

most significant bit: The leftmost bit of a binary number. The most significant bit contributes the largest quantity to the value of the number. For example, in the binary number 10110 (decimal value 22), the leftmost bit has the decimal value 16 (2^4). Compare **least significant bit**.

mouse: A small device you move around on a flat surface next to your computer. The mouse controls a pointer on the screen whose movements correspond to those of the mouse. You use the pointer to select menu items, to move data, and to draw with in graphics programs.

mouse button: The button on the top of the mouse. In general, pressing the mouse button initiates some action on whatever is under the pointer, and releasing the button confirms the action.

nanosecond: One billionth of a second. Abbreviated ns.

nested loop: A loop contained within the body of another loop and executed repeatedly during each pass through the outer loop. See **loop**.

nested subroutine call: A call to a subroutine from within the body of another subroutine.

nibble: A unit of data equal to half a byte, or four bits. A nibble can hold any value from 0 to 15.

NOT: A unary logical operator that produces a true result if its operand is false, and a false result if its operand is true. Compare **AND**, **OR**, **exclusive OR**.

NTSC: (1) Abbreviation for *National Television Standards Committee*. The committee that defined the standard format used for transmitting broadcast video signals in the United States. (2) The standard video format defined by the NTSC.

object code: See **object program**.

object program: The translated form of a program produced by a language translator such as a compiler or assembler. Also called *object code*. Compare **source program**.

odd parity: In data transmission, the use of an extra bit set to 0 or 1 as necessary to make the total number of 1 bits an odd number; used as a means of error checking. Compare **even parity**, **MARK parity**.

opcode: See **operation code**.

Open Apple: A **control key** on the Apple II-family keyboards; on later keyboards, simply called the *Apple key*.

operand: A value to which an operator is applied. The value on which an operation code operates. Compare **argument**.

operating system: A program that organizes the actions of the parts of the computer and its peripheral devices.

operation code: The part of a machine-language instruction that specifies the operation to be performed. Often called *opcode*.

operator: A symbol or sequence of characters, such as + or AND, specifying an operation to be performed on one or more values (the operands) to produce a result. See **arithmetic operator**, **relational operator**, **logical operator**, **unary operator**, **binary operator**.

option: (1) Something chosen or available as a choice; for instance, items in a menu. (2) An **argument** whose provision is optional.

OR: A logical operator that produces a true result if either or both of its operands are true, and a false result if both of its operands are false. Compare **exclusive OR**, **AND**, **NOT**.

output: Information transferred from a computer to some external destination, such as the display screen, a disk drive, a printer, or a modem.

output routine: A machine-language routine that performs the sending of characters. The standard output routine sends characters to the screen. A different output routine might, for example, send them to a printer.