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### Menus offers computer users endless options

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *This is the third of seven columns by Steve Kellman, our newsroom computer wonk, on what to do with that new computer the Big Elf dragged down your chimney. It assumes that the reader is a first-time computer owner who has a PC loaded with Windows 95, word processing and other basic software, a printer, modem and CD-ROM player.*

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Once you've mastered the basics of Windows 95's desktop, the next step is to familiarize yourself with the programs where you will do most of the actual work.

Most software programs written for Windows have similar features that allow the user to open up and save documents, move information around within and between documents, and manipulate the information.

Whether you're writing a letter to Aunt Matilda in a word processing program or designing a business logo in a graphics program, you'll still need to open up the documents (also known as files), print them out and save them once you're done. The devil is in the details - choosing the easiest-to-read font for the letter to your nearsighted aunt or finding the perfect shade of blue for that logo.

These common features, and the individual features specific to each program, can be found in the menu items aligned along the top of each program's main window. Any menu item with an ellipsis (the fancy punctuation name for three periods ...) will open up a box giving you even more choices.

Let's take Microsoft Word as an example, since many of its features can be found in other word processing programs. You should be able to reach the program from the desktop by opening up the Start menu and moving the cursor with the mouse to the Programs menu and from there to Microsoft Office.

Once you open Word up, you're presented with a blank page with a list of menus across the top. The File menu lets you save the document, print it out, set up the size of paper that will be used and the document's margins. Edit lets you cut or copy chunks of text or graphics and paste them elsewhere in the document. Use Format to choose that easy-to-read font and set how much the first line of each paragraph will be indented, and Tools to check your spelling and grammar.

Some programs, like recent versions of Word, also use a "toolbar" across the top of the window just underneath the list of menu items. Toolbars typically use clickable buttons (using a mouse) to repeat some of the same choices available through the menus, but save the user the step of dragging down a menu to select the item, or using the keyboard shortcut that is listed next to some menu items.

There may also be a "ruler" with inches marked across it, which typically lets you change the margins of a document or a portion of the document (by dragging the little arrows on either side) and set tab stops (by clicking on the ruler). Be careful, though, because any changes you make using the ruler (or most menu items) will only affect the line of text you're working on or the ones that are highlighted.

If you want to change the settings for the entire document, choose Select All from the Edit menu first.

Just remember, there's at least three different ways to do virtually everything in Windows 95, but you only have to know one to do what you want to do.