

Computer Tips

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Understanding Your PC—Part 7

Your computer would be almost pointless if you could not see what it was doing. All the results of its processing, all the data sent out by the video card, needs a place to be displayed, and this is the job of

The Monitor

The monitor, or screen display as it is also called, receives the data from the video card and converts it into colours and shapes that we are so familiar with.

There are several types of monitors. In the earlier years, computer monitors were patterned after the television tube, known as the Cathode-Ray Tube (CRT). These work by combining the data from the video card with tiny electrons (particles of electricity), and firing this electric combination against a phosphor coating located just behind the glass screen you normally see. This electron/data combination is fired up to 75 times per second, which lights up the phosphor coating, producing the different colours and shapes we see. Early types of CRT monitors supported only 16 colors, and were identified as CGA monitors. Then came the EGA and VGA types, which supported up to 256 colours. Current CRT monitors are classed as SVGA and XGA monitors, which support up to 16.7 million colours.

CRT monitors produce a clear, well-detailed picture, and this has resulted in their wide spread popularity. However, the firing of electrons at the monitor screen produces electrical radiation, which does affect you if you regularly sit in front of the screen for more than two hours at a time. This radiation and its associated health risks has been instrumental in the development of a new technology, the LCD monitor.

The LCD monitor gives off no radiation whatsoever, due to its different technology. The data from the video card is sent to a liquid crystal display, a light sensitive device. This in turn lights up the glass screen where you view the results. The picture displayed is not quite as clear and well-defined as the CRT monitor, but still gives an impressive result. However, due to the more complex technology used in LCD screens, the purchase price is still almost 3 times that of the CRT monitors. This however will change as LCD technology continues to expand.

Maintenance on CRT monitors is relatively simple. A wipe over on the glass with a lint-free cloth dampened with warm soapy water will remove smudges and fingerprints. To prolong the life of your CRT monitor, always turn it on AFTER you have started your PC. This is particularly important if the power to your monitor comes from your PC box.

For LCD monitors, try to avoid touching the glass, as this can cause dead pixels (tiny areas on the screen that do not light up). Some LCD screens use a power transformer. This should be located in a well ventilated place, as they can become quite warm. A gentle wipe of the monitor with a soft DRY lint-free cloth will keep them looking spic-and-span for many years.

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