

## PCs for Beginners

Be wary of some of the courses offered by local colleges. I know of cases involving beginners, where they were never even shown how to switch it on or close it down, because the computers were always on when they entered the room. Many of the courses involve instructing you with software you may never want to use such as Spreadsheets used mainly for accounting, and Databases intended for keeping records of people such as needed by hospitals. You might be better to buy well illustrated books on the software such as from <http://ineasysteps.com/> If you are a complete beginner to PCs you might like to practice using the mouse by downloading a completely safe free program of mine <http://www.sigord.co.uk/Submits/MousePractice.zip> There are 2 versions to try. If you do not know how to unzip files read <http://www.sigord.co.uk/dloads.htm> By practicing first with these programs, should help a beginner to avoid doing something wrong by clicking on a wrong icon etc.

Each piece of computer equipment may need to be switched off separately, such as the printer, Speakers, and Monitor. So it is much simpler to switch on/off the whole lot at once at the mains, such as by plugging all into a multi-socket extension board, which should have a master switch. There are also some specially for PCs providing some protection against harmful surges in the mains, and telephone lines. However it is always advisable to unplug your PC from the telephone lines during a storm. UK BT do not accept responsibility for damage caused by lightning striking a phone line. Press the Button for about 1 second to be sure the PC starts properly. But I consider it is best to always close down Windows using bottom left START button etc in screen, and not by pressing the start button again on the Console, which may not give Windows a chance to close down properly. Even then the Mains Power may still be connected, which is why the console often has a Mains switch at the back. Likewise the charger box for a laptop remains connected until unplugged. Do not run a laptop all the time from the mains, unless the battery no longer holds a charge. Never switch a PC on again after you have switched off for at least 10 seconds. Newer versions of Windows are often produced to allow new software to work better, so beware not all old versions of software work properly on all versions of Windows. Also 64 bit versions of any Windows will run not any old 16 bit software such as DOS based, though they will allow the use of CMD such as in .BAT files. to use some DOS commands. But you can still run DOS software by installing the free Dosbox from <http://www.dosbox.com/download.php?main=1>

Once switched on the system takes as few minutes to start up, especially on the older PCs. You may first see details of the internal CMOS settings before Windows starts. You can start any installed program using the bottom left START button with one of two clicks of the left button of the mouse, when the cursor is over the little icon etc. Here you will also find how to close down Windows properly. See below here how to abort programs by clicking on the X in the top right. Some Games etc can only be stopped pressing the Esc or maybe the Q key. When such as online, notice how the mouse cursor changes to a hand indicating that a left click then it takes you to another page or site etc.

The My Computer folder etc may show any Floppy Drive on PCs as A, and it will often show the hard drive as C. When you insert a little Flash Drive in a USB port, it will also display another icon. Likewise a CD and or DVD drive perhaps as D. Double click on the icons to access any. Modern PCs now usually have a combined drive able to read or write to ( burn ) both CDs and DVDs. Windows has simple ways of burning these such as ripping music tracks as WMA or MP3s with Windows Media Player etc. New PCs are usually supplied with say NERO installed to perform more complex burning of disks such as copying a whole disk. The easiest way to temporary store any files such as to copy from one PC to another such as if the PC crashes is with a little Flash Drive. But since the data can easily be erased, it might be safer to store important files on a Data CD/DVD, though beware some disks are rewritable. Files can be copied etc see below under Edit and deleted etc using the File Menu. All deleted files show up in the Recycle Bin, until removed from there. Delete everything in the Recycle Bin regularly to save space on your Hard Drive, run the Disk Cleanup and Drive Defrag say once a month. The CD/DVD player may start playing music CDs or DVDs or install Software or Games automatically, or display a list of such options.

