

COMPUTING HELP

This document contains information provided in a periodical magazine. It takes the form of 'questions and answers' between readers and the magazine's computer expert which I have tried to present in some kind of order. Although incomplete, further information will be added when I receive it and have time to incorporate it. I am qualified neither to verify its accuracy, nor to supplement its content.

Webmaster

- Last updated on 20 March 2018
- Some answers relate to specific operating systems or Mac computers
- Now includes a section for Windows 10
- Clicking on a website link will take you to that website if you have an internet connection
- Text inside square brackets denotes keys to be pressed on your keyboard; if two or more are shown, press them simultaneously
- Text highlighted in grey denotes **links**, **buttons** and **tabs** which can be clicked
- System messages and characters to type into boxes are shown inside "double quotes"
- Navigation through programme or system menus is shown in red with > between each level
- Since some of this was written, security concerns have arisen surrounding Flash Player. I strongly recommend that you read its latest reviews before deciding whether to install it; I offer no other comment upon it. (Google it with 'FlashPlayer review')

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click on the reader's Q button to search for given words

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HARDWARE

Computer

What happens to the information stored in a PC's virtual memory? Does it get transferred to RAM or does it clutter up the hard drive?

Virtual memory is a substitute for the RAM physically installed on your PC (eg 512Mb). Once you run out of physical memory the virtual memory (swap file or page file) kicks in. As the hard drive is nowhere near as fast as RAM in data transfer terms, performance may degrade according to how much data is being swapped on and off the hard drive. Being 'virtual' it doesn't remain there. There is space allocated to the swap file, page file or virtual memory on your C drive that cannot be used for anything else. It's called 'pagefile.sys'.

How do I get rid of my old computer?

If you rely on your local council to recycle it you could risk having your data falling into the hands of identity thieves, claims Computing Which? The magazine called 100 councils across the UK to find out what services they offer. One in seven couldn't say how they would recycle computers and the majority were neither concerned nor informed about protecting personal data. Computing Which? says sensitive data should be removed before recycling using specialist software. The safest way is to remove the computer's hard drive and smash it with a hammer.

I am to dispose of my old computer and wondered if you could advise what housekeeping/security measures I should carry out first. I am particularly keen to ensure that any new owner will not be able to resurrect deleted files containing personal information.

To get rid of your personal tracks on the computer, the best thing to do is simply format and reinstall Windows, or use the recovery utility that so many pre-built computers have built in. For added assurance, you could totally clean the hard drive using a utility like 'Darik's Boot and Nuke'.

A friend who has an IBM Thinkpad T20 Type 2647 laptop has been given Scrabble 2007. It installed OK, but when she tries to use it she gets the message: "Cannot find the 3D device". Can she update her graphic card to 3D capability?

It is possible to update drivers and software for graphics cards but this will probably not give you the 3D capability that you are after as this is a physical function of the card and may only be gained by changing the card itself. Laptops often have graphics cards inbuilt to the motherboard as a space saving feature, which means that they cannot be changed.

The number pad on the right-hand side of my keyboard will not work. Is it a fault with the keyboard or do I have to do something to activate it?

Try pressing the [NUM LOCK] key, top left of the number pad.

Since I had Windows re-installed after a virus infection, I have found that when I hit the [@] key the result is the quote mark " , while that key produces the @ sign. Is it possible to make them behave themselves?

Go to **Start Menu > Control Panel > Region and Language** settings. Click on **Keyboards and languages**, and then **Change keyboards**. Select from the drop down menu **English – United Kingdom** and click **OK**.

The clock on my PC is losing time. Resetting it helps for a while, but then it starts going backwards again.

The battery that maintains power to the CMOS on the motherboard in your PC when it is disconnected from the mains, needs replacing. CMOS stands for Complementary Metal-Oxide Semiconductor. This contains the basic settings for your PC required to start it up, before it gets to Windows etc. The clock is one of these. For more help go to: <http://www.computerhope.com/issues/ch000239.htm> or see the 'Battery' article on page 53.

Is it true that work saved to a USB memory stick can be retrieved and amended and that the amended version can be saved back to the same memory stick?

Yes. Anything saved on a memory stick can be altered, moved, deleted or created on to the memory stick itself, just like on a floppy disk.

I sometimes get the message: "My virtual memory is low and Windows is dealing with it".

You are running out of RAM, the physical memory component inside the computer that allows programs to be run simultaneously. Perhaps you should consider installing some more.

I want to transfer data from my computer onto a new Seagate external hard drive. Can you tell me how to do it?

Plug the Seagate drive into the computer's USB port. If the drive has a socket for the wall outlet, plug that in as well. The computer should recognise the drive. To copy your files, select them from where they are stored by clicking the left mouse button. Then right click and select **Copy**. Navigate to the Seagate drive through 'My Computer' and right click the mouse again in a blank white space and click paste. Your content will be copied to the external drive. If you wish to move items instead of copying them, select **Cut** instead of **Copy**.

I am going to buy my wife a new tower for her PC. Is it possible to transfer data from the old tower to the new one?

Yes. If you have an external hard drive, or a flash drive, you can easily copy across your data, or, if not, you could use writable CDs. Most of your files will be found inside 'My Documents', 'My Pictures', 'My Music' and possibly 'My Videos'. Copying can be done by right clicking files and selecting **Copy**. To highlight multiple files drag a selection rectangle around them using the mouse before selecting **Copy**, then **Paste** them onto the external media.

When I turn on my computer an Alert message appears stating that "system battery voltage is low" and asking me to "strike [F1] key to continue, [F2] to run the setup utility". I've continued as normal and everything seems to work, but I'm worried that the whole thing may 'crash'. What should I do?

Your computer won't 'crash' but if the small button-cell battery on the motherboard isn't replaced you may notice that your system clock will begin to slow. If it loses too much time it could cause

problems when you browse secure internet sites. I recommend you get the battery replaced sooner rather than later. See the 'Battery' article on page 53.

I have recently had some issues on my Windows desktop, as it is showing a "checksum error" message every time we turn it on.

This error often means that the battery on the motherboard which holds your computer's date and time has failed, no longer holding the power necessary to store the BIOS settings. The following link explains nicely about how to fix it: <http://tinyurl.com/qfgn253>
If you don't feel comfortable doing the swap yourself, a local IT repair store or handyman should be able to do it for a small fee as it is a quick job and the batteries are cheap.

When I switch my computer on the screen goes straight into the set-up menu and I have to press [F1] in order to continue. The clock and date have also changed to midnight 5/1/2005 and has to be reset to the present. Help please.

The CMOS battery has run down which is why the clock is failing to maintain the proper date. Ask your local computer shop to replace it. See the 'Battery' article on page 53.

I am continually being reminded by various Apps that my date/time is incorrect and needs adjustment urgently. I correct this many times, but the next time I switch on, it is again completely incorrect. Is it battery trouble? The computer works very well other than this, but is now 10 years old (ish).

The internal battery is most likely the cause. This keeps time and date information as well as storing information set in the BIOS. It is simple enough to replace if you have a tower PC. You can have a look at the following link to help change the CMOS battery, but you may want to ask a local IT person to help.

I keep getting pop-ups saying "Virtual Memory minimum too low, your system is low on virtual memory. Windows is increasing the size of your virtual memory paging file". What does it mean and what can I do about it?

It means that your computer does not have enough RAM memory to run your programs, so it is compensating with virtual memory, a file on the Hard Disk. The easiest way to speed the computer up and get rid of the message is to have a RAM upgrade installed, a relatively inexpensive job.

My wife has bought a laptop with Windows 7. When she is on the internet pages open of their own accord whenever the cursor hovers over a button or a different part of the screen. Is there a way of preventing this? I have spoken to friends and they also find this irritating.

This isn't a Windows 7 behaviour, in that it isn't part of the design. I can only think that your wife is accidentally leaning on the trackpad as she reads pages online, and that is what is causing the 'click' behaviour. Most trackpad drivers have the functionality to disable tap-to-click. This will be found under **Start Menu > Control Panel > Mouse Options**. Alternatively, the trackpad can be turned off completely when you are typing. Some HP laptops allow this to be done by double tapping a corner of the trackpad, others require a button to be pressed on the keyboard. Consult the documentation that came with your computer.

I have an Advent 4213 Netbook. The problem is that the cursor keeps moving to another position when I am typing, sometimes after only a few words. It has been happening while I have been typing this to you. It is taking so much time to keep going back all the time, deleting and starting again. Also, sometimes a section of type will highlight in blue and delete itself. What's the answer?

Same as above. I think you are accidentally brushing or tapping the trackpad with your hand as you type.

Can cold weather adversely affect the performance of the battery in a laptop? I keep mine in a caravan and now it's getting colder at night its performance seems to be deteriorating.

Cold weather should not affect your laptop's operating speed. Very low (and very high) temperatures could have an effect on other parts of the machine.

I want to buy a basic laptop for everyday use. What would you recommend?

For a basic laptop you will need a 1.8 dual core or above, with 2GB of RAM. There are so many different products on the market that the name on the box is a matter of personal choice.

The fan in my tower seems to run almost continually. Is there something wrong?

High power consumption will turn on the fan more often and increase its speed. Try to leave an air gap around the tower to stop it overheating and keep it free of dust. Vacuuming the inside of the case every three months or so, especially around the fan, will also help.

I have a Compaq Presario laptop which is almost 10 years old. Until recently it has been very reliable but now it is taking longer and longer to start working and it frequently displays a message saying "not responding". All my programmes work, but slowly. Is there a solution?

Yes, treat yourself to a new computer. The latest software only works properly on modern machines.

I have bought an external hard disc to download a quantity of music CDs, but no instructions. I have a laptop running Windows 7. Can you please advise how I should go about this project?

The best way to go about transferring music to your external hard drive would be simply dragging and dropping files on to the hard drive. (Click once and hold on the file you want to copy to the hard drive, then drag it into the external hard drive folder and then let it go). Plug in your external hard drive to the computer via a USB cable then once you've done that, go to the **Start Menu > My Computer** and open the external hard drive folder. You can then simply save or copy the music files into the hard drive.

I have freezing problems with my mouse and also when typing. I have checked the mouse but think this is a computer problem as I also get Internet and Windows Mail not responding. My computer is a Vista model laptop which otherwise I am happy with. If I press [CTRL]+[ALT]+[DELETE] it usually functions again, but this can take some time which is very annoying when playing Mahjong or sending emails.

It sounds like your computer is running at full capacity of RAM. This is what is slowing your computer down and taking a long time for it to load back up. The only thing I can suggest is to have more RAM installed onto your computer. If you go in to a local store and explain the symptoms they can probably explain further and possibly quote for upgrades.

I have a Samsung laptop with Windows 8. When I want to switch it off, it does not close when I press the power button. So when I want to switch it off, I pull out the power cable, and after a short period the computer closes. When wishing to switch on the laptop, I plug in the power cable and switch it on again. I wonder if there is a problem with the switch on button or is it software?

Ideally, you don't want to switch it off by just pressing the button; that in fact just puts the laptop to sleep. You need to close the laptop down. To do this, hover your mouse in the top right hand corner, wait till the Charms Bar appears, and select settings. And at the bottom you should see a little power button. Click this and then select shut down. This is how you correctly shut down a computer.

I keep getting a balloon stating that my virtual memory is low – my PERSONAL memory may be at odds sometime, but it's ages since I've seen this little reminder – and can't remember due to MY virtual memory perhaps, how I dealt with it, or, more to the point, what suggestions you had to correct it for me.

I would have a look at the following link: <http://support2.microsoft.com/kb/826513>. It may be due to what programs you use at the point of the virtual memory prompt, and usually is a result of memory running low. It will tell you what you can do to remedy the situation.

When trying to install a program, the message: "internal error 2349" appears. Can I do anything to get around this?

This sounds like a problem with installing Microsoft Office, and is related to Norton Antivirus which can interfere with the installation process. Try disabling Norton (or whatever antivirus security program you use) and running the installer again. This link suggests possible problems with the installation media, which may also be worth checking: <http://support2.microsoft.com/kb/329386>.

My PC is a few months old and runs Windows 8.1. I keep getting pop-ups advising that my drivers are out of date from "PC Drivers Headquarters" and offering updates for a fee. Is this a legitimate service or a scam? (All the hardware seems to work properly). If it is a scam how do I stop the pop-ups?

It's not a scam as such, it's just an unnecessary piece of software that installs advertising robots to try and sell you products. Ideally just delete the software. To do this, go to **Start Menu > Control Panel > Programs & Features**. Then go to **Uninstall a program**. Scroll down the list until you see the suspected program and then right click and select **Uninstall**. Restart your computer once complete.

My laptop is Sony Vaio and is nearly 8 years old. The software is Microsoft Vista and I have recently been informed that from the end of March 2017 this software will no longer be supported by Google Chrome. It may be worth adding that I had problems with some malware last year and had to have the computer reset to factory settings. Could you advise on whether it is worth updating software on my existing computer or to get a new one?

You will be able to use the programs but, eventually, as there are no support or updates, you will find that certain features will not work. Ideally, you should have different browsers installed. You will already have Internet Explorer, but you should also download Firefox so when features don't work in one browser you can then try in another. Depending on the age of your PC you will eventually have to upgrade the operating system or your PC. You will have to back up all of your data if you do choose to do this.

My family computer devices are PC, laptop and two tablets. Visiting relatives bring their tablets and iPhones. My BT router (the latest) requires them all to enter a common password to connect to the internet. So far so normal. My PC packed up. I replaced it with a brand new one with Windows 10. As with the previous PC, it was connected by an ethernet cable to the BT router. When it first started it did not ask me for the router password but was connected straight away and I was able to access the internet. Is this unusual?

The Wi-Fi password only relates to wireless connections. You do not need a password for a direct wired connection.

My PC is working very slowly at present – not just with the browser, but everything – and I wonder if the unwanted advertising is affecting the general working of the system. I've seen some advice in a Malware tips blog and wonder if I should follow this.

Slow PCs can be caused by a number of things.

- Malware/Viruses. We recommend a program called Malwarebytes, a free antivirus program which always provides you with protection and doesn't come with any free trials, just protection when you need it. <https://www.malwarebytes.org/mwb-intercept/>
- PUPs (Potentially Unwanted Programs) or browser toolbars, advertising programmes *etc.* Not necessarily malicious but certainly a nuisance. These can be removed with ADWCleaner (although Malwarebytes will often pick them up too): <https://toolslib.net/downloads/viewdownload/1-adwcleaner/>
- Finally, usage and age can play a part too. Over time, general system clutter can make it harder for the system to work smoothly, and as the software is updated it begins to ask more and more of the hardware as richer features and user experience are delivered. Eventually, after 3-5 years, it starts to become noticeable that modern software is asking more of the hardware, and by the 10 year mark it is usually necessary to upgrade to use contemporary software. The hardware itself is usually only expected to last 3 years, although warranties are often sadly less than that.

I have a Dell desktop computer which is about ten years old. About five or six years ago, we needed a new modem so updated from Windows XP to Windows 7. It is now running slow and I need to replace it with a new desktop computer Windows 10. I am not technically minded and so not sure what make to buy. I use Excel spreadsheets for my household and savings info), and I type the odd letter in Word. I would need a lot of space as we also download music and keep folders of our photographs, we do not use any computer games. I have been advised by a friend that you cannot buy the Office program now, it has to be rented.

Firstly you can buy Office or rent it, you have the choice. I would advise that you look at Lenovo, HP or Samsung PCs as these are tried and tested by our clients, so we don't ever advise our clients to buy anything else. I would say you need:

- i3 or i5 processor

- 4GB + RAM
- 750GB or more HDD storage

Can a faulty graphics card prevent a computer to boot up?

To check if it is actually the graphics card, you could try to boot without your graphics card by disconnecting it from your mainboard and connecting your monitor to your mainboard directly. If it works it would be clear it is your graphics card. It would be helpful for us to get some more information about your specs. So if you please can somehow find out the models of your mainboard and your graphics card, it might help to detect your issue.

Hard Drive

I want to recycle the hard drive on my five-year-old computer. What's the best way to ensure my personal data doesn't fall into the wrong hands?

First, destroy it with a hammer.

Sometimes when I start my computer it shows a black screen with the following message in white lettering: "American Megatrends AMD Athlon™ XP 1800÷PRI Master HDD Error Run Setup Press [F1] to resume." If I press [F1] nothing happens, but if I restart it works normally.

