com](mailto:windowsmagazine@futurenet.com)

## Windows **WINDOWS STUCK AT STARTUP REPAIR**

 I switched on my Windows 7 PC after the latest round of Windows Updates and now it's stuck in a loop whereby it goes to Startup Repair, which attempts unsuccessfully to repair files before rebooting again. It's pretty frustrating. Please help – what should I do to break the cycle?  
**Simon Jethwa**



### Graham's solution

This regrettable behaviour can occur when a single update corrupts for some unknown reason during the update process. Fixing it is usually as simple as waiting for the start-up repair to fail, then choosing System Restore from the list of available repair options.

Simon never got this option, so we tried to steer him towards an option on Startup to access

recovery options, which he couldn't find either. He then managed to find a Windows 7 repair disc, but on running it discovered that System Restore was unable to restore the computer using the Restore point taken before the update occurred.

At this point, Simon confessed that his computer had been unstable for some time. So it was increasingly clear that the installation was corrupt – it's possible that a timely use of the Check Disk tool or System File Checker would have caught and fixed the problems before they spread, but now the only solution was a clean install.

Sadly though Simon had no backups in place. So we pointed him towards our "Recover data if your PC fails" tutorial from issue 94, and this allowed him to take a drive image of the computer – thus crucially saving all the data on it – prior to reinstalling Windows from scratch. So Simon is now being thoroughly schooled in the art of backing up his PC!



**REPAIR WINDOWS**  
System Restore can usually undo corrupt updates



**FIND THE SOLUTION!** Microsoft Fix It Solution Center  
Visit [support2.microsoft.com/fixit](http://support2.microsoft.com/fixit) to access a number of diagnostic and fix-it tools for Windows, Office and more.



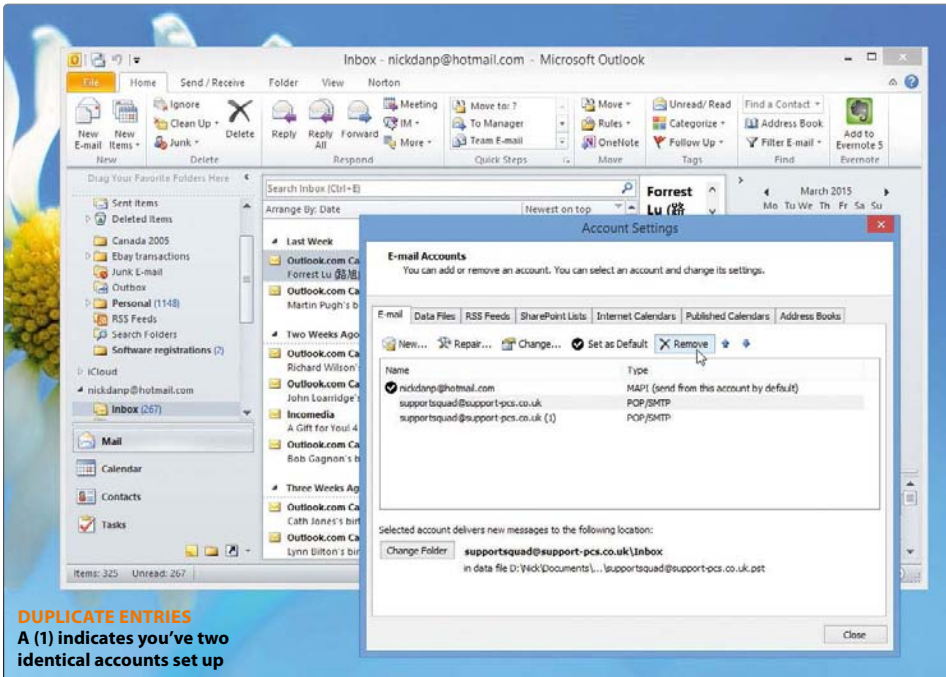
Quickfire questions

I'm looking for a good musical notation tool. Can you recommend one?  
**Tim Wilson**

MuseScore ([musescore.org](http://musescore.org)) is the best free tool out there – and version 2 had just been released with lots of new and improved features. We featured it back in issue 87.

I tried to format a memory stick but got the message, "This disc is write-protected".  
**Joe Pester**

We contacted Joe with several suggestions – the good news was he'd inadvertently knocked the drive's write-protect switch. Flipping it back to off solved the problem.



**DUPLICATE ENTRIES**  
A (1) indicates you've two identical accounts set up

Email  
**STRANGE OUTLOOK RECEIVE ERROR**

**Q** I recently updated to Outlook 2013 (but this problem still occurs in Outlook 2007), and I keep getting a Send/Receive error message, even though I appear to be receiving email with no problem. When I investigate under Tasks, I get receiving errors (0x80042108) against my address. But then it says "complete" next to my email address with (1) after it.  
**Colin Forster**



**Matt's solution**

The clue to the answer lay in the (1) – this indicates that a second, duplicate email account has been created in Outlook – the one that's currently working. There will be some minor tweak to the security settings that means this account works while the original one doesn't. All Colin needed to do was open Account Settings from the File tab, where he should see both accounts are visible. Select the first one and click Remove, then rename the second to remove the trailing (1). Once done, Colin confirmed the error messages had ceased.

Hardware  
**NEW PC WON'T PLAY MY DVDS**

**Q** I've just bought an Acer Aspire PC, but can't play DVDs. It will play music discs, however. Could you advise me on what external DVD or Blu-ray player to get that will play DVDs?  
**Royston Greenwell**



**Mayank's solution**

At first we thought this was a simple software problem to do with playing DVD films – Windows 8 no longer ships with a DVD player, so you need to download a third-party tool for the job, such as VLC Media Player ([videolan.org](http://videolan.org)). However, in the course of our correspondence with Royston it quickly became apparent this was a bigger problem: the drive wouldn't read or play any DVD discs – data or video, although it could still recognise and play CDs. This is symptomatic of a hardware failure whereby the laser diode used for reading and writing DVDs isn't working – Royston got on to Acer

"This is a hardware failure, where the laser diode isn't working"

Jargon buster!

► **Laser diode**

The semiconductor laser reads and writes optical discs. Burners have two lasers: infrared for CDs, red for DVDs.

► **Key logger**

A program that covertly records keystrokes, usually for malicious intent, such as password stealing.



**BROKEN LASER**  
If your DVD drive only recognises CDs you're in trouble

## Quickfire questions

Am I correct in thinking a Windows installation can be installed on two PCs you own? I wish to put Windows 7 on my XP laptop.

**Andrea Quinn**

Unfortunately not – previous versions of Office could be installed on a desktop and laptop in this way, but not Windows 7 unless you purchased a Family Pack version, which can be installed on up to three PCs.

What's the simplest way to transfer the photos on my Moto G phone to my PC?

**Darren Pink**

Use a cloud storage provider as an intermediary – apps such as Dropbox or OneDrive allow you to automatically sync photos to your storage, which can then be synced to your PC and other devices in turn.

My PC's stopped playing audio – can you please help me to troubleshoot?

**Art Evans**

Visit [support.microsoft.com/mats/audioplayback](http://support.microsoft.com/mats/audioplayback) where you'll find a handy tool that can diagnose and fix many audio-related problems, including issues with hearing sounds in Windows.

who responded by arranging a pickup and repair of the computer. Before sending it off, however, we advised Royston to back up any data first – just in case the entire computer ends up being replaced as opposed to just the drive itself.

### Email SPAM SURGE

**Q** After returning from holiday – where I had to check my email using my iPad and Nokia phone – I've discovered my home PC has suddenly started seeing a deluge of spam mail, at least a dozen per day. Could this be indicative of a key logger on my system?

**John Buchanan**

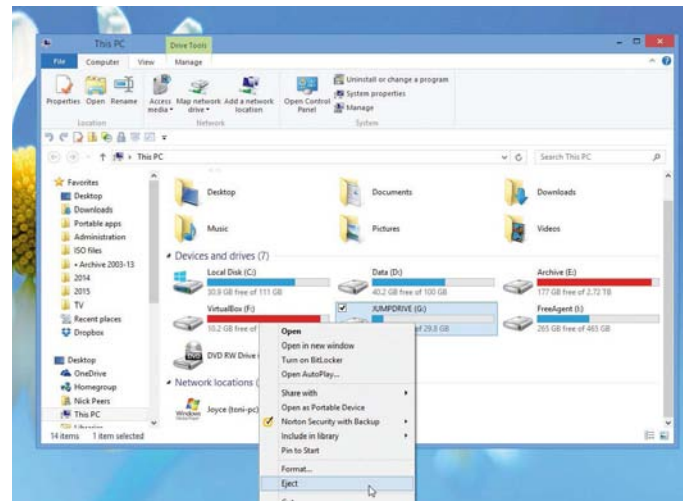


#### Matt's solution

It's unlikely an infection is to blame in this instance. Your first port of call should be your own email settings – check both the program you use and your online settings with your ISP. John checked his and found a couple of settings had been changed, which explained the problem: one no longer automatically filtered spam to the spam folder, and another had stopped putting a clear "SPAM" at the beginning of mails suspected of being spam.

John was understandably concerned at how these settings had changed in the first place – when something strange like this happens, it's a good idea to change your email password, just to be on the safe side.

Also, in the longer term, perhaps use a password manager such as LastPass ([lastpass.com](http://lastpass.com)) to manage your passwords – this encourages you to use more complex passwords without locking yourself out of your accounts.



**SAFE REMOVAL**  
The quickest way to remove a USB drive is to right-click it

### Windows PROBLEMS WITH SAFELY REMOVE HARDWARE BUTTON

**Q** Every time I click the Safely Remove Hardware and Eject Media button in the Taskbar, nothing happens. I've created a shortcut on my desktop as a workaround, but it's not the same. Can you help? I'm running Windows 7 on a Dell laptop.

**Andreas Christou**



#### Nick P's solution

There are a number of fixes you can try – you could, for example, check that the 'Devices and Printers' shortcut on the Start menu is working correctly. If it's not, then check the Bluetooth Support Service is running by clicking 'Start > Run', typing `services.msc` and pressing [Enter]. Scroll down – if it's not, restart the service and set it to 'Automatic (Delayed Start)'. This should bring back both.

If this fails, it's worth clicking the button and waiting, for perhaps up to a minute – if the list eventually

## ADD CUSTOM 'OPEN WITH' OPTION TO CONTEXT MENU

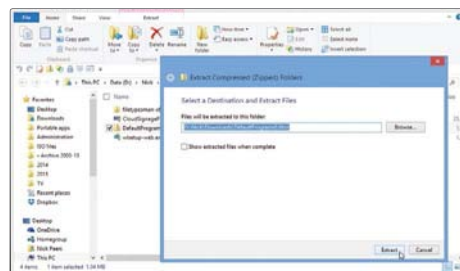
**Q** What happened to the File Types tab in Folder Options? I want to add a custom 'Open in' option to the menu that appears when a PNG file is right-clicked.

**John Rostron**



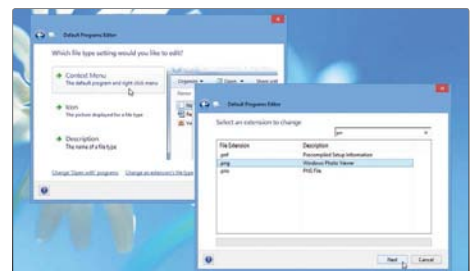
#### Nick P's solution

The feature was removed from Vista. If the new 'Open with' menu isn't to your taste – John wanted a simple, one-click alternative to the default option, for example – then follow this guide.



