

Catch the “Computer Bug”!

Some seniors have embraced learning to use computers because it has opened up new sources of information, made communications with family and friends instant, helped organize their everyday lives and in many instances they found many of the services to be free. Others 50+ in age have not even tried and they have defended their decision with statements such as “I could never learn that” or “It is too expensive for me” or “I’ll probably break it” or “I’m too old...computers are for the younger generation”. These statements are reflective of negative or closed-mind thinking. Once exposed to the positive aspects of learning to use a computer, seniors will find that the benefits are many.

There are multiple ways in which learning how to use a computer and the internet might enrich or expand your life. Just a few of the most common computer applications and uses are:

- **Information...** Using the computer to do research can be both rewarding and interesting. You can find out about your favorite hobbies and passions, however unique they might be, and discover that there are other people out there who share your interest and are willing to share with you. You can also research medical conditions and help yourself become better prepared for your doctor visits. You will find maps and directions to every conceivable location, up-to-the-minute weather information, world news, lotto numbers, and much, much more. Being able to use the computer and navigate the internet can expand your world of information resources tremendously.
- **Communication and Personal Relationships ...**Keeping in touch with friends and family through email will definitely enrich your life. You will be able to hear and see what your children (by using a simple camera attachment), grandchildren and good friends are up to on a daily basis without the expense of a large phone bill. You can resolve billing questions with your cable company, find out about services at a local organization, track down old classmates/friends, or request warranty information or information from national organizations.
- **Employment...** Knowing how to use a computer certainly can help you find a job. Most companies today post their jobs on-line and they include job requirements, application procedures, etc. Additionally, computer skills will increase the number of jobs available to you because in today’s world-of-work most jobs require computer literacy skills.
- **Entertainment...**On line games are very popular and plentiful and a fun way to engage your mind. Online magazines are plentiful, as are newsgroups and discussion groups focused on particular topics. Your computer might also become a great tool for expanding your hobby or learning a new one. If you love photography, software and your digital camera can give you the ability to alter your photographs without a darkroom.
- **Shopping...** Once you learn the basics and understand security, shopping on the internet can prove economical and interesting. You will be able to compare prices quickly without going to multiple stores, read reviews by other purchasers, look up ratings of large ticket items such as cars and appliances and have your purchases delivered to the address of your choice.
- **Organization...** It only takes basic computer skills to learn how to store information. Your computer can actually replace your address book, calendar, file folders of investments, insurance statements, and health and tax records.

And, research has shown that seniors who become adept at using a computer appear to have fewer depressive symptoms than others who aren’t so technologically connected.

Learning to use a computer can be fun and the rewards are immense. Although learning how to use a computer may seem like a daunting task, the process doesn't have to be overwhelming. The best advice is usually to take your first class with other seniors so you will feel comfortable asking questions. A formal classroom setting with a computer for each person with a lot of hands-on instruction and practice is the best way to begin your learning.

Delta College will offer a special one-day computer class just for those 50+ in age at its Midland Center (located at 1025 Wheeler) on Friday, February 20 from 9:30 am to 3:00 pm. The \$44 cost included lunch and all materials; Titled "The Computer and Internet Basics" this hands on workshop will introduce you to the computer without you have to know a lot of terminology. In the morning you will learn about: mouse functions, the keyboard, menus, the desktop, opening/sizing windows and be introduced to the programs that come with Windows. The afternoon session will focus on your becoming acquainted with the internet: selecting an internet provider, using search engines to find information, browser functions, using email to communicate with family and friends and internet security. Advance registration is required and class size will be limited so you will receive personal attention. To enroll in this one day session call the Delta College LifeLong Learning Office (989) 495-4000, extension 9364.

We all know that exercise is good for us – don't forget the brain also needs exercise. Learning new things, having new experiences and challenging yourself are all healthy exercises for your brain. Learning to use a computer will open up for you a myriad of learning opportunities. The flu bug should be avoided --- instead catch the "computer bug"!

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