To see the definition for a common Internet term, click its entry below.

A

anonymous FTP

Archie

B

bits per second (bps)

browser

Bulletin Board System (BBS)

C

chat

client

anonymous FTP

A way to download publicly available files using the File Transfer Protocol (FTP). Anonymous FTP sites do not require you to have an account or use a login ID and password.

Archie

A program that helps you find publicly accessible files. An Archie program searches other systems on the Internet for files matching the criteria you specify (such as file name or file type), and tells you where they are located so that you can download them to your system using FTP.

bits per second (bps)

A way to measure data transmission speed, usually on a modem or network connection. Modems usually support transmission rates such as 2400, 9600, 14,400 or 28,800 bps (also known as "baud"). The higher the bits per second, the faster you will be able to access and transfer information.

browser

A program that allows you to access information on the Internet's World Wide Web. Mosaic and Internet Explorer are examples of Web browsers.

Bulletin Board System (BBS)

A forum for discussion in which users read messages left by other members of the bulletin board and provide (or "post") their own messages. Bulletin boards cover many different subjects, including computers, politics, entertainment, and more.

The Internet has a large-scale bulletin board-type system called USENET news, which contains newsgroups with messages from users all over the Internet..

chat

Software that lets you communicate with large groups of people over the Internet using your computer. Chat is similar to a telephone conference call, only you type your comments and read others' remarks from your computer screen. You can interactively chat with other users via a "relay" or "chat" server. Numerous Internet Relay Chat (IRC) programs are available on the Internet.

client

A program that requests information from a server. For example, a Web browser is a client that displays Web pages that are located on a World Wide Web server. Likewise, an FTP client can be used to download files from an FTP server.

The interaction between clients and servers is referred to as client/server computing.

client/server

A distributed style of computing that involves interaction between client and server programs. "Front-end" clients request services, and "back-end" servers provide them. For example, when you run an FTP client such as Network File Manager on your PC, it contacts an FTP server.

compression

A method of compacting information so that it occupies less disk space. Many files on the Internet are compressed since smaller files take less time to transmit. Compressed files (such as "ZIP" files compressed using PKZIP) often need to be decompressed in order to be read.

cyberspace

A generic term referring to the Internet or an online service such as CompuServe that provides electronic information.

database

A collection of information organized in a manner that makes it easy to access. There are thousands of databases on the Internet containing a wide variety of information.

dedicated line

A telephone or data line that is always available for use. For example, many companies lease telephone lines and dedicate them around the clock for computer data communications. In contrast, a dial-up (or switched) line is used only for the duration of the connection and can be shared by many users.

dial-up line

A phone line that accesses the Internet (or any other network) by dialing into a remote computer using a modem. As opposed to a dedicated line, which is always connected, you must dial the remote computer in order to establish a connection.

directory

A folder that contains one or more documents or files. Related files are usually kept in the same directory; for example, all of the files for a program are usually kept in one directory. When accessing a file, you might have to specify its directory.

DNS

Domain Name System, a network service used to convert system names to numeric IP addresses. For example, DNS converts **www.spry.com** to **165.121.1.70**. DNS allows you to use human-readable names rather than dotted numerals to address computer users and systems.

DNS server

Also referred to as Name Server or Domain Name Server.   A DNS server is a machine that contains a large list of fully qualified domain names (like **humperdinck@florin.com**) and corresponding IP addresses (like **165.121.6.70**).   A DNS server is used as an "address book", allowing your programs to use fully qualified domain names instead of numeric IP addresses.

You will need access to a DNS server in order to use some Internet software such as Web browsers or gopher programs.

download

To transfer a file from a remote computer to your computer. You can download files to your computer using File Transfer Protocol (FTP).

e-mail

Electronic mail, a way to send and receive messages over a network. You use an e-mail program to compose and send a message (including binary files and voice messages, in some cases) to a remote mailbox on a network, where it can be retrieved and read by the addressee.

e-mail address

A unique address from which you can receive electronic mail messages. An e-mail address contains a username and an Internet address separated by an @ sign. For example, an e-mail address might be **lucy@narnia.com** where **lucy** is the username and **narnia.com** is the Internet address.

emoticon

A group of characters that look like an object, such as a smiling face. Emoticons are used to add expression to text. For example, when viewed sideways the following group of characters looks like a smiling face or "smiley." :-)

FAQ

Short for "Frequently Asked Questions." FAQ documents are used throughout the Internet to provide new users with information of general concern. For instance, many USENET newsgroups request that you read their FAQ before you begin posting articles to the group.

finger

A program that displays information about users on a given system on the Internet. Finger can often be used to find someone's e-mail address.

flame

A tasteless statement, criticism, or angry opinion made about another user's comments, most often taking the form of a direct personal attack. Flames are sometimes found within newsgroups, e-mail, and chat sessions. Two or more people exchanging flames is known as a "flame war."

freeware

Free software that is usually distributed online by the software developer. The developer retains all copyright privileges.

