temp

COLLABORATORS			
	TITLE : temp		
ACTION	*NAME*	*DATE*	*SIGNATURE*
WRITTEN BY		February 6, 2023	

REVISION HISTORY			
NUMBER	DATE	DESCRIPTION	NAME

Contents

Chapter 1

temp

1.1 Jargon Lexicon Main Index

1.2 Information

» This AmigaGuide ® version of 'jargon300' was generated with
» 'J2AG v1.2', written by Svante Eriksson aka Flintlund
» Internet: d2ser@dtek.chalmers.se, FidoNet: 2:203/123.42

»» Processed by Ron Charlton (charlton@cs.utk.edu) 23-Apr-1994 to clean
»» up superfluous {:} and hand-edited to fix C functions mistaken for links.

This is the Jargon File, a comprehensive compendium of hacker slang
illuminating many aspects of hackish tradition, folklore, and humor.

This document (the Jargon File) is in the public domain, to be freely
used, shared, and modified. There are (by intention) no legal
restraints on what you can do with it, but there are traditions about
its proper use to which many hackers are quite strongly attached.
Please extend the courtesy of proper citation when you quote the File,
ideally with a version number, as it will change and grow over time.

(Examples of appropriate citation form: "Jargon File 3.0.0" or
"The on-line hacker Jargon File, version 3.0.0, 27 JUL 1993".)

The Jargon File is a common heritage of the hacker culture.
Over the years a number of individuals have volunteered considerable
time to maintaining the File and been recognized by the net at large
as editors of it. Editorial responsibilities include: to collate
contributions and suggestions from others; to seek out corroborating
information; to cross-reference related entries; to keep the file in a
consistent format; and to announce and distribute updated versions
periodically. Current volunteer editors include:

        Eric Raymond   esr@snark.thyrsus.com   (215)-296-5718

Although there is no requirement that you do so, it is considered good
form to check with an editor before quoting the File in a published work
or commercial product. We may have additional information that would be
helpful to you and can assist you in framing your quote to reflect
not only the letter of the File but its spirit as well.

All contributions and suggestions about this file sent to a volunteer
editor are gratefully received and will be regarded, unless otherwise
labelled, as freely given donations for possible use as part of this
public-domain file.

From time to time a snapshot of this file has been polished, edited,
and formatted for commercial publication with the cooperation of the
volunteer editors and the hacker community at large. If you wish to
have a bound paper copy of this file, you may find it convenient to
purchase one of these. They often contain additional material not
found in on-line versions. The two 'authorized' editions so far are
described in the Revision History section; there may be more in the
future.

1.3 Introduction

                Introduction:
****

                About This File

                Of Slang, Jargon, and Techspeak

                Revision History

1.4 How Jargon Works

                How Jargon Works:
****

```
                     Jargon Construction

                     Hacker Writing Style

                     Email Quotes and Inclusion Conventions

                     Hacker Speech Style

                     International Style
```

1.5 How to Use the Lexicon

```
                     How to Use the Lexicon:
**********************
```

```
                     Pronunciation Guide

                     Other Lexicon Conventions

                     Format For New Entries
```

1.6 The Jargon Lexicon

```
                     The Jargon Lexicon
*****************
```

```
                     = A =

                     = B =

                     = C =

                     = D =

                     = E =

                     = F =

                     = G =

                     = H =

                     = I =

                     = J =

                     = K =
```

```
                        = L =

                        = M =

                        = N =

                        = O =

                        = P =

                        = Q =

                        = R =

                        = S =

                        = T =

                        = U =

                        = V =

                        = W =

                        = X =

                        = Y =

                        = Z =

                        = [^A-Za-z] (see {regexp}) =
```

1.7 Appendix A

```
                Appendix A: Hacker Folklore
****************************
```

This appendix contains several legends and fables that illuminate the
meaning of various entries in the lexicon.

```
                The Meaning of 'Hack'

                TV Typewriters

                A Story About 'Magic'

                A Selection of AI Koans

                OS and JEDGAR

                The Story of Mel, a Real Programmer
```

1.8 Appendix B

```
                Appendix B: A Portrait of J. Random Hacker
**********************************************
```

This profile reflects detailed comments on an earlier 'trial balloon'
version from about a hundred USENET respondents. Where comparatives are
used, the implicit 'other' is a randomly selected segment of the
non-hacker population of the same size as hackerdom.

An important point: Except in some relatively minor respects such as
slang vocabulary, hackers don't get to be the way they are by imitating
each other. Rather, it seems to be the case that the combination of
personality traits that makes a hacker so conditions one's outlook on
life that one tends to end up being like other hackers whether one wants
to or not (much as bizarrely detailed similarities in behavior and
preferences are found in genetic twins raised separately).

```
                General Appearance

                Dress

                Reading Habits

                Other Interests

                Physical Activity and Sports

                Education

                Things Hackers Detest and Avoid

                Food

                Politics

                Gender and Ethnicity

                Religion

                Ceremonial Chemicals

                Communication Style

                Geographical Distribution

                Sexual Habits

                Personality Characteristics

                Weaknesses of the Hacker Personality
```

                 Miscellaneous

1.9   Appendix C

                 Appendix C: Bibliography
****

Here are some other books you can read to help you understand the hacker
mindset.

                 G¨odel, Escher, Bach

                 Illuminatus!

                 The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

                 The Tao of Programming

                 Hackers

                 The Devil's DP Dictionary

                 The Devouring Fungus

                 The Soul of a New Machine

                 Life with UNIX

                 True Names ... and Other Dangers

                 Cyberpunk

                 Technobabble

                 The Cuckoo's Egg

1.10   = A =

                 abbrev

                 ABEND

                 accumulator

                 ACK

                 ad-hockery

Ada

adger

admin

ADVENT

AFJ

AI

AI-complete

AI koans

AIDS

AIDX

airplane rule

aliasing bug

all-elbows

alpha particles

alt

alt bit

altmode

Aluminum Book

amoeba

amp off

amper

angle brackets

angry fruit salad

annoybot

AOS

app

arena

arg

```
ARMM

armor-plated

asbestos

asbestos cork award

asbestos longjohns

ASCII

ASCII art

ASCIIbetical order

atomic

attoparsec

autobogotiphobia

automagically

avatar

awk
```

1.11 = B =

```
back door

backbone cabal

backbone site

backgammon

background

backspace and overstrike

backward combatability

BAD

Bad Thing

bag on the side

bagbiter

bagbiting
```

bamf

banana label

banana problem

bandwidth

bang

bang on

bang path

banner

bar

bare metal

barf

barfmail

barfulation

barfulous

barney

baroque

BASIC

batch

bathtub curve

baud

baud barf

baz

bboard

BBS

beam

beanie key

beep

beige toaster

bells and whistles

bells, whistles, and gongs

benchmark

Berkeley Quality Software

berklix

Berzerkeley

beta

BFI

bible

BiCapitalization

BIFF

biff

Big Gray Wall

big iron

Big Red Switch

Big Room, the

big win

big-endian

bignum

bigot

bit

bit bang

bit bashing

bit bucket

bit decay

bit rot

bit twiddling

bit-paired keyboard

bitblt

BITNET

bits

bitty box

bixie

black art

black hole

black magic

blargh

blast

blat

bletch

bletcherous

blinkenlights

blit

blitter

blivet

BLOB

block

block transfer computations

Bloggs Family, the

blow an EPROM

blow away

blow out

blow past

blow up

BLT

Blue Book

Blue Glue

blue goo

blue wire

blurgle

BNF

boa

board

boat anchor

BOF

bogo-sort

bogometer

bogon

bogon filter

bogon flux

bogosity

bogotify

bogue out

bogus

Bohr bug

boink

bomb

bondage-and-discipline language

bonk/oif

book titles

boot

bottom feeder

bottom-up implementation

bounce

bounce message

boustrophedon

box

boxed comments

boxen

boxology

bozotic

BQS

brain dump

brain fart

brain-damaged

brain-dead

braino

branch to Fishkill

bread crumbs

break

break-even point

breath-of-life packet

breedle

bring X to its knees

brittle

broadcast storm

brochureware

broken

broken arrow

broket

Brooks's Law

BRS

brute force

brute force and ignorance

BSD

BUAF

BUAG

bubble sort

bucky bits

buffer overflow

bug

bug-compatible

bug-for-bug compatible

buglix

bulletproof

bum

bump

burble

buried treasure

burn-in period

burst page

busy-wait

buzz

BWQ

by hand

byte

bytesexual

bzzzt, wrong

1.12 = C =

C

C Programmer's Disease

calculator

can

can't happen

candygrammar

canonical

card walloper

careware

cargo cult programming

cascade

case and paste

casters-up mode

casting the runes

cat

catatonic

cd tilde

cdr

chad

chad box

chain

channel

channel hopping

channel op

chanop

char

charityware

chase pointers

check

chemist

Chernobyl chicken

Chernobyl packet

chicken head

chiclet keyboard

chine nual

Chinese Army technique

choke

chomp

chomper

CHOP

Christmas tree

Christmas tree packet

chrome

chug

Church of the SubGenius

Cinderella Book

CI$

Classic C

clean

CLM

clobber

clocks

clone

clone-and-hack coding

clover key

clustergeeking

COBOL

COBOL fingers

code grinder

code police

```
codes

codewalker

coefficient of X

cokebottle

cold boot

COME FROM

comm mode

command key

comment out

Commonwealth Hackish

compact

compiler jock

compress

Compu$erve

computer confetti

computer geek

computron

con

condition out

condom

confuser

connector conspiracy

cons

considered harmful

console

console jockey

content-free

control-C
```

control-O

control-Q

control-S

Conway's Law

cookbook

cooked mode

cookie

cookie bear

cookie file

cookie jar

cookie monster

copious free time

copper

copy protection

copybroke

copyleft

copywronged

core

core cancer

core dump

core leak

Core Wars

corge

cosmic rays

cough and die

cowboy

CP/M

CPU Wars

crack root

cracker

cracking

crank

CrApTeX

crash

crash and burn

crawling horror

cray

cray instability

crayola

crayola books

crayon

creationism

creep

creeping elegance

creeping featurism

creeping featuritis

cretin

cretinous

crippleware

critical mass

crlf

crock

cross-post

crudware

cruft

cruft together

cruftsmanship

crufty

crumb

crunch

cruncha cruncha cruncha

cryppie

CTSS

CTY

cube

cubing

cursor dipped in X

cuspy

cut a tape

cybercrud

cyberpunk

cyberspace

cycle

cycle crunch

cycle drought

cycle of reincarnation

cycle server

1.13   = D =

D. C. Power Lab

daemon

dangling pointer

dark-side hacker

Datamation

DAU

day mode

dd

DDT

de-rezz

dead

dead code

DEADBEEF

deadlock

deadly embrace

death code

Death Star

DEC

dec

DEC Wars

decay

DEChead

deckle

DED

deep hack mode

deep magic

deep space

defenestration

defined as

dehose

delint

delta

demented

demigod

demo

demo mode

demon

depeditate

deprecated

deserves to lose

desk check

despew

Devil Book

devo

dickless workstation

dictionary flame

diddle

die

die horribly

diff

digit

dike

ding

dink

dinosaur

dinosaur pen

dinosaurs mating

dirtball

dirty power

disclaimer

Discordianism

disk farm

display hack

Dissociated Press

distribution

disusered

do protocol

doc

doco

documentation

dodgy

dogcow

dogpile

dogwash

domainist

Don't do that, then!

dongle

dongle-disk

donuts

doorstop

dot file

double bucky

double DECkers

doubled sig

down

download

DP

DPB

DPer

dragon

Dragon Book

drain

dread high-bit disease

DRECNET

driver

droid

drool-proof paper

drop on the floor

drop-ins

drop-outs

drugged

drum

drunk mouse syndrome

Duff's device

dumb terminal

dumbass attack

dumbed down

dump

dumpster diving

dup killer

dup loop

dusty deck

DWIM

dynner

1.14 = E =

earthquake

Easter egg

Easter egging

eat flaming death

EBCDIC

echo

eighty-column mind

El Camino Bignum

elder days

elegant

elephantine

elevator controller

ELIZA effect

elvish

EMACS

email

emoticon

empire

engine

English

enhancement

ENQ

EOF

EOL

EOU

epoch

epsilon

epsilon squared

era, the

Eric Conspiracy

Eris

erotics

```
error 33

evil

evil and rude

exa-

examining the entrails

EXCH

excl

EXE

exec

exercise, left as an

external memory

eyeball search
```

1.15   = F =

```
face time

factor

fall over

fall through

fan

fandango on core

FAQ

FAQ list

FAQL

faradize

farkled

farming

fascist

fat electrons
```

faulty

fd leak

fear and loathing

feature

feature creature

feature key

feature shock

featurectomy

feep

feeper

feeping creature

feeping creaturism

feetch feetch

fence

fencepost error

fepped out

FidoNet

field circus

field servoid

Fight-o-net

File Attach

File Request

file signature

filk

film at 11

filter

Finagle's Law

fine

finger

finger-pointing syndrome

finn

firebottle

firefighting

firehose syndrome

firewall code

firewall machine

fireworks mode

firmy

fish

FISH queue

FITNR

fix

FIXME

flag

flag day

flaky

flamage

flame

flame bait

flame on

flame war

flamer

flap

flarp

flat

flat-ASCII

flat-file

flatten

flavor

flavorful

flippy

flood

flowchart

flower key

flush

flypage

Flyspeck 3

flytrap

FM

fnord

FOAF

FOD

fold case

followup

fontology

foo

foobar

fool

fool file, the

Foonly

footprint

for free

for the rest of us

for values of

fora

foreground

fork bomb

forked

Fortrash

fortune cookie

forum

fossil

four-color glossies

fragile

fred

frednet

freeware

freeze

fried

frink

friode

fritterware

frob

frobnicate

frobnitz

frog

frogging

front end

frotz

frotzed

frowney

fry

FTP

FUBAR

fuck me harder

FUD

FUD wars

fudge

fudge factor

fuel up

fum

funky

funny money

furrfu

fuzzball

1.16 = G =

G

gabriel

gag

gang bang

garbage collect

garply

gas

gaseous

GC

GCOS

GECOS

gedanken

geef

geek out

gen

gender mender

General Public Virus

generate

gensym

Get a life!

Get a real computer!

GFR

gig

giga-

GIGO

gilley

gillion

GIPS

glark

glass

glass tty

glassfet

glitch

glob

glork

glue

gnarly

GNU

GNUMACS

go flatline

go root

go-faster stripes

gobble

Godzillagram

golden

golf-ball printer

gonk

gonkulator

gonzo

Good Thing

gorets

gorilla arm

gorp

GOSMACS

Gosperism

gotcha

GPL

GPV

grault

gray goo

Great Renaming

Great Runes

Great Worm, the

great-wall

Green Book

green bytes

green card

green lightning

green machine

Green's Theorem

grep

grilf

grind

grind crank

gripenet

gritch

grok

gronk

gronk out

gronked

grovel

grunge

gubbish

guiltware

gumby

gun

gunch

gurfle

guru

guru meditation

gweep

1.17 = H =

h

ha ha only serious

hack

hack attack

hack mode

hack on

hack together

hack up

hack value

hacked off

hacked up

hacker

hacker ethic, the

hacking run

Hacking X for Y

Hackintosh

hackish

hackishness

hackitude

hair

hairy

HAKMEM

hakspek

hammer

hamster

hand cruft

hand-hacking

handle

hand-roll

handshaking

handwave

hang

Hanlon's Razor

happily

haque

hard boot

hardcoded

hardwarily

hardwired

has the X nature

hash bucket

hash collision

hat

HCF

heads down

heartbeat

heatseeker

heavy metal

heavy wizardry

heavyweight

heisenbug

Helen Keller mode

hello, sailor!

hello, wall!

hello, world

hex

hexadecimal

hexit

HHOK

HHOS

hidden flag

high bit

high moby

highly

hing

hirsute

HLL

hobbit

hog

holy wars

home box

home machine

hook

hop

hose

hosed

hot spot

house wizard

HP-SUX

huff

humma

Humor, Hacker

hung

hungry puppy

hungus

hyperspace

hysterical reasons

1.18 = I =

I didn't change anything!

I see no X here.

IBM

IBM discount

ICBM address

ice

idempotent

If you want X, you know where to find it.

ifdef out

ill-behaved

IMHO

Imminent Death Of The Net Predicted!

in the extreme

inc

incantation

include

include war

indent style

index

infant mortality

infinite

infinite loop

Infinite-Monkey Theorem

infinity

initgame

insanely great

INTERCAL

interesting

Internet address

interrupt

interrupt list, the

interrupts locked out

```
IRC

iron

Iron Age

iron box

ironmonger

ITS

IWBNI

IYFEG
```

1.19 = J =

```
J. Random

J. Random Hacker

jack in

jaggies

JCL

JEDR

JFCL

jiffy

job security

jock

joe code

jolix

JR[LN]

JRST

juggling eggs

jump off into never-never land

jupiter
```

1.20   = K =

```
K

K&R

kahuna

kamikaze packet

kangaroo code

ken

kgbvax

KIBO

kiboze

kick

kill file

killer micro

killer poke

kilo-

KIPS

KISS Principle

kit

klone

kludge

kluge

kluge around

kluge up

Knights of the Lambda Calculus

Knuth

kremvax

kyrka
```

1.20   = K =

1.21 = L =

lace card

language lawyer

languages of choice

larval stage

lase

laser chicken

Lasherism

laundromat

LDB

leaf site

leak

leaky heap

leapfrog attack

legal

legalese

LER

LERP

let the smoke out

letterbomb

lexer

lexiphage

life

Life is hard

light pipe

lightweight

like kicking dead whales down the beach

like nailing jelly to a tree

line 666

line eater, the

line noise

line starve

link farm

link-dead

lint

lion food

Lions Book

LISP

literature, the

lithium lick

little-endian

live data

Live Free Or Die!

livelock

liveware

lobotomy

locals, the

locked and loaded

locked up

logic bomb

logical

loop through

loose bytes

lord high fixer

lose

lose lose

loser

```
losing

loss

lossage

lost in the noise

lost in the underflow

lots of MIPS but no I/O

low-bandwidth

LPT

Lubarsky's Law of Cybernetic Entomology

lunatic fringe

lurker

luser
```

1.22   = M =

```
M

macdink

machinable

machoflops

Macintoy

Macintrash

macro

macro-

macrology

macrotape

maggotbox

magic

magic cookie

magic number
```

magic smoke

mailbomb

mailing list

main loop

mainframe

management

mandelbug

manged

mangle

mangler

mango

manularity

marbles

marginal

Marginal Hacks

marginally

marketroid

Mars

martian

massage

math-out

Matrix

maximum Maytag mode

Mbogo, Dr. Fred

meatware

meeces

meg

mega-

megapenny

MEGO

meltdown, network

meme

meme plague

memetics

memory farts

memory leak

memory smash

menuitis

mess-dos

meta

meta bit

metasyntactic variable

MFTL

mickey

mickey mouse program

micro-

MicroDroid

microfloppies

microfortnight

microLenat

microReid

Microsloth Windows

microtape

middle-endian

milliLampson

minifloppies

MIPS

misbug

misfeature

Missed'em-five

missile address

miswart

moby

mockingbird

mod

mode

mode bit

modulo

molly-guard

Mongolian Hordes technique

monkey up

monkey, scratch

monstrosity

monty

Moof

Moore's Law

moose call

moria

MOTAS

MOTOS

MOTSS

mouse ahead

mouse around

mouse belt

mouse droppings

mouse elbow

mouso

MS-DOS

mu

MUD

muddie

mudhead

multician

Multics

multitask

mumblage

mumble

munch

munching

munching squares

munchkin

mundane

mung

munge

Murphy's Law

music

mutter

1.23 = N =

N

nadger

nagware

nailed to the wall

nailing jelly

naive

naive user

NAK

nano

nano-

nanoacre

nanobot

nanocomputer

nanofortnight

nanotechnology

nasal demons

nastygram

Nathan Hale

nature

neat hack

neats vs. scruffies

neep-neep

neophilia

net.-

net.god

net.personality

net.police

NetBOLLIX

netburp

netdead

nethack

netiquette

netlag

netnews

netrock

netsplit

netter

network address

network meltdown

network, the

New Jersey

New Testament

newbie

newgroup wars

newline

NeWS

news

newsfroup

newsgroup

nick

nickle

night mode

Nightmare File System

NIL

Ninety-Ninety Rule

NMI

no-op

noddy

NOMEX underwear

Nominal Semidestructor

non-optimal solution

nonlinear

nontrivial

not ready for prime time

notwork

NP-

nroff

NSA line eater

nude

nuke

number-crunching

numbers

NUXI problem

nybble

nyetwork

1.24 = O =

Ob-

Obfuscated C Contest

obi-wan error

Objectionable-C

obscure

octal forty

off the trolley

off-by-one error

offline

ogg

old fart

Old Testament

```
one-banana problem

one-line fix

one-liner wars

ooblick

op

open

Open DeathTrap

open switch

operating system

optical diff

optical grep

optimism

Orange Book

oriental food

orphan

orphaned i-node

orthogonal

OS

OS/2

out-of-band

overflow bit

overflow pdl

overrun

overrun screw
```

1.25   = P =

```
P-mail

P.O.D.
```

padded cell

page in

page out

pain in the net

paper-net

param

PARC

parent message

parity errors

Parkinson's Law of Data

parm

parse

Pascal

pastie

patch

patch space

path

pathological

payware

PBD

PC-ism

PD

PDL

pdl

PDP-10

PDP-20

peek

pencil and paper

peon

percent-S

perf

perfect programmer syndrome

Perl

person of no account

pessimal

pessimizing compiler

peta-

PETSCII

phage

phase

phase of the moon

phase-wrapping

phreaking

pico-

pig, run like a

pilot error

ping

Pink-Shirt Book

PIP

pistol

pizza box

pizza, ANSI standard

plaid screen

plain-ASCII

plan file

platinum-iridium

playpen

playte

plingnet

plokta

plonk

plugh

plumbing

PM

pnambic

pod

point-and-drool interface

poke

poll

polygon pusher

POM

pop

POPJ

post

postcardware

posting

postmaster

PostScript

pound on

power cycle

power hit

PPN

precedence lossage

prepend

prestidigitization

pretty pictures

prettyprint

pretzel key

prime time

printing discussion

priority interrupt

profile

proglet

program

Programmer's Cheer

programming

programming fluid

propeller head

propeller key

proprietary

protocol

provocative maintenance

prowler

pseudo

pseudoprime

pseudosuit

psychedelicware

psyton

pubic directory

puff

punched card

punt

Purple Book

purple wire

push

1.26 = Q =

quad

quadruple bucky

quantifiers

quantum bogodynamics

quarter

ques

quick-and-dirty

quine

quote chapter and verse

quotient

quux

qux

QWERTY

1.27 = R =

rabbit job

rain dance

rainbow series

random

random numbers

randomness

rape

rare mode

raster blaster

raster burn

rat belt

rave

rave on!

ravs

raw mode

rc file

RE

read-only user

README file

real

real estate

real hack

real operating system

Real Programmer

Real Soon Now

real time

real user

Real World

reality check

reaper

rectangle slinger

recursion

recursive acronym

Red Book

red wire

regexp

register dancing

reincarnation, cycle of

reinvent the wheel

religion of CHI

religious issues

replicator

reply

restriction

retcon

RETI

retrocomputing

return from the dead

RFC

RFE

rib site

rice box

Right Thing

RL

roach

robot

robust

rococo

rogue

room-temperature IQ

root

root mode

rot13

rotary debugger

round tape

RSN

```
RTBM

RTFAQ

RTFB

RTFM

RTFS

RTI

RTM

rude

runes

runic

rusty iron

rusty memory
```

1.28   = S =

```
S/N ratio

sacred

saga

sagan

SAIL

salescritter

salt

salt mines

salt substrate

same-day service

samizdat

samurai

sandbender

sandbox
```

sanity check

Saturday-night special

say

scag

scanno

schroedinbug

science-fiction fandom

scram switch

scratch

scratch monkey

scream and die

screaming tty

screw

screwage

scribble

scrog

scrool

scrozzle

scruffies

SCSI

ScumOS

search-and-destroy mode

second-system effect

secondary damage

security through obscurity

SED

segfault

seggie

segment

segmentation fault

segv

self-reference

selvage

semi

semi-infinite

senior bit

server

SEX

sex changer

shambolic link

sharchive

Share and enjoy!

shareware

shelfware

shell

shell out

shift left (or right) logical

shim

shitogram

short card

shotgun debugging

shovelware

showstopper

shriek

Shub-Internet

sidecar

SIG

sig block

sig quote

sig virus

signal-to-noise ratio

silicon

silly walk

silo

Silver Book

since time T equals minus infinity

sitename

skrog

skulker

slack

slap on the side

slash

sleep

slim

slop

slopsucker

slurp

smart

smart terminal

smash case

smash the stack

smiley

smoke

smoke and mirrors

smoke test

smoking clover

SMOP

smurf

SNAFU principle

snail

snail-mail

snap

snarf

snarf & barf

snarf down

snark

sneakernet

sniff

snivitz

SO

social engineering

social science number

soft boot

softcopy

software bloat

software laser

software rot

softwarily

softy

some random X

sorcerer's apprentice mode

SOS

source of all good bits

space-cadet keyboard

SPACEWAR

spaghetti code

spaghetti inheritance

spam

special-case

speedometer

spell

spelling flame

spiffy

spike

spin

spl

splash screen

splat

spod

spoiler

sponge

spoo

spooge

spool

spool file

square tape

stack

stack puke

stale pointer bug

state

steam-powered

stiffy

stir-fried random

stomp on

Stone Age

stone knives and bearskins

stoppage

store

strided

stroke

strudel

stubroutine

studly

studlycaps

stunning

stupid-sort

Stupids

Sturgeon's Law

sucking mud

sufficiently small

suit

suitable win

suitably small

sun lounge

sun-stools

sunspots

super source quench

superprogrammer

superuser

support

Suzie COBOL

```
swab

swap

swap space

swapped in

swapped out

swizzle

sync

syntactic salt

syntactic sugar

sys-frog

sysadmin

sysape

sysop

system

systems jock

system mangler

SysVile
```

1.29   = T =

```
T

tail recursion

talk mode

talker system

tall card

tanked

TANSTAAFL

tar and feather

taste
```

tayste

TCB

tea, ISO standard cup of

TechRef

TECO

tee

teledildonics

Telerat

TELNET

ten-finger interface

tense

tenured graduate student

tera-

teraflop club

terminak

terminal brain death

terminal illness

terminal junkie

terpri

test

TeX

text

thanks in advance

That's not a bug, that's a feature!

the X that can be Y is not the true X

theology

theory

thinko

This can't happen

This time, for sure!

thrash

thread

three-finger salute

thud

thumb

thunk

tick

tick-list features

tickle a bug

tiger team

time bomb

time sink

time T

times-or-divided-by

tip of the ice-cube

tired iron

tits on a keyboard

TLA

TMRC

TMRCie

to a first approximation

to a zeroth approximation

toast

toaster

toeprint

toggle

tool

toolsmith

topic drift

topic group

TOPS-10

TOPS-20

toto

tourist

tourist information

touristic

toy

toy language

toy problem

toy program

trampoline

trap

trap door

trash

trawl

tree-killer

treeware

trit

trivial

troff

troglodyte

troglodyte mode

Trojan horse

tron

true-hacker

tty

tube

tube time

tunafish

tune

turbo nerd

Turing tar-pit

turist

tweak

tweeter

TWENEX

twiddle

twilight zone

twink

twirling baton

two pi

two-to-the-N

twonkie

1.30 = U =

UBD

UN*X

undefined external reference

under the hood

undocumented feature

uninteresting

UNIX

UNIX brain damage

UNIX conspiracy

UNIX weenie

unixism

unleaded

unswizzle

unwind the stack

unwind-protect

up

upload

upthread

urchin

USENET

user

user-friendly

user-obsequious

USG UNIX

UTSL

UUCPNET

1.31   = V =

vadding

vanilla

vannevar

vaporware

var

VAX

VAXectomy

VAXen

vaxherd

vaxism

vaxocentrism

vdiff

veeblefester

ventilator card

Venus flytrap

verbage

verbiage

Version 7

vgrep

vi

videotex

virgin

virtual

virtual Friday

virtual reality

virtual shredder

virus

visionary

VMS

voice

voice-net

voodoo programming

VR

Vulcan nerve pinch

vulture capitalist

1.32 = W =

wabbit

WAITS

waldo

walk

walk off the end of

walking drives

wall

wall follower

wall time

wallpaper

wango

wank

wannabee

warlording

warm boot

wart

washing machine

water MIPS

wave a dead chicken

weasel

wedged

wedgie

wedgitude

weeble

weeds

weenie

Weenix

well-behaved

well-connected

wetware

whack

whacker

whales

whalesong

What's a spline?

wheel

wheel bit

wheel wars

White Book

whizzy

WIBNI

widget

wiggles

WIMP environment

win

win big

win win

Winchester

window shopping

Windoze

winged comments

winkey

winnage

winner

winnitude

wired

wirehead

wirewater

wish list

within delta of

within epsilon of

wizard

Wizard Book

wizard mode

wizardly

womb box

WOMBAT

wonky

woofer

workaround

working as designed

worm

wound around the axle

wrap around

write-only code

write-only language

write-only memory

Wrong Thing

wugga wugga

wumpus

WYSIAYG

WYSIWYG

1.33   = X =

```
X

XEROX PARC

XOFF

XON

xor

xref

XXX

xyzzy
```

1.34   = Y =

```
YA-

YABA

YAFIYGI

YAUN

Yellow Book

yellow wire

Yet Another

YKYBHTLW

You are not expected to understand this

You know you've been hacking too long when...

Your mileage may vary

Yow!

yoyo mode

Yu-Shiang Whole Fish
```

1.35   = Z =

```
zap

zapped

zen

zero

zero-content

zeroth

zigamorph

zip

zipperhead

zombie

zorch

Zork

zorkmid
```

1.36   = [ˆA-Za-z] (see {regexp}) =

```
'Snooze

(TM)

-oid

-ware

/dev/null

0

1TBS

120 reset

2

@-party

@Begin

\begin

(Lexicon Entries End Here)
```

1.37   About This File

                       About This File:
==================

This document is a collection of slang terms used by various subcultures
of computer hackers. Though some technical material is included for
background and flavor, it is not a technical dictionary; what we
describe here is the language hackers use among themselves for fun,
social communication, and technical debate.

