



↓ General

Q I own an Advent PC running Windows Me and have heard that there's software available which allows PC users to install Mac software. I have a 20GB hard disk and a copy of PartitionMagic. Please advise how this can be done.

A It's much easier to run PC software on a Mac. The difficulty is that PCs and Macs have completely different hardware designs, using processors with distinct instruction sets. Technically, this problem can be overcome in two ways: by creating a software emulator for the 'alien' hardware (which is relatively inexpensive, but runs very slowly), or by installing an add-in board that effectively puts the guts of a PC inside a Mac. There's no counterpart board for putting a Mac inside a PC as far as we know.

One of the most difficult problems with running a Mac environment on a PC is that the Mac ROM code is copyrighted by Apple, so there's no legal way to get hold of a copy that isn't inside a Mac. This is a problem for both emulator writers and

users. It has also proved difficult to emulate the Mac PowerPC processor on a PC's Intel chip.

There are no commercial products for running Mac software on a PC as far as we know. There are a couple of emulators being developed by volunteers on an 'open source' basis, but programs like this tend to be written in their spare time by people interested mainly in the challenge of doing it. They never usually get finished, and how good they would be at running real-world Mac programs on a PC is anyone's guess.

For more information on these emulators, and anything else related to Mac/Windows interoperability, we recommend www.macwindows.com.

Q I will be moving to Australia in a few months' time, but want to purchase a laptop before I go. What are the implications of this with regard to the warranty? If I have any problems will I be able to contact a branch of the same supplier in Australia, or will I have to send the computer back to the UK? Are there any technical differences between computers made for the UK and Australia? I have also heard that DVDs are different in different regions and a DVD purchased in America may not work in a European DVD player. Is this correct?

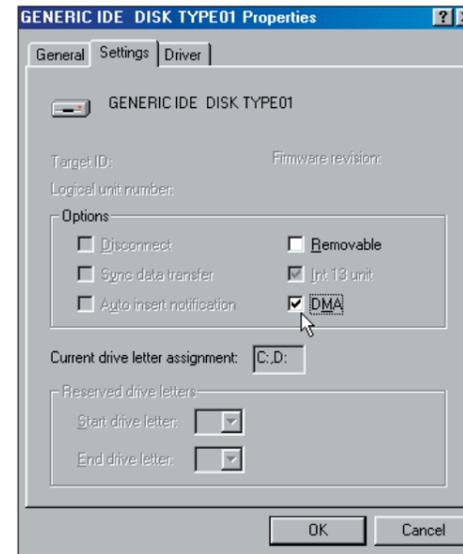
A Major world brands like Toshiba, Compaq and Sony have offices in most large countries of the world. It should be possible to get service for these systems in any of these countries – after all, many of them are used by globe-trotting business people who would require this. However, we would advise you to check before you buy. UK companies like Time, AJP or Pico (to give just three examples) don't have overseas offices, so you would have to ship the system back to the UK in the event of a problem.

Laptop power supplies usually work with any input voltage over 100V, so you only need to worry about the mains lead. Again, international brands usually offer optional adapters so that global travellers can plug them in to wall sockets in whatever country they visit. However, if you are moving permanently to Australia you could just cut off the UK 13A plug and fit an Australian plug when you get there. You will also need a new lead for any internal modem, since BT phone jacks are unique to the UK.

The DVD region code issue is a thorny problem, especially if you are hoping to take with you any DVDs bought here. The region code in Australia is different from that of the UK, which is different again from the USA's. Region coding is used so that movie distributors can control the release of movies on DVD. Films usually get released in other parts of the world some time after they are released in America, so the idea is to stop the film being available on DVD in other countries before it is being shown in cinemas there.

However, this does create a problem for you. Most PC DVD players let the region code be changed five times to accommodate foreign discs before locking it to the last one selected. The locking occurs in the player's controller, so it isn't easy (if possible at all) to circumvent it.

The site <http://regionhacks.datatestlab.com/> contains information on how to bypass region code locking with many popular DVD drives, so you could use this site to choose a system where the locking is easy to circumvent. The site www.fourmilab.ch/documents/dvdregion/ describes how to play DVDs with any



region code using the Microsoft DVD Player. However, you may be uncomfortable at having to resort to such hacks.

Your best bet is to wait until you get to Australia before buying your laptop. If you have any UK DVDs, sell them and buy new copies when you get there.

Q I installed a new 20GB Maxtor hard drive in my PC two weeks ago. When I access any application it opens very slowly, as if the system is out of memory. However, System Monitor shows the available RAM is substantial, although Kernel usage is very high during these operations. The system was faster with the previous hard drive, even though it had a slower specification.

A If you hadn't mentioned changing the hard drive, we'd have thought a virus checker was your most likely culprit. This is still something to check. However, it's possible that the new hard drive isn't using DMA (direct memory access) to transfer data to and from memory whereas the old one did. If so, this would certainly make it seem to run slower. Another possibility is that the drive is running in compatibility mode, either because of an incompatibility with another IDE drive on the same data cable, or because of the presence of a DOS virus.

