Taming Your PC

A General Survivor Guide

By Teresa King

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1. Your PC

In 1998 I wrote a poem about my Personal Computer (PC) I had no experience on the computer. It was new and exciting. I was online at 44 years old -- and life was good.

Well, after a while it was good, but first I had to learn things and while I was learning, I decided to write the following poem:

"My Computer"

You frustrating beast
and my companion, too
I hate you and love you
and wonder at you

You byte me
make me crawl through windows
keep me up all night
leave me in limbo

I explore you, adore you
You give me gifts
of which, I'm unaware
Cookies without milk
and boots in pairs

Taunt me, tantalize me
And, snicker, too
I know you do
I have been watching you

All day, all night
you tease, me, please me
drive me crazy

You stare at me
You laugh at me
making me glare
and pull out my hair

"My Computer", my
foe and friend
leading me to dead ends

You laugh at me
I know you do
I have been watching you

Oh, God, I think I am in love

Teresa King, Feb.1998

So, for you, let's get you a healthier start than I did. Let's learn a little bit about computers ☺

A computer is a machine that executes various tasks with the help of two main components:

Hardware: includes a physical part or any piece of equipment on your system. Examples are monitor, keyboard, mouse, printer, drives (A B C D and sometimes more) and your motherboard. Further hardware includes chips that make up these components.

Software: is basically the set of instructions and data files that are stored or executed upon. All programs (pre-recorded instructions) are software. There are two main categories of software – Operating system and Application Programs.

An **operating system (OS)** is the most crucial software because without it all hardware and other software on your PC are redundant. It is the field on which all the action takes place. The core tasks of an operating system are:

To control hardware like CPU (Central Processing Unit, part of the computer that executes tasks or instructions), computer memory (RAM or ROM), drivers, etc

- To run programs
- To take care of your file management system

The most common Operating Systems are:

1. Single user, single task: one user and one application at a time.
2. Single user, multi-task: one user can perform several tasks at the same time. One can compose an email, print a document, and search data simultaneously.
3. Multi-user, multi-task: used where several computers are networked together and data in each is accessible to all systems.

Windows® is a term that most of us have heard. This Microsoft Corporation product is the most widely used operating system for PCs (Personal Computers).

Most PCs these days work on Windows 98, Windows 2000, Windows XP versions of the Windows operating system and are characterized by extremely user-friendly applications. These are some of the basic features that are common to all these operating systems and helpful to find one's way through:

Desktop: This is basically the main area of Windows where a number of software and hardware icons are placed such as "My Computer", My Documents, Recycle Bin, Internet Explorer, Start menu, etc. One can easily navigate to any area of the computer by clicking on the icons placed here. Also if you click on the Start button you will see the icons of all the hardware and programs

that are available in your system. If you want to open any program on your computer then click on the Start button with the help of a mouse, go to the desired program, file, etc, and click on it.

- If an item on the Start menu shows an arrow, it will further display other items when you place the cursor (mouse pointer) on it. Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint, Outlook Express, Windows Media Player, Games, Printer, etc, are just some of the programs that you'll find listed when you click on the Start button.

- Using the **Mouse** requires you to point the cursor on the desired object and click the mouse button on it.

- Generally tasks are carried out by left-click (clicking on the left button of the mouse).

- There's also right-click, single-click (press the left button once), and double-click (press the left button twice quickly).

- When your cursor turns into an **hourglass** icon it means that the computer is processing your task and you need to wait before you give another instruction. However, you are free to carry out tasks in other areas of your PC.

"My Computer" that you see on your desktop is the place where all your files and folders are stored. When you double-click on the "My Computer" icon a window opens displaying various **drives** like A B C D E and others.

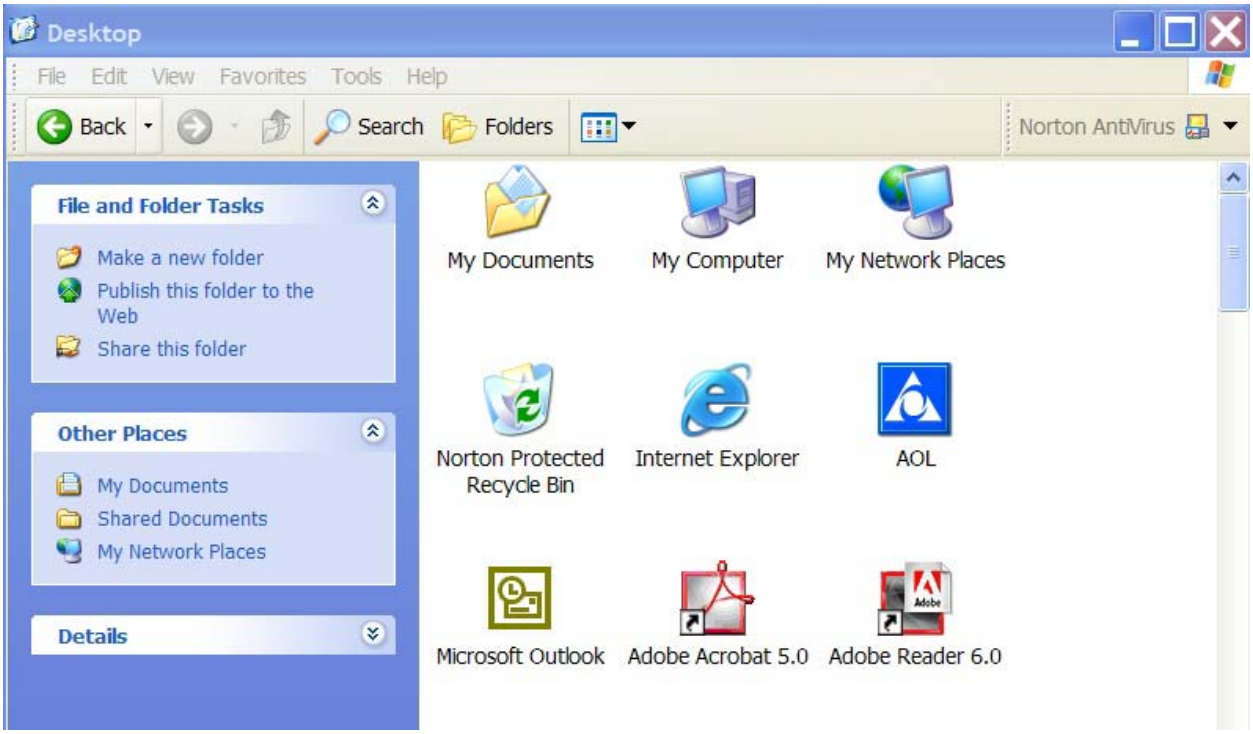
Generally, E: and A: have removable storage. Data in these cases is stored in removable disks like floppy disks and CDs.

Drives are basically separate cupboards that store your data in folders and files. Putting your data in separate drives helps organize your data neatly so that it can be easily accessed. You don't have to sift through everything to find a folder or file.

When you double-click on a particular drive, a window appears displaying folders and files stored within it.

A **folder** is like a bag that stores various files within it.

A **file** is a document. It could be in the form of text, numbers (account sheet), pictures, graphics, audio, or video. Both, files and folders, have names.



How to create folders?

Double-click the drive where you want the folder. In the window that opens, go to File – New – Folder

A folder icon (yellow case) will appear with a temporary name (New Folder.) You'll see it and you need to change it to the name that you want to give it. You simply place your cursor on the name and delete what you do not want then type in what you want to call your folder and press Enter. Your folder is made.

You can also create a **folder within a folder**. Suppose you have a folder called Peter. To create a folder called Work within Peter, double-click on Peter. Then go to File – New –Folder and follow the same steps. You change the "new folder" to "work" without the quotations.

When you **make a file**/document you need to save it so that you can get back to it later. You can store it in a particular drive, on the desktop, or in a folder.

In the File window, go to File menu and click on Save

A dialog box will open. In the Save In drop down list specify the location where you want it

Type the name in File Name

Select the kind of file it is in Save as Type (whether Word Document, Web Page, Text Only, etc)

Click on OK.

To rename a file or a folder: Click on it once. Then click again. (This is not double-clicking). Type the new name and press Enter. You can also use the right click mouse button. A box pops up. You can now select rename.

To **delete a file** or a folder select it by clicking on it once. Then press Delete on the keyboard and confirm that you want to send it to the recycle bin. You can also use the right click mouse button. A box pops up. You can now select delete.

You can **restore files** from the bin. Double-click on the recycle bin icon on the desktop. Select the file (or files by holding down CTRL key and pressing on the files). On the File menu, click on Restore. Your file will come back to where it was originally.

Control Panel is the place from where one can change/reconfigure the PC settings. To access Control Panel go to Start button – Control Panel or Start – Settings – Control Panel in some operating systems.

These are some of the icons on your Control Panel that you need to know about:

Add/ Remove Hardware: provides a wizard that can add, remove, or troubleshoot hardware devices

Add/Remove Programs: you can uninstall programs that you don't want.

Date and Time: you can control the date and time zone settings from here

Display: a fun thing. You can change the desktop picture, background color, screensaver, or desktop icon display from here

Folder Options: you can control the way your folder looks. You can display the files within it as icons or as a list; can add or remove toolbars etc.

Fonts: displays all the fonts available on your system. You can install new fonts here.

Network Connections: displays all the network and Internet connections on your PC.

Printers and faxes: displays printers and faxes installed on your computer. You can also add new ones here.

Scanner and cameras: displays devices installed and new ones can be added.

Sounds and audio devices: here can reconfigure audio settings of your PC.

You'll discover that Windows is an extremely user-friendly operating system. A very basic idea of your PC will make way for a self-learning journey.

