WIPE EMPTY PC FOLDERS
You'll speed up two vital tasks – scans and searches page 38

TRANSFER ALL YOUR FILES TO A NEW COMPUTER page 35
But first – organise your hard drives properly

DON'T BUY THE WRONG SMART TV
Get ALL streaming services at a price you can afford page 24

Computer act!ve

Learn something new in every issue

Dark notes are drawing in – p49

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Fake Your
IDENTITY ONLINE

▶▶ **STAY ANONYMOUS in 2022 to avoid scams and reclaim your privacy** p50

☑ Fake phone ☑ Fake location ☑ Fake name
☑ Fake address ☑ Fake email ☑ Even fake your face!

PLUS

YOUR FAVOURITE SOFTWARE REVEALED
Here's what your fellow readers use – see p63

But What's No.1?

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Switching from Edge to be made easier in Windows 11

Microsoft will soon make it easier to change your default browser in Windows 11, allowing you to use Chrome, Firefox and others rather than sticking with Edge.

Currently, if you don't want to use Edge, you have to go through the lengthy process of setting your preferred browser as the default for each different file and link type you want it to open, including HTML, PDF and HTTPS.

In contrast, Windows 10 lets you set a new default browser in a few clicks: open Settings (Windows key+I), click Apps, select 'Default apps' on the left then choose your browser from the 'Web browser' list.

Some browsers, including Brave and Firefox, have already released new versions that let you change your default without clicking lots of settings (see Issue 621, page 53).

But criticism of Microsoft's policy has grown, and now the company has confirmed it's testing a "streamlined" way to select which browser opens when you click a link.

The new option – which is a single button called 'Set default (see screenshot above) – was spotted in the Preview Build 22509, available to Windows Insiders. It's not known when it will appear in the full version of Windows 11.

EdgeDeflector blocked

While this move will please Windows 11 users, Microsoft has risked angering them again by blocking EdgeDeflector - a third-party tool that lets you open search results and widgets in the browser of your choice.

A new tool, called MSEdgeRedirect (www. snipca.com/40151), has sprung up to replace EdgeDeflector, though it seems likely that Microsoft will block that too in a forthcoming update. The company said that "when we become aware of improper redirection, we issue a fix". In other words, its policy is to remove tools that bypass restrictions in Windows.
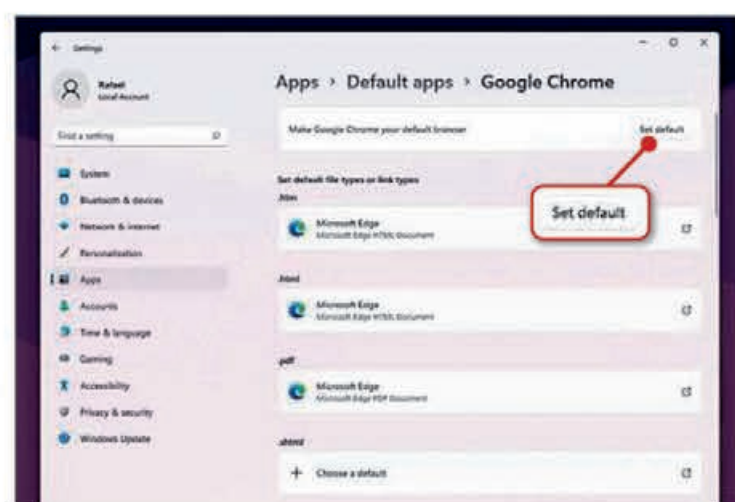
'Don't use Chrome' messages

Microsoft's strategy to encourage users to adopt Edge has become more aggressive with the launch of Windows 11. As well as making it more difficult to switch browsers, it is showing messages to people who try to download Chrome while browsing the web in Edge, in an attempt to change their minds.

One message says that Edge "runs on the same technology as Chrome, with the added trust of Microsoft", while another claims: "That browser is so 2008! Do you know what's new? Microsoft Edge."

A further message even boasts that Edge is "the best browser for online shopping" – which seems to be a reference to its controversial pop-up coupons (see page 21).

SUPPORT ENDS FOR WINDOWS 10 2004

Microsoft has now ended support for the May 2020 Feature Update for Windows 10 (version 2004), and is encouraging anyone running it to update their system to a more recent edition.

To see if you have an update pending, open Settings (Windows key+I), click 'Update & Security', then Windows Update on the left. Now click the 'Check for updates' button.

The company supports Feature updates for 18 months after release, as confirmed on its Lifecycle page: www.snipca.com/40508. The November 2020 Update (20H2) will be the next version to lose support, on 10 May.

Euro 2020 scores big in Google's 2021 searches

Football dominated Google searches in the UK during 2021 as England reached the final of Euro 2020 – their first tournament final since winning the World Cup in 1966.

'Euros' was Google's top trending search term for the year, which means it had the biggest increase compared with 2020. It was followed by 'Premier League' and 'Christian Eriksen', who suffered a cardiac arrest while playing for Denmark against Finland in the tournament.

Only one term in the top 10 (see box below left) relates directly to the Covid-19 pandemic ('Covid vaccine'), though 'Matt Hancock' appears in sixth place. The Conservative MP for West Suffolk resigned as Health Secretary in June after revelations that he had broken Covid rules by having an affair.

Three of the top searches were for people who died during 2021: Prince Philip, comedian Sean Lock, and Sarah Everard, who was murdered in March by police officer Wayne Couzens.

As well as an overall top 10, Google released the top search terms in other categories, including Questions (topped by 'Is Facebook down?'), Recipes ('Banana Bread') and Ideas ('Lockdown birthday').

Visit Google's 'Year in Search 2021' (www.snipca.com/40443) to see all the UK results, including those going back to 2010.

Sport also featured heavily in global searches on Google throughout 2021, though cricket was more popular than football, taking the top two slots, and five of the top 10. See all worldwide results at www.snipca.com/40461.

GOOGLE'S UK TOP 10 FOR 2021

1 Euros
2 Premier League
3 Christian Eriksen
4 Covid vaccine
5 Prince Philip
6 Matt Hancock
7 Emma Raducanu
8 Sarah Everard
9 England vs Denmark
10 Sean Lock

Scams must be covered in Online Safety Bill, say MPs

Websites should be forced to treat online fraud as seriously as terrorism and prevent scams from appearing, a group of MPs and peers has said.

It's one of the recommendations made by the parliamentary committee scrutinising the landmark Online Safety Bill, which the Government hopes to make law in 2022.

The committee said scams such as fake financial adverts should be classed as 'priority illegal content', meaning sites would be required to stop them appearing in the first place.

It also recommended that porn websites must demonstrate what they're doing to stop under-18s accessing their content.

Damian Collins, chairman of the joint committee issuing the report, said that "for too long, big tech has got away with being the land of the lawless".

He added: "A lack of regulation online has left too many people vulnerable to abuse, fraud, violence and in some cases even loss of life."

Other recommendations include making it illegal to send unsolicited sexually explicit photos to someone (known as 'cyberflashing'), and abusing ('trolling') people on the basis of gender, disability or race.

The Committee also wants to outlaw content that promotes self-harm, and deliberately sending flashing images to people with epilepsy with the intention of triggering a seizure.

In addition it called for Ofcom, which will become the tech regulator, to be given more powers to investigate and fine tech companies.

Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries said the Government will incorporate the recommendations "where we feel the bill can be strengthened further to make Britain the safest place to go online, while protecting free speech".

Question of the Fortnight

Do China and Russia threaten a 'free and open' internet?

Spy chiefs warn about rising cyber-attacks amid a 'clash of values'

Hopes were high in the early years of the internet that it would allow information to spread freely around the world. The more optimistic analysts even believed it would help to bring democracy to repressive states, and act as a powerful tool against censorship.

But they underestimated both how tightly those countries would want to control what's available online, and how quickly the internet would become a new battlefield in the global power struggle. Back when the internet was mostly cosy forums and GeoCities fansites, few could envisage a time when state-backed hackers would try to influence the result of elections by spreading propaganda.

> ❝ The UK's cyber-strategy now sees attack as the best form of defence ❞

Nobody is that naive now. In December, the UK's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) warned that China and Russia are now so powerful online that they threaten the existence of a "free and open" internet. It predicts a "clash of values" between those countries and the West, as fundamental as the ideological differences between the USSR and the US during the Cold War.