To check if the hard drive is using DMA, open Device Manager in System Properties, expand the Disk Drives entry

← If your hard disk isn't using DMA (direct memory access), your computer may run more slowly

and examine the properties for the IDE disk. Click the Settings tab. If the DMA box isn't ticked – as shown in the screenshot left – the drive is using programmed I/O to transfer data, which is the safest method but processor-intensive. DMA doesn't work reliably on all drive/motherboard combinations, which is why Windows doesn't automatically select it.

Before selecting DMA, back up all important files and run scanregw.exe to back up your System Registry. Be sure you know how to boot to a DOS prompt and run ScanReg. This will let you restore this backup and return to using programmed I/O if it turns out that selecting DMA means you can no longer get into Windows. It has happened, so this is no idle warning.

To look for causes of compatibility mode, you need to run a virus check, examine config.sys and autoexec.bat

for unnecessary DOS drivers, and consider putting your hard disk on a separate data cable to your other IDE drives.

Q I have an AMD K6-2 450MHz PC running Windows 98 SE, and have been experiencing problems for about 18 months. When I switch on (after shutting down from normal use) I sometimes get the error message: 'Invalid systems disk. Replace and hit any key when ready'.

From this state the only way that I can access my hard drive is by using the Windows 98 startup floppy. I run ScanDisk from this, and it reports that there are lost clusters/files. After running it about three times until there are no errors, I still get the same error message. The only way to get the PC running again is to repartition and reformat the hard disk.

This has happened about a dozen times now, using both the original hard disk and one fitted as a replacement. I have checked the system for viruses, but have not found any. Is there anything you can advise?

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www.pcadvisor.co.uk/registered

A Your boot sector, partition table, file allocation table and system files are being corrupted. The difficulty is identifying the reason why. Since it has happened with two different hard drives, disk failure is unlikely to be the cause of the problem.

It would be interesting to know how full the hard disk is when the problem occurs. It sounds like a 'wraparound' problem, where the most significant digit of the disk block address is being lost, so that instead of writing to block number 10,000 (for the sake of example) data is written to block 00,000 instead.

If this were the case, the problem would only occur once the disk got full enough for block 10,000 (in the above example) to need to be written to. If this is the explanation, the IDE interface on the motherboard could be faulty, but a more likely culprit is a faulty IDE data cable. Try replacing the cable and see what happens.

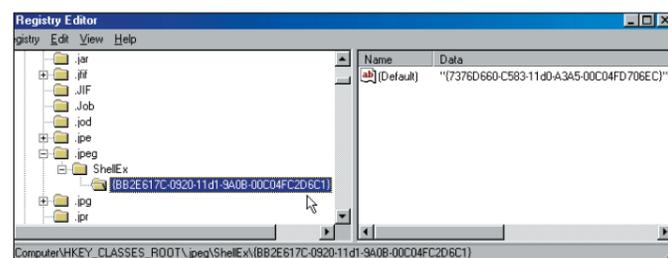
This is only a theory, but you could test it by finding a very large file and repeatedly copying it to a new filename each time, to progressively fill up the disk. Keep an eye on the amount of disk space used. If the system does start overwriting the disk from the beginning again, it will eventually start overwriting Windows files and the system will crash. So back up your important work first (though we expect you are already doing that).

↓ Windows

Q My computer runs Windows Me. After installing CorelDraw 8.0 the thumbnail images in My Pictures have been replaced with the Photo-Paint icon. I have reassociated my picture formats such as JPG files with Paint. All that it does is replace the Photo-Paint icon with the Paint icon. Can you help?

A Yes. This problem always occurs when installing older versions of CorelDraw (version 9.0 causes it, too) and other graphics programs that change the associations for image file types. Unfortunately, simply changing the association back to one of the standard Windows graphics programs doesn't solve the problem. The thumbnail images are displayed using a Windows feature called 'shell extension'. The loss of the association

→ For Windows to display thumbnail images, the Registry Editor for the file type should contain this information



with this extension can only be repaired by direct modification of the Registry – after you've backed it up of course.

Launch the Registry Editor, expand Hkey_Classes_Root, then expand an image file type (such as JPG). This entry should contain a folder named ShellEx. If you expand this folder, you should find another folder memorably named:

```
{BB2E617C-0920-11D1-9A0B-00C04FC2D6C1}
```

If you select this folder (as shown in the screenshot below), you should see that it has a default value of:

```
{7376D660-C583-11D0-A3A5-00C04FD706EC}
```

Each of the image file types for which Windows is capable of displaying a thumbnail should have a ShellEx folder exactly like this in its Registry entry, or the thumbnails won't be shown.

Repairing these Registry entries by hand is tricky, so we've prepared a REG file – [thumbnail.reg] – to do the job for you. You will find the file on this month's cover disc. Just right-click the file and select Merge. This will repair the entries for the file types supported by Windows, and the thumbnails for these types should once again be displayed.

Other programs such as Quick View Plus and Microsoft Office can install additional shell extensions, which extend the range of file types that can be shown as a thumbnail preview. Their ShellEx entries will look like the one described above but will have a different lot of gobbledygook in the Value field. CorelDraw may have messed up these associations, too.

Unfortunately, it isn't possible to come up with a safe generic fix. It would depend on what, if any, other thumbnail shell extensions were previously installed. If you

think you have lost the ability to see thumbnails of other file types we can only suggest you try reinstalling the application that added the shell extension.

