

Simply PC's Jargon Buster!

56K	A generic term for modems that can receive data at 56,000 bps. The maximum dial up modems ever achieved for connecting to the Internet
ADSL	Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Loop: High speed data connection using the existing copper telephone lines. Requires your telephone exchange to support it and be closer than 5000m.
Adware	Software that pushes advertising onto your computer. When it's installed without your permission it makes up part of what's known as malware. Often uses spyware to determine what ads to put on your computer.
Broadband	High speed Internet connection. Generally all connections except for dial up and ISDN connections.
Cache	Data that may be reused is stored in a cache to help speed things up. Web browsers have a cache to store recently used images and pages while CPUs have a cache to speed up processing and.
Cat 5	Category 5 Cable is used for network cabling. It has a faster relative called Category 6. When installing a network all cables should be at least cat 5. The square plug at the end of a Cat 5 or 6 cable is an RJ45.
Codec	Software that translates a video or audio file so it will work on a computer.
CPU	Central Processing Unit: The heart of the computer, this is the chip that runs the whole system. Sometimes the entire computer is referred to as the CPU.
Defragment	A process which reorganises data stored on a hard drive. On hard drives which are almost full defragmenting should be done often.
Drivers	Software that allows the operating system to talk to the hardware.
Ethernet	The standard networking system used in most modern networks
File Formats	Different file formats are the curse of the modern office. Every program has it's own way of saving data to disk. If you use Office 2000 that the other person is using Wordperfect 6 you will have problems sharing documents.
Firewall	Firewalls are security programs that decide what is allowed in and out of a computer and the Internet.
Firewire	A standard for connecting peripherals, particularly video cameras and multimedia devices. Standard on newer Apple computers and gradually becoming common on PC's. Also known as IEEE 1394 and I-link.
FTP	File Transfer Protocol: An Internet service used for transferring large files. It is used for uploading and downloading files from servers.
GIF	Graphics Interchange Format: A graphics file format. Commonly used in web pages.
HTML	HyperText Mark up Language: The computer language used to write web pages.
HTTP	Hyper Text Transfer Protocol: An Internet service that the World Wide Web uses.
ISP	Internet Service Provider: Provides access to the Internet for consumers and smaller businesses.
JPEG (or JPG)	Joint Photographics Experts Group: A graphics file format. Commonly used in web pages.
LAN	Local Area Network: Computers in the same office or complex connected to share data. Small businesses use Ethernet as their network standard.
Malware	A general term for software that intends to do no good to your computer. Includes adware, spyware, Trojan horses and viruses.
Parallel Port	The older printer port on IBM compatible computers, also known as the LPT or printer port. Devices like Zip drives could also be connected to parallel ports. Parallel ports have been largely superceded by USB and are dying out.
Partition	A hard drive needs to have partitions defining where the data is stored before it can be formatted. Normally a drive has just one partition, but the drive can be divided up into a number of partitions. These will appear as different hard drives to the computer.
PDF	An Adobe Acrobat document. A common way of sending documents
Plug-in	A sub-program that gives another program the ability to do something. To read an acrobat pdf file in a web browser, you will need the Acrobat plug-in.
POP (e-mail)	Post Office Protocol: A language used by e-mail programs to collect e-mail.
Ports (hardware)	Sockets you plug equipment into. You might plug a network cable (see RJ45) into a network port.
Protocol	A language used between computers trying to communicate.
RAM	Random Access Memory: Is where all the programs and data your computer has in use are stored. When you are finished with them the information goes back to the hard drive. The more RAM you can put in a computer or printer the better.
Registry	The files that keep Windows settings. The registry is essential to running Windows and should never be played with.
Removable Disks	Disks like floppy disks, zip drives and CD-ROMs that can be removed. Hard drives cannot be removed.
Router	A device that directs data on a computer network to different parts of the network or off onto the Internet.
Spam	Unsolicited e-mail usually advertising garbage but sometimes containing malware.

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Spyware	Programs that connect to the Internet and report usage details back to the vendor.
TCP/IP	Transport Control Protocol/Internet Protocol: The networking language that the Internet uses.
Trojan Horse	A malicious program that gets onto your system by pretending to be, or attaching itself to, an innocent program.
USB	Universal Serial Bus: A standard for connecting external devices such as keyboards, monitors, scanners, cameras and modems to a computer.
Virus	A computer program that attempts to install itself on other computers.
Virtual Memory	When a computer doesn't have enough RAM to run a program or open a document it uses virtual memory. Virtual memory is a file on the hard drive which the computer swaps less important things out of the memory into then swaps them back when they are needed. Virtual memory is also called a swap file.
WAN	Wide Area Network: A network of computers that are not in the same office or complex. A building company may use a WAN to connect it's site offices with head office. A WAN can use leased lines, dial up connections or a VPN.
WEP	Wireless Encryption Protocol. The older security method for protecting wireless networks, superceded by WPA. Generally not recommended although some equipment requires it.
Wi-Fi	The industry term for wireless networking, also known as 802.11 networks.
WLAN	Wireless LAN. A group of computers connected over a wireless network.
Workgroup	A group of computers on a network.
WPA	Wi-Fi Protected Access. The currently preferred method for securing wireless networks from unwanted hitch-hikers.
Write Protect	Protecting a drive or disk from being overwritten. Some types of disks have a physical switch, others have a software setting.
XML	eXtensible Mark up Language: A web design language similar to HTML but with built in programming features.
Zip file	A file that has been compressed to fit on a disk or make it quicker to transmit over the web.