

Chapter 11 The Mouse - Learning To Use It

The “mouse” is the input backbone of today’s computer. The keyboard “was” originally the most important input device but the mouse has surpassed it because you are living in a graphical world called “Windows.” When the computer was first put on the market as a personal computer you had to learn all sorts of input commands typed at a command line and the system was called “DOS.” When the Graphical User Interface for PCs (GUI) was introduced as “Windows,” instead of typing commands you just had to point and click to accomplish the same thing. . . thus, the “Mouse.”

The mouse has changed many times in its progression. . . but the point and click is still the same. Learning to do this is also a learning process. Children learn to do this much easier than do adults, especially seniors. The older you are the more established the mind - hand co-ordination has become and the harder the change. So. . . we are going to learn a few tricks to offset the advantage that those young minds have over us.

The biggest problem that we older folks have with the mouse is the ability to move the mouse around the screen then point it at the targeted spot and click on that exact spot. Sometimes that spot is very small. What happens is that we miss it and it takes several attempts, sometimes many, to click on the right spot. Often this becomes very frustrating, especially when it requires double clicking instead of just one single click. The real problem lies in the fact that when we attempt to click on the spot we push the mouse forward along with the clicking motion causing us to miss the spot. This problem can be overcome with practice and deliberation. Some (newbees) take longer than others, but the problem can be overcome. What we need to do before we become totally frustrated is temporarily offset the problem with a few tricks.

Double clicking is the biggest frustration when we keep moving the pointer past the spot on the first click. The second click misses because we overshot the point with the first click. In order to overcome this problem we must concentrate on holding the mouse steady on the spot when we use the forefinger to click the mouse. This will come to you with practice and concentration.

In the meantime, to offset this limitation, lets understand how and what this double clicking does. The first click is a command that selects the spot that starts the action. This is why it is called “Select” as well as “highlight.” You will notice that the spot often changes color when you first click on it. This first click selects or highlights the spot. The second click executes the highlighted spot and the action takes place. On your keyboard is a larger key that says “enter” on it. This key is an “execution” key. It is the same as the second click with the mouse. Therefore, if you highlight the spot with the mouse and then hit the “Enter” key with you finger you will accomplish the same as double clicking.

Another frustrating motion with the mouse is pointing a dragging. This motion is to use the mouse to select a spot and then by holding the left mouse button down dragging it to another spot. This motion is sometimes difficult for us adults to learn to do. . . but it does come with a little practice.

When Microsoft designed the Windows (GUI) Operating System they new that learning to use a mouse was a problem. So they included a game called “Solitaire.” If you haven’t discovered it already you will find it in your programs list from your “Start” menu under “Games.” There are also a number of other games on your computer. Solitaire was designed to help you develop your mouse abilities. Play the game frequently, have fun, and learn to use your mouse.

There are many designs in what is called “The Mouse.” Some of the designs are so different that you would not even recognize it as a mouse. In order to keep it as simple and standard as possible we are going to stick with the standard mouse that generally comes with your computer.

The mouse usually has two buttons and often a scroll wheel in the center between the two buttons. The newest mouse is called an optical mouse because it does not have a rolling ball on the underside. It is a far more sensitive and accurate. You will recognize the optical mouse because it does not have a rolling ball on the underside. . . but all the functions are the same.

Ninety per cent of the use of the mouse’s buttons are the left button that does all the executing. You single click, your double click, and you drag and drop using the left mouse button. The right button is almost always used for accessing a special menu that is designed into a specific area of the window on your screen. We may call it a “Hidden Menu” because the only way you can access the menu is by “Right Clicking” on that special area of the Window.

These menus are special menus that relate to certain areas of a window. You will learn over a period of time the types of commands that are listed in the right click menus just as you learn what to look for in the drop down menus on the menu bar. Again I reiterate that if you will learn one program like your e-mail program thoroughly the rest of the programs you face will come much easier. Even though they are different there is a commonality in the way they function.

The mouse system can have a lot of features. The best way to discover your mouse, all of its adjustments, its many features and how to make custom changes can be found in the “help and support” section of the “Start” menu. If you will click on the “Help and Support” (The Question Mark Icon) line in the middle section of your “Start” menu and will open up another Window with the name in the top title bar “Help and Support Center. Near the top is rectangular white box with a flashing cursor labeled “Search.” Type the word “mouse” in the box and hit your “Enter” key or click on the arrow next to the box. This will open up another window. On the left side you will see an inside window with a list of all the information and instructions all about your mouse. Here you can learn all about your mouse. There is no need for me to duplicate this information here when it is all on your own computer.