

Opportunities and Options for Learning Computer Skills in the MC-NPL Computer Lab

Computer Classes

We offer computer classes for the general public. The Computer Lab has developed a curriculum in which courses build upon each other. There are two tracks; the **Fast Track to the Web**, designed for the student who is primarily interested in getting on the internet and doing email, and the **Comprehensive Track to Productivity**, intended for the student who needs to develop or refresh computing skills that will lead to productivity in a computing environment at home and especially in the workplace.

The **Fast Track to the Web** meets once a week for three weeks. It covers learning to use the mouse, introduction to web browsing software, and creating an email account. The **Comprehensive Track to Productivity** is comprised of three courses, the first of which last five weeks. It begins with mousing skills. The Windows Vista environment is then explored including the desktop and parts of a window. Ultimately the student will learn how to multi-task, creating, saving and managing their files. Included is instruction in using an internet browser and a web-based electronic mail service. The final 4 weeks of courses, for those who have demonstrated proficiency using this skill set, are devoted to introductions to **Microsoft Word 2007** and **Microsoft Excel 2007**.

Computer Classes FAQ

- **How much do the classes cost?**

We charge by the course, and the fee depends upon how many weeks it lasts. The **Fast Track to the Web** course, which lasts three weeks is \$7.50. The series of three courses which we refer to as the **Comprehensive Track to Productivity** costs \$12.50 for the first course, which lasts five weeks. The Microsoft **Word 2007** and **Microsoft Excel 2007** courses each last two weeks and cost \$5.00 each. We only register one course at a time in case, for some reason, a student is unable to continue through the series. Class fees are non-refundable.

- **How do I register for a computer class?**

The Computer Lab publishes a calendar well in advance of each fall, winter and spring session. The calendar includes information about how and when to register for classes. Calendars are available in the Computer Lab or on the library website (www.mc-npl.org - click on the Computer Lab button on the left side menu). We also supply local libraries in Montgomery County with our schedules as well as the Bookmobiles.

- **Do your classes start at the very beginning, like how to turn the computer on?**

We do not teach you how to set-up a computer and turn it on. We start by teaching you a little bit about the various components of a computer, and then how to use a mouse.

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- **What if I want to start at the very beginning but I can't make all the classes in a series?**

We ask that you not register if you know in advance that you will miss classes. Our classes are in very high demand and we prefer to register only those who are able to make a commitment to clear their schedule and attend all classes. There are other options outlined below which you might try.

- **What if I want to start at the very beginning and the classes are filled?**

We can place your name on a waiting list. If someone drops out before the first session starts we will start calling names on the list in chronological order. If the slot opens at the last minute we will call names until we can speak to someone on the list. If we have more time, we'll leave messages and accept the first call-back.

- **What if I don't need to start at the very beginning? Can I skip some classes?**

In our experience, not all students wish to or can finish out an entire sequence of classes. So at times there is availability in courses further along in the series. In order to qualify to take these courses, you will need to demonstrate proficiency in the skills taught in the previous courses. We have created proficiency tests which you may take here in the Computer Lab. We proctor proficiency testing; therefore, an appointment to test-out must be made in advance. Depending on availability, once you have passed a proficiency test, you will either be able to register for a course on the spot or your name will be placed on a waiting list.

- **Can I practice in between classes?**

Yes, in fact, we encourage it. When the Computer Lab is not closed for classes it is open for public use. You can come in and practice during those times. We have developed support materials such as lesson plans, guides, and tutorials to utilize as you study. While we may be able answer a few questions when you are really stuck, typically practice sessions are self-study. You can always bring your questions to the next class.

- **Can I bring someone to class to help me?**

In our experience this does not work well. It can be distracting to other students and to the teacher. We typically have a teacher's helper during class who can provide individual assistance to a certain degree. However, if extensive assistance is required, we may encourage a student to explore other options for learning.

- **What if I want to complete the entire series without attending any classes?**

You are welcome to use materials developed for our classes, which are available online as well, but we wouldn't be able to provide assistance beyond how to access the materials, nor would we proctor proficiency tests or issue any certificates. Our study materials are tailored for Windows Vista, Microsoft Office 2007, Internet Explorer v. 8 and Yahoo web-based email. While these materials are online and can be accessed from a home computer, they are designed for use in the Computer Lab. We have certain settings on our computer software which may not look or behave like the software on your computer.