This message, coupled with a black screen, usually signifies a problem with the Primary Master Hard Disk Drive (PRI Master HDD). Back-up your files onto a CD or DVD – or make a hard paper copy at the very least – and then take your computer to a reputable shop for repair.

The last occasion my PC crashed I had an error report from Microsoft telling me Windows was temporarily unable to read my hard disk drive. It advised me to run Chkdsk and said I could do so from My Computer or Windows Explorer. How?

Go to **Start Menu > Run** and type "cmd" into the Run box. Once the command prompt appears (black box) type "CHKDSK" and press [ENTER] key.

My PC has crashed a couple of times recently. On the last occasion I had an error report from Microsoft telling me Windows was temporarily unable to read my hard disc drive and advising me to run 'Chkdsk'. For the life of me I cannot work out how to do this. I use Windows XP Professional.

To run CHKDSK go to **Start Menu > Run** and type "cmd" into the Run box. Once the command prompt appears (a black box) type "CHKDSK/F" and press [ENTER] key. For a full list of switches that can be used with the CHKDSK command, type "CHKDSK".

I keep getting a pop-up warning that I am running short of disk space on my D drive. Is it possible to check the capacity?

Go to My Computer and right click on D drive. Select Properties at the bottom of the menu, which will bring up a pie chart showing you a breakdown of available hard disk space.

I have just bought a 50 GB external drive with USB connection. Is it possible to transfer the functions of the internal hard drive (C) to it, thus, increasing storage and speeding up the computer, all in one go?

You may be able to move your data to the new drive fairly easily, but moving your programs and operating system to an external drive would make Windows unbootable and cause a lot of headaches. It is possible to boot Windows from an external drive but it will be much slower than using an internal hard drive. The best use of an external drive is as a backup to store vital files and data in case of a systems or hardware failure.

Printer

Each time I switch on my printer it automatically prints a test sheet, wasting paper and ink.

If you have replaced ink cartridges you need to complete an alignment process. Wait until your printer has finished printing a test sheet. Place the test sheet on to the scanner glass facing down towards the right hand corner. Press the Scan button (colour). Wait until the power ON light stops flashing.

My emails print perfectly well in Windows Mail, but I cannot seem to print them when I use BT Yahoo Mail, which I prefer. Can you help?

To print from Yahoo do the following:

1. Select/highlight the text you want to print using your mouse.
2. Select **Print** from the **File** menu.
3. When the print dialog box appears, select **Selection** from the range selection area where you usually choose the page range. (If disabled, it means you did not select the text; go back and repeat).
4. Click on the **Print** button.

My Toshiba laptop and Epson printer worked together perfectly until last week, when the computer suddenly stopped sending documents to the printer. I've gone to the Epson page in Control Panel to find out what is happening, but it just says that the documents are waiting to be printed. I can't retrieve them or print.

It sounds as if the print queue has jammed. Try restarting the printer spooler by going to the Start Menu. In the search field type "services.msc" and press [RETURN]. If you are asked to continue or cancel or words to that effect, select **Continue**. In the list of services find **Print Spooler**, right click it and press **Restart**. Switch the printer off and then turn it on again. Hopefully your problem will be solved.

The Epson Stylus 300 that goes with my 10-year-old Time computer has packed up. Can you recommend a replacement that will run with Windows 98?

The short answer is No. You may still be able to find laser printers that run on standard PCL or PostScript drivers, but it could be a long search. Inkjets may turn up on eBay or in charity shops.

My HP Colour Laserjet printer CP2025 has recently decided to print in black and white only. Previously there was an option to change between greyscale and colour but I've searched properties, preferences, and all tabs therein. In 'general' it states colour – no, and there is only a large black and white thumbnail in properties with no colour option. I'm pretty sure that properties – advanced is where the choice options used to be displayed, but no longer. I've tried uninstalling/reinstalling, all to no avail, help please!

It sounds like a fault in the printer which may be to do with your colour ink cartridges. Have you tried cleaning out the print head and changed the cartridges? When you reinstalled, did you use the latest drivers? I would always advise to download the latest drivers from the manufacturers site – I found a link for you: <http://bit.ly/2hlVry3>.

Monitor

Last week, while playing Freecell, my screen lost its 'backing light' and the diamonds and hearts turned black. Exiting the game, my computer showed all red colours as either black or blue, even the on/off button. It was like a red tube going in a television. Is there a cure?

I'm afraid it sounds as if your monitor needs replacing. It could just be your graphics chip, but I think this unlikely. You could double check by plugging your machine into another monitor.

My flat screen monitor has a flicker which develops into horizontal lines and then a fast, vertical roll. Sometimes the screen shows strange colours and almost double images. I can sometimes clear the fault with a sharp tap on top of the monitor.

Invest in another monitor. These things don't last forever and once they go it's not usually possible to repair them. Before you ditch it, however, it might be worth double-checking the cable connections. A loose lead could be causing the problems.

I have a laptop with a 14" screen which I hope to connect to a new 22" monitor. Will the working space expand to fit?

It should do so by default, however some monitors may show black around the edges. Check with your supplier. Remember that you can also use a second monitor as an extended workspace, rather than simply mirroring the laptop screen.

My desktop display jumped through 90 degrees when I accidentally dropped a folder onto the keyboard. Can you tell me how I can return it to horizontal please?

Press, simultaneously, the following keys on your keyboard: [CTRL]+[ALT]+[UP ARROW].

My monitor displays incorrectly.

Right click on an empty part of the Desktop and click on **Display** settings. Click on the **Advanced Settings** button and select the pixel settings to the 'recommended' settings. (The video resolution can sometimes be reset incorrectly during an update).

Scanner

I have recently upgraded my PC as the old one was some 15 years old and still running XP. Now I am having to come to terms with Windows 10, slowly but surely. The old PC contains some software that came with an Epson 1260 scanner – PhotoImpression – which was on the set-up disc with the scanner set up and I still have. This is a simple program (like me) that I used extensively to manipulate photos as part of my computerised Family History and I would very much like to keep. Looking on the net it appears to be an American programme that has obviously been improved over the years. However I am very familiar with my version and it does all I want to do. Please could you advise – could I use the original disc and go through the motions of installing the scanner on my machine – bearing in mind I have changed printers and scanner (all Epson), with no problems and it continued to work fine.

With the set-up disk being for your Windows XP computer there are no guarantees that it will work with your Windows 10 computer – however there is no harm in trying. Windows 10 is fairly good at running older software so give it a go. Failing this, the programme PhotoImpression can be downloaded online for free. There are versions online that may be more up to date than the version that you are using so I would be aware of this when you are looking. I would recommend that you make sure that it is as up to date as possible as this will allow it to run to its best capabilities.

CD/DVD

The CD drive on my computer is not working. I put a disk in the drawer and nothing happens.

The problem could be the Autorun feature that starts to play CDs/DVDs is not enabled. Check it by opening Windows Explorer, [Windows]+[E], right-click CD-ROM and select Properties from the menu. Select AutoPlay tab and enable if necessary.

My new computer allows me to record from our television directly onto the hard drive and burn the recording onto a disk. The disk will replay on the computer, but not back through the television. Am I doing something wrong, or is this how it is?

To play a recorded disk through a TV you need a DVD machine capable of playing MPEG or AVI files formats.

I have a fairly high-spec desktop running Windows XP and I want to transfer some vinyl LPs onto CD. I assume I can input to my sound card's Line-in or Aux input, but what do I do after that?

The easiest solution is to buy a digital USB turntable that plugs straight into your PC via a USB port. For starters try www.firebox.com

How can I copy music from my CDs on to my iPod. Do I have to go into iTunes, even if I just want to copy my own CDs?

The link below will tell you all you need to know:

<http://forums.ipodlounge.com/showthread.php?s=&threadid=33491>

In the 'old' days when I used floppy discs it was possible to retrieve data, amend it, and then save the amended version back to the disc. I would like to do this with RW CDs but cannot find a way of doing it.

That's because floppy discs and CDs use different technology and they are not comparable. If you want to copy files from a CD probably the easiest way is to use a USB memory stick.

When I download music from the internet onto disks it will not play on my CD or DVD player. What am I doing wrong?

You are ripping the music files to MP3 format, which is not recognised by normal CD players. For more information visit <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WAV>.

What format should I use to burn a CD-R so that it will play on a normal CD player, using Windows Media Player II?

Use the standard default setting as it provides the widest compatibility with today's CD players. MP3 CDs are not yet widely recognized although they hold more data.

My wife has inadvertently deleted an InCD file which means my computer will not read discs. Instead it displays a message: "Cannot connect to file system In CD service not running". How do I restore operations?

Re-install Nero InCD. If you no longer have the disks you could try System Restore. Go to **Start Menu > All Programs > Accessories > System Tools > System Restore**. Select **Restore my computer to an earlier time** and then **Next**. Select a date and time from the calendar and then **Next** again. Confirm to restart using the settings that worked at the specified time and date.

I have been saving my photos on to compact disks but have been warned these have a limited lifespan. Is this true? If it is, is there a more reliable way of storing material?

I'm afraid it is true. Recordable CDs available over the counter will 'decay' over time. They could last up to 10 years if you store them in their cases at room temperature, but heat, light and physically handling them will all hasten their deterioration. What happens is that the dyes that hold the data become unstable. Rewritable (RW) CDs are more prone to this happening than one-time recordable CDs (CR), but none are immune. You would be better off backing up your archives onto a hard drive, but even these will not last for ever. The only long-term solution is to copy the material every few years, either onto new CDs or – and this is probably less laborious – on to a new hard drive. The key to archiving important material is always to have more than one back up.

Others

Can you recommend a book that explains the internal working of a computer, BIOS settings, updates and so on?

Try the 'For Dummies' series. Don't be put off by the name, the books are good. More at www.dummies.com

I use a cordless mouse. Periodically the cursor gets stuck. I can sometimes persuade it to move again, but not for long. A shop sold me a new mouse, but the same thing is happening again. What's the answer?

Put in fresh batteries.

I get a Windows warning that "DIT.exe has encountered a problem and needs to close" when I plug my Seagate external hard drive into the USB port. Nothing appears to be wrong and I can continue to access the drive and complete all other tasks. I just close the warning message. What is DIT.exe? Do I need it and, if not, how can I get rid of either it or the warning message.

DIT.exe is a part of the software for USB removable devices, such as MP3 players. You can probably disable it from starting up with your computer by going to the **Start Menu**, clicking Run, and typing in MSCONFIG. On the **Startup** tab, find DIT.exe and uncheck it, then click OK.

I always switch my router off when not required. However a friend says not to bother and just leave it on 24/7. Are routers intended to operate in this manner and is it safe to leave them on constantly?

Yes, they are designed for ready internet access.

Occasionally when I am typing on a word document and hit the space bar the cursor jumps back to the start of the page. I then have to scroll down to reach the point where I finished typing. It seems to happen every two or three sentences.

If you are using a wireless mouse and keyboard there are two possible causes. Siting speakers close to a monitor can result in interference. Try moving them to a different location. If that doesn't work, fit new batteries.

When I attempt to write an email on my two-year-old Dell lap top (running Windows 7), the lines of typing become jumbled on top of one another. I've tried deleting the message and starting again but the same problem recurs now almost every time I use the keyboard.

The problem could be the way you are using the keyboard. The trackpad on a laptop which you use to move the cursor arrow is touch sensitive. If you accidentally brush the palms of your hands against it when you are typing it could cause the lines to jump. If this is the case, and you find it difficult to use the keyboard without your hands touching the trackpad, my suggestion would be to disable it and plug a mouse into one of the USB slots to move the cursor. You can disable the trackpad on some laptops either with a button or by accessing the software. Check your manual to see what option is available.

The titles of tracks on some CDs that I have copied to my MP3 player do not correspond to what is being played. I have tried to edit them, both in the media player and also on the MP3. The changes are accepted, but when I play them they are still incorrect.

Delete the music from your MP3 player and then re-sync the files. The ones stored on the MP3 player are separate copies, so they won't have been updated when the track names were changed.

I have just purchased a new laptop and wish to transfer a database from an older PC. It's my audio collection details with over 20,000 entries and 11 fields. I have it in Microsoft Works v7 on a PC

using XP. The new laptop has Office 2010 Starter and I have installed Libre Office. Any help you can give would be greatly appreciated.

I would recommend using a storage device like a USB memory stick, or why not even use a CD to transfer the files. If you have a lot of files which need to be transferred, why not go for an external hard drive? Not only would this allow you to transfer all your files in one go, but you could keep them stored on the external hard drive as a backup.

I have Windows 7 home premium on my desktop. I have some old floppy discs from when I had Windows 98 and Windows XP. How can I retrieve the information on these discs?

I think what you should do is purchase an external floppy disc drive. They are not too expensive and you can pick them up at any PC store. The floppy disc drive should then plug into your PC via a USB cable and then you will be able to transfer data from your floppy disc onto the PC.

I recently cleaned my keyboard with proprietary computer and telephone wipe. Unfortunately, I now find that when I press certain keys they do not type the character shown on them (e.g. o types 6, p types -, 1 types 3 etc).

It sounds like you may have accidentally turned on the numeric pad. Try pressing the [FN] key and the [NUM LOCK] key down together, this will turn off the numeric pad that has been set on the letter keys.

I have just lost my sound on my PC. It has always worked fine but now there is complete silence. Both speakers have power with the light on and volume turned up.

Could you check the cable from the speakers to the computer is securely in place? If they do appear to be in place then have a look at the bottom right hand side the screen (where the time is displayed). You should see a few icons to the left of the time, with one that looks like a speaker (you can hover your mouse cursor over the icons and it will tell you what the icon is). If you find the speaker, click on it and make sure there is no red circle with a line going through it as this indicates that sound is on mute. If it is on mute, try clicking the speaker icon with the circle and it should take it away, which enables the sound again.

I have internet connection problems.

Firstly ask yourself the basic questions – is everything plugged in? If you use a dialup connection, is the phone free of messages and can you get a dial tone? If you use wireless, is the wireless on your computer switched on and connected? Some have a physical wireless switch, or a key combination to activate it. The symbol often looks like a sonar symbol.

The next thing to try is to switch off and back on your ADSL modem/router (such as a BT home hub, or whatever device your ISP supplies you), which reboots it.

If you still don't have any connection to the outside world, check that every phone line in your house that is plugged into a telephone, fax machine, etc, has an ADSL filter on it. It is important that every socket in use has one of these filters so as not to mix up phone data and Internet data.

If all filters are in place, it's possible one or more of them is faulty. To make it as easy as possible to eliminate the fault – unplug all other devices and phones in the house apart from the socket that your ADSL modem is connected to. See if the connection comes back. If it does, plug your other

devices (phones, fax machines, etc) in one-by-one until the problem returns. Now you have identified the culprit, try replacing the ADSL filter on the device – you can get these from electrical shops. If replacing the ADSL filter doesn't work, the device itself may be at fault and could be causing noise on the line. Consider speaking to the manufacturer for a workaround or replacement.

If after all of this the problem is still occurring, it is likely to be a problem with either the computer, the ADSL equipment in your house, or the ISP's infrastructure itself. At this point, call your ISP. The technician may ask you to confirm the status of the lights on your ADSL modem/router or go through some basic troubleshooting instructions on your computer itself.

I have a Lenovo laptop and despite doing my best to clean it up, before turning it off (when the battery is fully charged) and disconnecting the power lead, when next turning it on the battery has lost some power. Is this normal, or is a programme causing drainage? The laptop is running on ready installed Windows 10. Also, should I run the laptop with the power lead connected, even when fully charged, or should I let it run right down just on battery, before using the power lead again to recharge?

Some power drainage between uses is natural, but unless you leave it for weeks on end this shouldn't be enough to need a full recharge before using. Naturally your battery will lose charge over time but if it is a large amount in a short time then I would recommend that you consider getting a new battery. If you do choose to look at a new battery I would recommend that you get a Lenovo battery as this will work best with your laptop. Leaving the power cable plugged in when the battery is charged can over time cause the battery to degrade, so try to at least give the battery some use even if it is to just run for a little while on battery power a few times a month.

I have been advised by Virgin Media (my broadband provider) that to improve the speed of my connection I should use a direct cable between the router and my desktop PC. Currently the family are using Wi-Fi with up to 3 or 4 devices connected at any one time. If I use a Ethernet cable to link my PC with the router can I also have Wi-Fi available to other users in the house. If so, how do I set it up?

