



# Ask the experts



**Mike Smith asks whether he can recover deleted camcorder video**

## Recovery position

**I accidentally deleted footage from my camcorder. I've had conflicting advice as to whether I might be able to recover it. What do you think?**

MIKE SMITH, LEATHERHEAD

Ontrack ([www.ontrackdatarecovery.co.uk](http://www.ontrackdatarecovery.co.uk)), which has recently merged with Vogon, a data recovery service well respected in the computer industry, told us it is sometimes possible to recover data but it will depend on individual circumstances. The main factor is the medium the data was saved on to. If the data were saved to a hard disk, DVD or solid-state media (memory card or stick), the chances are good.

### SHARE YOUR QUESTIONS AND EXPERIENCES

You can contact us by email or post

■ [letters@which.co.uk](mailto:letters@which.co.uk)

■ Letters, PO Box 44, Hertford X, SG14 1SH

If you think that you may have deleted or lost data, stop using the equipment. If you don't, you greatly increase the chances of overwriting the data, which seriously reduces the possibility of recovery. Contact a data recovery service (via a search engine). Most, including Ontrack, offer a free consultation. Depending on the advice, you can then either buy software and do it yourself – some companies offer a free trial that tells you whether it will be able to recover the data – or pay the recovery service to do it. (As a first stage of its service, Ontrack offers a £75 diagnosis, where staff evaluate various things, including how difficult the recovery will be.) We haven't tested data recovery services so can't recommend any. But check terms and conditions carefully, as you would with any supplier.

## 0800 from mobiles

**I can't phone 0800 numbers on my Orange Talk Plan 60 contract. I've been frustrated by this when I broke down in France. Is it possible to access 0800 numbers from other mobile networks, even if you have to pay?**

VALERIE SWIFT, PORTSMOUTH

Orange told us you have an old contract, on which 0800 calls aren't allowed. All its current Talk Plans do allow them. If you want to make an 0800 call, you'll need to update your contract.

Generally, mobile networks do let you call 0800 numbers, but check. Costs to call them in the UK range from 10p or so to £1.50 a minute; it will cost more to call from abroad. Before you travel anywhere, get geographical numbers for people you may need to contact, such as credit card companies, breakdown services and travel insurance.

See p62 for our report on mobile service providers.

## Which? focus on Who has the

### Given no choice

**Can anyone enter my home without my permission?**

Fire fighters and the police have this right – but even then police officers will normally have a warrant other than in extreme circumstances (if someone's life is in danger, for instance). Fire fighters can force entry to put out a fire, rescue someone, or gain access to a neighbouring property. Customs inspectors, too, can enter by force without a warrant, though this is unlikely to occur with private residences.

for a warrant, which entitles them to enter by force. It's a criminal offence to deny entry to an official in possession of a warrant or who asks to be admitted in an emergency, and doing so could result in a fine. Utility companies will usually let you know 24 hours in advance that they'll be calling, though they can call to inspect meters without prior notice.

### Password-protected

**My elderly dad doesn't like letting people in even to read his meter. Any tips I can pass on to him?**

Utility companies will usually give you a unique customer service or account number, which you can ask them to quote when they call. Tell your dad to make a note of these from his bills and keep them near the door. Also, as a condition of their licences, utility companies operate a 'special-needs' register. This allows elderly, disabled or chronically sick customers to agree a password which staff will use when they visit. Contact your utility company for details.

### Utility companies

**I was told the gas company can enter by force. Is that true?**

It can if it suspects a gas leak; otherwise, gas, electricity and water companies need your permission to enter. They have to show adequate ID, but if they do so and you still don't let them in, they can apply to the courts

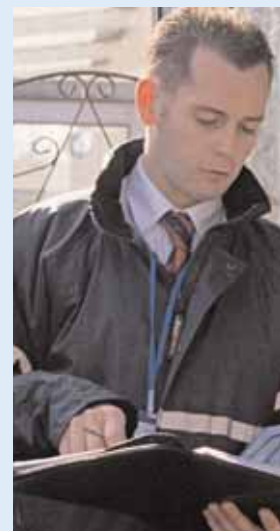
### PROTECT YOURSELF FROM INTRUDERS WITH OUR SIMPLE CHECKLIST

**Do...**

- ✓ **Stand your ground unless you're certain that the caller has a right to enter**
- ✓ **Ask for identification and look out for credible signs on things like vehicles, clothing and documents**
- ✓ **Ring the company's phone number if you're in any doubt**
- ✓ **Contact a citizens advice bureau or your local council if you're suspicious or you're being harassed. If they persist, call the police**

