

Computer Jargon Glossary of Terms

Version 2.0 Updated 11.10.11

DISCLAIMER: Due to the speed in which technology develops, this list is by no means comprehensive and will be updated continually. If you discover any errors or omissions, please contact the author, Gerard Damiano, at macdaddy@gerardist.com.

404 error: An error message received when you try to access a web page that either doesn't exist or is unavailable at the address you gave.

80211a, 80211b, 80211g, 80211i, 80211n

Different standards for operating wireless networks (**Wi-Fi**). Loosely the higher the letter, the faster the speed. So far they are mostly incompatible with each other.

80286, 80386, 80486 (or 286, 386, 486)

Three generations of PC **processor**, the ancestors of Intel's **Pentium**, now obsolete.

ActiveX: A Windows technology, which allows programmers to do various things on your computer. Unfortunately it also allows **hackers** to do *bad* things to your computer, particularly via web pages in Internet Explorer, and is safest switched off.

ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line): A method of connecting a computer to the internet over an ordinary phone line using **ethernet** office networking technology instead of an ordinary **modem**, which produces a much faster (**broadband**) connection. Asymmetric because it is faster from internet to PC than the other way (also true of a 56K modem).

Adware: Software which displays advertisements on your computer. Sometimes installed as part of a "free" application, sometimes by stealth. See also **Malware**, **Spyware**.

AFAICS, AFAIK, AFAIR (As Far As I Can See/Know/Recall) Internet slang.

AGP (Advanced Graphics Port): A special slot on the PC **motherboard** for graphics cards, and the format of the cards themselves.

AI (Artificial Intelligence): A program designed to respond "intelligently" to various situations, for example the computer opponent(s) in a game.

AIUI: (As I Understand It) Internet slang.

Alias: See **shortcut**

always-on: An internet connection which remains on 24/7 such as **ADSL** or **cable**, rather than only connecting on demand like a dialup.

AMD: AMD is a leading manufacturer of **processor** chips for PCs, including the **Athlon** and **Duron** chips.

antispam: An antispam program is used to filter out email **spam**, and sometimes to block it or complain about it.

antivirus: Software which protects computers from viruses and suchlike. Has to be updated frequently to keep up with the latest threats, so is usually sold with a subscription which enables you to download updates from the internet.

AOL (America On Line): An Internet Service Provider, or **ISP**. AOL were in business as a large commercial **bulletin board** before the internet really took off. Now they are an **ISP** specialising in family-friendly internet access.

Apple: Apple, Inc. makes the only successful personal computer which doesn't use Microsoft Windows, the **Macintosh**, the popular **iPod** music player, the **iPhone**, and the **iPad**.

Applet: A small program used to carry out a particular task, often on a web page. See **Java**.

Application: Software used to carry out a particular task, such as word processing or desktop publishing. Essentially another word for program.

App: (short for Application) refers to a downloadable program which expands the functionality of a smart phone.

Architecture: The basic design of a computer's hardware. Computers with different architecture, such as the PC and the Mac, cannot run each others' programs.

ASCII (*American Standard Code for Information Interchange*): An early and very basic format for text files, standard across pretty much all computers and mail systems. It only includes upper and lower case letters, numbers, and standard punctuation marks, but more sophisticated text formats still tend to be based on it. An ASCII file is a basic text-only file generated by a program like Notepad.

ATAPI (*ATtachment Packet Interface*); An upgrade to **EIDE** which allows the hard disk controller to control CD drives as well. Almost all CD and DVD drives are controlled this way.

Athlon: A PC **processor** produced by AMD, a leading chip manufacturer. You will often see a number such as 2700 following the word Athlon, which is a rough measure of the processor's speed - the higher the number, the faster the chip.

ATB (*All The Best*) Internet slang.

ATM (*At The Moment*) Internet slang.

Attachment: A file sent by **email** is "attached" to the email. An attachment can be a picture, a word processor document, a program or any other type of file. You should never open an attachment if you are not sure what it is, because some **viruses** propagate as email attachments; but they can't infect your machine if you don't open the attachment.

AUP (*Acceptable Use Policy*): A document setting out what an Internet Service Provider deems an acceptable use of their services, usually published on their website. Typically it will forbid the publication of obscene or defamatory material, and sending email or newsgroup **spam**. If you violate your ISP's AUP, they will usually close your account down immediately.

autocorrect: A feature in MS Word and other programs which automatically corrects your spelling, and even your grammar, as you type.

Avatar: A picture or figure representing a person in an online environment.

Backup, back up: A backup is an extra copy of your work, eg documents, pictures etc, saved onto a removable storage medium such as CD, DVD or an external hard drive, so that if your computer is stolen or breaks down you don't lose everything. Backup is a noun, back up is a verb.

Backwards-compatible: A program (or system) designed to work with data generated by earlier versions of itself, even though the format may since have changed completely.

bandwidth A measure of total amount of data transferred over a period of time, often used to measure how busy a website is. A **webhost** will usually base its charges on the bandwidth a website uses, ie how much data per month is requested from it.

beat-'em-up: A computer game in which you control one or more characters fighting onscreen using karate, kung-fu and so forth. Derives from **shoot-'em-up**.

biometric: A system that examines biological things like fingerprints or retinas, usually for security purposes.

BIOS: (*Basic Input/Output System*; pr. "by-oss") A program built into every PC for setting up very basic things, like how many hard and floppy disks you have and what type they are; the first thing that loads when you start your PC. You usually only need to access the BIOS if you are upgrading your hardware, eg adding more **RAM** or an extra **disk drive**, or setting a power-on password. BIOS settings are stored in a special type of memory called **CMOS**.

Bit: The smallest unit of information in a computer, can either equal 0 or 1. Eight bits equal one **byte**.

Bitmap: See **bmp**.

blog: (*weBLOG*) A bit of information created by a blogger (the author). It is a personal diary documenting someone's life and/or thoughts and observations.

blogosphere: a collective term encompassing all blogs and their interconnections. It is a perception that blogs exist together as a connected community (or as a collection of connected communities), or as a social network.

Bluetooth: A wireless communication system for PCs and other computing devices, which is suitable for connecting devices together over short distances of up to 30 feet (see **Wi-Fi**). Most commonly used to connect phones with wireless headsets or computers to wireless keyboards and mice.

bmp (*BitMaP*): A standard type of graphics file. An uncompressed format, so the files tend to be fairly big.

Boot, boot up: Usually used to mean "start up the computer". Literally, the process of loading up the operating system and getting the computer ready for use. See **Reboot**. A "boot password" is a password you have to give to start up the computer.

Boot disk: A removable disk which holds a copy of the operating system, or enough of it to start the computer, useful if the computer won't start up properly from its hard disk.

Bot (*roBOT*): A semi-automated program, usually performing a function on the internet such as indexing webpages or sorting email.

bps: (*Bits Per Second*) A measure of how quickly information is being transferred, usually via a modem or network. Divide by ten to get an approximation of the number of characters per second (**cps**). See also **Kbps**, **Mbps**.

BRB (*Be Right Back*) Internet slang.

Broadband: Internet access over a connection much faster than a dial-up modem, such as **ADSL** or cable.

Browser: A program used for viewing World Wide Web pages on the Internet. The most common browsers include Microsoft's Internet Explorer (built-in to Windows), Safari (built into the Macintosh), Firefox, Opera, and many more.

BTW (*By The Way*) Internet slang.

Buffer: A temporary storage area for data, often used to "smooth out" incoming audio or video streams. Several seconds worth of material is stored in the buffer and it is then played back from there, so that if there is a brief interruption in the stream your music or video doesn't stop.

Bug: Error, especially in a program, that has been missed in testing. The story goes that the original bug was an insect that got itself cremated inside an electrical circuit in an early computer, causing it to fail. It took them ages to figure out what was causing the problem, and when they eventually found the bug, the story passed into legend.

Bulletin Board: A semi-public area which computer users can connect to using a modem, to read and post

messages and/or exchange files. Now largely replaced by websites.

Burn: Create a CD or DVD.

Byte: A basic unit of measurement for pieces of information; the space required to store one character. See also **Bit, Kilobyte, Megabyte, Gigabyte, Terabyte.**

Cable: An always-on high speed internet connection similar to **ADSL** but using cable TV technology instead of a phoneline.

Cache: A temporary storage area for frequently or recently used data, either in memory, on your hard disk or the internet. For example, if you go back to a webpage you have recently visited, your computer will usually be able to display it from the internet cache on your hard disk, so it won't need to download it from the internet again.

