

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Historical Materials from University of  
Nebraska-Lincoln Extension

Extension

---

2001

## NF01-457 Basic Computer Glossary of Terms

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/extensionhist>



Part of the [Agriculture Commons](#), and the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#)

---

"NF01-457 Basic Computer Glossary of Terms" (2001). *Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension*. 175.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/extensionhist/175>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Extension at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.



# NebFact



Published by Cooperative Extension, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources,  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

## Basic Computer Glossary of Terms

---

**Archive** - A technique of compressing multiple files into a single file to enable easier backup, handling or transmission.

**ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange)** - The de-facto world-wide standard for the code numbers used by computers to represent all the upper and lower case Latin letters, numbers, punctuation, etc. There are 128 standard ASCII codes each of which can be represented by a 7 digit binary number: 0000000 through 1111111.

**Backup** - (v.) In computing, to create a "safe" extra copy of data recorded on floppy disk, magnetic tape, or other storage medium. 2. (n.) The actual copy of data recorded in the process described above.

**BIOS (Basic Input-Output System)** - A fundamental part of any personal computing system, the BIOS contains basic system control instructions.

**Bug** - A flaw in a computer program or system.

**Bytes** - A generic term developed by IBM to indicate a measurable number of consecutive binary digits which are usually operated upon as a unit. Bytes of eight bits ("by eight") usually represent either one character or two numerals. A computer's storage capacity or memory is figured in kilobytes (K or KB): one K is actually 1,024 (2 to the 10th power) bits.

**CD (Compact disc or compact audio disc)** - A 4.75 inch (12cm) optical disc that contains information (usually musical) encoded digitally in the CLV format. Popular format for high fidelity music, offering 90 dB signal/noise ratio, 74 minutes of digital sound, and no degradation of quality from playback. The standards for this format (developed by NV Philips and Sony Corporation) are known as the Red Book. The official (and rarely used) designation for the audio-only format is CD-DA (compact disc-digital audio). The simple audio format is also known as CD-A (compact disc-audio). A smaller (3") version of the CD is known as CD-3.

**CD-ROM (Compact Disc-Read Only Memory)** - A 4.75 inch laser encoded optical memory storage medium with the same constant linear velocity (CLV) spiral format as compact audio discs and some videodiscs. CD-ROMs can hold about 650 megabytes of digital data. CD-ROMs require additional

error-correction information than the standard prerecorded compact audio disc. The standards for this format (developed by NV Philips and Sony Corporation) are known as the Yellow Book.

**CD-ROM drive** - The drive needed to retrieve data from a CD-ROM format disc.

**CD-RW** - Short for CD-ReWritable disk, a type of CD disk that enables you to write onto it in multiple sessions. One of the problems with CD-R disks is that you can only write to them once. With CD-RW drives and disks, you can treat the optical disk just like a floppy or hard disk, writing data onto it multiple times.

The first CD-RW drives became available in mid-1997. They can read CD-ROMs and can write onto today's CD-R disks, but they cannot write on normal CD-ROMs. This means that disks created with a CD-RW drive can only be read by a CD-RW drive. However, a new standard called MultiRead, developed jointly by Philips Electronics and Hewlett-Packard, will enable CD-ROM players to read disks create by CD-RW drives.

**Disc or Disk** - Flat, circular rotating medium that can store and replay various types of information, both analog and digital. "Disc" often is used in reference to optical storage media, while "disk" refers to magnetic storage media. Often used as short form for videodisc or compact audio disc. (CD)

**Disk operating system (DOS)** - A computer operating system designed for use with a disk. Languages, application and utility programs can be transferred quickly between CPU memory and disk storage.

**Drive** - That part of a computer-based system (such as a personal computer) into which floppy disks, tapes, CD-ROM's, videodiscs, other optical or magnetic media are inserted when they are being used to input, process, or output information.

**Driver** - A program that controls (or drives) a device.

**Ethernet** - A very common method of networking computers in a LAN. Ethernet will handle about 10,000,000 bits per second and can be used with almost any kind of computer.

**GIF (Graphic Interchange Format)** - A common format for image files, especially suitable for images containing large areas of the same color. GIF format files of simple images are often smaller than the same file would be if stored in JPEG format but GIF format does not store photographic images as well as JPEG.

**Gigabyte** - 1,000 or 1,024 Megabytes, depending on who is measuring.

**JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group)** - JPEG is most commonly mentioned as a format for image files. JPEG format is preferred to the GIF format for photographic images as opposed to line art or simple logo art.

