Project 1a – presentation about computers

Introduction

Lots of students and their parents are thinking about buying a computer but not many of them understand the differences between different ones, and what to look for in a good computer.

I am going to create a presentation that can be shown on our school open evening, giving basic information about what makes up a computer and what to look for in a computer.

I will need to do some research. I need to find information about computers for sale – how much they cost and what they contain. I also need to get some information about the different parts of a computer.

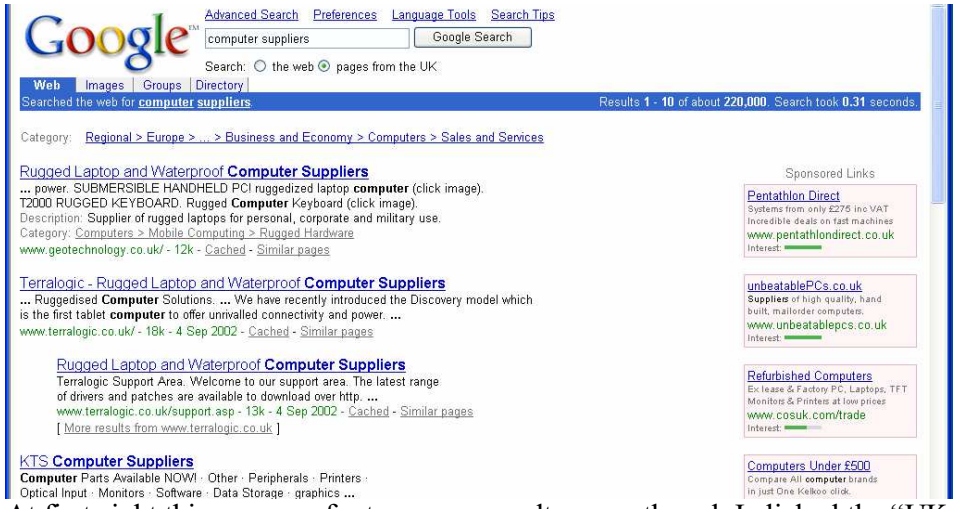
I can get some basic information from my school IT textbook. I can get information about computers for sale from newspaper adverts and the Internet.

Collecting information

First I looked in my textbook and found some information about the basic parts of a computer – input devices, output devices, processor, memory and backing storage. Then I collected some adverts from newspapers. These contained a mixture of desktop PCs and notebooks, of varying prices. You can see some of the adverts I found on the next page.

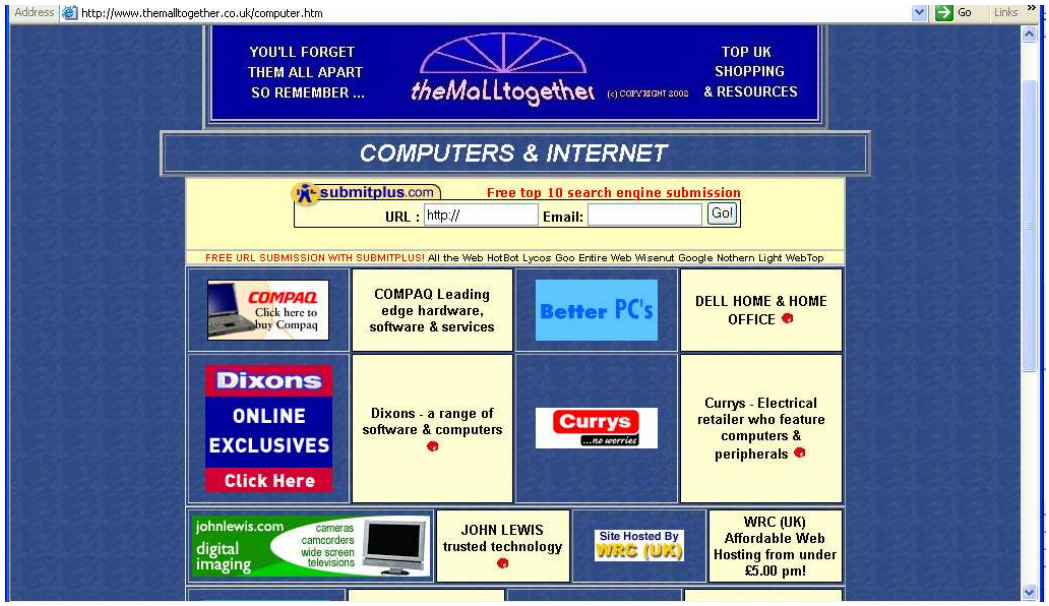
I will find it easier to use information if I can get it from the Internet – I will be able to copy and paste pictures and details without having to scan the pictures and retype the information. I can use search engines to find what I want. I will start using Google, which will allow me to choose just UK site. I could also use Ask Jeeves, where you can type in a sentence or a question.