CAD (Computer Aided Design): Software used to produce complex technical drawings by designers and engineers.

CCD: (Charge Coupled Device) The component of a **scanner** or digital camera which actually takes the pictures. The quality of image it is capable of is usually measured in **Megapixels** - the higher the number, the more detailed the image.

CD Burner: A CD drive that can create ("burn") CDs.

CD-ROM, CD-R (Compact Disk-Read Only Memory): A misnomer, as strictly speaking it is not memory but storage. Identical to standard music CDs. It can hold about 700 megabytes in total. Once a CD-ROM has been created its contents cannot be changed.

CD-RW (Compact Disk-ReWriter): A CD drive which can create CDs, either audio or data, using special rewritable CDs which are also often called CD-RWs. A CD-RW drive can also create ordinary CDs, though not rewrite them.

Celeron: A PC processor - Intel's budget chip, cheaper than the **Pentium**, but also less powerful.

Character: A letter of the alphabet, number, space or punctuation mark is a character.

Chatroom: A website where you can meet and chat live (via the keyboard) with other internet users. Most such websites have multiple "rooms", each dedicated to a particular topic or theme.

Chip: A silicon wafer with millions of tiny circuits engraved on it - what computers are made of..

Clipboard: A temporary storage area in a computer, which can hold one thing at a time. When you cut (Ctrl-X) or copy (Ctrl-C) highlighted text, documents or whatever in Windows they are sent to the clipboard; when you paste (Ctrl-V) they are copied from the clipboard to the cursor position. Sending something to the clipboard automatically overwrites its previous contents.

Cluster: Data stored on a disk is spread across a number of clusters, small physical areas on the disk. How big they are depends on the way the disk is formatted - generally a few kilobytes each.

CMOS (Complementary Metal Oxide Semiconductor; pr. "see-moss"):

A special type of memory which retains its data when the PC is switched off, used to store settings for things like what type of hard disk you have, and how much memory. The settings are accessed via the **BIOS**.

CMYK (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Keystone black): The standard four colours used by most printers - almost any colour can be created out of these. See also **RGB**.

codec (COmpressor/DECompressor): A small piece of computer code that tells the computer how to decode particular types of information, usually video files. If your video player won't play a particular format, you can usually download and install a codec which will tell it how.

Compatible: Compatible pieces of equipment can work together; incompatible ones can't.

Compression: A way of making files smaller, either to fit into restricted storage space or to speed up transmission over the Internet. Popular compression standards include **JPEG** and **GIF** for pictures, **MP3** for music files, **MPEG** for movies, and **zip** for folders and just about everything else.

Console: Nowadays usually refers to a dedicated gaming computer such as the Playstation or X-Box. Originally meant a terminal connected to a mainframe computer.

Cookie: A small data file stored on your computer by a website, in theory to allow it to "remember" your preferences, but in practise mostly used to track which adverts you have seen. You can set most browsers to reject all cookies, or to ask your permission before storing them, but this can generate multiple error messages on some websites and is generally more hassle than it's worth - they are pretty harmless.

cps (*Characters Per Second*): A measure of how quickly information, particularly text, is being transferred over a modem link or network. See also **bps**.

CPU (*Central Processing Unit*): The nerve centre of the computer : everything flows through it. Often just called "the processor". The best known PC processors are Intel's **Pentium** and AMD's **Athlon**.

Crack, cracked: A crack is a small program intended to defeat software's copy protection, thus allowing unlicensed copies to be made - stealing it, in effect. Software that is distributed with its copy protection disabled or bypassed has been "cracked".

Crash: When a computer program or operating system stops working completely, it is said to have "crashed". When a computer crashes it usually needs to be **rebooted** before it can be used again. See also **lockup**.

Crawler: A program that indexes pages on the World Wide Web for search engines.

CRT (*Cathode Ray Tube*): The imaging technology that was used in old desktop monitors and televisions. Provides an excellent color display, but is extremely bulky, now supplanted by **TFT**.

CSS (*Cascading Style Sheets*) A set of **HTML** commands used to control the style of web pages, much more complex than the tag-set it is intended to replace, but also more powerful and particularly useful for retaining a uniform style across a large website. Used by professional web designers.

Cyberspace: Loosely speaking, the internet, and virtual places thereon.

Cybersquatter: Someone who buys up internet domain names in order to sell them on at a profit.

Data: Any information created by a user, such as documents, pictures or sound recordings.

Database: A **program** used for organising any kind of information on a computer into a searchable form, anything from a list of contacts to a complex stock control and accounts system.

DDR (*Double Data Rate*): A fast type of **RAM** for a PC, originally only used on high performance **graphics cards** but now being used for general memory in most high-end PCs. DDR2 is a yet faster version.

Default: A default setting is one you haven't changed - what a program will do (or use) if you don't tell it any different. "Accept the defaults" means leave any settings as they are.

Desktop: A computer designed to sit on a desk (as opposed to a laptop). In **Windows**, it also means the screen you see when you aren't running any programs, with "My Computer", the Recycle Bin and so on.

Digital: Literally "to do with numbers". Often used to describe a device using computer technology to replace older, traditional technologies. For example, a digital camera is one that stores images electronically rather than on chemical film.

DIMM: (*Dual In-line Memory Module*; pr. "dim") A module of **RAM** (memory) for a PC, replacing the older **SIMM** specification.

Directory: An area on a disk for storing files, particularly in **DOS**. Usually called a **folder** in Windows.

Disk: Generic term for a type of storage device, such as a **hard disk**. So called because the important part, where the information is actually stored, is circular, although you can't see it because it is hidden away inside a protective shell.

Diskette: Also known as a floppy disk. Called a diskette because it was smaller than the original huge floppy disks, now long obsolete.

DNS: (*Domain Name Service/System*): An internet service that converts a human web address such as www.johnsmith.com into the numeric address that computers use, called the **IP address**. "Can't resolve DNS" usually means that this conversion has failed and therefore the website can't be found.

Domain: An internet address owned by a company, organization, or individual, such as cnn.com, nasa.gov. See also **TLD**.

Dongle: Originally slang for a plug-in module to copy protect software (see **Software Protection Dongle**), the term is used for any small module that plugs in and sticks out of a socket; for example, USB flash memory drives and other USB devices such as a wireless mouse receiver or cellular air card. If it uses a very short cable, it may still be called a dongle.

DOS (*Disk Operating System*; pr. "doss"): Usually refers to MS-DOS, which was the standard operating system for PCs, now obsolete. Controlled by typing in text commands and has several serious limitations.

DoS (*Denial of Service*): A form of attack on (usually) an internet service, which aims to prevent the service from operating properly, often by bombarding it with more information than it can process. See also **Mailbomb**.

Download: To transfer information (files) from a network (such as the Internet) onto a user's PC. See also **upload**.

dpi (*Dots Per Inch*): A measure of picture quality, often used to measure printer capabilities. The higher the number, the better the quality.

Driver: A small program used by the operating system to control hardware such as a printer, scanner, or a sound or video card. Often downloading the latest driver for a device from the manufacturer's website will improve its functionality.

DRM (*Digital Rights Management*): Software intended to prevent the unauthorised duplication of copyrighted video or audio, usually built into a computer's operating system.

Dual core:, dual-core **processors** which have two complete processors on the same chip, allowing computers to handle multiple tasks faster. See also **quad-core**.

Dual layer: A technology allowing two layers of data to be written to a DVD instead of the usual one, thus increasing its capacity.

DVD (*Digital Versatile Disk*): A more advanced version of the standard CD which can hold far more information. Widely used for high-quality digital movies. DVD drives can usually also read ordinary CDs.

DVD RW, DVD Writer (*Digital Versatile Disk ReWriter*): A **DVD** drive that can create ("write") rewriteable DVDs. There are several competing formats, but most recent drives support more than one. To add to the confusion, they tend to have very similar names: for example DVD+RW and DVD-RW are completely different formats, and incompatible with each other.

DVI (*Direct Video Interface*): A special type of connector for computer monitors, particularly flat panels.

E-commerce: Conducting business over the internet, and particularly the World Wide Web.

EIDE: (*Enhanced Integrated Drive Electronics*) An extremely popular **hard disk** format. As its name implies, an upgraded version of **IDE**.

EISA (*Extended Industry Standard Architecture*; pr. "ee-icer") An upgraded version of **ISA**, now obsolete; usually used with reference to expansion cards.

Email (or **e-mail**) (*Electronic mail* ; pr. "ee-mail"): A way to send messages between computers, or more to the point their users, either over a network or the Internet. E-mail is usually just text. Although it is possible to send pictures, sounds or even programs as e-mail, you should check with the person you are sending to first, as some e-mail systems don't accept messages over a certain size (even the longest text message is tiny compared to a picture).

