Glossary of Computer Terms

Bit: Short for binary digit. The smallest unit of information represented by either a zero or one.

> 8 bits = 1 byte
>
> *Enough memory to store one character (for example, the letter A)*
>
> 1,024 (approximately one thousand) bytes = 1 kilobyte, abbreviated KB
>
> *Enough memory to store a 200-word essay (almost one page)*
>
> 1,048,576 (approximately one million) bytes = 1 megabyte, abbreviated MB,
>
> *Enough memory to store 200,000 words (almost 1,000 pages)*
>
> 1,073,741,824 (approximately one billion) bytes = 1 gigabyte, abbreviated GB
>
> *Enough memory to store 200,000,000 words (almost 1,000,000 pages)*

CD-ROM: Acronym for Compact Disk - Read Only Memory. A CD-ROM can store up to 650 MB of information. Most of the software is available on CD-ROM for installation on your PC. A CD-ROM drive can read CD-ROMs as well as music CDs.

CD-R: Acronym for Compact Disk – Recordable. A CD-R drive can be used to not just install software or play music CDs, but also record information. However, it is only possible to record information to the disk once.
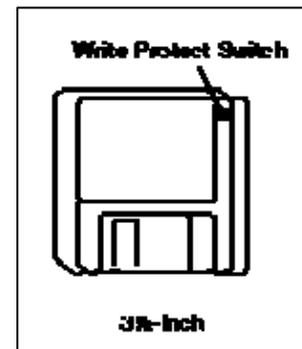
CD-RW: Acronym for Compact Disk – Recordable Writeable. A CD-RW drive allows users to record and erase information onto a disk multiple times. You can use the CD-RW drive to back-up files on your computer or to create music CDs.

CPU: Acronym for Central Processing Unit. You can think of the CPU as the brain of the computer; it is responsible for everything the PC does. There are different brands of processors such as Pentium or Celeron. The speed at which a CPU processes information is measured in Megahertz (MHz) or Gigahertz (GHZ).

Database program: One used to create and manage large amounts of information in one place. For example, the state of Wisconsin keeps your driver's license number and other information in a database. An example of a database program is Microsoft Access.

DVD: Acronym for Digital Video Disk or Digital Versatile Disk. DVDs can store large amounts of information whether it is large computer files or full length movies. A standard single-layer, single-sided can store 4.75 GB. However, two layer DVDs can store 8.5 GB and double sided DVDs can store 17 GB.

Write Protect Switch

3¼-inch

Floppy disk: A disk that stores information magnetically. Most disks are formatted and can store 1.44 MB of data. It is important to keep disks away from extreme heat and cold, liquids, and magnets. It is recommended that you keep disks in a protective case.

Glossary of Computer Terms

GHz: Abbreviation for Gigahertz. One GHz represents one billion cycles per second. The speed of the CPU is measured in Gigahertz. The higher the number, the faster it goes.
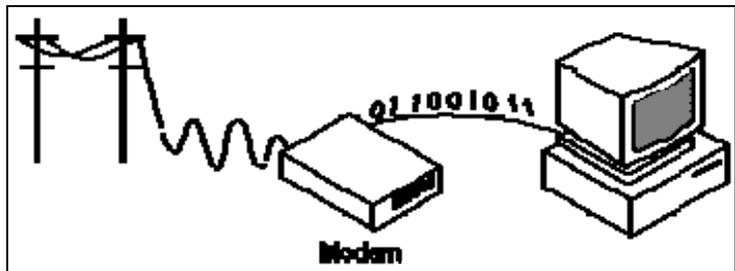
GUI: Pronounced "Gooey", this acronym stands for *graphical user interface* which allows you to activate commands or perform certain tasks by clicking on menus or icons, rather than typing in cryptic commands. For example, you can click on the picture of a *printer* to print a document.

Hard drive: The primary storage area within your computer, usually a hard, metal disk. The higher the number attached, the more storage room you have for programs as well as files created with those programs.

Hardware: Anything you can physically touch, such as the mouse, keyboard, monitor, CPU, or printer.

MHz: Abbreviation for Megahertz. One MHz represents one million cycles per second. The speed of the CPU is measured in Megahertz. The higher the number, the faster it goes.

Modem: Device used to access the Internet via the telephone. The fastest modem on the market today is 56k v90. Modems are measured by how much information can be transferred per second, or kilobits per second (Kbps).

Operating System: The operating system, or OS, is a piece of software that runs the computer. The operating system is responsible for starting the computer and executing commands like printing documents, opening programs, and so forth. Windows is the operating system most likely installed on your computer and is the operating system used here at the library. The operating system is a program that runs the computer. Whenever you turn on the computer, one of the first things a computer does is search for its operating system. The operating system manages the central processing unit and ensures that the commands you give the computer—like opening a program, saving a file, or printing a document—will be performed.

PC: Stands for Personal Computer.

Presentation program: One used to create slide show presentations. An example of a presentation program is Microsoft PowerPoint.

Program "suite": A series of programs that function as a package. The Microsoft Office suite contains Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Access.

Glossary of Computer Terms

RAM: Abbreviation for Random Access Memory. Often times people refer to RAM as Memory. RAM, or memory, can be thought of as a workspace. The more RAM you have, the more workspace you have. The more workspace you have, the more projects you can do at one time, and the faster you will be able to finish those projects. RAM is measured in megabytes.

Software: Software is installed on your computer. Often times the words program or application is used to refer to a piece of software.

Spreadsheet program: One used to perform calculations or store data. Many people use spreadsheet programs to manage business or household budgets. An example of a spreadsheet program is Microsoft Excel.

USB flash drive: A portable solid state storage device that plugs into a computer's USB port. Also called a pen drive, keychain drive, thumb drive.

Word processing program: One used to create written documents such as letters and résumés. An example of a word processing program is Microsoft Word.

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Conceptual Outline of Terms:

I) Hardware

   A) Components

- Monitor
- CPU, Desktop Computer, Tower
- Mouse
- Keyboard
- Speakers
- Printer
- Scanner

   B) CPU

- Megahertz (MHz) or Gigahertz (GHz)

   C) Hard Drive

- Gigabytes (GB)

   D) RAM

- Megabytes (MB)

   E) Modem

- Kbps (kilobits per second)

II) Software

   A) Operating System

- Microsoft Windows
- Apple

   B) Accessories

- Calculator
- Solitaire

   C) Keyboarding

- Ainsworth
- Mavis Beacon

   D) Web Browser

- Microsoft Internet Explorer
- Netscape

   E) Office Suite

- Word
- Excel
- PowerPoint
- Access