

First Steps With Your Computer

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Start Here

This book was written following a series of classes given by the author to people who had never used a computer before. Their needs and experiences form the basis of the book.

It will guide *you* in your first steps with your new computer.

Explanations are in simple English without jargon.

Chapters are short and deal with only one thing at a time.

Illustrations show you, as far as possible, exactly what you will see on your computer screen.

Step-by-step instructions make everything easy to follow and understand.

Using this book, you will learn how to:

- **Use the computer** and the **mouse**,
- **Write a letter** or document and print it out,
- **Send email** to your friends and relations,
- **Receive email** and reply to email messages,
- **Use the Internet** for information and entertainment,
- **Play a music CD** or a **video DVD**... and more.

Why should you put off learning how to use a computer, now that they are to be found in practically every home and office?

CHAPTER 1

The Computer

This chapter describes the computer and what it can be used for. You will learn about the different parts of a computer and what they are for.



The Computer

A computer is just a machine like any other. You can learn to use a computer just as you can learn to use any other machine. However, there are some people who regard computers as being 'difficult'. Perhaps this is because many people try to use a computer with little or no instruction on how to use it. Hence the fear and alarm when something unexpected happens and they do not know what to do.

But now that computers are so widely used, both in the home and in the workplace, why not learn a little about them?

If you see the computer for what it is and take a little time to learn how to use it, your interests can be enriched and your work reduced... and it can be a fulfilling and happy experience.

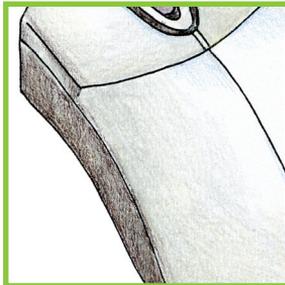
ARE COMPUTERS EASY TO USE?

Yes. When you have learnt the basic skills – and they really are basic – modern computers **are** easy to use. Long ago, however, computers **were** very difficult for ordinary people to use. All that appeared on the screen then was text – and only text. Instructions had to be typed in using the keyboard in a special code to get the computer to do anything.

CHAPTER 2

The Mouse

This chapter tells you more about the mouse.
It describes how it works and how to use it.



FIRST STEPS

While the mouse is **off the mat**, the pointer on the screen stays where it is and does not move.

When you return the mouse to the **centre of the mouse mat**, the pointer moves again – as you move the mouse – to complete your original intention.

USING THE MOUSE

The mouse is deceptively simple to use but it will require some practice before it can be used with ease and confidence.

Using the mouse automatically is **the key to confidence** in using the computer. The chapters that follow use programs already on your computer to give you plenty of practice with the mouse before you even think of using the keyboard.

The mouse is used for three different things – **pointing**, **clicking** and **dragging**.

It is most important to know the difference between these different actions. Then you will be able to use the one appropriate to what you want to do, without having to think about it.

Pointing

Pointing means moving the **pointer**, usually in the shape of a small arrowhead, on the screen so that the sensitive part – the **tip** of the arrow – rests on an object on the screen.

As you move the mouse, the pointer on the screen moves with it. You can point to anything on the screen quickly and easily just by moving the mouse.

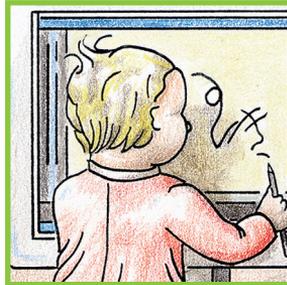
To **point** to something on the screen, move the mouse until the **tip** of the arrow **rests** on the object.

CHAPTER 5

Painting and Drawing

This chapter shows you how to use a program on the computer to draw a picture.

You will use the mouse to select tools and colours and to draw simple shapes.

