



Windows Help & Advice

57

PAGES OF
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WINDOWS
GUIDES!

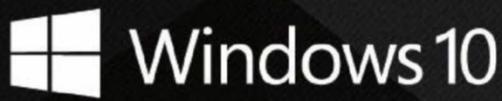
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IT'S TOO LATE!**Advice Inside**

- ✓ The best security
- ✓ Avoid Net nasties
- ✓ Remove malware
- ✓ Stay safe forever
- ✓ Trusted advice

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File Explorer secrets revealed / Control your PC's notifications / Check your Internet speed



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Windows 10 Home

Intel® Core™ i7-6900K Processor

ASUS® X99-A II Mainboard
16GB DDR4 3000mhz Corsair Vengeance LPX Memory
500GB Samsung 850 EVO SSD
2TB SATA III 6.0Gb/s 64MB HDD
8GB MSI Nvidia® GeForce® GTX 1080 Video Card
16X LG® Blu Ray BH16NS40 Writer Black
CoolerMaster Maker 5 Gaming Case
Corsair CX 600W Power Supply
Corsair H100 V2
Extreme Overclocking
LCD monitor is not included but optional



16x Optical Drive



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Windows 10 Home

Intel® Core™ i7-6700HQ Processor

17.3" Full HD 1920 x 1080 Display
Intel HM170 Express Chipset
Nvidia® GeForce® GTX 960M 2GB Video Card
8GB DDR4 2133MHz HyperX Impact Black Memory
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AC WiFi

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Windows 10 Home

Intel® Core™ i7-6700HQ Processor

17.3" FHD 1920 x 1080 Display
Intel HM170 Express Chipset
Nvidia® GeForce® GTX 1070 8GB Video Card
8GB DDR4 2133MHz SODIMM memory
1TB 5400RPM SATA HDD
Intel® Dual Band Wireless-AC 3165 WiFi
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2GB MSI Nvidia® GeForce® GTX 1050 Video Card
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Thermaltake Litepower 350W Power Supply
Corsair H45 Cooling System
LCD monitor is not included but optional



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Windows 10 Home

Intel® Core™ i7-7700K Processor

Gigabyte® Z270P-D3 Mainboard
8GB DDR4 2400Mhz HyperX Fury Memory
240GB Kingston UV400 SSD
1TB 7200rpm SATA III 6.0Gb/s 64MB HDD
6GB MSI Nvidia® GeForce® GTX 1060 Video Card
NZXT 410 Phantom White Gaming Case
Cooler Master 500 Power Supply
Corsair H45 Cooling System
LCD monitor is not included but optional



Infinity Xtreme



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Windows 10 Home

Intel® Core™ i7-6800K Processor

X99-E Mainboard
16GB DDR4 3000MHz Corsair Vengeance LPX Memory
256GB Intel 600P SSD
2TB 7200rpm SATA III 6.0Gb/s 64MB HDD
8GB MSI Nvidia® GeForce® GTX 1070 Video Card
CoolerMaster MasterBox 5 Gaming Case
Corsair CX 600W Power Supply
Corsair H45 Cooling System
LCD monitor is not included but optional



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Windows 10 Home

Intel® Core™ i5-7600K Processor

MSI® Z270-A PRO Mainboard
8GB DDR4 2400Mhz HyperX Fury Memory
2TB 7200rpm SATA III 6.0Gb/s 64MB HDD
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ThermalTake View 27
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Welcome

Hardly a day goes by without some story appearing in the news about websites being hacked or someone having their PC held hostage by ransomware, so in this issue we're going to show you how to fight back!

In our lead feature starting on page 14, we'll show you how to lock down your PC and protect it from hackers and other nasties; how to create strong passwords, encrypt your emails and chat securely with contacts; and even how to stay safe using Wi-Fi.

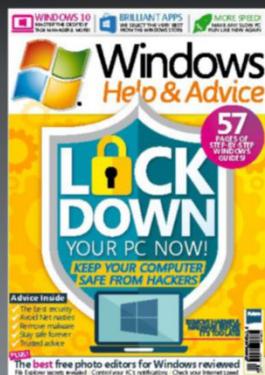
In Explore, starting on page 27, we'll also show you how to speed up a slow PC; make the most of File Explorer; and learn how to test the speed of your internet connection along with some tips and tricks to give it a boost.

And whether you're just starting out on your Windows journey or are an experienced user, check out our top 25 picks from the Windows Store on page 66.

Enjoy the issue and see you again on 31 March for much, much more!

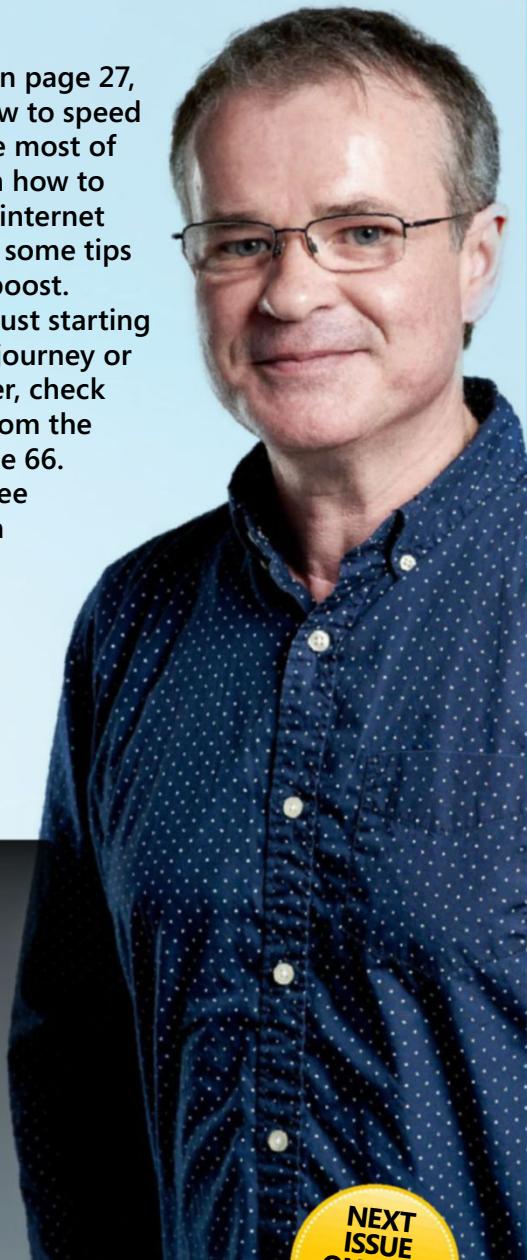
Rob

Rob Mead-Green Editor
www.facebook.com/windowsmag



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AND SAVE – JUST TURN TO PAGE 24!

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, smartphone or tablet.



NEXT
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ON SALE
31 March
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Windows Help & Advice

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Keep your computer safe from hackers with trusted advice and security tips!

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Discover the inner workings of your machine with Windows' Task Manager

66 25 best Windows 10 apps

Our pick of the top free and low-cost apps you can download from the Windows Store

REGULARS

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SUPPORT

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EXPLORE

The best PC tutorials



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

"If you're looking for better ways to use your home computer, then this is the place to start. We'll show you all the tips and tricks the experts use and more!"

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Find out more on page 24

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WHAT YOUR COMPUTER IS *REALLY* UP TO

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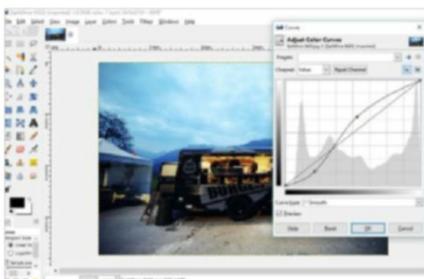
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PLAY AWAY You can plug any line-level musical instrument straight into your PC.

Sound advice

Make sweet music for free using Windows

You have everything you need to create and record digital tunes on your computer – without spending a penny

It's hard to find a modern album that hasn't been touched by a computer in some way, from the digital recording process to editing, mastering, effects and even instrumentation. If you fancy yourself as a musician – or even if you think you're not musical at all – there are a variety of free ways to make beautiful tunes, or make the most of any musical instruments that you use.

Take www.incredibox.com, for example. It gives you drag-and-drop access to a neat beatbox sequencer, and there's a game in there too – find the right combination of beats, effects and vocals and you will

unlock special choruses and interludes. When you fancy something slightly more advanced, Google's Chrome Music Labs (musiclab.chromeexperiments.com) gives you a number of musical toys to play with, along with a small grounding in music theory. Stay online and you can ramp things all the way up to the likes of Audiotool (www.audiotool.com), a powerful online music studio, which includes four

synthesizers and a host of drum machines and effects processors for you to wire up.

COMPUTER MUSIC

Away from your browser, there are some top-notch tools to choose from. We've talked a lot in Windows Help & Advice about Audacity (www.audacity.com), and it's a great way to record audio from a microphone or a connected instrument, then process it so it sounds great. Audacity is capable of layering multiple recordings, but if you need a little more fine control (or you feel like being in control of a full-blown

music studio) then Ardour (www.ardour.org) is the best port of call. Make no mistake, it's quite complex, but its range of abilities and selection of plugins gives you plenty of options, and there's on-board help if you need a little hand-holding too.

So don't think for a moment that you can't make beautiful music – Windows gives you all the tools you need to do something awesome without paying a penny.

You can take control of a full-blown music recording studio

FOLDABLE PHONES

Big screens for small spaces

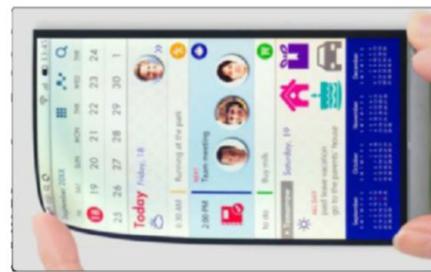
It's the next big thing in smartphones: bendable, foldable screens. LG and Samsung have been working on the tech for some time, and now word has leaked from Apple, via the US Patent Office, that the company is ready to jump on the bandwagon with its own foldable device. They'll mean a greater screen size in a smaller space, essentially transforming your phone into a tablet when unfurled – and a huge marketing advantage. Expect them to drop before the end of 2017.



CURLY CONCEPT Samsung's retractable concept phone could see the light of day this year.



SPRINGY SCREEN Larger versions of LG's flexible OLED displays have been demonstrated at various trade shows around the globe.



BRIGHT AND BENDY Japan Display has produced this flexible screen on a plastic – not glass – base.

The Knowledge...



Tesla Autopilot

Autopilot? Is that what it sounds like?

It is, or at least it soon will be. Tesla's Autopilot system has added a huge range of driver assistance features since it was first integrated into vehicles in 2014, but since October last year every automobile produced by Tesla has included an upgraded suite of hardware containing everything necessary for the cars to run completely autonomously, "at a safety level substantially greater than that of a human driver", the company says.

That sounds fantastically futuristic, so how does Tesla Autopilot work?

With a massive amount of computing power. Eight cameras are dotted around the body of the car, giving its central computer 360-degree vision over 250 metres. Twelve ultrasonic sensors can detect hard and soft objects over the same range, and a forward-facing radar helps it see through fog and adverse weather. All of this is fed into a central computer a quoted 40 times as powerful as the previous generation.

So it'll drive itself?

Yes – in fact, Tesla has already been testing self-driving vehicles on California's roads, and is gathering data from cars fitted with the updated Autopilot tech to ensure that the feature works smoothly once it's switched on for good.

That sounds a bit scary...

You wouldn't be alone in thinking that. Tesla won't be activating Autopilot's fully autonomous features until it receives backing from the relevant regulatory authorities. While Tesla boss Elon Musk says the software will be ready within a few months, it will likely take years of stringent testing before it's approved for the road.

Thank goodness for that...

Imagine the possibilities, though. Press a button on your smartphone to make your car drive itself to you. Jump out when you get to where you're going; the car will find its own parking space. Enjoy a game of Snap while hurtling down the motorway at 70mph. Erm, maybe that does sound a bit scary after all...

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Everyone's talking about Windows in the cloud

Could the next big version of Microsoft Windows run entirely through the internet? It certainly looks that way

The cloud is probably one of the vaguest yet most talked about tech topics of the past decade. Essentially bursting to life when a crude cloud icon was used to represent the 'internet technology goes here' portion of business organisation charts, the cloud can mean a lot of things: it can mean online storage, it can mean online software, and it can even mean entire online operating systems. We've caught a glimpse of the latter in the form of Google's Chromebook laptops – aside from a small number of programs that run on the machines, just about everything happens on the internet, meaning these low-powered devices can harness the muscle of stronger internet-based computers to pull off tasks which would otherwise be out of the question, and keep files safely synchronised between multiple machines.

Whispers and reports suggest that Microsoft is now preparing its own foray into the cloud OS market. Well, sort of. Product definitions for a product called 'Windows Cloud' have appeared in recent test builds of Windows 10, leading some to speculate about what this might mean; some prominent observers

suggest Microsoft is looking to do battle with Google's Chromebooks in the education market with a cut-down version of Windows 10, running on low-cost hardware and tied to app installs from the Windows Store. Others posit that this may be a true consumer cloud operating system, with apps and settings hosted online – log in from any machine and you will be presented with a familiar environment, all your software, and all your documents just where you left them.



more work in a web browser and storing more and more of our files and photos online.

But while we don't see traditional software dying out just yet, don't be surprised if, sometime in the next decade, booting up Windows just means heading to a website from any phone, tablet or computer. In some ways that would be incredibly freeing, but we also love our PCs just the way they are.

THE 60-SECOND QUIZ

Pens at the ready, your time starts now!

1 Approximately what percentage of the world's population uses Facebook every month?
A. 0.2%
B. 2%
C. 20%

2 Which country has the world's fastest broadband speed?
A. Hungary
B. South Korea
C. USA

3 Which country has the most active internet users?

- A. Russia
- B. India
- C. China

4 Why is Google Earth blocked in Iran?
A. US export restrictions
B. Because its broadband speed are too slow
C. It shows images of secret military installations

5 How long would it take for a packet of internet data to travel across the world?

- A. 1.5 seconds
- B. 0.6 seconds
- C. 3 seconds

6 What is the best selling computer model of all time?

- A. Apple iMac (2014)
- B. IBM PC Jr.
- C. Commodore 64

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

Download this... + ▶

The Useless Web

www.theuselessweb.com

A website that says 'hey' and 'ho' over and over. An never-ending ASCII picture of a towering horse. A wobbling black sausage that turns into a flashing musical mess when you shake your mouse. These are the first three incomprehensible sites that The Useless Web offered up to us, and there are hundreds more to see. Click the inviting pink 'please' button and you will be sent to a corner of the web to enjoy a toy with no purpose or a random digital oddity. Even if you're an internet veteran, you'll see something new, and it's hard to complain at being sent to www.sanger.dk even if you have seen it before.

See also www.weirdorconfusing.com, which offers up baffling products from around the world; we were tempted by the yodelling pickle, but the iPad stand with toilet roll holder was a step too far.

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TO A
USELESS
WEBSITE
→ PLEASE ←

ABSOLUTELY USELESS Go somewhere ridiculous. You know you want to...

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NEXT ISSUE ON SALE

March

31

Friday

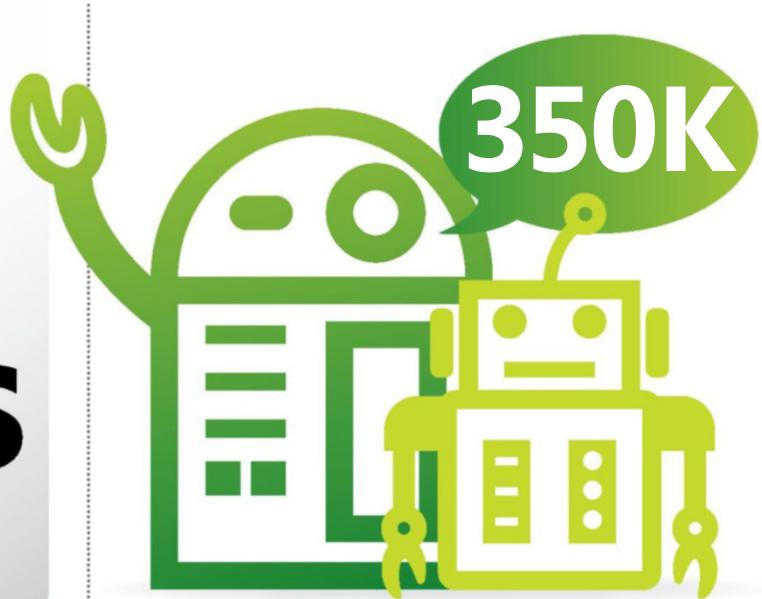
Facts & figures

Rob Mead-Green reveals a host of fascinating digital facts

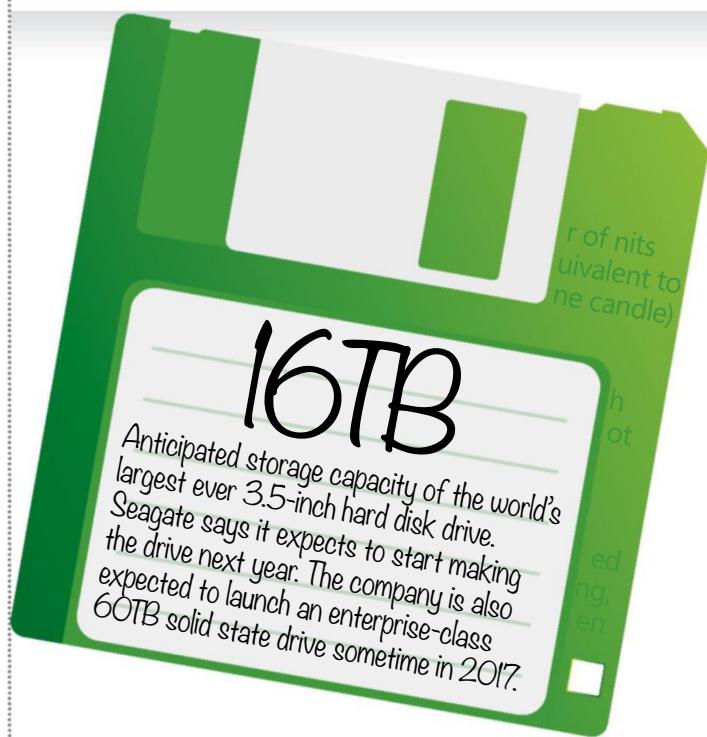


15.3 MILLION

Number of users who follow the @POTUS, the official Twitter account of the President of the United States, Donald Trump. The 44th President, Barack Obama, has 84.5 million followers at @BarackObama



The number of fake accounts or 'bots' linked to a single *Star Wars* botnet on Twitter. Researchers at UCL discovered the botnet after carrying out research into people's use of the social network. Their discovery that "a large number of Twitter users are bots" has all kinds of implications – from the prevalence of spam to the rise of fake news.



MINUTES

Length of time teens can spend using gadgets each day before it has an impact on their wellbeing. The study by the University of Oxford concluded: "Modern use of digital technology is not intrinsically harmful and may have advantages in a connected world..." The only caveat? That tech shouldn't be overused or affect other activities.

>> Incoming

The hottest new Windows hardware on the horizon



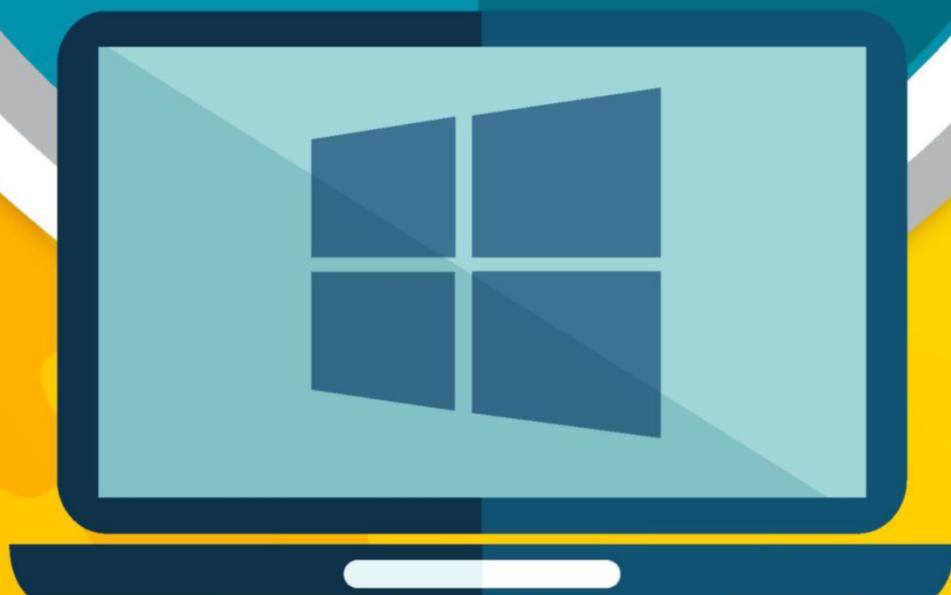
Canon PowerShot G9 X II

From £449.99, canon.co.uk

While smartphone snappers are getting better all the time, for true picture quality a good quality camera is a must. The Canon PowerShot G9 X II is just such a device. Compact, smart and with a premium-quality feel, it comes equipped with a 20.1MP CMOS image sensor, 28mm wide-angle lens and a 3x optical zoom. It also comes with a wealth of creative modes as well as an f/2 aperture lens for low-light shooting. It even includes Wi-Fi, Bluetooth and NFC, making it easy to transfer your photos to your phone when you're done shooting. Now that's smart.

LOCK DOWN

YOUR PC NOW!





Worried about your online and offline security and privacy? Nick Peers reveals the tips and techniques you need to lock down your computer

There's hardly a day goes by without some new hacking controversy. From online sites getting compromised to people facing down ransomware demands, the always-connected era is one fraught with danger. Prevention is always better than cure, so what can you do to ensure you're as protected as you can be?

In this feature we're going to arm you with all the tools, tips and guides you need to close the door on drive-by hackers, malware and other online threats to your privacy and security. We'll start by locking down your PC – ensuring your security software is up to scratch, you have a firewall that's fit for purpose and that your personal data is encrypted and as difficult to steal as possible.

Next, we'll look at tightening the security of your home network – you'll discover how to log on to

your router, improve the security of your Wi-Fi network and restrict access to only those devices you explicitly choose. We'll also show you how to perform a quick security sweep of your wireless tech and check it for weak spots.

Then it's on to your internet connection – you'll learn how to encrypt your connection using a VPN, even when browsing in public spots, and discover how to engage in secure web browsing, email and even chat. Last, but not least, you'll learn how to implement a foolproof – and watertight – password management system to ensure you have unique, strong passwords without making things awkward. We'll even show you how to switch on two-factor authentication for even greater protection.

Follow these tips and you'll lock out the snoopers and hackers, and keep your personal data as private and protected as it can be. It's time to fight back.

TIGHTEN UP YOUR SECURITY

STEP ONE IN PROTECTING YOUR HOME STARTS WITH YOUR OWN PC

Let's begin by tightening the security of the computers in your home. First, take a look at your security software. If you're currently using Windows Defender, we recommend that you switch to something stronger. If you're happy to rely on free protection, then Panda Free AntiVirus (www.pandasecurity.com/uk/homeusers/solutions/free-antivirus/) is an excellent choice. It's light on its feet, easy to use and gives you protection that matches many commercial products. It includes built-in protection against Potentially Unwanted Programs (PUPs) and an optional browser plug-in, which offers safe web searches and protection against dodgy websites. Panda is also less intrusive when it comes to pop-up upgrade offers – you can switch off these completely by opening its Settings.

Paid-for protection from the likes of Kaspersky and Norton goes even further, and you can get discounts by buying multi-computer licences to cover your whole household. If going down this route, keep an eye out for frequent 50% off deals – you can purchase these any time of the year, then apply them once your subscription has run out.

SECURE YOUR FIREWALL

If you decide to use free protection, you'll be relying on the Windows Firewall. It has all the tools you need to close the door to hackers, but it doesn't use them fully. Windows Firewall monitors incoming traffic from your network and the internet for potential threats, but waves through all outgoing traffic from applications without a second thought.

If you don't have a third-party firewall installed, then TinyWall (<https://tinywall.pados.hu>) gives you a way to



use Windows Firewall as a two-way firewall. True, it needs a bit of configuration to get working, but our step-by-step guide on the opposite page reveals all. The only caveat is that it can take some time before all your software is working correctly – look out for failed updates and applications complaining about not having enough access. If you recognise and trust the app in question, simply follow the guide to add it to TinyWall's whitelist. Also

your main security software. The free version should be used to scan your system at least once a week, or pay for the Premium version for real-time protection (without conflicting with your other security tools).

If your security software doesn't offer any protection against ransomware – the free version of Panda doesn't, for instance – then install BitDefender Anti-Ransomware Tool (www.bitdefender.com/solutions/anti-ransomware-tool.html)

"The answer is to encrypt your files, and that can be done in a number of ways"

note the potential issues with sharing files and printers with others – you can work around most of them, but if it's too much hassle, look for a paid-for solution instead.

ADD MORE PROTECTION

Whatever security software you have installed, there's always room for extra help. You can start by installing Malwarebytes Anti-Malware Free (www.malwarebytes.org), which can root out and remove infections missed by

to block four known ransomware families. Ransomware is particularly nasty malware that encrypts all the data on your hard drive, demanding you pay a hefty ransom in return for the key required to unlock it. Another way to protect yourself is to regularly back up your data both offsite (the cloud) and onsite (an external hard drive).

PROTECT YOUR DATA

Personal files are priceless, but they're also sensitive. If you're a laptop user who

takes their PC on the road, you should ask yourself how you would feel if your laptop was stolen. The answer is to encrypt your files, and that can be done a number of ways depending on where the data is stored.

If you're carrying files on a USB thumb drive, the easiest way is to create an encrypted 'container' into which you place your most sensitive files. The container is password-protected – supplying the correct password unlocks the files within as a virtual disk drive, but otherwise they remain hidden as well as scrambled. If this approach appeals, take a look at Rohos Mini Drive (www.rohos.com/products/rohos-mini-drive/). This lets you to create virtual drives up to 8GB in size for free.

If you want to encrypt your entire machine, then Windows 10 Professional users should type 'bitlocker' into the Search box to find out how to use Windows' own encryption tool. If you're running Windows 10 Home, then use VeraCrypt (<https://veracrypt.codeplex.com/>). You can use it either to create encrypted volumes of locally stored data or encrypt entire drives and partitions – see the 'System Encryption' section of VeraCrypt's documentation.

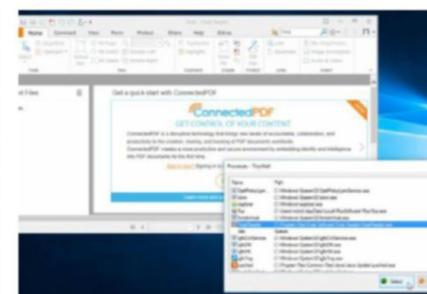
CONFIGURE TINYWALL

SECURE YOUR FIREWALL WITH THIS FREE APP



1 Add your browser

After installation, TinyWall will block most applications from accessing the network by default – including your favourite web browser. Open your browser, then click ^ on the Taskbar Notification area, right-click the new TinyWall icon and choose 'Whitelist by window'. Click inside the browser window, and it should now work correctly.



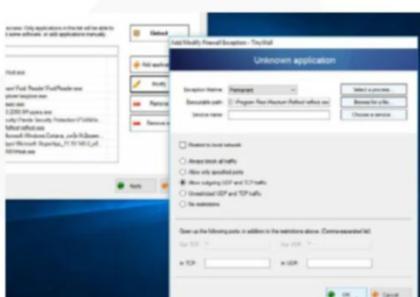
2 Add other apps

You can repeat this process for all your other open applications, or you can choose 'Whitelist by executable' to manually locate a program executable. If the app is running, try 'Whitelist by process' to select it from a list of running programs. To whitelist it, simply highlight the program's process name and then click Select to do so.



3 Use Autolearn

Some applications use multiple processes, which can be tricky to identify. To resolve this, close all programs, ensure your PC is malware free, then right-click the TinyWall icon and choose 'Change mode' > Autolearn. Now launch your program and use your PC for a few minutes before switching back to Normal mode. TinyWall will now whitelist the app.



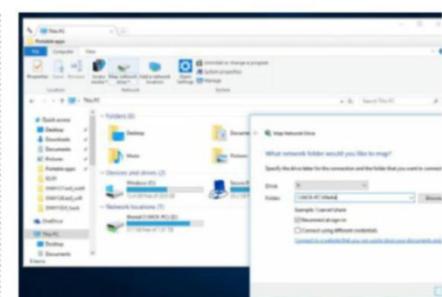
4 Manage exceptions

Right-click the TinyWall icon and then choose the Manage > Application Exceptions tab to view a list of whitelisted programs – if you've been using learning mode, you should hopefully see your target app's programs and processes appear here. You can use this option to remove unwanted apps or select and choose Edit to fine-tune its access levels.



5 Sharing settings

If you want to allow file and print sharing traffic on your network, switch to TinyWall's Manage > Special Exceptions tab and tick the relevant box. Click Apply. Windows will still complain Print and File Sharing is disabled, but it won't be true. You will, however, need to whitelist any printer management software and connect slightly differently.



6 Sharing folders

Open File Explorer and type '\\<server>' into the Address bar, replacing <server> with the computer name of the PC you wish to connect to. You should see a list of its shares appear, enabling you to browse and connect to them. Select 'This PC' and click 'Map network drive' to create permanent links to these shared files and folders.

SECURE YOUR CLOUD BACKUPS

If you back up data to the cloud, you may be concerned about its security. All cloud providers promise to encrypt your data for privacy purposes, but what kind of encryption is provided, and where are the keys required to decrypt your data stored? If you're at all paranoid, you will want those keys kept in your personal possession, a technique which is known as client-side encryption. Sadly, not many cloud backup providers offer this – neither Dropbox nor OneDrive do, for example.

If this is a concern, you can encrypt your data locally before uploading it to the cloud – if you're already using VeraCrypt, for example, you could simply create an encrypted volume inside your cloud folder and store all sensitive data in there. On the other hand, if you primarily use your cloud provider for

syncing data between your various devices, you'll need to choose a solution that enables you to access your data on whichever platforms you need.

There are a number of options out there, but one that's unlimited and free for personal use is nCrypted Cloud (www.encryptedcloud.com/apps/windows/). Once installed, set up your free nCrypted Cloud account, then connect cloud providers (Dropbox, OneDrive, Box and Google Drive are all supported) and finally choose the folders that you want to encrypt. If you want access from other computers or mobile devices (Mac, iOS and Android are also supported) then simply install the relevant app or program, link it to your nCrypted Cloud account and you're done.



Guest Network

You can configure the wireless network for guests.

Guest Network: Enable 2.4G Guest Network
 Enable 5G Guest Network
 Disable Guest Network

SSID: TP-LINK_Guest_2.4GHz

Security: WPA/WPA2 - Personal

Authentication Type: Auto

Encryption: Auto

Wireless Password: strongpasswordhere
(Enter ASCII characters between 8 and 63 or Hexadecimal characters between 8 and 64.)

Group Key Update Period: 0 (seconds, minimum is 30, 0 means no update)

Save 

BE OUR GUEST Move your visitors on to a guest network after tightening your Wi-Fi network's security.

LOCK DOWN YOUR NETWORK

STOP HACKERS AND SNOOPERS FROM ACCESSING YOUR ROUTER

Even if you've yet to embrace the concept of the smart home, the chances are you will still have a number of devices, as well as your PC, competing for bandwidth on your home network. Read on to discover how to reduce its vulnerability with a home network security audit.

LOCK YOUR ROUTER
 Let's start with the gateway between your home and the internet. If you have never carried out admin on your router before, then you will definitely find ways in which to strengthen its security. You can usually manage your router through your web browser by entering its four-digit IP address into the Address Bar. To do that, first open Settings > Network and Internet, and click 'View your network properties', then make a note of your router's IP address under Default Gateway.

Type the IP address into your browser, and you will now see a status or login page. Each router handles things differently, but they all follow a broadly similar pattern. Consult its documentation, look on the router box or visit its support

website for the default login details to gain access.

It's possible for drive-by hackers to target routers remotely, relying on users having left the default password in place, so if that's the case on your router, you should look for the option to change this – on our TP-Link router it's under System Tools > Manage Control, but other routers will vary. See pages 22-23 for tools that can help you help create a strong password.

PROTECT YOUR WI-FI

Once the router password has been changed, it's time to tighten up your Wi-Fi network. Your router should have already set encryption (WPA2-PSK with AES encryption ideally), but it's a good idea to change the default password. Yes, you'll have to reconnect all your wireless devices, but you'll immediately kick off any unauthorised devices who might have been using it without your knowledge. If you have separate 2.4GHz and 5GHz networks set up, repeat for both (and consider setting unique passwords for each separate network).

Each computer or device on your network is identified using its MAC address, a

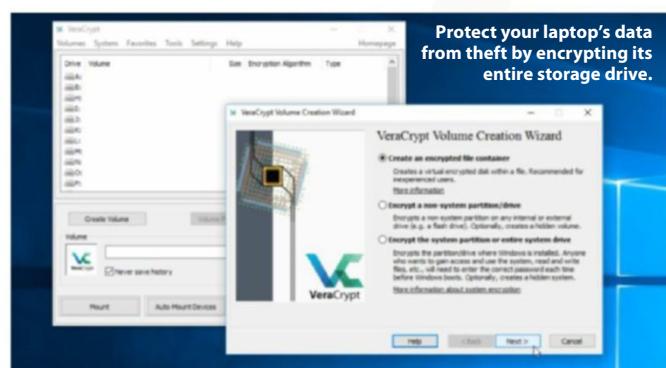
six-digit hexadecimal code. If your router supports MAC filtering, it means you can lock down your wireless network even further, by only accepting connections from devices with specific MAC addresses.

First, you need to identify the MAC address for each device you own, which we recommend you write down and record somewhere secure. You'll need to look up instructions for your specific device, but it'll typically be under Settings somewhere. In the case of your wirelessly connected PC, look under Settings > Network and Internet > 'View your network properties' in the Physical Address (MAC) section.

Once you've got all the MAC addresses you need –

including, critically, your wireless PC if applicable – enable MAC address filtering and enter the addresses one by one. If prompted, choose the option to only allow those devices with MAC addresses that match.

If you frequently allow family and friends to access your Wi-Fi network when they're around, enabling MAC address filtering may be a step too far. That said, explore your Wi-Fi router's settings to see if it offers a guest network function – if it does, you can give visitors internet access without opening up the rest of your network to them. Make sure that you enable the WPA/WPA2 encryption option for the guest network, and set a unique wireless password for your guests to use.



Protect your laptop's data from theft by encrypting its entire storage drive.

MORE SECURITY SETTINGS

Your devices connect to the internet using a series of virtual ports, with different ports used by different applications and services. Some are standardised – for example, port 80 provides connections to the web, while port 25 is used by SMTP email servers, but others are allocated on an application-by-application basis (if you want to access your Plex Media Server over the internet, for example, you need to connect through port 32,400).

In the past, you had to manually open up ports through your router's setup utility, but thanks to the arrival of Universal Plug and Play (UPnP) apps can now communicate effortlessly with your router and open the ports they need in the background. While this is convenient, it does open your router up to potential breaches (malware can open up ports to wreak havoc, for example). You should, at the very least, check periodically to see which apps have

access to your router and if you don't recognise any, disable it immediately to close all ports. You can then investigate the dubious app further using the IP address to target the device it's originating from before deciding whether or not you should re-enable it.

A better approach – if less convenient – is to manually set up port forwarding yourself. Apps should alert you when this needs to be done, and you can follow the step-by-step guide at the bottom of this page to see what information needs to be set up for each port.

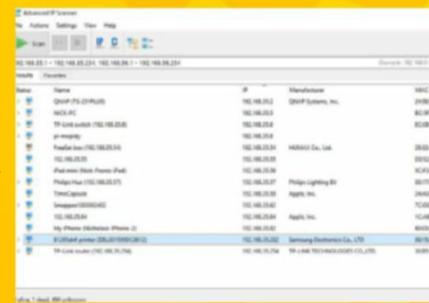
One final thing: check your router's support website to see if any firmware updates are available for it. These can add more features, but may also contain security fixes. Installing an update usually involves downloading the update file to your PC, then uploading it manually to your router's configuration utility where it's then applied. Be sure to back up or record your settings before doing so, in case the update wipes them out.

PROTECT HOME NETWORK KIT

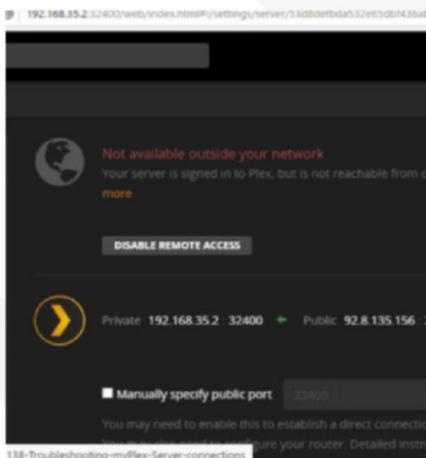
You've tightened your router settings, but what about the devices connected to your network? The growth in smart home tech means many more wireless devices are now communicating over the internet, so make sure these are locked down too. We'll show you how to use strong passwords and other measures to lock down any account settings screens on page 22–23, but you should look out for firmware updates that can help close security loopholes.

If you have a webcam attached to your PC make sure it's not in a place where it could be used to spy on you. Keep an eye on the activity light – it should only be on when you're using it. If the camera is a USB model, consider unplugging it when not in use or at least cover the lens, so even if it is compromised it won't see anything. If you use a security camera, protect it with a strong password and limit who has access. You should also switch on its notifications to make sure you're alerted whenever it's used.

If you'd like to see what's currently connected to your home network – potentially enabling you to spot snoopers or hackers – then download and run Advanced IP Scanner (www.advanced-ip-scanner.com). It will list all currently active network devices. Use the Manufacturer field to help identify unknown devices if the name doesn't give you any clues, and keep scanning from time to time.

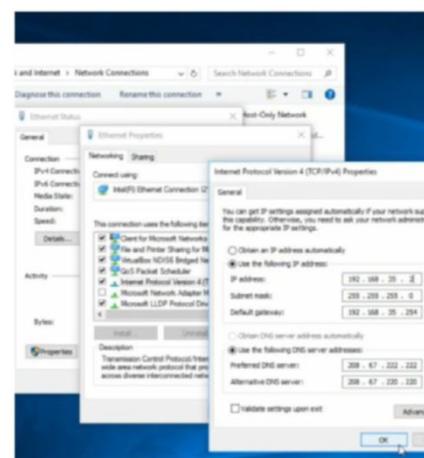


OPEN UP PORTS MANUALLY



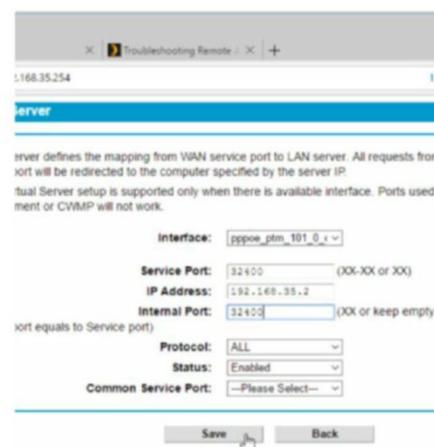
1 Check out an app's internet needs

Any app on your computer (or other device) that needs access to the internet should make it clear what you need to do in order to open up access to it. You should start by looking into the program's own settings to find out where you determine which ports it requires and the steps you need to follow to make it work.



2 Set static IP address

If you've not already done so, you'll need to set up a static IP address for the device that is running the application. In Windows 10, you should follow the guide at <https://portforward.com/networking/static-ip-windows-10.htm>. Make sure that you give the device an IP address which doesn't clash with your router's DHCP server.



3 Add new port

Armed with the instructions provided in the guide detailed in step 2, locate the port forwarding section of your router's configuration utility. Now create a new port, entering the port number into both port fields and your device's IP address into the IP Address field. Click Save or Enable to test the connection and see if it's working correctly.



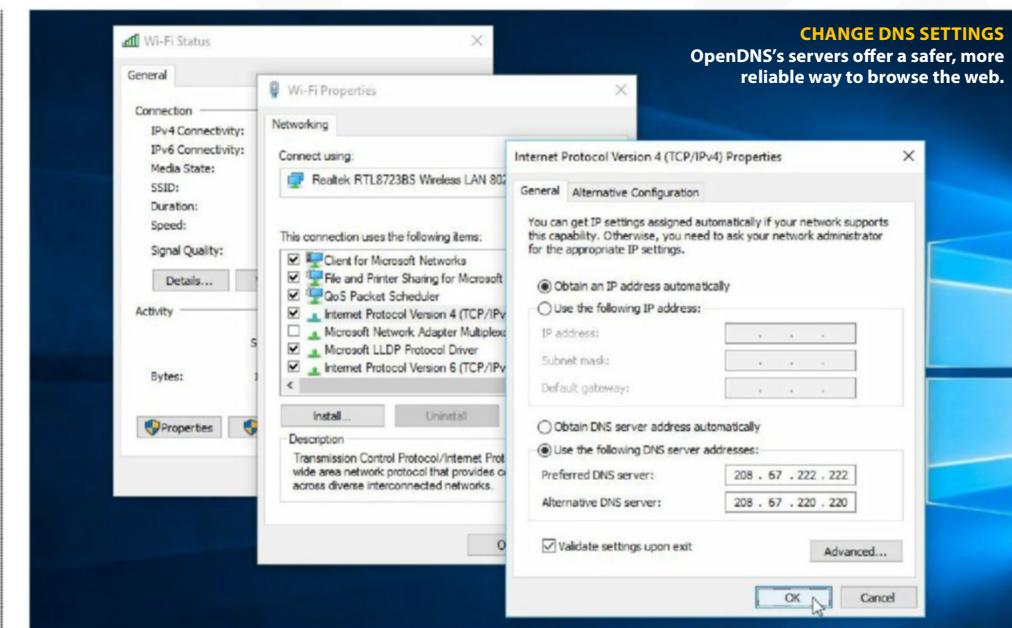
PROTECT YOURSELF ONLINE

BOOST PRIVACY AND SECURITY WHEN USING THE INTERNET

Now let's make your internet connection more secure. Let's start with your DNS server. This is used to translate web addresses into their actual physical IP addresses. Normally, your DNS server is provided by your ISP, but it's not the best choice for performance and security reasons. Alternatives such as OpenDNS are faster, more reliable and, crucially, apply more security checks to validate web addresses. With OpenDNS, you can even sign up at its website (www.opendns.com) for things like parental controls and identity theft protection.

