↓ General

Q **You recently mentioned that Microsoft will be pulling the plug on some of its operating systems. I was thinking about going over to Linux, but I'm not sure what kind of programs you can use on this OS.**

I have Ability 2000, Microsoft Office 97 and 2000, Lotus Millennium and even an integrated package called First Choice. I need word processing, a spreadsheet, a database, internet access and I also want to be able to use the digital camera I recently bought.

A Linux is certainly the main alternative to Windows on the PC, but it isn't one that we at *PC Advisor* strongly recommend. Linux has many attractive features and there's a wealth of free software available for it.

But it supports a smaller range of hardware (meaning there's more chance that something you've already got won't work with it), it isn't easy to install or configure if you don't have much technical knowledge and it won't run most of the software that people want to use.

Linux is able to run some Windows software using a package called Wine, which emulates the Windows software environment. However, Wine has not been created with any assistance from Microsoft so it is only as good an emulation as its developers can make it. It will run many older Windows programs quite smoothly but if you try to run one of the newer applications, especially Microsoft Office programs, you're liable to hit snags.

We'd advise that you switch to Linux only if the main reason is the challenge of installing and learning how to use it. If it is then we'd recommend using a native Linux office suite rather than trying to get a Windows suite working under Wine.

Your best choice is the free OpenOffice which is available for download from www.openoffice.org. This is a powerful package that will give Microsoft Office a run for its money. And if you want to give OpenOffice a try before taking the plunge into Linux itself then there's a version for Windows as well.

There are more Linux email clients than you can shake a stick at but every Linux distribution comes with a web browser and email client installed as standard, just like Windows, so there's no need to worry about that.

USB support is one of the weaker areas, though, and this may be the stumbling block if you are a digital camera user. Linux hardware support is mostly provided by Linux developers, not the hardware manufacturers, so your camera is most likely to be supported if it's a popular model from a major manufacturer.

As always, when considering an operating system upgrade (even when it's to a new version of Windows), check that all the hardware devices you want to use are going to be supported if you can't afford to throw them away.

Q **Since upgrading my motherboard I have been unable to use my Guillemot steering wheel. The steering wheel supports serial and USB ports, but when I access Gaming Options in the Control Panel there's only the choice of the standard game port. Can you help?**

A As you provide no specific information about the hardware or operating system you're using we can only offer some general advice. You don't mention whether you upgraded your operating system at the same time as your motherboard but, as far as we know, the serial port option for your steering wheel is not supported under Windows 2000 or XP.

Problems with USB operation may be the fault of your motherboard's USB controller. Open Control Panel, System, Device Manager and expand Universal Serial Bus Controllers. If the device is a 'Via Tech PCI to USB Universal Host Controller' then this may be the cause of the trouble.

Via host controllers are known to cause connectivity problems for game controllers and many other devices – and these problems are not all remedied by installing the latest drivers. Indeed, if you're contemplating a motherboard upgrade or purchasing a new PC, and need to have good USB connectivity, it would make sense to ensure that the motherboard has an Intel USB controller, which is by far the most dependable.

Another cause of USB connectivity problems is overclocking. Be sure that the PCI bus is running at the correct speed before looking elsewhere for the culprit.

Information about Via Tech USB problems and the latest drivers can be found at www.usbnews.net/news/

← The Radeon 9700 Pro can cause conflicts with Microsoft's Combat Flight Sim. If so, try installing more up-to-date drivers

Similar errors that we have come across suggest that the problem is graphics-related. Microsoft has documented some issues with Combat Flight Simulator and the Radeon 9700 Pro.

If the latest drivers from http://mirror.ati.com/support/driver.html don't cure them, Microsoft suggests installing version 6.13.10.6193 from http://mirror2.ati.com/drivers/wxp-w2k-r9700-6-13-10-6193-efg.exe. You can connect to both of these sites by clicking the links on this month's cover disc. However, we're not sure if this is relevant to your problem or not.

If the fault doesn't only occur when playing 3D games we'd be more inclined to suspect that the culprit is a bus timing issue. In that case, try experimenting with the advanced Bios settings. Start from a safe setting such as the Bios defaults and work from there. Other common causes of unreliable operation include faulty memory and overheating.

via_usb_filter_driver_110.htm or follow the link on this month's cover disc. More information can be found at www.usbman.com/guides (scroll down the list and look for a file called Via tips and tricks.htm).

Some game controllers (such as the Microsoft SideWinder) have driver patches for users of systems with Via USB chipsets, so it would also be worth checking for the relevant files at the Thrustmaster support website – http://us.thrustmaster.com/support.

Q **I have just built a new system based on a Gigabyte GA-8INXP E7205 Granite Bay motherboard and Gigabyte Radeon 9700 Pro Maya 2 graphics card.**

At random intervals the PC locks, gives a single beep, the display goes large so that I'm zoomed in on a quarter of the desktop and Windows XP Pro reports: 'Windows detected and recovered from a device failure. Please save and reboot to restore full functionality'.

The system continues working and I can finish what I am doing before rebooting to sort out the display. A friend experiences an identical error, though he has a different motherboard and a different brand of Radeon 9700 Pro. The problem occurs with ATI Catalyst 3 or 2.4 drivers. Is this the Radeon or is some other device failing?

A Because you have a home-built system we can't be sure if your particular collection of hardware should work properly together or not. It isn't practical for every motherboard to be tested with every plug-in card.

