Computer Basics
For Seniors

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Cost: $1.10
Computer Basics

You may have been using a computer for months or years, and still can’t quite figure out how some things work. What exactly is the Desktop? How do I get to the internet? What’s the difference between right click and left click? Throughout this packet, we will answer all of those questions and more!

NOTE: If there’s a phrase or name being used that you don’t recognize or remember, skip to the end of this packet for a glossary of terms.

Lesson 1: Parts of the Computer

There are 4 basic parts that make up your entire computer system: the monitor, the tower, the keyboard, and the mouse. Below is a description of each, along with some key pointers to help you.

The Monitor

When you think of a computer, this might be the first thing you think of. The monitor is the screen through which you view everything you do on your computer.

NOTE: The monitor has its own set of buttons, found on the side or bottom, including a power button. This will turn the screen off, not the entire computer. There are also buttons to adjust brightness, contrast, and other settings.

The Tower

The tower of the computer hosts the main power supply to the monitor, keyboard, and mouse. The tower will also have drives for memory sticks, DVDs and CDs, headphones, and speakers. Most importantly, it has the power button that controls the entire computer.
The Keyboard

Your keyboard and your mouse are the main avenues for you to tell the computer what you want it to do. The keyboard is often used for typing letters, entering website addresses and passwords, and searching.

The Alphabet Pad

The main section of the keyboard is the alphabet pad. This is where all of the letters are. On the “J” and “F” keys, there are usually little bumps – these are where your index finger rests for typing. Your dominant thumb will rest on the space bar beneath the letters, and each finger has its own set of keys it types.

On each side of the letters, there are other functions, such as Caps Lock, Tab, and Enter. Below the letters is your space bar. This is used for creating a space between each of your words.

The Number Pad

The number pad is one of two sets of number keys available on a keyboard. Some keyboards do not have the number pad, and you do not have to use it if you don’t want to. Similar to the alphabet keys, your hand is positioned on the pad in a specific way, and each finger has its own set of keys it operates.

When do I use…

- Shift and Caps Lock?

Caps Lock, when pressed once, will make it so that everything you type is all capital letters until you tap it again. You will use this if you are wanting to write whole words or sentences in all caps.

The Shift key needs to be held down while typing alphabet keys. This key is usually only used for capitalizing the word at the beginning of sentences, or if you just need one word in your sentence in all caps.
• **Delete and Backspace?**

Both **Delete** and **Backspace** will get rid of letters and words. The direction in which it removes them is different for each.

**Backspace** will remove letters *to the left* of the cursor on your page, and will look like the cursor is moving backwards. **Delete** will remove letters *to the right* of the cursor; it will look like the cursor is eating the words in front of it.

• **The Number Pad and the other numbers?**

Both sets of number keys will type the same way, and which one you use is only personal preference.

**NOTE:** If you decide to use the number pad, make sure the **Num Lock** key in the top left of the pad is on. When it is off, the Number Pad buttons have other functions.

**The Mouse**

The mouse, like the keyboard; helps you to direct the computer to do what you want it to. The mouse itself has three distinct parts:

1. ***Left Click button***: This button, when clicked, allows you to choose the option your mouse is pointed over on the screen. Think of the left click button as the “select” button.
2. ***Right Click button***: This button, when clicked, generally brings up a menu of other options related to the window that you have opened. Below are two examples of these menus that could appear:
3. **Scroll button:** Use this button to scroll up and down on a page. You don’t want to click the button itself, just lightly move it up and down on the mouse to operate it.

**Lesson 2: Turning Your Computer On and Off**

**Turning your computer on**

Step one of using your computer is, you guessed it, turning it on! All computers will have a power button on the tower. To turn on your computer, give that button one short, firm press. After a few moments, your computer will turn on.

**NOTE:** If you have it set up to, your computer may prompt you with a login when you first turn it on. You will want to have your password handy if this is the case.

**Turning your computer off**

There are a couple different options for turning your computer off, all of them accessed via the **Start Menu**.

**Shut down**

The first of these is the, “Shut down,” mode, which turns your computer completely off, and closes any applications, programs, and documents you may have been working on:

1. Click on the **Start Menu**.
2. Move your mouse over and click on the **Shut down** button.
   **CAUTION:** You want to click over the words, “Shut down,” not the arrow.

