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6th Edition

# Computers

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**Faithe Wempen, MA**

Computer Technology Instructor



# Computers For Seniors

6th Edition

by Faithe Wempen, MA

**for  
dummies**  
A Wiley Brand

## **Computers For Seniors For Dummies®, 6th Edition**

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# Computers For Seniors For Dummies®

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# Introduction

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Computers for consumers have come a long way in just 40 years or so. They're now at the heart of the way many people communicate, shop, and learn. They provide useful tools for tracking information, organizing finances, and being creative.

During the rapid growth of the personal computer, you might have been too busy to jump in and learn the ropes, but you now realize how useful and fun working with a computer can be. In fact, for seniors, the computer opens up a world of activities and contacts they never had before.

This book can help you get going with computers quickly and painlessly.

## ***About This Book***

This book is specifically written for mature people like you — folks who are relatively new to using a computer and want to discover the basics of buying a computer, working with software, and getting on the Internet. In writing this book, I've tried to take into account the types of activities that might interest a 55-plus-year-old who's discovering the full potential of computers for the first time.

## ***Foolish Assumptions***

This book is organized by sets of tasks. These tasks start from the very beginning, assuming you know little about computers, and guiding you through the most basic steps in easy-to-understand language. Because I assume you're

new to computers, the book provides explanations or definitions of technical terms to help you out.

All computers are run by software called an *operating system*, such as Windows, macOS, or Linux. Because Microsoft Windows-based personal computers (PCs) are the most common type of computer, I am assuming that you have a desktop or laptop PC running Windows. Windows 11 is the latest version, but many people still use Windows 10, so I cover both in this book. There are also various types of mobile computers available, such as tablets and smartphones, but this book doesn't cover them.

Windows is updated periodically, and each time there are minor feature changes. This book is based on the late 2021 versions of Windows 10 and Windows 11. You may encounter minor differences between what you see onscreen and what you read about in this book, but they should not prevent you from getting things done.

## ***Icons Used in This Book***

Sometimes, the fastest way to go through a book is to look at the pictures — in this case, icons that draw your attention to specific types of useful information. I use these icons in this book:



**WARNING**

The Warning icon points to something that can prevent or cause problems.



**REMEMBER**

The Remember icon points out helpful information. (Everything in this book is helpful, but

this stuff is even *more* helpful.)



TIP

The Tip icon points out a hint or trick for saving time and effort or something that makes Outlook easier to understand.



TECHNICAL  
STUFF

The Technical Stuff icon marks background information you can skip, although it may make good conversation at a really dull party.

## ***Beyond the Book***

In addition to the material in the print or e-book you're reading right now, this product also comes with some access-anywhere goodies on the web. Check out the free Cheat Sheet for a checklist for buying a computer, computer care and maintenance tips, and Windows keystroke shortcuts. To get this Cheat Sheet, simply go to [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) and type **Computers For Seniors For Dummies Cheat Sheet** in the Search box.

## ***Where to Go from Here***

Whether you need to start from square one and buy yourself a computer or you're ready to just start enjoying the tools and toys your current computer makes available, it's time to get going, get online, and get computer savvy.

# **Part 1**

## **Get Going!**



## **IN THIS PART ...**

Buying a computer

Finding your way around Windows

Buying and setting up a printer

# Chapter 1

## Buying a Computer

---

### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Seeing what you can do with computers
  - » Getting an overview of hardware
  - » Understanding the roles of input and output devices
  - » Appreciating operating systems and applications
  - » Deciding on a personal computer type
  - » Comparing display types
  - » Evaluating your storage options
  - » Considering your Internet options
  - » Shopping for your ideal PC
- 

If you've never owned a computer and now face purchasing one for the first time, deciding what to get can be a somewhat daunting experience. There are lots of technical terms to figure out and various pieces of **hardware** (the physical pieces of your computer such as the monitor and keyboard) and **software** (the brains of the computer that help you create documents and play games, for example) that you need to understand.

In this chapter, I introduce you to the world of activities your new computer makes available to you, and I provide the information you need to choose just the right computer for you.

