

Microcomputer Components

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Main Components

Component	Description
CPU: Central Processing Unit	CPU runs a group of instructions, or instruction set.
Motherboard	Circuit board that the CPU, IO chips and the peripheral cards plug into.
Memory	Chips in a computer that store data. Also referred to as RAM.
Graphics card	Translates image data from the computer into a format that can be displayed by the monitor.
Accelerated Graphics Port - AGP	High speed connection used by the graphics card to interface with the computer.
IDE Controller: Integrated Drive Electronics Controller	Interface for the hard drive, CD ROM and floppy disk drive.
Hard disk	Large capacity permanent storage used for storing information such as programs and documents.
PCI Bus: Peripheral Component Interconnect Bus	Common way for connecting additional components to the computer. PCI uses a series of slots on the motherboard that PCI cards plug into.
SCSI Interface: Small Computer System Interface	Used to add devices, such as hard drives or scanners, to the computer. Pronounced "scuzzy".
Sound card	Used to record and play audio by converting analog sound into digital information and back again.
Power supply	Electrical transformer which regulates the electricity used by the computer.
Operating system	The software that allows the user to interface with the computer.

Memory

Memory Type	Description
RAM: Random - access Memory	Temporarily stores information that the computer is currently working with.
ROM: Read-only Memory	Permanent type of memory storage used by the computer for important data that does not change.
BIOS: Basic Input/Output System	Type of ROM used to establish identification and configuration of resources when the computer is powered on.
Caching	Storing of frequently used data in fast RAM that connects directly to the CPU.
Virtual Memory	Space on a hard disk used to temporarily store data and swap it in and out of RAM.



I/O: Input/Output Devices	
Device	Description
Monitor	Device for viewing the output from a computer.
Keyboard	Main input device on PCs, consisting of the letters in the alphabet and the numbers 0 through 9. There are extra cursor and function keys.
Mouse	Pointing device that uses a roller ball on the bottom to detect motion.
Mass Storage	Used to add new information to the computer such as hard disk, CDs, flash drives, etc.

Network/Internet Connections	
Invoking	Description
Modem: Modulator/Demodulator	Allows a computer to connect to other computers at remote locations.
LAN: Local Area Network	Method for allowing computers to communicate with one another.
Cable modem	Device used to connect to the internet through cable television system.
DSL: Digital Subscriber Line	A high speed connection that works over a standard telephone line.
VDSL: Very high bit rate DSL	A newer variation of DSL, VDSL requires that the phone line have fiber optic cables.

Removable Storage	
Component	Description
Floppy disk	Small, circular piece of electromagnetically coated plastic.
CD-ROM	Medium format used for the distribution of software and data. Computer systems can utilize both CD-R and CD-RW capabilities.
Flash memory	Provides fast, permanent storage. CompactFlash, SmartMedia and PCMCIA cards are all types of Flash memory.
DVD-ROM: Digital Versatile Disc	Similar to CD-ROM, with a significant increase in the capacity for storing information.

Connection Ports	
Port	Description
Parallel	Port commonly used for connecting to a printer.
Serial	Port commonly used for connecting an external modem or other communication devices.
USB: Universal Serial Bus	Technology for connecting peripheral devices to a computer. It is much faster than serial and parallel communications.
FireWire - IEEE 1394	Method of connecting digital video devices to a computer.

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