**LAN** - A group of computers that are located in one area and are connected by fewer than 1,000 feet of cable. A LAN might interconnect a number of computers and printers on a single floor or in a single building. LANs can be connected together, but if two or more LANs are connected by modems and telephone lines, the larger network is called a WAN.

LANs make it possible for computers to share files and peripherals such as printers and servers.

**Megabyte** - A million bytes. Actually, technically, 1,024 kilobytes.

**Memory** - The location in which computer-based equipment stores recorded information, either permanently or temporarily. Usually measured in kilobytes or megabytes.

**Modem (Modulator, DEModulator)** - Modems are used to link computers together through telephone lines. Modulation is the process of changing computer data into tones that can be sent through a telephone line, and demodulation is the process of changing the tones back into computer data. Basically, modems do for computers what a telephone does for humans.

**Monitor - A CRT** - RGB screen which accepts video signals, computer display information, or both.

**House** - A hand-held, rolling remote control device for a computer which guides the cursor on the computer screen.

**MP3** - An increasingly popular way to store audio in electronic format. The MP3 format compresses audio files in such a way that the file size is relatively small, but the song sounds nearly perfect. You can identify MP3 files because they end in the ".mp3" extension. Typically 1 MB is equal to one minute of music or several minutes for spoken word/audiobooks.

**OS** - Operating System

**Parallel** - Simultaneous computer data processing of the individual parts of a whole. Parallel ports on microcomputers often connect with printing devices.

**Port** - The socket at which cables connecting the computer and its peripherals are attached.

**RAM (Random Access Memory)** - That part of a computer's memory which can both read (find and display) and write (record) information, and which can be updated or amended by the user; the largest part of a computer's memory, used to house and execute active program code.

**ROM (Read Only Memory)** - A computer storage medium which allows the user to recall and use information (read) but not record or amend it (write). 2. (n.) The smaller part of a computer's memory, in which essential operating information is recorded in a form which can be recalled and used (read) but not amended or recorded (written).

**RGB (Red-Green-Blue)** - A type of computer color display output signal comprising separately controllable red, green and blue signals; as opposed to composite video, in which signals are combined prior to output. RGB monitors typically offer higher resolution than composite.

**SYSOP (System Operator)** - Anyone responsible for the physical operations of a computer system or network resource. A System Administrator informs the System Operator when backup and maintenance should be performed.

**UNIX** - A computer operating system (the basic software running on a computer, underneath things like word processors and spreadsheets). UNIX is designed to be used by many people at the same time (it is "multi-user") and has TCP/IP built-in. It is the most common operating system for servers on the Internet.

**VRAM** - Video Random Access Memory

**Windows NT** - Abbreviation of Windows New Technology, a 32-bit multitasking operating system developed by Microsoft Corporation and released at the end of 1992. Windows NT is scalable and designed for use on a broad range of platforms, including high-end workstations. Windows NT consists of two versions - the basic product and the Windows NT Advanced Server. As such, the operating system has been positioned by Microsoft for client-server computing over networked systems.

**WYSIWYG** - What You See Is What You Get (pronounced "wizzy-wig"); refers to graphic display mode in some desktop publishing applications in which the page on the screen shows exactly how the printed page will appear.

### **Sources**

Glossary of Technical Terms - Nebraska Information Technology Council,  
<http://www.nitc.state.ne.us/itc/citizens/glossary.htm>

Glossary of Internet Terms - Matisse Enzer, <http://matisse.net/files/glossary.html>

net.speak the internet dictionary - "Your A to Z Reference to Internet Terms, Acronyms, and Etiquette",  
Tom Fahey

"Webopedia", The only online dictionary and search engine you need for computer and Internet  
technology - <http://webopedia.internet.com/>

Compiled by Connie Hancock, Extension Educator-Cheyenne and Kimball-Banner counties, University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension, conNEcting Nebraska Technology Team and reviewed by Dewey Teel, Extension Educator-Antelope county; Pam Peters, Communications and Information Technology, Education Coordinator-Computing; Linda Tempel, Administrative Assistant; and Jim Emal, Communications and Information Technology.

---

***File NF457 under: CONSUMER EDUCATION  
D-16, Consumer Information-General  
Issued May 2001***

---

*Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Elbert C. Dickey, Interim Dean and Director of Cooperative Extension, University of Nebraska, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.*

*University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension educational programs abide with the non-discrimination policies of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.*