



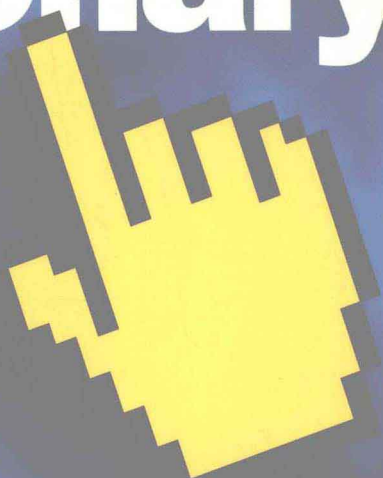
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Entries!**

# Microsoft Press **Computer User's Dictionary**

- **Clear, up-to-date definitions of the terms you need to know**
- **Entries cover the Internet, hardware, software, operating systems, and more**
- **Online updates keep information current**



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# **Computer User's Dictionary**

**Microsoft** Press

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## **Dictionary** *of Computer Terms*

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# Introduction

The *Microsoft Press Computer User's Dictionary* is designed to be a handy reference to the terms and abbreviations you'll encounter while using your personal computer. You'll find it handy when reading online help or computer manuals, using programs, browsing the Internet, reading advertisements for computer hardware and software, or thumbing through computer magazines.

The dictionary includes terms drawn from a variety of topics, such as these:

- The Internet and the World Wide Web, with subjects ranging from security to Web page construction to newsgroup slang
- Communications (e-mail, modems, and faxes)
- Network computing
- Information processing and data storage
- Computer graphics
- Hardware, including entries for popular computers and processors as well as descriptions of various boards, connectors, and peripherals

Because most computer users operate personal computers and desktop systems at home, at work, or both, the majority of the entries in this dictionary cover the terminology used in describing and working with these systems.

The definitions provided for these terms are clear, concise, and jargon-free. You'll also find traditional dictionary elements, such as parts of speech, spelling variants, and numbered lists for terms that have more than one definition.

## Order of Presentation

Entries are alphabetized by letter. Spaces are ignored, as are characters such as hyphens and slashes; for example, *README* falls between *read error* and *read notification*, and *machine-independent* falls between *machine error* and *machine instruction*. Entries that consist of numbers or symbols (80386, for example, or @) are located at the beginning of the dictionary and are listed in ascending ASCII order.

### Entries

Entries are of two types: main entries, which contain full definitions; and cross-references, which contain *See* references to the appropriate main entries. In many cases, the cross-reference is synonymous—that is, the cross-referenced term is a secondary or less common way of referring to the term that appears as the main entry, and the definition at the main entry can be substituted as a definition for the synonymous cross-reference:

**sign off** *vb.* *See* log off.

In other cases, the *See* reference directs you to a main entry that contains an explanation of the cross-referenced term:

**required hyphen** *n.* *See* hyphen.

### Format

Information in each main entry is presented in a consistent format: entry name in boldface, spelling variants (if any), part of speech (as applicable), definition, acronym (if any), alternative names (if any), and cross-references (if any).

### Main Entries

Entries that are acronyms or abbreviations or that are shortened forms of several words or a phrase show those words spelled out at the beginning of the definition. In those words, the letters that make up the acronym, abbreviation, or short form appear in boldface type.

When two main entries have the same spelling, the two terms are differentiated by adding a superscript numeral after each term. These entries are called homographs, and they are generally different parts of speech. For example, **e-mail**<sup>1</sup> is a noun, and **e-mail**<sup>2</sup> is a verb.

### Spelling Variants

When a main entry can be spelled in two or more different ways, each spelling variant is provided after the main entry, following the word *or*. For example:

**e-mail**<sup>1</sup> or **E-mail** or **email**

## Parts of Speech

Nearly all entries are designated as one of the following four parts of speech, abbreviated as shown here:

<i>n.</i>	noun
<i>vb.</i>	verb
<i>adj.</i>	adjective
<i>adv.</i>	adverb

For entries that are prefixes, the designation *prefix* is used rather than one of the four parts of speech. Additionally, the part of speech is omitted in a small number of entries for which it is not appropriate (for instance, an acronym representing a more complex phrase that is not clearly described by one of the four parts of speech).

