

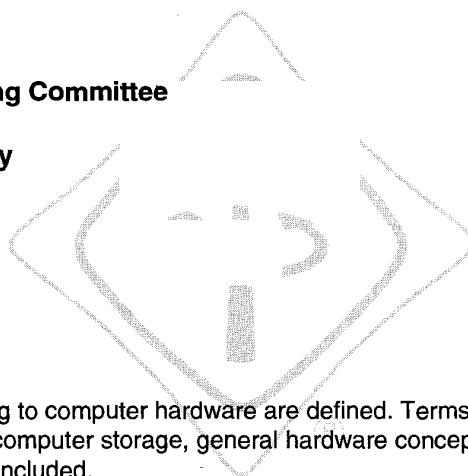
# IEEE Standard Glossary of Computer Hardware Terminology

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**Abstract:** Terms pertaining to computer hardware are defined. Terms falling under the categories of computer architecture, computer storage, general hardware concepts, peripherals, and processors and components are included.

**Keywords:** computer, hardware, definition, glossary, terminology

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The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc.  
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**3.1677 pointer.** (1) A data item that specifies the location of another data item; for example, a data item that specifies the address of the next employee record to be processed. [IEEE Std 610.12-1990] (2) An identifier that indicates the address or storage location of a data item.

**3.1678 pointing device.** An input device that is used to specify a particular addressable location. *See also:* cursor control device; stylus. *Contrast with:* pick device. [IEEE Std 610.6-1991]

**3.1679 polarity.** The orientation of any device that has poles or signed electrodes.

**3.1680 polarized dipole magnetization.** *See:* polarized return-to-zero recording.

**3.1681 polarized return-to-zero recording (RZ(P)).** Return-to-zero recording in which zeros are represented by magnetization in one sense, ones are represented by magnetization in the opposite sense, and the reference condition is the absence of magnetization. *Syn:* polarized dipole magnetization. *Contrast with:* non-polarized return-to-zero recording.

**3.1682 port.** An input or output connection between a peripheral device and a computer. *See also:* input-output port; mouse port; parallel port; serial port.

**3.1683 portable computer.** A personal computer that is designed and configured to permit transportation as a piece of handheld luggage. *Note:* U.S. Federal regulations limit use of the term "portable" to objects weighing no more than 21 pounds. *See also:* hand-held computer; laptop computer; notebook computer; transportable computer. [IEEE Std 610.2-1987]

**3.1684 portrait orientation.** A page orientation of a display surface having greater height than width. *Note:* Derived from portraits of people, which are usually vertical in format. *Contrast with:* landscape orientation.

**3.1685 position.** *See:* seek.

**3.1686 positional servomechanism.** In an analog computer, a servomechanism in which a mechanical shaft is positioned, usually in the angle of rotation, in accordance with one or more input signals. *Note:* Frequently, the shaft is positioned (excluding transient motion) in a manner linearly related to the value of the input signal. *See also:* repeater servomechanism, servomechanism.

**3.1687 positioning time.** *See:* seek time.

**3.1688 positive.** Pertaining to a voltage or charge that is associated with a deficiency of electrons. *Contrast with:* negative.

**3.1689 postamble.** A sequence of bits recorded at the end of each block on a magnetic medium for the purpose of synchronization when reading backward. *Contrast with:* preamble. [ANSI X3.138-1988]

**3.1690 potentiometer.** A resistor with an adjustable sliding contact that functions as an adjustable voltage divider. *See also:* function potentiometer; parameter potentiometer; servo potentiometer.

**3.1691 potentiometer set.** In an analog computer, a computer-control state that supplies the same operating potentiometer loading as under computing conditions and thus allows correct potentiometer adjustment.

**3.1692 power supply.** A unit that converts voltage from one level to another, usually regulating the output. *Note:* Typically used to convert an AC voltage to a DC voltage. *See also:* converter.

**3.1693 power-fail circuit.** A logic circuit that protects an operating program if primary power fails by informing the computer when power failure is imminent, initiating a routine that saves all volatile data. After power has been restored, the circuit initiates a routine that restores the data and restarts computer operations.

**3.1694 pre-read head.** A read head that is placed before another read head and is used to read data before the same data are read by the other read head.

**3.1695 preamble.** A sequence of bits recorded at the beginning of each block on a magnetic tape for the purpose of synchronization. *Contrast with:* postamble. [ANSI X3.138-1988]

**3.1696 precision.** The degree of exactness or discrimination with which a quantity is stated. *Note:* The result of a calculation may have more precision than it has accuracy; for example, the true value of pi to six significant digits is 3.14159; the value of 3.14162 is precise to six digits but only five digits are accurate. *See also:* accuracy. [IEEE Std 610.12-1990a]

**3.1697 prefetching.** In a pipelined process, to fetch the next instruction, or instruction part, before the processing unit requires it, resulting in a performance improvement by eliminating the lag between completion of one instruction and the availability of the next.