

## ➡ A Guide To Basic Computer Terminology

### Free Computer Education by Mitz

Isn't a desktop simply the top of your desk? No wonder the average person gets confused and stressed when confronted with computer terminology. This language has taken on a path of its own, using words such as cookie, ram, mouse, hardware and more. However don't panic yet, just read this article and soon you will be speaking the language.

### Lets start with the basics of Computer Terminology

- Hardware refers to the basic parts that make up your computer. For example a hard drive, memory, and motherboard are part of the hardware of your computer.
- Peripherals are those pieces of hardware that you add on to your computer. For example a mouse, keyboard, modem, monitor, etc.
- Software refers to all of the programs on your computer. Software helps you get things achieved, like writing letters, sending emails, and surfing the internet.

### Different types of hardware

Hard drive. This is where all your data is stored when you save it. Its size or capacity is measured in gigabytes. For Example, I have a 160GB hard drive in my computer. Obviously a 20GB hard drive is very small in comparison.

Processor or Central Processing Unit (CPU) interprets computer program instructions and processes data. The bigger your processor, the faster your computer performs your tasks. Its speed is measured in megahertz and gigahertz. 1000 megahertz equals 1 gigahertz. People still have computers that can be something like a Pentium III 933mhz, however a more up to date computer would be Pentium IV 3.0ghz.

Motherboard, systemboard, or mainboard is the central circuit board that provides electrical connections so the other components of a computer can communicate with each other. It is the main part to a computer.

Ram (random access memory) is the memory of a computer which works with the other components of the computer to allow it to function. It stores your data when you are using it and returns it when you are finished. For example it allows your programs to run and then puts them away when you close them. Ram size is measured in megabytes and gigabytes. Most computers have at least 512mb ram but if you doubled that it would be over 1 gigabyte. (1024mb).

CD Rom, Cd burner, or Dvd burner. These are used to read cd's to install software, or access any data stored on a disk. The latest dvd burners can read most disks as well as burn both cd's and dvd's. The older type cd roms only read cd's and cd burners read and write or burn cd's.

Floppy disk drives are almost obsolete. It uses the older type 3.5" square plastic disk.

### Different types of Peripherals

- Keyboard allows you to type information into your computer. It has made the poor old type writer obsolete.

- Mouse This is used as a pointing device that can help you control your computer tasks. It is a hand held device with a left and right click button. It performs a lot of the keyboards functions but its as easy as a click here and there.
- Monitor is the screen for viewing your working computer. The older type are CRT Monitors and the nice slim screens are LCD Monitors.
- Modem This device connects your computer to a phone line to enable communication between you and other computers. It allows you to view pages stored on other computers which is commonly called the internet. You will need a service provider to do this. Most people have cable internet, however in remote areas they still use dial up internet which is extremely slow.
- Printer/Scanner This allows you to print pages from your computer or scan and copy pages on to your computer to view and edit. Most new printers come with a scanner incorporated and sometimes they can also print great quality photos.

## Software

The main and most important piece of software a computer has is the Operating System which is most commonly called Windows. There is also software for almost anything you want to do with your computer. There is software for picture editing, movie making, music production, watching movies or TV, and more. It almost seems never ending. It all starts with an idea.

## Computer Terminology relating to software

- Warez A common name for illegal software.
- Apps Is an abbreviation used for application software.

## Common Computer terminology and meanings

Burn a cd. No this does not mean you can set fire to it! This means to write data to a disk. Maybe you want to burn a copy of your home movies on to a disk.

Desktop It is everything you see when you start your computer except the taskbar.

Wallpaper The monitor pattern or picture or other graphic representation that forms the background onto which all the icons are displayed. I like to use a photo of my own for the wallpaper on my desktop.

Cookie A text information message that is stored on your computer when you visit a web page. When you return to the page the cookie is used to recognise you.

Tweak To make small changes that fine-tune a piece of software or hardware. There are many programs that help you do this. For example XP tools, Tweak u, Ashampoo.

