It was time to introduce new members to the Golden Rules and Hints and Tips. Carrying the sub-title of "What I wish someone had told me when I started", it also serves as revision for the old hands because we all tend to forget things.

Howard made a presentation that emphasised the thinking behind the Rules and Hints rather than demonstrating detail.

He pointed out that our web site carries topical reports, see: Forum>2011> '16th October' and 'Working Efficiently (Tips)'. A document containing 'how to' details can be downloaded from the site at Downloads> 'hints and tips 2009'. (Update on the way).

Briefly, the Golden Rules are:

"Never answer "Yes" to a question that you do not understand." The safe option: say no to avoid any unintended consequences.

"Back up your files." The only people who don't are those who have not lost any – yet! Why, What, When, Where and How you back up is a matter of YOUR choice and depends upon the value YOU place on the files. This topic will be treated in depth at the next meeting.

"Keep on Learning" We acquire skills at our own pace. Explore other ways of doing things. Copy a good idea.

Howard stressed that there are always several ways to carry out even the simplest task in Windows. The best one for you is unlikely to be the first you find, so keep looking.

Sources of ideas can be found on web sites and in computing agony columns in newspapers and magazines. And of course the club can help.

Everyone will have a personal Top Ten Tips. Here are the ones I think merit early attention.

Manipulate Windows Howard noted over 38 ways of adjusting one or more windows on the screen; from dragging one side of a single window to keyboard shortcuts that change all at once. *Alt+Tab* will bring hidden windows to the front for viewing.

Keep only Shortcuts on the Desktop to avoid accidentally deleting an application.

Selection from a list. Learn to use 'Ctrl' and 'Shift' for efficiency.

Arranging Lists to make selection easier still. Click on the column headings to change the order of the listing.

Moving around Lists Use initial letters and/or the slider bar on the right.

Customise each application's default file storage location. Use 'My Documents' to ease the task of backing up.

'In between' sizes of Fonts can be used. Applies to zoom options too.

Spellchecker Use the correct language, usually UK English*.*

Autocorrect can work harder You can invent your own time-saving corrections (up to 256 characters long).

Use Wildcards '' and '?'*
Great help in searches.

These basic tips are useful across most of computing. If you have an unusual problem, someone will have found a solution and made it available somewhere. You just have to find it. Enjoy the search.