



q & a

Question time

Our new Q & A section is here to answer those **niggling quandaries**, as well as tackle the big issues.

Windows

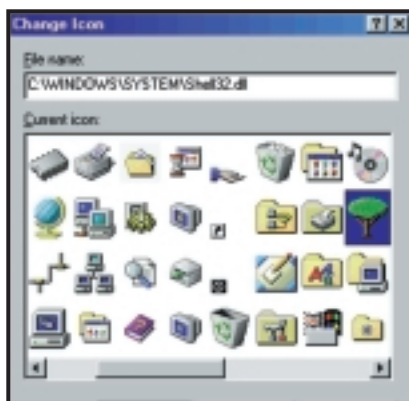
Q I have some .fon fonts that I want to use on my website (as images, not text). However, all the editors I use will only see .ttf fonts. What's the difference between them and how can I get at the .fon fonts?

Peter Inkey via email



Using system fonts in Paint

A TTF (TrueType Fonts) are scalable outline fonts that can be used on screen or printed at any size. FON fonts are bitmapped fonts used by the Windows system (eg the MS Sans Serif used as the default icon title font). These don't scale – they have to include a set of glyphs for each intended size – and when enlarged give a blocky effect. This may be just what you're after, and the good news is that you can access these fonts in Windows Paint.



Tracking down icon numbers

Q A strange thing has happened to the icon for my E: drive, for some reason it has changed from a standard hard-disk symbol to the Windows-flag-on-a-paper sign.

Rupert Gayne via email

A The most likely cause of this is that a file named autorun.inf has been placed in the root of the drive. These files are used by CD-ROMs to store the path to the icon and the path to the default Autorun program, but they also work on hard disks. Delete the file, or if you feel like being creative, open it in Notepad and change its contents so that it reads:

```
[Autorun]
icon=C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM\shell32.dll,41
```

(Key: ✓ code string continues)

This will give you a tree symbol: you can explore other likely sources by experimenting with any shortcut 'Change Icon' dialog, the icons are numbered from 0, down then across. Alternatively use the Icon Snatcher utility mentioned last month.

Q What are .gid files? McAfee PowerClean tells me they are temporary files that can be deleted, so why are they marked with the Hidden attribute?

Theresa Dunnett via email

A They are indexes to Help files that get built the first time the latter are accessed. You can indeed delete them, but it's a fairly pointless exercise as they will get recreated the next time you open the help file. If it's a big help file, you'll probably have to sit through a 'Preparing help file for first-time use...' message, as well.

Q I've just installed a second hard disk, which has bumped my CD-ROM drive down to E. Consequently, whenever Windows needs to get a file from the CD, it doesn't know where to look. Is there any way I can swap the

letters back, or point Windows in the right direction?

Chris Parker via email

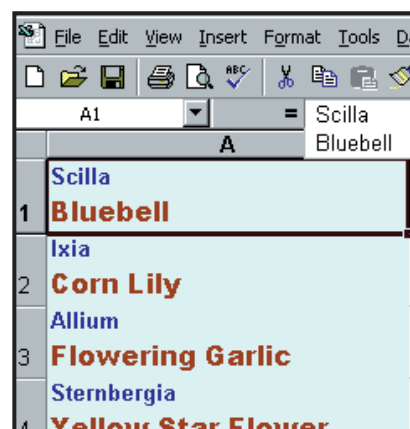
A I'm afraid it's no to the first question, but yes to the second. You need to run Regedit and go to: HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Setup.

Look for a value in the right-hand pane entitled SourcePath and double-click on it. You'll then be able to change the existing value (D:\win98\...) to the new (E:\win98\...). With the wisdom of hindsight, it's a good idea to leave space for expansion with a new system before you install any applications. In Device Manager, go to the Settings tab on the CD-ROM drive properties. Set the start and end reserve drive letters to a letter further down the alphabet. Redirect the SourcePath as above, then all subsequent installations will be safe from change.

Spreadsheets

Q How can I mix formats in an Excel cell?

Baxter Grant, via email



Mixing formats is easy when you know how

A It's easiest to do this in the Formula Bar. Position the insertion point where you want a line break and press Alt & Enter. Highlight the

first line and format it in the normal way. Repeat with the second line. To select the correct row height, double-click on the line between two row letters.

Q How can I paste data into a group of Excel worksheets?

Derek Clowes via email

A The Clipboard is not available when Excel sheets are grouped, but the Fill facility can be used instead. Click the tab of the sheet containing the data to be copied. Then hold down Ctrl and click the tabs of the sheets to be grouped. Select the data. Choose Edit, Fill, Across Worksheets, OK. Then right-click on any of the grouped tabs and choose Ungroup Sheets.

Q How can I quickly jump to a specific cell on the last sheet in my Excel workbook?