Q I recently customised my desktop to resize the desktop icon gaps and font sizes. Some time later I opened Adobe ActiveShare and a message told me to switch to small fonts if I wished to open the program. I did, and it opened. Later still, when auto-arranging the icons in the Control Panel window, I found that the gap I chose for the desktop doesn't leave sufficient vertical space in the large icon view. On checking other windows the same problem occurs. Can I set a different icon gap for the desktop as distinct from in a window?

A No you can't. As to why Adobe ActiveShare asked you to switch to small fonts, we can only say that from a programmer's perspective it is a pain to try to cater for the weird and wonderful font sizes Windows users choose for their desktops. Adobe's programmers may have decided to check the font sizes were within reasonable limits instead of fielding support calls from users complaining that half the text in dialog boxes is unreadable as a result of their tinkering.

Q My PC runs Windows 98 SE and Internet Explorer 5.5. It has developed a fault on power up. If I have Active Desktop enabled I get the error message 'Explorer caused an invalid page fault in module (unknown) at 0000.10001d10'. Windows continues to load, but if I reactivate Active Desktop I lose most of my Taskbar icons. The computer loads and runs okay if I disable Active Desktop. A search of Microsoft's website has revealed no solutions.

A It's rarely possible to instantly deduce the cause from an error message like this. The best hope is that someone else has had the error and stumbled upon the cause (perhaps because they remembered what they did before it started happening) and documented it in the Microsoft KnowledgeBase (which you've already searched.)

The next best thing is to try a few likely possibilities, either from intuition or a

Speed up Windows 98

TIP

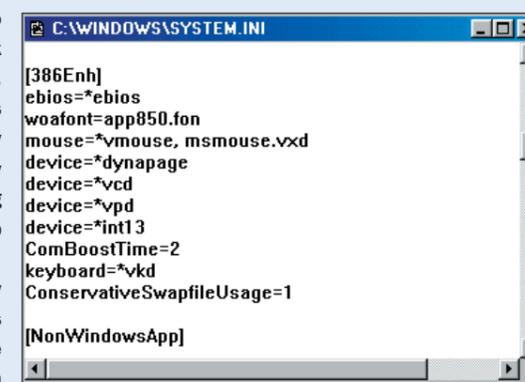
Here's a simple-to-do performance tweak for users of Windows 98, which makes Windows use a different memory management strategy that results in using the disk-based swap file less.

The default memory management strategy is supposed to improve performance on PCs with limited memory, and perhaps it does. However, if your system has more than 64MB of RAM, you'll probably find this tweak makes your system seem faster.

This is what to do. Run the System Configuration Editor (click Start, Run, type sysedit and hit Enter), then select the window displaying system.ini. Scroll down to the section headed by the line [386Enh] and add a line that says:

```
'ConservativeSwapfileUsage=1'
```

Save your change, then restart Windows. If you find that this change doesn't work for you, just delete the line you added.



search of similar-sounding errors in the KnowledgeBase. The final resort – you guessed it – is to do a clean reinstallation of Windows.

As far as likely possibilities go, an obvious place to start would be to look at your Active Desktop configuration and see if changing that has an effect on the fault. An incorrect version of a key system file could also cause this trouble, so try running the System File Checker (sfc.exe).

Another possible culprit is a program called Aureate Radiate. This is software that watches what you do on the web and downloads adverts that it thinks would be of interest to you, as a way of paying for free, but advertising-supported, software.

Aureate Radiate is distributed with more than 250 free programs, and it is known to cause similar errors to the one you are experiencing on systems with IE 5.5 installed on them. If your PC has this program running on it, try uninstalling it. For instructions on how to do this, go to www.radiate.com/privacy/remover.html.

Q My computer runs Windows Me. As you recommended in the magazine,

I ran the Maintenance Wizard after starting up in Safe Mode. Everything seemed okay, and I shut down as normal. Later, when I turned my computer back on, it said I had incorrectly shut down. This has now happened twice. Is this a bug in Windows Me? I have already downloaded the critical updates package and there is nothing more to download.

A This is rather an amusing problem. Microsoft introduced the 'Safe to turn off your computer' screen in Windows 95 because people used to turn off their PCs before all the information in memory had been written to disk. Now, Windows itself is turning the computer off before all the information in memory has been written to disk. In particular, the bit of data saying that Windows has been properly shut down isn't being written to disk before the computer turns itself off, which is why you are being told it wasn't properly shut down the next time it starts.

This is a bug that can affect both Windows 98 SE and Windows Me, and you need an update called the 'Windows IDE Hard Drive Cache Package'. According to



← This Windows 98 PC hasn't been updated, although it doesn't suffer from the shutdown bug

on white page) is frequently replaced by the golden pen-knib of WordPerfect, my preferred word processor. On closing and rebooting, the problem is corrected, until the next time it happens. Why is this occurring?

A This happens to us, too, and it most often affects the QuickLaunch icons in the toolbar. It is caused by a memory leak, which for some reason causes Windows' icon cache to be

Microsoft, you should be able to get this in the usual way from Windows Update. The update consists of a new copy of the file ifsmgr.vxd, which you should find in the \Windows\System\VXD folder. The updated version should be dated 21/9/2000 and have a time-stamp of 2:46pm.

