

Appendix 1

Coursework and marks: A student perspective

Benefits of using computers: a question and some student responses

Question

Your friend has written to you, asking whether it is worth learning to use a computer in order to do homework. Write a reply based upon what you think.

Here are some points that might be worth including in your reply:

- whether homework done on the computer scores more marks;

- the subjects that are most worth doing on the computer;

- the best program(s) to use;

- the amount of work that you have to do in class compared with the amount of work you have to do at home.

Responses

Year 9

It won't get you extra marks for content, you may get some for presentation. It may be possible, though, to pick up extra marks if you use a special program like Encarta 95 ... an easily operated, vast encyclopaedia with many facts and lots of information. At home it will help improve research skills and speed up the time doing it, so you can get more written content in your work.

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Now I use my computer for all the work I do apart from Maths and things like that. I can draw on my computer, make music, listen to music, write stories, look up words to find a meaning for it like a dictionary, print out any work I want for homework. I think it makes homework a lot easier because of all the different programs.

The only bad point of doing your homework on a computer is that you tend to find you have a lot more homework as you cannot write things up in lesson. ... PS Make sure you get some good games etc. Doom2 is an excellent game.

I have a CD-ROM at home and find it very useful when doing projects ... could result in getting better marks as you have more info on the topic.

... if you don't have a computer and your handwriting is not too good then you could lose marks for being untidy...

I find it a lot quicker to write up on a computer, and I find it much easier to write as it all just flows out.

At home, I have a PC, bought originally for my Dad when he was self-employed, but it is only a 286 and cannot run that much. We use WordPerfect 5 for DOS. I normally get better grades because it is neater and I can go into more depth. It also saves drafting.

The amount of time spent on homework is still the same but when on computer you end up doing more detailed work and more of it too.

... I use Encarta at home it's cool ...

Computers are the future they are quick and easy.

Once you have finished and the teacher asks you to add or do it again you can say "OK" without a face.

My advice to you is "Buy a computer." you won't believe how handy they are ... it also helps you get better marks because it looks good and worth reading even if what's written inside is not really that good.

... the writing is smaller when you print it out ... you have to write more so you get a better mark.

I think that no matter what teachers say about you not getting any extra marks for the work being printed, a well-presented piece of typed work with (obviously) no crossings-out and no spelling mistakes can make a teacher go "Wow!" as soon as they see it.

Year 10

On my PC we have AmiPro, for a word-processing package and Lotus 1-2-3 as a spreadsheet program. I use the computer to word process assignments as my handwriting is very messy. Also because it is easy to change things, and move things around. On AmiPro there is also a Thesaurus, a spell-check and a grammar check, which I think improves my work.

... they can get you marks for presentation, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure. If I do a draft and want to change it, it is quicker and easier than scribbling and making the paper messy, so you can read it.

Computers are expensive but if you didn't have one you probably would be degraded because of it in later life.

It also makes it easier for the teacher to read so I think it helps them when marking too. I do find that I do get better marks when I use a computer for my work but I think this is because when doing work on the computer you think about what you're doing more.

Although your work doesn't look as much on a computer it is still the same content and is easy for the teachers to work on and read.

Computers can make homework need a lot more time, even if you're very good at using them, because you end up spending a lot of time tweaking your work. The end product can look very good, especially with expert use. Spellchecks and automatic language aids such as Thesaurus help your writing. Computers with reference software, such as "Encarta" are great for research. AmiPro2 is

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the best word processor/d.t.p. program in the world. Apart from AmiPro3. You can also sharpen up your brains playing games such as Tetris and Doom.

Year 12

Computers are rubbish - drug of the nation blah, blah, blah. etc., etc.

(From a student who, throughout his school career, had strenuously resisted any suggestion that learning to use a computer may benefit him.)

