helpline

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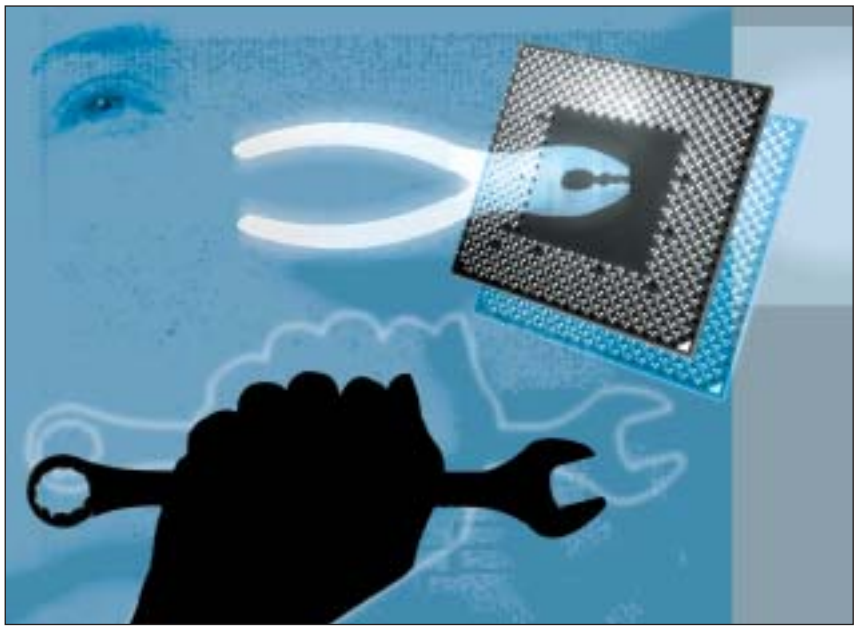


General

Q I want to upgrade my PC, which has a Gigabyte GA-71XE4 motherboard and 750MHz Duron chip. There seem to be two types of Athlon processor available and I am not sure whether I need to get a non-XP Athlon for this board in order for it to work or what speed I should go for.

A For the upgrade to be worthwhile you want to get the fastest processor you can. According to Gigabyte's website (www.gigabyte.com.tw/products/products.htm) it seems that this board will accept processors up to 1.4GHz if you upgrade the Bios.

However, we can't find any information about whether this motherboard will accept an Athlon XP processor. The general consensus seems to be that it isn't likely and, as there's a chance the board could damage the chip, no one has been brave enough to try.

Q I'm thinking of upgrading my graphics card. My motherboard has a 2X AGP slot, but the latest graphics cards have a 4X AGP bus. Will they work in my computer?

A They should work, as 4X AGP is backwards-compatible with 2X. However, you'll notice we say 'should', not 'will' work. Years of experience have taught us that the word 'compatible' in computing usually means 'should work', not 'will work', so try to buy from a vendor who will allow you to exchange the card if it turns out to be not quite compatible enough.

Q Can PC100 and PC133 Dimm memory modules be mixed on the same motherboard without the system becoming unstable?

A In theory, yes. The PC100 specification was designed to create a standard that would allow buyers to mix memory modules of different brands or speeds. However, the speed of your system will be limited to that of the slowest memory module installed so it may not be the best idea if performance is your main reason for upgrading.

Q My computer spontaneously restarts while I am working and then displays a 'Windows has recovered from a serious error' message. It's an Athlon 2000+ system with 256MB of RAM, running Windows XP. What could be causing this?

A It's hard to say. We've seen Windows XP reboot when non-certified drivers were installed on it. To determine whether this problem is a software or hardware fault you need to install a clean copy of Windows XP with no non-essential software or hardware and see how stable it is. Possible hardware problems include a faulty or underspecified power supply, an overheating or overclocked processor and faulty RAM (try running Memtest86 to test this – go to www.memtest86.com or load it from our cover disc).

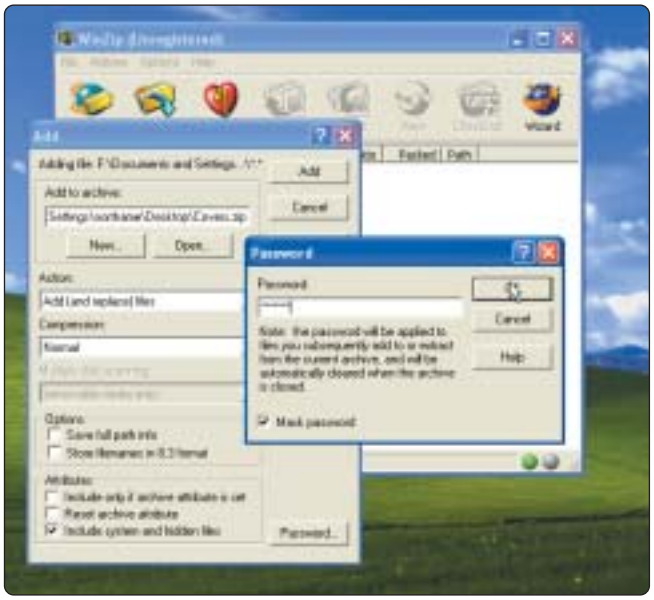
Q My upgraded PC has a new 30GB hard drive that's recognised as Master plus the original 6GB drive set up as Slave on the primary IDE cable. On the secondary IDE cable I have my CD-RW drive as Master.

As I have a lot of business records on CD I thought I would add my old CD-ROM drive to the secondary cable as Slave. After rebooting I got a message saying 'Not Atapi compatible' – the system couldn't even find the hard drives. The only way to boot is if I disconnect the secondary IDE cable, but then I cannot even back up to CD-R or install from CD. Any suggestions?

A We recommend that you put things back exactly as they were before you started all this, including any changes you may have made to drive Master/Slave jumper settings. If the system won't boot after that, there's a chance that you have damaged an IDE channel – perhaps by attaching a cable incorrectly.

Many cables aren't keyed to prevent incorrect installation, so you must ensure that the edge of the ribbon cable marked with a coloured stripe goes to the 'pin 1' side of the connector: this is usually marked somewhere. Don't rely on the connector on the back of your old CD-ROM drive being the same way round as the one on your CD writer.

