

PC doctor



I'm 14 years old and am thinking of hooking up to the Internet.

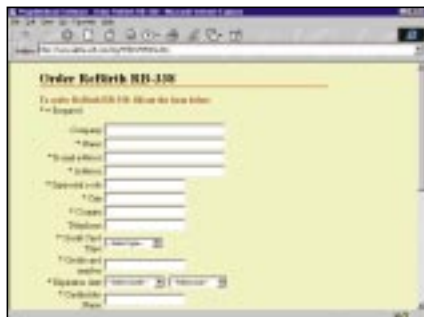
Two of the main uses of my PC are playing games and using it as a source of information for my schoolwork. In the pages of your magazine I've read that it's possible to download software free of charge. If this is the case, I'm sure I would download programs on a regular basis, but can I be sure I'm not going to be charged? Will I get a prompt before downloading if there's a cost? Or will I automatically be sent a bill? As a teenager, I cannot afford to have surprise bills coming through the post.
Lee Wood, Bridgend, South Wales



Worry not, Lee — the chances of receiving unexpected bills through the post after downloading software from the Internet are virtually non-existent.

The sort of programs that you can download from the Internet broadly fall into one of three categories: commercial software, shareware and freeware. Commercial software available on the Internet is just like any other — you have to pay before you can have it. This usually involves you handing over your credit card details before you can get anywhere near a 'download' button, so there's little chance of you being charged by accident.

The Web is jam-packed with shareware. Shareware programs are offered on a try-



The Internet makes it hard to get something for nothing.

Our PC doctor advises on how to keep a Desktop tidy, suggests a solution for printing on A5 paper from Excel, and explains why modems are never as fast as they could be

before-you-buy basis and if you like the software, you are obliged to pay a (usually small) fee for it. A shareware program may stop working after a certain length of time or may only have limited functionality. Pay the fee and you get the full program and usually notification of updates. Some shareware, however, is fully functional and the author relies on your integrity to pay for the program if you plan to use it.

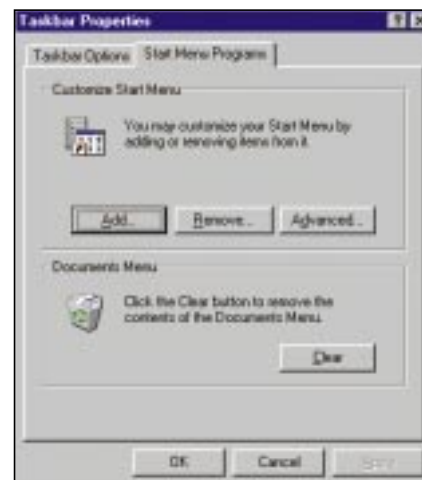
Freeware, as the name suggests, is completely free. Examples might be small utilities written as an intellectual exercise and then 'given' away, or versions of a program long since superseded. Game demos are also often distributed free. Beware, though — game demos are often many megabytes in size and can take a very long time to download.



I recently upgraded from Windows 3.1 to Windows 95 — a birthday present from my wife. I'm getting along fine with it but find that it leaves my Desktop messy. I'm sure there is an easy solution, but I want to know how to delete empty folders in the Start menu, delete a docu-

ment from the Documents menu, and delete the program paths in the Run box. Can you help?

Ian Thomas, Cardiff, South Glamorgan



Use the Taskbar properties to clear the Documents list.



Your first two wishes are easily granted. Right-click on the Taskbar (the grey bar along the bottom of the screen) and choose Properties from the menu that appears. Click on the Start Menu Programs tab for several options. Clear will clear the Documents menu, while Remove will allow you to navigate the Start menu and remove folders.

Clearing the Run box of the paths listed there is slightly more difficult and involves editing the Windows Registry — not something we would advise a novice user to do. A far simpler solution is to install Microsoft PowerToys from the Utilities section of the Software Library on this month's cover CD. One of the utilities here is TweakUI, which allows you to clear the Run list with the click of a button.



Q Is there any way of setting Excel 97 to print to A5-size paper? This size is not included on the list of preset sizes even though it was in the previous version, nor is there a custom option to let me define the size myself.
Mr T Cutbbert, Dagenham, Essex



Supported paper sizes depend on the printer driver.

A A quick call to Microsoft revealed that the paper size options in Excel are determined by the printer driver you are using. If your printer supports A5 paper, then an A5 option will appear; if it doesn't appear, then your printer does not support this size.

