**Mindtools**

**simple and powerful by design, easy to learn.**

**free or inexpensive.**

**engaging, supporting critical thinking.**

**multipurpose, useable with multiple learning forms.**

I am sure I'm aware of only a fraction of the Mindtools available to me on my home computer! Personal databases would include my music, picture, and document libraries, as well as my address book in Outlook. I have the Microsoft Office Suite on loan from the district, so that gives me Excel, Word, Publisher and PowerPoint for graphing, charts, and visuals. SmartArt in Word could be used for concept mapping; I'm hoping to get Draftbuilder from SOLO 6 Literacy Suite via the district license soon. As for Internet searches, my home page automatically has a Yahoo search box in the corner. I've used Google, Bing, and netTrekker, and can use those search engines to find even more search engines! A lot of my communication is done via my home computer, whether it's email using Outlook, posting on discussion boards on SHSU Online or Facebook, or instant messaging with friends and classmates on Facebook. Exploring some of the other programs and applications on my computer, I've discovered audio capture with Roxio, and a math input panel that allows me to write complex math problems that can then be inserted into a document for presentation. Looking at the toolbar for this Word document, I'm seeing ways to comment on this or other Word documents through balloons and tracking changes, which opens up means of collaborative writing. I'm sure if I explored the toolbars on all of the Office components, there would be bells and whistles I've never seen before.

My definition of Mindtools is: computer applications, easily obtained and learned, which allow users working alone or together to find and organize information and/or solve problems, and allow that information and/or results to be presented in a clear manner. We have always used "mind-tools" of some sort (books, drawings, slide rules), but with the abundance of information available to us today, the computer allows for quicker and broader searching, collecting, and presenting--and we learn best what we have to teach to others.

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