

Help! I'm Not Good At Computers!

The job market is pretty crowded right now, and everyone knows how important it is to stand out in a crowd. One of the best ways to stand out is to be able to proudly declare, "I'm good with a computer." Of course, it helps for that statement to be true. Let's quickly go through a few tips on how to improve your computer skills.

0) Focus on the Basics

Before we go on, it might be important to discuss what you need to know about computers. Keep it simple. Work at the basics of operating a computer. Just simply having a good understanding of the computer's operating system (typically Windows XP or Windows Vista) can make you much more efficient than a competing job applicant. It's also key to understand the programs common to office use (i.e. Microsoft Word, Outlook, Excel, and PowerPoint). Other programs that you might be required to use, though less frequently, might include Adobe Acrobat, Quicken, Microsoft Access, etc. Some companies have their own tech support department that will offer training on some of these, but of course, it helps to know as much as you can as early as you can.

1) Take a Class

Community colleges are not that expensive, and if a small investment of time and money can give you the skills you need to get a job, then it might just be time to go back to school. However, if money or time is an issue, you might want to check around to see if the libraries, churches, or other non-profit organizations in your area offer free or cheap training classes. These classes won't get you any academic/college credit, but they are certainly worth the money you pay if they can help you get a competitive edge.

2) Read a Book

Believe it or not, the Internet has not yet replaced the good, ol' fashioned printed page. Amazon.com, Borders, Barnes & Noble, and even your local library offer several great books on computers, computer programs, and other relevant topics. You may not like to read, but you probably like the idea of unemployment even less. Here are some books you might want to add to your mental library:

Microsoft Office 2007 Simplified by Sherry Williard Kinkoph

Using Microsoft Office 2007 by Ed Bott and Woody Leonard

Microsoft Windows XP Plain & Simple, 2nd Edition by Jerry Joyce and Marianne Moon

Windows XP for Dummies by Andy Rathbone

Using Microsoft Windows Vista by Robert Cowart and Brian Knittel

Windows Vista: The Missing Manual by David Pogue

Microsoft Windows Vista Step by Step by Jon Preppernau

3) Take an Online Tutorial

The Internet can be an incredible tool for increasing your computer knowledge. Several websites offer free tutorials that make using Microsoft programs much easier. Try using some of these websites.

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/training/default.aspx>

<http://www.officetutorials.com/>

<http://baycongroup.com/>

<http://www.pitt.edu/~edindex/OfficeindexXP2.html>

<http://www.bcschools.net/staff/MicrosoftOffice.htm> (This is for MS Office 2000, but it might still be helpful.)

4) Practice! Practice! Practice!

Whether with help or without, you need to practice. Use these programs every day to learn new things and keep old skills fresh. Put in the extra effort, and it will show.