

INSTALLING COMPUTER PERIPHERALS

In previous Tech Tips, we covered how to choose and install your computer components and how to install the internal system components for your computer from the motherboard to the CPU and heatsink/fan combo. In this tip we cover the installation of peripherals including monitor, keyboard, mouse and so on. Installing peripherals is just about the easiest task you will tackle when building a computer. Check the list below for the peripherals we will be covering in this Tech Tip.

Keyboard

Mouse

Monitor

Speakers

Webcam

Printer

Scanner

Note: If your computer doesn't have an operating system installed yet, you will want to stop after you install your mouse and keyboard, install your operating system, and then resume the installation of your peripherals

Installing the Keyboard

Installing a (non-wireless) keyboard is very straight forward and easy to do, but first you need to determine if the keyboard uses a PS/2 or USB connector. The PS/2 connector for keyboards is round and typically colored purple to match the connection on your computer although not all connectors are color coordinated. If your keyboard has a USB connector, the connector will be flat and rectangular in shape.



Every motherboard on the market that I have seen or heard of still has PS/2 ports; however the vast majority of newer keyboards you find these days will have USB connections. Either style will work, but if you don't want to use up a USB port for the keyboard, adapters are

available that will convert USB keyboard connections to PS/2.

Once you match your connection type to the port on your computer, you are ready to go and installing the keyboard is as easy as plugging it into the chosen port. A word of caution however, do not install your keyboard while your computer is powered on and do not unplug your keyboard while your computer is running. If you do either of these things, you run the risk of locking up your computer with possible data loss. Always be sure to read and follow the manufacturer's instructions before installing the keyboard on your system.

Installing the Mouse

Installing a mouse is very similar to installing a keyboard. You will still find mice with either USB or PS/2 connectivity, although most of the newer mice will use a USB connection, especially if you are using a mouse for gaming. Just like the keyboard, you can also use an adapter to change a USB connection to PS/2. If you are going to have a lot of USB peripherals, you may want to consider using adapters for your mouse and keyboard or perhaps using a USB hub for some of your peripherals. To complete the installation, simply plug the mouse into the proper port.



It is important to mention the need to follow the manufacturer's instructions. Some computer mice require that you install the software before you plug the mouse in. The instructions or owner's manual included with the mouse will tell you how to install it.

Installing the Monitor



Installing a monitor (also known as a "display") requires a free power outlet for A/C power and identifying the connection type you will use to connect the monitor to your graphics card. Both DVI and VGA connections are still very common in today's market and many monitors and graphics cards include both types of connections.

For the best picture quality possible, use the digital DVI port on your graphics card and display if they are available. Most all graphics cards now

support multiple monitors and they typically include the adapters required to change a DVI connection to VGA for older displays. Once you have the display plugged in, simply connect it to the appropriate connector on your video card and you are ready to go. Drivers are not typically required for displays, but once again consult the manufacturer's instructions for details.

Installing the Speakers

Installing the speakers can vary greatly depending on what type of speakers you are using. If you have a simple set of 2.0 or 2.1 speakers all you need do is connect the audio cable to the "line-out" jack of your computer's sound card, and connect the other end(s) to the speaker unless they are already "hard-wired" and plug in the power cord. If you are using a full 5.1 or 7.1 surround sound system, the connections get a bit more complicated. Read the instructions that came with the speakers and sound card for full details on this step. You can also find USB-powered speakers that have their own sound card built in and need only be connected to power.



Installing a Webcam



Most webcams are USB-powered and simply require that you plug them in and install their drivers. However, some cams require that the drivers be installed first, so be sure to read the instructions that came with your webcam to avoid any problems. If you bought a FireWire (a form of connection that is often faster than USB connections) webcam, ensure that your

computer has a FireWire port because they are not yet all that common.

Installing the Printer

Most printers on the market today will also use a USB connection; however, parallel port printers are still fairly common. You can also set up a printer over the network if you have another



computer on a local area network (LAN) with a printer attached and shared. This method is beyond the scope of this article.

Typically, you will either be connecting your printer via USB or parallel line printer (LPT) ports. Again, you will want to read the installation instructions to be sure that you are following the correct installation method. Printer installation typically requires that you install the drivers first then plug the printer in via USB or parallel port. The OS (operating system) will finish up the install for you after that.



Installing a Scanner

Installing a scanner is almost identical to installing your printer, though I have only seen USB scanners in the last few years. Again, you will simply need to install the drivers and then plug the USB cable in. Read the manufacturer's instructions for more details on this installation process.

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