

# U3A Brighton and Hove Computer Beginners 2011 - 2015

## The Beginning

Elizabeth Rimmington took over Computer Beginners from Peter Whitworth in 2011. Elizabeth's plan was to attract absolute beginners who had never even touched a computer before; people who needed help and practice just to control the mouse and keyboard. The emphasis was to be on **gaining confidence** and **acquiring basic skills** before doing anything too advanced.



Thanks go to four people with experience with computers who came along as teaching assistants: Norma Noakes, Patrick Palmer, Eryl Williams and Peter Whitworth. When someone's computer was running amok or not responding as expected, the help these assistants gave was invaluable and the group could not have succeeded without them.

## 2011-2 The First Year (Absolute beginners)

Our groups of absolute beginners had little or no experience of computing when we started. During the year we looked at these topics:

- **Plugging in and switching on** and off, identifying the power switch, the mouse, keyboard, screen, usb socket
  - **Getting the mouse under control** - we practised moving the pointer, double click, drag-and-drop etc using games like Solitaire (Patience). The members who did best were those who followed up each lesson with the recommended homework.
  - **Finding your keys** - using letters and numbers, capitals, the SHIFT and CTRL keys and on a laptop the Function (Fn) keys
- **Installing software** - what to do about those annoying little messages that pop up suddenly - and knowing which you can trust
- **Windows** - you know, those rectangular areas on the screen that can be moved around, re-sized and even found again when they hide from us.
- **Registering for Email** - getting everyone an email "account"; getting everyone an e-mail address took up a whole meeting and would not have been possible so quickly without the four helpers helping.
- Using e-mail - receive, send and reply (only)
- understanding **the internet and the web** using a road network analogy
- web sites - **browsing** and **searching**, introducing web address components eg .org.uk. .org. .com. .co.uk,



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## 2012-3 The Second Year (Beginners and improvers)

Some new beginners joined in 2012 while some people stayed with us from last year. We practised basic mouse and keyboard skills as before. The group leader learned from last year to use no more than one sheet of paper per topic. We had more "topics" while covering broadly the same material.



Most people had laptops they could bring in and fewer had desktop computers. So progress was a swifter with more time to pause and enjoy ourselves.

## 2013-4 The Third Year (Improvers)

With no *absolute* beginners this year we needed fewer helpers; we had just two. Group members had some skill and experience and most had an e-mail address. E-mails could be sent before a meeting to say what to expect. The emphasis was still on gaining confidence and became really good at guessing what the computer was going to do.

From January 2014, due to popular demand, the course became suitable for users of iPads and other tablets as we switched to looking at web pages - an activity that is more or less the same on any type of computer.

## 2014-5 The Fourth Year (Windows 8)



**Windows 8** was released in 2012, but no-one asked me about it until 2014. It was now time to embrace the latest version!

The Windows 8 class was smaller, with 4-8 people attending each time but not the same 4-8!. The last "helper" left us.

We started by learning to use "**gestures**" such as tap-and-hold, swipe, pinch and unpinch. People found the same gestures worked on other devices too. We were amazed what could be done using gestures.

To make the systems easier to use we removed unnecessary icons, adjusted the layout and increased the font size (on other devices as well). We started looking at the internet and e-mail in January 2015 on all computers - laptop, tablet or iPad and phone.

## Mission Accomplished!

E.g.: "I omitted to say how much I am enjoying your class. You have given me so much more confidence with the computer and I do thank you so much."