



Product news



Fool your friends with this gadget in disguise

Will your friends twig this trick?

Storage on a stick, literally

GADGETEER

Dutch company Oooms seems to have taken the term memory stick rather literally. Now you can dupe your friends into thinking you're a technical imbecile. They will think

you've jammed a bit of old wood into your socket, while really you're cunningly transferring files from computer to computer with these USB 2.0 storage devices in disguise.

You can choose from memory sizes of 256MB, 512MB or 1GB, and they cost between €45 and €70 plus shipping. See www.oooms.nl/usb for details.

New bonus for Wi-Fi buffs who like taking photographs

Nikon's Best Buy goes wireless

CAMERAS

Digital cameras with Wi-Fi, which allows photographs to be transferred to a computer wirelessly, are still rare.

The Wi-Fi-equipped Nikon Coolpix S6 is a current Best Buy. It takes good pictures and its 'jog-wheel' controls, similar to those on an iPod, are easy to use. But its Wi-Fi performance is not all plain sailing.

First the easy bit: installing the supplied software on your computer. Next, you need to configure the camera to your computer's Wi-Fi network. One of our testers with good Wi-Fi experience completed this in a few minutes without too much bother. But another tester, with practically no Wi-Fi knowledge, found it very fiddly and actually gave up after much trying.

If successful, you're free to transfer photos wirelessly. This is straightforward and reliable, although you should try to remain in the same room as your computer's wireless router for the best results.

Photos are transferred at a decent speed, but not as quickly as with a USB 2.0-wired connection, which some other cameras have. A useful shoot-and-transfer mode allows you to review your photo on the computer a few moments after you've taken it.



Nice to have – but adding camera Wi-Fi to your computer can be tricky

The Nikon Coolpix S6 also offers reliable wireless printing if you have a printer connected to your network. Alternatively you can use the optional PD-10 adaptor (about £50) plugged into any PictBridge printer's USB port.

This was easy to set up, though printing stopped halfway through one picture, leaving us with only half an image.

The Coolpix S6 is available for £250 from Jessops. If you aren't bothered about the Wi-Fi, you can still transfer photos in the traditional way, via a card or a wire.

Nikon has also recently launched the Coolpix S7c. This lets you email photos direct from the camera if you are in a Wi-Fi zone, like a hotspot, for example.

VERDICT A very good camera, but the Wi-Fi feature isn't a huge bonus unless you're a wireless buff or tend to lose cables.



Thomas and Mary Stanton – and their long-serving friend

Me & my buy

Thomas and Mary Stanton tell of the pleasure they've had from 50 years of the same food mixer

You can only imagine our disappointment when, after 50 years of loyal service, our Kenwood A700D mixer finally gave up the ghost. It's worked so hard over its lifetime, becoming part of our everyday cooking and proving to be excellent value.

The many gadgets and attachments we've acquired for it over the years have helped to produce cottage pies for parties of 40, Yorkshire puddings for Sunday lunch, preserves from home-grown fruit and non-stop cakes and desserts.

It's catered for copious events, a multitude of friends and our ever-increasing family, which now includes 12 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. We've been so impressed with it over the years that it's become a kind of family institution – each of our four daughters has had a Kenwood as a wedding gift, their mixers seeing varying degrees of use.

At this point in our lives it was difficult to imagine cooking without the mixer, so we were absolutely thrilled when Kenwood generously offered to give us a complete replacement.

Our old Kenwood was the pride and joy of our kitchen and our new mixer will be used, thankfully, to help us with the multiple ailments of old age.

13%

of people use travel guides to research their holidays

MINTEL

49 million

mobile phones sold worldwide in the quarter before Christmas 2005

GARTNER RESEARCH

82,000

hotspots worldwide for Wi-Fi users

INSTAT

Washing heads back to the steam age

CLEAN MACHINES

Dual-spray systems and direct-drive technology conjure up images of new gadgets and gizmos on the most up-to-date car. But times are changing: these are features on a cutting-edge washing machine. LG claims that its steam direct-drive machine is better than the competition and cuts the need for ironing – but is it all hype?

A standard 40°C cotton wash produces average results in an impressive 107 minutes. A quick wash at the same temperature takes 44 minutes and produces cleaner clothes, though the capacity is much smaller. So cleaning is OK but no better than other Best Buys.

The dual-spray system showers steam and water on laundry to improve performance, but LG says it is suitable only for baby clothes, underwear and heavily stained

LG's new steam washing machine will not banish the iron-day blues



items. We tried it on the baby care program but weren't that impressed with the results.

Water consumption was excellent – just 7.2 litres per kg on the standard 40°C wash compared with an average of 9.5 litres for other machines in this test, so the LG does make considerable savings. Being AAA rated, its energy usage is good, too.

Although LG's publicity claims the refresh program eliminates the need for ironing, our tests showed that this was exaggerated, as clothes were still a little creased. On closer inspection LG seems to agree, because its manual states: 'It just makes wrinkled clothes easy to iron.'

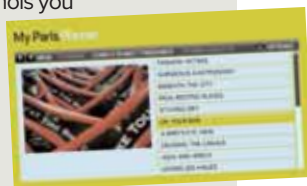
VERDICT The £680 LGWM 1437WFD is a good machine and rates as a Best Buy. It's worth a look if you're worried about your impact on the environment but not if you're interested only in giving up ironing. See www.which.co.uk for more details.

Just out

Passport to... £20

These PlayStation Portable discs take you on audio tours of Amsterdam, find restaurants in Rome and help you round Paris, Barcelona, Prague and London. If you're already taking your PSP on hols you

might prefer them to a guidebook, but it will mean walking around holding a valuable piece of kit.



Canon 400D SLR £490

Canon's new digital SLR camera, the EOS 400D, has a 10-megapixel sensor, a 2.5-inch LCD screen, and an integrated system to help keep lenses free from dust. But it's quite



pricey at £490 for the body only or £533 with a basic 18-55mm lens. From high-street shops.

Marks & Spencer

Next time you're shopping for clothes in Marks & Spencer look out for one of its new technology departments, selling everything from digital cameras to sat-nav systems. There are plans for 13 stores to open sections, stocking own-brand goods as well as models

MARKS & SPENCER

from big names like Nokia and Sony.

Nintendo Wii £179

Nintendo's new Wii games console will include five sport games. Its motion-sensitive controller makes it easier for those who don't normally play computer games – just swing it like a golf club and the on-screen character will do the same. From 8 December for £179 in high-street shops.



Is it worth it? Yes

In September we reported the results from our first survey of customer service from mobile-phone providers. We found Virgin was way ahead of its rivals in the pay-monthly sector. But do its tariffs also offer good value for money? We compare one of its low-cost plans with one of the same price from a rival.

Virgin £20



COST	£20/month
FREE MINUTES	100 ^a
FREE TEXTS	200 ^a

Vodafone Anytime



COST	£20/month
FREE MINUTES	75
FREE TEXTS	100

VERDICT

Virgin offers 25 more free minutes and 100 more free texts each month than Vodafone's same-priced plan. This means an extra 300 minutes and 1,200 texts a year. If you're a heavy user and exceed these calls and texts, Virgin is still the winner, as its call and text charges are cheaper than Vodafone's. Tariffs correct at 1 October 2006.

^a To get this many free minutes and texts you must purchase the tariff directly from Virgin Mobile