Emoticon: (*EMOTION ICON*) A group of symbols used to indicate emotions in **email** or **newsgroups**. The most popular is the **smiley** :-) or :) (look at it sideways), but there are lots of variations including the sad face :-(, the wink ;-) , and the astonished face :-0 .

Encrypt, encryption: Coding data so that it can't be read by **hackers** etc when transmitted over the internet. For example, any reputable website selling goods by credit card will encrypt your credit card number and personal details.

Ethernet: The most popular system used to connect a computer to a **network**, including most **broadband** internet connections. The computer needs to be fitted with a suitable **expansion card**, usually called an Ethernet card.

Excel: The most popular **spreadsheet** program for PCs, part of the Microsoft Office suite.

exe (or .exe): (*EXEcutable*; pr. "exie", "dot exie") A **file** which is usually the main part of a program used on a PC. A program may consist of just an exe file and nothing else, or there may be dozens of files, including more exes.

Expansion card (or board): A circuitboard which can be inserted into an **expansion slot** on the PC's **motherboard**, to give the PC extra capabilities. Common examples are sound cards, graphics cards and network cards.

Expansion slot: A socket on a PC motherboard into which you can insert expansion cards to increase the PC's capabilities. Most PCs have several **PCI** slots, plus an **AGP** slot for a graphics card.

Extension: The part of a filename after the dot (.), often used to tell Windows what type of file it is. For example, files ending in .txt, .rtf or .doc are text files. Files ending .jpg, .gif, or .tif are pictures.

Facebook: A social networking website which is currently the largest on the internet. As of July 2011, Facebook boasts more than 750 million active users. It was launched in February 2004, by Mark Zuckerberg with his college roommates and fellow computer science students at Harvard University. See **Social Network**

FAQ (*Frequently Asked Questions*): A document on a website or in a newsgroup which gives answers to common problems and questions. Look for an FAQ if you have a problem with something, before you email or phone support.

FAT: (*File Allocation Table*; pr. "fat") A sort of index of where data is stored on a hard disk, used by a PC operating system.

FDD (*Fixed Disk Drive, Floppy Disk Drive*). The slot on the PC which accepts **floppy disks**, almost always referred to as "Drive A:" by the computer.

FFS: (*For F***'s Sake*) Internet slang, not suitable for polite company.

File: All information on a computer is stored in files, whether it is part of a program, a document created by a user, a picture, or anything else. Most software is made up of dozens, sometimes hundreds, of different files.

File server: A type of computer used on **networks** to provide files and other services to other computers. Often just called a server.

Filter: A device which allows you to use an ordinary phone over a telephone line set up for an **ADSL** internet connection. Also called a micro-filter.

Firefox: A popular alternative **browser**, available free from Mozilla. It has a number of useful extra features, but perhaps the best is that it doesn't support Windows' **ActiveX**, thus preventing rogue websites from using ActiveX to hijack your computer.

Firewall: Originally a dedicated computer between you and the internet, preventing hackers, spammers and similar undesirables from taking over your PC. Now often just a program running on your computer, performing the same task. Absolutely essential if you have an always-on internet connection such as **ADSL** or **cable**.

Firewire: A standard for very fast data transfer, popular for applications that use very large files, particularly video editing. Requires special hardware, generally added to a computer as an **expansion card**.

Flame: Internet slang for an email or newsgroup post insulting or telling someone off. They range from elegant rapier wit to obscene profanity.

Flamewar: A public trading of insults in a **newsgroup** or forum. Sometimes flamewars get so out of hand that there are hundreds of flames in the newsgroup and almost nothing else.

Flash: A technology for displaying animations (mostly) on webpages, created by the Macromedia Corporation (now owned by Adobe). The Flash Player is a plugin which enables internet browsers to display the animations.

Flash drive: (AKA jump drive, keychain drive) A removable data storage device, usually thumb sized and plugged into a computer's USB port. **See Thumb Drive.**

Floppy disk: Also known as a **diskette**. Originally called floppy disks because they were round and non-rigid, which had a capacity of only 1.44 MB per diskette.

FOAD (<F**K> *Off And Die*) Internet slang. Pretty self-explanatory really.

Folder: An area on a disk for storing **files** in. Folders can also contain other folders, which in turn can contain more folders, and so on almost to infinity. Also called a directory, especially by people used to **DOS**.

Forum: A public or semi-public area on a website or bulletin board where you can read and post messages on a particular topic, allowing public debate. See also **Usenet**, **newsgroups**.

FPS

1 (*Frames Per Second*): A measure of the smoothness and quality of animations, particularly in computer games. The more frames per second, the better the quality.

2 (*First Person Shooter*): A computer game where you shoot things, played from a first person perspective, ie with you standing behind the gun(s). Also known as a **shoot-'em-up**.

frag: Shoot someone in a computer game.

FTP (*File Transfer Protocol*): A way of transferring files to or from an internet server. Often how you **upload** webpages to the internet.

GB See **Gigabyte**.

GHz (*Gigahertz - billions of cycles per second*): Often used as a measurement of a PC processor chip's speed and power, with bigger numbers meaning a bit more speed, and a higher price. 1000 MHz = 1.0 GigaHertz. See also **MHz**.

GIF (*Graphics Interchange Format*): A popular type of compressed graphics (picture) file, widely used on the WWW. Best for artwork with 256 colours or less. See also **jpg**, **compression**.

Gigabyte (or Gig): Unit of measurement for pieces of information : approximately 1 billion bytes, 1 million kilobytes, or 1000 megabytes. Hard disk sizes are usually measured in gigabytes. Often shortened to "GB", "Gig" or just G.

GIGO (*Garbage In Garbage Out*; pr. "guy-go"): Programmer's slang. A reminder of a fundamental principle of computing, that unexpected results are often caused by feeding a computer bad data, rather than a fault in the computer or program.

GPF (*General Protection Fault*): An common error message in early versions of **Windows**, seen when a program tried to do something Windows thought it shouldn't, often locking up the PC.

Graphics: A catch-all term for anything involving drawing images on a PC screen. A game with great graphics is one that is visually spectacular.

Graphics card (or controller): An **expansion card** which the PC uses to control the monitor's graphics.

GUI (*Graphical User Interface*; pr. "gooey"): means that a program's controls are represented pictorially, with symbols, buttons and so forth, and mostly controlled by pointing and clicking with a mouse rather than having to type in text commands. Almost all modern software is GUI controlled. (see also **Windows**, **WYSIWYG**).

Hacker: Person who uses computers to access ("hack") systems they are not supposed to have access to, eg other people's financial details, personnel files, military secrets etc. Hacking can get you arrested.

HAND (*Have A Nice Day*): Internet slang, often used ironically.

Hard disk: A computer's main storage for programs and data. Originally named to distinguish it from **floppy disks**.

Hardware: The physical parts of a computer.

HD, HDD (*Hard Disk Drive*): The main data storage unit in a computer. See **hard disk**.

Homepage: A page on the **World Wide Web**. Confusingly "homepage" is used indiscriminately to describe several slightly different things : an amateur's hobby site; the front or main page of any website; or the page which your browser first goes to when you start it up.

Hotspot: A location where a computer can connect to a wireless network (see **Wi-Fi**).

HTH (*Hope This Helps*): Internet slang, often added at the end of an email or newsgroup post answering a question.

HTML (*HyperText Markup Language*): The system used for creating **World Wide Web** pages, ordinary text with commands for special effects like pictures, colour and links enclosed between <> symbols. You can add the various HTML commands to ordinary text by hand, or have it generated for you by software such as Dreamweaver.

http (*HyperText Transfer Protocol*): The **protocol** or "language" computers use to send web pages over the internet. Almost every WWW address starts "http://", though many browsers understand if you omit it.

Hub: A basic device for connecting computers together to form a **network**.

Hung: If a computer (or sometimes just a program) gets completely stuck and refuses to do anything, it has hung. See also **crash, lockup**.

Hyperlink: Any kind of link on a webpage. Clicking a hyperlink will, in most cases, take you to a new page or graphic.

Hypertext: A way of presenting text so that you can click on a link within it, say a cross-reference, and instantly be transported to the relevant text, whether it is elsewhere in the current document or in another document entirely. The most obvious examples are **World Wide Web** pages and Windows helpfiles.

IANAL (*I Am Not A Lawyer*) Internet slang. Amazing how often this one comes up.

