



WINDOWS 10
THE MOST COMMON
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THE BEST SUITES
GO HEAD TO HEAD



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SET UP WI-FI TO USE YOUR
PRINTER IN EVERY ROOM



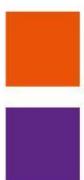
Windows Help & Advice

LEARN HOW TO...

- ⚙️ Customise your desktop
- ⚙️ Make flawless backups
- ⚙️ Use your digital assistant



57
PAGES OF
STEP-BY-STEP
WINDOWS
GUIDES!



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YOUR HOME
CONNECT TO
ANY PC IN
A FLASH –
IT'S EASY!

RECOVER
DELETED FILES
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LOST – GET
THAT DATA
BACK NOW!



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Windows Help & Advice

Welcome

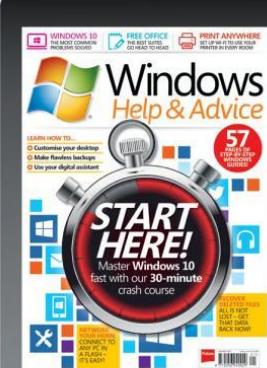
Windows has come a long way. You might look at our cover and think we're going over the top; can you really get started with Windows 10 in half an hour? Admittedly, you might have to concentrate – dawdling is not going to help your speed – but it really is possible to get your head around a Windows 10 system in just 30 minutes. See page 14 to find out how.

That half an hour includes the time it takes to get it customised, and even protect yourself with

proper backups. Of course, just as you think you're settled, you'll hit a wall. We all do. Something always goes wrong. But our commitment to you having an easy computing life goes even further with the likes of our regular Support section (page 74), our dedicated troubleshooting guides in Explore (page 33) and our huge Windows 10 DIY support manual over on page 64.

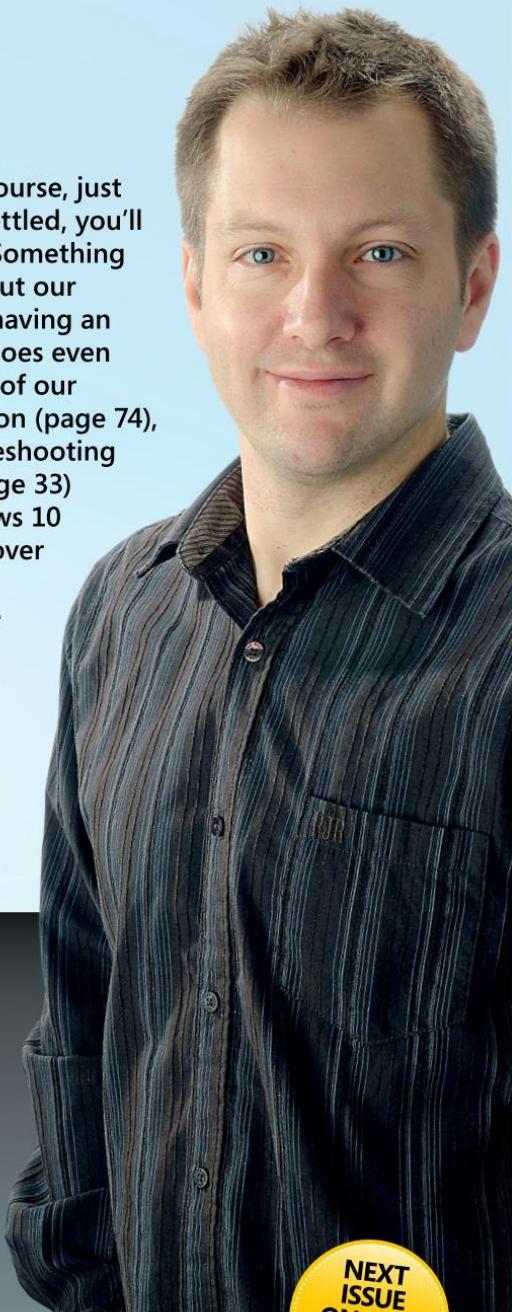
Enjoy the issue – see you on 6 January!

Graham Barlow Editor-in-Chief
www.facebook.com/windowsmag



SUBSCRIBE TO THE MAG TODAY
AND SAVE – JUST TURN TO PAGE 30!

We pride ourselves in being the only magazine on the shelves to show you exactly how to get the very best from the Windows operating system, whether you're using Windows 10 or Windows 8.1. Also, don't forget to take a look at how you can read the magazine on your laptop, phone or tablet.



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Windows Help & Advice

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The best PC tutorials



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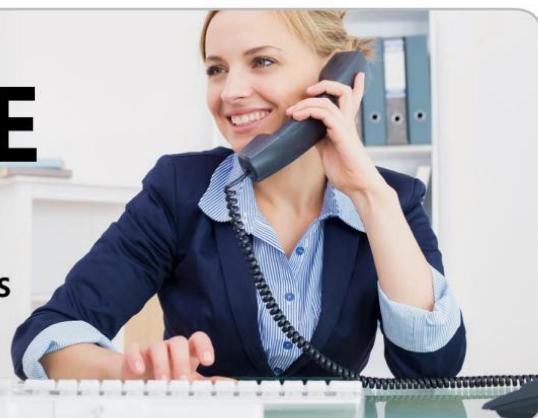
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OFFICE WARS

95 Free office apps go head to head



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PAINT IT BRIGHT

There's now every opportunity to be as creative on your PC as well as off...

Creators Update

Windows 10 gets even more creative

Next major update brings brand-new artistic tools

This is news that we hinted at it last issue, and it's now official: Microsoft held a huge New York press event to announce that the next major version of Windows 10 will be unleashed next spring, and it will be called the Creators Update.

As the name suggests, the next revision is all about the desktop OS getting creative, pushing forward with 3D content creation, making progress with augmented reality and virtual reality, plus enhancing 'connected mixed reality experiences', as Microsoft put it.

Microsoft's own 'experience design' expert Taj Reid showed off a demo with the company's HoloLens headset, showing him browsing in Edge, and taking an object – in this case, a humble stool – and pulling it out from the online shop, to place it in the real-world room to see how it looks next to a table – a feature that should make online shopping decisions a whole lot easier, as you can 'virtually' see what you're buying.

"Engage in a 'holotour' wandering about some old Roman buildings"

Reid also demonstrated a VR headset running Windows 10, enabling him to watch a football match on a giant screen right up close, or engage in a 'holotour' in which he wandered about among some old Roman buildings. A number of partners will be teaming up with Microsoft to produce VR headsets starting at around £245.

While support for new hardware tech is progressing, Microsoft hasn't forgotten more traditional PC users. Revamped creation studio Paint 3D is part of the new update, aiming to be a super-approachable 3D art studio. You can use it, for example, to

grab a photo with your phone camera and pull out an object from it, capturing it in 3D and then sharing it directly.

The Creators Update also introduces game broadcasting built directly into Windows 10. This is very easy to use, as it's essentially a one-click-to-broadcast affair. Windows Insiders already have their hands on early preview builds of the Creators Update, and we'll bring you a full hands-on guide soon.

FINLAND SIMULATOR Build a car, drink beer

My Summer Car (Steam, £10.99) is possibly the oddest and most amusing indie game we've seen for a long time. It sees you building a Datsun from scratch, all while dealing with bodily functions, working menial jobs to earn money for new mail order parts, and quaffing a vast amount of beer. Oh, and trying not to injure yourself while driving to the shop. It's not a traditional game, it's adult-flavoured, it's not easy, and it's very Finnish. Not to be missed.



TO-DO LIST ...And in its initial state, that's not looking very likely.



WELL STOCKED A boot full of beer is only good if you can get your car running...



DIRTY WORK Need cash? Rural Finland has a lot of septic tanks that need emptying.

The Knowledge...



Google Daydream View

What is it?

Have a look at the picture above – what does it look like?

A soft VR headset?

Bang on. It's a squishy VR headset. It's Google's textured new take on the hardware flavour of the moment. But this one's a bit different, because – beyond lenses – it doesn't actually have any internal guts of its own.

That sounds silly.

Don't worry, you're not expected to just imagine your VR experience. Instead, you slot a phone into the Daydream – à la Samsung's Gear VR headset or even Google's own super-cheap Cardboard DIY VR setup – and that deals with the business of filling your eyes with three dimensions of fun.

What can I do with it?

Pop in a compatible phone, slip on the super-light foam-and-fabric headset and you can explore any of the existing Android VR experiences, which range from simple games to VR videos to the likes of Google Maps in 3D. Or maybe grab hold of the included Bluetooth controller and enjoy some of the exclusive Daydream apps, over 50 of which are due by the end of 2016.

Controller?

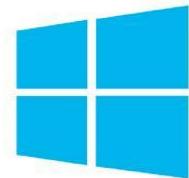
Ah, yes. The Daydream View includes a simple one-hand controller that, despite a few limitations, helps you explore 3D space very effectively. There's a dish-shaped clickable trackpad, a menu button, a home button to recentre the headset, and angular tracking that makes it a useful in-app laser pointer.

What's the damage?

Providing you already have a phone that supports it – currently this is just Google's own Pixel handset, but the list will grow pretty quickly – Daydream View is yours for a mere £69. But if you don't need the extra hardware, a Cardboard is only a few pounds...

GET EVEN MORE FROM WINDOWS 10

Technology
Tips Guide



WINDOWS 10 VOLUME 2

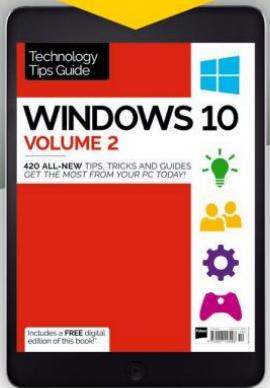
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Future



New tech

Surface hits the desktop

Microsoft loads its brushes with a brand new all-in-one PC

Microsoft is all about setting standards. It's done it for 2-in-1 laptops with the Surface Pro 4, and now it's ready to set the bar for all-in-one PCs with the Surface Studio, a 28-inch all-in-one PC with an all-new way to control the device: the Surface Dial.

It won't be cheap; the initial run will retail for a whopping \$2,999 (around £2,450, although UK pricing is still to be confirmed). How does the Surface Studio justify that price tag? By being a very strong contender for the title of 'Best All-in-One PC of All Time', that's how. For the price you'll get an adjustable, 28-inch 4500x3000 pixel display, a 6th-generation Intel Core i5 processor, 8GB of RAM and a 2GB Nvidia GeForce GTX 965M GPU, and there's an option to up the hardware specs if you're willing to creep towards a £3,340 top-end price.

The Surface Studio has proved so exciting that it's already sold out until 'early 2017'. Revealing the hardware on stage, Microsoft claimed that, at 12.5mm at its thinnest point, the Surface Studio is the thinnest desktop monitor ever created. The word 'monitor' is key there, as there's actually no hardware

within the screen unit. Microsoft's hardware wizards have instead pushed all of that stuff – the processor, the graphics, the memory and the hard drive – into the tiny base that holds the 'zero-gravity hinge'. This absorbs all of the torque required to move the 13lb display, making it easy to switch between its standard desktop PC orientation and that of a big drawing surface.

Our insiders report that using the device in its 20-degree-angled drawing orientation is wonderful; the components inside allow for a seamless drawing experience that seems as instantaneous as creating physical art.

Its brand-new accessory, the Surface Dial, is a radial control module that

operates over Bluetooth, drawing control options around the device when it's placed anywhere on the screen's surface. Imagine sketching something with your right hand and immediately changing the colour of your input with the Dial in your left hand. It's a marvel to watch, much less try yourself. Perhaps if you're not a digital artist the Surface Studio might not be worth the outlay, but this tech won't take long to reach a reasonable price point in the future.



Visit this...

Musiclab

musiclab.chromexperiments.com

The marvellous collection of tonal trinkets on Musiclab can make musicians of us all, whatever your age. The site is exclusive to the Google Chrome web browser, and was created as part of Music In Our Schools month. It comprises twelve individual tone generators, sound visualisers and beat makers, each of which is simple enough to help anyone start creating pleasing sounds or musical art in just a few seconds.

Brilliantly designed and, in many places, incredibly cute, Musiclab's playthings range from a monster-fronted rhythm generator to a 3D stereoscope that shows you exactly what music – or whatever you happen to croon into your computers microphone – looks like. OK, you're unlikely to end up impressing the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra with your efforts, but you might impress yourself.



MUSICLAB It's now time to unleash your musical talent onto the world. Maybe.

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

Facts & figures

Alex Cox reveals a host of fascinating digital facts



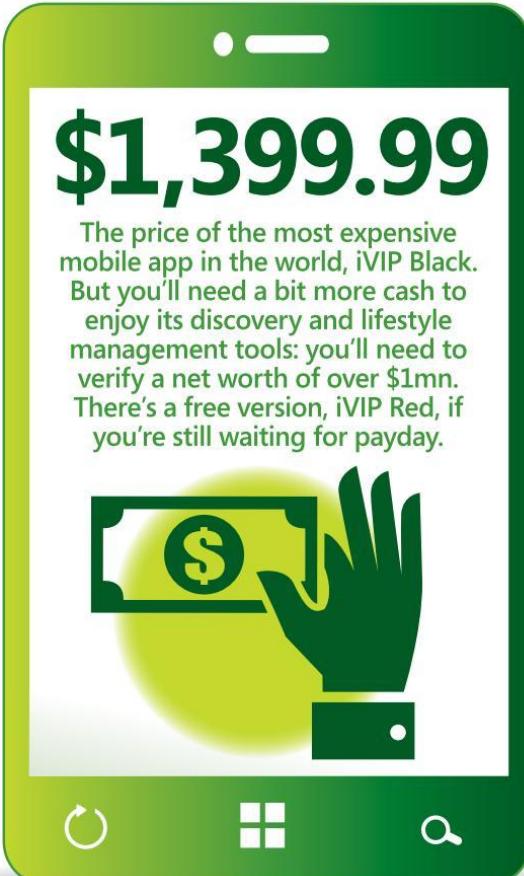
\$ 5.07 MILLION

The total prize of the League Of Legends World Championship, held in October. But it pales in comparison to the pool of the Dota International, which this year topped \$20mn, with over \$9mn going to the winning team. Proof, if it was needed, that eSports are on the rise...



£84M

was lost by Twitter in three months this year, leading to internal job losses and fears the company may never reach its target of becoming profitable by 2017.



\$1,399.99

The price of the most expensive mobile app in the world, iVIP Black. But you'll need a bit more cash to enjoy its discovery and lifestyle management tools: you'll need to verify a net worth of over \$1mn. There's a free version, iVIP Red, if you're still waiting for payday.



£14BN

was taken by Chinese retailer Alibaba during its 2016 Singles Day extravaganza. The takings of the annual sale have been growing steadily since it was launched in 2009, and it's credited with being the main driver behind the popularity of the festival itself.

>> Incoming

The hottest new Windows hardware on the horizon

Cambridge Audio Yoyo

From £150 cambridgeaudio.com

No strangers to classic design or fine audio quality, the boffins at Cambridge Audio's labs return with a collection of wireless speakers celebrating their homeland. Pumping out what the company calls 'British Sound', these are smothered in 'sound-transparent' British fabrics created in partnership with weaver Marton Mills. The fabric itself is coated with nanospheres that ensure water resistance (although we wouldn't dunk these in the bath) and dirt-repelling qualities. The fabric is also heat-treated to ensure it never shrinks or distorts. Cambridge Audio promises three models: the S, a single portable speaker in a compact form; the M, a pair of active speakers; and the L, an all-in-one audio module. They're all equipped with gesture control, so you can cut the music with a wave.



YOUR 30-MINUTE GUIDE TO WINDOWS 10

Whether you're new to Windows 10, upgrading from a previous version or just need a refresher, read on...

There's nothing worse than feeling like technology has run away from you when you weren't looking. If you were to take a glance at Windows 10, having spent any amount of time away from a computer, you might think we were living in the future! But nothing could be further from the truth: it's a comfortable, easy-to-use operating system, which belies its generally dark exterior. You could probably, truth be told, teach yourself how to use Windows 10

with nothing more than a little time and a willingness to explore.

But even if you go into it head-first, there may be something you'll miss, something that's moved, or something that just doesn't seem to be right. And if you're still overwhelmed, you could need a touch more assistance. That's why we've put together this extensive guide to getting started, from finding features to customisation and beyond. If you've been lucky enough to get a new laptop over the holiday season, you're in good hands. Turn the page to start!

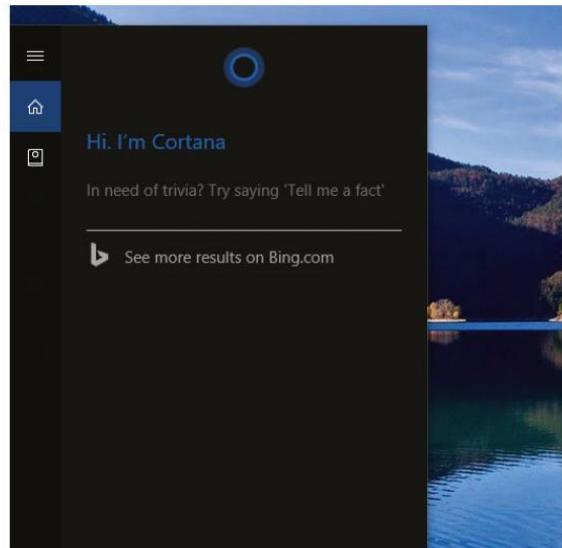
Windows 10

Get started



A guide to the basics

From the return of the Start menu to a brand-new browser, here's a quick tour of what you can find in Windows 10

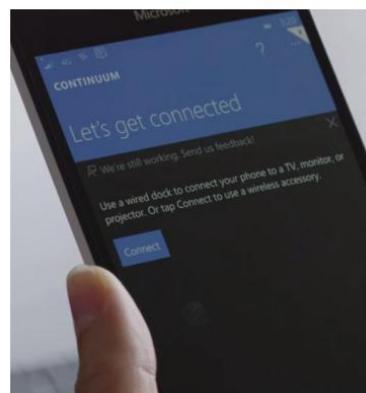
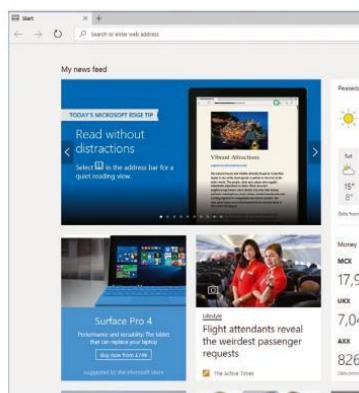
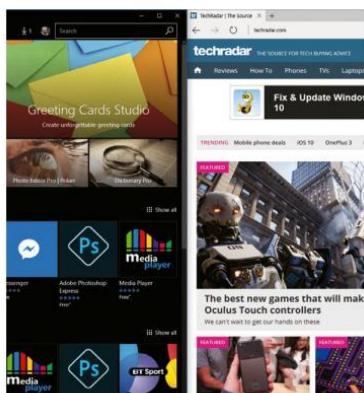


1 Start menu

It's back! Windows 8 introduced a full screen filled with icons and tiles that looked more suited to a tablet rather than the more common desktop or laptop. However, Windows 10 rolls back to something more usable. If you have a tablet, there's a whole Tablet Mode designed just for you.

3 Cortana

Microsoft's digital assistant will search for things on your computer and the internet, add events to your calendar. Cortana is named after a videogame character who blows up a lot of aliens, and while we can't guarantee it'll do the same on your PC (thankfully), it's a handy addition all the same.



3 Snapping

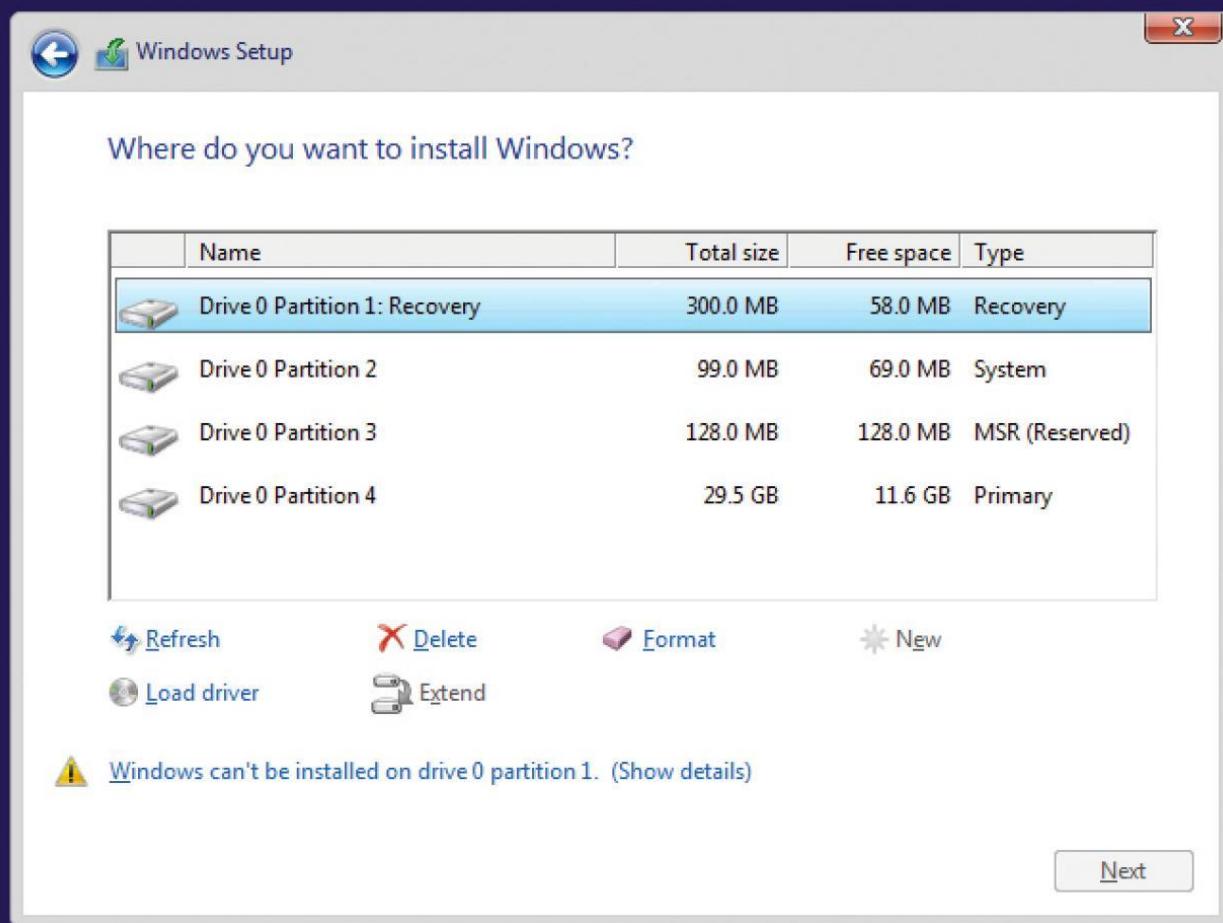
Windows 10 makes application management much easier by expanding on Windows 8's 'snapping' feature. No longer limited to one thin and one fat window, you can arrange four apps across the screen and change their proportions, easily making any one full-screen with a single click when it needs your full attention.

4 Edge

Edge is the new default browser in Windows 10, although Internet Explorer is still available and you can install the third-party browser of your choice. It brings a number of refinements, including a new rendering engine and, after 2016's Anniversary Update, supports extensions so you can customise it to work the way you want.

5 Continuum

If you ever find yourself stuck without a PC, your Windows Phone can come to the rescue. As Universal Windows apps can run on any device, there's nothing to stop you plugging in a monitor through an adapter, and using a Bluetooth mouse and keyboard with your phone to get some proper work done.



Installing and reinstalling

Get the operating system on your PC, and refresh it if it goes wrong

The chances are Windows 10 was pre-installed when you bought a new PC, but if you're building a computer from parts or want to reinstall the operating system after upgrading the startup disk, you'll need to install it from a DVD or downloaded disc image.

If it's a fresh system, you will have to tinker in the motherboard BIOS to make sure it can boot from DVD or USB, so you can start the install process. A disc image is available from the Microsoft website free of charge – you only pay when the time comes to activate

Windows and enter a serial number, once the trial period is up. Downloading the disc image and either burning it onto a DVD or making it into a bootable USB drive needs another computer. If you're building your only PC, then a DVD is the easiest method of getting Windows onto your hard drive – just make sure you have a USB disc drive or are building one into your case.

If you're upgrading from an older PC, then transfer your documents and other files over to the new one. Use an external hard drive, copying all the data you want to keep onto it before decommissioning your old machine, and copying them back into the Documents folder once the new machine is working. Make it easier by keeping your Documents folder

inside a cloud storage system, such as OneDrive or Dropbox, so the files sync to the new PC when you log into your account.

If you want to move your entire PC to new hardware, with documents and settings intact, you can use Windows' built-in backup system, restoring from the most recent backup. Again, you need an external drive capable of holding everything that's on your PC's internal drive, and make sure the internal drive of the new PC is large enough to hold everything too – a consideration in these days of small-capacity SSDs.

"Ideally, your data will live on a physically separate drive from Windows itself"

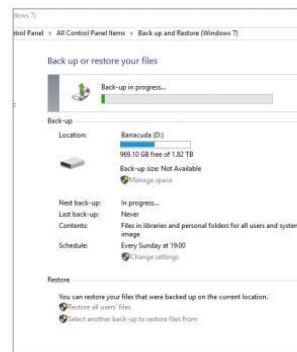
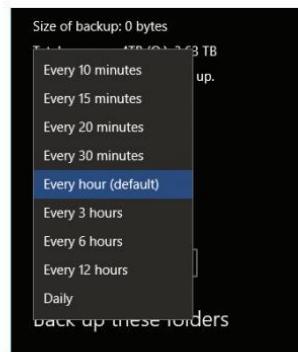
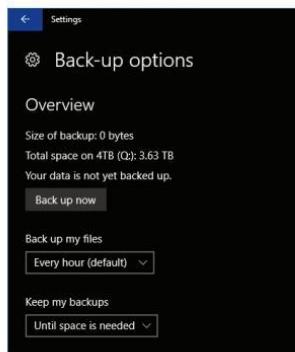
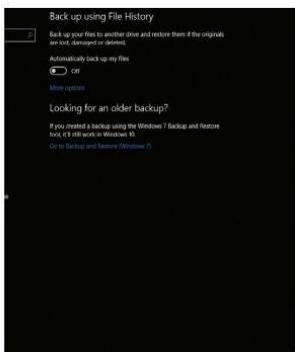
Make a backup

It's important to have more than one copy of files...

B

acking up your data is a good thing to do. Electronics aren't infallible, and you never know when your PC might die, all your work and photos trapped

on its unresponsive hard drive. Luckily, Microsoft bundles a backup tool, File History, with Windows 10, and while it's not as fully featured as third-party alternatives, it's good enough to save your data.



1 Open Settings

In Windows 10, open Settings from the Start menu, then choose 'Update and Security > Backup'. If this is your first backup, click on 'Add a Drive' to turn on File History and follow the walkthrough. When asked to choose an external drive to receive the backup, make sure it's not the one with the files already on it.

2 Auto back up

An option named 'Automatically back up my files' will appear, and will be switched on by default. It's a good idea to leave it this way, so your files will be seamlessly backed up to the drive every time you connect it to your computer. Hit 'More options' if you want to tinker with the way File History works.

3 How often?

By default, File History will back up your files every hour. If you'd like it to save every ten minutes, or wait longer and only do it once a day, set this under 'More options'. You can also choose which folders you'd like to back up (if they're not included in the default) or any to exclude from the process.

4 System image

If you particularly want to make a system image, perhaps so you can save a snapshot of a computer's state to restore later, the old Windows 7-style backup system is still present in Windows 10. Find it under 'Looking for an older backup?' in the main Backup window.

Reinstall or recover?

You have more than one option in case of disaster

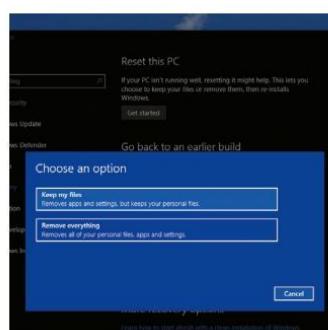
Restoring a system back to a point at which it worked, or reinstalling the operating system altogether, can soon have your machine back to its old self. Windows 10 offers you a few options for how you can reinstall your OS.

If you suspect it's a newly installed device or application that is causing the problems, you can use System Restore to roll your computer back to a point before you installed the pesky peripheral or program. If, that is, you've enabled it, because

Microsoft turns this useful feature off by default. Head to the Control Panel rather than 'Settings', then 'System and System Protection'. A window will open, and if you have system protection turned on, click 'System Restore'. If it's off, turn it on for each of the drives in your PC you want to protect. For most people, this will only be the boot drive, generally drive C, as any others are used for storing documents.

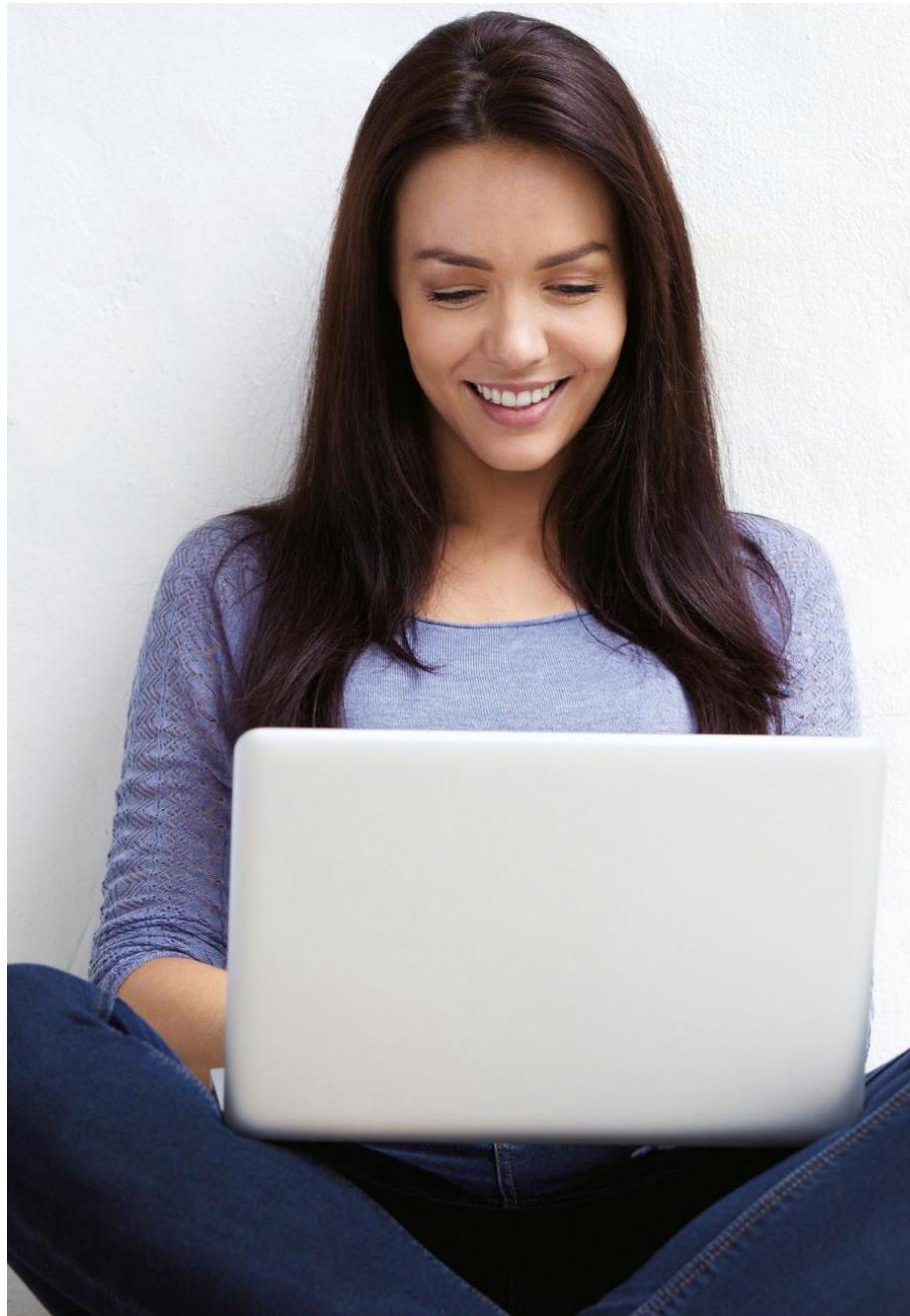
System Restore is Windows' oldest form of protection against things going wrong, dating back

to Windows 95, but Windows 10 has more choices. They're bundled under an option called Reset this PC, a change from Windows 8 where the choices were named differently. Resetting your PC gives you a shiny new installation of Windows 10, with or without your files and personal data, and does it by booting your PC into the Windows Recovery Environment, a stripped-down GUI separate from Windows itself, allowing it to overwrite files that would otherwise be in use when your PC is running.

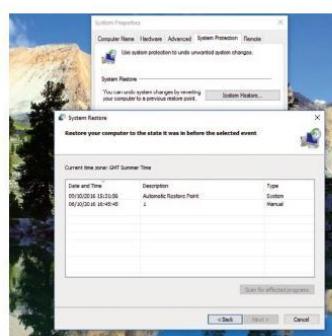


Keep my files

This is an option to search for documents and settings on your PC, and preserve them from the reset process – returning them once the refreshed operating system is up and running. This is the best option if you're interested in refreshing your system, and not removing sensitive data.



Remove everything
Choose this if you're selling your PC or want to completely obliterate your personal data for some other reason. Clicking this takes you to a further screen on which you're given the option of cleaning your drive – overwriting the deleted data so it can't be recovered.



Restore point
Rolling back from a restore point – assuming you have 'System Restore' switched on and a recent point to return to – is probably the quickest and easiest way of recovering from a fault without having to go to the trouble of completely reinstalling Windows.

Speed up future Windows installs

The Windows 10 installation process is designed to be quick – the whole OS was built to have as small an installation footprint as possible – and, with a modern SSD-equipped PC, it can be a swift and relatively painless process. There are ways, however, of speeding the process up – this is useful if you need to install Windows on multiple machines.

Products such as DriverEasy (www.drivereeasy.com) will scan your hardware after the install process is complete, and find any missing drivers for your hardware automatically. While Windows has a large database of device drivers for peripherals, it's not 100% perfect and obscure cameras, scanners or other external devices can fox its automatic detection.

If you have multiple machines with identical hardware to install Windows on, consider using an imaging program such as Macrium Reflect (www.macrium.com) to take a drive image from the first machine after installation is complete, and copying it straight onto the hard drives of the others, without going through all the processing involved in the install process.

If you have a lot of applications to install, a tool such as Ninite can streamline your installation process by installing them all at once. It runs in the background, and won't restart your PC even if the app demands it.



Driver Easy will scan your hardware after the install process is done and tell you what drivers are missing.

Master the desktop

You'll spend a lot of time there, so make it fast and efficient

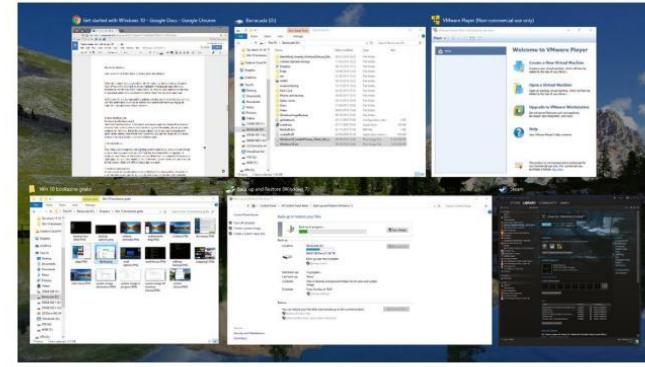
When not actually using applications, the Windows desktop is where you'll spend much of your time, moving files about, hunting for that obscure application you suddenly need, or lining up your windows so that they fill

the space perfectly. In Windows 10, the desktop and the taskbar now come with a few new tricks that make working with files and folders even easier. Also, the new search bar means pulling up applications you don't use very often is a breeze.



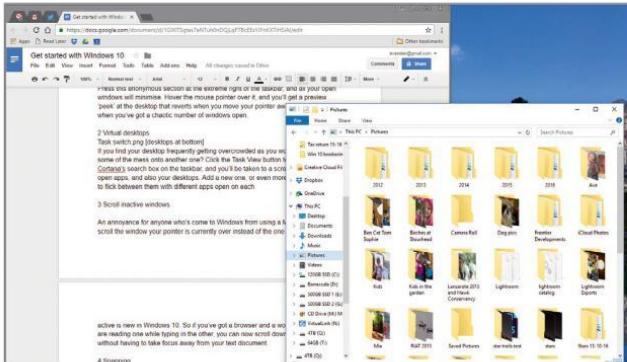
1 Show desktop/peek

The 'Show Desktop' button isn't marked, and some people don't even know it exists. Press this anonymous section at the right of the taskbar, and your open windows will minimise. Hover the mouse pointer over it, and you'll get a preview of the desktop, which reverts back when you move your pointer away. It's useful when you have a chaotic number of windows open.



2 Virtual desktops

If you find your desktop getting overcrowded as you work, why not offload some of the mess onto another one? Click the 'Task View' button to the right of Cortana's search box on the taskbar, and you'll be taken to a screen that shows your open apps, and also your desktops. Add a new one, or even more, and you can flick between them with different apps open on each.

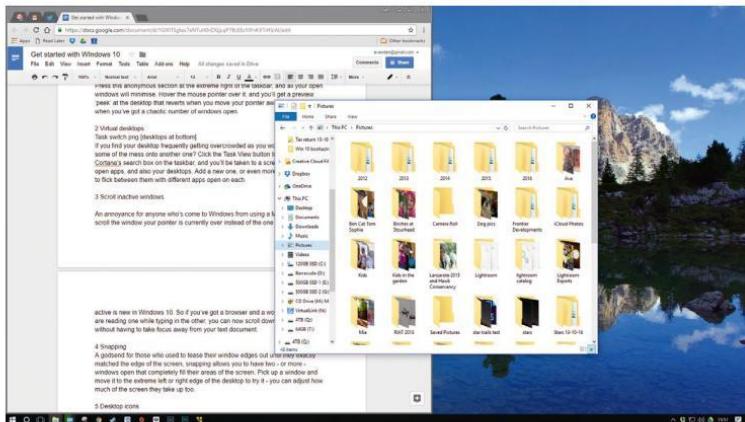


3 Scroll inactive windows

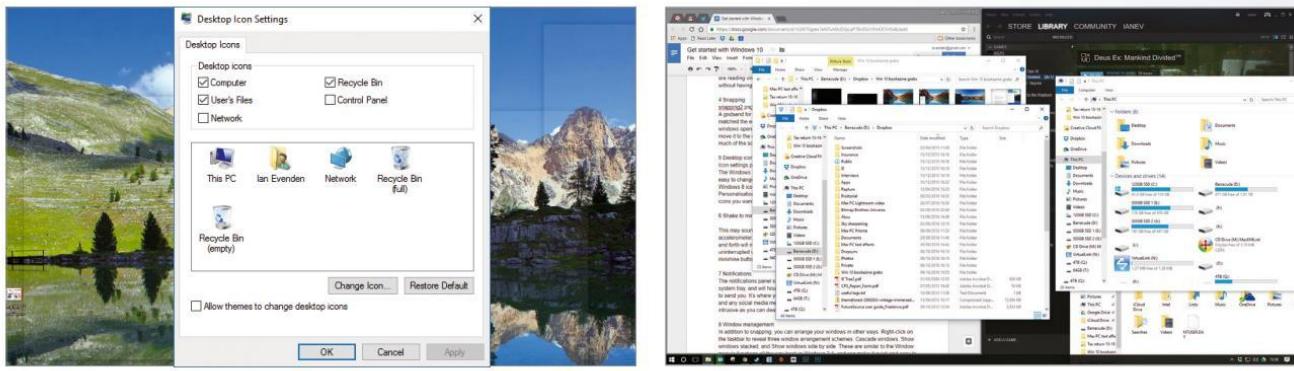
You can now scroll through the window your pointer is *on* instead of the window that is *active*. So if you have a browser and a word processor, and are reading one while typing in the other, you can now scroll down in the browser without having to take focus away from your text document. Trust us, this update is guaranteed to make time at your PC more productive!

