

What are computers, anyway??

A computer is a device that accepts information and manipulates it for some result.

Computers can be confusing, and it takes a little time before you gain confidence in using and understanding them. Just like a new TV or VCR, computers can be a bit cumbersome to figure out, but once you achieve a certain level of knowledge, these machines can become powerful allies.

Don't be afraid to tinker around on a computer. Like learning to drive or riding a bike, computing simply take patience and practice. And don't worry, short of dropping the computer off of a ten story building, you won't break it!

CPU (Central Processing Unit) Your computer's brain...



The main component to make your computer operate is the computer chip or microprocessor. This is referred to as the Central Processing Unit (CPU) and is housed in the computer case.



The **power switch** is located somewhere on the CPU, usually in the front or on the side. You press the power switch to start your computer. But do not press the power switch to turn off your computer unless nothing else works.

The Monitor



The computer monitor is the physical display for your computer. It is similar to your TV's screen.

On/Off Switch

Most monitors have their own power switch. It is often on the front of the monitor but it may be somewhere else on the unit. The monitor helps you see what the computer is doing.

Monitor Controls

Like televisions, monitors allow you to make adjustments in the quality of the display -- brighter, darker, etc. These controls vary from unit to unit, both in what you can adjust and how you do it.



Common Keys



Enter.

Enter is a very important key. When you finish typing in a response or a request, press Enter to send it to the CPU. In a word processor, it is the key used for starting a new paragraph.



Backspace.

Backspace deletes characters one at a time starting to the left of the cursor on the screen.



Delete. Delete erases characters one at a time starting to the right of the cursor on the screen. It also deletes whatever is highlighted on the screen.

Common Keys Continued



Cursor Keys

These keys are arrows that move the cursor (an arrow or little flashing bar that tells you where you are on the screen) around on the monitor screen for typing or drawing.



Numerical Keypad.

The numerical keypad looks like a small calculator. If you press the NumLock key, you can use it like a calculator in certain programs.

Disks



Hard Disk Drive

The hard disk drive is the mechanism that reads and writes data on a hard disk. The hard disk drive and the hard disk are packaged as a unit and are usually referred to as the “hard drive.” They are mounted permanently inside the computer. The hard disk holds the operating system for the computer (like Windows 95/98), programs (like Microsoft Word), and documents. The hard drive stores many more times the amount of information than can be stored on a floppy disk.

Floppy disk



One of the objects the computer stores information on is called a floppy disk. This consists of a plastic casing enclosing a thin piece of plastic. This device holds 1.44 megabytes. The information on a floppy disk is written in magnetic code. Because of this, it is important to keep all disks away from magnets and magnetic devices.

CD-ROM Drive



A compact disc (CD) is similar to the floppy disk because it stores and retrieves data. This device holds 650 megabytes of information.

USB Flash Drives

Types of USB flash drives

There are several types of these drives, and many more will likely crop up over time. Whether they are called *Thumb Drives*, *Jump Drives*, or *Pen Drives*, they all work the same way.



You use them just like you would a floppy disk – to save and transfer files. These devices hold from 32 megabytes to several gigabytes of information. The most popular kinds hold 128 to 256 megabytes.

Printers




A printer transfers graphics and text from your computer to paper. Printers can differ in the resolution per inch, color capability and speed. You can most often click on the printer icon in a program to print out a document.



What is a window??




When you open a program, it creates a new window. This window is separate from anything else that is running on the desktop. You can have multiple windows open at the same time.

Resizing and minimizing a window

Clicking on the  in the upper right-hand corner of the title bar **minimizes** the window—that is, hides it temporarily. The window becomes an **icon** on the **task bar**, which you can click on to bring it back to the screen.

Clicking on the  in the upper right-hand corner of the title bar resizes the window (makes it smaller or larger). If the window is not at maximum size, the symbol will appear as two interlocking boxes . These two symbols toggle back and forth. Try clicking on them to see how it works.

Closing a window or software program

Clicking on the  in the upper right-hand corner of the title bar will close both the current document window and the computer software that created the window.

When there are two  within a window, clicking on the innermost symbol will close the document you are using, but not the software.

The Mouse (no, you do not need an exterminator).



The mouse is an input device like the keyboard, but it is more dynamic. The mouse has a roller ball that is attached to several internal sensors that allow you to travel around the screen on the monitor. When you reach your destination, you can click, highlight, or drag and drop the item.

The mouse has two buttons: left and right. Most of the time you will click the left button to select objects. Usually you select things with the mouse by clicking the left button once. When you click the right button a special menu is displayed with various options you can select.

For a mouse tutorial website:

<http://www.ckls.org/~crippel/computerlab/tutorials/mouse/page1.html>

For a typing or keyboarding website:

<http://www.sense-lang.org/typing>

