

Beginning Computer Skills

Turning on the computer:

- Press the on-off button – it often has a circle with a line through it, but sometimes not.
On notebook computers, be sure the power supply is connected to the electrical cord!
- The computer hardware looks at basic instructions to find which operating system to load.
- The operating system, usually Microsoft Windows, starts up in about 30-60 seconds.
- You should see one or more buttons with user's names: this is the “login” screen. If you don't see this, the PC might not be secure: be sure a “standard user” account is set up!

What is the mouse (touchpad), and how do I use it?

- The mouse is that little device with two buttons on it and a cord going to the computer.
On notebook computers it's often replaced by a rectangular touchpad below the keyboard.
- Moving the mouse on the desk (or moving your finger on the touchpad) moves the pointer.
The mouse isn't the pointer, and the pointer isn't the cursor: they're all different things.
- Click on the button next to your name or “User”, then enter the correct password.
- Press the “Enter” key on the keyboard to send your user name and password to the PC.

What is a GUI (“gooey”), and what is WYSIWYG (“wizzy-wig”)?

- Next, the “Graphical User Interface” (GUI) appears. In MS Windows it's called the Desktop.
- “What You See Is What You Get” (WYSIWYG): just click on something and it simply runs!
- However, it's really not that simple, lots of intelligence is built-in. **A PC is more complicated than a car**, so let's learn how to “fill up the tank, check the oil and transmission fluid,” etc.
- “No matter how slick the GUI, artificial intelligence is no match for genuine ignorance!” But “knowledge is power” – it's the antidote to ignorance. Let's empower you: learn a bit (or byte)!

What is an icon, and what does it do?

- Those little square pictures are called “icons” that usually tell you a bit about the program.
- The icon is not the program: it's just a link to a file, like an address on an envelope.
- When you click on an icon, it tells the corresponding file to open / run / start up.
- That file can be either a program or a data file that needs a program to handle it. The ending (“extension”) on the file name tells if it's a program, or if a data file which program opens it.

What happens when I open / run / start up a program or a file?

- A program usually displays its GUI on the Desktop, with a menu at the top of its window.
- You can now choose to start typing in some information, or to open an existing file by clicking on “File” → “Open,” or by holding down the “CTRL” key and pressing “O”.
(In web browser programs like Firefox, Chrome or Internet Explorer, use the address line.)
- The extension will tell a certain program to open the file and displays it in its GUI (window).
- Now you can start working with the information in that file!

What happens when I close / stop / shut down a program?

- First, save your information by clicking on “File” → “Save,” or by pressing “CTRL” + “S”.
- If you click on the little “X” in the upper-right corner, the program should give you a choice to save your information, or to discard it. Be careful what you choose here!
- Watch and remember where the program saves your file, so you can find it later.

Turning off the computer:

- You must not just press the on-off button or unplug the computer: this can damage your files, your programs or even Windows operating system, especially when installing updates, so...
- click on the “Windows” button, select the “Power” icon, then click on “Shut Down.”