Most computers are now supplied with a CD-ROM (Compact Disc - Read Only Memory) drive. CD-ROM discs look exactly like music CDs but contain computer data instead of music. The advantage of a CD-ROM is that it can hold a vast amount of data (equivalent to the storage capacity of over 450 floppy disks). The other big advantage of CD-ROMs is that they are interchangeable. This means that you can own a range of different CD-ROMs and choose which one to insert into your CD-ROM drive.

Short for "Digital Versatile Disk”. Similar to CD-ROM drives but allows you to use DVD disks, which contain vastly more information than a traditional CD-ROM disk. These also transfer the data from the disk to the computer far faster, allowing you to watch movies on your computer screen. A CD-ROM can store 650 MB of data, while a single-layer, single-sided DVD can store GB of data. The two-layer DVD standard allows a capacity of GB. A double-sided DVD increases the storage capacity to 17 GB (or over 25 times the data storage capacity of a CD-ROM).

Floppy disks are also known as diskettes. They are very slow compared to hard disks or CD-ROMs, and hold relatively small amounts of data (1.44 Mbytes). Sometimes people will backup (i.e. copy) important data from their hard disk to floppy disks. However, as diskettes are notoriously unreliable this is not the best way of backing up valuable data (but is better than nothing).