

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.

see and access all shared files of other Gnutella users. Unlike Napster, Gnutella does not require a central server, and any file type can be exchanged. Gnutella was originally developed by researchers at America Online's Nullsoft group but the original implementation of the protocol was never publicly released. An open-source Gnutella preview appeared that resulted in a number of variations becoming available. *See also* Napster.

Godwin's Law *n.* As originally proposed by Internet activist Michael Godwin, the theory that as an online discussion grows longer, a comparison involving Nazis or Hitler will inevitably be made. When a participant in an online discussion resorts to invoking such a comparison, other participants might cite Godwin's Law to indicate both that the person has lost the argument and that the discussion has continued too long.

Good Times virus *n.* A purported e-mail virus alluded to in a warning that has been propagated widely across the Internet, as well as by fax and standard mail. The letter claims that reading an e-mail message with the subject "Good Times" will cause damage to the user's system. In fact, it is currently impossible to harm a system by reading an e-mail message, although it is possible to include a virus in a file that is attached to an e-mail message. Some consider the chain letter itself to be the "virus" that wastes Internet bandwidth and the reader's time. Information on such hoaxes and on real viruses can be obtained from CERT (<http://www.cert.org/>). *See also* urban legend, virus.

Gopher or **gopher** *n.* An Internet utility for finding textual information and presenting it to the user in the form of hierarchical menus, from which the user selects submenus or files that can be downloaded and displayed. One Gopher client may access all available Gopher servers, so the user accesses a common "Gopherspace." The name of the program is a three-way pun: it is designed to go for desired information; it tunnels through the Internet and digs the information up; and it was developed at the University of Minnesota, whose athletic teams are named the Golden Gophers. Gopher is being subsumed by the World Wide Web.

Gopher server *n.* The software that provides menus and files to a Gopher user. *See also* Gopher.

Gopher site *n.* A computer on the Internet on which a Gopher server runs. *See also* Gopher, Gopher server.

Gopherspace *n.* The total set of information on the Internet that is accessible as menus and documents through Gopher. *See also* Gopher.

GOSIP *n.* Acronym for **Government Open Systems Interconnection Profile**. A U.S. government requirement that all of its new network purchases comply with the ISO/OSI standards. GOSIP went into effect on August 15, 1990, but was never fully implemented and was replaced by POSIT.

GOTO statement *n.* A control statement used in programs to transfer execution to some other statement; the high-level equivalent of a branch or jump instruction. Use of GOTO statements is generally discouraged because they make it difficult not only for a programmer to trace the logic of a program but also for a compiler to generate optimized code. *See also* branch instruction, jump instruction, spaghetti code.

.gov *n.* In the Internet's Domain Name System, the top-level domain that identifies addresses operated by government agencies. The domain name .gov appears as a suffix at the end of the address. In the United States, only non-military federal government agencies may use the .gov domain. State governments in the United States use the top-level domain of .state.us, with .us preceded by the two-letter abbreviation for the state, or just .us; other regional governments in the United States are registered under the .us domain. *See also* DNS (definition 1), domain (definition 3), .state.us, .us. *Compare* .com, .edu, .mil, .net, .org.

Government Open Systems Interconnection Profile *n.* *See* GOSIP.

GPF *n.* *See* General Protection Fault.

GPIB *n.* *See* General-Purpose Interface Bus.

GPL *n.* *See* General Public License.

GPRS *n.* Acronym for **General Packet Radio Service**. A third-generation enhancement to the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM), which supports non-voice applications such as Web browsing and other servicing requiring transfer of data packets without limits in message size. Systems using the service can be immediately connected when needed and therefore seem to the users to be always on. *See also* GSM, TDMA.

GPS *n.* Acronym for **Global Positioning System**. A radio navigation system developed by the U.S. Department of



grovel *vb.* **1.** To search or do other work at great length without apparent progress. Some programs grovel over a whole input file before they begin to produce output. A programmer may have to grovel through manuals in search of documentation on a particular command, or through code in search of a bug. **2.** To post a plea for some favor to a newsgroup.

grunge *n.* *See* dead code.