First I searched for computer suppliers:



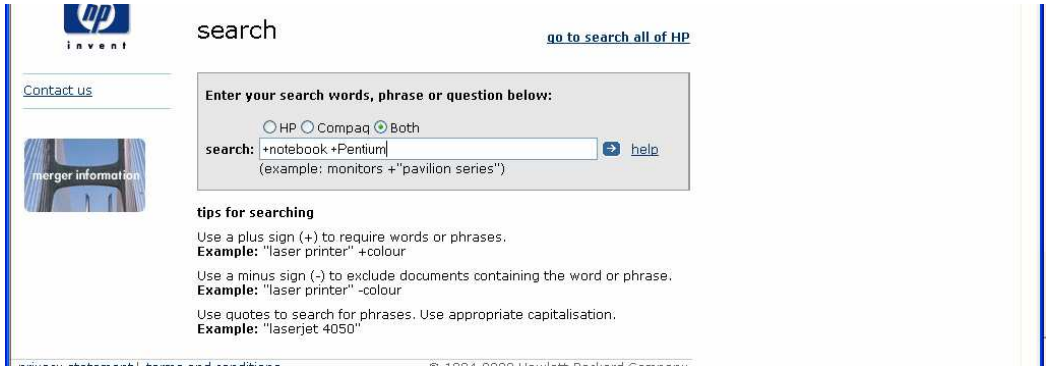
At first sight this gave me far too many results, even though I clicked the "UK sights only" button. However, on the first page of results was a page that seemed to be links to lots of relevant sites:

I clicked on this and it gave me quite a few useful links:

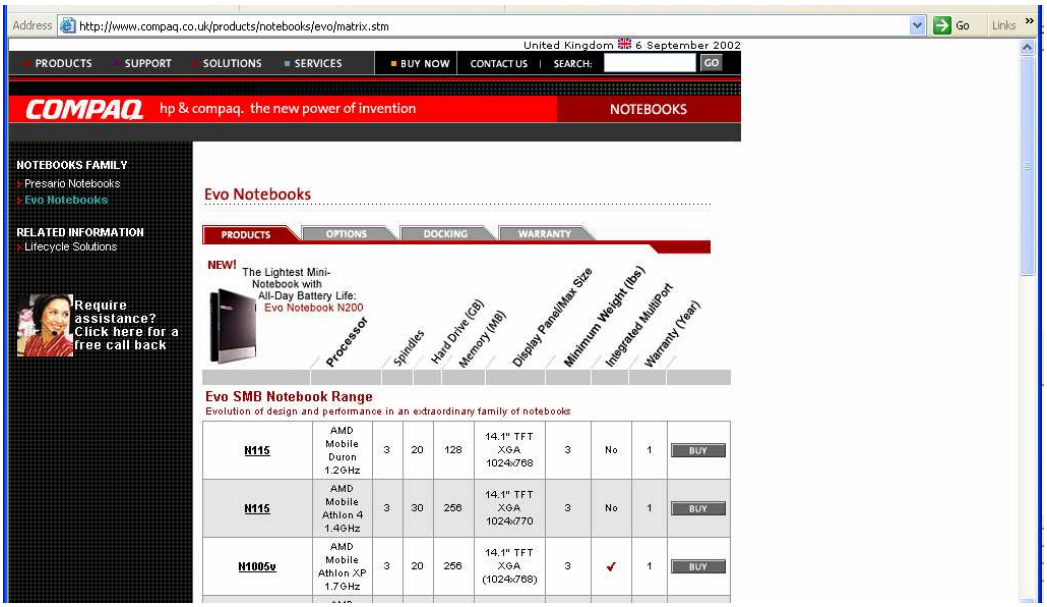


This allowed me to quickly browse some different sites.

First I decided to look for a top of the range notebook computer. I tried the Compaq site first. This gave me a search, so I tried:

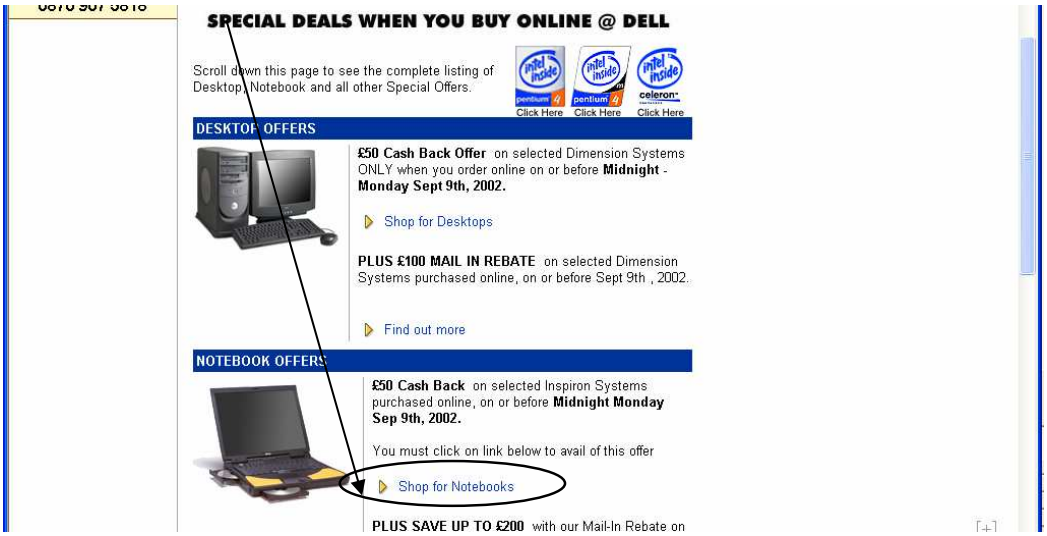


This made sure I found notebooks that were Pentiums, but there was no guarantee that these would all be top of the range. However, there was no way of choosing a minimum price or processor speed. I got 235 results, which was too many. I sorted them by date, because I thought that might bring the higher specifications to the top, but when I clicked on the first one it was a whole range, not even all Pentium.