## Definitions

Each of the more than 4,700 entries is written in clear, standard English. Many go beyond a simple definition to provide additional detail and to put the term in context for a typical computer user. When an entry has more than one sense or definition, the definitions are presented in a numbered list, to make it easier to distinguish the particular, sometimes subtle, variations in meaning.

## Acronyms

Terms used in the computer field are often shortened to form acronyms. Sometimes an acronym is the more common way of referring to a concept or an object; in these cases, the dictionary lists the acronym as the main entry. In other cases, the acronym is not as commonly used as the words or phrase for which it stands; in these cases, the words or phrase constitute the main entry, and the acronym is provided after the definition, following the word *Acronym*.

## Alternative Names

Some items or concepts in the computer field can be referred to by more than one name. This dictionary uses the generally preferred terminology as the main entry and lists alternative names after the definition and any acronyms, following the phrase *Also called*.

### Cross-References

Cross-references are of three types: *See*, *See also*, and *Compare*. A *See* reference simply points to another entry that contains the relevant information. A *See also* reference points to one or more entries that contain additional information about a topic; this type of reference follows any acronyms or alternative names after the definition. A *Compare* reference points to an entry or entries that offer contrasting information; this type of reference follows any acronyms, alternative names, or *See also* references after the definition.

### Future Printings

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this book. If you find an error, please let us know so that we can correct it in future printings and online updates. Address your letter to: Dictionary Editor, Microsoft Press, One Microsoft Way, Redmond, WA 98052-8302. Or you can send e-mail to [mspcd@microsoft.com](mailto:mspcd@microsoft.com).

### Further References

If you seek a definition that is not in this dictionary, you may wish to consult our larger and more comprehensive reference, the *Microsoft Press Computer Dictionary, Third Edition* (ISBN 1-57231-446-X), which contains more than 7,600 terms. The *Microsoft Press Computer Dictionary, Third Edition*, is available at most bookstores that carry computer books.

### Online Updates

Quarterly updates and revisions will be made to our dictionaries on the Microsoft Press Web site. These updates are meant to supplement the content of our dictionaries and keep them up to date in a field that's rapidly evolving. To view the updates, simply point your Web browser to <http://mspress.microsoft.com/mspress/products/1031/>.



# Numbers & Symbols

**\$0.02** *See my two cents.*

**& 1.** The default character used to designate a character entity (special character) in an HTML or SGML document. *See also* HTML, SGML. **2.** In spreadsheet programs, an operator for inserting text into a formula specifying the relationship between cells.

**\*** *See* asterisk.

**\*,\*** *See* star-dot-star.

**..** DOS and UNIX syntax for the parent directory. A single dot refers to the current directory.

**/ 1.** A character used to delimit parts of a directory path in UNIX and FTP or parts of an Internet address in Web browsers. **2.** A character used to flag switches or options that control the execution of a program invoked by a command-line interface. *See also* command-line interface.

**//** A notation used with a colon to separate the URL protocol (such as http or ftp) from the URL host machine name, as in http://www.yahoo.com. *See also* URL.

**:** A symbol used after the protocol name in a URL. *See also* URL.

**<> 1.** A pair of symbols used to set off a tag in an HTML document. *See also* HTML. **2.** In an Internet Relay Chat or a multi-user dungeon, a set of symbols used to designate some action or reaction, as in <chuckle>. *See also* emotag, IRC, MUD. **3.** A pair of symbols used to set off a return address in an e-mail header.

**> 1.** A symbol used in DOS and UNIX to direct the output resulting from some command into a file. **2.** A symbol commonly used in e-mail messages to designate text included from another message.

