

- Artificial Intelligence (AI)

COVER FEATURE

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Why You MUST Use

AI

Don't be afraid of artificial intelligence - it's more useful than you think. **Robert Irvine** reveals 30 ways that free AI tools can improve everything you do on your PC and online

From the Copilot button in Windows 11 to AI summaries of Amazon customer reviews, there's no escaping artificial intelligence, and this is only the beginning. The first AI-enabled PCs went on sale recently, new PC keyboards now include a Copilot key and Google is now

showing 'AI overviews' above its search results in the US.

This rapid AI onslaught has annoyed and confused many people, who aren't as excited about the technology as tech giants such as Microsoft, Google and Apple - which will launch its own AI system, Apple Intelligence, later this year.

It also obscures the fact that there are genuinely useful AI tools among the many gimmicks.

As we explained in our 'Give up Google for ChatGPT' feature in Issue 682 (page 60), AI gives more detailed information than the most popular search engine. And its benefits aren't limited to offering quick answers to your questions, and generating awful jokes and poems.

In this feature, we reveal how AI can improve everything you do on your PC and the web, from editing and enhancing photos and videos to speeding up your browsing and blocking security threats. With many developers now trying to make money from previously free AI tools, we focus mainly on software and websites that don't cost anything. Where you do have to pay, we've mentioned it.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Restore, resize and enhance your old photos
- Scan downloads and websites for malware
- Identify and avoid new phishing scams
- Summarise the content of YouTube videos
- Improve the quality of your search results
- **Benchmark** your PC's AI capabilities
- Remove background noise from recordings
- Create original images from text descriptions

Why You MUST Use AI



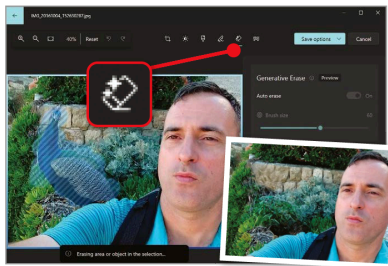
EDIT AND ENHANCE YOUR PHOTOS

Erase unwanted people from photos

Removing an unwelcome person from a photo usually involves fiddling around with your image editor's Clone Stamp tool. AI makes it much easier to erase unwanted people, and retouches pictures to disguise they were ever there.

There are plenty of online AI tools that remove people and objects from photos, but most require you to buy credits or pay a subscription. Instead, we use the new AI-powered Generative Erase tool in the Photos app that comes with Windows 10 and 11 (www.snipca.com/51156).

Select a picture and click the Edit button on the toolbar, then the Erase option in the window that opens (see screenshot below). Drag the brush over the unwanted element (a peacock in our photo) to 'paint' over it. Generative Erase will remove the selected person, animal or object, and seamlessly blend in the surroundings (see inset).



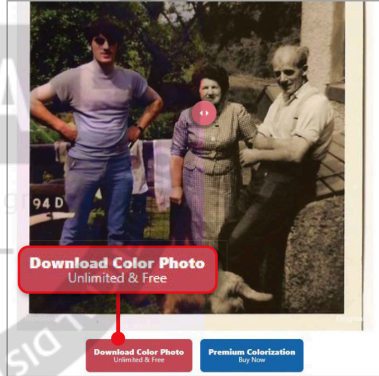
Microsoft Photos' Generative Erase tool removes unwanted elements from shots

Remove background from photos

The Photos app also includes an AI tool for removing the background from photos while leaving the subject intact. Click the Background option to the right of the Erase button, and the app will use AI to detect the background of the picture. You can then either blur the background, remove it altogether or replace it with a different-coloured canvas.

Colourise old black-and-white photos

Most online services that use AI to colourise black-and-white photos place restrictions on how many images you can upload – or download without a watermark. One of the best free options is Playback.fm's Colorize Photos tool (www.snipca.com/51101), which doesn't require an account or pose any limits on the number or size of



Use AI to colourise your black-and-white photos in a single click

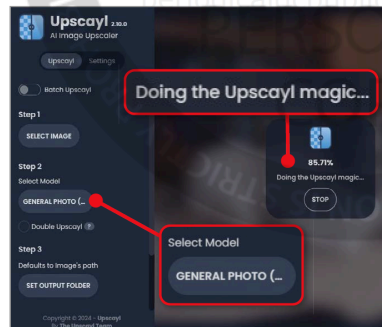
pictures you can colourise.