Another possibility is that you inadvertently changed one of your Bios settings. Your bootup problem may be caused by the system trying to boot from



← Password-protecting files with a compression utility such as WinZip before burning them to a CD is a good way to keep unauthorised users from accessing them

CD. Possibly your old CD-ROM drive doesn't support booting. We suggest that you go into Bios Setup, look for the setting for configuring boot options and try removing 'CD-ROM drive' from the list of bootable devices.

Q Is it possible to protect a CD-R or CD-RW from unauthorised readers so that a password is needed to access the information?

A This can't be done in exactly the way you describe. However, a possible solution is to write information to the CD after first encrypting it into a password-protected Zip file. Any Zip utility – such as the popular WinZip, shown above – will be able to do this. You'll find a copy of WinZip on our cover disc so you can try it for yourself.

Anyone wishing to access the information will need to know the password before they can view any of the files in the Zip archive, though it won't stop them from listing the archive directory or deleting files from the archive (or the entire Zip file) if a rewritable disc is used.

This solution will only be suitable if all those whom you wish to access the information have some unzipping software and know how to use it. If they all use Windows XP then our solution will work well. It will also be easy to use as support for encrypted Zip files is built into the operating system, which will prompt for the password when required.

Q I have just bought a new computer and would like to transfer a large number of applications to it, including Paint Shop Pro and Fix-It Utilities, from my old PC. Unfortunately the CD-ROMs for these products have disappeared during a house move some time ago so I need some sort of transfer program.

The trouble is I live in rural France and have never seen anything like LapLink on sale. Would it be possible to transfer the applications by uploading them from the old PC to some central server and then downloading them to the new one?

A Nice idea, but it wouldn't be practical. And even if you had a suitable server and a fast unmetered internet connection it wouldn't work. Nor would LapLink be very much help in this case. The problem is that moving an application isn't generally just a matter of transferring files from one computer to another.

The majority of applications update or add shared files to the Windows System folder and make numerous changes to the Registry. These changes are essential in order for them to work correctly. There's no way for you, us or some third-party utility to find out what all these changes are so that they can be applied to your new computer.

The only program that knows exactly how to install an application is that program's Setup package. So if you no longer have the original CDs for these

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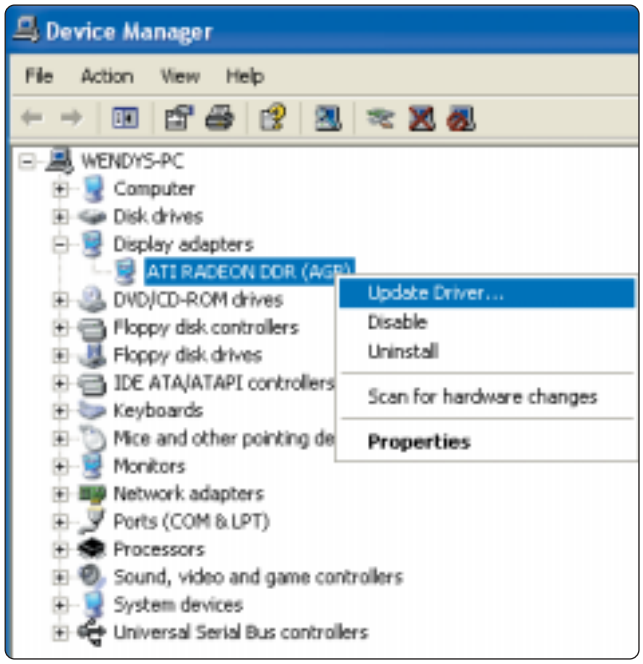
applications you're out of luck. A further difficulty in your case is that your new computer probably runs Windows XP, whereas the old one most likely ran Windows 95 or a descendant of it. You may need new XP-compatible versions of system utilities like Fix-It.

Other applications might install in another way and might even copy different versions of some files from the installation CD when installed on an NT-family operating system like Windows XP.

→ A Windows Protection Error can indicate a faulty graphics driver. Try updating your existing driver via Device Manager



Windows

Q My computer, which runs Windows Me, has a problem with ScanDisk. It reports 'ScanDisk found 16,384 bytes of data in 1 lost file fragment' and then asks whether to save or delete this. It then tells me: 'A program or Windows itself saved information to your drive after the previous error was detected. ScanDisk must restart so it can include this information in the scan for new errors'.

Whether I save or delete the file ScanDisk continues to report the error. The system runs well apart from this. What should I do?

A The best way to resolve problems with ScanDisk is to run it from DOS. Since this isn't possible under Windows Me, the only alternative is to run it under Safe Mode. To start Windows Me in Safe Mode, turn on the computer (or click on Start, Shut Down, Restart) and then press and hold the Ctrl key until the Windows StartUp Menu appears. Type the number for Safe Mode then press Enter.

Q On starting my computer I receive a message saying: 'Couldn't load cmf.dll, check bin bin.dir xcm.ini.' I have reloaded Windows 98 but it still appears. Can you help?

A The DLL file referred to belongs to Xerox Colour Manager, which is sometimes supplied with a scanner. This error usually only appears when opening the Control Panel. The recommended solution in this case is to locate the files xcmcp.cpl, xcmini.cpl and xrcmcp.cpl and rename the CPL extension to OLD. If this doesn't help, you'll need to investigate what software is being loaded at startup that might be trying to use this colour management software and either disable or remove it. Alternatively, you could try reinstalling Xerox Colour Manager.

Q My computer runs Windows Me and just about every time I shut it down I get the dreaded blue screen saying 'Windows Protection Error'. What's the problem?

A There are many possible causes of this error. A common one is a faulty graphics card driver. Try updating the driver via Device Manager, as shown above, or, if you did so prior to these blue screens appearing, try reverting to the old one. Background utilities such as virus checkers can also cause problems at shutdown.

Try closing all programs manually, then shutting down software running in your System Tray. If Windows shuts down properly after this, manually close one application at a time before shutting down to see which one is the culprit.

If none of these things turns out to be the cause of the trouble in your case there's no alternative but to work through the sequence of checks described in the Microsoft Knowledgebase article *How to Troubleshoot Windows Me Shutdown Problems.* You'll find this at http://support.microsoft.com/support/kb/articles/q273/7/46.asp.