If you right-click this file and select Properties, then click the Version tab, the version number should be 4.10.2225 for Windows 98 SE (as shown in the screenshot above) and 4.10.3002 for Windows Me.

If this fails to solve the problem, you may also require an update to the file scsiport.pdr in the folder \Windows\System\IOSubsys. The relevant version numbers are 4.10.2224 for Windows 98 SE, and 4.90.0.3001 for Windows Me. This update is only recommended for computers that are experiencing this problem, and doesn't seem to be available on the web. You will have to contact your PC manufacturer for it, or Microsoft Product Support if you have a full or an upgrade version of Windows.

Q Some of my Windows 98 desktop icons keep changing into something else. For example, the zip file icon turns into a Windows Explorer icon after an application window has covered it for a while and later been minimised or closed. An HTM file icon (blue letter 'e'

corrupted. We don't know of a solution that doesn't involve closing and restarting Windows, except to identify the program that causes the memory leak and either stop using it or get hold of a version in which the leak has been fixed.

A memory leak occurs after a program closes, and it fails to return to Windows all the memory resources it took when it opened. We don't know why this corrupts the icon cache, but it does. Windows maintains an icon cache for performance reasons, because it's quicker to look in a cache instead of going to the original source of the icon each time it needs to be refreshed.

Identifying the cause of a memory leak isn't easy, because the icons don't change as soon as you close the leaky program, only at the next occasion the affected icon has to be displayed. But now you know what is happening, you should be able to watch out for the icons changing and get a good guess as to what the culprit is.

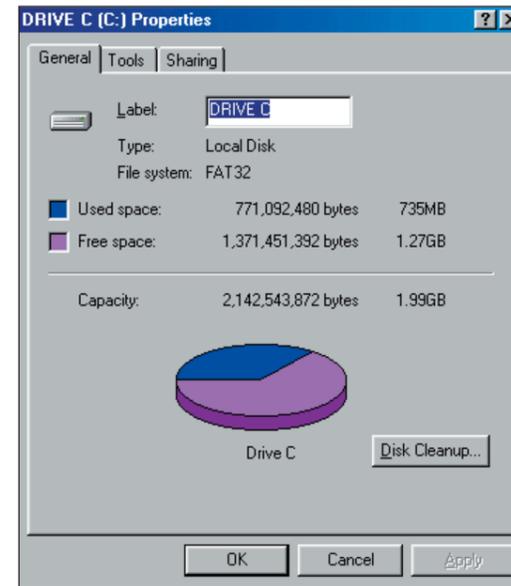
→ If your display is stuck in 16-colour mode, check to see if the right display adapter drivers are loaded

Q I selected 16 colours in the display settings of Windows 98 and finished up with a black screen. How do I get back to 256 colours? I tried Safe Mode but that didn't help.

A The usual cause of the display settings being stuck in 16-colour mode is that Windows is using a standard VGA driver. This is the default setting if it detects the display adapter as one for which no driver is installed or on the Windows CD. Go into Device Manager (right-click My Computer, select Properties and click Device Manager), then expand Display Adapters and see what is listed there, as shown in the screenshot below. If there is a problem with the drivers, the solution is to delete them and use Add New Hardware to reinstall them. Have your driver disks (or new drivers downloaded from the internet) handy.

Q I am using Windows 95. In My Computer C drive properties, the pie chart no longer shows any used space. The used space is 1.49GB and the free space is 2.53GB, but as far as the pie chart is concerned it's all free space. There is no problem showing the space on the A drive. How can I solve this problem?

A You can't, except by upgrading to a newer version of Windows, or repartitioning your hard disk into partitions of less than 2GB each. There is a bug in



← Windows 95 doesn't correctly report free hard disk space in partitions larger than 2GB

a data value which shows that you have accepted the legal disclaimer for the cover disc, so you are only shown it the first time you load it. This data occupies very little space, so leaving the folders will do no harm whatsoever. If you delete them, no harm will be done either (as long as you don't delete something else by mistake) except that you will be shown the legal disclaimer again the next time you load the cover disc.

Windows 95 that prevents it from displaying used and free space in partitions that are larger than 2GB (see the screenshot above). It also incorrectly reports the amount of free space when programs try to determine it, which can cause some software Setup programs to fail.

Q While looking for something in the Windows Registry I noticed, under Hkey_Current_User\Software, a folder named PC Advisor. When I expanded this folder I found a further six folders with names like Issue 68 May 2001 - Press Esc to quit. Why are they there, and is there a way of getting rid of them?

A These folders are created by the cover disc software. They contain

↓ Internet

Q I have just set up a computer to connect to the internet. Web surfing works okay but when I try to send an email in Outlook Express it bounces back with a report that says: '554 Too many hops 26 (25 max): from <address> via arizona.intrascap.com to <address>'. Any idea what's wrong?

