

HOME COMPUTER MAGAZINE

GET MORE FROM YOUR PC!

ISSUE 03 JANUARY 2005

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4 PAGE COVER FEATURE

100 TOP WINDOWS XP SPEED TIPS

Nick Peers reveals how to boost your PC's performance today!

TABLET PC REVIEW

Lifebook T4010

Add pen computing to your mobile life, but worth the price?

WIRELESS PRINTER FOR YOUR HOME

HP Photosmart 2710

Scan to your PC, print photos from your camera. What can't it do?

THE BEST IN PC GAMING

Football Manager 2005

The real heir to Championship Manager becomes apparent

WIN A NOTEBOOK!

NEW!

10

pages of PC reviews,
peripherals and the
latest software!



The UK's only **free** magazine for home computer users

12 PAGES PACKED WITH EXCLUSIVE TUTORIALS

Understanding bandwidth

Make sure that your web host doesn't sell you a package that will hamper your site

First steps in overclocking

We show you the easy way to get more speed from your hardware for free

Securing your broadband network

Triple layer wireless security for the home network explained step-by-step

Advanced Windows Settings

Master the operating system's speed controls from the System Properties Control Panel

Promote your website for free

Get more visitors to your site with this free software and our full tutorial

Readers' technical questions answered

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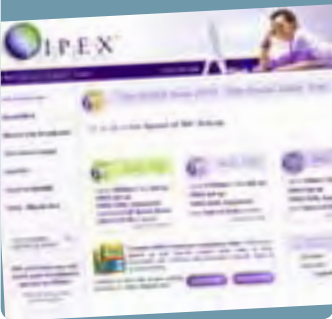
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Welcome...

...to another issue and news of a brand new way to get even more PC and technology information for free, every day of the week!

A month is a long time in politics, but a positive eternity in technology. Regular readers will have noticed that Home Computer Magazine doesn't include any news pages in the magazine. This is because we recognised when we launched the magazine that news would be outdated within a few days of publishing each issue. That doesn't mean we'd forgotten about it and we're really pleased to say that phase two of our website has now gone live with a section for news that is updated by our team daily. That's a new story written by our professional team every day. Simply log on to www.homecomputermagazine.com/news/ or follow the link from the home page. You'll find news and analysis of current events, tips that we come across and have to share, reviews and previews of kit and products that we find during the month and much more.

As if that weren't enough, teched-up readers can access our RSS feed and have our exclusive news delivered directly to them. If you've not come across RSS, don't worry, we'll be running a tutorial on this excellent, user-friendly technology next issue.

Back to the new issue of the magazine for now though and inside you'll find a Top 100 Speed Tips for Windows XP feature by renowned Windows expert Nick Peers. In our reviews section, make sure you check out the Audigy 2 ZS, and those of you who've written in requesting this will be pleased to know that this month's Broadband tutorial explains how to set up wireless security. Also in the tutorial section is our first part in a series on Overclocking Hardware for Beginners, more Windows XP and web hosting advice and our popular Q&A. Until next month, enjoy! **HCM**

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This issue

Our third issue is packed with features, reviews and tutorials. Find the one you are interested in and then click on the title for the article to be taken straight to that page.

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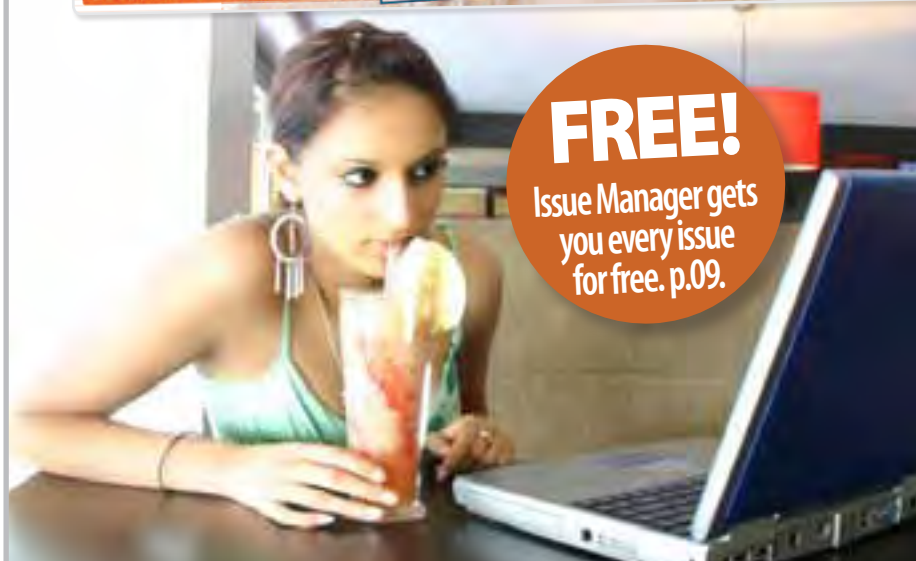
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- Understanding bandwidth**
Make sure that your web host doesn't sell you a package that will hamper your site
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- Readers' technical questions answered**
2 pages of real-life problems solved by our experts

10 pages of PC reviews, peripherals and the latest software!

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COMPETITION P.04

Win a Dell Notebook

04

Click here now for your chance to win a Dell Latitude D400 Notebook, featuring Pentium M1.4Ghz, 512 MB 266Mhz DDR SDRAM and 30Gb hard drive, courtesy of Dell Outlet.

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100 ways to speed up Windows today!

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Revolutionise the way you use your PC with our essential guide to boosting performance. Nick Peers shows you how to speed up Windows XP and optimise the way you work.

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PICKS OF THE MONTH

Click on a story to read more:

NEW! DAILY PC NEWS

Click here to visit our new, free addition to the Home Computer Magazine offering. Daily PC and technology news written by the team, mixed up with software reviews, windows tips and tricks and the ability for you to leave a comment or addition to items quickly and easily. RSS users can add our feed to their readers.



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EXCLUSIVE COMPETITION FOR HOME COMPUTER MAGAZINE READERS

Win a Dell™ Notebook!

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Enter our prize draw for your chance to win a Latitude D400 Notebook

It used to be that when your PC was no longer up to the task you needed to decide between trying to upgrade it yourself or forking out the full price of a new system. Upgrading can be a costly business – if you only upgrade one component, it might not function to its full potential unless you remove bottlenecks caused by other components by upgrading those at the same time.

It often amounts to building your own PC from scratch in terms of cost. Buying a complete new system can be expensive too when you buy the PC that you really want. What if there was a third way?

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The good people at Dell Outlet have kindly given us this amazing Dell Latitude D400 as a prize for one lucky reader. For your chance to win, simply fill out the form on the right, or the one on our website at www.homecomputermagazine.com/dell

The Latitude D400 features:

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56K internal Modem
24X CD-RW Drive with external D/Bay

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This brilliant prize for a lucky Home Computer Magazine reader comes courtesy of Dell Outlet. The Latitude D400 features Pentium M1.4Ghz, 512 MB 266Mhz DDR SDRAM and 30Gb hard drive.

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- ☒ I would like to receive special offers from other selected companies

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- 7) Only one entry per household. Multiple entries will be disqualified.
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- 9) For the latest Dell Outlet promotions, please visit the website at www.dell.co.uk/homecomputer
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- 12) All entries will become property of Dell Products and Home Computer Magazine, and may be used for publicity purposes.
- 13) There is no cash alternative to the prize.
- 14) Competition closes on the 28th February 2005
- 15) The winner will be notified within 30 days of the closing date. The result will be published on the Home Computer Magazine website as soon as possible after the closing date.
- 16) The decision of the editor on all matters concerning this competition is final and legally binding. No correspondence will be entered into.



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100 WAYS TO SPEED UP WINDOWS

Revolutionise the way you use your PC with our essential guide. Nick Peers lets you in on his top tips to optimise Windows XP and change the way you work.



There are two ways to speed up Windows: optimise its performance through changing system settings, and improving the way you use it. Whether you're stepping into Windows XP for the first time or an old hand, you'll find something in this feature to make using Windows a faster, more convenient experience. Without further ado, then, let's get to it...

Optimise the interface

The Windows XP interface is designed to be easy to use, but hidden beneath the surface are all sorts of tips and tricks to speed up the way you navigate it.

■ The Quick Launch Toolbar - a series of icons on the main Taskbar at the bottom of your screen - is the best place to store program shortcuts as it's always visible. Allocate it more space by right-clicking the Taskbar and unticking Lock the Taskbar by clicking it. Then resize the Taskbar upwards one line and use the dotted drag handles to the left of each toolbar to reposition it.

■ Create a toolbar containing a shortcut to any folder on your system. To do so, open My Computer and

browse to the folder in question, then drag it to the left, right or top of the screen to convert it into a toolbar. Remove it by right-clicking and choosing Close Toolbar followed by OK.

■ Right-click the Taskbar and choose Toolbar >

Gain quick access to any Control Panel directly from the Start menu by opting to display it as a menu.



Address. Now you can access any Web address or command entered into the Run box on the Start menu by typing into this box instead.

■ Access any Control Panel directly from the Start menu. Right-click the Start button and select Properties. Click the Customize button and switch to the Advanced tab. Select Display as a menu under Control Panel and click OK twice. Now click Start > Control Panel for instant access to them all.

■ You can also access other folders like My Computer and My Documents on the Start menu in the same way as the Control Panel from this options dialog. Tweak the settings to your personal requirements.

■ The Start menu contains shortcuts to the most recently accessed items. By default five are selected, but you can tweak this figure: right-click the Start button, choose Properties and click Customize, then alter the number on the General tab.

■ You can also 'pin' items from this list so that they're always displayed beneath your Web browser and email program. Just right-click the shortcut on the Start menu (or Start > All Programs menu) and select Pin to Start menu.

Pinning items permanently to the Start menu is simply a case of right-clicking the shortcut and choosing the obvious option.

■ If you regularly use a particular Control Panel, create its own custom shortcut. Right-click the desktop and choose New > Shortcut. Type control controlname.cpl into the first box, replacing controlname.cpl with the Control Panel's filename (visit www.computerhope.com/issues/ch000136.htm for a full list). Click Next, give your Control Panel a suitable name and click Finish. Make your new Control Panel shortcut more recognisable by changing its icon: right-click the shortcut and choose Properties, then click Change Icon.

■ You can quickly close any open program or window without bring it into focus: simply right-click its Taskbar entry and select Close.

File management shortcuts

Copying and moving files around your disk drives can be a bind - here are some clever tips to speed things up.

■ If you want to select more than one file or folder in a window or file dialog, hold the Shift key before clicking the first and last file in the list to select all of the files in between; to select non-consecutive files, hold Ctrl as you click each file.

■ If you want to select the majority of files in a folder, select those files you don't want and choose Edit > Invert Selection to speed up the process.

■ The SendTo menu enables you to right-click a file and copy it elsewhere without having to open the destination folder or drive first. The defaults include My Documents, but you can add your own: click Start > Run, type sendto and press Enter to open the SendTo folder, then drag shortcuts to other folders and drives into it.

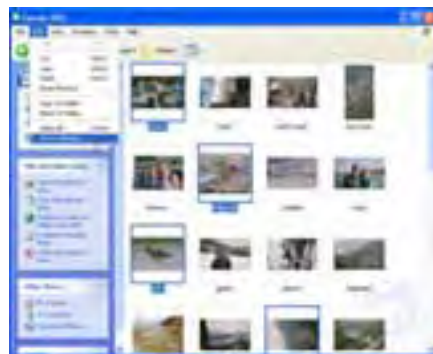
■ You can add options to the right-click menu that enables you to open a dialog letting you pick the destination of a file simply by right-clicking it and



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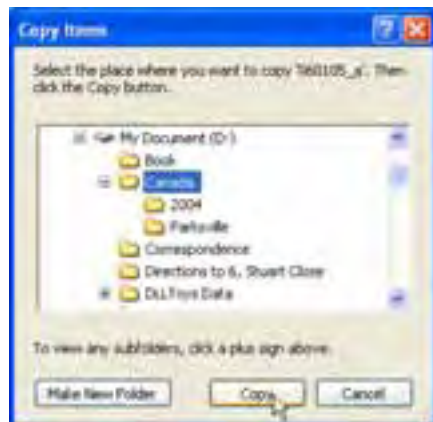


Choose Edit > Invert Selection creatively to quickly select 95 files out of 100 in a folder.

choosing Copy to Folder or Move to Folder. Normally you'd need to edit the Registry, but instead go to www.kellys-korner-xp.com/xp_tweaks.htm and click the Copy to/Move to link (it's number 45) on the page. Save this to your desktop, then double-click it. Select Run followed by Yes and OK. The options will now appear when you right-click a file.

■ When dragging files from one folder to another, Windows will automatically move the file if both folders are on the same drive. If you want to copy the files, hold the Ctrl key as you drag.

■ Conversely, if the files are going from one drive to another they're copied by default - hold Shift to ensure they're moved instead.



■ Quickly compress a large number of files by selecting them all, right-clicking and choosing Send To > Compressed (zipped) folder.

■ Renaming large numbers of files at once can be time-consuming. Download a freeware tool that makes it far easier: 1-4a Rename Tool can be found at www.1-4a.com/rename/.

■ Want to bypass the Recycle Bin? Hold Shift as you drag them into the Recycle Bin or right-click and select Delete. To delete them by default, right-click the bin, choose Properties and tick Do not move files to the Recycle Bin before clicking OK.

■ When deleting files you may occasionally be asked to confirm the deletion of a specific type. You can select Yes to All for this type, but what if you want to choose No to All instead? Simple: just hold Shift as you click No - it has the same effect.

■ The Places bar provides five folder shortcuts on the left-hand side of the Windows Open/Save dialog. Replace the default choices with your own using X-Setup. In Classic mode, select Appearance\System\Open/Save Dialog\Open/Save Dialog Place Bar and pick your own choice of folders.

■ Change the program used to open a particular kind of file by right-clicking it and selecting Open With > Choose Program. Select your program from the list (or click Browse to locate those not listed) and make sure you tick the Always use the selected program to open this kind of file box before clicking OK.

Start up and shut down faster

The biggest bottlenecks in performance often occur when you start or shut down your computer. Let's eliminate them.

■ Many programs configure themselves to start with Windows - find out what's loading from the Startup tab of the System Configuration Utility (click Start > Run, type msconfig and press Enter). You can disable any by

Add Copy to Folder and Move to Folder options to the right-click menu to enable you to shunt files from folder to folder quickly.

30 Speedy shortcuts

Don't rely on the mouse for your every move; keyboard shortcuts are the best way to speed up your system

Why click Start > Control Panel > Performance and Maintenance > System to access the System Control Panel when you can simply press the Windows and Pause/Break keys together? Take your time to work through these little shortcuts and you'll soon be whizzing around your system!

When you open a menu or My Computer window, press Alt once - underlined letters will appear, and

pressing that letter will trigger the appropriate shortcut, whether it's ticking a box or selecting a button like OK. You can make these underlined letters appear automatically from the Desktop Control Panel's Appearance tab: click the Effects button and remove the tick next to the box marked 'Hide underlined letters for keyboard navigation until I press the Alt key'. Click OK twice.

Alt-double-click file/folder	View file/folder's properties	F2	Rename currently selected file or folder
Alt-down arrow	Expand drop-down menu	F3 (or Windows-F)	Open Windows Search tool
Alt-Enter	View properties for selected object	F4	View drop-down menu for Address bar in Explorer/Internet Explorer
Alt-F4	Close current window or program	F5	Refresh the contents of the current window (reloads page in Internet Explorer)
Alt-F6	Switch between dialog boxes within the same program	F10	Select first menu item at top of window
Alt-Space	Display selected window's System menu	Shift-Delete	Deletes selected item permanently
Alt-Tab	Cycle between open programs	Shift-F10	Open context (right-click) menu
Backspace	Move up a level in My Computer view	Tab	Move between fields or options in a dialog box
Ctrl-A	Selects everything in the current window	Windows-Pause/Break	Open the System Control Panel
Ctrl-C	Copy selected item to clipboard	Windows-E	Open Windows Explorer at My Computer level
Ctrl-X	Cuts selected item to clipboard	Windows-M	Minimize all open windows
Ctrl-V	Pastes item in the clipboard	Windows-Shift-M	Undo minimize
Ctrl-Z	Undo the last action	Windows-R	Open the Run command box
Cursor keys	Move between options and items in the selected window	Windows (or Ctrl-Esc)	Open the Start menu
Esc	Cancel the currently running task		
F1	Open Help file for currently selected program (or Windows Help)		

unticking them, clicking OK and restarting when prompted.

Don't just disable everything though: some programs, like your Internet security software, are vital to the wellbeing of your PC. If you can't identify a start-up program, visit www.sysinfo.org/startuplist.php for a comprehensive list and tips on what to do with it.

■ If possible, look for an option in the program itself to disable it, rather than use the System Configuration Utility. If this fails, delete entries permanently by ticking them, checking their Location entry and then visiting the Registry or the All Programs > Startup folder to remove them.

■ If you're the only user of your computer, bypass the Welcome screen so you go straight to your desktop on startup. Click Start > Run, type control userpasswords2 and press Enter. Untick Users must enter a user name and password to use this computer, click Apply, type in your username and password (if applicable) and click OK twice.

■ If your PC has multiple users set up, you can switch between them without logging off: click Start > Log Off and choose Switch User. Don't forget to log off



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Cut back Services for extra speed

Services help keep Windows running smoothly, but not all of them are essential so cut back non-essential ones and reclaim some speed!

Services are programs that run invisibly in the background of your machine and are loaded before you log on to your system. Each Service consumes resources, but you won't necessarily need to use them all, enabling you to disable some and regain some much-needed memory for other programs.

Accessing the Services console is simple: click Start > Run, type services.msc and press Enter. Then click the multimedia button below to see how to switch

off and disable a service. Note that a Service can have one of three states: Automatic, Manual and Disabled. We suggest you set non-essential Services to Manual - that way they don't start with Windows, but can be called on if needed.

