

Questions & Answers

Handy Tips, Solutions and Answers to Common PC Questions

Do you have a question about an article, or need help with a computing problem? If you do, just drop us a line by email to editorial@pcforseniors.co.uk or editorial@windowsadvisor.co.uk and we'll do our level best to help!

When you write, please remember to include your customer number, your postcode, and the version of Windows you use. Give us as much detail as you can about the problem to help us understand what's happening, and feel free to attach a screenshot or document if you think it would help to illustrate the problem or error.

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1. How to Open Control Panel in Windows 10

Trouble finding Control Panel?

Question: *I seem to need Control Panel surprisingly often in Windows 10. I used to press **Win+X** and it would be on the menu that opened, but it's disappeared from there, and now I find it more by luck than judgement. What's the best way?*

Mike Croft

Answer: Ever so slowly, Microsoft is moving everything from Control Panel to the new Settings app, and they presumably believe we shouldn't need Control Panel very often these days. That's why Control Panel vanished from the **Win+X** menu (to be replaced by Settings, of course).

Use one of these methods

There's still a lot in Control Panel that can't be found anywhere else, so many of us need it at least occasionally. There are several ways to open it and you can choose whichever you find most convenient:

Method 1: search for it by name

Press either **Win** (to open the Start menu) or **Win+S** (to open the Search panel) and start typing the word **control**. By the time you've finished typing, you should see **Control Panel** at the top of the search results where you can click it to open it or (if it really is at the top) press **Enter**.

Method 2: find it on the Start menu

Open the Start menu and scroll down to the 'W' section. There, open the **Windows System** folder and you'll find **Control Panel** inside it.



When you've found it this way, you could right-click it and choose **Pin to Start**. That places a tile for Control Panel in the right-hand section of the Start menu. You

can then drag that tile upwards, putting it closer to the top where it's easier to reach.

Method 3: reach it from File Explorer

If you open File Explorer (by pressing **Win+E**) and scroll to the bottom of the left-hand pane, you should see Control Panel there. (If you don't, it's because you don't have Explorer set up in the most helpful way: switch to the **View** tab on its Ribbon, click the **Navigation pane** button and choose **Show all folders** to place a tick beside it.)

Method 4: create a desktop shortcut

Perhaps you'd like an icon for Control Panel on your desktop? If so, right-click a blank space on the desktop and choose **New > Shortcut**. A two-step dialog opens. In the first step, type **control** (which is the name of the Control Panel program), then click **Next**, and in the second step type **Control Panel** (which is the name that will appear for this icon on your desktop). Click **Finish** and you're done. A double-click on this icon will open Control Panel whenever you need it.

Extra tip: pin Control Panel to your taskbar

Do you use Control Panel often enough that it deserves a permanent place on your taskbar? By pinning it there, it's always just one click away. After following one of the methods above to start Control Panel, so that its icon appears on the taskbar, right-click that icon and choose **Pin to taskbar**.

Put it one click away

2. Can I Print News from the App?

Question: *Using the News app in Windows 10, I came across an article I wanted to print for a relative. Looking*

No obvious Print option

around, I realised it doesn't seem to have any Print option. Is it really not possible to print, or am I missing something obvious?

Georgina Durrell

Answer: No, you're not missing anything terribly obvious – the Microsoft News app doesn't offer any direct way to print an article. There is a slightly circuitous route to doing it, though.

Copy the link to the web page...

The key is that all the articles you read in the News app come from web pages, and you can certainly print one of those. When you're reading an article in the News app, look at the top-right of the window and you'll see a **Copy Link** button: click that button and you'll briefly see a little 'Link Copied' message.



Now start a web browser. This can be any browser you like, but for reasons I'll explain in a moment, my suggestion is to use Microsoft Edge.

... and paste it into your browser

Click in the browser's address box (or press **Ctrl+D** which does the same thing), then press **Ctrl+V** to paste the link you just copied. Press **Enter** and your browser will open the article you were just reading in News.

Now print the page

From here it's just a matter of printing from your browser. Press **Ctrl+P** and choose the printing options you want to use in the usual way.

Microsoft Edge offers this extra feature

One thing you might notice is that the web page is rather cluttered with advertisements – more than there were in the News app's version of it. And that's why I suggested using Edge: among Edge's Print settings you should see one labelled **Clutter-free printing**. Set that to **On** and Edge will remove a lot of this clutter – perhaps several pages of it – before you print.