FTP

File Transfer Protocol, a protocol used to transfer text and binary files between computers. Using FTP, you can download files from a remote computer to your computer, or upload files from your computer to a remote computer (if the remote computer permits it).

FTP is sometimes used as a verb meaning "download" or "upload." For example, someone may direct you to "FTP the file from **ftp.narnia.com**."

FTP site

A computer which stores files that can be retrieved using FTP (File Transfer Protocol). FTP sites which allow anyone to retrieve files (without requiring you to have an account on that computer) are known as "anonymous FTP sites."

GIF

A compressed graphics file format that is commonly used on the Internet to display graphical information. GIF (Graphics Interchange Format) was developed by CompuServe. JPEG is another common graphics format.

Gopher

A program that lets you search or browse information stored on Gopher servers. Gopher servers contain a wide variety of database information and other resources (such as programs and images) organized in menus.

Gopherspace

The collection of all the information available through Gopher

servers on the Internet.

home page

A startup Web page. Most Web sites have a home page that functions as a table of contents with hyperlinks to the other pages available on that site. You can configure your browser's default home page to point to a local file or any other Web site.

Host

A term that refers to any computer that you connect to over a network in order to access information.

hotlist

A file containing lists of Web pages, allowing you to easily access your favorite sites. Mosaic has several pre-configured hotlists which you can edit, and you can create and save your own hotlists, too.

HTML

HyperText Markup Language, the document formatting language used to design Web pages.

HTTP

HyperText Transmission Protocol, the method used to transfer Web pages from an Internet server to a browser.

hypermedia

Information that contains links to other related information. Hypermedia may include text, graphics, audio, video, animation, and other types of information. The Web is a hypermedia-based system that allows you to point and click on "hyperlinks" to go directly to related information.

hypertext

Text that is linked to other related text. For example, most online Help information is hypertext-based. Hypertext links are typically formatted using a different color or underlining (or both). Clicking on a hypertext link takes you directly to the related information.

information superhighway

A buzz word describing a worldwide network that will link the Internet, cable TV, telephone, business, entertainment, information providers, education, and more. Although the Internet is merely a prototype for the information superhighway, the media often uses this term when referring to the Internet.

Internet

The largest collection of interconnected networks in the world. These include university, corporate, government, and research networks around the world. Millions of systems and people are connected to the Internet through these networks. You can connect to the Internet through an Internet Service Provider.

InterNIC

Internet Network Information Center, an organization funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) that provides network information services to Internet users. InterNIC provides registration, directory, database, and information services.

IP

Internet Protocol, the networking protocol used to route information through the Internet via numeric IP addresses.

IP address

A unique number that identifies your computer on a network or the Internet. An IP address uses the format **A.B.C.D** where A, B, C, and D are numbers between 1 and 228. A sample IP address is **165.121.6.126**.

The term IP address is also sometimes used to refer to a fully qualified domain name, such as **marshwiggle.narnia.com**.

IRC

Internet Relay Chat, a program that enables Internet users to communicate in real time by typing messages to each other. IRC sites have channels set up for different topics, similar to USENET newsgroups.

ISDN

Integrated Services Digital Network, a digital phone service that permits high-speed access to the Internet. Capable of carrying data at up to 128 kilobits per second (or Kbps), ISDN is expected to provide users with faster communication services.

ISP

Internet Service Provider, a company that provides access to the Internet. An ISP acts similarly to your local cable TV operator, except it provides access to the Internet and does not dictate what information you see or what tools you use. There are several different types of access a service provider can provide, including dialup access, SLIP/PPP access, or a dedicated line.

ISPs typically charge a monthly subscription fee to access the Internet. This base fee usually allows you to use the Internet for a

number of hours per month, with an extra charge for each additional hour of usage.

