

# Doctors Orders

Hello, welcome to the October edition of our newsletter.

Our sales director says that all our suppliers have been phoning for the last month asking what stock we require for Christmas, so I suppose it must be that time again. Pre-Christmas panic time.

In these hard times, no one wants to carry stock that might not sell that week and now that most suppliers will ship the next day (for a fee) there's no incentive for the retailer to order a product until the day before he sells it.

The problem is unless the suppliers get their customers orders in early, they don't know what items to order from the manufacturers and likewise the manufacturers don't know what quantities to produce.

So from the end user's perspective what can you expect this Christmas? Well, if you are after a particular make and model of a particular product, then you might have a hard job tracking one down unless you are lucky. If you are fairly flexible you should be able to buy something similar to what you were looking for.

All in all, there's going to be a lot of people this year, with just an orange and a few nuts in their stocking, so shop early to avoid disappointment.

The Twitter revolution is still gaining a foothold over the other social media applications. It's a shame that many people use it for just letting the world know how bored they are, because if you choose who you follow carefully, you can receive useful information on a regular basis. As you can use Twitter on a mobile device, many companies are using it in place of texts to keep employees that are out of the office up to date with the latest information.

The message (the tweet) is short (140 characters) so its not like receiving an email, its just a little bit of information. You can include a web link though. I usually send out 3 or 4 tweets a week to all our customers that are signed up. These tweets usually contain information on free add-ons to make your computing life easier or late breaking news on competitions and other website goodies.

If you'd like to join our happy band, just click on the link to the right and don't forget you can also use Twitter to stay in contact with friends and family.



Craig the Trainee

<http://twitter.com/CraigtheTrainee>



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# How to create a strong password

Life is now full of pin numbers, passwords and strange answers to security questions. Do we really need them?

Well, the answer is a resounding YES. Many of our customers recently have had their hotmail password cracked and changed. This then allows a thief to use their account how they wish from sending spam to gathering personal information about friends and family to exploit them in any way possible.

Of course you need to be able to login to cancel your account and hotmail & Yahoo have no concept of telephone support. So the best you can do is to email them and wait the obligatory 3 days for an answer.

A better way is to have a strong password to start with, but one that you can remember. Surely a dilemma, but here are some handy tips to get you started.

**Realize** the probability of a password being cracked. Let's assume that you have a 4 character password. Each character can be A-Z, 0-9, or an underscore ("\_"). That means you have 37 possible keys for each character. That means that your password has 1874161 possibilities. This may sound like a lot, but modern computers can easily go through thousands of passwords per second if the login program isn't correctly secured. Adding just one more letter (or number) to your password increases the number of possible combinations by nearly 40 times.

**Select** passwords that are at least 8 character long. These are difficult to guess, and impractical to guess since many computer systems make you wait for a period of time after an incorrect password before you can try again. A computer trying to guess would have more than three **trillion** passwords to go through.

**Never** use a component of your user name in your password. If your user name is dog33, do not use dog in your password.

**Never** make your password the same as your user name. This will be extremely easy to guess and will probably be tried first by an attacker.

**Avoid** easily guessed passwords like "password" as well as passwords about your personal life. Avoid using favorites or proper names in the passwords.

**Select** passwords that are random. Try to use randomness in passwords. The best passwords are random strings of letters and numbers such as "493043ferw" or "4nfj4jkk13". But don't forget you have to remember it!

Never give anyone else your password.

## Tips

The harder your password is to guess the safer your data.

If you use linux, use shadow encryption and cracklib to filter out bad passwords and store passwords in a safer way.

If you are so inclined, scripture references make good passwords. Choose a passage you can remember and use the reference for your password. An example would if you chose The Beatitudes, your password could be Matt5:1-12.

Don't use rows of keys that can be found side-by-side on the keyboard, such as qwertyuiop, asdfghjkl, and zxcvbnm.

A funny sentence with friends and numbers can be easy to remember. Use the first letters of the words in the sentence. ie We ate 12 pies with Lisa and Bob would be Wa12pwLaB

## Warnings

The harder your password is to determine, the harder it will be to remember.

