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Computer Dictionary

Fifth Edition

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- *Easy to read, expertly illustrated*
- *Definitive coverage of hardware, software, the Internet, and more!*



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Dictionary of Computer Terms 1

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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.

Enhanced IDE *n.* See EIDE.

Enhanced Integrated Device Electronics *n.* See EIDE.

enhanced keyboard *n.* An IBM 101/102-key keyboard that replaced the PC and AT keyboards. It features 12 function keys across the top (rather than 10 on the left side), extra Control and Alt keys, and a bank of cursor and editing keys between the main keyboard and number pad. It is similar to the Apple Extended Keyboard.

Enhanced Parallel Port *n.* See EPP.

enhanced serial port *n.* A connection port for peripheral devices, commonly used for mice and external modems. Enhanced serial ports utilize 16550-type or newer high-speed UART circuits for faster data throughput. Enhanced serial ports are capable of transferring data at speeds as high as 921.6 Kbps. *Acronym:* ESP. *See also* input/output port, UART.

Enhanced Small Device Interface *n.* See ESDI.

ENIAC *n.* An 1800-square-foot, 30-ton computer containing about 18,000 vacuum tubes and 6000 manual switches. Developed between 1942 and 1946 for the U.S. Army by J. Presper Eckert and John Mauchly at the University of Pennsylvania, ENIAC is considered to have been the first truly electronic computer. It remained in operation until 1955.

enlarge *vb.* In Windows and other graphical user interfaces, to increase the size of a window. *See also* maximize. *Compare* minimize, reduce.

E notation *n.* See floating-point notation.

ENQ *n.* See enquiry character.

enquiry character *n.* Abbreviated ENQ. In communications, a control code transmitted from one station to request a response from the receiving station. In ASCII, the enquiry character is designated by decimal value 5 (hexadecimal 05).

en space *n.* A typographical unit of measure that is equal in width to half the point size of a particular font. *Compare* em space, fixed space, thin space.

Enter key *n.* The key that is used at the end of a line or command to instruct the computer to process the command or text. In word processing programs, the Enter key is used at the end of a paragraph. *Also called:* Return key.

Enterprise Application Integration *n.* See EAI.

enterprise computing *n.* In a large enterprise such as a corporation, the use of computers in a network or series of

interconnected networks that generally encompass a variety of different platforms, operating systems, protocols, and network architectures. *Also called:* enterprise networking.

enterprise information portal *n.* A portal or gateway that allows internal and external users in a business or enterprise to access information from intranets, extranets, and the Internet for business needs. An enterprise information portal provides a simple Web interface that is designed to help users sift through large amounts of data quickly to find the information they need. By organizing all internal information from company servers, databases, e-mail, and legacy systems, the enterprise information portal exercises control over the company's information availability and presentation. *Acronym:* EIP. *See also* portal.

Enterprise JavaBeans *n.* An application programming interface (API) designed to extend the JavaBean component model to cross-platform, server-side applications that can run on the various systems usually present in an enterprise environment. Enterprise JavaBeans are defined in the Enterprise JavaBean specification released by Sun Microsystems, Inc. The goal of the API is to provide developers with a means of applying Java technology to the creation of reusable server components for business applications, such as transaction processing. *Acronym:* EJB. *See also* Java, JavaBean.

enterprise network *n.* In a large enterprise such as a corporation, the network (or interconnected networks) of computer systems owned by the enterprise, which fills the enterprise's various computing needs. This network can span diverse geographical locations and usually encompasses a range of platforms, operating systems, protocols, and network architectures.

enterprise networking *n.* See enterprise computing.

Enterprise Resource Planning *n.* An approach to business information management that relies on integrated application software to provide data on all aspects of the enterprise, such as manufacturing, finance, inventory, human resources, sales, and so on. The objective of Enterprise Resource Planning software is to provide data, when and as needed, to enable a business to monitor and control its overall operation. *Acronym:* ERP. *Compare* Material Requirements Planning.

entity *n.* In computer-aided design and object-oriented design, an item that can be treated as a unit and, often, as a member of a particular category or type. *See also* CAD, object-oriented design.

Table P.2 *Portable Computers.*

<i>Type</i>	<i>Approximate weight</i>	<i>Power source</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Transportable	15–30 lb.	House current	Sometimes called luggable; 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

