# Tools of the trade

'However did I manage before?' is the cry from many a PC user who has found an invaluable utility. Here we describe what we think are 20 of the best of these useful software tools

If you're not familiar with the world of software utilities, chances are you're not getting the most out of your computer. Utilities are programs so useful that you can't think how you ever managed without them. They can be big programs, packed with features that perform dozens of tasks, or they may be tiny, doing just one job, but doing it so well that they're a must-have.

A utility can come in the guise of a beautifully boxed product, complete with glossy manual and a price tag to match. However, it can just as easily come in the form of shareware, from a catalogue, the World Wide Web or the cover disc of *What PC?*. A shareware program is one that you try out and decide whether you like before committing yourself to buying – you pay (register) only if you decide to keep it. Some of the best programs are shareware – their registration fees are usually low, so you don't have to pay a fortune to get good results.

Here we've rounded up 20 of the best utilities around – you can be sure that the programs reviewed in this survey perform their jobs well, are easy to use and represent good value for money. To help you find exactly what you're looking for, we've divided them into the following categories: archiving and compression, document manager, graphics, the Internet, personal information manager, security, system and diagnostic, Windows enhancements, and fun. Somewhere in here could be the program that will transform your working life.

Acrobat Reader

Acrobat is the name of a system that was developed by Adobe to compress words and pictures into relatively small files for easy distribution. With the Acrobat Reader, which is free, anybody can view Acrobat's portable document files (PDFs) without having to buy the full Acrobat program, which is only necessary if you want to create your own Acrobat files.

The reader is included on every *What PC?* CD-ROM, where we use it to display our back issues. If you've looked at these (and if you haven't, we think you should), you'll know why the Acrobat reader is so popular. It works rather like an electronic book, in that information is displayed on pages, each looking as close as possible to the original from which it was created. A magnifying glass lets you choose the scale at which you wish to view each page and this can be anything from thumbnail to life-sized and beyond.

You can split the screen so that an overview of a document appears down the left-hand side while the current page is displayed on the right, and a search tool allows you to track down specific words – a big improvement on the static index of an ordinary book. You can even print out Acrobat documents if you'd rather read them in the bath.

Version 3.0 of Acrobat Reader for Windows 95 can be linked with Internet Explorer, Netscape Navigator and many other Web browsers, allowing you to view PDF files while you are on line. Some browsers display PDF documents, page by page, as they load, and others can embed a navigable PDF document inside a Web page. With many software publishers now providing PDF manuals on CD-ROM, it makes sense to keep the Acrobat reader permanently installed on your hard disk.

If you haven't got the Acrobat Reader on your PC, install it now from our cover CD-ROM. It doesn't take up much space on your hard disk, it's easy to use, and, best of all, it's free.
○ Free
○ Adobe: 0181 606 4000

Paint Shop Pro 4

Far more than just a drawing program, Paint Shop Pro 4 combines image-editing, painting and file-conversion tools in one easy-to-use package.

All the painting tools you'd expect to find are included, with crayons, charcoal, airbrush and so on. However, there's also a good number of textured surfaces to work on, including canvas, wood grain, clouds and marble. If you like, you can save your creations as a pattern that can be tiled without the joins showing, which is ideal for producing personalised background wallpapers for Windows.

There are also tools for photo-retouching and creating images from scratch, enhanced in this version with graduated and textured fills. Another new feature is that you can create pictures that let what's underneath show through – useful if you are developing images to be displayed on Web pages with coloured backgrounds.

Using Paint Shop Pro is now easier than ever before, with improvements to the toolbars, the Browse screen and the batch conversion utility. You can customise the toolbars to include the features you use the most and you can move the toolbars around the screen so that they don't get in your way. Alternatively, you can turn the toolbars off if you don't like using them.

The Browse screen has also been incorporated into the main program, so you can click on a thumbnail picture at any time to edit it immediately. The batch conversion utility is now very easy to use, with helpful dialog boxes to guide you through the range of options.

Another of Paint Shop Pro's features is that it lets you to do a screen grab and save it in almost any format.
Good enough for professional graphic designers, but easy enough for anyone to use.
○ £64.50 (inc postage & VAT)
○ Digital Workshop: 01295 258335
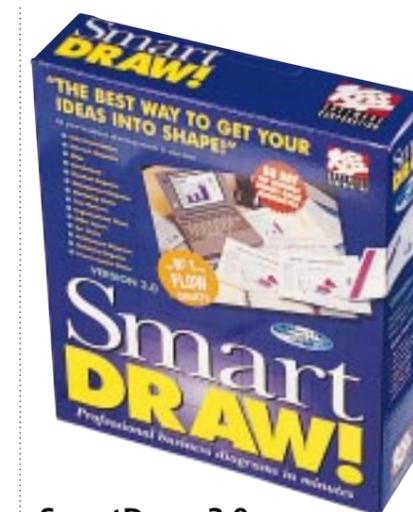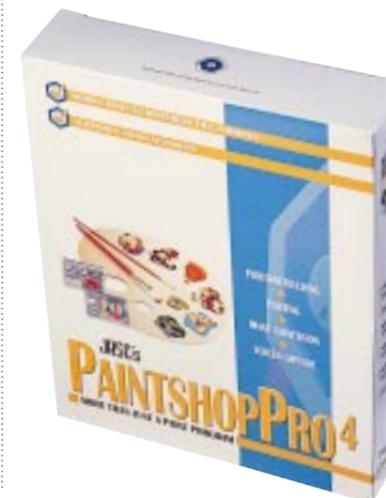
SmartDraw 3.0

SmartDraw is an easy way for non-artists to add pictures, charts and diagrams to their work. It can be used as a standalone program or from within word processors, spreadsheets and other programs that are able to insert objects.