GSL *n.* Acronym for **Grammar Specification Language**. A grammar description format used by VoiceXML applications and other speech recognition systems. GSL was developed by Nuance and supports a number of XML-based speech editing and voice-browsing applications.

GSM *n.* Acronym for **Global System for Mobile Communications**. A digital cellular phone technology first deployed in 1992. In 2000, GSM was the predominant phone technology in Europe, and was used by 250 million subscribers worldwide. GSM phones offer a removable smart card containing subscriber account information. This card can be transferred from phone to phone quickly and easily, allowing the user to access his account from any phone in the system. Various enhancements to the GSM system allow increased Web browsing and data transfer options. *See also* GPRS, TDMA.

guest *n.* A common name for a login account that can be accessed without a password. BBSs and service providers often maintain such an account so that prospective subscribers can sample the services offered.

guest account *n.* An account used to log onto a system or domain where the user does not have access. Generally, resources and access are severely limited. On Windows NT technology, this account is built in to all domains. *See also* domain.

GUI *n.* *See* graphical user interface.

GUID *n.* *See* globally unique identifier, global universal identification.

GUID partition table *n.* A disk-partitioning scheme that is used by the eXtensible Firmware Interface (EFI) in Itanium-based computers. A GUID partition table offers more advantages than master boot record (MBR) partitioning because it allows up to 128 partitions per disk, provides support for volumes up to 18 exabytes in size, allows primary and backup partition tables for redundancy, and supports unique disk and partition IDs (GUIDs). *Acronym:* GPT. *See also* eXtensible Firmware Interface, Itanium, master boot record.

gunzip *n.* A GNU utility for decompressing files compressed with gzip. *See also* GNU, uncompress. *Compare* gzip.

guru *n.* A technical expert who is available to help solve problems and to answer questions in an intelligible way. *See also* techie, wizard (definition 1).

gutter *n.* The blank area between two or more columns of text or between two facing pages in a publication.

gzip *n.* A GNU utility for compressing files. *See also* compress², GNU. *Compare* gunzip.

G

palmtop *n.* A portable personal computer whose size enables it to be held in one hand while it is operated with the other hand. A major difference between palmtop computers and laptop computers is that palmtops are usually powered by off-the-shelf batteries such as AA cells. Palmtop computers typically do not have disk drives; rather, their programs are stored in ROM and are loaded into RAM when they are switched on. More recent palmtop computers are equipped with PCMCIA slots to provide wider flexibility and greater capability. *See also* handheld PC, PCMCIA slot, portable computer. *Compare* laptop.

PAM *n.* *See* pulse amplitude modulation.

panning *n.* In computer graphics, a display method in which a viewing window on the screen scans horizontally or vertically, like a camera, to bring offscreen extensions of the current image smoothly into view.

PANTONE MATCHING SYSTEM *n.* In graphic arts and printing, a standard system of ink color specification consisting of a swatch book in which each of about 500 colors is assigned a number. *Acronym:* PMS. *See also* color model.

PAP *n.* **1.** Acronym for **Password Authentication Protocol**. A method for verifying the identity of a user attempting to log on to a Point-to-Point Protocol (PPP) server. PAP is used if a more rigorous method, such as the Challenge Handshake Authentication Protocol (CHAP), is not available or if the user name and password that the user submitted to PAP must be sent to another program without encryption. **2.** Acronym for **Printer Access Protocol**. The protocol in AppleTalk networks that governs communication between computers and printers.

paper feed *n.* A mechanism that moves paper through a printer. In laser printers and other page printers, the paper feed is usually a series of rollers that firmly grip and align the paper. In dot-matrix printers, the paper feed is usually a pin feed or tractor feed, in which small pins drag or push paper that has detachable edges punched with sprocket holes. Friction feed is another type of paper feed, in which the paper is gripped between the platen and pressure rollers and pulled by rotation of the platen.

