Kate Shoup

SIMPLY
LAPTOPS

- ☑ Step-by-step introduction to laptops

- ☑ Concise, jargon-free instructions

- ☑ Packed with screenshots in full-colour

Make it simple for yourself!

SIMPLY LAPTOPS

by Kate Shoup

WILEY

Permissions

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Author's Acknowledgments

How to Use This Book

Who Needs This Book

This book is for readers who have never used a laptop. It is also for more computer-literate individuals who want to expand their knowledge.

Chapter Organisation

This book consists of sections, all listed in the book's table of contents. A *section* is a set of steps that show you how to complete a specific computer task.

Each section, usually contained on two facing pages, has an introduction to the task at hand, a set of full-colour screen shots and steps that walk you through the task and a set of tips. This format allows you to quickly look at a topic of interest and learn it instantly.

Chapters group together sections with a common theme. A chapter may also contain pages that give you the background information needed to understand the sections in a chapter.

Using the Mouse

This book uses the following conventions to describe the actions you perform when using the mouse:

Click

Press your left mouse button once. You generally click your mouse on something to select something on the screen.

Double-click

Press your left mouse button twice. Double-clicking something on the computer screen generally opens whatever item you have double-clicked.

Right-click

Press your right mouse button. When you right-click on anything on the computer screen, the program displays a shortcut menu containing commands specific to the selected item.

Click, Drag and Release the Mouse

Move your mouse pointer and hover it over an item on the screen. Press and hold down the left mouse button. Now, move the mouse to where you want to place the item and then release the button. You use this method to move an item from one area of the computer screen to another.

The Conventions in This Book

A number of typographic and layout styles have been used throughout SIMPLY Laptops to distinguish different types of information.

Bold

Bold type represents the names of commands and options that you interact with. Bold type also indicates text and numbers that you must type into a dialog box.

Italics

Italic words introduce a new term, which is then defined.

Numbered Steps

You must perform the instructions in numbered steps in order to successfully complete a section and achieve the final results.

Bulleted Steps

These steps point out various optional features. You do not have to perform these steps; they simply give additional information about a feature.

Indented Text

Indented text tells you what the program does in response to your following a numbered step. For example, if you click a certain menu command, a dialog box may open or a window may open. Indented text may also tell you what the final result is when you follow a set of numbered steps.

Notes

Notes give additional information. They may describe special conditions that may occur during an operation. They may warn you of a situation that you want to avoid – for example, the loss of data. A note may also cross-reference a related area of the book. A cross-reference may guide you to another chapter or to another section within the current chapter.

Icons and Buttons

Icons and buttons are graphical representations within the text. They show you exactly what you need to click to perform a step.

You can easily identify the tips in any section by looking for the tip icon. Tips offer additional information, including hints, warnings and tricks. You can use the tip information to go beyond what you have learned in the steps.

Operating System Differences

The screenshots used in this book were captured using the Windows Vista operating system. The features shown in the tasks may differ slightly if you are using Windows 7, Windows XP or an earlier operating system. For example, the default folder for saving photos in Windows Vista is named "Pictures," whereas the default folder in Windows XP for saving photos is named "My Pictures." The program workspace may also look different based on your monitor resolution setting and your program preferences.

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CONTENTS

CHOOSING YOUR LAPTOP PC

Portable computers, generally referred to as *laptops* or *notebooks*, began as a great tool for people who travelled and wanted to bring their computer along. Today, laptops with high-end displays and huge processing power are taking over the desktop, as well.

Although laptop models vary by weight, size, keyboard configuration and more, they share some common traits. For example, on a laptop, the keyboard, pointing device and monitor are built-in.

Like their desktop counterparts, laptop computers run an operating system, most commonly Microsoft Windows. Computers that run Windows are generally referred to as *PCs*, which stands for *personal computers*.

EXPLORE A LAPTOP

Laptop computers are very similar to their desktop counterparts. Both contain a hard drive and other hardware. Both use an operating system, run software and save files. And both can be connected to peripheral devices, such as printers.

Key differences exist, however. For example, laptops, which are designed for portability, are much more compact. In addition, whereas desktops require an external keyboard and mouse, these features along with a monitor are built into laptops (although you can plug in a standard keyboard or mouse if desired). Finally, laptops can run on a battery, whereas desktops require an electrical outlet.

Ⓐ Monitor

The monitor on a laptop is typically made of a soft-to-the-touch, and somewhat fragile, liquid crystal display.

Ⓑ Keyboard

Keyboard configurations vary based on the size of the laptop, with larger laptops having a separate number pad and smaller ones embedding number-pad functionality within the regular keys.

Ⓒ Touchpad Pointing Device

Laptops feature a built-in pointing device – usually a touchpad, as shown here. You move your finger over the pad to move the mouse pointer on your screen.

Ⓓ Function Keys

Most laptops preassign functions to these aptly named function keys. Typical uses are for muting the speakers or accessing the Internet.

E DVD Drive

Most laptops include a DVD drive, although some still feature a CD drive. The location of these drives varies by model.

F Battery

A battery usually slots into the bottom of a laptop. The battery needs to be recharged on a regular basis.

G Power-Cord Connector

To recharge your battery, you plug your laptop into a power socket using this power-cord connector.

EXPLORE SLOTS AND PORTS

You can use the various slots and ports built into your laptop to connect peripheral devices to it, such as a printer, a mouse, a keyboard, an extra monitor, headphones, a microphone, a digital camera and more. Most of these slots and ports are located on the sides or back of the chassis.

Note that, in addition to using the slots and ports built into your laptop to connect peripheral devices, you can also connect these devices to ports and slots in a docking station. You can then plug your laptop into the docking station to access the peripheral devices.

