Introduction to Microsoft DOS I (Command Prompt)

The word DOS is an acronym meaning “Disk Operating System”, it is one of the first Operating systems released as an IBM PC-Compatible based system, this OS is known as the background to all PC Operating Systems including Windows 7. Being that it runs in the background, makes it a single-user, single-task operating system with a basic command line and no GUI (Graphical User Interface). DOS is strictly Command Line functional, which simply means No “Icons”, “Mouse” or “Graphics”.

Handout Objectives:

1. How to access DOS “Disk Operating System” screen.
2. How to access a list of DOS commands.
3. How to specify and work with prompts.
4. Understand the Difference between DOS Command Line and GUI.
5. Ways to compare Windows Environment to the DOS Environment.
6. How to view Directories / Folders and Files
7. How to access basic applications.
8. Ways to close the DOS (Command Prompt).
1. How to access DOS “Disk Operating System” screen.

There are two primary ways to launch the DOS screen.

I. Go to the **Start** Menu, **Programs**, **Accessories** and **Click** on **Command Prompt**.

II. **Click** on **Start** then select **Run**...
In the Run Dialog box Type “Command” in the Open: textbox and click OK. Tip: you could type in “cmd” short for Command either way, the outcome will be the same.

You should now see the black “DOS” screen also known as the Command Prompt. (The command prompt means that the computer will do a performance based on a command prompted by you the user.) Do not be worried if the text on your screen appears different after the C: Prompt, some computers might have different names that were specified during the O.S. setup.
2. How to access a list of DOS commands.

In order to work with DOS we need to understand that there is a list of commands that we use to perform all tasks while in this screen. If we do not know the commands it is almost impossible to navigate, through the command prompt and perform tasks.

We all know that most applications provide us with Help Menus or Help Dialog box, fortunately for us DOS also has that ability and is easy to access.

While in the Command Prompt at the blinking cursor Type “Help”

Press Enter.

DOS provides us with a large alphabetized list of different commands that can be used with dos. The list contains two columns: The left side contains the Command and the right side contains a description of what the command does.
Not all commands are visible simply Scroll down using the scroll bar to see the end of the list.

3. How to specify and work with prompts

Prompts are simply the location where the cursor is set to start typing its next command.

C:\ stands for the Primary Partition on the computer

Documents and Settings is a Folder which contains another subfolder called inspiron

The \ Backslash represents another section.
To make it simple lets distinguish 3 types of prompts.

You notice that C: is a drive letter. Depending on how your computer is setup each drive letter will be considered as a prompt. 1) A: for Floppy, 2) C: for the main partition on the hard-drive and 3) D: Representing the CD\DVD drive.

In the command prompt type in “CD\.”

![Image of command prompt]

Press Enter

![Image of command prompt]

C:\>_ is the main prompt the C drive.

Let’s try and see what other drives are available that we can access: Type in “A:” and press Enter and Type “D:” and press Enter.

A: generates the message that “The system cannot find the drive specified.” At this time in age floppy drives are dying out in newer computer models in the case below the computer does not have a floppy drive installed therefore it is an invalid command.

D: However gives us the message “The device is not ready.” This doesn’t mean that there is no CD or DVD drive rather it is simply telling us that there is no CD present in the drive to read from.
4. Understand the Difference between DOS Command Line and GUI.

Computers consist of two types of interfaces **DOS** and **GUI**.

**DOS**: We now know stands for “**Disk Operating System**”. It is a Black screen that is running in the background of any pc based computer with an operating system installed. We navigate our way through it by typing in commands or instructions.

![DOS Command Line](image1.png)

**GUI**: Might not sound all that familiar to you, however it is something that we use every day and might not even be aware of. **GUI** of course is an **acronym** which simply stands for “**Graphical User Interface**”. Basically this interface consists of graphics such as icons and mouse capability. We need not know any instructions to handle this interface a simple click here and there will start us off in creating our task at hand.