If you are a new computer user, you should keep this article handy for future reference, and hopefully soon this computer terminology will become your second language.

## Computer Terms and their meanings

All computer terms and definitions are only relevant to the Tips4pc website.

AGP: (Accelerated Graphics Port) is usually located near the white PCI slots on a Motherboard. This is where you install a video card for better graphical performance. Most motherboards now come with onboard sound and video which is top quality, however when you install AGP video it removes pressure from the computers resources. See [more..](#)

Application Software: Or simply application is a computer program that performs tasks that the user wishes to perform. It could be Microsoft word and you might use it to write a letter or Adobe Photoshop to edit a photo. See [more..](#)

ADSL: Short for asymmetric digital subscriber line, a new technology that allows more data to be sent over existing copper telephone lines. See [more..](#)

Animation: A simulation of movement created by displaying a series of pictures, or frames. All of these pictures put together can make a computer animated gif, which will be a moving picture. You can also animate writing, banners, and even entire websites. A cartoons on television is one example of an animation.

Attachment: A file attached to an e-mail message. For example you could attach a picture to send with your e-mail.

Auto responder An e-mail utility that automatically replies to an e-mail message with a prewritten response. [Read More.....](#)

Autostart This is when a program or application starts without you having to double click on the icon to start. For example, if you insert a cd into the cd drive on your computer it could be set to autostart. If it is it will automatically open the disc to view or start the program it holds. You can also plug your digital camera in and a program will appear to extract the photos from the camera. This means that the program was set to autostart if a camera was attached to the computer.

Broadband: This usually refers to a high speed internet connection like DSL or cable. To use this connection you would also need a broadband modem. Broadband is a far cry from the good old Dialup internet.

Bios: Basic input output system. You can access this when you start-up a computer. It will say on the screen "To enter setup press .....key". It lets you change whether the CD-ROM or hard drive boots first. There are also settings to overclock some computer systems.

Boot sequence: The order of drives that a system's BIOS follows when looking for the operating system. For example it can go to the hard drive, the floppy drive, or the Cd rom.

Broadcast: To simultaneously send the same message to multiple recipients. Broadcasting is a useful feature in e-mail systems

Browser: A program to allow you to view and browse web pages on the internet. I use Internet Explorer.

Bandwidth: This is the term we use to measure the amount of data and its speed through an internet connection. The more bandwidth you have, the faster the internet connection. Bandwidth is limited by the line it travel through. Your internet service provider can reduce or increase your bandwidth according to you internet plan.

Case Sensitive: A term used to describe if it is of importance to use upper or lower case letters.

Computer: This a general term for all the included components that make up a computer. When people say the word computer they generally mean the whole system.

Cookie: A text information message that is stored on your computer when you visit a web page. When you return to the page the cookie is used to recognize you.

CPU: (Central Processing unit) This is the brains of the computer. It is a chip attached to the motherboard and controls and calculates data and is a vital part of your computer. Sometimes known as the Processor, the CPU comes in different speeds. I have a 2.8ghz processor.

CTRL: Stands for control button. Found on both sides, bottom left and right, of the keyboard. Used to perform special functions such as selecting all (Ctrl-A).

Data: A collection of facts, information, photos, text, anything, on a computer or on the internet.

Desktop: It is everything you see when you start your computer except the taskbar. Your desktop has the icons on it that are shortcuts to programs and folders.

Download: To download something is to get it from the internet to your computer through your internet connection. For example, when you receive email to your computer the new emails are downloaded from your mail server. Now days people download everything including documents, information, music files, movies, games, cracks, cheats, and more.. To upload is the opposite of download.

Ergonomic office chair This refers to a chair purposely designed to fit the comfort needs of the user with considerations such as surrounding environment taken into account.

File: In the old days a file used to be a section category that was kept in a filing cabinet, however now we have less paper to file away. Now the term file can mean anything on your computer. Everything on your computer is made up of files. Folders and directories have files stored in them. Programs are made up of certain files that make the program work. A file on a computer can mean any file unless you specify which type. For example ther are music files, picture files, system files, and so on.