The 'hacker culture' is actually a loosely networked collection of
subcultures that is nevertheless conscious of some important shared
experiences, shared roots, and shared values. It has its own myths,
heroes, villains, folk epics, in-jokes, taboos, and dreams. Because
hackers as a group are particularly creative people who define
themselves partly by rejection of 'normal' values and working habits, it
has unusually rich and conscious traditions for an intentional culture
less than 35 years old.

As usual with slang, the special vocabulary of hackers helps hold their
culture together --- it helps hackers recognize each other's places in
the community and expresses shared values and experiences. Also as
usual, *not* knowing the slang (or using it inappropriately) defines one
as an outsider, a mundane, or (worst of all in hackish vocabulary)
possibly even a
                 suit
                 . All human cultures use slang in this threefold
way --- as a tool of communication, and of inclusion, and of exclusion.

Among hackers, though, slang has a subtler aspect, paralleled perhaps in
the slang of jazz musicians and some kinds of fine artists but hard to
detect in most technical or scientific cultures; parts of it are code
for shared states of *consciousness*. There is a whole range of altered
states and problem-solving mental stances basic to high-level hacking
which don't fit into conventional linguistic reality any better than a
Coltrane solo or one of Maurits Escher's 'trompe l'oeil' compositions
(Escher is a favorite of hackers), and hacker slang encodes these
subtleties in many unobvious ways. As a simple example, take the
distinction between a
                 kluge
                  and an
                 elegant
                  solution, and the
differing connotations attached to each. The distinction is not only of
engineering significance; it reaches right back into the nature of the
generative processes in program design and asserts something important
about two different kinds of relationship between the hacker and the
hack. Hacker slang is unusually rich in implications of this kind, of
overtones and undertones that illuminate the hackish psyche.

But there is more. Hackers, as a rule, love wordplay and are very
conscious and inventive in their use of language. These traits seem to

be common in young children, but the conformity-enforcing machine we are
pleased to call an educational system bludgeons them out of most of us
before adolescence. Thus, linguistic invention in most subcultures of
the modern West is a halting and largely unconscious process. Hackers,
by contrast, regard slang formation and use as a game to be played for
conscious pleasure. Their inventions thus display an almost unique
combination of the neotenous enjoyment of language-play with the
discrimination of educated and powerful intelligence. Further, the
electronic media which knit them together are fluid, 'hot' connections,
well adapted to both the dissemination of new slang and the ruthless
culling of weak and superannuated specimens. The results of this
process give us perhaps a uniquely intense and accelerated view of
linguistic evolution in action.

Hackish slang also challenges some common linguistic and
anthropological assumptions. For example, it has recently become
fashionable to speak of 'low-context' versus 'high-context'
communication, and to classify cultures by the preferred context level
of their languages and art forms. It is usually claimed that
low-context communication (characterized by precision, clarity, and
completeness of self-contained utterances) is typical in cultures
which value logic, objectivity, individualism, and competition; by
contrast, high-context communication (elliptical, emotive,
nuance-filled, multi-modal, heavily coded) is associated with cultures
which value subjectivity, consensus, cooperation, and tradition. What
then are we to make of hackerdom, which is themed around extremely
low-context interaction with computers and exhibits primarily
"low-context" values, but cultivates an almost absurdly high-context
slang style?

The intensity and consciousness of hackish invention make a compilation
of hacker slang a particularly effective window into the surrounding
culture --- and, in fact, this one is the latest version of an evolving
compilation called the 'Jargon File', maintained by hackers themselves
for over 15 years. This one (like its ancestors) is primarily a
lexicon, but also includes 'topic entries' which collect background or
sidelight information on hacker culture that would be awkward to try to
subsume under individual entries.

Though the format is that of a reference volume, it is intended that the
material be enjoyable to browse. Even a complete outsider should find
at least a chuckle on nearly every page, and much that is amusingly
thought-provoking. But it is also true that hackers use humorous
wordplay to make strong, sometimes combative statements about what they
feel. Some of these entries reflect the views of opposing sides in
disputes that have been genuinely passionate; this is deliberate. We
have not tried to moderate or pretty up these disputes; rather we have
attempted to ensure that *everyone's* sacred cows get gored,
impartially. Compromise is not particularly a hackish virtue, but the
honest presentation of divergent viewpoints is.

The reader with minimal computer background who finds some references
incomprehensibly technical can safely ignore them. We have not felt it
either necessary or desirable to eliminate all such; they, too,
contribute flavor, and one of this document's major intended audiences
--- fledgling hackers already partway inside the culture --- will
benefit from them.

A selection of longer items of hacker folklore and humor is included in

. The 'outside' reader's attention is particularly directed
to
, "A Portrait of J. Random Hacker".
 is a
bibliography of non-technical works which have either influenced or
described the hacker culture.

Because hackerdom is an intentional culture (one each individual must
choose by action to join), one should not be surprised that the line
between description and influence can become more than a little
blurred. Earlier versions of the Jargon File have played a central role
in spreading hacker language and the culture that goes with it to
successively larger populations, and we hope and expect that this one
will do likewise.

1.38   Of Slang, Jargon, and Techspeak

                    Of Slang, Jargon, and Techspeak:
==================================

Linguists usually refer to informal language as 'slang' and reserve the
term 'jargon' for the technical vocabularies of various occupations.
However, the ancestor of this collection was called the 'Jargon File',
and hackish slang is traditionally 'the jargon'. When talking about the
jargon there is therefore no convenient way to distinguish it from what
a *linguist* would call hackers' jargon --- the formal vocabulary they
learn from textbooks, technical papers, and manuals.

To make a confused situation worse, the line between hackish slang and
the vocabulary of technical programming and computer science is fuzzy,
and shifts over time. Further, this vocabulary is shared with a wider
technical culture of programmers, many of whom are not hackers and do
not speak or recognize hackish slang.

Accordingly, this lexicon will try to be as precise as the facts of
usage permit about the distinctions among three categories:

  * 'slang': informal language from mainstream English or non-technical
    subcultures (bikers, rock fans, surfers, etc).

  * 'jargon': without qualifier, denotes informal 'slangy' language
    peculiar to or predominantly found among hackers --- the subject of
    this lexicon.

  * 'techspeak': the formal technical vocabulary of programming,
    computer science, electronics, and other fields connected to
    hacking.

This terminology will be consistently used throughout the remainder of
this lexicon.

The jargon/techspeak distinction is the delicate one. A lot of
techspeak originated as jargon, and there is a steady continuing uptake
of jargon into techspeak. On the other hand, a lot of jargon arises
from overgeneralization of techspeak terms (there is more about this in
the "Jargon Construction" section below).

In general, we have considered techspeak any term that communicates
primarily by a denotation well established in textbooks, technical
dictionaries, or standards documents.

A few obviously techspeak terms (names of operating systems, languages,
or documents) are listed when they are tied to hacker folklore that
isn't covered in formal sources, or sometimes to convey critical
historical background necessary to understand other entries to which
they are cross-referenced. Some other techspeak senses of jargon words
are listed in order to make the jargon senses clear; where the text does
not specify that a straight technical sense is under discussion, these
are marked with '[techspeak]' as an etymology. Some entries have a
primary sense marked this way, with subsequent jargon meanings explained
in terms of it.

We have also tried to indicate (where known) the apparent origins of
terms. The results are probably the least reliable information in the
lexicon, for several reasons. For one thing, it is well known that many
hackish usages have been independently reinvented multiple times, even
among the more obscure and intricate neologisms. It often seems that
the generative processes underlying hackish jargon formation have an
internal logic so powerful as to create substantial parallelism across
separate cultures and even in different languages! For another, the
networks tend to propagate innovations so quickly that 'first use' is
often impossible to pin down. And, finally, compendia like this one
alter what they observe by implicitly stamping cultural approval on
terms and widening their use.

Despite these problems, the organized collection of jargon-related oral
history for the File's 2.x.x versions has enabled us to put to rest
quite a number of folk etymologies, place credit where credit is due,
and illuminate the early history of many important hackerisms such as

                kluge
                ,
                cruft
                , and
                foo
                . We believe specialist lexicographers will
find many of the historical notes more than casually instructive.

1.39   Revision History

                    Revision History:
===================

The original Jargon File was a collection of hacker jargon from
technical cultures including the MIT AI Lab, the Stanford AI lab (SAIL),
and others of the old ARPANET AI/LISP/PDP-10 communities including Bolt,
Beranek and Newman (BBN), Carnegie-Mellon University (CMU), and
Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI).

The Jargon File (hereafter referred to as 'jargon-1' or 'the File') was
begun by Raphael Finkel at Stanford in 1975. From this time until the
plug was finally pulled on the SAIL computer in 1991, the File was named
AIWORD.RF[UP,DOC] there. Some terms in it date back considerably
earlier (
                    frob
                     and some senses of
                    moby
                    , for instance, go back to the
Tech Model Railroad Club at MIT and are believed to date at least back
to the early 1960s). The revisions of jargon-1 were all unnumbered and
may be collectively considered 'Version 1'.

In 1976, Mark Crispin, having seen an announcement about the File on the
SAIL computer,
                    FTP
                    ed a copy of the File to MIT. He noticed that it
was hardly restricted to 'AI words' and so stored the file on his
directory as AI:MRC;SAIL JARGON.

The file was quickly renamed JARGON > (the '>' caused versioning under
ITS) as a flurry of enhancements were made by Mark Crispin and Guy L.
Steele Jr. Unfortunately, amidst all this activity, nobody thought of
correcting the term 'jargon' to 'slang' until the compendium had already
become widely known as the Jargon File.

Raphael Finkel dropped out of active participation shortly thereafter
and Don Woods became the SAIL contact for the File (which was
subsequently kept in duplicate at SAIL and MIT, with periodic
resynchronizations).

The File expanded by fits and starts until about 1983; Richard Stallman
was prominent among the contributors, adding many MIT and ITS-related
coinages.

In Spring 1981, a hacker named Charles Spurgeon got a large chunk of the
File published in Stewart Brand's "CoEvolution Quarterly" (issue 29,
pages 26--35) with illustrations by Phil Wadler and Guy Steele
(including a couple of the Crunchly cartoons). This appears to have
been the File's first paper publication.

A late version of jargon-1, expanded with commentary for the mass
market, was edited by Guy Steele into a book published in 1983 as "The
Hacker's Dictionary" (Harper & Row CN 1082, ISBN 0-06-091082-8). The
other jargon-1 editors (Raphael Finkel, Don Woods, and Mark Crispin)
contributed to this revision, as did Richard M. Stallman and Geoff
Goodfellow. This book (now out of print) is hereafter referred to as

'Steele-1983' and those six as the Steele-1983 coauthors.

Shortly after the publication of Steele-1983, the File effectively
stopped growing and changing. Originally, this was due to a desire to
freeze the file temporarily to facilitate the production of Steele-1983,
but external conditions caused the 'temporary' freeze to become
permanent.

The AI Lab culture had been hit hard in the late 1970s by funding cuts
and the resulting administrative decision to use vendor-supported
hardware and software instead of homebrew whenever possible. At MIT,
most AI work had turned to dedicated LISP Machines. At the same time,
the commercialization of AI technology lured some of the AI Lab's best
and brightest away to startups along the Route 128 strip in
Massachusetts and out West in Silicon Valley. The startups built LISP
machines for MIT; the central MIT-AI computer became a
                TWENEX
                 system
rather than a host for the AI hackers' beloved
                ITS
                .

The Stanford AI Lab had effectively ceased to exist by 1980, although
the SAIL computer continued as a Computer Science Department resource
until 1991. Stanford became a major
                TWENEX
                 site, at one point
operating more than a dozen TOPS-20 systems; but by the mid-1980s most
of the interesting software work was being done on the emerging BSD UNIX
standard.

In April 1983, the PDP-10-centered cultures that had nourished the File
were dealt a death-blow by the cancellation of the Jupiter project at
Digital Equipment Corporation. The File's compilers, already dispersed,
moved on to other things. Steele-1983 was partly a monument to what its
authors thought was a dying tradition; no one involved realized at the
time just how wide its influence was to be.

By the mid-1980s the File's content was dated, but the legend that had
grown up around it never quite died out. The book, and softcopies
obtained off the ARPANET, circulated even in cultures far removed from
MIT and Stanford; the content exerted a strong and continuing influence
on hackish language and humor. Even as the advent of the microcomputer
and other trends fueled a tremendous expansion of hackerdom, the File
(and related materials such as the AI Koans in Appendix A) came to be
seen as a sort of sacred epic, a hacker-culture Matter of Britain
chronicling the heroic exploits of the Knights of the Lab. The pace of
change in hackerdom at large accelerated tremendously --- but the Jargon
File, having passed from living document to icon, remained essentially
untouched for seven years.

This revision contains nearly the entire text of a late version of
jargon-1 (a few obsolete PDP-10-related entries were dropped after
careful consultation with the editors of Steele-1983). It merges in
about 80% of the Steele-1983 text, omitting some framing material and a
very few entries introduced in Steele-1983 that are now also obsolete.

This new version casts a wider net than the old Jargon File; its aim is
to cover not just AI or PDP-10 hacker culture but all the technical
computing cultures wherein the true hacker-nature is manifested. More
than half of the entries now derive from
                    USENET
                     and represent jargon
now current in the C and UNIX communities, but special efforts have been
made to collect jargon from other cultures including IBM PC programmers,
Amiga fans, Mac enthusiasts, and even the IBM mainframe world.

Eric S. Raymond <esr@snark.thyrsus.com> maintains the new File with
assistance from Guy L. Steele Jr. <gls@think.com>; these are the persons
primarily reflected in the File's editorial 'we', though we take
pleasure in acknowledging the special contribution of the other
coauthors of Steele-1983. Please email all additions, corrections, and
correspondence relating to the Jargon File to jargon@thyrsus.com
(UUCP-only sites without connections to an autorouting smart site can
use ...!uunet!snark!jargon).

(Warning: other email addresses appear in this file *but are not
guaranteed to be correct* later than the revision date on the first
line. *Don't* email us if an attempt to reach your idol bounces --- we
have no magic way of checking addresses or looking up people.)

The 2.9.6 version became the main text of "The New Hacker's
Dictionary", by Eric Raymond (ed.), MIT Press 1991, ISBN
0-262-68069-6.

The 3.0.0 version will be published in September 1993 as the second
edition of "The New Hacker's Dictionary", again from MIT Press
(ISBN 0-262-18154-1).

If you want the book, you should be able to find it at any of the
major bookstore chains. Failing that, you can order by mail from

        The MIT Press
        55 Hayward Street
        Cambridge, MA 02142

or order by phone at (800)-356-0343 or (617)-625-8481.

The maintainers are committed to updating the on-line version of the
Jargon File through and beyond paper publication, and will continue to
make it available to archives and public-access sites as a trust of the
hacker community.

Here is a chronology of the high points in the recent on-line revisions:

Version 2.1.1, Jun 12 1990: the Jargon File comes alive again after a
seven-year hiatus. Reorganization and massive additions were by Eric
S. Raymond, approved by Guy Steele. Many items of UNIX, C, USENET, and
microcomputer-based jargon were added at that time (as well as The
Untimely Demise of Mabel The Monkey).

Version 2.9.6, Aug 16 1991: corresponds to reproduction copy for book.
This version had 18952 lines, 148629 words, 975551 characters, and 1702
entries.

Version 2.9.8, Jan 01 1992: first public release since the book,
including over fifty new entries and numerous corrections/additions to
old ones. Packaged with version 1.1 of vh(1) hypertext reader. This
version had 19509 lines, 153108 words, 1006023 characters, and 1760
entries.

Version 2.9.9, Apr 01 1992: folded in XEROX PARC lexicon. This version
had 20298 lines, 159651 words, 1048909 characters, and 1821 entries.

Version 2.9.10, Jul 01 1992: lots of new historical material. This
version had 21349 lines, 168330 words, 1106991 characters, and 1891
entries.

Version 2.9.11, Jan 01 1993: lots of new historical material. This
version had 21725 lines, 171169 words, 1125880 characters, and 1922
entries.

Version 2.9.12, May 10 1993: a few new entries & changes, marginal
MUD/IRC slang and some borderline techspeak removed, all in preparation
for 2nd Edition of TNHD. This version had 22238 lines, 175114 words,
1152467 characters, and 1946 entries.

Version 3.0.0, Jul 27 1993: manuscript freeze for 2nd edition of TNHD.
This version had 22548 lines, 177520 words, 1169372 characters, and 1961
entries.

Version numbering: Version numbers should be read as
major.minor.revision. Major version 1 is reserved for the 'old' (ITS)
Jargon File, jargon-1. Major version 2 encompasses revisions by ESR
(Eric S. Raymond) with assistance from GLS (Guy L. Steele, Jr.) leading
up to and including the second paper edition. From now on, major
version number N.00 will probably correspond to the Nth paper edition.
Usually later versions will either completely supersede or incorporate
earlier versions, so there is generally no point in keeping old versions
around.

Our thanks to the coauthors of Steele-1983 for oversight and assistance,
and to the hundreds of USENETters (too many to name here) who
contributed entries and encouragement. More thanks go to several of the
old-timers on the USENET group alt.folklore.computers, who contributed
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<jcmorris@mwunix.mitre.org>.

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Hoequist <hoequist@bnr.ca> contributed valuable criticism; Joe Keane
<jgk@osc.osc.com> helped us improve the pronunciation guides.

A few bits of this text quote previous works. We are indebted to Brian
A. LaMacchia <bal@zurich.ai.mit.edu> for obtaining permission for us to
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author of the remarkable Swedish-language 'zine "Hackerbladet", for

1.40 Jargon Construction

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        Jargon Construction:
======================
```

There are some standard methods of jargonification that became
established quite early (i.e., before 1970), spreading from such sources
as the Tech Model Railroad Club, the PDP-1 SPACEWAR hackers, and John
McCarthy's original crew of LISPers. These include the following:

```
        Verb Doubling

        Soundalike slang

        The '-P' convention

        Overgeneralization
```

1.41 Hacker Writing Style

```
        Hacker Writing Style:
======================
```

We've already seen that hackers often coin jargon by overgeneralizing
grammatical rules. This is one aspect of a more general fondness for
form-versus-content language jokes that shows up particularly in hackish
writing. One correspondent reports that he consistently misspells
'wrong' as 'worng'. Others have been known to criticize glitches in
Jargon File drafts by observing (in the mode of Douglas Hofstadter)
"This sentence no verb", or "Too repetetive", or "Bad speling", or
"Incorrectspa cing." Similarly, intentional spoonerisms are often made
of phrases relating to confusion or things that are confusing; 'dain
bramage' for 'brain damage' is perhaps the most common (similarly, a
hacker would be likely to write "Excuse me, I'm cixelsyd today", rather
than "I'm dyslexic today"). This sort of thing is quite common and is
enjoyed by all concerned.

Hackers tend to use quotes as balanced delimiters like parentheses, much
to the dismay of American editors. Thus, if "Jim is going" is a phrase,
and so are "Bill runs" and "Spock groks", then hackers generally prefer
to write: "Jim is going", "Bill runs", and "Spock groks". This is
incorrect according to standard American usage (which would put the
continuation commas and the final period inside the string quotes);
however, it is counter-intuitive to hackers to mutilate literal strings
with characters that don't belong in them. Given the sorts of examples
that can come up in discussions of programming, American-style quoting
can even be grossly misleading. When communicating command lines or
small pieces of code, extra characters can be a real pain in the neck.

Consider, for example, a sentence in a
                vi
                  tutorial that looks like this:

    Then delete a line from the file by typing "dd".

Standard usage would make this

    Then delete a line from the file by typing "dd."

but that would be very bad --- because the reader would be prone to type
the string d-d-dot, and it happens that in 'vi(1)' dot repeats the last
command accepted. The net result would be to delete *two* lines!

The Jargon File follows hackish usage throughout.

Interestingly, a similar style is now preferred practice in Great
Britain, though the older style (which became established for
typographical reasons having to do with the aesthetics of comma and
quotes in typeset text) is still accepted there. "Hart's Rules" and the
"Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors" call the hacker-like style
'new' or 'logical' quoting.

Another hacker habit is a tendency to distinguish between 'scare' quotes
and 'speech' quotes; that is, to use British-style single quotes for
marking and reserve American-style double quotes for actual reports of
speech or text included from elsewhere. Interestingly, some authorities
describe this as correct general usage, but mainstream American English
has gone to using double-quotes indiscriminately enough that hacker
usage appears marked [and, in fact, I thought this was a personal quirk
of mine until I checked with USENET --- ESR]. One further permutation

that is definitely *not* standard is a hackish tendency to do marking
quotes by using apostrophes (single quotes) in pairs; that is, 'like
this'. This is modelled on string and character literal syntax in some
programming languages (reinforced by the fact that many character-only
terminals display the apostrophe in typewriter style, as a vertical
single quote).

One quirk that shows up frequently in the
                email
                 style of UNIX hackers
in particular is a tendency for some things that are normally
all-lowercase (including usernames and the names of commands and C
routines) to remain uncapitalized even when they occur at the beginning
of sentences. It is clear that, for many hackers, the case of such
identifiers becomes a part of their internal representation (the
'spelling') and cannot be overridden without mental effort (an
appropriate reflex because UNIX and C both distinguish cases and
confusing them can lead to
                lossage
). A way of escaping this dilemma
is simply to avoid using these constructions at the beginning of
sentences.

There seems to be a meta-rule behind these nonstandard hackerisms to the
effect that precision of expression is more important than conformance
to traditional rules; where the latter create ambiguity or lose
information they can be discarded without a second thought. It is
notable in this respect that other hackish inventions (for example, in
vocabulary) also tend to carry very precise shades of meaning even when
constructed to appear slangy and loose. In fact, to a hacker, the
contrast between 'loose' form and 'tight' content in jargon is a
substantial part of its humor!

Hackers have also developed a number of punctuation and emphasis
conventions adapted to single-font all-ASCII communications links, and
these are occasionally carried over into written documents even when
normal means of font changes, underlining, and the like are available.

One of these is that TEXT IN ALL CAPS IS INTERPRETED AS 'LOUD', and this
becomes such an ingrained synesthetic reflex that a person who goes to
caps-lock while in
                talk mode
                 may be asked to "stop shouting, please,
you're hurting my ears!".

Also, it is common to use bracketing with unusual characters to signify
emphasis. The asterisk is most common, as in "What the *hell*?" even
though this interferes with the common use of the asterisk suffix as a
footnote mark. The underscore is also common, suggesting underlining
(this is particularly common with book titles; for example, "It is often
alleged that Joe Haldeman wrote _The_Forever_War_ as a rebuttal to
Robert Heinlein's earlier novel of the future military,
_Starship_Troopers_."). Other forms exemplified by "=hell=", "\hell/",
or "/hell/" are occasionally seen (it's claimed that in the last example
the first slash pushes the letters over to the right to make them
italic, and the second keeps them from falling over). Finally, words
may also be emphasized L I K E T H I S, or by a series of carets (^)

under them on the next line of the text.

There is a semantic difference between *emphasis like this* (which
emphasizes the phrase as a whole), and *emphasis* *like* *this* (which
suggests the writer speaking very slowly and distinctly, as if to a
very young child or a mentally impaired person). Bracketing a word with
the '*' character may also indicate that the writer wishes readers to
consider that an action is taking place or that a sound is being made.
Examples: *bang*, *hic*, *ring*, *grin*, *kick*, *stomp*, *mumble*.

Another habit is that of using angle-bracket enclosure to genericize a
term; this derives from conventions used in
                BNF
                . Uses like the
following are common:

    So this <ethnic> walks into a bar one day...

There is also an accepted convention for 'writing under erasure'; the
text

    Be nice to this fool^H^H^H^Hgentleman,
    he's visiting from corporate HQ.

reads roughly as "Be nice to this fool, er, gentleman...". This comes
from the fact that the digraph ^H is often used as a print
representation for a backspace. It parallels (and may have been
influenced by) the ironic use of 'slashouts' in science-fiction
fanzines.

A related habit uses editor commands to signify corrections to
previous text. This custom is fading as more mailers get good editing
capabilities, but one occasionally still sees things like this:

    I've seen that term used on alt.foobar often.
    Send it to Erik for the File. Oops...s/Erik/Eric/.

The s/Erik/Eric/ says "change Erik to Eric in the preceding". This
syntax is borrowed from the UNIX editing tools 'ed' and 'sed', but is
widely recognized by non-UNIX hackers as well.

In a formula, '*' signifies multiplication but two asterisks in a row
are a shorthand for exponentiation (this derives from FORTRAN). Thus,
one might write 2 ** 8 = 256.

Another notation for exponentiation one sees more frequently uses the
caret (^, ASCII 1011110); one might write instead '2^8 = 256'. This
goes all the way back to Algol-60, which used the archaic ASCII
'up-arrow' that later became the caret; this was picked up by Kemeny and
Kurtz's original BASIC, which in turn influenced the design of the
'bc(1)' and 'dc(1)' UNIX tools, which have probably done most to
reinforce the convention on USENET. The notation is mildly confusing to
C programmers, because '^' means bitwise
                XOR
                 in C. Despite this, it
was favored 3:1 over ** in a late-1990 snapshot of USENET. It is used
consistently in this lexicon.

In on-line exchanges, hackers tend to use decimal forms or improper
fractions ('3.5' or '7/2') rather than 'typewriter style' mixed
fractions ('3-1/2'). The major motive here is probably that the former
are more readable in a monospaced font, together with a desire to avoid
the risk that the latter might be read as 'three minus one-half'. The
decimal form is definitely preferred for fractions with a terminating
decimal representation; there may be some cultural influence here from
the high status of scientific notation.

Another on-line convention, used especially for very large or very small
numbers, is taken from C (which derived it from FORTRAN). This is a
form of 'scientific notation' using 'e' to replace '*10^'; for example,
one year is about 3e7 seconds long.

The tilde (~) is commonly used in a quantifying sense of
'approximately'; that is, '~50' means 'about fifty'.

On USENET and in the
                MUD
                 world, common C boolean, logical, and
relational operators such as '|', '&', '||', '&&', '!', '==', '!=', '>',
'<', '>=', and '=<' are often combined with English. The Pascal
not-equals, '<>', is also recognized, and occasionally one sees '/=' for
not-equals (from Ada, Common Lisp, and Fortran 90). The use of prefix
'!' as a loose synonym for 'not-' or 'no-' is particularly common; thus,
'!clue' is read 'no-clue' or 'clueless'.

A related practice borrows syntax from preferred programming languages
to express ideas in a natural-language text. For example, one might
see the following:

     In <jrh578689@thudpucker.com> J. R. Hacker wrote:
     >I recently had occasion to field-test the Snafu
     >Systems 2300E adaptive gonkulator. The price was
     >right, and the racing stripe on the case looked
     >kind of neat, but its performance left something
     >to be desired.

     Yeah, I tried one out too.

     #ifdef FLAME
     Hasn't anyone told those idiots that you can't get
     decent bogon suppression with AFJ filters at today's
     net volumes?
     #endif /* FLAME */

     I guess they figured the price premium for true
     frame-based semantic analysis was too high.
     Unfortunately, it's also the only workable approach.
     I wouldn't recommend purchase of this product unless
     you're on a *very* tight budget.

     #include <disclaimer.h>
     --
                     == Frank Foonly (Fubarco Systems)

In the above, the '#ifdef'/'#endif' pair is a conditional compilation
syntax from C; here, it implies that the text between (which is a

              flame
) should be evaluated only if you have turned on (or defined on)
the switch FLAME. The '#include' at the end is C for "include standard
disclaimer here"; the 'standard disclaimer' is understood to read,
roughly, "These are my personal opinions and not to be construed as the
official position of my employer."

The top section in the example, with > at the left margin, is an example
of an inclusion convention we'll discuss below.

Hackers also mix letters and numbers more freely than in mainstream
usage. In particular, it is good hackish style to write a digit
sequence where you intend the reader to understand the text string that
names that number in English. So, hackers prefer to write '1970s'
rather than 'nineteen-seventies' or '1970's' (the latter looks like a
possessive).

It should also be noted that hackers exhibit much less reluctance to use
multiply nested parentheses than is normal in English. Part of this is
almost certainly due to influence from LISP (which uses deeply nested
parentheses (like this (see?)) in its syntax a lot), but it has also
been suggested that a more basic hacker trait of enjoying playing with
complexity and pushing systems to their limits is in operation.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that many studies of on-line
communication have shown that electronic links have a de-inhibiting
effect on people. Deprived of the body-language cues through which
emotional state is expressed, people tend to forget everything about
other parties except what is presented over that ASCII link. This has
both good and bad effects. A good one is that it encourages honesty and
tends to break down hierarchical authority relationships; a bad one is
that it may encourage depersonalization and gratuitous rudeness.
Perhaps in response to this, experienced netters often display a sort of
conscious formal politesse in their writing that has passed out of
fashion in other spoken and written media (for example, the phrase "Well
said, sir!" is not uncommon).

Many introverted hackers who are next to inarticulate in person
communicate with considerable fluency over the net, perhaps precisely
because they can forget on an unconscious level that they are dealing
with people and thus don't feel stressed and anxious as they would face
to face.

Though it is considered gauche to publicly criticize posters for poor
spelling or grammar, the network places a premium on literacy and
clarity of expression. It may well be that future historians of
literature will see in it a revival of the great tradition of personal
letters as art.

1.42   Email Quotes and Inclusion Conventions

