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Being a modern-day kid you must have used, seen, or read about computers. This is because they are an integral part of our everyday existence. Be it school, banks, shops, railway stations, hospital or your own home, computers are present everywhere, making our work easier and faster for us. As they are such integral parts of our lives, we must know what they are and how they function. Let us start with defining the term computer formally. The literal meaning of computer is a device that can calculate. However, modern computers can do a lot more than calculate. Computer is an electronic device that receives input, stores or processes the input as per user instructions and provides output in desired format. Input-Process-Output Model Computer input is called data and the output obtained after processing it, based on user's instructions is called information. Raw facts and figures which can be processed using arithmetic and logical operations to obtain information are called data. The processes that can be applied to data are of two types – Arithmetic operations – Examples include calculations like addition, subtraction, differentials, square root, etc. Logical operations – Examples include comparison operations like greater than, less than, equal to, opposite, etc. The corresponding figure for an actual computer looks something like this – The basic parts of a computer are as follows – Input Unit – Devices like keyboard and mouse that are used to input data and instructions to the computer are called input unit. Output Unit – Devices like printer and visual display unit that are used to provide information to the user in desired format are called output unit. Control Unit – As the name suggests, this unit controls all the functions of the computer. All devices or parts of computer interact through the control unit. Arithmetic Logic Unit – This is the brain of the computer where all arithmetic operations and logical operations take place. Memory – All input data, instructions and data interim to the processes are stored in the memory. Memory is of two types - primary memory and secondary memory. Primary memory resides within the CPU whereas secondary memory is external to it. Control unit, arithmetic logic unit and memory are together called the central processing unit or CPU. Computer devices like keyboard, mouse, printer, etc. that we can see and touch are the hardware components of a computer. The set of instructions or programs that make the computer function using these hardware parts are called software. We cannot see or touch software. Both hardware and software are necessary for working of a computer. Characteristics of Computer To understand why computers are such an important part of our lives, let us look at some of its characteristics – Speed – Typically, a computer can carry out 3-4 million instructions per second. Accuracy – Computers exhibit a very high degree of accuracy. Errors that may occur are usually due to inaccurate data, wrong instructions or bug in chips – all human errors. Reliability – Computers can carry out same type of work repeatedly without throwing up errors due to tiredness or boredom, which are very common among humans. Versatility – Computers can carry out a wide range of work from data entry and ticket booking to complex mathematical calculations and continuous astronomical observations. If you can input the necessary data with correct instructions, computer will do the processing. Storage Capacity – Computers can store a very large amount of data at a fraction of cost of traditional storage of files. Also, data is safe from normal wear and tear associated with paper. Advantages of Using Computer Now that we know the characteristics of computers, we can see the advantages that computers offer– Computers can do the same task repetitively with same accuracy. Computers do not get tired or bored. Computers can take up routine tasks while releasing human resource for more intelligent functions. Disadvantages of Using Computer Despite so many advantages, computers have some disadvantages of their own – Computers have no intelligence; they follow the instructions blindly without considering the outcome. Regular electric supply is necessary to make computers work, which could prove difficult everywhere especially in developing nations. Booting Starting a computer or a computer-embedded device is called booting. Booting takes place in two steps – Switching on power supply Loading operating system into computer's main memory Keeping all applications in a state of readiness in case needed by the user The first program or set of instructions that run when the computer is switched on is called BIOS or Basic Input Output System. BIOS is a firmware, i.e. a piece of software permanently programmed into the hardware. If a system is already running but needs to be restarted, it is called rebooting. Rebooting may be required if a software or hardware has been installed or system is unusually slow. There are two types of booting – Cold Booting – When the system is started by switching on the power supply it is called cold booting. The next step in cold booting is loading of BIOS. Warm Booting – When the system is already running and needs to be restarted or rebooted, it is called warm booting. Warm booting is faster than cold booting because BIOS is not reloaded. Ashutosh Sharma | Updated: Jun 14, 2021 18:35 IST A computer is an electronic device that accepts data/inputs from its user and processes it into useful information as per the processing instructions to generate the output. Computer fundamentals are an important part of the syllabus for several government exams, particularly the Banking exams, Railways, SSC, and more, conducted throughout the year.Through this article, learn about the basic fundamentals of computers, their applications in various domains, advantages, and disadvantages, followed by generations and types of computers.Fundamental of Computer: Basic As per our basic knowledge, an electronic device that accepts input/data and processes it into valuable information i.e output is named a Computer.Functionalities of ComputerIf we consider it in a very broad sense, any digital computer performs the