Ian Clarkson via email

A Click on the cell and choose Insert, Name, Define. Give it a Name and click Add, then OK. On any other sheet, you can now click the down arrow in the Name box (that can be found at the left end of the Formula Bar) and choose that Name.

Q How can I transfer an Excel Custom List from one workbook to another?

Julie Williams, Middlewich

A On the same machine, there's no need to do this. The list is stored in the registry and is available whenever you open Excel. On another machine, you need to go to the Tools menu and choose Options, Custom Lists. Click the 'Import list from cells:' arrow and highlight the list on a floppy disk file or via a network connection.

Word processing

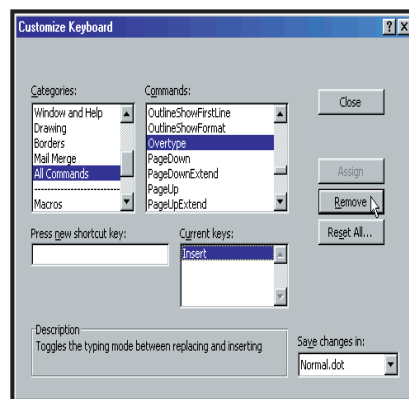
Q I'm sure that when I have used Word previously, it included a File Menu option to Close All Files, but leave Word running. This seems to have mysteriously vanished on my Word 97 system.

Diane Brandley via email

A If you hold down the Shift key as you open the File menu, you'll see that it mysteriously reappears. You can also add it to the standard menu if you go into Tools, Customise.

Q I hope you can help me with an annoying Word 97 problem that occurs often and unexpectedly: as I type, the program suddenly goes into overtyping mode, and begins deleting existing text as I edit. I then have to open Tools, Options, Edit and remove the check from the overtyping box.

Paul Guglielmetti via email



Disabling the Overtyping toggle key

A It sounds as if you are hitting the Insert key by accident, which toggles Overtyping on and off. It's possible to disable this from Tools, Customise, Keyboard. Choose All Commands on the left, and Overtyping on the right – you can then remove the keyboard assignment.

Q I have a picture with a plain white background and I would like to insert this into Word 97. The effect I am trying to create is to get the text to wrap around the outlines of the picture itself. Despite a great deal of fiddling with the Format Picture options, I can only get the text to wrap around the rectangular background.

Colin Wiley via email

A The easiest way to accomplish this is to use an image-editing program, such as Paint Shop Pro or Photoshop. Set the white background as the transparency colour and save the picture as a .gif file. You'll then find the Tight Wrapping Style option does what you want.

Hardware

Q I'm considering buying an Iomega Zip 250, but would like to use the drive between three machines. The first has a parallel port, no SCSI and no USB. The second has parallel, SCSI, but no USB. The third is a relatively new PII 400 that has parallel and USB but no SCSI.

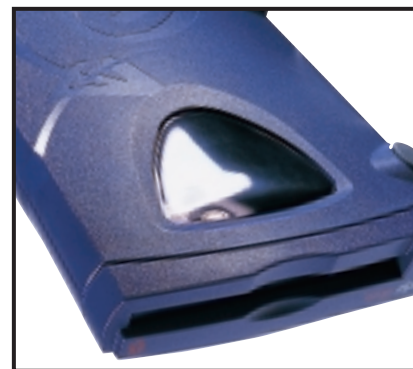
I am under the impression that the USB zip is substantially faster than the parallel zip. I have seen parallel-port-to-USB-port converters, but nowhere have I seen speed comparisons of native USB zip versus parallel-converted-to-USB zip – do you have any idea how they compare?

Also, will the forthcoming USB2, running at 480Mbps/sec, be backwards compatible with USB1?

Steve Wood via email

A A native USB device will run considerably faster than one connected to a parallel port. Even if you use a parallel-to-USB adaptor, you'll still be limiting your USB device to the much slower parallel port. For the ultimate in compatibility and performance, I'd recommend you buy a USB zip drive, and fit USB ports to your non-USB PCs, using a PCI card costing around £30 from Entegra. If you can't or don't want to fit this card, it would still be best to get the faster USB drive and use parallel converters for your non-USB systems. Their parallel ports will limit its performance, but at least it'll be quick on your USB PC and any future systems.

The USB forum says that USB2 peripherals will work on USB1 ports, although at the lower USB1 speed of 12Mbps/sec. USB1 peripherals are also said to work on a USB2 chain, although again at the lower speed of 12Mbps/sec. The forum also says mixing USB1 and USB2 peripherals on a USB2 chain won't



A USB Zip 250 is a safe bet



compromise performance of the faster devices, although we'll wait and see when USB2 arrives later this year.

