helpline

↯ General

Q **I want to upgrade the CompactFlash card in my digital camera. I see that there is a big difference in price between branded cards, such as Kodak's, and those from other suppliers. Would there be a difference in performance or image quality if I used a cheaper card?**

Also, what is the difference between Type I and Type II cards? My camera's slot is Type I -- will any CompactFlash card fit?

A Type II cards are thicker than Type I. The thicker Type II card was developed primarily to allow miniature hard disks such as the IBM Microdrive to be used. A Type II slot will accept a Type I card but not the other way round for the obvious reason that the thicker card won't fit.

As to the question of image quality and cheaper cards: remember that flash memory is digital -- either on or off -- so it either works or it doesn't. There's no intermediate position that would result in poor quality images. The memory chips inside the cheaper cards probably even come from the same supplier used by the expensive brand name manufacturers. Doubtless the name brands would argue that their quality control is better, but you'll also be paying for advertising, marketing and the higher dealer markups associated with brand name products.

Some very cheap cards might be rejects and contain faults, but as long as you buy from a reputable vendor who will readily replace a card that is found to be defective, our advice would be to save money and go for the cheaper product.

Q **I built my own PC, installed the operating system and was copying the contents of the My Documents folder from my old PC's hard disk to the new one, when the system shut down and restarted. It did this three times before I gave up. I disconnected the old hard disk as someone suggested I might be overloading the power supply, but the system still shuts down at random, apparently during tasks that cause intense hard disk activity.**

The processor temperature seems normal and I've run Memtest86 successfully. Both the power supply and the hard drive have been replaced. I'm now at a loss and wishing I'd bought a ready-built computer. Any ideas?

A This is one of the problems with DIY PC construction: when you get a problem like this it's hard to tell whether there's an incompatibility between a couple of the components you selected or whether one of them is actually faulty. Replacing likely culprits one by one is really the only way to find a solution, but this can be time consuming not to mention difficult if your retailer won't accept that it has sold you faulty parts.

As the problem appears to be associated with heavy hard disk activity, it's possible that the motherboard isn't stable at the transfer rate and mode selected for the hard disk. Try selecting a lower transfer rate or deselecting DMA access if it is selected, rather than using automatic settings.

You may be able to do this from the Bios or from the IDE Controller properties in Device Manager. The motherboard is the only component you haven't replaced that could reasonably be implicated in this problem so, if you're willing to try another replacement, that's what we'd suggest next.

Q **I own an Ultra 6100 notebook which was purchased in 1999. It had 32MB of onboard RAM plus 64MB in one of the memory slots. I purchased a 128MB upgrade from Crucial.com, which was listed as being compatible with this computer. However, with the new RAM installed the PC runs extremely slowly.**

I tried the 64MB module by itself in both of the memory slots and performance was normal. I also tried the 128MB module on its own and performance was not as bad as with all the memory installed. As Windows runs faster than it did with the previous memory configuration I have left the 64MB module out, but I would like to know if there is any way that I can use both modules together.

A From your description of the symptoms it appears that some of the extra memory is not being cached. Without detailed knowledge of your computer we can't provide specific advice – for that you will need to contact the original manufacturer. However, try going into Bios Setup to see if there

← Use a program such as Cool Edit Pro to transfer your LPs to CD

is an option to specify the range of memory that is cached.

If there is, you will need to increase this to a value as large as the total memory in the PC (224MB with all RAM installed). It is possible additional Level 2 cache RAM needs to be installed in order to cache this amount of memory, as the manufacturer may have fitted only the minimum number of cache modules for the amount of RAM originally installed in the computer to save money. If extra cache memory can be fitted, this will probably be explained in the computer's manual.

In the Technofile on sound cards in the October 02 issue you say that it's possible to fit a sound card that converts analogue to digital. This would allow me to connect my record deck and transfer some of my favourite LPs to CD. Which sound cards will do this and what additional software would I need?

A All sound cards convert analogue audio to digital data streams and vice versa. Windows Sound Recorder will allow you to record audio to a WAV file, which is a digital audio file. However, we wouldn't advise trying to use this to record LP tracks. A better choice might be Cool Edit (www.syntrillium.com). Most CD recorders come with a bundle of software that includes an application for burning audio CDs from WAV files.

That isn't to say that using Cool Edit and a bundled CD-burning application is necessarily the best way to transfer LPs to CD, although it might be a way of getting started. Nor will the sound card included in your PC necessarily produce

sufficiently good recordings if you're a hi-fi buff.

A fuller discussion on this topic is beyond the scope of Helpline. However, if you are interested in making the best quality transfers we recommend the LP to CD-R Tips at http://homepages.nildram. co.uk/~abcomp/lp-cdr.htm which contains all the advice you should need. We should also point out that the copyright notice on your LPs probably doesn't permit you to legally make copies of them on CD, even for your own use.