For a full list of Services, including what they do and what state you can set them to, visit www.blackviper.com/WinXP/servicecfg.htm

Alerter

Disable this unless you're sending messages over a network with it

Automatic Updates

Set to manual if you don't want XP to automatically download critical updates - make sure you visit Windows Update regularly yourself though

Computer Browser

If you're not on a network

DHCP Client

Disable it if you're not accessing the Internet through Internet Connection Sharing (ICS) or you're not connected to the Internet through a cable broadband connection

Distributed Link Tracking Client

If you're on a standalone computer or small home network

Error Reporting Service

If you get tired of being prompted to send error messages to Microsoft after crashes

Fast User Switching

Compatibility

Disable unless you have multiple users set up on your system and want to quickly switch between them

Help and Support

Switch it to Disabled - if you ever need it, it'll switch itself back to

Automatic

IMAPI CD-Burning COM Service

Disable if you don't use Windows' own CD-burning tools to write CDs

Indexing Service

Disable unless you're using indexing to help speed up file searches using the Search Utility

IPSEC Services

If you're not on a network with a domain or a virtual private network

Portable Media Serial Number

If you don't have a portable media player attached to your PC

Remote Registry Service

Not found in XP Home, but if you have XP Pro, disable it

Secondary Logon

Disable if you don't want to be able to install programs on a limited user account by supplying an administrator's username and password

Server

If you don't want to share files or printers attached to your PC across your network

TCP/IP NetBIOS Helper Service

If you're not on a network, or not on a network with older Win9x machines

Themes

If you use the classic Windows desktop, disabling this could save 4-12MB of memory

WebClient

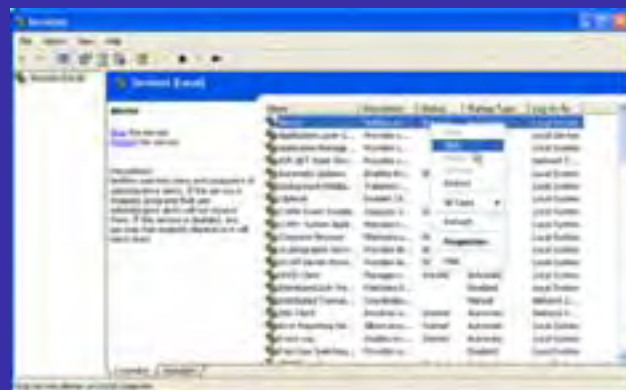
Try disabling it - if a Microsoft product complains, re-enable it

Windows Firewall/Internet Connection Sharing (ICS)

Disable if you have a third-party firewall installed and don't use ICS to share your Internet connection over your network

Wireless Zero Configuration

If you have no wireless devices attached to your PC, or you're not on a network with wireless machines



Where possible, find the option to disable a program's start-up routine from within its own options or configuration screen.

properly before shutting down your PC though or you may lose unsaved work.

■ Hibernating your PC enables you to restart from the same point you left it - with programs and documents open, ready to go, which is quicker than restarting your PC from scratch. To see if your PC supports Hibernation, open the Power Options Control Panel and look for a Hibernate tab. If it's there, tick Enable Hibernation to switch it on.

■ To hibernate your PC manually, click Start > Turn off computer. Hold Shift and you'll see the Hibernate option appear. Once selected - make sure you've saved all your documents first - your computer should go into hibernation and then power down. When you next start it, it will attempt to awaken from hibernation, placing you back at the exact spot when you hibernated.

■ By default, pressing the on button typically shuts down your PC. To make it hibernate your PC instead, switch to the Advanced tab on the Power Options Control Panel and select Hibernate from the 'When I press the power button on my computer' drop-down box. Click OK.

Speed up Windows

Still not satisfied by Windows' performance? Check out this collection of superb time-saving and performance-boosting tips.

■ Although graphics cards can display millions of colours, unless you specialise in graphic editing or games playing, you don't need all those colours. Switching the colour depth to 16-bit is barely noticeable, but will improve performance slightly. Open the Display Control Panel, switch to the Settings tab and select Medium (16 bit) under Color quality before clicking OK.

■ Look closely, and you'll see some clever effects when you open and close windows, or move them around the screen. If you're happy to sacrifice these effects in favour of a more zippy machine, open the System Control Panel and switch to the Advanced tab. Click Settings under Performance and select Adjust for best performance before clicking OK twice.

■ Check for updated graphics card drivers at your card manufacturer's Web site. These often introduce improved performance as well as bug fixes.

■ It's possible to run different programs at different priorities, so less important programs hand over resources to those that need it. There are six levels: Low,

Bypass the Welcome screen on startup with the help of a hidden Control Panel.



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Hibernation is more than just a power-saving tool; it can be used to speed up the boot process too.

BelowNormal, Normal, AboveNormal, High and RealTime. By default, all programs are given a priority of Normal.

You can change a running program's priority by pressing Ctrl + Alt + Del to open Task Manager. Switch to the Application tab, right-click the application in question and choose Go To Process. The program's corresponding process will be highlighted. Right-click it and select Set Priority followed by your chosen level. Click OK when prompted.

■ The highest priority you can give a program is RealTime, but resist the temptation to do so. Setting a program to this priority will give it priority over Windows itself, bringing your system grinding to a halt.

■ We also recommend keeping the number of programs set to High to a minimum, otherwise it becomes a somewhat pointless exercise.

■ Try setting programs that sit in the background to lower priorities, thus freeing up more resources for those you're currently using.

■ You can configure a program's shortcut to start with a set priority. Right-click the shortcut and select Properties. Copy the program's path from the Target box to the Start in: box instead, then remove it from

It's not just hard disks that can become fragmented; memory can too, so use a free tool like FreeRAM XP Pro to keep it running smoothly.

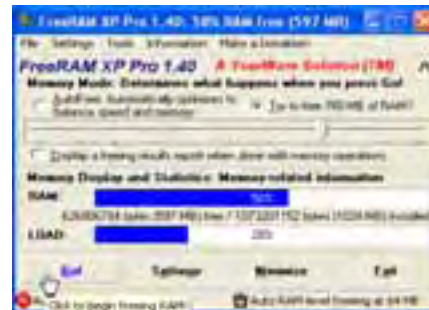
the Target box to leave just the program's filename (for example, PSP.EXE). Next, type the following into the beginning of the Target box, before your program's filename: CMD.EXE /C START /HIGH (replace HIGH with LOW, ABOVENORMAL or whichever priority you choose). Click OK and the icon will change (use the Change Icon button to change it back - you'll find the original icon by opening the program's executable file).

■ Defragmenting your hard drive rearranges the files and folders on it so it runs faster. If performance has become decidedly sluggish, a fragmented hard drive is usually the cause. Open My Computer, right-click your hard drive and select Properties > Tools tab, then click Defragment Now to access it.

■ Memory can become fragmented too, which leads to performance issues the longer your PC is switched on without restarting. Fix this problem by installing a free tool called FreeRAM XP Pro from www.yourwareolutions.com/download.html.

■ The Windows Search utility uses a wizard-like interface that can quickly become distracting. Disable it with the help of X-Setup Pro - in Classic mode, browse to Appearance\System\Find Files Dialog\Find Files Dialog Appearance and untick the box for a leaner, faster Search utility.

■ Windows indexes your files in the background to make the Search utility perform quicker. If you don't use it enough to justify the performance hit the Indexing Service demands, switch it off: to do so, open your new, improved Search utility and click the Indexing Service link to disable it.



10 top tweaks with X-Setup Pro

Discover how to improve Windows' performance without going to the lengths of hacking the Registry

X-Setup Pro (www.x-setup.net/) is a powerful tweaking utility that's free for personal use. We've picked out the 10 best tweaks, which you can access in Classic mode easily.

System\Advanced Performance Settings\Start High Priority Context Menu

Enable this option and you can launch any program at high priority by right-clicking its shortcut and choosing Start High Priority.

System\File System\App Paths\App Paths Editor

Create shortcuts that enable you to type a program or filename directly into the Start > Run box without having to provide the full path.

System\File System\Windows NT\2K\XP Options\Windows File System Options

If you no longer use DOS in any shape or form, or don't need to know when a file was last accessed, disable these two options to speed up your system.

System\File System\Windows Prefetching\Prefetch Options

Prefetching works by loading portions of programs at Windows startup for faster execution. If you'd rather load Windows quicker instead, untick one or both options here.

System\Screensaver\Password Grace Period

When you password-protect your screensaver, a small amount of time is allowed to pass after the screensaver kicks in before you have to type your password to exit it. Extend this period here.

Hardware\Modem\COM Port Speeds

If you have a dial-up modem connected to your serial port (not USB), speed it up by ticking your modem's COM port here.

Hardware\NIC Cards\NIC Task Offloading

If you're connected to a network through a wired Ethernet card or port that has its own onboard processor, verify it's enabled here to reduce the load on your main processor.

Network\Quality of Service\QoS Percentage

Windows reserves a portion of your network bandwidth for programs like

Windows Update. Try reducing this figure to speed up your network without affecting the programs in question.

Startup\Shutdown\Shutdown\Windows NT\2K\XP\10 Program Shutdown\Program Timeout

By default, Windows waits 20 seconds for programs to exit before forcibly closing them. Speed up a sluggish shut-down process by reducing this figure to five seconds.

Startup\Shutdown\Shutdown\Windows NT\2K\XP\20 Services Shutdown\Service Timeout

Windows also waits a long time for misbehaving Services. Reduce the wait to five seconds here.

X-Setup Pro enables you to speed up Windows by changing Registry settings in a friendlier environment.



Did you know you can move your broadband service to PIPEX? Place your mouse cursor over for more info...

PROJECT TIME 5-10 MINS TUTORIAL LEVEL BEGINNER SOFTWARE REQUIRED ISSUE MANAGER (FREE)

Issue Manager

Here's how Issue Manager works to make sure that you never miss out on a new issue, and to manage past issues. All for free!



This tutorial... The Issue Manager automatic features and interface explained.

Issue Manager is a special piece of software written to allow you to subscribe to our free magazines, like the one you're reading now. Once installed it simply checks our server once a day, or whenever you start up, to see if any new magazines have been published. No information, personal or otherwise, is sent to the server. It simply works by retrieving a file from our server to extract information from and compare with what you have already downloaded. If a new issue, or an update for Issue Manager, is available, a balloon will pop up in the System Tray informing you.

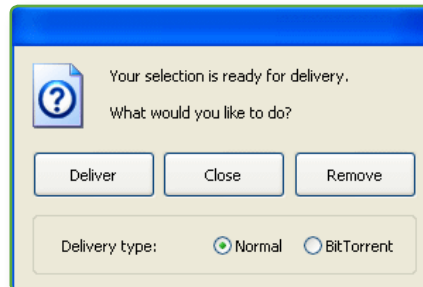
You can click in the balloon to see the Delivery dialog and select to get the new issue now, close the dialog or Remove the issue. If you choose Remove, you will not be shown the dialog again for that issue, nor will you be able to retrieve it manually from the main Issue Manager interface. If you click Close, you will be able to go into the interface and download the issue manually later, or Issue Manager will remind you the next time you start up or a day later.

As well as downloading the issues, Issue Manager keeps track of them for you, so you don't need to search your hard drive, just click on the Issue Manager icon in the System Tray to load the main interface. Then click in the My Magazines section to see the magazines you have downloaded to your PC.

DID YOU KNOW?...

As well as using the buttons in the main interface, you can right click on the issues to download or remove them from the context menu. In the System Tray, left clicking on the Issue Manager icon will open the interface, while right clicking will give you quick access to checking for new magazines or versions.

Select a magazine and then select an issue to load from the pane on the right. Double click to load the issue straight into Adobe Acrobat Reader. You'll notice that Issue Manager can deal with multiple magazines, so as well as getting the main magazine, you can also



If you see the Tool Tip balloon appear in the System Tray, you can just click in the balloon to open the delivery dialog straight up and get your new issues delivered immediately.

choose to get the supplements, like the bonus tutorial we publish every month for subscribers and subscribers to our email newsletter, and any other magazines we publish in the future.

Issue Manager is designed for broadband users as it requires a connection to the internet to check for new issues and because it only downloads the full broadband editions. It has a very small overhead when checking the server, once on startup or once a day, and when not checking the memory overhead is next to nothing, while CPU usage is zero, so it won't affect your PC's performance. **HCM**

EXPLAINED...

Issue Manager

The Issue Manager not only helps you download, it also files issues for you.

How to find it...

Start/All Programs/Cranberry Publishing or in your System Tray after installing

1 Issue Manager makes a check to see if there are any new issues when you start your PC, or if you leave your PC switched on, it will check once a day. If you want to check the server manually though, you can just press this button.

2 If there are any new magazines, or ones you haven't downloaded yet, they will show here in the Delivery pane.

On the left is a tick box to allow you to select the issue, either for delivery or removal. The issue will be selected by default. The title of the issue is shown, with its issue number, the name of the publication, what is happening and a filesize.

3 If you have a magazine showing in the Delivery pane, make sure it is selected and then click on Deliver. This will open the Operations dialog. Here you can click on a delivery method. Normal will download the magazine PDF straight away from our server. BitTorrent will download the Torrent file so you can use your BitTorrent client to download the magazine. If you are unsure what to use, leave it with the default Normal. Click on Deliver to download the magazine, Close to go back to the main screen, or Remove to delete the selected magazine(s) from the list in the Delivery pane.

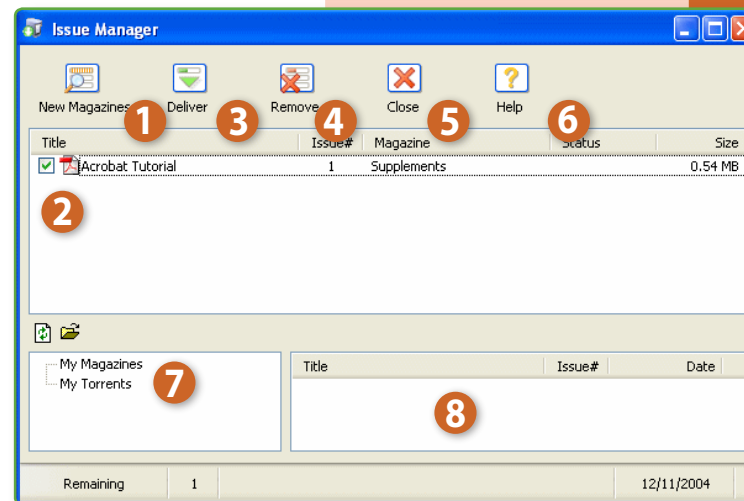
4 If you decide you don't want an issue, select it in the Delivery pane and click here, but remember this will remove it permanently from the list.

5 Close the Issue Manager main window and send it back to the System Tray.

6 Find the version number, Help file (this document) and manually check for Issue Manager software updates.

7 Click here to see the list of magazines you have issues of stored on your PC. Select a magazine and the issues will appear in (8). The same is the case for issue torrents downloaded.

8 Double click on any issue that is listed here and it will be loaded in Acrobat Reader for you.



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Dell Outlet

Dell Outlet offers equipment from the entire Dell range, from office servers and family PCs to Notebooks. With the benefit of Dell quality at an exceptional price Dell Outlet offers reliability and peace of mind with a full Dell warranty on each product. With no hidden surprises, we are the official Dell discount store offering further value for money



Home Computer Reviews

This month we've tested a variety of peripherals, tried out two very different laptops, and played the latest games. It's all here in our reviews section.

This month, we've reviewed a real mix of innovative products to enhance your home computing. Laptop users frustrated by the audio limitations of their machines should check out the extra listening power that the Creative Audigy 2 ZS Notebook can afford you. If you make lots of use of your printer, you can save desk space and money with the HP Photosmart 2710, which combines printer, scanner, fax and copier to excellent effect and if you're looking for a new PC, check out the Dell Dimension 5000.

We take a look too at two laptops with distinct features. The JVC Mininote weighs in at under 1.5kg which makes it truly portable, but is it too small or can it still pack a punch? The Fujitsu-Siemens Lifebook is a Tablet PC complete with pen; is this a viable everyday alternative to a regular laptop?

As for software, we've tested Microsoft Digital Image Suite and Adobe Photoshop Elements, and we've played the new Football Manager 2005: can it live up to its Championship Manager forebears?

How we test

Quite simply, we test by using. If we feel there is a particular need for benchmark testing, we will use it, but the truth is that benchmarking is for hardcore users and press releases. Most benchmarks, should you want them in addition to our review information, are available from the excellent web resource, Tom's Hardware website. Most hardware though, such as PC systems, is well specified enough that speed is not an issue for home users. Much more important are reliability, ease of use and value for money and these are the things paramount in our mind when we review.

Rest assured though, all our reviewers have been working in the industry for a long enough time that they know what you should expect from a particular purchase and if a product doesn't measure up, either

because its specifications are below par or because it doesn't operate as it should, then we will tell you.

What's more, you don't have to just take our word for it. With our revolutionary Readers' Verdict, you can see up-to-the-minute responses to our reviews from other readers. So, if you've got one of the products reviewed and want to comment on it, or you want to see everyone's opinion before making a new purchase, make sure you click on the Readers' Verdict section at the bottom of each review.

How we score

We rate our reviews using a five star system, rating Features, Reliability, Value for money and Overall. There is a star rating for each of these shown with each review. Listed below is an explanation of what each value means.

- ★★★★★ Unbelievably awful. Enough said.
- ★★★★☆ Poor performance. The product is seriously deficient in this area.
- ★★★☆☆ Below average. The product offers something, but it is not enough unless you require its specific function and have no alternative.
- ★★★☆☆ A good performer, but we either feel the product is lacking or it has displayed flaws in use.
- ★★★★☆ Very good. Really this is where you should expect anything produced by a reputable company to be at. It does what it says and does it well.
- ★★★★★ Above and beyond the call of duty. Real care and attention have been put into this creation.

Home Computer Magazine Award Winner

If a product performs highly enough, we like to show our appreciation with this award. If you're looking to buy a product in this area, then this is the one we'd recommend.



Why our reviews are the best...

We give you all the details you need to make a buying decision, price, delivery where applicable, and importantly where to buy...

PRODUCT DETAILS

Price £343.10 inc VAT (£292.00 ex VAT) **Delivery** From £5
Available from Simply Computers **Tel** 0870 727 2110
Web www.simply.co.uk

SPECIFICATIONS

Paper sizes Legal, A4 **Memory** 16MB RAM **Processor** OAK OTI-4110 150 MHz **Resolution** (colour and b&w) 600 dpi x 600 dpi
Print Speed Up to 16 ppm – b&w, Up to 4 ppm – colour **Connectivity** Hi-Speed USB interface **Dimensions** 22 kg, 48.2 cm x 45.1 cm x 32.5 cm

Also, all the facts and figures you need to know, from how much space its going to take up, to how fast it is...

Our star system shows you how we rate each aspect of the product's performance, and how we rate the product overall

Our Verdict

Features	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
Overall Score	★★★★★

Reader Verdict



Click to read reviews of this product by other readers, or add your own if you own this product.

We even let you post your own verdict, or read opinions from people who have bought the product

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CREATIVITY SOFTWARE

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GAME

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Dell Dimension 5000 (D01505)

You must have spotted Dell's adverts for its PCs in your paper or on the TV, so are they worth further investigation?

PRODUCT DETAILS

Price £1063 inc VAT (£905 ex VAT) **Delivery** £57.58 **Available from** Dell
Web <http://www.dell.co.uk> **Telephone** 0870 907 5818

SPECIFICATIONS

Intel Pentium 4 530 processor with HT technology (3.00GHz), Microsoft Windows XP Home Edition, 512MB DDR RAM, 160GB SATA hard disk, DVD +/-RW drive, 17" LCD TFT (1280x1024), 128MB ATI X300SE graphics card, Ethernet port

Dell, it has to be said, enjoys a unique position in the UK PC market. It's the only major system builder to advertise on a national scale throughout the print and broadcast media, yet it doesn't sell its wares on the high street or internet via a retailer, preferring to sell direct to the end-user. The idea behind this business model is that it lowers the price of its products, making them more attractive. And it has to be said that it works. Cutting out the middle man (PC World or Dabs, for example) means you can buy this very system for around £1000. Of course, there are any number of other, smaller system builders employing a similar philosophy. Evesham is just one and its Axis range is a firm HCM favourite after we reviewed one of its PCs in our first issue, so which of

the two should you spend your money on? After all, the sub £1,000 price bracket may represent the lower half of the PC pricing ladder but it's still a significant lump of cash.

