Glossary of Computer Related Terms

Term	Full Description
Airplane Mode	Many laptops, tablets and smartphones have an **airplane mode** which turns off the WiFi and Cellular radios so as not to interfere with an airplane's navigation systems.
All in Ones	At least two common devices are called "All in Ones", printers and computers. An AIO **printer** can scan, copy, fax and print. An AIO **computer** is a monitor (screen) with built in computer, power and, if available, optical drive. Many AIO computers are **wireless** except for power. Cool!
Anti-Malware	Applications designed to identify and help remove **Malware** (**Mal**icious Soft**ware**). No single piece of software (application) is capable of detecting every occurrence of a malware infection. Your best defense against such infections is regular **backups** of both your *system* and your *applications/data*. Please check out the references to both Anti-Virus and Anti-Malware at **Wikipedia.org**.
Anti-Virus	Applications designed to identify and help remove **Viruses** a form of malicious software. As a general rule, anti-virus software monitors all incoming traffic between your computer and the outside world. As such, you only want ONE anti-virus application on the computer, as more than one dramatically slows down the computer. No single piece of software (application) is capable of detecting every occurrence of malware infection. Your best defense against such infections is regular **backups** of both your *system* and your *applications/data*. Please check out the references to both Anti-Virus and Anti-Malware at **Wikipedia.org**.
Application (abbr: app)	When talking about computers, tablets and smartphones, we use the term **application** the same way a cook or chef uses the term **recipe**. In the BIG picture, a *recipe* is a list of instructions to take some common household items (flour, butter, sugar, etc.) and hopefully produce an attractive, usually tasty, and frequently fragrant item as defined by the name of the recipe; for example: Chocolate Chip Cookies. A computer *application* is a list of computer instructions to take information provided by the user and process that information into a result defined by its name. Some examples: 1) If the application was a **word processor** (a computer world typewriter), it would take information (words) entered into the computer by YOU typing on the computers' keyboard, from notes made by Grandma, into a document you could pass on as a recipe for Grandma's German Chocolate Cake! 2) If the application was a **DVD viewer**, it would take information from the DVD you put into the CD/DVD drive and display video on the screen as a movie, and play the audio on the computer's sound system. 3) If the application was a **game**, the computer would take information from your game controller and manipulate your **Avatar** on the screen as if it was you!

Avatar

An Avatar is your virtual (digital) stand-in. In particular, when you play certain games, you choose your stand-in (Avatar) to represent you in the game. You then control the actions of your Avatar with your game controller. For all practical purposes, the Avatar is YOU. Just don't expect to feel what the Avatar feels in this early stage of computer gaming.

Backup

In its simplest terms, a **backup** is simply a second copy, kept in a different location in case of loss of the original. On a computer where the permanent storage device is a **hard drive**; we know it WILL fail, we just don't know when. Proper **backups** provide the capability of total replacement of the hard drive up to the date of the most recent backup. The traditional **backup** is made to an *external hard drive* due to the amount of data to be backed up when backing up the entire system. Smaller amounts of data, such as a photo album, etc. could be saved to a **flash drive**. Search the internet for the common means of backing up a personal computer.

BIOS

Basic **I**nput/**O**utput **S**ystem; *firmware* (difficult to change software) on a computer motherboard to assist the *Central Processing Unit* in booting and running the operating system software.

Blu Ray Disc

A write once or re-writable optical disc, similar to an Audio CD, that can be used to save (through a process called *burning*) and read (in an appropriate reading/writing device) any sort of computer file. The 5.25" disc comes in capacities of 25, 50 and 100 Gigabytes of information.

Bluetooth

A short range radio channel a computer (or other electronic device) uses for wireless communication with a second device; such as a computer mouse or keyboard.

Boot / booting

The initialization process most computing devices go through to test current hardware and load software into temporary memory as needed to provide a fully functional computing system.

Browser – Web Browser

The software application required to **browse** the internet on internet connected devices. Popular browsers for personal computers include: Firefox, Chrome and Edge.

Cable (Internet)

One of the popular methods an Internet Service Provider uses to connect the internet to your home or place of business. It brings internet on the same cable that brings TV.