3. Help! What is the Difference Between a Modem and a Router?

Question: *I have a straightforward question for you. What's the difference between a modem and a router, if there is one? I thought they were the same thing.*

Not the same thing?

Gary Lucas

Answer: Strictly speaking, they are different things, but they can be combined into a single device. Thus, some homes have a modem and a router connected together while others have a single modem/router.

The modem is the device that allows ordinary telephone cables to carry computer data between us and the Internet. Telephone cables can only carry sounds, so the modem converts the data we're sending into sounds, and converts the sounds we receive in return back into data.

The modem

Besides doing that, it also creates and maintains a connection to the Internet via our broadband provider.

So in theory, at least, a modem is all you need. You could connect the modem directly to your PC with a network cable and you'd be able to use the Internet.

In practice we don't do that; we use a router too (usually a wireless router), and connect that directly to the modem instead. We use a router for several reasons.

The router

First, a router creates a network of the devices in our home and directs (or 'routes') data to the device that requested it. You might have two or three PCs, a smartphone, a smart TV and so on, all wanting to use the Internet at the same time, and the router allows them to do so. (It also allows computers to swap files and other data between themselves, separately from using the Internet, with a little help from Windows.)

Second, the router creates a wireless (Wi-Fi) network, meaning that we don't need to have all these devices connected together with cables.

Third, the router has built-in security features that help to keep the Internet's baddies off your network and out of your devices.

In summary, then, the modem is the device that gives your home its broadband connection, and the router is the device that enables your various gadgets to make practical use of it.

4. Windows Won't Recognise my Flash Drive - What Can I Do?

The flash drive can't be used

Question: *Something has gone wrong with one of my flash drives. When I plug it into a USB socket and start File Explorer, I can see an icon for it, so it seems that Windows knows it's been plugged in. But if I try to copy files to it, or if I double-click that icon to see what's on the drive, I just see error messages. What could the problem be?*

Stan Vaughn

Answer: It really depends on what type of error messages you're seeing, but there are two common problems that could prevent you from copying files to a flash drive.

Problem 1: The drive is write-protected

Is the drive write-protected?

In this case, you would be able to see what's stored on the flash drive, you'd be able to double-click the folders and files it contained to open them, and you'd be able to copy files from the flash drive to your computer. However, if you tried to create a new folder on the drive, copy files to the drive or delete files from it, you'd see an error message like this:



This tells you that the flash drive has been ‘write-protected’. In other words, it has been set to prevent any changes being made to the contents of the drive.

The solution is to examine the casing of the flash drive to find a little write-protection switch. This switch flips back and forth between the ‘lock’ and ‘unlock’ positions, and you need to switch it to the ‘unlock’ position.

Check the write-protection switch

Having done that, repeat what you were trying to do (or, if the error message is still open and it contains a **Try Again** button, you could click that button), and this time you should be successful.

Problem 2: The drive needs to be formatted

Instead, you may be seeing error messages like those below. If you click **Cancel** in the first, the second immediately appears.

Does the drive need to be formatted?





Windows can't read the drive's contents

These messages tell you that Windows can't read the flash drive because it doesn't understand how the drive has been set up (or 'formatted') for storing files. There are three possible reasons why this could happen:

- Perhaps the drive is brand new, unused, and has never been formatted.
- Perhaps you previously used the device in a different type of computer (or indeed a different type of device), and that device formatted the drive in a way that Windows can't read.
- Perhaps you unplugged the drive from your PC while Windows was still using it, which has damaged the data on the drive and made it unreadable.

The solution is to format the drive, which prepares it for use by Windows.



Formatting a drive causes any files it contains to be permanently deleted. If the flash drive is empty, or if you're sure it contains no files you want to keep, you won't regard this as a problem, of course.

If the flash drive does contain files you want to keep, don't rush into formatting it. Try plugging it into a different USB socket on this PC, or plugging it into a different computer, just in case that allows you to rescue the files it contains. Alternatively, if the files are

important enough to be worth paying to save, consider using a specialist data recovery service.