```
            Email Quotes and Inclusion Conventions:
=========================================
```

One area where hackish conventions for on-line writing are still in some
flux is the marking of included material from earlier messages --- what
would be called 'block quotations' in ordinary English. From the usual
typographic convention employed for these (smaller font at an extra
indent), there derived the notation of included text being indented by
one ASCII TAB (0001001) character, which under UNIX and many other
environments gives the appearance of an 8-space indent.

Early mail and netnews readers had no facility for including messages
this way, so people had to paste in copy manually. BSD 'Mail(1)' was
the first message agent to support inclusion, and early USENETters
emulated its style. But the TAB character tended to push included text
too far to the right (especially in multiply nested inclusions), leading
to ugly wraparounds. After a brief period of confusion (during which an
inclusion leader consisting of three or four spaces became established
in EMACS and a few mailers), the use of leading '>' or '> ' became
standard, perhaps owing to its use in 'ed(1)' to display tabs
(alternatively, it may derive from the '>' that some early UNIX mailers
used to quote lines starting with "From" in text, so they wouldn't look
like the beginnings of new message headers). Inclusions within
inclusions keep their '>' leaders, so the 'nesting level' of a quotation
is visually apparent.

The practice of including text from the parent article when posting a
followup helped solve what had been a major nuisance on USENET: the fact
that articles do not arrive at different sites in the same order.
Careless posters used to post articles that would begin with, or even
consist entirely of, "No, that's wrong" or "I agree" or the like. It
was hard to see who was responding to what. Consequently, around 1984,
new news-posting software evolved a facility to automatically include
the text of a previous article, marked with "> " or whatever the poster
chose. The poster was expected to delete all but the relevant lines.
The result has been that, now, careless posters post articles containing
the *entire* text of a preceding article, *followed* only by "No, that's
wrong" or "I agree".

Many people feel that this cure is worse than the original disease, and
there soon appeared newsreader software designed to let the reader skip
over included text if desired. Today, some posting software rejects
articles containing too high a proportion of lines beginning with '>'
--- but this too has led to undesirable workarounds, such as the
deliberate inclusion of zero-content filler lines which aren't quoted
and thus pull the message below the rejection threshold.

Because the default mailers supplied with UNIX and other operating
systems haven't evolved as quickly as human usage, the older conventions
using a leading TAB or three or four spaces are still alive; however,
>-inclusion is now clearly the prevalent form in both netnews and mail.

In 1991 practice is still evolving, and disputes over the 'correct'
inclusion style occasionally lead to

```
                        holy wars
                    .  One variant style
reported uses the citation character '|' in place of '>' for extended
quotations where original variations in indentation are being retained.
One also sees different styles of quoting a number of authors in the
same message: one (deprecated because it loses information) uses a
leader of '> ' for everyone, another (the most common) is '> > > > ', '>
> > ', etc. (or '>>>> ', '>>> ', etc., depending on line length and
nesting depth) reflecting the original order of messages, and yet
another is to use a different citation leader for each author, say '> ',
': ', '| ', '} ' (preserving nesting so that the inclusion order of
messages is still apparent, or tagging the inclusions with authors'
names).  Yet *another* style is to use each poster's initials (or login
name) as a citation leader for that poster.  Occasionally one sees a '#
' leader used for quotations from authoritative sources such as
standards documents; the intended allusion is to the root prompt (the
special UNIX command prompt issued when one is running as the privileged
super-user).
```

1.43 Hacker Speech Style

```
Hacker Speech Style:
====================
```

Hackish speech generally features extremely precise diction, careful
word choice, a relatively large working vocabulary, and relatively
little use of contractions or street slang. Dry humor, irony, puns, and
a mildly flippant attitude are highly valued --- but an underlying
seriousness and intelligence are essential. One should use just enough
jargon to communicate precisely and identify oneself as a member of the
culture; overuse of jargon or a breathless, excessively gung-ho attitude
is considered tacky and the mark of a loser.

This speech style is a variety of the precisionist English normally
spoken by scientists, design engineers, and academics in technical
fields. In contrast with the methods of jargon construction, it is
fairly constant throughout hackerdom.

It has been observed that many hackers are confused by negative
questions --- or, at least, that the people to whom they are talking are
often confused by the sense of their answers. The problem is that they
have done so much programming that distinguishes between

```
    if (going) ...
```

and

```
    if (!going) ...
```

that when they parse the question "Aren't you going?" it seems to be
asking the opposite question from "Are you going?", and so merits an
answer in the opposite sense. This confuses English-speaking
non-hackers because they were taught to answer as though the negative

part weren't there. In some other languages (including Russian,
Chinese, and Japanese) the hackish interpretation is standard and the
problem wouldn't arise. Hackers often find themselves wishing for a
word like French 'si' or German 'doch' with which one could
unambiguously answer 'yes' to a negative question.

For similar reasons, English-speaking hackers almost never use double
negatives, even if they live in a region where colloquial usage allows
them. The thought of uttering something that logically ought to be an
affirmative knowing it will be misparsed as a negative tends to disturb
them.

In a related vein, hackers sometimes make a game of answering
questions containing logical connectives with a strictly literal
rather than colloquial interpretation. A non-hacker who is indelicate
enough to ask a question like "So, are you working on finding that
bug *now* or leaving it until later?" is likely to get the
perfectly correct answer "Yes!" (that is, "Yes, I'm doing it either
now or later, and you didn't ask which!").

1.44   International Style

                    International Style:
=====================

Although the Jargon File remains primarily a lexicon of hacker usage in
American English, we have made some effort to get input from abroad.
Though the hacker-speak of other languages often uses translations of
jargon from English (often as transmitted to them by earlier Jargon File
versions!), the local variations are interesting, and knowledge of them
may be of some use to travelling hackers.

There are some references herein to 'Commonwealth hackish'. These are
intended to describe some variations in hacker usage as reported in the
English spoken in Great Britain and the Commonwealth (Canada, Australia,
India, etc. --- though Canada is heavily influenced by American usage).
There is also an entry on
                    Commonwealth Hackish
                     reporting some
general phonetic and vocabulary differences from U.S. hackish.

Hackers in Western Europe and (especially) Scandinavia report that they
often use a mixture of English and their native languages for technical
conversation. Occasionally they develop idioms in their English usage
that are influenced by their native-language styles. Some of these are
reported here.

A few notes on hackish usages in Russian have been added where they are
parallel with English idioms and thus comprehensible to
English-speakers.

1.45   Pronunciation Guide

```
Pronunciation Guide:
====================
```

Pronunciation keys are provided in the jargon listings for all entries
that are neither dictionary words pronounced as in standard English nor
obvious compounds thereof. Slashes bracket phonetic pronunciations,
which are to be interpreted using the following conventions:

1. Syllables are hyphen-separated, except that an accent or back-accent
   follows each accented syllable (the back-accent marks a secondary
   accent in some words of four or more syllables). If no accent is
   given, the word is pronounced with equal accentuation on all syllables
   (this is common for abbreviations).

2. Consonants are pronounced as in American English. The letter ‘g’ is
   always hard (as in "got" rather than "giant"); ‘ch’ is soft
   ("church" rather than "chemist"). The letter ‘j’ is the sound
   that occurs twice in "judge". The letter ‘s’ is always as in
   "pass", never a z sound. The digraph ‘kh’ is the guttural of
   "loch" or "l’chaim". The digraph ’gh’ is the aspirated g+h of
   "bughouse" or "ragheap" (rare in English).

3. Uppercase letters are pronounced as their English letter names; thus
   (for example) /H-L-L/ is equivalent to /aitch el el/. /Z/ may
   be pronounced /zee/ or /zed/ depending on your local dialect.

4. Vowels are represented as follows:

   a
           back, that
   ah
           father, palm (see note)
   ar
           far, mark
   aw
           flaw, caught
   ay
           bake, rain
   e
           less, men
   ee
           easy, ski
   eir
           their, software
   i
           trip, hit
   i:
           life, sky
   o
           block, stock (see note)
   oh
           flow, sew
   oo
           loot, through

```
or
        more, door
ow
        out, how
oy
        boy, coin
uh
        but, some
u
        put, foot
y
        yet, young
yoo
        few, chew
[y]oo
        /oo/ with optional fronting as in 'news' (/nooz/ or /nyooz/)
```

A /*/ is used for the 'schwa' sound of unstressed or occluded vowels
(the one that is often written with an upside-down 'e'). The schwa
vowel is omitted in syllables containing vocalic r, l, m or n; that is,
'kitten' and 'color' would be rendered /kit'n/ and /kuhl'r/, not
/kit'*n/ and /kuhl'*r/.

Note that the above table reflects mainly distinctions found in standard
American English (that is, the neutral dialect spoken by TV network
announcers and typical of educated speech in the Upper Midwest,
Chicago, Minneapolis/St.Paul and Philadelphia). However, we separate
/o/ from /ah/, which tend to merge in standard American. This may
help readers accustomed to accents resembling British Received
Pronunciation.

Entries with a pronunciation of '//' are written-only usages. (No, UNIX
weenies, this does *not* mean 'pronounce like previous pronunciation'!)

1.46 Other Lexicon Conventions

```
                Other Lexicon Conventions:
============================
```

Entries are sorted in case-blind ASCII collation order (rather than the
letter-by-letter order ignoring interword spacing common in mainstream
dictionaries), except that all entries beginning with nonalphabetic
characters are sorted after Z. The case-blindness is a feature, not a
bug.

The beginning of each entry is marked by a colon (':') at the
left margin. This convention helps out tools like hypertext browsers
that benefit from knowing where entry boundaries are, but aren't as
context-sensitive as humans.

In pure ASCII renderings of the Jargon File, you will see {} used to
bracket words which themselves have entries in the File. This isn't
done all the time for every such word, but it is done everywhere that a
reminder seems useful that the term has a jargon meaning and one might

wish to refer to its entry.

In this all-ASCII version, headwords for topic entries are distinguished
from those for ordinary entries by being followed by "::" rather than
":"; similarly, references are surrounded by "{{" and "}}" rather than
"{" and "}".

Defining instances of terms and phrases appear in 'slanted type'. A
defining instance is one which occurs near to or as part of an
explanation of it.

Prefix ** is used as linguists do; to mark examples of incorrect usage.

We follow the 'logical' quoting convention described in the Writing
Style section above. In addition, we reserve double quotes for actual
excerpts of text or (sometimes invented) speech. Scare quotes (which
mark a word being used in a nonstandard way), and philosopher's quotes
(which turn an utterance into the string of letters or words that name
it) are both rendered with single quotes.

References such as 'malloc(3)' and 'patch(1)' are to UNIX facilities
(some of which, such as 'patch(1)', are actually freeware distributed
over USENET). The UNIX manuals use 'foo(n)' to refer to item foo in
section (n) of the manual, where n=1 is utilities, n=2 is system calls,
n=3 is C library routines, n=6 is games, and n=8 (where present) is
system administration utilities. Sections 4, 5, and 7 of the manuals
have changed roles frequently and in any case are not referred to in any
of the entries.

Various abbreviations used frequently in the lexicon are summarized here:

abbrev.
     abbreviation
adj.
     adjective
adv.
     adverb
alt.
     alternate
cav.
     caveat
conj.
     conjunction
esp.
     especially
excl.
     exclamation
imp.
     imperative
interj.
     interjection
n.
     noun
obs.
     obsolete
pl.
     plural

```
poss.
     possibly
pref.
     prefix
prob.
     probably
prov.
     proverbial
quant.
     quantifier
suff.
     suffix
syn.
     synonym (or synonymous with)
v.
     verb (may be transitive or intransitive)
var.
     variant
vi.
     intransitive verb
vt.
     transitive verb
```

Where alternate spellings or pronunciations are given, alt.
separates two possibilities with nearly equal distribution, while
var. prefixes one that is markedly less common than the primary.

Where a term can be attributed to a particular subculture or is known
to have originated there, we have tried to so indicate. Here is a
list of abbreviations used in etymologies:

```
Berkeley
     University of California at Berkeley
Cambridge
     the university in England (*not* the city in Massachusetts where
     MIT happens to be located!)
BBN
     Bolt, Beranek & Newman
CMU
     Carnegie-Mellon University
Commodore
     Commodore Business Machines
DEC
     The Digital Equipment Corporation
Fairchild
     The Fairchild Instruments Palo Alto development group
Fidonet
     See the
                    Fidonet
                     entry
IBM
     International Business Machines
MIT
     Massachusetts Institute of Technology; esp. the legendary MIT AI Lab
     culture of roughly 1971 to 1983 and its feeder groups, including the
     Tech Model Railroad Club
NRL
```

```
      Naval Research Laboratories
NYU
      New York University
OED
      The Oxford English Dictionary
Purdue
      Purdue University
SAIL
      Stanford Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (at Stanford
      University)
SI
      From Syst'eme International, the name for the standard
      conventions of metric nomenclature used in the sciences
Stanford
      Stanford University
Sun
      Sun Microsystems
TMRC
      Some MITisms go back as far as the Tech Model Railroad Club (TMRC) at
      MIT c. 1960.  Material marked TMRC is from "An Abridged Dictionary
      of the TMRC Language", originally compiled by Pete Samson in 1959
UCLA
      University of California at Los Angeles
UK
      the United Kingdom (England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland)
USENET
      See the
                  USENET
                   entry
WPI
      Worcester Polytechnic Institute, site of a very active community of
      PDP-10 hackers during the 1970s
XEROX PARC
      XEROX's Palo Alto Research Center, site of much pioneering research in
      user interface design and networking
Yale
      Yale University
```

```
Some other etymology abbreviations such as
                  UNIX
                   and
                  PDP-10
                  refer to technical cultures surrounding specific operating systems ←
                  ,
processors, or other environments.  The fact that a term is labelled
with any one of these abbreviations does not necessarily mean its use
is confined to that culture.  In particular, many terms labelled 'MIT'
and 'Stanford' are in quite general use.  We have tried to give some
indication of the distribution of speakers in the usage notes;
however, a number of factors mentioned in the introduction conspire to
make these indications less definite than might be desirable.
```

```
A few new definitions attached to entries are marked [proposed].
These are usually generalizations suggested by editors or USENET
respondents in the process of commenting on previous definitions of
those entries.  These are *not* represented as established
jargon.
```

1.47   Format For New Entries

```
Format For New Entries:
=======================
```

All contributions and suggestions about the Jargon File will be
considered donations to be placed in the public domain as part of this
File, and may be used in subsequent paper editions. Submissions may
be edited for accuracy, clarity and concision.

Try to conform to the format already being used --- head-words
separated from text by a colon (double colon for topic entries),
cross-references in curly brackets (doubled for topic entries),
pronunciations in slashes, etymologies in square brackets,
single-space after definition numbers and word classes, etc. Stick to
the standard ASCII character set (7-bit printable, no high-half
characters or [nt]roff/TeX/Scribe escapes), as one of the versions
generated from the master file is an info document that has to be
viewable on a character tty.

We are looking to expand the file's range of technical specialties covered.
There are doubtless rich veins of jargon yet untapped in the scientific
computing, graphics, and networking hacker communities; also in numerical
analysis, computer architectures and VLSI design, language design, and many
other related fields. Send us your jargon!

We are *not* interested in straight technical terms explained by
textbooks or technical dictionaries unless an entry illuminates
'underground' meanings or aspects not covered by official histories.
We are also not interested in 'joke' entries --- there is a lot of
humor in the file but it must flow naturally out of the explanations
of what hackers do and how they think.

It is OK to submit items of jargon you have originated if they have spread
to the point of being used by people who are not personally acquainted with
you. We prefer items to be attested by independent submission from two
different sites.

The Jargon File will be regularly maintained and made available for
FTP over Internet, and will include a version number. Read it, pass
it around, contribute --- this is *your* monument!

1.48   The Meaning of `Hack'

```
                The Meaning of 'Hack':
=======================
```

"The word

                    hack
                     doesn't really have 69 different meanings", according
to MIT hacker Phil Agre. "In fact,
                    hack
                     has only one meaning, an
extremely subtle and profound one which defies articulation. Which
connotation is implied by a given use of the word depends in similarly
profound ways on the context. Similar remarks apply to a couple of
other hacker words, most notably
                    random
                    ."

Hacking might be characterized as 'an appropriate application of
ingenuity'. Whether the result is a quick-and-dirty patchwork job or a
carefully crafted work of art, you have to admire the cleverness that
went into it.

An important secondary meaning of
                    hack
                     is 'a creative practical
joke'. This kind of hack is easier to explain to non-hackers than the
programming kind. Of course, some hacks have both natures; see the
lexicon entries for
                    pseudo
                     and
                    kgbvax
                    . But here are some examples
of pure practical jokes that illustrate the hacking spirit:

     In 1961, students from Caltech (California Institute of Technology,
     in Pasadena) hacked the Rose Bowl football game. One student posed
     as a reporter and 'interviewed' the director of the University of
     Washington card stunts (such stunts involve people in the stands
     who hold up colored cards to make pictures). The reporter learned
     exactly how the stunts were operated, and also that the director
     would be out to dinner later.

     While the director was eating, the students (who called themselves
     the 'Fiendish Fourteen') picked a lock and stole a blank direction
     sheet for the card stunts. They then had a printer run off 2300
     copies of the blank. The next day they picked the lock again and
     stole the master plans for the stunts --- large sheets of graph
     paper colored in with the stunt pictures. Using these as a guide,
     they made new instructions for three of the stunts on the
     duplicated blanks. Finally, they broke in once more, replacing the
     stolen master plans and substituting the stack of diddled
     instruction sheets for the original set.

     The result was that three of the pictures were totally different.
     Instead of 'WASHINGTON', the word ''CALTECH' was flashed. Another
     stunt showed the word 'HUSKIES', the Washington nickname, but
     spelled it backwards. And what was supposed to have been a picture
     of a husky instead showed a beaver. (Both Caltech and MIT use the
     beaver --- nature's engineer --- as a mascot.)

     After the game, the Washington faculty athletic representative
     said: "Some thought it ingenious; others were indignant." The

Washington student body president remarked: "No hard feelings, but
at the time it was unbelievable. We were amazed."

This is now considered a classic hack, particularly because revising the
direction sheets constituted a form of programming.

Here is another classic hack:

On November 20, 1982, MIT hacked the Harvard-Yale football game.
Just after Harvard's second touchdown against Yale, in the first
quarter, a small black ball popped up out of the ground at the
40-yard line, and grew bigger, and bigger, and bigger. The letters
'MIT' appeared all over the ball. As the players and officials
stood around gawking, the ball grew to six feet in diameter and
then burst with a bang and a cloud of white smoke.

The "Boston Globe" later reported: "If you want to know the truth,
MIT won The Game."

The prank had taken weeks of careful planning by members of MIT's
Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity. The device consisted of a weather
balloon, a hydraulic ram powered by Freon gas to lift it out of the
ground, and a vacuum-cleaner motor to inflate it. They made eight
separate expeditions to Harvard Stadium between 1 and 5 A.M.,
locating an unused 110-volt circuit in the stadium and running
buried wires from the stadium circuit to the 40-yard line, where
they buried the balloon device. When the time came to activate the
device, two fraternity members had merely to flip a circuit breaker
and push a plug into an outlet.

This stunt had all the earmarks of a perfect hack: surprise,
publicity, the ingenious use of technology, safety, and
harmlessness. The use of manual control allowed the prank to be
timed so as not to disrupt the game (it was set off between plays,
so the outcome of the game would not be unduly affected). The
perpetrators had even thoughtfully attached a note to the balloon
explaining that the device was not dangerous and contained no
explosives.

Harvard president Derek Bok commented: "They have an awful lot of
clever people down there at MIT, and they did it again." President
Paul E. Gray of MIT said: "There is absolutely no truth to the
rumor that I had anything to do with it, but I wish there were."

The hacks above are verifiable history; they can be proved to have
happened. Many other classic-hack stories from MIT and elsewhere,
though retold as history, have the characteristics of what Jan Brunvand
has called 'urban folklore' (see
                FOAF
). Perhaps the best known of
these is the legend of the infamous trolley-car hack, an alleged
incident in which engineering students are said to have welded a trolley
car to its tracks with thermite. Numerous versions of this have been
recorded from the 1940s to the present, most set at MIT but at least one
very detailed version set at CMU.

Brian Leibowitz has researched MIT hacks both real and mythical

extensively; the interested reader is referred to his delightful
pictorial compendium "The Journal of the Institute for Hacks,
Tomfoolery, and Pranks" (MIT Museum, 1990; ISBN 0-917027-03-5).

Finally, here is a story about one of the classic computer hacks.

Back in the mid-1970s, several of the system support staff at
Motorola discovered a relatively simple way to crack system
security on the Xerox CP-V timesharing system. Through a simple
programming strategy, it was possible for a user program to trick
the system into running a portion of the program in 'master mode'
(supervisor state), in which memory protection does not apply. The
program could then poke a large value into its 'privilege level'
byte (normally write-protected) and could then proceed to bypass
all levels of security within the file-management system, patch the
system monitor, and do numerous other interesting things. In
short, the barn door was wide open.

Motorola quite properly reported this problem to Xerox via an
official 'level 1 SIDR' (a bug report with an intended urgency of
'needs to be fixed yesterday'). Because the text of each SIDR was
entered into a database that could be viewed by quite a number of
people, Motorola followed the approved procedure: they simply
reported the problem as 'Security SIDR', and attached all of the
necessary documentation, ways-to-reproduce, etc.

The CP-V people at Xerox sat on their thumbs; they either didn't
realize the severity of the problem, or didn't assign the necessary
operating-system-staff resources to develop and distribute an
official patch.

Months passed. The Motorola guys pestered their Xerox
field-support rep, to no avail. Finally they decided to take
direct action, to demonstrate to Xerox management just how easily
the system could be cracked and just how thoroughly the security
safeguards could be subverted.

They dug around in the operating-system listings and devised a
thoroughly devilish set of patches. These patches were then
incorporated into a pair of programs called 'Robin Hood' and 'Friar
Tuck'. Robin Hood and Friar Tuck were designed to run as 'ghost
jobs' (daemons, in UNIX terminology); they would use the existing
loophole to subvert system security, install the necessary patches,
and then keep an eye on one another's statuses in order to keep the
system operator (in effect, the superuser) from aborting them.

One fine day, the system operator on the main CP-V software
development system in El Segundo was surprised by a number of
unusual phenomena. These included the following:

* Tape drives would rewind and dismount their tapes in the
  middle of a job.
* Disk drives would seek back and forth so rapidly that they
  would attempt to walk across the floor (see
          walking

          drives

).
        * The card-punch output device would occasionally start up of
          itself and punch a
                  lace card
                  . These would usually jam in
          the punch.
        * The console would print snide and insulting messages from
          Robin Hood to Friar Tuck, or vice versa.
        * The Xerox card reader had two output stackers; it could be
          instructed to stack into A, stack into B, or stack into A
          (unless a card was unreadable, in which case the bad card was
          placed into stacker B). One of the patches installed by the
          ghosts added some code to the card-reader driver... after
          reading a card, it would flip over to the opposite stacker.
          As a result, card decks would divide themselves in half when
          they were read, leaving the operator to recollate them
          manually.

Naturally, the operator called in the operating-system developers.
They found the bandit ghost jobs running, and X'ed them... and were
once again surprised. When Robin Hood was X'ed, the following
sequence of events took place:

        !X id1

        id1: Friar Tuck... I am under attack! Pray save me!
        id1: Off (aborted)

        id2: Fear not, friend Robin! I shall rout the Sheriff
             of Nottingham's men!

        id1: Thank you, my good fellow!

Each ghost-job would detect the fact that the other had been
killed, and would start a new copy of the recently slain program
within a few milliseconds. The only way to kill both ghosts was to
kill them simultaneously (very difficult) or to deliberately crash
the system.

Finally, the system programmers did the latter --- only to find
that the bandits appeared once again when the system rebooted! It
turned out that these two programs had patched the boot-time OS
image (the kernel file, in UNIX terms) and had added themselves to
the list of programs that were to be started at boot time.

The Robin Hood and Friar Tuck ghosts were finally eradicated when
the system staff rebooted the system from a clean boot-tape and
reinstalled the monitor. Not long thereafter, Xerox released a
patch for this problem.

It is alleged that Xerox filed a complaint with Motorola's management
about the merry-prankster actions of the two employees in question.
It is not recorded that any serious disciplinary action was taken
against either of them.

1.49 TV Typewriters

```
                    TV Typewriters: A Tale of Hackish Ingenuity
=============================================
```

Here is a true story about a glass tty: One day an MIT hacker was in a
motorcycle accident and broke his leg. He had to stay in the hospital
quite a while, and got restless because he couldn't
                    hack
                    . Two of his
friends therefore took a terminal and a modem for it to the hospital, so
that he could use the computer by telephone from his hospital bed.

Now this happened some years before the spread of home computers, and
computer terminals were not a familiar sight to the average person.
When the two friends got to the hospital, a guard stopped them and asked
what they were carrying. They explained that they wanted to take a
computer terminal to their friend who was a patient.

The guard got out his list of things that patients were permitted to
have in their rooms: TV, radio, electric razor, typewriter, tape player,
... no computer terminals. Computer terminals weren't on the list, so
the guard wouldn't let it in. Rules are rules, you know. (This guard
was clearly a
                    droid
                    .)

Fair enough, said the two friends, and they left again. They were
frustrated, of course, because they knew that the terminal was as
harmless as a TV or anything else on the list... which gave them an
idea.

The next day they returned, and the same thing happened: a guard stopped
them and asked what they were carrying. They said: "This is a TV
typewriter!" The guard was skeptical, so they plugged it in and
demonstrated it. "See? You just type on the keyboard and what you type
shows up on the TV screen." Now the guard didn't stop to think about
how utterly useless a typewriter would be that didn't produce any paper
copies of what you typed; but this was clearly a TV typewriter, no doubt
about it. So he checked his list: "A TV is all right, a typewriter is
all right ... okay, take it on in!"

[Historical note: Many years ago, "Popular Electronics" published
solder-it-yourself plans for a TV typewriter. Despite the essential
uselessness of the device, it was an enormously popular project.
Steve Ciarcia, the man behind "Byte" magazine's "Circuit Cellar"
feature, resurrected this ghost in one of his books of the early
1980s. He ascribed its popularity (no doubt correctly) to the
feeling of power the builder could achieve by being able to decide
himself what would be shown on the TV. --- ESR]

[Antihistorical note: On September 23rd, 1992, the L.A. Times ran
the following bit of filler:

     Solomon Waters of Altadena, a 6-year-old first-grader, came home from
     his first day of school and excitedly told his mother how he had

```
     written on "a machine that looks like a computer -- but without the
     TV screen."  She asked him if it could have been a "typewriter."
     "Yeah! Yeah!" he said.  "That's what it was called."
```

I have since investigated this matter and determined that many of
today's teenagers have never seen a slide rule, either.... -- ESR]

1.50   A Story About `Magic'

