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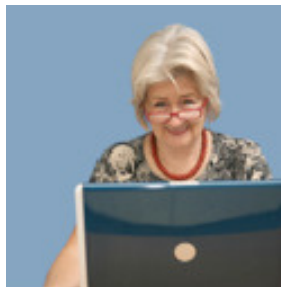
Introduction

Dear Friend,

Welcome to The Web on Wheels' Getting to Know My Computer series!
This Guide is designed for you, the computer novice. Our intention is to explain to you:

- What you can do with a computer
- The difference between software and hardware
- What the main parts do, and how they work together
- Why things go wrong, and what you can do
(before you call your Guru)

We would also like you to gain confidence with your computer, and make it into a useful everyday tool, rather than thinking of it as something rather frightening. Believe it or not, if you go through these Guides slowly and carefully, you will become competent at using your computer, and firm in understanding what it is and how it can help you do what you need.



How much you learn about the workings of your computer is entirely up to you. We will be covering the basics.

As with your own car, you know how to drive it. Lessons gave you the skills to know how to drive. Now you can drive competently, but when you come across a problem, it helps to know whether you need to take it into the shop or whether you can fix it on your own.

You might never have even lifted the bonnet to see how the motor works, but if the temperature light turns red on your dashboard, you probably know that it may only need water in the radiator.

Well, it's the same with your computer. You might not ever have looked inside your computer. But, it's helpful to know what some of the bits and pieces are called and what they do.

Some people might want to learn more about the workings of a car, or how to make it go faster, or more efficiently. These are the people who take a course in motor vehicle mechanics. If you would like to learn more about the workings of your computer, then there are many courses available to you.

This Guide serves as your mini-course in basic behind-the-scenes computer workings.

In our lessons, we will be using examples in a home situation, rather than in say, an office environment where things might be quite different.

At this stage, though, stop biting your nails and gripping the arms of your chair, and let's get going. So cross your fingers, close your eyes, start your engine, and take a big jump into the first lesson.

Part 1

Your Computer and the Main Parts

I imagine, dear reader, that you are reading these words now because a friend or relative decided to push you into the twenty-first century, and either gave or bought you a computer (if you are lucky) or persuaded you to buy one.

Either way, here you are with your computer staring you in the face, and you are wondering, "What can I do with it, and how do I do it?" "Anyway, what are all those parts, and what do they do?" "Do I need all of them?" "Can I save some money by just using part of them?" and so on.

This guide is designed to answer these questions, and to get you started on the way to using a computer effectively.

So, first things first - let's start by looking at a computer, and identifying the various parts that we can see. These parts are all referred to as **hardware**, and they can all be touched. (We'll wait to discuss software in a later chapter, as this can't be touched, and we don't want to give you the shivers at this stage).

Your computer

Don't tell me. Your computer has been sitting there, staring you in the face and making you nervous. Well, let's look it in the eye, give it the once-over, and bring it down to earth. After all, it is only a machine.

There are several components staring at you rather rudely, and they are:

1. A monitor
2. A metal or plastic case, which houses the brains of the computer
3. A keyboard
4. A mouse
5. A printer (optional)

Note: If you've got a laptop, the monitor, case, and keyboard are all one piece that usually flips open.

We will go through each of these parts, and I would like you to identify each component as we go through the list. Don't worry, it isn't difficult.

1. The Monitor

Does our picture of a monitor look anything like yours?

A monitor actually looks like a television, and can be flat if it is new or much thicker if it is older. The technology is similar, but there is a difference. Whilst a television receives signals from broadcasting companies – television stations – a monitor doesn't. It only receives signals from within the computer. Although the computer could well be receiving signals from anywhere in the world, your monitor doesn't care where the computer receives its instructions from. It will only listen to the computer that it is attached to, just like Aladdin's genie. One master is enough.



Whatever the computer commands it to display will be displayed – the computer's wish is the monitor's command.

Because the computer tells the monitor what to show you, the monitor is an output device that displays the computer's information visually - onscreen.

It is a very good idea to use the 'screen saver' function, in your computer, to save the monitor burning out.

