helpline

↯ General

My system, which runs Windows 98, has a Pentium III processor, 128MB of RAM and Voodoo 3500 graphics card with 16MB VRAM. When I display large graphical images, the mouse pointer starts to slow down and desktop icons become visible even when they are behind the picture. Eventually the system freezes and I have to reboot.

The display resolution is 1,024x768 with 32bit colour. I tried different resolutions, but only 256-colour and 640x480 resolution solved the problem. I substituted a different graphics card temporarily and that was okay. I found by chance that pressing the sleep button on the keyboard, then pressing wake, returns the system to normal. Is there something wrong with the graphics card?

A The description of this fault seems very much like a memory leak. A memory leak is when memory that is used by an application or any software – for instance, a graphics card driver – is not freed and returned to the system after use. Windows has to use memory from the swap file on the disk instead, which is much slower. As the memory leaks away, more and more swap file is used and the system becomes slower and slower.

The troubleshooting you have done makes it probable that the culprit is the driver for your Voodoo 3500 graphics card. It is unlikely that such symptoms could be caused by a fault on the card itself. We suggest that you download and install the latest available drivers for this card.

I want to lend my son a PC when he returns to college. I have deleted passwords and personal files, but I have been told that anyone who knows their way around computers will be able to find these files and reconstruct them. Is this correct and, if so, how can I prevent this without formatting the hard drive?

A Yes, this is correct, which is why there is a market for utilities that securely erase information from a hard disk. To be effective, though, these utilities must be used at the time you delete the confidential information.

If you're concerned about the recovery of files that have already been deleted, the only sure way to prevent them from being undeleted is to format the hard disk and reinstall Windows and applications from scratch. Even then, traces of your old data may remain on the part of the disk that hasn't been written to by the new installation. This is why security experts advise that the only completely sure way to stop your data falling into the wrong hands is to destroy the hard disk.

In practice, however, unless your hard drive contains state secrets or highly valuable commercial information, it is unlikely that anyone will go to very great lengths to recover deleted files. Be sure to remove any backup files or image files created by utilities such as Norton SystemWorks or GoBack, which may contain copies of files you deleted.

Empty the Recycle Bin, of course, then defragment the hard disk. This will sufficiently scramble the blocks of data containing fragments of deleted files, making recovery impractical using standard undelete utilities found in products like Norton SystemWorks.

I am building my own computer using an Abit motherboard, 1GB Duron processor, 128MB of RAM and a Sparkle 32MB AGP graphics card. When I switch on the system it gives a long beep followed by two short ones and the screen remains blank. If I insert a PCI graphics card it boots perfectly. I have change all the Bios settings to their defaults and have tried another AGP card, but I get the same result. Have you any ideas?

A You don't mention what model of Abit motherboard you have. However, many users of the Abit KT7 series motherboards seem to experience problems with AGP (advanced graphics port) graphics cards. Unfortunately, it isn't clear what the cause of these problems is or how to solve them. Some users have found that if they leave the system to warm up and then press the reset button after the failed boot, it will boot normally.

Another user found the opposite: if he switched off the PC he would have to wait 10 minutes for it to cool down before switching on again or it would fail to boot. This might suggest that there are problems with the AGP interface on this motherboard that are temperature related.
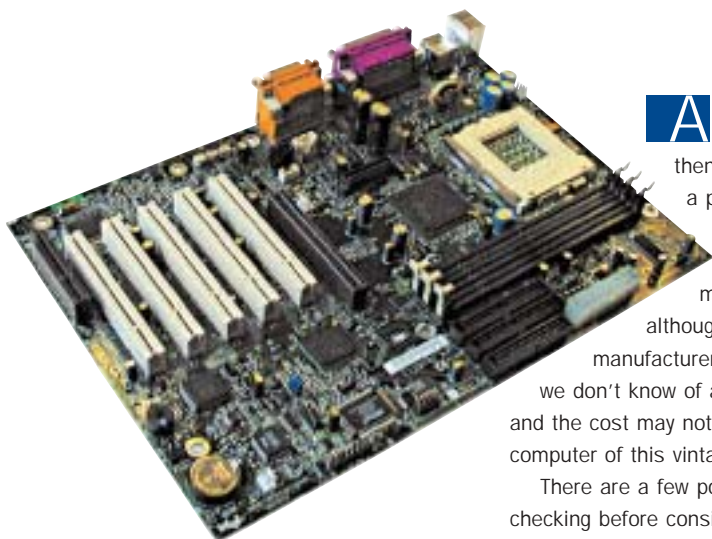
↑ Many conflicts have been reported between Abit KT7 series motherboards and AGP graphics cards. No clear solution has been found, although readers have discovered various actions that solve the problem

The long beep followed by two short beeps means that the Bios failed to initialise the graphics card. The usual reason for this is that the card isn't seated properly. It's possible, especially with home-built PCs, that the components don't fit together as well as they could. In your case it could be that when the bracket on the graphics card is screwed down, the contacts at the other end of the connector lift out of the slot slightly. One user found that by wiggling the graphics card he could get his system to boot.