A This is most likely an error message from a mail server (arizona.intrascap.com), which your email has arrived at. This server appears to be a Unix or Linux server, which uses a file called 'forward' to route mail for a

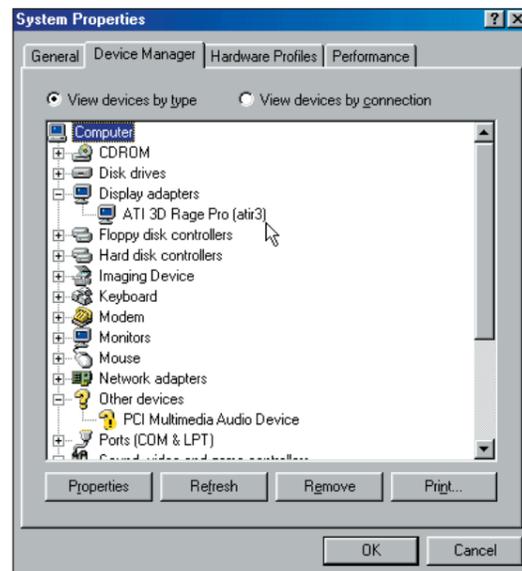
particular user to a particular computer. This file has been carelessly written in such a way that it has created a forwarding loop. This loop has been terminated by the hop count (initial value 25) that is sent with each message.

This can sometimes occur because you mistyped the email address and the username doesn't exist (though the error message still points to a badly written forward file). Sometimes the recipients themselves can cause this error, if they have set up a forwarding list to route mail to a colleague's address while they are away, and made a mistake in it.

The solution - unless you mistyped the address - isn't in your hands. You need to contact the administrator of the server mentioned (not easy to determine, but 'root@<domain name>' is a pretty good guess for badly managed Unix and Linux systems) and tell them to sort it out. Alternatively, contact the recipient of the message (by other means, obviously) and get them to do it.

Q When I try to send an email to someone I receive a message from the postmaster that says: '550 you are not allowed to send mail to user@isp.net'. Until recently I had no trouble sending to this address. Both the recipient's ISP and mine (ic24) report no problem.

A Then one of the ISPs is lying. First, an explanation of what is happening. When you send email using a dialup account, your email client software sends the messages to your ISP's outgoing mail server. This mail server then finds out



Pass it on: tips from readers

Do you have any great workarounds or shortcuts you'd like to share? Send your tips and tricks to *Helpline*, *PC Advisor*, Fifth Floor, 85 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 4TQ, or email pcadvisor_letters@ldg.com. To help us sort your messages, please use the words 'Pass it on' in the subject heading.

More French connections

Many of our readers spend a lot of time surfing in France, it seems. Tony Simpson passes on his recommendation for the French ISP Freesbee (www.freesbee.fr). It's free, gives you web space as well as email, and has a web-based interface that

allows you to access your mail account from any ISP, anywhere in the world.

Divx woes solved

Ken Robinson downloaded a Divx AVI file from the web, and found that he could get no video from Windows Media Player due to a missing Div3 decompressor. He could find no solution in the Microsoft KnowledgeBase. After a lot of searching, he came upon the Divx homepage (www.divx.com) and was able to download Divx 4.01. A file `divx4fullinstaller.exe` is created in the Media Player folder, which you can run to install the decompressor.

Updates and patches

If you've been having trouble with your computer, peripherals, hardware or software, it may be down to bugs (mistakes in the programming), errors or viruses.

Virus alert: cleaning up after SirCam

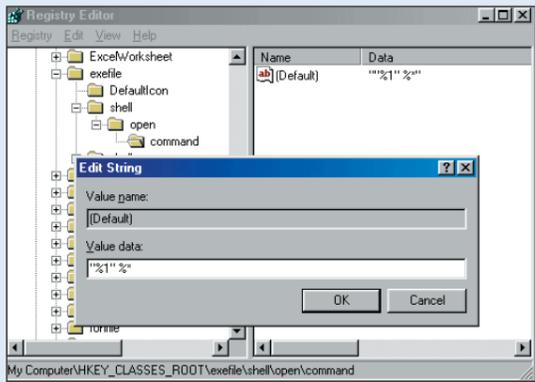
The internet worm SirCam continues to cause problems for several readers. The trouble seems to be that certain well-known antivirus programs can remove the files containing the virus without repairing the changes made by the virus to the Windows Registry. With these antivirus programs, you need to download a special tool designed specifically to remove SirCam from your antivirus vendor's website. Unfortunately, the virus scanners concerned don't always make that clear.

One of the changes that SirCam makes to the Registry results in the SirCam virus file (sirc32.exe) being used to run any EXE file. If sirc32.exe is deleted by your virus scanner before the Registry has been repaired, it becomes very difficult to run any EXE programs, including tools that could be used to remove the virus or repair the Registry. Attempts to run any program result only in a message that Windows can't find

sirc32.exe. If you find yourself in this situation, here's what to do. First, copy the Registry Editor executable, regedit.exe, to regedit.com in order to get around the inability to run EXE programs. To do this, click Start, then Run and type: Command /C Copy c:\Windows\Regedit.exe c:\Windows.Regedit.com, then hit Enter.

To clean the Registry, run this copy of the Registry Editor by clicking Start, then Run, typing regedit.com and hitting Enter. In the Registry Editor, expand the folders Hkey_Classes_Root, exefile, shell, open, command. In the righthand pane, double-click on (Default) and then change it so it contains "%1" %* (it should look exactly like the screenshot on the left). Click ok to make the change.