The broadband is shared between all devices that are connected. So the more devices you have connected the slower your broadband will be. Connecting via an ethernet cable is faster as it is a direct link from the router to the device. This will not affect the current Wi-Fi setup. If devices are connected to the Wi-Fi then they will stay connected. All you need to do for the ethernet cable connection is plug the cable in to the router and the PC.

SOFTWARE

Operating System

When I retrieved my computer from a repairer's after it crashed, I found the Ability Write program had been replaced with Internet Explorer and some files have changed from Type to Text and are unreadable. Can I restore them?

Open My Computer and go to **Tools** and **Folder Options**. Click on **File Types**. If you can find the file type that has now switched to text, click on the **Change** button and reassign it to the program

you want. Be very careful changing these settings. Make a mistake and you could cause more problems.

I'm using Windows XP - how can I find out if I am updated to Service Pack 2 (SP2)?

Right-click on **My Computer** and go to **Properties** at the bottom of the menu. This will tell you which version of Windows you are running and which Service Pack you have installed.

My new Hewlett Packard Pavilion - running Vista Home Premium won't wake up after being put into 'sleep' or 'hibernate' mode. I've tried everything - moving and clicking the mouse, pressing the sleep key, pressing other keys and pressing the on/off switch. I have called HP repeatedly on the telephone, but got fed up after being left on hold. Is the problem with my computer or with Vista? Apart from this I am happy with the computer.

This seems to be a problem with Vista. You can read about it at <http://www.cnet.com>. My advice would be to turn off your PC and allow the screen saver to run, or, if you want to keep your computer on, switch off the monitor. To change the settings for sleep and hibernate, go to **Start Menu > Control Panel > Display > Screen Saver > Power**.

Can you tell me how I can reduce the large size of the Icons on my laptop?

Go to **Start Menu > Control Panel > Display**. Click **Settings** and change the **Screen Resolution**. Alternatively, right-click on the **Start** button and select **Properties**. Under **Customise** you will find an option to make icons large or small. You could also check under **Accessibility Options** in the **Control Panel** to see if any display features are in use.

I use my laptop for online banking both for myself and a local sports club. How can I install a password to restrict access?

You can set passwords by going to the **Start Menu > User Accounts**. Click on the **Advanced** tab. Under the **Secure Logon** section choose: 'Require users to press [CTRL] + [ALT] + [DELETE]'. The PC will then ask you for a user name and password each time your PC starts up.

I recently put two new batteries into the motherboard on my desktop computer, and although I have reset the time clock it is still way out. If the problem is not the batteries, what else can it be?

You need to reset the time in the Basic Input/Output System (BIOS) on your PC – not in Windows. The BIOS is located on a chip inside the computer and contains all the basic settings required to launch the PC, including the time clock. You can access the BIOS by pressing the [DELETE] key while your PC is booting up. The time settings are usually found under the first menu on screen, usually called 'Standard CMOS Features'. For more information go to the links below:

http://www.andybrain.com/archive/mb/enter_bios.htm

<http://www.computerhope.com/help/phoenixa.htm>

Without warning the taskbar has jumped from the bottom of my screen to a new position on the right hand side. This has reduced the screen size by a couple of inches. How can I get it back to its original position?

Left click on the taskbar, hold down the left mouse button, and then drag it to the bottom of the screen and release.

Whenever I log on in Windows Vista a magnified box pops up on the screen. How can I get rid of it?

Click on the **Start** button. Go to **All Programs**, then **Accessories**, then **Ease of Access Centre**. Then click on **Make the computer easier to use** near the bottom. Then **UNCHECK Turn On Magnifier**. Hit **OK** and you're done.

My PC refuses to turn itself off completely when I shut it down. Windows XP appears to close, but then I have to press the power button to switch off the computer. Am I doing something wrong?

Go to **Start Menu > Performance and Maintenance**, and then **Power Options**. Click the **APM** tab. Check to select the **Enable Advanced Power Management Support** check box and then click **OK**.

After Adobe reader updated today it left the Adobe home page on screen. I clicked on Recent Documents and found two redundant files. I cannot find a way to delete these. Can you help please?

Right click on the **Start** button and select **Properties** to bring up your Taskbar and Start Bar Properties. Click on the **Customise** button, followed by the **Advanced** tab. You will see a **Clear List** button. Click it to clear the list of documents. Recent Documents is not a list of actual documents, just a placeholder that allows you to return to them easily.

When I terminate a process in Task Manager a warning appears that dire things could happen to my computer. If it goes wrong, can I restore?

Yes. This warning appears all the time. Nothing will be harmed.

I am running Windows ME and want to use Skype but my computer isn't compatible. I would like to upgrade, but I am worried if I do that I could lose all the files that are on my current computer.

You can upgrade in two ways. Either buy a new machine with Windows XP or Windows Vista installed or use software to upgrade your current machine. If you buy a new computer this will almost certainly be faster than your old one and will have a longer life. However, you will need to copy all the files and software from one machine to the other. Alternatively, use a Windows XP upgrade disk to enhance your old machine. These cost around £50. Upgrading this way means all your old files and settings will be preserved, but because XP uses more system power your old machine may struggle to cope.

Every time I use my computer an annoying pop-up message appears warning me that KBD.EXE has "encountered a problem and needs to close". It seems to have no impact on what I'm doing and I simply click it off. However, is there any way I can prevent it appearing?

KBD.EXE is a program which runs multimedia keys on a standard keyboard. Most people never need to use them, so if you want to disable the message click the **Start Menu**, then click **Run ...** and type "msconfig". Press [RETURN] and you will see 'system configuration utility' come up. Click the **Startup** tab and you will probably see KBD.EXE in the list of items. Remove the checkbox from the left hand side of the item and click **OK**.

I have accidentally removed the calculator from the Windows Vista gadgets sidebar - how do I put it back please?

Press the **+** sign on the gadget bar and select the **Calculator** from the list. This will also work for any gadget you wish to add.

The Taskbar and Start Button have disappeared from the bottom of my screen and been replaced by a blue bar down the right hand side with the Microsoft logo at the top. How do I get it back?

Click on the blue bar, drag it to the bottom again and release your mouse.

How can I persuade Windows XP that I want all new windows to be full screen, so that I don't have to keep maximising the window?

There is a free application which will make all new windows maximised at <http://www.southbaypc.com/AutoSizer/>

I have recently upgraded from Windows XP Home Edition to Windows 7 Home Premium. When I switch on the PC, the Windows Boot Manager appears with options to either run an earlier version of Windows, run Windows 7, or start the Recovery Console. The option to start Windows 7 is already highlighted with a 25-second or so "countdown" before Windows 7 starts. How can I have the computer boot straight into Windows 7?

Boot into Windows 7 and then go to the **Start** button at the bottom left and right click on **Computer**. Select **Properties**. Then click **Advanced system settings** in the top left and answer **Continue** if prompted. Under the 'Startup and Recovery' section click the **Settings** button. Under 'System Startup' click **Windows 7** as the default operating system and uncheck the option **Time to display list of operating systems**. Click **OK** until you are back to the Control Panel. Now when you start the computer, Windows 7 will open automatically.

I have to double-click everything to get it going. Is it possible to use just one click?

Yes. Go into any folder Window and click **Tools > Folder Options**. At the bottom you will find two radio buttons: Single-click to open an item (point to select) Double-click to open an item (single-click to select). Select the first one. Then click **OK**.

Can you tell me how to open Window Media Video files from emails? A computer message tells me I do not have 'file association'.

The easiest way is probably to save one of the WMV files to the desktop. Then go to its icon, right click it and select **Open With**. Click **Choose program** and select **Windows Media Player** from the list. Check the box **Always use the selected program to open this kind of file** and then click **OK**.

System Restore has stopped working correctly on my PC rendering it useless. How can I get back the functionality?

To turn system restore back on, right click **My Computer** and click the **System Restore** tab. Is 'Turn off system restore on all drives' checked? If so, uncheck it. Then click **OK**. Then try going into the **Start Menu**, and click **Run ...** Then type "services.msc" and then click **OK**. Find 'System Restore' in

the list and check its status. It should be set to 'automatic', but you can change this by right clicking on **Properties**.

I keep getting pop-ups for Windows Live Messenger whenever I turn on my computer. How can I block them?

You should be able to uninstall from the Control Panel. Go to **Start Menu > Control Panel > Programs and Features**. You should find it at the bottom under Windows Live.

Whenever I close my computer down a Microsoft update (KB976569) is installed. How can I stop this happening?

You could try downloading the .NET framework 2.0 service pack 2 and installing it yourself – that is what the auto update program is trying to do.

I would like to remove some icons on my task bar permanently as I don't need these programmes to run constantly. I can get some to vanish when I boot up but others don't have an exit facility.

Note the name of each icon that you exit manually. Then look in the **Add/Remove Programs in Control Panel** to see if you can find a related program. If you are certain you won't want to use it again, remove it. You could also use the MSconfig program (**Start Menu >** type in "MSconfig" and click **Startup** tab) to trim down some of the stuff that runs at startup.

I have reinstalled Windows XP on my seven-year-old desktop PC because it was running slow. The install worked relatively OK but everything is 'large'. I have tried to change the screen resolution but the system repeatedly 'refuses'.

Everything is large because Windows is running using the basic graphics drivers, which is also why you can't change the resolution. You need to install the correct drivers for your graphics device, either from the supplemental CD you got with the computer or from the internet.

I have purchased a tower set-up by HP running Vista. When booted up it takes several minutes to load HP advisor before I can do anything. As this is of no use to me whatever, and I always cancel it as soon as it has loaded, can I delete it to speed things up?

Use the MSConfig utility to disable the HP advisor. To run MSConfig on Windows XP: Go to the **Start Menu**, click **Run...** and type "msconfig" (**NOT** misconfig) and press [ENTER]. The MSConfig window pops on screen. On Windows Vista or Windows 7, to run MSConfig go to the **Start Menu**, and in the search field at the bottom left, type "msconfig" and press [ENTER]. The MSConfig window pops on the screen. You may be asked for permission to continue as it launches. Answer affirmatively. Click the **Startup** tab and you will see a list of applications that run when the computer starts. Look for 'HP Advisor' and uncheck it.

The sound on my computer has gone. I have tried everything I can to restore it with no luck. I can get into quick cam and reach friends but all I get on my speakers is a pulsating sound.

Give system restore a try. Go to **Start Menu > All programs > Accessories > System Tools > System Restore**. Restore to a date before you had the problem of no sound and bingo, you should be sorted.

I have lost the Disk Cleanup icon from my desktop.

You can recreate the shortcut on your desktop by right clicking a blank part of the desktop and click **New > Shortcut**. In the 'location' of the shortcut type 'cleanmgr' and then click **Next**. Give it a name and there you have it.

My daughter runs a local council care home and has acquired a PC for the use of the elderly residents there. However, she is finding it impossible to set up the number of individual user accounts she needs because the 15 inch screen will only display a handful of user icons at any one time. Is it possible to add more?

Yes. Hold down the [CTRL] + [ALT] keys together and type "DEL" twice in succession. This will open the classic logon box which will allow you to type in each username and password. More details at <http://bit.ly/6jAvlf>. You'll need an administrator account to make the change.

My recycle bin icon has vanished from my desktop, and I am unable to trace where it has gone. Can I restore it?

To get the recycle bin icon back, go to **Start Menu > Control Panel > Personalization**. On the left there will be list of options. Choose **Change Desktop**. A pop up box will then appear. Check the **Recycle Bin** box.

Every time I start up my computer the screen is blitzed with pop ups. Is there any way to stop them, and stop other programs starting up when I don't want them to?

Yes. Go to: **Start Menu > Search Bar > type "run" >** and type "msconfig" into the run box. This will load up a pop up box. In the **Startup** tab there will be a list of programs that start when you load up the computer. Select the one that describes the annoying pop up you are getting and remove the tick. Be careful not to uncheck anything you're unsure about though.

Windows struggles to open and, if it does, it fails again the next time I boot up. What's the answer please?

This error usually means some files on the hard disk have become corrupted. Go to: **Start Menu > My Computer**. Right click on **local disk C**, then go to **Properties**. Select the **Tools** tab and choose **Defragmentation** from the options. You will need to analyse the disk and do a defrag on it. When this is complete do an error check. This might say that you have to restart your PC. If you have more than one hard disk you will have to do a defrag and error check on them all. Another problem could be that your computer is over-loaded. You can find out by checking the task manager (follow the process above). Open the **Performance** tab. This will tell you what resources are being used and how much is still available.

Why does my cursor keep sticking? It usually happens at the top of a webpage. I have to pull the plug and start again, often several times during one session.

Your computer is probably freezing because it has run out of resources. You can find out what programmes are affected by pressing [ALT]+[CTRL]+[DELETE] keys on your keyboard. This will open a different screen. Choose **Task Manager** and it will tell you what programme has stopped

responding and give you the option of closing it down (though remember, ending a program will make you lose any work that isn't saved).

When I press the [@] key it responds with double quote marks. Some of the other keys also produce unexpected symbols.

Your keyboard is using an American setup. Go to: **Start Menu > Control Panel**. Choose **View by large icons** and select **Region and Language**. Switch the setting from USA to UK.

Since a few days, 'Windows Update' on my Toshiba Laptop using Windows Vista Home premium OS does not Check for Updates. Previously it used do that automatically. Now if I click on 'Check for Updates' a message says: "Windows Update cannot currently check for updates, because the service is not running. You may need to restart your computer." Following that I have restarted the laptop several times, but the same message comes up. The laptop is otherwise working OK.

Try this. Go to the **Start Menu > All Programs > Accessories > Run**. In the Run box type "services.msc". From here you will get a list of all the services your PC runs. If you scroll down to Windows Update (It will be in alphabetical order) right click on it and select **Start**; this should resolve the problem with the updates.

My System Mechanic software is telling me that: 1. Your computer has one unnecessary startup item which they suggest may be eliminated, and 2. Your computer has 56 potentially unwanted startup programs which they suggest may be turned off. Both of these actions, they say, will increase the speed of start-up and improve system performance. Can you advise me please?

Often these 'system diagnostic' tools are incorrect and spam the user with messages that do not require any actions. Please ensure the tool you are using is from a trustworthy source, and information is correct, otherwise remove the tool from your computer. However if you do want to change the programs that start automatically on startup, then please follow these steps: Click on the **Start Menu**, Click **Run** located on the right hand side of the **Start Menu**. If you're using Windows 7 or Vista, search for **Run** at the bottom of the **Start Menu**. In the box, type "msconfig" (without the quotation marks) and hit **OK/Enter**. A new window will appear. Click on the **Startup** tab. Un-tick any programs that you do not want to load automatically on startup. Leave anything Microsoft ticked.

What is your opinion of programs that can be downloaded that claim to be able to diagnose and fix faults that may be slowing computers? I am on Windows 7 with a one-year-old computer and am often told that I have a number of bugs slowing the computer down. Do you know of a safe program that can speed up a slow computer?

Normally the programs that claim to be able to speed up your computer actually end up slowing it down, or doing damage to your computer. The best thing to do would be to run a scan of your computer using your anti-virus software. Secondly, if you don't already have it, could you please download Malwarebytes Antimalware, and run a scan. It can be downloaded from: <http://tinyurl.com/>. This piece of software will look for any unwanted files on your computer and remove them. An immediate way to increase the speed of your computer is to do the following: Go to **Start Menu > All Programs > Accessories > System Tools**. In system tools there is **Disk defragmenter**. If you click this a new window will appear, click on the **C:/** drive to highlight it and select **Defragment disk**. This will clear up some room and hopefully increase the speed. Please remove any unused or unnecessary programs, by going to the **Start Menu > Control Panel** and

selecting **Add/Remove programs** or **Programs and features**. Click on a program you wish to change and click **Change/Uninstall**.

I have a Microsoft Windows XP Home Edition computer, nearly five years old. I get sound playing CDs, but just recently have not been able to get any sound when playing a video on YouTube. I have opened the volume control on the icon on the bottom bar, and they are all set on maximum volume. Any idea what else I can do?

Have you ensured the volume is on and tuned up on the YouTube video player? You can find the speaker icon at the bottom left corner of the video player. Ensure the slider is all the way to the right hand side. If that does not work please try downloading the latest version of Flash player from the website below: <http://www.adobe.com/>. If that still does not work, please try the following:

- Visit the Adobe Flash Global Storage Settings Panel.
- The Adobe Flash Player Settings Manager should display.
- Check the box labelled: **Allow third-party Flash content to store data on your computer**.

