Handbook Of Computer Terms

#

16-bit application
MS-DOS or Windows 3.1 application that works with information in groups of 16 bits at a time.

32-bit application
Application that works with information 32 bits at a time. These applications generally provide a better performance and memory management than 16-bit applications.

386
The number that refers to computers with 80386 microprocessors. If a program states that it run on a 386 computer, it generally runs on faster computers as well (like a 486 or Pentium).

486
The number that refers to computers with 80486 microprocessors. Programs that recommend a 486 computer might also run on faster computers, but they might not run on slower computers (like a 386).

586
Successor to the 486 CPU that was formally introduced in April, 1993. The 586 chip runs from 50% to 200% faster than the 486. The popular Intel Pentium processor is a 586.

80386
See also, 386.

80486
See also, 486.

A

active window
When a window is selected, it is active. Only one window is active at a time. Typed commands go to the active window even if it is not on the top. When you click a different window, it becomes the active window. The title bar of the active window is usually a different color or intensity than the title bars on the inactive windows. (It might not be if you have modified your desktop colors through the Windows control panel.)

activity
- Computer activity includes internal processing, reading or writing to the disk and accessing the serial port, or printing.
- User activity includes a keypress, mouseclick, or mouse movement. Screen savers blank out a screen until they detect user activity.

alert box
Dialog box that appears on your screen to warn or notify you of something.

ANSI or American National Standards Institute
Organization of American industry and business groups that develop trade and communications standards.

ANSI character set
This is a standard set of characters that include the alphabet, numbers, punctuation marks, and several other symbols. The characters in this set have 256 possible values (0 to 255) called ANSI values. Each value represents a different character. Values 0 to 127 are known as the ASCII character set.

application program

A program that runs on your computer.

application icon
Icon that sits in the taskbar and represents an open application window. An application appears as a button in the taskbar when you minimize the application window.

application window
Window that provides a working area for an application. The window might include a number of document windows.

archive file
Compressed file that might contain one or more files.

arrow key
Keyboard key used to navigate around your screen. Each key is marked with an arrow indicating the direction the cursor moves when you press the key. The four standard arrow keys are the UpArrow, DownArrow, LeftArrow, and RightArrow. Do not confuse these with the Tab, Enter or Backspace keys which also have arrows on them on some keyboards.

ASCII or American Standard Code for Information Interchange
Predominant character set of the present-day computers. Numeric values are assigned to letters, numbers, punctuation marks and a few additional characters. Computers and computer programs use these numeric codes to represent characters and other information. Values from 0 to 31 are assigned to control codes, such as backspace and carriage return, and are generally nonprinting characters. In some fonts, these characters represent graphical symbols. Values from 32 to 127 represent the numbers 0 to 9, common punctuation marks, and the upper- and lowercase letters of the alphabet. See also, ANSI; ANSI character.

ASCII file
File made up exclusively of ASCII characters. See also, text file.

association
Relationship between a file and a program. If you try to open a file that has been associated with a program, Windows opens the program and loads the associated file into it.

asterisk (*)
- In DOS, the asterisk is used as a wildcard character to represent any number of characters in a filename.
- In arithmetic, this is the symbol for multiplication.

attribute
Property of an object, such as a file or display device. See also, file attribute.

AUTOEXEC.BAT
This is a batch file that runs automatically when your computer starts. Although most computers running MS-DOS include this file, many of its functions have now been built into Windows 95. The primary purpose of the AUTOEXEC.BAT file under Windows 95 is to load TSRs that are available during DOS sessions. You can also use AUTOEXEC.BAT to set various environment variables used by DOS, such as the PROMPT and PATH variables. See also, command prompt.

B

background
Things that happen on your system without your knowledge, or without showing anything on the screen are said to run in the background.

back up
To copy files to a safe location to protect against loss of data.
To make a spare copy of a disk or file on a disk.

background process

If a process runs in the background, it only runs when the foreground stops demanding the computer's processing time. Background processes have a lower priority than foreground processes.

background processing
Running more than one program at the same time. While you perform work in one application, the other applications can continue working. See also, foreground processes.

background task
Action a computer perform in the background. Background tasks are usually hidden so that you don't know they are running. A word processor might perform spell checking as a background task. The only time you notice it running is when a word is misspelled.

BAT
Extension used for batch files.

batch file
A text file that contains operating system commands. Batch files are often used to automate repetitive tasks. Batch files are run either automatically by the system (see AUTOEXEC.BAT), or manually by typing their names at the MS-DOS command prompt or by double-clicking the batch file in Windows Explorer. When the batch file runs, the commands are executed sequentially. Under MS-DOS, batch files have the extension .BAT.

baud rate
- Number of times per second a signal changes in a communications channel. See also, bps; modem.
- The speed of data transmission in a modem or other device. The rate specifies the number of signal variations per second. It is commonly used as a synonym for bits-per-second, but this is inaccurate. While one signal change can represent one bit of data, in today's high-speed communications, one signal change usually encodes more than a single bit.

BBS or Bulletin Board System
An online service that allows messaging, electronic mail and file transfer between computer users who usually connect to the system via a modem. Generally, the users of a bulletin board share a particular interest. Even though some BBS systems are accessible through the Internet, they are separate entities.

BIOS or Basic Input/Output System
Software that allows the transfer of information between the computer's hardware, such as memory, hard disks and the monitor. On personal computers, the BIOS (ROM BIOS) is built into the read-only memory of the machine. See also, Flash BIOS.

bit
Smallest data component of software. It is a binary switch that is turned to "0" or "1". Eight bits make a byte.

bitmap
A file containing a picture stored as a set of colored dots or pixels. The file includes information about its location and size.

boot
- To start the sequence of events that occurs when a computer powers up. When booting, the computer runs basic tests on its circuitry, searches for attached devices such as keyboards and monitors, allocates memory, finds and executes the setup files on disk, and presents a prompt or an interface to the user.
- Process of loading the operating system into memory as the computer is turned on. See also, cold boot; reboot; warm boot.

boot disk
See bootable disk.

boot record

Every logical disk includes a boot record that stores the following information about the disk:
- Number of bytes per sector
- Size of a cluster (number of sectors per cluster)
- Number of sectors on the disk
- Number of sectors per track
- Number of sides on the disk
- The media descriptor byte

For bootable disks, the boot record also contains the bootstrap loader, a program that loads the operating system.

The boot record is stored in a disk's boot sector.

boot sector

Sector on the disk that contains the operating system. This is usually the first sector on the disk.

boot virus

Virus that infects the boot record program. The virus loads into memory before anything else, and infects any bootable disk that you access. Such a virus might prevent your computer from starting up at all from an infected disk.

bootable disk

Any disk that contains the system files necessary to start the computer. While today's computers include a bootable hard disk that is normally used to start the machine, bootable disk might also refer to a floppy disk that is used to start the machine if the hard disk has been damaged.