SmartDraw duplicates some of the features already found in the drawing tools built into software suites and integrated packages, so it has to offer something extra. It does: remarkable simplicity and an enormous array of ready-to-use shapes and drawings. Hints for beginners pop up automatically the first time you perform an action in each SmartDraw session. These make it very easy to learn how to use SmartDraw, and when you're more familiar with the program they can be switched off.

A SmartDraw shape can be as simple as a triangle or as complicated as a detailed picture of a house. Shapes can be flipped, scaled, rotated and combined with others. They can also be customised and saved in libraries. The libraries supplied with SmartDraw are themed for tasks such as producing flow and organisation charts, network diagrams, forms, maps and room plans. Smart connection lines move with the objects they link and make it especially easy to produce structured business and technical diagrams. However, SmartDraw is equally suitable for producing simple illustrations.

Our only criticism is that the predefined shapes are clearly designed for use in the US, which can be very annoying if you're trying to produce a roadmap without roundabouts and motorway slip roads.
SmartDraw's main strength is its flexibility and ease of use. Even if you don't use it for weeks at a time, you can be back up to speed within minutes.
○ £69.95 (inc VAT)
○ Kiss Software: 0181 875 4422
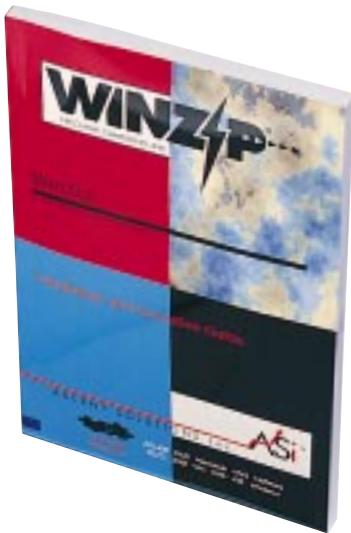
WinZip

There are all sorts of programs for dealing with compressed files, but the favourite in the *What PC?* office remains WinZip, which can handle files compressed by just about any program you could think of. It's got enough features to keep the most advanced user happy yet, thanks to its neat little wizard, it is simple enough to be used confidently by any beginner.

The WinZip Wizard automates the most common tasks for you, such as looking for zipped files, unzipping files and automatic installation of unzipped files. A really handy feature is that WinZip will let you install and try out a program, then, if you don't like it, you can uninstall it, leaving your system exactly as it was before.

The WinZip 'Classic' interface, while designed for more advanced users, is still pleasantly easy to operate, with colourful shortcut buttons and sensible menus. Simply drag a compressed file into the Classic window, and its component files are shown. Select one or more files, click on extract, and they are unzipped into the folder of your choice. Swapping between the two types of interface is achieved simply by clicking on a button.

The on-line help provided with WinZip is excellent, with an overview, tutorial and good reference sections. The program is now up to version 6.2, with support for long filenames and right-click integration with popular anti-virus programs.

A 21-day evaluation copy of WinZip can be downloaded from the Web (see URL below), a version is included on the *What PC?* CD-ROM and a full retail version is also available. **If you need to compress or decompress files, you couldn't do better than opt for WinZip to help you out.**
○ £38.78 (inc VAT & carriage)
  Trial version from: www.winzip.com
○ Atlantic Coast: 01297 552222

Internet Sidekick

Sidekick deserves a place of honour in the roll call of PC utilities, having been around for almost 15 years. The latest incarnation is Internet Sidekick, although Sidekick Deluxe is cheaper if you're not an Internet user. The core of both programs is a comprehensive electronic organiser offering everything you'd find in a paper-based organiser, with the added benefits of searching, sorting and cross-referencing.

Sidekick makes good use of the screen to present information from several of its modules at the same time, each in its own panel. You can, for example, view your address book at the same time as your notes and appointments, and drag information from one panel to another, perhaps to pop an address into a letter. The word processor built into Sidekick offers all the features most people need: a spelling checker, word counter, document templates and mail-merging.

The Internet version of Sidekick can be used to schedule meetings with groups of people anywhere in the world provided they have Internet e-mail accounts. It can also start up your Web browser and jump straight to an Internet site if you click on a Web address, and – by periodically connecting to an Internet time server – Sidekick can keep your computer's clock up to date.