Internet

Q I have trouble staying connected to the internet for more than a few minutes at a time. My computer manufacturer, Time, insists that the fault lies with my ISP settings. My ISP, Tiscali, has provided a list of the correct settings, which all check out.

Windows XP diagnostics say that the problem is caused either by the modem or the COM port. The 'expert' at the local computer shop says this is impossible and that I should have the phoneline checked and the gain raised. This I did with no result. Any chance you can help?

A There's no obvious cause for this problem, so all we can do is run through a list of possibilities in the hope that we mention something you haven't tried. It's not unknown for equipment at the ISP end to disconnect a user after a short period. This may be due to a fault at the ISP and often clears up after a few days when it is detected and fixed.

Avoiding Bugbear

virus alert

Though it first came to light in October 02 and is now detected by all up-to-date antivirus packages, the Bugbear worm virus was still in wide circulation at the time of writing. This virus spreads using email messages that can have a wide range of subject headers.

It contains an executable attachment which, if run, can disable virus protection, send out copies of system passwords and provide a 'backdoor' for intruders to gain access to the system. The worm can also spread to other PCs on a local network and may send garbage to shared printers.

The From email address in the worm is chosen at random from the address book or inbox of the infected computer, so this is unlikely to identify the person whose computer is infected. Because of this, you may receive emails from people accusing you of sending a virus even though your system is fully protected and virus-free.

If messages containing the Bugbear worm are received using Microsoft Outlook or Outlook Express on systems running Internet Explorer 5.0 or 5.5 which have not been updated with security patches, the worm is activated automatically as soon as the message is displayed in the preview pane of the mail reader.

Why you should upgrade IE

Readers could avoid this problem simply by installing the latest Internet Explorer, version 6.0. Alternatively, install the security patch from www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/download/critical/q290108/default.asp.

To disinfect a computer that has been infected by the virus, use an up-to-date virus scanner to detect and remove all files detected as Bugbear.A. To avoid error messages at startup you should also check the StartUp folder of the Programs menu and the contents of the Registry key Hkey_Local_Machine\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\RunOnce. Delete any entries relating to previously detected Bugbear.A files.

Unfortunately, it can be hard to convince an ISP that the problem is their fault even if you're certain that nothing has changed on your computer. It's easier if you have accounts with more than one ISP and can show that using the same computer, modem and phoneline you can connect reliably with another provider.

Noise on the line and low gain can cause a modem to lose the connection. However, it sounds as if you've checked and eliminated that. Call-waiting beeps can also cause a dialup connection to be lost, but we're sure you've thought of that too.

Another common cause is the advanced dialup options that disconnect if the connection is idle. It's best to disable all of these to be sure they aren't causing the trouble. From Control Panel, open Internet Options, select the Connections tab, select your ISP from the list of dialup settings and click the Settings button.

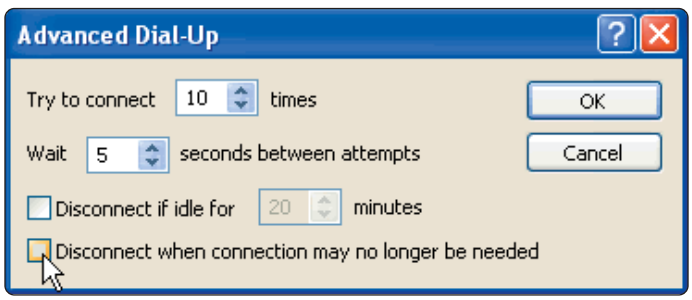
On the Settings dialog box, in the Dial-Up settings panel, shown right, click Advanced. Clear the checkbox beside 'Disconnect if idle for xx minutes' and 'Disconnect when connection may no longer be needed', then click ok.

A faulty modem could be the cause of the trouble, but this would be extremely rare. It's very unlikely that a COM port is at fault either. Most computers nowadays have internal modems that use a 'virtual' COM port, not a real one, so any apparent COM port problem would most likely be the result of a fault with the modem itself or its software drivers.

Most modems these days are software modems, which means that they use the PC's processor to encode and decode the signal sent over the telephone line. This is a cost-saving idea which is all very well in principle, but has the unfortunate result that the performance of the modem is ultimately at the mercy of other software running on the computer.

This other software may not be well-behaved and may be interrupting the encoding or decoding process at a critical time. If you've checked all the other possibilities, try closing all applications including utilities like system monitors, virus checkers and security firewalls and see if you can then make a reliable internet connection.

You could also try using a lower screen resolution or reducing the graphics hardware acceleration (right-click the desktop, click Properties, Settings, Advanced, Troubleshoot) in case it's your graphics card that is the cause of the trouble.



→ Disable the automatic disconnection options to be sure they aren't causing your internet connection to be lost

Q Please can you help me? Several people are claiming that they are receiving email viruses from me. I've updated my Norton AntiVirus 2002 and scanned my system and it is clean. On some of the days I am alleged to have sent viruses my computer wasn't even switched on. Is it possible for someone else to be sending infected emails that appear to come from me?

A Unfortunately, yes it is. As we mentioned last month in response to some questions about spam, there's no validation of the From field of an email so it's very easy to send a message, a virus or some spam that looks as if it comes from somebody else. Some viruses such as the currently common Bugbear.A

Stop pesky pop-ups

tip

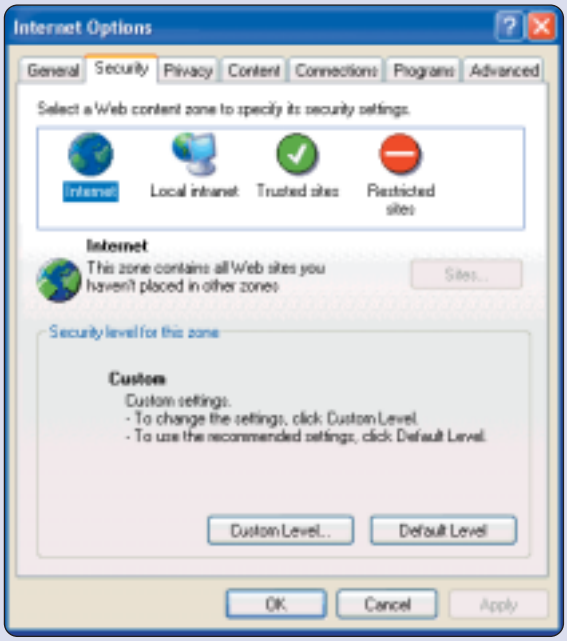
Are your browsing sessions plagued by pop-up windows advertising products or services you don't want? The solution for many is to install a pop-up killer, but this will cost money. There's another way to kill pop-ups – and it's free because it uses the built-in security options of Internet Explorer 6.0.

