

Computereze

Computer & Internet

Terminology

<http://www.webopedia.com>

Compiled By

Bill 'Smokey' Stover

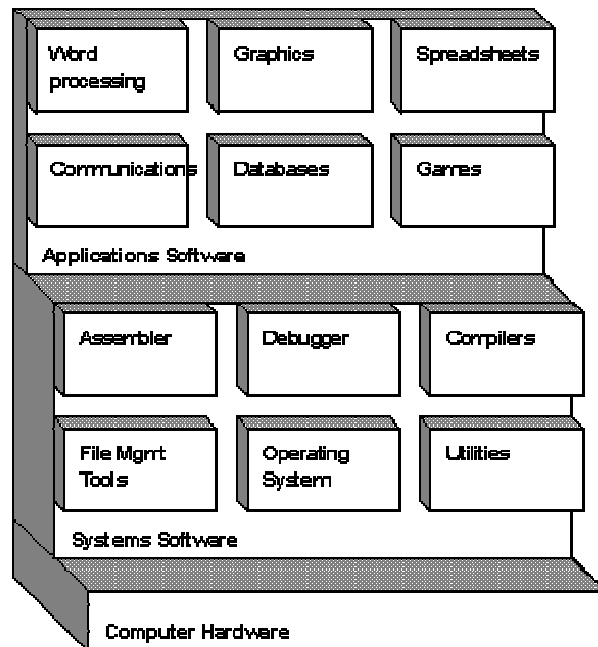
Applications

A program or group of programs designed for end users. Software can be divided into two general classes: systems software and applications software. Systems software consists of low-level programs that interact with the computer at a very basic level. This includes operating systems, compilers, and utilities for managing computer resources.

In contrast, applications software (also called *end-user programs*) includes database programs, word processors, and spreadsheets. Figuratively speaking, applications software sits on top of systems software because it is unable to run without the operating system and system utilities.

Also see a diagram of n-tier application architecture in the quick reference section of Webopedia.

Software Packages



Browser (Web Browser)

Short for *Web browser*, a software application used to locate and display Web pages. The two most popular browsers are Netscape Navigator and Microsoft Internet Explorer. Both of these are *graphical browsers*, which means that they can display graphics as well as text. In addition, most modern browsers can present multimedia information, including sound and video, though they require plug-ins for some formats.

Computer Hang, Hang Up, or Crash

To crash in such a way that the computer does not respond to input from the keyboard or mouse. If your computer is hung, you usually need to reboot it, although sometimes hitting the correct sequence of control characters will free it up.

Glitch

A malfunction. *Glitch* is sometimes used as a synonym for bug, but more often it refers to a hardware problem.

Reboot, Restart, Power Down/Up Reset/Restart

To restart a computer. In DOS, you can reboot by pressing the Alt, Control and Delete keys simultaneously. This is called a warm boot. You can also perform a cold boot by turning the computer off and then on again.

On Macs, you reboot by selecting the "Restart" option from the Special menu.

Databases

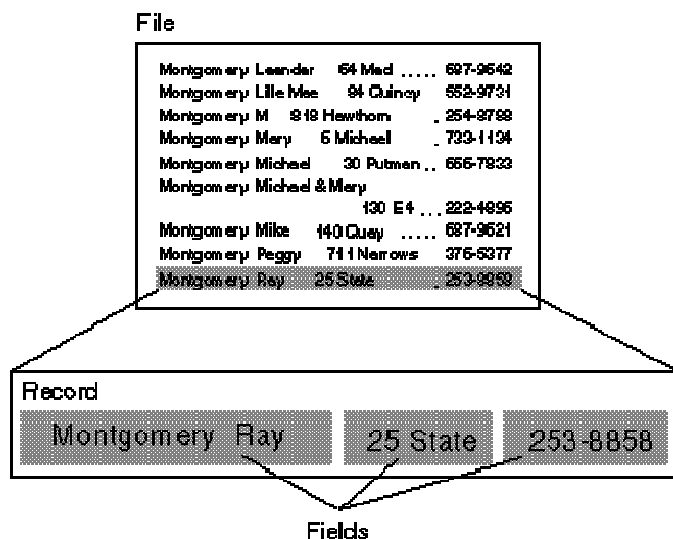
(1) Often abbreviated *DB*. A collection of information organized in such a way that a computer program can quickly select desired pieces of data. You can think of a database as an electronic filing system.

