

choice you can. Since this is not your project, don't worry if things get messed up .

7. If you want or need a book to help you solve any problems not covered in the user manual, you can purchase any of the popular how-to supplements, such as the "Dummies" series . Keep away from the 800 page tomes unless you have learned the program fairly well. Their good for reference to the cognoscenti. They are a terror to ordinary mortals.

8. If you have some knowledge of the **terminology** used by the program from going the menus as in 1-6 above the HELP function on the far right can be a good source of information to answer questions Consult with experts in user groups and GOOGLE your questions.

9. When your checking out GOOGLE and Yahoo do ask them for Tutorials etc. on the program your interested in. Often you'll find tutorials much better than what came with the program

All of this applies to learning a new operating system e.g. Going from XP to Vista.

I can't guarantee a 100% stress-free experience, but I can say from personal experience that if you follow the steps described here your software learning should go smoothly.

If you need help in this area and have questions give us a call (805-988-9540) and we will help with our without the help of ROBOGEEK.

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A Quick Guide To Learning New Software

Rev 1.5

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Cal-Pac Technology

300 Montgomery Ave.

Oxnard, CA. 93036

805-988-9540

nccorThu@calpactech.com

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Here is How to Learn a New Piece of Software FAST

Once you learn the secret you can grab a new piece of software in the morning, install it during a coffee break, and know how to use the basic features by lunch. A few tacos and hours later, I can have several of the advanced features down pat.

This drives many people crazy, especially since I do this most of the time without reading printed software manuals.

Shhhh ... here's a secret. Now I'm going to tell you one of the ways I learn software so quickly. I **use the menu bar**.

Most pieces of software have a menu bar. It's that little line of text right near the top of the window (or at the top of the screen for you Mac users) that contain words such as "File", "Edit", and "Help". With 98% of the software on the market (yes, I made that statistic up), you can perform every software-related function by clicking on items in the menu bar. Make sure you do any experimentation on a new document or one that you are using for experimentation.

1. The Left most items in the menu bar are VERY similar

In all Windows programs. By clicking on all of the major headings, you can see just about all of the features available in the software.

2. Use the arrow keys and watch the status bar
If your application has a status bar on the bottom of the window, then here's a great tip that may work for you. Instead of using your mouse to navigate the menus, use the arrow keys (read the tips at <http://www.calpactech.com/> and **select the FREE HOW TO & Tips Button**).

It's quite simple - to choose between master menu bar options, use the left and right arrow keys. To choose between options in the menus that pop up from the main menu bar, use the up and down arrow keys. Why do this? Well, while you are navigating the menus, text may appear in the status bar. (at the bottom of the Window). This text should describe the function of the menu option that is currently se-

lected. By using the cursor keys instead of the mouse, you can see quick synopses of the functions that you can perform with your software.

3 . C o n n e c t t h e d o t s

Normally, when you click on one of the menu options that pop out from the menu bar, you immediately perform a function. When the option, however, ends with an ellipsis (three dots), the software is telling you that selecting the option will instead bring up a dialog box or window. This is like the software telling you, "ok, I know you want to perform this function, but first, I need a little more information from you." If you plan on experimenting with learning software, try these menu options first.

4. Menus and submenus and sub-submenus, oh my.

If you see a menu bar option with a miniature arrow pointing right, clicking on that menu bar option brings up more menu bar options (sub-submenus) related to the option that you selected (whew!) For example, in some versions of Microsoft Word, if you choose the "View" menu, a menu option called "Toolbars" will appear. Selecting the "Toolbars" option (which has an arrow pointing right), brings up another submenu where you can select the types of toolbars to display.

5. I can't do that!?!?

Every now and then you will see menu **options that are grayed**. You can not select these options, at least for now. Most of these options are only appropriate in certain sections of the application or when you are performing some other functions. Don't worry about these options for now - keep on experimenting with the options that you can select.

6. Checkmate

Some menu bar options actually relate to program options that you can turn on or off. You will know that this is the case if you select a menu bar option and nothing appears to happen. If you go back to the menu bar option and you see a check (or you see a blank space where a check previously existed), you should now realize that you turned a program option on or off.

In summary, this is just a basic overview of how to use menu bars. I did not cover menu bar shortcuts and program-specific menu bar features. I just wanted to show you that, by using the menu bar, you could see much of what your software can do. Don't be afraid - experiment with your software. **I've seen people about ready to spend \$150 for software, when the features found in said package could already be found in another program already on the system**

Misc TIPS

1. Do not take a software course unless you have time to practice what you have learned immediately following the training. If your company arranges training at an inconvenient time for you, either reschedule the workshop for a later date or revise your calendar. Hands-on practice is always necessary to cement new knowledge.

2. As soon as I know I have to purchase a piece of software (and, of course, learn it), I start by researching what titles are available and compare the capabilities of each. Does it do what I need it to do with a minimum of fuss? Will it allow for more sophisticated tasks in the future? Does it do much more than I'll ever need or want to do? I also ask colleagues, friends, listserv, and the occasional passerby what their choice might be. After I have all the information I need I take the plunge and order my software.

3. Take Aristotle's advice, *What we have to learn to do, we learn by doing* .

4. Software seems to lodge itself in my long-term memory more often if my ultimate goal is a specific project, **without time pressure**. If I merely go through the tutorials and then leave the software laying in wait until it's needed at some future time, I find that the material learned seems to get lost in some irretrievable corner of my brain.

5. Learn the software when you have a good chunk of uninterrupted time. I'm talking hours/days not minutes . Go according to your attention span. Some of us do best by doing 1/2 hr increments rather than 2-3 hrs at a time.

6. Open a new document and play around with the program. Pull down every menu and try every menu