### 1 Download and run

Go to [defaultprogramseitor.com](http://defaultprogramseitor.com) and download Default Programs Editor. Right-click the downloaded file (DefaultProgramsEditor.zip) and choose Extract All. Open the newly created folder and launch Default Programs Editor.exe.



### 2 Choose what to edit

When prompted for which settings to edit, choose 'File Type Settings'. At the next screen, click 'Context Menu' to edit the contents of a file type's context menu, then scroll through the list (or use the search tool) to locate the file type.

appears then it could be linked to a networked printer.

To sort this out, open 'Devices and Printers', select the printer and click 'Print server properties'. Switch to the Ports tab, select 'Standard TCP/IP Port' and click 'Configure Port', then untick 'SNMP Status Enabled'. Click 'OK' twice and the problem should be solved.

If neither of these circumstances are relevant, then simply bypass the 'Safely Remove Hardware...' button altogether – instead, click 'Start > Computer', right-click the offending device and choose 'Eject'. Andreas was pleased to report this method worked perfectly.

### Printing LOST WIRELESS PRINTER CONNECTION

**Q** We have a HP Pavilion G6 PC and HP 4500 wireless printer. These have been working fine, but we seem to have lost the wireless connection between the two. We've uninstalled, removed everything, reconnected and then run the disc – everything seems to install smoothly, but when we try to print nothing happens. Are you able to help?

**Max and Susan Green**



#### Nick O's solution

Max and Susan were able to confirm that another PC was still able

to print to the printer wirelessly, which allowed us to focus our attention on the Pavilion G6 itself.

Other HP users have reported fixing this problem by physically connecting the printer to the PC using a USB cable. Once the PC's detected the printer via USB, you should be able to disconnect the printer and try printing wirelessly again. Unfortunately Max and Susan haven't yet responded to this

suggestion of ours, so we can't confirm whether or not it resolved their problem – please do let us know when a solution has been found, so we can share the method with other Windows users.

### Internet SILVERLIGHT UPDATE PROBLEM

**Q** I've been plagued by a failed Windows Update – one that attempts to update Silverlight. It's gone on for months, so in the end I attempted to uninstall Silverlight only to be told the feature I'm trying to use is unavailable.

**Theresa Unwin**



#### Graham's solution

Thankfully there's a simple solution to this irritating problem –

Microsoft provides a handy Silverlight clean-up tool that will enable you to completely remove all existing traces of the software.

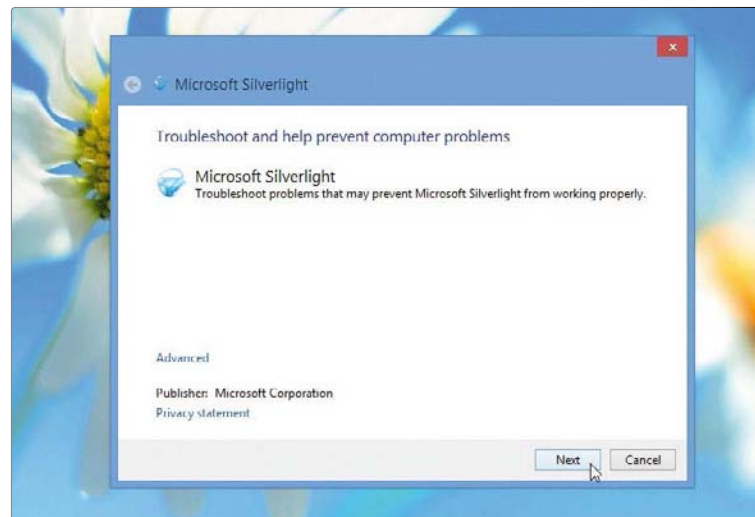
You'll find this tool at support.microsoft.com/kb/2608523 – scroll down the page and click the Microsoft FixIt button. If prompted, you should choose to open it with the Diagnostics Troubleshooting Wizard. Alternatively you could save it to your hard drive and double-click Silverlight.diagcab to run it manually.

Follow the wizard through and it should result in Silverlight being finally purged from your system. A little lower on the same web page you will find a link to the latest version and, hopefully, once this is installed, Windows Update will deliver future updates without any further problems.



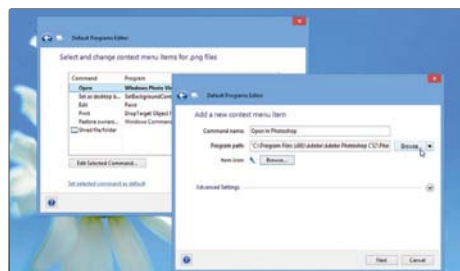
**Do you have a PC problem? Get in touch...**

Email full details of your problem to the support team and we'll do our best to help: [windowsmagazine@futurenet.com](mailto:windowsmagazine@futurenet.com) Or write to the support team and we'll do our best to help: **Support Squad, Windows Help & Advice magazine, Future Publishing Ltd, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1AU**



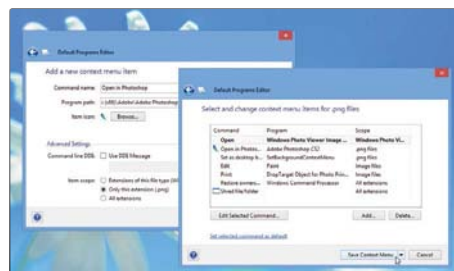
**REMOVE SILVERLIGHT**  
Microsoft offers a fix-it tool to purge Silverlight from your PC

**“There's a simple solution – Microsoft has a Silverlight clean-up tool that enables you to remove all traces of the software”**



### 3 Set up basic action

You'll see a list of existing context menu entries – click the 'Add...' button to create a new one from scratch. Next, type the command name (as it'll appear in the context menu), then click Browse to select your particular target program.



### 4 Final tweaks

Click the expand button next to Advanced Settings. Set 'Item scope' to 'Only this extension (.png)', then click 'Next'. You should see the option appear in the list – click 'Save Context Menu' followed by 'OK' and 'Close' to finish.

### Jargon buster!

#### ▶ SNMP

Stands for Simple Network Management Protocol, and is used to manage networked devices on a local network, including computers, routers and other peripherals.

#### ▶ Silverlight

Microsoft's alternative to Adobe Flash is an application for allowing developers to run media, streaming and other graphics in a web browser through a plugin.



# Upgrade

▶ NEW HARDWARE ▶ ESSENTIAL ACCESSORIES ▶ LATEST GAMES

## Welcome



Well, summer is nearly here, which for us folks at *Windows Help & Advice* is both a

good thing and a bad thing! With the sun shining and the birds singing merrily, we need to tear ourselves away from our PCs and get outside. Luckily, the Fitbit Surge offers something we can have fun with while also getting fit – see page 86 for more.

However, for when the sun goes down, we've put some seriously great hardware to the test. There's no less than eight headphones to choose from, as well as the new device from ASUS. We also have some great games, too. Until next time!

**Nick Odantzis** deputy editor  
nick.odantzis@futurenet.com

## This issue's highlights



### 78 Gaming headsets

Whether you're gaming, Skyping or watching a film, we've got the headset for you – we test eight of the best



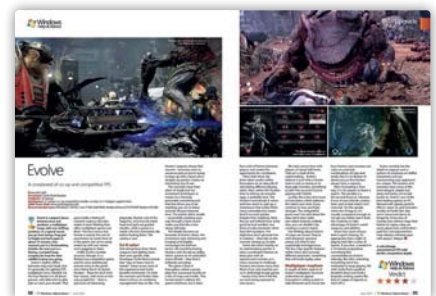
### 82 ASUS Transformer Book T300 Chi

With 2-in-1 laptops getting skinnier all the time ASUS has taken things further



### 84 SanDisk Connect Wireless Flash Drive

SanDisk's innovative USB stick has built-in Wi-Fi, but does that justify the price?



### 88 Evolve

The new game is a crossbreed of co-op and competitive FPS and a jetpack dance between prey and predator

## Our review guarantee

We use only acknowledged experts to review products, so you can use our ratings with full confidence to make your buying decision

### How we review

One of the key tenets of our review philosophy is that hardware should be compared against like products wherever possible. It is only when you pit the finest products of a certain type against one another – at the same time – that you can really come up with a definitive

verdict as to which is the very best in that category. The pace of development in computer hardware means that it is very difficult to compare scores from today with those from, say, six months ago. Magazines and websites that review a new product on its own run the risk of confusing or misleading.

We guarantee to test every piece of hardware rigorously and thoroughly, using only acknowledged experts to establish the worth of a product. We always review from the viewpoint of our readers; the day-to-day practicality and quality of a product is paramount.

## Our awards...



Only the very finest products receive our Best On Test Award. These will have excellent marks for quality.



Our Best Value Award is given to products that quite simply represent the best value for your money.

**RATING EXPLAINED** ★★★★★ Superb ★★★★★☆ Very good ★★★★★ Good ★★★★★ Disappointing ★★★★★ Poor

## Full listing

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- 86 Fitbit Surge
- 88 Evolve
- 90 Call of Duty
- 92 Grow Home
- 94 Gravity Ghost

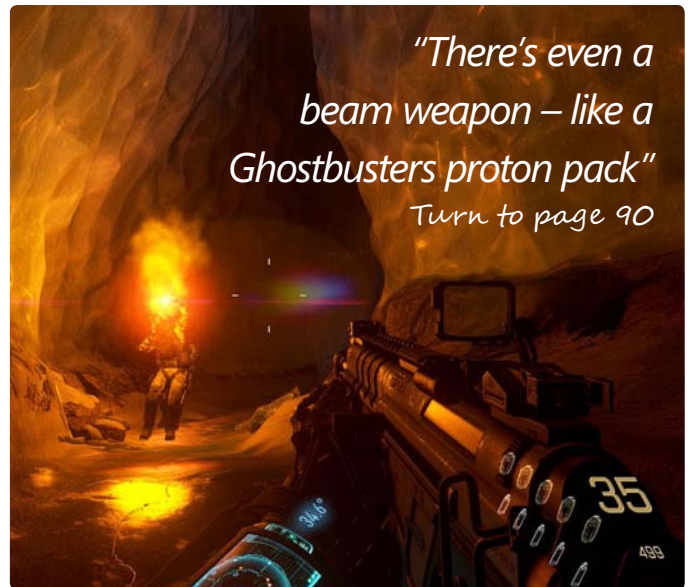
82 The latest machine from ASUS takes skinny to a whole new level



86 It's time to get fit (and stylish) with the Fitbit Surge



*"There's even a beam weapon – like a Ghostbusters proton pack"*  
Turn to page 90



## Our promise to you...

The Upgrade section is your key to finding out about the latest products, all designed to help you get more from your PC

### You can trust our reviews

✓ Our expert reviewers are 100 per cent independent, with years of experience in the world of computing. Our rigorous testing procedures mean that only genuine, high-quality products are awarded high star ratings. Further, very few are handed our Best Value or Best on Test Awards. If you see an item of hardware bearing one of these marks, you can be confident that it is an excellent product. Always check when the award was given, to ensure it is still up-to-date.

### We choose the best products

✓ Thousands of new products for your computer are released every year and choosing between them can sometimes be an impossible task. Our experts select only the best hardware and software to feature in this magazine, making your decision on which one to choose easier. Even better, our awards and star rating system make it simple to find the best products for your needs, with our recommended products section giving you a fast, trustworthy guide to a wide range of hardware and software.