```
                    A Story About 'Magic': (by GLS)
===============================
```

Some years ago, I was snooping around in the cabinets that housed the
MIT AI Lab's PDP-10, and noticed a little switch glued to the frame of
one cabinet. It was obviously a homebrew job, added by one of the lab's
hardware hackers (no one knows who).

You don't touch an unknown switch on a computer without knowing what it
does, because you might crash the computer. The switch was labeled in a
most unhelpful way. It had two positions, and scrawled in pencil on the
metal switch body were the words 'magic' and 'more magic'. The switch
was in the 'more magic' position.

I called another hacker over to look at it. He had never seen the
switch before either. Closer examination revealed that the switch had
only one wire running to it! The other end of the wire did disappear
into the maze of wires inside the computer, but it's a basic fact of
electricity that a switch can't do anything unless there are two wires
connected to it. This switch had a wire connected on one side and no
wire on its other side.

It was clear that this switch was someone's idea of a silly joke.
Convinced by our reasoning that the switch was inoperative, we flipped
it. The computer instantly crashed.

Imagine our utter astonishment. We wrote it off as coincidence, but
nevertheless restored the switch to the 'more magic' position before
reviving the computer.

A year later, I told this story to yet another hacker, David Moon as I
recall. He clearly doubted my sanity, or suspected me of a supernatural
belief in the power of this switch, or perhaps thought I was fooling him
with a bogus saga. To prove it to him, I showed him the very switch,
still glued to the cabinet frame with only one wire connected to it,
still in the 'more magic' position. We scrutinized the switch and its
lone connection, and found that the other end of the wire, though
connected to the computer wiring, was connected to a ground pin. That
clearly made the switch doubly useless: not only was it electrically
nonoperative, but it was connected to a place that couldn't affect
anything anyway. So we flipped the switch.

The computer promptly crashed.

This time we ran for Richard Greenblatt, a long-time MIT hacker, who was
close at hand. He had never noticed the switch before, either. He
inspected it, concluded it was useless, got some diagonal cutters and

                dike
                d it out. We then revived the computer and it has run fine ever
since.

We still don't know how the switch crashed the machine. There is a
theory that some circuit near the ground pin was marginal, and
flipping the switch changed the electrical capacitance enough to upset
the circuit as millionth-of-a-second pulses went through it. But
we'll never know for sure; all we can really say is that the switch
was
                magic
                .

I still have that switch in my basement. Maybe I'm silly, but I
usually keep it set on 'more magic'.

1.51   A Selection of AI Koans

A Selection of AI Koans:
=========================

These are some of the funniest examples of a genre of jokes told at the
MIT AI Lab about various noted hackers. The original koans were
composed by Danny Hillis. In reading these, it is at least useful to
know that Minsky, Sussman, and Drescher are AI researchers of note, that
Tom Knight was one of the Lisp machine's principal designers, and that
David Moon wrote much of Lisp Machine Lisp.

                            * * *

   A novice was trying to fix a broken Lisp machine by turning the power
off and on.

   Knight, seeing what the student was doing, spoke sternly: "You cannot
fix a machine by just power-cycling it with no understanding of what is
going wrong."

   Knight turned the machine off and on.

   The machine worked.

                            * * *

   One day a student came to Moon and said: "I understand how to make a
better garbage collector. We must keep a reference count of the
pointers to each cons."

Moon patiently told the student the following story:

"One day a student came to Moon and said: 'I understand how to make
a better garbage collector...

[Ed. note: Pure reference-count garbage collectors have problems with
circular structures that point to themselves.]

                                  * * *

In the days when Sussman was a novice, Minsky once came to him as he sat
hacking at the PDP-6.

   "What are you doing?", asked Minsky.

   "I am training a randomly wired neural net to play Tic-Tac-Toe"
Sussman replied.

   "Why is the net wired randomly?", asked Minsky.

   "I do not want it to have any preconceptions of how to play", Sussman
said.

   Minsky then shut his eyes.

   "Why do you close your eyes?", Sussman asked his teacher.

   "So that the room will be empty."

   At that moment, Sussman was enlightened.

                                  * * *

   A disciple of another sect once came to Drescher as he was eating his
morning meal.

   "I would like to give you this personality test", said the outsider,
"because I want you to be happy."

   Drescher took the paper that was offered him and put it into the
toaster, saying: "I wish the toaster to be happy, too."

1.52 OS and JEDGAR

                  OS and JEDGAR:
===============

This story says a lot about the ITS ethos.

On the ITS system there was a program that allowed you to see what was
being printed on someone else's terminal. It spied on the other guy's
output by examining the insides of the monitor system. The output spy
program was called OS. Throughout the rest of the computer science (and
at IBM too) OS means 'operating system', but among old-time ITS hackers
it almost always meant 'output spy'.

OS could work because ITS purposely had very little in the way of
'protection' that prevented one user from trespassing on another's
areas. Fair is fair, however. There was another program that would
automatically notify you if anyone started to spy on your output. It
worked in exactly the same way, by looking at the insides of the
operating system to see if anyone else was looking at the insides that
had to do with your output. This 'counterspy' program was called JEDGAR
(a six-letterism pronounced as two syllables: /jed'gr/), in honor of the
former head of the FBI.

But there's more. JEDGAR would ask the user for 'license to kill'. If
the user said yes, then JEDGAR would actually

                gun
                 the job of the

                luser
                 who was spying. Unfortunately, people found that this made life
too violent, especially when tourists learned about it. One of the
systems hackers solved the problem by replacing JEDGAR with another
program that only pretended to do its job. It took a long time to do
this, because every copy of JEDGAR had to be patched. To this day no
one knows how many people never figured out that JEDGAR had been
defanged.

1.53 The Story of Mel, a Real Programmer

                        The Story of Mel, a Real Programmer:
=======================================

This was posted to USENET by its author, Ed Nather (utastro!nather), on
May 21, 1983.

     A recent article devoted to the *macho* side of programming
     made the bald and unvarnished statement:

          Real Programmers write in FORTRAN.

     Maybe they do now,
     in this decadent era of
     Lite beer, hand calculators, and "user-friendly" software
     but back in the Good Old Days,
     when the term "software" sounded funny
     and Real Computers were made out of drums and vacuum tubes,
     Real Programmers wrote in machine code.
     Not FORTRAN. Not RATFOR. Not, even, assembly language.
     Machine Code.
     Raw, unadorned, inscrutable hexadecimal numbers.
     Directly.

     Lest a whole new generation of programmers
     grow up in ignorance of this glorious past,
     I feel duty-bound to describe,

as best I can through the generation gap,
how a Real Programmer wrote code.
I'll call him Mel,
because that was his name.

I first met Mel when I went to work for Royal McBee Computer Corp.,
a now-defunct subsidiary of the typewriter company.
The firm manufactured the LGP-30,
a small, cheap (by the standards of the day)
drum-memory computer,
and had just started to manufacture
the RPC-4000, a much-improved,
bigger, better, faster --- drum-memory computer.
Cores cost too much,
and weren't here to stay, anyway.
(That's why you haven't heard of the company,
or the computer.)

I had been hired to write a FORTRAN compiler
for this new marvel and Mel was my guide to its wonders.
Mel didn't approve of compilers.

"If a program can't rewrite its own code",
he asked, "what good is it?"

Mel had written,
in hexadecimal,
the most popular computer program the company owned.
It ran on the LGP-30
and played blackjack with potential customers
at computer shows.
Its effect was always dramatic.
The LGP-30 booth was packed at every show,
and the IBM salesmen stood around
talking to each other.
Whether or not this actually sold computers
was a question we never discussed.

Mel's job was to re-write
the blackjack program for the RPC-4000.
(Port? What does that mean?)
The new computer had a one-plus-one
addressing scheme,
in which each machine instruction,
in addition to the operation code
and the address of the needed operand,
had a second address that indicated where, on the revolving drum,
the next instruction was located.

In modern parlance,
every single instruction was followed by a GO TO!
Put *that* in Pascal's pipe and smoke it.

Mel loved the RPC-4000
because he could optimize his code:
that is, locate instructions on the drum
so that just as one finished its job,

the next would be just arriving at the "read head"
and available for immediate execution.
There was a program to do that job,
an "optimizing assembler",
but Mel refused to use it.

"You never know where it's going to put things",
he explained, "so you'd have to use separate constants".

It was a long time before I understood that remark.
Since Mel knew the numerical value
of every operation code,
and assigned his own drum addresses,
every instruction he wrote could also be considered
a numerical constant.
He could pick up an earlier "add" instruction, say,
and multiply by it,
if it had the right numeric value.
His code was not easy for someone else to modify.

I compared Mel's hand-optimized programs
with the same code massaged by the optimizing assembler program,
and Mel's always ran faster.
That was because the "top-down" method of program design
hadn't been invented yet,
and Mel wouldn't have used it anyway.
He wrote the innermost parts of his program loops first,
so they would get first choice
of the optimum address locations on the drum.
The optimizing assembler wasn't smart enough to do it that way.

Mel never wrote time-delay loops, either,
even when the balky Flexowriter
required a delay between output characters to work right.
He just located instructions on the drum
so each successive one was just *past* the read head
when it was needed;
the drum had to execute another complete revolution
to find the next instruction.
He coined an unforgettable term for this procedure.
Although "optimum" is an absolute term,
like "unique", it became common verbal practice
to make it relative:
"not quite optimum" or "less optimum"
or "not very optimum".
Mel called the maximum time-delay locations
the "most pessimum".

After he finished the blackjack program
and got it to run
("Even the initializer is optimized",
he said proudly),
he got a Change Request from the sales department.
The program used an elegant (optimized)
random number generator
to shuffle the "cards" and deal from the "deck",
and some of the salesmen felt it was too fair,

since sometimes the customers lost.
They wanted Mel to modify the program
so, at the setting of a sense switch on the console,
they could change the odds and let the customer win.

Mel balked.
He felt this was patently dishonest,
which it was,
and that it impinged on his personal integrity as a programmer,
which it did,
so he refused to do it.
The Head Salesman talked to Mel,
as did the Big Boss and, at the boss's urging,
a few Fellow Programmers.
Mel finally gave in and wrote the code,
but he got the test backwards,
and, when the sense switch was turned on,
the program would cheat, winning every time.
Mel was delighted with this,
claiming his subconscious was uncontrollably ethical,
and adamantly refused to fix it.

After Mel had left the company for greener pa$ture$,
the Big Boss asked me to look at the code
and see if I could find the test and reverse it.
Somewhat reluctantly, I agreed to look.
Tracking Mel's code was a real adventure.

I have often felt that programming is an art form,
whose real value can only be appreciated
by another versed in the same arcane art;
there are lovely gems and brilliant coups
hidden from human view and admiration, sometimes forever,
by the very nature of the process.
You can learn a lot about an individual
just by reading through his code,
even in hexadecimal.
Mel was, I think, an unsung genius.

Perhaps my greatest shock came
when I found an innocent loop that had no test in it.
No test. *None*.
Common sense said it had to be a closed loop,
where the program would circle, forever, endlessly.
Program control passed right through it, however,
and safely out the other side.
It took me two weeks to figure it out.

The RPC-4000 computer had a really modern facility
called an index register.
It allowed the programmer to write a program loop
that used an indexed instruction inside;
each time through,
the number in the index register
was added to the address of that instruction,
so it would refer
to the next datum in a series.

He had only to increment the index register
each time through.
Mel never used it.

Instead, he would pull the instruction into a machine register,
add one to its address,
and store it back.
He would then execute the modified instruction
right from the register.
The loop was written so this additional execution time
was taken into account ---
just as this instruction finished,
the next one was right under the drum's read head,
ready to go.
But the loop had no test in it.

The vital clue came when I noticed
the index register bit,
the bit that lay between the address
and the operation code in the instruction word,
was turned on ---
yet Mel never used the index register,
leaving it zero all the time.
When the light went on it nearly blinded me.

He had located the data he was working on
near the top of memory ---
the largest locations the instructions could address ---
so, after the last datum was handled,
incrementing the instruction address
would make it overflow.
The carry would add one to the
operation code, changing it to the next one in the instruction set:
a jump instruction.
Sure enough, the next program instruction was
in address location zero,
and the program went happily on its way.

I haven't kept in touch with Mel,
so I don't know if he ever gave in to the flood of
change that has washed over programming techniques
since those long-gone days.
I like to think he didn't.
In any event,
I was impressed enough that I quit looking for the
offending test,
telling the Big Boss I couldn't find it.
He didn't seem surprised.

When I left the company,
the blackjack program would still cheat
if you turned on the right sense switch,
and I think that's how it should be.
I didn't feel comfortable
hacking up the code of a Real Programmer.

This is one of hackerdom's great heroic epics, free verse or no. In a
few spare images it captures more about the esthetics and psychology of
hacking than all the scholarly volumes on the subject put together. For
an opposing point of view, see the entry for

                  real programmer
                     .

[1992 postscript --- the author writes: "The original submission to
the net was not in free verse, nor any approximation to it --- it was
straight prose style, in non-justified paragraphs. In bouncing around
the net it apparently got modified into the 'free verse' form now
popular. In other words, it got hacked on the net. That seems
appropriate, somehow."]

1.54   General Appearance

General Appearance:
===================

Intelligent. Scruffy. Intense. Abstracted. Surprisingly for a
sedentary profession, more hackers run to skinny than fat; both
extremes are more common than elsewhere. Tans are rare.

1.55   Dress

Dress:
=======

Casual, vaguely post-hippie; T-shirts, jeans, running shoes,
Birkenstocks (or bare feet). Long hair, beards, and moustaches are
common. High incidence of tie-dye and intellectual or humorous 'slogan'
T-shirts (only rarely computer related; that would be too obvious).

A substantial minority prefers 'outdoorsy' clothing --- hiking boots
("in case a mountain should suddenly spring up in the machine room", as
one famous parody put it), khakis, lumberjack or chamois shirts, and the
like.

Very few actually fit the "National Lampoon" Nerd stereotype, though it
lingers on at MIT and may have been more common before 1975. These
days, backpacks are more common than briefcases, and the hacker 'look'
is more whole-earth than whole-polyester.

Hackers dress for comfort, function, and minimal maintenance hassles
rather than for appearance (some, perhaps unfortunately, take this to
extremes and neglect personal hygiene). They have a very low tolerance
of suits and other 'business' attire; in fact, it is not uncommon for
hackers to quit a job rather than conform to a dress code.

Female hackers almost never wear visible makeup, and many use none at
all.

1.56   Reading Habits

```
Reading Habits:
===============
```

Omnivorous, but usually includes lots of science and science fiction.
The typical hacker household might subscribe to "Analog", "Scientific
American", "Co-Evolution Quarterly", and "Smithsonian". Hackers often
have a reading range that astonishes liberal arts people but tend not to
talk about it as much. Many hackers spend as much of their spare time
reading as the average American burns up watching TV, and often keep
shelves and shelves of well-thumbed books in their homes.

1.57   Other Interests

```
Other Interests:
================
```

Some hobbies are widely shared and recognized as going with the culture:
science fiction, music, medievalism (in the active form practiced by the
Society for Creative Anachronism and similar organizations), chess, go,
backgammon, wargames, and intellectual games of all kinds.
(Role-playing games such as Dungeons and Dragons used to be extremely
popular among hackers but they lost a bit of their luster as they moved
into the mainstream and became heavily commercialized.) Logic puzzles.
Ham radio. Other interests that seem to correlate less strongly but
positively with hackerdom include linguistics and theater teching.

1.58   Physical Activity and Sports

```
Physical Activity and Sports:
=============================
```

Many (perhaps even most) hackers don't follow or do sports at all and
are determinedly anti-physical. Among those who do, interest in
spectator sports is low to non-existent; sports are something one
does, not something one watches on TV.

Further, hackers avoid most team sports like the plague (volleyball is a
notable exception, perhaps because it's non-contact and relatively

friendly). Hacker sports are almost always primarily self-competitive
ones involving concentration, stamina, and micromotor skills: martial
arts, bicycling, auto racing, kite flying, hiking, rock climbing,
aviation, target-shooting, sailing, caving, juggling, skiing, skating
(ice and roller). Hackers' delight in techno-toys also tends to draw
them towards hobbies with nifty complicated equipment that they can
tinker with.

1.59 Education

```
Education:
===========
```

Nearly all hackers past their teens are either college-degreed or
self-educated to an equivalent level. The self-taught hacker is often
considered (at least by other hackers) to be better-motivated, and may
be more respected, than his school-shaped counterpart. Academic areas
from which people often gravitate into hackerdom include (besides the
obvious computer science and electrical engineering) physics,
mathematics, linguistics, and philosophy.

1.60 Things Hackers Detest and Avoid

```
Things Hackers Detest and Avoid:
================================
```

IBM mainframes. Smurfs, Ewoks, and other forms of offensive
cuteness. Bureaucracies. Stupid people. Easy listening music.
Television (except for cartoons, movies, and "Star Trek"
classic). Business suits. Dishonesty. Incompetence. Boredom.
COBOL. BASIC. Character-based menu interfaces.

1.61 Food

```
Food:
======
```

Ethnic. Spicy. Oriental, esp. Chinese and most esp. Szechuan, Hunan,
and Mandarin (hackers consider Cantonese vaguely d'eclass'e). Hackers
prefer the exotic; for example, the Japanese-food fans among them will
eat with gusto such delicacies as fugu (poisonous pufferfish) and
whale. Thai food has experienced flurries of popularity. Where
available, high-quality Jewish delicatessen food is much esteemed. A
visible minority of Southwestern and Pacific Coast hackers prefers

Mexican.

For those all-night hacks, pizza and microwaved burritos are big.
Interestingly, though the mainstream culture has tended to think of
hackers as incorrigible junk-food junkies, many have at least mildly
health-foodist attitudes and are fairly discriminating about what they
eat. This may be generational; anecdotal evidence suggests that the
stereotype was more on the mark 10--15 years ago.

1.62   Politics

```
Politics:
=========
```

Vaguely left of center, except for the strong libertarian contingent
which rejects conventional left-right politics entirely. The only safe
generalization is that hackers tend to be rather anti-authoritarian;
thus, both conventional conservatism and 'hard' leftism are rare.
Hackers are far more likely than most non-hackers to either (a) be
aggressively apolitical or (b) entertain peculiar or idiosyncratic
political ideas and actually try to live by them day-to-day.

1.63   Gender and Ethnicity

```
          Gender and Ethnicity:
====================
```

Hackerdom is still predominantly male. However, the percentage of women
is clearly higher than the low-single-digit range typical for technical
professions, and female hackers are generally respected and dealt with
as equals.

In the U.S., hackerdom is predominantly Caucasian with strong minorities
of Jews (East Coast) and Orientals (West Coast). The Jewish contingent
has exerted a particularly pervasive cultural influence (see

          Food
          ,
above, and note that several common jargon terms are obviously mutated
Yiddish).

The ethnic distribution of hackers is understood by them to be a
function of which ethnic groups tend to seek and value education.
Racial and ethnic prejudice is notably uncommon and tends to be met with
freezing contempt.

When asked, hackers often ascribe their culture's gender- and
color-blindness to a positive effect of text-only network channels,
and this is doubtless a powerful influence. Also, the ties many

hackers have to AI research and SF literature may have helped them to
develop an idea of personhood that is inclusive rather than exclusive
--- after all, if one's imagination readily grants full human rights to AI
programs, robots, dolphins, and extraterrestrial aliens, mere color and
gender can't seem very important any more.

1.64 Religion

Religion:
==========

Agnostic. Atheist. Non-observant Jewish. Neo-pagan. Very commonly,
three or more of these are combined in the same person. Conventional
faith-holding Christianity is rare though not unknown.

Even hackers who identify with a religious affiliation tend to be
relaxed about it, hostile to organized religion in general and all forms
of religious bigotry in particular. Many enjoy 'parody' religions such
as Discordianism and the Church of the SubGenius.

Also, many hackers are influenced to varying degrees by Zen Buddhism or
(less commonly) Taoism, and blend them easily with their 'native'
religions.

There is a definite strain of mystical, almost Gnostic sensibility that
shows up even among those hackers not actively involved with
neo-paganism, Discordianism, or Zen. Hacker folklore that pays homage
to 'wizards' and speaks of incantations and demons has too much
psychological truthfulness about it to be entirely a joke.

1.65 Ceremonial Chemicals

Ceremonial Chemicals:
=====================

Most hackers don't smoke tobacco, and use alcohol in moderation if at
all (though there is a visible contingent of exotic-beer fanciers, and a
few hackers are serious oenophiles). Limited use of non-addictive
psychedelic drugs, such as cannabis, LSD, psilocybin, and nitrous oxide,
etc., used to be relatively common and is still regarded with more
tolerance than in the mainstream culture. Use of 'downers' and opiates,
on the other hand, appears to be particularly rare; hackers seem in
general to dislike drugs that make them stupid. On the third hand, many
hackers regularly wire up on caffeine and/or sugar for all-night hacking
runs.

1.66   Communication Style

```
Communication Style:
====================
```

See the discussions of speech and writing styles near the beginning of
this File. Though hackers often have poor person-to-person
communication skills, they are as a rule quite sensitive to nuances of
language and very precise in their use of it. They are often better at
writing than at speaking.

1.67   Geographical Distribution

```
Geographical Distribution:
==========================
```

In the United States, hackerdom revolves on a Bay Area-to-Boston axis;
about half of the hard core seems to live within a hundred miles of
Cambridge (Massachusetts) or Berkeley (California), although there are
significant contingents in Los Angeles, in the Pacific Northwest, and
around Washington DC. Hackers tend to cluster around large cities,
especially 'university towns' such as the Raleigh-Durham area in North
Carolina or Princeton, New Jersey (this may simply reflect the fact that
many are students or ex-students living near their alma maters).

1.68   Sexual Habits

```
Sexual Habits:
==============
```

Hackerdom easily tolerates a much wider range of sexual and lifestyle
variation than the mainstream culture. It includes a relatively large
gay and bisexual contingent. Hackers are somewhat more likely to live
in polygynous or polyandrous relationships, practice open marriage, or
live in communes or group houses. In this, as in general appearance,
hackerdom semi-consciously maintains 'counterculture' values.

1.69   Personality Characteristics

Personality Characteristics:
============================

The most obvious common 'personality' characteristics of hackers are
high intelligence, consuming curiosity, and facility with intellectual
abstractions. Also, most hackers are 'neophiles', stimulated by and
appreciative of novelty (especially intellectual novelty). Most are
also relatively individualistic and anti-conformist.

Although high general intelligence is common among hackers, it is not
the sine qua non one might expect. Another trait is probably even more
important: the ability to mentally absorb, retain, and reference large
amounts of 'meaningless' detail, trusting to later experience to give it
context and meaning. A person of merely average analytical intelligence
who has this trait can become an effective hacker, but a creative genius
who lacks it will swiftly find himself outdistanced by people who
routinely upload the contents of thick reference manuals into their
brains. [During the production of the first book version of this
document, for example, I learned most of the rather complex typesetting
language TeX over about four working days, mainly by inhaling Knuth's
477-page manual. My editor's flabbergasted reaction to this genuinely
surprised me, because years of associating with hackers have conditioned
me to consider such performances routine and to be expected. --- ESR]

Contrary to stereotype, hackers are *not* usually intellectually narrow;
they tend to be interested in any subject that can provide mental
stimulation, and can often discourse knowledgeably and even
interestingly on any number of obscure subjects --- if you can get them
to talk at all, as opposed to, say, going back to their hacking.

It is noticeable (and contrary to many outsiders' expectations) that the
better a hacker is at hacking, the more likely he or she is to have
outside interests at which he or she is more than merely competent.

Hackers are 'control freaks' in a way that has nothing to do with the
usual coercive or authoritarian connotations of the term. In the same
way that children delight in making model trains go forward and back by
moving a switch, hackers love making complicated things like computers
do nifty stuff for them. But it has to be *their* nifty stuff. They
don't like tedium, nondeterminism, or most of the fussy, boring,
ill-defined little tasks that go with maintaining a normal existence.
Accordingly, they tend to be careful and orderly in their intellectual
lives and chaotic elsewhere. Their code will be beautiful, even if
their desks are buried in 3 feet of crap.

Hackers are generally only very weakly motivated by conventional rewards
such as social approval or money. They tend to be attracted by
challenges and excited by interesting toys, and to judge the interest of
work or other activities in terms of the challenges offered and the toys
they get to play with.

In terms of Myers-Briggs and equivalent psychometric systems, hackerdom
appears to concentrate the relatively rare INTJ and INTP types; that is,
introverted, intuitive, and thinker types (as opposed to the
extroverted-sensate personalities that predominate in the mainstream
culture). ENT[JP] types are also concentrated among hackers but are in

a minority.

1.70   Weaknesses of the Hacker Personality

                        Weaknesses of the Hacker Personality:
==

Hackers have relatively little ability to identify emotionally with
other people. This may be because hackers generally aren't much like
'other people'. Unsurprisingly, hackers also tend towards
self-absorption, intellectual arrogance, and impatience with people and
tasks perceived to be wasting their time.

As cynical as hackers sometimes wax about the amount of idiocy in the
world, they tend by reflex to assume that everyone is as rational,
'cool', and imaginative as they consider themselves. This bias often
contributes to weakness in communication skills. Hackers tend to be
especially poor at confrontation and negotiation.

Because of their passionate embrace of (what they consider to be) the

                Right Thing
                , hackers can be unfortunately intolerant and bigoted on
technical issues, in marked contrast to their general spirit of
camaraderie and tolerance of alternative viewpoints otherwise. Old-time

                ITS
                 partisans look down on the ever-growing hordes of
                UNIX
                hackers; UNIX aficionados despise
                VMS
                 and
                MS-DOS
                ; and hackers who
are used to conventional command-line user interfaces loudly loathe
mouse-and-menu based systems such as the Macintosh. Hackers who don't
indulge in
                USENET
                 consider it a huge waste of time and
                bandwidth
                ;
fans of old adventure games such as
                ADVENT
                 and
                Zork
                 consider
                MUD
                s
to be glorified chat systems devoid of atmosphere or interesting
puzzles; hackers who are willing to devote endless hours to USENET or
MUDs consider
                IRC
                 to be a *real* waste of time; IRCies think MUDs

might be okay if there weren't all those silly puzzles in the way. And,
of course, there are the perennial
                holy wars

                EMACS
                 vs.
                vi
                ,

                big-endian
                 vs.
                little-endian
                , RISC vs. CISC, etc., etc., etc. As
in society at large, the intensity and duration of these debates is
usually inversely proportional to the number of objective, factual
arguments available to buttress any position.

As a result of all the above traits, many hackers have difficulty
maintaining stable relationships. At worst, they can produce the
classic
                computer geek
                : withdrawn, relationally incompetent, sexually
frustrated, and desperately unhappy when not submerged in his or her
craft. Fortunately, this extreme is far less common than mainstream
folklore paints it --- but almost all hackers will recognize something
of themselves in the unflattering paragraphs above.

Hackers are often monumentally disorganized and sloppy about dealing
with the physical world. Bills don't get paid on time, clutter piles up
to incredible heights in homes and offices, and minor maintenance tasks
get deferred indefinitely.

The sort of person who uses phrases like 'incompletely socialized'
usually thinks hackers are. Hackers regard such people with contempt
when they notice them at all.

1.71 Miscellaneous

Miscellaneous:
===============

Hackers are more likely to have cats than dogs (in fact, it is widely
grokked that cats have the hacker nature). Many drive incredibly
decrepit heaps and forget to wash them; richer ones drive spiffy
Porsches and RX-7s and then forget to have them washed. Almost all
hackers have terribly bad handwriting, and often fall into the habit of
block-printing everything like junior draftsmen.

1.72 Verb Doubling

Verb Doubling: -------------- A standard construction in English ↩
is to
double a verb and use it as an exclamation, such as "Bang, bang!" or
"Quack, quack!". Most of these are names for noises. Hackers also
double verbs as a concise, sometimes sarcastic comment on what the
implied subject does. Also, a doubled verb is often used to terminate a
conversation, in the process remarking on the current state of affairs
or what the speaker intends to do next. Typical examples involve

win

,

lose

,

hack

,

flame

,

barf

,

chomp

:

"The disk heads just crashed." "Lose, lose."
"Mostly he talked about his latest crock. Flame, flame."
"Boy, what a bagbiter! Chomp, chomp!"

Some verb-doubled constructions have special meanings not immediately
obvious from the verb. These have their own listings in the lexicon.

The

USENET

culture has one *tripling* convention unrelated to
this; the names of 'joke' topic groups often have a tripled last
element. The first and paradigmatic example was
alt.swedish.chef.bork.bork.bork (a "Muppet Show" reference);
other infamous examples have included:

alt.french.captain.borg.borg.borg
alt.wesley.crusher.die.die.die
comp.unix.internals.system.calls.brk.brk.brk
sci.physics.edward.teller.boom.boom.boom
alt.sadistic.dentists.drill.drill.drill

1.73 Soundalike slang

Soundalike slang: ------------------ Hackers will often make ↩
rhymes or
puns in order to convert an ordinary word or phrase into something more
interesting. It is considered particularly

```
                flavorful
                 if the phrase is
bent so as to include some other jargon word; thus the computer hobbyist
magazine "Dr. Dobb's Journal" is almost always referred to among hackers
as 'Dr. Frob's Journal' or simply 'Dr. Frob's'.  Terms of this kind that
have been in fairly wide use include names for newspapers:

    Boston Herald => Horrid (or Harried)
    Boston Globe => Boston Glob
    Houston (or San Francisco) Chronicle
         => the Crocknicle (or the Comical)
    New York Times => New York Slime

However, terms like these are often made up on the spur of the moment.
Standard examples include:

    Data General => Dirty Genitals
    IBM 360 => IBM Three-Sickly
    Government Property --- Do Not Duplicate (on keys)
         => Government Duplicity --- Do Not Propagate
    for historical reasons => for hysterical raisins
    Margaret Jacks Hall (the CS building at Stanford)
         => Marginal Hacks Hall

This is not really similar to the Cockney rhyming slang it has been
compared to in the past, because Cockney substitutions are opaque
whereas hacker punning jargon is intentionally transparent.
```

1.74 The `-P` convention

```
                The '-P' convention: -------------------- Turning a word into a
question by appending the syllable 'P'; from the LISP convention of
appending the letter 'P' to denote a predicate (a boolean-valued
function).  The question should expect a yes/no answer, though it
needn't.  (See
                T
                 and
                NIL
                 .)

    At dinnertime:
         Q: "Foodp?"
         A: "Yeah, I'm pretty hungry." or "T!"

    At any time:
         Q: "State-of-the-world-P?"
         A: (Straight) "I'm about to go home."
         A: (Humorous) "Yes, the world has a state."