Traditional databases are organized by fields, records, and files. A field is a single piece of information; a record is one complete set of fields; and a file is a collection of records. For example, a telephone book is analogous to a file. It contains a list of records, each of which consists of three fields: name, address, and telephone number.

An alternative concept in database design is known as Hypertext. In a Hypertext database, any object, whether it be a piece of text, a picture, or a film, can be linked to any other object. Hypertext databases are particularly useful for organizing large amounts of disparate information, but they are not designed for numerical analysis.

To access information from a database, you need a database management system (DBMS). This is a collection of programs that enables you to enter, organize, and select data in a database.

(2) Increasingly, the term *database* is used as shorthand for database management system.



Desktop

1) In graphical user interfaces, a *desktop* is the metaphor used to portray file systems. Such a desktop consists of pictures, called *icons*, that show cabinets, files, folders, and various types of documents (that is, letters, reports, pictures). You can arrange the icons on the electronic desktop just as you can arrange real objects on a real desktop -- moving them around, putting one on top of another, reshuffling them, and throwing them away.

Specialized or Custom Software

Email

Short for *electronic mail*, the transmission of messages over communications networks. The messages can be notes entered from the keyboard or electronic files stored on disk. Most mainframes, minicomputers, and computer networks have an e-mail system. Some electronic-mail systems are confined to a single computer system or network, but others have gateways to other computer systems, enabling users to send electronic mail anywhere in the world. Companies that are fully computerized make extensive use of e-mail because it is fast, flexible, and reliable.

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Although different e-mail systems use different formats, there are some emerging standards that are making it possible for users on all systems to exchange messages. In the PC world, an important e-mail standard is MAPI. The CCITT standards organization has developed the X.400 standard, which attempts to provide a universal way of addressing

messages. To date, though, the de facto addressing standard is the one used by the Internet system because almost all e-mail systems have an Internet gateway.

Another common spelling for e-mail is [email](#).

Also see [Why E-Mails Bounce](#) and [Getting Rid of Spam](#) in the [Did You Know](#) section of Webopedia.

[Presentation Software, Graphics, & Slide Shows](#)

A type of business software that enables users to create highly stylized images for slide shows and reports. The software includes functions for creating various types of charts and graphs and for inserting text in a variety of fonts. Most systems enable you to import data from a spreadsheet application to create the charts and graphs.

Presentation graphics is often called *business graphics*.

Files, File System, Filesystem

Also referred to as simply a *file system* or *filesystem*. The system that an operating system or program uses to organize and keep track of files. For example, a *hierarchical file system* is one that uses directories to organize files into a tree structure.

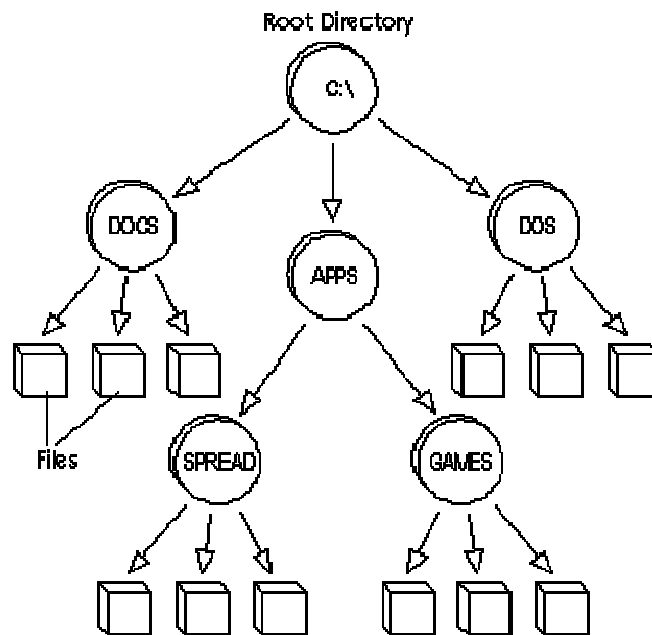
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File System Block Diagram