The only other thing we can suggest is to try playing with some of the Bios settings. For instance, try increasing the AGP aperture size, disabling fast writes or changing the transfer rate. Also, check out if there is a Bios upgrade for your motherboard.

Check the Abit website – there are some frequently asked questions about motherboards at http://fae.abit.com.tw/eng/faq/mb. There is also a lot of useful information for users of Abit motherboards at Paul's Unofficial Abit KT7 FAQ website (www.viahardware.com/faq/kt7/kt7faq.htm). Finally, there is a newsgroup devoted to Abit motherboards at news://alt.comp.mainboards.abit.

Q My computer has an Award Bios version 4.51 and a 2GB hard drive. Is there any way I can get it to accept an 8GB hard drive? It won't recognise it at present.

A If your Bios is version 4.51PG then it should not have a problem recognising an 8GB drive. If not, a Bios upgrade may be needed, although if the system manufacturer can't provide one we don't know of a source in the UK, and the cost may not be justified for a computer of this vintage.

There are a few points that are worth checking before consigning the system to the scrap heap, though. First, check that LBA (logical block addressing) is selected in the Bios Setup screen. It's also worth setting the drive's cylinders, heads and sectors parameters manually instead of using automatic detection. If the Bios won't let you set the correct value of one of the parameters, try dividing the value by two and then multiplying the next value by two. The actual values aren't critical when LBA is used, as it is the product of cylinders x heads x sectors that determines the maximum usable capacity of the drive. Some large hard drives have a capacity limit jumper that can be used to change the way the size of the drive is reported in order to overcome limitations in some Bioses: if present, try using this.

However, the most common reason for drives apparently being limited to 2GB is because the user has an old version of Windows 95. Windows 95 OSR2 or later (that is, Windows 98 or Windows Me) support the FAT32 file system which allows partitions larger than 2GB. The old FAT file system is limited to 2GB per partition, and a version of Fdisk supplied with versions of Windows that only support FAT limits partitions to this size too.

↓ Windows

Q When I right-click in an Explorer window to create a new folder the New submenu has 21 items on it that I never use. I know that you can use Tweak UI to remove unwanted items but I don't have it as Windows 98SE didn't have any Powertools disks preinstalled. Is there another way to remove these unwanted items?

A It would be possible to remove unwanted New submenu items by deleting information from the Registry, but as the process isn't easy, and is potentially dangerous, we don't advise it. Instead, you should use the Tweak UI tool. Click on the New tab and uncheck the items you don't want (shown right). If you don't have a Windows CD with a copy of it, you can download it from www.microsoft.com/windowsme/ guide/tweakui.exe. To add items to the submenu, see our tip *Add items to the New Context menu.*

➔ Remove unwanted submenu items with that handy utility, Tweak UI

Q My computer is running Windows Me. Recently, whenever I select the My Pictures folder in My Documents to view photos I get the following Internet Explorer script error: 'WiaMgr.Devices.Length is null or not an object. URL file://c:\windows\web\imgview.htt'. I have replaced the file imgview.htt to no effect. Can you help?

A A common reason for this error is that the Tweak UI tool has been used to change the first icon on the desktop from My Documents to My Computer (this option is on the Desktop tab.) If you have done this, change it back so that the first icon is My Documents.

This is not the only cause of the error, however. A corrupt imgview.htt file can also cause a script error, although it sounds as if you have already eliminated this possibility by replacing it. For the benefit of other readers though, a simple way to restore this file is to click on Start, Run, type regsvr32 webvw and hit Enter.

Q I have an old IBM Aptiva running Windows 98. I recently used the Aptiva updater facility and loaded the recommended upgrades. Now whenever I shut down I get a blue screen with a message stating 'An error has occurred at 0028:C1484919 in VXD IDEVSD(01)'. After I continue I receive another blue screen about a fatal exception. Then the computer hangs until I manually power off. At switch-on the computer starts up normally, but without ScanDisk.

A It's impossible to tell what has changed to have this affect on the operation of your computer, although,

at a guess, the first error is occurring in the driver for the IDE interface or hard disk. It's worth checking to see that fast shutdown is disabled.

To do this, click Start, Run, type msconfig and press Enter. Click Advanced on the General tab then select Disable Fast Shutdown. If this doesn't work, or if fast shutdown is already disabled, there are really only two things we can suggest. One is to download the article *Troubleshooting Windows 98 Shutdown Problems* (Q202633) from http://support.microsoft.com and follow the procedures described there. The other thing you can do is reinstall Windows.

Q I uninstalled Pinnacle PCTV USB and Pinnacle Express because there seemed to be a conflict. On restarting Windows 98SE a window appeared saying: 'searching for file launchlist.exe'. Initially it suggested a link to the Pinnacle folder, but after moving the remnants of Pinnacle to the Recycle Bin it now suggests a link to another program, Phone Tools. Apart from this the PC appears to be working normally. Can you advise me how to find the missing file or alternatively to stop the 'Searching for file' message?

A The searching for file message is one of the more useless features of Windows. It only appears when a file named in a shortcut has been moved or deleted. Usually the file has been deleted,

in which case there is little point in searching for another file with a similar name as it is most unlikely to be a suitable replacement for it.