Alternatively, log in to your router, locate where its DNS settings are stored, and then change them to the following addresses: 208.67.222.222 and 208.67.220.220. The effect will be immediate. If you lose your connection, check that you've added them correctly.

If you have any devices you use away from home, you can change their DNS settings to OpenDNS too – in the case of a Windows 10 PC, you need to type 'network' into the Search box and click 'View network connections'. Double-click your adapter's entry and click Properties, then select 'Internet Protocol Version 4 (TCP/IPv4)' and click Properties. Select 'Use the following DNS server addresses' and enter 208.67.222.222 and 208.67.220.220 into the two boxes, then click OK.



SECURE WIRELESS CONNECTIONS

When you're on the go, it's tempting to connect to any public wireless hotspot, even ones that don't ask you for a password. The problem is, these are often completely open, allowing anyone to eavesdrop on you. That's where a VPN or Virtual Private Network comes in.

A VPN creates a 'tunnel' through a public network, that enables you to connect to the internet, with all the traffic to and from your device encrypted. If you just want to browse the web, then install the Opera web browser (www.opera.com), which includes its own VPN. Look for the VPN button in your Address Bar (you can enable it via Menu > Settings

> 'Privacy & security'). Click it, flick the switch to On to encrypt your web browsing. If you want to widen VPN support to all your network traffic, the simplest solution is to install CyberGhost VPN (www.cyberghostvpn.com/en_gb), which can encrypt your entire connection. The free version is unlimited, but slow – pay the £3.99 monthly fee for faster performance.

MORE SECURE WEB BROWSING

Your internet connection may now be secure, but you can still do more. Opera comes with its own built-in ad blocker, which can help you avoid adverts as well as malware, but if you are using another browser, install the Adblock Plus plugin instead.

It's also a good idea to connect securely to websites when you can, using the 'https://' protocol rather than the insecure 'http://' one. Remembering this is tricky, so install the open-source Smart HTTPS add-on, and it will try to connect securely.

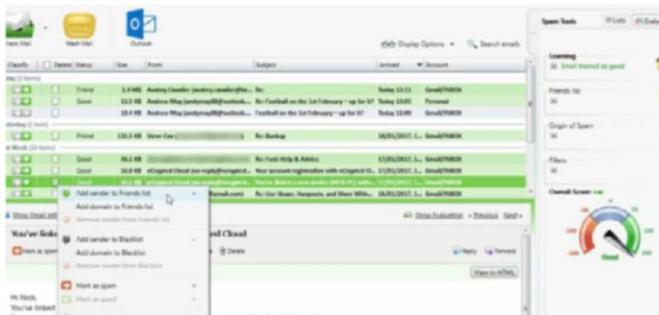
Half of the trick of staying safe online lies in avoiding dodgy websites. While web browsers are smarter at detecting and diverting you from sites that are known to

be dangerous, there's always room for improvement. See what web-filtering tools your security software offers in the form of a browser toolbar and use it to search the web instead of Google.

Similarly, be careful with software downloads – get them from a reputable website and scan the file with your anti-malware tool before running it. Exercise similar caution with browser add-ons – review each one before you install it, and periodically check which add-ons have been installed, removing any you no longer need or recognise.

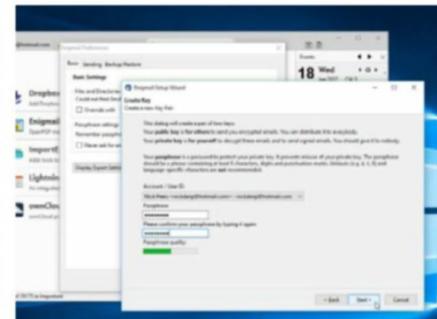
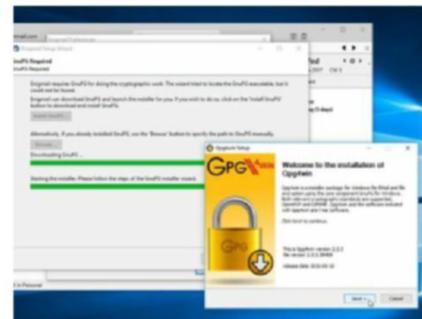
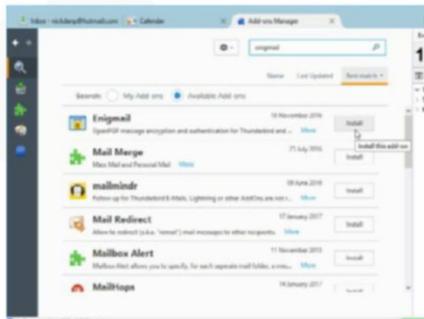
It's a similar story with email. Avoid clicking any links and instead type the URL into your web browser directly to ensure you end up going where you think you should. You should also scan email attachments before opening them, and employ the services of tools such as Mailwasher (www.mailwasher.net) or PopTray (www.poptray.org) to screen messages before they land.

Emailing someone is akin to sending a postcard – anyone can read it. If you use Thunderbird, check out the step-by-step guide to find out how to encrypt email.



SCREEN EMAIL You can use an app such as Mailwasher to check your emails before you download them to your PC.

SEND EMAILS SECURELY WITH THUNDERBIRD AND PGP



1 Set up Enigmail

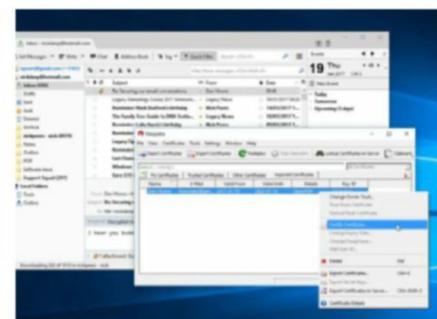
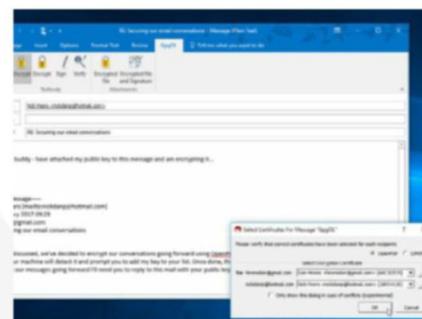
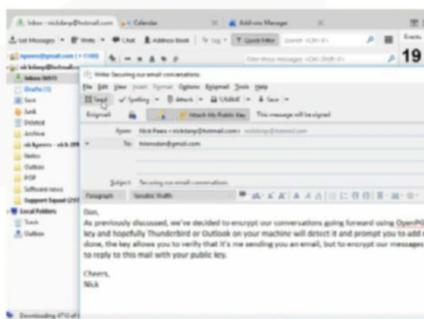
First, you need to install the Enigmail plugin for Thunderbird. To do that, open the Thunderbird menu and select 'Add-ons', then click the 'Get Add-ons' button. Type 'Enigmail' into the search box, then click Install next to Enigmail. When it's downloaded, click Restart Now to restart Thunderbird.

2 Add PGP

After installing the Enigmail plugin, go to Extensions and click Options > Enigmail. You'll now be told you need GnuPG – click the Setup Wizard and follow the prompts, choosing 'Install GnuPG...' when prompted to download and install the required components (be sure to tick Kleopatra, which is on the list).

3 Create certificate

You will now be prompted to create a new key pair for each email account that you have. Enter a passphrase to protect your private key (see over the page for tips on how to create a secure password), then generate it and create a revocation certificate when prompted. Just in case you ever need to.



4 Share certificate

Open a new message and you'll see Enigmail is warning you the email is unsigned and unencrypted. Choose Enigmail > Sign Message, then click Attach My Public Key. Include a suitably descriptive message and click Send, entering your passphrase when prompted. The message will be sent.

5 Return the favour

If your recipient has configured PGP on their email client (Gpg4win – www.gpg4win.org – also supports Outlook, for example), then they should receive notification of your public key. They will now be able to mark this as trusted, then they can reply to your message using a public key of their own.

6 Secure the line

When you receive their reply, save the .asc file to Downloads, then open Kleopatra and import the certificate. Once imported, right-click it and choose Certify Certificate if you trust its origin. Future conversations between you and your contact can be encrypted by going to Enigmail > Encrypt Message.

CHAT SECURELY

Do you often stay in touch through instant messaging apps such as Skype? While they can be great fun, the bad news is that Skype, in particular, isn't that secure. If you want true end-to-end encryption for voice, video and text-based chats (as well as secure file sharing), then you'll need to look into using an alternative solution.

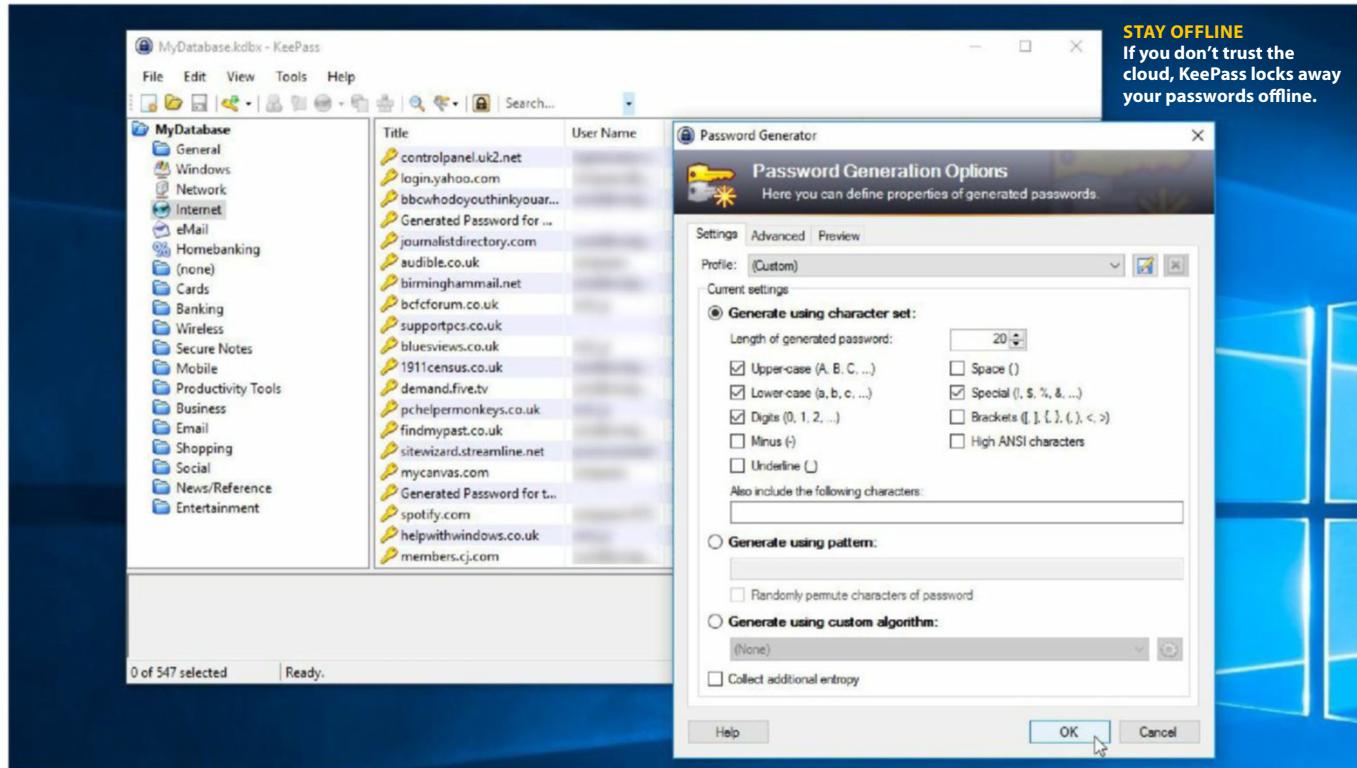
The most secure we have found is Retroshare (www.retroshare.net). The only catch is that you'll have to convince all your contacts to use it too – if this is a deal breaker, take a look at Jitsi (<https://jitsi.org/>), which supports a number of different messaging platforms.

You can install Retroshare (choose the QT5 version when at the download page) to your PC's main storage drive or run it

as a portable application, then set up your account and get each contact to do the same. You then export certificate files to send to each contact before importing their file in turn. Tick 'Authenticate friend (Sign PGP Key)' if you're confident in their identity, then wait while Retroshare's Connection Assistant sets up the connection.

It's a fiddly process getting that initial connection set up (and you have to repeat it for each device you install Retroshare on and import your identity into), but once both of you are verified and connected to the other, you can be secure in the knowledge that future chats aren't just encrypted and secure from unwanted eavesdroppers, but that you know exactly who you're chatting with.





BEEF UP YOUR PASSWORDS

HOW TO LOCK DOWN YOUR ONLINE AND OFFLINE ACCOUNTS

Do you rely on a limited number of passwords to secure accounts both online and off? You're not alone. The sad truth is, though, that this represents an opportunity for hackers and identity thieves who, once they crack one of your passwords, can often crack them all.

The way to solve this problem is to create unique, complex passwords for each account that you use, using a mix of upper and lowercase characters, numbers and even symbols. The trick then is remembering them all.

The solution lies in employing the services of a password manager. A good password management tool will generate strong random passwords, make them easy to access and protect them all behind a single, strong master password you can remember. You log into the password manager with the master password, and the rest of your passwords are then available.

PICK A PASSWORD

If you're super-concerned, or even paranoid, about security, you'll want to store your passwords offline, in which case you should look

at KeePass (<http://keepass.info/>). Everything's stored locally, and you can add an extra layer of protection to your passwords by locking them using both a master password and a key file, which you store on an external disk or drive. It's portable too, so you can store everything on a USB thumb drive and take your passwords with you on to other computers.

The biggest drawback with KeePass, however, is that it only works on your PC – if you want access to your passwords on your mobile, for example, then you'll need to be within reach of your machine to access them. If you're willing to store your passwords in the cloud (encrypted, of course), a more convenient option is to use a tool such as LastPass (www.lastpass.com).

LastPass offers a similar feature set to KeePass, minus the key file option. Instead, what it gives you is more convenience – you can install apps on your devices (including mobile ones) and use browser plugins to make it easier to log into sites – see the guide on the facing page – as well as generate strong, random passwords for new accounts. LastPass

work with any service you access through your web browser, making it a good fit for your router, plus locally hosted servers such as Plex.

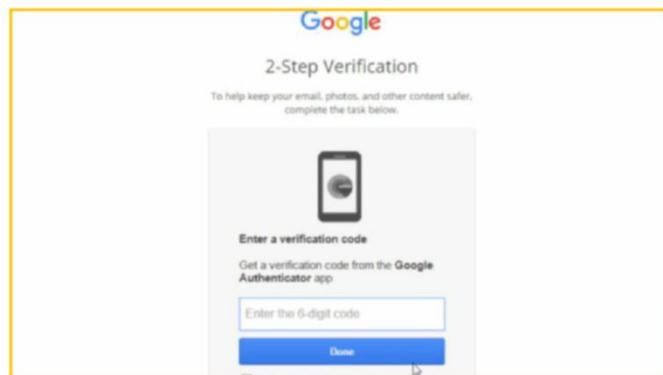
LastPass also offer secure notes and form filling tools, for storing other sensitive information. You can also ask LastPass to prompt you for your master password each time you open a particularly sensitive notes. LastPass also includes a security audit, which checks all your passwords for weak ones, duplicates, passwords you haven't updated in a while and even accounts known to have been compromised.

All of this functionality – including syncing across mobile and desktop – is now completely free. Upgrade to

the LastPass Premium package (around £10 per year) for more features, such as LastApp – a tool for using LastPass in conjunction with installed apps or programs on your device.

MULTI-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION

Even the strongest password can be guessed or cracked, so what happens if your password is leaked? The solution is to implement two-step verification or two-step authentication. This adds an extra step when logging into key accounts (including LastPass) on new devices. This can be as simple as an email notification, or you can implement a solution that



STRENGTHEN SECURITY Two-factor authentication and two-factor verification add an extra layer of security, by checking your identify using mobile devices.

requires your mobile phone or tablet to be at hand.

This latter option is best, because you'll need physical access to your mobile device in order to verify the request. Here you can opt to receive a code via text message, or you can install a special authentication app that generates codes offline that are tied to your account. If you're using LastPass to protect your passwords, then install the free LastPass Authenticator app to provide these codes – not only can you then switch on two-factor authentication for services and accounts that support it, but you can switch it on for LastPass too, making it even more secure.

You can find out if your chosen service supports two-factor authentication by logging into it and exploring the security section of its settings – LastPass users should log into their account at www.lastpass.com and go to Account Settings > Multifactor Options, for example. From here you can pair it with the free LastPass Authenticator app.

Other services make it relatively easy to add multi-factor authentication using LastPass Authenticator (if you can see an explicit reference to it, then choose the Google Authenticator option) by providing you with a QR code to scan into LastPass Authenticator using your mobile's camera, which then automatically pairs your account with the app.

One tip for additional security: what happens if your smartphone or tablet gets stolen? Make sure you tap Settings in LastPass Authenticator and flick the 'Use PIN Code' switch to On to protect it with a six-digit PIN. And remain wary of unexpected requests to use the authenticator app – it may indicate that a hacker has got your password and is hoping you can be tricked into verifying their request for access.

Other alternative password managers include 1Password (<https://1password.com>) which works across all your devices including Windows, Mac, Android and iOS. It also offers a web browser plugin.

ONE-TIME APP PASSWORDS

When you enable two-factor authentication, logging into the account on a new device or application should trigger a prompt to confirm your identity, but some older devices and apps – including emails apps Thunderbird and Outlook – don't work nicely with it.

The good news is you don't need to source a separate app or compromise your security – most services that offer two-factor authentication offer what's known as one-time passwords. These are passwords you can use in place of a regular password to log into an application or device. If an app refuses to work properly even after entering the correct password, try one of these instead.

If you're a Google user, for example, go to accounts.google.com and sign in. Choose your username, then My Account. Click 'Sign-in & security', scroll down and click 'App passwords' beneath '2-step Verification'.

Choose 'Select app' to give your app a name, and a device, then click Generate. Copy and paste the password into the relevant field (tick the option to save it). Now all should be well...



SECURE YOUR WEB LOGINS

1 Remember logins

Once you have installed LastPass, browse to a website and log in using its username and password in the usual way. After logging in, LastPass will pop up a green bar offering to save the website's credentials for you. Do so, and when you next visit the site, you'll see a LastPass button appear in the login fields – click this to fill your details in quickly.

2 Update passwords

If an existing password you use is a weak one, go to your account's settings and look for an option to update your password. Click the small padlock button next to the password field to generate a new random password. Be sure to set the password length to longer than the default six characters – 10 or more characters is usually best.

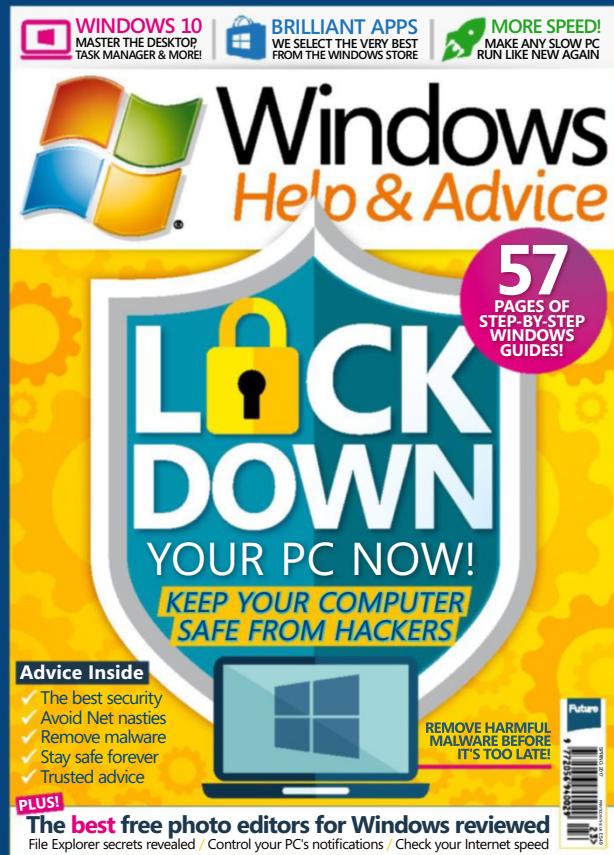
3 Go advanced

Click Show Advanced Options and tick the symbols box to increase your password strength further. Once you're happy with it, click 'Use Password'. You'll be prompted that the password has been generated, so click 'Yes, use for this site' then save your changes to update both the account and LastPass. Congratulations! Your password is now more secure.



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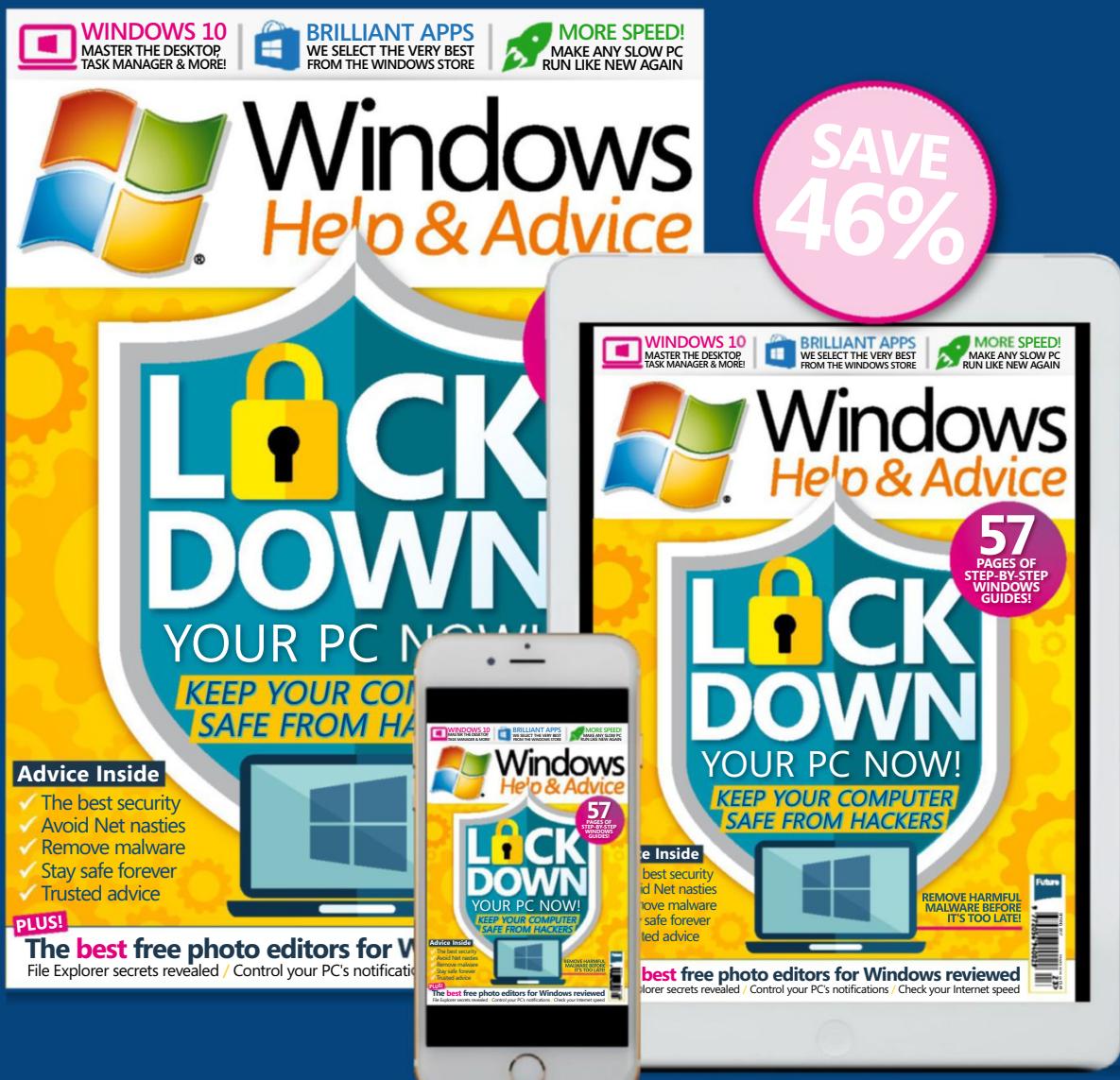
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Explore

► WINDOWS TIPS ► INTERNET ADVICE ► EXCITING NEW PROJECTS

Welcome



In this month's Explore section we're going to show you how to deal with three common problems: slow computers; slow internet connections and potentially unwanted programs (PUPs).

On page 38 we explain the roadblocks that can slow your PC down and what you can do to get around them.

On page 46 we'll tackle the unwanted programs that can sneak on to your PC – and tell you how you can avoid them.

And on page 56 you'll learn how to test your internet connection and the tricks you can use to speed it up.

Rob Mead-Green

Editor

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Your guide
Nick Odantzis says...

"Keep on top of windows in Windows by using the fantastic TidyTabs app"

Turn to page 42 to find out more

Our promise to you...

Get more from Windows, software and all your favourite sites

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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.

Customise Windows to work your way

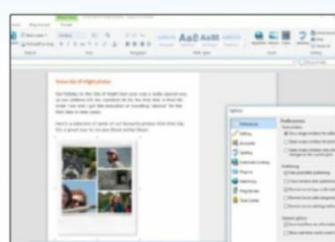
We all know how to do the basics but getting the most from Windows isn't always easy. Our dedication to the operating system means you get the very best tips and tricks for all versions of Windows.

Get more from your favourite websites

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

Discover new programs with our help

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...

Write blog posts offline



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

"Compose, edit and manage your blog posts without having to use your web browser"

At a glance

Skill level...

► Anyone can do it

Straightforward

Tricky in parts

Suitable for...

Windows 10

Windows 8.1

Windows 7

Wether you're new to blogging or have been running a blog for years, you need Open Live Writer. This brilliant free tool makes it easy to update your blog from your PC without having to open your web browser – you don't even need to be online to compose your posts. Simply write them in the normal way, then save a draft to your storage drive before publishing it when you're next online.

Open Live Writer is relatively straightforward to set up and use, but don't let that fool you. It's a powerful blog editor that doesn't just arm you with all the key functionality you need to blog, but also enables you to bring together all your blog accounts (across multiple platforms, including Blogger and WordPress) under one, convenient roof. By the time you've finished following this tutorial, you'll wonder how you ever managed to live without it...

Step-by-step Blog offline with Open Live Writer



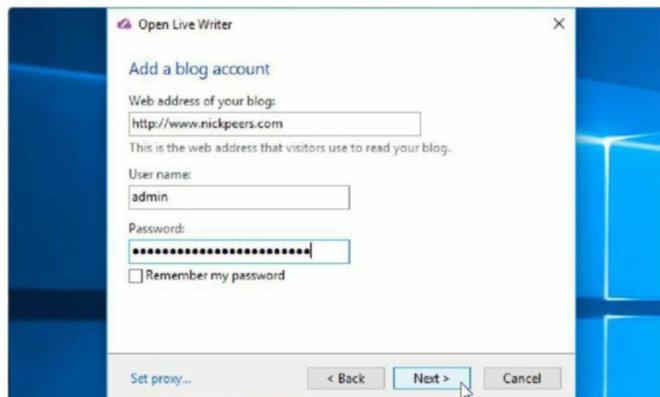
1 Get started

Open your browser, go to www.openlivewriter.org and click the blue Download button to save OpenLiveWriterSetup.exe to your storage drive. It's around 5.2MB in size, and no installation is required. Once downloaded, transfer the file to a suitable location, create a shortcut to the program (right-click it and choose 'Pin to taskbar'), then double-click that to launch Open Live Writer.

PUBLISH CONTROLS
Use these controls to switch between various services as well as publish or upload drafts to your online blog.

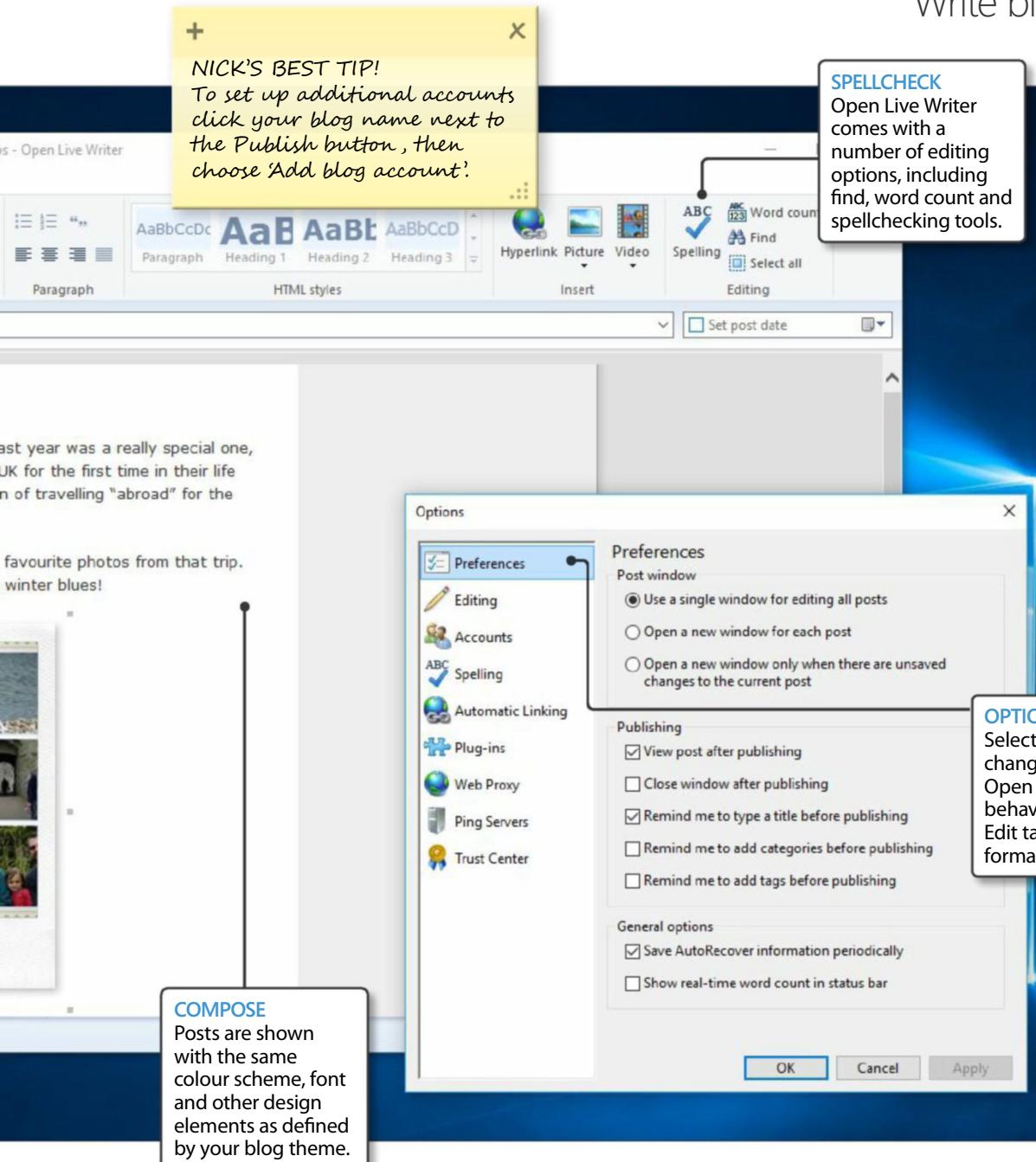
SET CATEGORIES
Open Live Writer lets you to organise your posts by category and, in some cases, tags. These are taken from your blog.

PREVIEW
Periodically select the Preview tab to see how your blog post will look within the main blog site when it's published.



2 Connect to blog

The first-run setup wizard will appear on screen. Click Next to select which blog you would like to connect to: WordPress, SharePoint, Google Blogger or 'Other services'. You may need to connect to your **blog** (Blogger), or you might have to enter its home page, plus your user credentials (WordPress). If you're worried about security, leave 'Remember my password' unticked.

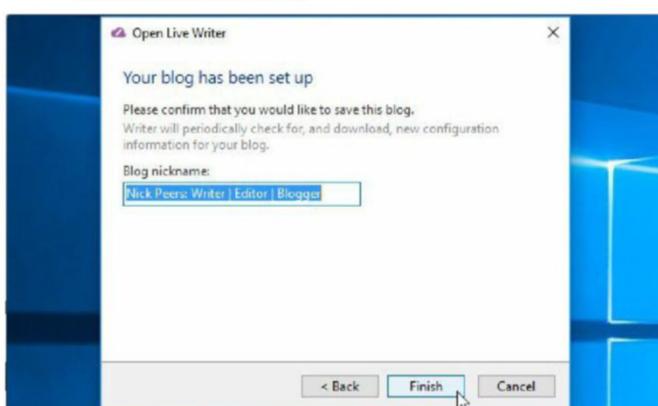


Jargon buster!

► Blog
Is a shortened form of 'weblog', and is a website structured around diary-style posts that consist of text, pictures and other elements.

► Theme
A package of design elements that are used to define the look and feel of a blog. Themes include fonts, colours, styles and even the blog layout.

► URL
Short for 'Uniform Resource Locator'. Most commonly used to refer to website addresses.



3 Finish setting up

Click Next. You will now either be prompted to enter certain details (and choose your blog type from an extensive drop-down list), or Open Live Writer will analyse your blog and configure itself accordingly. Once complete, review – and change if necessary – the blog nickname assigned and click Finish. You'll be taken to the main Open Live Writer screen, ready to compose your first post.

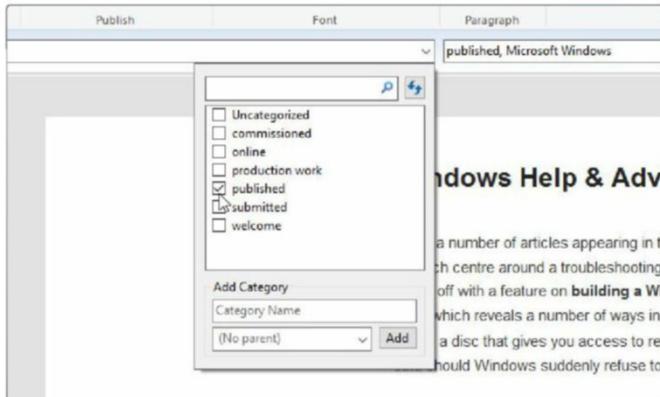
4 Write first post

Open Live Writer works like any word processor – enter your title, then compose your post in the usual way. Use the controls on the Home tab to style your post as you go, and make use of the edit tools for spellchecking purposes. Click the floppy drive icon to save your post as a draft on your hard drive, allowing you to work on it later, even if you're not connected to the internet.



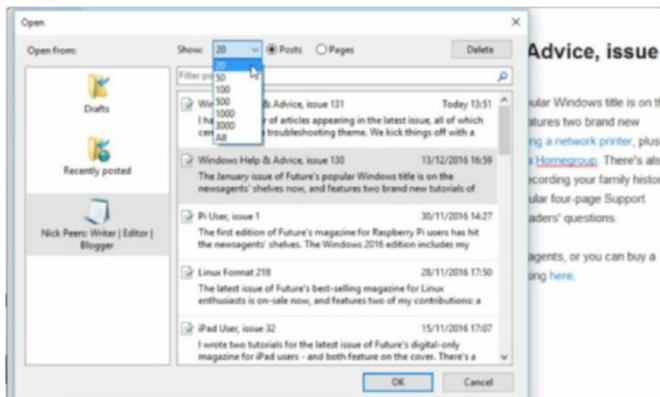
5 Insert photos

You'll see options for inserting web links, pictures and videos on the Home tab – you can attach photos from your PC, or select 'From the web...' to enter a **URL**. Use the controls on the Format tab to align your photo, edit it (you can crop or resize it) and apply various effects, such as a border effect. Click 'Set to default' to apply your edits to all future images you import too.



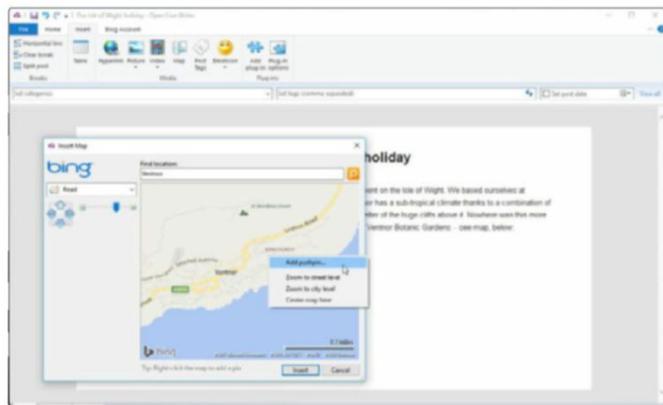
7 Categorise, tag and date post

Click 'Set categories' and you can allocate categories already created online, as well as add new ones. You can also organise them into groups. Click 'Set tags' to enter your tags, separating each with a comma. Again, previously used tags will appear as auto-suggestions as you type. Finally, tick 'Set post date' to specify the current date and time for the post – click to change it.



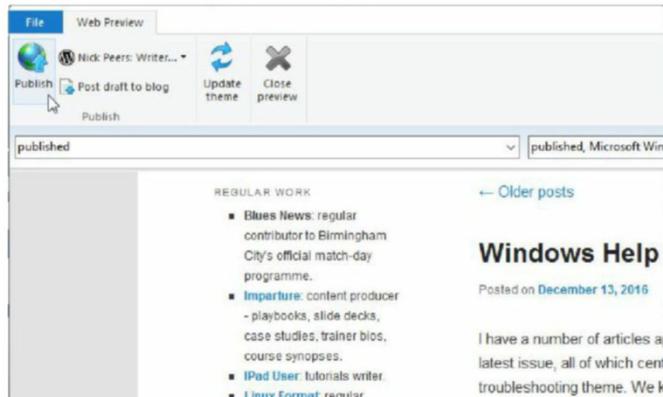
9 Manage blog posts and drafts

Use the File tab on the Ribbon to move between drafts. To view recent posts, select File > 'Open recent post'. You can view and select both locally stored drafts and recently posted items from here. Select your blog entry at the bottom, and Open Live Writer will retrieve the last 50 items (you can vary this figure). Select one and click Open to download it for editing.



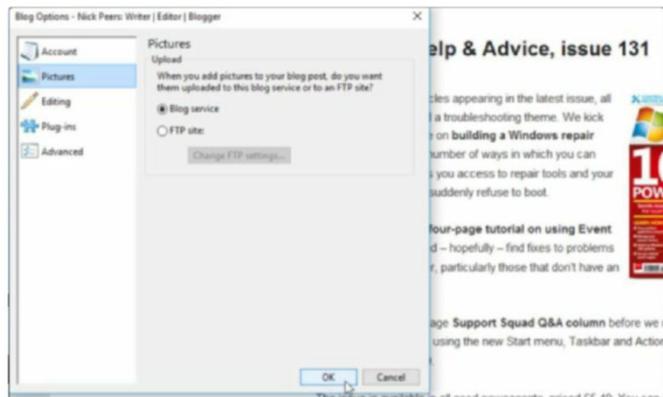
6 Add other elements

Videos can be embedded from your PC, the web or YouTube (select 'From video service...' to log into your YouTube account). Switch to the Insert tab on the Ribbon to reveal other options, from tables and page breaks to other elements such as maps, tags and emoticons. At time of writing there are no plug-ins available, but eventually you'll be able to insert other element types too.



8 Upload drafts and publish

You can upload your post to your blog as a draft via the Home tab – click 'Post draft to blog' to do so. This enables you to edit the post on other platforms, such as your browser or a mobile app. To see how your post will look after it's published, switch to the Preview tab at the bottom of the screen. Once you're happy with how it looks, click Publish to post it online.

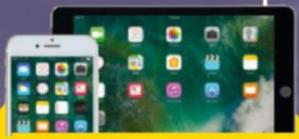


10 Blogging, made easy

Now you've mastered the basics of blogging with Open Live Writer, take the time to explore the program's other features. Switch to the Blog Account tab to find controls for accessing your blog settings and **theme** – if you change your theme online, for example, click 'Update theme' to sync the changes with Open Live Writer. Also, click Blog Options to explore extra settings. ■

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Learn how to...

Get more from File Explorer



Your guide [Rob Mead-Green](#) says...

"Discover new ways to view, edit and arrange files and folders on your PC with these tips and tricks"

At a glance

Skill level...

► Anyone can do it

Straightforward

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Windows 10

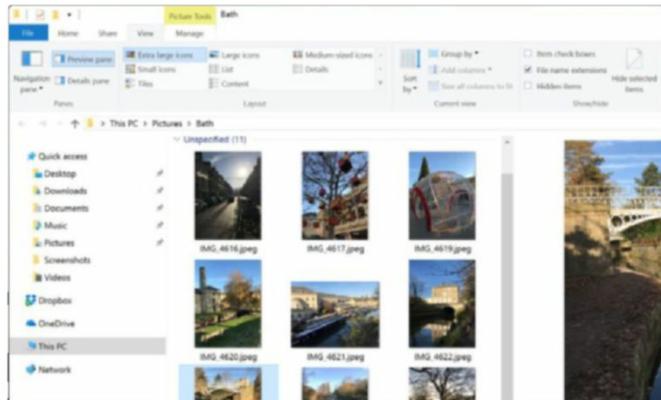
Windows 8.1

Windows 7

Whatever you do in Windows 10, chances are you're going to use the File Explorer at some point. It's the graphical user interface (GUI) that enables you to find, edit, copy, delete and organise your files. And in Windows 10, it carries a myriad of useful features that enable you to do more with ease: from taking a sneak peek at the contents of files without actually opening them; to changing the default file and folder views.