Expand the folders Hkey_Local_Machine, Software. You should see a folder named Sircam. Select it and delete it. Under Hkey_Local_Machine\Software, expand Microsoft, Windows, CurrentVersion, RunServices. You should see a folder named Driver32. Select it and delete it. This concludes the registry cleanup operation. We would then advise rerunning your virus scanner or any SirCam removal tools to be sure all traces of the virus have disappeared.



which server the addressee collects their mail from (using a complicated procedure we won't go into here) and relays the message to that. Finally, the recipient logs in and collects the mail.

For years, mail servers were open, which meant that you could send mail via any server you happened to know the address of. However, this was exploited by that species of internet lowlife known as the spammer, which sent their unwanted messages via other people's servers and hence avoided paying the cost of delivering them all. So ISPs now lock down their mail servers.

An ISP's outgoing mail server will only accept mail from people who are connected at the time to that particular ISP. Incoming mail servers will only accept mail for domains (the bit of the address after the @ sign) on that company or ISP's network. If one of those conditions are not met, you will receive an error message similar to the one you got, with an error code of 550 or 554.

If you receive this error for every message you send, the problem is at your end. Either you are sending the messages to the wrong mail server (perhaps you have two ISPs and are logged on to a different one than the one whose mail server you are trying to use) or your ISP's server requires authentication.

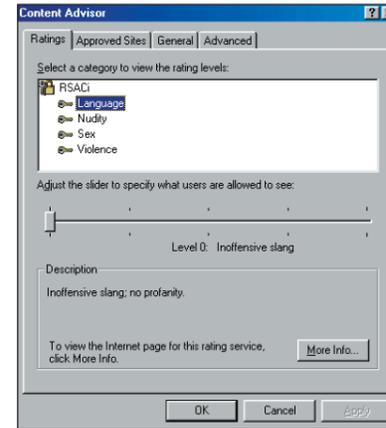
To use outgoing mail authentication in Outlook Express, click on Tools, Accounts and select the Servers tab (as shown in the screenshot right). Under Outgoing Mail Servers check the box beside 'My server requires authentication'. If the server requires a different login name and password than you use for incoming mail, you'll also need to click the Settings button and complete the Outgoing Mail Server dialog box appropriately.

If you only receive this message when sending mail to a particular address, the problem may be at their end. Their mail server may be

misconfigured. It's also possible that, in another effort to defeat spammers who send mail using false addresses, the destination server is attempting to verify



↑ Some ISPs may require authentication before they allow you to send email via their server



that your address is genuine and failing to do so for some reason. In that case, the only thing you can do is wait, while the problem is hopefully fixed, and try again.

I have Windows 98 on my computer. Everything was fine until this morning, when Internet Explorer told me that Content Advisor had missing information. The message told me how to fix it by going to Settings, Content Advisor and so on. However, when I follow the instructions the sliders for all the settings are to the left and it doesn't matter how many times I reset them and click ok, when I reopen them, they have returned to their original position. All that I get from Explorer is the main offline page. Any ideas?

This problem can occur if the file ratings.pol is corrupt, or if there is a second ratings.pol in the Windows folder. The file should be in the Windows System folder, and it is a hidden system file, so to see it you'll need to change some of Explorer's default folder options. Use the Find tool to search the Windows folder hierarchy for files named ratings.pol. If there is one in the Windows folder, delete it and see if this solves the problem. If you still have the problem, delete the ratings.pol in the System folder then create a new one.

To create a new ratings.pol, start Internet Explorer, click Cancel to dismiss the error message, then click on Tools, Internet Options. Select the Content tab, and then click Settings in the Content Advisor area. Enter the supervisor password, then click ok. Select the ratings options you need, then click ok.

← A corrupt ratings file can cause problems with Content Advisor

If you can't remember the supervisor password, here's how to reset it. (You'd better obliterate this information if your kids read your copy of PC Advisor.) Start the Registry Editor, then open in turn the folders Hkey_Local_Machine, Software, Microsoft, Windows, CurrentVersion, Policies. Select the Ratings folder and hit the Delete key.

I recently installed several programs that run automatic live downloads from the internet. I have just noticed a new folder called BackWeb has been created in my c:\Program Files folder. I did not install this myself, so I'm perplexed as to how this program has installed itself on my PC.

I have configured my personal firewall for full-time automatic protection. Nothing related to BackWeb has appeared in my Start menu, and I cannot actually execute the program itself. I am unable to uninstall it as nothing appears in the Add/Remove programs box from the Control Panel, nor is there any uninstall icon in the BackWeb folder. Is BackWeb, safe to leave on my computer?

You have almost answered your own question. BackWeb is a system designed to allow information to be sent automatically to client systems via the internet. One of the applications on your computer has probably been designed to use BackWeb AutoFile Update Manager, which allows the application developer to deliver software patches and updates to

users like yourself. It's a similar thing to LiveUpdate in Norton AntiVirus, but it's a third-party tool designed for use by software developers that don't want to reinvent the wheel and develop their own custom method for doing this.

BackWeb appears as a separate program folder because that is the way it was designed to be installed. It was added when you installed the application that needs it, and will be removed when you uninstall it. There is nothing useful you could do with it by running it yourself, which is why there's no Start menu entry for it; it is there solely to be used by another application. If you look at the documentation that came with the programs you recently installed, including the license agreement where the copyright statements are, you should be able to find out which one actually uses it.

A friend told me he had read that 90 percent of computers had been hacked into. This has got me worried, as I have ordered things over the internet a couple of times now. If someone has hacked into my computer, could they get my credit and debit card details?