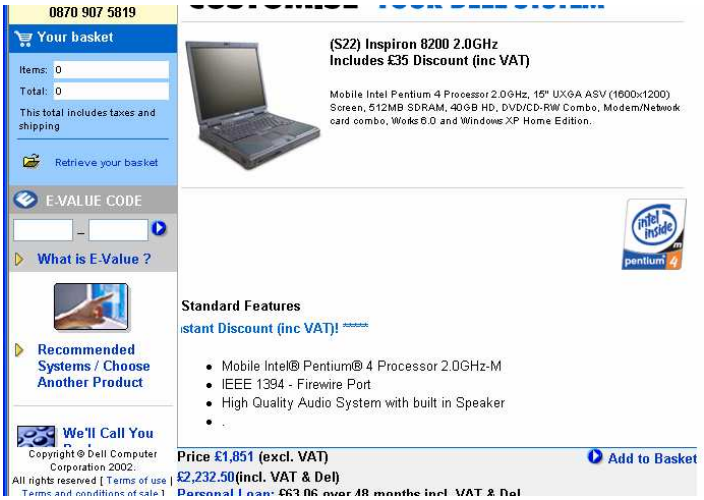
There were no prices at this stage, so I thought I would try a different site.

I went back and tried the Dell site. This didn't have a search but it allowed me to choose notebooks



and then I chose "supreme performance"

which gave me just 3 choices, so I chose the most expensive:



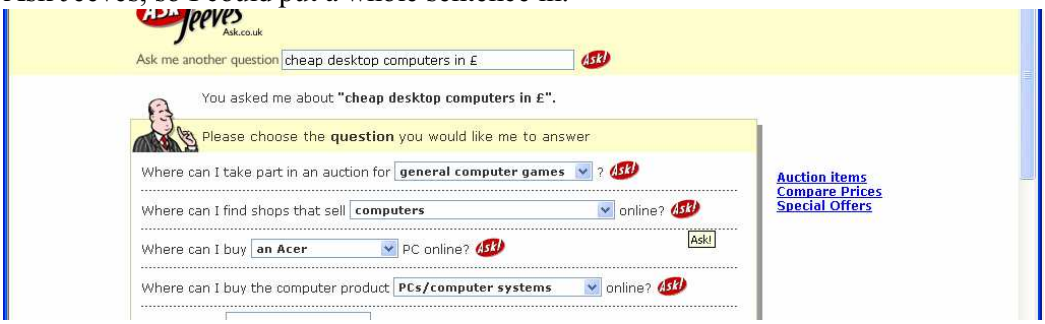
I then found a top of the range desktop from the same site, in the same way:

I then wanted a bottom of the range desktop to compare. I tried the Currys site for this. There were menus to follow to get to desktop PCs:

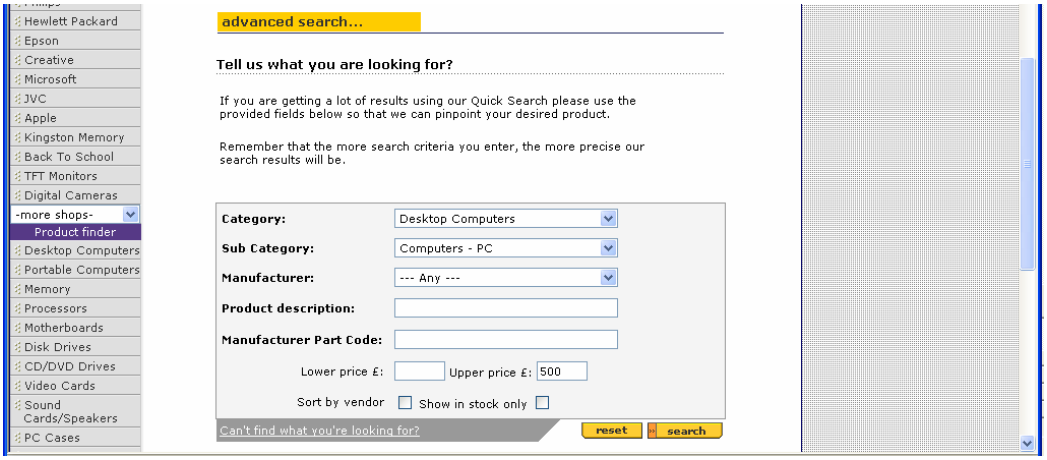
This then gave me PCs sorted by price, so I chose the cheapest:

However, this wasn't really a bottom of the range computer as it had a Pentium 4 processor and a DVD and CDRW drive.