**?** *See* question mark.

**@** The separator between account names and domain name in Internet e-mail addresses. When spoken, @ is read as "at."

**\** *See* backslash.

**100BaseT** *n.* An Ethernet standard for baseband local area networks using twisted-pair cable carrying 100 Mbps. *Also called* Fast Ethernet. *See also* Ethernet (definition 1).

**101-key keyboard** *n.* A computer keyboard modeled after the enhanced keyboard; introduced by IBM for the IBM PC/AT. The 101-key keyboard and

the enhanced keyboard are similar in the number and function of their keys; they may differ in the way the keys are laid out, the amount of tactile feedback expressed when a key is pressed, and the shape and feel of the keycaps. *See also* enhanced keyboard.

**1024×768** *n.* A standard super VGA computer display having a resolution of 1,024 columns of pixels by 768 rows of pixels. *See also* SVGA.

**10Base2** *n.* The Ethernet standard for baseband local area networks using a thin coaxial cable up to 200 meters long and carrying 10 Mbps in a bus topology. A network node is connected to the cable by a BNC connector on the adapter card. *Also called* Cheapernet, thin Ethernet, ThinNet, ThinWire. *See also* BNC connector, bus network, coaxial cable, Ethernet (definition 1).

**10Base5** *n.* The Ethernet standard for baseband local area networks using a thick coaxial cable up to 500 meters long and carrying 10 Mbps in a bus topology. A network node is equipped with a transceiver that plugs into a 15-pin AUI (Attachment Unit Interface) connector on the adapter card and taps into the cable. *Also called* thick Ethernet, ThickNet, ThickWire. *See also* coaxial cable, Ethernet (definition 1).

**10BaseF** *n.* The Ethernet standard for baseband local area networks using fiber-optic cable carrying 10 Mbps in a star topology. All nodes are connected to a repeater or to a central concentrator. A node is equipped with a fiber-optic transceiver that plugs into an AUI (Attachment Unit Interface) connector on the adapter card and attaches to the cable with an ST or SMA fiber-optic connector. *See also* Ethernet (definition 1), fiber optics, star network.

**10BaseT** *n.* The Ethernet standard for baseband local area networks using twisted-pair cable carrying 10 Mbps in a star topology. All nodes are connected to a central hub known as a multiport repeater. *See also* Ethernet (definition 1), star network, twisted-pair cable.

**1.2M** *adj.* Short for 1.2-megabyte. Refers to the capacity for high-density 5.25-inch floppy disks.

**14.4-Kbps modem** *n.* A modem with a maximum data transfer rate of 14.4 kilobits per second.

**1.44M** *adj.* Short for 1.44-megabyte. Refers to the capacity for high-density 3.5-inch floppy disks.

**16-bit** *adj.* *See* 8-bit, 16-bit, 32-bit, 64-bit.

**16-bit application** *n.* An application written to run on a computer with a 16-bit architecture or operating system, such as MS-DOS or Windows 3.x.

**16-bit color** *n.* RGB color in which the level of each of the three primary colors in a pixel is represented. Typically the red and blue elements each take up 5 bits. Because the human eye is more sensitive to shades of green than to red and blue, the green element takes up 6 bits. A 16-bit color image can contain up to  $2^{16}$  (65,356) colors.

**16-bit machine** *n.* A computer that works with data in groups of 16 bits at a time. A computer may be considered a 16-bit machine either because its microprocessor operates internally on 16-bit words or because its data bus

can transfer 16 bits at a time. The IBM PC/AT and similar models based on the Intel 80286 microprocessor are 16-bit machines in terms of both the word size of the microprocessor and the size of the data bus. The Apple Macintosh Plus and Macintosh SE use a microprocessor with a 32-bit word length, but they have 16-bit data buses and are generally considered 16-bit machines.