I have purchased a new a computer with Windows 8 Software. I have not been able to get my existing Epson series printer connected. It has been suggested Windows 8 does not have the driver required. Is there a solution to this, apart from buying a new printer?

We found the same problem after upgrading to Windows 8. We tried installing the drivers for Windows 7 and this has worked fine so far. Try installing those and see. Because Windows 8 has only just come out, it takes time for drivers to come out for the newest operating system. Some companies lag behind others in releasing newer, fully certified drivers and software.

I am hoping that you may be able to offer me advice on defragging the 'System'. I use a HP Tower PC approximately five years old using the Windows 7 operating system. The Defragging operation appears to cover the C/ and D/ drives plus the System. I have no problem with the C/ drive and don't need to do anything about the D/ drive. Although the System is analysed as 26% fragmented, it does not respond to the command. The only response is a very brief (2 seconds) period in which rapidly changing % values appear, then nothing. In fact this has been the situation throughout the life of the unit. Although slow in booting up, the PC appears to behave normally otherwise. May I ask if you can offer an explanation, a way of overcoming the apparent defect or does it matter at all?

Usually whatever result you achieve after one process of defragmentation is the best you are going to get. I wouldn't spend hours chasing that last 26%, but it is okay to run a process regularly – say once a month. Defragmenting consolidates file fragments like organising a bookcase makes the books (files) easier to find. However, modern operating systems often run automatic defragmenting on a schedule, and it's rapidly becoming a necessity of the past since solid state drives don't have sequential read access, so the file fragments can be accessed just as quickly by the drive as if they were 'tidied up'. As well as defragging, you can try a program called CCleaner which will clear up any old and redundant files to help free up space and make your computer run slightly faster I will leave a link below for you to try:

<https://www.piriform.com/ccleaner/download>

The installer may ask you to install supplemental software, like a browser toolbar. Watch out for this during install and uncheck to clear any additional options you don't want.

I have been using Windows since the year dot, no real problems. For the past year I keep receiving a message telling me I am not using genuine Windows and inviting me to log on to this so called

genuine Windows. My Grandchildren all say “don’t do it granddad” but are unable to stop this invitation. I am only on my PC for about an hour a day but the invitation can pop up two to three times a session. Please advise as to how I can rid myself of this nuisance.

1. Open Control Panel from the Start Menu.
 2. Click on System & Security.
 3. Click on Windows Update.
 4. Click on View Installed updates.
 5. Now, look for KB971033 update. Right click on it. Click on Uninstall.
 7. It will show a popup. Simply, click on Yes.
- Restart your computer and the pop up should be gone.

On Windows 7, I used to fill forms in and various options used to appear for me to select instead of retyping all details again. Since going to Windows 10 I have lost this. Could you tell me if and how I can get it back? I must add that I am not very computer literate!

I think what you are referring to is the auto-fill form option which appears in browsers such as Internet Explorer and Google Chrome. This feature may have been reset when you upgraded to Windows 10, but will likely come back into place after you have filled in one or two forms online.

I have a Windows XP desktop computer which is frequently not responding. I do not know if this is likely to be due to the age of the computer or the operating system? If the latter, I have a Windows 7 disk which I can put into the computer to convert to Windows 7, but do you know if this is likely to solve the problem? Thanks.

My advice is to run the registry clean in Ccleaner:

<http://www.piriform.com/ccleaner/download/standard> – you can also run a regular clean but please be aware of the boxes that are ticked and what will be removed. With the computer not responding, you may find that the ccleaner clean helps with this as it may just be that your PC is slowing up with a lot of temp files and old registry files. Is your PC old? Have you installed and uninstalled many programs? When uninstalling, it leaves behind temporary files and registry entries meaning your PC will slow a little. I would also run a scan with Malwarebytes – you may find that there is malware or viruses causing these issues: <https://www.malwarebytes.com/mwb-download/> Something to consider is that a PC still running XP is likely to be coming towards the end of its life.

Please can you advise me on what I should be doing when Windows Vista comes to an end in April 2017? I have already noticed my last updates from Microsoft were August this year and even when I try to get more recent updates none seem to be available. I run an Acer Aspire 5735Z with Intel Pentium dual core processor T4200 with 4GB DDR2. My laptop was purchased new in 2009 and is still in lovely condition. I only use it for web browsing and emails. I find during the latter few months it is running very slow even though I delete old info and run CCleaner.

When Vista support ends, you will no longer receive any updates – which normally include security and system updates. This means your laptop could be vulnerable online and will start to slow as you are using programs that are up to date but your laptop isn’t. As websites improve, they require the software you use to access them to be up to date, you will notice that over time it will feel like your laptop is getting slower. If you were only using the same programs OFFLINE then you wouldn’t notice any change unless your hardware started to fail – but as you use online

features you will certainly notice a difference over time – I can only advise you to upgrade to a newer operating system – and you may need a better laptop for that too, so speak to a local IT shop for advice on a new laptop if you do choose to upgrade.

I noticed last evening that the ‘Safely remove hardware’ icon is missing from my toolbar. I was removing a DVD at the time and had to risk doing it without going through the normal procedure. Search online would suggest that this was since the last Windows 10 upgrade. Lots of advice but reticent to do it without advice.

Do you have any external devices connected such as external hard drive or DVD players? If you have had these devices connected and then removed them this will be the reason that the ‘Safely remove hardware’ icon has disappeared. Your computer will remove this and then replace the icon as and when it’s necessary. If you plug in a device it should reappear. It’s also worth noting that ejecting a CD or DVD doesn’t require you to use safely remove. Hitting the eject button on the drive already tells the system to stop interacting with the disc.

Please help, I have lost the means to click onto links of any kind, also I am unable to use shortcuts from my task bar, but can use shortcuts on my internet explorer home page. This has suddenly happened out of the blue for no reason I can see, my computer is working all ok with all the other things I do with it.

Search for cmd in Start Menu. Right click on the first entry (Commando Prompt) and select **Run as administrator**. A black box will open, type in the following command: “sfc /scannow” Hit [ENTER] to run it. If the process finishes and it does not say “Windows Resource Protection did not find any integrity violations”, run the command again.

Windows 10

For those of you that don't already know, here are a few key differences that have changed since Windows 7 and 8.

The **Start Menu** is now a menu again, but still uses various Windows 8 features and designs like live tiles.

Microsoft Edge - it doesn’t replace internet Explorer (yet) but it soon will. This is a completely new browser that will become Microsoft’s flagship web platform product. You will find it pinned to the taskbar with the flat blue ‘e’ icon – not dissimilar to Internet Explorer with the gold stripe.

Apps no longer insist on running full screen – good news for the people using Windows on non-tablet devices, and are freely resizable like a normal window.

Cortana, Microsoft’s virtual assistant, usually activated by voice, is integrated into the operating system. Much like Apple’s Siri (which hasn't yet made it to their desktop operating system) it enables you to speak to the device and give it commands or ask it questions.

Aero snap has been improved - not only can you drag a window to the side of the screen, but drag it to a corner and it will only fill half of that side. An outline appears before you “drop” the window previewing what it will look like.

There’s still loads of time to get Windows 10 for free if you’ve been holding off – a whole year since its release last month – and if you don’t like it, you can revert back to your previous

Windows installation until the end of this month (August 2015). Here is a link that demonstrates how: <http://tinyurl.com/qzfmnm>.

In summary:

Open up Settings via the **Start Menu** or the taskbar icon.

Click **Update & Security** and then move to the **Recovery** section.

Under the 'Go back to Windows 7' or 'Go back to Windows 8.1' heading, click **Get started** and you'll be guided through the rest of the process.

Remember, this option will not be available to you if you have been using Windows 10 for more than a month, or if you have cleaned up the files related to your previous version of Windows.

I have just upgraded to Windows 10 and all seems OK so far, the only problem is that it's not compatible with iTunes, so I can't sync my iPad. Any idea when Microsoft might get this problem sorted?

The latest version of iTunes is now available and works OK with Windows 10. Check the link below for instructions on how to update. <https://support.apple.com/en-gb/HT201352>. The first time you sync after upgrading to Windows 10, you may need to type in your Apple ID and password to authenticate with Apple servers, as the system is treated like a new computer.

Will I be able to use my POP email account when I download Windows 10?

Yes you will, but you may need to remember your login credentials (ie, email address and password).

Hi, Microsoft seem to be keen that you use a Microsoft account, can I use my btinternet.com account to send and receive emails on Windows 10.

Yes, you can. Microsoft like you to use a Microsoft account to sign in, but even that isn't compulsory. You can use any email account on Windows that has POP or IMAP access.

Do you know if Windows 10 has Enhanced Protected Mode installed? If 'yes' how do I turn it on, please?

Enhanced Protected Mode is a feature of Internet Explorer and is available in Windows 10. To enable enhanced protection mode follow these steps: Start-up Internet Explorer, click on the **Tools** icon and then select **Internet Options** and a window will appear. Within this window select the **Advanced** Tab. In this tab there is an **Enhanced Protected Mode** option near the bottom which can be checked or unchecked. Ensure this is checked, and click **OK**.

Please could you advise? I have an update of WINDOWS 10 VERSION 1670 which is continually requesting to UPDATE even though I have! Every time the computer is "asleep" or "off", the wording is "installing update."

You can try the following steps – you have a stuck update on Windows 10 and the following should fix it:

Delete Windows Update Cache and Try Again

If waiting really isn't working, and the process has indeed stalled or failed without telling you, then you can try deleting the Windows Update cache before letting Windows try the update again. To do this:

Step 1: First and foremost, restart the Windows 10 machine in question.

Step 2: From the Start Menu Search, search for "cmd". Right-click on the result and click on **Run as Administrator**. When the system asks, confirm the request.

Step 3: In the presented Command Prompt window, type "net stop bits" and then press [ENTER]. The interface will then inform that BITS, or Background Intelligent Transfer Service, has now stopped working or has yet to start.

Step 4: Next, in the Command Prompt, type "net stop wuauserv" and press the [ENTER] key. Once again, the interface will inform that WUAUSERV (Windows Update) has been stopped or has yet to start.

Step 5: Close the Command Prompt window.

Step 6: Now go to C:\Windows\ and make a copy of the SoftwareDistribution folder. Paste this to your Desktop for safekeeping in case anything goes wrong.

Step 7: Navigate into C:\Windows\SoftwareDistribution\ and delete everything inside of that folder. Make sure that you do not delete the folder itself, leaving it as a valid directory, but ensure that all of its contents are removed.

Step 8: Now restart the machine once again, and run Windows Update when it reboots. The process now has the potential to re-download everything that had been queued up, and hopefully complete the process as intended this time around.

Since I upgraded my laptop to Windows 10, I can't print any documents on my HP Colour Laser Jet 2600n. Please help.

When updating operating systems – in your case to Windows 10 – it is sometimes necessary to reinstall printers and other devices like it. Before doing this, try downloading and installing the software from the manufacturer's website. Try to avoid anything other than the manufacturer's website for drivers as you can't always trust the source. Hopefully, this will fix any issues between your printer and Windows 10. If that doesn't work, I'm afraid the next step is a clean install. Try uninstalling the device completely and re-install it to your PC as if you had just purchased it. Instructions can be found in the printer documents or through a quick Google search.

Now I have Windows 10 and confess that, so far, though it is early days, it seems little different to Windows 7. Apart from the problem that I can find no way of turning my computer off. I found a suggestion that I could simply shut the laptop, but the light on the front remains on for a good few hours and is only off when I return to the device the following morning. On Windows 7 there was a "shut down" that I could click on to but I can find no equivalent now.

The shutdown option for Windows 10 is slightly hidden. You can reveal it by right clicking on the Start button. A menu will appear and it will be the second option from the bottom.

Start Menu won't open in Windows 10

A problem I am starting to hear about more often as Windows 10 is widely adopted is that the Start Menu sometimes refuses to open. A new problem that has generally not presented itself in previous versions of Windows, this incredibly annoying problem is fairly easy to fix. Word is, it's caused by a corrupted Windows App which causes the menu to not display properly (or rather, at all). One way to fix this is to create a new user profile, but that's perhaps a bit extreme when

there's an easier solution: Right click on the Start button (this should still work!) Here you'll see a long list of options, one of which is Command Prompt (Admin). Select this and you'll see the terminal window appear. Type the word "powershell", press [ENTER] and then copy and paste in the following command:

```
Get-AppXPackage -AllUsers | Foreach {Add-AppxPackage -DisableDevelopmentMode -Register "$($_.InstallLocation)\AppXManifest.xml"}
```

Hit [RETURN], let it run (ignore errors) and, once done, close the window. The Start button should now work!

Help. Since the last update from Microsoft I installed on Windows 10, my screen has been black with my icons flashing on and off. None will open. I use Microsoft outlook. Is there a solution please?

It sounds like a graphics issue or some other type of visual issue.

1. Check all wiring to your monitor then to the PC
2. Check Windows updates (search at bottom left Check for updates)
3. Check device manager, expand display adapters then right click and update your graphics card driver. This process can be used on all devices within device manager. You should check for updates in other devices such as Computer – Display Adapters – imaging devices – Monitors – and anything else that could relate to this issue.

Word Processor

How can I get rid of the annoying animated paperclip that pops up each time I write a letter in Microsoft Word? It's driving me nuts.

Right-click on the paperclip symbol, go to Options and untick the box that says Use Office Assistant.

Before I retired from BT in 1990 I worked on a highnet system using Wordstar software, which had a very useful facility for highlighting in column mode. Is it possible to do this with Word 2000?

Yes. Highlight a column of text while holding down the [ALT] key. You can then cut, copy, paste or manipulate the highlighted text however you wish.

What's the quickest way of switching from single to double line spacing when composing a document?

Hold the [CTRL] key on your keyboard, and then press 2 to use double line spacing, or 1 to go back to single line spacing.

If I type the date in Word - for example, December 1 2008 – the computer immediately pops up with 2008-12-01. Is it possible to stop it doing this?

Go to the File Menu, and click on Insert and Date and Time. Select the date and time format that you want to use and click the Default button, also check that the Update automatically box is ticked.

When I start up either Word 2003 or Excel 2003 they open a blank document for me which I hardly ever need. Can I skip this function?

You can create a shortcut straight to Microsoft word by right clicking the desktop, selecting 'New' -> 'Shortcut'. Type in the location box:

"C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\OFFICE11\winword.exe /n"

I'm writing a book. So far I've completed 17,248 words (or 22 pages of A4) and I worry the computer will crash before I am finished. It says I have 58.1 gigabytes of capacity unused. Will this be enough for a full-length novel?

Yes, with space to spare. Word documents take up far less space than other files like photos and videos.

When I try to open some attachments sent with emails, I get a message saying: "This file does not have a program associated with it for performing this action. Create an association in the folder options control panel."

This is a common problem for people who do not have Microsoft Word when they are sent .doc files. The message means the file you are trying to open is of a type that your computer does not recognise. If you want to open them you will have to install Word or similar.

I need to get access to what I always referred to on my ancient computer as 'Documents' so that I can type and print letters. I was able to do this for some time on my lap top but now I keep getting the request for 'Product Key' and am at a loss to understand this.

This sounds very much to me like you are running a version of Microsoft Word which has not been activated yet. Some new computers come with Microsoft Office suite installed free for 30 days but in order to keep using it you actually have to buy the program, and it's not cheap. There is a free Microsoft Word alternative called Abiword, which isn't as sophisticated as the full package but it will at least let you compose documents.

Having completed work in Word or Excel, I click on the 'Save' icon, top left, and a box appears inviting me to 'Save As' and asks me to enter a file name. This is all well and good. But then, when I make an alteration and click 'Save' again, there is no option to Save As, with the consequence that I lose the original file.

This is correct. You can create a new file by clicking **Save** or, if you want to give it a particular file name, **Save As**. Once you have done that, clicking **Save** will only overwrite the original file. If you want to create a second, amended, file you will need to click **Save As** on the **File Menu** and type in a different name.

I have just changed computers from one using Windows XP to one using Windows 7. I downloaded an important family file in MS Word from the old computer to the new one via a memory stick, but I cannot open it because the file is of 'type WDB'. In trying to solve the problem myself, I have downloaded something called 'my web search'.

