

Computer - Hardware

Hardware represents the physical and tangible components of a computer, i.e. the components that can be seen and touched.

Examples of Hardware are the following –

- **Input devices** – keyboard, mouse, etc.
- **Output devices** – printer, monitor, etc.
- **Secondary storage devices** – Hard disk, CD, DVD, etc.
- **Internal components** – CPU, motherboard, RAM, etc.



Relationship between Hardware and Software

- Hardware and software are mutually dependent on each other. Both of them must work together to make a computer produce a useful output.
- Software cannot be utilized without supporting hardware.
- Hardware without a set of programs to operate upon cannot be utilized and is useless.
- To get a particular job done on the computer, relevant software should be loaded into the hardware.
- Hardware is a one-time expense.
- Software development is very expensive and is a continuing expense.

- Different software applications can be loaded on a hardware to run different jobs.
- Software acts as an interface between the user and the hardware.
- If the hardware is the 'heart' of a computer system, then the software is its 'soul'. Both are complementary to each other.

Computer - Input Devices

Following are some of the important input devices which are used in a computer –

- Keyboard
- Mouse
- Joy Stick
- Light pen
- Track Ball
- Scanner
- Graphic Tablet
- Microphone
- Magnetic Ink Card Reader(MICR)
- Optical Character Reader(OCR)
- Bar Code Reader
- Optical Mark Reader(OMR)

Keyboard

Keyboard is the most common and very popular input device which helps to input data to the computer. The layout of the keyboard is like that of traditional typewriter, although there are some additional keys provided for performing additional functions.



Keyboards are of two sizes 84 keys or 101/102 keys, but now keyboards with 104 keys or 108 keys are also available for Windows and Internet.

The keys on the keyboard are as follows –

S.No	Keys & Description
1	Typing Keys These keys include the letter keys (A-Z) and digit keys (09) which generally give the same layout as that of typewriters.
2	Numeric Keypad It is used to enter the numeric data or cursor movement. Generally, it consists of a set of 17 keys that are laid out in the same configuration used by most adding machines and calculators.
3	Function Keys The twelve function keys are present on the keyboard which are arranged in a row at the top of the keyboard. Each function key has a unique meaning and is used for some specific purpose.
4	Control keys These keys provide cursor and screen control. It includes four directional arrow keys. Control keys also include Home, End, Insert, Delete, Page Up, Page Down, Control(Ctrl), Alternate(Alt), Escape(Esc).

5	<p>Special Purpose Keys</p> <p>Keyboard also contains some special purpose keys such as Enter, Shift, Caps Lock, Num Lock, Space bar, Tab, and Print Screen.</p>
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Mouse

Mouse is the most popular pointing device. It is a very famous cursor-control device having a small palm size box with a round ball at its base, which senses the movement of the mouse and sends corresponding signals to the CPU when the mouse buttons are pressed.

Generally, it has two buttons called the left and the right button and a wheel is present between the buttons. A mouse can be used to control the position of the cursor on the screen, but it cannot be used to enter text into the computer.



Advantages

- Easy to use
- Not very expensive
- Moves the cursor faster than the arrow keys of the keyboard.

Joystick

Joystick is also a pointing device, which is used to move the cursor position on a monitor screen. It is a stick having a spherical ball at its both lower and upper ends. The lower spherical ball moves in a socket. The joystick can be moved in all four directions.



The function of the joystick is similar to that of a mouse. It is mainly used in Computer Aided Designing (CAD) and playing computer games.

Light Pen

Light pen is a pointing device similar to a pen. It is used to select a displayed menu item or draw pictures on the monitor screen. It consists of a photocell and an optical system placed in a small tube.



When the tip of a light pen is moved over the monitor screen and the pen button is pressed, its photocell sensing element detects the screen location and sends the corresponding signal to the CPU.

Track Ball

Track ball is an input device that is mostly used in notebook or laptop computer, instead of a mouse. This is a ball which is half inserted and by moving fingers on the ball, the pointer can be moved.



Since the whole device is not moved, a track ball requires less space than a mouse. A track ball comes in various shapes like a ball, a button, or a square.

Scanner

Scanner is an input device, which works more like a photocopy machine. It is used when some information is available on paper and it is to be transferred to the hard disk of the computer for further manipulation.



