INTRODUCTION

This class assumes that you have never touched a computer before. That’s ok! Take a deep breath and get comfortable. You won’t break anything and you certainly won’t catch a computer virus. By the end of this class, you will be able to identify parts of the computer, tell the difference between hardware and software, and use the keyboard and mouse.

A personal computer is a machine that can accomplish many useful tasks. It can be used to write a letter (or email), play a game, view and send pictures of your friends and family, watch movies, listen to music, and keep track of your budget. There are hundreds of different kinds of computers made by hundreds of manufacturers. Some can sit on a desk, while others can be carried around in a bookbag.

PARTS OF A COMPUTER (HARDWARE)

Hardware refers to the parts of your computer that can be seen and touched. Poke something on the desk in front of you (not too hard!). If you can touch it, it is hardware.

Tower

The tower is the box that contains all the wires, chips, and circuits that makes a computer do what you instruct it to do. Any external device or media that you have is placed in or on the tower (CDs and DVDs to play, portable media players, cell phones, flash drives, etc.). A laptop, tablet, or smart phone has the exact same parts that a typical tower has—they are just more compact to fit into a smaller space. Don’t worry about what’s inside the tower just yet. We will get to that in a later class.

Most computer towers have various drives, ports, and buttons that all serve specific purposes. Here are some of the things you may find on your tower.

CD/DVD Drive

The CD/DVD drive is where you insert a CD or DVD to play or watch on the computer. Most computers still have CD and DVD drives although they are quickly being replaced by files on the internet. The disc drive, officially called an “optical drive,” may also allow you to rip and burn CD’s & DVD’s. Ripping is the process of taking data stored on a disc and transferring it to the computer. Burning is the act of taking data stored on the computer and putting it on a blank CD or DVD.
USB and Memory Card Slots

Every PC built in the past decade will have several USB ports. These small rectangular ports are for connecting other pieces of hardware to your PC. The most common thing that you will plug into a USB port is probably a mouse, although most other hardware such as digital cameras, scanners, flash drives, printers, and external hard drives plug into the same USB port as well.

Headphone and Microphone Ports

You may also find circular inputs for headphones (or speakers) and a microphone. Sometimes the headphone jack will be outlined in green and the microphone jack will be outlined in pink. Color coding the various inputs makes it easier to know what goes where.

The Power Button

The power button is used to turn on a computer. It is usually accented by a green LED light that remains lit when the computer is on. Avoid turning your computer off via the power button whenever possible! This could cause data to be lost.

Monitor

Although the monitor lacks a television tuner, it looks and functions just like a TV. Everything that you do with a computer will be displayed visually on the monitor. You probably won’t have to touch it other than turning it on and off.

Keyboard

The keyboard is one way to provide input, or instructions, to a computer. Except for a few additional keys, the keyboard is laid out just like a typewriter.

Mouse

The mouse is another way to provide input to your computer. Most mice have at least two buttons and a little wheel in the middle. We’ll talk a lot about the mouse in this class, because it’s the thing most new users need to know the most about.
OPERATING SYSTEM

The operating system is the most important program that runs on a computer. The operating system performs basic tasks like recognizing keystrokes and other input, sending visual output to a monitor, keeping track of files, and controlling disk drives. Most computers use Microsoft Windows as their operating system, but Apple’s OS X and Linux are other choices that are gaining popularity. Although each operating system is different, they all have similarities. If you are comfortable using one, you will probably feel comfortable using another after some practice.

APPLICATIONS

Applications are programs that perform everyday tasks. For example, a word processor is used to type and format documents. A web browser is used to view pages on the Internet. A graphic design program is used to edit photographs and create graphics. There are hundreds of different applications that you can use!

MOUSING AROUND

Hold Your Mouse

Are you left-handed or right? Move the mouse to the side that is most comfortable to you. Gently palm the entire mouse. Your pointer and middle fingers should naturally fold over the buttons.

Move Your Mouse

Keep your wrist movement to a minimum and practice moving the mouse around the mouse pad. It’s ok to pick up and reposition the mouse if you run out of space.

Click Your Mouse

It’s called a “click” when you press a mouse button because the mouse makes a light clicking noise. Keep your hand still when you click and lightly press down once on the button that you need (usually the one on the left). A double click is simply how it sounds—two clicks in quick succession. Both of these clicks will be very important when you start navigating through programs and menus on your computer.