following five operations:Step 1 – Accepts data as input. Step 2 – Saves the data/instructions in its memory and utilizes them as and when required.Step 3 – Execute the data and convert it into useful information.Step 4 – Provides the output.Step 5 – Have control over all the above four steps Generations of ComputerThere exist 5 computer generations till date. In the following list, approximate dates against each generation have been mentioned, which are normally accepted. These five generations of computers are based on their processing hardware.GenerationsPeriodTechnology UsedFirst Generation1946-1959Vacuum tube-basedSecond Generation1959-1965Transistor-basedThird Generation1965-1971Integrated Circuit basedFourth Generation1971-1980VLSI microprocessor-basedFifth Generation1980-onwardsULSI microprocessor-basedThese are single-user computer systems having small, relatively reasonable computers designed for an individual user. This type of computer can easily be moved from one place to the other comprising a personal storage unit, input & output unit, and a Central Processing Unit.WorkstationRegularly a single user system is named a workstation. Workstations usually come with a high-resolution graphics screen, inbuilt network support, a large amount of RAM, and a graphical user interface. They are often designed for self-use by an individual and can be used for multiple purposes. This type of system is not convenient for carrying from one place to another.Mini ComputerThese come under multiple user computer systems that are capable of holding hundreds of users simultaneously.MainFrameMainframe computers are also multi-user computer systems, capable of supporting hundreds of users simultaneously; designed to be used in large firms and organizations where a lot of people have to work on the same database. Software technology is different from minicomputers.SupercomputerThese are extremely fast computers, which can execute hundreds of millions of instructions per second. Supercomputers are mostly used in scientific and engineering operations where processing is difficult. They are costly and complex to work on.Learn more about other Types of Computers. Advantages of ComputerHigh SpeedThe computer is a very fast device.It can perform the calculation of a very huge amount of data.The computer has units of speed in a microsecond, nanosecond, and even the picosecond.It can process millions of computational calculations in a fraction of seconds, unlike the man who may spend many months performing the same task.AccuracyIn addition to being very fast, computers are very accurate.The calculations are 100% error-free. Computers perform all jobs with 100% accuracy provided that the input is correct.Storage CapabilityMemory is a very important characteristic of computers.A computer has much more storage capacity than human beings.It can store a large amount of data.It can store any type of data such as images, videos, text, audio, etc.DiligenceUnlike human beings, a computer is free from monotony, tiredness, and lack of concentration.It can work continuously without any error and boredom.It can perform repetitive tasks with the same speed and accuracy.VersatilityA computer is a very versatile machine.A computer is very flexible in performing the jobs to be done.This machine can be used to solve problems related to various fields.At one moment, it may be processing and simplifying a complex scientific problem, and the very next moment it may be running a card game.ReliabilityA computer is a reliable machine.Modern electronic components have long lives.Computers are designed to make maintenance easy.AutomationA computer is an automatic machine.Automation is the capability due to which a machine can perform its task without the need for human consideration. Once the program is fed to the computer i.e., the program is held in the computer memory, then the program and instruction can be executed in absence of human consideration.Reduction in Paperwork and CostWith the help of computers for data processing in an organization, there is a reduction of paperwork and results in speeding up the process, which in return saves trees.Because data saved as electronic files can be retrieved whenever required, the headache of maintaining piles of paper files gets reduced.While the investment at the beginning for the installation of a computer is high, it substantially reduces the cost of each of its transactions.Know more about the Different Versions of Windows here.Disadvantages of ComputerNo I.Q.A computer is a machine that has no intelligence to perform any task.Each instruction has to be given to the computer.A computer is not capable enough to make any decision on its own.DependencyIt works according to the user's instruction, thus it is entirely dependent on humans.EnvironmentThe operating environment of the computer should be dust-free and suitable.No FeelingsComputers have no feelings or emotions.It is not smart enough to make a judgment based on experience, feeling, taste, and knowledge just like humans.For more, download and install the Testbook App or visit the Testbook website for more updates on such similar topics from computer knowledge, and numerous such subjects, and can even check the test series available to examine your knowledge regarding various exams.Computer Fundamentals FAQsAns.1 The two main aspects of computers are: Input: The data that is inserted into the computer is termed the input. Input primarily is the raw data for which the system gives a meaningful outcome. Output: The response that the computer produces in return for the raw data entered, is termed output.Ans.2 Questions related to the background of computers, networking, the Internet, and other computer-associated terms are commonly asked in competitive exams.Ans.3 There are a total of five Generations of Computer, wherein each generation something different was discovered to improvise the functioning and the performance of computer systems.Ans.4 There are majorly 4-5 types of computers namely PC/Personal Computer, Workstation, Mini Computer, Supercomputer, and MainFrame Computer.Ans.5 Computer devices can be divided into: Hardware and Software. error: Content is protected !!

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