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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!



PUBLISHED BY
Microsoft Press
A Division of Microsoft Corporation
One Microsoft Way
Redmond, Washington 98052-6399

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Microsoft Computer Dictionary.--5th ed.

p. ; cm.

ISBN 0-7356-1495-4

1. Computers--Dictionaries. 2. Microcomputers--Dictionaries.

AQ76.5. M52267 2002
004'.03--dc21

200219714

Printed and bound in the United States of America.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 QWT 7 6 5 4 3 2

Distributed in Canada by Penguin Books Canada Limited.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

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Body Part No. X08-41929

soft patch *n.* A fix or modification performed only while the code being patched is loaded into memory, so that the executable or object file is not modified in any way. *See also patch*¹.

soft return *n.* A line break inserted in a document by a word processor when the next word in the current line of text would cause the line to overflow into the margin—a movable line break. *See also wordwrap. Compare hard return.*

soft-sectored disk *n.* A disk, especially a floppy disk, whose sectors have been marked with recorded data marks rather than punched holes. *See also index hole. Compare hard-sectored disk.*

software *n.* Computer programs; instructions that make hardware work. Two main types of software are system software (operating systems), which controls the workings of the computer, and applications, such as word processing programs, spreadsheets, and databases, which perform the tasks for which people use computers. Two additional categories, which are neither system nor application software but contain elements of both, are network software, which enables groups of computers to communicate, and language software, which provides programmers with the tools they need to write programs. In addition to these task-based categories, several types of software are described based on their method of distribution. These include packaged software (canned programs), sold primarily through retail outlets; freeware and public domain software, which are distributed free of charge; shareware, which is also distributed free of charge, although users are requested to pay a small registration fee for continued use of the program; and vaporware, software that is announced by a company or individuals but either never makes it to market or is very late. *See also application, canned software, freeware, network software, operating system, shareware, system software, vaporware. Compare firmware, hardware, liveware.*

Software & Information Industry Association *n.* *See* SIIA.

software-based modem *n.* A modem that uses a general-purpose, reprogrammable digital signal processor chip and RAM-based program memory rather than a dedicated chip with the modem functions burned into the silicon. A software-based modem can be reconfigured to update and change the modem's features and functions.

software bloat *n.* A software condition caused by the addition of excessive number of possibly unnecessary features and functions as new versions of the software are released. Software bloat is generally assumed to result in long loading times and inordinate resource (memory and storage) requirements. *See also bloatware, creeping featurism.*

software conversion *n.* Changing or moving a program designed to run on one computer to run on another. Usually this involves detailed (professional) work on the program itself.

software-dependent *adj.* Of, pertaining to, or being a computer or device that is tied to a particular program or set of programs developed for it.

software development kit *n.* *See* developer's kit.

software engineer *n.* **1.** In general, one who works at the code level with software. Although such engineering can be considered to encompass everything from software design to management and testing, the term is generally considered more or less synonymous with *programmer*—one who actually writes the code. **2.** *See* developer.

software engineering *n.* The design and development of software. *See also* programming.

software handshake *n.* A handshake that consists of signals transmitted over the same wires used to transfer the data, as in modem-to-modem communications over telephone lines, rather than signals transmitted over special wires. *See also* handshake.

software house *n.* An organization that develops and supports software for its customers.

software IC *n.* *See* software integrated circuit.

software integrated circuit *n.* An existing software module that can be designed into a program, much as an integrated circuit can be designed into a logic board. *Abbreviation:* software IC. *See also* abstract data type, module (definition 1), object-oriented programming.

software interrupt *n.* A program-generated interrupt that stops current processing in order to request a service provided by an interrupt handler (a separate set of instructions designed to perform the task required). *Also called:* trap.

software package *n.* A program sold to the public, ready to run and containing all necessary components and documentation.

software piracy *n.* *See* piracy.