Simply click Upload Photo, select a black-and-white shot and the tool will use AI to transform it into colour. Move the slider to compare the before and after pictures, then click Download Color Photo (see screenshot above). For better results, the site offers 'premium colorization', but this costs \$10 (£7.90) per photo.

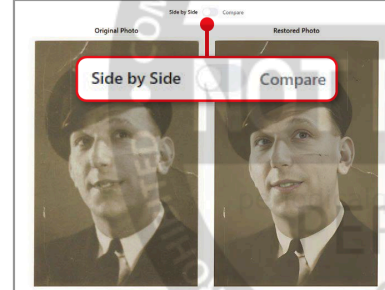
Upscale photos without losing quality

Increase the size of photos without losing quality, and turn low-resolution images into high-res versions, by 'upscaling' them using Upscayl (www.snipca.com/51108). Unlike the dozens of websites that perform the same task, this **open-source** AI tool is completely free to use and works offline on your PC.

Upscayl offers a choice of AI models (see screenshot below), so you can experiment to get the best results, and supports **JPEG**, **PNG** and **WEBP** images. It's a big download (228MB) and a bit slow, but a faster 'cloud' version is coming soon.



Upscayl offers a choice of AI models to increase the size and resolution of photos



PhotoRestore.io sharpens, brightens and cleans up old photos

Restore damaged and faded photos

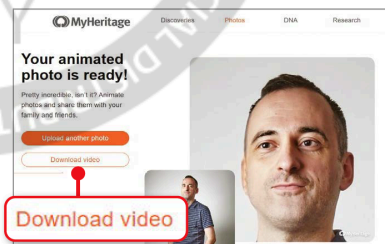
Another good AI-powered photo-restoration tool is PhotoRestore.io (www.snipca.com/51103), which cleans up old photos you upload for free. It removes dust and scratches, and sharpens and brightens the image, then displays the AI-restored result alongside the original (see screenshot above). There are no watermarks or size limits on the files you download.

Animate faces in photos using AI

MyHeritage's Deep Nostalgia tool (www.snipca.com/51105) uses AI to animate faces in photos. It effectively brings your ancestors to life and creates videos of people of whom no footage exists.

Upload a photo, register for a free MyHeritage account and the AI tool will work its magic, making the subject blink, smile and move in a realistic if slightly unnerving manner. You can download the animation as a watermarked **MP4** video (see screenshot below), but to create more than five, you need to pay for a subscription with the genealogy service.

Even creepier is MyHeritage's DeepStory (www.snipca.com/51106), which uses AI to add audio to your photos. This lets your ancestors tell their stories by moving their mouths to speak biographical information you provide.



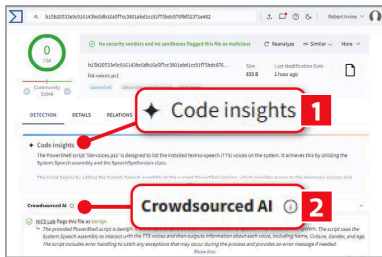
MyHeritage Deep Nostalgia uses AI to bring photos of your ancestors to life

BOOST YOUR SECURITY & PRIVACY

Scan files for malicious code

Google's free malware-detection service VirusTotal (www.virustotal.com) now uses AI to analyse files for security threats. This helps it identify malicious code that antivirus engines miss, and also reduces the number of false positives.

The AI-sourced information appears on VirusTotal's Detection tab. 'Code insights' (1 in our screenshot below) provides detailed analysis of the code, the actions it performs and the risks it poses. 'Crowdsourced AI' (2) offers a verdict based on data from various machine-learning models. Currently, AI analysis is mainly available for scripts, such as PowerShell scripts, but Google plans to add other file formats in due course.

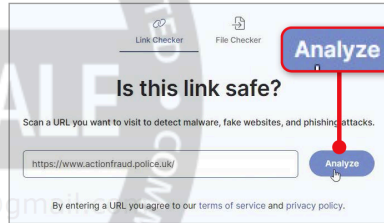


VirusTotal now uses AI to scan files for malicious code

Scan web links for malicious activity

VirusTotal hasn't yet expanded its AI analysis to its URL scanner, but instead you can use NordVPN's rival tool. Launched earlier this year, Link Checker (www.snipca.com/51114) combines a list of domains known to contain scams and malware with the firm's own machine-learning model, to warn you about dangerous websites.