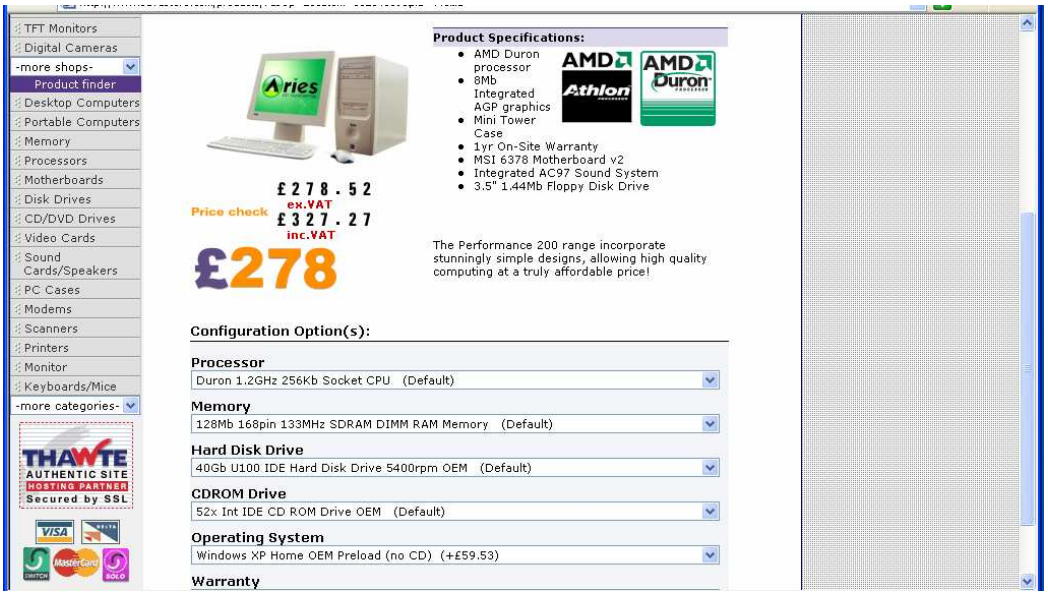
I then went back to try to search again. I had used Google before, so this time I thought I would try Ask Jeeves, so I could put a whole sentence in:



This gave me lots of computer shops again, one of which was called Savastore. This gave me an advanced search option where I could make some choices and select a price range:



The cheapest option was:



I have now found for my presentation:

- A top of the range desktop computer
- A laptop computer
- A bottom of the range desktop computer

These are all from the Internet. I could have used the one from the newspaper advert but it would be harder to get the information onto the computer, and it is more of a middle range computer, which is not what I really wanted. I want to show people the full range of what you can buy, and hopefully help them understand the difference.

Designing my pages

I will need a page or more at the beginning explaining the parts of a PC – processor, memory, input devices, output devices and backing storage. Then I will have a page or two for each PC I found – the top of the range laptop, the top of the range desktop and the bottom of the range desktop from Savastore. I won't use the Currys one because it wasn't really bottom of the range. I won't use the ones from the newspapers because it will be easier for me to copy the pictures from the web sites.

If I have time I will add extra pages at the end looking at different sorts of printers, and input devices, e.g. cameras and scanners.

I want all the pages to have the same sort of look, so I will use the same background idea but different colours. This will show that they all belong to the same presentation but will help people not to get the pages mixed up with each other. I will use simple fonts like Arial and comic sans, so that they are easy to read. I will try to put at least one picture on each slide to make it more interesting. I don't want to put too much writing on because people don't like reading too much from the screen. I will make the text come on a bit at a time to make it seem easier to read. I want my pages to be interesting to people my own age, so they must be colourful and easy to read.

I have designed the basic layout of the first four pages. The other computers will be the same basic layout as page 4, but different colours. I don't know yet if I will have time to do extra pages on printers etc so I haven't designed them yet.

Background - pale to darker blue
Dark blue writing
Arial.

(1)

Guide to buying a computer

people using
a computer
- clip art.

Background - pink
black writing.

Add a picture if room

(2)

Parts of a computer ← Arial large

- Processor. This does the work. The faster the ~~proceser~~ processor (more GHz) the faster it works.
- Memory. Needed to store work being done. Computers will run slowly if they don't have enough memory. Some people say more memory is more important than processor speed
- Input devices To get information into a computer Most computers have a keyboard and a mouse. You can also get digital cameras and scanners for pictures.

contd...

Same style as page 2

(3)

Parts of a computer - contd

- Output devices. You need a monitor and a printer.
- Backing storage. This is discs and CDs you use to save your work on. Every computer has a hard disc inside the computer and most have floppy discs and CDs too. CD rewriters (CDRW) are better than CD ROMs because you can save your work on them and they have more space than floppy discs. CD ROMs are used to load software.

Background - yellow
blue writing.

(4)