The quickest way to access File Explorer is to click the dedicated shortcut in the taskbar. You can also open it using the [Windows Key] + [E]; by clicking its option in the Start menu (just above Settings); or by using Windows 10's virtual personal assistant, Cortana. In this tutorial we're going to explain the tips, tricks and customisation secrets that can help you master File Explorer. So, let's crack on, shall we?

Step-by-step Get started with File Explorer



1 Reveal the Ribbon

You may not be able to see the Ribbon when you first open a File Explorer window. If that's the case, either click on the down arrow on the right side of the window, or press [Ctrl] + [F1]. You should now see four tabs: File, Home, Share and View. Select View to reveal the different ways you can change how a File Explorer windows contents are displayed.

QUICK ACCESS
Click any item here to quickly jump to the relevant folder. Some items, such as the Documents and Pictures folders, are here by default, but you can easily add your own shortcuts.

MAIN WINDOW
The files and folders in the currently selected location. Select Ribbon > View to change the way these items are displayed: in a list, as small icons, etc.

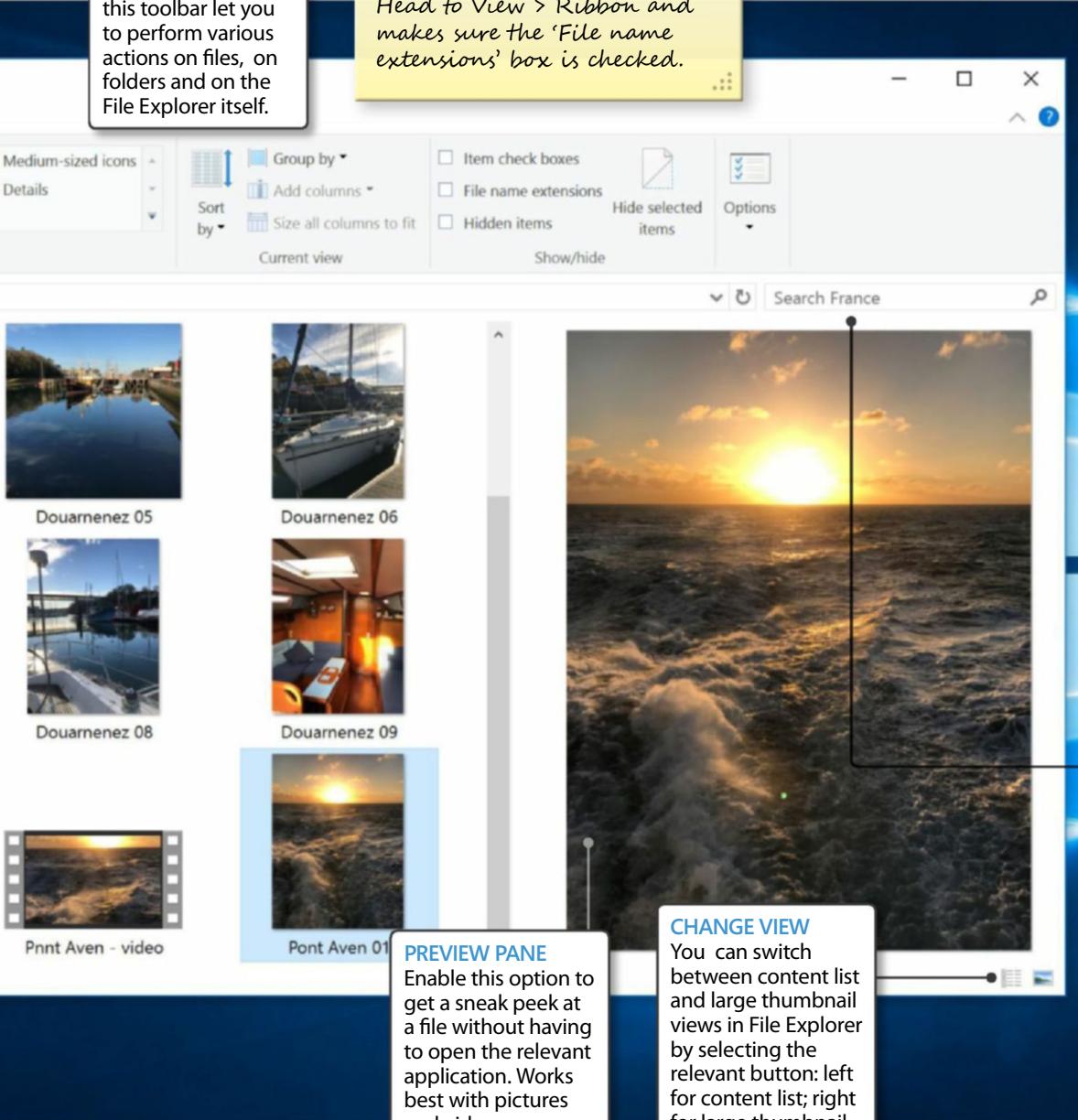
2 Change the view

Under View > Layout you'll see a range of options, including Large Icons, Small Icons, etc. Mouse over each one to see how it changes the way contents are displayed. To make each change more permanent, click the option you want to use. Now if you close the window, then reopen it again, you will see the change you have made has stuck. You can change the view at any time.

RIBBON

The four tabs – File, Home, Share and View – contained in this toolbar let you to perform various actions on files, on folders and on the File Explorer itself.

ROB'S BEST TIP!
Need to see file extensions? Head to View > Ribbon and makes sure the 'File name extensions' box is checked.



PREVIEW PANE

Enable this option to get a sneak peek at a file without having to open the relevant application. Works best with pictures and video.

CHANGE VIEW

You can switch between content list and large thumbnail views in File Explorer by selecting the relevant button: left for content list; right for large thumbnail.

Jargon buster!

► Quick Access

Previously known as Favourites, Quick Access contains items you're likely to use most often. Certain items are included by default, but you can add whatever you wish.

► Ribbon

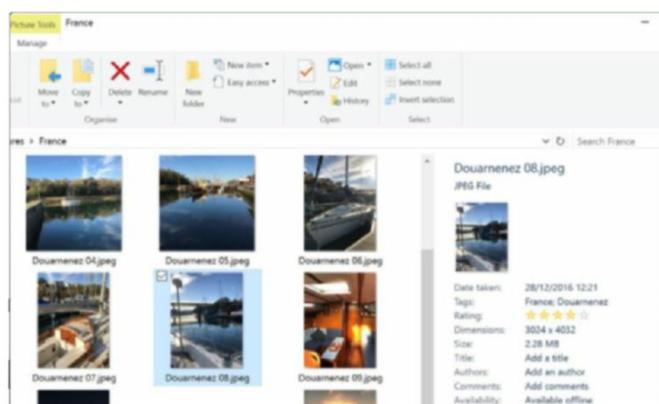
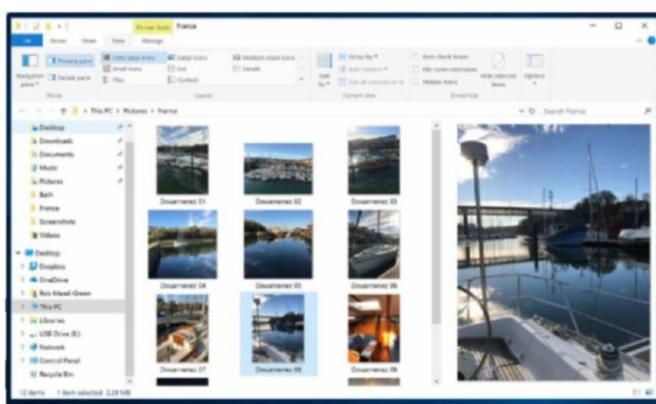
This toolbar adapts to what you're doing, so the right actions are always available at the right time.

► Shortcuts

Combinations of keyboard characters you can use to carry out certain actions. Often listed besides menu commands.

SEARCH

Quickly find any item by typing what you're looking for into the Search box. You can also search your computer using Cortana, of course.

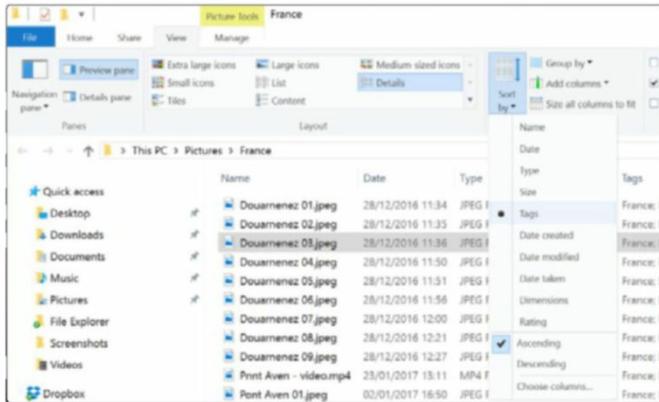


3 Take a sneak peek

Head to View > Panes and click Preview Pane. You'll now see a preview of the currently selected file or files (useful for pictures and video) without having to open it in a compatible application. You can resize the Preview Pane for a closer look by clicking and dragging the grey border to the left (the cursor will change to a double-arrow). Double click to open the file in the relevant app.

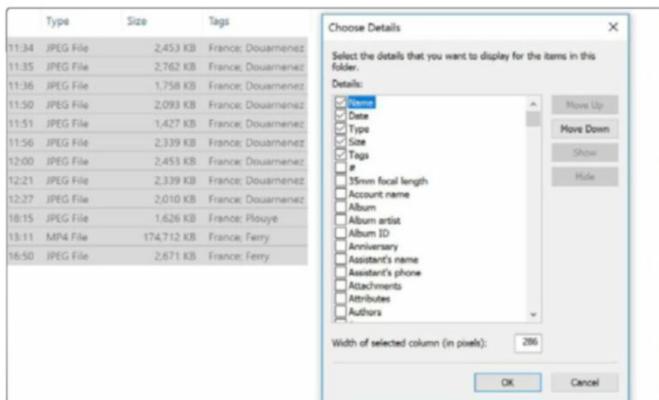
4 See more details

If you want to know more about a file, go to View > Panes and select the Details Pane. This reveals further info, including EXIF data in any photos. As you mouse over some of the details you'll see a grey outline appear around them. This means you can edit them. Double-click to change the current selection. You can add titles, tags, star ratings and other info right in File Explorer.



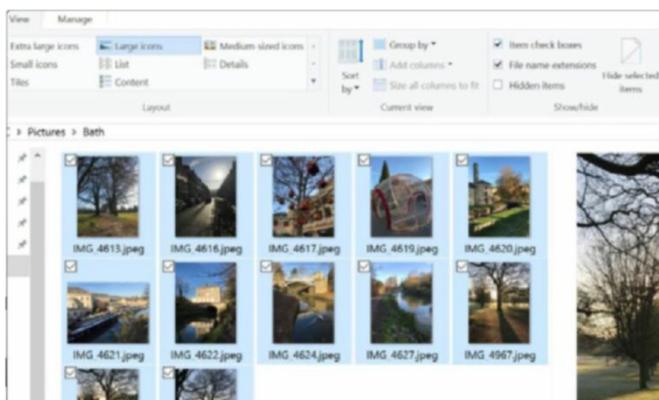
5 Sort your stuff

By default, File Explorer displays items in alphabetical order. To change this go to View > Current View and click Sort By to reveal a drop-down menu. You can view items by name, date, tags or any one of seven other options, as well as in ascending or descending order – handy if you’re trying to find the latest version or are trying to save space by weeding out the largest ones.



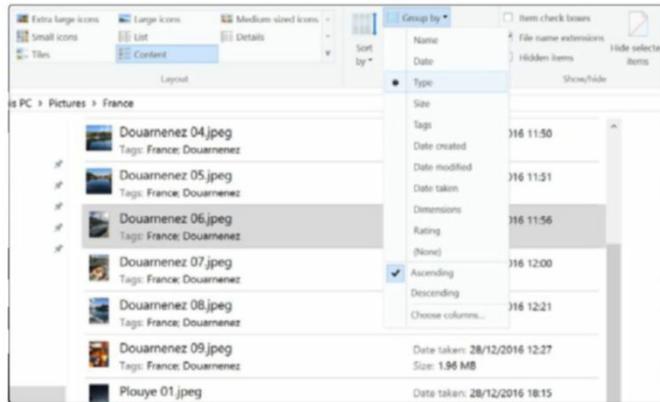
7 Customise your columns

Another way to get at-a-glance info is to customise the columns File Explorer shows. In Layout > Details and Current View > 'Group views' you’ll see default columns, but you can change these. Go to Current View > Add Columns and select Choose Columns. A Choose Details window appears. You can now choose the columns you want to see. Click OK once done.



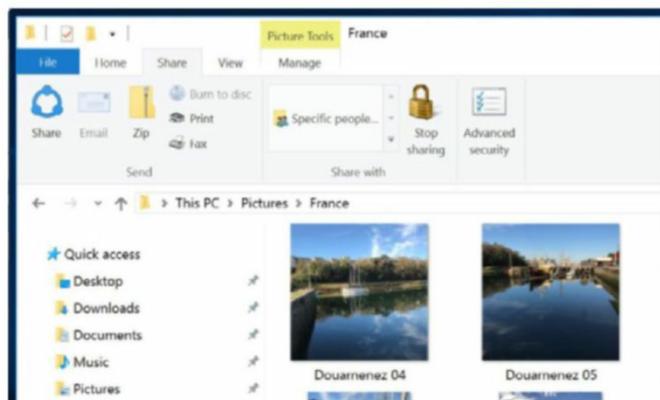
9 Other File Explorer options

While you can select multiple files and folders by clicking and dragging or [Ctrl] + clicking, there is another option. Go to View > 'Show/hide' and select and check the 'Item check boxes' option. Every item will now have its own check box, making it easy to select them quickly. This section also lets you to show or hide file extensions and show or hide individual files and folders.



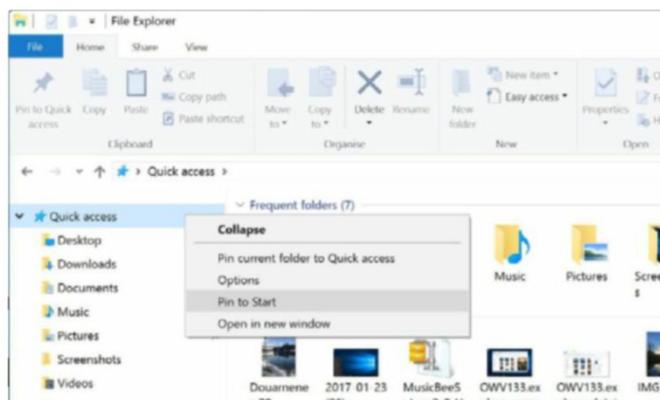
6 Form a group

You can sort also files and folders into groups. Again this is handy for identifying certain kinds of file, such as any images you have tagged. To do that, go to View > Current View > 'Group by' then choose from your options. You’ll see the window layout change to reflect your selection. If you select by File Type, for example, you’ll see files are listed under File Type headings.



8 Share files and folders

File Explorer makes sharing easy. Go to Ribbon > Share > Send > Share to upload files to apps and services such as Mail and Facebook. Select Send > Zip to compress them, or use the options in the next column to print, fax or burn them to disc. To share items on a local or public network, select Share With > 'Specific people...' Then choose your options from the window that opens.



10 Customise Quick Access

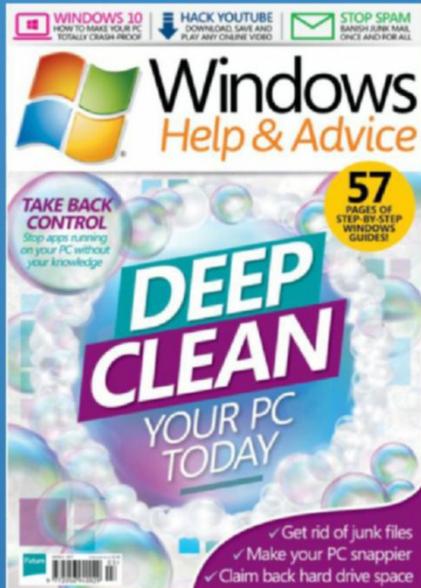
If you regularly access certain items, Quick Access can help. It enables you to pin them to its menu, which sits in File Explorer’s sidebar. Select the Quick Access menu itself and you will see your favourites on top with recent files below. To add an item to Quick Access, select it, then go to Home > 'Pin to Quick Access'. To remove it, right-click it and select 'Unpin from Quick Access'. ■

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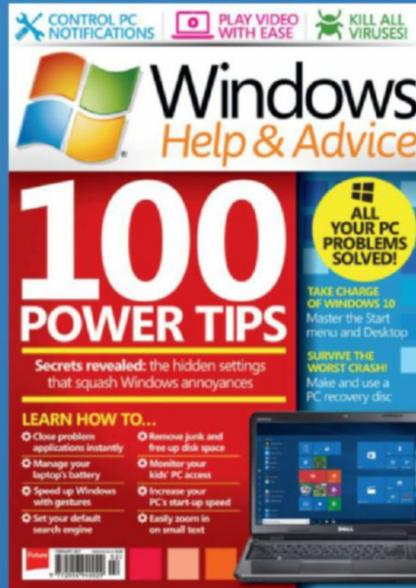
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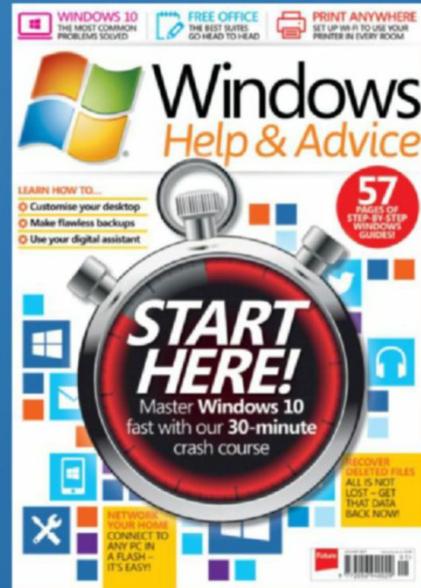
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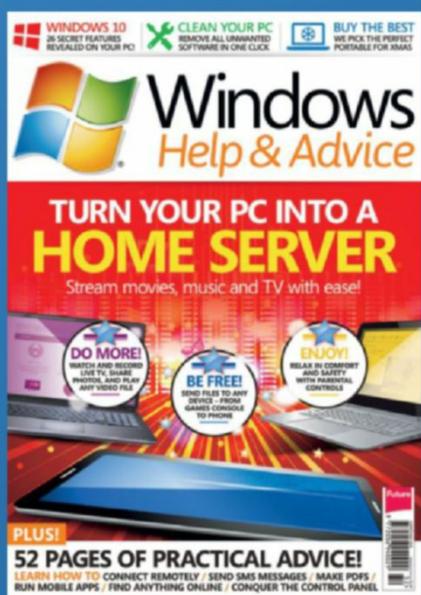
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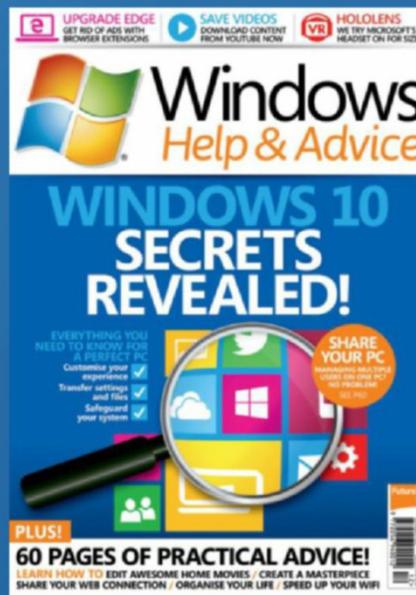
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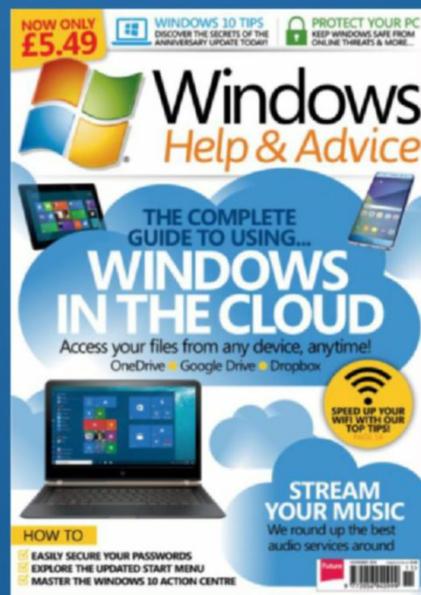
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Learn how to...

Boost your computer's anti-virus protection



Your guide *Nicholas Odantzi* says...

"We're going to show you how to boost the standard security built into Windows with AVG AntiVirus Free, so you can keep your PC protected against viruses"

At a glance

Skill level...

Anyone can do it

► Straightforward

Tricky in parts

Suitable for...

Windows 10

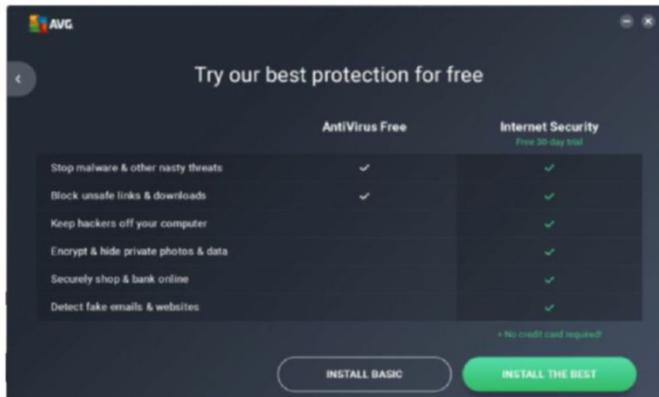
Windows 8.1

Windows 7

Looking for some additional virus protection for your PC?

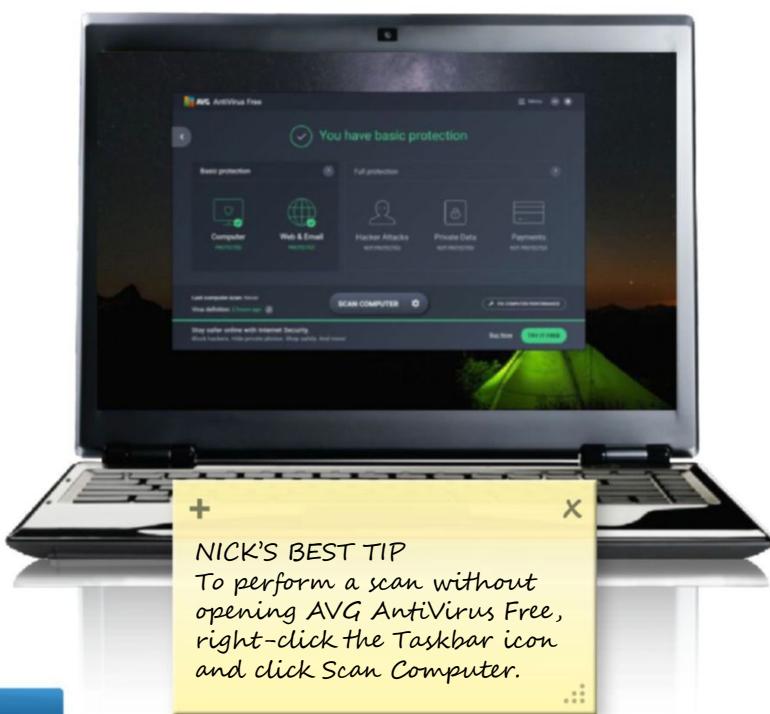
Then look no further – AVG AntiVirus Free is the perfect addition to any machine running the standard anti-virus protection that's included with Windows. There's nothing particularly wrong with the standard Windows security, but it's certainly wise to get backup to increase the level of protection. As its name suggests, you won't have to pay to get the additional protection either as AVG is completely free! So you really have no excuse – download it today from www.avg.com. As well as active virus protection that covers your PC's storage drive, internet browser and email inbox, you can also use AVG AntiVirus Free to manually scan for viruses, and if you decide to upgrade to the paid version, you will also get protection for things such as online payments and hacker attacks.

Step-by-step Keep your PC virus free!



1 Download AVG AntiVirus Free

Download the app from www.avg.com by clicking the 'Free download' button in the centre of the web page. Once the file has finished downloading, double-click it to run and select 'Yes' to the extraction prompt that appears. AVG will briefly download some installation components; when finished click 'Continue' to start the install procedure, selecting the Basic installation option.



2 Sign up

During the installation procedure, you'll be prompted to sign up for an AVG MyAccount, so you can use AVG to its fullest. You'll need to enter an email address and password to create an AVG MyAccount – once this is done, go to your email inbox and verify the link in the email you received to complete installation. Now you'll see the AVG application on your desktop.



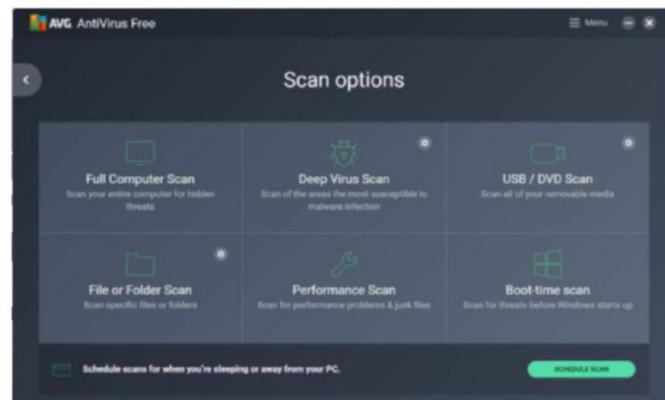
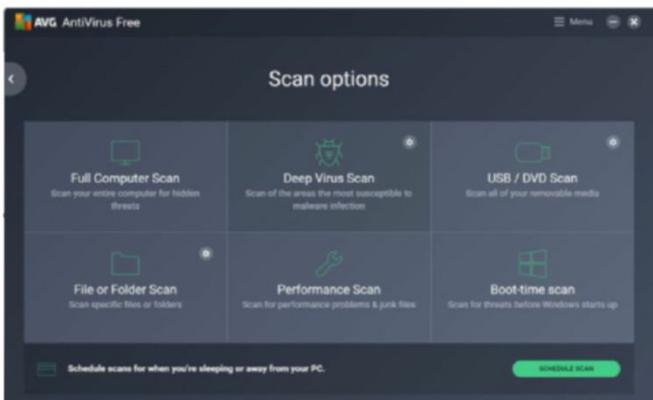
3 Open AVG Zen

AVG Zen is an application browser that enables you to see all the AVG programs you've installed in one place. If it doesn't open, or you want to open AVG Zen at a later date, you can do so either by double-clicking the application icon on the desktop, or by clicking the up-facing arrow (for hidden Taskbar icons) in the right-hand area of the Taskbar and double-clicking the AVG icon.



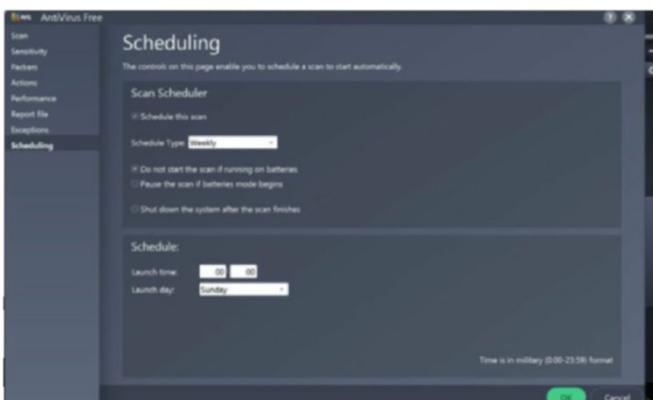
4 Launch AVG AntiVirus FREE

Within the AVG browser, click the square-shaped AntiVirus Free button to launch the app. A new window appears giving you an overview of your system, what level of protection is offered by AVG AntiVirus Free, as well as your PC's security status. As a new user it'll tell you that no security scan has been performed by the program, so hit the Scan Computer button to begin a full scan.



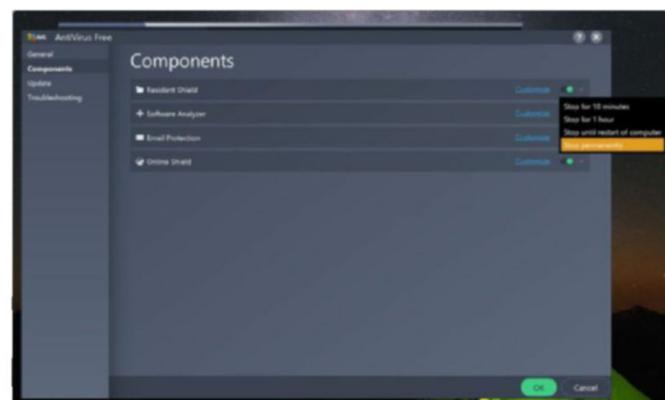
5 Extra scanning

The standard scan does a good job, giving you the results of the scan shortly after, but if you want to go a step further AVG offers a more intensive type of scan called a Deep Virus Scan. Performing this option makes sure your PC is completely free of malware. To do that, click the cog directly to the right of Scan Computer and choose the Deep Virus Scan option from the list.



6 Schedule scans

To make sure AVG AntiVirus Free scans your PC regularly, you can schedule a scan that suits your routine. Under the AVG AntiVirus Free window, click the cog icon next to Scan Computer and hit the Schedule Scan button in the lower right corner of the window. In the Scan Parameters window that appears, choose a name for the scan, if you like, and hit OK.



7 Cleaning up

Once you've created a new scan type, click the Scheduling link from the menu in the left column. Then hit the check box next to 'Schedule this scan', choose the frequency of the scan from the drop-down menu next to 'Schedule type'. Underneath 'Schedule', select when you want the scan to start – this option will change depending on the frequency you chose. Click OK when done.

8 Adjust Passive Mode

If you already use an anti-virus program to scan your PC, and only want to use AVG AntiVirus Free as a backup app, you can put it into Passive Mode. This stops it from automatically scanning your machine, but enables you to do a secondary scan at a time of your choosing. To do this, go to the menu, select Settings, choose Components and toggle the switch next to Resident Shield. ■

Learn how to...

Give your PC a speed boost



Your guide **Matt Hanson** says...

"No one likes a slow PC, but there are plenty of tricks to give even the oldest PCs a speed boost"

At a glance

Skill level...

Anyone can do it

► Straightforward

Tricky in parts

Suitable for...

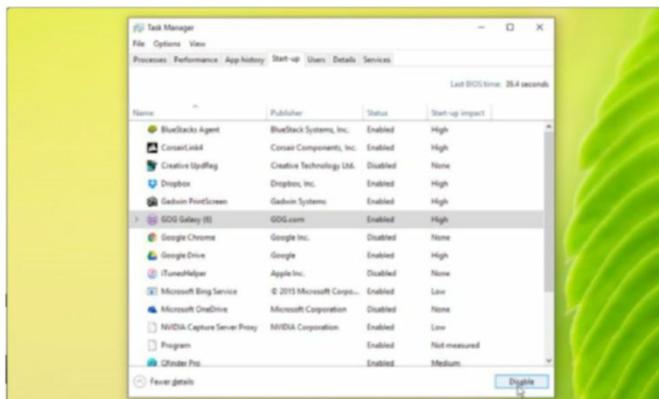
Windows 10

Windows 8.1

Windows 7

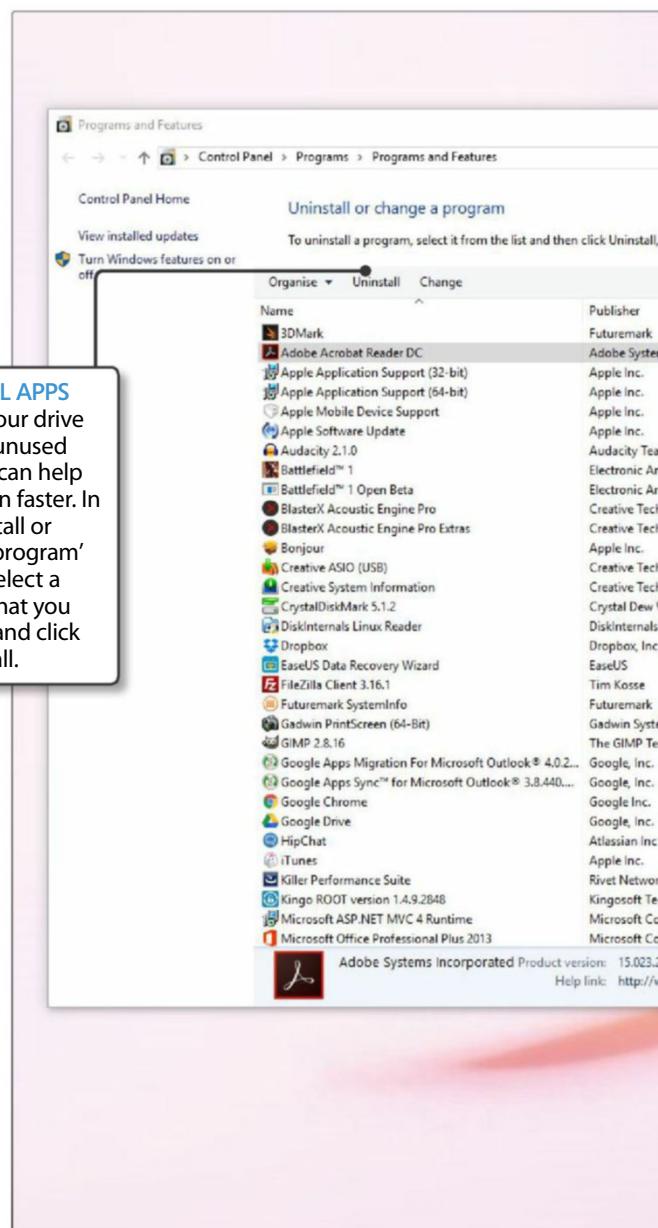
Unfortunately as our PCs age, the slower they become. A machine that used to spring into life and load up Windows in a flash may now chug along, taking its sweet time to display your desktop, making you wait even longer before you can actually use the device. This can be particularly annoying, and is usually caused by filling up your PC with ever more demanding software. The good news is that because these problems are usually software-based, it means you don't need to shell out for new hardware just yet. Instead, by giving your PC a spring clean and removing any software you don't need, and making sure Windows is up-to-date, virus free and with the latest drivers installed, you're able to give your machine a noticeable speed boost without having to spend a penny! In this guide we'll take you through some of the best tips and tricks for speeding up a slow PC.

Step-by-step Speed up a slow computer



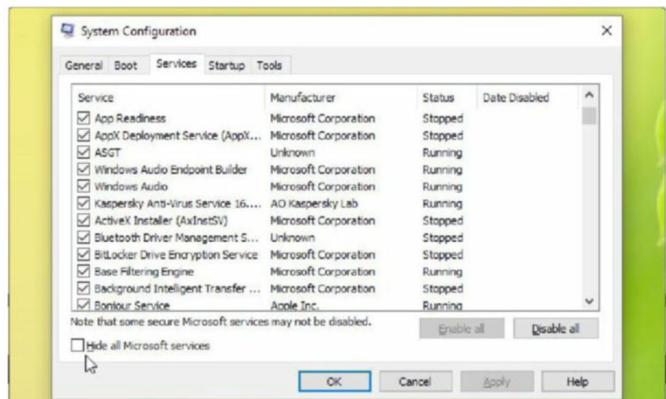
1 Cut down on start-up programs

Many apps you install will start themselves when Windows loads without asking you, and after a while this means Windows is loading a lot of apps when it boots, which can slow down your PC. Cut these down by opening the **Task Manager** – press [Ctrl] + [Shift] + [Esc] – and click 'Start-up'. Click on the program you want to stop loading when Windows starts, then select 'Disable'.



UNINSTALL APPS

Keeping your drive free from unused programs can help your PC run faster. In the 'Uninstall or change a program' window, select a program that you don't use and click on Uninstall.



2 Use System Configuration to stop services

The advanced System Configuration tool gives you the ability to disable **services** that start up with Windows. While some are needed for certain applications, having too many running can slow down your PC. In the Start menu type in 'msconfig'. Click the Services tab and check the box saying 'Hide all Microsoft services'. Now disable services connected to programs you rarely use.

PERFORMANCE
Click here to see a graph of your PC's performance and the resources that are being used. Any large spikes mean an app is causing your PC to slow down.

START-UP
This shows which programs are loaded when Windows starts. Cutting these down will make your PC run faster and slash the number of processes that run.

UPDATE PROGRAMS
Outdated apps may run slowly, so check this column to see which version you have installed. A quick internet search will tell you if a later version is available.

BACKGROUND PROCESSES
The more apps that you install, the more processes they run. And too many can slow your PC. Check here to see if you can close any.

RESOURCES
Shows you which apps and services are running, and how much of your PC's resources they are taking up. Close any resource hogs to speed up your PC.

Jargon buster!

► Services

A service is a small program that works in the background. Some start and stop when needed, but others continue to run, and can slow your PC down.

► Resources

Your PC's RAM, CPU power, graphics power, network tools and drive space.

► Task Manager

Helps with managing apps and system monitoring. To load it, press [Ctrl] + [Alt] + [Delete], then click Start Task Manager, or press [Ctrl] + [Shift] + [Esc].

MATT'S BEST TIP!

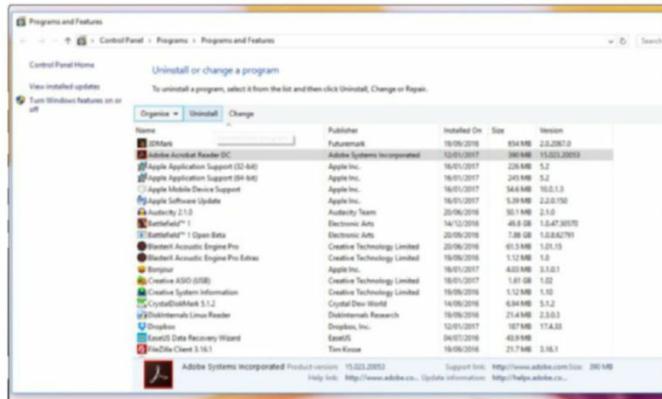
To see a real boost in speed swap out your PC's hard disk for a solid state drive (SSD) and install Windows on that.

3 Identify resource-hungry programs

Certain programs use a lot of **resources**, which in turn slow your PC. Open the **Task Manager** again, then in the Processes tab you'll see which programs and services are open, and how many resources they are using. If there are any programs that are taking up a lot of resources, close them (by clicking 'End task') for a speed boost, or uninstall them for something more permanent.

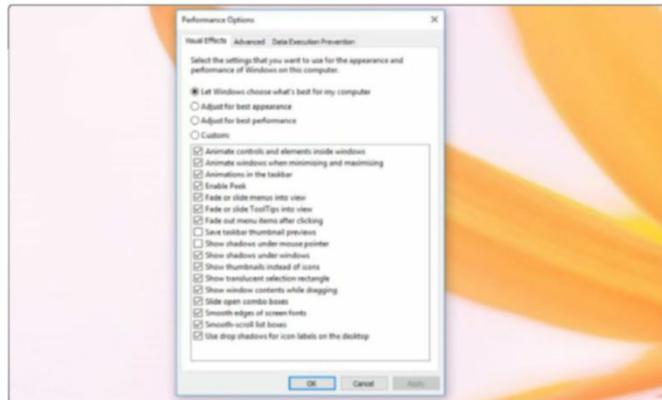
4 Make sure Windows is up to date

Microsoft regularly releases updates for Windows which can fix bugs and problems that could cause your PC to run slowly, so it's a good idea to make sure you're up-to-date. In the Start menu, type 'Windows update' and press [Return]. Click 'Check for updates' and if you're not using the most recent version you'll be told. This won't increase speed, but it will keep your PC healthy.



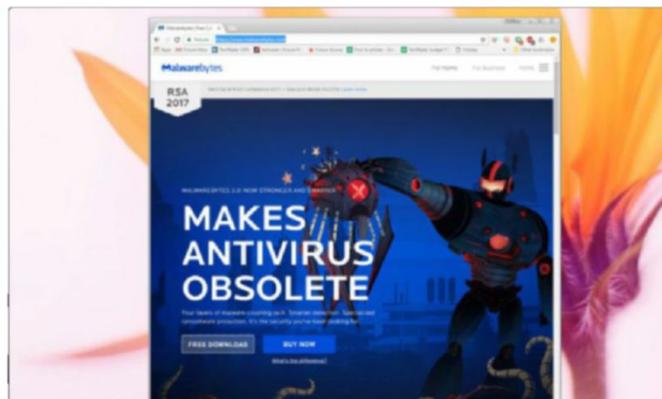
5 Remove unused programs

A PC with a clean and uncluttered drive will perform faster. Type 'uninstall' in the Start menu, and press [Return]. Take a look through the list of installed programs and if there are any you no longer use, select them, then click Uninstall. If there are programs that you still use, it may be worth looking online to see if they have been updated, making them perform faster.



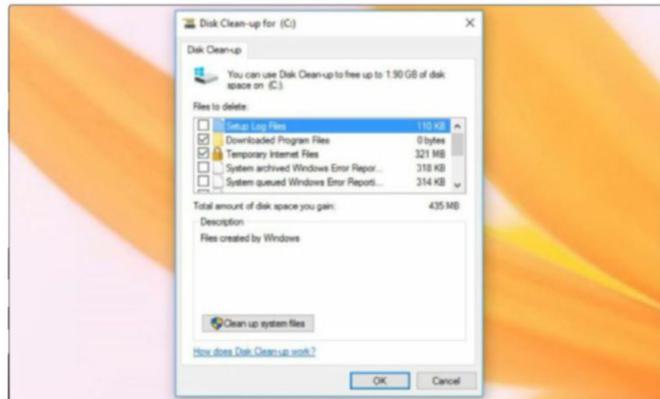
7 Reduce visual effects

Each version of Windows looks better than the last, but its visual effects and animations can slow you down. To turn them off, open the Start menu and click Settings. Type 'performance' in the text box, then click 'Adjust the appearance and performance of Windows'. The Performance Options window opens and from there either select 'Adjust for best performance' or 'Custom'.