Internet Sidekick can import and export names and addresses between other versions of Sidekick and via dBASE, Paradox and ASCII files. You can also import your Netscape and Microsoft Exchange address books. **Internet Sidekick and Sidekick Deluxe are much easier to use than programs like Microsoft's Schedule Plus and Outlook. Both run well on any Windows 95 PC, without stinting on features.**
○ £49.99 (£39.95 for Sidekick Deluxe) (both prices inc VAT)
○ Starfish Software: 0181 875 4455
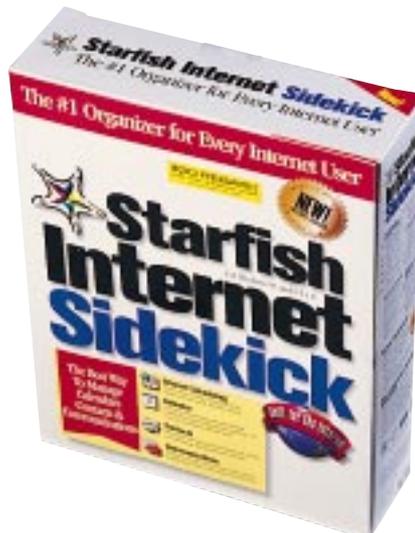
Pagis Pro 97

Pagis Pro is for people using their PCs productively, perhaps to run a business or home office. It binds together a PC, printer, scanner and modem so that collectively they can provide the same facilities as professional fax machines and copiers. Useful as this is, it would be hard to justify the purchase of Pagis Pro if it didn't have something else up its sleeve.

Actually it has two things: the TextBridge Pro OCR (optical character recognition) program and a document management tool so good that it could save you buying and learning how to use a separate database.

The OCR facility turns paper documents such as letters and faxes into electronic documents for use with word processors and graphics programs. These are then stored on the computer's hard disk. Converted documents and those you type in yourself can be managed effortlessly: Pagis Pro searches through every document and file on your computer and indexes each word. To retrieve a document you just type in some words you know it contains and Pagis Pro finds it for you. Even if you store scanned documents without carrying out OCR conversion, Pagis Pro can still index them and subsequently retrieve their contents, thanks to an automatic internal implementation of TextBridge Pro.

You can get at all Pagis Pro's features from an unobtrusive floating launch bar, and if you like to work by dragging and dropping files between windows, you can display a permanent toolbar at the side of the screen or attached to Windows' own taskbar. **Pagis Pro is a one-of-a-kind utility that's powerful and easy to use. It may seem pricey, but it actually costs less than many ordinary OCR programs, including TextBridge Pro.**
○ £233.83 (inc VAT)
○ Xerox: 01189 668421 ▶

First Aid 97

First Aid 97 helps prevent software and system failures on your PC. Where this isn't possible, it helps to minimise the damage caused. Part of First Aid's armoury is Dr Solomon's FindVirus, which alerts you to the presence of potentially destructive software on your computer. Equally important is the Guardian module, which runs constantly in the background, monitoring your PC and intercepting potential problems before they do any real harm.

Should a serious fault occur (one that could cause you to lose your work), Guardian's Crash Protector kicks in and tries to fix the problem, or at least close down the offending program. A supplementary utility, the Computer Program Reactivator, resurrects programs that have stopped responding to mouse and keyboard commands. Neither of these utilities is foolproof, but they offer valuable protection from many common software bugs.

A further element of prevention is provided by First Aid's automatic system check that identifies ways in which your computer may not be optimally set up. Allied to this, the Emergency Care module creates a recovery disk that will start up your computer even if Windows itself won't load. You can then use the BackTrack facility which enables you to revert to a previous working configuration.

Finally, there's a reference database covering Windows 95 and hardware-related problems. It uses a pictorial click-and-find approach, suitable for novices looking for simple answers to everyday questions.

First Aid 97 fixes many of the deficiencies inherent in Windows 95. It's not always successful, but by preventing a single crash it will justify its purchase price.

⃝ £34.95 (inc VAT)
⃝ CyberMedia: 0800 973631

Norton Utilities 2.0 for Windows 95

The original Norton Utilities included frighteningly technical tools for digging deep into the bowels of MS-DOS and directly modifying data stored on a hard disk. Old hands will be pleased to know that the Windows 95 version of Norton Utilities still includes some of the old DOS favourites, including Disk Doctor and Disk Editor, but in general the approach is now much more hands-off and the separate utilities work most of their magic unaided.

System Doctor carries out a PC health check whenever instructed and a Windows version of Disk Doctor fixes hard and floppy disk problems. System Genie helps you to customise Windows beyond the limits envisaged by Microsoft and there's a slick disk defragmenter that works faster than the one in Windows, and does a better job.

Space Wizard identifies files cluttering up your hard disk and lets you remove or compress them, while Registry Tracker monitors the changes made to essential Windows system files. Norton Protection adds another level of safety to the Recycle Bin so you can recover a greater range of accidentally deleted files. And if you really want to get your hands dirty, there's a registry editor that includes useful information about many of the registry keys.

For those new to Windows 95, there's the Norton Companion. This is a multimedia tutorial and reference work which contains over 50 videos telling you how your computer works and how you can use Norton Utilities to keep it in tip-top shape.

You won't get full value out of Norton Utilities unless you know your way around a PC, but if you do, you'll appreciate being able to get at the parts of Windows other utilities can't reach.