BPS or Bits Per Second

Measure of the speed at which a device such as a modem can transfer data. Also known as data rate. See also, baud rate.

browse

- To view the file and folder structure.
- To review information through a browser.

browser

Program that allows you to view the information on the Internet or World Wide Web. Browsers usually provide a mouse-based point-and-click hypertext interface to make it easier to move around on the Web.

buffer

Portion of memory that temporarily holds data until it is transferred to its ultimate destination.

bus

Set of hardware lines that connects different parts of the computer (the input/output ports, memory and microprocessor) and over which data is transferred.

button bar

Row of buttons that usually appear immediately below the application menu bar. These buttons let you perform specific tasks, such as copying, moving, and deleting items, or displaying certain information. In some applications, including Microsoft Word 7, button bars can float anywhere on the desktop.

byte

A sequence of eight bits. Usually a byte stores the data equivalent to a single character (a letter, numeral, or other character). Systems or applications using the Unicode character set, however, require two bytes of data to represent a single character.

C

cable

Group of wires enclosed in a protective tube, usually organized to correspond to specific pins on 9- or 25-pin connectors located at each end. This group of wires is used to connect peripheral devices to each other or to other computers.

cache
Memory that temporarily holds data or program instructions to improve overall computer performance. Most caches copy the data from a standard computer memory (disk or RAM) to a type of memory that allows for faster data access by the CPU. Some caches can hold data awaiting storage, freeing the CPU for other tasks, and writing that data only when the CPU is otherwise idle.

cascade
To arrange non-minimized windows or menu selections in a staggered overlap manner. Windows are stacked one on top of the other with enough of an offset to read the title of each window. See also, tile.

cascading menu
Sub-menu that drops down from a menu item when that item is chosen. The menu item is identified by a right arrowhead that follows the menu item name.

case-sensitivity
The ability to discriminate between lowercase and uppercase characters.

CD-ROM or Compact Disk Read-Only Memory
CD-ROMs consist of polished metallic disks with a clear plastic surface coating. Data is stored as minute pits and lands that affect how the laser beam is reflected from the disk surface. CD-ROMs can store more information than floppy disks, but it takes longer to read the data from CD-ROMs. CD-ROM drives include photodetectors containing the optical and electrical components necessary to read the data. See also, ROM.

CD-ROM drive
A device that uses a laser beam, mirrors, and a photodetector to read data from CD-ROMs. Because CD-ROMs are a read-only data storage medium, the CD-ROM drive can read data from, but not write data to, a CD-ROM.

CGA or Color Graphics Adapter
Older video display system that was later replaced by EGA. The CGA system was capable of showing graphics and some colors by mixing red, green, and blue.

character
Letter of the alphabet, a digit, or another computer symbol that is used in a string.

check box
Small box or an option in a dialog box that is selected or deselected by clicking it. In some cases a check box might be inactive or it might be partially colored to mean that only some of its underlying options have been selected, or that the option or selection will be ignored.

click
To press and release the primary mouse button.

client
- Networked computer that reads software on a server.
- Program that requests files or information from a server.

clipboard
Buffer area in memory where data is stored when being transported from one program or one location to another.

CLSID or Class Identifier
A CLSID is used by your computer to create programs or program controls.

cluster
Group of disk sectors. Disks are divided into clusters which act like storage units for data.

CMOS or Complimentary Metal Oxide Semiconductor
A type of semiconductor designed to require very little power. Although CMOS-based memory is volatile, the stored information is maintained by connecting the CMOS chip to a small power source, such as a battery.
PCs use CMOS memory chips to preserve basic data about system hardware. Information such as the number and types of disks, amount of RAM, and type of keyboard is stored in the PC's CMOS memory. This information appears on the computer's setup screen which can usually be displayed during startup. If the battery powering the CMOS memory fails, the information is lost, which can result in problems starting the computer.

cold boot
To start a computer by switching on the power. Switching on the power recycles the computer's RAM, thereby removing any viruses that might be present in memory. See also, boot; reboot; warm boot.

collapse
To shrink a branch of a tree structure, such as a folder, so that its contents no longer appear in the tree. See also, expand.

COM
Extension for a specific type of executable file. For example, COMMAND.COM.

COM file
See EXE file.

COM port
Serial port. COM port is derived from communication port.

command line
Text entered at the DOS command prompt. Press the Enter key to execute the command. If the command was not entered correctly, the system will show a syntax error.

command prompt
Character or string of characters in MS-DOS that tells you the computer is waiting for a command. These characters usually appear as the drive letter followed by a colon and greater-than sign (>), but might be modified through the PROMPT command. See also, AUTOEXEC.BAT, DOS prompt.

COMMAND.COM
Default command interpreter program for MS-DOS. This program accepts commands typed from the keyboard and performs tasks such as loading other programs and directing the flow of information between programs and the CPU.

compressed file
File that has been encoded to make it smaller. A compressed file might be a single file or contain several files. Sometimes compressed files are known as ZIP files. Some programs, like Drive Space, compress entire drives or portions of drives.

compression
Process of compacting data so that it can be stored in a smaller amount of space or transmitted faster. Individual files or entire disks might be compressed by various types of utility software.

CONFIG.SYS
A text file containing commands that configure a system's hardware and loads the device drivers automatically when the computer starts up. Many of the functions traditionally performed by this file in MS-DOS have been built into Windows 95. Under Windows 95, this file's primary purpose is to load device drivers when there are no virtual device drivers available.

Together with the AUTOEXEC.BAT file, CONFIG.SYS affects the environment used for all DOS programs, and for all MS-DOS applications run under Windows 95. Windows 95 processes the CONFIG.SYS file (if any) during system startup.

configuration
See hardware configuration.

context click
See right click.

context menu
Menu that appears when you right click an object. The selections on the menu depend on the options, actions, or information that are available or appropriate for the object.

context-sensitive help
Online help that is specific to where you are and the actions you just performed in a program. To access context-sensitive help, press F1, or click the right mouse button and select What's This. Information for the selected item appears.

control menu
Menu that allows you to manipulate a window, dialog box, or icon. This menu is displayed when you click the Control-menu box (symbol or icon in the upper-left corner of the object's title bar) or when you right-click an application's icon in the taskbar.

Control Panel
Windows application that allows you to modify most Windows settings. It let you add printers and fonts, add and remove programs and drivers, adjust the tracking speed of your mouse, select a screen saver, and so on.

conventional memory
The first 640K of RAM in a computer. The original IBM PC reserved conventional memory for the use of programs and the operating system; the remaining memory was reserved for other purposes. Any software that operates in real mode has access only to conventional memory and (with the aid of memory-management software) upper memory.

CPU or Central Processing Unit
This is the brain of a computer. It performs all computations, executes instructions and transfers information between all parts of the computer. Microcomputers such as PCs contain single-chip CPUs called microprocessors. For specific examples, see 586, 486, and 386.

crash
• When a computer system stops working and must be restarted by the operator.
• Sudden, usually drastic failure of a system component.
• Magnetic disk drive crashes.
See also, head crash; system crash.

Ctrl or control key
Key on the keyboard labeled Ctrl (on most keyboards). This key is used in a combination with other keys. For example, if you are told to press Ctrl+Esc, press and hold down the Ctrl key, then press Esc.
There are two Ctrl keys on your keyboard, on either side of the space bar. They work exactly the same and are duplicated for your convenience.

cursor
A cursor is the visible indicator where input takes place on your screen. Windows 95 usually it displays different cursors for keyboard input and mouse input. The keyboard cursor is usually a vertical flashing bar (called an insertion point). The mouse cursor is usually an arrow, and often changes to indicate the type of object it is pointing to.