Remember as you read through this chapter that figuring out what you want to do with your computer is an

important step in determining which computer you should buy. You have to consider how much money you want to spend, how you'll connect your computer to the Internet, and how much power and performance you need from your computer.

## ***What Can You Can Do with a Computer?***

Perhaps your friends and family have been telling you that you need a computer, but have they explained why? Today's computers can do some pretty amazing things. Not only can they connect you to the wide world of the Internet, but they can run applications that let you store and organize photos, write your memoirs, make your own greeting cards, play all kinds of games, track your investments, and so much more.

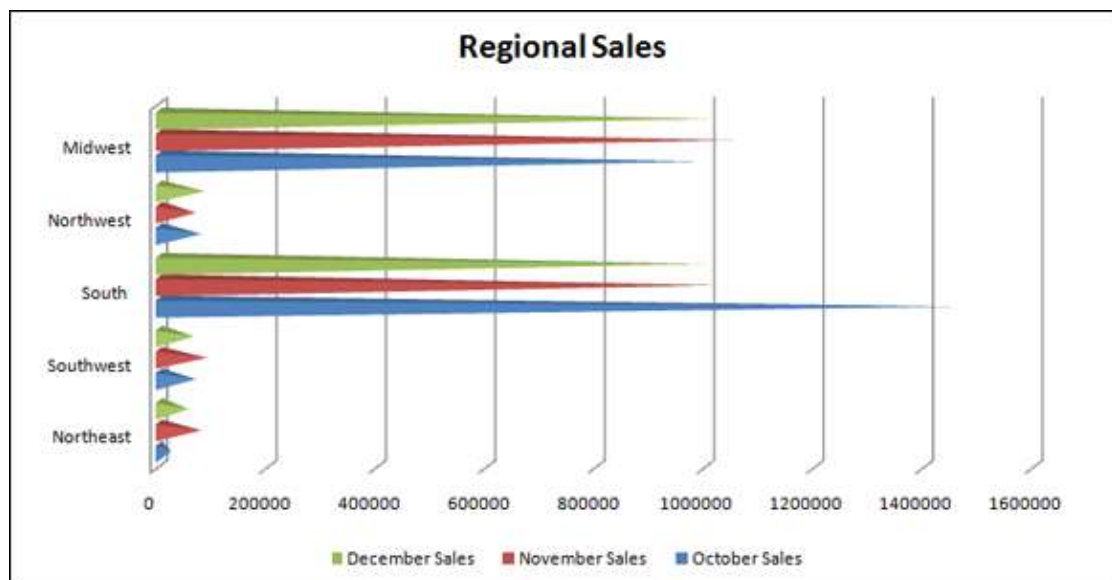
The following list walks you through some of the things a computer will enable you to do. Depending on what activities are important to you, you can make a more-informed purchasing choice.

» **Keep in touch with friends and family.** The Internet makes it possible to communicate with other people via email; share video images using built-in video recorders or webcams (tiny video cameras that capture and send your image to another computer); and make phone and video calls using your computer and Internet connection to place calls with services such as Zoom and Skype. You can also chat with others by typing messages and sending them through your computer using a technology called **instant messaging** (IM). These messages are exchanged in real time, so that you and your grandchild, for

example, can see and reply to text or share images immediately. [Part 3](#) of this book explains these topics in more detail.

- » **Research any topic from the comfort of your home.** Online, you can find many reputable websites that help you get information on anything from expert medical advice to the best travel deals. You can read news from around the corner or around the world. You can visit government websites to get information about your taxes and Social Security benefits, and go to entertainment sites to look up your local television listings or movie reviews.
- » **Create greeting cards, letters, or home inventories.** Whether you're organizing your holiday card list, tracking sales for your home business, or figuring out a monthly budget, computer programs can help. For example, [Figure 1-1](#) shows a graph that the Excel application created from data in a spreadsheet.
- » **Pursue hobbies such as genealogy or sports.** You can research your favorite team online or connect with people who have the same interests. The online world is full of special-interest discussion groups where you can talk about a wide variety of topics with others.
- » **Play interactive games with others over the Internet.** You can play everything from shuffleboard to poker and even participate in action games in virtual worlds. Love backgammon? Got you covered. Online bridge league? There are hundreds. Any game that you love offline, you can play online. You can play games with the computer, with total strangers, or (my favorite) with family and friends.
- » **Share and create photos, drawings, and videos.** If you have a digital camera or smartphone, you can transfer photos to your computer (called *uploading*) or