IBM (*International Business Machines*): The company that designed and built the first PCs, and still a giant of the industry. Standard PCs were originally referred to as "IBM compatible", although IBM no longer controls the PC standard.

Icon: Small pictogram either representing a **file**, or providing shortcuts for carrying out common tasks such as **saving** and printing inside an **application**.

IDE (*Integrated Drive Electronics*): A type of PC hard disk, now obsolete, the forerunner of **EIDE**.

IE (*Internet Explorer*) Microsoft's web browser, included free in Windows. If followed by a number (IE6, IE5 etc) it refers to a particular version of that browser.

IIRC: (*If I Recall Correctly*) Internet slang.

IM: (*Instant Messaging*) A program that allows you to "chat" live via keyboard over the internet, or over phone lines.

IMO, IMHO (*In My (Honest or Humble) Opinion*): Internet slang.

Inkjet: A very popular colour printer technology, which works by squirting tiny jets of ink onto paper with great precision.

Install: To transfer a program or programs from CD ROM or DVD onto a PC's hard disk. Most programs need to be installed before they can be used, though a few can be run directly from the CD or DVD.

Intel: The Intel Corporation is the leading manufacturer of **processor** chips for PCs, most famously the **Pentium**.

Internet: A vast worldwide network of computers, accessible to anyone with a computer, a modem, and a phone line. Provides access to e-mail and the World Wide Web. The Internet grew out of the need of academics to swap information with colleagues all over the world, and of the US military's need for a computer and communications network that couldn't easily be knocked out. As a result it is very difficult to censor, since anything placed on the World Wide Web from anywhere is instantly available everywhere in the world.

Intranet: A private miniature internet which allows no or only limited access to the internet proper, for example to allow easy sharing of confidential files within a company or corporation.

IP (*Internet Protocol*): A **protocol** (computer language) which computers use to communicate with and over the internet.

IP address (*Internet Protocol address*): A unique number assigned to any computer connected to the internet, including yours, in the format 255.255.255.255. Each of the four blocks of numbers can be any value from 0 to 255. They can either be assigned permanently ("static IP") or per session ("dynamic IP"). Most ISPs assign them dynamically, ie when you connect to the internet.

iPad: The iPad is a line of tablet computers designed, developed and marketed by Apple Inc. primarily as a

platform for audio-visual media including books, periodicals, movies, music, games, and web content. It runs the same operating system as the iPhone, and can run its own applications (Apps) as well as iPhone applications which are downloaded via the Apple App Store.

iPod: The **Apple** Corporation's massively successful portable music player.

iPhone: iPhone is a line of internet and multimedia enabled smartphones designed and marketed by Apple, first released in 2007. It can function as a video camera, a camera phone, can send texts and receive visual voicemail. It is a portable media player, and an Internet client with email and web browsing capabilities, and both Wi-Fi and 3G connectivity. The user interface is built around the device's multi-touch screen, including a virtual keyboard rather than a physical one. It is also capable of running third-party as well as Apple application software (Apps), available from the App Store, of which today more than 425,000 are available for download.

ISA: (*Industry Standard Architecture*; pr."icer") A once-common type of PC **expansion card**, now obsolete; see also **EISA, PCI**.

ISDN: (*Integrated Services Digital Network*) An early high speed (for its time) internet connection system mainly aimed at business, now largely obsolete. Requires a special type of **modem** called a **Terminal Adaptor**.

ISP: (*Internet Service Provider*) A company which provides a connection to the internet, or internet services.

ISTM: (*It Seems To Me*) Internet slang.

ISTR (*I Seem To Recall*): Internet slang.

IT (*Information Technology*): What computers are all about - using technology to manage information. The computer industry is often called the IT industry, and computer departments often refer to themselves as the IT department.

Java: A programming language used to create small programs called **applets**, often to produce special effects on web pages.

Javascript: A set of program instructions, vaguely similar to **Java** but not actually related, written straight into the HTML of a webpage instead of as an applet.

Joe job, joe-job: Spam email apparently promoting a website that actually has nothing to do with it, intended to get the owner of the website in trouble.

JPEG, jpg (*Joint Picture [Experts] Group*; pr. "jay-peg") A standard type of compressed graphics file, widely used on the WWW. Particularly good for photographs. See also **compression**.

Killer app (*Killer application*): A program that is so clearly useful to someone that they will rush out and buy it immediately.

Kbps: (*KiloBits Per Second*): A measure of speed of information flow, usually over a modem. A Kilobit is a thousand **bits**. See also **bps, Mbps**.

Kilobyte: Unit of measurement for pieces of information : actually 1024 Bytes (characters), but in practice almost always rounded down to 1000. Often written as just K, eg 250 K is 250 Kilobytes (250,000 bytes/characters - well not exactly, but close enough). See also **Megabyte, Gigabyte**.

LAN (*Local Area Network*; pr."lan"): A network of computers connected together, usually in a single department or building. See also **WAN**.

Laptop: A portable computer, with a CPU, screen and keyboard combined in one small package. They can do everything a desktop computer can do, but are usually more expensive because of the extra miniaturization required. Also called a **notebook**.

Laser printer, laserprinter: A high speed printer intended mainly for office use, usually better for text than graphics, especially in colour.

LCD (*Liquid Crystal Display*): A type of computer screen, originally used only on **laptops** but now increasingly used for desktop PCs and even televisions.

Linux: A rival PC **operating system** to Microsoft Windows, but unlike Windows it is "open source", which means that anyone can create their own version of it without having to pay royalties, and requires a much less powerful computer. Initially required a lot of technical knowledge, but is rapidly being made much more **user-friendly** and may soon start to challenge Windows' dominance.

LMAO (*Laughing My Ass Off*) Internet slang. Also **LMFAO**.

Lockup, locked up: An event which causes a computer to get stuck and refuse to do anything is a lockup. The computer is then said to be **hung** or locked up.

LOL (*Laughing Out Loud*): Internet slang.

Mac, Macintosh: **Apple Inc.**'s alternative to the PC, much loved by its devotees. Relatively incompatible with PCs, though most popular software is also released in Mac format.

Mac address: The unique serial number of an **Ethernet card**, required for connecting a PC to a **network**. (Nothing to do with Apple Macs, despite the name).

Macro: A small program used to automate repetitive or complex tasks. The Windows equivalent is a **wizard**. The Mac equivalent is an "Apple Script".

Mailbomb: One or more very large emails, sent to someone maliciously to stop them being able to use their mailbox and/or internet connection, because all the available **bandwidth** is being used up downloading the mailbomb(s). Most **ISPs** will close down any account responsible for mailbombing. See also **DoS** (Denial of Service).

Malware: A catch-all term for software installed by stealth onto a PC for malevolent purposes (hence the name). These may include displaying unwanted ads (**adware**), installing software you didn't ask for, or spying on your activities (**spyware**) and reporting them back to the culprit so that he can steal your bank account, address book etc.

Mbps (*MegaBits Per Second*): A measure of speed of information flow over a network (and if it's measured in Mbps, it's reasonably quick.) A Megabit is one million **bits**. See also **bps**, **Kbps**.

Megabyte: Unit of measurement for pieces of information : approximately 1 million bytes or a thousand kilobytes. Often shortened to Meg or just MB. See also **Gigabyte**, **Kilobyte**, **Byte**.

MegaHertz: See **MHz**.

Megapixel: A million **pixels**. Often used to measure the quality of digital cameras : the higher the number the better the camera.

Memory (Also known as **RAM**): Where the computer holds whatever you are currently working on. The contents of memory are lost when the computer is switched off.

MFD (*Multi Function Device*): A combined printer, scanner, photocopier and fax machine.

MHz (*Megahertz*): Millions of cycles per second. Most often used as a measurement of a PC processor chip's speed and power, with bigger numbers meaning more speed and a higher price. See also **GHz**.

Micro (*Microcomputer*): When desktop computers first appeared in the 1970's, they were often called microcomputers, later shortened to micro, to distinguish them from the so-called minicomputers of the day, which

far from sitting on a desk were a good deal bigger than it! There was also a popular home computer called the BBC Micro, now long obsolete.

Micro-filter: A device which allows you to use an ordinary phone over a telephone line set up for an **ADSL** internet connection. Sometimes just called a filter.

Microsoft: By far the largest software provider for PCs, they created Windows, Microsoft Office (which includes Word, Excel, Access and Powerpoint), Internet Explorer, Outlook and many other widely used programs.

