

Understanding The Internet: Glossary of Technology Terms



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This booklet provides basic definitions designed to give online consumers and Internet surfers a better understanding of the technology they use.

adware - Any software application in which advertising banners are displayed while a program is running. The authors of these applications include code that delivers the ads through pop-up windows or a bar that appears on a computer screen. Adware that includes code which tracks a user's personal information and passes it on to third parties without the user's permission is called **spyware**, see definition below.

blocking software - Filtering and blocking software work together. A web filter allows a user to block out pages from web sites that are likely to include objectionable advertising, pornography, spyware, viruses and other undesirable content. The software generally

works in two ways to deny access to an objectionable site: (1) by filtering undesirable material based upon a preselected database or site list and (2) by filtering objectionable material based upon web content.

blog - A web site of personal or generally noncommercial origin that uses a dated log format which is updated on a daily or frequent basis with new information on a particular subject or range of topics. A blog is characterized by a journal form and informal style, and generally represents the personality of the author or reflects the purpose of the web site that hosts the blog.

broadband - Communication in which a wide band of frequencies is available to transmit information. Because a wide band of frequencies is available, information can be multiplexed and sent on many different frequencies or channels within the band

concurrently, allowing more information to be transmitted in a given amount of time.

browser - Software that provides a way to look at and interact with the information on the world wide web. A browser program uses the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (“HTTP”) to make requests of web servers throughout the Internet on behalf of the browser user.

cached files - Also “temporary Internet files.” Saved copies of accessed files and web pages. Unless its default settings are changed, an Internet browser will automatically save copies of the files and web pages that users access online. The copies help facilitate the browsing experience by shortening the time needed to load the web pages upon repeat visits. The files – including image files – are stored on the computer’s hard drive in a folder usually named “Temporary Internet Files,” “Temp” or “Cache.”

chat room - An online venue for communities of users with a common interest to communicate in real time. Chat room users register for the arena of their choice, choose a user name and password, and log into a particular room. Inside the chat room there is generally a list of people currently online, who are alerted that another person has entered the venue. To chat, users type a message into a text box. The message is almost immediately visible in the larger communal message area and other users respond. Users can enter chat rooms and read messages without sending any, a practice called “lurking.” There are chat rooms focusing on virtually any aspect of human interest.

cookies - Small data files stored in a computer's memory by some web sites a user visits. These data files may contain information the site can use to track things such as user names and passwords, the contents of virtual shopping carts, lists of pages visited, and the date a user

last looked at a certain page. Many cookies contain just a unique number corresponding to an entry in the web site's database containing that information.

COPPA - The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (“COPPA”), enacted in 1998. This federal law attempts to place limits on the collection of personal data over the Internet from children under the age of 13.

cyber bullying - The use of e-mail, web sites, instant messaging, chat rooms, cell phone text messaging and digital cameras to antagonize and intimidate others.

cyber shorthand - A shorthand used in chat rooms and other forms of electronic communication made up of keypad hieroglyphics, alphanumeric combinations, few vowels, little punctuation and virtually no capital letters.

digital camera - A camera that records and stores photographic images in digital form that can be fed to a computer as the impressions are recorded or stored in the camera.

domain name - A domain name (for example, www.kelloggs.com) locates an organization or other entity on the Internet.

downloading - The transmission of a file from one computer system to another.

e-mail - Electronic mail.

encryption - Various methods of scrambling data so that information is secure as it is transmitted over the Internet.

filtering software - See **blocking software**, above.

freeware - Programs that are offered at no cost and are available for downloading and use in most operating systems.

history files - The automatic record that an Internet browser creates of all the web sites that have been visited on a specific computer.

home page - The first page presented when a user selects a site, or presence, on the world wide web. The usual address for a web site is the home page address, although a user can enter the address of any page on the site and access that particular page.

instant messaging - The continuous exchange of electronic messages. A user who is instant messaging can ascertain whether a pre-designated individual is connected to the Internet at a given time and, if they are, exchange messages with them in real time. Differs from e-mail in that instant messages are immediate.

Internet - A worldwide system of computer networks in which users at any one computer can, if they have permission, get information from any other computer. The most widely used part of the Internet is the **world wide web**, see definition below.

