

## Basic Computer Terminology

application - a program in which you do your work.

bit - the smallest piece of information used by the computer. Derived from "binary digit". In computer language, either a one (1) or a zero (0).

backup - a copy of a file or disk you make for archiving purposes.

boot - to start up a computer.

bug - a programming error that causes a program to behave in an unexpected way.

byte - a piece of computer information made up of eight bits.

card - a printed circuit board that adds some feature to a computer.

CD-ROM - an acronym for Compact Disc Read-Only Memory.

Clipboard - A portion of memory where the Mac temporarily stores information. Called a Copy Buffer in many PC applications because it is used to hold information which is to be moved, as in word processing where text is "cut" and then "pasted".

CPU - the Central Processing Unit. The processing chip that is the "brains" of a computer.

crash - a system malfunction in which the computer stops working and has to be restarted.

cursor - The pointer, usually arrow or cross shaped, which is controlled by the mouse.

database - an electronic list of information that can be sorted and/or searched.

data - (the plural of datum) information processed by a computer.

defragment - (also - optimize) to concatenate fragments of data into contiguous blocks in memory or on a hard drive.

desktop - the shaded or colored backdrop of the screen.

dialog box - an on-screen message box that appears when the PC requires additional information before completing a command.

digitize - to convert linear, or analog, data into digital data which can be used by the computer.

disk - a spinning platter made of magnetic or optically etched material on which data can be stored.

disk drive - the machinery that writes the data from a disk and/or writes data to a disk.

document - a file you create, as opposed to the application which created it.

DOS - acronym for Disk Operating System - used in IBM PCs.

download - to transfer data from one computer to another. (If you are on the receiving end, you are downloading. If you are on the sending end, you are uploading ).

drag - to move the mouse while its button is being depressed.

drag and drop - a feature which allows one to drag the icon for a document on top of the icon for an application, thereby launching the application and opening the document.

driver - a file on a computer which tells it how to communicate with an add-on piece of equipment (like a printer).

Ethernet - a protocol for fast communication and file transfer across a network.

expansion slot - a connector inside the computer which allows one to plug in a printed circuit board that provides new or enhanced features.

file - the generic word for an application, document, control panel or other computer data.

floppy - a 3.5 inch square rigid disk which holds data. (so named for the earlier 5.25 and 8 inch disks that were flexible).

folder - an electronic subdirectory which contains files.

font - a typeface that contains the characters of an alphabet or some other letterforms.

fragmentation - The breaking up of a file into many separate locations in memory or on a disk.

freeze - a system error which causes the cursor to lock in place.

gig - a gigabyte = 1024 megabytes.

hard drive - a large capacity storage device made of multiple disks housed in a rigid case.

highlight - to select by clicking once on an icon or by highlighting text in a document.

icon - a graphic symbol for an application, file or folder.

installer - software used to install a program on your hard drive.

K - short for kilobyte.

keyboard shortcut - a combination of keystrokes that performs some function otherwise found in a pulldown menu.

kilobyte - 1024 bytes.

landscape - in printing from a computer, to print sideways on the page.

launch - start an application.

Measurements (summary) -

\*a bit = one binary digit (1 or 0) \*"bit" is derived from the contraction b'it (binary digit) -> 8 bits = one byte

\*1024 bytes = one kilobyte

\*K = kilobyte

\*Kb = kilobit

\*MB = megabyte

\*Mb = megabit

\*MB/s = megabytes per second

\*Mb/s = megabits per second

\*bps = bits per second

i.e., 155 Mb/s = 19.38 MB/s

MB - short for megabyte.

megabyte - 1024 kilobytes.

memory - the temporary holding area where data is stored while it is being used or changed; the amount of RAM a computer has installed.

menu - a list of program commands listed by topic.

menu bar - the horizontal bar across the top of the PC's screen that lists the menus.

multi tasking - running more than one application in memory at the same time.

operating system - the system software that controls the computer.

palette - a small floating window that contains tools used in a given application.

partition - a subdivision of a hard drives surface that is defined and used as a separate drive.

paste - to insert text, or other material, from the clipboard or copy buffer.

PC - acronym for personal computer, commonly used to refer to an IBM or IBM clone computer which uses DOS.

peripheral - an add-on component to your computer.

pop-up menu - any menu that does not appear at the top of the screen in the menu bar. (may pop up or down)

port - a connection socket, or jack on the PC.

print spooler - a program that stores documents to be printed on the hard drive, thereby freeing the memory up and allowing other functions to be performed while printing goes on in the background.

QuickTime - the Apple system extension that gives one the ability to compress, edit and play animation, movies and sound on the Mac.

RAM - acronym for Random-Access Memory.

reset switch - a switch on the PC that restarts the computer in the event of a crash or freeze.

resize box - the small square at the lower right corner of a window which, when dragged, resizes the window.

ROM - acronym for Read Only Memory; memory that can only be read from and not written to.

root directory - the main hard drive window. (C:)

save - to write a file onto a disk.

save as - (a File menu item) to save a previously saved file in a new location and/or with a new name.

scroll - to shift the contents of a window to bring hidden items into view.

scroll bar - a bar at the bottom or right side of a window that contains the scroll box and allows scrolling.

scroll box - the box in a scroll bar that is used to navigate through a window.

serial port - a port that allows data to be transmitted in a series (one after the other), such as the printer and modem ports. (Rarely used since USB was invented)

server - a central computer dedicated to sending and receiving data from other computers (on a network).

shut down - the command from the Special menu that shuts down the Mac safely.

software - files on disk that contain instructions for a computer.

spreadsheet - a program designed to look like an electronic ledger.

start up disk - the disk containing system software and is designated to be used to start the computer.

surge suppressor - a power strip that has circuits designed to reduce the effects of surge in electrical power. (not the same as a UPS)

System file - a file in the System folder that allows your Mac to start and run.

System folder - an all-important folder that contains at least the System files. (Windows Directory)

title bar - the horizontal bar at the top of a window which has the name of the file or folder it represents.

upload - to send a file from one computer to another through a network.

Uninterruptible Power Source (UPS) - a constantly charging battery pack which powers the computer. A UPS should have enough charge to power your computer for several minutes in the event of a total power failure, giving you time to save your work and safely shut down.

UPS - acronym for Uninterruptible Power Source.

USB - Acronym for Universal Serial Bus (Used for connecting peripherals such as Cameras and Printers)

virtual memory - using part of your hard drive as though it were "RAM".

zoom box - a small square in the upper right corner of a window which, when clicked, will expand the window to fill the whole screen.