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Welcome

It's summertime and the next big update to Windows should be with you by the time you read this. Named the Creators Update, it's packed with enhancements, improvements and brand new features, which will make using your PC easier and more fun.

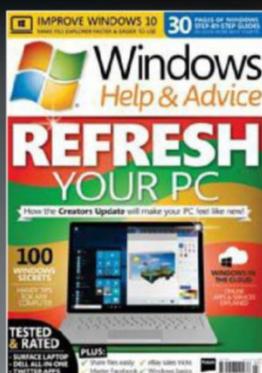
One of the most obvious – and welcome changes – can be found in the Edge web browser. For it not only improves tab handling, but also now supports a wider range of extensions and add-ons, finally putting it into serious

contention with rivals such as Chrome and Firefox. Edge also bests both of its rivals when it comes to battery life, enabling you to surf for longer when you're away from mains power.

And talking of power, be sure to check out Paint 3D, the simple yet powerful new app from Microsoft that lets anyone create amazing 3D images. You can find out about it, and all the other changes in the Creators Update on page 14.

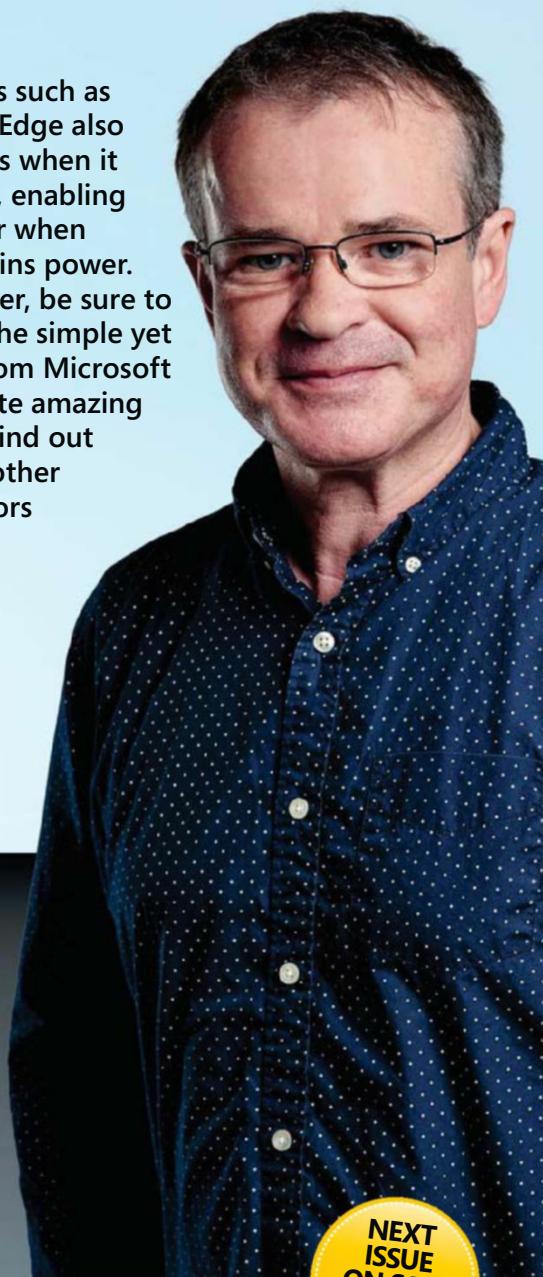
Enjoy the issue!

Rob Mead-Green Editor
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AND SAVE – JUST TURN TO PAGE 22!

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.



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- Fix the 50 most common PC problems → Set up the perfect home network
 - Get started with Paint 3D → Master Microsoft Edge → Make the most of Kodi
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Your guide *Rob Mead-Green* says...

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PLAY IT AGAIN Were things better in the olden days? You can find out with the Internet Archive.

Go back in time

Discover classic apps and games online – for free

The Internet Archive is now home to old programs, apps and games – and you can run them right in your browser

It's fair to say that the Internet Archive (<https://archive.org>) is one of the most important sites on the internet. It collects together the old and the new, gives a home to content which would otherwise have been removed from the web, and even offers a time warp in the form of the Wayback Machine (<https://archive.org/web>), which lets you revisit websites precisely as they were on a given date. Hunt around and you can explore, for example, a 1996 version of microsoft.com, or view archived news headlines from the likes of bbc.co.uk

NEW FOR OLD

The Internet Archive's coolest feature, if you've been around computing for some time, is its recent integration of combined software archiving and emulation – basically, this means the site is looking after old programs, and dealing with the process of getting them running too. Visit <https://archive.org/details/software> to see a broad look at its

Most of the Internet Archive's catalogue can also be downloaded to your computer

collection which, at time of writing, covers some 170,000 individual items, including games and programs for classic computers such as the ZX Spectrum and Commodore Amiga, titles from the smoky arcades of yesteryear and, most interestingly for us, classic software from the days of MS-DOS and Windows 3.1.

It takes some finding – hunt around the Internet Archive's rather awful interface until you find the MS-DOS collection or 'Software Library: Windows 3.x Productivity', for instance – and you'll see hundreds of bits of classic shareware and full software to try. Click one, click the

green Play button, and it'll run right there in your browser. You can make any title run full screen for the full experience. Most of the Internet Archive's catalogue can also be downloaded to your computer, so you're not explicitly restricted to playing online. Grab DOSBox (www.dosbox.com) and you should be good to go.

SURFACE PRO RETURNS Better than ever

You can't keep a good laptop/tablet hybrid down, and Microsoft's acclaimed Surface Pro is certainly one of the best. The Surface Pro 4 was one of our favourite machines of 2016, and this new model – at press time simply called the 'new Surface Pro' – looks set to best it with new features, a faster processor, lighter weight and a battery which lasts 50% longer than the previous edition. Prices start at an affordable £799 for an Intel Core m3 model with 128GB of storage.



COVER UP The Type Cover is an optional extra, but comes colour-coded to match your style.



SURFACE PEN The Surface Pro is ideal for art, with a pen which senses over 4,000 levels of pressure.



KICK BACK The new Surface Pro features the cool – and effective – kickstand line is known for.

The Knowledge...



Bitcoin

What actually is Bitcoin?

It's what's called a cryptocurrency, a digital currency generated and controlled by encryption techniques. This means new bitcoins can't just be generated. Early in its life people were able to 'mine' them, crunching through potential bitcoin addresses until an unclaimed one was found, but new bitcoins are now, sadly, few and far between.

Why does this matter?

Bitcoin's anonymous nature has made the currency very popular – and not only with hackers like those behind the WannaCry virus (see page 10). It appeals to people who need to make transactions outside of traditional financial institutions, and its increasingly being used as a way to pay for goods and services internationally. Additionally, the lack of new bitcoins means a vast amount of deflation; 2017 has seen its value increase rapidly.

Just how valuable is it?

Ridiculously so. In 2010, early in Bitcoin's life, a Florida man paid 10,000 bitcoins (around \$41 at the time) for a pair of pizzas. Today, with Bitcoin prices topping \$2,000 each, those pizzas would be worth over \$20 million. With the benefit of hindsight, that is some pricey pepperoni.

Let me buy in!

Hold your horses. Bitcoin's price isn't only going up; it's hit several troughs over its lifetime, and there are absolutely no guarantees that its price will continue to rise. The world's financial regulators are also eyeing it suspiciously, particularly given that its anonymity props up a marketplace for illicit and illegal goods.

Any other options?

Bitcoin may be one of the earliest cryptocurrencies, and the main one to break through, but there are hundreds more that might be worth a gamble. Although it's a complex and sometimes toxic environment to play in. Check out cryptomate.co.uk if you're interested in checking out prices and potentially purchasing some for yourself.

Everyone's talking about Ransomware attacks

The next wave of malware steps up the threat beyond mild irritation to outright extortion – as the NHS discovered

It was hard to miss the recent attack on Britain's National Health Service (NHS) computers. Hit with a package of ransomware known as WannaCrypt, the machines were effectively disabled, with the virus scrambling non-essential Windows files and locking them away with a secure key known only to the hacker that developed the software. For a fee of between £250-£500 the perpetrator offered to release the files on each affected machine – although, when someone's gone to the trouble of doing something so devastating to your files, trusting that same miscreant to fix everything once you've handed over the ransom money might not be the wisest move.



STAYING SAFE

Essentially, if a ransomware virus strikes, you're stuck – and the NHS attack, which made use of security vulnerabilities on machines which had not been properly updated, cost the taxpayer millions in IT fees, and has since gone on to propagate through the networks of Chinese universities, the German rail company, Scottish Power, and far beyond.

So what can you do to make yourself safe from such attacks? The standard virus precautions apply. Keep good backups on a drive which isn't always connected to your PC, in case something creeps in. In the case of ransomware attacks, you're very unlikely to get your files back unless you have another copy somewhere else. Apply Windows updates as soon as you can – don't defer them until later, as they're often critical to the security of your PC. Run a quality anti-virus package; relying on Windows Defender to keep you safe isn't the strongest option.

Finally, and most crucially, don't open files or use USB sticks you don't explicitly trust. Be on your guard. If you spot an email attachment

that looks even slightly suspicious, ask the sender if they meant to send it and what exactly it is.

If you find a USB drive in the street, it may be too good to be true: hackers targeting institutions will often leave malware-loaded media in local coffee shops and bars, which unleash their malicious payload as soon as they're inserted into a host computer.

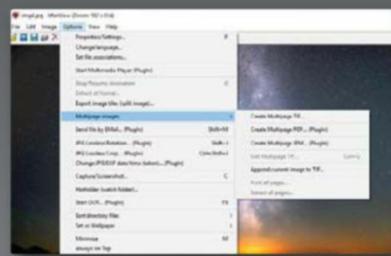
Download this...

IrfanView

www.irfanview.com

This isn't new software by any means, but there's a reason it's reached such venerable standing: IrfanView is one of the best bits of free software of its kind. If you want to view an image quickly and easily, you want IrfanView. It supports a long list of formats, including obscure image types from old cameras, vector graphics, and more. Viewing isn't its only trick: converting images from one form to another is supported, and you'll be able to perform rudimentary tweaks too.

It's quick to launch – in our experience far faster than Windows 10's less-compatible Photos app – and you can even extend its capabilities. Head to www.irfanview.com/plugins.htm to add support for audio and video files and even PDFs. Set it as the default app for images: in Windows 10, open Control Panel and head to Default Programs to do it.



SEE IT IrfanView supports a huge range of image formats, and is faster than Photos.

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Friday

21

July

THE 60-SECOND QUIZ

Pens at the ready, your time starts now!

1 Which tennis player was once linked to a virus outbreak?

- A Roger Federer
- B Anna Kournikova
- C Pete Sampras

2 Before the internet, how did viruses used to spread?

- A Infected floppy disks
- B Airborne spores
- C Dirty mice

3 In what year was the first ever computer virus created?

- A 1991
- B 1981
- C 1971

4 How many viruses are released into the wild each month?

- A Over 500
- B Over 5,000
- C Over 50,000

5 Which of these is a kind of virus?

- A Worm
- B Beetle
- C Fly

6 Which of these describes a virus?

- A Self-replicating
- B Self-involved
- C Self-less

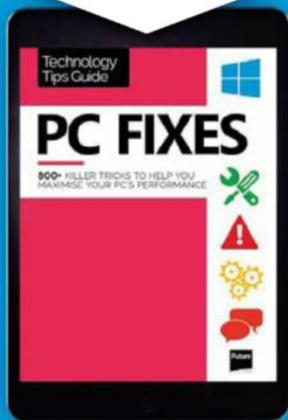
Answers: 1B 2A 3C 4B 5A 6A

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO FIXING YOUR PC

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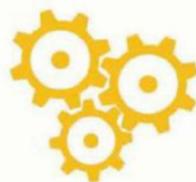


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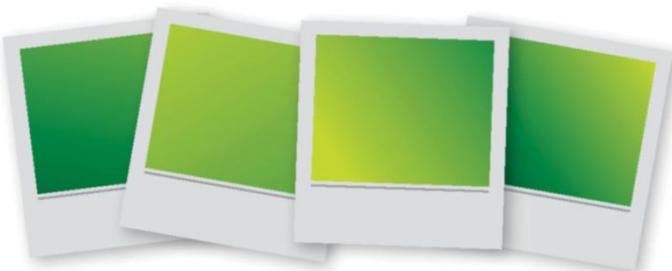


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Facts & figures

Rob Mead-Green reveals a host of fascinating digital facts



500 MILLION

Number of monthly users Google Photos gets every month. It's now growing faster than other Google services such as Gmail, YouTube and Chrome.



750,000

Number of passengers stranded following a major IT failure at British Airways over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend. Apparently caused by an IT contractor, the meltdown wiped £500 million off the market value of IAG, British Airways' parent company at one point. The company also faces an estimated £150 million compensation bill.



122 MILLION

Fine, in dollars, handed out to Facebook by the EU Union for issuing 'misleading information' over its takeover of WhatsApp.



Amount of data, in terabytes (TB), that The Machine prototype from HP can store in RAM. That's the same as 6,400 Blu-rays or 160 million books. The aim is to scale up the technology so it can store up to 4,096 yottabtes of data in RAM. A yottabyte is equivalent to 1 trillion terabytes.

Number of processor cores in Intel's new Core i9 Extreme processor, which will cost \$1,999. The top-of-the-line Core X CPU is capable of running 36 threads and is based on an updated version of the Skylake architecture, dubbed Skylake X.



>> Incoming

The hottest new Windows hardware on the horizon



ASUS ZenBook Pro UX550

\$1,299 (around £1,010), www.asus.com

In need of enlightenment? Then the redesigned ZenBook Pro should bring you the inner peace that you seek. Unveiled at Computex 2017 at the end of May, it features a Zen-inspired circular pattern on its aluminium unibody, which weighs a cherry blossom-like 1.8kg and measures just 18.9mm thin. But it's the tech inside that's leads you to the true path of happiness: an almost bezel-less 15.6-inch 4K Ultra HD NanoEdge display is teamed with Nvidia GeForce GTX1050 Ti graphics. Plus a 7th generation Intel Core i7-7700HQ processor, 16GB of DDR4 RAM and 1TB of PCIe x4 solid-stage storage. Oh, and battery life? A positively contemplative 14 hours on a single charge. Ommm...

REFRESH YOUR PC

The Windows 10 Creators Update is finally here.
This is what you need to know. *By Matt Hanson*

When Windows 10 launched in July 2015, it was met with acclaim – and also a fair amount of relief – because it was a marked improvement over its predecessor, Windows 8. However, it still wasn't a perfect operating system, and Microsoft appears to have acknowledged this by releasing two major updates for it: The first, the Anniversary Update, hit our PCs last year, and now the Creators Update is currently rolling out to PCs around the world as you read this.

Windows updates are rarely worth getting excited about, but the number of tweaks, fixes, and new features that Microsoft has promised with this release makes it worth downloading. As the name suggests, Microsoft has focused on bolstering the creative aspects of Windows 10. However, if you have less creative juice flowing through you than a heap of rocks does, the good news is that Microsoft has a rather

liberal interpretation of what it means to be a 'Creator'.

So, it's not just people who like to put stylus to Surface and create digital art – it also applies to people who play games and like to stream and share their gameplay with friends and strangers across the Internet. Of course, there is also the usual array of less glamorous (and arguably more essential) security and usability tweaks to make Windows 10 an all-around better piece of software to use. In this article, we're looking at how you can download and install the Creators Update, why you would want to, what cool new features you'll be getting, and how to use them.

Windows 10 still isn't perfect, but with major free updates such as the Creators Update – and the Fall Creators Update coming later this autumn – it shows that Microsoft is committed to evolving and improving its operating system at every turn, and that is something worth celebrating.



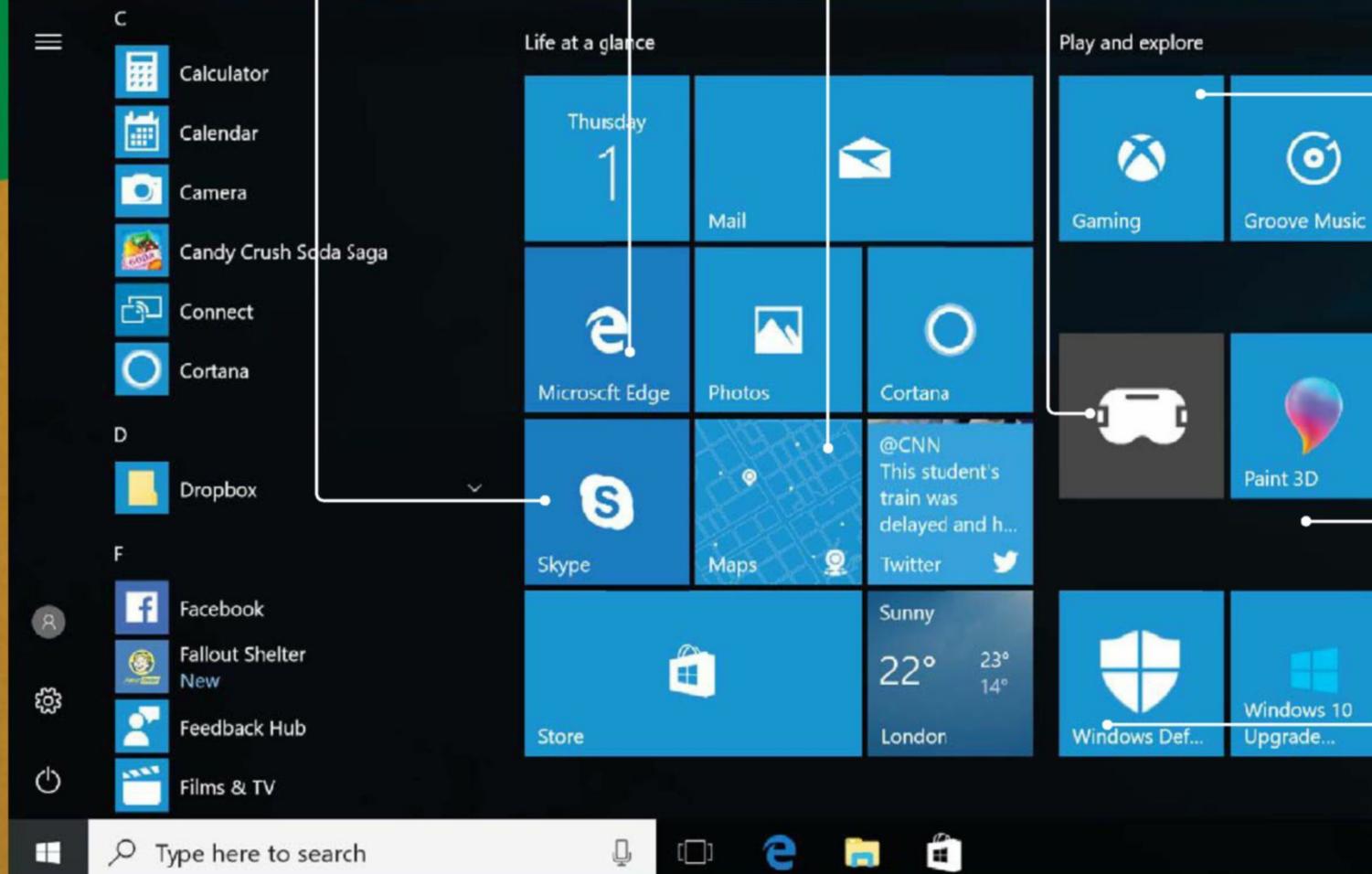
What's new... The Creators Update

SKYPE
This all-new version makes it easier than ever to make free video calls to friends and family. Now has SMS messaging too.

MICROSOFT EDGE
Given an overhaul in the Creators Update, with tab previews that let you grab a sneak peek at any web page you already have open before you switch to its tab.

MAPS
The updated Maps app now offers directions for trips with multiple stops and a new slicker, smarter look.

MIXED REALITY PORTAL
This option makes it easy to test augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) graphics without a connected device, such as a HoloLens. Aimed at software developers.



Be prepared

Before you install the Creators Update, there are a few wise precautions for you to take first...

1. BACKUP: It's unlikely that anything disastrous will happen, but now is a good time to ensure that you have backup copies of your most important files, preferably spread across several different devices and locations – both online and offline.

2. CREATE A RESTORE POINT: Before you install the Creators Update, create a system restore point so you can roll back your PC if something goes wrong. To do that type 'System Restore' in the Cortana search box, click the first link that appears and click Create to start the System Restore process.

3. FREE UP SPACE: Make sure you have enough room for the update. Type 'Disk Cleanup' into the Cortana search box to launch the Disk Cleanup tool. This will remove any unwanted or unnoticed files. Be careful to ensure it doesn't remove your latest restore point.

GAMING

Now has a dedicated option in Settings, enabling you to activate the new Game bar and use shortcuts to do things like share live video of your game using Beam.

VIEW 3D

Let's you take a look at 3MF, FBX, OBJ, PLY and STL 3D objects. Includes a shortcut to Microsoft's new Remix 3D website.

PAINT 3D

A brand new app that makes it easy for anyone to create amazing-looking 3D objects with simple, yet powerful tools.

WINDOWS DEFENDER SECURITY CENTRE

This new app acts as a one-stop shop for PC security settings, with at-a-glance options for making it safer.

11:58 AM
01/06/2017

GET THE CREATORS UPDATE

The Windows 10 Creators Update is a free download for every Windows 10 user. The good news is that this means at some point in the future, your PC will let you know that the update is ready to be downloaded and installed. All you need to do is make sure your work (or any game progress) is saved, then let Windows Update do its thing.

However, to stop millions of Windows 10 users all trying to download the rather hefty update all at once, and potentially breaking part of the Internet, Microsoft is rolling out the update to PCs around the world in waves, and it's been coy about how long this rollout process will take.

So, you might get the Creators Update in the next few days, or you may have to wait weeks – or even months – before it appears in Windows Update.

However, like the Good News Fairy that we are (think the Tooth Fairy, but with a beer belly and faded Half Life 2 T-shirt), we have more glad tidings: There's a way to manually update to the Windows 10 Creators Update yourself, so you don't have to wait for Microsoft's rollout.

To manually download the Creators Update, head to the Windows 10 Update Assistant web page (www.microsoft.com/en-us/software-download/windows10), then click 'Update now.'

The tool downloads, then checks for the latest version of Windows 10, which includes the Creators Update.

Once downloaded, run it, then select Update Now. The tool does the rest for



Use the Windows 10 Update Assistant to manually download and install the update.

you. Your PC restarts a few times – so make sure you save your work first – and then your PC is updated with the Creators Update, while all your files and settings remain where they were.

The Windows 10 download site also enables you to get an ISO image, which you can then use to update your current installation of Windows 10, or perform a clean install with the Creators Update.

WHAT'S NEW?

With the Creators Update installed, what new features await you? Well, one of the most exciting additions is a new program called Paint 3D. We know what you're

thinking: Who cares about a new version of Microsoft Paint? And who still cares about 3D? We were as surprised as you are – after meeting Microsoft to see Creators Update before it launched – to come away so impressed by this new app.

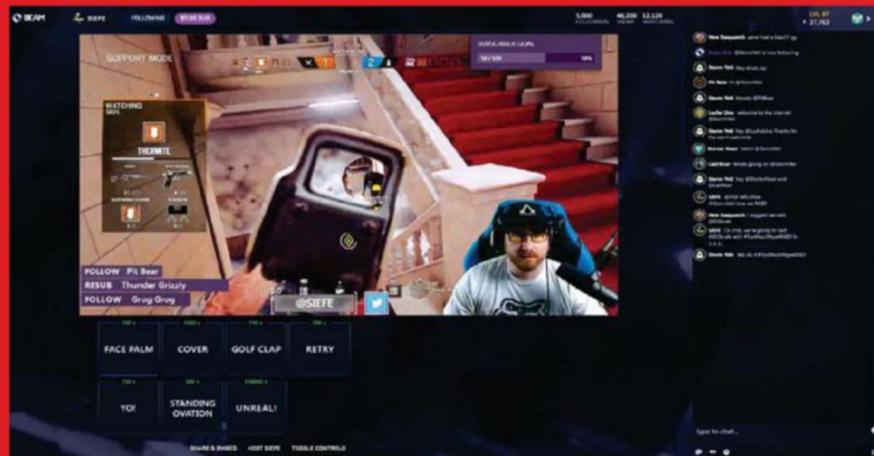
Paint 3D, like its 2D counterpart (which remains its own separate program), grants simple tools for people to create their own artwork. What's particularly impressive about Paint 3D is that the concept of creating models in a 3D space can be quite complicated, but Paint 3D makes the process incredibly simple, thanks to built-in tools that appear very straightforward at first, but are actually

Beam: Tools for broadcasting

Video game streaming is incredibly popular, with Twitch gaining 100 million monthly unique users watching over two million monthly streamers since it launched in 2011, with around 241 billion minutes of content being broadcast, so it's little wonder that Microsoft is so keen to get involved. It has done this by acquiring rival service, Beam, last year, and integrating it into Windows 10's Creators Update and the Xbox One. A classic Microsoft manoeuvre.

Of course, with the success of Twitch and other established services, Microsoft has an uphill struggle to convince people to move from their preferred service to Beam. However, it has a few tricks up its sleeve.

For a start, Beam has a focus on super low latency, something Microsoft is describing as the 'Beam Faster than Light SDK', which allows for broadcasting with virtually no latency. By having almost no perceptible pause between the action in the game the broadcaster is playing and what the audience sees, it makes conversations between the broadcaster and the audience even



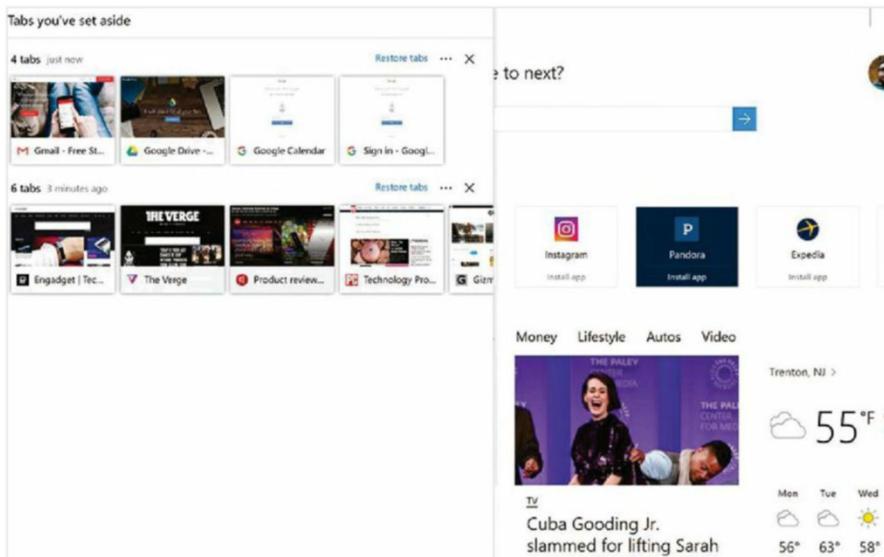
Beam wants to make watching "Let's Play" streams more interactive.

better. You could now tell a broadcaster to look out behind them, and they'd react, rather than telling them, only to find out three seconds later that they are already dead.

Microsoft also plans for Beam to have a full suite of interactive elements for its streams. These range from simple soundboard apps (which enable viewers to trigger specific sound effects) that can be applied to any game, through to

more complex interactive elements, introduced as part of Microsoft's Interactive 2.0 initiative, launched at GDC earlier this year.

When implemented into a game, these features – combined with the low latency – will enable viewers to be almost as involved in the action as the streamers themselves, "blurring the lines between playing and watching," as Microsoft puts it.



Windows 10's web browser, Edge, has been given an overhaul, and using tabs is now better than ever.

powerful enough to create some impressive 3D artworks once you're comfortable using them.

These creations can be exported and viewed on normal PCs, or added to Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) applications to be viewed in 3D. Plus, if you have a 3D printer hooked up to your PC, it's incredibly easy to print off your creations. It's difficult to explain in writing, but trust us: Load up Paint 3D and have a play around – it may just be your new favorite application.

Microsoft's renewed love of 3D extends beyond Paint 3D to PowerPoint (for 3D models and 3D animations, to make presentations slightly less dull), and the default Edge web browser, which now supports 3D content, and plays nicely with 3D files exported from various programs, such as Minecraft, SketchUp, and, of course, Paint 3D.

While 3D displays are now out of vogue, mixed reality – just like virtual reality and augmented reality – is the hot new thing, and it is these technologies that have rekindled Microsoft's 3D passion. Under the name Windows Mixed Reality (formerly Windows Holographic), this is a mixed reality platform built by Microsoft on the Windows 10 API, and it is heavily integrated into the Windows 10 Creators Update.

Windows Mixed Reality means you can create your own 3D model (or simply download an existing one), and then easily place it into a real or virtual world using a VR or AR headset. While Microsoft's own AR headset, HoloLens, is a pricey proposition, Microsoft also announced last year that it is working with a number of headset manufacturers to bring third-party AR and VR headsets to Windows 10 machines. A new app, the Mixed Reality Portal, is included with the Creators Update to show you exactly what Windows 10 is capable of.

A FOCUS ON GAMES

Microsoft promising that it still cares about PC gaming, while chasing the shiny Xbox bauble, is something that a lot of us have heard many times before. At least with the Creators Update, it seems like Microsoft may be making some positive moves.

In the Windows 10 Settings app, there is a new addition: Gaming. This setting enables you to control many aspects of how Windows 10 handles games. Its most talked-about feature is the new Game Mode option, which helps your PC maintain solid frame rates as you play, while other background tasks and applications run. We go into more detail in the box on the right, but you can turn the feature on and off from the Gaming settings page.

The Game DVR settings page enables you to control how you take screenshots and record gameplay videos. While there's a number of programs that enable you to record and share videos, such as Nvidia's ShadowPlay, Microsoft hopes that by baking this functionality into Windows 10, you'll be more likely to use its offering, especially since it's so easy to configure and begin recording. Microsoft also argues that by using Windows 10 to record your gameplay, rather than third-party software, your PC will have more resources at its disposal, which in turn should give you more consistent and stable frame rates when you play games while recording.

Among the new Game DVR settings is the ability to turn audio recording on (and off), if you want to provide narration, and you can choose the frame rates and video quality from here as well. You can also set Windows 10's Broadcast settings from this window. In the Creators Update, Microsoft is looking to seriously up the reach of, and community around, games played on Windows 10 with a new feature



Game Mode: Too Good to Be True?

Game Mode is perhaps the feature that generated the most amount of buzz ahead of the launch of the Creators Update. So much so, that Microsoft actually had to downplay expectations, worried that people were getting their hopes up too high.

So, what is Game Mode? It can be toggled from the Game Bar (pressing [Win] + [G] on your keyboard brings this up), and tells your system to reallocate CPU and GPU hardware resources to prioritise the game at hand when it's the active, full-screen application.

The results, as Microsoft claims, are steadier frame rates than before, notably with games that particularly tax a given system's resources. The idea is that if you're playing a game and recording it in the background – or you have another intensive task running while you play – Game Mode tells Windows 10 to prioritise your game, so you don't see major dips in frame rates. Unlike what some people were hoping – that Game Mode would strip down background apps and tasks while you're playing, to give you hefty boosts to FPS – Microsoft was keen to stress that the results are about stabilising frame rates, not boosting them. Microsoft also warns that Game Mode brings the most benefit to systems that aren't absolutely optimised for gaming, so if you have an all-powerful rig packed with Nvidia Titan Xp GPUs, you won't see much difference.

Both Universal Windows Platform (UWP) and Win32 games support Game Mode. Microsoft keeps an internal list of games for this feature, and others related to gaming, which we're told is updated more frequently than Windows itself.

There's no word on how many games – Win32 or UWP – support the feature, but we get the impression that the number is enormous. A select, growing number of games – regardless of whether they're UWP or Win32 – will see the feature automatically enabled. Of course, disabling Game Mode on a game is as easy as enabling it.

Paint 3D: Getting Creative

As we mentioned on page 18, Paint 3D is genuinely one of the most impressive new features of the Windows 10 Creators Update. When seeing it first-hand, creating three-dimensional pieces of art truly is as simple as Microsoft demonstrated at the update's reveal event last year.

Then again, it's clear that Paint 3D has the ability to allow for quite a bit of complexity, too. Most of that simplicity comes down to how intuitively the app communicates three dimensions in a two-dimensional space. Clever, minimalist use of sliders and other toggles enables you to shift your creation's position on either axis.

Of course, a wide selection of pre-loaded creation templates – such as goldfish – will help newcomers out immensely. Naturally, it wouldn't be Paint without the ability to freehand in 3D, and thus comes the desire to share those custom creations. That's where Remix 3D, Microsoft's online portal for sharing these Paint 3D projects, comes into play. Check it out at www.remix3d.com

The way in which Paint 3D communicates how to create in a new dimension so easily for the average user – yet offers the depth to please them as they increase in skill – could do a lot of good for the 3D printing scene, as well as VR and other fields further down the road – such as giving you the ability to add your own 3D creations to games.

Granted, Paint 3D is by no means a professional-grade 3D modeling app – this is meant for the vast majority of Windows 10 users who would just like to dabble. You can also export anything created in Paint 3D as 3D-ready FBX or 3MF files for 3D printers.

Regardless, we're already impressed with what Paint 3D can do, and only hope it grows from here. Oh, and don't worry, the old Paint app remains untouched.



According to Microsoft's own testing, Edge is the least battery-intensive browser.

called Beam. An acquisition recently made by Microsoft, Beam is a PC game streaming and broadcasting platform. It's similar to Twitch – complete with its own streaming network via web browser – and has been converted into a baked-in Game Bar feature, which can be brought up by pressing [Win] + [G] on your keyboard.

Beam's major claim to fame here, though, is that it maintains sub-second latency from the broadcaster's executions in-game to those moments being displayed on your computer screen via stream. In other words, for broadcasters, this reduction in the time between what you're doing in-game and your viewers seeing it makes interacting that much more interesting.

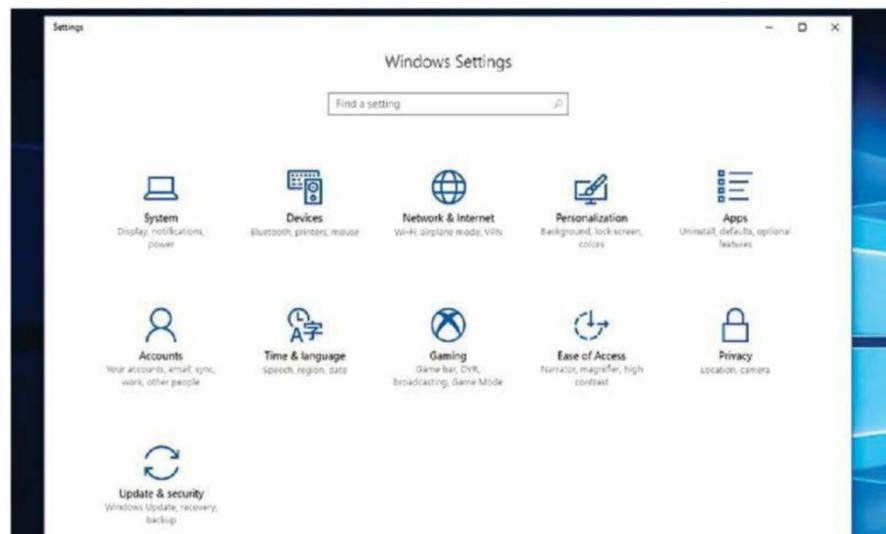
Broadcasting using Beam is made incredibly simple in the Creators Update – all you need to do is open up the Game Bar, click the Broadcast icon, then just a few clicks and toggles after that, and you're broadcasting to Beam viewers worldwide. That's after creating a Beam

account, as well as an Xbox Live account, if you haven't already. Once again, this is a sign that, as good as the new features ushered in by the Creators Update are, many of them require you to be fully signed up to Microsoft's ecosystem. If you're not too keen on Microsoft's recent direction, you may not be a huge fan of this. It is, after all, also doubling down on the Windows Store and UWP (Universal Windows Platform) apps for games.

OTHER FEATURES

There's a load of other features included in the Creators Update and – while they aren't as headline-grabbing as Game Mode and mixed reality support – their addition definitely makes Windows 10 a better operating system.

Take Night Light, for example. It's Microsoft's answer to Night Shift on Apple's macOS Sierra, and it is an effective and welcome feature for people who tend to use computers at all hours of the night. It lowers the amount of blue light



A new Gaming section has been added to the Windows Settings app.

your PC emits through its display, which can play havoc with your internal clock.

What's even better than the competing solutions is how Night Light enables you to adjust the tone of the colour change, in addition to the standard setting of whether the mode kicks in at sunset local time, or activates within set hours.

Microsoft has also thrown a lot of new features at its Edge browser in a bid to make us ditch Chrome and Firefox. As well as the aforementioned support for 3D media, it also includes a genuinely useful tab preview bar that gives you a visual overview of all your currently open tabs, so you can quickly and easily switch between the ones you need. This is a great addition for those of us who usually end a browsing session on the Internet with an unwieldy number of tabs open.

You can also 'set tabs aside,' which is Microsoft speak for saving open tabs as a collection, which you can then open and restore at any time.

Edge has often felt a little neglected when it comes to add-ons and extensions, with popular ones on Firefox and Chrome often skipping Microsoft's latest browser. The company is looking to fix that with the Creators Update, by bringing a large number of popular add-ons and extensions to Edge.

Microsoft has also worked hard on making Edge as lightweight as possible, which means that if you're browsing the web on a laptop or tablet, Edge should be less taxing on your device's battery, which should mean you'll have more surfing time before your machine dies.

To prove its point, Microsoft has released a battery test video comparison, showing the staying power of the three most popular browsers side-by-side, pitting its own Edge offering against Google's Chrome and Mozilla's Firefox. The test was a simple one: which browser could last the longest while streaming a



The Creators Update brings more compatibility with 'mixed reality' devices.

full-screen video from Vimeo. Given that Microsoft is keen for you to see the results, there are no prizes for guessing which web browser came out on top – yep, Microsoft Edge.

Edge didn't just, well, edge the test either. Instead, it dominated proceedings, lasting a full 35 percent longer than Google Chrome, and a massive 77 percent longer than Firefox.

While Firefox lasted just seven hours and four minutes before conking out, Chrome managed a full nine hours and 17 minutes of streaming.

Microsoft's Edge browser – which has been specially tuned for the Windows 10 Creators Update – just kept on chugging, eventually clocking up a staggering 12 hours and 31 minutes of streaming time before finally calling it a day.

In terms of fairness, the three browsers were each made to run on identical

Surface Book 2-in-1 laptops, each powered by a 2.4GHz Intel Core i5-6300U processor, with 8GB of RAM, and Intel HD Graphics 520 integrated graphics.

Ensuring further parity, each device was muted, had brightness set to 75 percent, Bluetooth and location disabled, and the Quiet Hours functionality switched on.

To be honest, it's not quite enough for us to make the leap from our trusted browsers to Edge just yet, but it looks like it is definitely going in the right direction.

PRIVACY SETTINGS

As good as Windows 10 is, there were concerns around the default privacy settings it originally shipped with, with many people worried about the kind of data – and control – to which Microsoft has access. Fortunately, the company has been aware of these criticisms, and it has responded by trying to make it more obvious what kind of data it collects in the Windows 10 Creators Update – as well as making it easier for you to change any privacy setting that you don't like.

When you update your install of Windows 10 to the Creators Update, you'll see a screen asking you to choose the privacy settings for your device. The options are for Location, Diagnostics, Relevant Ads, Speech Recognition, and 'Tailored Experiences with Diagnostic Data'. Each option has a 'Learn more' button that you should click to get a full explanation about what it affects.

In our opinion, this is a very positive step for Microsoft to have taken, and while we'd prefer it if most of those settings were switched off by default, we're happy to see that Microsoft has explained each setting thoroughly, enabling you to take a greater control over your privacy when you're using the Windows 10 Creators Update. ■

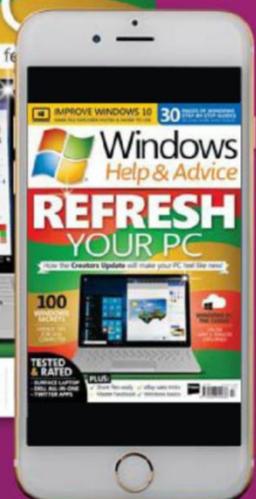
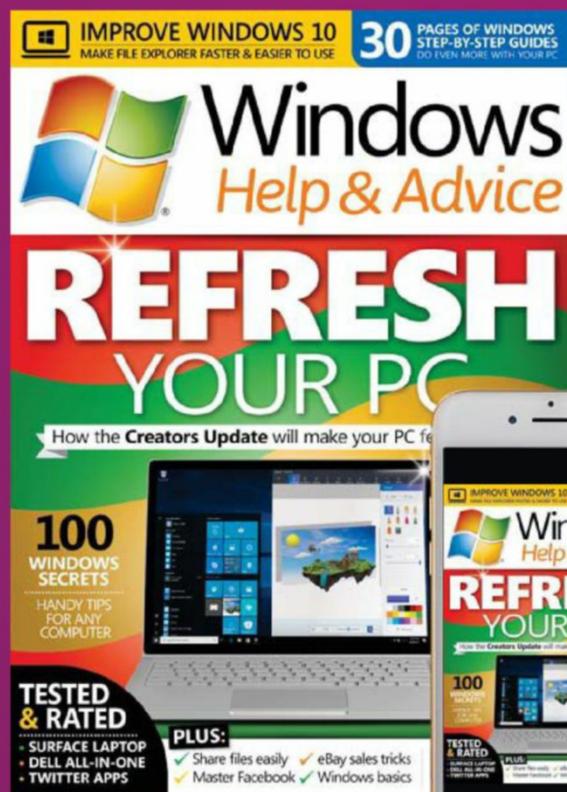
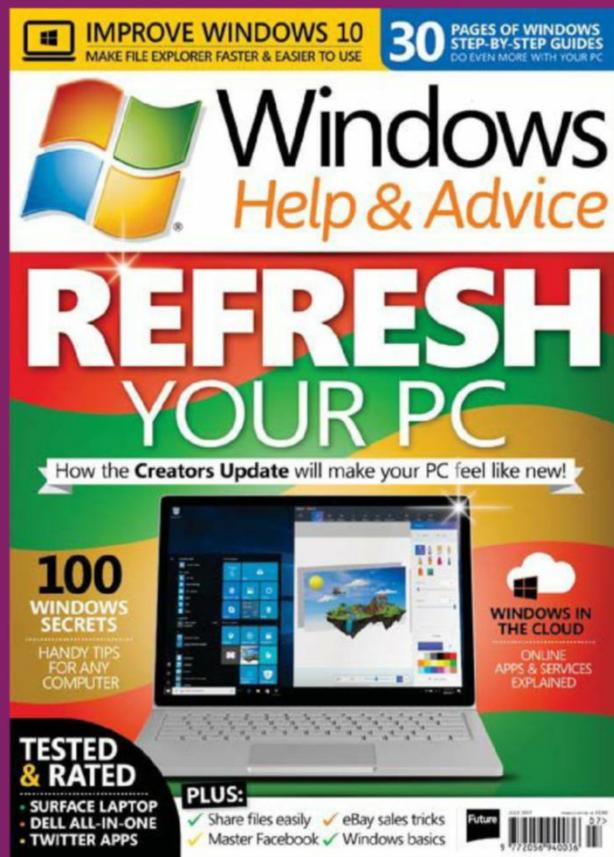
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Explore

► WINDOWS TIPS ► INTERNET ADVICE ► EXCITING NEW PROJECTS

Welcome



In this month's Explore section we're going to show you how to make your PC easier and more fun to use – whether it's reading your favourite websites (page 26), sending files to friends or workmates (page 44) or selling unwanted items on eBay (page 36).