4 Snapping

This is ideal for anybody who used to tease their window edges out until they exactly matched the edge of the screen. Snapping allows you to have two – or more – windows open that fill the areas of the screen. Pick up a window and move it to the extreme left or right edge of the desktop to try it – you can adjust how much of the screen it takes up too.

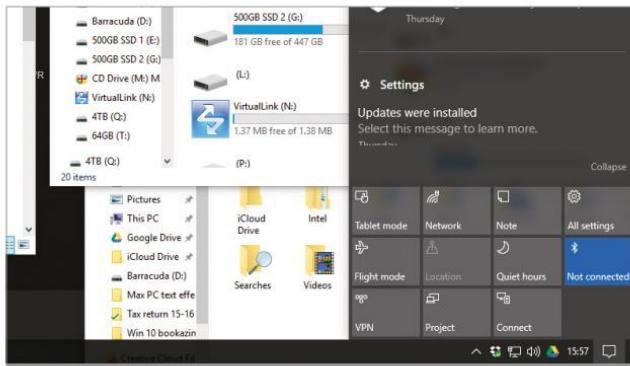


You can now scroll through inactive windows – helpful if you're doing research.



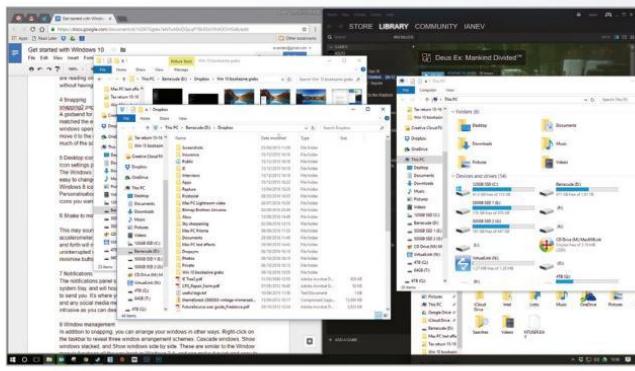
5 Desktop icons

The Windows 10 desktop icons have a pixelated look, but it's easy to change them. There are icon packs available online, including the shinier Windows 8 icons, and using them is a matter of choosing 'Start > Settings > Personalisation > Themes'. Then click the 'Desktop icon Settings' and select the icons you want to place on the desktop, and 'Change Icon' to change their look.



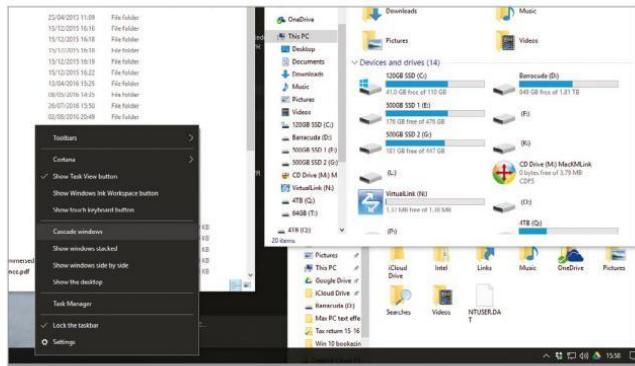
7 Notifications

The notifications panel slides in from the right of the screen with a button in the system tray, and it will house any messages that apps or Windows components want to send you. It's also where you'll find links to details of updates that have been installed, and any social media messages or calendar events. You can customise it to suit how often you want to be disturbed.



6 Shake to minimise

It might sound a little strange, but 'picking up' a window with your mouse pointer and shaking it back and forth will minimise every other window that's open, leaving you with a clear and uninterrupted view of the one you want to work with. It's faster than clicking several minimise buttons, and it's a fun little quirk.



8 Window management

In addition to snapping, you can arrange your windows in other ways. Right-click on the taskbar to reveal three window arrangement schemes: 'Cascade windows', 'Show windows stacked', and 'Show windows side by side'. These are similar to the Window menu's functions in Windows 3.1, and can make it quick and easy to find what you're looking for.

Customise the Start menu

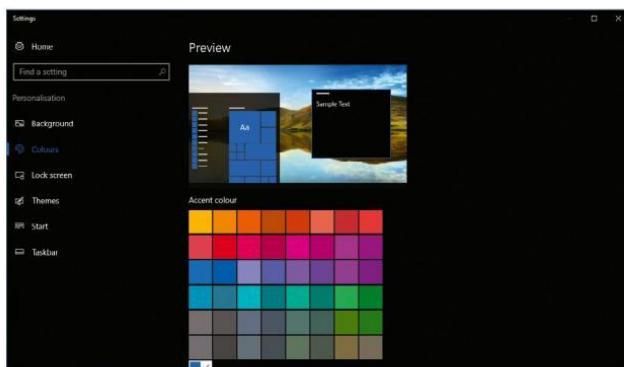
Make the Start menu work for you with these customisation tips

The return of the Start menu was big news when Windows 10 launched, and it has since evolved as the operating system has been updated into something that's a fast, efficient way of accessing applications

and settings. Windows 8's full-screen effort is now a distant memory.

But, however the Start menu looks when you first pop it up on your fresh install of Windows 10, it doesn't have to stay that way. It's customisable in ways that were never possible on earlier

versions of the operating system, and can be made to work in just about any way you want. You might want it to stand out from its background for ease of reading, or automatically blend in with the colour scheme of whatever theme you have on your desktop.

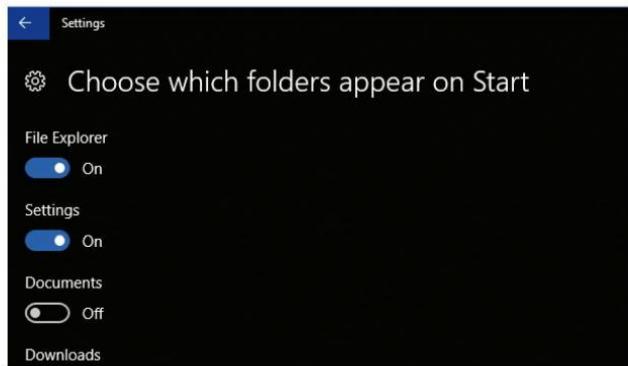
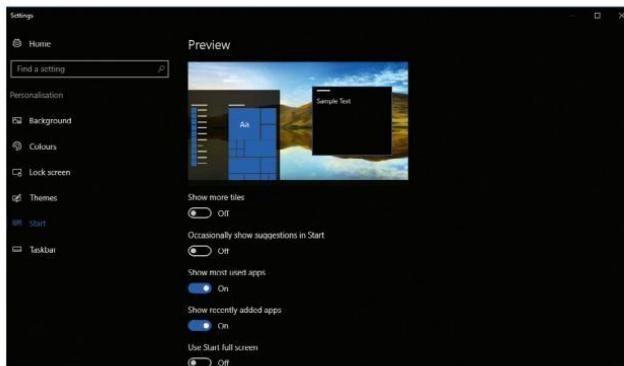


1 Colour

Your Start menu's background can be any colour you like – all you have to do is untick a box. Open 'Settings', then 'Personalisation' and finally 'Colours'. Untick 'Automatically pick an accent colour from my background' option and you'll be able to pick a colour from a palette. This means your menu can be a contrasting red or yellow rather than a dull blue or grey.

2 Size

To make space for all the customising you can do to the Start menu, just resize it to your liking. Move your mouse pointer to the top-border or right-border of the Start Menu (the pointer will change into arrows), and you'll be able to increase or decrease height and width, dragging it out to completely fill the screen, if you want to.



3 Folders and tiles

Your Start menu is made up of lists and tiles, and some of these can be shortcuts to folders. 'Settings > Personalisation > Start' allows you to tinker with this, so if you never shoot videos you can prevent the empty Videos folder taking up space on the menu. You can also turn links off or on for the Settings window, or opening up an empty File Explorer window.

4 Hide program lists

By default, the Start menu will show you lists of most used programs and most recently opened ones. This can end up repeating itself, so if you want to get rid of one or the other of the lists, or both, open up 'Settings > Personalisation > Start'. Here you'll be able to toggle the lists on or off. You can also prevent apps from appearing on the lists.



Get the Start menu customised to the way you work.



5 Use it to search with

Hitting the Windows key to pop up the menu and typing away is one of the fastest ways to search in Windows 10. Just type a few characters and you'll get suggestions of apps and documents stored on your PC that match. You can also use the arrow keys on your keyboard to navigate the menu, if you'd rather not use the mouse.



7 Pin tiles and shortcuts

If there's something you rely on being able to find quickly, but which gets lost in the lists and tiles of the menu, you can pin it. This works in exactly the same way it has since Windows XP, with the pinned items sitting above the automatically populated lists on the menu. For even faster access, you can pin shortcuts to the taskbar too.

6 Live tiles

Live tiles are tiles that are constantly updated with data. There's one for the Mail app that shows your most recent messages, one for the Weather app that uses your PC's location to tell you what's going on outside the window, and so on. If you find them distracting, you can turn them off by right-clicking them and choosing the appropriate option.



8 Bring back the Start screen!

It may have been reviled in Windows 8, but the full-screen Start menu is still there in Windows 10, ready to block out all your work at a single accidental press of the Windows key. But if you liked it, go to 'Settings > Personalisation > Start' and tick the box marked 'Use full-screen Start when in the desktop'. Note the wording – it now won't cover up your apps.

Get to know Cortana

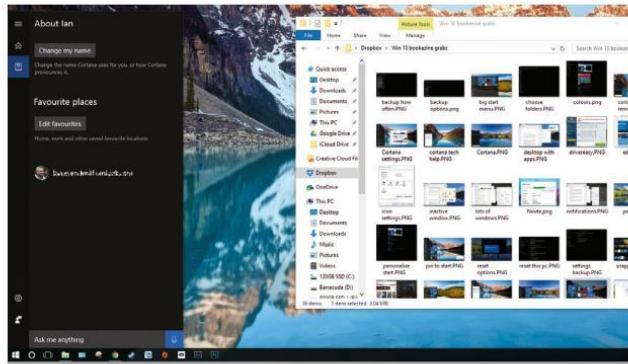
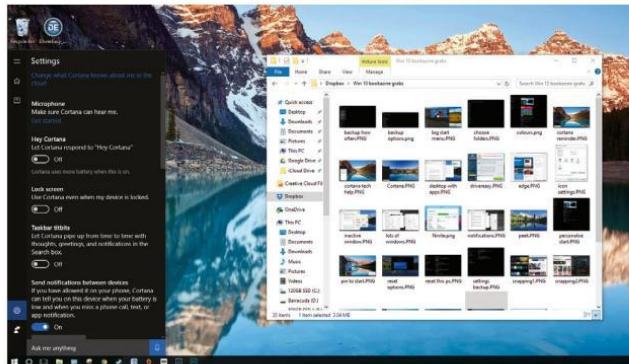
Your digital pal will help you out (and only respond to your voice)

Microsoft's digital personal assistant takes its name from a character in the *Halo* series of videogames. That incarnation of Cortana, an AI can hack alien computer encryption and fly captured spaceships.

The Windows 10 version is perhaps a little less powerful, but comes in useful all the same. It can search using natural language terms, and by using voice activation just like Siri on your iPhone. And if the idea of voice controlling your PC alarms you, or perhaps your

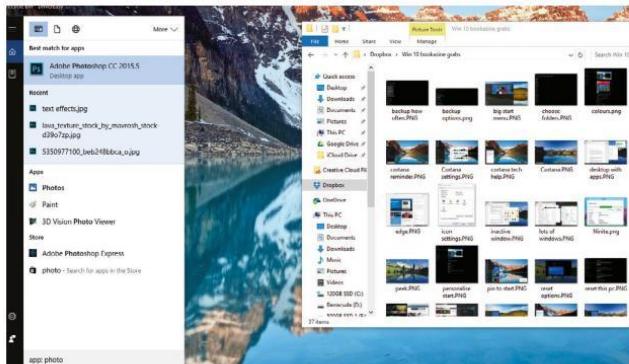
computer isn't equipped with a mic, then you can still interact with Cortana through the keyboard.

There's plenty Cortana can do to make your life easier, but here we'll just run through the basics – if you want to know more, just ask...



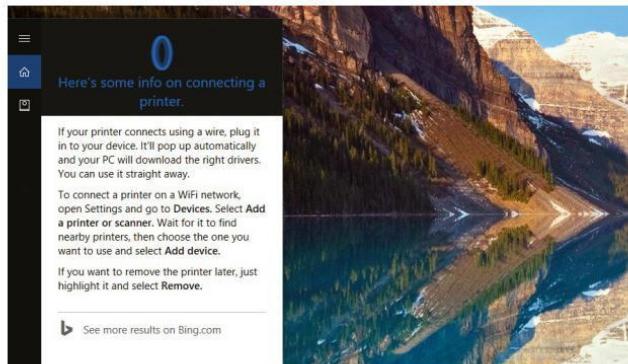
1 Set up

Depending on how your PC has been configured, you may need to switch Cortana on in order to work with it. The first time you try to search your PC, it'll ask if you want to use it. Say "no", and the search box remains functional, but without the extra features Cortana brings. You need to be connected to the internet to use Cortana.



2 Personalise Cortana

Tell Cortana your name and where you live, and it can adapt itself to you. If you've opted for it to speak results back to you, it'll call you by name and allow you to correct its pronunciation if it gets it wrong. Tell it your interests, and appropriate news snippets will appear when you open its panel. You can do all of this from Settings.

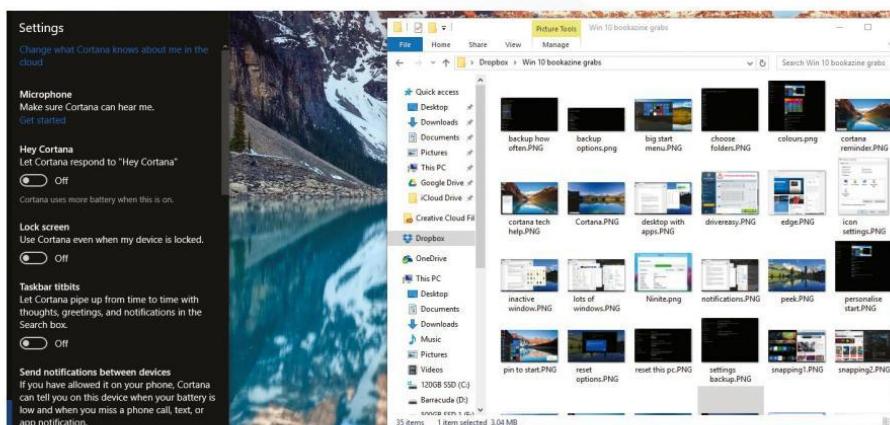


3 Narrow down your search

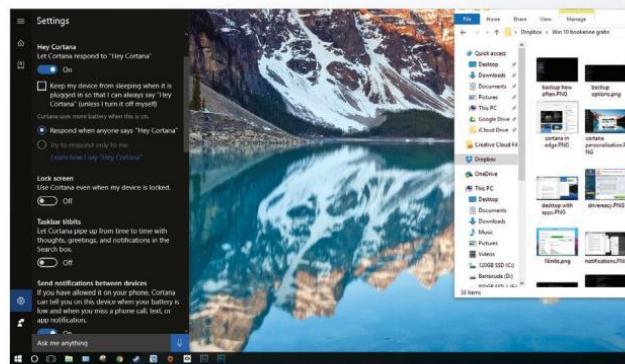
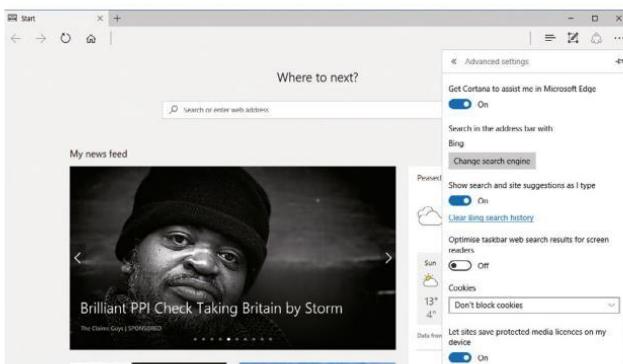
To stop Cortana searching things it doesn't need to, and speed up the return of the results, you can tell it what you're looking for. So if it's definitely an app you need, rather than a picture or video, start your search query with 'app:'. If it's a setting, type 'setting:'. And so on. You can force a web search with 'web:' too.

4 Use it for tech support

If there's something you want to quickly know how to do in Windows 10, simply ask Cortana. You can type your query in, and it will appear in the list of results under 'Can I help?'. Clicking this will get you through to the Microsoft help files, and, in the case of many common tasks, you'll receive a walkthrough to show you how it's done.

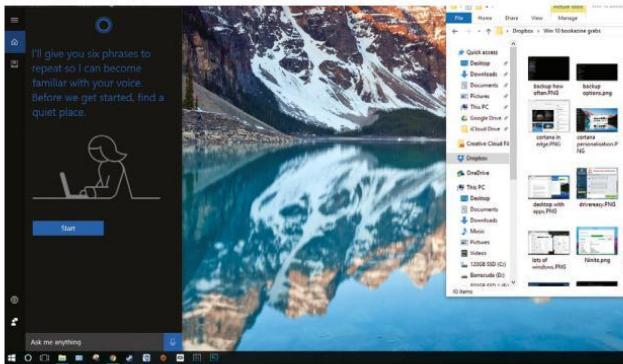


Cortana will soon be
a natural part of your
computing life...



5 Use it in Edge

Cortana can also help as you browse the net. If you want to enable it in Microsoft Edge, go to 'Settings > Advanced Settings > View Advanced Settings' and under 'Privacy and Services' enable 'Have Cortana Assist Me in Microsoft Edge'. Now, as you explore the web, you'll get additions, such as lyrics if you're listening to music, or links to apps if the site you're using has one.



6 Use voice commands

If you want to speak your instructions to Cortana, click the mic symbol next to the search box. You must have 'Search online' enabled in Cortana settings to use voice search, otherwise the mic icon disappears. If you select the option, it will respond to 'Hey Cortana' – but this will increase battery usage on portable devices, so it's only worth turning on if you're sure you'll use it.



7 Train Cortana to only reply to you

If you happen to shout "Xbox off!" at someone else's Xbox if they have Kinect voice control switched on, it can shut the console down in the middle of what they were doing. To avoid such things happening to you, train Cortana to respond only to your voice by selecting the 'Learn my voice' option in 'Settings' and speak the test phrases.

8 Use natural language to search

If you want to set yourself a reminder, you don't need to find a calendar app and input the details. Instead, you can just type or speak into Cortana as you would when talking to someone. 'Remind me to take a screen break in an hour' or 'Remind me to go to the supermarket on the way home' will trigger a notification at the appropriate time.

Be more productive in Windows 10

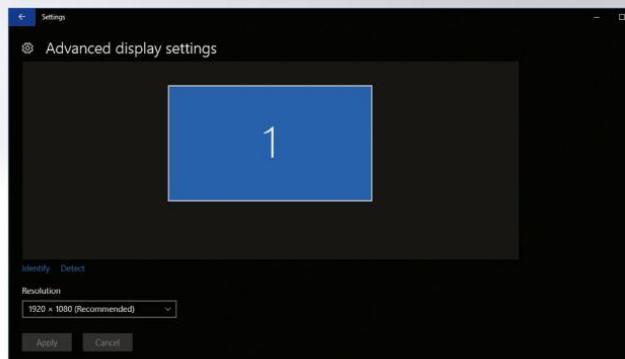
Getting more done on your PC is now even easier!

While Windows 10 may come with a slick interface that shows off the whizzy graphical effects possible on modern PCs, its basic intention is simply to help us get stuff done.

To this particular end, the best approach is just to dive straight in and start setting it up the way you want it. This means you will be able to

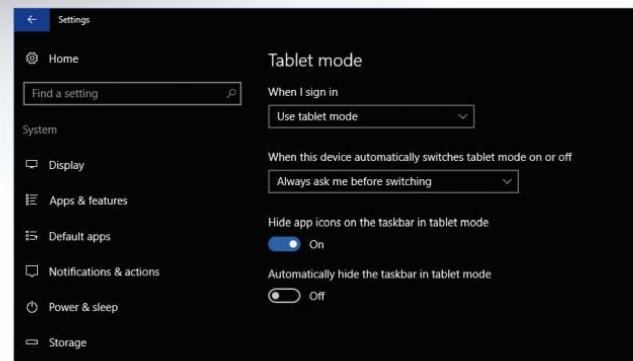
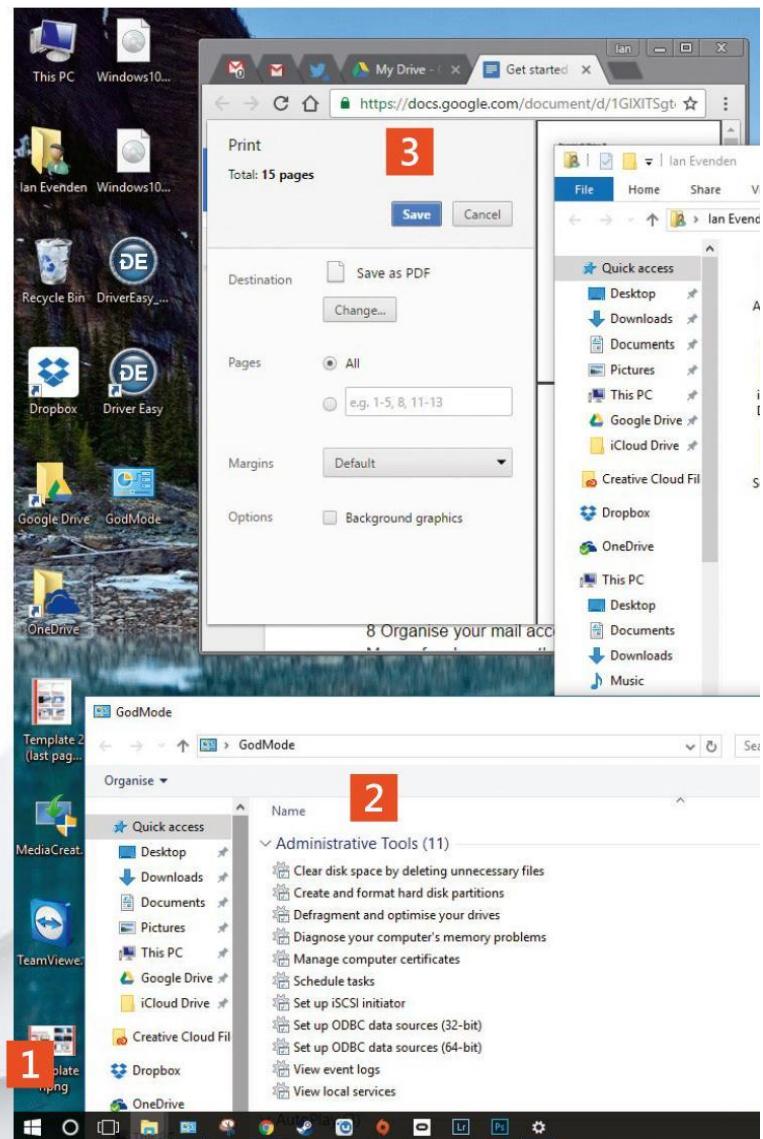
find what you want in a split second rather than having to hunt through files and folders, which can take time and lots of frustration.

If Cortana isn't your thing, then be ruthless and get rid of it! If you work best in a full-screen app devoid of distractions, you can do that too! There are many ways to personalise your Windows experience and increase your productivity.



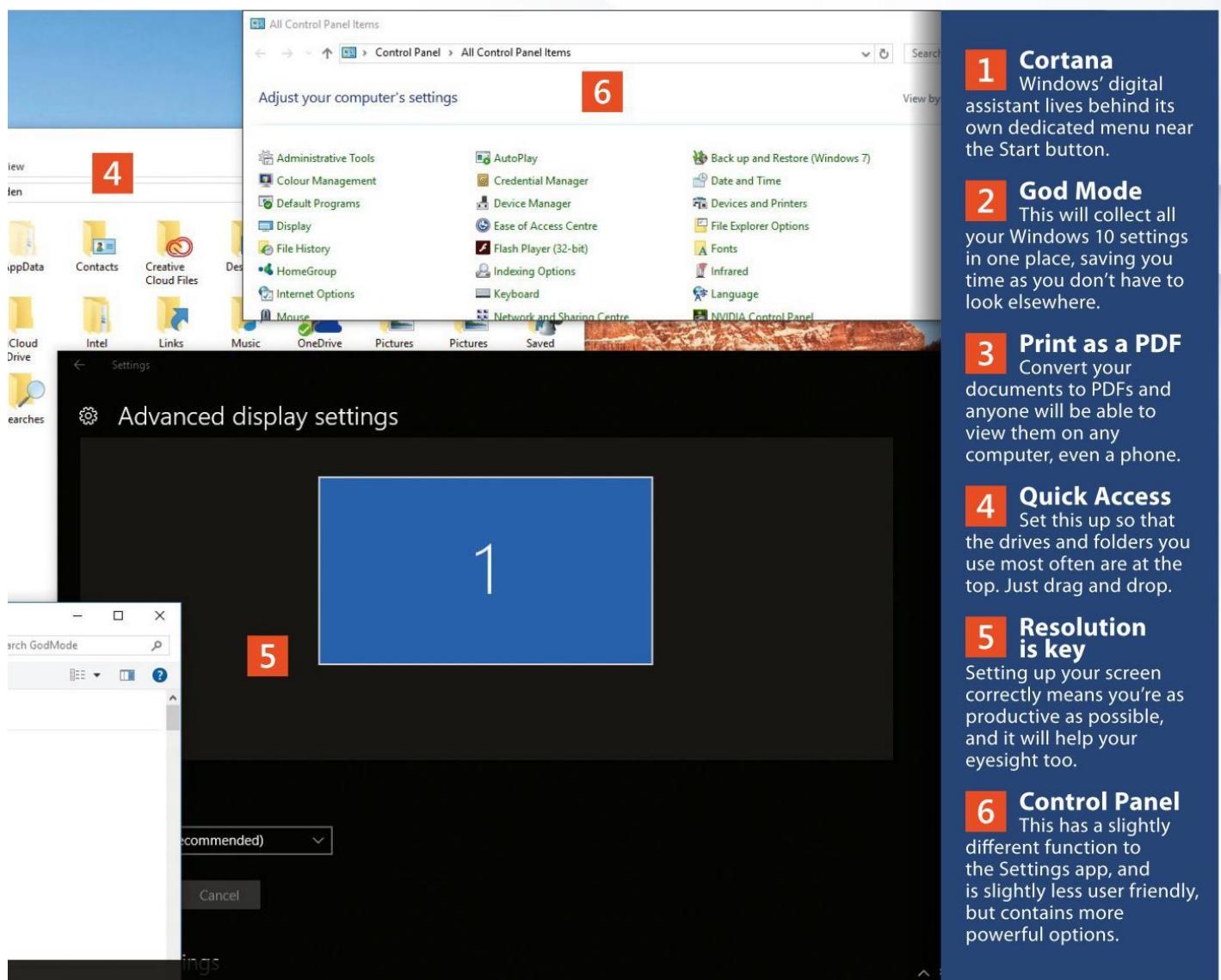
1 Make the most of your screen

Things will look clearer, if your screen is at maximum resolution. First, you'll need to know the current resolution of your screen. Right click an empty area of the desktop, and select 'Display settings' from the menu. Choose 'Advanced display settings' in the window that pops up, with a resolution menu. Choose the highest, or the setting that matches your screen.



2 Tablet Mode for convertibles

Laptop that flip and become touchscreen tablets will be happier with an OS that plays to its strengths. Windows 10 has a Tablet Mode that makes it act more like Windows 8, with fullscreen apps and a Start screen. To get it, open the 'Settings' app, go to 'System', and tell it to use Tablet mode the next time you sign in, and when to automatically switch.



1 Cortana

Windows' digital assistant lives behind its own dedicated menu near the Start button.

2 God Mode

This will collect all your Windows 10 settings in one place, saving you time as you don't have to look elsewhere.

3 Print as a PDF

Convert your documents to PDFs and anyone will be able to view them on any computer, even a phone.

4 Quick Access

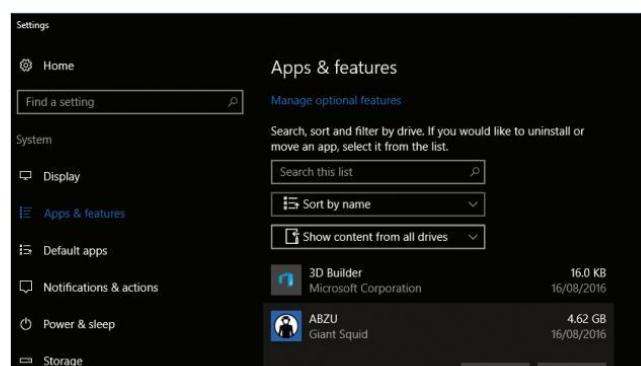
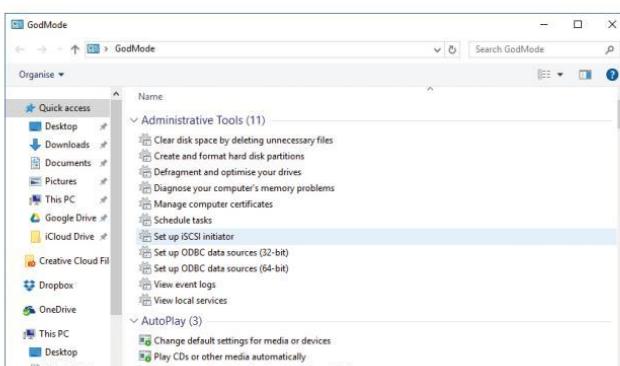
Set this up so that the drives and folders you use most often are at the top. Just drag and drop.

5 Resolution is key

Setting up your screen correctly means you're as productive as possible, and it will help your eyesight too.

6 Control Panel

This has a slightly different function to the Settings app, and is slightly less user friendly, but contains more powerful options.

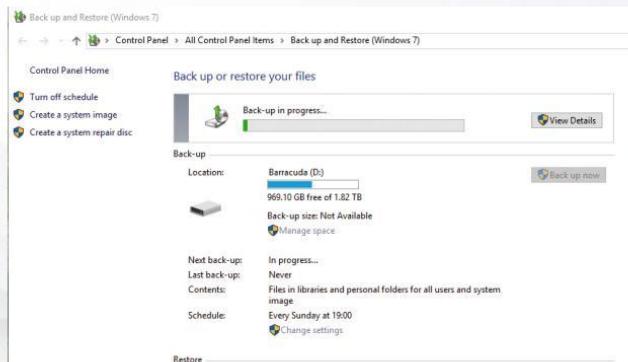
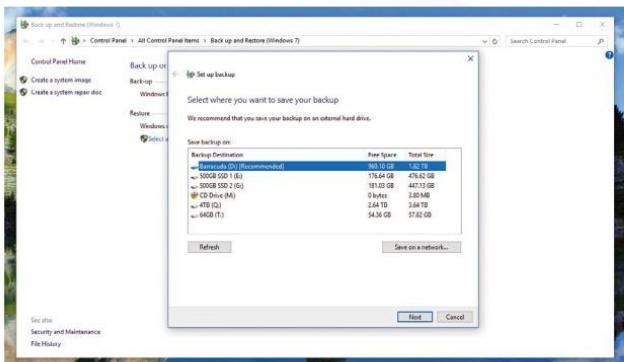


3 'God mode'

GodMode.{ED7BA470-8E54-465E-825C-99712043E01C} is a code that will unlock a secret folder on your PC that has all your settings in one place. You can use it in order to save time digging through the different places they can be found. Create a new folder on your desktop, and rename it to that long code above. You can change the name 'GodMode' to anything you like.

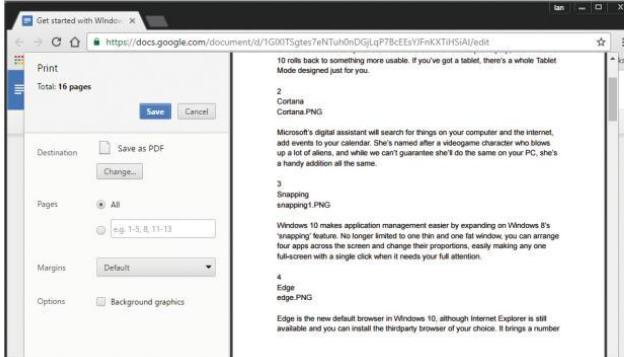
4 Uninstall programs

Uninstalling old programs can be useful for freeing up space on your PC, and a PC with a full hard drive is a slow PC, particularly at startup. Go to 'Settings', then 'System', then 'Installed Apps'. Left-click on any apps you don't need, and select 'Uninstall' to consign them to the bin. This can be especially useful if your PC came with manufacturer-installed bloatware.



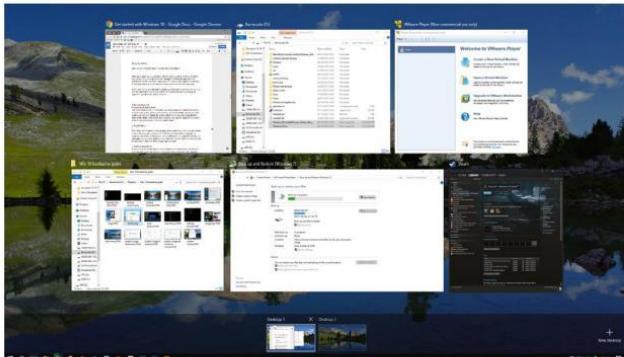
5 Create a system backup

You'll need in excess of 120Gb of space on a separate drive or partition to make a backup of your operating system every week. Go to 'Settings', then 'Update & Security', then 'Back up' in the left-hand window. Click on the '+' button and select the partition or drive you want to use for your backup. Then click on 'More options and Advanced settings...'.



7 Print to PDF

You don't need an expensive app to create simple PDFs of the documents you're working on. While Windows 8 insisted on the under-supported XPS format (Microsoft's alternative to PDF) Windows 10 uses the real thing. To create a PDF, print your document, select PDF Writer as a printer, and tell it where to save the file.

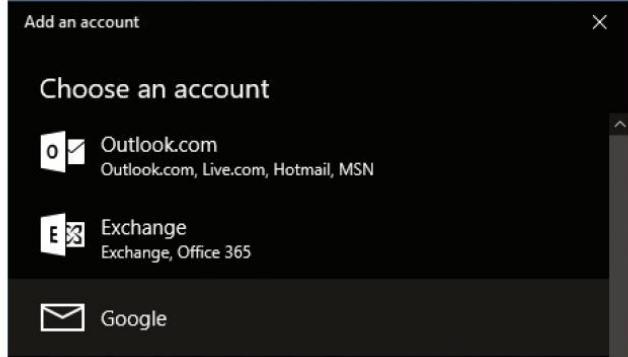


9 Multi app view

Another useful feature is the ability to swap between any of the multiple applications you may have open at the same time. Press the 'Task view' button next to Cortana's search box near the Start button. This allows you to quickly switch between open applications, including those that are minimised, without having to trawl through the icons on your taskbar.

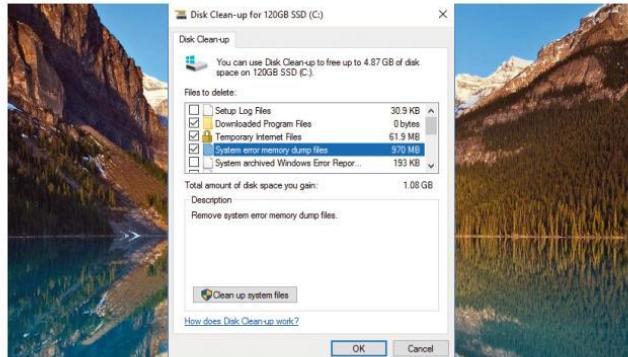
6 Complete the backup

Click 'System image backup' in the bottom left corner, then 'Set up backup'. Highlight the drive you want to receive the system image (not your boot drive) and click 'Next'. Select 'Let Windows choose' on the next screen, press 'Next'. You can now set up a schedule for when Windows performs the backup, once a week is probably enough. Press 'Save settings and run backup'.



8 Organise your mail accounts

Many of us have more than one email address – you might have a second one that you use to sign up to newsletters and site updates, for instance. Hit 'Add account' in the Mail app's settings as many times as you need to, and it will automatically set itself up to work with any number of your email addresses from many of the popular providers.



