

**EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO
KNOW ABOUT HOME COMPUTERS
BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK.**



Like a lot of parents, you probably find the thought of buying a home computer a little daunting.

Which brand? Which model? What software? What extra equipment? Can I make it work?

But you needn't worry. Today's modern personal computers are as easy to operate as a video recorder.

And while there are a number of computer brands and models available—ranging from basic introductory units for around \$350 through to sophisticated ones for \$2000–\$3000, the rules for buying a computer are essentially the same as buying a video.

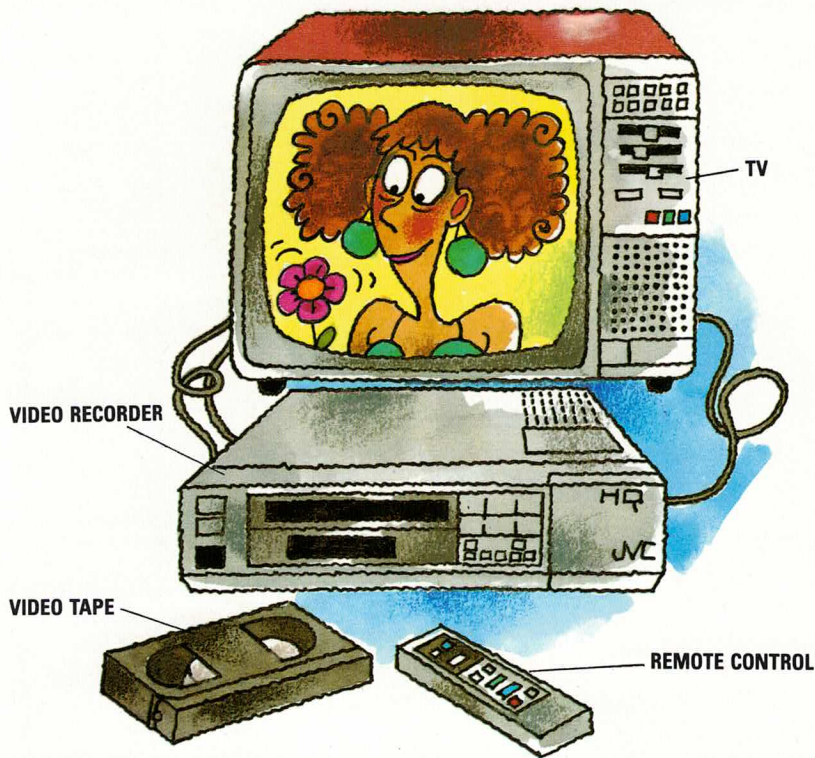
So the idea behind this booklet is to help you work out what you want your computer to do, which will help make it clear which computer you'll need.

With this knowledge you can go to a computer shop and try out the model you want. You'll be surprised at just how easy it will be to use.

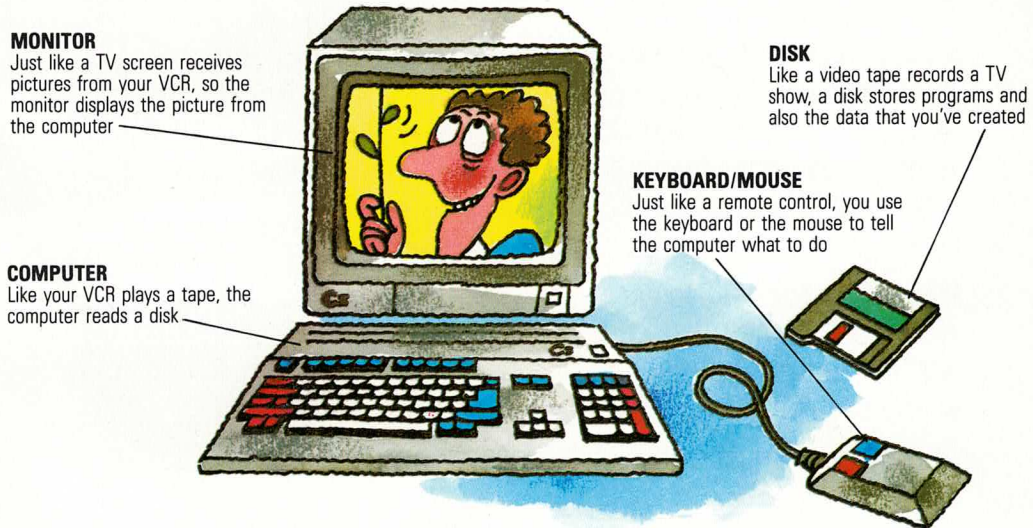
And like buying a video, check the reputation of the manufacturer and the availability of after-sales service. That way you can be sure of spending your money wisely.