On page 30, we also take an in-depth look at Facebook's privacy settings, and explain how to make File Explorer's context menu work for you (page 34). You'll also find some great tips for organising your images using the Photos app in (page 40), and much more.

Rob Mead-Green

Editor

rob.mead-green@futurenet.com

Full listing...

26 Make websites even easier to read with these tips and tricks

30 Lock down Facebook by taking control of your privacy settings

34 Power up Windows' context menu and transform your PC

36 Declutter and make money with our guide to selling on eBay

40 Organise your image library with help from the Photos app

44 Share files quickly and securely over the internet with FileDirect

46 Work without distractions using the minimalist WriteMonkey app

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Your guide
Ian Evenden says...

"It's easy to sort a large collection of images using the Photos app"

*Turn to page 40
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

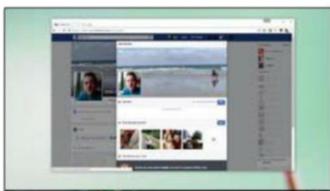
We all know how to do the basics but getting the most from Windows isn't always easy. Our dedication to the operating system means you get the very best tips and tricks for all versions of Windows.

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...

Make websites easier to read



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

"Making websites easier to read is easy in Windows. And we're going to show you how right here..."

At a glance

Skill level...

► Anyone can do it

Straightforward

Tricky in parts

Suitable for...

Windows 10

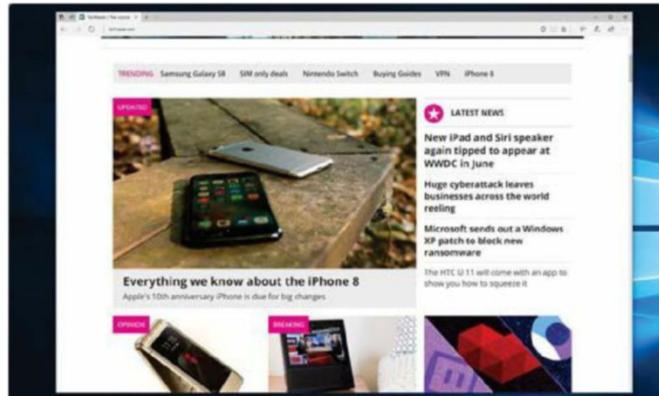
Windows 8.1

Windows 7

Do you sometimes struggle to read text, or comfortably view photos, on websites? Perhaps the text size is too small, or the colour combinations makes it difficult to read text on busy backgrounds. The good news is that there are a number of things you can do to make websites easier to read, so if you feel yourself struggling, follow these tips to make your internet browsing experience much more enjoyable. Almost all of these features are built directly into the Microsoft Edge internet browser – as well as other browsers such as Firefox and Chrome. This means, no matter what your web browser of choice is, you'll find these tips should work.

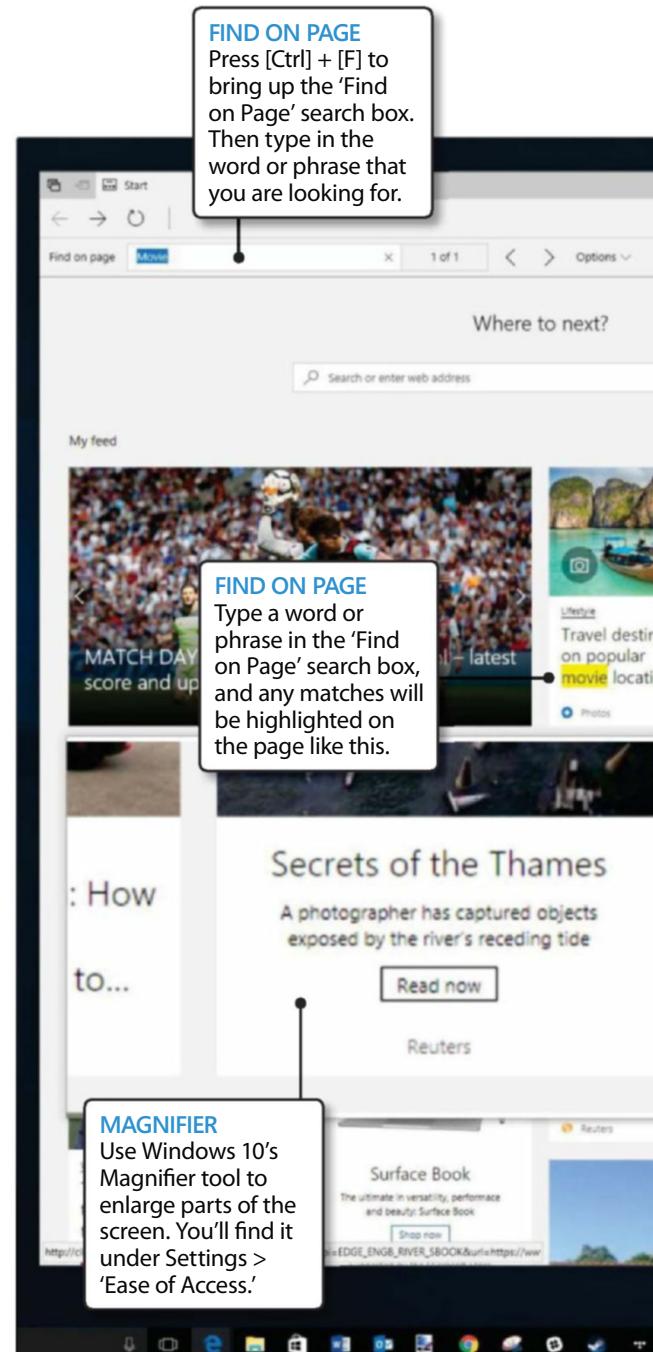
Windows 10 also includes a range of features that can help make sites more readable, including a built-in Magnifier. You can also use Settings to change the default font size across the OS – handy for apps and menus.

Step-by-step | Make websites easier to read



1 Quick resizing

The easiest way to make a website easier to read is to increase the size of the **fonts** used on the site. Thankfully, it's easy to increase (or decrease) the text size without additional tools. When on a website, hold the [Ctrl] button on your keyboard, then use the scroll wheel of your mouse to increase and decrease the size. You can also press the [Ctrl] + [+] or [-] keys to alter the sizes.



FIND ON PAGE
Press [Ctrl] + [F] to bring up the 'Find on Page' search box. Then type in the word or phrase that you are looking for.

Where to next?

Search or enter web address

My feed

FIND ON PAGE
Type a word or phrase in the 'Find on Page' search box, and any matches will be highlighted on the page like this.

Secrets of the Thames

A photographer has captured objects exposed by the river's receding tide

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Reuters

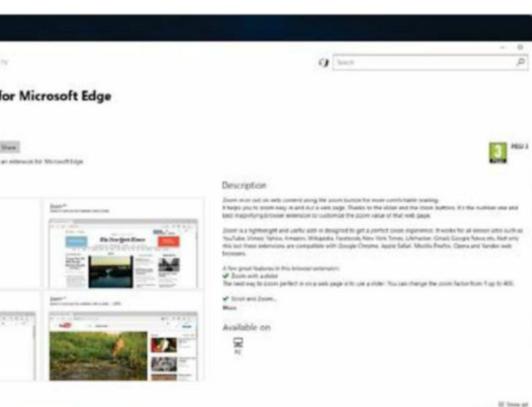
MAGNIFIER
Use Windows 10's Magnifier tool to enlarge parts of the screen. You'll find it under Settings > 'Ease of Access.'

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Z



Zoom for Microsoft Edge

Description

Zoom is out on web content using the zoom button for more control than ever. It's a fast and simple way to get a better zoom experience. It works for all session sites such as YouTube, Vimeo, Amazon, Wikipedia, Facebook, New York Times, LinkedIn, Gmail, Google News etc. Just drag and drop the zoom button to zoom in or out. It's also available for Internet Explorer, Edge, Firefox, Opera and Chrome.

Available on

Get it now

2 Smarter resizing

The first step is an easy way to increase text and images on websites, but if you want a method that gives you greater control, you'll need some **add-ons**. For Microsoft Edge, open up the Windows Store and search for 'Zoom for Microsoft Edge'. Click on Get and it will be added to the **web browser**, making it easier to zoom. For Chrome, try Zoomy, and for Firefox try NoSquint Plus.

MATT'S BEST TIP!
Get Windows to read web pages to you. Go to Settings > 'Ease of Access', and then click on Narrator to start.

HIGHLIGHT
Microsoft Edge's 'Make a Web Note' feature includes a virtual highlighter, so you can pick out key items on page.

WRITE NOTES
'Make a Web Note' also enables you to write notes and draw annotations as if you were writing on a piece of paper.

OPTIONS
Click here to bring up Edge's options. From here you can set the zoom level to make websites easier to read.

Jargon buster!

► Web browser

A web browser is an application used to display websites. The Microsoft Edge web browser comes pre-installed with Windows 10. Other popular browsers are Chrome and Firefox.

► Font

Refers to the size, weight and style of a typeface – basically the text you see on your PC. Increase the font size and the words you see will be larger, making them easier to read.

► Add-on

A browser add-on, also known as an extension, is a small program that can be installed alongside a web browser, and offers increased functionality without having to open a separate program.

Display

Night light
 Off

Night light settings

Scale and layout

Change the size of text, apps and other items

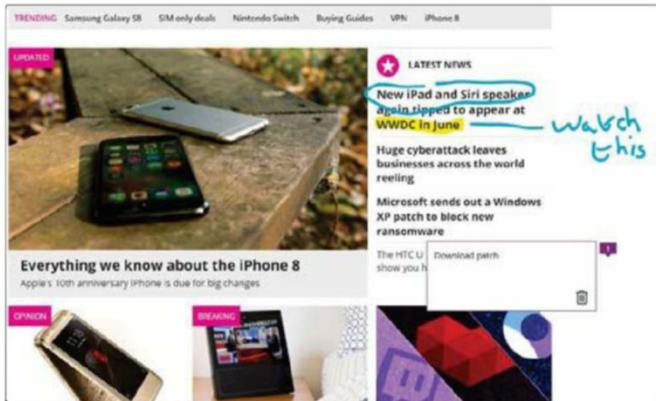
100%
125%
150%
175%
200% (Recommended)
225%

3 Change the default font size

If you find a text size that makes websites readable, and you want to keep it that way, then you can change the default font size in Windows. This has the added benefit of changing the font size in menus and apps as well. To do this, right-click on your desktop and select Display Settings. Then, where it says 'Scale and layout', select a percentage above 100%.

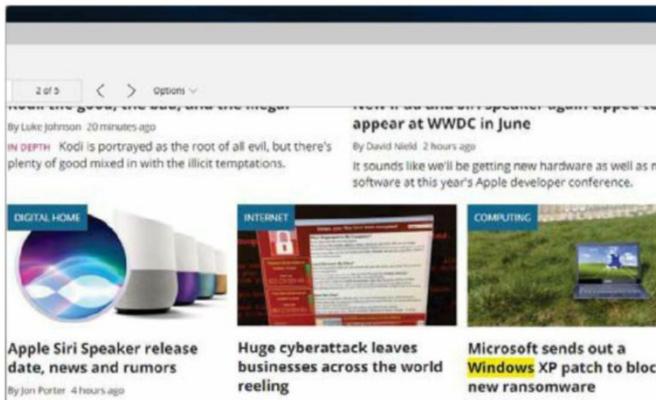
4 Clean up websites

Websites can often be cluttered, with an overabundance of animations, adverts and other distractions. Tools, such as Mercury Reader (<https://mercury.postlight.com/reader/>), can remove these, leaving text and images for a more readable experience. Mercury Reader is only available for Google Chrome, but there are alternatives for Edge and Firefox, such as Adblock.



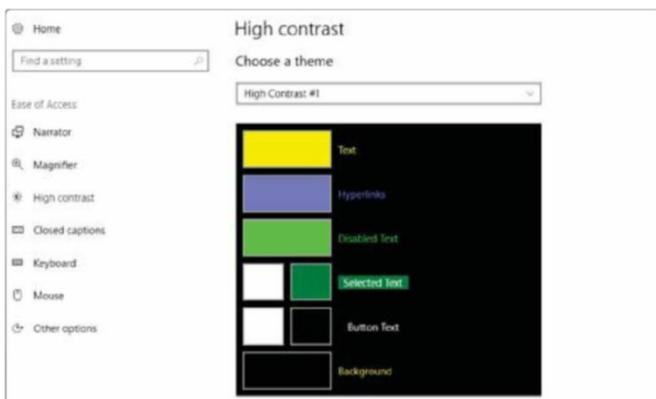
5 Highlight text and write notes

Microsoft Edge comes with a brilliant note-taking feature that lets you annotate websites, add comments and highlight important text. This can make websites more readable if they are text heavy and you want to add a few notes and reminders. To use it, click or tap on the 'Make a Web Note' icon in the top-right corner of Edge – the icon looks like a pen writing a note.



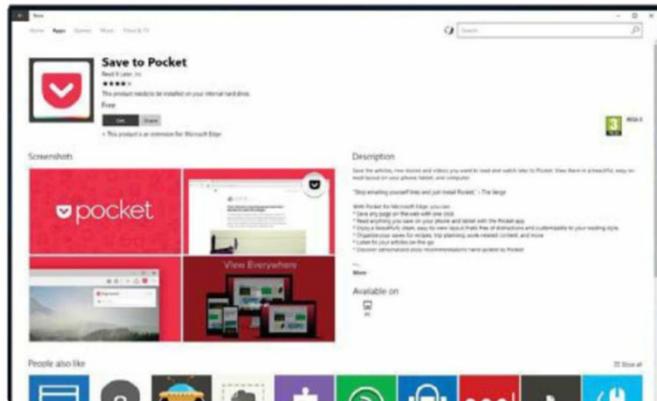
7 Find on a page

If you're reading a web page full of text, you may find it easy to lose your place – or you may want to jump to a certain section. In any browser, press [Ctrl] + [F] while on a website to open up the 'Find on page' text box. Here, type in the word or phrase you want to find, and it will be highlighted. Arrows next to the search box let you jump to every instance of the word or phrase found.



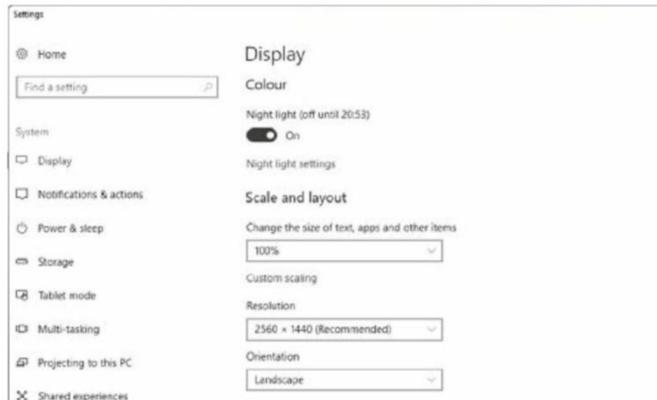
9 Enable high contrast colours

All versions of Windows come with a range of accessibility programs that can help people use their PCs. If you struggle to read or see websites, then using a high contrast colour scheme may help. To use it in Windows 10, go to Settings > 'Ease of Access'. From the window that appears, click on 'High contrast' then select a theme that makes reading websites easier for you.



6 Read a website to another device

Install the Pocket extension for Edge, Firefox or Chrome and you'll be able to save your favourite web pages for reading later – even when you're offline. With the Pocket extension installed on all your devices, you can also switch from one device to another and still see the same page you were looking at when you open your browser. See page 32 of issue 136 for more Pocket goodness.



8 Make reading easier at night

Many of us like to have a browse of the internet before bed, but reading websites at night can cause discomfort, as our eyes strain under reduced light. The type of light emitted by PC screens can also affect our sleep patterns. A recent feature in Windows 10 helps reduce this – right-click your desktop and select Display Settings. At the top, where it says 'Night light', switch it to On.



10 Use the screen magnifier

Windows comes with a magnifier that can enlarge parts of the screen when you mouse over it. To activate it, select Magnifier under Settings > 'Ease of Access' then flick its switch to On. It will work from now on. You'll also see an icon of a magnifying glass on the screen. Whenever your mouse over it, click on the arrows to see further options, such as zoom levels and different views.

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Learn how to...

Lock down Facebook



Your guide **Alex Cox** says...

"Facebook is great for sharing, but it's easy to overshare – it's time to control who sees what"

At a glance

Skill level...

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

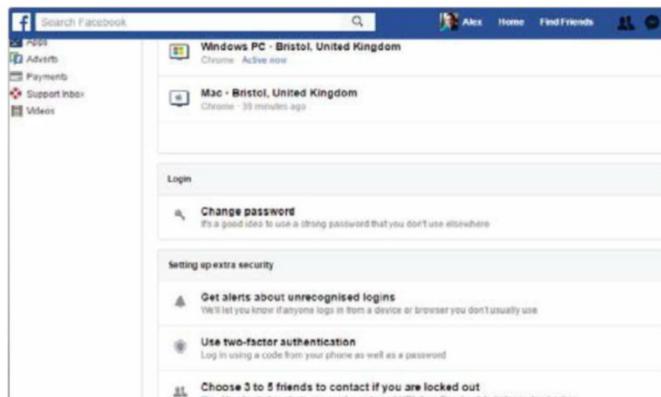
Suitable for...

- Windows 10
- Windows 8.1
- Windows 7

There's a good reason Facebook is the most popular social network in the western world. It's easy to join, easy to connect with your friends, and incredibly convenient – if you want to share something, it's only a couple of clicks away. But is that really such a good thing? Do you want every one of your friends to see every little thing you post? Should anybody that stumbles on your profile be allowed to poke through your family pictures or find out your personal information? Absolutely not.

Facebook doesn't exactly hide its privacy features, but it doesn't push them either. It's up to you to decide how secure you want your account and posts to be. We'll walk you through the steps and safeguards; use your own judgement over how much you want to put in place, to ensure the people that matter can still see your posts and profile.

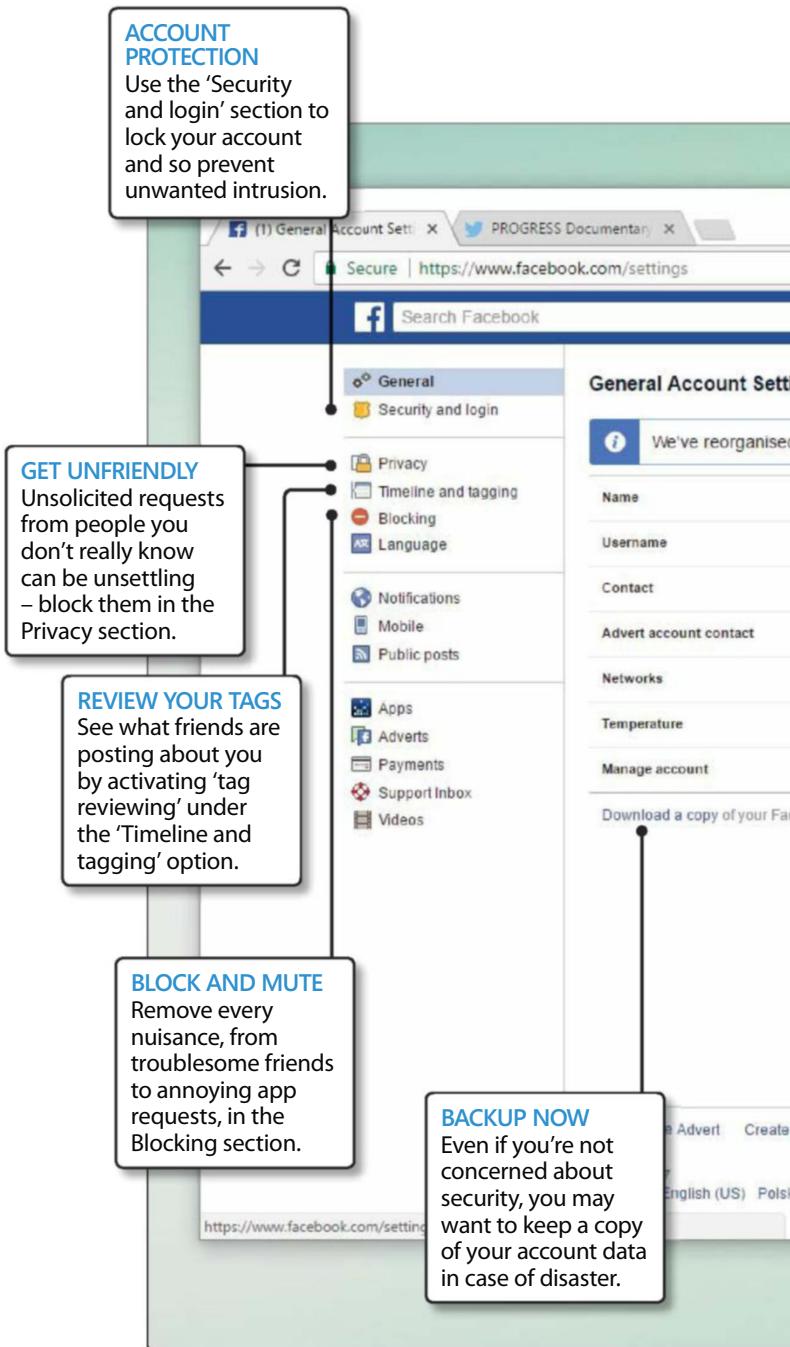
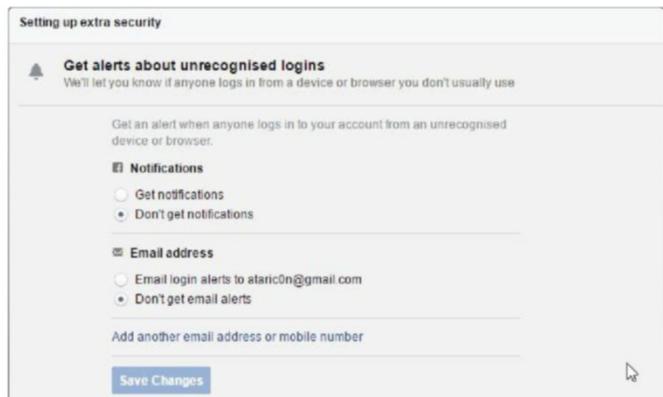
Step-by-step | Make Facebook more secure



The screenshot shows the 'General Account Settings' page on Facebook. In the left sidebar, under 'General', the 'Security and login' option is selected. The main content area displays several sections: 'Get unfriendly' (about unsolicited requests), 'Review your tags' (about timeline and tagging), 'Block and mute' (about blocking), and 'Backup now' (about account backups). A URL at the bottom of the page is https://www.facebook.com/settings?tab=security_login.

1 Login protection

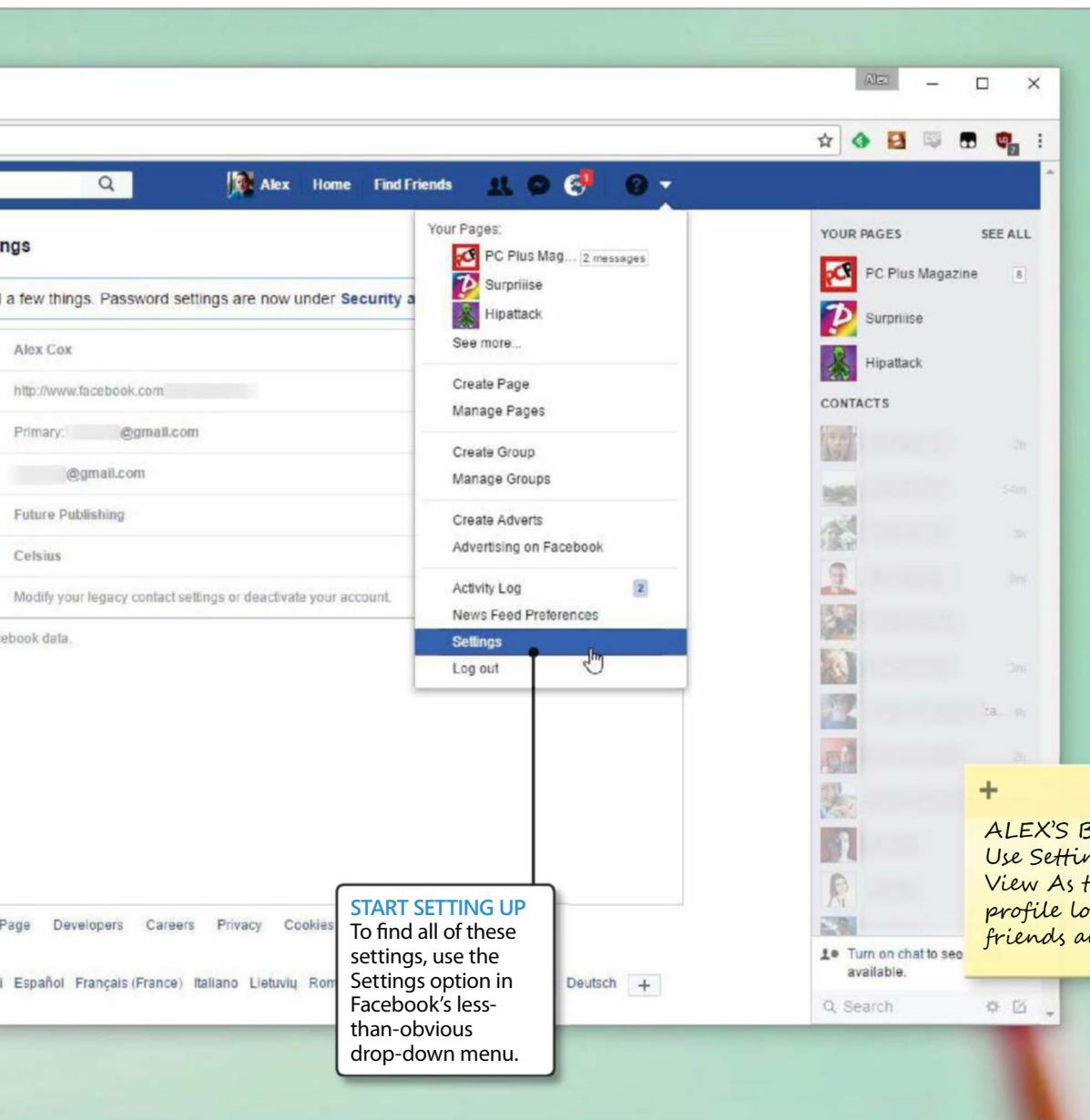
First, let's make sure nobody can get into your Facebook account and post anything they shouldn't and, if they do, that you'll know about it. Head to www.facebook.com as usual and, on the right side of the blue header bar, click the downward pointing arrow and head to Settings. In the left column, click 'Security and login', then scroll down to the 'Setting up extra security' section.

The screenshot shows the 'Setting up extra security' section in the Facebook 'General Account Settings'. It includes options for 'Get alerts about unrecognised logins' (with notifications and email address settings) and 'Use two-factor authentication'. A 'Save Changes' button is at the bottom.

2 Notify me

Click Edit next to 'Get alerts about unrecognised logins', and select the appropriate options to receive a Facebook notification when a new machine logs in, or an email sent to any addresses you've confirmed with Facebook in the past, then click Save Changes. There's a link here to add a new address, which will take you to more settings; click 'Security and login' to get back.



Jargon buster!

► Two-factor authentication

A way of logging into a service which requires two parts – usually a password, plus another single use code. The idea is that even if someone does find out your password, they won't be getting in without a fresh code.

► Friend request

The way Facebook users connect with people they know – or people that they want to know.

► Timeline

All your Facebook posts are arranged in chronological order – at least in theory. However that is not always the case.

Setting up extra security

- Get alerts about unrecognised logins**
We'll let you know if anyone logs in from a device or browser you don't usually use
- Use two-factor authentication**
Log in using a code from your phone as well as a password
- Choose 3 to 5 friends to contact if you are locked out**
On + Your trusted contacts can send a code and URL from Facebook to help you log back in

Your trusted contacts are friends who you chose who can securely help if you ever have trouble accessing your account.

Your trusted contacts:
 Edit Remove All

Use two-factor authentication
Log in using a code from your phone as well as a password

Two-factor authentication is off. Set Up
Add an extra layer of security to prevent other people from logging in to your account. Learn More

Text message (SMS) - Add phone number
Use your phone as an extra layer of security to prevent other people from logging in to your account.
Disabled - Enable

Security keys - Add key

3 Friendly help

Select the 'Choose 3 to 5 friends...' option, then click 'choose friends'. Facebook gives you the option of choosing real-life buddies who can help you get back into your account should it be compromised. Click 'Choose trusted contacts', type their names – Facebook will find them from your friends list – and click Confirm. That's it for you; they'll be informed of what they need to do next.

4 The security factor

Two-factor authentication, the middle option, means you'll need two things to log in – your usual password, and a security code. This could be generated by your Facebook mobile app, sent to your phone, or pulled from a cache of spare codes that you'll keep secret. Run through the options to set this up – it's easy as long as you have a mobile number associated with your account.

Privacy Settings and Tools

Who can see my stuff?	Who can see your future posts?	Close
Review all your posts and things you're tagged in	You can manage the privacy of things you share by using the audience selector right where you post. This control remembers your selection so future posts will be shared with the same audience unless you change it.	
Limit the audience for posts you've shared with Friends or Public?	What's on your mind?	
Who can contact me?	Friends	Post
Who can look me up?	Who should see this?	
Who can look you up using the email address you provided?	Public	Use Activity Log
Who can look you up using the phone number you	Friends	Limit Past Posts
	Friends except...	Edit
	More...	Edit
	PREVIOUS OR CURRENT	Edit

5 Defining defaults

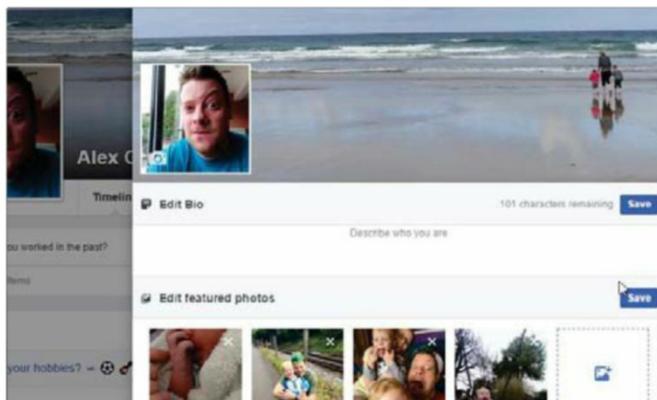
Select Privacy in the left column. Here you can define the default privacy settings for your future posts – we'd recommend Friends, although it's possible to exclude some on your friends list by choosing 'Friends except...' or set all your posts to private – this couldn't be more secure, although you'll need to manually set the privacy of each post as you make it – see Step 10.

Manage blocking

Restricted List	When you add a friend to your Restricted list, they won't see posts on Facebook that you only share with Friends. They may still see things you share to Public or on a mutual friend's Timeline, and posts they're tagged in. Facebook doesn't notify your friends when you add them to your Restricted list. Learn more .	Edit List
Block users	Once you block someone, that person can no longer see things you post on your Timeline, tag you, invite you to events or groups, start a conversation with you, or add you as a friend. Note: Does not include apps, games or groups you both participate in.	Block users <input type="text"/> Add name or email Block
Block messages	If you block messages and video calls from someone here, they won't be able to contact you in the Messenger app either. Unless you block someone's Profile, they may be able to post on your Timeline, tag you and comment on your posts or comments. Learn more .	Block messages from <input type="text"/> Type the name of a friend.
Block app invites	Once you block app invites from someone, you'll automatically ignore future app requests from that friend. To block invites from a specific friend, click the "Ignore all invites from this friend" link under your latest	

7 Block and banish

You can do more than deflect friend requests – head to the Blocking section in the left column of settings and you can deny app requests, block specific users from seeing anything you post, stop people contacting you via Facebook Messenger, and more. You can also block and mute users on your [Timeline](#) by clicking the downward arrow on their posts and reviewing your options.



9 Clever moves

Your next step isn't one that Facebook can help you with directly, it's more common sense. Click your profile picture on the blue bar to head to your profile page, then click 'Edit profile'. Remove any information that isn't absolutely critical to someone finding you – be as cagey as you can. To hide old posts, click the top right arrow on each one, select Edit, and change the status.

Privacy Settings and Tools

Who can see my stuff?	Who can see your future posts?	Friends
Review all your posts and things you're tagged in	Who can see your future posts?	
	Limit The Audience for Old Posts on Your Timeline	
	⚠ If you use this tool, content on your profile that you've shared with friends or on your Public wall will change to Friends. Remember: people who are tagged and their friends may see those posts as well.	
	You also have the option to individually change the audience of your posts. Just go to the post you want to change and choose a different audience.	
	Learn about changing old posts	
	Limit Old Posts	
Who can contact me?	Who can send you friend requests?	Everyone
Who can look me up?	Who can look you up using the email address you provided?	Friends of friends

6 Get retroactive

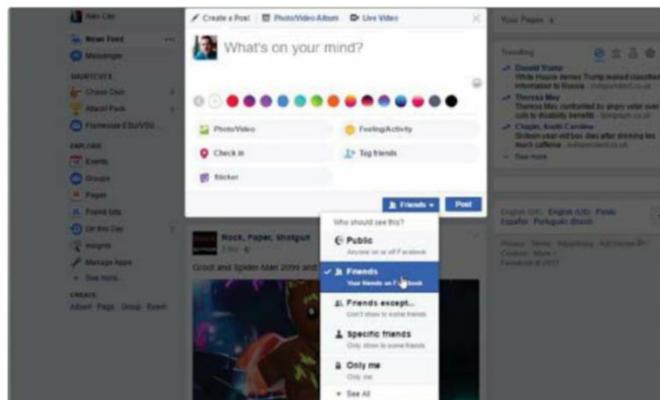
If you've previously been posting things publicly, you may be worried that you'll now have to plough through all your old posts to hide them from prying eyes. Not so – use the 'Limit past posts' option to automatically set your archived posts to friends-only. You can also use the options below to restrict who's allowed to look you up or canvass you with a [friend request](#).

Timeline and Tagging Settings

Who can add things to my Timeline?	Who can post on your Timeline?	
	Friends <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Friends Only me	
Who can see things on my Timeline?	Review what other people see on your Timeline	
	Who can see posts you've been tagged in on your Timeline?	Friends
	Who can see what others post on your Timeline?	Friends

8 Profile privacy

Now use the 'Timeline and tagging' section to choose who's allowed to see your profile page. This is perhaps the most critical part of everything we're doing here – your profile page could well be linking to personally identifying information, so you'll want to ensure non-friends can see as little as possible. If embarrassing relatives keep posting to your timeline, you can nix it here too.



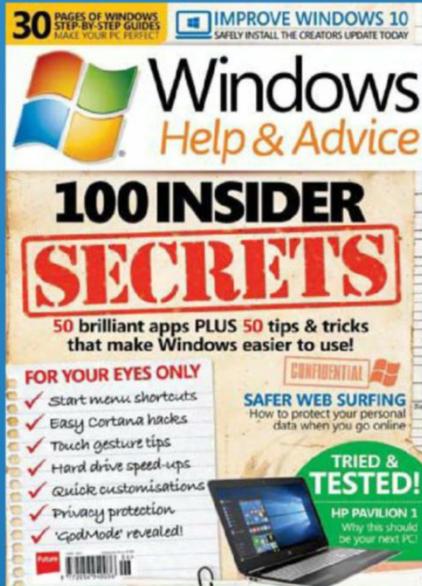
10 Posting clever

Now click the Facebook logo to head back to your timeline. In the box at the top, begin creating a new post. You'll see, at the bottom of the post composition box, a drop-down box marked Friends. This is the post's privacy; you can quickly set a post to private, or share it with specific people, by clicking this box. Bear it in mind when you post from now on. ■

Back issues
Don't miss out!

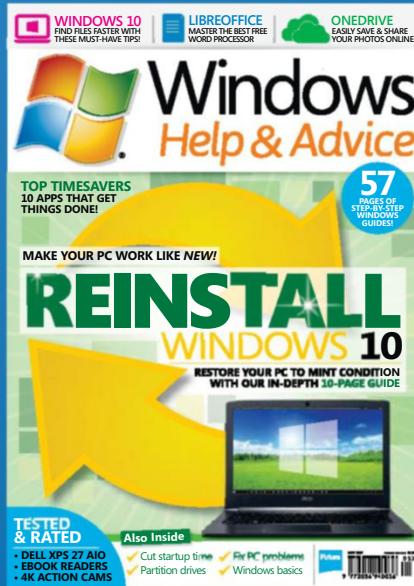
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we deliver worldwide and all prices include shipping



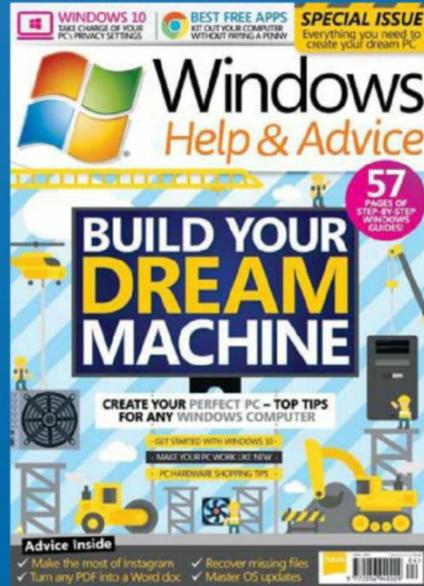
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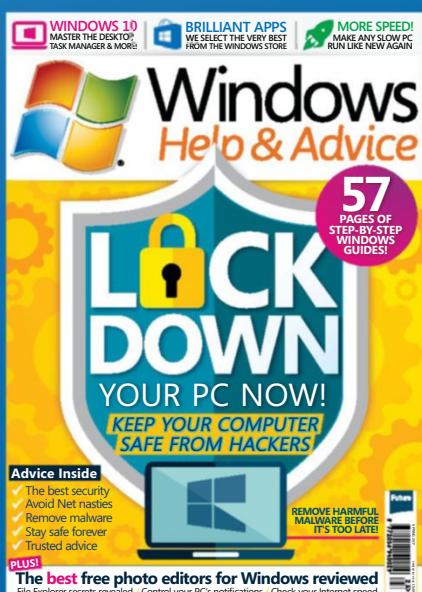
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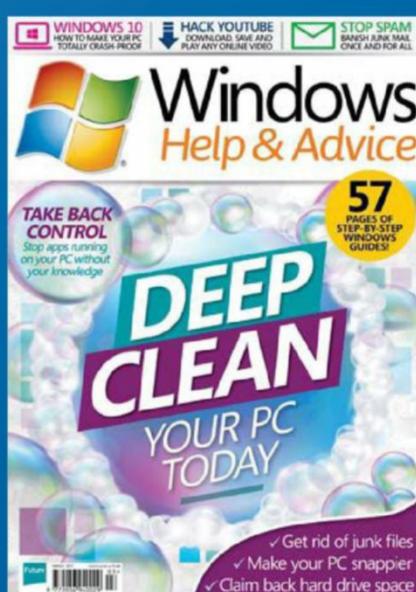
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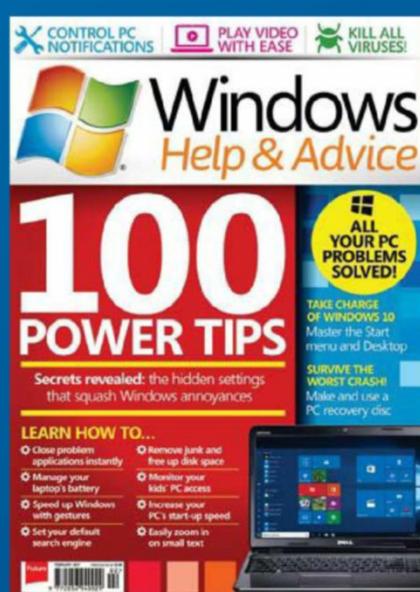
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Learn how to...