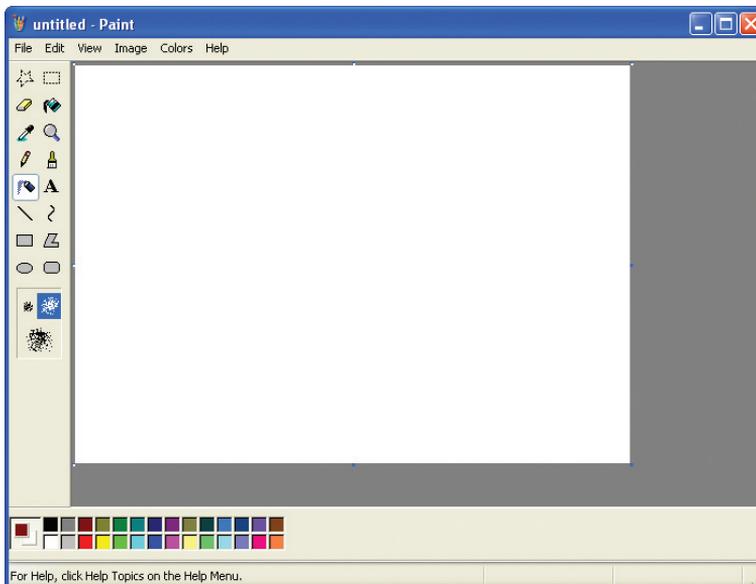


THE PAINT WINDOW

The main (white) part of the window represents the **blank paper**, or **canvas**, on which you will draw/paint. The size of the canvas can be changed by dragging the bottom right-hand corner of the canvas, only if you want to.

The size of the window can be adjusted, if necessary, as described in Chapter 4, on page 62.

The tools (brushes, pencils, etc.) are arranged down the left side of the window.



A selection of colours that you can choose from appears along the bottom.

You will use the mouse as if it were a pencil or a brush to draw the picture by **pointing**, **clicking** and **dragging**. As you move the mouse on the mouse mat, the pencil or brush that you have selected will do the drawing on the screen.

THE TOOLS

The tools buttons are described here. Each button has an icon on it to remind you of the tool it represents.

Select an irregular area			Select a rectangular area
Eraser for rubbing out			Paint Bucket for filling with colour
Eye Dropper for picking up colours			Magnifying Glass for a closer look
Pencil for drawing			Brush for painting
Spray can (Airbrush)			Write on your drawing
Draw a straight line			Draw a curved line
Draw a rectangle			Draw an irregular shape
Draw an ellipse or circle			Draw a box with round corners
Choose a tool size (some tools only)			

CHAPTER 7

The Keyboard

This chapter briefly describes the keyboard and tells you about some of the keys that you will use most often.



The Keyboard

If you have used a typewriter, you will see that the computer keyboard is essentially the same, but with a number of extra keys. There is also a number pad – like a calculator – on the right (but not on a laptop computer, where there is not enough space for it).

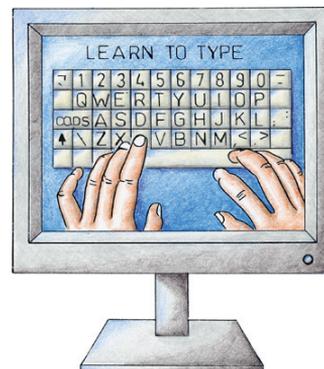
The keyboard is often referred to as the **QWERTY** keyboard because of the order of the first six letters in the top row of letters.



Learning to use the keyboard is just learning to type. There are several computer typing courses, programs that you buy and install on your computer to teach yourself to type.

The keyboard is displayed on the screen, with instructions and exercises.

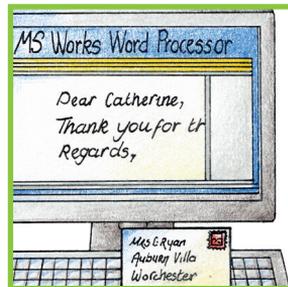
It works as though you had your own personal tutor.