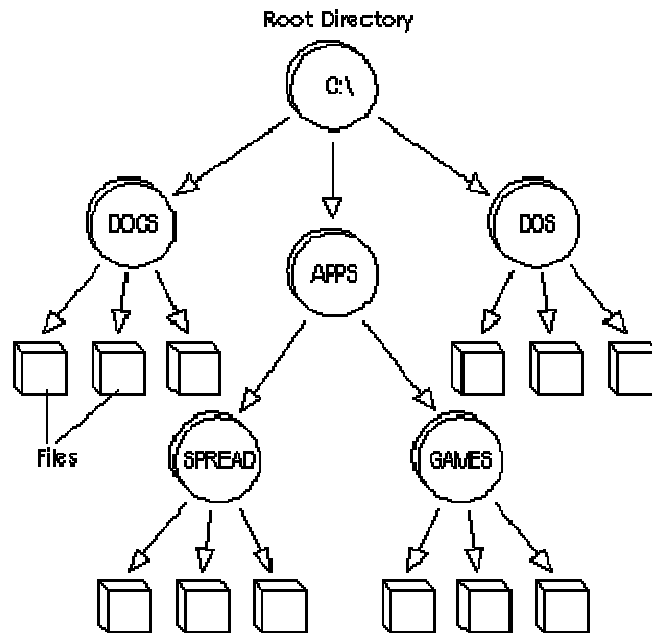


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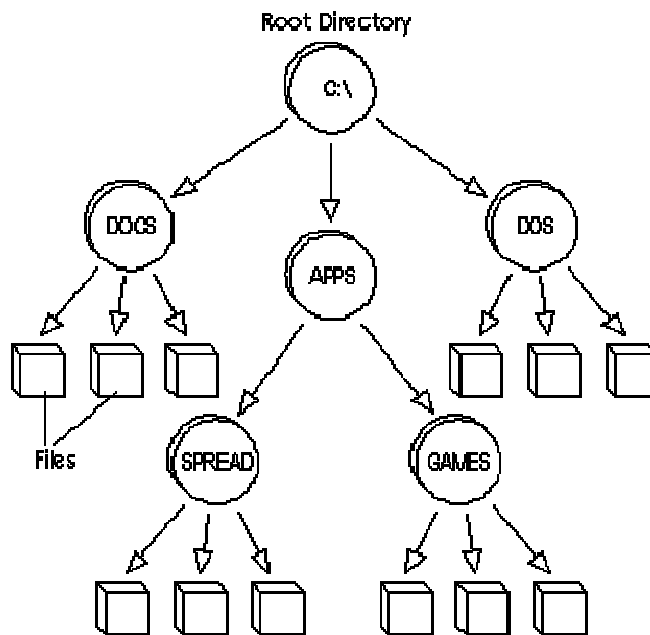


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Graphical User Interface

Abbreviated *GUI* (pronounced *GOO-ee*)

Abbreviated *GUI* (pronounced *GOO-ee*). A program interface that takes advantage of the computer's graphics capabilities to make the program easier to use. Well-designed graphical user interfaces can free the user from learning complex command languages. On the other hand, many users find that they work more effectively with a command-driven interface, especially if they already know the command language.

Graphical user interfaces, such as Microsoft Windows and the one used by the Apple Macintosh, feature the following basic components:

- pointer : A symbol that appears on the display screen and that you move to select objects and commands. Usually, the pointer appears as a small angled arrow. Text -processing applications, however, use an I-beam pointer that is shaped like a capital *I*.
- pointing device : A device, such as a mouse or trackball, that enables you to select objects on the display screen.
- icons : Small pictures that represent commands, files, or windows. By moving the pointer to the icon and pressing a mouse button, you can execute a command or convert the icon into a window. You can also move the icons around the display screen as if they were real objects on your desk.
- desktop : The area on the display screen where icons are grouped is often referred to as the desktop because the icons are intended to represent real objects on a real desktop.
- windows: You can divide the screen into different areas. In each window, you can run a different program or display a different file. You can move windows around the display screen, and change their shape and size at will.
- menus : Most graphical user interfaces let you execute commands by selecting a choice from a menu.