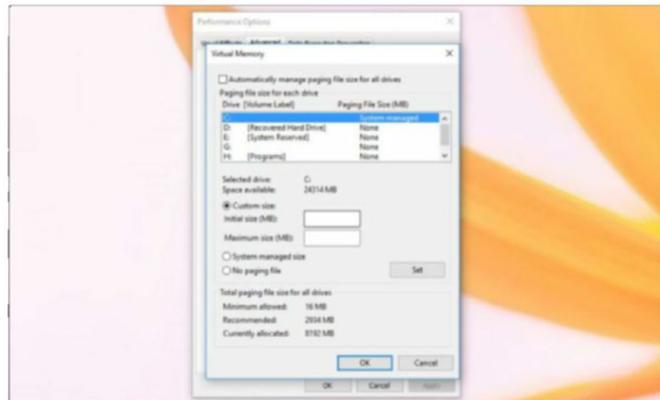
9 Scan for viruses

A slow PC could be symptomatic of a virus, so make sure you scan it (and remove any infected files) regularly. Windows Defender, which comes with every version of Windows since Windows 8 (and also available to download) does a good job. Free alternatives include AVG (page 36) and Malwarebytes (page 46). Removing viruses will speed up our PC and protect your privacy!



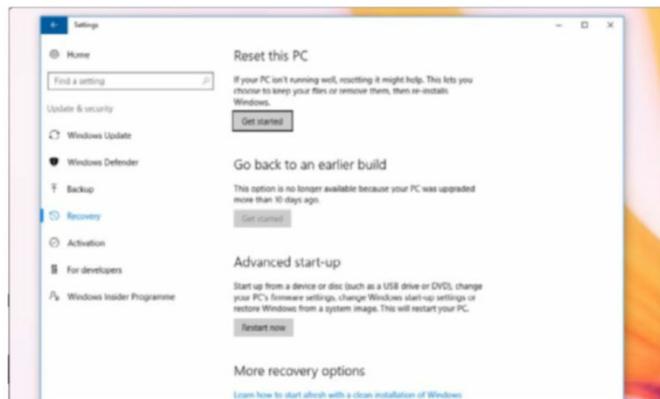
6 Clean up your drive

Next use the built-in Disk Clean-up tool in Windows. In the Start menu type 'disk clean-up' and press Enter. You'll be asked to choose the drive to clean up. For the biggest speed increase, select the drive which has Windows installed (usually C:), and click OK. Disk Clean-up will scan your PC's drive and show you a list of suggested files to delete. Select the ones you want then click OK.



8 Add virtual memory

Speed up your PC by adding Virtual Memory, giving it a RAM boost. From the Performance Options window of the last step, click the Advanced tab, then the 'Change...' button. Uncheck 'Automatically manage paging file size for all drives'. Select your drive, then select Custom Size and set the Initial Size to the recommended amount and the maximum size to a higher figure.



10 Advanced measures

Your PC should now be running fast again. If not, it's time for advanced measures. First, clean up your registry with CCleaner (www.piriform.com/ccleaner), which will remove invalid and outdated Windows Registry entries, as well as leftover files from uninstalled apps. If that doesn't help, try reinstalling or refreshing Windows. No dice? Then it's time to upgrade your hardware. ■

Technology
Tips Guide



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Learn how to...

Add tabs to any window



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

"TidyTabs allows you to group multiple program windows into tabs - just like your web browser."

At a glance

Skill level...

► Anyone can do it

Straightforward

Tricky in parts

Suitable for...

Windows 10

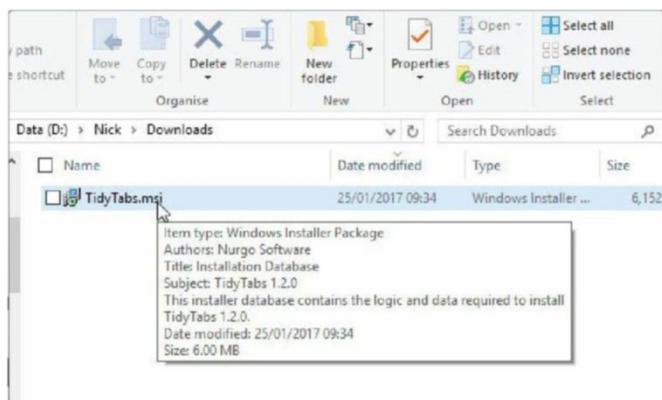
Windows 8.1

Windows 7

Remember when opening multiple websites at the same time resulted in a clutter of windows all over your desktop? Then some bright spark came up with the idea of tabbed windows, and your browser instantly became easier to manage. TidyTabs from Nurgo Software takes this concept and extends it to cover your entire desktop, from the programs you run to File Explorer itself.

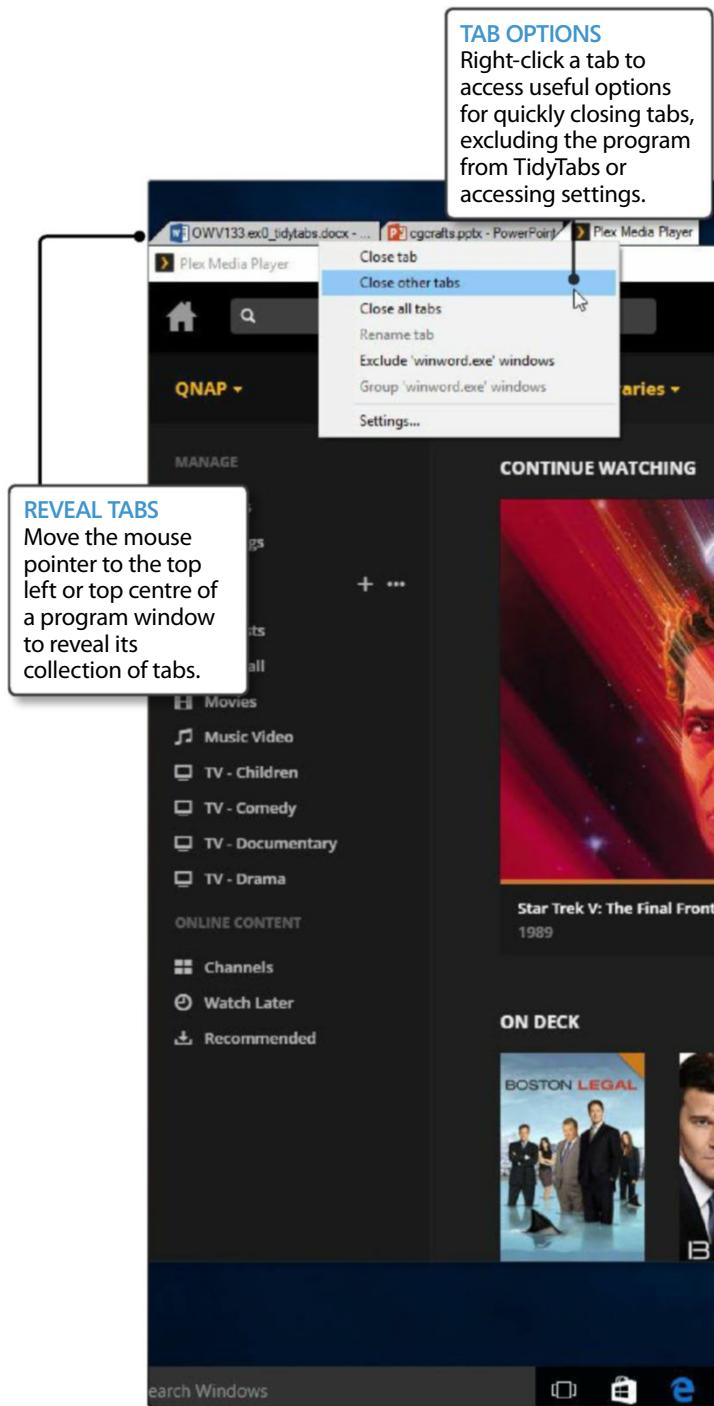
It's beautifully elegant in the way it works too – tabs appear discreetly at the top of a program window, and all you have to do is drag one tab on top of another to group them together. TidyTabs is smart – it knows which windows require tabs, but it's also compliant to your wishes, enabling you to choose which programs get to use its features. Best of all, TidyTabs is free for personal use, so read on to discover how to transform the way you use your PC.

Step-by-step Add tabs to all your windows



1 Download and install

Browse to www.nurgo-software.com/products/tidytabs and click 'Get TidyTabs'. Scroll down and click the Download button to save TidyTabs.msi to your PC. Once done, roll your mouse over the file and verify the author is Nurgo Software, then – when satisfied – double-click the setup file. Click Next, accept the licence agreement and then follow the installation through to its finish.



2 First steps

After you click Finish, a Welcome screen will appear inviting you to activate the Pro edition, try a 60-minute trial of the Pro edition or simply continue with the free version. Start by selecting 'Continue with TidyTabs Personal Edition' and click Continue. Close the warning notification about personal use (it only appears once) and the program will now run in the background.

NICK'S BEST TIP!
You can restrict TidyTabs so it only works with specific apps. To do that, go to Settings > Exclusion > Whitelist.

GROUP TABS
Professional users can tell TidyTabs to automatically group multiple windows by app – manage them from here.

GENERAL APPEARANCE BEHAVIOR EXCLUSIONS GROUPING

Tabs transparency

Active	Transparent	Opaque
Inactive	25%	75%
Mouse hover	100%	

Drag & Drop preview

Preview opacity	Transparent	Opaque
Preview size	300	

Tabs colors (Professional Edition)

- None
- Use a custom color
- Use the Windows theme color
- Use a different color for each application

OK Cancel Apply

On
Off
Settings...
Try TidyTabs Pro
Buy TidyTabs Pro (\$9)
Enter license key
Report a bug
Check for updates
About TidyTabs
Exit
11:02
25/01/2017

ADJUST WINDOWS
You can resize, drag or pin a window group together. Unpin a tab and the window reverts to its original size.

APPEARANCE
You can change tab transparency, and the size and opacity of the window that appears when you drag and drop.

ICON OPTIONS
Right-click the TidyTabs icon in the Taskbar Notification area to enable or disable it, try the Pro version or exit.

Jargon buster!**► Blacklist**

A specific list of apps or settings that a program is explicitly instructed to ignore or block. Anything not in this list is considered allowed.

► Tabbed window

A group of windows that have been temporarily merged into a single window, with selectable tabs that let you switch between them.

► Whitelist

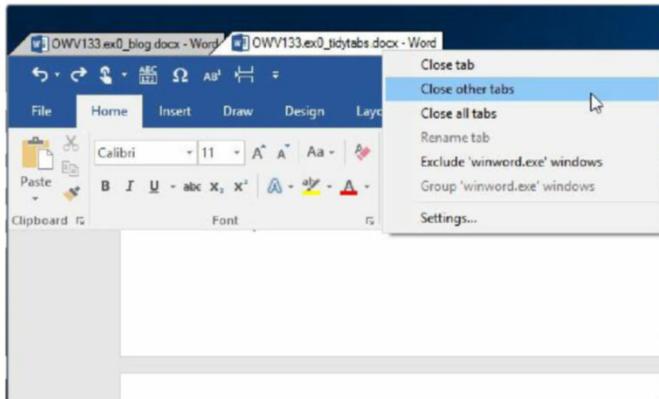
The opposite of blacklist – here a program will only work with those items specifically placed on the list.

3 Group two windows

Open your first application window. If it's snapped to the top of the screen, place the mouse cursor in the middle at the top – you should see a tab appear with the window name (typically the document name). If the window is floating, roll the mouse to the top left corner of the window to reveal the tab. Click and drag one tab on top of the other to group them together.

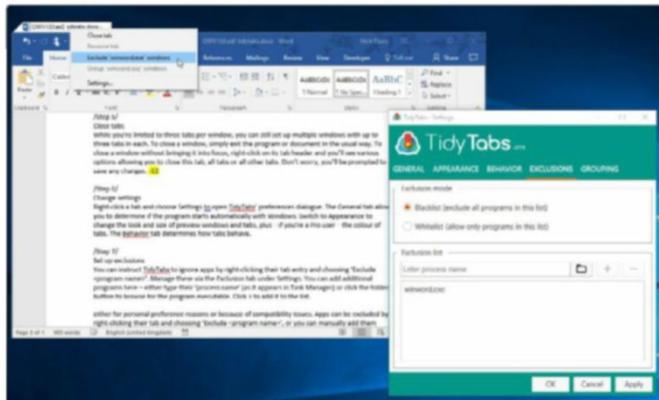
4 Work with tabs

You can group up to three windows under a single tabbed group in TidyTabs Free, so feel free to repeat for another program window. You can mix and match apps, enabling you to group related tasks together. Switch between tabs by clicking one to bring it into focus. To remove a tab from a group, simply click on it and drag it away from the main window to detach it.



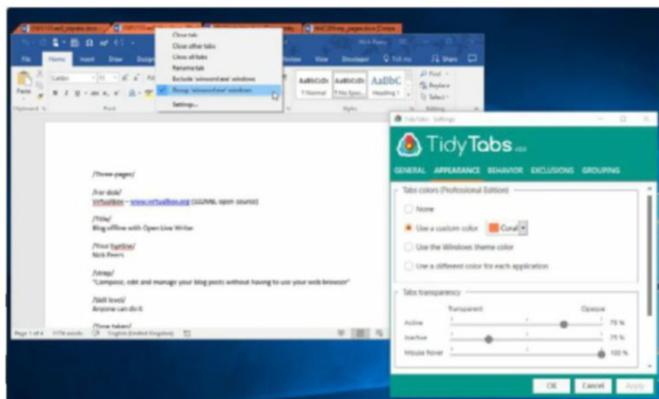
5 Close tabs

While you can only group three windows together per tabbed group, you can set up multiple groups. To close a window, simply exit the program or document in the usual way. To close a window without bringing it into focus, right-click its tab header to access various options allowing you to close this tab, all tabs or all other tabs. You'll be prompted to save any changes in documents.



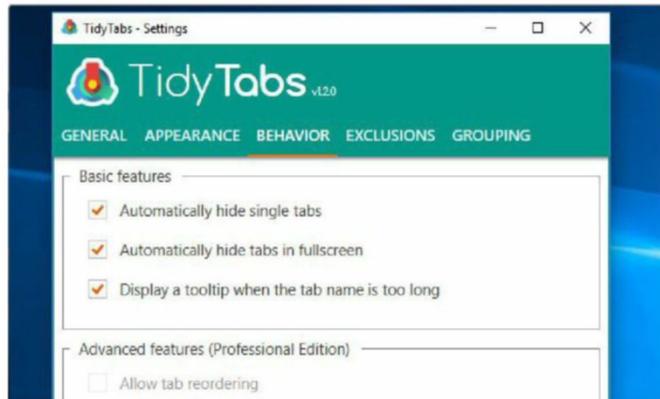
7 Set up exclusions

You can instruct TidyTabs to ignore apps by right-clicking their tab entry and choosing 'Exclude <program name>'. Manage these via the Exclusion tab under Settings with **Blacklist** selected. You can add additional programs here – either type their process name (as it appears in Task Manager) or click the folder button to browse for the program executable. Click + to add it to the list.



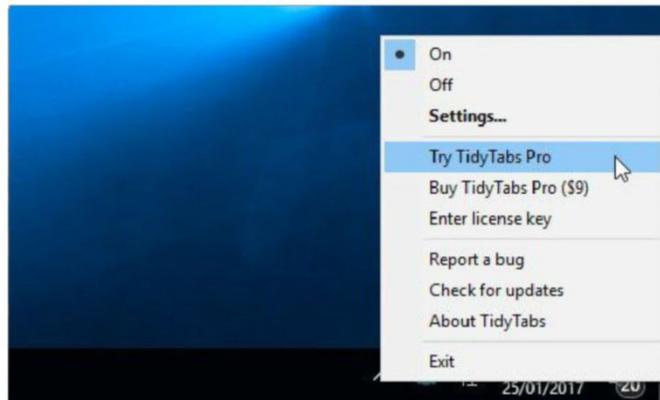
9 Explore the Pro version

If you go Pro, you will be able to bypass the three tabs per window limit. Plus you'll gain a new Group option when you right-click a program tab, which automatically groups all open windows from that program together. Go to Settings > Grouping tab to manage these, then visit the Appearance tab to set custom tab colours. You'll also be able to reorder tabs by drag and drop.



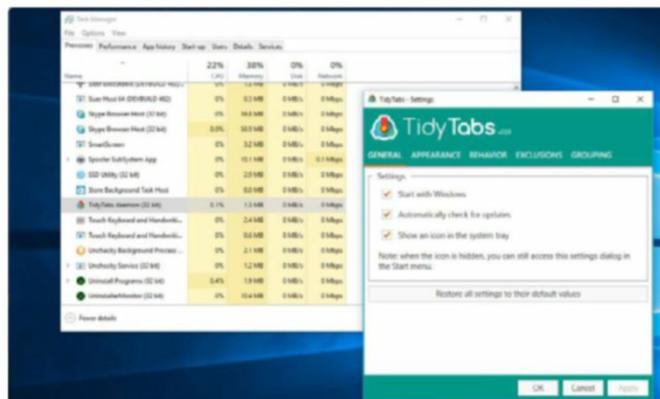
6 Change settings

Right-click a tab and choose Settings to open TidyTabs' preferences window. Use the General tab to decide whether TidyTabs should start with Windows or not (otherwise, you will need to launch it from the Start menu). Switch to Appearance to change the look and size of preview windows and tabs. The final Behavior tab determines how tabs act.



8 Get Pro features

TidyTabs' Pro Edition provides a number of useful extras, all for a one-off \$9 (£7) fee. To give these a tryout, right-click the TidyTabs Notification area icon and choose 'Try TidyTabs Pro'. You'll be able to road test the Pro features for 60 minutes. Once the trial ends, you can run the trial again, but only after closing and reopening TidyTabs – any Pro settings will be lost.



10 Program windows, under control

TidyTabs has been engineered to take up practically no memory or CPU, so you shouldn't notice any performance issues using it. If it crashes, as it sometimes does, it will attempt to automatically restart and pick up where you left off. If you'd like to run it as a portable app, download and extract it from [www.nurgo-software.com/download/TidyTabs.zip](http://nurgo-software.com/download/TidyTabs.zip) instead. ■



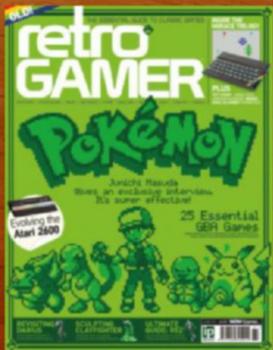
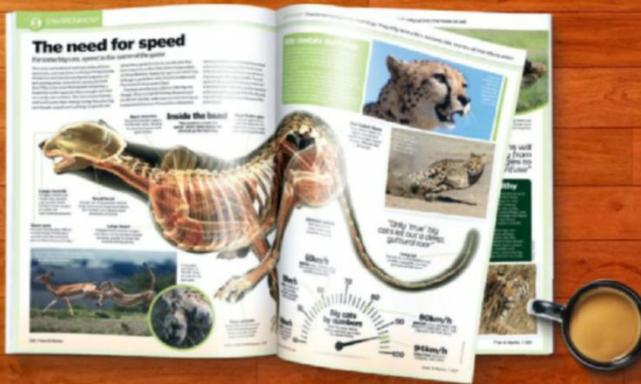
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Learn how to...

Avoid and remove unwanted programs



Your guide *Cat Ellis* says...

"When you download free software, there's a risk that unwanted apps will come along for the ride. Here we'll show you how to avoid or remove them..."

At a glance

Skill level...

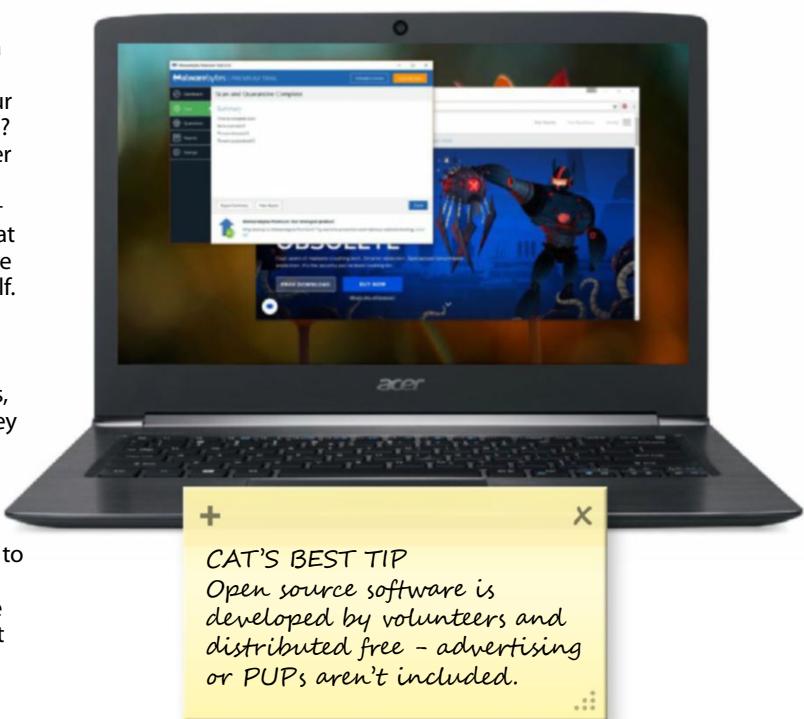
- ▶ Anyone can do it
- Straightforward
- Tricky in parts

Suitable for...

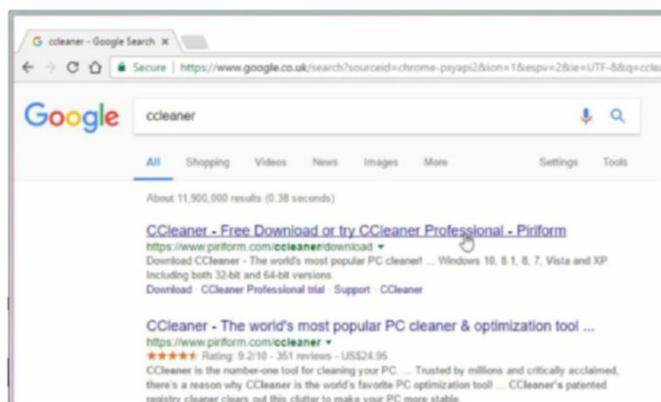
- Windows 10
- Windows 8.1
- Windows 7

Have you ever opened your web browser to discover a strange toolbar taking up half the top of the screen? That your default search engine has changed? Or that your homepage is no longer the one you originally chose? Then you could be suffering from PUPs – potentially unwanted programs that have installed themselves alongside other apps you have added yourself. Some PUPs even serve up a diet of adverts for online stores as you go about your business.

PUPs – or adware – aren't viruses, but they can be very annoying. They get in the way, slow down your PC, override your carefully configured system preferences, and even compromise your privacy by reporting your online activity back to advertisers. Thankfully, there are ways to avoid installing PUPs in the first place, and to wipe out any that slip through the net. Here's how...



Step-by-step Dodge or delete PUPs



Google Search

[ccleaner](https://www.google.co.uk/search?sourceid=chrome-papagui&ion=1&espv=2&q=cleaner)

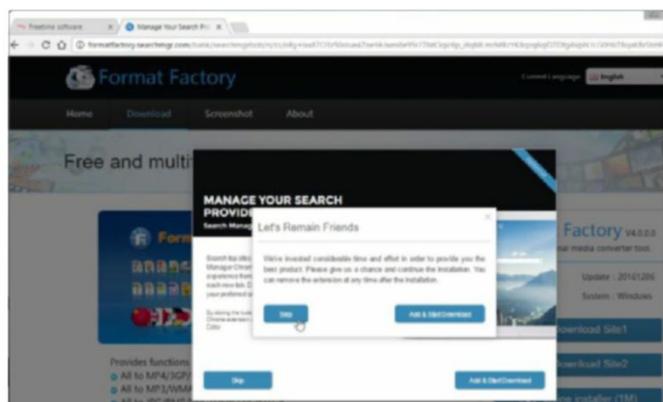
About 11,900,000 results (0.38 seconds)

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CCleaner - The world's most popular PC cleaner & optimization tool ...
<https://www.piriform.com/cleaner> •
★★★★★ Rating 9.2/10 - 351 reviews - US\$24.95
CCleaner is the number-one tool for cleaning your PC... Trusted by millions and critically acclaimed,
there's a reason why CCleaner is the world's favorite PC optimization tool... CCleaner's patented
registry cleaner clears out this clutter to make your PC more stable

1 Go straight to the source

The internet is a great source of free software, but such apps are often funded by advertising – including PUPs. Websites that offer software to download might add PUPs to help cover their costs, so the first step to avoiding PUPs is to download programs directly from the developer's site. If in doubt, searching for the app should lead you to the original source.



Manage Your Search Provider

Search Manager

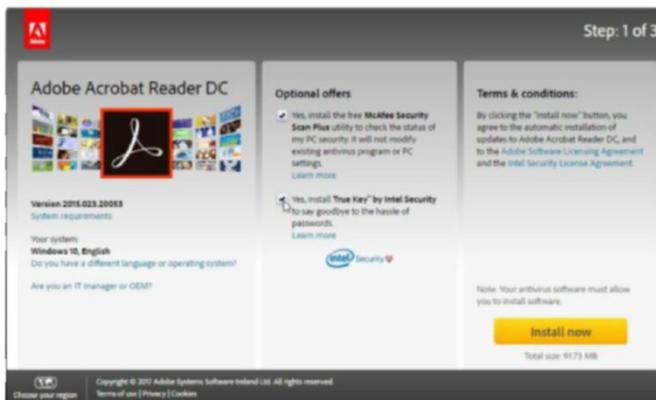
MANAGE YOUR SEARCH PROVIDER

Provides functions:

- All to MP4/3GP
- All to MP3/WMA
- All to JPEG/BMP

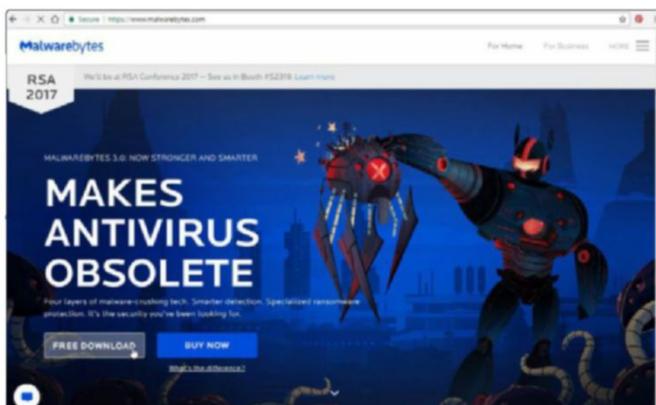
2 Beware sneaky tricks

When you're on a download site, watch out for banner advertisements with green download buttons on them. These are designed to trick you into clicking them; only click links or buttons that contain the name of the program you want. Also watch out for webpages that try to make you feel guilty for turning down 'special offers' of toolbars and browser extensions.



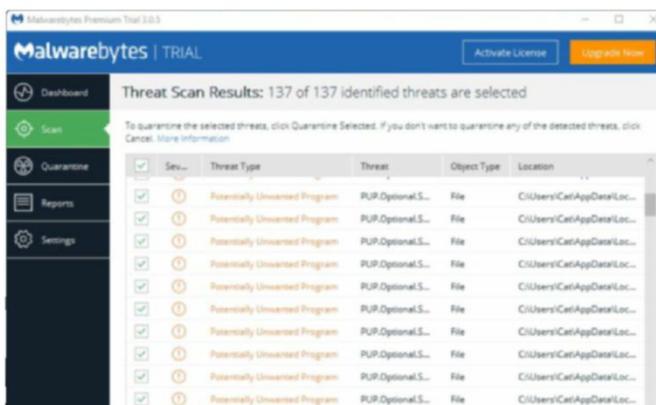
3 Take it slow

When you download a program, make sure you read each step of the installer carefully. Some developers are open about any extra software that's included, and make it easy to opt out, but sometimes the options are less obvious. Look out for a 'Custom installation' option – this often lets you choose which programs are installed and deselect any PUPs.



5 Prepare to purge PUPs

Prevention is better than cure, but as we've seen, PUPs can be sneaky and sometimes you might end up with an uninvited guest on your PC. If that happens, you need Malwarebytes Anti-Malware – a free program specially designed to identify and delete malicious and privacy-threatening software. Download and install the free version from www.malwarebytes.com.



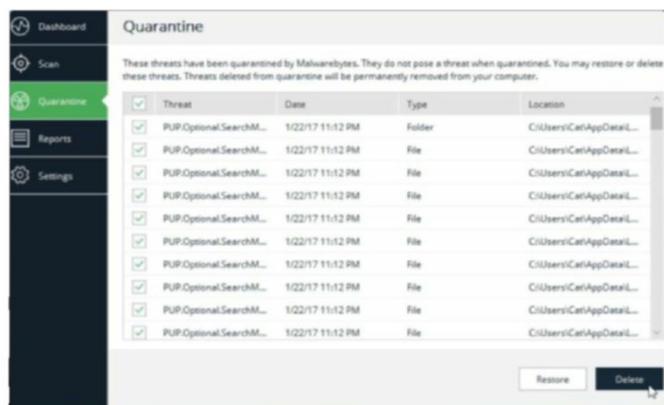
4 Get a little help

There's no substitute for care and attention, but sometimes PUPs are very sneaky and one might slip through your defences. Unchecky is a tiny program that automatically unchecks any tick boxes in software installers, and alerts you if you might be about to install a PUP. Download it from www.unchecky.com – it doesn't come with anything undesirable itself!



6 Supplement your security

The free version of Malwarebytes Anti-Malware doesn't replace your usual anti-virus software – it works alongside it, detecting programs, toolbars and browser extensions that don't behave like viruses, but you'd be better off without. For the first two weeks you get a trial of premium features like real-time scanning. Once the trial is up, it reverts to the basic scanner.



7 Scan and quarantine

Open Malwarebytes Anti-Malware and click Scan. It will check for updates, then search your PC for any unwanted programs in its database. If it finds any PUPs, these will appear in a list at the end of the scan. Make sure they're all ticked, then click 'Quarantine selected'. This will prevent them accessing other parts of your system. You will then be prompted to restart your PC.

8 Send PUPs packing

Once your PC has restarted, re-open Malwarebytes and click Quarantine. Check all the boxes, then click Delete to remove them permanently. Congratulations, your PC is now clean and safe to use! Careful downloading will protect you from the threat of PUPs, but if you like experimenting with free software, it's a good idea to keep Malwarebytes to hand and have it run occasional scans.

Learn how to...

Sort photos with Adobe Bridge



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

"Bring order to your chaotic photo collection with Adobe's free image-cataloguing tool, Bridge"

At a glance

Skill level...

Anyone can do it

- Straightforward
- Tricky in parts

Suitable for...

Windows 10

Windows 8.1

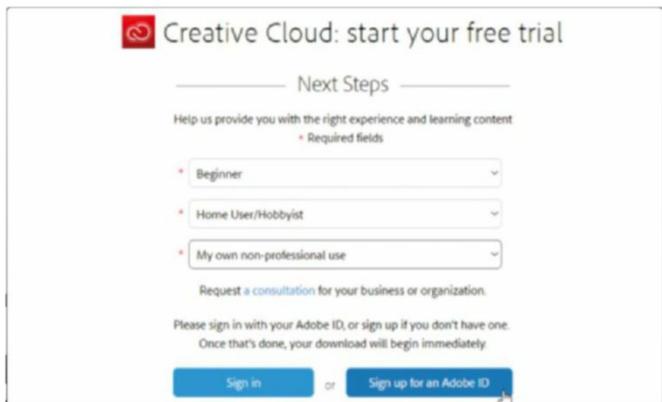
Windows 7

These days, it doesn't take very long to accumulate photos and other images across multiple drives. And getting them organised is no easy task. But, luckily Adobe has come to the rescue.

The company known best for its powerful (and pricey) Photoshop product has quietly made its tool for organising and cataloguing your images free to use.

The program in question is Adobe Bridge, and it's packed with handy features and time-saving tools to bring order to your photo collection. Read on to discover how to organise your photos into collections. You can also apply useful tags and other identifying data to photos with the minimum of fuss and even import photos directly from other sources, including your digital camera. If you've been struggling to stay on top of your photos, Adobe Bridge will be your new best friend.

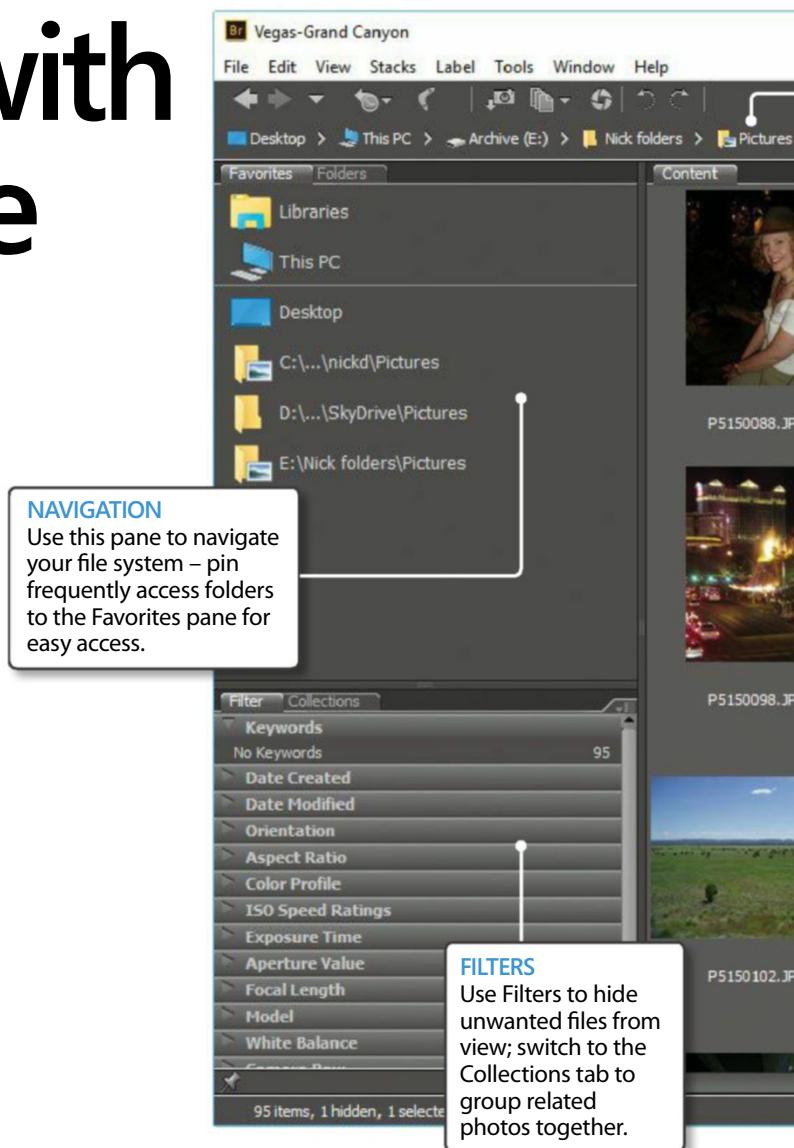
Step-by-step Get started organising your photos



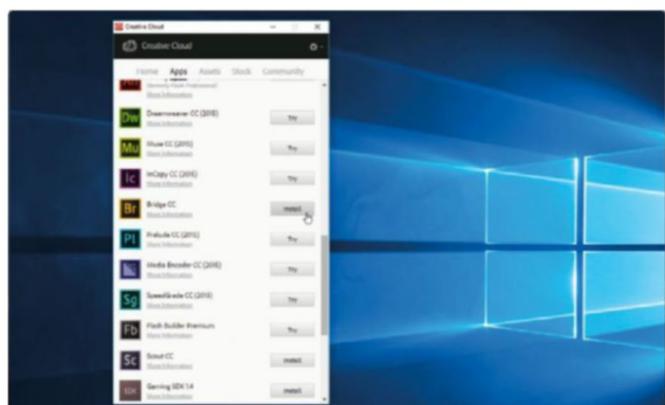
The screenshot shows the Creative Cloud landing page. It features a large button to 'start your free trial' and a 'Next Steps' section where users can choose their experience level: Beginner, Home User/Hobbyist, or My own non-professional use. There are also links for requesting a consultation and signing in or up.

1 Set up Adobe ID

Go to www.adobe.com/uk/products/bridge.html and click Download. Select Beginner, Home User/Hobbyist and 'My own non-professional use' before clicking 'Sign in' if you have an **Adobe ID**. Click 'Sign up for an Adobe ID' and fill in the form if not – you'll need to supply personal details, an email address and password. Click 'Sign up' and follow the instructions to get your download.



The screenshot shows the Adobe Bridge interface. The left sidebar is the 'Navigation' pane, which lists 'Favorites' and 'Folders'. It includes a 'Content' area with thumbnail previews of images. A callout box explains the navigation pane: 'Use this pane to navigate your file system – pin frequently accessed folders to the Favorites pane for easy access.' The bottom left is the 'FILTERS' pane, which lists various metadata categories like Date Created, Date Modified, Orientation, Aspect Ratio, etc. A callout box explains the filters: 'Use Filters to hide unwanted files from view; switch to the Collections tab to group related photos together.'



2 Download and install

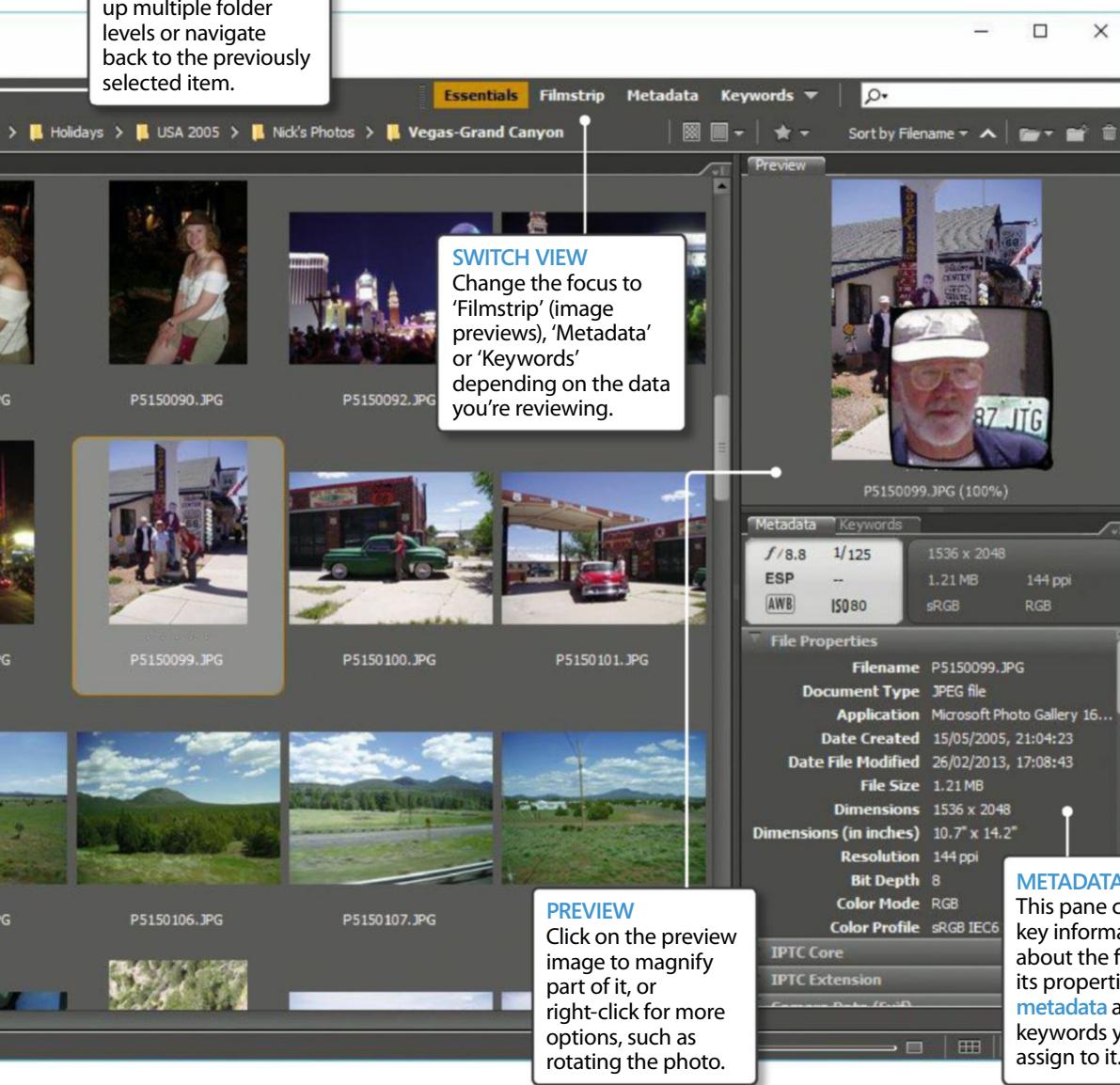
You'll start by downloading and installing the Creative Cloud desktop app – follow the prompts and once it's installed, sign in with your Adobe ID credentials. Switch to the Apps tab and scroll down the list until you find Bridge CC – click the Install button next to it. Scroll back up to see a meter revealing the download and installation progress. Click Open when done.

Explore

Organise photos with Adobe Bridge

BREADCRUMBS

Use these navigation aids to swiftly move up multiple folder levels or navigate back to the previously selected item.



Jargon buster!

► Adobe ID

An account used to manage your Adobe products and subscriptions – including apps such as Adobe Bridge.

