

BASIC COMPUTER TASKS

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The following is a basic introduction to computing and applies to every computer program, including Photoshop, word processing, spreadsheets.

Firstly, you need to know that your computer has two ways of storing information. The computer memory or *random access memory (RAM)* will hold documents or files you are working on, but when the computer is turned off will be wiped clean. This memory is necessary to enable computing tasks to be undertaken quickly.

The computer's disk memory is designed to permanently hold all your stuff – the operating system, all your applications, and all your documents. It holds at least 100 times more information than RAM, but it is less easily accessible. When your computer looks for information on disc memory, it has to search for it.

Additional storage disks your computer can access are magnetic hard drives, CD, DVD, camera cards, USB drives, or SSD. In the old days, we had punched cards, punched tape, magnetic tapes, and floppy disks as long-term storage. Today's hard drive memory is erasable and rewritable, but you cannot do that to most CD, DVD, or punched cards.

The same concept is used for any other computer device: smartphone, camera, Speedlight, car electronics, DVD player and so on.

APPLICATIONS (APPS) OR PROGRAMS

These are the software that you use to perform tasks on your computer. Windows and Apple Macintosh Finder are the operating system apps to enable you to use the graphical interface we are familiar with. Other apps are for word processing, spreadsheets, database, internet browsers, mail, photograph development, playing music, and everything else we do on the computer. Some come with the operating system. Others you have to pay for.

FILES OR DOCUMENTS

These are electronic forms of the items you create using an application, or import into your computer from another device (e.g. a camera). They can be seen as icons in windows. A file may be a short note, a massive book, a photograph, a movie, presentation, library, spreadsheet, or database. In some cases, individual items are stored in a library. For example, mail messages are stored in a library accessible from your mail browser, but you can't find the individual message as an icon in a window.

SOME COMMON COMPUTER TASKS

These tasks can be found in the File and Edit Menus of every program. The menus are always in the same place, and have the same keyboard shortcuts – Windows, Mac or Linux.

OPEN: Gives you a dialogue box to enable you to navigate to a file. If that file is compatible to the program you are running, it will have an Open button lit up. Clicking on this button will open the document into the program. It is copied to your computer memory, ready for you to edit it.

Shortcut keystroke Command/Control + O

Another way of opening a document is by double clicking on its ikon in Windows or Finder.

SAVE: Once you have done some work on the file, you want to copy the work you have done to the hard disk storage, so you have it when the computer is turned off. If you have a power failure or your computer crashes, everything in the computer memory is lost, so save often. Saving will write over the original file on the hard disk with the changes you have made.

In the early days, you could lose an hour's or a day's work if you didn't save it and there was a crash. These days most programs save automatically in the background, and files can be recovered. Programs like Lightroom don't require you to save at all.

Shortcut keystroke Command/Control + S

SAVE AS: This is similar to save, but it first gives you a dialogue box so you can change the name or the format of the file you are working on. Use Save As if you want to keep the original file. You can use this, for example to convert any document type to a PDF. Save-as as soon as possible when you need to, before you forget, also the automatic background saving may complicate things if there is a crash before you Save-as.

COPY: If you select something, usually by clicking and dragging over it, you can copy what you have selected with EDIT > Copy. This is stored temporarily in the RAM, waiting for you to do the next step.

Shortcut Key Command/Control + C

CUT: If you select something, and instead of choosing Copy you choose Cut, the selection is deleted from where it was and transferred to RAM.

Shortcut Keystroke Command/Control + X

PASTE: When you have transferred a selection to the RAM by Cut or Copy, the next stage is to put it somewhere else. Click where you want to put the selection and EDIT > Paste.

Shortcut Keystroke Command/Control + V

Note that Copying, Cutting and Pasting can be used to move files around in Windows or Finder.

DRAGGING AND DROPPING is a fast way of cutting and pasting. Select something in your document. Mouse down on the selection and drag it to the new location. When you let go, the selection will have been cut and pasted. This is quicker, but not so convenient if the place you want to move the item to is off screen.

DELETE: (delete key). Gets rid of something you have selected. The delete key may have different effects in different applications.

PRINT: Will print the file to your connected printer. Always in the File menu. Can be used to save the document as a PDF. There is usually a print to PDF option.

Shortcut Keystroke Command/Control + P

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