

BIOS (BASIC INPUT/OUTPUT SYSTEM) — A program contained in ROM that provides the interface between software programs and the hardware of any particular model of computer. Microcomputers made by a variety of manufacturers are "IBM-compatible" if they use a standard **BIOS**. The three well known BIOS vendors are AMI, Award and Phoenix. See also ROM BIOS.

BIOS SHADOWING — A feature that may be available in the System Setup program of an 80386 or 80486 microcomputer to maximize the execution speed of the video control program and overall system performance. **BIOS shadowing** copies, or shadows, the video control program and the BIOS code from ROM chips to much faster RAM chips at system start-up.

BIT — An abbreviation for binary digit. A bit is the smallest unit of information used by a computer. A bit can have one of two values (0 to 1) to indicate on/off or a single yes/no decision. All information is stored in computers as a series of **bits**.

BOOT / REBOOT — The start-up procedure used by the computer when you first turn it on. This procedure clears the contents of system memory, causes the computer to perform a self-test, and executes any commands contained in the **autoexec.bat** and **config.sys** files. You can reboot the computer by holding down the <CTRL> and <ALT> keys and simultaneously pressing the key. Some microcomputers have separate reset keys for this purpose.

BPS (BITS PER SECOND) — The measure of the speed of data transmission between two computers. See also **Modem**.

Bus — A collection of communication lines that carry electronic signals between elements on the system board or between the circuitry on the system board and any expansion cards or other boards plugged into the system board of a microcomputer. The "width" of a bus is an important factor in the overall speed of a microcomputer. An 8-bit bus (found in the IBM-XT and compatibles) can transmit one byte at a time between the CPU and memory or peripherals. A 16-bit bus (IBM-AT and compatibles and all 80386SX machines) transmits 2 bytes in the same interval while a 32-bit bus (most 80386 machines) deals with 4 bytes. **Expansion cards** must be compatible with your computer's bus. Most cards are compatible with the **industry standard bus**, which is that of the IBM-AT. Other buses include the **Micro Channel Architecture (MCA)** and the **Extended Industry Standard Architecture (EISA)**.

BYTE — The primary unit of measurement for computer storage. This term indicates the amount of space needed to store a single character of text. One byte consists of 8 bits. See also **bit**.

CARD — See **printed circuit board**

CARD EDGE CONNECTOR — The part of a card with exposed metal fingers that can be plugged into the expansion slot connector.