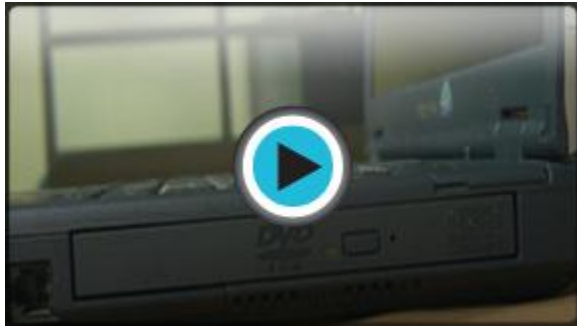What are all the buttons, sockets, and slots used for?

Introduction

What are All the Buttons, Sockets, and Slots Used For?

Watch the video (2:22). [*Need help?*](#)

Take a look at a laptop and count the number of **buttons**, **sockets**, and **slots** you see. You probably counted more than 10. There aren't quite as many as you'll find on a desktop computer, but still, all of these can be overwhelming for a new laptop user.

Each laptop computer is different, therefore the buttons, slots, and sockets will **vary from computer to computer**. However, there are certain **features** that are common and you can expect to find on **most laptop computers**.

Laptop Buttons, Drives, and Port

Power Button

Power Button

The **power button** is used to power the computer on and off. It is usually directly above the keyboard, but can also be located on any of the four sides of the laptop casing. In addition to turning the computer on and off, you can use the power button on some computers to place the computer in different **energy-saving modes** such as hibernate, sleep, and standby. It is a good idea to read your manual to learn how these features work on your computer.

CD-ROM (Compact Disk Read-Only Memory) Drive

A **CD-ROM drive**, also known as an **optical drive**, allows you to play a CD-ROM , just like a CD player allows you to listen to music. With a CD-ROM drive you can **listen** to music (if your computer is sound-enabled), **view files**, and**install software** that is located on a CD.

*Example Optical Drive – DVD*A

 CD writer is a device that can be used in conjunction with a CD-ROM drive and allows you to copy or burn information onto specific types of CDs called CD-RW (Compact Disk ReWritable) and CD-R (Compact Disk-Recordable) discs.

DVD-ROM (Digital Versatile Disc Read-Only Memory) Drive

A **DVD-ROM** drive, also known as an **optical drive**, reads DVD discs, all types of CDs, and can display movies from digital video discs. DVDs can hold more data than a CD, so they are a good storage option. A **DVD burner** is a device that can be used in conjunction with a DVD-ROM and allows you to copy information onto DVD discs. It is considered a type of **storage**.

In many of the computers you can purchase today, the CD and DVD-ROM or burners are combined.

SD Port

Memory Card Port
This port is for placing memory cards that are associated with your digital camera or PDA device. It is usually located on the left or right side of the laptop When a memory card is placed in the port, you can view the material on that card using your laptop.

Laptop Buttons, Drives, and Ports

On the sides of the laptop computer are **connection ports** that are made to fit **specific plug-in devices**, as well as assorted drives and buttons. The arrangement of these vary from computer to computer, and many companies have their own special connectors for the specific devices. Some of the ports are **color coded** to match a color on the device, which will help you determine which port is used with a particular device.

View of Back Laptop Ports

Back of Laptop Labeled

1. **Power Cord Connector**
   This is where you connect your AC power adapter.

2. **Ethernet Port**
   This port looks a lot like the modem or telephone port but it is actually wider. You can use this port for **networking** and also connecting to the Internet.

3. **PS/2 Port**
   This port is the mouse and keyboard port.

4. **Composite Video Port**
   Some laptops include a composite video port that allows you to connect your laptop to a television. This port may look familiar to you because many home electronic devices, such as television sets and camcorders, include this port. The composite video port is seen less on new laptops as other ports become more popular for the same tasks.

5. **Audio In/Audio Out**
   Every computer has a **bank of audio ports** where you can connect various devices, including speakers, microphones, headsets, and more.

