

Basic Computer Terminology

A

Application or Software Computer program: Software that allows you to perform a task or solve a specific problem. Programs that allow you to accomplish certain tasks such as write letters, analyze numbers, sort files, manage finances, draw pictures and play games.

Access time: The performance of a hard drive or other storage device how long it takes to locate a file.

Application Files: Program files environment where you can create and edit the kind of document that application makes.

Active program or window: The application or window at the front (foreground) on the monitor.

Active Cell In a spreadsheet, the cell you are working in. The cell is identified by a thick dark border.

Alert (alert box): A message that appears on screen, usually to tell you something went wrong.

Alias: An icon that points to a file, folder or application (System 7).

Apple menu: On the left side of the screen header. System 6 = desk accessories
System 7 = up to 50 items.

Application: A program in which you do your work.

Application menu: On the right side of the screen header. It lists running applications.

ASCII (pronounced ask-key): American Standard Code for Information Interchange. It is a commonly used data format for exchanging information between computers or programs.

ABEND: Short for abnormal end, and refers to a program stopping prematurely due to a bug, from an IBM System/360 error message. Abend is the German word for evening, and some say ABEND is so-named because it's "what system operators do to the machine late on Friday when they want to call it a day."

Ada: A programming language named after Ada Lovelace, who is considered by many to be the first programmer.

Apache: The web server from the Apache Software Foundation.

Originally this name was chosen by an author just because it was a catchy name. Soon enough, it was suggested that the name was indeed appropriate, because its founders got started by applying patches to code written for NCSA's httpd daemon. The result was "a patchy" server.

AWK: A computer pattern/action language, name made up of the surnames of its authors Alfred V. Aho, Peter J. Weinberger, and Brian W. Kernighan

Anti Virus: An application or program designed to scan or search disks or hard drives for viruses and repair files that it finds.

Acceptable Use Policy (AUP): A set of rules and guidelines that are set up to regulate Internet use and to protect the user.

Active Cell: In a spreadsheet, the cell you are working in. The cell is identified by a thick dark border.

Alignment: The way in which text lines up across a page. The text can be right aligned, centered, left aligned and fully aligned (justified).

Animated Clip Art: A moving clip art graphic

Arrow Keys: The keys on the keyboard used to move the cursor up, down, left and right.

Ascending Order: One of two ways to sort a database. Numbers are arranged from smallest to largest. Text is arranged in alphabetical order (A to Z) (See Descending).

Attachments: A file you add to an email when you send it to someone else

B

Background: Part of the multitasking capability. A program can run and perform tasks in the background while another program is being used in the foreground.

Bit: It is the smallest piece of information used by the computer. Derived from "binary digit". In computer language, either One (1) or Zero (0).

Backup: A copy of a file or disk you make for archiving purpose.

Boot: To start up a computer.

Bug: A programming error that causes a program to behave in an unexpected way.

Bus: Bus is an electronic pathway through which data is transmitted between components in a computer.

Byte: A piece of computer information made up of eight bits.

Biff: A command to turn on asynchronous email notification on Unix systems. Actually named after a dog at U.C. Berkeley, who would bark when mail was delivered. (The dog belonged to Heidi Stettner, validation of this from Eric Cooper.)

Bon: A programming language created by Ken Thompson and named after his wife Bonnie. However according to an encyclopedia quotation in Bon's manual, it

was named after a religion (likely Tibetan) whose rituals involve the murmuring of magic formulas.

BASIC: In computer programming, BASIC (an acronym which stands for Beginner's All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Code) is a family of high-level programming languages designed to be easy to use.

Baud Rate: The speed at which data signals are sent and received by a modem. The higher the baud rate the faster data is transferred.

Bold: A style of text that makes a letter or word darker and thicker to stand out in a document.

Bomb: A type of virus designed to activate at a specific date and time on your computer.

Browser: Software needed to be able to view information on the internet (See Internet Browser).

Button Bar or Toolbar: A horizontal strip of buttons near the top of a window which provides shortcuts for common commands. Some programs allow the user to hide or display the bar, and customize the buttons.

Buttons: A hot spot used in multimedia applications to navigate from one place to another or to activate elements such as sound and animation.

C

Card: A printed circuit board that adds some feature to a computer.

Cartridge drive: A storage device, like a hard drive, in which the medium is a cartridge that can be removed.

CD-ROM: An acronym for Compact Disc Read-Only Memory.

Chooser: A desk accessory used to select a printer, or other external device, or to log onto a network.

Clipboard: A portion of memory where the Mac temporarily stores information. Called a Copy Buffer in many PC applications because it is used to hold information which is to be moved, as in word processing where text is "cut" and then "pasted".

Clock Rate (MHz): The instruction processing speed of a computer measured in millions of cycles per second (i.e., 200 MHz).