### We'll introduce you to new stuff

✓ Wherever we can, we review new hardware comparatively, pitching it head-to-head against other similar products. (Full details of our policy can be found in the opposite page, under 'Our review guarantee'.) Of course, this isn't always possible with new products and part of our duty to you is to introduce you a wide range of fascinating new hardware, software, services and games.

The reviews of standalone hardware and software are just as thorough as our comparative reviews. However, we do not allocate scores to them because this can often be misleading. The only exception to this rule is on our games reviews, where the pace of change is a lot slower and single scores can be genuinely useful.

# GAMING HEADSETS

Whether you're gaming, Skyping or watching a movie, we've got the headset for you – here are eight on test

## Audio-Technica ATH-AG1

Price £232, [www.audio-technica.com](http://www.audio-technica.com)

The pro-audio outfit Audio-Technica's fancy ATH-AG1 headset is all about sound quality. This is the audiophile brand's first venture into gaming audio and the impressive cans boast some of the best in-game sound we've heard from our PC. The AG1's concession to gaming means it has the exaggerated bass that we've come to expect from such headsets, but it doesn't come at a cost to the rest of the aural experience. The high notes are crisp and the frequency response range offers an impressive depth to the sound. The mic is fantastic too.

But it's not all about sound, because if they won't

rest on your head comfortably then they're also simply no good for extended use. The Audio-Technica cans use a Wing Support Mechanism to rest this lightweight headset on your head, which is great if the size of your head fits in with the design. But, those with a slender skull, may struggle to find them comfy. So, while the sound quality matches the high price tag, the overall design might not.

### VITAL STATISTICS

**Manufacturer** Audio-Technica  
**Frequency response** 20Hz-20KHz  
**Weight** 310g  
**Connection** USB and 3.5mm wired



## CM Storm Sirius-C

Price £69 <http://gaming.coolermaster.com>

Someone at Cooler Master obviously felt the need for more noise during the design phase for the Sirius-C headset, and so threw another pair of drivers into these CM Storm cans. That means each pillow-soft ear cup has two separate drivers in it – a 44mm one for the mid-range and treble, then another 40mm woofer to pound your ears with bass notes. Because of the extra sound-processing and amp tech, these cans come in at a weighty 425g. It's lucky the build quality is so good and the padding so ample...

What do those separate drivers mean then? Well, let's be clear, the audio from the Sirius-C is good, but it's not really noticeably better than

a decent single driver set-up. The standard frequency response range means while the sound is clear both at the top and bottom, it doesn't produce the depth offered by single-driver sets with a wider range.

The microphone is a little underwhelming – a bit like the Sirius-C as a whole. It's a competent headset, but despite the impressive specs it doesn't reach the extra heights you might expect.

### VITAL STATISTICS

**Manufacturer** Cooler Master  
**Frequency response** 20Hz-20KHz  
**Weight** 425g  
**Connection** USB and 3.5mm wired





## Gamdias Eros

Price £46 [www.gamdias.com](http://www.gamdias.com)

This bargain-priced headset from peripheral newcomer, Gamdias, is a bit of a surprise. On first sight it looks every bit the £46 gaming headset – all glossy red and black styling with a fat, pivoting boom mic. It doesn't scream quality. But throw it over your ears and you'll be stunned at the level of audio loveliness.

The Eros combines bold, pounding bass notes with pin-sharp treble, making it a great headset for gaming or chatting. It only rocks a modest 20Hz-20KHz frequency response range, but sounds almost as good as sets costing twice as much. Despite the questionable appearance,

the cans are comfortable and cushion your head in gentle padded luxury.

The mic is nothing to get excited about, but it doesn't let the Eros down. The audio quality isn't quite so astounding musically, with treble feeling just a little too harsh for some vocals. Yet for a well-priced headset, you can't really ask for more than what Gamdias has delivered.

### VITAL STATISTICS

**Manufacturer** Gamdias  
**Frequency response** 20Hz-20KHz  
**Weight** 310g  
**Connection** USB wired



## Gamdias Hebe

Price £35 [www.gamdias.com](http://www.gamdias.com)

With Gamdias offering the Eros for a bargain £46, what can we say about the even-cheaper Hebe? For a start, it hasn't really got the hang of styling PC peripherals for anyone over the age of 17, with glossy red colour dominating these cheapish looking cans. We can also say that this isn't a headset for you if you like to preserve your eardrums and not perforate them.

However, aurally, the Hebe is as much of a surprise as its big brother Eros. The sound quality is similarly excellent, with a virtual soundscape that's crisp and effective enough to allow you to place audio

sources with impressive accuracy. We don't know what Gamdias' magic formula is, but it has managed to create a pair of budget-priced headsets that do away with unnecessary gimmicks and just deliver genuinely impressive audio. This 3.5mm jack connected set is slightly cheaper than the USB-cabled Eros, but the sound is almost as good.

### VITAL STATISTICS

**Manufacturer** Gamdias  
**Frequency response** 20Hz-20KHz  
**Weight** 372g  
**Connection** 3.5mm wired





## Kingston HyperX Cloud

Price £86 [www.kingston.com](http://www.kingston.com)

When we first saw Kingston's HyperX-branded headset there was a twang of recognition in our minds. It's effectively QPad's excellent QH-90 headset but with a little bit of a paint job. However, this time Kingston has also turned up the dial on the bass.

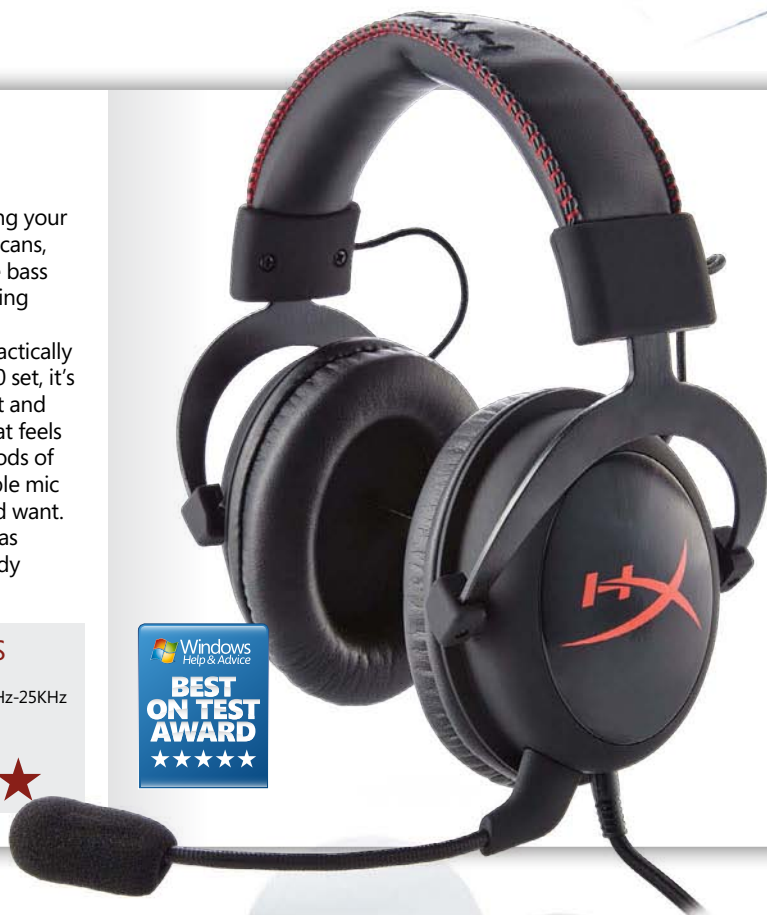
To our surprise, it hasn't taken anything away from the original headset's aural quality. Our one concern with the QH-90 was the bass response was a little light because of the delightfully balanced EQ the QPad had used. Kingston has augmented the low-end of this HyperX version to give the sub-20Hz frequencies a punch that is more felt than

heard. It's not punching your ear like the Mad Catz cans, but adds depth to the bass notes without muddying other sounds.

And because it's practically identical to the QH-90 set, it's got an elegant, robust and lightweight design that feels comfy after long periods of use, and the detachable mic is as clear as you could want. Incredibly, Kingston has improved on an already impressive headset.

### VITAL STATISTICS

**Manufacturer** Kingston  
**Frequency response** 15Hz-25KHz  
**Weight** 350g  
**Connection** 3.5mm jack



## Mad Catz FREQ 4D

Price £94 <http://madcatz.com>

Thanks to Mad Catz, you can now get mighty close to total sound immersion with its ViviTouch tech. Terrifying if you're gaming, even worse if you're on Skype with someone who likes to speak loudly.

The idea with these cans is when you get low-end sounds passing through the ear cups, you get a palpable vibration through some fancy harmonic distortion. We admit none of that sounds pleasant on the page, but with ViviTouch turned on (via a switch on the headset itself) you get a fairly satisfying bass thud. Unfortunately, the FREQ 4D is tuned towards bass-heavy sound, which means even

with ViviTouch shut off it's difficult to flatten out the EQ enough to make music or films sound anything other than utterly synthetic. Sadly, that makes the FREQ 4D's gimmick rather aurally destructive – it is suited for gaming to the detriment of anything else.

Finally, *Star Wars* fans will appreciate the headset looks like it was ripped straight off Jek Porkins after crashing into the Death Star...

### VITAL STATISTICS

**Manufacturer** Mad Catz  
**Frequency response** 20Hz-20KHz  
**Weight** 306g  
**Connection** USB and 3.5mm wired







## SteelSeries H Wireless

**Price** £205 [www.steelseries.com](http://www.steelseries.com)

The H Wireless is, obviously, a wireless headset and pulling wires out of peripherals always ends up adding to the price tag. Still, £205 is a huge amount to spend on a wireless headset, so you would expect something rather special for the money.

By and large, the SteelSeries headset pretty much delivers. The aural quality is impressive, with solid, controlled bass notes, clear mid-range and crisp treble. But it's not exactly class-leading – the Kingston HyperX cans still stand out as the best-sounding in this test.

But you're not really paying for audio; you're paying for wireless connectivity. And this is where the SteelSeries set

excels. The transmitter box is part amp and part charging station, with an OLED display and physical dial and push button that is simple to use. With a pair of Li-ion batteries – one for play, one for charging – you'll barely miss a beat and the 12m range is excellent. It's a seriously impressive kit, but hugely expensive.

### VITAL STATISTICS

**Manufacturer** SteelSeries  
**Frequency response** 20Hz-20kHz  
**Weight** 324g  
**Connection** Wireless



## Turtle Beach EF Z300

**Price** £156 [www.turtlebeach.com](http://www.turtlebeach.com)

The Z300 from Turtle Beach is both cheaper and lighter, than the SteelSeries above, but sadly it's not quite capable of delivering the sort of aural experience you'd expect from a £156 set of cans.

The wireless setup itself isn't the problem. With dual-band Wi-Fi you get almost the same range as the pricier SteelSeries headset, and there is Bluetooth pairing if you are keen to link up to a separate laptop or mobile device. The Turtle Beach headset only comes with a single battery, so you'll have to rely on USB for charging.

The audio doesn't stand out from the likes of the bargain-priced Gamdias cans

we've reviewed here. The virtual 7.1 surround sound does an okay job of offering a more expansive soundscape than plain old stereo, but only to the extent of giving you a bit of a separation between the front and rear noises. That underwhelming feeling extends to the general sound quality – big noises sound fine, but then they do on the Hebe headset too... for a quarter of the price.