S

C

screen together make up the console and represent the primary sources of input and output in an MS-DOS computer system.

concatenate *vb.* To join sequentially (for example, to combine the two strings "hello" and "there" into the single string "hello there"). *See also* character string.

concatenated data set *n.* A group of separate sets of related data treated as a single unit for processing.

concentrator *n.* A communications device that combines signals from multiple sources, such as terminals on a network, into one or more signals before sending them to their destination. *Compare* multiplexer (definition 2).

conceptual schema *n.* In a database model that supports a three-schema architecture (such as that described by ANSI/X3/SPARC), a description of the information contents and structure of a database. A conceptual schema (also known as a *logical schema*) provides a model of the total database, thus acting as an intermediary between the two other types of schemas (internal and external) that deal with storing information and presenting it to the user. Schemas are generally defined using commands from a DDL (data definition language) supported by the database system. *See also* internal schema, schema.

concordance *n.* A list of words that appear in a document, along with the contexts of the appearances.

concrete class *n.* In object-oriented programming, a class in which objects can be created. *See also* class (definition 1). *Compare* abstract class.

concurrent *adj.* Of, pertaining to, or characteristic of a computer operation in which two or more processes (programs) have access to the microprocessor's time and are therefore carried out nearly simultaneously. Because a microprocessor can work with much smaller units of time than people can perceive, concurrent processes appear to be occurring simultaneously but in reality are not.

concurrent execution *n.* The apparently simultaneous execution of two or more routines or programs. Concurrent execution can be accomplished on a single process or by using time-sharing techniques, such as dividing programs into different tasks or threads of execution, or by using multiple processors. *Also called:* parallel execution. *See also* parallel algorithm, processor, sequential execution, task, thread (definition 1), time-sharing.

concurrent operation *n.* *See* concurrent.

concurrent processing *n.* *See* concurrent.

concurrent program execution
Concurrent Versions System

condensed *adj.* Of, pertaining to, or characterized by a font style, supported in some applications, in which the width of each character and then the spacing between characters have a feature that causes the width of each character and print resulting in more characters fitting on a line than would otherwise be possible.
Compare expanded.

condition *n.* The state of an expression or operation, for example, when a result can be either true or not equal).

conditional *adj.* Of, pertaining to, or characterized by an action or operation that takes place based on whether or not a certain condition is true. *See also* conditional statement.

conditional branch *n.* In a program, a branch that occurs when a particular condition is true or false. The term is normally used in relation to assembly languages. *See also* branch instruction.

conditional compilation *n.* Selective translation of source code of a program based on conditions or flags; for example, sections of code specified by the programmer might be compiled only if a DEBUG flag has been defined at compilation. *See also* comment out.

conditional expression *n.* *See* Boolean expression.

conditional jump *n.* In a program, a jump that occurs when a particular condition code is true or false. The term is normally used in relation to assembly languages. *See also* condition code, jump instruction.

conditional statement *n.* A programming statement that selects an execution path based on whether some condition is true or false (for example, an *if* statement). *See also* case statement, conditional expression.

conditional transfer *n.* A transfer of control from one location to a given location in a program based on whether a particular condition is true. The term is normally used in relation to high-level languages. *See also* conditional statement.

condition code *n.* One of a set of bits that indicate whether a condition is true (1) or false (0, or false) as the result of an instruction. The term is used primarily in relation to assembly languages.

conditioning

machine language situation where the path from a result, and negative result branch.

conditioning *n.* The use of the ability of a communication controls or controls to condition noise, and distortion. It is where the path from a known in advance.

conductor *n.* A substance that is a good conductor of heat or electricity. Metals are good conductors among the best. The term is also used for copper. *Compare* insulator.

Conference on Data Systems Languages
CODASYL

CONFIG.SYS *n.* A file that contains aspects of operating system configuration. OS/2. Commands in the file enable the system to feature the maximum number of files in the operating system by loading device drivers specific to an operating system.

configuration *n.* The sum of the characteristics of a computer, the sum of its components, including its hardware and generally less its software, mouse, modem, and various devices connected through configuration and CONFIG.SYS files. Sometimes hardwired, "configure the system configuration memory or disk system—its architecture." AUTOEXEC.BAT works, the environment in which elements are configured.

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congestion *n.* A condition of excessive load or demand on a system, resulting in a delay in the processing of requests and bandwidth.