Save the MS Word file to your desktop, right click on it and select **Properties**. Under the **General** tab there should be an option **Open with**. Click on this and set it to Microsoft Word. If you do not

have this program you can download Word Viewer which will allow you to read Word documents. 'My web search' is a form of malware. Go to **Start Menu > Control Panel > Programs and Features**. Find My web search, right click it and select **Uninstall**. You could also download an anti-malware at www.malwarebytes.org/

I have important information saved on Microsoft Word & Excel 2007 with Back Ups. My existing computer processor needs replacing. Will I be able to install Microsoft Word & Excel 2007 on my new Windows 7 PC when I get it or will I have to purchase the 2010 editions?

Office 2007 works fine on Windows 7 so you wouldn't need to install 2010.

I have considerable trouble using Microsoft Word. I cannot obtain the font size I want - it goes back to the smallest size. Also when I am about halfway through my letter it suddenly disappears and I can't get it back. Is there a less complicated site I can use, or is there a book or some kind of information I can get to stop me going mad?

If you have already typed what you want out, then highlight the whole of the text and select the required font. This should then change the font for you. There are a number of websites that you can visit to help you with basic Microsoft word: <http://tinyurl.com/be8x8> or <http://tinyurl.com/ck8c59r>. This website is particularly good as it gives you screen shots on how to do everything: <http://tinyurl.com/d5thss5>.

My computer is a Dell Vostro laptop purchased about 5 years ago, and I'm running Windows 7. In 2013 I was advised to purchase Office Home & Student, and until about March/April this year everything worked fine until I suddenly experienced every time I tried to open a document I get a message: "Microsoft has stopped working." This also applies to Excel. I've tried everything within my limited knowledge of computers to try and correct the problem without success including trying to contact Microsoft support, can you help please.

You could try running a Repair on Office. Go to **Start Menu > Control Panel > Add/Remove Programs or Uninstall a Program**. Find Office Home and Student and Right Click. Depending on the version, it will either say **Change** or **Run Repair**. Select Change if you see that; once that appears you will see a small window appear asking what to do. Select **Repair** and then click **Next**. On newer versions of Office such as 2013, you have Quick Repair and Online Repair. Select **Quick Repair** as this generally fixes most problems. If it doesn't, do the process again and select **Online Repair**. This is essentially a full download and reinstall of the software, so you need your registration information handy. This is usually in the form of a product key or email address you used when originally signing up.

I purchased my laptop in 2010. It had office student on it as a free trial which I have never used. I loaded standard Excel and Word 2003 which I had for my old computer. It has worked well till recently and has now the following problem. When I click on any of the created files on 2003 format it opens on 2007 format and asks for a product key. As I do not want to use 2007 format I do not have a product key. When I say I do not have one and want to continue it opens up as 'see' only and I can do nothing with it. As I only want to use my office Excel and Word 2003 how do I overcome the problem?

You can uninstall the Office package you don't want. You would go to **Start Menu > Control Panel > Programs/Uninstall program > find Office**, click and **Uninstall**. Another easier method to get

around this is to right click the file you wish to open, click **Open with** and here you choose what program to open it with – i.e. Word 2003. You should select the default program for these files to what you want and this will fix your issues.

Since uninstalling Office 365, on startup, I am getting the message: “Failed to connect to a Windows service.” I have successfully downloaded Libre Office.

I would suggest to try the following: Search for ‘cmd’ in the **Start Menu** and right-click on it and select **Run as administrator**. Type in “netsh” and hit [ENTER]. Type in “winsock reset” and hit [ENTER]. Restart your computer afterwards. If that doesn’t help, next time the message appears click on the speech bubble in the bottom right corner. Have a look if that provides more information to the actual problem.

Email

Some of the most frequent questions readers ask me involve the sending of emails that include attachments. The most common problem is people trying to email too much data at one time. In general it is not a good idea to send any email that includes more than five megabytes (5Mb) of attachments. Some, free, mail providers block emails over that size and most block them if they are bigger than 10–15Mb in size. None will allow you to send more than 20Mb per email.

To get around this, you can send document files in small blocks, or reduce the size of photographs. (A quick Google search on ‘reduce photograph size’ will yield plenty of information on this). You can also try adding the files/photographs to a compressed folder.

Because email systems are different, the process of attaching files can vary from one provider to another. However, most use a paper-clip icon for attachments. Clicking on it opens a screen where you can navigate through your computer’s file system, find the photo or document you want to send, and drop it onto the email.

This is true whether you use a browser to access your email (webmail such as Yahoo, Hotmail, Gmail or Tiscali, etc) or a program on your computer (Windows Mail, Outlook Express, Apple Mail, etc).

I have got an email that is stuck in my Inbox, I cannot see the content or delete it. I have got another email stuck in my Outbox which will not budge however many times I try to send it. I cannot see the content of this either, or delete it. It is preventing me from sending any outgoing mails. What can I do?

Go to the **File Menu** in your mail program and click on **Work Offline** to put a tick beside it. Then do a right click on the messages that are stuck and click **Delete**.

I use Outlook Express for my email as do a lot of my friends. However my Inbox fits into the top ¼ of my screen whereas theirs fills almost the whole screen. Is it possible to reset my Inbox to do this?

When you are in Outlook Express, if you go to **View**, click on **Layout** and it gives you various options. Try out the various tick boxes until you achieve the desired effect.

Due to difficulties with emails I called the Orange Helpline, who sorted the problem but told me to change the contact number that is dialled by my computer to access the internet and Outlook Express. It’s easy to do, they said. But how?

Go to **Start Menu > Control Panel > Network Connections**. Opening the dial-up connection and clicking on the **Properties** button will reveal the phone number you need to change.

Why can't I send pictures in Outlook Express?

Go to **Tools > Options > Send** and then click on the HTML Settings Buttons. Make sure the **Send Pictures With Messages** box is ticked.

The Outlook Express icon has disappeared from my desktop. Can I get it back?

Re-create the icon by going to **Start** and **Run**. In the Run box type "C:\Program Files\Outlook Express" and click **OK**. Right click on the file 'msimn.exe' and select **Create shortcut**. Drag this shortcut onto your desktop.

In the Sept/Oct issue you explained how to save a contacts list on Windows Hotmail to put onto a disc. Can you tell me how to do the same for BT Yahoo! Mail?

If you are using the regular Yahoo Mail, follow these instructions:
Select **Options/Mail Options** from the Yahoo! **Mail Menu**. Go to the **Contact options** category. Select **Import/export** under **Management** Look for Yahoo! CSV under **Export** and click **Export now**. When asked what to do with the file download, click **Save**. Choose where you'd like to save the copy of your Yahoo Mail address book on your computer.

Is it safe to read my emails which I download on Hotmail without the email scanner active?

Hotmail is a web-based service and it never downloads emails onto your computer anyway, so having an e-mail scanner really makes no difference at all. In any case, Microsoft's servers that run Hotmail automatically scan every email for viruses.

Can I save my contacts list on Windows Hotmail so I can put it onto a disk?

There are a variety of opinions available to export an address book from Hotmail depending upon which software you are using. Try the links below:

<http://email.about.com/od/hotmailtips/qt/et072804.htm>

<http://support.microsoft.com/kb/883771>

http://ask-leo.com/how_do_i_transfer_Hotmail_contacts_to_another_account.html

When I log on to my mail box – I use BT Broadband – an advert pops up on the screen. I can delete it, but every time I look at a new message it pops up again. Is there any way I can get rid of it permanently?

It sounds as if you are using a sponsored email service. The advertising tie-up is part of the deal that enables customers to use it without charge.

I want to send identical emails to fellow members of a club I belong to. How do I do it without rewriting the message each time?

Write your message and use the carbon copy function (CC) in the address window to add as many addresses as you like. If you want to keep individual addresses private use the blind carbon copy function (BCC).

Several times I have tried to unsubscribe from an e-mail newsletter, but it refuses to give up. Is there any way I can kill it for good?

I suggest you add the offending address to your spam or blocked list. This will not stop it coming in, but it will be treated as 'junk' email so it shouldn't clutter up your inbox any more.

I have been told by an American friend that it is etiquette to delete unnecessary material from emails that I forward on. How is this possible?

The reason people don't do this is because text emails use up very little space on a hard drive, and keeping the back-history behind a communication is often helpful to both parties. However, if you want to mollify your American friend and delete parts of a mail, click and hold down the left mouse button and drag it over the unwanted text to highlight it, then click **Delete**. Alternatively, position the cursor and use either the [Backspace] or [Delete] keys.

Every time I use 'send email' to despatch photographs my system defaults to Microsoft Outlook.

This is because Outlook is set as your default mail program in Windows. To change this, go to **Start Menu > Control Panel > Internet Options**. Ensure Outlook Express is selected in the email drop-down box.

A friend has emailed pictures taken at a flower show, but every time I try to view them a box pops up on my desktop advertising Coral Photo Album 6 and warning me that my free trial has expired and that I must pay £15 for an 'unlocking key'.

You can register with Coral Photo Album if you wish. But to see your friend's email for free, change the 'file association' so that they open in Windows Image Viewer instead. Do this by first downloading the images to your desktop. Right click on one of them and go to **Open With** and then **Choose Program**. Select **Windows Picture and Fax Viewer**. At the bottom of the dialogue box select **Always use the selected program to open this kind of file**. Finally, click **OK**.

I have been using AVG Antivirus for some time now but recently it has started flagging up the message: "E-mail scanner not active UPDATE NOW". I've tried downloading AVG Antivirus again without success. How can I activate the E-mail scanner?

You can activate the E-mail scanner in the AVG Control Centre. Inactive objects will be highlighted. However, you only need the E-mail scanner if you download your email to an E-mail client on your PC such as Outlook Express, Outlook, Incredimail or Thunderbird. If you read your mail online, using an Internet Browser, you do not need to worry about the AVG Email scanner.

How can I use a picture from an email I have been sent, as a desktop?

Save the picture to your computer. Then right click on it and select **Use as desktop wallpaper**.

Emailed photos occasionally fail to appear, instead displaying an outline and small box in the corner with a red cross in it.

This may be because Outlook Express is blocking the picture content inside the message because it has decided the sender is 'suspect'. There is usually an option somewhere inside the email window that will allow you to 'trust' the sender to see the full message.

How can I delete unwanted emails?

Put them into the 'deleted items' box, right click on the deleted items icon and select **Empty deleted items folder**. Click OK.

My email account appears to have been taken over and is being used to send out spam. How do I stop this?

The easiest and most effective thing to do is change the password. It's also a good idea to run an antivirus scan on your computer, in case of a virus or spyware that compromised your account.

I would prefer to save email attachments in a location/directory of my choosing. Is there a way to change the destination of saved attachments?

When opening an attachment, select the **Save** option and navigate to the desktop, (or wherever you wish to save the file) then click **Save**.

In Outlook Express, I have inadvertently clicked off the Contacts pane in the bottom left hand corner of the screen. What must I do to retrieve it?

Select **View > Layout**. Then make sure **Contacts** is enabled. Click **OK**.

My PC works on Vista and I use Windows mail for my mailing. Recently, having sent a message, it remained in the outbox and failed to be sent. I have tried deleting it and re-sending it but all that happens is that a dialogue box appears stating "An unknown error has occurred". I have tried changing to Windows Live Mail and re-installing Explorer with no effect. Each time that I open Windows Mail it shows the message still in the Outbox.

In the **File Menu** for Windows Mail, click **Work Offline**. Then try deleting the mail in the Outbox folder. It should be deleted straight away to the deleted items folder. Now go back to the **File Menu** and hit **Work Offline** to bring Windows Mail back online once again.

I am experiencing a problem with Windows Live Mail. I can read any email that arrives by clicking on it in the usual way, but if I then open a new email the previous message vanishes and I am unable to find it again. Can you shed any light on what might be happening?

It sounds to me as if you have a filter on Live Mail which automatically hides emails after a pre-determined time, allowing you to select and read them in the preview plane but hiding them after a few seconds even if you have not fully opened them. Try going to **View > Current View > Show All Messages**. That should bring them back.

I seem to have picked up a virus that is sending emails to everyone in my address book. The emails lead to a link which is presumably malicious. How can I get rid of it?

Change your email password and run a full system scan with Malwarebytes. It will also sort out other problems. Find out more at www.malwarebytes.org

To access my Gmail account I have to enter my user name and password every time – how can I have it remember my credentials for automatic login?

Click the box just below the login credentials boxes to 'stay signed in', and then log in with your credentials. This principle also works with wording to this effect with other similar email accounts such as Yahoo or Hotmail.

Until recently an envelope icon would appear in Systray to indicate that new mail had arrived in Outlook Express 6. This no longer happens. Can you please advise if I can restore this facility?

Go to **Start Menu > Control Panel > Add/Remove Programs > Add/Remove Windows Components**. If OE is not checked here, tick it and then **OK** your way back out. Restart your computer. The envelope icon should reappear when mail arrives.

When clicking on a link on Outlook Express emails nothing happens. I am reluctant to reset Internet Explorer (7) because I fear I might lose Internet Explorer altogether. When the computer crashed recently the repair engineer installed a new disk and I've since been unable to restore original programs.

Resetting Internet Explorer will not cause you to lose it. However, it may not entirely fix the problem with links being 'unclickable' in Outlook Express. The recommended fix is to re-register a DLL file. You can find out how to do this at <http://www.5starsupport.com/oe-faq/1-18.htm>.

I use Outlook Express and I have lost access to the contacts list at the bottom left of the application. How can I get it back?

If you go to the **View Menu**, and click on **Layout**, you will be presented with a dialogue box with some tickboxes in them. Put a tick mark in the **Contacts** view and click **OK**.

I intend to give my old laptop to my grandson. How do I stop him receiving emails that are intended for me?

You will have to remove your email account from the laptop. Depending on the program you use to read your emails, this can vary. Most people use Outlook or Outlook Express, and this can be done through the **Tools > (Email) Accounts or Account Settings**. Select the account that relates to your email settings and click **Remove**.

I am unable to activate web links embedded in the text of emails. Sometimes it is possible to copy the link and paste it into my browser, but often it doesn't show an actual address, just 'Click here' or some such.

The system function that deals with links has lost its association. To re-establish it, exit all programs and go to Start, Run and then type "regsvr32 urlmon.dll" and press the **OK** button. If you receive a message: "DllRegisterServer in urlmon.dll succeeded" click **OK**. This indicates your problem is solved. If this doesn't work, continue the above procedure with either of the options below, hitting **OK** after each one:
regsvr32 Shdocvw.dll

regsvr32 Msjava.dll
regsvr32 Actxprxy.dll
regsvr32 Oleaut32.dll
regsvr32 Mshtml.dll
regsvr32 Browseui.dll
regsvr32 Shell32.dll

My daughter sends me emails which I receive ok. However, she does not receive any emails I send to her, also I do not get any advice that my emails to her have not been delivered. Appreciate your advice.

Do you know if your daughter receives emails from anyone else? If she hasn't been receiving emails at all then she will have to contact her internet service provider and find out what's wrong. If she still does receive emails from other people then I suggest that she makes sure she has added you as a contact, in case any of your emails are making their way to the junk email folder by mistake.

When I open my email inbox I get a message: "High Memory Usage by Internet Explorer. Details 126 MB."

Go to **Tools > Internet Options > Delete** under the **General** tab. In **Browsing history** make sure the first four boxes are ticked before clicking **Delete**. Then go back to **Tools>Internet>Options** and under the **Advanced** tab click **Reset**. Close and then reopen your browser.

When I receive an email in my Gmail (Google Mail) account, is there any way that I can forward it to another address?

Yes there is and it is simple to do. If you go into **Settings** in your G-mail account then go into the **Forwarding and POP/IMAP** tab. You will have the option to forward your emails to another email address.

My wife, on occasion, writes copious e-mails to a friend. She can take quite a long time to compose the message and very often, when she hits send, gets a display "02 cannot find the page you are looking for." The e-mail has also disappeared. As 02's Help Desk 'hasn't', can you tell me if a long delay before sending mails can cause this problem.

I think you might be spot on – a long delay on the 02 webmail page will cause a time out if you sit on the same page for too long. This is a security measure they have put in place. What I would suggest is copying the email before you hit the send button if you have been working on an email for a while; this way you will still have the email in case it gets lost.

I have a problem sending some e-mails. If I call up a website and there is an e-mail address I want to contact, which I click on, the Outlook Express window appears, anything sent doesn't go and stays in the sent box but all my usual e-mails go via BT Yahoo Mail. How can I stop outlook express coming up so that I go direct to BT? I have gone into Outlook Express options and get nowhere. I use Internet Explorer and have Windows XP.