### VITAL STATISTICS

**Manufacturer** Turtle Beach  
**Frequency response** 20Hz-20KHz  
**Weight** 319g  
**Connection** Wireless





## Asus Transformer Book T300 Chi

£601 | \$899 [www.asus.com](http://www.asus.com)

The 2-in-1 machine that takes skinny to a whole new level

The 2-in-1 laptops have come a long way over the last few years and are now considerably less bulky and clunky. However, Asus has gone one further with the Transformer Book T300 Chi, one of the thinnest 2-in-1 machines ever created.

The machine's guts are stashed behind the screen, which lifts away from a Bluetooth keyboard base to be a standalone tablet. But by choosing a fanless Intel Core M setup, Asus has delivered a convertible laptop that's even thinner than some tablets. Don't mistake this machine's svelte profile for lightweight performance, though. This machine can run with the best of them. But it might be best suited to media lovers.

The crucial thing the T300 Chi gets right is it looks and feels like a traditional laptop. It's well balanced, despite the tablet portion being slightly heavier and thicker than its keyboard base.

Beyond aesthetics, using the T300 Chi feels as natural as any laptop. You can easily place it on your lap and type away without it teetering backwards from the extra weight of the screen. Plus, it folds into a thin 16mm package with the thickness of the tablet and keyboard combined.

### Magnetic appeal

To get the machine to such a thin profile, Asus used rare earth magnets to keep the two parts together. By doing so, it avoids a bulky locking mechanism. Although the tablet and keyboard sections aren't locked with a hard connection, the magnets feel more than secure. You can easily lift the laptop by the keyboard, turn it upside down and give it a shake without the screen slipping.

However, that's not to say they're inseparable, either. With a quick tug, the screen will come away from the keyboard base. Slipping

the display back on is simple, but you will have to make sure it's lined up correctly.

The laptop itself is pretty smart, too. It's made entirely out of aluminium anodised with a sparkling deep-blue finish. The machine also has chamfered, 'diamond cut' edges on the outside edge of the keyboard deck, the inside track around the trackpad and around the perimeter of the screen lid. They're a nice touch, especially for resting wrists on a softer front edge of the palm rest.

Of course, such a thin form introduces compromises, and this machine only has micro size ports. You'll find a micro USB 3.0 port, micro HDMI and a microSD card slot on the bottom edge – even the Bluetooth keyboard features a mini USB charging port.

If you're planning on plugging anything into this laptop, be prepared to use an adapter or some extra cables. Luckily, Asus includes



## KEY FEATURES

### Asus Transformer Book T300 Chi

**Manufacturer** Asus  
**Processor** 1.2GHz Intel Core M 5Y71 processor (dual-core, 4MB cache, up to 2.9GHz with turbo boost)  
**Storage** 128GB SSD  
**Ram** 8GB DDR3L (1600MHz)  
**Graphics** Intel HD Graphics 5300  
**Connectivity** Intel Dual Band Wireless-N 7265 + Bluetooth 4.0 LE, micro USB 3.0, mini HDMI, microSD card reader, headphone/mic combo jack  
**Weight** 3.14 lbs  
**Size** 12.5 x 7.5 x 0.65in  
**Screen** 12.5in  
**Resolution** 2,560 x 1,440 (WQHD) capacitive multi-touch IPS display  
**Camera** 2MP 720p webcam  
**Screen size** 12.5in  
**Display resolution** 1920 x 1080 Full HD

a mini USB 2.0 to the full-size port adapter. However, if you want to fully use USB 3.0 port, you'll need to buy a micro USB 3.0 dongle.

Considering its price, the T300 Chi comes well equipped, with the exception of the paltry 128GB of SSD storage. Sadly there's no way of increasing the onboard storage (either with Asus or doing it yourself). One solution is to have a microSD card slotted in at all times.

### Screenless wonder

The Asus T300 Chi kept up with every task we threw at it, whether it was editing images in Lightroom or streaming a 4K video on YouTube. Thanks to its design as a tablet and

**“The Asus T300 Chi kept up with every task we threw at it, whether it was editing images in Lightroom or streaming a 4K video on YouTube”**

laptop in tandem, you could quickly go from watching a Netflix film to typing up a document, and then pulling the screen off its base for a quick bit of gaming.

The detachable keyboard can be used even when not attached, thanks to the Bluetooth connection and its own battery. The keyboard is excellent, with tactile, clicky keys and a solid base that shows minimal flex despite being so thin. The trackpad, on the other hand, feels annoyingly sticky but it's still serviceable enough. Plus, there's always the option of tapping around with the touchscreen. It does make us wish the tablet came with a stand though, to make it more practical and stable.

Asus promises the keyboard on its own will have 84 hours of use a

week on standby time. Sadly, though, the tablet end of this device can't siphon power from a Bluetooth accessory.

Asus advertised the T300 Chi with an eight-hour battery life. Our experience showed it to be around half this, after a mix of web browsing, streaming Netflix for an hour, playing games, playing Google Music over the speakers set to 20 per cent and keeping the display to 50 per cent brightness. With just simple web browsing and word processing, we could probably get six hours.

The WQHD, or 2,560 x 1,440, resolution display on the T300 Chi is magnificent. Everything you look

at on it is stunningly sharp and clear with great contrast to boot. If you're a fan of long vistas or looking at any type of colour photography and video, this screen will make it sparkle into life.

### Glaringly obvious

For production means, this panel is too colour rich, as reds can look overblown and meld into themselves. There's the option of diving into Asus's Splendid utility to manage your display options, but you'll never be able to fix the screen's other issue: glare. The T300 Chi's display panel is *very* reflective.

We weren't impressed with the side firing speakers either. As expected on such a thin machine, they're underpowered and tinny sounding. They can get loud

though, filling a room with booming explosions from action films for instance.

The T300 Chi comes loaded with bloatware. All the usual suspects are here, including McAfee LiveSafe, Line, Music Maker Jam, Wild Tangent Games and Zinio. That said, there are a few applications you'll want to keep around. Asus Splendid Utility is a software tool that optimises your viewing experience with different levels for colour saturation. Manual mode allows complete customisation including colour gamut, skin tones, sharpness, contrast and colour temperature. AudioWizard is ASUS's software designed to enhance audio experiences, offering five intuitive presets: Music, Movie, Recording, Gaming and Speech Mode.

### The final verdict

There are a few things Asus didn't get right with the T300 Chi, but it excels as a machine for multimedia consumption. It comes with a colourful, 16:9 display to kick back with and watch streamed films. At the same time, this is a pretty good device to read comics and books through the Kindle app, even if the app has not been optimised for high-resolution screens. ■

**If you seek a premium machine to stream films and games, the T300 Chi has your number.**

 **Windows**  
Help & Advice  
Verdict





## SanDisk Connect Wireless Flash Drive

£40 | \$50 [www.sandisk.co.uk](http://www.sandisk.co.uk)

An innovative USB stick with built-in Wi-Fi

**M**any of us buy USB drives more often than we should because we're always losing them. Or, we'll buy a new one for newer technology – did you ditch your USB 1.0 sticks when USB 2.0 gadgets came out? Well, we're now starting towards USB 3.0... However, it's now time to break the habit, as there's a wonderful glitch in the path: the SanDisk Connect Wireless Flash Drive.

The lengthily named SanDisk Connect Wireless Flash Drive allows you to share content anywhere, to any device, with or without an existing Wi-Fi source.

### The cost of sharing

The 16GB drive is priced at around £40, the 32GB model around £50 and the 64GB drive around £68. The price points are high (£40 for a 16GB flash drive when you can buy a standard 16GB USB 3.0 stick for far less than that). But then you won't have the excellent

functionality that SanDisk incorporates into the Connect Wireless Flash Drive.

### Flash in the pan

The Connect Wireless Flash Drive looks and feels like a normal-sized USB flash drive (okay, maybe it's just a *touch* bigger).

The system requirements call for a USB 2.0 interface or higher, though what type of USB connection the device uses isn't specified. In terms of operating systems, this SanDisk device works well with Windows Vista, 7 and 8. It's also allows for an optional password to be set for the Wi-Fi.

When it comes to sharing files, the drive works with almost all mobile devices. It supports Android devices on version 2.3 and later (as well as the Kindle Fire).

Charging the drive is carried out via a USB port on your computer, or you can use a charger. However, it's important to note that it

requires two hours of charging before the Wi-Fi option will work. But regardless of waiting for Wi-Fi, the SanDisk stick will still function as a normal USB straight away.

The performance of the drive is as you would expect for a USB stick. The Read/Write performance is particularly good and you can easily copy stuff to the drive via USB very swiftly.

If you need this device to receive PDFs, spreadsheets and other office files you won't have any problems. However, transferring bigger files, say a bunch of MP3s or a film, may take a while if you're using USB 2.0, but will be quick on USB 3.0.

### Wi-Fi lowdown

You'll soon notice the Wi-Fi aspect of this device is a bit different. Press the Wi-Fi button until it blinks blue to activate the Wi-Fi on the drive. Once on, you can connect your mobile device or computer to the drive by selecting the pre-named

## KEY FEATURES

### SanDisk Connect Wireless Flash Drive

**Manufacturer** SanDisk

**System Requirements** USB 2.0 connection interface or higher

**For mobile devices** Android version 2.3 or higher, iOS version 5.0 or higher

**For other Wi-Fi enabled devices**

A web browser

**PC** Windows 8, Windows 7, Windows Vista, Windows XP

**Available capacities** 16GB, 32GB and 64GB

**Dimensions** 70.9 x 21.3 x 11.4mm



wireless name. On a Windows machine, you can connect to the drive via a web browser.

The directions to hook up with a web browser instruct you to connect to [sandisk.com/WFD](http://sandisk.com/WFD). However, we found that doesn't always work consistently.

### **"The Wi-Fi capability may seem like a gimmick, but its real-world uses are endless"**

You can try using your IP address of the SanDisk drive in the web browser (which can be found in your network adapter's IP settings, then point your browser to the information under the 'gateway' setting). Usage via the web browser is merely okay – it just lists files in a basic directory. But it works.

For mobile devices you can download the SanDisk Wireless Flash Drive app. Once downloaded, connect your Android device to the SanDisk Connect Wireless Flash Drive's Wi-Fi and that's it.

The mobile app is far better than the web-browser app. You can change the Wi-Fi (SSID) name, password and energy-saver settings on both the web and

mobile apps. The web platform allows you to change the Wi-Fi Channel of the drive, and the mobile app lets you add the SanDisk device to an already existing Wi-Fi access point. So, if you want your drive to connect directly to your home network,

then you would set this here. The mobile app also allows you to upload contacts and other files, along with the facility to download files to your device.

Another thing worth mentioning is the Wi-Fi battery life is pretty decent. We put a film on the drive and streamed it to our mobile phone – the SanDisk device lasted for 55 minutes before giving out.

### **Final verdict**

The SanDisk Connect Wireless Flash Drive makes things easy – the Wi-Fi aspect is extremely clever and it works well. This device is ideal if you frequently collaborate with friends and co-workers in locations where Wi-Fi is not available, such as when travelling.

However, we disliked the web-based application for the Connect Wireless Flash Drive – it's just not that great. It's basic and we were hoping for something a lot more dynamic, in truth.

Another flaw is the lack of active Wi-Fi while the USB drive is plugged into a computer charging. That just seems like a lack of planning on SanDisk's part. Hopefully an upgrade will fix that.