► IPTC Core

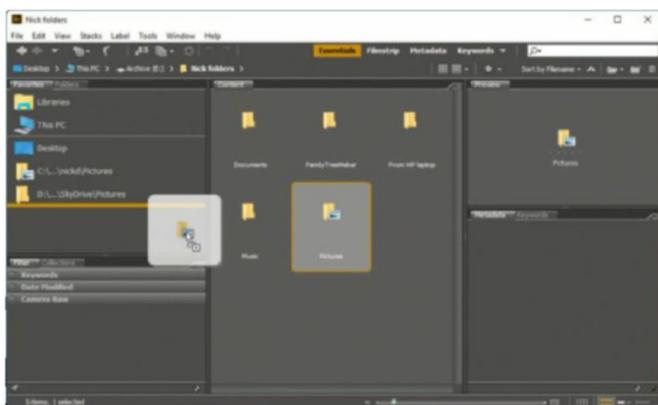
One of two standards adopted to help ensure information tagged to photos is stored in a consistent format.

► Metadata

Extra information added to a photo, video or piece of music that helps describe and identify the file. These details are sometimes known as 'tags'.

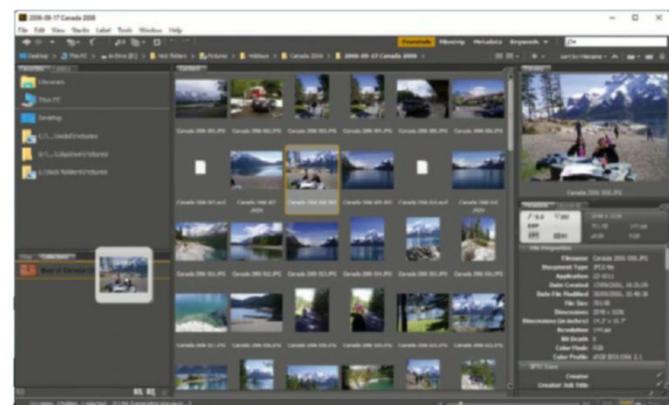
METADATA

This pane contains key information about the file – its properties, **metadata** and any keywords you assign to it.



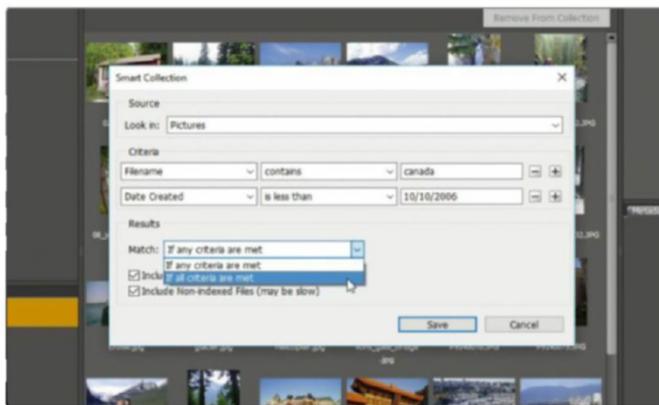
3 Set up favourite folders

A multi-paned window (split into five sections) will open. The annotated screenshot reveals the key elements of the program's user interface – take the time to make your picture folders more accessible by locating them in the middle pane, then dragging the folder into the Favourites list. Drag and drop folders within the pane to rearrange them, or right-click to remove them.



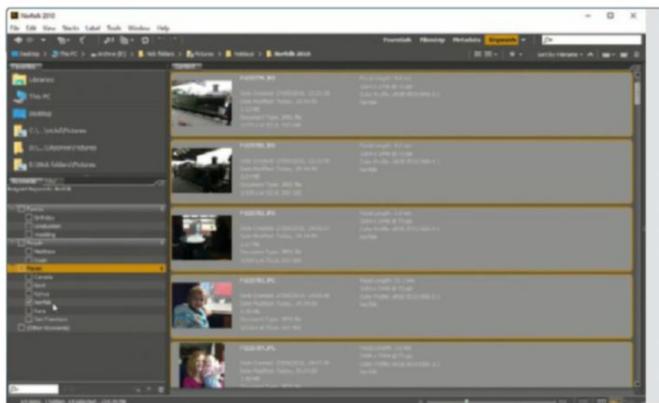
4 Group photos into collections

Bridge allows you to group related photos together into collections without having to move them into the same folder. Switch to the Collections tab in the bottom left pane, then click the New Collection button. Give it a suitable name, then use the top left pane to browse for photos to add to it. Drag them onto the collection icon to add them.



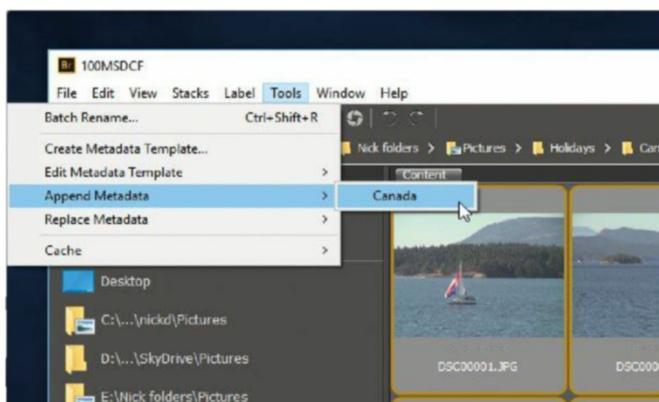
5 Smart collections

Alternatively, click New Smart Collection. This creates a dynamically updated collection of photos that match specific criteria, such as 'filename', 'metadata', 'date modified' or 'created', and keywords. Choose which folder or drive to search, and select whether or not to include subfolders and match one or all criteria. Click Save, then right-click and choose Edit to make changes.



7 Manage keywords

Several suggestions already exist, click '+' to add a new keyword from scratch. If a photo already contains a keyword, select it and the keyword appears italicised in the list – right-click it and choose 'Make persistent' to add it to Bridge's collection. Use categories to group related keywords together, then select linked photos and tick the relevant keywords to add them.



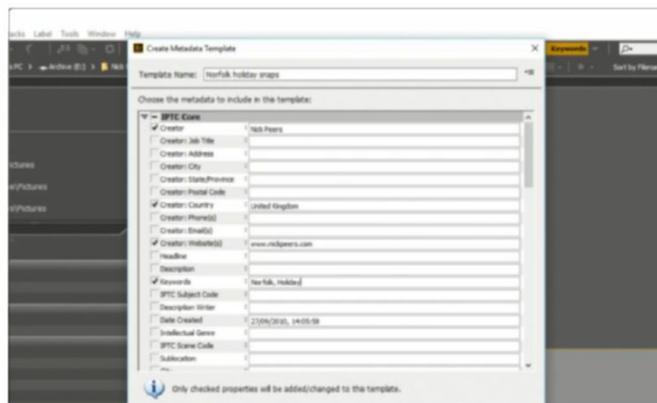
9 Apply metadata

Next, select all the photos you wish to apply the metadata to – one way to do this is organise them into a temporary collection. Once selected, pick the template from the Tools > Append Metadata or Tools > Replace Metadata menu depending on whether you want to simply add the metadata to what's already there, or replace it with the tags in your template.



6 Assign metadata

Identifying and finding photos can be time-consuming without adding additional information to the file's properties in the form of metadata. One of the simplest forms of metadata is to add keywords to your photos, such as the place they were taken or the people who were in them. Select the Keywords tab in the bottom right pane to view them, or switch to the Keywords view.



8 Use metadata templates

A faster way to assign metadata – including other tags listed under the Metadata tab – is to set up metadata templates. Choose Tools > Create Metadata Template to set up a template of information for specific photos. Work through the sections filling in the fields you want – you'll find keywords under the **IPTC Core** section, for example. Give it a suitable name and click Save.



10 And there's more

We've scratched the surface of what Bridge can do, so keep digging – import photos from your camera (click Advanced to access more options), apply ratings to favourite photos and develop your own labelling system via Edit > Preferences > Labels, enabling you to mark files for whatever purpose or workflow you want to use. ■

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Learn how to...

Plan study time to perfection



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

"Bring order to your chaotic school or university life with this handy free Windows app"

At a glance

Skill level...

► Anyone can do it

Straightforward

Tricky in parts

Suitable for...

Windows 10

Windows 8.1

Windows 7

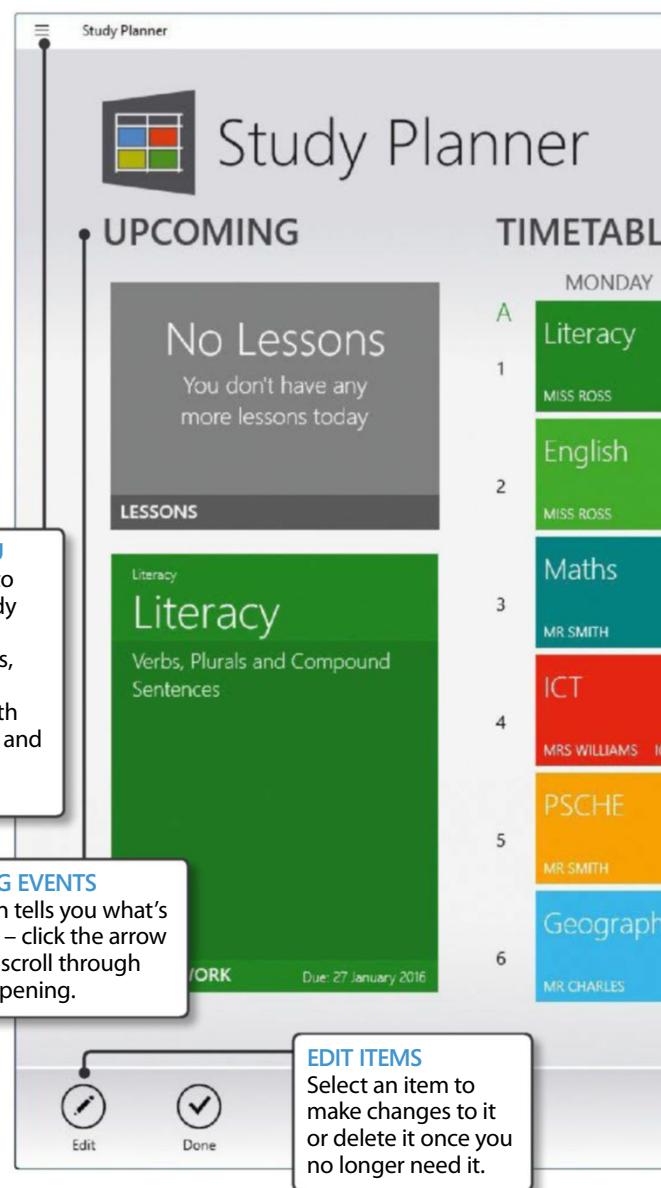
They say your school and college days are the best of your life, but that's no comfort when you're floundering in the middle of a difficult assignment or struggling to remember where you're supposed to be at any given moment. Study Planner won't improve your social life or actually do your essays for you, but it will at least help you remain organised and able to plan out your working week. Input your timetable into the app for a quick and easy way to see when and where you need to be, plus what lessons to prepare for. Study Planner can also be used to manage homework and allow you to organise your upcoming exam revision too. Install the app on your laptop, tablet or Windows Phone and follow our tutorial!

APP MENU
Open this to access Study Planner's preferences, plus share content with other apps and search by keyword.

UPCOMING EVENTS
This section tells you what's coming up – click the arrow buttons to scroll through what's happening.

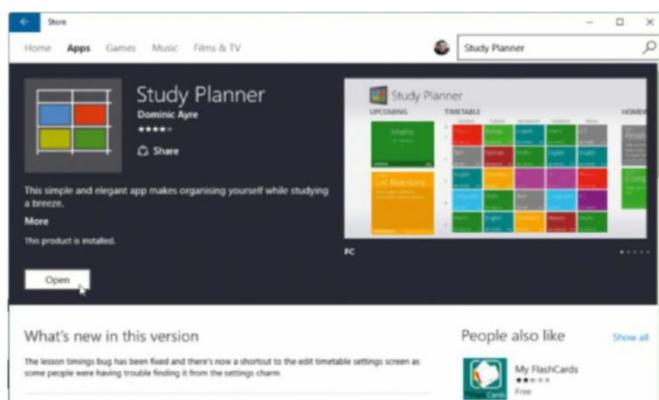


EDIT ITEMS
Select an item to make changes to it or delete it once you no longer need it.

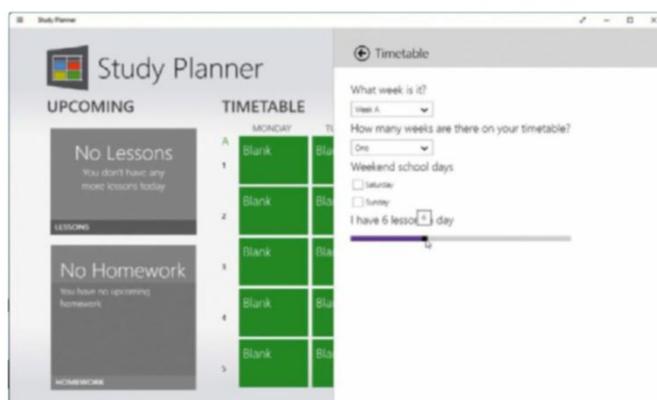


The screenshot shows the Study Planner app running on a Windows device. The main screen has three main sections: 'UPCOMING' (No Lessons), 'LESSONS' (Literacy: Verbs, Plurals and Compound Sentences), and 'TIMETABLE' (a grid for Monday to Friday). A vertical sidebar on the left contains icons for 'Study Planner', 'UPCOMING', 'LESSONS', 'HOMWORK', and 'TIMETABLE'. A callout box labeled 'APP MENU' points to the top-left icon. Another callout box labeled 'UPCOMING EVENTS' points to the 'UPCOMING' section. A third callout box labeled 'EDIT ITEMS' points to the 'Edit' and 'Done' buttons in the bottom right corner of the main screen area.

Step-by-step Put your school day in order



The screenshot shows the Windows Store page for 'Study Planner'. It includes the app's icon, name, developer (Dominic Ayre), rating (4 stars), and a 'Share' button. The description states: 'This simple and elegant app makes organising yourself while studying a breeze.' Below this, it says 'More' and 'This product is installed.' There is a 'What's new in this version' section and a 'People also like' section with a link to 'My FlashCards'.



The screenshot shows the 'Timetable' settings screen within the Study Planner app. It asks 'What week is it?' with a dropdown menu set to 'Week A'. It asks 'How many weeks are there on your timetable?' with a dropdown menu set to 'One'. It has checkboxes for 'Weekend school days' (Saturday and Sunday) both checked. It says 'I have 6 lessons' and shows a slider for the number of lessons per day. The main part of the screen shows a 5x5 grid for the timetable, with days of the week labeled across the top and numbers 1-5 down the side.

1 Install Study Planner

Study Planner can be found in the [Windows Store](#) – just type 'study planner' into the Search box to locate it, then click the Free button to install it. Once complete, click Open to launch it – from here you can create permanent shortcuts by right-clicking its tile and choosing 'Pin to Taskbar', or right-clicking its shortcut on the Start menu and choosing 'Pin to Start'.

2 Configure timetable

The timetable defaults to a single five-day week, with each day split into five. If you need to change this, click the hamburger button in the top-left corner and choose Settings > Timetable. From here you can set up two separate weeks (Week A and Week B) of lessons, plus change the number of lessons per day and add Saturday and Sunday to the timetable too.

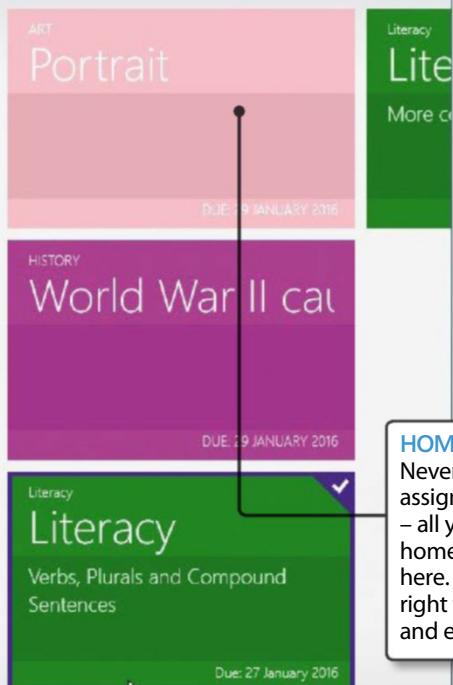
E



	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
E1	English MISS ROSS E1	Literacy MISS ROSS E1	P.E. MR DAVIES GYM	Literacy MISS ROSS E1
E1	Art MISS ROGERS A2	Design Tech MR WILSON A3	Maths MR SMITH M1	Maths MR SMITH M1
M1	French MME DUBOIS L4	Art MISS ROGERS A2	R.E. MR JENKINS RE2	Art MISS ROGERS A2
C3	Science MR PRICE P1	Drama MISS TURNER ST1	English MISS ROSS E1	Science MR PRICE P1
M1	Design Tech MR WILSON A3	ICT MRS WILLIAMS ICT3	History MRS GARNER H3	P.E. MR DAVIES GYM
G1	Design Tech MR WILSON A3	Science MR PRICE P1	PSCHE MR SMITH M1	P.E. MR DAVIES GYM

TIMETABLE

Record details of all your subjects here – include your teacher's name and room number. Right-click for editing options.

HOMEWORK**Jargon buster!****► Action Centre**

Also known as the Notification Centre – access this by clicking or tapping the speech bubble icon in the Taskbar's Notification area.

► App menu

This is the menu that appears when clicking the hamburger-like button in the top left of any app window.

► Windows Store

The place to go for Windows 10 apps. Click the Windows shopping bag button on the Taskbar to open it.

HOMEWORK

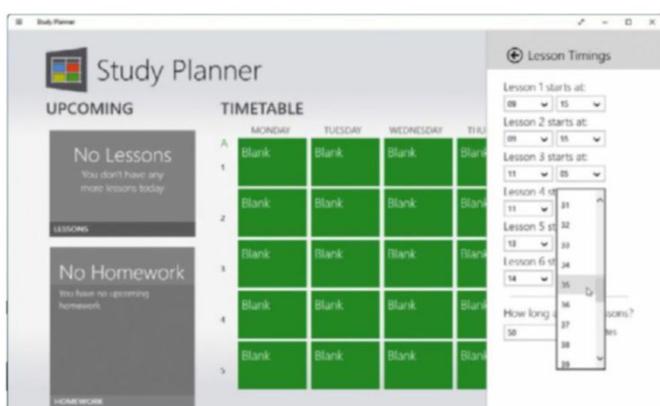
Never miss an assignment again – all your recorded homework is listed here. Keep scrolling right for classwork and exam info.

ADD ITEMS

Click the Add button to add details of more homework assignments, classwork notes and upcoming exams.



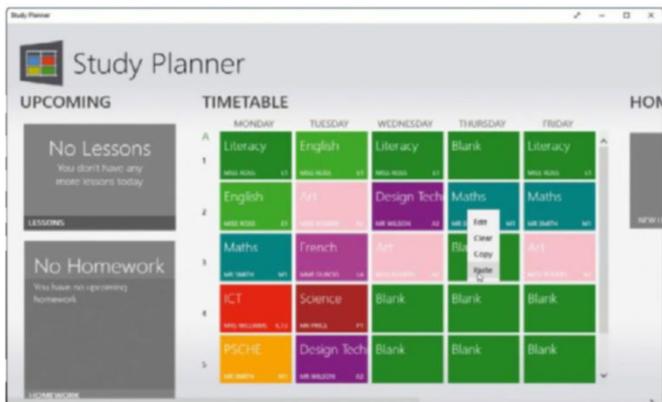
Exam Classwork Homework

**3 Set lesson times**

Open Settings again, but this time choose Lesson Timings to choose when each lesson starts, and how long each lesson is to make allowances for breaks, lunchtime and when school finishes. Sadly, you can't currently set different durations for individual lessons, so the best thing to do is set the lesson time to the most common length used.

4 Enter lessons

Now click on the first green Blank card under Monday. Click Subject, then enter your subject or choose from the list. Next, type the name of the person teaching the class, what room it's in and assign it a colour from the 11 available. Use colours to help differentiate between different subjects. Once complete, click Save and move on to the next slot in your timetable.



5 Fill timetable

You can fill each entry on the timetable, or copy and paste repeat subjects to speed things up: right-click the lesson you wish to duplicate and choose Copy, then right-click and choose Paste in each slot where you need it to appear. You'll also find Edit and Clear options from the same menu, allowing you to amend or remove entries. Finish Week A and – if applicable – Week B.



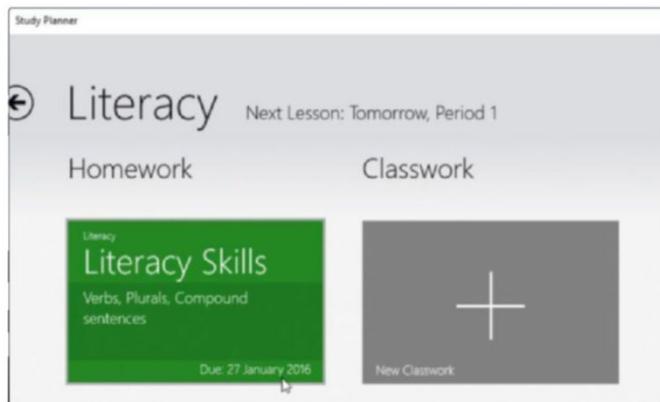
7 Mark completed

When you've finished your homework, tap it and select Done to mark it as complete. You'll be prompted to confirm this by choosing Yes – doing so effectively deletes it. You can also amend the entry by selecting Edit. Add new homework as you receive assignments – you can set up multiple items for a single subject. Homework is displayed with urgent items listed first.



9 Set exam reminders

You'll see an Exam option – selecting this enables you to record details (subject, module, date and location) about upcoming exams. Once created, exams will appear to the right of the classwork section in the main app and when browsing a subject, while the Upcoming section will also change to list your next exam. Right-click an exam to make changes to it, or delete it.



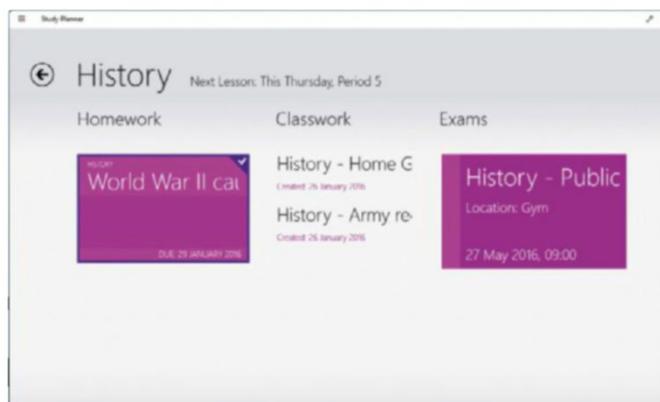
6 Add homework

Make a note of homework by clicking the appropriate tile on your timetable followed by New Homework. Give your homework task a title, verify the subject is correct, add a due date and then record some details about it. Click Save. The homework will now appear not just when you tap the subject in your timetable, but in the Homework section by the timetable too.



8 Record classwork

Record notes relating to your classwork by selecting the subject and clicking the New Classwork box. Give your classwork a title and record some notes, then click Save. Click the item to edit it, or right-click it and choose Delete to remove it. You'll also see an Add option – select this and choose Classwork (or Homework) to add extra items for that particular subject.



10 No more panic

Study Planner also ties in with the Windows 10 Action Centre to provide you with notifications reminding you of upcoming homework and exams. It's a great tool for putting your study day in order, alerting you to upcoming lessons, exams and homework. Now there's no excuse for missing an assignment – unless you want to trot out the old 'dog ate it' excuse, of course... ■

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Learn how to...

Test the speed of your internet connection



Your guide **Alex Dale** says...

"With one easy-to-use app and a few quick menu tweaks, you can check the speed of your network connection, and boost it by as much as 80%"

At a glance

Skill level...

Anyone can do it

Straightforward

Tricky in parts

Suitable for...

Windows 10

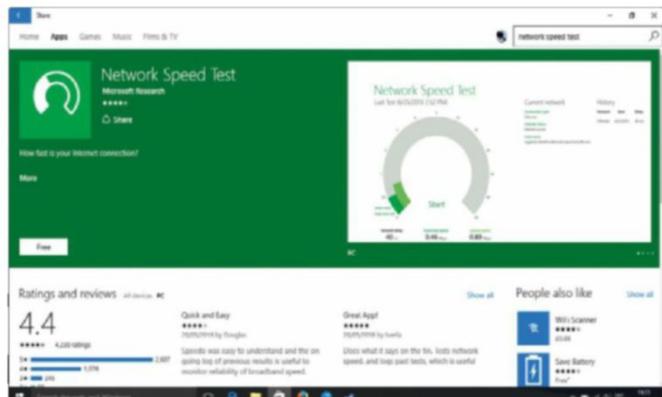
Windows 8.1

Windows 7

One of the main benefits of Windows 10 is that the operating system takes care of any housekeeping by default, constantly scanning the internet for the latest updates and drivers for your software. This means you will get the most stable, safest and up-to-date experience possible. But if your internet connection isn't the fastest, all that behind-the-scenes churning can disrupt your web browsing experience.

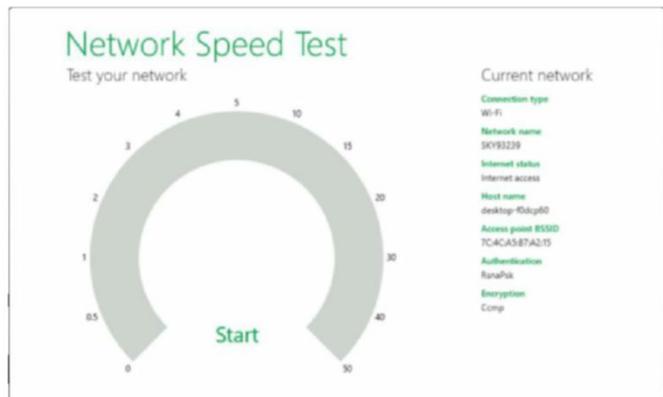
Luckily, with a little know-how it's possible to lighten your broadband internet connection's load and free it up to concentrate on the task at hand. But before you begin tinkering in the Settings menu, the first thing you should do is test the speed of your connection, to ensure it really is your network that is at fault, rather than, say, the servers carrying the video that you're trying to stream. Let's begin, shall we?

Step-by-step Check and boost your connection



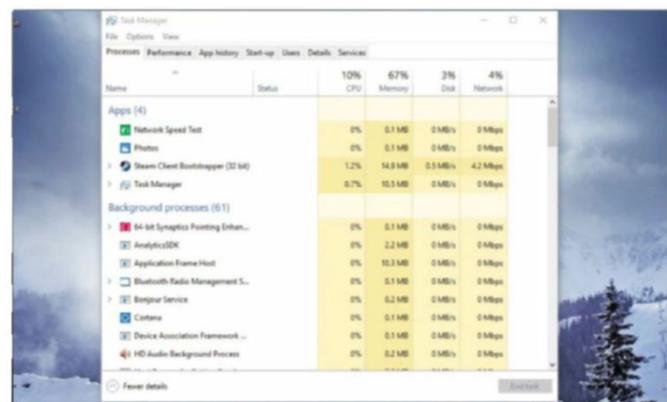
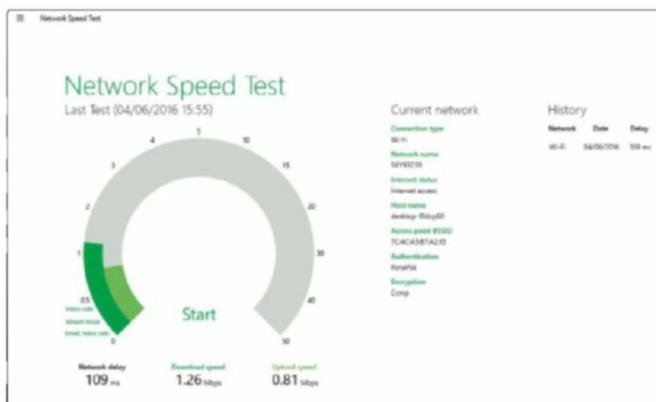
1 Download the app

There are many speed-testing apps out there. They work by connecting your device to servers across the globe, and then measuring how long it takes to send and receive a response. Microsoft recommends its own Network Speed Test app, which is free from the Windows Store. There are flashier ones out there, but this one is clear and tells you everything you need to know.



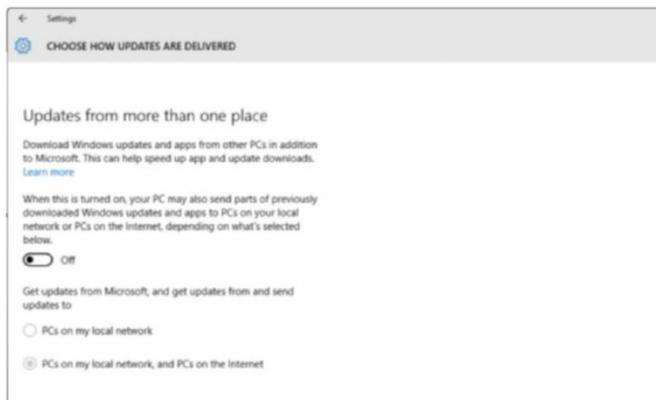
2 Checking your speed

Click Start and the app will test your connection's download speed, upload speed and its reaction times. The latter two are important if you play a lot of online games or share large files, but typically internet connections are set up to be much faster at downloading than uploading. It's rare to get the advertised 'best case' speeds, but you can hope for over 50%.



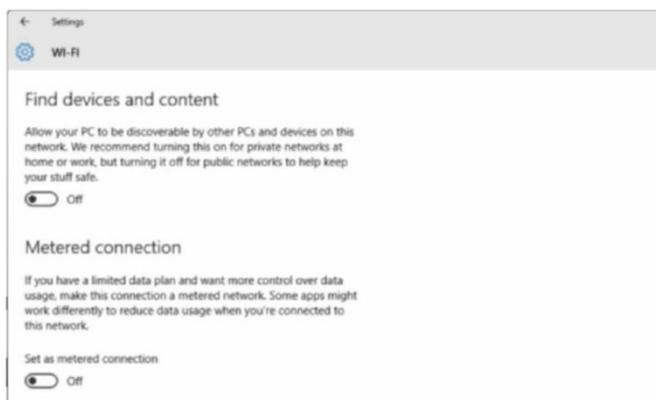
3 Analysing the results

Our recorded download speed (the dark green bar) is a paltry 1.26MBps – well below our advertised 6MBps speed. As the guide explains, we can stream music or moan about it over Skype, but high-definition video is out of the question. The simplest fix is to switch to a wired connection or move your PC closer to the router. But if neither of these is an option...



5 Turn off peer-to-peer updates

To speed up the rate at which users get updates, Windows 10 uses peer-to-peer technology. This means that instead of downloading everything from a central server, your PC sends and receives updates from other users' devices. If you can't spare the bandwidth, switch it off – Settings > Update & Security > Advanced Options > 'Choose how updates are delivered'.

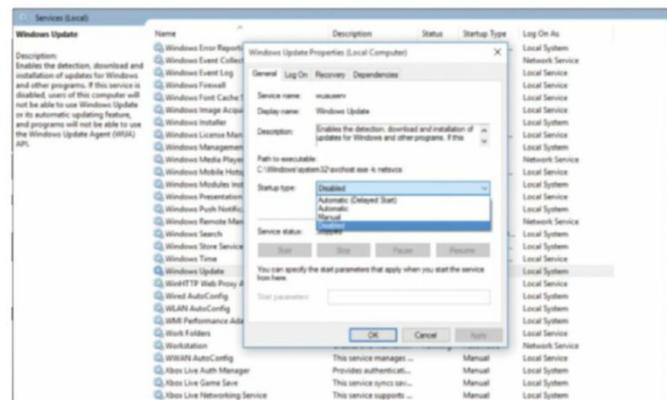


7 Set troublesome connections to 'metered'

Here's a sneaky trick if there's just one Wi-Fi connection (e.g. a workplace) in your life giving you trouble. Go to Settings > Network & Internet > WiFi > 'Advanced options' and activate the 'Set as metered connection' option. Until you say otherwise, this will flag the connection up as a pay-as-you-go connection. It isn't, but it'll treat it like one – which means no automatic updates.

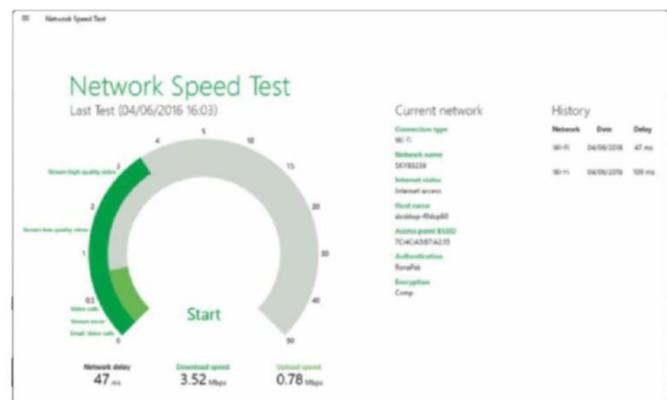
4 Close unnecessary programs

...It's time to get creative. Your first port of call should be the Task Master, accessed by pressing [Ctrl] + [Alt] + [Del]. Here you can see if there are any unnecessary programs hogging your bandwidth. The column to look at is Network – we can see Steam is busy downloading a hefty update. Close it, or wait until it finishes. Also check other devices connected to the Wi-Fi network.



6 Switch off updates

Switching off automatic updates isn't recommended, but if you need the extra zip, you can do so by typing 'services' into the search bar, which will bring up this screen. Scroll down to Windows Update, double-click it and change 'Startup type' from 'automatic' to 'disabled' and then press Stop. When you're finished, you can reinstate updates by selecting Start.



8 Success!

If you've followed all these steps, you should find your internet connection is in much better health – we're up to 3.52Mbps (megabytes per second) now. Note that the Network Speed Test App also keeps a record of your past speed tests down the right side of the screen. You can clear this by clicking on the menu icon, where the option will become available. ■

WHAT YOUR COMPUTER IS REALLY UP TO

Take a peek at the inner workings of Windows with Task Manager. By *Nick Peers*

Ever wondered what goes on under the hood of Windows? If your PC is running smoothly, doing its job, then probably not. It's when things start to go wrong – your PC slows to a crawl, or non-responsive application errors keep popping up – that you suddenly take a keen interest. There are plenty of tools out there that promise to speed up your computer, fix errors, and make things as good as new again (whatever that means), but there's always an element of risk involved in trusting your PC to a program that doesn't really explain what it's doing, failing to point out that cleaning out the Registry doesn't – on its own, at any rate – speed things up, and, more

often than not, introduces problems you later can't unpick to resolve without a refresh or, worse still, a full-blown reinstall.

We may live in a post-truth world, but your PC doesn't care about any of that. Knowledge is power, and understanding how Windows works arms you with the insights you need to make more informed choices about what to do the next time your computer decides to slow to a crawl. In this feature, we're going to take a close look at the programs, processes, handles, and threads that make up the bulk of what your PC does. And if that sounds like gobbledegook, don't worry, because we'll also explain how everything fits together to help you understand what's going on.

We're going to kick things off by having a look at the Task Manager tool to take a closer peek – you will even learn a trick that can sometimes help bring frozen applications back to life. And if you want to go deeper, we'll take you on a tour of Process Explorer, which offers a forensic take on what's going on – both in the foreground and behind the scenes. You'll discover how to free up system resources, track down troublesome processes, and generally keep your PC running a bit more smoothly.

We'll also look at some other tools that can help you monitor your PC and track down fixes for your problems. But now it's time to arm yourself with the tools and tips you

Feature

Understanding your PC

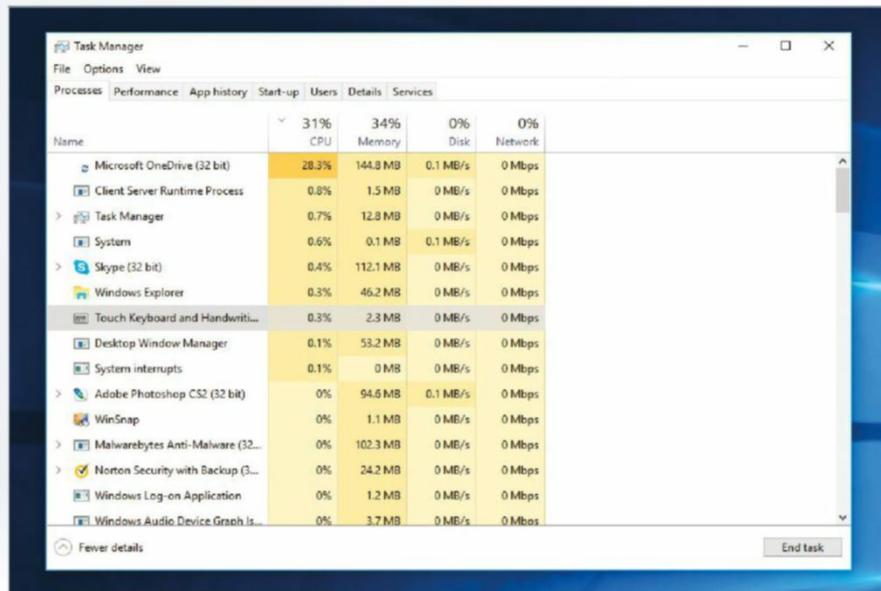
Armed with Task Manager and Process Explorer, you'll know what your PC is up to.

Process Explorer - Sysinternals: www.sysinternals.com [NICK-PC\nickd]

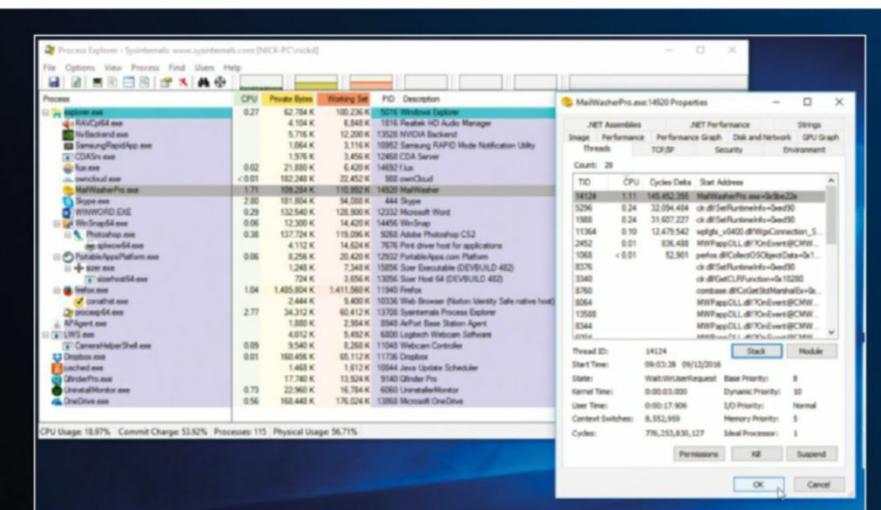
File Options View Process Find Users Help

	CPU	Private Bytes	Working Set	PID	Description	Company Name
svchost.exe	< 0.01	21,420 K	22,980 K	1176	Host Process for Windows Services	Microsoft Corporation
WUDFHost.exe		1,936 K	1,968 K	1792	Windows Driver Foundation - User-mode Driver Framework	Microsoft Corporation
dasHost.exe		9,040 K	13,668 K	2436	Device Association Framework Provider Host	Microsoft Corporation
TabTip.exe	0.08	3,652 K	8,252 K	5276	Touch Keyboard and Handwriting Panel	Microsoft Corporation
TabTip32.exe		1,312 K	1,400 K	6572	Touch Keyboard and Handwriting Panel Helper	Microsoft Corporation
svchost.exe	< 0.01	19,876 K	25,640 K	1348	Host Process for Windows Services	Microsoft Corporation
svchost.exe	< 0.01	19,376 K	21,200 K	1412	Host Process for Windows Services	Microsoft Corporation
igfxCUIService.exe		2,176 K	2,652 K	1616	igfxCUIService Module	Intel Corporation
svchost.exe	0.02	11,984 K	12,792 K	1632	Host Process for Windows Services	Microsoft Corporation
svchost.exe		3,068 K	6,704 K	1964	Host Process for Windows Services	Microsoft Corporation
audiogd.exe		6,120 K	11,324 K	15288	Windows Audio Device Graph Isolation	Microsoft Corporation
agent.exe				K 1996	Rohos Agent.	Tesline-Service SRL
svchost.exe				K 1448	Host Process for Windows Services	Microsoft Corporation
svchost.exe				K 2172	Host Process for Windows Services	Microsoft Corporation
spoolsv.exe				K 2248	Spooler SubSystem App	Microsoft Corporation
svchost.exe				K 2532	Host Process for Windows Services	Microsoft Corporation
ARService.exe				K 2668	ARServic Application	Trend Micro Inc.
mDNSResponder.exe				K 2676	Bonjour Service	Apple Inc.
dimngr.exe				K 2688		
D1265fServer64.exe				K 2704	Dell Network PC Fax (FaxServer)	Dell Inc
app_updater.exe				K 2712	Digital Wave Update Service	Digital Wave Ltd.
svchost.exe				K 2720	Host Process for Windows Services	Microsoft Corporation
FoxitConnectedPDFService.exe				K 2728	Foxit Reader ConnectedPDF Windows Service.	Foxit Software Inc.
DbxSvc.exe				K 2740	Dropbox Service	Dropbox, Inc.
OfficeClickToRun.exe				K 2748	Microsoft Office Click-to-Run (PreSxS)	Microsoft Corporation
GfExperienceService.exe				K 2780	NVIDIA GeForce ExperienceService	NVIDIA Corporation
IISvc.exe				K 2800	Uninstall Programs	IObit
mbamscheduler.exe				K 2852	Malwarebytes Anti-Malware	Malwarebytes

CPU Usage: 33.83% Commit Charge: 46.77% Processes: 118 Physical Usage: 51.20%



Windows 10's Task Manager provides a decent system overview.



Understanding process terminology

Programs, processes, handles, and threads – what are they, and how do they link together? It can get confusing, particularly given the way that both Task Manager and System Explorer present running programs, processes, and threads, so here's a little explainer...