A PC manufacturer will perform this compatibility testing when designing a new model and have the benefit of access to the motherboard manufacturer, who may suggest specific Bios settings or even produce a Bios update to overcome a particular problem.

As a home builder, to a certain extent you just have to cross your fingers and hope everything works when you power up. However, you did a sensible thing by buying the same brand of graphics card and motherboard as this should eliminate a common cause of incompatibility.

Q **My PC's hard drive has three partitions: C, D and E. There is a DVD-ROM drive labelled F and I used to have a CD-RW drive called G. I recently installed a smartmedia card reader which**

has labelled itself drive G. I now seem to have lost my CD-RW drive – it still works but I can't access it. Any ideas?

A A lot depends on what version of Windows you are running. Install a copy of Microsoft's free Control Panel utility Tweak UI (go to www.microsoft.com/downloads and type in 'PowerToys' to download it or click the link on our cover disc) and use this to check that the display of drive H has been enabled (as shown above).

If you're using a DOS-based version of Windows (95, 98 or Me) that has a config.sys file in the C drive folder, you should also check that this file doesn't contain a line that says Lastdrive=G.

From Control Panel, open Device Manager and check the properties for both your card reader and your CD-RW drive. Depending on the drivers for these devices you may be able to assign a specific drive letter to each one, which would allow you to allocate your CD writer to drive G once again.

Q **I regularly empty the folders holding my cookies and temporary internet files. What other folders should I clean out to protect my privacy?**

A Again, this question's easily solved with Microsoft's free Windows add-on, Tweak UI (click the link on our cover disc to download version 1.33 of the program).

Under Windows 9x, Microsoft gave Tweak UI a Paranoia tab, shown below right. Note, however, that PowerToys for Windows XP's version of Tweak UI lacks this tab. But don't worry – the tab in Tweak UI 1.33 works fine in XP. The two versions of Tweak UI can coexist on an XP-based system, as long as you don't try to use them at the same time.

After you've download Tweak UI 1.33, double-click it to extract the compressed files, right-click the

tweakui.inf file (the icon for this file looks like a notepad with a cog wheel in front of it), and choose Install. Once you've installed Tweak UI, open Control Panel, double-click the Tweak UI icon, and click the Paranoia tab (shown below).

You'll find a number of options in the 'Covering your tracks' list. If you check any of these items and click ok Windows will automatically clear them each time you boot up. Not all are worth selecting, however. Here are the three key options to enable:

• Clear document history at logon The document history is the list of recently opened documents you get by selecting Start, Documents (or in XP, Start, Recent Documents). Simply click this checkbox to erase your working day from the menu.
• Clear Internet Explorer history at logon This wipes visited links and the drop-down list of recently visited URLs in IE's Address Bar toolbar. It does not reliably clear the browser's history list; to empty that, select IE's Tools, Internet Options, click the General tab, and select Clear History.
• Run history at logon This option removes the list of commands that you typed in the Start, Run dialog box.
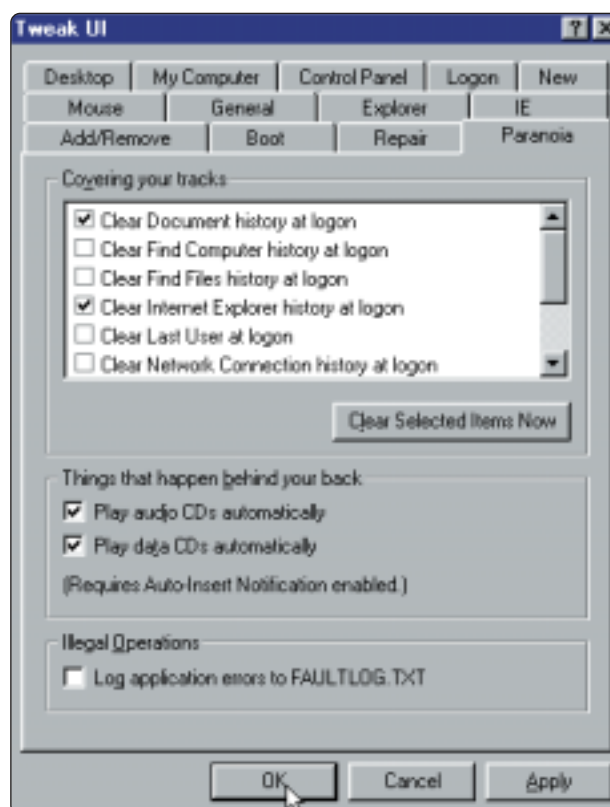
tip

Burning data backups to CD

Making a CD backup is easy and can save you a lot of pain later if your PC eats a file. Because CD-Rs and CD-RWs hold only a maximum 700MB of data, we suggest putting your documents on one CD and other kinds of things – say your email archives – on another. The following directions apply for CD-R discs and may differ slightly for CD-RW discs.

Before you begin, quit all other applications. The burning process is processor-intensive, particularly when you write at fast speeds. For the best results, reboot your PC before your

CD-burning session and make sure all but your essential applications are closed. Of those running in the System Tray, leave your antivirus protection loaded, but exit RealPlayer, for example. You should get more reliable and faster burns.
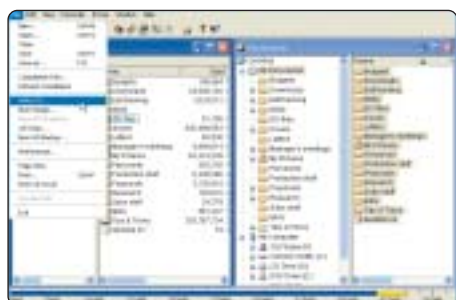
We're going to use Nero 5.0 Burning ROM, but the following steps will broadly apply to whatever disc burning package you have. And if you have Windows XP you can use the built-in CD burning wizard, although you do have less control over the process.

