

Computer Basics

Glossary

Bit or byte: A bit is a unit of information expressed as either a 0 or 1 in binary notation. A byte is a group binary digits or bits (usually eight) operated on as a unit. They are the basis of expressing data size of a computer.

Megabyte =one million bytes.

Gigabyte = one billion bytes.

Boot (and Reboot): The process of starting (or restarting) a computer and putting it into a state of readiness for operation.

CD Drive: A disc drive on a computer that reads CDs (both CDs of programs and data and music CDs). Many CD drives are also capable of writing to blank CDs (writing to a CD is often called “burning”).

CD-ROM (Compact Disc - Read Only Memory): A CD used to hold computer programs and data. A CD-ROM can only be read; no new data may be written to it.

CD-R (Compact Disc – Recordable): A CD used to hold programs and data that can be written to once.

CD-RW (Compact Disc – ReWriteable): A CD used to hold programs and data that can be written to multiple times.

Computer: The box that holds the “guts” of the PC (personal computer); also called CPU, central processing unit, or the tower.

Click: The act of pressing a mouse button. There are two sides, left and right.



Right click - Display a menu

Left click - Select something

Double click - Select and open, Double clicking is always done with the left button

Left click and hold down – Drag or highlight an item.

Cursor: Movable indicator on a computer screen identifying the point that will be affected by input from the user, for example showing where typed text will be inserted. See also **Mouse pointer**.

Desktop computer: A computer with separate monitor, keyboard, and mouse. As opposed to a **laptop**.

Drag: To move an icon or other image across a computer screen using the mouse.

Drop-down Menu: A menu that appears below a menu title when the menu title is selected.

File: A individual item (such as a document or program) stored in a computer's memory. Files are arranged within **folders** creating a structure analogous to a physical filing cabinet.

Flash drive: A data storage device designed to fit a **USB port**. A flash drive offers more memory than a **CD** or a **floppy disc**. Also called jump drives, zip drives, USB drives, or memory sticks.

Floppy disk: A flexible, removable, magnetic disk, typically encased in hard plastic, used for storing data. Floppy discs are largely obsolete as other media such as **CDs** or **flash drives** offer more memory.

Hard drive: A rigid non-removable magnetic disk with a large data storage capacity. A computer's hard drive contains its **operating system** and most programs and permanent data. Most hard disk drives are measured in gigabytes and megabytes.

Hyperlink (or link): Text or graphics that, when clicked, take you to a different Web page. The mouse pointer changes to a hand when over a link.

Icon: A symbol or pictogram used to label or represent a computer function.

Keyboard: Similar to the keys of a typewriter, a keyboard is one of two basic computer interface tools (along with the **mouse**).



Laptop: A portable computer in which the monitor, keyboard and mouse are built into a single unit. As opposed to a **desktop computer**.

Menu bar: A list of related commands or options, located at the top the window.

Microsoft Word 2000



Microsoft Word 2007



Monitor: The screen on which the computer displays visual information.



Mouse: A device used to control the **mouse pointer** in order to select and manipulate items on the screen. One of the two basic computer interface tools (along with the **keyboard**).

Mouse pointer: The virtual analog to the **mouse**. It can be an arrow, an **"I"** or a hand. Often an hourglass will appear while the computer is working. See also **Cursor**.



Operating System: The fundamental program on any computer, the operating system organizes files and information, controls peripherals such as monitors or keyboards, and allows other programs to function. Windows is the operating system on all the library's computers.

Peripherals: Equipment such as a printer, speakers, microphones that are not necessary for basic computer functions but add to what your computer can do. These might or might not come with your computer when you buy it, but your computer does come with **ports** to connect peripherals.

Ports: Connection points to allow the user to connect hardware to the computer. Some ports (such as a **USB port**) are designed for many types of hardware while others (like a monitor port) are designed for a specific item.

RAM (Random Access Memory): Short term memory for the computer. Programs are held in RAM while running. Adding more RAM will generally make a computer run more quickly.

ROM (Read Only Memory): ROM is a type of unchangeable memory residing in chips on your motherboard. It's used for critical functions and can't be removed or added to. Part of the Operating System is built into ROM.

Scrolling—The action of moving displayed text or graphics up or down, or left to right on a computer screen in order to view different parts of them.



Start Button: Located in the lower left corner of the screen on any computer running Microsoft Windows, the Start Menu opens a menu that will provide access to most programs and functions.

USB (Universal Serial Bus) Port: A port designed to be usable with a variety of peripherals. USB plugs can be found on keyboards, mice, digital cameras, mp3 players, flash drives, and many other peripherals.

Window: A framed area on the monitor containing visual information. Separate programs or documents open in separate windows allowing the user to have two or more tasks running at the same time.

Word processor: A program for storing, manipulating, and formatting text on a computer. Microsoft's Word is one of the most popular word processing programs.