A document published in December by the NCSC sees debates about the rules governing the internet to increasingly become "a site of

systemic competition between great powers". It's a conflict between nations that "want to preserve a system based on open societies", and those – like China and Russia – that are "promoting greater state control as the only way to secure cyberspace".

This warning lies at the heart of the Government's new National Cyber Strategy (www.snipca.com/40490), which is designed to "protect and promote UK interests in a rapidly evolving online world".

It signals a more proactive approach to cyber-security: attack being the best form of defence – or getting your retaliation in first.

This new aggressive stance was underlined last year with the creation of the National Cyber Force (NCF), a joint operation between spy agency

MI6, domestic intelligence agency GCHQ and the Ministry of Defence. It will be based in Samlesbury, Lancashire, with a mission to defend the UK by disrupting the ability of hostile countries, hackers and terrorists – a role that GCHQ director Sir Jeremy Fleming describes as both "poacher and gamekeeper".

As part of the new strategy, specialist police units will be given "significant funding" to target criminals online, and a new Cyber Explorers project will teach pupils cyber skills at school. The money is coming from a £2.6bn investment outlined in the Spending Review last October.

Such efforts are needed, the NCSC says, because threats to the UK are "evolving and diversifying". These range from the hacking of critical infrastructure such as energy systems and hospitals to the theft of intellectual property.

Spy bosses have accused both the Chinese and Russian governments of working with criminal gangs to launch

cyber-attacks, including on researchers developing Covid vaccines.

Officials are also preparing for the next front in the cyber wars, which will see a battle for supremacy in artificial intelligence and quantum computing. In November, MI6 boss Richard Moore said the service must work with tech companies to find new technologies that can defend the UK from attacks.

He called for the kind of innovations that the UK has previously pioneered, such as "the chemistry that enabled us to produce secret writing technologies in the early days, to the wireless and secure speech technologies we developed during the Second World War".

But for all the talk of taking the fight to China and Russia, intelligence officials fear that the UK's technology is years behind. Defending the country is much harder when you're also playing catch-up.

THE FACTS

- The National Cyber Security Centre has warned that China and Russia threaten the existence of a "free and open" internet
- It comes as part of the Government's National Cyber Strategy, which is a "blueprint to protect UK from cyber threats"
- Last year the Government created a National Cyber Force to defend the UK by attacking enemy systems

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Protect your tech

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

WATCH OUT FOR...

'Get an Omicron test kit' emails

What's the threat?
Fewer than 48 hours after the Omicron variant of Covid-19 was announced, scammers were sending emails exploiting people's concerns. The messages claim to be from the NHS ('contact-nhs@nhscontact.com') and offer a free PCR test so you can "avoid restrictions". They also falsely claim that the NHS has to use new test packs because Omicron "appears dormant in the original test kits".

Several versions of the scam have been spotted. In one, you're asked to click the link 'nhs-order-pcr/COVID-10-omicron-research' (see screenshot), while another has a blue 'Get it now' button. Both messages claim you'll be taken to the "NHS portal", but in fact it sends you to healt-service-nh.com, which mimics the official NHS site. The bogus site then asks for your full name, date of birth, address, mobile number and email address, as well as £1.24 for delivery.
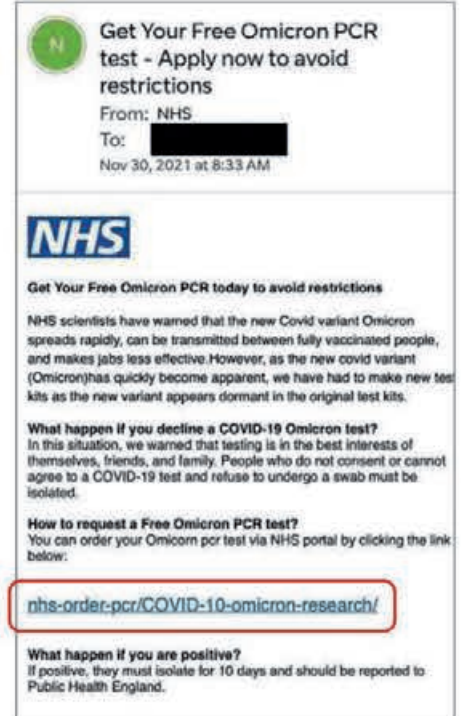
Deviously, it also asks for your mother's maiden name as the answer to a security question. This information would allow the scammers to sign into any of your accounts that request it.

How can you stay safe?
Treat this scam as another reminder that criminals are watching Covid developments as closely as health professionals and governments. They'll keep looking for ways to trick people for as long as the disease remains a serious threat.

Omicron's spread may also encourage scammers to send more emails urging you to apply for 'Vaccine passports', so be on the lookout for those. Ignore any such emails, and instead visit the NHS site if you want to find out how to obtain a Covid Pass: www.snipca.com/40368.

As the NHS said in a tweet (www.snipca.com/40367): "We never ask for bank details, so please be aware of suspicious emails or text messages".

N **Get Your Free Omicron PCR test - Apply now to avoid restrictions**
From: NHS
To:
Nov 30, 2021 at 8:33 AM

NHS

Get Your Free Omicron PCR today to avoid restrictions

NHS scientists have warned that the new Covid variant Omicron spreads rapidly, can be transmitted between fully vaccinated people, and makes jabs less effective.However, as the new covid variant (Omicron)has quickly become apparent, we have had to make new test kits as the new variant appears dormant in the original test kits.

What happen if you decline a COVID-19 Omicron test?
In this situation, we warned that testing is in the best interests of themselves, friends, and family. People who do not consent or cannot agree to a COVID-19 test and refuse to undergo a swab must be isolated.

How to request a Free Omicron PCR test?
You can order your Omicron pcr test via NHS portal by clicking the link below:

nhs-order-pcr/COVID-10-omicron-research/

What happen if you are positive?
If positive, they must isolate for 10 days and should be reported to Public Health England.

New tools | Brave's 'Debouncing'

'Bounce tracking' sounds rather fun, like a game of chase you might play on Space Hoppers. In reality, it's a dubious technique advertising networks use to track you even when you've blocked cookies.

It works by quickly loading an intermediary site when you click a link - adding cookies to track your activity - then taking you to the site you wanted. You don't realise you're being 'bounced' to an intermediary site, and your browser doesn't notice the site has added a sneaky tracking cookie.

In August 2020, Mozilla strengthened Firefox's security to protect against bounce tracking (see www.snipca.com/40378). Now the privacy-focused Brave browser has done the same by introducing a feature called

Brave is up to date
Version 1.32.113
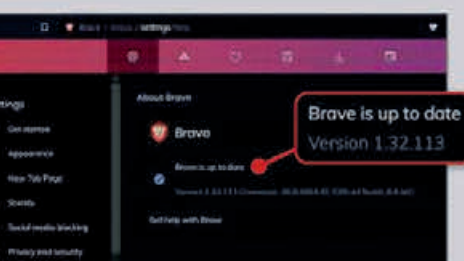
'Debouncing' (see www.snipca.com/40376).

This feature is active by default, so all you have to do is make sure you're running version 1.32 or later. To check, click the three horizontal lines at the top right, then About Brave at the bottom (or type brave://settings/help into the browser bar at the top). You should see a message telling you that Brave is up to date and running version 1.32 or later (see screenshot).

ScamWatch
Readers warn readers

'Tax refund' from DVLA
A few weeks before Christmas, I received a text message supposedly from the DVLA saying it had been trying to contact me because I was due a refund for overpaying my vehicle tax. It was a large enough amount (£103.57) to grab my interest, but it also made me suspicious. I was never seriously tempted to tap the link in the message that would supposedly allow them to process the refund. A quick search online confirmed that this was a scam. The message looked similar to the scams officially exposed by DVLA at www.snipca.com/40275.

Gary Clifford

✉ Warn your fellow readers about scams at letters@computeractive.co.uk

Letters

Tell us what's on your mind

Windows 10 runs my software, so why upgrade?

I feel that there's a point of view not reflected in the Windows 11 update debate. I have a Windows 10 laptop which I purchased 12 months ago to replace a tired laptop running Windows 7, which itself was purchased to replace a laptop running XP, which replaced a desktop PC running Windows 98 – and so on.

I could accept the pending offer to update to Windows 11, but why bother? I don't own a computer just to run the operating system (OS). If the OS runs the software I use then that's all I need, and Windows 10 runs my software without fault, in the same way that Windows 7 did, and before that XP and 98. Some of my software is quite old, and I don't intend to update it until I buy a computer that forces an operating system on me that refuses to run the software.

