# Computer Basics

Computers are powerful tools that allow people to perform a multitude of tasks. Personal computers (or PCs) come in two basic forms: laptops and desktops. Laptops are self-contained and portable, while desktop computers are intended to sit and stay on a desk and are composed of multiple components that are connected to each other via various cables. Computers can be used to type documents, send email, play games, browse the internet, create or edit spreadsheets, and more!

Parts of a Computer
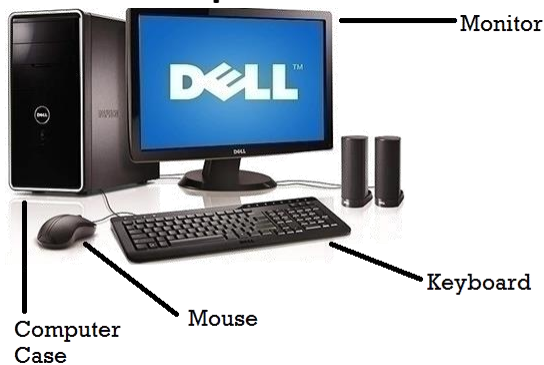
- The **computer case** is a metal or plastic box which contains the main components of the computer (motherboard, CPU, power supply, etc.). This is essentially what makes the computer do all that it does!
- The **monitor** displays images and text on the screen.
- The **mouse** is used to navigate around the screen. A user uses the mouse to point to objects, click them, and move them.
- The **keyboard** is the way we communicate with the computer and enter data. Keys may be pressed one at a time or used simultaneously to communicate commands—such as capitalizing letters or copying blocks of text.

Using the Mouse

- The **left click** allows you to select a point of manipulation on the screen or open new web pages. This is the primary button you will use for selection on your screen.
- The **right click** option will display a list of things you can do to manipulate the item that was clicked.
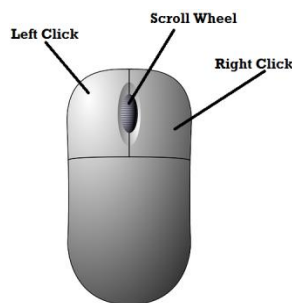
- The **scroll wheel** can be used to quickly scroll up or down through multiple page documents and web pages.
- The current location of the mouse on the screen is indicated by the **cursor**.

Keyboarding
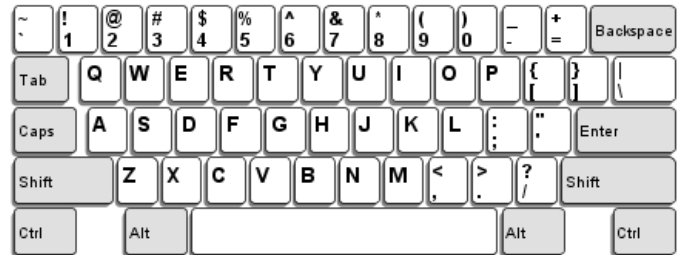
- **Alphanumeric Keys** are the main parts of the keyboard. These keys are comprised of the letters, numbers, and the spacebar.
- The **Shift key** works in combination with other keys. Hold down the shift key and a letter to capitalize or the shift key and a number to access the symbols on the number keys.
- When **Caps lock** is activated, all letters typed will be capital. *This is important to pay attention to when inputting passwords as many passwords are case sensitive.
- The **Backspace key** erases the characters to the left of the cursor. This can be pressed once at a time to erase one character at a time or held down to erase longer strings of text.
- The **Enter key** carries out commands in most programs and is used to start on a new line in word processing programs. On the internet, you can press enter after typing a website address to go to the website.

Minimizing, Maximizing, and Closing Programs

When you're looking at any window is the small group of three buttons in the top right corner of the program window. The button furthest to the right contains an 'X.' Click this one time to **close** the program/window. The button to the left of this can change depending on whether or not the program you're working with is filling the screen (click it a few times to see how it changes the size of your window).

To the left of this is a button that has a small dash along its bottom edge. Use this button to **minimize** the program you're working with. When you minimize a program, you don't close it; rather, you reduce it to an icon on the Taskbar. To "unminimize" a program, simply click the button at the bottom of the screen to bring the program back up.

Microsoft Office

Microsoft Office is a suite of desktop applications. The most commonly used applications are:

- **Microsoft Excel**: a spreadsheet program
- **Microsoft PowerPoint**: a presentation program
- **Microsoft Word**: a word processor

Web Browsers

A **web browser** is an application for retrieving and presenting information on the web.

The three main web browsers for PCs are Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, and Internet Explorer.

You can use the internet to find information on search engines, send and retrieve e-mail, find someone in an online phone book, get directions, and more!

Practice

Using the Mouse:
https://www.pbclibrary.org/mousing/mousercise.htm

Using the Keyboard:
http://www.learntyping.org/typinggames.htm
OR open a word processing program and practice typing a document!

*It's very important to practice these skills every few days when you start learning!

Still need help?
- Ask at the Reference desk for a quick answer
- Make a Tech Thursday appointment to work through a more difficult problem
- Come to JBML's next Computer Basics class. Call the Reference desk or visit www.blackstonelibrary.org to see a schedule of our classes.