

Computer Hardware

The term computer hardware refers to the various electronic components that are required for you to use a computer along with the hardware components inside the computer case. As you know your computer equipment is made of several common components. These include:

- **The main computer box.**
- **A monitor** - Looks like a television screen.
- **A keyboard.**
- **A mouse.**
- **Speakers.**
- **An optional printer**

The main computer box is the main component of the computer. It has computer hardware parts inside that perform the following functions:

- **Temporary storage of information** (known as data in more technical terms) - This function is done by memory.
- **Permanent storage of information** - This function is done by a hard disk, floppy disk, or CD ROM.
- **Manipulation or processing of data** - Used to determine where data is stored and perform calculations which support operations that the user is doing.
- **Interfacing to the outside components or to the outside world** - This supports the ability for the user to communicate with the computer and know how the computer is responding to commands which are done primarily through the monitor, keyboard, and mouse along with their interface components in the main computer box.

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A power supply which provides the electrical power to the components in the computer box.

The Main Computer Box

The main computer box is made of several computer hardware components and subcomponents which include:

- **The case** - The outside component which provides protection for the parts inside and provides a fan and power supply which are used to both cool the working parts inside and provide power to them.
- **The motherboard** - Hold the following computer hardware subcomponents:
 - Memory - Used to provide temporary storage of information as discussed earlier.
 - Microprocessor - Used to provide the processing of data function as discussed earlier.
 - Video interface card which is also called the video card - This card is an interface between the computer monitor and the motherboard and its subcomponents such as the microprocessor and memory. This card may be included as part of the motherboard or it may plug into a card slot on the motherboard.
 - Sound card is an interface between the computer speakers and the motherboard and its subcomponents such as the microprocessor and memory. This card may be included as part of the motherboard or it may plug into a card slot on the motherboard.
- One or more permanent storage devices some of which may be optional:
 - Hard disk - Most computers today have a hard disk (sometimes called hard drives) which is the component most commonly used to provide permanent storage of data. Hard disks are usually permanently installed in a computer.

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- CD ROM drive or DVD drive - Used to provide permanent storage of data but this type of drive is used to bring information into the computer more commonly than it is used to store information from the computer. Sometimes this type of drive is used to back up data from the hard drive so data is not lost if a hard drive breaks. A DVD drive holds more data than a CD ROM drive and DVDs have enough storage capacity that they may be used to play or store movies. The storage media, the CD ROM or DVD may be removed from the computer.
- Floppy Drive - A low capacity storage device which can be written to as easily as it is read. The floppy disk may be easily removed from the computer. It is called a floppy because the part of the media that holds the data is on a material that is not rigid but it is enclosed in a more rigid case to give it durability.

There are also other minor computer hardware components inside the case which include cables which may be used to hook other internal parts together along with connecting an interface to the case for printers and other devices such as a high speed serial bus called USB. (A serial bus simply refers to the fact that data is sent in a stream which is like sending one bit at a time.

