

Other Publications Available from CANS

Your Ticket to Technology at Towson University
highlights Towson's computing services and facilities.

Painless Pains: An Introduction to Windows 95
describes the use of Windows 95, PowerTerm and WsFTP.

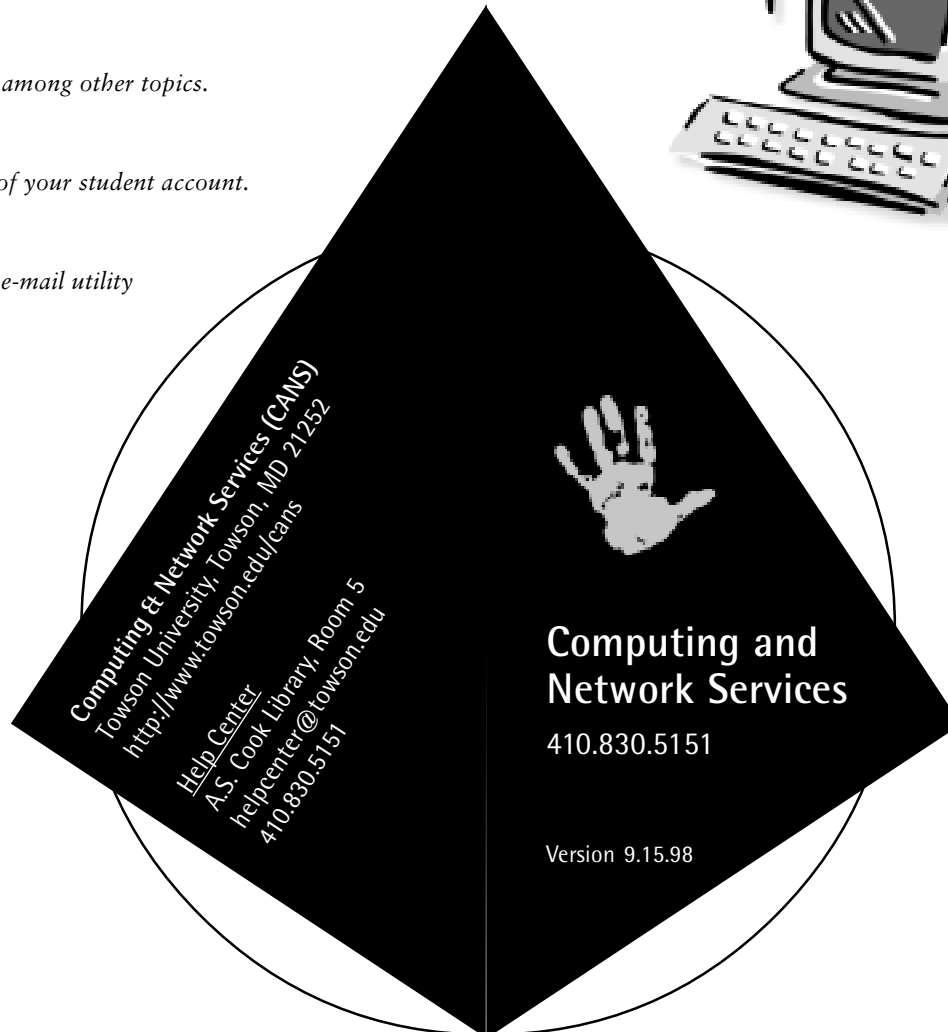
Netscape Quick Reference
covers the basic skills required to browse the World Wide Web.

Microsoft Word Basics
describes word processing with Microsoft Word.

Introduction to Tiger & Triton
covers logging on from on-campus and home among other topics.

Student Account Survival Kit
guides you through the use and maintenance of your student account.

The Sense of Pine
presents a thorough introduction to Pine, the e-mail utility provided with your student account.



