

Several of last month's letters have excited responses from you, which is just as it should be. Talk of the problems of deaf computer users has produced several solutions, and there's more encouragement for us all to take care over viruses. Elsewhere there is sympathy and advice for the man who lost out in an internet auction, and a reader who feels there's a *PC Advisor* conspiracy

Right type of conversation

As a totally deaf person, I can sympathise wholeheartedly with Brian Lewis (Readers' writes, September 02), regarding the difficulty of communication for anyone with hearing loss. But be of good cheer. Help is at hand: the RNID, in conjunction with BT, has a telephone communication system called Typetalk. Anyone with a PC and a data/fax/voice modem and the software supplied with them can now access telecommunications worldwide on equal terms with a hearing person. This has been aided still further by the introduction of BT Textdirect (nothing to do with mobile phone text messaging).

At www.rnid-typetalk.org.uk every assistance will be offered.

Roger Cox, Norfolk
(See also our *Star letter*)

The camera never says anything at all

Most people, when they take photographs on holiday, or at family events like weddings, christenings and so on, want people to see the pictures once they have been developed and printed. But more and more people are using digital cameras.

How do you show your wonderful creations to family and friends? Carry around your PC? Buy an expensive laptop or go through the lengthy, costly process of printing out copies on your home printer. Even sending your digital files to a specialist for printing is

not practical because it defeats the whole point of having a digital camera for those instant creations.

What it needs is a manufacturer to come up with a cost-effective gadget about the size of a normal photograph that's very slim and fits into the pocket like a pack of photographs. You could download the pictures or insert a memory smartcard and reproduce instant digital photographs on the screen to pass around at family gatherings. Is there such a thing out there already? Will a manufacturer see the potential for such a gadget?

Adrian Lewis, via email

Will Head replies: there's nothing we know of that exactly fits the bill, but there are a couple of other options. Sony made a digital photo frame, which you can plug your Memory Stick into and it shows the pictures on an LCD (liquid crystal display) panel. It was rather expensive however – over £500 – and required a mains power supply so would be no good on the move.

Canon has a portable printer that connects directly to its cameras so you can print your snaps without a PC; there's even an optional battery so you can use it on the move. Many digital cameras also include a video-out option, so you can hook them up to a regular TV and give a digital slideshow. Finally, all serious digital cameras include an LCD on the back so you could use that to preview and share your photos.

Virus complacency, part II

Paul Milne's letter (September 02) strongly urged readers not to be complacent about viruses, but I don't think he went far enough. If you check your mailbox daily, there's no point in updating your virus checker only once a week. Try suggesting to an airline pilot that he does his preflight checks as infrequently.

And there's no excuse not to install antivirus software – Grisoft let you have AVG absolutely free for the time and trouble it takes to download – and a quick check of its website on a daily basis will tell you if there's an update to download.

A few minutes a day will keep your data secure – and minimise the trouble caused by those who delight in developing harmful viruses. We all have a role to play.

John Gimson, via email

Musing over music

Your article about the music industry trying to close down the free download sites (August 02, page 150) made some very good points. Why would users wish to pay for something they can already get for free? If I were the head of one of these big record companies I would be looking for a better service to offer, not the same at a higher price. As for restricting the amount you download from each artist and the amount of songs you can burn, this is the last nail in their coffin.

I would offer any album at £5. This would take out packaging and delivery costs and profits for the record shop. I would also offer a good-quality copy with the album art, lyrics and sleeve notes tagged to each song. I would rather pay this than spend 30 minutes trying to download a song that has been recorded from the radio or is only half the song, or getting two minutes from the end and the other person hangs up.

Record companies must start to lead the way, not be dragged behind. I for one would pay £5 a CD for a good-quality

Star letter

In reply to Brian Lewis (Readers' writes, September 02), I would like to say that deaf and hard of hearing people do very well. Get yourself off to the Sensory Support Team at your local Social Services Office. After an assessment you will be given a permanent free loan of a minicom phone and any other support items deemed necessary, such as flashing doorbell lights and personal induction loops.

