



What have we started? Mike Leonard's letter last month has elicited much discussion on printer cables, and several of you have got in on the metric versus imperial debate begun by Adrian Ridley. Fortunately, a few of you wrote in on some other subjects...

Say no to free cables, part I

Mike Leonard (*Readers writes*, January 02) complains that having to buy a separate printer cable "jacked the price of the printer up from the £70, as advertised, to £83". Emma Northam says, "We don't think it's acceptable that everyone but the buyer ends up happy."

Would Mike be happy, and Emma find it acceptable, if Mike, now on his third printer, had been charged more than the cost of a printer for three pairs of 'free' parallel and USB cables? Especially if he had a cable to start with.

Bogush J Man, via email

Say no to free cables, part II

I agree with Mike Leonard's letter in the January 02 issue, that it should be clearly stated on printer packaging that no cable is supplied, but not that a cable should be included. Not only would it be wasteful and more expensive for two cables (parallel and USB) to be provided, but for those who are replacing an existing printer it would be unnecessary. I already have more cables than printers.

Peter Jones, Cumbria

Emma Northam replies: Mike's point was that he didn't have a spare cable so, when he got the printer home, he couldn't use it. You have to admit that's frustrating and it's not unreasonable to expect to be told when you buy something that you'll need another component in order to use it.

When you buy any battery-operated gadget, for example, the packaging always says 'batteries not included' (unless they are), so why can't printer makers state 'cable not included' on theirs – especially when, as reader Arthur Pughe reminds us (next), most scanner manufacturers do?

Ready, willing and cable

Mike Leonard's letter in the January 02 issue prompted me to check what was in the box when looking for a new scanner. Lo and behold – in the HP 5400 series boxes, among others, both parallel and a USB cables are included. So much for printer manufacturers saying it would be costly to include two cables in every printer box.

Arthur Pughe, via email

Phoning and driving don't mix

Shortly before driving to the local supermarket to do the weekly shop, I happened to read October 01's *News* item, *Don't use your mobile on the road.*

While sitting in stationary traffic, my car was run into by car driven by a woman who was using her mobile phone. The amazing part was, she had 350m of clear road between her car and mine, and yet she still failed to see me in time to stop.

I drive a classic Mini and, because of its age, theoretically it should have been written off. However, when I told the assessor who came to view the damage to my car that the other driver was using a mobile phone at the time of the incident, he told me he would sanction repairs.

A friend of mine, who's a plod in the local force, told me that it's not illegal to use a mobile phone while driving. However, if the police were to receive a complaint on the issue and the case was established, the driver could be prosecuted for driving without due care and attention.

I agree with Rospa (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) that no one should drive a car while using a phone, regardless of the circumstances. It is about time manufacturers built a device into the phone that would render it unusable within cars. Problem solved.

M V Wilkes, Devon

Rupert Collins-White replies: your point about blocking phones is a good one – some people want to see this done in trains and theatres too. Unfortunately, blocking mobiles involves pumping out radiation on the phone's wavelength – and just at the moment you need a licence to do that.

A different slant on RSI

Michael O'Donnell (*Readers writes*, December 01) might not have seen any magazine articles dealing with RSI (as work-related upper limb disorders are still universally referred to), but I can assure him that the health and safety and occupational health presses carry them quite regularly. They also carry details of quite hefty compensation payments.

While RSI is a fairly new phenomenon, keyboard use is not. Since the early part of the last century young women (and that is not sexist, it is a fact) have been sat at keyboards for much, if not all, of their working lives, with very few of them contracting musculoskeletal disorders. It is only since the advent of the almost flat electric/electronic keyboard that RSI has appeared. I believe that if we went back to more steeply raked keyboards like the old-fashioned typewriter we could reduce RSI by 99 percent, though this would have no effect on the problem originally referred to – namely the excessive use of notebooks.

Laurie Richards, Fife

You say potato...

I am afraid Richard Clooke is wrong in his response to Ron Francis' letter *Lost at sea* in the November 01 issue. Great Britain is a geographical entity – it is the island comprising England, Scotland and Wales. Britain is a political term meaning the same as United Kingdom (that means it includes Northern Ireland). Hence the old jokes about Northern Ireland taking the 'Great' out of Britain.

This is why the nationality of all UK citizens is 'British'. So this means that MileMaster Britain is not what it claims to be – what is offered on the CD should be entitled MileMaster Great Britain. I doubt that the Trading Standards people

are going to act, but Ron does have a legitimate grievance after all.