D

data
- Contents of a file.
- Numerical information that is processed by a computer. Sometimes numbers (such as dates, times, dollar amounts and so on) must be converted to a different type of data so they can be processed by the computer.

data file
File created by or associated with an application and contains no executable code (for example, word processing documents, databases, and spreadsheets).

data rate
Speed at which information moves between a computer and another location, measured in bps. See also, baud rate.

data transfer
Movement of information from one location to another. The speed of transfer is called the data rate or data transfer rate and is usually measured in bps.

default
Preset value that is used unless a different value is entered or otherwise specified.

default button
In a dialog box, the command button that is selected by default. It has a thicker border than the other command buttons. Pressing the Enter key while a dialog box is displayed is the same as clicking the default button.

defragment
The process of reorganizing and optimizing file storage on a disk. It moves the data together as closely as possible so that there are no unused portions of disk space between the first and last sectors of data. See also, fragmented file.

desktop
Screen background on which windows, icons, dialog boxes, menu bars, and toolbars appear. The term is an attempt to draw an analogy between what appears on your screen, and what you do typically find on a desk.

desktop computer
Computer that could fit on a desk. Desktop computers are not meant for travel or mobility. See laptop.

desktop icon
Icon on the desktop that represents an item. When you drag a file from a drive window, Explorer, or File Manager to the desktop, an item is created using the item's icon.

destination folder
Folder to which you are copying or moving files.

device driver
A program that allows a computer to communicate with a device, such as a printer or modem. If you notice that a peripheral device (printer, modem, and so on) is not functioning properly, it is a good idea to contact the hardware manufacturer to find out if a driver update is available. Many Windows problems are the result of out of date or obsolete drivers. See also, Control Panel.

dialog box
Special kind of window that either requests or provides information. Many of these windows allow you to choose options or enter information so that a program can complete a command. Others display warnings or system messages. See also, status bar.

directory

See folder.

disk
Magnetic or optical storage device that can hold data when no power is supplied. See also, hard disk; floppy disk.

disk cache
Portion of RAM that temporarily hold data read from (or to be written to) disk. If a program need the data again while the information is still in memory the access time is much faster, because reading data from RAM is quicker than reading data from a disk.

disk defragmenter
Program that rearranges the way that files are organized on a disk so that files are not split up in several sections on a disk. When files are fragmented, disk performance worsens. It is a good idea to defragment your files regularly since fragmented files are much more difficult to recover with undelete programs. See also, defragment; fragmented file.

disk space
Usable space on a disk. Look at the disk space requirements on a program before loading it on your computer. If you don't have enough disk space for the program, it cannot be loaded on the computer.

display
Visual output of a computer, as it appears on a video screen. Also known as screen or monitor.

display adapter
See video card.

DLL or Dynamic Link Library
A Windows file containing executable code that can be shared by running applications. DLLs also enable applications to share other resources necessary to perform particular functions.

document
File that is created by or associated with an application.

DOS or Disk Operating System
- A single-user operating system for the PC. Software that manages a computer's resources (for example, memory, disks, keyboard, files) and provides an interface between the user and the applications.
- Shorthand for MS-DOS, the most common operating system for PCs. See also, MS-DOS; or operating system.

DOS prompt
Visual cue that prompts you for a command, usually displayed as "A:>" or "C:>". The prompt is usually set up to show the current folder or path by entering PROMPT PG at a DOS prompt or in the AUTOEXEC.BAT file. See also, command prompt.

DOS window
Window on the desktop that shows a DOS prompt, or a program running under DOS.

double-click
To click the primary mouse button twice in rapid succession. Generally used to open an item or run a program.

download
To transfer a file from one computer system to another through a modem or a network (to transfer a file from a server to a workstation). See also, upload.

download folder
Folder where files are placed when files are downloaded.

drag
To hold the primary mouse button down while moving the mouse. For example, you can use this technique to choose a menu item, move or resize a window, or drag-and-drop an item into a window or application.

drag-and-drop
To drag a file, directory, or icon from one location and "drop" it (by releasing the mouse button) on another location.

DRAM or Dynamic Random Access Memory
Volatile memory that must be refreshed periodically. DRAM chips are common in computers. See also, SRAM.

drive icon
Icon representing a disk drive. Double-click on My Computer to see the available drives icons. These might include the icons for floppy, hard, RAM, CD-ROM, and network drives. When you double-click a drive icon, the drive window opens.

drive mapping
Assigning an unused drive letter to a drive or folder on a remote computer. The remote drive will appear as another drive on your PC. See also, map.

drive window
Window that display the contents of a disk drive. It shows folders and files for the open drive. In Windows 95, open drive windows by clicking My Computer. The display varies according to the options selected under the View menu.

driver
A program that allows a computer to communicates with and control a device, such as a printer, mouse, monitor, or disk drive. Windows 95 provides virtual device drivers that load and unload as necessary. In earlier versions of Windows and in MS-DOS, device drivers had to be loaded from the CONFIG.SYS file, and operated only in real mode. If you notice that a peripheral device (printer, modem, and so on) is not functioning properly, it is a good idea to contact the hardware manufacturer to find out if a driver update is available. Many Windows problems are the result of out of date or obsolete drivers. See also, Control Panel.

E

e-mail or electronic mail
Correspondence or other information (including files) sent electronically from one computer to another through a common computer network.

editor
Simple program that let you create and modify text files. Similar to a word processor, but usually with fewer features. Text editors save files in text format.

EGA or Enhanced Graphics Array
Video adapter card for the PC. This adapter became the standard that replaced CGA, but it was later replaced by VGA. The EGA system displayed better graphics than the CGA system, and it allowed the use of 16 colors.

electronic mail
See e-mail.

encryption
Act of securing files by making their data unreadable without a key or password. This process do actually alter the data in the files.

error message

Message from the system telling you of a problem that the computer cannot fix by itself. Most of the time you can continue using the application, but in extreme cases you might have to reboot the computer.

EXE or executable file
File containing a program that can be run by DOS or Windows. Executable files generally have the extensions COM, or EXE.

execute
To load a compiled program into memory and run it.

expand
To display a folder so that its subfolders are visible. See also, collapse.

expandable/collapsible tree
Method of displaying a directory structure that enables you to expand and collapse branches of the directory tree in the tree pane.

expanded memory
Memory beyond the 640K of DOS base memory. This memory is made available for programs to use through an expanded memory manager (EMM).

expansion card
Circuit board that fits into an expansion slot in the computer case. You can purchase expansion boards to expand the capabilities of your computer. Examples include an internal modem, video card, network communications card, and so on.

expansion slot
Slot in the motherboard where expansion cards can be inserted to expand the capabilities of the computer. Expansion slots coincide do with the computer case to make any jacks or connectors available in the back of the computer case.

extended memory
Memory above the first megabyte (MB) of memory. If the computer has 16 MB of RAM, the first MB consists of conventional and upper memory, but the other 15 are extended. Programs that can use extended memory run faster and more efficiently and leave more conventional memory available for other programs to use.

extension
One, two, or three letters after the period in a filename (example, in the filename AUTOEXEC.BAT, the extension is BAT). An extension often identifies the type of file (for example, EXE identifies an executable file, DOC is a common file extension for files created by word processors).

external modem
Modem that does not reside inside the computer case. External modems have sockets which then connects a phone line, a phone handset, a computer, and a power supply. See also, modem; internal modem; fax modem.