To format the flash drive, follow these steps:

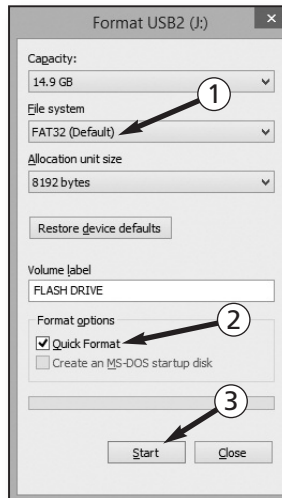
1. Connect the flash drive to a USB socket on your PC, if you haven't already. Close any dialogs or error messages that appear by clicking their **Cancel** buttons or the **x** buttons in their top-right corners.
2. Press the key combination **Win+E** to open File Explorer. Here you'll see icons for all the drives connected to your PC, one of which will be your flash drive. Its icon will likely be named 'Removable Disk'.
3. Make sure you know which icon is your flash drive. If you know which icon it is, right-click it and choose **Format**. If you're in doubt, double-click the icon: you'd expect to see the first of the two dialogs pictured at the bottom of page 7, and you can then click the **Format disk** button in that dialog.



Right-click the drive's icon

4. Now you'll see the Format dialog pictured in the screenshot to the right. In the drop-down list labelled **File system** ①, choose which file system you want to use on the flash drive. Don't worry if this means nothing to you; the rule is simple: if the capacity of the flash drive is 32 GB or less (which you can see in the **Capacity** box above), choose **FAT32**; if the capacity is more than 32 GB, choose either **exFAT**

Choose formatting settings



or **NTFS** – it doesn't matter which, but exFAT is the slightly-better choice if it's available.

- The drive will be erased!*
- A 'quick format' takes just a few seconds*
5. Make sure there's a tick in the box beside **Quick Format** ② and then click the **Start** button ③.
 6. Now you'll see a message repeating the warning I gave earlier – that any files on this flash drive will be deleted permanently. Since you already know this and you're happy to go ahead, click **OK**.
 7. Windows now formats your flash drive. This takes just a few seconds, and you'll see a message confirming that the drive has been successfully formatted. Click **OK** in this message, then click **Close** in the Format dialog, and your flash drive is ready to use again.

If instead you see a message saying that Windows was unable to complete the format, click **OK** in this message and you'll be returned to the Format dialog you were just a moment ago. In this dialog, remove the tick beside **Quick Format** ② and then click the **Start** button ③ again. This will perform a thorough format of the disk which will take longer but which should be successful.

5. Menu Chaos When I Click the Mouse

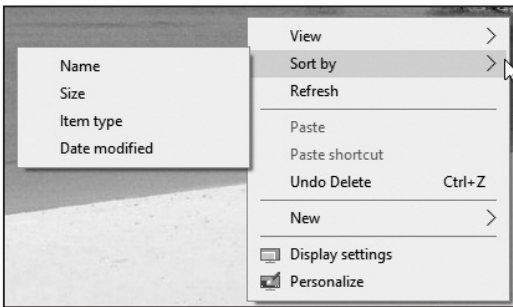
Menus suddenly appear in the wrong place

Question: *Something strange has started happening on my PC. All of a sudden, whenever I right-click something, the menu pops up on the left-hand side of the mouse rather than the right. And if a submenu opens, that appears at the left too. Everything still works, but I don't like this new layout. Can I change it back to how it was?*

Brian Littlewood

Answer: This problem isn't easy to picture, so let's start with an explanation. Normally, when you right-click the desktop or an icon, the menu appears to the right of the mouse pointer. But when this problem occurs, the menu appears at the left. And if you move the mouse to an item that opens a submenu, indicated by a right-pointing arrowhead, that submenu pops out of the left of the menu too:

They should be to the right of the mouse pointer

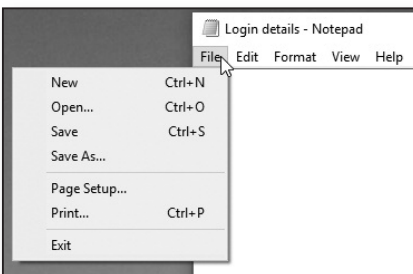


You've probably seen this happen if you right-click somewhere near the right-hand side of your screen, but that's simply because there isn't space to display these menus any further to the right. When the problem above occurs, however, it does so wherever you click.



