

DU Learning Guide

What is a Mac?

"I love my Mac!"

What's it all about?

If you have spoken to someone who uses a *Mac* computer (sometimes called an *Apple Mac*) you'll probably have discovered that they believe passionately that their machine is far superior in every way possible to the type of personal computer (a *PC* or *Windows PC*) that most people use.

There are lots of technical differences between the Mac and the PC, but you can use them to do the same things. The most obvious difference for a user is the *operating system*, the software that manages how the computer works. A PC normally uses Windows, from Microsoft, while the Mac uses an operating system designed specially for it by Apple.

At present Windows users are getting to grips with Windows 7 and Mac users use OS X Snow Leopard.

One of the most popular Macs is the iMac or iBook – it is very simple in design and when it came out Apple boasted that all you need to connect was two cables and you were ready to go! Certainly the all-in-one design with the processor and monitor being one plus its rather stylish design has been a great draw for many.

Another great draw for many people is the link with the personal music player produced by Apple, the iPod.

Finding Your Way Around

One of the most distinctive features of a Mac desktop is the *Dock*. This is a strip of icons usually (but not always) to be found at the bottom of the screen.



The Mac has its own programs for most of the things that you would want to do, e.g. use the web, e-mail or edit photos. It also has a quick link to iTunes and a player for the music from there.

You can add programmes such as a word processor or anything else that you might use on a regular basis to the Dock.

All the information about how your Mac works, the colour of the desktop screen, how you connect to the internet and whether you use any accessibility features can be found in System Preferences which is shown as a light switch on the bar above.

Why Else Would I buy A Mac?

There are very few things that can't be done on a Mac as compared to a PC. You can even buy Microsoft Programmes such as Word for Mac!

One of the greatest draws to a Mac for many people is that it is far less vulnerable to viruses and spyware. That is not to say that there are no security issues with a Mac, but they are significantly fewer.

However, not all programmes are compatible and if you like playing computer games you may find the range is slightly more limited.

If you would like to know more about the Mac and watch a few tutorials then have a look at www.apple.com where they have all their products and some fascinating video tutorials to explain what they can do.

If you want to know how easy a Mac is to use on the web then see the **Learning Guide: What is a Browser? Safari** which introduces the Mac web browser.