Command: The act of giving an instruction to your Mac either by menu choice or keystroke.

Command (Apple) key: A modifier key, the Command key used in conjunction with another keystroke to active some function on the Mac.

Compiler: A program the converts programming code into a form that can be used by a computer.

Compression: It is a technique that reduces the size of a saved file by elimination or encoding redundancies (i.e., JPEG, MPEG, LZW etc.)

Control key: Seldom used modifier key on the Mac.

Control panel: A program that allows you to change settings in a program or change the way a Mac looks and/or behaves.

CPU: The Central Processing Unit. The processing chip that is the "brains" of a computer.

Crash: It is a system malfunction in which the computer stops working and has to be restarted.

Click: To select an object by pressing the mouse button when the cursor is pointing to the required menu option, icon or hypertext link.

Close: To close a window that has been opened for viewing and / or editing.

Crash: Your computer or application no longer works correctly and so you "lose" all the work you've done since the last time you saved.

Creating a File Storing data as a file with an assigned file name that is unique within the directory it resides in.

Cursor: The pointer, usually arrow or cross shaped, which is controlled by the mouse.

C: A programming language named because Dennis Ritchie improved on the B language and called it New B. He later called it C. (See also D).

C++: An object-oriented programming language and a successor to the C programming language.

C++ creator Bjarne Stroustrup called his new language "C with Classes" and then "new C". Because of which the original C began to be called "old C" which was considered insulting to the C community. At this time Rick Mascitti suggested the name C++ as a successor to C. In C the '+' operator increments the value of the variable it is appended to, thus C++ would increment the value of C.

COBOL: Common Business Oriented Language

Cookie: A packet of information that travels between a browser and the web server.

The term was coined by web browser programmer Lou Montulli after the term "magic cookies" used by Unix programmers.

CSV: The comma-separated values file format is a set of file formats used to store tabular data in which numbers and text are stored in plain textual form that can be read in a text editor.

Cell: The intersection of each row and column in a spreadsheet. Example: Cell B5, Cell A202

Cell range: A continuous group of connected cells in a spreadsheet

Clip art: Drawings you can add to your documents, including cartoons, maps, symbols, and flags. Clip art comes with some programs or can be purchased separately.

Communication Software: It provides the tools for connecting one computer with another to enable sending and receiving information and sharing files and resources.

Compact Disc: A disc on which a laser has digitally recorded information such as audio, video or computer data is called Compact Disc.

Copy: To make an exact duplicate of information in your document, so you can place the copy in another location of your document.

Copyright Laws: Law that exist to protect those who create a new idea or product

D

Daisy chaining: The act of stringing devices together in a series (such as SCSI).

Database: An electronic list of information that can be sorted and/or searched.

Data: Information processed by a computer. (The plural of datum)

Defragment (optimize): to concatenate fragments of data into contiguous blocks in memory or on a hard drive.

Desktop file: An invisible file in which the Finder stores a database of information about files and icons.

Dialog box: An on-screen message box that appears when the Mac requires additional information before completing a command.

Digitize: To convert linear, or analog, data into digital data which can be used by the computer.

Disk: A spinning platter made of magnetic or optically etched material on which data can be stored.

Disk drive: The machinery that writes the data from a disk and/or writes data to a disk.

Disk window: The window that displays the contents or directory of a disk.

Document: A file you create, as opposed to the application which created it.

DOS: Acronym for Disk Operating System - used in IBM PCs.

Delete: To remove an item of data from a file or to remove a file from the disk.

Desktop: An on-screen representation of a desktop such as used in the Macintosh and Windows operating systems.

Dialog Boxes: Takes over your screen and allows you to "dialog" with the computer.

Directory: (AKA Folder, sub-directory) Allows you to organize files and other folders.

Disk Space: This is the place where your files live. The greater the disk space the more files you can keep. (See also Megabytes) More disk space is always better than less. You can never have much disk space.

Double Click: To press the mouse button twice in rapid succession without moving the mouse between clicks.

Drag: To move an object on screen in which its complete movement is visible from starting location to destination.

DPI: Acronym for Dots Per Inch - a gauge of visual clarity on the printed page or on the computer screen.

Download: To transfer data from one computer to another. (If you are on the receiving end, you are downloading. If you are on the sending end, you are uploading).

Drag: To move the mouse while its button is being depressed.

Drag and Drop: A feature on the Mac which allows one to drag the icon for a document on top of the icon for an application, thereby launching the application and opening the document.

Driver: A file on a computer which tells it how to communicate with an add-on piece of equipment (like a printer).

D: A programming language Walter Bright designed as an improved C, avoiding many of the design problems of C (e.g., extensive pointer manipulation, unenforced array boundaries...etc).

Daemon: A process in an operating system that runs in the background.

Debian: A Linux distribution, a portmanteau of the names Ian Murdock, the Debian Project creator, and Debra Lynn, Ian's then girlfriend and future wife.