Microsoft Word is the program you'll use to create your text document (example; letters). A few things you need to know about**:**

- **Title bar:** topmost one displaying the name of the document
- **Menu bar:** displays menus such as File, Edit, View, Tools, Tables, etc
- **Toolbars:** display icons for new document, cut, paste, print, etc. when you point the cursor on an icon it'll show the task that the icon can perform. Therefore you don't need to worry if you aren't familiar with the icons

- **Text area:** the large white area is the place where you can type the text. The small vertical line that appears as you type is the cursor. You can insert it wherever you want to type the text.

We've discussed how to open and save files.

To **edit,** or change your text, you need to select the portion of the text that you want to edit. Place the cursor from where you want to start the selection, click and drag the mouse across the text that you want to edit. To select several lines together drag the mouse across and downwards.

To **drag**, you push down the left button on your mouse, and push softly down and drag the mouse across your mouse pad. You should see the words you are dragging over become highlighted in black or blue.

If you want to **copy** and not **cut**, you simply choose copy. You can right click and a box pops up and you can choose copy. This will put your text on a clipboard. (I always call it my mousie.) It's not really inside your mouse. It's on the clipboard, which you cannot see.

It just appears to go to your mouse because you cut and your text leaves and the only place it is left is at the click of your mouse ☺

Clicking on **cut** in the Edit menu will remove the highlighted text. You can now **paste** this cut text somewhere else in the document. To do that, just put the cursor where you want to paste the text, go to Edit menu and click on Paste. You can also click on cut and paste icons in the toolbar.

If you want to insert text somewhere in your document, then just place the cursor where you want to type by clicking it there and start typing. You need not worry if you've missed out some text.

You can also **format** your text i.e. change the font type, color, size, align text left, right, center, etc. All you need to do is select the text and go to Format menu. Then do whatever you require by clicking on the options available.

- On the Tools menu you'll find options like Spelling and Grammar that will carry out a spell and grammar check of your document; Language that will help you with vocabulary, Word Count, etc.

- There are many amazing things that you can do with MS-Word. Keeping the above few things in mind will prepare you to handle many other features of this program. While exploring and learning you can also take the help of Microsoft Help menu that is designed to solve your queries.

Once you have a basic idea of MS-Word, you'll find yourself prepared to work on other handy and useful programs like Excel and PowerPoint.

2. How to Start and Shutdown Your PC

Whichever version of Windows you are using the rules for shutting and starting the computer are the same.

To shut down your computer:

Click on your Start button and select **Shut Down/Turn off Computer**

A dialog box will appear. Click on **Turn off**

Click **OK**

Your PC will shut down. In some cases, before you turn off the monitor, the CPU, and the UPS (Uninterruptible Power Supply) – if you have one - you'll need to wait till the message 'It is now safe to turn off your computer' appears. In cases where the message does not appear, the system shuts off automatically.

Once the screen is black;

1. turn off the monitor
2. then the CPU, and finally
3. the UPS,

… your computer does not shut these down automatically. Mine shuts everything down except my monitor.

Follow the opposite trend when you start the computer. UPS is the black box that is the power backup for your computer. Each of these three devices has a power bulb that turns on when the device is switched on.

There are many questions about cable and DSL boxes. I've always shut mine down. Lately, on my cable, I have not as I put another line into another room in my house and so,as soon as I power up "My Computer", within seconds of Windows coming on, I'm online.

If I choose to shut the power on the cable box, I have to remember to turn it on. When you shut it down,the power box has to look for a new IP to give you. This is what can take an extra few minutes to get connected.

With DSL, you can leave your box on. I didn't when I had DSL. I worried that it would get too hot. In fact, it did seem to get hot, so I just shut it off when I decided to shut down for the night. These choices will be yours.

Of course, if you are on dial up, you simply login, and then dial up ☺

And, I think I just may take the time to amuse you with my first experience with a computer. You see,I didn't have a lot of spare cash for luxuries. I really wanted to get on line to go to a chat room. I'd heard so much about them and they sounded so fun.

So, I powered up my old dx66 (yes, that was slower than a 130, 250, 450, 550, 650, and on up it goes ☺) Yes, it was slow, snail slow. However, I didn't know, as I'd never had a computer before.

So, I powered her up, and dialed up to get online. It was fascinating!

As I imagine you are feeling about now ☺

I got to the chat room, looked around and realized I needed to choose a username. I did. And, I got in and started chatting away with the keyboard.

Oh, it would not be fair to you when I say I was never on a computer and had no skills. Actually, I'd been on a keyboard! I could type and type very fast.

But, don't despair if you are typing slowly. My son took a little general class on typing and got to 10 words per minute. Within a year he was up to 80. You can learn to type, but do learn with a real typing program so that you know where to place your fingers and what fingers to use for what.

It's very important to learn properly.

Anyway, there I was in the chat room and I saw all kinds of abbreviations that people were typing in such as: afk brb gmta b LOL or lol and I was learning fast.

afk away from keyboard

(it means the person left the chat room for a while.)

b back from being away

gmta great minds think alike

fyi for your information

LOL laughing out loud - or lol means the same thing.

You'll discover more abbreviations and there is no shame in asking what they mean. They save typing out full words and they are easily learned and understood.

So, I was thrilled to be learning so much and meeting so many new people. It was a whole new world. But, something was wrong. There were words that followed the chatting words and they didn't make sense. Someone would say something and then *(italics came on saying something like a song name.)*

So, I asked.

They were sound file names. People could play a sound and people in the chat room could hear that sound, If, they had the sound on their computer and placed in the right place on their computer.

I had to get me one of those!

A nice lady offered to help me set them up. She asked me to sign up with ICQ. Which, I did not know what it was. I was told to go to www.mirabilis.com and get the relay system. So, I did. ☺

And, figured out how to sign in and get her username and I was chatting on the very cool and free ICQ. She sent me files for me to listen to. Oh, some were funny, some were a little dirty for my taste, but I was learning.

And, then it began. She was going to teach me how to set up so I could hear the tunes that I had downloaded on my pc when someone played them from the chat room. How cool could that be?

So, she said, "Teresa, go to start!"

My immediate reply was, "Where's start?"

"You know your start button, bottom left on your computer."

"I don't see a start button!" I typed back fast.

"Oh come on. It's right there on the left hand side of your computer on the bottom. You know where you shut your computer down!"

"I don't have a button on my bottom left that says start button!"

"IT'S WHERE YOU SHUT DOWN!" She yelled. (Typing in capital letters means YELLING.)

"I don't want to push that button. It'll shut "My Computer" down." I quickly explain.

"Do what I say!"

"Okay. See you in a little while."

(I now press my off button on "My Computer" (because I did not have a start button, because I had bought a used computer and my start button was not on my screen…. basically, I'd been turning the computer on and off with the on and off button on my tower.)

After about ten minutes I find her on ICQ and said, "I'm back!" And, she asked me what I did. I told her and she told me I was too stupid to teach and shut her ICQ off to never talk to me again.

That night, a friend came over and fixed my screen, and there in the left hand corner was my start button! I was really excited then, and I found someone else to teach me about adding my sounds to work with the old chat room system.

I also found I had **accessories**, a **search**, and a **control panel** and all kinds of wonderful stuff on "My Computer". I even learned how to defrag "My Computer" that night.

So, do not feel like any question is stupid. I mean if I can ask someone where my start button is and have survived, look at all the questions you can get away with asking ☺

Okay…

Starting the computer

This is called booting. While booting, your PC could make some grinding noise though newer machines are generally quieter. You will see text scrolling very fast on your screen. This is a normal booting routine. Once this is complete you'll see the Windows screen, also called desktop, and icons loading on it. Your PC is now ready to take instructions from you.

To restart:

Click on Start button and select Shut Down (Turn off Computer in Windows XP)

A dialog box will appear. Click on **Restart the computer**

Click OK

Restarting your computer in Safe mode

When your PC is unable to boot in the normal mode you can operate in the safe mode and fix the settings. Your computer is in a safe mode when only specific components of the operating system are loaded. During Safe mode the desktop will also look different from normal and some icons will be moved to different places on the desktop.

To start your PC in Safe mode:

- On the Start menu click Shut Down
- Click Restart and OK

  While your PC is restarting, hold down the F8 key on the keyboard

  If the PC beeps then release the key and press it after sometime

- On the Start up menu select Safe mode and press Enter

Your computer should start in safe mode now. You should be directed to be able to now troubleshoot, or even put your computer back to its last full working order.

3. Password Protection

At home, it is likely that you are sharing your computer with others. Each of you has data stored in the PC that is confidential and you don't want others to access it. This is especially true for large workplaces where you don't want unauthorized access to your PC. Fortunately, there are options that allow you to secure your privacy.

Like your email account that is password protected, you can secure files and folders that are stored in your hard disk through PC locking options.

A password protected screen saver is a handy option when you are away from your desk. It will lock your computer automatically in a few minutes of being idle. In Windows 2000, go to desktop, right-click on it, and click Properties. Click on Screen saver tab. Choose a screen saver if you haven't already and check against Password protected and click OK. In case of XP, check against On Resume and Password protect. Click OK.

You can have multiple accounts in some versions of Windows including Windows 2000 and XP. You can create two types of accounts – Administrator and Limited accounts.

An administrator account is the one that has access to all the data on your PC. It has access to all other user accounts on your PC. It is thus a privileged one. You can make system changes from here. Also many downloaded programs get installed only in Administrator.

A limited account, on the other hand, cannot be accessed unless its password is specified. This account is thus accessible only to its user.

In Windows 2000, go to Start – Settings – Control Panel. Double-click Users and Passwords and check against the box Users must enter a username and password to use this computer. Press Ctrl + Alt + Delete and click Change Password button. Type the old (in case you had one) and new password. Click on OK.

