A bit of the basics: Computer Knowledge

We live in a world full of technology, an inescapable part of who we are as a modern people. On the road to a career in any I.T. related field there will be certain building block skills that help us to get where we are going. In this guide we are going to go over and learn a bit about those building block skills.

Operating System Basics: The basis for using a computer tends to lean towards a graphical interface that works with kernel that is the core of the operating system. The kernel controls the hardware resources that make up a computer. This all translate to something you can use to make using a computer easier for users in general. Of course, you may know your OS (operating system) by it’s brand name i.e. Windows, Linux, Mac Os or even Android. These are all simply names for different operating systems. Here we are only going to be going over some basics for Windows.

The lowest visible part on a Windows interface is called the taskbar, pictured here.

This contains some very useful tools that we are going to go over. The first is the start button menu (the button in the lower left corner that looks like the windows logo). The start button contains shortcuts to programs, access to the settings menu (gear icon), power options for the computer along with basic account settings like signing out. The start button is also tied to the search function, so you can type out what you are looking for. Something else to keep in mind is that there is a hidden part of the menu (really just common task) that can be accessed by right clicking with the mouse on the start button. This menu has some links to very common resources that user’s access such as device manager, disk management and more. You may also notice that right clicking on the taskbar and any program icon will also pull up a similar program specific menu. These are known as a Jump List or jump menu and is a helpful short list of common functionalities of the program in question.

Next to the Start button is the search icon (looks like small magnifying glass). When the start menu is open, typing will switch to this menu. If you click on the icon, it will also open this menu. The search menu can search your computer, documents and to some extent the web for what you are looking for.

Another great tool present on the task bar is the file explorer. As a computer user, you tend to have files that you need to find and open, the file explorer is the app for the job. Looking not unlike a manila folder (classic file/folder icon) on the task bar it helps you to navigate the folder structure that makes Windows what it is. Opening file explorer will give you a menu like this:

Graphical user interface, application

Description automatically generated

The upper menu has file, home, share and view options. The left side contains quick access as well as This PC, which will show you your desktop, documents, downloads, drives and many other locations. The center contains frequent folders user and recent files. Clicking on anything in the left hand pane will open the folder or drive chosen, from there you many need to select sub folders or double click to get where you want to be. One of the most useful options that the file explorer helps with is the extraction of zipped files. Any file that has been zipped up is compressed for space, thus requiring us to extract it so we can use it. A zipped file has a different look from a normal folder



You can see it has a zipper on the folder to indicate that it is compressed and carries the .zip extension that also tells us the same. To decompress this file, we need to use an option at the top of the file explorer. When you click on the folder, you may notice that the top of the file explorer gives you another option (Extract – Compressed Folder Tools). Clicking on that option will give you a option to extract all or decompress the file (the same can be done by right clicking the zipped folder, choosing extract all). The folder will extract and then be usable although do note that it does this by basically making a non-compressed copy folder so you will be left with the zipped file and a non-zipped version.

Now we can move on to something meant to improve how efficiently we use Windows, keyboard shortcuts. Windows has a metric ton of keyboard shortcuts if you look. But there are some that are more helpful than others. In this section I will list a few that may make your life easier, some you may already know, some you may not

* Copy: Ctrl + C
* Paste: Ctrl + V
* Cut: Ctrl + X
* Maximize Window: Windows Key + Up Arrow
* Minimize Window: Windows Key + Down Arrow
* Task View: Windows Key + Tab
* Lock Computer: Windows Key + L
* Screen shot: Windows Key + Print Sc
* Screen Snip: Windows Key + Shift + S
* Select All: Ctrl + A
* Close Active Window: Alt + F4

There are a ton more things in Windows to explore, but those are just a bit of the basics.