

Microsoft

OVER
10,000
ENTRIES

Microsoft

Computer Dictionary

Fifth Edition

- *Fully updated with the latest technologies, terms, and acronyms*
- *Easy to read, expertly illustrated*
- *Definitive coverage of hardware, software, the Internet, and more!*



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Introduction

The *Microsoft Computer Dictionary, Fifth Edition* is designed to be a comprehensive and authoritative source of definitions for computer-related terms and abbreviations. The dictionary includes terms drawn from a wide variety of topics relevant to computer users, including software, hardware, networking, data storage, graphics, games, information processing, the Internet and the World Wide Web, gaming, history, jargon and slang, organizations, programming, and standards.

Although this book covers nearly every aspect of computing, it does not include entries on most companies or on most makes and models of computers, nor does it contain entries on most application software products. The few exceptions to this rule of thumb are key companies and products that have a historical or universal importance within the computing industry.

This dictionary emphasizes terminology that the average computer user will encounter in documentation, online help, computer manuals, marketing and sales materials, the popular media, and the computer trade press. Because most computer users operate personal computers and desktop systems at home, work, or both, the majority of the entries in this dictionary cover the terminology used in describing and working with these systems. However, some specialized or highly technical language is included that pertains to areas of industry, academia, software and hardware development, and research. These terms have been included because they have a bearing on more common computer terminology or because they are of historical significance.

Changes in the Fifth Edition

The fifth edition of the *Microsoft Computer Dictionary* has been revised and expanded to include over 10,000 entries, reflecting the many advances in the computer field and

including several areas that have come into prominence in the public eye, such as networking, Web authoring, and new technologies, such as .NET. The content from the Year 2000 appendix has been integrated into the body of the dictionary and a new appendix on emoticons and instant messaging symbols has been added.

Order of Presentation

Entries are alphabetized by letter. Spaces are ignored, as are characters such as hyphens and slashes; for example, *Baud-dot code* falls between *baud* and *baud rate*, and *machine-independent* falls between *machine identification* and *machine instruction*. Numbers and symbols are located at the beginning of the book and are listed in ascending ASCII order. If an entry begins with a letter or letters but contains a number, it is listed alphabetically, according to the initial letter(s), and then according to ASCII order. Thus, V20 precedes V.2x, and both precede VAB.

Entries

Entries are of two types: main entries, which contain full definitions, and synonymous cross-references, which contain *See* references to the appropriate main entries. Synonymous cross-references are generally secondary or less common ways of referring to a main entry. The definition at the main entry can be substituted as a definition for the synonymous cross-reference.

Format

Information in each main entry is presented in a consistent format: entry name in boldface, spelling variants (if any), part of speech, definition, illustration or table reference (if any), acronym (if any), alternative names (if any), and cross-references (if any).

Main Entries

Entries that are acronyms or abbreviations for one or more words or concatenations of two or more words have those words spelled out at the beginning of the definition. The letters in these words or phrases that make up the acronym, abbreviation, or concatenation are in boldface.

When a main entry is spelled exactly the same as another main entry, the two entries are differentiated by the use of a superscript numeral after each term. These entries are called homographs, and they are generally different parts of speech. For example,

e-mail¹ (*noun*)

e-mail² (*verb*)

Spelling Variants

When a main entry has one or more variations in the way it is spelled, each spelling variant follows the main entry, after the word *or*.

Parts of Speech

Entries are broken down into four parts of speech, in addition to prefixes, abbreviated as follows:

n. noun

vb. verb

adj. adjective

adv. adverb

Definitions

Each of the more than 10,000 entries is written in clear, standard English. Many go beyond a simple definition to provide additional detail and to put the term in context for a typical computer user. When an entry has more than one sense or definition, the definitions are presented in a numbered list, to make it easier to distinguish the particular, sometimes subtle, variations in meaning.

Illustration and Table References

Some entries have affiliated illustrations or tables that aid in defining the entry. In most cases, illustrations and tables appear on the same page as the entries to which they apply.

In some instances, however, page layout requirements have forced them to a subsequent page. Entries with illustrations or tables usually have references at the end of the definition for an entry, in the following formats:

See the illustration.

See the table.

