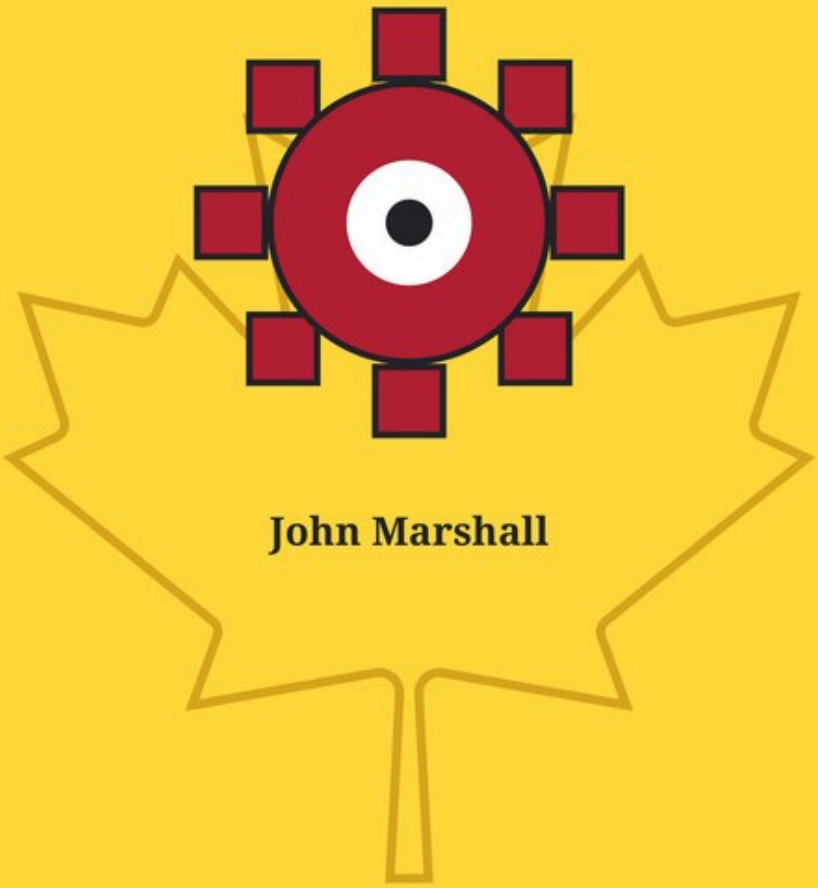
THE PROOF SERIES

A PLAYFUL GUIDE TO COMPUTER GEAR

Gear Proof

Computer accessories and printers, from setup to everyday use — in plain language, with big type and a few laughs.



John Marshall

PROUDLY CANADIAN



PROUDLY CANADIAN

FREE SAMPLE CHAPTER

By John Marshall

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KNOW YOUR PLUGS

Every Plug Has a Home

Behind your computer sits a row of small openings that can look like a secret code. This page cracks the code, one plug at a time.

Spy the holes › Match the shape › Push it in › Watch it work

1. Peek around back — Turn your computer or laptop and look for the row of small slots. These are ports, and each has a job. They are not traps; they will not bite.

2. Match by shape — Every cable end has a unique shape that fits only its matching port. Think of it like a key and a lock. If it does not slide in easily, you have the wrong one.

3. Gentle push — Push the plug in with steady, gentle pressure. It should seat firmly with a small click or snug stop. Never force it. Bent pins are the number-one rookie casualty.

4. Check the result — The screen, mouse, or printer should respond right away or ask for a setup step. If nothing happens, unplug it, flip it over once, and try again.

TALE

E STORY

Harold, 74, stared at the back of his computer for ten minutes before realising his desk lamp cable was already plugged into the wall — and the mystery slot was just waiting for his monitor.

!

Most cables fit only one way round. If a plug refuses to enter, rotate it 180 degrees before pushing harder.

Take care: Forcing a wrong plug can bend the tiny pins inside the port and ruin it. When in doubt, ask at the shop before you push.

KNOW YOUR PLUGS

USB-A Meets Its Modern Successor

USB-A is the familiar rectangle everyone knows. USB-C is the small oval that is taking over. Here is how to tell them apart.

Spot the rectangle › Spot the oval › One-way vs both-ways › Use an adapter

1. Know USB-A — USB-A is the flat rectangle that has ruled computers for twenty years. It plugs in only one way up, so you flip it, flip it again, and laugh at the joke.

2. Meet USB-C — USB-C is the small, rounded oval port. It is reversible, so it plugs in either way up. No more flipping. Newer laptops and phones almost all use it.

3. Which side matters — Check both ends of your cable before plugging in. A cable can be USB-C on one end and USB-A on the other. Match each end to its own port.

4. Bridge with adapters — A cheap adapter, about ten to fifteen dollars at an office-supply store, lets an old USB-A gadget work in a new USB-C port. Buy one and keep it in the drawer.

TALE

E STORY

Margaret, 78, bought a new printer and wailed that it would not fit her laptop — until her grandson produced a five-dollar adapter and she declared him 'the family electrician.'

!