Overall, the SanDisk Connect Wireless Flash Drive is excellent. The Wi-Fi capability may seem like a gimmick but its real-world uses are endless. If nothing else, this is a USB drive that offers another way of easily sharing your content with collaborators when all other means fail. And that could be a very handy feature to have on tap. ■

**A great gadget for those who work on the go or if you simply want more out of a USB stick.**

 **Windows**  
Help & Advice  
Verdict





## Fitbit Surge

£200 | \$250 [www.fitbit.com](http://www.fitbit.com)

The all-singing, all-dancing (and somewhat chunky) superwatch

**F**itbit Surge is a fitness tracker that's big on features. The start-up company behind it calls it a 'superwatch', compared to its Fitbit Charge and Fitbit Charge HR, and it boasts built-in GPS, a heart-rate monitor and real-time workout data.

The Fitbit Surge fastens a large LCD display to your wrist, and it's able to easily cycle through multiple stats. This backlit, always-on interface allows you to keep tabs on your steps, miles, active minutes and heart rate on a black-and-white, 1.25-inch screen.

The device boasts a touchscreen, and also puts three physical buttons at your fingertips, so you can control workout timers, GPS tracking, your music and more.

It would've been practical if there was an option to cycle back to the current time after a while. We also missed not having additional watch faces to supplement the preinstalled four.

Tucked underneath the watch's band is an optical heart-rate monitor and, at ends of the straps, a strong wristwatch clasp.

While the Fitbit Surge functionality is advanced, the square look and bigger size looks like it belongs to a retro 80s digital watch. It's not fashionable. And it doesn't help that it only comes in black, with blue and tangerine "coming soon".

### Lug your workout

At its thickest point, the watch case is half an inch thick off the wrist and its strap an inch wide. The large, rubber-coated lugs at the top and bottom make tucking it neatly under a buttoned cuff a workout in itself – not ideal for everyday wear.

Fitbit Surge has eight sensors crammed into its large frame, which, along with the LCD touchscreen, accounts for its size. This means it can track all sort of movements. There's an altimeter,

for example. The GPS maps your runs using Google Maps while generating step-by-step graphs for elevation, pace, heart rate and calories burned.

Fitbit Surge's satellite tracking works without your phone. It's motivating – review your run, seeing it laid out on a familiar overhead map. Though the tracking isn't always accurate, with occasional off-track routes a street and a half over. Though these errors are few and far between. Run tracking can be initiated right from the watch, with or without GPS.

Exercise shortcuts include weights, elliptical, spinning, yoga, workout, stair climber, circuit training, bootcamp, kickboxing, tennis, golf, walking, cycling and, even martial arts. The app also has a menu for food planning, but it's cumbersome to track.

Coupled with the runner-friendly GPS feature, the Fitbit Surge has a heart-rate monitor that constantly

## KEY FEATURES

### Fitbit Surge

**Manufacturer** Fitbit

**Sensors and components** GPS, 3-axis accelerometers, 3-axis gyroscope, digital compass, optical heart rate monitor, altimeter, ambient light sensor, vibration motor

**Requirements** Windows Vista and later, internet connection, USB port

**Connectivity** Bluetooth 4.0

**Display** Touchscreen monochrome LCD with backlight (for low light visibility)

**Water resistance** To 5 ATM

**Battery life** Up to five days

**Battery type** Lithium-polymer

**Charge time** One to two hours



tracks heartbeat. Really, it's an optical heart rate monitor that sits on the underside of the watch and reflects a pair of green LEDs off your skin to calculate changes in blood volume. This technology is no different to the Fitbit Charge HR. But the Surge does have a helpful trailing BPM indicator on the LCD.

### Sleep on it

Another feature is automatic sleep detection, so you don't have to change mode. And it starts logging sleep within minutes of dozing off.

## "Fitbit Surge is set up to fill the void between a fitness tracker and a real running watch"

The only thing you need to set is the convenient silent alarm that vibrates to wake you and not the person next to you.

The sleep timeline was basic: asleep in blue, restless in aqua and awake in pink. It was also hard to read, so the automatic sleep detection is less meaningful. The sleep tracking is a fantastic idea, so it's a shame it doesn't follow through with anything that can be considered accurate or helpful.

The Surge shows off scrolling Caller ID from incoming calls and SMS alerts that can be read in full, so you can see if a call or text is worth disturbing your run for.

A double tap on the left button brings up a hidden menu for controlling with your phone's

music. We used Google Play Music and could skip tracks, pause and play music. Music playback requires enabling Bluetooth Classic, which was confusing at first and drains the battery quickly. But it was effective once we re-synced the watch to our phone.

Chances are, if you own a modern day smartphone, Fitbit Surge works with it. The necessary app is compatible with iOS 8, Android and Windows Phone.

Fitbit is the first mainstream wearable manufacturer to invite

Microsoft's loyal customers into the fitness stats-syncing fold, and it goes a step further on Windows Phone 8.1.

### Wet workout

The Surge is as waterproof as a smartwatch gets and according to the official specs it's good for a depth of 50 metres. However, confusingly, the company still says while "it's rain and splashproof and can stand up to the sweatiest workout," owners should "remove before showering or swimming".

To test this out we submerged the Fitbit Surge for a few minutes... And we found it was absolutely fine, and so will almost certainly survive lengthy, sweat-filled workouts or heavy rain.

Fitbit Surge excels in a lot of areas, but falls behind its predecessors when it comes to battery life. That's expected given its large black-and-white LCD and new GPS capabilities. However, Fitbit promises its new 'superwatch' can last seven days with heart-rate monitoring and activity tracking enabled. But it does advise turning off GPS and music controls.

Our Surge gave us about four and a half days between charges, even with minimal GPS usage. But then most Android Wear watches (and our phones) require daily charging. It takes about an hour and a half to recharge a Surge.

### Surge of power

This is the most powerful Fitbit yet. It's the best of its brand, thanks to the ability to track GPS-mapped runs without a phone, control music on the run and check your heart rate in real time.

But best of all, it syncs with newer Windows phones in addition to Android devices.

The downside is Fitbit Surge tries to be a jack-of-all-trades... but falls short and ends up being a master of none. It's not always accurate and it's really not subtle as an activity band. However, this gadget is meant for budget-conscious power users who are in need of a smarter running accessory. Fitbit Surge is set up to fill the void between a fitness tracker and a real running watch.

**The most powerful Fitbit to date – the superwatch is big on features, size and price.**

 **Windows**  
Help & Advice  
Verdict





Evolve's general visuals are just as arresting as the cutscenes

# Evolve

A crossbreed of co-op and competitive FPS

**Price** £40 | \$60

**Developer** Turtle Rock Studios

**Publisher** 2K Games

**Multiplayer** 2-5 player co-op competitive modes, or solo, or 1-4 players against bots

**DRM** Steam **Web** [www.evolvegame.com](http://www.evolvegame.com)

**Recommended specs** Windows 7 64-bit, Core i7-920, 6GB RAM, Nvidia GeForce GTX 670/ATI Radeon R9 280

 **Evolve is a jetpack dance between prey and predator, a multiplayer tango with ever-shifting positions. In a typical round, you go from being a frag god to fragile and back again in about 12 minutes. One moment you're a firebreathing Goliath, the next you're a fleeing, crumpled heap, scraping the map for alien wildlife to keep you going.**

Evolve's rhythm differs between map and mode, but it's generally the tightest FPS multiplayer since *Titanfall*. For the four Hunters it's all about pursuit, with little time to plot, joke or catch your breath. That

pace instills a feeling of constant urgency, but also makes it more fleeting than other multiplayer games out there. The four-versus-one format is exactly the sort of asymmetry we need more of in the genre, but we've rarely ended up with war stories we're gagging to share

Unlike *Evolve's* zombie ancestor, though, it's a fleshed-out competitive game, and the most ambitiously uneven entry in the genre since *Rising Storm*. Its dozen Hunters – three for each of its four classes, with more on the way as paid DLC – form a spectrum of interesting

playstyles. Bucket, one of the Supports, unscrews his robot head and spits out guided missiles, while Lazarus is a medic who lets teammates die before healing them. The variety is vast.

## Sci-fi safari

And along those lines, these weapons and abilities have their own specific skills. Developer Turtle Rock extends that "easy to learn, hard to master" virtue across most of the experience and *Evolve* benefits immensely. On both the monster and Hunter sides there's a focus on cooldown management that we like. The

Hunters' jetpacks always feel starved – knowing when to conserve juice as you're trying to keep up with a beast who's straight-up quicker creates an interesting tug-of-war.

The monsters have their share of tough-but-fun movement techniques to master too. Paranoia permeates everything and that fear drives you to do anything you can to shave seconds off your traversal time. The trickier skill is stealth – successfully sneaking your way through a Hunt round makes you feel like a two-storey-tall ninja.

The Wraith became our favourite of *Evolve's* aliens. Her movement style (hovering and lunging) and fragility encourages hit-and-run tactics. We loved frustrating Hunters with the decoy ability, which spawns an AI-controlled mirror-Wraith – they find it brilliantly annoying.

The game is best in Evacuation, where a group plays five successive rounds on a mix of maps and modes. This format doesn't address the game's brevity, but it does

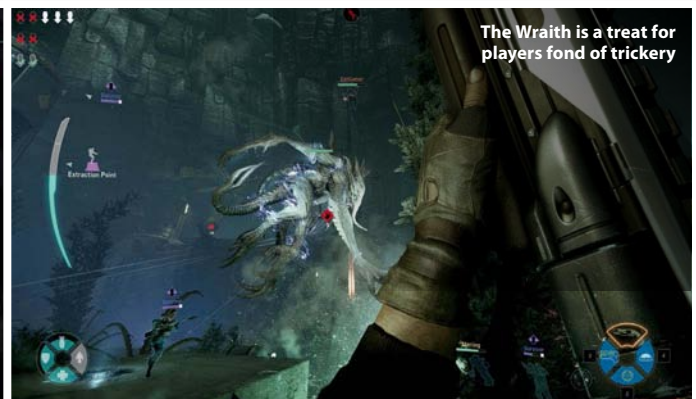




That is one angry, ugly bullfrog – let's call him Peter...



The dozen Hunters offer an impressive array of playstyles



The Wraith is a treat for players fond of trickery

form a bit of history between players and creates the opportunity for comebacks.

Other than Hunt, the three other modes within Evacuation do an okay job of stimulating different playing styles. Nest, where the Hunters have to destroy six monster eggs, is probably best. The Hunters must decide if, when, and how much to split up, a manoeuvre that makes them more vulnerable but means they'll succeed quicker. Despite their simplicity, Nest, Rescue and Defend have some good tactical wrinkles, but there are also moments when they feel mundane. The objectives don't generate fun in isolation – they rely on the monster stirring up trouble.

Evolve also leans heavily on its matchmaking system. It takes coordinated Hunters to keep pace with an experienced monster, or a clever monster to challenge Hunters who know every trick. Most of our solo matches put us in satisfyingly tough games – nearly every time it felt like we were being exposed to new tactics.

We had a worse time with players of mixed skill levels. That isn't a fault of the matchmaking – Evolve's balance is such that a Hunter team is only as strong as its least agile member, something to take into account if you're playing with friends.

Luckily, this is less of an issue in Evacuation, which balances the match over time. If you continue to lose, you'll get stronger. The competitive purist won't be wild about the idea, but it does make one-sided shutouts unlikely. Also, you can disable it by creating a custom match.

Our feelings about Evolve's 16 maps are mixed. They're well-designed, spacious arenas, but they're also surprisingly homogeneous. The few map-specific features within them don't prompt different playstyles, something that will erode replay value.

