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Windows® 7 Edition

PCs

FOR

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Dan Gookin

Author of all editions of Laptops For Dummies



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PCs
FOR
DUMMIES®
WINDOWS® 7 EDITION

by Dan Gookin



WILEY

Wiley Publishing, Inc.

PCs For Dummies®, Windows® 7 Edition

Published by

Wiley Publishing, Inc.

111 River Street

Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774

www.wiley.com

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Published by Wiley Publishing, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana

Published simultaneously in Canada

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2009937837

ISBN: 978-0-470-46542-4

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



About the Author

Dan Gookin has been writing about technology for over 20 years. He combines his love of writing with his gizmo fascination to create books that are informative and entertaining and not boring. Having written more than 115 titles with 12 million copies in print translated into more than 30 languages, Dan can attest that his method of crafting computer tomes seems to work.

Perhaps his most famous title is the original *DOS For Dummies*, published in 1991. It became the world's fastest-selling computer book, at one time moving more copies per week than the *New York Times* number-one best seller (though as a reference, his book couldn't be listed on the *NYT* Best Seller list). That book spawned the entire line of *For Dummies* books, which remains a publishing phenomenon to this day.

Dan's most popular titles include *Word For Dummies*, *Laptops For Dummies*, and *Troubleshooting Your PC For Dummies*. He also maintains the vast and helpful Web page www.wambooli.com.

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Publisher's Acknowledgments

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Contents at a Glance

<i>Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Part I: Hello, PC!.....</i>	<i>7</i>
Chapter 1: Your Computer Won't Explode.....	9
Chapter 2: Your Basic PC Tour	19
Chapter 3: Computer Assembly	31
Chapter 4: On and Off.....	45
Chapter 5: The Windows Tour	57
<i>Part II: The Nerd's-Eye View.....</i>	<i>67</i>
Chapter 6: Deep Inside the Console	69
Chapter 7: Connect This to That.....	83
Chapter 8: PC Memory	91
Chapter 9: The Mass Storage System.....	101
Chapter 10: The PC's Display	119
Chapter 11: Input This!.....	133
Chapter 12: P Is for Printer	149
Chapter 13: PC Audio Abilities	163
Chapter 14: PC Leftovers	173
<i>Part III: Communications, Sharing, Networking</i>	<i>179</i>
Chapter 15: Necessary Networking Things	181
Chapter 16: Basic Networking Stuff	193
Chapter 17: The Internet Quick and Dirty	205
Chapter 18: Flinging Files	213
<i>Part IV: Basic Computing.....</i>	<i>221</i>
Chapter 19: Be Safe Out There	223
Chapter 20: Know What a File Is	233
Chapter 21: Organizing Files with Folders	243
Chapter 22: Files Managed.....	255
Chapter 23: Software Installed, Uninstalled, and Upgraded	265

<i>Part V: Your Digital Life</i>	273
Chapter 24: Your Personal Disc Factory.....	275
Chapter 25: The Whole Digital Photography Thing.....	283
Chapter 26: Video on the PC	295
Chapter 27: Music to Your Digital Ear.....	307
Chapter 28: Sharing Your Life Online.....	315
Chapter 29: Kid-Safe Computing	325
<i>Part VI: The Part of Tens</i>	335
Chapter 30: Ten PC Commandments	337
Chapter 31: Ten Tips from a PC Guru	343
<i>Index</i>	349

Table of Contents

***Introduction* 1**

What's New in This Edition?	1
Where to Start	2
Conventions Used in This Book.....	3
What You Don't Need to Read	4
Foolish Assumptions	4
Icons Used in This Book	4
Getting in Touch with the Author	5
Where to Go from Here.....	5

***Part 1: Hello, PC!* 7**

Chapter 1: Your Computer Won't Explode 9

Clear Computer Concepts	9
I/O	10
Processing.....	11
Storage	12
Hardware and Software	13
The computer's operating system.....	14
Other software	15
The stuff you make (files)	15
Boring PC History	16
An Important Thing to Remember	17

Chapter 2: Your Basic PC Tour.....19

The Mundane PC.....	19
The Console Tour	21
There is no typical console	21
Major points of interest on the console, front.....	23
Stuff found on the console's backside	25
The I/O panel.....	27
Helpful hints, hieroglyphics, and hues	28