Calculator

An application (usually part of the operating system) that provides services similar to the old mechanical calculators or small pocket calculators. They can be anything from simple add, subtract, multiply and divide to scientific or special function calculators.

CD (Compact Disc)

A write *once* or re-writable optical disc (same as an audio CD) that can be used to save (through a process called burning) and read (in an appropriate reading/writing device) any sort of computer file. The 5.25" disc is limited to around 800 Megabytes of information.

CD/DVD Drive

The optical device needed to write and read various flavors of CD or DVD media. Check the drive specifications before buying media. Not all drives will write and read all the different types available.

Cellular Data Usage

On a cellular data enabled device, such as a smartphone or tablet, and some laptops, you pay a cellular data provider a monthly fee for messaging and internet data usage. The fee you are paying usually has an upper limit on the amount of data you are allowed to use. If you exceed the limit, there will be an additional charge.

Check Box

A check box is a small square box used as part of the user/computer dialog. The user points to the check box with a pointing device cursor, and either places or removes a 'check mark' by **selecting** the box. All check boxes are independent of each other.

Context Menu

A menu opened in response to the appropriate menu click of the users pointing device. The menu varies by the item selected with the users cursor, therefore, the menu is given "in the context of" the type of item selected.

Control Panel

A application included with an operating system. Using the **control panel** (on Windows) or **settings** (on Apple and Android devices), you can control various features of the operating system. One example would be: to set up a **mouse** or other pointing device for either **left** handed or **right** handed use, teach the computer your **double click** speed and teach the computer how **far** to move the cursor when you move the mouse a little.

CPU

Central Processing Unit – The brain of the computer.

Cursor

A computer generated mark on the computer screen under control of the users pointing device. The user moves the mark to an item on the screen before giving the computer a command to do something with it.

Desktop	Apparently; the term Desktop when used with a computer is a HUGE source of confusion. It is suppose to be a model of an item many people are used to: the desk they may normally work at. If you are not used to a desk, think kitchen table. You may set your table for breakfast one way, clear the stuff away to do a project, then re-set the table for lunch, but not the same way you set it for breakfast, etc. A kitchen table is in a state of flux the whole day. If you have a desk, the top of the desk is usually set up one way for all day, day after day. A haven of sorts. It is very personal. No two people have their desk set up the same way. In fact; NO TWO COMPUTER DESKTOPS are set up the same way! At least not after the computer is used the first time. It's too personal! That's why you PERSONALIZE your computer! The desktop on the computer is your haven. The place (on the computer) that should give you comfort because it's YOURS! You set it up the way your want to work, and only you can change it! In fact, if you allow other **users** access to your computer (login with their name), they have their own desktop! Your desktop is what you wait for while the computer is booting. In fact, you can't do much of anything until your computer presents you with your *desktop* or your *start screen*, depending on your version of Windows. One or the other will be the place you begin working with your computer.
Dial-up (Internet)	One of the first popular methods of getting internet in your home. Dial-up refers to the need to Dial-up your internet service provider, using your home phone, to get access to the internet. Compared with today's internet speeds, Dial-up was VERY slow.
Drag and Drop	The **drag and drop** technique on a computer is used for many different actions. The technique itself is nothing more than playing **checkers**. In checkers, you reach out your *pointing finger* and place it on the *checker*. You then *move* the checker (keeping your finger on the checker) until you get it to its new position. You then *remove* your finger from the checker. On a computer its the same thing, only using a mouse to move a cursor on the computer screen. Move the cursor to the checker (any screen object like an icon!), press down with your pointing finger, hold the finger down on the 'checker' while moving the mouse, cursor and checker to its new location, then remove your finger from the 'checker'. Drag and drop!
Driver (Device Driver)	A device **driver** is a piece of software the **C**entral **P**rocessing **U**nit needs to properly communicate with any particular hardware device connected to it; such as a printer. The printer is now most often connected either wirelessly, or by a USB connection.
DSL (Internet)	One of the popular methods an **I**nternet **S**ervice **P**rovider uses to connect the internet to your home or place of business. It brings internet on the same wires that brings your phone service.
DVD (Digital Video Disc)	A write *once* or re-writable optical disc, similar to an Audio CD, but can be used to save (through a process called burning) and read (in an appropriate reading & writing device) any sort of computer file. The 5.25" disc is limited to around 4.7 Gigabytes of information.