In case of Windows XP, to create, delete, or modify either of the account types go to Start – Control Panel – User Accounts. Click on User Accounts to do your job.

To log on and off the user accounts go to Start menu and click on Log off option (in Windows XP). XP has a fast logging off option. You can switch and revert between different users without having to close any program. In other operating systems you need to click on Start – Shut down – Log off.

You can even install a program in your computer for lock purposes. Lock My PC™ is one such compact and user-friendly software that locks the PC including the keyboard and mouse. Once the program is installed you can click on the icon to open a dialog box. You can then opt for the task you want it to perform including locking the computer and changing the password.

Speaking of passwords in general, when you use the Internet, you'll be going to different places and choosing passwords. **Passwords are not a game.** If you have online banking, never use the password you choose for anything else. You must use passwords with capital letters, small letters and other strange symbols such as UNd2x-m. You can even use things like * and ! with some.

When you sign up for programs, your password is seen by human eyes, never forget that. So, if it is not too important than it is okay to use the same password, but when you sign up for anything that gives a lot of details about yourself, use a carefully selected password.

4. Search/Find Files on Your PC

In most versions (Windows 95 onwards) the process is almost the same.

In Windows 2000:

- Click on Start menu on your desktop.
- Place the cursor on Search and click on For Files and Folders

  A window will open. On the left side, in the "Search for files and folders named:" box type the name of the file/folder you are looking for. If you don't remember all the letters of the name use an asterisk sign for the missing letters.

In the Containing text box, you can specify some keywords that are in the document

In the Look in box, specify the location or the hard drives where the folder might be.

- Click on Search now button.

The right side of the window will display the file/s searched by the computer.

You can click on the file/s to view them.

In Windows XP:

Go to Start and click on Search. (Alternatively pressing windows logo key on the keyboard + F will open the Search window. This is valid for all versions of windows.)

On the left side you'll notice a box "What do you want to search for?"

Click on whatever you are looking for, say, "All files and folders"

Type the name of the document. As mentioned above, use an asterisk for missing letters

Specify the location and click on Search button. You could specify additional criteria by clicking on More advanced options button.

The searched file/s will be displayed on the right side.

5. Image Conversion

JPEG, GIFF/JIFF, BMP, and TIFF are the most commonly used formats for storing still image files such as photographs, graphics, and drawings.

JPEG stands for Joint Photographic Experts Group and is a standard for image compression. However, some amount of data/detail is lost in the process. JPEG therefore is characterized by a glossy compression technique for still color images, just as MPEG is used for compressing motion picture files.

GIFF/JIFF stands for Graphics Interchange format, which is a bit-mapped graphics file format. Its storage is limited to about 256 colors as against 16 million colors in JPEG. GIFF therefore is more suitable to store illustrations rather than color photos.

Other popular formats for storing bit-mapped images are TIFF (Tagged image file format), BMP, and PCX. You'll also see GIF and JPG.

You may be wondering what a bit-map is? A bit-map graphic is composed of a pattern of dots (each dot containing bits of data). Vector graphics, on the other hand, use geometrical formulas to represent images. The latter can be scaled i.e. the object size can be changed while maintaining its shape. Vector images are thus more flexible than bit-maps. Also vector images look better on higher resolution and require less memory.

This brings us to the difference between Paint programs and Draw programs. In Paint program the drawings are represented as bit-maps. Draw programs, on the other hand, represent images as vector graphics.

Why we need to convert images from one format to another?

- Converting GIFF files to JPEG can compress the files to a considerable extent. The uncompressed data is normally 24 bits/pixel for full-color images. JPEG can achieve 10:1 to 20:1 compression without apparent loss, 30:1 to 50:1 compression with small to moderate defects, and 100:1 for very low quality purposes like archiving. These smaller size files increase storage capacity and take lesser transmission time across networks.

- JPEG files are extremely useful for image archiving purposes. JPEG files store a full color range (24 bits/pixel as against 8 bits/pixels in GIFF). The display of images is particularly good on full-color hardware that is becoming common now.

Conversion rules:

- Large, high-quality, real-world scanned photos are the best material for conversion to JPEG format.

- Do not convert black and white images to JPEG that works best with smooth and subtle color palette. B&W images are best on GIF.

- Even on colored images make sure to smoothen out the sharp edges before carrying out the conversion. A gray-scale image is much easier for a JPEG format.

- Avoid converting images that have already been converted before. Re-conversion spoils the quality of images. It's best to work with original scanned images here.

To explain how format conversion is carried out here's an example:

1. In a Windows operating system go to Start menu – Accessories – Paint

2. Create an image with the program and save it in BMP format. Now Close the file

3. To convert it into say JPEG, re-open the file

4. Go to File menu and click Save As

5. Rename the file in File name box and in Save as Type drop down box click on the format you want it to be converted to. In this case "JPEG File Interchange Format (*.jpg, *. jpeg,)"

6. Click on the Save button. Your file is now converted from BMP to JPEG.

If you want to change BMP to GIF, follow the same procedure except that in Save as Type box click on "Graphics Interchange Format (.gif)"

Once an image has been converted from one format to another, say GIF to JPEG, some of the information is lost. You can't go back to the original file. Therefore it is always advisable that you make a copy of the original file before converting it.

6. Web Browser

A web browser is a program that allows you to view web pages. In other words, a web browser is a program that you need to surf the Internet. The two most popular web browsers are Microsoft Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator. All machines using latest Windows OS have web browsers already installed and you can see the icon on the desktop.

To browse the Internet or any web page or web site you need to have access to the Internet. An Internet connection could be one of the following types:

Dial-up (using a modem), cable, DSL (digital subscriber line), network connection (you are automatically connected to the internet when you turn your PC on), and wireless (in a Palm PC).

Your Internet account will have an address and a password. Once you log on to the Internet you can browse the World Wide Web (www), which is basically millions of computers around the world that are linked and share information and data.

On the World Wide Web you can send and receive email; download text, graphic, audio, and video files; listen to online radio stations; search for information; carry out business transactions; receive online education; and countless other things.

When you click on the Internet Explorer button on your desktop a page will open. This is the web page, a text file that contains text, graphics, and links. A web page is based on a HTML format i.e. it provides links so that one can move from one web page to another, or one website to another. A website is like a folder that contains multiple web pages linked together within it.

You'll discover that sometimes when you place the cursor on a text or image the cursor will change into a palm. This indicates that this particular text (usually underlined in blue though not necessarily) or graphic is a link. Clicking on it will open another window.

It's helpful to know about the **Back, Forward, Stop, and Refresh buttons** on the toolbar of the web page.

With Back button you can move to the last few pages that you visited.

If you've clicked Back by mistake you can come back to where you were by clicking on Forward.

Clicking on Stop button will put an end to the download process. This is helpful when the page is taking too long to load/appear.

In such cases you can try again by clicking on Refresh.

You can have more than one window open at the same time. Go to File menu, click on New – Window. You can now work in different windows simultaneously.

You can also open a link in a separate window. Place the cursor on the link and right-click.

Click on Open link in a new window.

The Favorites menu is another interesting feature on the web page. You want to save your favorite websites so that you don't have to search for them every time on the Internet. Click on Favorites – Add to Favorites – OK. To organize your favorites list in folders you can click on Organize Favorites option in the Favorites menu.

Search engines like Google are a vital part of the web experience and will be dealt with in a separate chapter.

These are just some of the basic things that you need to know. You'll realize for yourself how many things you can do on the Internet and how simple it all is.

7. Electronic Mail (Email)

E-mail or electronic mail is one of the most useful services that you can avail of on the web (world wide web) or, to put it simply, if you have an Internet connection. There are many free email services that you can choose from on the web. The most popular ones are www.hotmail.com, www.yahoomail.com and www.rediffmail.com. You can have as many accounts as you want with separate addresses.

To be able to send and receive mails, you need an email address or email account that is an equivalent of your postal address. To get an email account you just need to visit the websites mentioned above and register for your address. You'll need to fill some personal details (only give out mandatory details) and provide them with a name and a password for your account. The password is a secret code that prevents other people from accessing your email account. If you have more than one account it's best to have separate passwords for each of them.

You'll discover very soon that you can also have an offline email account through Outlook Express. In this case you do not need to be connected to the Internet except when you send your mail. The basic rules for composing mail, saving, attaching files, etc, otherwise remain the same in both cases.

We'll now discuss Outlook Express in detail.

If you are someone who relies heavily on e-mail to correspond, a frequent traveler, or someone who has to pay by the hour for an Internet connection, then Outlook Express is the program for you. With this amazing program you can do many things offline like composing and reading your messages. Here is a stepwise guide to finding your way through **Outlook express**:

Your mail account: Outlook Express software is already installed in most operating systems. To start an email account in Outlook Express, you'll need to know the type of e-mail server you use (POP3, IMAP, or HTTP), the name of the incoming mail server and, for POP3 and IMAP, the name of the outgoing mail server. As in other email programs, you'll need an account name and a password. Multiple identities/mail accounts allow one to have separate mail accounts for say work, personal, etc and also make possible separate user accounts.

Sending a message: On the tool bar click on create mail OR file – new – mail message on the menu bar. A new message window will appear and you can type the message in the large white message area. The spell check can be done by pressing F7 or by clicking on spelling button in the toolbar.

Type the address(s) in the To: box and mention subject in the subject box. If the mail needs to be sent to more than one person then email addresses have to be separated by a semi-colon. Similar to other email programs, there is an option here for sending carbon copies (email addresses to be typed in Cc box) and blind carbon copies (email addresses to be typed in Bcc box). The difference between the two is that the email addresses of the people receiving the carbon copies appear to all the recipients of the message whereas in the latter case the recipients of the message cannot see whom the blind carbon copy has been sent to.