The way to change a default email client in Windows XP is by going to the **Start Menu > Control Panel > Internet Options**. From here if you select the **Programs** tab, Under **E-mail** click the drop

down arrow and select the email client you use, which, in your case, would be Yahoo! Mail. But Yahoo! Mail won't show up on the drop down menu as you need to install the Yahoo mail toolbar for Internet Explorer which can be found here <http://uk.toolbar.yahoo.com> ie. when you go to install the toolbar make sure you select **Install the Yahoo! Mail Plug-in and make Yahoo! Mail my default mail provider**. Now when you click on email links Yahoo! Mail will be the default client.

Some of my 'friendly and known' contacts have sent email which have landed in my Spam section and consequently been missed by me. Is there any way to ensure these emails land correctly in the Inbox as per normal? My email account is with BT Yahoo mail.

If you click on the **spam folder** listed on the left hand side of the page, put a check beside the email and from here click **Not Spam**. This will then stop emails from this sender from ever being sent to the spam folder.

We are having trouble opening an email attachment. It is a photo sent to us from someone who originally scanned it to their computer and then forwarded it to us as an email plus attachment. We have BT Broadband, Windows XP and use Outlook Express. After clicking on the paperclip icon we got the following message: "This file does not have a program associated with it for performing this action. Create an association in the Folder options panel." We don't know how to do this, can you help?

Does it tell you what the file type is (what does the name end in, is it a .jpg?) Could you try saving the file first by right-clicking and select **Save**? Locate the file, right click on it and select **Open with Windows Photo Viewer**. To ensure files always open this way, right click on the image and click **Properties**. A new window will appear. Next to the option 'Opens with' click the **Change** button. Select **Windows Photo Viewer** from the list. Click **OK**.

A friend wished me happy birthday on my Facebook page. Neither of us have the other's email address, hence the Facebook contact. A few days later I received an email purportedly from this friend, which contained an attachment which was an advert. Since that time I received several emails from this friend - all with an attachment. I have only opened the first attachment, but none since, and I have blocked emails from this friend, which have all come from different sources, but all on yahoo.co.uk. My friend assures me he didn't send them, and going into properties confirmed they were not from him. We have both contacted our ISP who just tell us to block these emails, but as they come from different sources, they have to be done individually.

These spam emails are often created to pretend to be from a contact you know, increasing the chances of you opening them. There are several reasons why you may be receiving them, it's hard to pinpoint exactly why. As you are currently doing, keep marking them as spam. Whoever you use for your emails, yahoo for example, should have a spam filter that will hopefully start to catch these emails before they get to you. Run a scan of your anti-virus software on your computer and tell your friend to run a scan on his computer too. You could also try downloading Malwarebytes' Anti malware and running a scan on your computer. This piece of software will look for any spyware on your computer and remove it. You can download that here: <http://tinyurl.com/bo8t4>. Ultimately, you should ignore these emails, though, as they are spam.

Could you please tell me how to unsubscribe the spam emails I am receiving?

The easiest way to remove the spam emails is to block the sender. Just right click on the email and there should be an option to send to junk and block sender. Or, if you are using webmail, the toolbar at the top of the inbox usually has a **Mark as junk/spam** button.

Having purchased a high quality camera (36.3 megapixels) to submit large repro quality TIFF images to Photo libraries, I find that their size makes them impossible to send by email... I am limited to 25Mb per email. I have managed to reduce the image size using 'LZW' in Adobe but the pics are still much too large, so, A) is there any way of attaching/sending large TIFF tiles... or B) can I increase my email 'Mb allowance'?

You cannot increase your email restriction on size but the best method to get around this is by using one of the Cloud storage facilities such as Drop Box. They are free and very easy to use – you can also email links to your dropbox which makes it not so much different from sending them in an email as attachments. Depending on which Adobe program you use, you can also resize the image and create a copy of it within that. A jpg image with resolution 1920 pixels on the long side (HD) will be significantly smaller in size.

I use Windows Live Mail on my PC which runs Windows 10. It's easy to ADD contacts but I have as yet to find a way to delete contacts that I have changed. Is there a solution?

You should be able to delete contacts using the following steps.

- Open Windows Live mail
- Press [CTRL]+[3] on your keyboard
- Select the contacts you wish to delete
- Click **Delete** which is located on the ribbon bar
- Click **OK** and the contacts should be deleted

If the above doesn't work then the below steps can also be tried:

- Click **Contacts**
- Search or browse the contacts you want to review
- Select the Contact by clicking its check box or click the checkbox at the top of the list to select everyone all at once
- Click **More Actions > Delete**
- Click **Delete X Contacts**

How do I establish on the email screen, the type of toolbar that I have on MacWord e.g. bold/italic/underline and extend the message box without resorting to the bottom right shaded symbol?

To change the fonts to bold/italic/underline you should be able to press the command [CMD] key and then either [B], [I] or [U] or you should be able to change them under the format menu. The following link will provide you with some further information on this: <https://goo.gl/jwLWrm>

Hello, I hope you can help me with the following enquiry. My broadband provider is Orange/EE who have announced that from 31st May they will stop providing the orange webmail service for a number of reasons. They suggest that using other alternatives such as gmail, that's fine but I prefer to use Microsoft Outlook which for me runs on POP/SMTP orangehome.co.uk. My question is when orange mail is disconnected will I lose my email address and Outlook connection with a provider rendering it useless? If this is the case what else can I do if I want to continue using Outlook to manage my emails and calendar/diary. I hope you can help me.

When the 31st May comes around, unfortunately you won't be able to access your Orange/EE emails. The link below will provide you with more information on this.

<http://goo.gl/VtrEXd> You will be able to set up a new email and then access it through your Outlook on your PC just like you would have with your Orange/EE emails. It is up to yourself which email provider you choose next. I would recommend using Google Gmail as this is what I use and have had no issues with it. The below link will then allow you to add this account to Outlook to access your emails through this. <https://goo.gl/ddQ4yH>

Hello. When I checked my emails a few days ago, I was surprised (and annoyed) to find that I had HUNDREDS of junk mailings, some dating back a year or more. I have been deleting them 50 at a time and still have not finished! I'm now receiving fistfuls of rubbish mails. I didn't have this trouble before. My provider is gmail. What can I do?

You should be able to block the senders of the unwanted emails with the following three steps:

1 Open a message from the unwanted sender.

2 Select **Block Sender Name** from the message dropdown menu.

3 Confirm your choice.

<https://goo.gl/d1w1Dr>

How do I clear the inbox and deleted messages box of unwanted messages on my Android tablet? Deleting them one at a time is very time consuming.

When you are in the mailbox that you wish to delete the items from you should have the option to delete multiple emails by using the below step. If you press and hold on an email, it selects that email without opening it. Then, if you click another email, it also selects that. Now you have two selected emails. You can then click the **Delete** button to delete both emails. You can select as many emails as you wish when doing this.

Web Browser

Is there any way of getting rid of the annoying drop-down box listing previous searches that appears when I start to type a word into Google?

To erase the Auto Complete History open Internet Explorer and under the General Tab in Browsing History click Delete. Then choose the Delete button for Form Data.

I have just updated to Internet Explorer7. Now every time I start up I get the following message: "The procedure entry point GetProcessImageFileNameW could not be located in the dynamic link library PSAPI.DLL"

This is because the BT software you are using does not like IE7 and vice versa. Navigate to the installation location for SmartBridge via My Computer. Find PSAPI.DLL and rename it to something like PSAPIOLD.DLL. Then restart. The program should find the new link in the \Windows\System32 directory and function normally. The alternative is to revert to IE6 by using the Add/Remove programs in Control Panel. **Start Menu > Control Panel > Add/Remove Programs.**

I have been advised that I should regularly delete all cookies. Will this have any effect on access to regular internet sites such as my online banking and others that I am registered with?

Deleting your cookies regularly won't affect your internet browsing to any major degree, although it may affect minor things like web page preferences. It's recommended to delete cookies every so often anyway, so that you don't accumulate too many.

I have AVG anti-virus (free edition) installed and every time I run a complete scan there are numerous tracking cookies which tell me these could be a potential threat. I have been moving these to the virus vault and then deleting them. Is this the correct procedure?

This is indeed the correct procedure. Cookies are downloaded to your computer automatically every time you visit a website. Most of them are harmless, only storing data such as your website preferences etc. Sometimes, however, they can contain data which could potentially be used to track your usage, hence tracking cookies.

I have used Google Earth successfully for quite a while but when I try to log on to the new Google Historical and Google Ocean sites I get a "Could not load" message.

Download Google Earth again and run the installer. When prompted, select and run **Repair**. This should sort the problem.

When I log onto the internet through Mozilla Firefox it opens with the last site I visited. Can I program it to open on the BBC's home page?

Go into Firefox options (**Tools > Options**). Under the first section, **Startup** on the **Main** tab, make sure the option **Show my home page** is selected. Then, in the box below, type "bbc.co.uk".

When I am working on the web or following a web address from email I frequently receive the message: "Internet Explorer has encountered a problem and needs to close. We are sorry for the inconvenience".

Try resetting Internet Explorer. Go to the **Tools Menu > Internet Options**. Then click on the **Advanced** tab and click the reset button at the bottom. This fixes a lot of errors in Internet Explorer that are often related to malfunctioning add-ons.

An icon for Personal Antivirus has appeared on my screen, with a pop-up proclaiming: This is a Critical System Warning, and telling me my computer is infected with various viruses. I have done a full scan with Norton which says everything is ok. Should I take the warning seriously?

Personal Antivirus is a rogue product. It does not offer genuine antivirus protection. If you can, run Malwarebytes Anti-malware (you can download it free at www.Malwarebytes.org, or find it on Google). Remove anything it throws up.

How can I specify Google as my home page?

Go to **Tools** and click on **Internet Options**. A window at the top allows you to type in your preferred home page option. Clear anything that is already there, type "<http://www.google.com>" and click **OK**.

How can I revert from Internet Explorer 8 to a previous version?

To downgrade to your previous version go to **Start Menu > Control Panel > Add/Remove programs**. Check the little box stating **Show updates** at the top of your screen. Find 'Windows Internet Explorer 8' in the list, highlight it, and select remove.

My history list has appeared on the left hand side of the screen and I would like to remove it and reclaim the screen space. I run Mozilla Firefox. How do I get rid of it?

Press the [CTRL] key and the [H] key on the keyboard, at the same time.

Is it worth upgrading to Internet Explorer 8 from versions 6 and 7?

The short answer is yes. If you are running Windows XP or higher – which the vast majority of people now are – there is no reason whatsoever to still be using Internet Explorer 6. Internet Explorer 7 is much more recent, but it is still worth upgrading to IE 8. This is faster, much more secure and more stable than earlier versions, and many websites are now starting to require an upgrade from IE 6/7 in order to work.

When I boot up my PC or try to access the internet I get an Internet Explorer “script error” message. How can I stop it appearing?

Resetting Internet Explorer is a good starting point. You can do this by going to the **Start Menu > Control Panel > Internet Options**. Click on the **Advanced** tab, and then click **Reset** at the bottom. If you need to confirm, click **OK**.

I get a message when using Yahoo mail, stating: “An error has occurred in the script on this page. Internet Explorer Script Error.” What should I do?

Reset Internet Explorer to its default settings. Go to the **Tools Menu**, click **Internet Options** and then click the **Advanced** tab on the right hand side at the top. At the bottom, will be a 'reset' button. Click it, and then confirm it again. Wait for the original settings to be restored and then close and reopen the browser.

I am having increasing problems with Internet Explorer script errors which appear almost every time I open emails. These have become very persistent and are increasingly hard to get rid of. Solution please?

Quite often the answer to this and other problems that seem to come out of nowhere is to reset Internet Explorer as described in the previous answer.

I have updated to Internet Explorer 8 and now every time I try to get access I get the message: “Data Execution Prevention - To help protect your computer Windows has closed this program.” Can you tell me how to get around this or how I can return to IE7, which worked fine?

To remove IE 8 go to **Start Menu > Control Panel > Add/Remove Programs**. Ensure the box at the top right 'show updates' is checked and then select Windows Internet Explorer 8 from the uninstall list.

I use Internet Explorer 8 to access YouTube and usually have no problems. However, recently I keep getting a message on screen saying that I either have Java script turned off or have an out of date Adobe Flash player, and videos will not play.

Try resetting Internet Explorer. It's a fairly simple procedure and it often works. Go to the **Tools Menu > Internet Options**. Then go to the **Advanced** tab. Click on the **Reset** button and confirm.

When my wife enters her password and tries to open her emails a message appears on Internet Explorer saying there is a problem with "Stack overflow at line 47" and blocks her access. How can she move the log-jam?

Her best bet is to reset Internet Explorer. She can do this by going to the **Tools Menu > Internet Options**. Then click the **Advanced** tab followed by **Reset**, then click **Reset** again to confirm. Shut down Internet Explorer, start it up again and see if access to her emails is restored.

When I reach the Talk-Talk page of web mail, the adverts at the bottom of the page jump up and cover the login. Can you tell me how I can prevent this?

At the top right (or left) of an ad there is usually an 'X' which you can click on to close them down. Some resist, but most will obligingly disappear.

I want to download Internet Explorer 8 to try. If I don't like it, can I revert to Internet Explorer 7?

Yes. If you want to revert back to IE 7, simply uninstall IE 8 from the Windows **Start Menu > Control Panel > Add/Remove Programs**, and select IE 8 to remove it. Internet Explorer 7 is automatically reinstated when you do that.

I keep getting a message that Internet Explorer "has stopped working". It seems to be happening all the time now. I tried replacing IE 8 with IE9 but it doesn't make any difference. Have you any idea what might be wrong?

My advice would be to reset IE. You can do this by going to **Start Menu > Control Panel > Internet Options > Advanced** tab. Click **RESET** at the bottom right hand side and confirm. This will reset Internet Explorer to its factory defaults without erasing any favourites.

I have upgraded Internet Explorer to version 9, and now I can't find the Favourites button.

It is a grey star on the right hand side.

I run Windows XP with Internet Explorer 8 and Outlook Express 6. When I try to open a link to a web page from an email nothing happens apart from a brief flash of a page on the screen.

Try resetting Internet Explorer as the default browser. Start Internet Explorer. Select **Tools > Internet Options**. Select the **Advanced** tab. Look for the reset button and select it. Click **Apply** and then **OK**. Close Internet Explorer and then re-open. Close Outlook Express and then re-open.

A pop up box keeps sliding up from the bottom right hand side of my computer saying: "AVG has detected high memory usage by the following application: Windows Internet Explorer." It then gives a figure of memory used in MBs. What does it mean and can I stop it?

It might happen because you are doing things that require lots of memory (scrolling through maps, watching web video etc). You can stop it by going into the AVG user interface and selecting **Tools > Advanced Settings > Appearance**. Uncheck **Display AVG advisor performance**.

Google has been replaced on my Homepage by Ask Jeeves. How can I get Google back?

On Internet Explorer go to **Tools > Internet Options**. Under the **General** tab you will see a Home Page Option. Type “www.Google.co.uk” and apply the changes. Then restart Internet Explorer.

I have three browsers: Internet Explorer, Google Chrome & Mozilla Firefox. I can access You Tube on all of them but only in Firefox does the sound work. Please advise me how to correct this.

Here are a few things you can try. Start playing a video on YouTube, then click on the speaker icon in the bottom right hand side of the computer screen. Then click on **Mixer** if you have Windows Vista or 7. You will see a new sound bar in there for YouTube flash videos. Make sure it is not on zero. Go to the **Start Menu > Control Panel > Internet Options**. Select the **Advanced** tab, The **Advanced** tab is usually on the far-right side of the Internet Options screen. Scroll Down to **Multimedia**. Scroll through the options until you see the section called "Multimedia." check the **Play Sounds Option** is not unticked, if it is, check the option called **Play Sounds in Webpages**. This will turn on all sounds in your internet browsers. If these options don't work, make sure you have the most up to date version of the Adobe Flash Player on the other two browsers.

<http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/>

I have a new laptop running Windows 7, and every time I open a new website on Internet Explorer, it opens with a small window in the middle of the screen. I expand it to the edges and all seems to be OK, but when I exit and go back later, the small screen appears again and I have to expand it again. This happens on every website I visit. Please can you tell me how I can adjust any settings to get the screen I require every time I open a website, as I cannot find anything to assist me?

Try right clicking on the Internet Explorer icon on the desktop and select **Properties**. On the **Shortcut** tab we're looking for the **Run** option; beside that there will be a drop down menu and from here you can select **Maximised**. Apply the changes and select **OK**. Try opening Internet Explorer now and see if it's in a full windowed mode.