DVD Drive/Blu Ray Drive	The optical device needed to write (through a process called burning) and read various flavors of CD or DVD media. Check the drive specifications before buying media. Not all drives will write and read all the different types available.
DVD ROM	A write *once* optical media, similar to an Audio CD, no longer used in current personal computers.
Email	Electronic mail. Requires internet. Reaches the recipient (at least the ISPs server) in seconds, rather than hours or days of traditional mail services.
Ethernet	The wired version of networking usually found on **A**ll **I**n **O**nes and tower computers. Not necessarily connected to the internet.
External Hard Drive	A traditional mechanical hard drive in a box separate from a computer. Usually connects to the computer via a USB cable.
Facebook	A popular social networking site on the internet. Mobile devices usually have an application to make using Facebook more convenient. Many parents and grandparents resort to Facebook to follow what the kids are doing.
File Manager	File managers are applications that give the user the ability to manipulate the file structure of their computer. Think of the traditional file cabinet and the drawers of all the folders and files. If you received such a cabinet that contained a hodge-podge of folders and files, you would want to organize things in a manner that made sense to you. THAT is what a file manager allows you to do. You get to build your own digital world in your computer. For more information, see the lesson on Using Windows File Explorer (the Windows file manager!).
Flash Drive	Also called a USB Flash Drive or Thumb Drive. It is an extremely compact memory system combining a Flash Memory and a USB interface in a single package. They have pretty much replaced the floppy disc and CD/DVD disc as the memory of choice for file portability.
Free Software	Many commercially available applications, especially security software, is available as 'free to home users'. I believe the producers of such software are agreeable to let non commercial users have it free of charge for two reasons: 1) If you use it at home, you will suggest it at work, and 2) Commercial users cannot afford to pay to have someone sit and do scans. Paid for versions are able to automatically scan after work hours. Home users have to start the scan themselves any time they choose to. Then go have a cup of coffee; or...

Hard Drive (HD)	Hard drives and the more recent solid state drives (SSDs) are memory storage devices capable of storing huge amounts of data. They are typically used as permanent storage in computers, or, when coupled with a USB interface, used as external storage systems for additional storage or backups.
Hardware	Hardware usually refers to the physical (hard) parts of a computer system, literally the nuts and bolts (and memory, CPU, power supply, printer, etc.) of the system.
Hibernate	Hibernating a computer is usually reserved for a portable computer to get it to shut down as far as possible and still be able to wake up rapidly and return you to what you were in the middle of when you told it to hibernate. A laptop with a fully charged battery can hibernate for a month.
I/OS	Apple operating system for portable devices such as tablets and smartphones.
Interface	This is a non-scientific description: In the sewing world, you sew interfacing between two pieces of fabric to stiffen it, such as a shirt or blouse collar and cuffs. So, in a way, an interface is a 'go between'. In electronics, an engineer knows computers have no fingers to flip switches, but he knows how to make a computers electrical signal turn a *relay* ON that then can power up any light bulb ever made! The relay becomes an ***interface*** (translator from computer signal to HUGE electrical signal). Similarly, the engineer can design ***interfaces*** to *translate movements* humans make into *electrical signals* that computers can understand. So; when you hear ***interface***, think ***translator***.
Internet	A world wide communication spiderweb of networked computers giving us access to information and other resources we could only dream of before the internet. Think of it as a world wide PUB without the food and drink.
Internet Browser	An internet ***browser*** (web browser) is an application that lets YOU read files on a computer somewhere on the internet. Anything you view on the internet is NOT ON your computer. You are using your computer to view files on some other computer! Popular browsers include: Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, Opera.
ISP (Internet)	Internet Service Provider – Like your telephone service provider, or TV (pay for) service provider, your Internet Service Provider connects your home to the internet. It may actually be your telephone or TV cable provider, but could be someone else. Depending on your location, you may have few choices of provider and/or the type of service.
Media	No, not a fake news service. Computer ***media*** is recordable media, such as floppy discs, CD-Rs, DVD-Rs, camera memory cards, etc.