Q PCW recently mentioned that Celeron PPGA 366 processors can be run with Front-Side Bus (FSB) speeds of 100MHz – to achieve an over-clocked 550MHz processor speed. I have just upgraded one PC to a Celeron PPGA 433MHz processor and another to 400MHz, does the same principle apply?

Lewis Delgado via email

A The theory works, but unfortunately the practice probably won't. The Celeron 400 and 433 processors use fixed clock multipliers of six and 6.5 times their intended FSB of 66MHz. Upping the FSB to 100MHz would therefore overclock them to 600 and 650MHz respectively, both of which are sadly beyond the capabilities of the process used to create them.

If your motherboard supports intermediate FSB settings between 66 and 100MHz, you may wish to experiment, but remember these may be running the very picky PCI and AGP buses at non-standard speeds. Bear in mind that you'll also need memory rated at 100MHz.



Celeron 433s can't really be over-clocked

Databases

Q I have an Access database that now holds over 150 phone numbers and addresses. Is it possible to design some sort of search form or program that will find the first few characters of the surname, telephone number or address?

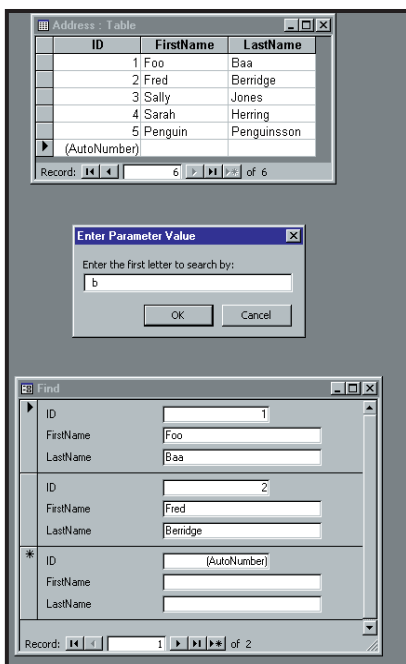
For example, if I type jac I get the results: jackie, jackson, jackson.

Matthew Andrew via email

A One way is to create a parameter query that uses:

Like [Provide the first few characters:] & "*"

This query works as desired. You can then create a form based on the query. When you open the form, the dialog will ask for the characters and then provide the matching records in the form.



Parameter queries in Access

Unix

Q I've recently got my new system up and running, and have added such essentials as an Internet-connected modem, sound and a printer. Using Linux has saved me money – not just on the price of the operating system, but also because I don't need the very latest processor and a ton of memory to run the software.

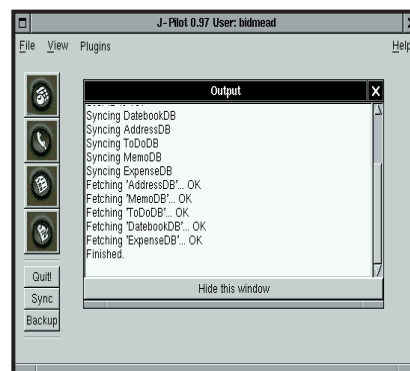
In honour of this I'd like to 'reward' my machine by buying it something extra. I thought of a Zip drive, a writable CD drive, an LCD monitor or a Palm Pilot (I hear there's software available to connect this to a Linux system). What would you recommend?

Bobby Smith via email

A We'd recommend none of the above. Of course, they'd all be nice, and when you do get around to it there is a very tasty software package, J-Pilot, to connect a Palm Pilot to Linux. Written by Judd Montgomery (judd@engineer.com) you can

download J-Pilot free from the website at: <http://jpilot.linuxbox.com>.

But from your description something that we'd judge to be essential is missing. You don't have any form of backup.



J-Pilot can connect a Palm Pilot to Linux

By the way, that Zip drive isn't backup, and neither is the CD-RW, despite what the adverts may tell you. You need tape, because you require:

- a) Capacity that matches or exceeds your hard-disk drive
- b) A per-gigabyte price that makes it a no-brainer to back up all the time.

Sure, tape backup is boring. You could spend £400 on a DAT drive and have absolutely nothing to impress your friends with. But if you decided to be first on your block with that LCD screen instead, you might also sooner or later end up with irretrievably lost data files and/or crocked system executables. In the end, it's your choice.

PDA's

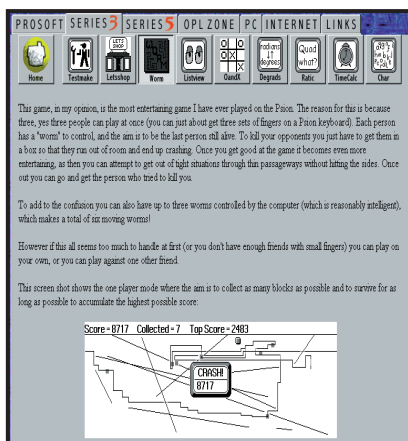
Q We are a family that has recently bought a second-hand Series 3 computer. We want to know if it is possible to get a game we can all play on the machine at the same time.

