Mac Basics

If you know a bit about using a mouse and keyboard, but don't know your way around using a Mac computer just yet, this guide is for you.

What is a Mac?

A Macintosh computer (Mac) is a type of computer designed and produced by Apple Inc.

All Mac desktop computers are "all-in-one" systems, meaning that the parts that make them work and process information are built in behind the monitor. This is different from most desktop PCs, where these parts are in a separate case.

If you've used a Windows computer before, you'll notice Apple's OS X operating system has a different look and feel.

Basic parts of an iMac
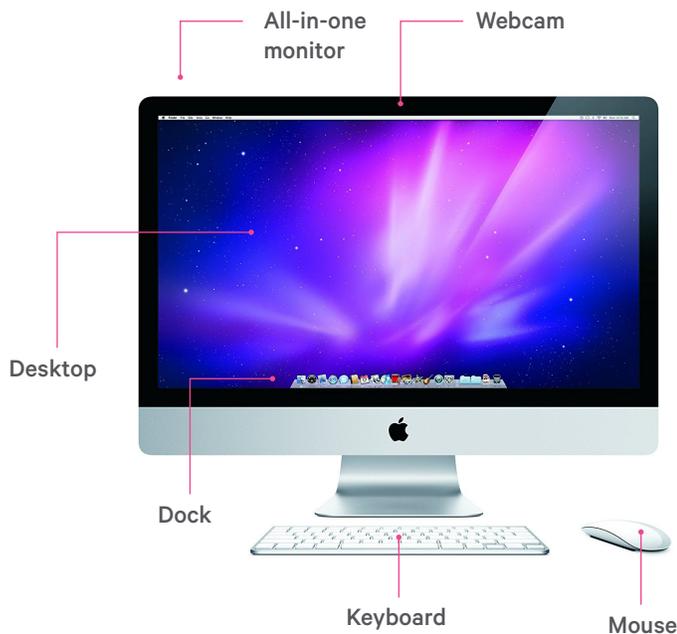
Basic parts of Macbook

What is an operating system?

An operating system is software that runs "behind the scenes" to manage all your computer's different programs and processes. The operating system determines how information on your computer is organized and how things are displayed on the screen.

There are different operating systems:

- The Mac operating system is called OS X (pronounced "oh-ess-ten.")
- Most personal computers, or PCs, use a version of the Windows operating system.

The Mouse

Unlike the 2-button mouse normally used with Windows PCs, the Mac mouse has only 1 button. Further, the button isn't visible—the top of the mouse looks completely smooth. To click this type of mouse, you just press down gently.

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Press this
area to click

Left-clicking

Clicking anywhere on a Mac mouse's single button is equivalent to clicking the left button on a two-button mouse.

Right-clicking

"Right clicking" brings up a menu of options related to what your mouse is pointing at. To right click with a Mac mouse, hold down the **Control** key on your keyboard and click the mouse button once.

The Trackpad

A trackpad is a type of mouse that is used with laptops. It lets you move a pointer around the screen by sliding your finger around the trackpad's surface.

If you prefer to use a regular mouse with your Mac laptop, you can purchase a wireless mouse or one that plugs into your laptop's USB port.

There are two ways to click on a trackpad:

- By pressing down on the trackpad, or
- By tapping anywhere on the trackpad with a single finger.

Single clicking

- Press or tap once with a single finger to select an item, to open a menu from a menu bar, or to open an icon from the dock.

Double clicking

- Press or tap twice quickly with a single finger to open a file or folder from the desktop or the Finder.

Right-clicking

- Place 2 fingers (any 2 fingers, even from different hands) close together on the trackpad.
- Tap or click with both fingers at the same time.
- Alternatively, you can right click by holding down the **Control** key on the keyboard while pressing or tapping with a single finger.

ctrl
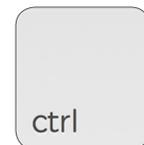
The Pointer

Some of the pointer icons in OS X look slightly different from the pointers in Windows.

Here are some of the most common pointer shapes:

Arrow: The pointer is an arrow most of the time. The arrow shows you where you are pointing.

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Hand: The hand indicates that you are pointing at a web link. Clicking a link will take you to a different page.

I-Beam: This shape indicates a space where you can enter text.

Rainbow beach ball: This pointer means the computer is a little overwhelmed and needs a few seconds to "think." The rainbow beach ball is equivalent to the hourglass icon in Windows. If this icon appears for more than a minute or 2, you may need to restart your computer.

Keyboard

Mac keyboards are similar to other types of keyboards, with a few minor differences:

Command : Macs have a **Command** key on either side of the space bar. It is used for keyboard shortcuts. For example, you can quickly save your work by holding down the **Command** key and pressing "S."

Control: The **Control** key on a Mac is used for "right clicking."

Option: Similar to the "Alt" key in Windows. Like the **Command** key, **Option** is used in combination with other keys for shortcuts.

Desktop

When you turn on your Mac, you will see the OS X desktop. Depending on which version of the operating system you're using, this desktop may look slightly different, but the basics will be the same.

The desktop is just like the top of your desk at home or at work. On a wooden desk, you might have different folders or binders with papers in them. You also have other tools you need to get things done, such as a calculator for math, a pen for writing, or books for reference.

