

Operating Systems

An operating system (OS) is software that allows the computer's central processing unit (CPU), random access memory (RAM), hard drive and motherboard to work together so programs can run on your computer. Without an operating system your computer will not function. Most computers come loaded with an operating system. It is important to check what operating system is included prior to purchase of a computer, as it can be expensive to buy an operating system separately.

Nearly all new computers come with the Microsoft operating system, Windows. The latest version of Windows is Windows 7. There have been many different versions of Windows over the years which have all had their good and bad points. Before Windows the common operating system was DOS (disk operating system). DOS was command line based, meaning that you had to type in commands to access programs. Windows has a GUI (graphical user interface) which allows you to click an icon to run a command rather than having to type in the command.

Windows based computers are most common so more programs are compatible with Windows than other operating systems. If you play games on your computer, Windows would be the operating system of choice due the large number of games available for this operating system. However because Windows is the most common operating system there are more viruses designed to target Windows than other operating systems.

When a new Windows operating system is released it is always promoted as being faster than the previous versions. This doesn't mean you should race out and buy it to improve your computer's performance. On an older computer, the newest operating system may not perform any better than an older operating system due to the computer's internal components not being of a high enough specification to allow the new operating system to run at its full potential. If your computer was released with Windows XP it would be wise to stick with Windows XP. If you want to upgrade to a new operating system in most cases you will be better off also upgrading the whole computer at the same time. An exception to this is if your computer was released with Windows Vista. Vista was a very problematic operating system and it would be worth upgrading to Windows 7, as Windows 7 is essentially a "debugged" version of Windows Vista. If your computer ran Windows Vista its specifications will be adequate to run Windows 7.

Apple computers are an alternative to Windows and are gaining popularity. Apple's latest operating system is called OS X Lion. Like Windows it has a GUI but other than that it functions differently. Apple computers are popular for video, music and photo editing as the software is more advanced and easier to use. Currently the risk of a virus with Apple is less than with Windows but as Apple become more popular in the future it is likely that the number of viruses will also increase.

Linux is another less popular operating system. Like Windows and Apple operating systems it has a GUI but other than that it functions differently. It is a free operating system, there is a lot of compatible software and it can be installed on both Windows and Apple computers. Linux doesn't need a high powered machine to run and has a lower chance on contracting a virus. There are many versions of Linux but a popular version is Ubuntu. Ubuntu is popular due to the simple layout of the operating system, its similarity to Windows and ease of use. Despite its many strength Linux remains less common as most computers are sold with either Windows or Apple operating systems already loaded. Because of this many people don't know about Linux operating systems and it is often only considered when the user is looking for an alternative operating system.

It's not only computers that have operating systems, mobile phones and other electronic devices also have them. Smart phones are mobile phones that allow you to perform additional tasks while you are out, that you would normally do from your home computer, such as web browsing, emailing and shopping online. You may have heard of an Android phone. Android is the name of an operating system made by Google which is becoming an increasingly popular choice when purchasing a smart phone. The current version of Android is 2.3.

Apple iPhones have an operating system called iOS. The current version is 4.3. It is only available on Apple devices, such as the iPod and iPads. iOS' biggest advantage over Android is its connection to the iTunes store. iTunes allows you to download music, videos, games and applications easily and allows you to share your music with your iPod.

Both iOS and Android are good phone operating systems and the choice usually comes down to personal preference. There are more Android phones on sale than iOS phones so it is likely that over the time Android will be the most popular choice. Both operating systems offer many of the same options and application developers often develop their apps to suit both iOS and Android.

Internet Security software is important no matter what operating system you use on your computer. Internet Security companies design antivirus software for many different operating systems, even those with a low chance of contracting a virus. AVG make internet security for Windows, Linux and Android operating systems. Even though there is a low chance of contracting a virus on an Android smart phone, I recommend downloading AVG from the Android market.

For Apple users there is a very low chance of contracting a virus when using genuine software and Apple Certified applications. The chance of contracting a virus increases when using pirated software or applications that aren't Apple certified. Norton offers antivirus for Apple computers.

If you need of an antivirus program for your computer, drop into the Grenfell Internet Centre and I will recommend one for your computer. Internet security for multiple computers and for multiple years is currently available for a great deal.

If you are having any other computers troubles or need some advice drop in and see Josh, call on 6343 1720 or visit our Facebook page (don't forget to click like!) www.facebook.com/gic2810. Also check out our website www.grenfell.org.au/gic, to catch up on tech tips articles you may have missed.