A bottom of the range computer

- features, with explanation.
-
-
-
-

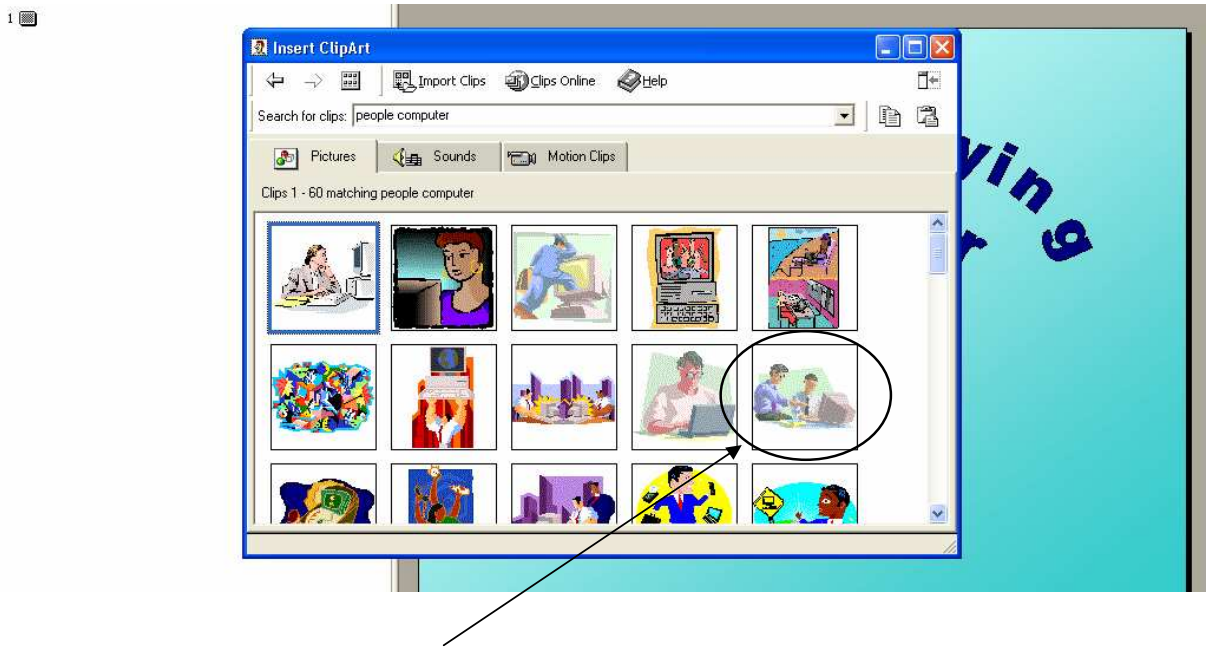
picture

This would be OK if you didn't want to have lots of pages open at once and if you didn't want to do much work with pictures

Creating my first slide

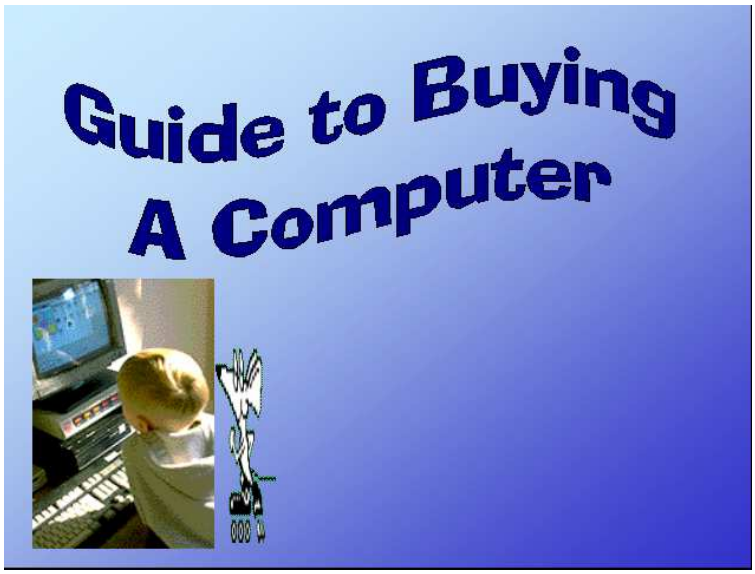
I want my front page to look really attractive so that people will want to go on and look at the rest. To make my page I loaded up PowerPoint and chose a blank slide, so I could choose my own layout. First I set the background using Format - Background. I chose fill effects and gradient, then diagonal up and the first option. I will use this for all my slides, going from light in the top left corner down to darker in the bottom right.

I used Word Art for my big title and made it curve. Then I looked on clip art for a picture of people using a computer, using a search:



I chose a picture with more than one person on because I thought it looked as though one person was showing the other things, which is what my presentation is about:

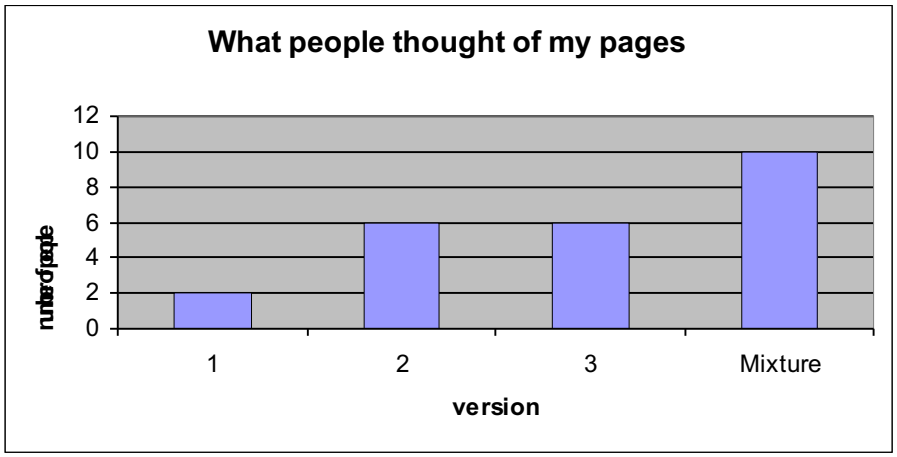
Although this was what I had planned it looked a bit boring, so I experimented a bit. I changed the style of word art and chose a more interesting font, made the background a brighter blue, and looked for an animated picture.



I got the parts to appear on the screen differently. I used dissolve for the writing, then random bars for the photo, then got the mouse to crawl from the right, making it look as though he was skating towards the boy. The photo is animated – the pointer moves around the screen. I thought this looked much more interesting. I am doing my presentation for people my age, so it is important to make things interesting to look at.

I had one more go at the front page. This time I found a picture that could have been someone our age doing homework. I made this really big. Then I found a really interesting style of word art that went round in a circle. I made this spiral onto the picture. I also changed the background style.

I asked people in my class what they thought of my three front pages. I put the results into Excel and made a graph. This is the result:



I was surprised because I thought they would all like version 3 best. A lot of people said they liked it but couldn't read the title so they said I should look for some word art that would be easier to read.