I have a Dell Dimension 4100 Pentium III PC. I purchased a Belkin 2.0 USB four-port PCI card. Once installed on the computer, I switched on. After the Dell logo cleared a blue screen appeared. Windows then started checking the file system.

When it had finished, the computer rebooted and started the same procedure again. Belkin's advice was that this was an IRQ fault and I should try the card in another slot. This made no difference. Have you any other ideas?

A For a problem to occur this early in the startup process, even before drivers have been installed, the cause can only be a hardware conflict, unless the card itself is faulty. In the Bios, check that plug and play support is enabled. If it isn't, the system may not be able to assign the IRQs and other resources correctly.

If this doesn't help, we would suggest temporarily removing any other non-essential cards that may be installed or disabling any onboard devices (such as serial ports). This may help identify the cause of the conflict.

↓ Windows

Q **I installed The Times Testing Series: Test your IQ from the November 02 cover disc. Now some of my programs -- Serif DrawPlus 6.0 and PhoneTools 2000, for example – refuse to start. I receive an error message which says 'A device attached to the system is not functioning' followed by one that says 'The msacm32.dll file is linked to missing export ntdll.dll:ntclose'. I can see no problems in Device Manager and msacm32.dll and ntdll.dll are both present. How can I put things right?**

A This seems to be the Helpline problem of the month. You're the only reader who mentioned installing The Times IQ program, which was a good clue, because this program is indeed to blame. We now find that the developers have a patch – there's a copy on this month's CD – which solves this problem and an unrelated one that can affect AOL users, but unfortunately they didn't tell our CD editor about it at the time.

The error message 'A device attached to the system is not functioning' is misleading in this case, and is simply a side effect of the problem. It is caused by a fault in an application's Setup program, which has caused either msacm32.dll or ntdll.dll to be overwritten by an incorrect version. Other applications can cause exactly the same error: it is not something specific to The Times program.

The solution is to replace these DLLs with the versions that were present when everything worked. How you go about this depends on the tools you have available. If you have a backup of your Windows folder, simply restore the files from this. If you have Windows Me or XP you could perform a System Restore to a point prior to the problem occurring, as shown above.

If you have Windows 98 or Me you can use SFC (System File Checker) to perform a check on your system files and allow it to restore the latest version of these two DLLs. If you have Windows 95 you will need to extract them manually from your Windows CD.

← If a bad Setup program overwrites a shared file with an older version, use System Restore to undo the damage

Because these two files are usually used by Windows, manual extraction is the most difficult method because you can't overwrite files that are in use. You will need to extract the files to a temporary location using the following commands from a command prompt:

    Extract /A d:\win95\win95_02.cab
ntdll.dll /L c:\Windows\Temp
    Extract /A d:\win95\win95_02.cab
msacm32.dll /L c:\Windows\Temp

Then exit to real-mode MS-DOS to copy the files to their correct location in c:\windows\system.

If restoring the original version of these files does not solve the problem then there may be an incorrect version of one or other of them in another location. In this case, search your hard disk for both of these filenames and delete (or temporarily rename) any copies other than the ones in the System folder.

Q **My computer runs Windows 98. Ever since I installed a Viper V550 16MB graphics card, it won't shut down properly. Instead, it hangs at the 'Windows is shutting down' screen and I have to switch off manually. Any help would be appreciated.**

A This is an example of the common 'Windows hangs on shutdown' problem. Unfortunately there is no single cause of the error and no simple fix. Microsoft has written some troubleshooting articles explaining how to determine the cause of shutdown problems in each version of Windows.

The process is too lengthy to describe here, so instead we will direct you to the original Microsoft articles, which can be accessed at http://support.microsoft.com. They are:

• Q145926: How to Troubleshoot Windows 95 Shutdown Problems
• Q202633: How to Troubleshoot Windows 98 Shutdown Problems
• Q238096: Problems Shutting Down Windows 98 Second Edition
• Q273746: How to Troubleshoot Windows Millennium Edition Shutdown Problems

Q **In the Summer 2002 edition of *Tips & Tricks* magazine you give a tip for printing out the contents of a folder. I have tried this, but all I get is a box telling me that Windows cannot find the command 'dir>prn'. Have I done something wrong?**

A There needs to be a space between the command 'dir' and the '>prn'. As spaces aren't very large when a proportional typeface is used, this may not have been clear in the magazine.