As you seem to be happy with the way the computer works without launchlist.exe, we will assume that it was part of one of the software packages that you deleted. If this is the case then the most appropriate action will be to delete the shortcut and not to reinstall the file. If you click on Start, Programs, StartUp, the shortcut concerned will be one of the items on the StartUp submenu. Right-click it, then select Delete from the pop-up menu.

Q My Windows Me-based PC has a problem. System Monitor shows that after a couple of minutes of being idle the hard drive begins to work frantically and the RAM is eaten away until nothing is left. Moving the mouse or touching the keyboard stops the process and the RAM remains stable until another couple of minutes have elapsed and the process restarts. What is causing this and how can I prevent it?

A It's probable that you have some process on your PC that is designed to run while the system is idle. If it doesn't affect the usability of the system it might be best not to worry about it. But it would be a good idea to find out what the process is. It might be a virus checker that is scanning your hard disk in the background or a system optimisation

Add items to the New Context menu

XP TIP

It's easy to add items to the list of file types that appear when you right-click a folder and select New from the Context menu. It just involves a bit of work using the Registry Editor. You can add items for most of the file types registered on your system. To illustrate how to do it, we'll use, as an example, the file type PAS, which is the extension used by Pascal program files – although the same procedure will work with most file types. Just use the file type you want in place of PAS in our example. Don't forget to create a system restore point before you begin in the event that something goes wrong and you want to undo the changes you made.

It's simplest to add a new item if the application that is used to edit the file type in question is happy about opening a blank file. The only way to find out if this is the case is to try it. Start the Registry Editor (click Start, Run, type regedit and hit Enter) and then expand Hkey_Classes_Root. Select the folder for the file type you want (PAS, in this example). Right-click the folder and select New, Key. Name the new key (or folder) ShellNew. Now select the newly created

ShellNew folder. Right-click in the righthand pane of the Registry Editor and select New, String Value. Name the new string value NullFile.

If your application gives an error message, or doesn't behave as expected when you double-click a new file created using the New menu, it is probably because it doesn't like opening a zero-length file. In that case, you need to do a bit more work. The following method is also useful if you want your new file to contain some data (such as a template) instead of being completely blank.

First, use the application appropriate for the file type to create a new file and save it in the folder c:\Documents and Settings\<username>\Templates. The filename isn't important, but it makes sense for it to relate to what the template is. In our example, we called the template pasunit.pas.

Now go back to the Registry Editor and open up the same file type folder you created before. Select the string value NullFile that you created then right-click it, select Rename and change the name to FileName.
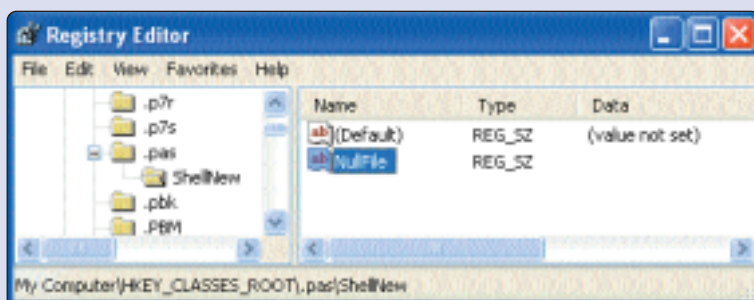
1 Close the Registry Editor and Windows Explorer then open a new copy of it. If you right-click in a folder, you should now see an item in the New submenu for the file type you added
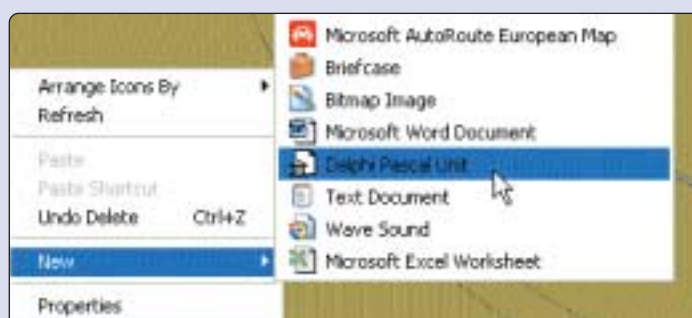
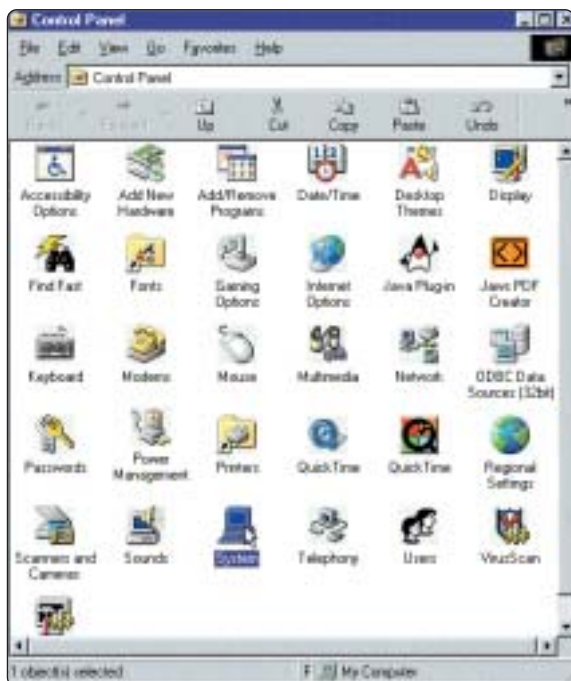**2** If it doesn't appear, try logging out and logging in again to force the change to take effect
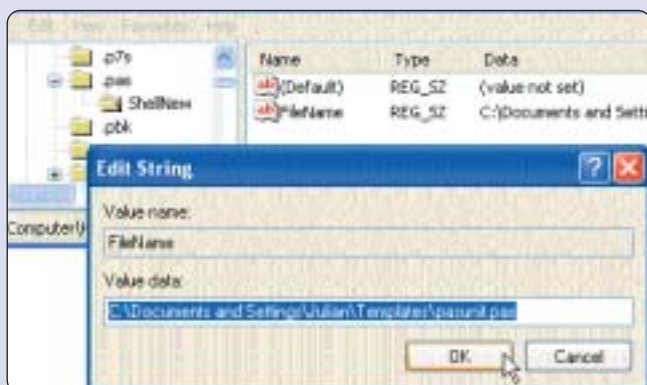
3 Double-click on FileName, then enter the path to your template file (for example, c:\Documents and Settings\Julian\Templates\pasunit.pas. Now when you create a new file using the New menu, the file will contain a copy of your template