**16-bit operating system** *n.* An operating system, now outdated, that can work with 16 bits, or 2 bytes, of information at one time. A 16-bit operating system, such as MS-DOS or Windows 3.x, reflects the functionality of a 16-bit processor because the software and the chip must work together so closely. The main advantage of a 16-bit operating system over its earlier 8-bit predecessors was its ability to address more memory and use a larger (16-bit) bus. The 16-bit operating system has since been eclipsed by 32-bit operating systems, such as the Mac OS, Windows NT, and Windows 95, and by 64-bit operating systems, such as some versions of UNIX. *See also* 32-bit operating system.

**1NF** *n.* Short for first normal form. *See* normal form.

**2000 time problem** *n.* *See* Year 2000 problem.

**24-bit color** *n.* RGB color in which the level of each of the three primary colors in a pixel is represented by 8 bits of information. A 24-bit color image can contain over 16 million different colors. Not all computer monitors support 24-bit color. Those that do not may use 8-bit color or 16-bit color. *Also called* true color. *See also* bit depth, pixel, RGB. *Compare* 16-bit color, 32-bit color.

**286** *n.* *See* 80286.

**287** *n.* *See* 80287.

**28.8-Kbps modem** *n.* A modem with a maximum data transfer rate of 28.8 kilobits per second.

**2NF** *n.* Short for second normal form. *See* normal form.

**32-bit** *adj.* *See* 8-bit, 16-bit, 32-bit, 64-bit.

**32-bit application** *n.* An application written to run on a computer with a 32-bit architecture or operating system, such as the Mac OS or Windows 95.

**32-bit color** *n.* RGB color that is similar to 24-bit color, with 8 additional bits used to allow for faster transfer of an image's color. *See also* bit depth. *Compare* 16-bit color, 24-bit color, RGB.

**32-bit driver** *n.* A software subsystem that controls either a hardware device (device driver) or another software subsystem. The 32-bit versions of this software take full advantage of the instruction sets of the 486 and Pentium processors for improved speed. *See also* driver, instruction set.

**32-bit machine** *n.* A computer that works with data in groups of 32 bits at a time. The Apple Macintosh II and higher models are 32-bit machines, in terms of both the word size of their microprocessors and the size of the data buses, as are computers based on the Intel 80386 and higher-level microprocessors.

**32-bit operating system** *n.* An operating system in which 4 bytes, or 32 bits, can be processed at one time. Windows NT, Linux, and OS/2 are examples. *See also* instruction set, protected mode.

**3.5-inch floppy disk** *n.* *See* microfloppy disk.

**360K** *adj.* Short for 360-kilobyte. The capacity for standard 5.25-inch floppy disks.

**386** *n.* *See* 80386.

**387** *n.* *See* 80387.

**3-D** *adj.* **1.** Short for three-dimensional. Of, pertaining to, or being an object or image having or appearing to have all three spatial dimensions (height, width, and depth). **2.** Having the illusion of depth or varying distances, as in 3-D audio.

**3-D audio** *n.* Short for three-dimensional audio. Recorded as stereo sound, 3-D audio enables the listener to feel immersed in the sound and to determine its exact location (up, down, left, right, forward, or backward). This technology is commonly used in video games and virtual-reality systems, as well as in some Internet applications. *Also called* 3-D sound, binaural sound.

**3-D graphic** *n.* Any graphical image that depicts one or more objects in three dimensions—height, width, and depth. A 3-D graphic is rendered on a two-dimensional medium; the third dimension, depth, is indicated by means of perspective and by techniques such as shading or gradient use of color.

**3-D metafile** *n.* A device-independent file for storing a 3-D display. *See also* metafile.

**3-D model** *n.* *See* three-dimensional model.

**3-D sound** *n.* *See* 3-D audio.

**3NF** *n.* Short for third normal form. *See* normal form.

**486** *n.* *See* i486DX.

**4mm tape** *n.* *See* digital audio tape.

**4NF** *n.* Short for fourth normal form. *See* normal form.

**5.25-inch floppy disk** *n.* *See* floppy disk.

**56K** *adj.* Having 56 kilobits per second available for traffic on a communications circuit. One voice channel can carry up to 64 Kbps (called a T0 carrier); 8 Kbps are used for signaling, leaving 56 Kbps available for traffic. *See also* T-carrier.

