

FOOD PROCESSORS AND WORD PROCESSORS

We can learn a lot about computers by comparing them with electric beaters (and using a lot of imagination). Both electric beaters and computers consist of three sections: the basic drive unit, add-on accessories, and a system for attaching the accessories.

The Basic Unit: Imagine food processors that you buy piece by piece as you need various attachments, rather than buying a whole package to begin with. These are available from a variety of manufacturers, each of which has a number of models, of various power, with new models constantly being developed. You start with the basic hand-held model with just beaters supplied, a switch to turn it on and off, and perhaps a variable speed dial. You can buy further accessories or kits of accessories when you need them. But you don't need to buy anything further until you have learned how to use the beater (beating eggs, whipping cream, mixing cakes) — and you might never want to do anything else with it.

This is similar with computers. You start with a basic model that will get you started that you can learn on. When you buy it, a basic word processor (WordPad) is included — you can write notes and letters in this, and also emails (which use the same principles) — as well as programs to send and receive emails and search the Internet. The basic model has an on-off switch, processor, memory, hard drive, CD/DVD drive, sound card, graphics card, etc., and a monitor and mouse (accessories). You can add further things later if you need anything more.

Accessories: Quite a range of accessories might be available to add to your mixer: a stand with mixing bowl, blender, dough hook, orange juicer, cabbage shredder, bean slicer, etc.

This is the same with computers. Computers have two types of add-ons: “hardware” and “software”. Hardware are things that are plugged in: printer, speakers, scanner, flash drive, external hard drive, etc. Software includes the programs or applications which do different things, such as more advanced word processing, desktop publisher, spreadsheet, database, drawing, etc.

Attachment Mechanism: In many cases manufacturers of food processors use their own design for attaching their accessories to the basic unit, and accessories are not interchangeable between different brands (think Kenwood and Sunbeam). There are two main systems for attaching software accessories to the computer (called the “operating system”): *Mac OS* (for Apple computers) and *Windows* (for most of the rest). Apple makes its own computers, operating system and accessories, and generally does not allow other manufacturers to make or use these (however, it is licensed by Windows to make an adaptor which allows *Windows* programs to run on Apple computers).

Windows is produced by Microsoft, which creates software which runs in its Windows system (and many other companies also create software which

runs in the Windows system). Microsoft does not make computers. Instead it licenses many manufacturers to use *Windows* on their computers, and you pay for this when you buy a computer with *Windows*. Like car manufactures, Microsoft frequently brings out new models of *Windows* — 95, 98, ME (2000), 2000, XP (2002), Vista (2007), Windows 7 (2009) — to persuade customers to buy their new models. But you usually don't need a later version if you're happy with what you're using.

Also available is a free operating system (*Linux*, with a number of versions), which can be installed in a computer instead of *Windows*.

Microsoft Office: *Windows* comes with a word processor program (*WordPad*), which will do enough that you need for learning and using word processing, and is used in our initial word processor course. It also includes a program for emails (*Outlook Express* in *Windows 98/XP*, *Windows Mail* in *Windows Vista*), an "Internet browser" (*Internet Explorer*), and a program for finding things in your computer (*Windows Explorer*). Several alternative Internet browser programs are available: *Firefox*, *Chrome*, etc.

Microsoft Word is the next step up from *WordPad* as a word processor. It contains further options, including tables, text boxes, columns, WordArt, ClipArt, Mail Merge, etc. These are available in our further word processor or other courses, but you will have to buy the program (or load the free alternative, *Open Office*) before doing these. *Word* is not available by itself, but only in a package (*Microsoft Office*, about \$150 plus — but see below), and includes further programs (*Excel*, *PowerPoint*, and others, depending on the version of *Office*). You probably won't need *Microsoft Office* when you buy a new computer, unless you intend to use *Office* programs — you can always buy it later if you feel that you need it.

There are a number of versions of *Microsoft Office*: 97, 2000, XP (2002), 2003, and 2007. Versions of programs in the first four are very similar, and *Word* in these is often referred to as "*Word 97-2003*". Most *Microsoft Office 2007* programs have a different layout from earlier versions — they have "tabs" with "ribbons" instead of drop-down menus. This means that some of our manuals have alternative instructions for these different versions, and computers with the different versions are available in our teaching room. New versions of *Windows* and *Microsoft Office* (due in 2010) may require further changes.

Open Office is a free alternative to *Microsoft Office*. It includes programs which are compatible with those in *Microsoft Office 2003*.

There is one important difference between food processors and word processors. Food processors are usually supplied with manuals with full instructions on how to use them, and often include recipes. Word processors don't have operating instructions, but there are books and "Help". SeniorNet provides you with courses where you are supplied with manuals and tuition in using them.