10 Uninstall the old Windows

If you upgraded from Windows 7 or 8 to 10, there's a chance there's a file called Windows.old on your boot drive. It's just the old installation taking up space. If you're sure you'll never want to roll back to the old version, use 'Disk Clean Up' (search for it on the Start menu) to remove it by ticking 'Previous Windows installations' in the app, then clicking 'Clean up system files'. ■

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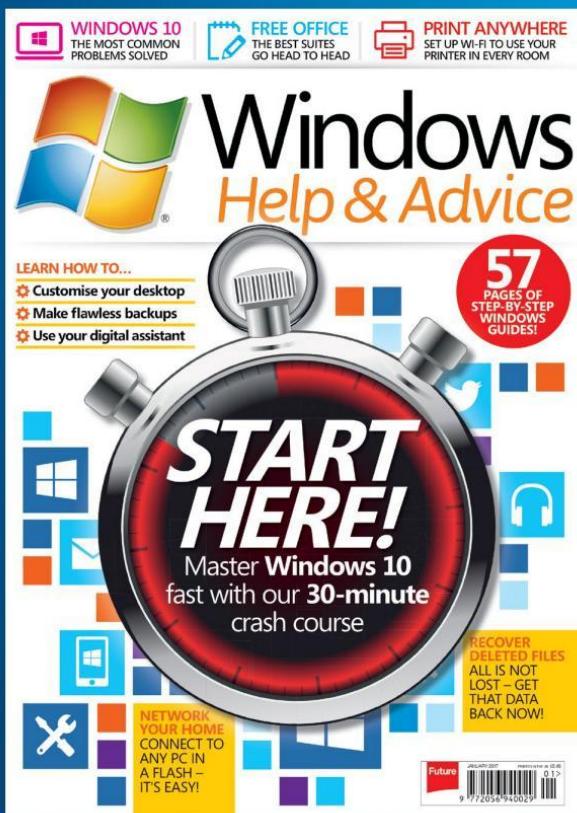
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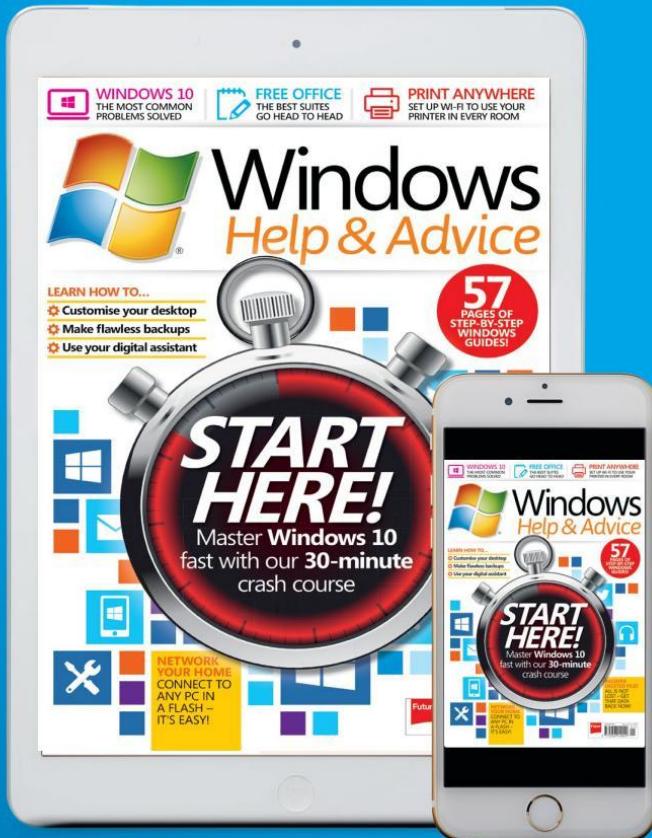
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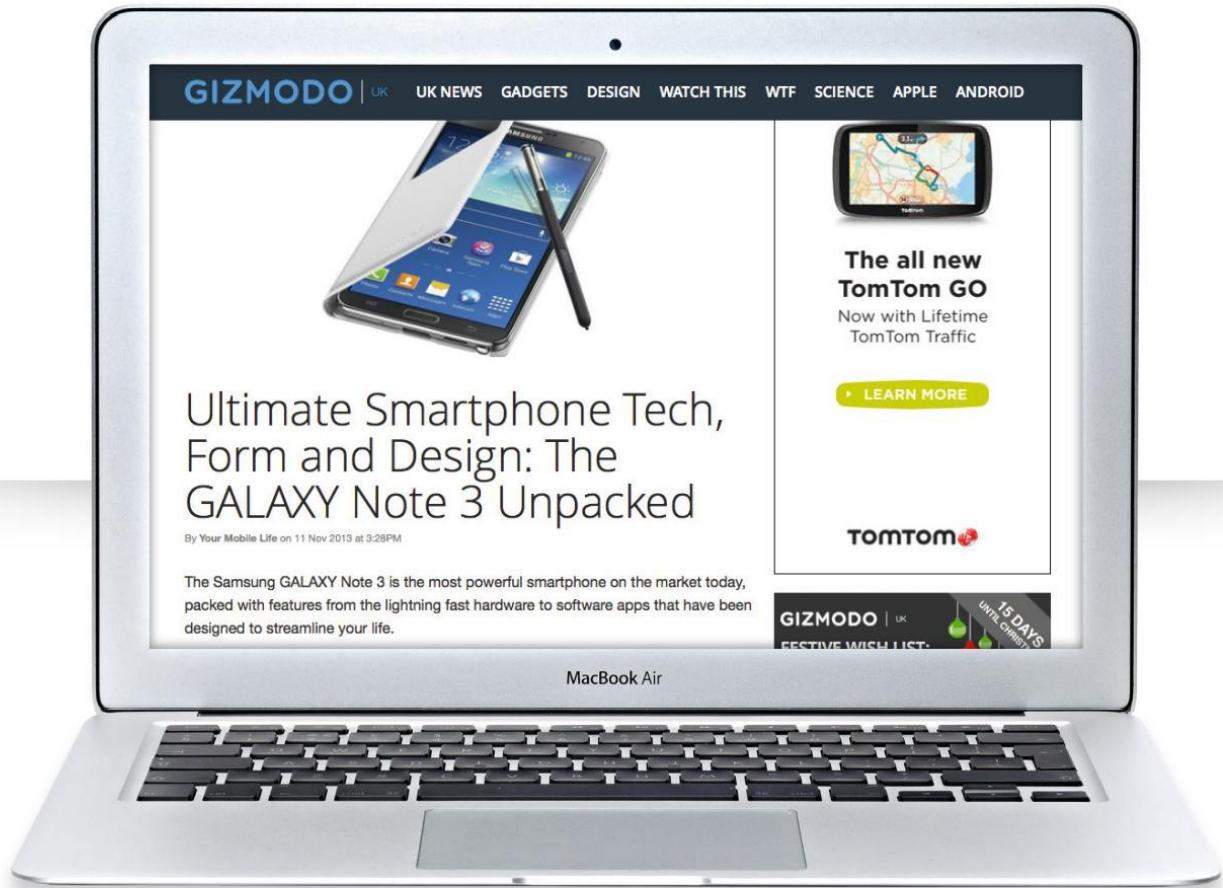
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Welcome



We've all accidentally deleted files we shouldn't have – it's a gut-wrenching feeling!

If you've cleaned out your Recycle Bin only to discover it contained something that you didn't mean to recycle, all is not lost. The data is there, it's just the reference to it that's gone. If something else has not already taken its space on your hard drive, Recuva might be able to get it back for you.

This month, we also take you through networking, creative pursuits, and a lot more. See you next time!

Graham Barlow

Editor-in-chief

graham.barlow@futurenet.com

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Your guide
Cat Ellis says...

"Try Vivaldi – it's a truly beautiful browser!"

Turn to page 42 to find out more

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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.

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From speed-up and security software to superb photo apps, there's always something new to try on your PC. The Windows Store in Windows 10 and Windows 8.1 is packed with software to download.



Learn how to...

Recover lost or deleted files



Your guide **Mayank Sharma** says...

"There's no need to lose sleep over accidentally deleted files – we have the solution right here"

At a glance

Skill level...

Anyone can do it
Straightforward
► Tricky in parts

Suitable for...

Windows 10
Windows 8.1
Windows 7

Everybody deletes files by mistake. And while deleting them is particularly easy to do, **recovering** them isn't always that straightforward.

The good news is when you empty the Windows Recycle Bin, the files aren't really destroyed. In fact, what Windows does is earmark the space occupied by the 'deleted' files as empty space for new data. This makes it possible to recover the files, so long as new data hasn't been written over the space.

Recuva is a free, feature-rich tool that helps recover accidentally deleted files. In addition to hard disks, it can also be used to recover data on USB drives SD card and smartphones connected to your computer. It can recover data from formatted drives too. If that wasn't enough, Recuva can even recover deleted emails from your mail client! Let's get started.

Step-by-step | Use Recuva to recover files



1 Download and install

Head to www.piriform.com/recuva and click 'Free Download' to grab the application. Run the installer to install the app. While the default installation options will work for most users, make sure you remember to deselect the option to install any additional application when prompted.

Piriform Recuva

Recuva.com v1.52.1086 (64-bit)

Microsoft Windows 10 Home 64-bit
Intel Core i3-3110M CPU @ 2.40GHz, 4.0GB RAM, Virtu

All Local Disks

Filename	Path
SR184NFO.png	C:\\$Recycle.Bin\S-1-5-21-4...
AAehR3S[1].png	C:\Users\geeky\AppData\L...
PhotosSmallTile.contra...	C:\Program Files\Windows...
PhotosLargeTile.contra...	C:\Program Files\Windows...
MapsWideTile.scale-10...	C:\Program Files\Windows...
MapsPinnedPlaceWide...	C:\Program Files\Windows...
MapsPinnedPlaceAppL...	C:\Program Files\Windows...
MapsLargeTile.scale-10...	C:\Program Files\Windows...
MapsBadgeLogo.scale-...	C:\Program Files\Windows...
MapsAppList.scale-100...	C:\Program Files\Windows...
IconOpenInRefocus.co...	C:\Program Files\Windows...
IconOpenInCinemagra...	C:\Program Files\Windows...

Found 82 file(s) (89,955 ignored) in 3.31 seconds.

[Online Help](#)

RECOVERED FILES
The list of recovered files will usually have a different name to their original ones.



2 Recovery wizard

When you launch the app it'll fire up a recovery wizard. Make sure the storage device where your deleted files are kept is connected to the computer. If your deleted files are stored on an external drive, such as a USB stick or a memory card, remember to connect them to your PC via a USB cable or card reader.

FILE STATE
Not all files are recoverable. This column will help you determine whether a file is recoverable or not.

MEDIA TYPE
Use this pull-down menu to narrow down the search results based on the file type.

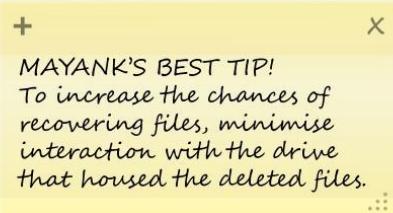
OPTIONS
Click on this button to tweak the default behaviour of the application.

Last Modified	Size	State	Comment
1/15/2016 08:53	421 KB	Poor	This file is overwritten w
1/15/2016 04:14	1 KB	Unrecoverable	This file is overwritten w
1/15/2016 04:31	522 bytes	Excellent	No overwritten clusters
1/15/2016 04:31	3 KB	Excellent	No overwritten clusters
1/15/2016 04:32	869 bytes	Excellent	No overwritten clusters
1/15/2016 04:32	1 KB	Excellent	No overwritten clusters
1/15/2016 04:32	358 bytes	Excellent	No overwritten clusters
1/15/2016 04:32	336 bytes	Excellent	No overwritten clusters
1/15/2016 04:32	294 bytes	Excellent	No overwritten clusters
1/15/2016 04:32	2 KB	Excellent	No overwritten clusters
1/15/2016 04:32	2 KB	Excellent	No overwritten clusters
1/15/2016 04:32	324 bytes	Excellent	No overwritten clusters
1/15/2016 04:32	408 bytes	Excellent	No overwritten clusters
1/15/2016 04:31	463 bytes	Excellent	No overwritten clusters
1/15/2016 04:31	516 bytes	Excellent	No overwritten clusters

Pictures Options... Preview Info Header

Filenumber: \$RJ92T1V.png
Path: C:\\$Recycle.Bin\\$S-1-5-21-4250581009-2763091833-2501584388-1001
Size: 403 KB (412,366)
State: Poor
Creation time: 1/19/2016 03:10
Last modification time: 1/15/2016 08:54
Last access time: 1/19/2016 03:10

Recover... Check for updates...



FILE INFORMATION
Various metadata about a selected file to help you identify it.

File type
What sort of files are you trying to recover?

- All Files Show all files.
- Pictures Show only files of common image formats, such as digital camera photos.
- Music Show only files of common audio formats, like MP3 player files.
- Documents Show only files of common office document formats, such as Word and Excel files.
- Videos Show only video files, like digital camera recordings.
- Compressed Show only compressed files.
- Emails Show only emails from Thunderbird, Outlook Express, Windows Mail and Microsoft Outlook.

File location
Where were the files?

- I'm not sure Search everywhere on this computer.
- On my media card or iPod Search any removable drives (except CDs and floppies) for deleted files.
- In My Documents Search user documents folders.
- In the Recycle Bin Search for files deleted from the Recycle Bin.
- In a specific location Browse...
- On a CD / DVD Browse...

3 File type

In the next screen, the program will ask you to select the type of files you are trying to retrieve. You can only check one of the options. If you wish to retrieve two or more types select 'All Files'. This will retrieve all deleted files, but you can sort out the ones you don't need later.

4 Select location

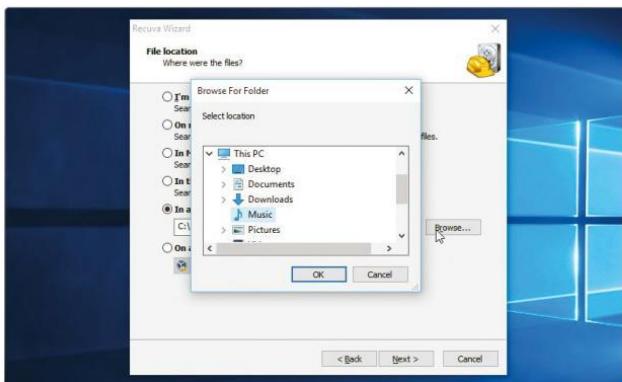
After selecting the type of file you wish to retrieve, the program will prompt you to select the location where you want to retrieve the files from. The screen lists several options. The default option searches your entire computer, while the second option looks for deleted files inside any **removable** drives.

Jargon buster!

► Recover
The task of recovering the contents of a file that has been deleted and removed from the Recycle Bin.

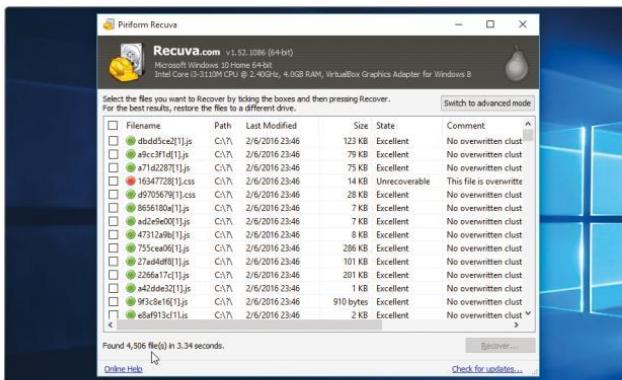
► Removable media
Any storage media, including USB drives and SD Cards, that are connected to the computer.

► Metadata
The information stored alongside a file, which can also be used to help identify it.



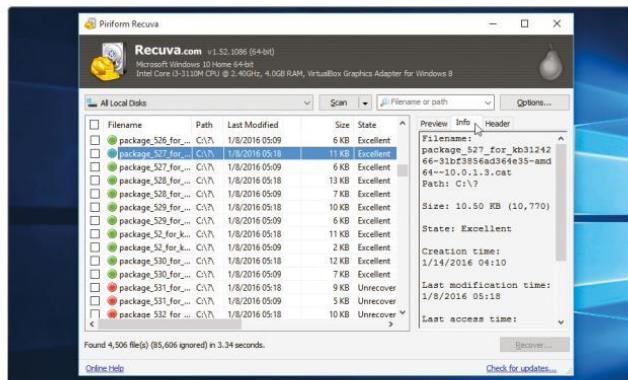
5 Browse location

Instead of searching your entire computer, you can save time and look for deleted files inside a specific location by selecting the second to last option. Now click 'Browse' and point Recuva to a particular folder on the computer. Select the last option if you wish to look for files on an optical disc.



6 Initiate the scan

That's all the information Recuva needs to start hunting for deleted files. Click 'Start' in the next screen to get going! Do not toggle the option marked 'Deep Scan' at this stage. This option kicks off an intensive and time-consuming scan and should only be used if you can't find the files using the regular process.

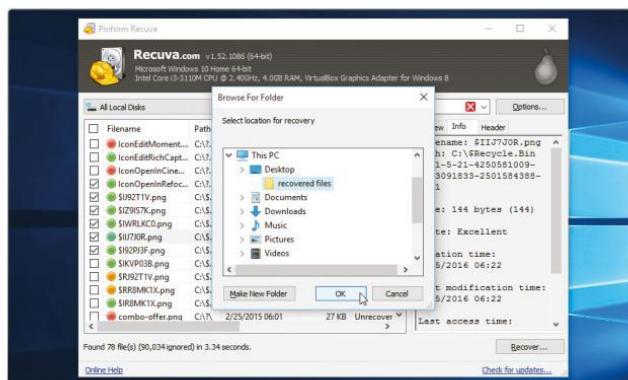
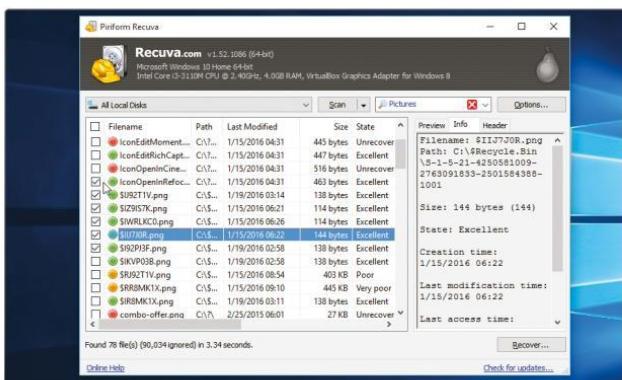


7 Analyse results

A regular scan usually only take a few seconds. When it's done, Recuva will list all the deleted files it has dug up. The list is normally fairly long and exhaustive, especially if you've asked the application to look for all types of deleted files back in Step 3.

8 Switch to Advanced Mode

Since the recovered files don't retain their original name you'll need help identifying the files. Click 'Switch to advanced mode'. This will split the interface and show three tabs in the right-pane. Use these to preview the files and read their metadata information, such as size, state, creation time, etc.



9 Narrow down results

You can also rein in the results by limiting their scope. Use the pull-down menus in the advanced mode. The first menu lets you switch drives, while the third can be used to only show files of a particular media type. When you find files you recognise, toggle the checkbox adjacent to the files you wish to recover.

10 Recover files

Now click 'Recover'. Recuva will ask you where you wish to save the recovered files to. Ideally this folder should be on a different drive than the one you've scanned for deleted files. That's it! This folder now contains all the recovered files for you to now rename and move as you please. ■

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Learn how to... Play Xbox on your PC



Your guide *Alex Cox* says...

"Take your gaming anywhere in the house by combining your console and your Windows 10 PC"

At a glance

Skill level...

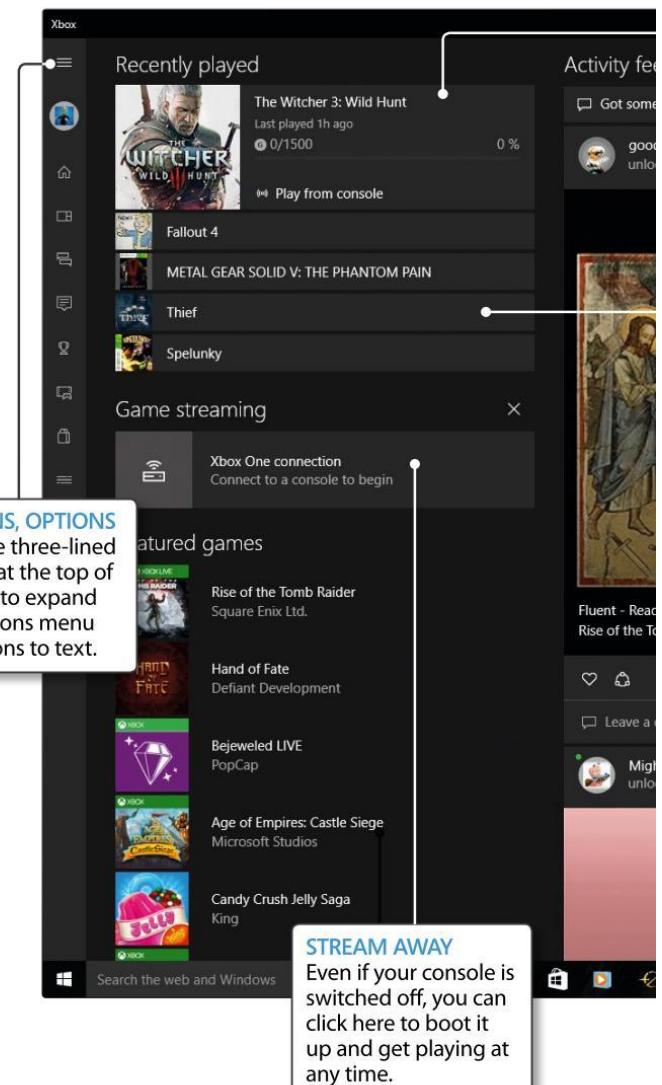
- Anyone can do it
- Straightforward
- Tricky in parts

Suitable for...

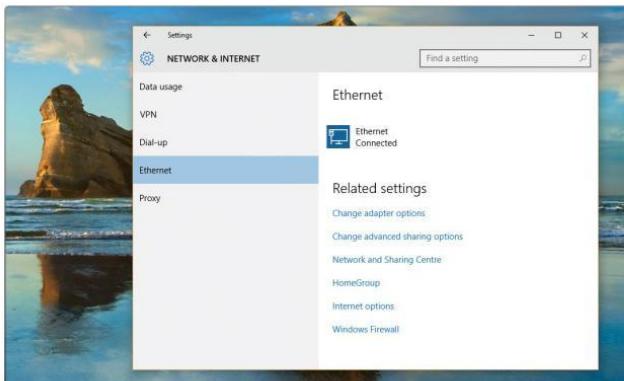
- Windows 10
- Windows 8.1
- Windows 7

Microsoft is, behind the scenes, pulling its various devices closer together. Windows Phone, Windows itself, and even the Xbox One now all share bits and pieces of code between them. This means apps designed for one device should, in theory, work perfectly with another. Indeed, crossover games have already begun appearing on the Windows store.

Because of the shared components (and some technical wizardry) you can also *stream* games over your network from your Xbox to your Windows 10 computer. It's a perfect thing to do if you're fighting for control of the living room TV, or you want to play games on a device without an HDMI port – I've used this to play games on an older VGA-only projector, for example, and you could make use of an old laptop or monitor to take your games anywhere.



Step-by-step | Start streaming your Xbox One games



1 Begin set up

Start by lining up your kit. You'll need Windows 10, as this won't work with any other OS, and your Xbox One will be need to have the latest updates. Make sure both devices are hooked up to the same local network; without some very complicated network rerouting there's no way to play your games from a remote location, and even if you could, your inputs would be delayed.



2 Get connected

If possible, wire both machines to your network with an ethernet cable – game streaming works over Wi-Fi, but you may have to drop the quality to compensate for its slower speeds. A (fast) powerline networking kit will do the trick if your devices are a long way from your router, but we'd recommend trying game streaming over Wi-Fi before making the investment.

Explore

Play Xbox on your PC

ACTIVITY FEED
Find out what the people on your Xbox Live friends list have been up to, and give them encouragement for earning achievements.

ALEX'S BEST TIP!
While you're streaming, try to reduce the load on your network by stopping downloads – particularly those on your Xbox One.

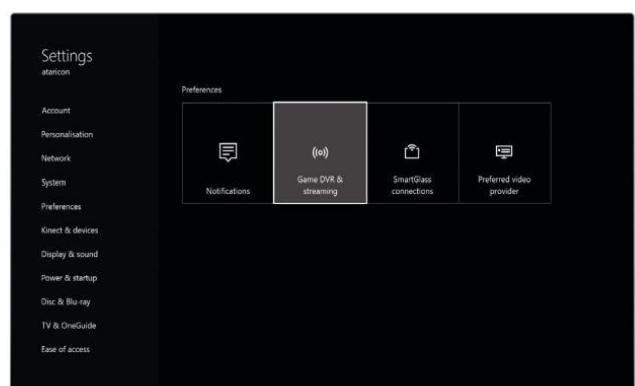
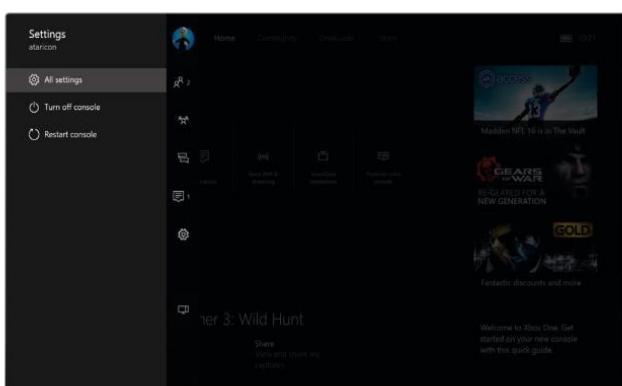
FEATURE CREEP
Honestly, this section is a bit of an advert. But if you're looking for a new game to play, you might find something here.

RECENTLY PLAYED
The games you've been playing are listed up here – this includes Xbox 360 games played on your Xbox Live account, though streaming is Xbox One only.

FRIENDS LIST
Your online (and offline) chums are listed here, and you can click them to send messages directly to their console.

Jargon buster!

- Streaming**
Providing content directly, on demand, without downloads. When you stream your Xbox One gameplay, you do it live on your local network.
- D-pad**
The flat directional arrow pad on a game controller. This gives digital control, as opposed to the analogue sticks, which provide more fine movement.
- Stuttering**
Jerky, broken or glitchy sound or graphics, sometimes experienced when a network cannot keep up with streaming demands.

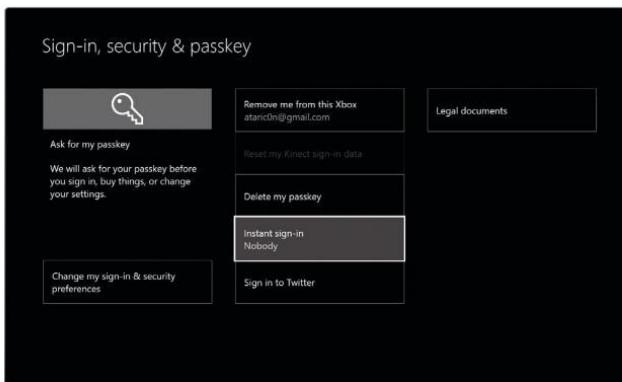


3 Xbox on

Boot up your Xbox One and log into your Xbox Live account. You may have to enter your password or PIN to do this. Now hit [Left] on your controller's **D-pad** until the console's vertical menu appears (don't press too many times), then press [Down] until you've highlighted the cog icon, hit [Left], and select 'All settings' to get to the main Xbox preferences window.

4 Start streaming

The streaming options are in the Preferences section. So head there, hit [A], and select Game DVR & Streaming. Make sure 'Allow game streaming to other devices' is ticked – it may be by default, but older consoles may not have this option automatically enabled, as it's a relatively recent addition that accompanied the release of Windows 10.



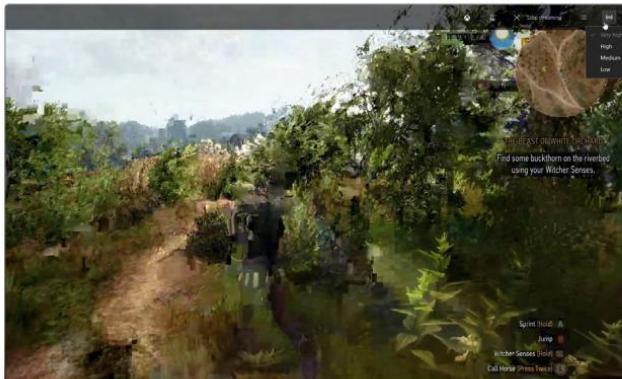
5 Auto sign-in

Although your Xbox One is set up to stream, it will only work when you are signed into your account – this is not always convenient if someone else is using the TV at the time. Go to the Account menu, choose ‘Sign-in, security and passkey’, and select the ‘Instant sign-in’ option. Choose ‘Use instant sign-in’, and your Xbox will be ready to stream to your PC as soon as you switch it on.



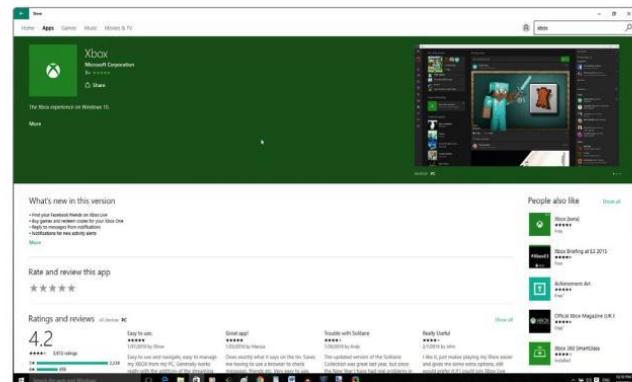
7 Log in

Run the Xbox app, select ‘Sign In’, and you’ll be asked for your Xbox Live login details. These will need to match the account used on your Xbox One, and the details you use to log into Windows 10. You can sign into the app independently, but we’ve found this doesn’t always work. An alternative is to set up a new Windows 10 user account and sign in with your Xbox Live details.



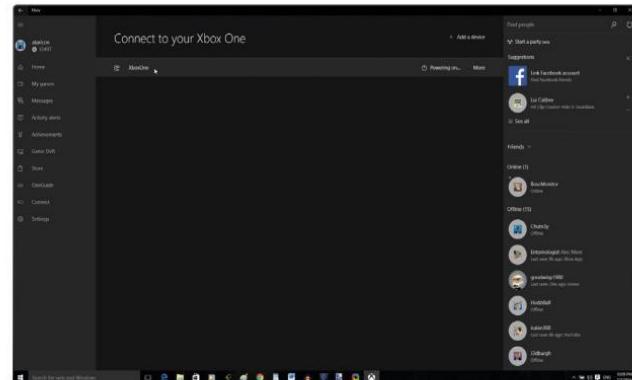
9 Quality control

Depending on the speed of your network you may run into problems at this point, as streaming live video and audio can be quite intensive. If you’re experiencing **stuttering** issues, you can lower the streaming quality by moving your mouse to the top right icon on the app and selecting a different setting. Even ‘low’ gives acceptable graphics, so see what works for you.



6 Get the app

You’ll access your Xbox One through the Windows 10 Xbox app. We’ve come across machines that don’t include it, so, in this case, use the Store app and search for ‘Xbox’ to download it. It’s worth accessing the Store and installing updates anyway, as you’ll need to make sure you have the very latest version in order to connect to your Xbox One successfully.



8 Time to stream!

From the main interface of the Xbox app, select ‘connect’ and choose your Xbox One in the list that appears. Once connected, you’ll be given the option in the main menu of the Xbox app to stream, or you can choose to launch a game from the list and jump right into the action. Plug in an Xbox 360 controller, or switch on your Xbox One wireless controller.



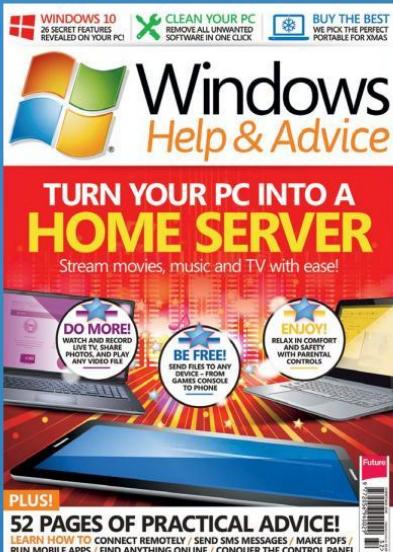
10 Time to play!

You’re all lined up and ready to go, playing Xbox One games wherever you are in the house. The next step is using your Xbox to stream your gaming to viewers on twitch.tv – you’ll find the options you need in the preferences section. But don’t expect to stream over the internet and to your PC at the same time, unless you’ve got a supremely capable network set-up at home. ■

Back issues
Don't miss out!

MISSED AN ISSUE?

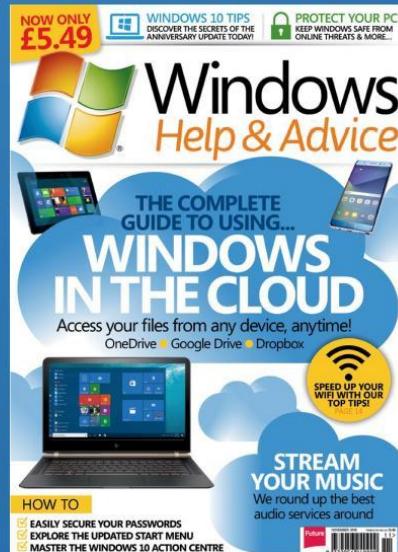
Our website stocks up to six months' worth of back issues – we deliver worldwide and all prices include shipping



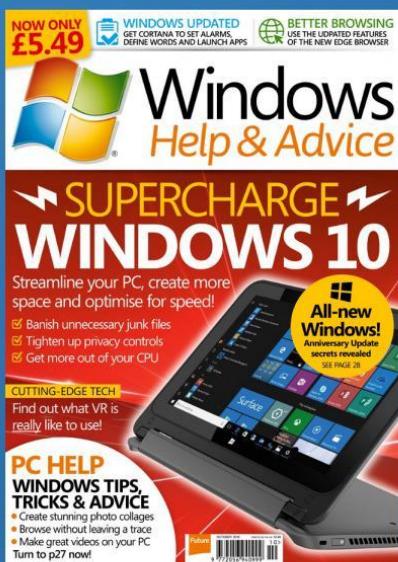
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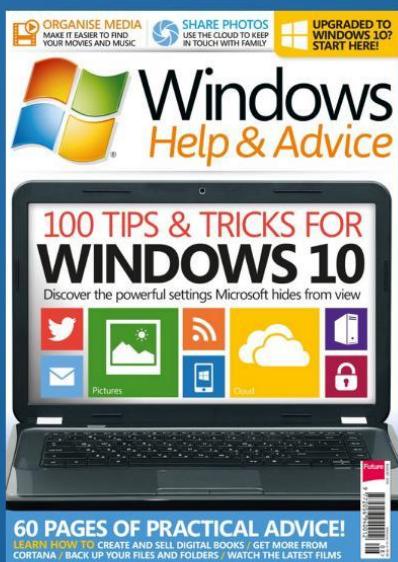
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Learn how to...

Build your perfect browser



Your guide *Cat Ellis* says...

"Vivaldi is a free browser that's hugely customisable, so you can tailor it to suit the way you use the internet"

At a glance

Skill level...

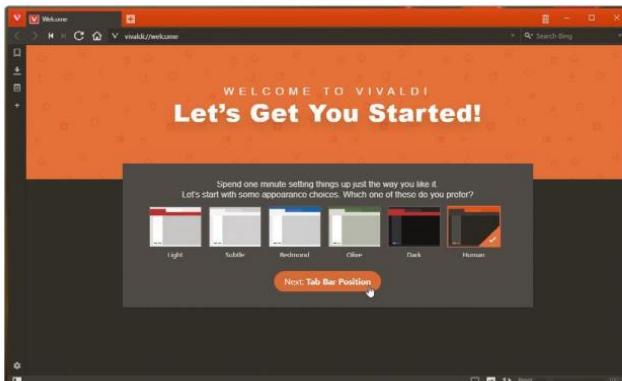
- Anyone can do it
- Straightforward
- Tricky in parts

Wether it's Firefox, Opera, Chrome or Internet Explorer, we all have a favourite browser. Once you've been using it for a while, you get used to its quirks and learn exactly where to find all its hidden features.

However, the developers of your browser of choice might have different things in mind. You never know when your familiar browser might receive an update that takes away a feature you've come to rely on, hides something important away in an obscure place, or adds extra widgets and menus you don't need. You don't have a choice – you have to learn to live with it.

That's where Vivaldi comes in. This modern, free browser is totally customisable, so you can make it truly your own. Once you've tried it, you might never go back!

Step-by-step | Browse the internet on your terms

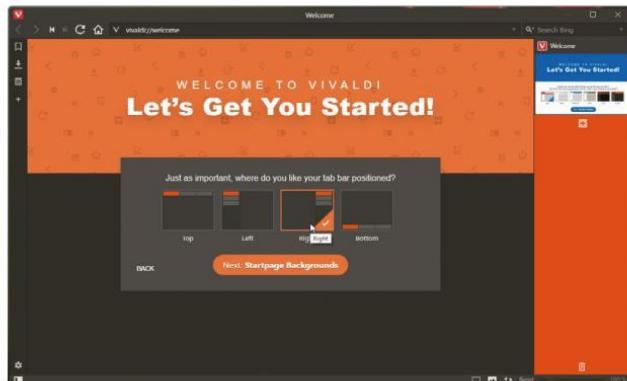


1 Get Vivaldi and get going

Download Vivaldi from <https://vivaldi.com> and run the installer. Once it's installed, Vivaldi immediately lets you begin customising its appearance by offering a choice of six colour schemes. Don't worry if you're not too keen on any of them – you can change each colour individually later. Select an option and click 'Next'.

PANELS
Click the plus icon to add a website in a sidebar beside the main website you're visiting. The switch at the very bottom left of the browser frame toggles panels off and on.

SETTINGS
This cog icon opens Vivaldi's huge settings menu, where you can set your privacy options, make your own colour schemes, create custom shortcuts and much more.



2 Pick your tabs

Now you'll be asked to choose a location for your tabs. Most browsers put them at the top of the window, so this might seem like the obvious choice, but consider the other options too. If you put the tabs on the side, Vivaldi will add a small thumbnail preview to each one, which makes it much easier to find the one you want. Pick a position and click 'Next' again.

TABS
Click the plus button to add a new tab. Tabs can be stacked in groups, bookmarked en masse, and restored after they've been closed via the right-click menu.

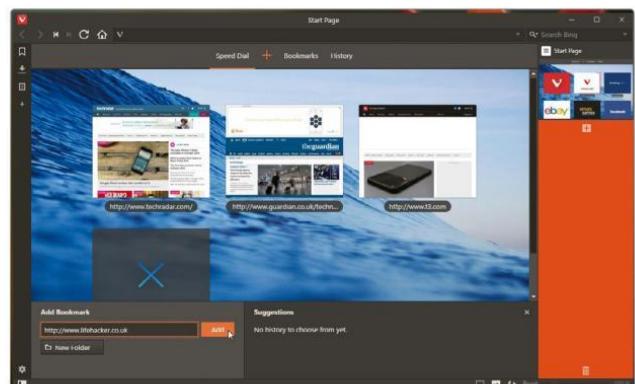
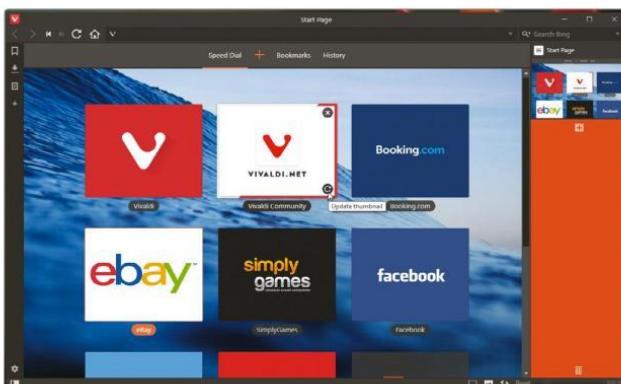
SEARCH
Click the magnifying glass to search using Bing, DuckDuckGo, Wikipedia or Google. There are lots more options available in the settings menu.

