helpline

↓ General

When I start my PC it runs the startup checks, beeps then repeats the process. After many attempts it gets as far as the Windows logo screen before restarting. After about an hour it works, though when I try to print a file the PC reboots instead. I have changed the RAM and floppy drive and tested the power supply. The hard drive appears okay. What should I try next?

Despite your claim to have tested the power supply, this would seem the most likely culprit. One of the signals from the power supply is called 'power good' and if this drops below a certain value, even briefly, it will cause the system to reboot – even if the output voltages are correct.

Spikes or rapid fluctuations could also cause the system to reboot and they would be undetectable during testing – except with an oscilloscope.

An engineer would change the power supply first to see if this cures the fault. If it doesn't then the most likely source of trouble is the motherboard itself, which is an even more expensive replacement.

To access the internet I trail an extension cable from the phone point to the dining table. Is there wireless dialup equipment I can use and, if so, how fast and secure is it?

There are a number of products that meet your requirements and they use same technology as digital cordless phones. These devices are as fast as a conventional 56Kbps (kilobits per second) modem and probably about as secure as an unencrypted wireless network – which is to say, not very. The signals won't be receivable much more than 10 metres from your home, though, so unless your neighbours are keen hackers don't worry too much about it.

Your main concern will be finding a supplier. You should be able to get hold of the BT Sagem On-Air 1800, which gives you a cordless phone as well as a cordless modem (you'll need a free USB port for the modem connection).

You can purchase the Sagem On-Air 1800, shown below, from Freedom Mobiles (www.freedom-mobiles.co.uk) but any stockist of BT-branded products should be able to get it.

Due to the relatively low price of hard drives, I intend fitting a third disk configured as a Slave on IDE channel 2 as a backup for my two drives on IDE channel 1. My concern is whether this will affect the drive letter assignments. My existing drives have been partitioned to use letters C to U and I would prefer the backup drive to be V so that there are no changes to the other letters.

Can I choose the drive letter to be used in PartitionMagic?

Under Windows 98 drive letters are assigned by DOS and they can't be changed. Drives that only become accessible after their drivers load, such as CD-ROMs and Zip drives, are given letters that follow on from the hard disks by default.

→ The BT Sagem On-Air 1800 comprises a cordless modem and phone, allowing you to set up a wireless internet connection

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PC ADVISOR EXPERT ADVICE HOTLINE

The letters used by these drives may be chosen by the user if this is supported by the drivers (though you can't choose letters that have already been allocated to hard disk partitions).

Your question is probably best answered by explaining how DOS allocates drive letters. Hard drives may have two partitions – a primary and extended partition. Extended partitions may be further subdivided into logical drives. Primary partitions are always allocated letters before the logical drives on secondary partitions and the letters are allocated in the order DOS looks at the drives.

So the primary partition on channel 1 Master drive will be C, the one on channel 1 Slave drive will be D, channel 2 Master will be E and so on. After that, the logical drives on the extended partitions are allocated letters, each drive being looked at in the same order.

The key fact that provides the answer to your question is that you don't have to have a primary partition on a drive. You can fill the entire drive with an extended partition and then create logical drives on it. As there's no primary partition, and since the drive will be looked at after the existing drives in your computer, all the letters allocated to it will follow on from those already allocated.

O **My computer runs Windows XP. When I try to install my Olympus C5050Z digital camera software, the new hardware is detected but when I click on 'Install the software automatically' I receive the error: 'Cannot install this hardware. The name is already in use as either a service name or a service display name.' What can I do?**

A This error message seems to crop up quite frequently, most often when installing the drivers for certain LinkSys network cards and SiS sound chips. Unfortunately there is no documented solution. Some people have tried reinstalling Windows XP in an attempt to resolve it, but this is not always successful so we don't recommend it.

The error occurs because a service that is required to be installed has the same name as one that is already present, according to the Registry. This might be a genuine conflict with something else which would be a difficult problem to resolve, or it may be because a failed earlier attempt to install or remove the software has left behind the Registry entries relating to it.

You'll find the Registry information associated with installed services in subfolders under Hkey_Local_Machine, System\CurrentControlSet\Services. The conflict is either over the name of the subfolder or over the value of DisplayName found in one of the subfolders.

If you know what you're looking for you could probably find out the names that the service wants to use by examining the INF file that comes with the drivers (it's a text file that you can view in Notepad). The INF file contains instructions for Windows telling it what Registry entries to set up.

If you can determine the names used you could delete the subfolder causing the conflict from the Registry (if it doesn't appear to relate to anything vital). This should allow you to install the camera software. We can't offer any more specific advice, however, without looking at both your computer and the camera drivers. If you want to try this, be sure to force a System Restore Point before you delete anything from the Registry.

