

## Essential Computer Skills

Many users use computer without adequate computer knowledge. It is tempting to think that because you have used a computer for a long time, you are "computer literate" or "computer savvy," but this is not the case. This lesson is designed to introduce you to TEN essential skills that overlap with the basic computer skills to make one qualified to be considered a computer literate before delving into the use of translation software: (see *Community Literacy Consortium Online*).

**1. Search engines:** Using a search engine is more than typing in the address, putting a couple of keywords into the big text box, clicking Search, and choosing the first result. While that may work, it will not give you the best results most of the time. Learning the advanced search, Boolean operators, and how to discern good results from bad results will enable you considerably to use a computer as a powerful research tool.

**2. Word processing:** Word processing is one of the oldest uses for a computer. It continues to be extremely important, even though, in many ways, its functions have been put into other applications. For example, people may write more emails than documents, but the task is nearly identical. It is hard to claim to be a computer literate if the basic functions of word processing -like spell check, table creation, and working with headers - are outside your capabilities.

**3. Spreadsheets:** Spreadsheets were *the* killer application that made many people willing to pay big sums of money for a PC (Personal Computer) in the early 1980s. Spreadsheets offer incredibly powerful analysis possibilities if you know how to use them for more than storing the holiday card address list. Being able to use formulas, references, and macros can turn a "grid of numbers" into actionable information in the hands of the right person.

**4. Browser basics:** It is almost painful to watch some "computer savvy" people operate a Web browser. The most obvious foolish mistake is going to a search engine to type in the address of the site they want to go to. But many users are unaware of many other things they do that make the Internet more difficult than it should be. Mastering techniques like opening links in new windows, using bookmarks, editing Uniform Resources Locator (URLs) (the global address of documents and their resources on the world wide Web: *Webopedia*) to *perform navigation, clearing the browser cache, and understanding common error messages* will give you access to a world of unlimited information instead of keeping you stuck with only what Web site designers make obvious.

**5. Virus / malware scanning:** Much of the typical computer maintenance is automated or unneeded at this point, but it is still essential to understand how

to check a system for nasty bugs, spyware, and other malicious applications. While the scanning tools come with real-time monitors, something can still slip onto the system before the scanner has the right filter for it. So it is critical to know how to trigger a manual virus / malware scan, as well as how to use alternative systems, spot signs of an infection, and other similar tasks.

**6. Common keyboard commands:** If you do not know how to copy / paste without a mouse, you may not be a computer literate in the full sense of the word. Every operating system has some universal keyboard commands, and while knowing them will not take but a very short time, it will take a lot of the "friction" out of using a computer. Learning these commands is more a matter of routine than anything else.

**7. Basic hardware terminology:** It is hard to have someone help you with a problem when you tell them that your "hard drive" is unplugged, when you really mean "the computer." There is a number of common hardware misunderstanding out there, and while some are understandable, knowing basic hardware terminology is a must.

**8. Simple networking diagnosis:** Networking problems create the most common trouble with most computers. While you do not need to be able to program a Cisco router, you should know how to:

- Determine your IP (Internet Protocol) address.
- Verify physical connectivity to the network.
- Check that you have a logical connection to the network.
- Find out what path network traffic takes to get to its destination.
- Translate from DNS (Domain Name System) names to IP addresses.

**9. Connecting your computer:** Despite the color coding of connections and the fact that most cords can be plugged into only one hole, many people still cannot connect a computer properly. It is difficult to claim to be a computer literate if you cannot even get it wired up and turned on without some help.

**10. Security / privacy:** You must know how to protect yourself from attackers and hackers on the Internet and keep your personal data private. Everything from knowing to check a link before you click it to verifying that encryption is being used to transmit sensitive data to researching sites before giving them your personal data are all critical skills for the modern computer users namely language experts and translators. If you do not know how to keep yourself safe, you need to check internet guides.

***Resources: Professor Hasan Said Ghazala. Translation Skills: A Textbook. Konooz Al-Marifa. Um el-Kora University of Makkah Al-Mokarrama.2013***