The other thing you'll want to consider in your choice is a computer that can grow with you as your skills increase or your budget allows.

IF YOU CAN USE ONE OF THESE



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JUST SOME OF THE THINGS A COMPUTER CAN DO FOR YOU

Writing

- write letters
- design and print invitations
- write shopping lists
- record recipes
- keep birthday lists up-to-date
- keep a Christmas card list
- keep personal addresses and telephone numbers
- creative writing—stories, poems, articles

Home office

- maintain financial records
- work out budgets
- keep track of family finances
- do spreadsheets

Education

- learn new skills
- learn a new language
- practice reading skills for young children
- practice spelling
- write essays and homework projects

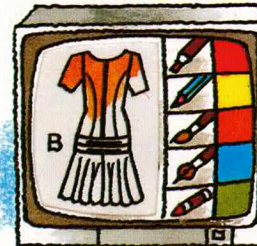
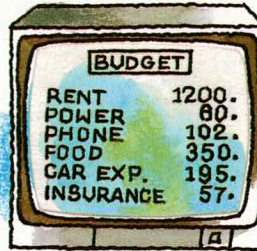
Art/graphics

- paint your own pictures
- produce your own artwork
- design and print business cards
- design and print bumper stickers
- draw graphs and charts
- design knitting patterns

Recreation

- play chess and other games
- write and play music
- play simulation games

And these are just a few of the possibilities!



IN CASE YOU DIDN'T ALREADY KNOW

When you're trying to decide which computer to buy, don't be shy about asking for information. Staff in computer shops are used to being asked all sorts of things about computers, so you probably won't be the first to ask a particular question. Here are some of the questions people typically ask.



1. What different sorts of computers are available?

There are many brands and models available, each with its own special functions and capabilities. But the most popular brand of home computer in Canada is Commodore.

2. Do I have to buy a computer monitor, or can I attach my computer to my TV?

A number of today's home computers can be attached to a TV, but this will result in a more limited display capability and lower definition than a monitor. However, if you do have a limited budget it is an excellent way of economising until you can afford a separate monitor. And of course a colour monitor is far more attractive and enjoyable to watch than a black and white one.

3. How much power do they use? What difference will it make to my power bill?

Like all electrical appliances, this will depend entirely on how much you use it. For most people the cost will be similar to running a radio—and usually less than a colour television set.



4. How much room do they take up?

Microcomputers are small and compact, designed to take up as little room as possible. They need only a space about the size of your old school desk.

5. Do I have to have air conditioning in the room I want to use my computer in?

No. Because today's models are more robust they don't need any special cooling. They will work quite happily in a wide range of temperatures and conditions.

6. How many power outlets will it need, and does it need any special wiring or connections?

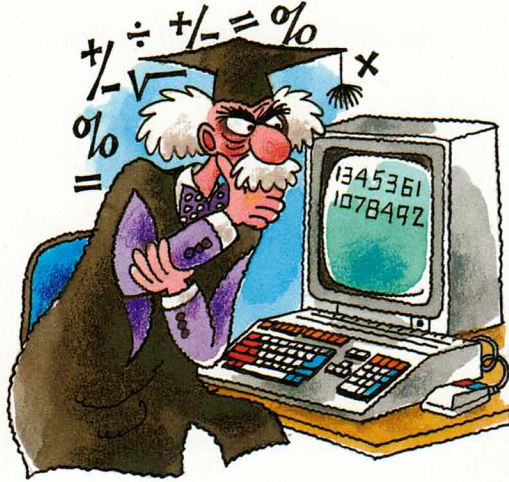
All you need is a standard three point plug for each of the pieces—one for the computer and screen, and one for the printer. Most people manage with a double adaptor or a small "powerboard".