EXTENSIONS
Vivaldi supports Chrome extensions. Shortcuts and buttons for extensions appear beside the search box.

Jargon buster!

- Favicon** A tiny icon representing a specific website that appears in your browser's address bar and favourites menu.
- Extensions** Small programs that add extra features to your web browser. Popular extensions include ad blockers and video downloaders.
- Gestures** Shapes drawn on the screen that perform a certain action, like opening a new tab or adding a bookmark.

CAT'S BEST TIP!
Vivaldi supports Chrome extensions – go to vivaldi://extensions to see those already installed, and get more from the Chrome store.



3

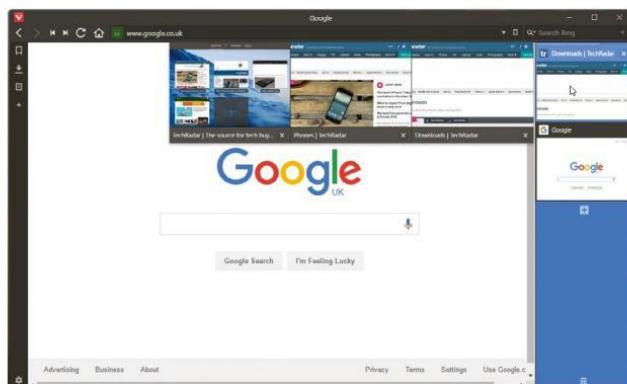
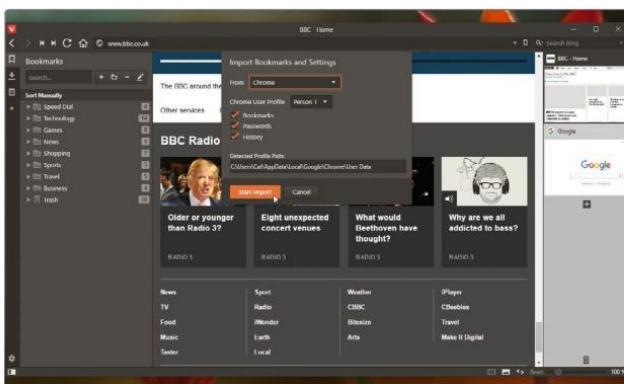
Start it up

Just pick a background for your Start page (or choose 'Custom' and choose a picture from your hard drive) and click 'Done'. You'll now see your Start page, which provides handy links to all your favourite sites. Move your mouse over one of the preview tiles and you'll see a small refresh button that lets you quickly check the site for updates without reloading it.

4

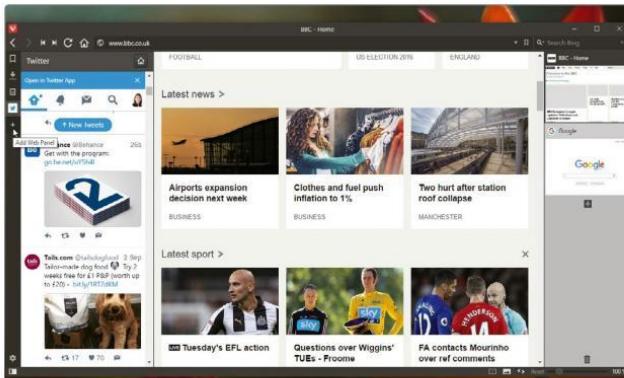
Get quick access

To remove a site from the Start page, move your mouse over its tile and click the cross that appears in the top right. To add a new site, right-click anywhere on the background and select 'Add bookmark to speed dial'. Once you've been using Vivaldi for a while, it will suggest additional sites. Add extra Start pages using the plus icon at the top between Speed Dial and Bookmarks.



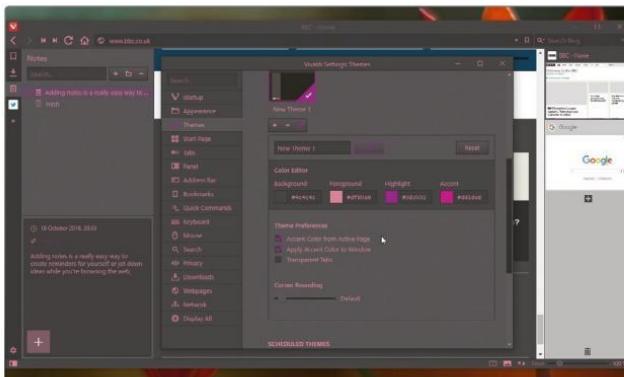
5 Make a mark

The Start page is only for the top sites you visit every day – for everything else, you still have a standard bookmarks menu. To migrate them from your old browser, click the bookmark icon on the left, then right-click and select ‘Import bookmarks’. You can add bookmarks from Microsoft Edge, Internet Explorer, Opera or Chrome, along with your saved passwords and browser history.



7 Perfect panels

If you’re fond of social media, you’ll love Vivaldi’s web panels, which let you open an extra website in a narrow sidebar beside the main window. To add a panel, just click the plus icon on the left-hand edge and enter a URL. They’re particularly great for Twitter feeds, and you can add as many as you like, then switch between them by clicking their favicons.

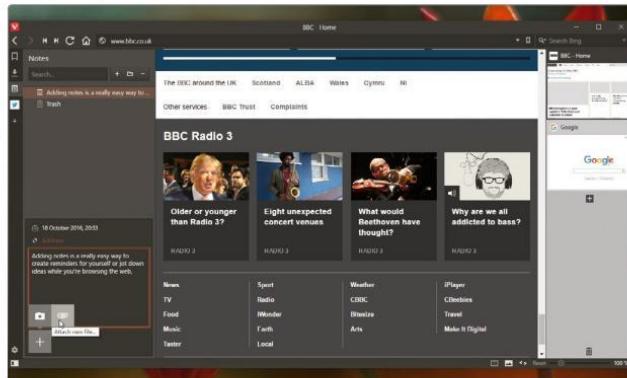


9 A fresh look

Select the cog icon at the bottom left to open Vivaldi’s extensive options menu. These are all worth investigating, but if you aren’t overly enamoured with the colour scheme you picked at the start, click ‘Themes’ and click the ‘Edit’ button to create your own. You can also set different colour schemes for different times of day.

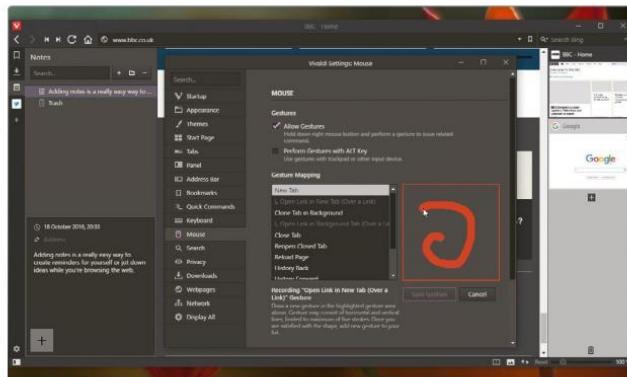
6 Essential tab tips

If you have several pages from the same site open in different tabs, you can group them together in a stack to keep them organised. Right-click a tab and select ‘Stack tabs by host’. To open one of them again, move your mouse pointer over the stacked tabs and they’ll all appear in a line. Just pick the one you want and it will open like normal.



8 Take a note

Above the plus icon for adding panels, you’ll find shortcuts to your bookmarks and downloads, as well as a handy little tool for taking notes. This works much like a slimmed-down version of Evernote – just jot down whatever’s on your mind, and move your mouse pointer over the plus button to add files or a screengrab of the web page you’re currently viewing.



10 Shortcuts and gestures

Also check out the ‘Keyboard’ and ‘Mouse’ options. These let you set your own shortcuts for everyday tasks, including custom gestures. Don’t worry if you don’t have a touchscreen – you can make **gestures** with your mouse too. Once you’re happy with your settings, close the window and they’ll be saved automatically, ready for next time you use your bespoke browser. ■

NEED MORE WINDOWS 10 TIPS?

Technology
Tips Guide

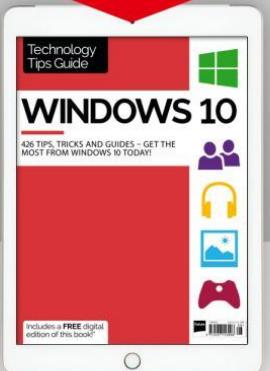


WINDOWS 10

426 TIPS, TRICKS AND GUIDES – GET THE
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Learn how to... Animate your photos



Your guide *Cat Ellis* says...

"Bring your ordinary static photos to life using free image-editing software"

At a glance

Skill level...

- Anyone can do it
- Straightforward
- Tricky in parts

Suitable for...

- Windows 10
- Windows 8.1
- Windows 7

Anybody who uses social media will have seen **GIF** animations – small, looping clips that are usually designed to bring a smile to your face.

It's easy to make your own animations; all you need is an ordinary photo and a piece of software called the GNU Image Manipulation Program (GIMP). It's a great photo editor, made and maintained entirely by a team of volunteers – and it's completely free. It includes a brilliant tool that lets you stretch, warp and otherwise distort pictures, then save the results in GIF format ready to share online.

When choosing a photo, think about which parts could be moved or distorted to good effect. Portrait photos work well, because even small changes can totally change the subject's expression – with hilarious results. Choose a few snaps to try, and let's get started.

Step-by-step | Bring your photos to life



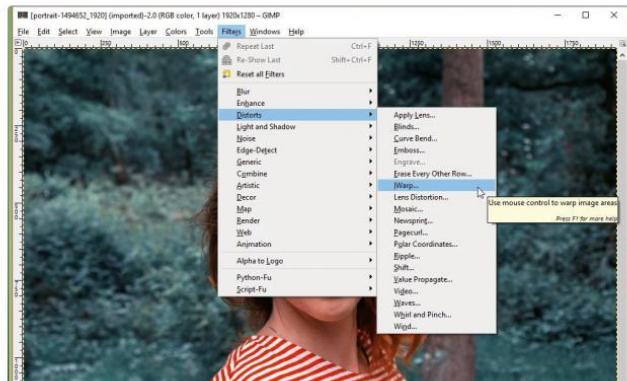
1 Get the software

First, download GIMP from www.gimp.org, run the installer and start the program. You'll notice that GIMP doesn't take over your whole screen – instead, its tools and other options appear floating over your desktop, with another floating window in the centre. It's an unusual design for Windows software, but it makes it easier to work on several pictures at once.

FILTERS
A menu full of special effects to give your photo a new look, including Instagram-style colour effects and the iWarp tool, which you can use to create animations.

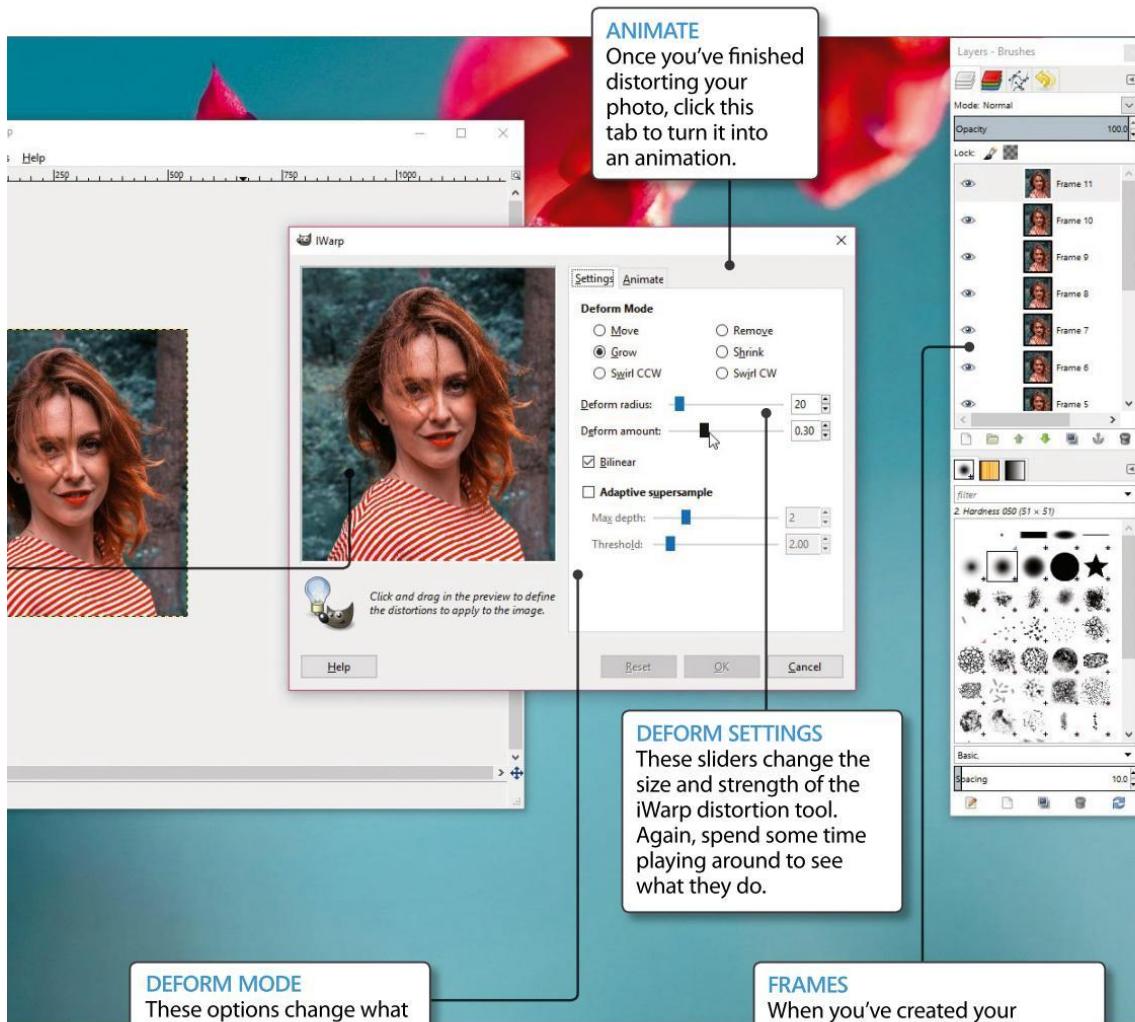
PREVIEW
Click and drag on this image to distort it. The changes will be applied to your picture when you click 'OK'.

CAT'S BEST TIP!
You're not limited to animated photos of people – pictures of animals can also be great fun.



2 Open the distortion tool

Click 'File > Open' and select your picture, then click 'Open'. Select 'Filters' from the menu above your picture and click 'Distorts > iWarp'. You'll now see a small preview of your picture, with a set of options on the right for distorting it. GIMP doesn't offer a way to zoom in on the preview, so if it looks too small and fiddly, tap [Win]+[+] button to access Windows' built-in magnifier.



Jargon buster!

► GIF

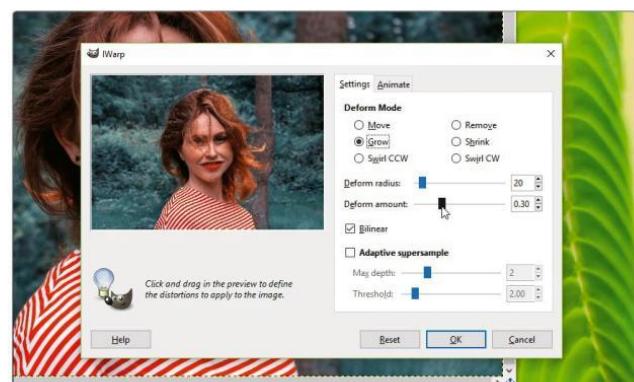
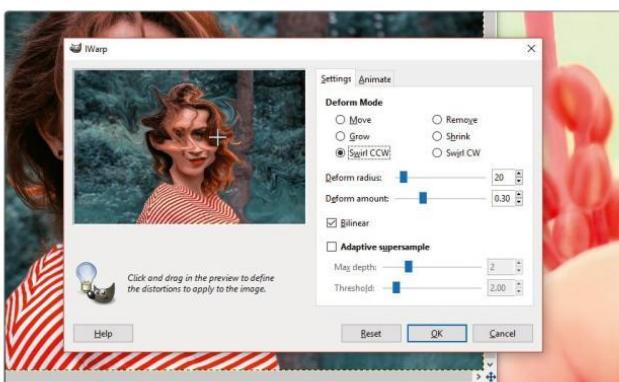
Graphics Interchange Format – an image format that supports animations made up of individual frames with a specified time delay between each one.

► Export

GIMP can save images in dozens of formats, and its export tool helps you get the best balance of quality and file size.

► Crop

To cut out a section of an image. You might do this to remove empty background space or improve the composition.

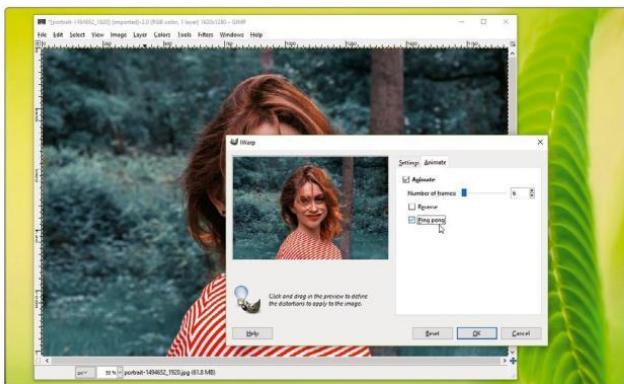


3 Try the tools

Clicking and dragging on the preview image will apply the options selected on the right. 'Move' makes the area you click appear to grow, while 'Shrink' does the opposite. 'Move' pulls part of the image in the direction you move your mouse, and the 'Swirl' options create a twisting effect, like dragging a brush through wet paint. 'Remove' undoes any distortions applied to an area.

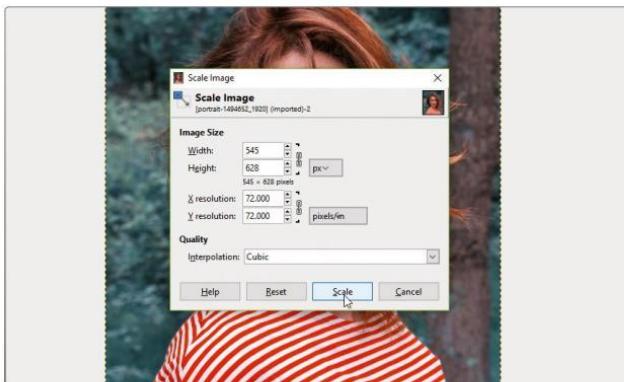
4 Play around

The 'Deform radius' changes the size of the area that's distorted when you click and drag your mouse, and 'Deform amount' changes the strength of the effect. If you're unhappy with any of your changes, hit 'Reset'. Remember, when you create your animation, the picture will shift from its original state to its distorted one, then back again.



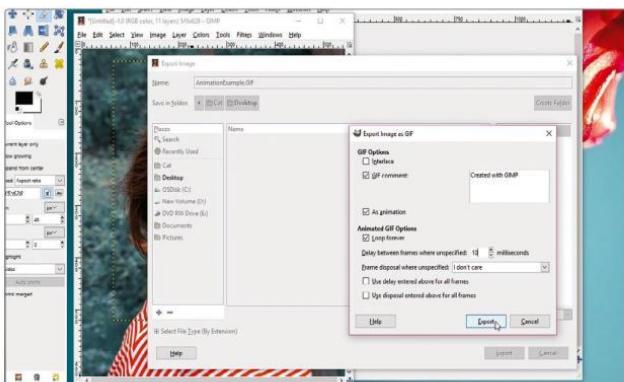
5 Set the animation options

Once happy with the results, click the 'Animate' tab. Make sure 'Animate' is selected and check the 'Ping Pong' box. This ensures your picture moves to its distorted one, then back again. Choose a number of frames for the animation – the more frames, the smoother the animation, but the larger the resulting file will be. Six should be plenty. The 'Ping Pong' option doubles this to 12.



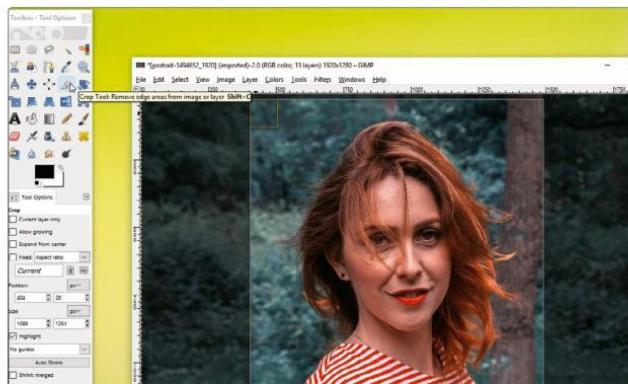
7 Resize it for Facebook

You also need to resize your picture so that it's the size you want it to appear on-screen (there's no need to make it larger, and it will load much faster). Select 'Image > Scale Image'. It's been found that the optimum height for images shared on Facebook is 628 pixels, so type this number in. The image width will update automatically to keep the proportions correct. Click 'Scale'.



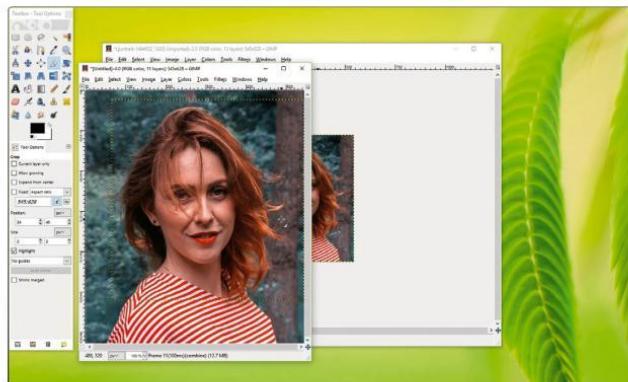
9 Export in GIF format

Select 'GIF image' from the menu towards the bottom and click 'Export'. Another options window will open – tick the box marked 'As animation' and make sure 'Loop forever' is selected. Set 'Delay between frames' to '10' (this should create a nice smooth result) and check 'Use delay entered above for all frames'. When you've finished, click 'Export'.



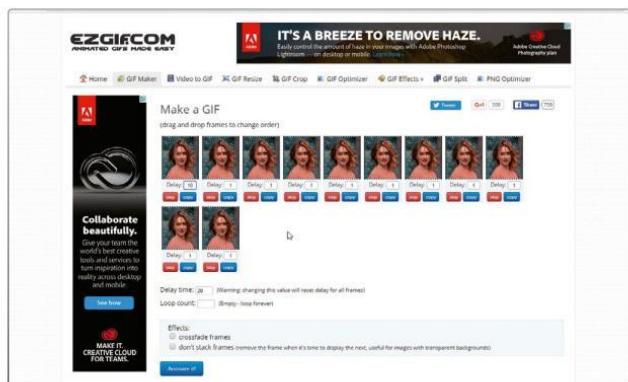
6 Crop your picture

Click 'OK' and the software will create a set of frames for your animation, which will appear in the 'Layers' panel on the top right. If you'd like to crop your image to focus on your subject and get rid of some of the background, this is the time. Select the craft knife icon from the toolbox on the left and use it to draw a rectangle over the area you'd like to keep, then click it to crop.



8 Optimise the animation

Click 'Filters > Animation > Optimize for GIF'. The software will identify the parts of each frame that don't change and cut them away so the frame underneath shows through. This reduces the size of the finished file and makes it load much faster. Now click 'File > Export', enter a name in the bar at the top (making sure it ends in .GIF) and choose a location for it to be saved.



10 Tweak timings, open and check

Go to www.ezgif.com and select 'GIF split'. Click 'Choose file' and select your exported animation, then click 'Upload'. Click 'Split it', then 'Edit animation', and specify a delay for each frame. Once you're done, click 'Animate it' and you will see your edited animation. Click 'Save' to download it. You can now close GIMP and double-click your exported GIF to see how it looks. ■

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Learn how to... Stitch images together



Your guide **Ian Evenden** says...

"Creating the perfect panoramic image is easier than you think with Microsoft's ICE software"

At a glance

Skill level...

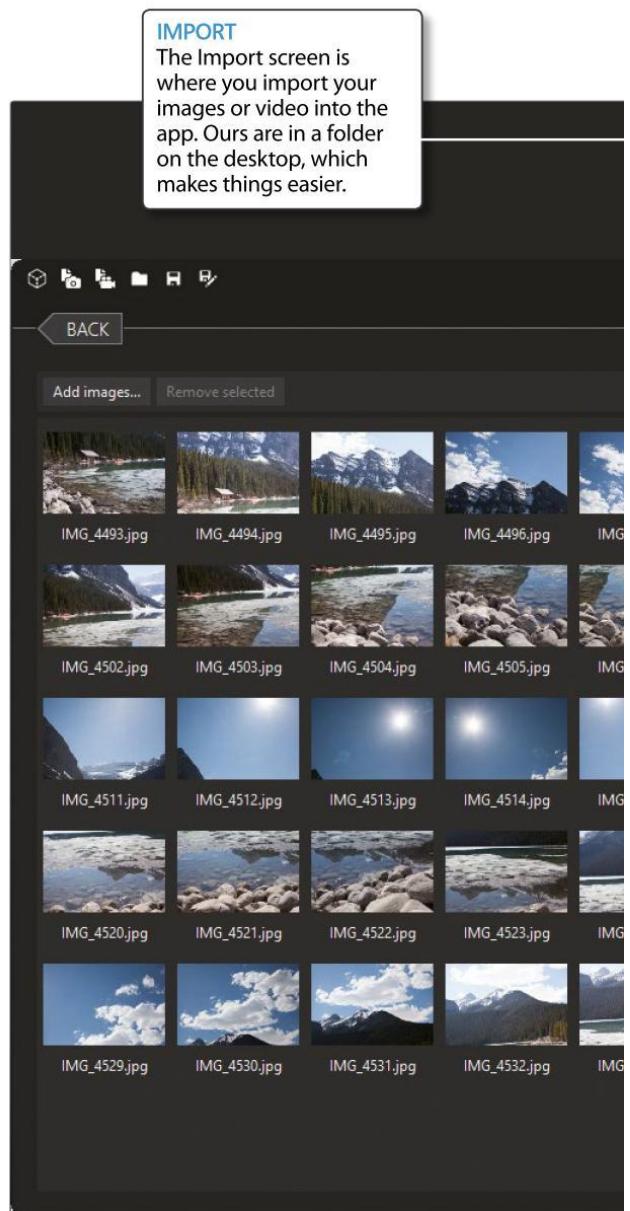
- Anyone can do it
- Straightforward
- Tricky in parts

Suitable for...

- Windows 10
- Windows 8.1
- Windows 7

Have you ever been presented with an amazing view across a lake or similar, only to find your camera lens isn't wide enough to take it in. You should still take the pictures on your phone, because there are still options for getting a great shot. Many smartphones have panorama modes, for a start. You can pan the phone across the view and the software **stitches** it into one image. Or you can do the same thing in paid-for software such as Photoshop Elements. Or, as we're going to do here, you can download Microsoft's Image Composite Editor (ICE) and create a panorama on your PC for free.

Unlike many other free apps, the ICE is a fully fledged program with no strange quirks, it's just one that's targeted at a particular niche. Let's take a look.

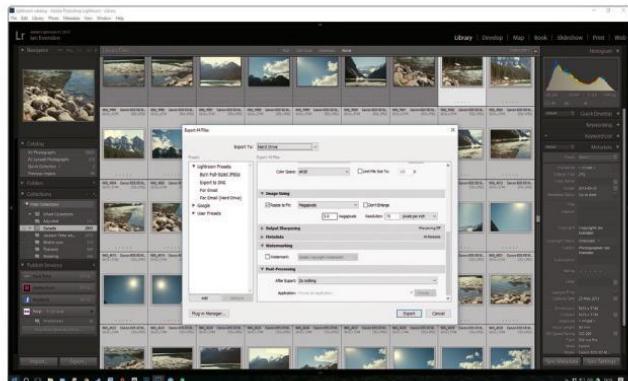


Step-by-step | Get started with ICE



1 Take the pictures

You can't edit your images together until you've taken them. Stand facing the scene you want to create a panorama of, then use your camera to take photos either in a straight line from left to right, or in a grid pattern starting in the top left and moving in a zig-zag to bottom right. It's a good idea to take more than one attempt, as it's really easy to miss a chunk of the scene out.

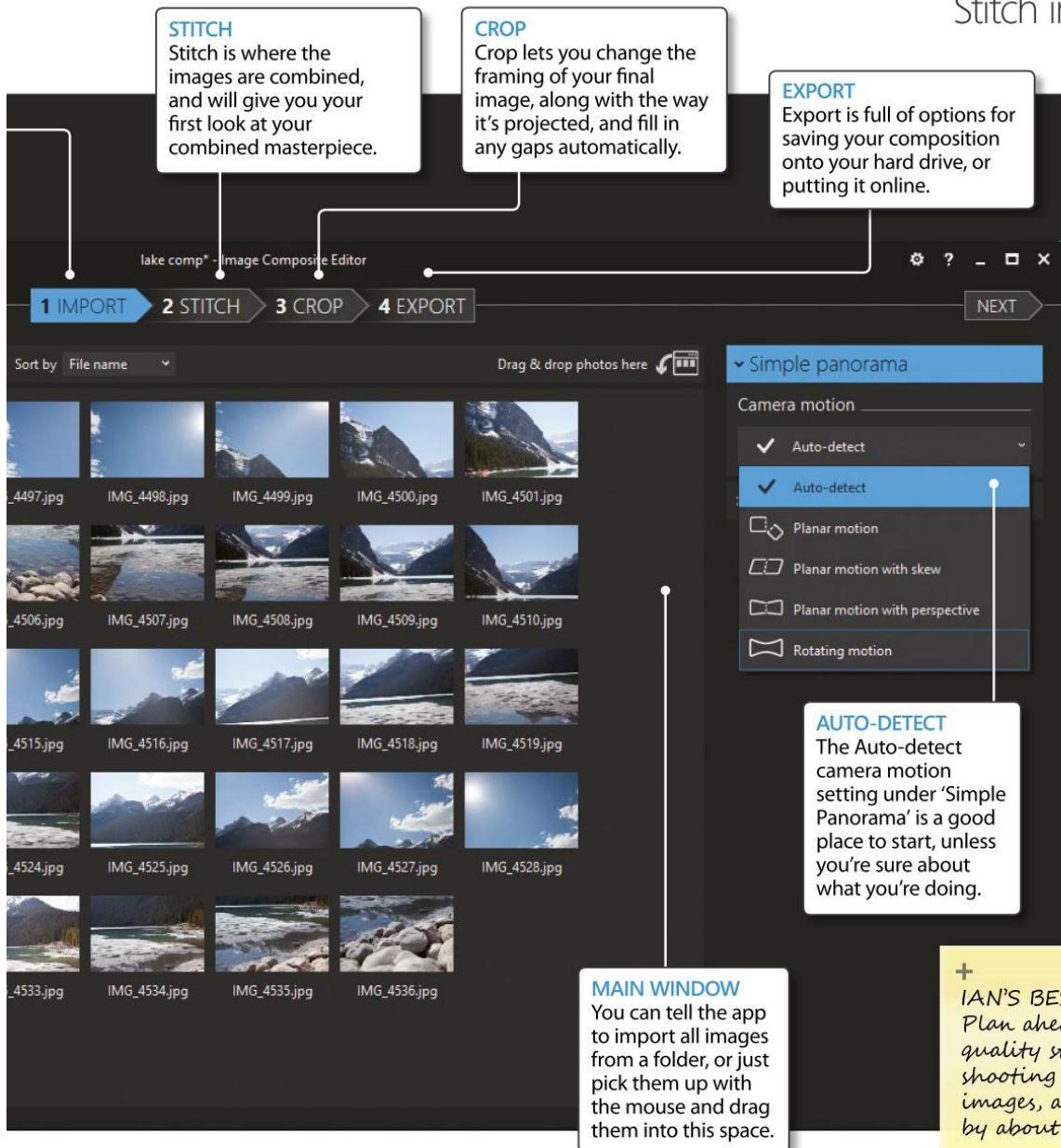


2 Export and resize

We shot our images as Raw files, which means we need to turn them into JPEGs for the ICE to work on them. At the same time, we're resizing them down to 5 **megapixels** (but the result of the stitching process will be large enough). The larger the files you work with, the longer the process will take and you can end up with a panorama that would fill an advertising billboard.

Explore

Stitch images together

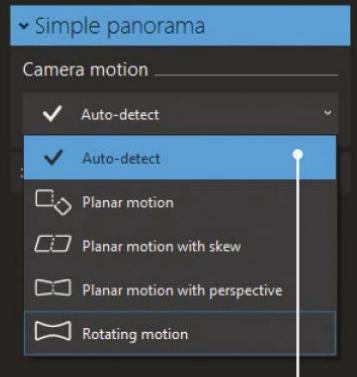


Jargon buster!

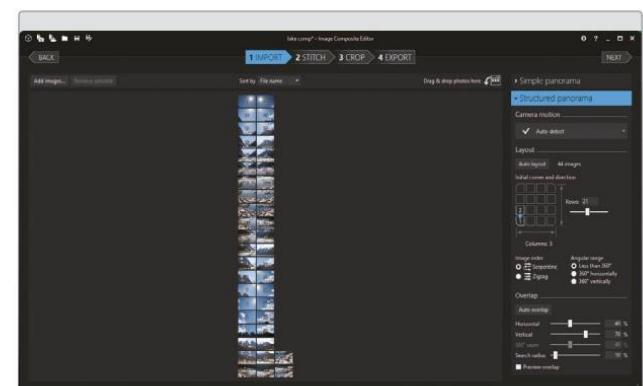
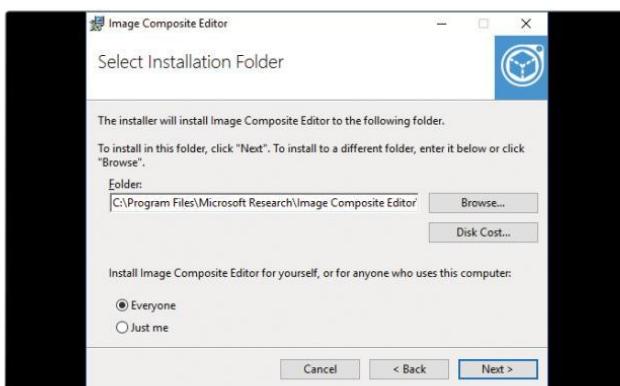
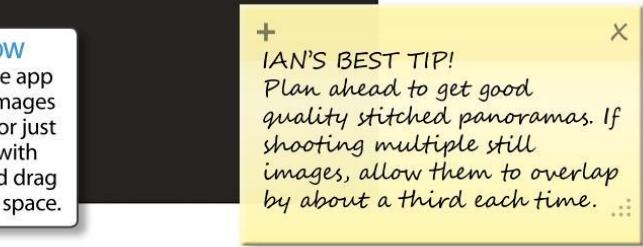
► Stitching
The art of merging multiple images together into a much larger whole. An automated process in many image-editing applications, such as Adobe Photoshop Elements.

► Photosynth
A site designed for viewing extremely large images, sometimes known as 'gigapans', which can be panned across and zoomed in and out of with the mouse wheel.

► Megapixel
A million pixels. Used as a measure of the resolution of a digital camera's sensor. Cameras in smartphones are around 16mp, while digital SLR cameras can be up to 50.



AUTO-DETECT
The Auto-detect camera motion setting under 'Simple Panorama' is a good place to start, unless you're sure about what you're doing.



3 Install ICE

Install ICE by going to <http://bit.ly/ICE-MS>. Download the version that corresponds to your version of Windows (32 or 64bit) then double-click the downloaded file to install. Once the process has completed, run the app by finding it on your Start menu. Import your JPEGs into ICE by clicking the 'Add images...' or by dragging and dropping them into the interface from a folder.

4 Settings

We've stuck with 'Simple Panorama' and 'Automatic camera-motion detection' for this tutorial. There are some advanced options under 'Structured Panorama'; but we found the automatic settings were good at detecting what we'd done with our camera. Click 'Next' to go to the next step, which will involve the app pausing for a moment while it processes your images.



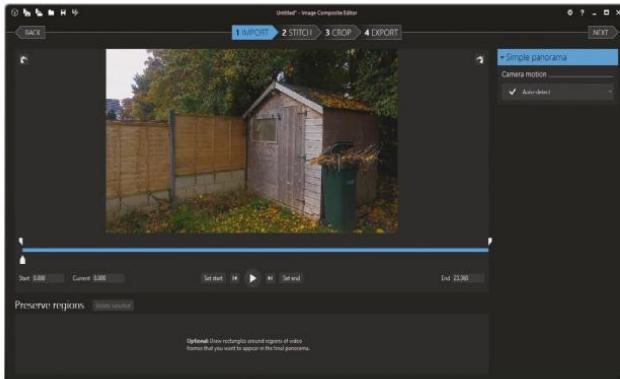
5 Projections

When the 'Aligning' and 'Compositing' progress bars have moved to the right, you'll be on the 'Stitch' screen. Our composite looks a bit bendy round the edges, and has a gap bottom left. We can sort that out. Auto detection has selected the 'Transverse Mercator' projection for the composite, but try out the others – you can always put it back if you don't like the result.



7 Crop

On the 'Crop' screen, you can choose how much of your panorama is retained in the final image. Drag the rectangular box so it encompasses most of the image, but crop out any large gaps. We've left a small gap at the left to take advantage of the 'Auto Complete' feature, which will fill them in. Click the button at the top left to set it going. It usually does a reasonable job.



9 Use a video

It's also possible to make a panorama from a video file. Shoot your video as if you were rotating on the spot, trying to keep it smooth. The cropping and Auto Complete processes can smooth out a bit of wobble, but if you can keep the camera level while moving it, you'll end up with a better result. Import the file and let ICE process it just as you would a series of still images.



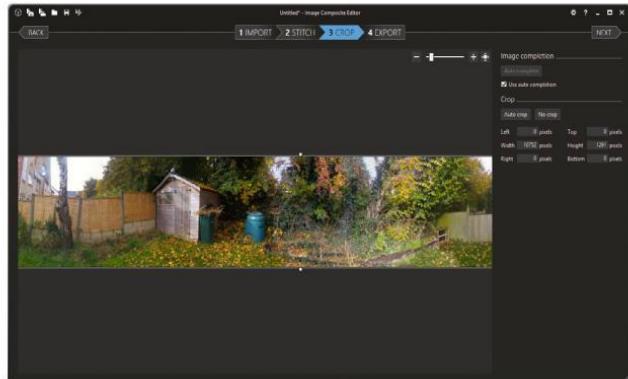
6 Zoom and adjust

We've stayed with 'Transverse Mercator' but zoomed in on the image using the controls to the top left, and straightened the horizon by dragging the mouse into the area next to the grid where the pointer becomes a two-headed arrow. Try dragging the image around, to see the effect – it can introduce or remove distortion. Click 'Next' to move on to the next screen.