CHAPTER 8

Writing a Letter

This chapter shows you how to use a word processor on your computer to write a short letter.



Writing a Letter

A computer program called a **word processor** is used to write letters and to prepare documents of all kinds. In this chapter, you will use the **Microsoft Works** word processor.

Using a computer has many advantages, even if your typing skills are limited.

Typing errors are very easy to correct.

The computer can correct spelling mistakes for you.

You can easily keep copies of all your letters.

Copies of letters can be sent to different people. Some details can be changed to suit each person, without having to type out everything again.

OPENING MICROSOFT WORKS

This is how to find **Microsoft Works** if you are opening it for the first time.



Click the **Start** button.
The Start menu appears.

CHAPTER 9

Editing a Document

This chapter shows you how to reopen a document you have saved previously and how to make changes and additions to it.



FIRST STEPS

Now, with your computer switched on again – if you had switched it off – you are ready to find and reopen your letter.

FINDING A RECENT DOCUMENT

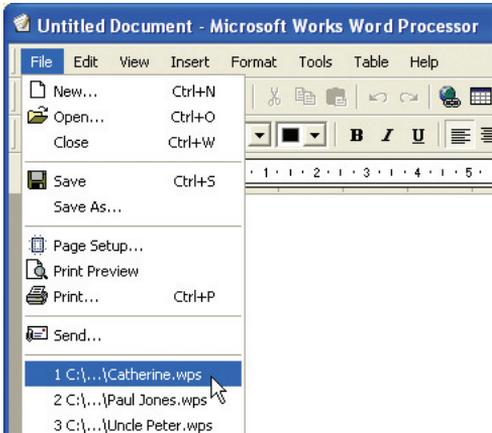
Microsoft Works keeps a list of the most recent documents that you were working on.

This makes it easy to find and open them again.



Open **Microsoft Works**, if it is not already open.

Open the **File** menu (click the word **File** in the menu bar – all letters and documents are files).



Look at the bottom of the **File** menu and you will see a list of recent files, giving their locations and names.

Click the **Catherine** file to open it.
The letter appears just as it was when you saved it.

CHAPTER 11

The Internet

This chapter introduces you to the Internet and describes how your computer connects to it. It also describes how Internet pages work and how to use them.



AN INTERNET ACCOUNT

You must have an account with an **Internet Service Provider** (ISP) before your computer can connect to the Internet.

The process of setting up an Internet account is not dealt with here. It is assumed that an Internet account has been set up for you and that you are ready to use it.

A **Username** and **Password** will have been allocated to you when your Internet account was opened. These are used when you want to connect to the Internet.

INTERNET EXPLORER

A program called an **Internet Browser** is used to view pages on the Internet.

The most widely used browser is **Microsoft Internet Explorer**. It normally appears near the top of the **Start** menu.

If Internet Explorer is not on the **Start** menu, you will find it on the **All Programs** menu.



Click the **Internet Explorer** button to open it.

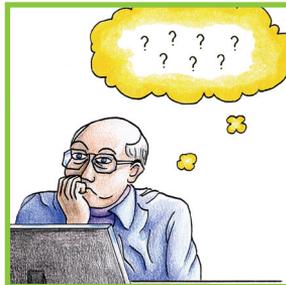
The screenshot shows a Windows Start menu for a user named Tom. The menu is divided into two columns. The left column contains application shortcuts: Internet Explorer (with a blue 'e' icon), Outlook Express (with an envelope icon), and Calculator (with a calculator icon). A green arrow points to the Internet Explorer icon. The right column contains folder shortcuts: My Documents, My Recent Documents (with a right-pointing arrow), My Pictures, and My Music.

The Internet Explorer window appears and displays a page of information.

CHAPTER 12

Using the Internet

This chapter guides you in exploring some pages on the Internet.



SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION

How can you search for all the information that you are told is available on the Internet?

The easiest way is to use an Internet **Search Engine**, such as **Google**, which is one of the most popular and widely used.

