

**LOW-LEVEL FORMATTING** — One step in preparing a hard-disk drive for data storage by an operating system. This step sets up the basic organization of your hard-disk drive into sectors and flags bad areas for your operating system to avoid. Low-level formatting must be performed before partitioning and high-level formatting (or logical formatting). This process is performed at the factory for IDE drives. Low level formatting is also known as physical formatting. See also **IDE (integrated drive electronics)**, **hard-disk drive**, **high level formatting**.

**LPT** — See **parallel port**.

**MATH COPROCESSOR** — A chip that can be installed in your computer to increase the speed of mathematical calculations in applications that have been written to take advantage of a coprocessor.

**MB (MEGABYTE)** — A megabyte is a unit of measure for disk storage capacity. It represents 1,048,576 bytes or 1024 kilobytes, a number which varies from the normal metric definition of "mega" (one million) because computer storage is based upon powers of two rather than powers of ten.

**MCA (MICRO CHANNEL ARCHITECTURE)** — A 32-bit bus which is proprietary to IBM and used in the PS/2 series of microcomputers. Standard 8-bit and 16-bit expansion cards are incompatible with **MCA**. See also **bus**, **expansion card**. Compare with **EISA**.

**MFM (MODIFIED FREQUENCY MODULATION)** — The most common type of **hard-disk controller**.

**MHZ (MEGAHERTZ)** — A unit of measure for indicating frequency in millions of cycles per second.

**MICROPROCESSOR** — The chip that is the centre of all activity inside a microcomputer. The microprocessor controls all of the logical and arithmetic operations of the computer and is responsible for executing program commands. Also sometimes abbreviated as **processor**.

**MITNET** — A voice and data communication facilities to EAITC users in Ottawa and abroad.

**MODEM** — A device that connects a computer to a telephone line for the purpose of exchanging information with other computers. An internal modem can be installed in an expansion slot inside your computer. An external modem connects to a serial port and resides outside the computer.

**MOTHERBOARD** — The main **printed circuit board** of a microcomputer onto which the **bus** is attached and into which all other **printed circuit boards** are connected.

**MOUSE** — A pointing device that can be attached to your computer to allow quick and easy cursor movement. As you move the mouse over a flat surface, the cursor makes corresponding movements on the screen. See also **cursor**.