Pause a Windows update   tip

Is Windows downloading an update and preventing you from doing something else? Or perhaps you just want to turn off the computer. Simply click the Windows Update icon in the notification area (it's a globe surmounted by the Windows logo) and select Pause. When you want to continue with the update, click the icon again and select Resume. If you disconnect from the internet or turn off the computer after pausing an update, Windows will automatically resume the download the next time you are connected.
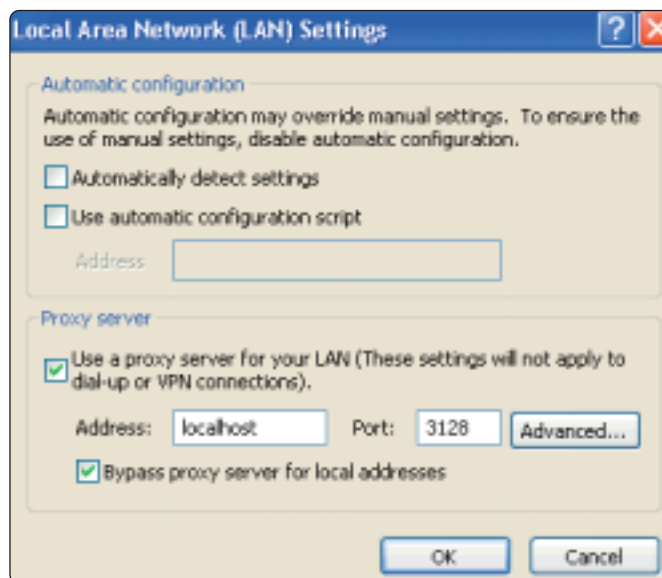
↓ Windows

Q **I'm running Windows Me. When I try to do a Windows Update I'm told that I'm behind a proxy and the web page can't be displayed. When I visit Hotmail I'm told that Internet Explorer is out of date and that I need version 5.0 or later, even though I'm running version 6.0. What's wrong?**

A It appears that you are indeed accessing the web via a proxy server and if your PC is on a network then this is quite likely. You will need to speak to the network administrator about the problem of representing your browser as an old version of Internet Explorer. They should also configure the proxy so that access to pages on www.windowsupdate.com are passed straight through.

It's possible that a proxy could be running on your PC without you realising it. Web accelerator programs, content filtering software and advertisement blockers often work by acting as a proxy between your browser and the internet. If you have any such software on your PC this may well be the cause of your problems, so try removing it.

To check the proxy settings of Internet Explorer, click on Tools, Internet Options. Choose the Connections tab, select your ISP and click on Settings. (If you're accessing the internet via a network, choose LAN Settings instead.) If the browser is using some proxy software running on your PC, under Proxy server

→ Check the web proxy settings for a LAN workstation

the address will be shown as 'localhost' (as above) or '127.0.0.1'.

If the proxy server address is an internet address then your ISP's proxy server may be to blame. Note, however, that an ISP can enforce the use of a web proxy even if it isn't selected in your browser settings. If you're sure there is no proxy server running on your computer, give your ISP's helpline a call.

Q **I've recently invested in a keyboard with a sleep button. After I put the computer to sleep, I can't bring it back to life except by turning the power off and on at the wall plug. How can I make it wake up? I'm running Windows 98 SE.**

A The sleep function does not work reliably on older PCs, which we assume yours is if it's running Windows 98

SE. The hardware needs to be compliant with the latest Acpi version and many older PCs aren't. All the peripherals and their drivers you've installed need to fully support power management too. Even if both of these are true, Acpi support isn't installed by default under Windows 98 or 98 SE. You must install it before there's a hope of the sleep function working properly.

From the Control Panel, open System, select the Device Manager tab then expand System Devices. If the Advanced Power Management Support entry is present, select it, click Remove and then restart the computer. This will reinstall it and may resolve the problem.

If the entry isn't present, then Acpi support wasn't enabled when Windows was installed. The most reliable way of enabling it is to reinstall Windows using the command 'setup /p j'.

If you don't want to reinstall Windows try this less reliable method. Start the Registry Editor and expand Hkey_Local_ Machine\Software\Microsoft\Windows\ CurrentVersion then select Detect. In the righthand pane, right-click and select New, Dword Value. Name the new value 'ACPIOption' then double-click it and change the value to 1. Close the Registry Editor, restart Windows then run the Add New Hardware Wizard from Control Panel. Acpi should be detected and installed.

If your sleep button doesn't work after this then unfortunately your hardware isn't fully Acpi compatible and there's nothing you can do about it.
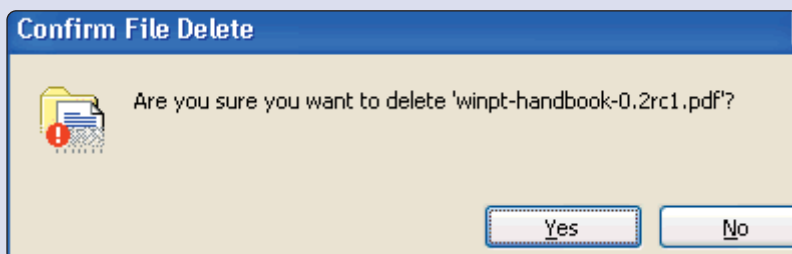
Bypass the Recycle Bin   tip

Confirm File Delete

Are you sure you want to delete 'winpt-handbook-0.2rc1.pdf'?