A search engine takes your request and searches through the millions of pages available to find those relevant to what you are looking for. Then it displays the pages in order and presents them to you with, hopefully, the most relevant pages at the top of the list.

FINDING GOOGLE

Find Google as follows.



Click anywhere in the white space in the **Address** box.

Any address already there is highlighted.

Type **www.google.com**

It replaces whatever was in the address box.

Press the **Return** key on the keyboard or click the **Go** button at the end of the address box.

The Google page appears. Note that it may be localised for your country – **Google.ie** if you are in Ireland, for example.



CHAPTER 13

Email

This chapter tells you about email. It describes the Outlook Express email program and shows you how to use it.



FIRST STEPS

When an email message is sent, it does not go directly to the recipient's computer, which is most probably turned off most of the time anyway.

Instead, it goes to the electronic equivalent of the recipient's local post office.

To check for email, your computer contacts your electronic Post Office. If it finds any email for you, it collects it and brings it back to your computer.

So, although email can be almost instantaneous in going from one side of the world to another, how long it takes for you to see it depends on how often you check your email.

An **email address**, and a separate **username** and **password** to use with it, may have been allocated to you when your Internet account was opened.

Your **email address** is what people use to send messages to you by email, just as you need a street address so that people can send you letters by post. You will recognise an email address because it always has an 'at' (@) symbol in it.

Your **username** is a unique name that identifies you, usually a version of your name, such as **tom** or **tmacm**. A short username is easier to type and to remember.

Your **password**, like a bank **PIN** number, ensures that no one else can have access to your email.

OUTLOOK EXPRESS

Outlook Express is the program that most people use for email. It normally appears near the top of the **Start** menu.



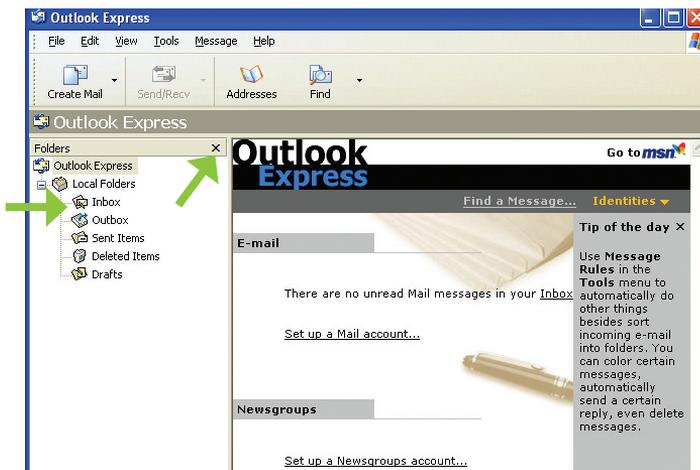
Click the **E-mail/Outlook Express** button to open it.
If Outlook Express is not on the **Start** menu, you will find it in the **All Programs** menu.



When you open Outlook Express, it connects to the Internet in the same way as Internet Explorer. There may be a connection procedure if you use a dial-up connection. Look back at Chapter 11, page 161) to refresh your memory if necessary.

The Outlook Express Window

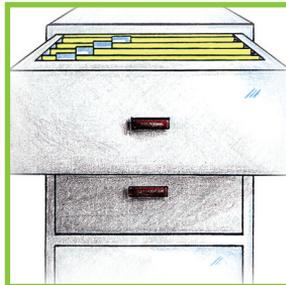
Information about Outlook Express is displayed when you open it for the first time.



CHAPTER 15

Using Folders

This chapter shows you how to file and organise your work and help keep your desktop tidy.



CREATING FOLDERS

Now you will learn how to create new folders and to save documents in them.

To open the **My Documents** folder, do the following.



Click the **Start** button.
The Start menu appears.

Click **My Documents** located on the right of the menu.



The **My Documents** window opens.