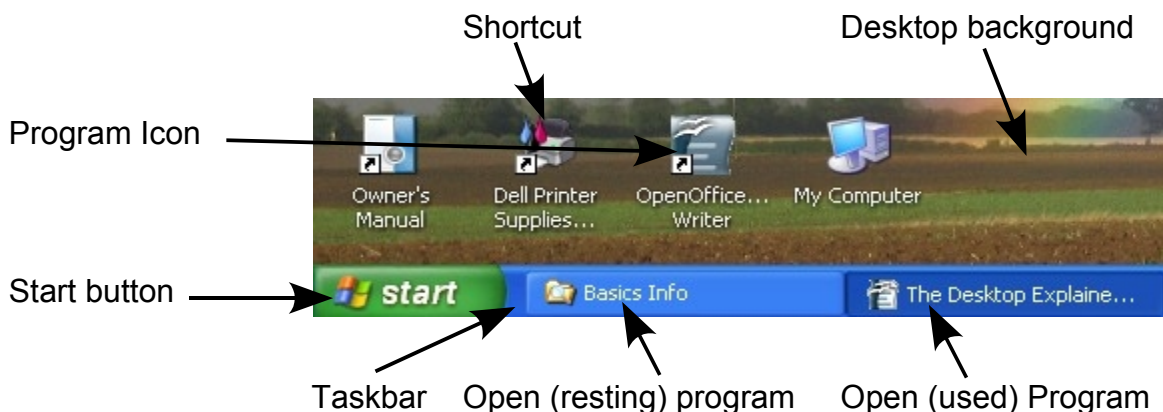


**Computer Basics:  
The Desktop Explained**

Windows uses a **GUI (Graphical User Interface)** so almost everything can be done using pointing the mouse pointer and clicking on pictures and symbols. The pictures and symbols are called icons and buttons. A Graphical User Interface allows you to see what you are doing. It is still possible to send commands to the computer using the keyboard as well.

**What you See**

When your computer completes its startup routine, called booting you will find yourself looking at a screen displaying the Windows interface – the part of the computer which you see and interact with. The **Desktop** and the **Taskbar** are the two main parts of the interface. The desktop and taskbar look similar to the picture below. However you should be aware that every desktop may look different depending on how you choose to arrange it and the things you put on it to use.

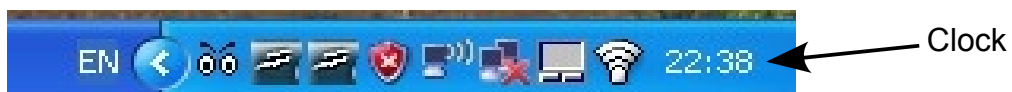


**Icons** are the small pictures on the desktop which indicate the different programs available to you.

When **Icons** have a curved upwards arrow attached to the picture then these are **shortcuts** to programs and applications held elsewhere on your computer.






The **Desktop** is the main area on your screen which is used, like a normal desk, to keep things you use often.

The **Taskbar** is the bar along the bottom of the screen which has the **Start** button, plus buttons indicating applications which your are currently using, plus other **icons** showing programs being run by your computer in the background e.g. the clock.



All of the items on a desktop may be used for an action. For example the recycle bin is used to put deleted objects into.

Common icons to be found on the desktop in Windows XP are

	My Documents which is where Windows XP likes to store your files.
	My Computer which allows you to organise your files and folders
	My Network Places which allows you to look at other computers attached to yours should you have more than one computer
	Internet Explorer which allows you to explore the Internet
	Recycle Bin which allows you to hold deleted files until you are sure you wish to get rid of them permanently.

The **Taskbar** is the area at the bottom of your desktop. It contains the Start button which gives you a menu allowing you to find all the applications available on your computer. It also allows you to Search your computer for files, pictures and folders.



On the right hand side of the taskbar you will see several icons which indicate programs and activities which are running in the background of the computer memory. This is like setting your washing machine going and then cooking dinner whilst it does the washing.

On the very right hand side of the tasks you will see the time displayed.



On the left hand side of the taskbar your will see the Start button. Next to this may be programs, folders or files which you are currently working on. These show in a darker blue if they are currently open on the desktop and a lighter blue if they are put to one side.