### Multiplayer mayhem

A couple of other aspects of Evolve's multiplayer structure undermine its appeal. Evacuation's voting system is odd. Between each round, the

four Hunters and monster cast votes on potential combinations of map and mode. But it's an illusion of democracy as the Hunters always have a majority.

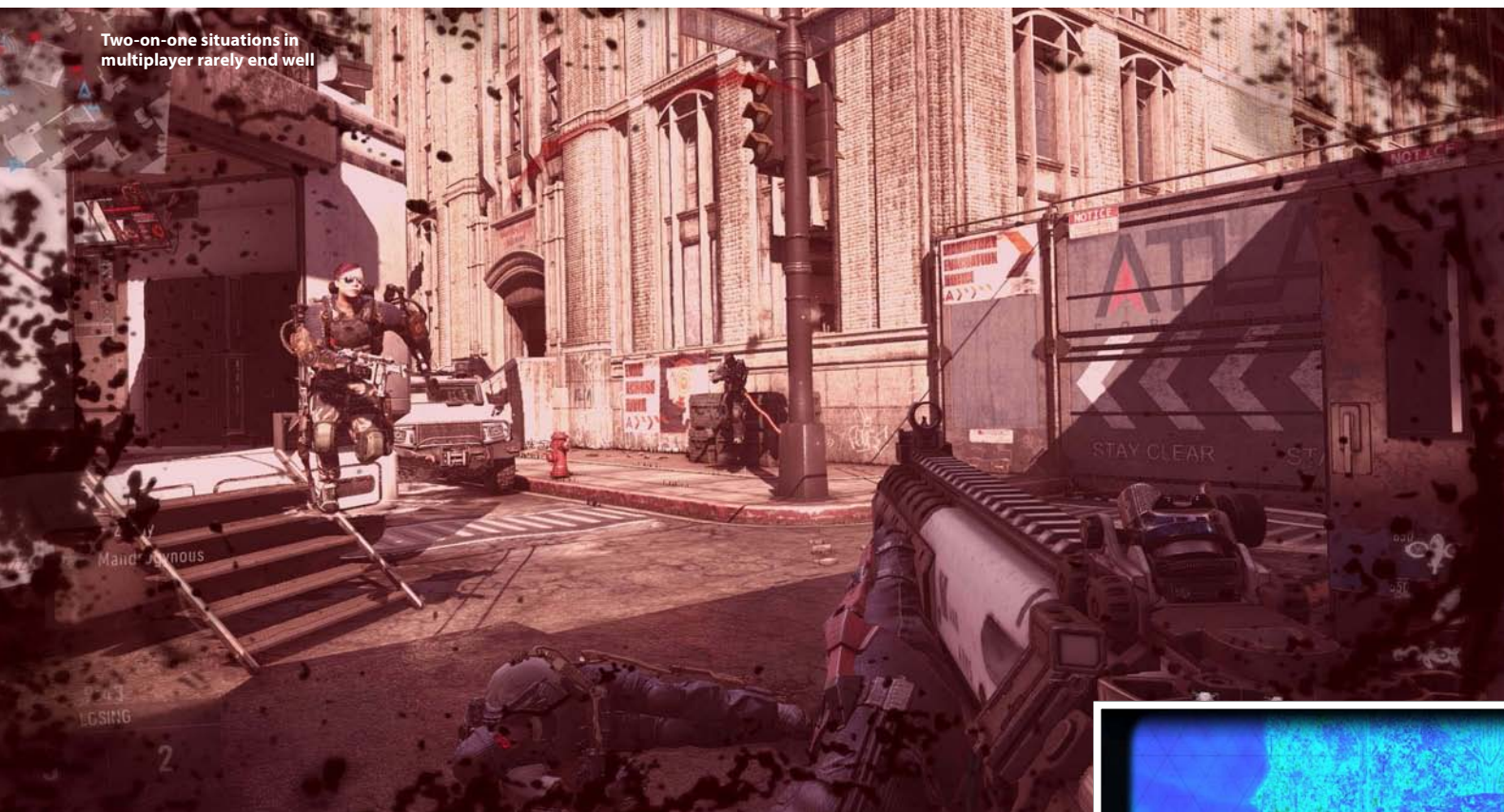
More frustrating is how easy it is for players to leave a match. The penalty is a 60-second timeout. Likewise, if one of your friends crashes, their spot in that match isn't reserved. On the upside, when the AI tags in, it's usually competent enough to not get you killed, but it lacks the creativity to take advantage of Evolve's weird weapons and abilities.

Given how much of your time is spent chasing, it's appropriate that a night of playing feels like a series of sprints. If you lose, a rematch is a 10-minute proposition, something that counterbalances Evolve's intensity. But after unlocking everything we're less motivated to keep playing. We wish Turtle Rock would've doubled-down and built a bespoke ranking system like that of League of Legends or StarCraft 2.

Evolve certainly has the depth to support such a system. Its emphasis on skillful movement and out-manoeuvring your opponent are unique. The Hunters and monsters have some of the most elegant, simple-but-deep mechanics we've laid hands on. And it's one of the best-looking games on PC, blessed with splashy particle effects, smart UI, and monsters worthy of Pacific Rim. But we're concerned about its longevity. It has tons of novelty, but without maps that bolster its replay value we worry about how well Evolve's paid DLC and planned free map releases will keep pace with players' fatigue. ■

A refreshingly asymmetrical FPS with terrific competitive depth.





Two-on-one situations in multiplayer rarely end well

# Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare

A futuristic but familiar military shooter drones on

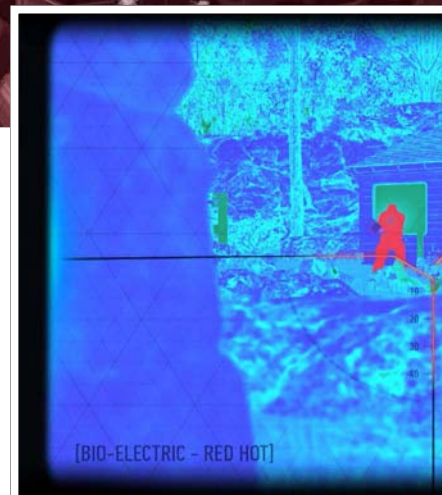
**Price** £40


**Developer** Sledgehammer Games, Raven Software

**Publisher** Activision

**Multiplayer** 4-12 player online competitive and 'horde' style co-op **DRM** Steam **Web** [www.callofduty.com](http://www.callofduty.com)

**Recommended specs** Core i7-4770K, 16GB RAM, GTX Titan Black



 *Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare's* campaign is a first-person shooting gallery smattered with nearly-on-rails vehicle segments, quicktime events, and slightly interactive storytelling. Just like the other CoD games, then.

It's a lot better than *Ghosts*, though, and it introduces some neat near-future gadgets. The most interesting are the Exo suits, which imbue their wearers with double-jumps, strafe dashes, and other special abilities.

Guns are everywhere: big, powerful, varied, some punching single shots through armour, others

spraying through corridors. The ballistics aren't very interesting but the animations and sounds are addictive. There's even a beam weapon – like a Ghostbusters proton pack, only it extracts ghosts from the living.

You'll be a walking, running, jet-jumping massacre, then, but all that power is constricted by a greater power: the script. There are moments when *Advanced Warfare* snaps the rigidity typical of CoD campaigns – a brief, unguided stealth section and a grappling hook that you can occasionally use freely – but outside of that you'll

rarely be asked to solve any problem, other than who to shoot first.

*AW's* eight-hour campaign was hard to put down, though. With the help of Kevin Spacey in a lead role, it tells a simple, predictable story of power and corruption. You might not care much for it, but it's an effective way to push players into increasingly improbable scenarios: hopping between buses on a freeway, clinging to a jet with magnetic gloves as it flew over Antarctica, speeding away from assailants on a hover bike. It's impossible to become even remotely bored when you're

doing something new, extravagant and adventurous every ten minutes.

## Looking good

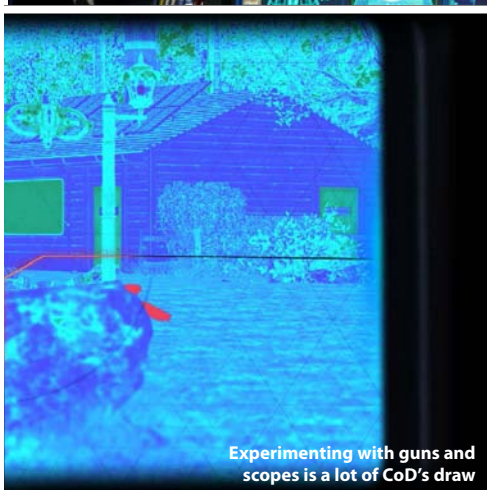
Despite a few ugly textures, this is by far the best-looking CoD too. The Antarctica level in particular is gorgeous, with glowing ice caves and great windy plains of snow. Our biggest complaint is that *Warfare* slacks on some of the basics. We were always faster than the squadmates we were supposed to follow, and always reached our destination first. They gestured to us over their shoulders while we were standing in front of them, then barked at us to open



Yep, you fly a jet. The WASD controls are atrocious, so it's best that it's brief



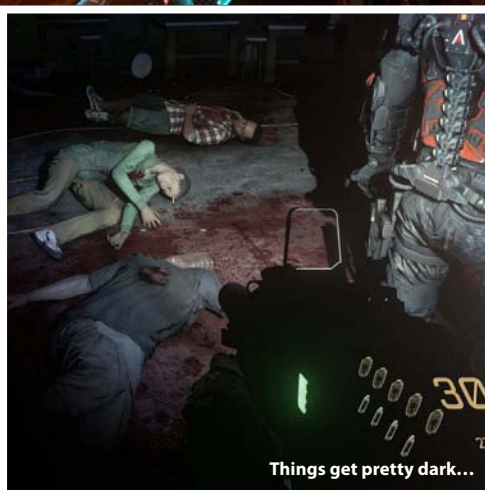
The ice caves look amazing



Experimenting with guns and scopes is a lot of CoD's draw



Did they mention Kevin Spacey is in it? Kevin Spacey. Kevin Spacey



Things get pretty dark...

the door we'd been standing next to the whole time. Also, we got stuck in the geometry once while under attack from a sniper... and so on.

The story conclusion didn't particularly feel fulfilling. Kevin Spacey's performance was good, but we didn't grow attached to any of the characters, or give a damn about who survived.

### Enhanced warfare

AW's multiplayer is much better than *Ghosts'*, too. The weapons are more fun to handle, the maps more colourful, interesting and better designed, and the progression system far superior.

The Exo suits, with their jet-assisted double jump, are useful for getting to the high ground in a hurry, and

occasionally for getting out of fire through a high jump. They do make for fun cat-and-mouse chases. They also have special abilities, such as cloaking and hovering. These are unlocked along with special grenades and weapon attachments as you earn experience and ranks – as usual.

New equipment, however, is now also unlocked in 'supply drops' acquired during matches. Like a *Team Fortress 2* crate, these gift you surprise new guns and gear.

We like that we can customise the look of our soldier. More importantly, there are now weapon variants to collect, so while there are only six assault rifles, for instance, there are multiple versions of each. The guns have plenty of

variety on offer, though some feel superfluous.

A big complaint about all the guns is that, while getting used to their stats and bullet spread is interesting, their animations are dull and simple, and there aren't many moving parts. They do have distinct personalities, it's just hard to see it.

