

Computers 101

Part I: Meet the Computer

In this day and age in order to succeed – be it in school, at work, or just in life in general – you need to know at the very minimum the basics of how to use a computer. Nearly every job now requires you to apply online. For many people the idea of using a computer is overwhelming enough, but knowing that if you want to get a job you must use the computer can be downright frightening! But computers today are not only smaller and faster than in years past, they are also easier to use than ever before.

Computers come in various shapes and sizes and can be used for a variety of purposes. Whether it's surfing the internet, checking email, writing a resume, listening to music, playing games, posting pictures of your family reunion, or just watching movies, the computer has become the all in one multimedia machine that society just can't seem to get enough of.

Parts of the Computer

Tower

The tower is the big box that contains all the wires and chips and other innards that make your computer work. The tower is also one of the parts of the computer that you'll probably interact with the least. The tower is where you would insert a CD or DVD to play.



Monitor

The monitor looks like a TV - and for the most part works like one. You'll rarely do much with the monitor itself, except for look at it and maybe turn it off and on.



Keyboard

The keyboard is one of the ways you'll communicate with your computer. The keyboard is laid out much like a typewriter (if you've used one of those in the past) with several additional keys that are just for the computer. We'll talk more about the keyboard a little later.



Mouse

The mouse is another way you'll interact with the computer. It has two buttons and sometimes a little wheel in the middle. We'll talk a lot about the mouse in this class, because it's usually the thing most new users need to know the most about.



Computers may come in all shapes and sizes, but these basics parts are always there. The only major difference you may see is on a laptop the mouse may be replaced with a touch pad. Never fear though, you can still buy a standard mouse separately and use it like you normally would.

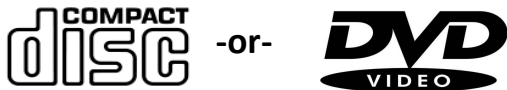
Computers 101

Part II: A tour of the tower

While designs will vary, most computers will look something like the picture to the right.

CD/DVD Drive

At the top of the tower is the CD/DVD drive. This is where you would insert a CD or DVD to play or watch on the computer. Virtually all new computers have CD drives, and most have DVD drives as well. If you are unsure if a computer has a CD or DVD drive, on the front drawer that slides out, look for a logo such as:



You may also install CD-ROM programs on your computer using the CD drive. Popular programs like Norton Antivirus, Photoshop, and Windows Vista will require you to install them via a disc. The disc drive, often 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. (Note: special software may be required to rip or burn a disc). But these are more advanced options that you probably won’t be doing right away.

USB and memory card slots

On the front of most newer PCs (and along the sides of most laptops) you will find **USB ports** (also called USB hubs or slots). 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 a printer, although most other hardware devices such as digital cameras, scanners, flash drives, and external hard drives plug into the same USB port as well. Most of these devices will come with a cable that plugs into the device on one end and into the computer on the other (although sometimes you have to buy the cable separately). Many newer computers also have **memory card slots** on the front on the tower. These are used for inserting memory cards from devices such as cameras and cell phones, to transfer data to the computer.

Headphone & Microphone inputs

Also on the front of most computers you will find two 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. You will also notice on the back of the computer many color code combinations – for example the keyboard plugs into the purple input, the monitor into the blue input, and so on.

The power button

Also on the tower is the power button. This is usually signified by an LED light (often green) that is lit when the computer is turned on. There is often a second small light next to the power button that flashes – this indicates that the computer is receiving or processing data. Tip: You want to avoid turning your computer off via the power button whenever possible! This could cause data to be lost.



Computers 101





Part III: Using the Mouse

Your mouse will generally have two to three relatively simple kinds of parts: the body of the mouse, the mouse buttons (left & right), and occasionally a little button shaped wheel in the center which is called a scroll wheel.



The body of the mouse has a little roller ball or laser in it that keeps track of which direction you are moving the mouse in. (This only works when you keep the mouse on the desk or mousepad, so try not to lift the mouse up in the air!) When you move the mouse around on the desk it will move your little pointer in the same directions around the screen.