MIDI (*Musical Instrument Digital Interface*; pr. "middy"): A very popular standard for controlling musical instruments connected to computers. Many **soundcards** have a built-in synthesizer which can play back MIDI files, though if it's a cheap one they probably won't sound very good. A MIDI file is a set of instructions to play particular notes at particular intervals in particular styles, not a recording.

MIME (*Multipurpose Internet Mail Extension*; pr. "mime"): An encoding system used in **email**, mainly for sending attachments. Email was originally designed to just use plain text, so programs, graphics etc have to be sort of disguised as text for email systems to be able to handle them. MIME is more powerful than its predecessor, UUENCODE (pr. you-you-encode), but not all systems accept it.

MLM (*Multi-Level Marketing*): A scam similar to pyramid selling, once much in evidence on the internet, particularly in **spam**. Despite the claims of those promoting MLM, it is of dubious legality in most jurisdictions.

MMORPG (*Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game*). An online role-playing game (**RPG**) designed to be played by thousands of players simultaneously, such as Half-Life or World of Warcraft.

Modem (*MOdulator/DEModulator*): A device for allowing computers to communicate over a phone line. May be either an **expansion card**, or an external device plugged into one of the **serial ports**.

Monitor: A computer screen, display.

Motherboard: The main circuitboard in the computer - all the other bits and pieces are plugged into it.

Mouse: A device used to move a pointer around on the computer screen.

MP3 (*MPEG-1 audio layer 3*): A very popular standard for compressing audio and particularly music files down to a reasonable size with little or no perceptible loss of quality, and the files created using it - "an MP3" is an audio file. See **MPEG**, **Compression**.

MPEG (*Motion Picture Experts Group*; pr. "em-peg"): A set of standards for compressing video and audio files, and the committee that came up with them. Also, often used to mean movie files created to the MPEG standard.

Nameserver: An internet server which translates the alphabetic web addresses favoured by humans into the numeric ones used by computers.

Napster: A pioneering **peer-to-peer** internet file-sharing system. Because much of the data shared was copyrighted, and thus being distributed illegally, the operators of Napster were hit with a number of large lawsuits by the music industry, and later closed down. The name was bought and is now used by a legal pay-to-download service.

Network: A way of linking several computers together so that their users can share resources such as printers and documents, often via a central computer called a **server**. See also **LAN**, **WAN**, **Ethernet**.

Network card, Network Interface Card: An **Expansion card** which lets a PC communicate with a **network**, required for **broadband** Internet access. See also **Ethernet**, **NIC**.

Newbie (*New beginner*): Internet slang for someone who hasn't been using computers or the internet long. In gamer's slang: **NOOB**

Newsgroup (or just News): A public area where you can read and post messages on a particular topic or theme, allowing public discussion, either on the Internet or a Bulletin Board. Similar to a **forum**. Most newsgroups cover a specific topic, and newsgroup users get very annoyed if people post messages which are off-topic, ie not relevant to the topic under discussion. See also **Usenet**.

NIC (*Network Interface Card*): An **Expansion card** which lets a PC communicate with a **network** or use a **broadband** internet connection. Almost all modern NICs are **Ethernet** cards.

Notebook: A portable computer, with a CPU, screen and keyboard combined in one small package. They can do everything a desktop computer can do, but are usually more expensive because of the extra miniaturization required. Also called a **laptop**.

OCR (*Optical Character Recognition*): A program which attempts to convert a scanned image (ie a picture) of text into text that can be edited in a word processor. The result is rarely 100% accurate and must be carefully proofread, but it can save a lot of retyping.

OEM (*Original Equipment Manufacturer*) as opposed to a third-party manufacturer.

Office Suite: A related group of programs for business use, usually including a word-processor, spreadsheet, database and a number of other programs. The best known is Microsoft Office.

Off-topic: A message which is not relevant to a particular **newsgroup** or **forum** on the Internet is said to be "off-topic". Posting off-topic messages in newsgroups annoys people intensely, as they make it harder to follow the discussion properly.

Online: Connected to the internet, or of the internet.

Open Source: Software (usually) that is created and distributed with either relaxed or no copyright restrictions.

Operating System: Every computer has an operating system, which is a sort of master program that runs automatically when you switch the computer on, and continues running till you switch off. It is responsible for the many routine tasks required to keep a computer running : moving the pointer when you move the mouse, providing icons and menus, running other programs such as a word processor or a game which you may request, controlling the various disk drives, the screen and so on. The most widely used PC operating system is Microsoft **Windows**.

OS/2 (*Operating System 2*): A rival PC **operating system** to Microsoft Windows, produced by IBM in the 1990s, now obsolete.

Overwrite: Replace a computer file such as a document or picture with a newer version, destroying the earlier version. If you make changes to a document and save it with the same filename, the previous version is overwritten and usually cannot be restored.

P2P: See **peer-to-peer**

Palmtop: A small computer which fits into the palm of your hand. They run similar software to conventional PCs, but (unlike **notebook** PCs) are more limited in what they can do than desktop PCs, because of the constraints of miniaturisation. See **PDA**.

Parallel Port: A special socket for plugging a printer into a computer. The computer usually refers to the parallel port as LPT1.

Patch: A program which makes updates to computer software, usually to fix bugs which had not been detected when the software went on sale. The best place to look for a patch is on the software manufacturer's website.

PC (*Personal Computer*): Originally just short for "personal computer", PC is now an industry standard, partly evolved in the marketplace, partly agreed by a committee of the major players in the computer industry. A term which is often used erroneously to distinguish between Apple Macintosh (Mac) computers and all others.

PC 2011 (2010, 2009 etc): An agreed standard for new PCs, set each year by a committee of the major players in the computer industry.

PCI (*Peripheral Component Interconnect*): A standard for PC **expansion cards**, currently the most popular. A "PCI slot" is a socket on the **motherboard** for such cards.

PCI Express: A special type of PCI slot for the latest graphics cards, now replacing **AGP** in new computers.

PCMCIA (*Personal Computer Memory Card International Association*): A type of PC **expansion card**, the size of an ordinary credit card, mainly intended for use with **notebooks**.

PDA: (*Personal Digital Assistant*) A small handheld computer used for taking notes on the move, keeping contact information and so on. Now being replaced by smart phones. See also **palmtop**.

PDF (*Portable Document Format*): A popular document format, used mainly for online computer manuals, which retains the look of a printed book onscreen. PDFs are created using Adobe Acrobat, but can be read and displayed by many different programs including Internet Explorer.

Peer-to-peer: A type of **network** where computers are connected together directly, rather than via a **server**, allowing them to access each other's hard disk etc.

Pentium: The best known PC **processor** (or **CPU**), manufactured by Intel.

Peripheral: Anything that plugs into the computer, such as keyboard, printer etc.

Phishing: An internet scam in which a forged message from a "bank", or other business, provides a link for you to go to their website and "confirm your details" - but the website is a fake, and if you do enter your details they will be used to steal all your money. Note that a legitimate email from your bank should be addressed to you personally rather than "Dear customer" etc, and will never ask you to enter your PIN.

Pixel (*PICTure ELeMent*): All computer screen or printed images are made up of pixels, small square dots - the smaller the pixels, the higher the image quality.

pixelated: A picture that has been compressed so much that the pixels that make it up are large and visible to the naked eye, making the image look like it is made out of square blocks (which it is, but they shouldn't be visible).

Plasma: A type of very large screen, either TV or computer monitor. At present plasma screens aren't very suitable for computing because the images, although bright and colourful, aren't very sharp, especially when depicting motion.

Platform-independent: If something is platform-independent, you don't need a particular type of computer or particular software to use it. Perhaps the best example is the internet, which you can access from a PC, Mac or just about any other type of computer, and using a huge range of different software.

Plug'n'play (*Plug and Play*): A system which automatically detects any new hardware that is plugged into the computer and adjusts to it without human intervention.

Podcast: An audio file that can be downloaded to a portable audio player or computer, usually speech.

POP3 (*Post Office Protocol version 3*; pr. "pop 3"): A **protocol** for transmitting and receiving email, but mostly used just for receiving. (Transmitting is still mostly handled by its less powerful predecessor, **SMTP**).

Pop-up: A form of online advertising where the advert pops up in a separate browser window when you go to a particular webpage. Many people find them annoying, and most browsers now have the ability to block pop-ups from opening.

Port: A socket on the back (usually) of a computer which allows you to plug in extra hardware such as a printer or modem.

Portal: A virtual gateway between computer systems, or a website that provides links to lots of useful sites on a particular theme, eg shopping or news.

POST (*Power On Self Test*; pr. "post"): A routine PCs go through when first switched on, before loading the operating system, to make sure the hardware is working properly.