paperless office *n.* The idealized office in which information is entirely stored, manipulated, and transferred electronically rather than on paper.

paper-white *adj.* Of, pertaining to, or being a type of monochrome computer monitor whose default operating colors are black text on a white background. Paper-white monitors are popular in desktop publishing and word processing environments because the monitor most closely resembles a white sheet of paper printed with black characters.

paper-white monitor *n.* A display monitor in which text and graphics characters are displayed in black against a white background to resemble the appearance of a printed page. Some manufacturers use the name to refer to a background that is tinted in a manner corresponding to bonded paper.

paradigm *n.* An archetypal example or pattern that provides a model for a process or system.

paragraph *n.* **1.** In word processing, any part of a document preceded by one paragraph mark and ending with another. To the program, a paragraph represents a unit of information that can be selected as a whole or given formatting distinct from the surrounding paragraphs. **2.** On IBM and other computers built around the Intel 8088 or 8086 microprocessor, a 16-byte section of memory beginning at a location (address) that can be divided evenly by 16 (hexadecimal 10).

parallel *adj.* **1.** Of or relating to electronic circuits in which the corresponding terminals of two or more components are connected. **2.** In geometry and graphics, of, relating to, or being lines that run side by side in the same direction in the same plane without intersecting. **3.** In data communications, of, relating to, or being information that is sent in groups of bits over multiple wires, one wire for each bit in a group. *See also* parallel interface. *Compare* serial. **4.** In data handling, of or relating to handling more than one event at a time, with each event having its own portion of the system's resources. *See also* parallel processing.

parallel access *n.* The ability to store or retrieve all of the bits composing a single unit of information, such as a byte or a word (usually two bytes), at the same time. *Also called:* simultaneous access.

parallel adder *n.* A logic device that processes the addition of several (typically 4, 8, or 16) binary inputs simultaneously rather than sequentially, as is the case with half adders and full adders. Parallel adders speed processing

pop *vb.* To fetch the top (most recently added) element of a stack, removing that element from the stack in the process. *Compare* push² (definition 1).

POP *n.* *See* point of presence, Post Office Protocol.

POP3 *n.* Acronym for **Post Office Protocol 3**. This is the current version of the Post Office Protocol standard in common use on TCP/IP networks. *See also* Post Office Protocol, TCP/IP.

populate *vb.* **1.** To put chips in the sockets of a circuit board. **2.** To import prepared data into a database from a file using a software procedure rather than by having a human operator enter individual records.

pop-under ad *n.* An advertisement on the Internet that appears in a new window in the background, behind the Web site content. Users may be unaware of the presence of pop-under ads until they close foreground windows at the end of a Web session. Pop-under ads may appear in response to a mouse click, a rollover, or after a user has spent a predetermined amount of time at a Web site. *See also* pop-up ad.

pop-up ad *n.* An advertisement on the Internet that appears in a new window in the foreground, often whenever a new page is opened within a site. Pop-up ads may appear in response to a mouse click, a rollover, or after a user has spent a predetermined amount of time at a Web site. *See also* pop-under ad.

pop-up Help *n.* An online help system whose messages appear as pop-up windows when the user clicks on a topic or area of the screen about which help is desired. Typically, a special form of click, such as clicking the right mouse button or Option-clicking, will activate pop-up Help, if it is available. *See also* Balloon Help.

pop-up menu or **popup menu** *n.* In a graphical user interface, a menu that appears on-screen when a user selects a certain item. Pop-up menus can appear anywhere on the screen and generally disappear when the user selects an item in the menu. *Also called:* popup. *Compare* drop-down menu, pull-down menu.

pop-up messages *n.* The messages that appear when pop-up Help is used.

pop-up window *n.* A window that appears when an option is selected. Typically, the window remains visible until the mouse button is released.

