37 Defining and classifying

A Describing function

We define an object by describing its function and properties.
For example, we can define a 'router' like this:

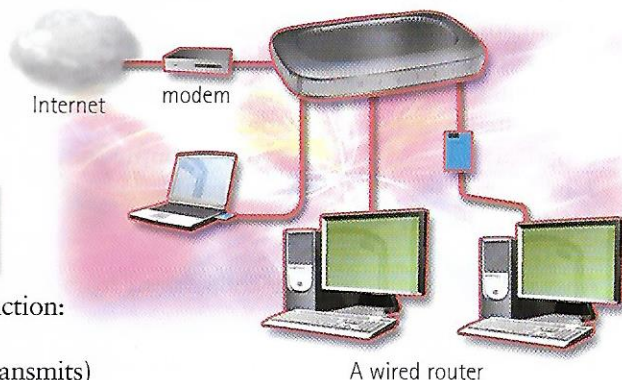> A router is a <u>device</u> **used to** transmit data between two computers or networks.

There are other ways of describing its function:

- for + -*ing* (**for** transmitting)
- relative pronoun + verb (**which/that** transmits)
- relative pronoun + **is used + to** + infinitive (**which/that is used to** transmit)

We can define people and places like this:

> A blogger is a <u>person</u> **who** keeps a Web log (blog) or publishes an online diary.
> An address bar is the <u>area</u> in your browser display **where** the web address is displayed.

- We use **which** or **that** to refer to things.
- We use **who** or **that** to refer to people.
- We use **where** (= at which) to refer to places.

Internet   modem

A wired router

A wireless router is a <u>device</u> **which** allows computers to communicate via radio waves

B Classifying from general to specific

'Classifying' means putting things into groups or classes. We can classify types of music, parts of a computer, classes of software, etc.

Typical expressions

> ... **are classified into** X **categories**
> ... **can be divided into** X **types**

> ... **include**
> ... **consists of**
> ... **is made up of**
> ... **is composed of**
> ... **comprise**

> **types**
> **There are** X **classes of** ...
> **categories**

Examples: classifying storage media

Storage media **are** often **classified into three categories**: magnetic, optical and flash memory.

Magnetic storage media **include** tape cartridges, floppies and hard disks.

A hard disk **consists of** several disks (platters) and their read-write heads.

Optical storage media **comprise** CDs, DVDs and high-definition video discs, which **include** two competing formats: HD-DVD and Blu-ray.

There are two basic types of flash memory: flash memory cards – used in digital cameras – and USB flash drives, also called pen drives.

C Classifying from specific to general

We can also classify from the specific to the more general. We can say, for example, that 'a word processor (*specific*) is a type of software (*general*)'.

Typical expressions

> ... **is a type of**
> ... **are parts/components of**
> ... **constitute**
> ... **make up**

Examples

OCR **is a type of** software which recognizes characters.

A PC card radio and a router **are** two basic **components of** a wireless network.

The RAM and the ROM **constitute** the main memory.

The **System** and **Finder** programs **make up** the Mac OS.