question time

This month we include advice on a mystery Windows file, how to alter a PC's sound volume, dealing with an AOL connection problem, getting CD-ROMS to auto-run, and reacting to the introduction of MMX technology

Q I have recently subscribed to AOL but am having problems trying to connect to the service. When I click the 'Connect' button, the modem appears to initialise okay and dials the AOL number but then the 'Hold' light comes on and nothing else happens. Could you please tell me what has gone wrong?
Robert Jay, Parkfields

A From your description, it sounds as though AOL doesn't have the correct settings for your modem. A modem, just like any other computer peripheral, needs a driver if it is to work properly. Many

Modem Selection and Customisation

Modem Port: ○ COM 1 ⊙ COM 2 ○ COM 3 ○ COM 4

Choose Modem:
- Gateway Telepath 14.4
- Gateway Telepath II 14.4
- Gateway Telepath II 28.8 V.34
- General Datacomm DeskTop
- General Datacomm FastPro
- General Datacomm Quester
- General Datacomm SpectraComm
- Generic (Hayes Compatible)
- Guillemot MaxiModem 14.4
- Guillemot MaxiModem 28.8

[Edit Commands] [Edit Result Codes] [Edit Advanced] [Help & Info]

[OK] [Cancel]

communications programs rely on the modem driver specified by the Windows Control Panel but some, like AOL, rely on their own.

To change AOL's driver, click the 'Setup' button on the startup screen. Next, click the 'Setup modem' button and choose your modem from the list that appears. If you don't know the type of modem you have, choosing 'Generic (Hayes compatible)' usually gets things going.

If this doesn't work, there may be a problem with your AOL installation and you should call AOL technical support on 0800 376 5432.

Q Just before Christmas, I invested in what I thought was a top-of-the-range Compaq PC for my family. The shop assistant told me its Intel Pentium 166MHz proces-
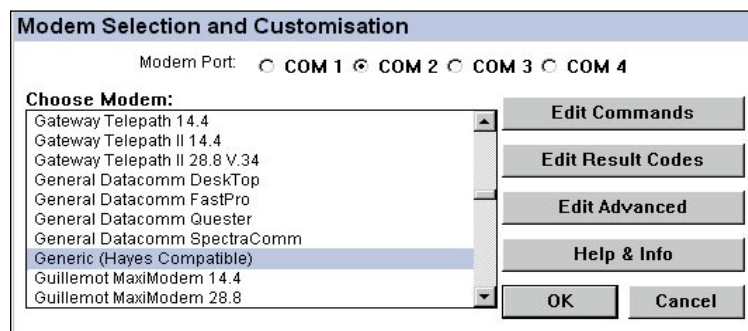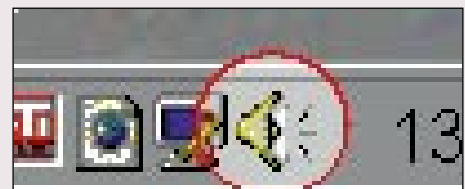
sor was very powerful and unlikely to need upgrading for several years. However, I read with some dismay the article in your April issue regarding the new MMX technology. I'm appalled that barely four months after buying my PC, I now face the prospect of it being made obsolete within a few months. Is there anything I can do?
Peter Farlington, Ludlow, Shropshire

A The first thing you can do, Peter, is to stop panicking! Intel's introduction of MMX technology does not render existing Pentium-based PCs obsolete and a Pentium 166MHz is still a very powerful processor. It's true that some software titles will run only on Pentium MMX PCs, but for the short term at least, this should only affect games. Even then, 'standard' Pentium versions of these titles will undoubtedly appear alongside the MMX-only editions as software publishers will want to generate as much revenue from their products as possible. Bear in mind that there are literally tens of millions of non-MMX Pentium PC owners in the world, and to sweep them aside overnight does not make commercial sense.

In the longer term, of course, even high-end Pentium 166MHz machines like your own will need upgrading – technology advances very rapidly in this industry. Intel has already launched MMX OverDrive processors to replace existing Pentium processors, turning the PCs into fully-fledged MMX systems. If you really feel the need, you can invest in one of these and then you'll have an MMX PC. However, in our opinion, there's absolutely no reason for you to consider doing so at the moment. ▶

Q I use Windows 95 and have a problem with my sound card. The card works fine but I do not have a speaker icon on the taskbar for altering the volume. Is there any way to fix this?
David Precious, Stevenage, Herts

Multimedia Properties

[Audio] [Video] [MIDI] [CD Music] [Advanced]

Playback
Volume: Low ———————— High
Prefered device: AWE64G Wave Out [220]
☑ Show volume control on the taskbar

Recording
Volume: Low ———————— High
Prefered device: AWE64G Wave In [220]
Prefered quality: CD Quality [Customize...]

