

Computer Lingo

Application: A piece of **software** that does a particular task such as **word processing**, **data-base** management, or a game. Examples of application programs are *Microsoft Word* and *Adobe Photoshop*. Also known as **software** or **program**.

Bit: The smallest unit of measurement for electronic **data**, a bit is one on or off signal. Eight bits make one **byte**.

Boot: To start up the computer.

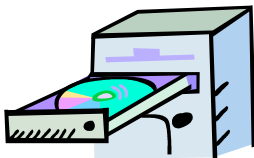
Bug: An error in a computer **program** or system. It got its name when a moth was found on a tube in one of the first computers.



Byte: Eight **Bits**. A byte is enough information to convey a single alphabetic character in a **file**. The number of bytes determines how much information your computer can store and retrieve.

Cache: A portion of the **memory** set aside for temporary storage. It can house directions to **files** that are frequently accessed and otherwise would have to be retrieved from the **RAM**. It aids in computer efficiency since it is generally higher speed than **RAM**.

CD-ROM (Compact Disk-Read Only Memory): A disk that stores larger amounts of information than **floppy disks** (One CD-ROM equals almost 500 floppies!). The information cannot be erased and new information cannot be **saved** onto the disk. CD-ROM generally refers to both the **disk** and the **drive** used to read them. Both are very similar to music CD's and CD players. The CD-ROM is inserted into the part of the system unit called the D:/ drive.



CD-RW (Compact Disk-Rewritable): A **disk** and **drive** that is similar to a **CD-ROM**, except files can be **saved** to it.

Click: To press and release a **mouse** button once, usually the left one, to select something on the screen.



Computer: A machine that can be programmed to perform high speed mathematical or logical calculations and assembles, stores, correlates, or otherwise processes and prints **data**. Computers can perform complex and repetitive procedures quickly, precisely, and reliably and can quickly store and retrieve large amounts of **data**.

CPU (Central Processing Unit): The part of the computer that controls all the other parts. This chip on a computer's system board does the main processing and controls the speed of the computer. See **Processor**. Occasionally, CPU can refer to the box the houses the brain of the computer. See **System Unit**.



Cursor: The insertion point for text on a computer. Cursors are usually represented as a blinking black vertical line.

Data: Numbers, characters, images, or other method of recording information in a form which can be easily assessed by a human or inputted into a computer, stored and processed there, or transmitted.

Database: Any collection of **data**, from a phone book to a company's inventory, typically organized to make common retrievals easy and efficient. One key component of a database is that the **data** is searchable by the various parts of the information stored.

Desktop: Initial screen displayed by the computer after it has been turned on and logged in. On the desktop, icons for the **software** available on the computer are usually shown.



Digital Camera: A camera that takes pictures and stores them as computer **files**, rather than recording them on film. Digital photos are usually saved onto a **memory stick** inserted into the camera, which can be taken out and the pictures can then be transferred to other compatible computer equipment for printing or editing.

Disk: A physical object used for storing **data**. It will not forget saved **data** if power is lost. Generally, it is possible to write new information to a disk in addition to reading **data** from it. It is always used in conjunction with a disk **drive**. See also **Drive, Floppy Disk, CD, DVD, and Memory Stick**.

Drive: A device used in conjunction with a **disk** for storing and retrieving **data**. Some drives (such as disk drives, zip drives, and tape drives) are typically capable of having new **data** written to them, but others (like **CD-ROMs** and **DVD-ROMs**) can only retrieve information.



DVD (Digital Versatile Disc): An optical storage medium that can hold up to 133 minutes of a full length film, including video and audio components.

DVD-R (Digital Versatile Disc – Recordable): A **disk** and **drive** that can save video files as well as retrieve them.

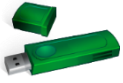
DVD-ROM (Digital Versatile Disc – Read Only Memory): A **disk** and **drive** that can only play DVDs. New video material cannot be saved.

Error Message: A message displayed by a piece of **software** to inform you that something has gone wrong. Error messages often indicate the nature of mistake or problem.

