

# Doctors Orders

Hello all and welcome to 2010. I'm afraid this month's Doctors Orders is a bit light on content, (phew, that's a relief, I hear you all cry), as all of our contributors (our engineers) have spent most of the early part of December sorting out their Christmas party list and most of the latter part, recovering from aforementioned Christmas parties. Still, they managed to pass some interesting facts over to me for inclusion, even if they were all written on post-it notes.

Our "Surgery" got busier and busier as Christmas got nearer. By 24th December it was really like a headless chicken lookalike competition as we tried to get as many PC's fixed in time for Christmas as we could. We didn't get them all done, as some were waiting for parts. Plus a laptop with an intermittent fault that needed further testing. This belonged to a foreign gentleman who wasn't happy, "In my country the boss would make sure the engineer finished the job, even if he had to come in on Christmas day". Our workshop manager was heard to say, "Yes I agree, since the industrial revolution the motivation of your average peasant has definitely declined".

For those reading last month, thanks for the tweets commiserating with me for being stuck "up North" at our Leeds warehouse. The digs where I stayed looked after me so well, I put on nearly a stone in four weeks. I didn't mind that so much but when I started to put a "T" in front of every word and the thought of whippet breeding really started to look like quite an interesting hobby, I thought I'd better get back to my fellow southern nancies.

Anyway, the boss said that Northampton couldn't run without me, apparently my temporary replacement (a university student on a degree course) was sent out by one of the engineers for his midday steak and kidney pie and actually came back with a pasta salad because he thought was a "healthier option".

Rumour has it that it took over four washes for his mum to get the tomato sauce out of his tank-top!

Well, now I've managed to upset the toffs, the northerners, southerners and anyone not born in England, I shall take my leave and wish you all a prosperous 2010.

Craig



<http://twitter.com/CraigtheTrainee>



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# Ask the Doctor (Questions to our Tech Support)

## Why can't I delete my desktop shortcuts?

**"Do you have a method to remove desktop shortcuts that claim a directory has been corrupted or can't be found? These shortcuts can't be deleted. I've tried all normal ways to accomplish this, to no avail."**

When you start Windows, the contents of the Desktop folder are displayed by default. In Vista and Windows 7, the actual Desktop folder is located by default at:

**C:\Users\username\Desktop**

In XP, the folder is at:

**C:\Documents and Settings\username\Desktop**

But the Desktop is still just a folder and is subject to the same problems and fixes that can affect any folder. Four possible problems and their solutions are:

**Error on disk.** My number-one suspect for the unable-to-delete problem is a disk error, such as a scrambled file. This would explain the "directory is corrupted" message.

The simplest fix for this condition is to run CHKDSK, Windows' built-in error-checking tool. For details, see Microsoft Knowledge Base article 315265, (<http://support.microsoft.com/kb/315265/en-us>)

"How to perform disk error checking in Windows XP."

The manual steps listed in that article work almost identically in XP and in all subsequent versions of Windows. A Guided Help button is also offered, but it works only in XP.

**Registry glitch.** If running CHKDSK doesn't fix the problem, free Registry-repair tools such as CCleaner can be downloaded from our website.

**Files in use.** Still no dice? Perhaps something is locking the files or marking them as in use. (This doesn't explain the "directory is corrupted" message, but still ...) The most common reason for undeletable files is that they're marked as "in use" — even if they really aren't. Windows won't remove a file that it thinks is currently open, because the operating system is attempting to avoid instability.

Alternatively, some software programs — either by accident or through bad design — create files with nonstandard, invalid names or other attributes that Windows can't handle. Some malware does this deliberately, making the infected files difficult to clear out.

My favourite tool for removing locked, in-use, or otherwise undeletable files is the free but oddly titled program GiPo@MoveOnBoot. At less than half a megabyte, it's tiny, and the tool is unobtrusive in Windows Explorer's context

menu. (<http://www.softwarepatch.com/software/moveonboot.html>)

To remove a supposedly undeletable file, just right-click the file in Windows Explorer, choose the GiPo@MoveOnBoot option, and instruct the utility to delete the file.

GiPo@MoveOnBoot automatically creates a little script that runs the next time the system boots. It deletes the target file before the file can be locked, marked as in-use, or loaded. The process is one-click simple and very effective.