2. The Case, or the Computer, aka. the Computer's Brains



The case that you are looking at is the most vital part, as this is where the computer does all its thinking. This is where the brain lies, and your technician will be fiddling around here if he has to, as this is the cause of your success, and also of all the trouble. As President Kennedy once put it, "the buck stops here!"

The case is actually housing many parts, most of which are vital to the computer's proper functioning. Some parts, though, are enhancements, allowing the computer to work faster, for instance, or to handle more tasks.

Now your case might be a box on the floor, desk or table. In the case of a laptop, then it's all contained under the keyboard. Either way, the concept is still the same.

We shall discuss the main parts inside your Computer in Part Two.

3. The Keyboard

Attached to your computer, on a shelf or table, or the lower half of your laptop, you will see what we call a keyboard. Although this looks like a typewriter, it can do so much more.



A keyboard allows you to input information into the computer. Not only can you tell the computer what to do by pressing various buttons, but you can also write letters or other texts with it, and save the information for later use. You can even send these texts out as e-mails, or print them on your printer, if you have one.

There are various buttons beside the familiar typewriter keys that perform different functions – such as the arrow keys moving the cursor up, down etc. And some keyboards have a separate numeric keyboard, to make it easier if someone needs to quickly enter a lot of numbers – that's probably not going to be you or me though!

4. The Mouse

Ladies, this is one mouse that we don't have to be frightened of!

You will probably see a humped object next to your keyboard, which we call a mouse. If you have a laptop, perhaps your mouse is a flat square 'touchpad' or a small knob.

The mouse is also an input device, like your keyboard, as it allows you to control your computer. Sometimes, a mouse is just quicker and easier to use than a keyboard. As you move it around on a flat surface, it moves a corresponding arrow on your screen. When you move your mouse left, right, up or down, then you will be moving an arrow or cursor in those directions, correspondingly.

If your computer is on, and in Windows (which we will explain soon), then you can try moving your mouse around, and you will probably enjoy doing so. We also suggest that you play around a little bit with your keyboard, before we go on to explain other parts of your computer. (I know that we are still at an early stage, but try pressing some buttons, and see if anything happens - don't worry, you won't break anything). Why not try pressing the **F1** key. That's your Help button.



5. A Printer (optional)

A printer is something that you will probably need, but may or may not have. A printer allows you to print a whole variety of things: what you see on your screen, information on a website, a letter, or a photo.



Just like a monitor, a printer does what it is told. It processes whatever signals it is given by the computer and prints accordingly. Like a monitor, it is an output device, as opposed to a mouse or keyboard. (We can't tell a computer what to do with a monitor or printer).

Printers vary in shape and size, and what they can do, depending on their power and technology.

Part 1 Summary

At this point, we have explained what the various visible parts of a computer look like, and what they do. There are other parts to discuss, some of them inside the computer, and some of them that can be added for various purposes, but we shall leave them for the moment.

Before we leave this chapter, though, we should clarify the difference between hardware and software. As we have said, hardware is the components of a computer that are plastic and metal pieces that help a computer translate 0s and 1s into colours, letters, numbers, and sounds that we can understand. Although not advisable, if you were to open up the computer, you could see and touch the parts and move some of them around. Hardware needs to stay with the computer for it to run.

Software, though, is something that you can't touch because it's a series of instructions that the computer uses to complete a task, and those instructions are in computer code. Software - instructions for a computer - is basically a program or programs that tell the computer what to do so you can interact with it. Turning on a computer that has all the necessary hardware will not help you accomplish anything if there are no programs for you to use.

As an example, when you use an ATM to take money out, you have to insert a card, type in your codes, and follow instructions. The prompt to insert your card, type in your code, and choose among options is all part of a program. The ATM then uses a program (software), to check your card, codes, and bank account. Assuming that your balance will allow it, the ATM software will then tell the ATM computer to cough up money! Believe me, though, that stupid machine couldn't do all that by itself. It needs a program to tell it what to do, and that program is called software. You can't pick it up or throw it in the bin, but it still exists.

Now that we understand the difference between software and hardware, it is time to move on to the next chapter, and look inside your computer.

This concludes Part 1 of the 'Getting to Know My Computer' series.

If you would like more help, or one-on-one coaching, please call Viv on: (03) 9787 7500 or email: info@thewebonwheels.com.au