The first graphical user interface was designed by Xerox Corporation's Palo Alto Research Center in the 1970s, but it was not until the 1980s and the emergence of the Apple Macintosh that graphical user interfaces became popular. One reason for their slow acceptance was

the fact that they require considerable CPU power and a high-quality monitor, which until recently were prohibitively expensive.

In addition to their visual components, graphical user interfaces also make it easier to move data from one application to another. A true GUI includes standard formats for representing text and graphics. Because the formats are well-defined, different programs that run under a common GUI can share data. This makes it possible, for example, to copy a graph created by a spreadsheet program into a document created by a word processor.

Many DOS programs include some features of GUIs, such as menus, but are not graphics based. Such interfaces are sometimes called graphical character-based user interfaces to distinguish them from true GUIs.

Desktop

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ICON

A small picture that represents an object or program. Icons are very useful in applications that use windows, because with the click of a mouse button you can shrink an entire window into a small icon. (This is sometimes called *minimizing*.) To redisplay the window, you merely move the pointer to the icon and click (or double click) a mouse button. (This is sometimes called *restoring* or *maximizing*)

Icons are a principal feature of graphical user interfaces.

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Hardware

Refers to objects that you can actually touch, like disks, disk drives, display screens, keyboards, printers, boards, and chips. In contrast, software is untouchable. Software exists as ideas, concepts, and symbols, but it has no substance.

Books provide a useful analogy. The pages and the ink are the hardware, while the words, sentences, paragraphs, and the overall meaning are the software. A computer without software is like a book full of blank pages -- you need software to make the computer useful just as you need words to make a book meaningful.

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Internet

A global **network** connecting millions of **computers**. More than 100 countries are linked into exchanges of **data**, news and opinions.

Unlike **online services**, which are centrally controlled, the Internet is decentralized by design. Each Internet computer, called a ***host***, is independent. Its operators can choose which **Internet services** to use and which **local** services to make available to the global Internet community. Remarkably, this anarchy by design works exceedingly well.

There are a variety of ways to **access** the Internet. Most online services, such as **America Online**, offer access to some Internet services. It is also possible to gain access through a commercial **Internet Service Provider (ISP)**.

*The Internet is not synonymous with **World Wide Web**.*

Also see **The Difference Between the Internet and the World Wide Web** in the **Did You Know . . . ?** section of Webopedia.

Multitasking

The ability to execute more than one *task* at the same time, a task being a program. The terms *multitasking* and *multiprocessing* are often used interchangeably, although multiprocessing implies that more than one CPU is involved.

In multitasking, only one CPU is involved, but it switches from one program to another so quickly that it gives the appearance of executing all of the programs at the same time.

There are two basic types of multitasking: *preemptive* and *cooperative*. In preemptive multitasking, the operating system parcels out CPU *time slices* to each program. In cooperative multitasking, each program can control the CPU for as long as it needs it. If a program is not using the CPU, however, it can allow another program to use it temporarily. OS/2, Windows 95, Windows NT, the Amiga operating system and UNIX use preemptive multitasking, whereas Microsoft Windows 3.x and the MultiFinder (for Macintosh computers) use cooperative multitasking.

Networks, Networking, LAN

A computer network that spans a relatively small area. Most LANs are confined to a single building or group of buildings. However, one LAN can be connected to other LANs over any distance via telephone lines and radio waves. A system of LANs connected in this way is called a wide-area network (WAN).

Most LANs connect workstations and personal computers. Each node (individual computer) in a LAN has its own CPU with which it executes programs, but it also is able to access data and devices anywhere on the LAN. This means that many users can share expensive devices, such as laser printers, as well as data. Users can also use the LAN to communicate with each other, by sending e-mail or engaging in chat sessions.

