

2.2 Input devices.

An input device is any device that is used to supply information to a computer (as data or for the selection of commands/menus/icons etc).



Keyboard: This is used to input/enter data into a computer. With a keyboard, you can enter commands, select menu options and enter data/values into applications (software).



Mouse: The mouse is used to point and click on items/icons/menu's on the screen. When you move the mouse, a pointer on the screen also moves. If you press the mouse button while the pointer is on certain icons or buttons, you can activate commands or program options.



Light pen: A special pen that lets you *draw* directly onto the screen, or click on buttons and menus.



Touch screen: Similar to an ordinary TV screen. Has a thin, transparent layer of plastic covering that is touch-sensitive. When you touch a part of the screen, it has the same effect as if you clicked on that area with a mouse.



Joystick: A hand-held stick that can be moved around in any direction. Used mainly for playing games (i.e, flight simulators etc).



Touchpad: Often used on laptops. With a touchpad, you can move the mouse cursor on the screen by touching the pad and moving your finger around. The two buttons, on the touch pad, simulate the use of the left and right buttons on a mouse.



Trackerball: Instead of using a mouse, you can also use a trackerball. The trackerball generally provides the same functionality as a mouse, however, you do not have to move the unit up/down/left/right etc to move the mouse pointer. Instead, you can use your thumb on the roller-ball to move the cursor on the screen.



Graphics Pad: This is a square piece of material that you can use to draw pictures (as a mouse is not always practical for drawing complicated lines and shapes).



Scanner: Used to scan images/documents into a computer. Can be flatbed or hand-held. Also used for **Optical Character Recognition (OCR)** and to scan microfilm/transparencies and negatives.