At your leisure

The booming lifestyle sector offers something for everyone, from garden designers and fishing programs through to wine and travel guides. Following last month's focus on reference software, we bring you a lifestyle software guide

In this tour round the lifestyle software market we've restricted our attention to titles that are readily obtainable from UK distributors and ignored the mountain of shareware available. Also, because much of the best lifestyle software comes on multimedia CD-Roms, which can make heavy demands on a computer system, we've tested all the programs to make sure they'll run on a 486/66 with 8Mb of memory – some will even run on older 386 machines, albeit more slowly.

Finally, to help you select the best titles, each product carries a *WhatPC?* star rating in our easy-to-use quick reference table.

Gardens and gardening

If you're a keen gardener you'll warm to *Geoff Hamilton's Garden Designer*. It has clearly been developed for gardeners, rather than computer buffs, and it's so

Right: Key Home Gardener
Below: Geoff Hamilton's Garden Designer
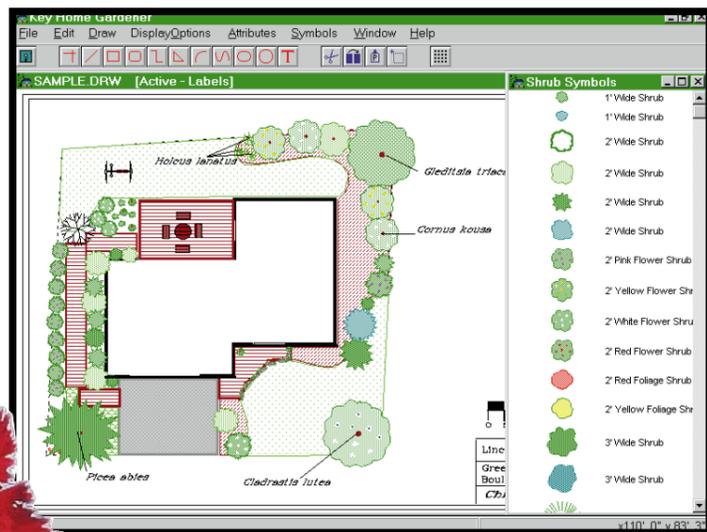
easy to use that anyone could learn how in just a couple of hours.

It offers a plan view of a garden with everything you'd expect to find in and around it, such as paths, fences, furniture, buildings and cars – though if your garden's full of broken toys and abandoned shopping trolleys, you're out of luck. You create a plan of your garden by dragging objects into place, sizing and rotating them – all of which can be done using the mouse, without recourse to complicated menus.

Once you've created your garden you can 'plant' it with shrubs, flowers and trees and then view or print it in the colours of each month and season. The plant encyclopaedia and gardening calendar are stuffed with information about plant diseases, watering, feeding

and propagation for the 1,100 plants in the program, each of which is illustrated photographically or with lifelike drawings. About the only thing this program can't do is erect your deckchair and bring you a gin and tonic.

3D Garden Designer 2 is even more ambitious because rather than making a plan of your garden it attempts to create it in three dimensions. The plant and tree database contains information on 600 varieties and there's a 'tasks this month' feature giving general guidance on care and maintenance as well as pruning and trimming. Over 200 full-screen pictures of plants photographed in famous gardens are a rich source of ideas, but the plants you can select for your virtual garden are just crude illustrations.

Although 3D Garden Designer 2

fails to match the standards of the Geoff Hamilton program, it's far better than *Key Home Gardener* from Softkey. Despite its name and a picture of a watering can and flowers on the box, this is a thinly disguised drawing program; not a gardening guide. There are no pictures of plants and there is little reason to return to the program once the plan has been printed, because there is no ongoing help with care and maintenance.

Trips and excursions

Pleasant as it is to spend time in the garden, it's also nice to get out and about, either on a day trip or for a longer stay. *Days out in Britain and Ireland*, produced in conjunction with the AA, describes over 2,000 places of interest and includes maps and road directions.

You can search for interesting places by county or by choosing from six types of attraction. Searches can be refined even further by spec-

ifying particular needs such as wheelchair access or places that allow dogs.

Each suggestion is displayed on a separate screen with details of opening times and prices. However well you think you know your area, this program is bound to come up with some new ideas for day trips. It's very slick and exceptionally easy to use; a good job really because the instructions are limited to five tiny pages in a CD insert.