Desktop Publishing: Using features of word processing to format and produce more sophisticated documents with graphics and text, such as flyer, brochures, or newsletters.

E

Emacs: A text editor written in 1976, acronym for editor macros.

Ethernet: A protocol for fast communication and file transfer across a network.

Edit: To make a change to existing data.

Expansion slot: A connector inside the computer which allows one to plug in a printed circuit board that provides new or enhanced features.

Extension: A startup program that runs when you start the Mac and then enhances its function.

Enter/Return: The key used to begin a new line in a word processor, or to enter information into a spreadsheet or database. It is the same as clicking OK in the dialog box.

Entry bar: Where the contents of the active cell in a spreadsheet are displayed

F

Fibre Channel: As applied to data storage and network topology - link to FC Glossary.

File Cabinet: Metaphorically, the hard drive (and other kinds of storage media like floppy disks) which store files and folders.

Folder Icons: Collections of documents and other folders.

File: The generic word for an application, document, control panel or other computer data.

Finder: The cornerstone or home-base application in the Mac environment. The finder regulates the file management functions of the Mac (copying, renaming, deleting...)

Floppy: A 3.5 inch square rigid disk which holds data. (The earlier 5.25 and 8 inch disks were flexible).

Folder: An electronic subdirectory which contains files.

Font: A typeface that contains the characters of an alphabet or some other letterforms.

Footprint: The surface area of a desk or table which is occupied by a piece of equipment.

Fragmentation: The breaking up of a file into many separate locations in memory or on a disk.

Freeze: A system error which causes the cursor to lock in place.

Finger: UNIX command that provides information about users logged into a system.

Les Earnest wrote the finger program in 1971 to provide for users who wanted information about other users on a network or system. Before the finger program, the only way to get this information was with a who program that showed IDs and terminal line numbers for logged-in users; people used to run their fingers down the "who" list. Earnest named his program after this phenomenon.

Foo and **bar:** From the U.S. Army slang acronym, FUBAR. Both foo and bar are used as metasyntactic variables.

FQVS: Fully Qualified Virus Signature, the best candidate signature with minimum false-positives and false-negatives.

G

Get info: A Finder File menu command that presents an information window for a selected file icon.

Gig: A gigabyte = 1024 megabytes.

Gentoo: A Linux distribution, named after a variety of penguin, the universal Linux mascot.

GNU: A project with an original goal of creating a free operating system.

Gnu is also a species of African antelope. The founder of the GNU project Richard Stallman liked the name because of the humour associated with its pronunciation and was also influenced by the song The Gnu Song, by Flanders and Swann which is a song sung by a Gnu. It is also an early example of a recursive acronym: "GNU's Not Unix".

Golden copy: A single copy of all of the data used, which is used by any application which requires the data.

Google: Search engine on the web.

The name started as an exaggerated boast about the amount of information the search-engine would be able to search. It was originally named 'Googol', a word for the number represented by 1 followed by 100 zeros. The word was originally invented by Milton Sirotta, nephew of mathematician Edward Kasner in 1938 during a discussion of large numbers and exponential notation. "Google" is often used as a verb, meaning "to search".

Gopher: An early distributed document search and retrieval network protocol on the Internet

The source of the name is claimed to be three-fold: first, that it is used to "go-for" information; second, that it does so through a menu of links analogous to gopher holes; and third, that the mascot of the protocol authors' organization, the University of Minnesota, is Goldy the Gopher.

Grep: A UNIX command line utility

The name comes from a command in the Unix text editor ed that takes the form g/re/p meaning search globally for a regular expression and print lines where instances are found. "Grep" like

H

Hard drive: A large capacity storage device made of multiple disks housed in a rigid case.

Head crash: A Hard disk crash caused by the heads coming in contact with the spinning disk(s).

High density disk: A 1.4 MB floppy disk.

Highlight: To select by clicking once on an icon or by highlighting text in a document.

Hotmail: Free email service, now part of MSN.

Founder Jack Smith got the idea of accessing e-mail via the web from a computer anywhere in the world. When Sabeer Bhatia came up with the business plan for the mail service, he tried all kinds of names ending in 'mail' and finally settled for Hotmail as it included the letters

"HTML" - the markup language used to write web pages. It was initially referred to as HoTMaiL with selective upper casing.

i18n: Short for internationalization.

"18" is for the number of letters between the i and the n. The term l10n (for localization) has failed to catch on to the same degree, but is used by some.

ICQ: An instant messaging service.

ICQ is not an initialism. It is a play on the phrase "I seek you" (similar to CQ in ham radio usage).

Icon: A graphic symbol for an application, file or folder.

Initialize: To format a disk for use in the computer; creates a new directory and arranges the tracks for the recording of data.