To send the message, click the Send button on the toolbar OR click on Send message in the file menu bar. The message goes to your Outbox and will be sent from Outlook Express to the recipients if you are connected to the Internet.

In case you are not connected to the Internet or want to send your message later (you can click on Send later button in the file menu) the message will remain in your Outbox. You can write all the messages you want offline and put them in the Outbox. Whenever you are online you can click on the Send and Receive button and your messages will be delivered all at once. This sure saves a lot of money and allows great flexibility. To ensure your mail has been sent you can check on the Sent items icon in the Outlook bar.

Saving a message: This option allows you to save an unfinished message and work on it later. When you are composing the message go to the file menu and click on save. Your message will be saved in the drafts folder. To retrieve it, go to the outlook bar and click on the drafts icon. The list of saved messages will appear. Double click on the message you want to work on and then send it as described above.

Reading mail: Run your Outlook express account and be online. Click on Send and Receive All on the toolbar. All your incoming messages will be downloaded on your computer in the Inbox folder. The list carries the name of the senders as well as the subjects. Once the messages have

been downloaded you have the option to go offline and read them at your leisure. The upper part of the Inbox window will display the list of the messages and the bottom part shows the text of the message you select. Double clicking on the message listed in the Inbox will open it in a separate window. You can read, forward, reply to the message from here. Click the close button to come back to the Inbox window.

Address book: To add entries to the address book, right-click the address in the list of messages in the Inbox window. Click on Add to Address Book button and then click Ok. To retrieve the addresses while sending your message click on To: or Cc icon. In the Select Recipients window, double-click on the entries you want to be included and then click Ok.

Attachments: If you need to send an attachment with the message go to Insert menu and click on File Attachment. OR double-click on the paperclip icon in the tool bar. Browse and select the file you want to attach and click OK. The file will be attached to your message.

Similarly the incoming message will have a paperclip icon to indicate the attachment. Clicking on the paperclip will display the name of the file. To open, double-click on the icon.

How to deal with Junk mail/ Spam?

Mail with message subjects or content like work-at-home schemes, investment opportunities, get something free, enter a contest, shop for something, etc, sent by unknown sources and flooding our email accounts are a big nuisance. These unwanted email are called junk mails or spam. Here's a small guide to deal with them:

- Do not give out your email address, the one that you use for work and to correspond with friends, to people you don't know
- Set up another mail account and give it out when you can't avoid disclosing your email address
- Do not open junk mail that arrives in your Inbox. Just delete it straight away
- Do not open attachments sent from unknown or unreliable sources

All email programs have spam-blocking features. Try to figure them out and use them. Through these options you can specify who can send you mails and who to block.

Blocking Spam In Outlook Express:

- Select the email from the sender you want to block
- Go to Message menu and click on Block Sender
- Confirm the decision

All the email that come from the chosen address will now be sent straight to the deleted items folder. To delete mail from the Delete folder, go to Edit menu and click on Empty 'Deleted Items' Folder.

8. Creating and Managing Folders in Outlook Express

A folder is basically a box or a cupboard that stores various files within it. You could be working with all kinds of files or messages or data related to work, friends, family, jokes, etc. Folders are a great way to organize your data/files/email. When you acquire an Outlook Express account you will notice that there are some default folder icons like the Inbox, Outbox, Sent Items, Deleted Items, and Drafts on your account window.

You could create new folders as well. Following are the steps to create a new folder:

1. On the file menu place the cursor on Folder. A dialog box will appear. Click on New in the box. Alternatively, on the File menu go to New. On the dialog box that appears click on Folder.

2. In the dialog box that appears type the name you want for the folder that you are creating.

3. Specify the location where you want the folder by clicking on the location options available.

4. Click OK.

You can move messages from one folder to another. You simply can right-click on the message. In the dialog box that appears select Move To or Copy To, and click on the folder where you want the message to go. Alternately, you could select the message, then go to Edit menu, and follow the same steps as above.

If your Email program displays the folders on one side of the message window then you can carry out message transfer by drag and drop method. Select the message on the message window, drag it while holding down the mouse button, and drop it on the destination folder.

You can also compress the folders in your Outlook Express. Select the folder/s you want to compact. On the File menu place the cursor on Folder. A dialog box will appear. Click on Compact.

The compact option frees space on your hard drive while still retaining your messages.

To delete a folder, click on it. On the File menu select Folder, Delete. Click on Delete and confirm.

9. Back Up Files

If you rely heavily on Outlook Express for your email then it's worth it to have a backup copy of your mail messages and address book. Hard disk failure, viruses, worms, Trojans, and human error are the many ways in which one can lose invaluable information.

Creating backup files is simple and worth the effort.

Here's a step-wise guide for creating a backup of your email data:

For your Outlook Express email messages backup:

- Open your Outlook Express account.
- On the tools menu click on Options – Maintenance – Store Folder

  A dialog box specifying the location of your Mail folder will appear
- Select the location by dragging the mouse over it and press CTRL+C to copy the location
- Click Cancel and then the close icon (×)
- Go to Start menu on your computer and click on Run

  In the box that appears paste the location by pressing CTRL+V and then click OK

  A window will open displaying your Outlook Express email files

  On this window, go to Edit menu. Click Select all and then Copy. Close the window
- Now go to Desktop and right click on it. Click on New and on Folder
- Name the folder and press enter
- Double-click on the folder to open it, go to Edit menu, and click on Paste.

Your backup folder is created and you can close the window. An important thing to remember is that for each separate mail account you'll need to have a separate backup folder.

Whenever you need to retrieve/Import the data from your backup folder you can do the following:

- Go to File menu – Import - Messages
- In the **Select an e-mail program to import from** box, click Microsoft Outlook Express 5 or Microsoft Outlook Express 6, and then click Next
- Here click on **Import mail from an OE5 store directory** or **Import mail from an OE6 store directory**, and then click OK.
- Click Browse, locate the backup folder, and click OK and then click Next
- Click All Folders – Next- Finish

Your address book is for sure a very valuable data. Create a backup address book. This is how:

- On the File menu click Export – Address Book
- In the dialog box that appears select Text File (Comma separated values) and then click Export.
- Locate the backup folder that you created to put the address book in that. Name this backup file in the File name box and click Save
- Click on Next
- Select the fields that you want to export for your address book and click Finish
- Click on OK and then Close

To retrieve your address book take the following steps:

- On the file menu go to Import – Other address book
- Click Text File (Comma separated values) and then click Import.
- Click on Browse
- Locate the backup folder where it is stored, click on the file name, and click Open
- Click Next and then Finish
- Click OK and then Close

These are the simple rules to organize yourself better and save a lot of hassle in times of data loss.

10. Downloading, Naming, & Saving Files

The term 'downloading' in computer language refers to the process of copying files from the Internet onto your computer's hard drive.

A program or file that you download can be a text, graphic, audio, or video. Each different type of file has a different file format that indicates the kind of data it carries and the way the data is organized. A PDF file, for example, is a formatted document that is received by the recipient as intended by the sender. To download and view a PDF file, one needs to have an Acrobat reader installed.

A Frequently Used Download is a pdf file, such as this book. You probably have figured it out or you would not be reading this. However, maybe you are reading this on a friend's computer. Or maybe, when you downloaded you just double clicked on the link and it started loading (very annoying) and it loaded and then you had to save as.

You will need Acrobat Reader on your computer to read pdf books. So, you go to http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html to get the latest version of acrobat reader.

Files are usually compressed to decrease their size and reduce the download time. Zipped file or "zip" is the most popular compression program and a zipped file comes with a .zip extension added to its name.

A file or program that can be downloaded has a button or link that when clicked starts the process. As a first step, the computer asks you "What would you like to do with this file".

Your options are either to run the file or to save it to your computer's hard drive. The latter is what you need to click. The Netscape browser skips the question and opens the Save As dialog box straight away.

In either case, you need to:

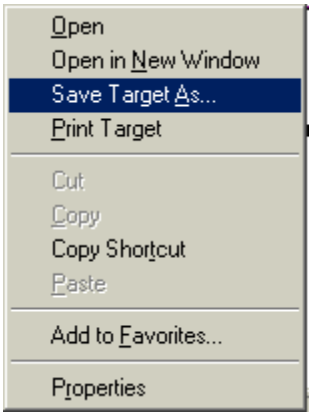
1. Specify in the Save in box the location where you want the file to be stored. The Save in box has a drop down arrow that indicates various locations possible.

2. Name the file in the File name box.

3. Specify the file type in Save as type box.

4. Click on Save button.

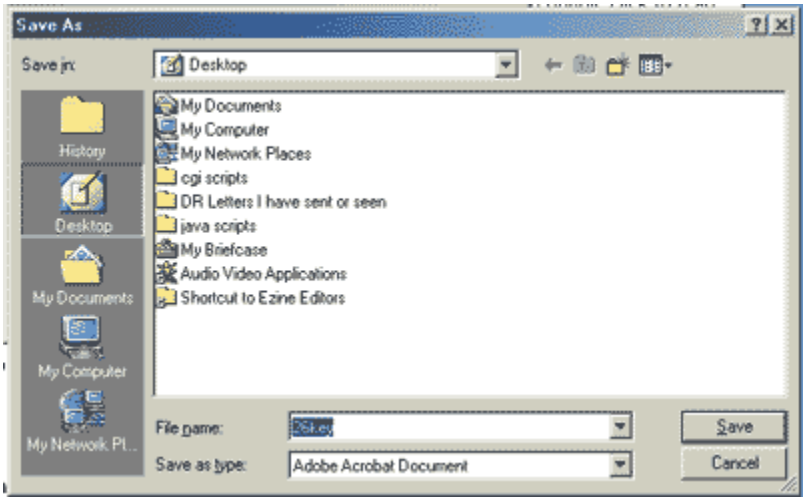
The download will begin and the dialog box that appears will show you the status of your download i.e. how much has been downloaded, the speed, the file source, the file destination, etc.