⃝ £81.08 (inc VAT)
⃝ Symantec: 0171 616 5600
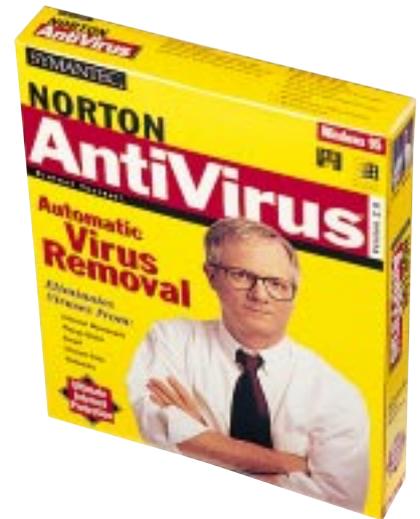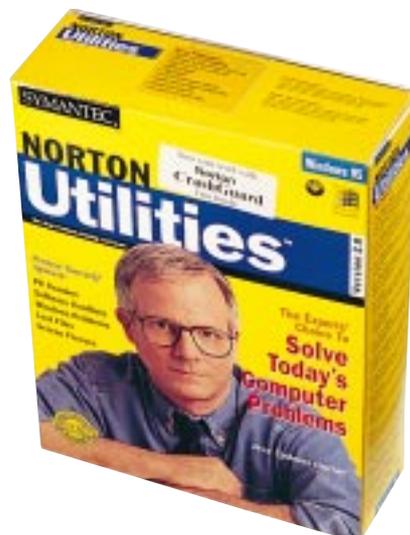
Norton AntiVirus for Windows 95 v2.0

If you're in the habit of downloading files from the Internet, taking floppy disks from other people, or using e-mail, you really can't afford to be without a good anti-virus program. These days, anti-virus software is easier to use than ever – simply install it and forget it until it finds a virus.

To have that kind of security, you need to know that your anti-virus program is up to the job, and you won't do better than to opt for Norton's Anti-Virus for Windows 95. Now onto version 2.0, this walked away with the Best Buy award in our February round-up of anti-virus programs. With plenty of features, it performs well, is easy to use and is sensibly priced.

When you install Norton AntiVirus, you can create a set of rescue disks to help out if your PC does get infected. If you accept the installation defaults, you have little more to worry about, as the Auto-Protect option will automatically warn you if you try to run, open, copy or unzip an infected file, or access an infected floppy disk.

You can use the Norton Scheduler to check your hard disk regularly, or you can, of course, run a manual scan any time you want – simply select the appropriate drive and click on 'Scan Now'. It only takes a couple of minutes to scan a typical hard disk and the Norton virus detection rates are very impressive, as are the repair capabilities.

Keeping up-to-date with anti-virus software is essential, as there are always new viruses to tackle. Symantec has made this easy – updates can be downloaded automatically (and free) from several sources, including its own Web site simply by clicking a button.

Superb at sniffing out viruses, excellent at repairing and easy to use – an ideal choice.

⃝ £59 (inc VAT)
⃝ Symantec: 0171 616 5600
　www.symantec.com ▶

PC Handyman

Like First Aid 97, PC Handyman provides virus protection, preventative maintenance, recovery utilities for when your computer won't start, and a database of answers to common questions. The obvious difference between the two programs is that PC Handyman costs more, but the real difference is that PC Handyman is slicker and easier to use.

The program carries out a series of scheduled automated checks on the internal integrity of Windows 95 and when it finds a problem, offers to fix it automatically. The frequency and rigour of the checks can be set by the user, but beginners can just let PC Handyman decide for itself. Every couple of weeks, PC Handyman makes an updated set of recovery disks in case Windows conks out altogether, which is not a completely unknown scenario.

The reference database is excellent. For background information you click on a picture of a PC to get facts about whatever component you have selected. For more complicated questions, PC Handyman uses a natural-language query system. With this you can type plain English questions, such as 'Why won't my CD-ROM drive work?', and be reasonably sure of getting an answer.

In most cases, PC Handyman finds what you're looking for and offers to rectify the problem. When it can't do this, it presents a video demonstration showing how to put things right and invokes the appropriate Windows 95 wizard if one exists.

Should your computer develop a problem so severe that you can't start PC Handyman to fix it, there's a chapter in the manual on reviving a seemingly dead machine.

The best Windows 95 maintenance program for beginners. Buy it before your problems start, not after.
○ £57.58 (inc VAT)
○ Symantec: 0171 616 5600

PartitionMagic 3.0

If your hard disk is large and unwieldy – over 1Gb, say – dividing it up into smaller chunks can make it considerably more manageable, and save space into the bargain. You can also take advantage of disk partitions to run multiple operating systems – OS/2, Windows 95 and Windows 3.1, perhaps. Partitioning your disk in this way has never been a task for the faint-hearted – it's been a case of knowing your way around DOS, perhaps clearing your disk completely, and hoping you don't lose any data in the process.

PartitionMagic 3.0 is a handy tool for reorganising your hard disk without the need for intimate knowledge of your computer's workings. It has a simple front end, with the look and feel of a standard Windows 95 program. Even so, there is a lot of information presented in the Main Window, which requires a certain depth of confidence and understanding.

Fortunately, PartitionMagic 3.0 comes with an excellent manual that guides you through the likeliest scenarios – setting up two partitions, adding in another operating system and reclaiming wasted disk space. By the time you have worked through these, you will have a fair grasp of what can be done and how to do it.

