

Using Technology? Positively!

A SERIES OF FACT SHEETS

ON EVERYDAY TECHNOLOGIES AND OLDER CANADIANS

COMPUTERS: GETTING ONLINE USING THE INTERNET

Fact sheet #4 examines some of the benefits as well as the challenges related to computers and older adults.

Older adults are the fastest growing group of computer buyers and internet users. In 1999, 25 percent of households headed by a person 55-64 years old used the internet from home. In the 65 and over age group, 10 percent did. Internet use in the 65 and over age group is growing faster than in all other age groups.

A **computer** can enrich your life in many ways. Just as you might not know exactly how your car works to drive it, so too, you don't have to understand the



computer to send **electronic mail (e-mail)** to friends and family, shop online, play games, make greeting cards,

read book and film reviews, look into your family's genealogy or find valuable health information on the **internet**.

Think about it

Some research shows that age is not an important predictor of owning a computer. An interest in technology among other factors is more important in determining who owns a computer.

Some Useful Definitions

- ◆ The **internet** is a very large computer network through which individual computers are connected to **internet service providers (ISP)** so they can share information. The **internet** is open to anyone with access to a computer that is connected to an **ISP**. 
- ◆ Information on the **internet** is presented on **web pages** that contain images, text and sometimes sound.



By clicking on the ‘links’ on a **web page**, you can visit other pages. The total of all **web pages** makes up the **World Wide Web or www**.

- ◆ **Modems** are devices that are installed in your computer or outside of it and allow your computer to communicate with other computers. This enables you to send a message through your computer via electronic mail (**e-mail**) over your telephone line, cable or satellite to another computer or the **internet**.

Myth: Older adults are resistant and react negatively to technological change.

Mythbuster: Some research shows that older adults’ direct experience with computers and technology can have a positive influence on their overall outlook and mental health.

Training and Access

Computers are available for public use at any of the **Community Access Program (CAP)** sites across Canada and are located in various public facilities, including libraries, seniors’ centres, schools and recreation centres. The

volunteers who donate their time at the **CAP** sites provide training, access to the internet and information on distance education. The training topics range from getting connected to the Web and using e-mail effectively to online banking, shopping and security issues. For more information, call toll free: **1-800-575-9200** or for **TTY** service: **1-800-465-7735**. You can also visit the CAP web site: **<http://cap.ic.gc.ca>**.

Across Canada, the **Student Connection Program** provides **Seniors’ Internet Training** for a low fee. Four training modules include basic computer training as well as internet and electronic commerce education. For more information, visit their web site: **<http://www.scp-ebb.com>** or call toll free: **1-888-807-7777** to obtain the telephone number of the office nearest you.

Do it yourself

Seek out affordable and reputable **training programs**. Check out your local library for lists of courses or call your community education department. Some universities, community colleges and school boards have Continuing Education departments that may offer

training. Your provincial or territorial seniors' organizations or government agencies may also have information on computer training. Many reasonably priced programs are staffed by volunteers and/or subsidized by public funding. In some areas, training in your home is available. Once you are online, there are moderately priced computer and internet training courses available on the internet, as well as free resources. You may find listings of such material by conducting a search on the internet using specific terms like 'computer training resources'.

Overcoming Barriers...

- ◆ For many older adults, the cost of new computer equipment is beyond their budget. However, previously owned systems are available at reasonable costs. Ask at a local **Community Access Program (CAP)** site for suggestions (see **Training and Access** above).
- ◆ One of the best ways to learn how to use a computer is to talk to someone you know who already uses a computer, perhaps a neighbour,

friend, grandchild or other relative. Or ask people at your local seniors' centre for advice.

- ◆ Some older adults may feel that computers are too complicated or difficult to understand but with a little training and persistence, you might be surprised at how quickly you can learn, not to mention how much fun you might end up having. Learning how to use a computer can be a great way to feel connected to the Information Age!

Sources:

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Techno Terms

Computer Virus - a programming code that is transmitted to your computer from an infected e-mail attachment, downloaded from an infected web site or present on a diskette. Viruses can cause operating problems with your computer and are often designed to automatically spread to other computer users. You can protect your computer from a virus by purchasing virus detection software.

Firewall - a security feature installed on some but not all computers that protects your information by preventing access to it from other computers when you are connected to the internet. Many networks have built-in **firewalls** to ensure privacy. If you plan to use the internet regularly from your home, check into whether you already have this feature on your computer or must install firewall software.

Hacker - a term used by some to mean ‘a clever programmer’ and by others, to mean ‘someone who tries to break into computer systems’.

Internet Service Provider (ISP) - a company that provides individuals and other companies access to the internet and other related services.

Online - the condition of being connected to a computer or a telecommunications system. The term is frequently used to describe someone who is currently connected to the internet.

World Wide Web - all the resources and users on the internet that are using the **Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP)**. The World Wide Web is the universe of network-accessible information, an embodiment of human knowledge.