

question time



This month we include advice on hard drive error messages, transferring data from a non-PC word processor, installing a second hard drive, extending Windows 3.1 filenames, upgrading to Windows 95, and using disk compression to free up space

Q My PC is a home-built AMD DX-4-120 system with a 540Mb Fujitsu hard drive. Occasionally, when I switch on, I get the message 'Primary HDC controller failure' and switching the machine off, then on again, usually fixes it. Do you think this could be bad connection or could it be a hardware fault?
Iain Hawkins, Edinburgh
ihawkins@worldscope.co.uk

A The error message could be caused by a faulty connection and this is certainly worth checking. The hard drive connects to the PC's motherboard via a ribbon cable. Check that there are no bent or broken pins on both the hard drive and the motherboard where the cable connects. Next, check that the cable is firmly connected at both ends. If this doesn't fix the problem then it might be worthwhile replacing the cable itself. If errors still occur, then the hard drive is probably on its last legs and you should back up everything you want to keep and consider replacing it.

Q I have been using a Samsung SQ-W1000 portable word processor for some years now and have amassed a big box of floppy disks containing material written on it. I recently bought a PC but, unfortunately, the Samsung disks are not compatible with its 3.5in disk drive. Is there a program available that allows a PC to read different format disks or can I transfer the information using some other method?
Jack Yeatman, Holbury, Lancs

A The Samsung SQ-W1000 comes with a disk containing a program that enables a PC to read files from the word processor's disks and save them as ASCII (plain text) files. These can then be edited using any PC word processor

application. If you don't have the disk, Samsung will happily supply one. Call its Customer Services department on 01952 292262.

Q I have a Gateway 2000 P5-75 that has maintained sterling service since I bought it a year ago. However, after installing Windows 95, Office 95 Professional, etc, I find that I am rapidly running out of hard drive space. I want to add a second hard drive to my system and have been told that it's as simple as plugging it in, but I find this very hard to believe. Is this really all there is to it or will the system need a major reconfiguration?
John P McRae, Guildford, Surrey

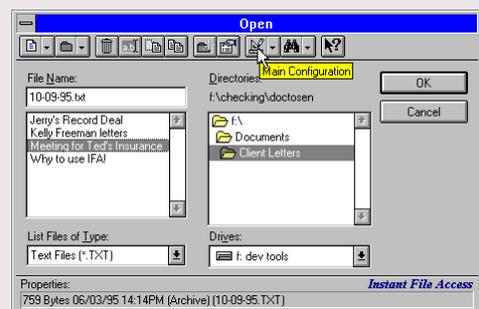
A Installing a second hard drive is relatively straightforward but there are a number of points to bear in mind. Most PCs have room for a second hard drive inside their case and have sufficient power and cabling for this to be possible. The second drive will need to be on the

same IDE channel (the primary one) as the first drive, connected by one of the plugs along the same piece of ribbon cable. The PC's BIOS will also need to be altered. You didn't mention in your letter the BIOS your PC has, but most are configured in a similar way. Basically, the second hard drive will need to be auto-detected (there is a BIOS setup option for this) and then configured (usually under 'standard' settings) as a 'primary slave' device, the first drive being the 'primary master'.

Q I have a Pentium 75 PC with a Cirrus Logic video card and 14in monitor. I use MS-DOS 6.2 and Windows 3.11. With Windows, the display is fine but when I run a DOS program the image moves off-centre so that the right edge is unreadable. I can use the monitor's controls to move the image back but when I go back into Windows, the image is off-centre again. The VGA card has several programs in a directory called 'Vgautil', but I can't get these to run. Any ideas?
N Higley, Oakham Leics

Q I installed Windows 95 on my PC several months ago and have been more than happy with its overall performance. I still use several Windows 3.1 applications and although these run without any problems, their inability to handle long filenames is a little irritating. I can't afford to upgrade to full Windows 95 applications just yet, so is there any way to get my old applications to use filenames of more than eight characters?
Alfred Bradley, Fulham, London

A There is a shareware utility for this very purpose called 'Instant File Access v4.00' from Alexoft. As well as long filenames, the program also adds extra features to 'Save' and 'Open' dialog boxes. It is available for downloading from <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/alexoft> and you can contact the author at 72154.15@compuserve.com.