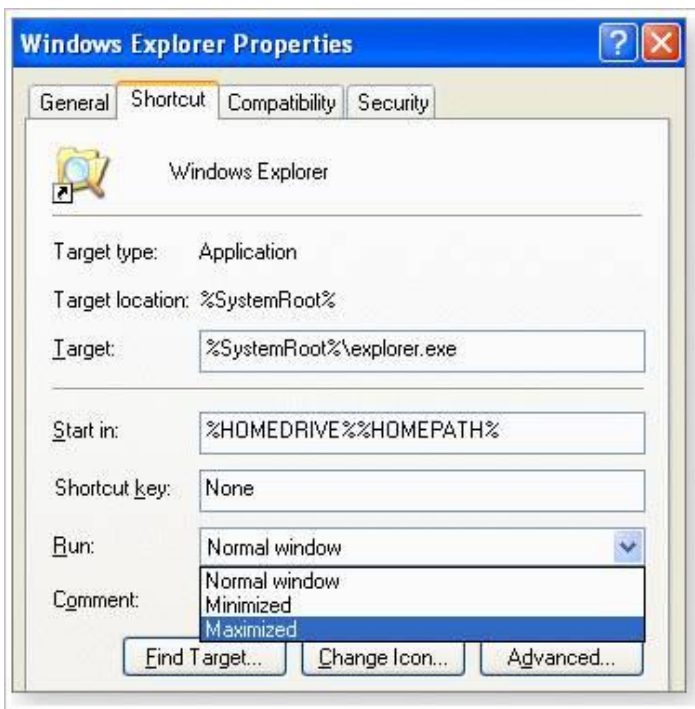
**File attributes.** Finally, it could be a simple matter of the shortcuts somehow — and incorrectly — being flagged as "system" or "read-only." If that's the case, KB article 326549 may help. (<http://support.microsoft.com/kb/326549/en-us>)

## Make windows open to your preferred size

**"How can I make windows open at the maximized size and keep them that way when I switch from window to window?"**

Two independent tricks can help you out.

First, to set each application to open in normal, maximized, or minimized size, right-click the application's icon and select Properties. On the Shortcut tab, pull down the Run menu, choose Maximized, and click OK. That's that: the app you just changed will always open in a maximized window — at least until you change the setting back.



Second, once you have several maximized apps running, don't manually resize them. Instead, leave them maximized and use Alt+Tab to cycle between them. Simply press and hold the Alt key and then tap the Tab key until the window you want is presented.

Different versions of Windows present views of the other running apps in different ways, but the idea is the same across all Windows versions. When you've found the app you want, release the Alt key and the window you selected will be brought to the foreground at whatever size you last left it.

This way, your apps will open maximized — or whichever setting you prefer — and stay that way until you're ready to shut them down.

### **What's best for long-term data storage?**

**"Could you please address the issue of which medium is best for long-term storage? CDs/DVDs have a five-year limit. USB sticks are costly per GB and delicate, etc."**

CDs and DVDs are probably still best for archival storage, which stashes data offline for a long time. If the CDs and DVDs aren't adorned with glue-on labels and are kept in a dark place at normal residential heat and humidity levels, most estimates I've seen place the minimum usable life span of these discs at 5 to 10 years. In fact, I have some 10-year-old CDs that still work fine.

With carefully controlled data-centre or museum-quality storage (i.e., dark, dry, stable, low-temperature conditions), the life span of a CD or DVD can be much longer — as much as 30 to 100 years. Name-brand manufacturers sometimes quote these higher life spans, but such claims are suspect in real-world situations, where environmental conditions are less benign. For more info, see the Optical Storage Technology Association's disc longevity Q&A.

<http://www.osta.org/technology/dvdqa/dvdqa11.htm>

Keep in mind that those very long life spans run the risk of tech obsolescence. Even if the medium survives, there may not be any devices capable of playing back the data years from now. For example, tape cartridges were once the be-all and end-all of backup media, but when was the last time you saw a new PC with a tape drive built in?

I suggest you use name-brand CDs or DVDs for archival storage. (Bargain disks are fine for everyday use, though.) Preserve your discs in the same container they shipped in — that's usually stacked on a spindle. Keep the discs away from light and from extremes of heat and humidity. Label the disks with a felt-tip pen; never use a glued-on label,

which can degrade a disc's data layer.

