

Common Computer Terms and Definitions

Boot: The act of starting up a computer.

Byte: One character (eight bits of data).

Cursor: The blinking vertical or horizontal line that indicates where text is being typed.

CD-ROM: Compact Disc Read-Only Memory

CD-R/CD-RW: CD-Recordable/CD-Re-Writeable. Disc drives that create (or *burn*) new CDs.

CPU: Central Processing Unit. The computer's electronic brain.

Crash: A hardware or software failure.

Dialog Box: A window that asks a question or requests the user to make a choice.

Drive: A device that spins disks or tapes in order to read and write data; for example, a hard drive, floppy drive, or CD-ROM drive. Each drive has an assigned letter. The "C" Drive is the hard drive (information is stored in the computer). The "A" drive holds the floppy disk (information is stored in the floppy). The "D" Drive is the CD-ROM drive.

Download: The act of retrieving data from another computer. **Upload**: The act of sending data to another computer.

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DVD: Also called DVD-ROM. Digital Versatile Disk Read-Only Memory.

File: Any form of digital data that's saved to a disk.

Filename extension: The last three characters of a file or folder name, appearing after a period (dot). For example, DOC is the filename extension of MyLetter.DOC.

Floppy Disk: The standard removable storage device used with computers. The floppy disk goes in the "A" Drive.

Icon: A small drawing that represents a program, command, data file, service, function, or website.

Hardware: The electronic, electrical, and mechanical components that make up a computer.

Maximize: Expanding an open window to fill the screen by clicking the maximize button.

Minimize: Shrinking an open window by clicking the minimize button.

Mouse: The standard pointing device used with computers.

Open: To activate a program or data file.

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Operating System: The main program that controls your PC (personal computer). (Windows 95, 98, ME, and XP)

Pointer: The arrow that moves when the mouse is jostled.

Port: Input/output receptacles which enable your PC to connect to other hardware resources, such as a keyboard, printer, mouse, and so on.

RAM: Random Access Memory. The computer's temporary memory. It is used when you are running a program or creating something. RAM is erased when you turn your computer off.

Software: Programs that run in a computer, such as a word processor, spreadsheet, database, web browser, or e-mail system.

USB: Universal Serial Bus. The standard input/output port for connecting devices to computers.