

ICT Jargon Busted



Do you wonder what a hard drive or an operating system is? The ICT jargon buster has been written to explain the meaning behind the jargon.

An Operating System is a crucial piece of software that loads automatically when you switch on a computer. Windows XP Home and Professional are two current operating systems. These Operating Systems govern the way the hardware and software components in a computer work together.

The Hard Disk is a high-capacity disk drive fitted in almost all PCs and used to store both applications and the documents and files they create. Hard disks are so-called because they use rigid magnetic disks to store data. Hard disk storage capacity is measured in Gigabytes.

Memory - this is the computer's temporary storage area which is measured in megabytes (Mb). Anything written to memory will be lost when the power is switched off.

A Homepage is the first or main page of a website, usually containing links to more detailed sections or content.

An Icon is a small image that is used by Windows on the Desktop to identify a file or application.

A Pointer - this is commonly known as a mouse pointer that looks like an arrow and is used to activate one of the Icons that are located on the screen of the computer.

A Sound card is an expansion card that lets a Personal Computer create sounds for games, sound effects, music, and so on.

A Graphics Card - this is the part of a Personal Computer that displays the images that you see on your computer's monitor. Some are more advanced than others, and feature connections for video recorders and other similar devices.

A Modem is a device that enables two computers to communicate with each other over a telephone line. A modem is usually needed to connect to the Internet.

Online - this is the amount of time you spend connected to or on the Internet.

A Wizard - is an automated online 'assistant' designed to guide you, step-by-step, through a potentially complex process such as faxing, creating a template or adding additional software options.

A Plug-in - this is a small program that adds extra features such as streaming video to your web browser or to other applications, and is loaded only when it's needed to display information

A Portal - this is a website that offers a variety of services, such as news, weather reports, stock information, email and so on. The information on offer may be personalised for your own interests if you have registered with the portal. Most search sites are also portals.

Spam - this is Junk Email that is sent to large groups of people offering such things as money-spinning ideas, holidays and so on.

Newsgroups - these are discussion areas on the Internet, where you can post a message and read replies from other people, like an Office Notice Board.

Virus - a Virus is a malicious computer program that is designed to cause at best annoyance and at worst, damage to computer data. Viruses usually spread from computer to computer by 'infecting' files that are passed between them, or by automatically sending an email to everyone in your address book. They are often hidden in innocuous-looking files or email attachments, and may lay dormant waiting for a trigger date or event before they launch.

An Attachment - this is a computer file that is sent along with an email message.

Broadband this refers to high-bandwidth Internet Connections that are currently available

A Web Browser is an application that lets you view pages on the Internet. Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator are two of the most popular browsers.

CD-ROM - this is a version of the CD, which can store a lot more than just music.

CD-RW Stands for compact disc rewritable format, or blank compact discs which can be recorded on over and over again.

A DVD-ROM drive - these drives will play both CD-ROM and DVD discs.

A DVD is a type of disc that is able to store huge amounts of digital data, including full-length movies, with excellent-quality sound and pictures.

A DTS Digital Theatre System is an alternative 5.1 surround sound system used by some cinemas and for DVD movies.

A Database is any collection of information, usually (but not always) used to refer to information stored on a computer. Database software applications usually include powerful search and data-filtering facilities.

Email - Short for electronic mail is a system of sending notes and memos between computers via the Internet.

Extension - The three-letter code at the end of a filename that indicates the type or format of the file. These enable Windows to recognise what type of file it is dealing with.

Firewall - this is a system that prevents unauthorised access to a computer over a network, such as the Internet.

A Floppy Disk is a small, rigid square of plastic that is used to store data. Inside the case is a circular magnetic disk (the floppy bit). The most common type of floppy disk is the 1.44Mb 3.5in version. These are currently going out of date and are now being replaced by USB Pen Drives.

A Dialogue Box - this is a small window that pops up to display or request information. In Windows, Menu options that end with an '...' always open a dialogue box.

Dial-up connection this is a component of Windows that allows PCs to connect to the Internet using a modem and a telephone line.

Dolby Digital - this is a surround system that is used in cinemas and on DVD movies. Also known as AC3, it requires five satellite speakers and a subwoofer. The two rear speakers produce stereo sound and also require a Dolby Digital amplifier.

Download - a process of transferring files onto your Personal Computer directly from another computer.

A Font this is a set of letters, numbers and other symbols that have a particular style, which include popular Windows fonts like Arial, Verdana and Times New Roman.

Formulas - Formulas tell spreadsheets how to act on data that is stored in cells. For example, '=SUM(B13+B16)' tells the program to add the contents of cells B13 and B16 together.

Hackers - these are people who break into other people's computers and network systems, often in an attempt to steal sensitive information.

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