Power up the context menu in Windows



Your guide *Cat Ellis* says...

Make the right-click menu work for you by adding brilliant new tools and options, and removing the ones you never use

At a glance

Skill level...

► Anyone can do it

Straightforward

Tricky in parts

Suitable for...

Windows 10

Windows 8.1

Windows 7

The Windows context menu, which appears when you right-click a file or folder, is packed with handy tools. Not only can you open, copy or delete a file or folder using it, you can also use it to pin items to the Taskbar for quick access, scan them for viruses with Windows Defender (very useful if it's something you've just downloaded), or create a handy shortcut.

The context menu is capable of so much more, though. With a few extra programs, you can transform this humble list into a powerful resource that will save you time and make everyday tasks effortless.

You can customise the Windows tools available when you right-click a file, making it easier to power down your PC, change properties, or empty the Recycle Bin. Alternatively, if your context menu is cluttered, there's an easy way to get it under control so it only shows the options you use.



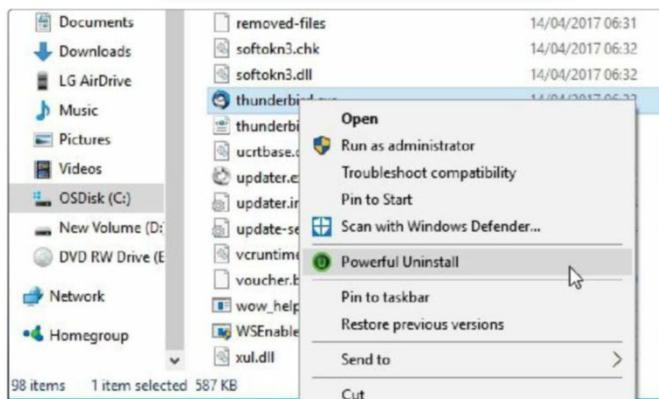
CAT'S BEST TIP!
If you're feeling brave, you can edit the context menu via Windows' Registry editor. See <http://bit.ly/1MSuBoT>

Step-by-step | Create a bespoke right-click menu



1 Make uninstalling easier

Usually when you want to remove a program, you have to do it through the Apps & Features control panel, only sometimes items get left behind. There's a free tool called IObit Uninstaller that lets you remove any program by right-clicking its icon. Once it's finished, it performs a deep scan to make sure there's no junk left. Get it from www.iobit.com/en/advanceduninstaller.php

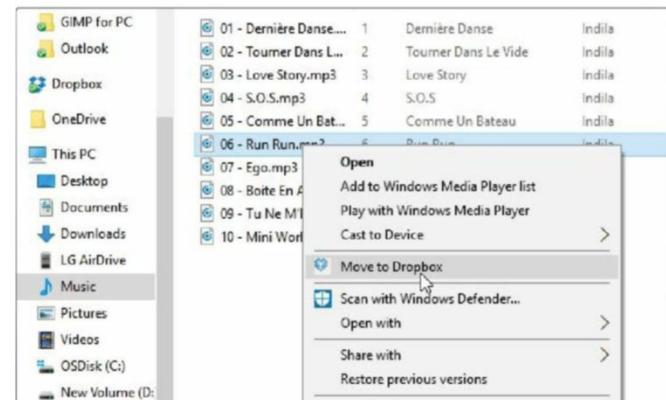


2 Remove programs with a click

Run the installer and the tool will be added to the context menu. To try it, right-click the icon of an app you don't want and select 'Powerful uninstall'. Check that the app shown is correct, then click Uninstall. You can create a Restore Point before you start, just in case. The app's own uninstaller will then run, and any residual files or registry entries will be identified for removal.

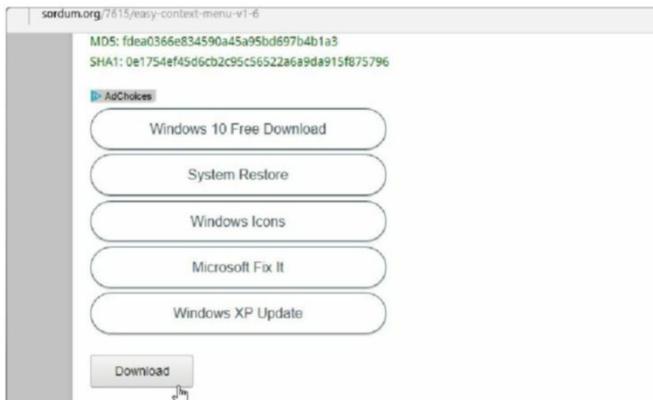
Explore

Power up Windows' context menu



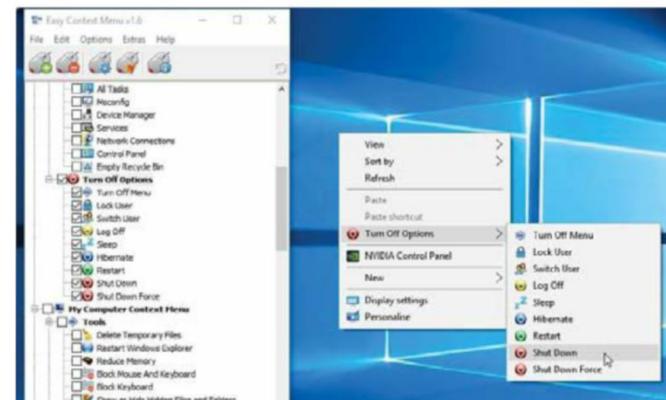
3 Get instant cloud storage with Dropbox

Another great tool for your context menu is Dropbox, which lets you send any file from your PC to an online cloud server, so you can access it from any device with an internet connection. The free version of Dropbox gives you 2GB space for your files, which goes a long way. To get started, go to www.dropbox.com and click 'Download the app', then run the installer.



4 Access your files anywhere

When the Dropbox app starts, you'll be asked to either create an account or sign in via Google. Once you've logged in, right-click a file and select 'Move to Dropbox'. The file will now be accessible from any device with the Dropbox app installed, or via www.dropbox.com. See the Dropbox icon in the notification area. If there's a green tick, the files you've moved have been uploaded.



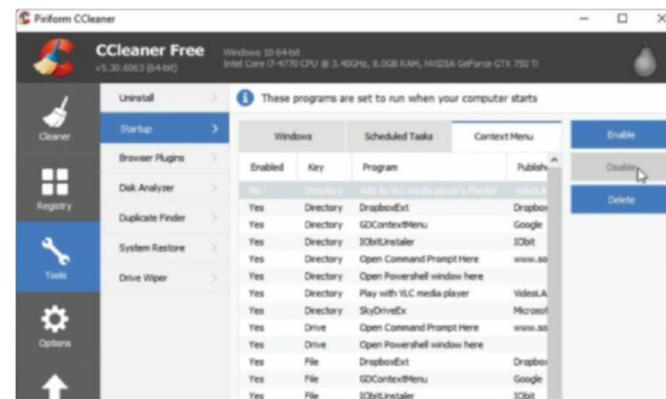
5 Boost your menu with extra tools

Easy Context Menu is a free tool that lets you add all kinds of handy tools to your right-click menu. Download it from www.sordum.org/7615/easy-context-menu-v1-6/ (it's not obvious, but click the rectangular grey Download button at the bottom of the page). Extract the ZIP, and double-click EcMenu.exe. Easy Context Menu doesn't have to be installed, so it will start immediately.



6 Add quick controls

You'll now see a huge list of options that you can add to the context menu. Some of these are advanced Windows tools that you won't need on a regular basis, but others – such as Turn Off Options and Empty Recycle Bin – are very handy to have at your fingertips. Check the boxes beside the tools you want to add, then click the green '+' icon on the top left to save the changes.



7 Clean up the clutter

If your context menu is starting to look big and unwieldy, removing the tools and options you never use can make it much more manageable. To get rid of the junk, download the free version of CCleaner from www.piriform.com/ccleaner/download and run the installer. When you're offered a trial of the Pro edition, select 'No thanks, install free version'.

8 Make the finishing touches

Run CCleaner and select Tools from the menu on the left, then click Startup and select the 'Context menu' tab. Take a look through the list; if there's anything you'd like to remove, just click it once and select Disable. You can always reactivate it later on if you change your mind. Congratulations! Thanks to these tools, you now have a fully customised context menu. ■

Learn how to...

Make money with eBay



Your guide **Alex Cox** says...

"Top tips to help you sell your stuff, using the world's most popular online auction site"

At a glance

Skill level...

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

Suitable for...

- Windows 10
- Windows 8.1
- Windows 7

Let's face it, we all accumulate way too much stuff in our lives. From old clothes that no longer fit to ancient games consoles and DVD players that we just don't use any more, the nation's attics are fit to bursting with things forgotten, unloved and unneeded.

But rather than letting them languish in a dusty corner, you can sell them on eBay for cash. It's a great way to top up your income and clear out the unwanted junk from your home at the same time. Even if you don't think you have anything valuable to sell, the money you make from getting rid of low-value items can quickly add up.

Selling on eBay is remarkably easy, but there are plenty of ways to boost your chances of getting a good price for your items – from listing them at the right time to being honest in your product descriptions. You'll find all the help you need right here...

Step-by-step | Post your first listing on eBay

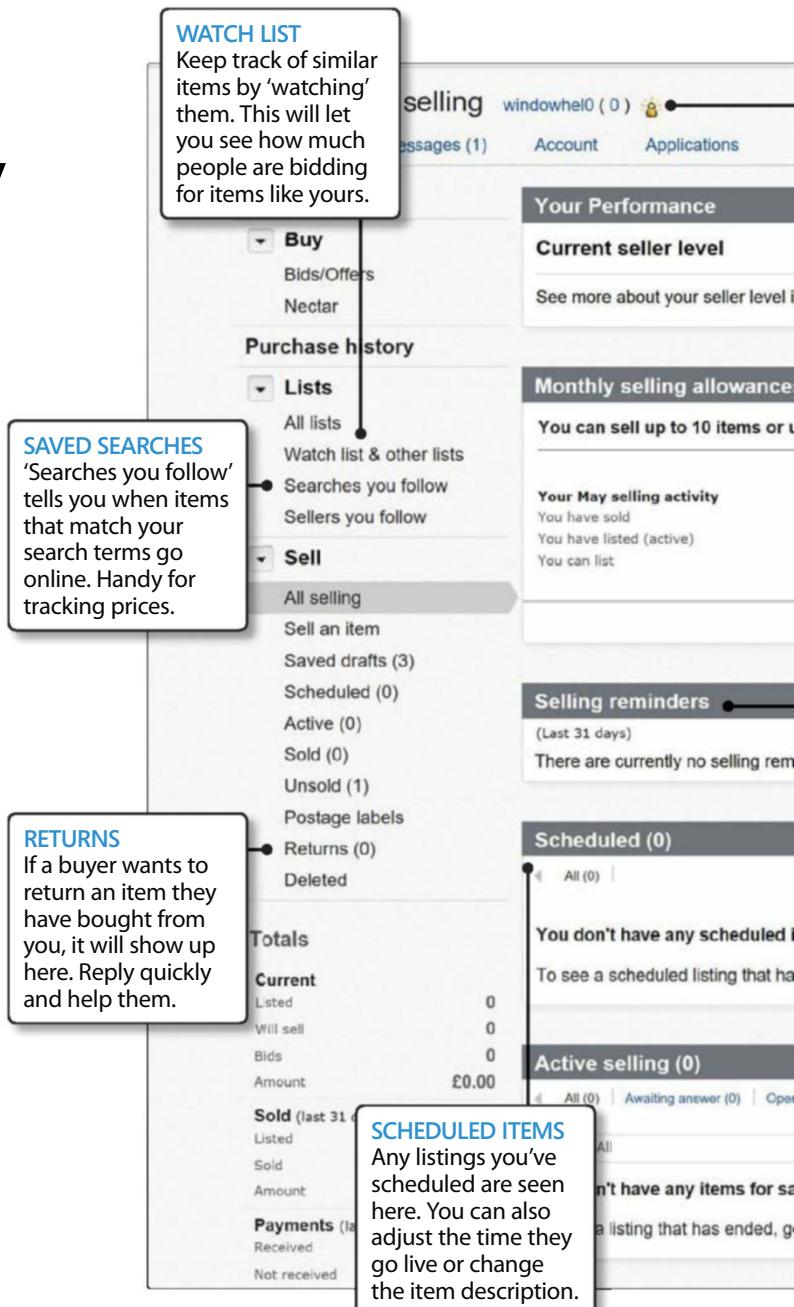


1 Build your reputation first

Many bidders will stay away from sellers with low feedback, especially when it comes to high-price auctions. So, it's a good idea to build your positive feedback by buying items before you sell anything – you don't have to spend much, but aim for around 10 positive feedback before you start flogging your own items. Buying first will also help you get to grips with how eBay works.

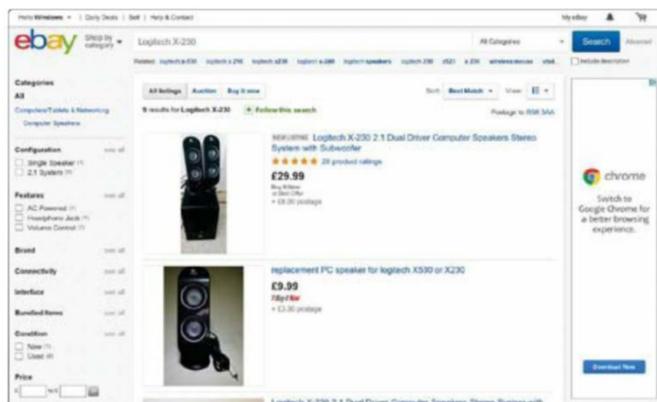
WATCH LIST

Keep track of similar items by 'watching' them. This will let you see how much people are bidding for items like yours.



The screenshot shows the eBay Seller Central dashboard. Key sections include:

- WATCH LIST**: Shows a summary of watched items and a link to 'Buy'.
- Purchase history**: Shows a dropdown menu for 'Lists' (selected) and 'Sell'.
- SAVED SEARCHES**: Explains how it tracks search terms.
- RETURNS**: Explains how it tracks buyer returns.
- Totals**: Shows current stats: Listed (0), Will sell (0), Bids (0), Amount (£0.00).
- Sold**: Last 31 days: Listed (0), Sold (0), Amount (£0.00).
- Payments**: Received (0), Not received (0).
- SCHEDULED ITEMS**: Explains scheduled listings.



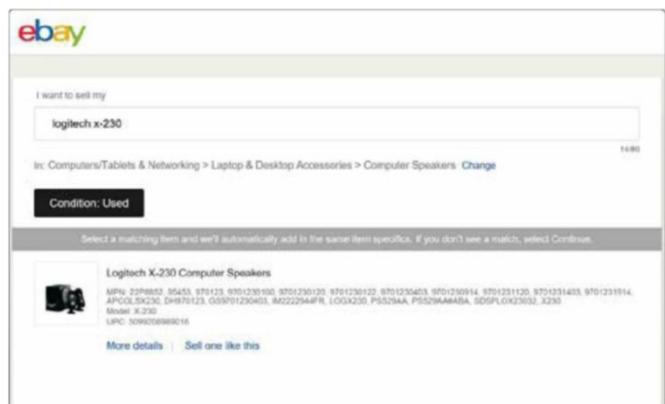
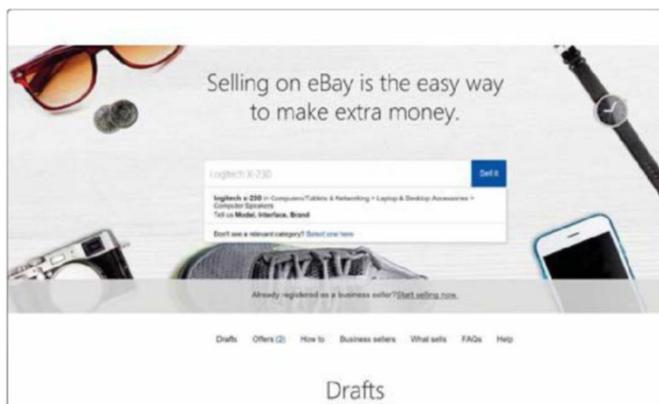
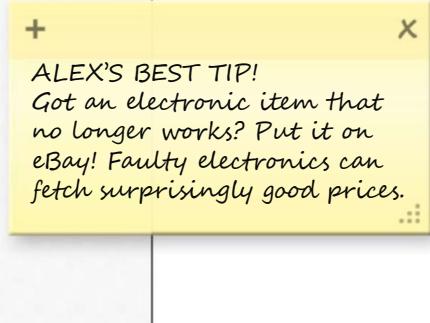
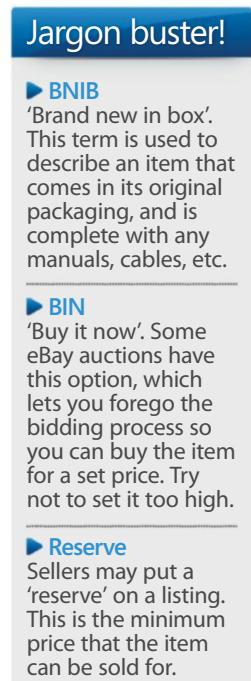
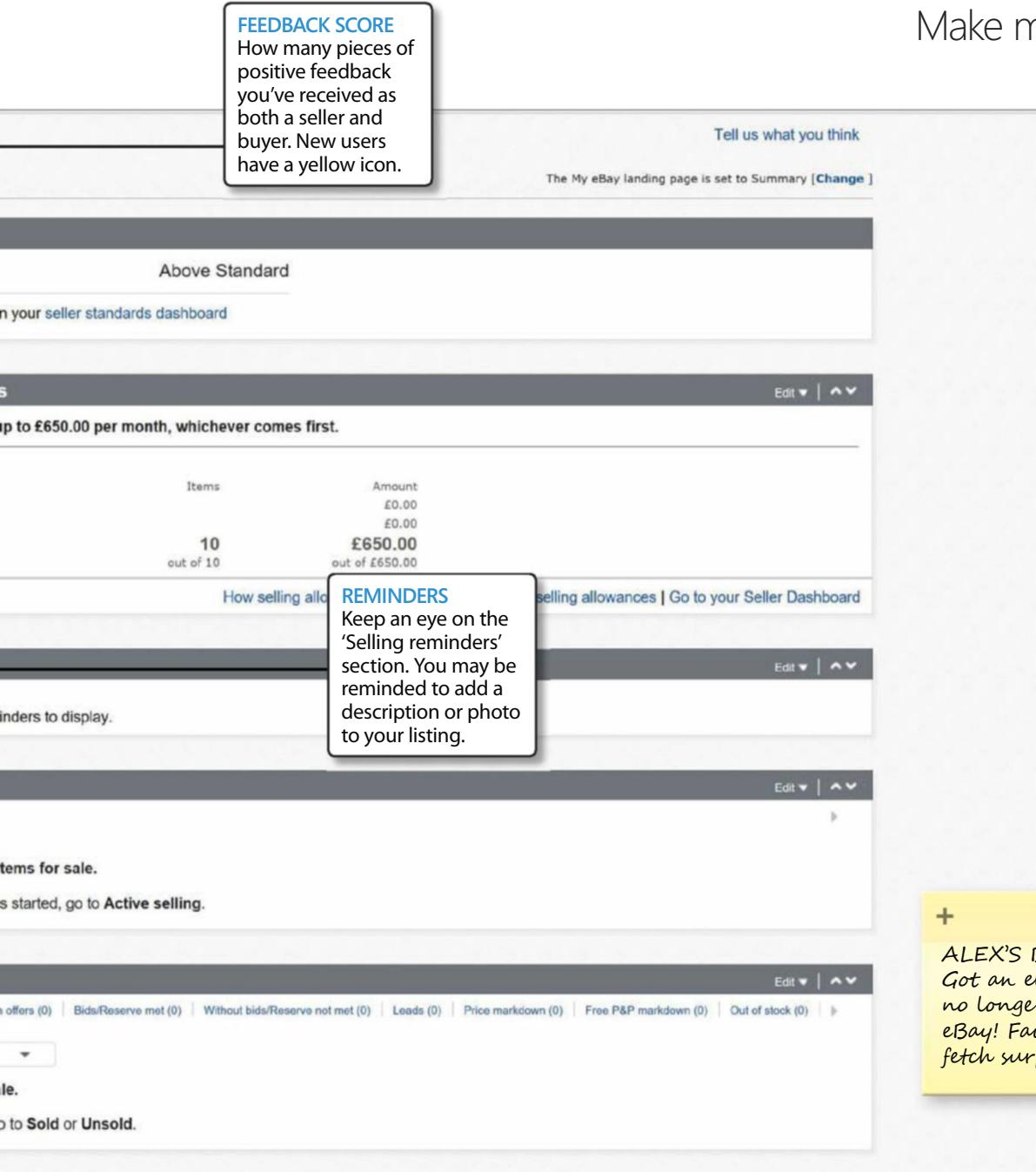
The screenshot shows a search result for 'Logitech X-230'. It displays several listings for the item, including:

- Logitech X-230 2.1 Dual Driver Computer Speakers Stereo System with Subwoofer - £29.99
- replacement PC speaker for logitech X300 or X230 - £3.99

 The interface includes filters for Configuration, Features, Brand, Interface, and Price, along with a sidebar for switching to Google Chrome.

2 Research your item before selling

Before doing anything, search eBay for other people selling the same product as you. This will give you an idea of how much the item sells for. Look for auctions where people have actually bid, as this shows you what people are willing to pay – don't just use 'Buy it now' prices as a guideline, since these are often set much higher than what the product is actually worth.

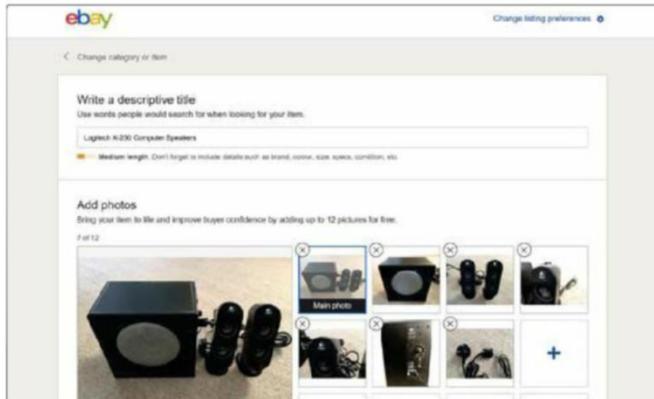


3 Take your photos

3 Take your photos If you want to sell it, it's vital you take good photos. Cover your item from multiple angles, and make sure to show any blemishes – honesty is important, and helps potential bidders to trust you. If the item has a product name printed on it, show that too. Imagine you're the bidder – what would you want to see to get a good idea of the item and whether you should bid on it?

4 What's in a name?

4 What's it a name? Click 'Sell' at the top of the page, then enter your address. On the next screen, enter a description for the item, including the brand. This will be used by eBay to fill out details like the product name and, in our case, things like the maximum power output. It uses this information to categorise your item. Once you've stated the item's condition and found a match, click 'Sell one like this'.



The screenshot shows the eBay 'Add item specifics' section. It includes fields for writing a descriptive title ('Logitech X-230 Computer Speakers') and adding photos. A preview shows five images of computer speakers.

5 Picture perfect

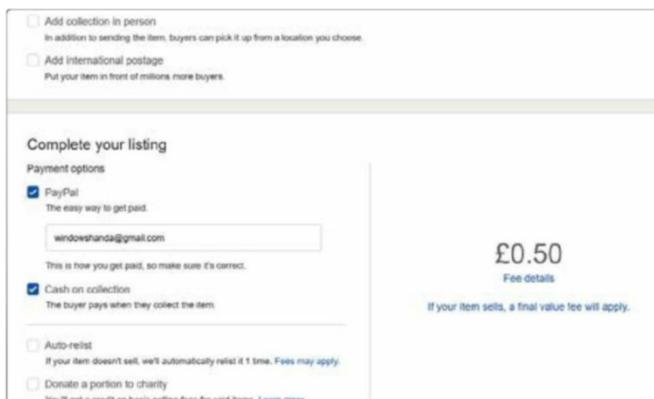
Now upload your photos. You can drag and drop them from your PC, or use the eBay app to upload them directly from your phone. Rearrange the photos into an order you're happy with, and make any adjustments with the rotate and crop tools. If you don't have any photos you can use the 'Stock photo' option, although this won't show as much detail as your own shots will.



The screenshot shows the 'Choose a price' section. It includes a note about typical selling prices and two main options: 'Auction' and 'Fixed price'. Under 'Auction', it shows a starting price of £6.62 and a duration of 10 days. There are also checkboxes for 'Add Buy it now (fee applies)' and 'Schedule your listing's start time'.

7 Set your asking price

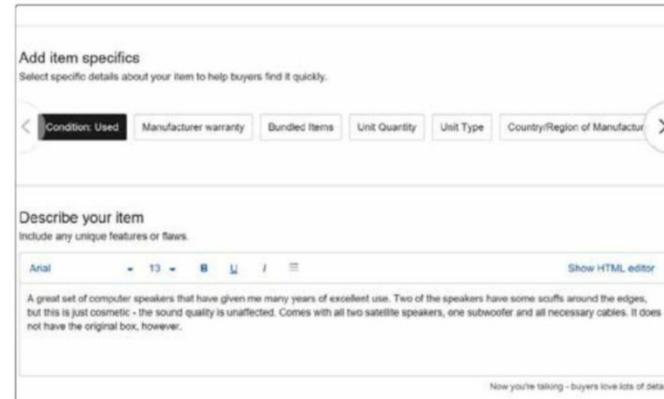
You'll then get a suggested price from eBay based on how much similar items have recently sold for – try not to set your start price too high, or you'll put off potential bidders. Adding a 'Buy it now' option is a good idea if you don't think you will get many bids on your item. Try not to be greedy – no one will go for your 'Buy it now' offer if it's ridiculously high.



The screenshot shows the 'Complete your listing' section. It includes payment options like 'PayPal' (selected) and 'Cash on collection'. It also shows a fee of £0.50 and a note about final value fees.

9 Select a payment option

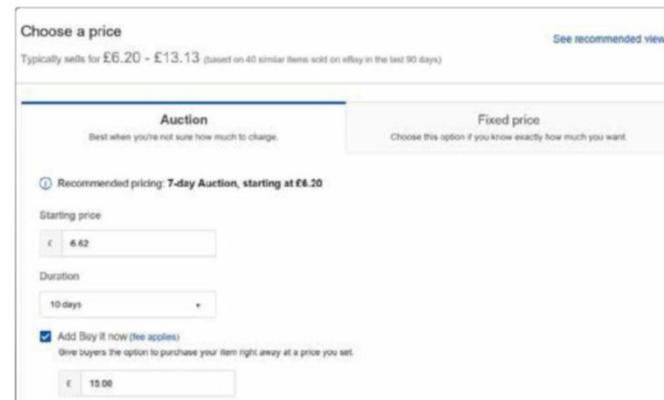
PayPal protects bidders against fraudulent sellers, but also charges sellers 3.4% on the final sale price, plus 20p per listing. You have to make it an option for bidders, but you should also consider the 'Cash on collection' option. If the item you're selling is too large to send by post, say in the description that you'd prefer cash on collection – that way you can avoid the PayPal charges.



The screenshot shows the 'Describe your item' section. It includes a rich text editor and a note: 'Now you're talking - buyers love lots of detail'.

6 Details, details

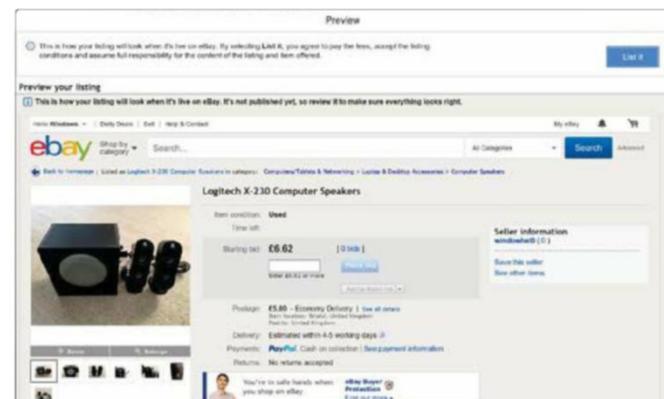
Next, enter a product description. Make it as descriptive as you can, and be sure to mention any blemishes or other points of note, such as bundled extras or how long you've had the item. Honesty is the best policy – not only will it make for positive feedback, but you'll avoid having to pay any refunds if the winning bidder feels the item was not as you described it.



The screenshot shows the 'Choose a price' section again, this time with the 'Fixed price' tab selected. It shows a starting price of £6.62 and a duration of 10 days. There are also checkboxes for 'Add Buy it now (fee applies)' and 'Schedule your listing's start time'.

8 Choose a listing duration

Under the '7-day Auction' text, click 'Change' to alter the auction duration. Auctions can be listed for three, five, seven or 10 days. If you're not in any hurry to sell, choose 10 days to increase the likelihood of multiple people bidding on your item. Try to time it so your auction ends on a Sunday evening – this is eBay's busiest time, and increases your chances of getting a good price.



The screenshot shows the 'Preview' section of the eBay listing. It displays all the information entered, including the title 'Logitech X-230 Computer Speakers', item condition 'Used', starting bid '£6.62', and payment method 'PayPal'. It also shows the eBay URL and seller information.

10 Looking good

Click 'Preview' to see how your listing will look once it's live. If you're happy with everything, close the preview box and click 'List with displayed fees'. Your listing will go live shortly (or at the designated time if you chose to schedule it). You can change the listing's details from the My eBay section, but you can't change the auction duration if it's been live for more than two hours. ■

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Learn how to...

Organise your photo library



Your guide Ian Evenden says...

“It’s easy to sort a large collection of images using Windows 10’s built-in Photos app”

At a glance

Skill level...

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

Suitable for...

-  Windows 10
 -  Windows 8.1
 -  Windows 7

With modern digital cameras, it's easy to take a lot of photos. It's not like you're wasting film, after all, and with memory cards of up to 128GB easily available and reusable, you can come back from holiday with a bulging collection of images that will need organising and sorting through. That's where organising software comes in. Being able to arrange your images, even if it's just by date, into a coherent collection is important if you want to be able to find your photos as your collection grows.

Photos as your collection grows.

Apps are available to help you, one of the best being Adobe's Photoshop Elements, which bundles an image editing program with a standalone Organizer that takes a lot of the effort out of organisation, including GPS tagging and face recognition. The Photos app in Windows may be less sophisticated, but it can still make your photos easy to navigate.

Step-by-step Organise images with Photos

1 Import images

In Windows, there's a lot you can do to organise a large collection of files, even if it's just splitting them into folders based on the date they were created. When you import photos from your camera, it's likely to do this for you, dumping the resulting dated folders into your Pictures folder. To do it manually, sort the memory card's Explorer window by date, to make things easier.

ALBUMS
This brings up the Albums view, from where you can make new Albums and view those the app has created for you.

FOLDERS
The folders you've given the app access to, in alphabetical order. You can drill down the folder structure from here.

Collection **Albums** **Folders**

April 2016

COLLECTION
Click here to see every photo in the folders on your PC that you've told Photos it can look in, in date order.

DATE
The date each of the following images was taken on. Use it to scroll a collection, stopping by dates of interest on the way.

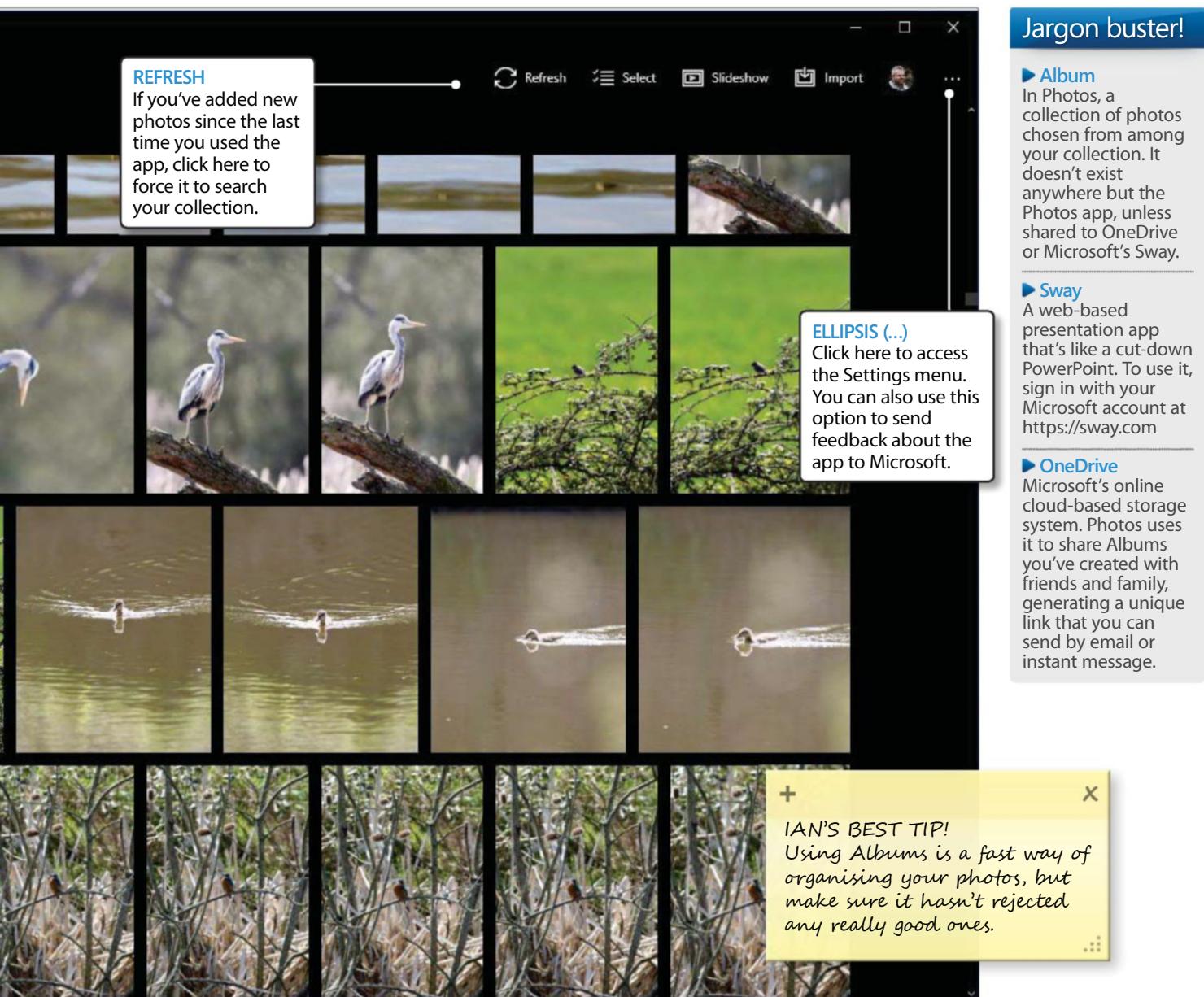
A screenshot of a Windows context menu for several image files. The menu items are:

- Move to Dropbox
- Scan with Windows Defender...
- Open with >
- Share with >
- Add to archive...
- Add to "BZ9A0383.rar"
- Compress and email...
- Compress to "BZ9A0383.rar" and email
- Stitch using Image Composite Editor
- Restore previous versions
- Send to >
- Cut
- Copy
- Create shortcut
- Delete
- Rename
- Properties

The menu is displayed over a grid of image thumbnails. The file BZ9A0383.CR2 has a blue selection bar above it, indicating it is the active item. To the right of the menu, a vertical strip shows preview images for other files: A0386.CR2, A0392.CR2, A0398.CR2, and A0403.CR2.

2 Name your folders

2 It's worth adding more information to the names of your image folders, even if it's just the name of the place or event you were taking photos at. Renaming a folder is simple enough in Windows: click on it, then either click on the name until it's highlighted in blue or select Rename from the right-click menu. Once you can edit the name, type the new one then hit [Enter].



Jargon buster!

► Album

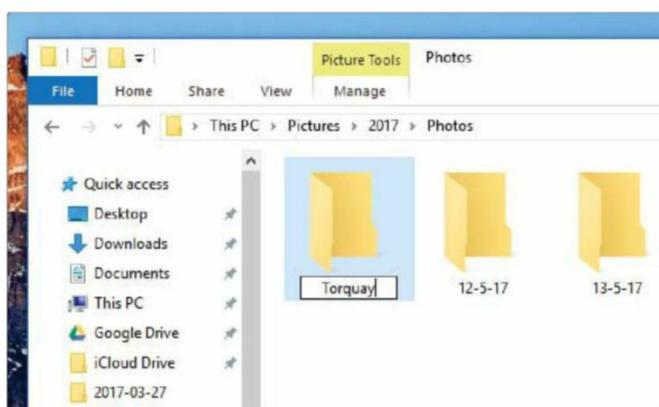
In Photos, a collection of photos chosen from among your collection. It doesn't exist anywhere but the Photos app, unless shared to OneDrive or Microsoft's Sway.

► Sway

A web-based presentation app that's like a cut-down PowerPoint. To use it, sign in with your Microsoft account at <https://sway.com>

► OneDrive

Microsoft's online cloud-based storage system. Photos uses it to share Albums you've created with friends and family, generating a unique link that you can send by email or instant message.



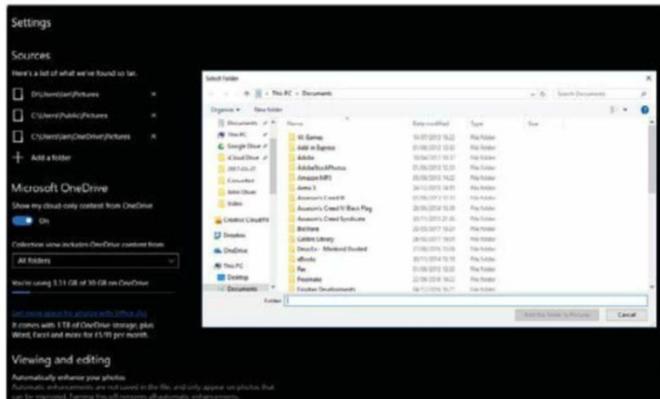
3 Batch renaming

You can batch rename folders in Windows by first selecting them, then renaming the first folder. The following ones take that new name, but add a number after. If you want to rename folders containing photos you took in Torquay, for example, select and right-click them with the mouse and select Rename. Call the first one 'Torquay'. The rest will become 'Torquay (2)', 'Torquay (3)', etc.



4 Photos in Photos

Windows 10's Photos app does even more to organise your images. Its Collection view shows you every photo in the folders you've told it to watch, and the Folders view breaks this up into specific folders. If you use your PC's Pictures folder, this is added by default, but if you keep photos in another location, such as on Google Drive, you'll need to add that manually.



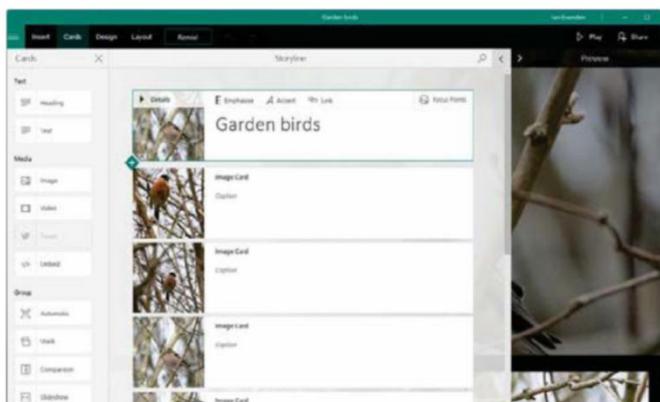
5 Add folders to Photos

To do this, you'll need to enter the Photos app's settings. Find this by dropping down the ellipsis (...) menu at the top right of the interface. Choose 'Settings', and the first thing you see will be labelled Sources. Click 'Add a folder' and head to the folder you keep your photos in. Hit 'Add this folder to Pictures' then back out of Settings to the Collection view to see the newly added photos.



7 Adding pictures to Albums

Photos does a good job of picking out a single image from a string of duplicates or similar pictures. If there's a photo you want to add to an album, you can by clicking 'Add or Remove Photos' below the album display. You'll be presented with every image in the source folder, each with a tick box. Ticked images will appear in the Album, unticked ones won't. Click 'Done' when finished.

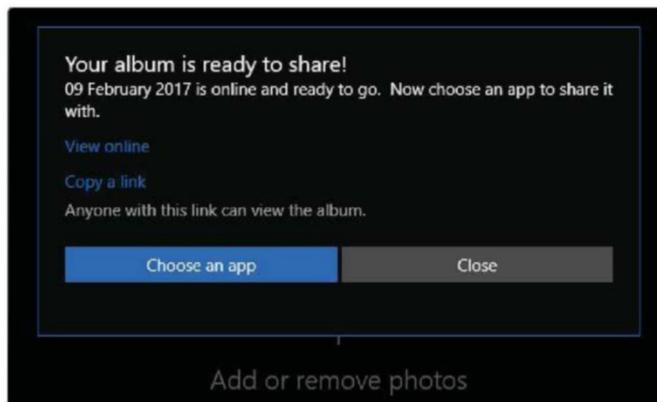


9 Share with Sway

The second option exports your images to [Sway](#), Microsoft's web-based presentation app. From here, you can create a moving slideshow, or anything else you might think of in PowerPoint, before sharing a link to view your presentation in a web browser or mobile app. If you've taken video to go with your images, and uploaded it to YouTube, you can add it to your album in Sway.

