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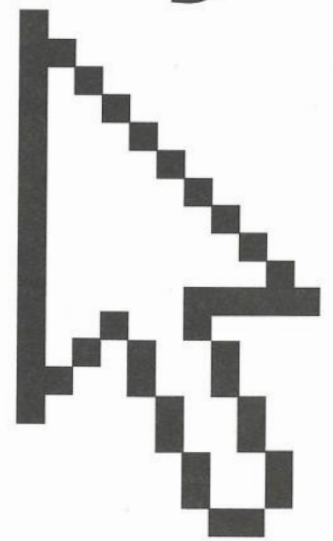
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Computer Dictionary

Fifth Edition



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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Project Editor: Sandra Haynes

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b¹ *adj.* Short for **binary**.

b² *n.* 1. Short for **bit**. 2. Short for **baud**.

B *n.* Short for **byte**.

B: or **b:** *n.* 1. Identifier for a second floppy disk drive on MS-DOS and other operating systems. 2. Identifier for a single disk drive when used as the secondary drive.

B1FF *n.* Slang for a new online user who is prone to making mistakes in e-mail, newsgroup articles, or chats that show his or her inexperience. Examples of typical mistakes made by B1FFs include sentences ending with multiple exclamation points (!!!!) and messages typed in ALL CAPS. Although it's spelled B-1(one)-F-F, the term is pronounced "bif."

B2B *n.* Short for **business-to-business**. The electronic exchange of products and services between businesses without the direct involvement of consumers. B2B's effects on business include streamlining purchasing, accounting, and other administrative functions; lowering transaction costs; and simplifying the sale of excess inventory. Related businesses have collaborated on the creation of Internet-based supply-chain networks.

B2C *n.* Short for **business-to-consumer**. The direct electronic exchange of products and services between businesses and consumers. B2C's effects on business include improving the efficiency in delivering goods and services to consumers.

backbone *n.* 1. A network of communication transmission that carries major traffic between smaller networks. The backbones of the Internet, including communications carriers such as Sprint and MCI, can span thousands of miles using microwave relays and dedicated lines. 2. The smaller networks (compared with the entire Internet) that perform the bulk of the packet switching of Internet communication. Today these smaller networks still consist of the networks that were originally developed to make up the Internet—the computer networks of the educational and research institutions of the United States—especially

NSFnet, the computer network of the National Science Foundation in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. See also NSFnet, packet switching. 3. The wires that carry major communications traffic within a network. In a local area network, a backbone may be a bus. Also called: collapsed backbone.

backbone cabal *n.* On the Internet, a term for the group of network administrators responsible for naming the hierarchy of Usenet newsgroups and devising the procedures for creating new newsgroups. The backbone cabal no longer exists.

back door *n.* A means of gaining access to a program or system by bypassing its security controls. Programmers often build back doors into systems under development so that they can fix bugs. If the back door becomes known to anyone other than the programmer, or if it is not removed before the software is released, it becomes a security risk. Also called: trapdoor.

back end *n.* 1. In a client/server application, the part of the program that runs on the server. See also client/server architecture. Compare front end. 2. In networking, a server computer or the processing that takes place on it. 3. The part of a compiler that transforms source code (human-readable program statements) into object code (machine-readable code). See also compiler (definition 2), object code, source code.

back-end processor *n.* 1. A slave processor that performs a specialized task such as providing rapid access to a database, freeing the main processor for other work. Such a task is considered "back-end" because it is subordinate to the computer's main function. 2. A processor that manipulates data sent to it from another processor; for example, a high-speed graphics processor dedicated to painting images on a video display operates in response to commands passed "back" to it by the main processor. Compare coprocessor.

background¹ *adj.* In the context of processes or tasks that are part of an operating system or program, operating without interaction with the user while the user is working on another task. Background processes or tasks are

B

assigned a lower priority in the microprocessor's allotment of time than foreground tasks and generally remain invisible to the user unless the user requests an update or brings the task to the foreground. Generally, only multitasking operating systems are able to support background processing. However, some operating systems that do not support multitasking may be able to perform one or more types of background tasks. For example, in the Apple Macintosh operating system running with multitasking turned off, the Background Printing option can be used to print documents while the user is doing other work. *See also* multitasking. *Compare* foreground¹.

background² *n.* 1. The color against which characters and graphics are displayed, such as a white background for black characters. *Compare* foreground² (definition 1). 2. The colors, textures, patterns, and pictures that comprise the surface of the desktop, upon which icons, buttons, menu bars, and toolbars are situated. *See also* wallpaper. 3. The colors, textures, patterns, and pictures that comprise the surface of a Web page, upon which text, icons, graphics, buttons, and other items are situated. *See also* wallpaper. 4. The condition of an open but currently inactive window in a windowing environment. *See also* inactive window. *Compare* foreground² (definition 2).

background noise *n.* The noise inherent in a line or circuit, independent of the presence of a signal. *See also* noise.

background printing *n.* The process of sending a document to a printer at the same time that the computer is performing one or more other tasks.

background processing *n.* The execution of certain operations by the operating system or a program during momentary lulls in the primary (foreground) task. An example of a background process is a word processor program printing a document during the time that occurs between the user's keystrokes. *See also* background¹.

background program *n.* A program that can run or is running in the background. *See also* background¹.

background task *n.* *See* background¹.

back-illt or backlit *adj.* Having a source of light, such as a lamp or LED behind a (usually translucent) viewing surface, in order to illuminate the surface.