8 Export and share

Auto Complete led to some repetition in the rocks, so we've tightened the crop to remove it. Moving on to the 'Export' screen, we get options to save our image out as a JPEG (it's 75mp; if we'd stuck with our original 20mp images, the result would be over 300mp) or upload it to the online services Deep Zoom or Photosynth, which are used for sharing really huge images.



10 Video processing

When using a video you can mark out important areas on the 'Import' screen that you want to keep in the final panorama. Your composite image is likely to be longer and thinner, so take extra care at the cropping stage, making use of Auto Complete to fill gaps rather than crop out details. You can save your panorama as a JPEG, our 360-degree file came out at 14.6 megapixels. ■

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Learn how to... Set up your network printer



Your guide **Nick Peers** says...

"It's easy to get confused with installing a wireless printer – our guide will show you how to avoid the pitfalls and get it up and running"

At a glance

Skill level...

- ▶ Anyone can do it
Straightforward
- Tricky in parts

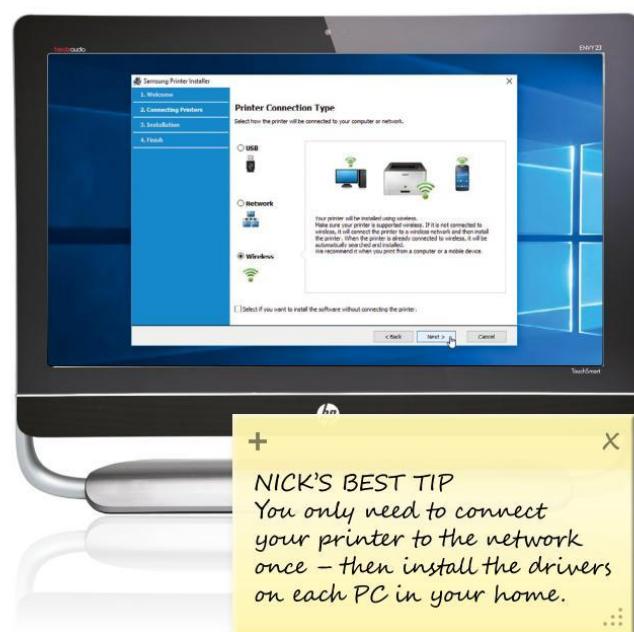
Suitable for...

- Windows 10
- Windows 8.1
- Windows 7

Once upon a time, installing a printer involved plugging it into your PC, installing the drivers, printing a test page and riding off into the sunset, printouts in hand. If you wanted to give other computers in your household access to the printer, you shared it through your main PC.

However, the rise of affordable network printers – particularly wireless ones – means everyone can access your printer anytime from anywhere in your home. In theory. In practice, judging by the number of emails we've received over the years, it can often be a confusing process.

Thankfully, you can distil the process down to just a few straightforward steps, which should work for the vast majority of wireless (and Ethernet) printers out there. Read on to find out how to turn a frustrating set-up process into something more simple.



Step-by-step | Install your network printer

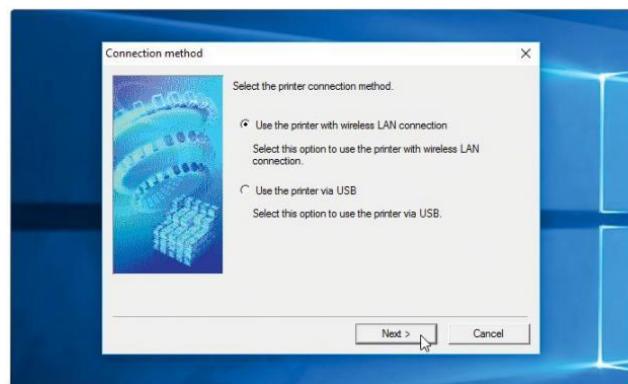


1 Connect wired printer to network

First things first, you need to physically connect your PC to your network. If it connects via Ethernet cable, plug the cable into your printer and connect it to your router or switch (if your printer's too far away from the router, consider investing in a HomePlug starter kit – £30 buys you a Solwise AV 500 kit from www.broadbandbuyer.co.uk, for example). Now jump to Step 6.

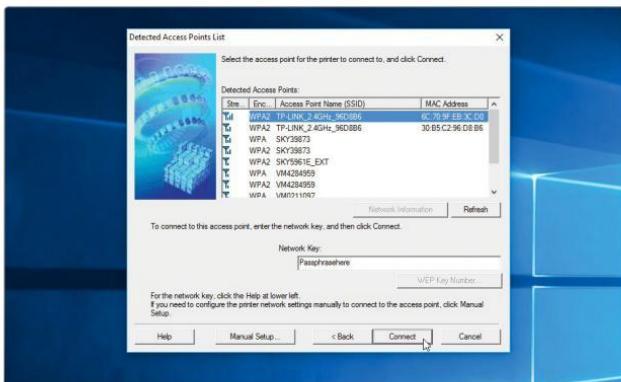
2 Connect wireless printer

If your printer and router both have WPS buttons, then the simplest thing is switch on your printer and press the WPS button on it. Next, move to your router and press the WPS button on that within two minutes of pressing the first button. Check your printer manual or quick set-up guide to see what confirmation you'll receive that the printer is connected. Now jump to Step 6.



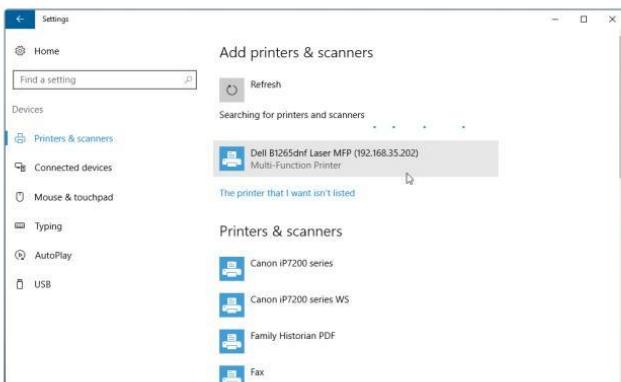
3 Use control panel

If your printer has a control panel, you should be able to use this to manually connect to your router. Look for a Set-up or Network menu, then locate the wireless set-up option. Follow this through to first detect and select your Wi-Fi network if it appears (look for an option to manually enter it if not), and then enter the router's WEP key or WPA passphrase to connect. Go to Step 6.



5 Finish USB-based install

Complete the set-up process – if the printer isn't able to determine your wireless settings automatically (likely if your PC is connected to your network via Ethernet cable), you should be prompted to enter these manually or use the wizard to select your Wi-Fi network from a list before entering the passphrase or key to complete the connection.

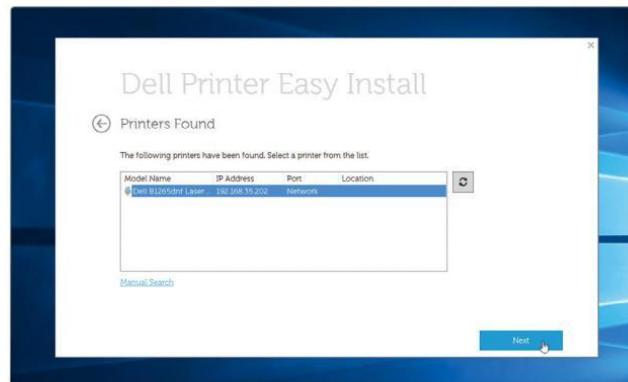


7 Install through Windows

If you only need basic functionality, or Windows 10 drivers aren't available from your manufacturer, make sure it's switched on, then click 'Start > Settings > Devices', then click 'Add a printer or scanner' and wait for Windows to search. Your printer should show up if connected to the network, so select it and follow the prompts to complete the basic driver installation.

4 Connect (temporarily) through USB

You should be able to connect the printer to your network through your PC if necessary – you'll need a USB cable. Don't connect up straightaway; instead download the latest version of the printer software from your manufacturer and follow the set-up wizard, connecting when prompted. Look out for options regarding connection – be sure to choose the 'Wireless' option.



6 Install manufacturer drivers

If you've connected your printer to the network without having to download any software, you now have two choices about adding the printer to your PC. The preferred approach is to source drivers and software directly from the manufacturer, either by using the printer CD or by visiting its website for the latest version – look for your printer under 'Support' or 'Downloads'.



8 Locate compatible drivers

If Windows can't find drivers, revisit your manufacturer's website and look for drivers from a previous version of Windows. If separate 32-bit and 64-bit drivers exist, choose the version that matches your system (right-click 'Start' and choose 'System' to get this). Download and run the setup process – you shouldn't need to use 'Compatibility' Mode – hopefully you'll have success! ■

Learn how to...

Share files, media and more with HomeGroups



Your guide **Nick Peers** says...

"HomeGroups simplify the sharing of files, printers, music, video and other media – find out how to use them to link up all your networked PCs"

At a glance

Skill level...

Anyone can do it

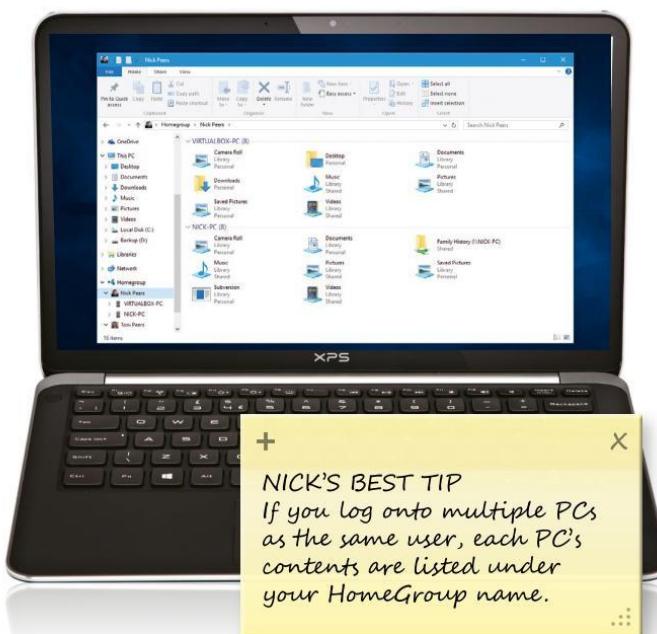
- ▶ Straightforward
- Tricky in parts

Suitable for...

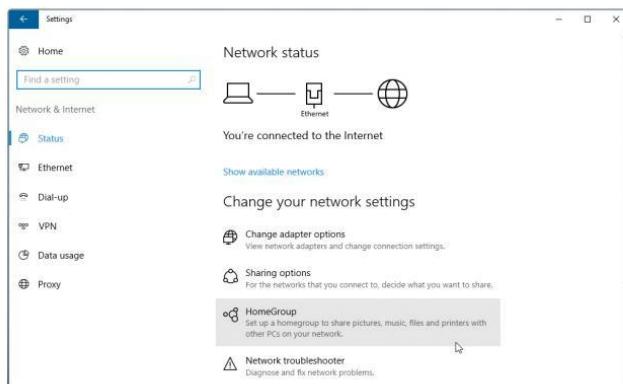
-  Windows 10
-  Windows 8.1
-  Windows 7

HomeGroups are Microsoft's solution to the tricky task of sharing files, printers and devices over networks. Once set up, they make it easy to choose what to share with others, plus access shared content from across your network, all without having to log onto shared folders or get bogged down in tricky network settings.

Once set up, you can easily browse the contents of other people's PCs through File Explorer – just expand the HomeGroups entry in the left-hand pane to get started. There's more good news too: HomeGroups don't lock out other platforms, so MacOS and Linux users can access any folder you share with your HomeGroup – they'll appear as regular shared folders, and you'll need your Windows username or Microsoft Account email address and password to access them. Read on to find out how...

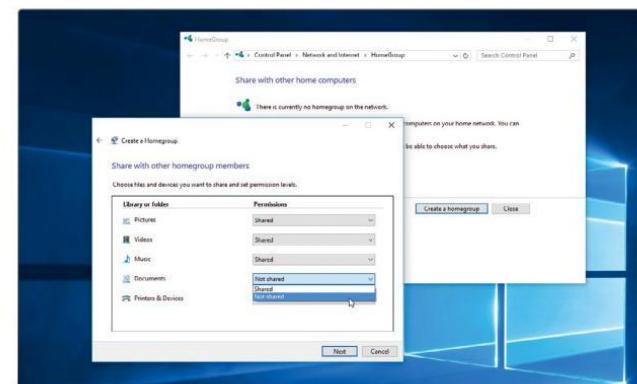


Step-by-step | Set up and manage a HomeGroup



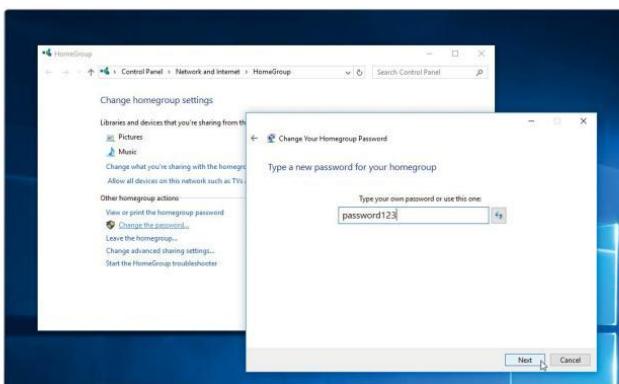
1 Access HomeGroup settings

The HomeGroup Control Panel can be accessed in different ways – you can click 'Start > Settings > Network & Internet' in the Anniversary Edition, for example, or search for 'homegroup' in the Cortana Search box. If you have an earlier version of Windows, right-click the network icon in the Taskbar Notification area and choose 'Open Network and Sharing Centre > HomeGroup'.



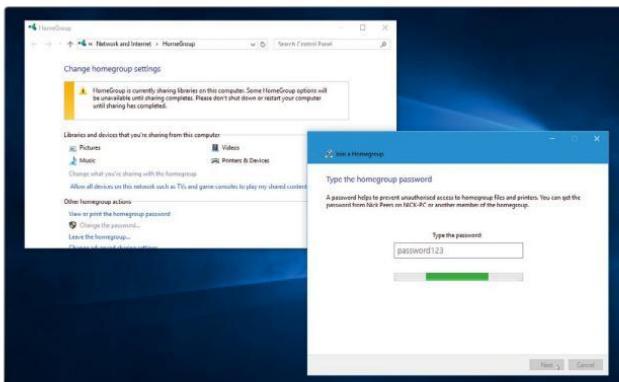
2 Create a HomeGroup

Each network can support one HomeGroup at a time. If one isn't present, click the 'Create a homegroup' button to get started. Click 'Next' to choose what libraries (Pictures, Videos, Music and Documents), USB-connected printers and devices you want to share (you can change these settings later). Make your choices, then click 'Next'. Make a note of the password and click 'Finish'.



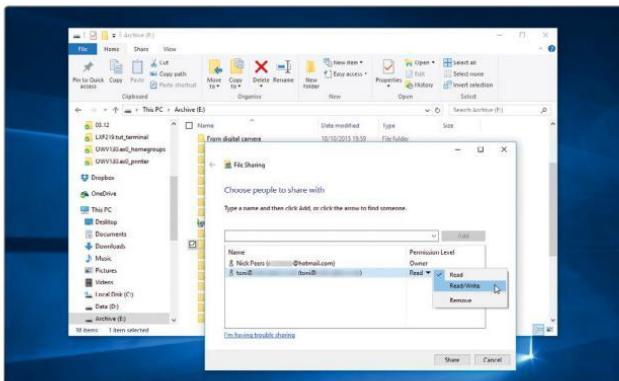
3 Change password

The default password is randomly generated – it's a strong one, so sharing this with others is the best step forward, but if you want to change it you can from the main HomeGroup Control Panel – click 'Change the password...' twice, then type a more memorable (but still strong) password or click the 'Refresh' button to randomly generate another. Click 'Next' followed by 'Finish'.



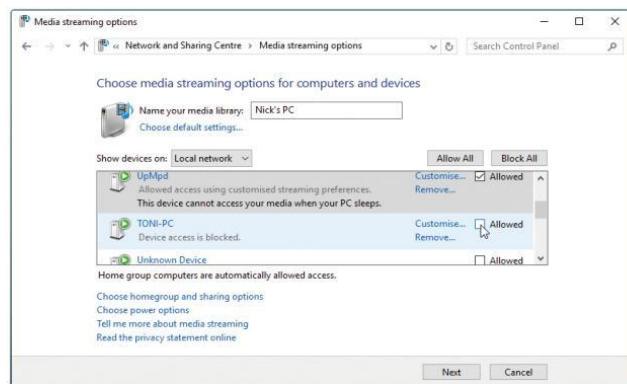
5 Join a HomeGroup

Share the password with other members of your network and steer them to the same HomeGroup Control Panel. They'll see a different screen – instead of creating a HomeGroup, they'll be invited to join yours using the password you generated earlier. Once they've joined, they can choose which libraries and devices to share from their PC and configure media access as you did.



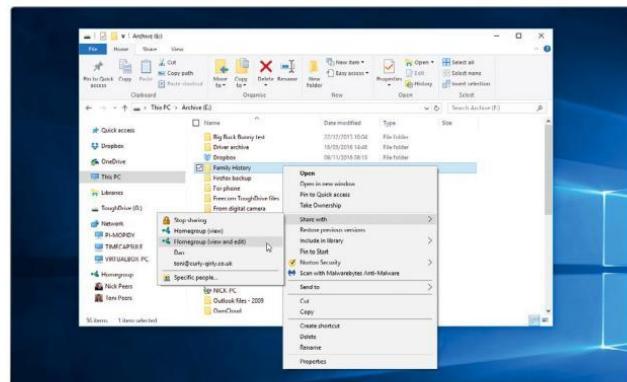
7 Share outside the HomeGroup

You can also share folders in the usual way – right-click the folder and select 'Share with > Specific people...'. Start typing a username or click the down button to select a person from the list given ('Everyone' basically makes the folder publicly visible and available). Once selected, click the person's entry to determine their level of access, then repeat for others. Click 'Share'.



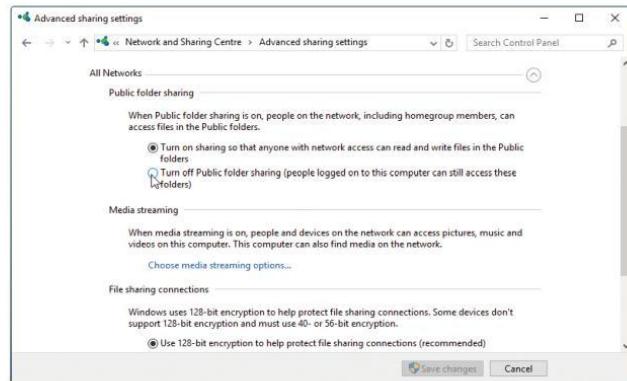
4 Share media

If you'd like network media devices to be able to directly play music, photos and video you've shared, click 'Allow all devices on this network such as TVs and game consoles to play my shared content'. Turn on media streaming, then choose a library name to identify your media on the network, plus choose which devices have access to your media from those detected.



6 Share more folders

Want to share a specific folder with your HomeGroup or another specific user (for access from a non-Windows 7 device)? Browse to the folder in File Explorer, then right-click and select 'Share with'. Choose 'Homegroup (view)' for read-only access, or 'Homegroup (view and edit)' for full access. The folder will then appear under your name in the HomeGroup folder.



8 Tweak HomeGroup settings

Return to the HomeGroup Control Panel to make changes to your HomeGroup. Most of the options are self-explanatory – note, if you change the password, you'll need to communicate this to everyone in your HomeGroup. Click 'Change advanced sharing settings...' to access more options – expand 'All Networks' for additional tweaks, including disabling Public Folder sharing. ■

Learn how to...

Capture your screen with Icecream Recorder



Your guide **Rob Mead-Green** says...

"Discover the easy way to capture any part of your PC's screen – even video – with our guide to this easy-to-use app"

At a glance

Skill level...

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

Suitable for...

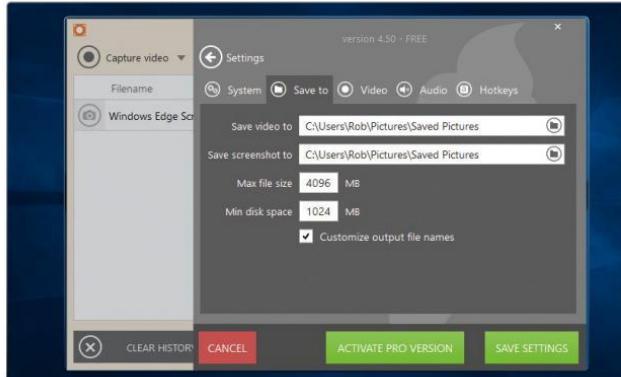
- Windows 10
- Windows 8.1
- Windows 7

While you can easily capture a still image of your entire Windows 10 desktop by using the Print Screen command on your PC, Icecream Recorder (www.icecreamsapps.com) gives you a whole lot more control. You can use it to capture specific parts of a screen and even record video-streams from the web. It's also useful for when you want to show someone how to do something – like in a tutorial such as this. You can get the app to record your every move, along with a voiceover, which you can then save as a video that you can share.

Although Icecream Recorder is free, to get the best out of it we suggest the paid-for Pro version. It allows you to do more, including capturing grabs in a variety of file formats, making it easier for you to share them as widely as possible. For now, we'll get going with the free version!

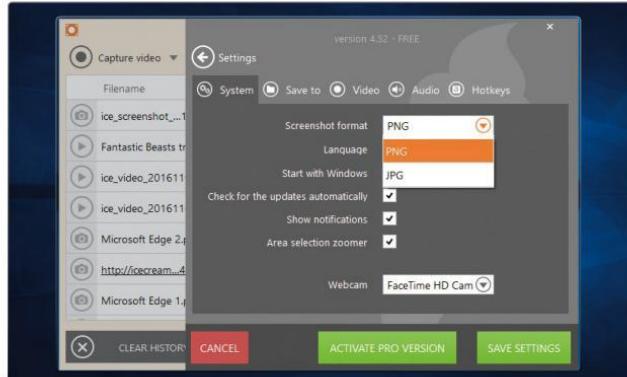


Step-by-step | Start using Icecream Recorder



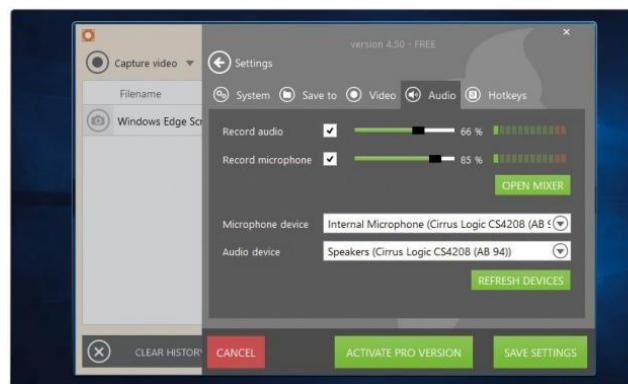
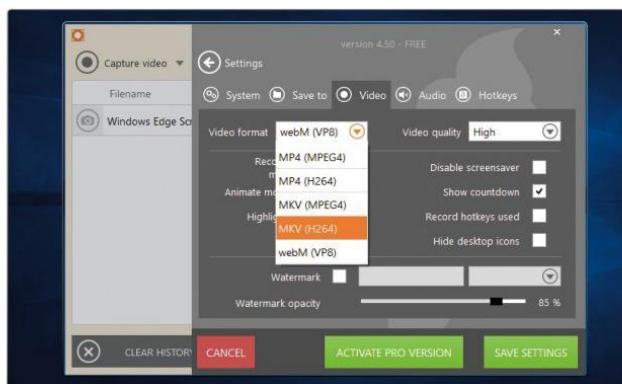
1 Set your preferences

The first thing you should do when you open Icecream Recorder is decide where you want your screenshots and videos to be saved. Head to 'Settings > Save To' and choose the default folders to use. This could be your 'Pictures > Saved Pictures' folder or to the cloud on OneDrive. Select 'Customise output file names' if you want to name each screen capture.



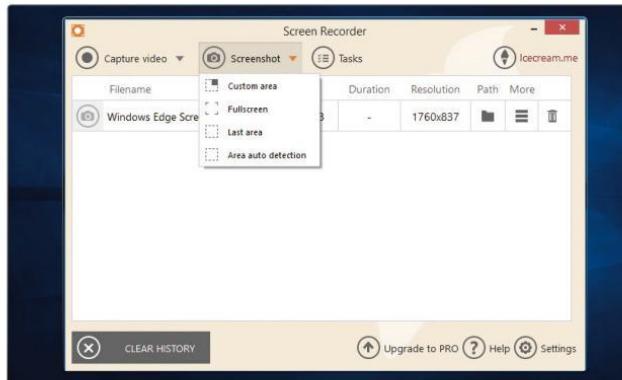
2 Choose your screenshot format

Icecream Recorder enables you save screenshots in different formats, so under 'Settings > System', choose which one you'd like to use: PNG or JPEG. The 'System' tab also enables you to choose whether to automatically open the apps when you log in, check for updates, show notifications and more. You can customise screengrab shortcuts under the 'Hotkeys' tab on the right.



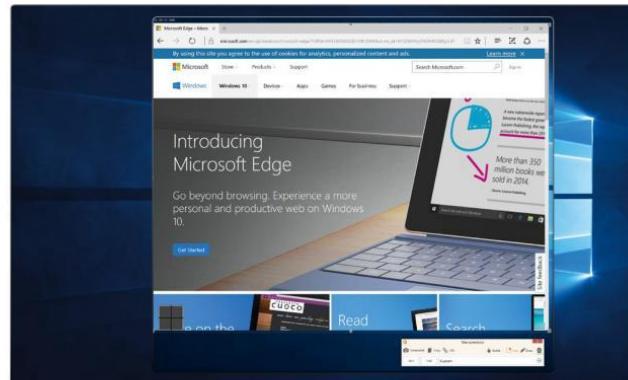
3 Choose your video format

Head to 'Settings > Video' and select the video format dropdown to choose which format you want to record in. If you're using the free version, you'll be limited to the default, which is WebM (VP8). You can also set the video-recording quality and add a countdown timer so you'll be ready for when recording starts.



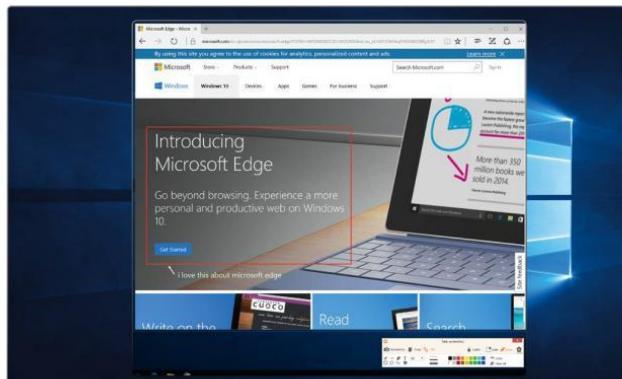
4 Choose your audio format

Before you begin capturing screenshots, choose your audio options. These give you the chance to capture sound from what you're recording on screen, as well as from your microphone. You can also adjust audio-recording levels, with further sound tweaks available when you select 'Open Mixer'. You can also choose how sounds are played back too.



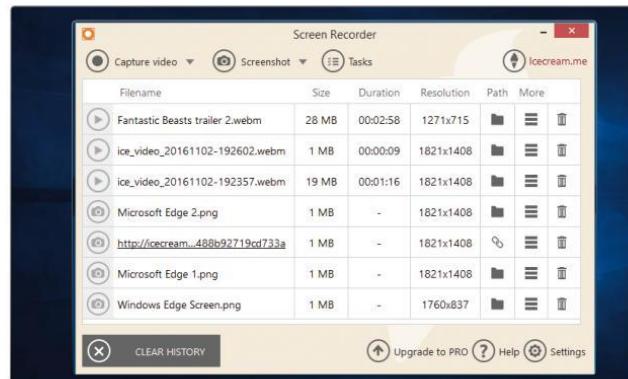
5 Pick a screenshot style

Icecream Recorder gives you lots of flexibility when it comes to capturing stuff on screen. You can record events Fullscreen, choose a Custom area, recapture the last area you selected or use Area auto detection. If you choose this last option, the app tries to identify different screen elements, which you can mouse over then select.



6 Create a custom screenshot

To choose a specific area of a screen choose 'Custom', then use your mouse to click and drag to draw the capture area. You can adjust the area using the grab handles or set its dimensions in 'Take Screenshot'. When you're set, tap 'Screenshot'. You'll be prompted to name your screenshot and save it to your default folder. The process for recording video is the same.



7 Annotate your screen

To annotate screenshots, select 'Draw' from the 'Take Screenshot' window. You can add shapes, change their colour and border weight as well as add text. If you're unhappy with where you've placed a shape or want to resize it, you can do so by selecting the cursor tool in the same window. You can also add multiple annotations in steps.

8 Share your screens

Anything you capture with Icecream Recorder is logged under 'Task' in the main window. Here you'll find details for each one including its file size and resolution. Selecting a task will open it for you to view, with other options available on the right-hand side. Selecting 'More' enables you to copy the screenshot to the clipboard. To share a screenshot, open it, then choose 'Share'. ■

Learn how to...

Record your family history



Your guide **Nick Peers** says...

"My Family Tree is a great tool for building and managing your family tree. Find out how"

At a glance

Skill level...

- Anyone can do it
- Straightforward
- Tricky in parts

Suitable for...

- Windows 10
- Windows 8.1
- Windows 7

History can be boring without context, and what better context could there be than to place your ancestors at the heart of it? Genealogy is an exciting way to learn about where you came from and reconnect with your family.

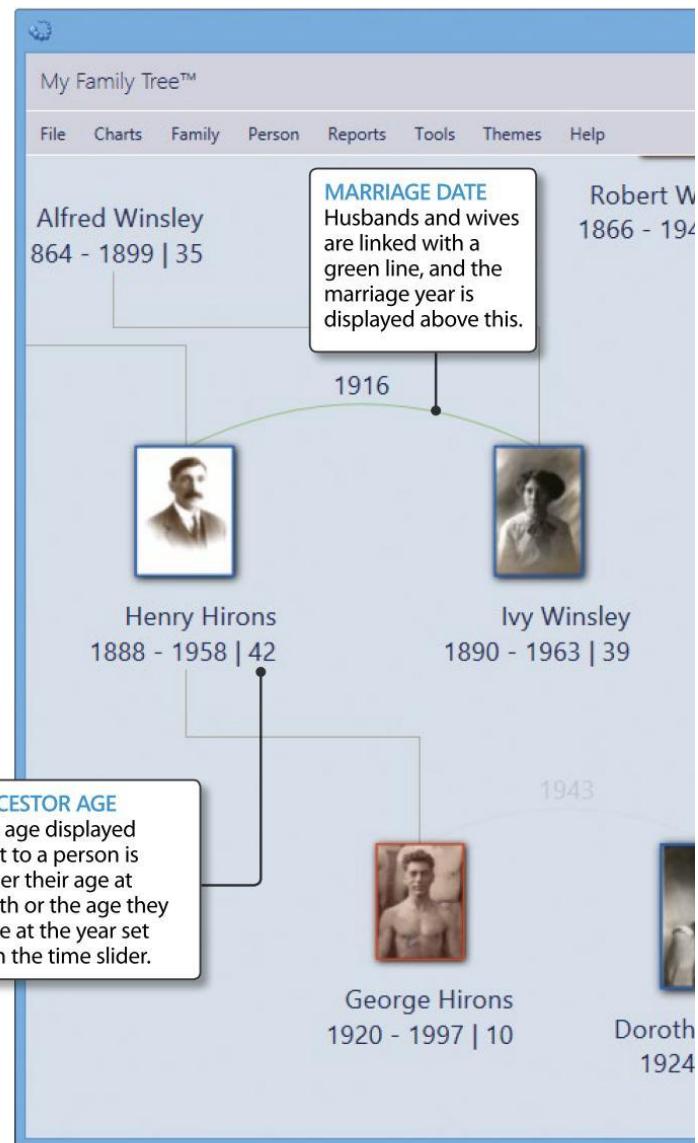
Family history software is plentiful, but most packages cost money. If you're dipping your toe into the genealogical waters, then My Family Tree is one of the best free tools you'll find for recording and managing your family's rich history. The program offers all the core tools you need, helping you build your tree, flesh out your ancestors' lives with events and attributes, attach old family photos and video, and even preserve stories handed down through the generations. Thanks to powerful reporting and analytical tools, you can take your research to the next level too. You can even customise its appearance with **themes**. Read on...

Step-by-step | Record your family history

The screenshot shows the 'Products' section of the My Family Tree website. It features a large download button for 'My Family Tree' (x64) and a smaller one for 'My Family Tree (x86)'. Below these are sections for 'System requirements' (Windows 8.1, Windows 7, .NET 4.5.2), 'Release notes' (Build 4.0.2, Date: 05 October 2014), and a 'Version history' link. A 'Downloads' window is also visible, showing a list of files including 'Portable apps', 'Program settings', 'Quick links', 'Support PCs', 'Videos', and 'Homegroup'.

1 Download, install, set up

Go to www.chronoplexsoftware.com, click on Products and click 'Get it free' next to My Family Tree. If you're unsure, look in Settings/System/About to find out if you need the 32-bit or 64-bit version. Once downloaded, double-click the setup file and follow the setup wizard to the end. Once complete, leave 'Launch My Family Tree' ticked and click 'Finish'.



The screenshot shows the 'Add the First Family Member' dialog box. It asks for gender (Male selected), name(s) (Nicholas Daniel), surname (Peers), birth date (01/01/1972), and birth place (Guildford, Surrey, United Kingdom). A date and time picker is open, showing June 1972. A calendar is also visible at the bottom.

2 Set up new tree

When the main menu appears, click 'Start a new family tree'. You'll be prompted to add your first family member – typically yourself. Enter your gender, then add your forename(s), surname, date of birth and birth place (use the format town, county, country) and click 'Add'. You'll see yourself appear in the centre of the main screen with your details in the right-hand pane.

Explore

Record your family history

NICK'S BEST TIP!
Visit <http://maps.google.com>, right-click the red marker and click 'What's here?' to get its latitude and longitude.

TIME SLIDER
The time slider lets you view your tree as it stood in a specific year, greying out events and people born after this date.

CHART CONTROLS
The spanner button lets you customise your tree's appearance and what's shown and the cog button lets you switch views.

EDIT CONTROLS
The currently selected person is displayed in this pane. Use the various options to add more detail and media to their tree entry.

Dorothy Ann Pink

Name and age
Dorothy Ann Pink
Born
01/08/1924 - 31/08/1924
Perth, Western Australia,...

Details Photos and story
Relationships Video and audio
Genetics Attachments

Create relationship
Add mother

Family (459) Family data

Name	Born	Died	Age
Nicholas Dani...	1972	-	41
Mary Elli Peers	1912	1967	54
Daisy Annie P...	1888	-	
Mary Phillips	1876	-	
Eliza Hirons	1850	-	
Eli Tibbles	1878	1958	80
Alice Mary Cal...	1909	1996	86
John James E...	1874	-	
Frederick Peers	1874	1909	35
David M...	1852	1908	55
Anna M...	-	1841	2
Robert M...	-	-	
Jos...	-	-	

FAMILY VIEW
Use the search box to locate a person in your tree, then click on them to make them the tree's focal point.

Jargon buster!

► Attachments
Attachments allow you to link any file to an individual, and are typically scanned documents, such as birth certificates.

► Pedigree tree
A horizontal diagram that shows a selected individual on the left and a set number of generations of their direct ancestors on the right.

► Theme
My Family Tree supports the use of different themes, which you can use to change its appearance for any reason.

3 Edit personal details

After saving your file for the first time (select 'File > Save', then choose a folder and name for your file), click the 'Details' button underneath your avatar to record more information about yourself. Start by clicking the little map icon next to your birthplace – you can record the exact Latitude and Longitude of your birthplace if you wish (see my best tip, above, for details).

Nicholas Daniel Peers

Edit Details

Gender: Male Restriction: Read only
Name: Nicholas Daniel Peers
Birth date: 1972 Living:
Edit birth order
Birth place: Guildford, Surrey, United Kingdom
Place: Description: Guildford, Surrey, United Kingdom
Latitude: 51.236107
Longitude: -0.557657
Edit more facts
Done

4 Add more facts

Click 'Edit more facts' to add extra attributes (such as education or nationality) and events (such as christening, census or emigration) by clicking the appropriate button. Then click the event on the left to fill in the details, such as details, date and place. Use the 'Address' field to record an exact street address and contact details. Add as many facts as you wish to include.

Attributes and Events

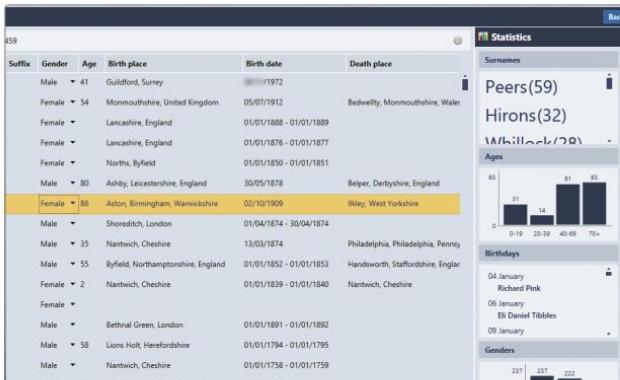
	Address	Age at eve
United Kingdom	Grizedale College	0 years 0 m
United Kingdom	Lancaster University	20 years 2 m
United Kingdom		21 years 6 m
East Somerset, United Kingdom	30, Monmouth Street Bath	25 years 10
United Kingdom	6, Stuart Close Trowbridge	31 years 6 m

Add an attribute
Add Occupation
Add an event
Add Graduation
Birth
Death
Cremation
Burial
Retirement
Emigration
Immigration
Graduation
Census
Event
Probate
Will
Naturalization
Adoption



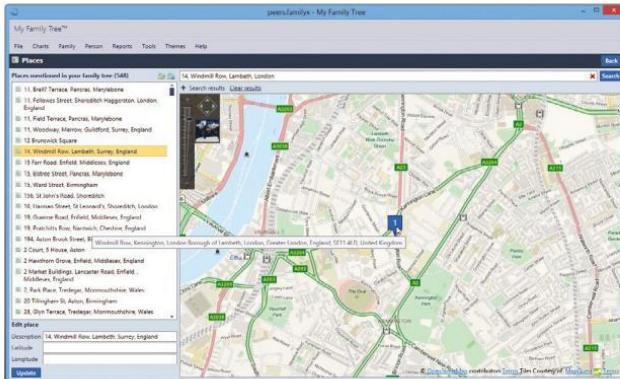
5 Attach photos

Click 'Back', then click 'Photos and story' to upload photos of yourself, or '**Attachments**' to link other files. Either drag them into the space provided, or click 'Add > Scan new image' to scan them in. Add as many as you like, then click one to add information such as date, title and caption. Select 'Edit' to view the photo's properties and editor toolbar to make further changes.