Post: To upload content to a website or online bulletin board.

Power-on password: A password which the computer will prompt you for whenever the computer is switched on, a good security measure provided you don't forget the password. Power-on passwords can usually only be bypassed by taking the computer to bits.

Powerpoint: A popular program for creating graphical presentations, mostly for business use. Available separately or as part of Microsoft Office, Microsoft's office suite.

Processor: The nerve centre of the computer : everything flows through it. Also called the **CPU**. The best known are Intel's **Pentium** and AMD's **Athlon**. The most important single specification on any PC is the speed of its processor, usually measured in megahertz (MHz), or gigahertz (GHz).

Program (Application): A program is essentially a list of instructions that tell a computer how to do something. Any **word processor, spreadsheet, database, game** or any other tool you may use on a computer is a program (often a group of programs). Also referred to as **software**.

Protocol: Any "language" used by computers to communicate with each other for particular tasks.

Proxy server: A computer used to store copies of popular webpages at an **ISP** and provide them on request, to save having to fetch them from the website each time.

PS/2: A type of connector that was used to plug in mouse and keyboard on PCs, now replaced by **USB**.

PS2 (without the /) is often used to refer to Sony's PlayStation 2, a popular games console.

PVR (*Personal Video Recorder*): A TV video recorder which records to a **hard disk** (such as TiVo or Video-On Demand). Typically a standalone unit, but you can also get software which allows you to use your PC's hard disk for this purpose.

Quad-core: PC **processors** which have four complete processors on the same chip, allowing computers to handle multiple tasks faster. See also **dual-core**.

Quicktime: A video compression standard created by Apple for use on both Macs and PCs, and the program which displays such movies.

RAID (*Redundant Array of Inexpensive Disks*; pr. "raid"): A way of connecting multiple hard disks together so that a computer sees them as one very large, very fast disk instead of many smaller ones. Often called a "RAID array", even though the acronym already contains the word array. Mostly used on network servers.

RAM (*Random Access Memory*; pr. "ram"): The computer's main **memory**, which it uses to hold whatever you are currently working on. The contents of RAM are lost when the computer is switched off. Adding more RAM is often the most cost-effective upgrade for an ageing computer.

Readme: An electronic document, usually distributed with software, containing additional information that didn't make it into the printed guides, often giving tips about troubleshooting installation problems, and last minute changes to the software. It is usually entitled "readme.txt".

Read-only: A read-only file has been set so that it cannot be altered or deleted. See **write-protected**.

Real Audio, Real Media, Real Video: An audio and video compression system from RealMedia Inc which

produces files small enough to "stream" in real time over an ordinary modem, at the cost of a lot of sound/vision quality. See **streaming**.

Reboot: Restart the computer, either by shutting it down properly and restarting it (a soft reboot), or just switching it off and on again (a hard reboot - should only be used as a last resort).

Registrar: An organisation which retains a register of internet **domain** names, who owns them, and where they can be found. Domains under the most popular **TLDs** such as .com, .net and .org can be registered with a number of different competing registrars, but you only need to register with one of them. National domains such as .uk usually have only one registrar.

Registry: A file on Windows PCs which contains all the settings for the PC and its software. Can be edited by the user, but this should only be done as absolutely a last resort, as it is possible to trash the operating system completely if you don't know what you are doing.

Resolution: Loosely speaking, the quality of an image. When printing or working with images, the resolution is usually measured in Dots Per Inch (dpi) - the more dots per inch, the higher the quality of the image but the larger the file needed to store it. The screen resolution is how many **pixels** fit on the desktop, the most popular ones being 800 x 600 and 1024 x 768 - the former makes images, icons etc look bigger, but the latter means you can fit more of them on the screen.

Rewriteable: A special type of reuseable **CD** or **DVD** which you can write to, delete the contents, and write to again, theoretically forever. A conventional CD or DVD's contents can't be changed once they have been written. However, rewriteable CDs and DVDs are less reliable and more expensive than write-once media.

RGB (*Red, Green, Blue*): The three colours used by a computer screen - all the other colours can be made up by mixing red, blue and green. A few printers use this system as well, though most use the alternative **CMYK** system instead.

Ripper: Program which copies ("rips") tracks from music CDs onto a computer, often as an **MP3**. Technically this is illegal in many jurisdictions, but the practice is extremely widespread and usually tolerated, as long as the ripped tracks are for personal use only.

ROFL (or **ROTFL**) (*Rolling On the Floor Laughing*): Internet slang indicating laughter.

ROM (*Read Only Memory*; pr. "rom"): Memory whose contents are preset and cannot (usually) be changed by the user. See also **CD-ROM**.

Router: A device used to connect networks together, for example so that several PCs can share one internet connection. A relative of the **hub**, but more powerful.

RPG (*Role Playing Game*): A computer game in which you control a character and interact with other characters, explore virtual worlds, undertake quests et cetera. See **MMORPG**.

RSS (*Really Simple Syndication*): An automated system for gathering information, usually news, from multiple sources and bringing it together in one place, usually a website. If any of the information is changed at the source, it is automatically updated at the target.

RTFM (*Read The F*****g Manual*) Internet slang, usually fired at people asking basic questions to which they would know the answers if they had looked at the manual.

RTS (*Real Time Strategy*): A computer game where you command armies (usually) of animated figures, direct their development, fight their battles and so on. "Real Time" because the game runs continuously rather than waiting for your orders, though in practise you can usually pause the game as much as you like unless you are playing against a human opponent.

Safe Mode: A cut-down version of **Windows** which you can launch instead of the full version for troubleshooting purposes.

SATA (*Serial Advanced Technology Attachment*): The latest high speed standard for connecting hard disks to your computer, replacing **EIDE** on most new computers.

Save: Copy whatever you are working on from **memory**, which is lost when you switch off the computer, to permanent **storage**, usually the hard disk. It is a good idea to save frequently when you are working on something important, in case there is a sudden power cut or you make some awful mistake that trashes your document.

S/B Compatible (*SoundBlaster compatible*): A common **Soundcard** format. In practice anything which is described as "S/B compatible" should work with almost all sound cards.

Scanner: A device which makes high-resolution copies of printed images and text to use on a computer.

Screensaver: A program that blanks the computer screen or displays images if you don't do anything for a few minutes. Early screens could have images literally burned permanently onto the tube if left displaying the same thing all day. This is no longer a problem, and these days screensavers are mostly used for security (with a password to return to normal mode), or just for fun.

Scroll, scroll-bar: To scroll something is to move it up or down the screen, so you can see what is above or below the current position, for example at a website. A scroll-bar is a bar on the right-hand side (usually) of a window which allows you to move the text etc up and down the screen with a mouse. If the window is too wide to fit the screen there will be a scroll-bar at the bottom, so you can scroll the text left and right too.

SCSI (*Small Computer Systems Interface*; pr. "scuzzy"): A fast system for controlling hard disks, tape drives, and various other add-ons. Sometimes used for a PC's main hard disk, but more often the main hard disk is controlled by an **EIDE** controller built into the motherboard. Now falling into disuse.

Search engine: A website directory which indexes as many websites as it can and allows you to search its database for sites on particular subjects. Because of the immense size and rate of growth of the world wide web, no-one has a complete directory of all sites which exist. The most popular today is [Google](#).

Security Suite: A set of programs designed to protect a computer from **malware** and similar threats. Usually consists of a **firewall**, **antivirus** program, anti-**spyware** program, and often an anti-**phishing** program.

Serial ATA. See **SATA**.

Serial Port: A socket for plugging devices into the computer. Most had two, called COM1 and COM2. Most often used to plug in a modem or mouse; however, on many modern computers a modem is built into the computer as an expansion card, and the mouse has its own separate port. Now replaced by USB.

Server: A computer at the centre of most **networks** which provides **files** and other services to other computers. Also known as a file server.

Shockwave: A very impressive technology from Macromedia Inc. (now Adobe) for making animations, games, sound and all kinds of special effects on a webpage.

shoot-'em-up: A computer game in which you control a character, vehicle etc and shoot lots of onscreen enemies. Also called an **FPS** (First Person Shooter).

Shortcut: In **Windows** (from 95 on), a type of **icon** which lets you launch a program quickly, without having to search for it. Often placed on the Windows **desktop** for convenience. Usually has a small arrow in the bottom lefthand corner, to show it is a shortcut rather than the program itself. On Mac OS referred to as an **Alias**.

SIMM (*Single In-line Memory Module*; pr."sim"): A module of **RAM** for older PCs. Replaced by **DIMMs** on newer computers.