6. **USB Port**
   Almost every laptop computer on the market today comes with **two or more**

Universal Serial Bus (USB)ports. These USB ports let you attach a **variety of devices** such as mice, printers, keyboards, web cameras, USB/flash drives, and digital cameras to your computer quickly. Almost every peripheral made comes in a USB version, and installing the devices using **USB ports** is **much easier** than connecting devices using parallel and serial ports.

Back of Laptop Labeled

1. **Monitor Port**
   An external monitor can be connected to this port. Even though the laptop comes with a built-in screen, some users like to turn their laptop into a desktop unit by connecting external parts such as a monitor, keyboard, and printer.

2. **Serial Port**
   The **serial port** is the other **original port** on the first personal computer. On recent computers, the serial port has been replaced by the USB port, as both ports can be used to **plug in external devices** such as a mouse or keyboard. Most peripherals use the USB drive because USB drives do not require you to reboot your computer when a new device is added, whereas serial ports do.

3. **Parallel Port**
   The **parallel port** is one of the **two original ports** on the first personal computer. It is commonly known as the**printer port** since this port is used to connect your printer to your computer; however, with the rise in use of the USB ports, you can expect to see a decrease in the use of this port. Currently, a large number of parallel port printers are still manufactured and used on older computers that don't have USB support.

4. **FireWire Port**
   FireWire is actually the Apple brand name for the IEEE 1394 port, but the term caught on and it is commonly referred to as the FireWire port. It is the **standard port** used with **digital video cameras** and high-resolution scanners. It is commonly used to upload audio/video from the device to the computer using a FireWire cable. FireWire ports are not on every computer; however, you can buy an adapter card to add them. The laptop in the image does not have a FireWire port.

Peripherals You Can Use in Various Ports

Printer

- **Printers**: A **printer** is a **peripheral** that is used to print, or produce, a version of what appears on the screen in a **hardcopy** format. There are many types of printers available including ink-jet, laser-jet, and photo printers. Also, combination printers that include scanners and copiers are increasing in popularity.

- **Scanners**: A **scanner** allows you to **copy an image or document** and save it in electronic form onto your computer. While you can purchase a hand-held and flatbed scanners, you are more likely to purchase a scanner as an all-in-one option that combines a scanner, printer, and copier into one product.

  Scanners vary in **resolution**, or sharpness, so when shopping for one, be sure to compare the resolution of the products. A scanner is connected to the computer via a parallel port, a USB port, or a SCSI connection. No matter which connection is used, the images are stored on your PC's hard drive in a digital format.

Headphones

- **Speakers/Headphones**: **Speakers** and **headphones** are output devices, which means that they are devices that communicate information from the computer to the user. They allow you to **hear sound and music**. Both speakers and headphones connect to a computer; however, some computers are designed with speakers built into the monitor.

- **Microphones**: A **microphone** is a type of input device, or a device that receives information from a user. You connect the microphone to the computer and use the computer to record sound or to communicate with another computer user via the Internet. Many computers come with built-in microphones.

Web Camera

- **Web Cameras**: **Web cameras**, or web cams, are devices that connect to a computer and **display a video image** of whatever it is recording. This video image can be transmitted over the Internet, allowing a user in another location the ability to see the video in real-time. Web cameras are used often in business for video conferences, and are also a great tool for families to use to stay connected from different parts of the world.

- **Joystick or Game Controller**: A **joystick** is a lever used while playing a computer game.

- **Digital Cameras**: A **digital camera** lets you capture a picture in **digital (computer-readable) form**. You can transfer that image directly from the camera to the computer. When you use a digital camera, you can also preview your pictures before printing them. If you don't like what you see, you can edit or delete them.

Personal Digital Assistant

- **Personal Digital Assistant (PDA)**: A PDA is a **handheld computer** that can have a variety of features including a calendar, Internet access, video recording, word processing, email access, phone, media player, and more. Most PDAs can be synchronized with a PC to allow up-to-date contact information stored on software such as Microsoft Outlook, RSS feeds, or other web updates.

- **MP3 Players**: An **MP3 player** is a **portable device** that stores, organizes, and **plays** audio files. The player can read files that are recorded from a CD using a computer, or downloaded from various sites via the Internet.