USB Port

You can use a universal serial bus (USB) port to connect a wide variety of devices, from a flash drive for data storage to a printer or digital camera. Devices that can be connected via USB are generally plug-and-play – that is, you need not restart your computer to use them after connecting them via a USB cable. Windows can automatically install many USB devices when you connect them, requiring no additional input from you.

Memory Card Reader

A memory card is a small, removable digital storage device used in many electronic gadgets such as digital cameras, MP3 players and so on. Many laptops feature memory card readers – small slots into which you can insert a memory card. You can then view the contents of the memory card and even use the memory card as an external storage device to save data from your laptop.

Monitor Port

Some laptop computers include a monitor port. If you want to connect an external monitor to your laptop – for example, to show a presentation on a larger screen or if you use a dual-monitor system in your workflow – you can connect a standard monitor cable to the laptop's monitor port.

Ethernet Jack

You use an Ethernet jack to connect your computer to a router that controls your local area network (LAN) through a coaxial or fibre-optic cable. You can also use an Ethernet jack to establish a high-speed connection to the Internet. You simply plug the Ethernet cable into the Ethernet jack on your laptop and then connect the other end of the cable to a high-speed modem.

Modem Jack

Although most people use an Ethernet cable or a wireless signal to access the Internet, there may be times when you must use a phone line. If you need to use a phone line to dial up your Internet connection, you can plug a phone cable into the modem jack to pick up a signal.

PC Card Slot

The Personal Computer Memory Card International Association (PCMCIA), a group of industry-leading companies, defined and developed a standard for PCMCIA (or PC) cards. A PC card was originally a type of storage card but it has expanded to house other devices, such as network cards and modems. Many laptops include slots for PC cards.

Headphone and Microphone Jacks

If you want to use headphones to listen to music from your computer, you plug them into the headphone jack. You can also use this jack to plug in computer speakers. You use the microphone jack to plug in a microphone. You might use a microphone, for example, to communicate with others using a video-chat application.

CHOOSE A MONITOR SIZE

Laptop displays range in size from 5 inches – perfect for portability – to 17 or even 20 inches. These larger monitors are ideal for handling graphics and animations. In addition to varying in size, laptop monitors can also vary in image quality.

Which monitor is right for you depends on how many hours you will spend in front of it and what functions you need to perform. When choosing a monitor, you should keep both size and image quality in mind.

Note that laptop monitors are notoriously fragile. Avoid scratching them or submitting them to extreme temperatures.

Display Size

If you mainly need to check e-mail or type a few memos on the road, a smaller monitor might be adequate. However, if you spend hours reading reports, studying graphs and viewing high-end graphics, a larger monitor is best. Of course, monitor size affects portability, with larger monitors best suited for stay-at-home laptops.

Display Quality

Laptop monitors vary widely in quality. When researching laptop monitors, you will hear various terms, such as "backlit" and "reflective", "active matrix" and "passive matrix" and "TFT". Generally speaking, TFT, active-matrix, backlit displays are superior. A monitor's screen resolution indicates the number of pixels that form an image on the screen; the higher the numbers are, the crisper the display. Look for a screen resolution of at least 1024 × 768 pixels – higher if you use graphics-intensive applications.

Tablet PCs

Tablet PCs are a special type of laptop. Most tablet PCs look more like legal pads than laptops; instead of using a keyboard and pointing device to input data, you write directly on the tablet PC's monitor using a stylus – that is, an electromagnetic pen that sends a digital signal through the screen. What you write on the monitor can be converted to a regular font for improved readability.

If you run into a problem with Windows 7 or you are not sure how to perform a task, try the Windows Help and Support Center. Click the **Start** *button, click* **Help and Support.** *Type a keyword or phrase in the Search box. Click the* **Search Help** *button (🔍) or press* Enter *. Click a link that looks relevant.*

CHOOSE THE RIGHT WEIGHT

Laptops started out as portable computing devices for people who travelled regularly. Today, you can find ultra-portable laptops that weigh as little as two pounds. These laptops offer a smaller display and keyboard size and have the advantage of a longer battery life.

You can also buy laptops that weigh as much as 18 pounds. These larger models often include multimedia features and larger screen sizes. In fact, these models are so fully featured, many people have adopted them for use in lieu of a desktop computer.

Choosing the right weight for your laptop involves weighing portability against performance.

Portability

If you need a laptop for use while on the road, consider a lighter-weight model. Be aware, however, that there can be a trade-off in features and price when you buy a very lightweight laptop. A two-pound laptop may be more expensive and less able to handle larger programs or run at faster speeds. In contrast, a larger portable laptop may offer more speed or features, but it may be difficult to carry on long trips.

Stay-at-Home Laptops

Some people use laptops at home in lieu of a desktop computer. Even larger laptops, which boast 17- or even 20-inch screens, take up less space than a computer tower and plugging external devices into them is easier than having to crawl around on the floor or move a heavy tower. With wireless Internet connections and a built-in keyboard and pointing device, they tend to reduce the clutter of cables that come with standard desktop models. Although weight is less of an issue for stay-at-home laptops, consider whether you might want to carry such a computer from room to room or out of the house before you choose the heaviest model.

Rugged Laptops

Some laptops are marketed for their durability. If you work in an industry such as construction, the military, law enforcement, archaeology or any other industry in which your laptop may be subjected to a harsh physical environment in which heat, humidity, altitude or depth may be a factor, one of these rugged laptops may be for you. Water- and shock-proof, their keyboards are sealed to prevent water damage and they can withstand more variation in temperature, as well as the effects of shock, vibration, falls, grease, water and fire. They can also function near electromagnetic transmissions, such as from power generators. Not surprisingly, these rugged laptops are somewhat heavier than traditional models.