7. How much will it cost to insure my computer—what difference will it make to my household insurance?

This will depend on your insurance company and how you choose to insure your household effects. But it should cost only about as much as it would to insure a good stereo.

8. Some computers look just like a television screen. Do I have to have a licence, like a television licence?

No. Although the computer might look like a television, it can't be used to receive television transmissions, so you don't need a licence.



9. Do I have to be good at maths to use my computer?

Not really. After all you don't have to be an electronic technician to use a video cassette recorder!

10. I've heard computers need complicated programs to make them work—will I have to learn how to do this "programming"?

No, depending on the application most of the programming has already been done for you, and is in your software package. But should you want to go further and learn programming, then you will be able to use your microcomputer to its full capacity.



11. I've also heard computers use special languages. Do I have to learn these new languages to use my computer?

No, the language used to program your home computer is normally provided with the machine. So unless you want to write your own programs you won't need to learn it.

12. Where can I learn more about how to use my computer, once I've bought it?

Most major brands have their own user groups and clubs you can join, a lot of schools and polytechnics offer formal courses too.

13. Do I need expert tuition or to attend a course to learn about my computer?

It isn't necessary, but as we mentioned there are a number of excellent courses available through night school and continuing education programmes, should you decide to further your knowledge and appreciation of computers. Some computers such as the Commodore Amiga are supplied with a tutorial disk to help you through the system.



14. How difficult is it to connect up my computer and make it all work?

Not difficult at all. The plugs are designed to fit together in the correct order, so you can't go wrong!

15. How private is information I put into my computer?

The information you put into your computer can be permanently stored either on a floppy disk, or on a hard disk in the machine. The information can only be accessed by someone using those disks. The information is as safe as the disk, how securely you decide to store it, and who you allow to use it. You are in control of the disk, so you control who has access to your private information.

16. Is it bad for my children to sit too long in front of the screen—is there any sort of radiation effect from sitting too close to it?

Like most things in life, moderation in computers is a good thing. Children should get plenty of exercise and fresh air as part of their daily routine—but sitting in front of a computer for part of each day isn't in itself harmful.



17. If my children spend all day on the keyboard will they develop RSI?

RSI (repetitive strain injury) has affected some typists, who work at great speed for hours on end, day after day, putting a strain on the tendons in their wrists and arms because of the angle of their wrists to the keyboard. Nowadays, computer keyboards have been redesigned so the keys don't sit flat, at the awkward angle that contributed to RSI. Instead they are gently curved up at the edges, and much more comfortable and safe to

use. And most leading computers also have a mouse which greatly reduces the amount of keyboarding required.

18. What else do I need to make my computer work?

Many systems are available as a "package". This will usually include the computer, often with a built in disk drive. Most dealers will offer you a choice of colour or monochrome monitors to go with the computer. A printer is a separate item that can be chosen to suit your particular needs. If you decide to have a mouse, that is sometimes extra to the basic package. Then you'll need to buy your "software". These programs will depend on what you and your family want from your home computer.

19. Where can I buy paper for the printer?

Computer paper is readily available from your nearest computer shop. Most printers will also take single sheets.

20. What is the availability of software? Is it hard to get?

There are a number of substantial software suppliers servicing the home computer market, but Commodore computers have the widest range of software available.

21. Is software expensive?

Software prices can vary from \$9.95 for a simple game to \$2000–\$3000 for very advanced applications such as computer assisted design functions. Most major home computer software ranges from a few dollars to a few hundred dollars, depending on how complicated they are.

22. What is “public domain software”?

The public domain is a library of programs which have been donated by other computer users, for use by anyone. These programs hold no copyright and are free of charge, except for your disk and copying costs.

23. What on-going expenses will there be?

Any new software you decide to buy to add to your collection, and from time to time you will need blank diskettes (\$2.00–\$3.50 each), replacement ribbons (\$15.00–\$30.00 each) and paper (\$40.00–\$50.00 for a box of 2000 sheets).