For longer stays away the *AA Hotel and Restaurant Guide* contains details of 4,000 regularly inspected establishments. Like the Days Out guide, it can be searched in numerous ways to find somewhere that exactly meets your needs in terms of price, facilities or location. This CD is much stronger on hotels than restaurants. Most decent hotels are AA inspected but there are too many local restaurants for the AA to have visited more than a smattering of them.

If you need more help with routes, maps and itineraries when planning your trips, there are several programs available. Best known is *AutoRoute Express* from Microsoft but there are alternatives from the AA and Route 66. Details of these are in the table of suppliers but if you want to know more about

them, check out last month's review of reference software.

If your trips take you abroad you might have problems making yourself understood. While few people can be bothered to learn a language just for a holiday, it's nice to rehearse a few useful phrases. What *Multimedia Language System* offers you isn't a structured language course but the chance to hear and say phrases in the language of your choice without anybody laughing at your accent.

It's available in French, German, Italian and Spanish: each following the same format of looking at pictures, hearing phrases and then trying them yourself by playing a number of games. There are lots of sample phrases spoken at natural speed by native speakers, and as this is a computer-based system you can slow them down or listen to the phrases word by word. The program comes with a microphone of quite heroic proportions.

Food and drink

It's easy to argue that a recipe book or cooking guide should be printed on paper so it can be browsed in an armchair and used in the kitchen at mealtimes, so what do computer cookery books offer that their printed counterparts don't?

Julia Child – Home Cooking With Master Chefs takes the same approach as a television cookery programme: take a 'character' to front the program (the ebullient Ms Child) and assemble a bunch of expert guests, then demonstrate a number of recipes and throw in some advice on wine, serving suggestions and a few helpful hints.

This formula works well on CD
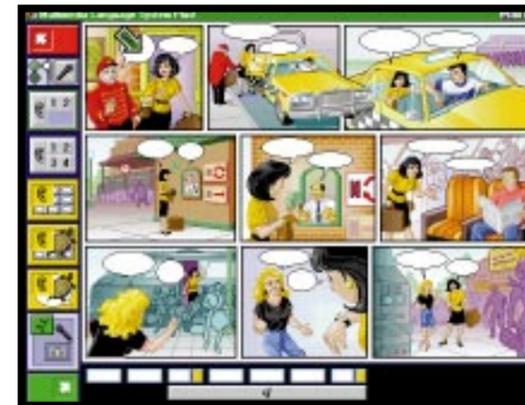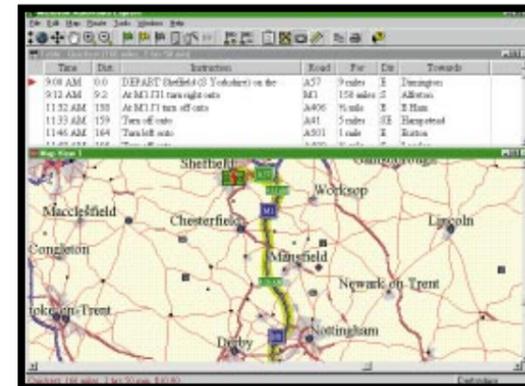
Top: Autoroute Express
*Above: Multimedia Language System*

Home Cooking With Master Chefs

because it's possible to backtrack and see things as often as you want.

The Julia Child CD comes from the States so you've got to come to terms with cup measurements, broiling and ingredients such as sun-dried sour cherries, which aren't necessarily part of your normal larder stock. If you like cookery programs you'll like this CD, not least for Ms Child herself, who sounds like Dame Edna Everage on acid.