Type or paste a URL into Link



Analyse web links for malicious activity using NordVPN's Link Checker

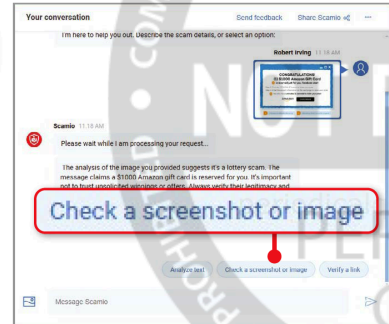
Checker's search box and click Analyze (see screenshot above) to perform a scan. The result will either be green, to indicate "no signs of malicious activity", or red to warn you about phishing and malicious components.

Detect and avoid online scams

While fraudsters are now using AI to create convincing scams, security companies are using the technology to protect you against them. For example, Bitdefender's AI tool Scamio (www.snipca.com/51113) analyses text, images and links to tell you whether they're real or fake.

You can interact with the Scamio chatbot in your browser, WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger – once you register for a free Bitdefender account. Select whether you want to analyse text (such as an email or social-media message), a screenshot (see screenshot above right) or a web link, then either paste or upload the suspicious content. Press the 'Send message' button and Scamio will perform its analysis and tell you whether to be wary of a potential scam.

To get a second opinion, you can try Norton's AI-powered scam detector, Norton Genie (www.snipca.com/51115), without creating an account.

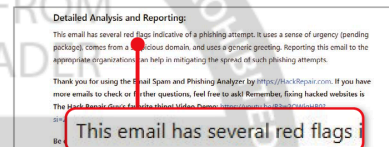


Bitdefender's Scamio chatbot uses AI to detect potential scams

Identify spam and phishing emails

One of the most useful GPTs (generative pre-trained transformers, ie customised versions) of ChatGPT is 'Email Spam and Phishing Analyzer' (www.snipca.com/51109), which does just what its name suggests.

Type Hi to start a chat, then copy and paste a suspicious email, including headers, into the text box. To get this, click the three dots in the top corner of a message and choose 'Show original' or 'View raw message' (ignore any formatting below the main email). The chatbot will analyse the sender's details and message content, and alert you to 'red flags' that suggest spam or a phishing attempt (see screenshot below).



Check your emails for signs of phishing using a custom GPT

Scan and rate website privacy policies

Privacy Observer (www.snipca.com/51119) saves you having to read through the often lengthy privacy policies on websites to learn what information they collect and share about you. Enter a site's URL and the tool will scan its privacy policy using AI and provide an overall privacy score plus separate ratings for data handling, transparency and collection – the higher the better.

The Privacy Observer website is currently free to use, but to install its upcoming browser extension and check policies automatically, you need to pay \$9.95 (£7.90) a month.

Should you use AI to generate passwords?

Most AI assistants will generate random and secure passwords for you, and Google plans to add the option to Chrome through integration with Gemini. There are also online tools such as AI Password Generator (www.snipca.com/51118).

It's a speedy and convenient way to conjure up unique logins, but – assuming you use the generated password – it's also a security risk. Many AI tools store your conversations for training purposes, and use language-learning models that

are susceptible to data leaks, which means your password could be stolen by hackers

Brave's Leo assistant is more trustworthy because it deletes chats automatically, and won't store passwords it generates "for security reasons". But it's safer to use the password generator in a dedicated password manager such as Bitwarden (www.bitwarden.com), so new logins are always protected with end-to-end encryption.

Why You **MUST** Use AI



SPEED UP YOUR WEB BROWSING & SEARCHES

Summarise the content of web pages

Save time when browsing lengthy web pages by asking AI to summarise the key points for you. All the main browser-based AI assistants offer this feature, including Copilot in Edge (www.snipca.com/51129), Leo in Brave (www.snipca.com/51130) and Aria in Opera (www.snipca.com/51131). Simply click or type 'Generate page summary' (see screenshot below), 'Summarise this page' or similar – in Opera, press Ctrl+/(forward slash) and switch to Aria's Page Context mode.