Insertion point: In word processing, the short flashing marker which indicates where your next typing will begin.

Installer: Software used to install a program on your hard drive.

Icons In a graphical user interface (GUI), a small, pictorial, on screen representation of an object, such as a document, program, folder or disk drive.

Icon View allows you to see icons of folders and files primarily as icons with little information.

Interrupt button: A tool used by programmers to enter the debugging mode. The button is usually next to the reset button.

ID10T: Pronounced "ID ten T" is a code frequently used by a customer service representative (CSR) to annotate their notes and identify the source of a problem as the person who is reporting the problem rather than the system being blamed. This is a thinly veiled reference to the CSR's opinion that the person reporting the problem is an IDIOT. Example: Problem reported caused by ID10T, no resolution possible. See also PEBKAC.

J

Jakarta Project: A project constituted by Sun and Apache to create a web server for Java servlets and JSPs.

Jakarta was the name of the conference room at Sun where most of the meetings between Sun and Apache took place. The conference room was most likely named after Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, which is located on the northwest coast of the island of Java.

Java: A programming language

Originally called "D", but with the connotation of a near-failing mark on a report card the language was renamed Oak by Java-creator James Gosling, from the tree that stood outside his window. The programming team at Sun had to look for a substitute name as there was already another programming language called Oak. "Java" was selected from a list of suggestions, primarily because it is a popular slang term for coffee, especially that grown on the island of Java. As the programmers drank a lot of coffee, this seemed an appropriate name. Many people mistakenly think that Java is indeed an acronym and spell it JAVA. When one of the original Java programmers from Sun was asked to define JAVA he said it stood for nothing, but if it must stand for something: "Just Another Vague Acronym."

JavaScript: A programming language

It was originally developed by Brendan Eich of Netscape under the name Mocha, which was later renamed to Live Script, and finally to JavaScript. The change of name from Live Script to JavaScript roughly coincided with Netscape adding support for Java technology in its Netscape Navigator web browser. JavaScript was first introduced and deployed in the Netscape browser version 2.0B3 in December 1995. The naming has caused confusion, giving the impression that the language is a spin-off of Java, and it has been characterized by many as a marketing ploy by Netscape to give JavaScript the cachet of what was then the hot new web-programming language.

K

K: Short for kilobyte.

Keyboard: This is the primary text input device. It also contains certain standard function keys, such as the Escape key, tab, and arrow keys, shift and control keys, and sometimes other manufacturer-customized keys.

Kilo (K): This is a unit of measure = 1,000. So 1,000 bytes is a KiloByte.

Keyboard shortcut: A combination of keystrokes that performs some function otherwise found in a pull down menu.

Kilobyte: 1024 bytes.

Kerberos: A computer network authentication protocol that is used by both Windows 2000 and Windows XP as their default authentication method.

When created by programmers at MIT in the 1970s, they wanted a name that suggested high security for the project, so they named it after the Greek mythology character Kerberos, (also spelled Cerberus), the mythical three-headed canine guarding Hades' gates. The reference to Greek mythology is most likely because Kerberos was developed as part of Project Athena.

L

Linux: An operating system kernel, and the common name for the operating system which uses it.

Linux creator Linus Torvalds originally used the Minix operating system on his computer, didn't like it, liked MS-DOS less, and started a project to develop an operating system that would address the problems of Minix. Hence the working name was Linux (Linus' Minix). Originally, however, Linus had planned to have it named Freax (free + freak + x). His friend Ari Lemmke encouraged Linus to upload it to a network so it could be easily downloaded. Ari gave Linus a directory called linux on his FTP server, as he did not like the name Freax.

Lisa: A personal computer designed at Apple Computer during the early 1980s. Apple stated that LISA was an acronym for Local Integrated Software Architecture; however, it is often inferred that the machine was originally named after the daughter of Apple co-founder Steve Jobs, and that this acronym was invented later to fit the name. Accordingly, two humorous suggestions for expanding the acronym included Let's Invent Some Acronym and Let's Invent Silly Acronyms.

List View Shows the icons but also orders the icons (often by name, but can sort the list in other ways) and shows more information about them.

Liveware: A term meaning computer personnel. It plays on the terms software and hardware. Coined in 1966, the word indicates that sometimes the computer problem is not with the computer itself, but with the user.

Landscape: In printing from a computer, to print sideways on the page.

Launch: Start an application.

Lotus Software: Lotus founder Mitch Kapor got the name for his company from 'The Lotus Position' ('Padmasana' in Sanskrit). Kapor used to be a teacher of Transcendental Meditation technique as taught by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

M

Macintosh, Mac: A personal computer from Apple Computers.

From McIntosh, a popular type of apple, Jef Raskin, a computer scientist, is credited with this naming.

Mac OS: The operating system used in a Macintosh computer.

