The evolution of personal computing

From the launch of the first microprocessor, to the operating system that brings touch controls to devices for the first time, we identify the 20 greatest landmarks in the history of personal computing.

**1970s**
- Intel 4004 heralded the dawn of the computer industry.
- The first ever "microprocessor", the Intel 4004, was created from a single chip.
- The Altair 8800 was a ground-breaking kit computer.
- Microsoft Disk Operating System was born.
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**1980s**
- The Macintosh was introduced as the first truly graphical personal computer, complete with desktop, folders and menus, scrollbars and more.
- The Macintosh was the first commercially successful PC, the Apple II launched.
- The Xerox Alto was the first computer to use the familiar "windows", including drop-down 'windows', including drop-down menus, scrollbars and more.
- 'Chess' Microsoft acquired the rights to 'Chess' from Xerox in 1982.
- The 1990 launch of Windows 3.0 and Windows 3.x coincided with a steep upswing in PC ownership. Concepts such as the Program Manager and File Manager were introduced for the first time.

**1990s**
- The birth of MS-DOS
- Windows 1.0 was the first operating system that made Windows so stable that it was suitable for the mass-market computer to ship with a graphical user interface and a mouse.
- Windows 1.0 replaced MS-DOS' 'Chess' with "Windows", although "Chess" was eventually unveiled as the Windows operating system that brought touch controls to devices for the first time.

**2000s**
- Windows XP, released in 2001, is by far and away the most used computer operating system in the world today. It markedly improved performance.

**2010s**
- Windows 8, released in 2012, has given birth to dozens of new laptop, hybrid and desktop designs that are still in use today. It's undoubtedly the most influential operating system ever made.
- Windows 8.1, released in 2013, has made several key refinements to the Windows 8 design, including the return of the Start button and desktop that are still in use today.

Find out more about Windows devices.