Scanner captures images from the source which are then converted into a digital form that can be stored on the disk. These images can be edited before they are printed.

Digitizer

Digitizer is an input device which converts analog information into digital form. Digitizer can convert a signal from the television or camera into a series of numbers that could be stored in a computer. They can be used by the computer to create a picture of whatever the camera had been pointed at.



Digitizer is also known as Tablet or Graphics Tablet as it converts graphics and pictorial data into binary inputs. A graphic tablet as digitizer is used for fine works of drawing and image manipulation applications.

Microphone

Microphone is an input device to input sound that is then stored in a digital form.



The microphone is used for various applications such as adding sound to a multimedia presentation or for mixing music.

Magnetic Ink Card Reader (MICR)

MICR input device is generally used in banks as there are large number of cheques to be processed every day. The bank's code number and cheque number are printed on the cheques with a special type of ink that contains particles of magnetic material that are machine readable.



This reading process is called Magnetic Ink Character Recognition (MICR). The main advantages of MICR is that it is fast and less error prone.

Optical Character Reader (OCR)

OCR is an input device used to read a printed text.



OCR scans the text optically, character by character, converts them into a machine readable code, and stores the text on the system memory.

Bar Code Readers

Bar Code Reader is a device used for reading bar coded data (data in the form of light and dark lines). Bar coded data is generally used in labelling goods, numbering the books, etc. It may be a handheld scanner or may be embedded in a stationary scanner.



Bar Code Reader scans a bar code image, converts it into an alphanumeric value, which is then fed to the computer that the bar code reader is connected to.

Optical Mark Reader (OMR)

OMR is a special type of optical scanner used to recognize the type of mark made by pen or pencil. It is used where one out of a few alternatives is to be selected and marked.



It is specially used for checking the answer sheets of examinations having multiple choice questions.

Computer - Output Devices

Following are some of the important output devices used in a computer.

- Monitors
- Graphic Plotter
- Printer
- Projectors
- Head sets and earphones

Monitors

Monitors, commonly called as **Visual Display Unit** (VDU), are the main output device of a computer. It forms images from tiny dots, called pixels that are arranged in a rectangular form. The sharpness of the image depends upon the number of pixels.

There are two kinds of viewing screen used for monitors.

- Cathode-Ray Tube (CRT)
- Flat-Panel Display

Cathode-Ray Tube (CRT) Monitor

The CRT display is made up of small picture elements called pixels. The smaller the pixels, the better the image clarity or resolution. It takes more than one illuminated pixel to form a whole character, such as the letter 'e' in the word help.



A finite number of characters can be displayed on a screen at once. The screen can be divided into a series of character boxes - fixed location on the screen where a standard character can be placed. Most screens are capable of displaying 80 characters of data horizontally and 25 lines vertically.

There are some disadvantages of CRT –

- Large in Size
- High power consumption

Flat-Panel Display Monitor

The flat-panel display refers to a class of video devices that have reduced volume, weight and power requirement in comparison to the CRT. You can hang them on walls or wear them on your wrists. Current uses of flat-panel displays include calculators, video games, monitors, laptop computer, and graphics display.



The flat-panel display is divided into two categories –

- **Emissive Displays** – Emissive displays are devices that convert electrical energy into light. For example, plasma panel and LED (Light-Emitting Diodes).
- **Non-Emissive Displays** – Non-emissive displays use optical effects to convert sunlight or light from some other source into graphics patterns. For example, LCD (Liquid-Crystal Device).

Printers

Printer is an output device, which is used to print information on paper.

There are two types of printers –

- Impact Printers
- Non-Impact Printers

Impact Printers

Impact printers print the characters by striking them on the ribbon, which is then pressed on the paper.

Characteristics of Impact Printers are the following –

- Very low consumable costs
- Very noisy
- Useful for bulk printing due to low cost
- There is physical contact with the paper to produce an image

These printers are of two types –

- Character printers
- Line printers

Character Printers

Character printers are the printers which print one character at a time.

These are further divided into two types:

- Dot Matrix Printer(DMP)
- Daisy Wheel

Dot Matrix Printer

In the market, one of the most popular printers is Dot Matrix Printer. These printers are popular because of their ease of printing and economical price. Each character printed is in the form of pattern of dots and head consists of a Matrix of Pins of size (5*7, 7*9, 9*7 or 9*9) which come out to form a character which is why it is called Dot Matrix Printer.