PartitionMagic is especially useful as it allows you to reorganise your hard disk 'on the fly', so even if you regularly change the way you store your data you'll still not run into problems. For example, you can move applications from one partition to another, instead of having to uninstall and reinstall them. If you're feeling brave, you can delete entire partitions, together with whatever data is on them.
It takes some commitment to get the best out of this package, but for the serious computer user, it's well worth the investment.
○ £70.44 (inc VAT)
○ POW Distribution: 01202 716726
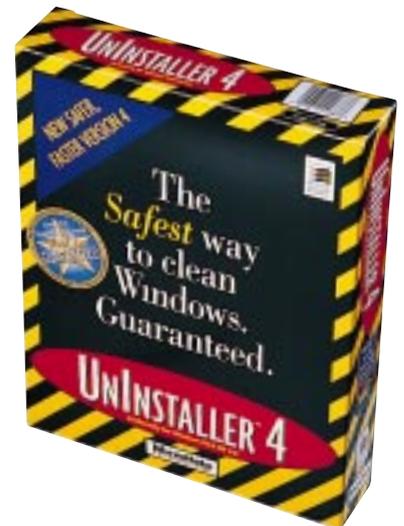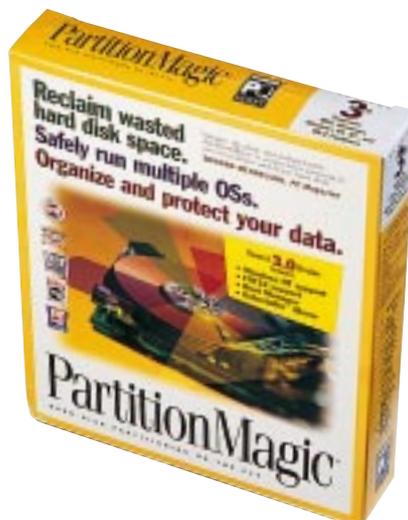
UnInstaller 4.0

Installing new software in Windows 95 is easy, but removing programs when you don't need them any more can be a headache. UnInstaller for Windows 95 not only makes it easier to get rid of all traces of old programs, it also makes backups of deleted programs so that, if you change your mind, you can reinstate them automatically at a later date.

UnInstaller is virtually foolproof when you install new programs via its monitoring facility. This keeps a record of all the changes made to your system during a program's installation. When removing programs whose installation was not logged, UnInstaller uses colour coding to tell you which files can be safely removed, which should be removed with caution, and which should be left alone. However, the final decision is yours.

UnInstaller can also be used to create space on cramped hard disks by archiving programs you don't often use into compressed files. When you click on a compressed program's icon to start it, the program is automatically expanded to its original size.

The File Cleanup option is another way of making extra disk space by removing files you may no longer need. These include temporary files, disk caches, duplicates and little-used picture files. As with removing unmonitored programs, you have to make the decision on which files can be safely deleted, under UnInstaller's guidance. Version 4.0 is for Windows 95, but v3.5 for Windows 3.1 offers very similar features.

Provided you always use UnInstaller 4.0 to add new software to your PC, you'll be able to remove it effortlessly should the need arise. The compression and space-making routines are icing on the cake.
○ £39.99 (inc VAT)
○ RMG: 0181 875 4444 ▶

Microsoft Plus Pack

Few people would dispute that Windows 95 is a considerable improvement on Windows 3.x – more intuitive and with many more useful features. You can make it even better, though, by adding in the enhancements of Microsoft Plus.

The Plus Pack contents range from the almost essential to the purely fun. On the serious side, there's a System Agent, an improved DriveSpace, and a Dial-Up server, which will all improve your productivity. The System Agent allows you to schedule programs to run at a specific time. For instance, you could set it up to run the Disk Defragmenter late at night, to check regularly for low disk space or any number of other tasks.

If you're running short of disk space, you'll appreciate the much-improved compression facilities of the Plus Pack. For starters, you get a new version of DriveSpace, which has some advanced settings and improved compression facilities. There's also Compression Agent, a program to compact individual files. Best of all, there's support for compressed drives of up to 2Gb in size, a four-fold increase on the previous size.

Another great feature of this utility is the facility to turn your PC into a Dial-Up Networking server. Put simply, this allows you, or someone else, to dial into your PC from another one – a notebook perhaps – to get access to files on your PC. You just need to add a modem, and you have great flexibility.

Just for fun, there's a 3D Pinball game and Desktop themes, which allows you to smarten up your desktop, with a collection of wallpapers, screen savers and plenty more besides. **It would be nice if these features had been incorporated into Windows 95, but this is a fair price to pay for all the enhancements.**
○ £36.66 (inc VAT)
○ Microsoft: 0345 002000

QuickView Plus 4.0

QuickView Plus is an enhancement to the QuickView utility built into Windows 95. If you've never seen QuickView, perhaps it's not installed on your computer. It's an optional accessory that you can add via the Add/Remove Programs option in the Control Panel. You'll find the utility under Accessories.

What QuickView and QuickView Plus both offer is the ability to right-click on a filename or icon and then view the file without having to start up the program that created it. QuickView Plus is able to do this with hundreds of file types instead of the handful supported by the standard QuickView. You can view files even if you don't have the originating program, which makes QuickView Plus indispensable to users who have to cope with computer files from outside sources.