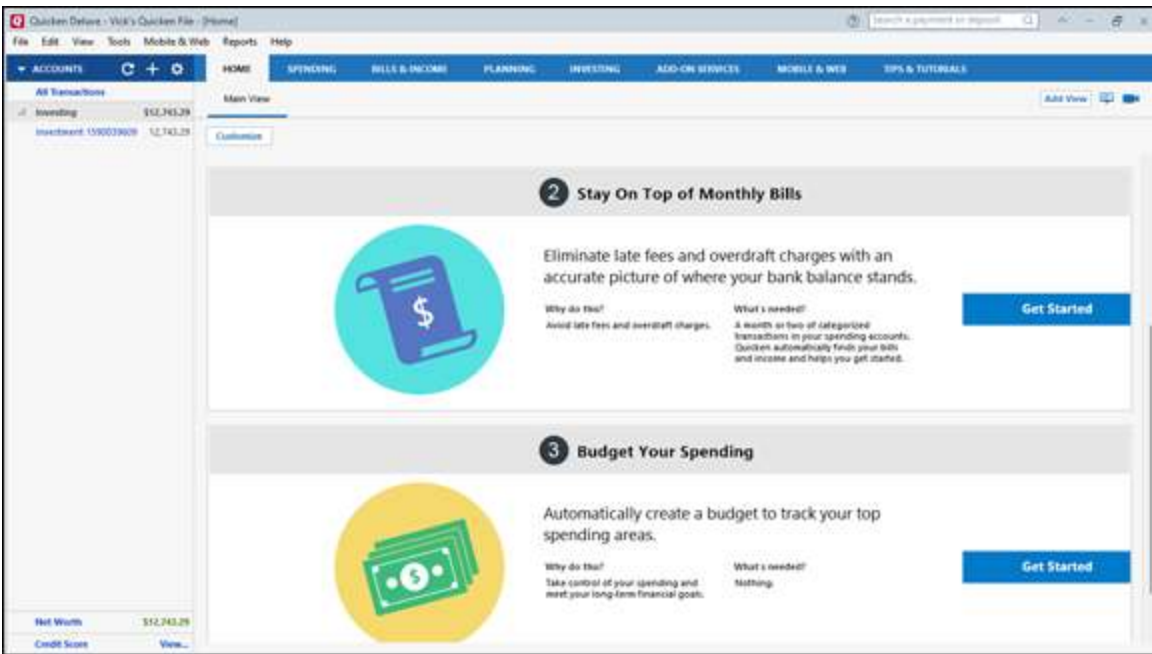
copy photos off the Internet (if their copyright permits it) and share them in emails or use them to create your own greeting cards. If you're artistically inclined, you can create digital drawings. Many popular websites make sharing your homemade videos easy, too. If you have a digital video camera or smartphone and editing software, you can use editing tools to make a movie and share it with others via video-sharing sites such as YouTube or by email. Steven Spielberg, look out!



**FIGURE 1-1**

» **Shop online and compare products easily, day or night.** You can shop for anything from a garden shed to travel deals or a new camera. Using handy shopping site features, you can easily compare prices from several stores or read customer product reviews. Many websites, such as [pricegrabber.com](http://pricegrabber.com), list product prices from a variety of vendors on one web page, so you can find the best deals. Beyond the convenience, all this information can help you save money.

» **Manage your financial life.** You can do your banking or investing online and get up-to-the-minute data about your bank account, credit card balances, and investments. For example, [Figure 1-2](#) shows Quicken, an application that enables you to track and view all your bank accounts and investments in one place.



**FIGURE 1-2**

## *Get Up to Speed on Hardware*

Your computing experience consists of interactions with hardware and software. I will explain both of those things, but let's start with hardware. The *hardware* is all the tangible computer equipment — the parts you can see and touch.