    On the phone to Florida:
         Q: "State-p Florida?"
         A: "Been reading JARGON.TXT again, eh?"
```

[One of the best of these is a
                Gosperism
                . Once, when we were at a
Chinese restaurant, Bill Gosper wanted to know whether someone would
like to share with him a two-person-sized bowl of soup. His inquiry
was: "Split-p soup?" --- GLS]

1.75 Overgeneralization

                Overgeneralization: ------------------- A very conspicuous ←
                feature of
jargon is the frequency with which techspeak items such as names of
program tools, command language primitives, and even assembler opcodes
are applied to contexts outside of computing wherever hackers find
amusing analogies to them. Thus (to cite one of the best-known
examples) UNIX hackers often
                grep
                 for things rather than searching for
them. Many of the lexicon entries are generalizations of exactly this
kind.

Hackers enjoy overgeneralization on the grammatical level as well. Many
hackers love to take various words and add the wrong endings to them to
make nouns and verbs, often by extending a standard rule to nonuniform
cases (or vice versa). For example, because

     porous => porosity
     generous => generosity

hackers happily generalize:

     mysterious => mysteriosity
     ferrous => ferrosity
     obvious => obviosity
     dubious => dubiosity

Another class of common construction uses the suffix '-itude' to
abstract a quality from just about any adjective or noun. This usage
arises especially in cases where mainstream English would perform the
same abstraction through '-iness' or '-ingness'. Thus:

1.76 Spoken inarticulations

Spoken inarticulations: ----------------------- Words such as
'mumble', 'sigh', and 'groan' are spoken in places where their referent
might more naturally be used. It has been suggested that this usage

derives from the impossibility of representing such noises on a comm
link or in electronic mail (interestingly, the same sorts of
constructions have been showing up with increasing frequency in comic
strips). Another expression sometimes heard is "Complain!", meaning "I
have a complaint!"

1.77 Anthromorphization

                    Anthromorphization: ------------------- Semantically, one rich ↩
                        source
of jargon constructions is the hackish tendency to anthropomorphize
hardware and software. This isn't done in a naive way; hackers don't
personalize their stuff in the sense of feeling empathy with it, nor do
they mystically believe that the things they work on every day are
'alive'. What *is* common is to hear hardware or software talked about
as though it has homunculi talking to each other inside it, with
intentions and desires. Thus, one hears "The protocol handler got
confused", or that programs "are trying" to do things, or one may say of
a routine that "its goal in life is to X". One even hears explanations
like "... and its poor little brain couldn't understand X, and it
died." Sometimes modelling things this way actually seems to make them
easier to understand, perhaps because it's instinctively natural to
think of anything with a really complex behavioral repertoire as 'like a
person' rather than 'like a thing'.

Of the six listed constructions, verb doubling, peculiar noun
formations, anthromorphization, and (especially) spoken inarticulations
have become quite general; but punning jargon is still largely confined
to MIT and other large universities, and the '-P' convention is found
only where LISPers flourish.

Finally, note that many words in hacker jargon have to be understood as
members of sets of comparatives. This is especially true of the
adjectives and nouns used to describe the beauty and functional quality
of code. Here is an approximately correct spectrum:

     monstrosity brain-damage screw bug lose misfeature
     crock kluge hack win feature elegance perfection

The last is spoken of as a mythical absolute, approximated but never
actually attained. Another similar scale is used for describing the
reliability of software:

     broken flaky dodgy fragile brittle
     solid robust bulletproof armor-plated

Note, however, that 'dodgy' is primarily Commonwealth Hackish (it is
rare in the U.S.) and may change places with 'flaky' for some speakers.

Coinages for describing
                lossage

seem to call forth the very finest in
hackish linguistic inventiveness; it has been truly said that hackers
have even more words for equipment failures than Yiddish has for
obnoxious people.

1.78 abbrev

abbrev: /*-breev'/, /*-brev'/ n. Common abbreviation for
   'abbreviation'.

1.79 ABEND

ABEND: [ABnormal END] /o'bend/, /*-bend'/ n. Abnormal
termination (of software);
            crash
            ;
            lossage
            . Derives from an
error message on the IBM 360; used jokingly by hackers but
seriously mainly by
            code grinder
            s. Usually capitalized, but may
appear as 'abend'. Hackers will try to persuade you that ABEND is
called 'abend' because it is what system operators do to the
machine late on Friday when they want to call it a day, and hence
is from the German 'Abend' = 'Evening'.

1.80 accumulator

accumulator: n. 1. Archaic term for a register. On-line use of it
as a synonym for 'register' is a fairly reliable indication that
the user has been around for quite a while and/or that the
architecture under discussion is quite old. The term in full is
almost never used of microprocessor registers, for example, though
symbolic names for arithmetic registers beginning in 'A' derive
from historical use of the term 'accumulator' (and not, actually,
from 'arithmetic'). Confusingly, though, an 'A' register name
prefix may also stand for 'address', as for example on the
Motorola 680x0 family. 2. A register being used for arithmetic or
logic (as opposed to addressing or a loop index), especially one
being used to accumulate a sum or count of many items. This use is
in context of a particular routine or stretch of code. "The
FOOBAZ routine uses A3 as an accumulator." 3. One's in-basket
(esp. among old-timers who might use sense 1). "You want this
reviewed? Sure, just put it in the accumulator." (See

                    stack
                    .)

1.81 ACK

          ACK: /ak/ interj. 1. [from the ASCII mnemonic for 0000110]
Acknowledge. Used to register one's presence (compare mainstream
Yo!). An appropriate response to
          ping
           or
          ENQ
          .
2. [from the comic strip "Bloom County"] An exclamation of
surprised disgust, esp. in "Ack pffft!" Semi-humorous.
Generally this sense is not spelled in caps (ACK) and is
distinguished by a following exclamation point. 3. Used to
politely interrupt someone to tell them you understand their point
(see
          NAK
). Thus, for example, you might cut off an overly
long explanation with "Ack. Ack. Ack. I get it now".

There is also a usage "ACK?" (from sense 1) meaning "Are you
there?", often used in email when earlier mail has produced no
reply, or during a lull in
          talk mode
           to see if the person has
gone away (the standard humorous response is of course
          NAK
             (sense 2), i.e., "I'm not here").

1.82 ad-hockery

          ad-hockery: /ad-hok'*r-ee/ [Purdue] n. 1. Gratuitous assumptions
made inside certain programs, esp. expert systems, which lead to
the appearance of semi-intelligent behavior but are in fact
entirely arbitrary. For example, fuzzy-matching against input
tokens that might be typing errors against a symbol table can make
it look as though a program knows how to spell. 2. Special-case
code to cope with some awkward input that would otherwise cause a
program to
          choke
          , presuming normal inputs are dealt with in
some cleaner and more regular way. Also called 'ad-hackery',
'ad-hocity' (/ad-hos'*-tee/), 'ad-crockery'. See also

          ELIZA effect
          .

1.83 Ada

                Ada:: n. A
                Pascal
                -descended language that has been made
mandatory for Department of Defense software projects by the
Pentagon. Hackers are nearly unanimous in observing that,
technically, it is precisely what one might expect given that kind
of endorsement by fiat; designed by committee, crockish, difficult
to use, and overall a disastrous, multi-billion-dollar boondoggle
(one common description is "The PL/I of the 1980s"). Hackers
find Ada's exception-handling and inter-process communication
features particularly hilarious. Ada Lovelace (the daughter of
Lord Byron who became the world's first programmer while
cooperating with Charles Babbage on the design of his mechanical
computing engines in the mid-1800s) would almost certainly blanch
at the use to which her name has latterly been put; the kindest
thing that has been said about it is that there is probably a good
small language screaming to get out from inside its vast,

                elephantine
                 bulk.

1.84 adger

                adger: /aj'r/ [UCLA] vt. To make a bonehead move with
consequences that could have been foreseen with even slight mental
effort. E.g., "He started removing files and promptly adgered the
whole project". Compare
                dumbass attack
                .

1.85 admin

                admin: /ad-min'/ n. Short for 'administrator'; very commonly
used in speech or on-line to refer to the systems person in charge
on a computer. Common constructions on this include 'sysadmin'
and 'site admin' (emphasizing the administrator's role as a site
contact for email and news) or 'newsadmin' (focusing specifically
on news). Compare
                postmaster
                ,
                sysop

,
system

mangler
.

1.86 ADVENT

ADVENT: /ad'vent/ n. The prototypical computer adventure game, ↩
          first
implemented on the
          PDP-10
           by Will Crowther as an attempt at
computer-refereed fantasy gaming, and expanded into a
puzzle-oriented game by Don Woods. Now better known as Adventure,
but the
          TOPS-10
           operating system permitted only six-letter
filenames. See also
          vadding
           .

This game defined the terse, dryly humorous style now expected in
text adventure games, and popularized several tag lines that have
become fixtures of hacker-speak: "A huge green fierce snake bars
the way!" "I see no X here" (for some noun X). "You are in a
maze of twisty little passages, all alike." "You are in a little
maze of twisty passages, all different." The 'magic words'

          xyzzy
           and
          plugh
           also derive from this game.

Crowther, by the way, participated in the exploration of the
Mammoth & Flint Ridge cave system; it actually *has* a
'Colossal Cave' and a 'Bedquilt' as in the game, and the 'Y2' that
also turns up is cavers' jargon for a map reference to a secondary
entrance.

1.87 AFJ

AFJ: // n. Written-only abbreviation for "April Fool's Joke".
Elaborate April Fool's hoaxes are a long-established tradition on
USENET and Internet; see
          kremvax
           for an example. In fact,
April Fool's Day is the *only* seasonal holiday marked by

customary observances on the hacker networks.

1.88 AI

AI: /A-I/ n. Abbreviation for 'Artificial Intelligence', so
   common that the full form is almost never written or spoken among
   hackers.

1.89 AI-complete

              AI-complete: /A-I k*m-pleet'/ [MIT, Stanford: by analogy with
   'NP-complete' (see
              NP-
)] adj. Used to describe problems or
subproblems in AI, to indicate that the solution presupposes a
solution to the 'strong AI problem' (that is, the synthesis of a
human-level intelligence). A problem that is AI-complete is, in
other words, just too hard.

Examples of AI-complete problems are 'The Vision Problem'
(building a system that can see as well as a human) and 'The
Natural Language Problem' (building a system that can understand
and speak a natural language as well as a human). These may appear
to be modular, but all attempts so far (1993) to solve them have
foundered on the amount of context information and 'intelligence'
they seem to require. See also
              gedanken
              .

1.90 AI koans

              AI koans: /A-I koh'anz/ pl.n. A series of pastiches of Zen
teaching riddles created by Danny Hillis at the MIT AI Lab around
various major figures of the Lab's culture (several are included
under "
              A Selection of AI Koans
              " in
              Appendix

              A
). See also
              ha ha only serious
              ,
              mu
              , and

Humor,

Hacker

.

1.91 AIDS

AIDS: /aydz/ n. Short for A* Infected Disk Syndrome ('A*' is a

glob
 pattern that matches, but is not limited to, Apple),
this condition is quite often the result of practicing unsafe

SEX
. See
virus
,
worm
,
Trojan horse
,

virgin
.

1.92 AIDX

AIDX: n. /aydkz/ n. Derogatory term for IBM's perverted version
of UNIX, AIX, especially for the AIX 3.? used in the IBM RS/6000
series (some hackers think it is funnier just to pronounce "AIX"
as "aches"). A victim of the dreaded "hybridism" disease, this
attempt to combine the two main currents of the UNIX stream
(

BSD
 and
USG UNIX
) became a
monstrosity
 to haunt
system administrators' dreams. For example, if new accounts are
created while many users are logged on, the load average jumps
quickly over 20 due to silly implementation of the user databases.
For a quite similar disease, compare
HP-SUX
. Also, compare

Macintrash

```
            Nominal Semidestructor

            ,
            Open DeathTrap

            ,

            ScumOS

            ,
            sun-stools

            .
```

1.93 airplane rule

            airplane rule: n. "Complexity increases the possibility of
failure; a twin-engine airplane has twice as many engine problems
as a single-engine airplane." By analogy, in both software and
electronics, the rule that simplicity increases robustness. It is
correspondingly argued that the right way to build reliable systems
is to put all your eggs in one basket, after making sure that
you've built a really *good* basket. See also
            KISS

            Principle
            .

1.94 aliasing bug

            aliasing bug: n. A class of subtle programming errors that can
arise in code that does dynamic allocation, esp. via
`malloc(3)' or equivalent. If several pointers address
(`aliases for') a given hunk of storage, it may happen that the
storage is freed or reallocated (and thus moved) through one alias
and then referenced through another, which may lead to subtle (and
possibly intermittent) lossage depending on the state and the
allocation history of the malloc
            arena
            . Avoidable by use of
allocation strategies that never alias allocated core, or by use of
higher-level languages, such as
            LISP
            , which employ a garbage
collector (see
            GC
). Also called a
            stale pointer bug
            .
See also
            precedence lossage

            ,

smash the stack

,

fandango on core

,
memory leak

,
memory smash

,

overrun screw

,
spam

.

Historical note: Though this term is nowadays associated with
C programming, it was already in use in a very similar sense in the
Algol-60 and FORTRAN communities in the 1960s.

1.95 all-elbows

all-elbows: [MS-DOS] adj. Of a TSR (terminate-and-stay-resident)
IBM PC program, such as the N pop-up calendar and calculator
utilities that circulate on
BBS
 systems: unsociable. Used to
describe a program that rudely steals the resources that it needs
without considering that other TSRs may also be resident. One
particularly common form of rudeness is lock-up due to programs
fighting over the keyboard interrupt. See
rude
, also

mess-dos
.

1.96 alpha particles

alpha particles: n. See
bit rot
.

1.97 alt

alt: /awlt/ 1. n. The alt shift key on an IBM PC or
clone
    keyboard; see
bucky bits
, sense 2 (though typical PC usage does
not simply set the 0200 bit). 2. n. The 'clover' or 'Command'
key on a Macintosh; use of this term usually reveals that the
speaker hacked PCs before coming to the Mac (see also
            feature

            key
). Some Mac hackers, confusingly, reserve 'alt' for the Option
key (and it is so labeled on some Mac II keyboards). 3. n.obs.
[PDP-10; often capitalized to ALT] Alternate name for the ASCII
ESC character (ASCII 0011011), after the keycap labeling on some
older terminals; also 'altmode' (/awlt'mohd/). This character
was almost never pronounced 'escape' on an ITS system, in

            TECO
            , or under TOPS-10 --- always alt, as in "Type alt alt to
end a TECO command" or "alt-U onto the system" (for "log onto
the [ITS] system"). This usage probably arose because alt is more
convenient to say than 'escape', especially when followed by
another alt or a character (or another alt *and* a character,
for that matter).

1.98 alt bit

alt bit: /awlt bit/ [from alternate] adj. See
meta bit
.

1.99 altmode

altmode: n. Syn.
alt
 sense 3.

1.100 Aluminum Book

Aluminum Book: [MIT] n. "Common LISP: The Language", by
Guy L. Steele Jr. (Digital Press, first edition 1984, second
edition 1990). Note that due to a technical screwup some printings

of the second edition are actually of a color the author describes
succinctly as "yucky green". See also
                book titles
                .

1.101 amoeba

amoeba: n. Humorous term for the Commodore Amiga personal computer.

1.102 amp off

                amp off: [Purdue] vt. To run in
                background
                . From the UNIX shell '&'
  operator.

1.103 amper

                amper: n. Common abbreviation for the name of the ampersand ('&',
  ASCII 0100110) character. See
                ASCII
                 for other synonyms.

1.104 angle brackets

                angle brackets: n. Either of the characters '<' (ASCII
  0111100) and '>' (ASCII 0111110) (ASCII less-than or
  greater-than signs). Typographers in the
                Real World
                 use angle
  brackets which are either taller and slimmer (the ISO 'Bra' and
  'Ket' characters), or significantly smaller (single or double
  guillemets) than the less-than and greater-than signs.
  See
                broket
                ,
                ASCII
                .

1.105   angry fruit salad

            angry fruit salad: n. A bad visual-interface design that uses too
many colors. (This term derives, of course, from the bizarre
day-glo colors found in canned fruit salad.) Too often one sees
similar effects from interface designers using color window systems
such as
            X
            ; there is a tendency to create displays that are
flashy and attention-getting but uncomfortable for long-term
use.

1.106   annoybot

            annoybot: /*-noy-bot/ [IRC] n. See
            robot
            .

1.107   AOS

            AOS: 1. /aws/ (East Coast), /ay-os/ (West Coast) [based on a
PDP-10 increment instruction] vt.,obs. To increase the amount of
something. "AOS the campfire." Usage: considered silly, and now
obsolete. Now largely supplanted by
            bump
            . See
            SOS
            .
2. n. A
            Multics
            -derived OS supported at one time by Data
General. This was pronounced /A-O-S/ or /A-os/. A spoof of
the standard AOS system administrator's manual ("How to Load
and Generate your AOS System") was created, issued a part number,
and circulated as photocopy folklore; it was called "How to
Goad and Levitate your CHAOS System". 3. n. Algebraic Operating
System, in reference to those calculators which use infix instead
of postfix (reverse Polish) notation.

Historical note: AOS in sense 1 was the name of a
            PDP-10
                instruction that took any memory location in the computer and ↩
                  added
1 to it; AOS meant 'Add One and do not Skip'. Why, you may ask,
does the 'S' stand for 'do not Skip' rather than for 'Skip'? Ah,
here was a beloved piece of PDP-10 folklore. There were eight such
instructions: AOSE added 1 and then skipped the next instruction
if the result was Equal to zero; AOSG added 1 and then skipped if

the result was Greater than 0; AOSN added 1 and then skipped
if the result was Not 0; AOSA added 1 and then skipped Always;
and so on. Just plain AOS didn't say when to skip, so it never
skipped.

For similar reasons, AOJ meant 'Add One and do not Jump'. Even
more bizarre, SKIP meant 'do not SKIP'! If you wanted to skip the
next instruction, you had to say 'SKIPA'. Likewise, JUMP meant
'do not JUMP'; the unconditional form was JUMPA. However, hackers
never did this. By some quirk of the 10's design, the
                JRST
                    (Jump and ReSTore flag with no flag specified) was actually ←
                        faster
and so was invariably used. Such were the perverse mysteries of
assembler programming.

1.108 app

                app: /ap/ n. Short for 'application program', as opposed to a
systems program. Apps are what systems vendors are forever chasing
developers to create for their environments so they can sell more
boxes. Hackers tend not to think of the things they themselves run
as apps; thus, in hacker parlance the term excludes compilers,
program editors, games, and messaging systems, though a user would
consider all those to be apps. (Broadly, an app is often a
self-contained environment for performing some well-defined task
such as 'word processing'; hackers tend to prefer more
general-purpose tools.) Oppose
                tool
                ,
                operating

                system
                .

1.109 arena

                arena: [UNIX] n. The area of memory attached to a process by
'brk(2)' and 'sbrk(2)' and used by 'malloc(3)' as
dynamic storage. So named from a 'malloc: corrupt arena'
message emitted when some early versions detected an impossible
value in the free block list. See
                overrun screw
                ,
                aliasing

                bug
                ,

memory leak

,

memory smash

,

smash the

stack

.

1.110 arg

arg: /arg/ n. Abbreviation for 'argument' (to a function),
used so often as to have become a new word (like 'piano' from
'pianoforte'). "The sine function takes 1 arg, but the
arc-tangent function can take either 1 or 2 args." Compare

param

,

parm

,

var

.

1.111 ARMM

ARMM: [acronym, 'Automated Retroactive Minimal Moderation'] n. A
USENET robot created by Dick Depew of Munroe Falls, Ohio. ARMM was
intended to automatically cancel posts from anonymous-posting
sites. Unfortunately, the robot's recognizer for anonymous
postings triggered on its own automatically-generated control
messages! Transformed by this stroke of programming ineptitude
into a monster of Frankensteinian proportions, it broke loose on
the night of March 31, 1993 and proceeded to
spam
news.admin.policy with a recursive explosion of over 200
messages.

ARMM's bug produced a recursive
cascade
 of messages each of which
mechanically added text to the ID and Subject and some other
headers of its parent. This produced a flood of messages in which
each header took up several screens and each message ID and subject
line got longer and longer and longer.

Reactions varied from amusement to outrage. The pathological
messages crashed at least one mail system, and upset people paying
line charges for their USENET feeds. One poster described the ARMM

```
debacle as "instant USENET history" (also establishing the term
```

            despew
            ), and it has since been widely cited as a cautionary
```
example of the havoc the combination of good intentions and
incompetence can wreak on a network.  Compare
```
            Great Worm, The
            ;

            sorcerer's apprentice mode
            . See also
            software laser
            ,

            network meltdown
            .

1.112 armor-plated

            armor-plated: n. Syn. for
            bulletproof
            .

1.113 asbestos

            asbestos: adj. Used as a modifier to anything intended to protect
  one from
            flame
            s; also in other highly
            flame
            -suggestive
```
usages.  See, for example,
```
            asbestos longjohns
             and
            asbestos

            cork award
            .

1.114 asbestos cork award

            asbestos cork award: n. Once, long ago at MIT, there was a

            flamer

            so consistently obnoxious that another hacker designed,
had made, and distributed posters announcing that said flamer had
been nominated for the 'asbestos cork award'. (Any reader in
doubt as to the intended application of the cork should consult the
etymology under
            flame
            .) Since then, it is agreed that only a
select few have risen to the heights of bombast required to earn
this dubious dignity --- but there is no agreement on *which*
few.

1.115   asbestos longjohns

            asbestos longjohns: n. Notional garments donned by
            USENET
                posters just before emitting a remark they expect will elicit

            flamage
            . This is the most common of the
            asbestos
                coinages. Also 'asbestos underwear', 'asbestos overcoat',
etc.

1.116   ASCII

            ASCII:: [American Standard Code for Information Interchange]
/as'kee/ n. The predominant character set encoding of present-day
computers. The modern version uses 7 bits for each character,
whereas most earlier codes (including an early version of ASCII)
used fewer. This change allowed the inclusion of lowercase letters
--- a major
            win
             --- but it did not provide for accented
letters or any other letterforms not used in English (such as the
German sharp-S
or the ae-ligature
which is a letter in, for example, Norwegian). It could be worse,
though. It could be much worse. See
            EBCDIC
             to understand how.

Computers are much pickier and less flexible about spelling than
humans; thus, hackers need to be very precise when talking about
characters, and have developed a considerable amount of verbal
shorthand for them. Every character has one or more names --- some
formal, some concise, some silly. Common jargon names for ASCII
characters are collected here. See also individual entries for

          bang
          ,
          excl
          ,
          open
          ,
          ques
          ,
          semi
          ,
          shriek
          ,

          splat
          ,
          twiddle
          , and
          Yu-Shiang Whole Fish
          .

This list derives from revision 2.3 of the USENET ASCII
pronunciation guide. Single characters are listed in ASCII order;
character pairs are sorted in by first member. For each character,
common names are given in rough order of popularity, followed by
names that are reported but rarely seen; official ANSI/CCITT names
are surrounded by brokets: <>. Square brackets mark the
particularly silly names introduced by
          INTERCAL
          . The
abbreviations "l/r" and "o/c" stand for left/right and
"open/close" respectively. Ordinary parentheticals provide some
usage information.

  !
      Common:
          bang
          ; pling; excl; shriek; <exclamation mark>.
      Rare: factorial; exclam; smash; cuss; boing; yell; wow; hey;
      wham; eureka; [spark-spot]; soldier.

  "
      Common: double quote; quote. Rare: literal mark;
      double-glitch; <quotation marks>; <dieresis>; dirk;
      [rabbit-ears]; double prime.

  #
      Common: number sign; pound; pound sign; hash; sharp;
          crunch
          ;
      hex; [mesh]. Rare: grid; crosshatch; octothorpe; flash;
      <square>, pig-pen; tictactoe; scratchmark; thud; thump;

          splat
          .

  $
      Common: dollar; <dollar sign>. Rare: currency symbol; buck;

cash; string (from BASIC); escape (when used as the echo of
ASCII ESC); ding; cache; [big money].

%

    Common: percent; <percent sign>; mod; grapes. Rare:
[double-oh-seven].

&

    Common: <ampersand>; amper; and. Rare: address (from C);
reference (from C++); andpersand; bitand; background (from
'sh(1)'); pretzel; amp. [INTERCAL called this 'ampersand';
what could be sillier?]

'

    Common: single quote; quote; <apostrophe>. Rare: prime;
glitch; tick; irk; pop; [spark]; <closing single quotation
mark>; <acute accent>.

( )

    Common: l/r paren; l/r parenthesis; left/right; open/close;
paren/thesis; o/c paren; o/c parenthesis; l/r parenthesis; l/r
banana. Rare: so/already; lparen/rparen; <opening/closing
parenthesis>; o/c round bracket, l/r round bracket,
[wax/wane]; parenthisey/unparenthisey; l/r ear.

*

    Common: star; [
        splat
        ]; <asterisk>. Rare: wildcard; gear;
dingle; mult; spider; aster; times; twinkle; glob (see

        glob
        );
        Nathan Hale
        .

+

    Common: <plus>; add. Rare: cross; [intersection].

,

    Common: <comma>. Rare: <cedilla>; [tail].

_

    Common: dash; <hyphen>; <minus>. Rare: [worm]; option; dak;
bithorpe.

.

    Common: dot; point; <period>; <decimal point>. Rare: radix
point; full stop; [spot].

/

    Common: slash; stroke; <slant>; forward slash. Rare:
diagonal; solidus; over; slak; virgule; [slat].

:

    Common: <colon>. Rare: dots; [two-spot].

;

    Common: <semicolon>; semi. Rare: weenie; [hybrid],
    pit-thwong.

< >

    Common: <less/greater than>; bra/ket; l/r angle; l/r angle
    bracket; l/r broket. Rare: from/into, towards; read
    from/write to; suck/blow; comes-from/gozinta; in/out;
    crunch/zap (all from UNIX); [angle/right angle].

=

    Common: <equals>; gets; takes. Rare: quadrathorpe;
    [half-mesh].

?

    Common: query; <question mark>;
        ques
      . Rare: whatmark;
    [what]; wildchar; huh; hook; buttonhook; hunchback.

@

    Common: at sign; at; strudel. Rare: each; vortex; whorl;
    [whirlpool]; cyclone; snail; ape; cat; rose; cabbage;
    <commercial at>.

V

    Rare: [book].

[ ]

    Common: l/r square bracket; l/r bracket; <opening/closing
    bracket>; bracket/unbracket. Rare: square/unsquare; [U turn/U
    turn back].

\

    Common: backslash; escape (from C/UNIX); reverse slash; slosh;
    backslant; backwhack. Rare: bash; <reverse slant>; reversed
    virgule; [backslat].

^

    Common: hat; control; uparrow; caret; <circumflex>. Rare:
    chevron; [shark (or shark-fin)]; to the ('to the power of');
    fang; pointer (in Pascal).

_

    Common: <underline>; underscore; underbar; under. Rare:
    score; backarrow; skid; [flatworm].

`

    Common: backquote; left quote; left single quote; open quote;
    <grave accent>; grave. Rare: backprime; [backspark];
    unapostrophe; birk; blugle; back tick; back glitch; push;
    <opening single quotation mark>; quasiquote.

{ }

    Common: o/c brace; l/r brace; l/r squiggly; l/r squiggly
    bracket/brace; l/r curly bracket/brace; <opening/closing

brace>. Rare: brace/unbrace; curly/uncurly; leftit/rytit; l/r
squirrelly; [embrace/bracelet].

 |

Common: bar; or; or-bar; v-bar; pipe; vertical bar. Rare:
<vertical line>; gozinta; thru; pipesinta (last three from
UNIX); [spike].

 ~

Common: <tilde>; squiggle;
        twiddle
        ; not. Rare: approx;
wiggle; swung dash; enyay; [sqiggle (sic)].

The pronunciation of '#' as 'pound' is common in the U.S.
but a bad idea;
            Commonwealth Hackish
             has its own, rather more
apposite use of 'pound sign' (confusingly, on British keyboards
the pound graphic
happens to replace '#'; thus Britishers sometimes
call '#' on a U.S.-ASCII keyboard 'pound', compounding the
American error). The U.S. usage derives from an old-fashioned
commercial practice of using a '#' suffix to tag pound weights
on bills of lading. The character is usually pronounced 'hash'
outside the U.S.

The 'uparrow' name for circumflex and 'leftarrow' name for
underline are historical relics from archaic ASCII (the 1963
version), which had these graphics in those character positions
rather than the modern punctuation characters.

The 'swung dash' or 'approximation' sign is not quite the same
as tilde in typeset material
but the ASCII tilde serves for both (compare
            angle

            brackets
).

Some other common usages cause odd overlaps. The '#',
'$', '>', and '&' characters, for example, are all
pronounced "hex" in different communities because various
assemblers use them as a prefix tag for hexadecimal constants (in
particular, '#' in many assembler-programming cultures,
'$' in the 6502 world, '>' at Texas Instruments, and
'&' on the BBC Micro, Sinclair, and some Z80 machines). See
also
            splat
            .

The inability of ASCII text to correctly represent any of the
world's other major languages makes the designers' choice of 7 bits
look more and more like a serious
            misfeature
             as the use of
international networks continues to increase (see

                    software

                    rot
). Hardware and software from the U.S. still tends to embody
the assumption that ASCII is the universal character set and that
characters have 7 bits; this is a a major irritant to people who
want to use a character set suited to their own languages.
Perversely, though, efforts to solve this problem by proliferating
'national' character sets produce an evolutionary pressure to use
a *smaller* subset common to all those in use.

1.117 ASCII art

                    ASCII art: n. The fine art of drawing diagrams using the ASCII
character set (mainly '|', '-', '/', '\', and
'+'). Also known as 'character graphics' or 'ASCII
graphics'; see also
                    boxology
                    . Here is a serious example:


```
    o----)||(--+--|<----+   +---------o + D O
      L  )||(  |        |   |             C U
    A I  )||(  +-->|-+  |   +-\/\/-+--o -    T
    C N  )||(        |  |   |      |         P
      E  )||(  +-->|-+--)---+--)|--+-o       U
         )||(  |        |          | GND     T
    o----)||(--+--|<----+----------+
```


    A power supply consisting of a full wave rectifier circuit
    feeding a capacitor input filter circuit

                        Figure 1.

  And here are some very silly examples:


```
   |\/\/\/|      ____/|              ___    |\_/|    ___
   |      |      \ o.O|   ACK!      /   \_  |' '|  _/    \
   |      |      =(_)=  THPHTH!    /       \/      \/      \
   | (o)(o)        U              /                         \
   C      _)  (__)                \/\/\/\  _____  /\/\/\/
   | ,___|    (oo)                    \/      \/
   |   /       \/-------\        U                   (__)
  /____\       ||     | \      /---V  'v'-            oo )
 /      \      ||---W||  *   * |--|   || |'.          |_/\


              //-o-\
          ____--=========____
        ====___\   /.. ..\   /___====      Klingons rule OK!
      //        ---\__O__/---        \
      \_\                           /_/
```

Figure 2.

There is an important subgenre of ASCII art that puns on the
standard character names in the fashion of a rebus.

