

Glossary of Internet Terms

Acceptable Use Policy (AUP): A set of guidelines and expectations about how people conduct themselves online.

Blog: - An online diary; a personal chronological log of thoughts published on a Web page; also called *Weblog*, *Web log*.

Bandwidth: A measure of capacity for communications channels. For Internet connections, bandwidth is usually expressed in thousands of bits per second (kbps). A standard dial-up connection to the Internet, for example, typically has a bandwidth of approximately 56k (or 56,000 bits per second).

Broadband: A common reference to communications or Web access that's faster than dial-up (56k). Broadband access includes cable modems and digital subscriber lines (DSL).

Bulletin board: A computer system used as an information source and forum for a particular interest group. Bulletin boards typically show the postings and replies made by various participants.

Cache: A place to store files locally for quicker access. Caches, which can be temporary or permanent, are used to speed up data transfer. Memory and disk caches are used in every computer to speed up instruction execution and data retrieval. Material in caches often remains even after it has been used or viewed.

Chat: Real-time Internet conferencing between two or more users. Chatting is usually accomplished by typing on the keyboard, not speaking, and each message is sent directly to the recipient.

Chat room: A virtual room where a chat session takes place. Technically, a chat room is really a channel, but the term "room" is used to promote the chat metaphor.

Cookie: A message given to a Web browser by a Web server. The browser stores the message in a file (generally called *cookie.txt*). The message is then returned to the server each time the browser requests a page from the server. Web sites often use cookies to track users and their preferences.

Cybersex: Online, real-time dialogue (usually text-based) that interactively describes sexual behavior and actions with one's online partner for erotic purposes and expression.

Cyberspace: A term coined by William Gibson in his 1984 novel *Neuromancer* that refers to the Internet or to the online or digital world in general.

Database: A collection of information organized in such a way that users—often both people and computer programs—can quickly select desired pieces of data.

Download: The act of copying data, usually an entire file, from a main source to a peripheral device. The term is often used to describe the process of copying a file from an online service to one's own computer.

Encryption: Any procedure used in cryptography to convert plain text into cyphertext to prevent anyone but the intended recipient from reading it.

File attachment: A method by which users of e-mail can attach files to messages (for example, sending a digital picture of a newborn in an e-mail announcing the birth).

Filter (or filtering): A type of technology that allows Internet material or activities deemed inappropriate to be blocked, so that someone using the filtered computer can't access the material or participate in the activities.

Firewall: - Hardware or software that secures computer files by blocking unauthorized access. Many computers already have them, but they must be activated by the user.

Graphics file: A file that holds an image. JPG and GIF are two popular formats for image files exchanged on the Internet.

History file: The list, which most Web browsers maintain of downloaded pages in a session, that allows users to quickly review everything that's been retrieved. History files can easily be cleared or altered.

Instant Message (IM): A two-way, real-time, private dialogue between two users. A user initiating an IM sends an invitation to talk to another, specific, user who's online at the same time. IMs are often used in conjunction with chat rooms. A user in a chat room can send an IM to someone else in the chat room whose screen name, or "handle," is displayed, thus establishing a private communication.

Internet Relay Chat (IRC): A conferencing system used on the Internet. Unlike instant messaging, however, users don't communicate directly with each other. Instead, the server broadcasts all messages to all current users of a particular channel.

Internet Service Provider (ISP): An organization or company that provides access to the Internet. Examples of national-level ISPs include America Online (AOL), EarthLink, and Microsoft Network (MSN).

Monitoring software: - Software products that allow a parent or caregiver to monitor or track the Web sites or e-mail messages that a child visits or reads, without necessarily blocking access.

Peer-to-peer network: A communications network that allows all computers in the network to act as servers and share their files with all other users on the network. Napster is one example of peer-to-peer networking on the Internet. Also known as P2P.

Phishing: - An identity theft scam in which criminals send out spam that imitates the look and language of legitimate correspondence from e-commerce sites. The fake messages generally link to Web sites which are similarly faked to look like the sites of the respected companies. On the sites, you are directed to enter your personal information for authentication or confirmation purposes. The information, when submitted, however, goes to the thieves, not to the "spoofed" company.

Podcasting: - The Web-based broadcast of music which works with software that automatically detects new files and is accessed by subscription

Portal: A Web site or service offering a broad array of resources and services, such as e-mail, search engines, subject directories, and forums. Yahoo! is an example of a portal.

Real-time audio or video: Communication of sound or images over the Internet that occurs without delay in real time, much like a telephone conversation.

RSS: A web-feed used to publish frequently updated digital content.

Screen name: An alias, or short nickname, chosen by a computer user to use when accessing his or her online service or network account.

Search engine: A program that searches documents or indexes of documents for specified words or phrases and returns a list of the documents where those items were found.

Surfing (or Web surfing): is a metaphor for browsing the contents of the Web.

Webcam: A video camera that is used to transmit periodic images or continuous video to a Web site for display.

Wiki: A website that allows visitors to add, edit, change or remove content without a formal registration.