Open IE and click on Tools, Internet Options and select the Security tab. You'll see that Microsoft has defined four security zones: Trusted sites are those you're confident will do no harm to your computer; Restricted sites are those you're concerned about, whose activities you want to restrict; Local intranet would be any sites running on servers on your local network – you can probably ignore this; Internet is all the sites that you haven't added to one of the other three zones. The chances are you haven't added sites to any of the three zones, so everything is in the Internet zone at the moment.

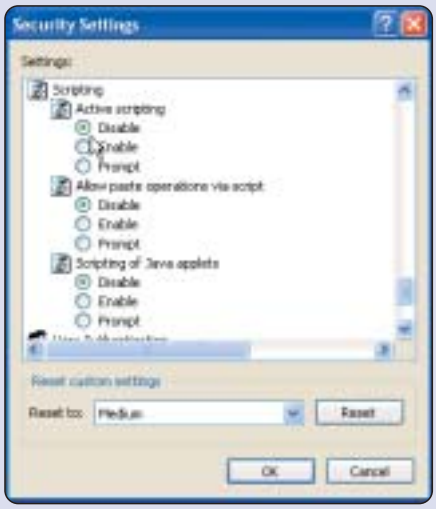
The method outlined below requires a bit more effort than installing a pop-up stopper, but it will make your web surfing safer, since scripting can be used to cause other mischief besides displaying unwanted pop-up windows.

The disadvantage is that it might not always be apparent that a site isn't working properly because scripting has been disabled. And adding domains to the Trusted sites list to enable their scripts to work gets to be a bit of a pain.

But many pop-up stoppers aren't 'install and forget' tools either and they too can sometimes interfere with normal browsing. Try this tip. If it doesn't suit your web surfing habits just click the Default Level button and restore the Internet zone security settings to the original ones.

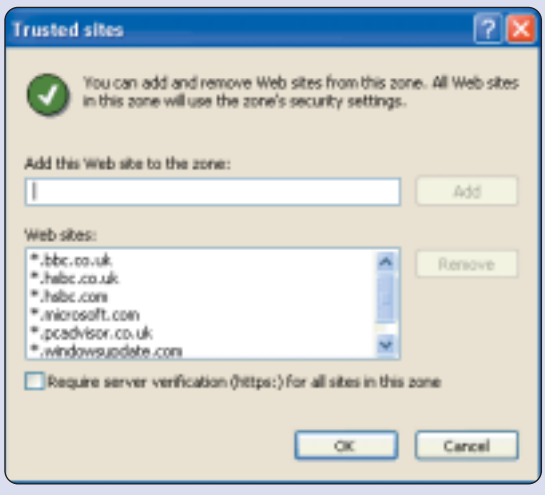


1 You can use these security settings to prevent pop-up windows appearing. Pop-ups are created using script code in a web page, so what we need to do to prevent them from appearing is disable scripting. That would be fine, except that scripting is often used for other, more useful purposes. So what we will do is disable scripting for sites in the Internet zone and then add those sites that need to run scripts in order to work properly to the Trusted zone



2 If you're currently using the default security settings then the settings for the Trusted and Restricted zones are already quite acceptable. Select the Internet zone then click Custom Level. Select Disable for all three options under Scripting. Click ok

3 You must now add the sites that you regularly visit and which require scripting in order to work properly to the Trusted zone. To do this, select Trusted sites and click Sites. Add the site in the form '*.domain'. For example, BT's website uses JavaScript, so if you visit it, enter '*.bt.com' (without the inverted commas) and then click Add. To enable scripting for Microsoft's site add '*.microsoft.com' and '*.windowsupdate.com'. You'll need to clear the checkbox 'Require server verification for sites in this zone' since not all the sites you'll need to put in this zone will be running on a secure server



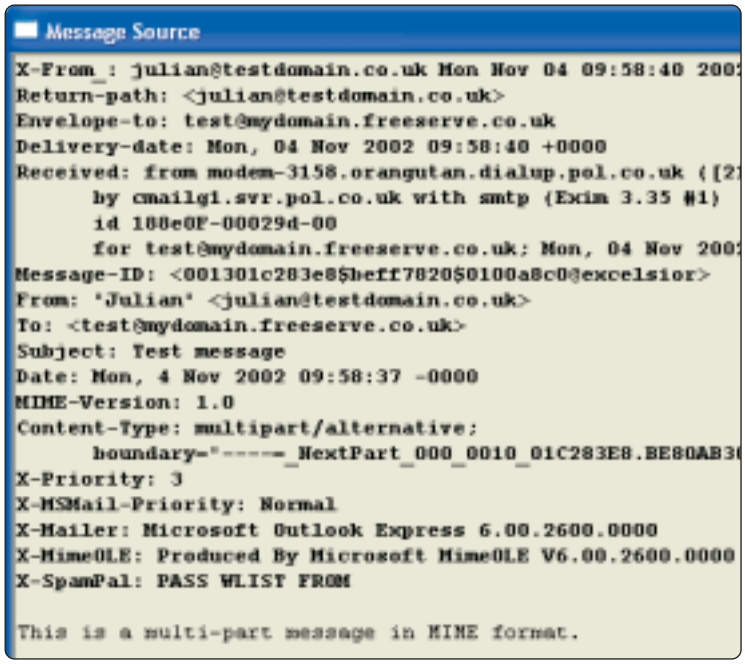
worm (see *Avoiding Bugbear* on page 155) take advantage of this to obscure their true origin. They fill the From field with an address taken from the sender's address book or a message in their inbox. Therefore anyone who has ever received email from you (even indirectly, via a mailing list or Yahoo Groups) could be the culprit whose system is spreading the virus.