Acronyms

Some terminology in the computer field, particularly computer standards and Internet slang, can be shortened to form acronyms. Sometimes the acronym is the more common way to refer to the concept or object; in these cases, the acronym is the main entry. In other cases, the acronym is not as commonly used as the words or phrase for which it stands. In these cases, the words or phrase constitute the main entry. The acronym is given after the definition for these entries in the following format:

Acronym:

Alternative Names

Some items or concepts in the computer field can be referred to by more than one name. Generally, though, one way is preferred. The preferred terminology is the main entry. Alternative names are listed after any acronyms; otherwise they are listed after the definition in the following format:

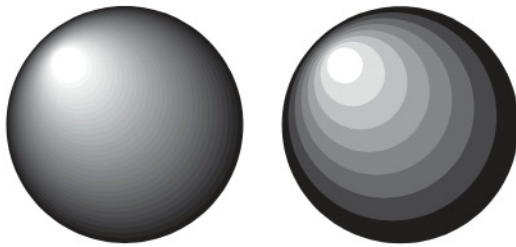
Also called:

Cross-References

Cross-references are of three types: *See*, *See also*, and *Compare*. A *See* reference is used in an entry that is a synonymous cross-reference and simply points to another entry that contains the information sought. A *See also* reference points to one or more entries that contain additional or supplemental information about a topic and follows any acronyms or alternative names after the definition. A *Compare* reference points to an entry or entries that offer contrast and follows any *See also* references; otherwise it follows any acronyms or alternative names after the definition.

Future Printings and Editions

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of this book. If you find an error, think that an entry does not contain enough information, or seek an entry that does not appear in this edition, please let us know. Address your letter to: Dictionary Editor, Microsoft Press, One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052-6399. Or send e-mail to mspcd@microsoft.com.

**Contouring.**

contrast *n.* **1.** The degree of difference between light and dark extremes of color on a monitor or on printed output. **2.** The control knob by which the contrast of a monitor is changed.

control *n.* **1.** Management of a computer and its processing abilities so as to maintain order as tasks and activities are carried out. Control applies to measures designed to ensure error-free actions carried out at the right time and in the right order relative to other data-handling or hardware-based activities. In reference to hardware, control of system operations can reside in a data pathway called a *control bus*. In reference to software, *control* refers to program instructions that manage data-handling tasks. **2.** In a graphical user interface, an object on the screen that can be manipulated by the user to perform an action. The most common controls are buttons, which allow the user to select options, and scroll bars, which allow the user to move through a document or position text in a window.

control break *n.* A transition in control of the computer that typically gives control of the CPU (central processing unit) to the user console or to some other program.

Control-Break *n.* See Break key.

control bus *n.* The set of lines (conductors) within a computer that carry control signals between the CPU (central processing unit) and other devices. For example, a control bus line is used to indicate whether the CPU is attempting to read from memory or to write to it; another control bus line is used by memory to request an interrupt in case of a memory error.

control character *n.* **1.** Any of the first 32 characters in the ASCII character set (0 through 31 in decimal representation), each of which is defined as having a standard control function, such as carriage return, linefeed, or backspace. **2.** Any of the 26 characters Control-A through Control-Z (1 through 26 in decimal representation) that can be typed

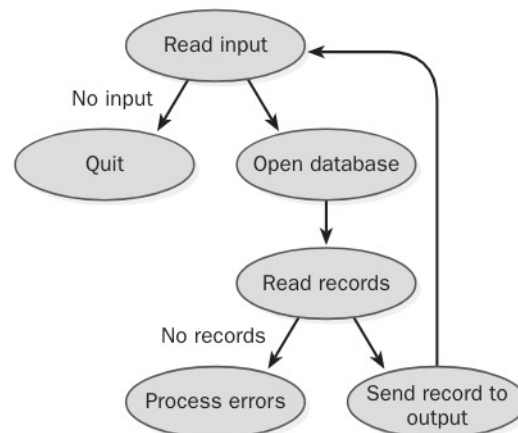
at the keyboard by holding the Control key down and typing the appropriate letter. The six remaining characters with control functions, such as Escape (ASCII 27), cannot be typed using the Control key. *Compare* control code.

control code *n.* One or more nonprinting characters used by a computer program to control the actions of a device, used in printing, communications, and management of display screens. Control codes are mainly employed by programmers or by users to control a printer when an application program does not support the printer or one of its specialized features. In video, control codes are sent from a computer to a display unit to manipulate the appearance of text or a cursor on the screen. Popular video control code sets are ANSI and VT-100. *Also called:* escape sequence, setup string. *See also* control character.

control console *n.* See console.

control data *n.* Data that consists of information about timing and switching, used to synchronize and route other data or to manage the operation of a device such as a bus or a port.

control flow *n.* The tracing of all possible execution paths in a program, often represented in the form of a diagram. See the illustration.

**Control flow.**

Control key *n.* A key that, when pressed in combination with another key, gives the other key an alternative meaning. In many application programs, Control (labeled CTRL or Ctrl on a PC keyboard) plus another key is used as a command for special functions. See the illustration. *See also* control character (definition 2).

C