

You can use a computer to write letters and notes. When connected to the internet, you can keep in touch by email and other means with friends, family, businesses and public services. There's no postage cost and messages arrive within seconds.



Write

A computer can help you compose a formal letter, record some notes for a hobby or write a short story. Simply type a draft and edit it until you are happy. Save it on your computer, print it out or send it to someone by email.

Find out how to set up email (see overleaf) to keep in contact with friends and family. It's 'free', your messages can be sent anywhere in the world and your computer will remember people's email addresses for you.

Talk

Most people are familiar with using a telephone to make calls to friends and family. You can make 'free' phone calls over the internet using a computer with a microphone and headphones or speakers.

You can record and share video messages and have live video conversations over the web with people all around the world. See each other as you talk!



Connect

Another powerful feature of the web is the way it helps people to connect in new ways. This can be with people you know or new groups of people you share a common interest or hobby with.

Meet people from all over the world, through blogs, discussion groups, forums chat rooms and special websites, such as Facebook, Bebo and Friends Reunited. Find out more on Computer Skills for life.

Learn more at: www.hants.gov.uk/computer-skills/keeping-in-touch.



Create an email account

How to set up your own email account

Email is free to set up and use on an internet-connected computer to send and receive messages. If you are not certain how to do this, you might wish to ask a friend or relative to help. Alternatively, many libraries provide drop-in sessions on using the internet and email to help you get started.

One thing you will need to think about is your email address (also called your **username** or **login name**). This will be used by people to contact you, for example *bobsmith@googlemail.com*.

Because there are so many people with an email address and each one has to be unique, you may have to add some extra words or a number eg *bobsmith44@googlemail.com*.

Set up Google Mail

Google Mail is a leading email program, others are Microsoft Hotmail, www.hotmail.co.uk (see below *) and Yahoo Mail, www.yahoo.co.uk/mail (see below *). Let's look at Google Mail:

1. Go to www.google.co.uk (see below *)
2. Click **Mail**, then **Create an account** and fill out the form
3. Type in your first and last name
4. Choose an email address (**Desired Login Name**) and click **check availability**. If this address is not available, you will be offered alternatives or try a new name and click **check availability** again.

5. Choose a **password** that is easy for you to remember but not obvious for someone else to guess.
6. Also choose a security question to remind you of your password should you ever forget it
7. Complete the form, read the **Terms of Service** and click **I accept. Create my account**.

Use Google Mail

Sign in to your email at www.google.co.uk, click **Mail**. Type your **Username** (your email address) and **Password**. [NB if you are using a public computer, do not select the 'remember me on this computer' box].

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