

CHAPTER 12

IT AND SOCIETY

A Changing World

Learning Module Objectives

When you have completed this learning module you will have:

- Knew the concept of the "Information Society"
- Knew Year 2000 issues
- Knew E-Commerce

Understand the Terms Information Society and Information Superhighway.

- **The concept of the Information society refers to the fact that it is now very easy to link computers together and access information stored on other computers.**
- **The Internet is a good example.**
 - **By connecting to the Internet you gain access to millions of other computers that are connected around the world.**
- **You can communicate via email with anyone on this planet (assuming they also have an email connection).**

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Understand the Terms Information Society

The Concept of the “Information Society”

The concept of the Information society refers to the fact that it is now very easy to link computers together and access information stored on other computers. The Internet is a good example. By connecting to the Internet, you gain access to millions of other computers that are connected around the world. You can communicate via email with anyone on this planet (assuming they also have an email connection). Unlike posting a traditional letter, this communication via email is instant! The full impact of the Information society has yet to be seen. In an age of instant worldwide communication, it is very hard for governments to maintain a grip on their population and the idea of banned books, such as the UK's attempts to stop ex-security personnel disclosing embarrassing secrets begin to look a little foolish. Even US court decisions have been announced via Internet at the same time as through more traditional means! Many companies are taking up the challenge of the information age where selling to the world via the Internet can bring enormous benefits to a company.

Year 2000 issues

Now a historical issue for most of us. However remember that when specifying a date on a computer you should use four digits, i.e. use 2000 rather than 00.

Understand the Terms Information Society and Information Superhighway.

- The phrase e-commerce is a buzz word that relates to buying or selling via the Internet.
 - Increasingly you can purchase directly via a Web site by selecting the goods or services that you require and entering your credit card details.



E-commerce

The phrase e-commerce is a buzzword that relates to buying or selling via the Internet. Increasingly you can purchase directly via a Web site by selecting the goods or services that you require and entering your credit card details. When you send your credit card details these SHOULD be encrypted by the site operators so that no one can intercept your details. Most sites that accept credit card payment are on secure services and your Internet browser program (i.e. Microsoft Internet Explorer or Netscape Communicator) will normally inform you (via a pop-up) when you are entering or leaving a secure server.

A Good Workplace

Learning Module Objectives

When you have completed this learning module you will have:

- Knew good working practices

Understand What Elements and Practices Can Help Create a Good Working Environment

- Frequent breaks away from the computer
- Appropriate positioning of screens, chairs and keyboards
- Provision of adequate lighting and ventilation.



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Understand what Elements and Practices Can Help a Good Working Environment

Good working practices

Your chair: Your chair should be fully adjustable, and be able to be moved up or down. It should have an adjustable back.

Your screen: Your screen should be fully adjustable so that your eyes are at the same height as the top of the screen. You may wish to use a filter attached to the screen to reduce glare. If the screen is badly focused, too bright or appears to flicker, then get a qualified technician to take a look at it!

Your keyboard: Use a good keyboard and you may also wish to use a wrist pad to relieve pressure on your wrists.

Your feet: You may wish to use a footpad to rest your feet on while using the computer.

Your mouse: Use a mouse mat to make the mouse easier to use. Ensure that you have enough space to comfortably use the mouse. If your arm or fingers become tired or painful, when using the mouse, take a break and do something else!

Breaks: Take frequent breaks when using a computer!

Other factors: Make sure that the area that you are using the computer in is adequately lit and well ventilated. Ventilation is especially important if you are using a laser printer, which may produce ozone when printing.

More information:

<http://intranet.linst.ac.uk/student/services/health/computer.htm>

<http://www.ibm.com/ibm/publicaffairs/health/summary.html>

<http://www.ics.uci.edu/~chair/comphealth2.html>

Health and Safety

Learning Module Objectives

When you have completed this learning module you will have:

- Knew how to make sure that cables are safely secured
- Knew how to make sure that power points are not overloaded
- Understood Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI)

Be Aware of Health and Safety Precautions When Using a Computer

- **Make sure that cables are safely secured**
- **Make sure that power points are not overloaded**
- **Also be aware of:**
 - **Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI)**
 - **Glare from screens**
 - **Bad posture**



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Be aware of Health and Safety Precautions When Using a Computer

Make sure that cables are safely secured

You should always use the power cables that were supplied with your computer or cables of a similar quality. Make sure that the cables are safely secured at the back of the desk and that you have power points located near the desk. If your desk has a cable ducting system make sure that, you use it. Avoid long trailing cables as yourself or other people can easily trip over them and cause injury to yourself or others. Apart from personal injury, accidentally pulling out a power cable could cause your computer to loose power and you will loose data as a result.

Network cables tend to be delicate and easily damaged and the most common cause of failure to log onto a network server is that someone has accidentally dislodged or damaged the network cables.

Make sure that power points are not overloaded

Overloading of a power point is dangerous and a potential fire hazard! If you need more power sockets, have them properly installed by a qualified electrician!

Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI)

Often referred to as RSI. This is a condition caused by constant use of the keyboard or mouse. You should take regular breaks to help avoid this type of injury. You may want to consider the use of a pad that you can rest your arms on which will help to some extent.

More information:
<http://www.rsi-center.com>

Glare from screens

You should take regular breaks to avoid constantly staring at the screen and straining your eyes. You should consider using the best (i.e. most expensive) monitor that you or your company can afford. The better the monitor the better the screen resolution and the higher the refresh rate. For detailed work, you should also consider using a large screen rather than the 'standard' 14" or 15" screens that are in common use. In many countries, your employer has a legal duty to pay for eye tests for employees as and when they request it.

Bad posture

When sitting at your computer you should have a monitor at eye level that can be adjusted to suit you. In addition, you may want to consider a footrest.