



## Tips for Tech Savvy Seniors

# An Introduction to Computers

A personal computer is an incredibly useful tool for communicating, shopping, getting information, and entertainment.

### What is a personal computer?

Person computers come in one of two basic forms:

- **Desktop computers** require a connection to a power point and have a main box which is placed on or under a desk. They also have a separate screen (monitor), keyboard, and mouse. Some, called **all-in-ones**, combine the monitor and the computer box to save space.
- **Laptop computers** combine all the components into a clamshell case, which opens to show the monitor on top, and keyboard below. They are portable and include batteries which last 5-10 hours per charge. Instead of a mouse, they have a track pad.

### Connecting a computer

To set up a **desktop computer**, you will need to plug everything into the main box. Most monitors use a connection called **HDMI**, and the keyboard and mouse will connect via **USB**. These connectors are keyed so you can tell where each one goes, and you can't plug things in the wrong way around or upside-down.

A **laptop** has everything you need built-in, but if it isn't charged, you'll need to connect the charging cable that came with it.

Activate the computer by pressing the **power button**, and it will **boot up** to a **login screen**.

### Computer software

A computer requires software to control it and let it communicate with you. Software is broadly divided into two types:

- **Operating system (OS)**: This runs the basic functions of the computer. **Windows** is an operating system, and so is MacOS. Usually, the operating system is how you say what kind of computer you have.
- **Apps**: Also known as applications or programs, apps are smaller pieces of software that do specific things, like write a letter, or browse the internet. There are millions of apps.

## Getting to know your mouse

The **mouse** is used to point at things on screen. It's used to select which app you want to launch, and to operate the app's features. By default, the mouse has two buttons and a scroll wheel.

- **The left button:** Press once (called a **click**) to highlight items and make a choice from a menu. Press it twice quickly (called a **double-click**) to launch the app or open the file the mouse pointer is over.
- **The right button:** This changes function depending on the app you're using, but usually pressing it once will open a **menu**.
- **The scroll wheel:** This lets you navigate a page without needing the keyboard. Just roll the wheel up or down with your fingertips to see more of the page.

A **laptop** computer has a **trackpad**, which is a touch-sensitive panel you slide your finger around, like using a mouse. Trackpads use a single or double tap of your finger, in place of mouse buttons.

## All about keyboards

The keyboard is how you enter text. There are some important keys to know about:

- The **Enter** or **Return** key ends a paragraph or confirms input.
- The **Shift** keys shift text between lower- and uppercase and let you type the symbols above the numbers.
- The **Caps Lock** key will let you type capital letters without holding shift, until you press it again.
- The **Ctrl** and **Alt** keys are used to activate shortcuts. For example, **Ctrl+Z** is the undo shortcut.
- The **Tab** key is used to insert a gap, or jump to the next field in a spreadsheet or online form.
- The **navigation keys** include four arrow keys to move the cursor.
- **Backspace** erases letters to the left of the cursor, and **Delete** (or **Del**) erases letters to the right.
- The **Function** keys (**F1**, **F2** etc) control the current app. **F1** usually brings up the **Help** screen.
- The **Esc** key lets you back out of or cancel whatever you're doing, depending on the app.

## Using a computer

Personal computers, whether they're Windows 10, Windows 11, or MacOS, all work by clicking icons to launch apps. When you use Windows:

- **Icons** represent an app and are usually labelled.
- The Windows **Start** button opens a menu that lets you see **All Apps**.
- The **Task Bar** is a row of icons for your most frequently used apps.
- You can search for an app using the **Search icon**.
- Launch an app by clicking on its **icon**. Taskbar icons only need one **click**, an app on the desktop needs a **double-click**.
- When you launch an app, a window appears on the desktop with the app inside it.
- Close an app by clicking the **X** in the top right corner of the window.
- You can move a window around with your mouse and have more than one app open at the same time.

To finish using your computer, it needs to be **Shut down**. Shut down a computer by clicking the **Shut down** icon, which on Windows is found by clicking **Start** and then the **Power** icon.

## Useful apps

Windows computers include a simple built-in word processor app called **WordPad**. You can use this to create, edit and save documents.

The web browser app is how you access the internet from your personal computer. **Windows** includes a browser app built-in, called **Edge**. You can type an internet address or search term into the web browser's **Search bar** to find web pages with information, images and more.