Advantages

- Inexpensive
- Widely Used
- Other language characters can be printed

Disadvantages

- Slow Speed
- Poor Quality

Daisy Wheel

Head is lying on a wheel and pins corresponding to characters are like petals of Daisy (flower) which is why it is called Daisy Wheel Printer. These printers are generally used for word-processing in offices that require a few letters to be sent here and there with very nice quality.



Advantages

- More reliable than DMP
- Better quality
- Fonts of character can be easily changed

Disadvantages

- Slower than DMP
- Noisy
- More expensive than DMP

Line Printers

Line printers are the printers which print one line at a time.



These are of two types –

- Drum Printer
- Chain Printer

Drum Printer

This printer is like a drum in shape hence it is called drum printer. The surface of the drum is divided into a number of tracks. Total tracks are equal to the size of the paper, i.e. for a paper width of 132 characters, drum will have 132 tracks. A character set is embossed on the track. Different character sets available in the market are 48 character set, 64 and 96 characters set. One rotation of drum prints one line. Drum printers are fast in speed and can print 300 to 2000 lines per minute.

Advantages

- Very high speed

Disadvantages

- Very expensive
- Characters fonts cannot be changed

Chain Printer

In this printer, a chain of character sets is used, hence it is called Chain Printer. A standard character set may have 48, 64, or 96 characters.

Advantages

- Character fonts can easily be changed.
- Different languages can be used with the same printer.

Disadvantages

- Noisy

Non-impact Printers

Non-impact printers print the characters without using the ribbon. These printers print a complete page at a time, thus they are also called as Page Printers.

These printers are of two types –

- Laser Printers
- Inkjet Printers

Characteristics of Non-impact Printers

- Faster than impact printers
- They are not noisy

- High quality
- Supports many fonts and different character size

Laser Printers

These are non-impact page printers. They use laser lights to produce the dots needed to form the characters to be printed on a page.



Advantages

- Very high speed
- Very high quality output
- Good graphics quality
- Supports many fonts and different character size

Disadvantages

- Expensive
- Cannot be used to produce multiple copies of a document in a single printing

Inkjet Printers

Inkjet printers are non-impact character printers based on a relatively new technology. They print characters by spraying small drops of ink onto paper. Inkjet printers produce high quality output with presentable features.



They make less noise because no hammering is done and these have many styles of printing modes available. Color printing is also possible. Some models of Inkjet printers can produce multiple copies of printing also.

Advantages

- High quality printing
- More reliable

Disadvantages

- Expensive as the cost per page is high
- Slow as compared to laser printer

Projector



A **projector** is an output device that takes images generated by a computer to reproduce it by projection onto a screen, wall, or another surface. In most cases, the surface projected onto is large, flat, and lightly colored. For example, you could

use a projector to show a presentation on a large screen so that everyone in the room can see it. Projectors can produce either still (slides) or moving images (videos). A projector is often about the size of a toaster and weighs only a few pounds.

How does a projector get its input?

Today, most projectors use either an [HDMI](#) cable or [VGA](#) cable from a computer as their [input](#) source.

Computer - Memory

A memory is just like a human brain. It is used to store data and instructions. Computer memory is the storage space in the computer, where data is to be processed and instructions required for processing are stored. The memory is divided into large number of small parts called cells. Each location or cell has a unique address, which varies from zero to memory size minus one. For example, if the computer has 64k words, then this memory unit has $64 * 1024 = 65536$ memory locations. The address of these locations varies from 0 to 65535.

Memory is primarily of three types –

- Cache Memory
- Primary Memory/Main Memory
- Secondary Memory

Cache Memory

Cache memory is a very high speed semiconductor memory which can speed up the CPU. It acts as a buffer between the CPU and the main memory. It is used to hold those parts of data and program which are most frequently used by the CPU. The parts of data and programs are transferred from the disk to cache memory by the operating system, from where the CPU can access them.



Advantages

The advantages of cache memory are as follows –

- Cache memory is faster than main memory.
- It consumes less access time as compared to main memory.
- It stores the program that can be executed within a short period of time.
- It stores data for temporary use.