Take away the multimedia elements from a computer cookery program and you've got a much ▶

The Elements of Wine
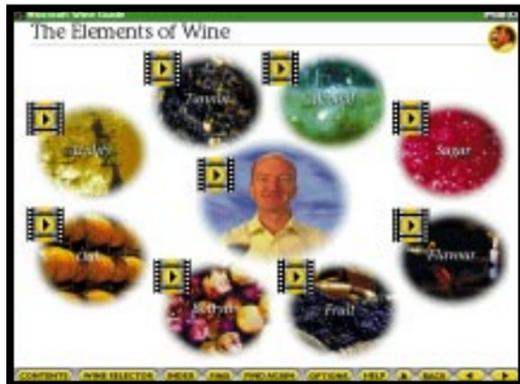
Microsoft's Wine Guide

harder job trying to justify its existence. Two products called *Instant Recipes and World Cuisine Recipe Book* share exactly the same look and feel. As the latter is sponsored by Schwartz and features only recipes containing Schwartz herbs and spices, we can't work out why it costs a fiver more than the unsponsored Instant Recipes.

Each program contains around 200 recipes which can be selected in several ways: by specifying ingredients you've already got, fixing a maximum price, or limiting the time you're prepared to spend in the kitchen. There are no pictures, videos or sounds, though you can print recipes to take into the kitchen.

All three cookery programs suggest wines to serve with each dish, but *Wine Guide* is aimed specifically at regular topers. King of the oenophiles is Oz Clarke, who has been chosen to front this TV programme on a CD, which includes videos of Oz sniffing and slurping his way through a variety of wines and giving you the low-down on wine growing, storage and vintages.

There's a lot of fascinating

Below: Balanced Diet Below right: John Wilson's World of Fishing Bottom right: Gone Fishin'

information including an encyclopaedia and an atlas of wine as well as tips along the lines of how to get a broken cork out of a bottle – and there are also suggestions as to which wine goes best with specific types of food.

Wine Cellar is aimed specifically at those with the enviable problem of managing an extensive cellar of wine. We at *What PC?* feel we're lucky if we have a few bottles in a rack on top of the wardrobe or under the stairs. However, it's possible to imagine that keen wine drinkers and collectors could find a use for Wine Cellar, which is a conventional database, already set up to store details of wines, suppliers, tasting notes, storage and consumption. If this is what you want, it saves you the trouble of setting one up yourself, but don't real cellar owners have dusty leather-bound books for this sort of thing?

Healthy eating

With what seems like half the country trying to lose weight, there's at least one computer cookery book designed to brighten up the sometimes depressingly dull menus doctors would like you to stick to. *Healthy Indulgences* is hosted by Lynn Fischer, whom we are assured is well-known on American TV. She tells you how to make all sorts of gooey and exotic meals you wouldn't normally associate with healthy eating, such as sweet potato bundles, triple-decker French toasts and chocolate cookie ice-cream sandwiches.

For each recipe you can print out a shopping list and view the nutritional content in terms of fats, cho-

lesterol, calories and sodium. Lynn seems like a very nice woman, even more endearing because she is not afraid of making mistakes, but we were disappointed to find that much of the 'healthiness' in these recipes comes from using ingredients such as non-fat milk and cheeses and powdered egg substitutes.

A more systematic approach to dieting is provided by *Balanced Diet*, an eminently worthy program that requires you to enter details about your body, build and pattern of exercise (if any), as well as sample meals. Balanced Diet then suggests a regime for you – based on the meals you have entered, though it has some more frugal suggestions of its own.

It's unlikely that the sample meals you entered are remotely suitable so you can tweak the ingredients until they're closer to your real needs, and fiddling about with Balanced Diet at least keeps you from raiding the fridge.

Outdoor pursuits

John Wilson's World of Fishing is probably not what you think it is. Forget about rainy afternoons on dismal riverbanks; this is a picture and movie tour of 17 exotic destinations all over the world. As a travelogue it's likely to be of almost as much interest to non-fisherpersons as to keen sports anglers, but John Wilson's hints and tips and the fishing fact sheets will satisfy those who really do feel the urge to cast line into water.

You get a more interactive fishing experience from *Gone Fishin'* which simulates fresh water fishing in the wilds of Canada. Instead of sitting passively and watching John visit exciting places at someone else's expense, you go to the bait shop, pack your tackle box, choose a location from the map and then fish from a virtual boat. You make decisions

about bait, casting procedures and much more. The DOS-based graphics are of the colourful cartoon variety and if you really like fishing (and can suspend your disbelief for long enough) you'll probably get a lot of kicks from this program.

Sailing enthusiasts are better served than anglers by *Interactive Sailing*. This one runs under Windows instead of DOS and is much slicker. You captain a J/105 boat over a choice of three regatta courses. There's also a practice mode and 40 video tutorials.