Chapter 3: Computer Assembly31

Unpack the Boxes	32
Set Up the Console First	32
A General Guide to Plugging Things into the Console.....	33
Audio	33
IEEE, 1394, FireWire	35

Gamepads, controllers, joysticks	36
Keyboard and mouse	36
Modem.....	36
Monitor.....	37
Network.....	37
Printer	38
USB.....	38
Wireless gizmos	39
It Must Have Power	39
The mighty power strip	39
The UPS power solution.....	41
Using the UPS (a short play)	43

Chapter 4: On and Off.....45

Turn On Your PC	45
Windows, Ahoy!.....	47
Turn the Computer Off	48
Log yourself off.....	51
Lock the computer.....	51
Switch users	52
Sleep mode	52
Hibernation.....	53
Restart Windows.....	53
Turn the darn thing off.....	54
Should You Leave the Computer On All the Time?.....	55
“I want to leave my computer off all the time”	55
“I want to leave my computer on all the time”.....	55

Chapter 5: The Windows Tour.....57

Windows and Its Goopy, Glorious Graphical Interface.....	58
The desktop.....	58
The taskbar.....	60
The Start button and Start menu	61
The notification area	62
The Control Panel.....	63
Where Your Stuff Goes.....	64
Windows Tries to Help You.....	65

Part II: The Nerd's-Eye View.....67

Chapter 6: Deep Inside the Console.....69

Console Guts	69
Looking under the hood.....	70
Going inside the console (not recommended)	71
The Mother of All Boards	72

The Processor Rules	73
What does the processor do?	73
Name that processor!	74
Processor muscle and speed.....	74
Which processor lives in your PC?.....	75
Expansion Slots.....	76
Your Computer Is Also a Timepiece	77
Viewing the date and time	78
Setting the clock.....	78
Using the Internet to set the clock	79
About the PC's Battery	80
The Chipset	80
The Source of PC Power	81
Chapter 7: Connect This to That	83
It's a Port.....	83
USB, a Most Versatile Port	84
Playing with USB cables	85
Connecting a USB device	86
Using USB-powered gizmos	86
Removing a USB device.....	86
Expanding the USB universe with hubs	87
The IEEE or 1394 or FireWire Port.....	88
Legacy Ports.....	89
Chapter 8: PC Memory	91
What Is Computer Memory?	91
Delicious Chocolate Memory Chips	92
Measuring Memory One Byte at a Time	94
Memory Q&A.....	96
“How much memory is in my PC right now?”	96
“Do I have enough memory?”	96
“Does my PC have enough memory?”	96
“Can I test whether my PC has enough memory?”	97
“Can I add memory to my PC?”	97
“Will the computer ever run out of memory?”	98
“What is virtual memory?”	98
“What is video memory?”	99
“What are kibi, mebi, and gibi?”	99
Chapter 9: The Mass Storage System	101
What Is Mass Storage?	101
Storage media roundup.....	102
Mass storage technical drivel	102
The Hard Disk Drive	103



The Optical Drive.....	104
Observe the optical drive	105
The speed rating (the X number)	106
All about optical discs	107
Put the disc into the drive	107
Eject the disc	108
Media Cards and Flash Drives	109
The media card reader	110
Media card roundup.....	111
Insert a media card or thumb drive	113
Eject a media card or thumb drive.....	113
When the media card is canceled.....	114
External Storage.....	114
Adding external storage.....	115
Removing external storage.....	115
Permanent Storage ABCs.....	115
Describing and naming storage devices	116
Assigning storage devices a drive letter.....	117
Chapter 10: The PC's Display	119
The PC's Display System	119
The monitor	121
The display adapter.....	122
Merry Monitor Mayhem.....	123
The physical description	123
Adjust the monitor's display	125
The second monitor	126
Windows Controls What You See.....	128
Setting display size (resolution)	128
Going for a new look.....	129
Saving the screen.....	131
Chapter 11: Input This!	133
Meet Mr. Keyboard.....	133
The keyboard connection.....	134
A typical PC keyboard	134
Modifier keys	136
Keys that are also locks	137
Useful-key tour	138
Weird-key tour.....	138
Keys for doing math	139
Control the Keyboard in Windows	140
Say Hello to the Mouse	141
Connecting the mouse.....	141
Basic mouse parts.....	142
Other mouse species.....	143