Spot the Difference

You might think that a major difference between the two systems' specifications would lie in the processor. Evesham's Axis 64A30P sports an AMD Athlon64 3000+ while this Dell Dimension 5000 is built around an Intel Pentium 4 processor (cue familiar jingle) clocked at 3GHz. Despite what Intel and AMD would have you believe, there's very little difference between the two in terms of real-world performance, either when gaming or running office applications. It comes down to any personal preference you might have; while each processor has its own strengths and weaknesses, when taken as a whole they manage to cancel each other out. Comparing the specifications of the Dell and Evesham machines you might notice that they each feature a different graphics card, though this too results in a similar level of parity. The Dell Dimension is the more forward-looking of the duo in this department, though, featuring an ATI X300SE card while the Evesham relies on a slightly older ATI Radeon 9550. While the product names might not reveal much, the X300SE in the Dell is a PCI Express graphics card. PCI Express is the latest high-speed interface to emerge on the motherboard and is slowly replacing the existing expansion slots which are used for graphics cards, sound cards and other peripherals such as network adapters. While the latter devices have yet to demand the increased bandwidth that PCI Express offers over and above the regular PCI standard, today's high-performance graphics cards do need more than



"What this PC is designed for is general home and multimedia use. It's unlikely that you'd ever need to add a secondary hard drive or upgrade the existing one."

the current AGP 8x Interface can offer. With a roughly twofold increase in bandwidth, PCI Express opens the door to faster graphics and the ability to play the latest, most demanding games in all their glory. Which, to be fair, isn't really something that the X300SE or rest of the Dimension's components are geared towards. Power gamers would be well advised to look elsewhere or be prepared to spend more money on upgrades.

Horses for Courses

No, what this PC is designed for is general home and multimedia use. The capacious 160GB Serial-ATA hard drive is well tailored to an avid digital photographer or even home video fan. The S-ATA connection (another forward looking technology) provides a rapid transfer of data to and from the drive and it's unlikely that you'd ever need to add a secondary hard drive or upgrade the existing one. If you do start to feel the squeeze, the DVD +/-RW drive provides an excellent way of archiving digital media files and freeing up space on your system. Saying that this PC (indeed, any PC) is future-proof is a fallacy; technology moves so fast and moves in so many new directions that it's impossible to

Dell regularly runs special offers so it's unlikely you'll ever need to pay the full listed price.

apply the term. But it is fair to say that the Dimension is better prepared for upgrades than the Evesham system. That's not enough to merit a higher score as you pay more for the privilege (around £100) but it should make your mind up for you. If you want an excellent budget system, buy the Evesham. If, on the other hand, you want the option of upgrading and increasing your PC's performance a year or two down the line, the Dell is the answer. It's your choice. **HCM**

Our Verdict

Features	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
Overall Score	★★★★★

Reader Verdict



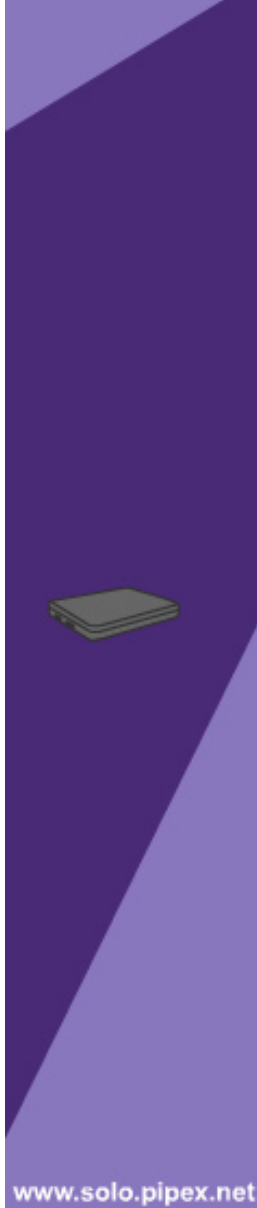
Click to read reviews of this product by other readers, or add your own if you own this product.



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The burning question

The DVD burner that comes as standard with the Dimension 5000 is capable of burning dual-layered DVD discs, that is discs which can store one track of data on the uppermost layer and another just below it. The laser that reads and writes the data is able to change focus from one layer to another and therefore increases the capacity of a single DVD from just over 4GB to over 8GB.



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£2.08
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- 500Mb Webspace
- 10 Gb Transfer Pm
- Easy Control Panel
- 10 Pop3 Mailboxes
- Email forwarding
- Free Email Support

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Your Trusted
Partner on the web

HP Photosmart 2710 All-in-One

If you've got the muscle and the wallet for it, this new multi-function device could become your new best friend

PRODUCT DETAILS

Price £273.49 inc VAT (£232.76 ex VAT) **Delivery** £6 **Available from** Dabs.com **Web** <http://www.dabs.com>

SPECIFICATIONS

Printer speed mono to 30ppm draft, 2.1ppm best, colour to 21ppm draft, 2.1ppm best **Print quality** to 4800 x 1200 dpi **Fax speed** 3 secs/A4 page **Optical scanning resolution** 2400 x 4800 dpi **Bit depth** 48bit **Memory cards** CompactFlash I/II, IBM MicroDrive, SmartMedia, Secure Digital/Multimedia, Fuji xD, Sony Memory Stick/Pro/Duo **Connectivity** USB 2.0, 802.11b/g wireless, Ethernet, PictBridge **Dimensions** 466x370x216mm

This is an imposing piece of hardware; just lugging it into your home is an effort, it weighs so much. Unpacking the 2710 confirms your suspicions: the large granite grey and silver lump of plastic manages to look somehow both purposeful and menacing. But that doesn't negate its trump card: despite its size, the PSC 2710 still saves significant desk space by combining a photo-quality inkjet printer, scanner, copier and fax machine in a single box.

Make the connection

Multifunction devices are nothing new; Epson, Canon and Lexmark all offer their own models but what raises the 2710 above the rest is its connectivity. Like the

6 ink printing

The 2710 can improve your photo prints by replacing the black mono cartridge with a second tri-colour cartridge. This second cartridge can contain light cyan, light magenta for colour photos and black or a pair of greys and a black for black and white photos. The improvement in tone and colour is not really noticeable on busy 6"x4" prints but more pronounced when you print larger, higher resolution images.

2710's smaller sibling, the 2510 which featured in our top 20 products of 2004 last issue, an integrated wireless connection is available so the printer/scanner/copier can be shared among your wirelessly-networked PCs. You don't need a print server or to keep the PC to which the printer's directly connected turned on for other PCs to use it. As well as the wireless adapter, a standard USB connection, regular wired Ethernet connection and host of memory card slots mean you can hook up just about anything PC related.

Setting up

Given this variety of methods of communication it's perhaps unsurprising that setting up the 2710 demands a good hour or more of your time. It's not as difficult as you might expect but the process is time consuming nonetheless. Setting up the wireless network adapter takes the longest as you'll be required to enter your network's WEP key via the keypad on the 2710 itself. This is, of course, time well spent as it ensures that your network's integrity isn't compromised. Installing the software takes nearly as long and will Hoover up close to 800MB of hard drive space on your PCs, though a low-fat option is offered, too. Much of the software is optional but, for once, most of what's installed is useful. HP's Director program has been renovated, making it easier to use, and puts the full range of the 2710's capabilities at your finger tips.

Multi-functionality

And what a range it is; there isn't a weak link to be found. The printer is as adept at handling home office duties as it is digital photographs from the kid's birthday parties. The memory card slots allow you to



Multifunction devices are leaving their SOHO habitat and coming into homes like yours.

print photos directly from a digital camera without having to go via the PC and there's even a PictBridge port for compatible cameras. Prints are as good as we've seen produced by any inkjet printer and, with high enough resolution images, they compare favourably with professional prints. It also prints photos without any borders, putting an end to the annoying white boundaries that have dogged inkjet photo prints in the past.

As a scanner it's equally accomplished, quickly scanning photos and documents in rich colour and at an optical resolution of up to 2400 x 4800dpi. The integrated OCR (Optical Character Recognition) software leaves a little to be desired but that's a small quail. The scanner/printer combination allows the 2710 to carry out its other two roles as a copier and fax machine. Both tasks can again be performed without the assistance of a PC thanks to the 2710's excellent control panel. You can instantly photocopy a document or image by placing it on the bed of the scanner and pressing either the Mono or Colour button on the front. Sending and receiving faxes is no more difficult, though will take an extra fifteen minutes to connect to your telephone line and configure.

A good deal?

Obviously if you pay £320 for a peripheral you expect it to perform as well as this. Whether the asking price represents value for money is another matter and with the 2510 nearing the end of its lifecycle, we'd be willing to plump for the older model and the savings that are available. But if you're after the last word in home printing and office functionality, we're sure you'll have no problem convincing yourself that it's not an unreasonable price tag. [\[CUT\]](#)

Our Verdict

Features	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★☆
Overall Score	★★★★★

Reader Verdict



Click to read reviews of this product by other readers, or add your own if you own this product.



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Dell Outlet

Dell Outlet offers equipment from the entire Dell range, from office servers and family PCs to Notebooks. With the benefit of Dell quality at an exceptional price Dell Outlet offers reliability and peace of mind with a full Dell warranty on each product. With no hidden surprises, we are the official Dell discount store offering further value for money

Creative Audigy 2 ZS Notebook

Laptops' processors, graphics and hard drives are always improving, but not sound. Until now...

PRODUCT DETAILS

Price £84.98 inc VAT (£72.33 ex VAT) **Delivery** £6 **Available from** Dabs.com **Web** <http://www.dabs.com>

SPECIFICATIONS

Supports Dolby Digital EX, DTS-ES, EAX 4.0/DVD-Audio **Inputs** Combination optical SPDIF/3.5mm stereo mini-jack **Outputs** Combination optical SPDIF/3.5mm stereo mini-jack, 3 x analogue line out (up to 7.1 channels) **Dynamic range** 192dB **Sampling rate** up to 192kHz, 24-bit

As marvellous as today's laptops are, there's still an area in which they suffer: audio. Even the specialist gaming and multimedia models like the HP Pavilion that we reviewed in issue 1 suffer from poor sound. It's not surprising, really; there isn't enough room to fit a decent set of speakers into a laptop chassis, so shoehorning a top of the line audio processor into the limited space is largely redundant. Consequently even when you listen with headphones or connect to a set of powered speakers, music, movies and games often sound far short of stellar.

Creative, M-Audio and Terratec among others have tried to remedy the situation with USB sound cards, external units about the size of a packet of cards that connect to the PC via a regular USB cable. They were good but not a patch on this latest audio innovation

Seventh Heaven

If you're only just getting the hang of 5.1 surround sound then 7.1 can sound like a satellite speaker too far. The extra channels come from an extra pair of rear speakers so you have a centre speaker, left front, right front, left & right side and left & right rear speakers (with the subwoofer comprising the .1 part). DVDs with Dolby Digital EX and DTS-ES soundtracks use these extra speakers, as do computer games.

from PC sound pioneers Creative. The Audigy 2 ZS Notebook is, to our knowledge, the first PCMCIA sound card. It's certainly the first to boast such an impressive specification: 7.1 channel surround sound is yours for the listening along with Dolby Digital and DTS decoding, as many connections as a workaholic Hollywood agent and, most importantly, crystal clear sound quality.

Sound investment

It really is quite a revelation in use. Simply slide it into the PCMCIA card slot on your laptop, load the drivers and copious software from the CD and you're away. The card will automatically disable your laptop's onboard audio processor and speakers while it's installed so you don't even need to go into your laptop's audio settings to ensure that it works smoothly. And the beauty of being a PCMCIA sound card lies in the fact that it's powered by the laptop itself, so you can keep the card installed and enjoy its sound while you're out and about. It does reduce your battery's longevity (our aging test laptop ran for about 83 minutes while we listened to music compared to the 110-odd minutes we can usually squeeze out of it) but if you've got a relatively new Centrino laptop, for instance, you'll be more than able to reach the end of a DVD whilst riding the train.

Of course, many laptops never leave their desktop home and the attendant mains power supply, and it's here that the Audigy 2 ZS Notebook really shines. Between the integrated combination optical/analogue input and output on the card is a proprietary serial port which connects to a trio of analogue audio connections. With these you can connect the sound card to any one of Creative's surround sound speaker

HOME
COMPUTER
MAGAZINE
AWARD WINNER
★★★★★



"Audio is crisp, clean and full-bodied whatever your tastes run to and it's a massive improvement on existing laptop audio"

It might not look like much but this little sound card punches above its weight.

sets to take advantage of the card's multi-channel audio capabilities. Creative's EAX software provides gamers with cinematic audio in up to 7.1 channels and makes for a more involving playing experience, while Dolby and DTS decoding means that movies can be enjoyed in their full sonic glory, too. But it's not just about surround sound; even if you only listen to MP3s on your headphones you'll benefit from the card. Audio is crisp, clean and full-bodied whatever your tastes run to and it's a massive improvement on existing laptop audio.

Get the most from your laptop

Whether you'll view the asking price as reasonable or not comes down to how you use your laptop. If you're a casual audio user then it's not likely you'll get your money's worth. It's also possible that you've got more useful peripherals for filling the sole PCMCIA slot on your laptop. This brings us nicely to a cautionary note: if you rely on connecting to your wireless network via a PCMCIA wi-fi card, you'll need to choose between internet access and audio. It's this very reason that's behind the timing of the card's launch, if you're sat at home wondering why nobody's ever made a PCMCIA

sound card before. With laptops today featuring integrated wireless network adapters it leaves the PCMCIA slot empty in most instances, ready to be filled with something like this. We wonder if the Audigy 2 ZS is the first in a wave of new peripherals designed to take advantage of the recently vacated PCMCIA slot; if it is, we can only hope that they're each as accomplished as this. If your laptop is your main PC and you enjoy MP3s, audio from the internet, DVDs or games then this will open up a whole new world. [Read more](#)

Our Verdict

Features	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
Overall Score	★★★★★

Reader Verdict



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Fujitsu-Siemens Lifebook T4010

Add pen and paper functionality to your next laptop computer with a combination tablet PC

PRODUCT DETAILS

Price £1796.55 inc VAT (£1528.98 ex VAT) **Delivery** £10 **Available from** Laptopshop **Web** <http://www.laptopshop.co.uk> **Tel** 01255 422033

SPECIFICATIONS

Intel Pentium M 1.8GHz with Centrino technology, Microsoft Windows XP Tablet Edition, 512MB RAM, 60GB hard disk, DVD/CD-RW drive, 12.1 inch active display (1024 x 768), Intel 855GME graphics processor, Ethernet port, 802.11g wireless LAN, modem, VGA out, infrared, 1 x PCMCIA slot, 2 x USB 2.0, headphone in/out, MS/SD card slot, 1 x Firewire, dimensions (WxHxD) 293mm x 37.5mm x 244mm, weight 2Kg

All things considered, it's a surprise that tablet PCs haven't been a bigger success. Not only are they lightweight, portable and powerful enough to do anything you want (except play games, anyway), you can operate them using one of mankind's most loved tools: the stylus. Take a second to look at your hand and think about how well suited something as simple as a pencil is. It's comfortable to hold and you can draw and write with complete control and an amazing degree of accuracy. Man has been using the pen, stylus or twig for millennia and even chimpanzees hold sticks in the same way as we hold a pen (except they use them to pick up ant and termite snacks, rather than penning a letter to aunty). If you've never used a tablet PC before, navigating in this

Windows XP Tablet Edition

Microsoft has added a number of exclusive features to its tablet PC operating system to help you get along without a keyboard and mouse. Along with handwriting recognition is speech recognition, enabling you to dictate documents and also operate basic Windows functions. It's not perfect and takes time to get used to, but does offer potential.

manner is a startling revelation. It's so natural and intuitive that it takes hardly any time to pick up.

The one factor holding tablet PCs back from world domination is the software. For all Microsoft's hard work and dedicated operating system (Win XP Tablet Edition includes many special utilities and features for the platform), the tablet PC can't quite perform the same range of tasks as a regular notebook PC. This is largely due to the fact that handwriting recognition technology hasn't reached a point where you can quickly knock out an essay or letter by writing on the touch-sensitive screen and have it reliably converted to a typed Word document. Hence a keyboard is still de rigueur for people with reports to write and emails to send. All of which makes the convertible laptop/tablet PC an ideal compromise.

Do the twist

Fujitsu-Siemens' Stylistic range of tablet PCs are excellent and this, the higher specified of the two-model Lifebook T Series, builds on this success. Shut down and closed up the T4010 looks pretty much like any other laptop, but open it and you soon realise what's on offer. By twisting the monitor on its vertical axis through 180 degrees and folding it flat against the keyboard you turn the laptop into a tablet PC. Although it's bulkier than an out-and-out "slate" tablet and half a kilo heavier, the benefits conferred more than compensate for this.

Not only do you get a full-size QWERTY keyboard, you also enjoy an integrated DVD/CD-RW drive, something that's usually an external peripheral with slate tablets. The screen, while not providing a terribly high resolution (it measures just 1024 x 768 pixels on what's a 12 inch screen), is crisp, clear and responsive in



"An integrated wireless network adapter enables you to gain easy access to wi-fi internet hotspots or a residential network."



use with the stylus. It is one of the best touch screens (or "active digitizer" to give it its proper name) we've used, so you can work your way around Windows, your files and software accurately and reliably.

Light but no lightweight

The rest of the specification is equally impressive, with an Intel Pentium M processor running at 1.8GHz, a 60GHz hard drive and half a gigabyte of RAM. It's enough power to run anything you'd realistically want to on the Lifebook; although it's not suitable for games or CAD, for example, it'll run office, multimedia and internet software with nary a murmur. An integrated wireless network adapter enables you to gain easy access to wi-fi internet hotspots or a residential network and although the battery won't last the five hours quoted by Fujitsu-Siemens, you'll likely see the better part of three hours without trouble. A Bluetooth adapter is an optional extra but with the rise in popularity of wi-fi it's unlikely you'll need it.

The extra functionality of this combination laptop/tablet PC and ultra-portable weight/dimensions goes some way to justify the high price tag, as the T4010 is

The display's hinge is sturdier than it looks and shouldn't cause you any trouble.

one of the more expensive tablets on the market. Acer offers a similarly specified convertible laptop/tablet for £1120 (the 302 XMi) but it's 740g heavier than the T4010 and rather too unwieldy to use for extended periods of time as a tablet. In fact, it makes you realise how good the Lifebook is, as a PC in general and as a proper tablet. If you're considering buying a high-end laptop, take the time to check the convertible concept out – you'll be glad you did. [\[EVE\]](#)

Our Verdict

Features	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★☆
Overall Score	★★★★★

Reader Verdict



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Mini Note MP-XV841

If a regular laptop is still too big and heavy for you, take a look at JVC's pint-sized portable

PRODUCT DETAILS

Price £1,526.32 inc VAT (£1299 ex VAT) **Delivery** £7 **Available from** Dabs **Web** <http://www.dabs.com> **Tel** 0870 330 5000

SPECIFICATIONS

Intel Pentium M 1.0GHz with Centrino technology, Microsoft Windows XP Home Edition, 256MB DDR RAM, 40GB hard disk, DVD/CD-RW drive, 9 inch widescreen (1024 x 600), Intel Extreme 2 graphics processor, Ethernet port, 802.11g wireless LAN, dimensions (WxHxD): 235mm x 43.2mm x 214mm, weight: 1.47Kg

Here's a question to ponder: at what point does a laptop computer become too small to be viable? When does it become a glorified PDA? It's something worth pondering as you become acquainted with JVC's newest Mini Note PC. Barely larger than a hardback novel (and only marginally heavier), it's currently the smallest laptop you can buy and yet it features all of the modern amenities you'd expect. At its core is Intel's Centrino technology, which roughly translates into a processor running at 1GHz, a wireless network adapter and a battery life that would even impress the Duracell bunny.

