

A cryptocurrency is a digital or virtual currency that is secured by cryptography, making it nearly impossible to counterfeit or double-spend. Many cryptocurrencies are decentralised networks based on blockchain technology—a distributed ledger enforced by a disparate network of computers. A defining feature of cryptocurrencies is that they are generally not issued by any central authority, rendering them theoretically immune to government interference or manipulation.

The first and most famous cryptocurrency is Bitcoin, created in 2009 by an anonymous entity known as Satoshi Nakamoto. The blockchain is the public ledger of all Bitcoin transactions. Transactions are recorded in "blocks" and added to the "chain" in a chronological and unalterable way. This process is secured by "mining," where powerful computers solve complex mathematical problems to validate transactions and are rewarded with new Bitcoin. This decentralised and transparent system allows for peer-to-peer financial transactions without the need for a traditional intermediary like a bank. While Bitcoin remains the most well-known, thousands of alternative cryptocurrencies have been created with various functions and specifications.