

What are the basic parts of a desktop computer?

Introduction

What are the Basic Parts of a Desktop Computer?



Watch the video (2:12). [Need help?](#)

All of the basic parts of a desktop computer are considered hardware. The **computer case, monitor, keyboard, mouse, and power cord** are considered the basic parts. These items are the things you notice right away when you look at a desktop computer.

Beyond these parts are the hardware items that are located inside the computer case and the peripherals, which are optional pieces of hardware that make the computer system more useful, or enable you to accomplish additional tasks. Let's take a look at the **basic hardware components**, or the things required in order to let you and the computer interact.

Basic Parts of a Desktop Computer (cont.)



Computer Case

Computer Case

The **computer case** is the metal and plastic box that **contains the main components** of the computer. It houses the motherboard, central processing unit (CPU), the power supply, and more.

Computer cases come in different shapes and sizes. A **desktop case** lies flat on a desk, and the monitor usually sits on top of it. A **tower case** is tall and sits next to the monitor or on the floor. The front of the case usually has an **on/off switch** and **two or more drives**.

Most of the personal computers you can purchase today include **tower cases**, rather than desktop cases; however, some computers are being made with all of the internal components built into the monitor, which completely eliminates the tower.

Basic Parts of a Desktop Computer (cont.)



Computer with Two LCD Monitors

Monitor

The **monitor** works with a **video card**, located inside the computer case, to display images and text on the screen. The **two main types** are cathode ray tube (CRT) and liquid crystal display (LCD) monitors.

The **CRT** monitor is **big**, like a tube television, and takes up a lot of desk space; however, it is the least expensive monitor option. The **LCD** monitor is **thin** and saves energy, but costs more. Over the years you can expect to see fewer CRT monitors as LCD monitors become the standard.

Your monitor has an **on/off button** and **control buttons** that allow you to change

your monitor's display. Control buttons are either visible or located behind a small panel. Additionally, some monitors have built-in speakers.

Power Cord

The power cord is the **link** between the **power outlet** and the **power supply unit** in the computer casing. If the power cord is not plugged in, the computer will not power on. It is a good idea to keep the power cord plugged into an Uninterruptable Power Supply (UPS), which serves as a surge protector with its own temporary power source.

Basic Parts of a Desktop Computer (cont.)

Keyboard

The **keyboard** is a piece of hardware that resembles a typewriter keyboard. It is one of the primary ways we communicate with the computer and enter data. There are many different types of computer such as wired, wireless, ergonomic, multimedia, and more. Although there may be differences in the location of some keys or features, keyboards are **very similar** and allow you to accomplish basically the same tasks. The images below show you three different types of keyboards.



Standard Keyboard

About the Keyboard

- The main part of a computer **keyboard** has **alpha-numeric** (letter and number) keys similar to a typewriter. However, the keyboard also features keys that cause the computer to perform specific tasks.

- The **Escape key**, labeled **Esc**, allows you to stop a function or action. For example, if your computer suddenly freezes up, you may be able to resume by pressing Esc.
- The **Function keys**, along the top of the keyboard, are labeled **F1, F2, up to F12**. These shortcut keys allow you to quickly complete a specific task within certain programs. For example, F1 opens Help in Microsoft Office.



Wireless Ergonomic Keyboard

- The **Print Screen, Scroll Lock and Pause/Break keys** are at the far right end of the keyboard. The Print Screen key takes a "picture" of your screen that you can edit or save using a graphics program.
- The **Enter key** carries out commands. For example, while on the Internet, you can type in a website address, called a URL, and press Enter to go to the site.
- The **Control (Ctrl), Alternate (Alt), and Shift keys** are designed to work with other keys. For example, if you press Ctrl + S at the same time, you can save a file.
- The **Backspace key** erases the character to the left of the cursor.



iMac USB Keyboard

- To the right of the regular keys is the **cursor control pad**. At the bottom are **four arrow keys**. Pressing any one of these keys moves the cursor in the direction of the arrow.

Depending on the keyboard you are using, there are **five to six keys** above the arrows including:

- The **Delete key** erases the character to the right the cursor.
- The **Insert key** switches between the insert mode and overtype mode. The insert mode is the normal mode for word processing.
- The **Home key** moves the cursor to the **left** or beginning of the current line.
- **End** moves the cursor to the **right** end of the current line.
- **Page Up** and **Page down** take you to the top or bottom of the screen.
- The **Number pad**, at the far right end of the keyboard, resembles a calculator keypad. Similar to the curser keys, you can use the arrow keys on this keypad to move the cursor.

Basic Parts of a Desktop Computer (cont.)



Mouse

The **mouse** is a **peripheral** that is known as a **pointing device**. It lets you **point** to objects on the screen, **click** on them, and **move** them. Previously, it was considered an optional device, but now all desktop computers will come with a mouse.

There are two main types of mice -- optical and mechanical. The **optical** mouse uses an electronic eye to detect movement and is easier to clean. The **mechanical**

mouse uses a rolling ball to detect movement and is more difficult to clean; however, it is less expensive, so many computers come with a mechanical mouse.

Another decision you have when choosing a mouse is **wired** versus **wireless**.

Wireless everything is popular right now, so it will be up to you to decide which type will work best for you.

To properly use the mouse:

- Using your right hand, place your thumb on the desk or table top on the left side of the mouse
- Your index (pointer) finger should rest on the left button of the mouse.
- Place your middle finger on the right button of the mouse.
- Your ring finger and little finger should rest on the right side of the mouse.
- The base of your wrist should rest on the mouse pad or desktop, for stability.

Left-handed computer users sometimes use their right hand to maneuver the mouse. However, if you're left-handed and want to use your left hand, the mouse buttons can be switched.

To Switch the Mouse Buttons for a Left-Handed User:

- Click **Start**.
- Choose **Settings → Control Panel**.
- **Double-click** the Mouse icon in the Control Panel window.
- Click **Left-handed**.
- Click **OK**.

To properly use the mouse:

- **Click**. Select an object on the screen by pressing the **left mouse button** down with your index finger and then release the button.
- **Drag** an object on the screen by pressing and holding down the **left mouse button** with your index finger while moving the mouse. When the object is where you want it, release the button.
- To **double-click**, rapidly press and release the **left mouse button** with your index finger.
- To **right-click**, press and release the right mouse button with your middle finger.

A **trackball** is similar to a mouse, but the ball that helps maneuver the cursor is on top instead of underneath.