

Chapter 8 - Windows

Skills needed:

Keyboard and mouse (Chapters 6 & 7)

Windows are what PC programs are all about. Up to now we have been talking about ‘pictures’, ‘screens’ and Desktops – these are **not** ‘window’s. Windows appear on the screen when we start to work with the computer and because they all share a basic anatomy it is very important that you recognise their structure. This may sound technical to the point of unnecessary boredom, but please believe me when I tell you that this knowledge is essential. Returning to the analogy of the car, all of them, from the humblest Ford to the most exotic Ferrari, use basic controls - accelerator, brakes, steering wheel, speedometer, fuel gauge, windscreen wipers and lights. Others may have a clutch, cruise control, tachometer or navigation system but however much you are keen to take it down the road for the first time, you must know the functions of the basics if you hope to complete your journey with any degree of safety.

So take some time to learn the underlying features of a computer window and you will recognise the structure of even the most advanced program displays.

The Basic Window:

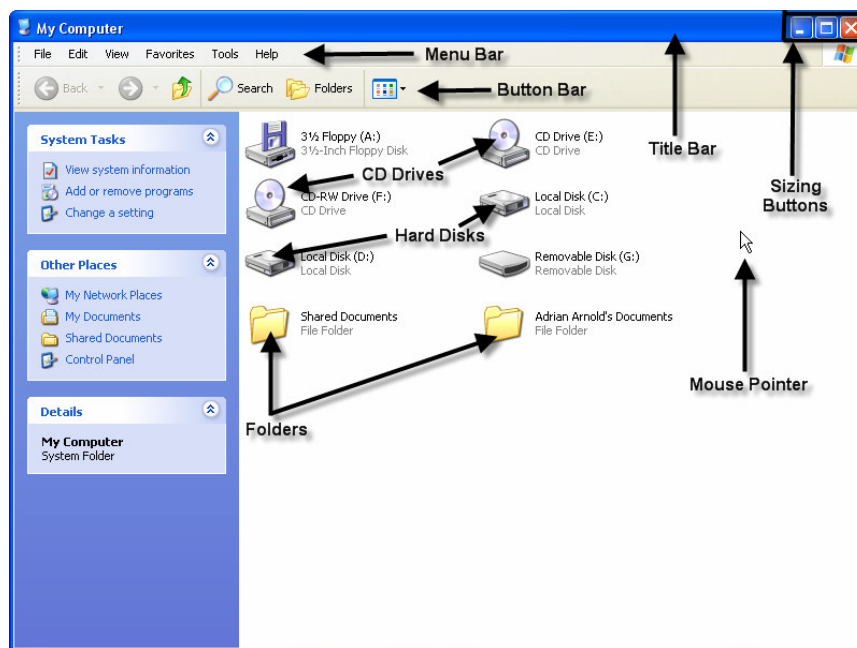


Fig.

8.1

Let us explore the basic window in some detail. Double click the My Computer icon on the desktop. (It is usually found at the top left-hand corner of the desktop.) This brings up a rectangular picture lying over the desktop screen.

The My Computer Window shows the contents of the computer which consist of a floppy drive (A:), hard disc (C: or D:) and the CD players (E: and F:) see Fig. 8.1 You may only have one hard disc and one CD player in which case the identifying letters may be

different. We will explore the meanings of disks, drives and players in a moment but for the time being we are interested in the structure of the window itself.

Title Bar



Fig. 8.2

The blue bar at the very top is the Title Bar identifying the window – in this case, My Computer. Because this is the only window you have open, the Title Bar will be a bright colour. You should be able to see part of the desktop screen around the edges – left click on any part of the surrounding desktop and notice how the Title Bar changes colour. Then left click anywhere on the window and the colour of the Title Bar is restored. I will explain the significance of this colour change in a moment but we need to take control of the window before throwing in complications.

The Sizing Buttons:



At the right-hand end of this bar are three buttons that allow you to control the size of the window.

The right-hand button (**X**) closes the window completely. Left click on this button and the window vanishes. Restore the window by double clicking on the My Computer icon on the desktop. When a window is part of a program, such as email or word-processor, clicking on this button has the effect of shutting down the whole program with the window.

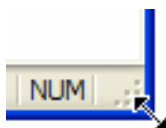
The left hand button 'minimises' the window by clearing the screen and placing an identifying icon in the Status bar at the very bottom of the Desktop. Click on this button and identify the My Computer box in the Task Bar at the bottom of the screen. Left click on the box to restore the window. The advantage of minimising a window is that you can have several programs running in the background available for use at the click of a mouse. For example you may be writing a letter when you want to include a comment from an email message. If both programs are open it is easy to copy the email message from one program and insert it into the letter in another.



The central button maximises the window to fill the whole screen.

Click on the central button now. When the window is maximised the central button changes to a double square which, on being clicked, restores the window to the original size. By using the full screen you will relieve strain on your eyes and back by reducing the need to lean forward and squint at the screen.

Resizing tag:



There is another way of resizing the window. The image on the left is an enlargement of the bottom right hand corner of a word processing

window. Diagonal dots or lines mark the corner in question and if you place the mouse pointer over this hatched area the arrow changes to a double-headed arrow. Hold down the left mouse key and drag it diagonally up or down the screen. The window size changes with the dragging action. Let go of the mouse button when you have the size you want and this will be set as the Restore Down position.

It is not a good idea to use this tag to drag the window to fill the screen as this will eliminate any difference between the Full Screen and Restore Down positions and the window will always open as full screen.

Menu Bar:

Below the Title Bar lies the Menu Bar (Fig. 8.3)



Fig. 8.3

By clicking on the words you will create a drop-down menu with various commands. These drop-down menus can also be activated by holding down the Alt key at the same time as the pressing one of the underlined letters in the word you require - such as Alt-E for the Edit menu or Alt-A for the Favorites menu.

Microsoft Windows systems invariably give you many options to perform a command. At this early stage I will only give you two alternatives for most commands to avoid confusion.

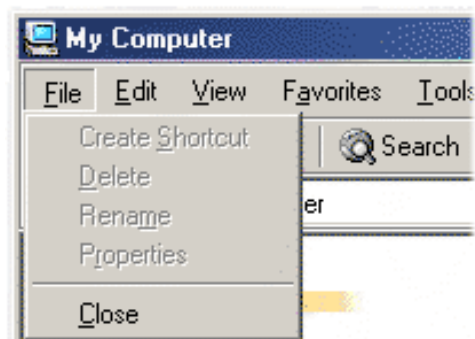


Fig. 8.4

Fig. 8.4 shows the drop-down File menu. You will notice that all but the Close command are 'greyed-out' meaning that these commands are unavailable at this time. Click the mouse on any blank area of the window to remove the drop-down menu.

Tool Bar



Fig. 8.5

Much of this bar comes into its own when using more advanced windows especially in the use of your Internet browser that is covered in Chapter 13. The four buttons at the left-hand end are needed at this stage and we will deal with those when navigating the folders later in this chapter.

If you do not see this tool bar click on View then Toolbars then Standard Buttons.