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Computer Dictionary

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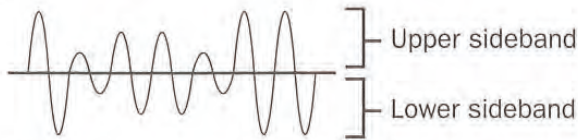
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Sideband.

sidebar *n.* A block of text placed to the side of the main body of text in a document, often set off by a border or other graphic element.

side-by-side execution *n.* The ability to install and use multiple versions of an assembly in isolation at the same time. This can occur on the same machine, or in the same process or application domain. Side-by-side execution can apply to applications and components as well as the components of the .NET Framework. Allowing assemblies to run side-by-side is essential to support robust versioning in the common language runtime.

side effect *n.* Any change of state caused by a subroutine, such as a routine that reads a value from a file and advances the current file position.

side head *n.* A heading placed in the margin of a printed document and top-aligned with the body text, rather than being vertically aligned with text, as is a normal head.

sieve of Eratosthenes *n.* An algorithm for finding prime numbers. It is often used as a benchmark in testing the speed of a computer or programming language. *See also* benchmark¹.

.sig *n.* A file extension for a signature file for e-mail or Internet newsgroup use. The contents of this file are automatically appended to e-mail correspondence or newsgroup articles by their respective client software. *See also* signature file (definition 1).

SIG *n.* Acronym for special interest group. An e-mail online discussion group or a group of users who meet and share information, especially one of the groups supported by the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), such as SIGGRAPH for computer graphics.

SIGGRAPH *n.* Short for Special Interest Group on Computer Graphics, a part of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM).

sigmoid function *n.* A kind of S-shaped mathematical function arising in many dynamical systems, including neural networks, because it is the solution to a first-order differential equation. It typically maps a real value, which may be arbitrarily large in magnitude (positive or nega-

tive), to another real value, which lies within some narrow range. The sigmoid function, in neural network computation literature, is also sometimes referred to as the logistic function. The reason for its prevalence is that it is thought to resemble the probability that a true neuron generates as an action potential in response to particular input and output. *See also* artificial intelligence, neural network.

sign *n.* The character used to indicate a positive or negative number. In assembly-level programming, the sign is indicated by the sign bit accompanying the number. *See also* sign bit.

signal *n.* **1.** Any electrical quantity, such as voltage, current, or frequency, that can be used to transmit information. **2.** A beep or tone from a computer's speaker or a prompt displayed on screen that tells a user that the computer is ready to receive input.

signal converter *n.* A device or circuit that converts a signal from one form to another, such as analog to digital, or pulse code modulation to frequency modulation.

signal-to-noise ratio *n.* The amount of power, measured in decibels, by which the signal exceeds the amount of channel noise at the same point in transmission. *Abbreviation:* S/N. *See also* noise (definition 2).

signature *n.* **1.** A sequence of data used for identification, such as text appended to an e-mail message or a fax. **2.** A unique number built into hardware or software for authentication purposes.

signature block *n.* A block of text that an e-mail client or a newsreader automatically places at the end of every message or article before the message or article is transmitted. Signature blocks typically contain the name, e-mail address, and affiliation of the person who created the message or article.

signature file *n.* **1.** A file that contains information inserted by a user and automatically appended to e-mail correspondence or newsgroup articles by client software. A signature file typically contains the name or nickname of the user and might include such information as the user's e-mail address, Web page, company, or job title. **2.** A file that updates an antivirus program so that the program recognizes signatures of new viruses and removes the viruses from the user's computer. *See also* antivirus program, virus signature.

sign bit *n.* The most significant, or leftmost, bit of a number field, usually set to 1 if the number is negative.