There is no easy way around this problem. If your printer can emulate other models and one of these emulations supports A5 paper, then installing and using this printer driver will allow you to print onto A5. Unfortunately, although hundreds of printers are supported by Windows, there is no definite list of which ones can print to A5, so it will be a matter of trial and error.

Alternatively, you could try importing your Excel worksheet into Word using the Insert/Object command. Choose the 'Create from File' tab and click 'Browse' to find the worksheet. Word's custom page size option means you can print to A5 paper even if your printer does not support this directly.

Q I have recently noticed that my Apache 33.6 modem is only downloading files from some Web sites at about 1Kbits/s. I have set the modem's COM port (COM4) to 33.6Kbits/s but the download speed is never over 1.5Kbits/s.
Ed Lea, Market Drayton, Shropshire

A You're not alone in believing that your modem is running slowly. Although it's possible that your modem may not be working properly (check that you're using the latest drivers), it's more likely that it is downloading the information just as fast as it can.

A 33.6Kbits/s modem can download information at up to 33,600 bits per second (abbreviated to 33.6Kbits/s). However, Internet browsers measure download speeds in kilobytes per second. Without getting bogged down in the technical complexities, a single kilobyte contains over 8,000 bits. Perform a quick sum and you'll find that a 33.6Kbits/s modem's maximum download speed when measured in kilobytes is around four per second.

Your download speed of around 1.5Kbits/s is still under half that but that's not the end of the story. Downloading files over the Internet is a complicated process that relies on many external factors. The physical location of the computer on which the files are located, the number of other people trying to get at the same files and even the time of day can all have an adverse effect on the speed of downloads. In short, it's unlikely that you'll ever download a file from the Internet at 33.6Kbits/s.

Q My brother and I have our PCs in the same room and would like to connect them together to play multiplayer games. Do we need to set up a network or is there an easier way to do this?
William Luke, Maidenhead Berkshire

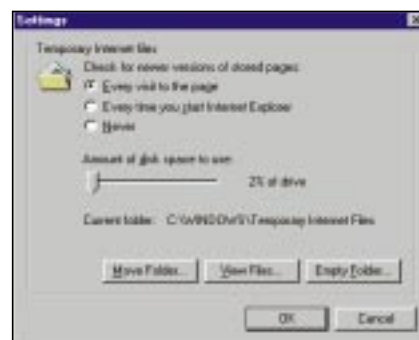
A If you look at the setup screens of most games with a multiplayer option, you have the chance to select what type of connection you have to the other player. In most cases, there will be an option of 'serial link' or 'null modem'. As long as you have a 'null-modem' serial cable joining your PCs, you will be able to choose this and play. Be warned though, that a normal serial cable (eg, the one supplied with an external modem) will not work.

Q I recently signed up for a one-month free trial with Pipex Dial. The trial has now expired but I find that I still have access to a lot of previously-viewed Web pages. My PC informs me that these are 'cached'. I didn't save any of these pages in the first place and am worried that they are taking up valuable space on my hard drive. I have tried to delete these pages, with no success. Any suggestions?
Gary Nuttall, London N4

A When you visit a Web page for the very first time, Internet Explorer (as supplied with Pipex Dial accounts) stores a copy of it in a 'cache' on your hard drive. Then, on each subsequent visit to the page, the program checks if the page has changed since you were last there and, if it hasn't, it uses the copy of the page in the cache instead of downloading it. For Web sites that seldom change, this reduces the time taken to view a page.

The cache is actually a folder on your hard drive and can be deleted like any other. If you still have Internet Explorer installed, go to the View menu and choose Options. Click the Advanced tab and then click the Settings button for Temporary Internet files. From here, you can set how the cache is managed and empty it by clicking the 'Empty Folder' button.

If you don't have Internet Explorer installed, look in the Windows folder for a folder called Temporary Internet Files. This is the cache and deleting it will delete the stored pages.



IE3's cache settings are easily altered.

The PC doctor regrets that he cannot provide readers with individual replies but, if you have a question or problem you want to share with other readers, write to PC doctor, *What PC?* Editorial, VNU House, 32-34 Broadwick Street, London W1A 2HG or e-mail whatpc@vnu.co.uk.

The writer of EVERY letter published will receive a FREE Microsoft IntelliMouse and a choice of Microsoft Bookshelf, Publisher 97 or Money 97. Please state which you would prefer.

