

Computer Jargon

BLOG

Short for web log, a blog (or weblog, or less commonly, 'blog) is a web site containing periodic (usually frequent) posts. Blogs are usually syndicated via either some type of RSS or Atom and often supports TrackBacks. It is not uncommon for blogs to function much like newspaper columns. A blogger is someone who writes for and maintains a blog.

BROWSERS

Browsers are software programs that enable you to view WWW documents. They "translate" HTML-encoded files into the text, images, sounds, and other features you see. Microsoft Internet Explorer (called simply IE), Mozilla, Firefox, Safari, and Opera are examples of "graphical" browsers that enable you to view text and images and many other WWW features.

BYTE

A byte is a grouping of bits. It is typically eight bits, but there are those who use non-standard byte sizes. Bytes are usually measured in large groups, and the term "kilobyte" (often abbreviated as K) means one-thousand twenty-four (1024) bytes; the term "megabyte" (often abbreviated as M) means one-thousand twenty-four (1024) K; the term gigabyte (often abbreviated as G) means one-thousand twenty-four (1024) M; and the term "terabyte" (often abbreviated as T) means one-thousand twenty-four (1024) G. Memory is typically measured in kilobytes or megabytes, and disk space is typically measured in megabytes or gigabytes. Note that the multipliers here are 1024 instead of the more common 1000 as would be used in the metric system. This is to make it easier to work with the binary number system.

Kilo is 1000
Mega is 1000 kilo
Giga is 1000 mega
Tetra is 1000 giga
Peta is 1000 tetra.

CASE SENSITIVE

Capital letters (upper case) retrieve only upper case. Most search tools are not case sensitive or only respond to initial capitals, as in proper names. It is always safe to key all lower case (no capitals), because lower case will always retrieve upper case.

DIRECTORY

Also called "folder", a directory is a collection of files typically created for organizational purposes. Note that a directory is itself a file, so a directory can generally contain other directories.

DRIVE

A device for storing and/or retrieving data. Some drives (such as disk drives, zip drives, and tape drives) are typically capable of having new data written to them, but some others (like CD-ROMs or DVD-ROMs) are not.

DOWNLOAD

To download a file is to copy it from a remote computer to your own. The opposite is upload.

e-BOOK

The concept behind an e-book is that it should provide all the functionality of an ordinary book but in a manner that is (overall) less expensive and more environmentally friendly. The actual term e-book is somewhat confusingly used to refer to a variety of things: custom software to play e-book titles, dedicated hardware to play e-book titles, and the e-book titles themselves. Individual e-book titles can be free or commercial (but will always be less expensive than their printed counterparts) and have to be loaded into a player to be read. Players vary wildly in capability level. Basic ones allow simple reading and bookmarking; better ones include various features like hypertext, illustrations, audio, and even limited video. Other optional features allow the user to mark-up sections of text, leave notes, circle or diagram things, highlight passages, program or customize settings, and even use interactive fiction. There are many types of e-book; a couple popular ones include the Newton book and Palm DOC.

e-MAIL

E-mail is short for electronic mail. It allows for the transfer of information from one computer to another, provided that they are hooked up via some sort of network (often the Internet. E-mail works similarly to FAXing, but its contents typically get printed out on the other end only on demand, not immediately and automatically as with FAX. A machine receiving e-mail will also not reject other incoming mail messages as a busy FAX machine will; rather they will instead be queued up to be received after the current batch has been completed. E-mail is only seven-bit clean, meaning that you should not expect anything other than ASCII data to go through uncorrupted without prior conversion via something like uucode or bcode. Some mailers will do some conversion automatically, but unless you know your mailer is one of them, you may want to do the encoding manually.

EXTENSION or FILE EXTENSION

In Windows, DOS and some other operating systems, one or several letters at the end of a filename. Filename extensions usually follow a period (dot) and indicate the type of file. For example, this.txt denotes a plain text file, that.htm or that.html denotes an HTML file. Some common image extensions are picture.jpg or picture.jpeg or picture.bmp or picture.gif

File Extensions

.PDF - Acrobat Portable Document Format (Adobe Systems Incorporated)

.doc - Word Document (Microsoft Corporation)

.docx - Word Microsoft Office Open XML Format Document (Microsoft Corporation)

.odf - OpenOffice OpenDocument (Ver 2) Formula (Sun Microsystems, Inc.)

