LEARNING MADE EASY

5th Edition

Computers

FOR SENIORS

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Choose the right computer and go online

Shop, bank, email, and share photos online safely

Use the new features of Windows 10

Nancy C. Muir

Computers For Seniors

Computers For Seniors

5th Edition

by Nancy C. Muir

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Computers For Seniors For Dummies®, 5th Edition

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Introduction

Computers for consumers have come a long way in just 30 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 guide 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. The latest version is Windows 10 Creators Update. This edition covers features in the original release of Windows 10, as well as modifications to those features added in the Anniversary Update released in 2016 and the Creators Update released in 2017. Because Microsoft Windows–based personal computers (PCs) are the most common type of computer, this book focuses on Windows 10 functionality.

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` 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.

1 Get Going!

IN THIS PART . . .

Buy a computer.

Find your way around Windows 10.

Set up your display.

Get help with accessibility features.

Set up your printer and scanner.

Search and more with Cortana.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Seeing what you can do with computers
- Getting an overview of hardware
- Appreciating software
- Choosing a desktop computer
- Choosing a laptop computer
- Selecting a version of Windows
- Determining your price range
- Understanding displays
- Exploring storage options
- Choosing features for faster performance
- Connecting to the Internet

Chapter 1
Buying a Computer

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.

Understand All You Can Do with Computers

Congratulations — in your life you've been witness to a remarkable revolution. In just a few decades, computers have moved from being expensive behemoths that lived in corporate basements to being personal productivity and entertainment tools. They've empowered people to connect around the world in unprecedented ways, and they've made common tasks much easier to handle.

The following list walks you through some of the things your 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 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 program created from data in a spreadsheet.

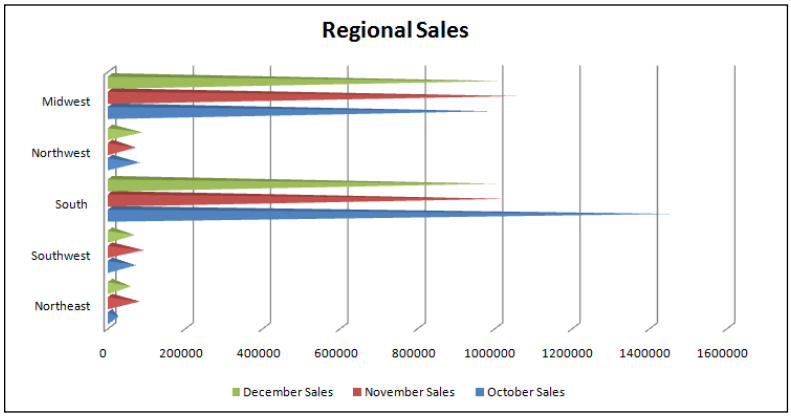

FIGURE 1-1

- **Pursue hobbies such as genealogy or sports.** You can research your favorite team online (see Figure 1-2) 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.
- **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 1-2

- **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 `www.nextag.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. And, if you're online savvy, you can do this all without fear of having your financial data stolen. (See Chapter 13 for more about online safety.)

Get an Overview of Hardware

Your computing experience consists of interactions with hardware and software. The *hardware* is all the tangible computer equipment, such as the monitor, central processing unit, and keyboard.

Your computer hardware consists of

- **A central processing unit (CPU),** which is the very small, very high-tech semiconductor *chip* that acts as the brains of your computer. The CPU is stored in a computer tower — or in all-in-one computer models, laptops, and tablets, in a single unit along with the monitor. The CPU also contains other nuts and bolts used to run your computer.
- **A monitor,** which displays images on its screen such as the Microsoft Windows screen, a video you watch from an online entertainment site, or a document in a software program. Today, more and more computers sport touchscreen monitors, which allow you to use your finger on the screen to provide input to the computer.
- **A keyboard,** which is similar to a typewriter keyboard. In addition to typing words, you can use a keyboard to give the computer commands such as selecting, copying, and pasting text.
- **A mouse,** which you also use to give your computer commands. This little device is a more free-flowing way of providing input than your keyboard. You move the mouse around your desk with your hand, which moves a pointer around onscreen. Using this pointer, you can click an item — an onscreen button, for example — that causes an action, or click on the screen and drag the mouse to select text or an object to perform an action on it (such as deleting the text or making it bold). A mouse can be a separate device that is mouselike in shape, or can be built into devices like laptops in the form of a touch button or touchpad.
- **Peripherals,** such as printers, speakers, webcams, and headphones. These may or may not come with your computer when you buy it, but your computer does come with slots (called *ports*) where you plug in various peripherals.

