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AMERICAN HERITAGE® Dictionaries

AN A TO Z GUIDE  
TO HARDWARE,  
SOFTWARE,  
AND CYBERSPACE

*dictionary*  
*of* **computer**  
*and* **internet**  
*words*

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watches. Most LCDs in laptops are mono-  
 rk gray images on a light gray background,  
 enhance image contrast.

liquid crystals sandwiched between two layers  
 crystals are rod-shaped molecules that flow  
 crystalline order in their arrangement. Elec-  
 d to control the alignment of the molecules  
 smission of light through the filters. Cells of  
 ged in an array to form pixels, each cell act-  
 ally controlled shutter.

ways to produce color LCDs. Active-matrix  
 ceptionally sharp color images but is very  
 ix technologies are cheaper but are difficult  
 produce washed-out color.

**nter** A high-quality printer that resembles  
 f using a laser to create images on the print  
 eam through a liquid-crystal panel. Individ-  
 ct as tiny shutters, blocking or transmitting  
 attern on the drum. *See table at printer. Also*  
**nter printer.**

**processor.** A programming language that is  
 l intelligence research. Developed in the  
 at MIT, LISP is made up of expressions that  
 tions to the computer. These lists establish  
 mbolic values, and the computer performs  
 those relationships. Since each list yields a  
 a other lists, there is no distinction between  
 hin a LISP program.

a with an organizational structure that al-  
 eleted in any order.  
 ram in source code.

manager owned by L-Soft International,  
 mail among the list's members. It was orig-  
 NET, and versions are available for Unix  
 platforms.

maintains mail distribution lists related to  
 ribing to a particular list server, a user will  
 one sends a message to that list. Similarly,

anyone can send email to the whole group by sending a message to  
 that particular list.

**literal** A letter or symbol that stands for itself as opposed to a feature,  
 function, or entity associated with it in a programming language.  
 For example, \$ can be a symbol that refers to the end of a line, but  
 as a literal, it is a dollar sign.

**lithium-ion battery** A rechargeable battery for portable computers.  
 Although more expensive than NiCad and NiMH batteries, it has  
 greater storage capacity, is lighter, and is free of poisonous metals  
 such as lead and mercury.

**load** *v.* 1. To transfer a program from a storage device into a com-  
 puter's memory. Before a program on a disk can be executed, it must  
 be loaded into the computer's RAM (random-access memory). 2. To  
 transfer data into a computer's memory for processing. 3. To mount  
 an external storage device, such as a tape, floppy disk, or CD into its  
 drive. 4. To import a large amount of data into a database.  
*n.* An amount of work that a computer undertakes at one time.

**loader** A computer program that transfers data from offline memory  
 into internal storage.

**local area network** *Abbreviated LAN* A network that links together  
 computers and peripherals within a limited area, such as a building  
 or group of buildings. Each computer or device in LAN is known as  
 a node. The computers in a LAN have independent CPUs (central  
 processing units), but they are able to exchange data and files with  
 each other and to share such resources as laser printers.

The three principal LAN organizing structures, called topologies,  
 are bus, ring, and star. In a bus topology, all computers and other  
 devices are connected to a central cable. In a ring topology, the  
 computers are joined in a loop, so that a message from one passes  
 through each node until it reaches its proper destination. In a star  
 topology, all nodes are connected to one central computer, known  
 as the hub.

Additionally, LANs are organized as either peer-to-peer networks,  
 in which all computers are similarly equipped and communicate di-  
 rectly with one another, or client/server networks, in which a central  
 computer, the server, provides data and controls communication be-  
 tween all nodes.

Every LAN has a protocol that governs the exchange of data be-  
 tween nodes, and a network operating system (NOS), software that

## striping

disk; if a computer does not have a hard startup disk, a floppy startup disk must be inserted into one of the disk drives every time the computer is turned on. *Also called boot disk, system disk.*

**statement** An elementary instruction in a high-level language. Programs are made up of statements and expressions, operations, and values stated in symbolic form.

**static** Unchanging or fixed. *See also dynamic.*

**static RAM** *Abbreviated SRAM* A type of random-access memory that does not need to be refreshed by the CPU (central processing unit) as often as dynamic RAM. Substantially faster than dynamic RAM, static RAM chips are also more expensive and are used for cache memory, a reserved area of memory that stores frequently used data or instructions for fast access. *See table at access time.*

**static random-access memory** *See static RAM.*

**stop bit** In asynchronous communication, the bit that signals the end of a byte of data. *See also start bit.*

**storage** The places that hold computer information for subsequent use or retrieval. There are two types of storage: primary storage consists of a computer's RAM (random-access memory); secondary storage, or mass storage, refers to the places, such as hard disks or floppy disks, where large amounts of information can be permanently stored.

**storage device** Any device used to record and store computer data. Among storage devices are hard disks, floppy disks, CD-ROMS, and tape.

**store** To copy data onto a mass storage device, such as a floppy disk, or into memory from the CPU (central processing unit).

**streaming audio** The sending and playing of audio in real time over the Internet, instead of first sending a file and playing after it has been downloaded.

**streaming video** The sending and displaying of video in real time over the Internet, instead of first sending a file and displaying after it has been downloaded.

**string** A set of consecutive characters treated by a computer as a single unit. Computers can perform operations on text by treating words as strings. *Also called character string.*

**striping** On an array of disk drives, a technique for improving disk drive speed. Each file written into a striped array is spread, or

can be issued interactively or can be em-

of static random-access memory.

**Sockets Layer.** An encryption standard for transmitting data, especially business data over the Internet. Another encryption standard is applied to the World Wide Web, but SSL is not, allowing for the encryption of data transfers, including FTP.

used for temporary storage of information that is first stored and then retrieved, and that is to be retrieved.

a self-contained, independently oper-

procedure or structure for a specific type of data. Standard physical structures that enable data to plug into a variety of different communication methods, called protocols, in one computer usable by other com-

an official organization, such as ANSI (American National Standards Institute), which establishes standards for languages. Other standards evolve naturally as developers attempt to create protocols that work with the more popular computers and standards include the ASCII standard for text and the communications protocol.

**Markup Language** *See SGML.*

topologies for a local area network, in which devices, known as nodes, are connected to a central device as the hub. All communication between devices is through the hub. *See also bus, ring. See illustration.*

communication, the bit that signals the beginning of a byte. *See also stop bit.*

contains the operating system files that are needed for booting. The startup disk is usually a hard