

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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Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Changes in the Fifth Edition</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Order of Presentation</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Entries</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Future Printings and Editions</i>	<i>ix</i>

Dictionary of Computer Terms 1

Appendix A:

Common Character Sets	587
ANSI Character Set	587
Apple Macintosh Extended Character Set	593
IBM Extended Character Set	597
EBCDIC Character Set	599

Appendix B:

Common File Extensions	605
------------------------------	-----

Appendix C:

Instant Messaging Emoticons and Acronyms	613
--	-----

Appendix D:

Internet Domains	623
------------------------	-----

Appendix E:

Numeric Equivalents	631
---------------------------	-----

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, *Baudot 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.

domain slamming *n.* The practice of transferring ownership of domain names from one customer to another without the permission of the first customer.

Domino *n.* See Lotus Domino.

dongle *n.* 1. See hardware key. 2. An adapter device or cable enabling a nonstandard interface between a computer and a peripheral device or between two disparate items of computer hardware.

do-nothing instruction *n.* See no-operation instruction.

doorway page *n.* A Web page that functions as a doorway into a Web site. Usually a doorway page contains keywords, which Internet search engines seek when they scan the Internet. Placing the correct keywords on a doorway page can increase the number of viewers visiting a site.

dopant *n.* An impurity that is added in small quantities to semiconductor material during the manufacture of diodes, transistors, and integrated circuits. The resistance of a semiconductor falls between the resistance of a conductor and the resistance of an insulator (hence its name); dopants are added to the semiconductor to increase its conductivity. The type and amount of dopant determine whether the semiconductor will be N-type (in which current is conducted by free electrons) or P-type (in which current is conducted by electron vacancies, called *holes*). Common dopants include arsenic, antimony, bismuth, and phosphorus. See also N-type semiconductor, P-type semiconductor.

DoS *n.* Acronym for denial of service attack. A computerized assault, usually planned, that seeks to disrupt Web access. A denial of service attack can occur in a number of forms. The most common form of attack is to overwhelm an Internet server with connection requests that cannot be completed. This causes the server to become so busy attempting to respond to the attack that it ignores legitimate requests for connections. One example of this type of attack, known as a SYN flood, inundates the server's entry ports with false connection messages. Another, known as the Ping of Death, sends a ping command with an oversized IP packet that causes the server to freeze, crash, or restart. Other forms of denial of service attacks include the destruction or alteration of a server's configuration data, such as router information; unauthorized access to physical components of a system; and the sending of large or invalid data that causes a system to crash or freeze. See also packet, Ping of Death, SYN flood.

DOS *n.* 1. Acronym for disk operating system. A generic term describing any operating system that is loaded from disk devices when the system is started or rebooted. The term originally differentiated between disk-based systems and primitive microcomputer operating systems that were memory-based or that supported only magnetic or paper tape. 2. See MS-DOS.

DOS box *n.* 1. An OS/2 process that supports the execution of MS-DOS programs. Also called: compatibility box. 2. A computer that uses the MS-DOS or PC-DOS operating system, as opposed to one that runs some other operating system, such as UNIX.

DOS extender *n.* A program designed to extend the 640 KB of conventional memory available for use by DOS and DOS-based applications. A DOS extender works by claiming a portion of reserved memory (memory used by other parts of the system, such as the video adapter, the ROM BIOS, and the I/O ports).

DOS prompt *n.* The visual indication from the MS-DOS command processor that the operating system is ready to accept a new command. The default DOS prompt is a path followed by a greater-than sign (for example, C:>); the user can also design a custom prompt with the PROMPT command.

DOS Protected Mode Interface *n.* A software interface, originally developed for Microsoft Windows version 3, that enables MS-DOS-based application programs to run in the protected mode built into 80286 and later microprocessors. In protected mode, the microprocessor can support multitasking and use of memory beyond 1 MB—capabilities otherwise unavailable to programs designed to run under MS-DOS. See also protected mode, real mode, Virtual Control Program Interface.

dot *n.* 1. In the UNIX, MS-DOS, OS/2, and other operating systems, the character that separates a filename from an extension as in TEXT.DOC (pronounced “text-dot-doc”). 2. In computer graphics and printing, a small spot combined with others in a matrix of rows and columns to form a character or a graphic element in a drawing or design. The dots forming an image on the screen are called pixels. The resolution of a display or printing device is often expressed in dots per inch (dpi). Dots are not the same as spots, which are groups of dots used in the halftoning process. See also pixel, resolution (definition 1). Compare spot. 3. In an Internet address, the character that separates the different parts of the domain name, such as

D

dedicated to that data, and it cannot be reprogrammed. *See also* EEPROM, EPROM, ROM (definition 2).

