Computer Tips

Computer Jargon

As many of our readers have already discovered, it seems that when someone talks about their computer, they are speaking a different language. CPU, Drives, Bytes, Booting, Logon, BIOS, what are they talking about?

In this week's column, we will examine the meaning of some commonly used computer terms. Lets go.

DOWNLOAD—The process of transferring information to your computer, usually from the Internet, but can also be from another computer (on a network), a CD or DVD, or from a mobile phone. A common example of "downloading" is receiving an email.

The opposite is "upload", where information is sent from your computer. A common example of this would be sending an email.

BYTE— A byte is a set of 8 bits that represent a single character in the computer's memory. Do not confuse this term with "bite," as in taking a bite of a cookie, because that is totally different. Bytes are used to measure file sizes, hard disk space, and computer memory. Larger amounts of data are measured in units such as kilobytes, megabytes, gigabytes, and terabytes. For example, one kilobyte (KB) is equal to 1,024 bytes.

BLUETOOTH—This wireless technology enables communication between Bluetooth-compatible devices. It is used for short-range connections between desktop and laptop computers, PDAs (eg. Palm Pilot), digital cameras, scanners, mobile phones, and printers.

Infrared once served the same purpose as Bluetooth, but it had a number of drawbacks. For example, if there was an object placed between the two communicating devices, the transmission would be interrupted. (You may have noticed when using your TV remote, which uses infrared). Also, the Infrared-based communication was slow and devices were often incompatible with each other.

Bluetooth takes care of all these limitations. Because the technology is based on radio waves, there can be objects or even walls placed between the communicating devices and the connection won't be disrupted. Also, Bluetooth uses a standard 2.4 GHz frequency so that all Bluetooth-enabled devices will be compatible with each other. The only drawback of Bluetooth is that, because of its high frequency, its range is limited to 10 metres. However, the short range can be seen as a positive aspect as well, since it adds to the security of Bluetooth communication.

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