JPEG

A popular method used to compress photographic images. JPEG stands for Joint Photographic Experts Group, the original name of the committee that wrote the standard. Many Web pages contain JPEG and GIF images.

LISTSERV

A program on a mail server that manages an e-mail mailing list about a particular topic. A LISTSERV program allows you to automatically subscribe to or unsubscribe from a mailing list.

local system

The system you are using. Interactions between your computer and another computer on the Internet are sometimes described using the terms "local" and "remote" systems. The local system is your computer and the remote system is the other computer (usually a server).

login

The act of signing onto a computer. You typically must log into a computer before you are allowed to use it or access information it contains. When you log in, you usually need to provide your name or identification and password. This prevents unauthorized users from accessing computers.

lurking

"Listening in" on a mailing list, newsgroup, or bulletin board discussion without actively participating. When joining a newsgroup, you may want to "lurk" for awhile before joining in the discussion; this lets you better understand what's being written by other members of the group.

mailing list

A list of e-mail users who belong to a group. A mailing list can be an informal group of people who share e-mail with one another, or it can be a more formal LISTSERV group which discusses a specific topic.

modem

A communications device that converts data between the digital format used by computers and the analog format used for transmission on telephone lines. This process, known as 'modulation/demodulation" is the origin of the term "modem."

You can use a modem to connect your computer to another computer, a network, online service, and more.

MPEG

Moving Picture Experts Group. MPEG is a compression standard used for digital video files, or "movies." MPEG files are viewed using a special program; shareware and freeware MPEG players are available on many anonymous FTP sites.

multimedia

The combination of many different types of data, including graphics, sounds, animation, and video. Multimedia is a subset of hypermedia, which combines multimedia elements with hypertext to link the information.

net

Another term for the Internet.

netiquette

Short for "network etiquette," netiquette is a set of guidelines governing your conduct while using the Internet. For instance, DON'T USE UPPERCASE LETTERS WHEN SENDING A MESSAGE BECAUSE IT IMPLIES YOU'RE SHOUTING!

News

A term often used to denote USENET news, a popular forum for discussion on the Internet.

newsgroup

A discussion group, usually found on USENET news. There are thousands of newsgroups available on the Internet, with each group devoted to a specific topic.

news server

A file server that contains a number of USENET newsgroups containing discussions on thousands of subjects. You must connect to a news server in order to read and post to a newsgroup. News server administrators decide which of the thousands of USENET newsgroups to carry; many news servers prohibit access to newsgroups containing adult content.

NIC

Network Information Center, an organization that provides users with information about services available on a network. For example, InterNIC provides information about Internet services.

online

Being connected to a network. Being online enables you to exchange data and interactively communicate with other users or computers on the network.

packet

A unit of data used to route information between computers over the Internet. A packet includes a header that contains addressing information, plus the other information you are sending (such as an e-mail message or binary file).

password

A sequence of characters that uniquely identifies you. A password is typically associated with your user name to verify that you are who you say you are. For example, a password and username are usually required to login to a computer.

ping

A diagnostic program used to check if a particular computer is up and running. Ping sends a message to a computer, and looks for a response indicating that the computer is available. Several shareware and freeware Ping programs are available on the Internet.

PKZIP

A shareware compression program for PCs. Many files on the Internet are compressed using PKZIP since smaller files take less time to transmit. A program called PKUNZIP must be used to decompress ZIP files before they can be read.

POP

Point of presence, a dialup connection provided for modem users to access the Internet. In order to avoid long distance charges, most Internet users with dialup accounts look for a local or toll-free POP.

POP3

Post Office Protocol 3, a popular method used for storing Internet mail. Many Internet e-mail programs require a POP3 mailbox in order to receive mail.

PPP

Point-to-Point Protocol, a communications protocol that enables you to access a remote network or the Internet with a modem and a phone line. PPP is a new standard which is gradually replacing the

SLIP protocol.

public domain

Software or information that is available for use by the general public without any copyright or title restrictions. The author of public domain software or information has relinquished his or her copyright.

remote system

A computer on the Internet you connect to. Interactions between computers are often described using the terms "local" (meaning your PC) and "remote" (the computer you connect to).

RFC

Request for Comments, a type of document that defines standards or provides information on various topics. Many Internet and networking standards are defined as RFCs.

Rlogin

A method used to access a remote host which does not require a login procedure. You can only use Rlogin if the remote host is set up to allow you access.