1 Start by inserting a blank CD-R into your recordable drive. If you do not have the Nero Wizard turned on, you can activate it by selecting Help, Use the Nero Wizard. To get to the Wizard without having to restart the program select File, New, or if New Compilation is onscreen click the Wizard button. Select Compile a new CD and click Next. Select Data CD and click Next again

2 The next screen will ask if you want to create a new data CD. Make sure this option is selected and click Next then Finish when prompted. You'll see Nero's ISO compilation window. The two panes on the right show what's on your PC

4 The Nero Wizard will pop up. You can choose Test, Test and burn or Burn. Test and burn is safest but takes longer. Make sure Create image is selected (especially if you want to make multiple copies) then click Burn

3 Select the drive and folders you want to back up in the window directly under the words File Browser. Find the specific folders and files you want in the pane to the right. Drag the folders or files you want to copy from the far right pane to the far left pane. Hold the Ctrl key as you click to select multiple folders. The calibrated blue bar at the bottom of the File Browser window shows how many megabytes of data you've selected. When you exceed the disc's capacity, the bar turns red. When you've selected what you want to copy, choose File, Write CD

5 Nero will make a copy of the files on your hard drive. and prompt you for a filename. Use the default Image if you plan to burn one CD; if you're making multiple copies choose a memorable name. Click Save. The program will tell you that it is burning the data – it is really copying it. When the app says it has successfully burned the data, click ok then Discard. It will relaunch the ISO compilation window. Select File, Burn image and open the image file you just created
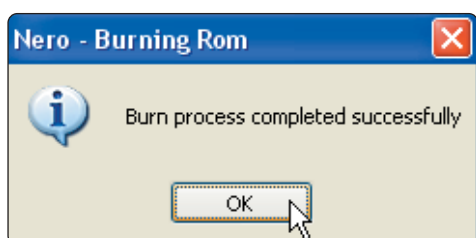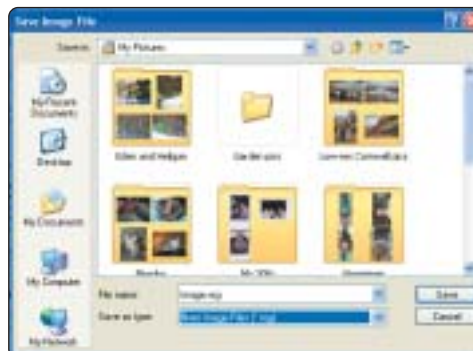
6 In the Nero Wizard be sure to deselect Create image at this point. Select the Burn radio button, choose the burn speed (you can go fairly fast because you created an image first) then click Burn. Nero will burn the data to your CD-R. When it says it has successfully burned the data, click ok then Discard. It will relaunch the ISO compilation window and eject the disc

↓ Windows

Q **When I boot up my PC and Windows 98 starts up I receive an error message saying that a file called infoadmn.dll cannot be found. Nothing seems to be amiss – all my applications run fine – so how can I stop this message from appearing?**

A The missing file is needed by Personal Web Server, so most likely this is the program that is complaining about it.

If you need Personal Web Server, try reinstalling it by running the program named setup.exe in the Add-ons/pws folder of your Windows 98 CD. If you don't need the file then uninstalling it from Add/Remove programs should result in the elimination of the offending error message.

We'd advise uninstalling Personal Web Server because it contains a security hole that could enable someone to gain access to your files over the internet.

If you can't see an entry for Personal Web Server in Add/Remove Programs, stop it from running by locating its shortcut in the StartUp folder of the Programs menu and deleting it. To do this, double-click your hard drive icon,

locate the Windows folder and within it you'll find the Start Menu folder, which contains the Programs menu folder.

You can remove the software from your computer by locating and deleting the following files from the Windows System folder: ftpsapi2.dll, infoadmn.dll, mswebab.dll, mswebapi.dll, mswebcpl.cpl, mswebcpl.hlp, mswebsp.vxd and w3svapi.dll.

Q **My hard disk is partitioned so that I can use either Windows 98 or Windows 2000. When I attempt to access my floppy drive under Windows 98 I receive the error: 'A: is not accessible. Drive is not ready'. I know that the drive is okay because the system can boot from it and it works perfectly when accessed from Windows 2000.**

A This is a fairly common problem under Windows 98. A quick fix that usually works is to disable the Windows floppy disk drivers. This will cause the floppy drive to work under MS-DOS compatibility mode, which is no great hardship since the floppy controller is a slow device anyway.

To do this, open Control Panel, System. Select Device Manager, expand Floppy Disk Controllers and double-click Standard Floppy Disk Controller (shown above). Check the box beside 'Disable in this hardware profile' then click ok and reboot.

A possible reason for the trouble is that the disk drive does not support Fifo (first-in first-out) buffering. If you want to use the 32bit Windows drivers you can try a Registry tweak to prevent the drivers from trying to use Fifo buffering.