Armed with your minicom, visit the Royal National Institute for the Deaf website at www.rnid.org and follow the links to the Typetalk website. Once you have set up an account you can use the telephone as normal. The only difference is your conversation is relayed back and forth via a hearing operator who converts your text input into voice for the hearing person on the other end and back into text for you. You can even set up your PC to use the service.

Next, enrol in a British Sign Language course. No, it's not English with silly signs, but a rich, diverse, independent language used by the deaf community. You will also learn about the deaf community, its history and traditions. Pretty soon you will wonder why you ever wanted to hear in the first place. Be proud of being deaf and welcome to our community.

James Hughes, via email

Our star letter writer wins a copy of Paint Shop Pro 7.0, worth £93.95 inc VAT. This software classic is a huge bundle of graphics programs, which will enable you to edit digital photos, add special effects, create your own illustrations, organise photos in an album and animate graphics.

If you want to air your views in these pages, please write to PC Advisor, FREEPOST 20 LON87018, London W1E 4AN, fax us on 020 7580 1935, or email us at pcadvisor_letters@idg.com. Please mark emails 'Readers' writes' in the subject heading.



download rather than spend days trying to get it from P2P sites.

Des Harman, via email

Hammer to fall

As a frequent e-auctioneer, I get very angry at the thought of Martin Carter's experience when he bought a laptop online only to find the Windows operating system was a pirate version (Readers' writes, September 02). Clearly, Fast (Federation Against Software Theft) must be alerted to this as you said, but any half-decent auction site has the ability to protect buyers from unscrupulous sellers. Ebay and QXL both encourage the production of experience reports so others can be alerted to problems.

In this case I feel that Martin should write directly to the auction site customer services so that the vendor can be barred and all his current auctions stopped. He might even find that the site has insurance that will get him some money back.

Martin Carr, via email

What's on the telly?

In the News section of the September 02 issue (page 23), it says people who watch TV on their PC monitor could be forced to buy a television licence and goes on to mention PCs with TV capability and the coverage of *Big Brother* over the internet. From that I get the impression that the writer is talking about web-based TV (the TV capability bit is a little odd if you take this view).

But in the same issue's feature, *25 ways to get the PC you always wanted*, it states: "Save on your TV licence (at least for now) and turn your PC into an extra domestic TV by adding a TV tuner card." As long as you have a licence for your house (address) you can have as many TVs as you like, but this gives the impression you don't need a licence for TV tuner card-equipped PCs.

I've been a student for the last three years, getting all the TV licence info pushed under my halls of residence doors.

Each states 'equipment used to receive TV signals'; one was just about computers equipped with TV cards needing to have a TV licence. I think this needs clarifying as I'm sure people have read the articles thinking they can save the cost of the TV licence and when the TV licence man calls they will get caught out.

Matthew Barrett, via email

Ursula Seymour replies: you need a TV licence no matter how you actually view television programmes and you're right, we did seem to say the opposite in our feature so apologies for that. Normally all the TV sets in a family house would be covered by a single licence, so you could put a TV tuner card in your PC and watch programmes on it quite legally, effectively making it a second set.

It's worth noting, though, that the regulations covering student televisions are slightly more complicated because you need individual licences to cover everyone in the house who has a separate tenancy agreement.

If you are in halls of residence you will need a licence to cover your TV in your room, regardless of whether the hall has a licence. If you share a house and also keep a TV in your room you will also need a licence. 'TV' means any television receiving equipment.

Conspiracy theory

I've discovered a conspiracy over at *PC Advisor Towers*. After having spotted mistakes in both the July and August 02 issues, I emailed the Readers' writes section and got my message published in the September 02 issue. However, something odd happened – I'm the only one among those who submitted letters that did not receive a credit – oversight or conspiracy? I'll be watching closely in the future, flashlight at hand.

Mark Weldon, via email

Emma Northam replies: damn! You've rumbled us – and we were hoping to hush-up our error (yes, we did notice). It's all the more galling for us to have forgotten to print your name when your letter picked us up on a printing error in the issue before. What can we say? Sorry Mark. It was an oversight, not a conspiracy – at least I think so... ■