Try not to use extremely random things, like sjktyu7cvhj6m, because you won't remember it (unless you have it on paper). If you can't remember it, you generally have to click the link which says "forgotten your password" if one is available.

If you are still stuck and need some help creating a strong password have a look at :-

<http://strongpasswordgenerator.com> it not only gives you a very strong password but also a means of remembering it.

## Bargain laptop but limited stock available



### **HP 6735s laptop**

**AMD Sempron SI-40 2.0GHz Processor**

**2Gb fast DDR2 RAM memory**

**160Gb SATA Hard drive**

**DVD-RW drive**

**15.4" Widescreen LCD screen**

**ATI Radeon HD3200 graphics**

**Wi-Fi Lan for wireless broadband**

**Windows Vista Home basic**

**12 months warranty**

**Only £299.95 inc vat**

These laptops are the result of a cancelled local government order from Hewlett Packard.

They are an excellent specification for this price level and would make an ideal gift this Christmas or for a student returning to uni.

We have very limited stock of these, so when they have gone they're gone.

At this price we are not able to install our usual add-ons of antivirus and office suite but if you purchase one of these you can download these programs from our website for free or we can install these for £19.57.

## Computer Doctors new web address & Emails

We have recently acquired the web address of [www.computerdoctors.co.uk](http://www.computerdoctors.co.uk) and have decided to go with this as our main web address instead of the old address [www.computerdoctors.uk.net](http://www.computerdoctors.uk.net).

It probably doesn't sound much, but most people in the UK assume a "co.uk" address and will try this first if they are not sure of the exact address.

Likewise, some people will type in PC doctor.co.uk or something similar, so we try and cover all eventualities by purchasing additional web addresses when available and redirecting these to our main site. At present we have about 40 additional web addresses but one we do not own is [www.computerdoctor.co.uk](http://www.computerdoctor.co.uk) (no S on the end of doctor).

So if you type this you will get a very good repair company in London who do not come out to Northampton.

When we came to Northampton in 2001, the name "Computer Doctors" was a bit inspired. Little did we know that every computer engineer and their dog would want to be known as a computer doctor.

Then, if you typed Computer Doctor into a search engine, you got us and a few companies in USA, nowadays its hard to see the wood for the trees.

What's worse is, if a customer types something like "PC repair doctor" (as one customer did) then complained to us that they couldn't find us, and they only looked at the first page of 20!

(I've just typed this into Google and got 913,000 results and even the company whose web address is [www.pc-repair-doctor.co.uk](http://www.pc-repair-doctor.co.uk) didn't get on the first page)!

Web optimisation is something that large companies spend lots of money on and not everyone can be on the first page. So it's a bit of an achievement if any small company can reach this elevated position.

(If you look at our London friends website [www.computerdoctor.co.uk](http://www.computerdoctor.co.uk) you will see a home page full of keywords, (and I mean full) which totally distracts from the message they are trying to put across. But they have to design it this way to stand any chance of standing out from the crowd in the metropolis).

Our email addresses have also lost the "uk.net" suffix to be replaced with "co.uk" but all the prefixes of "sales@" and "tech@" stay the same.

All our contact details are on the back page as usual.

<http://www.computerdoctors.co.uk/pages/contact.htm>

# Microsoft anti-piracy tool (WPA) returns for an encore

## Ask the Doctor

**"Should you warn readers about not updating every driver in Windows — or at least those in Vista? Some driver updates require reactivation of Vista. I don't know specifically which drivers trigger reactivation (I updated several at once), but maybe you could shed some light on the subject."**

Product activation first appeared in XP and has been tweaked several times since then. WPA is nominally an anti-piracy tool that's supposed to detect whether a copy of Windows is being installed illegally on multiple systems.

In essence, Windows makes a system inventory when it's first installed and then checks to see whether the OS is being placed on the same core hardware each time its installation routine wakes up. If Windows thinks it's being installed on a different system, it asks to be reactivated.