It's possible to see whether the message came from your computer or not by inspecting the message headers. To do this in Outlook Express, right-click the message in the list in the top righthand pane, then select Properties, select the Details tab and click on Message Source. Resize the Message Source window so that the longest header line is displayed in full. The headers are the part of the message shown in bold type.

To see how to identify a message sent by you, send a test message to yourself. When the message arrives, look at the headers starting from the bottom. You'll probably see a line that starts 'Message-ID:' followed by some gobbledygook, an '@' sign and a name that may be recognisable as the name you gave your computer.

Any message that originated from your mail program will have a line like this. The gobbledygook will be different for each message but the '@name' will always be the same.

→ You can tell whether an email came from your PC by examining the headers



Moving up from here you'll see one of possibly several lines starting with 'Received:'. The first line (starting from the bottom) is added by the mail server that received the message from the sender's PC. If you have a dialup account the From address will identify the dialup node you were connected to when sending the message, rather than your computer, so it won't always be the same. However, the domain name part should at least identify the ISP. (In our example above it is 'pol.co.uk', the domain of Planet Online, Freeserve's parent company). You may also see 'helo=name' where 'name' is whatever you have called your PC (it's 'excelsior' in our example). Further on this line, the 'By' address may be identifiable as your ISP's outgoing mail server.

If the domain name of the addresses in the first Received header from the bottom is something other than your ISP, or the 'helo=name' differs from messages you send yourself, this is proof that your computer isn't responsible for originating the message. The domain name should identify the ISP that was used. However, if the sender used a dialup account it won't be easy to identify who they are from this information.

It ought to be possible for the ISP to identify the sender, though, so if one of the people who received the virus is getting a bit abusive, just tell them to forward a copy of the message to their ISP's support people.

They should be able to work out which service provider the virus came from and pass the information on to the appropriate people who can trace the real sender and inform them that their computer is spreading a virus.

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If our online database can't solve your problem, try posting a question in our support forum, where more than 200 queries are answered every day. The forum is manned by our team of Helproom angels, who are ready and willing to lend a hand on anything, from system crashes to virus alerts. Don't let the gremlins get you down – check out our Helproom instead.

www.pcadvisor.co.uk/helproom

I recently installed Internet Explorer 6.0. Now I keep getting 'Error 35 incompatible version of the RPD Stub'. How can I resolve this annoying problem?

A This is quite a common problem. It is caused by a bug in some versions of the file oleaut32.dll. It is usually solved by replacing this file with an older version. There are two ways to achieve this. The easiest is to download the patch file mcrepair.exe from http://download.microsoft.com/download/msninvestor/patch/1.0/win98/en-us/mcrepair.exe. Alternatively, access the link from this month's cover disc.

Save this file to disk, then close all applications and run it. You will be prompted to restart the computer. This step is necessary, since the patch replaces files that are in use by Windows. The patch replaces the files asycfilt.dll, oleaut32.dll, olepro32.dll and stdole2.tlb with version 2.40.4515. It would be prudent to back up the original versions of these files in case the patch adversely affects some other application.

If you're skilled at using DOS, an alternative solution would be to replace oleaut32.dll on its own by downloading a copy from www.dll-files.com. The version there is 2.40.4518. Again, there's a link to this website on this month's cover disc.

Save this to a temporary folder, then boot MS-DOS and copy the downloaded file to its correct location in c:\Windows\System. (We aren't aware of this error occurring under Windows XP. If it does, note that under that operating system the correct location of oleaut32.dll is Windows\System32.)

Pass it on: tips from readers

tip

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@idg.com. To help us sort your messages, please use the words 'Pass it on' in the subject heading.

Alternative Acrobat

Following our tip about emailing formatted documents in a way that everyone can read, Dave Turner wrote suggesting a cheaper alternative to Adobe's Acrobat. He evaluated a number of possibilities for his employer and settled on eDocPrinter PDF Pro from Iteksoft (www.iteksoft.com). It's free to try and $29.00 to buy. The free version puts a 'trial version' watermark after the third page of every document. Note that this program runs only on Windows 2000 or XP.

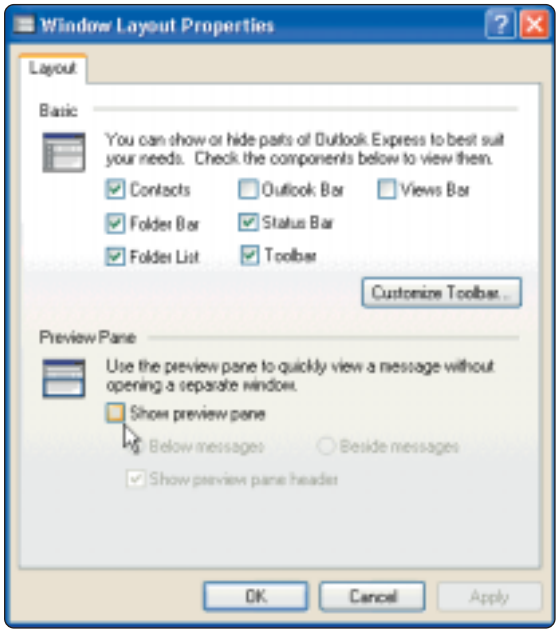
Perl of wisdom

Dave Turner also had a recommendation for the reader in December's Helpline who wanted a better tool for scripting. He advises using Perl, which is free, and runs on many other operating systems besides Windows. You can download Perl for Win32 from www.activestate.com/products/activeperl. There's also a free integrated development environment, OpenPerl, at http://open-perl-ide.sourceforge.net. And there are plenty of books on the subject: Dave recommends *Programming Perl 3rd Edition* by Larry Wall (the inventor of Perl), which is published by O'Reilly.

We'd agree with Dave that Perl is an excellent scripting language and a very useful skill to learn, especially if you're interested in a career in computing or web development. But be warned, it has a learning curve that's perhaps a bit too steep to be worth tackling if you only want a scripting tool for occasional use.

Thumbs up for ThumbsPlus

Browsing through some back issues, Alan Slate spotted a reader's query about how to print several photos on one page. He wrote to recommend ThumbsPlus from Cerious Software (www.cerious.com). It's described as "a highly customisable image database and graphics editor application that makes it easy to catalogue and locate, as well as maintain and modify, all your graphics and multimedia files".



