CHAPTER 3: TECH TALK: A GLOSSARY

Chapter 3 of *100% Online Student Success* discusses the technical considerations of choosing and using a computer. Technology can be both exciting and overwhelming. If you have any questions about the tech talk used in Chapter 3, review the following list of terms.

Cable. Cable connections use cable modems for connecting to the Internet (see **Internet**) and are much faster than a typical dial-up (see **dial-up**). Cable modems achieve some of the highest data transfer speeds (up to 42Mbps downstream, 10Mbps upstream) by using the high-bandwidth capabilities of cable TV lines. Speeds can vary depending on traffic on the lines. Cable providers often bundle cable Internet with cable TV packages.

CPU. The central processing unit controls the operation of a computer. It is a chip or circuit that interprets and executes programs by processing a list of machine instructions to perform logical operations.

Dial-Up. Dial-up is a type of analog Internet (see **Internet**) connection using standard telephone lines. The highest speed that you can reach using this analog is 56Kbps, which is okay for text and e-mail files but slow for accessing graphic-intensive Web sites or downloading large files.

DSL. Digital subscriber lines transfer data over telephone lines to connect to the Internet (see **Internet**). Like a cable (see **cable**) modem, a DSL circuit is much faster than a regular phone connection. DSL provides very high-speed—over 100 times faster than dial-up (see **dial-up**)—Internet access over standard telephone lines. DSL is always on and eliminates the wait-time of dial-up.

Firewall. A firewall is software that protects your computer from unauthorized entry, allowing only the users you designate to access the network over the Internet (see **Internet**). The firewall software recognizes perceived attacks and blocks unauthorized users.

FTP. File transfer protocol is a common method of transferring files over the Internet (see **Internet**) from one computer to another.

GUI. Graphical user interface is a computer interface that has pictures as well as words on the screen. A GUI typically has windows, pictures, icons, and pull-down menus that make computer use easier for most people.

Hard Drive. A hard drive is a disk drive that reads from and writes to a hard disk. The hard drive is the computer's electronic filling cabinet: it stores the computer's operating system (see **operating system**), files, programs, and documents.

Hardware. Hardware is the physical part of a computer system: the machinery and equipment.

Internet/internet. An internet is a group of networks interconnected via routers (see **router**). The Internet (with a capital I) is the world's largest internet. This "information superhighway" is made up of thousands of interconnected computer networks and reaches millions of people all over the world.

LCD. Liquid crystal display is a type of display screen commonly used on laptop computers. LCDs are lighter and consume much less power than other computer displays. This technology is largely replacing the cathode ray tube (CRT), the type of monitor used in traditional computers and televisions.

Modem. A modem (which stands for modulator/demodulator) is used for connecting to the Internet (see **Internet**). This can be either a standard modem that you use with your existing phone lines for dial-up (see **dial-up**) access, a DSL (see **DSL**) modem that also uses your phone line but does not tie it up, or a cable (see **cable**) modem that uses the same cable as your cable television.

Operating System. An operating system (OS) is a set of computer programs that manage the hardware and software resources of a computer. The OS forms a platform for other system and application software. The "user" of an OS is an application, not a person.

Peripherals. Peripherals are devices that connect to your computer to make your life more convenient. Some peripherals are necessities, such as a keyboard and a mouse. Other peripherals include printers, digital cameras, and media storage devices.

RAM. Random access memory is the memory your computer uses for storing data temporarily while you're working on it or running application programs. RAM memory is considered volatile; information in RAM will disappear if the power is switched off before it is saved to disk. So save your work early and often!

Router. A router is used to network multiple wired computers or set up a wireless network, useful for laptops.

Server. Servers are powerful computers that provide services to other computers over a network. These services include things like disk storage and file transfer.

Software. Software is the umbrella term for programs that interact with your operating system (see **operating system**) and increase your productivity. Software tells your computer what to do.

Spyware. Spyware—also called adware and malware—is a software that "spies" on your computer. Spyware can capture information like Web browsing habits, e-mail messages, keystrokes, usernames and passwords, and credit card information. If left unchecked, the software can transmit this data to another person's computer for malicious use.

USB. Universal serial bus is a computer port that can connect several peripherals (see **peripherals**) to your computer. Fast data transfer using inexpensive cables and the ability to "Plug-and-Play" characterizes USB. "Plug-and-Play" refers to the concept of connecting a device (such as your camera) to the computer without the need for software or restarting the computer. You simply *plug* the USB cable into the USB port *and play*.

Web Browser. A Web browser is a program that displays text, images, and other information on a Web page at a Web site on the Internet (see **Internet**). Users can interact with the Web page by clicking *hyperlinks* (links to other Web sites) and traveling to other pages and virtual destinations.

Wireless Fidelity Broadband. Wireless fidelity broadband uses a wireless network card included in most laptops to achieve Internet (see **Internet**) connection speeds of 256Kbps to as much as 10Mbps or more. The advantage of wireless fidelity broadband over other types of Internet connectivity is portability and free access at a local WiFi hotspot.

Tech Talk Resources

As an online student, you're bound to encounter computer jargon here and there. Use the following resources to search for technical terminology and explore unfamiliar computer concepts.

- http://techdictionary.com
- http://www.techterms.com
- http://www.webopedia.com
- http://whatis.techtarget.com