Q **My HP Club 70 computer runs Windows 98 and whenever it boots the following blue screen error appears: 'Invalid VxD dynamic link call from DSCVXD(01) + 00000239 to device 9CEF, service 6. Your Windows configuration is invalid. Run the Windows Setup program again to correct the problem'. After I press Enter, the system continues booting and runs without any apparent problem. Do you know of another solution apart from reinstalling Windows as suggested?**

A Rerunning Windows Setup isn't as drastic a step as you may suppose and it may be enough to run it without deleting the existing installation. However, it's quite likely that the error is being caused by a conflict between Windows and other software that is being loaded at startup. In most cases of this error, the software concerned is connected with networking. ZoneAlarm has been known to cause errors such as this, so if you are using it try disabling it or any similar software. By elimination you may be able to find the culprit.

There is an article in the Microsoft Knowledgebase at http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb;en-us;Q137335 which gives information about interpreting this type of blue screen message. It's rather old as it relates to Windows 95 and hasn't been updated, but it may provide some clues if you find the cause of this error to be elusive.

← The Blocked Senders list isn't an effective tool for preventing spam

↓ Internet

Q **I received a spam email this morning. When I tried to add the sender to my blocked list I was surprised to find that it had apparently come from myself. How can I block this malicious sender without blocking my own email address?**

A Unless you are in the habit of sending emails to yourself, it won't do any harm to set up a rule to block messages that have your address as the sender. Unfortunately, as you have found, the From header field is not a reliable indication of who sent an email. Just about anything can be put in this field: many mail servers don't even check that it is a valid email address. For this reason, it isn't worthwhile trying to use the sender address to block spam, as it's rare for the same address to be used to send more than one item of spam in any single case.

The sender of an email can be more accurately identified by inspecting the Received header fields. However, the mail rules in programs such as Outlook Express don't operate on these fields. But even this field may not identify the real sender, only that of the mail server used to send the message.

Most spam is sent using open mail relays: mail servers that have been set up without adequate security so that people other than authorised users can use them to send mail. Spammers simply take advantage of these insecure servers to do their dirty work.

If you need sophisticated spam filtering there's really no alternative to using third-party antispam tools such as McAfee SpamKiller. It's impractical to effectively block spam using mail rules or the blocked senders list, shown below.

Q **I receive a constant stream of unwanted email. My ISP, BTopenworld, states that it does not currently use spam filters, which rather leaves it up to me. Searching for a solution, I came across Spamhaus but it seems to be aimed at people who run mail servers not ordinary users like me.**

BTopenworld helpfully pointed me in the direction of websites containing spam eaters, spam killers and so on. What is the difference between these programs and the message rules/sender blocking in Outlook Express 6.0?

A Spamhaus (www.spamhaus.org) is a list of IP (internet protocol) addresses of known spammers. It is intended for use by ISPs and others who maintain their own mail servers. This list is not in itself a complete spam-blocking solution since it will not prevent spam that originates from new sources.

Few consumer ISPs operate spam filtering for the simple reason that it is cheaper to deliver the spam and let the recipient deal with it. The processing needed to perform spam filtering on the millions of messages a day passed by ISPs the size of BTopenworld, for example,
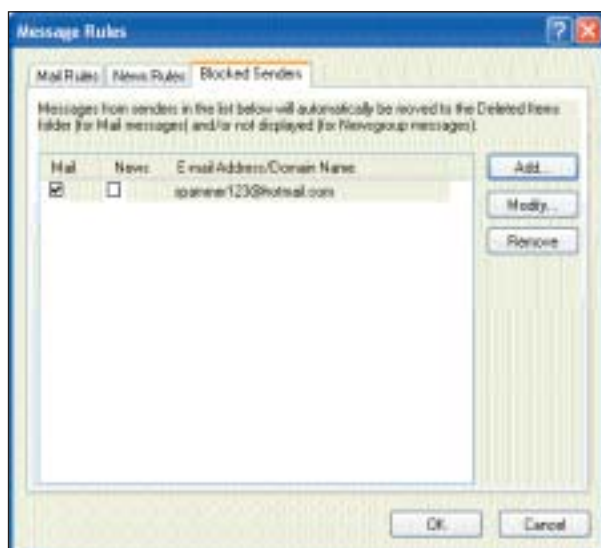
would require more powerful mail servers and increase costs that would be passed on to users like yourself. If you want your email spam filtered at the server, the only possible way to get it is to register your own domain name and have it hosted at a business-oriented ISP that offers value-added services, such as spam filtering and virus checking, at a cost.

The only practical solution for most ordinary internet users, therefore, is to deal with spam yourself. Unfortunately, mail clients like Outlook Express aren't equipped with the tools to do it. Message rules were designed to help users manage their (wanted) mail, not to avoid downloading unwanted junk. It isn't possible to effectively eliminate spam using message rules, although with ingenuity you may succeed in stopping some of it.