Open the Registry Editor then expand the folders Hkey_Local_Machine, System, CurrentControlSet, Services, Class, FDC, 0000. Select the 0000 folder, right-click in the righthand pane and select New, DWord Value. Name the new value 'ForceFIFO'. Leave the value at 0, the default (change it to 1 or delete the value to re-enable Fifo buffering).

Q **My CD player application has disappeared from my desktop. When I try to open the Sounds and Multimedia icon in Control Panel nothing happens. The loudspeaker icon has mysteriously appeared in my System Tray, but if I right-click it and select Adjust Audio Properties I receive the warning 'Error loading mmsys.cpl. A device attached to the system is not functioning'. Please can you tell me what's happening and how to stop it?**

A The loudspeaker icon in the System Tray is usually present when sound is working and provides quick access to the volume control. It can be hidden by clearing a checkbox in the Sounds and Multimedia Control Panel that you're having trouble accessing. The symptoms you describe are probably

Glossary

tip

U nsure of a technical term? Want to check exactly what that acronym means? Load up our searchable Glossary which you'll find on the cover disc. Requires Acrobat Reader, which is also on the CD.

Save those Windows 98 updates

tip

If you're using Windows 98 and have no plans to upgrade any time soon, you may be concerned about Microsoft's plans to withdraw support for this operating system. You still have the installation CD, so you can reinstall Windows 98 if you need to, but what about all those updates you've downloaded from Windows Update? Is there a way of saving them when they are downloaded so that you can reapply them if necessary?

Yes, there is. Microsoft designed Windows Update to be an easy way to obtain OS updates – it avoids the need to decide which ones are necessary and keeps track of which updates have already been installed.

However, Microsoft realised that business users who have a number of PCs on a network don't want to update each computer manually. They want obtain an update file that can be applied later on, perhaps using an automated script. For these users, Microsoft created the Windows 98 Corporate Download site at www.microsoft.com/windows98/downloads/corporate.asp which you can access via the link on the cover disc. Here you will find Windows updates ready to download, with a description and details of the size and download time of each one.

It's also possible to save downloaded update files when you use Windows Update, but the method is more complicated. Like other files downloaded from the web, Windows updates are stored in Internet Explorer's temporary files cache.

It's easier to spot them if you empty the cache before visiting Windows Update, which you can do by selecting Tools, Internet Options and then clicking Delete Files.

Once you have completed an update if you still can't see any new files in Temporary Internet Files then look for
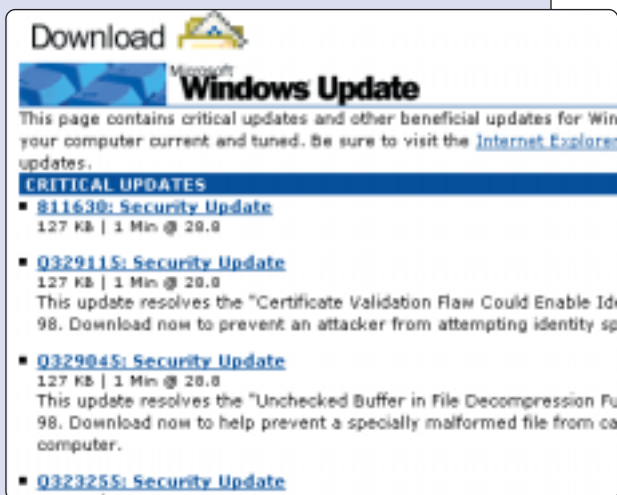
↑ Microsoft's Windows 98 Corporate Download site gives you details of downloadable updates, with a description of the size and download time of each

a folder named msdownload.tmp – you may find them in there.

Updates are distributed either as EXE (executable) or CAB (cabinet format) files. EXE files are easy to install: just double-click them to run them. CAB files must be extracted to a temporary location before you can install them. To do this, double-click the CAB file to open it, select all the files using the mouse then click File, Extract to extract them to your chosen location.

One of the files extracted will be an INF file, containing information about how the update is to be installed. Make a note of its name. You must then click on Start, Run and enter the following command (all on one line):

```
rundll32
advpack.dll,LaunchINFSection  inf_file
```

where inf_file must be replaced by the full path and name of the INF file in its temporary location. Note that the capitalisation of the parameters to the rundll32 command must be exactly as shown above and the only spaces should be after 'rundll32' and before the filename. If there are spaces in the path and filename of the INF file, put quotes round it.

connected, but unfortunately they don't point clearly to the solution.

First, use System File Checker (sfc.exe in Windows 95 and 98) or the System Configuration Utility (in Windows Me and XP) to extract a fresh copy of mmsys.cpl to the Windows System folder. You should also use Device Manager (from Control Panel, System) to check for conflicts affecting your sound card drivers. If you find a conflict, use the Hardware Conflict Troubleshooter to try to resolve them. If you don't find any conflicts then try updating your sound card drivers or, if the drivers you have are the latest ones available, reinstalling them.

↓ Internet

Q I use Outlook Express 5.5. All spellcheck options are selected, including English (UK), and if I edit my custom dictionary it shows the additions I have made. However, my spellchecks take no account of my custom dictionary and even continue to query words that I have added earlier in the same spellcheck. How can I make Outlook Express use the custom dictionary?

A There are a couple of bugs or quirks in the way Outlook Express' spellchecking works, which may give rise to the impression that it is ignoring the custom dictionary altogether. When you add a word to the custom dictionary it is written to the dictionary file, but the new word won't be used until the next spellcheck.