tool. If the Windows Task Scheduler is running, take a look at the scheduled tasks and see if there are any configured to run when the system is idle. If you don't need them, remove the tasks from the schedule.

If you use Microsoft Office then the most likely culprit is the Find Fast utility, which is installed automatically when you install Office. This utility creates an index of your files to allow text searches to run more quickly, but if you rarely do any text searches it's just a waste of resources. You'll find a shortcut to this utility in the Startup group of your Programs menu. Deleting this shortcut will stop Find Fast from running after the next restart, but it will leave many space-wasting files on your hard disk.

To correctly disable Find Fast and remove the index files it has created see article Q158705 (Office 97) or Q199787 (Office 2000) in the Microsoft Knowledgebase at http://support.microsoft.com. Both articles are titled *How to turn off the Find Fast Indexer.*

Q **I usually leave my computer turned on but in Sleep mode. On one occasion it failed to wake up properly. Upon rebooting I received a message asking if I wanted to prevent the system going into Sleep mode. Without thinking, I selected Yes. Now I have lost the option to put the system to sleep. How can I restore it?**

A Open Control Panel and double-click System (shown below). Select the Device Manager tab and expand the System Devices branch. If you see an entry named APM (advanced power management) support, select it then click Remove. Restart the PC when prompted to do so.

Now start the Add New Hardware Wizard in Control Panel. If the wizard successfully installs support for APM, you should find that the use of Sleep mode is now restored. If the wizard doesn't install APM support then there may be a
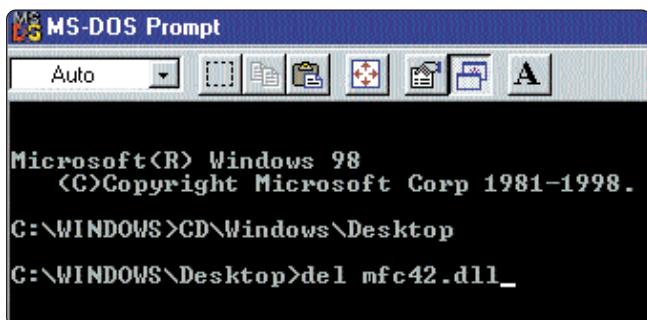
hardware problem with your system. If APM support was installed, but the Sleep mode option does not appear when you shut down Windows, try deleting the standard floppy disk controller entry under Floppy Disk Controllers in Device Manager, and restarting the computer. When Windows restarts, it will detect the floppy disk controller and reinstall the driver for it. In the process, it will clear flags in the Registry that may be preventing the use of Sleep mode.

If Sleep mode is still not available after this try the following procedure. Start the Registry Editor by clicking on Start, Run, typing regedit and pressing Enter. Expand the following folders: Hkey_Local_Machine\System\CurrentControlSet\Services\VXD. Select the Vpowerd folder and check that values named Flags and SuspendFlag are present. If the value of Flags is greater than or equal to 200, change the value to the current value minus 200. Set the value of SuspendFlag to zero if it has some other value. Restart the computer.

Q **Could you tell me what the purpose of temporary files is and can they be safely deleted?**

A Temporary files are created by an application when it needs to store some information temporarily. As the name suggests, these files are not meant to be kept on the hard disk

← If your PC won't go into Sleep mode, then it's easy to fix. Start by double-clicking on the System option in Control Panel to access the power management settings in Device Manager

MS-DOS Prompt

Auto

Microsoft(R) Windows 98
(C)Copyright Microsoft Corp 1981-1998.