And the point is...

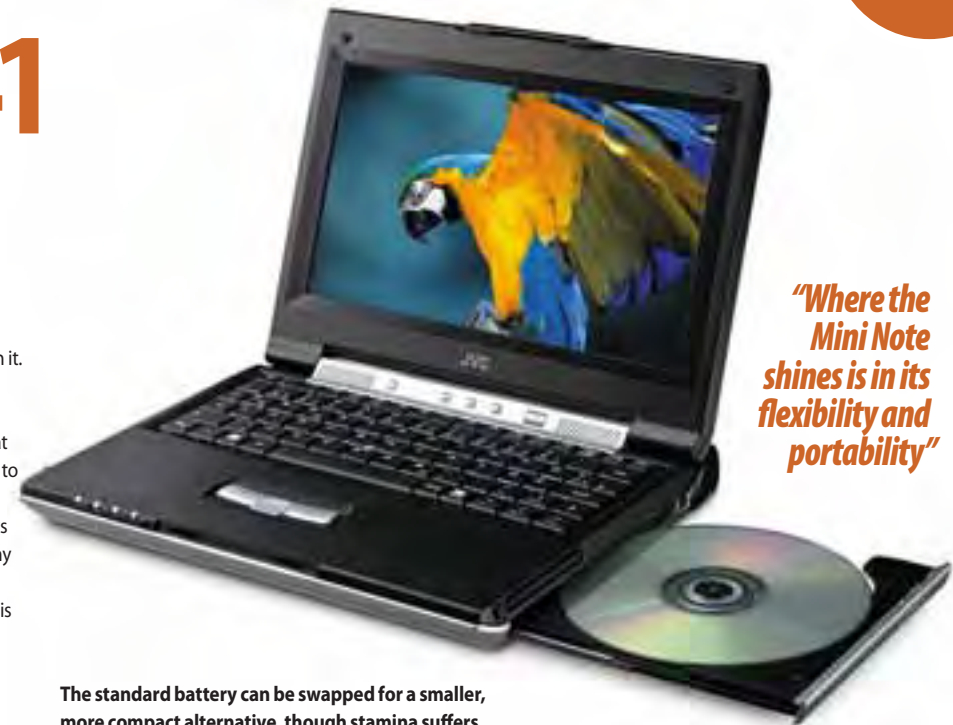
But what would you use it for? Despite cramming a full QWERTY keyboard into its 23cm wide chassis, it's not a

Port in a storm

There's simply not enough room to cram in all the USB, network, audio and serial ports from the back of your desktop into a laptop. Consequently the port replicator was born: a rectangular block of plastic that holds all of the connections that don't fit on the laptop itself. The Mini Note makes excellent use of this, providing an extra four USB ports, a VGA out, optical audio out and a second Ethernet port.

dream to type with and you certainly wouldn't contemplate writing the next Booker prize winner on it. Even on train journeys, anything more than a quick email or spreadsheet amendment becomes a test of manual dexterity and digit nimbleness. The screen, at only 600 pixels tall, isn't of a large enough resolution to display some internet pages fully, these days, so any applications requiring an expanse of empty Windows desktop will be disappointed. Likewise it hampers any gaming aspirations you might have, if you've got anything that's undemanding enough to run with this system's specification.

No, where the Mini Note shines is in its flexibility and portability, and it's not until you've turned it on, connected it to your wireless network and had it at your side for those occasions when a PC with internet access is such a boon that you fully appreciate this. In this respect it's a viable alternative to the tablet PC, which is also tremendously mobile and is ideal to have at hand on those occasions when you need to be connected. Whether you want to surf the internet for TV listings from your sofa, download a recipe or keep up to date with the news while you're in the garage working on the car, it's great to have around. It's also great to take out and about on the road. Even though the keyboard is on the small side, it is usable enough to enable you to employ whatever software you choose to install on it. There's even an integrated DVD combi drive, too. This means that you can play DVD movies on the Mini Note, which is the perfect task for the 9" (diagonal) widescreen display. Coated with a glossy film which helps to make colours appear more vibrant on-screen, the widescreen aspect is pleasingly large enough to enjoy a DVD while you're on the train, for instance. The battery will last as long as all but the most bloated director's editions; we managed to scrape 2.5 hours while watching a DVD and using headphones and when we turned to more menial



"Where the Mini Note shines is in its flexibility and portability"

The standard battery can be swapped for a smaller, more compact alternative, though stamina suffers.

tasks we were impressed to achieve 4.5. Even though each is shy of the overly optimistic figures quoted by JVC (3 hours and 6.7 hours respectively) they're still more enduring than most laptops you'll come across.

Chequebook

The Mini Note also has all of the connections you'd expect to find on a larger laptop, too. A docking bar helps the cause, which can be plugged into a port on the side of the Mini Note itself. The docking port is joined by a pair of USB 2.0 ports, a PCMCIA slot, mini IEEE1394 port, and modem and network ports. These all accompany the integrated 802.11g wireless network adapter. The wi-fi adapter can be turned on and off at will via a sliding switch on the side of the notebook, helping you to draw the battery life out longer when you're not in the area of a wireless network. In fact, it's only really the diminutive screen and keyboard that remind you that the Mini Note isn't a full size laptop. In every other respect you're treated to a complete computing experience and at no point are you compromised by the hardware. The processor,

graphics chip, memory and hard drive are all up to performing a wider range of tasks than a PDA could ever hope to cope with, and doing so in a form that's so consummately portable. Yes, the portability comes at a price and it won't meet everyone's demands, but if you're after a second PC for the home or a portable computer it's one worth paying. **CC**

Our Verdict

Features	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
Overall Score	★★★★★

Reader Verdict



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Air Live Wi-Fi adapter

Add wireless network and internet access to your next order at Starbucks with the handy Air Live WL-5460USB Wi-Fi adapter from OvisLink

PRODUCT DETAILS

Price £30 inc VAT (£24.95 ex VAT) **Available from** Cablelines Ltd **Tel** 0115 949 1010 **Web** <http://www.airlive.co.uk> (product information) <http://www.cablelines.com> (ordering information)

SPECIFICATIONS

Dimensions 75 mm x 24 mm x 9 mm **Weight** 11g **Supports** IEEE 802.11b/g (up to 54Mbps) **Security** 64/128-bit WEP encryption, WPA **Connection** USB 2.0 **Requires** Windows 98SE or above



A short USB extension lead is included if your PC's USB ports are obstructed.

mean that you lose a USB port that could be filled with other peripherals. It'll not take kindly to being connected via a USB hub, either, so bear that in mind if you're particularly short on ports.

Those issues aside, though, the Air Live is easy to use. You'll need to install the necessary drivers on your PC first, of course, but after that you can connect and disconnect the adapter as you please. In fact, it's everything you want in an occasional adapter: it's lightweight, easy to use and should be the second thing you reach for after your biscotti the next time you're out for a coffee. **HCN**

Our Verdict

Features	★★★★☆
Reliability	★★★★☆
Value for money	★★★★☆
Overall Score	★★★★☆

Reader Verdict



Click to read reviews of this product by other readers, or add your own if you own this product.

BatteryLife Activator

Play for longer and talk more by boosting your laptop and mobile phone batteries

PRODUCT DETAILS

Price €10 (approximately £7) for mobile phone patch, laptop patch price to be confirmed **Available from** BatteryLife **Email** graham.jackson@batterylife.co.uk (for ordering information) **Web** <http://www.batterylife.de> (product info)

SPECIFICATIONS

Dimensions 50 mm x 35 mm



One size fits all: you can trim the patch with scissors to make it fit your battery.

OK folks, listen up: whatever you might be thinking about this little square of black sticky-backed plastic, forget it right now. This is no late-night info-mercial scam, it really does work. As inauspicious as it appears, the BatteryLife Activator will actually enable you to extend the life of a lithium ion battery, such as might be found in your laptop, MP3 player or mobile phone. And, frankly, we were as surprised as you are sceptical right now.

Explaining exactly how it works would require a doctorate in physics and chemistry but the long and the short of it is this: the sticker contains trace elements which attract the waste build up that occurs within a battery. As a battery is charged and discharged the metal cells inside expand and contract, causing small pieces of the cells to fracture and break off. The sticker attracts this detritus and keeps it away from the terminals, improving the durability of the battery and reducing the time it takes to recharge.

We tried the patch on a Siemens mobile phone,

Snug Fit

As complicated as the process by which the BatteryLife Activator works is, fitting it couldn't be easier. You simply stick it to one side of the battery, preferably the one facing into the device. As long as you've covered 80% of the side of the battery, you're set. There's no limit as to what devices you use it with; if something's got a removable Li-ion battery that you can gain access to, you can apply an Activator patch.

Creative MP3 player and our HP test laptop and we noticed an improvement in battery life after the first couple of charging cycles of each. Our phone went an extra day on standby without charging and we squeezed an extra hour's play from the MP3 player. The improvement in our laptop battery life was most noticeable (and most useful), with an extra 20 to 30 minutes depending upon usage. You may be forgiven for questioning the wisdom of shelling out £7 or more for a little black sticker (the laptop patch's price is tbc), but if you're frequently frustrated by your rechargeable batteries it'll be one of the best buys you make. **HCN**

Our Verdict

Features	★★★★☆
Reliability	★★★★☆
Value for money	★★★★☆
Overall Score	★★★★☆

Reader Verdict



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Microsoft Digital Image Suite 10

Microsoft's plan for worldwide software domination continues and, on this occasion, we're welcoming it with open arms

PRODUCT DETAILS

Price £23.00 **Delivery** Free **Available from Amazon Web** <http://www.amazon.co.uk> (purchase) <http://www.microsoft.com/uk> (info)

SPECIFICATIONS

Processor 300MHz (700MHz recommended) **Memory** 256MB RAM (512MB recommended) **OS** MS Windows 98SE or above, Internet Explorer 6 (included) **Hard drive** 400MB **Display** 800 x 600 16-bit display

Believe it or not, this is Microsoft's first fully-fledged digital image editor. Yes, there have been some attempts with Picture It! and others in the past, but none has come close to offering the same comprehensive package as Digital Image Suite. Whether it's enough to lure Adobe Photoshop Elements or Paint Shop Pro users away from their respective eyries is another matter; Microsoft has neither the pedigree nor the kudos within the image editing community to make it a clear-cut choice.

It takes two

Digital Image Suite comprises two separate programs, each containing further quasi-autonomous utilities themselves. Digital Image Library takes care of the management side of things and is the less impressive of the two. Little more than an extension of My Pictures, it doesn't really make managing your digital photos any easier than it is already. This isn't a slur against Microsoft alone; many such organisers in image editing suites are equally poor, even that found in

Fun Photography

A beginner's digital image program wouldn't be complete without "creativity" elements and Digital Image Suite has them aplenty. There's a stack of supplied templates, frames and pictures to help you create greetings cards, photo albums and collages. The best is the panoramic image stitching tool which joins seemingly disparate photos into one panorama. It's nothing new but the efficacy with which it works, is.

Adobe's Photoshop Elements 3 which is reviewed this issue. But given that the software engineers behind Digital Image Library would presumably have had total back-door access to Windows XP and the My Pictures folder, we were left disappointed. It was slow, clunky and not as tightly integrated with the operating system as it could have been.

Digital Image Library does contain the odd useful feature for beginners though, and we love the Photo Story 2 utility in particular. Selecting images, you can cue them up in a slide show similar to that in My Pictures, except you can program the view to zoom in or pan around the photographs as you please. By recording your own narrative and adding a musical soundtrack you can create an impressive piece of multimedia. In the right hands it can produce something very much like those TV documentaries that use little more than historical photos as visuals. You can then burn the finished Photo Story onto a CD or DVD and play it on a TV set.

Over the wall

It's the second part of Digital Image Suite where things really take off in the guise of Digital Image Pro. This is the hands-on image editing part of the package and, confounding our expectations, it's good, very good. When using Microsoft's past digital image editing products you'd frequently hit a wall. The software would let you go so far and then no further, resulting in a half-baked photo and a frustrated user. No more; Digital Image Pro is an absolute dream to use. Although it's aimed, again, at the beginner, there's plenty of leeway in what you can do and achieve with an image. The most common digital photo ailments can be dealt with by selecting the appropriate Auto Fix, which will balance the image's contrast, colour levels and brightness, among other things. Where old Microsoft image editors would have left it at that, Digital Image Pro offers you the further option of fine-tuning the fix yourself. Although the beginner may



never need more than the Auto Fixes, it does give the more advanced user the opportunity to create certain visual effects that would otherwise be unobtainable.

Hallmark moments

At its core though, Digital Image Pro is still an entry-level program and if you're a more adventurous digital photographer you'll find it far too limiting. Photoshop Elements provides a more capable image editor with additional tools that will enable you to grow and develop. But Digital Image Pro, and indeed the whole Suite, is an accomplished piece of software. It bears all of the hallmarks of a great Microsoft product: it's well thought out, executed and a pleasure to use. Help is there when you want from the now-standard wizards; when you've outgrown them, simply disable them. It really can inspire you to see what's possible with your camera and photos. There's no better companion for the first-time digital camera or image editor user. **HCM**

Fixes can be implemented to multiple images at once using the efficient Mini Lab utility.

Our Verdict

Features	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
Overall Score	★★★★★

Reader Verdict



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Your Trusted
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Photoshop Elements 3.0

Adobe's family-friendly image editor enters its third term with a new look and new aggressive attitude

PRODUCT DETAILS

Price £62.99 inc VAT Delivery Free Available from Amazon Web <http://www.amazon.co.uk>

SPECIFICATIONS

Processor 800MHz (1.6GHz recommended) Memory 256MB RAM (512MB recommended) OS Windows 98SE or above Hard Drive 600MB Display 1,204 x 768 16-bit display



While the quick fixes are good, the full-on image editor reigns supreme and is the star of the show.

or greetings cards.

It's the image editing, as you'd expect, that's the great strength of the program and it's certainly more accomplished than Digital Image Suite. Quick automatic remedies are available at the touch of a button while more advanced fixes are open to the more seasoned user. In fact, it's the best digital photo editing suite this side of its expensive precursor. While not as intuitive or user-friendly (it simply tries too hard, hijacking your PC and being overly-imposing) as Microsoft's attempt, for advanced users it's as close to picture perfect as you'll come. [HCKM](#)

Up Close and Personal

Photoshop Elements will, if you let it, tie together absolutely anything image-related installed on, or connected to, your PC. And even some things that aren't. If your MP3 player is recognised as a removable drive by Windows XP, it'll even launch its image import wizard and, frustratingly, set about scanning your MP3 player for files. It's this kind of intrusiveness that you'll need to disable manually so you can really enjoy Photoshop Elements 3.0 without being sidetracked by minor irritations.

Our Verdict

Features	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
Overall Score	★★★★★

Reader Verdict



Click to read reviews of this product by other readers, or add your own if you own this product.

PowerDVD 6 Deluxe

When you're surrounded by free software DVD players, do you really need to pay for one?

PRODUCT DETAILS

Price £19.99 Delivery Free Available from Amazon Web <http://www.amazon.co.uk> (purchase) <http://www.gocyberlink.com> (info)

SPECIFICATIONS

Processor 1GHz Memory 128MB OS Windows 98SE or above Hard Drive 60 MB Display 1,204 x 768 or 1280 x 1024 display



The control panel is greatly improved over older editions but still feels cumbersome.

Hear this

One of the key features of movies on DVD is surround sound audio and PowerDVD includes support for both the latest versions of Dolby Digital EX and DTS. Laptop users are particularly well catered for though, as although you're unlikely to have a 5.1 channel speaker set connected, Dolby's Virtual Surround technology is used to mimic the surround sound effect over a pair of headphones. It's not perfect but it is a decent second best.

laptop's battery life when you're watching DVDs on the move, though we didn't notice much difference.

In fact, if you've got version 5 of PowerDVD or a recent copy of any other DVD player, you probably won't notice a whole heck of a difference at all, even with the improved picture quality. There's no doubt in our minds that for the money this is the best DVD player on the market, but unless you're using something from the Stone Age, it's unlikely you'll desperately need it. [HCKM](#)

Our Verdict

Features	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
Overall Score	★★★★★

Reader Verdict



Click to read reviews of this product by other readers, or add your own if you own this product.



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Zoo Tycoon 2

In what other game can you experience the fun of mucking out an elephant enclosure?

PRODUCT DETAILS

Price £24.99 **Delivery** Free **Available from Amazon Web** <http://www.amazon.co.uk> (purchase) <http://www.microsoft.com/games/zootycoon/zoo2> (info)

SPECIFICATIONS

Processor 733MHz (1.4GHz recommended) **Memory** 256MB (512MB recommended) **OS** MS Windows 98SE or above **Graphics** 32MB 3D card (64MB recommended) **Hard drive** 900MB

Given the plethora of Tycoon-style management games on the market, it's fair to say that we've probably developed quite an appetite for them. There are so many different Tycoon titles out there that new concepts are starting to be difficult to come by, acting as a catalyst for the inevitable sequels. This isn't necessarily a bad thing; Rollercoaster Tycoon 3, reviewed in issue 1, came out of the sequel treatment with a brand new 3D graphics engine and amusing features such as riding the rollercoasters via a first-person view. Microsoft has performed a similar kind of makeover on Zoo Tycoon 2. And while the premise of the game hasn't changed since the original – you build and run a zoo, and try to make a profit – there's just enough variation to warrant further consideration.

Picture quality

The first notable improvement comes in the graphics; as is now de rigueur, Zoo Tycoon 2 plays out in a fully 3D environment. Using a cartoon-style aesthetic the

colours and caricatures are bright and bold; even when there's a lot going on it's never difficult to isolate the animal or visitor you want. It's clear that the developers have failed to make the most of the potential that the move to 3D provides, though; graphics lack detail and the main overhead camera angle can't be altered enough to avoid it feeling cramped. Animal characters are particularly lacking in visual finesse; the option to switch to a first person view to walk around your zoo is a wasted opportunity to wow the audience. Interaction with the animals and visitors using this view is too restricted and what could have been a massive crowd-pleaser, making Zoo Tycoon 2 stand out, ends up being a mildly diverting gimmick at best.

Failure to reach its potential seems to be the overriding theme with Zoo Tycoon 2. There are plenty of occasions when you'll be pleasantly surprised while you play, but which later turn out to be nothing but the beginning of a concept awaiting complete realisation. The animals are amusing and will growl, tweet and bark as they go about their business, even interacting, albeit in a limited fashion, with their surroundings. Keeping male and female animals together and healthy will result in mating and you'll have cute little balls of fur on your hands. But their behaviour and activities are not explored in enough depth to be truly satisfying; had as much emphasis been placed on the animals' needs as the human visitors' this could have been a much more rewarding experience.