6 Organising with albums

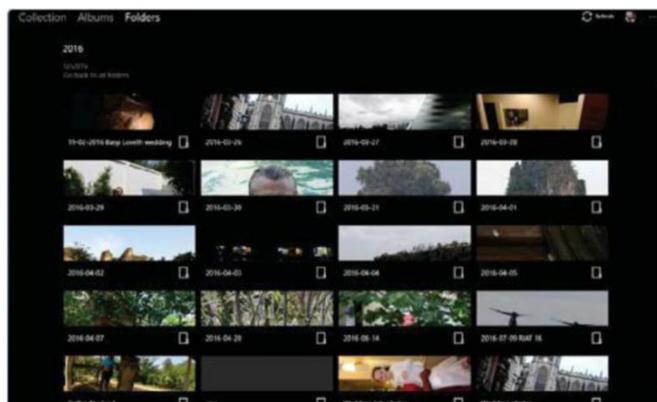
The [Albums](#) view has two ways of organising your images: one automatic; the other more hands-on. When you first go into Photos, it will scan the folders you've marked in Settings and present them as Albums – you won't see all the images in the folders, just the ones that Photos has picked. It's quite discerning, but doesn't delete anything. You can add important pictures later.



Add or remove photos

8 Sharing Albums

Once you've created an album you're happy with, you can share it in one of two ways. The first way is to upload the album to [OneDrive](#), then send a link to the people you want to view it. To do this, click 'Share this Album' below the images, and select 'Upload and Share'. Once your album has been uploaded, a screen will appear confirming the upload, along with sharing options.



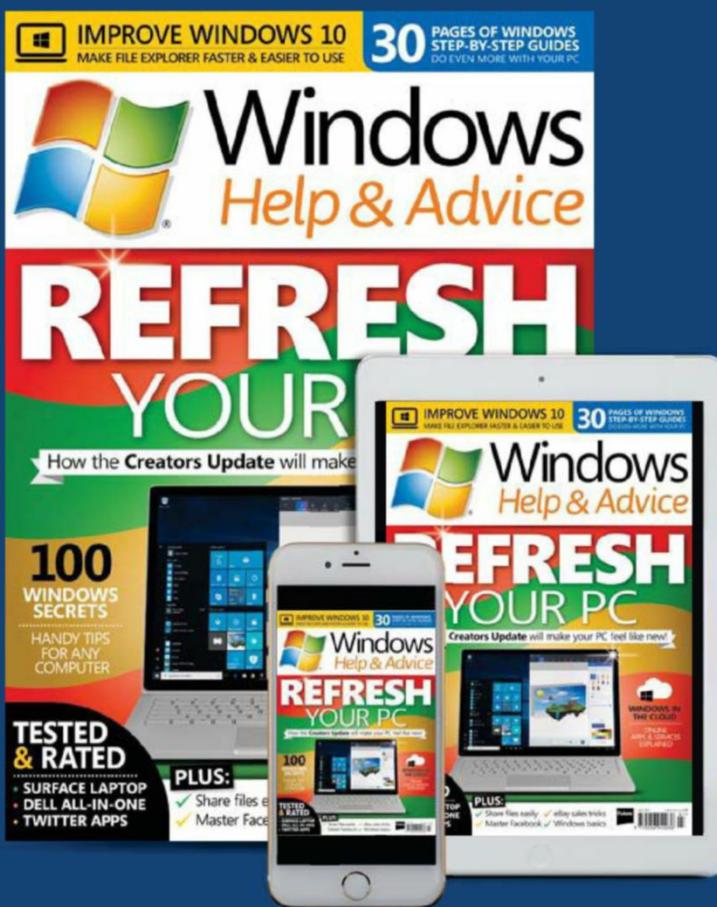
10 View your folders

The folder view is still there in Photos, even though all the cleverness of Albums overshadows it. Click Folders in the bar at the top of the interface, and you'll see the folders you added to Photos in Settings. Double-click one, and you can delve further into its structure. Right-click a photo, and select 'Open folder' from the menu that appears to open that folder in Explorer. ■

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Learn how to...

Share files quickly and securely over the internet



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

"Internet file-sharing doesn't have to be complicated – or risky. O&O FileDirect is the perfect free tool for the job, and it's both secure and hassle-free"

At a glance

Skill level...

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

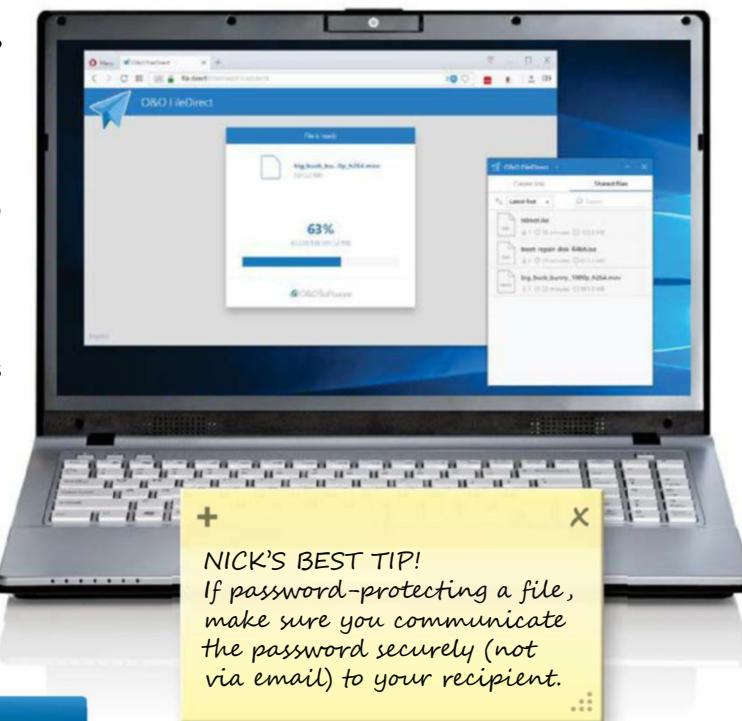
Suitable for...

- Windows 10
- Windows 8.1
- Windows 7

What's the best way to share files over the internet? Email? It's an insecure medium, and there are file-size limits. OneDrive or Google Drive? That works best for shared folders and collaborating regularly, not one-off file shares.

The easiest and most secure way to share files is by P2P (peer-to-peer) file sharing, which transfers files directly from your PC to your recipient's computer, with nothing stored online. O&O FileDirect (www.oo-software.com/en/filedirect) makes this process a simple and safe one: files are transferred using WebRTC encryption for maximum security.

Your recipient doesn't even need to install O&O FileDirect – instead, they click a shared link in a compatible browser (Firefox, Opera, Chrome or Vivaldi, but not Edge or Internet Explorer) to access the file. It's simple, quick and no hassle – the step-by-step guide reveals all.

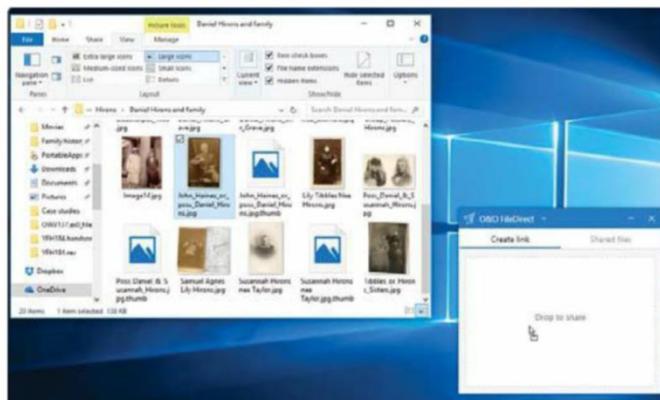


Step-by-step | Share files with O&O FileDirect



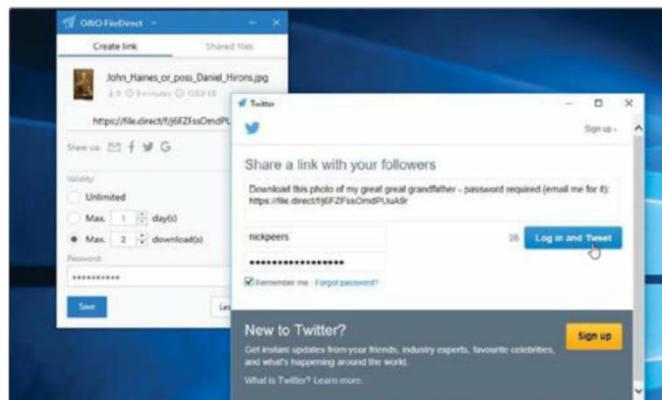
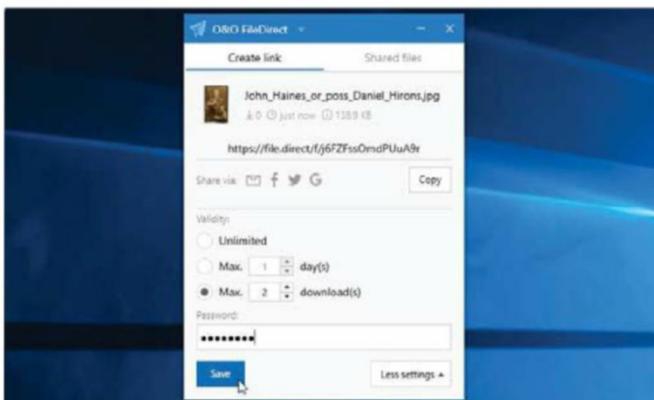
1 Download, install

Open your web browser and head to www.oo-software.com/en/filedirect where you'll find the program's homepage. Scroll down the page and click the green Download button. Save OOFfileDirect1ENU.exe to your hard drive, then double-click this file to download the full setup file and launch the installation wizard. Follow this through – choose Complete when prompted.



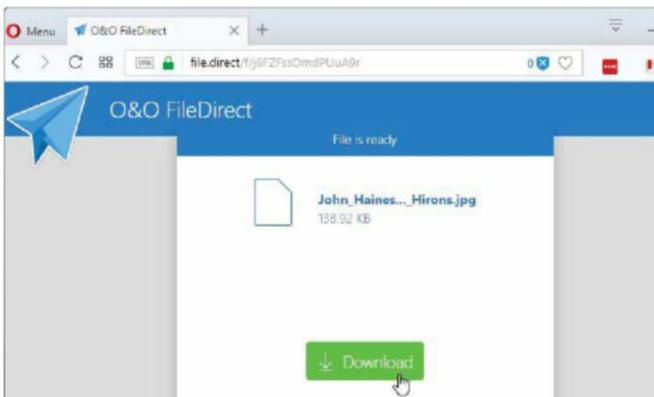
2 Select file to share

Type 'filedirect' into the search box and launch O&O FileDirect – ignore any error referring to 'LiveUpdateCaption' by clicking OK and the program's main window should now appear. Open a File Explorer window and locate the file or folder you wish to share. Drag this on to the O&O FileDirect window and drop when prompted. You'll see a message about compressing the file.



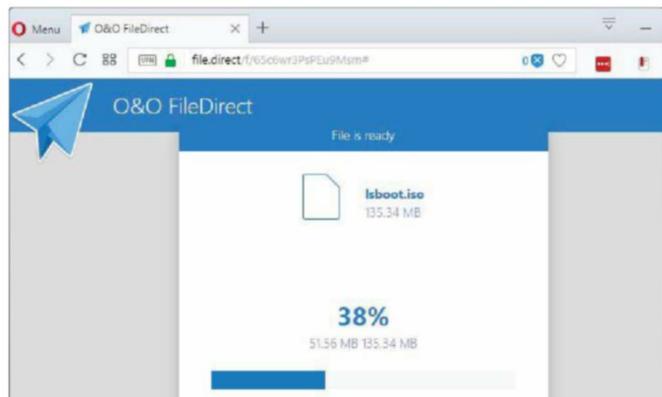
3 Tweak sharing settings

You'll see the file or folder appear, complete with a thumbnail preview or icon. Beneath it is a link, which you'll share with others. First, though, click the 'More settings' button at the bottom of the screen to reveal two additional options: first, you can set the link to expire after a set number of days or downloads. Second, you can add a password to protect the download.



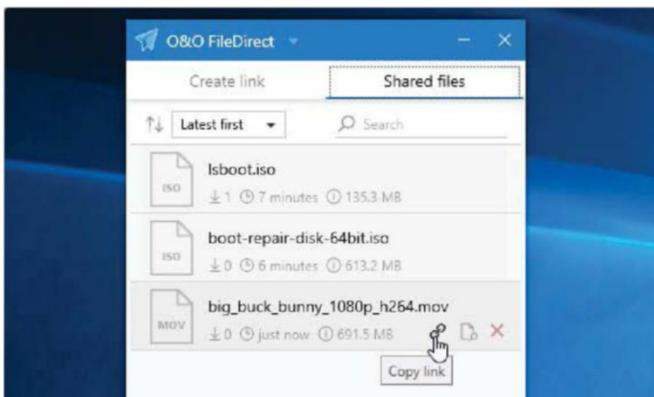
4 Share file

Click 'Save' if you apply either security setting, or 'Less settings' to hide the extra options and reveal the Delete button, which you can click to remove the link at any time. To share the link with someone via email or social media, click the relevant button. If sharing by social media, you'll need to log into your account, then tweak the message before publishing it.



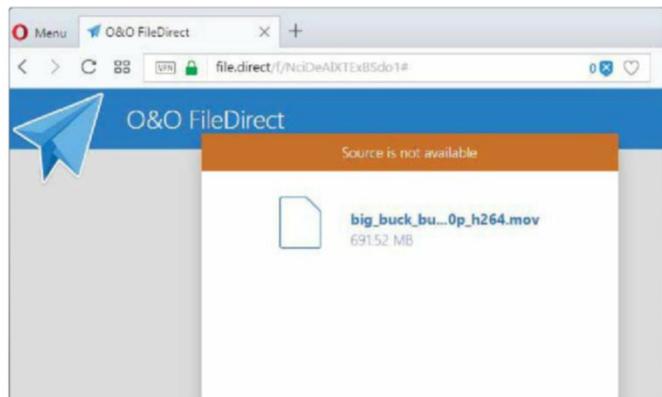
5 Access file

Alternatively, click Copy to copy the link to your clipboard, allowing you to paste into another application. The link works only while your PC is switched on and FileDirect is running. Your recipient will click the link to open it in their web browser – remember it needs to be Firefox or a Chrome-based browser to work. If necessary, they'll need to enter any password you set.



6 File download

Once they've clicked the link, the download will begin. Its speed will depend on both their internet connection and yours – the file is transferred directly from your PC to theirs over an encrypted web connection, it's never stored in the cloud. When the download is complete, switch to the 'Shared files' tab and you'll see how many times the file has been downloaded.



7 Add more files

You can share more files or folders simply by dragging them on to the 'Create link' tab – they'll show up in place of the current file. Review current shared files by switching to the 'Shared files' tab. From here, you can roll your mouse over a file to quickly copy its link to the clipboard, open its file location or delete the link, which immediately stops it from being shared with anyone.

8 Suspend access

Click an entry in the 'Shared files' list to edit it further by adding or amending passwords and download limits. If you close the FileDirect application, your contacts will still be able to access the file (it runs in the background). To make the link temporarily inaccessible, either shut down your PC or open Task Manager and locate the O&O FileDirect process. Select it and click End Task. ■

Learn how to...

Write without distractions



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

"Escape social media, emails and cluttered programs with WriteMonkey – a simple writing app that lets you focus on what really matters"

At a glance

Skill level...

- Anyone can do it
- Straightforward
- Tricky in parts

Suitable for...

-  Windows 10
-  Windows 8.1
-  Windows 7

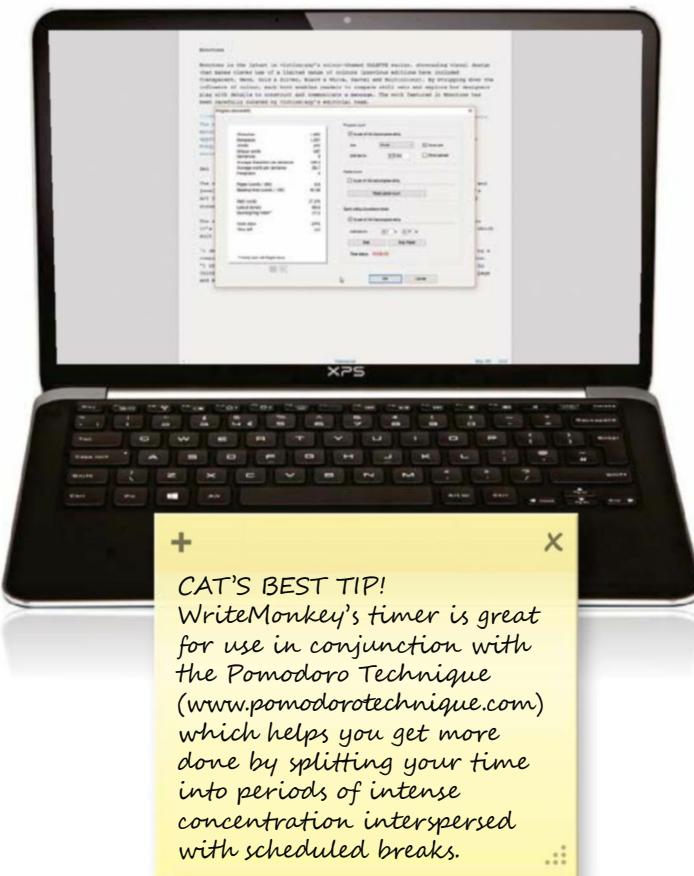


ou've got your word processor and web browser open, ready to knuckle down to some serious work – but wait, what's that new email notification about? It could be something important. You'd better check. And there's a new alert on that Facebook tab you left open. What could that be?

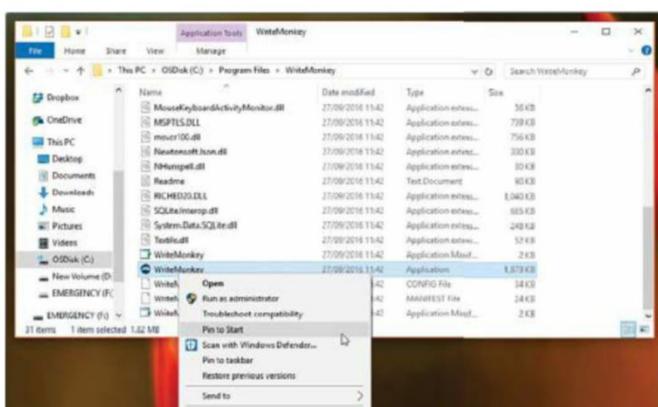
Even with the best will in the world, it's difficult to avoid distractions, and they can easily eat up your time. That's why you need WriteMonkey – a simple but very effective text editor that blocks out everything except the page you're working on.

There's no unnecessary clutter, such as toolbars, and if you really do need to look something up online, you can do so with a quick keyboard shortcut and then close the small browser window immediately once you've finished.

Let's get started with WriteMonkey and put an end to procrastination.



Step-by-step | Get focused



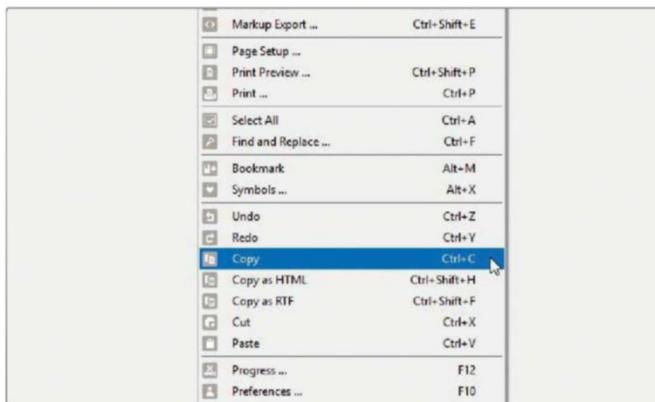
1 Get WriteMonkey

Download WriteMonkey from writemonkey.com (it's most convenient to use the 'Manual download' link) and extract the ZIP file to a convenient place on your hard drive. WriteMonkey doesn't have to be installed, which is great, but that means it won't appear in your Start menu. For easy access, right-click the file WriteMonkey.exe and select 'Pin to Start'.



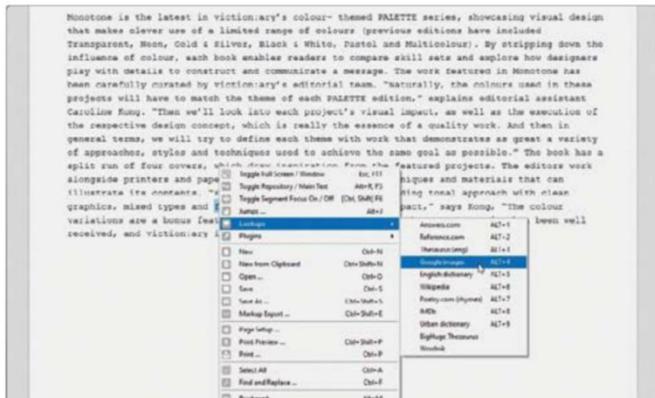
2 The page and the scratchpad

Starting WriteMonkey for the first time can be a bit intimidating. There are no menus, icons, or even scrollbars; the screen is almost bare, with only the time and word count in the bottom left, and the word 'Scratch' at the bottom centre. Clicking this opens a scratchpad, where you can make notes as you write and save them as their own separate files by tapping [Ctrl] + [S].



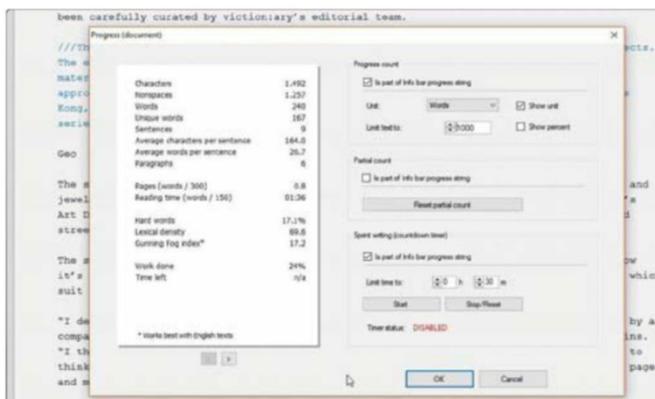
3 Shortcuts and options

WriteMonkey supports keyboard shortcuts you'll be familiar with from Microsoft Word – [Ctrl] + [C] for copy, [Ctrl] + [X] for cut, and so on. Using these will help you work faster, but you don't have to rely on them. Right-click on your WriteMonkey document to access a menu containing all the options you'd expect from a text editor, plus some new ones to make your life easier.



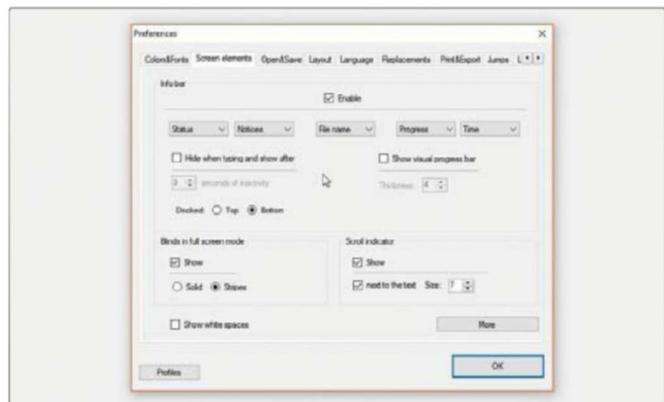
5 Distraction-free searches

'Lookups' saves you leaving WriteMonkey and opening a browser window when you want to find information about a subject. To use it, highlight and right-click a word, select Lookups and choose from a list of resources including online dictionaries, thesauruses and Google Images. A window will pop up, and can be quickly closed once you're done.



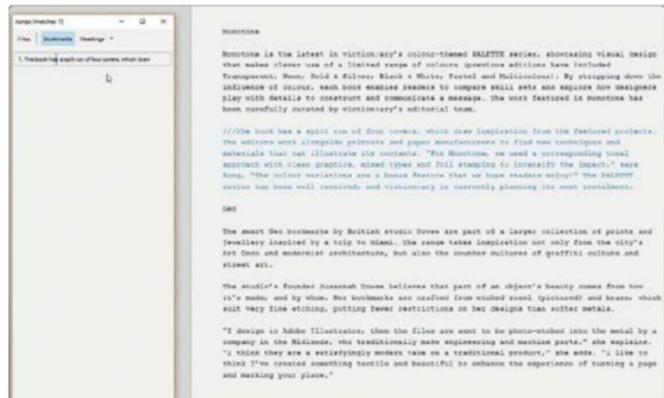
7 Track your progress

Another of WriteMonkey's unusual but useful features is the Progress window, accessed via the right-click menu or by tapping [F12]. This gives you much more detail than the bar at the bottom of the page, including some interesting stats on your writing style. You can also set a timer to alert you once you've been working for a certain time.



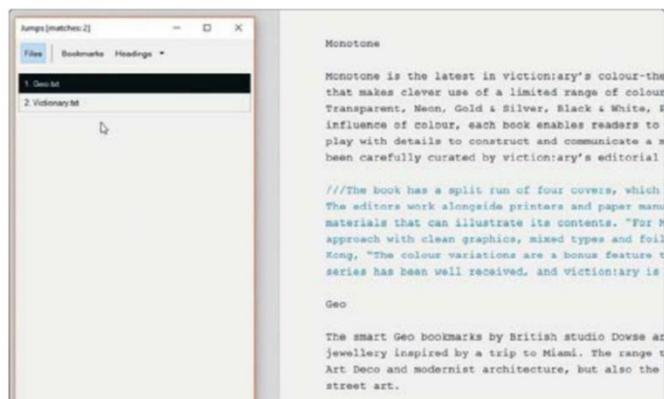
4 Customize WriteMonkey

Select Preferences from the right-click menu (or tap [F10]) to customise WriteMonkey. In addition to adjusting basics, such as fonts and colours, you can decide how much information should be displayed in the info bar, what language the dictionary should use, and whether your work should be saved automatically. Use the arrows in the Preferences panel to see all the tabs available.



6 Create quick links

If you're writing a particularly long piece, you'll find it useful to jump to certain points quickly. Position the cursor at the start of a paragraph and type '///'. The paragraph will then turn blue, and you'll then be able to jump straight to it from anywhere in the document by tapping [Alt] + [J] and then selecting it from the list on the left side.



8 Save files and create projects

Once you've finished, tap [Ctrl] + [S] to save your work. All the files saved in a particular folder are treated as part of the same project, so you can access them all quickly by tapping [Alt] + [J] and clicking the Files tab. If you have lots of files, the Filter option at the bottom lets you search for specific filenames, and you can delete or rename any file by right-clicking it. Happy writing! ■

Learn how to...

Turn your PC into a Wi-Fi hotspot



Your guide [Tim Hardwick](#) says...

"Share the wired or wireless internet connection of your Windows 10 PC with other users and devices with one of these two methods"

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 found yourself away from home with access to only a single wired internet connection, but with various wireless devices that you and your family want to connect up? Perhaps you've stayed in a hotel room where Wi-Fi access is charged based on the number of users that log on. Or maybe you just want to temporarily extend your home network's wireless range to the garden or another part of the house using your laptop.

Windows 10's facility to turn your PC into a wireless hotspot can be the perfect solution in all of these situations, and here we'll show you two ways you can do it. The first and easiest method involves downloading and installing a third-party app that largely automates the process. But if you're confident enough to adjust a few Windows settings, give the second method a go instead.

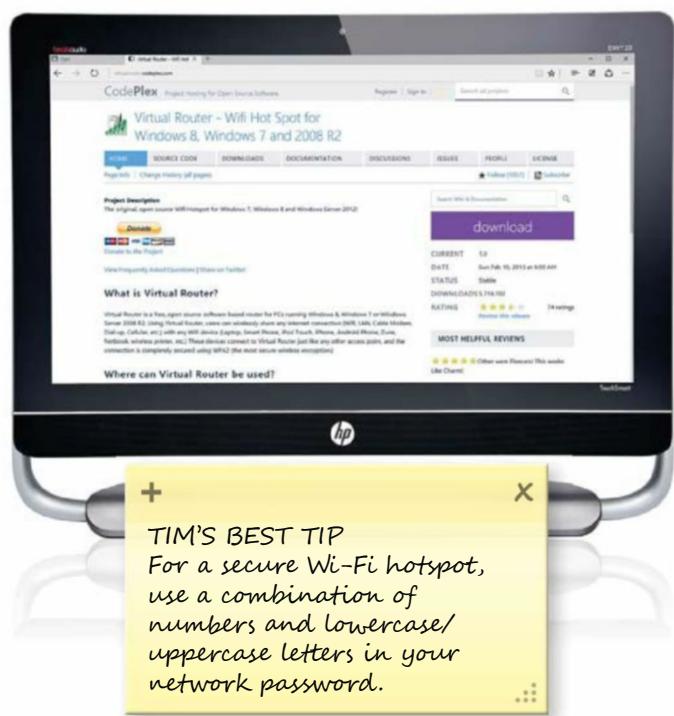
Step-by-step | Turn your PC into a Wi-Fi hotspot



The screenshot shows the 'Virtual Router - Wifi Hot Spot for Windows 8, Windows 7 and 2008 R2' project page on CodePlex. It features a 'download' button, project statistics (1.0, Sun Feb 10, 2013 at 8:00 AM, Stable), and a rating section with 24 reviews. Below the main content is a note about where the router can be used.

1 Virtual Router

This first method involves installing a third-party utility called Virtual Router. It's a free open-source app; it's also free of ads and bloatware. Open up a browser window, type 'virtualrouter.codeplex.com' into the address bar and hit [Enter]. You'll see the open source project page and a download button. Click it to download and confirm you want to install the utility.



The screenshot shows the 'Virtual Router Manager v1.0' application window. It has a 'Settings' tab with fields for 'Network Name (SSID): Tim's WiFi hotspot', 'Password: thiSi5thespot', and 'Shared Connection: Wi-Fi'. A 'Start Virtual Router' button is at the bottom. To the right is a yellow sticky note with a tip.

TIM'S BEST TIP

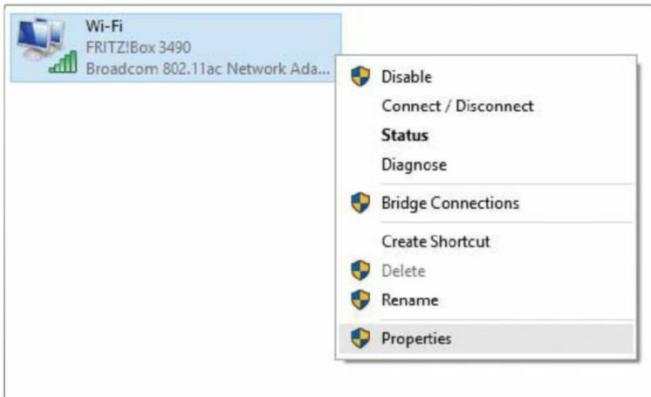
For a secure Wi-Fi hotspot, use a combination of numbers and lowercase/uppercase letters in your network password.



The screenshot shows the same 'Virtual Router Manager v1.0' application window, but now it shows a peer connected under the 'Peers Connected (0)' section. The 'Start Virtual Router' button is still visible.

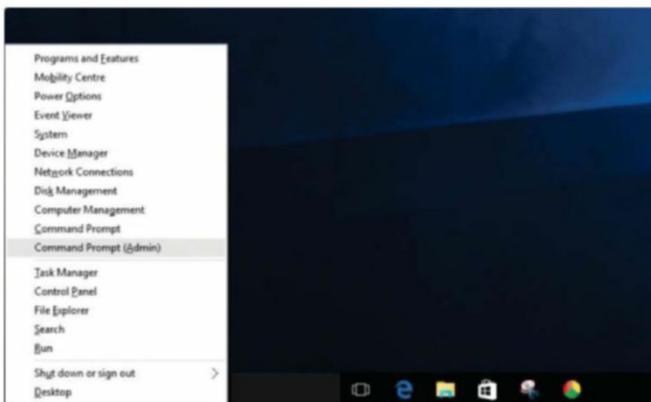
2 Name your network

Virtual Router should appear in your Start menu. Open the app and you should see the utility's management window appear. Now, give your new Wi-Fi hotspot an identifiable name by typing one into the Network Name (SSID) field. Next, input a password for your network (eight characters minimum), then select the connection to share from the menu and click Start Virtual Router.



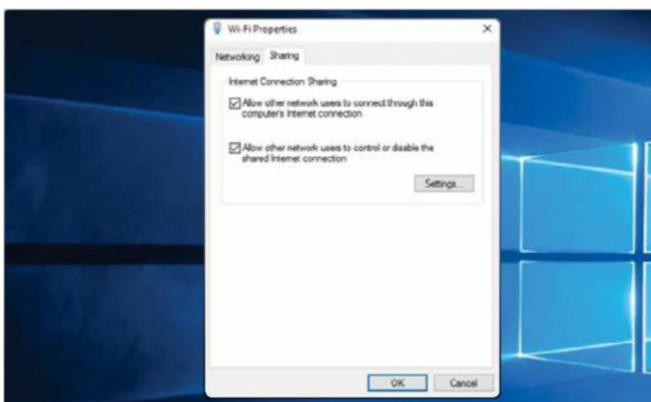
3 Sharing preferences

Hit a problem? It's likely your sharing preferences aren't properly configured. To fix them, open the Start menu and type 'View network connections' in the search bar. Now, right-click the connection to share and select Properties. Click the Sharing tab and ensure the box is checked next to 'Allow other network users to connect through this computer's internet connection'.



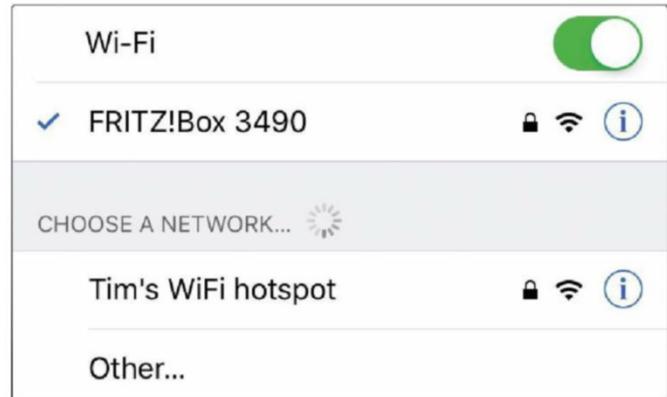
5 Alternative method

Another method for sharing a wired or wireless connection with other devices doesn't require additional utilities, but it does involve a visit to Windows 10's command line. In order to get there, press [Win] + [X] on your keyboard to bring up the power user settings menu and select Command Prompt (Admin) from the list. This will open up a black window with a flashing cursor.



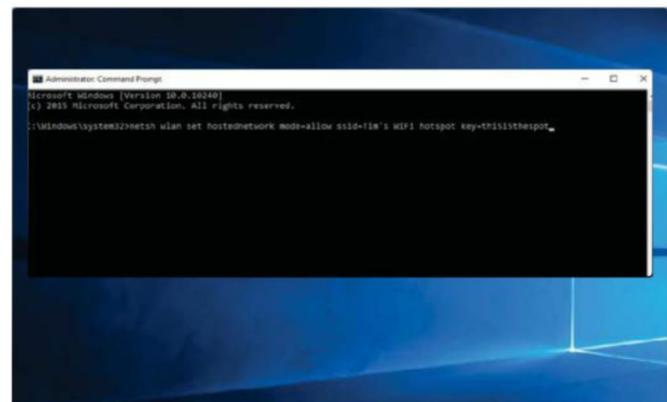
7 Allow connections

Next, open the Start menu and type 'View network connections' in the search bar. Then, right-click on the Wi-Fi connection you want to share in the list and select Properties. Click on the Sharing tab and make sure the box is checked next to 'Allow other network users to connect through this computer's internet connection'. Now click OK.



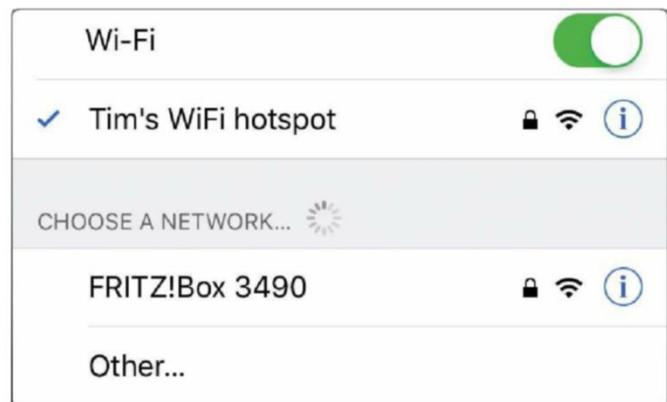
4 Connect to hotspot

If you tweaked Windows' sharing preferences outlined in Step 3, start the Virtual Router again and your Wi-Fi hotspot should go live. Now, switch to a device that you want to connect (we've used an iPhone) and open its Wi-Fi settings. The name you gave your network should show up in the list of wireless signals. Select it, type in your password and the device will connect.



6 Command line

Now, input the command at the cursor prompt, replacing the values for SSID and 'key' with the identifying network name and password you would like to use: 'netsh wlan set hostednetwork mode=allow ssid=AdHoc key=password'. Press Enter to run the command, and input 'netsh wlan start hostednetwork' and press [Enter] to start your Wi-Fi network.



8 Connect to hotspot

Move to a device you want to connect to your wireless hotspot and open its Wi-Fi settings. The name of your network should show up in the list of wireless signals. Select it, type in the password and the device should connect automatically. Note that your hotspot will continue to serve other devices as long as your computer is switched on and your Wi-Fi is active. ■

TAP INTO THE CLOUD

Discover why and how the cloud can transform the way you use your PC with our essential guide to the best cloud-powered apps and services

Cloud computing has changed the way we use technology. In the past, your PC powered everything you did, but that changed with the emergence of cloud apps and services, which provide features you'd normally associate with a desktop application, only streamed to your computer over the internet.

The key advantage of the cloud is that it transfers the heavy lifting of running applications from your PC, enabling you to run complex apps and services with little more than a web browser. It also makes it easy to access your data anywhere, on any device and at any time – provided you have internet coverage.

In this feature, we'll examine some of the ways in which you can tap into the cloud. We'll start by revealing how to protect yourself from data loss by backing up to the cloud, then show you how easy it is to sync that data with other devices and share it securely with others.

We'll then look at several useful cloud-based apps and services that enable you to do everything from edit images and office documents in your web browser to converting files and connecting devices together. We'll then reveal how to stream music, video and other media over the internet before finishing off by revealing how to make sure your cloud endeavours are secure.

Enough pre-amble – it's time to tap into the power of the cloud...





Cloud backup and sync

Discover how to use the cloud to provide an off-site backup of your data that you can access, sync and share across multiple devices

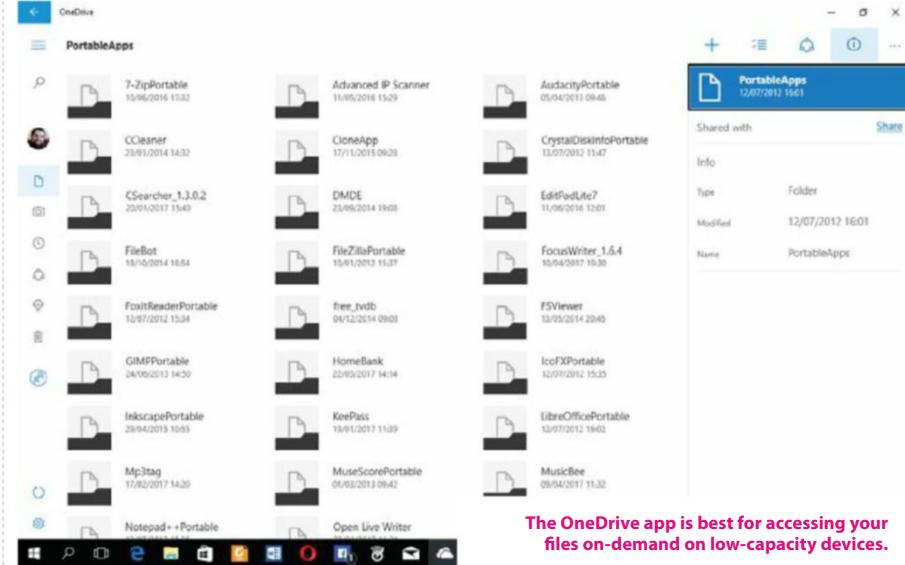
The most obvious use for the cloud is as a remote place to store your documents, photos and other files. Think of it as your offsite backup – if your house burned down or thieves stole all your PC equipment, then you'd still have access to your files.

There are numerous other benefits to cloud storage too: first, you can access your files from wherever you are through your laptop, smartphone or tablet, without having to physically download them first. Second, cloud storage also serves to sync data between your computers, giving you access to the latest versions of your files and ensuring you're always working with the correct version.

Other benefits include being able to selectively share files and folders with other people, and – depending on the cloud service you use – edit certain files, such as Word and Excel documents, directly in your browser should you need to tweak them.

Pick your solution

You can't escape Microsoft's cloud storage offering, OneDrive, given how aggressively it's promoted in Windows 10. If you sign into Windows with your Microsoft account then you already have access to 5GB of storage, but you can increase this to 50GB for £1.99 a month, or get a whopping 1TB of storage when

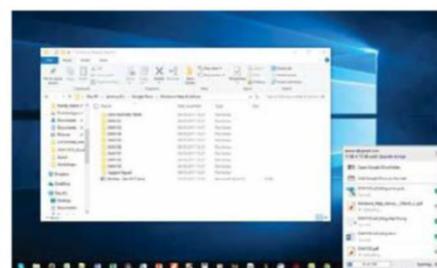


The OneDrive app is best for accessing your files on-demand on low-capacity devices.

you purchase an Office 365 subscription (£39 a year for one PC).

If you're looking for an alternative, you'll find many to choose from, but it pays to pick one that's well established and unlikely to disappear. Two of the best known are Google Drive (drive.google.com) and Dropbox (www.dropbox.com). Google offers 15GB free storage with its account, although this is shared with its Gmail email service; Dropbox only offers 2GB for free, although you can 'earn' up to 16GB by completing certain tasks and referring friends and family (500MB per referral).