C:\WINDOWS>CD\Windows\Desktop

C:\WINDOWS\Desktop>del mfc42.dll_

← If you're running Windows 95 or 98 use MS-DOS to delete old file copies

permanently. Temporary files are usually deleted by the application that created them. A common reason for temporary files being left on the hard disk is that the application crashed before it was unable to delete them.

However, there are no cast-iron rules governing the use of the Temporary Files folder. Some application setup programs create files in the folder that are intended for use in a final part of the setup which runs when the system is restarted. Sometimes these files are not deleted after they are used. However, it's a pretty sure bet that anything in the Temporary Files folder that is more than a couple of days old can be safely deleted.

Under Windows 95, 98 and Me, temporary files are usually kept in c:\Windows\Temp unless you specifically changed the location. Under Windows XP you'll find them under c:\Documents and Settings\<your login name>\Local Settings\Temp. There are many tools that claim to help you clean up your system by deleting unwanted temporary files. However, it's easy enough to open the Temporary Files folder in Explorer, click on the Date Modified header so the files are sorted into date order, then select all the files and folders that are more than a couple of days old and delete them to the Recycle Bin. If no untoward effects are noticed after a couple of hours, you can complete the process by emptying the Recycle Bin.

I have a copy of mfc42.dll on my desktop, which I moved there from the Recycle Bin to check its properties. Now I can't delete it because Windows says that it is in use. Microsoft System Information gives the path for mfc42.dll as c:\Windows\Desktop instead of c:\Windows\System, although the system copy is newer. How can I get rid of this file?

**A** If you're running Windows 95 or 98, exit to MS-DOS, type and execute the following commands:

CD\Windows\Desktop followed by del mfc42.dll (shown left). Windows Me users will need to get to MS-DOS via their recovery disks. If using MS-DOS commands seems too difficult, try starting Windows in Safe mode. In Safe mode it's likely that applications which use mfc42.dll won't be started, which will enable you to delete the file in the normal way.

In July 02's *Top 50 Helpline queries answered* feature, tip 14 *Turn back time* (page 142) described how to boot to a command prompt and run Scanreg to restore the Registry to an earlier state. I tried this using an emergency recovery disk, but when I typed Scanreg at the command prompt I only received the following error message: 'Bad command or filename'.

A This error message means that MS-DOS cannot find the program whose name you typed. It's likely that your recovery disk hasn't set up a search path that includes the directory in which scanreg.exe is held. Try changing to the Windows directory by typing the commands and then run the Scanreg command:

C:
CD \Windows

↓ Internet

I have a laptop that I want to connect to my desktop PC to share a printer and a modem and exchange files. The desktop PC containing the modem has both Norton AntiVirus and Norton Personal Firewall installed. Would the laptop be protected while online or would a second set of software be needed?

A A firewall is only needed on the system that connects to the internet. However, while Norton AntiVirus will give the laptop a measure of protection from viruses downloaded over the web using the shared modem, it will not be fully protected. It would be advisable to provide the laptop with its own virus-checking software.

Break Programs menu into columns **tip**

Does your Programs menu have so many items that you have to scroll up and down before you can start some of your applications? If so, here's how to get Windows to break the menu into columns, the way it used to be under Windows 95, so that you can quickly access all of your applications.

Start the Registry Editor (click on Start, Run, type regedit and press Enter.) Expand the following folders in turn: Hkey_Local_Machine\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer. Click on the Advanced folder in Explorer. Right-click in the righthand pane of the Registry Editor and select New, String Value. Name the new string value StartMenuScrollPrograms then double-click the new string value and enter False into the Value Data field. Close the Registry Editor. You may need to log out and then log back in to Windows before the change takes effect.

To make it easier to make this change to the Registry, we've prepared a couple of REG files, which we've put on the cover disc. To break the menu into columns, double-click the file cascmenu.reg. To revert to the original scrolling menu, double-click scrollmnu.reg.

My computer runs Windows 98SE and Microsoft Office 97 Professional, together with Outlook Express 6.0. I'm unable to make Outlook Express my default email program, which causes problems with other applications. Under Tools, Options, the General tab shows 'This application is not the default mail handler'. If I click on Make Default it seems to work, but on reopening Tools, Options, General, it once again shows that OE is not the default handler.

This is a common problem for people who are still using Office 97. This application changes some Registry values that are needed to allow Outlook Express to be selected as the default mail handler. To correct the problem, you must reregister Outlook Express. To do this, click on Start, Run, then type and hit Enter:

"c:\Program Files\Outlook Express\msimn.exe" /reg

Note that the quotes are required around the path of msimn.exe as the folder names contain spaces. After doing this, open Internet Explorer, select Tools, Internet Options, Programs and select Outlook Express as the default mail handler (shown below).

I tried installing Internet Explorer 6.0 from the Microsoft website but Outlook Express didn't install properly so I uninstalled everything and tried again. This time the main file did not download and the installation didn't work. Now when I try to install it, even from the *PC Advisor* cover disc, I am asked if I want to resume the previous installation. But the installation always fails. Are there files I have to remove to enable a clean start for the installation?