Just as you have tools, documents, and folders on your wooden desk, you also have those items on the computer, which you can access through the desktop. Your desktop is the screen you see when your computer first starts up. Tools, documents, folders, and other items are represented on the desktop by small images called icons.

When you connect an external storage device to your computer, such as a USB drive, it will show up as an icon in the top right hand corner of the desktop.

In the image below, there is 1 file and 1 folder on the desktop. There is also a USB drive connected to the computer.
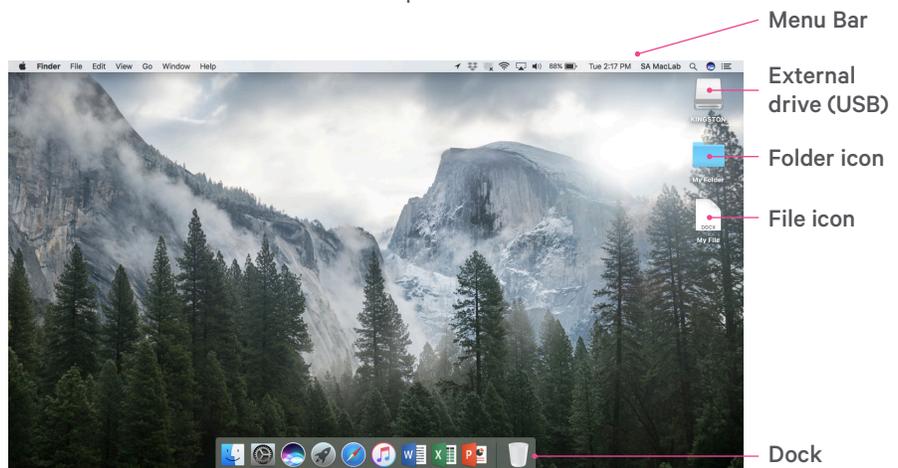
Dock

The Dock is usually located along the bottom of the screen.

Applications are tools that allow you to do things on a computer. Some allow you to write and edit text documents. Others allow you to do things like edit photos or do math.

If you wanted to handwrite a letter, you would pick up your pen. If you wanted to create a letter on your computer, you would open a writing application, such as Microsoft Word, by clicking on its icon.

On a Mac, your most frequently used applications are kept in the Dock. Not all applications on your computer are displayed in the Dock.

The purpose of the Dock is to make your favourite applications easily accessible by keeping them visible on your desktop. To open an application from the Dock, you click on these icons, also known as shortcuts.

Icons from left to right: Finder, System Preferences, Siri, Launchpad, Safari, iTunes, Word, Excel, Powerpoint, Trash.

Adding shortcuts to the Dock:

- From the Dock, click the Launchpad icon (a silver rocket ship) to display all the applications on your computer.

- Find the application you want to add to the Dock.

- Click on the icon to open the application.

- When the application is open, find its icon in the Dock.

- "Right click" by holding down the **Control** key and pressing the mouse button once.

- Slide your pointer up to "**Options**" and hover on it.

- Select "**Keep in Dock**" from the menu that appears.

Removing shortcuts from the Dock:

- "Right click" on an application's icon in the Dock by holding down the **Control** key and pressing the mouse button once.

- Select "**Remove from Dock**" from the menu that appears.

Note: Removing an application from the Dock does not delete it from your computer.

Common applications and their icons

Microsoft Word
Creating documents like letters, resumes, or flyers.

Microsoft Excel
Working with data and creating charts and graphs.

Microsoft PowerPoint
Creating presentations (virtual "slide shows").

Adobe Acrobat
Opening and reading files with names ending in .pdf.

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iTunes
Downloading and listening to music.

Siri
A "digital personal assistant" for answering questions, making recommendations, and performing actions using voice recognition technology.

Skype
Making phone calls and video calls over the internet.

Some of the icons in the Dock help you navigate and manage your computer:

Finder
Viewing and managing the files, folders, and drives on your computer

System Preferences
Adjusting your computer's settings, including changing the look and feel of the desktop. Your computer's network (internet) settings are also found in System Preferences.

Launchpad
Viewing all the applications on your computer

Trash
Holding files that you've deleted from your computer until you get rid of them permanently by "emptying" the trash.

Some will help you view websites on the internet:

Safari   **Mozilla Firefox**   **Chrome**   **Internet Explorer**

The menu bar

Above the desktop at the top of the screen is the menu bar. The menu bar includes different menu options depending on what application you are using.

In the below example, the active menu is the Finder menu.

A few parts of the menu bar never change, no matter the application you're using.

The Apple icon is always visible in the top left corner of the screen. You click on this icon to do things like shut down your computer or change the computer's settings:

Apple menu   Application menu

Finder File Edit View Go Window Help

On the right side of the menu bar is a collection of icons that allow you to see the date and time, adjust volume, connect to the internet, and more. These icons are always visible.

Right menu bar

88% Tue 2:17 PM SA MacLab
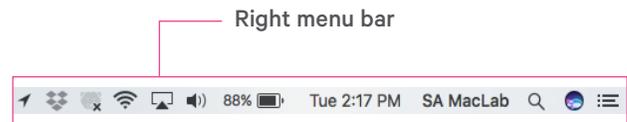
Of these icons, the ones you will probably use most frequently are volume (to adjust the volume of your speakers), WiFi (to find and connect to wireless internet networks) and battery (to check how much battery life is left on your laptop).

Battery   **Wifi**   **Volume**