

A Level Computer Science Preparatory Work

Hello and welcome to the Pate's Grammar School Computing Department. In this document I will list some of the fundamental concepts that you should be familiar with to give yourself a good start to the Computer Science A Level.

If you have not studied GCSE Computing and are unfamiliar with a programming language, then you should think about starting to improve your coding skills. The default language that we use at Pate's is Python – we use version Python 3.2. Version 3.5 can be downloaded for free here:

<https://www.python.org/downloads/>

A useful, and free editor is Thonny, <https://thonny.org/>

I have included a set of PowerPoint presentations that I have used with classes when learning Python. You might find this a useful starting point. However, there are some excellent resources online that will help you take your first few steps in coding:

<https://www.learnpython.org/> An excellent resource, but please, **under no circumstances pay for a resource** – this will give you the skills that you need to get to grips with Python – although it can be a little frustrating when you know that you have got a particular problem correct – but not in the way that was expected by the website!

Another great resource is <https://www.w3schools.com/python/>, which gives you the opportunity to try code online.

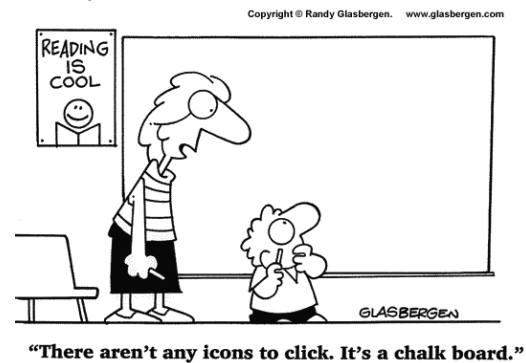
You don't have to learn Python. The key features of most programming languages are transferable, but use slightly different syntax e.g.

Displaying the message, hello world, on screen:

Python	<code>print("hello world")</code>
C	<code>puts("hello world");</code>
Java	<pre>public class HelloWorld { public static void main(String[] args) { System.out.println("Hello, World"); } }</pre>
Php	<code>echo ("hello world");</code>

No matter which language you pick, you should be able to understand and use:

Input	Getting data from the user
Outputs	Displaying information
Variable	storing and changing values in a program
Arrays	storing a group of values
Procedures with parameters	sub parts of a program
Loops (while / for)	doing the same task over and over again





Selections (If then else) using logical statements to make decisions
File manipulation opening, reading from and writing to files

It is much easier to learn a language if you have an actual task to complete.

Practical Task 1

Whichever language you have chosen to use, try this seemingly simple task. Write a text based program that plays hangman. The rules are very similar to the natural rules of hangman (and you can adapt them if you so wish):

- The computer picks up a “random” from words stored in the program or in a file
- The computer displays the number of letters, with underscores (i.e. _____ _)
- A player has 9 lives (corresponding to the drawing)
- A player can guess one letter each turn
- The computer compares the guess with the “hidden” word
- The computer prints an updated version of the guessed work with underscores replaced by the correct letter(s)
- If the user gets all of the correct letters, they win
- If the user uses all nine lives without guessing the word, they lose.

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Practical Task 2

If you have studied GCSE computing, then you should be fine, but because of the difficulties with coursework you may want to complete the GCSE task that I have included as a PDF.



“We back up our data on sticky notes because sticky notes never crash.”

If you didn't study Computing at GCSE, then you may like to try one of the programming tasks that students have been asked to complete in the past. I have included a PDF (*A453 Controlled Assessment Material 2 - June 2017.pdf*) with the instructions with this pack. The main aim of this task is to improve your programming skills, but a useful exercise is creating the **write-up**, which is where you actually achieve the marks at A-Level.

If you would like to catch up on the theory part of the course, then the BBC Bitesize site is excellent and gives you a good insight into the requirements for GCSE. Please have a look through, but I don't expect you to have learned it from start to finish over the summer!



Extension Work

If you would like a challenge, and it's a wet and miserable summer, then creating a program that controls a webpage is a good place to begin.

Try and create a simple webpage that accepts a student's details (name & address) and saves them into a database. For this you will need HTML, CSS (– if you'd like your page to look good), php to do the programming and SQL to store and retrieve details

XAMMP will turn your computer into a local webserver. Just download XAMMP, create your web pages in the xampp/htdocs, you can then run these calling the address localhost/webpage.html from your browser.

You will need:

XAMMP <https://www.apachefriends.org/index.html>

HTML

JavaScript

CSS

Even using

PHP & SQL

The website W3schools is a great resource for web skills (<http://www.w3schools.com/>)

Good luck!

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