Just as oddly, if you're using a program that has a menu bar and you open one of its menus, that menu also pops open to the left of the mouse pointer:

The same happens in programs' menu bars



*Why this happens
is unknown...*

The reason why this happens isn't entirely clear. It seems to happen on tablet computers (or on any computer with a touch-screen), as well as computers with a trackpad or graphics-tablet connected, and it can happen in any version of Windows from Vista onwards. The strange thing is that it doesn't happen to all these computers, and it doesn't happen immediately – you just start your computer one day and find that your menus are suddenly favouring the left rather than the right!

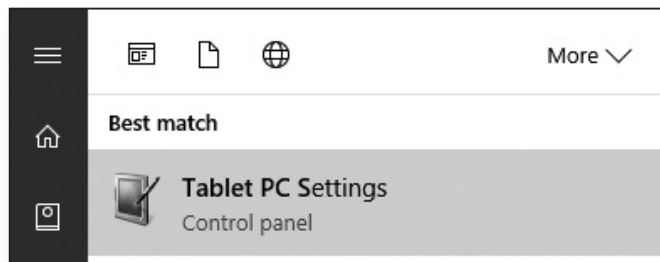
*... but it's easy to
put right*

It's also not a disaster, of course: all the menus still look just the same, so they're still fully useable. It's just that their sudden change of layout does take some getting-used-to.

But rather than getting used to it, you'd probably rather put things back as they always were, so here's what to do:



1. Open the Start menu and type the words **tablet pc settings**. At the top of the results that appear on the menu, you should see an item named **Tablet PC Settings**: if you do, click it and jump to step 3 below.



2. If you didn't see that item, there's another way, but it takes some rather-tedious typing. Open the Run dialog by pressing the key combination **Win+R** and then type this:

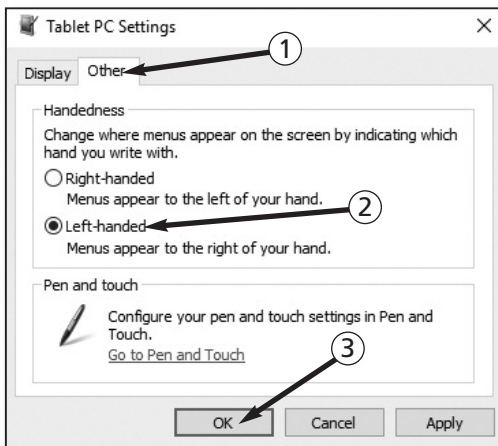
```
shell:::{80F3F1D5-FECA-45F3-BC32-752C152E456E}
```

Note that there are three colons after the word 'shell', there are no spaces at all, and you're using curly brackets (not ordinary brackets or square brackets: you type these using **Shift** and the corresponding square-bracket key). To help a little, you can type small letters rather than capitals. Having typed this command, press **Enter** or click **OK**.

3. Using either of the two methods above, you'll arrive at a dialog titled 'Tablet PC Settings'. In this dialog, switch to the **Other** tab ①.
4. In the 'Handedness' section at the top, you'll see that the selected option is 'Right-handed'. That might seem sensible (particularly if you are right-handed), but you'll notice it also says 'Menus appear to the left of your hand'. As you've discovered, they appear to the left of your mouse pointer too! Click the **Left-handed** option ② to make that the selected item instead.
5. Finally, click the **OK** button ③. This dialog closes, and from now on you'll find that all menus pop up where you expect to see them – to the right-hand side of the point you clicked.

*Switch to the **Left-handed** option*

Fixed!



6. Where are my Desktop Icons?

Every desktop icon suddenly missing?

Question: *Until yesterday I had a number of icons on my desktop, including 'Recycle Bin' and 'This PC'. Yesterday they'd gone, but I assumed they'd reappear after I restarted the computer. I did that this morning and there's still no trace of them. Where could they be?*

John Edgson

Someone has told Windows to hide them

Answer: As you've apparently guessed, you can't have deleted them because the Recycle Bin icon has gone too, and that can't be deleted in the normal way. Instead, someone who uses your PC has told Windows to hide the desktop icons – perhaps accidentally, perhaps mischievously. That makes the solution easy:



*Put back the tick beside **Show desktop icons***

1. Right-click a blank space on the desktop (which, as it's now empty, means anywhere at all!).
2. On the menu that appears, move the mouse to **View** ①.
3. A submenu appears with a **Show desktop icons** item ② at or near the bottom. That should normally be ticked, but in your case it clearly isn't. Click that item, which ticks it (although you won't see that happen as it also closes the menu) and, more importantly, brings back all your desktop icons.