I still use an old version of Office, which continues to meet all of my needs. I use a 20-year-old CAD package that works just fine, and a 25-year-old audio-processing software for removing the pops and crackles from my converted LP collection. The benefit to me of replacing old and tired machines is not that I have an updated operating system. Rather, it's that my current laptop boots up in seconds, not minutes, and runs my software many times faster than it did 20 years ago. I have better things to do than lavish attention on a machine that is my servant.

Tim Baker

Switch off your phone as shortcut to 'wellness'

I thought it was ironic that so-called 'wellness' apps ranked highly in Google's 'best of 2021' (News, Issue 621, page 7) because the happiest time I've spent recently was when my phone was broken and I could live 'off the grid', so to speak. During that week I was mostly incommunicado. I wasn't bothered by bleeping (in both senses of the word) notifications, nor from spam phone calls selling me insurance.

If someone wanted to get hold of me, they had to do it the new old-fashioned way – ie, email. I could then reply at my leisure, without any obligation to respond instantly. This blissful phone-free existence couldn't last, and I was bullied by my children and wife into getting my phone fixed. But I no longer look at my phone as much as I used to. In fact, I only turn it on when I leave the house, in case someone wants to contact me.

So forget meditation apps or those that claim the moon can "heal your soul and harmonize your life". A quicker route to wellness is simply to switch your phone off.

Howard Atkinson

Vodafone's Eco-Towers look hideous

The UK's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) won't remain outstandingly beautiful for long if Vodafone's plans to build 'Eco-Towers' (pictured below right) come to fruition (News, Issue 621, page 8). They look like a cross between an aeroplane propeller and the front end of a combine harvester. They're hideous, and my heart sinks when I imagine them littering AONBs like the Malvern Hills or Cotswolds. I hope Vodafone's engineers think about casing the towers in a design that blends in with the surroundings. If they aren't considering this, then they should be forced to by law.

Sheila Abbot

What's the Issue...?

I'm feeling brave, so want to attempt Microsoft's official workaround for installing Windows 11 on computers that aren't compatible. Can you remind me which issue you explained how to do that?

James Cobb

CA SAYS Yes, it was the Workshop in Issue 618, on page 38. Good luck!

When did you explain how to move bookmarks from Chrome to Brave?

Terry Crockford

CA SAYS In Issue 611's Cover Feature – page 56.

I've lost the recent issue that had the PC monitors Group Test. When was it, and which was the cheapest AOC model?

Joseph Hall

CA SAYS It was in Issue 618 (pages 24-25), and AOC's cheapest model was the Q34E2A (£243 from www.snipca.com/39703). We gave it four stars.

Don't blame workers for poor customer service

I agree with Desmond Hawkings (Letters, Issue 621) that many companies are using Covid as an excuse not to return their customer service to pre-pandemic levels, but I would urge him and other readers not to take it out on the people who actually answer calls from the public. My daughter works for the customer-support team for a large internet provider, and has been working from home since March 2020. During that time she has received hardly any IT assistance from her bosses, and yet is expected to work as professionally as she did before. People were very understanding in the early days of lockdown, but this goodwill has largely evaporated, and she's getting more and more abuse from frustrated customers. I hope readers will bear in mind that no matter what broadband problems they have, they shouldn't blame the poor people who have to answer the phones eight hours a day.

Helen Smith

Groupon refunded me – but I had to chase them

I was interested in your news story in Issue 618 (page 9) about Groupon offering cash refunds to customers that were previously told they had to accept a credit note or replacement. I'd purchased Groupon vouchers for various restaurants only to find that Covid restrictions meant they couldn't open. Despite this, Groupon only offered me credit notes to use against future purchases.

As your story reported, Groupon responded to a warning from the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) by saying they would contact customers who had been told they weren't entitled to a refund. I didn't receive this communication, but by following the link in your article (www.snipca.com/39784) I duly registered my refund claim. I didn't receive an acknowledgement, but a couple of weeks later I discovered that my claim of £79.02 had been refunded in full. So, many thanks *Computeractive*.

Steve Beatson

Relief as my 'broken' drive still worked

I write in praise of the benefits of careful backups. After a long and exhausting session indexing my train magazine collection and saving it on to my – admittedly quite old – SanDisk Ultra Fit 64GB hard drive, I went to pull it out of my laptop to plug it into my desktop PC – when it literally fell to pieces. Distraught doesn't begin to describe how I felt when I reflected on a whole day's work completely wasted.

However, the next morning I examined the wreckage and no component appeared actually broken. It had just been separated into its three component parts. Thinking nothing ventured, nothing gained, I wedged the bare circuit board into an old spare hub and plugged it into my computer. Imagine my relief as the little red indicator light flickered into life and File Explorer appeared, with the folders containing my magazine index. I've now backed it up (twice) and am very glad that I tried this unorthodox, desperate action. 'Back up as you go' is now my middle name!

Mike Gosling

It's taken 220 years for the apostrophe to die

Further to your article on social media killing the apostrophe (News, Issue 620, page 9), I attach a photo (below) of Entick's New Spelling Dictionary, by William Crakelt, printed in 1798. In this, he says the apostrophe was

introduced by mistake and predicts that it will soon be discontinued. It has taken 220 years or so to start disappearing!

Adrien Willcocks

Divorced, beheaded, deciphered...

I must say I'm loving the password challenges in every issue. Am I the first to decipher Issue 621's password ('Wwt4thwoH8?AoC'), set by Barry Hilton? Unless I'm terribly mistaken, it has to be 'Who was the 4th wife of Henry VIII? Anne of Cleves'. The order of his wives have been embedded in my brain since learning 'Divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived' at school, many years ago. Indeed, DbddbsHVIII would make a decent password too.

Ryan Mansell

CA SAYS Ryan's historical knowledge served him well. He was the first person

Windows 11 is no 'flop' – just give it time

Issue 621's 'Question of the Fortnight' ('Has Windows 11's release been a complete flop?') asked the wrong question. You should have asked whether Windows 11's popularity actually matters at the moment. I would say it doesn't, because it's clear Microsoft's strategy with Windows 11 is gently nudging people towards upgrading, rather than constantly elbowing them in the ribs, as they did with Windows 10.

I think this is the right strategy. I remember plenty of people, including writers on *Computeractive*, criticising the company for forcing Windows 10 on to people. Many users felt rushed into upgrading from an operating system they loved (Windows 7, in most cases). It would have been less disorientating for people if they'd felt confident to wait and upgrade in their own time.

I don't know if that's what Microsoft is doing this time, but if so they should be commended. I interpret their message as: Windows 10 is fine, there's nothing wrong with it, but you've four years to upgrade to a newer, better system. That gives people plenty of time to grow accustomed to the idea of making the switch.

My own position is that my newish desktop PC can run Windows 11, but there's nothing about the new system I'm desperate to try. However, I have no desire to still be using Windows 10 when support ends in 2025. I'm going to wait for Microsoft to add more tools to Windows 11, and will probably upgrade when the first Feature update is released next autumn. So for me, Windows 11 isn't a "flop". It's just being released gradually in a sensible and measured manner, and will eventually become the dominant system.

Richard Hoyle

The Star Letter writer wins a Computeractive mug!

to email us the answer, and is now the proud owner of a *Computeractive* mug.

Can you work out TBGBDCTMBJatl5PMs?

The questions in recent issues have given me lots of password ideas. My preference though is to use sequences of people or events, which I find easier to remember. They naturally seem to include a mix of upper and lower-case letters, as well as numbers, and can be easily modified to suit subjects you're interested in. Here's an example I previously used: TBGBDCTMBJatl5PMs. I'm willing to donate it as the next password to be cracked.

Max Wallace

CA SAYS Thanks Max – that's an intriguing twist on the previous challenges. Send us your answers to the usual address: letters@computeractive.co.uk.

Consumer active

Contact us so we can investigate your case
✉ **Email:** consumeractive@computeractive.co.uk
Please include your name, phone number and address.

We stand up for your legal rights

Did I complain too late for an automatic refund?

LEAD CASE

Q On 15 November, I bought a Samsung Tab 6 Lite (pictured) from an Amazon seller. It was a Christmas present for my grandson, so I thought I should check that it worked. Good job I did! It wouldn't turn on, so I contacted the seller. I emailed them on 20 November to report the fault and ask for a refund, but they didn't reply until 22 December. They said I was outside the 30-day deadline for an automatic refund. Is that right?