Chris Pogson, via email

Richard Clooke replies: a lot of you are very passionate about this issue, so we asked the experts at the Royal Geographical Society to settle this once and for all. After scouring the Statesman's Yearbook 2001 and the Columbia Gazetteer of the World, librarian Eugene Rae concluded, "Technically speaking Great Britain is the island that contains England, Wales and Scotland. 'Britain' is a shortened form of that."

'United Kingdom', says Rae, is used to indicate The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which comprises England, Wales and Scotland plus Northern Ireland. Now, let's hope that's an end to the matter!

Give them an inch...

Poor Adrian Ridley (*Readers writes*, January 02). My heart bleeds for him. Doesn't know what an inch is? He hasn't used them for over 30 years? Better steer clear of America then. They haven't even heard of metres and weigh their boxers in pounds and stones. What an archaic bunch they are.

And what about Australia, where cricket pitches are 22 yards long and they rate their fast bowlers hurling down the leather at well over 90 miles an hour? I suggest he moves to France. They've never heard of feet and inches over there. It's all millipedes, centipedes and slimy escargots.

Mind you, it won't just be inches and feet you'll be giving up. You'll have to wrap your brain round something like 100,000 other words: it's called French. But then, in for a penny, in for 0.62 of a euro, I say.

Terry Mahon, via email

...and they'll take 1,760 yards

Adrian Ridley should not be allowed to get away with his attack on the imperial measurement system in your January 02 issue. When the emperor Napoleon was dying, he was asked if there was anything he regretted. He replied, "The metric system and the way in which my armies forced the countries of Europe to adopt it."

Star letter

Having read about the possibility of others being able to hack into my computer and do what they like with it, I eventually decided to install ZoneAlarm 2.6, from the January 2002 CD cover disc.

A few minutes after visiting my regular internet haunts a ZoneAlarm alert window popped up giving details of an apparent attempt to access my computer. I dismissed this alert thinking that something must have got through by accident or misrouting, but then I started getting as many as three alerts attempts a minute. Thankfully attacks finally 'tailed off' – now I only get one alert every quarter of an hour or so!

There are a couple of sites on the internet that can check the security of your computer and firewall, so I thought I would test my newly protected system. I thought with free software it might say that I was fairly well protected but was chuffed when I discovered I was 100 percent safe. I'd now advise everybody to install some sort of firewall as you really don't know what is happening until you do.

Bob de Jong, via email

Richard Clooke replies: your letter echoes that of a number of registered users of the website, who agree that ZoneAlarm is a useful utility. In fact, the demand for firewall software has been so great that, space permitting, we'll be including ZoneAlarm on the cover disc with every issue of PC Advisor from here on in.



The author of this month's star letter receives the Canon Bubble Jet S630 printer, which retails at £160 ex VAT and is currently our Best Buy model in the Top 10 Personal printers chart (see page 134). With an unbeatable actual print speed for both monochrome and colour pages, the Bubble Jet combines fast printing with well-defined images and clean text output. For more information, visit www.canon.co.uk. Please write to PC Advisor, FREEPOST

20 LON8718, London, W1E 4AN, fax us on 020 7580 1935, or email to pcadvisor_letters@idg.com. Don't forget to mark your emails 'Readers writes' in the subject heading.

Napoleon appreciated, too late, that colourful, interesting imperial measurements we're far better suited for everyday use by human beings. The metric system was designed for scientists, astronomers and multinational manufacturers who increased their profits by ensuring goods in all their markets could be produced, sold and distributed in identical formats.

Television screens are measured in inches because the USA, still the richest and most powerful country in the world, will not adopt the metric system.

However, Adrian Ridley and his ilk will eventually win this battle because schools are carefully brainwashing

students to think only in metric terms. What a grey world it will be when their victory is complete.

It could have been worse. The French revolutionaries also wanted a 10-month year, a 10-day week and a 100-minute hour. Adrian Ridley would have been in his glory had he lived in 1789.

Ron Phillips, London W14

Andrew Charlesworth replies: as someone old enough to remember the laborious horror of adding up columns of imperial pounds, shillings and pence, I can see the attraction of universal decimalisation. But I still think some things just seem so much better in imperial measurements: 9in always sounds more impressive than 23cm. ■

