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Facts & Figures from the Colorado Literacy Research Initiative

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Functional Illiteracy Linked to Computer "Illiteracy"

Adults who fail to master prose, document, and quantitative literacy* have always been at a disadvantage in the labor force. In the "Information Age," they have the additional disadvantage of so-called computer "illiteracy."



Adults who fail to complete high school—and even more so, those who fail to begin it—are much less likely to have computers or to use them at home, school or work. In increasingly computer-oriented

Table 1 ■ Computer Use by Persons Age 18 and Over by Educational Attainment, 1993

Educational Attainment	Uses computer ...				
	anywhere	at home	At home ¹	At school ²	At work ³
< 9 th grade	1.5%	4.5%	12.7%	31.1%	4.0%
9 th -11 th grade	9.8%	8.1%	41.8%	46.6%	13.0%
High school/GED					
graduate	25.1%	16.7%	49.3%	51.7%	34.2%
Bachelor's degree +	63.4%	48.7%	76.9%	50.5%	69.1%

Source: Computer Use and Ownership, 1993 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997; available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/computer.html>). Notes: ¹ Percent of those with a computer at home, ² percent of those enrolled in school, ³ Percent of those with a job.

workplaces, this additional form of "illiteracy" is probably a factor contributing to the failure of non-graduates to succeed at work.

* For explanations of the three major types of functional literacy: prose, document, and quantitative, see **Adult Literacy in America: A First Look at the Results of the National Adult Literacy Survey** (National Center for Education Statistics, September 1993). Also available at: <http://nces.ed.gov/nadlits>.

Table 2 ■ Percent of U.S. Computer Households by Educational Attainment for Central City, Urban, and Rural Areas, 1995

Level of Educational Attainment	Central City	Urban	Rural
Elementary: 0-8 years	2.6%	2.8%	2.6%
High School: 1-3 years	4.7%	6.1%	6.5%
High School: 4 years (including GED)	12.2%	15.3%	16.5%

Source: **Falling Through the Net: A Survey of the “Have Nots” in Rural and Urban America** (U.S. Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, 1995). Available at <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/ntiahome/fallingthru.html>.

Table 3 ■ Percent of U.S. Computer Households with Modems by Educational Attainment for Central City, Urban, and Rural Areas, 1995

Level of Educational Attainment	Central City	Urban	Rural
Elementary: 0-8 years	35.4	32.9	23.7
High School: 1-3 years	44.7	36.7	22.4
High School: 4 years (including GED)	36.0	37.8	31.2

Source: **Falling Through the Net: A Survey of the “Have Nots” in Rural and Urban America** (U.S. Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, 1995). Available at <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/ntiahome/fallingthru.html>.

According to a 1995 U.S. Commerce Department study, **Falling Through the Net: A Survey of the “Have Nots” in Rural and Urban America**, functionally illiterate adults (i.e., those who did not graduate from high school) are the least likely to own computers—especially if they live in central cities like Denver, Colorado Springs, Pueblo, and Grand Junction. If they do own computers, they are the least likely to have the modem capabilities required to access the World Wide Web—especially if they live in outlying rural areas. (See Tables 2 and 3.)

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