Internet Service Provider - A company that provides individuals and other companies access to the Internet and other related services, including blocking services. Commonly abbreviated as “ISP.”

member directory - Some Internet Service Providers offer subscribers use of a Member Directory, consisting of **member profiles**, see definition below. The ability to search these directories by field, looking for specific demographic and interest groups, makes them a potential tool for predators looking for victims.

member profile - Some of the larger Internet Service Providers allow members the option of

creating individual member profiles, which make up an ISP's **member directory**, see definition above. A member profile may include information such as name, gender, location, marital status, occupation, hobbies, etc.

newsgroup - A discussion about a particular subject consisting of notes written to a central Internet site and redistributed through Usenet, a worldwide network of news discussion groups. Each subject collection of posted notes is known as a newsgroup. Users can post to existing newsgroups, respond to previous postings, and create new newsgroups.

pharming - A scamming practice in which malicious code is installed on a personal computer or server, misdirecting users to fraudulent web sites without their knowledge or consent. In contrast to **phishing**, see definition below, larger numbers of computer users can be victimized because it is not necessary to target

individuals one by one and no conscious action is required on the part of the victim. Like a form of **spyware**, see definition below, pharming is often perpetrated for commercial gain for the pursuit of identity theft.

phishing - E-mail fraud where the perpetrator sends out legitimate-looking e-mails that appear to come from well-known and trustworthy web sites in an attempt to gather personal and financial information from the recipient.

privacy policy - Information posted on a web site generally setting forth the site's personal data collection and sharing policies. Some web sites have comprehensive privacy policies, some lack privacy policies and some fail to disclose conspicuously their information procedures in a clear and understandable fashion.

search engine - Software that allows a user to formulate an Internet search and scans the Internet for the user's terms.

secure connection - Secure connections use encryption to scramble a user's information as it is transmitted over the Internet. Browser software is equipped to alert the user when such safeguards are in place. There are two basic ways of identifying a secure connection: (1) the web address of the site visited will be preceded by "https" instead of "http." The "s" is for "secure" and (2) depending upon the brand and version of the browser software, either a closed lock or an unbroken key will appear at the bottom of the browser window.

shareware - Software that is distributed free on a trial basis with the understanding that the user may need or want to pay for it later.

social networking site - Social networking sites generally allow a member to provide information about himself/herself and offer a communication mechanism (chat rooms, forums, e-mail, instant messaging, blogging)

that enables him/her to connect with other members. On some sites, a member can browse for people based upon certain criteria, while other sites require that a member be introduced to new people through a shared connection. Many of the sites have communities or subgroups that are based on a particular interest or subject matter.

spam - Unsolicited and unwanted commercial e-mail, or junk electronic mail.

spam filter - A program that is used to detect spam and prevent those messages from getting to a user's inbox.

spyware - See **adware** definition above.

temporary Internet files - Also **cached files**, see definition above.

typosquatting - Also called "URL hijacking." Typosquatting is a form of cybersquatting which

relies on mistakes such as typographical errors made by Internet users when inputting a web site address into a web browser. A cybersquatter registers, traffics in or uses a domain name with a bad faith intent to profit from the goodwill of a trademark belonging to someone else. If a user accidentally enters an incorrect web site address, s/he may be led to an alternative address owned by a cybersquatter, and all information transmitted through the incorrect site address is transmitted directly to the cybersquatter.

Uniform Resource Locator - The unique address for a file that is accessible on the Internet. A common way for a user to get to a web site is to enter the URL of the site's home page in a web browser's address line. Any file within that web site can also be specified with a URL.

webcam - A video camera, usually attached to a computer, whose latest image is requestable

from a web site. A “live cam” continually provides new images that are transmitted in rapid succession or, in some cases, streaming video.

web site - A related collection of world wide web files that includes a beginning file called a **home page**, see definition above. The site is accessed through its Internet address, or URL (**Uniform Resource Locator**, see definition above).

world wide web - The most widely used part of the Internet. Its outstanding feature is hypertext, a method of instant cross-referencing which allows a user to click on a highlighted word, phrase, or clickable button or image, and be transferred to the relevant site or page.

Acknowledgments: www.whatis.com
www.wikipedia.com
www.us-cert.gov/legal.html