I decided to alter version 3 a bit and finished up with:

It looks better on the screen, with the text swivelling round. I think this is a good front page. It has a picture of a young person and the cartoon image and swivelling text make it interesting and attractive for young people.

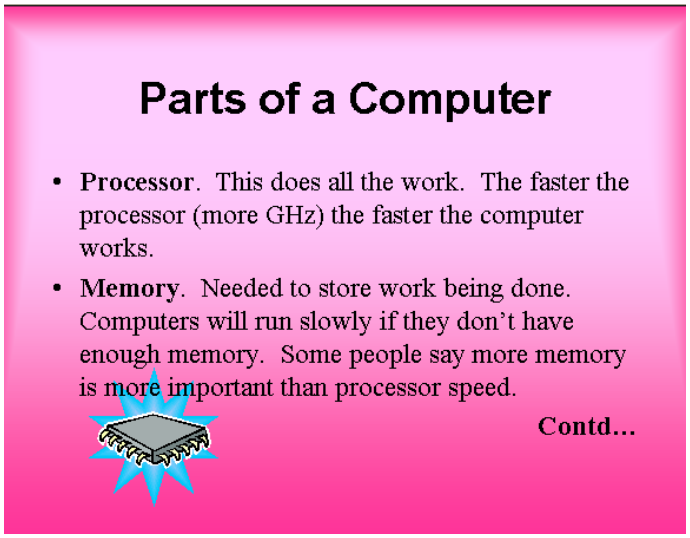
Creating the rest of my screens

I then made the rest of my slides in the same way.

Slide 2
I chose a pink background and put in the writing about processor and memory. I didn't have enough room for backing storage without making the text too small, which would be no good – young people would get bored too quickly.

I found a picture of a chip on clip art and added it to the bottom to make it look more interesting and fill the page.

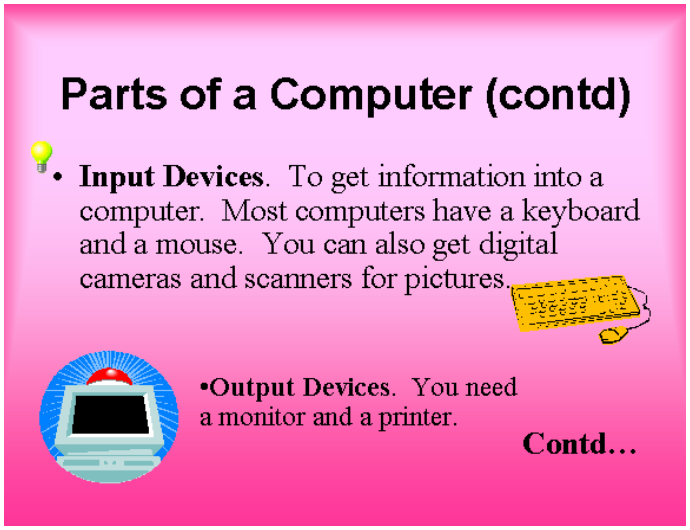
I used the ready made styles at first but then I couldn't put my picture where I wanted it – it kept on covering up the text – so I put my own text frame so that I could choose exactly where I wanted the text and picture to be.



Slide 3
I realised I wouldn't get all of the rest of the writing on this page, so I split it up, leaving enough for an extra page.

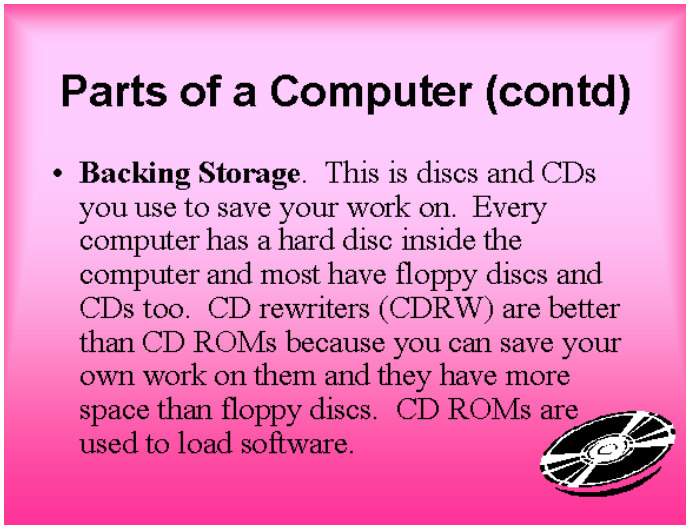
That gave me room for more pictures, which made the page look better.

I used the same background as before because this was a continuation of the last page.



Slide 4

This was the extra page. I did it in the same way as the other two, with the same background.



Slide 5

I copied and pasted the text and picture from the Internet page where I found it (Savastore).

I had a few problems with the picture. It had a white background that covered up the coloured background I had set.

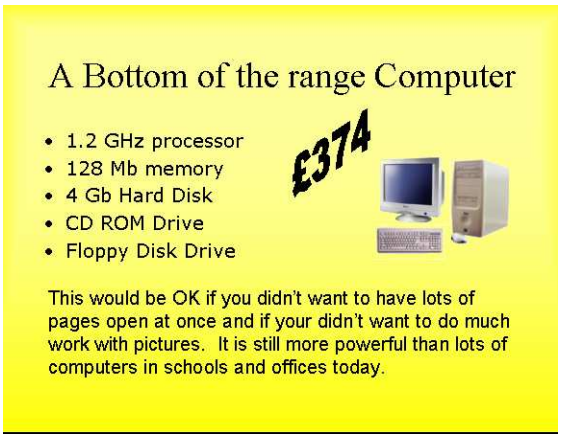
I also noticed that there was a picture of a TFT screen. When I looked carefully I realised that there was no screen or keyboard included in the price, so I would need to find a cheaper screen and add the price on. I went back to the Savastore site and found a screen for £78, a keyboard for £5 and a mouse for £3. This made the total price £364 and I needed to change the picture.

