
Defining Internal Computer Parts

Ever wonder what all the different terms mean when someone refers to the physical parts inside of your computer? Most computer users don't understand the differences between individual parts inside the computer case because they rarely have a need to know them and never see them. While most computer technicians will usually be able to decipher descriptions of what's broken when a request for help is made, they typically have a harder time explaining to non-techies what it is they've found or repaired due to the techie language barrier. There is an enormous amount of different hardware (the physical pieces of your computer) that makes up the internal anatomy your computer, but here is a brief description of four that are typically misunderstood. In order to make each a bit easier to understand, I've related each of them to something not computer related.

CPU: CPU is an acronym for "central processing unit" and sometimes referred to simply as the "processor". As its name suggests, the CPU is the part of your computer that actually processes everything your computer does. The faster the CPU, the more work it can process at one time. Although it does so much work, this is typically one of the smaller components of your computer. The CPU is best thought of as the brain of your computer. So, for easy reference, CPU = brain.

Hard Drive: The hard drive is the internal computer part where all your data is stored. This data includes the operating system (e.g. Windows XP), software programs (e.g. Microsoft Office, Internet Explorer, etc), all of your documents, and everything else your computer needs to store. The hard drive can be thought of as a storage unit or file cabinet where all of your stuff is stored. Hard Drive = file cabinet.

Memory: There are many types of memory as well and many devices have their own separate memory, but usually this refers to the computer's main memory and may be called "RAM". Memory is an internal computer part where data is stored while the CPU works on it. So, although your documents are stored on your hard drive, they are actually moved to memory when you are using them. This is because memory is much faster than a hard drive when it comes to talking with the CPU. Most memory only retains data when a computer is turned on, however. That is why so many computer problems are resolved by rebooting the computer. It gets wiped clean every time you reboot! Memory can be thought of as a desk or work bench where things are stored only while you are working on them and those things are put back in your file cabinet when finished. Memory = work bench.

Motherboard: The motherboard is also often referred to as the "system board". The motherboard is an internal computer part (usually the largest) that actually determines everything else that can be connected to your computer. This is because every single hardware

component of your computer, including external parts such as the monitor and keyboard, has to connect to the motherboard. The motherboard provides the communication between devices, most importantly from the CPU to the other devices. The motherboard can be thought of as a highway infrastructure on which all data must travel to get anywhere. Without this highway infrastructure, none of the many other parts of your computer would be able to talk to each other. Motherboard = highway infrastructure.

About Desktop Resources, Inc.

Desktop Resources, Inc. was founded in 1995 by Tony Schafer, and is a leader in helping organizations couple their business initiatives with the technology to address those needs. DRI's "InformIT" managed services offerings proactively manage client infrastructure and strive to prevent problems before they occur. For more details, contact DRI at (317) 596-3650 or <http://www.DesktopResources.com>