Here is a picture and more explanation to the download process:

When downloading, you just right click on the link to the download and a box pops up. Then you save target as:

It will then take you to a box where you decide where you want to put your new download on your hard drive, or to a floppy disk.



At the top you'll see an arrow in the middle of the above box.

You can search where you want to put the download you are downloading.

You might want to put it on desktop or under "my documents."

So you would scroll that arrow until you found where. Next you would choose save. And it will start downloading.

If you do not have a folder prepared for your download, you can click on the little yellow folder icon top right of the image above. This will let you make a new folder, where you can change the name from "new folder" to the name of the folder you want it to be called. Then you can save your book to that file.

Once the download is complete a dialog box will appear confirming the status.

If you click on the Open button in the box the downloaded program will be opened and it will start installing.

If you click on the Open folder button, then the folder where you saved the file will open and you can double click on the downloaded file to install it.

It’s best to save the file at a location that one can easily remember and can access like the desktop. You can always move the file between various locations later.

It’s best to have a file name that is self-explanatory.

There is a free software called www.freshdownload.com

This is very important if you are on dial up and you are wanting a large file. This clever software will save your download, so that when you are knocked off the net, you can resume from where you left off. That's very handy.

I lived for four and ½ years where I could not get DSL or cable. Whew. Fresh Download came in handy, and it is still free at this writing.

You will run into the term upload. Which is the opposite of download. Basically, before someone can download something, someone else would have had to upload it to his server.

A server is a web host who hosts domain names.

Domain names are names, such as yahoo.com, ebay.com or google.com - to name a few examples.

Each of these site names are hosted by a web host. You'll also hear domain names referred to as URL's. You might even hear such lingo as, "what's the site's addy?" Which means, what is the URL or what is the address of the domain name.

When you view these domains, you are viewing web pages. You are viewing them from your browser.

So, later you may want to have your own domain name. Many people have them for fun or for profit or for both. Then when you set up your web pages and put them up on the server computer that connects you to the World Wide Web it is known as uploading. For now, you get confident with sending mail and downloading. Later, you may very well want to have your own web site ☺.

11. Zipping and Unzipping Files

We mentioned in the chapter on downloading that most programs that we download from the Internet are compressed to economize on space and transmission time. Often when we download we are not required to decompress the file. These are the files that come with **.exe** extension and are called self-installing files.

However, if the file isn't self-installing then we need to uncompress it before it becomes useful for us. Such a file has **.zip** extension to it and is made up of several files. There are programs available that can zip and unzip files, the most popular being WinZip for Windows.

You can download the WinZip software from their official website www.winzip.com. Follow the instructions. That's all there is to any download process. You can leave the default options as they are. Save the program on the desktop from where it is easily accessible.

To open a Zip file using WinZip:

1. Click on the WinZip icon on the desktop or go to Start – Programs – WinZip
2. A licensing agreement window will open. Click on the 'I agree' option
3. Click on Next
4. Click on Unzip or Install from an existing Zip option and then click on Next
5. A dialog box will appear. Select the file you want to unzip and click on Next
6. In the window that opens check if the folder listed in the Selected folder box is the one where you want to save your unzipped file. Otherwise, click on Select different folder and specify the new location.
7. Once the folder has been selected click Unzip Now

A window displaying the unzipped file will appear

The WinZip Complete dialog box will appear.

8. If you want to zip or unzip other files then click on Next.

9. Else, click on Close to finish the program.

To zip a file using WinZip:

The first three steps are the same as above.

- After clicking Next a dialog box will appear. You'll need to type a name in the File name box. Do not add the extension. It'll be done by itself. This box will also display the default folder where your file will be saved. If you want you can browse and change the location. Click Next

- Drag and drop files/folders you want to zip from the window to Add Files or Add Folders button. And click on Zip Now option

Your zip file is created. You can now click on Close or else on Next if you want to do some other job. Here you also have the option Mail this Zip file to email the file.

You can see how complicated it all sounds but how simple it really is.

12. Searching Data on the Internet

While searching the computer hard drive for the required data is a straightforward process, the same cannot be said of the web search. Searching the World Wide Web could prove to be time consuming and tedious. We'll guide you through some important aspects of Internet search to help you find your way through the maze.

You could search the web for information either through search engines or through subject directories.

For Search engines to retrieve information from the web, you need to type the keywords in the search box and press enter or the Search button. Documents containing those keywords are then listed before you and could easily number about thousands.

The page numbers are listed at the bottom and you could move from one to another by clicking on them. Usually the most relevant information is contained in the very first few chapters. Since this is a keyword search many of the results prove to be out of context.

The most popular search engines:

- Google (http://www.google.com)
- Alta Vista (http://www.altavista.com)
- Excite (http://www.excite.com/search)
- Alltheweb (http://www.alltheweb.com)
- HotBot (http://www.hotbot.lycos.com)

Search engines differ in terms of the different results they produce (based on the size of their database and how frequently they are updated), search speed, search interface, and display features.

There are subject specific search engines like www.Monster.com a job site. And there is like People search at http://people.yahoo.com that simply aim at specific categories.

Search directories are based on category search and they index links to relevant websites unlike web pages in the case of search engines. Search directories are therefore good tools for general search while search engines are good for finding specific information.

Examples of search directories are: Yahoo (http://www.yahoo.com), Open Directory (http://dmoz.org), LookSmart (http://www.looksmart.com) and www.CompaniesOnline.com.

While searching for information on the web one has to bear in mind the amount of information, perhaps billions of pages, lying out there. It's therefore very important that one uses the right tools and has a clear search goal in mind to sift through for relevant data.

13. The Dangers of Mail Attachments

In most cases of system sabotage these days, dangerous PC programs like viruses, Trojans and worms invade through email attachments. A lot of advertisements and newsletters come as pop-ups or web links. These dangerous programs can modify or delete files on your system, sometimes erase the entire hard drive, and also spread through the entire network.

For a virus to infect the system, it needs to be 'run.' In the case of malicious attachments, the file name or message content therefore intends to entice people to open the attachment. This attachment, which is a program, runs the program when opened and infects the system. Worms are usually hidden in file formats such as Word or Excel. Once into your system, such document can enter your PC features like email address list and forward itself to, say, the first fifty ones. (see difference between a virus, worm, Trojan and hoax in Chapter 14.

In a Microsoft operating system, every file type has a three-letter extension name that is added to the file name. The extension name helps to figure out what program should be used to open the file or whether it is safe to open it at all. However, programs like Outlook Express are not automatically configured to display the file extension names, and therefore, one should be careful to put on the display option (Open "My Computer; on the Tools bar click on folder options; click View tab and remove the check mark against the 'Hide file extensions for known file types'; click OK).

The safe file extensions that are most commonly used are GIF (graphics format), JPG or JPEG (photograph format), TIF or TIFF (tagged image format), MPG or MPEG (movie format), MP3 (compressed audio), and WAV (audio). Any attachment that does not have any of these extensions is best left unopened. Unlike the normal one, three or four letter extensions, some files have a double extension (e.g. coolpic. gif.exe) and need to be treated with suspicion. Sometimes clicking on a file name that is like a URL can also make way for a harmful program. If one isn't sure, the best option is to copy and paste the URL on the address bar of the web browser rather than open it as an attachment.

Thefts, fraud and numerous illegitimate activities on the Internet are a norm in the contemporary information age. Never reveal personal information to unknown sources on the net. A lot of

fraudulent messages are designed in the manner of legitimate ones and it's easy to be taken in by them. Phishing, for instance, refers to the email designed to fool you into surrendering personal information like credit card and bank account numbers, passwords etc. Such messages will direct you to fake websites, which appear legitimate, where the theft takes place.

Very often people receive email in the form of warnings to take urgent action, say installing or removing some file on their system to avoid an apparent damage to one's system. Such email often asks you to pass on the message to others as well. These are considered HOAX messages. When you receive one, it will seem like it is from a friend. OR it is from a friend who has fallen for the HOAX… go to www.microsoft.com and search for hoaxes.

They keep up on them for you. You might search for Virus Hoax. Be sure to do that before passing the email to a friend, and before you go changing the settings on your computer as many will tell you to do!

Instant messaging is another means through which your system can be hacked. Even though IM services are firewalled, IMs can be intercepted and read. Therefore do not reveal personal information like phone number, address, etc to your IM client. Also do not engage in file transfer with people you don't know and never click on suspicious or unknown links.

The basic principle is that one should trust only the trusted sources. And even then, be careful, especially if you aren't sure.

14. Virus Protection

System and network crashes, data loss, program damage, reformatting of hard disk, data theft, etc are problems that a computer user is familiar with. Viruses, worms and Trojans are the dangerous programs that are responsible for such disasters.

A virus is a program or a piece of code that needs a host file to attach itself to, gets into the memory of the system, and can either cause severe damage by deleting files, damaging programs, and modifying the hard disk or it can just simply use your system memory through unwanted text, video, and audio files that lead to loss of data, can slow down your system terribly, and cause system crashes.

A worm, on the other hand, is a program that can replicate itself without the use of a "host" file. The worm usually releases a document, generally a Word or Excel file, that carries a worm inside it and this worm document takes over your computer features. The worm can automatically forward itself to email addresses on your list infecting other systems as well.

A Trojan, as the name suggests, is a file that arrives as an email claiming to be desirable but is actually malicious. To make itself work, it needs you to invite it by opening an attachment or downloading a file from the Internet.