Mouse Maneuvers	144
Control the Mouse in Windows	145
Making the pointer easier to find.....	145
Fixing the double-click	146
Using the mouse left-handed.....	147
The Fun Input Gizmos	147
Chapter 12: P Is for Printer	149
The Printer, the Paper, the Document Maker	150
Types of computer printers	150
The basic printer tour	151
The printer's control panel	152
The printer drinks ink	153
The printer eats paper	154
Types of paper	155
Printer Setup	156
Connecting the printer	156
Finding the printer in Windows	156
Manually adding a printer.....	158
Setting the default printer.....	158
Basic Printer Operation	159
Setting the margins	160
Printing in reverse order.....	161
Stopping a printer run amok	162
Chapter 13: PC Audio Abilities.....	163
The Noisy PC	163
Speakers hither and thither.....	164
In your own world with headphones	166
Microphone options	166
Sound Control in Windows.....	167
Configuring the speakers	168
Configuring the microphone	168
Adjusting the volume	168
Windows Goes Bleep.....	169
Setting event sounds	170
Recording your own sounds.....	171
Chapter 14: PC Leftovers	173
Manage the PC's Power	173
Choosing a power-management plan	174
Adding a hibernation option	175
Power-saving options for battery-powered PCs	176
Merry Modems.....	176
Modem speed	177
The dialup modem.....	177

Part III: Communications, Sharing, Networking 179**Chapter 15: Necessary Networking Things.....181**

The Network Arena	181
Network Hardware	183
Saint NIC.....	184
Network hoses.....	185
Not network hoses.....	185
The router.....	186
The modem.....	187
Network Software	188
Getting to Network Central.....	188
Connecting to a wired network.....	189
Connecting to a wireless network	190
Disconnecting from a network.....	191

Chapter 16: Basic Networking Stuff193

Network Fun in Windows.....	193
Browsing the network	195
Turning on network discovery.....	195
Viewing the network map	196
HomeGroup Sharing.....	197
Creating a HomeGroup.....	197
Joining a HomeGroup.....	198
Using the HomeGroup	199
Disconnecting from a HomeGroup	199
Traditional Network Sharing.....	200
Configuring Windows to share.....	200
Sharing a folder	202
Accessing a network folder	203

Chapter 17: The Internet Quick and Dirty.....205

What Is the Internet?	205
How to Access the Internet	206
Choosing an ISP.....	206
Configuring Windows for the Internet.....	207
Connecting to the Internet.....	207
It's a World Wide Web We Weave	208
Browsing tips.....	208
Printing Web pages.....	210
Searching-the-Web tips	210
E-Mail Call!	211
Downloading an e-mail program	211
Getting the most from e-mail.....	212

Chapter 18: Flinging Files213

Get Stuff from a Web Page.....	213
Saving an image from a Web page	214
Grabbing text from a Web page	214
Free Software on the Internet	214
Finding programs on the Web.....	215
Downloading a program.....	215
Installing from a Compressed Folder	217
E-Mail File Attachments	218
Receiving an e-mail attachment	218
Sending an e-mail attachment	219

Part IV: Basic Computing 221**Chapter 19: Be Safe Out There223**

Fight the Bad Guys	224
Internet Explorer Tools.....	225
Blocking pop-ups	225
Phighting phishing.....	226
The Action Center	227
Windows Firewall.....	228
Windows Defender.....	229
Antivirus protection	230
User Account Control warnings.....	231

Chapter 20: Know What a File Is233

Behold the File!	233
The guts of a file.....	234
Things that describe a file	234
Files dwell in folders.....	235
Filenames	236
Choosing the best name.....	236
Obeying the filenaming rules.....	237
File Types and Icons.....	238
What's a filename extension?	238
Filename extension details	238
How to see or hide the filename extension	239
Icons	240
How Files Are Born.....	240

Chapter 21: Organizing Files with Folders243

About Folders.....	243
Famous Folders.....	244
The root folder	244
Subfolders and parent folders.....	245
A place for your stuff.....	246