**56-Kbps modem** *n.* An asymmetric modem that operates over POTS (Plain Old Telephone Service) to deliver data downstream at 56 kilobits per second, with upstream speeds of 28.8 and 33.6 kilobits per second. In contrast to earlier, slower modems, which invoke a two-conversion transmission process, 56-Kbps modems achieve faster speeds by converting analog data to digital data only once, typically at the telephone company's switching office near the beginning of the transmission. Designed to improve download times for Internet users, 56-Kbps modems rely on a public phone network that allows for a single conversion and on the availability of a digital connection, such as ISDN or T1, at the ISP location that provides the actual connection to the Internet. *See also* ISDN, ISP, T1.

**586** *n.* The unofficial name used by industry analysts and by the computer trade press to describe Intel's successor to the i486 microprocessor prior to its release. In the interest of using a name whose trademark could be more easily protected, however, Intel decided to name the microprocessor Pentium. *See also* Pentium.

**5NF** *n.* Short for fifth normal form. *See* normal form.

**64-bit** *adj.* *See* 8-bit, 16-bit, 32-bit, 64-bit.

**64-bit machine** *n.* A computer that works with data in groups of 64 bits at a time. A computer may be considered a 64-bit machine either because its CPU operates internally on 64-bit words or because its data bus can transfer 64 bits at a time. A 64-bit CPU thus has a word size of 64 bits, or 8 bytes; a 64-bit data bus has 64 data lines, so it ferries information through the system in sets of 64 bits at a time. Examples of 64-bit architecture include the Alpha AXP from Digital Equipment Corporation, the Ultra workstation from Sun Microsystems, Inc., and the PowerPC 620 from Motorola and IBM.

**68000** *n.* The original microprocessor in the 680x0 family from Motorola, introduced in 1979 and used in the first Apple Macintosh computers as well as the Apple LaserWriter IISC and Hewlett-Packard's LaserJet printers. The 68000 has 32-bit internal registers but transfers data over a 16-bit data bus. The 68000 can address 16 megabytes of memory—16 times as much memory as does the Intel 8088 found in the IBM PC.

**68020** *n.* A microprocessor in the 680x0 family from Motorola, introduced in 1984. This chip has 32-bit addressing and a 32-bit data bus and is available in speeds from 16 MHz to 33 MHz. The 68020 is found in the original Macintosh II and the LaserWriter IINT from Apple.

**68030** *n.* A microprocessor in the 680x0 family from Motorola, introduced in 1987. This chip has 32-bit addressing and a 32-bit data bus and is available in speeds from 20 MHz to 50 MHz.

**68040** *n.* A microprocessor in the 680x0 family from Motorola, introduced in 1990, with 32-bit addressing and a 32-bit data bus. The 68040 runs at 25 MHz and includes a built-in floating-point unit and memory management units.

**68K** *n.* *See* 68000.

**80286** *n.* A 16-bit microprocessor from Intel, introduced in 1982 and included in the IBM PC/AT and compatible computers in 1984. The 80286 has 16-bit registers, transfers information over the data bus 16 bits at a time, and uses 24 bits to address memory locations. The 80286 operates in two modes: real mode, which is compatible with the 8086 and supports MS-DOS; and protected mode, which enables the CPU to access 16 megabytes of memory and protects the operating system from incorrect memory accesses by ill-behaved applications, which could crash a system in real mode. *Also called* 286. *See also* protected mode, real mode.