From "Mac", a shortened form of Macintosh and a commonly used name for the Macintosh computer system (see elsewhere on this page), and "OS", the common abbreviation for "operating system".

Memoization: The process of automatically modifying functions to include caching behavior.

Coined by Donald Michie in his 1968 paper Memo Functions and Machine Learning.

Macintosh, the brand name of a family of personal computers (hardware) and an operating system (software) from Apple, introduced in 1984.

Megabytes (Mb): Mega = million so Mb is 1,000,000 bytes. It's enough information for the computer to store one character (e.g. "h"), so 1mb text file = 1,000,000 keystrokes in that file. Just to confound the masses, although RAM and Disk Space do something completely different we measure both in megabytes. This leads to confusion.

MegaHertz (Mhz): A hertz is an electronics term. 1 hz = one cycle (or wavelength) per second. 1 megahertz = 1,000,000 cycles per second.

In computer jargon, Mhz measures how fast your CPU chip runs. Although it's more important to know the chip than the speed, if you're comparing the same kind of CPU chip then a higher / faster CPU speed (measured in MHz) is better than a slower speed.

Menu: Displays a list of commands, some with images next to them.

Modifier Keys: Keys that change the meaning of what you type.

Measurements (summary):

A bit = one binary digit (1 or 0)

"bit" is derived from the contraction b'it (binary digit) - 8 bits = one byte

1024 bytes = one kilobyte

K = kilobyte

Kb = kilobit

MB = megabyte

Mb = megabit

MB/s = megabytes per second

Mb/s = megabits per second

bps = bits per second

i.e., 155 Mb/s = 19.38 MB/s

Memory: The temporary holding area where data is stored while it is being used or changed; the amount of RAM a computer has installed.

Menu bar: The horizontal bar across the top of the Mac's screen that lists the menus.

Multi finder: A component of System 6 that allows the Mac to multi task.

Multi tasking: Running more than one application in memory at the same time.

Mouse: Pointing device that allows you to tell the computer what to do.

Mozilla: A web browser and successor to Netscape Communicator.

When Marc Andreessen, founder of Netscape, created a browser to replace the Mosaic browser, it was internally named Mozilla (Mosaic-Killer, Godzilla). When Netscape's Navigator source code was made open source, Mozilla was the internal name for the open source version.

N

Nerd: A colloquial term for a computer person, especially an obsessive, singularly focused one.

Earlier spelling of the term is "Nurd" and the original spelling is "Knurd", but the pronunciation has remained the same. The term originated at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in the late 1940s. Students who partied, and rarely studied were called "Drunks", while the opposite - students who never partied and always studied were "Knurd" ("Drunk" spelled backwards). The term was also (independently) used in a Dr. Seuss book, and on the TV show Happy Days, giving it international popularity.

Nanosecond: One billionth of a second

NuBus: Expansion slots on the Mac which accept intelligent, self-configuring boards. NuBus is a different bus architecture than the newer PCI bus and the boards are not interchangeable.

Novell NetWare: A network operating system from Novell.

Novell, Inc. was originally Novell Data Systems co-founded by George Canova. The name was suggested by George's wife who mistakenly thought that "Novell" meant "new" in French.

O

Operating System (OS): System software that allows your computer to work.

Oracle: A relational database management system (RDBMS).

Larry Ellison, Ed Oates and Bob Miner were working on a consulting project for the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency). The code name for the project was called Oracle (the CIA evidently saw this as a system that would give answers to all questions). The project was designed to use the newly written SQL database language from IBM. The project eventually was terminated but they decided to finish what they started and bring it to the world. They kept the name Oracle and created the RDBMS engine.

Optical disk: A high-capacity storage medium that is read by a laser light.

P

Pointer (AKA Cursor): The name of the arrow (or other shape) that tracks across the screen as you move the mouse (or other pointing device) around.

Palette: A small floating window that contains tools used in a given application.

Pac-Man: A video arcade game.

The term comes from paku paku which is a Japanese onomatopoeia (written version of a noise) used for noisy eating; similar to chomp. The game was released

in Japan with the name Puck- Man, and released in the US with the name Pac-Man, fearing that kids may deface a Puck-Man cabinet by changing the P to an F.

PCMCIA: The standards body for PC card and Express Card, expansion card form factors.

The Personal Computer Memory Card International Association is an international standards body that defines and promotes standards for expansion devices such as modems and external hard disk drives to be connected to notebook computers. Over time, the acronym PCMCIA has been used to refer to the PC card form factor used on notebook computers. A twist on the acronym is People Can't Memorize Computer Industry Acronyms.

PEBKAC: An acronym for "Problem Exists Between Keyboard And Chair", which is a code frequently used by a customer service representative (CSR) to annotate their notes and identify the source of a problem as the person who is reporting the problem rather than the system being blamed. This is a thinly veiled reference to the CSR's opinion that the person reporting the problem is the problem. Example: PEBKAC, no resolution possible. See also ID10T.