Animal magic?

Young children will enjoy the game regardless and it's particularly rewarding in this respect thanks to the high educational value. Keeping the animals happy and healthy is a vital (if not fully developed) part of the game and to that end there's an integrated animal encyclopaedia cribbed from Encarta. Matching an animal to its biome (just one of the cool words your kids will learn), dietary and social wants requires an impressively authentic knowledge of its habits and



needs. If your children are even mildly interested in animals and wildlife, they'll get a major kick out of Zoo Tycoon. The book-balancing side of the game can be placed on the back burner and it's likely that the younger audience will enjoy the unrestricted sandbox game mode most, where financial considerations are sidelined. If you're more interested in the numbers you won't find anything new; staff salaries and running costs must be offset by entry fees and donations from a grateful public. Anyone after a more serious and enduring challenge would be well advised to skip the zoo and head for Rollercoaster Tycoon 3 instead. The latter is all that Zoo Tycoon 2 aspires to be: engaging, layered and visually polished. Here we have the sketch of a great game and an obvious platform for the inevitable expansion packs and third instalment. **BCM**

Icons hovering above the animals' and visitors' heads tell you how they're feeling.

Our Verdict

Learning curve	★★★★★
Longevity	★★★★★
Online features	★★★★★
Overall Score	★★★★★

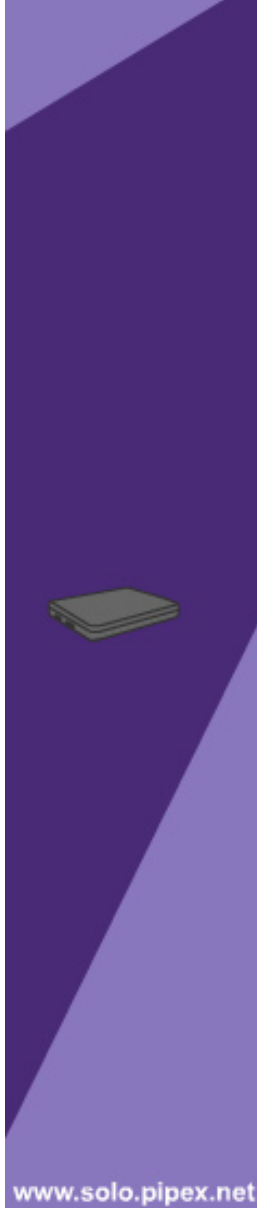
Reader Verdict



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Football Manager 2005

The king is dead, long live the king! Find out why Football Manager is the new Championship Manager in more ways than one

PRODUCT DETAILS

Price £21.99 **Delivery** Free **Available from Amazon Web** <http://www.amazon.co.uk> (purchase) <http://www.footballmanager.net> (info)

SPECIFICATIONS

Processor 600MHz (1.8GHz recommended) **Memory** 128MB RAM (256MB recommended) **OS** MS Windows 98SE or above **Hard drive** 650MB free space required

This is, to all intents and purposes, the latest instalment in the phenomenally successful Championship Manager football management simulations. The rider opening that statement is necessary because Football Manager has been developed by Sports Interactive, the team responsible for Championship Manager's success. Following a contractual bust-up, Eidos retained use of the Championship Manager brand but not the creative team behind it, so Football Manager 2005 is essentially the latest update of possibly the best-loved, most authentic football management game in the world.

Picking players and scoring goals

So, other than the new name, what does Football Manager bring to the pitch? If you're totally new to Championship Manager, it may seem somewhat intimidating at first as the sheer amount of information and range of details that you oversee is staggering. Upon starting the game you're appointed as the manager of just about any club of your choosing – one

Media Manipulation

The press and the public's perception of you matter in Football Manager 2005 to the extent that any comments you make to the press can either burn you or turn you into a local hero. You can also use the press to play mind games with your opponents; a few carefully worded comments to the tabloids about the manager of your upcoming opponents can create a pressure cooker atmosphere come kick-off.

of 2,531 spread throughout 51 countries – and from then on in you're the guv'nor. You inherit the team line-up that existed at the end of the summer 2004 trade deadline and it's onward and, hopefully, upward.

Your team's ascendancy is dependant upon your handling of the squad and you can tweak and adjust absolutely anything. Training schedules need to be set to keep your players match-fit, a headline-hungry media must be negotiated with and there's the ever-present fan pressure to bring home the silverware, whether you oversee Arsenal or York City. Individual players on your squad, all based on their real-life counterparts, all have a full set of statistics and you can even instruct them how to behave on pitch. From making them play through balls deeper to selecting the finishing touch that'll put the ball in the back of the net, you influence your team's performance from the turf up. This attention to detail, which made such a success of Championship Manager, should ensure Football Manager an equally long run at the top of the table. For football fans of every ilk, from fanatical armchair managers to fair-weather fans, it offers something different to the usual EA Sports FIFA fare.

Help is at hand

Football Manager is able to cater to this wide audience so well because, despite all appearances to the contrary, the game offers help just where you need it. The Assistant Manager feature, new to this game, provides you with a welcome right-hand man. Always on hand to offer advice, he'll suggest which players to pick on match day, when to schedule training sessions and even recommend how and where to spend the club's money. Having said all this, you will need to be an ardent football supporter to really get the most out of the game; if you're passionate about the beautiful game you'll absorb the information on screen like a sponge. You'll even find yourself glued to your monitor during matches; a collection of moving coloured dots on the screen has never been so captivating.



A move up the league tables

If you are a seasoned Championship Manager veteran, all this will be familiar to you, so is Football Manager worth the money? Well, if you're a dedicated enthusiast who's bought every annual update to Championship Manager then this is undoubtedly worthwhile. Not only do you get to enjoy the updated game but you're able to take advantage of all future updates from Sports Interactive and Sega. With Football Manager now home to the Championship Manager game engine and player database, it's the only way you can enjoy the game you love while staying up to date. (Note: Championship Manager 5, tentatively lined up for release in March of this year, is essentially a brand new game built from scratch by a new developer.) **HCM**

You can hire, fire, schmooze and lose any player you want; you're in complete control.

Our Verdict

Learning curve	★★★★★
Longevity	★★★★★
Online features	★★★★★
Overall Score	★★★★★

Reader Verdict



Click to read reviews of this product by other readers, or add your own if you own this product.



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Home Computer Tutorials

This month's tutorials cover registering a domain name, Windows System Properties, first steps with broadband and pictures in Microsoft Word.

As if our mammoth tips feature this month weren't enough, we've got another section full of tutorials for you. New series this month include a beginners' guide to overclocking, the mysterious art of making your hardware run faster than it is supposed to, and a guide to promoting your website for free using the free Web CEO software.

Additionally this month we continue our popular series on Windows XP, rounding off our look at the intimidating System Properties. We've also got the latest in our ongoing web hosting series which has been getting excellent response, so we're glad it's useful. Our broadband series continues with a look at how you should secure your wireless network, something several people have written in to request.

If you haven't read any previous issues of Home Computer Magazine, don't worry. They are still available for immediate download for free. To download a back issue, simply go to our website

www.homecomputermagazine.com and select the previous issue from the Issue bar at the top. Make sure you click on the Download this issue link and not the Download latest issue link on the web page. We have an even easier method though, which is for you to install Issue Manager (see page 9). Issue Manager will not only tell you in future when new issues are published, it will also offer to download previous issues that you don't have and all of the issues will be stored for easy access through the Issue Manager interface which is only ever a single click away in the System Tray.

We are keen to hear your views on our tutorials. If you've got an idea for a tutorial series, think we should cover a particular program or want to ask us to look at something specific in one of our series, then let us know. We also want to know whether you found these tutorials useful and let us know what you managed to do with your new skills. Drop us a line at

tutorials@homecomputermagazine.com.

Why our tutorials are the best...

Our tutorials include a time required, the level of user and the software requirements as well as including interactive content to make them easier.

DID YOU KNOW?...

Windows XP was originally criticised by advanced users for hiding away settings and not allowing enough control, but the truth is that it offers far more control over the system than ever before as long as you know where to look. Most of the nooks and crannies are hidden away in the Control Panel, but they are there.

PROJECT TIME 15-30 MINS
TUTORIAL LEVEL BEGINNER SOFTWARE REQUIRED
REQUIRED WINDOWS XP HOME OR PROFESSIONAL

Click the screen shot where you see this icon to play the movie!

Inside this issue

WINDOWS XP

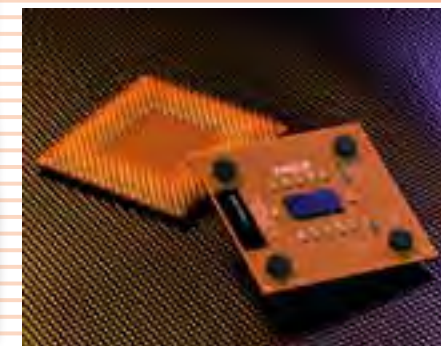
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POWER USER TIP

System Volume Information folder

Windows XP includes a folder on the root of each drive that remains hidden from view even when you choose to show system files. It includes the restore points for System Restore, a database for restoring linked documents and shortcuts, databases for fast file searches (if you use this feature) and possibly a few other bits and pieces. If you just want to reduce the amount of space that System Restore is allowed to use on any drive, then go to System Restore in Accessories and click on the link to the settings. By default this is 12% of the drive which can be excessive

on today's spacious hard drives. Sometimes you might want to remove one entry from the SVI folder though (virus infection sometimes necessitates this). To see the folder, open Folder Options and on the View tab check Show Hidden Files and Folders and uncheck Hide protected operating system files (Recommended). If you use NTFS, you will also need to right click the System Volume Information folder and select Properties. On the Security tab click Add and enter the name of the user you are allowing access to the folder. You can now open the SVI folder.

Guide to our tutorials

Our tutorials are marked with a level: beginner, intermediate or expert, so you can judge whether it's going to be for you. They also have a time estimation to tell you long it might take you and software requirements necessary to complete the tutorial. We use step-by-steps, annotations and animations to make everything as easy as possible to understand.

Did you know you can move your broadband service to PIPEX? Place your mouse cursor over for more info...

PROJECT TIME 15-30 MINS TUTORIAL LEVEL INTERMEDIATE SOFTWARE REQUIRED WINDOWS XP HOME OR PROFESSIONAL

Dell Outlet

Dell Outlet offers equipment from the entire Dell range, from office servers and family PCs to Notebooks. With the benefit of Dell quality at an exceptional price Dell Outlet offers reliability and peace of mind with a full Dell warranty on each product. With no hidden surprises, we are the official Dell discount store offering further value for money



System Properties - part 2

Take control of Windows by mastering the settings that change the way Windows works

Last issue... Part 1 of the System Properties explained. [Click here to get this issue free now!](#)

Next issue... We take a look at the Add/Remove Programs feature - did you know it hides extras?

The Advanced tab on the System Properties is the forbidden land of mystery for many people, and with good reason. Some of the options offered are the work of crazed monkeys, but the good news is that the majority of us can leave the settings alone unless there is a specific reason for needing the features they offer (which we discuss over the page). The exception to this is the Settings button in the Performance section. This controls options that will determine how quick Windows is to respond to your every whim. You really should tweak the settings here to suit your own PC, as Windows will make a guess as to how it thinks the PC should be set up but you are likely to disagree.

When you click on the Settings button, you will see a new dialog with three tabs. The first is Visual Performance and it controls a lot of the animation that Windows does. If you remember back in issue 1 (get it free here if you don't already have it) we looked at the Start menu and one setting allowed you to switch to the classic view, which is the older style grey Start menu. The reason most people choose this setting is down to speed. The new blue looks lovely, but

rendering it requires processor time and video card performance that can be better used elsewhere on either low end PCs or if you just demand the fastest response time and don't care about aesthetics. The settings you find here in the Visual Performance tab allow you to adjust settings that affect



As well as System Properties, don't forget TweakUI for more settings – see page 23.

menus, including the Start menu, in a much more extensive manner. There are three automatic settings that you can choose from the radio buttons: let Windows decide everything (not recommended), adjust the system for best appearance (make everything look pretty and hang the processor) or adjust the system for best performance (turn off all the animation on menus, smoothing and fading, so you get instant results and let the processor kick back and relax). As you would guess, we'd recommend none of these and that you select Custom instead. This way you can turn off some of the features that are excessive, but not lose all of the animations that make Windows more pleasant to use. Check out our chosen settings for a mid-range PC on the right. [HCKM](#)

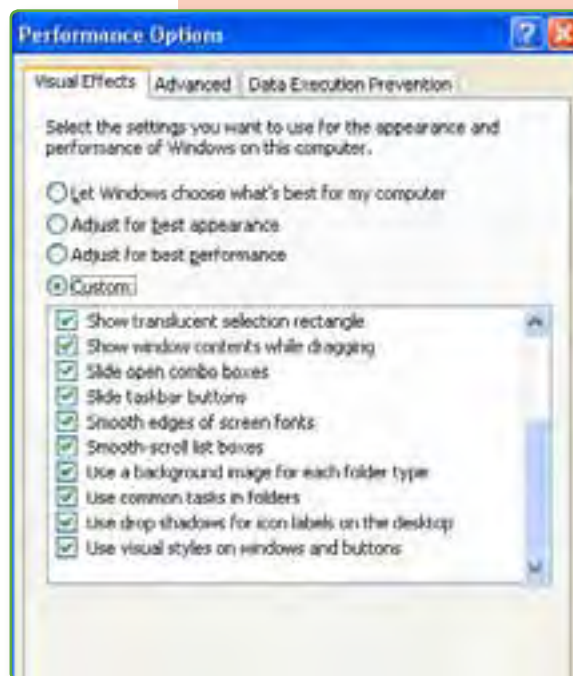
EXPLAINED...

System Properties: Advanced / Visual Performance options

If your PC is mid-range, then here's how we'd set the Custom options, and why.

How to find it...

Start/Control Panel/System then Advanced and click on the Settings button in Visual Performance



When running on anything remotely resembling a decent specification PC, Windows XP will turn on all options on this tab by default. If you consider your PC to be more mid-range, or more than a few months old, you might consider turning off the following options:

1 Fade out menus after clicking: as you have made your selection at this point and presumably want the PC to get on with opening the program/performing the task, why would you want the menu to do anything other than go away as quickly as possible?

2 Show shadows under menus: other visual options do help you see some elements, but this does nothing except require rendering. It is also the cause of a few screen quirks we've seen.

3 Slide taskbar buttons: this determines whether to animate when you click on the arrow on the right of the taskbar to uncover hidden icons. Given you are clicking there to get at a hidden icon, you probably just want to get at it quickly.

4 Use a background image for each folder type: background images make it harder to work out contents in a folder, so why bother?

Some people also recommend disabling sliding menus, tooltips and combo boxes. You can disable these without causing any problems, but these do actually make Windows more pleasant to our minds. Also note that you can turn off the Common Tasks pane which appears on the left of each folder if you don't use it. For all these, simply untick the option, then click on the OK button to apply permanently.



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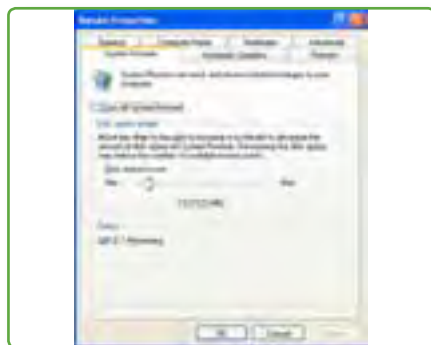


PROJECT TIME 10-15 MINS TUTORIAL LEVEL INTERMEDIATE SOFTWARE REQUIRED WINDOWS XP HOME OR PROFESSIONAL

System Properties tabs

Here's an overview of the remaining tabs on System Properties, including the other parts of Advanced

Click the screen shot where you see this icon to get interactive!



01 System Restore is a Windows rollback utility that you will find in Start menu / All programs / Accessories / System Tools. It allows you to take your PC back to a state before you installed software or drivers, but without losing any data, like documents. Here you can decide to turn it on or off, and you can determine how much disk space you are prepared to use.

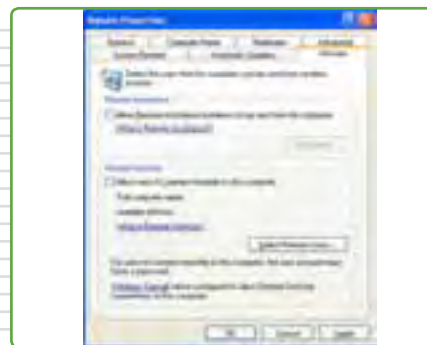


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Every time you install a piece of software, System Restore will create a backup, and will also do so of its own accord regularly, so it can eat up disk space, which on bigger drives can add up to Gbs. Limit it to about 1Gb or roughly 1,000Mbs.



02 The Automatic Updates tab can look slightly different if you don't have Windows XP Service Pack 2 installed. (To find out more about SP2, see issue 1 - download it free now.) Windows contains the ability to patch itself in order to make sure that security vulnerabilities are addressed among other things. It does this by contacting the Microsoft server regularly when you are online and comparing what bug fixes are available with those already installed on your PC. On this tab you can select whether to let Windows do this, and if so to set a time when it should check. You can also choose to allow it to get the updates, but only install them when you say so, or to notify you only that updates are available. You can also turn them off completely, but this will result in a security warning from the SP2 Security Centre each time you start up. You can disable this warning - see the Technical Q&A in issue 2 for details (get issue 2 for free here). Beginners can leave this tab alone.



03 Remote allows you to set up your PC to allow other people to access it. You can use it to request technical assistance from a friend if they are running a compatible system. Essentially, it allows you to share your PC's desktop with other users and even give them the ability to control your mouse pointer and type into programs. You can do this through programs like MSN Messenger. However, firstly it should be noted that this is obviously a huge security risk and you should never share your desktop with anyone you don't know. Secondly, you may find that your broadband modem has a built in firewall, or if you are using a PC at work, it is almost certainly behind a firewall. If this is the case, the firewall must be configured to allow remote desktop access (highly unlikely in companies and with broadband modems, you will need to fiddle). If you never intend to do any of this, turn both options on this tab off.



04 The Advanced tab has other buttons aside from the Performance one. The User Profile settings are only of interest in company networks. The Startup and Recovery options should all be enabled. Although you might never want to use these if you are a beginner, these settings ensure that information is gathered on a system error that can help you or a technical support person track down the problem. Environment variables set where Windows stores certain files - leave them alone! Error reporting on the other hand can generally be turned off - it sends a message to Microsoft when Windows crashes, but it doesn't really help you. In Performance options, there are two other tabs we haven't mentioned: Advanced, where you can set the processor scheduling (see below) and virtual memory (we'll deal with this in a later issue) and Data Execution Prevention (if you have SP2) which offers some protection against virus code.

EXPERT TIPS AND ADVICE!

Performance tips and more settings with Microsoft Tweak UI

The Advanced tab on the Performance dialog allows you to decide whether Windows should task the processor predominantly with running Programs, or running Services (Windows itself). We recommend programs for the home PC. Likewise in the Memory Usage we select Programs over the System cache. As well as all the settings discussed in this article, there are more Windows settings that can improve performance, and you can change some of these with Microsoft's Tweak UI utility. We gave an overview of Tweak UI in our first free bonus tutorial. To get the free tutorials, simply install Issue Manager for free - click here for more information.