**80287** *n.* A floating-point coprocessor from Intel for use with the 80286 family of microprocessors. Available in speeds from 6 MHz to 12 MHz, the 80287 offers expanded mathematical capabilities. Because the 80287 conforms

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to the 80286 memory management and protection schemes, it can be used in both the real and protected modes of the 80286. Also, if the computer manufacturer implements support for it in the motherboard design, the 80287 can be used in a system with an 80386 microprocessor. *See also* floating-point processor.

**80386** *n.* A 32-bit microprocessor from Intel, introduced in 1985. The 80386 is a full 32-bit microprocessor; that is, it has 32-bit registers, it can transfer information over its data bus 32 bits at a time, and it can use 32 bits to address memory. Like the earlier 80286, the 80386 operates in two modes: real mode and protected mode. The latter allows the CPU to access 4 GB of memory directly, supports multitasking, and protects the operating system from crashing as a result of an incorrect memory access caused by an application program error. The 80386 also includes a virtual 8086 mode (also called virtual real mode), which emulates the 8086 but offers the same memory safeguards as protected mode. The virtual 8086 mode is the basis for the MS-DOS prompt available inside Windows. *Also called* 386, 386DX, 80386DX. *See also* protected mode, real mode, virtual real mode.

**80387** *n.* The floating-point coprocessor introduced by Intel for use with the 80386 microprocessors. Available in speeds from 16 MHz to 33 MHz, the 80387 offers expanded mathematical capabilities. The 80387 operates independently of the 80386's mode, and it performs as expected regardless of whether the 80386 is running in real, protected, or virtual 8086 mode. *Also called* 387. *See also* 80386, floating-point processor.

**80486** *n.* *See* i486DX.

**80-character line length** *n.* A standard line length for text mode displays, found in the earliest IBM PCs and in professional terminals of the 1970s and 1980s. Newer graphical user interfaces support longer or shorter lines depending on the fonts chosen. A message composed with longer lines using a graphical e-mail program appears broken up and difficult to read when it is viewed by a user with only a terminal emulation program and a shell account.

**8.3** *n.* The standard format for filenames in MS-DOS/Windows 3.x: a filename with eight or fewer characters, followed by a period ("dot"), followed by a three-character file extension. *Compare* long filenames.

**8-bit, 16-bit, 32-bit, 64-bit** *adj.* **1.** Capable of transferring 8, 16, 32, or 64 bits, respectively, on data bus lines. *See also* 16-bit machine, 32-bit machine, 64-bit machine, 8-bit machine. **2.** Capable of transferring 8, 16, 32, or 64 bits, respectively, on the data path of a video adapter. An *n*-bit video adapter can display up to  $2^n$  colors. For example, an 8-bit video adapter is capable of displaying up to 256 colors. *See also* video adapter.

**8-bit machine** *n.* A computer that works with data in groups of 8 bits at a time. A computer may be considered an 8-bit machine either because its microprocessor operates internally on 8-bit words or because its data bus can transfer 8 bits at a time. The original IBM PC was based on a microprocessor (the 8088) that worked internally on 16-bit words but transferred

them 8 bits at a time. Such machines are generally called 8-bit machines because the size of the data bus limits the machine's overall speed.

**8mm tape** *n.* A tape cartridge format used for data backups, similar to that used for some video cameras except that the tape is rated for data storage. The capacity is 5 GB or more of (optionally compressed) data.

**8-N-1** *n.* Short for **8** bits, **No** parity, **1** stop bit. Typical default settings for serial communications, such as modem transmissions.

**9,600-bps modem** *n.* A modem with a maximum data transfer rate of 9,600 bits per second.

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**A:** *n.* In Windows and some other operating systems, the identifier used for the first, or primary, floppy disk drive; unless otherwise specified by changing the CMOS startup instructions, this is the drive the operating system checks first for startup instructions.

**ABC** *n.* Acronym for **automatic brightness control**. A circuit that changes the luminance of a monitor to compensate for ambient lighting conditions.

**abort** *vb.* To terminate abruptly, often used in reference to a program or procedure in progress.

**absolute path** *n.* A path specification to a file that begins from the topmost level of the identification of a disk drive (for example, C:\docs\work\contract.txt). *See also* path (definition 3). *Compare* relative path.