Menu

Usually refers to the **Menu Bar** near the top of a Window. The most frequent menus that may appear on the Menu Bar, include: File, Edit, View and Help. Menus are _application specific_. That is, when you select a menu, the computer will display the options you have available pertaining to the menu name AND the current application.

Menu Click (Pointing Device)

If you have set up your pointing device for right or left hand use as described in Class 2, your middle finger click will ALWAYS give you a **context menu** for the item your pointing **cursor** is on **_at the time of your click_**.

Mobile Hot Spot

Many smartphones and some other devices can become a mobile hot spot. In hot spot mode the device will convert cellular data into WiFi data for use by nearby computers, tablets and other WiFi internet capable devices.

Modem

MOdulator DEModulator – Translates signals to/from your ISP into signals your computer can understand: a language translator of sorts.

Monitor

Term used to describe the device that looks like a TV, but just displays information from your computer on its **screen**. In some cases it _can_ be your TV.

Mouse

An electromechanical device used to simulate our pointing to and touching objects on the computer screen. Also very useful for touch screen computers when icons and other objects are too small or too close together for a finger.

Mouse Pad

There are many different mouse pads, but most of them are built to slow down mouse movements. This can be very useful if you tend to move the mouse when you click a button. The pad will help you anchor the mouse in place before you click or release the button, a must for proper communication with the computer. When shopping for a mouse pad, test it at a store that sells both mice and pads. Some don't have much drag at all.

NotePad

A very abbreviated capability word processor included with the Windows operating system.

Operating System (abbr: OS)

A complex combination of software code that can turn what otherwise would be a pile of hardware junk into functioning tool; a computer.

Optical Drive

The mechanical and electrical interface for a computer that is built to read from and write to an optical memory such as a CD or DVD.

Optical Storage

A memory that uses optical means to read/write data, such as a CD or DVD.

OS	See: Operating System
OS/X	Apple Macintosh Operating System Ten
Paint	A drawing application included with the Windows operating system. It is particularly useful when capturing screen grabs and saving them to a file.
PC	Originally referred to any Personal Computer, but more recently applies to any computer sold with the Windows operating system.
Photo	In Windows 10, Photo is a 'universal' application to view and modify photographs.
Poke (Button/Key)	A well known function of the pointing or index finger when applied to a siblings ribs. It is now applied to most computer buttons to avoid miss-interpretation of the 'press a button' action. Many people press and hold a button rather than poke, which results in a totally different response by the computer, like spewing a whole line of the same character.
Port – Communication	The early 'Comm Ports' on a computer usually referred to the serial and parallel ports (connector specific; 9-pin D-sub for serial, 25-pin D-sub for parallel, but even earlier parallel ports for printers consisted of a 26 pin Blue Ribbon Connector). Ports on current computers usually refer to any connector on the computer proper.
Power Button	The power button on a computer is poked to turn the computer ON from an OFF condition, or to wake the computer from a sleep or hibernate condition. You may choose what you want the computer to do if you poke the power button while the computer is running. Using the Power Options item on the Control Panel, the button can be programmed to hibernate the computer, put the computer to sleep or to shut the computer down. You can also force a rapid shutdown of the computer by pressing and holding the button for roughly five seconds. This is NOT to be used as your normal method of shutting the computer OFF!
Power Icon	The international icon for the power button is a circle with a vertical line breaking the top edge of the circle. It is reminiscent of the old toggle switch on many pieces of electronic equipment. On many computers the quickest way to see the power icon is to: press and hold CTRL and ALT then poke DEL and release all keys.
Program	People used to write a program for execution by a computer. Now we write applications. New generation of programmers, new terms.
Radio Button	A radio button is a small circle in a group of small circles used as part of the user/computer dialog. Only one radio button in a group is allow to be selected at any time; just like the old station selector buttons on a radio.