I cropped the picture to get rid of the monitor and keyboard, and then added the new pictures. I had to make the monitor smaller because it was the wrong size. Then I copied and pasted the pictures into Microsoft Photo Editor to make the white background transparent. I did this with all the pictures from the web.

I then had to change the price to £364.

Version 2

Final version

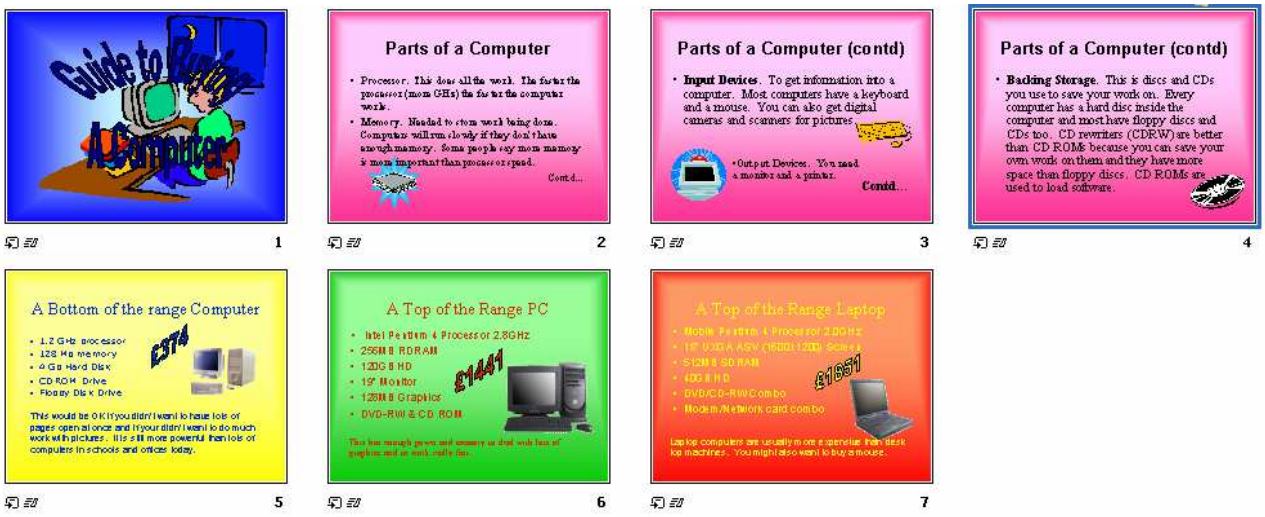


My page is now how it needs to be – it is clear and attractive, it has the main information from the advert, with some explanation of my own. The picture matches the price and there is no ugly white border.

Slides 6 and 7

I did these in the same way as slide 5.

I finished all the pages I had planned but I didn't have time to do the extra ones:



Evaluation

I think that my work has been successful overall. My presentation is attractive and contains the information I wanted. It took longer than I thought to make, mainly because the Internet was very slow and because I had to get rid of all the white backgrounds on the pictures. I would have liked to have added pages about printers, cameras, scanners etc.

Health and Safety

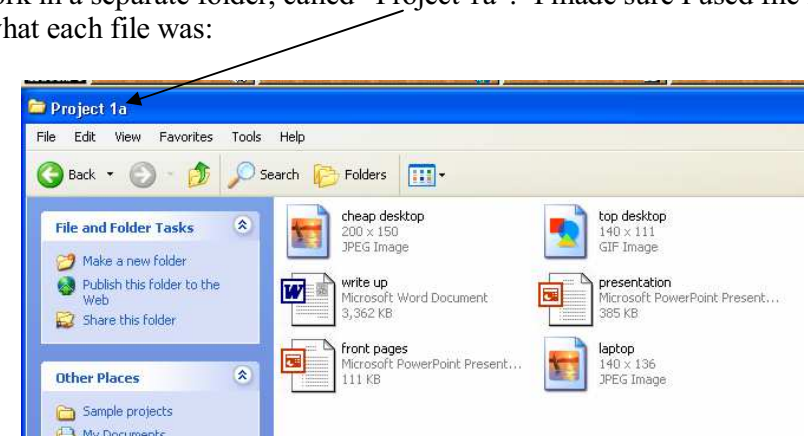
During my project I had to make sure that I worked safely. Our school has organised the computer rooms so that there are no trailing cables or double adaptors in sockets. We have a CO_2 fire extinguisher in the room. We are not allowed to bring food and drink into the room and always put our bags under the tables. This is the way we make sure that we work safely.

If you use a computer for a long time without a break you could get health problems such as RSI and backache. At school we don't sit at the computer for hours – our lessons are only 1 hour long and we are often getting up to collect work from the printer. If I was working in an office I would have to have an adjustable chair and I would have to have a break from the computer every 2 hours. There is one problem at school – the blinds are broken and so we get lots of glare on the screens. This could cause eyestrain and headaches.