Similarly, sender blocking was intended to be used to prevent the receipt of emails or Usenet postings from annoying or offensive individuals – not to block spammers, who rarely use the same email address twice. Trying to block spam using the sender's email address (rather than the numeric IP address) is futile.

So, if you're determined to stop seeing spam, your only real choice is to use a program like SpamEater, shown below left, from High Mountain Software (www.hms.com) or SpamKiller, below right, from McAfee (www.mcafee.com). However, consider the disadvantages first.

These programs complicate mail collection somewhat as they aren't integrated with your mail software, so you have to run them first to remove the spam before running your mail

Search for answers in our free online Helproom

The *PC Advisor* online Helproom contains an indispensable set of answers to common questions, regarding all aspects of PC software. This ranges from general Windows issues to using specific applications and covers all types of PC hardware and software, including system components and peripherals.

Alternatively, you can ask for help from one of the visitors in our online forums. Sign up as a registered user (which is free) and then browse to one of the Discussion Forums. In the Helproom your first stop should be the searchable database of frequently asked and previously answered queries. With more than a quarter of a million postings, you'll almost certainly find the answer you need in this archive of queries, simply by entering a couple of keywords.

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

www.pcadvisor.co.uk/helproom

program. They also take time to maintain, since you will need to update lists of known correspondents and download updates to the spammer database. Before choosing such a solution, you need to consider whether it isn't easier and less time-consuming to just hit the Delete key whenever you receive some spam.

Q I have a question about Outlook Express 6.0 message rules. I notice that the action options include 'Do not download from the server'. However the rule description field always states 'Apply this rule after the message arrives'. How can I tell my computer not to download a message if the rule isn't applied until after it has arrived?

A The text 'Apply this rule after the message arrives' is extremely misleading and can be disregarded. However, the practicalities of how email works means that at least some of a message has to be downloaded in order to get the information needed for Outlook Express to tell whether a rule applies.

The actions 'Delete from server' and 'Do not download' can only work on conditions that test the From line, the To line, the CC line, the Subject line or the Priority rating. All of this information is contained in the message header, therefore it must be downloaded before the rules can be tested or applied. It isn't necessary to download anything at all to determine the account from which a message originates or its size.
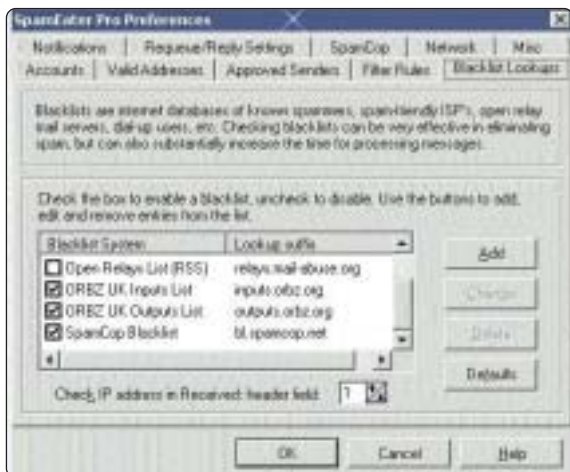
←→ If spam is a problem your ISP isn't dealing with to your satisfaction, you might try a solution like High Mountain Software's SpamEater or McAfee's SpamKiller

However to test a condition that a message contains specific words or contains an attachment, the entire message must be downloaded. Therefore a rule to delete messages that contained certain rude words, or one to leave on the server messages containing attachments, would be impractical to implement.

If you avoid using the last two conditions you can create a rule that avoids downloading certain messages, such as those over a certain size, as shown left. But be aware that using message rules in this way can increase the time taken to download email, because the headers of nearly every message will be downloaded twice.

They will be downloaded once for every message so that the rules may be applied, then once again as part of each message
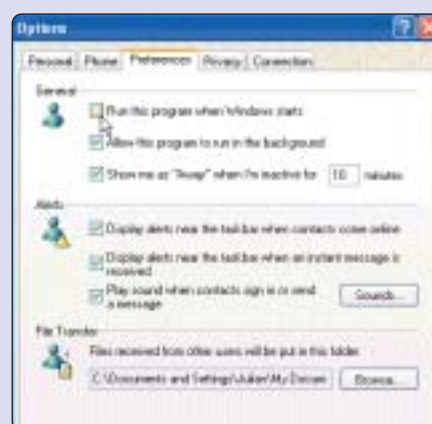
Shoot the Windows Messenger

XP TIP

If you don't use Windows Messenger, you may wish to prevent it from running and appearing in the notification area of the Taskbar. The way to stop it from running depends on the version of both Windows XP and Windows Messenger. If you have Windows XP Professional, carry out the following steps. Start the Group Policy Editor by clicking Start, Run, and entering the command Gpedit.msc. In the Group Policy Editor, expand the following items: Local Computer\Policy\Computer Configuration\Administrative Templates\Windows Components\Windows Messenger. Double-click 'Do not allow Windows Messenger to run' then click Enabled. Click ok and close the Group Policy Editor.

