Loading a computer program

As we have seen your new computer will have had a number of basic programs already installed – such as WordPad, Outlook Express, Internet Explorer and a few games. We have used these programs to learn the basics of operating a computer but there is a huge difference in being able to operate a computer and being able to fulfil its potential. This is where additional programs are needed.

As an example, both Windows XP and Windows Vista have very basic image viewing facilities but that it all they let you do – view pictures. They are not designed to allow you to alter and, presumably, improve your photographs. A commercial program such as Adobe Photoshop Elements will provide you with a much more comprehensive tool to manipulate your digital images.

WordPad is a basic word processing program but, to produce quality documents, you need its big brother, Microsoft Word. There are millions, literally, of programs available for loading onto your machine: Accounting programs, web page design programs, genealogical programs and architectural programs to name a few.

Where do we get these programs from? There are two main sources. You can either buy a program disk or download from the Internet. In this chapter I am going to take you through the steps of loading a program from a disk into the memory of your computer.

Inserting the program disc:

At the beginning of this chapter I suggested the acquisition of a program called Photoshop but any program disk will do to explain the principles.

I would recommend closing all programs that may be open before you start installing a new program. This is not always necessary but it may prevent glitches occurring in the setup process. (A quick way of doing this is to right click on any minimised program then left click on Close.)

First of all, find your CD slot. On a desktop machine this is normally at the top of the front panel running the width of the computer and about 1'' deep (Oh, all right, about 25mm!) with an oblong button underneath. Press the button and if nothing happens you have probably forgotten to turn the computer on but, idiots like me aside, you will find that a tray slides out that looks like a small plate holder – do not use it for this purpose. In the case of laptops the CD tray is more commonly found on one side of the case and it is rather thinner than the desktop version and the small button needs the use of a small finger to activate the opening mechanism. There are one or two minor variations in the manner in which desktop and laptop trays operate but these will be pointed out as we go along.
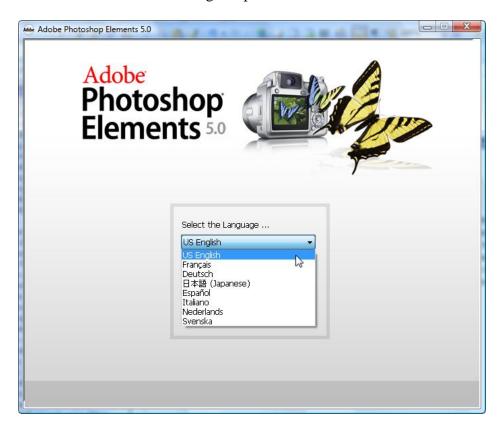
Now to the disk itself – it will usually come in a plastic container known as a jewel case and, since some program disks can cost upwards of £600, they are aptly named. It is held in place by a central plastic "sprogget" or clasp. Press down on this clasp and ease up the edge of the disk to release it. It is best to make sure your fingers are clean during this operation because grease and grit are disks' number one enemies.

Installing the program:

Now there are a number of steps we need to follow to install the program which should take less than ten minutes -

1. Place the disk – **shiny side down** – into the open CD tray; wiggle it about to make sure it is sitting comfortably. Don't worry if the CD does not appear to sit tightly within the tray on a desktop. A laptop tray uses a central clasp similar to that in the jewel case so make sure it is firmly seated.
2. Gently press the tray back into the computer housing. Now wait. You will see a small light flickering on the face of the desktop tray or somewhere on the keyboard of the laptop.
3. After a minute or two you will be greeted by a welcome screen with an invitation to choose a language such as US English. Not all programs follow the same route through the setup process but most of the steps we will follow will occur at some time during setup.

4. Click on the language and a long legal agreement document will appear on the screen. Basically this states that you will treat the program with respect; you will not copy it, let other people load the program onto their computers or generally abuse the copyright to the program.

5. Click on Accept to access the next screen where you choose the Install Photoshop Elements options by clicking on it. Some programs will have the Accept button greyed out until you have scrolled through to the bottom of the agreement.

6. Now the computer starts to read the disk and works out whether your machine is up to the task of using the program when it displays the first screen of the installation wizard. A wizard in this case has had no training at the Hogwarts Academy but is a series of steps designed to lead you through installation process.

7. Click on the Next button. The wizard offers you the options to perform a Standard or Custom installation – Click on Standard. Custom is only there if the program goes wrong and you have to call in someone who only speaks in acronyms.

8. Accept any default suggestions as to the names of the program and necessary folders by clicking Next or Accept.

9. Once all the parameters have been set the computer will install the program showing progression bars as it works its way through the setup process.

10. Once the installation process is complete to just need to click the Finish button and you have successfully installed your first program. You can confirm this by finding the desktop icon and scrolling through the Programs list on the Start menu. Some programs need to have the computer shutdown before they will function correctly after setting up. The reasons for this are quite technical and therefore not worth explaining at this stage – just accept it.

11. Put the disk back in its jewel case to prevent the surface becoming scratched.

If you want to start playing with the Photoshop Elements program please feel free to have a go but I am warning you now that it will look rather unfamiliar at this stage and may leave you more confused than enthused.

A strong word of warning:

It is a crime to install a program from a disk that you have not paid for or is specifically labelled as free software. Free software? Is that the same as a free lunch? Definitely not, I will discuss the concept of free software in another tutorial. Let me give you an example of what I am talking about regarding the crime of software piracy. Let us say a friend at work or one of your children learn that you are looking for a simple home accounting program and that they have a program disk at home for just the kind of software you are after. "No problem," they say. "I'll pop round and put it on your computer on Saturday morning." How kind, how considerate – how criminal - because you are both committing the crime of software theft or piracy. Do you remember the contract you accepted when installing Photoshop Elements without a second thought? You agreed, by accepting that contract, not to "copy, share, loan sell" and several other legal terms meaning the same thing not to do what you are expecting to do on that Saturday morning.

Lots of people do it – like travelling at 50mph in a 30mph zone – and they get away with it. That does not mean it is right. I rest my case and leave you to your own moral judgement.