F
fax modem
Modem that can also transmit facsimiles.

file
Structure for saving information on a storage disk. Files are stored in folders. See also, filename, file attribute, file extension, and file type.

file attribute
Property of a file. The file can have up to four attributes: archive, hidden, read-only and system. A file's attributes can restrict how a file is accessed and used.

- Attribute r (read-only) files can't be deleted or modified. These files cannot be changed or deleted.
- Attribute a (needs to be archived) files have been tagged to be backed up.
- Attribute s (system) files are used by the operating system, and are usually also hidden.
- Attribute h (hidden) files are not displayed in drive windows or Windows Explorer.

file extension
See extension.

file transfer
Process of moving or transmitting a file from one computer to another. The sending and receiving computers must be set to use the same set of standards (called protocols) for transferring the file. XModem, ZModem, and Kermit are examples of popular file transfer protocols. See also, FTP.

file type
Classification of a file usually indicated by the filename's extension. For example, files with EXE and COM extension are applications or program files, TXT is for text files and BAT is for batch files.

filename
Name of a file. See also, pathname, LFN.

find
See search.

flash BIOS
BIOS that is stored in flash memory instead of read-only memory. You can upgrade a Flash BIOS in place, but you must replace ROM BIOS with a newer chip. See also, BIOS.

floppy disk
One of several types of magnetic media used for storing data. Because the magnetic medium is bonded to thin, flat disks of Mylar, floppy disks are flexible. This is in contrast to hard disks, which consist of a rigid material with a magnetic coating. The most commonly used floppy disks today are 3 1/2 inches in diameter, although 5¼ and 8 inch disks have been used in the past. Floppy disks are also known as diskettes.

folder
Container for files and programs. In Windows 95 (and other graphical interfaces), folders appear as icons resembling manila file folders. The master container of a disk is called the root (called the root directory before Windows 95) and ultimately contains all the folders and files on the disk. You can also create folders within folders, which allows you to have a hierarchical organization of data. Also known as directory.

foreground process
Computer's primary task. This task has the highest priority on the computer's list of things to do. Background processes get done only when the foreground process is resting or does not have anything to do. An application running in the foreground runs in the active window.

format
To prepare a magnetic disk (or other long-term data storage medium) for use. When you format a disk, you are setting up a framework on it so to allow it to hold data. Formatting a disk involves creating the sectors on the disk (low level formatting), creating any disk partitions (for hard disk), and creating the DOS tables (high level formatting) so that data can be saved on the disk or drive.

fragmented file
File that is physically located in more than one spot on a disk. When files are deleted, or temporary files are removed from the disk, they leave unused disk sectors. As new files are saved onto the disk, they are then put on the first unused portions of disk found. If the file is larger than the space available, the file is divided and put into more than one area of the disk. This is fragmentation. It

takes longer for a computer to access fragmented files than it does to access defragmented files. Also, it is more difficult for an undelete program to recover a file if it is very fragmented. See also, defragment.

FTP or File Transfer Protocol
Set of standards (called protocols) that allows one computer to transfer files to another computer over a TCP/IP network.

function keys
A set of keys labeled F1 through F12 on standard keyboards. The actual function of each key is determined by the software currently running. In Windows, the F1 key generally brings up a help file.

G
graphics card
See video card.

H
hard disk
One of several types of magnetic media used for storing data. Unlike floppy disks, hard disks are non-flexible and usually non-removable. They hold much more data than floppy disks, and are the principal long-term data storage for most personal computers. Non-removable hard disks are also known as fixed disks.

hardware configuration
Set of hardware options, such as modem type, port, device, and data rate, that indicates exactly what hardware is used to make the connection between two computers for a remote control or an online session.

head crash
Hardware crash that involves the read/write heads dropping onto the surface of the disks and then scraping off the oxide. A head crash means it is time to buy a new hard drive, and hope that you have backed up your system recently. See also, crash; system crash.

help
Access electronic documentation by pressing F1 or clicking Help in most applications. Online help gives advice or instructions on using program features without interrupting your work. Context-sensitive help gives advice and information pertaining directly to the active field or window.

hotkey
Key or a sequence of keys on the keyboard that brings up a menu, activates a window, or does some other function.

HTML or HyperText Markup Language
Language used to create Web pages. HTML allows the author to control the appearance of a Web page or to set up links to other locations in the document or on the Internet. Web browsers read HTML and convert it into readable text and graphics. Using a browser, click the hyperlinks to jump to the specified location. See also, hypertext.

hyperlink or hypertext link
Text or a graphic in an online document that can be clicked to display a different location, or execute some function. Links can open new windows, reference different documents, or refer to a target within the same document. Links are usually distinguished by underlines or different colors. When you click on the link, the target reference is displayed. For example, click here to see the glossary contents.

hypertext
Text containing hyperlinks. Hypertext is the basis of the Web. See also, browser; HTML.

I

icon
Small picture representing an object, concept, or message, application, a file, a group of items, or a desktop item.

idle time
Time during which the computer is not active. See also, activity.

image
- Copy of critical disk information (boot record, file allocation tables, and root information), saved in a IMAGE.DAT file.
- Picture or graphic.

infected file
File that contains a virus.

INI file
Any file whose name has a file extension of INI. INI files were used by many Windows 3.x applications (and by Windows 3.x itself) to store user preferences and other information used in the program initialization. In Windows 95, the Windows Registry stores most of this information, and INI files are used mainly by older applications.

initialize
- To prepare for use.
- In communications, to get the software and modem ready to communicate at the start of a session.
- To set a setting to an initial or default value.

inoculate
To generate information about a file that is used at a later time to verify the integrity of the file. Some virus scanners record critical information about each file and use that information when they scan the system to see if anything has been changed. If the information has changed, it could indicate the presence of a virus.

insertion point
Blinking vertical bar that indicates where typed or pasted text will be inserted. If you click at a new point in a word processing program, the insertion point moves to that point. Most of the word processors also allow you to move the insertion point with the arrow keys on your keyboard.

internal modem
Modem (expansion card) installed inside the computer case. It generally has two connectors, or jacks, which are visible at the back of the computer. One jack connects directly into the phone line. The other jack is connected to a telephone handset. See also, external modem; modem; or fax modem.

Internet
Largest network of computers in the world. The Internet is comprised of networks throughout the world, all communicating with each other. A computer on one network easily communicates with other computers thousands of miles away.
You can identify different network types on the Internet by the extensions on the network name. Commercial networks have extensions of COM, university extensions are often EDU, and other research extensions include ORG and NET. These networks span many different physical networks around the world. See also, Web; TCP/IP.

interrupt
Signal sent by a hardware device or by software that causes the CPU to stop what it is doing and execute special instructions. See also, IRQ.

IO.SYS

System file that contains device drivers for the MS-DOS operating system. See also, MSDOS.SYS.

IP or Internet Protocol
Set of standards used in networks that allows computers to trade information.

IRQ or Interrupt Request
Hardware line used by devices to send interrupts to the CPU. Each hardware device (input/output ports, keyboard, disk drives and so on) is assigned its own IRQ. Two devices cannot share the same IRQ, or they will not work properly.

item
File, folder, shortcut, disk, or other object. This term usually refers to things that can be opened or moved on your computer.