We often hear of virus hoaxes as well. These are just enticing messages that urge you to take an undesirable action. They often appear as 'Delete it immediately'; 'Forward this warning to everyone you know' etc.

Of course, not all errors arise due to malicious codes and could be just hardware problems. As far as virus protection goes, some of the necessary steps are:

- It is always advisable to have both hardware and software firewalls on your system. A firewall is essentially a wall between your computer and the cable (in broadband connection) or modem. It therefore controls and filters data traffic that is taking place between your computer and the web. While the former is effective, cheap and easy to configure, software firewalls though tougher to configure claim to resist pop-ups and infiltration by Trojan horse programs.

Most firewalls, however, are not enough to keep off viruses. It's therefore mandatory to have anti-virus software installed on your computer.

- Always keep your anti-virus software up-to-date.
- Do not open an e-mail attachment from someone you do not know or one that you weren't really expecting from a known source.
- It's best not to open an attachment that has a doubtful extension name.

No matter what the nature of these malicious programs, a little caution and alertness on our part can go a long way to help prevent them.

You must have a virus protection. I have tried Mcafee and Norton and I prefer Trend. It's been easy to use, and nothing but a pleasurable experience, and it comes on almost every day with a new virus protection as that is how rampant viruses are nowadays.

You can get a free scan of your PC right now to see if you have any viruses.

http://housecall.trendmicro.com

Don't be caught with Spyware and Viruses. Stay alert. Keep your PC clean.

15. Spyware

The click of a mouse connecting us to millions of computers out there on the World Wide Web and making an incredible amount of information available to us at our desk is absolutely amazing. However, as an Internet user would agree, the experience is not always delightful and comes with its own set of problems.

We've discussed viruses, worms and Trojans in this book. These are malicious programs and content infecting your computer and can damage your files and genuine programs.

A similar nasty program is Spyware and is wider in operation. This program once installed on your computer sends information out from your computer to sites on the Internet without your knowledge. The information sent out could be just about anything including your email address and password, the Internet sites you frequently visit, the products you generally purchase, etc. A Windows operating system is more prone to such malice.

The creators of Spyware claim that they seek your permission before the program is installed on your computer and thus Spyware is different from viruses and worms. When you install peer-to-peer sharing programs like Kaaza, Media Desktop or Morpheus on your system, click on a pop-up, or visit some porn sites, etc, you've made way for a Spyware. The End User Licensing Agreement window that seeks your confirmation when you download programs from the Net is skipped by almost all Internet users simply because it's lengthy and painfully written. The Spyware creators take advantage of this habitual pattern.

Once the tracking program is on your system it takes over your browser settings.

- You'll notice that your default web page has been hijacked and changed.
- You are invaded by advertisements that keep popping-up on the web page you are viewing.
- You are directed to the websites that you did not type in the address bar.
- Your machine slows down considerably.

Some options to deal with Spyware nuisance:

- Don't click on pop-up links.
- Download only trusted programs on the net.
- While surfing, if an unexpected dialog box appears prompting you to take some action or click on some link, avoid it. Cancel the box.
- You can limit unwanted links by adjusting your browser settings. Go to Tools menu and click on Internet Options.
- Scan your machine thoroughly with Anti-virus software.
- If you suspect a Spyware infection, install and run Spyware detection and removal tools. LavaSoft's Ad-Aware (extremely user-friendly), Spybot Search and Destroy, and Webroot's SpySweeper are the most popular ones. These tools scan your computer for unwanted programs, list them, and recommend their removal.

16. Saving Files to Disks

Creating and working on a file is of no use if we forget to save it. Saving a document is a must if we do not want to lose data. Most Windows versions already have a folder called My Documents where you can save your files. You can create new folders within My Documents or somewhere else to store your files.

Though we've already discussed how to save files we can refresh your memory. These are the few things to remember:

- The Save option is in the File menu of the document. Click on it and a dialog box appears
- Specify the location in Save in box.
- Type the name in File name.
- Specify the format or kind of document in Save as Type.
- Click OK. If you click on Cancel the file will be left unsaved.

You can make a copy of the same file in some other location by clicking on the Save As option. Follow the same rules as discussed above. Specify the new location and type a different name.

When you save the file on your desktop, C:, or D: your data is stored in the hard drive of your computer. Your hard drive is prone to crashes, viruses, worms, etc, that can modify or delete your files. Therefore you can store your data (folders and files) in removable storage devices such as floppy disks and CD- ROMs as well for backup. These devices need to be inserted in the system. After the files have been copied and saved on them they can be taken out of your PC.

To save files in the floppy disk:

- Insert the floppy disk in your computer
- Select the file or folder you want to save in the floppy

- Right-click on the file/folder. A dialog box opens. Point the cursor on Send To and click on 3 ½ Floppy (A:)

  A copy of the file/folder will be placed on the floppy disk.

- To confirm, double-click on ""My Computer"."

- Double-click on 3 ½ Floppy (A:)

  The file/folder will be displayed there.

Important: A floppy disk is a very sensitive device. Make sure it isn't corrupted and successfullyopens the file/folder saved on it. Sometimes it doesn't. In this case the floppy must be very old or corrupted. It's best to get a new one to store your data.

Some files are very large like large text files or picture files. A floppy is not an adequate device to store such data. The best option then is to copy your files on the CD-Rom.

Each CD can hold about 650 MB of data. An important thing to remember is that once a CD has been burned (i.e. data copied on it) it cannot be altered unlike in a floppy. Therefore burn a CD only when you have the final version of a file done.

CDs are of two types:

1. Rewritable CDs: can be used more than once but are more expensive than ordinary ones

2. Ordinary writable CDs: can be used only once. Data copied on it cannot be erased to re-use space.

There are two main options when saving files to CD:

1. **Data CD project:** in this case once the copying session is over you can't write any more data even if there is space available. CDs copied like this can open on any CD drive though.

2. **Direct CD:** this option allows you to save files to the CD more than once. However, such CDs will not work in ordinary PC CD drives.

To burn CDs you need to install a CD Writer/CD burn software. Nero® is the most popular CD writing software. Once the software is installed in your PC you can start burning CDS. Just follow the instructions carefully and you'll find how easy the process is. Most CD writers are compatible with multi-session data CDs.

Nero® can copy all kinds of data: text, pictures, audio, and video. The better the quality of the source material, the better the quality of your CD.

Even cheapest of CDs can store information for a decade. However, you should take the following **precautions** to increase their longevity:

- Do not expose CDs to direct sunlight or high humidity.
- Always place the CD with the label side (opposite the plastic covered side) facing up. A scratch on the label side will destroy the data.

17. Upgrading Your Browser

We've already discussed that Internet Explorer, as part of the Windows operating system, is the most popular web browser. It is, however, highly prone to security problems. Even though Microsoft constantly provides security patches, alternatives to IE are gaining popularity. They have advanced features and are relatively free from security dangers.

Upgrading your browser therefore provides better security against threats as well as enhances your web experience by allowing greater efficiency. If you have a dial-up connection, efficiency particularly counts since you are paying by hours for using the net.

Browsers for Windows operating systems that are becoming significant alternatives to IE and Netscape Navigator are:

Mozilla Firefox: is considered the best alternative. This free of cost browser has many advanced features some of which include: a built-in pop-up blocker; tabbed browsing that allows you to view multiple web pages in one window; comprehensive security features; smarter search tools such as Smart Keywords and Find bar; and quicker downloading with fewer prompts.

If you have Windows 98, ME, NT 4.0, 2000, or XP you can upgrade to Firefox 1.0. The minimum hardware required on your system is Pentium 233 MHz, 64 MB RAM, and 52 MB of hard disk space. Download is available at www.mozilla.org .

Opera 7.50 and **Avant Browser** are considered the fastest browsers available. Avant Browser is free of cost (you can donate if you want) and can be downloaded from www.avantbrowser.com . **Netscape 7.2** (www.netscape.ca), **Konqueror**, **Mosaic**, etc are other popular ones. It's important to check if your system is compatible with the browser you want to upgrade to. Downloading is not difficult. You just need to follow the instructions that the program specifies.

A newer version of Internet Explorer called Internet Explorer 6 SP 1 is now available for non-XP users. If you have Windows XP Service Pack 1 (SP 1) already installed in your computer you do not require IE 6 SP1. This version's focus is on enhanced privacy features making web browsing reliable for its users. It also provides the latest version of Outlook Express with it.

To download the latest version, visit www.microsoft.com and go to either Download or Windows Update.

18. Upgrading Your PC

While upgrading any of your PC hardware it's best to explore all options and seek advice before you dive into buying a new component. It's worthwhile to check if you really need an upgrade.

It's not a good idea to upgrade your very old PC because it would cost a lot of money. It's cheaper to buy a new computer in such cases because they are easier to upgrade later when you want to.

Upgrading the hard drive:

Most people don't really need to upgrade their hard disk, unless they use it for playing a lot of music, movies, and games. A 20 GB hard drive is sufficient to hold up-to-date office and Internet applications, and all your files and data.

A medium sized hard drive would be around 40 GB and the maximum would be around 60 – 80 GB at this writing. The Internet changes fast and furious. Almost seven years ago I started with a very old computer a dx66. Yes, that's less than a hundred. And, yes there were 350's out, but computers were more expensive back then, and I simply did not have the money to have the best.

After I while, I got a 133, then get going up the line, until I had an 800, home built. Which was about as fast as they came. And, that I believe was the computer I am on now, which I upgraded several times. Now I have like a 1,400 and it is simply time to get a new computer. A faster one!

Before you upgrade your hard disk it's best to do a thorough disk checkup including disk scan, defragmentation, etc. Check all options before you go for an upgrade. As we mentioned earlier you might not need an upgrade. If you are an average user and need more storage you could add another drive to the existing one.

