

Session 1 – The Basics

1 INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

This is the first of 6 sessions in which you will be shown the basics of using a Windows computer.

The course is relevant whatever you want to do with your computer. It includes most popular programs (apps): word processing, spreadsheets and graphics. We will also address concerns about safety, security and integrity.

This course cannot possibly teach you everything you need to know, so you will learn how to find out things for yourself, or learn from the other members on the course.

Although there is a basic pre-planned structure to the sessions, we will not be following a rigid curriculum, so we can explore any topics that are of particular interest to you. Similarly, the job of your course leader is to facilitate your exploration of the subjects, rather than to act as a formal tutor.

There will be exercises for you to tackle, indicated by blue italic text.

2 FIRST EXERCISE

We will be using the resources of the internet throughout these sessions, so your first exercise is...

Connect to the internet:

You can do so using either:

- Task bar >  (Internet access)

Or

-  (Start) > Settings > Network and Internet > WiFi > Show available networks.

Use the network name and password that you will be provided with.

Check that you are connected, by opening your internet browser and typing a URL, such as

- <https://www.example.com>
- <https://southsolihull.u3asite.uk>

3 DEMONSTRATION SYSTEMS

The demonstrations on this course will be on Windows 10. You may be using Windows 11, or an older version of windows. This is not a problem; will deal with the differences as we encounter them.

4 KNOWING YOUR COMPUTER

It is useful to be able to find out the specification of your computer.

View your system information:

- For W10 and W11, make the following menu selections:

-  (Start) > Settings > System > About
- Or on W10:



- (Start) > Windows System > Control Panel > System and Security > System

Examine the information that is presented.

5 WINDOWS 10 VS. WINDOWS 11

The main visible differences introduced with Windows 11, compared to Windows 10, are:

- Centred Taskbar & Start Menu: Icons are placed in the centre (but can be moved back to the left).
- Windows, menus etc.: Rounded corners.
- Icons & Themes: New system icons and a simplified file explorer.
- Widgets: "News & Interests" panel replaced by "Widgets" board, and can be personalised.
- Snap Layouts & Groups: More window snapping options (Hover over the maximise button on a window to see the options.)

6 UPGRADING TO WINDOWS 11

Can I upgrade my system from Windows 10 to Windows 11? This depends on your computer having:

- A suitable processor.
- The minimum amount of memory.

There is an easy way to check:

- Search bar: select Apps tab, type: "PC Health Check", then select it from the list of results.

If you don't have PC Health Check installed, you can install it by going to:

<https://aka.ms/GetPCHealthCheckApp>

and following the prompts to download and install the app.

7 BUGS AND CRASHES

If your system becomes unresponsive, or behaves in strange ways, for instance, a window won't close, you can use the Task Manager to see what's running, and terminate the program that is causing trouble.

Open Task Manager:

- Press: [CTRL]+[ALT]+[DEL] > Task Manager.

By clicking on the column headings you can sort the entries to find out which tasks are using a lot of memory or CPU time.

ONLY TERMINATE APPS, NOT BACKGROUND OR SYSTEM PROCESSES.

If closing programs doesn't work, you can try restarting your machine by either:



- (Start) > Power > Restart

Or

- Hold down the power button on your machine until it responds.

8 GOD MODE

There are many places where you can make system settings, select options and execute system actions, such as Settings, Control Panel, File Explorer, and Notifications. (We have already seen some of these).

There are hundreds of different settings, so it can be difficult to remember where any specific one is, but there is an easy way to find them most of them in one place, called the 'Windows Master Control Panel Shortcut' – also known as 'God Mode'.

Using Internet Explorer, search for "god mode windows 10" and follow the instructions carefully.

If successful, you should have a new icon like this:  on your desktop. The icon does not have a name, and you can't add one.

Test the result.

9 OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE

Software (programs) can be divided into two types: 'Proprietary' and 'Open Source'. The characteristics of Open Source are:

- Source code that anyone can inspect, modify, and enhance.
- Licensed to allow users to use, study, change, and distribute the code, freely.
- Fosters collaborative development and community-driven innovation.

The demonstrations in these sessions will be on Open Source software, but you can use proprietary software just as well, as the functionality is much the same, though the user interface may be somewhat different.

10 KEEPING UPDATED

It is important to keep your system and programs up-to-date.

Check the status of your system:

-  (Start) > Settings > Update & Security > Windows Update > Check for updates.

System updates are usually applied the next time the system is started. Sometimes the update process will re-start your system automatically, but it is a good idea to re-start your system after a system update anyway.

How to check that you are using the latest version of a program depends on the program itself. For most programs you can click on the Help icon and then Check for updates.

11 FILE MANAGEMENT

Do you give your files meaningful names? Do you keep them in a well-organised folder structure, using the folder hierarchy?

11.1 File Explorer

The program that lets you look at your filing structure is called 'File Explorer' (it used to be called 'Windows Explorer' in earlier versions of Windows).