Yes   No

↑ Sending a file to the Recycle Bin doesn't delete it from your system

To really delete a file instead of sending it to the Recycle Bin, select the file and then press and hold Shift while you hit the Delete key. The confirmation message will say 'Are you sure you want to delete…?' (as shown above) instead of 'Are you sure you want to send… to the Recycle Bin?' to confirm that the file won't be sent to the Recycle Bin. Note that the contents of a file deleted in this way will still be recoverable using data recovery tools. If you need the file to be deleted so that its contents can never be recovered, use a secure deletion utility such as AnalogX SuperShredder (go to www.analogx.com/contents/download/system/shred.htm or click the link on our cover disc).

O I followed the tip in your August issue (page 123) to create a System Restore icon on the desktop. When I tried it there was disk activity for a couple of seconds and then I received the error 'Create Restore Point Failed'. I then tried a manual restore and received the message: 'Error signature: AppName rstrui.exe AppVer 5.1.2600.1106 ModName srrstr.dll ModVer 5.1.2600.1106 Offset 000095ba'. Have you any ideas?

A We can't see why our tip could have caused System Restore to stop working -- it's just a command to run the restore program and we use it regularly. But this error has been seen on several occasions by those who have only ever run System Restore normally. Here are some tips to try to get System Restore working again.

Turn off System Restore by selecting Control Panel, choosing System and clicking on the System Restore tab. Uncheck the 'Turn off System Restore on all drives' option (as shown right) then reboot and turn System Restore on again. This clears out the System Restore folder so you'll lose previous backups but it should get it working. If not, click on Start, Run, type %windir%\inf and

hit Enter. Locate the file sr.inf, right-click it and select Install. You may have to load your Windows XP installation disc.

Alternatively click Start, Run then type the command: expand -r C:\i386\srrstr.dl_ %windir%\system32. Hit Enter. If there isn't a hidden i386 folder on your hard disk, insert your Windows XP CD and substitute its drive letter for C in this example. Run the command from a command prompt so you can see any error messages if it doesn't seem to be working.
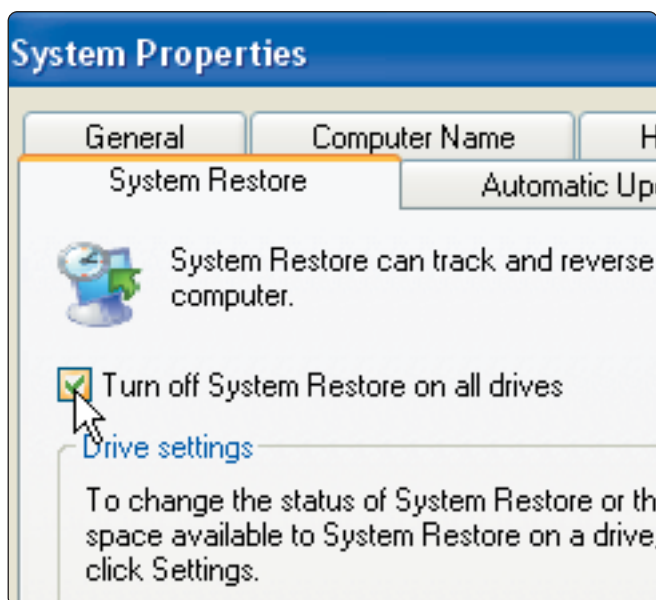
↓ Networking

O I'm trying to network two Windows XP Pro systems without success. I have run the Network Connection Wizard and it reports that the network cable is unplugged, even though it isn't. I then selected 'Ignore disconnected hardware' and the wizard went ahead but after rebooting nothing appeared to happen. How can I get my network working?

A Getting computers to talk to each other isn't always easy, but one thing you should never do is try to ignore an obvious error. Windows is only software, so it can't see if a cable is physically plugged in or not.

If it reports that the cable is unplugged what it really means is that it can't detect that a cable is plugged in. And in this case your network's never going to function, so you have to fix that problem before going any further. The cable could be faulty so try substituting a known good one. You should also be sure that you're using the right type – usually a crossover cable not a straight one used for daisychaining hubs together.

Check the network adapter properties in Device Manager to be sure they are correct. Ensure that the right media type is selected if your card supports different types of network connection.

System Properties

General   Computer Name   H

System Restore   Automatic Up

System Restore can track and reverse computer.

☑ Turn off System Restore on all drives

Drive settings

To change the status of System Restore or th space available to System Restore on a drive, click Settings.