Manage Your Folders	248
Using Windows Explorer.....	248
Working with folders	249
Working with libraries.....	250
The Open Dialog Box.....	252

Chapter 22: Files Managed255

Files Ready for Action	255
Selecting all files in a folder	256
Selecting a random smattering of files	256
Selecting a swath of files in a row	257
Lassoing a group of files	258
Unselecting stuff	258
Stuff You Do with Files	258
Copying a file	259
Moving a file.....	260
Creating a shortcut	260
Deleting files	261
Bringing dead files back to life	262
Renaming files	262
Finding Lost Files	263
That All-Important Safety Copy	264

Chapter 23: Software Installed, Uninstalled, and Upgraded265

Installing Software	265
Running a Program.....	267
The Start button menu	267
The pin areas.....	269
The desktop shortcut icon	269
Uninstalling Software	269
Updating and Upgrading.....	270
Windows Update	271
“Should I upgrade Windows?”	272

Part V: Your Digital Life 273

Chapter 24: Your Personal Disc Factory.275

Disc Creation Overview	275
Make a Data Disc.....	277
Preparing the disc for use.....	278
Working with a USB Flash Drive/Live File Format disc	279
Working with a CD/DVD Player/Mastered disc	280
Using the Burn button	280

Erasing an RW disc	281
Labeling the disc	281
Disposing of a disc	282
Chapter 25: The Whole Digital Photography Thing.....	283
The Digital Camera.....	284
Connecting a digital camera	284
Importing images	284
The Scanner.....	286
Introducing the scanner.....	286
Scanning an image	287
Picture Files.....	289
Storing pictures in Windows	290
Viewing pictures in Windows	291
Changing picture file formats	292
Image Resolution	293
Setting resolution.....	293
Choosing the best resolution	294
Chapter 26: Video on the PC	295
PC Movies	295
Storing video in Windows	296
Viewing a video	296
Getting the video into your PC.....	297
Editing video.....	298
Your PC Is a TV	299
Connecting a TV tuner	300
Configuring Windows Media Center	300
Watching television	301
Recording television.....	302
Watching recorded TV	303
Burning a DVD from recorded TV.....	303
Purging recorded TV	305
Chapter 27: Music to Your Digital Ear	307
Your PC Is Now Your Stereo	307
Running Windows Media Player	307
Inserting a musical CD.....	309
Collecting tunes	309
Creating a playlist	310
Taking your music with you	310
Making your own music CDs	311
The PC Can Talk and Listen	312
Babbling Windows	312
Dictating to the PC.....	313

Chapter 28: Sharing Your Life Online315

Social Networking.....	315
Sharing your life on Facebook.....	316
Tweeting your thoughts.....	318
Share Your Photos Online.....	318
Finding a free site.....	318
Signing up for the site.....	319
Uploading images.....	320
Sharing your images.....	321
Your Video Life.....	322
Creating a YouTube account.....	322
Uploading a video to YouTube.....	323
Sharing your videos.....	323

Chapter 29: Kid-Safe Computing325

An Account for Junior.....	325
Setting up your Administrator account.....	326
Confirming your Administrator account.....	327
Adding an account for Junior.....	328
Configuring Junior's account.....	328
Parental Controls.....	329
Setting time limits.....	330
Controlling access to games.....	331
Blocking programs.....	331
PC Parenting.....	332
Spying on your kids.....	332
Dealing with a cyberbully.....	333

Part VI: The Part of Tens..... 335**Chapter 30: Ten PC Commandments337**

I. Thou Shalt Not Fear Thy PC.....	337
II. Thou Shalt Save Thy Work.....	338
III. Thou Shalt Back Up Thy Files.....	338
IV. That Shalt Not Open or Delete Things Unknownst.....	338
V. Thou Shalt Not Be a Sucker.....	339
VI. Thou Shalt Use Antivirus Software, Yea Verily, and Keepeth It Up-to-Date.....	339
VII. Thou Shalt Upgrade Wisely.....	339
VIII. Thou Shalt Compute at a Proper Posture.....	340
IX. Thou Shalt Keepeth Windows Up-to-Date.....	340
X. Thou Shalt Properly Shut Down Windows.....	341

Chapter 31: Ten Tips from a PC Guru343

Remember That You're in Charge	343
Mind Who "Helps" You	344
Give Yourself Time to Learn	344
Create Separate Accounts	344
Use a UPS	345
Consider Some Hardware Upgrades	345
Avoid Crying "Wolf" in E-Mail	346
Don't Reinstall Windows.....	346
Shun the Hype.....	347
Remember Not to Take This Computer Stuff Too Seriously.....	347

***Index* 349**

Introduction

Say hello to the nearly all-new 12th edition of *PCs For Dummies*!