![GUI](image2.png)

Take a look below does this screen look familiar? it should this is our GUI. Our latest Operating Systems provide us with a much more appealing look to our screen. No more memorizing commands or doing single tasks at a time.
Based on the two images above we are able to distinguish 2 main differences in each.

**DOS** – **A:** Command Line  **B:** Single-task Capability

**GUI** – **A:** Interactive graphical icons  **B:** Multi-tasking Capabilities.

With DOS we are only able to do tasks one at a time one command after another, once the first task is complete we need to move on to the next task. With GUI however we are able to do multiple tasks all together on the same screen.

**Notice:** At the bottom of our Desktop there are tabs lined up one after another. This is known as multitasking, the ability to switch back and forth on multiple tasks using a single computer screen.

5. **Ways to compare Windows Environment to the DOS Environment.**

It may not seem like it; but DOS and the Windows Environment is the same thing, the only difference is their appearance and style.

We will start off with the Windows environment first.

Go to your desktop and select the **My Computer** Icon

Click on the **C: drive Icon.** (Main Hard Drive Icon)
Take a moment to look at the Folders and Files that are present in the drive, and make a mental note of it, now select the Windows Folder.

Within the Windows folder we are able to see other folders and files required for windows to properly run. One of the advantages of the Windows Environment is that you are able to use the mouse to click to perform tasks.
Now let’s take a look at the **DOS environment** and how the same they really are. Keep in mind that “**Background**” is the key word.

Go to **Start – Run…** and type “**Cmd**” or “**Command**” in the textbox, in the Command Prompt Type “**dir**” which is short for Directory and press **Enter**. A list of files and folders appear. In this view we see a **date, time, size, and filenames** that are found in the **C:** directory. When ever you see `<DIR>` that means that it is a folder, if nothing is visible then they are files.

Let’s now go into the windows folder. In the command prompt type “**cd windows**” and press **Enter**. You should see “**C:\WINDOWS>**” We are now in the Windows folder prompt.
Type **dir** and press **Enter** to display the folders and files in the windows folder (*note: in the windows view we only had to click, at the command prompt we need to type in commands*) Look at the files and folders that appear and compare to your GUI environment.

Take a look at both screenshots below, notice the difference in appearance, in actuality both are the same.
6. How to view Directories / Folders and Files

As we've seen in the previous objectives, there are several commands that we could use to view the Directories and Files through the command prompt.

Command Prompt Basic Commands

Viewing a list of Directories and Folders

C:\>dir

Going into a folder Directory

Type “cd windows”
Type `dir` to display the directories in the windows folder, choose `system`, and type “`cd system`” and take a look at the prompt.

We are now in a subdirectory within the windows folder, the process can go on and on until there are no more subfolders available. By typing “`CD..`” we are able to decrement and remove you from the current folder to the previous folder location, until you are back to the main command prompt.
7. **How to access basic applications.**

We can access both Windows and DOS applications through the command prompt.

**Windows based applications:** Calculator, Microsoft Paint, Notepad…

Typing `calc`, `mspaint`, `notepad` in the Command Prompt will Open the following applications

**DOS based Application:** File Editor / Creator

Typing **Edit** will open one of the first basic editors.
Instead of opening a separate app window the DOS screen upon pressing enter will change to the editor screen as seen below.

Classic menu style format, if for some reason the mouse is not available, this screen could easily be controlled by using the **ALT** and **Arrow Keys** on the keyboard. **Alt** – will access the menus, the **Arrow Keys** will **navigate up, down, left and right**.

Accessing applications through the DOS interface is quite simple. You need to understand that each command that launches an application has the extension of .exe which stands for executable. For example to launch calc you could also type in calc.exe this will also launch the application.
8. Ways to close the DOS (Command Prompt)

There are two possible ways of closing the DOS Screen.

I. By clicking on the upper left hand corner we are able to access a drop down menu, and selecting the close option. Clicking on the X on the upper right hand side of the screen will also close the DOS screen. (This is made possible when the mouse is available.)

II. Typing in EXIT will also close the DOS screen. (This is our only option when the mouse is not available to us.)