

A typical computer connects to the world around it in three different ways: input/output devices, ports and networking.

### Input/Output

No matter how powerful the components inside your computer are, you need a way to interact with them. This interaction is called **input/output (I/O)**. The most common types of I/O in PCs are:

- **Monitor** - The monitor is the primary device for displaying information from the computer.
- **Keyboard** - The keyboard is the primary device for entering information into the computer.
- **Mouse** - The mouse is the primary device for navigating and interacting with the computer.
- **Removable storage** - Removable storage devices allow you to add new information to your computer very easily, as well as save information that you want to carry to a different location.
  - **Floppy disk** - The most common form of removable storage, floppy disks are extremely inexpensive and easy to save information to.
  - **CD-ROM** - CD-ROM (compact disc, read-only memory) is a popular form of distribution of commercial software. Many systems now offer CD-R (recordable) and CD-RW (rewritable), which can also record.
  - **Flash memory** - Based on a type of ROM called **electrically erasable programmable read-only memory (EEPROM)**, Flash memory provides fast, permanent storage. Compact Flash, Smart Media and PCMCIA cards are all types of Flash memory.
  - **DVD-ROM** - DVD-ROM (digital versatile disc, read-only memory) is similar to CD-ROM but is capable of holding much more information.

### Ports

- **Parallel** - This port is commonly used to connect a printer.
- **Serial** - This port is typically used to connect an external modem.
- **Universal Serial Bus (USB)** - Quickly becoming the most popular external connection, USB ports offer power and versatility and are incredibly easy to use.
- **FireWire (IEEE 1394)** - FireWire is a very popular method of connecting digital-video devices, such as camcorders or digital cameras, to your computer.

### Internet/Network

- **Modem** - This is the standard method of connecting to the Internet.
- **Local area network (LAN) card** - This is used by many computers, particularly those in an Ethernet office network, to connect to each other.
- **Cable modem** - This type of modem uses the cable TV system in your home to connect to the Internet.
- **Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) modem** - This is a high-speed connection that works over a standard telephone line.
- **Very high bit-rate DSL (VDSL) modem** - A newer variation of DSL, VDSL requires that your phone line have fiber-optic cables.