This book was written just for you, someone who doesn't want to turn into a computer nerd or fall in love with computers or technology. No, this book was written because something complex and mysterious, like a computer, can make a smart person like you feel like a dummy.

Computers are now commodity items, tossed into a big-box store along with the toaster ovens and plasma TVs. The PC is a commodity, yet it's not any easier to use than it was a decade ago. The cheerful person in the store can't help you. There's no computer manual. And that toll-free phone number they gave you connects you with a foreigner who reads you a script in heavily accented English. Obviously, a book like this one is more than needed — it's a necessity.

This book helps restore your confidence by explaining how computers work in a manner that's simple, easy to understand, and, often, entertaining. Between this book's yellow-and-black covers, you'll find quick, helpful information about using your computer. This book uses friendly and human — and often irreverent — terms. Nothing is sacred here, and you'll find no painful jargon or condescending tone. You and your needs are the focus.

The result is that, after reading this book, the computer, while still a technological marvel, will no longer intimidate you.

What's New in This Edition?

There have been one dozen editions of this book, and you're lucky enough to be holding in your hands the most recent, best edition. As is my tradition, I thoroughly update each edition of this book, adding information on new technology, removing obsolete stuff, and giving the text a gentle massage to keep the material light and fresh.

Specifically, this book has been updated to cover the Windows 7 operating system. Additionally, you'll also find these new topics:

- ✓ The latest information on the new computer designs, including the popular One PC
- ✓ The latest on expansion options, including eSATA, plus tips on adding external storage to your PC
- ✓ Updated and complete information on media cards, which provide the latest in removable storage for your computer
- ✓ New information on computer security, which jibes well with the new Action Center in Windows 7
- ✓ Lots of new material about your online life, including social networking sites and sharing photos and video on the Internet
- ✓ Information on setting up your PC for your children, including ways to limit their computing time and restrict access to games and other software
- ✓ The Cheat Sheet, which once appeared just inside this book's front cover, is now available online: www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/pcs.
- ✓ General up-to-date and current information on all aspects of PC technology, hardware, and software — tidbits too numerous to mention here

As in years past, I present all the information in this book in a sane, soothing, and gentle tone that calms even the most panicked computerphobe.

Where to Start

This book is a reference. You can start reading at any point. Use the index or table of contents to see what interests you. After you read the information, feel free to close the book and perform whatever task you need; there's no need to read any further.

Each of this book's 31 chapters covers a specific aspect of the computer — turning it on, using a printer, using software, or heaving the computer out a window in the best possible manner, for example. Each chapter is divided into self-contained nuggets of information — sections — all relating to the major theme of the chapter. Sample sections you may find include

- ✓ Turn the darn thing off
- ✓ Using the Internet to set the clock
- ✓ Eject a media card or thumb drive
- ✓ Stopping a printer run amok

- ✓ Downloading a program
- ✓ Burning a DVD from recorded TV
- ✓ Dealing with a cyberbully

You don't have to memorize anything in this book. Nothing about a computer is memorable. Each section is designed so that you can read the information quickly, digest what you have read, and then put down the book and get on with using the computer. If anything technical crops up, you're alerted to its presence so that you can cleanly avoid it.

Conventions Used in This Book

Menu items, links, and other controls on the screen are written using initial cap text. So if the option is named "Turn off the computer," you see Turn Off the Computer (without quotes or commas) shown in this book, whether it appears that way onscreen or not.

Whenever I describe a message or information on the screen, it looks like this:

```
This is a message onscreen.
```

If you have to type something, it looks like this:

Type me

You type the text *Type me* as shown. You're told when and whether to press the Enter key. You're also told whether to type a period; periods end sentences written in English, but not always when you type text on a computer.