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PROJECT TIME 20-30 MINS TUTORIAL LEVEL BEGINNER SOFTWARE REQUIRED NONE

Bandwidth and web services

Once you've bought your domain name, what services do you need to look for in a web hosting company?

➔ **Last issue...** How to register the right domain name for more traffic. [Get this issue here!](#)

Next issue... How to set up a database driven site or blog. [Don't miss out: get it for free!](#)



Once you've decided on and registered your domain name for your website, it's time to decide where you're going to have it hosted. Back in issue 1 (get it for free from here if you haven't read it yet) we looked at the general reasons for choosing a paid for host over any free web space you may have access to. It's likely that when you first decided to create a website, you had an idea of what you wanted to produce and it's more than likely that anything beyond a low traffic static HTML based site is going to require a paid for web host.

This needn't be an expensive business. EasySpace for example has a Gold hosting package that only costs £25/year so little over £2/month. What you do need to make sure of though is that the hosting package you choose has all the features you'll need for your site as you want to create, and any features that you feel you might like to incorporate over the coming months. Paying for one package that is cheap, only to have to upgrade and pay for a more expensive one in a few month's time, will prove costly.

Most importantly, as we've said before, is that you check out what bandwidth restrictions there are on your package. You'll often see that

hosting companies will offer you hundreds of Mbs of disk space, but this is generally not something that will concern you. Websites are by their nature very small, so unless you are planning on putting a lot of media files, like videos, on your host, you'll never use more than a few Mbs.

DID YOU KNOW?...

Getting your head around bandwidth is difficult. The easy way is to select the folder that contains your site on your hard drive and see how big it is. Divide 1,000Mbs by the size to see how many people could see your whole site per month for 1Gb of bandwidth (very roughly). It also gives you an idea of transfer/second.

Incidentally, if you are thinking of putting video or music files on your website, check the T&Cs of any host you are considering as many do not allow this.

Instead of the disk space, which is cheap for web hosts as we all know how cheap hard drives are, you may be best to concentrate on looking at their bandwidth restrictions. Many hosts will offer "unlimited bandwidth." Not to put too fine a point on it, this is a bare faced lie.

Bandwidth is the amount of data transferred by your site, normally measured per calendar month. Say you have a 1Mb file on your website. One person downloads it. Roughly (don't ask why it's rough, we haven't the space to explain) this will use 1Mb of bandwidth. (You may have also used up 1Mb of bandwidth in the company's book when you uploaded it.) Now most small sites have small amounts of traffic and therefore use little bandwidth. These sites are considered to be well within the company's boundaries of "unlimited bandwidth". If your site is popular or has lots of large files that use up a lot of bandwidth, the company will often decide that this is outside their limits of "unlimited bandwidth" and pull the plug on your site. If you read the T&Cs carefully on these types of hosts, you will see some sort of clause that says something like "We reserve the right to remove any site that makes excessive use of our servers or causes a network slowdown for other users."

Your site will be hosted on a server which will have many other websites from other people on it. The company will only have a limited pipe to the internet (i.e. will only be able to serve a limited amount per second, something like 100Mb/s). If your site is popular it might either use up too much of the company's pipe or too much monthly bandwidth. Either way they will have the right to pull the plug with no refund as you will have breached their T&Cs, without ever having a solid idea what they were. For obvious reasons, we therefore recommend you choose a host that defines how much bandwidth you can have. EasySpace Gold offers 10Gb/month for example. [H&M](#)

TOP TEN HOSTING SERVICES

These are the things your host must offer

If you want a site that can grow, then make sure the host you choose offers the following:

- 1 A stated bandwidth allowance per month. Any terms and conditions that don't state this explicitly, but say "well, you'll probably be alright" leave you as a hostage to fortune. In an ideal world they will also state whether this is download only bandwidth or if your uploads are counted too. If they tell you the size of their pipe (yes, make up your own joke here) or how fast they can transfer out data to your visitors, then all the better.
- 2 Whether your domain name is registered with your web host or you choose to keep them separate, you need to make sure that you can control the destination that the domain name registrar forwards to. There are several ways this can work too, which we look at over on the next page.
- 3 If you want to create a site that includes dynamic content or internal searching, then some sort of database will be required. MySQL is the most common, but ask which version it is. Often it may be version 3, which is not necessarily bad, but version 4.x is the current version and some software you may want to use may require this later version.
- 4 If you are planning on having a database driven or partially drive site, then you'll need something that can access the database. PHP is a commonly used language, so see if your host supports this and

again, what version is it? Both version 4.x and 5.x are common, but check the version against any requirements your software may have. If neither 3) nor this makes any sense, consider a blog as an example. These are driven database sites. One piece of blog software, Nucleus, requires PHP version 4.0.6+ and MySQL version 3.23.x+. Another, Blog: CMS requires PHP 4.0.6+ but MySQL 4.0+. You may be limited by your server as to which you can run.

5 CGI is pretty essential, but can you create and run your own scripts on the server? CGI is a scripting language, not dissimilar to PHP, but it is used to do things like write form submission data to files, power Send to a friend features, control random advertisements insertions.

6 Are you going to want email addresses associated with your domain? If so, you may want your host to offer an email server as part of the package. If not, you will have to use email forwarding from your domain name registrar.

7 What platform is used to host? Linux is cheaper and more stable than some Windows versions.

8 FTP access to your webspace is a must - you want to be able to upload easily.

9 Daily backups of your site are a nice extra that can save you from all sorts of problems.

10 If we're going to ask for the impossible, then we might add server side includes (SSI) which is a script that allows you to build web pages from blocks of other pages, and some sort of SSL, secure web page facility might also be useful.



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PROJECT TIME 10 MINUTES TUTORIAL LEVEL INTERMEDIATE SOFTWARE REQUIRED NONE

Controlling your domain name

Once you've got your domain name registered, you need to make sure it actually points to your website



01 There's no reason for you to have your website hosted by the same company that you decided to register your web domain with. Indeed many people use separate companies. For this to work, you need to make sure that the company you register your domain with points that domain name at the location of your website. To simplify matters, when someone types in the domain name that you bought in their address bar in the browser, a special type of server called a domain name server (DNS) is called upon. This says "ah, yes, I know where that website lives" and transparently sends the user off to wherever your site is hosted.



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FOR FREE!

02 You can normally administer your domain name in several ways with your registrar. For example, you may choose to transfer the domain out or make the domain use different name servers. You may use a different name server if you have a very advanced web hosting package, for example. In this case, the resolution of the domain name will be given over to a different name server, but your registrar will retain the record of the domain name for you to control, for renewal or changing the name server again, etc. Alternatively, you may choose to change the DNS settings, which rather confusingly are not the same as the NS settings. These allow you to use your registrar's name server, but tell it where to resolve that name to, so you can send it off to a specific IP address, which would normally be your website. This allows you to have different types of address, like news.homecomputermagazine.com for example.

03 Many people won't need to go so far into their settings though as they can probably get by using web forwarding. Web forwarding is less technical. You simply tell the registrar to forward any people who type in your domain name onto another web address, which will be the address given to you by your web host. There are often two ways in which you can request this type of forwarding to be done. The first is to mask the URL, which keeps the original address as typed in within the address bar. This is useful if you have your site is really hosted at "www.mywebhost.com/webpace/yourwebsite" and you don't want people to see that, so instead you mask and keep "www.mywebsite.com". The second is to refresh to the URL you forward to, which is useful when you have two domain names pointed at the same website and want to use only one, the other being for typos; for example, www.home-computer-magazine.com forwards to www.homecomputermagazine.com.

04 If you don't adjust the DNS to point to a web server, then in order to be able to accept emails from this domain, you need to set up email forwarding as well as web forwarding. You should be able to set up the email address you want by putting the alias (e.g. "webmaster") in and then saying where you want any mail to that address forwarded to. Then webmaster@mydomain.com emails will get forwarded to myrealemail@myisp.com. Configure your email client to reply to emails sent to this address with a reply to address of the alias and few people will every be the wiser. As well as setting up these alias emails, you can also enter an email address to act as a "catchall". This will then forward all emails sent to anything except the aliases, including misspelt aliases, to this address. Every domain should have a catchall, or else email will go missing. Just make sure that you have a decent spam filter set up on your email address as it is bound to attract spam.

EXPERT TIPS AND ADVICE!

Transferring domains names out of a registrar is perfectly possible

You don't need to keep your domain names with the company that you register them with. You can transfer them over to a different company. All registrars will have a mechanism for doing this, but check out the charges. Some may charge for transferring out domains and some may charge for transferring in (though this is rare). As well as transferring away, you can transfer ownership, in other words sell the domain. How you do this will depend on the type of domain. For instance, .com can be done electronically, but .co.uk requires you request some paperwork and do it manually, to avoid fraudulent transfer.

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Choose the right web host for your website

Take a look at what four of the best web hosting companies have to offer. Check out the full details of each of these companies' offers to find your ideal solution

Easyspace www.easyspace.com

➤ Easyspace offers web hosting solutions for all levels of users. The basic hosting package has just been reduced in price from £49 to only £24.99. This Gold hosting package includes a free UK domain name registration, 10 mailboxes and free email forwarding. You get free stats, full control through the Control Panel, free account setup, FTP access for easy upload to your site and My SQL support for database driven sites. HTTP media streaming is even supported in this basic package. Easyspace offer other services including more advanced hosting packages and email services. Easypost is an exclusive Easyspace service which offers spam filtering and virus detection to help keep you safe when receiving mail from your site. If you need more from your hosting solution, then rest assured that Easyspace has an offering to suit you. As you move up through the web hosting offerings, you can add in CGI, PHP, and SSL for secure web pages!



Webitsmart www.webitsmart.co.uk

➤ If you are a novice and just want a web host that can walk you through creating a website by filling in a wizard, then Webitsmart is for you. It allows you to create your pages, upload your images and even create your own menu for your website. It couldn't be easier.

The basic package starts from as little as £2.99/month and it includes a photo gallery with a comments system as well as the homepage designer and menu builder. You can get visitor statistics and there is a guestbook feature.

The more advanced packages offer higher filesize limits and more features, including POP3 email accounts and the ability to password protect certain pages on your site. The paid-for packages all include email support and there's even free clipart to help you spruce up your pages.

With over 500,000 homepages hosted, you can see that Webitsmart is a firm favourite for home users.



1&1 1and1.co.uk

➤ If you want a mountain of features for your website, but don't want to pay the earth for it, 1&1 is the answer you're looking for. Starting at £4.99/month, the Home hosting package gives you 10Gb of monthly bandwidth allowance, 600Mb of webspace and the ability to point up to 50 domains to the server, as well as giving you 10 sub-domains. Even this entry level package includes Frontpage Extensions and ready-to-run CGI scripts. The Control Panel allows you to configure your site and add interactive elements like Chat Rooms.

1&1 has a special WebElements feature making it easier than ever to add feedback forms, event registrations and Tell a Friend features to your site. Couple this with the Website Creator, which can build your first site in minutes using templates, and you can see that beginners are well catered for.

You'll also be amazed to learn that if you sign up for this package, 1&1 will give you £400 worth of software, free.



B-one www.b-one.net

➤ B-one starts its web hosting packages at 90p (that's right £0.90) a month. There's a £9 set up fee, but after that you can have your site running for under a pound a month and yet benefit from some really advanced features.

You get 125Mb of webspace and unlimited bandwidth – which they define in their terms and conditions as anything which doesn't disrupt other users. You have unlimited email accounts and POP3 and webmail access. There is a virus filter and advanced users can make use of ASP and PHP scripting even on the most basic package.

The control panel is bright and colourful and easy to navigate and gives you access to the statistics and the mail administration. To make sure your site is safe they operate daily backups and they offer free email support with a promise to get a reply to you within 24 hours. With 80,000 people already using this web host, you can be sure you're in good hands.



Dell Outlet

Dell Outlet offers equipment from the entire Dell range, from office servers and family PCs to Notebooks. With the benefit of Dell quality at an exceptional price Dell Outlet offers reliability and peace of mind with a full Dell warranty on each product. With no hidden surprises, we are the official Dell discount store offering further value for money



PROJECT TIME 1 HOUR TUTORIAL LEVEL INTERMEDIATE SOFTWARE REQUIRED PC WIZARD 2004 (FREE) & SPEEDFAN (FREE)

Getting started with overclocking

Getting more speed from your hardware is possible, but before you jump in, you need to set your PC up so you're safe

This issue... We explain the ideas and benchmark the PC, as well as install some monitoring software.

Next issue... We start the actual overclocking by making the CPU (processor) run faster. Subscribe!

There are several ways to get more speed from your PC. Obviously you can upgrade components inside it so that it contains faster hardware. Secondly, you can optimise the way Windows runs so that it works better – see our 50 Speed tips feature on page 5. Lastly though, you can try and tell your existing hardware to work faster.

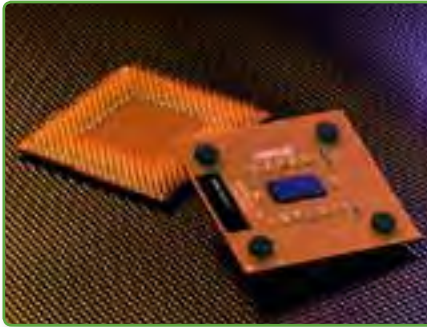
This last method is what is generally referred to as overclocking. The CPU or processor in your PC (that's the Intel Pentium 4 or AMD Athlon chip that was quoted on the PC specification when you bought your PC) runs at a certain clock speed. If you've seen 1.4Ghz or some similar number, then that is a clock speed. The higher the clock speed in any processor family, the faster it is, though note that a 2Ghz Intel Pentium 4 isn't actually faster than an AMD Athlon 1.8Ghz, just faster than a 1.8Ghz Pentium 4. That's just because we like things to be complicated in PC technology.

What people discovered several years ago was that while their CPU might be rated at one clock speed, it was actually perfectly capable of running at a higher speed without causing problems. So they made it do just that. Hence, overclocking.

DID YOU KNOW?...

Originally overclocking simply involved increasing the "multiplier" in your PC's BIOS. Intel was so miffed that people were getting speed increases for free from their chips that they started building in limiters to stop chips from running faster, even if they were perfectly capable of doing so.

It doesn't stop with the CPU either. Similar things can be done with the graphics (video) card and the memory (RAM). What's more, nowadays a lot of the work can be done through software in Windows. You may need to look in the BIOS, but we'll cover that later in the series. Serious overclocking requires



AMD processors have long been popular with overclockers because of their excellent potential.

modifying the hardware itself, but we won't be touching on that in this series.

So, if more speed is available for free and relatively easily, why isn't everyone doing it? Why don't the PC manufacturers do it for you? Quite simply because every PC is different and because there are risks involved. You are making your PC run faster than was intended. At the very least, this means that your system will be unstable and crash while you are testing your overclocking. More seriously, overclocking causes the CPU to run hotter and therefore could overheat and cause permanent damage. While we're not discussing anything here that we haven't performed on our own PCs, the risks are yours and Home Computer Magazine and its publishers accept no responsibility if you damage your PC.

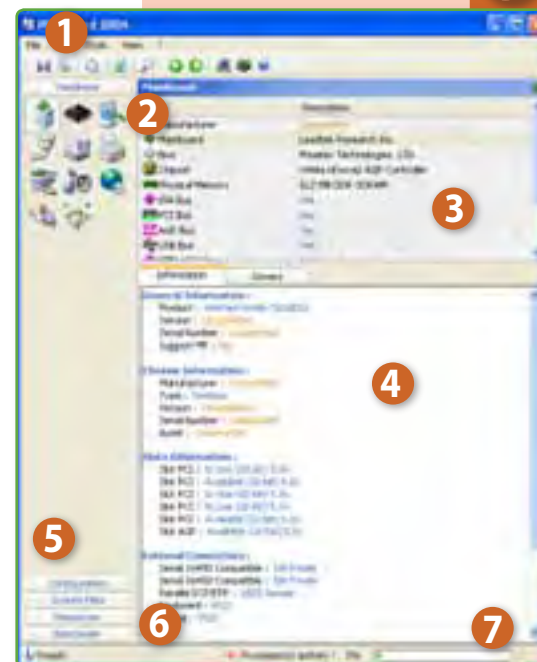
All that said, there are utilities available to warn you if a heat problem is occurring, and to deal with it, we discuss this on the next page. **HCM**

EXPLAINED...

PC Wizard 2004: how fast is your PC?

Before we make any adjustments, we need to know how fast the PC is by default so that we can see the effect of any changes. Click [here to download PC Wizard 2004](#) – this utility makes no changes and is safe.

How to find it...
Start/All Programs/PC Wizard 2004



1 You can print out or save the reports that you generate in PC Wizard, including the benchmarking and overviews.

2 When you start the program up, you will see this tab open on the left. The program will do a system check and report what hardware it has found. In order to do the overclocking you will need the motherboard (Mainboard) information which is displayed by default, and is the very top left icon in this tab. You will also need the processor information – click on chip icon to the right of the Mainboard icon to get this.

3 The overview of information from the current tab will be shown in this pane. Here it shows the manufacturer of the motherboard. In benchmarking, it shows some of the results.

4 Click on the Mainboard line in the pane above and a detailed breakdown of the features will be shown in this pane. In benchmarking it shows details of the part of the PC you are testing, e.g. CPU.

5 Click on the labels here to open the different tabs within the program.

6 The Benchmark tab is the second reason for having this program. It allows you to test the speed of your PC, so you can then re-test after overclocking to see what speed improvements you have managed to achieve.

7 At the bottom right, you can see a realtime indication of the processor load. Minimise PC Wizard 2004 and you will see a realtime clockspeed readout on the top right of your screen.



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- 500Mb Webspace
- 10 Gb Transfer Pm
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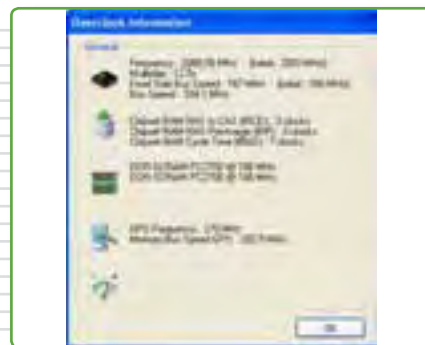
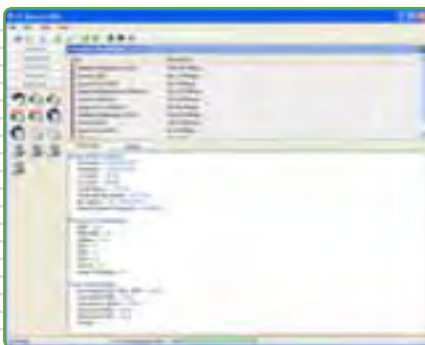
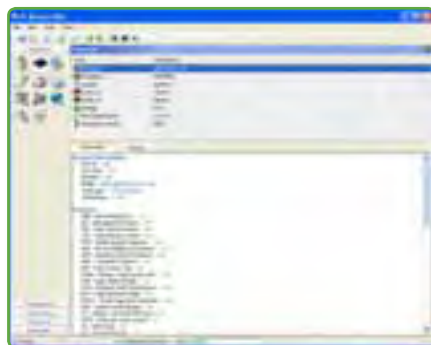


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PROJECT TIME 1 HOUR TUTORIAL LEVEL INTERMEDIATE SOFTWARE REQUIRED PC WIZARD 2004 (FREE) & SPEEDFAN (FREE)

Benchmark and protect

Before we start tweaking, let's speed test the PC and add a utility that will allow us to monitor temperature



01 Download PC Wizard 2004 from <http://www.cpubid.com/pcw>. This program is an analytical program only, so you are not performing any adjustments to your PC with it that can cause it any problems. When you have installed the program and start it up, you will see that it tests the hardware. This is so that it can report what exactly it finds in your PC. You will need to know what hardware you have in order to overclock it later in the series. As discussed on the previous page, use this first tab of the program to find out the motherboard and processor type. Print these specifications out or write them down.

