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# Microsoft Press **Computer User's Dictionary**

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**Microsoft Press**

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## Dictionary *of Computer Terms*

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**communications program** *n.* A software program that enables a computer to connect with another computer and to exchange information. For initiating communications, communications programs perform such tasks as maintaining communications parameters, storing and dialing phone numbers, executing logon procedures, and repeatedly dialing busy lines. Once a connection is made, these programs can also be instructed to save incoming messages on disk or to find and transmit disk files. During communication, such programs can encode data, coordinate transmissions to and from the distant computer, and check incoming data for transmission errors.

**communications protocol** *n.* A set of rules or standards designed to enable computers to connect with one another and to exchange information with as little error as possible. The protocol generally accepted for standardizing overall computer communications is a seven-layer set of hardware and software guidelines known as the ISO/OSI (International Organization for Standardization Open Systems Interconnection) model. The word *protocol* is often used, sometimes confusingly, in reference to a multitude of standards affecting different aspects of communication, such as file transfer, handshaking, and network transmissions. *See also* ISO/OSI model.

**communications satellite** *n.* A satellite stationed in geosynchronous orbit that acts as a microwave relay station, receiving signals sent from a ground-based station, amplifying them, and retransmitting them on a different frequency to another ground-based station. Communications satellites can be used for high-speed transmission of computer data. Two factors affecting this use, however, are propagation delay (the time lag caused by the distance the signal travels) and security concerns. *See also* downlink, uplink.

**communications server** *n.* A gateway that translates packets on a local area network into asynchronous signals, such as those used on telephone lines or in RS-232-C serial communications, and allows all nodes on the LAN access to its modems or RS-232-C connections. *See also* gateway, RS-232-C standard.

**communications slot** *n.* On many models of the Apple Macintosh, a dedicated expansion slot for network interface cards. *Acronym:* CS.

**communications software** *n.* The software that controls the modem in response to user commands. Generally such software includes terminal emulation as well as file transfer facilities. *See also* modem, terminal emulation.

**communications system** *n.* The combination of hardware, software, and data transfer links that make up a communications facility.

**Communications Terminal Protocol** *n.* A terminal protocol that enables a user at a remote location to access a computer as if the remote computer were directly connected (hardwired) to the computer. *Acronym:* CTERM.

**compact disc** *n.* **1.** An optical storage medium for digital data, usually audio. A compact disc is a nonmagnetic, polished metal disc with a protective plastic coating with the capacity to hold up to 74 minutes of high-fidelity recorded sound. The disc is read by an optical scanning mechanism that uses a high-intensity light source, such as a laser, and mirrors. *Also called* optical disc.

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