WPA accommodates normal hardware upgrades from time to time so that you can add more RAM and can implement other system enhancements without requiring reactivation. However, a major hardware change (such as installing a new motherboard) or even many small hardware changes can trigger the reactivation flag.

Some routine operations can also prompt a reactivation. For example, a system's WPA records are stored on the hard drive, so reformatting the drive or otherwise losing or corrupting the activation records will generate a request for reactivation.

As for drivers: Windows "talks" to hardware through software drivers so, upgrading many drivers within a short time can make Windows think that it's seeing lots of new physical hardware. Bingo! You get the reactivation nag dialogs.

While it's always a good idea to get your driver updates directly from the hardware maker rather than through the general services of Windows Update, note that WPA doesn't care where the drivers come from; Several new drivers at once, from any source, may trigger a reactivation nag.

And the above applies not only to third-party drivers. Windows contains many internal drivers of its own that are part of the core Windows installation. Some Windows up-

dates and service packs contain new copies of these necessary internal drivers, so these may also trigger a demand for reactivation.

Microsoft has never fully published the internal details of WPA, so there's no way to know precisely what will and won't trigger reactivation. It's just an annoyance that those of us with legit copies of Windows have to live with, even if we've done absolutely nothing wrong.

For additional general info, see Microsoft's Help and How-to article, "Activating Windows: frequently asked questions,"

<http://windowshelp.microsoft.com/Windows/en-US/Help/62088be6-3538-46a6-99fb-05e74aeb48b51033.mspix>

and also another article on the same site titled "Troubleshoot activation problems."

<http://windowshelp.microsoft.com/Windows/en-US/Help/57cc0e65-f70c-49fd-bdaa-6da83d6a35af1033.mspix>

The articles focus on Vista, but the same information applies to XP and Windows 7.

## Windows XP PowerToys

If you are one of those people that find it impossible to leave your desktop plain or just have to change your icon fonts from Courier to Times New Roman, then you'll love PowerToys. This a collection of goodies by Microsoft that allow you to tweak nearly every aspect of Windows XP.

You'll be able to make your average computer engineer weep as nothing will be where it should be and your whole computer will look different from anybody else's.

There's no official support from Microsoft for PowerToys so if you change so much about your computer that you don't know which way is up, then you're on your own.

Most of this is accomplished via the numero uno of PowerToys "Tweak UI" but if you don't feel as adventurous there are others, such as "Taskbar Magnifier", "Image Resizer", "Slide Show Wizard" and lots more to keep you out of mischief on those cold winter evenings that should be arriving any day now.

[http://www.winsupersite.com/reviews/windowsxp\\_pt.asp](http://www.winsupersite.com/reviews/windowsxp_pt.asp) is a review of the various PowerToys and if you feel inclined, you can download them from Microsoft from:

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/downloads/powertoys/default.mspix>

# Those pesky “temp” files

## Ask the Doctor

**"I'm wondering why antivirus vendors don't clean out the temporary Internet files and temp files before doing a scan. I've watched scans take many hours, and in most instances the scan is winding through the temporary Internet files and temp files for a majority of that time...."**

**"I don't mind grabbing another tool and quickly cleaning that stuff out, but it would be nice to have that option as a 'one-stop-shop' sort of thing."**

If you have so many temp files that they take hours to scan, you'd probably do well to reduce the size of the temp-file area. In IE, click Tools, Internet Options. In the "Browsing history" section under the General tab, click Settings and see how much space is allocated to Temporary Internet Files.

If you have a fast Internet connection — anything above dial-up speeds — you probably don't need more than 10MB or 20MB of temp-file space, despite what Microsoft recommends. If you use a dial-up link, 50MB is about the right size for your temp files. In my experience, anything more than those amounts just bogs things down with no discernible performance upside.

Normally, files get placed in a temp-file location because there's a reasonable chance they'll be needed again. Having on hand a temporary copy of an often-used file saves time and makes your browser seem faster.

Installation software sometimes uses the temp-file areas, especially with programs that require a reboot after installation because the files in the temp area may be needed to finish the install after the reboot. Prematurely flushing the temp-file area can torpedo the installation. This is one of the ways that overaggressive file cleaning can lead to trouble.