← If an infected email causes Outlook Express to crash when you select it, disable the preview pane

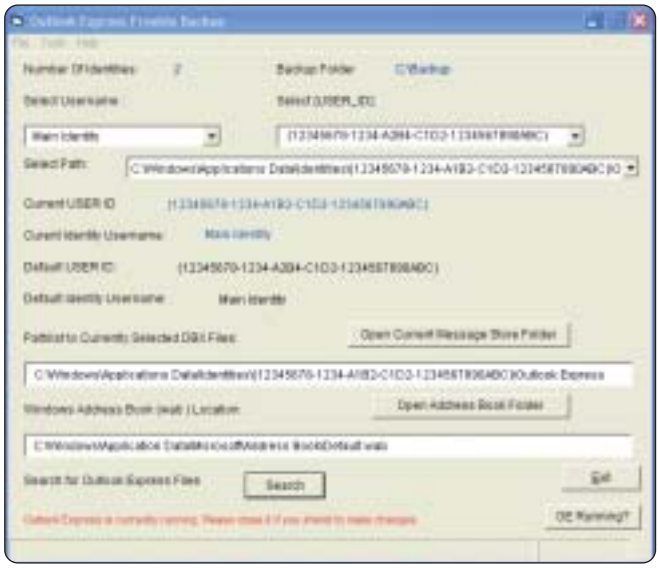
Q I have received two emails containing the Bugbear.A worm virus. Norton AntiVirus 2002 picked them up and quarantined them. However, when I try to delete them from Outlook I am told 'This program has performed an illegal operation and will be shut down'.

I have downloaded the Symantec repair tool, but although it finds the virus in quarantine it leaves the emails in Outlook. How can I remove them?

A Most likely the illegal operation is occurring when Outlook Express tries to preview the infected emails. Therefore our advice is to disable the preview pane, which you can do by clicking in View, Layout from the Outlook Express menu and then deselecting Show preview pane as shown left.

With this done, you should be able to select and delete the messages without triggering the error. In the unlikely event that this doesn't work try performing a block selection, which you can do by holding down the Shift key while clicking on messages either side of the two infected ones. This will enable you to select the messages for deletion without having to click on them.

We would suggest that you consider upgrading to a newer version of Outlook Express after this, which you can do by installing the latest version of Internet Explorer 6.0. No version of Outlook Express is invulnerable to viruses, but older versions are so full of security holes that even with an antivirus package installed it's still risky to keep using them.



← Outlook Express Backup – hardly the last word in user interface design, but it's free

Q I wish to back up my Outlook Express email messages to a ZIP archive. I know that I can save individual messages, but is there a way to save complete folders?

A We think the tool you're looking for is Outlook Express Backup, shown above, a free utility from www.oehelp.com (you can also access it from this month's cover disc). It won't make a ZIP archive out of your mail folders, but it will create backups of your mail folders (as well as your address book and most of your settings) and allow them to be restored if required.

Q How can I stop those annoying pop-up windows that appear when I surf the internet?

A The easiest way to get the better of these internet irritations is to install a pop-up stopper. There are a number of such utilities available for download (just type 'pop-up stop' into your favourite search engine). However, most of them cost $20 to $30 to register after an initial trial period.

We found one free utility: a basic version of PanicWare's Pop-Up Stopper, which you can get from www.panicware.com/popupstopper.html or access it from this month's cover disc. If you don't mind paying for one, then we recommend PopNot by HDSoft (www.hdsoft.com), which costs $19.95 (around £13). You'll find a 15-day evaluation version on the cover disc. Alternatively, try the technique described in *Stop pesky pop-ups* on page 156 which uses features built in to Internet Explorer 6.0 to prevent pop-ups.

Q Our home network has a PC running Windows XP Pro, which provides internet access to two systems running Windows 98 through ICS (Internet Connection Sharing). This works fine except that, on the two Windows 98-based PCs, the System Tray icon that allows a user to start or close a web connection doesn't always appear. Plus, if a user disconnects using this icon the connection is closed even if others (or even the server) are using it.

This can be very frustrating. I could configure ICS to start a connection automatically whenever a PC on the network needs it, and I could disable the ability of other network users to control the connection and rely on a time-out to close it. However, as we only have one phoneline which is also used for voicecalls I would prefer to have more immediate control over the connection.

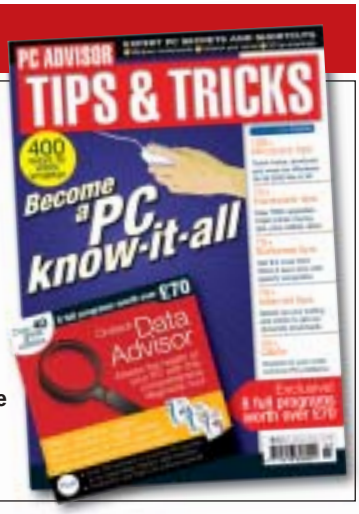
Is there a problem with our ICS setup and, if so, can you tell me how to make it work properly?

A We think the problem is not with your setup but with ICS itself. The System Tray icon that allows users to control a connection doesn't seem to appear if the internet is already open when the client computer starts up. And there appears to be no way to make a user's Disconnect command take effect only if no one else is using the connection.

Allowing your Windows XP ICS server to close the connection after a period of inactivity is really the only way to ensure

Helpline FAQs Directory

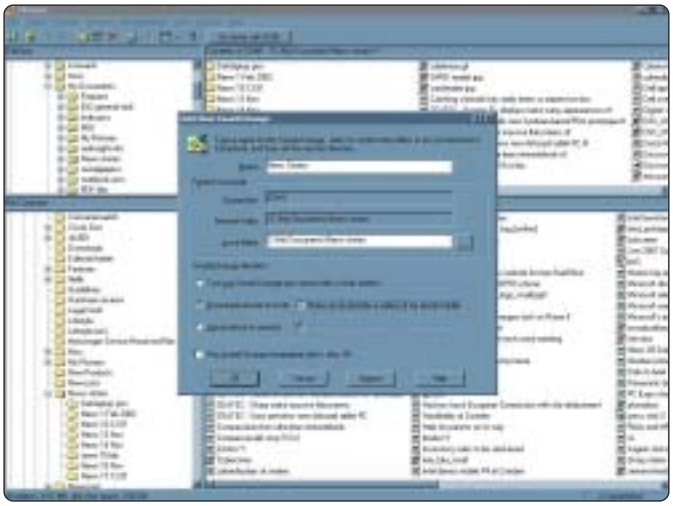
Ever have a problem with your PC and feel sure you once read about the solution in a past issue of Helpline? The FAQ Directory can help you. Comprising 18 months worth of questions and answers from Helpline, the Directory is a searchable database of almost 400 questions and answers. It covers common Windows dilemmas, plus bugs and glitches in software, hardware errors and web troubleshooting. Whatever your problem, our Directory can almost certainly provide you with the solution. Available with *Tips & Tricks*, on sale now at all good newsagents.



that other users' online sessions aren't terminated when someone else closes the connection. The reason is that there is apparently no way for Windows to tell if a web connection is in use or not, except by checking for activity (or the absence of it).