Disadvantages

The disadvantages of cache memory are as follows –

- Cache memory has limited capacity.
- It is very expensive.

Primary Memory (Main Memory)

Primary memory holds only those data and instructions on which the computer is currently working. It has a limited capacity and data is lost when power is switched off. It is generally made up of semiconductor device. These memories are not as fast as registers. The data and instruction required to be processed resides in the main memory. It is divided into two subcategories RAM and ROM.



Characteristics of Main Memory

- These are semiconductor memories.
- It is known as the main memory.
- Usually volatile memory.
- Data is lost in case power is switched off.
- It is the working memory of the computer.
- Faster than secondary memories.

- A computer cannot run without the primary memory.

Secondary Memory

This type of memory is also known as external memory or non-volatile. It is slower than the main memory. These are used for storing data/information permanently. CPU directly does not access these memories, instead they are accessed via input-output routines. The contents of secondary memories are first transferred to the main memory, and then the CPU can access it. For example, disk, CD-ROM, DVD, etc.



Characteristics of Secondary Memory

- These are magnetic and optical memories.
- It is known as the backup memory.
- It is a non-volatile memory.
- Data is permanently stored even if power is switched off.
- It is used for storage of data in a computer.
- Computer may run without the secondary memory.
- Slower than primary memories.

Random Access Memory

RAM (Random Access Memory) is the internal memory of the CPU for storing data, program, and program result. It is a read/write memory which stores data until the machine is working. As soon as the machine is switched off, data is erased.



Access time in RAM is independent of the address, that is, each storage location inside the memory is as easy to reach as other locations and takes the same amount of time. Data in the RAM can be accessed randomly but it is very expensive.

RAM is volatile, i.e. data stored in it is lost when we switch off the computer or if there is a power failure. Hence, a backup Uninterruptible Power System (UPS) is often used with computers. RAM is small, both in terms of its physical size and in the amount of data it can hold.

RAM is of two types –

- Static RAM (SRAM)
- Dynamic RAM (DRAM)

Static RAM (SRAM)

The word **static** indicates that the memory retains its contents as long as power is being supplied. However, data is lost when the power gets down due to volatile nature. SRAM chips use a matrix of 6-transistors and no capacitors. Transistors do not require power to prevent leakage, so SRAM need not be refreshed on a regular basis.

There is extra space in the matrix, hence SRAM uses more chips than DRAM for the same amount of storage space, making the manufacturing costs higher. SRAM is thus used as cache memory and has very fast access.

Characteristic of Static RAM

- Long life
- No need to refresh
- Faster
- Used as cache memory

- Large size
- Expensive
- High power consumption

Dynamic RAM (DRAM)

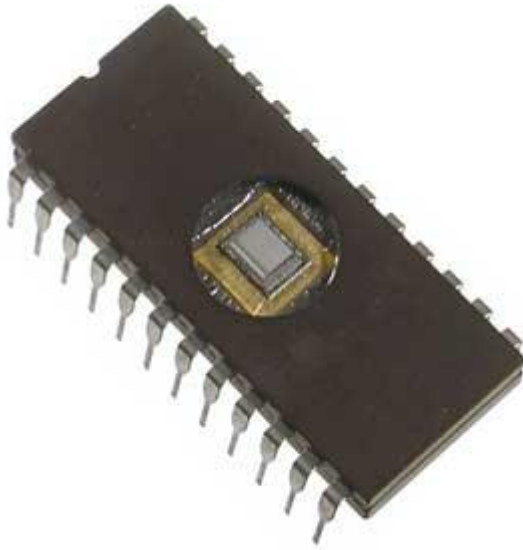
DRAM, unlike SRAM, must be continually **refreshed** in order to maintain the data. This is done by placing the memory on a refresh circuit that rewrites the data several hundred times per second. DRAM is used for most system memory as it is cheap and small. All DRAMs are made up of memory cells, which are composed of one capacitor and one transistor.

Characteristics of Dynamic RAM

- Short data lifetime
- Needs to be refreshed continuously
- Slower as compared to SRAM
- Used as RAM
- Smaller in size
- Less expensive
- Less power consumption

Computer - Read Only Memory

ROM stands for **Read Only Memory**. The memory from which we can only read but cannot write on it. This type of memory is non-volatile. The information is stored permanently in such memories during manufacture. A ROM stores such instructions that are required to start a computer. This operation is referred to as **bootstrap**. ROM chips are not only used in the computer but also in other electronic items like washing machine and microwave oven.



