Glossary of Computer Terms

The following is an alphabetical listing of definitions of common computer terms.

Application Software

Programs that perform specific tasks for the computer user.

Example: Word Processing software is an example of an application software. It is allows the user to type documents such as letters, reports, memos and the like.

Binary

A number consisting only of the numerals zero (0) or one (1). All input to the computer is converted into binary numbers made up of the two digits, 0 and 1. For e**xamples:** When you press the 'K' key on your keyboard, the number 01001011 is generated and sent to the computer's memory as a series of pulses.

Bit

A zero (0) or one (1) as in a binary numeral. This is the smallest piece of information a computer handles. Eight bits make up a byte. A bit is also known as a **b**inary **di**git.

Boot

Starting or restarting a computer. When a computer is first turned on (a cold boot) or restarted (a warm boot), the computer loads the operating system into memory.

Byte

A unit of computer storage made up of 8 bits. A byte represents a single character on the keyboard.

CD-ROM (Compact disk read-only memory)

A compact disc that uses the same technology as audio CD. CD-ROMs can also contain text, graphics and video. It can be written on only once, so the information stored on it is read-only.

Central Processing Unit (CPU)

This is the part of the computer that interprets and executes the basic instructions that operate a computer. It is sometimes called the processor.

Device Driver

A computer program that links a peripheral device to the operating systems. This is also known as a Driver

Disk Drive

Peripheral storage device that reads and writes magnetic or optical disks. It may be a receptacle for disk cartridges, disk packs, or floppy disks. It may also contain non-removable disk platters like most PC hard drives

GUI (Graphical User Interface)

This is a graphics-based user interface that incorporates icons, pull-down menus and a mouse to control how users enter data and how information is displayed on the computer screen. GUI is pronounced Gooey.

Hard Drive

This is a high capacity magnetic storage medium that stores items electronically. Also known as the Hard Disk or C: Drive

Hardware

Electronic, electric and mechanical machinery and equipment that makes up the computer.

Icon

The stylized images which represent files, programs, folders or some other object and can be accessed with the mouse.

Interface

This is the connection and interaction between the computer hardware, software and the user.

Internet

A large network made up of a number of smaller networks that links millions of business, governments, educational institutions and individual worldwide.

Memory

This is a temporary storage place for data and programs. This determines the size and number of programs that can be run at the same time, as well as the amount of data that can be processed instantly. This is also called primary storage.

Modem

This is a communication device that connects a terminal or computer to a telephone line or cable and allows computers in different places locally or internationally to communicate with each other. A modem is also known as **MO**dulator-**DEM**odulator

Operating System

A set of programs that runs the computer. This is the first program that loads when the computer is turned on and it's main part resides in the memory as long as the computer is turned on. It is this system that sets the standards for the application programs that run in it.

Peripheral

Any hardware device connected to a computer that include monitors, keyboards, printers, disk or tape drives, scanners, mice (more than one mouse), etc.

Power Supply

A component in the computer's system unit that provides the electric power to all the devices that need it.

Program

This is a set of instructions that tell the computer what to do.

Random Access Memory (RAM)

This is the memory that can be read from or written to by processor to process the data.

Read Only Memory (ROM)

This is memory can only be read and cannot be erased or written over.

Software

These are instructions that tell the computer how to perform tasks. The word is used interchangeable with the word program(s).

System Unit

This is the box like case that protects the internal parts of the computer from damage.

World Wide Web (WWW)

The largest collection of electronic documents that is worldwide in its reach. The Web is an Internet facility that has become synonymous with the Internet.