Joe Warden

A No it's not right. Joe reported the fault within the 30-day period for demanding a full refund, so the seller must return his money. The seller can't wait over a month to reply and then claim this means Joe has missed the deadline. Had Joe reported the fault after 30 days, then the seller has the right to replace the item, or attempt one (and only one) repair.

We've told Joe to explain the law to the seller, and ask for an address to post the tablet to. The seller is allowed to inspect the tablet to confirm there's an inherent fault. As with Charlie James's case (right), fewer than six months have passed since purchase, so the seller would need to prove that the fault was caused by Joe damaging it.

If the seller ignores him, Joe should file a claim with Amazon for faulty goods (at www.snipca.com/40274). He can always withdraw this should the seller accept their responsibility and issue a refund.

CASE CLOSED

Have I wasted my money on CCTV?

Q In June, I bought a MaxxOne Elite CCTV system priced £1,000 from a company called Aerial Force (www.aerialforce.co.uk), paying for installation also. It doesn't work properly on my iPad or iPhone and Aerial Force couldn't fix the problem despite sending the same engineer twice. MaxxOne refuses to respond to emails for technical help. Have we wasted our money?

Charlie James

A Charlie hasn't wasted any money because he has since fixed the problem himself by following instructions on MaxxOne's website (www.1.maxxone.com). But even if he hadn't, he would have been covered by the Consumer Rights Act (CRA) had the kit turned out to be inherently faulty. The law also covers services, including faulty installation, which may have caused this problem. If he had pursued a case, it would have been against Aerial Force (the retailer) not MaxxOne (the manufacturer). Fewer than six months had passed since purchase, so Charlie wouldn't have had to prove the fault was inherent. Instead the onus would've been on Aerial Force to prove Charlie had accidentally damaged the camera.

CASE CLOSED

Must I accept a refurbished device?

Q I bought an Epson WorkForce Pro WF-C5210 printer (pictured) from Leo Office Supplies (www.leoofficesupplies.co.uk) for £299, but it turned out to be faulty. Leo Office Supplies said I had to contact Epson because I'd had the printer longer than six months. Epson admitted the printer has an inherent fault and agreed to send a refurbished one. Do we have to accept this refurbished printer?

Gerald Sables

A Yes, because six months have passed since purchase and Gerald can't therefore demand a refund. Instead, Leo Office Supplies is allowed to offer a replacement, and this can be a refurbished printer – as long as it's the same make and model.

But what makes this case more interesting is that it's not clear whether Gerald should pursue a claim under the Sale of Goods Act (SOGA), or the Consumer Rights Act (CRA), which replaced it in 2015.

The reason for this uncertainty is that he bought the printer under his business name, and SOGA still applies for business purchases. Legal rights for businesses aren't as comprehensive as for individuals. For example, sellers aren't restricted to just one attempted repair when the buyer is a business. That said, courts have sometimes ruled that individuals running a small business can be considered consumers if the goods they buy are for personal use as well.

As it happened, Gerald agreed to a refurbished printer, but this was also faulty. He's since received another, and we're waiting to hear whether it works. If it doesn't, Leo Office Supplies has promised to refund Gerald in full.

CASE CLOSED

Is this eBay listing misleading?

Q I needed some mouse traps, and ended up buying some from an eBay trader. The advert seemed to indicate I'd get three traps for £7.37, but I only got one. The listing title on eBay states '3x Pest-Stop' (see screenshot), suggesting three mouse traps, but the seller now denies this. I've taken a screenshot of the listing to show that it does say '3x'. Is the seller guilty of misleading advertising?

Brian Hudson

A Yes, we do think it's misleading, and we can't understand why the seller claims their listing doesn't say '3x' when it clearly does.

Brian says the amount of money involved is so small it's not worth pursuing as a case, but there's no harm in making a formal complaint to eBay. The seller should be made to realise that the average person would believe from the wording that they'd be receiving three mouse traps.

EBay has a Money Back Guarantee, which encourages buyers and sellers to sort out problems themselves. Brian is beyond that stage, so instead he could report the seller to eBay via www.snipca.com/40299.

CASE ONGOING

CASE UPDATE

PayPal refunds reader after first refusing

PayPal never discusses individual cases with us (understandably so), but we like to think our email to the company nudged it into refunding reader Jordan Ingram (see Issue 620), after initially refusing to settle his claim.

Jordan got in touch with us after two records he'd bought from an independent label failed to turn up. Despite providing PayPal with the evidence needed, including confirmation from the record label that he was owed a refund, Jordan's claim was denied.

He thinks this may have been because he didn't fill in the claims form correctly – something PayPal has been increasingly strict about since the start of the Covid pandemic.

PayPal gives users 10 days to appeal its verdict of a claim (as explained at www.snipca.com/40282). We don't know whether Jordan launched an appeal, but he got his money back in any case.

Also, despite being based in Luxembourg PayPal is covered by the UK's Financial Conduct Authority, so you can file a complaint with the Financial Services Ombudsman if you have an unresolved complaint. Find out how at www.snipca.com/40283.

CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

Laptops Direct's prompt Asus refund

✓ I recently bought an Asus X415JA laptop (pictured) from Laptops Direct (www.laptopsdirect.co.uk). The laptop was good, but the advertised backlit keyboard didn't work. I emailed the company and got a reply within the hour. They agreed that the specifications included a backlit keyboard and suggested possible keystroke combinations to get it to work, which were unsuccessful.

I then contacted Asus, who told me the backlit keyboard was optional, though you can't tell that from the box, only from the serial number.

Despite Asus creating the problem by not making clear what was actually in the box, Laptops Direct replied quickly and positively to all my emails. When they found that the laptop didn't have the backlit keyboard, they promptly offered me a discount or a refund. I now have a Lenovo laptop instead – bought again from Laptops Direct.

Callan Dick

✉ Has a company impressed you with its customer service? Please let us know: editor@computeractive.co.uk

Contact
Laptops Direct
• **Email** www.snipca.com/40262
• **Phone** 0871 244 0943

Best smart TVs for 2022

If you're looking to buy a new TV this year, make sure you can watch your favourite streaming services on it. Here, we test five of the best smart TVs around

It wasn't too long ago that your internet connection probably did little more than deliver your emails and let you browse web pages. Now, with your smart TV connected to on-demand and video-streaming services, it's likely to be taking up more of your bandwidth than your PC.

To make the most of today's streaming services, you need a decent smart TV. High-definition 1080p models were perfectly adequate when we received TV signals via rooftop aerials and satellite dishes, but today's streaming services

work up to 4K (3840x2160 pixels). They also use advances in contrast and colour reproduction – called High Dynamic Range (HDR) – to ensure that the pictures you're seeing on your TV are exactly as the filmmaker intended.

These specifications used to be the preserve of huge sets that cost several thousand pounds. Now, you can get astounding picture quality in good-sized screens without having to pay a king's ransom.

We've run each of these models through a series of tests, with the help of

our colleagues from our sister title *What Hi-Fi*, to make sure we've found the very best screens you can buy for the price.

£399 from Argos www.snipca.com/40289

Samsung UE43AU7100

This 43in LCD TV doesn't provide the level of visuals you'd get on an OLED model, but for its modest price it delivers an impressively balanced, consistent and immersive picture. Dark scenes appear without the grey wash that so often mars pictures on cheaper LCD panels. It also has better viewing angles than we expected.

Of all the sets here, it comes with the best smart TV operating system (Samsung's

own one, called Eden) and the widest range of apps. The only significant absentee is Freeview Play, but you'll get catch-up apps for all terrestrial broadcasters. Apps for streaming services like Amazon Prime Video, Netflix, Now TV, YouTube, Rakuten, Apple TV and Disney+ are also present and correct.

