

Introduction

Take a look at the front and back of your computer case and count the number of **buttons**, **ports**, and **slots** you see. Now look at your monitor and count any you find there. You probably counted at least 10, and maybe a lot more.

Each computer is different, so the buttons, ports, and sockets will **vary from computer to computer**. However, there are certain ones you can expect to find on most desktop computers. Learning how these ports are used will help whenever you need to connect something to your computer, like a new printer, keyboard, or mouse.

Watch the video below to learn about the buttons, ports, and slots on a desktop computer.

Computer Basics: Buttons and Ports on a Desktop Computer



Front of a computer case

Click the buttons in the interactive below to become familiar with the front of a computer.



Back of a computer case

The back of a computer case has **connection ports** that are made to fit **specific devices**. The placement will vary from computer to computer, and many companies have their own special connectors for specific devices. Some of the ports may be **color coded** to help you determine which port is used with a particular device.

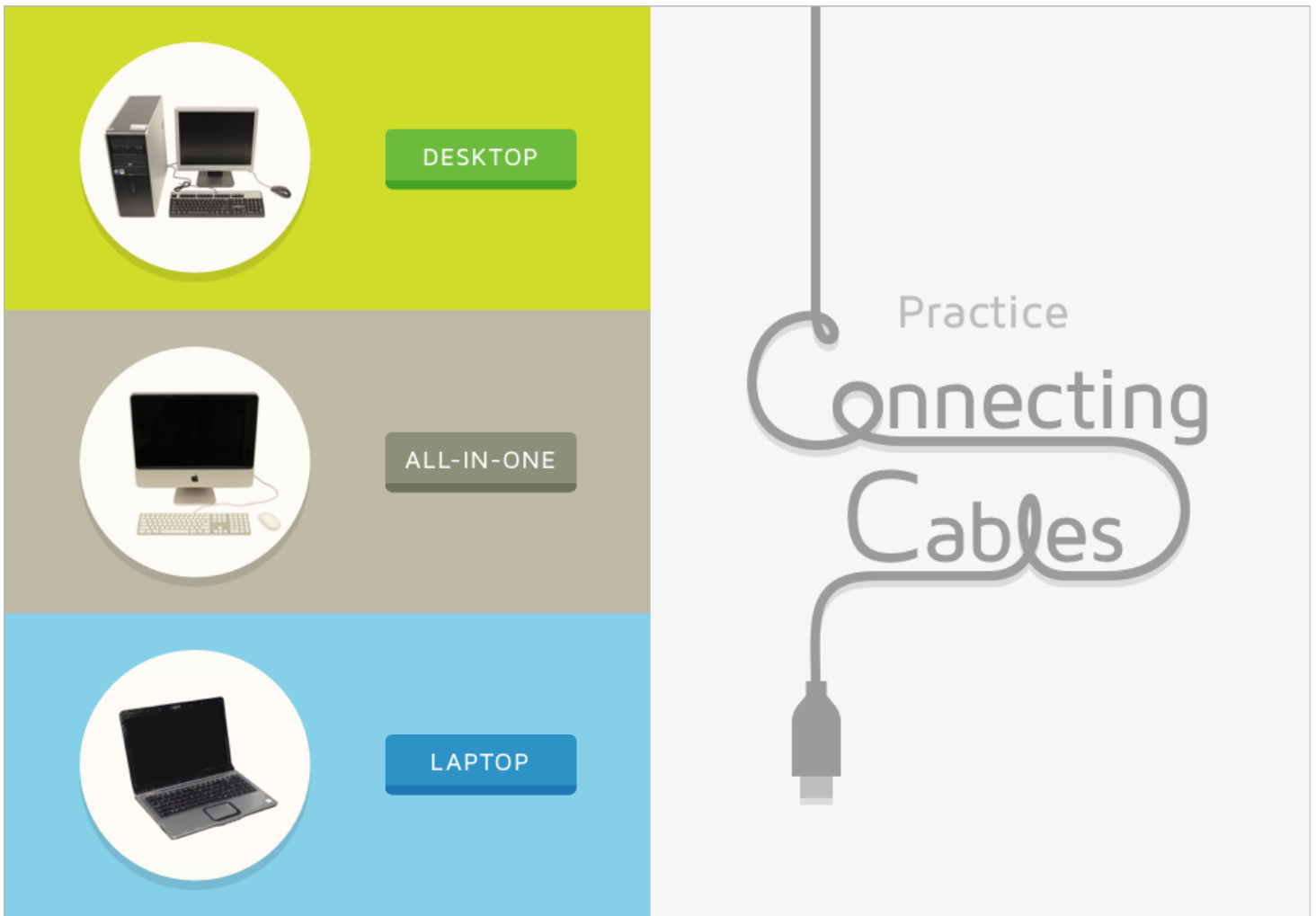
Click the buttons in the interactive below to become familiar with the back of a computer.



Other types of ports

There are many other types of ports, such as FireWire, Thunderbolt, and HDMI. If your computer has ports you don't recognize, you should consult your manual for more information.

Now you try it! Practice connecting the cables with the interactive game below.



Peripherals you can use with your computer

The most basic computer setup usually includes the **computer case**, **monitor**, **keyboard**, and **mouse**, but you can plug many different types of devices into the extra ports on your computer. These devices are called **peripherals**. Let's take a look at some of the most common ones.

- ▶ **Printers:** A **printer** is used to **print** documents, photos, and anything else that appears on your screen. There are many types of printers, including **inkjet**, **laser**, and **photo** printers. There are even **all-in-one printers**, which can also scan and copy documents.



- ▶ **Scanners:** A **scanner** allows you to **copy a physical image or document** and save it to your computer as a **digital (computer-readable)** image. Many scanners are included as part of an all-in-one printer, although you can also buy a separate **flatbed** or **handheld** scanner.
- ▶ **Speakers/headphones:** **Speakers** and **headphones** are output devices, which means they send information from the computer to the user—in this case, they allow you to **hear sound and music**. Depending on the model, they may connect to the **audio** port or the **USB** port. Some monitors also have built-in speakers.



- ▶ **Microphones:** A **microphone** is a type of input device, or a device that receives information from a user. You can connect a microphone to **record sound** or **talk with someone else** over the Internet. Many laptop computers come with built-in microphones.
- ▶ **Web cameras:** A **web camera**—or **webcam**—is a type of input device that can record **videos** and take **pictures**. It can also transmit video over the Internet in **real time**, which allows for **video chat** or **video conferencing** with someone else. Many webcams also include a microphone for this reason.



- ▶ **Game controllers and joysticks:** A game controller is used to control computer games. There are many other types of controllers you can use, including **joysticks**, although you can also use your **mouse** and **keyboard** to control most games.
- ▶ **Digital cameras:** A **digital camera** lets you capture pictures and videos in a digital format. By connecting the camera to your computer's USB port, you can transfer the images from the camera to the computer.
- ▶ **Mobile phones, MP3 players, tablet computers, and other devices:** Whenever you buy an electronic device, such as a mobile phone or MP3 player, check to see if it comes with a **USB cable**. If it does, this means you can most likely connect it to your computer.