

OPERATING SYSTEM — The disk-based software that manages the operations of a computer. An operating system controls the flow of information between the computer's hardware, such as the keyboard, video display, disk drives, and printer. It also manages the processing of applications software. MS-DOS is an operating system.

PARALLEL PORT — A port that transfers data through multiple wires so that eight bits are transmitted simultaneously. Parallel ports are often used to connect printers to computers. A parallel port usually has a 25-hole connector and is designated by software with the letters LPT and a single digit, such as LPT1. See also **port**. Compare with **serial port**.

PARAMETER — A value sent to or returned from a program or command. For example, the MS-DOS copy command requires you to specify as one of its parameters the name of the file you want to copy.

PARTITION — A section of a hard-disk drive set aside for an operating system and for program and data files. MS-DOS permits the division of a hard disk multiple partitions: a primary partition and one or more extended partitions.

PATH — The sequence of directories through which an operating system will search to find a particular file or directory. See also **directory**.

PC (PERSONAL COMPUTER) — In general, a microcomputer which is intended for use by one person at a time. Specifically, the brand name for the original IBM microcomputer which was the first to combine the Intel 8088 **microprocessor** and the **MS-DOS operating system**.

PCL (PRINTER COMMAND LANGUAGE) — Printer commands telling the printer which task to perform or fonts to use. The printer command language contains all the instructions the LaserJet printers understand.

PERIPHERAL — A device that is connected to and communicates with a computer. A printer and mouse are peripherals. See also **I/O**.

PERSONAL COMPUTER — See **PC**.

PHOENIX — A specific vendor of BIOS. See also **BIOS**.

PHYSICAL FORMATTING — See **low-level formatting**.

PITCH — The number of characters printed per horizontal inch.

PLASMA DISPLAY — A thin, lightweight video display based upon gas plasma technology and sometimes used for portable computers.

PLOTTER — A peripheral output device that draws maps, charts, drawings, etc. with a pen.

POINT SIZE — Units of measurement that identify the height of a font.