

Nintendo Wii Fit Plus

Cycling, snowball fighting and jogging over an obstacle course are among the new games in this Nintendo Wii Fit update.

The Plus version of the game has new strength and yoga activities, more balance games, plenty of fun mini games plus the activities from the original Wii Fit. It costs £90 with a balance board,



£40 without. We gave it a first look test to try it out. Our testers liked the new games, though the yoga and strength training exercises seemed suited only to fitter users.

As with the original Wii Fit, it weighs you, works out your body mass index and, after balance tests, gives a Wii Fit age that's meant to sum up your fitness. It offers posture, exercise and balance advice.

With the Plus, you can set up tailored exercise routines and count calories burned.

The Wii Fit Plus is fun, but the jury is still out on whether the Wii Fit will actually help you lose weight.

VERDICT Our testers liked the new games but some are only suited to fitter users.

Light for an upright



The Vax Mach Air is the lightest upright vac we've tried. At 4.9kg, it feels manoeuvrable and easy to carry, though it takes practice to stop it

wobbling – its base is narrow at the back.

Suction on carpet seemed powerful in our first look test, but we'll have to wait for our full lab test to see how deeply it cleans.

It bends flat to the floor, making it easy to get under furniture.

A red light comes on if the brushes are jammed and it's simple to

empty the dust container. It wasn't as good on hard surfaces, needing two or three passes to pick up the bits we could see and was noisy on any surface.

There is a Hepa filter – designed to retain particles that cause allergy attacks – and our full tests in 2010 will show how well this does. Register the Mach Air within 28 days of purchase (this is free) and you get a six-year parts and labour guarantee. It costs £180 from www.vax.co.uk.

VERDICT The Vax Mach Air is light and cleaned well on carpet.

JUST OUT

A peek at what's new on the shelves

Philips Robust kitchen gadgets

£125 - £345

Widely available

This range includes a handblender, juicer, blender, mixer and food processor, and should last a lifetime says Philips. This is just as well, as it's pricey. The hand mixer is £125 (Best Buys start at £15). They do have long warranties. We'll test the processor and jug blender soon, and publish results in spring.



Swan Teasmade

£59.95

John Lewis

That 1970s stalwart, the Teasmade, is back in the shops but with a new look. John Lewis says it's stocking the gadget due to customer demand. The Swan STM100 has a 600ml reservoir, enough for four cups of tea or coffee (it comes with a ceramic cup), a rapid boil function, a backlit LCD clock and a reading light.

Hoover TSE0100 Silent Energy

£180

Amazon.co.uk

Hoover claims that the TSE0100 is its quietest-ever bagged vacuum cleaner. It has three suction levels, the middle one of these being its 'silent energy' setting.

There are standard and hard floor nozzles and a combination tool that clips under the handle for easy storage.

You'll find the Silent Energy's power and suction setting buttons are on the curved hand grip to give you fingertip control.



Kenwood Cooking Chef

£1,000

John Lewis

Taking a traditional kitchen appliance and adding a cooking option is one of the latest innovations in the kitchen.

The Cooking Chef is a kitchen machine (a type of large food processor) but it also cooks by using induction heating under the mixing bowl.

Kenwood claims that the Chef can reach temperatures between 20°C and 140°C – giving everything from gentle warming to a rolling boil.



FUTURE TECH

Livescribe Pulse

Imagine a pen that lets you upload handwritten notes to computer, record voice memos and play piano. That's the idea behind the Pulse, which is sure to interest business people, students and journalists.

You write with the Pulse on paper carrying a marking that works with sensors in the pen. An A4 pad is included and you can buy A5 journals and pocket diaries or print sheets with a laser printer. We found electronic versions of the notes were clear and accurate, even dealing with messy writing.

Sound recording

A neat trick using the sound recorder allows you to take notes at a meeting and later tap the pen on your notes to replay that part of the meeting. The sound is good for such a tiny device. A piano application lets you draw a keyboard and play it by touching the pen to the paper.

It connects to a PC or Mac. The battery keeps going for weeks and the pen charges when docked to a computer. It costs £150 from Amazon. Blank notebooks don't cost much more than normal stationery.

VERDICT The Pulse is useful, but it remains to be seen how many will pay the price.

Mobiles add splash of colour



The Samsung Genio adds a splash of colour to the mobile market – it comes in a range of colours, from Jamaican yellow to cupid pink and festival orange. And with a huge TV ad campaign behind it, this is a phone that's hard to miss.

The Genio is an affordable way of getting a full touchscreen device. But it's basic and lacks many features you'll find on high-end handsets, such as GPS and 3G.

There's a 2Mp camera with smile detection, basic web browsing and some music features including an MP3 player and FM radio with RDS which gives station information on the screen as you listen. There are different levels of RDS offered, from just the station name, to more involved information about the artist and DJ.

The 2.8-inch touchscreen has Samsung's smart unlock tool, which allows you to unlock

the phone by tracing a preset shape across the screen with your finger.

Samsung claims that the battery will give up to 500 hours of standby – that's almost three weeks – and three hours and forty minutes talktime.

It's just over 10cm high and just under 1.25cm thick.

VERDICT The Samsung Genio is cheap and certainly cheerful-looking, but lacks a decent camera, GPS and 3G.

Could this laptop replace your pc?

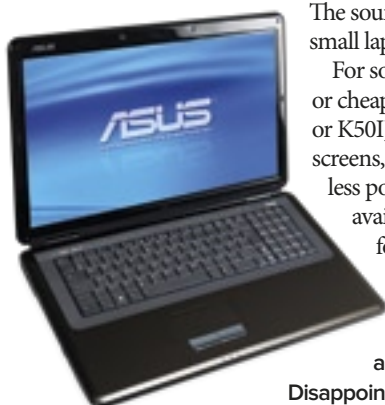
The Asus K70IO offers powerful computing at a bargain price, and its 17-inch screen makes it a possible substitute for a desktop PC. The keyboard is useable, but disappointingly flexible, and the keys feel dull. The Core 2 Duo T6500 processor can handle a wide range of applications and the 4GB of Ram is impressive. There's a 320GB hard drive, and the Nvidia GeForce GT 120M graphics card should do a good job with all but the most demanding programs.

The sound is good for small laptop speakers.

For something smaller or cheaper, the K50IN or K50IJ have 15-inch screens, and a bit less power. It's widely available online for £629.

VERDICT Plenty of power and a good screen.

Disappointing keyboard.



Watch your bread get toasted

You can watch your toast brown with what Magimix says is the first see-through toaster. You can toast a standard sliced loaf, crumpets, bagel or teacake by controlling it yourself or using the setting dial or defrost, bagel, reheat and stop buttons. The windows have two sheets of glass on each side, keeping

most heat from the toaster's outside wall. The windows fold down so you can clean the inside glass. When they're open, the power cuts out until they're closed and it's safe to use. It's launched in January for £160 and will be widely available.

VERDICT Looks good but very expensive for a two-slice toaster.