Windows menu commands are shown like this:

Choose File⇨Exit.

This line directs you to choose the File menu and then choose the Exit command.

Key combinations you may have to type are shown like this:

Ctrl+S

This line says to press and hold the Ctrl (Control) key, type an *S*, and then release the Ctrl key. It works the same as pressing Shift+S on the keyboard produces an uppercase *S*. Same deal, different shift key.

What You Don't Need to Read

It's a given that computers are technical, but you can avoid reading the technical stuff. To assist you, I've put some of the more obnoxious technical stuff into sidebars clearly marked as technical information. Read that information at your own peril. Often, it's just a complex explanation of stuff already discussed in the chapter. Reading that information only tells you something substantial about your computer, which is not my goal here.

Foolish Assumptions

I make some admittedly foolish assumptions about you: You have a computer, and you use it somehow to do something. You use a PC (or are planning on it) and will use Windows as that computer's operating system.

This book was written directly to support Windows 7. Even so, notes in the text apply to Windows Vista. I even tossed in some stuff about Windows XP when I was feeling rather saucy.

Windows comes in different flavors, such as Ultimate, Business, and Home versions. Differences between them are noted in the text.

When this book refers to Windows without a specific edition or version, the information applies generically to both Windows 7 and Windows Vista.

This book refers to the menu that appears when you click or activate the Start button as the *Start button menu*. The All Programs menu on the Start panel is referred to as *All Programs*, though it may say only *Programs*.

Icons Used in This Book



This icon alerts you to needless technical information — drivel I added because even though I can't help but unleash the nerd in me, I can successfully flag that type of material. Feel free to skip over anything tagged with this little picture.



This icon usually indicates helpful advice or an insight that makes using the computer interesting. For example, when you're setting fire to the computer, be sure to wear protective goggles.



This icon indicates something to remember, like turning off the iron before you leave the house or not trimming your nose hairs with a butane lighter.



This icon indicates that you need to be careful with the information that's presented; usually, it's a reminder for you not to do something.

Getting in Touch with the Author

My e-mail address is listed here in case you want to send me a note:

`dgookin@wambooli.com`

Yes, that's my address, and I respond to every e-mail message. Note that I reply to short, to-the-point messages quickly. Long messages may take more time for me to reply to. Plus, I cannot troubleshoot or fix your PC. Remember that you paid others for their technical support, and you should use their services.

You can also visit my Web site, which is chock-full of helpful support pages, bonus information, games, and fun:

`http://www.wambooli.com`

Where to Go from Here

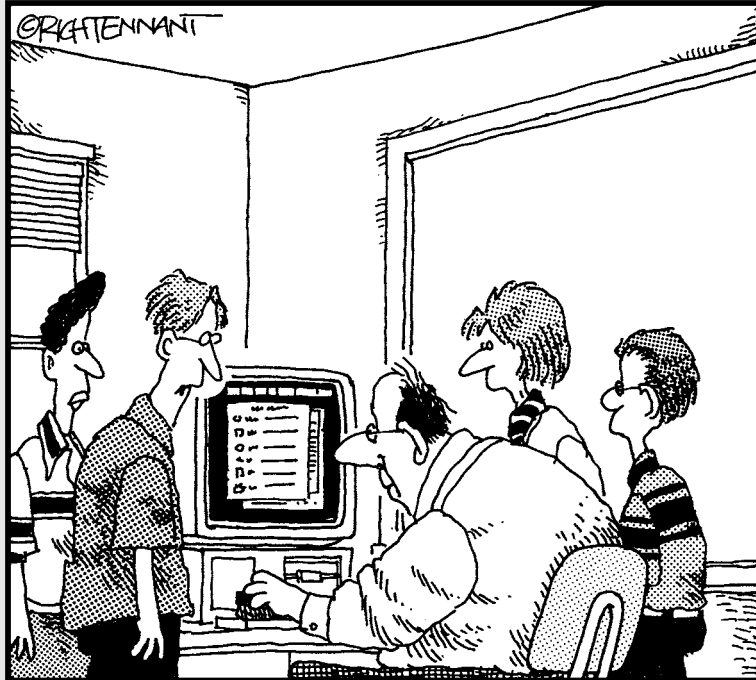
With this book in hand, you're now ready to go out and conquer your PC. Start by looking through the table of contents or the index. Find a topic and turn to the page indicated, and you're ready to go. Also, feel free to write in this book, fill in the blanks, dog-ear the pages, and do anything that would make a librarian blanch. Enjoy.