The simulation is good enough for landlubbers who want to learn the principles of sailing before risking life and limb on the waves, and as you become more experienced you can set trickier weather conditions and switch off some of the computer-controlled aids, thus taking manual control of sail setting and tacking manoeuvres.

Home improvements

Back on dry land, there's no shortage of software to help you plan home improvements. Three complementary programs from Planix cover interior and exterior design and landscaping.

Given that drawing precision plans and three-dimensional views is inherently complex, *Home Designer 3D* makes it as foolproof as possible. Constructional elements such as walls, doors and windows can be dragged into place in plan view. The same goes for furniture and fittings, which are all supplied as symbols. Once everything is in place, click on '3D' and you get to see what your design looks like.

Exterior Designer 3D is the architectural counterpart of Home Designer, this one being for designing buildings themselves, rather than their interiors. While most people at some time in their lives need to plan interiors, either when decorating, buying furniture or moving

into a new home, not many would contemplate planning their own external building work. This program uses a question and answer technique for you to select a house style, modify the floor plan, choose building materials and plot type, then add landscaping features. As an example of the power a PC puts in the hands of inexperienced users, this is a terrific program, but we're not quite sure who needs it.

Last of the Planix programs is *Photo Landscape*. It's a photo manipulation tool for visualising what the garden/exterior of a house would look like if you added features such as trees, plants, paths and walls. It couldn't be easier to use, and there are extensive tutorials and demonstrations. Our screen shot (below left) shows the before and after effects of using Photo Landscape.

There's another interior design program called *3D Interior Designer*. This is an incredibly clunky DOS program and best avoided unless you've got an urgent need to do interior design on an ancient PC with limited memory. The most impressive thing about it is the opening screen. The instruction booklet doesn't even tell you the correct command to start the program, and from then it goes downhill.

Home finance

A number of products have sprung up to fill the yawning gap between the back of an envelope and a full-blown computerised accounting system. *Microsoft Money* is a highly visual way of keeping track of where your money goes and monitoring the payment of bills and the progress of savings and investments. Wherever possible it tries to

Top left: Interactive sailing Above: Home Designer 3D

Below left: Photo Landscape Below: Quicken Bottom: HomeWise

avoid the usual accounting jargon and stick with everyday concepts and words.

Once you've entered details of your transactions, which you should do once a week, you can check exactly where you stand financially by calling on a host of automated reports and charts that Money can generate for you.

Quicken is a similar product to Money, though somewhat more sophisticated and aimed as much at the small business as the home user. This makes it harder to learn, though still very much simpler than conventional ▶
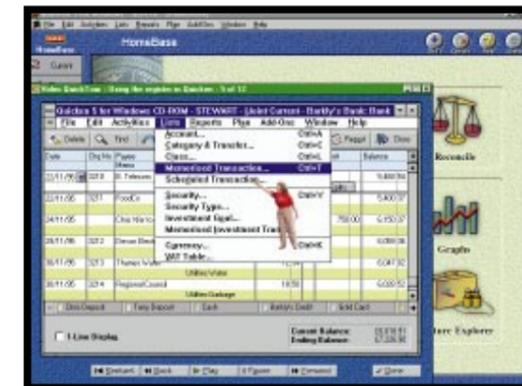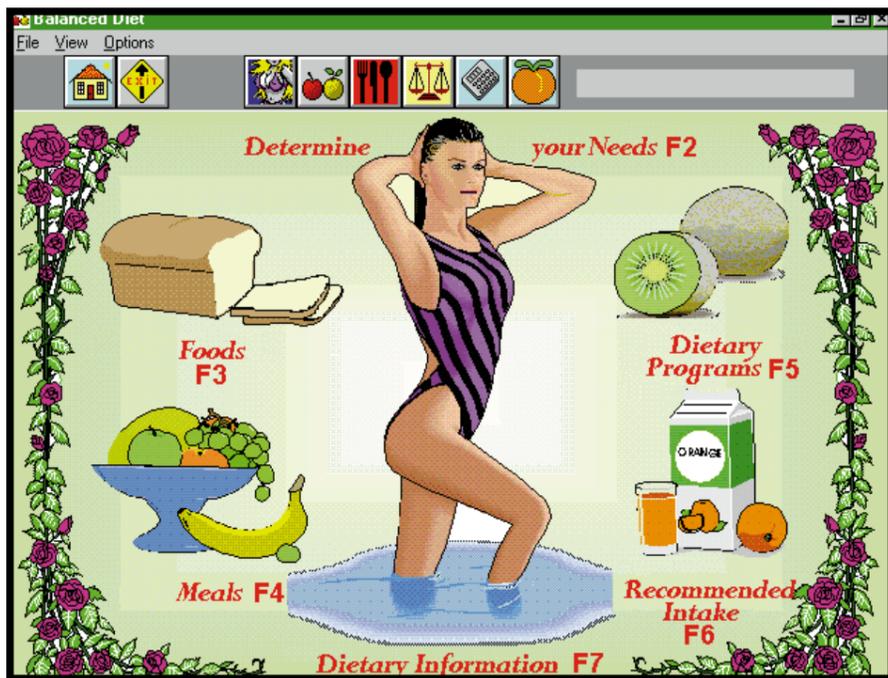
Home Inventory. The invoicing program ties in with Quicken to produce professional-looking invoices on plain paper and Home Inventory is an extremely useful program that makes it easy to log all your possessions, room by room, for insurance purposes.