If you have Windows XP Home edition, the Group Policy Editor isn't available. To find out what to do, you must first find out the version of Messenger you have installed on your PC. Open Windows Messenger then click on Help, About to determine the version number. If you have version 4.0, click on Tools, Options and select the Preferences tab, Clear the checkbox 'Run this program when Windows starts' and click ok. This will prevent Windows Messenger from being started the next time you reboot.

Unfortunately, Windows Messenger is also started when you run Outlook Express. Microsoft suggests that you carry out the following step: start Outlook Express, then click on Tools, Options and select the General tab. Clear the checkbox captioned 'Automatically log on to Windows Messenger', click ok and close Outlook Express. However when we tried this we found that the wretched thing still started when Outlook Express is launched. The only way we were able to prevent it was by the rather drastic step of renaming or deleting the c:\Program Files\Messenger folder.

If you have Windows Messenger version 4.5 or later, disabling it is somewhat easier. Start the Registry Editor (click Start, Run, type Regedit and hit Enter). Expand the folders Hkey_Local_Machine, Software, Policies and Microsoft. Select Microsoft, then right-click it and select New, Key. Name the new key 'Messenger'. Select the new key, then right-click it and select New, Key. Name the new key 'Client' and then select it.

In the righthand pane of the Registry Editor, right-click and select New, Dword Value. Name the new value PreventRun. Double-click PreventRun and enter 1 in the Value data field, then close the Registry Editor.

To make this easier, we have prepared a file called unmessenger.reg on this month's cover disc which you can double-click to prevent Windows Messenger 4.5 from running. If you subsequently want to allow Messenger to run again, double-click the file remessenger.reg.

you want to receive. You will also be sending twice as many commands to the mail server, which will take time to respond to each one.

Q I loaded your *Tips & Tricks* CD and installed Tweak UI XP, Cookie Crusher 3.0 and ZoneAlarm 3.1. I then went to the *PC Advisor* home page. When I tried to exit the home page it went to the MAD home page, and page after page kept appearing until I turned off the PC. After rebooting I found I had lost a lot of files and it took five hours to restore everything. Is it the CD or is it me?

A We take a great deal of care when compiling our CDs to try to ensure that things like this don't happen. Obviously, we can't guarantee that a program on the CD won't conflict with software or hardware that you have (nor can software developers, which is why it is always a good idea to back up important files before installing any new software.) However, we feel pretty sure that the problem you experienced isn't the fault of our CD because, if it was, we'd be inundated with complaints from other readers by now.

The problem you experienced sounds like a trick sometimes used by the developers of some disreputable sites. The site is loaded through an invisible frame which contains some JavaScript code that opens the other pages when the frame is exited. The *PC Advisor* site doesn't do anything like this so we strongly suspect the problem has been caused by some other site you have visited. If it persists, try clearing your browser cache and check your browser's home page setting.

By the way, switching off a PC is always a bad way to stop it, whatever it is doing. Far better to press Ctrl, Alt, Del and try to close the errant program (Internet Explorer, in this case) or force a Windows shutdown.

Q I use AOL 7.0 under Windows XP. I tried to follow your advice on page 189 of the November 02 issue to check whether the Internet Connection Firewall was enabled, but found that when I clicked the Properties button on

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Automate disk cleanups

Save time by automating Windows' Disk Cleanup tool. You can use the Windows Task Scheduler to run the tool whenever you want, but first you need to create a profile containing the settings you want the tool to use when it runs.

To do this, click Start, Run and enter the command 'Cleanmgr /Sageset:x' (minus the inverted commas) where x is a number. This will start the Disk Cleanup Tool. Select the settings you want the tool to use by checking or clearing the checkboxes beside each entry. When you are finished, click ok.

The Disk Cleanup Tool will close, storing the settings you chose in the Registry. Now start the Windows Task Scheduler (click Start, Programs, Accessories, System Tools, Scheduled Tasks.) Double-click Add Scheduled Task, then use the wizard to schedule the Disk Cleanup Tool to run when you want. When the task has been added to the schedule, right-click it and select Properties.

On the Task tab of the Properties dialog box, edit the Run field to add /Sagerun:x after the program command line, where x is the number you used previously. This will cause the Disk Cleanup tool to run in Unattended Mode using the settings you stored in the Registry.

You can even create several other settings profiles for the Disk Cleanup Tool using different values of x, and run them at different times.

