

Digital Dictionary – understanding tech jargon

The digital world brings a whole new language. From bots to search engines, cookies to malware, you'll come across a lot of words and phrases that may seem alien to you.

So, what do they all mean? With this jargon buster, we'll help you to understand the most common techy terms. Over time, you'll build confidence and know-how so you can make the most of your time online: before you know it, you'll be fluent when it comes to talking tech.

Any word in a definition below that is in bold has its own definition in the list.

4G

4G is the fourth generation of mobile phone technology it makes it easier to access the **internet** on your mobile, tablet or laptop.

5G

The fifth generation of cellular technology. This has been designed to increase speed of your **internet** on your mobile when you are without wi-fi service.

AI

Artificial intelligence uses computers and machines to mimic the problem-solving and decision-making capabilities of the human mind.

Android

An **operating system** for mobile phones and tablets.

Antivirus

Security **software** that helps protect your computer from online **viruses**.

Autofill

Autofill is a form filler, form recovery, text snippets, and automation tool all in one. It allows you to add previously recorded data online automatically.

App

App is short for application. These are **programmes** that you can **download** onto a **smartphone** or **tablet** to help you carry out tasks, or for entertainment.

Bookmark

Allows you to save a website so that you can return to it later, just like a bookmark in a book or physical book.

Broadband

This is usually used to describe high-speed connection to the **internet**.

Browser

Allows you to view websites on the **internet**. Examples include Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge.

Cloud

Allows you to save and access files via the **internet** on nearly any device.

Cookie

Small files that are placed on your computer by websites that you visit. They remember information about your visit, such as your preferred language.

Cyber attack

A digital attack that targets digital devices.

Desktop computer

A non-portable computer.

Device

The tool you are using to access the **internet** and work digitally i.e., a computer, mobile, laptop.

Document

A file (e.g., a letter) created and saved on a computer or laptop: similar to an offline document.

Download

Saving a file onto your device from a website.

Digital / Secure key

An extra level of security, often used with online banking. Will help protect you from fraud.

Email

A way of sending messages and files electronically (for free!).

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Encryption

Encoded data which is more secure. It can help to prevent your private information being stolen.

Firewall

Software that provides protection against **cyber attacks**. A basic version of this can be downloaded for free.

Fraud

Like its offline equivalent, this is when someone impersonates someone else to get personal information (such as bank details) illegally.

Font

How text looks. For example:
Here's some text in one font.
 Here's some text in another font.

Hacker

Someone who gains access to computers or online accounts without the owner's permission.

Hardware

The physical parts of a computer, such as a keyboard or monitor.

History

A record of all the websites you have visited on the **internet**.

HTTP

Hypertext Transfer Protocol. These letters form part of a website's **URL** or address i.e., <https://www.google.co.uk>

Hyperlink / Link

A link to a website address that you can click on, that takes you directly to a webpage/other online content. Often underlined and in a different colour (such as blue).

Icon

A small image that you can click on to open an app, file or piece of **software**.

iOS

An operating system designed by Apple for its mobile phones and tablets.

Internet

One huge network that is used to store and move information. Like a big library.

Install

Putting something like **software** onto your device e.g. downloading an app.

Junk / Spam folder

A folder for mostly unwanted emails that may include scams.

Laptop

A portable computer with a built-in screen and keyboard. It can fold in half to be carried more easily.

Log on / login

To sign into a website or device with your own details.

Malicious attack

An attempt by a **scammer** to install a virus on your computer.

Malware

Describes all forms of **software** designed to attack or disrupt a device e.g. **viruses** and **ransomware**.

Memory

Where the device stores all its information. Just like your own memory, it remembers things.

Mobile data

Allows your mobile device to access the **internet** without being connected to wi-fi. You will pay for this as part of your mobile phone contract. When abroad, you may be charged more for using this, so make sure it is switched off when away, unless you are willing to pay more.

Monitor

The part of a computer that you look at. Similar to a TV, it shows the information on the screen.

Mouse

A small device, that moves the cursor to different places on the screen.

