

IT Skills for Beginners

New to computers? Not sure where to start?

During your time at University you will need to use a computer for tasks including, but not limited to, word processing, online research, emails, online courses, online submission of projects or essays, looking up your results, online forums, downloading documents or electronic journals and keeping up to date with University events/socials/societies.

This can appear daunting if you have very little experience with computers. This guide aims to cover the basics of computing, but once you have a general overview we would recommend following the link to the [GCF \(Goodwill Community Foundation\) pages](#) for a selection of great video tutorials about computer basics.

Hardware

Physical parts of your computer that you can touch

- For example, the monitor, keyboard, mouse, memory, sound card and graphics card.
- This set of physical objects however, would be very limited without software.



Software

Sets of instructions that tell your computer what to do, and how to do it

- Software includes any program and related data that provide instructions to your computer hardware.
- Without hardware, software wouldn't be able to run at all.

Operating Systems

The operating system manages other computer processes

Your computer's operating system (sometimes called OS) manages all of the software and hardware on the computer. Most of the time there are many computer programs all running at the same time, which all need access to the central storage and memory. The operating system coordinates these processes to make sure each program runs properly.

An operating system comes preloaded on any computer you buy or use, the two most common being Microsoft Windows and Apple Mac OS X. At University the classroom computers all use Microsoft Windows 10, which is designed to be quite easy to use with a little practice.

Applications

A type of software that helps you fulfil a task or activity

- For example, **Microsoft Word** is a **word processing** application, specifically for writing documents on your computer.
- **Windows Media Player** is an multimedia application that can play **audio files, video files or display pictures**; it is specifically for types of media.



Browsers

A type of application for accessing the internet

- By typing in a web address, called a URL, (e.g. <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/>) the browser can find the pages on the internet that you want. Each page has its own address so that you can find it easily.
- Most computers come with a browser pre-installed, but you can use another if you prefer, such as:

Microsoft Edge



Google Chrome



Mozilla Firefox



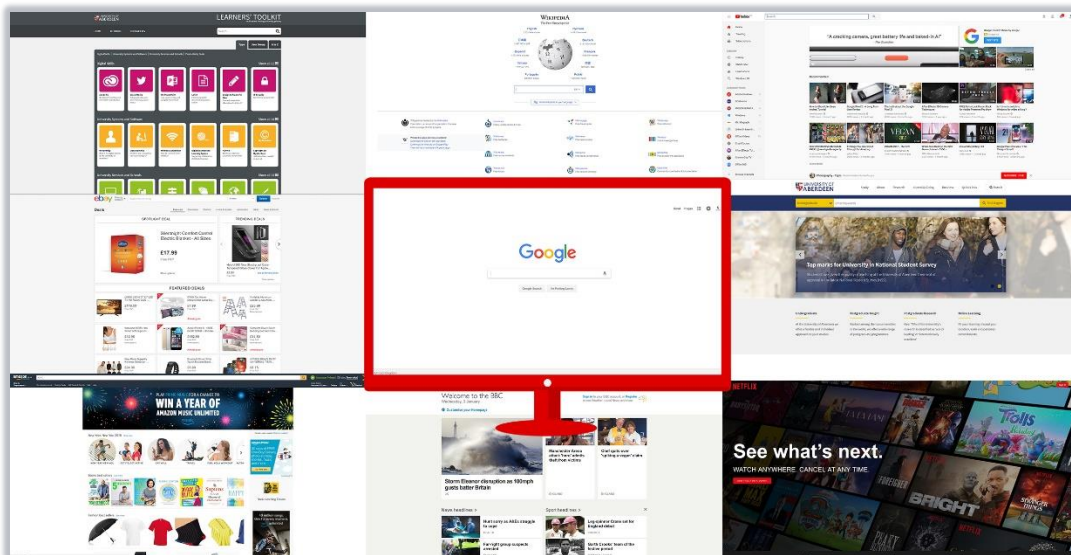
Apple Safari



Internet

The largest computer network in the world

- The internet connects millions of computers together to share the entirety of human knowledge. There are billions of internet pages, all with different functions. Your computer is a window into the internet.
- Some pages like Amazon, Asda, John Lewis and eBay are online shops where you can purchase real products that get sent to you.
- Other pages are informational, such as Wikipedia, BBC News and The University of Aberdeen website. They contain searchable articles and information that you may find useful.
- Pages like Netflix and YouTube can be described as educational or entertaining, often having digital media such as videos for you to watch.



- When you type in a URL into the address bar, your browser will search the whole internet for the page or information you need. If you are not sure where to find the information you need, you can use a search engine.
- There are many search engines such as Bing, Ask, Yahoo!, AOL and Baidu but by far the biggest is www.google.com. Simply go to the search engine's website and type a word or phrase into the search box, the search engine will search the entire internet and then show you the pages it believes are most relevant to your word or phrase.

Communication

- One of the internet's main uses is to communicate. You can do this by sending an electronic mail (email) to another person, by writing a message on a website's message board (often called a forum) or by creating your own website to tell other people about your product or idea.
- You can communicate and collaborate with others on a platform such as Microsoft Teams which combines online chat, video meetings and shared document storage.
- Often you will hear the terms "Upload" and "Download"; this refers to information being shared or communicated. For example, if you click on a resource on the Toolkit and it asks if you would like to "Download", this means that information stored on the internet is being communicated to your computer and saved into its memory. Next time you want to view that information you simply find where you saved it.
- Conversely, "Upload" is when you take information saved on your computer and send it to the internet. For example, if you need to upload an essay for your tutor, you would find out what internet page your tutor would like it uploaded to, and the computer will send your file to that page for your tutor.

Further Help

- [YouTube](#) is a great source of free training, simply type your topic into the search bar for tutorials
- [GCF \(Goodwill Community Foundation\) computer basics](#)
- [Toolkit Resources](#) (e.g. Introduction to Word, Introduction to PowerPoint, Classroom PCs, Email, MS Teams)
- Contact IT Service Desk with individual issues or questions on myit.abdn.ac.uk