

Finding the time

XP's time synchronisation error messages are not what you want when you're trying to update documents or schedule appointments. Here's how to keep your PC's clock accurate



When time.windows.com throws a wobbly at your request for the correct time, one possible culprit is your firewall. If you're running one, try briefly disabling it to see whether you can synchronise the time with it turned off.

It's quite likely this won't work, however, as the Windows time server is not very reliable. Trying a different time server is a good idea in any case, since both servers offered by Windows XP are in the USA and so it will take longer for the information to get to you, making your clock a second or two slow.

There are three open-access internet time servers in the UK: ntp.cis.strath.ac.uk, ntp2a.mcc.ac.uk and time-server.ndo.com. The first is at the University of Strathclyde – handy for our Scottish readers – while the second is centrally placed for the rest of the UK at the University of Manchester.

Distance in internet terms is measured in 'hops' – the number of routers through which data has to travel – so the third server at Telehouse, the central hub of the internet for the UK, is likely to be a shorter number of hops for just about everyone. Overseas readers should check the Public NTP Time Servers List at www.eecis.udel.edu/~mills/ntp/servers.html to find the one nearest to them.

There are, however, inherent disadvantages to the Windows Time Service – not least the fact that it only synchronises the clock every seven days which might not be often enough for particularly inaccurate clocks. But the real killer is that, if you're offline when the next sync time comes, you'll miss your weekly update.

So for many home users, a better solution would be to disable the Windows Time Service and use a freeware utility like Atomic Clock Sync from www.worldtimeserver.com/atomic-clock. ■

Synchronising your PC's clock

An incorrect system clock can drive you to distraction. Here's how to use XP's time server synchronisation feature.



1 Click Start, Control Panel and if 'Switch to Classic View' is displayed in the lefthand panel, click it. Then double-click the Date and Time icon

2 Click the Internet Time tab and choose one of the default servers. Hit the Update Now button and wait while Windows tries to synchronise with the server



Server:

3 If you receive an error message, type the location of an alternative time server into the box and try again

4 At the bottom of the Date and Time dialog box, you should see when the next automatic synchronisation is scheduled for

Next synchronization: 17/06/2003 at 16:00
Synchronization can occur only when your computer is connected to the Internet. Learn more about [time synchronization](#) in Help and Support Center.