↑ Start up Disk Cleanup and select the files you want to purge by clicking the relevant checkboxes
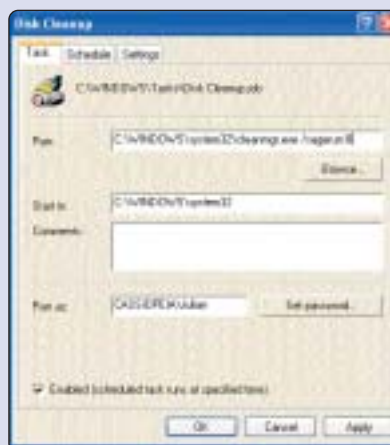
↑ Under the Task tab, add /sagerun:x to the end of the line in the Run field, substituting the relevant number for 'x' at the end of the command

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the Settings dialog box nothing happened. Nothing happens if I right-click the AOL connection in Network Connections in Control Panel, either.

Has the connection properties dialog box been disabled by AOL and, if so, how can I get round AOL's settings in order to enable the Internet Connection Firewall?

A AOL is not a standard internet connection. It is a proprietary network that installs ready-configured with the correct settings. It would appear that in order to avoid the problems that could be caused by users fiddling with the settings, AOL has disabled access to the Properties dialog box. Consequently, it is not possible to use the Windows XP Internet Connection Firewall with AOL.

Q I found your broadband supplement in the November 02 issue very interesting. However, I would like to know how broadband can deliver such high speeds over the same wiring that cannot currently even give me a consistent dialup connection?

**A** A detailed answer is beyond the scope of Helpline, but the simple

one is that although broadband uses the same wiring, it uses completely different technology. A normal phoneline is only intended to deliver an audio connection, so the equipment at each end of the copper wire limits the signal it can carry to audio frequencies, greatly restricting its capacity as a data carrier. DSL (digital subscriber line) broadband, on the other hand, uses radio frequencies that offer a much higher data bandwidth but requires different equipment at each end of the line.

Nevertheless, the quality of the line is much more critical for DSL use than for ordinary audio frequencies. So if your phoneline can't deliver a reliable dialup connection using your modem it probably won't provide consistent broadband performance either. Indeed, a DSL connection to your home may not be possible at all.

However, all may not be lost yet. The usual reasons for variable performance with an ordinary modem are either a weak signal (low gain) or noise on the line – faults which your telephone provider should be able to rectify.

I downloaded updates for my McAfee virus checker. Since then I seem to have lost all my Outlook Express email files. When I started up the computer after the download, the only email in my inbox was a new welcome message from Outlook Express.

I run Windows XP and have tried System Restore but it says there are no changes to restore. I have also searched for the DBX files without success. Can you help me restore these files?
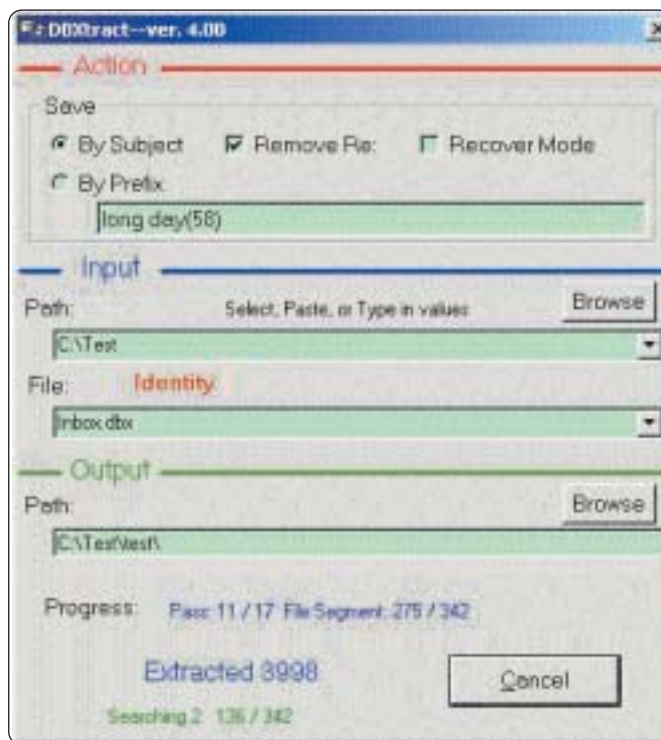
← If McAfee VirusScan corrupts your Outlook Express files, DBXtract may enable you to recover your messages

A You seem to be another unfortunate victim of a problem that can cause McAfee VirusScan to corrupt Outlook Express email files. It's a known problem and McAfee suggests that users who have experienced the problem should make sure that they are running the latest version of VirusScan, which you can obtain from www.mcafeeretail.com/naicommon/download/patches.asp#virusscan.