**absolute pointing device** *n.* A mechanical or physical pointing device whose location is associated with the position of the on-screen cursor. For example, if the user of a graphics tablet places the pen on the upper right corner of the tablet, the cursor moves to the upper right corner of the screen or on-screen window associated with the pen. *See also* graphics tablet. *Compare* relative pointing device.

**absolute value** *n.* The magnitude of a number, irrespective of its sign (+ or -). For example, 10 is the absolute value of 10 and of -10. Programming languages and spreadsheet programs commonly include functions that return the absolute value of a number.

**A/B switch box** *n.* An enclosure that contains a two-position selector switch. When a user selects a switch setting, the signal passing through the box may be directed either from a single input to one of two outputs, or from the selected input to a single output. *See also* switch (definition 1).

**AC** *n.* *See* alternating current.

**AC adapter** *n.* An external power supply that converts from a 110 VAC or 220 VAC domestic electric supply ("house current" or "main power") to low-voltage DC, which is required to operate solid-state electronic equipment (such as a laptop computer) that does not include an internal power supply.

**accelerator** *n.* **1.** In applications, a key or key combination used to perform a defined function. *Also called* shortcut key. **2.** In hardware, a device that speeds or enhances the operation of one or more subsystems, leading to improved program performance. *See also* accelerator card, Windows-based accelerator.

**accelerator board** *n.* *See* accelerator card.



**accelerator card** *n.* A printed circuit board that replaces or augments the computer's main microprocessor, resulting in faster performance. *Also called* accelerator board. *See also* expansion board, graphics accelerator.

**acceptable use policy** *n.* A statement issued by an Internet service provider or an online information service that indicates what activities users may or may not engage in while logged onto the service. For example, some providers prohibit users from engaging in commercial activity on the network. *Acronym:* AUP. *See also* ISP, online information service.

**access**<sup>1</sup> *n.* **1.** The act of reading data from or writing data to memory. **2.** Connection to the Internet or other network or system.

**access**<sup>2</sup> *vb.* To gain entry to memory in order to read or write data.

**ACCESS.bus** *n.* A bidirectional bus for connecting peripherals to a PC. The ACCESS.bus can connect up to 125 low-speed peripherals, such as printers, modems, mice, and keyboards, to the system through a single, general-purpose port. The peripherals are daisy-chained together, although the PC communicates directly with each peripheral and vice versa. When an ACCESS.bus device is connected to a system, the system automatically identifies and configures it for optimum performance and assigns it a unique address. The ACCESS.bus supports hot plugging. Developed by DEC, the ACCESS.bus competes with Intel's USB. *See also* bidirectional, bus, daisy chain, hot plugging, input/output port. *Compare* USB.

**access code** *n.* *See* password.

**access control** *n.* The mechanisms for limiting access to certain items of information or to certain controls based on users' identity and their membership in various predefined groups. Access control is typically used by system administrators for controlling user access to network resources, such as servers, directories, and files. *See also* access control list, access privileges, system administrator.

**access control list** *n.* A list associated with a file that contains information about which users or groups have permission to access or modify the file. *Acronym:* ACL.

**accessibility** *n.* The quality of a system incorporating hardware or software that makes it usable by people with one or more physical disabilities, such as restricted mobility, blindness, or deafness.

**access mechanism** *n.* **1.** The disk drive components that move the read/write head(s) to the proper track of a magnetic disk or optical disc. **2.** A circuit that allows one part of a computer system to send signals to another part. *See also* disk controller.

**access number** *n.* The telephone number used by a subscriber to gain access to an online service.

**accessory** *n.* *See* peripheral.

**access path** *n.* The route followed by an operating system to find the location of a stored file. The access path begins with a drive or volume (disk)

#  
A  
B  
C  
D  
E  
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G  
H  
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J  
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Z