RATING ★★★★★

£999 from Currys www.snipca.com/40288

Philips 48OLED806
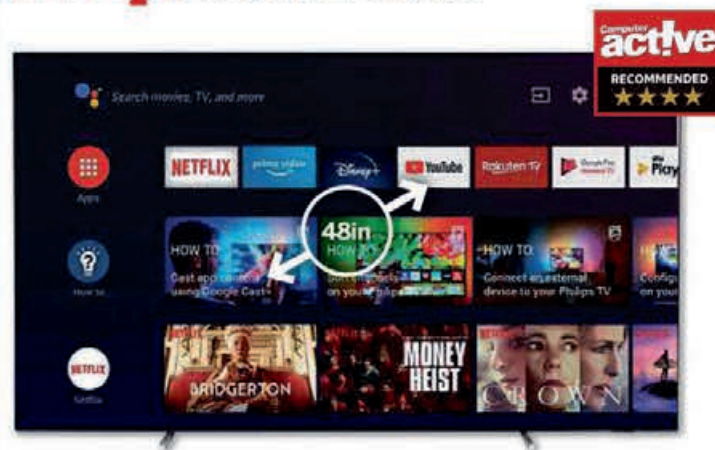
We think the Philips 48OLED806 is the best 48in OLED you can currently buy. During our tests, however, we realised that the default picture presets don't do the screen justice, so you'll need to adjust the settings to optimise what you see.

Philips uses a combination of Android TV 10 and Freeview Play to deliver all its streaming services, which does mean you aren't using a

single system, but it's fine once you get used to it.

On the plus side, this mixed approach means almost total coverage when it comes to apps and services, with all the UK catch-ups present, along with streaming services Netflix, Prime Video and Disney+ – all available in their highest-quality modes.

RATING ★★★★☆

£380 from Currys www.snipca.com/40291

TCL 55RP620K

A 55in smart TV needn't break the bank. This affordable 4K HDR TV from Chinese firm TCL comes with Roku's fantastic streaming interface built in, which smoothly handles all the terrestrial catch-up services, as well as

Netflix, Disney+, Prime Video and Apple TV.

For the price the picture is excellent. It doesn't have the wide viewing angles on more expensive OLED sets, but its colours are vivid and dark scenes aren't too washed out,

as long as you don't crank up the brightness levels to maximum.

It also has four HDMI sockets, which is very generous for the price, should you need to connect several other devices.

RATING ★★★★☆

£399 from Argos www.snipca.com/40295

Hisense Roku R50A7200GTUK

If you like the sound of the TCL model above but would prefer something slightly smaller, the Hisense Roku R50A7200GTUK could fit the bill (and your available space). The picture is great for the price, but you aren't getting

the quality you'll see on more expensive sets like the Philips model below left.

As with the TCL model, the Hisense uses Roku's software to power its smart TV services. This is arguably as good as streaming gets, including all

the major subscription services and access to all terrestrial on-demand options. It also comes with Freeview Play, which offers an alternative way to access free UK TV channels.

RATING ★★★★☆

£1,299 from John Lewis www.snipca.com/40290

Sony XR-55A80J

The XR-55A80J is a small step down from Sony's flagship OLED TVs (the A90J series), but it knocks more than £1,000 off the price and is still a stunning set for enjoying your favourite films and TV

series. Its picture is sharp and detailed, and the speakers sound great and reduce the need for a separate soundbar.

However, it lacks terrestrial catch-up services, with BBC iPlayer, ITV Hub and All 4

missing. You could add them with a relatively cheap Roku or Amazon Fire Stick, of course, but it's disappointing that they're missing from the TV itself.

RATING ★★★☆☆

WHAT SHOULD I BUY? We solve your buying dilemmas

Can you suggest a replacement laptop?

Q I need a new laptop and have a budget of around £800. My current laptop has an old Intel Core i7-3520M with 8GB RAM. It has a 16in screen with DVD drive, and I updated the hard drive it came with to an SSD. However, its keyboard is no longer working so I have to use an external one.

Ian Barlow

A To maintain a similar size screen, we'd opt for the Acer Aspire 5 A515-56G, which has

a 15.6in screen. It comes with an Intel Core i7-1165G7 processor, with 8GB of memory and a 512GB SSD. While these are similar specifications to what you already have, we think the 11th-generation Intel Core i7 processor will help the laptop feel significantly faster. It costs £799 from Currys (www.snipca. com/40297, pictured).

Not many computers come with DVD drives any more, because most software is downloaded and video is streamed from online services. Building them into laptops significantly increases the bulk,

so we'd advise buying an external disc drive instead, and connecting it to a new laptop. These can be bought from Amazon for around £23, such as the Rioddas External Drive (www.snipca. com/40296).

✉ Do you need advice on what you should buy?
Email us at letters@computeractive.co.uk

Workshop

Delete empty folders from your computer

What you need: Remove Empty Directories
Time required: 20 minutes

There are likely to be hundreds, if not thousands, of empty folders on your computer. Some of these you may have created yourself and forgotten about, but most of them will have been generated by Windows or software installed on your PC. Because these folders don't contain any data, they don't consume valuable space, so they're less of a problem than other types of junk. Indeed, most clean-up

tools simply ignore them. But these vacant directories can still prove annoying, because they make your hard drive look messy and increase the time it takes to perform file searches and malware scans. Here we explain the best ways to remove empty folders from your PC, using a powerful free program that ensures you don't delete anything important, and also a hidden tool that's built into Windows.

STEP 1
Visit the website of Remove Empty Directories (RED) at www.snipca.com/40365 and click 'Okay, cool! Show me the beta version' **1** to view the latest release of this free program. The most recent stable version is now 10 years old, but the beta works perfectly in all versions of Windows. Click the GitHub.com button under 'Windows Installer (Win32 + Win64) - Recommended' **2** to download RED to your hard drive. Run the installer and select the option to launch the program **3**, then click Finish.
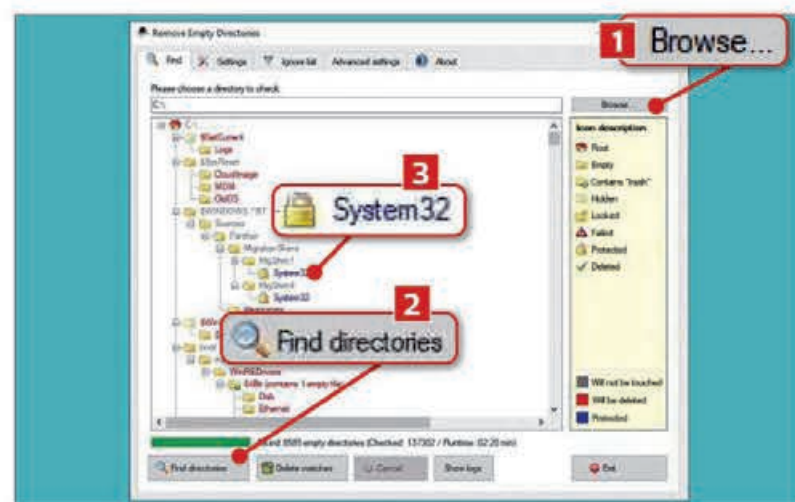

STEP 2
When the program opens, you can either click the Browse button **1** to select a directory to scan for empty folders, or stick with the default option, which is to scan your main 'C:\' drive for all folders that contain no data.. Click the 'Find directories' button **2** and RED will detect any empty folders in the specified location – this can take a few minutes. Folders highlighted in red are safe to delete, while those marked in grey won't be touched. Blue folders are protected directories, such as essential system folders **3**.

STEP 3
Before you delete the empty folders, it's a good idea to specify how RED should do this, so you don't risk losing anything important, but don't need to click endless confirmation boxes either. Click the Settings tab **1** and ensure the option 'Delete to recycle bin and ignore errors' is selected in the 'Delete mode' dropdown menu **2**. This will let you restore folders if their removal causes problems, but you won't need to confirm the deletion of each one. Once you've done that, click to return to the Find tab.


