

## Basic Computer Terminology

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**access time** - The performance of a hard drive or other storage device - how long it takes to locate a file.

**active program or window** - The application or window at the front (foreground) on the monitor.

**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. Lists running applications.

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

**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** - the smallest piece of information used by the computer. Derived from "binary digit". In computer language, either a one (1) or a zero (0).

**backup** - a copy of a file or disk you make for archiving purposes.

**boot** - to start up a computer.

**bug** - a programming error that causes a program to behave in an unexpected way.

**bus** - an electronic pathway through which data is transmitted between components in a computer.

**byte** - a piece of computer information made up of eight bits.

**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** - 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** - a system malfunction in which the computer stops working and has to be restarted.

**cursor** - The pointer, usually arrow or cross shaped, which is controlled by the mouse.

**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** - (the plural of datum) information processed by a computer.

**defragment** - (also - optimize) to concatenate fragments of data into contiguous blocks in memory or on a hard drive.

**desktop** - 1. the finder. 2. the shaded or colored backdrop of the screen.

**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.

**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).

**Ethernet** - a protocol for fast communication and file transfer across a network.

**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.

**fiber channel** - as applied to data storage and network topology - link to [FC Glossary](#).

**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. (so named for the earlier 5.25 and 8 inch disks that 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.

**get info** - a Finder File menu command that presents an information window for a selected file icon.

**gig** - a gigabyte = 1024 megabytes.

**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.

**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.

**interrupt button** - a tool used by programmers to enter the debugging mode. The button is usually next to the reset button.

**K** - short for kilobyte.

**keyboard shortcut** - a combination of keystrokes that performs some function otherwise found in a pulldown menu.

**kilobyte** - 1024 bytes.

**landscape** - in printing from a computer, to print sideways on the page.

**launch** - start an application.

**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

**MB** - short for megabyte.

**megabyte** - 1024 kilobytes.

**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** - a list of program commands listed by topic.

**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.

**nanosecond** - one billionth of a second. ( or, the time between the theatrical release of a Dudley Moore film and the moment it begins to play on airplanes).

**native mode** - using the computers original operating system; most commonly used when talking about the PowerPC can run software written for either the 80x0 systems, or the PowerPC's RISC code.

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

**operating system** - the system software that controls the computer.

**optical disk** - a high-capacity storage medium that is read by a laser light.

**palette** - a small floating window that contains tools used in a given application.

**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 achitecture.

**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.

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

**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.

**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.

**save** - to write a file onto a disk.

**save as** - (a File menu item) to save a previously saved file in a new location and/or with a new name.

**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.

**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 (hexidecimal); 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).

**shut down** - the command from the Special menu that shuts down the Mac safely.

**software** - files on disk that contain instructions for a computer.

**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.

**32 bit addressing** - a feature that allows the Mac to recognize and use more than 8MB of memory.

**title bar** - the horizontal bar at the top of a window which has the name of the file or folder it represents.

**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.

**UPS** - acronym for Uninterruptible Power Source.

**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".

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

**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.

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Link to [Avid Technology, Inc.](#) for more technical info regarding Avid products.

Link to [Filmmaker's Home Page/ Editing](#).

Link to [ZeroCut](#) main page.

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