This isn't very logical and looks like a bit of slapdash programming. The problem appears to be fixed in Outlook Express 6.0, however, which is included in Internet Explorer 6.0 SP1. Download this update from www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/downloads/default.asp.

There's also a bug in the way Outlook Express checks spelling. If you insert your responses into the quoted text so that each answer or comment follows the bit of the original message it relates to, and you've opted to always ignore the original
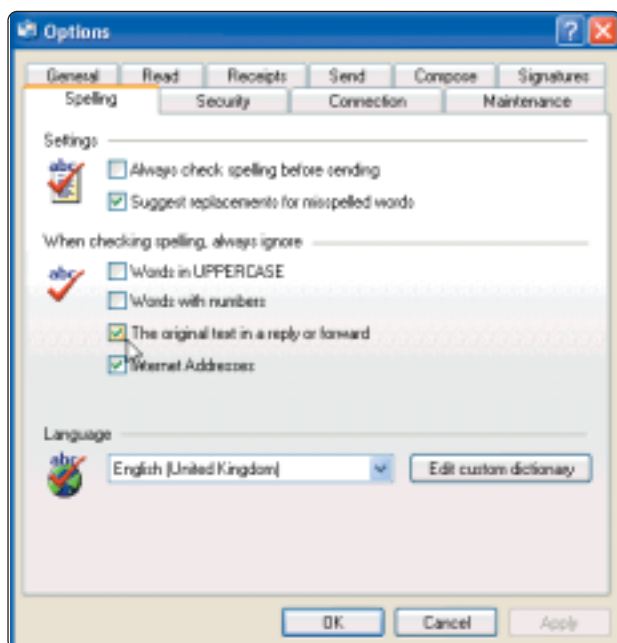
(in other words, quoted) text in a reply or forward, as shown below, Outlook Express won't check the spelling of your new text.

It starts spellchecking at the top and finishes as soon as the first bit of quoted text is encountered. This bug is still present in the current version of Outlook Express, despite being known about as long ago as 1997.

However, the bug whereby Outlook Express always did this regardless of whether you chose the 'Ignore original' option has now been fixed. If you install the latest version it's possible to check the spelling of text that follows or is inserted into quoted text, but the checker will also flag errors in your correspondent's spelling.

A workaround is to select the text you want to check with the mouse before you send the message or click on Tools, Spelling. Outlook Express will check the selected text and then ask if you want to check the remainder of the text, to which you can respond by clicking No. This is probably quicker than spellchecking the quoted text and doesn't require you to upgrade to the latest version.

O **A local computer repairer reformatted my computer's hard drive due to a defective RAM module (so I'm told). Since then, the Outlook Express spellchecker insists on defaulting to French. Even after I try to correct this by selecting Tools, Options, Spelling, Language and clicking the Apply button,**

→ Outlook Express uses the language selected in Microsoft Word for its spellchecker
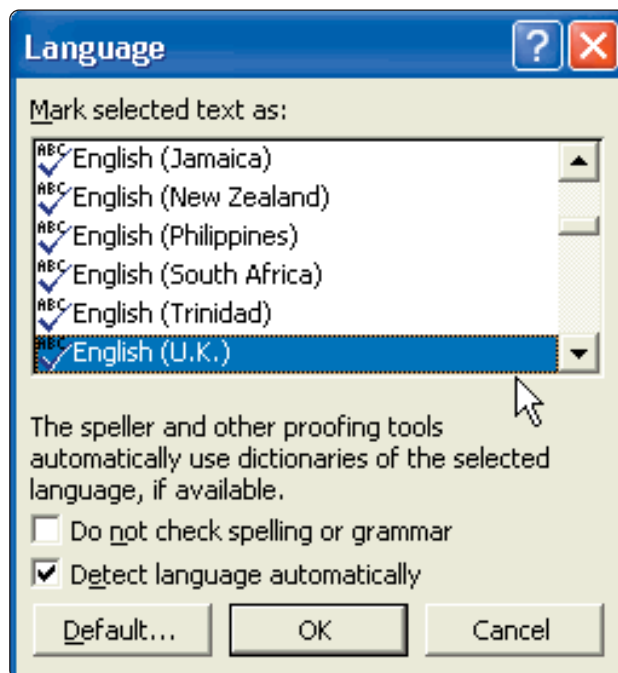
it still reverts to French. The regional settings are set to English and Internet Explorer 6.0 has been uninstalled and reinstalled twice to no avail. The spellchecker in Outlook is correctly set to English (UK) but I would prefer to use Outlook Express as the default mailer.

A Outlook Express uses the spellchecker of Microsoft Word. It also takes the language selection from this application. Open Word, click on Tools, Language, Set Language and ensure that English (UK) is selected there (as shown

← If you tell Outlook Express not to spellcheck quoted text, it won't check your added comments either

above). If it already is selected then try a repair of Microsoft Office. If that doesn't help it's time to try an uninstall of Office followed by a reinstall.

O **I run Windows 98 SE, Internet Explorer/Outlook Express 6.0 and my ISP is Quista (Royal Bank of Scotland). Everything works fine if I connect using the Quista shortcut on the desktop. But if I attempt to access the web any other way, such as by clicking on a favourite channel, I receive an error message. Any ideas?**

A Unless there's something unusual about the logon for Quista our guess is that there is some remnant of a previous ISP connection on your computer that is causing the trouble.