APPLICATION

Look at your monitor while moving your mouse around. That arrow moving around is your cursor and is what you will use to open programs, select files, and choose where you want words to appear when you type. Your cursor is pretty smart and will change appearance depending on what it is pointing at.

Hand - Text can be clicked on.
Wait - A program or web page is loading.
Text - Text can be typed here.
As noted above, a computer keyboard is laid out just like a typewriter. There are, however, a few special keys that typewriters don’t have:

- **Page Up and Page Down (⭐)** will allow you to move up and down on the page without using the mouse.

- **Home (♦)** will take you to the beginning of the line and **End (♦)** will take you to the end.

- **At the bottom of your keyboard, on the left and right sides, you’ll see a key labeled Shift (●) with an arrow pointing upwards.** If you hold down the shift key while typing a letter, it will make a capital letter. When you have a key with two things on it (for example the ! and 1 key), the Shift key tells the computer to type the character on top rather than the one on the bottom.

- **The Caps Lock key (■) will make any letter capital until you turn it off by hitting the Caps Lock key again.**

- **If you type something incorrectly, backspace (●) will back up over one letter at a time. Delete (●) will delete the letter just in front of the cursor.** If you make a really big mistake you can also highlight an entire section using the mouse and delete it all at once, just by using the delete key.

- **The space bar (●) puts a space between letters and words.**

Note: The keyboard image is also larger for reference at the end.
EXPLORE YOUR DESKTOP

The desktop of a computer serves the same purpose as your office desk at home. The difference, of course, is that it is digital! The desktop is usually the first screen you see when you start your computer (or, if you’re using a library computer, after you log on). It contains a clock and calendar to help manage your schedule. It contains a drawer filled with tools, or applications. It also has a place to store your files, like a filing cabinet.

MANAGE WINDOWS

Every application that you open opens in a new “window.” You can have multiple windows open at the same time (e.g. do research online on Wikipedia while you type a paper in a word processor). Every window you have open will be shown in the taskbar at the bottom of the screen. Every window you open will have three buttons at the top right (top left if you are using a Mac): minimize, restore down/maximize, and close.

The minimize button looks like an underscore or underline. This button will “minimize” your window to the taskbar at the bottom of the screen. This is useful when you need to shuffle some work out of the way to make room for other applications. The second button that looks like a three dimensional cube is called the “restore down” button when a window is opened in full screen mode. When clicking it, the window shrinks to a smaller size, but is still visible. Once in the smaller mode, the “restore down” button now changes to a square and becomes the “maximize” button. Simply clicking this button will bring the window to full screen.
size. The last button is the close button (which looks like a giant X). It does exactly what you think it does — it closes the application you have open. If you are in a program where you have made changes to a file, such as Word or Photoshop, you may be prompted to “save your changes” after clicking the close button. If you choose not to save your changes, any data you entered will be lost!

### STAY COMFORTABLE AND HEALTHY WHILE COMPUTING!

- Sit up straight with the monitor at eye level. Avoid slouching or leaning back too far.
- Take occasional breaks to stretch and walk around.
- Move the mouse with your arm, not your wrist.
- Work in a well-lit area and rest your eyes regularly.
- To reduce neck strain, learn to touch type instead of “hunting and pecking.”

### WHY COMPUTERS?

Computers not only provide tools to make your life easier, but they also help you connect with your family, friends, and the world around you. Read local and worldwide news, watch that TV show you missed last week, view photos and videos of your family and comment on what you see. Keep a journal that others can read and comment on. Write that book you always wanted to. If you are in the job market, almost every employer requires an online application and electronic resume. There is no better time to acquaint yourself with using a computer, and you are not alone on the journey! Like any new skill, learning how to use a computer takes lots of practice (and patience). Here is your homework (don’t worry, you won’t be graded):

Practice your mouse skills while playing a game! If you are using a Windows computer, open Solitaire or Hearts from the “Games” menu (remember where applications are kept? They’re in the drawer of your desktop).

Practice typing by writing a journal entry for the day using Notepad or Word.

Check out some of these books from our collection:


Don’t stop now! The next class is Internet for Beginners I. Ask library staff to sign you up for a time that works with your schedule or call us at (513) 369-6900.