.xls - Excel Worksheet (Microsoft Corporation)

.pub - Publisher Document (Microsoft Corporation)

.bmp - Windows OS/2 Bitmap Graphics

.GIF - Graphic Interchange Format

.JPG -

.TIFF - Tagged Image Format File

.PNG - Portable (Public) Network Graphic

FILE

A file is a unit of (usually named) information stored on a computer.

FLOPPY

An extremely common type of removable disk. Floppies do not hold too much data, but most computers are capable of reading them.

FONT

In a simplistic sense, a font can be thought of as the physical description of a character set. While the character set will define what sets of bits map to what letters, numbers, and other symbols, the font will define what each letter, number, and other symbol looks like. Fonts can be either fixed width or variable width and independently, either bitmapped or vectored. The size of the large characters in a font is typically measured in points.

GROUPS

Discussion forums one can participate in, share ideas with, and form community. Most are free and some are open to new members. Yahoo Groups and Google Groups are both popular. Google Groups includes the former Usenet Newsgroups. Blogs are replacing some of the need for this type of community sharing and information exchange.

GUI

A graphical user interface is a graphics-based means of communicating with a program, especially an OS or window manager. In fact, a window manager can be thought of as a GUI for a CLI OS.

ICON

A small graphical display representing an object, action, or modifier of some sort.

HARDWARE

The physical portion of the computer.

INTERNET

The Internet is the world-wide network of computers. There is only one Internet, and thus it is typically capitalized (although it is sometimes referred to as "the 'net"). It is different from an intranet.

KEYBOARD

A keyboard on a computer is almost identical to a keyboard on a typewriter. Computer keyboards will typically have extra keys, however. Some of these keys (common examples include Control, Alt, and Meta) are meant to be used in conjunction with other keys just like shift on a regular typewriter. Other keys (common examples include Insert, Delete, Home, End, Help, function keys, etc.) are meant to be used independently and often perform editing tasks.

MEMORY

Computer memory is used to temporarily store data. In reality, computer memory is only capable of remembering sequences of zeros and ones, but by utilizing the binary number system it is possible to produce arbitrary rational numbers and through clever formatting all manner of representations of pictures, sounds, and animations. The most common types of memory are RAM, ROM, and flash.

MONITOR

The screen for viewing computer information is called a monitor.

MOUSE

In computer parlance a mouse can be both the physical object moved around to control a pointer on the screen, and the pointer itself. Unlike the animal, the proper plural of computer mouse is "mouses".

PDF or .pdf or pdf file

Abbreviation for Portable Document Format, a file format developed by Adobe Systems, that is used to capture almost any kind of document with the formatting in the original. Viewing a PDF file requires Acrobat Reader, which is built into most browsers and can be downloaded free from Adobe.

PLUG-IN

An application built into a browser or added to a browser to enable it to interact with a special file type (such as a movie, sound file, Word document, etc.)

URL

Uniform Resource Locator. The unique address of any Web document. May be keyed in a browser's OPEN or LOCATION / GO TO box to retrieve a document. There is a logic the layout of a URL:

Domain name (computer file is on and its location on the Internet) www.lib.berkeley.edu.

VIRUS

A virus is a program that will seek to duplicate itself in memory and on disks, but in a subtle way that will not immediately be noticed. A computer on the same network as an infected computer or that uses an infected disk (even a floppy) or that downloads and runs an infected program can itself become infected. A virus can only spread to computers of the same platform. For example, on a network consisting of a WinTel box, a Mac, and a Linux box, if one machine acquires a virus the other two will probably still be safe. Note also that different platforms have different general levels of resistance; UNIX machines are almost immune, Win '95 / '98 / ME / XP is quite vulnerable, and most others lie somewhere in between.