Computing is a simple necessity of the university experience; but not all students come to Towson with the basic knowledge and skills they need to use the computers on campus. Among the objectives of Computing and Network Services is to help those students new to computing quickly learn enough to begin using Towson's computer labs. We have designed this document specifically for our fresh users. Inside, we identify the basic parts of a computer system and describe how to use the two most common input devices: the keyboard and the mouse. So, come on in, and let us help you get started on the path to "electrobliss." (Or is it electrolysis? Whichever is the less painful.) ■



Desktop Computer

When you hear the word “computer,” chances are you picture a device much like the one illustrated here, a device commonly known as a *desktop computer*, or even more specifically, a *PC* (Personal Computer). This is the type of computer that you are most likely to encounter in a campus computer lab or business office. Granted, it is not warm and fuzzy, but it is fairly friendly and can be a lot of fun! Come on, we’ll introduce you.

Monitor

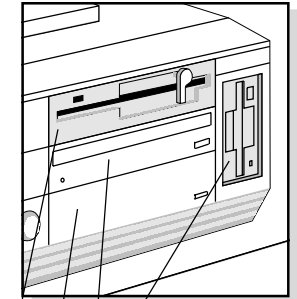
Resembling a small television, the monitor has a glass screen which allows you to see what you are doing as you use the computer. What you see on the monitor is referred to as the *desktop*; just as you move real papers and folders around on the surface of your desk, you can move *virtual* (electronic) papers and folders around on your computer desktop. This desktop is generated by the *operating system*, special computer software that allows you to create and organize your own files (documents) as well as to run other software (like WordPerfect or Netscape Navigator). All PCs on campus use an operating system called Microsoft Windows which displays labeled icons (small images) and buttons designed to make the computer less intimidating and easier to use. Most monitors have their own power switch, usually located on the front, in the lower right corner.

Keyboard

With its rows of labeled keys, the computer keyboard largely resembles the *ancient* typewriter. And, it pretty much works the same way too. When you press a key or a combination of keys, you send instructions to the computer. The keyboard is well suited for typing and editing text and for navigating (moving through) long documents. For drawing or moving objects around on the desktop, the mouse is a more efficient tool.

Disk Drives

As you type, the computer stores your input in its temporary memory. When you instruct the computer to save your work, the computer transfers that information to a permanent storage medium called a *disk*. The devices which make this possible are called **disk drives**. Disks can be either fixed (permanently mounted inside the computer) or removable. Fixed (or hard) disks typically hold an enormous number of files. Removable disks (often called *floppy disks*) hold fewer files but are portable. When you work in the PC Lab, you will want to save your work (files) to a 3.5” floppy disk in Drive A so that you can take them with you and keep them safe.



3.5” Floppy Drive
CD-ROM Drive
Hard Drive (Internal)

5.25” Floppy Drive (On Older PCs Only)

Computer

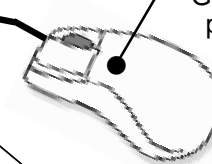
Often a rather ordinary looking box located beneath the monitor, the computer contains all the electronic gadgetry which allows you to create and save your work. Within its case are located a processor (*the brain*), circuit boards, disk drives, and a big honkin’ mess of wires and cables. The front of this unit (described above) typically sports a power button, a reset button, and insertion slots for diskettes (floppies) and CD-ROMs.



Detailed Above ↗

Mouse

Generally described as a pointing device, the mouse allows you to point to and act upon displayed objects such as icons or buttons. As you roll the mouse across a flat, smooth surface, a special symbol called the *cursor* (usually an arrow) moves accordingly across your computer desktop. A PC mouse usually has two buttons upon which your index and middle fingers naturally rest. Pressing these buttons sends instructions to the computer. A typical mouse operation might involve pointing to an icon on the desktop, then pressing the left button twice (double-clicking) to open the file or application associated with the icon. Operating on a typical mouse might involve removing an piece of cheese lodged in the lower esophagus via a longitudinal incision. However, that is beside the point.



Lift Here
To Open

Keyboard

Caps Lock

Press this key once to turn caps on, then again to turn caps off. When caps are on, every letter you type will be UPPERCASE. When caps are off, every letter you type will be lowercase.

Shift

Many keys bear two different characters or symbols. In order to enter the top character, you must hold down the **Shift** key while you press the character key. For example, to type a %, you must hold **Shift** while you press the 5 key.