The Johnson family via email

A At first we thought you were completely mad, as the Psion Series 3 is a Personal Digital Assistant; with the emphasis on personal. As such it has just one keyboard, so how can you possibly expect to find a multi-player game for it?

But when we trawled the web before replying, we actually found a multi-user game for the Series 3 at www.prosoft.force9.co.uk/series3/worm.html.

Apparently up to three people can each use part of the keyboard to drive



Worms: Fun for all the family

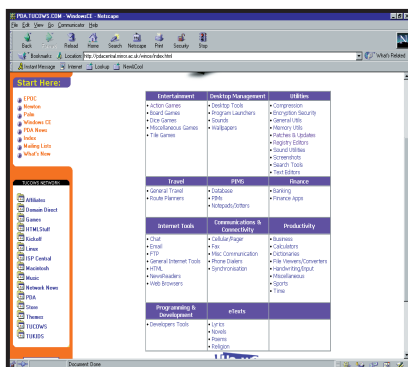
their worm around the screen. We've checked and there are four members in the Johnson household, but they are happy to take turns keeping the score.

Q You gave the address of a good site for PDA stuff a while ago as <http://hensa.pdacentral.com>. This seems to have disappeared.

Brian Ellison via email

A You're right, the site has vanished. Our memory of this site is that it is academic-based, so on the off chance we tried www.hensa.ac.uk and that redirects to www.mirror.ac.uk and ultimately to <http://pdacentral.mirror.ac.uk>.

There, in all its glory is the site, now revamped with even more goodies.



PDA Central is back!

Windows 2000

Q I'm perplexed by an apparent contradiction between comments by Gordon Laing and Terence Green on the subject of symmetric multiprocessor (SMP) support in Windows 2000.

Gordon Laing says it is necessary to have applications which recognise the dual processors like Photoshop. But Terence Green says that 'simply moving an application from Windows 98 to a W2K dual-CPU system has a dramatic performance effect. No changes to the application are required...' Who is telling the truth?

Steve Holmes via email

A Windows 2000 multiprocessing is symmetric, which means that work is allocated by the operating system to whichever processor is available at the time. When Windows 2000 schedules (allocates resources to applications and the operating system) it does so in units of work called threads. With the exception of part of the operating system kernel – which always runs on the first CPU – Windows 2000 schedules threads on the next available processor.



The wonders of multi-processor systems

Windows 2000 itself is multi-threaded and most Windows NT applications have at least a few threads. High-end graphics and engineering fields typically have multi-threaded components, especially if they have been written to run on Windows NT or Windows 2000.

It's very dependent on the specific workload at any point in time, but a higher degree of multi-threading enables Windows 2000 to distribute work more efficiently among the available processing resources.

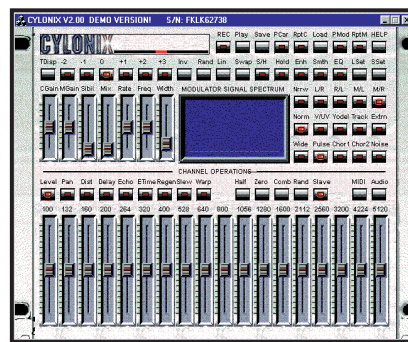
Audio

Q I am interested in being able to record relatively small samples of voice (up to say 30 seconds) and then impose special effects over the top to develop alternative character in the voice.

Please could you let me know if you're aware of a suitable package that is capable of doing this.

Jon Gregory via email

A For robotic-type voices you could try a piece of shareware software called Cylonix, that produces a vocoder effect similar to the sound of the Cylons in *Battlestar Galactica*. It



Cylonix allows you to sound like a Cylon

works in real-time and a demo version is available from the website at: www.cim.mcgill.ca/~clark/cylonix.html. However, it will cost you around £32 to register the software to save the output.

An alternative offering is Voice FX, which can be found at www.synoptic.net. This includes a whole range of sound effects, such as reverb, vocoder, alien and flanger. It costs around £43, but will give you a broader palette of sounds.

Q A while ago you mentioned a small program that allows you to use VST plug-ins in audio editors that only support DirectX plug-ins. Can you tell me what it was as I can't find the name of it anywhere.

James Clarke via email

A The program is called Amulet, it costs £18.80, and is now located at www.fxansion.com.

However, an alternative product has been released by Spinaudio. It's called VST DX Wrapper, is completely free, and is available as a download from: www.spinaudio.com/products.html.

CONTACTS

All of our experts welcome your queries, simply respond to the appropriate address at the end of their Hands On columns.