Another contender in this category is *Mini Office Home Finance*, previously known as Moneybox. It costs a tenner less than Quicken or Money but it's much less slick and probably more suitable for a small business seeking a really low-cost accounts program than for home use.

Family life

This is a broad category covering a range of programs. One that is unlikely ever to be used in the way its designers intended is *HomeWise*. It offers a computerised virtual house split into rooms in which mini databases are used

Time's Up

tional accounts, especially if you run the animated tutorials of Quicken support staff walking around the screen and pointing out key features.

Although Quicken (currently in version 5) can be bought for £39.95, a better buy is the Deluxe version, which comes with two additional programs: *Quick Invoice* and

to store details of what needs doing in the house, who should be doing it, what are each family member's favourite meals and dozens of other categories. Family members can leave messages for each other and consult a combined family calendar of activities.

Rather than use the family PC to type messages to their children, responsible parents should be making sure it's being used creatively. *Time's Up* is parental control software that lets a parent restrict children's access to the computer in many ways. By giving every member of the family a password to enter before Windows will start, it's possible to restrict the playing of games to, say, an hour a day; prohibit Internet usage unless at a time when you are there to supervise; block out certain programs altogether and allow unrestricted access to others. This is a program every parent should have, and at £19.95 they can afford it.
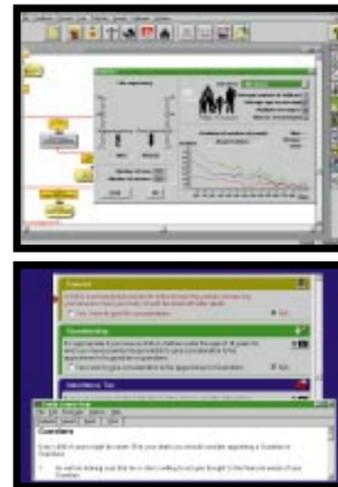

Families interested in tracing their history have a choice of cheap programs to help them. *Family Origins* is pretty foolproof: you start with a person whose details you know, then add relationships to other family members and the pro-

gram prompts you for the relevant information. You can add photographs of individuals and print out a variety of reports and charts. Keen genealogists can use the program for serious research, while amateurs can refer to a booklet on how to go about tracing your own family history through UK sources.

A similar product called *Family Tree* has a more complex array of buttons and controls to learn but is far more interesting in its screen layout and graphical reporting facilities. Pictures and sound recordings can be attached to individuals and, as with Family Origins, standard GEDCOM genealogical files can be shared with other programs. You aren't told how to trace your family's history but there's a booklet describing the use of the software and a list of useful UK information sources in the help file.

Quicken *Family Lawyer* is misleadingly named because it's not a general source of legal advice but a way of creating legally binding wills and powers of attorney by filling in a question-and-answer form in plain English. Death isn't a popular subject, but perhaps because of this many people neglect making a will until it's too late. Quicken Family Lawyer has been checked by UK solicitors and the legal rules it adheres to were those current in June 1996.