**Hibernate or Sleep**

The second of these is choosing either, “Hibernate,” or “Sleep.” The former turns off your computer but makes programs and documents available when you start up again. The latter puts your computer in a power-saving mode, and allows you pick up where you left off:

1. Click on the **Start Menu**.
2. Move your mouse over the arrow next to the **Shut down** button.
3. Click on either, “Hibernate,” or “Sleep” from the menu of options.

**Lesson 3: Your Desktop**

Think of the “Desktop” on your computer like you would the top of your desk at home. On top, you have a variety of possibilities: paper and pen, calculator, folders of documents, spreadsheets, etc.

**Icons**

The main difference in this analogy is **icons**. Instead of having physical paper and pen or a calculator, there will be a small picture representing what each program, respectively, is. By double clicking (left click) over the small picture, you are opening up that program.
Example: The Microsoft Word icon (right), when double clicked, will open up a word processing application. The closest equivalent to this is paper and pen. Through Word, you can type up a letter, create birthday cards, display data, and much more.

The Taskbar

Running along the bottom of your desktop is the Taskbar. This holds its own set of icons, along with a few other features.

On the far right is the time and date. Clicking on it will open a small calendar for viewing. You can also access settings for the time and date from here. A cluster of other settings are in this area, including Wi-Fi settings, external drives, notifications, and more.

Moving from right to left, you may have a whole host of icons. These icons function the same ways as those found elsewhere on the desktop, taking you to the programs each icon represents.

NOTE: When the icons on the taskbar are underlined, that means you have one document of that program open.

The Start button

The icon on the farthest left of your taskbar is the Start button. This button allows you to access all of the programs, documents, settings, and devices for your computer. Depending on your computer type and year, you can either scroll, search, or click into various sections to find what you’re looking for.

For almost any program you find through the Start button, you can create an icon and pin it to your Desktop, including your Taskbar.
Lesson 4: File Explorer

Following the analogy before of what is available on the top of your desk at home, you could also choose to have documents and folders tucked in a drawer of your desk. Think of the “File Explorer” as your drawer searcher.

The easiest way to access your File Explorer is to click on the icon on your taskbar:  Once you've opened it, you should get a pop-up like this:

![File Explorer screenshot]

Inside the File Explorer, you see several folders, and within those, possibly multiple documents you have saved over time. To find anything within your computer, start from the left and work your way over:

1. Choose a location from the left-hand list of possibilities.

![Folder selection screenshot]

**NOTE:** If you insert a DVD, CD, or Removable Disk, it will be listed in this section.

2. Choose the folder from the main, middle panel.

![Folder selection screenshot]

**NOTE:** You may have to continue clicking through several folders to find what you need if you've created an elaborate system of sub-folders.
3. If you can’t find what you’re looking for this way, use the search function.

**CAUTION:** The search will apply to whatever location from step 1 is selected. If you’re not sure which location the document or folder could be in, choose *This PC* to search your whole computer.

To learn more about saving documents and organizing your files and folders, sign up for one of our one-on-one coaches and keep an eye out for upcoming classes!

**Lesson 5: Microsoft Office**

On your desktop, taskbar, or somewhere in your start menu, you may have seen one or all three of these icons:

![Microsoft Office Icons](image)

These are all different programs provided by the Microsoft Office when an Office package is purchased. At Twinsburg Public Library, we have a subscription that gives patrons access to the three above (Excel, Word, and PowerPoint) along with Access and Publisher.

Below is a break-down of what each program is used for:

- **Excel**: Use this for organizing and displaying data. It is especially useful for numerical data. Charts, graphs, and formulas are oft-used components of this program.
- **Word**: This is your typewriter, in a sense. Papers, letters, and resumes are oft-used components of this program.

**NOTE:** You can also find templates for making cards, bookmarks, invitations, and other creative projects. However, Publisher specializes in this.

- **PowerPoint**: Use this program for creating presentations. Talk outlines, picture slideshows, and data displays (graphs, charts, tables) are oft-used components of this program.
- **Access**: Think of Access as an advanced version of Excel. This program allows you to store information for reporting and analysis. Inventories, records information, and cataloging information are oft-used components of this program.
- **Publisher**: This is a basic design tool, offering more options than Word, but not quite as advanced as Photoshop or Gimp. Invitations, flyers, and cards are oft-used components of this program.
Lesson 6: Using the Internet

A common use of the computer now is for access to the internet. By going, “online” you can access tons of information, social interactions, and entertainment.