Pentium: Microprocessor from Intel

The fifth microprocessor in the 80×86 series. It would have been called i586 or 80586, but Intel decided to name it Pentium (penta = five) after it lost a trademark infringement lawsuit against AMD due to a judgment that numbers like "286", "386", and "486" cannot be trademarked. According to Intel, Pentium conveys a meaning of strength, like titanium.

Since some early Pentium chips contained a mathematical precision error, it has been jokingly suggested that the reason for the chip being named Pentium rather than 586 was that Intel chips would calculate $486 + 100 = 585.99999948$.

Perl: An interpreted scripting language

Perl was originally named Pearl, after the "pearl of great price" of Matthew 13:46. Larry Wall, the creator of Perl, wanted to give the language a short name with positive connotations and claims to have looked at (and rejected) every three- and four-letter word in the dictionary. He even thought of naming it after his wife Gloria. Before the language's official release Wall discovered that there was

already a programming language named Pearl, and changed the spelling of the name. Although the original manuals suggested the backronyms "Practical Extraction and Report Language" and "Pathologically Eclectic Rubbish Lister", these were intended humorously.

PHP: A server-side scripting language

Originally called "Personal Home Page Tools" by creator Rasmus Lerdorf, it was rewritten by developers Zeev Suraski and Andi Gutmans who gave it the recursive name "PHP Hypertext Preprocessor". Lerdorf currently insists the name should not be thought of as standing for anything, for he selected "Personal Home Page" as the name when he did not foresee PHP evolving into a general-purpose programming language.

Pine: e-mail client

Acronym for "Program for Internet News & Email". It is also a recursive acronym for "Pine Is Not Elm" (in reference to Elm, another email client)

Ping: Computer network tool used to detect hosts

The author of ping, Mike Muuss, named it after the pulses of sound made by a sonar called a "ping". Later Dave Mills provided the backronym "Packet Internet Groper".

PKZIP: Data compression or zipping tool. It was written by Phil Katz and stands for Phil Katz's ZIP program.

Partition: A subdivision of a hard drives surface that is defined and used as a separate drive.

Paste: To insert text, or other material, from the clipboard or copy buffer.

PC: Acronym for personal computer commonly used to refer to an IBM or IBM clone computer which uses DOS.

PCI: Acronym for Peripheral Component Interchange - the newer, faster bus architecture.

Peripheral: An add-on component to your computer.

Point: (1/72") 12 points = one pica in printing.

Pop-up menu: Any menu that does not appear at the top of the screen in the menu bar. (May pop up or down)

Port: A connection socket, or jack on the Mac.

Power PC: A processing chip designed by Apple, IBM and Motorola (RISC based).

Power Mac: A family of Macs built around the PowerPC chip.

Print spooler: A program that stores documents to be printed on the hard drive, thereby freeing the memory up and allowing other functions to be performed while printing goes on in the background.

Python: An interpreted scripting programming language.

Q

QuickTime: The Apple system extension that gives one the ability to compress, edit and play animation, movies and sound on the Mac.

R

RAM: Acronym for Random-Access Memory.

Reset switch: A switch on the Mac that restarts the computer in the event of a crash or freeze.

Resize box: The small square at the lower right corner of a window which, when dragged, resizes the window.

Recycle Bin: Place where you put files and folders that you may later want to delete or get rid of. Compare Trash.

Resize Box: Allows you to change the size and shape of a window.

Right click: To press the right button on the mouse. (This is Windows specific. On a Mac running System 8 or higher, you hold down the Control key and then click to get the same effect.)

RISC: Acronym for Reduced Instruction Set Computing; the smaller set of commands used by the PowerPC and Power Mac.

ROM: Acronym for Read Only Memory; memory that can only be read from and not written to.

Root directory: The main hard drive window.

Radio button: A GUI widget used for making selections.

Radio buttons got their name from the preset buttons in radio receivers. When one used to select preset stations on a radio receiver physically instead of electronically, depressing one preset button would pop out whichever other button happened to be pushed in.

Red Hat Linux: A Linux distribution from Red Hat.

Company founder Marc Ewing was given the Cornell lacrosse team cap (with red and white stripes) while at college by his grandfather. People would turn to him to solve their problems, and he was referred to as "that guy in the red hat". He lost the cap and had to search for it desperately. The manual of the beta version of Red Hat Linux had an appeal to readers to return his Red Hat if found by anyone.

RSA: An asymmetric algorithm for public key cryptography.

Based on the surnames of the authors of this algorithm - Ron Rivest, Adi Shamir and Len Adleman.

S

Save: To write a file onto a disk.

Save as: To save a previously saved file in a new location and/or with a new name. (A File menu item)

SIMON: Batch Interactive test/debug software.