SIR (*Serial InfraRed*): A wireless communication system for PCs and peripherals, especially laptops. Only works when the devices are in line-of-sight of each other.

Smartphone: A high-end mobile phone that offers more advanced computing ability and connectivity than a standard mobile phone. It runs a complete mobile operating system and may serve as a personal digital assistant (PDA), a portable media players, and a camera, (which can also include a digital video a recorder). It often features GPS navigation, Wi-Fi and mobile broadband access.

SMTP (*Simple Mail Transfer Protocol*): The original method of transmitting and receiving email on the internet. Still often used for transmitting, but has been widely replaced by **POP3** for receiving.

Smiley: :-) or :) A group of symbols used to indicate a smile or laughter in an email or newsgroup message (look at it sideways). There are all sorts of variants including :-(for sadness, ;-)) for a smile with a wink, and :-o for astonishment. Collectively they are often called **emoticons**.

Social Network: A social structure made up of individuals (or organizations) called "nodes", which are tied (connected) by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as friendship, kinship, common interest, financial exchange, dislike, or relationships of beliefs, knowledge or prestige.

Social Networking Service: is an online service, platform, or website that focuses on the building and reflecting of social networks or social relations among people, who, for example, share interests and/or activities. A social network service essentially consists of a representation of each user (often a profile), his/her social links, and a variety of additional services. Most social network services are web based and provide means for users to interact over the Internet, such as e-mail and instant messaging. see **Facebook**

Software: The programs that run on a computer. Without software, a computer can't do anything.

Software Protection Dongle: A piece of hardware that attaches to a computer in order to make a piece of secured software run. Essentially A security key, a dongle in this sense, is used as a high-end form of security to prevent the unauthorized copying of software, since making a copy of the hardware itself is much more difficult than simply copying the software. See **Dongle**

SoundBlaster: The best known type of **Soundcard**, made by Creative Labs. Most modern soundcards are described as "SoundBlaster compatible" (or **S/B compatible**), meaning that they understand the same commands as the popular SoundBlaster range, and should therefore work with almost all programs.

Soundcard: An **expansion card** which enables the PC to make sounds more sophisticated than a simple "beep!". Almost all modern PCs are fitted with soundcards; nowadays they are often built into the motherboard instead of being added as an expansion card.

SP2 (*Service Pack 2*): A major enhancement to Windows XP, particularly its security vulnerabilites, downloadable as a free patch from Microsoft's website.

Spam: Originally a name for mass postings to Usenet **newsgroups** advertising products or services, regardless of their relevance to the newsgroup. (The name comes from a famous Monty Python sketch in which every conversation is interrupted every few seconds by people shouting "spam spam spam" at the top of their voices). Now generally used to describe bulk commercial advertising emails (**UCE**). Sending spam is a violation of most ISPs' **AUP**.

Spreadsheet: A **program** used for doing calculations and setting up financial balance sheets, indispensable for accountants and managers. The best known are Microsoft Excel and Numbers on the Macintosh.

Spyware: Programs, typically installed by stealth, which record what you do on your PC and send reports to criminals, allowing them to steal your bank details, passwords and so on. See also **Malware**.

Standalone: A computer not connected to any kind of network.

Start Button: A button on the lefthand end (usually) of the **Taskbar** in most versions of **Windows**, which you click on to display the **Start Menu**.

Start Menu: A set of menus which appear when you click on the **Start Button** in Windows, which you can customise to suit your own preferences. Most programs will automatically add themselves to the Start Menu when you install them.

StartUp Folder: An area under Programs in the Windows **Start Menu**. Any programs placed in this folder will launch themselves automatically whenever you start up Windows.

Storage: The generic term for any method of storing information which is not lost when the computer is switched off; the most common types are **hard disks**, **CDs**, and **DVDs**.

Stream, streaming: Video or audio that plays while still downloading, rather than you having to wait till the download has finished.

Suite: A group of programs which carry out different tasks but are intended to work together, such as Microsoft Office.

Surfing: In a computer context, wandering around the **World Wide Web**. Also called **websurfing**.

System Tray: An area on the righthand end of the Windows **Taskbar** which displays icons representing **TSRs** presently running, usually at least a loudspeaker which represents the volume control for the **soundcard**, and a clock. Programs in the Sytem Tray are often but not always launched from the **StartUp folder**.

System unit (or box): The unit with the disk drives which the keyboard, monitor etc are plugged into. In other words, the actual computer.

Taskbar: In **Windows**, a bar across the bottom of the screen (usually - you can move it to the top or side if you want to) which contains the **Start Button**, the **System Tray**, and **icons** which represent all the applications currently running. You can switch between applications by calling up the taskbar and clicking on the relevant icon.

TBH (*To Be Honest*): Internet slang.

TCP/IP (*Transfer Control Protocol/Internet Protocol*): A common **protocol** (language) which a computer can use to communicate with other computers, particularly on the internet.

Terabyte: Unit of measurement for pieces of information : approximately 1 trillion bytes, 1 billion kilobytes, 1 million megabytes or 1000 gigabytes. That's a *lot* of data.

Terminal Adaptor: A piece of hardware similar to a modem, required to operate an **ISDN** internet connection.

Thumb drive (*AKA jump drive, keychain drive*): A computer storage device about the size of a man's thumb, often carried on a keyring, which plugs into a **USB** port. A very convenient way to carry large amounts of data around. See **Flash drive**.

TIFF, Tif (*Tagged Image File Format*): A type of graphics (picture) file, often used for photographs. The files are usually huge, as the data is not significantly compressed. Files in this format usually have names ending **.tif**.

TFT (*Thin Film Transistor*): A technology used mainly in **laptop** screens for giving a sharp and vibrant color display.

TLD (*Top Level Domain*): The part of an internet address between the last **.** and the end of the address, excluding the path/address of a specific page if present. TLDs include **.com**, **.org**, **.net**, and all the national domains such as **.uk** for the UK and **.fr** for France. See also **domain**, **registrar**.

Toolbar: An extra set of controls that can be added to many programs to provide extra functionality not present in the standard version, such as the Google toolbar, which lets you do Google searches from your browser without having to go to the website.

Torrent: A method of making data available for download over the internet, where the recipient of data is expected

to make the data available to others for download from their PC, rather than all users downloading from a central server. Typically much of the data is bootleg software, audio and video. Because the data is distributed from multiple computers all over the place rather than a central point, it is extremely hard to police.

Touchpad (*Trackpad*): A pressure-sensitive pad which replaces the **mouse** on most **laptop** computers.

Trojan (*Trojan Horse*): A program similar to a **virus** which is disguised as something harmless like a game, but when launched actually sabotages the computer on which it is running.

TSR (*Terminate and Stay Resident*): In Windows, a program, usually loaded automatically on startup, which remains in memory to provide particular functions such as connection to a network or protection against viruses. A few TSRs are essential, but many are installed automatically by a particular application just to improve its own performance, with no thought for anything else you may be doing, and may actually have a negative impact on everything else. Usually (but not always) launched from the **StartUp folder** in the Windows **Start Menu**.

TWAIN (*Technology Without An Interesting Name*, according to legend) A standard "language" or **protocol** which computers use to communicate with **scanners**.

UBE, UCE (*Unsolicited Bulk Email, Unsolicited Commercial Email*): Email sent out in bulk to addresses harvested from web pages, newsgroups etc, advertising products or services - mostly scams or pornography. Also known as **spam**. Sending UCE is a violation of most **ISP's** Acceptable Use Policies, and will often get your account terminated immediately.

Ultra DMA, UDMA (*Direct Memory Access*): A standard for **EIDE** disk controllers relating to how fast they can transfer data. Often followed by a number representing the transfer rate in **Mbps**, eg UDMA100 operates at up to 100 Mbps.

Uninstall: Remove a program from your system. You can't just delete its folder, because almost all programs make changes to various parts of your operating system. Many programs come with a special uninstaller, which you should use if it exists. Otherwise, you can uninstall programs (in Windows) from the Control Panel.

Upload: To transfer information (files) from a user computer to a network or the Internet. See also **download**.

URL (*Universal Resource Locator*): An address used to locate something on the internet, most often a web page. All web addresses are URLs.

USB (*Universal Serial Bus*): A type of **serial port** (or connector), used to attach extra devices such as a scanner to a computer. A standard on new computers from around 1998 on. USB 2.0 is a faster version of the same thing. Most computers use the USB to connect the mouse and keyboard.