Browsers

A browser is the tool you use to access the internet. There are three you may have on your Desktop at any time, which will do the same thing but might look and function a little differently:

- Internet Explorer
- Mozilla Firefox
- Google Chrome

To get onto the internet, double-click over one of these three icons. For this packet, we will be using Google Chrome.

Parts of the Internet Window

When you open your Internet Browser, the program will launch, giving you something that looks similar to the image below. You can use either white bar indicated below to look up something or go to a website.

Looking up a term or phrase

When you aren’t sure of the specific place you want to go, and would like to just browse and see what the internet has, you would enter in terms or phrases into the search bars of your browser.

**Example:** You’re looking for somewhere fun to eat tonight. Try looking for “food Twinsburg” or “Chinese restaurants near me” and choose from the list of sites provided.

Going to a specific website

Sometimes you know the exact webpage you want to go to. You would enter in the web address specific to that page to go directly there.

**Example:** If you want to go to Facebook, you would type in its address: www.facebook.com. If you would like to browse Consumer Reports, you would type in their address: www.consumerreports.org.

**CAUTION:** In order to use this method, you have to know the specific web address beforehand. If you don’t know it, try looking up a site using key words or phrases.
Glossary of Terms

**Application:** A program that is useful in the everyday life of the user. For example: calculator, word processing software like Microsoft Word, or a video player.

**Central Processing Unit (CPU):** part of the computer where the logical functions are performed and instructions are decoded. The “brains” of the computer.

**Cursor:** A symbol onscreen that shows the current position of the user. It can be a flashing line, an arrow, or an elongated letter “I”. From the point of the cursor, users can write text, select online links, and select applications.

**Drive:** Device that reads and writes data (usually from a storage device).

**Desktop:** The graphic background; users can store files on the desktop.

**File:** A set of stored information. It can be a program, a document, or application.

**Flash drive:** Also called a Thumb Drive, a small portable data-storage unit.

**Hardware:** Tangible or physical components of a computer.

**Hibernate:** A low-energy state the computer goes into when it has not been used for a long period of time.

**Hyperlink:** Also called a link. This is usually highlighted text, an icon, or picture. It allows users to jump from one file to another. Think of it as a connection between files and webpages.

**Icon:** A picture (sometimes located on the desktop or on a webpage) that represents a link to a program or website.

**Keyboard:** The alphabet and number keys are arranged in a similar way to the typewriter. These keys allow users to type documents or input commands to the computer.

**Microsoft Windows:** The most commonly used Operating System. Microsoft Windows is available on most personal and public computers.

**Maximize:** A command in the top-right corner of a window that adjusts the size of the window to fit the entire computer screen.

**Minimize:** A command in the top-right corner of a program’s window that allows a user to see the desktop without closing a program.

**Monitor:** Similar in appearance as a television, the monitor allows the user to view files and applications on the computer.

**Mouse:** An external device that is used to select different commands on the computer, by manipulating the cursor onscreen. Typically, a mouse has two buttons and is designed to fit in a user’s hand.

**Operating System:** A collection of software programs that allows a user to access the computer.

**Program:** A software application that tells the computer how to run a task. Common programs include: games, Microsoft Office, and internet browsers.
**Restore up or down**: A command in the top-right corner of a window that automatically adjusts the size of the window.

**Shut Down**: A command listed under the *Start Menu* that safely turns a computer off.

**Software**: Intangible components of a computer; the programs that tell a computer what to do.

**Start Menu**: This menu is found under the Start Button (lower-left corner of the screen) in Microsoft Windows. The user clicks on the start button to view all available programs on the computer.

**Tower**: The internal hardware for the CPU, such as computer chips and processors, are stored in the small vertical cabinet. This is where users connect headphones, insert CDs, and turn the computer on/off. Not every computer model requires a tower for internal hardware storage (e.g. a laptop does not).

**Wallpaper**: A large image on the desktop, used for decoration.

**Window**: A program running in a square or rectangular section of the screen. Users can adjust the size of each window.