RAM	**R**andom **A**ccess **M**emory – The temporary memory in a computer.
Re-boot	You **reboot** (restart) your computer by selecting the **power icon** on the start screen, then select the **restart** option.
Restart	You **restart** your computer by selecting the **power icon** on the start screen, then select the **restart** option.
Router	A network device used to **route** or _switch_ network signals between the internet and various devices on your local network.
Satellite (Internet)	If you need internet service in unusually remote locations, you may be able to get it from a satellite service such as Direct TV, or Dish Network.
Search Engine (Internet)	**Search Engines** on the internet provide services similar to the reference librarian at your local library. You pose a question, or enter 'keywords' (words necessary to your search) to find answers or informational **websites** on the internet.
Select	You select an item on your computers' touchscreen by reaching out and touching the screen. If you don't have a touchscreen, you use a pointing device (usually a mouse) to place your cursor on the item and gently click the button under your pointing finger (without moving the pointing device!).
Settings	Many applications have user adjustable **settings**. Look for the **gear** icon.
Sleep	One of the options you can choose from when you select the power icon is to put your computer to **sleep**. For computers that remain plugged into power all the time (no battery to worry about), putting them to sleep rather than shutting them down will result in more rapid shutdown AND startup. Additionally, you will be returned to the exact conditions (open applications and files) that you had when you told your computer to 'take a nap!' (**sleep**).
Software	**Hardware** is tangible, you can put your hands on it. **Software** sounds like it would feel good...but you can't touch it, you can't see it, you can't even hear it. You can handle the memories (flash drives, CDs, DVDs, etc.) that software files are stored on, but you can't handle the software. Yet software brings the computer to life. Software is the catchall term that covers ALL of the code programmers generate (operating systems, **applications**, code generating and debug routines, etc.) to make the computer do something. Need a computer to do something? There's **software** for that,
Solid State Drive (SSD)	**S**olid **S**tate **D**rives are the up and coming replacement for the aging electromechanical (moving parts) **Hard Drive**. They use less power and are faster at reading and writing than most hard drives. You can now also buy **externa**l SSDs for more storage and backups.

Spreadsheet	For the average person, a **spreadsheet** application is a **word processor** that makes making tables of information easy. Family budgets, shopping lists, gift clothing sizes, etc. As a kid delivering papers, I designed a page with rows of client names and addresses, and columns for delivery dates and check boxes to keep track of 1) Paper delivered, and 2) Paper paid for! Boy, would THAT have been easy with a spreadsheet app. Two very important features of a spreadsheet app are 1) the ability to include math formulas to do calculations, such as to sum a column of numbers (Dollars?), and 2) to be able to sort ALL the information in numeric or alphabetic order. This glossary is a spreadsheet of two columns and many rows. I add new entries at the bottom, click on sort column 1, and done!
Start (Application) Icon	When using Windows on a personal computer, at one end of the task bar you will see a Windows logo (it looks like a multi-pane window!). If you select (move pointing device cursor to the icon and click the button under your pointing finger) the icon, the computer will open (or close) the start (application) screen.
Start (Application) Key	When using Windows on a personal computer, on your keyboard, to the left of the space key, you will see a Windows logo key (it looks like a multi-pane window!). If you poke the key, the computer will open (or close) the start (application) screen.
Start (Application) Screen	The Start (Application) screen will probably 'hit you in the face' when you first see it. What you must remember is: it is designed for relatively small screens such as tablets and smartphones. As such, 'standard' icons are far too small to be seen on the small screens. As a result, Microsoft has designed the right pane of the start screen using 'tiles', touch style buttons that display larger application icons. You select the appropriate tile to start your application. If an appropriate tile does not exist, find your application in the left pane of the window and select it. A much faster method to find and start your application is: hand off the mouse, poke the windows key on the keyboard, begin typing the name of the application. As you type each character, look at the screen. The computer will find the application faster than you. If your application appears at the top of the list, and is highlighted, just poke 'enter' to tell the computer to open the application. No pointing device needed!
Tab Key – use of in Text Editing	When editing forms on the internet, such as an application for an account, use tab to move to the next text box, and shift+tab to move to the previous text box. After you place your insertion point in the first text box, you can finish the whole form without using the pointing device again. CAUTION!: Do NOT use **enter**! Using the **enter** key will tell the computer to move on to the next page.
Task Bar	The **task bar** is visible on your **desktop**. It is usually at the bottom of the screen, but can be moved to any side. At one end of the **task bar** you will see the Windows **logo**, and near the other end you will see the **clock**. This identifies the task bar. You can use one of several methods to put your own application icons on the task bar for quickly locating and starting applications you use frequently. When you find an application, **menu click** it to see what you can do with it.