Both services charge £7.99 a month for 1TB, but Google trumps Microsoft in



Google Drive offers a similar set of features to OneDrive, with more informative notifications.

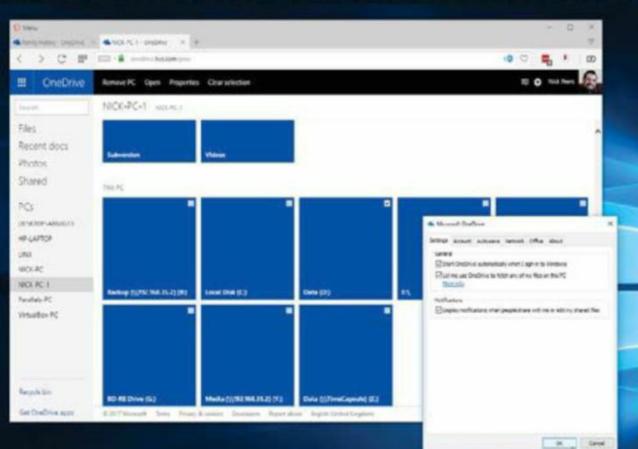
Optimise OneDrive

To tweak OneDrive, click the '^' button in the Taskbar notification area, then right-click the OneDrive icon and choose Settings. Use the Account tab to select specific folders to sync with this PC – handy if you're low on space or only want to access a certain subset of your data. Go to the Network tab and select 'Adjust automatically' under 'Upload rate' – this can prevent your internet connection being overwhelmed by OneDrive.

Switch back to the Settings tab and you'll see an option marked 'Let me use OneDrive to fetch any of my files on this PC' – leave this ticked to access

any file, not just those inside your OneDrive folder, from your web browser – log into OneDrive, then click the App Menu button in the top left corner and choose 'PCs' from the drop-down menu.

And finally, if you're an Office 365 user, OneDrive has the annoying habit of saving directly to the cloud rather than your local OneDrive folder. To stop this behaviour, open the offending Office app, then select the File tab and click Options. Switch to the Save section and tick 'Save to Computer by default' before clicking OK. New documents will now be saved on your PC.



OneDrive can be set to give you access any file on your PC from a remote computer, perfect if you're the forgetful type.

offering 100GB storage for just £1.59 a month (£15.99 a year), which should be adequate for most people's needs.

How they work

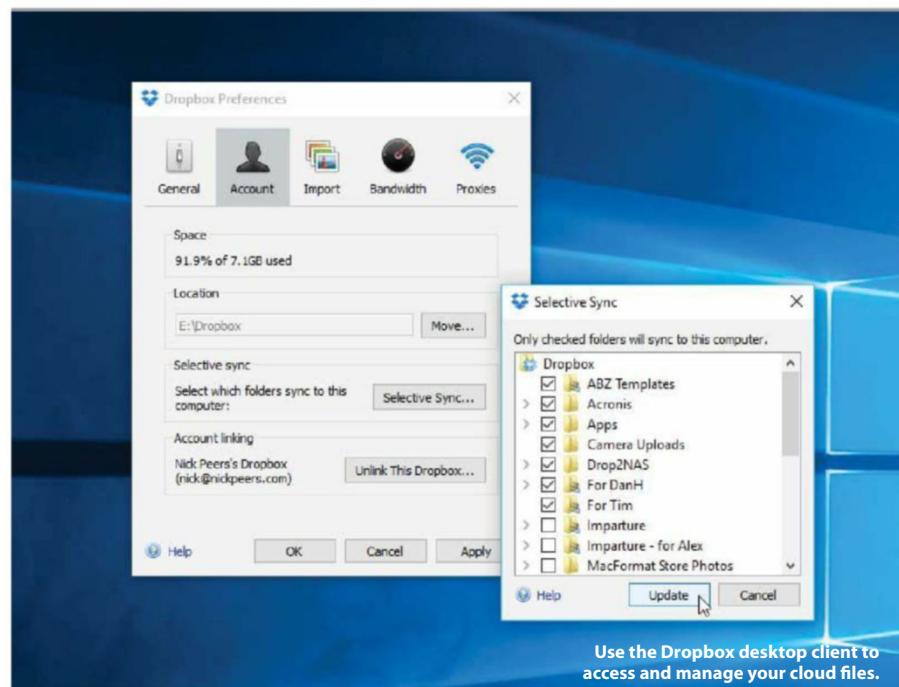
After downloading and installing the desktop client (not necessary with OneDrive as it's baked into the Windows operating system), all three services set up a shared folder, which is located inside your personal user folder by default. When you copy files into here they're automatically uploaded to the cloud provider's server.

If you then install the desktop client on other computers, those files will automatically sync to those devices, and then any changes you subsequently make on one machine, whether adding, moving, modifying or deleting files, is quickly synced to the others. All three services also record up to 30 days of file changes, enabling you to roll back to earlier versions if required, and there's a 'Selective sync' option that makes it possible to sync only a subset of your

"If you then install the desktop client on other computers, those files will automatically sync to those devices"

files to a specific device – handy for syncing work documents, for example.

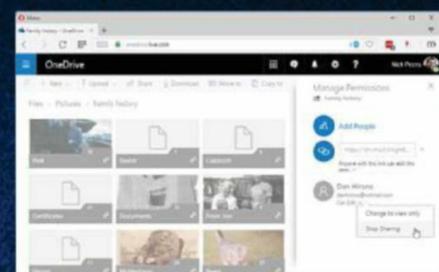
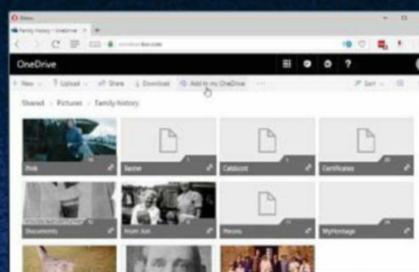
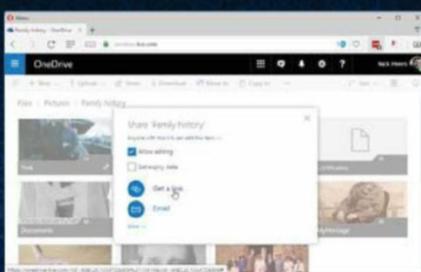
In addition, you can install apps for Android, iOS and Windows Phone to view, stream and download files on demand when out and about (plus automatically upload photos from your phone to your cloud storage). There's also a OneDrive app in the Windows Store, aimed primarily at low-capacity Windows laptops and tablets where you don't have space to store all your files – the app enables you to browse and access the files on demand.



right-click the target file and folder and look for a sharing option under the Google Drive or Dropbox sub-menu.

You retain in control of your folders at all times – you can set an expiry date on shared links so they automatically stop working, for example, or set read-only access to allow people to view and download copies of your files, while preventing them from editing or deleting the originals. Look for shared icons in File Explorer indicating which folders are currently being shared. These don't always appear in OneDrive, but luckily you can get a quick overview of any shared folders or files in the OneDrive web interface by clicking the App Menu button in the top left corner and choosing Shared from the drop-down menu that appears.

Share files with OneDrive



1 Shared link

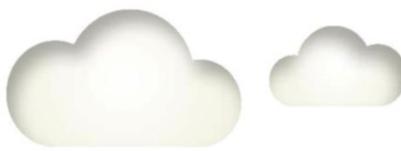
Browse to the file or folder that you wish to share using File Explorer on your PC. Right-click it and you will be able to choose 'Share a OneDrive link' to share a read-only (and download) link, or 'More OneDrive sharing options' to create a link with editing and read-only characteristics – handy for collaborative projects.

2 Access link

A link will be generated for you to share with others. When a recipient gets a message from you containing a link, they can click it and access the file or folder using the OneDrive web interface. They can view or download the items without logging in or click 'Add to my OneDrive' to edit files through their own account.

3 Permissions

If you want to view and manage a shared folder's permissions, browse to it in your web browser and click the 'i' button, then click 'Change permissions' under 'Has access'. Click a link or a person to edit the level of access that they have or remove them completely. This is useful if you want to temporarily share items with them.



Run apps from the cloud

Discover a world of cloud-powered apps that can be run directly from your machine's web browser to save drive storage space

One of the most interesting ways in which the cloud has transformed our lives is in the way it's now possible to run apps that take up next to no resources on your PC. Cloud-powered apps are basically powered by remote servers – networks of supercomputers linked together to provide the resources required to run the app. Your PC then accesses these apps directly through your web browser or – less frequently – through special apps that basically provide a 'wrapper' around a web-based interface.

The concept of running all your applications in the cloud led to the emergence of Chromebooks, low-powered laptops that are powered by Chrome OS, which basically uses the Chrome web browser as its desktop interface and works primarily with web-based or cloud applications. The concept works well with low-powered Windows laptops and tablets too.

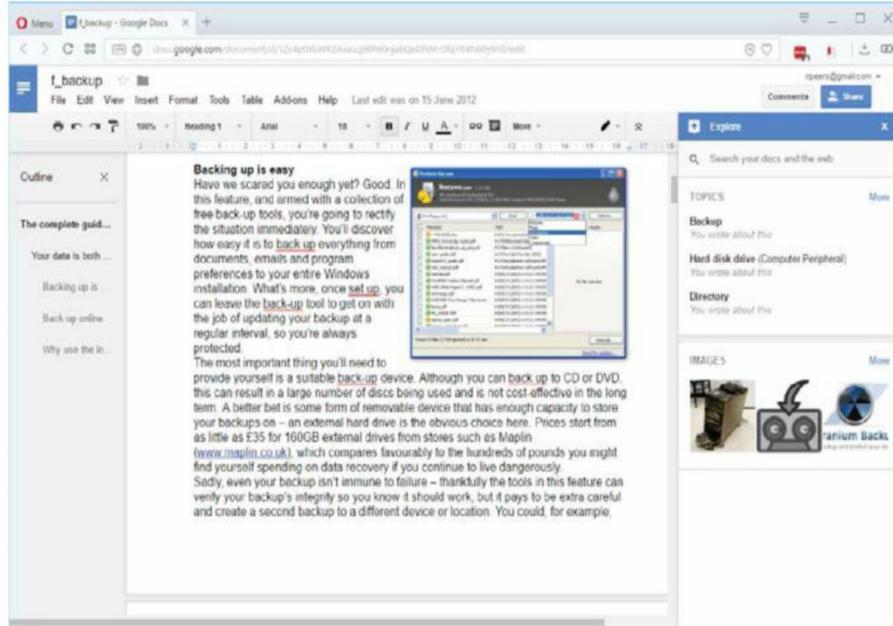
Cloud-powered office

If you've signed up for OneDrive or Google Drive you may have already encountered your first cloud apps in the form of online versions of Word, Excel and PowerPoint (OneDrive) or Docs, Sheets and Slides (Google Drive). Click an office document in your browser window and you'll be able to edit it using one of these tools. They provide a familiar interface with menus and toolbars, which work in the same way as their desktop equivalents. There are fewer features compared to those in your desktop office suite, but the core functionality is still there.

Access through your web browser is all well and good, but if you regularly make use of these – or other cloud apps – then look for a standalone 'wrapper' app, which basically offers you the functionality you need without requiring your browser to be open.



Microsoft's Sway app provides a wrapper for accessing this cloud-based presentation tool.



Google's Docs, Slides and Sheets are cloud-based apps that you can access using your web browser.

Mobile apps are common enough, but you can occasionally get desktop versions too: the Kiwi for Gmail app (www.kiwiforgmail.com) provides a wrapper for the various Google apps – it costs \$9.99 (around £8.22) a year for access to Docs, Slides and Sheets, or you can let the 30-day trial convert it into Kiwi for Gmail Lite, and use it exclusively to access your Google email, contacts and calendar instead.

"If you've signed up for OneDrive or Google Drive you may have already encountered your first cloud apps"

More cloud apps

Head to <https://sway.com> and you'll discover Microsoft's cloud-based web presentation tool, Sway. You can run this directly from your browser or install the Windows Store app, but the result is the same: it's powered by the cloud, your presentations are stored online in your Microsoft account and there's no way to download or access them offline.

Most cloud apps do provide some provision for offline use through their desktop clients or Windows Store apps – Simplenote (www.simplenote.com) and Wunderlist (www.wunderlist.com) are two examples, while Evernote (www.evernote.com) gives you offline access

to your notes when you upgrade to the Plus version, which costs £29.99 a year.

The scope for cloud-powered apps is widening all the time. Need to edit a photo? Head over to Pixlr (<http://pixlr.com/editor/>), upload your image and use its powerful tools to make changes before downloading the finished copy back to your PC – see issue 131 for more. Want a tool for technical drawings? Try Draw.io (<https://www.draw.io/>), a free

tool that saves directly to your choice of cloud service or hard drive, plus can export files in PNG, PDF and SVG format.

Frustrated with the loss of Windows Movie Maker? Cloud-based WeVideo (www.wevideo.com) provides a similar web interface, but you'll have to pay a monthly subscription to unlock HD support and the ability to access advanced editing tools. Video Toolbox (www.videotoolbox.com) is cheaper, but offers basic editing and no effects, plus you're limited to 600MB files.

You'll also find the cloud is a great place to go to perform specific tasks. The step-by-step guide opposite reveals six of the most useful we've found...

Six unmissable cloud tools



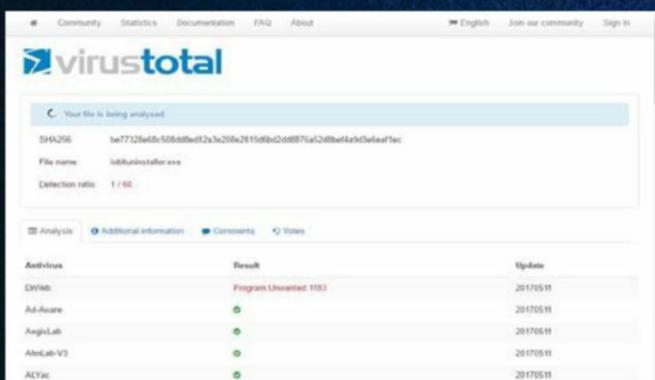
1 Do more with PDFs

Smallpdf (smallpdf.com) gives you access to several useful PDF-related tools: you can convert to and from PDF via JPG, PowerPoint, Excel or Word, for example. And you can also merge two PDFs together, split a PDF into multiple files and modify protection. Click an option, upload your file and off you go.



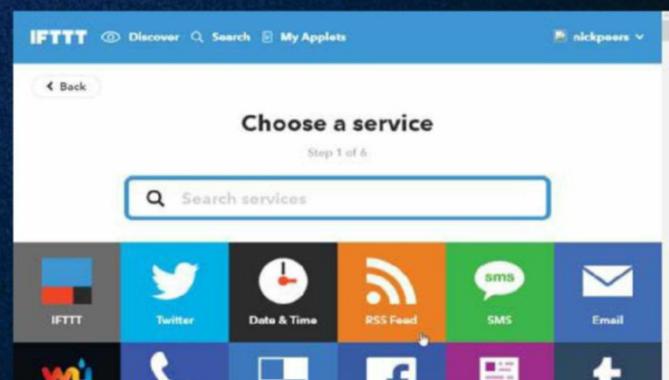
2 Selectively print web pages

You want to print the contents of a web page, but not waste reams of paper. Enter its URL at www.printwhatyoulike.com and you'll be able to manually edit the page, stripping out adverts and other unwanted junk, before printing the content you do want on to significantly less paper.



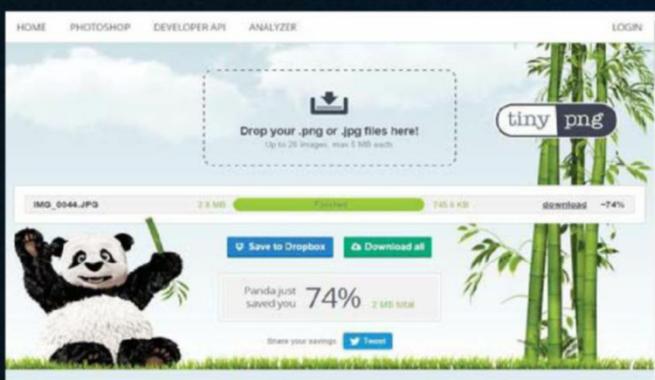
3 Check out suspicious files

Worried about a file you've downloaded? Head over to www.virustotal.com to upload the file. The website will then run said file through dozens of well-known anti-virus engines to produce a definitive report on whether it's safe or not, packed with helpful detail so you can make an informed decision.



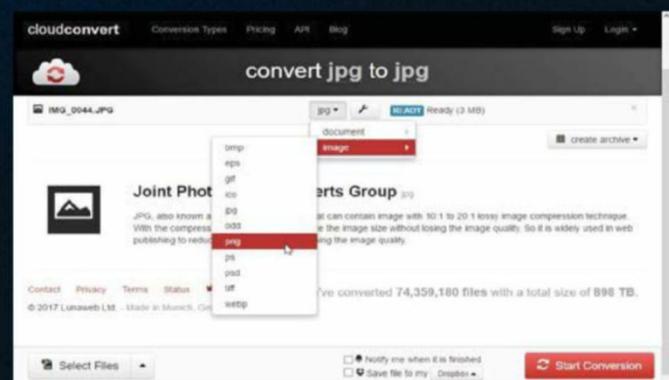
4 Automate actions

Go to IFTTT.com to link devices (phones, smart gadgets, your PC) and online services (Twitter, Instagram, your Google account and so on) together using 'recipes' built using a simple formula: cause (If That) and effect (Then This). You can add, enable and manage recipes from your browser or mobile.



5 Compress images

Want a way to create smaller JPG and PNG image files without ruining their quality? Upload your photos – 5MB limit per file, up to 20 per upload – to tinypng.com and it'll squeeze them down to a more manageable size without noticeably affecting their quality. Handy for blogs, social media posts, etc.



6 Convert any file

Need a file converting into a readable format? Visit cloudconvert.com where you can convert uploaded files between 215 different formats, including audio, video, office, compressed, and images. Advanced options enable you to tweak conversion settings, batch process files and more.



Media cloud streaming

Access your favourite music, movies, TV shows and photos anywhere – without having to store them all on your PC

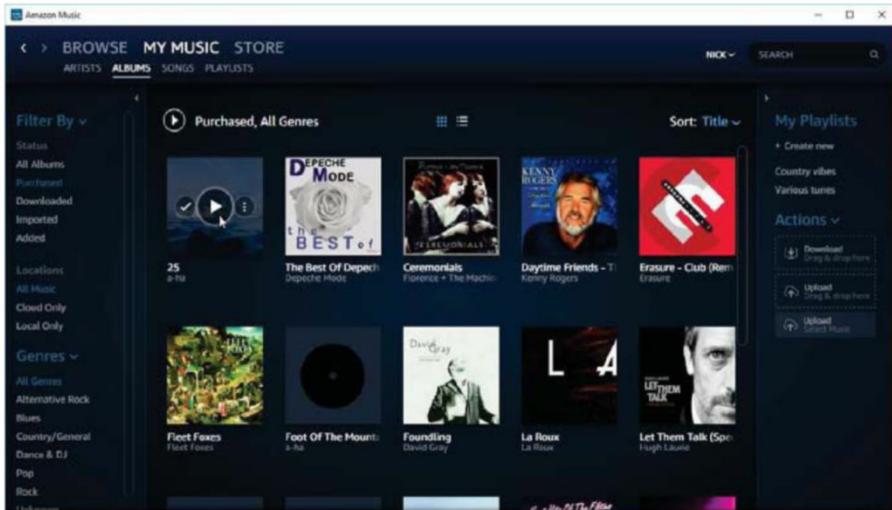
Digital media has changed the way we enjoy music, movies and photos – we no longer have to lug large photo albums around or get up from the sofa to swap our CDs. You're no longer obliged to purchase a physical copy of an album, film or TV show to consume it digitally, either, freeing up storage space at home.

The cloud has taken things further: now you can rent media instead of buying it outright, and thanks to the growth in mobile data plans, it's even possible to access your media on the move too, using the cloud to transfer it in a process called streaming.

Stream music

Think beyond Apple (iTunes and Apple Music) and Microsoft (Groove Music) and the best-known choice for streaming music over the internet is Spotify (www.spotify.com). It gives you access to a huge catalogue full of popular songs, and there's a free version you can download to your PC or mobile. It's the ultimate cross between radio station – with curated playlists and the latest releases – and personal jukebox, enabling you to build your own virtual collection of albums and playlists.

Upgrade to Spotify Premium (£9.99 a month after 30-day trial) to unlock the full collection of music, and you'll be able to download tracks to listen to



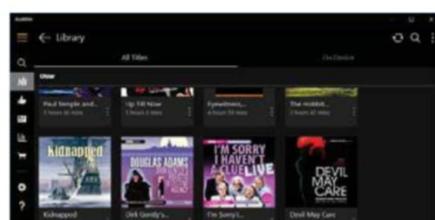
Access previously purchased music as well as stream tracks from the internet with Amazon Music Player.

offline, enjoy High Definition (HD) sound quality and remove adverts.

Amazon offers its own rival service in the form of Amazon Prime Music (free to Prime members with access to two million songs) and Amazon Music Unlimited (£3.99–£14.99 a month, with up to 40 million songs). But there's also Amazon Cloud Player for those of us who are old-fashioned enough to prefer paying for our music outright.

Log into Amazon Music at <https://music.amazon.co.uk> where you access any streaming subscription as well as listen to your purchases, all kept in the cloud for access wherever you happen

to be. Install Amazon Music for PC and you can automatically play (and selectively upload) music from iTunes and Windows Media Player to stream too. You can also download tracks from



Audible offers both downloading and on-demand streaming of your audiobook collection.

Stream your own media

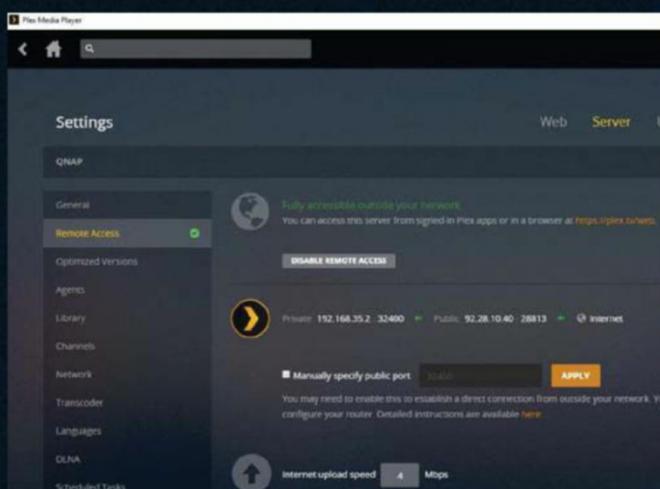
The problem with streaming video services (such as Netflix) is they're usually restricted – you have no control over the content and you're tied to a specific provider. If you have a large collection of personally owned digital media, then why not build your own unlimited, non-expiring, streaming media service instead?

Both Emby (emby.tv) and Plex (plex.tv) enable you to build your own media server containing your private content, then stream to devices both on your local network and further afield through the internet. Taking Plex as an example, you install the server

on your PC or – if you'd like to run it 24-7 – a compatible low-powered device such as a Raspberry Pi 3 or a mid-range Seagate or QNAP network hard drive (or NAS).

After configuring it with your media, you need to access the Plex server through your web browser or Plex Media Player app, then navigate to Settings > Remote Access to set it up.

If your router supports UPnP forwarding, this should be a straightforward process. Otherwise you can click the link in the Plex app to view more detailed instructions that tell you exactly how to set up the server manually.



You can use the power of the cloud to stream your own video collection over the internet using services such as Plex (pictured here) and Emby.

the cloud to your computer, or any other device, for listening offline.

When using Amazon Music, look for an AutoRip logo when buying CDs, LPs and other physical formats. If it's present, Amazon will automatically add MP3 versions of your songs to your Amazon Music library.

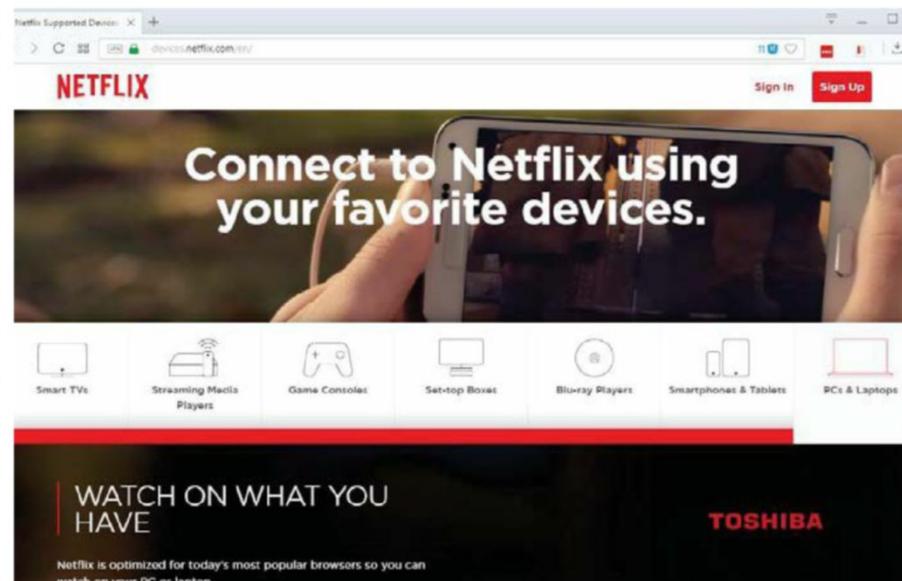
Other online audio services worth looking at (or listening to) include Soundcloud (<https://soundcloud.com/>), where you can stream free music and podcasts over the internet (a subscription-based Go+ option gives you ad-free and offline access for £9.99 per month), and Amazon's Audible (www.audible.com). Audible enables you to buy and stream audiobooks over the internet to any mobile device or your PC via a Windows Store app. You can also download books to listen offline. While audiobooks can be bought outright, a cheaper option is to purchase a monthly subscription that allows you to download one book a month for a fixed price of £7.99.

"When using Amazon Music, look for an Autorip logo when buying CDs, LPs and other physical formats"

Stream TV and movies

Remember when you had to watch TV live or record it to video? Those days have long gone thanks to the cloud. First, watch recent free-to-air broadcast TV through online catch-up services: BBC iPlayer, 4oD, UKTV Play and so on. These are streamed over the internet to your PC, set-top box, mobile or smart TV using your internet connection.

You can also purchase TV shows and movies digitally through the likes of



Amazon, iTunes and Google. Once purchased, you stream your content

through a proprietary app to supported devices. This kind of content is usually protected using DRM (Digital Rights Management), meaning you can't simply download it and use it as you will (see the facing page for a way to stream video using your own media).

Then, of course, there's the likes of Netflix (netflix.com), Amazon Prime Video and NowTV (nowtv.com). These services directly challenge expensive cable and satellite TV packages by

removing the contract – you pay on a month-by-month basis. Netflix and Amazon are exclusively on-demand services, combining popular movies and TV shows with original content (*Stranger Things* on Netflix, for example). Prices start from £5.99 per month (or free if you're an Amazon Prime subscriber).

NowTV takes a slightly different approach. It's owned by Sky, so carves up its offerings into TV (Entertainment and Kids), movies and sport packages. The Entertainment package costs £6.99 per month (or you can pay a fiver a month by purchasing extended three- and five-month passes for £15 and £25 respectively) and gives you access to both Sky's extensive on-demand collection as well as the ability to live-stream 11 popular channels, including Sky's own-brand channels (Atlantic, Arts, Sky 1 and so on).

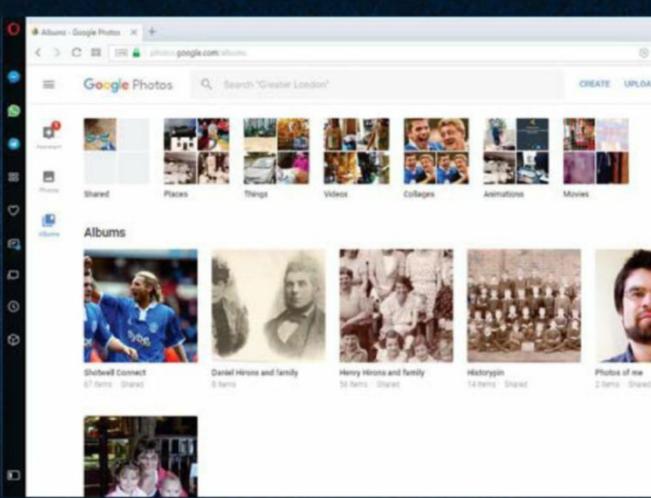
Share your own photos

When it comes to syncing and sharing photos through the cloud, you're spoilt for choice.

If your focus is on syncing photos from mobile devices to your PC, then look at your cloud service provider's mobile app – both Microsoft's OneDrive and Google Drive offer to automatically upload your snaps (and video) to a special folder (such as your Camera Roll) that then syncs back to your other machines.

But what about sharing your photos with a wider audience? The obvious choice is your social network, and the likes of Facebook and Twitter make photo-sharing as simple as

possible, both from your mobile device and your desktop. But if sharing photos is the main reason for being on social media, then try one of Instagram (www.instagram.com), Flickr (www.flickr.com) or Google Photos (photos.google.com) instead. Each of these services has its own strengths and weaknesses, enabling you to pick the best fit for your needs – features to look out for include the ability to tag your photos (with details such as location, people, date and so on); being able to organise photos into albums; and sharing with people without forcing them to sign up.



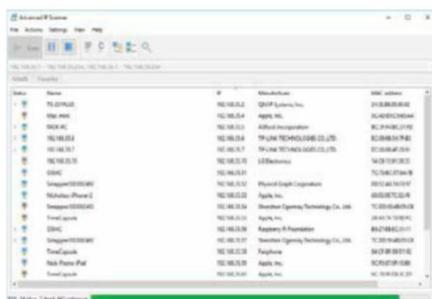
Google's Photo-sharing service will appeal to anyone with a Google account, and can automatically group photos according to content.

Secure the cloud

Make sure you don't compromise your security or privacy when using the cloud to share files, stream media or use apps

Offloading services to the cloud makes sense in terms of streamlining resources and making good use of the internet, but it comes with significant security risks. It's not that you're simply opening your computer to the internet, you're putting key data – files, personal information and login details – in the hands of third parties. Can you trust them? And how do you protect yourself adequately?

Step one is to revisit the Lock Down Your PC feature in our Spring 2017 issue, which explains how you can make your computer hackproof. You should ensure your computers and other devices are adequately protected, and that your home network is locked down too – you should certainly make sure that your router's default password is changed, and that you haven't left it open to access from over the internet, for example. Tighten Wi-Fi security and perform a careful inventory of what devices have network access and how



Regularly check which devices are connecting to your home network by carrying out an inventory.

secure they are. If you've splurged on smart home tech, check regularly for security advisories – many makers have been shockingly lax when it comes to securing their kit.

Secure your connection

Once your own local network is in order, it's time to look at the security of your connection to the web. At home you should be secure connecting through either an Ethernet cable or an encrypted Wi-Fi connection, but what about when



You can secure access to a Network Attached Storage (NAS) drive by using a Virtual Private Network (VPN).

you're out and about? How can you be sure the network you're connecting through is as safe as your home one?

The answer lies in not trusting it at all. Instead, make use of a VPN connection, which encrypts your connection even over insecure networks, such as open Wi-Fi hotspots. If you're connecting to the cloud through your web browser, then consider switching to Opera (www.opera.com) and using its built-in VPN to secure your connection.

Secure your smartphone using the free Opera VPN app for Apple and Android (flick the switch on, and all your apps will communicate through Opera's VPN networks). Finally, if you want to encrypt your entire network connection, either use a free VPN service such as CyberGhost (www.cyberghostvpn.com) or set up your own VPN server through your NAS and connect that way when you're away from home.

Tighten cloud security

Your network and internet connections are safe and secure, which just leaves the cloud itself. The step-by-step guide on the facing page reveals a useful set of tips to follow for each of the cloud accounts or apps you use. You might be wondering why you'd need to add extra encryption to the files you store in cloud backup services, and the reason is this: your provider keeps hold of the all-important encryption keys that can unlock the data, and some have already updated their terms and conditions to make it clear that they'd hand those keys (and your data with them) to certain agencies.

If that's a problem for you, then you need that extra layer of encryption. We namecheck nCryptedCloud in the step-by-step guide, but if your data is particularly sensitive you might prefer to protect it in a different way – see the box on the left for details.



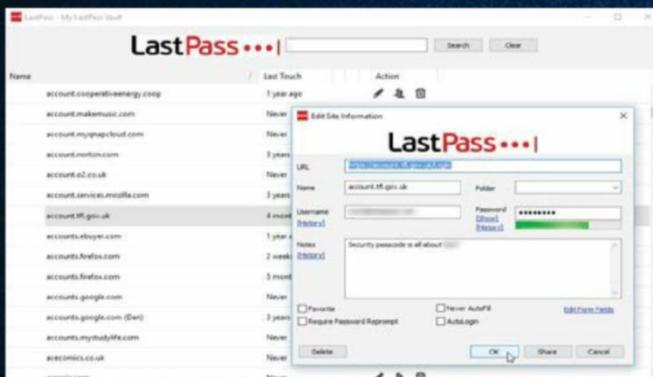
Your personal cloud

Don't trust third-party providers to look after your data or provide the services you want? Why not build your own personal cloud device with Network Attached Storage (NAS) at its heart? Expand your budget to the price of a mid-range laptop (£250-400) and you can have a QNAP (www.qnap.com) or Synology (www.synology.com) NAS that provides you with your own locally hosted cloud storage (ownCloud), media (Plex) and other services, accessible from your computer, smartphone and other devices.

This approach leaves you in full control of all your data, and gives you the choice of whether to restrict access to these services to your local network or to expand them to the wider internet.

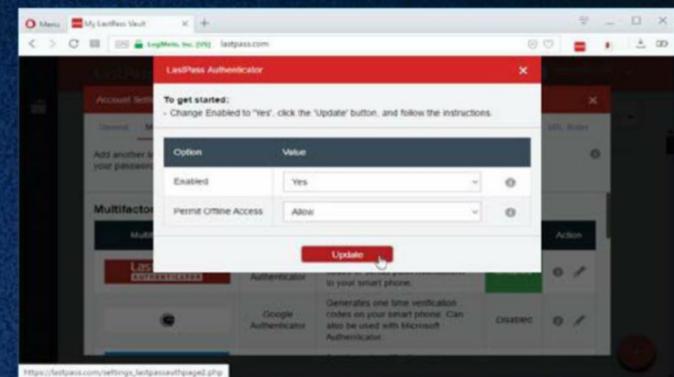


Secure your cloud accounts



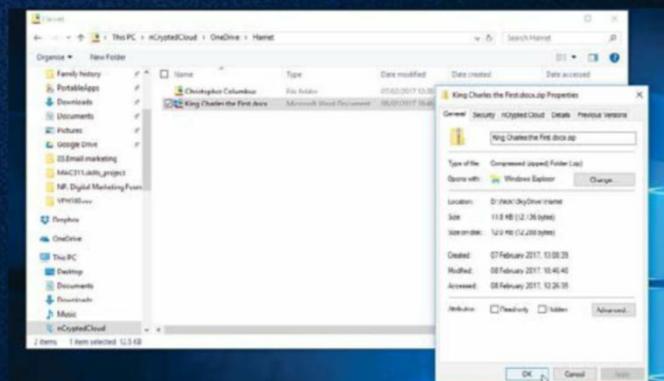
1 Strengthen passwords

Install a password manager, such as LastPass (www.lastpass.com), and use it to strengthen all your cloud accounts by generating random passwords comprising letters, numbers and symbols. Pick a strong master password – the only one you need to remember – to securely lock your vault.



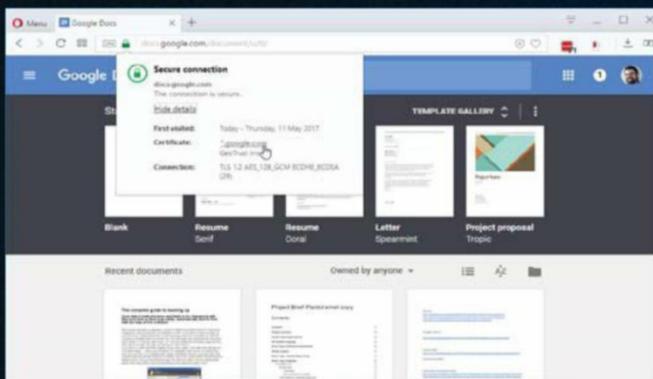
2 Instigate two-step verification

If any cloud app or service (including LastPass) supports it, switch on two-step verification or authentication, linked to your phone by text message, email or an authenticator app such as LastPass Authenticator. This helps protect your account even if the password is guessed or hacked.



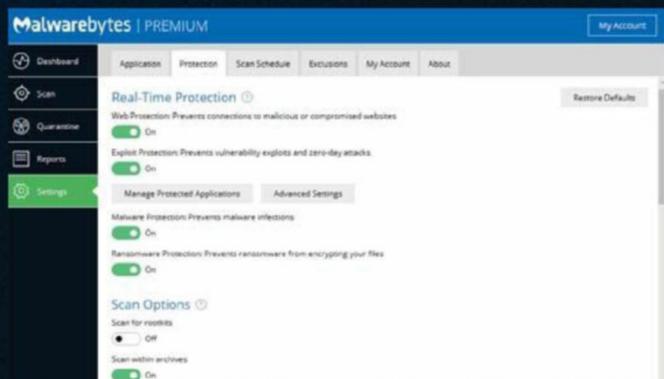
3 Encrypt cloud data

Although the likes of Google Drive and OneDrive encrypt your data when it's uploaded, you're not given any control over the encryption key. To add another layer of encryption to your files – or a subset of them – using a tool such as nCryptCloud (www.encryptedcloud.com/apps).



4 How nCryptCloud works

nCryptCloud automatically zips and encrypts any files or folders that you've marked as private, but they're displayed as normal files thanks to the way the desktop client integrates with File Explorer. Visit the Getting Started section of the nCryptCloud website to download a manual in PDF format.



5 Secure your browser

How do you know the cloud app you're using in your web browser is secure? First, make sure that you're connected using the 'https://' protocol and check that the security certificate in your browser (click the icon next to the web address) matches the website you're using. Avoid any insecure connections – and don't click on links on emails you receive without verifying them first.

6 Block malicious websites

Most browsers can detect known fake websites and prevent you from logging in, but check if your security software also offers tools (typically through browser plugins) that can add an extra layer of protection too. For maximum protection, buy Malwarebytes Anti-Malware Premium (www.malwarebytes.com). A one-year subscription costs £29.99 and is worth every penny. ■





100 Windows secrets

Do so much more in older versions of Windows with our selection of tips and tricks. By **Mike Williams**

There may be over 500 million Windows 10 users worldwide, but not everyone can, or wants to upgrade to Microsoft's latest OS. And if that includes you, then good news – we have you covered! Over the next eight pages you'll discover 100 tips that will work on any version of Windows, although some are version specific. And since we like to deliver more than expected, we've thrown in 21 bonus secrets and shortcuts too.

This feature includes some fantastic tweaks – keep reading and you'll discover simple but effective techniques to cut your PC's boot time, fix annoying problems and revitalise your desktop. There are amazing shortcuts to speed up file management and have you navigating Explorer like a pro. So, without further ado, let's get stuck in! ►



Look & feel

Revitalise your desktop

1 VIEW EVERYTHING

The Computer folder in Windows 7 no longer displays the Control Panel or Recycle Bin on its opening view. But there is an easy way to bring them back – click Tools > Folder Options, check Show All Folders and click OK.

2 EASY FOLDER SWITCHING

To select a window, you normally have to click it, but there's another Windows 7 option that's easier. Click Start, type 'Ease', click 'Ease of Access Centre' > 'Make the mouse easier to use', and check 'Activate a window by hovering over it with the mouse'. Leave the cursor over a window for a second, and Windows brings it to the foreground.

3 TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR WINDOWS

If you don't like the way Windows 7 automatically resizes and relocates windows when they're moved to the edge of the screen, turn the feature off. Click Start, type 'Ease', click

the 'Ease of Access Centre' link, and select 'Make it Easier to Focus on Tasks'. Check the 'Prevent windows from being automatically arranged button', and then click OK.

4 CREATE A DESKTOP SLIDESHOW

Right-click an empty part of the desktop, click Personalise > Desktop Background, and select the Windows Desktop Backgrounds folder under Picture Location. Now hold down [Ctrl] while clicking every wallpaper you like, or press [Ctrl] + [A] to select them all.

Windows switches from one to the next every 30 minutes, though you can set a different frequency by selecting it in the 'Change picture every' box.

5 DISABLE AERO PEEK

By default, Windows 7 hides open windows to display the desktop when you move your mouse over the lower right-hand corner of the screen – this feature is called Aero Peek. If you

find this annoying, it's easy to turn off.

Right-click Start, select Properties > Taskbar and clear 'Use Aero Peek to preview the desktop'.



6 RESIZE THE CURSOR

If it's hard to see the single-line Windows cursor, in Windows 7 click Control Panel > 'Ease of Access' > 'Ease of Access Centre', select Make The Computer Easier To See and set the thickness of the blinking cursor to what suits you.

7 ACCESS EVERYTHING

For an easier way to access all the advanced applets and maintenance options in Windows 7, create a folder and call it

ROTATING DESKTOPS

You can set Windows 7 so it changes the desktop background at regular intervals.

10 PIN A DRIVE TO THE TASKBAR

To pin a drive icon to your Taskbar, right-click an empty part of the desktop, and select New > Text File. Rename the TXT extension so it reads C.exe (replace the 'C' with the drive letter you want to launch). Drag and drop C.exe on to the Taskbar, and delete the original file. Right-click its new icon, then right-click 'C' on the jump list and select Properties. Change the

8 Instantly resize icons Hold down the [Ctrl] key while rotating the mouse scroll wheel to increase or decrease the icon size.

