

Student B

English 106

04-12-2015

Computers: Outstanding for humans? Trouble for the Environment?

Computers have arguably been the greatest creation in the last century. On an everyday bases we all use computers and hardly realize that we are doing so. The range of using a computer goes from calculating an equation on a calculator all the way to creating a wide area network for major corporations. In fact, technology has completely revolutionized the medical field, but what we tend to overlook while we are searching the web, checking our social media accounts or while we are doing homework is that the convenience and joys of using computers don't come without negative effects. Computers can be outstanding resources for humans, while on the other hand they have side effects that affect the environment, the human body and also the carbon footprint that this generation will leave.

Yes computers are great, and one of the best possible ways to use computers is by improving the medical field. Sciencemuseum.org states "using computers was one of the most important technological changes in the 20th-century". Computers became a common piece of medical gear in the 1950s and were able to consistently monitor patients. Not only did computers help with monitoring patients, they also made keeping track of patient records much easier. Technology brought important medical practices such as MRI and X-ray. Computers are able to scan the body and identify things that could be a potential threat to the health of a human. As stated earlier, computers aren't completely a positive thing. There are many negative things that come with computers that I will now identify.

The first point I am going to bring up, in arguing that computers can be a bad thing for the environment is the large amounts of unnecessary files that businesses tend to print. Sherri, who wrote in 2014 saying that large companies send mass emails and memos to employees that often times require large print jobs. With companies of over thousands of people, if each person is even printing just a couple pages a day, that is over two thousand pieces of paper printed from just once company. Fortunately we do live in a world where many people are beginning to go paperless. Things like online bill pay, power point presentations and email limit the amount of paper that is being used. However, theworldcounts.com argues that paper waste is still a big problem. From our newspapers to our paper wrappings, a lot of paper is still filling landfills and being wasted instead of being recycled.

Creating paper requires double the amount of energy to make than it does to make a plastic bag. In order to make paper, trees need to be cut down as well. Losing our forest and wooded areas is one of the main environmental impacts that the technological world we live in today creates. Theworldcounts.com also informs their audience that 42 percent of wood that is harvested is to make paper. Theworldcounts also shares some of the following facts:

1. More than 19 tons of paper have already been produced.
2. It takes 324 liters of water to make 1 kilogram of paper.
3. 10 liters of water are required to make a single piece of A4 paper.
4. 93 percent of paper created comes from trees.
5. The Sunday edition of the New York Times requires 75,000 trees.

Another negative effect of computers on the environment and the human body are the heavy metals and chemicals. The metals and chemicals used in computers contribute to global warming when the computers are discarded. They do so by causing water contamination and air pollution.

Planetsave.com gives a detailed list of these heavy metals and details of the harm they can do. The heavy metals include the following:

1. Lead which can be found in the glass of the monitor and the solder in the circuit board of the central processing unit. Save the Planet states that a normal house hold monitor has up to 2.2 kilograms in them.
2. Mercury is also in the circuit boards and the switches. Mercury is often linked to brain and kidney damage while being harmful to developing of a fetus.
3. Brominated Flame Retardants can be responsible for thyroid damage and also harm fetal development.
4. Beryllium has shown to cause lung disease
5. Cadmium is located in a coating on a monitor glass, batteries, chip resistors and cables.

A lot of computer use causes other effects on the body that are not seen as positive. One of those side effects is bad posture. Chen Kah Fei writes in a research paper "sitting or slouching in front of a computer for long periods of time and making repetitive small movements with our fingers and wrists will affect our structure". A lot of people don't realize how much time they spend sitting in front of computers. As I type this paper I notice that I am slouching and not sitting up straight. Fei goes on to explain some of these effects of slouching will be direct, such as strains on our spines and the way our ligaments are effected in our wrist.

Our posture can easily be corrected if someone knows that they will be sitting in front of a computer for an extended period of time. One of the ways we can correct ourselves is by getting a computer posture chair. These posture chairs will force computer users to sit up straight.

Thehealthsite.com shows the benefits of using posture chairs, their arguments are as follows:

1. These posture chairs do exactly as the name says, they support your posture. Believing that traditional chairs are a main reason for posture issues, the correct posture chairs force users to sit up straight.
2. The chairs will become for comfortable because they are made to be user friendly. They are adjustable to fit the user.
3. Reduced risk of neck problems because most traditional chairs do not have neck support. Without a neck support for an extended period of time, neck stiffness will develop around the shoulder area.
4. Posture chairs will reduce the risk of back pain. As ergonomic chairs come with a backrest that supports the natural curve of the human spine. Traditional chairs aren't tall enough to support the entire back.
5. Ergonomic chairs reduce pressure on the hips because they have a soft surface.

The last negative effect of computers that I want to cover, is that of computer addiction.

According to Ed Grabianowski who writes for howstuffworks.com, "Computer addiction can have a variety of negative effects on a person. The most immediate are social". As we are living in a time where people live virtual lives on social media and the internet, we are slowly losing face to face connections and conversations due to technology such as text messages, social media sites and instant messaging. Grabianowski goes on to explain that when we are addicted to our computers or phones, we tend to withdraw from family and even our friends. "Relationships begin to wither as the user stops attending social gatherings, skips meetings with friends and avoids family members to get more computer time." (Grabianowski 1).

I have identified one of the many reasons computers are a great thing, I have also made the unpopular counter argument of the effects that computers have on the environment, human body and even on our social life if we become addicted. After doing reading this paper I hope that readers understand the effects, both good and bad that computers have. There comes a point in time that we have to think, how much is to much? What we are doing now may not have a noticeable effect on our everyday life, but will have a significant effect on the environment our children and grandchildren will be living in.

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