Temp files are supposed to be either deleted by the process that created them or left to "age out": When a temp-file area reaches a certain size, Windows starts deleting the oldest files to make room for new ones. Temp files don't really become junk files until they linger past their "age-out" date, for whatever reason.

Beyond the age of temp files, there's no good way for third-party software to know whether a given file in the temp area might still be useful. This is one of the reasons why temp-file folders tend to expand over time: most software treats temp files with caution, so nothing that still has value gets deleted.

I recommend that you reduce the size of your temp-file area and use both a good antivirus program such as Avast or Kaspersky and a separate good clean-up tool, such as Ccleaner. With a right-sized temp-file area, the problem of overlong scans simply goes away.

# Cleanup for multiuser PCs

## Ask the Doctor

**"What's the best way to clean a computer with multiple accounts? Should you install and run [the cleanup] software on each account? If you install the software on one account, will it clean the entire computer, including each account?"**

**"For example, programs like CCleaner will install on only one account and don't offer the option for all users. Does this mean the program will clean the entire computer, including other accounts, or do I have to install CCleaner on each account to clean up each user's account?"**



Most reputable cleanup software does clean system-wide but may not do so in an obvious way.

CCleaner automatically installs to all accounts, but the program does so in a nonstandard way that might lead you to think it's not present. Instead of listing itself normally in each user's All Programs menu, CCleaner inserts itself into the context menu that appears when each user right-clicks the Recycle Bin.

From there, each user can access CCleaner's junk-removal features. But the program's Registry cleanup features are available only to the administrator who originally installed it and who has the access rights and (presumably) the knowledge required to use CCleaner properly. This is a safe approach, but it doesn't make it obvious that CCleaner is installed on all accounts!

CCleaner supports the use of command-line arguments. This means you can create scripts or shortcuts to scrub whatever target folders you wish, either automatically — such as at startup or shutdown — or via some manual trigger.

For example, CCleaner's `/auto` command automatically cleans whatever locations you've previously selected from within the main program. So if you create a shortcut with this as the target:

**"C:\Program Files\CCleaner\ccleaner.exe" /auto**

and then put it into this folder:

**C:\Documents and Settings\All Users\Start Menu\Programs\Startup**

CCleaner will run in `/auto` mode each time any user signs in.

# Tricks to evade keyloggers on public PCs

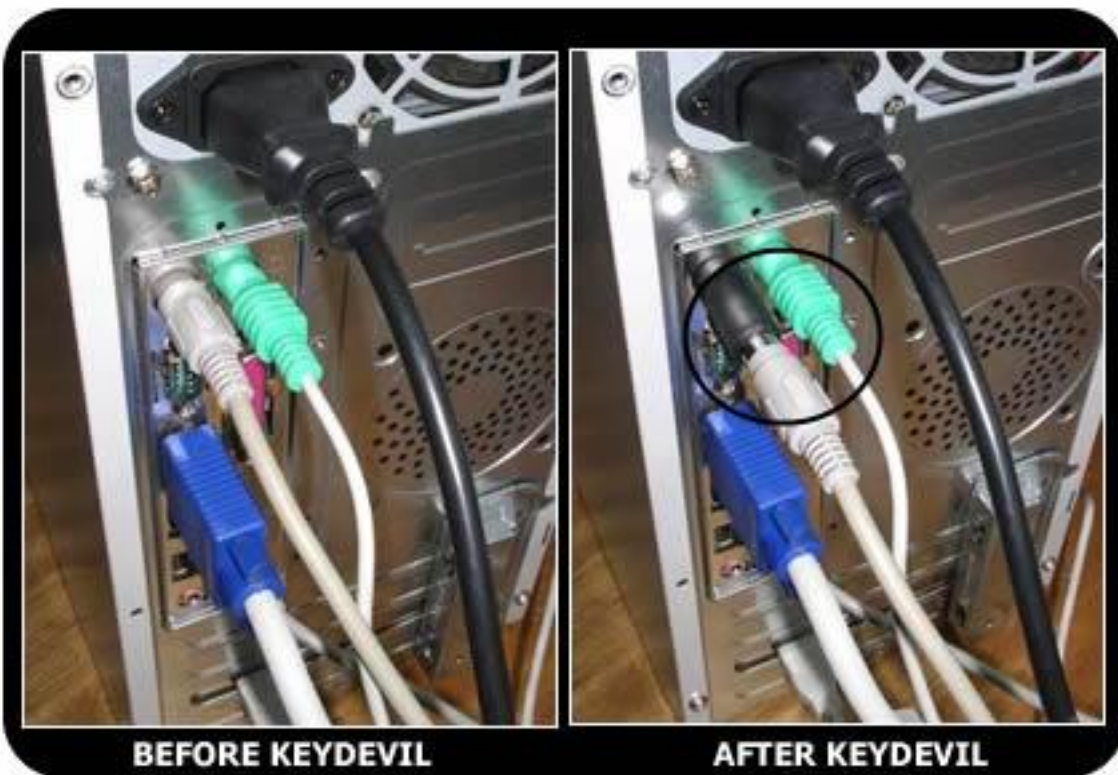
Keyloggers keep a record of your keystrokes then send the log back to their host website where the log is sold to the highest bidder. This may contain your credit card details and other information. You can protect your own PC against keyloggers with anti-spyware programs, but what if you are using a public PC? There are methods of inputting passwords etc. without using the keyboard but some are confusing enough to prevent most people using them.