When viewing a picture, you can scale it, rotate it and zoom in and out. Text files can be searched and all files may be copied to the clipboard, forwarded via e-mail or printed out. QuickView Plus preserves the look of the original as much as possible, so spreadsheets look like spreadsheets and word-processed documents keep their original formatting.

QuickView Plus hooks into other programs, including PowerDesk, Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator, from which it can be used to view HTML (Hypertext Mark-up Language) files and follow hyperlinks within documents.

New in version 4.0 is a fast printing facility that lets you print files without having to view them first, and a facility to download new file viewers from developer Inso's Web site. **If there were such a radio programme as 'Desert Island Utilities' and you could only take one of your programs, this would be it.**
○ £45.83 (inc VAT)
○ Software Compatibility: 01753 842728
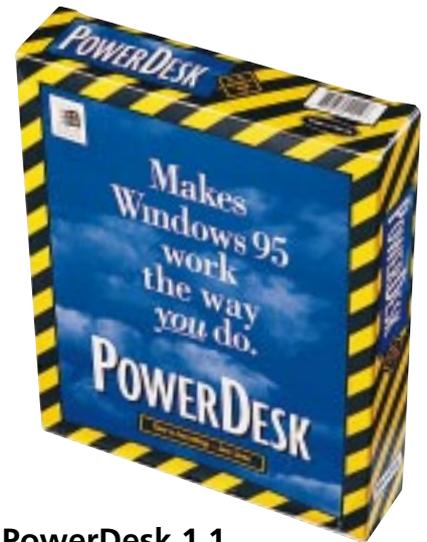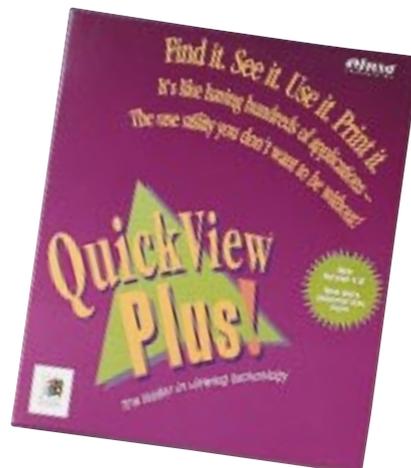
PowerDesk 1.1

After just a few days using Microhelp's PowerDesk you'll find it hard to imagine how you managed without it. There are two parts to it. Our favourite is the replacement for Windows Explorer, ExplorerPlus. Its drive bar lets you switch drives with a single click instead of having to scroll through a lengthy list of folders, but far more useful is the ability to view two drives at the same time, in separate panes of a single window, and then drag files from one to the other.

The right mouse button is enhanced with two new features. One enables you to copy or move files to any destination on any disk, and not just to the floppy drive; the other is a Zip option with which files can be compressed or decompressed without the support of an external utility such as WinZip.

The other element in PowerDesk is a system of fixed or floating customisable toolbars which provide fast access to your favourite Windows 95 features, as well as some new ones. The most useful of these is Multiview, a feature for defining up to 16 different screen layouts, each with a different mix of programs and windows.

PowerDesk toolbars duplicate some of the built-in features of Windows but also offer extra components such as an interactive system monitor showing CPU activity and free disk space. You can type in DOS commands without having to start a DOS session first, and Quick Launch buttons put your favourite Windows features and programs just one click away.

A newer version of PowerDesk (2.02) is now available from its creators, Mijenix, and a 30-day trial version can be downloaded from www.mijenix.com. Microhelp continues to sell version 1.1. **Along with QuickView Plus, this is a 'must have' utility for Windows 95.**
○ £24.99 (inc VAT)
○ RMG: 0181 875 4444 ▶
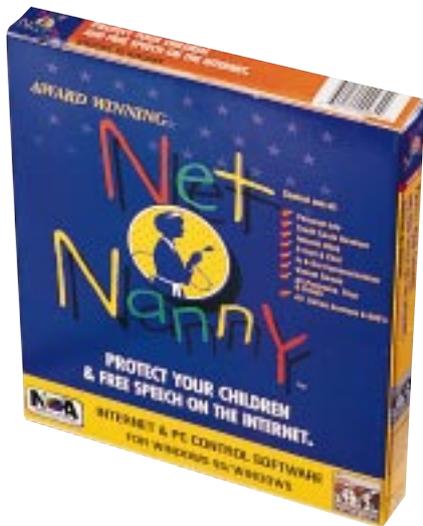
Net Nanny

As a parent with a connection to the Internet you could well be worried that your children may stumble across offensive material or you may simply have material on your computer that you don't want your children to see.

There are now several products that tackle this problem, one of the best being the aptly named Net Nanny. It is very easy to use, with the on-line help system giving useful tutorials and a good overview of the facilities available.

Net Nanny allows you to control the information that comes into and is displayed on your computer in a variety of ways. You can monitor both Web browsers and other programs, denying access to certain Web sites and news groups, or screening out your own hit list of words that you find offensive or inappropriate. You can also block certain information from being passed from your computer – credit card and telephone details, for instance – to be sure that the children aren't making purchases over the Web.

