

MS-DOS (MICROSOFT DISK OPERATING SYSTEM) — A single-user, single-tasking operating system. See also **operating system, single-user operating system, single-tasking operating system**.

MS OS/2 (MICROSOFT OPERATING SYSTEM/2) — Compatible with MS-DOS, this is a single-user operating system which offers multitasking, extended memory, and additional storage capabilities for microcomputers. See also **operating system, multitasking operating system, single-user operating system**.

MULTIPROCESSING — See **multitasking operating system**.

MULTITASKING OPERATING SYSTEM — An operating system that can run multiple programs (tasks) at the same time by requiring the CPU to switch rapidly among the programs that are competing for its attention. Programs that are not completed in any given turn at the CPU remain suspended until their next "time slice". See also **operating system**.

NETWORK — Two or more computers linked together electronically to share programs and exchange data. See **LAN (Local Area Network)** and **WAN (Wide Area Network)**.

NETWORK INTERFACE CARD (NIC) — A card which is plugged into the bus or parallel port of a microcomputer and which manages the physical and logical connection between that computer and a **network**. Each model of **NIC** is specific to one generic network type (**ethernet, arcnet, etc.**), is usually specific to one cable type (**coaxial, twisted pair, fibre**) and often contains firmware which is specific to one brand of network.

NETWORK OPERATING SYSTEM — An operating system which allows one or more computers in a **network** to offer services to programs running on other computers which are connected to that **network**. See **LAN, WAN, Operating System**.

NOTEBOOK — A portable computer with a built-in keyboard and display. Usually smaller footprint and weighs less than a laptop.

NS (NANOSECOND) — A unit of time equal to 1 billionth of a second. Abbreviated as "ns".

OFF-LINE — The state in which a peripheral such as a printer has no communications link with its controlling computer. For example, many printers have an on-line switch or button for establishing a communications link with an attached computer. If this switch or button is turned off, the printer is off-line because it cannot receive data and instructions from the controlling computer.

ON-LINE — The state in which a peripheral such as a printer has a communications link with its controlling computer. For example, many printers have an on-line switch or button for establishing a communications link with an attached computer. If this switch or button is turned on, the printer is on-line because it is ready to receive data and instructions from the controlling computer.