The name of this instruction set simulator software; that allowed batch application programs to be tested interactively from online terminals - did not originate from "SIMulation ONline" or similar. It was the name of the author's other son (see Oliver above).

Scroll: To shift the contents of a window to bring hidden items into view.

Scroll bar: A bar at the bottom or right side of a window that contains the scroll box and allows scrolling.

Shut down: To quit all applications and turn off the computer.

Software: Instructions that tell the computer what to do.

Scroll box: The box in a scroll bar that is used to navigate through a window.

SCSI: Acronym for Small Computer System Interface.

SCSI address: A number between zero and seven that must be unique to each device in a SCSI chain. Fast and Wide SCSI devices will allow up to 15 SCSI Ids (hexadecimal); however, the length restriction (3 meters) is such that it is virtually impossible to link 15 devices together.

SCSI port: A 25 pin connector on the back of a Mac (native SCSI port); used to connect SCSI devices to the CPU. Some SCSI cards (like the ATTO) have a 68 pin connector.

SCSI terminator: A device placed at the end of a SCSI chain to complete the circuit. (Some SCSI devices are self-terminating, or have active termination and do not require this plug).

Serial port: A port that allows data to be transmitted in a series (one after the other), such as the printer and modem ports on a Mac.

Server: A central computer dedicated to sending and receiving data from other computers (on a network).

Spreadsheet: A program designed to look like an electronic ledger.

Start up disk: The disk containing system software and is designated to be used to start the computer.

Surge suppressor: A power strip that has circuits designed to reduce the effects of surge in electrical power. (Not the same as a UPS)

System file: A file in the System folder that allows your Mac to start and run.

System folder: An all-important folder that contains at least the System file and the Finder.

Samba software: A free implementation of Microsoft's networking protocol. The name samba comes from inserting two vowels into the name of the standard protocol that Microsoft Windows network file system use, called SMB (Server Message Block). The author searched a dictionary using grep for words containing S M and B in that order; the only matches were Samba and Salmonberry.

Sed: Stands for stream editor, used for textual transformation of a sequential stream of text data. It is modeled after the ed editor.

Shareware: Coined by Bob Wallace to describe his word processor PC-Write in early 1983. Before this Jim Knopf (also known as Jim Button) and Andrew Fluegelman called their distributed software "user supported software" and "freeware" respectively, but it was Wallace's terminology that prevailed.

Slashdot: A technology oriented weblog

Sosumi: One of the systems sounds introduced in Apple Computer's System 7 operating system in 1991.

Apple Computer had a long litigation history with Apple Records, the Beatles' recording company. Fearing that the ability to record musical sound would cause yet more legal action, the Apple legal department allegedly ordered the sound to be renamed from its original, musical name. So the developers changed the name to Sosumi ("So sue me"). Depending on who was asked, they quipped that it was Japanese for either "absence of sound" or "a light pleasing tone".

Spam: Unwanted repetitious messages, such as unsolicited bulk e-mail

The term spam is derived from the Monty Python SPAM sketch, set in a cafe where everything on the menu includes SPAM luncheon meat. While a customer plaintively asks for some kind of food without SPAM in it, the server reiterates the SPAM-filled menu. Soon, a chorus of Vikings joins in with a song: "SPAM, SPAM, SPAM, SPAM, SPAM, lovely SPAM, wonderful SPAM", over and over again, drowning out all conversation.

SPIM: A simulator for a virtual machine closely resembling the instruction set of MIPS (computer manufacturer) processors is simply MIPS spelled backwards. MIPS stands for Millions of Instructions per Second, from way back when that was something to boast of. In recent time, SPIM has also come to mean SPam sent over Instant Messaging.

Swing: A graphics library for Java.

Swing was the code name of the project that developed the new graphic components (the successor of AWT). It was named after swing, a style of dance band jazz that was popularized in the 1930s and unexpectedly revived in the 1990s. Although an unofficial name for the components, it gained popular acceptance with the use of the word in the package names for the Swing API, which begin with javax.swing.

T

Tomcat: A web server from the Jakarta Project

Tomcat was the code name for the JSDK 2.1 project inside Sun. Tomcat started off as a servlet specification implementation by James Duncan Davidson who was a

software architect at Sun. Davidson had initially hoped that the project would be made open-source, and since most open-source projects had O'Reilly books on them with an animal on the cover, he wanted to name the project after an animal. He came up with Tomcat since he reasoned the animal represented something that could take care of and fend for itself.

Troff: A document processing system for UNIX

Troff stands for "typesetter roff", although many people have speculated that it actually means "Times roff" because of the use of the Times font family in Troff by default. Troff has its origins from Roff, an earlier formatting program, whose name is a contraction of "run off".

Trojan horse: A malicious program that is disguised as legitimate software.

The term is derived from the classical myth of the Trojan horse. Analogously, a Trojan horse appears innocuous (or even to be a gift), but in fact is a vehicle for bypassing security.