There is a risk of fraud with any transaction. However, banks say that far more credit card numbers are obtained from thrown-away paper counterfoils than by hacking into computers.

Your credit card details are not normally stored on your computer when you make a secure transaction. Even if they were, the chances of a hacker finding them would be remote. Hackers steal information they know where to look for.

Contact us...

Please address your Helpline questions to: Helpline, PC Advisor, Fifth Floor, 85 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 4TQ. Alternatively, you can email us at pcadvisor_letters@idg.com. To help us sort your messages, please use the word 'Helpline' in the subject header.

We aim to give you the best assistance we can. However, given the limitations of this type of advice, we can't guarantee that what we say will work, and we can't accept responsibility for any damage arising as a result of this advice. Always back up your system before you make any changes. If you send us software disks, make sure they are not original copies as we cannot return them.

We regret that we cannot answer technical queries over the phone, except via our Expert Advice Hotline, on 0906 906 0272; calls charged at £1.50 per minute.



← Use Twigger to access your mail and delete unwanted large messages

It might be a very large message but, if so, you should see it being downloaded (for example, you should see almost continuous data being transferred in the Internet icon in the System Tray). In that case, you could just wait.

The most commonly stolen information is internet access passwords.

Letters or faxes in your My Documents folder could contain financial information, but, it would take time for a hacker to look through them. If you use a financial management package there is a greater risk that valuable information could be stolen, because hackers examine these packages to see how the security may be broken. If they find a loophole, they develop automated tools that can steal information from these packages in seconds.

To put things in perspective, however, it's important to realise that it is very hard for a hacker to gain access to a correctly set up Windows computer. The two main avenues by which a hacker may gain access to your files are by abusing file and printer sharing (which will only be possible if your PC is networked, and this has been turned on) or by using a malicious 'Trojan' that has previously been installed on your computer. You should know if the first avenue exists; a good antivirus program will warn you of the presence of the second. If you are still worried about the security of your data, install a personal firewall like ZoneAlarm or Norton Internet Security, which will deny hackers even the chance of getting into your computer.

Q I appear to have 33 messages waiting for me in my mailbox, but downloading always stops at number 12. I have repeatedly emailed my ISP's support desk, giving them authority to delete any large file that might be jamming the system, but I have not received a reply. You are my last hope.

A Since it has access to your mailbox, your ISP is clearly in a better position to see exactly what is causing the problem.

Another possibility is that you have a message that is infected by a virus. This could be being detected by your antivirus software, which might be responding in such a way as to block the download. If that seems possible, you may be able to overcome the problem by disabling your antivirus software, or at least any feature of it that specifically checks email.

However, if you do this, you need to be aware of the risk that your computer could become infected when you open the email. A good solution for looking at problem mailboxes (and also for checking your mail when you are away from your home computer) is to use Twigger. There is a link to this online mail client on this month's cover disc. See the screenshot above. Just give your username, password and the name of your ISP, and you can then see a list of your messages, which you can read or delete. Hopefully, this will allow you to solve your problem for yourself.

An alternative is JMail 2.3, a portable mail client and mailbox cleanup tool. Get the free download from www.thefreesite.com/email_freebies/free_e_mail_software/ or install it from this month's cover disc.

Q Is it possible to be informed when an email I have sent has been opened or read? I am using Outlook Express 5.0.

A Yes, it's possible. Mechanisms exist that allow an automatic acknowledgement to be generated when a message

→ Two ways to request an acknowledgement that a message has been read, neither of which usually work

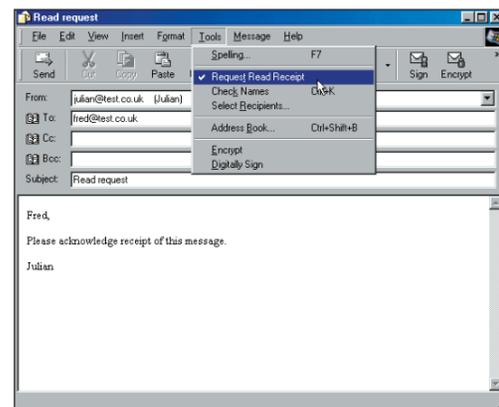
arrives in someone's mailbox, or when they open it.

However, these mechanisms aren't standardised and support for them isn't mandatory, which means that even if you request an acknowledgement in your message, more often than not you won't get one. This makes the feature pretty useless unless you happen to know that the person you are sending the message to has software that supports these acknowledgements.

In Outlook Express 5.0, you can request an acknowledgement by selecting Tools, Request Read Receipt from the message composition menu (as shown in the screenshot below). However, for the reasons just given, there isn't much chance that you'll actually get one.

Q Following a switch to NTL, I have been experiencing problems accessing email. I usually receive this message: 'There was a problem checking email. Your email (POP3) server may not be working properly'. Outlook Express also reports errors. When I click the Details button I see the report: 'Your server has unexpectedly terminated the connection. Possible causes for this include server problems, network problems or a long period of inactivity. Account: pop.ntlworld.com. Server: pop3.norton.antivirus. Protocol: POP3. Port: 110. Secure(SSL): No. Error Number: 0x800CCC0F'. Can you help?