In Internet Explorer click on Tools, Internet Options then select the Connections tab. If there are any other ISPs listed there besides Quista, delete them. Select the Quista entry and click Set Default. Finally, select 'Always dial my default connection' from the three options adjacent to this.

O **I recently downloaded Media Player 9.0 from Microsoft. I'm running Windows XP with SP1. When I try to view information about an album I receive the message 'Access denied by access control list'. I didn't have any**

trouble with the old Media Player. Any help would be appreciated.

A The number one culprit when 'Access denied by access control list' error messages regularly appear is a firewall or router. If you're running a personal firewall product, try disabling it and see if that makes a difference. If not, check the browser proxy settings by opening Internet Options from Control Panel, selecting the Connections tab and clicking Settings.

Try disabling the proxy if one is configured or check with your ISP or network manager whether you should be using one if it isn't. Note that the proxy settings in Media Player on the Network tab (Tools, Options) should only be changed if you experience problems with playback of audio or video. These settings have no effect on Media Player's ability to access other information.

If the suggestions above don't apply, or don't help at all, try clearing your web browser cache. From Internet Options select the General tab then click Delete Files. It's possible a bad cookie could be causing the problem, so click on Delete Cookies as well. Unfortunately, this will mean that you'll lose your stored passwords and other preferences for favourite websites.

Q I'm using Internet Explorer 6.0 under Windows XP. When I close Outlook Express I receive an error that says: 'The instruction at 0x77f536f9 referenced memory at 0x00bd4ce4. The memory could not be written. Click ok to terminate the program'. Apart from this all seems well, although the Outlook Express splashscreen takes seven

seconds to appear after clicking the icon. I'd love to solve both problems.

A We suspect the two problems are connected. The memory error is usually caused by a corrupt identity. The simplest way to fix it is to create a new identity and import the address book and mail folders from the old identity into the new one. After that, you can delete the old identity.

To create a new identity click on File, Identity, Add New Identity then use the wizard to create a new identity with the same details as the old one. (It might be a good idea to make a note of these details first.) After you've finished, you should find that Outlook Express will close without any error.

The next step is to import the data. Restart Outlook Express then select File, Import, Address Book. Locate your address book (it will be in a location like c:\Documents and Settings\<username>\ Application Data\Microsoft\ Address Book) and import it.

To import your messages, click on File, Import, Messages. An Import Wizard will start. Select 'Microsoft Outlook Express 6' from the import format list (shown below) then click Next. Select 'Import mail from an OE6 identity' (the default) and then select the name of your old identity.
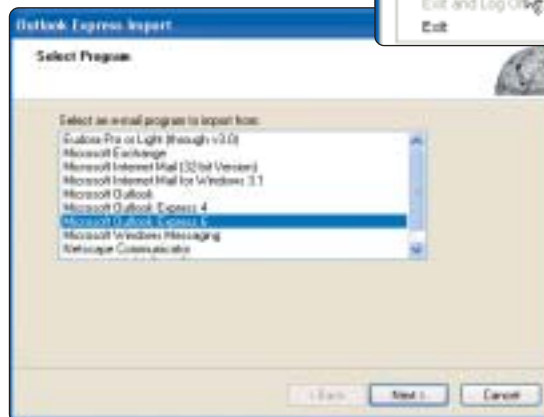
Click ok and the wizard will display the name of the folder containing the messages. Then click Next. You can now choose the message folders you wish to import or accept the default setting 'All folders'. Click Next again and your messages will be imported.

To remove the old, corrupt identity, click on File, Identities, Manage Identities. Select the old identity and click Remove.

Q I recently subscribed to email newsletters from Serif and Dabs.com. When I open them in Outlook Express, though, the Dial-Up Connection box appears and I have to cancel it five times before I can get on with reading the message.

A The reason the Dial-Up Connection box keeps popping up is because the emails contain links to image files that are stored on the sender's web server instead of being included in the message itself. Exactly the same thing would happen if you opened a locally stored copy of a web page that contained external links.

In fact, that's precisely what you are doing since the newsletter is written in HTML – the same language used to create web pages. There's nothing you can do about it if you want to read these newsletters as they're meant to be viewed.
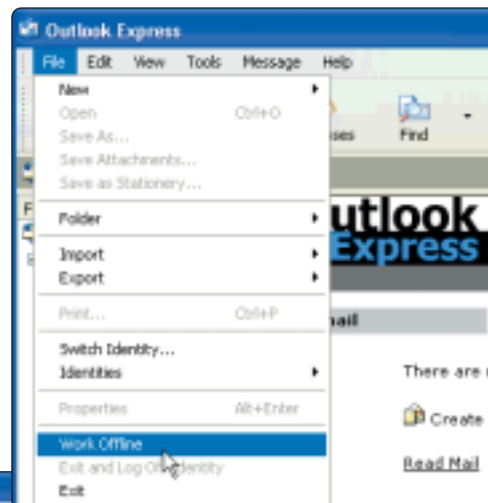
If you're content to read just the text, however, you have two choices. Select Work Offline from the Outlook Express File menu (shown below left). This will prevent Outlook Express from connecting to the internet to retrieve the image files, so the pictures will be replaced with a red cross in a box – the missing image icon.

Alternatively, you can click on Tools, Options, Read and select Read all messages in plain text (this option is not present in older versions of Outlook Express). This will remove the HTML formatting from your messages – all you'll see is the text. Outlook Express won't even try to display the images, so it will never need to connect to the internet when you open an email.

