



Mastering Computer Basics

Part 1

This class is intended to cover the most basic information you need to use a computer. You will learn a little bit about what a computer is and how it works. However, the most important goal of this class is to get you comfortable with using computers. This is the first part of a two part class. In part one we will talk about computers generally and get started with mouse and typing skills, as well as navigating a computer's layout and functions.

Below are our goals for this first class:

- Feel comfortable using a mouse
- Feel comfortable using a keyboard
- Navigate a computer desktop
- Open programs
- Save documents
- Turn your computer on and off

Getting to know the basics

Before we start using computers, let's talk about what a computer is. A computer is an electronic device, used to store, retrieve, and process information. This includes everything from desktop computers to smart phones. We will focus on personal computers, or PCs, such as desktops and laptops. Desktop computers come with many parts: a CPU (central processing unit) or tower, a monitor, mouse, and keyboard. Laptops contain all those parts in one compact unit that is easily transportable.

All computers need an Operating System, or OS. The OS is software which provides a user interface making the computer easier for you to use. Most personal computers are either Apple, which use the Mac iOS, or other PCs, which use the Microsoft Windows OS. Even computers with the same OS might look a little different. It is important to understand the basic functions and symbols, rather than the specifics, so you can apply your knowledge to any computer.

TASK: List what you know about computers. These can include uses you have seen or heard of, tasks that you know people accomplish with computers, etc.

TASK: Now, define your goals. What inspired you to learn more about computers? What is your goal in using computers?

Getting Started

Turning on your computer is easy. Just look for the power symbol and press the button. This button may be in a variety of places depending on your machine, but recognizing the universal power button will make it easy.



TASK: Turn your computer on

Using the mouse

There are two ways that you as a user interact with your computer: the mouse and the keyboard. You can use either a mouse or, if you have a laptop, the track pad. These input a pointer that appears on the screen and lets you navigate and select items on the screen. Just settle your palm over the mouse and relax.

The mouse has one or more buttons on it that do different things.

- **Clicking** – The single or left click is the basic function of the mouse. Point and click to select or highlight an item.
- **Double-clicking** – Click twice in rapid succession to open a file, folder, or program icon.
- **Right-clicking** – Click with the right button and you are given a list of actions you can do with the item.
- **Hovering** – Sometimes items will show you information if you simply point without clicking. This is sometimes called a roll-over.
- **Clicking and dragging** – Click and hold the left button and move the mouse to move objects on the screen. Release the button to complete the move.
- **Scrolling** – Some objects have more information than can be displayed on the screen at once.

The track pad works much the same as the mouse, but instead of moving it with your whole hand you move with your finger. There will still be one or more buttons at the bottom of the track pad surface that allow you to click, right-click, double-click, and so on.

TASK: Practice with the mouse. Try each type of mouse function on the computer in front of you. It doesn't matter if you click on the desktop or on an icon on the desktop, just try and notice what happens.

Using the keyboard

The keyboard is the other way you tell your computer what you want. This is made much easier with good typing skills. The keyboard is set up so that you can rest your fingers on the most used letters. This is called a QWERTY keyboard, because of the top row of letters starting at the left. Look down at your keyboard and see!

Now place your index fingers on the "F" and "J" keys and rest the remaining fingers on the adjacent keys. Your thumbs can rest on the space bar. See the chart below.



At first you will need to look at the keyboard to learn where the letters are, but as you learn the goal is to "touch type," or type without looking at your hands.

TASK: Practice typing. There are a lot of ways to practice typing. You can just open a word processor and type freely or you can try a tutorial or game. Using the mouse skills you learned, find the icon on your desktop that says “Word,” double-click it, and try typing your name and one or two goals you mentioned earlier.

Getting to know your computer

Your computer runs using both hardware and software. We have already talked about both of these earlier. Hardware are the physical components of a computer such as the monitor, mouse and keyboard, as well as internal parts such as the motherboard and hard drive that are inside your computer. Software are programs or applications that perform certain tasks. We already mentioned OS as a type of software; other examples include word processors and spreadsheets, photo and video editors, games, and internet browsers.

Desktops

The desktop is the screen you see when the computer starts. It is usually populated by icons which open programs, files, or folders when you double click on them. Depending on your OS you will find other navigation features at the top and/or bottom of the screen.

Windows

When looking at a Windows desktop, you will see a bar running along the bottom of the screen. This is the task bar where you will usually find the date and time on the far right (along with a few other icons you are welcome to ask about). On the far left is a button with the Windows logo on it; this is the start menu. The start menu gives you access to all programs on your computer and a search bar to find anything on your computer.

Mac

Macs have navigation at the top and bottom. The top has the menu bar.

TASK: List or explore desktop icons

TASK: Min-max-close

Using programs

TASK: Find programs. Try opening Microsoft PowerPoint, an Internet Browser, or even Skype.

TASK: Create and save document. You can create another Word document, or use another Microsoft Office program as practice.

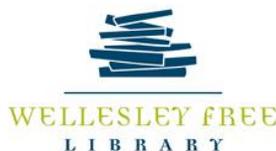
Files and file management

TASK: Create new folder on the desktop. Save a new document in this folder.

TASK: Retrieve file by navigating through File Explorer.

Shutting down

TASK: Shut down the computer using the path I showed you using the mouse.