☐ Use prefered devices only

[OK] [Cancel] [Apply]

A The speaker icon can be turned on and off using the Multimedia settings in Control Panel. Try selecting the check box on the 'Audio' tab for 'show volume control on the taskbar'. This should sort things out.
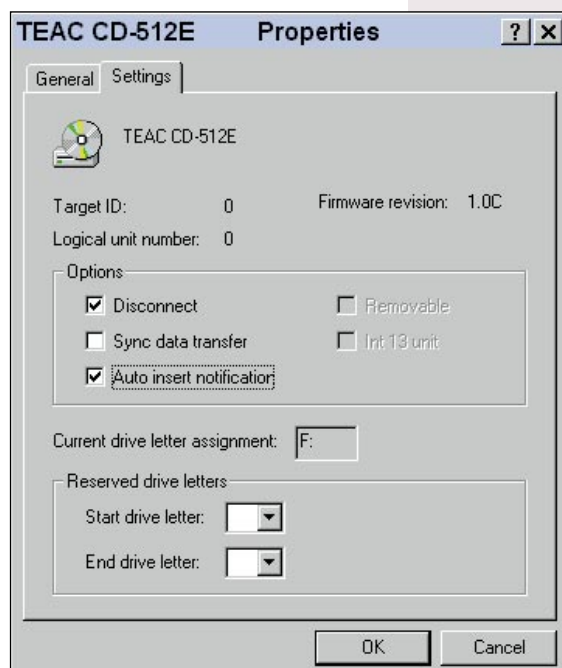
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Q I am no expert, just an eager enthusiast, so could you help me with a problem? For some reason, my computer has stopped auto-running CD-ROMs when I place them in the drive. To run a CD-ROM now, I have to go through Start, Run, D: and then double-click the file I require. Have I mistakenly removed a vital file and can I restore this feature?
Mr P Shore, Mansfield,Notts

It sounds as though you have simply turned off the AutoPlay feature for your CD-ROM drive – not that easy to do accidentally, as this setting is tucked away below several layers of menus. However, it's a simple matter to restore the feature once you know where to look.

Click on Start, then Settings, then Control Panel. Next, double-click on the System icon and select Device Manager. Open the entry for CD-ROM by clicking the '+' sign next to it, then double-click on the entry for the CD-ROM drive. Next, click the empty box next to 'Auto insert notification'
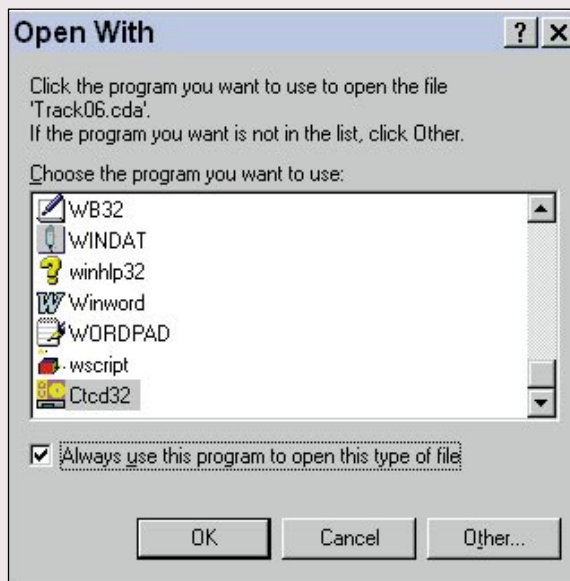
Q When I purchased my PC a couple of months ago, it came with a Creative Labs CD-ROM full of audio applications. I've only just installed this and my problem is how to make the Creative Labs CD player the default, rather than the one supplied with Windows 95. **Leon Potter, Norwich**

A As far as Windows 95 is concerned, a track on an audio CD is a file just like any other and, as such, has a default application associated with it. For an audio CD track, this is usually a CD player and for a text file, for instance, it is a word processor. These file/application relationships are called 'associations' and they can be changed.

First, find the file you want to open. Then, hold down a Shift key and right-click the file. Choose 'Open With...' from the menu that appears and a list of different applications will appear in a window. If the application you want (the Creative Labs CD player, in your case) doesn't appear, use 'Browse' to find it on your hard drive.

Finally, before clicking 'OK', tick the check box to always use this program for this type of file.

Incidentally, the application association for any type of file can be changed in this way and associations can always be changed by holding down Shift when right-clicking on a file.

Open With dialog – Click the program you want to use to open the file 'Track06.cda'. If the program you want is not in the list, click Other. Choose the program you want to use: WB32, WINDAT, winhlp32, Winword, WORDPAD, wscript, Ctcd32. ☑ Always use this program to open this type of file. OK / Cancel / Other...

TEAC CD-512E Properties – General / Settings. TEAC CD-512E. Target ID: 0. Firmware revision: 1.0C. Logical unit number: 0. Options: ☑ Disconnect, ☐ Sync data transfer, ☑ Auto insert notification, ☐ Removable, ☐ Int 13 unit. Current drive letter assignment: F:. Reserved drive letters: Start drive letter / End drive letter. OK / Cancel

to turn AutoPlay on. Then click on the OK buttons to exit. You should now find that your CD-ROMS run automatically – if you want to prevent this from happening on occasion, hold down a Shift key while you put in the CD-ROM.

Q I have an AST 7303 PC with a Pentium 133MHz processor and have been busily installing utilities to try out.

While doing this I noticed that my Windows folder contains a file called WIN386.SWP, which I have not come across before. My attention was drawn to it purely because of its size. It's unusual in that the space it occupies on my hard disk seems to fluctuate from 15Mb at start-up to around 20Mb a just few minutes later. What exactly is this file, and should it be in my Windows folder?
Chris Johnston, Glasgow

The file you refer to is known as a swap file and it is a special area on your hard disk that Windows reserves for use as 'virtual' memory'. As far as your computer is concerned, virtual memory acts in the same way as real memory (RAM) but because it resides on the hard disk, it works very slowly in comparison. When Windows runs out of real memory it will use virtual memory as a temporary measure. This is the reason why the WIN386.SWP file fluctuates in size when you're running Windows – as more virtual memory is needed so the size of the swap file will increase, and vice versa.