Net Nanny works with all on-line services so you can filter the use of newsgroups, e-mail and the Web via any service provider. You can download lists of safe and dangerous sites from the Net Nanny Web site.

Depending how tightly you want to control things, you can log 'offences', have a warning message displayed, or close down the program being used.

The program allows you to set up a number of users, with their own passwords, so you can allow different levels of access for different people. An Administrator, again with a password, controls the whole system, and can disable it for free use of the PC.

If you're worried about children's access to the Internet, this package is a great way to allay your fears.
○ £56.33 (inc postage & VAT)
○ Robinson Marshall: 01203 233216

Time's Up

Parents often find themselves in two minds about buying a family computer. On the one hand they want to give their children the advantages of being able to use a PC for homework, study and entertainment, but they're concerned about tales of games junkies, computer pornography and telephone bills being run up to catastrophic levels.

Through a system of passwords, Time's Up gives parents control over who can use the family PC. More than this, children can be prohibited from using specific programs and have their access to others restricted to a fixed amount of time each day. For example, you might choose to limit games playing to an hour a day but offer unrestricted access to CD encyclopaedias. Up to three periods each day can be blocked out altogether, so you can prohibit use of the computer at times when children should be doing other things.

The software is easy to set up and use, having been designed on the sensible assumption that kids often know more about PCs than their parents. There are two drawbacks to Time's Up. One is that really bright kids could boot into MS-DOS from a floppy disk, because Time's Up is only for Windows. The other is that you can't filter out Internet sites you'd rather your children didn't visit, but you can put a complete block on the Net so that children can only use it in your presence.

Complete blocking counters the problem of potential tampering with your settings. Some programs, such as DOS access, File Manager and Control Panel, are automatically blocked out to unauthorised users.

For less than the price of a take-away pizza you can make sure your children don't misuse the family PC. An absolute bargain.
○ £9.95 (inc VAT)
○ RMG: 0181 875 4444
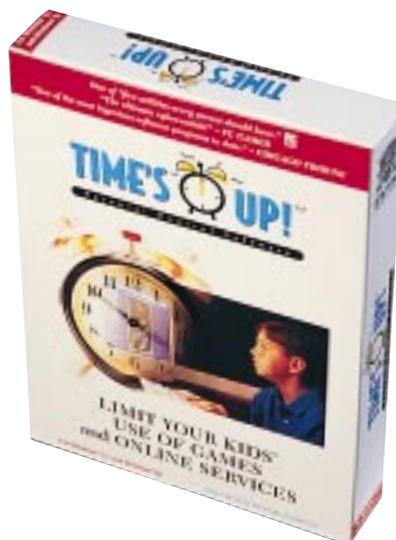
Teleport Pro

Surfing the World Wide Web can be an expensive business, – even when you've found the site you want, a lot of graphics, a wealth of information or simply a busy time of day can mean frustrating waits and a large phone bill. A neat solution is to use an off-line browser – a program that downloads a Web site of your choice, capturing the number of levels you state and the types of file you specify. Once this is done, you can browse the site at your leisure, free from the stress of the telephone bill piling up.

One of the best off-line browsers is Teleport Pro from Tennyson Maxwell, which is powerful yet simple to use. It can create an exact 'mirror' of a site, with all the subdirectories and files intact, so browsing it is exactly like browsing the original Web site – but faster. It is also able to search for files of a particular size or type, explore every site linked from a given starting page, or make a complete list of all pages and files.

Teleport Pro is packed with features, which take a fair bit of learning to get their maximum benefit. However, the program is easy to use and there is an excellent wizard to set up your projects. Six of the most popular tasks are listed, so you just need to click to 'Create a browsable copy of a Web site' or 'Search a Web site for keywords', for instance. You then just need to complete a few details about specifications, sit back and let the wizard do your work.

When it's finished, the Teleport Pro wizard presents you with the results in a beautifully structured format. There are all sorts of helpful features for sorting, searching and navigating, so it's very easy to deal with the end product.

If you've already got an Internet connection, you can download Teleport Pro and try it out before parting with your hard-earned cash.

This package has a splendid balance of features and usability, helped along with an excellent wizard.
○ Price: $39.95
○ Tennyson Maxwell: 001 504 781 3404
   Download: www.tenmax.com/pro.html ▶
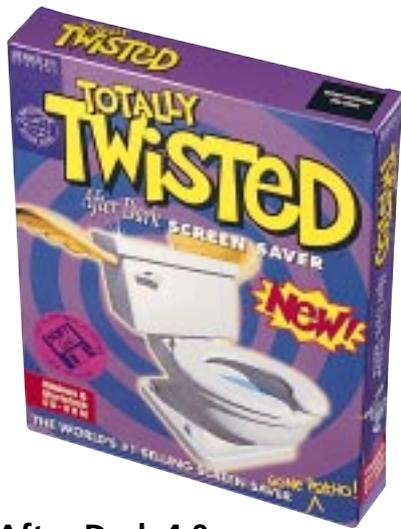
After Dark 4.0

You don't really need a screen saver to avoid the effects of burn-in, a problem that used to afflict monitors but which modern technology has largely eradicated. However, screen savers are useful in other ways. For example, After Dark can be set to power down Energy Star monitors, thus saving money. You can identify Energy Star monitors by the logo displayed in the top right-hand corner of the screen when the PC is turned on.