→ Turn off System Restore then reboot your PC to start again

Auto-selection of speed and duplex mode isn't always reliable, so try choosing them manually. Most routers and switches can use 100MB full duplex but hubs can generally only use half duplex. Check the link lights: if they don't come on when both ends of the cable are plugged in you don't have a physical connection.

If you think you have a connection, try assigning IP addresses to the TCP/IP protocol bound to the network cards. Use 192.168.0.1 on one PC and 192.168.0.2 on the other, with 255.255.255.0 for the subnet mask. Then open a command window and type the command 'PING 192.168.0.2' from the PC that's 192.168.0.1 and vice versa.

There's no point trying to run the Network Connection Wizard if the two PCs can't even ping each other.
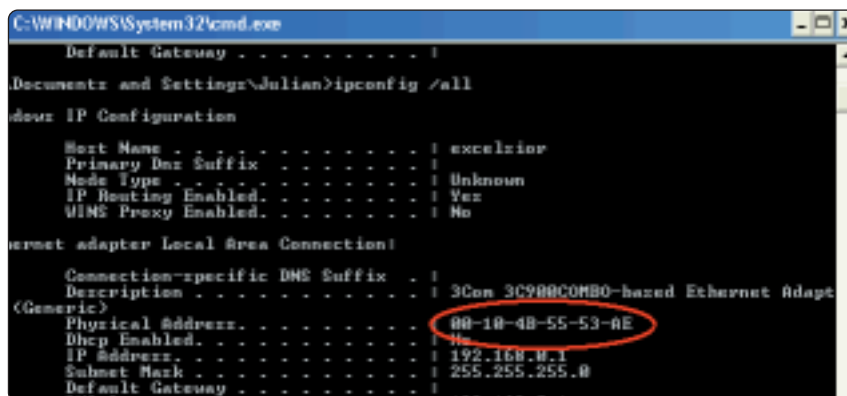
Q I want to connect my computers to the internet using a wireless network, so I purchased a Belkin 54g wireless router and connected it to my network card. The Belkin Easy Install Wizard ran perfectly but when I unite my cable modem with the router I can't connect to my Telewest ISP. I have no trouble when the modem is hooked up directly to my network card.

A With many ISPs (including Telewest) your broadband connection is locked to the network card you were using when the link was originally set up. The simplest solution is to get the router to 'spoof' your network card's MAC (medium access control) address. There should be an option for this on one of the router configuration pages.

Another option that may be available to you is to register the router's MAC address with Telewest. MAC is a globally unique address that is allocated to each network card during manufacture. It should not be confused with the TCP/IP address.

To determine a network adapter's MAC address, open a command prompt and type the command 'ipconfig /all'. It will be shown as Physical Address (as above).

→ The wrong DownloadPlus can cause a major headache as it bombards the user with irritating pop-up ads

↑ To determine a network adapter's MAC address, open a command prompt and type 'ipconfig /all'. It will be shown as Physical Address

If your computers were sharing your internet connection via a wired network before, you will also need to disable ICS (internet connection sharing). ICS is set up to use fixed IP addresses that usually conflict or aren't compatible with those used by a router-based configuration.
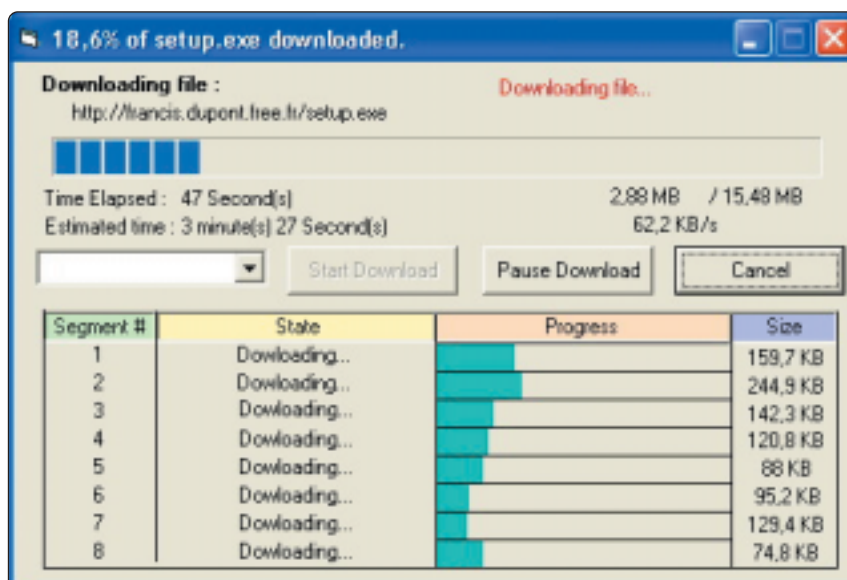
↓ Security

Q I removed two viruses from my brother's computer. Since then, whenever he starts the PC the internet connection dialog box appears. It takes three attempts to remove it, after which an icon called DownloadPlus appears in the System Tray. How can I get rid of it?