To use ChatGPT (<https://chatgpt.com>) or Google Gemini (www.snipca.com/51132) instead, open the assistant in a new tab and paste the URL of the page you want to summarise. Be wary of the hundreds of dodgy ChatGPT extensions in the Chrome Web Store (see box on page 55).

Once the chatbot has provided its summary, you can ask follow-up questions about the content – or select a question it suggests. Copilot and Leo can even summarise PDFs you view in the browser, and the latter also analyses Google Docs and Sheets files.

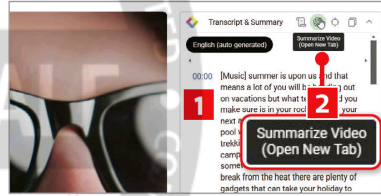


Generate summaries of web pages to discover their key points

Summarise the content of YouTube videos

Equally useful is AI's ability to summarise YouTube videos, if you don't have time to watch the whole clip or you just want to check specific information. Copilot and Leo can both perform this time-saving feature, provided the video has a transcript – which is itself generated from the video's **closed captions**.

ChatGPT can't currently summarise YouTube videos, but you can beat this restriction by installing the (reliable) extension 'YouTube Summary with ChatGPT & Claude' (www.snipca.com/51120). This provides both full transcripts of videos, which appear next to them on YouTube (1 in screenshot above right), and bullet-pointed



Install an extension to summarise YouTube videos in ChatGPT

summaries that open in a new ChatGPT tab – click Summarize Video 2.

To view YouTube summaries in Google Gemini, first go to its Extensions page (www.snipca.com/51121) and switch on the YouTube option. Paste the video URL into a Gemini chat and ask the assistant to summarise.

Organise your browser tabs

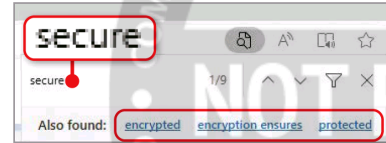
Earlier this year, Google added several AI features to Chrome – but only in the US. One of them organises your tabs into themed groups, so they're easier to find when you have a lot open. Right-click a tab, then select Organise Similar Tabs and the browser's new AI tool will add them to suitably named groups.

To get the feature now, install the AI-powered extension TabGPT (www.snipca.com/51124) – you don't need a ChatGPT account to use it. Pin it to your toolbar, then click its button and select 'Classify My Tabs' (see screenshot below). TabGPT will use AI to sort your tabs into themed groups – the default options are News, Shopping and YouTube, but you can add more in the extension's Settings.

Edge offers a similar feature through its Copilot assistant. Type 'Organise my tabs' to sort your tabs into groups, then click 'Group tabs' to accept its suggestions.



Sort your browser tabs into themed groups by clicking this button



Edge's 'Find on page' tool now uses AI to search web pages

Search web pages faster

One of the most useful new AI options in Edge has nothing to do with Copilot, but instead improves the browser's 'Find on page' feature. When you press Ctrl+F and enter a word, phrase or name you don't spell correctly, the updated search tool uses AI to guess what you mean.

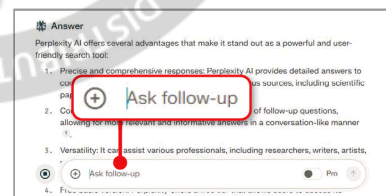
It provides 'Also found' suggestions below the search box, which you can click to view matching results on the page. 'Find on page' may also suggest synonyms for your query, for example 'encrypted' and 'protected' when you type 'secure' (see screenshot above).

If you don't see these suggestions, you can enable the option manually. Type `edge://flags` into Edge's address bar and press Enter to load the Experiments page. Find the entry **Related matches for find on page**, select Enabled in its dropdown menu and restart the browser.

Scour the web with an AI search engine

Google, Bing and Brave Search now include AI-generated results alongside 'real' ones, but several new search engines rely entirely on AI. The most impressive is Perplexity (www.perplexity.ai), which scours 'top-tier' online sources to provide concise but informative answers to your queries, then lets you ask follow-up questions (see screenshot below)

It's much faster and more focused and up-to-date than ChatGPT, and is immune to the **SEO** tricks that push poor-quality pages to the top of Google search results. Perplexity is free to use, but has a paid-for Pro plan priced at \$20 (£15.80) a month that "goes deeper into the specifics of your question".



Perplexity is a speedy new AI-based search engine that lets you ask follow-up questions