**Don't...**

- ✗ **Let anyone in if you are on your own.**  
You have the right to ask the caller to wait or to return when someone else is present
- ✗ **Let in anyone you're not familiar with and whose identity you're unsure of**



Your consumer questions answered by our experts, plus your chance to share your experiences with fellow Which? members



**Lucy Hairsine**  
**Services research assistant**  
Answers this month's questions



**Nicolas Frankcom**  
**Money research assistant**  
Tells you who can and can't come in

## Your say

Share your stories with fellow members

### Great days out

**Other stones that leave Stonehenge standing... a cannon balls-up...and something that, with 'houndsight', we probably should have included**

### What you told us

'If you want to see ancient stones, Avebury seems to me a much better choice than Stonehenge. It has a proper and informative visitor centre and a choice of places to eat. The site itself is free and you can go right up to the stones.'

KRIS, BY EMAIL

'Any crowds gathering at Edinburgh Castle at 1pm to see a cannon fired will be disappointed. It would be a magnificent (and dangerous) sight. The One o'Clock Gun is, of course, a 25 pounder.'

JOHN, OXON

'I visited Portsmouth Dockyard with my son, which you ranked sixth [out of 11]. I was stunned at the cost but pleasantly surprised by the reality of the attraction. Yes, it is "chips with everything", but there is a large children's play area. And our entrance ticket had a one-year expiry date. Wonderful value for money and an all-round memorable day.'

JAYNE, BY EMAIL

'Thank you for the welcome and informative report on dogs and other pets. A pity you didn't include information about whether they are permitted at the heritage sites in your preceding report.'

BRYAN, BY EMAIL

### Next month

Caring for your eyes

■ [letters@which.co.uk](mailto:letters@which.co.uk)  
■ Letters, PO Box 44  
Hertford X SG14 1SH

## right to enter

### I'll warrant you

What about my local authority, TV Licensing and people like that?

Local council officers can enter only in certain situations – if a planning officer suspects building work has been done without permission, say, or an environmental health officer suspects a property is infested with vermin. No warrant is needed but prior notice is. TV Licensing inspectors can enter with a warrant but, again, will tell you in advance.

### Watch out for bailiffs

I've had a letter threatening a visit from a bailiff. What's the situation?

As a rule, in England and Wales bailiffs may not enter by force (their Scottish equivalents can) and you can't be arrested for refusing them entry, but they can enter peaceably – through an open window, say. Once bailiffs have gained entry peaceably, they have the right to return and force entry. See 'Legal tip', p81, for more on bailiffs.



### Tracker accounts

**My building society savings account guaranteed to track the Bank of England base rate until September 2007. In October 2006, it changed to paying a fixed rate. I was told that the Banking Code allows it to make this kind of change, provided it notifies customers. Does it?**

MARY, SUFFOLK

The code can't stop banks and building societies changing their terms and conditions. But it does insist that they give customers advance warning and offer them the option of switching or closing the account.

However, we think any company that reneges on a guarantee such as this is acting reprehensibly. Ask your building society to justify the change. If you're not satisfied, complain. All building societies have a formal complaints procedure and are subject to the Financial Ombudsman Service.

### Liquids at airports

**In 'Liquid alert', in your July issue (p4), you say that air passengers can't take any container with more than 100ml of liquid through airport security checks. I've been told that larger containers with only 100ml in them have been confiscated. Is this true?**

MIKE HOOPER, PURLEY

Yes. It's the size of the container, not how much liquid it contains, that's important. All liquids must be in individual containers of no greater than 100ml capacity (aerosols, creams and pastes count as liquids). The containers must fit easily into one resealable, transparent bag no larger than 20cm x 20cm – each passenger is allowed one bag. There are only exemptions for medicine and baby milk/food.



**Mel McMahon is querying a fee on her store card statement**

### Mystery store card fee

**I used my Creation store card to buy £110 worth of goods. My statement showed a £2.03 'price and purchase protection charge', added without my permission. What is this fee?**

MEL McMAHON, BASINGSTOKE

It's part of a package of protection insurance. Price protection means that if the price of something is later reduced in a sale or you find the item cheaper elsewhere, you can claim back the difference within a set time. Purchase protection lets you claim money back if goods are lost, stolen or damaged, again within a set time. Creation currently charges £1.85 for every £100 of balance outstanding each month.

If there's no balance when a statement is produced, you won't be charged. And if you've not used the card for a while and there's no balance outstanding, you may not realise you have insurance, or you may have forgotten, particularly if you took it out when you signed up for the card. It isn't compulsory so if you don't want it, cancel it.

Store cards are best avoided, as their interest rates tend to be higher than credit cards'. If you do sign up for one, pay off the statement in full.