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FOR FREE!

02 Now click on the Benchmark tab at the bottom left. You will see a new set of icons, but no test will be run until you click on one. Click on the top left icon, which is the CPU icon and it will perform a benchmark test to tell you how fast/how many calculations per second your processor is. While the test is in progress, don't touch the mouse or keyboard. Any activity will give you an artificially low result. Either save this report out by clicking on the Save button, or print it. Repeat the test for the RAM and the Video/DirectX icons. These will give us benchmarks for the speed of the three areas that we can speed up and once we have tweaked the hardware we will run these tests again to compare the results. Therefore you need to keep the results of the original system for the duration of this tutorial series and make sure you leave PC Wizard 2004 installed for it too.

03 Now we know what hardware we have and how fast it is, we just need to make some safety checks. Again, in PC Wizard go to Tools / Overclock Information. This will show you the clock speeds of your system compared against their original states. At this point in time, they should be identical – in other words, your PC has not been overclocked. If it shows something different then your PC has already been overclocked and we shouldn't tinker further unless you know what has already been done with your PC. Assuming all is untouched, then we now want to install a utility that will monitor the temperature of the processor and warn us if it starts to overheat. Overclocking processors makes them use more power which in turn generates more heat and you need to make sure that your PC can cool the CPU fast enough so that it doesn't cause a problem.

04 Download and install SpeedFan from <http://www.almico.com/speedfan.php>. When you start it up, it is simply a diagnostic tool like PC Wizard. It will tell you the temperature of your CPU, assuming your PC supports this test (most modern ones do). It will also tell you information about any fans installed. Now, not all PCs use fans to cool the CPUs. Some use devices called heatsinks which are metal prongs that simply dissipate the heat quickly. (You can also use water cooling, but you probably know if you have that installed as it is very bespoke!) We don't want our CPU to go above 55°C (ideally we want to keep it below 50°C). If you do have a fan installed, then SpeedFan can be set with the Configure button to control the fan speed, which means that as you crank up the clock speed and the heat increases, the fan can compensate to some degree. It can also alter the clock speed of the CPU in idle state so it cools down, which we look at next month.

EXPERT TIPS AND ADVICE!

More advanced users can do further tests to assess their PC's speed.

In this article we've used PC Wizard 2004 as it can both analyse and benchmark a system, and because it's completely free of charge. However the benchmarking tests that it does, particularly the video tests, are not as extensive as those performed by other packages. Most advanced users make some use of SiSoft SANDRA, a comprehensive benchmarking utility which you can get from <http://www.sisoftware.co.uk/> though the Lite version doesn't have all the benchmarking modules. Also popular are PCMark 2004, again a limited free version is available (<http://www.futuremark.com/>) and WCPUID from <http://www.h-oda.com/>.

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PROJECT TIME 20-30 MINUTES TUTORIAL LEVEL ADVANCED SOFTWARE REQUIRED NONE

Setting up secure wireless

You've got your wireless broadband router installed, but how do you stop the neighbours from accessing your network?

Last issue... Understanding broadband offers and setting up your broadband connection. Get it here!

Next issue... Get started configuring the rules of your firewall to stop crackers. Subscribe for free!



You would be pretty surprised to know how many people set up a broadband connection, get a lovely wireless router for it and then proceed to broadcast their connection for all within range to see and indeed use. All the more worrying is that if you use it as a network hub, then you can give people access to shared folders on your PC.

So many people do this in fact that there is a hobby grown up around it called wardriving, where techies drive around with a wireless enabled laptop and use a piece of software, often NetStumbler, featured on page 34, to see how many insecure wireless networks they can find.

The reason is that setting up the security on a router is still not easy. Windows XP SP2 does make it easier and if you install the service pack then we recommend that you try using the Wireless Network Setup Wizard to configure your network, especially if you are beginner. However, there are many occasions when this isn't appropriate, like when you already have one PC set up on the network and want to add another, or when you want to set the security features to your own liking. To do this, you need to understand the basic forms of security that all wireless routers offer.

DID YOU KNOW?...

There are two forms of WEP, 64-bit and 128-bit which means you can have even more complicated keys if you choose to do so and if your router supports it. However, 64-bit should be good enough for home users, especially if it is used in conjunction with the other security methods we are discussing.

Firstly, a router can be given a unique name, and will probably have one set up as a factory default. This is called the SSID. Some routers can be set to only allow computers that know the exact SSID to connect, so that you can set the SSID on



Little did Matt and Tracey know that the next door neighbour was up to his old tricks again.

your PC and then your PC and router will work happily, but anyone who comes along without the SSID won't be able to see the router.

Secondly, there is a wireless encryption standard known as WEP. This uses an alphanumeric key (letters and numbers) as a password. You enter the key into the router and into any PCs that log on to the network. To create these, you should really enter a random combination of numbers and letters; don't use a password.

Lastly, there is the ability to tell the router to only allow access to computers that it recognises. It recognises them via their "MAC" address, which is a 12 digit hexadecimal code that is unique to your PC. Confusingly, MAC addresses have nothing to do with Apple Macs and both PCs and Macs have MAC addresses. You can find your address (see next page) and enter it into your router and then set it to only allow these "trusted" PCs. We will use all three of these methods. **BCM**

EXPLAINED...

The interface to your wireless router

Your router will probably have software that installs a shortcut to it on the desktop, or you can try typing your IP address into a browser. Routers can be configured simply through a web page interface.

How to find it...

Check your manual, or type in IP address



1 Routers are configured through a password protected web page that is served to you by the router itself. You can normally just type in your IP address to access the page, though most routers come with software that will help you make the initial configuration and put a shortcut to the page on your desktop.

2 The page that accesses the router's settings varies from router to router, but thankfully the basic wireless security settings remain the same between routers, though they may be given slightly different names.

3 Confusingly, the Basic settings, not the ADSL settings, set up the broadband connection. You will need your login and password from your ISP and then select PPPOA and unless you bought the option for a static IP (useful for some web developers), use the Dynamic IP setting. This should make ADSL broadband connections work.

4 The Security settings control firewall rules and such like that we look at later in this series. Wireless security is controlled through the Wireless Settings section above it.

5 Here we can set the Service Set Identifier or SSID. You can choose whatever you want, but it is a good idea to change it from the default.

6 You can set an unguessable alphanumeric (or sometimes hexadecimal [Base 16 number, like binary is Base 2]) WEP key.

7 Set the router to allow access only to PCs whose MAC address is registered.



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PROJECT TIME 20-30 MINUTES TUTORIAL LEVEL ADVANCED SOFTWARE REQUIRED NONE

Triple layer wireless security

That sounds rather over the top, but don't rely on any single method to protect your network



01 Firstly log in to your router. If you've got an unprotected wireless network running on it already, then you can probably do this wirelessly, but it's easier if you can connect up wired to do this as you will lose the connection when you restart the router and if you haven't got the settings right you won't be able to get in wirelessly.

You'll need your router's username and password to get into it. This is not the same as your ISP (broadband) username and password. If you've never changed the password, then the chances are that it is still "admin" and "password". If it is, then you're very naughty and should change that now as well.

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02 We now need to find the section of the settings that deal with wireless settings. Not all routers call the settings the same things.

Alcatel SpeedTouch modems (interface pictured above) are different from the Netgear shown, but the same features are there; just look for the Wireless section. When you have found the section, you'll likely find that the name of the router, or its SSID is at the top. Enter a new name for the router in the box. If you set the router so that only computers with the correct SSID can access it (not an option on the Netgear, but it is on the Alcatel) then you will need to make sure that the wireless card for the PC is set to access that router. Note down the SSID and remember it is case sensitive. Go to Device Manager in the System Properties (see last issue's Mastering Windows XP tutorial if you need help with this) and find the Network Adapters. The wireless card should be in there and when you open it, you should find a setting in the driver for entering the SSID.

03 Now we will set the WEP encryption. On the Netgear (picture above) you need to click the Configure WEP button, but in the Alcatel, you can just choose the 64-bit drop down menu and then enter your chosen WEP key. The WEP key is a hexadecimal number made up of 5 x 2 digits (so ten in total). In the Alcatel, you just enter one, so type something like "2e3f1f8a6b" and note it down! You can also click on the Advanced settings in the Alcatel, which will allow you to select whether the correct SSID (see 2) is required and whether only registered MAC addresses are allowed. In the Netgear, simply click on the Configure WEP and then select the Open System in the drop down menu and click on the 64-bit radio button. Underneath here are four rows for keys. Enter them manually, or click Generate and the router will create them randomly. You'll need a note of these keys, so you could print the page out, as long as you don't go showing it to the neighbours.

04 Click on Apply to save your changes to the router on the Netgear and then Back to go to the Wireless page. In the Alcatel, just continue down to Access Control List section lower on the page. Click on New in that section to add a new MAC address for the Alcatel to allow access. In the Netgear, click on Trusted PCs button. In both routers there is now a box to enter the MAC address of your wireless adapter card. If you don't know this address see below for details on how to get it. The address is 6 x 2 hexadecimal digits separated, each pair separated by a colon (:), e.g. 1a:2b:3c:4d:5e:6f. The MAC address is hard coded into your hardware; it is not something you can set. When you've entered the MAC address(es) of PC(s) you want to grant access to, apply or save the changes to the router. Remember that you will need to specify Trusted PCs only in the Netgear and similar in the Alcatel Advanced settings. We're now secure, so take out the network cable – see below for final tips.

EXPERT TIPS AND ADVICE!

*Need to find your IP or MAC address?
Having trouble accessing the network?*

Your router's IP address and your MAC address are not something you normally know off the top of your head. To get them, go to Start Menu / All programs / Accessories / Command Prompt and type in "ipconfig /all" (no need for the quotes) and press the Return key. You'll get lots of info. The Default Gateway should be your router's IP address and the Physical Address in your wireless adapter is your MAC address. When you have your router set up, your PC will not be able to access the network unless it is correctly configured also. Windows XP SP2 should simply ask you for the network key when it starts and remember it from then on.

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PROJECT TIME 30-60 MINUTES TUTORIAL LEVEL INTERMEDIATE SOFTWARE REQUIRED WEB CEO (FREEWARE)

Improving your website ranking

So, you've got your website up, you're very proud of it, but only your mum is visiting it? We think we've found the answer

This issue... Understanding how search engines find web pages and getting your noticed.

Next issue... Start to monitor how successful your optimisation is. Subscribe for free now!

Websites are relatively easy to create these days, with web editors doing much of the leg work of coding for you. However, even if you create a great website, full of fantastic content, people will not beat a path to your virtual door. For that to happen, you need to give them a map.

And these days on the web, directions to websites are mostly handed out by search engines like Google, Yahoo and MSN. Search engines won't just find your website though (well, they might, but you'll have to be very lucky). You can submit your page to them, but unless you've done everything right, you might see little difference. This is where Web CEO comes in.

There are two versions of Web CEO, a free and a professional version. We're going to start out with the free version. Download it from <http://www.webceo.com/> and install it. When you first run the program it will check for updates and you can install them so that it has the latest information on search engines. You'll also need to register via email to unlock your free version. Once all this is done, you can get Web CEO to help you optimise your site and submit to engines.

Before we look at doing this, which we do on the next page, we ought to take a moment to explain why software like this is essential.

DID YOU KNOW?...

You can find out what websites are linking to yours by asking the search engines. In Google, enter "link:www.mysite.com" and in others like Yahoo, type "links:www.mysite.com". This will look up and show which pages link to you, just like a normal web search, so you can click and see the content that links to you.

Search engines work by the user typing in some words and the server trying to match those words against websites to find relevant content. Some search engines work in different ways, but the way this is basically



If you're wondering why search engines aren't sending traffic your way, find out why with Web CEO.

achieved is by the search engine spidering (following the links in your site) and indexing the pages. It then also takes into account the information in the page title and information in various other parts of the HTML, like META tags for keywords and IMG ALT tags. All of these have varying degrees of meaning to different search engines. To determine where you come in the results, the engine will assess how all of these elements stack up against the word(s) the user searches on.

The notable exception is Google, as you'd expect. As well as traditional means, Google achieved its position by using something it calls Page Rank. This is a mark generated by seeing how many other websites link to this one. The more sites that do, the more useful the content on the site is likely to be so the better Google ranks it. (Basically it assumes people would only link to a site if it is any good.) Page Rank is being downgraded in importance these days, and special rules apply to blogs – click here to see Google's note – but it is still a factor that will affect any results on Google for your website. [BGM](#)

EXPLAINED...

Web CEO: understand its many features

Web CEO does not just do one thing, it does many from helping you find the keywords that matter to implementing them through to seeing how effective that implementation has been for your website.

How to find it...

Start/All Programs/Web CEO

1 Once you've registered and updated Web CEO so that you're ready to go, you'll see this dialog. Web CEO comes with a demo site information loaded so you can play around, but if your site is already on the web, then you need to add it here so that you can start analysing it.

2 If you add more than one site to Web CEO, then you can manage them from here.



3 The first step to getting your site onto the rankings is to find out what terms people search on when looking for things related to your website. The tool can help you find this out – we look how this works on page 32.

4 Once you know what words and phrases you are interested in, you need to find out what you need to do in order to ensure that your pages are displayed in the results when someone searches on those terms. This feature will analyse the phrase you are interested in against the page you want to come up in the results and suggest ways to improve your position in the search results. Again, see page 32.

5 When you've got your pages ready, then you're set to tell the world about their existence. Manually submitting your pages to each search engine may take more time than you have though, so you can use this feature. Be aware however that manual submission can be more effective and, irrespective of method, it can take months to start appearing in the listings.

6 You can keep track of how successful your website is by checking your rankings against certain keywords and you can also perform a detailed link analysis to see who is linking to your website and individual pages. You are limited to 5 keywords/phrases in this free version.

7 As a bonus feature, you can register so that Web CEO tracks your website and checks to see if there is any downtime (where the site is not available). In this free version, the check is only daily, but more regular checks are available if you choose to upgrade to Web CEO's paid for service.



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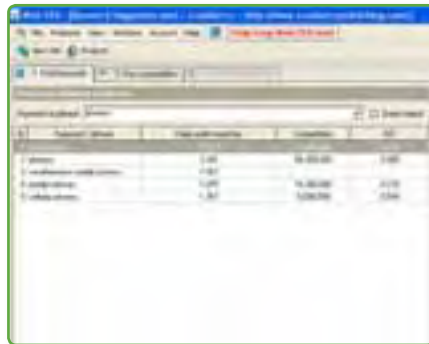


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PROJECT TIME 30-60 MINUTES TUTORIAL LEVEL INTERMEDIATE SOFTWARE REQUIRED WEB CEO (FREWARE)

Better keyword matching

Match your site's content against searches that people do in order to get more visitors



01 When you start the program, click on the Add new site button and enter the URL of the site together with a description. When you finish the wizard, you'll be left looking at a blank screen. In the Features menu select Keywords. A dual paned window will open. In the top right of the program click on the drop down menu for Project and select your website.

Now in the left pane enter a word that relates to your site's content. So, for example, if you cover telephones, try entering "phones". Press Enter and the search will be made. The results will come back showing what phrases including the word "phones" are searched on.

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02 The results show you how many searches per day are done on the relevant phrases, how many pages are matched in search results (so what your competition is for getting into those results) and then the Keyword Effectiveness Index (KEI). The KEI basically shows you a ratio of how many searches are made vs the number of results. A high number means that you have more chance of getting a result with that keyword, as there are more searches per result. If you see a key phrase here you like, click on it and then click on the Add button to place it into the pane on the right into your keyword "basket". This is a holding area so that you don't have to remember the key phrases you want to target. You can now repeat the search on other words, so to continue our example, you could try "telephone" and bingo, you'll find "telephone portable" with a KEI of 21! (So any mobile phone companies out there, there is a good phrase to target!)

03 Right click on the top keyword in your basket and select Copy phrases to clipboard. Now go to Features / Optimisation. A new window will appear. The base URL for the project should be shown – if not, check the URL is selected correctly in the Project menu top right. Now right click in the "Keywords for which you want to be at the top" box just underneath your URL. Select Paste and the key phrase from the Keyword Research will be pasted in. If you leave the URL as the base URL and click Go at the bottom, Web CEO will perform its analysis on the default page (normally index.htm or index.html). If you want the analysis to be done on a specific page on your site then click in the input box next to "Web page to analyse" and enter the rest of the URL, e.g. "products/phones/new.htm". When you click Go, Web CEO will look at the page's elements compared to the search phrase you have entered and offer you a report which tells you what you need to improve.

04 When the analysis has been done, you'll go straight to the report. Most of the changes that Web CEO will recommend can be done from any decent WYSIWYG web editor, but a basic knowledge of HTML and a source code editor will make it easier for you to implement the changes. The report is in a very digestible format, so it's easy to print out for you to then use to work on. It will analyse the actual URL against the keyword to check that, then the title of the page. Within the body of the page it will suggest how to emphasise the keyword, give you a keyword count and suggest what you need to reach and analyse the actual position of the keyword in the page and give a suggestion. Below the general advice are some very specific elements, like the use of keywords in the META tags and prominence of certain words. At each step, if you don't match or exceed its optimal level, it will warn you and advise you what to do. Implement the changes in your HTML and re-test.

EXPERT TIPS AND ADVICE!

How do you implement the
recommendations of Web CEO?

Changing the title and the text within your web page should prove no hardship if you created the page. Simply rework the text to bring the keywords into the areas the program recommends and try and get the keyword into the text the suggested number of times. If you've not heard of the HEAD tag and META tags before, these are elements within a page that aren't displayed. If your software doesn't do these, click here to use an online META tag creator. Most importantly enter the keywords you are targeting, then create the HTML. Copy this code into the source HTML of your page within <HEAD> and </HEAD>.

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Dell Outlet offers equipment from the entire Dell range, from office servers and family PCs to Notebooks. With the benefit of Dell quality at exceptional price Dell Outlet offers reliability and peace of mind with a full Dell warranty on each product. With no hidden surprises, we are the official Dell discount store offering further value for money



Q&A

Got a problem with your PC? We're here to help, so if you've got a problem, use our form directly on this page to send us your query.

WINDOWS

BEGINNER

Q I recently installed a new web browser and decided to swap back to Internet Explorer, but my icons are all screwed up. How do I restore them to the originals?

A You haven't said which alternative to Internet Explorer you tried, but in our experience Mozilla's Firefox doesn't cause this problem, so it's either a very specific problem you have or some other browser. Without more information, it's hard to tell whether your problem is just the icons or whether double clicking on .htm (web files) doesn't load Internet Explorer.

