

HSS and ALISON Basic Computing (ABC) IT

Much of the text of this document has been taken from the ALISON¹ web site <http://alison.com> ; it describes the 'ABC IT' online course² – a free course which we think is suitable for older people who have already mastered basic computer skills³, and now wish to take their learning to a higher level by working independently at home, or anywhere else they have access to the Internet. It seems to be particularly suitable for people who are still in the job market – either working now, or hoping to get back to work soon.

ALISON and Hackney Silver Surfers.

It is important to understand that Hackney Silver Surfers and Age Concern Hackney have no formal relationship with ALISON. If you register as an ALISON user, you will become an ALISON learner. However, Hackney Silver Surfers have set up two extra resources to help you ...

- We have created an ALISON management group for the ABC-IT course. The name of this management group is 'Hackney Silver Surfers' and the 'enrolment key'⁴ is hackney123. Note that ...
 - The management group is for our benefit as well as yours. It will help us track your progress, and analyse our own effectiveness.
 - If you choose not to join the group (or if you forget to join it), our help system will *not* be affected – we can offer you almost exactly the same level of support whether you are in it or not.
 - *Anybody* may join this group. It is not exclusive.
- We have set up a new web site named 'Hackney Silver Surfers Talking' at <http://talk.lawns.org.uk> ; the purpose of this site is to help you with your independent learning, including computer activities at home. We have a section devoted to ALISON learners. We strongly advise all Hackney Silver Surfers to register with our new web site as soon as they have become reasonably proficient with email, and definitely if they intend to register for an ALISON course⁵.

By the way, help with online learning is an *additional* service for our learners. It does not replace any part of our existing program, and we hope that all independent learners will still find the time to visit us at The Lawns occasionally.

¹ ALISON: Advance Learning Interactive Systems Online.

² An 'online' course is a course which is presented to you on the World Wide Web. Therefore you need access to a computer connected to the Internet, and you must also be able to use a web browser (eg: Internet Explorer, Firefox, Opera) before you begin (although your competence does not have to be great).

³ As a guide to the minimum level attained, you should be able to use email on your own (eg: at home) without help from anyone else.

⁴ You might be asked if you have an enrolment key when you register.

⁵ Please note that 'Hackney Silver Surfers Talking', although much easier to use than ALISON, is *not* suitable for absolute computer beginners. Get some practice first at the Hackney Silver Surfers centre.

Registering as an ALISON learner.

Before you do this, please think about *how* and *where* you will do the course. First think about the skills you have acquired so far – you should be a fairly confident email user, and able to enter and edit text without difficulty. You will need access to a computer that is connected to the Internet and has sound (some of the content is spoken)⁶.

- Visit the ALISON home page <http://alison.com/>
- Click on the ‘Register’ button.
- Fill in the registration form⁷. Make sure that all your details are correct before you proceed.
- Registering is a ‘confirmed opt-in’ process. That means ALISON will send a message to your email address, asking you to confirm your registration by clicking on a link within the message. The link will take you to a page which will complete your registration and show you how to get started with ABC-IT.
- After you click on the ‘Start’ button for the first time, you will a request to enter your ‘enrolment key’. Your key is **hackney123** (type it in the small box above the ‘Enrol in Group’ button). Enrolling in our Hackney Silver Surfers group is optional – obviously we would like you to enrol, but the choice is yours.
- Now you are ready to start.

ALISON ABC IT: What is it?

ALISON Basic Computing IT helps a student to learn practical skills and competencies and consists of three separate modules covering computer theory, practice and skills attainment, all available for free learning. ALISON ABC IT is self-certified, meaning that a certificate of completion is available to students once they have achieved a success rate of 80% or more in the free tests, and have completed the basic introductory lessons provided for touch typing.

Who is ALISON ABC IT for?

ALISON ABC IT is for anyone who needs to learn basic computing skills or has a need to demonstrate to an international standard that they are fully competent in the use of a personal computer and common computer applications. Prospective learners should ideally have used computers and the more common software applications before, although it is possible for complete beginners to take this free IT course also.

ALISON ABC IT-1 Outline.

ALISON ABC IT-1 introduces the learner to the very basic concepts of IT and teaches how computing is an everyday feature of life and work.

ABC IT-1 introduces the concept of the digital world or the ‘digital age’, outlining the opportunity and practicalities of e-mail, online business and e-commerce. The Unit

⁶ The computers at The Lawns are very suitable for ALISON.

⁷ The registration form is the first test – if you do not understand how to do it, you are *not* yet ready for an online course (but don’t worry – we can help you get to that level quickly at Hackney Silver Surfers).

presents basic IT training concepts of how to work safely with computers and the legal matters relating to the computer world. It also introduces the learner to the computer itself, both hardware and software, and the key concepts of information technology in general.

Finally, ABC IT-1 introduces the learner to the online world: Web browsers, e-mail, Web addresses, bookmarking, messaging and practical lessons on how to manage e-mail. As with all ALISON courses, ALISON ABC IT-1 is free learning available to all registered learners on ALISON.

Outline of ABC IT-1 Basic Concepts.

Module One: IT Today.

Lesson 1: Introduction to IT.

Lesson 2: Working with IT.

Lesson 3: The Digital World.

Lesson 4: Using IT Safely and Protecting the Environment.

Lesson 5: Legal Matters in IT.

Module Two: The Computer.