A There is a program called DownloadPlus that is legitimate and harmless but there is also one that's classed as adware. This means that it downloads ads from a server and displays them to the user, thereby earning money for the program author.

Many of the ads are porn-related. There are also a couple of malicious Trojan programs that can install DownloadPlus without the user's knowledge. The virus you removed was probably one of these.

To get rid of DownloadPlus try running SpyBot Search and Destroy (from http://security.kolla.de or access a trial version from this month's cover disc). This ought to get rid of it. After that, advise your brother to run it on a regular basis.

Alternatively you can remove DownloadPlus manually. Locate and

Stop hijackers `tip`

After reading about the problem of hijacked start pages in the July 03 issue, Geoff Hutton wrote to recommend a free program called StartPage Guard (download it from http://pjwalczak.com). It runs in the background and prevents your start page from being hijacked by any script or program.

remove the shortcut that runs the program at startup. It should be in the StartUp folder of the Start menu. Then use the Search tool to locate downloadplus.exe and delete it.

Next, check the Windows Downloaded Program Files folder. If it contains a file named 'Loader class' right-click it and then delete it. Finally start the Registry Editor, expand Hkey_Current_User and Software, select the key '0x7A69' and send it to the Recycle Bin.

Q My Norton virus checker told me that a file was infected with the Backdoor Trojan virus. I ran the scanner but it was unable to delete the virus or move it to the quarantine area.

I then tried SpyBot Search and Destroy from one of your cover discs. That got rid of the file, but now I keep getting a black DOS window that pops up in front of almost every application I have. I tried to restore the system to a date prior to when I had the virus, but it won't let me do this. What should I do?

A All virus scanners suffer from the same problem: they can't remove an infected file if it's being used. So if you find a virus or a Trojan on your system, unfortunately it's no longer enough just to run the scanner and select Clean.

Instead, make a note of the virus and go to your antivirus vendor's website for its removal instructions.

SpyBot Search and Destroy seems to have removed the file, but it hasn't deleted the instruction to run the Trojan. The window that's popping up is a program with the same name as the Trojan but they are both in different locations.

We think your virus was backdoor.xts, which is fairly rare. It affects Windows NT, 2000 and XP only and runs in the background as the System Important Message service. It looks legitimate and installs a number of files including Windows\svchost.exe.

But there's another svchost.exe in Windows\System32 – this time a legitimate file – and this is what is being run now. Whatever you do, don't delete the genuine svchost.exe file.

To stop the window from flashing up you have to disable the unwanted service. Click Start, Run, type services.msc and hit Enter. Locate and right-click the System Important Message service and select Properties. Click Stop then change the startup type to Disabled.

Close the Services application, restart the computer then run Norton AntiVirus again to be sure that all files associated with the Trojan have been removed.

↓ Internet

Q I can no longer change the font size when printing emails from Outlook Express or web pages from Internet Explorer. I can vary the font size on the screen but not in a printout.

A Don't ask why, but Outlook Express uses the Internet Explorer font size settings for printing. To change them, select View, Text size from the Internet Explorer menu.
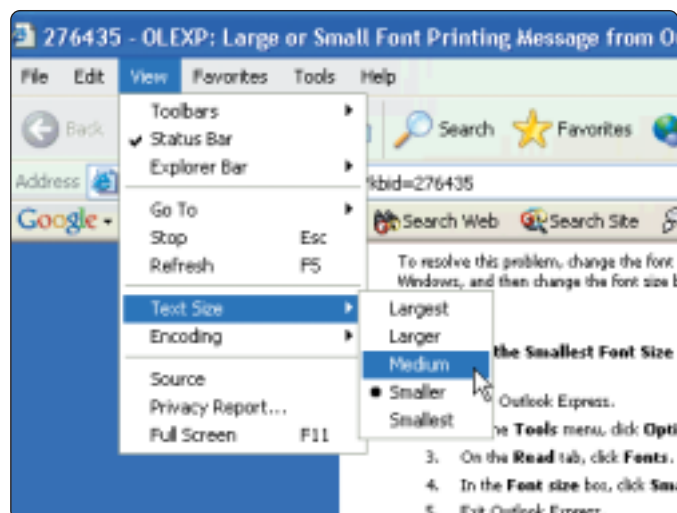
If you've tried this to no effect, Microsoft suggests that the reason for this is that the print drivers are not set to the same font size as the text.

To reset them, start Outlook Express and set the font size to the smallest by choosing Tools, Options. Select the Read tab, click Fonts, choose Smallest, hit ok then close Outlook Express. Next, start Internet Explorer, select View, Text Size, Smallest then close Internet Explorer. Finally repeat the above steps setting the font size back to Medium as shown below.

