

Introduction

The basic parts of a desktop computer are the **computer case**, **monitor**, **keyboard**, **mouse**, and **power cord**. Each part plays an **important role** whenever you use a computer.

Watch the video below to learn about the basic parts of a desktop computer.

Computer Basics: Basic Parts of a Desktop Computer



Computer case



The **computer case** is the metal and plastic box that **contains the main components** of the computer, including the motherboard, central processing unit (CPU), and power supply. The front of the case usually has an **On/Off button** and one or more **optical drives**.

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. **All-in-one** computers come with the internal components built into the monitor, which eliminates the need for a separate case.

Monitor



The **monitor** works with a **video card**, located inside the computer case, to display images and text on the screen. Most monitors have **control buttons** that allow you to change your monitor's display settings, and some monitors also have built-in speakers.

Newer monitors usually have **LCD** (liquid crystal display) or **LED** (light-emitting diode) displays. These can be made very thin, and they are often called **flat-panel displays**.

Older monitors use **CRT** (cathode ray tube) displays. CRT monitors are much larger and heavier, and they take up more desk space.

Keyboard

The **keyboard** is one of the main ways to communicate with a computer. There are many different types of keyboards, but most are **very similar** and allow you to accomplish the same basic tasks.

Click the buttons in the interactive below to learn about the different parts of the keyboard.



If you want to learn how to type or improve your touch-typing skills, check out our free [Typing Tutorial](#).

Mouse



The **mouse** is another important tool for communicating with computers. Commonly known as a **pointing device**, it lets you **point** to objects on the screen, **click** on them, and **move** them.

There are two main mouse types: 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 requires regular cleaning to work properly.

To learn the basics of using a mouse, check out our interactive [Mouse Tutorial](#).

Mouse alternatives

There are other devices that can do the same thing as a mouse. Many people find them easier to use, and they also require less desk space than a traditional mouse. The most common mouse alternatives are below.

- ▶ **Trackball:** A trackball has a ball that can rotate freely. Instead of moving the device like a mouse, you can roll the ball with your thumb to move the pointer.



- ▶ **Touchpad:** A touchpad—also called a **trackpad**—is a touch-sensitive pad that lets you control the pointer by making a drawing motion with your finger. Touchpads are common on laptop computers.