Programs are a series of files that are combined to provide you with the tools and functionality you use on a daily basis, from a web browser or office package to your game collection. They can also include underlying Windows programs (such as File Explorer) and lower level Services, which work in the background to provide features such as networking and automatic updates.

Processes provide resources to run a program, which are stored in 'virtual address space', a reserved portion of RAM. They comprise the program, open 'handles' to system objects, which

determine what resources are required (such as DLL files), as well as environment variables. Processes are assigned a security context, which determines their level of access to the system, plus a unique process identifier (PID). They're also assigned a priority class, which determines how fast the process runs in relation to other processes. Minimum and maximum 'working set sizes' are also applied, to set limits on how much physical memory the process requires.

Each process is split into threads, which enables Windows to allocate CPU time between processes. Each thread can execute any part of the process's code, and shares the process's virtual address space and resources. They have their own properties, such as unique identifiers and exception handlers, and they stop and start to a schedule, so they don't all run at once.

The main focus of our feature is the programs and processes that are running whenever you're using Windows. These include apps, games, and other programs you launch yourself, as well as background processes, such as Windows Services, your security software's auto-protect features, and File Explorer itself. Windows ships with its own built-in tool for monitoring and – to some degree – managing these: the Task Manager.

Task Manager has evolved into quite a powerful tool in recent versions of Windows – launch it by right-clicking the Taskbar. The default basic view merely shows running programs – right-click to close it or switch to that program (handy if it's hidden from view). Note that the 'Always on top' option merely ensures that the Task Manager window can't be hidden by other windows.

To tap into Task Manager's range of features, click 'More details', which splits things into a multi-tabbed view. The main tab is Processes, an expanded view of all the processes and threads running on your PC. By default, these are split into three groups: apps are programs that you launch from File Explorer; background processes are third-party programs that run in the, erm, background; and Windows processes refer to core processes related to Windows.

You'll see four additional columns of information, labeled CPU, Memory, Disk, and Network. These represent the process's usage (as a percentage in CPU terms). You can quickly see which processes are hogging system resources by clicking any of the columns to sort the list accordingly. Once identified, you can decide whether or not to close the program or process in question – if you don't recognise its name, right-click it, and choose Properties > Details for a more verbose description, or choose 'Search online' to search Bing for both the process name and its filename.

Tip: Cloud storage apps often hog all available network resources, which in turn can result in sluggish performance. Once verified as the culprit in Task Manager, open their settings, and look for a section where you can apply limits to their upload and download speeds – OneDrive users should go to the Settings > Network tab, for example.

RECOVER FROZEN APPS

If a program is not responding, the process should be highlighted in the Task Manager – from here, you can attempt to close it by selecting the process and clicking the 'End task' button. If that's too drastic a step, you may be able to recover it by right-

clicking and choosing 'Go to details'. This takes you to the Details tab, where processes are listed with more information – their status (running or suspended), the user who launched them (typically you, SYSTEM, or a SERVICE), and a PID (Process ID).

To try to free up a non-responding thread from here, right-click it again, and choose 'Analyse wait chain'. This lists any threads that are using or waiting to use resources being used elsewhere. Ending the thread may be enough to free up the original process – we've done this a few times in Firefox when an individual tab has become non-responsive, for example.

There are some other handy options under the Details tab – you can alter thread priorities here, which in turn can stop particular processes from taking over your PC, and slowing everything else down. To do that, simply right-click the offending process, and choose Set Priority > Below Normal to see whether it helps. You can also give threads more priority if you feel they need extra attention, but avoid giving any thread 'Realtime' priority, because it brings Windows grinding to a halt.

Another option is 'Set affinity'. This determines which processor cores a program or service can use – if you have a dual-core CPU or better, you might find older applications designed in the era of single-core processing run better if you limit their access to a specific core, rather than allowing them to use all the available cores. In most cases, however, you'll find that Windows is perfectly capable of assigning resources efficiently, so it's of largely academic interest only.

TRIM STARTUP

One other Task Manager tab is worthy of attention: 'Start-up'. This doesn't just list which programs are set to start with Windows – it provides a 'Start-up impact' tab that rates apps' resource usage as High, Medium, or Low. Keep an eye on those rated High – if start-up times and overall performance suffer, preventing these from starting with Windows (right-click the program and choose Disable) may improve matters.

Task Manager's other tabs enable you to monitor performance over time via a series of graphs (Performance), plus keep an eye on apps you've installed through the Windows Store by measuring their resource usage over time ('App history'). The Users tab is handy when two or more users are logged on at once, providing a list of user-generated running processes. Finally, Services provides a cut-down version of which low-level processes are running (or not). You can manually start, stop, and restart services from here, but

for more granular control (such as setting a Service's start-up setting), right-click the service, and then select Open Services.

PROCESS EXPLORER

The Windows 10 Task Manager tool goes a long way to giving you a peek inside your system, as well as the tools for dealing with runaway and non-responding programs, processes, and threads. But you can delve deeper into your system with the help of Process Explorer, a free tool developed by Microsoft's Sysinternals team. Find out more and download it from <https://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/sysinternals/processexplorer.aspx> – it's completely portable, and can be run directly from your web browser (go to <https://live.sysinternals.com/processexp.exe> to do so).

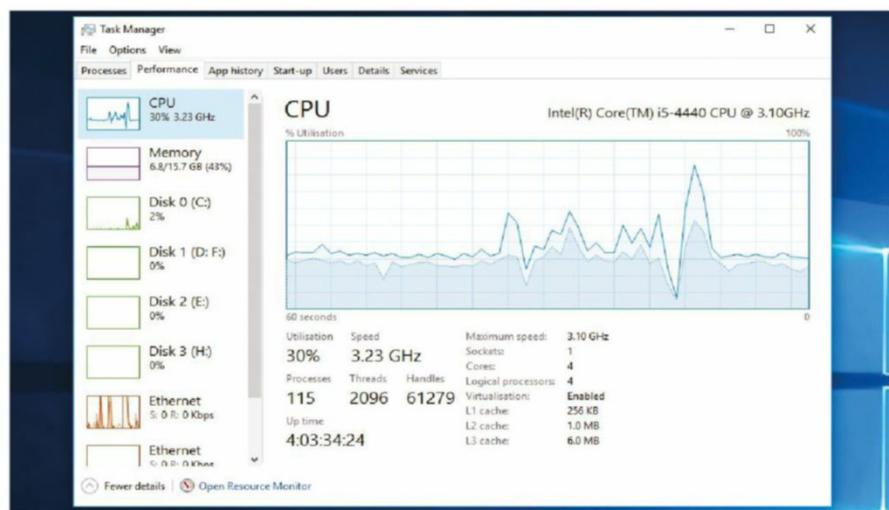
We'll assume you're downloading it: once done, right-click ProcessExplorer.zip, choose Properties, check Unblock, and click OK. Now extract its contents, then right-click either processexp.exe or processexp64.exe (depending on your Windows system type), and choose

'Run as administrator'. Process Explorer doesn't require elevated access, but if you want a complete look at your system, you should do so to enable it to peer wherever it needs to.

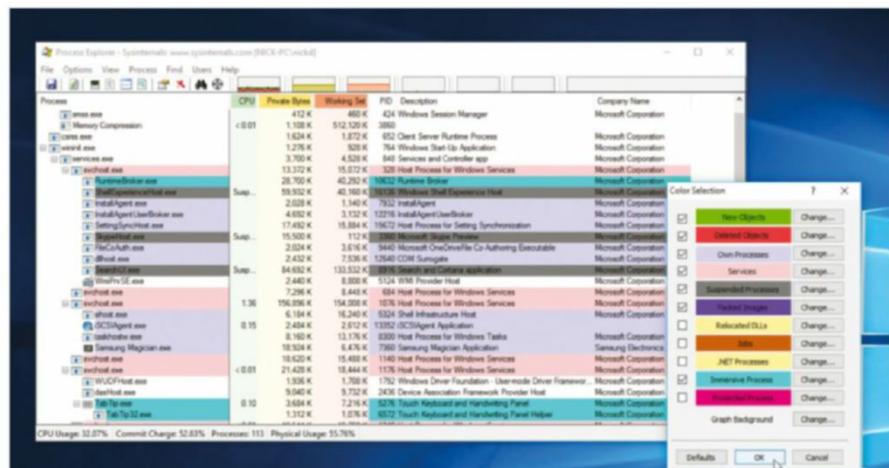
Process Explorer opens to a single-pane window. Expand the Options menu, and check 'Hide When Minimised' and 'Allow Only One Instance'. The former option ensures that when you close or hide Process Explorer, it minimises to the Taskbar notification area, where a real-time graph lets you keep an eye on CPU usage (roll your mouse over it, and a pop-up window reveals overall CPU usage, as well as that of the most demanding app running). Go to Options > Tray Icons to measure additional metrics via their own system tray icons, with seven choices on offer, including 'GPU memory' and Commit (total predicted memory the system may need at any one time based on the current usage).

DIG DEEPER

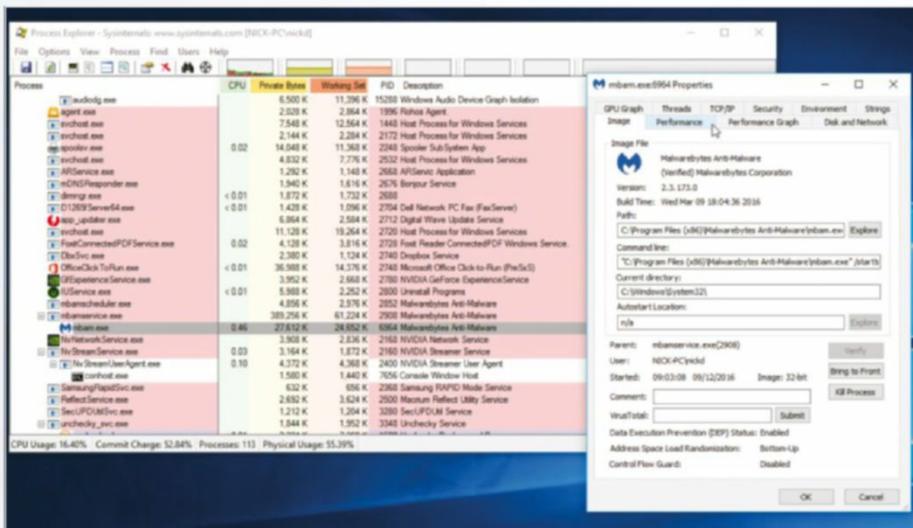
But we digress. Return to the main Process Explorer window, which lists all



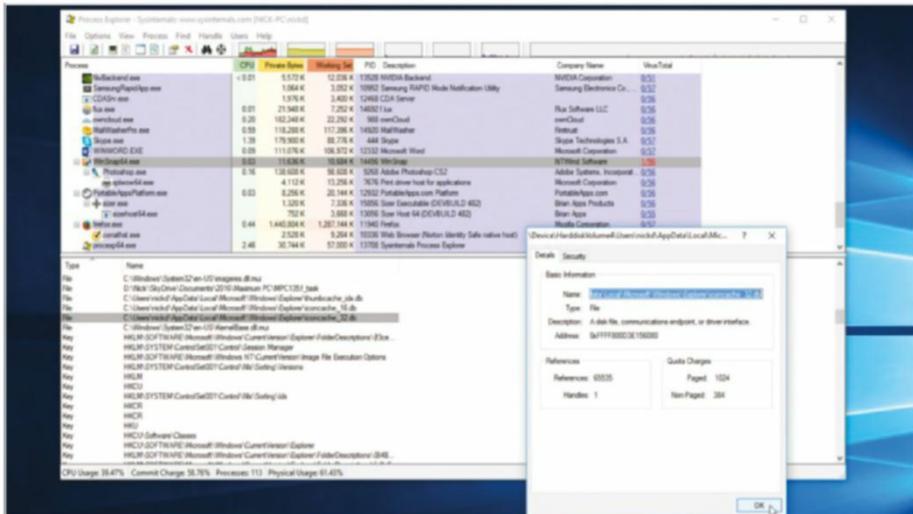
Monitor the ups and downs of your system performance with Task Manager.



All that colour isn't just for decoration – find out what it means.



Get the full lowdown on any process via its Properties dialog.



Discover what resources your processes are using via handles.

Check for malware

Process Explorer can also help track down potential security risks that are running, by comparing a process's parent file with the VirusTotal online database, which checks files against dozens of reputable anti-virus engines. Switch the feature on by choosing Options > VirusTotal.com > Check VirusTotal.com. Click Yes to agree to the VirusTotal terms of service (these are displayed in your browser), and then Process Explorer will submit the hashes of every running process and thread to the VirusTotal website. It also adds a new VirusTotal column to the main view. You'll see a list of clickable links reading '0/56' or '3/57'. Each one links to the anti-virus scan results for that individual file.

Any files listed as '0/57' or similar have been rated safe by all the anti-virus engines used; focus your efforts on those marked in red, where the score is 1 or higher. Click the link and you will be taken to a web page of results, with the suspected infections placed prominently at the top, along with the source anti-virus engine and suspected infection. Conduct a web search for the result, together with the filename, to see what's out there, but unless there are multiple matches, it's likely to be a false positive.

If your file isn't listed there, that means it hasn't yet been scanned by VirusTotal's engines – right-click the file and choose 'Submit to VirusTotal' to upload it, then wait for it to be

running processes. You'll see some processes are nested inside others in a tree-like structure. This makes it clear from which process a particular process or program spawned (for example, if you open a program in the usual way, it appears nested beneath explorer.exe; however, if you open your web browser by clicking a link in another program – Word, for example – it appears underneath the parent program instead).

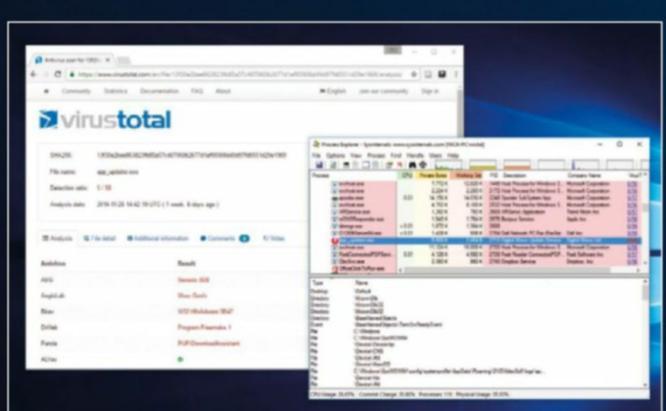
Processes are also colour-coded to help you identify what's going on with each – to see what the colours represent, from recently launched threads (green) to threads ending (red), then choose Options > Configure Colours.

Note this view is lost if you click any of the other column headings – such as CPU – to determine resource hogs. But if you double-click the process to open its Properties dialog, you can see the name of its parent process underneath the Image tab with other useful information (such as which user the process is running under).

As an aside, look carefully at the System process. You'll see an entry marked Interrupts. This is an artificial process in that it actually tracks the system's interaction with your hardware. If you spot high CPU consumption for this figure, then it indicates a potential problem with your hardware or a driver bug. Don't bother clicking for further information, though – there's nothing to see.

MICROSCOPIC EXAMINATION

One of the many ways that Process Explorer enables you to see what's



The more flags on VirusTotal, the more dangerous the file.

scanned. The results will appear in due course.

You can also check files for their digital signatures, a mathematical scheme which – in theory – shows that they have come from a verified source. To do that, double-click the process and switch to the

Image tab, then click the Verify button. Look for '(Verified)', followed by the name of the digital certificate authority under Image File. This, on its own, is no guarantee of whether or not a file is safe, but it does at least offer an extra layer of security.

really happening under the hood is through its support for showing detailed information about a process's threads. Switch to the Thread tab – ignoring the warning about missing symbol files (not needed unless you've got the chops to go the extra mile, or you are a developer) – and you'll see a list of all threads associated with that process. You get to see the CPU usage for individual threads, as well as the files calling that thread, which helps pinpoint where a resource leak may be occurring. You can kill or suspend individual threads from this dialog box, but save any work before doing so – you could easily bring down the parent process from here, or even Windows if you don't know what you're doing.

A process's Properties dialog contains a wealth of helpful information. Use the Performance and Performance Graph tabs to measure its impact over time, for example. Switch to the Service tab to list which services it utilises, or select Environment to check on any environmental variables used by the program. The Strings tab is linked to the list of values provided by any DLL files used – these can help identify a process if you are struggling to work out what it relates to.

HANDLES AND DLL FILES

Process Explorer also enables you to take a close look at a process's handles and DLL files (the resource files that can be shared between multiple programs). Select your thread and press [Ctrl] + [H] for a new pane to appear listing its handles. From here, you can double-click a handle to get more information about it (most specifically, a description of the handle type, such as Section or WindowStation.)

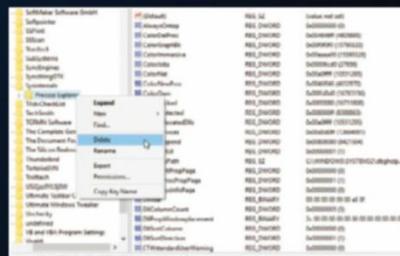
It's also possible to close individual handles by right-clicking and choosing the Close option – but, as with threads, if you don't know what you're doing, it's likely you'll bring the whole process crashing down.

Process Explorer Tips and Tricks

Struggling to identify a window's parent process or thread? Open Process Explorer, then drag the target-like icon next to the binoculars icon on to the window in question, and its associated thread will be suitably highlighted.

Click the binoculars icon or press [Ctrl] + [F] to open the search tool – this enables you to search by handle or DLL substring to see which processes are using (and possibly holding on to) resources. If you can't access a file because it's open in another program, this can find what's locking it.

Choose View > Select Columns, and you'll see you can view pretty much any kind of data about a process or thread that you want. Most useful views can be found on the Process Image (for additional info about the process) and Process Performance tabs (check CPU History, for example, to track a process's resource consumption over time on a graph). Many of these options are overkill, but Google any terms to find out more about them. Also take the time to look at



the Handles and DLL tabs – you can add extra information to both panes.

We like running Task Manager and Process Explorer together, but if Process Explorer offers all the functionality you need, you can make it your default task manager – choose Options > Replace Task Manager. Now, when you press [Ctrl] + [Alt] + [Del] or right-click the Taskbar and choose Task Manager it will launch Process Explorer instead.

Should you wish to reset Process Explorer to its defaults, right-click its system tray icon, and choose Close Process Explorer. Press [Win] + [R], type 'regedit' and hit Enter. Navigate to [HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Sysinternals]. Right-click the Process Explorer subkey, choose Delete, then close Registry Editor.

Press [Ctrl] + [D], and this lower pane switches to DLL view, listing all the DLL files that the process in question is accessing. Double-click a DLL file to access its properties – switch to the Strings tab and you're shown a list of string values it contains. Either press [Ctrl] + [H] to switch back to Handles view, or [Ctrl] + [L] to toggle the lower pane on and off.

What does this information tell you? Well, it gives you detailed insights into what makes up a process – how it's composed of multiple threads, and what resources it uses in the form of handles and DLL files. Not only does it enable you to see what's happening with individual processes, but it also helps

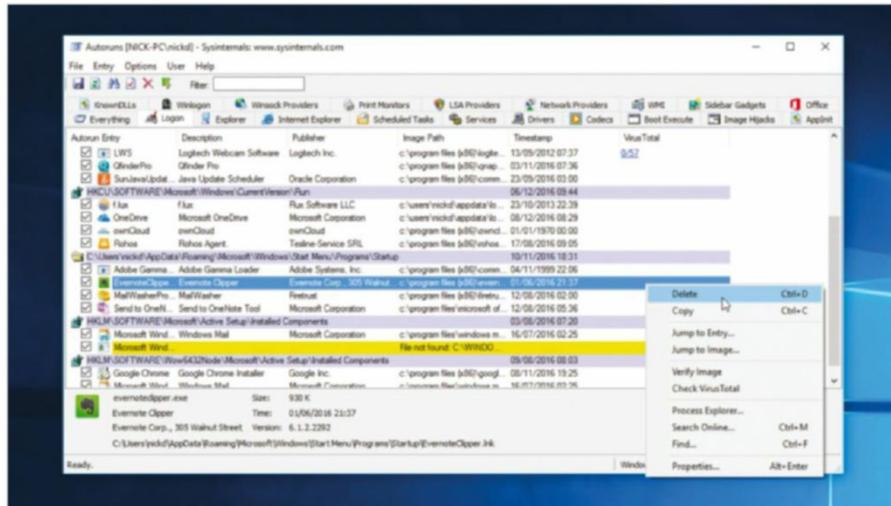
you to learn exactly how programs and processes run.

GET MORE HELP

Process Explorer is a powerful tool, and it can take a while to get your head around it. The Help file is a good place to start – press [F1] to access it – but you'll find some handy online resources, too. There's a PDF handout from Kansas State University, for example, that provides a good introduction (<http://bit.ly/proceplhandout>) – it was written way back in 2009, but it is still relevant. And don't forget the official Process Explorer forum (<http://forum.sysinternals.com>), which contains an FAQ, among other handy resources.

It's also worth taking a look at some of Sysinternals' other tools as well – Autoruns (<http://bit.ly/autoruns>), for example, gives you a similarly detailed view of the start-up process, split across major tabs. It's easier to grasp than Process Explorer, and provides you with all the tools you need to streamline your startup.

If you want to monitor file system, Registry, process, thread, and DLL activity in real time, then Process Monitor (<http://bit.ly/processmonitor>) is the tool to go for – this is particularly handy if a program is crashing, because it provides you with more detail as to where in the process things might be going wrong. Finally, RAMMap (<http://bit.ly/ram-map>) lets you take a peek into how system RAM (or memory) in your computer is managed. It's a very useful tool. ■



For more granular control over your startup, check out Autoruns.

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25 of the **BEST** Windows 10 apps for 2017

We scoured the Windows Store to find the best apps that will
improve the way you use your Windows 10 PC

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LIFESTYLE & ENTERTAINMENT



indows 10 has come a long way since its launch in July 2015, and for good reason.

Microsoft described it as the first “operating system as a service” that would receive ongoing updates to its features and functionality, with the Anniversary Update extending its install base to more than 400 million active devices, or a quarter of all PCs.

The Anniversary Update brought enhancements like a desktop ‘dark mode’, better intelligence to personal assistant Cortana, and a new version of Skype. These features generally make life easier when it comes to using Windows, but at some point you’ll probably need to look elsewhere for an app that performs a particular function not covered by Windows 10. And that’s where third-party apps come in. Thanks to the Windows Store, additional apps are just a couple of clicks away – and many of them are free to download. Even those that do have a price ask for just a few pounds, which is a far cry from traditional boxed software, and you can be sure of their quality, too, since the Store is a hand-picked collection curated by Microsoft itself.

So read on and discover what our top picks are from the Windows Store for 2017 and beyond.

1

Zen: Coloring Book for Adults

Free • JH Digital Solutions

Colouring books aren’t just for kids, as this app proves. Zen: Coloring Book for Adults is designed to help the older folks relax and unwind in a creative and stress-free way. The 40 designs included in the book are more intricate and involved than what you’d find in a children’s colouring collection, and the tools include pencil shading, brush size and a darkness meter. You can also undo strokes, share images, and zoom with ease.

1

2

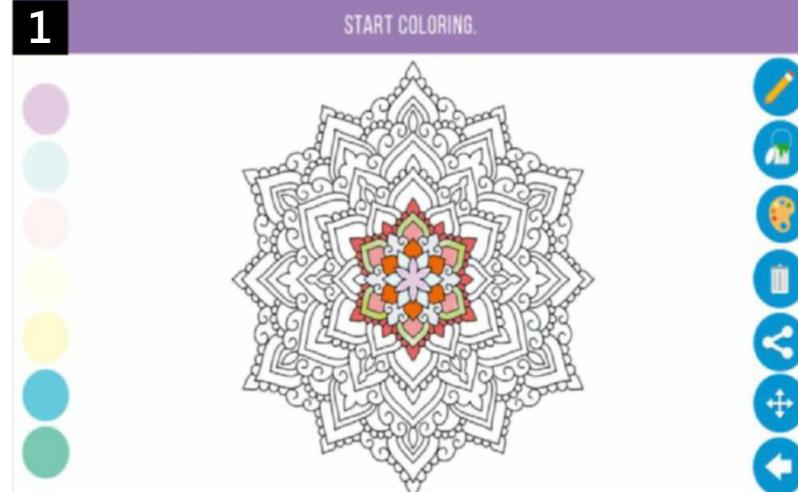
Netflix

Free • Netflix, Inc.

Netflix has become a staple of the TV series binge-watching generation, and for good reason – it’s the internet’s top digital TV and film service by a mile. With the Netflix app you can instantly watch as many TV episodes and movies as you want, and there’s plenty of quality original content to choose from. You can search for titles and watch them immediately on your Windows 10 devices. There’s a free trial for a month included, and then it’s £5.99 per month.

3

START COLORING.



3

Spotify

Free • Spotify AB

Spotify is the world’s most popular streaming music service. It costs £9.99 per month, ad-free, with the option to download music and enjoy it offline. Or you can plump for the ad-supported version, which enables you to enjoy the music without paying. You can also access any local music files on your PC through Spotify’s intuitive interface, which lets you create playlists of your favourite genres, tracks and artists.

4

Amazon

Free • Amazon.com

If you love shopping online with Amazon then forget accessing the website through a browser – use this app instead. It enables you to make purchases, search departments, compare prices, read reviews, create wishlists, and share product and gift ideas with friends using a simple, elegant interface. You can access any of Amazon’s sites around the world using the app, simply by choosing your desired regional store.

5

Plex

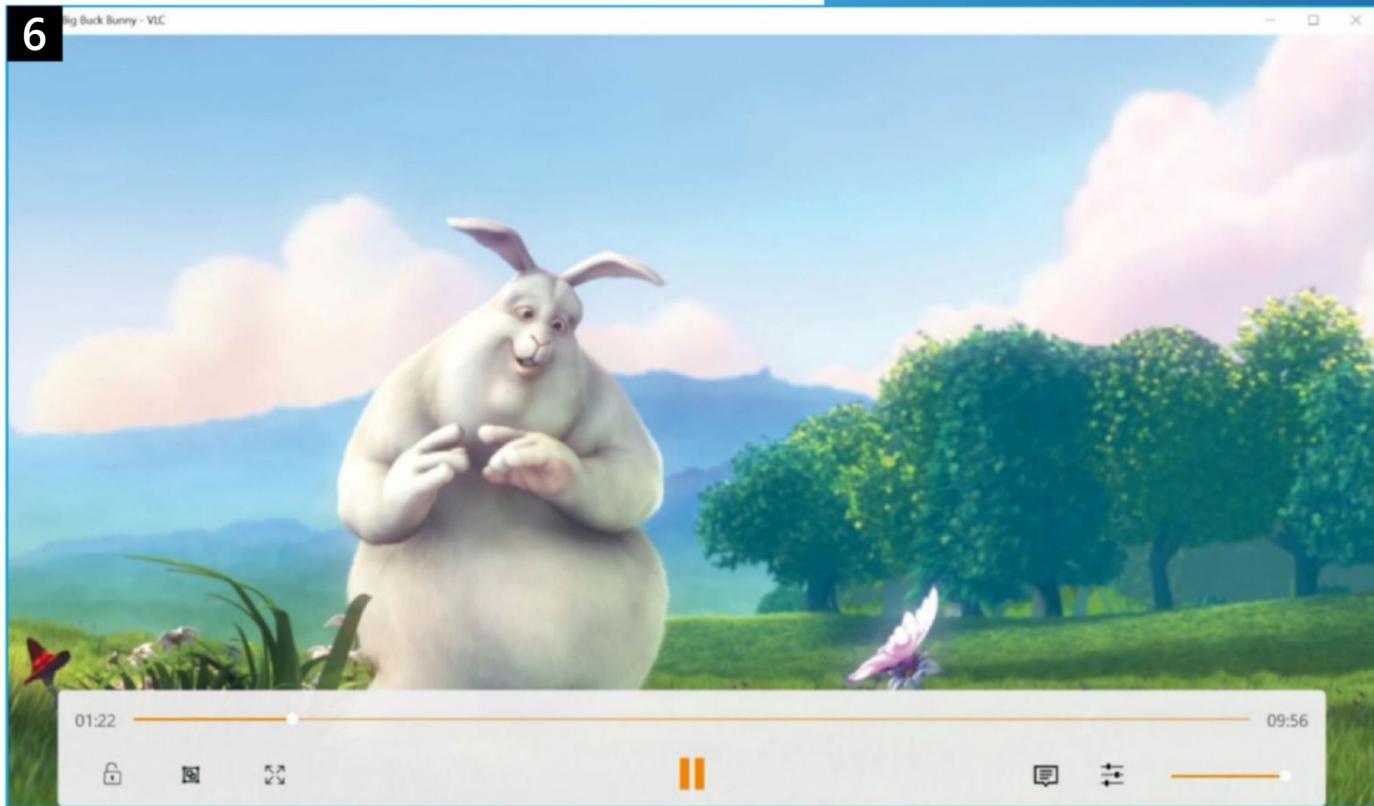
Free • Plex

Plex is a media streaming server that enables you to organise your video, music and photo libraries and access them on your devices using a beautiful interface. Your media will never have looked so good, because Plex

imports rich descriptions, artwork, trailers, and other related information to augment the specific content of your collection. With a premium Plex Pass subscription, you can sync videos, music and photos to smartphones and tablets to enjoy offline, and even share your media with family and friends.

MEDIA

6



6

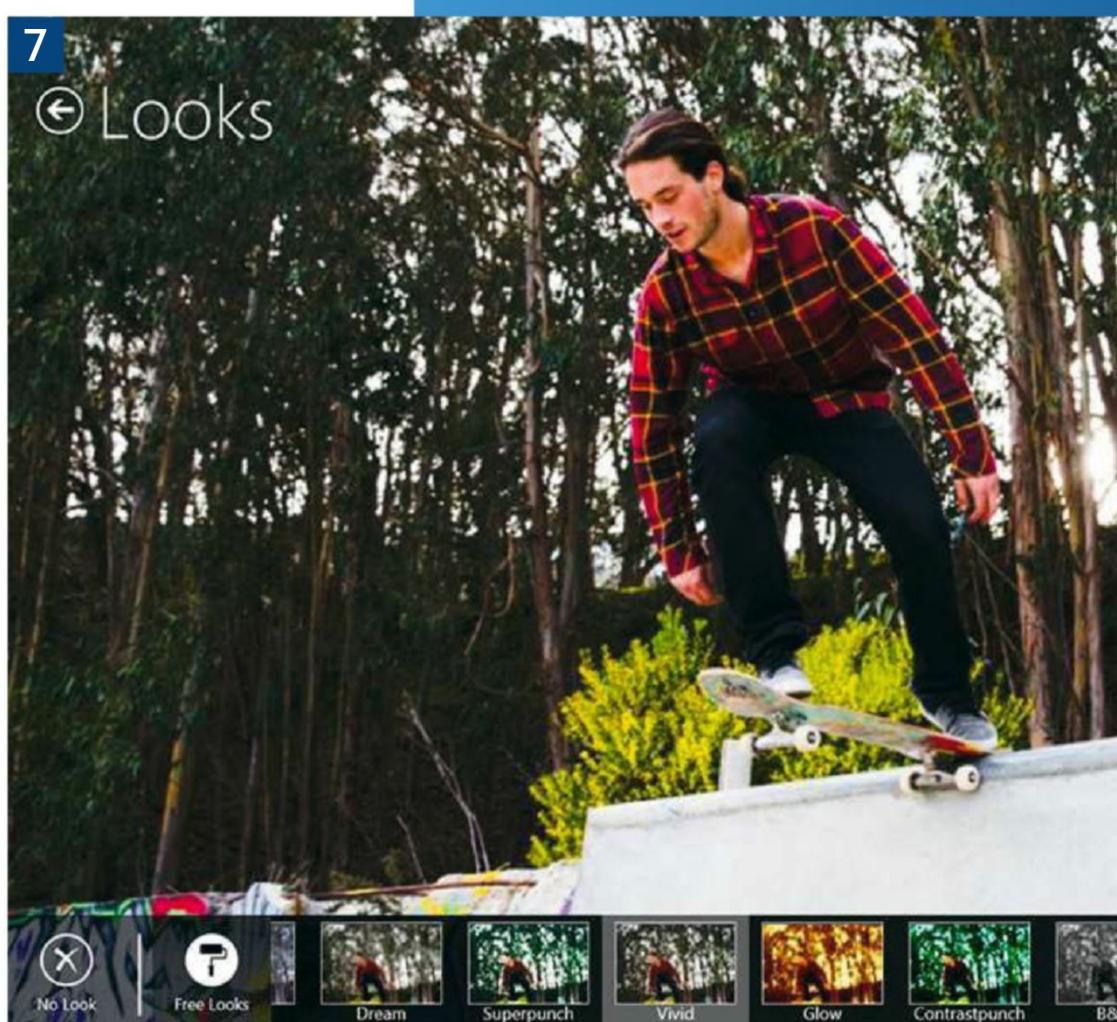
VLC

Free • VideoLAN

VLC has held the crown as most versatile media player for years now, and for good reason. It plays nice with countless video and audio file formats, and also includes a media library for all your files, complete with metadata fetching. It's also had a refresh for Windows 10, so the look and feel matches Microsoft's operating system, while updates to its codec, library and search features keeps it just as relevant as it was when it came on the scene over 15 years ago.

7

Looks

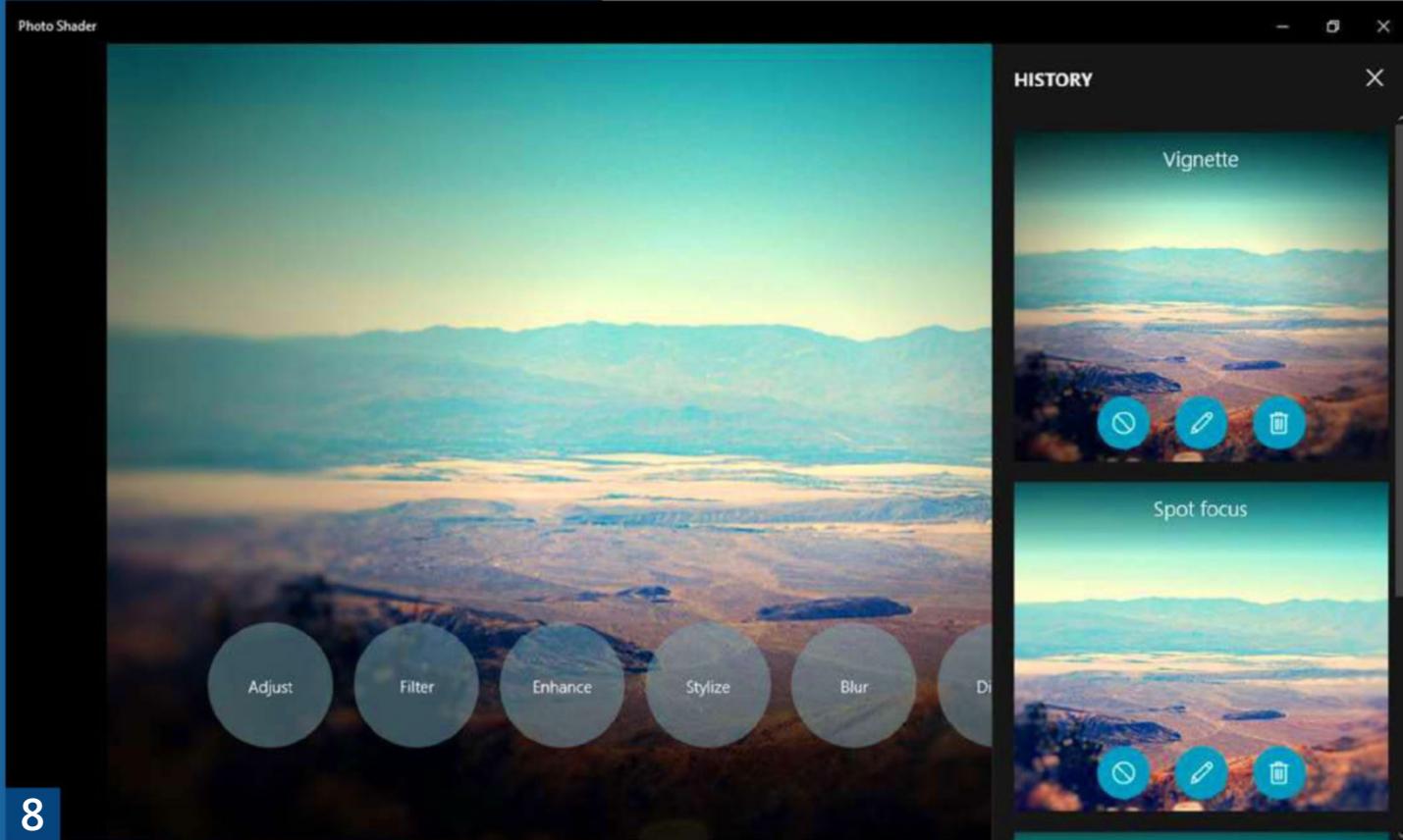


7

Photoshop Express

Free • Adobe

Photoshop has become a household name thanks to the unrivalled power of the professional editing suite, but if your image manipulation needs are more modest, you might want to check out Photoshop Express. With one-click features such as Auto-Fix to adjust brightness, exposure and shadows in snaps, and slider controls for exposure, contrast, clarity and vibrance, it's no wonder Adobe's free app remains one of the most popular photo editing options in the Windows Store. You can even add to its toolkit with in-app purchases.



8



8

Photo Shader

Free • Ryken Studio

Photo Shader is another long-standing resident of the Windows Store, largely thanks to its host of easy-to-use editing tools and effects filters, not to mention an excellent editing history feature that allows you to revisit any changes you've made to your images. Photo Shader has also enjoyed an interface redesign recently, and now presents its tools as a series of buttons that scroll across the screen, making it even easier for you to perform quick edits to your photos and then save the end result.

9

Photo Editor

Free • Aviary, Inc.

This simple and concise image editor from Aviary offers several common features found in photo apps and allows you to apply them quickly and easily, thanks to its intuitive sliders and controls. You can crop your images, adjust their contrast and brightness, apply filters and effects that boost variables like hue and lighting, and more. Photo Editor also includes text and drawing tools, stickers, and one-click cosmetic enhancements for things such as red-eye and blemishes, as well as for whitening teeth.

10

Photoroom

Free • Supporting Computers, Inc.

If you enjoy sharing your photos with the rest of the world or are looking for a quick-fire way to get your snaps out to friends and family as soon as they're edited, consider Photoroom. The app is host to a burgeoning community of likeminded snappers, but that's not all. It also packs a raft of editing tools, from the basic (exposure, contrast, cropping, etc) to professional-quality tools such as HDR conversion, tilt shift, colour splash, filter brush and more. It even offers support for 150 image formats.

10





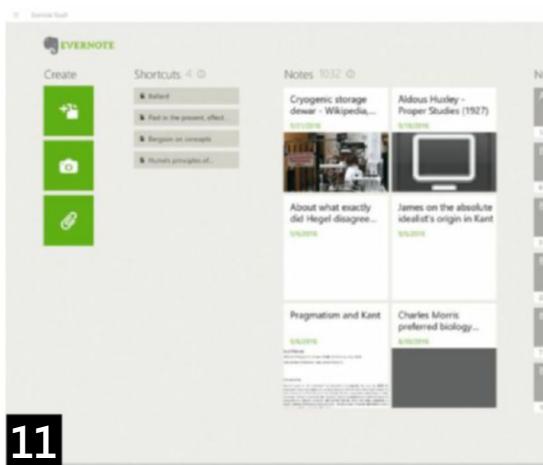
PRODUCTIVITY

11

Evernote

Free • Evernote

Evernote is like a digital filing cabinet for your notes. Each note has a title, an input field for adding tags, a date and location, and an editing window into which you can drag files or type into. When you type, a style and formatting bar appears, with options to create numbered, bulleted and check lists, insert tables, record audio, and share a note. You can also add a reminder if the note needs actioning later. Best of all, your notes sync to the cloud.



11

12

Taskify

Free • Optrio

Task management does not get easier than Taskify. The app opens up with columns of tiles grouped by category, which you can choose to name any way you like (Work, Home, Shopping and so on). You can create a list of tasks under each heading and drag them between categories. You can give tasks due dates and times, and set reminders for each. Colour coding helps keeps things fresh, while you can change the view to show all tasks, overdue ones, or those that are due soon.



13

Plumbago

Free • Microsoft Research

Microsoft's Plumbago – Latin for graphite – is a note-taking app designed specifically for people who love handwriting and drawing, with technology that smooths out the strokes when using a stylus like the Surface Pen on a Surface tablet. It makes use of realistic ink technology and other user-friendly features, such as an optimised tool picker designed to reduce the number of taps to access its options.

14

Quyre

£1.99 • Christopher Snazell

Quyre is a lightweight note-taking app inspired by real-world pocket notebooks and aims to offer users an effortless and elegant way to note down things. Compared to Evernote (see app 11 on the left), its single-screen interface is radically simple and uncluttered, making quickly capturing and creating notes as simple as possible, just minus the organisational bells and whistles of other apps. Quyre offers none of the rich media clipping features that the other apps do, but if your needs are modest, it might just be all you need.