Readers who use Outlook Express and VirusScan and haven't experienced the problem might be well advised to download the latest updates, too, in case they become a victim later. Alternatively,

disable the email and internet download scans, which are the part of the product that causes the problem.

McAfee publishes a recovery procedure for lost emails, which makes use of a third-party freeware utility. However, it provides no guarantees that the procedure will work. You need to download a utility called DBXtract (shown above) from www.oehelp.com/dbxtract/dbxtract.exe. Once you have done this, make sure Outlook Express is closed and then perform the following steps.

A description of the utility can be found at www.oehelp.com/dbxtract/default.aspx. It's worth reading in order to understand what the utility does.

Create a folder to contain emails that will be recovered using the utility. Then start the program dbxtract.exe. It should detect your inbox.dbx file containing the emails that you want to recover. For the Output Path field, click the Browse button and select the folder that you just created. Click ok, then Extract. Any emails in the inbox.dbx file will be extracted to this folder as individual EML files.

Once the emails are extracted, start Outlook Express. Open the folder containing the extracted emails. Select all the email files and drag them to one of the folders in Outlook Express. After this, you may delete the folder containing the

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.
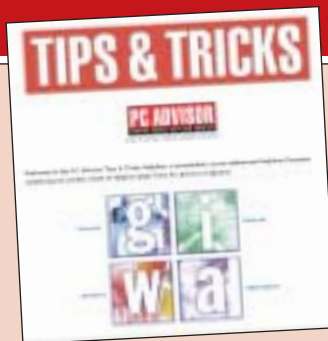
EML files. Note that, since DBXtract is recovering data from a corrupt file, it's likely that some messages may be missing and others may be invalid (notably messages with No Subject headings).

We hope that this procedure allows you to recover your lost emails. Unfortunately, the more you have used Outlook Express after discovering the problem the less likely it is that you will be able to recover many messages from it. The only guaranteed recovery option is to restore an earlier inbox.dbx file from a backup.

↓ Applications

I recently received a copy of your 2000 and 2001 archive CD-ROM. When I load the CD or try to run launcher.exe I get the message 'A required DLL file, msvbvm60.dll, was not found'. Is this file missing from my system or the CD?

In all probability this common shared file should have been put on the CD as it is only included as standard with Windows Me and XP. If you have an older version of Windows then you won't necessarily have a copy of msvbvm60.dll, although many applications install it so a large number of readers already will.

Fortunately this problem is easy to remedy. Just go to www.dll-files.com/dllindex/index.shtml, select msvbvm60.dll from the list and download it. Once you've done that, the file should go in the

↓→ If the Label Wizard (below) doesn't appear under Microsoft Access' New Report options, it may not be present or working correctly on your system. To find the problem, try creating mailing labels using one of the sample databases
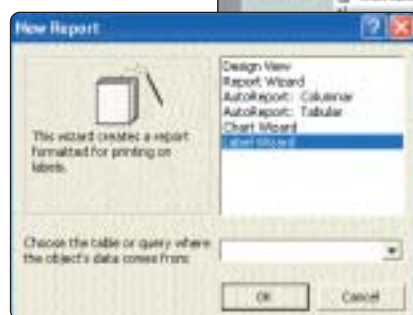
Windows System folder if you're running Windows 95 or 98, or System32 if you have Windows NT or 2000.

The site www.dll-files.com is well worth bookmarking as a resource for solving problems that may occur in the future. It contains downloadable copies of many of the DLL files that sometimes go missing.

I am using Office 2000 Premium and am trying to create mailing labels using Microsoft Access for some coursework. I select Report, New, the New Report box appears and I click Label Wizard. I select the table or query to create the labels from and click ok, but the Label Wizard doesn't appear and I am returned to the database window. My course tutor has no ideas. Can you help?

Have you checked the obvious things like looking at the data table or query to verify that it contains some data records? We are not aware of any known software problems that can result in the non-appearance of the Label Wizard. However, it might be worth running Office Setup and using the repair facility to rectify any faults in the installation.

Before you do this, use the same steps you described to create mailing labels using one of the sample databases that come with Microsoft Access, such as northwind.mdb, shown above. This will verify whether the Label Wizard is present and working correctly on your system, or whether the problem is actually something to do with your data.

I installed the Apache web server on my PC, which runs Windows 98, but uninstalled it because I had trouble configuring it. Now when I start the computer I get a window saying 'Missing shortcut. Windows is searching for apachemonitor.exe'. How do I get rid of this? I want to reinstall Apache. Is there a simple, clear guide to installing it anywhere?

The shortcut to the missing Apache program is probably in your Programs, StartUp menu folder. Just right-click the icon in the menu and delete it. This is a pretty elementary problem to fix, so if it stumped you and if you had problems configuring the program, you may want to consider if Apache is really the right web server software for you. It was

Contact us

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

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.