The other practical use for After Dark's screen savers is as a rudimentary form of security. If you frequently leave your PC unattended and switched on, this utility allows you to set a password to deter inquisitive colleagues from using your computer.

But the main purpose of screen savers, as always, is to amuse and entertain – that is if the Totally Twisted savers can be described as entertainment. There are 13, all in dubious taste, some highly amusing and others which are rather close to the bone. If we say you can customise the rate of vomiting, number of kittens killed and the amount of phlegm, you'll get an idea what to expect.

On the other hand, Voyeur is a clever parody of Hitchcock's film, *Rear Window*, and Message Mayhem provides several novel ways of displaying customised messages. We've also got to admit to a sneaking fascination with Flying Toilets. The savers are accompanied by sound effects and all 13 of them take up only 5Mb of hard disk space. This is because they are stored in a highly-compressed Zip format which the separate After Dark control module decodes. **Good value if you're totally twisted yourself. If not, there are other themes from which you can choose.**
- £19.95 (inc VAT)
- Softline: 0181 401 1234

KidDesk

There's plenty of fun to be had from KidDesk, which also has plenty of useful features. As its name suggests, KidDesk provides a way of setting up individual desktop environments for children.

It works on the premise that a family is made up of computer users who all have substantially different needs. Young children may find Windows 95 too complex to deal with, for instance, and you may want to prevent them from running some applications. You may wish to allow some privacy to teenagers and you would almost certainly appreciate being able to secure some of your own files to prevent accidental deletion.

KidDesk is simple to administer – an 'Adult' sets up a number of 'Kids', who each have their own icon and optional password to take them to their own desk. An icon can be a scanned-in photo, so even the youngest children can identify themselves. There's a choice of desktops and icons, which are associated with some simple applications – a large calculator, a calendar and a selection of clocks to name just a few.

One of the best applications is the electronic mail system, which allows for messages to go from one desk to another – a great way of introducing young children to mail in a safe environment. If you have sound facilities you can also take advantage of the voicemail facilities.

You can add applications to be used from KidDesk, with the flexibility to disallow access by any user, so you could, for instance, permit use of Internet Explorer by only certain members of the family. **As well as being great fun to use, this package is wonderfully useful for any family – and it's great value for money.**
- £19.95 (inc VAT)
- Iona Software: 0181 296 9454
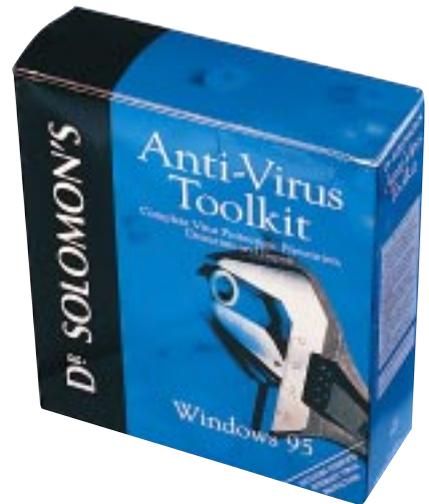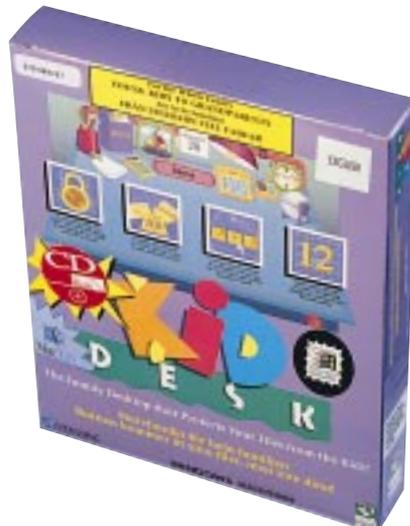
Alternatives

Dr Solomon's Anti-Virus Toolkit

Dr Solomon's Anti-Virus Toolkit for Windows 95 offers a good range of virus protection tools and quarterly updates for a year. It's well documented and comes with a thick virus encyclopaedia. Shop around to find it for £80 or less.
- £80 (inc VAT)
- S&S International: 01296 318700

Lotus Organizer

More of a fully-blown application than a utility, Lotus Organizer merits a mention because it is just so useful. Bursting with features, it incorporates a diary, a planner and scheduler, an address book and notebook and other handy bits and pieces besides. It's really easy to use because of its intuitive interface and because the various components are neatly integrated – it's just what you need to keep yourself organised.
- £69.33 (inc VAT)
- Lotus: 01784 445808
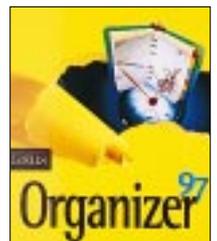
WebFerret

WebFerret is an alternative to the search engines found on the World Wide Web. It's a program you run outside of your Web browser, so you can flip quickly between WebFerret's search results and the Web page you are viewing. It's free and can be downloaded from Ferretsoft's Web site.
- www.ferretsoft.com

Sheila Hill and Paul Wardley