Online Glossary L-Z

A GLOSSARY OF COMMON WEB TERMS

consumer brief

LCD stands for "Liquid Crystal Display." LCDs are super-thin displays that are used in laptop computer screens and flat panel monitors. Smaller LCDs are used in handheld TVs, PDAs, and portable video game devices. The image on an LCD screen is created by sandwiching an electrically reactive substance between two electrodes. This color of this substance can be changed by increasing or reducing the electrical current. Since LCD screens are based on the principle of blocking light (rather than emitting it), they use up much less power than standard CRT (Cathode-Ray Tube) monitors.

PDF– PDF stands for "Portable Document Format." PDF is a multi-platform file format developed by Adobe Systems. A PDF file captures document text, fonts, images, and even formatting of documents from a variety of applications. You can e-mail a PDF document to your friend and it will look the same way on his screen as it looks on yours, even if he has a Mac and you have a PC. Since PDFs contain color-accurate information, they should also print the same way they look on your screen. To view a PDF file, you need Adobe Reader, a free application program distributed by Adobe Systems. Adobe also makes an Acrobat Plug-in for Web browsers that enables PDF files to be viewed inside a browser window. For more information on PDFs, visit Abobe's PDF Page.
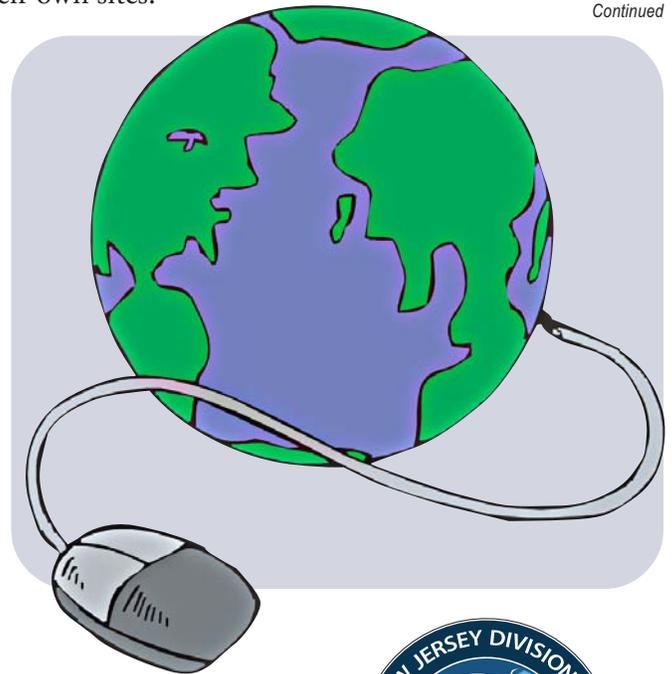
Phishing– The most common form of phishing is e-mail pretending to be from a legitimate retailer, bank or government organization. The sender asks you to confirm your personal information (Social Security numbers, financial account information, PIN numbers, mother's maiden name, etc.) and then uses your information fradulently.

Pharming– Similar in nature to phishing, pharming seeks to obtain personal and private (usually financial) information. A malicious program is secretly implanted in your computer and it then hijacks your Web browser. When you type in the name of a legitimate Web site, you are taken to a fake copy of the site without realizing it. Any personal information you supply to the fake site can be stolen and used fraudulently.

An **(Internet) Portal** is a Web site that acts as a starting point for browsing the Web. Portals typically include search engines and large directories of websites. Some popular portals are Yahoo, Excite, Lycos, Netscape, AltaVista, MSN, and AOL.com. There are also many smaller portals, known as "niche portals," for specific interests. These sites include C|net (for computers and technology), Fool.com (for investors), and Garden.com (for gardeners). Most large portals have millions of Web pages indexed for visitors to search though. They also have large directories of Web sites, which are categorized by topic. Though the primary purpose of a portal is to find other sites for you, many now include a lot of information within their own sites.

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Server—As the name implies, a server serves information to computers that connect to it. When users connect to a server, they can access programs, files, and other information from the server. Common servers are Web servers, mail servers, and LAN (Local Area Network) servers. A single computer can have several different server programs running on it.

Social Networking Websites enable people to create home pages and post their own content on the Web, allowing them to be a part of a virtual community. The two most popular sites are currently Facebook and MySpace. These websites provide users with simple tools to create a custom profile with text and pictures. A typical profile includes basic information about the user, at least one photo, and possibly a blog or other comments published by the user. Advanced profiles may include videos, photo albums, online applications (in Facebook), or custom layouts (in MySpace). After creating a profile, users can add friends, send messages to other users, and leave comments directly on friends' profiles. These features provide the building blocks for creating online communities.

Spam— Unsolicited commercial e-mail.

Spyware— Software installed on your computer, without your consent, to monitor and control your computer use. It may be used to send you pop-up ads, redirect your computer to Web sites, monitor your Internet surfing or record your keystrokes, which in turn could lead to identity theft.

URL— This is the abbreviation for Uniform Resource Locator, the addressing system used in the World Wide Web and other Internet resources. The URL contains information about the method of access, the server to be accessed and the path of any file to be accessed.

Virus— A software program which is capable of reproducing itself and is usually capable of causing great harm to files or other programs in the same computer.

VoIP stands for "Voice Over Internet Protocol." VoIP is a telephone connection over the Internet. The data is sent digitally, using the Internet Protocol (IP) instead of analog telephone lines. This allows people to talk to one another long-distance and around the world without having to pay long distance or international phone charges. In order to use VoIP, you need a computer, an Internet connection, and VoIP software. You also need either a microphone, analog telephone adapter, or VoIP telephone. Many VoIP programs allow you to use a basic microphone and speaker setup. Others requires VoIP phones, which are like regular telephone handsets, but typically connect to your computer via USB. Analog telephone adapters allow you to use regular phones with your computer. IP phones are another option that connect directly to a router via Ethernet or wirelessly. These phones have all the necessary software for VoIP built in and therefore do not require a computer. The largest provider of VoIP services is Vonage, but there are several other companies that offer similar services: Skype and PeerMe.

Web Page— An HTML document that is accessible on the Web.

WhoIs is an Internet service that finds information about a domain name or IP address. If you enter a domain name in a WHOIS search engine, it will scour a huge database of domains and return information about the one you entered. This information typically contains the name, address, and phone number of the administrative, billing, and technical contacts of the domain name. WHOIS can also be used to simply check if a certain domain name is available or if it has already been registered.

Worm— An independent program that replicates from machine to machine across network connections, often clogging networks and information systems as it spreads.

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