Computer Terminology

Types of Devices

Desktop Computer: a computer that is designed to stay in a single location.

Laptop: also known as notebook; portable computers that you can take with you and use in different environments.

Smartphone: a mobile phone that includes advanced functionality beyond making phone calls and sending text messages. Most smartphones have the capability to display photos, play videos, check and send e-mail, and surf the Web.

Tablet: a portable computer that uses a touchscreen as its primary input device. Most tablets are slightly smaller and weigh less than the average laptop. Examples: Ipad, Kindle Fire

What Are the Main Components of a Computer?

Mouse: A mouse is a small device that a computer user pushes across a desk surface in order to point to a place on a display screen and to select one or more actions to take on a computer. A mouse is not required for a laptop or tablet.

Keyboard: A device that can be used to insert data into a computer; a typewriter-style device, which uses an arrangement of buttons or keys.

Monitor: A display screen used to provide visual output from a computer.

Hardware: The physical parts of a computer and related devices. Internal hardware devices include motherboards, hard drives, and RAM. External hardware devices include monitors, keyboards, mice, printers, and scanners.

Software: A general term that describes computer programs. It is "virtual," not physical like computer hardware.

Operating System: Every desktop computer, tablet, and smartphone includes an operating system that provides basic functionality for the device. Common desktop operating systems include Windows, Mac OS X, and Linux.

Hard Drive: The hard drive is what stores all your data. It houses the hard disk, where all your files and folders are physically located.

What do you see when you turn on the computer?

Desktop: the primary user interface of a computer.

Taskbar: (Windows) The bar that spans the bottom of the screen and contains the Start button on the left side. The task bar also includes the current time on the far right side and can hold shortcuts to programs directly to the right of the Start button.

Dock: (Mac) The Dock is a feature of the Macintosh operating system. It is a virtual tray of icons that provides fast, one-click access to commonly used programs and files.

Cursor: Where your mouse pointer is (the "arrow") or where the next character typed will be entered in a line of text (the "blinking line")

Icons: the way we view files on computers. An icon on your computer screen represents an object or a program on your hard drive.

Apps: App is short for "application," which is the same thing as a software program. It is most often used to describe programs for mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets.

File: a collection of data stored in one unit, identified by a filename. It can be a document, picture, audio or video stream, data library, application, or other collection of data. Examples: Text documents (Word documents, PDF) Photos (JPG, JPEG), Music (MP3)

Other common terms

Log in (or on): To go through the procedures to begin use of a computer, database, or system. Typically, logging in requires a username and password.

Username: an identification used by a person with access to a computer, network, or online service.

Password: a secret string of characters (letters, numbers, symbols) that allows access to a computer, interface, or system

External Hard Drive: If the internal hard drive becomes full or if the user wants to backup the data on the internal hard drive, and external hard drive may be used.

Flash Drive: Also called jump drives, thumb drives, pen drives, and USB keychain drives. Regardless of what you call them, they all refer to the same thing, which is a small data storage device

USB: USB is the most common type of computer port used in today's computers. It can be used to connect keyboards, mice, game controllers, printers, scanners, digital cameras, and removable media drives, just to name a few.

Upload: sending a file from your computer to another system.

Download: may refer to either a file that is retrieved from the Internet or the process of downloading a file. Downloading is the opposite of uploading.

Streaming: Data streaming, commonly seen in the forms of audio and video streaming, is when a multimedia file can be played back without being completely downloaded first.

Things that can harm your computer

Virus: Like a biological virus, a computer virus is something you don't want to get. Computer viruses are small programs or scripts that can negatively affect the health of your computer. These malicious little programs can create files, move files, erase files, consume your computer's memory, and cause your computer not to function correctly.

Malware: Short for "malicious software," malware refers to software programs designed to damage or do other unwanted actions on a computer system. Common examples of malware include viruses, worms, trojan horses, and spyware.

Spyware: this is software that "spies" on your computer. Nobody likes to be spied on, and your computer doesn't like it either. Spyware can capture information like Web browsing habits, email messages, usernames and passwords, and credit card information.

Internet Terminology

Internet: The Internet is a global wide area network that connects computer systems across the world. In order to connect to the Internet, you must have access to an Internet service provider (ISP), which acts the middleman between you and the Internet.

Wifi: (wireless internet) Wi-Fi is a wireless networking technology that allows computers and other devices to communicate over a wireless signal.

Browser: an application used to access and view websites. Common web browsers include Microsoft Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, and Apple Safari.

ISP: Stands for "Internet Service Provider." In order to connect to the Internet, you need an ISP. It is the company that you (or your parents) pay a monthly fee to in order to use the Internet.

URL: A URL is the address of a specific Web site or file on the Internet. Stands for "Uniform Resource Locator."

Website: A website, or Web site, is not the same thing as a Web page. Though the two terms are often used interchangeably, they should not be. So what's the difference? To put it simply, a Web site is a collection of Web pages. Example: Amazon.com

Web Page: Web pages are what make up the World Wide Web.

Email: Email, short for "electronic mail," is one of the most widely used features of the Internet, along with the web. It allows you to send and receive messages to and from anyone with an email address, anywhere in the world.

Search Engine: Search engines index millions of sites on the Web, so that Web surfers like you and me can easily find websites with the information we want. By creating indexes, or large databases of Web sites (based on titles, keywords, and the text in the pages), search engines can locate relevant Web sites when users enter search terms or phrases. Example: Google

Address Bar: An address bar is a text field near the top of a Web browser window that displays the URL of the current webpage. The URL, or web address, reflects the address of the current page and automatically changes whenever you visit a new webpage.

Online: the term "online" usually means being connected to the Internet.

Link: When you are browsing the Web and you see a highlighted and underlined word or phrase on a page, there is a good chance you are looking at a link. By clicking on a link, you can "jump" to a new Web page or a completely different Web site. While text links are typically blue and underlined, they can be any color and don't have to be underlined.

Blog: Short for "Web Log," this term refers to a list of journal entries posted on a Web page. Anybody who knows how to create and publish a Web page can publish their own blog.

The Cloud: The cloud may be used to describe specific online services, which are collectively labeled "cloud computing." Examples: online storage (Google Drive), email. If you save something in cloud storage, it can be accessed from any computer with internet access.

Social Media: a collection of Internet-based communities that allow users to interact with each other online. The term is most often used to describe popular social networking websites, which include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn.

Wiki: A wiki is a website that allows users to add and update content on the site using their own Web browser. A great example of a large wiki is the Wikipedia, a free encyclopedia in many languages that anyone can edit.

User Profile: A visual display of personal data associated with a specific user. A profile refers to the digital representation of a person's identity.

Facebook: A social networking website that is open to anyone 13 years of age or older. Facebook users can create and customize their own profiles with photos, videos, and information about themselves. Friends can browse the profiles of other friends and write messages on their pages.

Twitter: A social networking service that allows you to share updates with other users by answering one simple question: "What are you doing?" Twitter limits each "tweet", or post, to 140 characters, which means there is no room for rambling.

Instagram: An online photo sharing service.

LinkedIn: A social networking website designed for business professionals. It allows you to share work-related information with other users and keep an online list of professional contacts.

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