It is extremely important to have a reputable antivirus software installed, especially if using the Internet and Email. Many like AVG are free, but obviously you get greater protection by paying for the full version as shown on their sites, such as protection for youngsters while using the Internet. Some make a small extra small charge if you want to install the full version on 2 or more PCs Almost all programs have a little set of

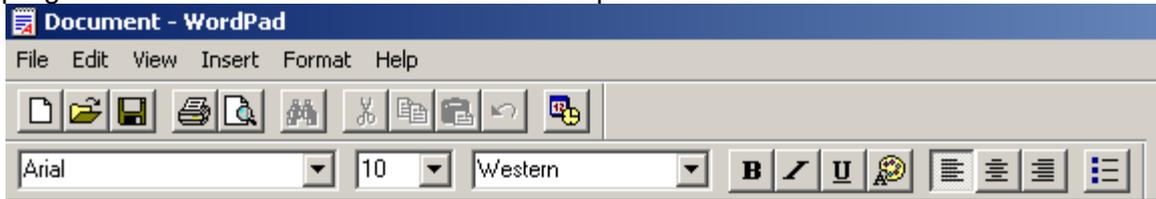
icons on the top right shown as  The X allows you to quit the program, and the square to

the left to enlarge the window or reduce the size. The exact size of a reduced window can be set by a left click a side or corner while moving the mouse, and likewise the whole window moved by clicking on the blue bar at the top. The - dash is used to minimize the program, which will then show on the bottom taskbar. This allows us to run more that one program at once.

Microsoft Wordpad is valuable for creating letters, which can include Graphics such as Photos, or Clipart cartoons etc. Notepad is simpler just for text only. A better WP program is Word with a Spell check, but it has to be bought as part of the comprehensive Microsoft Office. There is a similar Open Office which is Free from

[http://freedownloads.us.com/products/openoffice2/suite.php?pk=11153&c=FreeD\\_OOSuite\\_CCUK\\_All](http://freedownloads.us.com/products/openoffice2/suite.php?pk=11153&c=FreeD_OOSuite_CCUK_All)

A useful Windows program for creating drawings, or altering any graphics is Paint. You will notice most programs have a number of icon buttons and pull down menus similar to this:-



If you left click on File, Edit, or View etc it will display a small pull down menu. You then move the mouse down a little to highlight what you want, and left click to activate. The little icons below these menus do the same things, and if ever in doubt of the purpose of any icon, then just leave the cursor over the icon a second or two, and a notice may inform you of its purpose. Some of the various options often also show any time by using a right click of the mouse.

The Edit menu allows you to Cut, Copy, Paste and Find any text, and replace it with any other text. You can either use the mouse or the Cursor (Arrow) keys to move around a document to insert changes or delete using the Backspace key above the Enter key, or the delete to the right with the key marked Del. To highlight a batch of files after highlighting the first, hold the SHIFT key while you click on the last. To add single files, hold down the Ctrl key. If you hold down a Shift key while using a cursor key, it also highlights text or graphics. You can then use Copy or Cut in the Edit menu on the highlighted text, to Paste text or images anywhere that you move the Cursor. This also applied to images, and even to copy and paste from one program to another. Hence the value of minimizing programs as shown above.

The File Menu allows you to create a Printout, New documents, Open old ones, or Save as a file of whatever is on screen with whatever name you wish. When you Open or Save documents a Filedialog appears to allow you to choose anywhere on you drive . You need to practice navigating around the Folders / Directories of your Drive, to decide where to find files or where to save a new file. Usually documents are stored in the folder called My Documents, likewise some Music, and Pictures. Likewise if you click on a ZIP ( compacted ) file it will show its File Menu allowing you

extract the contents, but be sure to again watch where it is saved. To create a ZIP file highlight one or more file or folders, then use File / Send to / Compressed folder. The Insert Menu allows other files or graphics etc to be inserted at the cursor position. If you look at the Format menu, you will see you can change the type of Print Font, and size etc. Beware menus do not always display all their options immediately, so if you see two little arrows, click on them to see the remaining options. The Help menu such as under the START can sometimes be of use to help solve a problem.

The programs called Disk Cleanup and Disk Defragmenter tidy up data on your Hard Drive to save room and speed up the computer. But the process sometime takes about 30 minutes or more. Anytime you cannot find a program or a file, use START / Search by entering the details. Though it may not show depending on your settings, all the files have an .ext at the end such as .doc, .jpg, .txt. By entering a search using \* such as \*.jpg it will list ALL the jpg files There is also often a Search option shown on any folder you open.

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