15

Wunderlist

Free • 6 Wunderkinder GmbH

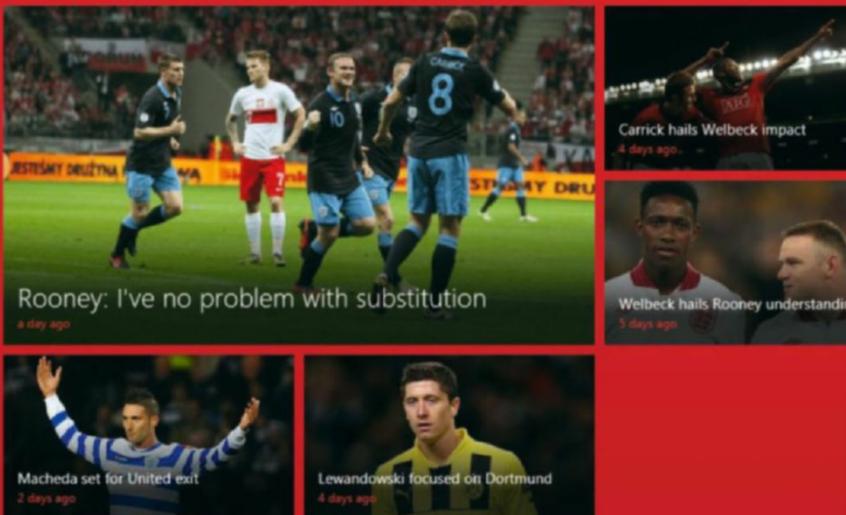
This surprisingly versatile and easy-to-use app has proved so popular with users that Microsoft bought the German company that came up with it in 2015. Like Taskify, Wunderlist helps you create and curate all kinds of to-do lists, sync them across mobile and other devices, and even share them with others – perfect then for delegating jobs to co-workers and domestic chores to other members of your household. Wunderlist looks beautiful too.

NEWS & SPORT



Manchester United

Latest News



21

21

ESPN FC

Free • ESPN

If you're looking for a decent app to follow the beautiful game, you won't go wrong with ESPN's specially curated app. It offers worldwide football coverage 24/7, including live scores, results, fixtures, tables, club profiles and player profiles, all presented in a clean and simple interface. You can pin your favourite team or league on the Start Screen too.

22

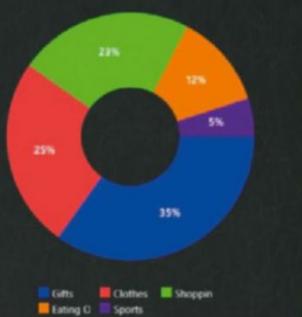
Flipboard

Free • Flipboard

Flipboard is like your own newspaper, daily curated content served straight to your home screen in an easily navigable, readable magazine format. It's not just full of text, either. Articles are rich with video and imagery from some of the most iconic sources in newspaper journalism. Magazines can be built around any topic, and the app supports sharing options such as Twitter and Facebook.

Summary

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Expense	£200.67
Gifts	£70.00
Clothes	£50.00
Shopping	£45.67
Eating Out	£25.00
Sports	£10.00
Balance	+£99.33



16

FamilyBudget

Free • Geo HOG

FamilyBudget takes some of the boredom out of home financing by making your data more aesthetically pleasing, but without sacrificing on useful features. It lets you view expenses and

Transactions ▾

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income history by month, category and individual family members. What's more, you can track your family's overall budget, store your data safely in the cloud and get access to it whenever and wherever you need it. You can also recover data in case of disaster, so you'll always know how much the kids are costing you.

Feature
25 best apps 2017

HOME & FINANCE

17

Viber

Free • Viber Media S.p.a.r.l

Everyone's heard of Skype, but Viber is another app for keeping in touch with friends and family. It features free VoIP calling and messaging, encryption, contacts integration, and a new user interface made especially for use with multiple devices. Its chat window offers a wealth of stickers and emoticons for you to express yourself, and Viber also sports an Explore portal for following topical and curated content.

18

Spending Tracker

Free • MH Riley Ltd

Spending Tracker is another free app that helps you keep abreast of where your money is going and where it's coming from, and aims to make it easier for you to identify areas of expense so you can cost-cut and increase your regular savings. The tabbed interface lets check the health of your finances in weekly, monthly and annual timeframes, and you can also set a budget total to stick to, while a useful overview of your spending progress is just a click away.

19

Notepad Next

Free • Simplify Designs

This alternative to Microsoft's native Notepad app is based on the latest Windows framework, making it more elegant and smooth to work in. It features tabs for editing multiple docs at once, an auto-save capability that lets you resume where you left off, full touch support for Surface devices, and high resolution support. Not only that, it's completely closed off from the internet, so you can rest easy knowing your documents are safe from third parties.

20

MoneyPoint

Free • Two Square Systems

MoneyPoint helps the budget-conscious record, categorise, track and tick off all their daily transactions in a simple accounting format. You can maintain schedules and payees between separate accounts within the app, and if you're wary of the cloud, don't worry - MoneyPoint stores all your data locally and secures it with a password. Additionally, you can schedule reminders to pay upcoming bills and outgoing payments.

23

Pocket

Free • Read It Later, Inc.

Pocket is an extension for Microsoft Edge, which lets you save the contents of any web page so you can read it later on any device – including your PC. It's ideal for everything from news stories to recipes and even gives you the option to have the contents read out loud. The app presents items you've saved in a clutter-free layout and can offer personal story recommendations, tailored to your interests.

24

Readiy

Free • Nishro Tech LLC

If you prefer to have stories delivered using Really Simple Syndication (RSS) news feeds, then Readiy is your go-to app. It makes subscribing and updating your feeds super-easy and presents them in a slick, customisable interface that marks items as read as you scroll. The app is free for you to download and use, although you gain additional features and banish adverts by paying £2.29 for the Pro version via In-App Purchase (IAP).



The Weather Channel

Free • The Weather Channel

The Weather Channel app serves up some of the best radar maps, local forecasts and weather updates available on Windows 10, or anywhere in fact! Using the snazzy app and live tiles you can

stay up to speed on what's going on outside of the window. There are hourly and 10-day forecast options, and current weather conditions give you the rainfall from the last hour, as well as a "feels like" temperature, sunrise time, sunset time, wind speed, humidity, UV index, visibility, dew point and pressure. Brilliant.

Meet the... Support Squad



Support!

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



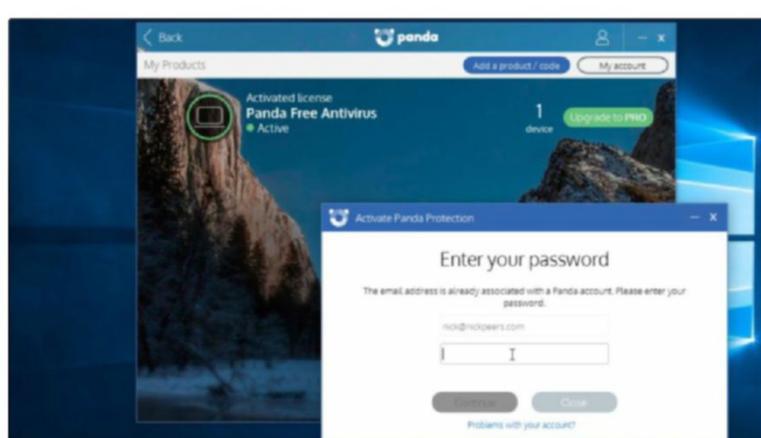
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PC problem?
Get in touch...

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

Security

PANDA ANTIVIRUS KEEPS PROMPTING TO ACTIVATE

Q I've downloaded and installed Panda Free Antivirus (from www.pandasecurity.com), and activated an account via email – or so I thought. Yet the antivirus software keeps prompting me to activate my account whenever it starts up. Can you offer any assistance please?
Ergin Vlietstra



ACTIVATION FIX
Prevent Panda Free Antivirus from constantly bugging you to activate it.



Mayank's solution

This sometimes happens if Panda isn't aware you've clicked the link in the email (perhaps you accessed the email on a different computer). Thankfully it's straightforward to fix. When you next see the 'Don't forget to validate your Panda account' message, click 'Want to use another email address'. Leave your existing email address in there, but type in the password you

created when setting up your Panda account. Click Continue, and the program should finally register your activation.

Windows

WINDOWS KEEPS CHECKING DRIVE ON STARTUP

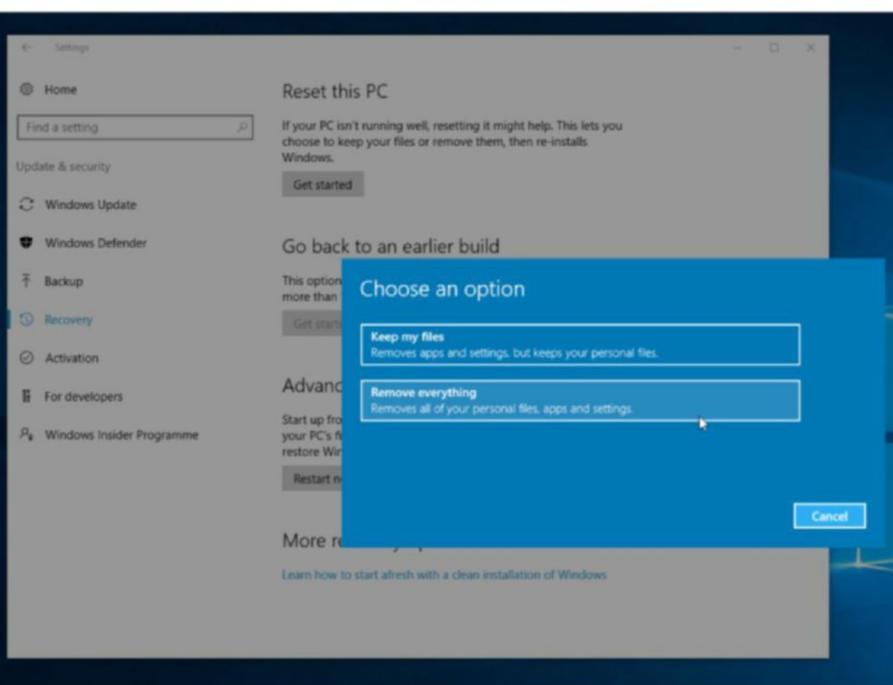
Q I followed your advice in issue 132's feature on spring-cleaning by running the Chkdsk tool on my hard drive, and now it's continually running it at startup. How do I prevent this?
Hannah Eastwell



Nick P's solution

Sometimes Chkdsk can get stuck in a loop even if there isn't a problem with the drive. We instructed Hannah to click Start > Settings > 'Update & security' > Recovery and click 'Restart now' under the Advanced start-up option.

At the recovery menu, choose Troubleshoot > Advanced Options > Command Prompt. Windows will reboot and you'll need to select



START AGAIN
Reset your new
PC to start with a
clean slate.

Quickfire questions

Hi, I'm unable to open the Windows Store. Can you help?
Marsha Thalin

We pointed Marsha to two troubleshooting tools:
http://aka.ms/diag_apps10 and http://aka.ms/diag_csemerg7008 – on running both and rebooting, the Store worked again.

My desktop icons are two to three times larger on Windows 10 than in Windows 7, but the desktop resolution is the same.
Toby Marks

Simply right-click some empty space on the desktop and choose View > 'Small icons' to shrink them to the same size.

your username and enter your password. When the prompt appears, type the following, substituting 'c:' for whatever drive letter you are scanning:

chkdsk c:/f/r /x

On running the command, Hannah reported that Chkdsk made a minor correction, but more critically it also stopped trying to run at every boot.

Hardware

CAN I INSTALL WINDOWS 10 ON A M.2 SSD CARD?

Q I'm planning to build a desktop PC and would like to know the best way of installing Windows 10 on to a plug-in M.2 SSD card. I'm thinking of a single Samsung 1TB drive with an Asus X99A motherboard or something similar. I will be purchasing a Windows 10 disc.

Ken Payne



Rob's solution

If everything is set up correctly, then installing Windows 10 to an M.2 SSD is the same as on any other drive. The trick is to make sure the drive is compatible with your choice of motherboard.

One thing to consider is the physical length of the M.2 drive – the X99A motherboard, for example, supports type 22x42, 22x60, 22x80 and 22x110 drives (NB: the digits after the 'x' refer to the length of the drive in millimetres, so '22110' refers to the maximum length of 110mm). Samsung's SM961 Polaris 1TB drive is 22x80, so fitting it to your new desktop PC shouldn't be a problem.

There's a YouTube video that may help you set things up at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Noct8pQclg> – in particular, focus on the UEFI settings where you'll see that the Compatibility Support Module (CSM) is disabled while Secure Boot is enabled.

As you'll be installing Windows on a freshly built PC, you may find the UEFI defaults are already in place for M.2 SSD support; if not, following this video should help.



Installing Windows 10 to an M.2 SSD is the same as on any other drive

Jargon buster!

► M.2

Known as 'M dot two', this is a new generation form factor for internal components, primarily SSD-based storage devices.

► SMTP

Stands for Simple Mail Transfer Protocol and is the standard for sending email messages across the internet.

NEXT-GEN SSD

The M.2 drive resembles a memory stick.

Quickfire questions

I've mapped drives following tip 21 in issue 131's '100 Power Tips' feature, but don't know how to remove any created in error. Can you advise?

Bryan Little

If right-clicking the drive in File Explorer and choosing Disconnect doesn't appear to work, right-click the Start button and select Command Prompt (Admin), then type 'net use z:/delete', substituting 'z:' for the drive letter that you wish to unmap.

Is there a quicker way to search my hard drive for files?

Ron Best

Try CSearcher (www.hnsoft.pt), a free and portable tool that focuses on file and folder searches to deliver blisteringly fast results.

I'm looking to optimise my virtual Windows 10 machine in VirtualBox. Should I tick the 'Enable PAE/NX' option?

James Pinkerton

You should only enable this if the VT-x option has been enabled in your main PC's BIOS or UEFI. Also, your guest OS must be running a 64-bit operating system and have more than 4GB of RAM assigned to it, otherwise leave 'Enable PAE/NX' unticked.

Windows CAN'T DISABLE MAGNIFICATION

Q I have an Acer Aspire 5750 laptop using a Synaptic ClickPad. After I installed Windows 10, the magnification settings have gone haywire. It keeps resetting the magnification level and even changes it while moving the pointer. I've tried switching all Magnifier settings to 'Off' under Settings, but it has had no effect.

P Nguyen



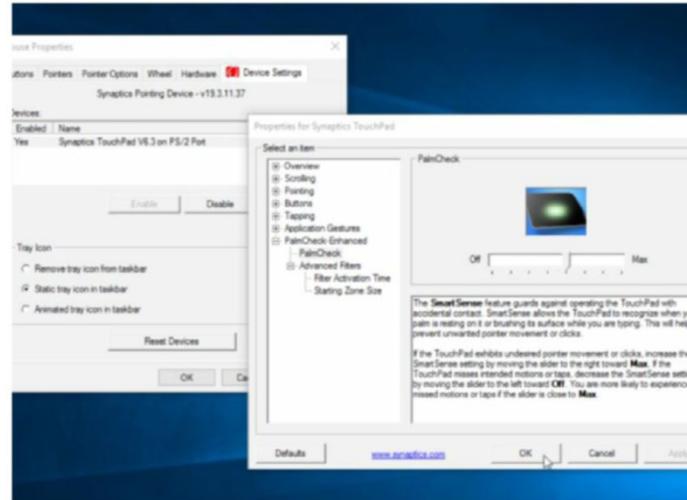
Cat's solution

We first confirmed that the three settings relating to Magnifier under Start > Settings > Ease of Access > Magnifier were all set to 'Off' and remained so after a reboot. We then suggested opening the Ease of Access Control Panel (type 'ease of access' into the Search box to locate it) and clicking 'Make the computer easier to see' to verify 'Turn on Magnifier' was unticked there too.

Neither had any effect, so we dug a little deeper and discovered that the problem might be linked to the Acer's trackpad settings. Go to Start > Settings > Devices > 'Mouse & touchpad' and click 'Additional Mouse Options' to access the old Mouse Properties Control Panel. There should be a Device Settings tab on the right – switch to this and click the 'Settings...' button. Look for a Pinch Zoom setting, then untick Enable Pinch Zoom, click Apply followed by OK and this will hopefully disable the pointer's ability to magnify the screen.

Windows PROBLEM BURNING RECOVERY DISC

Q I've been trying to follow your guide to burning a Lazesoft



recovery disc (issue 131), but having burned three discs with no success (I've formatted the disc, but it warns it can't close the session before spitting out the disc with a "length was incorrect" error message). I need some help please!

Harry Lato



Nick P's solution

You shouldn't need to format the disc prior to burning it, Harry – the problem may be as simple as that. Alternatively, there may be issues with the burning process. One workaround is to create an ISO file in Lazesoft Recovery Suite and then burn that ISO file to a blank, unformatted DVD instead.

To do this, launch Lazesoft and choose the option to burn the disc. Leave DO NOT SPECIFY selected and click Next, then select ISO Image and choose a suitable folder to save the file (lsboot.iso) to. Now, click Start and wait for the ISO file to be created.

At this point, if you have VirtualBox installed, you could test the ISO file by mounting it into a

BACK UP AND RESTORE OFFICE SETTINGS

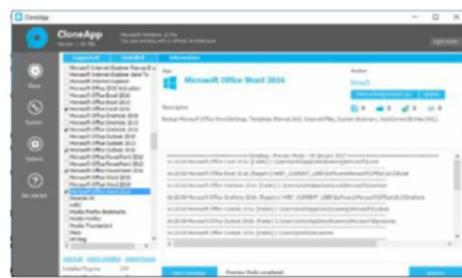
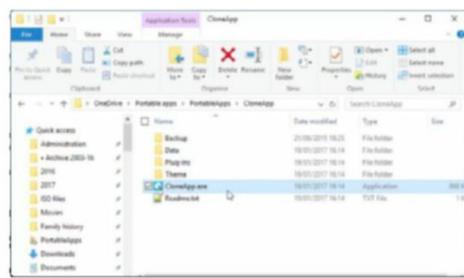
Q I've just upgraded from Office 2003 to Office 365, but can't find any mention of the Office Save My Settings Wizard. Is there an alternative I can use?

Roy Morgan



Rob's solution

You can back up your Office settings – and indeed lots of other program settings too – with the excellent CloneApp. Go to www.mirinsoft.com and download the portable version from the Download Resources section.



1 First steps

Once downloaded, extract the contents of cloneapp.zip to a suitable folder, then double-click CloneApp.exe to get started, giving it administrator rights when it asks for them to make sure it can back up everything that it needs to.

2 Review what to back up

CloneApp supports over 250 applications – scroll down to the Office section and you'll see you can back up individual Office apps: Excel, OneNote, Outlook, PowerPoint and Word. Tick them and click 'What is being backed up'?



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

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

virtual machine and seeing if it can boot from it (it should be able to). Otherwise, locate lsboot.iso on your PC's storage drive, right-click it and choose 'Burn disc image'. Select your disc burner, tick 'Verify disc after burning' and click Burn. This should produce a disc you can then boot from – if problems persist, there may be a deeper problem with your DVD writer.

Windows

PERSONALISE AN OLD PC

Q I've been given a secondhand PC by my son, but I'm unable to set up my own user account. Can you help me please?
Ron Edwards



Alex's solution

We would always advise restoring Windows to its factory settings. If the PC you've been given didn't come with a recovery or installation disc, look for an option when you first boot to access recovery options, which should include an option for returning the PC to its defaults using recovery files stored on a small partition on the hard drive.

Why do this? First of all, you remove all traces of the previous owner and return the PC to its initial state, ready for a new user. Second, it should remove any software installed on the machine that shouldn't be there, namely commercial programs left behind for which you don't have the original media or licence.

Returning the PC to its factory settings also gives you a blank canvas to work with: you can then update the machine yourself, install security software on it, if applicable, and then customise it either for a generic user or for the specific someone who you intend passing on the PC to.

Email

TROUBLE WITH MAIL CONFIGURATION

Q You helped me previously set up an old email address to send mail through another account in order to allow me to keep using it. I'm now trying to use Mail in Windows 10 and cannot make the server alterations required to send mail. Where can I find them please?
Colin Travis



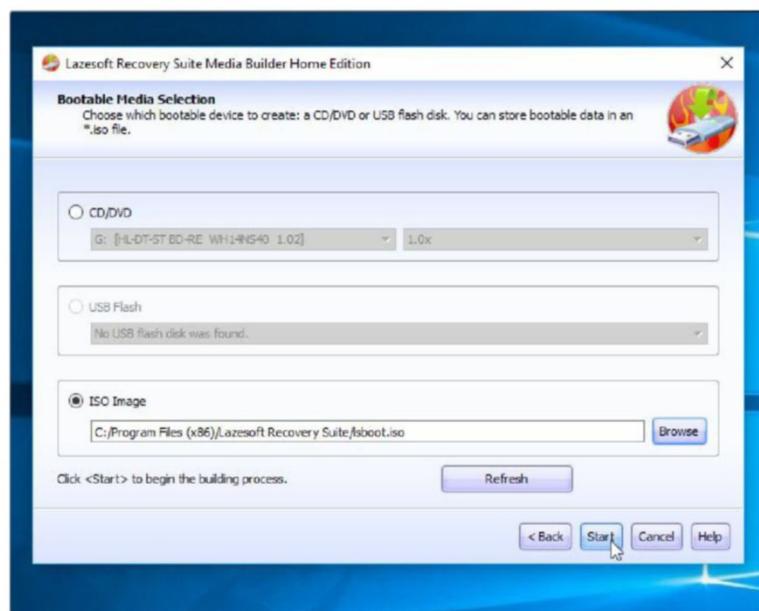
Rob's solution

Sadly, it isn't possible to configure an email account in Mail to send messages through a different mail server, so instead we pointed Colin

towards eM Client, which is available at www.emclient.com.

To do this yourself, go through the eM Client setup wizard to configure your account and you should find that it will fail the sending mail test. At this point, you may be prompted to enter your outgoing account credentials, but if not, click the Menu button and choose Tools > Accounts.

The next step is select your account and then switch to the SMTP tab to input the details of your outgoing server. Here choose 'Use these credentials' before inputting your new email account's username and password. You'll now be able to send your emails. ■



BURN ISO
Don't format your DVD before you burn an ISO to it.

"Returning your PC to its factory settings also gives you a blank canvas to work with, you can then update the machine yourself"



Jargon buster!

►ISO image

A virtual copy of a CD or DVD, stored as a single file. It is often used to back up and distribute discs over the internet.

►PAE/NX

PAE stands for Physical Address Extension, and allows 64-bit processors to access more than 4GB RAM. NX stands for 'No-eXecute' and is used by processors to mark memory pages as non-executable to help block malware.

3 Back up – and restore

A list of all folders and Registry entries being backed up will be shown. Click 'Start CloneApp' to back these up to the CloneApp folder (click Options to choose a different backup location). Click Restore to recover previous settings.

4 More Office settings

You can attempt to save more Office settings (Publisher and Access) by selecting Custom and choosing which Registry keys and folders to add – you can use the existing Office folders and Registry keys as a guide for where you should look.

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Issue 02 // Spring 2017



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15

Pi projects
to try

Q&A SPECIAL

ALL YOUR PI PROBLEMS SOLVED!

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Build the ultimate
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Welcome to... Windows 10

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

Welcome



Just starting your Windows journey? Confused by the changes Microsoft has made to the

Anniversary update? Or maybe you just want to learn something new about Windows 10. Well, 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 Basics section, we'll show you how stay up to date with what's going on in your world with notifications in Windows 10's Action Centre. We'll also show you how to make the most of the changes in the Start menu.

Matt Hanson
Associate Editor
www.facebook.com/windowsmag

Featuring...

78 Stay up to date with Action Centre

81 Take charge of the Windows Start menu

TURN TO PAGE 14 TO FIND OUT HOW TO KEEP YOUR PC SAFE FROM HACKERS



Windows 10 tip of the month

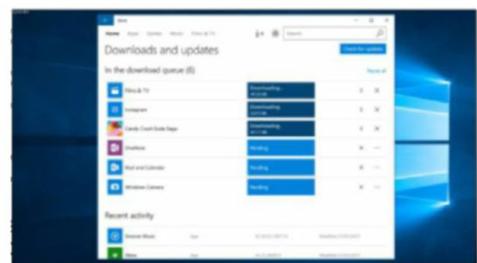
Update apps from the Windows Store

Update your Windows Store apps

Built right into Windows 10, the Windows Store is a great place to discover, try and buy apps that can enhance your PC experience. Best of all, developers – including Microsoft – often improve that experience by delivering free updates to the apps you have already downloaded, often squishing bugs and adding new features along the way. Here's how to you can make sure get hold of the latest updates...



VISIT THE STORE Open the Windows Store app, right click your user ID and select 'Downloads and updates'.



GET UPDATED Now you will see which updates are available. Click the ones you want to download.



Learn how to...

Stay notified in Windows 10

Take advantage of the Action Centre's improved notifications system

TIME TAKEN
30 minutes

The Action Centre had a huge makeover in Windows 10, and the Anniversary Edition sees some welcome tweaks that make it even more configurable, customisable and useful. One particularly clever new feature is the ability to sync notifications between your Windows-powered devices.

Microsoft has made much of the fact that your Android phone can get in on the action too, with the UK-centric version of the Cortana app finally being made available on the Google Play UK store last December. You can download it from <http://bit.ly/2l0eC1d>.

Get notifications from

Select a sender to see more of their own notification settings for them.

- AutoPlay On: Banners, Sounds
- Calendar On: Banners, Sounds
- Connect On: Banners, Sounds
- Dropbox On: Banners, Sounds
- Dropbox Off
- Duolingo Off
- DVDFab Passkey is a V Off
- igfxTray.exe On: Banners, Sounds
- Macrium Reflect Disk On: Banners, Sounds

CONTROL NOTIFICATIONS
Enables you to switch off notifications for apps, programs and services that you find annoying.

Ask me anything

How to stay on top of notifications



1 A new icon

The new Notifications icon has moved to the far right of the Taskbar, and while the basic design (a speech bubble) hasn't changed, the icon now updates to show how many unread notifications you have. When you click to review these, the speech bubble will empty to indicate the notifications have been acknowledged – see Step 3 for details on reviewing these.



2 Notification banners

Pop-up notifications – known as **toasts** – display more useful information in the Anniversary Update. They're capable of displaying 'richer' information, such as message details, the app icon and even pictures. As before, click on a pop-up notification to respond directly to it or the 'X' button to dismiss it. Otherwise ignore it and it'll be added to the list in the **Action Centre**.

APP SETTINGS
The quickest way to configure an individual app's behaviour is to right-click it and choose 'Go to notification settings'.

PRIORITY LEVELS
Notifications appear in three tiers: 'top' is assigned to a single app, while others are configured 'high' or 'normal'.

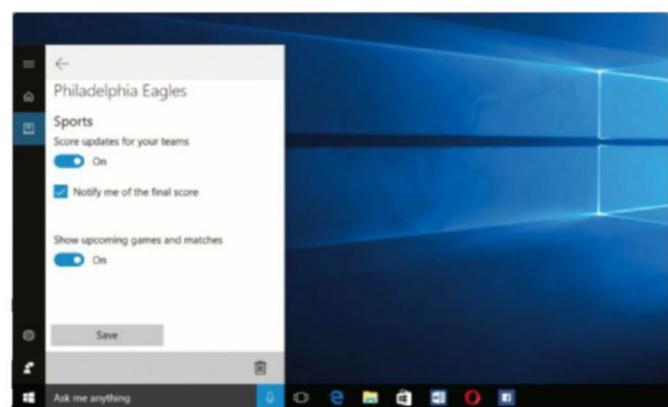
RESPONSE OPTIONS
Click a notification to access it through its app. Click the arrow to view it in detail or 'X' to dismiss it when read.

SEE MORE
You can now view all outstanding notifications for a selected app by clicking the 'See more' link.

QUICK ACTIONS
You can now rearrange all of your Quick Action buttons, not just those on the first row.

Jargon buster!

- ▶ **Action Centre**
Microsoft's name for the vertical panel on the right side of your desktop that holds your notifications. Not to be confused with the identically named control panel in previous versions of Windows.
- ▶ **Senders**
Apps, programs and other services – including tools such as AutoPlay – that can send notifications.
- ▶ **Toasts**
Alternative term for 'notification banners', which appear briefly above the Taskbar notification area when an update is received.

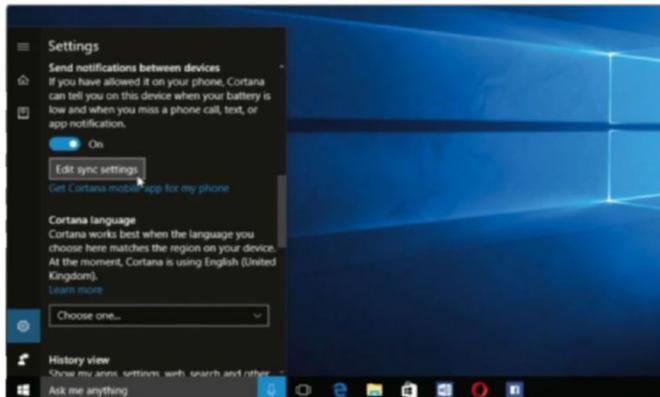


3 Action Centre redesign

The Action Centre's look has also been updated in the Anniversary Edition, along with its functionality. Notifications are now grouped by Sender, with the app icon shown here rather than next to individual updates. You can now view more unread notifications per app and not just the last three received – click the 'See more' link underneath the notifications to view them all.

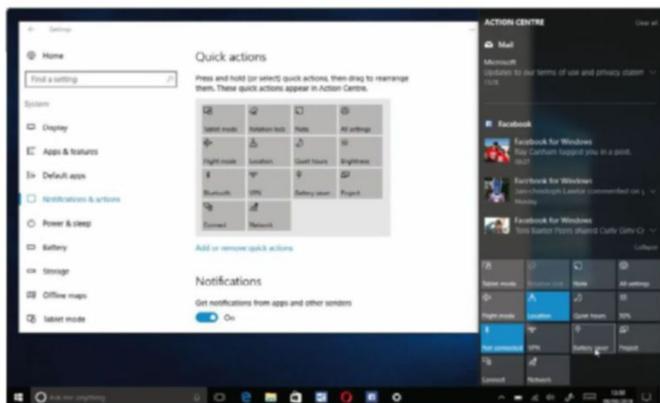
4 Wider notification support

You can now receive notifications from other sources such as Cortana's notebook. For example, browse to Notebook > Sports and tap on a team you're tracking, then tick 'Notify me of the final score'. The same is true of Edge – if you're using certain websites that support notifications such as web.skype.com, then you can get toasts while the site is open in a browser tab.



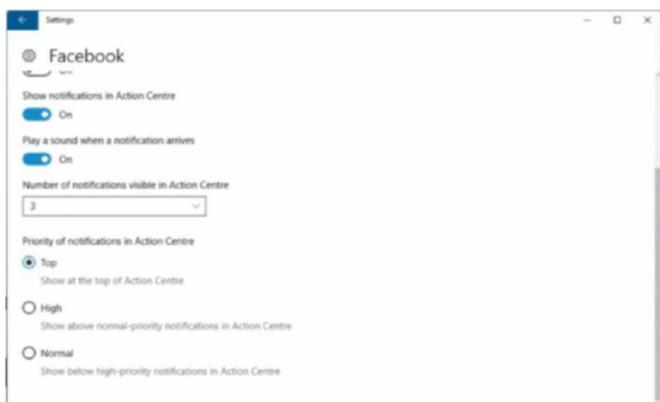
5 Link in with your phone

You can share notifications between PCs and Windows phones and tablets, such as a low-battery warning. Cortana needs to be signed into your Microsoft Account on both devices – then open its settings (tap the Search box on your PC and click Settings). Make sure ‘Send notifications between devices’ is on, then tap ‘Edit sync settings’ to send and/or receive notifications.



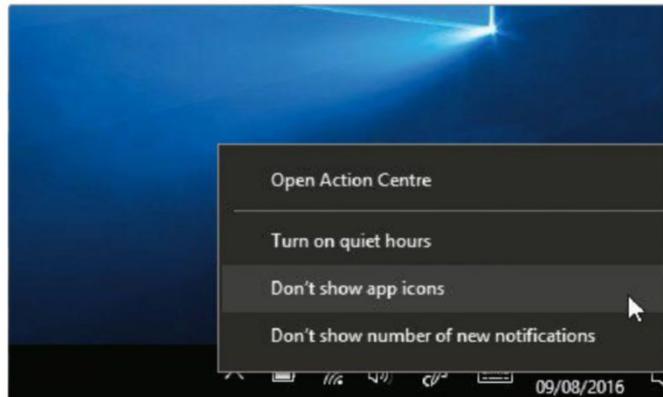
7 Customise Quick Actions

You can now rearrange the order of your Quick Action buttons – click All Settings and go to System > ‘Notifications & actions’. Click and drag buttons to rearrange the order in which they appear on the Action Centre, or free up screen space by removing those you don’t need – click ‘Add or remove quick actions’ to do so using a series of on/off switches.



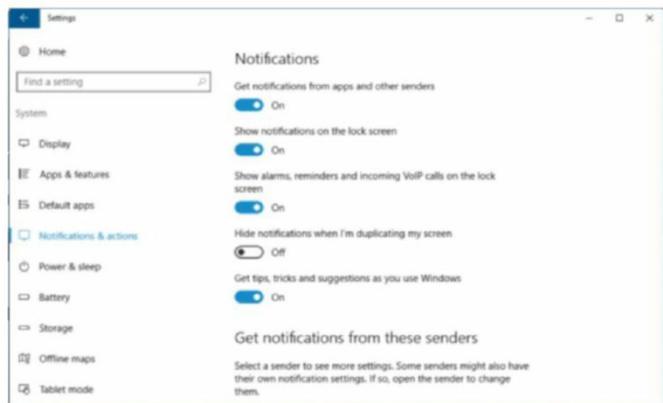
9 Customise how apps notify you

You’ll see two new options when configuring individual apps’ notification settings. The first allows you to set the number of notifications displayed at once in the Action Centre – three is the default, but you can choose between one, three, five, 10 and 20. The priority settings allow you to restrict which notifications appear – and where they appear in the Action Centre.



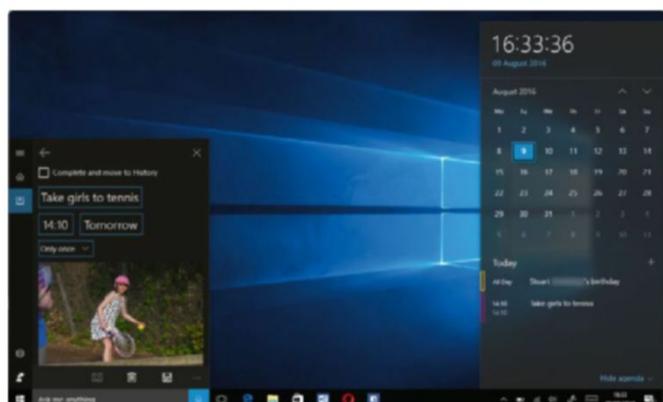
6 Tweak Notification settings

If you right-click the Notifications button you’ll see there are two options to go with ‘Turn on quiet hours’. ‘Don’t show app icons’ prevents an app icon briefly appearing when a notification appears from an app that doesn’t use toasts, while ‘Don’t show number of new notifications’ prevents the Notifications button from distracting you with an unread notification count.



8 Tweak notification settings

The main Notifications options are the same as those in the original version of Windows 10, although they’ve been reworded. Scroll down to see a list of all senders that can be configured to display notifications or not. Use the switches to enable or disable apps from using the Action Centre to notify you of updates, or click an app to reveal more granular settings.



10 And finally...

There’s no doubt that the Action Centre and Notifications system in Windows 10 is much better than it’s ever been. One final improvement can be found when you click the time and date to the left of the Notifications button – you’ll see a list of all upcoming events from your calendar, as well as any reminders you’ve set through Cortana, which appear under the calendar. ■



Take charge of the Start menu

Find out how to harness the new-look Start menu and Taskbar in the Windows 10 Anniversary Edition

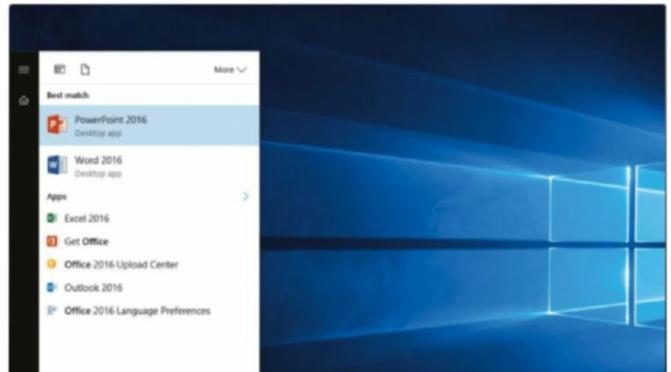
Microsoft has made some tangible changes to the way that the Start menu and Taskbar look in the Anniversary Edition. And while the changes are visible – and immediately noticeable – the moment you click the Start button, they're

not as radical as they first appear. That's because despite the intuitive redesign, which makes certain popular features like the 'All apps' menu more accessible, the Start menu continues to work as it's always done since its return in Windows 10.

In this tutorial, we're going to examine all the major (and minor) Start menu

changes in the Anniversary Edition, revealing how they work and where to find them, plus we'll take a look at how the Windows Taskbar has evolved too – in its case, the biggest change is where you now access its customisation settings. We reveal where it's gone and how to tweak it. So let's find out what's changed...

How to master the Anniversary Edition changes



1 The new Start menu

Click the Start button to view the updated Start menu. The main changes are to the left-hand portion of the menu, as our annotated screenshot reveals. Now all of your installed programs and apps are no longer hidden behind the 'All apps' sub-menu, and can be found underneath the 'Recently added' and 'Most used' lists, which remain in place.



2 Speed up app launches

When you click the Start button, the Cortana search box is immediately highlighted – you can then start typing the name of the program you wish to launch and it'll appear in the list, saving you the hassle of wading through the full 'All apps' list. The search is smart too – type 'office', for example, and it will list associated Office apps such as Word, Excel and PowerPoint.



3 Browse 'All apps' quickly

Alternatively, speed up browsing by clicking the 'Recently added' header to reveal an A-to-Z list, and click a letter to jump to that letter in the apps list. You'll also see a clock icon – select this to jump back to the top of the list. Right-click an app entry to access the same options as before, including the 'Don't show in this list' option if you want to trim the apps list back.

4 Chaseable live tiles

One big change to the way Start menu tiles behave is that they can now be coded as 'chaseable' by the app developer. This means if they're displaying live content, such as a news headline, then clicking the tile will take you directly to the content rather than the app's main screen. This requires app support – at time of writing, MSPoweruser is one such app.



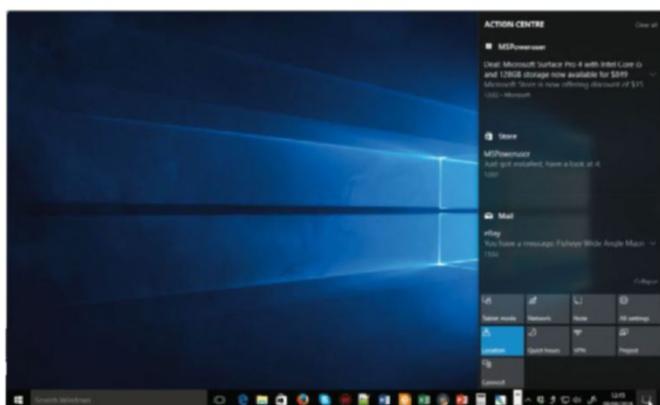
5 Start menu icons

The left-hand column of the Start Menu displays four icons. Click the user photo for sign-out options, and right-click File Explorer for Quick Access shortcuts and a More sub-menu with options for Computer Management and System Properties. Go to Start > Settings > Personalisation > Start to add shortcuts for any user folders that you wish to have quick access to.



6 Tablet Mode changes

The Start menu's appearance has changed in Tablet Mode too, and it now more closely resembles the old Windows 8 Metro user interface. Pinned tiles are shown by default, but you can quickly switch to 'All apps' view with one click, while once again the options on the left have been reduced to single buttons – click the 'hamburger' icon to expand them and reveal their titles.



7 Taskbar tweaks

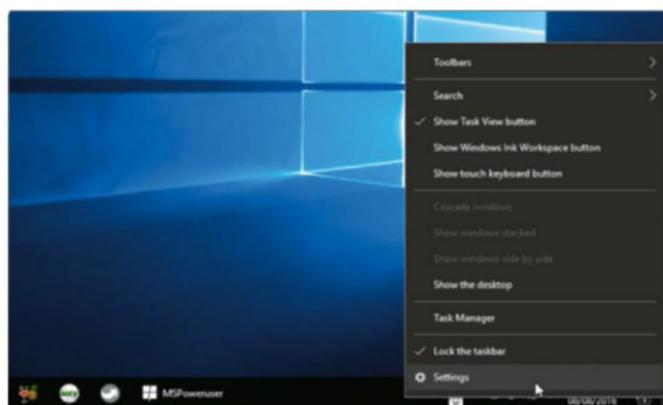
The only real visible change to the Taskbar is the new Notifications button, which now sits on the far right and displays the number of unread notifications it contains (see page 78 for a tutorial). There's also a new Windows Ink option when you right-click the Taskbar. Ticking this reveals a pen-like button – click it to bring up the new Windows Ink Workspace.

HAMBURGER
Click the hamburger-like icon to show or hide the titles of the buttons in the left-hand column.

SIGN OUT QUICKLY
Click your user picture to access the account menu previously found at the top of the Start menu.

OTHER SHORTCUTS
These icons give you access to File Explorer, Settings and the Power button – place user folders here too.

ALL-IN-ONE
The revised Start menu now lists All Apps on the main screen beneath the recently and frequently used lists.