7 Family statistics

Once your tree is well established, packed with lots of information and photos, My Family Tree provides a number of useful tools for analysing and viewing it all. Start by clicking the 'Family data' button in the right-hand pane. You'll be shown a list of all individuals on the left, and some handy stats and graphs on the right. Select 'Family > Statistics' for even more useful stats.



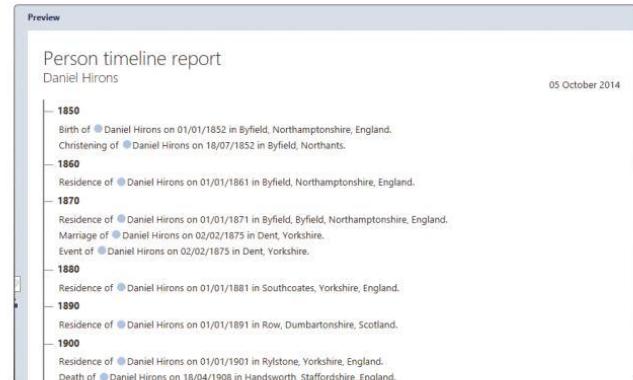
9 Plot your ancestors on a map

Open the Family menu for more analytical options – we particularly like the mapping tools found under 'Places'. Select a place in the left-hand pane, then click the 'Search' button to try and locate it on the map. If no results are found, try refining your search terms or Googling the street address to see if there are any records about what happened on the street.



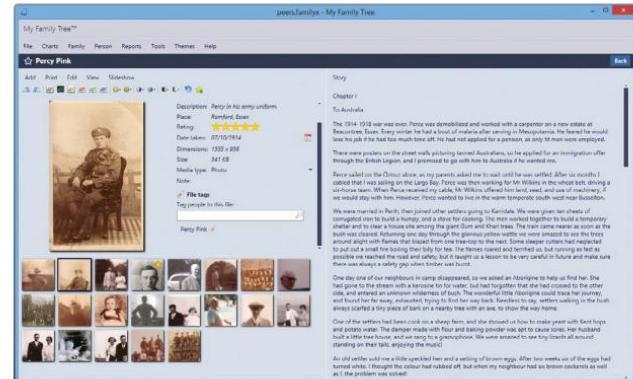
6 Build your tree

Click 'Back', then click the arrow beside 'Create relationship' to choose the next person in your tree. This is typically someone related to you directly, but you can select 'Unrelated'. Fill in their details and add photos as before. If they're present in a photo you've already uploaded (say a wedding photo), you can edit the photo and use the 'File tags' field to link the photo to them.



8 Generate reports

My Family Tree also provides a large collection of reports – click the 'Reports' menu to access them. Reports can be on a family, individual or topic, such as birthdays or places. Click the 'Preview' button to see what it looks like, then click 'Customise' to refine it further by choosing which options to include or leave out. Click 'Save' to save it as a web page, or 'Print' to print it out.



10 And there's more

With the basics covered, you can tap into more useful features: record free-form narratives about individuals in the 'Photos and Story' section, or click 'Genetics' to record information including eye and hair colour. It's also possible to switch the main view to a **pedigree tree**; click 'Settings' and choose 'Ancestors tree' to do so. Whatever your needs, My Family Tree has it covered. ■

THE **WINDOWS 10** **DIY** **SUPPORT** **MANUAL**

If you've got a problem and nobody else can solve it,
look a little closer to home

When it comes to tech, a little knowledge goes a long way. Windows 10, especially as it becomes more mature, is growing in stability, and it's a long way ahead of its predecessors but – and it's a big but – it is still beset by little niggles and gripes that can make it difficult to use. But you're the master of your own domain, and you can be the master of your own PC. Those problems can be banished by a little knowledge, either of the right thing to do or the right place to look. And, while we here at *Windows Help & Advice* endeavour to bring you the best

fixes and tweaks on a regular basis – and our Support team solves very specific issues – we can't be there for you every minute of the day.

What we *can* do, however, is bring you a collection of the most common Windows 10 problems and the best ways to solve them. We've broken them up into categories to help you find your way around. Look out for **highlighted words** – we've pulled these out to help you find fixes for particular components and elements. The next time you run into an issue, check this guide – chances are the solution will be here, but if you're still stumped we'll lead you to the right places to find the answer.

1 THE PERFECT WINDOWS PC

If you're planning to move to Windows 10, installing the OS might be the first area where you run into problems. Installing a new operating system requires a certain amount of **free space** on your drive, so that it can be downloaded and certain elements can be run successfully.

For Windows 10, the minimum space requirement is 16GB, which should be kept free on the main system drive the computer uses. This is actually the same as previous versions of Windows, so if you've upgraded before you can most likely do it again. To check how much space you have left, go to 'My Computer' (or 'This PC' depending on the version of Windows you're running) where any drives you have will be listed. You can see the remaining space indicated underneath each drive, or you can right click and select 'Properties' for a clearer overview (the system drive is usually C:). Just as with space requirements, your PC will also have to be capable of running Windows 10. This means it must reach certain minimum **system requirements**.

Thankfully, the requirements for running

Windows 10 are relatively low: a processor of 1GHz or faster; 1GB (32-bit) or 2GB (64-bit) of RAM; 16GB of free drive space; Microsoft DirectX 9 graphic device; and a Microsoft account combined with internet access. To find out your PC's spec, go to 'Control Panel' and select 'System and Security', then 'System'.

2 ACTIVATION

Some users have reported issues with **activating** their copies of Windows 10, which could have been down to a number of different reasons. In some cases, the easiest way to get around the problem is to purchase a legitimate copy of Windows 10.

Unlike previous versions of Windows, this latest one is almost exclusively available online, which means that official Microsoft websites are the best bet for your purchase. The company was once

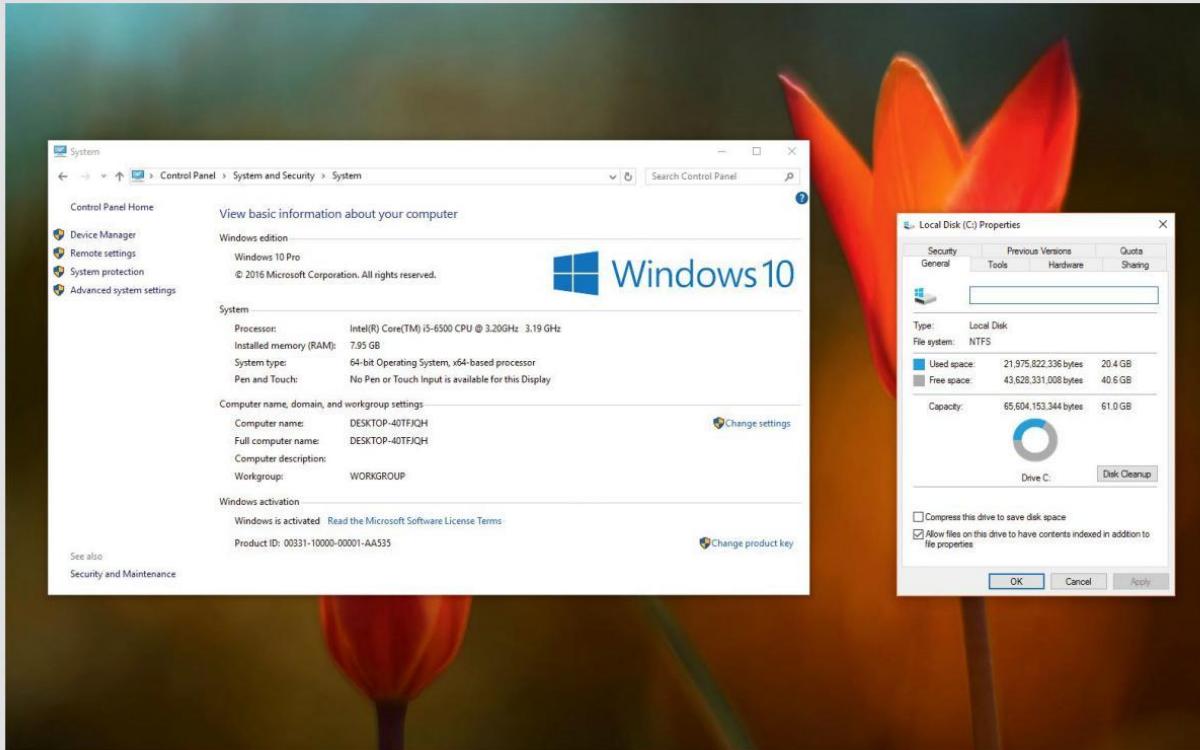
giving the OS away for free, but that promotion has now ended.

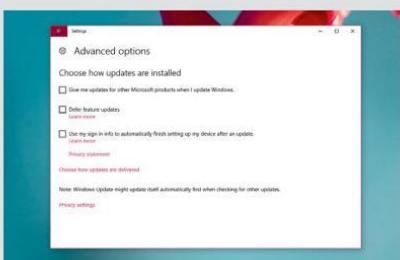
Microsoft has a helpful website that provides a downloadable copy in either 32-bit or 64-bit versions. If you do find that you're unable to activate Windows 10 successfully, Microsoft have introduced a new activation troubleshooter feature with the recent Anniversary Update. You'll find this in 'Settings', then click 'Update & Security', go to 'Activation' and select 'Troubleshoot' (you won't see this option if the OS has been activated).

3 UPDATING

Windows 10 is, in many ways, a truly internet-based operating system. Mostly this is a bonus, but there are times when it isn't – and Microsoft's attitude towards **operating system updates** is one such time.

"Microsoft have introduced a new activation troubleshooter feature with the Anniversary Update"





The most annoying part of automatic updates is the restarting, which can seemingly come at random (and inconvenient times). The simplest way to counteract this is to head to 'Windows Update' (in 'Settings > Update & Security'), click on 'Advanced Options' and then 'Notify to Schedule Restart', which means the OS will request a reboot rather than trampling all over the work you're not quite done with yet.

Each version of a new operating system also comes with its own set of backwards **compatibility issues** and Windows 10 is no exception. The transition from Windows 8.1 to 10 was far less jarring than the move from Windows 7 to 8 was, but there are still certain applications that can become broken and, in some cases, cease to work at all.

One such application is Chrome, which some users have had to fully delete and reinstall. If a program isn't working with Windows 10, try looking in the Windows Store or on the official website for the software to find an update and, if that doesn't work, delete and reinstall it. Over time, more and more developers have updated their programs for Windows 10 compatibility; this is now less of a problem than it once was.

4 BROWSERS

The web browser is the heart of the modern PC. Microsoft ships Windows 10 with Edge, the successor to its Internet Explorer browser (although IE is still present in the OS). For many people, however, using Chrome or Firefox is the norm, no matter what Microsoft wants.



MEDIA MALADIES

Problems playing? We're here to help

Annoyingly, Windows 10 ships without DVD playing software as a standard option. However, Microsoft offers an app as a download from the Windows Store – called Windows DVD Player – but it costs £11.59. The best bet for those who want to **watch DVDs** is VLC Media Player, which is a free download and was recently updated to support Windows 10. It also supports a host of other file formats – even the weird ones – making it a very useful tool to have around.

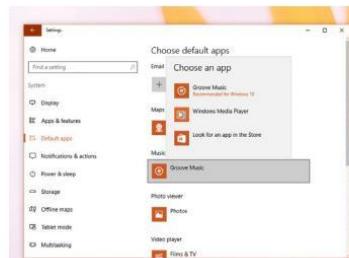
Of course, many of us have moved on from DVDs to the wild world of **media streaming**. Netflix and Amazon Prime both work on Windows 10's default browser, Edge, but may need an update to Silverlight, an application framework that Microsoft created and maintains.

If you've upgraded from a Windows 7 PC you could well suffer from this issue, as the older version of Silverlight may have travelled across when you migrated. At any rate, if you're encountering streaming gremlins, to fix the problem and get back to binge-watching *House of Cards*, go to the Microsoft website where you can reinstall Silverlight – follow the instructions as detailed on the web page.

Then there's music. Microsoft bundles a **music-streaming** service with Windows 10 called Groove Music, and the song selection is pretty good. It also comes with the added bonus of integration with

Xbox and any other Windows devices. The downside, of course, is that you may well have spent time creating playlists in Spotify, Google Music, Tidal, or wherever else – so you might not want to use Groove. Luckily, all of these alternative applications are available on Windows, and you'll find some in the Windows Store, so you can always easily switch your service of choice.

Browser-based streaming services – such as Google Music – are also supported, of course. But, bear in mind, that they may not work well in Edge, because Windows 10's browser doesn't stream multimedia when minimised. At any rate, to set the default music service (i.e. the one songs will automatically play with), head to 'Start > Settings > System' and select the 'Default Apps' tab in the column on the left. You'll see a Music Player section, which will present options based on the players you have installed. Select the one you want and hit 'OK'.



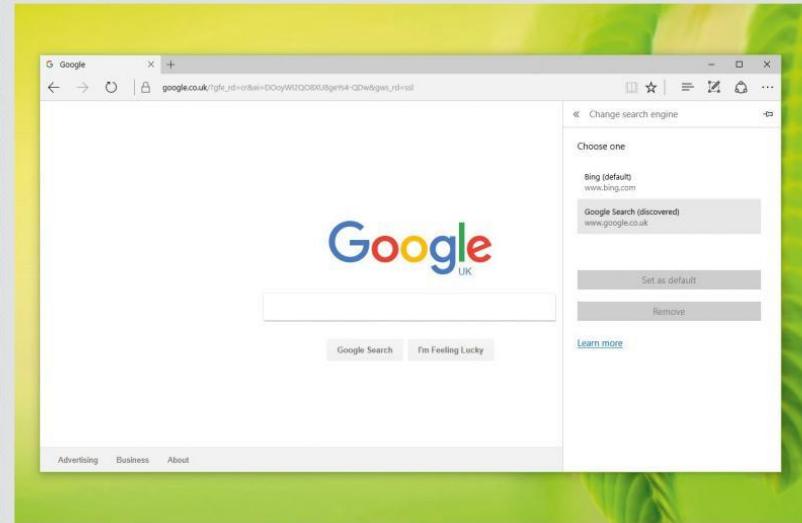
The screenshot shows the VideoLAN website with the following sections:

- VLC media player**: Described as a free and open source cross-platform multimedia player and framework that plays most multimedia files as well as DVDs, Audio CDs, VCDs, and various streaming protocols. A "Download VLC" button is visible.
- Other projects from VideoLAN**:
 - FOR END-USERS**: VLC media player (a powerful media player playing most of the media codecs and video formats out there) and VLMC (VideoLAN Movie Creator is a non-linear editing software for video creation).
 - FOR PROFESSIONALS**: DIVX.NET (a simple and powerful MP3-DIVX encoder and streaming application) and mencoder (a set of tools designed to easily and efficiently manipulate multimedia streams and files).
 - FOR DEVELOPERS**: libvdpctl, libvLC, libbluray, libfaac, and libStream.
- VIEW ALL PROJECTS** button.

To **install Chrome or Firefox** – and get back to normality – open Edge, search for either, and find a Windows 10 version. Download it, install it, and make sure it's set as the default browser option so that Edge doesn't keep reappearing. To do this, head to 'Settings > System', and click on 'Default Apps' – click under 'Web Browser', and select your preferred default browser.

If, however, you do want to use Edge, then you'll find it's actually a decent browser, but one that does come with some annoying features. Because it's a Universal Windows App, Edge runs on smartphones, tablets, PCs, and almost any other device. This means that it sometimes has a problem with being too much like a phone app rather than a PC program.

One of the ways this manifests itself is by sometimes refusing to **play media when minimised**, just as a phone app wouldn't. There's a fix for this, but it's tucked away in a rather obscure location. Head to 'Settings > Privacy > Background apps' and enable Microsoft Edge (switch it to 'on') in the list on the right to allow the browser to keep



itself going in the background. There's another issue with Edge, and it's often one of personal taste. Many people just don't like the Bing search engine, most likely because they have always used Google. That's fine, and we're sure Microsoft understands.

Changing Edge's search engine over to Google is relatively simple. Navigate in Edge to google.com (or Yahoo, or whatever your preference) and click the ellipsis button in the top-right corner. A drop-down menu will appear: select 'Settings', and then navigate down to

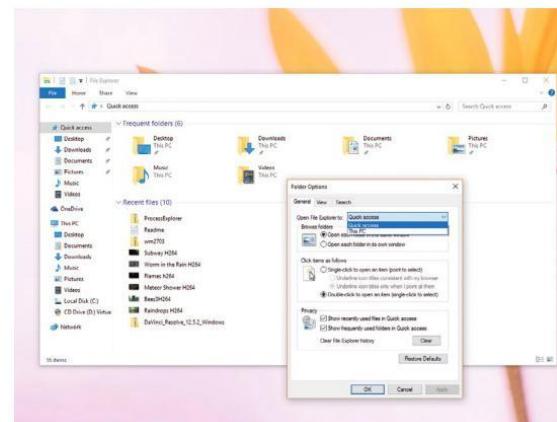
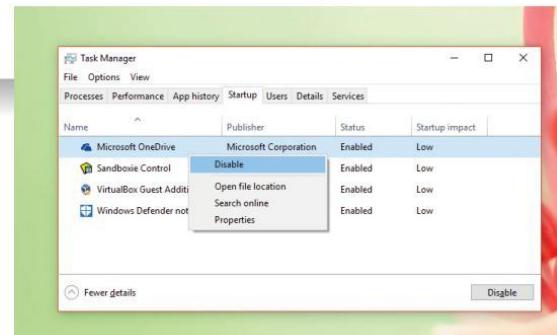


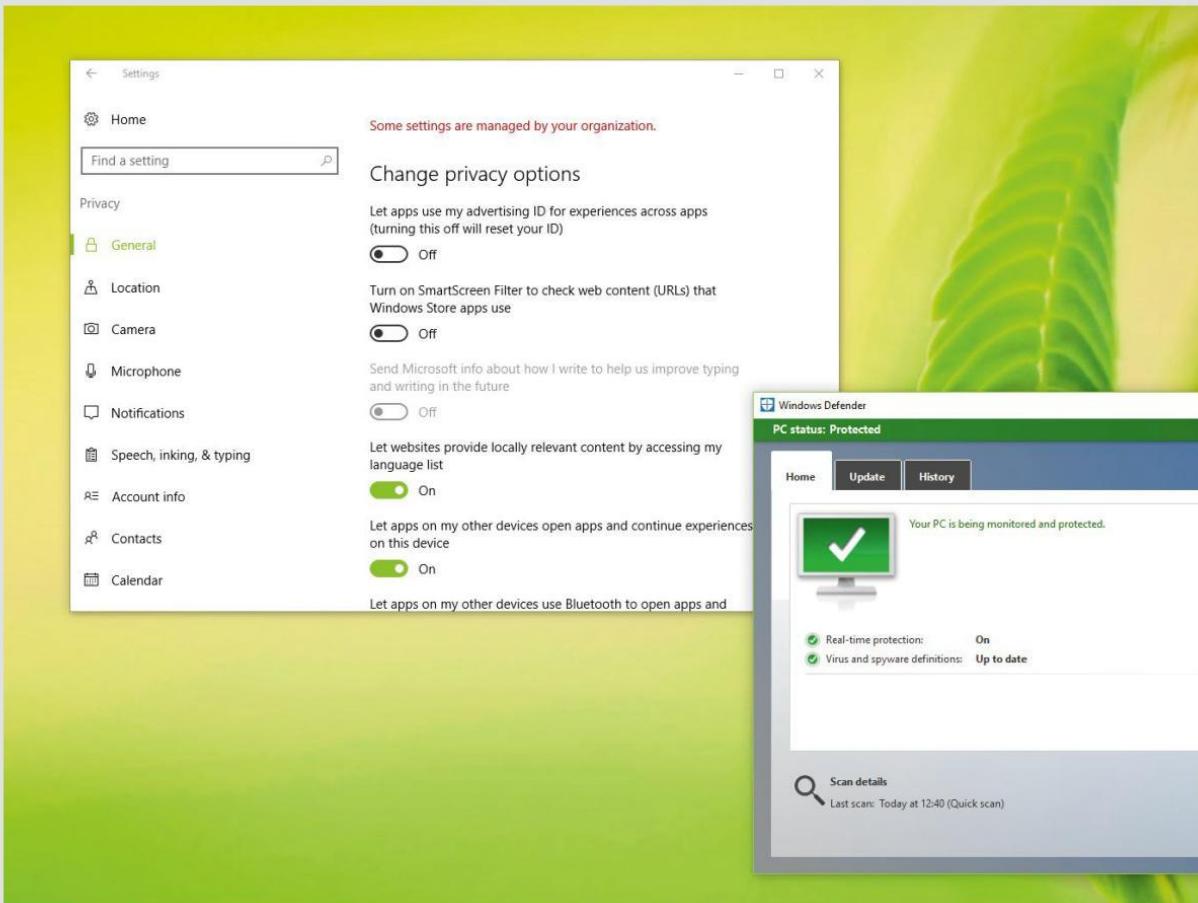
SPEED UPS

Take the brakes off a sluggish PC

The easiest way to fix a PC **booting** sluggishly is by reducing the number of apps that launch on startup, as having too many programs firing up when the computer starts makes the whole process much slower, especially when it comes to older hardware. To trim those apps, press [Ctrl]+[Shift]+[Esc] to bring up Task Manager, then click the link that says 'More Details'. From here, select the 'Startup' tab. Look through the list of enabled apps and find any that you don't need – you can turn an app off by right-clicking on it and selecting 'Disable'. Disabled apps won't automatically load on boot up. Be careful not to turn Microsoft services off, mind you, or important apps such as antivirus. If you're unsure whether it's wise to disable a certain app, Google it to find out.

Let's think beyond physical speed, now, and more towards **efficiency**. Do you feel like it takes you ages to get anything done in Windows 10? The 'Quick Access' menu is located in File Explorer, and it can save a ton of time. To add files, folders or apps to the sidebar, right click on their icon and select 'Pin to Quick Access'. This means they will show up and can be easily accessed, which is useful for recently visited folders. You can also set File Explorer to load the Quick Access menu by default when you bring it up, rather than This PC. To do so, with File Explorer open, click on the 'View' tab in the top menu (next to 'Share'), then click on 'Options', and select 'Change folder and search options'. Now look where it says 'Open File Explorer to', and use the drop-down menu to select Quick Access.





click 'View Advanced Settings'. From here, scroll down to 'Search in the address bar with...' and select 'Add New'. Some users have reported that 'Add New' often has no results in it, suggesting that no new search engine can be added. This isn't true. To get past this, close and then reopen Edge and (hopefully) some results will appear. One slight issue: you won't be able to ask Cortana to search with Google. It'll always use Bing, which can be something of an irritation.

5 PRIVACY

Data security is incredibly important, especially as hackers become increasingly sophisticated and the number of complex cyber-attacks is on the up. An unprotected PC is basically an invitation to be interfered with, and you might not even know you're being exploited – the days of openly malicious viruses are somewhat behind us.

Windows 10 comes with a decent set of built-in protection measures, but you

"Security is important, as hackers become more sophisticated and cyber-attacks are on the up"

can never be too careful. One such feature that should be disabled by privacy-minded individuals is **Wi-Fi Sense**, which automatically shares the Wi-Fi password across Windows 10 devices on the same account.

Microsoft updated Wi-Fi Sense to share less data, but switching it off is the ideal way of preventing anything you don't want happening. To turn it off, go to the Start Menu, select 'Settings' and click on 'Network & Internet', then 'Wi-Fi', and head to 'Manage Wi-Fi Settings' – turn off all the options in here. Also in 'Settings', it's possible to get an overview of everything else happening on Windows 10 in terms of privacy – unsurprisingly, under the 'Privacy' section. In here, you'll

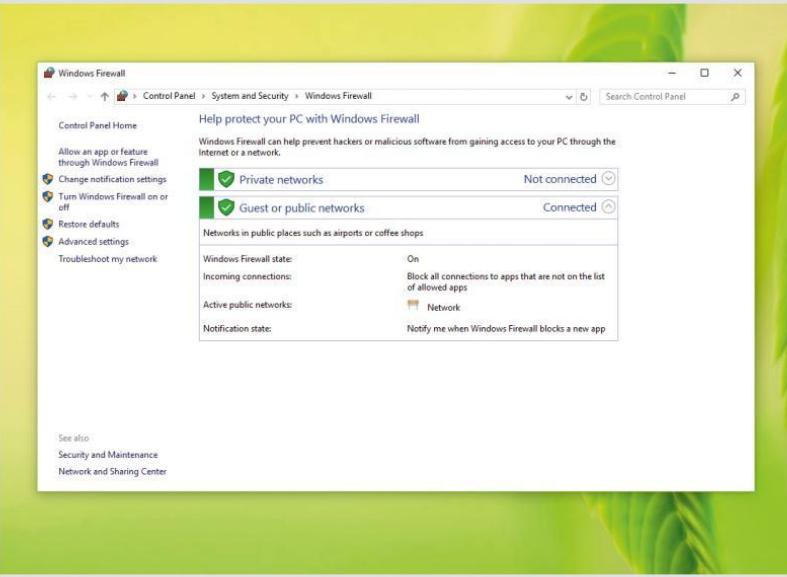
be presented with a bunch of toggles that adjust some **privacy options** to help keep everything under control.

Windows 10 also ships with a variety of security features that it's a good idea to take a look at. One such feature to be aware of is **Windows Defender**, which is designed to detect and remove malware from PCs – you'll find it under 'Settings > Update & Security'. Make sure you have this turned on if you don't have another third-party **antivirus** solution running on your machine. But, equally, make sure you don't rely on Defender; it's one of the least-effective antivirus tools there is, and you should definitely apply some third party protection even if it's something free, such as Avira (www.avira.com).

Windows Firewall is the other half of Microsoft's basic efforts to keep your PC safe from malware and other attacks. It's easy to turn on, but configuring the firewall is a slightly more involved matter.

To switch on the firewall, or rather to make sure it's switched on as it should be by default, simply type **firewall** into the search/Cortana box (next to the Start menu), and click on 'Windows Firewall'. From here, there's an option to turn it on (or off), and you can also adjust the relative 'strength' of the firewall.

Windows Firewall can be configured as incredibly strong via the 'Advanced Settings' option – blocking all suspect apps without asking – or slightly weaker, which means there's a slightly greater risk that your PC will become hit with some kind of infection, but the firewall won't interfere as much.



6 INPUT ISSUES

If you've bought a Windows 10 machine that has a **touchscreen** then you are, by and large, getting the best experience with the OS. Ever since Windows 8, Microsoft has been optimising its operating system for the finger – and sometimes pen – with large

tiles, easy-to-scroll menus, and so on. However, it can still be a little disjointed, but the easiest way to remedy this is simple: head to 'Start > Settings > System > Tablet Mode'. Then turn Tablet Mode on – this optimises Windows 10 for fingers rather than pointers, making it far easier to use.

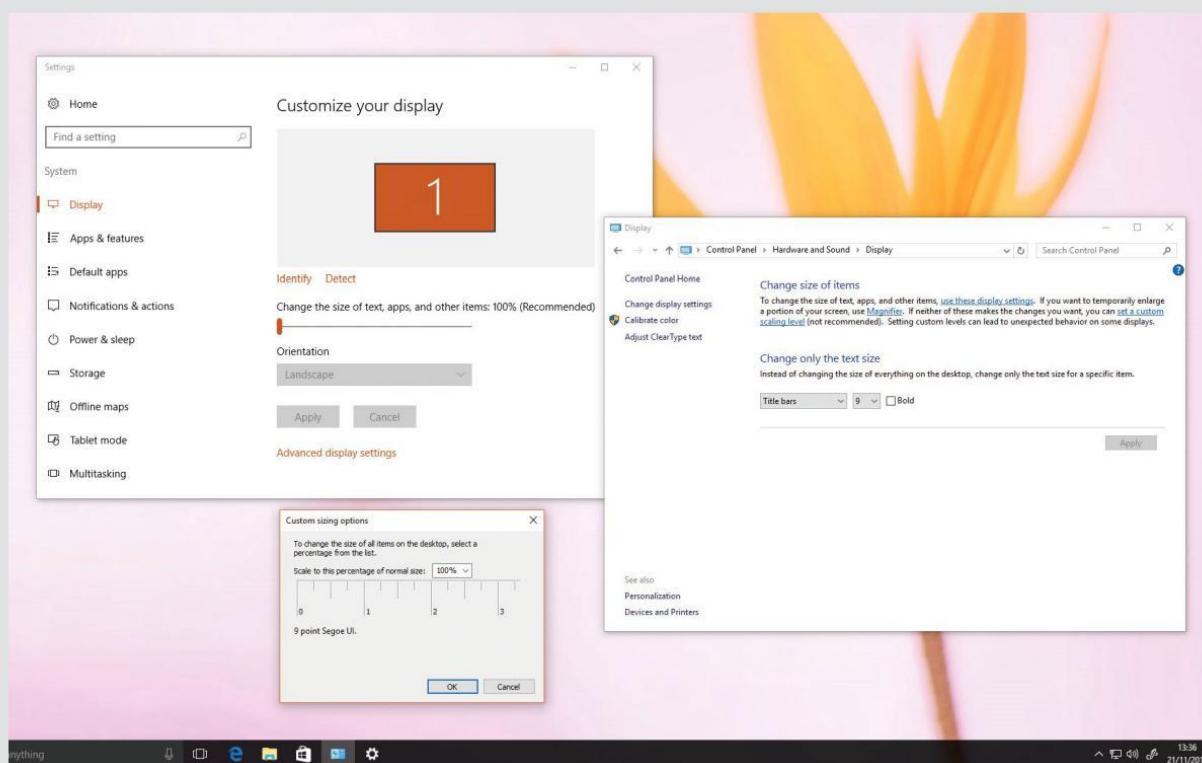
Having a **touchpad**-enabled laptop is also good for Windows 10, but some users have reported that the upgrade

from Windows 7 (and sometimes Windows 8) breaks it.

One of the ways to solve this is by first checking to see if your keyboard has a key that turns the touchpad off. You'll usually have to use the [Fn] key on your laptop with one of the F-keys; look for a symbol that looks like a rectangle with a cross through it.

If your laptop doesn't have such a function – or the right setting is toggled





and you're still having issues – then head to 'Devices > Mouse & Touchpad > Additional mouse options'. A new window will appear. From here, select the tab that says 'Device Settings', then 'Devices', and then make sure the touchpad is enabled. If none of these options work, press [Windows]+[X], select Device Manager, then the option for 'Mice and other pointing devices', and update the driver. This should fix things.

7 HARDWARE

We can't all keep up with the latest changes in tech. And neither should we have to. But this can, naturally, cause issues. Let's start with **printer compatibility**. If you're jumping from Windows 7 (or earlier) to Windows 10 then it's definitely worth updating all available printer drivers, which should help prevent them not working post-upgrade. Doing this is simple. Just search Google (or Bing, depending on your preference) for the name of your printer and download the latest Windows 10 compatible drivers. Follow the manufacturer's instructions to install them and you're good to go.

Now on to screens. Users have reported issues with **high-resolution displays** and Windows 10, including

"If you're jumping from Windows 7 to Windows 10, then update all available printer drivers"

experiencing blurriness in applications that had been rendering fine on previous versions of the OS, such as Windows 8.1. The easiest way to solve the issue of blurriness is by going to 'Control Panel > Display' and fiddling around with the settings here. There is no one single setting that will fix all issues, so experiment and see what works (and what doesn't).

To fix **blurriness** in specific applications, right click on the app's icon and select 'Properties'. Under the 'Compatibility' tab there is an option to 'Disable display scaling on high DPI settings'. Tick this and – hopefully – the problems will disappear.

You may also find that your screen is **flickering** – this isn't always a hardware issue, as some users have found it to occur when upgrading to Windows 10. The easiest way to fix this is to update all relevant drivers for monitors, as well as Norton Antivirus, iCloud, and IDT Audio,

which are all suspected to be potential causes of these problems. It may even help to uninstall and then reinstall them. Windows 10 does automatically update drivers, so there is also a chance it's forcing an incompatible version of a driver onto the PC without realising.

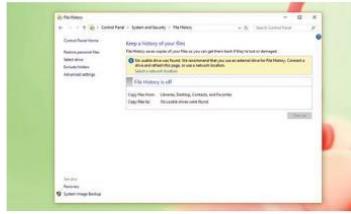
If you found that an upgrade to Windows 10 broke the connection of a **Bluetooth** device (or devices) that was previously paired up just fine with your machine, then there is an easy enough fix for this. According to Microsoft, all you have to do is head to 'Device Manager' (just type **device manager** into the search/Cortana box next to the Start menu), select the Bluetooth driver and update it to the latest version, which will be compatible with Windows 10. The operating system should be able to automatically search, and then update, the driver. If that fails to work, unpairing (or 'forgetting') the device before re-pairing it should fix the issue.



FILE SAFETY

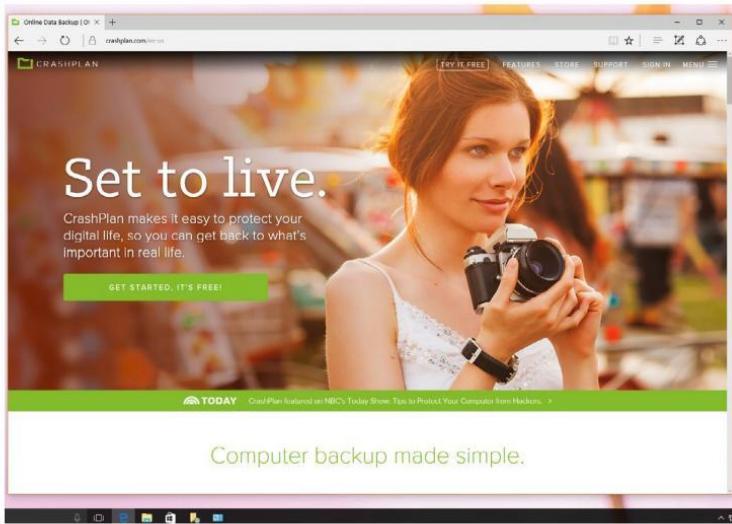
Keep your photos, videos and documents secure

Losing files after a disaster hits because you didn't back them up is a hugely frustrating experience, but fortunately it's one that can be avoided easily. To **create a backup**, purchase an external hard drive (which obviously has to be larger in size than the data you want to store on it). You can simply copy your files across to this disk manually, of course, or you can set up **File History** in Windows. To do the latter, ensure the drive is connected to your PC, and left click on the Start menu, then click 'Settings'. From there, click 'Update and Security' and navigate to 'Backup' on the left. See the 'Add a Drive' button next to the big plus sign? Click this. Windows will scan for available drives on which to back up, and you should select the drive you want to use from the list it brings up. The OS will now get to work and you'll soon be done; an 'on' toggle button will appear to show that the feature is active and automatically backing up your files (and will continue to do so as long as the drive is connected).



If a physical drive doesn't suit you (maybe you're worried about a fire, for instance, or the possibility of the backup disk corrupting), then there are plenty of **online backup** options you can use as an alternative. CrashPlan has received some very good reviews and comes with various tiers suitable for single PCs right through to businesses. Alternatively, you could simply use a cloud storage locker like Dropbox, or of course Microsoft's OneDrive, the latter of which is tied in directly with Windows 10.

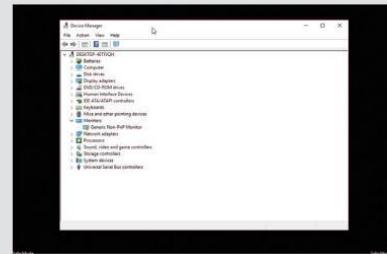
Whichever online option you choose, do be warned that sending all your files over a net connection could be a slow process – although that obviously depends on the quantity of files you have, and the speed of your broadband. Also be careful if you have data allowances on your broadband plan. It can be a good idea to have both a local backup on an external hard disk, and a further online backup – even if the latter only holds critical files and not everything.



8 Startup Settings

Restart to change Windows options such as:

- Enable low-resolution video mode
- Disable debugger mode
- Disable system boot logging
- Enable Safe Mode
- Disable driver signature enforcement
- Disable early-launch anti-malware protection
- Disable automatic restart on system failure



8 MOBILE COMPUTING

Battery life is important to anyone who regularly uses a laptop, tablet, or smartphone, and, of course, Windows 10 can be used on all three of those devices. Microsoft recognises this – as shown by the marketing of its Edge browser as being battery-friendly – and has built several tools into Windows 10 to help cut down on excessive battery drain. All apps that run in the background can be toggled off, for example, which stops them from sucking up precious juice.

Windows 10 also includes a dedicated set of power options, which you can find via 'Settings > System > Power & Sleep'. From here, display sleep times can be set and under 'Additional Power Settings' you can select a power plan that means a lighter load for your battery.

If just fiddling with the settings isn't enough, Windows 10 can also generate a **battery report**. To do this, head to the 'Command Prompt Admin' (which you get from right clicking on the Start menu), and type `powercfg /batteryreport /output "C:\battery_report.html"`. This will save a file to any chosen folder – e.g. C:\ in this case, the root of your system drive – which gives you a hugely detailed look at battery quality, cycles, how much charge is left, and much more. The report is a little dense, so be warned.

Location-based apps are fairly prominent in Windows 10, which makes it a good idea to let your PC know (roughly) where you are. Cortana, for example, can give far more information

A problem has been detected and Windows has been shut down to prevent damage to your computer.

PFN_LIST_CORRUPT

If this is the first time you've seen this Stop error screen, restart your computer. If this screen appears again, follow these steps:

Check to make sure any new hardware or software is properly installed. If this is a new installation, ask your hardware or software manufacturer for any Windows updates you might need.

If problems continue, disable or remove any newly installed hardware or software. Disable BIOS memory options such as caching or shadowing. If you need to use Safe Mode to remove or disable components, restart your computer, press F8 to select Advanced Startup Options, and then select Safe Mode.

Technical information:

*** STOP: 0x0000004e (0x00000099, 0x00900009, 0x00000900, 0x00000900)

“While Windows 10 is more stable, it’s still prone to the odd bout of madness, so it pays to be prepared”

if it can accurately pinpoint where in the world it's being used.

To update your computer's location settings, head to the Start menu, click 'Settings, Time & Language', and click 'Region & Language' – then make sure the correct country is selected. To turn on Location services, go to 'Settings > Privacy > Location', and flick the 'Location' switch on.

If you're on a tablet that has 4G, or if you're using a mobile hotspot or surfing the web via a Windows 10 smartphone, then the operating system may have a nasty surprise for you. Users have been reporting that the default configuration of Windows 10 sucks up data like there's no tomorrow, potentially putting you over your **data allowance**, and leaving you with a hefty bill. Fortunately, there's an option that addresses the problem. Simply go 'Settings > Network & Internet > Wi-Fi'. Click 'Advanced Options' and then 'Set as metered connection'. This means that

Windows 10 will stop collecting so much data in the background.