Part I

Hello, PC!

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"I think the cursor's not moving, Mr. Dundt,
because you're using the chalk board eraser
instead of a mouse."

In this part . . .

It's been called a fast idiot, the ultimate solution for which there was no problem, a toy, Satan's spawn, a godsend, *Time* magazine's Machine of the Year 1982, and perhaps the most miraculous gadget ever invented. I'm speaking, of course, about the personal computer, the PC.

Loathe it or love it, the PC is now a part of everyday life, a gizmo as common as a desk lamp and with more uses than a Swiss Army knife. Whether you already have a PC or are looking to buy one in the near future, use this part of the book to bone up on basic computer stuff.

Chapter 1

Your Computer Won't Explode

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding computer basics
 - ▶ Admiring input and output
 - ▶ Knowing about hardware and software
 - ▶ Discovering the PC
 - ▶ Realizing that your PC is quite dumb
-

If you're a fan of science fiction television or film, you're probably quite familiar with the concept of the exploding computer. Sparks, smoke, flying debris — it all appears to be a common function of computers in the future. Sure, they could just beep and display error messages when they die or are thwarted by Captain Kirk's irrefutable logic, but where's the fun in that?

My point is to relax. Computers are not evil, and they're not out to get you. In fact, you probably want to get the most out of your PC investment because you've heard about all the wonderful things a computer can do. The key to building a productive, long-term relationship with such technology is to understand the computer. You don't need to have Einstein's IQ to do that. You just need to read and enjoy the easy, helpful information in this chapter.

Clear Computer Concepts

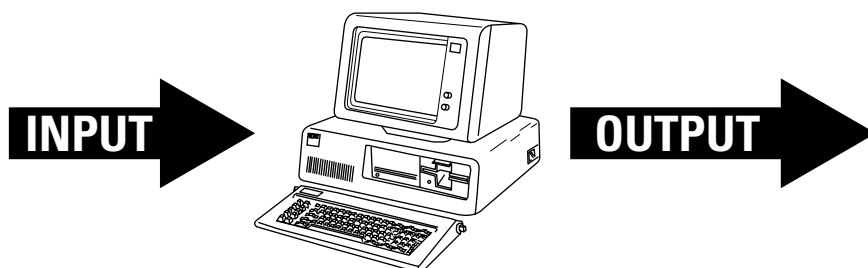
A computer is the simplest of devices. It joins a long line of new technologies that originally might have appeared frightening but in the end turned out to be entirely useful.

For example, a coffee pot combines dangerous, scalding water with a legal stimulant to provide you with a delicious beverage. A lawn mower whirls sharp blades of metal around yet safely keeps the grass short. A microwave

oven uses lethal beams of energy to cook food. And, the TV remote helps you gain valuable fat cells, vital to keeping you alive through lean times, by preventing you from walking the short distance to your television set. Truly, you have nothing to fear from modern technology after you understand it.

At its most basic level, the computer is a gadget that receives input, does something with that input, and then produces output. Figure 1-1 cheerfully illustrates this concept.

Figure 1-1:
What a
computer
does at its
simplest
level.



The act of receiving input, modifying it, and then producing output is incredibly simple, but at the same time it's bursting with enormous potential. That's why the computer is capable of doing so many things.

The “input goes into computer and produces output” equation is the foundation of these three basic computer concepts:

- ✓ I/O
- ✓ Processing
- ✓ Storage

The following sections expand on these notions, distilling for you what you could have learned in a computer science class, had you bothered to take one. Or, if you did take a course in computer science, the following sections explain what you missed while you were sleeping.

I/O

All computers are obsessed over the letters *I* and *O*. It's *IO* as in “I owe,” not as in *Io*, the third-largest moon of Jupiter.