

a

The potential of Multimedia applications are used in all sorts of fields. For example, museums, banks and estate agents often have information kiosks that use multimedia; companies produce training programs on optical discs; businesspeople use Microsoft PowerPoint to create slideshows; and teachers use multimedia to make video projects or to teach subjects like art and music. They have all found that moving images and sound can involve viewers emotionally as well as inform them, helping make their message more memorable.

The power of multimedia software resides in hypertext, hypermedia and interactivity (meaning the user is involved in the programme). If you click on a hypertext link, you can jump to another screen with more information about a particular subject. Hypermedia is similar, but also uses graphics, audio and video as hypertext elements.

b

Sound, Music, MID As long as your computer has a sound card, you can use it to capture sounds in digital format and play them back. Sound cards offer two important capabilities: a built-in stereo synthesizer and a system called MIDI, or Musical Instrument Digital Interface, which allows electronic musical instruments to communicate with computers. A Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) lets you mix and record several tracks of digital audio.

*MIDI allows your computer to communicate with electronic keyboards and other devices* You can also listen to music on your PC, or transfer it to a portable MP3 player. MP3 is short for MPEG audio layer 3, a standard format that compresses audio files. If you want to create your own MP3 files from CDs, you must have a CD ripper, a program that extracts music tracks and saves them on disk as MP3s.

Audio is becoming a key element of the Web. Many radio stations broadcast live over the Internet using streaming audio technology, which lets you listen to audio in a continuous stream while it is being transmitted. The broadcast of an event over the Web, for example a concert, is called a webcast. Be aware that you won't be able to play audio and video on the Web unless you have a plug-in like RealPlayer or QuickTime.

c

Creating and Editing movie Video is another important part of multimedia. Video computing refers to recording, manipulating and storing video in digital format. If you wanted to make a movie on your computer, first you would need to capture images with a digital video camera and then transfer them to your computer. Next, you would need a video editing program like iMovie to cut your favourite segments, re-sequence the clips and add transitions and other effects. Finally, you could save your movie on a DVD or post it on websites like YouTube and Google Video

d

Product full of picture, action and sound Multimedia is used to produce dictionaries and encyclopedias. They often come on DVDs, but some are also available on the Web. A good example is the Grolier Online Encyclopedia, which contains thousands of articles, animations, sounds, dynamic maps and hyperlinks. Similarly, the Encyclopedia Britannica is now available online, and a concise version is available for iPods, PDAs and mobile phones. Educational courses on history, science and foreign languages are also available on DVD. Finally, if you like entertainment, you'll love the latest multimedia video games with surround sound, music soundtracks, and even film extracts.