Everything.{ED7BA470-8E54-465E-825C-99712043E01C}. You'll see shortcuts to useful network options, troubleshooting tools, user account settings and much more.

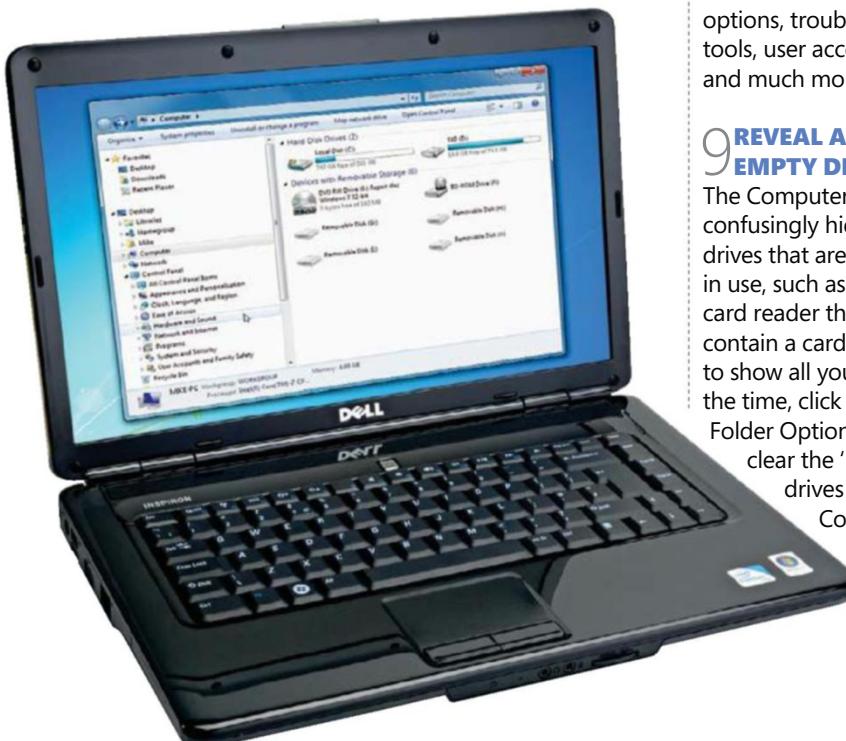
9 REVEAL ALL EMPTY DRIVES

The Computer folder confusingly hides all the drives that aren't currently in use, such as a memory card reader that doesn't contain a card. If you want to show all your drives, all the time, click Tools > Folder Options > View, clear the 'Hide empty drives in the Computer folder' box and then click the OK button.

contents of the Target and Start In boxes to point to your chosen drive. Click 'Change Icon', choose an icon for the drive, click OK.

11 STAY ALERT

When a Windows 7 program wants to tell you something, its Taskbar button flashes, but only three times – it's easy to miss. If you'd like to increase the number of flashes, run REGEDIT, go to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\CONTROL PANEL\DESKTOP and double-click ForeGround FlashCount. Choose the Decimal option and set it to the number of flashes you need. Beware: entering zero doesn't stop it flashing – it ensures the button flashes until you click it to see what's going on.





Top 10 Taskbar tips

Get more from your Windows 7 Taskbar

12 CREATE A RETRO TASKBAR

If you're not so keen on the combined Taskbar buttons in Windows 7, restore the old Windows XP and Windows Vista style – right-click the Taskbar, select Properties, and set the Taskbar Buttons option to 'Never combine'.

13 REARRANGE YOUR APPS

Windows 7 Taskbar buttons are now moveable – drag, drop and reposition them to suit your needs.

14 KEYBOARD SPEEDUP #1

To select a Taskbar app from the keyboard, hold down the [Win] key and hit [1] to launch the first icon, [2] the second, [3] the third, up to [0] (which represents 10).

15 VIEW A WEBSITE

Want easier access to the web? Right-click the Taskbar, select Toolbars > Address, then enter a URL such as www.bing.com whenever you like to open a browser window at that page.

16 FAST TASK-SWITCHING

To switch quickly between windows of the same application, hold down [Ctrl] as you click the app's Taskbar button.

17 RELAUNCH WITH A CLICK

If you've launched an application and then want to run another copy, don't go back to the Start menu

– just hold down [Shift], click the app's Taskbar icon and Windows fires up another instance of the program.

18 REARRANGE WINDOWS

Do you miss the old 'Minimise all windows', Cascade, Tile and other options that no longer appear when you right-click a Taskbar button in Windows 7? You can make them reappear by holding down [Ctrl] + [Shift] as you right-click. Magic!

19 BRING BACK QUICK LAUNCH

If you'd like the old Quick Launch toolbar back, right-click the Taskbar, and then click Toolbars > New Toolbar, type '%userprofile%\AppData\Roaming\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Quick Launch' in the folder box, and click Select Folder.

20 KEYBOARD SPEEDUP #2

To switch to a Taskbar application from the keyboard, hold down the [Win] key and press [T] to select the Taskbar, then use the left and right arrows to select an application, and then press [Enter] to launch it.

21 SHRINK THE TASKBAR

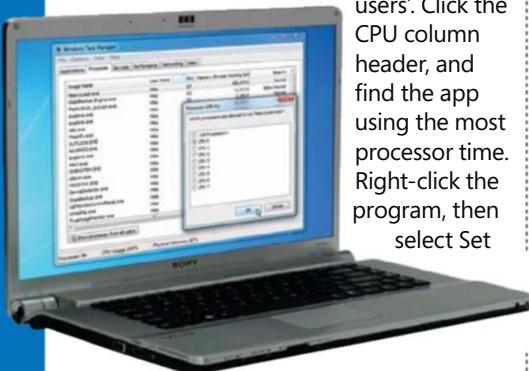
Cutting the Taskbar down to size leaves more screen space for of your applications. Right-click the Taskbar, select Properties and then check 'Use Small Icons' to make it happen.

Speed

Give Windows a boost

22 HALT RUNAWAY PROGRAMS

If a program is grabbing all your processor time and slowing everything down, but you can't close it, hit [Ctrl] + [Shift] + [Esc] to launch Task Manager. Click Processes, then select 'Show processes from all users'. Click the CPU column header, and find the app using the most processor time. Right-click the program, then select Set



Affinity, clear all

but one of your processor core boxes, and it won't be able to use them. Your PC will speed up.

23 REMOVE SURPLUS SOFTWARE

Uninstalling unwanted programs can speed up your PC. But which ones should go? Launch the 'Uninstall a Program' applet in Control Panel, and click the 'Installed on' column header to sort your programs by the date that you installed them. (Don't see Installed On? Right-click

24 Uninstall easily If the uninstaller fails, boot into Safe Mode and try again.

a column header, and check the Installed On box – if necessary, click More to locate it.) You can see programs you installed long ago. If there are any you've forgotten about that you no longer use or need, uninstall them and you'll also have more storage space to play with too.

25 START IE FASTER

If Internet Explorer seems slow to launch, fire up the browser, click Tools > 'Manage Add-ons', and click Toolbars & Extensions. This displays all of your add-ons, along with a Load Time figure that shows how long they took to launch. If you spot one that's wasting time that you don't need, uninstall it, or click the extension and hit Disable.

26 POWER UP

The Windows 7 Power Options can make a real difference to system speed. Go to Control Panel > 'Hardware and Sound' > Power Options, and ensure that you have High Performance selected.

27 BOOT QUICKLY

Install multiple versions of Windows on a PC and you get a menu asking which one you'd like to launch. By default this waits up to 30 seconds before selecting the default choice, but if that's too long, launch MSCONFIG. EXE, click the Boot tab and set the Timeout figure to, say, 10 seconds instead.

28 FREE UP HARD DRIVE SPACE

If you're running short of hard drive space, Windows Disk Cleanup can help. Click Start, type 'Disk' and click Disk Cleanup. Choose the drive you'd like to clean and click OK. Disk Cleanup displays files it thinks you can delete. By default, only a few are selected, so check the boxes next to anything else you don't need and click OK > Delete.

29 REMOVE OLD PICTURES

Fix a photo in Windows Live Photo Gallery and it keeps



the original forever; great if you need to undo it, but otherwise a waste of space. To tweak this, launch Photo Gallery, click File > Options, and set 'Move originals to Recycle Bin after' to, say, one month.

30 SAVE RESOURCES

If you've installed an anti-virus package, then you don't need Windows Defender. Click Start, type 'Defender' and click Windows Defender to fire up the program. Click Tools > Options > Administrator and clear the Use This Program box, then click Save to turn off Defender.

31 SPOT HIDDEN WINDOWS

Sometimes programs display a message asking you to do something, but it's under another window and you don't see it. You're waiting for the program, it's waiting for you, so nothing happens. The window is made visible after 200 seconds, but you can shorten the delay. Launch REGEDIT, go to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Control Panel\Desktop, double-click 'ForegroundLockTime out' and select Decimal. Change the value to 30,000 milliseconds (30 seconds) and see how this works.

32 BROWSE MENUS AT SPEED

A Registry edit can shorten the pause before Windows

menus expand, speeding up navigation. Launch REGEDIT, go to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Control Panel\Desktop, double-click MenuShowDelay, and select Decimal. Now change the default to something a little snappier – 200 (which is 0.2 seconds) works for us.

33 DISABLE AERO (TEMPORARILY)

When you're running a program that requires all your RAM, you can give it a little extra by automatically (and temporarily) turning off Aero. Browse to the executable file or its shortcut, right-click it, select Properties > Compatibility and check 'Disable desktop composition'. Run the program and Aero is turned off, then restored when the program is shut down.

DISABLE DEFENDER

If you have installed a full security package, running Windows Defender is a waste of resources.

34 FIND UNWANTED SERVICES

Many applications install Windows services, which run all the time, consuming valuable system resources. To view these services, run MSCONFIG.EXE, click Services and check 'Hide all Microsoft services'. Don't disable anything unless you know what you're doing, because it can be dangerous. But if you recognise apps that are still installed, and you no longer use them, uninstall them.

35 USE ONE DEFRAZ TOOL ONLY

If you've installed a third-party defrag tool,

36 Command line speed-up

Drag and drop a file on the Windows 7 command window and the full name appears automatically.

disable the Windows version, because it may still be running, wasting time and resources. To turn it off, click Start, type 'Defrag', click Disk Defragmenter and select Configure Schedule. Clear the 'Run on a schedule' box.

SWITCH AERO OFF

Some PCs seem a little faster when using the Windows 7 Basic theme.

37 DISABLE AERO (ALWAYS)

If you're running Windows 7 on a low-powered PC, you can improve its performance a little by

turning off the Aero interface. Right-click an empty part of the desktop, select Personalise, scroll to Basic and High Contrast Themes and click Windows 7 Basic. If you miss the old look, return to the Personalise dialog and choose an Aero Theme.

38 SOLVE SLOW STARTS

If Windows 7 is taking a long time to launch or shut down, Event Viewer may tell you which program or driver is responsible. Click Start, type 'Eventvwr.msc' and press [Return], then expand the Applications and Services Logs section,

and browse to Microsoft\Windows\Diagnostic\Performance\Operational. Scroll the events list on your PC to see if Windows which app or service is to blame.

39 FIX THIS ODD BOOT BUG

Is your Windows 7 desktop background a solid colour? Then it may mean your PC takes 30 seconds longer than usual to boot. Change your background to an image to restore normal start-up performance, or install a hotfix from Microsoft (<http://support.microsoft.com/kb/977346>).

40 SAVE DRIVE SPACE

Windows 7 keeps files on your last 50 crashes. If you'll never look at this data, though, it's a waste of precious drive space. Run REGEDIT, go to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SYSTEM\CurrentControl Set\Control\CrashControl, and set MiniDumpsCount to 5. Windows now keeps the last five dumps, so you have some info if you need to diagnose crashes but you also gain a little drive space.





Keyboard shortcuts

Learn these keyboard shortcuts if you want to use your apps like a pro

41 [Win] key + [Left arrow]

Docks the current window to the left half of the screen.



42 [Win] key + [Right arrow]

Docks the current window to the right half of the screen.



43 [Win] key + [Up arrow]

Maximises the current window.



44 [Win] key + [Down arrow]

Minimises the current window.



45 [Win] key + [M]

Minimises all windows.



46 [Win] key + [Space]

Makes all windows transparent so you can see the desktop.



47 [Win] key + [Shift] + [Left arrow]/[Right arrow]

On a multi-monitor PC, this shortcut moves a window from one monitor to another.



48 [Win] key + [B]

Moves focus to the system tray.



49 [Win] key + [E]

Launches Windows Explorer.



50 [Win] key + [F]

Displays the Find dialog box.



51 [Win] key + [Ctrl] + [F]

Displays the Find Computer dialog box.



52 [Win] key + [Pause/Break]

Displays the System Properties dialog box.



53 [Win] key + [+]

Zooms in on the screen.



54 [Win] key + [-]

Zooms out from the screen.



55 [Win] key + [Alt] + [1] to [9]

Opens a jump list for the icon in that Taskbar position.



Power user

Tips to help you take control

56 REPAIR BROKEN WINDOWS

Poorly written software can remove vital Windows files, leaving your PC unreliable. If you're having problems, asking Windows to look for and restore any damaged files may help. Click Start,

problems, it may also break DVD burning and other drive-related programs that you've installed. If so, you need to reinstall them.

59 CLOSE HUNG PROGRAMS

When a program locks up, you normally press [Ctrl] + [Shift] + [Esc] to launch Task Manager, click the program name, then select End Task. But sometimes this doesn't work, and the program stubbornly refuses to die. If this happens to you, right-click the program in Task Manager, and select Go To Process. Right-click the process again, select End Process, and with any luck your misbehaving app will finally bite virtual dust.

57 You have the power!

Right-click Start, select Properties, and choose the action you'd prefer.

type 'Command', right-click the Command Prompt link and select 'Run as Administrator'. At the command prompt, type 'sfc /scannow' and press [Enter]. The SFC tool checks your PC, applies any fixes where necessary, and lets you know what's happened.



IP ADDRESS

It's time to tweak your router. Pity that you've forgotten its address...

58 RESTORE MISSING DVD DRIVES

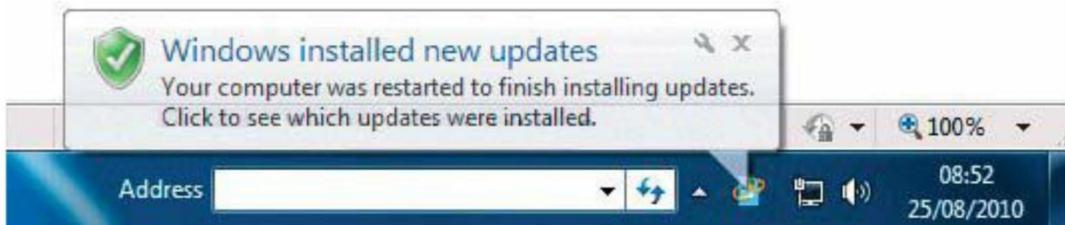
If Windows doesn't recognise your DVD drive, try rebooting. No change? Run REGEDIT, browse to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SYSTEM\CurrentControl Set\Control\Class\{4D36E965-E325-11CE-BFC1-08002BE10318}, then delete both UpperFilters and LowerFilters in the right-hand pane. Then reboot again. Beware, while this usually fixes odd drive

60 SHARE YOUR DRIVE SPACE

If you want to stop a particular user on your PC from tying up all your hard drive space, the Disk Quota option can help you. Click Computer, right-click on a drive you'd like to protect, and select Quota > Show Quota Settings. Check 'Enable Quota Management', click the Quota Entries button, double-click any user you'd like to restrict, and select the maximum amount of disk space they're able to use.

61 COMMAND LINE TRICKERY

Sometimes you might want to make a note of all the files in a particular folder, but unfortunately Windows (AKA File) Explorer still provides no way to do this. A little command line work can help, though: simply click Start, type 'CMD /C DIR "C:\Program Files" | Clip' and press



[Enter]. This will open a command window for one command only, lists all the files in the specified folder (replace C:\Program Files with whatever you'd like to use), then copies the list to the clipboard, ready for pasting wherever you like.

62 TURN A FOLDER INTO A DRIVE

When you're regularly working in a folder deep in your file system, you probably spend lots of time expanding other folders to reach it. But Windows does provide another way. Click Start, type 'SUBST z: "c:\my data\work\accounts\2008\december"' and press [Enter], for instance, and Windows creates a virtual drive called Z: that actually

points to the folder you've specified. (Enter a drive letter that doesn't exist on your PC, and a folder path that does, surrounded by quotes). Your new drive appears in the Computer folder, and in file Save or Open dialogs, so it's easy to select. And if you save, or drag-and-drop files to that folder, they actually go to the folder, just as you'd expect – very convenient. Reboot, or enter 'SUBST z: \D' to delete a virtual drive (don't worry, the contents of your folder remain untouched).

63 SEARCHING COMMAND PROMPT WINDOWS

Every power user needs to work at the command line

AUTOMATIC REBOOT
That huge file you wanted to download? You will have to start again, sorry.

occasionally. But it's not easy, and you'll often find yourself scrolling up and down the window, looking for a particular file name or some other detail. Don't forget, though – there is a quicker way. Just right-click in the command window, choose Find, enter a key word and then Windows quickly locates and displays it for you.

64 CLOSE EXPLORER GRACEFULLY

If you need to close Explorer for some reason, don't do so with Task Manager except as a last resort. Instead, click Start, hold down [Ctrl] + [Shift], right-click any empty part of the Start Menu and select Exit Explorer.

65 STOP WINDOWS UPDATE FROM REBOOTING YOUR PC

Windows may reboot your PC to install some new update – annoying if you'd left a program running and all its work is lost. To fix this, run REGEDIT, browse to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Policies\Microsoft\Windows\WindowsUpdate\AU, create a 32-bit DWORD value called NoAutoRebootWithLoggedOnUsers and set it to 1.

66 TURN OFF HIBERNATE

If you don't use the Windows 7 Hibernate feature, turning it off frees up a little drive space, and delivers a tiny improvement in PC speeds. Click Start, type 'CMD', click the cmd.exe link, and select 'Run as Administrator', then type 'powercfg / hibernate off' to disable hibernation, or 'powercfg / hibernate on' if you need to switch it back on again later.

Add-ons Enhance your PC with these powerful free tools

71 IObIT UNINSTALLER

www.iobit.com/advanceduninstaller.html
An easy-to-use tool that (unlike the Windows equivalent) removes every trace of a program from your PC.

72 VISTA SWITCHER

www.ntwind.com/software/vistaswitcher
Replaces the [Alt] + [Tab] dialog with a list of running apps, and larger previews, making it easy to switch programs.

73 COPY HANDLER

www.copyhandler.com
Replaces the Explorer

file copy function; it's more configurable, often faster, it enables you to pause and resume copies, and cancel individual files.

74 ULTRA SEARCH

www.jam-software.com/ultrasearch
Ultra Search is ultra-fast and locates files with the names you specify almost as fast as you can type. It's far speedier than Windows Search, and doesn't waste time building indexes.

75 SHUTDOWN TIMER

www.sinvise.net
Need a more flexible way to shut down your PC? Shutdown Timer

closes in a few minutes, at a named date and time, when your CPU is idle, network activity has stopped, and more.

76 EXPLORER++

www.explorerplusplus.com
This is fast, small and configurable, featuring tabbed folders for easy file management on even the most complex of hard drives.

77 WINDOWS MEDIA PLAYER PLUS

<http://bmproductions.fixnum.org>
This free plug-in extends Media Player with an easy-to-use tag editor, adds 'What's Playing

Now' information to the title bar and Windows Live Messenger status, simplifies searching, restores the last active playlist when you restart Media Player, and more.

78 START MENU CLEANER

www.iceview.com/start-menu-cleaner
Every Start menu gets cluttered with broken shortcuts and empty folders. This program finds and deletes them, making it quicker and easier to navigate the rest of your system.

79 FOLDER MENU

<http://foldermen.sourceforge.net>
Forget desktop

shortcuts or Taskbar buttons, Folder Menu brings up a customisable menu of favourite folders with just a click of the middle mouse button, then provides many shortcuts to help you access them more quickly.

80 DITTO

<http://ditto-cp.sourceforge.net>
Ditto extends the Windows clipboard, storing everything you copy there. If you copy one image to the clipboard, say, then another, Ditto ensures the first is still available and you can paste it into a document in just a couple of clicks.

**67 'RUN AS' RETURNS**

Right-click a program in Windows XP and you see a 'Run as' option, enabling you to launch the program as a different user. This is handy if you need to run a program with different security privileges to your current account. This disappeared in Windows Vista, but Windows 7 brings it back – hold down [Shift] as you right-click a program and choose the Run As Different User option.

68 FIND YOUR ROUTER'S IP ADDRESS

If you need to change your router settings, you probably have to enter its IP address into a browser. But which address is that, exactly? To find out, type 'cmd' and click the cmd.exe link to open a command window, then type 'ipconfig /all' and press [Enter]. Scroll down the list, looking for the network adaptor that's connected to your router, check its Default Gateway setting, and that's usually the router address.

69 TWEAK SYSTEM RESTORE

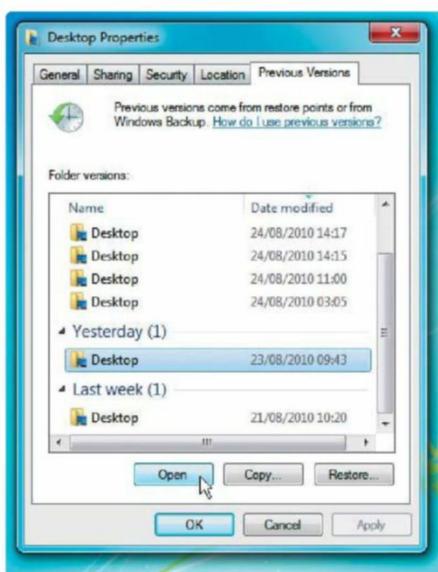
System Restore is a great disaster recovery tool, but can consume loads of hard drive space – unless you stop it. To recover some of it, click Start, right-click Computer, select Properties, and then click Advanced System Settings > System Protection. Then, for each drive where System Restore Protection is set to On, click Configure, and set the Max Usage figure to the maximum amount of drive space you're happy to lose.

70 SAVE YOUR CHATS

Windows Live Messenger can save your chats for reference later, with a tweak – click Tools > Options > Messages and check 'Automatically keep a history of my conversations'.

Troubleshooting

Eradicate PC problems yourself

**81 SOLVE POWER PROBLEMS**

If your Windows 7 laptop battery life isn't what you expected, a command line tool may be able to tell you

'Repair Disc' option, then follow the instructions to burn a disc. You can't reinstall Windows with this, but it does have useful disaster recovery tools, so if your PC won't start in future, boot from the Repair Disc instead and it'll do its best to help.

84 SEARCH ACCURATELY

If Windows Search isn't finding files you know are there, rebuilding its index may help. Click Start, type 'Index', click Indexing Options > Advanced > Rebuild > OK, and try searching again once the index has been recreated.

85 SOLVE HARD DRIVE PROBLEMS

If your PC seems unreliable, crashing all the time, you may have hard drive errors. Open the Computer window, right-click your main system drive, select Properties > Tools > Check Now and click Start to track them down. And repeat the process on other hard drives that you use for good measure.

86 MEMORY MATTERS

Faulty memory can cause all kinds of odd computer behaviour, and is difficult to detect – but Windows has a RAM checker that can reveal the problem. Click Start, type 'Memory' and then click on the Windows Memory Diagnostic link. Click 'Restart Now' and your computer will reboot, then will run a check of your memory, and let you know whether it's detected any problems.

UNDELETE EASILY

Accidentally deleted a crucial file?
The Previous Versions dialog may help you revive it.

why. Click Start, type 'Command', right-click the link to Command Prompt and select 'Run as Administrator'. Type 'powercfg -energy' and press [Enter]. The PowerCFG tool spends a while browsing your PC, then produces a report detailing power-related problems and recommendations that seem relevant.

82 FIX AN UNBOOTABLE PC

If Windows 7 won't start, you can use its installation DVD to try to fix the problem. But what if your system didn't come with a DVD, or maybe you've lost it? Fortunately, Windows 7 can burn a separate System Repair CD that carries out the same functions. Click Start, type 'Repair' and choose the 'Create a System

87 RECOVER YOUR LOST FILES

If you've accidentally deleted a file, right-click the folder where it was stored, and click Properties > Previous Versions. If you're in luck, you'll see earlier versions of the folder, each dated at some point in the last few days. Double-click one from a time when you knew the file was still around, it opens in Explorer, and if the file is present, you can open it as normal.

88 GIVE YOUR PC A HEALTH CHECK

If your Windows 7 system isn't performing very well, hold down the [Win] key, press [R], then type in 'perfmon /report' and press [Enter] to generate a diagnostic report. This includes details of your computer's current status, any problems that you might have, and recommendations on how to fix them.

89 SHARPEN UP YOUR TEXT

Windows 7 doesn't always display text as clearly as it should. To check your PC, click Start, type 'ClearType', and click Adjust ClearType Text to launch the ClearType Text Tuner, which applies several simple tests to help ensure that text is sharp and easy to read.

90 HIDE ALERTS

Sometimes issues pointless alerts, such as complaining that you're not using Windows Backup even if you're regularly running another back-up tool. To fix this, go to Control Panel >

83 Run as Administrator To run any Windows 7 program as administrator, hold [Shift] + [Ctrl] as you click its shortcut.

System and Security > Action Centre > Change Action Centre Settings, then clear the boxes next to Windows Backup and any other types of messages you don't want to receive.

91 THE RIGHT TIME, ALL THE TIME

Windows 7 automatically sets your PC's clock once a week, using an incredibly accurate internet time server to make sure it's correct. If the time has drifted off for some reason, though, you can quickly set it again by clicking the system tray clock, and selecting 'Change Date and Time Settings' > Internet Time > Change Settings > Update Now.

92 EASILY ACCESS A PC TOOLKIT

For quick access all the best Windows tools, click Start, type 'MSCONFIG' and press [Enter] to launch the System Configuration program, then click the Tools tab. This lists tools such as the Action Centre, Troubleshooting applet, System Restore option, command prompt, Resource Monitor and more, and they're all just a double-click away.

93 FIXING WINDOWS 7 N

If you have Windows 7 N, that means you don't get bundled copies of Windows Media Player, Media Center, DVD Maker and other goodies, and third-party apps that rely on these may not install or work properly. Fortunately, you can download and install all of the missing components in the shape of Microsoft's Windows Media Pack, which is available at <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/968211>

SUPER SHORTCUTS

Navigate your folders quickly with our Windows Explorer secrets.

94 SIMPLE HARDWARE MANAGEMENT

Tweaking your PC's hardware settings used to involve browsing a host of separate Control Panel applets, but Windows 7 has made life a little easier. Go to Control Panel > 'Hardware and Sound' > 'Devices and Printers' and you'll see icons for all major



items of hardware – just right-click on any of these for a list of settings that you can tweak.

95 SOLVE EMAIL PROBLEMS

If Windows Live Mail isn't working as it should do, logging all of its activities may reveal the problem. To do that, click Tools > Options > Advanced > Maintenance, and check the logs you need in the Troubleshooting section. The logs are saved in the Store Folder.

EASY ACCESS
'Devices and Printers' provides an easier way to tweak all your hardware.

Make life easier

Time-saving advice

96 OPEN WEBSITES WITH A KEYPRESS

Click 'Favourites', right-click the Favourite for your particular site, and select Properties. Click in the Shortcut Key box and press the key combination you'd like to launch the site – [Ctrl] + [Alt] + [G] for Google, for example. Close your browser, press your shortcut key, and your default browser opens to display the site.

97 MOVE FILES EASILY

If you want to move some files to one of your main folders – Pictures, Music, Downloads, the desktop and more – select the files, hold down [Shift] as you right-click one of your selections, and choose Send To. Select the folder you need and the files are moved right away.

98 RESTORE RUN
If you miss the Windows XP Run option, right-click Start, select Properties > Customise, check the Run Command box and click OK, and a Run option now appears on the Start menu.

99 SEARCH FILE CONTENTS

If you occasionally need to search the contents of files that haven't been indexed, just start your search with 'content:'. So typing 'content:zebra' will find files that have the word 'Zebra' in, for instance.

100 EASY SCREEN GRABS

Click Start, type 'Snip' and click Snipping Tool. When you want to take a grab, select File > New Snip, drag the mouse cursor around the area to capture, and it appears in the Snipping Tool window. Click 'Tools' for various options to draw on your grab, or File > Save As to save it as a PNG, GIF or JPG file.

101 UPLOAD TO FLICKR

Don't look for a program to upload your photos to Flickr – Windows Live Photo Gallery can do it. Click Publish > Publish on Flickr and follow the instructions.

102 LAUNCH APPLETS FAST

Don't browse Control Panel for an applet – launch it directly. To run Device Manager, say, click Start, type 'Device' in the search box and Windows should display a Device Manager link for you. Or type the applet's executable file name, such as 'devmgmt.msc' (Device Manager), 'services.msc' (Services), 'diskmgmt.msc' (Disk Management), or 'compmgmt.msc' (Computer Management).

103 ACCESS NETWORK FILES

To work on network files even when that PC isn't connected (in Windows 7 Professional, Ultimate or Enterprise) there's an easy fix. When the network computer is available, browse to the file or folder you need, right-click it, check 'Always Available Offline', and Windows makes a local copy available for you to use at all times.





104 SEARCH THE WEB FROM YOUR START MENU

Run REGEDIT, browse to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Policies\Microsoft\Windows\Explorer, create a DWORD value called AddSearch InternetLinkInStartMenu and set it to 1. Search your PC for something, and at the bottom of the Start menu you'll see 'Search the Internet'. If search results are insufficient, click this and a window opens with the results of a web search.

105 COPY FILES

Select your files, click Edit > 'Copy to Folder/Move to Folder', choose the destination folder and Windows moves them!

106 PASTE MORE ACCURATELY

If you paste web page text into Word or Excel and find it's incorrectly formatted, paste it into Notepad first, then copy the Notepad text, and paste it into your app. Still problems? Check the Edit menu for an option such as Paste Special, and choose Unicode.

107 DON'T MISS A POP-UP ALERT!

Windows displays warnings in the bottom-left of the screen. If you miss a few, click Start, type 'Ease', click 'Ease of Access Centre', select 'Make it Easier to Focus on Tasks', and change the 'How long should Windows notification dialog boxes stay open' figure.

108 ENJOY LARGER PREVIEWS

Move your cursor over a Windows 7 Taskbar button and you see a tiny preview of the application window. To make this larger, launch REGEDIT, go to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Taskband, right-click in the right-hand pane and create

a new DWORD value called MinThumbSizePx. Double-click this, choose Decimal, set it to 300 and reboot.

109 ENHANCE MOVIEMAKER

Windows Live MovieMaker doesn't enable you to import files on a network drive. So run REGEDIT, browse to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows Live\Movie Maker, add a DWORD value called AllowNetworkFiles and set it to 1.

110 OPEN FILES WITH ANY APP

Click Start, type 'Default' and click Default Programs. Now click 'Associate a file type of protocol with a program'. Scroll down until you find the file type that you'd like to modify. Click 'Change Program', and choose the app you'd like to open this sort of file.

111 CHANGE YOUR PRINTER

To have Windows switch your default printer when you move to a different network (from home to office, say), click Start, type 'Devices', and click 'Devices and Printers'. Choose a printer and click Manage Default Printers. Select 'Change my default printer when I change networks', choose a network, the default printer you'd like, and click Add. Repeat for other networks, and pick a default printer. Now, when you connect to a network, Windows sets the printer you defined.

PUBLISH YOUR PICS
Upload pictures directly to Flickr from your desktop.



Time-saving Explorer tips

Boost your file management productivity with these shortcuts

112

To quickly open your user folder in Explorer, hold down the [Win] key on your keyboard and press [R] to launch the Run box, type '..' and press [Enter].

box, type your keyword and press [Return].

116

And don't bother browsing for folders that you've accessed recently. Press [F4] and you can probably choose them from the History list – it's much quicker.

117

If an Explorer window seems to be missing a file, folder or drive, press [F5] to refresh the window and new information may appear.

118

And if you're examining an enormous list of files and need all possible screen real estate, you can press [F11] to toggle full-screen view.

119

It's easy to navigate your folder trees from the keyboard. Press [+] on the numeric keypad to expand the currently selected folder, for instance.

120

Pressing [*] on the numeric keypad expands all folders below the current one, although be careful – this can take ages.

121

And press [-] on the numeric keypad to collapse the current folder. ■

"If you paste web page text into Word or Excel and find it's incorrectly formatted, paste it into Notepad first"

Meet the... Support Squad



Support!

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



Do you have a
PC problem?
Get in touch...
Email full details of your
problem to the
support team and we'll
do our best to help
windowsmagazine@futurenet.com

Email GOOGLE DRIVE FULL

Q I followed your step-by-step guide on page 61 of issue 135 to archive my old Gmail email from before 2015. Everything appeared to proceed smoothly enough – the files are now in MailStore and I chose the option to delete messages on the server, but Google is still telling me I only have 350MB free space. What gives?

Greg Jenner



Nick P's solution

When MailStore deleted your mail from the Gmail server, it didn't wipe it completely; instead the mail was placed in the Bin folder, where it will reside for the next 30 days until automatically being wiped. If you're confident all the mail you've archived is now accessible through MailStore, go to mail.google.com and locate the Bin in the list of folders on the left. Click this

followed by the 'Empty Bin now' link at the top of the page. Confirm how many messages will be deleted, then click OK. Be patient while this process occurs; once done, it may also take a little time before your Google account is updated to show the correct amount of free space you have.

Networking PRINTER WON'T CONNECT

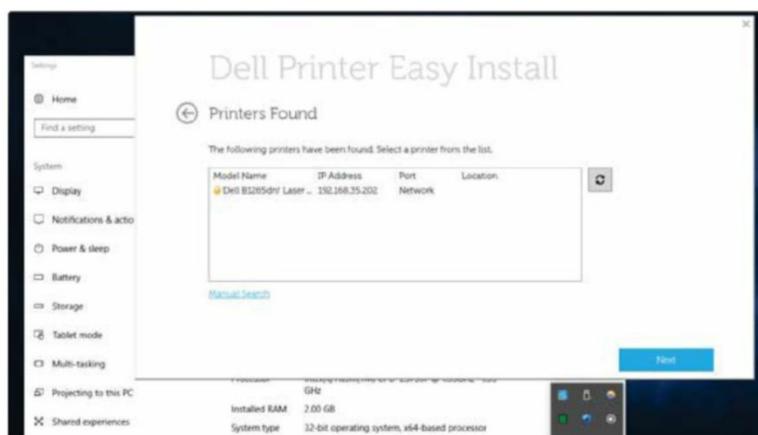
Q I'm attempting to re-connect my laptop PC to my network printer after installing the Windows 10 Creators Update. When I run the printer's setup software, however, it fails to find the printer. Do you have any idea what's happening?

Evan Luckett

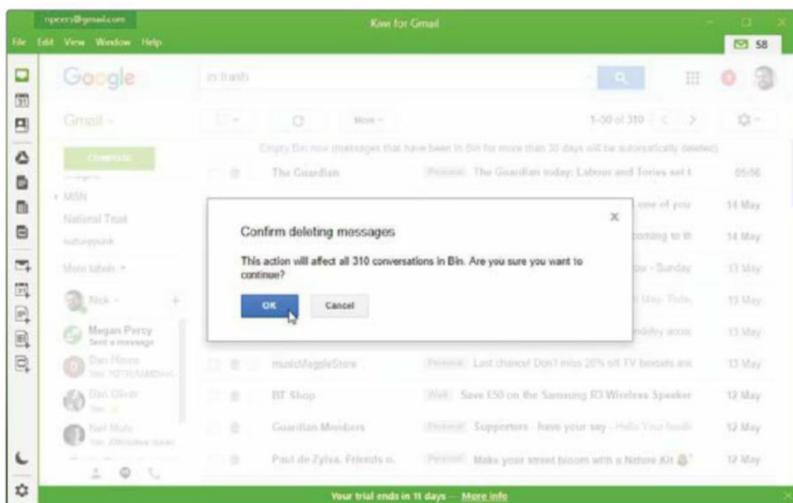


Rob's solution

Evan subsequently revealed that his laptop had 2GB of RAM, and that he had no problem connecting to the printer from his main desktop PC. We investigated the issue and discovered that due to



NETWORK GLITCH
Firewall changes
may make it hard
for your PC to
detect a printer.



firewall hardening rules, some network printer software may be unable to detect printers over the network or machines with under 4GB RAM. Microsoft should resolve the issue in an update, but you can fix the issue manually.

Right-click the Start button and choose Command Prompt (Admin), then type the following command and hit [Enter]:

sc config fdphost type=own

Restart Windows and the printer software should now be able to detect – and install – the printer.

Security

RANSOMWARE FEAR

Q The recent well-publicised attack on the NHS leaves me worried about whether my spare laptop could be susceptible to such an attack. It's still running Windows XP, but I have security software installed and up to date browsers.

Kyle Dawkins

Mayank's solution

Sadly, the days for Windows XP have long since gone. Even with up-to-date security software installed and the latest browsers in place, there are still gaping holes that can be exploited, as the global WannaCry ransomware attack so devastatingly proved.

WannaCry targeted business PCs, so you will have dodged one bullet, and the attack was so serious that Microsoft rolled out a universal update to patch the bug for both Windows XP and Windows 8, so installing that through Windows Update should close the door to that particular vulnerability.

But there will be other exploits both now and in the future, which is why XP is no longer safe, even in the short term. If your laptop is still performing adequately, but isn't

capable of being upgraded to at least Windows 7, then you should consider switching to an alternative operating system, such as Linux Mint (www.linuxmint.com). Mint has a clean, modern user interface and is relatively safe from malware. And it runs easily on older PCs.

Windows

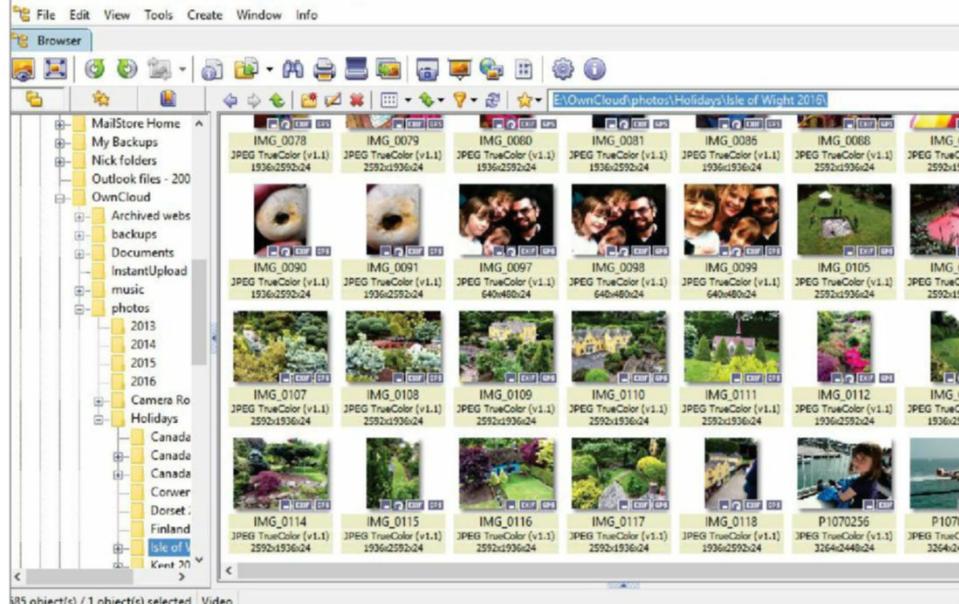
COMPATIBILITY ISSUES WITH EMBER

Q I'm still using a wonderful (but discontinued) program called Ember, which I purchased back in the Windows XP days. I've never found another graphic file manager, viewer and screensaver like it, so keep going back despite my best efforts to move on. I've tried to install it now in Windows 10, but am unable to get past a series of setup screens, which keep appearing each time I restart the program. Can you help?

Peter McAndrew

Can you help? Peter McAndrew

XnView - [Browser - E:\OwnCloud\photos\Holidays\Isle of Wight 2016]



Quickfire questions

I bought a cheap keyboard only to discover it has no Caps Lock indicator. What can I do?
Jill Ball

Try Keyboard LEDs (<http://keyboard-leds.com>), which beeps and provides a graphical indicator in the Taskbar Notification Area whenever you press Caps Lock.

Is there a way to automatically create a link when I type a word or phrase in my blog?
Harry Thomas

If you're using Open Live Writer, click File > Options > Automatic Linking where you enter your text and the associated link that's created whenever it's entered.

"WannaCry targeted business PCs, so you will have dodged one bullet"

Jargon buster!

► Hardening

The process of making a PC more secure by reducing the points where it can be exposed to vulnerabilities, such as network ports.

► Simple volume

A partition on a hard disk that is physically restricted to the disk it's created on.

IMAGE VIEWER

XnView is a feature-rich tool for viewing and editing images.

Quickfire questions

After installing the Windows 10 Creators Update, two-finger scrolling has stopped working on my Asus ZenBook.

Keith Laurent

We instructed Keith to remove the Asus Smart Gesture driver, then download and install the latest version from www.asus.com/support/faq/1009613 – this resolved the problem.

I've installed Apple Bonjour and enabled AirPlay in Kodi, but I can't stream my music from my iPhone to my PC's speakers. What's missing?

Francesca Davis

Navigate back to Settings > Service Settings > General in Kodi, but click the Standard button to switch it to Expert. A new option – ‘Enable AirPlay “Videos” and “Pictures” support’ – will appear. Flick the switch off and AirPlay should now work.

I'm often referred to the AppData folder, but can't find it in my Users folder.