Lesson 1: Computer Hardware.

Lesson 2: Computer Software.

Lesson 3: Computer Networks.

Lesson 4: Maintenance.

Lesson 5: System Analysis.

Lesson 6: Working Securely.

Lesson 7: Starting Up and Using Your Computer.

Lesson 8: Desktop Management.

Lesson 9: File Management.

Lesson 10: Virus Management.

Module Three: The Online World.

Lesson 1: Getting Started on the Web.

Lesson 2: Surfing the Web.

Lesson 3: Searching the Web.

Lesson 4: Web Bookmarks.

Lesson 5: E-mail.

Lesson 6: Basic Messaging.

Lesson 7: Managing Mail.

Lesson 8: Address Books.

ALISON ABC IT-2 Outline.

ABC IT-2 introduces the learner to the Microsoft Office 2003 application suite⁸, one of the most commonly-used and most popular office-software packages worldwide. This suite includes MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Access. As with all ALISON courses, ALISON ABC IT-2 is free learning available to registered learners on ALISON.

Microsoft Word.

This course introduces the learner to the fundamental principles of using Word 2003 and provides an understanding of the power of the Word 2003 word-processing system.

Lesson 1: First Steps with Word.

Lesson 2: Key Operations.

Lesson 3: Applying Formatting.

Lesson 4: Finishing a Document.

Lesson 5: Advanced Features.

Lesson 6: Using Mail Merge.

Lesson 7: Outputs.

Lesson 8: Printed Output.

Microsoft Excel.

Microsoft Excel 2003 combines a powerful spreadsheet application with the user-friendly atmosphere of Windows. Candidates will learn the basics of Excel; creating, editing, and saving worksheets.

Lesson 1: First Steps with Excel.

Lesson 2: Key Operations.

Lesson 3: Introduction to Worksheets.

Lesson 4: Working with Functions and Formulas.

Lesson 5: Formatting Cells.

Lesson 6: Using the Print Function.

Lesson 7: Graphs and Charts.

Microsoft Access.

This course will enable candidates to use and create a database using Access 2003, to an intermediate level.

Lesson 1: First Steps with Access.

Lesson 2: Creating a Database.

Lesson 3: Making Changes to a Database.

Lesson 4: Database Forms.

⁸ MS Office 2003 is the version of MS Office we use at The Lawns.

Lesson 5: Information Retrieval.

Lesson 6: Using Database Reports.

Lesson 7: Printing.

Microsoft PowerPoint.

This course is designed to give the user the ability to produce their own PowerPoint 2003 presentations.

Lesson 1: First Steps with PowerPoint.

Lesson 2: Creating a Presentation.

Lesson 3: Formatting.

Lesson 4: Graphics and Charts.

Lesson 5: Printing and Distribution.

Lesson 6: Slide Show Animations and Transitions.

ALISON ABC IT-3.

ALISON ABC IT-3 covers three of the most practical elements of computing:

- Touch Typing.
- How to use Webmail (Gmail).
- Desktop Ergonomics.

Touch Typing.

For the purposes of the free ALISON ABC IT certification, we simply ask learners to complete the basic touch typing course. These free lessons will introduce the learner to basic tips of touch typing and set the learner on the road to faster and more efficient desktop skills. At ALISON, we believe that touch typing is the single most under-appreciated skill in computing. A learner, perhaps beginning years of academic study can literally waste months of their lives by being poor or slow typists.

How to use Gmail.

How to use Gmail introduces the learner to Web-based e-mail (Webmail) and specifically to Google's Gmail (or Google Mail) service which we believe is one of the simplest and most efficient free mail services on the Web⁹. Besides showing a new learner how to sign-up for an account, the course outlines the basic benefits and features of e-mail services generally. Whether using Hotmail, Yahoo! Mail or other quality Webmail services, the learner will come away from this free course having a much better understanding of this very powerful communications tool.

⁹ Our own seniors.org.uk email system is a branded version of Gmail. Although there are some small differences, it is effectively the same system, and people with seniors.org.uk email accounts should be able to follow this course without difficulty.

Desktop Ergonomics.

This free lesson encourages everyone to consider the risks associated with using display screen equipment, applying good ergonomic principles and adopting the correct work practices and postures. Learners will be shown what actions can be taken to ensure their workplace is a safe environment for them to work at and how to establish an ergonomic workstation.

ALISON ABC IT Free Testing and Free Certification.

A Free Online Certification for Digital-Age Learners.

All free testing is currently carried out within the courseware itself by way of the tests that are positioned at the end of every free lesson. Your ALISON learning record keeps track of your performance in these tests, and, once you have completed all lessons averaging 80% within these tests you are eligible for an ABC IT certificate. Completion of the touch typing training module is also required to qualify for the ABC IT certification.

Once certified, a learner can print (or digitally download and save) their ABC IT certificate, direct from the ALISON Web site.

Do you have questions about ALISON?

If you have questions about ALISON, or this document – or if there is anything you do not understand – then please ask!

The *appropriate* place to ask is our new ‘Hackney Silver Surfers Talking’ web site <http://talk.lawns.org.uk> – please visit the site now and register¹⁰.

Hackney Silver Surfers Talking exists specifically for you to ask that sort of question, and give you an answer that is genuinely useful.

¹⁰ The registration procedure is easy, but if you need more information, please read our document named *Hackney Silver Surfers Talking.pdf*.