The revised Vesik method involves typing nonsense characters into a password input box when using a public PC and then rearranging some of the letters to form your actual password with the mouse. If the PC contains a hardware keylogger or is infected with a software keylogger, rearranging a password in this way will usually suffice to obscure your credentials. Most hackers will concentrate on the 99% of users who type in their passwords at Internet cafés in the usual way.

One proposal sent in by a customer was a variation on a single theme. Namely, keep your sign-in information on a USB flash drive or memory stick, then copy and paste the info into the appropriate fields when you're required to use a public PC or other unsecured computer.

Unfortunately, many keyloggers capture any information you place into the Windows Clipboard. We tested the copy-and-paste technique using the All In One Keylogger from RelyTec. ([www.relytec.com](http://www.relytec.com))\* The program easily captured the sign-in IDs and passwords entered, whether we used the standard menu options (Edit, Copy and Edit, Paste) or the keyboard shortcuts Ctrl+C and Ctrl+V.

In our tests, the All In One Keylogger wasn't able to capture the information when we performed a copy-paste operation using a context (right-click) menu. But that's not much to rest one's hopes on. Other keyloggers do succeed at capturing data copied via context-menu options.



## A hardware keylogger

Note that many password-manager products require you to copy and paste your passwords from their database to an input box. Any product using the Clipboard in this manner is vulnerable to a keylogger that captures data from the Clipboard.

\*(At present it is perfectly legal for anyone to purchase software that keeps a record of your key strokes).

## Other strategies for blocking keyloggers

We have seen various ways of carrying one's passwords on a flash drive. A customer asked, for example:

### "What about surfing from suspect PCs using only Firefox Portable running off a USB drive, with all your passwords stored in the browser?"

If you store passwords in a portable version of Firefox, make sure you set a "master password" first. This encrypts your passwords so they're not readable on the USB device for any malware to scan.

To establish a master password in Firefox, pull down the Tools menu, click Options, select the Security tab, and turn on Use a master password. After doing this, you must enter your master password once per browser session.

Another customer, proposed signing in using a tool such as the portable version of Siber Systems' free RoboForm password manager, available on the company's download page. <http://www.roboform.com/download.html>

Both of these approaches were able to evade the keylogger we tested them with and would likely confound other keyloggers as well.

However, any method that permits automatic sign-in from a flash drive poses a risk of physical security. A flash drive is easy to lose. When you misplace one, you could be handing over your passwords to whoever finds the device — if you don't enable a master password.

