Computers in Everyday Life

Skill Builders

1. Find out about personal computers and their capabilities.
   Visit a computer store or consult computer magazines. Investigate the hardware required to run today's software and to gain access to the Internet. Compare costs and add-on capabilities, including CD-ROMS, faxing, and audio and multimedia capabilities.

2. Learn how to use a word processing program. Become proficient in formatting, editing, spell-checking, cutting and pasting, inserting page numbers or symbols, and creating columns and boxes. Be able to take shortcuts by customizing the toolbar. Write a paper for school, publish the minutes of your troop or group meeting, or design a flyer using this program. Or if you already know how to do the above, select a software program that allows you to do something totally new. Apply the program to an activity for example, redesigning your bedroom, creating party invitations, or keeping track of a month-long project.

3. Learn to use a desktop publishing software package that allows you to create a newsletter or informational brochure for your troop or group.

Technology

1. Read reviews of hardware, software, and Web sites in at least two magazines that address products and applications for home computer use. Interview at least three or four computer users of different ages and find out what they look for in these products. Develop your own checklist of criteria and share it in a meeting of your troop or group or at your school.

2. Learn to use a software program that allows you to create spreadsheets. Master basic functions such as formatting and editing, worksheet, entering and organizing data, using formulas, and creating a chart or graph from your data. Use the spreadsheet to keep a personal or family budget for a month, to keep records of an event's income and expenditures, or to keep track of your troop or group finances. Create a personal finance software package for your personal or family budget.

3. Play three or four computer games, or visit an Internet or Web site that previews computer games, trivia, or murder mystery contests. What games appeal to you? Why? Discuss with others some concerns about playing these games, such as violence or sexist stereotypes.

4. Find out about at least two computer applications that enhance the lives of people with disabilities.

5. Investigate how information is stored on credit cards, medical emergency cards, and other kinds of cards. Find out about protecting against criminal use of this information.

6. Investigate careers that are possible from the home with a computer, technical support, and access to online resources. Interview at least two people who work at home (at least 50 percent of the time) and use a computer. What are the advantages/disadvantages of working at home for them? What special hardware and software do they use, if any?

And Beyond

Career Exploration

1. Compile a directory of Web sites that contain information about careers. Create some major categories, such as technology, medicine, law, and education. Share your directory with friends.

2. Investigate careers that are possible from the home with a computer, technical support, and access to online resources. Interview at least two people who work at home (at least 50 percent of the time) and use a computer. What are the advantages/disadvantages of working at home for them? What special hardware and software do they use, if any?

3. Investigate computer-related careers. Computer salesperson, computer programmer, software developer, graphic designer, computer analyst, systems developer, systems programmer. Arrange to interview at least two professionals in person or online.

4. Identify three types of businesses or industries which, while not computer-based, rely heavily on computers for documentation, data collection, or production. Create a means of sharing your findings.

5. Find out how your school, Girl Scout council, or another community group creates fliers, newsletters, brochures, and invitations. Who does what, such as editing, design, production, and circulation? Assist in some stage of the creation of a flier, a newsletter, a brochure, or an invitation.

THE RELATED INTEREST PROJECTS BELOW will allow you to put creativity and technology together for great results:

- Scouting the Net
- Desktop Publishing
- Graphic Communications
- Media Savvy
- From A to Z: Audiorvisual Production
- Games for Life

And this technology is getting you to turn up a recreational hobby as found in All About Birds, Collecting, High Adventure, Rolling Along, or Water Sports, and unwind with From Stress to Success, On a High Note, or Reaching...