

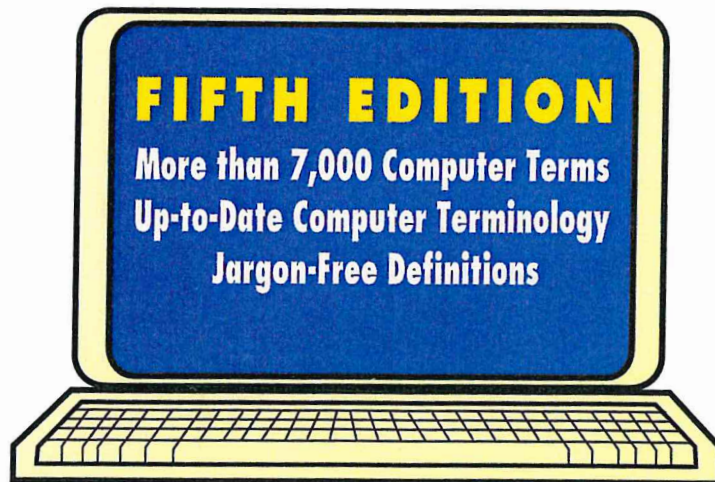
Webster's
New World

Dictionary of Computer Terms

Macmillan

Webster's New World Dictionary[®] — of — Computer Terms

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Webster's

**NEW WORLD
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**OF
COMPUTER
TERMS**

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**NEW WORLD
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FIFTH EDITION

Compiled by
Donald Spencer

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is held stationary while animated images are moved over the painting, producing the illusion of movement. Animation programs that perform cell animation are available.

cell contents The label, value, formula, or function contained in a SPREADSHEET cell.

cell definition In ELECTRONIC SPREADSHEETS, the contents of a cell.

cell format The way a spreadsheet program displays the contents of cells on the display screen.

cell pointer A special cursor that designates the cells into which information is entered in an electronic spreadsheet.

centering The WORD PROCESSING and PAGE LAYOUT PROGRAM feature that places a line of text midway between the left and right margins.

center of perspective The position at which an image subtends the same angle to the viewer as the object subtended to the camera (in photography) or to the "synthetic camera" (in computer graphics).

centimeter One-hundredth of a meter (0.39 inch).

centralized data processing The concept by which a company has all its computing equipment located at the same site and field-office operations have no effective data processing capability. Contrast with DISTRIBUTED COMPUTING.

centralized network configuration The structure of a computer network whose dominating feature is a central computer that, one way or another, is involved in everything that happens in the system.

centralized system A processing system with a single database that users access from terminals.

central processing unit (CPU) The major component of a computer system with the circuitry to control the interpretation and execution of instructions.

central processor A processor that contains the sequencing and process-

discrete Pertaining to distinct elements or to representation by means of distinct elements, such as characters or bits.

discrete component An electrical component that contains only one function, as opposed to an integrated circuit.

disk A magnetic device for storing information and programs accessible by a computer. Can be either a rigid platter (HARD DISK) or a sheet of flexible plastic (FLOPPY DISK). Disks have tracks where data is stored.

disk access time The time required to locate a specific track on a disk. Also called seek time. Part of total access time.

disk buffer The area of a computer's memory set aside to hold information not yet written to disk.

disk cache A section of random access memory (RAM) set aside by the operating system to store frequently accessed data and program instructions.

disk cartridge A removable hard disk enclosed in a protective case. Disk cartridges are used by certain types of hard disk drives.

disk controller card A peripheral circuit card that connects disk drives to a computer and controls their operation.

disk commands DOS commands that must be accessed from the DOS disk.

DISKCOMP A DOS and OS/2 command that compares two disks to see if the information they contain is identical.

DISKCOPY A DOS and OS/2 command that copies the entire contents of one disk to another.

disk copying The process of transferring the entire contents of one disk to another.

disk crash The condition of a disk unit that makes it unusable. Usually caused by contact between the read/write head of the disk drive and the surface of the disk.

