



Computer Software



(How to reduce the costs of buying the software you need)

You have a computer, but it doesn't do all you want! You have come to realise that you need additional software. Before you buy expensive software, consider other options to obtain what you need.

Microsoft Office is probably the most widely used software, students within school are taught using the Microsoft Office suite of programs. Microsoft Word is used for writing letters and Microsoft Excel for creating a spreadsheet. However buying Microsoft Office can be very expensive. Fortunately there are ways of obtaining legal versions of suitable software a great deal cheaper.

If you wish to produce simple documents and spreadsheets, Open Office is a free alternative. Open Office is a complete office suite for word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, graphics, databases and more and is released as "open source" software. This means that anyone is free to download and use it. The website address is www.openoffice.org. Although very good it is not Microsoft Office.

Another option is buying a version of Microsoft Office from www.software4students.co.uk. This company is a Microsoft Partner and is licensed to sell discounted software to school, college students and their family members for home use only. They sell the Microsoft Office 2007 version and most schools, including West Park, are still using Microsoft Office 2003 version. So if documents are shared with other people, I recommend that you save your documents in 2003 format.

At the time of writing this article, Microsoft Office Standard which gives a 2-PC license for Office including Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Outlook for XP / Vista is £35.45. A considerable saving over other suppliers.

Don't forget that there is free software included in Windows e.g. Windows Movie Maker that's included with Windows XP and Windows Vista. This is useful for putting together short movies from your photographs and videos.

Another resource that is becoming increasingly popular is using facilities on a website, rather than installing programs on your own computer. This enables you to access your work from any computer attached to the internet.

Google has incorporated in its increasing range of services, the ability to create and share your online documents, presentations and spreadsheets. Whilst Adobe has made many of its photo editing tools available to use for free at the new Photoshop Express website, www.photoshop.com/express.

If you have any ideas for articles, or taster courses you would like us to run, I can be contacted through our website www.westparkcommunity.co.uk by telephone 821964 or e-mail at community@westpark.derby.sch.uk.

Jean Moss—Community at West Park School