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Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Computers

Computers have been around for quite some time; there is no denying that. Long before they were purchased for personal use, (homes and businesses alike) computers were exclusively used by programmers in advanced areas of science and technology. However, with the rise of personal computers (PCs) in the 1980s and 1990s, more and more people (ordinary people, not just skilled developers) were starting to learn about the unique features of what computers can and can't do. Like any invention or concept, the advantages and disadvantages of these machines started to come about and with the evolution of computers to today's standards, the evidence isn't any clearer. Are computers more helpful than not? Or are they becoming a burden on today's society? Are computers overused or are they underutilized? Questions like these can be answered by delving into the perceived view of pros and cons these machines offer amongst many other but related technological hardware.

On one side of the spectrum, computers are widely seen to be one of the most important inventions ever created and why not? The obvious reasons include the following: organization, self-sufficiency, cost-effectiveness, speed, research and development, and sales generation. With organization, computers can keep track of and store important information in a detailed and easy to find fashion. Within a computer's hardware is large amounts of storage (largely based on megabytes for the time being) that is necessary to hold handful amounts of documents, files, and other

important data. Furthermore, there are various kinds of software that can aid in organization; Microsoft Word (and its extensions), for example, is a very well-known program that not only provides for typing papers but also creates graphs (Excel) and presentations (PowerPoint). In the end, each program has its own features that are based around a user's purpose and the options presented are organized for efficiency and accessibility.

Going on in its advantages, computers are self-sufficient. Although not 100% reliable to the point of them being artificial intelligence, computers can perform a wide variety of tasks, from financial accounting to video production. Although these highly advanced applications are only possible with human involvement, for the time being, it is still a step up from having to do these things by hand or with several people/equipment at a time. In fact, by cutting on the number of workers/equipment needed to perform a given task, the advantage of cost-effectiveness comes into play. All computers are able to accomplish many aspects of what businesses call for (i.e. data modeling, web browsing, and internet security); by simply hiring a few expert workers trained in the IT background, businesses and companies alike could reduce their budgets on funding for many employees in favor of a few multitasking and skilled workers. Furthermore, it goes without saying that computers speed up business operations (for obvious reasons); not only is having IT people important, but so are people adept at emailing, faxing, video-messaging, etc. which ultimately quickens most to all business tasks (at least with regards to communication with clients, other companies, and vice versa).

The final reasons of how computers are advantageous are self-explanatory. For one thing, these machines can provide for efficient research and development tactics. Students in all educational levels will use computers for this purpose and with the advent of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s, assignments have become more web oriented than book oriented and it still holds true for today's educational environment. Even businesses benefit from research as most conduct surveys and collect reviews on their company products and reputation. To segue in the last but most relatable advantage that computers offer, the subject of sales comes into play. As already touched upon, the advent of the World Wide Web has brought upon change in the learning environment; in this case, it also holds true in the sales department. Over the last few years, businesses and websites have been operating sales online as an alternative to the traditional brick-and-mortar (in-store) method. Services such as Amazon and Ebay offer so much from web shopping that virtually anyone around the world can look up prices for great products, yet another reason why computers serve as an important tool for life's conveniences.

Now that I established the pros of the usage of computers, (which admittedly is multifold) there is the other spectrum in naming and describing the negatives; these include technical problems, spelling and handwriting skills, cheating, financial problems, and abuse. Dealing with technical problems is a given when handling computers but regarding what specific thing can run the gamut. Internet security is a very common issue amongst many computer owners and without the proper guidance and knowledge of how to install the right software, a computer can be infected with various kind of malware. Furthermore, a computer user must be able to troubleshoot

problems concerning internet connections, hardware failure, overheating, etc. as these can occur at any point in a computer's life cycle. On to the next problem, the subject of spelling and writing skills and the effects of computing on them is one that is not brought up often. As more and more people become accustomed to typing on the computer (especially from an early age), the benefits of Microsoft Word in spell check and grammar check could deter some from having to spell or write correctly on paper. This becomes problematic for students who need the natural skills to do well on the SATs or MCAS for example.

Perhaps one of the most significant issues facing computer ownership is cheating. There are many ways one can cheat by using a computer for aid in assignments and tests (non-open book); plagiarism is one common method. Ever since the creation and rise of the World Wide Web, the number of websites useful in information and research has skyrocketed. Naturally, with an almost limitless array of sources, plagiarizing them has been a very common cheating practice. Furthermore, looking up test answers on the web is not unheard of, especially considering scenarios where students can resume a test after the time runs out for everyone to complete. For the time being, cheating is being countered by a variety of solutions (Turnitin.com for plagiarizing and one-session tests for in-class examinations).

The last disadvantages I'm going to detail are financial problems and abuse from computers. Regarding the former, the price of computers (desktops and laptops) have been steadily rising over the last few years, especially when it comes to how much features are present in them. Schools and businesses alike require large numbers of computers for their educational and financial uses respectively and thus

both require a budget for purchasing the computers. In short, it is important to have the affordability for buying computers since they offer exceptional research and production capabilities but that affordability has to also extend to repair and upgrades to keep these machines in check. On the other hand, while computers present themselves as a significant tool in reputable institutions, some of its users could be in for something dire in terms of habits: computer abuse.

Computer abuse comes from an assortment of things including procrastination and gaming. For every one person who uses computers for self-study, there are more who procrastinate and end up hours on websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Google, Yahoo and much more. And if that wasn't worse enough, the number of gaming websites on PCs have increased tenfold since the 1990s which has led many computer users to actively spend hours, if not days and weeks on a game (especially if said game was online/around the world multiplayer). Although this problem is already present in video gaming consoles, the unique problem here is that computers can do a wide array of things effectively meaning that someone could waste a day on playing and browsing the web AND doing their work ultimately leading to computer overuse. This overuse could then lead to someone not being active and that in itself is an epidemic in this country.

In conclusion, computers provide a lot for advantages and some for disadvantages but based on my findings and also in my genuine opinion, computers are not severely detrimental than they are extremely beneficial. The fact of the matter is that computers, along with tablets, smartphones, and other devices all have the same problems (cheating, overuse) but they can be easily countered with self-

control and awareness which is getting more ground per year. The reflection in seeing how much accomplishments computers have had on our world and lifestyle says so much about its influence and to me, that legacy will remain strong for future generations.

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