STEP 4
Click the 'Delete matches' button **1** and RED will purge your PC of empty folders. You can click Cancel **2** if you change your mind or the process takes too long – it took over 15 minutes to remove 5,613 directories on our computer. Don't worry if the program skips or fails to delete some folders – it probably means they're in use or locked for a valid reason. You can view more information about these directories, as well as those the program removed successfully, by clicking the 'Show logs' button **3**. Click 'Exit' to close RED.
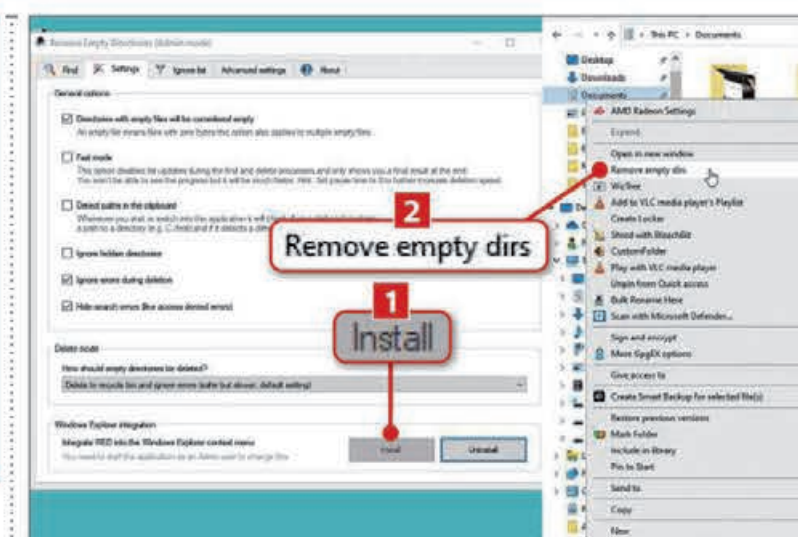
STEP 5
RED can also add an option for deleting empty directories to your right-click menu. To enable this, you need to run the program as an administrator. Find the folder to which you downloaded RED in Step 1 - it's likely to be your browser's Downloads folder - then right-click the 'setup.exe' file and choose 'Run as administrator'. Install the program again, overwriting the existing installation, then launch it and click the Settings tab. In the 'Windows Explorer integration' section at the bottom of the window, click the Install button **1**. Now when you right-click a folder, you'll see a 'Remove empty dirs' option in the context menu **2**.

STEP 6
Another way to find and remove empty folders is to use a hidden tool called Robocopy, which you access through the Windows Command Prompt. Type cmd into the Windows search box, choose 'Run as administrator' next to the top result **1** and allow Command Prompt to make changes to your PC. Type the following command, replacing both instances of 'C:\Users\Public' with the directory you want to check: robocopy "C:\Users\Public" "C:\Users\Public" /S move /L **2**.
Alternatively, copy and paste the command from our Pastebin account at www.snipca.com/40371 – but remember to change the target folder.
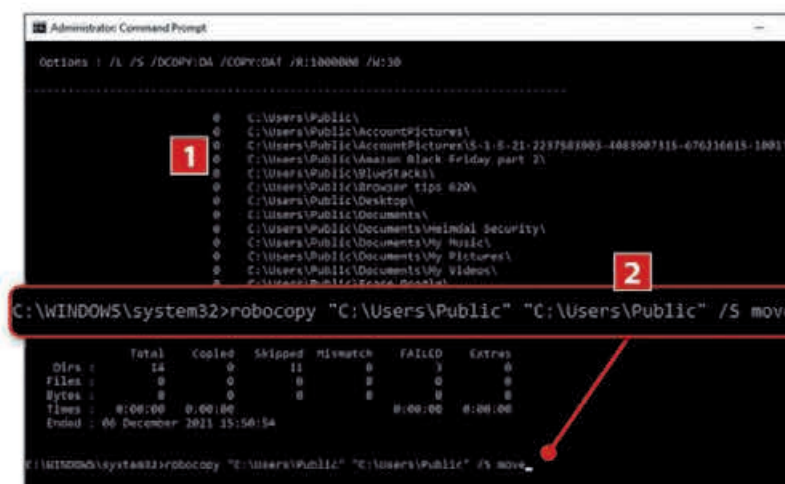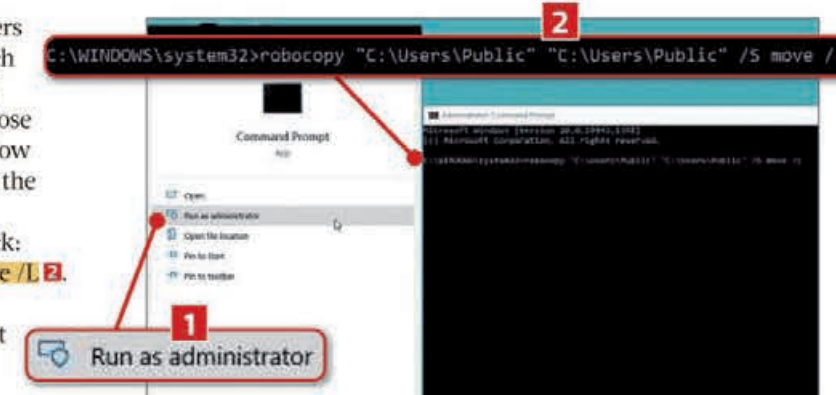
STEP 7
Press Enter, and Robocopy will list all the folders in your chosen location that contain no data **1**. To delete these folders, use the same command as in Step 6 but without the '/L' at the end. For example: robocopy "C:\Users\Public" "C:\Users\Public" /S move **2**.
Before you press Enter again, check which folders you're about to delete, because unlike RED, Robocopy doesn't differentiate between folders that are safe to delete and those that may be important. It also won't remove folders that contain a 'Thumbs.db' file, which Windows creates to show thumbnail images. On the plus side, the deletion process is very quick, taking a matter of seconds.

Fake Your IDENTITY ONLINE

Start the new year with a new you, by creating a false identity online. **Robert Irvine** explains how to fake your personal data to stay anonymous, stop spam and avoid nuisance calls

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Generate fake data to enter in online forms
- Tweak your profile picture to fool facial recognition
- Sign up with sites using a fake email address
- Receive verification texts to a disposable inbox
- Withhold your real phone number from companies
- Spoof your location without a VPN
- Pay for items online with a virtual credit card

Fake is usually a word with negative connotations – from fake news that's designed to trick you to fake products that rip you off. But if you want to protect your privacy online, and prevent your personal data from being gathered by marketing companies, cyber-criminals and spammers, then faking your identity is an effective and sensible option.

Many websites now ask you to provide information that they don't really need – including your phone number, address and date of birth – and use it to build a scarily accurate profile of you in their databases. Faking this data stops your actual details falling into the wrong

hands and means you're much less likely to receive spam emails, nuisance phone calls and junk mail. It can even speed up the process of signing up for websites, as well as shielding you from phishing scams and data breaches.

In this feature, we explain the best ways you can fake your identity on the web, legally and ethically – so don't worry, we won't be suggesting ways you can commit fraud or deceive vulnerable people.

Instead, from concealing your email address to disguising your location, we reveal how you can stay anonymous using the latest tools and start the new year by being a new, fictitious you.

DISGUISE YOUR PERSONAL DETAILS

Generate a fake online personality

Setting up a fake online profile to trick someone into befriending you – a practice known as 'catfishing' - isn't illegal but it's certainly unethical, and is not what we're encouraging with this feature. However, there are clear privacy and security benefits to using fictitious details when signing up with websites. Not only will it stop criminals and spammers obtaining your personal data, but it helps to limit your digital footprint - details of your interests and activities that companies can use to target you with ads.

Rather than make up information each time you're asked to provide it (which can prove surprisingly tricky), use the excellent Fake Name Generator (www. snipca.com/40277 - see screenshot right) to create your alias. This free site offers random, ready-made identities for the gender, nationality and country of your choice, from Australia to Uruguay. It goes far beyond merely generating names, and provides a realistic address and postcode, a fake phone number that automated site tests will deem valid, a disposable email address, a birthday and star sign, mother's maiden name, physical characteristics such as height, weight and blood type, an occupation and vehicle, and even your alter ego's favourite colour. Although Fake Name Generator doesn't have a mobile app, you can transfer your new identity to your phone by scanning a QR code and adding it to your contacts.

As well as protecting your privacy when you register with websites and online services, Fake Name Generator can help authors flesh out their characters and give web designers data to test their databases. The site stresses that it doesn't "condone, support, or encourage illegal activity of any kind", and that the fake credit card and national insurance numbers it provides "can't be used to make purchases online or to obtain employment".

Fake Name Generator gives you a fully fleshed-out pseudonym to use in online profiles – just click the Generate button to create a new identity

Fill in fake personal details on online forms

One drawback to using Fake Name Generator is that you need to copy and paste its false information into the relevant text boxes on websites. Rather than risk having your browser auto-fill your real name and other personal details, you can use a browser extension to enter fake data in online forms. This

will help you avoid online fraud, unwanted communication and intrusions into your privacy, without hampering your access to web content.