Roger Wray

That's because it's hidden by default – the quickest way to access it is to press [Win] + [R], then type %AppData% to access the AppData\Roaming folder, or %LocalAppData% to access the AppData\Local folder on your PC.

Cat's solution



In the past, Peter could complete the setup process by temporarily reducing User Access Control to its lowest level, but this no longer works in Windows 10. Ironically, the actual solution is a lot simpler. When running Ember for the first time, simply right-click its program file or shortcut and choose 'Run as Administrator'. This gives it the one-time access to the Registry it needs to finish setting itself up – once done, the program should run as normal.

While troubleshooting the problem, Ian came across XnView (www.xnview.com) as a potential long-term replacement for Ember. It comes in many guises – XnView MP is the most fully featured version, while XNView Classic may have the functionality Ian needs. All are free for personal use, and can be run as portable applications too.

Hardware

NEW DRIVE ISN'T VISIBLE

Q I recently fitted a second internal hard drive to my desktop PC. I've double-checked the physical connections and verified it's visible in the configuration utility that appears before you boot Windows, but there's no sign of it in Windows at all. What am I missing? A driver?

Leonard Green

Matt's solution



It sounds like the drive hasn't yet been initialised, which you can do in Windows. Right-click the Start button and choose Disk Management, which will list all the drives attached to your PC. You should see your new drive is visible here, but it'll be marked as

RESTORE THE WINHLP32 HELP SYSTEM

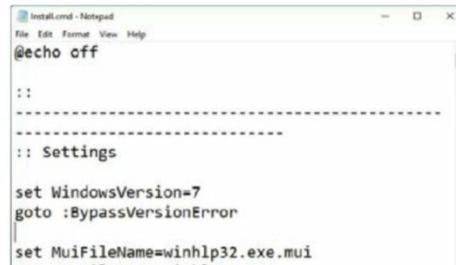
 I can no longer view help files from older programs in Windows 10. Is there a workaround?
Fiona Hollis

Rob's solution
Microsoft stopped providing a fix for this problem with Windows 8.1, but thanks to the efforts of Komeil Bahmanpour (and a slight tweak) you can get older help files working in Windows 10 – even with the latest Creators Update. Here's how to do it.



1 Download files

1 Download files
First of all head to www.komeil.com/download/1230 to download winhlp32-windows-7-x86-x64-komeil.cab to your PC. Save it to your hard drive, then double-click the CAB file and drag the three files into a new folder to extract them.



3 Edit Install.cmd

Right-click the extracted Install.cmd file and it will open in Notepad. Choose Edit, then add the following two lines under the ':: Settings' section, as shown above:
`set WindowsVersion=7
goto :BypassVersionError`

– for example, if you've recently installed the Creators Update you may be able to free up a significant chunk of space.

If you've enabled System Restore on the drive, consider switching it off, but only if you're taking a full drive image using a tool like Macrium Reflect Free. We'll assume any cloud storage (OneDrive, Google Drive, Dropbox and so on) is already saving to your microSD card, but also consider selectively syncing only a subset of the folders available or – in the case of OneDrive – removing the sync completely and relying on the OneDrive Windows Store app to selectively access files directly from the cloud as and when required.

If you regularly fill your drive with temporary files, then go to Start > Settings > System > Storage and make sure 'Storage sense' is

switched on, clicking 'Change how we free up space' to configure automatic deletion of temporary files and files that have been left in the Recycle bin. Or move the temp files off your drive completely: type 'environment' into the Search box and click 'Edit environment variables for your account' before editing both the TEMP and TMP variables, so that they point to your microSD card.

Windows RESTORE SYSTEM CONTROL PANEL

I see that the Windows 10 Creators Update has now removed the System Control Panel, embedding it into Settings instead. Is there a way to bring the original back so I can easily access the advanced options?

Tony Barrowclough

Rob's solution

Windows 10 is doing its best to hide away the old Control Panel, but it's still there – the quickest way to access the Advanced tab of the System Properties Control Panel is to press [Win] + [R], type **sysdm.cpl** and hit [Enter], for example, while typing 'control system' brings up the System Properties Control Panel with information about your PC.

If you'd like these shortcuts back on the menu that appears when you right-click the Start button, download and run Win+X Menu Editor (<http://winaero.com/download.php?view.21>). Select 'Add a program' from the list of options at the top of the window, then choose 'Add a Control Panel item', and scroll down and choose System. Now restart File Explorer and the shortcut will appear.



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

Email full details of your problem to the support team and we'll do our best to help:
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TEMP MOVE
Free up extra
space by housing
temporary files on
another drive.

The screenshot shows two windows side-by-side. On the left, the 'Storage sense' settings page indicates 29.5 MB of disk space cleaned up in the past month. It has two toggle switches: 'Delete temporary files that my apps aren't using' (On) and 'Delete files that have been in the recycle bin for over 30 days' (On). Below this is a 'Free up space now' section with a 'Clean now' button. At the bottom is a 'Do you have a question?' section with a 'Get help' link. On the right, the 'Environment Variables' dialog box is open, showing the 'User variables for nickd' section with variables like MOZ_PLUGIN_PATH, OneDrive, Path, TEMP, and TMP. Below it is the 'System variables' section with variables like ComSpec, NUMBER_OF_PROCESSORS, OS, Path, PATHEXT, PROCESSOR_ARCHITECTURE, and PROCESSOR_IDENTIFIER.

"If you've recently installed the Creators Update you may be able to free up a significant chunk of space"

```
C:\Windows\System32\cmd
Taking the ownership of system's existing ...
ERROR: File or Directory not found.

Granting nickd full-access permission to system's existing ...
C:\Windows\ /grant nickd:f: The filename, directory name, or volume label syntax is incorrect.
Successfully processed 0 files; Failed processing 1 files

Copying to system...
35 File(s) copied

Updating Registry entries...
The operation completed successfully.
The operation completed successfully.
The operation completed successfully.
The operation completed successfully.

[Output truncated]
```



Jargon buster!

► Ransomware

A type of malware that encrypts a user's data – from specific files to an entire hard drive – before displaying a message demanding the user pay to unlock the files.

► Storage Sense

A new feature introduced in the Creators Update that aims to help users keep hard drives clear of junk by automatically clearing out temporary files and the Recycle Bin.

3 Install help files

Save the file and exit Notepad. Now right-click **Install.cmd** again, but this time choose 'Run as administrator'. Click Yes when prompted. A command window should appear, indicating files copied and Registry entries updated successfully.

4 Access old help files

Press the key when prompted to close the Command Prompt window. Now re-open your offending application and press [F1] to open the Help files. You should now find that the help files you need for your old Windows programs appear correctly once again.

29 AWESOME SMART HOME UPGRADES



The Gadget Magazine

THINNEST 4K EVER

→ We've watched
LG's 2.5mm-thick
super screen!



BEST TECH FOR EVERYTHING

Upgrade all aspects of your life with our killer
selections of today's top gadgets



67
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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

Creators Update? 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 our essential Basics section, we'll show you how to: master the desktop and make it work for you; customise the Start menu and quickly access favourite items using tiles; and how to get the best from Windows 10's virtual personal assistant, Cortana.

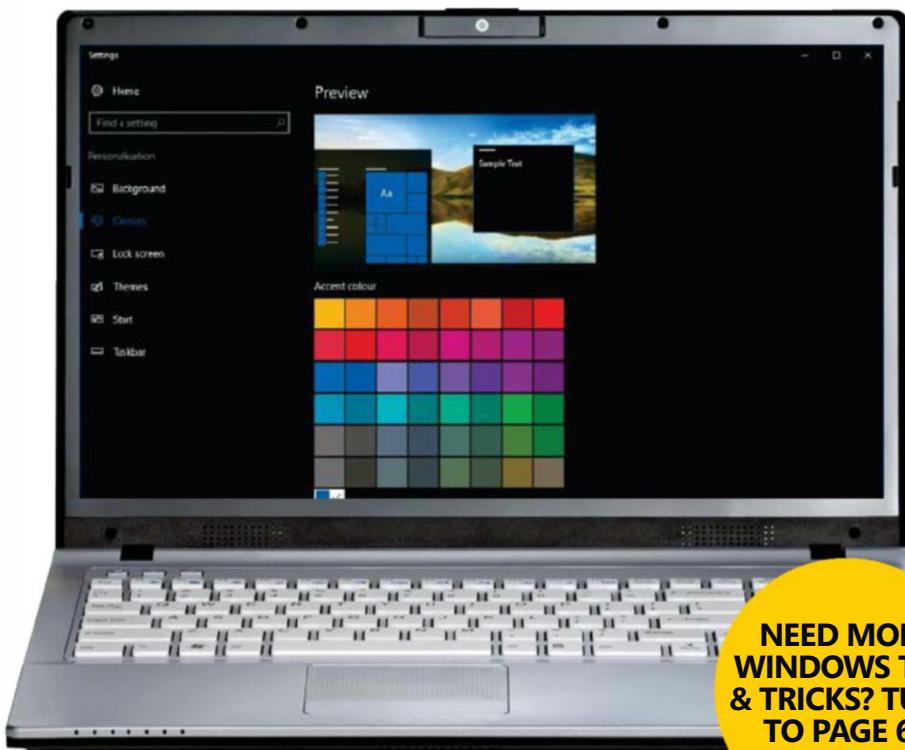
Matt Hanson
Associate Editor
www.facebook.com/windowsmag

Featuring...

76 How to master the Windows 10 desktop

78 Change the way the Start menu works

80 Discover the ways Cortana can help you



NEED MORE
WINDOWS TIPS
& TRICKS? TURN
TO PAGE 60
NOW!

Windows 10 tip of the month

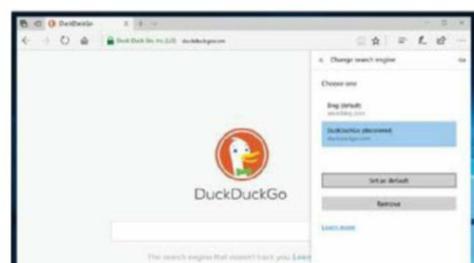
Change Edge's default search tool

Change your search engine in Edge

If you use Microsoft Edge as your main web browser, you'll no doubt have noticed that it uses Microsoft's own search engine, Bing, as its default. While Bing is very good, there are alternatives available... the ubiquitous Google, of course, and DuckDuckGo – a search engine that doesn't track you. To use DuckDuckGo, open Edge and head to <https://duckduckgo.com>, then click the ellipsis (...) in the top right corner.



SETTINGS In the menu that appears scroll down and select Settings, then 'View advanced settings'.



SEARCH Scroll down until you see the 'Change search engine' button. Now set DuckDuckGo as the default.

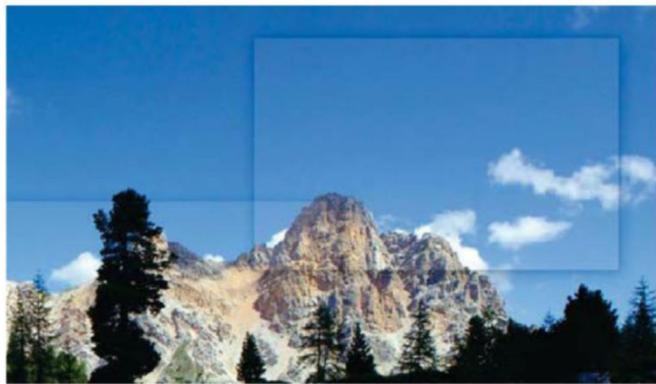
Master the desktop

You'll spend a lot of time there, so here are some great ways to make it work for you...

When not actually using applications, the Windows desktop is where you'll spend much of your time, moving files about, hunting for that obscure application you installed six months ago and suddenly need, or lining up your windows so that they fill the space perfectly (a time-wasting

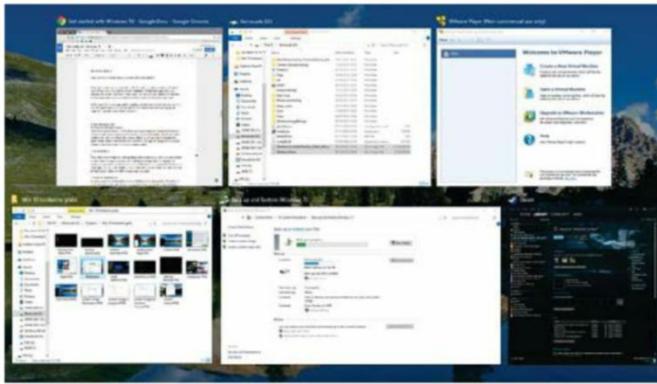
pastime that's all but dead now thanks to window snapping).

In Windows 10, the desktop and the taskbar get a few new tricks that make working with files and folders even easier, and the new search bar means pulling up an application you don't use often is a breeze. Follow these tips to a happy start...



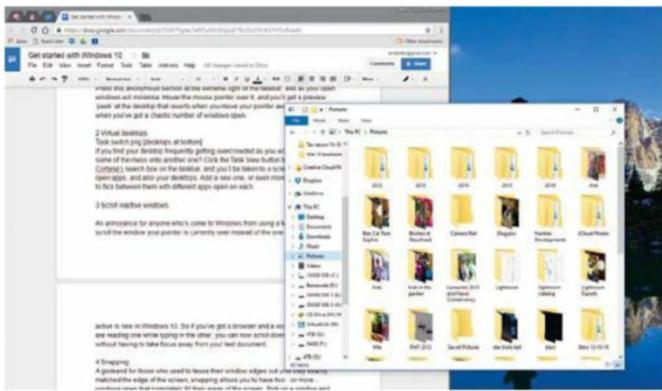
1 Show desktop/peek

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



2 Virtual desktops

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



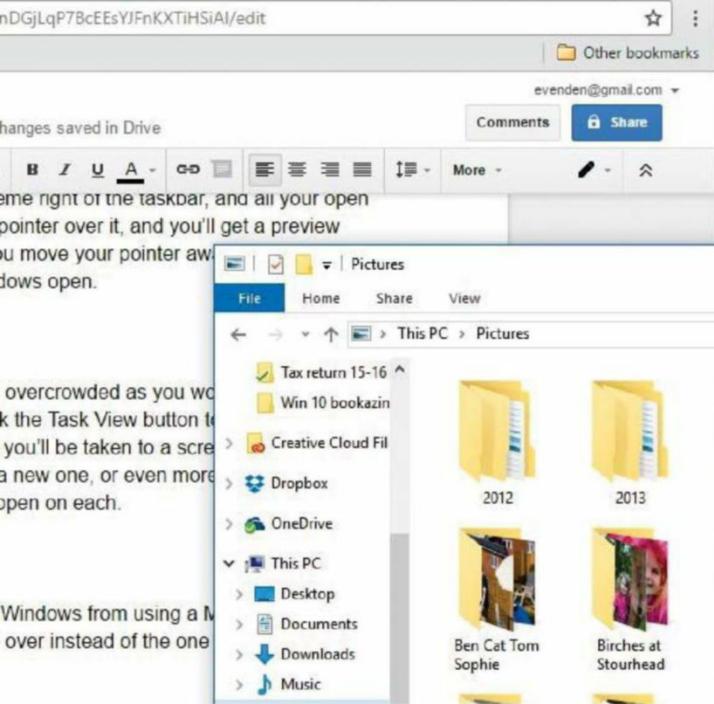
3 Scroll inactive windows

An annoyance for anyone who's come to Windows from using the Mac, the ability to scroll the window your pointer is currently over – instead of the one that's currently active – is new in Windows 10. So, if you have a browser and a word processor open, and are reading one while typing in the other, you can now scroll down in the browser without having to take your focus away from your text document.



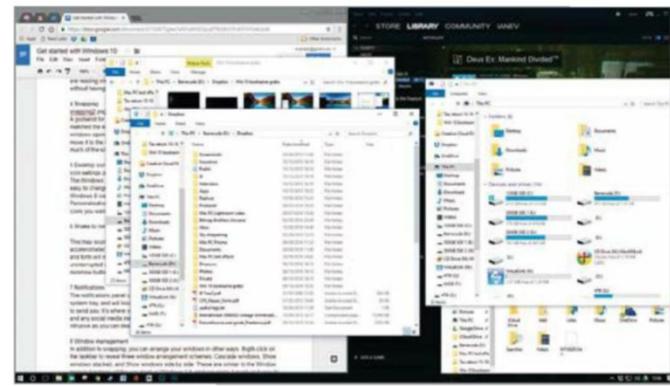
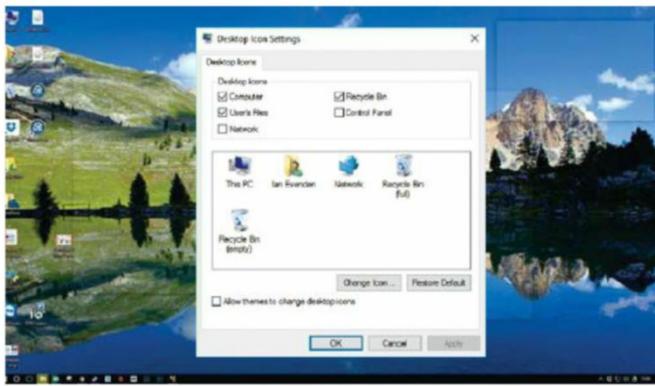
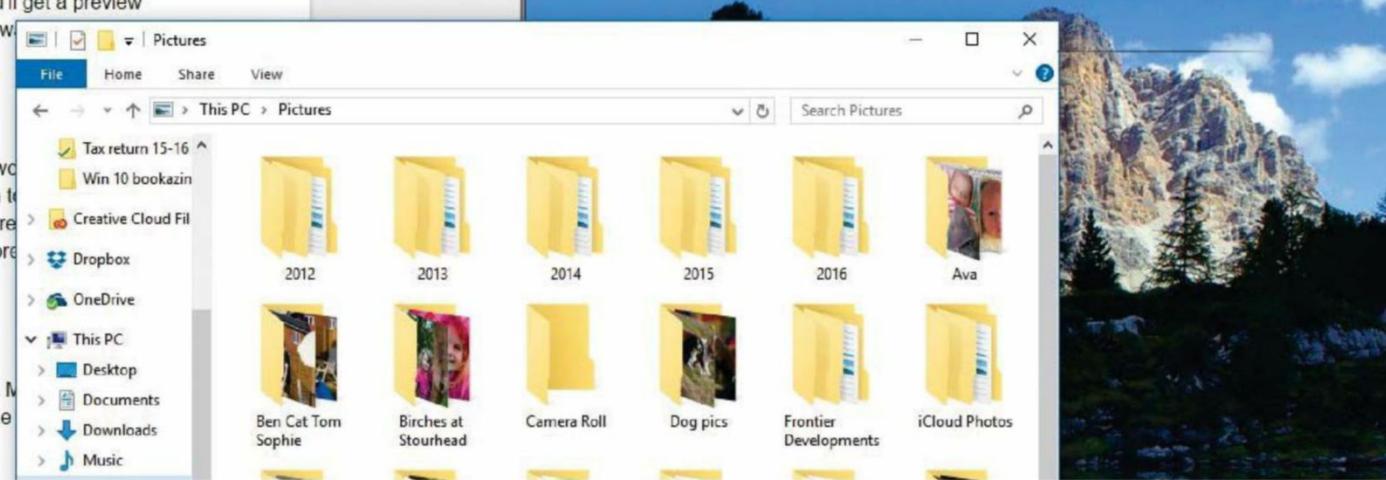
4 Window snapping

A real godsend for those who used to tease their window edges out until they exactly matched the edge of the screen, snapping in Windows 10 enables you to have two or more windows open that completely fill their areas of the screen. Pick up a window and move it to the extreme left or right edge of the desktop to try it (you'll see it 'snap' to the new half screen format). You can adjust how much of the screen they take up too.



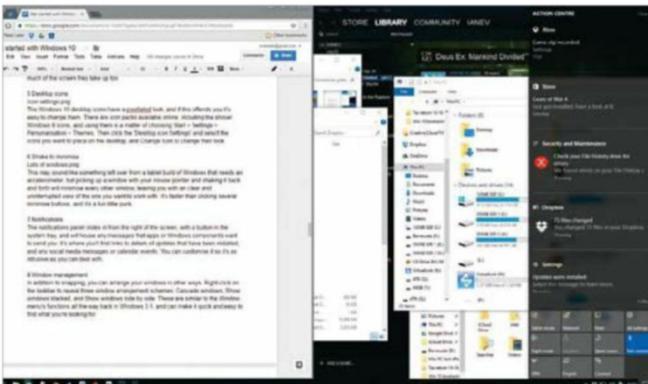
overcrowded as you work. Click the Task View button to see all your open windows. You'll be taken to a screen where you can switch to a new one, or even more windows open on each.

Windows from using a mouse instead of the one



5 Desktop icons

The Windows 10 desktop icons have a pixelated look, and if this offends you it's easy to change them. Luckily, there are icon packs available online – including the shinier Windows 8 icons. Download the icon pack you want to use, then go to Start > Settings > Personalisation > Themes. Click the 'Desktop icon Settings' and select the icons you want to place on the desktop, then use the Change Icon option to change their look.

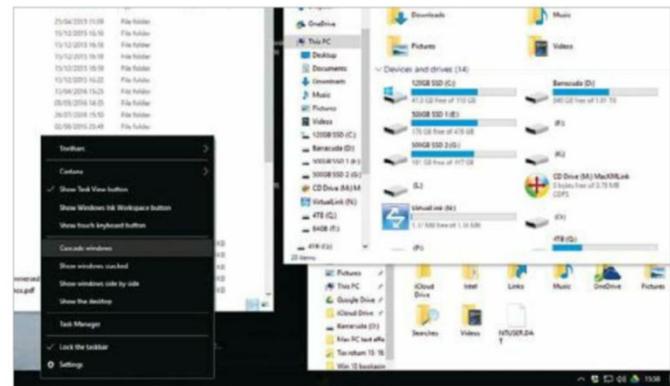


7 Notifications

The notifications panel – or Action Centre – slides in from the right of the screen, with a button in the system tray, and will house any messages that apps or Windows components want to send you. It's where you'll find links to details of Windows updates that have been installed on your machine, and any social media messages or upcoming calendar events. You can customise it so it's as intrusive as you can deal with.

6 Shake to minimise

This may sound like something left over from a tablet build of Windows that needs a built-in accelerometer, but picking up a window with your mouse pointer and shaking it back and forth will minimise every other window, leaving you with a clear and uninterrupted view of the one you want to work with. It's much faster than clicking several minimise buttons, and it's a fun little quirk that's a good one to remember.



8 Window management

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

Customise the Start menu

The Start menu in Windows 10 is more powerful than ever – here are some easy tips to make it work for you

The Start menu's return was big news when Windows 10 launched, and it has evolved as the operating system has been updated. It's become a fast, and efficient way to access apps and settings – Windows 8's full-screen monstrosity is now a distant memory, thankfully!

However, if you don't like how the Start menu looks when you first pop it up on your fresh

install of Windows 10, it doesn't have to stay that way. It's fully customisable in ways that were never possible in earlier versions of the operating system, and can be made to work in just about any way you want, standing out from its background for ease of reading, or automatically blending in with the colour scheme of whatever theme you have currently set on your desktop.



1 Colour

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

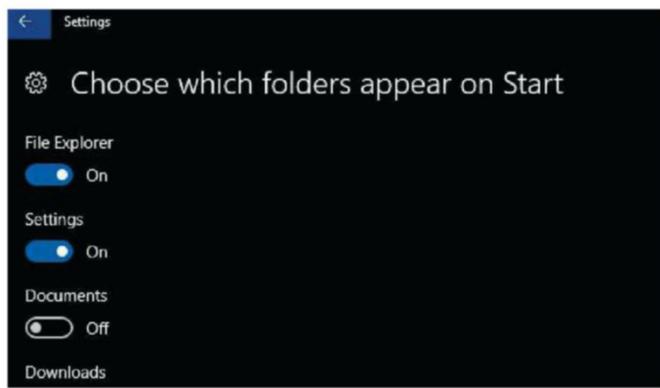


3 Folders and tiles

Your Start menu is made up of lists and tiles, and some of these can be shortcuts to folders such as Documents. Settings > Personalisation > Start enables you to tinker with this, so if you never shoot videos you can stop the empty Videos folder from taking up space on the menu. You can turn the links to the Settings window, and the one that opens an empty File Explorer window, on and off too.

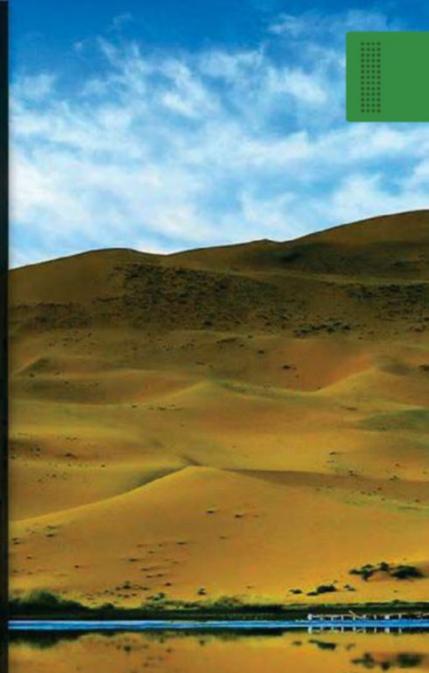
2 Size

To make space for all the customising you can do to the Start menu, you can easily resize it to your liking. Just move your mouse pointer to the top-border or right-border of the Start Menu, the pointer will change into arrows, and you'll be able to increase or decrease height and width, dragging it out to completely fill the screen if you want to. This is particularly useful if you have a PC filled with programs that you access regularly.



4 Hide program lists

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



5 Use it to search with

Hitting the [Win] key on your keyboard to pop up the Start menu's Search box is one of the fastest ways to look for anything in Windows 10. Just type a few characters and you will get suggestions for applications and documents stored on your computer that match your initial query. You can also use the arrow keys on your keyboard to navigate the Start menu, if you'd rather not use the mouse.



6 Live tiles

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



7 Pin tiles and shortcuts

If there's something you need to be able to find quickly, but which gets lost in the lists of the Start menu, you can pin and reposition it so it's always prominently placed. To do that right-click an item and choose 'Pin to Start'. It will now appear in tiles. Now click and drag the tile to where you want to move it to. To resize the tile, right-click, choose Resize then the tile size you want. You can pin shortcuts to the Taskbar for easy access too.

8 Bring back the Start screen!

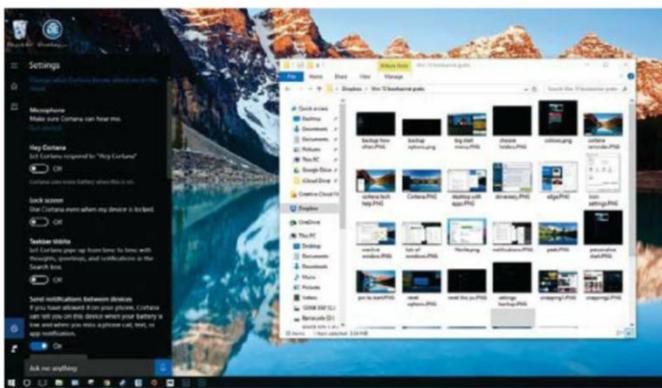
It may have been almost universally mocked and reviled in Windows 8, but the fullscreen Start menu is still there in Windows 10, ready to block out all your work at a single press of the Windows key! But, if you liked it, go to Settings > Personalisation > Start and tick the box marked 'Use full-screen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

Get to know Cortana

Meet the digital assistant that's here to help you – she can even recognise the sound of your voice

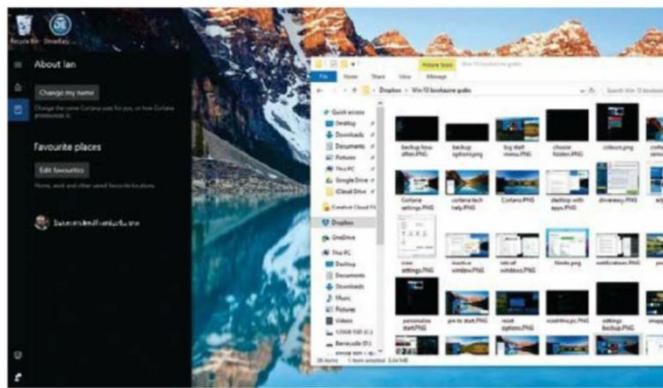
Microsoft's virtual personal assistant takes its name from a character in the *Halo* series of videogames. That incarnation of Cortana – an AI who is outwardly female (having been created from the brain patterns of a female scientist) and never seems to have been provided with quite enough clothes – can hack alien computer encryption and fly captured spaceships.

The Windows 10 version is perhaps a little less powerful, but comes in useful all the same. She can search using natural language terms, and by using voice activation just like Siri does on your iPhone. And if the idea of voice controlling your PC alarms you, or perhaps your computer isn't equipped with a mic, then you can still interact with Cortana through the keyboard, typing your queries for Cortana to answer.



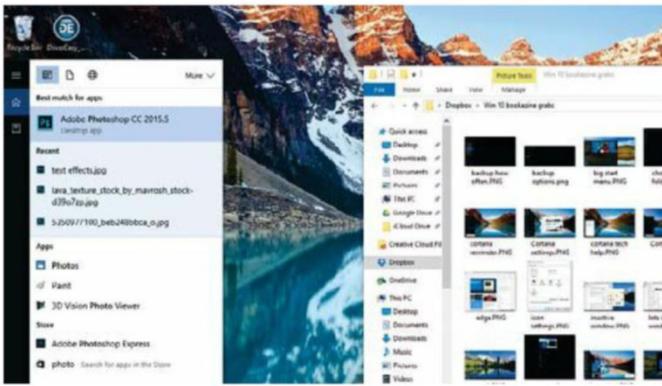
1 Set up

Depending on how your PC has been configured, you may need to switch Cortana on in order to work with her. The first time you try to search your PC, she'll ask if you want to use her. Say no, and the search box remains functional, but without the extra features that Cortana brings. You'll need to be connected to the internet to use Cortana of course, because that's how results are queried and returned to you, just like Apple's Siri.



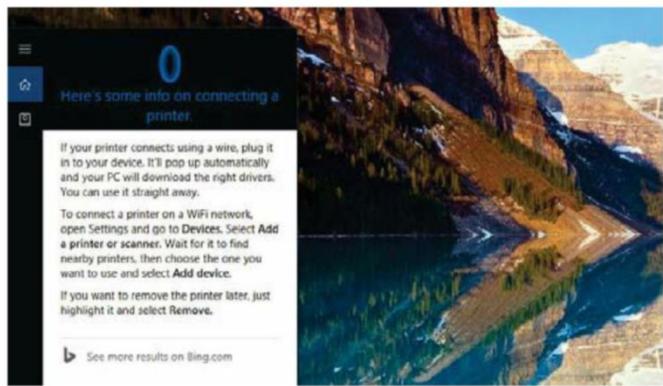
2 Personalise Cortana

To make Cortana as useful as possible she needs to address you personally. Tell Cortana your name and where you live and she can adapt herself to you. If you've opted for her to speak results back to you, she'll call you by name and allow you to correct her pronunciation if she gets it wrong. Tell her your interests, and appropriate news snippets will appear when you open Cortana's panel. You can do all this from the settings.



3 Narrow down your search

To stop Cortana searching things she doesn't need to, and speed up the return of those internet results, you can tell her exactly what you're looking for, which is great when it comes to finding apps and files in particular. So if it's definitely an app you need, rather than a picture or video, start your search query with 'app:'. If it's a setting, type 'setting:'. For a document... you get the idea. You can force a web search with 'web:' too.



4 Use Cortana for tech support

If there's something you want to know how to do in Windows 10, a publication like this one can help of course. If you need to know really quickly, try asking Cortana instead. Type your query in, and it will appear in the list of results under 'Can I help?'. Clicking this gets you the Microsoft help files, and in the case of many common tasks a walkthrough will show you how it's done. Don't forget the tips on these pages though!

Settings

Change what Cortana knows about the cloud

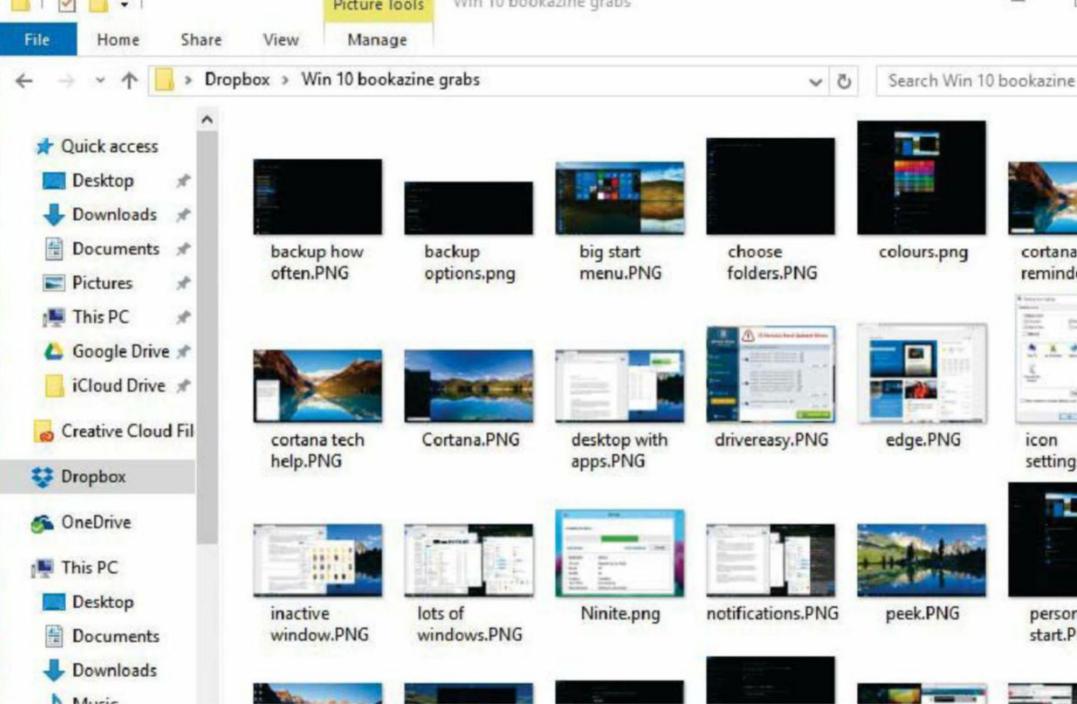
Microphone
Make sure Cortana can hear me.
Get started

Hey Cortana
Let Cortana respond to "Hey Cortana".
Off

Cortana uses more battery when this is turned on.

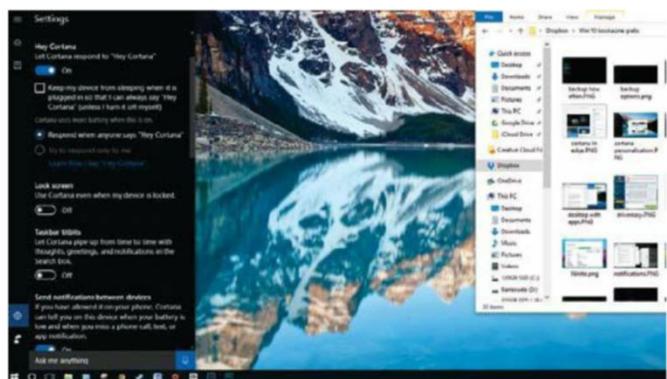
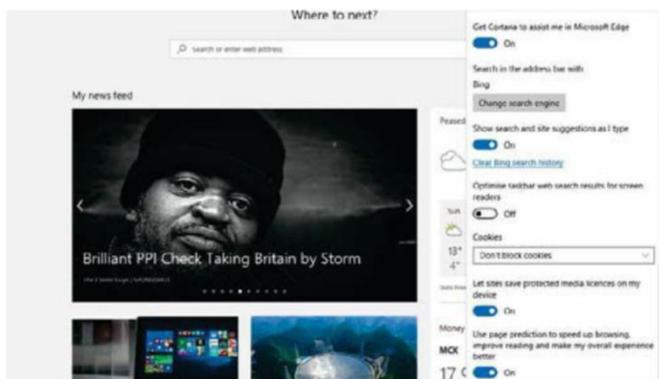
Lock screen
Use Cortana even when my device is locked.
Off

Taskbar titbits
Let Cortana pipe up from time to time with thoughts, greetings, and notifications in the Search box.



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is locked.

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5 Use Cortana in Edge

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



6 Use voice commands

Click the microphone icon next to the search box, and you can speak your questions and instructions to Cortana. You must have 'Search online' enabled in Cortana settings to use voice search, otherwise the mic icon disappears. If you select the option, she will respond to a cheery 'Hey Cortana' – but this will increase battery usage on portable devices, so is only worth turning on if you're sure you'll use it.



7 Train Cortana to only reply to you

It's hilarious to shout 'Xbox off!' at someone else's Xbox with Kinect voice control switched on, shutting the box down in the middle of what its poor user was doing, so train Cortana to respond only to your voice by selecting the 'Learn my voice' option in Settings and speak the test phrases. You'll find that Cortana keeps learning anyway, so over time the more you use Cortana the better she will be at just about any task!

8 Use natural language to search

If you want to set yourself a reminder, you don't need to find a calendar app and input what you want to do, and when, just type or speak it into Cortana as you would when talking to someone. Saying 'Remind me to take a screen break in an hour' or 'Remind me to buy flowers on the way home', for example, will trigger a notification at the appropriate time. Now there's no excuse to forget that meeting or important date again!

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Upgrade

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Welcome

 Microsoft's new Surface Laptop is a thing of beauty, a gorgeous slice of aluminium, glass (and alcantara) that will turn heads in college cafeterias across the land. You can find out whether it's worth taking out a student loan for on page 84. We also look at Dell's all-in-one Inspiron 24 7000 (page 86); see if Gigabyte's Aero 15 can successfully meet the needs of gamers and enterprise users (page 88); and put the Epson Expression XP-960 (page 90) and BT Whole Home Wi-Fi (page 92) through their paces. And on page 95, we look at Twitter apps.

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This issue's highlights



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It's achingly hip and amazingly powerful, so why is it armed with Windows 10 S?



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The perfect combination of design, style and affordability? Let's see, shall we...



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A laptop for gamers and business types, but does it fall between both stools?



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Looking for an A3 photo printer? Then this compact all-in-one has your back

Our promise to you...

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

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RATING EXPLAINED  Superb  Very good  Good  Disappointing  Poor



Microsoft Surface Laptop

£979 | \$999 www.microsoft.com

Microsoft's most direct shot at the MacBook yet

The one Surface product that fans have been clamouring over for years, a straight up Surface Laptop, is finally here. But, in taking design cues from both the Surface Pro and Surface Book lines, Microsoft has set lofty expectations for its first dedicated laptop device.

Priced at £979 (\$999), the Surface Laptop clearly aims to chip at the MacBook and MacBook Air models that dominate college campuses practically worldwide. In fact, Microsoft claims that its cheaper (and larger) Surface Laptop can last far longer on a charge than Apple's 12-inch MacBook: 14.5 hours.

However, every Surface Laptop shipped will come with Windows 10 S installed, Microsoft's new version of Windows 10 that only accepts app installs downloaded from the Windows Store.

With the ability to switch from Windows 10 S to the 100% open Windows 10 Pro for \$49 (around £40) if you miss the chance in 2017

for free, should you need an app outside of the Windows Store that badly (spoiler: you probably will).

Regardless, at that price, can Microsoft garner enough interest from college students (or more likely their parents), who are often already strapped from the cost of going into higher education?

Design

Clearly, part of Microsoft's plan is to lure students and other users in with an incredibly gorgeous, and potentially trendsetting, design. The 13.5-inch Surface Laptop may very well be Microsoft's most attractive computing product yet.

With four colours to choose from – Burgundy, Platinum, Cobalt Blue and Graphite Gold – there's bound to be one that appeals to you.

A full aluminium lid and base wrap the laptop in much the same way it does a Surface Book, but ditches the aluminium in the keyboard deck for an Alcantara

fabric that surrounds every plastic key and meets with the aluminium base in a seemingly airtight seal.

The fabric, according to Microsoft, is imported from Italy and laser cut to fit every Surface Laptop. Now, while many of the design elements are the same – the 13.5-inch (2,256 x 1,504) PixelSense touch display, the smooth glass-coated Precision touchpad, the chrome logo centred on the aluminium lid – we're told that the Surface Laptop shares very few parts with other Surface models.

That much is obvious in the nature of the felt used for this keyboard deck compared with what Microsoft uses in its Type Covers. The material used here is smoother and more plush, and we're told it's spill resistant.

Plus, the additional height afforded by this traditional laptop design allowed Microsoft to equip the keyboard with 1.5mm of travel, and the difference in typing



KEY FEATURES

Microsoft Surface Laptop

Supplier www.microsoft.com

Operating system Windows 10 S

Processor Intel Core i5

Storage 128GB

RAM 4GB

Graphics Intel HD 620

Connectivity 801.11ac Wi-Fi; Bluetooth

4.0 LE; 1x USB 3.0 port; 1x headset jack; 1x mini DisplayPort; 1x 3.5mm AV socket; 1x Surface Connect port

Weight 1.25kg

Screen size 13.5-inch

Display resolution 2,256 x 1,504 pixels

between that and the Surface Pro 4 is night and day. Finally, Microsoft devised a speaker system beneath the keyboard that radiates sound through the spaces between the keys and the keyboard deck.

The result isn't much better audio than you'd find in a MacBook Air, perhaps a bit fuller, but at least it's consistently in an uninterrupted position. Naturally, the audio gets muffled when you are busy typing, but since the sound radiates throughout the laptop base, there isn't a major loss in audio detail.

"The Surface Laptop's incredible, potentially trend-setting design cannot go unnoticed"

That leaves the side of the Surface Laptop's base to house Microsoft's proprietary power and docking port found on other Surface devices, as well as a USB 3.0 and Mini DisplayPort, not to mention an audio jack. If you're already asking, "where's the USB-C port?" we've already been there.

