

Using Windows – 102

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After Windows boots, you see what is called the "Desktop". Usually, there are several "icons" on the Desktop, on the left side (My Computer, Recycle Bin, My Documents, Internet Explorer, Setting Up MSN, and Connecting to the Internet). There is a "START" icon in the lower left corner of the Desktop. Unless you are an accomplished Windows user, do not experiment with the Internet Icons until you have specific instructions on how to work with them. You may accidentally start a setup procedure that may be more difficult to correct. The only Icon you might be concerned with, is in the upper left corner called "My Computer". This is a short cut to see important items installed in your computer system such as Floppy and Hard Drives as well as CD ROM Drives. The floppy drive is designated the "A" drive, the hard drive is designated "C", and the CD ROM is usually designated "D". If you have additional drives, there may be additional drive letter designations. You also see an icon for Printers, Control Panel, and Dial-up Networking. The Control Panel allows configuring the many devices installed or to be installed into the computer. "Dial up Networking" is the special dialer used for Internet access. The "Start" button, in the lower left, is the access to any installed programs as well as utilities to maintain Windows. It is also possible to have "Shortcut" icons on the Desktop for installed programs. Shortcuts can be placed on the Desktop for any program. I recommend NOT changing the position of any Icons, because if you one day need help, you may confuse the person helping you by the changed location.

You should note that the mouse that comes with and is attached to your computer, moves a "Pointer" around on the desktop as you move the mouse. The object is to move the pointer to the icon that you want, and click or double click on the icon to activate it. Learning to use the mouse can be fun by playing Solitaire, a game that comes with Windows.

Windows comes with a few basic simple programs: Notepad, Word Pad, Address Book, Calculator, and a Paint program to draw with, two types of dialers to use with the modem (a device that connects the computer to a phone line), and some simple games. It also comes with an Internet browser, "Internet Explorer", a program that lets you surf the Internet. In addition, it comes with some tools and utilities to help maintain it and configure it. Another utility, called "Windows Explorer", allows you to copy files from one drive to another or from one location to another, make directories, or other manipulation of files. Be careful not to confuse Windows Explorer with Internet Explorer.

You most likely purchased a printer with your computer. Before you use it, the printer software driver must be installed into Windows. Different printers install this software in different ways, so get out the instructions for the printer. Do not lose these or the disks, or any disks that comes with your computer, for that matter.

Any additional programs must be purchased and installed. Some times, a computer manufacturer will pre-install promotional software that you can also find useful. It is possible you may not even get these disks to reload these preloaded applications some time in the future if you have to reformat your hard drive. A popular Word Processor is "Microsoft Word", a popular spreadsheet is "Microsoft Excel", a data base is "Access". Quicken is a popular checkbook program. There is software to do almost anything on a computer. Once you get active on the Internet, you should locate WinZip and install it on your computer. WinZip will uncompress downloaded software for installation and use on your computer. Software must be installed into a computer. It cannot be copied into it. There is usually a procedure for each program that you purchase and that procedure must be followed. Most of the time, you can simply insert a program CD into the drive, and within 30 or so seconds, a menu comes up with instructions for you to follow. Once you have collected several programs and utilities on your computer, there is some trouble you can get in to. Installation instructions that come with most software (if you find and read them) states that you must stop all other programs from running before you start the installation. If this is not followed, the installation may cause major problems in the future. What you the user may not realize is that Windows may have started programs that you do not know about. It is these programs that cause the trouble. More about how to determine what is running later on. Once a program is installed, it is usually required to reboot the computer so Windows can read the new information. You should also know that Windows must be shut down properly, or additional trouble may creep into your computer. Windows is shut down by going to the START (in the lower left corner), then clicking on "Shut Down", making sure the box is clicked to shut down rather than restart. If all is well, the computer will shutdown with in 30 or so seconds and a message will appear that it is safe to turn off the power to the computer. Newer computers actually power off themselves.

When you install software, keep a log of where the software installs to (the directory). When you create data, letters, spreadsheets, databases, presentations, etc, store the data you create in "My Documents" so you can find it later. Some programs like Works, Quicken, AOL, Outlook, and others store data in their working folders. That is why you need to know where the programs are installed. Assuming your project is important, you need to back up your data. Things do go wrong and you may lose it.

If you intend to use the Internet, you must select a service provider and set up the computer to dial it. Windows comes equipped to use the Internet without any additional software, unless you choose AOL or a free service with advertising rolling in front of you all the time. My recommendation is to select a local provider such as Bee Net (610-280-2274) to get the most reliable service. (\$20 a month).

Windows crashes sometimes. Crashes are caused by many things: improper shut down, power interruption while computer is running, program conflicts, too many programs running, and loading a program with others running. Hardware failure can also cause a crash. If a virus is picked up from a floppy disk or the Internet, that can really mess things up. Accidentally deleting files is a common cause of crashes. Games often cause other programs to crash. Removing unwanted software can also be a problem, even with special utilities made to do it safer.

As the owner of a computer, you need to learn more about it. The computer requires maintenance. First, clean the dust out of the CPU fan and the power supply every few months. Two utilities that come with Windows should be run monthly. One is Scandisk and the other is called DEFRAG. You should also back up your "data" to a second source, such as a ZIP, ORB, or CDR drive. Once the computer is loaded and configured, it is advisable to make an image of your hard drive or have someone make it for you so it can be restored quickly should something go wrong. The image will contain your operating system, all drivers, programs, and data at the time of the image. Proper care also includes protecting both the power and phone line going into the computer. A quality surge protector, such as Panamax, is a must. Your computer should also be opened at least once a year and cleaned to get out the dust that gets sucked into it by its cooling fan. Beware Static Electricity!