The first thing to do is restore the file association so that Internet Explorer is set to handle HTML and other

You can mend broken file associations in Windows by going to the Folder Options in Control Panel and selecting the filetype.



web files. Go to Control Panel and open the Folder Options. Click on the File Types tab and then scroll down the list until you find the HTM and HTML files. Click on and you should see the button at the bottom showing "Restore" – normally it shows "Advanced". Click on Restore and the association for that type of file will be restored to the default, which is Internet Explorer. (You can actually change the defaults for certain programs, which we will look at in next month's Windows Mastering Windows XP tutorial).

Restoring the file associations will not correct problems with the icons themselves. To do this, download Microsoft Tweak UI from <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/downloads/powertoys/xppowertoys.mspx> and go to the Repair section. Make sure that Rebuild icons is selected in the drop down menu and click on the Repair button. This will remove any personalised positions of icons on the desktop, so you will need to personalise your desktop again afterwards.

You can read more about Tweak UI in the free bonus tutorial from issue 1, and don't forget that our bonus tutorials are now running a series looking at replacements for certain Windows programs, so we will look at replacements for Internet Explorer in a future one of these. To get the bonus tutorials, you simply need to download and install our own Issue Manager, which will give you the back issues of the bonus tutorials and store them for you as well as telling you automatically when new issues of Home Computer Magazine or bonus tutorials are published.

OFFICE

BEGINNER

Q I just bought a new laptop and installed a copy of Microsoft Office on it, which is the full version, but when I load Word, it says it just the trial version. What is going on?

A At a guess, your laptop came with a trial version of Microsoft Office pre-installed on it. Many do. You installed the full version, but didn't remove the trial version. The full version doesn't necessarily overwrite the trial version. Go to Add/Remove programs in the Control Panel and see if there are two entries for Office. If there are, remove the trial version.

INTERNET

BEGINNER

Q I have just installed Firefox, and I really like it, but whenever I log into a website that is password protected, it keeps sending me back to the login page when I visit a new page. Internet Explorer doesn't do this and it's very annoying. It's the only thing that is making me consider going back.

A Firefox is a great browser, for sure, and given its roots, it is not surprisingly more secure by default than other browsers. Many secure areas of websites require a cookie to be set to keep you logged in between pages. In Firefox go to Tools /

Firefox is a sophisticated browser, but you will need to customise it after setup to ensure it functions as you want to.



Use this interactive form to send us your query

Your email address

Message

Send

Options and then click on the Privacy section and open the Cookies settings. You need to allow the site to set cookies and may need to allow them to remain until they expire, and indeed you may need to leave unchecked "for the originating site only". You'll need to experiment here as all sites set cookies differently.

WINDOWS

INTERMEDIATE

Q I run a home office and find your magazine to be of enormous help. I have just had ADSL installed on our business line, but our fax



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machine no longer seems to function. I've looked on the internet and it appears that fax machines don't work on ADSL lines. Is this right?

A The answer is probably. Most fax machines won't work on ADSL lines because DSL sends a digital signal that is incompatible with the analogue signals that a fax machine wants to send. Buying a new fax machine is not likely to solve this. However, there are several options available to you before you shell out on a new fax line. The first is to use Windows own fax service, which for some reason does still seem to function on ADSL lines. Assuming your PC has a 56k modem still inside it (almost all do), then plug it into your phone line. In Windows XP, go to Add/Remove Programs in the Control Panel and then click on the Windows components. Check the Fax Services box and install it (you may need your Windows XP CD). You can now send a fax by selecting Print in any program and choosing Fax from the drop down list of printers. A wizard will walk you through sending the fax.

Receiving faxes can be done by going to Start menu / All programs / Accessories / Communications / Fax / Fax Console. It doesn't mean you need to have the program up all the time as you can minimise it to the tray but still be waiting to receive faxes. Alternatively, you can use an Internet fax service. Some broadband providers include the feature as part of the broadband package or offer it as an extra, so check with your ISP first. If not, you can subscribe to a service separately and send faxes by email and receive them too. Check out a service like www.efax.co.uk. Lastly, there are rumours that you may eventually be able to fax over ADSL using Voice over IP (VoIP) technology, but there so many other more elegant solutions that it's not something to wait for.



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Unfortunately all of this does mean that your fax machine is a bit redundant now and if you don't already have one, you will need a scanner if you want to fax printed documents.

Faxing in Windows XP – isn't a feature installed by default or explained particularly well.

WINDOWS

INTERMEDIATE

Q Our family PC is set up with multiple users and it means everyone has the programs and desktop that they like. My young son however likes to use the PC with a lower screen resolution but this appears to change the resolution for the rest of us too. How do we solve this?

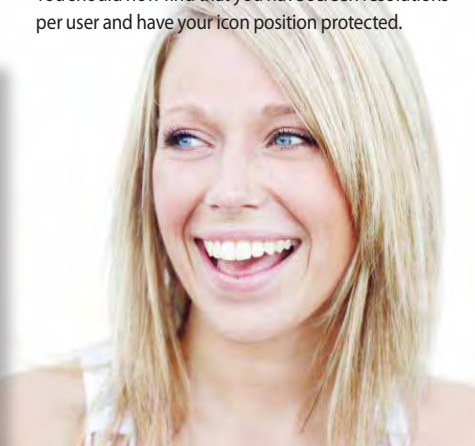
A Windows XP allows you to set many things according to the user, but sadly the screen resolution isn't one of them. It is system-wide so if you change it for one user, you change it for all. We weren't satisfied with that as an answer for you though, so we did some digging around.

Solving this is a two step process. Firstly, you need to get hold of a free program called "XP Keep per User Display Settings" which does exactly what it says it does. Download it from <http://perso.wanadoo.fr/sto41/en/MyTools/XPKeepPerUserDisplaySettings.htm>. When you install the program it will run and record your screen resolution. When you reboot, the program will start and load the screen resolution that you set as a user. So, to set the resolution for a different user, just log out and log in as the other user and set the screen resolution. This tool will do the rest. When you log back in as yourself, you will see the other user's screen resolution for a second before this tool starts and then it will restore you to your chosen resolution. This is only half the problem solved though, I'm afraid. When you change resolution, the icons on your desktop will get moved around to fit the new desktop size, so setting the resolution lower for your son will mean that when you restart as yourself, the brief

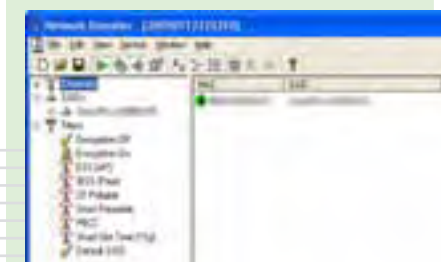


Save the position of your icons and restore them at the click of a button or automatically at startup with Activicons.

moment before your resolution is restored will move your desktop icons. To solve this, you need another free program called Activicons from http://www.cursorarts.com/ca_aifw.html. Install this and then load it. On the left of the interface is a vertical scroll bar. Scroll down until you find Desktop Controls and tick the box marked "Use saved desktop icon position when loading Windows". Click on the Save button to save the current position of your icons (you will need to do this again if you change the icons or position of icons on your desktop and want to keep the new positions). Then scroll down again to Interface and select "Reduce Activicons capabilities in favour of faster loading times", "Place Activicons in System Tray on startup" and "Run Activicons minimised". You should now find that you have screen resolutions per user and have your icon position protected.



TECH TOOL OF THE MONTH NETSTUMBLER



Where can I get it?

<http://www.netstumbler.com/>

What does it do?

It scans your wireless network and gives you all sorts of information about what it finds. It allows you to check that your network is set up as you expected it to be, using the correct channels, SSIDs and if it is secure or not, but most importantly it assesses the signal strength so you can see whether a network problem is being caused by lack of signal or by incorrect settings.

Who needs it?

Anyone who runs a wireless network and has a problem, or thinks there might be one. Primarily designed for corporate network administrators to check that nobody in their organisation has set up a wireless network incorrectly and inadvertently given away access to the rest of the network, it is useful for home users troubleshooting their networks. Also the tool of choice for wardriving, the hobby of driving around and spotting people's unsecured wireless networks.

How much does it cost?

It's free, though you can make a donation if you choose.

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Advertisers' Index

Check out the services of companies who have advertised in this issue. Plus, enter our competition to win a Dell Latitude Notebook.

PLATINUM SPONSOR

Pipex Broadband

Pipex Broadband offers a range of services that suit both the home and business user. Starting from as little as £15.99 for the lowest home package, you also get free ADSL equipment (a modem and the all important micro-filter that other providers often don't include) to get you online with all Solo broadband packages from Pipex. What's more, with Pipex's latest offer, you can be among the first to try out 2Mb broadband in your home! That's 4 times the speed of most home broadband packages.



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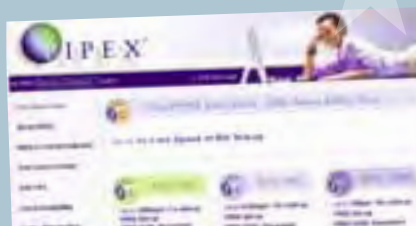
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For full details and terms and conditions of the Dell Outlet Competition, please see page 4.

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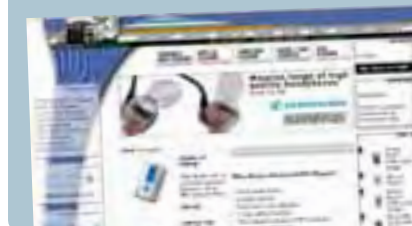
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Back issues of Home Computer Magazine. Don't forget that issue one and issue two remain available for free. Simply click on one to go to the issue page on our website and download that issue:



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Easyspace

Easyspace's Gold hosting package costs only £25/year and includes a free UK domain name registration, 10 mailboxes and free email forwarding. You get free stats, full control through the Control Panel, FTP access for easy upload to your site and MySQL support for database driven sites like Blogs. Find out more about Easyspace on page 26.

Did you know you can move your broadband service to PIPEX? Place your mouse cursor over for more info...

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Letters

I just thought to drop you a note to say that Acrobat Reader 7 is out and your magazine seems to work fine in it. One thing I did notice (apart from the much faster loading time for the reader – thank goodness) is that it has adjusted security settings, so when you open Home Computer Magazine it does ask whether you want to play the multimedia content. If you say no then you miss out on some of the fun stuff in the magazine, but as long as you OK this, you get everything playing as normal. You can adjust these settings in Trusted Documents in the Preferences, but I guess it depends on how many other PDFs you tend to open. Hope this helps.

Tim Crane

Thanks Tim, we have been playing with version 7 of the reader and the faster loading is something Adobe has consciously worked on. If you notice when the reader first opens an issue of the magazine in version 7, the dialog offers to let you play (or deny) the multimedia this time, or to play multimedia in documents that you have marked as trusted. If you click this radio button and then click on Play, then Reader won't ask you again the next time you open this issue, but will play it automatically. Just do this for every issue and you won't even have to adjust your preferences. I agree that this dialog isn't massively obvious, but that is how it operates.



Reader 7 offers several new features, including faster loading, but it also changes security settings, so be aware of how to use them properly.

"Raises the bar for all PC magazines"

Now, we know that it is very poor form to congratulate yourself, so this issue, we've decided to let other people do it for us. Here are some excerpts from the reviews of Home Computer Magazines that have appeared on some of the web's most influential websites:

Each issue is downloadable in PDF with no account required. Its quality definitely rivals that of the magazines you've probably been paying for all these years. David Taylor [Publisher of Home Computer Magazine] has raised the bar for all PC magazines.

Chris Pirillo (of Lockergnome fame)
http://chris.pirillo.com/blog/_archives/2004/12/25/215755.html#comments

Could Home Computer Magazine be the new model of what the technology press should be doing? Earlier this month, I asked how long it would be before traditional print magazines die off because of the internet, suggesting that technology magazines must take into account the demographic changes that influence how people prefer to read magazines, and adapt accordingly...

They [Home Computer Magazine] have embraced BitTorrent as part of making the magazine easily downloadable and distributable. There's an RSS feed on topics. Email subscription... I wish them all success.

Neville Robson (writing on Web Pro News)
Full article here: <http://www.webpronews.com/>

I grew up in the publishing business and I've watched over time as formerly phone book-sized publications have dwindled down to mere booklets as more and

more content moves online. Home Computer is the first publication I'm aware of that has been designed from the ground up as an online magazine (no print edition). The layout is excellent, formatted in landscape mode for your monitor, and makes great use of the PDF format with embedded animations, interactive forms, and links. Both broadband and narrowband versions are available as are BitTorrent versions for those who use that file sharing technology. Reading, especially for those using a Tablet PC, is quite enjoyable and the content is first rate. The first two issues are available now and, if you subscribe to their e-mail newsletter or RSS feed, you can also get special bonus tutorials (including an excellent guide to using Tweak UI - Microsoft's interface tweaking tool). Consider how much you've probably spent on magazines over the years. Then consider the implications of this tectonic shift in publishing models.

Marc Orchant (writing on theOfficeweblog)
Full article here: <http://office.weblogsinc.com>

I am always on the lookout for good alternatives for reading material. I stumbled upon Home Computer Magazine completely by accident and I have to recommend it as a good read. The magazine is already on its second issue and it is jam-packed with interesting material. HCM is a very professional magazine and it is totally free and exists solely in an electronic form. The magazine is distributed in PDF format so it will work for just about everyone and is perfect for the Tablet PC. I don't normally care for the PDF format but it is nothing short of amazing what these folks have done with this format.

James Kendrick (aka jkendrick)
<http://jkontherun.blogspot.com/>

I downloaded both issues yesterday and browsed through them this morning. First of all, they're free. And by free I mean free as in beer. And the content is surprisingly well done! The layout and graphics work is exceptional. The technical articles are well written and accurate. I would say the target audience is beginner to moderately experienced user. However, I found the reviews very useful and enjoyed the electronic format (Adobe) of the magazine.

You essentially download the entire thing as a .PDF

file and read it on your machine. I thought the digital format would not be easily consumed. I have never been a fan of reading things on my computer monitor - I'd rather print them out and read them on paper. I found the Adobe Reader application and format of the magazine, however, very easy to read at my computer monitor with my cup of coffee this morning. The neatest benefit to reading this online is that they've built functionality into the magazine that allows you to interact with it. Throughout the pages are sprinkled little "send this to a friend" buttons and "print this article" buttons. I found them incredibly useful. I printed out the review on Sid Meier's "Pirates!", for example, so I could casually leave it where my wife would find it.

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Home Computer Magazine Issue 04
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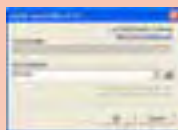
GET MORE FROM YOUR PC!

Next month you'd better get your feather duster out as it's time to spring clean your PC. All of us end up cluttering up our hard drive and slowing down Windows with the software we install. We show you how to free up space and improve performance.

Of course, you don't need to wait until next month now to get more from Home Computer Magazine. Log onto our website and see our new daily news section for technology information and analysis, Windows tips and software gems, previews and reviews with a new item provided every day.

There are now even more ways to keep up to date with Home Computer Magazine. As well as Issue Manager to subscribe to the magazine for free, there's our free email newsletter and now a new RSS feed too!

BXNEWFOLDER



This program was actually flagged up by us one day on our new daily news site as the answer to a

problem that had bugged us for nearly a decade. Despite all the shortcuts, Windows doesn't include a keyboard shortcut for creating a new folder. BXNewFolder, from the same company as we featured last month in Software Gem, is the answer. Once installed, press F12 in any folder or Explorer window and a dialog appears asking for a name and then creates the folder. It's simple, but effective. Advanced users who have found this incredibly small Windows oversight as annoying as we have over the years will be very pleased. Best of all, the program is free for home users. Alternatively, there is another solution available for free download from our website here.

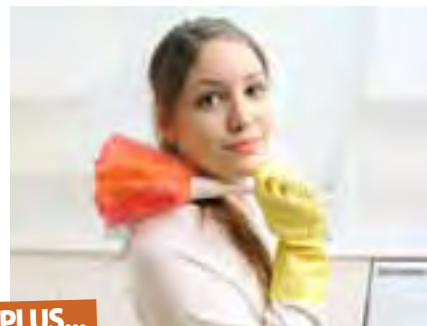
★★★★★ <http://www.baxbex.com/>

**SOFTWARE
GEM**

HOME COMPUTER MAGAZINE FEATURES

Spring clean your PC in an hour!

After you've finished tweaking Windows with our Top 100 Speed Tips in this issue, you'll be ready for next month's advice. Nick Peers returns with the ultimate guide to giving your PC an overhaul to make sure you've got rid of the software residue and items or problems that could be slowing your PC down.



PLUS...

Get started with RSS

Want to keep on top of all your favourite websites, like our daily news section? We show you how to use the best, free Windows RSS reader.

If you've looked at any websites recently you may have noticed an orange button called "RSS", perhaps with the words "feed" or one labelled "XML".

Those three letters have the power to change the way you use the internet forever. Well, at least until the next really cool development comes along. Originally leapt upon by bloggers, RSS feeds tell an interested user when a new article has been published. Nowadays many big commercial sites, including our own, supply an RSS feed.

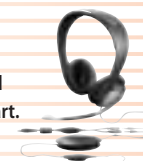
To use one, you need to have either an account with an aggregator website, or an RSS reader piece of software. Once installed, you simply

HOME COMPUTER MAGAZINE REVIEWS

Next month we bring you another 10 pages of the best new PC products we can find. Among the goodies you can look forward to are:

Sennheiser PC 155 USB

When we saw the price tag on this headset we nearly fainted, but find out how it managed to win our heart.



HP Photosmart R507



Hewlett Packard are mainly known for their printers, so how does one of their digital cameras measure up?

GSP Family Tree Maker Deluxe

Genealogy made easy by your PC.

JUST CAN'T WAIT?

Bonus Tutorial #4

Don't forget that we reward our loyal subscribers with a free bonus tutorial every month. Not available from the main site, simply install Issue Manager and we'll notify you when the extra tutorial is available.

copy the location of the feed into the software and it checks all the feeds you subscribe to regularly and pings up when a new story is detected. Alternatively, Firefox users will often see an orange icon in the bottom right of the browser. This allows you to "live bookmark" and the titles of the articles will appear, live and updated, in your Bookmark menu. We may have to use the word "ultracool".

What's the point of...
RSS feeds

HOME COMPUTER MAGAZINE TUTORIALS

Choosing a webhost

Part 4: So you've heard about blogging? We explain why you should host your own blog, the features you need from your web host and how to get started.

Mastering Windows XP

Part 4: Add/Remove Programs explained, including all the options you never even knew about.

Getting started with broadband

Part 3: Protect yourself from crackers by making sure nobody can access your PC over the internet.

Overclocking for beginners

Part 2: Now we've laid the ground work, we go for the big one and accelerate the main processor.

2 pages of readers' questions

Here's two pages we don't know about yet – you haven't written in yet. Click here to send a question.

If you've enjoyed this issue of Home Computer Magazine, please pass the word on to any friends or relatives. Simply fill out the form to send them an email with information on the magazine. We do not collect any email addresses you enter. If you have a website, please consider adding a link to us.

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