PROM blaster *n.* *See* PROM programmer.

PROM blower *n.* *See* PROM programmer.

promiscuous-mode transfer *n.* In network communications, a transfer of data in which a node accepts all packets regardless of their destination address.

PROM programmer *n.* A hardware device that records instructions or data on a PROM (programmable read-only memory) chip or an EPROM (erasable programmable read-only memory) chip. *Also called:* PROM blaster, PROM blower. *See also* EPROM, PROM.

prompt *n.* 1. In command-driven systems, one or more symbols that indicate where users are to enter commands. For instance, in MS-DOS, the prompt is generally a drive letter followed by a greater than symbol (C>). In UNIX, it is usually %. *See also* command-driven system, DOS prompt. 2. Displayed text indicating that a computer program is waiting for input from the user.

propagated error *n.* An error used as input to another operation, thus producing another error.

propagation *n.* Travel of a signal, such as an Internet packet, from its source to one or more destinations. Propagation of messages over different paths with different lengths can cause messages to appear at a user's computer with varying delivery times. *See also* propagation delay.

propagation delay *n.* The time needed by a communications signal to travel between two points; in satellite links, a noticeable delay of between one-quarter second and one-half second, caused by the signal traveling through space.

propeller head *n.* Slang for a person who is obsessed with computers or other technology; a geek. The name refers to a child's beanie cap topped by a spinning propeller.

property *n.* In Windows 9x, a characteristic or parameter of an object or device. Properties of a file, for example, include type, size, and creation date and can be identified by accessing the file's property sheet. *See also* property sheet.

property sheet *n.* A type of dialog box in Windows 9x, accessed by choosing Properties in the File menu or by right-clicking on an object and selecting Properties, that lists the attributes or settings of an object such as a file, application, or hardware device. A property sheet presents the user with a tabbed, index-card-like selection of prop-

erty pages, each of which features standard dialog-style controls for customizing parameters.

proportional font *n.* A set of characters in a particular style and size in which a variable amount of horizontal space is allotted to each letter or number. In a proportional font, the letter *i*, for example, is allowed less space than the letter *m*. *Compare* monospace font.

proportional spacing *n.* A form of character spacing in which the horizontal space each character occupies is proportional to the width of the character. The letter *w*, for example, takes up more space than the letter *i*. *Compare* monospacing.

proprietary *adj.* Of, pertaining to, or characteristic of something that is privately owned. Generally, the term refers to technology that has been developed by a particular corporation or entity, with specifications that are considered by the owner to be trade secrets. Proprietary technology may be legally used only by a person or entity purchasing an explicit license. Also, other companies are unable to duplicate the technology, both legally and because its specifications have not been divulged by the owner. *Compare* public domain.

proprietary software *n.* A program owned or copyrighted by an individual or a business and available for use only through purchase or by permission of the owner. *Compare* open source, public-domain software.

protected *n.* A keyword in a programming language (such as Java or C++) used in a method or variable declaration. It signifies that the method or variable can be accessed only by elements residing in its class, subclasses, or classes in the same package. *See also* class, declaration, method, package, variable.

protected mode *n.* An operating mode of the Intel 80286 and higher microprocessors that supports larger address spaces and more advanced features than real mode. When started in protected mode, these CPUs provide hardware support for multitasking, data security, and virtual memory. The Windows (version 3.0 and later) and OS/2 operating systems run in protected mode, as do most versions of UNIX for these microprocessors. *Compare* real mode.

protocol *n.* *See* communications protocol.

protocol analyzer *n.* A management tool designed to identify and diagnose computer network problems. A protocol analyzer looks at LAN (local area network) or WAN (wide area network) traffic and finds protocol errors, connection delays, and other network faults. The protocol

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