USB-C is not automatically faster than USB-A. The shape is just the connector; speed depends on the gadget and the cable itself.

Take care: Very cheap no-name cables can charge slowly or fail early. Spend a few extra dollars on a reputable one.



KNOW YOUR PLUGS

Display Cables Without the Headache

HDMI carries picture and sound to your monitor or TV in one tidy cable. DisplayPort does the same job with a slightly different plug.

Find the port › Pick the cable › Plug both ends › Choose the input

1. Find the port — Look for a wide, thin slot labelled HDMI on both your computer and your monitor or TV. It looks like a long mouth with one slightly angled corner.

2. Pick the cable — Any standard HDMI cable works for everyday viewing. You do not need the gold-plated deluxe version. A basic cable from an office-supply store is perfectly fine.

3. Plug both ends — Push one end into the computer and the other into the monitor or TV. The cable carries both picture and sound, so there is nothing else to connect.

4. Select the input — On your monitor or TV, press the input or source button until you see HDMI 1 or HDMI 2, whichever matches the port you used. Your picture should appear.

TALE

TALE STORY

Ron, 81, bought a longer HDMI cable so he could watch slideshows from his armchair.

He now calls his living room 'the cinema' and charges grandchildren popcorn.

!

DisplayPort looks a bit like HDMI with one squared-off corner and is common on office monitors. Same idea: one cable, picture and sound.

Take care: Do not yank cables by the cord. Pull from the plug itself, or the wires inside can loosen and the picture will flicker.

KNOW YOUR PLUGS

Your Friendly Audio Jack Primer

That small round hole is the audio jack. Plug in headphones or a speaker and the sound switches from the computer to your ears.

Find the hole › Match the plug › Push it in › Adjust the sound

1. Find the hole — Look for a small round hole about the width of a pencil tip. On many computers it is green or has a tiny headphone symbol next to it.

2. Match the plug — Headphone plugs are usually 3.5 millimetres, the standard size, and should slide in snugly. Big studio headphones may need a small adapter plug, which costs just a few dollars.

3. Push it all in — Push the plug in fully until you feel it seat. A half-inserted plug gives crackly sound in one ear, which is the classic 'it is broken' panic moment.

4. Adjust the sound — Turn the volume up slowly using the speaker icon on the screen. If you hear nothing, check that the computer is not muted before you worry.

TALE

TALE STORY

Edna, 76, thought her computer speakers had died — until her cat was found asleep on the headphone cable, half-plugged in.

The cat denied everything.

!

Many laptops pause their speakers the moment headphones are plugged in. Unplug the headphones and the speakers usually wake straight back up.

Take care: Keep volume modest, especially with earbuds. Your ears are valuable and do not come with a reset button.

KNOW YOUR PLUGS

Power Cables and Adapters Explained

The power cable is the thickest one in the box and the easiest to identify. Here is how to plug in safely and what adapters do.



1. Spot the thickest — The power cable is the heaviest cable in the box, often two pieces that join in the middle. Laptops also have a chunky brick that turns wall power into gentle power.

2. Connect both ends — Join the two cable pieces firmly, then push the small end into the computer or monitor. The round or square power port is usually marked with a tiny lightning bolt.

3. Plug into wall — Plug the wall end directly into a wall socket or a good power bar. A power bar with a switch lets you turn everything off with one satisfying click.

4. Label the cables — Wrap a strip of masking tape around each cable and write what it belongs to. Future you, unplugging things in a tangle, will be grateful.

TALE

TALE STORY

Bill, 79, labelled every cable behind his desk with tape. When a friend asked what the pink flag said, Bill read it aloud: 'DO NOT TOUCH. BILL'S INTERNET.'

!

A power bar with surge protection, around twenty to thirty dollars, shields your computer from power spikes during storms.

Take care: Never plug a damaged cable with exposed wire into the wall. Replace it instead. Electricity deserves respect.

SEE IT CLEARLY

Picking the Right Monitor Size

Bigger and sharper sounds better, but for seniors the real prize is readable text. Here is how to choose without the jargon.

Pick the size › Decode resolution › Sit-back distance › Check the price

1. Pick the size — A 24-inch screen is a comfortable step up from a laptop. A 27-inch is generous for tired eyes. Measure your desk first, because a monitor that overhangs looks worried.

2. Decode resolution — Resolution means sharpness. For everyday use, look for 1080p, also called Full HD. Anything labelled 4K is extra sharp but rarely needed for email and photos.

3. Sit-back distance — Sit an arm's length from the screen. If you are leaning in and squinting, the screen is too far or the text is too small. Both are fixable.

4. Check the price — A good 24-inch monitor costs roughly one hundred fifty to two hundred fifty dollars at an office-supply store. Watch for sales around back-to-school season, and compare prices online before you buy.

TALE

STORE STORY

Dorothy, 77, bought the biggest monitor in the shop and needed a neck brace of pure stubbornness to see the corners.

She traded down and has been comfortable ever since. Her neck sends its thanks daily.

! Matte screens cut glare better than glossy ones. If your desk faces a window, matte is your friend.