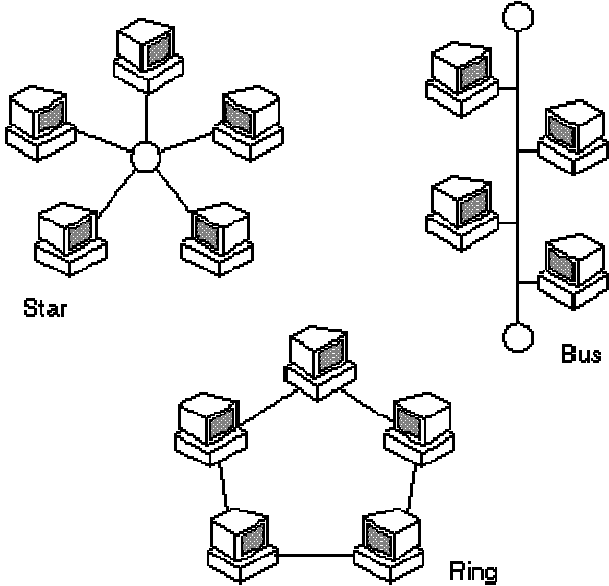
There are many different types of LANs Ethernets being the most common for PCs. Most Apple Macintosh networks are based on Apple's AppleTalk network system, which is built into Macintosh computers.

The following characteristics differentiate one LAN from another:

- topology : The geometric arrangement of devices on the network. For example, devices can be arranged in a ring or in a straight line.
- protocols : The rules and encoding specifications for sending data. The protocols also determine whether the network uses a peer-to-peer or client/server architecture.
- media : Devices can be connected by twisted-pair wire, coaxial cables, or fiber optic cables. Some networks do without connecting media altogether, communicating instead via radio waves.

LANs are capable of transmitting data at very fast rates, much faster than data can be transmitted over a telephone line; but the distances are limited, and there is also a limit on the number of computers that can be attached to a single LAN.

Network Topography



Operating System

The most important program that runs on a computer. Every general-purpose computer must have an operating system to run other programs. Operating systems perform basic tasks, such as recognizing input from the keyboard, sending output to the display screen, keeping track of files and directories on the disk, and controlling peripheral devices such as disk drives and printers.

For large systems, the operating system has even greater responsibilities and powers. It is like a traffic cop -- it makes sure that different programs and users running at the same time do not interfere with each other. The operating system is also responsible for security, ensuring that unauthorized users do not access the system.

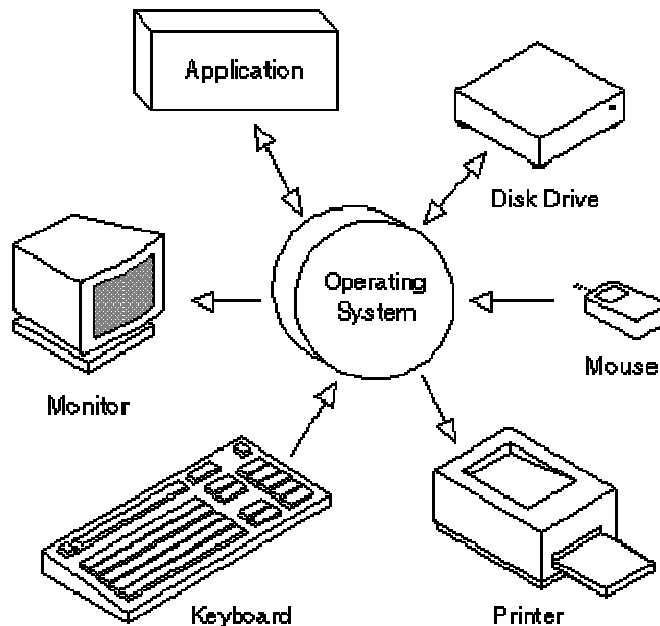
Operating systems can be classified as follows:

- multi-user : Allows two or more users to run programs at the same time. Some operating systems permit hundreds or even thousands of concurrent users.
- multiprocessing : Supports running a program on more than one CPU.
- multitasking : Allows more than one program to run concurrently.
- multithreading : Allows different parts of a single program to run concurrently.
- real time: Responds to input instantly. General-purpose operating systems, such as DOS and UNIX, are not real-time.

Operating systems provide a software platform on top of which other programs, called application programs, can run. The application programs must be written to run on top of a particular operating system. Your choice of operating system, therefore, determines to a great extent the applications you can run. For PCs, the most popular operating systems are DOS, OS/2, and Windows, but others are available, such as Linux.

As a user, you normally interact with the operating system through a set of commands. For example, the DOS operating system contains

commands such as COPY and RENAME for copying files and changing the names of files, respectively. The commands are accepted and executed by a part of the operating system called the command processor or command line interpreter. Graphical user interfaces allow you to enter commands by pointing and clicking at objects that appear on the screen.