The pointer may change depending on where it is on the screen.

			
Standard Pointer This is what the mouse cursor typically looks like as you move it around the screen.	I Bar or Text Cursor This is what the mouse changes to when you put it on top of text.	Hand Pointer This is what the mouse changes to when you place it above a link that you can click on.	Hourglass This is what the mouse changes to when the computer is waiting for something to load.

In all of these cases, you will use the **left side button** to click on any item you want to select. If you select a link, clicking will open that link. If you select a text box, clicking the left button will place a flashing line in that box showing you it's OK to start typing. If nothing happens when you click once, try a "double-click" which is two rapid clicks one right after another. **Tip: You will often need to double-click to open a program or file on your computer. When you're on the internet, or inside a program, a single click will usually do.**

As far as mouse buttons go, the left side button is the one you'll use the most as a beginning user. You'll use the left side button to click on items you want to select.



Hold the mouse like this.

The **scroll wheel** is between the left and right buttons. You do not *need* to use the scroll wheel, and in fact, some mice will not have them. However, as you get more comfortable, give it a try. With many pages you can use the scroll wheel to move the page up and down.

Don't worry too much about the **right button**; it's mostly used to open a small window with special commands which you won't need right away. The window can vary, depending on what program you're using, but if you get a small window that pops up when you're trying to click on something, chances are you clicked the right mouse button. To make the little window go away, move your mouse so that it is somewhere on another part of your screen, then click the left button.

When you first try to use a mouse, chances are it's going to feel a bit weird. Most people have a little trouble their first time with the mouse. Make sure you hold the mouse securely with the bottom of the mouse against the heel of your hand and your index finger over the left button. Don't let go of the mouse when you click! And, if it doesn't work--try again. Using the mouse takes some practice, but after awhile it will start to feel more natural.

Computers 101

Part IV: Using the Keyboard

Don't worry, after the mouse, the keyboard will seem pretty easy! Remember clicking the mouse to get the flashing vertical line? That line is called the cursor, and that's where the letters will show up when you start typing.

There are a few special buttons which distinguish a computer keyboard from a typewriter keyboard:

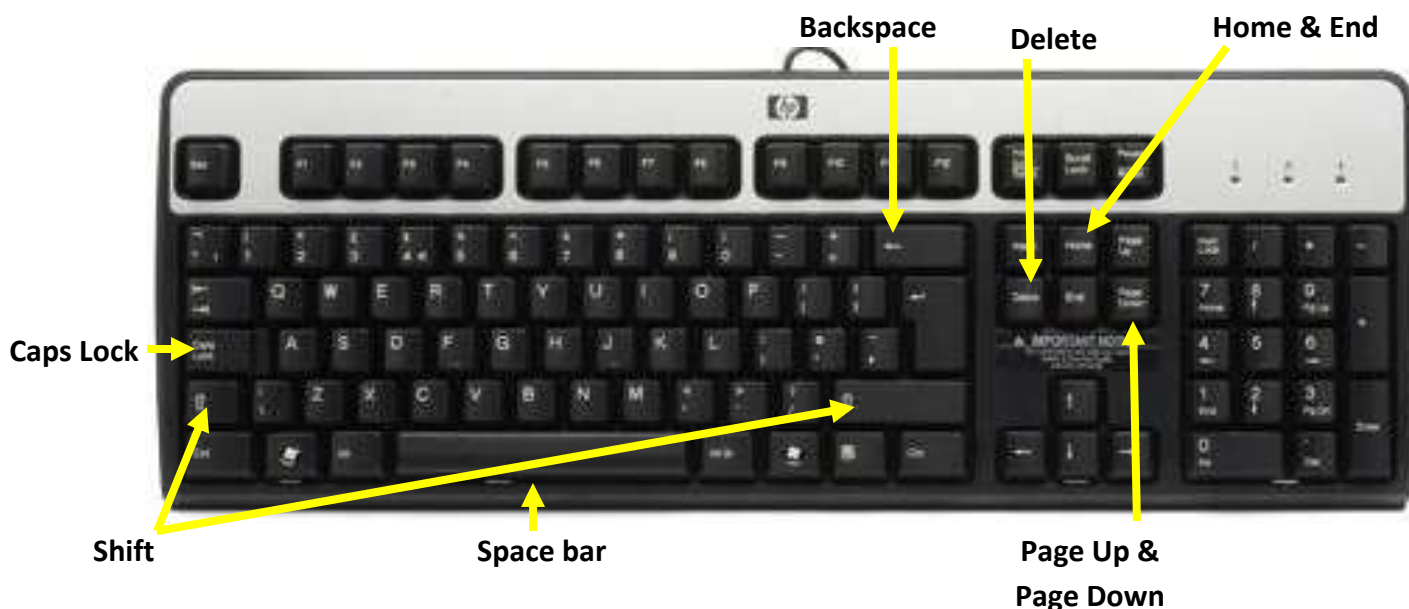
Page Up and Page Down will allow you to move up and down on the page without using the mouse.