Ctrl

Most applications use the **Control** key in conjunction with other keys or mouse clicks to perform useful operations. For example, to select multiple objects on your desktop, hold down the **Ctrl** key while you click on each object with the mouse.

Alt

Many applications use the **Alternate** key (like the Ctrl key) to perform special functions when pressed in conjunction with other keys. In Microsoft applications, for example, you can open the Help menu by holding **Alt** while pressing the H key.

Esc

In many situations, the **Escape** key allows you to change your mind and back out of something you have started. In many applications, for example, you can press **Esc** to close an open menu from which you do not wish to make a selection.

F1...F12

Although different software applications often use the **Function** keys in different ways, a few of these keys are becoming more standardized. For example, within most applications, pressing **F1** will open an online help tool and pressing **F5** will refresh (update) the display. Consult your application manuals and online help to explore the functions associated with other F keys.

This year's celebrated daily Key of the Month is the tilde (sounds like Hilda) key. Some Web page addresses (URLs) incorporate one or more of these squiggles. You'll find tilde in the upper left corner of the keyboard, above Tab.



Delete, PgUp, PgDn, et.al.

When you want to get rid of an icon, a file, or a couple paragraphs of text, just select the ill-fated object or data and press the **Delete** key. Away it goes!

PageUp and **PageDown** are useful navigation tools. When viewing a lengthy document, Web page, or e-mail message, use PgUp and PgDn to advance or retreat one screen at a time.

Indicator Lights

These lights shine when the Num Lock, Caps Lock and Scroll Lock features of the keyboard are on.

Number Pad

Most keyboards feature a row of number keys above the letter keys; however, the group of number keys at the right end of the keyboard (the number pad) may also be used to enter numbers. Indeed, it is well suited for work that involves entering many numbers, such as accounting or data entry. Before using it, be sure to turn it on by pressing the **Num Lock** key (the Num Lock indicator light should come on).

