



The Lingo Of The Electronic Age



If you are an avid computer user, or have children who are well ahead of you in technology, learning some of the most common computer terms may prove useful.

By Reid Goldsborough

As if the world of computers and the Internet isn't difficult enough for some of us out there, it also comes with its own vocabulary. Just as in any other field, you can't walk the walk unless you talk the talk.

Acronyms, jargon and buzzwords serve several purposes. They condense complicated concepts into shorthand words and phrases, saving time. They help separate the insiders from the outsiders. And, frankly, they can confuse the heck out of you.

If you're a "newbie" and want to become a "digerati," you've got to learn the lingo. Fortunately, help can be either a click or an arm's-length away.

NetLingo is both a Web site [www.netlingo.com] and a recently published 528-page book. Created by Erin Jansen and Vincent James, both resources provide definitions of more than 3,000 modern technology terms, including 1,200 SMS ("short message service") acronyms.

Co-author Jansen has been around the cyberblock a few times. She has been an

Internet consultant since 1994, building and promoting Web sites for clients in the United States, Great Britain, Germany and France. Among the sites Jansen has worked with are CNET, OfficeDepot.com and CareerMosaic.com.

Following are the most important terms to know in the Information Age from Jansen herself:

■ E-mail and Spam

E-mail is the "killer app" of the Internet, and the single most widely used and indispensable tool. Its nemesis is "spam" (the name originally came from a Monty Python's Flying Circus skit), also called "unsolicited commercial E-mail" (UCE).

Spam gunks up people's "in-boxes." Variations of spam include "meatloaf" (unsolicited personal E-mail), "velveeta" (excessive cross-postings in Usenet discussion groups), "fram" (spam sent to friends and family) and "SPIM" (spam sent by "instant messaging," or IM).

■ Download

Every time you're connected to the Internet, you're "downloading," or transferring data from a "remote" computer to your "local" computer.

This applies, among many things, to MP3 songs. MP3 is short for "MPEG-1, audio layer 3," and MPEG, in turn, is short for "Motion Picture Experts Group," which is the standards body that created this file format.

MP3 makes sharing music over the Internet efficient ... and controversial, since there's now less incentive to buy music, which has caused music CD sales to drop, along with music industry revenue.

■ Opt-in, Opt-out

When you see a checkbox on a Web page that says "send me info about" such and such, which often involves receiving advertising via E-mail, you can choose to "opt-in" by checking it. Sometimes Web sites are tricky and check the box for you, which, in order to "opt-out," would require you to uncheck the box if you don't want to receive the mailings.

Conscientious Web sites require a "double opt-in," in which you have to confirm by E-mail that you've agreed to receive the mailings. This prevents people from signing others up for unwanted mailings. If you opt-in and later change your mind, you'll have to "unsubscribe" by following the directions given.

■ Acronyms and Smileys

Acronyms are abbreviations derived from the first letters of a term or phrase, and they're popular online because it's quicker to type them. Many "netizens" also find it just plain cool to communicate in a lingo that not everyone understands. Most common are:

- ▶ **TMI** = Too much information
- NRN** = No reply necessary
- TWIMC** = To whom it may concern
- EOM** = End of message
- BRB** = Be right back
- BTW** = By the way
- ROTFL** = Rolling on the floor laughing
- LOL** = Lots of love, luck or laughter
- POS** = Parent over shoulder

"Smileys," also known as "emoticons," are symbols representing emotions or facial expressions that help prevent misunderstandings. The most common is a

sideways smiley face :-), which is often used to indicate you're telling a joke.

■ E-commerce

Many Internet neologisms begin with the letter "E," which stands for "electronic," and perhaps the most important of these is "E-commerce." With the recent "dot-com" bust, conducting business over the Internet doesn't have quite the cachet it used to. But there are still plenty of opportunities for online entrepreneurs.

"B2B" (business-to-business E-commerce) is larger than "B2C" (business-to-consumer E-commerce). Many individuals are engaging in E-commerce through online auctions such as eBay.

■ Cyberterrorism

Other Internet neologisms begin with "cyber," which originated from the word "cybernetics," or the study of communication systems. "Cyberterrorism" encompasses any criminal attempt to disrupt computers, or communicate terroristic plans via the Internet.

When a "hacker" brings down a Web site through a "denial of service" (DoS) attack, or when someone writes or deliberately spreads a "virus," "worm" or other "malicious code," they're engaged in cyberterrorism.

Computer lingo. It's not too difficult, right? :-)

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