Let us now discuss the various types of ROMs and their characteristics.

MROM (Masked ROM)

The very first ROMs were hard-wired devices that contained a pre-programmed set of data or instructions. These kind of ROMs are known as masked ROMs, which are inexpensive.

PROM (Programmable Read Only Memory)

PROM is read-only memory that can be modified only once by a user. The user buys a blank PROM and enters the desired contents using a PROM program. Inside the PROM chip, there are small fuses which are burnt open during programming. It can be programmed only once and is not erasable.

EPROM (Erasable and Programmable Read Only Memory)

EPROM can be erased by exposing it to ultra-violet light for a duration of up to 40 minutes. Usually, an EPROM eraser achieves this function. During programming, an electrical charge is trapped in an insulated gate region. The charge is retained for more than 10 years because the charge has no leakage path. For erasing this charge, ultra-violet light is passed through a quartz crystal window (lid). This exposure to ultra-violet light dissipates the charge. During normal use, the quartz lid is sealed with a sticker.

EEPROM (Electrically Erasable and Programmable Read Only Memory)

EEPROM is programmed and erased electrically. It can be erased and reprogrammed about ten thousand times. Both erasing and programming take about 4 to 10 ms (millisecond). In EEPROM, any location can be selectively erased and programmed. EEPROMs can be erased one byte at a time, rather than erasing the entire chip. Hence, the process of reprogramming is flexible but slow.

Advantages of ROM

The advantages of ROM are as follows –

- Non-volatile in nature
- Cannot be accidentally changed
- Cheaper than RAMs
- Easy to test
- More reliable than RAMs
- Static and do not require refreshing
- Contents are always known and can be verified

Computer - Motherboard

The motherboard serves as a single platform to connect all of the parts of a computer together. It connects the CPU, memory, hard drives, optical drives, video card, sound card, and other ports and expansion cards directly or via cables. It can be considered as the backbone of a computer.



Features of Motherboard

A motherboard comes with following features –

- Motherboard varies greatly in supporting various types of components.
- Motherboard supports a single type of CPU and few types of memories.
- Video cards, hard disks, sound cards have to be compatible with the motherboard to function properly.
- Motherboards, cases, and power supplies must be compatible to work properly together.

Popular Manufacturers

Following are the popular manufacturers of the motherboard.

- Intel
- ASUS
- AOpen
- ABIT
- Biostar
- Gigabyte
- MSI

Description of Motherboard

The motherboard is mounted inside the case and is securely attached via small screws through pre-drilled holes. Motherboard contains ports to connect all of the internal components. It provides a single socket for CPU, whereas for memory, normally one or more slots are available. Motherboards provide ports to attach the floppy drive, hard drive, and optical drives via ribbon cables. Motherboard carries fans and a special port designed for power supply.

There is a peripheral card slot in front of the motherboard using which video cards, sound cards, and other expansion cards can be connected to the motherboard.

On the left side, motherboards carry a number of ports to connect the monitor, printer, mouse, keyboard, speaker, and network cables. Motherboards also provide USB ports, which allow compatible devices to be connected in plug-in/plug-out fashion. For example, pen drive, digital cameras, etc.

Computer - Memory Units

Memory unit is the amount of data that can be stored in the storage unit. This storage capacity is expressed in terms of Bytes.

The following table explains the main memory storage units –

S.No.	Unit & Description
1	Bit (Binary Digit) A binary digit is logical 0 and 1 representing a passive or an active state of a component in an electric circuit.
2	Nibble A group of 4 bits is called nibble.
3	Byte A group of 8 bits is called byte. A byte is the smallest unit, which can represent a data item or a character.
4	Word A computer word, like a byte, is a group of fixed number of bits processed as a unit, which varies from computer to computer but is fixed for each computer. The length of a computer word is called word-size or word length. It may be as small as 8 bits or may be as long as 96 bits. A computer stores the information in the form of computer words.