24. What can go wrong with my computer—what are the usual sorts of problems with them?

Very little can go wrong—there are very few moving parts and the most common faults are usually minor defects in soldering on the control boards inside the box. These are usually picked up before the machine reaches the store, as every machine is thoroughly tested before it is put on sale. Any remaining defects will usually show up within the warranty period.

25. What sort of guarantees do they have—and how do you get them repaired if they do break down?

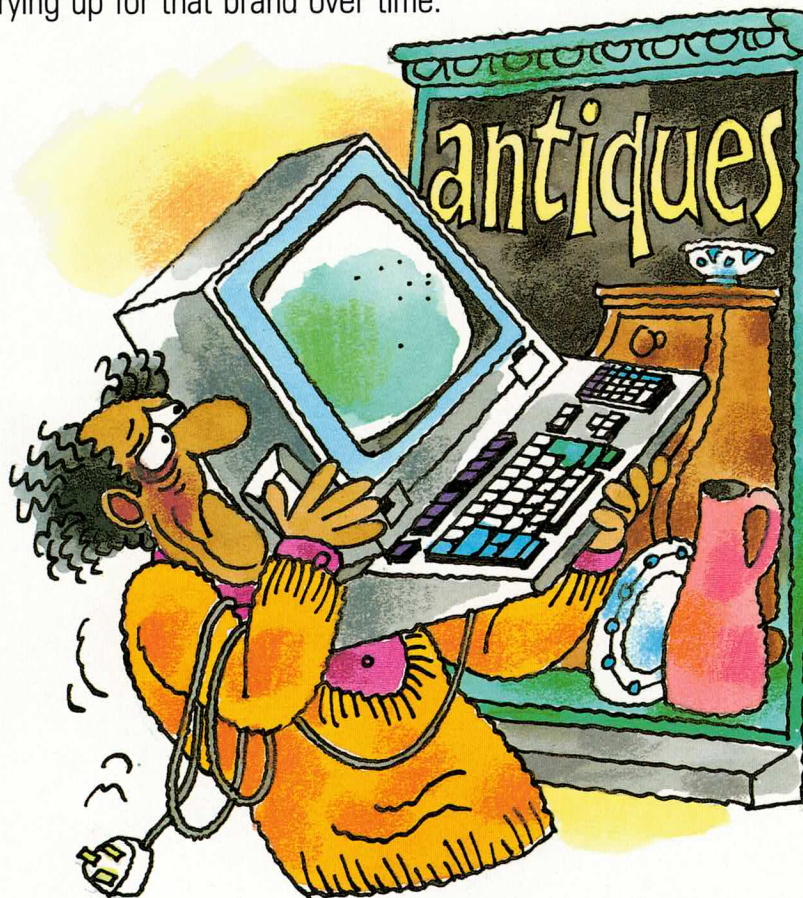
This will depend on the sort of computer you buy and who you buy it from. If you buy a recognised brand from an authorised dealer, you will normally be covered by the manufacturer's guarantees. This will usually be a parts and labour warranty, ranging from three months to one year. Repairs can usually be organised by the dealer you bought your machine from.

26. Do I need to have my computer regularly serviced?

No. Your computer only requires the same degree of care and attention you would give to a video recorder.

27. Will my computer become obsolete?

No, it will always be able to do what you bought it for, and while more sophisticated models may follow, you will still be able to use your computer for what you intended. If you buy a less common brand you could have a problem with the supply of software drying up for that brand over time.



28. How can I pay for my computer?

Most computer shops and stores where computers are sold have purchase terms and credit card facilities.

WHAT DO I NEED MY COMPUTER TO DO?

All Commodore computers can do the things listed on Page 4 of this booklet. However, some applications are better suited, (and more enjoyable) with a particular model. We've briefly noted the strengths of each Commodore computer below to help you decide which Commodore is right for you.

Commodore 64

A great introduction to home computing. The Commodore 64 is most suitable for Games and Education.

Commodore Amiga

Much more powerful than a 64, the amazing Amiga can do everything a 64 can and much much more. Especially good for Art; Graphics; Animation and Simulations. The amazing Amiga will let you do as much as your imagination can manage.

Commodore PC

With much greater capacity than a Commodore 64, the Commodore PC is ideal for any office situation and runs IBM compatible software.



Commodore

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