```
+----------------------------------------------------------+
|        ^^^^^^^^^^^                                        |
| ^^^^^^^^^^^                 ^^^^^^^^^                      |
|                ^^^^^^^^^^^^^              ^^^^^^^^^^^^^    |
|        ^^^^^^^            B           ^^^^^^^^^            |
| ^^^^^^^^^              ^^^               ^^^^^^^^^^^^^^    |
+----------------------------------------------------------+
          " A Bee in the Carrot Patch "
```

Figure 3.

Within humorous ASCII art, there is for some reason an entire
flourishing subgenre of pictures of silly cows. Four of these are
reproduced in Figure 2; here are three more:

```
          (__)              (__)              (__)
          (\/)              ($$)              (**)
     /-------\/        /-------\/        /-------\/
    / | 666 ||        / |=====||        / |     ||
    *  ||----||        *  ||----||        *  ||----||
     ~~     ~~          ~~     ~~          ~~     ~~
   Satanic cow    This cow is a Yuppie   Cow in love
```

Figure 4.

1.118 ASCIIbetical order

ASCIIbetical order: /as'kee-be'-t*-kl or'dr/ adj.,n. Used to
   indicate that data is sorted in ASCII collated order rather than
   alphabetical order. This lexicon is sorted in something close to
   ASCIIbetical order, but with case ignored and entries beginning
   with non-alphabetic characters moved to the end.

1.119 atomic

atomic: [from Gk. 'atomos', indivisible] adj. 1. Indivisible;
   cannot be split up. For example, an instruction may be said to do
   several things 'atomically', i.e., all the things are done
   immediately, and there is no chance of the instruction being
   half-completed or of another being interspersed. Used esp. to
   convey that an operation cannot be screwed up by interrupts.
   "This routine locks the file and increments the file's semaphore
   atomically." 2. [primarily techspeak] Guaranteed to complete

successfully or not at all, usu. refers to database transactions.
If an error prevents a partially-performed transaction from
proceeding to completion, it must be "backed out," as the database
must not be left in an inconsistent state.

Computer usage, in either of the above senses, has none of the
connotations that 'atomic' has in mainstream English (i.e. of
particles of matter, nuclear explosions etc.).

1.120 attoparsec

            attoparsec: n. About an inch. 'atto-' is the standard SI
prefix for multiplication by 10^(-18). A parsec
(parallax-second) is 3.26 light-years; an attoparsec is thus
3.26 * 10^(-18) light years, or about 3.1 cm (thus,
1 attoparsec/
            microfortnight
             equals about 1 inch/sec). This
unit is reported to be in use (though probably not very seriously)
among hackers in the U.K. See
            micro-
             .

1.121 autobogotiphobia

            autobogotiphobia: /aw'toh-boh-got'*-foh'bee-*/ n. See
            bogotify
             .

1.122 automagically

            automagically: /aw-toh-maj'i-klee/ or /aw-toh-maj'i-k*l-ee/ adv.
Automatically, but in a way that, for some reason (typically
because it is too complicated, or too ugly, or perhaps even too
trivial), the speaker doesn't feel like explaining to you. See

            magic
             . "The C-INTERCAL compiler generates C, then automagically
invokes 'cc(1)' to produce an executable."

1.123 avatar

      avatar: [CMU, Tektronix] n. Syn.
      root
      ,
      superuser
      . There
are quite a few UNIX machines on which the name of the superuser
account is 'avatar' rather than 'root'. This quirk was
originated by a CMU hacker who disliked the term 'superuser',
and was propagated through an ex-CMU hacker at Tektronix.

1.124 awk

      awk: 1. n. [UNIX techspeak] An interpreted language for massaging
text data developed by Alfred Aho, Peter Weinberger, and Brian
Kernighan (the name derives from their initials). It is
characterized by C-like syntax, a declaration-free approach to
variable typing and declarations, associative arrays, and
field-oriented text processing. See also
      Perl
      . 2. n.
Editing term for an expression awkward to manipulate through normal

      regexp
       facilities (for example, one containing a

      newline
). 3. vt. To process data using 'awk(1)'.

1.125 back door

      back door: n. A hole in the security of a system deliberately left
in place by designers or maintainers. The motivation for such
holes is not always sinister; some operating systems, for example,
come out of the box with privileged accounts intended for use by
field service technicians or the vendor's maintenance programmers.
Syn.
      trap door
      ; may also be called a 'wormhole'. See also

      iron box
      ,
      cracker
      ,
      worm
      ,
      logic bomb

.

Historically, back doors have often lurked in systems longer than
anyone expected or planned, and a few have become widely known.
The infamous
                RTM
                 worm of late 1988, for example, used a back door
in the
                BSD
                 UNIX `sendmail(8)' utility.

Ken Thompson's 1983 Turing Award lecture to the ACM revealed the
existence of a back door in early UNIX versions that may have
qualified as the most fiendishly clever security hack of all time.
The C compiler contained code that would recognize when the
`login' command was being recompiled and insert some code
recognizing a password chosen by Thompson, giving him entry to the
system whether or not an account had been created for him.

Normally such a back door could be removed by removing it from the
source code for the compiler and recompiling the compiler. But to
recompile the compiler, you have to *use* the compiler --- so
Thompson also arranged that the compiler would *recognize when
it was compiling a version of itself*, and insert into the
recompiled compiler the code to insert into the recompiled
`login' the code to allow Thompson entry --- and, of course, the
code to recognize itself and do the whole thing again the next time
around! And having done this once, he was then able to recompile
the compiler from the original sources; the hack perpetuated itself
invisibly, leaving the back door in place and active but with no
trace in the sources.

The talk that revealed this truly moby hack was published as
"Reflections on Trusting Trust", "Communications of the
ACM 27", 8 (August 1984), pp. 761--763.

1.126 backbone cabal

                backbone cabal: n. A group of large-site administrators who pushed
through the
                Great Renaming
                 and reined in the chaos of
                USENET
                  during most of the 1980s. The cabal
                mailing list
                 disbanded in
late 1988 after a bitter internal catfight.

1.127   backbone site

backbone site: n. A key USENET and email site; one that processes
a large amount of third-party traffic, especially if it is the home
site of any of the regional coordinators for the USENET maps.
Notable backbone sites as of early 1993 include uunet and the
mail machines at Rutgers University, UC Berkeley,
DEC
's Western
Research Laboratories, Ohio State University, and the University of
Texas. Compare
rib site
,
leaf site
.

1.128   backgammon

backgammon:: See
bignum
 (sense 3),
moby
 (sense 4), and

pseudoprime
.

1.129   background

background: n.,adj.,vt. To do a task 'in background' is to do
it whenever
foreground
 matters are not claiming your undivided
attention, and 'to background' something means to relegate it to
a lower priority. "For now, we'll just print a list of nodes and
links; I'm working on the graph-printing problem in background."
Note that this implies ongoing activity but at a reduced level or
in spare time, in contrast to mainstream 'back burner' (which
connotes benign neglect until some future resumption of activity).
Some people prefer to use the term for processing that they have
queued up for their unconscious minds (a tack that one can often
fruitfully take upon encountering an obstacle in creative work).
Compare
amp off
,
slopsucker
.

Technically, a task running in background is detached from the
terminal where it was started (and often running at a lower
priority); oppose
            foreground
            . Nowadays this term is primarily
associated with
            UNIX
            , but it appears to have been first used
in this sense on OS/360.

1.130   backspace and overstrike

backspace and overstrike: interj. Whoa! Back up. Used to suggest
    that someone just said or did something wrong. Common among
    APL programmers.

1.131   backward combatability

            backward combatability: /bak'w*rd k*m-bat'*-bil'*-tee/ [from
    'backward compatibility'] n. A property of hardware or software
    revisions in which previous protocols, formats, layouts, etc. are
    irrevocably discarded in favor of 'new and improved' protocols,
    formats, and layouts, leaving the previous ones not merely
    deprecated but actively defeated. (Too often, the old and new
    versions cannot definitively be distinguished, such that lingering
    instances of the previous ones yield crashes or other infelicitous
    effects, as opposed to a simple "version mismatch" message.) A
    backwards compatible change, on the other hand, allows old versions
    to coexist without crashes or error messages, but too many major
    changes incorporating elaborate backwards compatibility processing
    can lead to extreme
            software bloat
            . See also
            flag

            day
            .

1.132   BAD

            BAD: /B-A-D/ [IBM: acronym, 'Broken As Designed'] adj. Said
    of a program that is
            bogus
             because of bad design and misfeatures
    rather than because of bugginess. See

```
            working as designed
            .
```

1.133 Bad Thing

```
            Bad Thing: [from the 1930 Sellar & Yeatman parody "1066 And
All That"] n. Something that can't possibly result in improvement
of the subject.  This term is always capitalized, as in "Replacing
all of the 9600-baud modems with bicycle couriers would be a Bad
Thing".  Oppose
            Good Thing
            .  British correspondents confirm
that
            Bad Thing
             and
            Good Thing
             (and prob. therefore
            Right

            Thing
             and
            Wrong Thing
            ) come from the book referenced in the
etymology, which discusses rulers who were Good Kings but Bad
Things.  This has apparently created a mainstream idiom on the
British side of the pond.
```

1.134 bag on the side

```
bag on the side: n. An extension to an established hack that is
   supposed to add some functionality to the original.  Usually
   derogatory, implying that the original was being overextended and
   should have been thrown away, and the new product is ugly,
   inelegant, or bloated.  Also v. phrase, 'to hang a bag on the side
   [of]'.  "C++?  That's just a bag on the side of C ...."
   "They want me to hang a bag on the side of the accounting
   system."
```

1.135 bagbiter

```
            bagbiter: /bag'bi:t-*r/ n. 1. Something, such as a program or a
computer, that fails to work, or works in a remarkably clumsy
manner.  "This text editor won't let me make a file with a line
longer than 80 characters!  What a bagbiter!"  2. A person who has
caused you some trouble, inadvertently or otherwise, typically by
```

failing to program the computer properly. Synonyms:
loser
,

cretin
,
chomper
. 3. 'bite the bag' vi. To fail in some
manner. "The computer keeps crashing every five minutes."
"Yes, the disk controller is really biting the bag." The
original loading of these terms was almost undoubtedly obscene,
possibly referring to the scrotum, but in their current usage they
have become almost completely sanitized.

ITS's
lexiphage
 program is the first and to date only known
example of a program *intended* to be a bagbiter.

1.136   bagbiting

bagbiting: adj. Having the quality of a
bagbiter
. "This
bagbiting system won't let me compute the factorial of a negative
number." Compare
losing
,
cretinous
,
bletcherous
,
'barfucious' (under
barfulous
) and 'chomping' (under

chomp
).

1.137   bamf

bamf: /bamf/ 1. [from old X-Men comics] interj. Notional sound
made by a person or object teleporting in or out of the hearer's
vicinity. Often used in
virtual reality
 (esp.
MUD
)

```
electronic
              fora
               when a character wishes to make a dramatic
entrance or exit.  2. The sound of magical transformation, used in
virtual reality
              fora
               like sense 1.
```

1.138   banana label

```
              banana label: n. The labels often used on the sides of
              macrotape
                 reels, so called because they are shaped roughly like blunt- ↩
                    ended
bananas.  This term, like macrotapes themselves, is still current
but visibly headed for obsolescence.
```

1.139   banana problem

```
              banana problem: n. [from the story of the little girl who said "I
know how to spell 'banana', but I don't know when to stop"].  Not
knowing where or when to bring a production to a close (compare

              fencepost error
              ).  One may say 'there is a banana problem' of an
algorithm with poorly defined or incorrect termination conditions,
or in discussing the evolution of a design that may be succumbing
to featuritis (see also
              creeping elegance
              ,
              creeping

              featuritis
              ).  See item 176 under
              HAKMEM
              , which describes a
banana problem in a
              Dissociated Press
               implementation.  Also,
see
              one-banana problem
               for a superficially similar but
unrelated usage.
```

1.140 bandwidth

bandwidth: n. 1. Used by hackers (in a generalization of its
technical meaning) as the volume of information per unit time that a
computer, person, or transmission medium can handle. "Those are
amazing graphics, but I missed some of the detail --- not enough
bandwidth, I guess." Compare
low-bandwidth
. 2. Attention
span. 3. On
USENET
, a measure of network capacity that is
often wasted by people complaining about how items posted by others
are a waste of bandwidth.

1.141 bang

bang: 1. n. Common spoken name for '!' (ASCII 0100001),
especially when used in pronouncing a
bang path
in spoken
hackish. In
elder days
this was considered a CMUish usage,
with MIT and Stanford hackers preferring
excl
or
shriek
;
but the spread of UNIX has carried 'bang' with it (esp. via the
term
bang path
) and it is now certainly the most common spoken
name for '!'. Note that it is used exclusively for
non-emphatic written '!'; one would not say "Congratulations
bang" (except possibly for humorous purposes), but if one wanted
to specify the exact characters 'foo!' one would speak "Eff oh oh
bang". See
shriek
,
ASCII
. 2. interj. An exclamation
signifying roughly "I have achieved enlightenment!", or "The
dynamite has cleared out my brain!" Often used to acknowledge
that one has perpetrated a
thinko
immediately after one has
been called on it.

1.142 bang on

bang on: vt. To stress-test a piece of hardware or software: "I
banged on the new version of the simulator all day yesterday and it
didn't crash once. I guess it is ready for release." The term

pound on
 is synonymous.

1.143 bang path

bang path: n. An old-style UUCP electronic-mail address specifying
hops to get from some assumed-reachable location to the addressee,
so called because each
hop
 is signified by a
bang
 sign.
Thus, for example, the path ...!bigsite!foovax!barbox!me
directs people to route their mail to machine bigsite (presumably
a well-known location accessible to everybody) and from there
through the machine foovax to the account of user me on
barbox.

In the bad old days of not so long ago, before autorouting mailers
became commonplace, people often published compound bang addresses
using the { } convention (see
glob
) to give paths from
several big machines, in the hopes that one's correspondent
might be able to get mail to one of them reliably (example:
...!seismo, ut-sally, ihnp4!rice!beta!gamma!me). Bang paths
of 8 to 10 hops were not uncommon in 1981. Late-night dial-up
UUCP links would cause week-long transmission times. Bang paths
were often selected by both transmission time and reliability, as
messages would often get lost. See
Internet address
,

network, the
, and
sitename
.

1.144 banner

banner: n. 1. The title page added to printouts by most print
spoolers (see

                spool
). Typically includes user or account ID
information in very large character-graphics capitals. Also called
a 'burst page', because it indicates where to burst (tear apart)
fanfold paper to separate one user's printout from the next. 2. A
similar printout generated (typically on multiple pages of fan-fold
paper) from user-specified text, e.g., by a program such as UNIX's
'banner(1,6)'. 3. On interactive software, a first screen
containing a logo and/or author credits and/or a copyright notice.

1.145   bar

                bar: /bar/ n. 1. The second
                metasyntactic variable
                , after
                foo
                    and before
                baz
                . "Suppose we have two functions: FOO and BAR.
FOO calls BAR...." 2. Often appended to
                foo
                 to produce

                foobar
                .

1.146   bare metal

                bare metal: n. 1. New computer hardware, unadorned with such
snares and delusions as an
                operating system
                , an
                HLL
                , or
even assembler. Commonly used in the phrase 'programming on the
bare metal', which refers to the arduous work of
                bit bashing
                    needed to create these basic tools for a new machine. Real
bare-metal programming involves things like building boot proms and
BIOS chips, implementing basic monitors used to test device
drivers, and writing the assemblers that will be used to write the
compiler back ends that will give the new machine a real
development environment. 2. 'Programming on the bare metal' is
also used to describe a style of
                hand-hacking
                 that relies on
bit-level peculiarities of a particular hardware design, esp.
tricks for speed and space optimization that rely on crocks such as

overlapping instructions (or, as in the famous case described in

                 The Story of Mel, a Real Programmer
                  (in
                 Appendix A
                 ),
interleaving of opcodes on a magnetic drum to minimize fetch delays
due to the device's rotational latency). This sort of thing has
become less common as the relative costs of programming time and
machine resources have changed, but is still found in heavily
constrained environments such as industrial embedded systems, and
in the code of hackers who just can't let go of that low-level
control. See
                 Real Programmer
                 .

In the world of personal computing, bare metal programming
(especially in sense 1 but sometimes also in sense 2) is often
considered a
                 Good Thing
                 , or at least a necessary evil
(because these machines have often been sufficiently slow and
poorly designed to make it necessary; see
                 ill-behaved
).
There, the term usually refers to bypassing the BIOS or OS
interface and writing the application to directly access device
registers and machine addresses. "To get 19.2 kilobaud on the
serial port, you need to get down to the bare metal." People who
can do this sort of thing well are held in high regard.

1.147 barf

                 barf: /barf/ [from mainstream slang meaning 'vomit']
1. interj. Term of disgust. This is the closest hackish
equivalent of the Val\-speak "gag me with a spoon". (Like,
euwww!) See
                 bletch
                 . 2. vi. To say "Barf!" or emit some
similar expression of disgust. "I showed him my latest hack and
he barfed" means only that he complained about it, not that he
literally vomited. 3. vi. To fail to work because of unacceptable
input, perhaps with a suitable error message, perhaps not.
Examples: "The division operation barfs if you try to divide by
0." (That is, the division operation checks for an attempt to
divide by zero, and if one is encountered it causes the operation
to fail in some unspecified, but generally obvious, manner.) "The
text editor barfs if you try to read in a new file before writing
out the old one." See
                 choke
                 ,
                 gag
                 . In Commonwealth

Hackish, 'barf' is generally replaced by 'puke' or 'vom'.

                barf
                 is sometimes also used as a
                metasyntactic variable
                ,
    like
                foo
                 or
                bar
                .

1.148 barfmail

                barfmail: n. Multiple
                bounce message
                s accumulating to the
    level of serious annoyance, or worse. The sort of thing that
    happens when an inter-network mail gateway goes down or
    wonky.

1.149 barfulation

                barfulation: /bar'fyoo-lay'sh*n/ interj. Variation of
                barf
                   used around the Stanford area. An exclamation, expressing ↩
                        disgust.
    On seeing some particularly bad code one might exclaim,
    "Barfulation! Who wrote this, Quux?"

1.150 barfulous

barfulous: /bar'fyoo-l*s/ adj. (alt. 'barfucious',
    /bar-fyoo-sh*s/) Said of something that would make anyone barf,
    if only for esthetic reasons.

1.151 barney

barney: n. In Commonwealth hackish, 'barney' is to
fred
   (sense #1) as
bar
 is to
foo
. That is, people who
commonly use 'fred' as their first metasyntactic variable will
often use 'barney' second. The reference is, of course, to Fred
Flintstone and Barney Rubble in the Flintstones cartoons.

1.152 baroque

baroque: adj. Feature-encrusted; complex; gaudy; verging on
excessive. Said of hardware or (esp.) software designs, this has
many of the connotations of
elephantine
 or
monstrosity
 but is
less extreme and not pejorative in itself. "Metafont even has
features to introduce random variations to its letterform output.
Now *that* is baroque!" See also
rococo
.

1.153 BASIC

BASIC: [acronym, from Beginner's All-purpose Symbolic Instruction
Code] n. A programming language, originally designed for
Dartmouth's experimental timesharing system in the early 1960s,
which has since become the leading cause of brain-damage in
proto-hackers. This is another case (like
Pascal
) of the
cascading lossage that happens when a language deliberately
designed as an educational toy gets taken too seriously. A novice
can write short BASIC programs (on the order of 10--20 lines) very
easily; writing anything longer is (a) very painful, and (b)
encourages bad habits that will make it harder to use more powerful
languages well. This wouldn't be so bad if historical accidents
hadn't made BASIC so common on low-end micros. As it is, it ruins
thousands of potential wizards a year.

1.154 batch

```
batch: adj. 1. Non-interactive.  Hackers use this somewhat more
   loosely than the traditional technical definitions justify; in
   particular, switches on a normally interactive program that prepare
   it to receive non-interactive command input are often referred to
   as 'batch mode' switches.  A 'batch file' is a series of
   instructions written to be handed to an interactive program running
   in batch mode.  2. Performance of dreary tasks all at one sitting.
   "I finally sat down in batch mode and wrote out checks for all
   those bills; I guess they'll turn the electricity back on next
   week..." 3. 'batching up': Accumulation of a number of small
   tasks that can be lumped together for greater efficiency.  "I'm
   batching up those letters to send sometime" "I'm batching up
   bottles to take to the recycling center."
```

1.155 bathtub curve

```
              bathtub curve: n. Common term for the curve (resembling an
      end-to-end section of one of those claw-footed antique bathtubs)
      that describes the expected failure rate of electronics with time:
      initially high, dropping to near 0 for most of the system's
      lifetime, then rising again as it 'tires out'.  See also
              burn-in

      period
      ,
      infant mortality
      .
```

1.156 baud

```
baud: /bawd/ [simplified from its technical meaning] n. Bits per
   second.  Hence kilobaud or Kbaud, thousands of bits per second.
   The technical meaning is 'level transitions per second'; this
   coincides with bps only for two-level modulation with no framing or
   stop bits.  Most hackers are aware of these nuances but blithely
   ignore them.

   Historical note: 'baud' was originally a unit of telegraph signalling
   speed, set at one pulse per second.  It was proposed at the
   International Telegraph Conference of 1927, and named after J.M.E.
   Baudot (1845--1903), the French engineer who constructed the first
   successful teleprinter.
```

1.157   baud barf

baud barf: /bawd barf/ n. The garbage one gets on the monitor
when using a modem connection with some protocol setting (esp.
line speed) incorrect, or when someone picks up a voice extension
on the same line, or when really bad line noise disrupts the
connection. Baud barf is not completely
random
, by the way;
hackers with a lot of serial-line experience can usually tell
whether the device at the other end is expecting a higher or lower
speed than the terminal is set to. *Really* experienced ones
can identify particular speeds.

1.158   baz

baz: /baz/ n. 1. The third
metasyntactic variable
 "Suppose we
have three functions: FOO, BAR, and BAZ. FOO calls BAR, which
calls BAZ...." (See also
fum
) 2. interj. A term of mild
annoyance. In this usage the term is often drawn out for 2 or 3
seconds, producing an effect not unlike the bleating of a sheep;
/baaaaaaz/. 3. Occasionally appended to
foo
 to produce
'foobaz'.

Earlier versions of this lexicon derived 'baz' as a Stanford
corruption of
bar
. However, Pete Samson (compiler of the

TMRC
 lexicon) reports it was already current when he joined TMRC
in 1958. He says "It came from "Pogo". Albert the Alligator,
when vexed or outraged, would shout 'Bazz Fazz!' or 'Rowrbazzle!'
The club layout was said to model the (mythical) New England
counties of Rowrfolk and Bassex (Rowrbazzle mingled with
(Norfolk/Suffolk/Middlesex/Essex)."

1.159   bboard

bboard: /bee'bord/ [contraction of 'bulletin board'] n.
1. Any electronic bulletin board; esp. used of
BBS

                         systems
running on personal micros, less frequently of a USENET

                 newsgroup
                  (in fact, use of this term for a newsgroup generally
marks one either as a
                 newbie
                  fresh in from the BBS world or as
a real old-timer predating USENET). 2. At CMU and other colleges
with similar facilities, refers to campus-wide electronic bulletin
boards. 3. The term 'physical bboard' is sometimes used to refer
to an old-fashioned, non-electronic cork-and-thumbtack memo board.
At CMU, it refers to a particular one outside the CS Lounge.

In either of senses 1 or 2, the term is usually prefixed by the
name of the intended board ('the Moonlight Casino bboard' or
'market bboard'); however, if the context is clear, the better-read
bboards may be referred to by name alone, as in (at CMU) "Don't
post for-sale ads on general".

1.160 BBS

                 BBS: /B-B-S/ [abbreviation, 'Bulletin Board System'] n. An ←
                   electronic
bulletin board system; that is, a message database where people can
log in and leave broadcast messages for others grouped (typically)
into
                 topic group
                 s. Thousands of local BBS systems are in
operation throughout the U.S., typically run by amateurs for fun
out of their homes on MS-DOS boxes with a single modem line each.
Fans of USENET and Internet or the big commercial timesharing
bboards such as CompuServe and GEnie tend to consider local BBSes
the low-rent district of the hacker culture, but they serve a
valuable function by knitting together lots of hackers and users in
the personal-micro world who would otherwise be unable to exchange
code at all. See also
                 bboard
                 .

1.161 beam

                 beam: [from Star Trek Classic's "Beam me up, Scotty!"] vt. To
transfer
                 softcopy
                  of a file electronically; most often in
combining forms such as 'beam me a copy' or 'beam that over to
his site'. Compare

```
            blast
            ,
            snarf
            ,
            BLT
            .
```

1.162 beanie key

```
            beanie key: [Mac users] n. See
            command key
            .
```

1.163 beep

```
            beep: n.,v. Syn.
            feep
            .  This term seems to be preferred among micro
    hobbyists.
```

1.164 beige toaster

```
            beige toaster: n. A Macintosh. See
            toaster
            ; compare

            Macintrash
            ,
            maggotbox
            .
```

1.165 bells and whistles

```
            bells and whistles: [by analogy with the toyboxes on theater
    organs] n. Features added to a program or system to make it more

            flavorful
             from a hacker's point of view, without necessarily
    adding to its utility for its primary function.  Distinguished from
```

                chrome
                , which is intended to attract users. "Now that we've
got the basic program working, let's go back and add some bells and
whistles." No one seems to know what distinguishes a bell from a
whistle.

1.166   bells, whistles, and gongs

                bells, whistles, and gongs: n. A standard elaborated form of

                bells and whistles
                ; typically said with a pronounced and ironic
accent on the 'gongs'.

1.167   benchmark

                benchmark: [techspeak] n. An inaccurate measure of computer
performance. "In the computer industry, there are three kinds of
lies: lies, damn lies, and benchmarks." Well-known ones include
Whetstone, Dhrystone, Rhealstone (see
                h
                ), the Gabriel LISP
benchmarks (see
                gabriel
                ), the SPECmark suite, and LINPACK. See
also
                machoflops
                ,
                MIPS
                ,
                smoke and mirrors
                .

1.168   Berkeley Quality Software

                Berkeley Quality Software: adj. (often abbreviated 'BQS') Term ←
                  used
in a pejorative sense to refer to software that was apparently
created by rather spaced-out hackers late at night to solve some
unique problem. It usually has nonexistent, incomplete, or
incorrect documentation, has been tested on at least two examples,
and core dumps when anyone else attempts to use it. This term was
frequently applied to early versions of the 'dbx(1)' debugger.

See also

> Berzerkeley
>
> .

Note to British and Commonwealth readers: that's /berk'lee/, not
/bark'lee/ as in British Received Pronunciation.

1.169 berklix

> berklix: /berk'liks/ n.,adj. [contraction of 'Berkeley UNIX'] See
>
> BSD
> . Not used at Berkeley itself. May be more common among
>
> suit
> s attempting to sound like cognoscenti than among hackers,

who usually just say 'BSD'.

1.170 Berzerkeley

> Berzerkeley: /b*r-zer'klee/ [from 'berserk', via the name of a
now-deceased record label] n. Humorous distortion of 'Berkeley'
used esp. to refer to the practices or products of the
>
> BSD
> UNIX hackers. See
> software bloat
> ,
> Missed'em-five
> ,
>
> Berkeley Quality Software
> .

Mainstream use of this term in reference to the cultural and
political peculiarities of UC Berkeley as a whole has been reported
from as far back as the 1960s.

1.171 beta

> beta: /bay't*/, /be't*/ or (Commonwealth) /bee't*/ n.
1. Mostly working, but still under test; usu. used with 'in': 'in
beta'. In the
> Real World

```
              , systems (hardware or software)
software often go through two stages of release testing: Alpha
(in-house) and Beta (out-house?).  Beta releases are generally made
to a small number of lucky (or unlucky), trusted customers.
2. Anything that is new and experimental.  "His girlfriend is in
beta" means that he is still testing for compatibility and
reserving judgment.  3. Flaky; dubious; suspect (since beta
software is notoriously buggy).