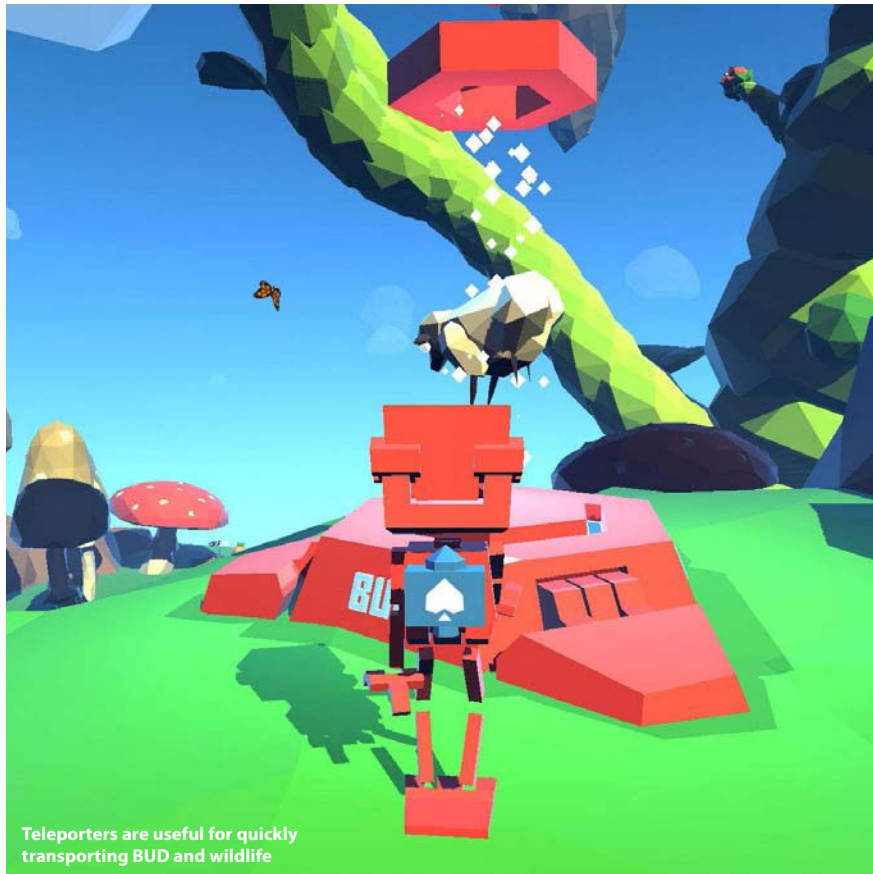
*Warfare* still doesn't rank particularly highly for us, especially when compared to other multiplayer shooters. *Rising Storm* has fidelity, and generates the best stories, *CS:GO* offers tension and nuanced tactics, *Titanfall* is great casual fun, and *Team Fortress 2* has the best community. *CoD* remains a churning sea of adolescent sharks for whom new players are chum. The first several

hours of learning are frustrating, so thank goodness for the new Combat Readiness Program, which is a silly but sweet way to learn anonymously with other beginners while you learn the ropes.

Even though there's nothing particularly new or challenging here, the fun comes with the familiarity of what you already know. ■

**Predictable and fun, but still has some of the familiar shortcomings.**

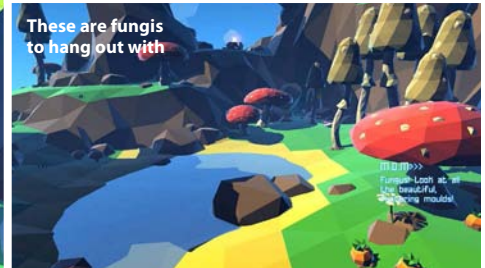




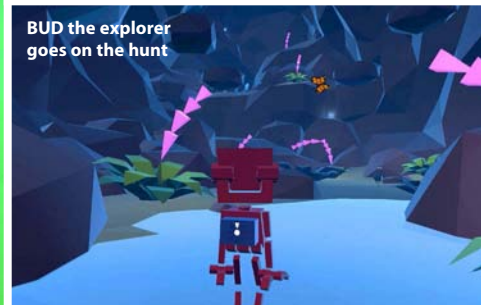
Teleporters are useful for quickly transporting BUD and wildlife



Autumn leaves make useful parachutes



These are fungi to hang out with



BUD the explorer goes on the hunt

# Grow Home

A small game with big dreams

**Price** £6 | \$8  
**Developer** Ubisoft Reflections  
**Publisher** Ubisoft  
**Multiplayer** None **DRM** Steam  
**Web** [www.ubisoft.com/en-GB/game/grow-home](http://www.ubisoft.com/en-GB/game/grow-home)



You're a red robot called BUD, on a low-poly planet with low-poly flora, fauna and floating islands. Your task, as explained by MOM – a ship's computer that watches over BUD while cracking jokes – is to encourage a giant star plant to grow until it flowers and produces seeds to take back home. Got it?

To make the star plant grow, BUD has to climb it until he finds a smaller offshoot, which he then rides on as it reaches for a floating glowing energy rock. You aim these shoots but they also have a mind of their own and struggle against your direction. And finally, when

the shoot is plugged in and starts taking up the energy the main plant needs, it pulses a few times.

It's very easy to get incredibly involved in the fiction in this game, as well as get busy planning what connections to make for the most economical climb. You'll find yourself winding shoots in all directions, around each other, doubling back to sprout an offshoot from an offshoot, and when you look down through the polygonal clouds you'll see a beautiful tangled maze of your own creation.

**Exploration time**  
 It should only take a couple of hours to make the star

plant flower, but *Grow Home* has a great pace. Shortly after BUD lands, you're taught the grab mechanic that's used for almost every action in the game, including climbing, and directed to use it to retrieve a gem. Collecting these gems unlocks abilities, the second of which is the ability to zoom out the camera and should become available around when the world starts to open up.

These gems also encourage the more horizontal exploration that supplements your vertical climb. After every few energy rocks your star plant will break through a kind of landmark, perhaps a floating

island with a prominent waterfall. We were generally glad of the opportunity to take a break for some more traditional platforming.

You control BUD's hands separately, one for each bumper/trigger (you'll want to use a gamepad, trust us), and when climbing his body dangles between them. BUD might not feel the strain, but after only a couple of hours my wrists did, especially since the same grab mechanic is also used to collect gems, to gather the flowers and leaves BUD can use as parachutes, and to torment wildlife.

But even if your wrists are throbbing, you'll be glad of the extra mission that gives you the excuse to go explore more. Thanks, MOM. ■

**A unique and charming game, worth the few quid and few hours it needs.**

Windows  
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Verdict



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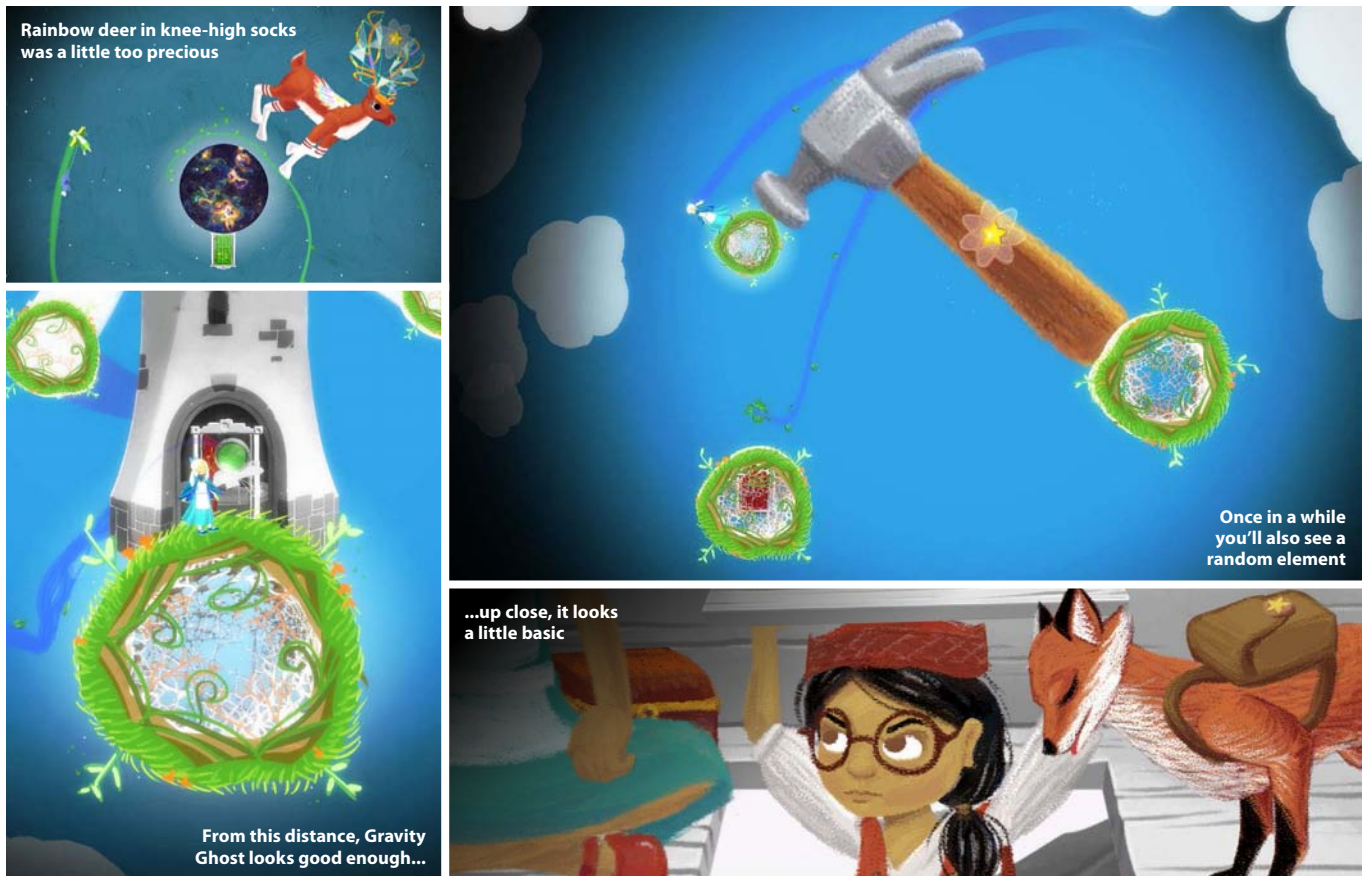
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# Gravity Ghost

A pretty 2D platformer, with pretty fine gameplay

**Price** £11 | \$15  
**Developer** Ivy Games LLC  
**Publisher** In-house  
**Multiplayer** None **DRM** Steam **Web** [www.gravityghost.com](http://www.gravityghost.com)  
**Reviewed on** AMD Quad Core 3.3GHz, 16GBRAM, GeForce GTX 660 Ti

 **Gravity Ghost starts out simple enough. You jump from planet to planet, using the gravity to launch into 2D orbits so you're within reach of the star you need to collect in every level. We've seen this kind of thing before, but Gravity Ghost does it better and without shotguns. And it even finds time to explore more complicated puzzles and an unconventional story.**

A lot of what makes this game work is its pacing, which will keep you playing through in one sitting. You choose levels from a map divided into hubs, or constellations, which are unlocked by collecting more stars. Each constellation adds a new element – water,

fire, etc – so you can transform planets, and a movement ability makes jumping between them easier and more fun. You can gain the ability to jump mid-air, hover mid-air, and descend more quickly as if cannonballing into a pool.