If you are using Windows 95, 98 or Me this problem can usually be resolved by locating and deleting a file named wininit.ini (which is usually – but not always – found in the Windows folder.) Under Windows NT 4.0, 2000 or XP, start the Registry Editor, expand the folders Hkey_Local_Machine\System\CurrentControlSet\Control\Session Manager and delete any values named

PendingFileRenameOperations in the Session Manager folder.

It may also be necessary to expand the folders Hkey_Local_Machine\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion, check the subfolders named RunOnce, RunOnceEx and RunServicesOnce and delete any pending file rename operations found there. You should also expand Hkey_Current_User\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion and delete any pending file rename operations in the RunOnce folder.

For all versions of Windows, delete the contents of the Temporary Files folder (for example, c:\Windows\Temp under windows 95 to Me). Also, check for a folder named '$!$!$!$!' in the c:\ folder and delete it if

present. Sometimes it is necessary to empty the Temporary Internet Files folder as well. Also check the folder c:\Windows\inf and delete all zero-length files named oem*.inf where '*' is a number. If there is a folder named c:\Program Files\Internet Explorer\Uninstall (or something similar), try deleting its contents.

Certain software, such as an antivirus package, can sometimes interfere with the installation of Internet Explorer by preventing critical files from being replaced. If you still have problems after attempting the above, try running the setup after closing down all other programs and utilities, or run it after starting Windows in Safe mode.

Pass it on: tips from readers

Thank Grisoft for AVG Free
Reader Ed Cranford wrote to express his gratitude to Grisoft for providing the free version of AVG antivirus software on our cover CD. He found a minor conflict with the latest version of the free ZoneAlarm firewall. However, disabling the email check function in the ZoneAlarm configuration allowed the two products to run alongside one another.

Ed also had trouble installing AOL 7.0 and eventually tracked it down to a conflict with ZoneAlarm. Temporarily closing ZoneAlarm solved the problem. Most program installers recommend other applications are closed down while the setup is running, but people often forget to do this or simply ignore the warning.
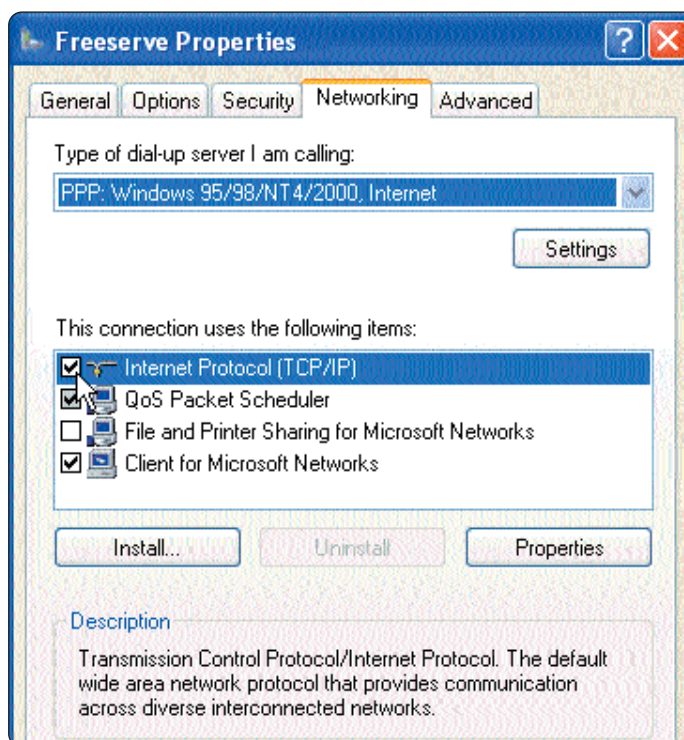

← Installing Office 97 may prevent Outlook Express being used as the default mail handler

My computer runs Windows XP. When I connect to my ISP by starting Microsoft Outlook, I receive an error message 733 warning that IPX/SPX have not been connected. If I connect by starting Internet Explorer everything works normally. I have looked at the network settings for Outlook and IPX/SPX is installed. Any ideas?

← The IPX/SPX protocol is not needed for a dialup internet connection; uncheck it if it's in this list

A IPX and SPX are network protocols that are used only by computers on large business networks. If your PC is a typical home PC they are not needed. The error is being caused by the fact that these protocols are installed and linked to your dialup adapter (modem) but are not supported by your ISP.

To resolve the problem, open Control Panel and double-click Internet Options. On the Internet Properties dialog box select the Connections tab, then select your ISP from the list of Dialup and Virtual Private Network settings. Click the Settings button. Then, on the Settings dialog box, click Advanced. On the Properties dialog box for your ISP select the Networking tab. If IPX/SPX appears on the list of items used by the connection, clear the checkbox against it (shown above). Then close all the dialog boxes by selecting ok.

It's possible that when you set up Microsoft Outlook you chose the Corporate/Workgroup option, which is intended for business networks instead of internet mail only. To change the installation type from Corporate/Workgroup to Internet Mail Only, start Outlook and click on Tools, Options. Select the Mail Services tab and click Reconfigure Mail

Support. Under E-mail Service Options, select Internet Only then click Next. A warning message will appear: click Yes and Outlook will close. Now restart Outlook. The Windows Installer will start and install the files needed for the Internet Only configuration.