File Extension: A file extension classifies what category a file falls into. If it has .txt as a file extension then you know it is a text file. If it has .jpeg it is a picture.

Firewall: A personal firewall is a computer program that protects your computer from malicious users by blocking incoming and outgoing unauthorized access. Windows Xp comes with a built in firewall.

Format: (Hard drive, re-writeable disks) To clear of all data. Clean to the original state of empty. A hard drive has to be formatted and partitioned to install an operating system. It can also mean to format text by changing the font, color and size.

Forward: Forward is an option found in an e-mail client, which allows you to forward a received e-mail to another recipient.

Forum: This is a member based website, usually free to join, where people gather to chat and converse on a particular subject. Forums can be used as a very useful learning tool for most subjects as people share their knowledge and experiences with others. You can find computer help forums, money saving forums, child birth forums, and more..

Hardware: The basic parts that make up your computer.

Html: (hyper text markup language) This is coding used to develop webpages. You can start from scratch, writing html or you can use a html editor like Frontpage that has a template to start with.

IP Address: A unique address that each computer has. If you have a home network your modem will have an ip address, so will your router, and any computers that are attached.

ISP: (Internet service provider) Your ISP is the company that supplies your internet connection to you. It could be a local phone company or even a pay tv company. Your internet service provider usually sends you a bill for your internet connection.

Keypad: The set of numbers on the right hand side of the keyboard.

Message Rules: Rules that you can set in Outlook Express to filter your email messages.

Motherboard: The central circuit board that provides electrical connections so the other components of a computer can communicate with each other. It is the main part to a computer. Everything is connected to it.

OS: (Operating System) Is the main program that runs your computer. Windows is probably the most popular.

OSK: On screen keyboard. Windows has a built in OSK. You can type OSK in the run command window and it will appear.

Page Impressions: This can also be known as Page Hits or Page Views. This measures the number of times a webpage is visited. This is also a broad term and can be further categorized into unique visitors and page loads.

Peripherals: Peripherals are those pieces of hardware that you add on to your computer. For example a mouse, keyboard, modem, monitor, etc.

PCI: (peripheral component interconnect) These are slots on the motherboard, usually white, where you can add cards onto your computer. You can add soundcards, internal modems, TV cards, and more...

Power Supply: This is a component of the computer that supplies power to all of the other components. You plug power into the back of the computer.

Print Screen (Key): The key between the letters and the keypad labelled "Prt Sc/Sys Rq". Commonly used to take photographs of the screen.

Partition: When you divide your hard drive into parts, each section of data is called a partition. A hard drive must have at least one partition on it for Windows to be installed.

Remote Desktop: This feature enables you to connect to your computer across the Internet from virtually any computer anywhere. You need to know your computers IP address and its password and username.

Registry: This is where the very important settings for your computer are stored. This includes software serial numbers and passwords, email settings and accounts and a lot more information.

Safe mode: When your computer is started in safe mode the computer loads only the files necessary to run the basic Windows services. It is the NO-frills version of Windows, which allows you to diagnose problems by process of elimination.

Screenshot: A photograph of a computer screen or a portion of it.

Screen Resolution: It refers to the amount of pixels (little coloured dots) you have on your screen. The most popular resolution nowadays is 1024x768. That suits a 17 inch monitor perfectly. If you set your screen resolution to 800x600 the writing will be bigger and easier to see.

SEO: Search Engine Optimization. The art of optimizing your web site for the search engines.

Shareware: Shareware is a software program that you can download or try for free, usually for a set trial period. After that time is up you can buy the software program to continue using it. A lot of software is sold this way as the user gets attached to using the program and ends up buying it.

Snail mail: Normal postal mail, where an actual physical letter or package is delivered. The term didn't exist until electronic mail (e-mail) came along.

Software: Refers to all of the programs on your computer. Software helps you get things achieved, like writing letters, sending emails, and surfing the internet.

System Properties Box Contains information about your computer. What speed is your processor, how much memory you have, automatic updates settings, your computer name, and more

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