Every few years, check the stored discs by playing back a few selected ones from the oldest part of your collection. If anything is amiss, or if you start to feel uneasy about the age of the discs, re-burn the oldest ones afresh. But don't re-burn them all at once; just copy the oldest batch, and then wait another year to re-burn the next-oldest batch.

Likewise, when new and improved storage technologies come along, migrate your archived data to a new medium. For example, I have some archival files that started on floppies, then moved to tapes, and are now on CDs and DVDs.

For now, CDs and DVDs are tops for archival storage. They're cheap, compact, and have no moving parts. Using them for long-term storage will help your data live on indefinitely!

### **Will I benefit from using a multi-core CPU?**

**"I've been looking at new PC's and they all seem to have dual or quad core processors. Are they really that much faster than a single core processor such as the Pentium 4".**

If you're thinking of moving to a quad-core processor in order to improve the performance of a particular program — such as an audio-visual app or a computer game — you need to check carefully whether that program supports multiple cores. If it doesn't, the program may not run much faster with four cores than it does on a single-core PC. However, if the software supports multiple cores, you'll see a significant improvement in performance.

Switching to a multi-core system will also enhance the overall performance of your PC. The degree of improvement will depend on the number of programs you run simultaneously and whether those apps have been optimized for multi-core operation.

Anyone who normally uses only one program at a time will see the least amount of improvement. But if you're like me and have a half-dozen windows open simultaneously, a quad-core processor may transform your computing experience.

If you have a problem that's been bugging you for ages, why not "Ask the Doctor" . Give us as much information as you can and we will do our best to help.

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

# New mail-order facility saves the pennies for shoppers

We are pleased to say that our new mail-order facility got off to a great start last month.

For the first time a small company such as ours has been able to compete on price with the big boys such as PC world and Amazon.

We just managed to get it all up and running four weeks before Christmas and we estimate that our online shoppers saved a total of £1,000 compared with the competition in those four weeks.

If you prefer to buy as usual from our Northampton shop, then this is still available and these prices are comparable or better than other computer shops.

But if you know what you want and are happy to buy online you can really make a saving.

Shopping online is a different way of shopping for many people and some of the things that you automatically take for granted in a normal shop, such as unbiased advice is missing.

If you want the best prices you must do the work of the salesman yourself, by reading reviews and looking on manufacturer's websites to find out if the particular item is right for you. This is where you are earning the money you are saving.

Some of our customers have asked why we can't sell in the Northampton shop at the same prices as online.

Well, this is the dilemma, the fact is, if you want to be able to go into a shop and speak to a human (this loosely describes our salesman), then someone has to pay for his time.

As an example, on a typical day our salesman may have dealt with 25 enquires and sold 10 items. During this day he has earned £90 in wages. Shop rent, heating and other overheads, come to a further £50.

Each one of those 10 items sold must show a profit of £14 for us just to break even. The biggest overhead by far is our salesman's time.

Compare this with a fully automated mail order facility, where the orders come in via the internet and two men can stock, pick and ship around 500 items each day using wrapping machines and label printers.

Our two men's wages and overheads cost £375 which means we have to make just 75p on each item to break even. The biggest overhead in this instance is the warehouse costs, but look at the throughput compared with the shop.

This is not just us, this is the sole reason why every retailer now wants to sell online and why the Internet is such a great leveller for price.

Granted, it tells you nothing about quality of service, honesty and how a company reacts when things go wrong. If you buy on price alone from a company that you have never heard of, you may find out why they are so cheap.

Some companies have taken the above scenario to the extreme and cut overheads like support staff and even telephones to enable them to be the cheapest kid on the block.

When things go wrong, that's when you find out if that super low price included a smidgen of customer service.

Our sales team at Northampton handles support for any item that you buy from our online shop and if a part should fail within its warranty you can return it to our Northampton shop instead of packaging it and sending it back to Leeds.

You don't even get this sort of service from Amazon although I'm not going to knock them for it because their other customer services are excellent.

## Online security.

It goes without saying that the information you supply to our online shop is stored temporarily on secure servers only for the time that payment is being taken.