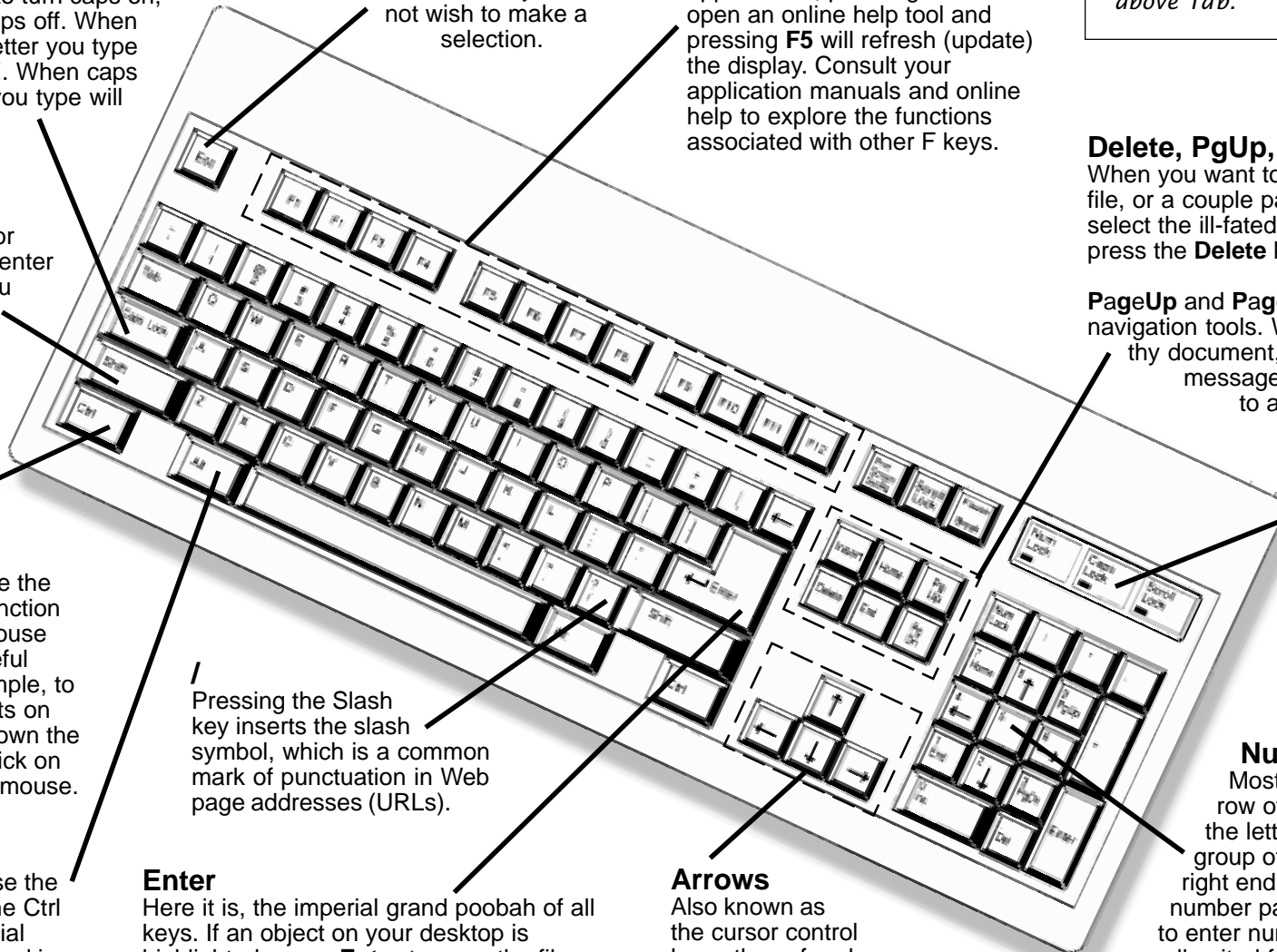
Arrows

Also known as the cursor control keys, these four keys can be used to move the cursor up, down, left and right. In conjunction with other keys, they may also be used for menu and document navigation.

Enter

Here it is, the imperial grand poobah of all keys. If an object on your desktop is highlighted, press **Enter** to open the file or run the application with which the object is associated. If you are word processing, press **Enter** to end a paragraph and insert blank lines. Chances are, you'll press this key more than any other.

Pressing the Slash key inserts the slash symbol, which is a common mark of punctuation in Web page addresses (URLs).



Mouse

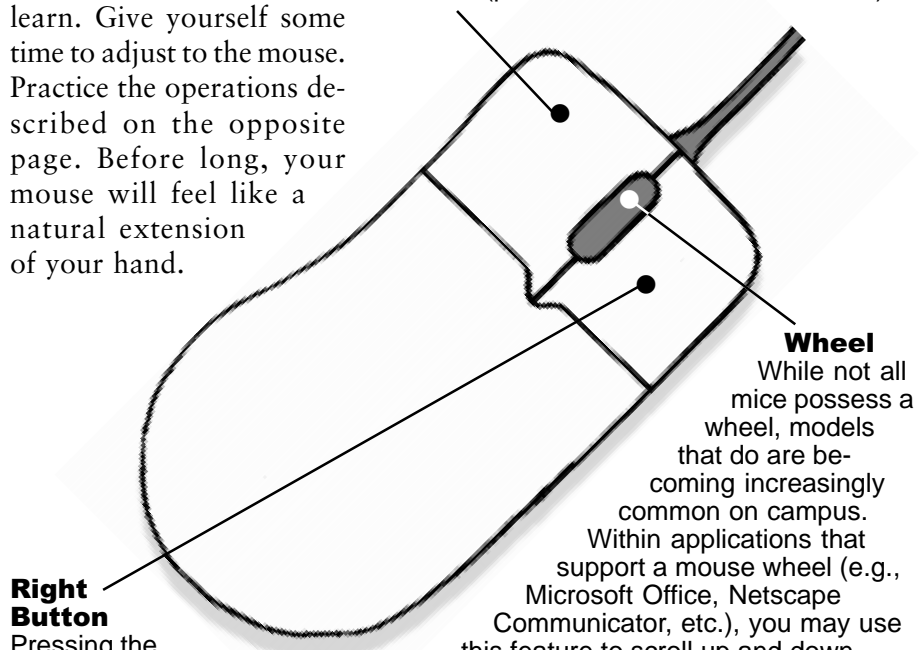
A mouse is a pointing device, it allows you to point to objects on your computer desktop. And, by virtue of its buttons, it also allows you to act upon the objects to which you point. Although it is easy to use, it is not necessarily easy to learn. Give yourself some time to adjust to the mouse. Practice the operations described on the opposite page. Before long, your mouse will feel like a natural extension of your hand.