J
jack
The receptacle that a plug fits into. The plug itself is also called a jack.

K
K or kilobyte
1024 bytes.

keyboard
The primary interface between you and your computer. Keyboards hold alphabetic and numeric keys, as well as function keys.

kilobyte
See K.

known virus
Virus that is detected and identified by name. Up-to-date virus-scanning software knows how to deal with known viruses.

L
LAN or Local Area Network
Group of computers and other devices located in a limited area and connected together so that each device can interact with other devices on the network. A LAN usually includes a central computer called a server, that stores commonly needed programs and data. See also, WAN.

landscape
Page orientation where the longest edge of the paper is on the top and bottom of the page, rather than on the sides.

laptop
Small, lightweight, battery-operated computer used for traveling. Laptops generally have a screen that flips up to reveal the keyboard underneath. Some laptops have a specialized mouse or other pointing device. Laptop computers generally have less functionality than a desktop computer, and are considerably more expensive.

launch
To start a program.

LBA or Logical Block Addressing
LBA is an algorithm used to properly address IDE drives larger than 528 MB. Without LBA, the sectors beyond 528 MB get mapped back on top of themselves. This is often called drive-wrap. LBA is enabled in CMOS, on the hard drive controller card itself, or by the use of software such as On Track's Disk Manager or Microhouse's EZ Drive.

LFN or Long Filename

MS-DOS (and Windows 3.x) imposed an "eight dot three" limit on file names, allowing, at most, an eight character filename plus a three character file extension separated by a period. Long file-names are a feature of Windows 95 that allow filenames to be up to 255 characters long (including the drive:\path\filename). In addition to allowing longer filenames, Windows 95 supports using characters that were previously illegal in filenames (plus sign, comma, semicolon, equals signs, and left and right square brackets). Long filenames allow uppercase and lowercase letters. Long filenames use the Unicode character set. Even if you use long filenames, Windows 95 saves the files in "eight dot three" format as well. Therefore, if you use a program that does not support long filenames, you can always use the shorter name.

local computer
Computer you are currently working on. If you are connected to another computer via modem or a network, the other computer is the remote computer.

lock
- To prevent access to a disk, directory, or file. Some programs provide network locks so that two people cannot be using the same item at the same time. Other programs require passwords to open an item or disk. See also, protect.
- When you try to access a file in one program while it is in use by another program, Windows 95 locks the file.
- Another name for a computer crash. For example, your computer locks up when it crashes.

logical disk
See volume.

login
- To identify yourself to a computer after connecting to it over a communications line.
- The procedure of connecting to another computer. During this procedure, the remote computer usually requests your user name and a password.
- The name and password that you use to connect to a computer. On a computer with multiple users, the login provides a means of identifying authorized users. See also, logoff.

logoff
To end a session with a computer accessed over a communications line. Also known as logout. See also, login.

loop
Program code that is repeated until a specific condition is met.

lost cluster
Small portion of a disk that contains data, but does not belong to any file. Lost clusters can happen if the system crashes, or if you turn off the computer without exiting the programs that are running.

LPT
Name used by MS-DOS and Windows that refers to a parallel printer port. LPT comes from 'Line Printer.' See also, parallel port.

M
macro
Memorized set of keystrokes, operations, and other control codes. Some applications will let you create your own macros to reduce the work on repetitive tasks. When you run a macro, the key-strokes and codes are played back.

map
To assign a drive letter to a folder or drive on another computer (usually connected over a network). The other computer's drive or folder appears as a hard drive on your computer. You can copy files, and run programs on the other computer as though the programs were on your own PC.

maximize

To enlarge a window to its maximum size. You can maximize a window by clicking the Maximize button in the window's title bar. (When the window is already maximized, there is no button; in its place is the Restore button.)

You can maximize a minimized application by right clicking the application's button in the taskbar and then clicking Maximize on the window menu.

Maximize button
Button on the right side of a window's title bar that maximizes the window. When the window is already maximized, there is no Maximize button; in its place is the Restore button.

MB or megabyte
1024 K or 1,048,576 bytes.

MBR or Master Boot Record
First physical sector on a hard disk. It contains the computer's startup programs, and information on how the hard disk is partitioned. Also known as system area.

MCGA or MultiColor Graphics Array
Older video display system that allows you to see 256 colors at a time. This display was used on IBM PS/2 computers, but was not well supported by software developers.

memory
Computer hardware that stores data and provides for the retrieval of that stored data. Generally, the term memory refers to random access memory (RAM), which is used to run applications and temporarily store data during program execution.

menu
List of options. Clicking an option from a menu performs an action, leads to a dialog box, or shows another menu containing more options.

menu bar
Vertical or horizontal section in a window that contains menu options in the form of words or icons that can be selected. Click an item in the menu bar to display the related menu.

menu item
Option on a menu. Click a menu item to run the function associated with that item.

message
- Information displayed by a program on your screen that indicates a condition or suggests an action.
- Primary means by which applications communicate. For example, every time a button is clicked, a message is sent to the application indicating that the button was clicked.

MIDI or Musical Instrument Digital interface
Hardware and software standards that allow computers, music synthesizers, and musical instruments to exchange information.

minimize
To shrink an application window to a button in the taskbar. Applications are frequently minimized to cause them to run in the background while a user work on something else. You can minimize an application window by clicking the Minimize button in the window's title bar. To restore a minimized application, click it's button in the taskbar.

Minimize button
Button located on the right side of a window title bar that minimizes the window to an icon in the taskbar.

modem or modulator/demodulator
Communications device that enables a computer to transmit information over a standard telephone line. A modem translates (modulates) digital data to an analog signal for transmission over tele-

phone lines and then back to digital (demodulates) at the other end. It can transmit at different speeds or data-transfer rates. See also, baud rate; bps.

monitor
• Screen attached to your computer that shows display data from programs.
• To watch over something, or look for specific conditions.

motherboard
The large, main circuit board inside a computer to which all the other computer components (the CPU, memory chips, expansion boards, and so forth) are attached.

mouse
Handheld device used to control a cursor on the screen.

MS-DOS or Microsoft Disk Operating System
The operating system most commonly used on IBM and IBM-compatible PCs. MS-DOS was the operating system licensed by IBM for use with its first PCs, and has been the dominant operating system ever since. (IBM renamed the licensed version PC-DOS.) Natively, MS-DOS operates only in real mode, however DOS programs that conform to the DPMI specification can run in the protected mode of 80286 and later CPUs.

MSDOS.SYS
Hidden system file that contains the basic setup information for the MS-DOS operating system and startup information for Windows 95. See also, MS-DOS; IO.SYS.

multitasking
Sharing a CPU so that more than one program can run concurrently on a computer. Multitasking gives the appearance that multiple processes are occurring simultaneously. However, only computers with multiple CPUs and a supporting operating system (such as Windows NT, UNIX, or OS/2) can run more than one program truly simultaneously.

My Computer
Icon that sits in the top left corner of a standard Windows 95 desktop. Click this icon to open drive windows, set up your computer, and run applications. See also, Start Menu.

N
network
Group of computers and associated hardware that are connected by communication lines or other means. Networks allow users to share data and peripheral devices, such as printers and storage media, to exchange electronic mail, and so on. See also, LAN; WAN.

Notepad
Simple text editor that comes with Windows. This program works well for editing simple text files that don't require fonts or complicated formatting.