S-HTTP

Secure HyperText Transfer Protocol, a version of HTTP which implements secure transactions using public key encryption methods. S-HTTP servers on the Web are used for secure transactions such as credit card processing.

server

A program that provides services to client programs. Different types of servers provide different types of services. For example, an FTP server allows an FTP client program to access files on that server, and a Web server allows a browser to view Web pages.

shareware

Freely distributed software that you may try before paying. If you keep the software and use the program, then you should send payment to the shareware author.

signature

Text that is automatically added to the end of an e-mail message or newsgroup article. Signatures usually include contact information (such as your name, address, e-mail address) and sometimes include a witty saying or quotation, piece of trivia, fun Internet link,

and so forth.

SLIP

Serial Line Internet Protocol, a communications protocol that enables you to access a remote network or the Internet with a modem and a phone line. SLIP is gradually being superseded by PPP.

SLIP/PPP

SLIP (Serial Line Interface Protocol) and PPP (Point-to-Point Protocol) are communications protocols that enable you to access the Internet with a modem and a phone line. PPP is slightly faster than SLIP.

SMTP

Simple Mail Transfer Protocol, a method used for sending Internet e-mail.

SSL

Secure Sockets Layer, a protocol developed by Netscape to implement secure transactions using public key encryption methods. SSL servers on the Web are used for secure transactions such as credit card processing.

TCP/IP

Transmission Control Protocol and Internet Protocol, two communications protocols that are used to connect and route information through the Internet. TCP and IP are also used for local area network (LAN) communications and tying networks together (internetworking).

telnet

A program that lests you log into another computer using the TELNET protocol. Logging into another computer using a telnet program enables you to access files or run programs stored on the remote system.

thread

A specific conversation topic in a newsgroup. News reader programs often allow you to sort news articles by thread, allowing you to more easily follow a discussion.

TN3270

A version of telnet that is used to access IBM mainframes.

UNIX

A multi-user operating system developed by Bell Laboratories. UNIX runs on a wide variety of hardware platforms, and supports multitasking operations. Many of the servers on the Internet are UNIX-based.

UNZIP

To decompress (or expand) a file that has been compressed using PKZIP. PKZIP is a popular shareware compression utility for PCs.

upload

Transferring a file from your computer to another computer on the Internet. You can use FTP to upload files from your computer to other computers on the Internet.

URL

Uniform Resource Locator, a string of characters used to access a site on the Internet (for example, **http://www.spry.com**). A URL includes the name of the server that stores the file, its directory, and filename. Each Internet site has a unique URL.

USENET

A "user network" containing Internet newsgroups. There are about ten thousand newsgroups available through USENET, each covering a specific topic or subject area.

username

A string of characters that identifies you. When connecting to a remote computer, you usually need to provide your username and password to gain authorization to use the system.

uucode/uudecode

A protocol used to convert binary files to text and back again. Since most mail and news servers can only receive text files, uucode and uudecode are used to enable you to transfer binary files. Most Internet mail and news programs automatically uucode and uudecode binary files for you.

UUCP

UNIX-to-UNIX Copy Program, a program that lets you copy files between UNIX systems. The UUCP protocol is used to transfer news and e-mail messages through USENET.

Veronica

A program you can use to search Gopher menu items for keywords that you specify. Using Veronica simplifies the search for information

available throughout Gopherspace.

VRML

Virtual Reality Modeling Language, a language used to add interactive three-dimensional graphics to Web pages.

WAV file

An audio file format popular on the PC. Wave (or "waveform") files contain digitally sampled sound clips and have a .WAV file extension.

Web page

An HTML document found on the World Wide Web (sometimes referred to as a home page). You can view a Web page using a Web browser such as Mosaic or Internet Explorer.

Whois

A database that you can use to locate a person on the Internet. Whois is commonly accessed using a telnet program to find someone's e-mail address.

Wide Area Information Servers (WAIS)

An information system that enables you to search databases for information based on keywords that you specify. There are numerous shareware and freeware WAIS programs available on the Internet for anonymous FTP download.

World Wide Web (WWW)

A hypermedia system that makes it easy to browse for information on the Internet. Information available on the World Wide Web is presented on Web pages. A Web page can contain text and graphics that can be linked to other pages.

ZIP

To compress a file using PKZIP, a shareware utility for PCs. Many files on the Internet are "zipped" (compressed) since smaller files take less time to transmit. ZIP files usually have .ZIP file extension and must be decompressed using PKUNZIP before use.