The following table lists some higher storage units –

S.No.	Unit & Description
1	Kilobyte (KB) 1 KB = 1024 Bytes
2	Megabyte (MB) 1 MB = 1024 KB
3	GigaByte (GB) 1 GB = 1024 MB

4	TeraByte (TB) 1 TB = 1024 GB
5	PetaByte (PB) 1 PB = 1024 TB

Computer - Ports

A port is a physical docking point using which an external device can be connected to the computer. It can also be programmatic docking point through which information flows from a program to the computer or over the Internet.

Characteristics of Ports

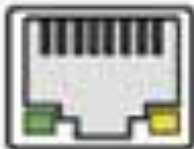
A port has the following characteristics –

- External devices are connected to a computer using cables and ports.
- Ports are slots on the motherboard into which a cable of external device is plugged in.
- Examples of external devices attached via ports are the mouse, keyboard, monitor, microphone, speakers, etc.

IES Power Connectors



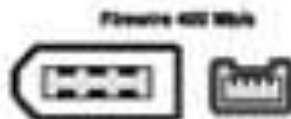
Ethernet / RJ45



Modem / RJ11



Firewire
Video camera (DV) and Hard Drive



Firewire 800 Male



Serial Port



Parallel Port



PS/2 Port



Games Port



eSata

External Hard Drive Port



DisplayPort

Video and Audio Port for Home Theater Systems



PCMCIA / Cardbus

WiFi, Networking and Expansion Cards



VGA Port



S - Video



HDMI



Digital Video Interface



Audio Mini - Jacks

Audio Mini - Jacks



Microphone



Stereo Line-In



Stereo Line-Out



Right-to-Left



Center / Subwoofer

S/PDIF
Digital Audio



Let us now discuss a few important types of ports –

Serial Port

- Used for external modems and older computer mouse
- Two versions: 9 pin, 25 pin model
- Data travels at 115 kilobits per second

Parallel Port

- Used for scanners and printers
- Also called printer port
- 25 pin model
- IEEE 1284-compliant Centronics port

PS/2 Port

- Used for old computer keyboard and mouse
- Also called mouse port
- Most of the old computers provide two PS/2 port, each for the mouse and keyboard
- IEEE 1284-compliant Centronics port

Universal Serial Bus (or USB) Port

- It can connect all kinds of external USB devices such as external hard disk, printer, scanner, mouse, keyboard, etc.
- It was introduced in 1997.
- Most of the computers provide two USB ports as minimum.
- Data travels at 12 megabits per seconds.
- USB compliant devices can get power from a USB port.

VGA Port

- Connects monitor to a computer's video card.

- It has 15 holes.
- Similar to the serial port connector. However, serial port connector has pins, VGA port has holes.

With the increase in use of digital video, VGA ports are gradually being replaced by HDMI and Display Ports. Some laptops are equipped with on-board VGA ports in order to connect to external monitors or projectors.

HDMI

HDMI is an abbreviation of High Definition Media Interface. HDMI is a digital interface to connect High Definition and Ultra High Definition devices like Computer monitors, HDTVs, gaming consoles, High Definition Cameras etc.

HDMI can be used to carry uncompressed video and compressed or uncompressed audio signals. The HDMI port of type A is shown below.



The HDMI connector consists of 19 pins and the latest version of HDMI i.e. HDMI 2.0 can carry digital video signal up to a resolution of 4096×2160 and 32 audio channels. The pinout diagram of an HDMI port is as follows.

Power Connector

- Three-pronged plug.
- Connects to the computer's power cable that plugs into a power bar or wall socket.

Firewire Port

- Transfers large amount of data at very fast speed.
- Connects camcorders and video equipment to the computer.
- Data travels at 400 to 800 megabits per seconds.

- Invented by Apple.
- It has three variants: 4-Pin FireWire 400 connector, 6-Pin FireWire 400 connector, and 9-Pin FireWire 800 connector.

Modem Port

- Connects a PC's modem to the telephone network.

Ethernet Port

- Connects to a network and high speed Internet.
- Connects the network cable to a computer.
- This port resides on an Ethernet Card.
- Data travels at 10 megabits to 1000 megabits per seconds depending upon the network bandwidth.

Game Port

- Connect a joystick to a PC
- Now replaced by USB

Digital Video Interface, DVI port

- Connects Flat panel LCD monitor to the computer's high-end video graphic cards.
- Very popular among video card manufacturers.

Sockets

- Sockets connect the microphone and speakers to the sound card of the computer.