Be grateful if you're not the one in your family currently boning up for the new driving test. Even so, you should still spend some time running through *The Official Driving Instructor*, which contains all 630 of the new written test questions as well as stacks of useful and informative
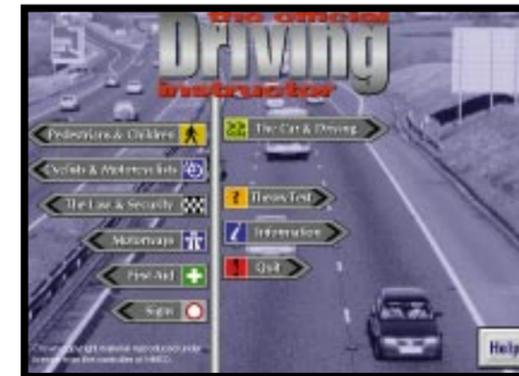
Left top:
Family Tree
Left below:
Family Lawyer
Above: The
Official Driving
Instructor

tutorials on safe driving. This is a 'must have' product for new and experienced drivers. And still on the theme of motoring, if you want to keep track of how much your car is costing you there's a simple database program called *Motoring Expenses* from GSP at £14.99.

Finally, let's not forget the animal members of the family. *Virtual Reality Cat*, one of Dorling Kindersley's Eyewitness series, tells you everything you need to know about all sorts of cats, from the domestic variety to tigers, and is a visual delight for anyone interested in the subject.

Dog lovers are also well catered for by Microsoft's *Dogs*. This is a fully interactive exploration into buying, training, feeding and caring for a dog as well as a guide to breeds and characteristics. Perhaps not quite as slick as the Virtual Reality Cat but it contains a wealth of useful information and is an object lesson into how to make a multimedia CD easy to use.

Just pop it into a Windows 95 PC and it runs: no questions, no setup, no fuss.

Paul Wardley

Below: Virtual
Reality Cat
Bottom: Dogs
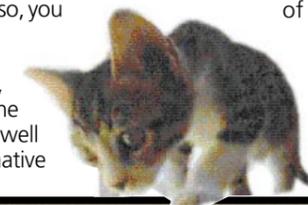
Lifestyle sofware packages compared