Home will take you to the beginning of the page 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.

If you need to turn on capital letters for more than just one letter, the Caps Lock key will turn on capitals until you turn them off by hitting the Caps Lock again.

There are also two wonderful keys for when you make a mistake. Backspace will back up over the letter you just typed. 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** does just what you would imagine; it puts a space between letters.

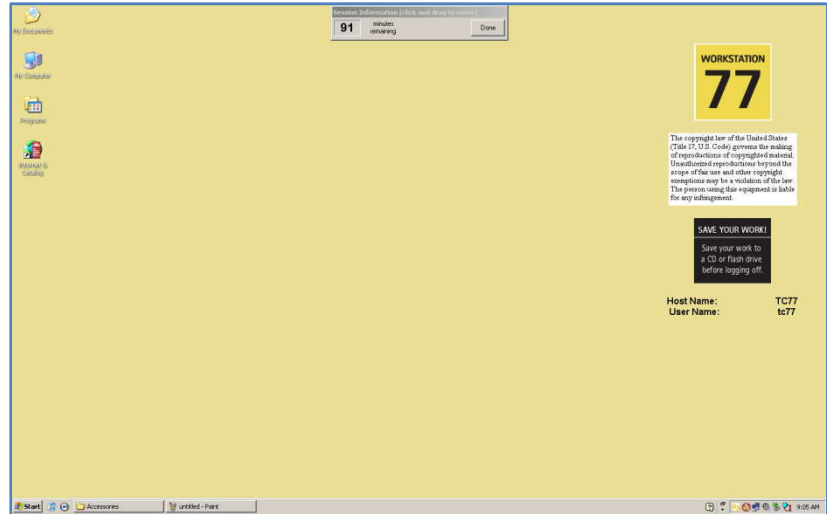


Tip: If you aren't comfortable using the mouse yet, you can use the keyboard to maneuver around the screen in some applications and on the desktop. For example, on the desktop try pushing the up arrow until it highlights "My Computer" in a blue box. Click the enter button. This accomplishes the same thing as double clicking with the mouse!

Computers 101

Part V: On the Desktop

The desktop is a special term when you're talking about computers. The **desktop** is usually the first screen that comes up when you start your computer (or, if you're using the library computers, after you log on). Much like a real desk at work or home, the desktop holds the tools you use most—links to most of the commonly used files and programs on your computer. These are represented with little pictures called **icons**. Take a look at the picture to the right, which shows the desktop of a library computer, and you'll see some examples of icons lined up along the left side of the screen.

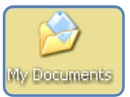


Not all desktops will look the same, but almost all of them will have these things:

My Computer This icon is usually in the top left corner of the desktop. If you click on it, it will show you all the different places in your computer.



My Documents My Documents is also in the top corner of your desktop, and it's a folder that's just made for saving files. If you type up a resume, want to save some photos or any other type of file where you



can easily access them, saving to My Documents allows you to just click once from the desktop to easily find your file.

When you're saving files at the library—be careful! Because these are shared computers, anything you save in My Documents will be deleted when your time ends—ask the librarian about other ways to save!