O **I have noticed that when connecting to the internet using a notebook with an internal modem, connections are usually made at 31.2Kbps (kilobits per second) or even lower. Only occasionally will the modem connect at 50Kbps. I have observed this using two different notebooks and two different phonelines – in both cases a desktop PC using the same phoneline had no trouble making a 50Kbps connection.**

I used HyperTerminal to send the ATI11 command to the modem in order to gain the details of the previous connection. The problem appears to be

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www.pcadvisor.co.uk/helproom

an estimated noise level of between 400 and 600. I believe that this value should not be above 150 for efficient data transfer. Why do notebooks see more noise on the line than desktop PCs?

A To avoid a spate of queries from worried readers we should point out that not all modems support the ATI11 command that allows you to obtain the previous connection statistics. Second, you shouldn't panic if your modem reports an estimated noise level of more than

150. This figure is an arbitrary value that has no known relationship to a measurement like dB (decibels), which your phone company would use. If your modem is working fine but it reports a value greater than 150 then don't worry about it.

This problem is interesting, though, because we've come across cases of slow connections when using a notebook before. The cause is unlikely to be electrical noise generated within the device, however, despite the closely packed components. It's more likely to be caused by the notebook's power supply/charger.

Unlike desktop PCs, portables aren't normally connected to an electrical ground so there is nothing to stop this noise finding its way on to the phoneline. Test whether the problem still occurs when the notebook is running from batteries.

If the results are inconclusive, and you know what you're doing, you could also experiment with electrical grounding. Please note that the device should be grounded safely by connecting it to an external monitor or a mains-powered printer that has an earth connection on its power plug.

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. The FAQ Directory is available with *Tips & Tricks*, on sale now at all good newsagents.

↓ Applications

Q When I use Adobe Photoshop 6.0's smudge tool the screen freezes. This is followed by a blue screen error. My PC has an AMD Athlon 1800+ processor and the friend who built it has now slowed the chip so the system thinks it is an Athlon 1150. This seems to have solved the problem, but should my processor be running slower than its proper setting?

A No it shouldn't and, what's more, a high-end graphics package needs all the CPU power it can get. The Photoshop smudge tool generates very intensive memory activity that could highlight weaknesses in the hardware such as memory that is marginally off specification.

This might explain why the system doesn't crash now the clock speed has been reduced, but it's impossible to be sure (we're assuming that your processor wasn't being overclocked).

Our prime suspect in this case would be the graphics card. Make sure that you have the latest drivers for it. If that doesn't stop the crashing, try reducing the hardware acceleration. (If you're running Windows XP you can access the control from Display Properties, Settings, Advanced, Troubleshoot.)

You should also check Photoshop's own memory management settings – crashes may occur if the program is set to use too much system memory. It's unwise to allow Photoshop to use more than 75 percent of available memory but a safer and more stable figure would be 60 percent. To change the setting click on Edit, Preferences, Memory & Cache.

Q Like the reader in the March issue (page 1640 I am having trouble uninstalling Norton AntiVirus 5.0 prior to installing the 2003 version. Unlike that reader, I can't even install AntiVirus 2003 because the old version or part of it is still in place. I thought I found a solution – a link to a utility named RNAV on Symantec's site – but when I click on the link I'm told that the page is unavailable. What should I do?

A Norton AntiVirus 5.0 is a right so-and-so to remove. Symantec has produced a utility called RNAV, which manually removes the program files and Registry entries installed by NAV version 5.0 and up.

Unfortunately, the address of the page containing this information on Symantec's site is so long that it won't fit on one line of a web page, so it gets 'word-wrapped'.

We suspect that what has happened is the link you found contains only as much of the address as would fit on one line, so obviously it isn't valid.

Since the address, as well as being very long, is also full of gibberish, there's no hope of anyone typing it in correctly if we printed it. So we'll tell you how to find the page instead. Go to the Symantec search page at www.symantec.com/search, type 'rnav' into the Search box and click on Search.

Your search results should include a link to an article named 'How to uninstall Norton AntiVirus by using the rnav2003.exe removal utility'. Click on this then print the article as it contains the instructions for use as well as a link to download the removal utility itself.

Q I decided to store my financial and other confidential files in password-protected Zip files using PowerDesk. To my dismay I've discovered dozens of temporary directories containing the contents of these Zip files, which anyone could find using the Search facility without a password. I've tried to delete them, but am told that the source files can't be removed. What can I do?

A Any Windows program that lets you browse the contents of Zip files as if they were folders achieves this illusion by extracting the contents to a temporary folder. The temporary folders should be deleted after you've finished with them, but it can be hard for an Explorer-like utility such as PowerDesk to determine when that is.

The folders may remain open until you close PowerDesk, but if it (or Windows) crashes then they won't be deleted at all. Even if everything works perfectly, the

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Forewarned is forearmed

tip

You may be keen to keep your PC protected from viruses, worms, Trojans and other dangers, but short of making Windows Update your home page so that you make a point of visiting it daily it's hard to know what the current issues are and what you should do about them.

Microsoft has now made that job a lot simpler. Its new security bulletin, delivered via email, offers an easy way for home users to stay abreast of the latest security issues and patches. To subscribe to the bulletin, visit www.microsoft.com/security/security_bulletins/decision.asp and complete a simple form.