There are other Open Source file management programs if you want particular features that File Explorer doesn't have, but we will stick to File Explorer on this course.

There are some simple ways to help you find your files easily and keep your filing system tidy.

There are several ways to open File Explorer. The only difference between them is the initial view.

- Desktop >  (This PC).

This opens at the top level, showing all the data storage devices accessible by the machine.

- Task bar >  (File Explorer).

This opens at the level defined in Folder Options.

- Desktop >  (Documents)

This opens starting at the Documents Library.

Open File Explorer using all the above methods, and observe the result.

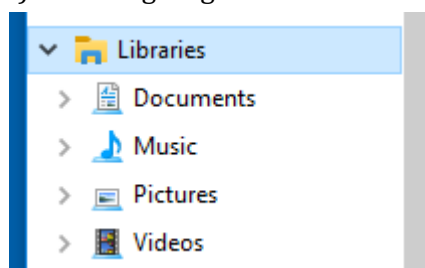
11.2 Logical File Structures

Tips for creating a logical, hierarchical folder structure:

- Use consistent file names.
- For date dependant files, put the date first in yyyy-mm-dd format, so that the names sort in the correct order.
- Folders should ideally contain only sub-folders, or only files, not a mixture.
- Keep a balance between width and depth, i.e. number of entries in a folder, vs. creating a deeply nested structure.

11.3 Libraries

In File Explorer, a 'Library' is not a real folder; the system searches for files of a particular type (music, documents, pictures, videos) and brings together a list of all it finds.



Searching in Libraries can be a good way to find a file if you know what type it is, but not which folder it is in.

11.4 Finding Files

File Explorer has many options; you can use them to help you find your files:

- Sorting:
Click on column headings and see what happens.
- Views:
Try various options of the Views menu
- Find files by content:
Enter a word in the Search field
- File Properties:

Right click on a file and select 'Properties'

You can add information from the Properties of a file to the File Explorer display by using the Add Columns option. For instance, if your camera records the 'Date Taken' for photographs, you can display that information.

11.5 Moving and Copying

Files can be moved or copied between folders by either:

- Right-clicking on the file name and using the Copy, Cut and Paste options of the context menu. This gives you full control of what you are doing, but is the slowest method.

Or

- By Drag & Drop, with the left mouse button. This is the fastest method, but you have to remember whether it is going to move or copy: Dragging to the same physical drive moves, dragging to a different physical drive copies.

A good compromise is to use Drag & Drop with the right mouse button, then you can explicitly choose move or copy from the context menu when you drop.

(Will see in a later session that there is a method using keyboard shortcuts).

12 THE SEARCH BAR

The Search bar allows you to find almost anything, anywhere.

Click in the search bar.

Note the tabs at the top. The default is 'All' but you can refine the search by selecting a tab.

Try searching for anything.

For example, a program to do with music, or a file name.

13 FILE EXTENSIONS

All file names should have a file 'extension' that indicates the file type or contents. Common extensions are:

- Word Processing: .odt, .doc, .docx
- Spreadsheets: .ods, .xls
- Raster Graphics (photos): .jpg, .bmp
- Vector Graphics (drawings): .odg, .svg
- Presentations: .ppt, .odp

In File Explorer you can choose to show or hide extensions. The 'Type' column is based on the file's extension.

14 FILE ASSOCIATIONS

There is a relationship between programs and the types of file that they can handle. For example, you can open a .doc file using Word but not using Paint.

There are two ways of opening a file, either:

- Open the App, then open the file from within the app. The app will tell you which file types it can open.

Or

- Open the file with the default app for the file type by double-clicking the file.

The association between file types and their default app is determined by a system setting that you can get to by any of these ways:

-  (Start) > Settings > Apps > Default Apps > Choose default application by file type.

Or

-  (God Mode) > File Explorer Options > Change file types associated with a file extension.

Or

- Search bar: type "Default Apps".

Try one of the above

The system will list all the file extensions and show which app (if any) is the default for that file extension. (It may take a long time to build the list – be patient).

15 USING A NON-DEFAULT APP

Sometimes you might want to open a file with an app other than the default for the file type. For instance, your default for .bmp (bitmap graphics) might be Paint, but you might want to open it using Photoshop.

You can do this by right-clicking on the file and selecting Open With from the context menu.

Try right-click on a selection of different file types.

16 SUMMARY OF THE SESSION

In this session you have:

- Learned how to find out the name and specification of your computer.
- Learned when and how to use Task Manager.
- Installed God Mode, and seen how to use it.
- Compared Open Source vs Commercial software.
- Learned about keeping system and programs up-to-date, including potential upgrade to Windows 11.
- Had some tips about organising files and using File Explorer.
- Seen how useful the Search bar can be.
- Learned about File extensions and App associations.

17 CLOSE

Finally, here is some homework for you:

Review your folder structure, and see if you can improve it.

Review today's content and bring any questions to the next session.

Change Control

Version	Date	Change
1	30/8/2026	First version.
2	5/9/2026	Corrections to some menu navigation steps.