As part of the data protection act we are not able to keep credit card details longer than this. Even our staff are not able to retrieve the full credit card number, only the last four digits that may appear on your invoice.

If you really do not want to pay by credit or debit card then a PayPal account is the answer. This is a really secure account that anyone with a bank account or credit card can set up. If you don't receive the goods or there is a problem with them, PayPal will refund your money. You can arrange for PayPal to take payments from your credit card so you get all the benefits of using a card without the risk.

Many online shops do not support PayPal as it's too easy to get their payments withdrawn if goods are shoddy or service poor.

But most reputable retailers are happy to accept PayPal as it proves to their customers that they are serious about customer service.

Naturally, we accept PayPal as well as credit/debit cards on our online shop.

It's early days yet and we are looking to our regular customers to support us in this enterprise. We don't expect you to pay over the odds for our goods, just to remember that top notch customer service is automatically included in the price.

We have still to reach the throughput at our warehouse to break even so every item we sell at the moment, is at a loss. So if you are looking to purchase any item of computer related hardware or software, why not give us a try and we will do everything we can to keep those prices as low as possible.

<http://www.computerdoctors.co.uk/shop/online.htm>

# Computer Basics — Downloading a Program

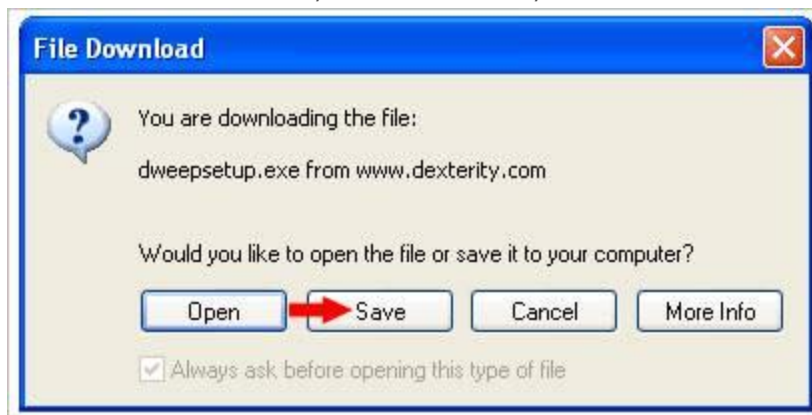
Our tech support are always suggesting to our customers that they download a particular file or utility to help them with a problem. Our web server downloads around 500 files each week, but if you have never downloaded a file before, how's it done?

Downloading is the process of copying a file (such as a game or utility) from one computer to another across the internet. When you download a program from our web site, it means you are copying it from our web server to your own computer. This allows you to install and use the program on your own machine.

Here's how to download a file using Internet Explorer and Windows XP. (This example shows a download of the file "dweepsetup.exe" from Dexterity Games.) If you're using a different browser such as Firefox or a different version of Windows, your screens may look a little different, but the same basic steps should work.

Click on the download link for the program you want to download. Many sites offer multiple download links to the same program, and you only need to choose one of these links.

You may be asked if you want to save the file or run it from its current location. If you are asked this question, select "Save." If not, don't worry -- some browsers will automatically choose "Save" for you.



You will then be asked to select the folder where you want to save the program or file, using a standard "Save As" dialog box. Pay attention to which folder you select before clicking the "Save" button. It may help you to create a folder like "C:\Download" for all of your downloads, but you can use any folder you'd like.

The download will now begin. Your web browser will keep you updated on the progress of the download by showing a progress bar that fills up as you download. You will also be reminded where you're saving the file. The file will be saved as "C:\Download\dweepsetup.exe" in the picture below.