## Can freeware provide the privacy you need?

There are products that are specifically designed to defeat keyloggers. Neo's SafeKeys 2008, is available for free on the Alpin Software site.

[http://www.aplin.com.au/?page\\_id=368](http://www.aplin.com.au/?page_id=368)

Neo's SafeKeys 2008 displays a small window with a simulated keyboard on which you can type your sign-in, password, and other information. Plus, it doesn't transmit information in a way that can be picked up by keyloggers. Nor does the program use the Clipboard. Instead, you type your info in the SafeKeys 2008 window and then drag the data to the appropriate text box in your browser.

Neo's SafeKeys 2008 successfully evaded the All In One Keylogger product in our tests. Other options help you foil keyloggers that regularly take screen captures to record your PC activities. According to the Alpin Software site, however, the utility's drag-and-drop methods don't work with all products — including the Opera browser. No product will ever be able to guarantee your safety from snoops when you use a public computer. Fortunately, the techniques and products described here can reduce your risk substantially.

## Don't Click Delete

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If you have ever had the urge to find out more about the recycle bin and let's face it, who hasn't, then this site will tell you all you need to know. From hiding it to changing its name, it's all here.

<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/dont-click-delete-10-free-tips-for-the-recycle-bin-windowsxp/>

## 5 sites to fix your own PC for free

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Remember where you heard this first, a computer repair company telling you how to fix your own PC for free.

Seriously though, these sites do give some useful hints that might save you a callout sometime.

<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/5-sites-to-learn-how-to-repair-your-own-computer/>

## Coollector, movie database

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If you are into movies then this is a must have application. It gives you the full 50,000 title database information not just online but on your PC when off-line

<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/coollector-a-huge-movie-title-database-and-collection-organizer-nb/>

## 10 Tips for Outlook 2007

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If you are still struggling to get to grips with Outlook 2007 then this site may be a godsend. Some of those things that you thought Outlook won't do, can be done if you just know how.

<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/10-productivity-tips-for-the-quickfire-outlook-2007-user/>

## Smiley face meanings

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If you get emails from friends with smiley faces attached such as ":-)" or "(^\_^)" and you don't know what they mean, have a look at this article to find out more.

<http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/15-popular-codes-for-smiley-faces-their-meanings/>

# Personal Antivirus is a HOAX Antivirus Program!!!



We have said this so many times that regular readers must think we have gone mad. But every day we get customers ringing us to say that their PC is full of Trojans and that Avast can't be much good as it doesn't find any of them! The reason is the Trojans are not there. Personal antivirus, like antivirus 2009 and antivirus 2008 before it are all hoaxes and purely designed to get you to pay for their "antivirus" program. The customers that have purchased the product report that nothing changed on their PC, at all, "it didn't even remove the hoax software". The perpetrators of this hoax, supposedly reside offshore, on an island off the south American coast. Ask yourself, would you want to give these people your credit card details?

Some of these customers have been with us since day one (2001) so they obviously do not read our newsletters. When asked one customer said, "I do get your newsletter but I don't read it, I'm not interested in computers". Fair enough, but a bit of interest could have saved him a £58.72 call-out!

Plus it has to be said that whilst you can pick this up from any compromised website, by far the most sites to be compromised in this way are porn sites. While it's not up to us to tell our customers what they should or shouldn't view on their PC's but it would be remiss of us not to point out that a huge number of porn sites are happy to get any income they can and that includes being paid to send malware to your PC hidden inside their web page.

If you are going to view any site that may be compromised then use a sandbox ([www.sandboxie.com](http://www.sandboxie.com)) which will capture any downloads and enable you to delete them without infecting your PC.

The other old chestnut is, do you monitor what your children view online? If you have children assume they are visiting compromised sites, even though yours might be the 12% of under 18's that don't (a recent online poll).

If you already have personal antivirus, then download "MalwareBytes anti-malware" from our download page, this should remove all but the latest versions of the program.

## Three winners for Last months Competition

Last month we had three winners of the fabulous new book titled "Computing made easy for the over 50's".