Title	Type	Distributor	Telephone	CD or floppy	DOS or Windows	Windows version	Minimum CPU	Minimum memory	Price	Star rating
3D Garden Designer 2	Gardening	EuroPress	01625 859333	CD	DOS	n/a	386	640Kb	£29.99	★★★☆☆
3D Interior Designer	Home Improvements	EuroPress	01625 859333	CD	DOS	n/a	386	640Kb	£19.99	★★☆☆☆
AA Days out in Britain & Ireland	Travel	BTL Publishing	01274 841313	CD	Windows	3.1 or 95	486	8Mb	£23.99	★★★★☆
AA Hotel & Restaurant Guide	Travel	BTL Publishing	01274 841313	CD	Windows	3.1 or 95	486	4Mb	£23.99	★★★☆☆
Autoroute UK and Ireland	Travel	Microsoft	0345 002000	CD	Windows	3.1 or 95	386SX25	4Mb	£49.99	★★★★☆
Balanced Diet	Diet	GSP	01480 496575	both	Windows	3.1 or 95	386	4Mb	£14.99	★★★☆☆
Dogs	Pets and animals	Microsoft	0345 002000	CD	Windows	3.1 or 95	386	4Mb	£29.99	★★★★☆
Exterior Designer 3D	Home Improvements	RMG Ltd	0181 875 4444	floppy	Windows	3.1 or 95	486DX	4Mb	£46.99	★★★☆☆
Family Origins	Family Life	Guildsoft	01752 895100	floppy	Windows	3.1 or 95	386	4Mb	£29.95	★★★☆☆
Family Tree	Family Life	GSP	01480 496575	floppy	Windows	3.1 or 95	386	4Mb	£14.95	★★★☆☆
Geoff Hamilton's Garden Designer	Gardening	GSP	01480 496575	CD	Windows	3.1 or 95	386	4Mb	£19.95	★★★★☆
Gone Fishin'	Outdoor pursuits	EuroPress	01625 859333	CD	DOS	n/a	386DX33	4Mb	£19.99	★★★☆☆
Healthy Indulgences	Diet	Softkey	0181 246 4000	CD	Windows	3.1 or 95	386	4Mb	£29.99	★★★☆☆
Home Designer 3D	Home Improvements	RMG Ltd	0181 875 4444	floppy	Windows	3.1 or 95	386DX	4Mb	£46.99	★★★☆☆
HomeWise	Family Life	GSP	01480 496575	both	Windows	3.1 or 95	386	4Mb	£19.95	★★☆☆☆
Instant Recipes	Food & Drink	GSP	01480 496575	both	Windows	3.1 or 95	386	4Mb	£14.99	★★☆☆☆
Interactive Sailing	Outdoor pursuits	EuroPress	01625 859333	CD	Windows	3.1 or 95	486SX25	4Mb	£19.99	★★★★☆
John Wilson's World of Fishing	Outdoor pursuits	Pearson Publishing	01223 350555	CD	Windows	3.1 or 95	386SX25	4Mb	£19.95	★★★★☆
Julia Child: Home Cooking	Food & Drink	Microsoft	0345 002000	CD	Windows	3.1 or 95	386SX	4Mb	£29.99	★★★★☆
Key Home Gardener	Gardening	Softkey	0181 246 4000	CD	Windows	3.1 or 95	386/25	4Mb	£29.99	★★☆☆☆
Milemaster2 Home	Travel	AA	01256 494692	floppy	DOS	n/a	386SX	2Mb	£25.00	★★★★☆
Mini Office Home Finance	Home Finance	EuroPress	01625 859333	CD	Windows	3.1 or 95	486	8Mb	£29.99	★★★☆☆
Money for Windows 95	Home Finance	Microsoft	0345 002000	CD	Windows	95 only	486	8Mb	£39.99	★★★★☆
Motoring Expenses	Miscellaneous	GSP	01480 496575	both	Windows	3.1 or 95	386	2Mb	£14.99	★★★☆☆
Multimedia Language System	Languages	Infogrames	0171 738 8199	CD	Windows	3.1 or 95	386SX	4Mb	£34.99	★★★★☆
Photo Landscape	Home Improvements	RMG Ltd	0181 875 4444	CD	Windows	3.1 or 95	486DX	8Mb	£46.99	★★★☆☆
Quicken Deluxe	Home Finance	Intuit	0800 585058	CD	Windows	3.1 or 95	486	8Mb	£64.95	★★★☆☆
Quicken Family Lawyer	Family Life	Guildsoft	01752 895100	CD	Windows	3.1 or 95	486	4Mb	£29.95	★★★☆☆
Route 66 UK	Travel	Ingram Micro	01908 260160	CD	Windows	3.1 or 95	386SX25	4Mb	£45.83	★★★☆☆
The Official Driving Instructor	Miscellaneous	EuroPress	01625 859333	CD	Windows	3.1 or 95	486/33	4Mb	£29.99	★★★★☆
Time's Up	Family Life	RMG Ltd	0181 875 4444	floppy	Windows	3.1 or 95	386	4Mb	£19.95	★★★★☆
Virtual Reality Cat	Pets and animals	Dorling Kindersley	0171 753 3488	CD	Windows	3.1 or 95	486/25	4Mb	£29.99	★★★★☆
Wine Cellar	Food & Drink	GSP	01480 496575	both	Windows	3.1 or 95	386	4Mb	£14.99	★★★☆☆
Wine Guide	Food & Drink	Microsoft	0345 002000	CD	Windows	3.1 or 95	386	4Mb	£29.99	★★★★☆
World Cuisine Recipe Book	Food & Drink	GSP	01480 496575	both	Windows	3.1 or 95	386	4Mb	£19.95	★★☆☆☆

Why Train a Dog?

An untrained dog that jumps on people and refuses to come when called is no fun to be around. More than that, it can endanger itself, and others.

School Days

Just say yes
A well-trained dog understands that you are the pack leader. For this reason, it will obey you even if your command goes against its instinct.

See Spot run
Because dogs are descended from wild hunters, many will instinctively pursue almost anything that moves. Cats, cars, and bicycles all become prey for an untrained dog to chase—and bite.

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