O
online
• To have a device connected to a computer and ready to communicate. For example, if a printer is online, it is turned on, and the communication line is open to the computer.
• To be connected and communicating with an online service or network.

online help
See help.

online service
Computer communications system or service that allows users to dial in for information, messages, and files. CompuServe and America OnLine are examples of commercial services. See also, BBS.

operating system

The master control software of a computer that tells the computer how to operate. It is the first program to load into memory when the computer is started, and remains in memory as long as the computer is running. The operating system controls the computer's use and allocation of system resources such as processing time, memory, disk space, and peripheral devices such as printers and the monitor display. All applications must interact with the operating system to gain access to system resources, and all applications are limited by the operating system for which they are designed. Windows 95 is an operating system.

output
Results of computer processing that are sent to the screen, a printer, or a file.

P
palette
Set of colors available to the display.

parallel port
Port connected to the motherboard in the computer case that transfers data on more than one wire. Its generally used for printer connections. Most computers have at least one parallel port known as LPT1. See also, serial port.

parity
An extra bit added to a byte to reveal errors in storage or transmission. This parameter must be the same between two modems for them to communicate.

partition
Portion of memory or a hard disk that acts a separate unit. A single hard disk might be divided into several partitions, where each partition acts as a separate physical disk. See also, volume.

partitioned hard disk
One physical hard disk that is set up to appear as two or more disks.

password
Private identification code. Passwords are often required for access to online services and networks. Computers might be set up to require a password before they begin (boot passwords). Windows 95 might require a password to start running. You can also protect sensitive files with passwords so they cannot be opened by unauthorized users.

path
List of folders where DOS can search when it cannot find a requested file. A PATH= statement is placed in an AUTOEXEC.BAT file to tell DOS where to search. Programs located in the path directory might be run from any other folder.

pathname
Complete name of a file or folder. The name includes the drive letter and complete route to a file or directory on a disk. For example, if a file named QQTR1.DOC is stored in the My Documents folder on drive C:, the pathname for the file is "C:\My Documents\QQTR1.DOC." See also, filename, long filename.

Pentium
Intel's version of the 586 processor.

peripheral device
Any device connected to your computer. Peripheral devices include keyboards, modems, monitors, printers, mice, and many other devices. See also, Control Panel, device driver.

PIF or Program Information File
A Windows data that holds requirements for DOS applications that run under Windows. You can open an application by clicking its PIF file.

pixel

Single dot in the screen of your monitor. Screen images are created by putting together hundreds of pixels. Screen sizes are defined by the number of pixels displayed. For example, a 640X480 display is 640 pixels wide and 480 pixels tall. The word pixel comes from picture element. See also, bitmap.

plug-and-play
An industry standard that allows computer peripherals to be automatically configured by an operating system. Plug and Play eliminates the need for manually changing jumpers and other hardware settings when installing hardware, and for restarting a computer after making a hardware change (example, after inserting a PCMCIA card or plugging a portable computer into a docking station). Plug-and-Play works best with a BIOS that can communicate up-to-date configuration information, and an operating system that supports Plug-and-Play hardware by dynamically maintaining system-wide configuration settings.
Windows 95 has built-in Plug-and-Play support. It stores current configuration information in the Registry, which gets updated whenever a configuration change occurs. Applications are notified by Windows 95 whenever there is a change in the system configuration.

point
To position the mouse pointer over an object, like a window or menu.

port
The portion of a computer or a hardware device through which data passes to get in to or out of the computer or device. Computers connect to devices such as printers, monitors, and modems through ports. See also, serial port; parallel port.

portrait
Page orientation that aligns the paper's longer side from top to bottom. See also, landscape.

primary mouse button
Mouse button you use the most. In most cases it is the left mouse button. To better suit left-handed users, the right mouse button might be configured as the primary mouse button through the Control Panel in Windows. See also, secondary mouse button.

printer driver
Software that tells your computer how to send the data to a specific printer. Most printers require a printer driver to print anything at all; but Windows 95 comes with many print drivers already installed. You can add more print drivers through the Windows Control Panel. See also, device driver.

processor
Computer hardware component that performs actual computations. See CPU.

program
- File or group of files written for a specific purpose such as playing a game, word processing, or creating a spreadsheet.
- Sequence of instructions that a computer can execute, including all the statements and files it needs. See also, application.

program file
File that launches an application. The file usually has an EXE, PIF, COM, or BAT extension.

program virus
Virus that infects program files such as COM, EXE, OVL, DRV (driver), and SYS (device driver) files. This type of virus can stay in memory even after a program is executed, until you turn off your computer. See also, boot virus.

protect

To secure a disk, program, file, or entire system. There are many software utilities that allow for different levels of protection. Protection can include (but not limited to) any of the following protection methods:

- Limiting a user's access to a file
- Copying a file so that it can be replaced if damaged or lost
- Tracking a file's information to identify whether the file has been modified (commonly used in virus protection)

See also, lock.

protocol
Set of standard rules that enable computers to exchange data with one another with as few errors as possible. When information is transferred over a network or a modem, all computers use the same protocol. There are many protocols used in computer communications. For example you might hear of TCP/IP in networks, and XModem, ZModem, or Kermit in the world of modems.

Q

queue
Buffer or list that holds commands waiting to be executed.

R

RAM or Random Access Memory
The main memory of a computer. The memory is considered random access because the memory locations might be accessed directly by address rather than sequentially. The CPU must load the application programs and the data they need into RAM before they can perform any processing. RAM is often supplemented by virtual memory which increases the number of applications that can be run simultaneously. RAM memory is volatile. See also, virtual memory.

read
To collect information from an input source such as a file.

read-only
Disk or file containing data that can be read, but cannot be written to or deleted.

read-only attribute
Attribute of a file. When this attribute is on, the file cannot be modified or deleted.

real mode
Mode of computer operation that only allows the first 1 MB of RAM to be used, and prevents the CPU from running more than one process at a time. The running process has free access to the memory and all input/output devices. This mode is the only operating mode supported by MS-DOS. Any software that operates in real mode has access only to conventional memory and (with the aid of memory management software) upper memory.

reboot
To restart your computer. See also, boot; cold boot; warm boot.

Recycle Bin
Windows folder that catches deleted files and holds them in place just in case you want to retrieve them later.

Registry
A Windows 95 database that provides centralized storage of startup, configuration, and other information. The Registry stores information about all installed hardware and any software that has been designed expressly for the Windows 95 operating system. The Registry is one of the components that enables Windows 95 to support Plug and Play.
The Registry replaces many of the functions previously provided by these files; AUTOEXEC.BAT, CONFIG.SYS, WIN.INI, and SYSTEM.INI, and the by individual applications' INI files. These files might still exist, however, to provide compatibility with older programs and hardware. The Registry

stores its information in two binary files: SYSTEM.DAT, which maintains up-to-date computer-related data, and USER.DAT, which can maintain multiple system configurations for different users or purposes.

remote
Computer or other device that is accessed through a network or modem. See also, local computer.

remove
See uninstall.

repair
- To remove a virus from a file and return the file to its original, uninfected state.
- To return a file or disk to its original state.

replace
To put new data in the place of older data, usually after conducting a search for the data to be replaced. See also, search and replace.

restart
Starting the computer over by choosing Restart the Computer from the Shut Down menu under the Start button. Installation programs often ask you to restart your computer so that new system extensions can work.