Appreciate Software

Software is what makes computer hardware work and lets you get things done, such as writing documents with Microsoft Word or playing a game of solitaire. You can install software (also known as *programs*, *applications*, or *apps*) on your computer or use a version from an online website. Here are a few basics about software:

- **You use software to get your work done, run entertainment programs, and browse the Internet.** For example, Quicken is a financial management program you can use to balance your checkbook or keep track of your home inventory for insurance purposes.
- **The software used to run your computer is the operating system.** Some examples of operating systems are Apple OS X for Mac and Microsoft Windows. This book deals mainly with Windows 10 Creators Update and the programs it runs.
- **Some programs come preinstalled on your computer; you can buy and install other programs when you need them.** For example, a computer always has an operating system because the operating system runs all the other programs. Also, some programs are included with a Windows computer, such as WordPad, a simple word-processing program, and Music and Video apps.
- **You can uninstall programs you no longer need.** Uninstalling unwanted programs helps to free up some space on your computer, which helps it perform better.
- **Software programs called *utilities* exist to keep your computer in shape.** An *antivirus* program is an example of a utility used to block or spot and erase computer viruses from your system. Your *operating system* also includes some utilities, such as those that optimize your hard drive or restore your system if it's experiencing problems.

Pick a Desktop: Tower or All-in-One?

A form of computer that has been around for quite a while is a tower (see Figure 1-3). A tower is one style of desktop computer that, because of its size, people keep on or near a table or desk. Typically, you keep the tower, which holds the hard drive, processor, and other brains of the beast, on the floor. You work with the computer via a keyboard and monitor that sit on the desk.

Courtesy of Dell, Inc.

FIGURE 1-3

Pros of the tower include space to expand various elements, such as memory, and fans that keep the computer cool while operating. To repair a tower, you open the metal case and replace parts.

Another form of desktop computer is an *all-in-one.* With this type of computer, the brains are stored in a casing within the monitor, so the entire computer sits on your desk or table.

All-in-ones are often sleek and modern looking, involve fewer cables, and save you from using floor space for a computer tower.

However, repairing or customizing the hardware is almost impossible because opening the computer is difficult.

Both desktop towers and all-in-ones take up more surface space than a laptop computer, but if you don't need portability in your computer or more space, a desktop may be the best choice.

TIP

Tablets, such as iPad, and Windows-based tablets, such as Surface, offer many computing capabilities, including reading and working on simple documents, connecting to the Internet to send and receive email, playing games, listening to music, and so on. However, they have relatively small touchscreens (with a touchscreen, you provide input with your finger or a stylus); onscreen keyboards, which can be a bit challenging to use; no mouse; and often less file-management capabilities. If you just want to browse the web, read email, and play games, a tablet could be a way to go. If you want a broader range of capabilities with a larger screen size and can live with less portability, a computer is the way to go.

Choose a Laptop

A *laptop* is portable, weighing anywhere from 2 to 8 pounds. The monitor, keyboard, and mouse (in the form of a flat touchpad) are built into the laptop.

A laptop is sometimes called a *notebook* computer. Choose a laptop if you want to use your computer mainly away from home or you have little space in your home for a larger computer.

Note that if the monitor on a laptop becomes damaged, you'll pay quite a bit for a repair, or you can hook the computer up to an external monitor. Because there is less space for fans, laptops sometimes run hot to the touch.

A two-in-one laptop (see Figure 1-4) allows you to either rotate the monitor to rest on the back of the keyboard or remove the monitor so you can use the laptop like a tablet. When you have no active physical

keyboard, you have to use the touchscreen feature to interact with the laptop.