Usenet: An enormous collection of public newsgroups on the **Internet**, which allow users to post messages discussing particular issues. Though it claimed to have as many as 120,000 users in 2006, usenet has been in decline over the past decade. See **Newsgroup**

User interface: A program's controls, with which the user "interfaces" with the program.

Vaporware: Derogatory term for **software** which is announced but fails to materialise.

VGA (*Video Graphics Array*): An early colour graphics standard for PCs, now used as a sort of lowest common denominator which all monitors and graphics cards understand.

VGA Cable: Standard video cable used to connect computers to external monitors and projectors.

Virus: A program that has been deliberately created to cause computer problems, usually minor ones as a prank, but occasionally very nasty ones indeed, such as erasing your entire hard disk. Viruses were originally designed to attach themselves to programs on a disk, and then "hide" in the computer's memory once the host program is executed, and "infect" every disk they come across. Some types of virus (such as the famous "I love you") propagate by email, disguised as an **attachment**, which is why you should never open an attachment you are

unsure of.

Virus protector: A program which guards against computer **viruses**, either by lurking in memory as a **TSR** and checking everything you run for viruses as you go along, or by scanning some or all of the files on either hard or floppy disk at a time you specify. Virus protectors need to be updated frequently to guard against new types of virus.

Virus Definitions: Updates to antivirus software which should be loaded at least once a month to protect against newly created viruses.

Virtual, virtual reality: A simulated environment on the internet or a computer.

Vista: See **Windows Vista**.

Voicemail: A voice message recorded on a computer and sent to a specific person by the computer or telephone system. In effect a more sophisticated telephone answering machine.

VOIP (*Voice Over Internet Protocol*): A system for making cheap phonecalls over the internet instead of via the telephone system.

Vulcan Nerve Pinch: Slang for keyboard commands that tax the hand's ability to reach_ all of the appropriate keys. For instance, the soft boot for a Mac II_ involves simultaneously pressing both Control keys, the Command_ key, and the Power On key. On a PC it refers to pressing the _Ctl-Alt-Del buttons on your keyboard at the same time. a.k.a. **three finger salute** or **quadruple bucky**.

W3C (*World Wide Web Consortium*): An influential group of interested parties who agree what is and isn't official **HTML**. Originally WWWC, but W3C is a lot easier to say.

Wallpaper: A picture or motif displayed on your computer's desktop (finder). Background image.

WAN (*Wide Area Network*): A sort of group of networks, or more properly **LANs**, connected together.

WAP (*Wireless Application Protocol*; pr. "wapp" or "wopp"): A system to enable mobile phones to browse the World Wide Web.

WAV file, Wave: A computer sound recording. WAV files tend to be very large, so sound recordings are often compressed into **MP3s** on the internet, giving a slightly lower quality but *much* smaller files.

Webcam (*WEB CAMera*): a kind of cheap TV camera which you can use for videoconferencing over the internet, or just showing off. The picture quality usually isn't all that great but it doesn't need to be, because high quality real time video won't fit down an ordinary internet connection anyway.

Webhost: A company which makes webpages available on the World Wide Web, usually as a commercial venture.

Weblog: A website documenting someone's life and/or thoughts, also known as a **blog**.

Webmail: Email controlled from a website such as Hotmail or Yahoo instead of with a dedicated mail program like Outlook Express or Eudora. Many ISPs allow you to access your email both with a mail program and via the Web, so that you can access your email while travelling.

Webmaster: The person principally responsible for maintaining a website.

Webserver: A computer which fetches or stores **World Wide Web** pages and provides them over the internet on request.

Website: A page or group of pages on the **World Wide Web**.

Webpace: The storage on an internet server where websites are kept. Webpace can be hired from a commercial

provider, or is sometimes provided free with an internet dialup account.

Websurfing: Looking at pages on the **World Wide Web**. Often just called **surfing**.

Wi-Fi (*Wireless Fidelity*): A method of connecting computers together in a network without cables, using small transmitter/receivers connected to ordinary PCs, printers, broadband modems etc. See **80211** etc.

Wiki: A website where the users create and edit the content collaboratively, the best known being Wikipedia, a huge online encyclopedia. Entries on controversial subjects should be viewed with caution, as they may have been edited by persons with strong but not necessarily correct views.

Win95 Windows 95: See **Windows**.

Win98 Windows 98. See **Windows**.

Win9x: Compatible with or pertaining to both Windows 95 and Windows 98.

Windows: A family of **operating systems** from the Microsoft Corporation, standard on most PCs. Windows 95, 98 and ME (*Millenium Edition*) are three generations of the version intended mainly for home use; Windows NT and 2000, developed and released in parallel with the 9x family, were intended more for use in office and network environments. Other versions include Windows XP and Windows Vista, the latest being Windows 7.

Windows 2000: A version of **Windows** intended for business users, the successor to **Windows NT**. Now theoretically superseded by **Windows XP**, but many businesses are still using it.

Windows 3.1 / 3.11: Microsoft's standard PC operating environment before the release of Windows 95. Not strictly speaking an operating system in its own right, more an add-on which provides **DOS** with a **GUI**. Windows 3.11 was officially called "Windows for Workgroups" because it was purportedly designed for use with networks, but in practice is no different to 3.1.

Windows 98SE (*Second Edition*) An upgrade to Microsoft's Windows 98. Generally agreed to be the best of the Win9x bunch.

Windows Key: An extra key on keyboards made after 1995, located between Ctrl and Alt and bearing the Microsoft Windows logo. Pressing this key in any Win95/98 application should immediately call up the Taskbar with the Start Menu open. (If your keyboard doesn't have a Windows key you can perform the same task by pressing Ctrl-Esc).

Windows ME (*Millenium Edition*): The successor to **Windows 98**, replaced by **Windows XP**. See **Windows**.

Windows NT: A version of **Windows** intended for business use, more stable for networking but less game-friendly than its **Win9x** cousins. Superseded first by Windows 2000 and now by Windows XP, Vista, and 7.

Windows Vista: Microsoft's latest version of its popular Windows operating system, released in 2007, intended to replace XP. It has been released in no less than *six* different versions, with varying capabilities and prices.

Windows XP: The version of Windows generally agreed to be the most stable. Intended to bring together and replace the different 9x and NT versions of Windows (see **Windows**) - but Microsoft released two versions, "Home" and "Professional".

Winsock: A program required by Windows to communicate with the internet, usually installed automatically along with internet connection software.

Winzip: The most popular program for compressing files, either for storage or transmission via the internet, widely available as a free download. The compressed files it creates have the extension .zip. See also **zip**.

Wireless network: A computer network which uses radio transmitters (usually) to move information between computers without the need for physical cables. See **Wi-Fi**.

Wizard: A **Windows** feature which presents a user with simple menus or options for what would otherwise be a complex task, and carries them out automatically. Almost all Windows programs are **installed** via Wizards, and they are also widely used inside Windows programs.

Word Processor: A **program** used for creating documents, letters etc. The best known is Microsoft Word.

World Wide Web (WWW or just "the Web"): The easiest part of the **Internet** to understand and use, the World Wide Web consists of many millions of pages of text and images published by anyone and everyone, from governments and large corporations down to the humblest home user, in a standardised **hypertext** format. A particular person or company's area is called a website. Viewed with a program called a **browser**. Wandering around the World Wide Web is often called **Websurfing** or just **surfing**.

Worm: A malicious program introduced into computers by stealth, similar to a **virus**.

Write-protected: A write-protected file has been set so that it cannot be altered or deleted without first removing the write protection. Also called **read-only**. You can write-protect a file in windows by right-clicking on it and checking the "read-only" box under attributes. Floppy disks were write-protected by moving the small plastic square in the top right corner.

WTF (*What The F****) Internet slang.

WWW See **World Wide Web**.

WYSIWYG (*What You See Is What You Get; pr. "whizzy-wig"*): A computer interface, usually for creating documents, that reproduces the end-product as accurately as possible on screen. Standard on most all modern software, so you don't often hear it mentioned these days.

Xerox Subsidy: Euphemism for swiping "Free" photocopies from one's workplace.

YAFIYGI: (You Asked For It You Got): Internet slang

YMMV (*Your Mileage May Vary*): Internet slang, meaning "your experience may be different". Derives from a disclaimer in US car ads.

Zip: A popular standard for file **compression** developed by the PKWare corporation. Files thus compressed usually have the extension .zip. See **Winzip**.

Zip drive: A special drive for removable data cartridges known as Zip disks. Once used for making **backups** as the cartridges could hold a lot more data than a floppy disk. Now pretty much obsolete, as almost all computers have CD or DVD writers fitted as standard.