

The explosive development of computer technology is being matched by a proliferation of new words. Often the new jargon of the microchip age is vivid and fresh; sometimes it seems to outrage the English language in a way rarely seen before. But whatever the newcomer feels about it, those already involved with computers find this new vocabulary indispensable in talking about their field.

The **DICTIONARY OF COMPUTING TERMS** is a concise guide to the vocabulary of computing. All the terms defined in it are fully explained at the appropriate place in the **HOME COMPUTER COURSE**; the definitions here will give useful reminder when needed.

Sometimes it is necessary in a definition to use a term that is in itself defined elsewhere. Such a term is printed in *italic* type to refer the reader to that other entry.



Computers in the home are now a familiar sight — where they are used for games, education and home management.

A

Accumulator. A special memory location in the microprocessor that stores data temporarily while it is being processed.

Acoustic coupler. A device that connects a telephone handset to the computer and enables the latter to communicate over the telephone network. With its aid, a computer can communicate with other home computers, exchange messages with them and retrieve information stored in large computers.

Address. The number in an instruction that identifies the location of a 'cell' in a computer's memory. By means of its address, a particular memory location can be selected so that its contents can be examined or, in the case of RAM, both examined and altered.

Adventure game. A game in which the user plays one role while the computer takes other parts. Typically, it involves a series of rooms or caves to accumulate treasure while avoiding traps.

Algorithm. A set of logical steps that describe how a particular problem may be solved or how a task may be accomplished.

Alphanumeric. A character that is either a letter or a number.

ALU. Arithmetic Logic Unit. The part of a microprocessor that carries out arithmetical and logical operations.

Analogue. Describes the expression of a quantity in terms of continuous change rather than by numbered stages (contrast with *Digital*). For example, a mercury thermometer rises and falls continuously, and is thus an analogue device.

Analogue-to-digital converter. A device for converting analogue signals into a digital form that can be processed by a digital computer.

Animation. The creation with a computer of moving images for display on a screen.

Applications program. A program that instructs the computer to perform a specific task — as opposed, for example, to an *Operating system* program, which tells the computer *how* to do it.

Architecture. The arrangement and interconnection of the various parts of a microprocessor and computer system.

Array. An arrangement of rows and columns in which numbers can be stored for easy access by the computer.

Artificial intelligence. The ability of certain specially developed computer programs to 'learn' and incorporate their own 'experience' into their operation.

ASCII. American Standard Code for Information Interchange. A commonly used way of representing the numbers, letters and other symbols that can be entered from the computer's keyboard.

Assembly code. A programming language in which *Machine code* commands have particular names that suggest their purposes. An assembly code program must be translated into machine code (by an assembler) before it can be executed by a microprocessor.

B

Bar code. Information represented as a pattern of thick and thin printed lines. The information is fed into the computer through an intermediary device — either a *Light pen* or a bar code reader.

Base. Also known as *Radix*. The basis of any positional system of number representation. The binary system has base 2; the decimal system has base 10.

BASIC. Beginners' All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Code. The programming language used in almost all home computers. BASIC was specifically designed to be easy to learn and simple to use.

Baud. The unit for measuring the rate at which digital data are transmitted over a telegraph or telephone channel.

BCD. Binary Coded Decimal. A coding system for decimal numbers in which each digit is represented by a group of four binary digits.

Benchmark. A standard task that can be given to different computers to compare their speed, efficiency and accuracy.

Binary notation. The number system with base 2, in which all numbers are made up from the two binary digits 0 and 1. A typical four-digit number is 1001. In such a number, the digits are weighted according to their positions, with the least significant digit on the right and the most significant on the left. The weighting factor for the least