— K —

K (1) An abbreviation for kilo, or 1,000 in decimal notation. For example, 100K cps means a reading speed of 100,000 characters per second. (2) Loosely, when referring to storage capacity, 2^{10} ; in decimal notation, 1,024. The expression 8K represents 8,192 ($8 \times 1,024$).

kb Abbreviation for KILOBYTE.

kc One thousand characters per second. Used to express the rate of data transfer operations.

kermit A file transfer protocol used for more error-free modem communications.

kernel A set of programs in an OPERATING SYSTEM that implement the most primitive of that system's functions; the core of an operating system.

keyning Adjusting the space between characters to create wider or tighter spacing; the reduction of excess white space between specific letter pairs.

key (1) The control field or fields that identify a record. See PRIMARY KEY. (2) The field that determines the position of a record in a sorted sequence. See MAJOR SORT KEY and MINOR SORT KEY. (3) A lever on a manually operated machine, such as a typewriter or visual display keyboard. (4) To enter data into a system by means of a KEYBOARD.

key abstraction In OBJECT-ORIENTED PROGRAMMING, a class or object that forms part of the vocabulary of the problem domain.

key assignments Functions that a computer program assigns to specific keys.

keyboard An input device used to key programs and data into a computer's storage. Since the keyboard is the most frequently used part of the computer, a good keyboard is an essential part of any computer system intended for business purposes.

keyboarding The process of entering programs and data into input media or directly into the computer by typing on a keyboard.

mega A prefix indicating one million, or 10^6 . Abbreviated M. Contrast with MICRO, one-millionth.

MEGA A personal computer series from Atari Corporation that is compatible with the Atari ST series of microcomputers.

megabit Loosely, one million bits or one thousand kilobits. Actually, 1,048,576 bits, or 1,024 kilobits.

megabyte (MB) Specifically, 2^{20} , or 1,048,576 bytes; 1,024 kilobytes. Roughly, one million bytes or one thousand kilobytes.

megacycle One million cycles per second.

megaflop One million floating-point operations per second. Also called Mflops.

megahertz (MHz) A unit of electrical frequency equal to one million cycles per second, a measure of transmission frequency. Megahertz is used to measure a CPU's clock rate.

megapal display In computer graphics, a display system that handles a million or more pixels. A resolution of 1,000 lines by 1,000 dots per line requires a million pixels for a full-screen image.

member object In OBJECT-ORIENTED PROGRAMMING, a repository for part of the state of an object; collectively, the member objects of an object constitute its structure. The terms FIELD, INSTANCE VARIABLE, *member object*, and SLOT are interchangeable.

membrane keyboard A keyboard constructed of two thin plastic sheets (called membranes) that are coated with a circuit made of electrically conductive ink. The keyboard is sensitive to touch. It is an economical, flat type used in several early microcomputers. Today, such keyboards are used primarily on printers.

memory Storage facilities of the computer, capable of storing vast amounts of data.

memory allocation See STORAGE ALLOCATION.

open-ended Capable of accepting the addition of new programs, instructions, subroutines, modifications, terms, or classifications without disturbing the original system.

open file A file that can be accessed for reading, writing, or possibly both. Contrast with CLOSED FILE.

open prepress interface Developed by the Aldus Corporation, a system for automating the placement of color photographs, usually when sending desktop files to a high-end system.

open shop The operation of a computer facility in which most productive problem programming is performed by each problem originator rather than by a group of programming specialists. Contrast with CLOSED SHOP.

open subroutine A subroutine inserted into a routine at each place it is used. Contrast with CLOSED SUBROUTINE.

open system A vendor-independent system that is designed to interconnect with a variety of products that are commonly available.

operand The data unit or equipment item that is operated upon. Usually identified by an address in an instruction. For example, in "ADD 100 TO 400," 100 and 400 are operands. See OPERATION CODE.

operating environment (1) The environment in which programs are executed; for example, an IBM PS/2 computer for DOS or WINDOWS, or an Apple Macintosh computer for SYSTEM 7. (2) A PROGRAM that overlays the OPERATING SYSTEM to allow a menu-driven operating system, multitasking, or the use of windows.

operating ratio See AVAILABILITY.

operating system (OS) The master set of programs that manage the computer. Among other things, an operating system controls input and output to and from the keyboard, screen, disks, and other peripheral devices; loads and begins the execution of other programs; manages the storage of data on disks; and provides scheduling and accounting services.

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This Best-Selling Guide to Computer Terms Just Got Better!

The language of computing, like computers themselves, is changing at top speed—and if you want to know all the latest terms, this acclaimed guide is just what you need! Specially created by Webster's New World™, the leading name in American reference, it lists, defines, and explains all the words you'll encounter as you set off down the information superhighway. You'll find:

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