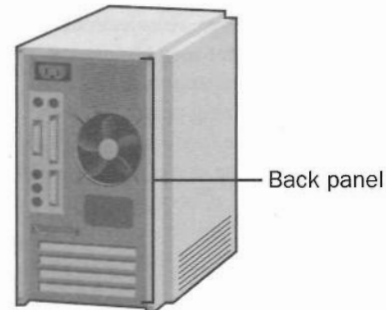
back-illt display or backlit display *n.* Something illuminated from behind, rather than by a light source above or to the front.

BackOffice *n.* A suite of software developed by Microsoft that provides certain network services.

Designed to work with Windows NT and Windows 2000, BackOffice includes such services as e-mail (Exchange), intranet capabilities (Site Server), network management (Systems Management Server), and high-end database development (SQL Server), among others.

Back Orifice *n.* A hostile application tool used by hackers to gain control of a remote computer. Back Orifice consists of client and server applications. The client application is used to control a computer running the server application. A target computer is taken over after an executable file, typically delivered by an e-mail attachment or a removable disk, is opened. Back Orifice then copies itself to the Windows System directory and transfers control to the machine running the client application. Back Orifice first appeared in the summer of 1998 and was quickly contained through updated security software. Its name is a play on words for the Microsoft BackOffice suite of servers.

back panel *n.* The panel at the rear of a computer cabinet through which most of the connections to outside power sources and peripherals are made. *See* the illustration.



Back panel.

backplane *n.* A circuit board or framework that supports other circuit boards, devices, and the interconnections among devices, and provides power and data signals to supported devices.

backslash *n.* *See* \.

Backspace key *n.* 1. A key that, on IBM and compatible keyboards, moves the cursor to the left, one character at a time, usually erasing each character as it moves. 2. On Macintosh keyboards, a key (called the Delete key on some Macintosh keyboards) that erases currently selected text or, if no text is selected, erases the character to the left of the insertion point (cursor). *See* the illustration.

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number can be changed if the font is installed in a system already having a font with that number. *See also* font.

font page *n.* A portion of video memory reserved for holding programmer-specified character definition tables (sets of character patterns) used for displaying text on the screen on IBM Multi-Color Graphics Array video systems.

font size *n.* The point size of a set of characters in a particular typeface. *See also* point¹ (definition 1).

font suitcase *n.* A file on Macintosh computers that contains one or more fonts or desk accessories. Such files are indicated in early versions of the operating system with the icon of a suitcase marked with a capital A. From System 7.0 onward, this icon is used to denote individual fonts.

foo *n.* A string used by programmers in place of more specific information. Variables or functions in code examples intended to demonstrate syntax, as well as temporary scratch files, may all appear with the name *foo*. Likewise, a programmer may type *foo* to test a string input handler. If a second placeholder string is needed, it will often be *bar*, suggesting that the origin of both is the U.S. Army phrase FUBAR (an acronym which, in discreet language, represents Fouled Up Beyond All Recognition/Repair). However, other origins have been claimed. *Compare* fred (definition 2).

footer *n.* One or more identifying lines printed at the bottom of a page. A footer may contain a folio (page number), a date, the author's name, and the document title. *Also called:* running foot. *Compare* header (definition 1).

footprint *n.* The surface area occupied by a personal computer or other device.

force *vb.* In programming, to perform a particular action that would normally not occur. The term is most often used in the context of forcing data to be within a particular range of values—for example, forcing a divisor to be non-zero. *See also* cast.

force feedback *n.* A technology that generates push or resistance in an input/output device. Force feedback enables an input/output device, such as a joystick or a steering wheel, to react to the user's action in appropriate response to events displayed on the screen. For example, force feedback can be used with a computer game to react to a plane rising in a steep ascent or a race car turning a tight corner. *See also* input/output device.

foreground¹ *adj.* Currently having control of the system and responding to commands issued by the user. *See also* multitasking. *Compare* background¹.

foreground² *n.* 1. The color of displayed characters and graphics. *Compare* background² (definition 1). 2. The condition of the program or document currently in control and affected by commands and data entry in a windowing environment. *Compare* background² (definition 4).

forest *n.* A collection of one or more domains in Microsoft Windows that share a common schema, configuration, and global catalog and are linked with two-way transitive trusts. *See also* domain, global catalog, schema, transitive trust, two-way trust.

fork¹ *n.* One of the two parts of a file recognized by the Mac OS. A Macintosh file has a data fork and a resource fork. Most or all of a typical user-produced document is in the data fork; the resource fork usually contains application-oriented information, such as fonts, dialog boxes, and menus. *See also* data fork, resource fork.

fork² *vb.* To initiate a child process in a multitasking system after a parent process has been started. *See also* multitasking.

fork bomb *n.* In UNIX-based systems, a program or shell script that locks up the system by recursively spawning copies of itself using the Unix system call "fork(2)" until they occupy all the process table entries. *Also called:* logic bomb.

FOR loop *n.* A control statement that executes a section of code a specified number of times. Actual syntax and usage vary from language to language. In most cases, the value of an index variable moves through a range of values, being assigned a different (and usually consecutive) value each time the program moves through the section of code. *See also* iterative statement, loop¹ (definition 1). *Compare* DO loop.

form *n.* 1. A structured document with spaces reserved for entering information and often containing special coding as well. 2. In some applications (especially databases), a structured window, box, or other self-contained presentation element with predefined areas for entering or changing information. A form is a visual filter for the underlying data it is presenting, generally offering the advantages of better data organization and greater ease of viewing. 3. In optical media, a data storage format used in compact disc technology. 4. In programming, a metalanguage (such as Backus-Naur form) used to describe the syntax of a language. *See also* Backus-Naur form.

formal language *n.* A combination of syntax and semantics that completely defines a computer language. *See also* Backus-Naur form, semantics (definition 1), syntax.