When you do need to go for an upgrade, make sure you back up your files so that you don't lose data.

Upgrading the RAM:

Random Access Memory is the short-term memory of the PC. It holds data that is being worked on now and may or may not be transferred to the hard drive that forms the long-term/permanent memory of the computer. Modern processors can perform an enormous number of

tasks per second. The hard drive, on the other hand, is considerably slower to handle so much information. This is where a high-speed short-term memory (RAM) comes in. RAM needs a power supply to store data. Once the power is turned off the data is lost.

Almost all PCs these days have 64 MB RAM and often128 MB. If you want to run newer applications on your PC then you should definitely upgrade to 128/256 MB RAM. A high speed RAM (128 and above) helps to prevent PC slow-down when too many applications are running at the same time.

Also, many people do upgrade from 98 to Win 2000, and discover their computers lock up, a lot. It is usually because they don't have enough RAM. "My Computer" has 526 RAM. I work at home on "My Computer" and have many applications open at any given time. I just looked down and I have approximately 16 windows open. Microsoft Word, my email, several browsers, notepad, unfinished email, a search and find application and of course, I'm online, and my virus protector, even my printer.

CPU upgrade:

means faster execution of instructions but it leaves the RAM and hard drive capacity unchanged. It is the most cost effective upgrade and can increase the efficiency of your computer considerably. Seek a professional's help, however, before you take a decision.

Motherboard:

Its upgrade is not such a good proposition unless you replace the CPU and the RAM as well to achieve greater performance levels. You upgrade the motherboard either because the current one doesn't support a faster CPU or the CPU requires a different socket. It could very well prove to be highly expensive. You can instead think of buying a new PC.

Ports:

Ports are sockets at the back of your computer where you plug in external devices. Older PCs work on "parallel" ports. If you need to work a lot on peripherals such as digital cameras, digital camcorders, CD burners, and scanners then you need to upgrade to USB and Firewire ports if you are not using them already. Both tend to be cheaper than the "parallel" and SCSI devices they replace.

Always make sure that there are no compatibility problems with other devices in your PC when you plan to upgrade any hardware on your machine.

19. Memory Problems

The **symptoms** of memory problems in your PC could be any of the following:

- Frequent system crashes. The system boots and then hangs up
- The system boots, starts an application, and then reboots
- Blue-screen error during functioning
- The machine does not load the operating system.
- The system beeps 2 – 4 times during booting. 1 beep is a normal sign.
- The computer reports a memory error. Here you need to either delete files that you don't require and free space. Or you need to upgrade the RAM.
- The monitor does not display any video type

The **possible causes** for memory problems in your PC could be:

- Power surges or poor power supply that gradually tend to damage the memory. Ensure that you don't run microwaves or window air conditioners on the same circuit as your PC.
- Extremely dusty or humid environment.
- Heat from other PC parts or RAM.
- A memory chip has been damaged and needs to be replaced.
- You've installed a new memory chip in your PC and some compatibility problems have arisen.

While some could be minor problems that you can fix yourself, in some cases you'll have to seek technical help.

20. Hot CPU?

Any machine, including the PC, generates a lot of heat during its functioning. CPU is one such part of your PC that gets heated much more than other parts. Cooling is vital for the maintenance of the CPU (Central processing unit) and the machine in general. Heating is caused when:

- Overclocking: making the hardware (CPU, RAM, CD-Burner, motherboard) work faster than prescribed by the manufacturers. You can achieve good performance if you go about it carefully.
- High-system load: caused by video-editing programs or graphic-intensive games.
- Extremely fast processing that is becoming a norm with contemporary processors

Heating of the CPU is of concern to PC users as it leads to system crashes and freezes; affects performance; and is dangerous.

Temperature Regulation:

Heat sinks are components that help to regulate the temperature in electronic devices. Made up of aluminum alloy and with fins attached to them, they are placed within the CPU to draw in cool air from outside and act as an exhaust for the hot air generated by the CPU. Most CPU's are armed with cooling mechanisms such as heat sink or a fan.

Keeping a watch on the overall temperature of the PC is also important. The internal temperature in the range of 60 – 110° Fahrenheit is normal. A rise in temperature beyond this could mean a stress on the performance capacity of the machine.

You could also maintain the PC temperature by allowing it to warm up for a few minutes after turning it on.

Keep the vents on the monitor case unclogged. Make sure you regularly clean them using a can of compressed air.

Water-based cooling solutions are also gaining ground but they are expensive and custom-made.

If you are running high image and graphic based programs then ensure that you do not have many programs open simultaneously. This can really stress the CPU that is processing all the tasks.

These are just some of the basic steps that’ll help maintain your machine and increase its longevity. Keeping your computer so it does not get too hot is very important.

My friend in a southern state in the summer, fried her computer. She had one with only one fan. It was hot, and she was working long hours. The computer cannot take that, kind of abuse. I have two fans, but I still shut "My Computer" down a couple of times per day. You don't have to, but I happen to like to give "My Computer" a break.

21. Defragmentation

Over a period of time files that you save in the hard drive are stored in a fragmented manner. This is because file modifications create empty pockets of space in the hard disk. The data therefore gets scattered all over the hard drive of your system. This is called disk fragmentation. This can significantly affect the performance of your system.

- Your computer will find it difficult to access scattered data on the hard disk. And will become painfully slow.
- You could lose information.
- The wear and tear of your hard drive increases.

Reorganizing files and unused pockets in a hard drive to increase the system’s efficiency is known as defragmentation. It is highly recommended that hard drives be defragmented at least once a month, if not more. The more frequently it is done the lesser time it takes to carry out the process. It’s best that all other programs are closed when you are defragmenting the disk.

How to De-fragment a Drive:

1. Double-click on the "My Computer" icon on the desktop
2. Select the drive you want to defragment and right-click on it
3. Click on Properties
4. A dialog box will open. Click on the Tools tab
5. Click on **Defragment Now** button under Defragmentation
6. Follow the program instructions. Once the process is complete, close the program.

In case you’ve been having problems with your system it’s advisable to scan your disk before defragmenting. For that:

1. Double-click on "My Computer" and select the disk drive
2. Right-click on it and open Properties.
3. Click on Tools tab.
4. Click on Check Now button under Error-checking. Let the program complete the process.

To ensure optimum efficiency it’s best to run the defragmenting program on all hard drives.

22. Cleaning Tips for Your PC

Maintenance of any machine is a very significant part of its usage. To ensure that your machine performs efficiently you need to take care of it. A routine cleaning of your PC means a significant improvement in its efficiency. A very simple example would be cleaning the mouse when it gathers dust inside it and becomes very stiff.

Just rubbing that dust off makes life so much simpler. Dedicating 20-30 minutes every three months to clean your PC is not difficult at all especially considering the wonderful difference it can bring to your machine's performance. Here are a few tips to carry out this routine check and cleaning:

Keyboard

If you work on your PC everyday or frequently, your keyboard like the rest of the PC parts is bound to gather a lot of dust and dirt. The keys become sticky and slow down your speed, not to mention they feel and look yucky!

Make sure you unplug the keyboard when you clean it. Turn it upside down and shake well to remove crumbs and dirt. I give it a small swat like a baby burp pat when I turn the key board over to get the crumbs (wait, there are no crumbs in my computer, I don't eat at my computer, I swear I don't. Did I say that?) ☺

Dust off the keys using a soft brush or a can of compressed air while holding it upside down.

Clean the key tops with a damp cotton cloth using either a mild detergent or rubbing alcohol. But make sure you don't spill liquid over it. If you do so by mistake then wipe it off as soon as possible and let it dry completely.

It's a good idea to always keep your keyboard and monitor covered with a cloth when you are not using it.

Mouse

Take off the cover at the back of the mouse by rotating it anti-clockwise. The ball will come out and you'll see two thin wheels. The dust that gathers on them is the main culprit. Use your fingertips to scratch out the dust that is sticking there. Also shake out dirt that gathers in the hole. You can wipe the wheels with a mild cleaning agent.

Wipe off the ball well with a wet cloth. Use a mild detergent to clean the outside of the mouse. Dry with a soft cloth.

Put the ball back into your little mousie then close it up. Now, your mouse is happy and ready to chase cats ☺

Monitor

For the **monitor** screen of your PC, it's best to use a cloth dampened in water (no detergent or other liquid). Be careful especially with laptop screens that are very sensitive. The strokes should be top to bottom. Paper cloths are highly recommended for monitor screens to avoid any damage.

You can use a mild detergent for the cover. For holes at the back of the cover use an air can spray to take out dust. These vents should be cleaned to avoid overheating of the monitor.

Computer Case

Remove the **case** and get to the area where all the hardware parts are located. Cleaning this area is significant. Use an air spray to blow out all the dust gathered here. Always ensure that the spray is held in an upright position and blow the dust out of the machine. Also everything should be unplugged and avoid any physical contact with the components.

Printer

Printer surfaces can be cleaned with a damp cloth. Make sure to clean the print head as well with cartridge flush on a cotton bud. For the **scanner** surface use a soft cloth dampened with window cleaner. In both cases make sure you don't spill any liquid on them.

CD-ROM and other Drives

For **CD-ROM** drive use a CD-ROM cleaner available with retailers. Cleaning the CD drive prevents reading and writing errors. To clean your CDs just wet a cloth in water and rub it from center to the edge to avoid any scratches.