port¹ *n.* **1.** An interface through which data is transferred between a computer and other devices (such as a printer, mouse, keyboard, or monitor), a network, or a direct connection to another computer. The port appears to the CPU as one or more memory addresses that it can use to send or receive data. Specialized hardware, such as in an add-on circuit board, places data from the device in the memory addresses and sends data from the memory addresses to the device. Ports may also be dedicated solely to input or to output. Ports typically accept a particular type of plug used for a specific purpose. For example, a serial data port, a keyboard, and a high-speed network port all use different connectors, so it's not possible to plug a cable into the wrong port. *Also called:* input/output port. **2.** port number.

port² *vb.* **1.** To change a program in order to be able to run it on a different computer. **2.** To move documents, graphics, and other files from one computer to another.

port 25 blocking *n.* An anti-spam technique adopted by many ISPs to prevent bulk mailings of unsolicited commercial e-mail. Spammers may try to use SMTP servers to relay a single commercial e-mail to multiple recipients. Port 25 blocking filters prevent this spam distribution method. Although it is a popular remedy for some spam problems, port 25 blocking may cause problems for legitimate users of non-compatible e-mail programs.

portable *adj.* **1.** Capable of running on more than one computer system or under more than one operating system. Highly portable software can be moved to other systems with little effort, moderately portable software can be moved only with substantial effort, and nonportable software can be moved only with effort similar to or greater than the effort of writing the original program. **2.** Light enough, rugged enough, and free enough of encumbering external connections to be carried by a user.

portable computer *n.* Any computer designed to be moved easily. Portable computers can be characterized by size and weight. *See the table.*

Table P2 Portable Computers.

Type	Approximate weight	Power source	Comments
Transportable	15–30 lb.	House current	Sometimes called luggage; usually has floppy and hard drives; standard CRT screen.
Laptop	8–15 lb.	House current or batteries	Can be held on the lap; usually has a floppy drive; uses flat LCD or plasma screen.
Ultralight	2–8 lb.	Batteries or transformer pack	Easy to carry in a briefcase; sometimes uses RAM drive or EPROM instead of floppy or hard drive; thinner models are known as notebook computers.
Handheld	Less than 2 lb.	Batteries or transformer pack	Also called palmtop or palm-sized; can be held in one hand.

Portable Digital Document *n.* See PDD.

Portable Distributed Objects *n.* Software from NeXT, running under UNIX, that supports an object model in which objects to be stored at various locations on a network can be accessed as though they were at a single location. *Acronym:* PDO.

Portable Document Format *n.* The Adobe specification for electronic documents that use the Adobe Acrobat family of servers and readers. *Acronym:* PDF. *See also* Acrobat, .pdf.

portable executable file *n.* The file format used for executable programs as well as for files that are linked together to form executable programs.

portable keyboard *n.* A portable keyboard for use with personal digital assistants (PDAs), wireless phones with advanced digital features, and other handheld mobile devices. Light, compact, and easy to carry, most portable keyboards fold for convenient storage and connect to the handheld device via a built-in cradle.

portable language *n.* A language that runs in the same way on different systems and therefore can be used for developing software for all of them. C, FORTRAN, and Ada are portable languages because their implementations on different systems are highly uniform; assembly language is extremely nonportable.

Portable Network Graphics *n.* See PNG.

portal *n.* A Web site that serves as a gateway to the Internet. A portal is a collection of links, content, and services designed to guide users to information they are likely to find interesting—news, weather, entertainment, commerce sites, chat rooms, and so on. Yahoo!, Excite, MSN.com, and Netscape NetCenter are examples of portals. *See also* home page (definition 1), Web site.