If you need the ability to close an ICS connection without doing it from the server, the only solution is to disable ICS and use a program called Remote Disconnection Utility from www.twiga.fsbusiness.co.uk. You can also access it from this month's cover disc.

This utility manages the connection by displaying a prompt on each user's PC asking whether it is okay to close the connection. If no response is received within a specified time it is assumed that the connection isn't needed, so the connection won't be left open just because someone has left their PC unattended.



← A program such as FileSync can help you transfer files and settings to a new computer

↓ Applications

Q I was hoping to try your file synchronisation tip in Helpline, December 02 (page 207), but I have an additional complication. I take various Word and Excel files on the road with me and change them, but sometimes the copies on my desktop PC get altered in my absence. Is it possible to have the PC flag that a changed file is about to be overwritten and then not to overwrite it?

A Not with our simple batch file method. The batch file we created will simply replace the older copy of a file with the newest one, as determined by its time/date stamp. To do what you suggest a program would need to record the date stamp of every file transferred in either direction, so that the next time it is run it could check whether the older of the pair of files had been modified since the previous synchronisation.

The program could then ask you what to do about it. It was the need to resolve such conflicts that frustrated the reader who asked the original question. He wanted a simple 'replace by the newest' solution. Unfortunately, you'll need a more sophisticated file synchronisation tool like LapLink, FileSync (shown above) or PCSync to handle this particular problem.

Q When I try to record narration in PowerPoint 2000 I get the message 'PowerPoint cannot detect microphone'. I can record using the Windows Sound Recorder so I know the microphone is working. Can you help?

A For some reason PowerPoint will occasionally locate other sound devices, such as a voice modem, which are installed in the computer. If you have such a device installed in your PC, open Control Panel, System, Device Manager and temporarily disable the device in the hardware profile.

Other useful tips on recording narration in PowerPoint can be found at www.indezine.com/products/powerpoint/ppnarration.html.

Q When I press the Del key in Microsoft Word, it performs a spellcheck. What am I doing wrong?

A Don't worry, you aren't doing anything wrong. However, there is definitely something wrong with your copy of Microsoft Word. It's possible to assign practically any Word function to any key, so it isn't particularly strange that this is happening.

What is a bit more worrying is how it got into this state in the first place. We aren't aware of any Microsoft Word macro virus that meddles with the key assignments in this way, but there are so many it's impossible to be sure. It's certainly feasible, so if you haven't been trying to customise Word for yourself it would be worth running a virus check, in case there's an infected document on your hard disk somewhere.

The simplest remedy would be to locate and delete all files named normal.dot on your system. This would return everything to the factory defaults, but it's a bit drastic as you would lose many other

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Clean your Registry

tip

Reader Pravin Hurhangee tipped us off about a free utility called RegCleaner written by Jouni Vuorio (available from www.jv16.org or load it up from our cover disc). This program avoids the need to use the Registry Editor to complete the thorough removal of an application (as we described in last December's Helpline on page 201.) It lists all the software entries in the Registry so you can select those belonging to applications that are no longer installed.

When you remove the selected items they are moved to a backup location so that they can be reinstated in case you made a mistake, something Microsoft's Regedit won't do.

RegCleaner also provides an easy way to remove programs from the startup list, get rid of orphaned Add/Remove Programs entries and clear out unwanted file types, shell extensions and 'new file' menu entries. It's an excellent tool, but like any powerful tool it can be dangerous if you aren't careful with it, so take our advice and have a full backup of your Registry handy before trying it.

↑ Safely clean out obsolete Registry data using the utility RegCleaner

changes you may have made to your Word configuration. Instead, choose Tools, Customize, select the Options tab, then click the Keyboard button.

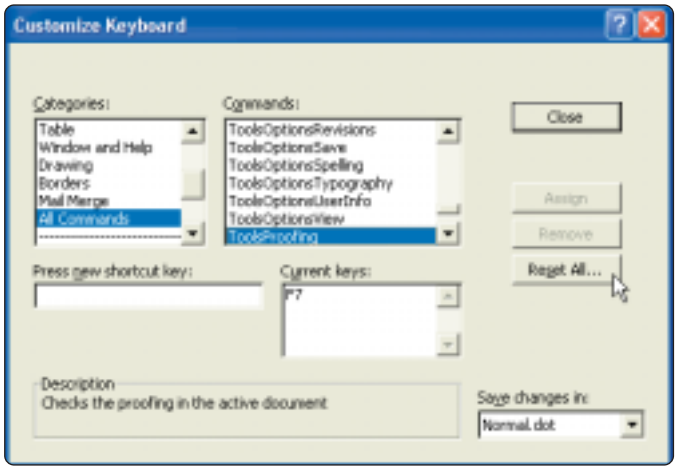
On the Customize Keyboard dialog box (shown below) select All Commands under Categories and ToolsProofing under Commands. In the Current keys field you should see F7. If you don't, click the Reset All button. This will restore the key assignments to the factory defaults.

It won't remove any macros or styles you have defined (unlike deleting normal.dot) but it will get rid of any key assignments to your macros and styles (you'll see a warning message about this). If you assigned keys to your own macros or styles you'll have to reassign them.

Q I use Microsoft Word 2000. A couple of days ago when I booted it up it froze at the splash screen, locking my entire computer. I tried repairing it then uninstalling and reinstalling it – all without success. Have you any ideas?