Our favourite tool is Fake Data (www. snipca.com/40281), which fills in as much or as little bogus information as you require, and is available for Chrome, Edge and other Chromium browsers, and Firefox. Simply right-click a text field and choose an option from its menu, including first and last name, username, address, phone number and more, or choose to 'Fill entire form' with random data (see screenshot below). You can also use keyboard shortcuts to enter these details - right-click the extension's toolbar button and choose Options, then Settings and click Keyboard Shortcuts to set up this feature.

By default, the extension is set to use 'English (United States)', but you can change this to 'English (Great Britain)' on its General Settings page to obtain more appropriate entries, such as UK postcodes when you choose 'zip'. Note that the email addresses Fake Data generates aren't linked to an actual inbox, so don't use them for a site that needs to verify your

account. If you upgrade to its Ultra plan for €2.99 per month (about £2.55), you get a disposable email address and phone number for account authentication, but the free version is sufficient for casual fakery. We explain the best free ways to fake your email address on page 53.

Use a different name on social media

Facebook expressly forbids you from using a false name in your profile. Its rules state that: "The name on your Facebook account should be the name that your friends call you in everyday life. This name should also appear on a form of ID" (www.snipca.com/40276). Fake profiles are regularly purged from the social network - 1.8 billion of them in the most recent figures (see www.snipca. com/40285) – but if you've ever received friend requests from obvious spam

Fake Data lets you fill in online forms using bogus names, addresses and other details

Strict new laws on using mobile phones while driving are slated to arrive in 2022. It's already illegal to make calls or send texts using your hands (unless it's an emergency), but you're still allowed to use your phone in other ways while driving, such as taking photos, playing games, zooming into maps and scrolling through playlists. The Government plans to change this in 2022 by banning all phone use that isn't hands free, with the exception of making contactless payments at drive-through restaurants or when using a toll road.

The new laws are still evolving and their exact date of implementation will depend on their passage through Parliament. However, if you want to stay legal, you need to start planning today.

When the regulations come into force, you should still be able to use your phone if it's in a cradle, as long as you don't touch it and it isn't a distraction. Here we'll show you how to set up your smartphone to minimise the need for physical interaction, letting you operate it by voice. Whichever method you choose, you're still responsible for making sure your phone isn't a distraction. If you're staring at the screen or engrossed in a long, involved conversation that takes your attention away from the road, you could be found legally responsible if the phone is proved to be a contributing factor to an accident.

Use your phone legally (& safely) while driving

Laws planned for 2022 ban using your phone while driving unless it's hands-free. **Nik Rawlinson** explains how to stay on the right side of the law

Does your car support Android Auto or Apple CarPlay?

Most modern cars support Android Auto and Apple CarPlay. Connecting your device via USB or Bluetooth will allow it to display compatible apps on a screen in your car. In most cases, the apps will have been designed to take advantage of the extra pixels on the screen, and run in landscape rather than portrait mode.

If your car doesn't support Android Auto or Apple CarPlay, you may be able to fit a receiver and screen. The Sony XAV-AX3005DB, which costs £349 (www.snipca.com/40254, pictured below), combines what's known as a double-DIN screen (twice the height of a regular 5cm radio slot) with a head unit that handles CarPlay, Android Auto and digital radio reception.

You can ask Google Assistant (on Android Auto) or Siri (on CarPlay) to read incoming messages and reply to them hands-free – as well as using third-party messaging tools like WhatsApp. You can also take your playlists on the road

with services such as Spotify, and podcasts using Pocket Casts (www.pocketcasts.com).

Routes planned using Android Auto and CarPlay may be more accurate than those plotted on the car's sat-nav if the latter doesn't have a live data connection, because your phone can take real-time congestion and disruption into account. Better yet, because both services can access your calendar, you

This Sony device works with Android Auto and CarPlay, and plays digital radio

can tap your next appointment and get directions right away.

Naturally, many of CarPlay and Android Auto's skills rely on an active data connection, so check that your allowance is sufficient to accommodate whatever navigation and streaming you have in mind before you set off.

How to use Android Auto

To use Android Auto, you need a phone running Android 6.0 or later. As this was released in 2015, almost any Android phone currently on sale – whether new or second-hand – should support it. The app provides voice access to Google Assistant, or you can control it using buttons built into the steering wheels of most recent cars.

Google provides a list of compatible stereos at www.snipca.com/40256, with an asterisk beside those that support wireless connections. If yours isn't on the list, you can still run Android Auto on

Google Assistant's driving mode simplifies the Android interface, showing audio options on panels that are easy to tap
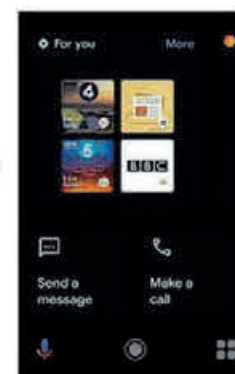
Tap 'Turn Driving on Automatically' and your iPhone will detect when you're in a car and remove distractions

your phone without connecting to an external screen. To do so, download the app for free from www.snipca.com/40257, and secure your phone in a cradle. We'd also recommend keeping a charging cable handy.

For Android 9 or later, Google is rolling out Google Assistant driving mode as an alternative to the separate Android Auto app. This simplifies the interface, presenting common features such as maps and audio on panels that are easy to tap (see screenshot above). It is also more forthcoming, asking what you want to do, then waiting for you to speak a response.

You can set driving mode to kick in automatically when the phone detects that you're in the car, based on your Bluetooth connection and motion sensing from the phone's accelerometer. Open 'Settings' and tap 'Connected devices' then 'Connection preferences'. Tap 'Driving mode' followed by 'I'm in', then tap the switch beside the Bluetooth device associated with your car (if you're following our workshop on the next page, tap T11). Then tap Continue. If your phone doesn't automatically switch to driving mode the next time it connects to your car's Bluetooth, say 'Hey Google, start driving'.

Use Apple CarPlay

CarPlay requires an iPhone 5 or later (it doesn't work on iPads), and is compatible with more than 600 models of car (see www.snipca.com/40259) as well as radios sold as accessories. As with Android Auto, you can control it using your voice, by tapping the in-car screen, or using buttons mounted on the steering wheel. Unlike Android Auto, you can't run CarPlay on your phone: you need an external screen in your car.

However, iOS 15 (which runs on iPhone 6s and later), introduces Driving Focus, which reduces the number of distractions you experience while driving. To enable it, open Settings and tap Focus, followed by '+'. Tap 'Driving', then Next.

By default, Driving Focus will accept phone calls from people you've added to your Favourites list in the phone app. If you want to allow other people to call you while you're driving, tap '+ Add' and select them from your contacts list. Tap 'Allow', followed by 'Turn Driving on Automatically' (see screenshot above), and your phone will automatically detect when you're in a moving car and enable Driving Focus. Tap Done.

The next time you're driving, if your phone doesn't detect your movements and enable Driving Focus, open Control Centre (swipe down from the top-right corner of the screen on iPhone X and later, or up from the bottom on iPhone 8 and earlier), then touch and hold Focus or Do Not Disturb, then tap Driving.

You can also set Driving Focus to reply automatically to texts with a set message. Swipe to open Control Centre, then tap Focus or Do Not Disturb. Then, instead of tapping Driving, tap the three dots to the right, followed by Settings.

Next, in Options, check to see if Focus Status is Off. If it is, tap it, then tap the switch at the top of the following screen to turn it on. Tap 'Driving' to return to the previous screen, then Auto-Reply. By default, only people on your Favourites list will receive a notification saying you're unavailable, but you can change this to No One, Recents or All Contacts (see screenshot below). You can also

With Driving Focus active, your iPhone can respond to incoming messages automatically

Drive Mode Dashboard
Free
Android: www.snipca.com/40271
Although it's advertised as a dashboard for motorbikes, Drive Mode Dashboard has several features that are just as useful to car drivers. These include shortcuts to a slimmed-down selection of external apps to save you hunting through the full list, and useful velocity and distance indicators. The developers plan to add weather and map views soon, as well as a media player.

Here WeGo Maps & Navigation
Free
Android: www.snipca.com/40272
iOS: www.snipca.com/40273
When you're driving on unfamiliar roads, it's easy to creep over the speed limit – especially if you're also trying to read road signs and negotiate heavy traffic. Here WeGo provides an audible warning if you break the speed limit for your current location, reminding you to slow down. It also has an excellent, uncluttered on-screen display, with buildings rendered in 3D and their door numbers clearly marked.