A NTL isn't the culprit here but, thanks to your detailed listing of the messages you received, the cause of the problem is immediately apparent. The clue is in the line: 'Server: pop3.norton.'



antivirus'. You have Norton AntiVirus installed and its incoming email virus check is interfering with communication with your mail server (see screenshot right). This is quite a common problem and the solution most users have found is to disable this check.

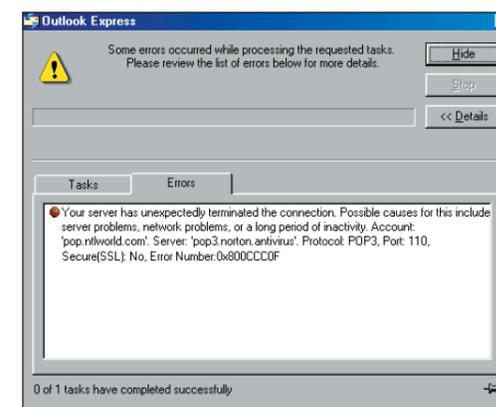
Email-borne viruses are a nuisance and virus checks are an important way of preventing them, but the way Norton and other packages check the incoming data stream for viruses is flawed. Anything that intercepts and delays the flow of TCP/IP data is a possible source of connection problems.

A virus can only do harm once it has been written to disk and activated. A good virus scanner running in the background should detect the virus at this point.

↓ Applications

Q Due to a software conflict, Microsoft advises disabling Norton AntiVirus 2001 Script Blocking when using Picture It Publishing. Otherwise, the program won't shut down properly and the computer has to be restarted. This solves the problem, but leaves me unprotected if I don't remember to re-enable script blocking afterwards. Is it possible to generate an onscreen message which would appear as soon as Picture It Publishing is closed?

A We have seen reports of script blocking causing problems with many programs, so you could leave it disabled until Symantec develops a version that causes fewer conflicts. An



← Tweak UI – the safest tool for removing orphaned Add/Remove Programs entries

alternative way to eliminate the risk of malicious scripts is to remove WSH (Windows Scripting Host) from your system. From Control Panel, open Add/Remove Programs, click the Windows Setup tab and select Accessories. Click Details, then scroll down the list and deselect WSH. Close the dialog boxes and activate your selection by clicking ok.

This will prevent your system from responding to VBS (VBScript) and JavaScript files. You probably have no need to run scripts on your PC, so it won't cause a problem. If it does, you can easily reinstall WSH by repeating the above steps and reselecting the accessory.

If you'd prefer to leave WSH installed, here's a way to do what you suggested. Run your publishing program from a batch file. The batch file will use 'start /w' to start the program (the /w causes the command to wait until the program has closed) followed by 'start notepad' to display a reminder message using Notepad. The batch file would contain two lines looking something like:

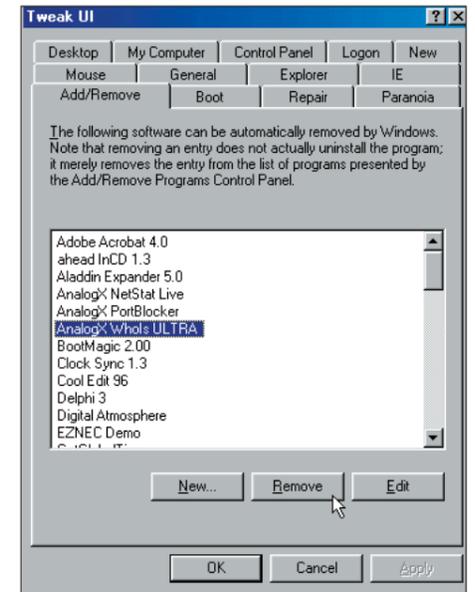
```
start /w 'c:\Program Files\Some App\someapp.exe'
```

```
start notepad.exe c:\warning.txt
```

You'll need to change the path in the first command to point to your publishing program, and the path in the second one if you create your warning text file somewhere other than C drive. You'll need to change the shortcut that runs the publishing program so that it starts the batch file instead. You'll also want to change the batch file's Program properties, so that it runs minimised and closes on exit.

Q I installed System Restore Remover Pro from the November 01 cover

← If your email has trouble talking to the server 'pop3.norton.antivirus' disable the virus check



disc. However, I didn't realise that it wouldn't work with Windows 98. Once installed, it advised me that it was not compatible, so I immediately uninstalled it using Add/Remove Programs in the Control Panel. The trouble is that it still remains listed in my Control Panel and I can find no way of removing it.

A First of all, the orphaned entry in Add/Remove programs isn't doing any harm, so you could leave it. If you aren't comfortable with the idea of messing with the Registry and don't have a suitable removal tool, that might be the best solution. If you have Tweak UI you can delete the redundant entry using the tool's Add/Remove tab (see screenshot left). This is the safest way of doing it. You can get Tweak UI from www.microsoft.com/windowsme/guide/tweakui.exe. Some commercial clean-up and tweaking tools that you may already possess also have a similar facility.

To solve the problem the hard way, run the Registry Editor, expand in turn Hkey_Local_Machine, Software, Microsoft, Windows, Current Version, Uninstall. Locate the subfolder of Uninstall that contains the uninstall information for System Restore Remover Pro and delete it. ■

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