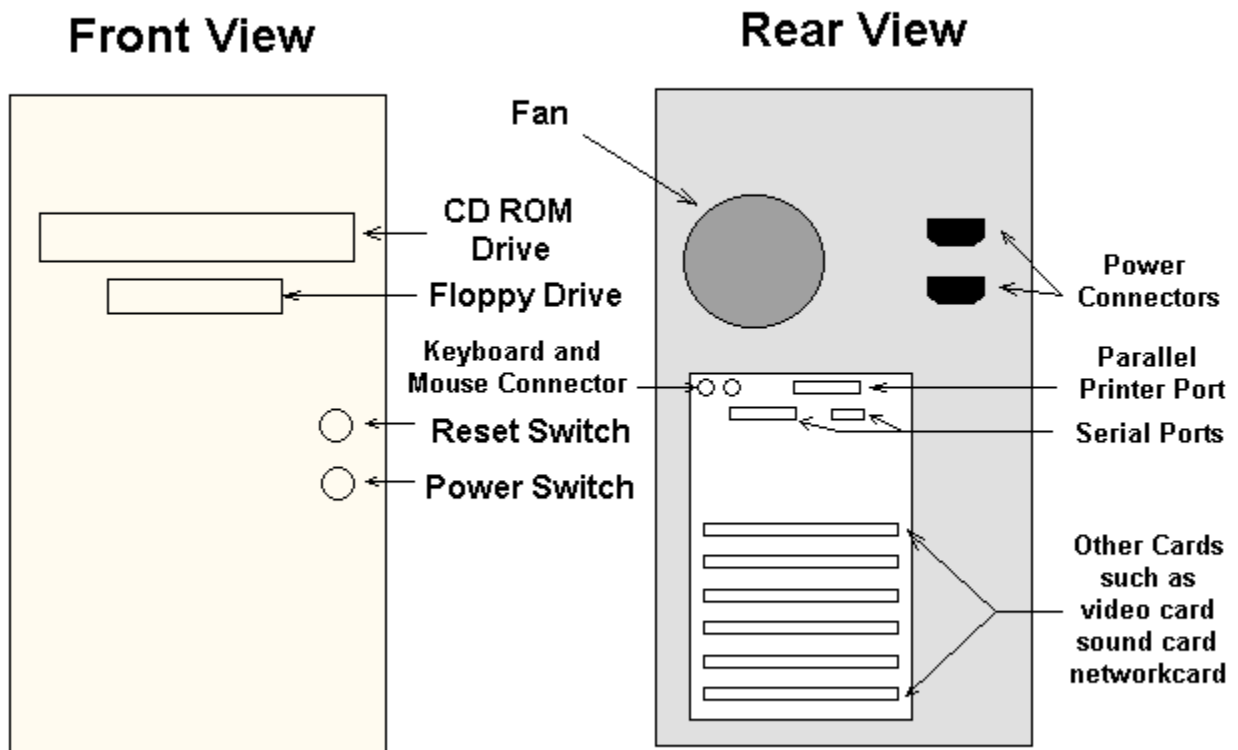
The Case

The drawing below shows a typical case. It may help you understand where your connections for your monitor, keyboard, mouse, and other devices are if you should need to hook them up. For more specific information you should refer to your computer owner's manual.

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A Typical Computer with Tower Case

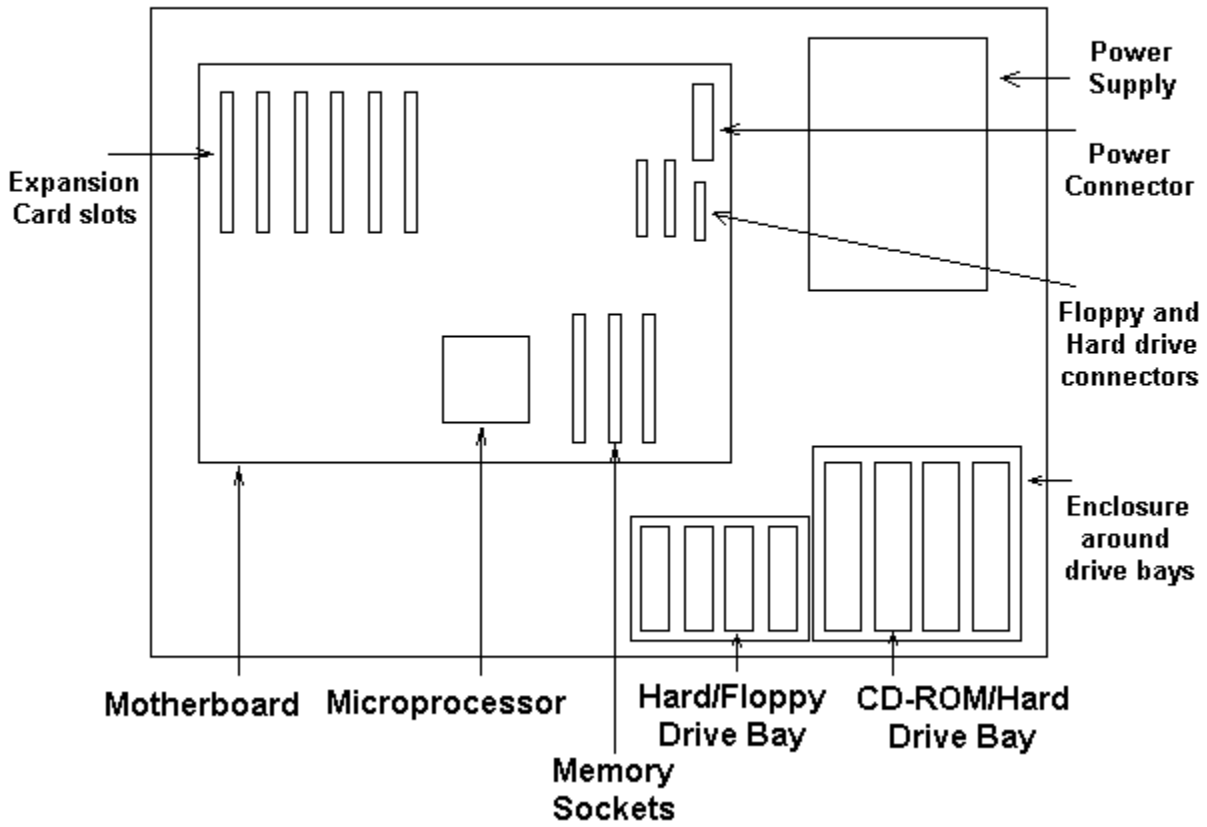


The drawing below shows a typical layout of the components inside your computer case.

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Inside the Case



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