Hard Drive clean up will include:

- Running anti-virus program occasionally
- Running Scandisk for scanning and removing the errors in the hard drive. Go to Start menu – Programs –Accessories- System Tools – Scandisk (Disk clean up in Windows XP)
- Deleting temporary and obsolete files. Click on "My Computer" and select the drive you want to clean of unwanted files. Right-click on it and click Properties. In General tab click on Disk Cleanup button. A dialog box will open. Here you need to select the files you want to delete from the Temp and other folders. Click OK.
- Uninstalling programs that are not required.
- Emptying the recycle bin
- Defragmenting the hard drive occasionally (discussed in chapter on Defragmentation)

Note: While cleaning any part of your PC, be completely sure that you've unplugged the PC and its peripheral devices (printers and scanners) from all the sockets.

23. Sluggish PC

We've discussed in the chapter 'Cleaning the PC' the various ways in which you can shake your PC out of its sluggishness.

All that, and some more here:

- Don't clutter your desktop with too many icons. We know for sure that it's a convenient place but try cleaning it up every few days. Right-click anywhere on the desktop. Click on Properties and then desktop tab. Click on "Clean Desktop Now" option. In Windows XP you need to go on Properties – Desktop – Customize desktop - Clean Desktop Now. You can also opt to run the clean up wizard every 60 days here.

- Move files or folders saved on desktop for convenience to other locations. In Windows XP, there is a folder known as Unused Desktop Shortcuts where you can move all the shortcut icons to the programs that you don't generally use.

- A jazzy picture as your Active Desktop or stretched colored wallpaper can tax your PC's resources. The latter is especially true for PCs with limited memory. Stick to simple black and white ones in such cases. Turn off your Active desktop.

- Running too many programs at one time also hampers the efficiency of your PC. Prioritize your tasks and close programs that you are not really working on.

We've already discussed how important it is to maintain your hard drive. Scan disk, defragmentation, and disk clean up have already been mentioned. It's extremely important to keep the PC register tidy. This is the main reference point for your PC to carry out any task. Bits of data are left here even after you've uninstalled programs and deleted files from the hard drive. There are various programs available for the purpose.

RegCleaner is free of cost and you don't have to be an expert to use it. CleanMyPC Registry Cleaner, Registry Mechanic, and Registry Cleaner are other utilities among numerous others that you can use to get rid of obsolete entries made by programs you've deleted long ago.

24. Troubleshooting Tips

The problems discussed below are common; everyone faces them while working on the PC. Often the cause for their occurrence is something very minor. Yet they do disrupt the flow of your work. Don't panic. Here are a few very basic things you can try out that work most of the times. If it doesn't work there could be a bigger problem where you'll need to call a technician.

Your System Hangs.

The mouse cursor doesn't move or disappears and you can't open or close any program. Press Ctrl + Alt + Delete. A Close Program window will open where you can select the program that is not responding and click on End Task. In Windows XP, the window is called Task Manager. Hopefully your machine will recover.

If not, you'll need to turn off the monitor and boot the computer again. This usually works. However, you'll lose unsaved information in this case. It's therefore advisable to keep saving your document as you work along.

If you have had to shut down your computer because it got stuck, let it sit for at least 30 seconds, before re-booting. If I have had mine on for several hours, I generally let it sit for a full five minutes.

A **fault** has occurred in which case a dialog box stating that 'An error has occurred in the application' or 'This program has performed an illegal operation and will be shut down' or 'A fatal exception has occurred' will appear. In the first case you can ignore the message and close the dialog box. In the second case the program will shut down and you'll lose unsaved information. In the third one, all programs that are opened on your PC will close immediately. It's advisable to Restart your computer in the last two situations.

You've switched on the PC but the **monitor screen is blank**. Ensure the monitor cable is plugged in properly. If this is not the case then reboot the machine. I knew a lady who was very upset because her computer would not turn back on. She did check to see if the cord was plugged in. It was very smart of her to do that. But, when the PC man came to her home to do a house call

for her, he was puzzled, too. Then he looked a little closer and it seemed her pet mouse (at least, I hope it was a pet) had chewed through her cord.

While you are starting your PC a message appears '**Invalid system disk**. Replace the disk, and press any key'. It occurs when a floppy disk or a CD is lying in the drive. You'll need to remove the disk from the drive. Then press any key to continue. You might need to turn off the computer and boot again.

Your computer starts in a **Safe mode**. Go to Start - Shut down – Restart. Your PC should start in a normal mode now.

Sometimes you give a command and the **hourglass remains** without anything happening on the screen. Press Ctrl + Alt + Delete and click on End Task. If the End Task window reappears, then click again on End Task. Now you can start the program again.

By mistake you have switched from the Insert mode to the **Overwrite mode**. You'll notice that as you insert words other words get deleted. To rectify this, go to the Status bar at the bottom of the screen. Click on the OVR to disable it. Or you could click on the Insert button on the keyboard. You will be back on the Insert mode. This happens to me many times. I do not know what key I hit to cause this to happen. One day, I'll catch myself!

You've sent an email and it comes back to your Inbox with a message like '**Mailer Daemon' or 'Message could not be delivered**'. Check the email address(s) again to ensure that you've typed the message correctly. Of course, this could also be due to an error on the side of the recipients like an overflowing Inbox. Wait for some time and then send the message again or inform the recipient/s about the error.

problems in printing a document.

Make sure:

The printer is switched on.

The printer has paper in it.

The paper is pushed back to the maximum.

Check if there is a paper jam. Open the front of the printer and take out the jammed paper slowly. Put the lid back and give the print command again.

Documents are smudged with ink.

Open the cover and take out the cartridges (color and black). Dampen a cloth in little rubbing alcohol and clean the bottom of the cartridges as well as the area where they are placed.

Put them back and close the lid. Now resume printing.

25. Warn Your Children

Pornographic websites form a very small proportion of the web content. However, this aspect of the Internet gets the maximum media attention encouraging tremendous curiosity among the young to explore them. The mainstream media often ignores a huge number of educational and recreational sites available for children. Such sites need to be given more media coverage.

Schools and public libraries in America are adopting "Acceptable Use Policy" to ensure that they provide internet access to youngsters with a sense of responsibility as to what information should and should not be made accessible.

But most significant is the involvement of the parents in monitoring their child's web experience. Parents should advise their kids about and ensure that:

- The kids don't spend too much time online and should develop other hobbies.
- They should never give out personal information like: last name, phone number, address, school name, password, etc, on the net to people they don't know.
- They should use different passwords when they need to register online. It's a good idea to write them down on a piece of paper and keep them in a secret place in their room, in case they forget the password.
- While filling out forms online, if they feel uncomfortable about answering some questions they should seek the help of their parents.
- If they feel uncomfortable about some information that they've come across they should share it with their parents.
- If an unknown person sends them an email don't trust him/her. They should let their parents know about this.
- They should never open attachments that are not sent by their friends, family, or someone they know well or ones that they were not expecting. And, because viruses are so wide

spread to make it look like an attachment is being sent by a friend, it is best to teach your child and their friends to send an email first, saying an attachment is on the way!

Perverts get into children's chat rooms. It can make you sick. Keep up a great communication with your children so they will tell you if someone sounds unusually friendly or creepy or they suspect it is an older person.

Never meet anyone from the Internet. If you are sure, and really want to take that chance, please, meet in an open area in a busy place such as a popular restaurant in a popular area. Please, be careful.

Frequently Used Keyboard Shortcuts

CTRL + C: to copy text

CTRL + V: to paste text

CTRL + P: to print

CTRL + S: to save document

CTRL + Z: to undo last action

TAB: to move from item to another across the window

ENTER: to execute any task

ESC: to cancel a selection in a menu

CTRL + ALT + DELETE: to end the task and close the program running

ALT + F4: closes the active window

Backspace (←): to delete the character/s to the left of the cursor

F3: opens the find /search dialog box

There are many tricks on the PC. The things this book has selected should get you through many difficulties.

The Internet is a wondrous place to be. It's a new frontier and we all will learn as we go what is appropriate and what is not.

Net Etiquette

If you get a present via the Internet, like if someone buys you a present or sends you an email, you can thank them through email.

If someone sends you a real item in the real mail to your real house, this requires a real letter of thanks in the real mail. You can send them an immediate email thanking them for the gift. But, do follow it up with a real thank you card.

You can also get your feelings hurt in forums and in chat rooms and in email. Before you "fight" back with words that will haunt you. Stop.

Read what you write. Then let it sit as a draft overnight and if you still wish to send it, well, that's up to you. You really need that cooling down time.

Exercise

Learn to get exercise. The Internet can be very addictive and you'll find yourself sitting for long hours at a time. This is not good for your circulation; this is not good for your health. Take some relaxing and deep breaths, get some stretches in and get away from the computer.

To protect your neck and back:

Your eyes should be at the level of the top of your screen. Your feet should be flat on the floor and not crossed. Hold your stomach in to help support your back muscles. (I learned this from my physical therapist after I ruptured the disk on my own neck from too many hours on the computer at one time, putting much stress on your neck.)

Some Interesting Free Sites

I use this start page for when I go on the Internet. I've been using them for about six years. I've crashed and burned a few times, and I keep the URL to my start page, and the things I use the most are on that start page.

So all I have to do is set it up as my start page and set up my favorite places to go. When I log on, I am sent directly to my start page. And, as long as I have the link (that no one else can see) I have wonderful things at my fingertips. You get that here for free. Once you get it, copy and paste your personal url and print it out and file it for emergency when and if you computer crashes or for when you get a newer computer.

http://www.homeofficeexecutive.com/psp/templates/teresa/index.html

If you like to be part of groups on the Internet, check out http://groups.yahoo.com You can start your own, or you can join one, or both ☺

1. http://www.about.com is a great community center. They have a lot of different topics, surely you'll find something that interests you.

2. If you like to play games such as chess, bridge, or other card games, check out http://www.zone.com It has many things to do.

Take good care of your computer. Use it wisely. The Internet is vast and wonderful. Enjoy your computer. No question is too dumb. And, most of all - have fun!

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