Rescue Disk
Program that makes sure you're always prepared in case disaster strikes. It stores the information needed to get your computer up and running if it fails to start normally from the hard disk.

restore
To return a window to the size it was before it was maximized or minimized. You can restore a maximized application window by clicking the Restore button in the window title bar. (When the window is not maximized, there is no Restore button; in its place is the Maximize button.)
You can restore a minimized application window by clicking on its button in the Windows taskbar.

Restore button
Button located on the right side of a maximized window's title bar that restores the window. When the window is not maximized, the Maximize button takes the place of the Restore button. If any window is minimized, you can restore it to its former size by either clicking the window's icon in the task bar or by right clicking the window's icon in the task bar and clicking Restore on the Control menu.

right click
Click the secondary mouse button (usually the right mouse button). If your system is set up for a left handed mouse, the buttons are reversed and a right click refers to clicking the left mouse button.

ROM or Read-Only Memory
Memory that can be read from but not written to. It usually contains programs or instructions. A common type of read-only memory is a CD-ROM. See also, CD-ROM; RAM.

root
The root is the first folder on a volume. The root contains some files and shows the first level of folders stored on the disk. MS-DOS and versions of Windows prior to Windows 95 referred to the root as the root directory.

root directory
See root.

S
scan
- To search through a file or disk for specific conditions such as viruses.
- To copy information from a printed page into the computer through a scanner.

scheduler
- Operating system process that manages other processes and tasks.
- A program, like Microsoft System Agent, that runs other programs at specific times.

screen resolution
Dimensions, in pixels, of your computer screen. Setting the screen resolution involves setting the size of the display, and the color depth (the number of colors to be shown). Change the screen resolution by right clicking the desktop and selecting Properties and Settings. See also, pixel.

screen saver
Program that blanks the screen or displays moving graphics. Screen savers prevent images from burning into the screen. You can use a screen saver with password protection to hide sensitive material on your screen while you are away from your desk.

scroll
To move a document in a window in order to see a different portion of the document.

scroll arrow
Arrow button that appears at both ends of a scroll bar. Click the scroll arrow to move small increments in a window. You can click between the scroll box and the scroll arrows to move larger increments.

scroll bar
Bar that appears along the right side and bottom of a window to allow you to see more information. If the entire document or file fits in the window, the scroll bar does not appear. Click on the scroll arrows or the scroll bar to move the display up or down through the document.

scroll box
Small box that slides up and down in the scroll bar, indicating the current relative position in a document. Also known as an elevator, a slider, or a thumb.

SCSI or Small Computer System Interface
Pronounced "SKUH-zee." Standard interface that provides high-speed access to devices such as hard disks, printers, and CD-ROMs. Up to seven SCSI devices can be connected to each other and to a single SCSI port on the computer.

search
To look for the location of a file or folder, or to look for specific data in a file or data structure. See also, replace; search and replace.

search and replace
Word processing function, in which you specify two strings of characters, one to find and the other to replace the first with. Some word processors allow you to replace all occurrences throughout the document with a single mouse click. See also, search.

secondary mouse button
Less-used mouse button. Clicking the secondary mouse button is known as a 'right click' and frequently displays a context menu. Usually, the secondary mouse button is the right button, but you can change it using the Windows Control Panel. See also, primary mouse button.

sector
Smallest physical storage unit on a hard disk, generally 512 bytes.

select
- To specify an item on the screen (icon, checkbox, list item and so on) by clicking it. It generally indicates only that a choice has been made.
- To specify text by dragging the mouse over it while holding down the primary mouse button. Once the text has been selected, it can be moved, cut, pasted, formatted and so on.

sensitive
- Object that can be easily affected or damaged by something. Floppy disks are sensitive to magnets, heat, pressure, and so on.
- Private information that should not be seen by the rest of the world.

serial communication
Standard method of communicating between two computers over a modem. Both the computers must use the same data rate, parity, and control information. Most modems can determine automatically the best rate available to both of them.

serial port
A computer's input/output connection for serial communication. It is attached to the serial interface and is usually an RS-232-C type connector. The standard serial ports on a PC are called COM Ports.

server
- Computer that provides some service for other computers connected to it through a network. The most common example is a file server, which has a local disk and services requests from remote clients to read and write files on that disk.
- Computer that allows other machines to share its files over a network. Often, a computer is used as a server only and does not have anyone using applications on it. See also, client; LAN; workstation.

shortcut
Item that references another file. When you double-click on a shortcut, the system activates the associated program.

shortcut key
Key combination that allows you to carry out a particular command from the keyboard, without using the mouse to choose a menu item. If a menu item can be run by pressing a shortcut key, the keystrokes often appear on the menus next to the item name.

SIMM or Single Inline Memory Module
Circuit board loaded with memory chips that fit into the motherboard. Motherboards have four to sixteen memory slots that can accept SIMMs.

slider
See scroll box.

sound card
Expansion card that fits into an expansion slot on the motherboard. Sound cards have jacks that open in the back of the computer for external speakers and a microphone. Some have input jacks and a MIDI jack.

SRAM or Static Random Access Memory
Volatile memory that does not need to be refreshed to retain information. SRAM chips are larger, require more power, and cost more than DRAM chips.

Start button
Button on the taskbar that opens the Start menu.

Start menu
Menu system for running programs under Windows. The Start menu allows you to run programs, change Windows settings, and shut down the computer. Open the Start menu by clicking the Start button on the taskbar.

startup disk
See startup floppy disk.

startup files

See system files.

startup floppy disk
Floppy disk containing the necessary system software to start up a computer.
- To create a startup floppy disk, open Add/Remove Programs in the Windows 95 Control Panel. Then select the Startup Disk tab. Follow the instructions that appear on the screen to create the disk.
- To start your computer with a floppy disk, insert the disk into the floppy disk drive and restart your computer.

status bar
Bar at the bottom of a window that displays information about a process, function, or selected item.

subdirectory
See subfolder.

subfolder
Folder within another folder. See also, root.

SVGA or Super VGA
Type of video adapter board used in personal computers developed after VGA. These cards add several higher resolutions than were possible with VGA cards.

swap file
Hidden file used by Windows to hold information from RAM temporarily. This frees up the RAM for other applications to use. It allows you to have several large applications open at the same time. The Windows 95 swap file is named WIN386.SWP.

syntax
Set of rules governing how a command is written. These rules tell you the spelling and parameters that must be used to execute a command.

syntax error
Error that occurs when the software does not recognize a command that was entered.

system area
Area of a disk that contains the operating system information. This information includes data on how to access the boot record, file allocation tables, and root information. The system area of a hard disk also includes a partition table to accommodate multiple operating systems and multiple volumes for the disk. Also known as master boot record.

system crash
Software crash in which the operating system or other software is at fault. See also, crash; head crash.

system files
Group of files used to start a computer or used to start and configure Windows. These includes: AUTOEXEC.BAT, CONFIG.SYS, SYSTEM.INI, SYSTEM.DAT, and USER.DAT. Also known as startup files.

system floppy disk
See startup floppy disk.

SYSTEM.DAT
One of two primary system files in Windows 95 that contains system-related Registry information. See also, USER.DAT.