A This problem could be caused by a rogue macro or by a faulty third-party add-in. Try starting Word by clicking Start, Run then typing 'Winword /A' and pressing Enter. If Word starts, this confirms that the software itself is okay and that the fault is in the configuration.

There are several possible causes of the problem, so we'll run through them starting with the most likely culprit.



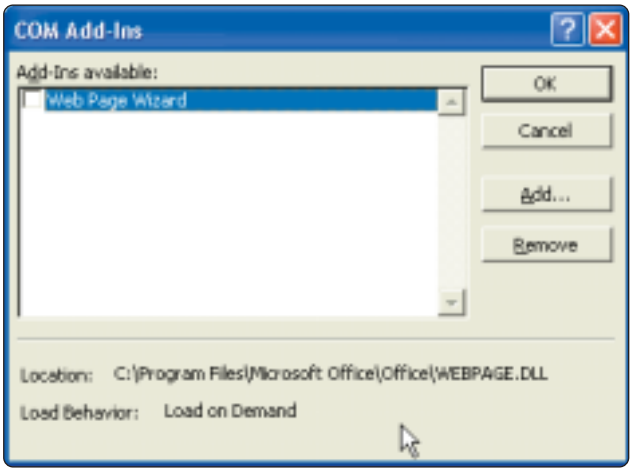
← If Microsoft Word does odd things when you press certain keys, try resetting the key assignments

This is the default template, normal.dot, which contains macros and other user customisation settings. To see if this is to blame, close all Office applications and use Search (or Find) to locate all files named normal.dot. Either rename them (so that you can reinstate them if this doesn't solve the problem) or delete them, then try starting Word in the usual way to see if it loads normally.

Another common cause of problems with Word is the Microsoft Works add-in, which you will have if your computer came with Microsoft Works installed. It's no great loss, so try removing this using Control Panel, Add/Remove Programs.

A third-party add-in could also be causing Word to hang at startup. To see if any add-ins are installed, click on Tools, Templates and Add-Ins. If any global templates or add-ins are listed, try removing them one at a time, closing and restarting Word (using the normal method of launching it) after each removal to see which if any is the cause of the problem.

Word 2000 supports COM add-ins, which are managed using a normally inaccessible part of the user interface. Right-click a toolbar, select Customize, choose the Commands tab, then select the Tools category. Drag the item 'COM Add-ins' to one of the toolbars; this will create a button labelled 'COM Add-Ins'.



← A faulty COM add-in might cause Microsoft Word to freeze at startup

Click this button, then look to see if any add-ins are installed and enabled. If there is a tick in the checkbox beside any of the names, clear it then click ok and close and restart Word to see if this has solved the problem.

As a matter of general interest, disabling or removing unwanted COM add-ins can make Word start much more quickly. However, don't remove add-ins such as the Web Page Wizard (shown above) if you are likely to want to use them in the future. We found that the Add button doesn't work when you try to add them back again (thank goodness for backups).

If none of the above helps, there's one other possibility – corrupt Registry data. Close Word, then start the Registry Editor. For Word 2000 open Hkey_Current_User\Software\Microsoft\Office\9.0\Word. You should see a folder named Data: select and delete it.

Q I bought Norton AntiVirus 2003 but it wouldn't install until I removed Norton AntiVirus 5.0, which unfortunately did not appear in my Add/Remove Programs list. I tried the uninstall instructions which coincidentally appeared in December 02 (page 201) but after rebooting the system halted with a blue-screen message: 'Cannot find a device file that may be needed to run Windows or a Windows application. The Windows Registry or system.ini file refers to this device file but the device file no longer exists'. The file referred to is c:\Program~1\Norton~1\Navap.vxd. After dismissing the message, the system works normally and I have now successfully installed AntiVirus 2003. How can I stop this message appearing?

A One of the difficulties with uninstalling programs manually is that it's impossible to track down and remove Registry entries that may have been created in other than the obvious locations. We don't know whether Journi Vuorio's RegCleaner (see the tip *Clean your Registry* on page 163) would have done any better. Fortunately, this particular problem is fairly easy to solve.

Start the Registry Editor then expand in turn the Registry folders Hkey_Local_ Machine, System, CurrentControlSet, Services, VxD. Under VxD you should find a folder named after the missing VxD, Navap in this case. Select it and delete it. The annoying startup message should now be history.

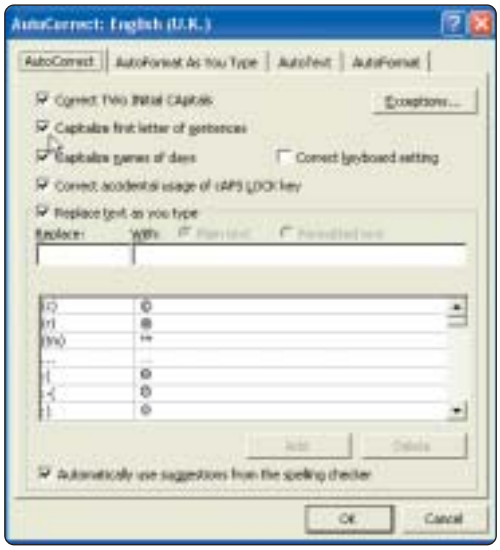
→ If Word tries to capitalise the first letter of a word, it thinks you're starting a new sentence

Q I'm experiencing an annoying problem when using Word. Occasionally when continuing a sentence into the next line the PC tries to insist on starting the next word in the new line with a capital letter. I can get round the problem fairly easily but would rather it didn't happen at all. Is there a remedy?

A On the whole, Microsoft's attempts to make software guess what the user wants in an attempt to be helpful cause more trouble than they save. In this case, you're battling an AutoCorrect option to capitalise the first letter of sentences.

Word decides that you're starting a new sentence if the previous word ended with a full stop or if you pressed Enter. We're assuming, of course, that you realise there's no need to press Enter when you get to the end of a line of typing, because Word will automatically wrap text to fit the margins. Normally, you only press Enter to force a new line to be started at the end of a paragraph.

If you don't want Word to guess when you're starting a new sentence, click Tools, AutoCorrect. On the AutoCorrect tab you'll see an option 'Capitalize first letter of sentences'. Clear the checkbox beside it, as shown below, and this particular irritation will no longer bother you. ■



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