Historical note: More formally, to beta-test is to test a
pre-release (potentially unreliable) version of a piece of software
by making it available to selected customers and users.  This term
derives from early 1960s terminology for product cycle checkpoints,
first used at IBM but later standard throughout the industry.
'Alpha Test' was the unit, module, or component test phase; 'Beta
Test' was initial system test.  These themselves came from earlier
A- and B-tests for hardware.  The A-test was a feasibility and
manufacturability evaluation done before any commitment to design
and development.  The B-test was a demonstration that the
engineering model functioned as specified.  The C-test
(corresponding to today's beta) was the B-test performed on early
samples of the production design.
```

1.172   BFI

```
              BFI: /B-F-I/ n. See
              brute force and ignorance
              .  Also
encountered in the variants 'BFMI', 'brute force and
*massive* ignorance' and 'BFBI' 'brute force and bloody
ignorance'.
```

1.173   bible

```
              bible: n. 1. One of a small number of fundamental source books
such as
              Knuth
               and
              K&R
              .  2. The most detailed and
authoritative reference for a particular language, operating
system, or other complex software system.
```

1.174   BiCapitalization

BiCapitalization: n. The act said to have been performed on
trademarks (such as
PostScript
, NeXT,
NeWS
, VisiCalc,
FrameMaker, TK!solver, EasyWriter) that have been raised above the
ruck of common coinage by nonstandard capitalization. Too many

marketroid
types think this sort of thing is really cute, even
the 2,317th time they do it. Compare
studlycaps
.

1.175 BIFF

BIFF: /bif/ [USENET] n. The most famous
pseudo
, and the
prototypical
newbie
. Articles from BIFF are characterized by
all uppercase letters sprinkled liberally with bangs, typos,
'cute' misspellings (EVRY BUDY LUVS GOOD OLD BIFF CUZ HE"S A
K00L DOOD AN HE RITES REEL AWESUM THINGZ IN CAPITULL LETTRS LIKE
THIS!!!), use (and often misuse) of fragments of
talk mode
abbreviations, a long
sig block
(sometimes even a
doubled

sig
), and unbounded naivet'e. BIFF posts articles using his
elder brother's VIC-20. BIFF's location is a mystery, as his
articles appear to come from a variety of sites. However,

BITNET
seems to be the most frequent origin. The theory that
BIFF is a denizen of BITNET is supported by BIFF's (unfortunately
invalid) electronic mail address: BIFF@BIT.NET.

[1993: Now It Can Be Told! My spies inform me that BIFF was
originally created by Joe Talmadge <jat@cup.hp.com>, also the
author of the infamous and much-plagiarized "Flamer's Bible".
The BIFF filter he wrote was later passed to Richard Sexton, who
posted BIFFisms much more widely. Versions have since been posted
for the amusement of the net at large. --- ESR]

1.176   biff

biff: /bif/ vt. To notify someone of incoming mail. From the
BSD utility 'biff(1)', which was in turn named after a
friendly golden Labrador who used to chase frisbees in the halls at
UCB while 4.2BSD was in development (it had a well-known habit of
barking whenever the mailman came). No relation to

BIFF
.

1.177   Big Gray Wall

Big Gray Wall: n. What faces a
VMS
 user searching for
documentation. A full VMS kit comes on a pallet, the documentation
taking up around 15 feet of shelf space before the addition of
layered products such as compilers, databases, multivendor
networking, and programming tools. Recent (since VMS version 5)
DEC documentation comes with gray binders; under VMS version 4 the
binders were orange ('big orange wall'), and under version 3 they
were blue. See
VMS
. Often contracted to 'Gray Wall'.

1.178   big iron

big iron: n. Large, expensive, ultra-fast computers. Used ←
    generally
of
number-crunching
 supercomputers such as Crays, but can include
more conventional big commercial IBMish mainframes. Term of
approval; compare
heavy metal
, oppose
dinosaur
.

1.179   Big Red Switch

        Big Red Switch: [IBM] n. The power switch on a computer, esp. the
   'Emergency Pull' switch on an IBM
            mainframe
             or the power switch
   on an IBM PC where it really is large and red. "This !@%$%

            bitty box
             is hung again; time to hit the Big Red Switch."
   Sources at IBM report that, in tune with the company's passion for

            TLA
            s, this is often abbreviated as 'BRS' (this has also
   become established on FidoNet and in the PC
            clone
             world). It
   is alleged that the emergency pull switch on an IBM 360/91 actually
   fired a non-conducting bolt into the main power feed; the BRSes on
   more recent mainframes physically drop a block into place so that
   they can't be pushed back in. People get fired for pulling them,
   especially inappropriately (see also
            molly-guard
). Compare

            power cycle
            ,
            three-finger salute
            ,
            120 reset
            ; see
   also
            scram switch
            .

1.180   Big Room, the

Big Room, the: n. The extremely large room with the blue ceiling
   and intensely bright light (during the day) or black ceiling with
   lots of tiny night-lights (during the night) found outside all
   computer installations. "He can't come to the phone right now,
   he's somewhere out in the Big Room."

1.181   big win

        big win: n. Serendipity. "Yes, those two physicists discovered
   high-temperature superconductivity in a batch of ceramic that had
   been prepared incorrectly according to their experimental schedule.
   Small mistake; big win!" See
            win big

.

1.182 big-endian

big-endian: [From Swift's "Gulliver's Travels" via the famous
paper "On Holy Wars and a Plea for Peace" by Danny Cohen,
USC/ISI IEN 137, dated April 1, 1980] adj. 1. Describes a computer
architecture in which, within a given multi-byte numeric
representation, the most significant byte has the lowest address
(the word is stored 'big-end-first'). Most processors,
including the IBM 370 family, the
PDP-10
, the Motorola
microprocessor families, and most of the various RISC designs
current in mid-1993, are big-endian. See
little-endian
,

middle-endian
,
NUXI problem
,
swab
. 2. An

Internet address
the wrong way round. Most of the world
follows the Internet standard and writes email addresses starting
with the name of the computer and ending up with the name of the
country. In the U.K. the Joint Networking Team had decided to do
it the other way round before the Internet domain standard was
established; e.g., me@uk.ac.wigan.cs. Most gateway sites have

ad-hockery
in their mailers to handle this, but can still be
confused. In particular, the address above could be in the
U.K. (domain uk) or Czechoslovakia (domain cs).

1.183 bignum

bignum: /big'nuhm/ [orig. from MIT MacLISP] n. 1. [techspeak] A
multiple-precision computer representation for very large
integers. 2. More generally, any very large number. "Have you ever
looked at the United States Budget? There's bignums for you!"
3. [Stanford] In backgammon, large numbers on the dice especially a
roll of double fives or double sixes (compare
moby
, sense 4).

See also

> El Camino Bignum

> .

Sense 1 may require some explanation. Most computer languages
provide a kind of data called 'integer', but such computer
integers are usually very limited in size; usually they must be
smaller than than 2^(31) (2,147,483,648) or (on a

> bitty box
>) 2^(15) (32,768). If you want to work
with numbers larger than that, you have to use floating-point
numbers, which are usually accurate to only six or seven decimal
places. Computer languages that provide bignums can perform exact
calculations on very large numbers, such as 1000! (the factorial
of 1000, which is 1000 times 999 times 998 times ... times 2
times 1). For example, this value for 1000! was computed by the
MacLISP system using bignums:

```
402387260077093773543702433923003985719374864210710
463254379991042993851239862902059204420848696940480
047998861019719605863166687299480855890132382966994
459099742450408707375991882362772718873251977950595
099527612087497546249704360418278094646496291056393
887437886487337119181045825783647849977012476632889
835955735432513185323958463075557409114262417474349
347553428646576611667797396668820291207379143853719
882498081268678383745597317461360853795345242215865
932019280908782973084313928444032812315586110369768
013570421616874760967587134831202547858932076716913
244842623613141250878020800026168315102734182797770
478463586817016436502415369139828126481021309276124
489635992870511496497541990934222156683257208082133
318611681155361583654698404670897560290095053761647
584772842188967964624494516076535340819890138544248
798495995331910172335555660213945039973628075013783
761530712776192684903435262520001588853514733161170
210396817592151090778801939317811419454525722386554
146106289218796022383897147608850627686296714667469
756291123408243920816015378088989396451826324367161
676217916890977991190375403127462228998800519544441
428201218736174599264295658174662830295557029902432
415318161721046583203678690611726015878352075151628
422554026517048330422614397428693306169089796848259
012545832716822645806652676995865268227280707578139
185817888965220816434834482599326604336766017699961
283186078838615027946595513115655203609398818061213
855860030143569452722420634463179746059468257310379
008402443243846565724501440282188525247093519062092
902313649327349756551395872055965422874977401141334
696271542284586237738753823048386568897646192738381
490014076731044664025989994902222217659043399018860
185665264850617997023561938970178600408118897299183
110211712298459016419210688843871218556461249607987
229085192968193723886426148396573822911231250248664
935314397013742853192664987533721894069428143411852
015801412334482801505139969429015348307764456909907
```

```
44828015051399694290153483077644569099073152433278
28826986460278986432113908350621709500259738986355
42771967428222487575867657523442202075736305694988
25087968928162753848863396909959826280956121450994
87170124451646126037902930912088908694202851064018
21543994571568059418727489980942547421735824010636
77404595741785160829230135358081840096996372524230
56085590370062427124341690900415369010593398383577
79394109700277534720000000000000000000000000000000
00000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
00000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
00000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
00000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
000000000000000000.
```

1.184   bigot

bigot: n. A person who is religiously attached to a particular
computer, language, operating system, editor, or other tool (see

religious issues
). Usually found with a specifier; thus,
'cray bigot', 'ITS bigot', 'APL bigot', 'VMS bigot',
'Berkeley bigot'. Real bigots can be distinguished from mere
partisans or zealots by the fact that they refuse to learn
alternatives even when the march of time and/or technology is
threatening to obsolete the favored tool. It is truly said "You
can tell a bigot, but you can't tell him much." Compare

weenie
.

1.185   bit

bit: [from the mainstream meaning and 'Binary digIT'] n.
1. [techspeak] The unit of information; the amount of information
obtained by asking a yes-or-no question for which the two outcomes
are equally probable. 2. [techspeak] A computational quantity that
can take on one of two values, such as true and false or 0 and 1.
3. A mental flag: a reminder that something should be done
eventually. "I have a bit set for you." (I haven't seen you for
a while, and I'm supposed to tell or ask you something.) 4. More
generally, a (possibly incorrect) mental state of belief. "I have
a bit set that says that you were the last guy to hack on EMACS."
(Meaning "I think you were the last guy to hack on EMACS, and what
I am about to say is predicated on this, so please stop me if this
isn't true.")

"I just need one bit from you" is a polite way of indicating that
you intend only a short interruption for a question that can
presumably be answered yes or no.

A bit is said to be 'set' if its value is true or 1, and
'reset' or 'clear' if its value is false or 0. One speaks of
setting and clearing bits. To
            toggle
             or 'invert' a bit is
to change it, either from 0 to 1 or from 1 to 0. See also

            flag
            ,
            trit
            ,
            mode bit
            .

The term 'bit' first appeared in print in the computer-science
sense in 1949, and seems to have been coined by early computer
scientist John Tukey. Tukey records that it evolved over a lunch
table as a handier alternative to 'bigit' or 'binit'.

1.186 bit bang

            bit bang: n. Transmission of data on a serial line, when
accomplished by rapidly tweaking a single output bit, in software,
at the appropriate times. The technique is a simple loop with
eight OUT and SHIFT instruction pairs for each byte. Input is more
interesting. And full duplex (doing input and output at the same
time) is one way to separate the real hackers from the

            wannabee
            s.

Bit bang was used on certain early models of Prime computers,
presumably when UARTs were too expensive, and on archaic Z80 micros
with a Zilog PIO but no SIO. In an interesting instance of the

            cycle of reincarnation
            , this technique is now (1991) coming
back into use on some RISC architectures because it consumes such
an infinitesimal part of the processor that it actually makes sense
not to have a UART.

1.187 bit bashing

bit bashing: n. (alt. 'bit diddling' or
bit twiddling
) Term
used to describe any of several kinds of low-level programming
characterized by manipulation of
bit
,
flag
,
nybble
,
and other smaller-than-character-sized pieces of data; these
include low-level device control, encryption algorithms, checksum
and error-correcting codes, hash functions, some flavors of
graphics programming (see
bitblt
), and assembler/compiler code
generation. May connote either tedium or a real technical
challenge (more usually the former). "The command decoding for
the new tape driver looks pretty solid but the bit-bashing for the
control registers still has bugs." See also
bit bang
,

mode bit
.

1.188   bit bucket

bit bucket: n. 1. The universal data sink (originally, the
mythical receptacle used to catch bits when they fall off the end
of a register during a shift instruction). Discarded, lost, or
destroyed data is said to have 'gone to the bit bucket'. On

UNIX
, often used for
/dev/null
. Sometimes amplified as
'the Great Bit Bucket in the Sky'. 2. The place where all lost
mail and news messages eventually go. The selection is performed
according to
Finagle's Law
; important mail is much more likely
to end up in the bit bucket than junk mail, which has an almost
100% probability of getting delivered. Routing to the bit bucket
is automatically performed by mail-transfer agents, news systems,
and the lower layers of the network. 3. The ideal location for all
unwanted mail responses: "Flames about this article to the bit
bucket." Such a request is guaranteed to overflow one's mailbox
with flames. 4. Excuse for all mail that has not been sent. "I
mailed you those figures last week; they must have landed in the
bit bucket." Compare

                    black hole
                    .

This term is used purely in jest. It is based on the fanciful
notion that bits are objects that are not destroyed but only
misplaced. This appears to have been a mutation of an earlier term
'bit box', about which the same legend was current; old-time
hackers also report that trainees used to be told that when the CPU
stored bits into memory it was actually pulling them 'out of the
bit box'. See also
                    chad box
                    .

Another variant of this legend has it that, as a consequence of the
'parity preservation law', the number of 1 bits that go to the bit
bucket must equal the number of 0 bits. Any imbalance results in
bits filling up the bit bucket. A qualified computer technician
can empty a full bit bucket as part of scheduled maintenance.

1.189   bit decay

                    bit decay: n. See
                    bit rot
                    . People with a physics background
tend to prefer this variant for the analogy with particle decay. See
also
                    computron
                    ,
                    quantum bogodynamics
                    .

1.190   bit rot

                    bit rot: n. Also
                    bit decay
                    . Hypothetical disease the existence
of which has been deduced from the observation that unused programs
or features will often stop working after sufficient time has
passed, even if 'nothing has changed'. The theory explains that
bits decay as if they were radioactive. As time passes, the
contents of a file or the code in a program will become
increasingly garbled.

There actually are physical processes that produce such effects
(alpha particles generated by trace radionuclides in ceramic chip
packages, for example, can change the contents of a computer memory
unpredictably, and various kinds of subtle media failures can
corrupt files in mass storage), but they are quite rare (and

computers are built with error-detecting circuitry to compensate
for them). The notion long favored among hackers that cosmic
rays are among the causes of such events turns out to be a myth;
see the
                cosmic rays
                 entry for details.

The term
                software rot
                 is almost synonymous. Software rot is
the effect, bit rot the notional cause.

1.191 bit twiddling

                bit twiddling: n. 1. (pejorative) An exercise in tuning (see

                tune
) in which incredible amounts of time and effort go to
produce little noticeable improvement, often with the result that
the code becomes incomprehensible. 2. Aimless small
modification to a program, esp. for some pointless goal.
3. Approx. syn. for
                bit bashing
                ; esp. used for the act of
frobbing the device control register of a peripheral in an attempt
to get it back to a known state.

1.192 bit-paired keyboard

                bit-paired keyboard: n. obs. (alt. 'bit-shift keyboard') A
non-standard keyboard layout that seems to have originated with the
Teletype ASR-33 and remained common for several years on early
computer equipment. The ASR-33 was a mechanical device (see

                EOU
                ), so the only way to generate the character codes from
keystrokes was by some physical linkage. The design of the ASR-33
assigned each character key a basic pattern that could be modified
by flipping bits if the SHIFT or the CTRL key was pressed. In
order to avoid making the thing more of a Rube Goldberg kluge than
it already was, the design had to group characters that shared the
same basic bit pattern on one key.

Looking at the ASCII chart, we find:

```
  high  low bits
  bits  0000 0001 0010 0011 0100 0101 0110 0111 1000 1001
   010        !    "    #    $    %    &    '    (    )
```

```
011    0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9
```

This is why the characters !"#$%&'() appear where they do on a
Teletype (thankfully, they didn't use shift-0 for space). This was
not the weirdest variant of the
                QWERTY
                 layout widely
seen, by the way; that prize should probably go to one of several
(differing) arrangements on IBM's even clunkier 026 and 029 card
punches.

When electronic terminals became popular, in the early 1970s, there
was no agreement in the industry over how the keyboards should be
laid out. Some vendors opted to emulate the Teletype keyboard,
while others used the flexibility of electronic circuitry to make
their product look like an office typewriter. These alternatives
became known as 'bit-paired' and 'typewriter-paired' keyboards. To
a hacker, the bit-paired keyboard seemed far more logical --- and
because most hackers in those days had never learned to touch-type,
there was little pressure from the pioneering users to adapt
keyboards to the typewriter standard.

The doom of the bit-paired keyboard was the large-scale
introduction of the computer terminal into the normal office
environment, where out-and-out technophobes were expected to use
the equipment. The 'typewriter-paired' standard became universal,
'bit-paired' hardware was quickly junked or relegated to dusty
corners, and both terms passed into disuse.

1.193 bitblt

                bitblt: /bit'blit/ n. [from
                BLT
                , q.v.] 1. Any of a family
of closely related algorithms for moving and copying rectangles of
bits between main and display memory on a bit-mapped device, or
between two areas of either main or display memory (the requirement
to do the
                Right Thing
                 in the case of overlapping source and
destination rectangles is what makes BitBlt tricky). 2. Synonym
for
                blit
                 or
                BLT
                . Both uses are borderline techspeak.

1.194 BITNET

BITNET: /bit'net/ [acronym: Because It's Time NETwork] n.
Everybody's least favorite piece of the network (see
network,

the
). The BITNET hosts are a collection of IBM dinosaurs and
VAXen (the latter with lobotomized comm hardware) that communicate
using 80-character
EBCDIC
 card images (see
eighty-column

mind
); thus, they tend to mangle the headers and text of
third-party traffic from the rest of the ASCII/
RFC
-822 world with
annoying regularity. BITNET is also notorious as the apparent home
of
BIFF
.

1.195   bits

bits: n.pl. 1. Information. Examples: "I need some bits about ←
 file
formats." ("I need to know about file formats.") Compare
core

dump
, sense 4. 2. Machine-readable representation of a document,
specifically as contrasted with paper: "I have only a photocopy
of the Jargon File; does anyone know where I can get the bits?".
See
softcopy
,
source of all good bits
 See also
bit
.

1.196   bitty box

bitty box: /bit'ee boks/ n. 1. A computer sufficiently small,
primitive, or incapable as to cause a hacker acute claustrophobia
at the thought of developing software on or for it. Especially
used of small, obsolescent, single-tasking-only personal machines

such as the Atari 800, Osborne, Sinclair, VIC-20, TRS-80, or
IBM PC. 2. [Pejorative] More generally, the opposite of 'real
computer' (see

    Get a real computer!
). See also
    mess-dos
    ,

    toaster
    , and
    toy
    .

1.197   bixie

    bixie: /bik'see/ n. Variant
    emoticon
    s used on BIX (the Byte
Information eXchange). The
    smiley
     bixie is <@_@>, apparently
intending to represent two cartoon eyes and a mouth. A few others
have been reported.

1.198   black art

    black art: n. A collection of arcane, unpublished, and (by
implication) mostly ad-hoc techniques developed for a particular
application or systems area (compare
    black magic
). VLSI design
and compiler code optimization were (in their beginnings)
considered classic examples of black art; as theory developed they
became
    deep magic
    , and once standard textbooks had been written,
became merely
    heavy wizardry
    . The huge proliferation of formal
and informal channels for spreading around new computer-related
technologies during the last twenty years has made both the term
'black art' and what it describes less common than formerly. See
also
    voodoo programming
    .

1.199   black hole

black hole: n. What a piece of email or netnews has fallen into if
it disappears mysteriously between its origin and destination sites
(that is, without returning a
bounce message
). "I think
there's a black hole at foovax!" conveys suspicion that site
foovax has been dropping a lot of stuff on the floor lately
(see
drop on the floor
). The implied metaphor of email as
interstellar travel is interesting in itself. Compare
bit

bucket
.

1.200   black magic

black magic: n. A technique that works, though nobody really
understands why. More obscure than
voodoo programming
, which
may be done by cookbook. Compare also
black art
,
deep

magic
, and
magic number
  (sense 2).

1.201   blargh

blargh: /blarg/ [MIT] n. The opposite of
ping
, sense 5; an
exclamation indicating that one has absorbed or is emitting a
quantum of unhappiness. Less common than
ping
.

1.202   blast

          blast: 1. vt.,n. Synonym for
          BLT
          , used esp. for large data
sends over a network or comm line. Opposite of
          snarf
          . Usage:
uncommon. The variant 'blat' has been reported. 2. vt.
[HP/Apollo] Synonymous with
          nuke
           (sense 3). Sometimes the
message 'Unable to kill all processes. Blast them (y/n)?' would
appear in the command window upon logout.

1.203   blat

          blat: n. 1. Syn.
          blast
          , sense 1. 2. See
          thud
          .

1.204   bletch

          bletch: /blech/ [from Yiddish/German 'brechen', to vomit, poss.
 via comic-strip exclamation 'blech'] interj. Term of disgust.
Often used in "Ugh, bletch". Compare
          barf
          .

1.205   bletcherous

          bletcherous: /blech'*-r*s/ adj. Disgusting in design or
function; esthetically unappealing. This word is seldom used of
people. "This keyboard is bletcherous!" (Perhaps the keys don't
work very well, or are misplaced.) See
          losing
          ,
          cretinous
          ,
          bagbiting

,
bogus
, and
random
. The
term
bletcherous
 applies to the esthetics of the thing so
described; similarly for
cretinous
. By contrast, something
that is 'losing' or 'bagbiting' may be failing to meet
objective criteria. See also
bogus
 and
random
, which
have richer and wider shades of meaning than any of the
above.

1.206   blinkenlights

blinkenlights: /blink'*n-li:tz/ n. Front-panel diagnostic lights
on a computer, esp. a
dinosaur
. Derives from the last word
of the famous blackletter-Gothic sign in mangled pseudo-German that
once graced about half the computer rooms in the English-speaking
world. One version ran in its entirety as follows:

        ACHTUNG! ALLES LOOKENSPEEPERS! Das computermachine
  ist nicht fuer gefingerpoken und mittengrabben. Ist easy schnappen
  der springenwerk, blowenfusen und poppencorken mit spitzensparken.
  Ist nicht fuer gewerken bei das dumpkopfen. Das rubbernecken
  sichtseeren keepen das cotten-pickenen hans in das pockets muss;
  relaxen und watchen das blinkenlichten.

This silliness dates back at least as far as 1959 at Stanford
University and had already gone international by the early 1960s,
when it was reported at London University's ATLAS computing site.
There are several variants of it in circulation, some of which
actually do end with the word 'blinkenlights'.

In an amusing example of turnabout-is-fair-play, German hackers
have developed their own versions of the blinkenlights poster in
fractured English, one of which is reproduced here:

                    ATTENTION
    This room is fullfilled mit special electronische equippment.
    Fingergrabbing and pressing the cnoeppkes from the computers is
    allowed for die experts only! So all the "lefthanders" stay away
    and do not disturben the brainstorming von here working

        intelligencies. Otherwise you will be out thrown and kicked
        anderswhere! Also: please keep still and only watchen astaunished
        the blinkenlights.

    See also
                geef
                .

1.207   blit

            blit: /blit/ vt. 1. To copy a large array of bits from one part
of a computer's memory to another part, particularly when the
memory is being used to determine what is shown on a display
screen. "The storage allocator picks through the table and copies
the good parts up into high memory, and then blits it all back down
again." See
            bitblt
            ,
            BLT
            ,
            dd
            ,
            cat
            ,
            blast
            ,

            snarf
            . More generally, to perform some operation (such as
toggling) on a large array of bits while moving them. 2. Sometimes
all-capitalized as 'BLIT': an early experimental bit-mapped
terminal designed by Rob Pike at Bell Labs, later commercialized as
the AT&T 5620. (The folk etymology from 'Bell Labs Intelligent
Terminal' is incorrect. Its creators liked to claim that "Blit"
stood for the Bacon, Lettuce, and Interactive Tomato.)

1.208   blitter

            blitter: /blit'r/ n. A special-purpose chip or hardware system
built to perform
            blit
             operations, esp. used for fast
implementation of bit-mapped graphics. The Commodore Amiga and a
few other micros have these, but in 1991 the trend is away from
them (however, see
            cycle of reincarnation
). Syn.
            raster

             blaster
             .

1.209 blivet

             blivet: /bliv'*t/ [allegedly from a World War II military term
meaning "ten pounds of manure in a five-pound bag"] n. 1. An
intractable problem. 2. A crucial piece of hardware that can't be
fixed or replaced if it breaks. 3. A tool that has been hacked
over by so many incompetent programmers that it has become an
unmaintainable tissue of hacks. 4. An out-of-control but
unkillable development effort. 5. An embarrassing bug that pops up
during a customer demo. 6. In the subjargon of computer security
specialists, a denial-of-service attack performed by hogging
limited resources that have no access controls (for example, shared
spool space on a multi-user system).

This term has other meanings in other technical cultures; among
experimental physicists and hardware engineers of various kinds it
seems to mean any random object of unknown purpose (similar to
hackish use of
             frob
). It has also been used to describe an
amusing trick-the-eye drawing resembling a three-pronged fork that
appears to depict a three-dimensional object until one realizes
that the parts fit together in an impossible way.

1.210 BLOB

BLOB: [acronym, Binary Large OBject] n. Used by database people to
   refer to any random large block of bits that needs to be stored in
   a database, such as a picture or sound file. The essential point
   about a BLOB is that it's an object that cannot be interpreted
   within the database itself.

1.211 block

             block: [from process scheduling terminology in OS theory] 1. vi.
To delay or sit idle while waiting for something. "We're blocking
until everyone gets here." Compare
             busy-wait
             . 2. 'block
on' vt. To block, waiting for (something). "Lunch is blocked on
Phil's arrival."

1.212   block transfer computations

```
block transfer computations: [from the television series
   "Dr. Who"] n. Computations so fiendishly subtle and complex
   that they could not be performed by machines.  Used to refer to any
   task that should be expressible as an algorithm in theory, but
   isn't.
```

1.213   Bloggs Family, the

```
           Bloggs Family, the: n.  An imaginary family consisting of Fred and
   Mary Bloggs and their children.  Used as a standard example in
   knowledge representation to show the difference between extensional
   and intensional objects.  For example, every occurrence of "Fred
   Bloggs" is the same unique person, whereas occurrences of
   "person" may refer to different people.  Members of the Bloggs
   family have been known to pop up in bizarre places such as the DEC
   Telephone Directory.  Compare
           Mbogo, Dr. Fred
              .
```

1.214   blow an EPROM

```
blow an EPROM: /bloh *n ee'prom/ v. (alt. 'blast an EPROM',
   'burn an EPROM') To program a read-only memory, e.g. for use
   with an embedded system.  This term arose because the programming
   process for the Programmable Read-Only Memories (PROMs) that
   preceded present-day Erasable Programmable Read-Only Memories
   (EPROMs) involved intentionally blowing tiny electrical fuses on
   the chip.  The usage lives on (it's too vivid and expressive to
   discard) even though the write process on EPROMs is
   nondestructive.
```

1.215   blow away