Windows – (Microsoft Operating System)

A family of operating systems for personal computers. Windows dominates the personal computer world, running, by some estimates, on 90% of all personal computers. The remaining 10% are mostly Macintosh computers. Like the Macintosh operating environment, Windows provides a graphical user interface (GUI), virtual memory management, multitasking, and support for many peripheral devices.

Find out more about Your Windows System Registry in Webopedia's "Did You Know...?" section.

Specialized or Custom Software

Email

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Most e-mail systems include a rudimentary text editor for composing messages, but many allow you to edit your messages using any editor you want. You then send the message to the recipient by specifying the recipient's address. You can also send the same message to several users at once. This is called broadcasting.

Sent messages are stored in electronic mailboxes until the recipient fetches them. To see if you have any mail, you may have to check your electronic mailbox periodically, although many systems alert you when mail is received. After reading your mail, you can store it in a text file, forward it to other users, or delete it. Copies of memos can be printed out on a printer if you want a paper copy.

All online services and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) offer e-mail, and most also support gateways so that you can exchange mail with users of other systems. Usually, it takes only a few seconds or minutes for mail to arrive at its destination. This is a particularly effective way to communicate with a group because you can broadcast a message or document to everyone in the group at once.

Although different e-mail systems use different formats, there are some emerging standards that are making it possible for users on all systems to exchange messages. In the PC world, an important e-mail standard is MAPI. The CCITT standards organization has developed the X.400 standard, which attempts to provide a universal way of addressing

messages. To date, though, the de facto addressing standard is the one used by the Internet system because almost all e-mail systems have an Internet gateway.

Another common spelling for e-mail is [email](#).

Also see [Why E-Mails Bounce](#) and [Getting Rid of Spam](#) in the [Did You Know](#) section of Webopedia.

[Presentation Software, Graphics, & Slide Shows](#)

A type of business software that enables users to create highly stylized images for slide shows and reports. The software includes functions for creating various types of charts and graphs and for inserting text in a variety of fonts. Most systems enable you to import data from a spreadsheet application to create the charts and graphs.

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Program

n) An organized list of instructions that, when executed, causes the computer to behave in a predetermined manner. Without programs, computers are useless.

A program is like a recipe. It contains a list of ingredients (called variables) and a list of directions (called statements) that tell the computer what to do with the variables. The variables can represent numeric data, text, or graphical images.

There are many programming languages -- C, C++, Pascal, BASIC, FORTRAN, COBOL, and LISP are just a few. These are all high-level languages. One can also write programs in low-level languages called assembly languages, although this is more difficult. Low-level languages are closer to the language used by a computer, while high-level languages are closer to human languages.

Eventually, every program must be translated into a machine language that the computer can understand. This translation is performed by compilers, interpreters, and assemblers.

When you buy software, you normally buy an executable version of a program. This means that the program is already in machine language - it has already been compiled and assembled and is ready to execute.

(v) To write programs.

Software

Computer instructions or data. Anything that can be stored electronically is software. The storage devices and display devices are hardware.

The terms software and *hardware* are used as both nouns and adjectives. For example, you can say: "The problem lies in the software," meaning that there is a problem with the program or data, not with the computer itself. You can also say: "It's a software problem."

The distinction between software and hardware is sometimes confusing because they are so integrally linked. Clearly, when you purchase a program, you are buying software. But to buy the software, you need to buy the disk (hardware) on which the software is recorded.

Software is often divided into two categories:

- systems software : Includes the operating system and all the utilities that enable the computer to function.
- applications software : Includes programs that do real work for users. For example, word processors, spreadsheets, and database management systems fall under the category of applications software.

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Short for *electronic mail*, the transmission of messages over communications networks. The messages can be notes entered from the keyboard or electronic files stored on disk. Most mainframes, minicomputers, and computer networks have an e-mail system. Some electronic-mail systems are confined to a single computer system or network, but others have gateways to other computer systems, enabling users to send electronic mail anywhere in the world. Companies that are fully computerized make extensive use of e-mail because it is fast, flexible, and reliable.