Frustrate the spammers

Spam – unwanted and often offensive email – seems to have got a lot of readers hot under the collar this month. If you're receiving spam, the only effective solution is to use some spam-filtering software, as discussed in two replies in the Internet section. There's only one alternative to this and it's rather drastic: get a new email address.

If your mailbox is spam-free, or you decide to take our drastic advice, here are some tips for ensuring that your address doesn't fall into the hands of the spammers.

1. Keep it private **Don't post to newsgroups, message boards or website visitors' books using your email address. If this is inconvenient, obfuscate your address by inserting some extra text like _Delete_This_ or .No-Spam. into it. Address-gathering robots will get an invalid address; most people will be savvy enough to remove the extra text from the address if they want to email you.**

2. Hold back on email **Don't give your email address when completing registration forms at a website (unless the site is a household name that you can trust, like PCAdvisor.co.uk).**

Even then, look for the checkbox that lets you deny the right for the site to pass your information to other parties. If you need to register with sites you aren't sure about, set up a free mail account (such as with Hotmail) for this purpose alone. You can then dump this address if it becomes a target for spammers.

3. Don't advertise **If you have a personal home page, make sure your email address doesn't appear on it. If you want site visitors to be able to email you from a page, set up a mail form if your ISP supports this. If it doesn't, use one of the many free JavaScripts that let you create an 'Email me' button without your address appearing as clear HTML text. Or create a GIF file containing your address (use the text tool of a bitmap editor) and insert this into your web page. Visitors will be able to read the address; robots will think it is just an image.**

4. Look for yourself **Use your favourite search engine to search the web for your email address. If you can find it, spammers' robots can too. Email the webmaster of any site on which your address appears and ask them to remove it.**

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originally written by and for Unix and Linux geeks, who will happily plough through thousands of lines of program source code to find out what things are supposed to do. It hasn't been designed to be easy to use.

You will find the official guide to using Apache with Windows at http://httpd. apache.org/docs/windows.html. There's also a useful page called 'How to Install the Apache Web Server on Windows' at www.thesitewizard.com/archive/ apache.shtml. For help with specific configuration problems, try using Google (www.google.com) to search the archives of the newsgroup comp.infosystems.www. servers.ms-windows.

Q I'm having trouble recording video files using a Hauppauge WinTV-USB. When playing back any files recorded using the device the video is perfect, but the sound contains a harsh click about every half second. I have tried every combination of setting and updated drivers I can think of. Can you help?

A We haven't heard of this problem and so can't offer a specific remedy. However, a few users of this product (shown below, left) have complained of poor video/audio sync. Clicks in digital audio are caused by discontinuities in the digital data stream. This is unlikely to be occurring on the USB connection due to the way USB reserves sufficient bandwidth for audio and video data streams. Therefore, you need to look at what might be interrupting the software thread that handles the audio recording.
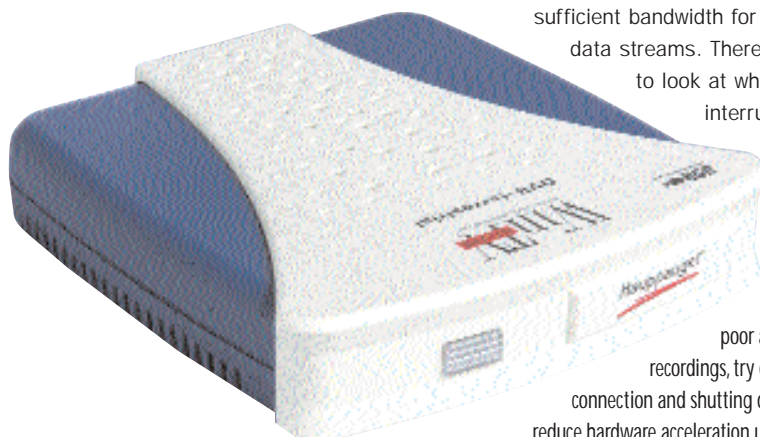
↖→ If you're getting poor audio/video sync from recordings, try disabling your network connection and shutting down all programs or reduce hardware acceleration under System Properties

Networks can be the culprit as they often check for activity at half-second intervals, so disable the connection if there is one.

Shut down all applications, including system monitors and virus checkers running in the System Tray. If you can get clean recordings with the system in this state, re-enable the apps one by one until you discover the culprit. You could also try reducing the hardware graphics acceleration level (from System Properties, Performance tab, shown below). If none of this helps, possibly the driver for another USB device is interfering with the WinTV drivers. Try uninstalling any other devices to see if this is the problem. ■