When downloading from the internet my computer's data transfer rate is around 5Kbps (kilobits per second). It has always run at this speed so I presumed it was normal, but I have now been told it is slow. What is the problem? I have a built-in 56Kbps V.90 modem and am using Windows Me.

A You don't have a problem – this is a good speed for downloading files using a 56Kbps V.90 modem. It's rare to see a connection faster than 48Kbps with such a modem; often it can be as low as 42Kbps. The speed is largely dependent on the quality of your phoneline and how close you are to the telephone exchange.

The modem speed is expressed in kilobits per second. There are eight bits in a byte, so the maximum data transfer rate in kilobytes per second could be obtained by dividing the connection speed by eight. In practice, however, the network communications protocol and other overheads will use some of the available capacity, so a good rule of thumb is to divide by 10 to get a more realistic file download rate. This rule holds true when downloading ZIP or EXE files that are already compressed. You may see a higher speed when downloading uncompressed data, such as plain text files, because the modems are able to increase the apparent transfer rate by performing compression and decompression on the fly.

In October 01's Helpline on page 178, you told a reader who wished to know who received BCCs (blind carbon copies) of an email in Outlook Express that this could be achieved by

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 Helpline FAQ Directory can help you locate that information. Comprising 18 months worth of questions and answers from the Helpline pages, the Directory is a searchable database of almost 400 questions and answers. It covers common dilemmas caused by Windows, plus bugs and glitches in software, hardware errors and internet trouble-shooting. Whatever your problem, our Directory can almost certainly provide you with the solution, and it's available with *Tips & Tricks* magazine, on sale now.
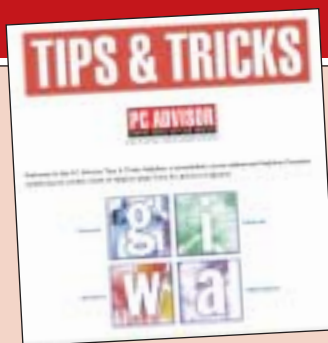
inspecting the headers in the message **properties window. If the sender can do this, so, presumably, can the recipient. Is there a way to send a message so that the recipient cannot see who received blind carbon copies?**

A Perhaps the original answer in Helpline didn't make it clear, but this technique of inspecting the message headers can only be performed by the sender of the message. Outlook Express has to store the list of recipients somewhere in the message, so that this information is available when it is actually sent. However, the BCC header is not present in the copy of the message that is actually sent, so recipients cannot see it.

Q **I have an HP 720C DeskJet printer and use Internet Explorer 6.0. When I try to print a web page or an HTM file on my computer I receive the following message: 'An error has occurred in the script on this page. Line: 508. Char: 1. Error: Permission denied. Code: 0. URL: res://c:\windows\system\ shdoclc.dll/preview.dlg'. I'm sure that printing worked when I used IE 5.5.**

A This error message is quite common. To prevent it from appearing, select Tools, Internet Options and click the Advanced tab. In the list of settings, under Browsing, place a tick in the checkbox beside Disable script debugging (shown above). Then click ok.

Q **Can you tell me what IRC is? I have AOL's instant messenger, AIM, but my friend keeps telling me to**
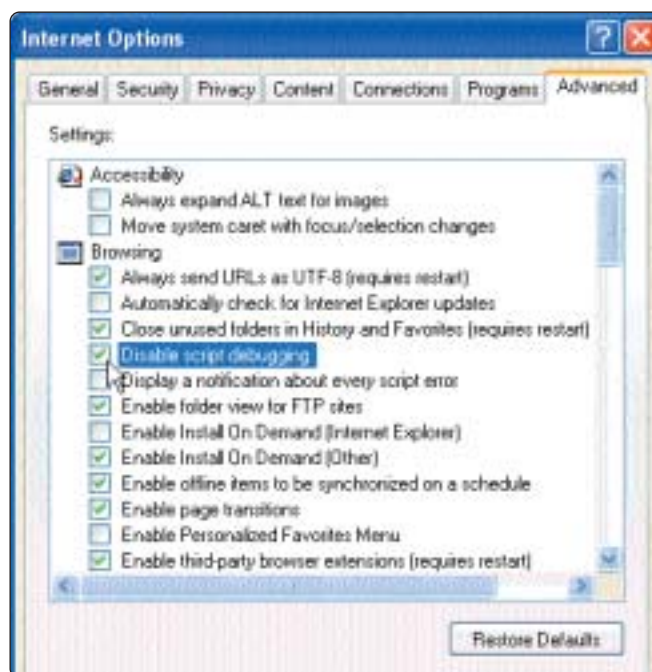
← To prevent script errors from interrupting your web browsing, disable script debugging

use Mirc instead. Is this better? What's the difference?

A There are many kinds of instant chat. IRC (internet relay chat) got it all started back when the internet was still an inside secret. IRC remains an important tool because it is uncensored, private and not subject to any corporation's terms of service – this is probably why your friend uses it. Though there are many ways of plugging in to IRC, one of the best for Windows users is Mirc 6.01. The free 30-day evaluation version is a 1.1MB download from www.mirc.com.