Microsoft tells us that it intends for its own port to handle concerns of connectivity expansion via the Surface Connect port and its Surface Dock, while refraining from alienating customers who have yet to completely update to USB-C.

That doesn't explain why the Surface Laptop is equipped with USB 3.0, not USB 3.1, since you're missing out on some major data transfer speed improvements there.

Performance and battery

Microsoft can pack the Surface Laptop with the latest Intel Core i5 or Core i7 Kaby Lake processors, up to 512GB of PCIe solid-state storage and as much as 16GB of RAM.

That's a powerful laptop on paper, likely stronger than either the MacBook Air or the 12-inch MacBook, while rising above even the latest 13-inch MacBook Pro, which uses Skylake processors. (The £979/\$999 Surface Laptop model comes packing a 128GB SSD and 4GB of RAM with the Intel Core i5.)

As for how Microsoft fits that kind of power in a laptop just 14.48mm thin, a brand new, proprietary vapour chamber cooling system helps. The system changes the physical state of the heat as it's taken in through the centre of a fan vent in the rear of the laptop base and spits it out of the sides of that same vent.

While we obviously weren't able to stress-test the Surface Laptop, we were able to test out how it feels to use. For starters, at just 1.25kg, this thing is super light, which is impressive considering it's a 13.5-inch, Gorilla Glass 3 touchscreen you're looking at.

Microsoft chalks this up to, in part, the thinnest LCD touch module ever used in a laptop

design. This, in turn, helps the lid to lift with just one finger. However, perhaps the hinge design needs refinement. While you can open the display with just a finger, that slightness in the hinge is felt when the screen bounces with every tap of the touchscreen. It's the very reason we question the inclusion of touchscreens in traditional laptops to begin with. Microsoft hasn't found a better solution here.

That said, typing on the keyboard is the best time we've had doing such on a Surface product yet, and the portability of the whole thing is right up there with Apple's best.

As for battery life, Microsoft is, again, claiming 14.5 hours on a single charge. Microsoft later clarified for us that this number was achieved via local video playback with all radios but Wi-Fi disabled.

That testing environment sounds very similar to how we test for battery life, so you should see battery life results close to this. If so, then the Surface Laptop will be very tough to beat.

Summary

The Surface Laptop's incredible, potentially trendsetting design cannot go unnoticed. This is a laptop that appears to outclass the MacBook Air and 12-inch MacBook – and possibly even the 13-inch MacBook Pro – for hundreds less. Save for a questionable platform versus pricing decision, the Surface Laptop has all the makings of yet another winning piece of hardware from Microsoft. ■

Incredible design inside and out is hampered by a questionable platform choice for the price.

Windows Help & Advice Verdict





Dell Inspiron 24 7000

£949 | \$1,149.99 www.dell.com

A solid all-in-one PC for your home or workplace with some surprising plus points

Dell forged its name (and reputation) in the world of traditional desktop PCs, but with more of us looking for more creative ways to work, the US company is now looking to offer a number of other form factors and options for those looking for something a little different.

With the company slipping recently in terms of global PC sales, Dell is looking for the growing all-in-one PC market to boost its numbers. The Dell Inspiron 24 7000, reviewed here, is the company's attempt to challenge the likes of the Microsoft Surface Studio and Apple's premium iMacs in the growing all-in-one PC market, which combines everything you'd want in a PC into a single model.

Design

Make no mistake, the Inspiron 24 7000 is striking. The 23.8-inch Full HD display catches the eye from the minute you open the box,

offering a true widescreen experience – although there are some seriously large bezels present.

The PC is also super thin, at just 27mm across, and thanks to its movable hinge, the display can be tilted to a number of angles, right down to lying flat on its back.

This flexibility means that the display isn't able to rise up too high, meaning you might need to invest in a separate screen stand unless you want to get a cricked neck.

All the main components are contained within the base of the display, which packs in the device's hardware, as well as a surprisingly powerful speaker. With its metal and black plastic design, it's hardly the most attractive unit, but the angle of the screen means that you won't really notice it when the machine is in use.

Specifications

The base model, on test here, offers a decent set of specifications,

including a quad-core Intel Core i5-6300HQ (Skylake) processor with 6MB cache, integrated Intel HD graphics and 12GB of 2133MHz DDR4 RAM. Other goodies include a 1TB 5400rpm hard drive, plus 80211ac Wi-Fi and Bluetooth 4.0 wireless connectivity.

As far as wired connections go, the Dell Inspiron 24 7000 has you covered, coming equipped with four USB 2.0 and two USB 3.0 ports, plus Ethernet and HDMI, as well as a memory card reader.

Inside, there's Windows 10 Home, meaning that all your favourite Microsoft Office programs are present and correct, making it ideal for home and office working.

These specs put the Inspiron 24 7000 a little behind the lowest-priced iMac offerings, although the equivalent Apple device – the 27-inch iMac with Retina 5K display – will set you back £1,749, far more than the £949 (\$1,149.99) that Dell asks for its all-in-one PC.



"Given its attractive design, it's a relief to find the Inspiron 24 7000 is easy to set up and use"

As for Microsoft's Surface Studio, the equivalent model – equipped with similar hardware to the Dell – costs \$2,999 (around £2,326 – it's currently not available in the UK) meaning that if you're strapped for cash, Dell's device could be everything you're looking for.

In use

The Inspiron 24 7000 offers fairly decent power, given its price range, and was able to take on some of its more powerful competitors, outscoring the Microsoft Surface Studio in our GeekBench tests. Here, the Dell scored 3,809 on the single core test; 10,649 on the Multi Core test and a decent 16,588 on the Compute OpenCL test.

The Dell all-in-one also outperforms the 2016 version of the equivalent-sized Apple iMac, which

scored lower on Novabench's tests, with the Inspiron 24 7000 coming in 70 per cent faster thanks to its integrated Intel HD GPU (NB: Apple released updated versions of the iMac as we went to press).

The version we used came with an Intel Core i5-6300HQ processor, but the device is also available with a more powerful Intel Core i7.

This boosted version also comes with embedded Nvidia graphics, instead of Intel hardware, 16GB of RAM, plus a 32GB SSD as well as HDD storage. You'll have to pay more for the privilege of course, with the higher specced model costing £1,099 in the UK; or between \$1,399 or \$1,567.99 in the US, depending on configuration.

Overall, though, the standard edition is more than enough to handle the vast majority of

KEY FEATURES

Dell Inspiron 24 7000

Supplier www.dell.com

Operating system Windows 10 Home

Processor 3.20GHz quad-core Intel Core i5-6300HQ (Skylake), with 6MB Cache

Storage 1TB 5400rpm hard drive

RAM 12GB 2133MHz DDR4

Graphics Intel HD Graphics

Connectivity Intel Single Band Wireless-AC 3165; Bluetooth 4.0; 2x USB 2.0 ports;

4x USB 3.0 ports, 1x RJ45 Ethernet port,

1x HDMI input, 1x HDMI output

Weight 9.46kg

Display 23.8-in IPS display

Display resolution 1,920x1,080 pixels

everyday work tasks, and also means the PC boots quickly, with that 12GB of RAM doing wonders for speed and performance.

Given its attractive design, it's a relief to also know that the Inspiron 24 7000 is easy to set up and use – just unpack the PC out of the box and plug it in to get started.

Dell is obviously targeting the creative industries, with the flexible display useful if you work in media or graphic design, however this is by no means a portable device, with the unit weighing 9.46kg.

The super-wide screen is also ideal for those who need multiple windows or programs open at the same time, allowing for a much less crowded display that lets you stay on top of everything.

Overall, the Inspiron 24 7000 is an attractive proposition if you need a Windows-powered all-in-one.

Summary

With its 24-inch display, the Dell Inspiron 24 7000 is a valuable addition to any home or office, provided you have the room for it.

Although it lacks the high street appeal of Microsoft's Surface Studio, or the sophistication and build quality of Apple's iMac, for the price on offer, the Dell Inspiron 24 7000 is a good all-rounder.

Featuring a great blend of value, power and usability, Dell has made solid progress with its all-in-one PCs. Now it's time for the company to take this idea forward, and make the next generation even better. ■

The Dell Inspiron 24 7000 offers both flexible design and solid hardware. A good budget buy.


Windows Help & Advice Verdict





Gigabyte Aero 15

£1,471 | \$1,899 www.gigabyte.com

Is this laptop all play and no work?

Laptop on the inside, envelope on the outside, the Gigabyte wants to mail the Aero 15 into gamer caves and boardrooms alike. With its programmable keyboard, Kaby Lake Core i7, Nvidia GTX 1060 GPU, and an enduring battery, the Aero 15 is the next do-it-all device.

The Aero 15 may be ready for anything, but so are its competitors, the Razer Blade and Origin EVO15-S. All offer comparable hardware at similar prices. But it's the little things that put a device over the top, and the Aero 15 has plenty.

It doesn't have everything, though. Uncomfortable inputs make it more gamer than worker. Nonetheless, the Aero 15 is greater than the sum of its parts. Better yet, the sum of its parts isn't going to put much of a dent in your wallet.

Price and availability

Gigabyte currently only offers one version of the Aero 15, a Full HD-capable unit priced at \$1,899

(around £1,471). That's pretty good considering the hardware you're getting and it's the most affordable of the bunch. The Razer Blade and Origin EVO 15-S, specced to meet the Aero 15's configuration, cost \$2,099 (around £1,999) and \$2,317 (around £1,907) respectively.

If you stripped the panelling off the Aero 15, Razer Blade, and Origin EVO15-S, and just compared their hardware, you'd have a hard time telling them apart. However, one anomaly of the Aero 15 is its SATA storage. The Aero 15 prioritises size (and cost) over speed, whereas the Razer Blade includes faster PCIe storage even in its base model.

With its 512GB PCIe SSD, the Origin EVO15-S combines the best of both worlds, although it costs \$500 (£412) more than its rivals.

The Aero 15's Thunderbolt 3 is welcome, especially as 4K video editing becomes a thing. It certainly makes Gigabyte's laptop a better competitor with the MacBook Pro.

Design

The Aero 15 comes in three Halloween-inspired colours: orange, green, and black. Couple this with the Aero 15's flat-rate-shipping-envelope paneling and you have a device whose design is more 'kid-tested/mother-approved' than Gigabyte's suggested 'For Work/For Game.' We just can't see this laptop showing up under the arm of a sales rep during a client meeting – at least not in its more lurid colours. Gigabyte is trying to appeal to professionals, and the Aero 15's look works against that.

Not all is lost though! Flip open the Aero 15 and you'll find a well-designed interior. It's matte black only in here, which gives the screen and base a gravitas that is missing from the back panel (the downside being that it's easily smudged).

In here, the screen is clearly the centrepiece. On paper it's 15.6 inches, but thanks to a minuscule bezel it seems bigger. Gigabyte's



KEY FEATURES

Gigabyte Aero 15

Supplier www.gigabyte.com

Operating system Windows 10 Home

Processor 2.8GHz Intel Core i7-7700HQ

Storage 512GB M.2 SATA SSD

RAM 16GB DDR4-2400

Graphics NVIDIA GeForce GTX 1060, Intel HD Graphics 630

Connectivity Intel Dual Band Wireless AC 8265 plus Bluetooth; 3x USB 3.0 ports; 1x HDMI port; 1x Mini DisplayPort; 1x Thunderbolt 3; 1x Headphone/Microphone combo jack; 1x Ethernet port; 1x SD Card Reader

Weight 2.1kg

Screen size 15.6-inch

Display resolution: 3,840 x 2,160 pixels

also moved the Aero 15's webcam, light sensor and mic to the hinge, keeping the bezel free of clutter.

The Aero 15's 2.09kg is evenly spread, giving the laptop a dense, but not heavy feel. The Origin EVO15-S and Razer Blade weigh 1.81kg and 1.88kg, respectively.

When it comes to the Aero 15's inputs, there's a lot to love, and to hate. The glass touchpad is big and supports Windows 10 gestures, but its tracking is imprecise. So is its left click/right click detection, making it unfriendly for gamers and pros.

"Its programmable keyboard may be the Aero 15's best feature, but its display is a close second"

The Aero 15's keyboard also suffers from feedback issues. In its case, there's too much: the action of the keys is too stiff for long-term use. Plus, stiff keys make for loud typing. While these two things might appeal to gamers, they're annoyances in the office.

The keyboard – feedback and noise aside – is pretty nifty. Gone are the 'G' macro keys of the Aero 14. They've been moved out to make room for a full number pad. Macro functionality still exists, and in fact, it's expanded: every key on the board is now mappable. It's one of the Aero 15's best features.

A desktop app – called Gigabyte Fusion – allows users to program the Aero 15's keyboard and full RGB backlight. Click on a key in the

utility, and assign a macro, shortcut or app to it. Not too hard at all.

The backlight can be modified just as extensively with seven colours, plus five customisable and 13 pre-set lighting effects. Each user can save their settings to their own unique profile too.

The display on our review Aero 15 test unit may only be 1080p, but that's plenty at this screen size and is no less impressive for that.

The Aero 15 comes with the blessing of the pope of colour, X-Rite Pantone, and that's nothing

to shake a censer at. It's definitely worthy of its blessing: the Aero 15's colours are dessert rich. You can also use this as a media workhorse knowing the colours on the screen have been industry certified.

Although the display isn't touch-capable, its wide viewing angles, glare-killing matte finish, and sharp colours are the syrup, whip cream, and cherry on top. Its programmable keyboard may be the Aero 15's best feature, but its display is a close second.

Performance and features

Similar hardware is going to yield similar results and the Aero 15 performs as well as its competitors.

Ultra settings are a bit of reach for portable devices, unless the

game is a few years old, and the Aero 15 is no different. Nonetheless, it handles high settings without dropping into slideshow territory.

Performance drops considerably on battery, but again, that's par for the course. The fans are also loud – loud enough that the average quality of the speakers is irrelevant. Headphones are a necessity.

Battery life

The Aero 15's third best feature? Its battery. It lasted five hours and four minutes on the PCMark 8 Battery Test. Good for a gaming laptop. Enterprise users take note as the Aero 15 wasn't done there: it eked out an extra hour and 35 minutes above its PCMark 8 time on our battery test, in which the laptop plays a movie on continuous loop at 50% volume and brightness. These numbers put the EVO15-S (PCMark 8: 2 hours, 52 minutes) to shame. Only the Razer Blade gets close to the Aero 15's PCMark 8 time. It accomplished four hours and eight minutes of wireless work.

Summary

The Gigabyte Aero 15 is a definite recommend, but for who? Gamers for sure, it has everything that they want. But it's harder to recommend to enterprise users. Even if those folks look past its arcade-inspired paneling, the uncomfortable inputs of the 15 will inevitably have them reaching for a MacBook Pro or Lenovo ThinkPad instead. ■

It's the best gaming laptop of 2017 so far, but the Aero 15 falls short as a workhorse.

 Windows Help & Advice Verdict





Epson Expression Photo XP-960

£249.99 | \$299.99 www.epson.com

A compact MFP which can produce highly professional results

There are plenty of all-in-one inkjet printers on the market, but not so many that are capable of handling A3 paper. Epson's relatively affordable (£250/\$300) lozenge-shaped Multi-Function Printer (MFP) takes up no more desk space than its EcoTank ET4500, with a footprint of 148x479x356mm (HxD), but it doesn't stop at A4 size, and it uses an extra colour in its six ink system to achieve higher quality prints.

Add a scanner capable of capturing documents at 4,800 dpi and three document trays that will accept envelopes and blank discs as well as paper, and you have a machine suitable both for your home office or even a medium-sized business.

Design and build

The rounded sides of Epson's Expression Photo XP-960 reduce bulk as much as possible, so although it has the capacity to

handle A3 paper, it's small enough to share an average-sized desk with a computer and still have room to spare. The glossy black finish is an absolute magnet for dust, but because all of the printer's trays and flaps fold neatly away, it's very easy to wipe it down with a duster.

When you're ready to print, the motorised LCD panel whirrs upwards, while the out-tray extends from the front by a few inches. Below this tray are two drawers, one for loading plain A4 paper and another for photo paper and envelopes. Sheets of A3 drop into the rear speciality media feed, where a plastic assembly pulls up telescopically to support the large sheets of paper as they feed in.

The Expression Photo XP-960's colour display is a generously-sized 4.3-inch touchscreen, and it's quite easy to print directly from an SD card without any need to access a computer using the straightforward interface (yes, there's an SD card

slot for printing directly from a camera's memory card).

At the rear you'll also find a square USB port and an Ethernet port, which could be useful if you prefer not to overcrowd your Wi-Fi network – at home or at work.

Features

The ability to handle A3 paper is what sets the Expression Photo XP-960 apart from your average all-in-one photo printer, but besides that, you have a fairly full feature set. Duplex (or both sides) printing is possible with A4 plain paper, for example, and in this mode, the print speed accelerates from eight to 28 pages per minute.

Having two paper in-trays is an advantage as well, because it means you can load one with plain A4 and the other with photo paper, envelopes, or printable blank CD-sized discs, and not have to empty the tray each time you switch media. The Expression Photo



XP-960 can normally select the correct paper setting automatically when you ask it to print, an incredibly useful feature.

The scanner, meanwhile, can capture very high resolution scans of 4,800 x 4,800 dpi, which is good news for designers, photographers or anyone else who needs large, decent-quality images. You can save the scanned documents onto a USB thumb drive, or a mobile device via the Epson iPrint app (available for iOS and Android only) – or have it emailed to your PC.

"Colour documents benefit from the six ink cartridge system and show good separation"

Epson's Claria Photo HD ink system uses six, instead of the usual five, colour cartridges – magenta, light magenta, cyan, light cyan, yellow and black – to achieve superior colour fidelity.

All that's really lacking here is an automatic document feeder (ADF) for lining up, or scheduling printing and scanning jobs. NFC or Near-field communication connectivity for linking your phone with a single touch could also have been included, but wasn't.

Setup and operation

Getting started with the Expression Photo XP-960 is a smooth process thanks to the large and user-friendly touchscreen, which walks you through the setup procedure.

With luck, you should be able to hook up the MFP to your Wi-Fi network in just a few minutes.

The LCD's logical on-screen menu also makes it easy to adjust the printer's paper settings and select a function, so you shouldn't need to reach for the user manual very often, if at all.

Performance

Beginning with a black text on plain paper test, the Expression Photo XP-960 achieved average results after its print heads were

cleaned and realigned. The print speed is a little slow at less than nine impressions per minute (IPM) compared to similarly priced MFPs (especially the Canon Pixma iP7950, which has a print speed of 14.5 ipm with mono prints and 10.4 ipm with colour), but text looks sharp enough. Characters lack the light touch of a laser and look a little heavy-handed by comparison, but they are perfectly acceptable for an inkjet printer like this one.

At one point during our testing, the print head must have fallen out of alignment as the lines of black text turned grey half way down the page, but after running the automatic calibration tests, printing remained crisp and consistent for the remainder of our review.

KEY FEATURES

Epson Expression Photo XP-960

Supplier: www.epson.com

Functions: Print, copy, scan

Ink: 6 cartridges (cyan, magenta, yellow, black, light cyan, light magenta)

Connectivity: Ethernet, Wi-Fi, Wi-Fi Direct, USB

Data storage slots: USB port, SD card, MemoryStick, CF card

Print speed: 8.5 ppm mono, 8 ppm colour

Main paper tray capacity: 100 sheets

Print quality: 5,760 x 1,440 dpi

Scan quality: 4,800 x 4,800 dpi

Apple AirPrint: Yes

Google Cloud Print: Yes

App support: Yes (iOS/Android)

Consumables included: 6 ink cartridges

Dimensions: 479x356x148mm

Weight: 8.7kg

Colour documents benefit from the six ink cartridge system and show good separation and consistency. When it comes to printing photos on photo paper, the Expression Photo XP-960 really shines. There's no unwanted ink mixing or smearing here and a real boldness to the colour palette that gives quality images professional production values.

Summary

For any business or home user that needs, on occasion, to produce A3-sized documents or posters, the Expression Photo XP-960 should be a definite consideration. Thanks to its accurate six ink cartridge system, it turned out professional production quality prints every time in our full colour tests. Printing onto photo paper yields especially vibrant and stable colours with print speeds averaging eight impressions per minute.

For plain text documents this machine looks expensive to buy and run, but its feature set and ease of use justify the costs if you plan to do any kind of A3 printing as well.

If you need to produce professional-looking prints and posters in full colour, or A3-size documents, then this surprisingly compact all-in-one printer from Epson does a high-end job on a realistic budget. ■

A compact, highly-capable A3 printer for home or business with professional-looking results.

 **Windows Help & Advice**
Verdict





BT Whole Home Wi-Fi

£195.97 www.shop.bt.com

Enjoy house coverage with this 'mesh' wireless setup

If you're struggling to get Wi-Fi reception in certain areas of your house, then BT's new Whole Home Wi-Fi setup could be for you. As the name suggests, this is a set of devices that should ensure your entire home is covered when it comes to wireless networking.

It achieves this by including not just one single router that will sit in a room and struggle to transmit Wi-Fi far and wide, but two extra devices that you can dot around your house to guarantee blanket coverage. They all transmit the same Wi-Fi network, creating a 'mesh' that allows you to seamlessly switch from device to device easily.

Mesh networking is becoming increasingly popular – we've previously looked at similar systems from Netgear. Google Wifi uses the same mesh technique.

Design and setup

As we mentioned earlier, BT refers to its Wi-Fi units as 'discs', and it's

easy to see why. Each one is smallish, white, flat and circular, and look rather nice compared to many other routers. They each come with rounded metal stands, and all the units are identical as well, so there's no 'base' unit that's designed especially for plugging into your modem – any of the units will do.

The front of each unit displays the BT logo, along with a single LED at the bottom that's used as a status light. This changes colour depending on the status of the router, and if it glows blue everything is alright.

If the LED shows amber, then that's the BT Whole Home Wi-Fi system telling you that the location that particular unit is positioned in isn't ideal, and that you should move it. This is a handy guide to making sure each unit is positioned to give you the best possible Wi-Fi coverage throughout your home.

The LED will also turn purple if the unit is updating its firmware,

and red if there's no connection or there's an error.

On the rear of each unit is a single Ethernet port, a WPS (Wi-Fi Protected Setup) button, a power button, a factory reset button and a port for a power supply. The details of the Wi-Fi network, such as the name, password and admin password are printed on the back. In a nice design feature, you can pull out the tab with these details and keep them elsewhere, which saves you having to crawl around the back of the router every time someone comes over and wants to connect to your Wi-Fi.

Behind that tab is a hole for wall mounting the router. With most routers we'd rarely suggest hanging them out for all to see, but the BT Whole Home Wi-Fi units are so nicely designed, they wouldn't look to out of place.

Annoyingly, there's no easy way to remove the metal base of each disc, so if you do wall mount them,



they wouldn't hang flat against the wall, which is a shame. While a nice design isn't always the highest priority for router manufacturers, the fact that BT has obviously taken some time and consideration when designing these units means you don't feel the need to hide them away – which would potentially limit the strength and reach of their Wi-Fi networks.

With three separate units, you'd fear that setting them up would be overly complicated, but thankfully we found that not to be the case.

"When all the discs are installed they will reboot, and then turn into one large Wi-Fi network"

This is because the process is handled by the BT Whole Home app, which can be downloaded on iOS and Android devices. This takes you through the setup procedure in an easy-to-follow way. All you have to do is choose a disc and plug it in to your modem using an Ethernet cable. With the disc plugged in, you load up the app and selected 'Get started'. The step-by-step guide then shows you with illustrations how to connect up your router.

Once the first disc is up and running, the app takes you through the process of setting up and positioning the other discs. Again, this is nice and straightforward, with the app displaying colour-coded graphics showing whether the phone is in a poor location, or a

good location. If it is designated 'good', then you can plug in and install the disc as close as possible to that location.

When all of the discs are installed they will reboot, and then turn into one large Wi-Fi network. You can then connect your devices to this new network, which each one connected to the disc closest to it.

You can see which devices are connected to which disc through the BT Whole Home app, which is very useful. You can also use the app's Pause button to temporarily

disable the Wi-Fi network, for example if it's bed time and you don't want your children to be distracted. Sadly, you can only pause the entire network, rather than pause the network for specific devices, like you can with Google Wifi. This means no one can use the network while it's paused.

Performance

Considering how easy BT's Whole Home Wi-Fi is to set up, we were expecting similarly impressive results when it came to the device's performance. We used the BT Whole Home Wi-Fi in a building with three floors, with a single BT Whole Home Wi-Fi disc on each floor (with the one in the middle connected to our wired network

KEY FEATURES

BT Whole Home Wi-Fi

Supplier www.bt.com

System requirements Any operating system; Android 4.42 and above or iOS version 8 and above for Whole Home app

Connectivity IEEE802.11a/b/g/n; IEEE802.11k/v (steering); 1x Ethernet port

Antennas 4x4 Dual-band (2.4GHz/5GHz)

Security WPA (TKIP); WPA2 (AES); WPA + WPA2

Dimensions (per disc) 165x165x77mm

Weight (per disc) 415g

using the built-in Ethernet port on the back of the disc).

Next to the middle disc, we recorded wireless speeds of 134Mb/s, which is around what we would get with a wired connection.

Moving one floor above (and in another room), we achieved an impressive 122Mb/s, where single routers would usually struggle. Going down to the bottom floor also saw an impressive speed, this time 133Mb/s. Each time, our test device switched to the closest BT Whole Home Wi-Fi disc, and it is clear that the connection between the three discs was nice and strong.

In different house layouts the performance may be even better (or worse), but it's clear that if you have a large house or office and need your Wi-Fi to reach every corner of the building, then the BT Whole Home Wi-Fi is a very good choice – but there are cheaper alternatives, such as using powerline adaptors.

Summary

Even if BT isn't your ISP, the BT Whole Home Wi-Fi kit is worth considering if you have a large home that has far flung corners that struggle to get Wi-Fi. It's elegantly designed, easy to set up and use, and can offer real-world performance increases.

However, if you have a smaller home, or a tighter budget, we'd suggest not going the 'mesh' route offered by BT Whole Home Wi-Fi, and instead look towards powerline adaptors for extending the internet throughout your house. ■

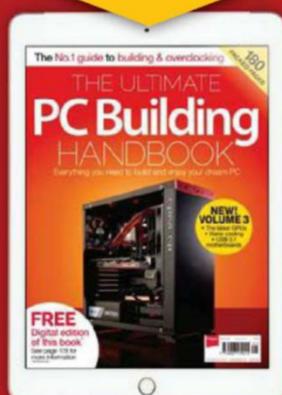
BT's easy-to-use mesh network can reach where other Wi-Fi setups can't, but it's not cheap.

 Windows Help & Advice Verdict



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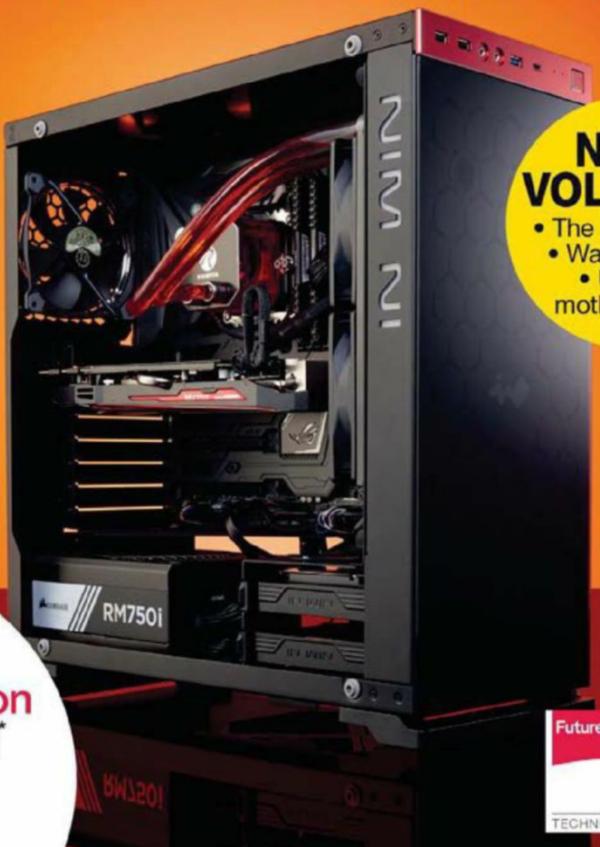


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THE BEST LOW-COST TWITTER CLIENT 2017

Tweet on your terms with our top app picks

Once upon a time, the web was awash with third-party clients that enabled you use Twitter in a way that suited you – either as a full-screen extravaganza with multiple skins, or as a discreet sidebar alongside your web browser. Those days are over; Twitter decided to crack down on developers a few years back, imposing strict API restrictions that broke most clients and drove users back to Twitter's web app.

The third-party scene isn't completely dead, though; thanks to dedicated developers, there are still some great alternatives for users who want to go beyond the basics. Twitter has built some alternatives of its own too, so you can choose a client that's best suited to the way you tweet.

Presented here is our pick of the best Twitter apps for Windows – some free and some premium. Read on and find out which one is right for you...

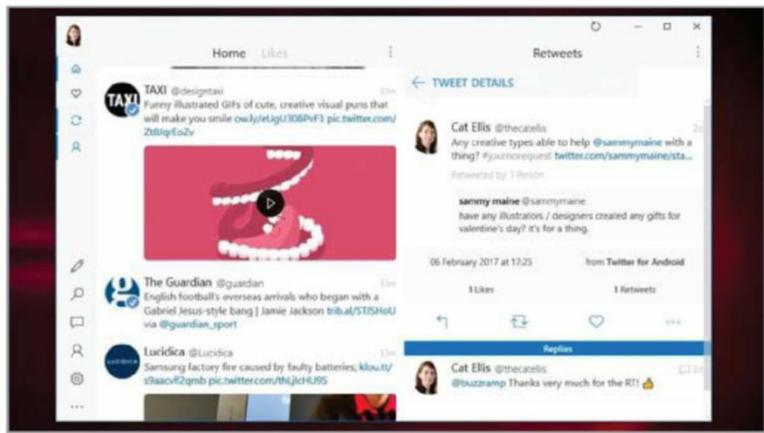


1 Aeries

www.bradstevenson.co/Aeries/

Aeries (£2.29/\$2.99) is a very slick looking Windows desktop app, with a stylish interface that's customisable from the ground up. It makes no assumptions, letting you choose exactly what you want to see and pick a configuration that suits your screen size before it launches for the first time. Likes, mentions, profile details, direct

messages and retweets can all be arranged into handy columns, organised and named to suit your preferences. Once you've chosen your content, you're prompted to set various visual options, including font size and weight (very useful if you have a hard time reading small text on screens), and image size.



In use, Aeries is much like TweetDeck, but with some excellent extras that show how much care and attention has been put into its creation. The best of these is the ability to bookmark tweets – a way of marking them to read later without retweeting them. There's also support for gestures and an excellent range of filters, including not only words, users and hashtags, but also clients. The only thing missing is the ability to schedule tweets.

There's no free trial, but for the price of a cup of coffee, you won't be disappointed. Aeries is the best Twitter client for Windows.

Aeries is brilliantly designed and full of useful touches. You can even use it to bookmark your favourite tweets.



RATING



2 Fenice for Twitter

<http://bit.ly/2qwIIISD>

Tweeting with Fenice for Twitter (£1.59/US\$2.25) is a very pleasant experience. Available from the Windows Store, it offers a level of customisation you'd expect from a premium app – enabling you to adjust not only colours and feeds,

but also shorten links, spellcheck, and format edited retweets.

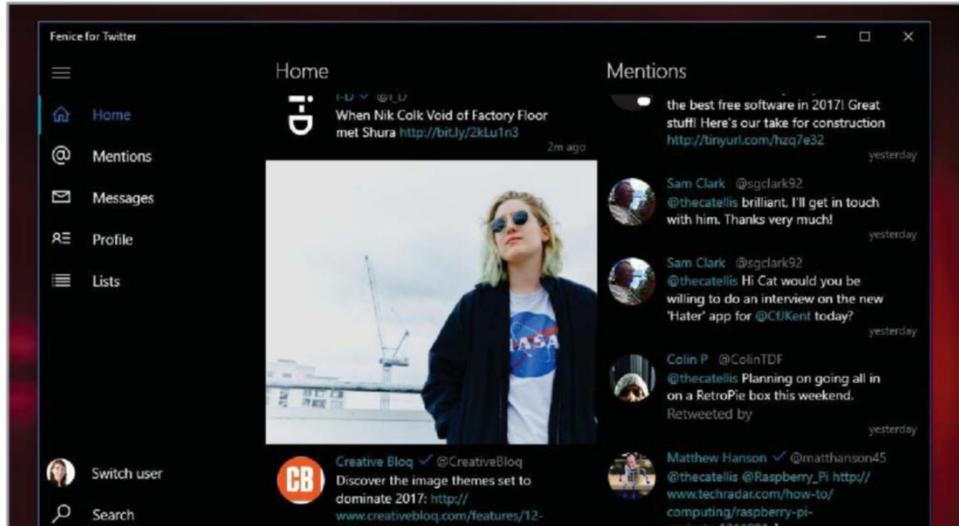
Fenice's interface is much like TweetDeck's, and is designed for larger screens so you'll get a better experience on a desktop with a good-sized monitor than

Fenice is an affordable premium Twitter client that works best on the big screen.

you would on a notebook. We particularly like the ability to drag and drop pictures into tweets, and to queue tweets to be published later if you find yourself without an internet connection (although you can't schedule them for a specific time).

Fenice also offers customisable Live Tiles and notifications, so you never miss an important tweet.

Unfortunately, Fenice is no longer available in a free trial version, although given its capabilities and low cost we think it's definitely worth the price of the download. A must-have app for anyone's Twitter armoury.



RATING

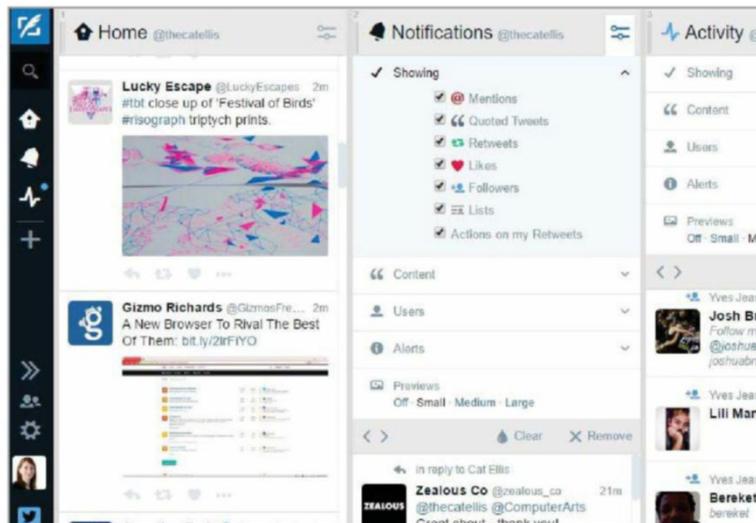


3 TweetDeck

<https://tweetdeck.twitter.com>

Owned by Twitter itself, free web app TweetDeck puts all the Twitter information you could want at your fingertips, with feeds for your main feed, notifications and activity all on one screen – rather than hidden in tabs, as they are on

Twitter.com. Each of these columns in TweetDeck is customisable, so if you're frustrated by seeing too many retweets, for example, you can easily filter them out. You can also remove any columns you like



Twitter's multi-function web app, Tweetdeck, is convenient, but sadly lacks a few premium features.

(activity in particular tends to move too fast to follow), and replace them with the search tool, likes, mentions, trending topics, lists and direct messages instead.

TweetDeck also lets you flick between multiple accounts (not possible with Twitter.com) and, perhaps most usefully, schedule tweets to be published in the future. If you're serious about Twitter, TweetDeck is hard to beat – it's just a shame that the desktop software has been discontinued. It maybe available as an extension for Google Chrome, but we miss the convenience of a real Windows 10 app with Live Tiles.

Windows Help & Advice

RATING



4 Buffer

<https://buffer.com>

Buffer isn't designed to replace Twitter's own web app – instead, it's intended for managing your account, and is designed for users who take their online presence using the social network seriously.

As its name implies, Buffer's main purpose is to build a list of scheduled posts. Once they've

gone live, you can then monitor their performance to see what gets the best response, and when.

Buffer isn't just a Twitter app, either – it lets you manage LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and Google+ accounts as well. There are several variations of Buffer – some for personal and

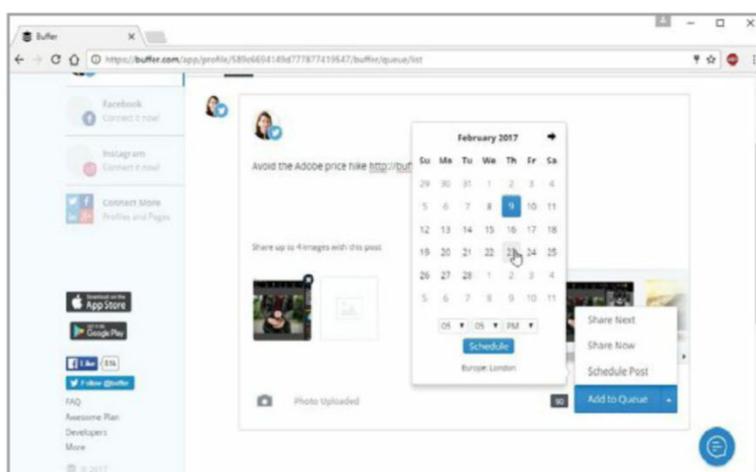
some for business use. Here we're looking at the free option, which lets you connect one social media account and enables you to queue up to 10 of your posts for future publication – the 'individual' paid-for (\$10) version, by contrast, enables you to manage up to 10 social media accounts and schedule up to 100 posts.

Links are automatically shortened, and Buffer lets you pick an image to attach to your tweet – either one from the linked page, or one you've uploaded.

If you want to build a real presence on Twitter, Buffer is well worth investigating.

Windows Help & Advice

RATING



Buffer lets you schedule your tweets so your feed is refreshed with new content throughout each and every day.

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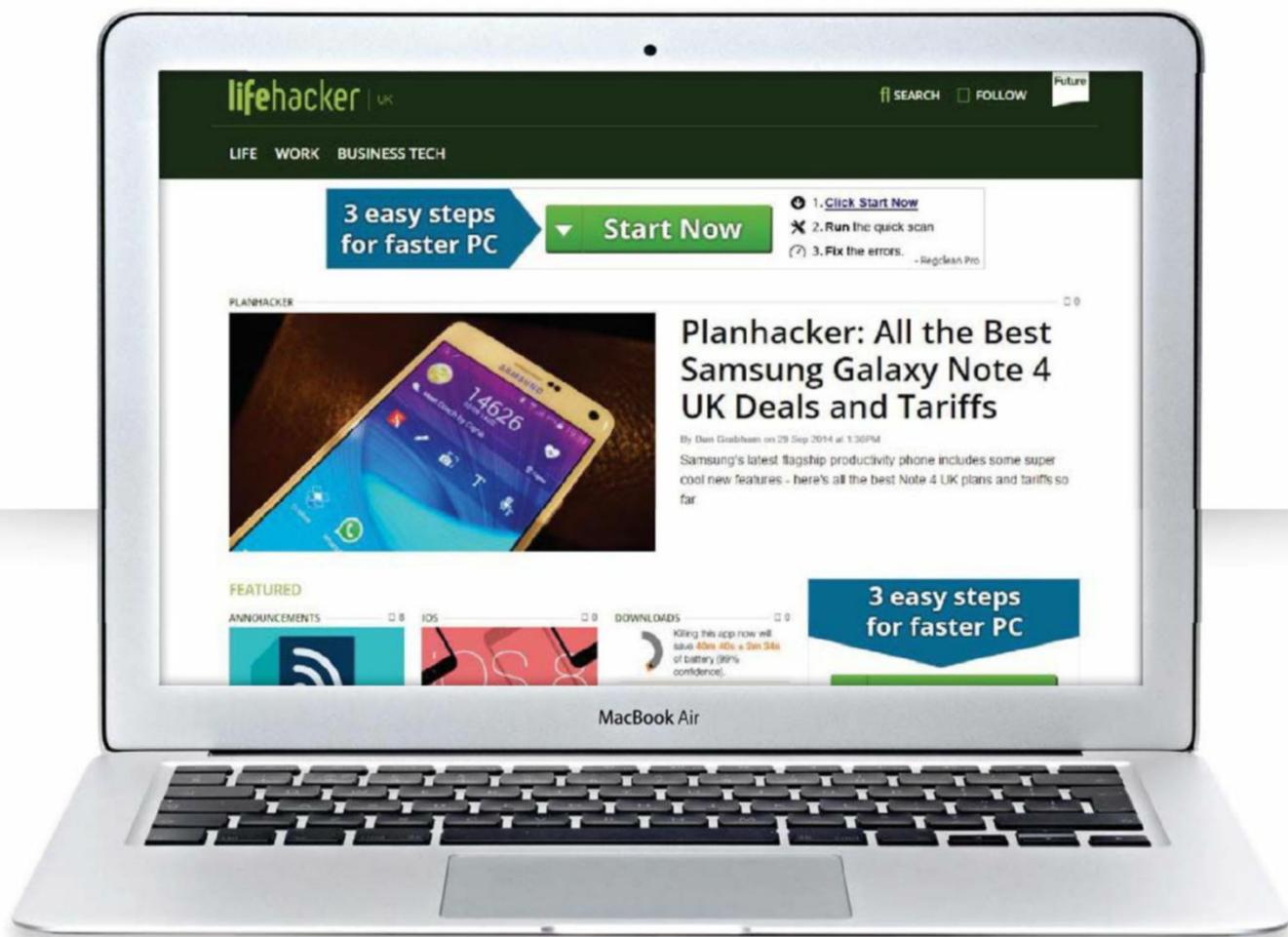


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