Take care: Ignore salespeople upselling giant curved gaming screens unless you genuinely want one. Bigger is not always kinder to the eyes.



SEE IT CLEARLY

Hooking Up Your New Monitor

Connecting a monitor takes two cables: one for the picture and one for the power. Ten minutes, tops, and you get a glorious big screen.

Power off first › Connect picture cable › Connect power › Switch it on

1. Power off first — Turn off your computer before you start plugging things in. This is polite to the electronics, removes any worry about sparks, and saves you from unplugging the wrong thing.

2. Connect picture cable — Plug the HDMI cable into the computer, then into the monitor. If your computer only has USB-C, you will need a small USB-C to HDMI adapter.

3. Connect power — Plug the monitor's power cable into the monitor and then into the wall or your power bar. The monitor should show a little standby light.

4. Switch it on — Turn the computer on first, then the monitor. Press the monitor's input button until you pick the right HDMI port. Your desktop should bloom onto the big screen.

TALE

E STORY

Frank, 82, connected everything perfectly but saw only black — the monitor's power button was still off.

He now tells everyone he 'installed it twice.' The second install went much faster.

! Most monitors also come with a stand to assemble. It usually snaps together with no tools, like friendly furniture.

Take care: Lift the monitor by its edges, never by the screen face. Fingerprints smudge and too much pressure can damage the panel.

SEE IT CLEARLY

Making Your Screen Text Bigger

Tiny text is not a test of character. Your computer has a magnifying control built in, and it takes about thirty seconds to use.

Open display settings › Find text size › Slide it up › Apply and admire

1. Open display settings — Right-click on an empty spot of your desktop and choose Display settings. This opens the panel where your screen's behaviour is decided. The text-size slider sits right near the top.

2. Find text size — Look for an option called Scale or Make text bigger. It is a slider or a percentage list, usually sitting near the top of the panel.

3. Slide it up — Move the slider from 100 percent to 125 or 150 percent. Text, icons, and buttons all grow together, so nothing gets left behind squinting. It feels like getting a brand-new pair of glasses.

4. Apply and admire — Click Apply or Keep changes. Wander around your programs and enjoy the new, readable world. Some apps may ask you to sign out and back in.

TALE

TRUE STORY

Irene, 75, enlarged her text so much her email filled the whole screen.

'At last,' she said, 'I can read my sister's gossip properly.' She has never missed a family scandal since that glorious day.

!

Holding the Ctrl key and rolling the mouse wheel up zooms in most web pages and documents instantly, no settings needed.

Take care: Going above 150 percent can make some windows too big for the screen. If buttons vanish off the edge, dial it back a notch.

SEE IT CLEARLY

Easy Ways to Spare Your Eyes

Brightness that is too high or too low both cause strain. A few small tweaks make long sessions far more comfortable.

Match the room › Lower at night › Try night mode › Take breaks

1. Match the room — Your screen should be about as bright as the room around it. A glaring white rectangle in a dim room is like a headlight in your face.

2. Lower at night — Use the monitor's menu buttons or your keyboard's brightness keys to dim the screen after sunset. Your eyes will thank you before bedtime. A dimmer screen also makes the room feel cozier at night.

3. Try night mode — Look in your settings for Night light or Night shift. It warms the screen's colour in the evening, cutting the harsh blue glow. Your evening emails will feel much gentler this way.

4. Take breaks — Every twenty minutes, look at something twenty feet away for twenty seconds. Eye doctors call this the 20-20-20 rule, and it genuinely helps. Stand up, stretch your legs, and make a cup of tea.

TALE

SHORT STORY

Stan, 80, dimmed his screen for the first time and accused it of being broken.

His wife just smiled: 'No dear, that's called comfortable.' She turned it down another notch, just to prove her point.

! Blue-light glasses are popular, but simply lowering brightness and using night mode does most of the work for free.

Take care: If your eyes water, burn, or blur often, mention it to your eye doctor. Screens do not cause eye disease, but they can reveal it.

SEE IT CLEARLY

Two Screens, Twice the Room

A second screen gives you space for email on one side and photos on the other. It is easier to set up than it sounds.

Check your ports › Plug screen two › Extend the desktop › Arrange the layout

1. Check your ports — Look at your computer for a second picture port, often another HDMI. If you have only one, a small adapter box from an office-supply store adds another.

2. Plug screen two — Connect the second monitor with another HDMI cable and power it on. The computer usually detects it automatically and may mirror your screen at first.

3. Extend the desktop — In Display settings, choose Extend these displays instead of Duplicate. Now your desktop stretches across both screens like one wide desk. Drag a window across to feel the magic.

4. Arrange the layout — Drag the little screen icons in the settings to match how they sit on your desk. This stops your mouse from teleporting to the wrong side.

TALE

REAL STORY

Phyllis, 73, got a second screen for her recipes and her video calls.

'Now I can watch my granddaughter,' she said, 'and still see where the salt goes.' Multitasking has never tasted so good.

! A laptop plus one monitor is the most popular setup. Close the laptop and the monitor becomes your main screen.

Take care: Two screens double the temptation to sit too long. Stand up, stretch, and give your eyes that 20-20-20 break.

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