Computer Concepts for Beginners

Greetings

- Hi, my name is Tony & we're about to take a big plunge into the computer world!

  For some of us, this might be the first time we're actually *using* our computers, so this tutorial will take things nice & easy. For those who already feel comfortable with computers, feel free to browse the handouts/videos. Who knows—you might find some handy tips or new techniques to use.
- This tutorial is meant to steer you in the right direction as computer users, but even after working through this guide there'll still be a lot of work to do!

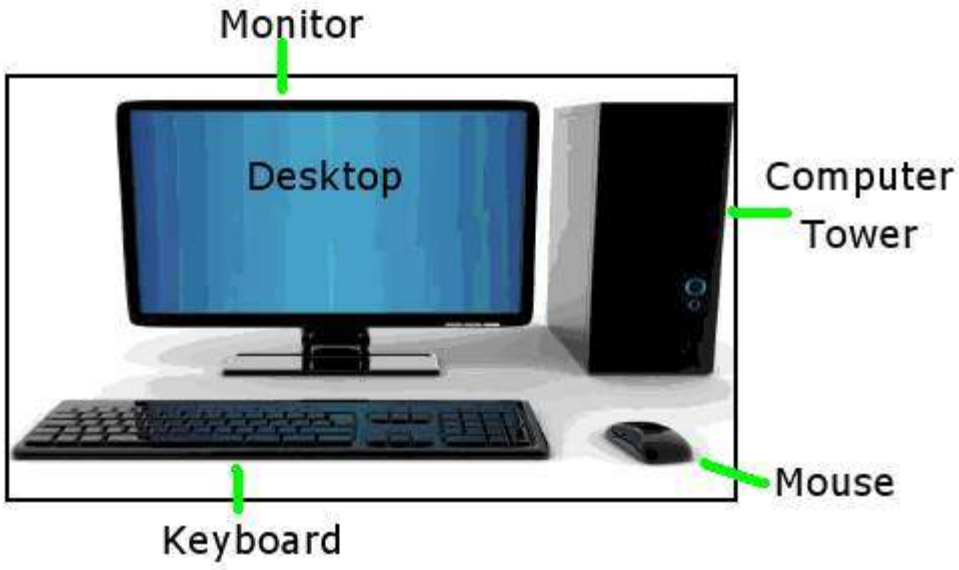
  Practice, *practice*, practice is the key to getting more proficient with your machine.
- Note: Any words in *italics* will be defined in the glossary at the back of the handout.
- As a quick word of caution, neither myself nor the library can be responsible for any changes/damages made to your computer from the result of this tutorial package, so be careful!

Philosophy

- Remember—things might look complicated, but the overwhelming options that your computer gives you are simply *shortcuts* for doing a few basic things.
  - There are many ways to perform one function**!**
- Computers are machines—they operate based off of commands & they need maintenance just like your automobile.
  - They will only do what you tell them to do!
- If you're a true beginner, remember that computers are meant to make life easier, so as soon as you feel frustration creeping in—take a step back, take a deep breath, and try, try again ☺

Physical Breakdown

- This is a typical *desktop* computer, some parts may look differrent but the components all serve a similar function. If you're practicing with a "laptop" computer, the same rule applies.



  - **Monitor**: this is the computer's display. It looks & works just like a tv screen—this is where you see what's happening on your computer.
  - **Computer Tower**: this is where the brain of your computer lives. Sometimes, the tower is called the "Central Processing Unit" or CPU.
  - **Mouse**: this is the main way to interact with your computer. It's imperative to get comfortable with this device—you'll be using it to tell your computer what to do. There'll be more on how to use a mouse later…
  - **Keyboard**: this is another way to interact with your computer. It's been modeled after a traditional typewriter, so those functions should carry over smoothly. There are command *shortcuts* that you can use instead of clicking the mouse—there'll be more on this too…
- On any given day, most of what you do will involve computer systems. The TV channels you watch, the music you listen to, the car that you drive, and even the cash register at the local grocery store are all controlled in some way by computer systems…simply put, they help us perform complicated tasks & keep track of a great deal of information. During the course of this class, you'll learn a little about how they work & how to use them—and who knows, maybe even a little more!

Getting Started

Turning on the Computer

- When you get behind a computer, you can assume that it's in one of two states:
  - **Off**: this is exactly what it sounds like. The computer system is completely powered down—as good as being unplugged from the wall. The monitor will be blank with nothing on it, there're no sounds coming from the tower, & the system is unresponsive to the mouse. The "power" switch is usually located on the front of the tower: 
  - **Sleep Mode**: if left alone, modern computers'll go into something called "sleep", where it's "on" but in an e*nergy-efficient* mode. To wake it up, simply move the mouse around or press any key on the keyboard & it'll come back to life at exactly the same place where it went to sleep.
- If your computer locks up or freezes for whatever reason, you can hold down the "power" button to manually force the computer to power down. You will only want to do this if the computer is not responding to <u>any</u> of your commands—be careful with this, you can lose data or corrupt files with a sudden power loss.

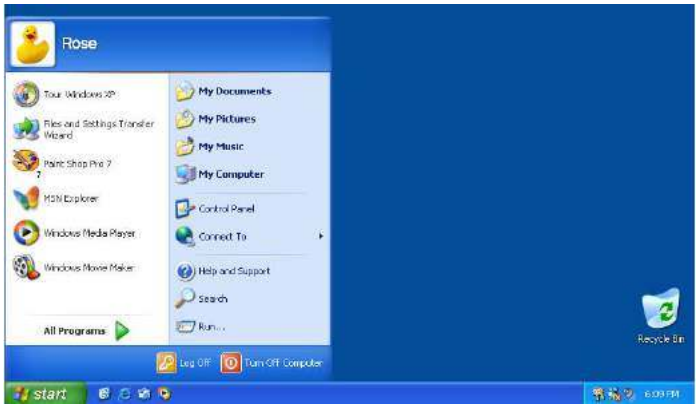
- Logging on
  - Once your computer is on, the monitor will go through a series of tasks before it is ready for your commands (this might take a few moments). If everything's working as it should, you'll see a log-on screen like this: 

or 

  - These are called "Log On" windows & they allow your computer to be password protected. If you're at a public computer, like at the library, you should assume there is an *additional* log-on process for the given institution.

So, What's Next?

- **Desktop:** your computer sould reach what's known as the "desktop" within a few minutes of powering-up. Here you have a *digital* representation of a real desktop—complete with a workspace, files, folders, & even a trash can!
    - The desktop contains the "icons" & "shortcuts" that provide access to some of the commonly used programs on the computer. Once you are familiar with your computer, you can create your own shortcuts.
    - The desktop is also customizable—you're able to manipulate, alter & change almost everything about your desktop. For instance if you don't like the color of your background, you can change it using the "control panel", but more on that later…
- In this way, your desktop will look diffent from everyone else's. Sometimes it depends on which "operating system" you're using—this will be covered later as well. Here're a few screenshots of what your desktop might look like:



Windows XP

Windows Vista

Windows 7

Apple/Mac