However, there's more to *Gravity Ghost* than flinging yourself around planets, you can also turn solid planets into water planets and then swim through them. And don't worry about the puzzles that require you to slow down and think about transforming planets. It will put you into the level you need to gather enough momentum to smash through glass planets, or one where you can chase down a

spirit animal that mirrors your movements. There's plenty going on here.

The only notable issue is that there's something confusing about controlling a character whose up and down are constantly shifting. We got used to it after a while, but we continued to mess up jumps until the very end.

## A puzzling time

Instead of the standard boss fight, each constellation ends with a unique, more elaborate puzzle, such as the one that required us to rotate around a planet to move different coloured shadows of a fox until they overlapped and created purple and orange foxes.

At this point you've probably noticed *Gravity Ghost* has some cute animals in it. There's also a frog, a deer, and a bird that leaves a trail of pretty flowers. But even though, there's something about *Gravity Ghost's* particular aesthetic that's twee, it actually gets pretty dark towards the end, where it reveals how all these animals and repeated symbols fit together, and it's a powerful and melancholy moment.

For all the love that we could see was put into it, *Gravity Ghost's* story ultimately feels slightly stilted. But still we loved its ambition, and it's otherwise a novel, excellently paced, and consistently clever puzzle-platformer. ■

Hits the notes of bigger platformers on a smaller (and sweeter) scale.



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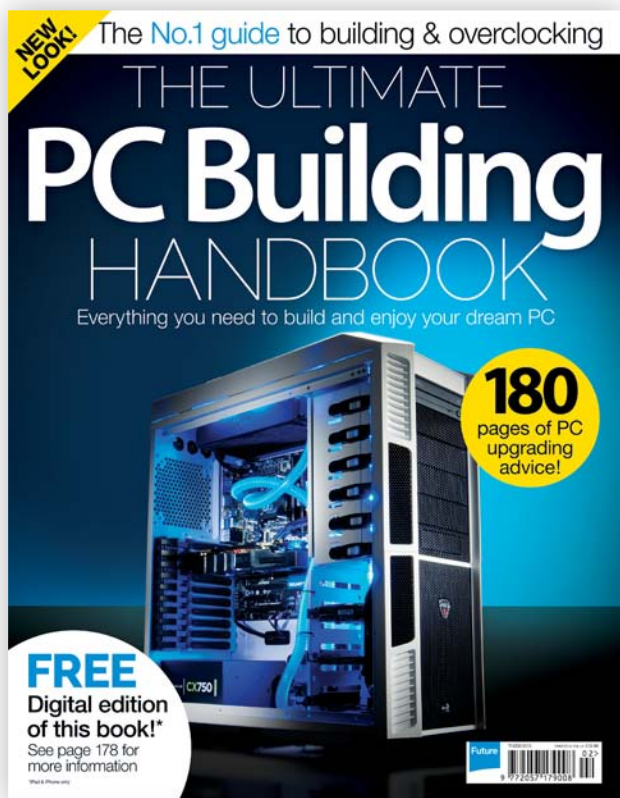
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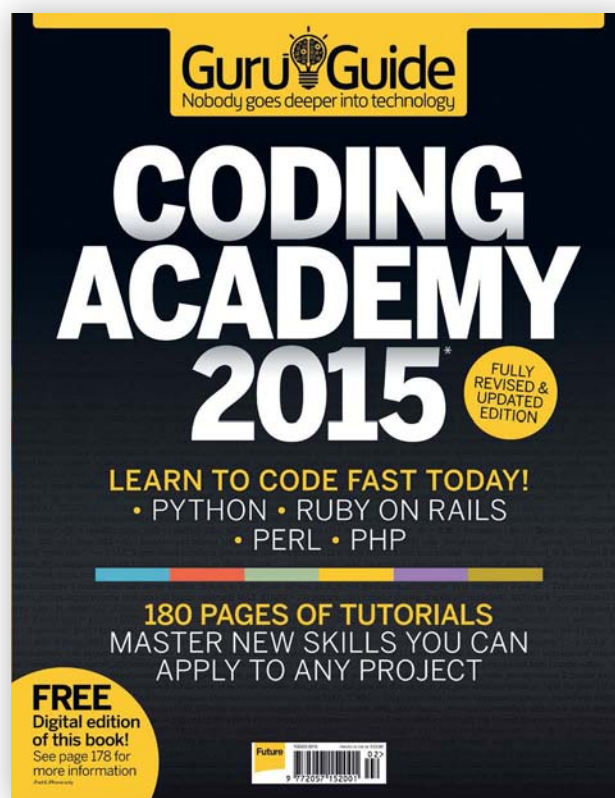
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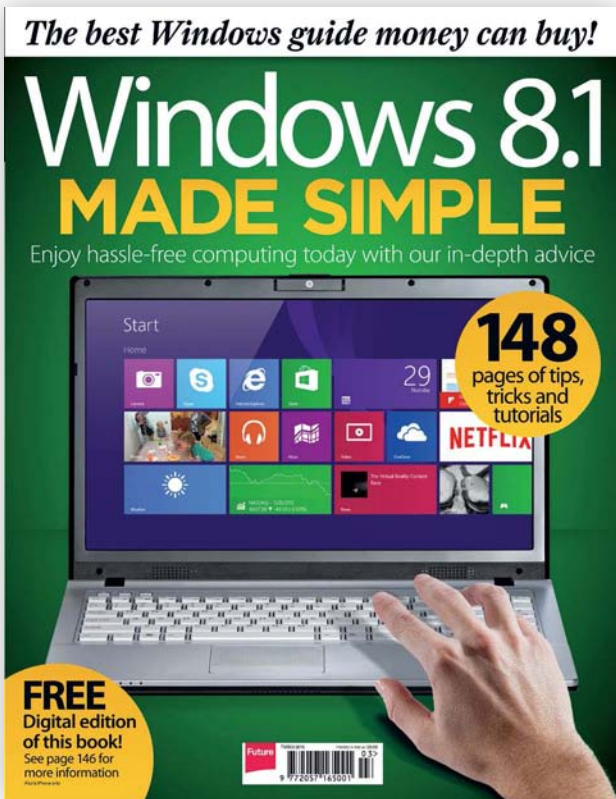


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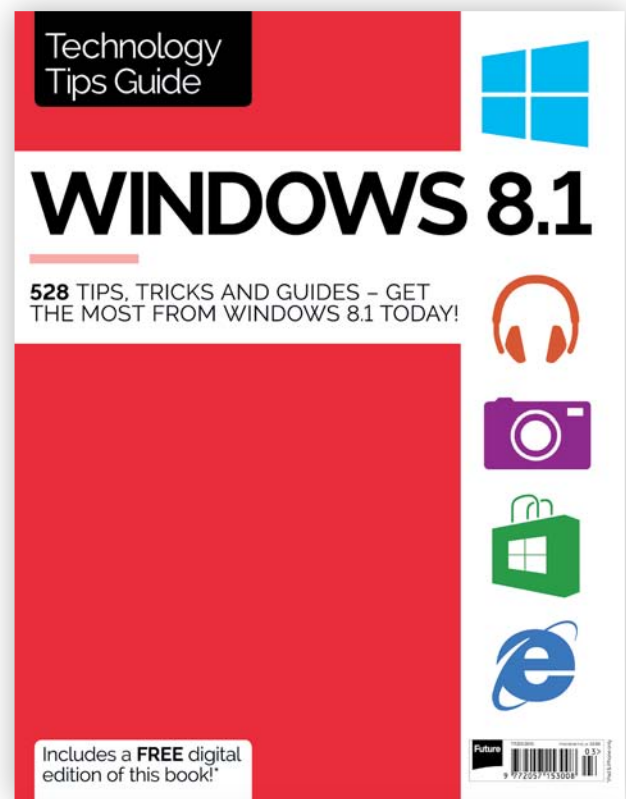
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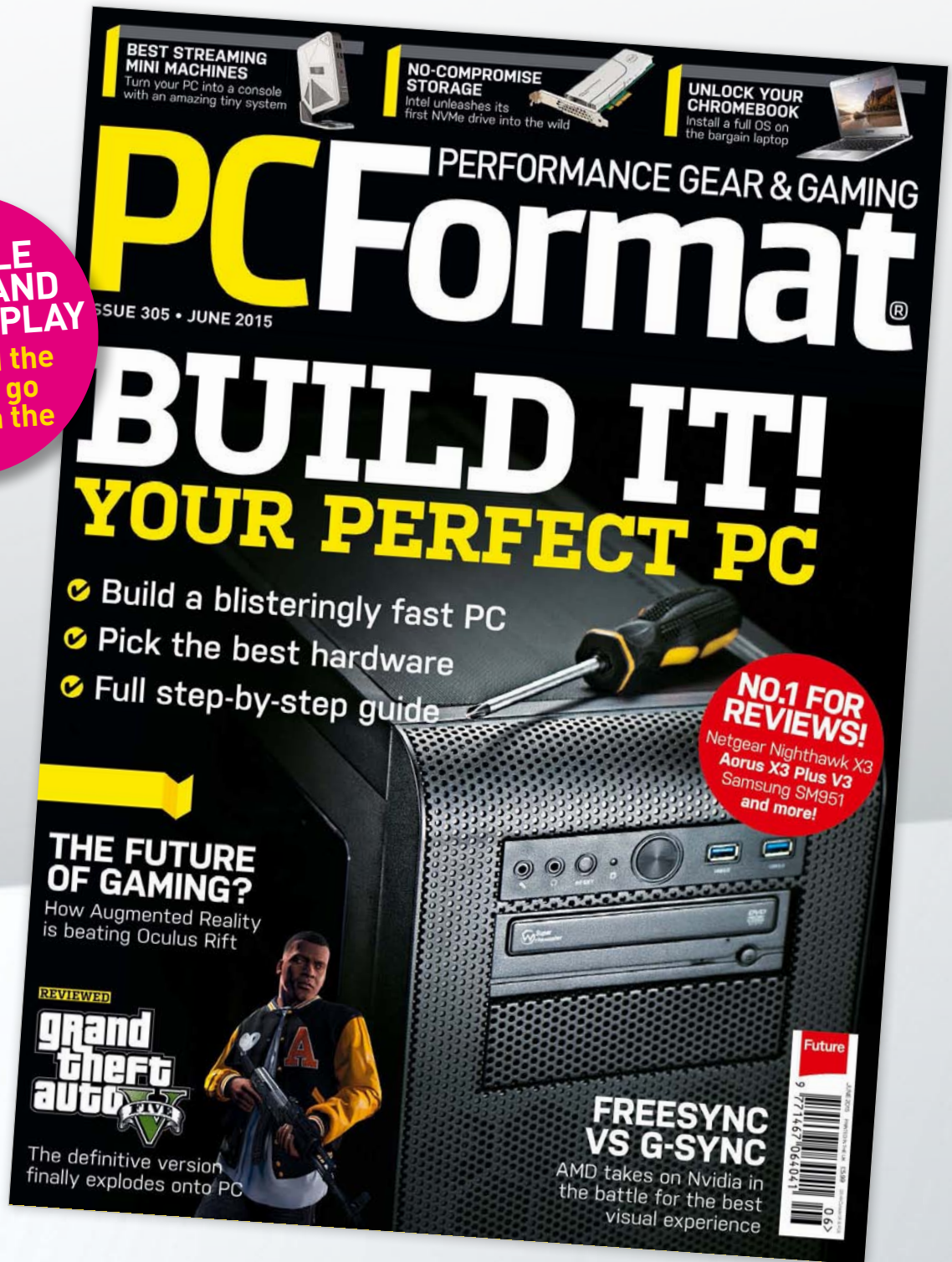


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