Q I installed AdShield from your June 03 cover disc. How can I transfer the list of ad sites that you also included on the disc? Without it AdShield doesn't do much.

A It's easy enough. Click the shield icon to ensure the AdShield pane is displayed to the left of the main browser window then click the Import button. Change the file type in the selection dialog box to 'All files' then browse to select the list of sites (which is a text file). Note that AdShield is no longer freeware. In Evaluation mode the current version accepts a maximum of 10 sites in the list and the Import button is disabled.

Q I'm running Windows XP Professional and I've just bought a Netcomm AM 5060 Rave USB modem. Every time I connect to the internet it works for about 30 seconds before a blue screen of death appears with the message 'driver_irql_not_less_or_equal', after which the PC reboots. I've tried the latest driver from the web with no

← Outlook Express uses Internet Explorer's text size selection to determine the font size for printing

luck. Netcomm either can't or chooses not to respond to my emailed queries. Any ideas?

A To be frank, we'd take the modem back to the shop and ask for a refund as it isn't fit for its intended purpose. If the drivers weren't certified for use under Windows XP and you had to ignore a warning when you installed them, even more reason not to accept it as we're pretty sure the drivers are the cause of the trouble.

This error has been experienced by a number of users of various brands of USB modem. The Alcatel SpeedTouch is quite common in the UK as it's supplied by several major broadband access providers. Your modem may be a similar design, or share the same drivers, but it isn't a common enough brand for us to have any knowledge of problems related to it.

According to Microsoft, the error you received can occur after installing faulty drivers or system services. It happens when a driver or service tries to access non-existent memory. The information that accompanies the error message may name the driver concerned, although in your case the circumstances under which it manifests itself make the culprit fairly obvious anyway.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the error is most frequent when a number of USB drivers share an IRQ (interrupt request). You might mitigate the problem by uninstalling the drivers for other USB devices, but why should you have to?

Another comment relating to the Alcatel modems – which may or may not apply to yours – is that they draw a higher current than some integrated USB ports are designed to supply. If this is the cause of the problem it can be resolved by connecting the modem to an external self-powered hub.

Q **The search facility of Internet Explorer has stopped working. My ISP advised me to uninstall and reinstall Internet Explorer, but I can't.**

A There are several possible causes of this. The most effective solution is to reinstall the search facility – use Windows Explorer to navigate to the INF folder, which is a subfolder of Windows. It's a hidden folder so if you don't see it click on Tools, Folder Options, select the View tab and check 'Show hidden files and folders'.

Locate and right-click the file named srchasst.inf and select Install. You may be prompted to insert your Windows CD to complete the installation.

Another possibility is that a firewall, proxy server or ad-blocking software is preventing your browser from accessing the website address http://sa.windows. com. If you're using any such programs, check the settings.

To eliminate another common cause of this fault, start the Registry Editor, expand Hkey_Local_Machine\Software\ Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\ Explorer\Desktop\NameSpace and select the folder named {e17d4fc0-5564-11d1- 83f2-00a0c90dc849}. In the righthand pane, double-click Default and enter the text 'Search Results Folder'. An easier method is to run the file fixsrch.reg from this month's cover disc.

Q **When I try to open Outlook Express 5.0 I receive the message 'Outlook Express could not be started because msoe.dll could not be loaded'. How do I overcome this?**
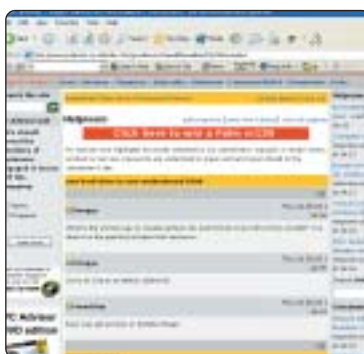
A There are several possible reasons for this error occurring. It can be caused by doing something that results in incompatible versions of Internet Explorer and Outlook Express files being present, such as restoring an older edition

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of Internet Explorer. But that isn't a likely scenario nowadays. If it is the culprit, the best remedy would be to upgrade to Internet Explorer and Outlook Express version 6.0. Nobody should be using Outlook Express 5.0 anymore – it is too wide open to viruses.

A more likely explanation for the error is that Outlook Express is unable to open your message store DBX files. This is usually because one of the files is corrupted or because there is a Registry corruption that prevents it from seeing the files in the first place. The procedure to fix this is somewhat risky for the inexperienced PC user, so we'd strongly advise taking a full system backup before attempting anything.

Locate the folder containing your DBX files – determine the location by clicking on Tools, Options, selecting Maintenance and clicking Store Folder. Drag and drop the DBX files to a different, temporary location. If Outlook Express now starts, you can use the Import option to retrieve your messages from the old DBX files.