9 MAJOR CRASHES

While Windows 10 is far more stable than many operating systems that came before it, it's also still prone to the odd bout of madness, so it pays to be prepared. A **black screen** on Windows 10 can mean several things, depending on whether you've logged into the operating system or not.

If you haven't logged in, or Windows 10 hasn't booted, then your immediate diagnostic path should be to check your internet connection and then boot your PC in a different way. If you logged in and then the screen went black, unplug all external devices and, failing that, boot via **Safe Mode**. It's just what you'd expect –

a safe way of booting up a PC and running the system with no startup apps and only essential drivers, which should hopefully allow the computer to boot successfully (when it won't otherwise due to some issue or other). With Windows 10, to access Safe Mode, hold down [Shift] during boot-up (or select 'Restart' from the desktop while holding down [Shift]), then follow the menus on screen.

The **Blue Screen of Death**, also known as a BSOD or a 'stop' error, may sound bad but it's certainly fixable in the majority of cases. When the problem manifests it halts your PC completely, stopping it working and showing a blue screen, usually with some kind of message about restarting or a critical error. You'll then need to reboot.

To fix this, you can explore several options. First, be sure to check how much available space you have left on your system drive and, if it's low, make some room by deleting bigger files or programs you don't need. Also, ensure all the latest updates are applied to the software on your machine, as having outdated apps can cause issues. While you're at it, you can update the hardware drivers of any peripherals, as the problem could be caused by Windows 10 clashing with something. Head to 'Device Manager', which you can reach by searching for it in the Start menu.

Here, you can ensure that the likes of peripherals, such as your monitor, webcam, printer or scanner – the extra devices you plug into your machine – have the latest drivers, simply by right-clicking on the device in question. Selecting ‘Update Driver Software’, then click ‘Search automatically for updated driver software’.

10 GLITCHES

It's not uncommon for software, particularly older apps, to encounter glitches or even fail to run completely with Windows 10. There's one potential way to get around show-stopping bugs, though: right click on the icon for the app and select ‘Properties’, then click on the ‘Compatibility tab’. From here, click the checkbox next to ‘Run this program in compatibility mode for’, and in the drop-down menu underneath that, choose the version of Windows that the program ran fine on. Over time, many developers will update their apps to

remove bugs, so the software in question may eventually work just fine with Windows 10. An easy way to help them is by reporting any bugs you find, which can usually be done via the developer's website.

Alternatively, your PC may be in the grips of **slowdown** – perhaps the hard disk is whirring like crazy? If so, there's a good chance that one of the programs you're running may have developed some kind of issue and is sapping all your system resources. There's an easy way to find out if an app has gone haywire and is bogging down your computer. You need to head over to ‘Task Manager’ (press [Ctrl]+[Shift]+[Esc] together), and click on ‘More Details’ – you'll then see a

list of processes, which is all the different apps and services currently running on your machine. Scan down the list and look for any apps which are **hogging CPU**, memory or disk usage – or perhaps all of the above.

Once you've discovered the culprit, select it. There's an option in the bottom-right corner to ‘End Task’. However, be careful that you aren't ending important system-critical tasks (usually ones with confusing names that won't mean anything to you), as this could cause your computer to crash. If in doubt, Google is your friend here – search for the app/service and you'll almost certainly find an answer about exactly what it does. ■

“Older apps can often encounter glitches or even fail to run completely with Windows 10”

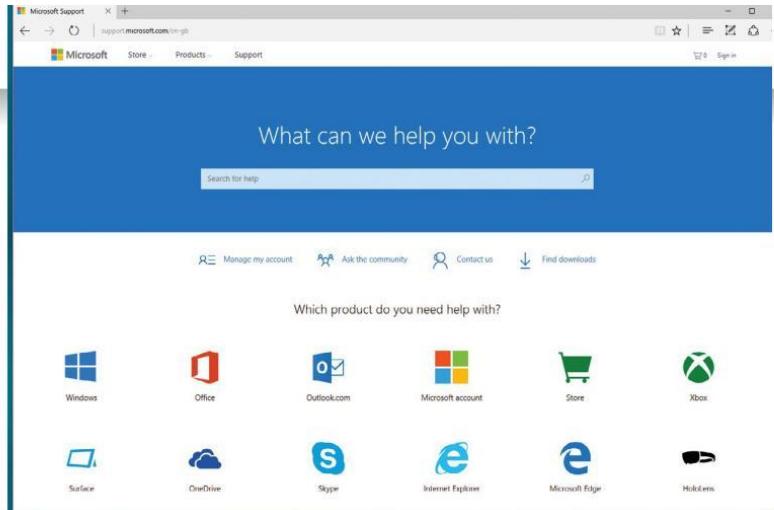
WHAT NEXT?

Still searching? Don't worry...

If you haven't found an answer to your problem here, that doesn't mean it's completely insurmountable. You can always ask our friendly Support team – just email your problems to windowsmagazine@futurenet.com – for help. And, of course, a subscription to *Windows Help & Advice* is highly recommended, since we'll give you guides to fixes and tweaks every issue. See p30 for more details. Once you've done that, check these sources to find out more about your problem.

answers.microsoft.com

Microsoft's forums may not always have the answer you're looking for – sometimes the response to your problem may be ‘there's nothing we can do’ – but since it's staffed by actual experts and a huge number of other users, it's a great place to look.



support.microsoft.com

Microsoft's fully categorised breakdown of common issues with its software and products isn't so much an admission of defeat, as it is a consistently updated and reliable extra manual for your software – and it's one you should turn to whenever possible.

Google

If you've hit a specific error, this is the first place to turn. Try typing in your symptoms or the error code provided when your computer crashes; the results will likely point you to forums or blogs where people have come up with solutions.

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Windows Update ANNIVERSARY UPDATE ERROR IS ANNOYING

Q My Sony VAIO won't update to the Anniversary Update (v1607). It consistently fails, and shows the following error code: 0x800705b4. Its constant attempts to download and update are really eating into my monthly allowance. Do you

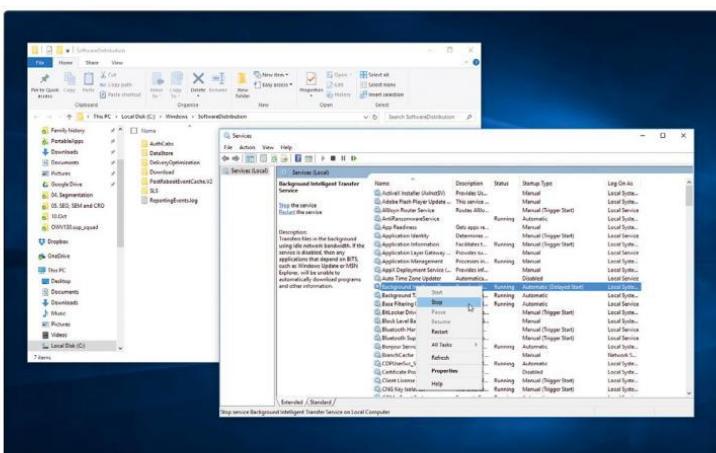
have any ideas that will help with this very frustrating problem?
Steve Dale



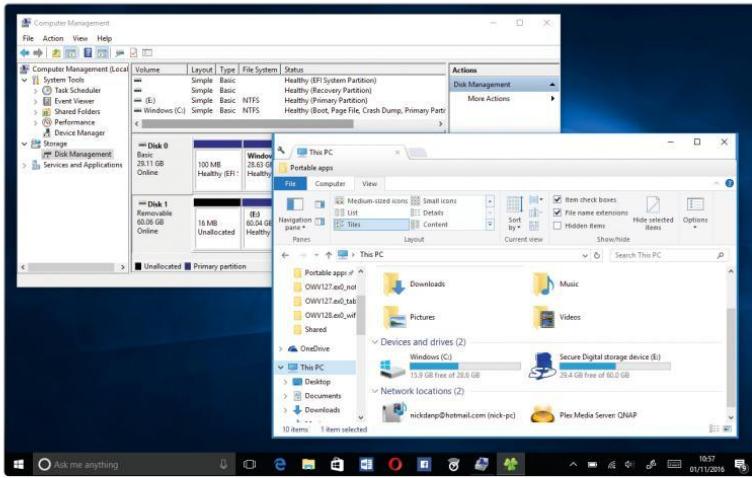
Alex's solution
There are a number of fixes you can attempt, Steve. First, type **troubleshoot** into the Search box to access the 'Troubleshooting Control Panel'. Click 'Fix problems

with Windows Update', then click 'Advanced' followed by 'Run as administrator' before clicking 'Next'. If this doesn't work, reboot, then press [Win]+[R], type **services.msc** and click 'OK' to open the Services console. Right-click 'Background Intelligent Transfer Service' and choose 'Stop'. Now open File Explorer and navigate to C:\Windows\SoftwareDistribution. Select everything in here – folders and files – and delete it. Not all files will delete, but it's crucial both Download and Delivery Optimization folders are removed (if they refuse to do so, reboot, stop the **BITS** service once more and try again).

Once deleted, reboot and see if Windows Update now works correctly. If not, try downloading the standalone installer (go to 'Settings > Update & Security > Learn more', then click the 'Get the Anniversary Update' link), or download the latest version of the Media Creation Tool and 'upgrade' Windows to the latest version.



RESTART UPDATE
Try deleting key
files and folders
to get the
update going.



Drivers

MONITOR SCREEN STRETCHED

Q I updated to the Windows 10 Anniversary Edition and now my monitor screen is stretched. Both Device Manager and IObit Driver Booster claim my drivers are up to date. What's happened?
Scott Spiers



Graham's solution

First, we confirmed Scott's problem was down to an incorrect resolution setting, which he confirmed it was (the screen was 'stuck' at 1024x768). We next asked for Scott's PC model, which revealed his Dell PC was powered by an AMD Radeon HD4300/4500 card. Sadly, this generation of cards isn't supported in Windows 10 – AMD drops support for older graphics cards much quicker than its rivals NVIDIA and Intel.

Nevertheless, Scott didn't have this problem prior to the Anniversary Update, and a quick check online revealed that other Radeon HD4000-series owners had successfully got their cards working in Windows 10 by downloading the last supported version of the driver – 13.1. Although rated for Windows 8, it should work in Windows 10 too. Get this from <http://bit.ly/ati-legacy> – download the Software Suite version, then double-click the setup file and follow the prompts to install the drivers.

Storage

HOW TO MAXIMISE TABLET STORAGE

Q I own a HP Stream 11 2-in-1 device, and its lack of onboard storage (a paltry 32GB) is incredibly difficult to manage. What are my options for extending its storage,

preferably without having to connect an external hard drive?
David Price



Nick P's solution

The Stream 11 has a microSD card, which gives David the ability to double or even treble the amount of storage available to him. The manual claims it supports up to 32GB only, but some HP users have reported that they've been able to use 64GB (and even 128GB in one instance) **SDXC cards** from the likes of Kingston, Lexar and Samsung. Another option would be a USB 3.0 flash drive, although they're no quicker (plus microSD cards are less conspicuous).

Another way to eke out more storage might be through the use of a cloud storage device or shared folder on a NAS drive, although that's not practical for running apps off, whereas you can easily divert applications to the internal microSD card following the step-by-step guide in issue 129's Support section.

STORAGE EXPANSION
MicroSD cards are the most effective way to add storage to your tablet.

Quickfire questions

What's the quickest way to take ownership of a folder?
Frédéric Lechaude

Download www.howtogeek.com/wp-content/uploads/TakeOwnership.zip – open the zip file and double-click `InstallTakeOwnership.reg`, clicking 'Run > Yes > Yes > OK' when prompted. Now right-click the folder to find a new 'Take Ownership' option.

Can I force websites to use a secure browser connection?
Evelyn Turner

Firefox, Chrome and Opera users should install **HTTPS** everywhere from their app store, which will redirect links to secure sites where possible.

"Another way to eke out more storage might be through a shared folder"

Jargon buster!

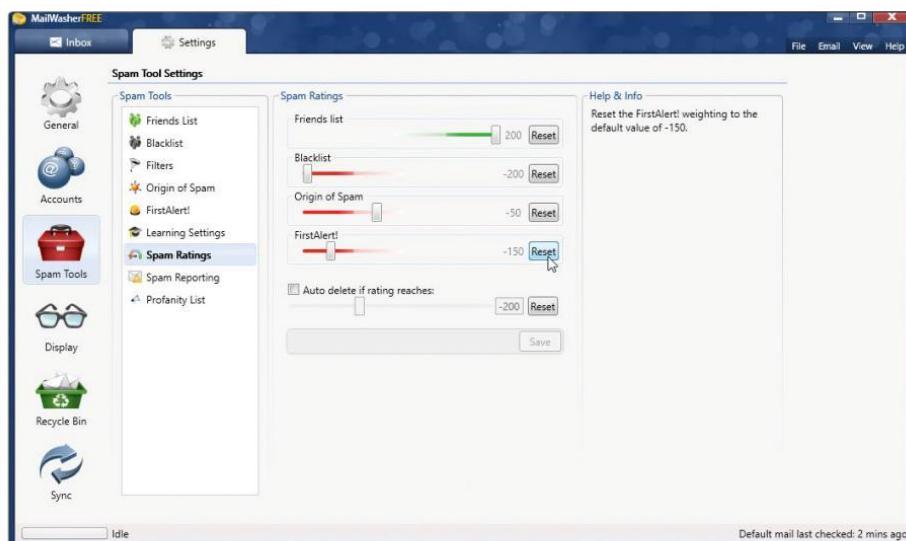
► Background Intelligent Transfer Service (BITS)

A background process used by both Windows Update and Windows Defender to manage the download of updates.

► HTTPS

Stands for Hyper Text Transfer Protocol Secure, and indicates a web connection that has been encrypted for security reasons.

BLOCK SPAM
Use a tool such as MailWasher to vet your email before downloading it.



Quickfire questions

Could you recommend a smartwatch with a reasonable battery life and support for a Windows phone?
Hayley Rees

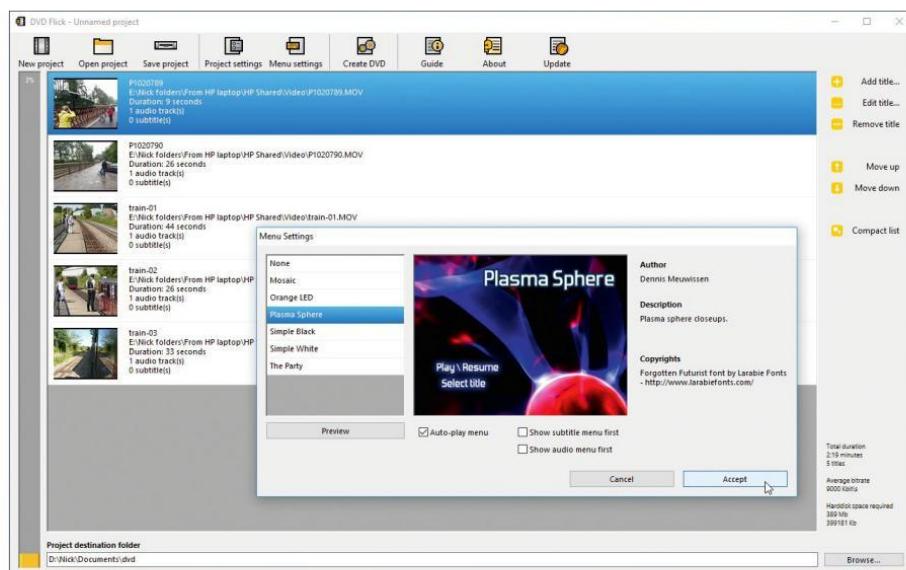
The Vector Smart Watch (£249, www.johnlewis.com) has a 30-day battery life and works with a number of services and apps via Android, iOS and Windows Phone.

How can I improve the Wi-Fi signal in a single room without moving my router?
Roger Atkins

You need a Wi-Fi Repeater, which is placed somewhere between the router and the 'dead' area to relay the signal on. One inexpensive option at around £22 plus postage (try box.co.uk) is D-Link's DAP-1365 N-300 Wi-Fi Range Extender.

I keep getting red squiggly lines for correctly spelled words in Microsoft Word. How do I prevent this?
Terry Lees

It sounds like part or all of your document is set to the wrong language. Switch to the 'Review' tab on the ribbon, then select all of your text and click the 'Language' button. Choose 'Language > Proofing Language'. Make sure 'UK' is selected and click 'OK'.



Privacy **DITCH YOUR UNWANTED EMAILS**

Q For the past month or so I've been swamped with unsolicited email, and the usual method of unsubscribing hasn't worked. I've moved them to my junk folder but they're still obtrusive. Can you help stop them?
Bryan Little



Matt's solution

Sadly, there's no way of blocking this kind of spam – once your email address has fallen into the hands of spammers, which is all too easy nowadays (however careful you might be), then it's a case of dealing with the unwanted mail rather than trying to find ways of avoiding it. Going forward, though, never click any links in unwanted email as you merely confirm your address to the spammer at the other end. The best way to process such mail is

BURN VIDEO **You need specialist software to burn a video DVD.**

with a mail-filtering tool like Mailwisher (www.mailwisher.net), which, over time, learns to automatically blacklist messages and prevent them from ever reaching your email program.

Security **SECURE YOUR DOCUMENT STORAGE**

Q I'm sure this will resonate with other readers who are trying to switch from paper to digital – what's the best way to back up this data and keep it secure?
Colin Sexton



Nick P's solution

The simplest solution is to use cloud storage such as OneDrive, but you may want to take an additional step for particularly sensitive documents – if you use Veracrypt (<https://veracrypt.codeplex.com/>), for example, create an **encrypted container file** inside your cloud

MOVE USER FOLDERS TO NEW PARTITION

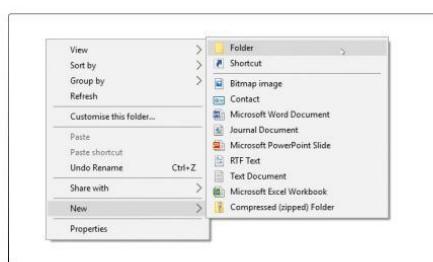
Q My Windows 10 PC has a large data partition I'd like to store documents and other personal files on. How can I point Windows to this partition?
Donald Lincoln



Cat's solution

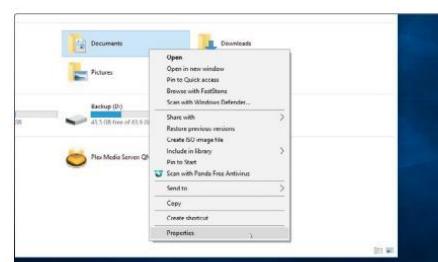
The step-by-step guide reveals how to move your data and let

Windows know where it's now residing. It'll also reveal what to do after a reinstallation in order to regain access to those folders using your newly recreated user account.



1 Create folder structure

Create a named folder (such as 'Donald') on your data partition, then create folders inside this for Documents, Pictures, Videos and any other system folders – including desktop and downloads – that you want to move.



2 Select folder to move

Open File Explorer and click 'This PC' to reveal six of your user folders (or browse to C:\Users\<Username>) to reveal more such as Searches or Favourites). Start by right-clicking the Documents folder and choosing 'Properties'.



storage to store private files inside, providing an extra layer of security. If you own a network drive that's billed as a 'personal cloud', you could eschew all third-party services and use that instead – either with its own proprietary software (such as Western Digital's MyCloud) or using the open-source ownCloud (<https://owncloud.org>) solution instead. Again, employ it in conjunction with VeraCrypt or similar service to ensure your data is doubly encrypted.

Applications **HOW TO BURN A VIDEO DVD**

Q I'm trying to create a video that will play on a standard DVD player. I've edited it using Windows Movie Maker, but the resulting discs that I burn won't play on anything. Can you help me overcome this seemingly insurmountable hurdle?

Terry Mitchell

Cat's solution

Terry was running Windows 10, which meant the files he was creating in Movie Maker can't be directly burned to DVD. Instead, he was saving the files, then burning them to disc – this method results in a data disc, not a bona-fide video DVD. He'll need additional third-party software, and the good news is there are options. We prefer DVD Flick (www.dvdflick.net) as it's clean and open source. Make sure you export your video from Movie Maker using the recommended option, then import this file into DVD Flick via the 'Add Title' button and use its menus and tools to build your disc. Before burning, be sure to click 'Project Settings' and select your DVD drive from the 'Burning' section.

**Windows
MICROSOFT ACCOUNT
PASSWORD GLITCH**
Q I changed my Microsoft Account password and now I keep getting this message: "You need to fix your Microsoft Account for apps on your other devices to be able to launch apps and continue experiences on this device." Help!

John Wallis



Nick P's solution

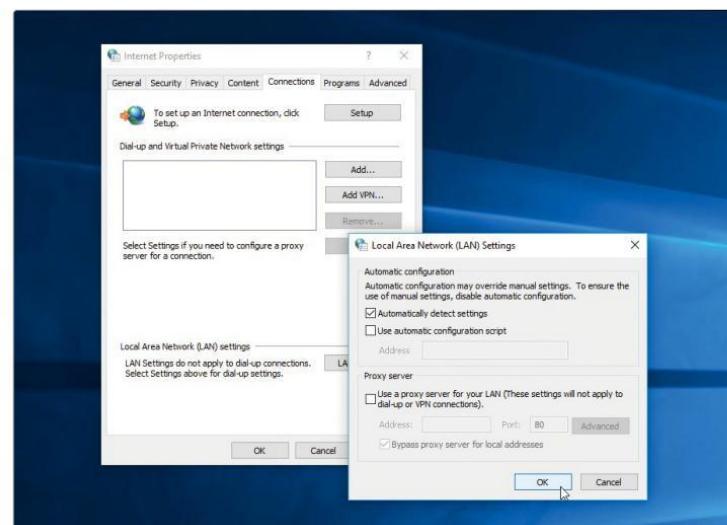
This is linked to the password change affecting an app or service previously linked to that account. Ordinarily, it can be fixed by going to the Windows Store app and signing in, but John kept getting an error code – 0x8013153B – whenever he tried to open it. We pointed him to three options: type

Find and fix into the Search bar to access the 'Find and Fix Problems Control Panel' (click 'View all'), then run Windows Store Apps, Background Intelligent Transfer Service, and Windows Update in turn. All three reported problems and attempted fixes, but to no avail. Next, we went to the Microsoft Store reset options in Tweaking.com's Windows Repair tool (www.tweaking.com), but also to no avail. But, after running Windows Repair, the Store gave a different error, which John investigated. This led him to running inetcpl.cpl from the 'Start > Run' box, then clicking 'LAN settings' under the 'Connections' tab, which revealed the proxy server box had been ticked – unticking this and clicking 'OK' twice resolved both the Store and account problems. ■



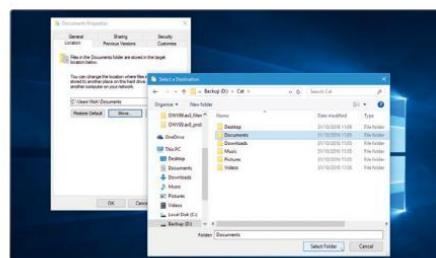
Do you have
a PC problem?
Get in touch...

Email full details of your problem to the support team and we'll do our best to help:
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Or write to the support team and we'll do our best to help:
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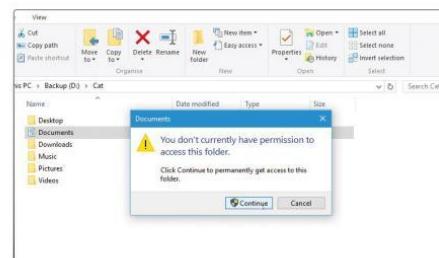
STORE FIX Proxy settings can disrupt the Windows Store.

"Never click any links in unwanted email as you merely confirm your address to the spammer at the other end"



3 Move folders

Switch to the 'Location' tab and click the 'Move...' button. Navigate to the named folder you created in Step 1, then select the Documents folder and click 'Select Folder' followed by 'Apply' and 'Yes'. Repeat for each folder you wish to move.



4 Reinstall and recycle

If you later reinstall Windows using the same user account, simply repeat Steps 2 and 3 to pair the folders with Windows again; if not, you may get a prompt about access being denied – if so, click 'Continue' to regain access.

Jargon buster!

► SDXC card

One of the newer types of SD card that can handle capacities of 32GB or greater. It only supports exFAT (the default) and NTFS file systems.

► Encrypted container file

A special file that can be mounted as a virtual hard drive partition. Files stored inside here are encrypted, so when the file is unmounted, they're both unreadable and invisible.



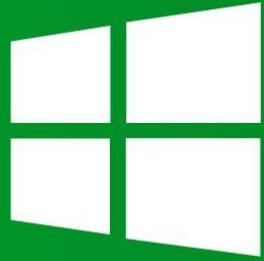
DON'T MISS OUR ANNUAL CHRISTMAS GIFT GUIDE!



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Welcome to... Windows 10

► WINDOWS 10 TIPS ► FEATURES EXPLAINED ► NEW TIPS AND TRICKS

Welcome



Just starting your Windows journey? Stumbling over the changes made in the recent Anniversary update? Or maybe you just want to learn something new about Windows 10. This is the section for you!

There's not enough space to tell you absolutely everything you need to know here, but *Windows Help & Advice* always has your back. In this month's Explore section we teach you how to network your PC with homegroups, bring your deleted files back from the dead, and even stream your console games onto your PC desktop. Here's how...

Matt Hanson
Associate Editor
www.facebook.com/windowsmag

Featuring...

80 Childproof your Windows 10 PC

82 Work smarter with ease-of-access tools

TURN TO PAGE 54
TO FIND OUT
HOW TO SET
UP A WI-FI
PRINTER

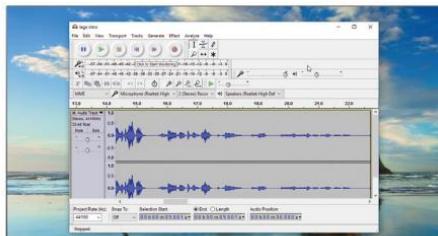


Windows 10 tip of the month

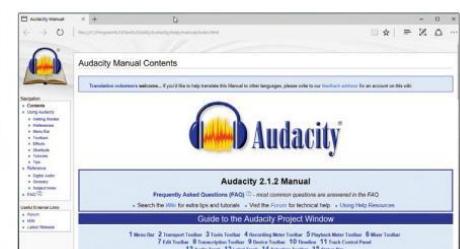
Get extra help direct from the source

Open built-in help files

You're working away, using a familiar piece of software, then all of a sudden it gets a bit confusing and you're stuck. What now? If you're not prepared to wait for the next issue of *Windows Help & Advice* for the answer, we understand! Thankfully, most Windows applications have built-in assistance, which can help you out if you're in a jam: just hit [F1]. Or perhaps [Fn]+[F1], depending on your laptop keyboard.



LOST AND ALONE When you hit a wall, just reach to the top-left corner of your keyboard and hit [F1]...



HELP IS AT HAND ...to bring up your app's built-in help menu, which should have the answers you need



Learn how to...

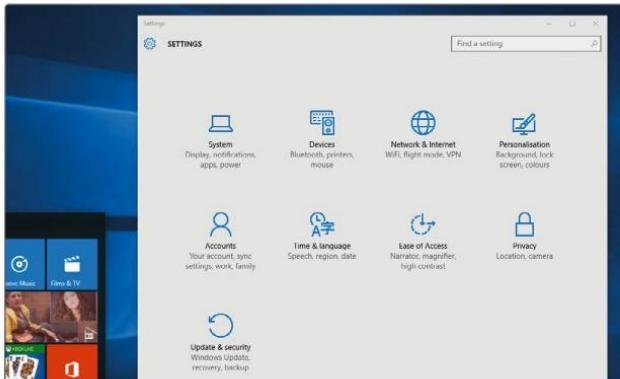
Childproof your Windows 10 PC

Control what your kids can and can't see and do in Windows 10 with child accounts

TIME TAKEN
20 minutes

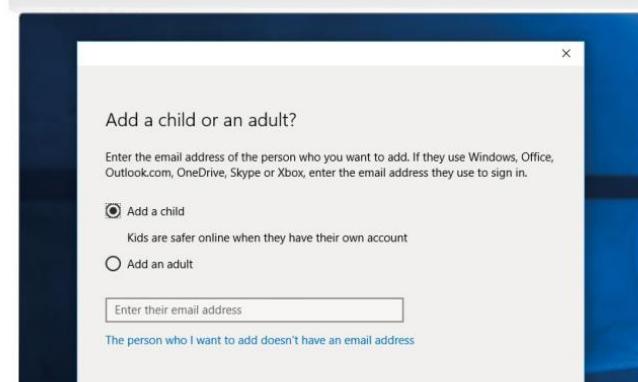
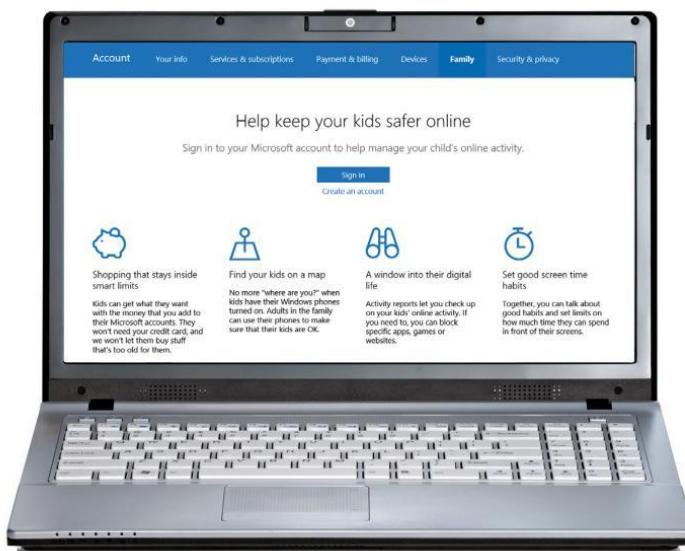
The internet is an amazing information resource that brings convenience to our everyday lives. But with such freedom come drawbacks, particularly when it comes to child safety. Happily, Windows 10 offers a solution in the form of child user accounts. If you're sharing your PC with your kids, giving them their own account allows them to go online safely by letting you set up age restrictions. That way, you can ensure they aren't visiting websites that aren't right for them, and prevent them from downloading and/or launching apps or games they shouldn't be. Let's go!

How to set up child accounts



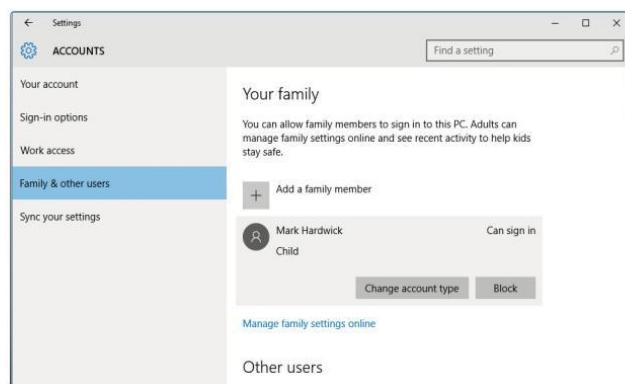
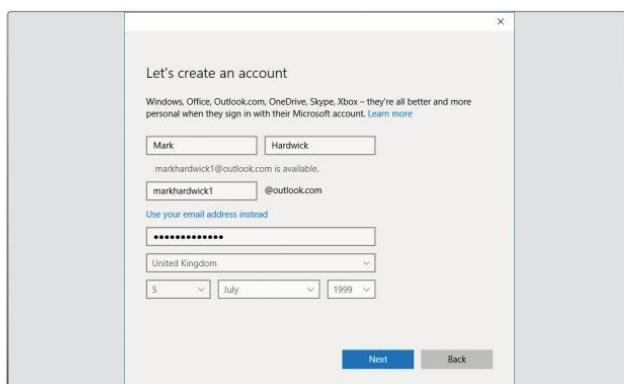
1 Add a family member

With a child account, your kids will get their own desktop layout, their own set of user folders and their own Start menu. To set them up in Windows 10, choose 'Settings' from the desktop Start menu and click on 'Accounts'. Next, select 'Family & other users' from the left pane, click the plus button next to 'Add a family member' on the next screen, and then select 'Add a Child'.



2 Add a child account

Next you'll be asked to enter an email address associated with the new account. If your child doesn't have a Microsoft account or they're too young to have an email address, that's okay. Just click 'The person I want to add doesn't have an email address', and you'll be prompted to create an account and @outlook.com email address for them. Click 'Confirm' to finish.



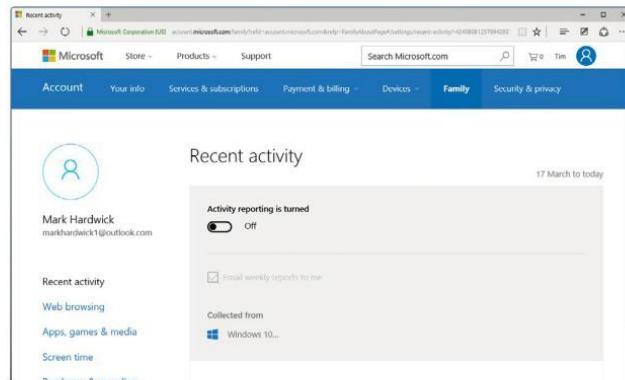
3 Accept an invite

One of the benefits of a child account is that your children can use theirs to log onto any device you own. Before they can do that however, they may need to accept an invite that Windows sends to the email address associated with the new account. If they're too young to understand, you can do this for them using the account details you added in the previous step.



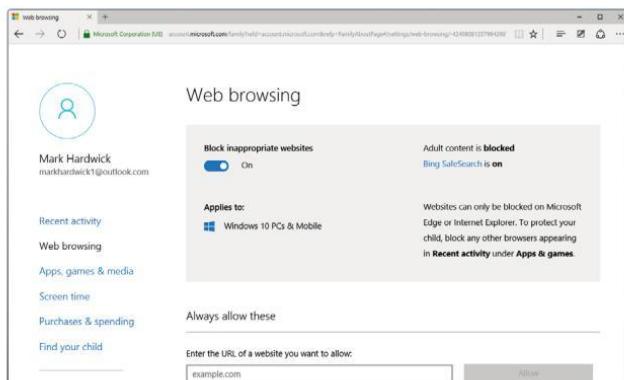
4 Parental permission

Once you've logged into their email and accepted the invitation, the child will be prompted to log into their account. If the administrating account lists your child as being under 13, you'll need to sign in yourself and confirm them as a family member. A screen will appear titled 'You need a parent's permission'; click the button that says 'Have a parent sign in'.



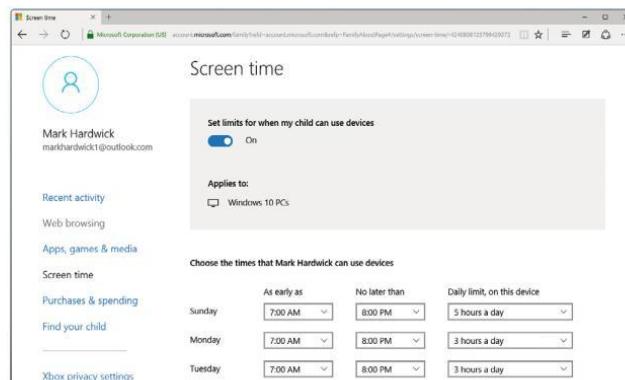
5 Set up permissions

Windows may ask you for your credit card number to verify you're an adult. Once you've done that, it's time to set up the child's permissions. Back in the Windows 10 account settings menu, select the option to 'Manage family settings online'. A browser window will open and load the Microsoft website. Once you've logged in, you'll be able to control family access.



6 Your family

A list of user accounts that come under the family category will be displayed. Select the child from the list that you're setting up the account for and you'll see some options. The first, 'Recent activity', lets you see what sites they've been visiting, what apps/games they've been downloading/playing, and how much time they've been spending on their devices.



7 Browsing and apps

In 'Web browsing', you can choose to block or allow specific sites and to restrict sites rated beyond a certain age. If you have very young children, you can choose to allow them to only visit websites you've decided are safe, by entering the URLs and clicking 'Allow'. From the 'Apps, games & media' screen, you can block inappropriate apps and games in the Windows Store.

8 Screen time and spending

Screen time lets you set time limits and time of day for your child to use their account. You can let them use it more at the weekends, for example. You can also use the 'No later than' fields so they can't use their account beyond a certain time. Finally, 'Purchase and spending' lets you add money to their account so they can buy items from the Windows Store. ■



Learn how to...

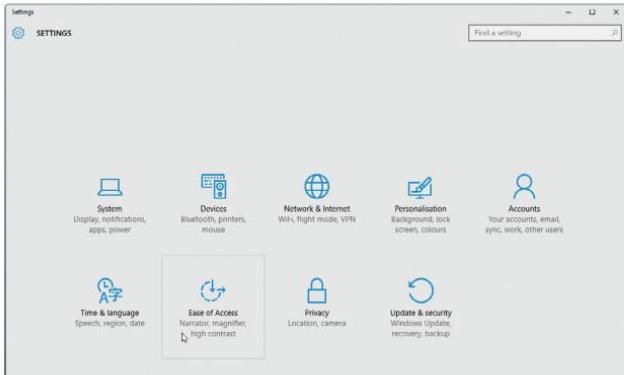
Make your PC easier to access

Everyone should be able to enjoy their PC to the full, and Windows 10's built-in accessibility tools are here to help

TIME TAKEN
20 minutes

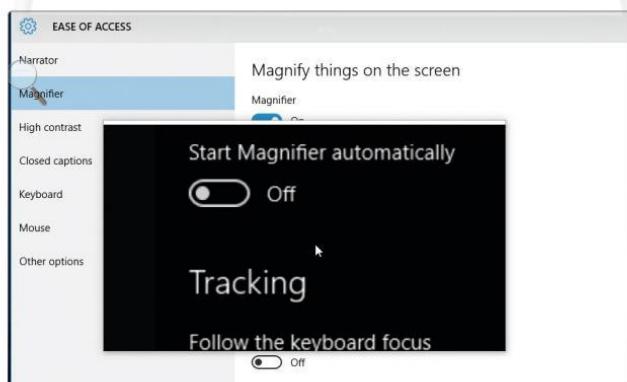
Windows 10 is Microsoft's most user-friendly operating system to date, and packs an impressive suite of tools to make using your PC as easy as possible. In Windows 7, certain features were only available as part of the Aero display scheme, which put heavy demands on low-powered PCs. Other features, including the screen reader and audio descriptions were hidden away. Not ideal if you're already having difficulty with your PC! Thankfully, with its new focus on accessibility, Microsoft has addressed these concerns – and done much more besides.