Most e-mail systems include a rudimentary text editor for composing messages, but many allow you to edit your messages using any editor you want. You then send the message to the recipient by specifying the recipient's address. You can also send the same message to several users at once. This is called broadcasting.

Sent messages are stored in electronic mailboxes until the recipient fetches them. To see if you have any mail, you may have to check your electronic mailbox periodically, although many systems alert you when mail is received. After reading your mail, you can store it in a text file, forward it to other users, or delete it. Copies of memos can be printed out on a printer if you want a paper copy.

All online services and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) offer e-mail, and most also support gateways so that you can exchange mail with users of other systems. Usually, it takes only a few seconds or minutes for mail to arrive at its destination. This is a particularly effective way to communicate with a group because you can broadcast a message or document to everyone in the group at once.

Although different e-mail systems use different formats, there are some emerging standards that are making it possible for users on all systems to exchange messages. In the PC world, an important e-mail standard is MAPI. The CCITT standards organization has developed the X.400 standard, which attempts to provide a universal way of addressing

messages. To date, though, the de facto addressing standard is the one used by the Internet system because almost all e-mail systems have an Internet gateway.

Another common spelling for e-mail is *email*.

Also see Why E-Mails Bounce and Getting Rid of Spam in the Did You Know section of Webopedia.

Presentation Software, Graphics, & Slide Shows

A type of business software that enables users to create highly stylized images for slide shows and reports. The software includes functions for creating various types of charts and graphs and for inserting text in a variety of fonts. Most systems enable you to import data from a spreadsheet application to create the charts and graphs.

Presentation graphics is often called *business graphics*.

Spreadsheets

A table of values arranged in rows and columns. Each value can have a predefined relationship to the other values. If you change one value, therefore, you may need to change other values as well.

Spreadsheet applications (sometimes referred to simply as *spreadsheets*) are computer programs that let you create and manipulate spreadsheets electronically. In a spreadsheet application, each value sits in a cell. You can define what type of data is in each cell and how different cells depend on one another. The relationships between cells are called formulas, and the names of the cells are called labels.

Once you have defined the cells and the formulas for linking them together, you can enter your data. You can then modify selected values to see how all the other values change accordingly. This enables you to study various what-if scenarios.

A simple example of a useful spreadsheet application is one that calculates mortgage payments for a house. You would define five cells:

- 1. total cost of the house
- 2. down payment
- 3. mortgage rate
- 4. mortgage term
- 5. monthly payment

Once you had defined how these cells depend on one another, you could enter numbers and play with various possibilities. For example, keeping all the other values the same, you could see how different mortgage rates would affect your monthly payments.

There are a number of spreadsheet applications on the market, Lotus 1-2-3 and Excel being among the most famous. The more powerful spreadsheet applications support graphics features that enable you to produce charts and graphs from the data.

Most spreadsheet applications are *multidimensional*, meaning that you can link one spreadsheet to another. A three-dimensional spreadsheet, for example, is like a stack of spreadsheets all connected by formulas. A

change made in one spreadsheet automatically affects other spreadsheets.

The Difference Between the Internet and the World Wide Web

Many people use the terms *Internet* and *World Wide Web* (a.k.a. *the Web*) interchangeably, but in fact the two terms are not synonymous. The Internet and the Web are two separate but related things.

The *Internet* is a massive network of networks, a networking infrastructure. It connects millions of computers together globally, forming a network in which any computer can communicate with any other computer as long as they are both connected to the Internet. Information that travels over the Internet does so via a variety of languages known as protocols.

The *World Wide Web*, or simply *Web*, is a way of accessing information over the medium of the Internet. It is an information-sharing model that is built on top of the Internet. The Web uses the HTTP protocol, only one of the languages spoken over the Internet, to transmit data. Web services, which use HTTP to allow applications to communicate in order to exchange business logic, use the the Web to share information. The Web also utilizes browsers, such as Internet Explorer or Netscape, to access Web documents called Web pages that are linked to each other via hyperlinks. Web documents also contain graphics, sounds, text and video.

The Web is just one of the ways that information can be disseminated over the Internet. The Internet, not the Web, is also used for e-mail, which relies on SMTP, Usenet news groups, instant messaging and FTP. So the Web is just a portion of the Internet, albeit a large portion, but the two terms are not synonymous and should not be confused.

