

What is Windows?

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Windows is a collection of programs known as an *operating system* (OS) that controls a PC (personal computer). First produced by Microsoft in November 1985, it has been frequently updated since, as computer memory has got bigger, as processing chips have got faster and, of course, when the internet was invented. Prior to Windows, PCs were operated by a series of text commands.

Windows' key benefits and features

- Allows the user to interact with the computer (through the keyboard, mouse, microphone, etc.).
- Controls the storage of data (images, files, music).
- Controls hardware attached to the computer such as webcams, scanners and printers.
- Helps to open and close programs (word processors, games, photo editors, etc.), and gives them part of the computer's memory to allow them to work.
- Controls what access to a computer different users have and the computer's security.
- Deals with errors and user instructions, and issues simple error messages.
- Promotes multitasking by allowing the user to do several things on the computer at once – for example, watch a video while writing a letter.

Other operating systems are available, notably the Apple OS X used in Mac computers. In addition, with the increased use of smartphones, notepads and tablets, there are systems aimed directly at mobile devices. However, most people who learn to use computers do so on a system running Windows.

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