If messages can't be imported from any of the DBX files because they are corrupted, use a tool called DBXtract (from www.oehelp.com or follow the link on our cover disc) to recover the contents to individual message files, which can then be dragged and dropped into the appropriate folder.
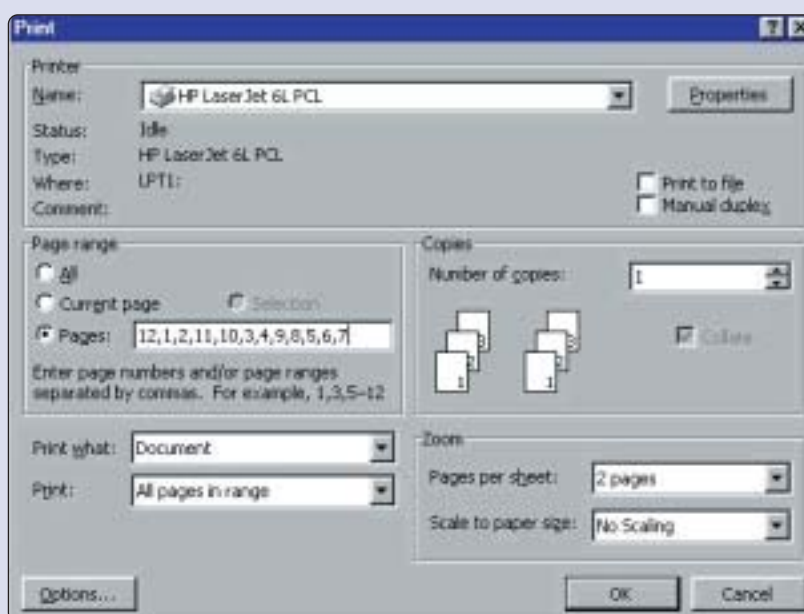
If moving the DBX files out of the way didn't get Outlook Express to open, the problem is more likely to be a corrupt Registry key. Start the Registry Editor, expand Hkey_Current_User, select Identities and then use File, Export to save the contents to a REG file. Delete the Identities folder (we warned this was risky) and then double-click the REG file you made to recreate it.

How to make A5 booklets

tip

Reader Steve Hill sent this tip explaining how to create A5 booklets using Microsoft Word. First, create the publication using A4 format not A5. If the booklet will have 12 pages then your document will contain 12 A4 pages numbered 1 to 12. Conversion to A5 is performed during the process of printing. Click on File, Print then set up the Print dialog box as shown below. Under Zoom select '2 pages per sheet'.

The tricky part is entering the page numbers under Page range so that the pages come out in the right order when printing two pages to an A4 sheet, front and back, so that they can be folded and stapled to form an A5 booklet. The order should be: last page, first page, second page, second from last page and so on. Steve warns not to add any commas or spaces after the last page in the list – this can cause Word to crash. Thanks for a great tip, Steve.

↑ You can create A5 booklets by setting up Microsoft Word's Print dialog box as shown here

Q **When I select File, Send To, Mail Recipient in Word or Excel, the document opens in Outlook Express. How do I make it link to Outlook?**

A Your default email client is determined by a Windows setting that also affects the program that opens when you click a Mailto link in a web browser, among other email-related options. To change this setting, open Internet Explorer, select Tools, Internet Options, Programs. Choose your preferred application from the pull-down menu and click ok.

The menu options may seem Microsoft-centric; your computer likely arrived with options for Hotmail, Microsoft Outlook, Outlook Express and MSN Explorer. AOL, Eudora, Lotus Notes, Netscape Mail and other installed third-party email programs may or may not appear on this menu.

Don't forget to defrag

tip

Robert Nettleton is one of many who had trouble getting Windows 98 Defrag to finish. After 48 hours it was stuck at around 50 percent. Having recently installed Microsoft Office, Robert decided that the computer must have chopped up every Office 2000 file and scattered the remains right across the hard disk. He uninstalled Office then ran Defrag again.

It finished quickly this time, after which he reinstalled Office. The experience taught Robert to defrag before installing an application, especially a large one. That's a good idea, Robert. Thanks for sharing it with us.

← Let The SleuthHound sniff out those documents on your hard disk

↓ Applications

Q **I use a tool called The SleuthHound (www.isleuthhound. com) that lets you search for files based on keywords. However it fails to recognise some Word documents as DOC files. When I look at the file properties in Windows Explorer I see that the problem files have only one tab headed General. Others have five tabs: General, Summary, Statistics, Contents and Custom. Why is this and how can I correct it?**

A Word documents are structured as a directory that contains various types of information such as the property data. It is therefore possible for a valid DOC file to have no additional property info. It's unusual, though, as even documents created using old versions of Word, or files saved in RTF format, have at least a Summary tab in their properties. The only file type you can save from Word that doesn't have any extra tabs is a template (DOT) file.

Perhaps the affected files were mistakenly saved as templates or maybe they were infected by viruses and have been cleaned by a virus scanner. They might have been saved in Microsoft Word format by a different word processor or by a text format conversion utility.