Computereze

Computer & Internet

Terminology

<http://www.webopedia.com>

Compiled By

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What is a Computer?

A programmable machine. The two principal characteristics of a computer are:

- It responds to a specific set of instructions in a well-defined manner.
- It can execute a prerecorded list of instructions (a program).

Modern computers are electronic and digital. The actual machinery -- wires, transistors, and circuits -- is called hardware; the instructions and data are called software.

All general-purpose computers require the following hardware components:

- memory : Enables a computer to store, at least temporarily, data and programs.
- mass storage device : Allows a computer to permanently retain large amounts of data. Common mass storage devices include disk drives and tape drives.
- input device : Usually a keyboard and mouse, the input device is the conduit through which data and instructions enter a computer.
- output device : A display screen, printer, or other device that lets you see what the computer has accomplished.
- central processing unit (CPU): The heart of the computer, this is the component that actually executes instructions.

In addition to these components, many others make it possible for the basic components to work together efficiently. For example, every computer requires a bus that transmits data from one part of the computer to another.

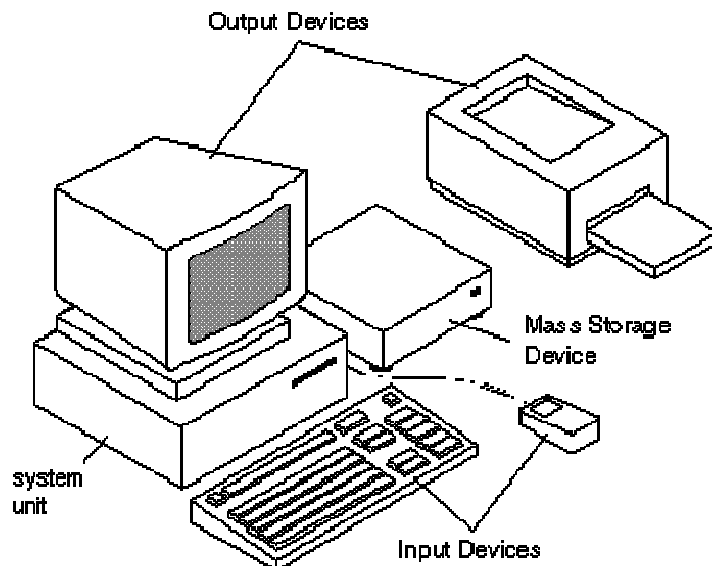
Computers can be generally classified by size and power as follows, though there is considerable overlap:

- personal computer : A small, single-user computer based on a microprocessor. In addition to the microprocessor, a personal

computer has a keyboard for entering data, a monitor for displaying information, and a storage device for saving data.

- workstation : A powerful, single-user computer. A workstation is like a personal computer, but it has a more powerful microprocessor and a higher-quality monitor.
- minicomputer : A multi-user computer capable of supporting from 10 to hundreds of users simultaneously.
- mainframe : A powerful multi-user computer capable of supporting many hundreds or thousands of users simultaneously.
- supercomputer : An extremely fast computer that can perform hundreds of millions of instructions per second.

Computer Block Diagram



Windows – (Microsoft Operating System)

A family of operating systems for personal computers. Windows dominates the personal computer world, running, by some estimates, on 90% of all personal computers. The remaining 10% are mostly Macintosh computers. Like the Macintosh operating environment, Windows provides a graphical user interface (GUI), virtual memory management, multitasking, and support for many peripheral devices.

Find out more about Your Windows System Registry in Webopedia's "Did You Know...?" section.

World Wide Web (WWW)

A **system of Internet servers** that **support** specially **formatted documents**. The **documents** are formatted in a markup language called **HTML** (*HyperText Markup Language*) that supports links to other documents, as well as **graphics**, audio, and video **files**. This means you can jump from one document to another simply by **clicking on hot spots**. Not all Internet servers are part of the World Wide Web.

There are several **applications** called **Web browsers** that make it easy to **access** the World Wide Web; Two of the most popular being **Netscape Navigator** and **Microsoft's Internet Explorer**.

World Wide Web is not synonymous with *the Internet*.

Also see **The Difference Between the Internet and the World Wide Web** in the **Did You Know . . . ?** section of Webopedia.