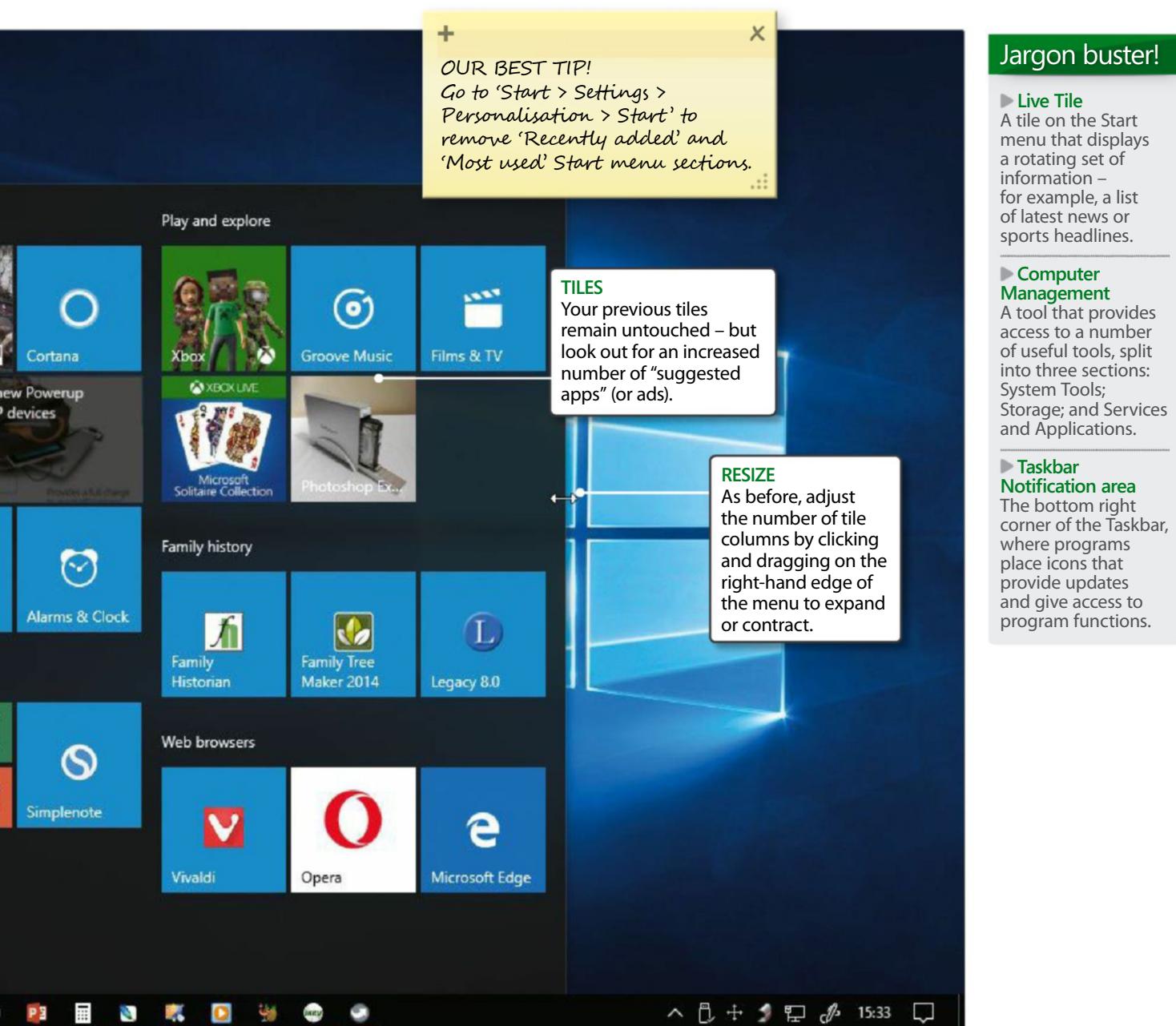


8 Tweak Taskbar settings

The Anniversary Edition moves Taskbar settings from their own dialogue box to a brand-new Taskbar section inside the main Settings app. You'll find this under Personalisation, next to the settings for tweaking the Start menu. The quickest way to access the Taskbar portion of Settings is by right-clicking the Taskbar and selecting Settings, which takes you directly to it.

Welcome to Windows

Take charge of the Start menu



Jargon buster!

► Live Tile

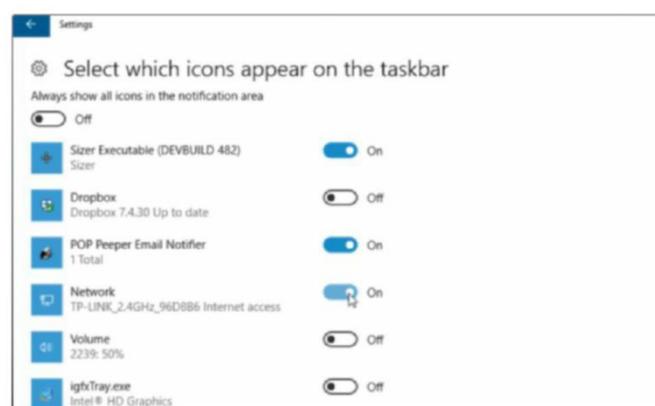
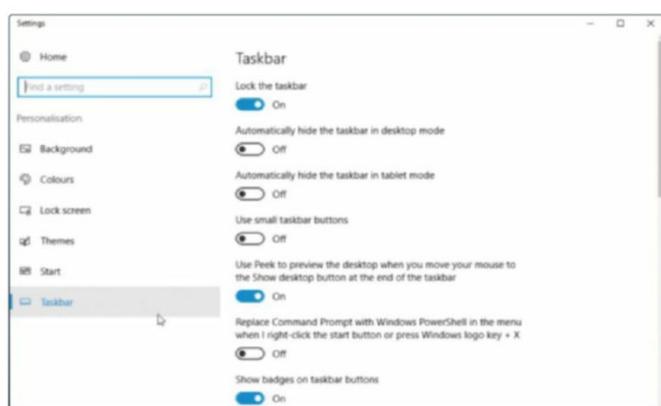
A tile on the Start menu that displays a rotating set of information – for example, a list of latest news or sports headlines.

► Computer Management

A tool that provides access to a number of useful tools, split into three sections: System Tools; Storage; and Services and Applications.

► Taskbar

The bottom right corner of the Taskbar, where programs place icons that provide updates and give access to program functions.



9 New Taskbar settings

Previously the Taskbar settings were split across three tabs – now they've all been merged into one section, with the options mixed up. One new setting allows you to hide the taskbar when in Tablet Mode, while there's a new 'Multiple displays' section that enables you to configure how the taskbar behaves when you've spread your display over two or more monitors.

10 Customise the Notification area

You'll also find a shortcut to choosing how programs' Taskbar notification icons are displayed – this has been moved from its old location under System > 'Notifications & actions'. A simpler way to customise how these icons behave is to drag and drop them to and from the Taskbar (using the hidden area that appears when you click the ^ button to the left of the icons). ■

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Upgrade

► NEW HARDWARE ► ESSENTIAL ACCESSORIES ► LATEST GADGETS

Welcome

 Thanks to the popularity of smartphone cameras of us are taking photos than ever before – but how can you make the most of the images you take? One way is to subscribe to Adobe Creative Cloud. Another is to use a free photo editor. In this issue we're going to look at four of the best to see which ones gives you the best mix of usability and features. We also take a look at the Acer Swift 7 ultrabook, test the limits of Netgear Orbi's Wi-Fi mesh network and give the Misfit Phase fitness smartwatch a run for its money. Enjoy!

Nick Odantzis Deputy Editor
windowsmagazine@futurenet.com

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

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

This issue's highlights



86 Acer Swift 7

Super-slim luxury laptop with attitude, but is it more than the sum of its parts?



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Discover the surprisingly effective alternative to traditional Wi-Fi routers



90 Misfit Phase

There's more to this smartwatch than meets the eye – it's a fitness tracker too!



95 Free photo editors on test

Four amazing alternatives to Adobe's Creative Cloud that don't cost a penny



Acer Swift 7

£999.99 | \$1,099 www.acer.com

Can this ultra-thin Ultrabook teach its arch-rivals a thing or two?

Since the arrival of the 12-inch MacBook, Apple's rivals have responded with enough super thin laptops to practically create a new subcategory. It's one that we like to call ultra-thin, ultra-luxurious Ultrabooks, and the Acer Swift 7 aims to bring that experience to more people.

Acer largely nails the attempt, with a gorgeous 13-inch device in black and gold aluminium that's not much thicker than an iPad with a sharp, colourful screen and extra USB-C port. But, corners cut in battery life and other niceties stand to hold the Swift 7 back from dominating any "best-of" lists.

Price and availability

There is only one version of the Swift 7 that's available right now online through Amazon and other retailers for £999.99 (\$1,099). That premium nets you one of the latest Kaby Lake Intel Core i5 processors paired with 8GB of memory, a

256GB SSD and a 13.3-inch, 1920 x 1080 Full HD IPS display.

In some ways, what you're getting here is worth the cost, what with the Swift being an absolutely gorgeous device. In others, like the omission of keyboard backlighting and less-than-stellar battery life, it's a less attractive proposition.

Design

The Acer Swift 7 embodies the idea of 'sleekness'. Its black, anodised aluminium screen lid could almost disappear on a coffee table.

Measuring just 10mm thick when closed, the Swift 7 manages to be thinner than the MacBook by 3.1mm and the ultra-thin HP Spectre by 3.9mm. It is, however, heavier than the MacBook at 1.13kg.

The impressively slim Swift 7 offers a colour scheme Acer that hopes will appeal to a crowd, both understated and ostentatious at the same time: a black lid paired with a golden, anodised aluminium

keyboard deck and base. Always cool to the touch at the palm rest, the keyboard feels a bit squishier than we'd like, but has enough force feedback to help compensate.

Unfortunately, the keyboard here is not backlit. For over a grand, we've come to expect keyboard backlighting to come as standard. And, considering Acer managed to get away with a smartphone-sized, 2,770mAh battery inside, we think it could've been included.

One check in the 'pro' category here is the oversized trackpad, which makes navigating Windows 10 via gestures more comfortable and easy. Also, since this trackpad uses Microsoft's Precision Touchpad software, palm rejection is on point and controllable right within the operating system's mouse settings.

Regardless, the Swift's chassis is gorgeous and sharp – both literally and figuratively. (We feel as if you could cut food with those edges.) Plus, to make up for the down-



KEY FEATURES

Acer Swift 7 SF713-51

Supplier www.acer.com
Operating system Windows 10 Home
Processor 1.2GHz Intel Core i5-7Y54
Storage 256GB SATA SSD
RAM 8GB LPDDR3
Graphics Intel HD Graphics 615
Connectivity 2x USB-C (3.1) ports, 802.11ac Wi-Fi, Bluetooth
Weight 1.3kg
Screen size 13.3-inch
Display resolution 1920 x 1080 Full HD

While everyday performance with the Swift 7 was practically flawless, the use of a low-power Kaby Lake Core i-series processor helps keep it in league with close rivals in benchmarks – both of which employ last-generation Core m chips – not ahead of them.

This is a good example of Kaby Lake's more incremental upgrades aimed at efficiency. So, it's not rare to see the MacBook with a Core m5 oust the Swift 7 in Geekbench 3.

That said everyday tasks on the Swift 7 are performed without issue and with joy in the face of the IPS display. Even video conferences are a delight, thanks to the enhanced voice quality the included Dolby Audio software provides, and the sharp webcam. However, for the price, what we do take a bit of issue with is the battery life.

Battery life

The Swift 7's smartphone-sized, battery lasted for just four hours and 19 minutes in the typically brutal PCMark 8 battery test, and just another hour and 22 minutes in our local video playback test. Now compare that to the MacBook, which measured five hours and 41 minutes; and seven hours and 10 minutes in a similar test. In this subcategory of ultra-thin luxury Ultrabooks few, if any, have been able to match the MacBook's battery life – and the Acer Swift 7 doesn't buck that trend.

In many ways the Swift 7 is a seriously impressive laptop, it's just a shame Acer has cut some corners to help keep it competitive.

A beautiful, ultra-thin Ultrabook that excels in many areas. But limited battery life lets it down.

 **Windows Help & Advice Verdict**



firing speakers, the included Dolby Audio software works to enhance sound to fantastic effect.

Meet the anti-MacBook

While it's not the only one, Acer can't seem to resist butting heads with its ultimate rival, Apple, head on. Look at even how the Swift 7 is specced out at just one option. The low-frequency, 1.2GHz Intel Core i5 processor is just a smidge above that of the 1.1GHz Intel Core m3 and processors inside the entry-level £1,249 MacBook.

"In many ways the Swift 7 is a seriously impressive laptop, it's just a shame Acer has cut some corners"

To further the point, the Swift 7's starting RAM and storage are identical to the MacBook's and, while the display resolution isn't as sharp, Acer serves up a second USB-C 3.1 port compared to the MacBook's paltry one. If you look at the MacBook and think you don't need that sharp of a screen or you need more ports, who is there waiting for you? We've made our point, but how does that angle shake out for Acer?

When considering the Acer Swift 7 from a value perspective, though, you're left with something of a conundrum. That's in part due to the components on offer for the price, but also thanks to how the laptop performs in a key area – and that's battery life.

Coming back to the MacBook comparison, the Swift 7 goes for a flat fee of £999.99 (\$1,099), which nets you a 13.3-inch, 1080p IPS display; a dual-core 1.2GHz Intel Core i5-7Y54 (Kaby Lake 7th generation) processor; 8GB of RAM and a 256GB SATA solid-state drive in an all-aluminium laptop without keyboard backlighting.

Now, take the entry-level £1,249 (\$1,299) 12-inch MacBook. It offers a 2304 x 1440 pixel resolution Retina display, a dual-core 1.1GHz Intel Core m3 (Skylake 6th generation)

processor, 8GB of RAM and a 256GB PCIe solid state drive. However, where the MacBook offers snazzy keyboard lighting, it houses just one USB-C (3.1) port compared to the Swift 7's two. One final difference is the storage on offer. The Swift 7's SATA-based SSD is a bit slower than the MacBook's PCIe-based flash drive, despite being equal in capacity. This results in somewhat slower read and write speeds from the Swift 7 when compared to the MacBook.

So, with such heavy pros and cons in either direction, which is the better value depends entirely upon your individual needs and what you want out of a laptop. And, this isn't even getting into the performance end of the equation.



Netgear Orbi

£399.99 | \$399.99 www.netgear.com

Forget routers and access points – Wi-Fi mesh is the future

Sometimes, no amount of prime router placement is going to get you decent Wi-Fi coverage throughout your house. Netgear isn't the first to try and solve this problem, but its new Orbi Wi-Fi system tackles it pretty handily.

Comprising a single Router and one (or more) Satellites, the Orbi system broadcasts an unimpeded Wi-Fi signal to every room in the house. It sounds like an empty promise from a 2am infomercial, but we're happy to report that the Netgear Orbi does exactly what it says on the tin.

Price and availability

Since this is a Wi-Fi mesh system rather than a traditional router, try not to suffer too much sticker shock when you see the Netgear Orbi's £399.99 (\$399.99) price tag. Now available in the US and the UK, one Orbi system comprises both an Orbi Router and an Orbi Satellite, hence the added cost.

More Satellites can join the mesh system for an additional £249.99 (\$249.99) apiece – so, your bill can rack up quickly, depending on your home size. Having said that, one Orbi system is said to cover 370 square metres or 4,000 square feet.

Regardless, the Orbi is still mighty expensive compared to your average router. So, how does the Netgear Orbi justify its high price? Pretty well, actually.

Design and setup

While it's referred to as a single product, Netgear Orbi is technically comprised of two parts: the Orbi Router and the Orbi Satellite. Both 889g (1.96lb) devices are nearly identical, adorable pylons of white matte plastic.

Their only differences lie in which ports are included in which unit, and the Router sporting a blue top versus the Satellite's pure white.

On the back, the Router houses a Sync button (more on that in a

moment); three Ethernet LAN ports for connecting other internet devices; one Ethernet WAN port for your gateway or modem connection; a USB 2.0 port for network-attached storage; and a standard DC power port. The Satellite has all of this too, but swaps the Ethernet WAN port for a fourth LAN port instead.

Even without the free Orbi app (available for iOS and Android), setting up what Netgear calls the Orbi's 'Tri-band Mesh' system is surprisingly simple. Netgear has more specific instructions, but setup basically amounts to connecting the Orbi Router to a power socket and to your modem or gateway, then positioning the Satellite in a more central location in your home and connecting it to the mains too.

Then, after pressing the Sync button on each, the two devices will begin to communicate, and that's when the magic happens.



KEY FEATURES

Netgear Orbi

Wireless Connectivity AC3000 (1733Mbps + 866Mbps + 400Mbps); Simultaneous Tri-Band WiFi – IEEE 802.11b/g/n 2.4GHz–256QAM support, IEEE 802.11a/n/ac 5GHz–256QAM support

Memory 4GB Flash and 512MB RAM

Antenna 6x high-performance antennas with high-powered amplifiers

Ports 4x 10/100/1000Mbps Gigabit Ethernet (1x WAN + 3x LAN for Router, 4x LAN for Satellite) 1x USB 2.0

Our attempts to isolate either band from within the Router's settings, to properly benchmark the Orbi, ended up with us being unable to connect at all from a laptop with both bands enabled. This is solvable on a Windows 10 device by tweaking your Wi-Fi radio using Windows' Device Manager, but the Orbi doesn't seem to like you trying this within its own settings, despite allowing for it.

Secondly, should you lose power or accidentally unplug either the Router or a Satellite, getting both products to operate normally again is tougher than it should be.

Whether it's getting the two to sync again or for the connected devices in question to recognise the network, it's a hassle to the point that hard-resetting both devices with their pin-sized Reset buttons might be faster.

Final verdict

All told, we found the Netgear Orbi to be an incredible solution to our Wi-Fi woes at home – so much so that we're dreading having to send this unit back. While it's probably twice as expensive as any router you've ever bought, the Orbi's benefits do well to justify the price.

Whether you rent or own a large home, or a smaller house or flat with thick walls, the Netgear Orbi can coat your whole property in a consistently strong Wi-Fi signal, making it possible to do all kinds of things that weren't possible before. And after seeing what the Orbi can do, we're going to have a hard time going back to a crummy gateway.

Unimpeded, seamless Wi-Fi coverage is easy with the Netgear Orbi – but it comes at a price.

 **Windows Help & Advice Verdict**



Underneath those separated plastic lids are LED rings that light up in different colours and pulse to tell you how their connection is doing: a solid blue ring indicates a strong, stable connection; an amber ring a 'fair' connection (which you can make better by moving the Orbi Satellite closer to Router); and a magenta ring a poor connection (in other words, move it a lot closer).

Finally, you log into the Orbi system's settings via your browser, to 'orbilogin.com' using the details on the bottom of the Router, and

much done from the basement; the Wi-Fi signal didn't work at all.

With the Orbi replacing the existing router and a Satellite in the living room, those problems have been eliminated. We can even stream Netflix in 4K resolution to a Roku 4 in the basement with no buffering at all (that's through three walls of plasterboard and a breeze block crawl space, mind you).

How does it work? The Orbi Router and its satellite broadcast three distinct bands of Wi-Fi signal: one at 2.4GHz; another at 5GHz;

"The difference between the Netgear Orbi's Wi-Fi mesh and our existing router was night and day"

set up your SSID. From there, your home should be covered in Wi-Fi that gives off the same speeds from floors or walls as it does from within 1.52m or 5ft of your router. Easy.

Performance

So, how good is that sphere of glorious Wi-Fi? Pretty remarkable. While the house we tested in measured a mere 335 square metres (or 1,100 square feet), the difference between the Netgear Orbi's Wi-Fi mesh and our existing router was night and day.

Before installing the Orbi system, streaming anything via an Amazon Fire TV in the living room from the office-bound gateway was a stilted experience with plenty of buffering. And, you can forget trying to get

and then another at 5GHz that's locked off from normal access.

It's through this third, hidden 5GHz band that the Orbi Router delivers its Wi-Fi signal to the Satellite(s) and back, and so doesn't take up the same bandwidth being used by your various devices.

For as wondrous as it sounds (and it truly is), this system comes with two small caveats. Firstly, the Orbi system broadcasts both Wi-Fi signals under a single SSID and will switch between them on a per device, per location basis to maintain a consistent experience.

For most, this will come as a wonderful convenience; but, for those that like a bit more control over their Wi-Fi use, it can quickly become a pain.



Misfit Phase

£165 | \$175 <https://misfit.com>

There's more to this smart-looking watch than meets the eye

While Misfit is an established name in activity tracking devices – thanks to its Shine 2 and Ray fitness bands – the Phase is something of a departure. It's the company's first smartwatch, a hybrid device for those of us who prefer traditional timepiece styling.

Built around standard run, swim and cycle-tracking skills, it sacrifices an integrated heart rate sensor and GPS for a clean, uncluttered design. The Phase is also smarter than it looks, with activity tracking joined by an array of smartphone-syncing notifications and phone controls.

Design

Most fitness-focused smartwatches are either bland or overly brash, but the Misfit Phase is rather different. To the outside world, it looks just like a traditional watch, with a brushed metal body paired with a supple leather strap, with just two side-mounted buttons detracting from its traditional watch-like looks.

The Phase doesn't have an LCD or a touchscreen either. Instead, a 41mm watch face provides a clean, classic look that disguises this smartwatch's hidden talents.

For example, press the top button on the Phase's right edge, and its hands will move to indicate your progress towards your daily step goal. In this instance, the watch's face becomes a 0-100% dial, with 6 o'clock indicating 50% of your target activity.

While it's a stunning bit of kit, the grey-bodied, deep blue-faced model we tested did have a design flaw – it's not the easiest to read at night. Although the watch's hands are silver and bright, its dial is dull and dark, making it hard to tell the time in the hours of darkness.

The Phase is also waterproof to 50 metres, although we wouldn't recommend that you take it for a dip without a sports strap. The same can be said when running. We wore the Misfit Phase on a 5K

run and although it was comfy, we found the combination of soft, supple leather and sweat wasn't the best mix. If you want this as a run- or swim-friendly wearable, you might want to invest in an additional silicone strap – it won't look as nice, but it will serve you better in the long run (or swim).

Specs and performance

The Misfit Phase isn't a watch for the hardened fitness enthusiast. It can track your step count, calorie burn, distance covered and sleep, as well as your cycle and swim sessions, but it's more of an activity guide than a fitness coach.

A three-axis accelerometer in the Phase tracks your activity and sleep levels, with the watch automatically deducing what you're up to based upon your movements.

The base level of fitness tracking is a step count, and here the Misfit Phase is a bit stingy. Compared to an Apple Watch Nike+ and Polar



KEY FEATURES

Misfit Phase

Supplier <https://misfit.com>
Battery life Up to 6 months using replaceable CR2430 coin battery

Sensors and components 3-axis accelerometer; vibration alarm; colour-coded notification indicator

Connectivity Bluetooth

Water resistance To 5ATM; swimproof and showerproof

Materials Satin aluminium and stainless steel; leather or silicone watch straps

M200, we found that its daily step tracking came up short. Carry shopping in your watch-adorned hand, or walk around with your hand shoved deep inside a pocket, and your true step count will be even further out. This isn't unusual though. Like any activity tracker that uses motion sensors alone to calculate distances, the Phase isn't going to be as on-point as one that packs GPS-enhanced tracking.

And although it's slightly off, the Phase has one of the more accurate motion sensors we've used. We saw

to indicate different contacts. It takes a while to get used to, and you will need to remember which colour is assigned to which type of notification, and which contact you set up to be shown at 3 o'clock, but after a while this drops into place.

It's still not as accessible as a true smartwatch, though. If you want to know what any of these messages say you'll need to pull your phone from your pocket. What's more as with telling the time, due to the lack of a backlight, spotting those colour marks at night isn't easy.

"Open the app and the watch's Bluetooth radio kicks in, relaying recently recorded data"

around 5% variance compared with more advanced trackers. Its main issue is that when it comes to activity tracking, it doesn't offer anything different from the rest.

This isn't just a fitness tracker though. Unlike most analogue hybrid smartwatches that hit a stumbling block when it comes to wrist-based notifications, the Phase plays nice with your smartphone.

Receive a text, email or message and the watch will vibrate and the hands will spin around. The small pinhole window at the base of the watch's face also displays different colours to alert you to the type of notification you've received.

Using the accompanying app, you can also set the hands to point to different hours on the watch face

You're not going to miss your messages though. Watch vibrations – which can also be employed as an alarm and to indicate when you've hit your daily fitness goal – are a full-on buzz that can be startling.

What really gives the Phase an edge is Misfit's 'Link' features. This isn't a passive device that's only feeding data back to the paired smartphone when syncing. Instead, pressing the Phase's bottom button lets you interact with your phone. If you're a music fan, a single press will play or pause what you're listening to; while a double tap will skip tracks forward, and a triple tap will skip tracks back; holding the button down increases the volume.

The Phase has plenty of other uses, too. Want it to control your

phone's camera? A single press of the button will capture a single shot, while holding it down will enable burst mode. You can also use it as a presentation clicker or assign your own tasks – such as finding your phone – to it. It's a nice touch that helps the Phase stand out in a sea of similar devices.

Compatibility and app

Like any tracker or smartwatch, the Misfit Phase's captured data comes into its own when relayed on the free accompanying app.

Unlike some smart accessories, we had no trouble syncing with the Phase. Open the Misfit app and the watch's Bluetooth connection kicks in, relaying recently recorded data in a matter of seconds. However, despite a number of graphs and graphics showing how you've performed on a daily, weekly and monthly basis, the Phase does little to show you how to improve.

The same can be said for its sleep tracking. While you'll get a graph of the hours you slept, if you had a bad night's sleep you'll feel it, you won't need to check the app.

Battery life

Whatever sort of wearable you're after, battery life is key. Fortunately, the Phase doesn't just look like a traditional watch, it offers great battery life too, with its replaceable CR2430 coin cell battery lasting for up to six months at a time. Another benefit is that you can enjoy a lazy weekend or leave the watch in your gym bag for a few days, knowing it will still work when put it on again.

The Misfit Phase is a great activity tracker with a few impressive smartwatch features thrown in.

 Windows Help & Advice Verdict



GAMING HEADSETS

Now seen as an essential part of the online experience, you're going to need a headset that helps you get ahead of the game

Gaming headsets have evolved massively over the last 15 years, thanks in part to the birth of Xbox Live and the rise of online play. With modern games featuring blockbuster-style sound effects, surround sound and positional audio, not having a decent set could make the difference between virtual life and death.

Of course, you'll want to replace those sub-standard bundled headsets from Microsoft with a dedicated set of cans, so here we present Xbox and PC

compatible options for those who do their gaming across both systems. If you're in the market for a new pair of headphones, make sure you stick one of these on your bungee for total gaming gratification.



1 HyperX Cloud Revolver

£99.99 hyperxgaming.com

Although they're a bit big, these cans are very ergonomic, thanks to a suspension fitting solution. The headband is a little firmer fitting, but the overall feel is light and comfortable. Pivoting cups deliver a deep and precise audio experience, for accurate in-game sound location that's perfect for shooter and open sandbox gameplay. The only drawback is the cable – it's shorter than most and there are no direct volume or mic controls for console players (you only get it on the PC version). A detachable mic comes with noise cancelling for sound isolation.



2 Turtle Beach PX24 headset

£69.99 turtlebeach.com

The PX24 headset may be cheaper-looking and smaller than its rivals, but the audio doesn't suffer and the surround sound is top notch. Cup padding isn't leather, so the interweave finish can be slightly itchy compared to leatherette. The PX24 has a non-detachable mic arm, but it's highly adjustable. Sound-wise, explosions, gunfire and high-end effects all hold up thanks to the Ear Force Superamp, an external unit that sits between the headset and controller. It's ungainly, but the PX24 punches above its weight.



3 Creative Sound Blaster X H7

£139.99 creative.com

The Sound Blaster X H7 offers more than its price tag suggests. Build quality is premium, with a retro look to the leatherette cups and headband. Controls are on the flexible cable that connects to the gamepad, meaning you'll have to look away from on-screen gameplay to adjust them – not ideal. Chunky cups give great noise cancellation, with a rich surround experience, and while volume level is decent, it does fall short when you want things really loud. The mic is optional, detachable and extremely flexible, so top marks there.





4 Sennheiser Game Zero

£199.99 sennheiser.com

Renowned for its hi-fi headphones, Sennheiser delivers a striking set of cans with the Game Zero. From the quality of leather used on the cups and headband to the finish of the mic, everything looks high end; it helps they're comfortable as well. The usual cable controls are ditched in favour of a volume click wheel on the cup, which feels very intuitive. Equally so is the mic, which self mutes when moved out of the way. Sound output is crystal clear thanks to decent noise cancelling. Everything folds flat for easy storage in the supplied carry case. Neat.



5 Logitech G231 Prodigy

£49.99 logitech.com

There's a futuristic look to Logitech's G231. With the majority of the build being plastic, the hinges can sound a bit rickety. The cups are fairly small and can feel a bit snug on the ears, while padding is a sports mesh cloth. The angular cups mean noise cancelling isn't as effective, but the sound quality is of a deeper sort, if less refined than the others on test. The rigid mic is compact and folds away neatly when not in use, while controls are found on both cable and headset. You get a long cord, though both controls are on the small side.



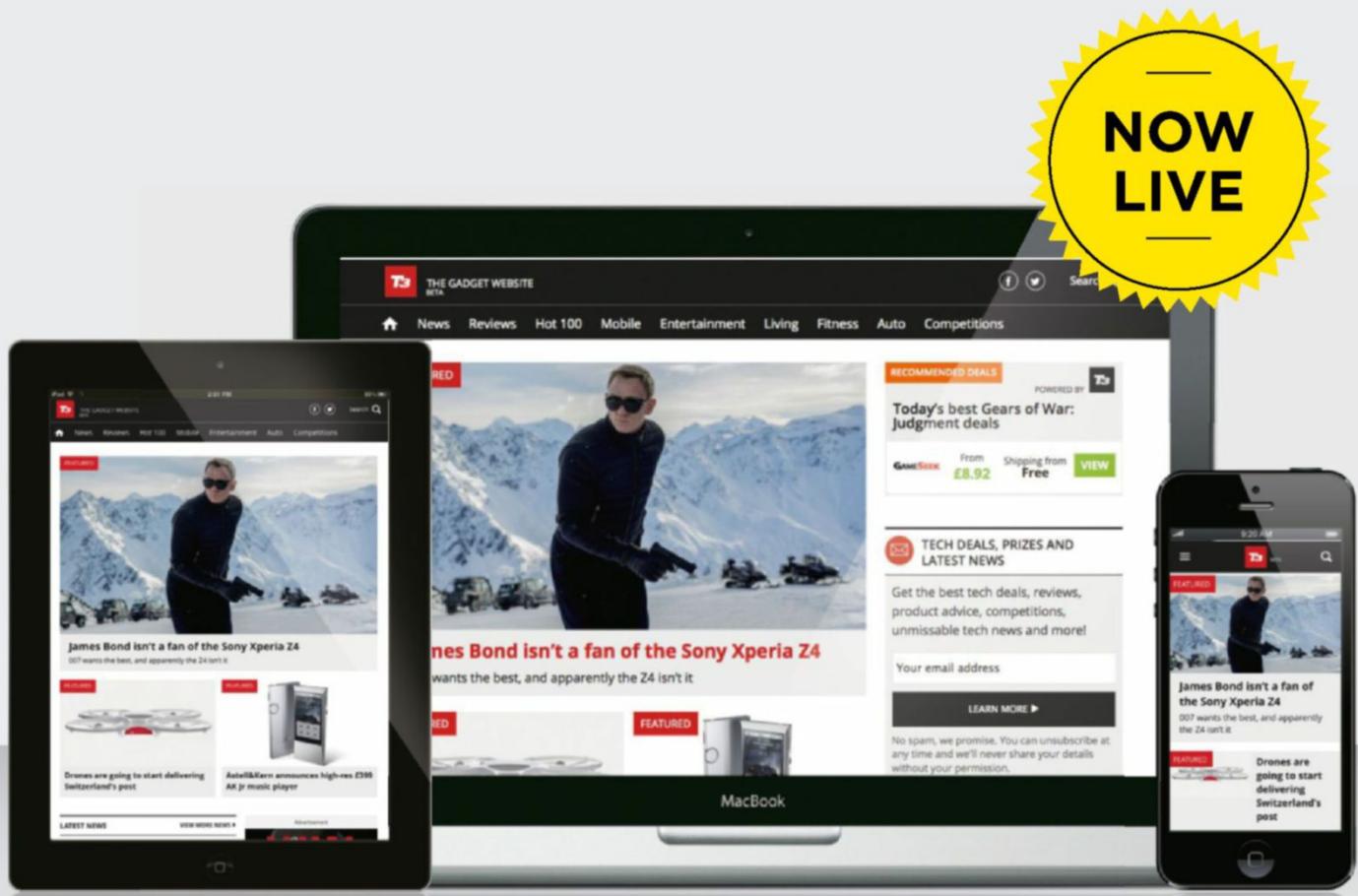
6 SteelSeries Siberia 840

£299.99 steelseries.com

The Siberia 840 sits at the higher end of the market. Cup padding sports a superior leather and stitch finish, with memory foam padding in the headband. Our only peeve is that the cups can feel a little too close-fitting. Being wireless, the headset has an external unit for control over source inputs and audio output, though intuitive on-ear controls give you remote adjustment. You can also use it to charge a spare battery, so you'll never need to take a break from gaming. The only downside is that the retractable mic is a little inflexible, but it still sits well.



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THE BEST FREE PHOTO EDITORS

The four best editors for perfecting your pictures, without spending a penny



We're taking more photos than ever, but even the best photographer is likely to produce a dud or two, and even the best shot straight out of your phone camera could stand to be better.

Photo editing, then, shouldn't be the sole reserve of those who can afford to stump up the cash for a subscription to

Adobe's Creative Cloud. And no, Microsoft Paint won't cut it: you deserve more than mere cropping or a few sliders to tweak.

We've given our list a total overhaul and selected the very best free photo editors, ranging from fully-featured Photoshop clones to simple, easy to use ways to add filters and effects to your favourite snaps.

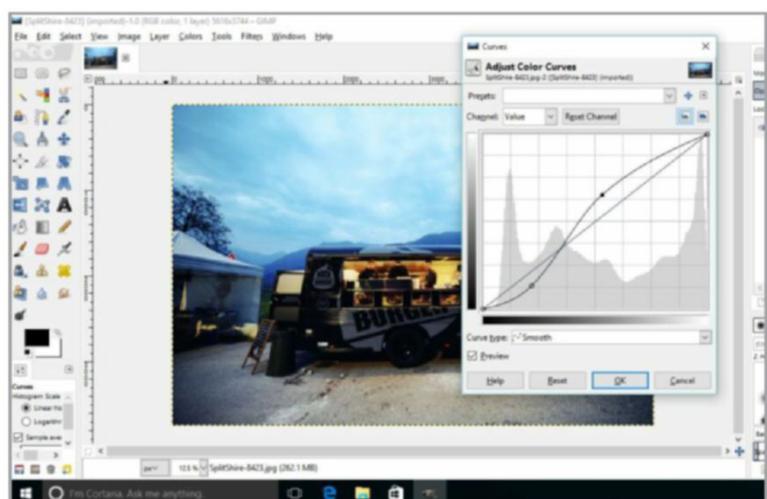
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1 GIMP

www.gimp.org

The elder statesperson of free photo editing, GIMP – or GNU Image Manipulation Program, to give it its proper title – is the most fully featured cross-platform Photoshop competitor going, and gets our vote as the best free photo editor available today.

That said, GIMP is not without its crashes and glitches – that's the too-many-cooks open source development philosophy in action – and it lacks the polish of its commercial rivals. Some of the built-in filters, in particular, seem as if they haven't been touched



With its layers, customisable brushes, advanced filters and dozens of plugins, GIMP remains one of the best free image editors around.

since the software was first released 20 years ago.

But if you're looking for a desktop free photo editor ready for just about any task, GIMP is it. Its interface will be immediately familiar if you've used Photoshop before, particularly if you switch on the highly recommended single window mode. GIMP is also still in active development, so new features and filters are added regularly, and there is a healthy and extensive range of plugins available from third parties.

Without doubt, its power and flexibility make GIMP the best free photo editor for Windows.



RATING



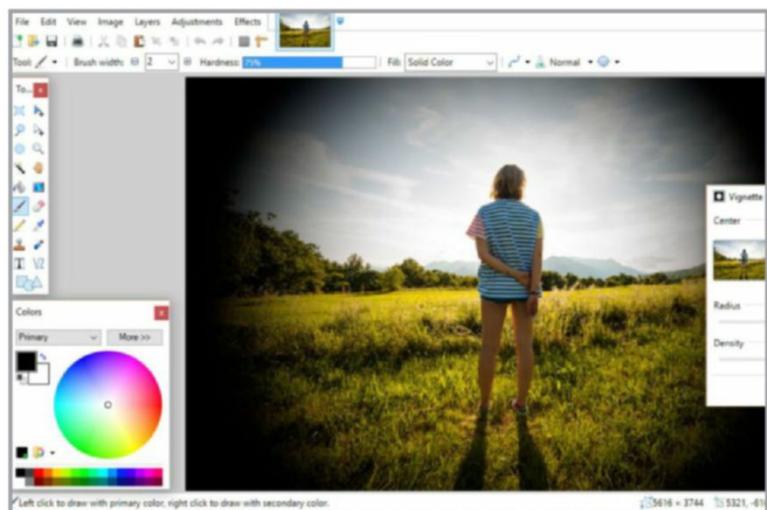
2 Paint.NET

www.getpaint.net

Sometimes it pays not to be overloaded with bells and whistles and that's the case with Paint.NET. In fact, its simplicity is one of its key features; giving you a fast, easy to operate and free photo editor that's perfect for those little

tasks that don't need the sheer power of GIMP.

Don't be fooled by the name, though. This isn't just a clone of Microsoft's ultra-basic Paint – though it was originally intended to replace it. Paint.NET is a proper



Despite its name, Paint.NET is an advanced free photo editor that runs quickly and has a wealth of user-created plugins.

photo editor, just one that lands on the basic side of the curve.

Interface-wise it's reminiscent of its namesake, but as it's grown Paint.NET has added essential editing tools such as layers, an undo history, a raft of filters, numerous community-created plugins, and a 3D rotate/zoom function that's useful for recomposing images.

Yes, Paint.NET is lacking in certain areas, but since it needs only Windows 7 SP1, a minimum of a 1GHz processor and 1GB of RAM to run, it's perfect for older, slower machines that other photo editors have long left behind.



RATING

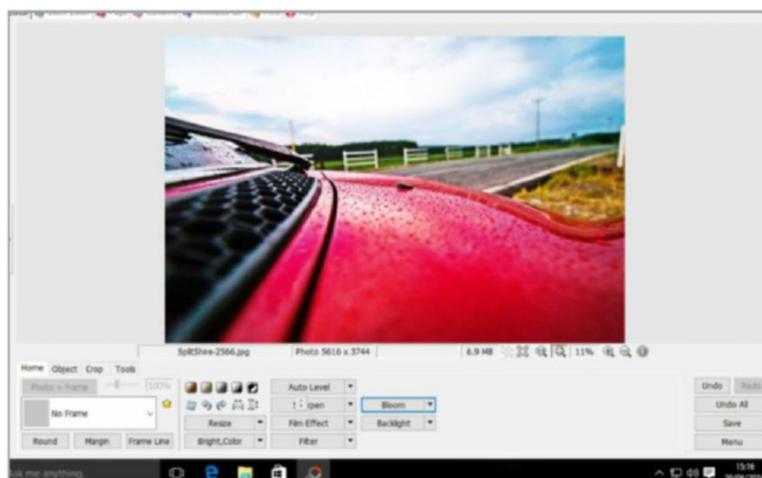


3 Photoscape

www.photoscape.org

PhotoScape is, ostensibly, a rather simple free photo editor. But one glance at its main menu reveals a wealth of features, including RAW conversion, photo splitting and merging, animated GIF creation, and even a rather odd (but useful) function with which you can print lined, graph or sheet music paper.

The meat, of course, is in the photo editing. PhotoScape's interface is among the most esoteric of all the apps that we have looked at here, with tools grouped into pages in odd configurations. It certainly doesn't attempt to ape Photoshop, and includes fewer features.



Photoscape's filters are a great way to add some pizzazz to your pictures. Its RAW conversion tool is very handy if your camera shoots in that format.

This ensures that Photoscape is better suited to beginners rather than photo editing enthusiasts, but that doesn't mean you can't get solid results using it either. PhotoScape's filters are functional and not at all beginner-like, so it's a good choice if you need to level, sharpen or add mild filtering to pictures in a snap.

Having said that you should steer clear of the rest of the tools in Photoscape's armoury. You'll find better elsewhere.

Photoscape works on PCs running Windows NT or later. Windows 10 users should try the dedicated Photoscape X instead.



RATING



4 Google Nik Collection

www.google.com/nikcollection

Google's unending determination to corner just about every market sometimes pays dividends for the pincher of pennies. Take Google's purchase of Nik in 2012 – its Nik Collection photo editor plugin range retailed for US\$500 (£412) at the time, and in early 2016 Google decided to do away with the price

tag and release the powerful collection for free.

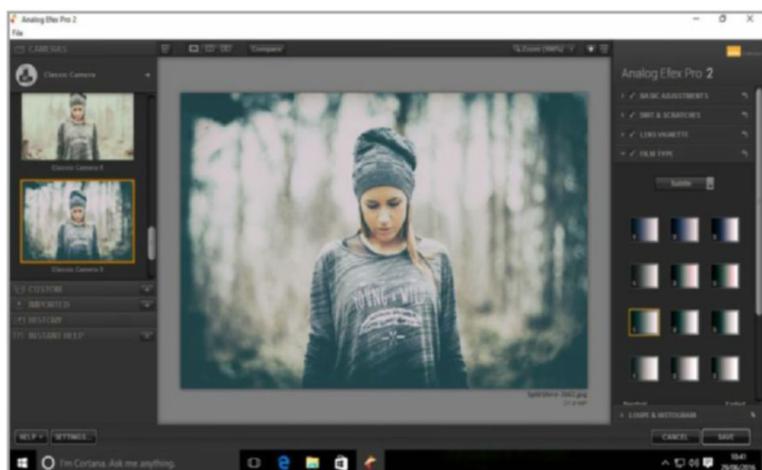
Support and updates may be limited going forward, but it does enables you to bag seven quality photo-editing tools as-is: lens and film emulator Analog Efex; colour corrector Color Efex; monochrome converter Silver Efex; noise

reducer Dfine; selective colour tweaker Viveza; and Sharpener and HDR Efex, both of which speak for themselves.

These are perfect free plugins if you already use Photoshop, and you can add them to compatible host applications when you install them, but they can also be run as standalone photo editors if you hunt down their executable files. They won't appear in your list of Windows apps – you need to look in C:\Program Files\Google\Nik Collection. To edit a photo, simply drag it onto the EXE file of your chosen editor. It's a strange system, but it works!



RATING



Nik Collection comprises a set of Photoshop filters that can be used as standalone tools.

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