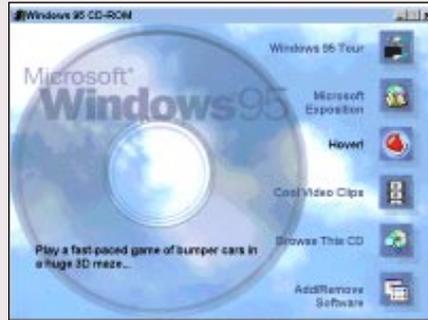
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Cirrus video cards are usually supplied with an MS-DOS utility disk that creates a directory called SVGAUTIL somewhere on the hard drive. This contains a program called 'clmode.exe' that, when run, allows you to test and centre each of the possible resolution, colour depth and refresh rate combinations for your monitor and video card. Once done, the settings are saved in a program called 'center.com', also in the SVGA directory. You then need to insert the line 'center.com' into your PC's AUTOEXEC.BAT file, with the full path that gives its location. After re-booting your PC, the 'center.com' program will intercept any changes in the display and adjust the centring of the image accordingly. If the two programs don't work, you may have the wrong versions for your particular video card. You can download the correct one from Cirrus Logic's Web site at <http://www.cirrus.com/support>.

I am contemplating purchasing a notebook computer for use at home, for a combination of both private and work use. Most of the machines I've looked at only have 8Mb of RAM as standard, whilst being expandable to varying degrees. Since your buying advice states that the minimum requirement for Windows 95 is 8Mb, should I consider more RAM? Or perhaps I should opt for a different operating system such as IBM OS/2? **Peter J Fairbank, Falmouth, Cornwall**

Windows 95 will function adequately with 8Mb of RAM but if you can afford it we strongly advise you go for a 16Mb machine, especially if you intend running more than one application at a time. It is true that OS/2 would offer marginally better per-

Q I am currently running Windows 3.1 and MS-DOS 6.2 and am a bit confused about upgrading to Windows 95. I have seen two versions of Windows 95 – the upgrade and the full version. A friend told me that the upgrade has less features than the full version. Is this true? Also, when you install Windows 95, do you need MS-DOS up and running or do you need to format the hard drive first? **Wesley Griffin, London**



A The two versions of Windows 95 you have seen are to all intents and purposes identical. The upgrade version is intended for those users who already have Windows 3.1, which it replaces when installed. The other version is intended for PCs that have neither MS-DOS nor Windows 3.1 and is supplied with a bootable floppy disk that initiates the installation. The floppy disk version of Windows 95 has all the same features as the CD version, but it lacks the video clips and game. You don't need to reformat your hard drive before installing Windows 95, as it automatically replaces any existing versions of Windows. It is, however, a very good idea to ensure that your Windows 3.1 system is working perfectly before attempting the installation.

formance on an 8Mb PC than Windows 95. However, OS/2 cannot run 32-bit Windows applications and there is a dearth of OS/2-specific software titles. In other words, with OS/2, you're restricted to using 16-bit Windows 3.1x applications. Unless you're completely happy with this idea, Windows 95 is the best choice.

Q I've heard that it's possible to compress a hard disk to give more space. As my hard disk is nearly full I'm wondering how to go about doing this. **J Perkins, Beddau, Mid Glamorgan**

Windows 95 has a utility that compresses hard disks and frees up space. I want to run this program, but I understand that some games will not function correctly when installed on hard disks which have been compressed. Is this true and, if so, is

there any way around this problem? **Victoria Cordiner, Doune, Perthshire**

A There is a Windows 95 compression utility called DriveSpace, which is started by clicking on the Start button, pointing to Accessories and then System Tools. DriveSpace works by compressing the information it contains so that it takes up less space. Whenever some of the compressed information needs to be used, it is quickly decompressed. This means that the processor is doing more work than usual but on most PCs this has little noticeable effect on performance and the whole process is completely transparent to the user. The time DriveSpace takes to compress a drive will depend entirely on the number and size of files to be compressed, but as a rough guide you can expect to wait several hours for the process to complete. Although DriveSpace is used on several machines in the *What PC?* office and has proved reliable so far, it goes without saying that you should back up your important files before using it. We haven't come across any games that won't work with a compressed drive but since DriveSpace uses some of a PC's RAM, you may find that you don't have enough memory to run some games in MS-DOS mode. Incidentally, the Microsoft Plus! pack has an improved version of DriveSpace that gives better compression, together with some other useful compression utilities.



We regret that we cannot provide readers with individual replies but, if you have a question or problem you want to share with other readers, write to us at: Question Time, *What PC?* Editorial, VNU House, 32-34 Broadwick St, London W1A 2HG.

If possible, please include details of your hardware and preferably copies of your AUTOEXEC.BAT and CONFIG.SYS files – and for Windows problems, your SYSTEM.INI and WIN.INI files.

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