Left handed? You may want to purchase a mouse specifically designed for left-handed users. Depending on the computer you are using, you may also be able to switch the functions of the left and right mouse buttons.

Left Button

Pressing the left button, referred to as **clicking**, is the most common mouse operation. To select an object on the desktop, for example, move the mouse so that the cursor overlaps the object, then **click** (press and release the left button).



Right Button

Pressing the right mouse button, referred to as **right-clicking**, usually opens a menu of options pertaining to the selected object. And because these *pop-up* menus appear right beside the object, you can select from them without having to move your mouse more than a whisker.

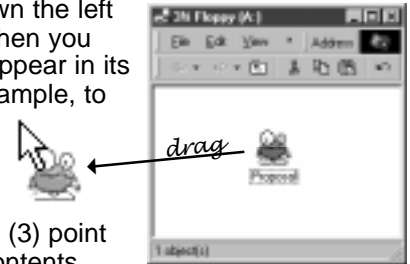
Wheel

While not all mice possess a wheel, models that do are becoming increasingly common on campus. Within applications that support a mouse wheel (e.g., Microsoft Office, Netscape Communicator, etc.), you may use this feature to scroll up and down through multi-page documents. Roll it away from yourself to move backward in your document, or roll it toward yourself to move forward. This wheel may also function as a button to activate an *auto scroll* feature. Press down on the wheel until it clicks, move the cursor in the direction you wish to scroll, and the scrolling will continue on its own.

A Few Cool Things to Do With Your Mouse

Drag & Drop

Just as you might drag a cup of coffee across the surface of your desk (Okay, so you'd pick it up. I'm trying to make a point here!), you can use your mouse to drag objects around on your desktop. To drag an object, first point to it, then press (but do not release) the left mouse button. As you move the mouse while holding down the left button, you are dragging the object. When you release the left button, the object will appear in its new location next to the cursor. For example, to copy a file from a floppy disk to your desktop, you would (1) insert the floppy disk into the disk drive, (2) display the contents of the floppy by double-clicking its icon on the desktop, (3) point to the file displayed with the floppy's contents, (4) click and hold the left mouse button, (5) move the mouse so that the cursor moves to a blank area of the desktop, and (6) release the mouse button.



Selecting

Let's say you're typing a term paper using a word processing application (like Word or WordPerfect). Now, let's say "I slit the sheet, the sheet I slit, and on the slitted sheet I sit." Wasn't that fun? So, you're typing away and you realize that you need to move a sentence. Using the mouse, you can drag text from one location and drop it into another location; but, first you must select it so that the computer will recognize it as the unit or object with which you wish to work. To select text, position the cursor at the beginning of the text. Then, press and hold the left mouse button as you drag the cursor over the text. **As you drag, the text will appear in reverse video—just as this sentence is.** Release the mouse button to end your selection. Once your text is selected, you may move it as you would any other object, in other words, as is described above under **Drag & Drop**.

A Modest Suggestion for Practice

Working with any of the applications available in the PC Lab (Cook 35) will help you develop your mouse and keyboard skills. However, if you are the kind of person who relishes assignments, here's one that you can run with.

Go to the PC Lab and use Netscape Navigator to browse the World Wide Web for twenty minutes or so. Then move to a computer that has Microsoft Word, open Word, and write a couple paragraphs describing your experience on the Web.

