



The Computer Glossary

The Complete Illustrated Dictionary

Eighth Edition

Alan Freedman

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general-purpose computer

applications compared to digitizing actual music. For example, a three-minute MIDI file may take only 20 to 30K, whereas a WAV file (digital audio) could consume up to several megabytes depending on sound quality.

general-purpose computer

Refers to computers that follow instructions, thus virtually all computers from micro to mainframe are general purpose. Even computers in toys, games and single-function devices follow instructions in their built-in program. In contrast, computational devices can be designed from scratch for special purposes (see *ASIC*).

general-purpose controller

A peripheral control unit that can service more than one type of peripheral device; for example, a printer and a communications line.

general-purpose language

A programming language used to solve a wide variety of problems. All common programming languages (FORTRAN, COBOL, BASIC, C, Pascal, etc.) are examples. Contrast with *special-purpose language*.

generator

- (1) Software that creates software. See *application generator* and *macro generator*.
- (2) A device that creates electrical power or synchronization signals.

Genie

An online information service from IDT, Hackensack, NJ, that provides Internet access, chat lines, roundtable discussions and games. It was originally the General Electric Network for Information Exchange. See *online services*.

genlock

(generator lock) Circuitry that synchronizes video signals for mixing. In personal computers, a genlock display adapter converts screen output into an NTSC video signal, which it synchronizes with an external video source.

geometry calculations

In 3-D graphics rendering, the transformation from 3-D world coordinates into screen coordinates, the clipping of non-visible parts and lighting.

geostationary, geosynchronous

Earth aligned. Refers to communications satellites that are placed 22,282 miles above the equator and travel at the same speed as the earth's rotation, thus appearing stationary.

germanium

The material used in making the first transistors. Although still used in very limited applications, germanium was replaced by silicon years ago.

gesture recognition

The ability to interpret simple hand-written symbols such as check marks and slashes.

get

In programming, a request for the next record in an input file. Contrast with *put*.

Gflops

See *gigaflops*.

ghost

(1) A faint second image that appears close to the primary image on a display or printout. In transmission, it is a result of secondary signals that arrive ahead of or later than the primary signal. On a printout, it is caused by bouncing print elements as the paper passes by.

- (2) To display a menu option in a dimmed, fuzzy typeface, indicating it is not selectable at this time.