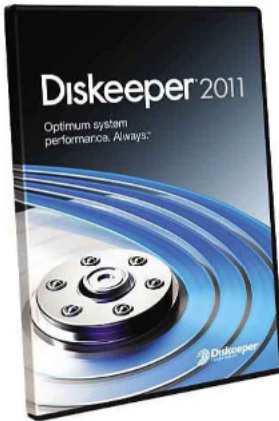


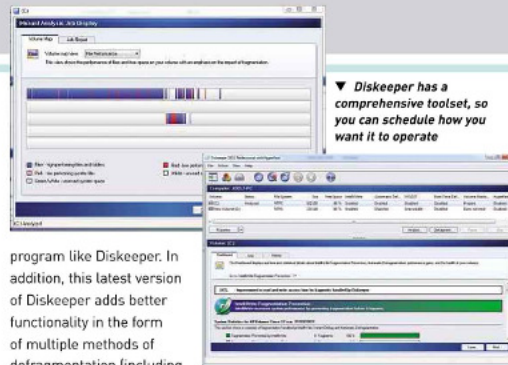
Diskeeper 2011 Professional

Joe Lavery gets his drives in order



Is your computer getting slower and slower? Well, it's very likely that the hard drive needs defragging. If you haven't any idea what I'm talking about, it's a procedure that gathers all your files into contiguous blocks on your hard drive, because after a while most hard drives get fragmented. This is simply the consequence of opening and closing files, or installing and uninstalling programs, which leaves unused space on the drive that unfortunately is reused in a haphazard way by the filing system.

While Microsoft provides rudimentary defragging software with each version of Windows, it's not as good as a dedicated



Diskeeper has a comprehensive toolset, so you can schedule how you want it to operate

program like Diskeeper. In addition, this latest version of Diskeeper adds better functionality in the form of multiple methods of defragmentation (including the facility to defragment your drives using only idle resource time). This means no appreciable loss of PC performance while the program is working. By way of comparison, when you're

defragging using Windows it's just about impossible to use the machine for anything else.

The program is quite straightforward to use. The interface opens with a system

performance report to highlight any problems found. Then on the main menu you can initiate a manual defragmentation, set up file or drive exclusions and CPU priorities. You can also analyse your drives to see a visual graph of the current state of fragmentation. Once Diskeeper is active it will work in the background, helping to keep your drives clear of further fragmentation. It achieves this by using the company's proprietary I-FAAST file optimisation technology, which monitors file access frequency. Then, if appropriate, the software will automatically relocate the most used files to improve access times.

Details

Price: £48.95
 Manufacturer: Diskeeper Corporation
 Website: www.diskeeper.com
 Required spec: None specified, but should work with any PC running Windows XP or later

Ratings

Quality: ★★★★★★
 Value: ★★★★★★
OVERALL 8
 Diskeeper works quietly in the background, and we like that

Diskeeper 2011 Pro is a worthwhile investment, not only for the increased performance it provides but also for the ongoing health of your hard drives. Once the drive is optimised, it has less work to do because the files are stored in a more efficient way. Consequently, there's less thrashing of the drive heads and less wear on the mechanisms. A highly recommended bit of software then. **mm Joe Lavery**

HomePCBackup

Joe Lavery hopes to never have to worry about losing files



Imagine most of us have felt that sinking feeling at some time in our lives, perhaps when a hard drive fails and you realise that you don't have a backup of your important files; when a friend or family member loses all the photographs that document your life because of virus attack; or simply when some cheeky criminal steals your computer.

Well, all that could be a thing of the past for just a small monthly fee using HomePCBackup, which is basically an online system where you can upload and store all your personal files in a secure environment. So if, or, perhaps more realistically, when such an event occurs, you can simply log into your account and restore all your files.

The company is currently offering a 15-day free trial, providing 2GB of online storage for you to try out the system. It takes just a few minutes to install, and then you simply need to designate the files, folders and frequency that you want to back up.

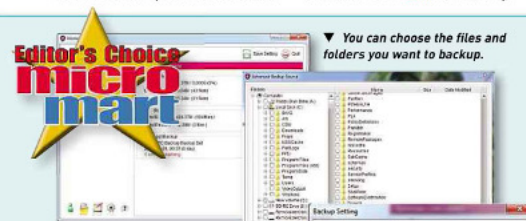
The initial interface includes a few familiar folders as a backup source, including Documents, Favourites and Outlook - those being typical locations for most users. If you have more specific needs, there's an advanced tab that allows you to select the folder locations directly from an Explorer window. If, like me, you have a considerable amount of files, the initial backup can take some time but is obviously determined by the speed of your Internet connection and the number of files you're uploading. Once this is completed, though, it's only a matter of backing up any new files or those you may have altered, since the system is

intelligent enough to realise when a file has been changed.

If you want to restore your files, you simply log into your account and either select the individual files you need by placing a tick next to them, or you can initiate a complete restore by ticking the drive letters. Files can be restored to their original location, or to a new folder of your choosing.

If you try the free offer and later decide to sign up with HomePCBackup, then the account is upgraded and your storage space becomes unlimited. I must say it's quite a refreshing change to other online storage solutions, which usually charge per gigabyte. This can be very expensive if you have a large collection of images, or video files you want to protect.

While the registered system provides unlimited storage, it's not really designed to back up and restore whole drives. It's better

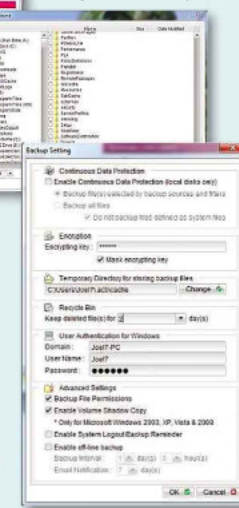


The main menu shows a summary of your backup status, with links to other options

to perform this type of backup at a local level. By the way, you don't have to worry about security, because the company uses 256-bit data encryption and all your files are encrypted before they leave your computer. In addition, Home PC Backup uses site replication, meaning your data is stored in more than one location. So in the event of a fire or other catastrophe, your files would still be recoverable, which is good, because it's always useful to have a backup.

mm Joe Lavery

You can choose the files and folders you want to backup.



Backup settings include protection for your recycle bin

LM541 Bluetooth USB Adaptor

Justin Bantock tests out a long-range Bluetooth adaptor

The LM541 is the latest in the range of Bluetooth USB adaptors from LM Technologies. Specifically designed for sending Bluetooth proximity marketing messages - which, if you've been to certain festivals and events you'll almost certainly have received - the LM451 has a range of 500 metres and can be extended to 1,000 metres with the purchase of an additional antenna.

With a data transmission rate of up to 3Mbps, the LM451 would be more than capable of handling the majority of Bluetooth needs, such as streaming audio, printing and data exchange between Bluetooth devices.

The device itself looks like a USB key on steroids. There's a dust cap to protect the USB connector and a screw thread to attach an antenna.

The enclosed antenna is a basic 2dbi one, which can easily be upgraded if you require a greater range.

The LM541 isn't a vastly expensive item and, if you require a much greater Bluetooth range than usual, is a very worthwhile purchase. A long-range Bluetooth adaptor that does exactly as you would expect, at a price that won't break the bank.

mm Justin Bantock

Details

Price: £29.22 (uk.farnell.com)
 Manufacturer: LM Technologies
 Website: www.lm-technologies.com
 Required spec: Spare USB 2.0, Windows 98SE or later

Ratings

Quality: ★★★★★★
 Value: ★★★★★★
OVERALL 8
 A good USB Bluetooth adaptor with a great range