Smart Dash Cam
Free
Android: www.snipca.com/40280
iOS: www.snipca.com/40279
Save the expense of a dashcam by using your phone instead. Mount it in a holder with a clear view through your windscreen and Smart Dash Cam will record a loop of footage, deleting the oldest frames after a few minutes to save space on your device. The app can detect collisions and preserve video from before and after the event – or you can opt to upload it to cloud storage.

Do I have to give eBay my bank details?

Q I've sold the odd item on eBay in the past, but when I logged in recently – ignoring a nag for my bank details – the site informed me that I'd been suspended from selling. In order to regain this ability, I must provide my bank details. With the endless stories of companies, and even banks, losing people's account details and other data, I'm reluctant to hand over this information. Do you think it's safe to give eBay my bank details, or is there another way I can sell on the site without doing this?

Kay Wilson
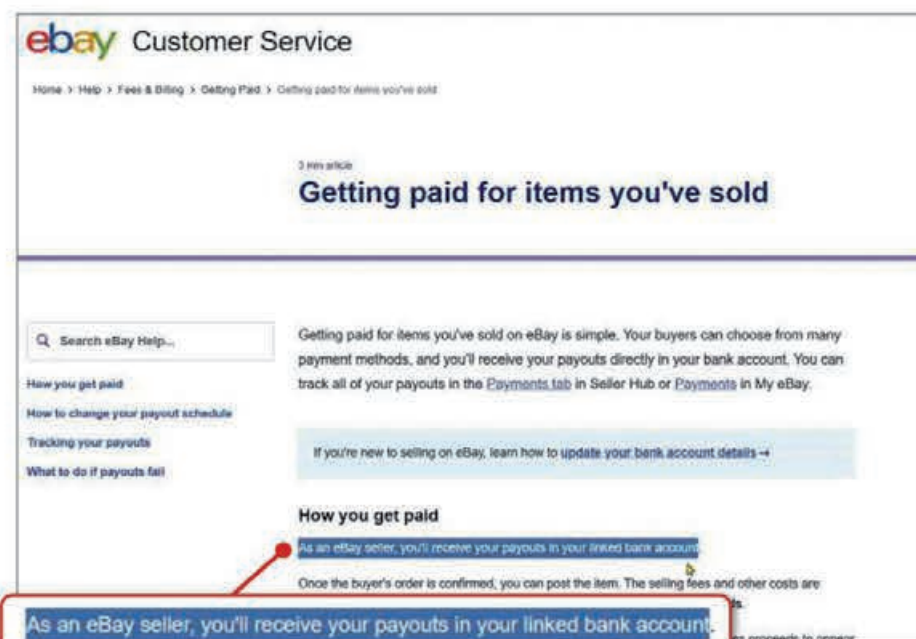
To sell on eBay, you will now need to link a bank account rather than using PayPal

A Sadly, there's no other way. At the beginning of 2021, eBay announced that sellers would need to link a bank account to receive payments. This is because the company has been progressively severing its ties with PayPal, the payments service it once owned. This move will allow eBay to keep a fraction more of the commission from each sale. Since its announcement, eBay has been rolling out this requirement to users worldwide – and now it's your turn.

Is it safe to supply your bank details to eBay? It's certainly no less safe than handing over this information to any other large company. In other words, eBay isn't some dodgy, fly-by-night organisation that will disappear with your savings or sell your data on the dark web. Having to supply your bank details is certainly a pain, not to mention an unwelcome surprise for many, but it is a legitimate request.

Will my FM radio app work on a new phone?

The Xiaomi Redmi 10 has a built-in FM radio

Q My Android mobile phone has an app I installed called FM Radio. This app is a genuine FM radio, which uses the headphone cable as an antenna and scans for stations without using the internet. It's one of the most useful things on my phone. I seem to remember reading that most phones have a radio function buried within them, but that there is a problem with enabling this function.

It won't be long before I need to replace my phone, so I want to know if I'll be able to transfer my app to a new phone, and whether it'll still work. If not, is there another Android app that provides genuine FM radio rather than streaming over the internet?

David Horne

A We don't know the exact app you're talking about but, if the developers still support it, it should still work in Android.

However, the real problem is that there's no guarantee any phone you buy will work with it. It's true that many Android phones have FM radios built into them, but it's also true that, for various commercial and technical reasons, many manufacturers disable this feature at the hardware level. Sometimes it can be re-enabled, but often it can't. We're sorry if this all sounds rather uncertain, but that's because the situation is uncertain.

Only a handful of manufacturers actively support FM radio in their phones, and although they tend to be the lesser-known brands and models. The pictured Xiaomi Redmi 10, for example, is equipped with an FM radio, so it would probably work with your app. It costs around £200 (www.snipca.com/40161).
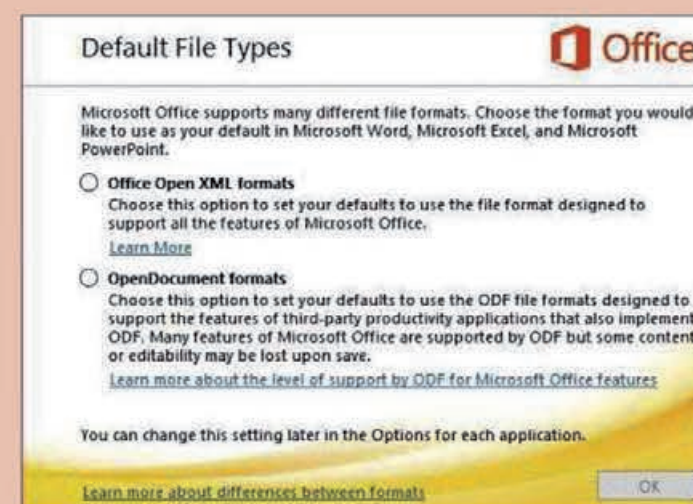

Office Open XML and OpenDocument?

Q While installing Office 2016 on my new Windows 11 PC recently, I was offered a choice of default file types – Office Open XML or OpenDocument (see screenshot). Having read a short description of each, I went for the first one. Was this the right decision? Why does Microsoft want to confuse users like me with choices like this?

Colleen Stafford

If you use Microsoft Office, you're better off choosing Microsoft's own file formats as the default

A There's no quick answer to this, suffice to say, it's due to a complex mix of factors including industry disagreements, a desire by Microsoft to be seen to be doing the right thing and an underlying fear of legal sanction.

The first of these is the easiest to explain, because it's a good old-fashioned format war – not unlike the VHS and Betamax battle of the 1970s and 1980s. In this case, one group believes the OpenDocument file format is the best standard for saving assorted document types, while an opposing group considers Office Open XML, or OOXML, to be superior. Needless to say, the latter group is led by Microsoft.

Both options have their merits, but if you use Microsoft Office, you're better off with OOXML. This is because only OOXML files support all the features of Microsoft Office documents. You can load or save OpenDocument files in Microsoft Office programs, but if you create a document in Microsoft Office and save it in OpenDocument format, some elements may not make the transition. The full list of features OpenDocument does and doesn't support is extensive. See Microsoft's rundown for Word at www.snipca.com/40164.

Microsoft once protected the ownership of its Office file formats, but it introduced OOXML as an 'open' format, in Office 2007. This means any developer can use it, heading off accusations of anti-competitive behaviour and the associated risk of prosecution.

✉ Want to know the difference between technical terms? Email noproblem@ computeractive.co.uk

Can I overwrite downloads automatically?

Q I have two questions. First, is there a way to stop Windows adding '(1)', '(2)', '(3)' and so on to a file's name when saving a downloaded file? I'd rather have the option to overwrite an existing file that has the same name. Second, can I add the .htm or .html file extension to Notepad's 'Save as type' menu alongside 'Text Documents (*.txt)'? I seem to remember this was possible in Windows 7 through a registry change.

Dan Willink

Edge won't automatically overwrite file downloads that have the same name, but this extension will

A From your screenshot, we see you're using Edge. There's no official way to change this behaviour, but a free extension called Downloads Overwrite Already Existing Files (from www.snipca.com/40166 – see screenshot) will enable it. Click the Get button to install it. Be warned that it doesn't ask you to confirm whether or not it should overwrite downloads with duplicate names. The process is automatic, with no other option – so use cautiously

We don't know of any registry hack to modify Notepad's 'Save as type' menu but we're happy to publish your query in case any readers know better.