I read your page every time my magazine comes through the letter box, so here goes. When I go on Firefox, I do what I want to do then shut it down. Then, for example, maybe the next day I want to use it again but a box comes up to say Firefox is already running and I will have to shut it down or restart my computer. I have deleted it and re-downloaded it. It opens first time then we start over again. I'm using Chrome at the moment. I like Firefox and would like to keep using it. I hope you can help, I have tried everything I know.

Assuming you've installed Windows on the C drive: Go to C:/Users/yourname/AppData. If you can't find this press the [Windows] key on your keyboard, hold this down and then press [R] and type in “C:/Users/yourname/AppData”. If all goes well, you should now see three folders named Local, LocalLow and Roaming. Now go to Roaming > Mozilla > Firefox and delete everything that's in there. Now you have an empty Firefox folder, which will force Firefox to start up as if it was never installed before. Note: yourname is the name of the computer, for example, mine is just 'ben' so C:/Users/ben/AppData.

I have an annoying problem when trying to print web pages, eg, 'printer friendly' receipts etc. I get the following error message: "Script Error. An error has occurred in the script on this page Line 2126 Char 1. Do you want to continue running scripts on this page? YES/NO." This only happens if I am using IE 9, other browsers are unaffected.

Open up internet explorer and then select **Tools** at the top. Click **Internet options** and then across the top select **Advanced**. Towards the bottom of the screen you will see **Reset**. Follow these steps and then close the internet down. Re-open and see if the message appears at all. This should hopefully fix the problem.

When looking for a bus timetable from Durham County Council, I was directed to a pdf file. When I tried to open this file I got this message: "Paint cannot read this file. This is not a valid bitmap file or its format is not currently supported." Is there anything I can do about this situation?

Here is a download link for adobe reader: <http://get.adobe.com/uk/reader/>. Download and install this and you will be able to read pdf files. Make certain to remove the check from the box that offers to install Google products alongside the installation of Adobe Reader.

Whilst attempting to add more tools in the toolbar of my home page, Google, I inadvertently managed to delete File, Edit, View, Tools and Help; please, could you offer me some guidance on how to restore them? Thank you.

It sounds like you are using internet Explorer. You can get this menu back by right clicking on the title bar (the blue or translucent bar near the top of the screen) and select **Menu bar**. If this doesn't work, resetting internet Explorer may present these menus, and can be done by going to **Settings (top right) > Internet Options > Advanced > Reset**.

I wonder if you can advise me, please. I've got a Dell computer running Windows XP. I know it is no longer supported but I have been getting updates regularly and everything was working as normal. However, now when I try to go to a website it won't connect me and I get a message saying the browser is out of date regardless of whether I try Internet Explorer, Google, or Yahoo. What do you think the problem is?

Webpages need up-to-date browsers (Google, Chrome, Internet Explorer, Firefox etc.) to display them. However, browsers need up-to-date Operating Systems to run the latest versions. For Example, Internet Explorer 11 is currently the latest version available for download so most webpages will be designed to run on this, but Windows XP only supports Internet Explorer 8. So, in short, the operating system on your computer is holding you back, because it is outdated and companies and web designers are no longer supporting it. I'm afraid it may be time to upgrade.

*I use Google Chrome. I have bookmarks which I want to delete. I click on the mark, the page opens; I then click on the icon on the top right hand corner of the screen and choose **Remove**. It doesn't work. Please advise me.*

When using Google Chrome, click on the **3 horizontal bars** at the top right hand side of the screen, hover your mouse over the **Bookmarks** option until the window expands and then click on **Bookmark Manager**. From here right click on any bookmark you wish to remove and then select delete.

Why has my internet connection become so slow recently?

If your internet has become increasingly slow, but other programs such as Microsoft Word or Malwarebytes are still working normally, then a good idea is to unplug your internet router for 10 seconds and then plug it back in. This allows the router to cool down and declutter itself. If you have your router in an enclosed space and you suspect it may be overheating, then you should put it somewhere with a bit more room to breathe. We recommend you reboot your router every month or two and run regular scans with Malwarebytes to make sure there aren't any spyware or viruses slowing your internet down.

The Script Error notice seems to pop up on numerous sites but more noticeably on sites like Outlook email and Facebook. It seems if I try to input anything to Facebook then the script error notices appear and whenever I delete them they reappear.

These errors may be specific to the browser you're using – i.e. an old version of Internet Explorer. You can either try upgrading Internet Explorer (**Help > About** menu), resetting it (**Tools > Internet Options > Advanced > Reset**) or even by using another browser altogether if you have one.

I no longer watch TV or have a licence. However, there are the very occasional times when I have wanted to watch something. I know I can't watch live ITV or the BBC channels online but am unable now to watch ITV, Channel 4 or Channel 5 on catch up. I get the message: "we no longer support this browser" on Mozilla Firefox and Internet Explorer. Can I do anything?

Normally Firefox should work fine. Have a look if you use the latest version which is 57.0.* You can check and possibly update it by doing the following:

1. Open Mozilla Firefox
2. Click on the Settings bar on the right (the **Three horizontal lines**)
3. Click **Help**
4. Click **About Firefox**

A new window should open and display somewhere a number similar to '56.0' or '57.0'. If it is not 57* there should be a button saying **Restart to update Firefox**. If that doesn't help, you could try to use Google Chrome. You can download it here: www.google.com/chrome/ (* this is current as of Jan 2018).

Security

I installed ZoneAlarm internet security suite to monitor for viruses, hackers etc. However, in order to open Outlook Express, Skype, Windows Messenger or the internet I have to shut it down, which rather defeats the object. Is there a simple solution?

Try updating ZoneAlarm. Some versions had an incompatibility issue with a recent Windows update, which has now been rectified.

Is it possible to reduce the time my computer takes to complete the AVG security scan? This morning the scan took 3 hours 42 minutes.

That doesn't sound unreasonable to scan over 65,000 files. In fact, it's actually pretty good. Some antivirus scans can take days.

Can you please tell me on how to deal with this 'critical error message' which keeps popping up on my computer? It tells me "the registry is damaged and corrupted," and I need to go immediately to a website address and install the 'cleaner program' I will find there. When I checked it out I was asked to 'scan now' to buy a full version or 'scan for free'. Am I right to be cautious?

Yes. This is what is commonly known as 'adware'. You can get rid of it with a good Removal Tool. One such is SpyBot Search & Destroy, which you can download free. Find it at <http://www.safer-networking.org/en/download/index.html>

Sometimes I receive files containing suffixes such as 'xls_aq' and 'doc_aq'. What does 'aq' indicate? And why should the files be so hard to open?

When '_aq' is added to a file extension it means the attachment is 'quarantined'. It may be you have a safety feature installed on your computer such as Zone Alarm, which detects potentially dangerous attachments. My advice would be not to attempt to open them unless you are convinced they are harmless (you know who sent them to you and/or their contents). If you are satisfied they are OK, you could remove the '_aq' part of the file extension and then try and open it.

When I connect to the internet a message appears telling me "MyWebSearch has prevented another program from changing your Default search settings". I can't get rid of it. Also, I am getting unwanted emails from phone and film companies advertising their products. Some of these do have an unsubscribe button, but when I click on these I either cannot enter the site or nothing happens. I have Bullguard anti-virus installed. I would appreciate your advice.

MyWebSearch is spyware – basically a virus, but not as harmful. To get rid of it, download, install and run the Malwarebytes program from the following URL: <http://cnet.co/ePmYS>

I want to get rid of a program that arrived on the back of another one I downloaded. It's called blinxbeat. When I try to uninstall it I get the following message: "An unidentified program wants to access your computer - Allow or Cancel." What do I do?

You click Allow. It's just a warning message from Windows telling you that changes are being made to your computer. The computer doesn't know if the change is legitimate or not, so it's asking you for confirmation.

My husband and I have just come off the telephone after a stressful time with a Mr Taylor who had the ability to take over our computer and check – his words – all our systems. This is the second time this year we have had this experience and we are very worried. What damage could he have done? We didn't give him any passwords or security info as we know better than that, but it is all very upsetting and we need help to put our minds at rest. I'm now unsure if our computer is secure. Should I tell the police?

You've been scammed. It's a growing problem and one I've written about before. Your Mr Taylor was able to gain access to your PC by asking you to go through a number of steps. He may have planted something on the system to track your usage. Have your computer checked by someone you trust and, if necessary, professionally cleaned. These scammers operate from outside the UK so there is little the police can do. Other readers take note that reputable repair companies don't make unsolicited telephone calls offering their services. If you get a call like that – put the phone down.

I have been trying to cancel my Norton anti-virus automatic renewal subscription without success. I have been going round in circles trying to find a way out. When I go into my account it tells me to click automatic renewal and cancel it, but automatic renewal disappears off the screen. Can you help? I use version Norton 360.

Try closing the browser and then try again. Log on to your Norton Account > Click Sign In > Type in your Norton Account email address and password, and then click Sign In > Click Automatic Renewal > Next to the Norton product for which you want to disable Automatic Renewal, click Off. When you receive the prompt, click Turn Off. Your Norton product will prompt you to manually renew the subscription when it nears its expiry date next time.

I regularly receive a pop up at the bottom right hand side of my screen from Norton saying High CPU usage by Internet Explorer. Can you please explain it to me and tell me if I should be doing anything about it?

Your Norton Anti-virus is detecting that a program (in this case, Internet Explorer) is using the majority of your system resources (computer memory). The most likely reason why this happens is because you have a lot of things running at the one time on the Internet Explorer browser. The next time it happens check and see if you have a lot of tabs open at one time, as this can cause the browser to be sluggish, especially if you have a lot of complex web pages open (the best thing to do is just close some tabs you're no longer looking at). You may also want to check if you have a lot of toolbars enabled on the browser as they could be taking up some memory too. To do that, go onto Internet Explorer and click Tools > Internet Options > select the Programs tab > Manage Add-ons; from here you can see what toolbars you have and if you find a lot of toolbars, try disabling some that you don't use.

I have AVG Anti-virus and was recently notified that there was a 'summer update' ready for downloading, which I did. Everything was OK except that I could not launch Internet Explorer afterwards. There was a message to say that DEP had closed the programme (presumably as a security measure). IE tries to start up but disappears.

DEP errors are usually caused by an add-on on the browser; to test this you can try running Internet Explorer without add-ons. Go to Start Menu > All Programs > Accessories > System Tools and open Internet Explorer (No Add-ons). If Internet Explorer opens with no problems then it will most likely be an add-on to the browser that is causing the problem. In this case, go the Start Menu > Control Panel > Internet Options, select the Programs tab then choose the Manage Add-Ons button. From here a list of your add-ons will load; once they are all loaded you can look for an AVG add-on as I believe this will be the one causing the problem. Once you find it, if you right click on it and select disable the problem should be sorted. Try opening Internet Explorer again normally.

I recently purchased an ACER computer with Windows 7. It has McAfee anti-virus installed for 30 days. I wish to remove this and install another anti-virus. I'm unable to find the option to uninstall the program on the control panel.

If you go into the Start Menu > Control Panel > Programs > Programs and Features, the list of your programs will appear. Right click on McAfee and select Uninstall. After removing

McAfee in Programs and Features, you should run the free McAfee removal tool to remove all features of the McAfee program. You can download the mcpr.exe from McAfee here: http://download.mcafee.com/products/licensed/cust_support_patches/MCPR.exe. Download and save mcpr.cxc on your desktop and then run it. But don't run it before you remove McAfee in Program Features. Also, don't leave your computer unprotected once removed, make sure to add a security program once McAfee has been removed.

For the second time in a few months I have received a message like this:

"I had a trip to Istanbul, Turkey for a short vacation and I was robbed at the hotel car park, I wasn't hurt but I lost my money bank cards, mobile phone [...] Please I need you to help me with some amount of money. I promise to refund your money as soon as I return [...]"

I know they are a scam. In each case a friend's computer was hacked, and e-mail contacts stolen. In the latest case, the friend had only just bought a new PC, and suspected that the expert who had installed it may not have activated its security software (Norton, I believe). I'd be most grateful for advice as to the prevention of such hacking, especially for when I come to replace my current PC. And likewise what to do if I were to get hacked like this. I'm sure many other NFOP magazine readers would also welcome this advice.

It's not always PC specific, especially if you use webmail and your details have been harvested either through phishing or in transmission over the web. Good practice is to use a complex password (but not so complex you have to write it down) – pass phrases work as they are easier to remember – and, if you can, change the password every so often as well. Hackers don't always stop at email addresses though and have many methods of attack and that is why we must have certain levels of security. The following are steps to take to make sure you are secure:

- ° Keep Windows up to date (**Start Menu > All Programs > Windows Update**)
- ° install Anti-Virus protection
- ° install Anti-Malware protection
- ° Change passwords regularly or make them complex

I purchased a new laptop computer 72 months ago which came installed with Norton 360. This has now expired and they want payment to renew it. Is there a free website from which I can download a reliable replacement to Norton?

Yes there are several that are free, safe and great to use. I would give one of these two a try:

Anti-Virus

AVG – <http://free.avg.com/gb-en/free-antivirus-download>, or

Avast – <http://www.avast.com/index>

Anti-Malware is also something you should have and the program I use for this is MalwareBytes <https://www.malwarebytes.org/>

My computer seems to have been taken over by vosteran.com. This happened about a month ago, and every time I click on to my Google Chrome internet browser, it opens in Vosteran. My home page is with TalkTalk. I had Windows 7 installed in April. My system protection is Malwarebytes Anti-Malware and CCleaner. There are programmes to remove Vosteran, but I am afraid to use them in case it exacerbates the problem. I have refused all offers to change browsers and security. Please advise.

This seems to be the latest breed of malware that is infecting PCs, likely as adware or spyware in existing tree programs that act as sponsors, and can sometimes be avoided when installing. There is a guide on how to remove this malware:

<http://malwaretips.com/blogs/remove-vosteran-search/>

This is a complicated virus that installs itself in various locations in your PC so I would carefully go through each step and you should be able to rid your PC of this.

I recently had a virus and the technician who sorted it out for me installed Malwarebytes free premium trial. The trial has now finished and has left me with the free version. Could you please advise whether or not to keep the free version to run alongside my Antivirus which is Windows Defender. I am running Windows 10.

We also advise to use Malwarebytes – it's a very good program to have but you could consider using another program such as AVG or Avast instead of the inbuilt Windows defender – which doesn't have the highest detection rates, however is still better than nothing.

<https://www.avast.com/en-gb/index>

<http://www.avg.com/gb-en/homepage>

I back up my photos/files/documents to a hard drive once a week then switch it off. If I received a ransom e-mail what are the steps to take once the ransom time limit has expired and data wiped, to restore my computer back to where it was?

Shut down the PC; cutting power at the wall if necessary. Remove the internet connection from the PC so it doesn't affect others on your network (or make the infection worse). I would then remove any external drives or anything else it can attack them too. If you had the ransom attack you must remove the virus completely before trying to restore from backup. This is best done offline and with tools transferred from another computer. If you have a full back-up a factory restore is probably the easiest and safest option.

I have been looking for a security package on the net but every time I go onto one site I get a different opinion about the various ones you can use on another site. Can you recommend a particular one which is of a reasonable price.

If you want a free set up, I would suggest you go with Avast Free Antivirus and Malwarebytes Free edition. Usually, this should be an adequate choice to be secure. If you however would rather pay for something, we would recommend to use Malwarebytes Premium (www.Malwarebytes.org). It contains plenty of features and we have had good experience with it in the past. Nevertheless you should be clear, that your system can never be 100% safe, as long it is connected to the internet or is somehow connected to external storages or devices like USB sticks, SD cards and Smartphones. Since it occurred recently to one of our customers, another tip I want to give you is to make sure, you don't open links in emails from someone you don't know and have a look at the email address the message comes from. If the domain (the part after the @ sign) refers to a free service like Gmail or Yahoo it's most likely to be not from a proper company.

I am trying to download AVG (my preferred anti-virus software). I am told that the installation cannot be completed because mfc110u.dll is missing. This may be self-inflicted, but that is by the way. I want to get this sorted, and a guard in place. My search for a solution on the web has opened up all sorts of scary options. Is there an easy way to reload this. My operating system is Windows 10. Can you advise please?