SYSTEM.INI
A Windows startup file that contains system-specific drivers and configuration information. Most of the information that was stored in SYSTEM.INI for Windows 3.x has now been relocated to the

Windows Registry. SYSTEM.INI still exists in Windows 95, however, for compatibility with older applications, and for certain Windows 95 startup processes.

T

taskbar
Bar that usually appears along the bottom of the Windows 95 desktop. The taskbar contains the start menu button, and holds icons for the applications that are running. When an application is minimized, click the application's icon in the taskbar to restore it again.

TCP/IP or Transmission Control Protocol over Internet Protocol
Standard protocols used over networks and the Internet.

text file
File composed of text characters, without formatting controls. Text editors save documents as a simple text file with minimal formatting. Text files work well when you want to transfer a document between two applications that cannot read each other's file formats. A text file usually consists of characters coded from the ASCII character set. Text files generally have a TXT extension; however, there are some exceptions. For example, DOS batch files and Windows INI files are all text files. See also, ASCII.

tile
To arrange open windows so that you can see them all on the desktop at the same time. See also, cascade.

title bar
Top portion of a window or dialog box that shows the name (or title) of the application running in the window. In the active window, this bar is usually a different color or intensity than that of an inactive window. In a drive window, the bar shows the current drive, folder, and file types. It might also contain the Control menu, the Minimize button, Maximize button, and Restore button.

toggle
• Object that is selected or deselected (or turned on or off) with the same action.
• To select or deselect an object (such as a check box or menu item) using the same control or action.

toolbar
Row of command buttons displayed in an application window, is usually immediately under the window's menu bar. These buttons provide quick access to application options or commands.

trackball
Stationary input device that performs the same as a mouse. Trackballs have a rollerball on the top of the device, and two buttons that operate just like mouse buttons. To move the cursor with a trackball, roll the rollerball with the palm of your hand.

True Type font
Fonts that are loaded into your computer and offer a variety of type faces that you can print with. True Type fonts are WYSIWYG (they generally print just as they appear in the application).

TSR or Terminate and Stay Resident
Type of program that loads itself into memory the first time it is run and remains there until explicitly removed or until the computer is restarted. Also known as memory-resident program.

U

undo file
When software makes repairs to your disk, it usually creates an undo file. The undo file allows the software to reverse the repairs, if necessary.

Unicode

Greatly expanded set of characters. While the ANSI character set contains 256 values, the Unicode set contains 65,536 values. It allows a computer to display and print characters in virtually any language throughout the world.

uninstall
To undo the software installation process, removing all files associated with the installed program.

unknown virus
Virus that has not been identified, or is not recognized by anti-virus software. See, known virus.

upload
In communications, the process of transferring a file to another computer by means of a modem or network. See also, download.

upper memory
Memory between the first 640K and the first Megabyte of RAM.

UPS or Uninterruptible Power Source
Backup power used in the event of electrical power failure. UPS systems usually do have enough battery power so you can shut down your computer properly. Unlike a surge protector that filters power surges, your computer keeps running when plugged into a UPS, even if there is no electrical power.

USER.DAT
Windows 95 file that contains user-related Registry information. This file contains user-specific information for multi-user systems. Also see SYSTEM.DAT.

user name
Login name used to gain access to a computer or network.

V
VGA or Video Graphics Array
Type of video adapter board used in PCs. VGA was developed after EGA (Enhanced Graphics Array). VGA cards are capable of several video modes but have a limit of 256 colors for graphics and text. See also, SVGA.

video card
Expansion card that supports graphical capabilities in a display device (for example, a monitor). Also known as display adapter or graphics card.

Virtual device driver
Device driver that is added to or removed from memory as needed.

virtual memory
A technique for increasing the amount of memory available to programs by using space on the hard disk to simulate RAM. Program instructions and data moves between the hard disk and RAM as needed. See also, swap file.

virus
Program intentionally written to alter the way your computer operates without your knowledge or permission. Viruses attach themselves to other programs and become active when the program is run. While active, it can replicate by copying itself to other applications on any available disk. Viruses can be very destructive and can even damage your computer's hardware. See also, virus-like activity.

virus definition
Virus information that allows an anti-virus program to recognize, alert you to the presence of, and sometimes remove a specific virus. See also, unknown virus; virus List.

virus-like activity

Activity or action caused by other software that appears to be the work of an unknown virus. These are activities that can be performed legitimately by some programs; however, in other cases they might indicate a virus at work.

Virus list
List of known viruses.

volatile
Requires power. Volatile memory cannot retain data without power. When a computer is turned off, the main memory or RAM immediately looses its contents because it is volatile.

volume
Storage device or part of a storage device formatted to contain files. A large hard disk is often partitioned so that the computer thinks there are several disks, even though the data resides on the same physical disk. Each volume is mapped to a drive letter so you can access it. Also known as logical disk or partition.

VRAM or Video Random Access Memory
Memory used in a video display adapter card to display images on the monitor. VRAM is faster than DRAM, because it simultaneously moves data in and out. See also, SRAM.

W
wallpaper
Picture that you can put on the background of your Windows desktop.

WAN or Wide Area Network
Network, usually constructed with serial lines, extending over distances greater than one kilometer. See also, LAN; network.

warm boot
To restart your computer by pressing Ctrl+Alt+Del. This type of startup is detected and emulated by some viruses, so a virus in memory might still be there when startup is complete. Cold boots are safer if you notice virus-like activity. See also, boot; cold boot; reboot.

Web, WWW or World Wide Web
Hypertext based system of information located throughout the Internet. See also, browser; HTML.

wildcard
Global filename character used in DOS and Windows that represents all or part of a filename. A question mark (?) represents any single character and an asterisk (*) represents a series of characters. For example, *.TXT refers to all filenames with the .TXT extension.

WIN.INI
Windows startup file that contains system settings and application preferences. Most of the information that was stored in WIN.INI for Windows 3.1 has now been relocated to the Windows 95 Registry. WIN.INI still exists in Windows for compatibility with older applications and for certain Windows startup processes.

WIN386.SWP
Windows 95 swap file.

window
Framed area in which you can run an application, view a file listing or a document, or perform a task. Windows can generally be opened, closed, maximized, minimized, resized, and moved. See also, status bar.

wizard
Small program that leads you through questions and decisions needed to perform a task.

word processor

Program that lets you create text, paragraphs, and pages. Powerful word processors have many features that help you produce written documents. Simple word processors might do nothing more than allow you to enter text into a database or program. Word processors generally allow you to apply formatting to text, paragraphs, and pages.

workstation
- General-purpose computer designed to be used by one person at a time and which offers higher performance than that normally found in a PC, especially with respect to graphics, processing power, and the ability to carry out several tasks at the same time.
- Computer that is attached to a network and logs into the network server. See also, client; server.

World Wide Web
See Web.

wrap
Ability of the program to continue displaying information on a new line or page when the end of that line or page is reached.

write
To transfer information to an output or storage device such as a printer, monitor, or disk. See read.

write-protected disk
Disks that cannot be written to. Write-protecting disks prevents viruses from infecting them.

WWW
See Web.

WYSIWYG
The acronym for What You See Is What You Get. This information prints just as it appears on the screen.

X

Y

Z
ZIP file
Compressed file that might contain several normal files. ZIP files have a ZIP extension and are compressed with the PKZIP program.