Whatever the reason, opening the problem documents in Word – forcing a change by, say, doing a word count – and then resaving them should result in the appearance of the missing property tabs.

Q **How do I archive mail from Outlook Express on a separate disc so that I can retrieve it later?**

A This is a common question. The following technique works in both Outlook and Outlook Express. Open Windows Explorer and create a new folder, whether on your hard drive, a network or a CD-R disc. Now open your mail client and select the messages you want to archive. Alternatively, choose a folder and press Ctrl, A to archive everything in it.

Drag the messages out of your email program and into the folder you just created in Explorer. Each message becomes either an EML (internet email message) file or an MSG (Outlook item) file, depending on your email client. In your email program, press Delete to get rid of the messages or select the folder and delete that.

To access an archived message, simply double-click the message file or drag it from the archive folder into a mail folder.

Q **I have Microsoft Word XP installed on my PC. I would like to install Excel 97, Outlook 97, Access 97 and PowerPoint 97. Can these apps work together without problems?**

A According to Microsoft, different versions of Office apps may coexist on the same PC except for Outlook. Office XP is installed by default in the Office10 folder, so you can keep a previous version in the Office folder. If you don't have Outlook XP then your copy of Outlook 97 probably won't cause a conflict, but you might need to install Word XP after the older programs to get it working properly.

Contact us

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Q I'm creating some web pages. Could you advise whether it's better to use the JPG or GIF format for the images I wish to include?

A JPG and GIF formats can both produce files that are much smaller than the same image would occupy when in a hard drive's memory, resulting in faster downloads. However, they work in very different ways and are best suited for different purposes.

The GIF format is ideal for use with computer-produced art: drawings, clip art, buttons, logos and so on. It's also the best format to use for screenshots.

GIF works with a maximum of 256 colours. Computer-created images don't often contain more different colours than this and, if they do, they don't usually suffer much when you use an image editor to reduce the colour depth to 256 colours prior to conversion.

GIF uses lossless compression, which means that the displayed image looks exactly the same as the 256-colour original. It achieves this using an encoding method that replaces repetitive sequences of pixels in an image by a count of the number of repetitions. So it gives the best compression with images that contain large blocks of the same colour.

The JPG format was designed to reduce the size of photographic images that may contain over 16 million different colours. It does this by encoding blocks of pixels that are approximately the same colour. You can choose the degree of compression to use, but because the compression method is lossy the quality of the image suffers as the compression levels rise.

JPG always gives better results than GIF for photographic images, but it usually looks terrible when used for computer-generated images and anything containing text such as screenshots.

Another advantage of GIF is that you can save files in an interlaced format, which means that something appears in your browser very quickly before the image has been fully downloaded. With JPG you see nothing until it has all been received.

If you stick to the rule of JPG format for photos and GIF format for everything else then you won't go wrong.

Q Your article on programming (June 03 issue, page 100) took me back to my early days of the Commodore C64 and a language called White Lightning – a version of Fig Forth. Is it possible to put this on my PC running Windows XP?

A There are implementations of Forth for just about any platform, including Windows and DOS. You can find links to Forth compilers at www.forth.org/compilers.html.

You might be better advised, though, to try a DOS version. A glance at the notes for 32bit Forth for Windows suggests that in order to program a Windows interface you need a pretty good grasp of the Windows API (application program interface) as well as the Forth development system itself. This is unlike White Lightning, which had built-in support for animated graphics.

An alternative approach, or at least something of nostalgic interest, would be to run a Commodore C64 emulator on your computer. You'll find links to a large number of them at Commodore64 Heaven (www.lemon64.com) but since we haven't tried any of them we can't say which is best.

There are many downloadable games for the Commodore C64 emulator, but we don't know if White Lightning is available.

The problem is that most Commodore 64 software is copyright and even 20 years on many copyright holders still send nasty letters to anyone who makes Commodore programs available in a format that can be loaded into an emulator. ■

Kerio Personal Firewall: a ZoneAlarm alternative   tip

ZoneAlarm is the best-known free personal firewall, but it's not the only one on the market. Kerio Technologies' Kerio Personal Firewall is small (a 2MB download), easy to set up and free to non-business users.

Like other high-quality firewalls, Kerio pops up dialog boxes asking whether you'd like to allow applications to send and receive data over your network connection. it then stores your answer as a filtering rule for future reference.

Kerio comes with a number of predetermined rules for network connections that are known to be safe (or unsafe) and it allows you to set up your own rules manually. The program also shows the applications currently connected and active – a great way to spot Trojan horses and backdoor programs to which you may have inadvertently granted network access. Go to www.kerio.com/kpf_download.html to download your copy or follow the link on our cover disc.

↑ Keep an eye on your internet connection with Kerio Personal Firewall. And the best part? It's absolutely free