Expansion Board: A piece of circuitry that can be added to a computer’s **hardware** to increase its productivity or functions. See **Expansion Slot**.

Expansion Slot: A place set aside on your computer’s **motherboard** where you can “expand” your computer functions; this is done by installing **expansion boards**, which are inserted into expansion slots. For example, if you wanted to add better sound to your computer, you would buy a **sound card** (a type of **expansion board**) and place it in an expansion slot.

File: A collection of **data** with a name attached, created with a **program**, and **saved** on a **hard drive, floppy disk, CD-RW, or Flash Drive**.



Flash Drive: A small device, about the size of a lipstick, which can be connected to a computer's **USB port**. It is a very large form of portable **memory**, often holding as much information as a **hard drive**. It is sometimes also called a **micro drive**.

Floppy Disk: A portable form of **memory** consisting of a floppy Mylar disk enclosed in a hard shell. Floppy disks can be used to transfer smaller **files** from one computer to another. They are inserted into a slot on the front of the **system unit** called the A:/ drive.



Floppy Drive: Usually refers to the A:/ drive, which is a slot, usually in the front of the computer, where the **floppy disks** are inserted for use.

Format: 1. To prepare a **disk** to hold information. 2. The type of **file** information has been **saved** in. 3. To change the way information in your document looks.

Gigabyte: About a billion **bytes** or a thousand **megabytes** of **data**. A gigabyte holds an extremely large amount of **data**.

GUI (Graphical User Interface): A visual computer environment that represents **files**, commands, and **software** with graphic images. The user selects these options through a **pointing device** such as a **mouse**. Microsoft **Windows operating system** is an example of a GUI.

Hard Disk: See **Hard Drive**.

Hard Drive: A storage device, usually inside a **system unit** that holds large amounts of **data**. It is the memory box of the computer where all **applications** and **files** are stored. The size of a hard drive is usually measured in **gigabytes**. Also known as the **Hard Disk** or the C:/ drive.

Hardware: The physical components of a computer system, such as the **monitor**, the **keyboard**, and the **system unit**.

Icon: A small image displayed on the screen that represents a **program**, command, or **file**. Users can point and **click** on icons to select these objects. This is a key aspect of the **graphical user interface**.



Keyboard: The typewriter-like mechanism used to input text and give commands to the computer.

Kilobyte: About 1,024 **bytes**. The higher the number of **bytes**, the more information your computer can store and retrieve.

Laptop: A laptop computer, also called a **notebook** computer, is a battery- or AC-powered personal computer smaller than a briefcase that can easily be transported and conveniently used in temporary spaces such as on airplanes, in libraries, and at meetings. A laptop typically weighs less than 5 pounds and is 2 inches or less in thickness.



Megabyte: About a million **bytes**. The number of **bytes** determines how much information your computer can store and retrieve.

Megahertz: The number of cycles per second at which a **processor** or **CPU** works. The higher the number of megahertz the faster a computer can process information.

Memory: The place where a computer keeps **software** and **data**. There are three types of memory storage in most computers: the **hard drive**, **RAM**, and **cache**. Memory is measured in **bytes**.

Memory Stick: See **Flash Drive**.

Micro Drive: See **Flash Drive**.

Modem: A device that changes computer **data** into signals that can be carried over phone or cable lines, and decodes **data** it receives over those lines into a form readable by the computer. Modems are responsible for our Internet connections and work similarly to phones.

Monitor: The screen on which the computer displays information. It is very similar in construction and look to a television set.

Motherboard: The main board in the computer's **system unit** that holds the **central processing unit, memory**, and other circuitry. It is also known as a **System Board**.



Mouse: A **pointing device** that allows users to choose **icons**, select information, and move objects. It usually consists of two buttons at the top of the mouse and a rounded body.

MP3: Computer format used to store audio or sound files.

Network: An arrangement by which computers are connected so that users of each computer can share **files, applications**, and other services.

Notebook: See **Laptop**.

Operating System: The special **software** that allows the user to interact with the computer. It also takes care of basic system activities, such as opening and **saving files**. Microsoft **Windows** is an operating system.