Mastering Computer Basics: Part 2

Part 2 of this class is going to cover the Internet and many of its uses. By the end of class today, you should feel more comfortable with:

- Connecting to the Internet/accessing a web browser
- Using search tools
- Navigating to and within web pages
- Using Email, including composing/reading emails and uploading/downloading attachments
 - We will be setting up an email account if you do not have one!

Review:

- Mouse vs. trackpad
 - Double clicking vs. single clicking
 - Left click vs. right click
- Minimize, maximize, close
- Elements of the desktop

What is the Internet?

The Internet is a huge system linking computers worldwide, creating a network. Through the Internet, users can communicate with one another, share tools/data, and retrieve information. You can access news sources, businesses and government agencies, and friends. The Internet has become a crucial part in many important life functions, including (but not limited to) applying for jobs, filing taxes, doing research, and many more.

How do you connect to the Internet?

In order to use the Internet, you must connect via a cable service. This is your **Internet Service Provider**, or **ISP**. Common ISPs in our area are Verizon and Comcast. At home, they'll set up a router that connects to your computer wirelessly.

In a nutshell: the router bounces radio waves through the air to connect your computer or other devices.

Navigating the Web:

To use the Internet (or the “web”), you’ll have to use a piece of software called a **web browser**. A web browser puts data into a readable format for humans (unless you are a robot). They allow you to read, view, listen to, and interact with internet accessible content, such as videos, games, email, etc. Common web browsers are **Google Chrome, Internet Explorer, Safari, and Mozilla Firefox**. Computers come pre-loaded with a web browser, but you can always install one of your choice. For example, Apple computers automatically come with Safari, but you can download Chrome if you prefer. Windows OS computers usually come with Internet Explorer.

Using a Web Browser:

All browsers include an **address bar** at the top where you can type in the address, or **URL (uniform resource locator)**, of a website you wish to visit. Web addresses usually end in .com, .org, .edu, .gov, and .net (etc.). Most businesses and organizations use their name followed by “.com.”

TASK: Let’s practice! Using the skills we learned last week, open a web browser of your choice. In the address bar, type in the URL of a website you want to see, for example the Boston Globe. Take a guess at what their web address is!

Using Search Tools:

If you don’t know the address of the site you want, or you don’t quite know what you’re looking for, web browsers have excellent search tools. Search engines like Google and Yahoo are most popular. A **search engine** is a website that searches the wider Internet for the **search terms** you input. Search terms can be anywhere from keywords to names, organizations, themes, a question, or any piece of information you’re looking for. Keep in mind that simple searches are



usually the most effective. Most web browsers let you simply type into the search bar. Or, you can look for the **magnifying glass icon** which is next to a blank text box. This is a shortcut used to search the internet just like a search engine.

TASK: Navigate to google.com. Search for Boston weather and find out tomorrow’s weather forecast. Try searching another way. Do you get the same results? If not, think about how the results may differ. **Hint:** this could simply be a difference in which search engine is used.

Reading Web Pages:

Reading websites can be a little overwhelming. Web pages require a different type of literacy than just reading print.

First: the information displayed on a webpage may not be all that is available.

Second: web sites have **internal links** that lead to other pages associated with their site.

Let’s go to bostonglobe.com

TASK: On the home page, scroll up and down. Note how the content of the webpage changes. Click on article titles to read the full story and see how the page changes. Continue with other sites you're interested in!

Email!

Email is a key tool for modern living. To make online purchases and subscriptions, you must have a working email. It is also a great tool to use to keep in touch with friends and family.

Setting up Email:

1. Choose a provider (Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail, etc.)
2. Set up a username. Make this easy to remember but also unique to you. A variation of your name is most common, but you can use whatever you like as long as you can remember it!
3. Set a password (and keep it for your records!)
4. Note that each provider will have instructions that look slightly different. Simply follow the instructions on the screen to set up your own account.

TASK: Set up an email account if you don't already have one! If you do, please log in to your account now.

Using Email:

Basic functions of email include:

- Composing an email (to send to others).
- Incoming emails (that others have sent to you) in your Inbox.
- Trash/delete option to keep your Inbox tidy.
- Address book or contacts (this usually happens automatically as you start receiving and sending emails)

TASK: Compose a new email! Send one to adorste@minlib.net (my email address) as a test. Don't forget the subject line!

TASK: Read the incoming emails that I will send back to you by replying to your email. Add my email to your address book, and then delete the email.

Downloading and Uploading:

These terms refer to transferring information (or files) from one computer to another using email.

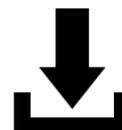
- **Downloading:** taking information from one place and putting it on to your computer.
- **Uploading:** taking information **from your computer** to make it accessible on another computer.

Attaching/Uploading:

Attaching a file is the same as uploading it to an email. Look for the paperclip icon, and choose the file you wish to upload/attach.

Downloading Attachments:

When you receive an email with an attachment, you can then download it onto your computer. Depending on the provider you're using, this may look different. You simply click on the attachment and it will give you the option to open or save the file. Look for a download button as a shortcut!



TASK: Use skills learned last week to create a word document with whatever you like in it. Upload that document to an email and send to me! I will then send you an email with an attachment for you to download.

REMEMBER: Keep a close eye on whatever you are downloading. If you do not recognize who it is from, or if you are suspicious about the site, **do not download anything**. This could be a virus or other phishing scam designed to steal your information and/or hurt your machine.