Computer Basics: Parts of a Computer

Hardware and software in plain English

Hardware

The parts you can touch: the screen, keyboard, mouse, speakers and the box or laptop body.

Processor (CPU)

The brain of the computer. It follows instructions and does the calculations.

Memory (RAM)

Short-term workspace. Programs you are using sit here. It is cleared when you turn the computer off.

Storage

Long-term space for files and programs, on a hard drive or an SSD. It keeps your files when the power is off.

Operating system

The main software, such as Windows, macOS, Linux or ChromeOS. It runs the computer and other apps.

Apps and files

Apps are programs, like a browser or a word processor. Files hold your documents, pictures and music.

Tip: More RAM helps you do many things at once. More storage lets you keep more files.

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