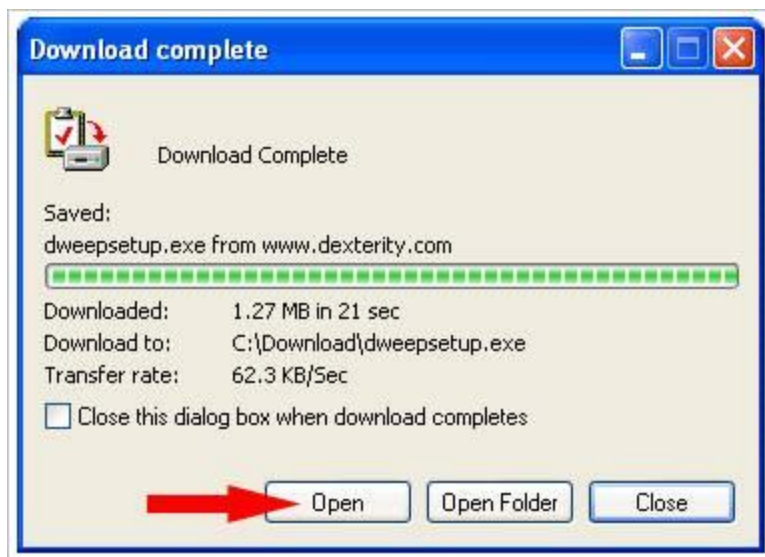
**Note:** You may also see a check box labelled "Close this dialog box when download completes." If you see this check box, it helps to uncheck this box. You don't have to, but if you do, it will be easier to find the file after you download it.



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Depending on which file you're downloading and how fast your connection is, it may take anywhere from a few seconds to a few minutes to download. When your download is finished, if you left the "Close this dialog box when download completes" option unchecked, you'll see a dialog box like this one:



Now click the "Open" button to run the file you just downloaded. If you don't see the "Download complete" dialog box, open the folder where you saved the file and double-click on the icon for the file there.

What happens next will depend on the type of file you downloaded. The files you'll download most often will end in one of two extensions. (An extension is the last few letters of the filename, after the full stop.) They are:

**.EXE files:** The file you downloaded is a program. Follow the on-screen instructions from there to install the program to your computer and to learn how to run the program after it's installed.

**.ZIP files:** ZIP is a common file format used to compress and combine files to make them download more quickly. All versions of Windows (XP and later) can read ZIP files without extra software. Otherwise, you will need an unzipping program to read these ZIP files. A common unzipping programs are WinZip, <http://www.winzip.com/index.htm> but there are many others. Many unzipping programs are shareware, which means you will need to purchase them if you use them beyond their specified trial period.

### Showing file extensions:

Windows for some unknown reason, hides file extensions by default. They seem to think that users will be confused by the extensions, but when running a downloaded utility, you may look in the folder and find filenames such as setup.exe, setup.dll and setup.dat. If you are unable to see the file extensions, you then have three files called setup and what could be more confusing than that?

To show your file extensions, open any explorer folder i.e. double click "My Computer", click the "Tools" menu then "Folder Options". On the "View" tab you will see a scrollable list of tick boxes, scroll down until you see one that says "Hide extensions for known file types" and untick the box to the left. Click "OK" and close the explorer folder. Your files will now have a three letter extension telling you what type of file they are.

You will immediately see the difference, have a look in "My Documents" folder and you will see your photos have a .JPG extension, your music has an .MP3 or .WAV extensions and Word documents will have .DOC extensions. (.DOCX for word 2007)

Once you know your file extensions you can search for the extension. Say you wanted to view all your photos, but they were on your PC in different folders. You could use the \* as a wildcard and search for \*.jpg, this will search your whole hard drive looking for any file with a JPG file extension and show all your photos irrespective of wherever they happen to be stored.

# Fast access to Win7 resources via the keyboard

Some of Win7's best timesavers are staring you right in the face on your keyboard, particularly via the previously under-utilized Windows key. You probably already know that pressing the Windows key (Win) opens the Start menu. But now, holding the Win key in combination with other keys does a lot more.

Win7's Windows-key combinations speed up opening system tools, navigating between files and apps, and performing other common tasks. (Note that many of these shortcuts work in XP and Vista as well.)

**Win+Pause:** Displays the System Control Panel applet.

**Win+D:** Shows the desktop.

**Win+Spacebar:** Shows the desktop without minimizing open windows (Aero Peek).

**Win+E:** Opens Windows Explorer with Computer selected.

**Win+F:** Opens a Search window for finding files or folders.

**Win+Ctrl+F:** Opens a Search window for finding computers on a network.

**Win+G:** Cycles through Gadgets (if any are installed).

**Win+L:** Locks your computer or switches users.

**Win+M:** Minimizes all windows.

**Win+Shift+M:** Restores minimized windows.

**Win+P:** Chooses a presentation display mode.

**Win+R:** Opens the Run dialog box.

**Win+T:** Cycles through and previews programs on the taskbar.

**Win+U:** Opens the Ease of Access Centre (Utility Manager in XP).

**Win+X:** Opens the Windows Mobility Centre (which isn't installed by default on desktop PCs).

**Win+(numbers 1 to 5):** Starts the program pinned to the taskbar in the position indicated by the number. If the program is already running, it switches to that program.