The publishers assured us that the book requires no installation, no power supply, is totally portable and doesn't even have an on/off switch. Plus it's guaranteed not to freeze, crash or blue screen. How's that for cutting edge technology?

Our three winners this month are:-

**Ms Jacqueline Hall from Northampton**

**Mrs Chris Russell from Northampton**

**Mr Paul Mayes from Northampton**

By now our three winners should have received their prize (subject to Royal Mail strikes) and be well on their way to knowing all about computers.

Don't forget to enter this month's competition (page 10) for a huge back up drive, software and installation (worth £150), that can hold up to 142,000 photos.

## PC basics - adjust your screen resolution.



A high screen resolution is wonderful because more things find space on your desktop. However, a high resolution also reduces the size of everything and text becomes very hard to read. Hence, it may help to reduce the screen resolution. It's not a very elegant solution, but it's quite easy.

Right-click onto a blank area of the > desktop and select > Properties. The Display Properties window opens. Switch to the > Settings tab and reduce the screen resolution to 1024 x 768 or 800 x 600 pixel. If you're using a flat screen, you'll see that decreasing the screen resolution will also reduce the sharpness. You'll simply have to find the right balance for yourself.

To retain sharpness and visibility, you can also increase the DPI (dots per inch). Note that this step may require a reboot.

Within the > Settings tab click the > Advanced button, switch to the > General tab and under > DPI setting select > Large size (120 DPI) from the pull-down menu.

## Could you handle the marshmallow test?

Remember when you were a kid and were told to wait before you could eat dessert? That excruciating delay caused fits of fidgeting as you fed the dog your dinner in hopes of hastening the glorious sweet treat at the end of the meal.

Waiting takes on a whole new meaning when researchers give children one marshmallow and two choices: eat one marshmallow now, or hold off till the researcher brings you another one — doubling your pleasure.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWW1vpz1ybo>

As we are always banging on to our customers about making back-ups, we thought we would put our money where our mouth is.

This month we are giving away a LaCie 500Gb USB drive, complete with software that backs up your selected data with one click. How easy is that?

The prize includes installation and setup by our engineers and the whole package would normally cost £148.67.

**500GB HDD Holds:**

Up to 142,000 digital photos

Up to 125,000 songs (MP3)

Up to 12,000 songs (uncompressed CD quality)

Up to 38 hours of Digital Video (DV)

Up to 200 hours of DVD quality video

Up to 60 hours of HD video

**Specifications:**

Capacity: 500GB

Interface Hi-Speed USB 2.0

Interface Transfer Rate: Up to 480Mbps/s (60MB/s)

Burst Transfer Rate: Up to 30-35MB/s

Rotational Speed: 7200rpm

Cache: 8MB

Software Configuration Driver-free for Windows 2000,

Windows XP, Windows Vista and Mac OS X

Dimensions (H x W x L): 41 x 113 x 194 mm

Weight: 900 g

Don't think that you have no chance of winning.

Our competition is only open to people in our catchment area (\*see below) so give it a try, you never know, yours might be the only entry. You don't have to be an existing customer, so if you don't want to enter, be nice to your friends and help them with the answers.

As usual there are a few easy questions to answer but all the answers are on our website. **Good Luck**

[www.computerdoctors.co.uk/competition](http://www.computerdoctors.co.uk/competition)

\*NN1 – NN18, NN29, MK19, MK40 – MK46, LE16.

Competition ends 25th October



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If this has been passed to you from a friend and you would like your own regular copy, just go to:

[www.computerdoctors.co.uk/pages/newsletter.htm](http://www.computerdoctors.co.uk/pages/newsletter.htm)



Map to our Northampton Workshop  
[www.computerdoctors.co.uk/pages/map.htm](http://www.computerdoctors.co.uk/pages/map.htm)

## Contact us

**General information & to book a call out**  
Tel: 01604 411 444 (9-6 Mon-Fri, 9-1 sat)

**Sales & On-Line Purchases**  
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Shop: [www.computerdoctors.co.uk/shop](http://www.computerdoctors.co.uk/shop)

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**Email test Facility:**  
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