Update (Software)	Software upDATES are important to minimize security problems. It is especially important to regularly upDATE your security applications. Windows will automatically update important parts of the operating system.
Upgrade (Hardware)	The need to upGRADE (buy new) your hardware can occur when aging hardware no longer is supported by a new operating system, and you can't find new *drivers* on the manufacturers web site.
Upgrade (Software)	Beware of popups or buttons suggesting you upGRADE your software. Much excellent software is available to the home computer user to use free. The same software may suggest you get a 'free download' of a trial version (paid for). Buttons will suggest you upGRADE now! UpGRADES of free versions usually means you convert to the paid for version!
USB	Universal Serial Bus – Modern 'universal' communication port. Can be used for flash drives, external drives of many types, keyboards, pointing devices, external video cards, external audio systems, etc.
USB Port	Universal Serial Bus Port – A universal communication port on most computers. There are several versions of the USB connector, but the most common one in use on All In Ones, towers and laptops is perfectly rectangular. There are no notches or curved corners in the connectors. The port is universal because nearly any device you would like to plug into your computer comes with the USB interface. ANY USB device will connect to ANY USB port. You may have to use a converter to/from the proper connector form (A, B or C), but the device and the port are compatible.
USB Port Expander	If your computer has too few USB ports for your current needs, you can add a USB port *expander*. Simple port *expanders* are 1 to 4 or 1 to 7. You may expand your system up to 255 USB ports.
User Interface	If you read the description of *Interface*, you know the interface is sort of a translator. A _computer_ needs to be told what the user wants done, and the _user_ must be told what the computer needs to get the job done. A graphical *User Interface* like Microsoft Windows, is a translator between the _human user_ (keyboard and pointing device) and the _computer_ (screen, sound). It is the *User Interface* that determines how well the computer and the user understand each other.
VPN (Internet)	Virtual Private Network – Used mostly to connect a home computer to the company network where you work.
Web Browser	A web *browser* (internet *browser*) is an application that lets YOU read files on a computer somewhere on the internet. Anything you view on the internet is NOT ON your computer. You are using your computer to view files on some other computer!

Website	A **website** is nothing more than a collection of special files on a computer somewhere on the internet. The files are intended to be opened by your web **browser**. As such they are all the types of files that can grab your attention using color, text, videos and sound. Any body can have a website, but it takes an *artist* to design a Hollywood production style website.
WiFi	Term used to describe a special short range radio system used for wireless connection to a network such as the internet.
WiFi Extender	Hardware used to extend the range of the WiFi signal.
WiFi Hot Spot	Relatively small area (0-100') within range of a WiFi source, usually supplying internet access.
Windows Explorer	Can be either of two Windows applications: **Windows File Explorer,** the Windows file manager, and **Windows Internet Explorer**, the desktop version of Microsofts' **browser** application.
Windows Settings	There are a number of ways to change the way Windows works. Two quick ways to access 'settings' are: 1) poke the Windows logo **key** on your keyboard (or select the Windows **icon** on the task bar) and select the **gear icon** for **settings**, and 2) menu click the Windows logo **icon** on the task bar, then select **Control Panel**. Your first view of the Control Panel is 'Categories'. If you move your cursor into the upper right area of the Control Panel window, you will find you can change 'Categories' to 'Large' or 'Small' icons. Check out all the control panel icons to find out what you can change on your computer.
Word Processing App	Two **word processing** applications (text editing apps) are included with the Windows operating system: 1) **Notepad**, a relatively simple word processing application, and 2) **WordPad**, probably the only word processing application most people need. You can find many more word processing applications on the internet, both free and pay for.
WordPad	A very capable **word processing** application included with the Windows operating system. I use it for most of the handouts I generate when teaching computer classes.
YouTube	A **website** to share videos and music. Many internet searches will display results at YouTube.com. You can actually spend more time viewing YouTube videos than playing solitaire!

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