Contact us

Please send your Helpline questions to pcadvisor_letters@idg.com. To help us sort your messages, please use the word 'Helpline' in the subject header. Alternatively, you can post your queries to Helpline, *PC Advisor*, Fifth Floor, 85 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 4TQ.

We aim to give you the best assistance we can. However, given the limitations of this type of advice, we can't guarantee that what we say will work, and we can't accept responsibility for any damage arising as a result of this advice. Always back up your system before you make any changes. If you send us software disks, make sure they are not original copies as we cannot return them. We regret that we cannot answer technical queries over the phone except via our Expert Advice Hotline on 0906 906 0272. Calls are charged at £1.50 per minute.

folders won't be securely deleted so the contents can still be retrieved using a data recovery tool.

If you're serious about security you should be using a utility like Cypherix's Cryptainer PE from www.cypherix.com/cryptainerpe (or click the link on this month's cover disc), which stores your sensitive files in a permanently encrypted virtual drive. Cryptainer PE can be downloaded for a 30-day free evaluation, so why not give it a try?

Regarding the problem of source files that cannot be removed, this is usually because an application – in this case PowerDesk – still has them open.

The error can also occur if the files you're trying to delete have already been deleted. This confusion can arise because PowerDesk doesn't always update its display when files are removed. You have to refresh it by pressing F5.

Q **I'm using Microsoft Office 2000 Professional. When I try to open a document that has been password-protected by double-clicking its icon in My Documents, Word starts but then hangs with the program titlebar flashing. I have to press Ctrl, Alt, Del to bring up the Task Manager and close it. If I start Word and then open the file using the File, Open menu I get the prompt for the password and can then access the file as normal. I have uninstalled and reinstalled Office but the problem is still there.**

A Word hasn't hung. A flashing titlebar tells you that an application which is not the currently active window needs your attention. What has happened in this instance is that the password prompt has come up behind the main Word window.

To get round the problem, minimise Word and any other applications that may

Pass it on: tips from readers

tip

Do you have any great workarounds or shortcuts you would 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.

Take a rise
Back in January's Helpline we suggested that one possible cause of a reader's problem was a graphics card that wasn't seated properly in its slot on the motherboard. Paul Wyatt, whose PC was experiencing symptoms similar to our original reader's computer, wrote in with his alternative cure. Paul purchased some small fibre washers from a DIY store and fitted one under each of the risers on which the motherboard is mounted. This lifted it sufficiently to ensure that all the daughterboards are now a perfect fit. Cheap and effective – what more could you want? Thanks for the tip, Paul.

Don't forget the Briefcase
In response to the file synchronisation question in Helpline, March 03, page 162, Geoffrey Pick wrote to remind us not to forget the Briefcase. This little-used facility of Windows can be a bit flaky when synchronising large files, but it usually works well and has the advantage that it's free with every copy of Windows.

be obscuring the desktop and you will be able to see the password prompt (which will look like the one below). You can then type your password in the usual way and Word will work as normal.

While this will work, it isn't very intuitive and, of course, it is not supposed to happen. We suspect that something is interfering with Word's ability to be the active window when it is launched by double-clicking on a Word document.

The most likely culprit is your virus scanner, which will be activated whenever you open a Word document in order to check that it is free from macro viruses. When we last encountered this problem a couple of years ago Norton AntiVirus turned out to be to blame.

You can verify if a similar explanation is true in your case by temporarily disabling your on-access virus checker

and then opening your password-protected file. Unfortunately, a solution is outside our control. Check with your antivirus software vendor to see if it is aware of the problem and has a fix for it.

Q **I used Adaptec GoBack under Windows 98 and have found it invaluable in recovering from software conflicts and other problems. I'm now upgrading to XP and I was wondering if you can recommend a compatible program. Adaptec's site only advertises version 2.0 which is suitable for Windows Me. XP's built-in system recovery feature doesn't seem to be half as good to me.**

A We guess you must have looked at an outdated website as Adaptec software products are now sold under the Roxio brand and can be found at www.roxio.com.

For Windows XP you need to be running GoBack 3.0 Deluxe. You'll need to purchase an upgrade if you have an earlier version, even if it's GoBack 3.0 Personal. If you have GoBack 3.0 Deluxe running on Windows 95, 98 or Me then Roxio has a free updater for Windows XP. For more information see www.roxio.com/adban/internal_campaigns/xpinfo/gbupgrade.jhtml. ■

Password

Enter password to open file
C:\...\Julian\My Documents\Secret Information.doc

| |

OK   Cancel
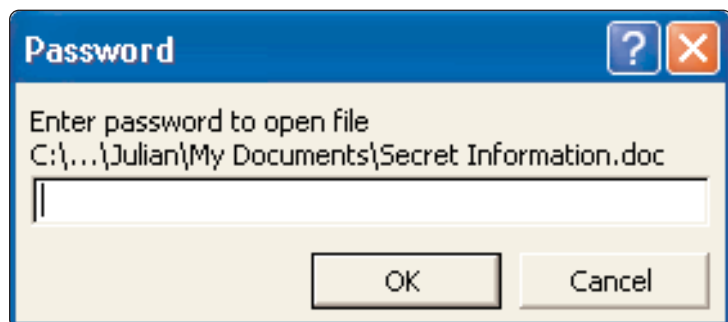
← Word's password input box may open behind Word's main window causing the program to appear to have hung