Trusted data: It is data which is completely controlled by an entity you trust absolutely.

Tux (Linux mascot): The penguin now commonly regarded as the most famous logo of the Linux Kernel and its deviants.

TWAIN: A standard for acquiring data from image scanners

Title bar: The horizontal bar at the top of a window which has the name of the file or folder it represents.

U

Ubuntu Linux: A Debian based Linux distribution sponsored by Canonical Ltd. The name derives from ubuntu, a South African ideology.

Trash Place where you put files and folders that you want to delete or get rid of.

UNIX: An operating system.

When Bell Labs pulled out of the MULTICS (MULTiplexed Information and Computing System) project, which was originally a joint Bell Labs/GE/MIT project, Ken Thompson of Bell Labs, soon joined by Dennis Ritchie, wrote a simpler version of the operating system for a spare DEC minicomputer, allegedly found in a corridor. They needed an OS to run the game Space War which had been compiled under MULTICS. The new OS was called UNICS - UNIpIplexed operating and Computing System by Brian Kernighan. An alternative spelling was Eunuchs, it being a sort of 'reduced' MULTICS. It was later shortened to Unix.

Upload: To send a file from one computer to another through a network.

Uninterruptible Power Source (UPS): A constantly charging battery pack which powers the computer. A UPS should have enough charge to power your computer for several minutes in the event of a total power failure, giving you time to save your work and safely shut down.

V

vi: A text editor, initialism for visual, a command in the ex editor which helped users to switch to the visual mode from the ex mode. The first version was written by Bill Joy at UC Berkeley.

Vim: A text editor, acronym for vi improved after Vim added several features over the vi editor. Vim however had started out as an imitation of vi and was expanded as vi imitation.

Vaporware: "Software" advertised, and sometimes sold, that does not yet exist in a releasable form.

Virtual memory: Using part of your hard drive as though it were "RAM".

Virus: A piece of program code that spreads by making copies of itself.

The term virus was first used as a technical computer science term by Fred Cohen in his 1984 paper "Computer Viruses Theory and Experiments", where he credits Len Adleman with coining it. Although Cohen's use of virus may have been the first academic use, it had been in the common parlance long before that. A mid-

1970s science fiction novel by David Gerrold, When H.A.R.L.I.E. was one, includes a description of a fictional computer program called VIRUS that worked just like a virus (and was countered by a program called ANTIBODY). The term "computer virus" also appears in the comic book "Uncanny X-Men" No. 158, published in 1982. A computer virus's basic function is to insert its own executable code into that of other existing executable files, literally making it the electronic equivalent to the biological virus, the basic function of which is to insert its genetic information into that of the invaded cell, forcing the cell to reproduce the virus.

W

Wiki or WikiWiki: A hypertext document collection or the collaborative software used to create it.

Coined by Ward Cunningham, the creator of the wiki concept, who named them for the "wiki wiki" or "quick" shuttle buses at Honolulu Airport. Wiki wiki was the first Hawaiian term he learned on his first visit to the islands. The airport counter agent directed him to take the wiki wiki bus between terminals.

Worm: A self-replicating program, similar to a virus.

The name 'worm' was taken from a 1970s science fiction novel by John Brunner entitled The Shockwave Rider. The book describes programs known as "tapeworms" which spread through a network for the purpose of deleting data. Researchers writing an early paper on experiments in distributed computing noted the similarities between their software and the program described by Brunner, and adopted that name.

WORM: Acronym for Write Once-Read Many; an optical disk that can only be written to once (like a CD-ROM).

WYSIWYG: Describes a system in which content during editing appears very similar to the final product.

Acronym for What You See Is What You Get, the phrase was originated by a newsletter published by Arlene and Jose Ramos, called WYSIWYG. It was created for the emerging Pre-Press industry going electronic in the late 1970s.

Y

Yahoo!: Internet portal and web directory.

Yahoo!'s history site says the name is an acronym for "Yet Another Hierarchical Officious Oracle", but some remember that in its early days (mid-1990s), when Yahoo! lived on a server called akebono.stanford.edu, it was glossed as "Yet Another Hierarchical Object Organizer." The word "Yahoo!" was originally invented by Jonathan Swift and used in his book Gulliver's Travels. It represents a person who is repulsive in appearance and action and is barely human. Yahoo! founders Jerry Yang and David Filo selected the name because they considered themselves yahoos.

Z

Zip: A file format now also used as a verb to mean compress

The file format was created by Phil Katz, and given the name by his friend Robert Mahoney. The compression tool Phil Katz created was called PKZIP. Zip means "speed", and they wanted to imply their product would be faster than ARC and other compression formats of the time.

Zoom box: A small square in the upper right corner of a window which, when clicked, will expand the window to fill the whole screen.