I would suggest you follow these steps: First of all, download and install this package:

www.microsoft.com/en-US/download/details.aspx?id=48145

On the Microsoft page (the link I gave you), you have to click on the red **Download** button. Then you have to choose either the vc_redist.x64.exe (for a 64-bit system) or the vc_redist.x86.exe (for a 32-bit system). Check the box left to the entry you need and click **Next**. The download should start after a few seconds. Make sure, you haven't installed any other anti-virus software which may conflict with AVG such as Avast, McAfee, Norton. If so, uninstall the programme(s) first. Restart your computer. Try to install AVG again.

Others

As a treasurer of a club, I have devised a chart onto which I record monthly income and expenditure to arrive at an annual figure. Can you please advise how I can delete all of 2008's figures while retaining the rows and columns so that I can get cracking on 2009?

Simply highlight the figures you wish to delete and press the [DELETE] key.

I travel widely photographing birds and I use a WinDVD creator programme to install the resulting Jpegs and Mpegs on to a DVD with proper chapters, transition effects and menus. Unfortunately the old installer disc will not load into my new computer. Is there a programme that can overcome the problem?

Sadly, no. If the drive is working and you cannot get the disc to install, it's probably hopeless. However, there is a Windows programme called Windows Movie Maker which is ideal for creating basic clips. Just ensure you save your work frequently, because it can be unreliable.

I recently installed some optional updates to my Dell Wireless Card, Quickset and Web cam. Windows is blocking them on startup – are they safe and can I unblock them?

Assuming you have a Dell computer, the answer is yes.

I have Vista and have lost a folder. I am sure I did not delete it but it has disappeared from my Documents file and I can't find it elsewhere. How can I search for it?

Click the Start Menu and type the name of the folder in the search bar. It should appear in the list. If it does not, try clicking **Search everywhere** to expand the search. The folder is likely to be still present on the computer, but may have been accidentally dragged into an adjacent folder. The search will find it wherever it is.

Recently, while trying to save space on my disc, I used the My Computer and Add/Remove functions and in doing so inadvertently deleted the Windows Media program. Can you tell me how to reinstate it please? I run Windows XP.

I would recommend the use of System Restore to repair this problem. It should put back Windows Media Player as it was, at the date which you restore to. You can access System Restore by going to the **Start Menu > All programs > Accessories > System Tools** and then click **System Restore**.

Click **Next** and select a date from the calendar prior to the time you uninstalled Windows Media Player. Finally, confirm by clicking **Next** and then **Finish**.

I sometimes struggle to see the image of the cursor on screen because it is so faint. Is it possible to make it darker and bigger?

Yes. Go to the **Start Menu > Control Panel**. If it says 'Pick a category', click **Switch to Classic view**. Now double click the mouse icon and when a box comes up, click the **Pointers** tab. Under 'Scheme' select **Windows Black (extra large) (system scheme)**. Click **OK**.

I have a picture I want to open in Paint, but, whenever I try, it opens in Microsoft Picture Viewer instead. How can I change the default setting?

Right click on the file and go to **Open with**. Select the program that you wish to use. To change the default setting select **Change default program**. A pop-up menu will offer you various choices.

I have valuable family and work photographs stored on CDs that I want to load on to my laptop, but I'm unsure quite how and where to store them. Any suggestions?

You could drag them from the CD direct into 'Pictures'. You will find the file by opening My Documents.

I have problems with Flash Player. Time and time again I download flash player, and get confirmation it is downloaded and running. (I turn off my Norton Security whilst downloading it). But when flash player is required by a programme – I get a pop up message saying "Download flash player". What can I do to get Flash Player running?

First things first we need to completely remove Adobe Flash from the computer as there seems to be an issue with the current version installed. If you search for Adobe Flash player uninstaller <http://helpx.adobe.com/flash-player/kb/uninstall-flash-player-windows.html> you will be able completely to remove the Flash player. Once this has been completed install Flash again and once the download is complete go onto Internet Explorer. Select tools and then internet options, from here choose the security tab and then the custom level button scroll down until you see Active Scripting and make sure it is enabled. Close the browser and then open it again; now try and see if Flash is working.

I am a member of CSPA and need some help about an external hard disc. My computer broke down but a friend managed to put my large collection of photos on the disc. I can view the photos, but only as a continuous diaporama. Is there any Way I can stop this diaporama to look at individual photos and also locate various photo files? To watch the complete diaporama would take hours!

It may be the program that is set to open your photos that is causing it to start a slideshow. You can try right clicking one of the individual pictures > open with > choose a different program to open with like Windows Photo Viewer. To locate pictures you would enter the folder your pictures are saved in and at the top of this window it gives you an option to change view. This will allow you to change the viewing size of each picture within the window.

I have an Asus Windows 10 laptop and I use an outdoor camera to spot night-time hedgehogs, but when I put the SD card in to the laptop it down loads ok but will not play the video. I still have my

old PC which it works perfectly ok on. I have transferred pictures from a card OK but just problem with videos.

I would recommend that you download a program called VLC media player. This is a free program and will be similar to the normally installed media player on your PC. I will include a link below to allow you to download and try this. This should allow you to open and watch the videos again. <http://www.videolan.org/vlc/>

My iPad videos download in sideways format.

Recently, a member wrote in asking us why the videos from his iPad appeared rotated 90 degrees once downloaded, despite playing fine on the device. There are various ways to fix it, including using Windows Movie Maker or VLC (or iMovie, if you are on a Mac). A how-to guide is here: <https://goo.gl/8mNwln> Although fixing it isn't particularly difficult, some of you may be left wondering – why does it happen? To put it in laymen's terms, holding the device sideways (or even upside down) is the same thing as holding a camera rotated portrait (or upside down) – the pictures will want to come out sideways. With phones and tablets, the motion sensor inside it knows you are doing this and compensates, by applying a small information tag (or metadata) to the recorded media, telling it to be oriented 'the right way' when you play it back. For the most part, it works perfectly and requires no thought by the end user. However, it has a tendency to go out the window (as our member found) when downloading the media. The problem occurs because when the media is downloaded it often drops the rotation metadata on the way, causing it to be played in its original 'sideways' format. It can also happen because some playback apps won't read the metadata correctly; the changes aren't hard coded into the recorded images as this is very resource intensive. If editing files afterwards isn't your cup of tea, you can prevent this from happening in the first place by using a transfer method that respects all metadata attached to the image. For iOS one that works very well is called 'Photo Transfer App' - it costs a few pounds but it respects all edits and rotations to images made on an iPhone/iPad.

MISCELLANY

What's the purpose of PDF files? Haven't found a way of amending a document in this form or converting it to a doc. form without having to subscribe to do so. Easy enough to convert from doc. to PDF but not the other way round. Help, please.

PDFs are not easily edited as they are created for the purpose of keeping the format even when the person viewing the documents doesn't have the same software as you. There are methods to editing PDFs – type in the link here and it will advise you of what software you can use: <http://bit.ly/2cpi7cW>.

I have been asked by someone to provide a screenshot. How?

Press all of the following keys simultaneously [CTRL]+[ALT]+[PRINT SCREEN]. Then go to **Start Menu > Programs > Accessories > Paint**. When you have opened Paint go to **Edit** and click **Paste**. Save the file by clicking on **Save As** and select JPEG from the **Save as Type** dropdown. Finally click on **Save**.

I publish three websites using FrontPage. The text and photographs are as clear as a bell when I send them to my webhost site, but once they are on the internet they are so blurred they look as if they are being viewed through water. What am I doing wrong?

It appears you are saving your web pages as one, stretched image, rather than separating the text from the photos. You could also improve clarity by increasing the resolution of your JPEGs from, say, 60% to 100%.

I'm trying to type in a serial number that contains a figure 0 dissected by a forward slash. What key do I use to replicate it?

The character you describe is a zero. The strikethrough is simply to distinguish it from the capital letter O. Use the zero on the number pad on your keyboard.

I have just bought a Tesco Hudl2 tablet. What I am unsure about is connecting to the Internet when I am away from home. No problem at home as we have broadband from BT. Many places say "free Wi-Fi here" e.g. shopping arcades, hotels, pubs, bus/coaches etc. Once in these areas, is Internet connection automatic (is the signal out there in the air for anyone to use), or do I have to ask for any access codes which need inputting to my tablet before I can connect?

These hotspots normally need a password to get in but a lot of shops and restaurants offer free Wi-Fi or offer their password if you purchase something. Another thing to mention is BT open zones are available in many public places, but you have to have your internet with BT to be able to use them. You may need to use the settings App on the Hudl2 to tell it to manually connect to a hotspot. Here is a guide how: <http://goo.gl/pXXwxb>
Just skip steps 3 and 4 as they are not relevant to public Wi-Fi hotspots.

Switch off, switch on – a cure for computer problems

I try my best to help each and every one of my readers. However, sometimes it isn't possible to give a quick answer to every question. Often, to help me help you, I need some background information. When you call the helpline, you may be asked details about your computer: its approximate age, operating system and the specific program that is causing you problems. Please bear with me, as without this information it is often impossible to give an accurate diagnosis and come up with a solution.

There are some basic problems which you can often solve yourself. If you have a broadband outage, try turning your modem off and then on again. If your keyboard/mouse has stopped working, change the batteries and/or check that all the wires are connected snugly. The solution to many problems is to shut down your computer and then restart it. It might sound a cliché, but as it cures so many problems it is always worth trying before anything else.

High cost of technical support lines

CALLING technical support lines can be a costly business. Consumer magazine Which? Computing found that 32 of the 45 technology companies it investigated use higher-cost numbers for their

helplines and some are charging significantly more than others for responding to technical breakdowns. Four companies – Tesco broadband, Supanet, Nero and Roxio – use premium rate 090 helplines, which are the most expensive numbers available. A ten minute call to Tesco broadband's 090 number costs £5 from a landline plus any connection charges.

Only six companies offer a Freephone 0800 number: BT, Waitrose, 02 (home broadband), UK Online, Corel and Sony (software).

Broadband users are also frustrated with the time it takes to get through to customer support. Which? Computing found that customers had to wait, on average, one minute and 33 seconds to speak to someone on an ISP technical support line. Plusnet customers have the longest average wait of nearly eight minutes; though one researcher waited nearly 12½ minutes.

Warnings

I am receiving enquiries from members who have been 'cold called' by people claiming to be computer experts or 'Windows Support' and offering to 'fix' their computers over the internet for alleged problems. The callers claim to be working for companies called SupportOnClick or WindowsClick. Some claim to represent Microsoft or Windows (or similar) which **NEVER** makes calls like this. I advise readers not to respond to these calls. Do **NOT** allow the callers access to your computer and under **NO** circumstances reveal your credit or debit card details. These callers **ONLY** want access to your money. **Hanging up is the *only* safe option.**

Over the last couple of years people have been plagued by officious-looking emails warning that they are vulnerable to attack from a 'big virus'. They usually add that the information has been released 'direct from Microsoft and Norton' that very morning, and that users of Yahoo! Hotmail and AOL will be affected. 'The whole hard Disk C of your computer will be burned', they say, and no antivirus software will be able to stop it.

The emails may look authentic, but they are not. The senders will urge recipients to forward the emails to everyone else in their address book, with the express intention of causing as much mayhem as possible. If enough people take them at face value, the strain on mail servers around the world from emails being forwarded millions of times will cause systems to crash, which is the intention, of course.

So, if you get one of these warnings, delete it. There is no 'big virus' coming your way. Your hard disk will not burst into flames. In fact, the only consequence of pressing the [DELETE] button will be that you will have stopped a bunch of computer pirates from achieving their aim of setting the world on fire.

Battery

This is a little battery called the CMOS battery which is located inside the computer case or tower. It is a small round disk – normally a CR2032 – which you should be able to acquire from any decent hardware store. To replace it, switch off the computer at the mains, and tap the power button a few times to drain any residual power from the motherboard. Open the tower case and locate the battery; unclip the old one and pop the replacement back in its place. You may need to reset the time and date once more after your computer restarts.

How to avoid advertisement software (adware) (When installing free software on to your computer)

A number of queries have come into the Helpdesk lately from concerned members who aren't quite sure how unwanted software, toolbars, search engines *etc.* ended up on their computer. They usually appear after the installation of free software and the reasoning is because they are bundled within the installers for some free software packages. This advertising is one of the ways the person who wrote the software can make a little bit of money from their efforts, but, on the flip side, the adware bundled with these packages won't usually do much for you except clutter up your desktop, slow down your browser's loading time and annoy you with unwanted advertising. Those of you who are wondering how your browser got cluttered up with toolbars or how 'smilies' ended up on your PC will want to continue reading.

How to prevent the advertisements from getting in

The first and most obvious answer is to be vigilant when installing software. There are two primary ways that adware ends up on PCs. The first is the download link to a perfectly legitimate piece of software that leads to a page that contains what seems like an endless number of download buttons, all for software you didn't ask for, while the actual link to the software you want is in tiny text somewhere obscure on the page. This leads to, understandably, the wrong software being requested sometimes, but thankfully many of the common software download websites are putting an end to this arguably deceptive practice. The second method is the adware packaged in the installer itself. CCleaner appears to go through phases of doing this (I've just checked, and the current installer is clean) as does other useful free utilities like Unlocker. The usual steps of language selection, file path *etc.* are supplemented by a page to offer supplemental advertising software. A lot of the time this will be missed as the repetitive nature of software installers makes it tempting to rush through and click all the prompts away quickly, but it's important to be prudent and just clear the selections for additional software to avoid it being installed.

The software installer for Unlocker offers to install Delta Toolbar and search by default. You can say 'no' by clicking advanced, and clearing the three check boxes.

Using Google to your advantage

Google is a smart tool. You can almost literally ask Google a question and it will answer you with relevant results. 'What's that song on the Vauxhall car advert?', 'What is Delia's cooking programme last name?' or even 'How do you make pancakes?' I suspect that many people already know this, but you can go even further. Google is a dictionary, a calculator, unit converter and a great deal more than being just a search engine.

To ask Google the definition of a word, type it followed by 'definition'. To find the definition of the word Epoch, you'd type 'epoch definition' and hit search. Along with search results for the word epoch, a dictionary definition is given at the top, with options for translation, the word origin and more synonyms.

You can ask Google to add, subtract and much more with its built in calculator. Type a sum into the search box and as well as the answer, you also get an interactive calculator to use as well.

Similar applies for converting units. Again, just ask it what you want to do and you'll get an answer and then a conversion table.

Google's getting smart: the calculator provides scientific functions and the unit converter will change almost anything you can think of.

What to do with *!?\\$??*

The internet search engine Google is incredibly useful for quickly finding out information and answering questions on just about everything under the sun (and beyond!) But what people might not know is that Google is also useful in identifying computer error codes.

These are the confusing, often seemingly nonsensical strings of numerals and letters that pop up on computer screens when something has gone, or is about to go wrong. There are three main types, covering hardware, operating systems and programs.

Individual error messages may indicate serious problems or they may amount to no more than an inconvenient nuisance. But finding out which is which can be a worrying time. However, if you copy and paste the error code into Google (or the name of the error file), it will instantly return a host of explanations and solutions which, with luck, will tell you what it means and what action to take. Type "<http://www.google.co.uk>" into your browser and join the search.

Spam Email

We've had a fair few members write to us regarding spam email, either with troubles filtering it or just the sheer number of emails received. Spam emails are much like taxes – a near certainty in life. You can do things to mitigate it but it's a problem which won't be going away any time soon. It's unlikely your email address is being personally held to account, but rather is targeted along with millions of others in a scattergun approach in hopes that you'll buy into whatever is being advertised in your mailbox. Spam emails often come from compromised computers that are covertly running mass mailers and peppering the population with unwanted rubbish.

With this in mind, solving the problem comes twofold – at the receiving end, but also through diligence. Most of you will likely use a free email service that either came as part of a deal with your broadband service, or another free option like Hotmail or Google mail. They have the option to filter spam email, and some services are better at it than others – some aren't particularly good at all.

Being careful pays dividends. Most of the time spam builds up because of how the account is used. The more you use it to sign up to online services, the more it will be gradually sold to third parties who then send on marketing material. A virus that infects a machine and copies its contact list will then ruthlessly email everyone in that contact list, and so forth. Before you know it, your run of the mill email address is being spammed. You can partially solve this by using a disposable or 'burner' email address for online services, forums and insurance quotes. You can then keep a primary email address for your friends and family.

If the free email provider you use does a lacklustre job of filtering spam, consider voting with your feet. Google Mail's email service is generally pretty good, and you get virtually unlimited amounts of storage.