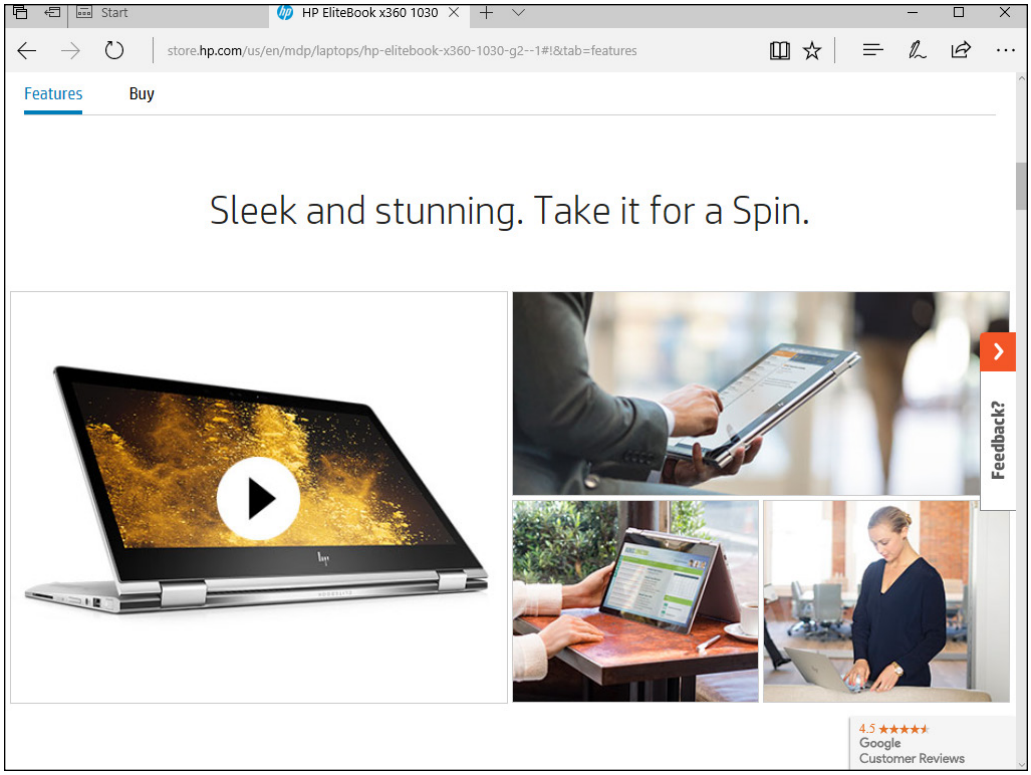

FIGURE 1-4

TIP

Many of today's desktops and laptops have touchscreens that allow you to interact with them using your finger or a digital pen. See Chapter 2 for advice on using a touchscreen computer.

Select a Version of Windows

Choosing your computer's *operating system* (software that runs all the programs and organizes data on your computer) will be one of your first decisions. This book focuses on computers running the current version of Windows, which is Windows 10 Creators Update. Windows 10 is a radical departure from previous Windows operating

systems, so if you opt for an earlier version of Windows, such as Windows 7, you would need to buy the Windows 7 edition of this book. Note that, depending on your Windows Update settings, updates to Windows may be performed regularly without your instigating them.

Windows 10 comes in several versions, including two versions for home and small business users:

- **Windows 10 Home:** Includes apps such as Music, Video, Weather, People, Camera, and more. If you consider yourself primarily a home user, you should consider this version of Windows 10.
- **Windows 10 Pro:** Is great for small businesses or if you work from home. This version of Windows has ultimate security features and more administrative tools.

Determine Your Price Range

You can buy a computer for anywhere from about $199 to $5,000 or more, depending on your budget and computing needs. You may start with a base model, but extras such as a larger monitor or larger storage capacity can soon add hundreds to the base price. The rule of thumb is to buy just as much computer as you need.

You can shop in a retail store for a computer or shop online using a friend's computer (and perhaps get his or her help if you're brand new to using a computer). Consider researching different models and prices online with the help of a computer-savvy friend and using that information to get the best buy. Be aware, however, that most retail stores have a small selection compared to all you can find online on websites such as Amazon.com and NewEgg.com. Additionally, retail stores sometimes carry slightly older models than those available online.

Buying a computer can be confusing, but here are some guidelines to help you find a computer at the price that's right for you:

- **Determine how often you will use your computer.** If you'll be working on it eight hours a day running a home business, you