Keeping work safe

I also had to make sure that I kept my work safe. My school backs up all network files every night. The backup tapes are kept for a week and Friday's tapes are kept for a month. That way, if anything happened to my work I could always get it back by asking the technician. If I were only doing this work at home I would have to make sure I backed up my work onto a floppy disc every time I finished work.

I kept all my work in a separate folder, called "Project 1a". I made sure I used file names that would tell me what each file was:



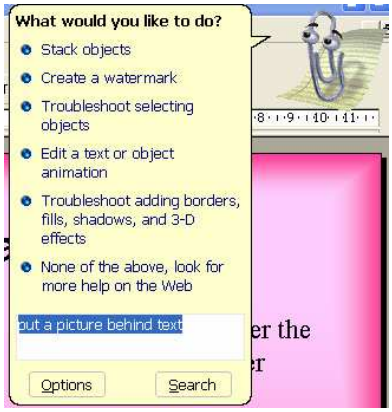
One way to lose work is to get a virus. This is quite common when you are downloading work from the Internet. It can also happen if you use floppy discs to take work from home to school. Our school has the Sophos anti-virus program installed on the network. This checks the network disc and also checks every floppy disc that is put in. That way we make sure we don't get viruses. You should also be careful not to use anyone else's disc unless you know it has been checked and you shouldn't open emails and attachments unless you know whom they are from. Anti-virus programs need to be updated regularly so that they can cope with the latest viruses.

Taking care of equipment

Sometimes I took my work home on a floppy disc. I always kept this clean and safe by putting it in a plastic folder inside my ring binder. That way it didn't get squashed or dirty. My disc never went wrong.

I also made sure I shut down my computer properly before switching it off. Otherwise it might not boot up properly next time.

Getting help and finding errors



I didn't need much help on this project because I already knew how to use the Internet and how to use PowerPoint. There were a few things I got stuck on. The first thing I did was to use the help button on the program. This allows you to ask a question and quite often I found out the answer that way.

Sometimes the help isn't very helpful – it doesn't tell you what you want. Sometimes I found out by asking people round me but I did ask the teacher too. She showed my how to get rid of the white bits round the pictures off the Internet.

PowerPoint is also quite good because it gives you a little light bulb if it has a hint for you. Sometimes this is just annoying because it is telling you it has a picture you can use. Sometimes it is helpful because it tells you when you should have used a capital letter or if you have put too much on the page. You just click on the light bulb and it shows you the hint.

Advantages and disadvantages of using IT

I am pleased I was able to use IT for this project. Without it I would have had to write all the information by hand, probably on posters. It would not have looked so good, and I would not have been able to have all the animation effects. This way it will look good in a room on open day. Using IT also made it possible to keep on experimenting with ideas until I was really happy with the result, without having to start all over again.

It would have been easier cutting the pictures out of paper adverts and sticking them onto posters. This would have been much quicker than waiting for the Internet and then getting rid of the backgrounds. However, the result wouldn't have looked anything like as good.

Copyright and Confidentiality

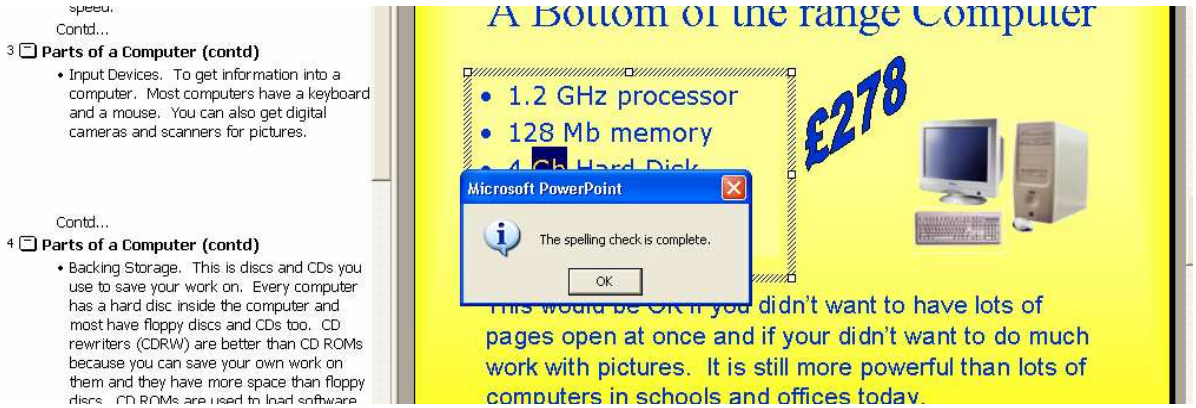
I need to make sure I don't break the law when I use information from other people. I didn't include information about people, so there was no problem with confidentiality.

I can use Microsoft clipart in my work so long as I am not making money out of it, so that is OK.

I did use some pictures from the Internet. Sometimes if you try to copy a picture it tells you that it is copyright. These are just photographs and there was no copyright message on them so I am OK to use these too but I need to go back and write on the slides where the pictures came from.

Checking for errors

I tried to make sure there were no mistakes in my work. I used the spell check on PowerPoint to check for spelling mistakes, but it didn't find any. The only things it didn't like were "contd" and things like Gb. I checked these with my teacher and they were OK.



I also needed to make sure that my write up was correct. I used the spell check again and found a few mistakes, which I put right. However, sometimes mistakes can still get through, if you have used the wrong word, for example. I asked my Mum, who is a secretary, to check my work and she said it was OK. I will ask her to check again when I have completely finished.

I have checked this work for accuracy and there are no mistakes

Signed _____