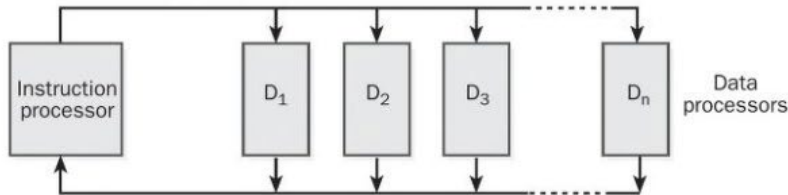
port enumerator *n.* In Windows, part of the Plug and Play system that detects I/O ports and reports them to the configuration manager. *See also* plug and play (definition 2).

port expander *n.* A hardware mechanism used for connecting several devices to a single port. Although several devices might be connected, only one can use the port at any given moment.

portmapper *n.* A service used by Remote Procedure Call (RPC) to assign port numbers. RPC doesn't follow the Well-Known Ports port designations, and only Portmapper is assigned a permanent port number. Because hackers may gain access to portmapper communication, various portmapper security tools are often used to prevent theft of information. *See also* remote procedure call.

port number *n.* A number that enables IP packets to be sent to a particular process on a computer connected to the Internet. Some port numbers, called "well-known" port numbers, are permanently assigned; for example, e-mail data under SMTP goes to port number 25. A process such as a telnet session receives an "ephemeral" port number

P

**SIMD.**

SIMM *n.* Acronym for single inline memory module. A small circuit board designed to accommodate surface-mount memory chips.

Simple API for XML *n.* See SAX.

Simple Authentication and Security Layer *n.* See SASL.

Simple Control Protocol *n.* See SCP.

Simple Mail Transfer Protocol *n.* A TCP/IP protocol for sending messages from one computer to another on a network. This protocol is used on the Internet to route e-mail. *Acronym:* SMTP. *See also* communications protocol, TCP/IP. *Compare* CCITT X series, Post Office Protocol.

Simple Network Management Protocol *n.* See SNMP.

Simple Object Access Protocol *n.* See SOAP.

simplex *n.* Communication that takes place only from sender to receiver. *Compare* duplex² (definition 1), half-duplex².

simplex transmission *n.* See simplex.

SIMULA *n.* Short for **simulation language**. A general-purpose programming language based on ALGOL 60, with special features designed to aid the description and simulation of active processes. Visual C++ is based on aspects of this language.

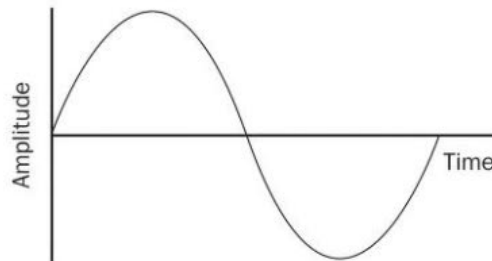
simulation *n.* The imitation of a physical process or an object by a program that causes a computer to respond mathematically to data and changing conditions as though it were the process or object itself. *See also* emulator, modeling (definition 1).

simultaneous access *n.* See parallel access.

simultaneous processing *n.* **1.** True multiple-processor operation in which more than one task can be processed at a time. *See also* multiprocessing, parallel processing.

2. Loosely, concurrent operation in which more than one task is processed by dividing processor time among the tasks. *See also* concurrent, multitasking.

sine wave *n.* A uniform, periodic wave often generated by an object that vibrates at a single frequency. *See* the illustration. *Compare* square wave.

**Sine wave.**

single attachment station *n.* An FDDI node that connects to the primary ring through a concentrator. *Compare* dual attachment station.

single-board *adj.* Of or pertaining to a computer that occupies only one circuit board, usually with no capacity for additional boards.

single-density *adj.* Of or pertaining to a disk that is certified only for use with frequency modulation (FM) recording. A single-density disk can store much less data than a disk using modified FM encoding or run-length limited encoding. *See also* modified frequency modulation encoding, run-length limited encoding.

Single Image Random Dot Stereogram *n.* See autostereogram.

Single Image Stereograms *n.* See autostereogram.

single inline memory module *n.* See SIMM.

single inline package *n.* See SIP.

single inline pinned package *n.* See SIP.

single-instruction, multiple-data stream processing *n.* See SIMD.

single-line digital subscriber line *n.* See SDSL.

single-precision *adj.* Of or pertaining to a floating-point number having the least precision among two or more