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Above: Early computers, like the 1949 Manchester Mark 1, a development of 'Baby', were large and expensive machines confined to machine rooms.

Below: By the 1980s, computers, such as this ZX Spectrum, were becoming affordable appliances that brought computing to the homes of the masses.

Above: Rick Dickinson's early design sketches for a modular ZX81. Industrial designers were vital in shaping computers into forms suitable for the home.

Above: Computer magazines tied the microcomputing world together with news, reviews, adverts, letters and programming articles. As *Sinclair User* shows, initially home computing was about education and applications as well as gaming.

Sinclair ZX81 Personal Computer

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Graphics, charts, animated displays.

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Free course in BASIC programming - no previous experience required.

**Inside a day, you'll be
talking to it like a new friend.**

Above: The ZX81 was amongst the first machines aimed at a mass market. Its advertising presented the computer as an accessible introduction to the wonders of information technology.

Right: The endless creativity of programmers and the surreal streak of early British games are well illustrated in this controversial 1981 Automata advert for 1k ZX81 games.

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Left: Programmed through a hexadecimal keypad and built from a kit, the Science of Cambridge MK-14 was one of many hobbyist computers, suitable for the tinkering enthusiast but not the mass market.

Below: The futuristic Commodore PET 2001 was the first of the 1977 Trinity of ready-made appliance computers, and was far more user-friendly than hobbyist machines.

Above: Bundled together with a monitor and built-in cassette recorder, the Amstrad CPC464 looked far more like a serious 'real' computer than most other home micros.

Left: Unique in using FORTH not BASIC as its built-in programming language, the Jupiter Ace was developed by the former designers of the ZX Spectrum, and shared its diminutive size.

Left: Well built, with a typewriter-style keyboard, the Dragon 32 was a large and proudly Welsh computer, which achieved only short term success.

Above: The VIC-20, Commodore's first home computer, offered an attractive combination of sound, colour, and a typewriter style keyboard, but had only a tiny 5k memory.

Above: Although aimed at the games market, the Acorn Electron retained many of the fine qualities of the larger and pricier BBC Micro.

Left: The terrifying T-Rex roaming the corridors of *3D Monster Maze*, one of the most ambitious and tense ZX81 games.

Right: *Elite*'s combination of three-dimensional graphics, open-ended game play, and enormous scope, created a gaming experience like no other before.

Below: Early home computer games, such as *Namtir Raiders*, were often inspired by arcade games, and despite the basic capabilities of early micros were still great fun.

Above: Isometric 3D games, such as *Head Over Heels*, pushed the simple hardware of home computers to create surprisingly detailed graphics and novel gameplay.

Below: Combining a game with music, philosophy and a celebrity cast, the surreal *Deus Ex Machina* was a multi-media work of art to be experienced rather than just played.

Above: Keyboard design varied enormously, such as the calculator-like buttons of the PET (top left), flat membrane of the ZX81 (top right), rubber keys of the Spectrum (bottom left) and the ideal typewriter-style keyboard of the Electron (bottom right).

Below: Prestel, seen here running on an Acorn BBC Micro connected to the phone by an acoustic coupler, connected home computer users to a huge range of online services and information, long before the World Wide Web.