PC: Abbreviation for Personal Computer. See **Computer**.

PC Card: A credit card sized **memory** device usually used in a **notebook** or **laptop** computer.

Peripheral: **Hardware**, such as a **printer**, headphones, or **scanner**, that you use with a computer, but are not essential to its operation.



A printer is a type of Peripheral

Pixel: Short for “picture element.” On a **monitor**, one pixel is a single dot of light and color. Thousands of pixels make up an image. The higher the ratio of pixels the better the resolution.

Pointer: An on-screen indicator, controlled by a **mouse** or other pointing device, you use to select objects. Examples are the arrow or the white hand that are controlled by the movement of the **mouse**.

Pointing Device: A **hardware** component is used to control, select, and input **data**. The most common example is a **mouse**, although **trackballs**, **touchpads**, and joysticks are also pointing devices.

Port: A connector used to attach **peripheral** devices to the **system unit**. Most computers come with a variety of ports allowing for a variety of equipment to be plugged in.



Port Cable

Printer: A **peripheral** used to create paper copies of computer work, text, or pictures.

Processor: A circuit in a computer that processes information. Processors are attached to the **motherboard** or to add-on **expansion boards**. Grades of processors are measured in **mega-hertz**. Processors control the speed at which you computer works. See **CPU**.

Program: See **Application**.

RAM (Random Access Memory): The **memory** location where a computer keeps **applications** and **data** when they are in use. RAM is measured in **megabytes**.

Reboot: To turn off your computer and start it again, or to press the *Ctrl, Alt, Delete* keys to restart it. It's what you do when a computer freezes up. Many computers also provide a reset option that reboots the computer without turning off the power.

Save: To record work onto a **disk** (the **hard drive**, a **floppy disk**, **CD-RW**, or **Flash Drive**) for permanent storage. Until work is **saved**, it exists only in **memory** and will be lost if the computer is turned off or its power is otherwise interrupted.



Scanner: A device that translates a paper image into a computer-readable file. Some scanners are hand-held while others are flatbed models.

Software: See **Application**.

Solid State: Any **memory** storage device with no moving parts. Some examples include **memory sticks**, **flash** or **micro drives**, and **memory cards** such as the ones in digital cameras or cell phones.

System Board: See **Motherboard**.

System Unit: The main body or the box of a computer that houses the computer's workings, including the **power supply**, **motherboard**, **processor**, **hard drive**, as well as the **CD-ROM** and **Floppy Drives**. System units can come in tower and desktop models. Also occasionally referred to as the **CPU**.



A tower system unit

Touchpad: A **pointing device** used on many **notebook** or **laptop PCs**. Instead of using the traditional **mouse**, you move the pointer onscreen by moving your finger over a touchpad.

Trackball: A **pointing device**, consisting of a rotating ball embedded in a base that can be used instead of a **mouse**. Trackballs are easier to use for those who have difficulty controlling a **mouse**.

Trojan Horse: A **virus** or security breaking **program** that is disguised as something benign, such as a directory or game.

Utility: A piece of **software** designed to manage the computer itself, providing functions such as checking for **viruses** or backing up a **hard drive**.

Virus: A usually destructive **program** written specifically to “infect” one or more other **programs**.

When the infected **program** is used, the embedded virus also opens and performs its predetermined action on the **software**, **files**, or computer. Viruses can be transmitted from computer to computer through the downloading and sharing of **files** received on **floppy disks**, via email or by downloading **files** from the Internet.



Windows: A popular **GUI operating system** by Microsoft.

Word Processor: A **program** used to create and print text documents such as those that would otherwise be prepared on a typewriter. The key advantage of word processing is the ability to make changes easily, such as correcting spelling, changing margins, or adding, deleting, and moving blocks of text. Once created, the document can be printed quickly and accurately as well as saved for later modifications. Microsoft Word is an example of a word processor.

Worm: A **program**, usually destructive such as a **virus**, that propagates itself over a **network**, reproducing itself as it goes.