Make Windows work for you



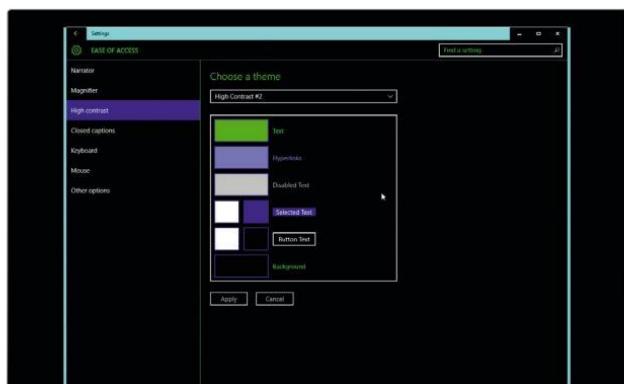
1 Read it aloud

Click 'Start > Settings > Ease of Access'. The first option is 'Narrator', which is ideal if you have difficulty reading text on screen. When activated, it reads text aloud when you move your mouse over a control, click or type text. Use the toggles below to decide which events should trigger it; turn all of them on to begin with, then deactivate any you find unnecessary.



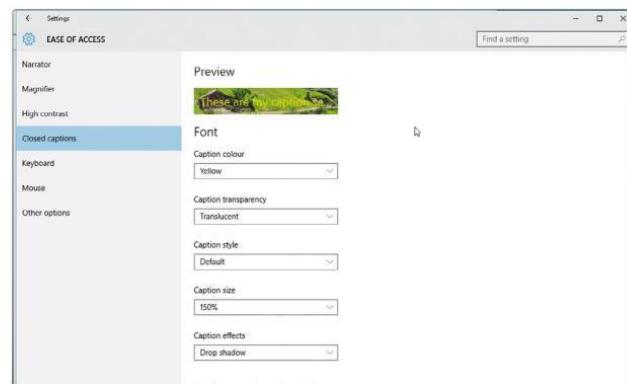
2 Get closer

If you sometimes have difficulty reading small text on your PC's screen, you might appreciate the Magnifier, which does what its name suggests. Use the toggle switch to activate it, then tap [Win]+[+] and [Win]+[-] to zoom in and out respectively. The magnifier can also invert the colours on your screen, which can make text easier to read on coloured backgrounds.



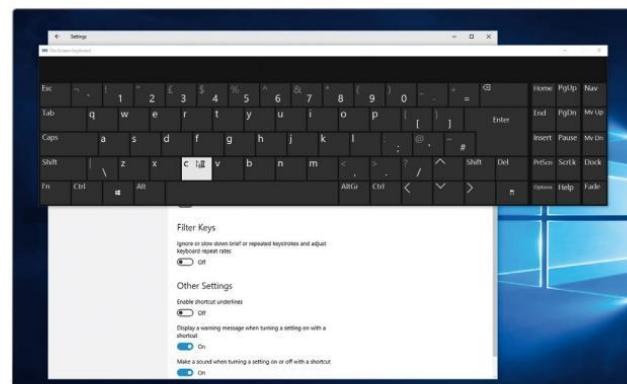
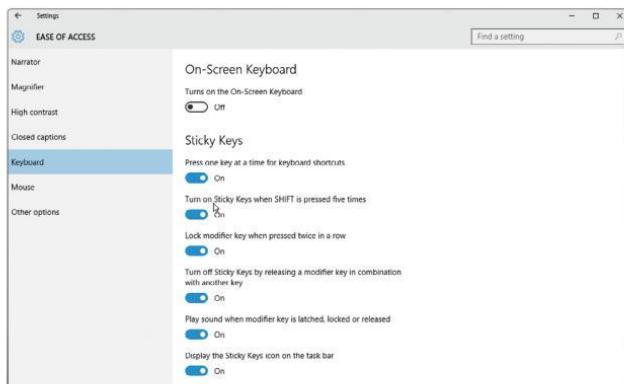
3 Bright and bold

If you'd rather make everything on screen more legible, or have trouble with colour blindness, take a look at the 'High Contrast' setting. There are four options here – two with white backgrounds and two with black. These colour schemes make Windows itself much clearer visually, but websites and programs will be unaffected so you can use the 'Magnifier' as well.



4 Clearer captions

Closed captions are displayed in many video programs for viewers who have limited hearing. Windows 10's Films and TV app supports closed captions; while a video is playing, right-click it and you'll see if the 'CC' option is available. Windows 10's 'Ease of Access' centre let you customise the colour and size of the captions, and add effects to make them easier to see.

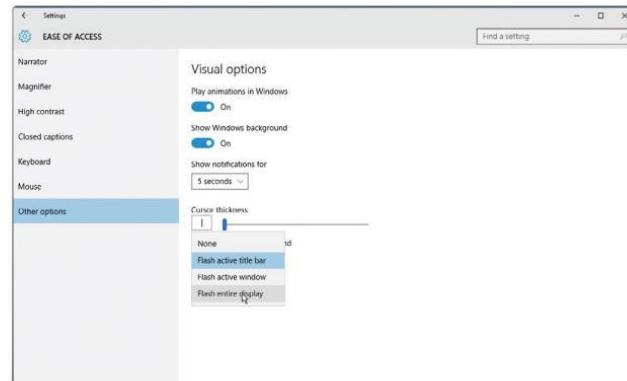
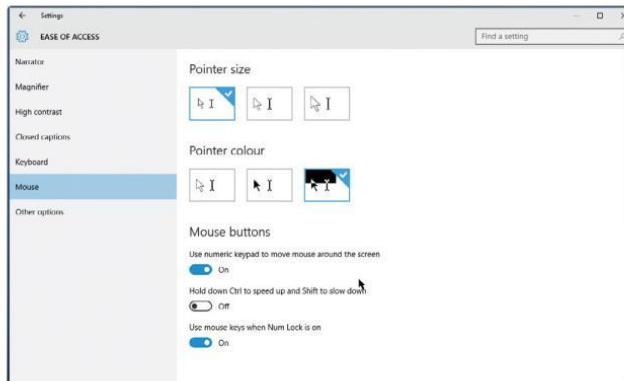


5 Shorter shortcuts

The Keyboard options are worth investigating even if you don't have any difficulty using Windows. One of the most useful is Sticky Keys, which removes the need for finger gymnastics when performing keyboard shortcuts – activate it, and you can tap each key in turn rather than reading across the board to press them simultaneously. Try it – tap [Ctrl], followed by [Alt] and [Del].

6 Click to type

The on-screen keyboard is useful. You might choose to use it because you find using a regular keyboard difficult, or you may find it more convenient if you have a touchscreen. However, it isn't effective if you're worried about keyloggers – malicious programs that record what you type to steal your passwords and other information. An antivirus tool is your best bet here.



7 Mouse trap

The default mouse pointer can often be hard to see, particularly if your monitor has a high resolution. The Mouse settings in Ease of Access is therefore useful, letting you choose a size and colour that are easier to see and use. The option to move the cursor using the numeric keypad is handy if you find a mouse tricky to use, or if the battery in your cordless mouse is flat.

8 Crystal clear

Perhaps the most useful accessibility tool for writers is under 'Other options' – the ability to change the thickness of the text cursor to make it much easier to spot in your word processor of choice. We recommend experimenting with the other options here – particularly visual notifications for sound, which are helpful if you have limited hearing. ■

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Upgrade

► NEW HARDWARE ► ESSENTIAL ACCESSORIES ► LATEST GADGETS

Welcome



It might be getting cold outside, but thankfully it's toasty inside, because the Hive smart thermostat from British Gas is doing a fine job of keeping my home warm. Find out more over on page 88. Also this month, we check out the latest revision of the HP Spectre x360, a neat convertible laptop/tablet that's making both work and play a lot easier. We also enjoy Google's brilliant (and huge) new phone, and get down to some serious gaming with the best controllers around. Enjoy, and I'll see you next issue!

Nick Odantzis Deputy Editor
windowsmagazine@futurenet.com

This issue's highlights

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It's a laptop. It's a tablet. It's thin, light, and it's got some serious power inside

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The all-knowing device that will take charge of the temperature in your home

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The search giant's first self-designed phone is a serious Android device

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Four of the best gaming sticks go head to head (or thumb to thumb...)

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Windows 10 note-taking apps

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 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. If you see an item of hardware bearing a high score, you can be confident that it is an excellent product.

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Thousands of new PC products are released every year and choosing between them can be an impossible task. Our experts select only the best hardware and software to feature in this magazine. Even better, our star rating system makes it simple to find the best products, giving you a fast, trustworthy guide.

How we review

Our expert reviewers 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.

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



HP Spectre x360 (2016)

From £860 | \$1,049 www.hp.com

HP's flagship 2-in-1 laptop goes ultra-thin with style

The original HP Spectre x360 was a great-looking 2-in-1 laptop, and now the company has released a dramatically improved next-generation model. The new 13-inch machine brings in a ton of great improvements, including a new chassis that's 13% thinner and 11% lighter, a quarter more battery life and an Intel Kaby Lake processor. Numbers aside, this is practically an all-new laptop, with a re-engineered display and a few features we now can't live without.

Design

HP has trimmed the new model's chassis. Measuring 13.8mm thin, it's significantly thinner than the outgoing model. The design also trims the body to a touch over 12 inches. Both of these changes stem from the new micro-edge display HP has implemented – more on that shortly.

With the hybrid's new weight of 1.3kg, the device is much more comfortable to use in tablet mode. Another effect of the narrower body is that it gives the laptop a boxier shape, however, this device still features a 16:9 screen.

Aside from the shape change, HP has also re-engineered almost every aspect of the laptop. The geared hinges have been reshaped into a shorter – and wider – mechanism to coincide with the thinner design. Likewise, HP has reduced the keyboard travel from 1.5mm to 1.3mm, but we prefer this change thanks to a stiffer force curve on the keys.

Unfortunately, there have also been a few less favourable sacrifices made in the name of thinness. The SD card reader has kicked the can, as has the HDMI video-out, in exchange for two USB-C ports.

The good news is that those ports support Thunderbolt 3 for charging, dual 4K monitor support

and 40Gbps data transfers. Plus, you still get one full-sized USB 3.1 port for legacy mice, thumb drives and other peripherals.

The glass-coated precision trackpad remains relatively unchanged, and that's no bad thing. It's still as responsive as ever, but, again, we wished HP had gone with a narrower option that wasn't so easy to trigger while typing.

Popping off

Aside from the aesthetic changes, the updated Spectre x360 makes a huge splash with its new micro-edge display that reduces the bezels on the sides of the screen to a much squatter 0.54mm.

Unfortunately, the top and bottom bezels haven't seen the same dramatic reduction, but at least HP is using the space above the screen to good use with a new TrueVision FHD webcam. Not only does the IR camera enable you to log in with your face through



KEY FEATURES

HP Spectre x360 (2016)

Operating system Windows 10

Processor 2.7GHz Intel Core i7-7500U (dual core, 4MB cache, 3.5GHz with Turbo Boost)

Storage 512 GB PCIe NVMe M.2 Solid State Drive

RAM 16 GB LPDDR3 SDRAM

Graphics Intel HD Graphics 620

Ports 2 x USB 3.1 Type-C (Thunderbolt Gen 3), 1 x USB 3.1 Type-A Gen 1, headset jack

Connectivity 802.11ac 2x2 WLAN and Bluetooth

Weight 2.85 pounds

Size 12.03 x 8.58 x 0.54 inches

Screen size 13.3-inch Full HD (1,920 x 1,080) IPS UWVA WLED-backlit multi-touch display

Camera 1080p HP TrueVision FHD IR Webcam

Windows Hello, it also provides you with a 12% wider field of view.

In addition to stretching from edge-to-edge (on the sides), the micro-edge display also features an optically bonded design, so the pixels look like they're sitting right on top of the touch panel.

Although HP has limited display resolution to only 1,920 x 1,080 Full HD, we can certainly live without 4K or QHD+ options on a 13-incher, especially when we're impressed with the overall image quality as is.

Colours pop off the screen, and they're accurate thanks to it being

Secondly, it's the first of HP's quad-speaker equipped machines to have all four firing off at the same time. Thanks to a new audio boost feature, the speakers work together to produce a louder and fuller sound profile. Highs come out clearly and bass is more present, but even with all these improvements a good pair of headphones still deliver a superior listening experience.

Performance

Don't mistake the Spectre x360's ultra-slim form factor for lightweight performance. This is

"It's practically a new laptop, with a re-engineered display and features we now can't live without"

able to reproduce 70% of the colour gamut. Viewing angles are also generous, even at extreme angles, allowing us to read parts of the screen even when just trying to admire the extreme thinness of the new display panel.

HP has also redesigned the audio on its flagship hybrid with quad-speaker system. Just above the keyboard you'll find a new speaker grille, under which are two top-firing tweeters that go with another pair of bottom-facing speakers located on the underside.

The idea behind the quad-speaker setup is that you'll always have sound projected towards you, whether you're using the device as a tablet or laptop.

a speedy machine for everything from starting programs, to loading up a dozen websites simultaneously to header tasks such as video editing.

What's even more impressive is what a cool customer this laptop is under load. Even with pressure from a ton of demanding applications, the fan inside hardly spins at an audible level. And then there's the long battery life you'll be able to pull out of this machine.

Battery life is the biggest standout performance of this laptop and it's largely thanks to a massive 57.8-watt hour (Whr) battery. It even looks physically impressive as HP gave us a look at the Spectre x360's interior and the battery takes up more than half

the internal cavity. According to HP's claims, the updated hybrid should last for up to 15 hours – 25% longer than older models with only a 52Whr battery.

In our own testing, we haven't quite seen these numbers, but the results are impressive nonetheless. With our standardised movie-based battery benchmark test, the Spectre x360 was able to play *Guardians of the Galaxy* over and over again for 8 hours and 45 minutes straight. Overall, it performs remarkably better than most Skylake laptops. Seven to 10 hours of battery life will easily see you through even the toughest days at work. The best thing of all is you can recharge the laptop from zero to 90% in just 90 minutes thanks to USB-C quick charging.

Final verdict

HP has gone back to the drawing board to redesign and reengineer every piece of its flagship 2-in-1 laptop to make it slimmer, lighter and much longer lasting.

If you're in the market for something with higher-end specs, then this option comes at a really great value. ■

A practically all-new laptop, that's one of the longest-lasting machines we've ever tested.


Windows
Help & Advice
Verdict





Hive Active Heating 2

From £249 www.hivehome.com

Hive turns up the heat in the smart home wars with a super-stylish thermostat

Hive is a smart heating system, but the brand has been expanding over the past four years to offer up a whole-home smart setup. You can use Hive to heat your house and have fun doing this, or you can allow it to take control of lights, sensors and more, all of which are easy to control through the Hive app.

The initial installation is something you don't need to do yourself. Hive's British Gas connection means that once you buy the product the installation of Hive is included, and it's worth noting that you don't have to be a British Gas customer.

For £249 you get a wireless thermostat controller, the Hive hub, a receiver that connects up your boiler to the controller and a person to come install the thing.

The installation was hassle free on our part. We have a combi boiler – two boilers in a house can also work, you just have to choose the

multi-zone package, which allows you to control the boilers separately. We already had a rudimentary wireless system attached. The installer simply replaced this with Hive and the whole process took under an hour.

The Hive hub was also set up in this time. The hub connects to your router and is the thing that each Hive product connects to.

To try out Hive, we didn't just road test the thermostat for over a month, but we added a bunch of extras, too. A few years ago, Hive was just a connected thermostat, but the service has since expanded to include smart plugs, sensors and connected lights. All of these are also controlled by the Hive app and can be used in a number of ways.

Hotting up...

The Hive thermostat is one of the best-looking controllers we have seen for smart heating. It has a physical dial in the centre of the

device, which you can move clockwise or anti-clockwise to turn the temperature up or down. That's pretty much it. The controller is dormant until you turn that dial – once turned, it will show on the left-hand side the 'target' temperature and on the right, you'll see the 'actual' temperature. If your house has hit the target temperature, then the heating will stay off until it drops, then will turn back on again.

If you feel the need to boost the temperature, then there's a button on the top, press this and you can choose how long you want the heating to stay on for.

There are three clickable buttons below the dial as well. The middle one brings up extra settings, to the left of this is a back button, and to the right a confirm button.

The Hive app is well designed and a joy to use. The more Hive products you have the more circles you have to press on the main



screen – heating always remains in the centre though. If you don't particularly fancy the visual layout, then you can also look at all your Hive products in list form – at a glance you will be able to see which are online, what status they are in and any schedules you may have sorted.

Installing other devices to your Hive setup is simple. As mentioned before, we also installed motion sensors in our home, window sensors and smart, dimmable bulbs. To install these, you connect them as per the simple instructions on their box, then click on the

off through the app. Through the app you can dim them by a percentage each time – there's a slight delay in telling the app to do this and it actually happening, but it's mere seconds.

In motion

When it comes to the motion sensors, for some reason notifications are switched off to begin with. So, even though your motion detectors will detect motion, the only way you will know about it is by looking at the activity log in the app. Switching notification on is just a couple of

"You can use Hive to heat your house and have fun doing this through the dedicated app"

Install Devices section of the app. It will ask you to Add a Heating Zone or Add Another Device. Add Another Device will automatically push the app to search for any devices in your home. There is a time limit of 10 minutes on this, but each one of our devices were found in under a minute.

Once found, they will be labelled rather generically Plug One, Light One etc. You can rename them, which helps if you have a few of them dotted around your house.

Controlling these is simple. With the lights, you just have to make sure that your light switches are always on, and then turn the lights

clicks away and – and you have the choice of how to be notified, through push notifications, text or by email. In our trials, it took around five seconds for the motion to be detected and the notification to be sent. When it comes to the smart plugs, these work well as light timers – add one to any light in the house and you can schedule them to go on and off. We added it to one of our outside lights – which has a plug on the inside – and it worked great.

Frustratingly, there's no option to hook the motion sensor up to your thermostat, so you won't be able to have your thermostat automatically

Hive & Amazon Alexa

While Hive is pretty much a closed smart home system, it has integrated with Amazon Alexa, meaning you can control your heating with your voice. We tried the system with Alexa on an Amazon Echo and it raises the bar for what a smart home can be. Turning off and on your lights by saying: "Alexa, turn on a light to 50%" will never get boring, and neither will upping your heating by asking nicely.

The Alexa setup was easy – just add in your account credentials. Once done, you don't need to go into the app again, just use your voice.

know that you're home just from sensing your motion. The real fun comes in with the recipes built into the app. Think of it like IFTTT, but with just the recipes you'll actually want to use. For instance, you can pair up a light with a sensor. If the sensor is tripped then you can have a recipe that will automatically turn one of your connected lights on.

And that's the thing about Hive's modular approach – you can smarten up your home with the smart thermostat and be more than happy (and warm) but add a motion sensor here, an active light there and the whole system begins to marry together really well.

Verdict

The Hive system is a great way to get true smart-home functionality in your home. It's easy to use too – the barrier to entry is low as Hive is run by British Gas, it doesn't let complicated features get in the way of its ease of use.

As it's a modular system, you can add sensors, active lights and smart plugs – as many as you want. The standalone heating system is smart enough on its own, if that's as far as you want to go with making your home that little bit smarter. ■

Simple and stylish, it's easy to use and offers a great way to make your home smarter.

 Windows Help & Advice
Verdict





Google Pixel XL

From £599 | \$649 store.google.com

The iPhone 7 killer made by Google

The Google Pixel XL, along with the Google Pixel, is the first phone made (almost entirely) by Google, and it's the best way to experience the latest and greatest that Android software has to offer.

It puts the immense power of Google search behind everything you do, with its all-new Google Assistant, a context-understanding AI that's often smarter than Siri. Sorry, Apple fans...

The Pixel XL also launches with the Android 7.1 Nougat update, which gives the phone virtual-reality powers when paired with the newly released Google Daydream View headset.

The phone debuts the Snapdragon 821 processor, with 4GB of RAM inside of a glass-and-metal body. The camera is touted as 'best in class', and the 5.5-inch 2K-resolution screen looks superb. There's strengthened Gorilla Glass 4 for the top third of the device

around the rear fingerprint sensor and camera, and polished anodised aluminum on the bottom two-thirds where your hand wraps around the phone.

Google has thrown a lot into the Pixel XL design, but there's one thing you won't find: an annoying camera bump. The rear camera is completely flush with the glass plate on the back.

On the front, surrounding the 5.5-inch display, is a big 'chin' for a phone that contains no physical home button. All the face buttons are on-screen, while the riveted sleep/wake button and smooth volume rocker are on the right side.

It does, however, use that extra room at the top to include a headphone jack. There's a speaker on the bottom, but while there are two speaker grilles, there's just one firing out sound. If you accidentally cover it up with your finger when watching something in landscape mode, it kills the volume.

Showing that it does, in fact, have 'personality', the Google Pixel XL colours include Very Silver, Quite Black and a limited-edition Really Blue, a poke at ridiculous phone-colour naming conventions.

Display

The Google Pixel XL further proves why AMOLED displays look the best for smartphones, thanks to its colourful and bright screen that outclasses LCD panels every time.

It's vivid, ready for virtual reality on a budget, and one of the key reasons we'd suggest you upgrade from the normal-sized Google Pixel, which is just Full HD or 1080p.

The rear fingerprint sensor pad (not a button) lights up and unlocks the phone with authentication, too, but that's only useful when it's in your hand, not sitting on a desk. At least give up a double-tap-wake feature to light up the lockscreen... Ambient Display modes does lights the screen up in a black-and-white



colour palette when notifications come in, but it's just not the same.

The Google Pixel XL ushers in a lot of firsts: Android 7.1 Nougat, Google Assistant and the new Snapdragon 821 processor.

That's why you're paying a lot more for a Pixel vs a Nexus phone: usually we're getting some new software and six-month-old internal specs, but Qualcomm is debuting its latest chip here.

The Google Pixel XL shows that it's ready for the future with Android 7.1 Nougat, along with

its smaller 2,770mAh power pack is just that much less. Its 18W adapter charges the phone in a speedy one hour and 50 minutes. However, the adapter uses a USB-C port to achieve those speeds, meaning you have to lug around the USB-C-to-USB-C cable everywhere.

Camera

Our own camera tests showed that the Pixel XL's 12.3MP shooter is outstanding, capturing some of the most highly detailed and colour-accurate photos we've seen on a

"It's vivid, ready for virtual reality, and we'd suggest you upgrade from the normal-sized Google Pixel"

the promise of operating system updates for the next two years and security updates for three years.

Google Pixel XL may also be your first chance to test out Google Allo (messaging) and Google Duo (video chat). They come installed with the phone, and work okay as iMessage and FaceTime rivals.

We found we were averaging a day and a quarter of battery life during our week with the phone, using it as we normally do: checking social media, playing games while waiting in line and making that rare phone call.

If you're a power user, you're better off with the Pixel XL than the standard Pixel, which, despite its Full HD screen, only gave us a day before we ran back to the charger.

phone. The camera has vivid colours, and low-light performance is almost as good, but where it wins out is when things become too bright for Samsung's leading camera on the Galaxy Note 7.

The Pixel XL captures more natural tones, and shots may come off as a bit duller in side-by-side match-ups, but it works well enough in almost every scenario. To put it simply: Samsung ups the brightness and contrast, Google stays more consistent.

What worried us at first was the lack of optical image stabilization (OIS). Google's camera bumpless design forgoes OIS in favour of software-optimized electronic image stabilization (EIS). But we didn't notice a lack of sharpness in

KEY FEATURES

Google Pixel XL

Operating system Android 7.1 Nougat
Display 5.5" AMOLED

Processor cameras 12.3 MP (rear), 8 MP (front)

Processors Qualcomm® Snapdragon™ 821 processor

RAM 4 GB

Storage 32 GB & 128 GB

Dimensions and weight 6.09x2.98in

Colours Silver, black or blue

Media Bottom-firing speaker, microphone

Battery 3,450 mAh

Wireless and location 4G LTE, Wi-Fi 802.1, Bluetooth 4.2

Channels World-wide network/mobile compatibility

Sensors Pixel Imprint, Accelerometer

Ports USB-C, Nano SIM slot

photos shot without a tripod, or issues with video smoothness when playing back footage.

Google's app doesn't have quite as many modes as it could – it feels as though it's just getting by with Slow motion, Panorama, Photosphere and Lens Blur, and options like timer, HDR+, temperature controls and burst photos. Where's the handy gesture shot mechanic to trigger the timer with a wave or even something as basic as time lapse? And you can forget about manual controls. The default camera app feels empty and will send you scrambling to the Google Play Store within the first 24 hours of owning this phone.

The front-facing camera is a different story, however. We shot some of the best-looking 8MP selfies we've seen on the Pixel XL, which thankfully includes HDR+ on the front, too.

Verdict

The Google Pixel XL is a sure-fire bet if you're looking to try a new Android phone. If upgrading to Android 7.1 Nougat and taking advantage of its budding VR capabilities are important to you, this is your smartphone. ■

This VR-capable phone has a fast processor, smart AI software and a great camera in one cool design.

 **Windows Help & Advice**
Verdict



GAME CONTROLLERS

Because a mouse isn't always enough...



Whether you're trying to explore a magic island, fly a shuttle or beat the baddies, sometimes all you need is a good controller (especially if you have a PC hooked up to an enormous TV in your living room).

Consoles have been using well-made controllers for decades, and many games are designed with them in mind. Let's face it, as useful as a keyboard and mouse is for your everyday computing needs, when it comes to gaming they don't quite cut the mustard – especially, when it comes to executing quick responses or fluid movements.

Here, we look at selection of four controllers that are designed to keep you ahead of the game...

1 Razer WildCat

£120 www.razerzone.com

Razer has clearly been taking design cues from Microsoft – its controller even features a familiar X-button. But the manufacturer has added a few innovations of its own to the Wildcat. Nice touches include the Xbox-One-style triggers, which here come with sliders to control their biting points. The additional M buttons are in exactly the right places for most fingers, though it's a shame that what at first appear to be extra analogue triggers underneath are in fact microswitched digital buttons. The D-pad is four buttons rather than a tilting cross, and the set of audio controls on the edge of the controller is a thoughtful addition.



2 Xbox One Elite Wireless Controller

£110 www.xbox.com

This is the Xbox One pad's more expensive brother, and one difference is in how it feels: unlike the standard plastic model, this has a steel frame within a soft-touch shell. Interchangeable D-pad and stick caps attach with magnets, while underneath the pad additional 'P' buttons are triggered with steel paddles, which are magnetised and unlikely to be jerked loose. Trigger sensitivity can be set with switches underneath the pad.

This is undeniably a quality controller, but at more £100, you'd have to really love gaming to make the investment.

3 SteelSeries Stratus XL

£46 www.steelsseries.com

A compact yet heavy controller, SteelSeries Stratus XL doesn't bring anything particularly exciting to the party, yet manages to rise above some of the other offerings thanks to a solid implementation of the basics. The controller body feels solid in the hand and the button placement means nothing is out of reach. Connection to your PC is through Bluetooth, and a pair of AA batteries should last 40 hours. SteelSeries is on to a winner here, despite the lack of additional features. This is a device that ticks a lot of boxes simply because it gets so much right.

4 Steam Controller

£40 store.steampowered.com

Valve's move into the controller world has been innovative, but divisive – it dumps the right stick and D-pad for touchpads to better emulate mouse control. Spend some time with it, however, and it can start to make sense. The face buttons are good enough, with a well-dampened drop, but the triggers and bumpers could be better. The bumpers barely move before giving a click, while the trigger pull is too short. Having a click at the end of the pull is a nice touch, and there's a decent amount of resistance, but there's little sense of analogue progression. This controller is well supported, but its cleverness doesn't always make up for its shortcomings.



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WHICH IS THE BEST FREE OFFICE SUITE?

Get more out of your day-to-day computing tasks with these great productivity suites that don't cost a penny

Microsoft Office used to be pretty much synonymous with Windows and was widely regarded as the go-to productivity suite for PC owners. But with the growing rise of cloud computing and the gradual improvement of free alternatives, that isn't really the case anymore for many home users.

Office 2016 remains the bulwark of many businesses, but at £120 the home edition of Microsoft's suite is a substantial investment, while

its cloud-based version – Office 365 – requires an £8 monthly subscription. So before you shell out, it's worth seeing if FreeOffice, LibreOffice, WPS Office or Google Docs can meet your needs instead.

Here we'll lay out the features of each app and compare their relative merits, which should give you a better idea of which suite is the one for you. Ultimately, the surest way to find out which one is best for your needs is to try it for yourself – don't forget, they're free!

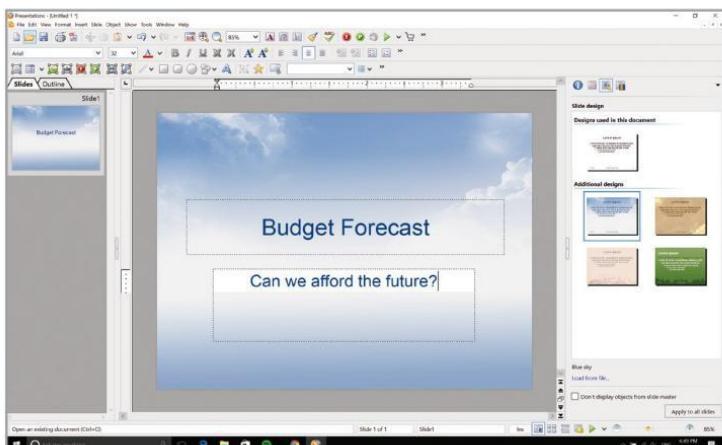


1 FreeOffice

www.freeoffice.com

FreeOffice from Softmaker might be a free version of the company's commercial productivity suite, but it remains a powerful and robust alternative to Microsoft Office. The TextMaker app is the suite's answer to Word, with support for most common document formats like DOCX and RTF, including

password-protected files. TextMaker opens documents in separate tabs for convenient switching. It also exports to PDF as well as EPUB format for ebook publishing, and offers a toolbar and menu layout that will be familiar if you've used Microsoft's word-processing program.



The same can be said for its Excel-like PlanMaker spreadsheet app – it works with XLS and XSL files just as faithfully without any loss of fidelity. PlanMaker worksheets also support over 350 calculation functions, can do the maths with complex numbers, and also offers intelligent AutoFill.

The Presentations app lets you open, edit and save PPT PowerPoint files, includes a number of slideshow templates with placeholders for adding text and media, and also packs plenty of drawing and picture-editing tools. Overall, it's streamlined, powerful and recommended.


Windows
Help & Advice

RATING


FreeOffice is a powerful office suite and all of its programs sport familiar layouts.

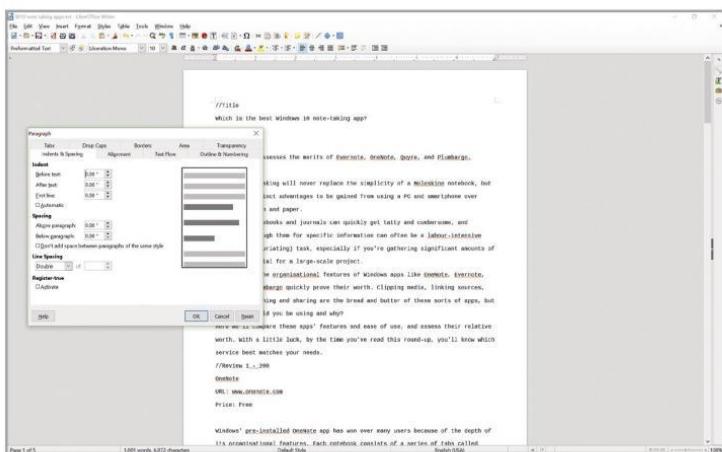
2 LibreOffice

www.libreoffice.org

LibreOffice is an open-source project, which means it's continually being developed and refined. All the apps have an organised interface, so the Writer app is simple enough for a quick memo but powerful enough to create and export media-rich books. The same goes for

spreadsheet app Calc, which offers cell-formatting options and forecast tools. Draw is a well-designed package for producing technical drawings, while Base is a full-featured database program with import options.

Handy wizards help you create specific content, such as memos,



budgets, and the like. Additionally, LibreOffice is compatible with a range of Office document formats. It also has native support for the OpenDocument Format (ODF), which guarantees compatibility across all productivity suites. It even has a suite-wide formula editor and chart creator.

Another unique feature of LibreOffice is its support for extensions, allowing you to add more functionality and templates, such as clipart and multiple language proofreading tools. All in all, LibreOffice is a great choice if you like productivity bells and whistles.


Windows
Help & Advice

RATING


LibreOffice is packed with special tools and useful programs, thanks to its open source heritage.

3 Google Docs

www.google.co.uk/docs

If you're already a user of Gmail and Google Drive cloud storage, the Google Docs suite probably offers the most convenient integration of productivity and communication features. It's lighter on advanced tools than the other suites covered here, but makes up for it

with strong collaboration features, such as change tracking, while its web browser-based interface ensures multiple platform support. You need a Google account to use it, but all of your documents are automatically saved to the cloud for secure anywhere-access.

A screenshot of a Google Sheets document titled 'Future Badminton Ladder'. The spreadsheet contains a table with columns for Rank, Name, Move, Player Name, Form, Played, Next Challenge, and Date/time Challenged. The table lists various players with their current rank, previous rank, and recent performance. Some cells contain formulas or notes like 'Recovering from shoulder surgery' and 'Challenge by Alex Thomas'. A color key indicates that ranks are frozen.

Google Docs makes a lot of sense if you're already invested in Google's other cloud and email services.

Google's word processor, spreadsheet and presentation apps do a generally fine job of importing DOCX and other files and converting them, but with some caveats. PowerPoint files for example may need a certain amount of tweaking, while Google Sheets can handle arithmetic functions, but anything more complex than that can be a bit hit and miss.

All of the apps are backed up by the ever-useful autosave feature and a complete revision history, just remember that you have to be online to use all of the features!



RATING



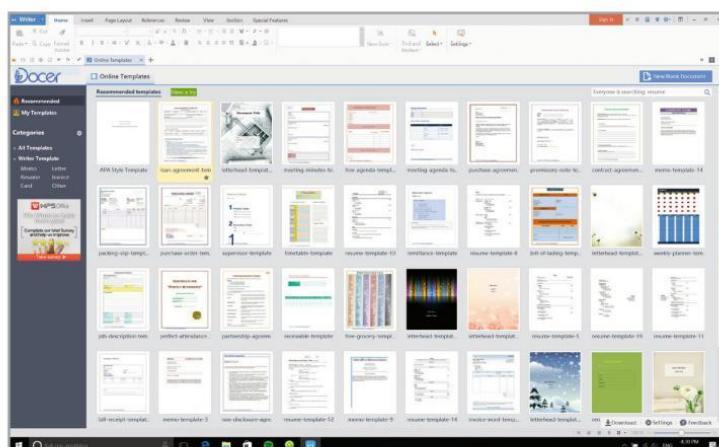
4 WPS Office

www.wps.com

WPS Office is one of the smartest-looking MS Office alternatives and the free version includes a 30-day trial of the premium suite. It includes clever and refined alternative apps for word processing, presentations and spreadsheets, and apes Microsoft's familiar ribbon

interface across the suite, with support for all common document formats. It also works on Mac, Linux, Android and iOS devices, making it truly cross-platform.

Most of the advanced productivity features can be found here. WPS office actually comes with some unique features



WPS Office is a powerful alternative to Microsoft's suite, but its free version is slightly let down by ads and watermarking.

that MS Office doesn't. For example, it offers an 'eye protection' mode that turns the background green, and also lets you change the color and style of the UI. WPS also boasts tabbed documents, which makes organising your desktops easier.

The only downsides of the free version of WPS Office are watermarks on printed documents and the appearance of ads when performing some functions, such as PDF exporting or mail merging. These aren't hugely intrusive, but do detract from the general professionalism of an otherwise excellent suite.



RATING



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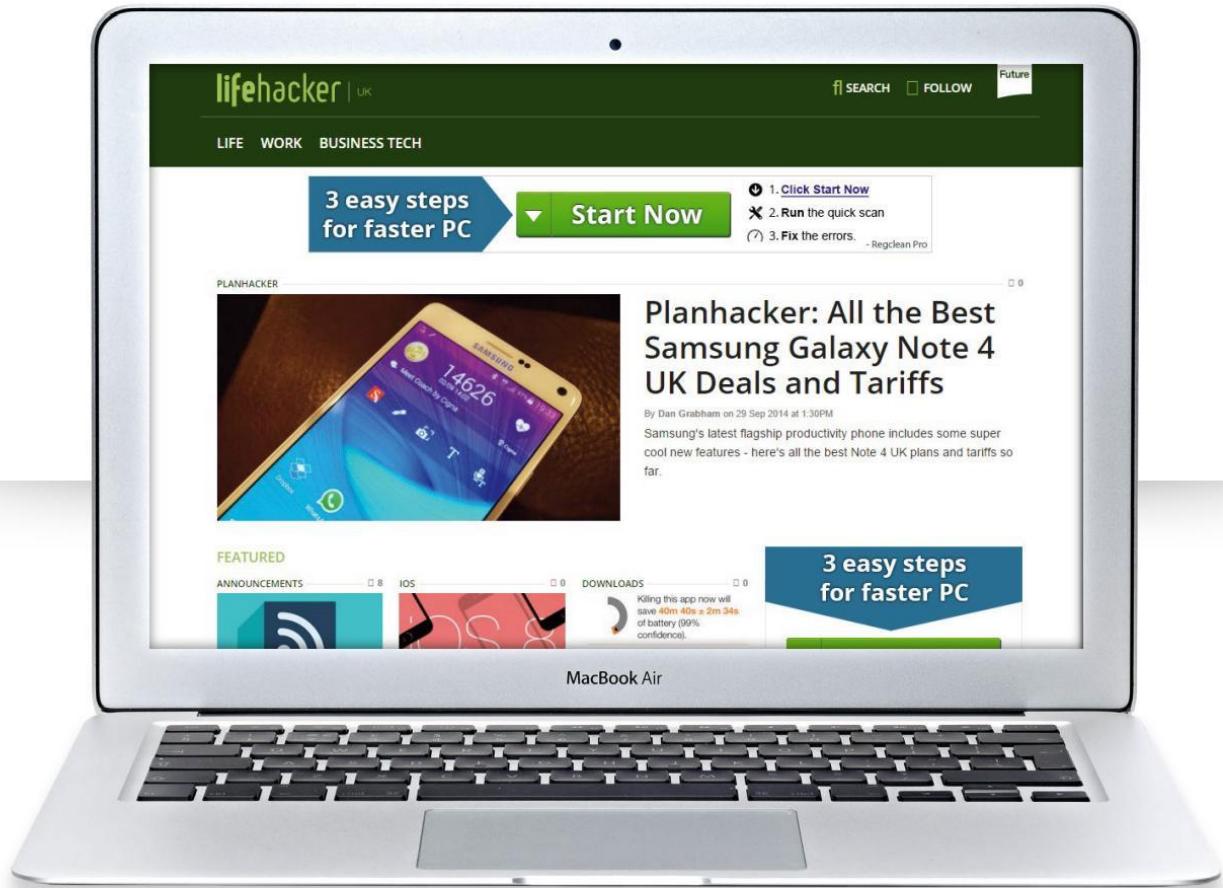


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