

Vetech View

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We Can Talk the Talk

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Learn The Lingo

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Computers are wonderful tools that help us to be more productive. But, for some of us they are a complete mystery. We approach them as if they were the great and powerful Oz, intimidated by the thought of having to interact with them. Anything outside of our daily routine can send fear through our veins. Sometimes it's simply fear of the unknown. A little knowledge can go along way to help alleviate that fear. So, the following is a **very** brief computer glossary that, at the least, will help you amaze your friends with your dizzying computer skills.

application - Computer [software](#) that performs a task or set of tasks, such as word processing or drawing. Applications are also referred to as programs.

bandwidth - The capacity of a networked connection. Bandwidth determines how much data can be sent along the networked wires. Bandwidth is particularly important for [Internet](#) connections, since greater bandwidth also means faster [downloads](#).

boot - To start up a computer. Cold boot—restarting computer after having turned off the power. Warm boot—restarting computer without having turned off the power.

cache - A small data-memory storage area that a computer can use to instantly re-access data instead of re-reading the data from the original source, such as a [hard drive](#). Browsers use a cache to store [web](#) pages so that the user may view them again without reconnecting to the Web.

CPU - Central Processing Unit. The brain of the computer.

cursor - A moving position-indicator displayed on a computer monitor that shows a computer operator where the next action or operation will take place.

database - A collection of similar information stored in a file, such as a database of addresses. This information may be created and stored in a database management system (DBMS).

desktop - The main directory of the user [interface](#). Desktops usually contain [icons](#) that represent [links](#) to the [hard drive](#), a network (if there is one), and a trash or recycling can for files to be deleted. It can also display icons of frequently used [applications](#), as requested by the user.

disk - Two distinct types. The names refer to the media inside the container:

A **hard disc** stores vast amounts of data. It is usually inside the computer but can be a separate [peripheral](#) on the outside. Hard discs are made up of several rigid coated metal discs. Currently, hard discs can store 15 to 30 [Gb](#) (gigabytes)

A **floppy disc**, 3.5" square, usually inserted into the computer and can store about 1.4 [megabytes](#) of data. The 3.5" square "floppies" have a very thin, flexible disc inside. There is also an intermediate-sized floppy disc, trademarked Zip discs, which can store 250 [megabytes](#) of data.

file - A set of data that is stored in the computer

hardware - The physical and mechanical components of a computer system, such as the electronic circuitry, chips, monitor, disks, disk drives, keyboard, modem, and printer.

Thought for the day: A conscience is what hurts when all your other parts feel good.

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icons - Symbols or illustrations appearing on the computer screen that indicate program files or other computer functions.

megabyte (MB) - Equal to 1,048,576 bytes, usually rounded off to one million bytes (also called a "meg").

memory - Temporary storage for information, including [applications](#) and documents. The information must be stored to a permanent device, such as a hard disc or [CD-ROM](#) before the power is turned off, or the information will be lost. Computer memory is measured in terms of the amount of information it can store, commonly in [megabytes](#) or [gigabytes](#).

menu - A context-related list of options that users can choose from.

modem - A device that connects two computers together over a telephone or cable line by converting the computer's data into an audio signal. Modem is a contraction for the process it performs: modulate-demodulate.

monitor - A video display terminal

network - A system of interconnected computers.

operating system - A set of instructions that tell a computer on how to operate when it is turned on. It sets up a filing system to store files and tells the computer how to display information on a video display. Most PC operating systems are [DOS](#) (disc operated system) systems, meaning the instructions are stored on a disc (as opposed to being originally stored in the microprocessors of the computer). Other well-known operating systems include UNIX, Linux, Macintosh, THEOS and Windows.

Peripheral - Any external device attached to a computer to enhance operation. Examples include external [hard drive](#), [scanner](#), printer, speakers, keyboard, [mouse](#), [trackball](#), [stylus and tablet](#), and joystick.

program - A precise series of instructions written in a computer language that tells the computer what to do and how to do it. Programs are also called "software" or "[applications](#)."

RAM - Random Access Memory. One of two basic types of memory. Portions of programs are stored in RAM when the program is launched so that the program will run faster. Though a PC has a fixed amount of RAM, only portions of it will be accessed by the computer at any given time. Also called memory.

server - A computer that shares its resources and information with other computers, called clients, on a network.

software - Computer programs; also called "[applications](#)."

surge protector - A controller to protect the computer and make up for variances in voltage.

Window - A portion of a computer display used in a graphical interface that enables users to select commands by pointing to illustrations or symbols with a [mouse](#). "Windows" is also the name Microsoft adopted for its popular [operating system](#).