Program Icons On the library's public computers, you'll see one box that is called programs and contains almost all the programs on the computer. On other computers, you'll often see separate icons for different programs. You can double-click on these icons to start programs that you want to use.

Taskbar/Start Button

The **taskbar** is the grey bar at the bottom of the desktop. When you have programs and documents open, their names will be shown in small rectangles on the taskbar. If you click on that rectangle, it will display the window containing that document or program. The **Start Button** is the rectangular button in the corner. It opens a menu which works as a second way to access the programs on the computer.



Computers 101

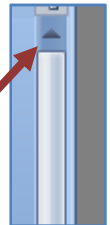
Part VI: Managing Windows

Every program that you open, be it Internet Explorer, Microsoft Word, or Windows Media Player opens in a new **window**. A window is the area of the screen in which a program is located. You can have multiple windows open at the same time; for example the internet window and a word processing window. Every window you have open will be shown in the taskbar at the bottom of the screen. In this example, I have internet explorer open (the web page I am on is the Public Library's website) and Microsoft Word (the document is called computers101v3).

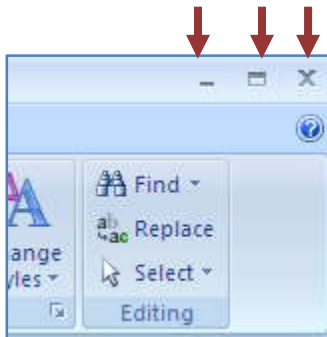


The screen that is on top right now is the internet browser, as it is highlighted in a darker blue tone. If I want to jump back to the internet window, all I have to do is move my mouse down to the taskbar and click anywhere in the rectangle that says "computers101v3." This will now open the Word window on top!

Sometimes when you are viewing a document, or program, or web page, there will be too much information to fit on one screen. In this case, you want to look for a scroll bar located on the right hand side of the screen. By clicking on the upside down triangle (or down button) you can scroll further down on the page to view the entire document. To scroll back up, click on the **triangle** at the top of the scroll bar. Tip: Once you click in the window, you can also use the up and down arrow buttons on the keyboard to scroll.



Every window you open will have this next feature: the minimize, restore down/maximize, and close buttons located on the upper right-hand corner of the program.



The first button, **the minimize button**, looks like an underscore or underline. By clicking this button, your window will "minimize" to the taskbar at the bottom of the screen. The second button which make look like a three dimensional cube in most cases, is called the **"restore down"** button when a window is opened in full screen mode. By clicking it, the window shrinks to a smaller size, but 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. It is somewhat common for certain programs, notably

internet explorer, to initially open up in the "restore down" mode and require you to click the maximize button to put the program in full screen mode. The last button, the **close button** (which looks like a giant X), does exactly what you would think it should – it closes the window 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!

Part VII: Hardware & software

Hardware refers to the actual physical parts of the computer, such as the keyboard, mouse, or other devices you might connect to your PC like a web cam, printer, microphone, and so forth. **Software** refers to programs that are installed on the computer, such as Microsoft Word, Internet Explorer, Photoshop, or Windows Movie Maker.

Computers 101

Part VIII: Turning the Computer on/off

We mentioned the power button earlier and how you want to avoid turning your computer off this way if at all possible. The reason is, even though it may not appear the computer is running and you may have closed all of your programs, there are still “invisible” things going on such as saving your settings, sending and receiving data, and so forth. Cutting these actions off in mid-stream can cause the data to be lost or corrupted. The best way to turn off your computer is to go to the start button, select “shut down” and choose one of the options listed.

Part IX: Frustration!

Learning anything new can be frustrating and computers are no exception. When you get frustrated, take a deep breath. If you're really stuck, ask someone for help, or take a little break. Sometimes it's easier when you get back. Finally, the more you use the computer, the better at it you'll become, so practice!



Part X: For more practice

There are several software programs built in to the computer that can help you learn basic skills.