**Win+Shift+(numbers 1 to 5):** Starts a new instance of the program pinned to the taskbar in the position indicated by the number.

**Win+Ctrl+(numbers 1 to 5):** Switches to the last active window of the program pinned to the taskbar in the position indicated by the number.

**Win+Alt+(numbers 1 to 5):** Opens the Jump List of recently accessed items for the program pinned to the taskbar in the position indicated by the number.

**Win+Tab:** Cycles through open programs by using Aero Flip 3-D. (You must have Aero working; Win7 Home Basic and Starter don't use Aero.)

**Win+Ctrl+Tab and then Left or Right Arrow:** Opens Aero Flip 3-D to cycle through open programs.

**Win+Ctrl+B:** Switches to the program that displayed a message in the notification area.

**Ctrl+click:** Pressing Ctrl while clicking a taskbar icon will scroll through multiple windows of that icon's application.

**Win+Up Arrow:** Maximizes the window.

**Win+Left Arrow:** Docks the active window to the left half of the screen.

**Win+Right Arrow:** Docks the active window to the right half of the screen.

**Win+Down Arrow:** Minimizes the window.

**Win+Shift+Up Arrow:** Stretches the window to the top and bottom of the screen.

**Win+Shift+Left or Right Arrow:** Moves the window from one monitor to another.

**Win+Home:** Minimizes all but the active window.

## Get a PC for Christmas?

I suspect that lots of people got a PC, laptop or other piece of computer equipment for Christmas and now as the last of the turkey is disappearing into the dog, may be thinking, "Oh how much better this PC / laptop / netbook / router etc... would be if it was set up correctly".

We can set up your new equipment to work with your existing broadband, printer etc. Transfer all the valuable photos, music and documents from your old PC to the new one.

If your laptop came with no useful programs just a huge wodge of unwanted trial software that takes up space on your hard drive and slows the PC down. We can remove it and install any software you require.

Our standard security pack costs a one off fee of £19.37 installed. (No annual renewal costs) and advanced security pack just £44.36 renewable annually.

If you are a remote support customer not only do you get 20% discount on the above, but you can add the advanced security pack to your remote access account for just £2 a month, effectively, half price.

While we are on the subject, why not give yourself a belated Christmas present and sign up for our remote access support. From just £6.99 per month our engineer can take over your PC remotely and fix any problems you may have. (Hands-on hardware repairs may still need a call out).

<http://www.computerdoctors.co.uk/care/index.htm>

As it's Christmas we thought we would really push the boat out and offer a really fabulous prize spread over 8 weeks. This is the fantastic Asus 1000h netbook, worth £300 that won the recent best buy in Which magazine's best netbook tests. Do not confuse this with entry level Netbooks that run Linux instead of Windows and have tiny 8Gb hard drives to save battery. This has Windows XP, has a 160Gb hard drive but still has 7 hours battery life. You can see the full specification at:

[http://www.computerdoctors.co.uk/shop/Asus\\_1000H.htm](http://www.computerdoctors.co.uk/shop/Asus_1000H.htm)



Don't think that you have no chance of winning. Our competition is only open to people in our catchment area (\*see right) so give it a try, you never know, yours might be the only winning 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 January 2010

## Contact us

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



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

### General information & to book a call out

Tel: 01604 411 444 (9-6 Mon-Fri, 9-1 sat)

### Sales & On-Line Purchases

Tel: 01604 415 984 (9-6 Mon-Fri, 9-1 sat)

Fax: 0872 115 5359

Email: [sales@computerdoctors.co.uk](mailto:sales@computerdoctors.co.uk)

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

### Technical Support

Free: [tech@computerdoctors.co.uk](mailto:tech@computerdoctors.co.uk)

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

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

### Email test Facility:

[mail.computerdoctors@keme.co.uk](mailto:mail.computerdoctors@keme.co.uk)

