

COMPUTER SCIENCE

SHORT NOTES

1 Kilobyte (K or KB)

Equal to 1,024 bytes.

Linux

A UNIX - like, open-source operating system developed primarily by Linus Torvalds. Linux is free and runs on many platforms, including both PCs and Macintoshes. Linux is an open-source operating system, meaning that the source code of the operating system is freely available to the public. Programmers may redistribute and modify the code, as long as they don't collect royalties on their work or deny access to their code. Since development is not restricted to a single corporation more programmers can debug and improve the source code faster.

Laptop and notebook

Small, lightweight, portable battery-powered computers that can fit onto your lap. They each have a thin, flat, liquid crystal display screen.

Macro

A script that operates a series of commands to perform a function. It is set up to automate repetitive tasks.

Mac OS

An operating system with a graphical user interface, developed by Apple for Macintosh computers. Current System X.1.(10) combines the traditional Mac interface with a strong underlying UNIX. Operating system for increased performance and stability.

Megabyte (MB)

Equal to 1,048,576 bytes, usually rounded off to one million bytes (also called a meg).

Memory

Temporary storage for information, including applications and documents. The information must be stored to a permanent device, such as a hard disc or CD-ROM before the power is turned off, or the information will be lost. Computer memory is measured in terms of the amount of information it can store, commonly in megabytes or gigabytes.

Menu

A context-related list of options that users can choose from.

Menu bar

The horizontal strip across the top of an application's window. Each word on the strip has a context sensitive drop-down menu containing features and actions that are available for the application in use.

Merge

To combine two or more files into a single file.

MHz

An abbreviation for **Megahertz**, or **one million hertz**. One MHz represents one million clock cycles per second and is the measure of a computer microprocessor's speed. For example, a microprocessor that runs at 300 MHz executes 300 million cycles per second. Each instruction a computer receives takes a fixed number of clock cycles to carry out, therefore the more cycles a computer can execute per second, the faster its programs run. Megahertz is also a unit of measure for bandwidth.

Microprocessor

A complete central processing unit (CPU) contained on a single silicon chip.

Minimize

A term used in a GUI operating system that uses windows. It refers to reducing a window to an icon, or a label at the bottom of the screen, allowing another window to be viewed.

Modem

A device that connects two computers together over a telephone or cable line by converting the computer's data into an audio signal. Modem is a contraction for the process it performs : modulate-demodulate.

Monitor

A video display terminal.

Mouse

A small hand-held device, similar to a trackball, used to control the position of the cursor on the video display; movements of the mouse on a desktop correspond to movements of the cursor on the screen.

MP3

Compact audio and video file format. The small size of the files makes them easy to download and e-mail. Format used in portable playback devices.

Multimedia

Software programs that combine text and graphics with sound, video, and animation. A multimedia PC contains the hardware to support these capabilities.

MS-DOS

An early operating system developed by Microsoft Corporation (Microsoft Disc Operating System).

Network

A system of interconnected computers.

Open source

Computer programs whose original source code was revealed to the general public so that it could be developed openly. Software licensed as open source can be freely changed or adapted to new uses, meaning that the source code of the operating system is freely available to the public. Programmers may redistribute and modify the code, as long as they don't collect royalties on their work or deny access to their code. Since development is not restricted to a single corporation more programmers can debug and improve the source code faster.

Operating system

A set of instructions that tell a computer on how to operate when it is turned on. It sets up a filing system to store files and tells the computer how to display information on a video display. Most PC operating systems are DOS (disc operated system) systems, meaning the instructions are stored on a disc (as opposed to being originally stored in the microprocessors of the computer). Other well-known operating systems include UNIX, Linux, Macintosh, and Windows.

Output

Data that come out of a computer device. For example, information displayed on the monitor, sound from the speakers, and information printed to paper.

Palm

A hand-held computer.

PC

Personal computer. Generally refers to computers running Windows with a Pentium processor.

PC board

Printed Circuit board, a board printed or etched with a circuit and processors. Power supplies, information storage devices, or changers are attached.

PDA

Personal Digital Assistant, a hand-held computer that can store daily appointments, phone numbers, addresses, and other important information. Most PDAs link to a desktop or laptop computer to download or upload information.

PDF

Portable Document Format, a format presented by Adobe Acrobat that allows documents to be shared over a variety of operating systems. Documents can contain words and pictures and be formatted to have electronic links to other parts of the document or to places on the web.

Pentium chip

Intel's fifth generation of sophisticated high-speed microprocessors. Pentium means the fifth element.

Peripheral

Any external device attached to a computer to enhance operation. Examples include external hard drive, scanner, printer, speakers, keyboard, mouse, trackball, stylus and tablet, and joystick