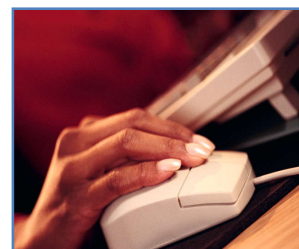
For practice using the keyboard

To work on your keyboarding skills, you may want to open a word processing program like Microsoft Word, Microsoft Works, WordPad, or Notepad. Open your favorite book or magazine to a page and begin to retype it on the computer. Computers in the TechCenter and in the Training Room at the Main Library also feature Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing software which is great for practicing your keyboard skills as well. We also offer monthly “Typing Basics” Open Lab sessions where you can practice your typing skills.



For practice using the mouse

To work on your mouse skills, the best way to learn is to play a game. Most computers come pre-installed with games like Solitaire which are excellent for teaching mouse control. Try clicking on the start button, selecting programs, and then games. You can find games like solitaire, hearts, and more that are great for practicing your mouse skills.



Computers 101

Computers 101—Quick Definitions from this Lesson

Backspace: A key to help you fix your mistakes, pressing it will make the cursor go backwards to erase them one letter at a time.

Burning: The act of taking data stored on the computer and putting it on a disc.

Caps Lock: If you need to turn on capital letters for more than one letter, the Caps Lock key is the key to use. When you hit Caps Lock, the computer will type capital letters until you hit the Caps Lock key again to turn them off.

CD/DVD Drive (aka Optical Drive): Where you insert a CD, CD-ROM, or DVD to play on your computer.

Close Button: Found in every window, it's the X button in the top corner. Clicking will close the window.

Cursor: The symbol, usually a flashing vertical line, that shows where letters will appear when you type.

Delete: Another key to help you fix your mistakes, Delete will either remove one letter in front of the cursor, or when a section of text is highlighted, remove the whole section.

Desktop: The first screen on the computer, the desktop contains links to your most commonly used files and programs.

Double-click: To click the left button on the mouse twice in rapid succession

End Button: A key to take you to the end or bottom of a page.

Hardware: The physical parts of the computer, like a tower, mouse, printer, scanner, and so on.

Highlight: Clicking the left button of the mouse and dragging over an object you want to select will highlight it. Highlights will often be shown in [blue](#).

Home Button: This key will take you back to the beginning of the page.

Icons: Small pictures that represent objects, files or programs on your computer

Keyboard: A device to enter letters and numbers into the computer—resembles a typewriter

Link: A link is text or an object (like a picture) on the internet that will take you to another page when clicked.

Maximize Button: Appears in a window when not on full screen mode. Clicking it will open a full screen.

Memory Card Slot: Used for inserting memory cards from a camera or phone into the computer.

Minimize Button: A part of every window, clicking it will cause the screen to minimize to the taskbar.

Monitor: The TV-like display of your computer.

Mouse: A hand-held pointer device used to interact with your computer

My Computer: Shows all the places on your computer—you can open files or programs by browsing through this folder and double-clicking on them.

My Documents: A convenient folder in which you will usually store your most used files. Often the My Documents folder will have other folders inside for different types of files, like [My Pictures](#) or [My Music](#)

Page Down/Page Up Buttons: Two keys which will allow you to move up and down on the page.

Pointer: A small picture that moves around the screen as you move the mouse, usually the pointer is in the shape of a little arrow

Ripping: The act of taking data stored on a disc and putting it on the computer

Shift: Two keys located on the left and right of your keyboard, near the bottom—hold down the shift key while hitting another key when you need to type a single capital letter, or when you need to use the upper symbol on a key that has two symbols on it.

Software: Programs installed on the computer, such as MS Word, Photoshop, or Internet Explorer.

Space Bar: Used for putting a space between letters.

Start Button: Located on the taskbar in the lower left corner of your desktop, the start button allows you to open programs and also to log off or shut the computer down.

Taskbar: The grey bar across the bottom of your desktop. Programs you are using will show up in little rectangles in the taskbar.

Tower: The “box” part of a desktop computer; this is where the wires and chips are stored.

USB Ports: Hubs for connecting hardware such as a printer or camera to your computer.

Window: A rectangular area on the screen that contains a program or document.