Offline

Working on a device without an **internet** connection.

Online

Working on a device when connected to the **internet**.

Operating System

Manages computer **software** and hardware (including memory, and app usage).

Padlock symbol

Usually found in the address bar showing a website, it means you are on a secure connection.

Parental controls

Settings that allow parents to choose what content their children can or can't access or see online.

Passcode

The method used to access your device or an online account. This may be a series of numbers, lock screen pattern, fingerprint or face recognition to give access to either your device or an online account.

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Password

Allows you to access online accounts. Some websites/programs will require passwords of specific lengths and the inclusion of certain keyboard characters – such as an upper case letter, a number and a character, e.g., Website.01”.

PC

Personal Computer.

Personal data / information

Information which is related to you, such as credit card details, bank details, addresses or phone number.

Phishing

A form of **scam** that may try to trick you into sharing **personal information** or transferring money.

Podcast

A podcast is an audio-only version of a program, like a radio show.

Popup

An extra window or tab that appears, usually when you are on a website.

Privacy settings

Allow you to control and manage who sees or shares your information. These often pop up when you access a website for the first time.

Processor

A piece of hardware that enables your computer to interact with its applications and programs installed – think of it as the computer’s brain.

QR code

Quick Response Code. Similar in appearance to a bar code, it stores full website information. Can be scanned with a smartphone’s camera to open a website. It looks like this:



Ransomware

Malware that prevents you from accessing files until you pay money to the hacker.

Recycle bin

Where documents go when you delete them on your computer. They can be recovered if you change your mind.

Refresh / reload

Can help the computer connect to the website if it doesn’t load properly.

Scam

When someone tries to trick you into giving away your **personal data** such as bank details.

Scammer

A person who carries out a **scam**.

Scroll / Scrolling

The act of moving text or graphics on the screen. Move your mouse or finger (depending on your device) up, down or across to view different parts of it.

Search engine

A website used to find information on the **internet**. Google is an example.

Shopping basket

Just like a real-life basket, you add items you want to buy online to a shopping basket.

Smartphone

A mobile device that can be used to access the **internet**. iPhone is one example.

Smart device

Physical equipment used to access the **internet**, such as a **smartphone**, **laptop** or **tablet**.

Smishing

When **scammers** send a text message (or SMS) purporting to be someone they’re not.

Social engineering

Where a **scammer** will try and trick you through manipulation, trying to gain your trust by playing on your emotions and kindness.

Social networks

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are examples of social networks: websites that allow you to talk to people and share photos or videos.

Software

Something that you can **download** and install onto your computer which performs a specific task or function.

Software bug

An error or fault in a computer’s **software** that means it does not work as it should.

Spam

Unwanted **emails** or messages from sources you don’t trust.

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Streaming

Listening to music or watching videos online while connected to the **internet**.

Tab

When searching and viewing pages online, each will have its own 'tab'. You can have multiple tabs open at once.

Tablet

A portable computer without a physical keyboard. Instead, the keyboard appears on the screen.

Touchpad / trackpad

Performs a similar function as a **mouse** and is built into a laptop. Allows you to move the cursor around the screen.

Troll

Someone who posts offensive or rude comments online.

Upload

To post something on the **internet**, for example to post a photo onto Facebook.

URL

Uniform Resource Locator. Another phrase for a website address (e.g. www.google.co.uk).

Username

A unique name that identifies someone online.

Virus

A type of **malware** that can spread to other computers. Like a real-life illness, it might prevent your computer working properly.

Vishing

A **scam** that happens over the phone.

Website

An online page containing information (news, weather, sports results, holiday locations).

Wi-fi

Wirelessly connects you to the **internet** through a broadband connection.



Links to further learning

We appreciate that the first time hearing these words, can seem like an all-new language. Work through these phrases with your digital helper and it will feel a lot less overwhelming, and don't forget you can refer back to it at any time.

For further information around this jargon and other useful phrases, you can click on this link or type it into your web browser: <https://www.digitalunite.com/computer-basics/getting-started/computer-terms-and-internet-jargon>