Unlike AOL's, Microsoft's and Yahoo's instant messaging systems, IRC consists of multiple networks of independent chat servers, each hosting multiple chat

channels. Using a few basic commands, you join or exit existing channels, create your own channel, find out more about other users on the channel and send them private messages, and even decide who can and cannot join your channel. In other words, getting started can be a bit daunting. Though Mirc's online help file is an excellent introduction to using IRC, you'll find even more guidance at www.irchelp.org.

↓ Applications

Q **In Microsoft Excel 2000, when I open Print Preview and click the Setup button to try to change the margins, nothing happens. The button is not greyed-out. Why won't it work?**

A This problem can occur if you have ScanSoft TextBridge Pro 98 installed. It does not occur if Excel is installed after TextBridge. One solution would therefore be to uninstall Microsoft Excel and then reinstall it.

If you don't use the TextBridge Instant Access feature, you can fix the problem more simply by doing the following: close Excel then start TextBridge Pro 98. In the Instant Access Control Panel, clear the Microsoft Excel checkbox and click ok.

Defrag your disk from the command line

Windows XP has a disk defragmenter you can run from the command line. It's quick, uses fewer resources and can be run from the Task Scheduler if you wish. To use it, open a command prompt (click on Start, Run, type CMD and press Enter) and type defrag c:.

Replace c: with the identifier of the drive you want to defragment, if required. To see more information during the process type defrag c: -v. To find out how fragmented a drive is, without actually starting a defrag, type defrag c: -a (as shown below).

```
C:\WINDOWS\System32\cmd.exe

Microsoft Windows XP [Version 5.1.2600]
(C) Copyright 1985-2001 Microsoft Corp.

C:\Documents and Settings\Julian>defrag c: -a
Windows Disk Defragmenter
Copyright (c) 2001 Microsoft Corp. and Executive Software International, Inc.

Analysis Report
    14.06 GB Total,  8.83 GB (62%) Free,  10% Fragmented (20% file fragmentation
)

C:\Documents and Settings\Julian>
```

← Use the command line defragmenter to check your drive fragmentation level

Q I have been using the Steganos Security Suite from *PC Advisor*'s August 02 cover disc to erase beyond recovery sensitive files. I recently used GoBack to restore my hard drive to a point just before I had securely deleted a file. Out of curiosity I looked to see if the deleted file was no longer there and to my great surprise it had reappeared. What value is Steganos if you can use GoBack to restore data?

A GoBack is essentially just a convenient-to-use backup and restore utility. Security software like Steganos cannot erase backup copies of files made by third-party utilities, such as GoBack, any more than it can delete copies of files that have been backed up on tape, CD-R, floppy disk or any other backup medium. It has no knowledge of what backup precautions you may take. It can only delete files that are managed by the Windows file system.

Anyone who backs up their files (which should be everyone, of course) should be aware that backups can be used to restore any files – however securely they have been deleted from the hard disk. If it is important that files you use are securely deleted then you need to take account of this when making arrangements to back up your system. A solution might be to create a separate folder or partition on your hard disk for sensitive files, which is never backed up.

Q I use Microsoft Office 97 Professional under Windows XP Professional. Recently whenever I start Outlook, after about one minute, no matter what I happen to be doing, the system suddenly reboots itself. I have uninstalled Outlook, removed all references to it from the Registry and then reinstalled it, but the problem persists. I'm out of ideas as to what to try next.

A We're a bit baffled, too. A trawl of the newsgroups produced a few reports of similar problems, but no solutions to the symptoms that seemed close to those you are experiencing. Several people have had trouble with the PC rebooting when sending email containing an attachment using either Outlook or Outlook Express. This is usually caused by virus-checking software and can be cured by disabling the scanning of outgoing email.

The most likely cause of this problem is a conflict with something else that is running on your system. We can only suggest uninstalling all the utilities that run in the background to see whether this puts a stop to the rebooting.

Another possible culprit is a virus or Trojan, so we'd suggest a thorough scan of your hard disk with the most up-to-date virus checker. If this doesn't help, a reformat and reinstall of Windows XP may be the only solution. The trouble with Microsoft applications is that they are heavily dependent on shared files, one of which may have become corrupted or replaced by an incompatible version when installing another application. Uninstalling and reinstalling Office 97 will not cause the problem shared file to be replaced if the version on the Office CD is older than the one now on your hard disk.

Q I use Windows 98 and have come upon a problem that affects both Microsoft Word and Excel (version 97 SR2). If I select File, Open, then click the Look In list, I receive a message that the program has performed an illegal operation and will be shut down. Why does this occur and how can I fix it?

A This error can occur if there is an invalid FTP site in the Look In list. The solution is to remove this entry from the list. To do this involves using the Registry Editor. As it is possible to make things worse rather than better when attempting to perform the fix, it is advisable to back up the Registry before starting.

To remove the invalid entry, start the Registry Editor and expand the folders Hkey_Current_User\Software\Microsoft\ Office 8.0\Common\Internet and FTP Sites. The subfolders of the FTP Sites folder named Site_0, Site_1 and so on contain information about FTP sites. Select and delete each of these subfolders, then close the Registry Editor. ■