## Basic Parts of a Computer

### Case/Tower

The computer case is the metal and plastic box that contains the main components of the computer, including the motherboard, central processing unit (CPU), and power supply. Computer cases come in different shapes and sizes. A desktop case lies flat on a desk, and the monitor usually sits on top of it. A tower case is tall and sits next to the monitor or on the floor.

### Monitor

The monitor works with a video card, located inside the computer case, to display images and text on the screen. Most monitors have control buttons that allow you to change your monitor's display settings, and some monitors also have built-in speakers.

### Keyboard

The keyboard is one of the main ways to communicate with a computer. It is comprised of a panel of keys (numbers, letters, and symbols) that enables you to enter data into the computer.

### Mouse (wired)

The mouse is another important tool for communicating with computers. Commonly known as a pointing device, it lets you point to objects on the screen, click on them, and move them.
### Mouse (wireless)

A wireless mouse works the same as a wired mouse, but it does not need to be plugged into the computer with a wire/cord. Instead, it uses different technology, like Bluetooth, to receive signals.

![Wireless Mouse](image)

### Laptop Touchpad

A touchpad—also called a trackpad—is a touch-sensitive pad that lets you control the pointer by making a drawing motion with your finger. Touchpads are common on laptop computers.

![Laptop Touchpad](image)

### Printer/Scanner

A printer is used to print documents, photos, and anything else that appears on your screen. There are many types of printers, including inkjet, laser, and photo printers. There are even all-in-one printers, which can also scan and copy documents.

![Printer](image)

### Speakers

Speakers and headphones are output devices, which means they send information from the computer to the user—in this case, they allow you to hear sound and music. Some monitors also have built-in speakers.

![Speakers](image)

### Webcam

A web camera—or webcam—is a type of input device that can record videos and take pictures. It can also transmit video over the Internet in real time, which allows for video chat or video conferencing with someone else. Many webcams also include a microphone for this reason.

![Webcam](image)
Surge Protector

A surge protector is a device designed to protect electrical devices from voltage spikes. A surge protector attempts to limit the voltage supplied to an electric device by either blocking or shorting to ground any unwanted voltages above a safe threshold.

### Case/Tower Front
1. **Power Button** – used to turn the computer on.
2. **CD-ROM/DVD-ROM Drive** – lets your computer read CDs and DVDs.
3. **Audio Ports** – allow you to easily connect speakers, microphones, and headsets.
4. **USB Ports** – used to connect almost any type of device, including mice, keyboards, printers and digital cameras.

### Case/Tower Back
5. **Power Socket** – where you’ll connect the power cord to the computer.
6. **PS/2 Ports** – sometimes used for connecting the mouse and keyboard.
7. **Monitor Port** – where you will connect the monitor to the computer.
8. **USB Ports** – used to connect your mouse and keyboard, digital camera and other devices.
9. **Ethernet Port** – for networking and connecting to the Internet.
10. **Audio Ports** – where you can connect various devices, including: speakers, microphones, and headsets.
11. **Expansion Slots** – where expansion cards are added to computers.
## Internal Computer Parts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parts</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motherboard</strong></td>
<td>The motherboard is the computer's main circuit board. It is a thin plate that holds the CPU, memory and connectors for all the other parts of the computer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CPU/Processor</strong></td>
<td>The central processing unit (CPU), also called a processor, is located inside the computer case on the motherboard. It is sometimes called the brain of the computer, and its job is to carry out commands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RAM</strong></td>
<td>RAM is your system's short-term memory. Whenever your computer performs calculations, it temporarily stores the data in the RAM until it is needed. This short-term memory disappears when the computer is turned off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hard Drive</strong></td>
<td>The hard drive is where your software, documents, and other files are stored. The hard drive is long-term storage, which means the data is still saved even if you turn the computer off or unplug it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power Supply Unit</strong></td>
<td>The power supply unit in a computer converts the power from the wall outlet to the type of power needed by the computer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Component</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Video Card</td>
<td>The video card is responsible for what you see on the monitor. Most computers have a GPU (graphics processing unit) built into the motherboard but, if you like playing graphics-intensive games, you can add a faster video card to one of the expansion slots to get better performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound Card</td>
<td>The sound card—also called an audio card—is responsible for what you hear in the speakers or headphones. Most motherboards have integrated sound, but you can upgrade to a dedicated sound card for higher-quality sound.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network Card</td>
<td>The network card allows your computer to communicate over a network and access the Internet. It can either connect with an Ethernet cable or through a wireless connection (often called Wi-Fi). Many motherboards have built-in network connections, but a network card can also be added to an expansion slot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bluetooth Card</td>
<td>Bluetooth is a technology for wireless communication over short distances. It’s often used in computers to communicate with wireless keyboards, mice, and printers. It’s commonly built into the motherboard or included in a wireless network card. For computers that don’t have Bluetooth, you can purchase a USB adapter, often called a dongle.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Modems and Routers

#### Modem

The type of Internet access you choose will determine the type of modem you need. Dial-up access uses a telephone modem, DSL service uses a DSL modem, cable access uses a cable modem, and satellite service uses a satellite adapter. Your ISP may give you a modem—often for a fee—when you sign a contract, which helps ensure that you have the right type of modem. However, if you would prefer to shop for a better or less expensive modem, you can choose to buy one separately.

#### Router

A router is a hardware device that allows you to connect several computers and other devices to a single Internet connection, which is known as a home network. Many routers are wireless, which allows you to create a home wireless network, commonly known as a Wi-Fi network. You don’t necessarily need to buy a router to connect to the Internet. It’s possible to connect your computer directly to your modem using an Ethernet cable. Also, many modems include a built-in router, so you have the option of creating a Wi-Fi network without buying extra hardware.

### LEARN MORE!

- **Computer and Technology Help** ([vpl.bibliocommons.com/events](http://vpl.bibliocommons.com/events))
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- **Computer Survival Guide** ([guides.vpl.ca/computers](http://guides.vpl.ca/computers))
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- **GCFLearnFree.org tutorials** ([gcflearnfree.org](http://gcflearnfree.org))
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