```
           blow away: vt. To remove (files and directories) from permanent
   storage, generally by accident.  "He reformatted the wrong
   partition and blew away last night's netnews."  Oppose
           nuke
              .
```

1.216   blow out

blow out: [prob. from mining and tunneling jargon] vi. Of
software, to fail spectacularly; almost as serious as
crash and

burn
. See
blow past
,
blow up
,
die

horribly
.

1.217   blow past

blow past: vt. To
blow out
 despite a safeguard. "The server blew
past the 5K reserve buffer."

1.218   blow up

blow up: vi. 1. [scientific computation] To become unstable.   ←
       Suggests
that the computation is diverging so rapidly that it will soon
overflow or at least go
nonlinear
. 2. Syn.
blow out
.

1.219   BLT

BLT: /B-L-T/, /bl*t/ or (rarely) /belt/ n.,vt. Synonym for

blit
. This is the original form of
blit
 and the ancestor
of
bitblt
. It referred to any large bit-field copy or move
operation (one resource-intensive memory-shuffling operation done
on pre-paged versions of ITS, WAITS, and TOPS-10 was sardonically
referred to as 'The Big BLT'). The jargon usage has outlasted the

PDP-10
 BLock Transfer instruction from which
BLT
 derives;
nowadays, the assembler mnemonic
BLT
 almost always means
'Branch if Less Than zero'.

1.220 Blue Book

Blue Book: n. 1. Informal name for one of the three standard
references on the page-layout and graphics-control language

PostScript
 ("PostScript Language Tutorial and Cookbook",
Adobe Systems, Addison-Wesley 1985, QA76.73.P67P68, ISBN
0-201-10179-3); the other three official guides are known as the

Green Book
, the
Red Book
, and the
White Book
 (sense
2). 2. Informal name for one of the three standard references on
Smalltalk: "Smalltalk-80: The Language and its
Implementation", David Robson, Addison-Wesley 1983, QA76.8.S635G64,
ISBN 0-201-11371-63 (this book also has green and red siblings).
3. Any of the 1988 standards issued by the CCITT's ninth plenary
assembly. These include, among other things, the X.400 email spec
and the Group 1 through 4 fax standards. See also
book

titles
.

1.221 Blue Glue

              Blue Glue: [IBM] n. IBM's SNA (Systems Network Architecture), an
incredibly
              losing
               and
              bletcherous
               communications protocol
widely favored at commercial shops that don't know any better. The
official IBM definition is "that which binds blue boxes
together." See
              fear and loathing
              . It may not be irrelevant
that
              Blue Glue
               is the trade name of a 3M product that is
commonly used to hold down the carpet squares to the removable
panel floors common in
              dinosaur pen
              s. A correspondent at
U. Minn. reports that the CS department there has about 80 bottles
of the stuff hanging about, so they often refer to any messy work
to be done as 'using the blue glue'.

1.222 blue goo

              blue goo: n. Term for 'police'
              nanobot
              s intended to prevent

              gray goo
              , denature hazardous waste, destroy pollution, put
ozone back into the stratosphere, prevent halitosis, and promote
truth, justice, and the American way, etc. See

              nanotechnology
              .

1.223 blue wire

              blue wire: [IBM] n. Patch wires added to circuit boards at the ←
                 factory to
correct design or fabrication problems. These may be necessary if
there hasn't been time to design and qualify another board version.
Compare
              purple wire
              ,
              red wire

,
yellow wire
.

1.224 blurgle

blurgle: /bler'gl/ [Great Britain] n. Spoken
metasyntactic

variable
, to indicate some text that is obvious from context, or
which is already known. If several words are to be replaced,
blurgle may well be doubled or trebled. "To look for something in
several files use 'grep string blurgle blurgle'." In each case,
"blurgle blurgle" would be understood to be replaced by the file
you wished to search. Compare
mumble
, sense 7.

1.225 BNF

BNF: /B-N-F/ n. 1. [techspeak] Acronym for 'Backus-Naur Form', a
metasyntactic notation used to specify the syntax of programming
languages, command sets, and the like. Widely used for language
descriptions but seldom documented anywhere, so that it must
usually be learned by osmosis from other hackers. Consider this
BNF for a U.S. postal address:

    <postal-address> ::= <name-part> <street-address> <zip-part>

    <personal-part> ::= <name> | <initial> "."

    <name-part> ::= <personal-part> <last-name> [<jr-part>] <EOL>
                 | <personal-part> <name-part>

    <street-address> ::= [<apt>] <house-num> <street-name> <EOL>

    <zip-part> ::= <town-name> "," <state-code> <ZIP-code> <EOL>

This translates into English as: "A postal-address consists of a
name-part, followed by a street-address part, followed by a
zip-code part. A personal-part consists of either a first name or
an initial followed by a dot. A name-part consists of either: a
personal-part followed by a last name followed by an optional
'jr-part' (Jr., Sr., or dynastic number) and end-of-line, or a
personal part followed by a name part (this rule illustrates the
use of recursion in BNFs, covering the case of people who use
multiple first and middle names and/or initials). A street address

consists of an optional apartment specifier, followed by a street
number, followed by a street name. A zip-part consists of a
town-name, followed by a comma, followed by a state code, followed
by a ZIP-code followed by an end-of-line." Note that many things
(such as the format of a personal-part, apartment specifier, or
ZIP-code) are left unspecified. These are presumed to be obvious
from context or detailed somewhere nearby. See also
                parse
                .
2. Any of a number number of variants and extensions of BNF proper,
possibly containing some or all of the
                regexp
                 wildcards such
as '*' or '+'. In fact the example above isn't the pure
form invented for the Algol-60 report; it uses '[]', which was
introduced a few years later in IBM's PL/I definition but is now
universally recognized. 3. In
                science-fiction fandom
                , a
'Big-Name Fan' (someone famous or notorious). Years ago a fan
started handing out black-on-green BNF buttons at SF conventions;
this confused the hacker contingent terribly.

1.226 boa

                boa: [IBM] n. Any one of the fat cables that lurk under the floor
in a
                dinosaur pen
                . Possibly so called because they display a
ferocious life of their own when you try to lay them straight and
flat after they have been coiled for some time. It is rumored
within IBM that channel cables for the 370 are limited to 200 feet
because beyond that length the boas get dangerous --- and it is
worth noting that one of the major cable makers uses the trademark
'Anaconda'.

1.227 board

                board: n. 1. In-context synonym for
                bboard
                ; sometimes used
even for USENET newsgroups (but see usage note under
                bboard
                ,
sense 1). 2. An electronic circuit board.

1.228   boat anchor

boat anchor: n. 1. Like
doorstop
 but more severe; implies
that the offending hardware is irreversibly dead or useless.
"That was a working motherboard once. One lightning strike later,
instant boat anchor!" 2. A person who just takes up space.
3. Obsolete but still working hardware, especially when used of an
old S100-bus hobbyist system; originally a term of annoyance, but
became more and more affectionate as the hardware became more and
more obsolete.

1.229   BOF

BOF: /B-O-F/ or /bof/ n. Abbreviation for the phrase "Birds
  Of a Feather" (flocking together), an informal discussion group
  and/or bull session scheduled on a conference program. It is not
  clear where or when this term originated, but it is now associated
  with the USENIX conferences for UNIX techies and was already
  established there by 1984. It was used earlier than that at DECUS
  conferences and is reported to have been common at SHARE meetings
  as far back as the early 1960s.

1.230   bogo-sort

bogo-sort: /boh'goh-sort'/ n. (var. 'stupid-sort') The
archetypical perversely awful algorithm (as opposed to
bubble

sort
, which is merely the generic *bad* algorithm).
Bogo-sort is equivalent to repeatedly throwing a deck of cards in
the air, picking them up at random, and then testing whether they
are in order. It serves as a sort of canonical example of
awfulness. Looking at a program and seeing a dumb algorithm, one
might say "Oh, I see, this program uses bogo-sort." Compare

bogus
,
brute force
,
Lasherism
.

1.231 bogometer

bogometer: /boh-gom'-*t-er/ n. A notional instrument for
measuring
bogosity
. Compare the 'wankometer' described in
the
wank
 entry; see also
bogus
.

1.232 bogon

bogon: /boh'gon/ [by analogy with proton/electron/neutron, but
doubtless reinforced after 1980 by the similarity to Douglas
Adams's 'Vogons'; see the Bibliography in
Appendix C
] n.
1. The elementary particle of bogosity (see
quantum

bogodynamics
). For instance, "the Ethernet is emitting bogons
again" means that it is broken or acting in an erratic or bogus
fashion. 2. A query packet sent from a TCP/IP domain resolver to a
root server, having the reply bit set instead of the query bit.
3. Any bogus or incorrectly formed packet sent on a network. 4. By
synecdoche, used to refer to any bogus thing, as in "I'd like to
go to lunch with you but I've got to go to the weekly staff
bogon". 5. A person who is bogus or who says bogus things. This
was historically the original usage, but has been overtaken by its
derivative senses 1--4. See also
bogosity
,
bogus
;
compare
psyton
,
fat electrons
,
magic smoke
.

The bogon has become the type case for a whole bestiary of nonce
particle names, including the 'clutron' or 'cluon' (indivisible
particle of cluefulness, obviously the antiparticle of the bogon)
and the futon (elementary particle of
randomness
, or sometimes
of lameness). These are not so much live usages in themselves as

examples of a live meta-usage: that is, it has become a standard
joke or linguistic maneuver to "explain" otherwise mysterious
circumstances by inventing nonce particle names. And these imply
nonce particle theories, with all their dignity or lack thereof (we
might note parenthetically that this is a generalization from
"(bogus particle) theories" to "bogus (particle theories)"!).
Perhaps such particles are the modern-day equivalents of trolls and
wood-nymphs as standard starting-points around which to construct
explanatory myths. Of course, playing on an existing word (as in
the 'futon') yields additional flavor. Compare
                magic

                smoke
                .

1.233 bogon filter

                bogon filter: /boh'gon fil'tr/ n. Any device, software or hardware ←
                    '
that limits or suppresses the flow and/or emission of bogons.
"Engineering hacked a bogon filter between the Cray and
the VAXen, and now we're getting fewer dropped packets." See
also
                bogosity
                '
                bogus
                .

1.234 bogon flux

                bogon flux: /boh'gon fluhks/ n. A measure of a supposed field of

                bogosity
                 emitted by a speaker, measured by a
                bogometer
                ;
as a speaker starts to wander into increasing bogosity a listener
might say "Warning, warning, bogon flux is rising". See

                quantum bogodynamics
                .

1.235 bogosity

bogosity: /boh-go's*-tee/ n. 1. The degree to which something is

bogus
. At CMU, bogosity is measured with a
bogometer
; in
a seminar, when a speaker says something bogus, a listener might
raise his hand and say "My bogometer just triggered". More
extremely, "You just pinned my bogometer" means you just said or
did something so outrageously bogus that it is off the scale,
pinning the bogometer needle at the highest possible reading (one
might also say "You just redlined my bogometer"). The
agreed-upon unit of bogosity is the
microLenat
. 2. The
potential field generated by a
bogon flux
; see
quantum

bogodynamics
. See also
bogon flux
,
bogon filter
,
bogus
.

1.236 bogotify

bogotify: /boh-go't*-fi:/ vt. To make or become bogus. A
program that has been changed so many times as to become completely
disorganized has become bogotified. If you tighten a nut too hard
and strip the threads on the bolt, the bolt has become bogotified
and you had better not use it any more. This coinage led to the
notional 'autobogotiphobia' defined as 'the fear of becoming
bogotified'; but is not clear that the latter has ever been
'live' jargon rather than a self-conscious joke in jargon about
jargon. See also
bogosity
,
bogus
.

1.237 bogue out

bogue out: /bohg owt/ vi. To become bogus, suddenly and
unexpectedly. "His talk was relatively sane until somebody asked
him a trick question; then he bogued out and did nothing but

flame
 afterwards." See also
bogosity
,
bogus
.

1.238   bogus

bogus: adj. 1. Non-functional. "Your patches are bogus."
2. Useless. "OPCON is a bogus program." 3. False. "Your
arguments are bogus." 4. Incorrect. "That algorithm is bogus."
5. Unbelievable. "You claim to have solved the halting problem
for Turing Machines? That's totally bogus." 6. Silly. "Stop
writing those bogus sagas."

Astrology is bogus. So is a bolt that is obviously about to break.
So is someone who makes blatantly false claims to have solved a
scientific problem. (This word seems to have some, but not all, of
the connotations of
random
 --- mostly the negative ones.)

It is claimed that 'bogus' was originally used in the hackish sense
at Princeton in the late 1960s. It was spread to CMU and Yale by
Michael Shamos, a migratory Princeton alumnus. A glossary of bogus
words was compiled at Yale when the word was first popularized (see

autobogotiphobia
 under
bogotify
). The word spread into
hackerdom from CMU and MIT. By the early 1980s it was also
current in something like the hackish sense in West Coast teen
slang, and it had gone mainstream by 1985. A correspondent from
Cambridge reports, by contrast, that these uses of 'bogus' grate on
British nerves; in Britain the word means, rather specifically,
'counterfeit', as in "a bogus 10-pound note".

1.239   Bohr bug

Bohr bug: /bohr buhg/ [from quantum physics] n. A repeatable

bug
; one that manifests reliably under a possibly unknown but
well-defined set of conditions. Antonym of
heisenbug
; see also

mandelbug
,
schroedinbug
.

1.240 boink

boink: /boynk/ [USENET: variously ascribed to the TV series
"Cheers" "Moonlighting", and "Soap"] 1. To have sex
with; compare
bounce
, sense 3. (This is mainstream slang.) In
Commonwealth hackish the variant 'bonk' is more common. 2. After
the original Peter Korn 'Boinkon'
USENET
 parties, used for
almost any net social gathering, e.g., Miniboink, a small boink
held by Nancy Gillett in 1988; Minniboink, a Boinkcon in Minnesota
in 1989; Humpdayboinks, Wednesday get-togethers held in the San
Francisco Bay Area. Compare
@-party
. 3. Var of 'bonk';
see
bonk/oif
.

1.241 bomb

bomb: 1. v. General synonym for
crash
 (sense 1) except that
it is not used as a noun; esp. used of software or OS failures.
"Don't run Empire with less than 32K stack, it'll bomb."
2. n.,v. Atari ST and Macintosh equivalents of a UNIX 'panic' or
Amiga
guru
 (sense 2), in which icons of little black-powder
bombs or mushroom clouds are displayed, indicating that the system
has died. On the Mac, this may be accompanied by a decimal (or
occasionally hexadecimal) number indicating what went wrong,
similar to the Amiga
guru meditation

```
 number.
MS-DOS
   machines tend to get
locked up
 in this situation.
```

1.242   bondage-and-discipline language

```
bondage-and-discipline language: A language (such as
Pascal
,

Ada
, APL, or Prolog) that, though ostensibly general-purpose,
```
is designed so as to enforce an author's theory of 'right
programming' even though said theory is demonstrably inadequate for
systems hacking or even vanilla general-purpose programming. Often
abbreviated 'B&D'; thus, one may speak of things "having the
B&D nature". See
```
Pascal
; oppose
languages of

choice
.
```

1.243   bonk/oif

```
bonk/oif: /bonk/, /oyf/ interj. In the
MUD
 community, it
```
has become traditional to express pique or censure by 'bonking'
the offending person. Convention holds that one should acknowledge
a bonk by saying 'oif!' and there is a myth to the effect that
failing to do so upsets the cosmic bonk/oif balance, causing much
trouble in the universe. Some MUDs have implemented special
commands for bonking and oifing. See also
```
talk mode
.
```

1.244   book titles

book titles:: There is a tradition in hackerdom of informally
tagging important textbooks and standards documents with the
dominant color of their covers or with some other conspicuous
feature of the cover. Many of these are described in this lexicon
under their own entries. See

Aluminum Book

,

Blue Book

,

Cinderella Book

,

Devil Book

,

Dragon Book

,

Green

Book

,

Orange Book

,

Pink-Shirt Book

,

Purple Book

,

Red Book

,

Silver Book

,

White Book

,

Wizard Book

,

Yellow Book
, and
bible
; see also
rainbow

series

.

1.245 boot

boot: [techspeak; from 'by one's bootstraps'] v.,n. To load and
initialize the operating system on a machine. This usage is no
longer jargon (having passed into techspeak) but has given rise to
some derivatives that are still jargon.

The derivative 'reboot' implies that the machine hasn't been down
for long, or that the boot is a
            bounce
             (sense 4) intended to
clear some state of
            wedgitude
            . This is sometimes used of
human thought processes, as in the following exchange: "You've
lost me." "OK, reboot. Here's the theory...."

This term is also found in the variants 'cold boot' (from
power-off condition) and 'warm boot' (with the CPU and all
devices already powered up, as after a hardware reset or software
crash).

Another variant: 'soft boot', reinitialization of only part of a
system, under control of other software still running: "If
you're running the
            mess-dos
             emulator, control-alt-insert will
cause a soft-boot of the emulator, while leaving the rest of the
system running."

Opposed to this there is 'hard boot', which connotes hostility
towards or frustration with the machine being booted: "I'll have
to hard-boot this losing Sun." "I recommend booting it
hard." One often hard-boots by performing a
            power cycle
             .

Historical note: this term derives from 'bootstrap loader', a short
program that was read in from cards or paper tape, or toggled in
from the front panel switches. This program was always very short
(great efforts were expended on making it short in order to
minimize the labor and chance of error involved in toggling it in),
but was just smart enough to read in a slightly more complex
program (usually from a card or paper tape reader), to which it
handed control; this program in turn was smart enough to read the
application or operating system from a magnetic tape drive or disk
drive. Thus, in successive steps, the computer 'pulled itself up
by its bootstraps' to a useful operating state. Nowadays the
bootstrap is usually found in ROM or EPROM, and reads the first
stage in from a fixed location on the disk, called the 'boot
block'. When this program gains control, it is powerful enough to
load the actual OS and hand control over to it.

1.246   bottom feeder

            bottom feeder: n. Syn. for
            slopsucker
            , derived from the
fishermen's and naturalists' term for finny creatures who subsist
on the primordial ooze.

1.247 bottom-up implementation

bottom-up implementation: n. Hackish opposite of the techspeak term
   'top-down design'. It is now received wisdom in most
   programming cultures that it is best to design from higher levels
   of abstraction down to lower, specifying sequences of action in
   increasing detail until you get to actual code. Hackers often find
   (especially in exploratory designs that cannot be closely
   specified in advance) that it works best to *build* things in
   the opposite order, by writing and testing a clean set of primitive
   operations and then knitting them together.

1.248 bounce

               bounce: v. 1. [perhaps by analogy to a bouncing check] An
   electronic mail message that is undeliverable and returns an error
   notification to the sender is said to 'bounce'. See also

               bounce message
               . 2. [Stanford] To play volleyball. The
   now-demolished
               D. C. Power Lab
                building used by the Stanford
   AI Lab in the 1970s had a volleyball court on the front lawn. From
   5 P.M. to 7 P.M. was the scheduled maintenance time for the
   computer, so every afternoon at 5 would come over the intercom the
   cry: "Now hear this: bounce, bounce!", followed by Brian McCune
   loudly bouncing a volleyball on the floor outside the offices of
   known volleyballers. 3. To engage in sexual intercourse; prob.
   from the expression 'bouncing the mattress', but influenced by
   Roo's psychosexually loaded "Try bouncing me, Tigger!" from the
   "Winnie-the-Pooh" books. Compare
               boink
               . 4. To casually
   reboot a system in order to clear up a transient problem. Reported
   primarily among
               VMS
                users. 5. [VM/CMS programmers]
   Automatic warm-start of a machine after an error. "I
   logged on this morning and found it had bounced 7 times during the
   night" 6. [IBM] To
               power cycle
                a peripheral in order to reset
   it.

1.249   bounce message

              bounce message: [UNIX] n. Notification message returned to sender
  by a site unable to relay
              email
               to the intended
              Internet

              address
               recipient or the next link in a
              bang path
               (see

              bounce
              , sense 1). Reasons might include a nonexistent or
  misspelled username or a
              down
               relay site. Bounce messages can
  themselves fail, with occasionally ugly results; see
              sorcerer's

              apprentice mode
               and
              software laser
              . The terms 'bounce
  mail' and 'barfmail' are also common.

1.250   boustrophedon

boustrophedon: [from a Greek word for turning like an ox while
   plowing] n. An ancient method of writing using alternate
   left-to-right and right-to-left lines. This term is actually
   philologists' techspeak and typesetters' jargon. Erudite hackers
   use it for an optimization performed by some computer typesetting
   software and moving-head printers. The adverbial form
   'boustrophedonically' is also found (hackers purely love
   constructions like this).

1.251   box

              box: n. 1. A computer; esp. in the construction 'foo box'
  where foo is some functional qualifier, like 'graphics', or
  the name of an OS (thus, 'UNIX box', 'MS-DOS box', etc.) "We
  preprocess the data on UNIX boxes before handing it up to the
  mainframe." 2. [IBM] Without qualification but within an
  SNA-using site, this refers specifically to an IBM front-end
  processor or FEP /F-E-P/. An FEP is a small computer necessary
  to enable an IBM
              mainframe

                    to communicate beyond the limits of
the
            dinosaur pen
            . Typically used in expressions like the cry
that goes up when an SNA network goes down: "Looks like the

            box
             has fallen over." (See
            fall over
            .) See also

            IBM
            ,
            fear and loathing
            ,
            fepped out
            ,
            Blue

            Glue
            .

1.252   boxed comments

            boxed comments: n. Comments (explanatory notes attached to program
instructions) that occupy several lines by themselves; so called
because in assembler and C code they are often surrounded by a box
in a style something like this:

```
   /**********************************************
    *
    * This is a boxed comment in C style
    *
    **********************************************/
```

Common variants of this style omit the asterisks in column 2 or add
a matching row of asterisks closing the right side of the box. The
sparest variant omits all but the comment delimiters themselves;
the 'box' is implied. Oppose
            winged comments
            .

1.253   boxen

            boxen: /bok'sn/ [by analogy with
            VAXen
            ] pl.n. Fanciful
plural of

```
            box
             often encountered in the phrase 'UNIX boxen',
used to describe commodity
            UNIX
             hardware.  The connotation is
that any two UNIX boxen are interchangeable.
```

1.254   boxology

```
            boxology: /bok-sol'*-jee/ n. Syn.
            ASCII art
            . This term
implies a more restricted domain, that of box-and-arrow drawings.
"His report has a lot of boxology in it."  Compare

            macrology
            .
```

1.255   bozotic

```
            bozotic: /boh-zoh'tik/ or /boh-zo'tik/ [from the name of a TV
clown even more losing than Ronald McDonald] adj. Resembling or
having the quality of a bozo; that is, clownish, ludicrously wrong,
unintentionally humorous.  Compare
            wonky
            ,
            demented
            . Note
that the noun 'bozo' occurs in slang, but the mainstream
adjectival form would be 'bozo-like' or (in New England)
'bozoish'.
```

1.256   BQS

```
            BQS: /B-Q-S/ adj. Syn.
            Berkeley Quality Software
            .
```

1.257   brain dump

brain dump: n. The act of telling someone everything one knows
about a particular topic or project. Typically used when someone
is going to let a new party maintain a piece of code. Conceptually
analogous to an operating system

core dump

 in that it saves a
lot of useful

state

 before an exit. "You'll have to
give me a brain dump on FOOBAR before you start your new job at
HackerCorp." See

core dump

 (sense 4). At Sun, this is also
known as 'TOI' (transfer of information).

1.258   brain fart

brain fart: n. The actual result of a
braino
, as opposed to
the mental glitch that is the braino itself. E.g., typing
'dir' on a UNIX box after a session with DOS.

1.259   brain-damaged

brain-damaged: 1. [generalization of 'Honeywell Brain Damage'
(HBD), a theoretical disease invented to explain certain utter
cretinisms in Honeywell

Multics

] adj. Obviously wrong;

cretinous

;

demented

. There is an implication that the
person responsible must have suffered brain damage, because he
should have known better. Calling something brain-damaged is
really bad; it also implies it is unusable, and that its failure to
work is due to poor design rather than some accident. "Only six
monocase characters per file name? Now *that's*
brain-damaged!" 2. [esp. in the Mac world] May refer to free
demonstration software that has been deliberately crippled in some
way so as not to compete with the commercial product it is
intended to sell. Syn.

crippleware

.

1.260   brain-dead

```
brain-dead: adj. Brain-damaged in the extreme.  It tends to imply
   terminal design failure rather than malfunction or simple
   stupidity.  "This comm program doesn't know how to send a break
   --- how brain-dead!"
```

1.261   braino

```
            braino: /bray'no/ n. Syn. for
            thinko
            . See also
            brain

            fart
            .
```

1.262   branch to Fishkill

```
            branch to Fishkill: [IBM: from the location of one of the
    corporation's facilities] n. Any unexpected jump in a program that
    produces catastrophic or just plain weird results.  See
            jump

            off into never-never land
            ,
            hyperspace
            .
```

1.263   bread crumbs

```
            bread crumbs: n. Debugging statements inserted into a program that
    emit output or log indicators of the program's
            state
             to a file
    so you can see where it dies or pin down the cause of surprising
    behavior. The term is probably a reference to the Hansel and Gretel
    story from the Brothers Grimm; in several variants, a character
    leaves a trail of bread crumbs so as not to get lost in the
```

woods.

1.264   break

              break: 1. vt. To cause to be
              broken
               (in any sense). "Your latest
patch to the editor broke the paragraph commands." 2. v. (of a
program) To stop temporarily, so that it may debugged. The place
where it stops is a 'breakpoint'. 3. [techspeak] vi. To send an
RS-232 break (two character widths of line high) over a serial comm
line. 4. [UNIX] vi. To strike whatever key currently causes the
tty driver to send SIGINT to the current process. Normally, break
(sense 3), delete or
              control-C
               does this. 5. 'break break'
may be said to interrupt a conversation (this is an example of verb
doubling). This usage comes from radio communications, which in
turn probably came from landline telegraph/teleprinter usage, as
badly abused in the Citizen's Band craze a few years ago.

1.265   break-even point

              break-even point: n. in the process of implementing a new computer
language, the point at which the language is sufficiently effective
that one can implement the language in itself. That is, for a new
language called, hypothetically, FOOGOL, one has reached break-even
when one can write a demonstration compiler for FOOGOL in FOOGOL,
discard the original implementation language, and thereafter use
working versions of FOOGOL to develop newer ones. This is an
important milestone; see
              MFTL
                 .

[Since this entry was first written, several correspondents have
reported that there actually was a compiler for a tiny Algol-like
language called Foogol floating around on various
              vaxen
               in the
early and mid-1980s. The above example may not, after all, be
hypothetical. -- ESR]

1.266   breath-of-life packet

breath-of-life packet: [XEROX PARC] n. An Ethernet packet that
contains bootstrap (see
                boot
) code, periodically sent out
from a working computer to infuse the 'breath of life' into any
computer on the network that has happened to crash. Machines
depending on such packets have sufficient hardware or firmware code
to wait for (or request) such a packet during the reboot process.
See also
                dickless workstation
                .

The notional 'kiss-of-death packet', with a function
complementary to that of a breath-of-life packet, is recommended
for dealing with hosts that consume too many network resources.
Though 'kiss-of-death packet' is usually used in jest, there is
at least one documented instance of an Internet subnet with limited
address-table slots in a gateway machine in which such packets were
routinely used to compete for slots, rather like Christmas shoppers
competing for scarce parking spaces.

1.267   breedle

breedle: n. See
feep
.

1.268   bring X to its knees

bring X to its knees: v. To present a machine, operating system,
piece of software, or algorithm with a load so extreme or

                pathological
                that it grinds to a halt. "To bring a MicroVAX
to its knees, try twenty users running
                vi
                --- or four running

                EMACS
                ." Compare
                hog
                .

1.269   brittle

brittle: adj. Said of software that is functional but easily
broken by changes in operating environment or configuration, or by
any minor tweak to the software itself. Also, any system that
responds inappropriately and disastrously to abnormal but expected
external stimuli; e.g., a file system that is usually totally
scrambled by a power failure is said to be brittle. This term is
often used to describe the results of a research effort that were
never intended to be robust, but it can be applied to commercially
developed software, which displays the quality far more often than
it ought to. Oppose
robust
.

1.270   broadcast storm

broadcast storm: n. An incorrect packet broadcast on a network ←
          that
causes most hosts to respond all at once, typically with wrong
answers that start the process over again. See
network

meltdown
.

1.271   brochureware

brochureware: n. Planned but non-existent product like

vaporware
, but with the added implication that marketing is
actively selling and promoting it (they've printed brochures).
Brochureware is often deployed as a strategic weapon; the idea is
to con customers into not committing to an existing product of the
competition's. It is a safe bet that when a brochureware product
finally becomes real, it will be more expensive than and inferior
to the alternatives that had been available for years.

1.272   broken

broken: adj. 1. Not working properly (of programs). 2. Behaving
   strangely; especially (when used of people) exhibiting extreme

depression.

1.273 broken arrow

broken arrow: [IBM] n. The error code displayed on line 25 of a
3270 terminal (or a PC emulating a 3270) for various kinds of
protocol violations and "unexpected" error conditions (including
connection to a
                down
                 computer). On a PC, simulated with
'->/_', with the two center characters overstruck.

Note: to appreciate this term fully, it helps to know that 'broken
arrow' is also military jargon for an accident involving nuclear
weapons....

1.274 broket

broket: /broh'k*t/ or /broh'ket'/ [by analogy with 'bracket': a
'broken bracket'] n. Either of the characters '<' and '>',
when used as paired enclosing delimiters. This word
originated as a contraction of the phrase 'broken bracket', that
is, a bracket that is bent in the middle. (At MIT, and apparently
in the
                Real World
                 as well, these are usually called
                angle

                brackets
                .)

1.275 Brooks's Law

Brooks's Law: prov. "Adding manpower to a late software project
makes it later" --- a result of the fact that the expected
advantage from splitting work among N programmers is
O(N) (that is, proportional to N), but the complexity
and communications cost associated with coordinating and then
merging their work is O(N^2) (that is, proportional to the
square of N). The quote is from Fred Brooks, a manager of
IBM's OS/360 project and author of "The Mythical Man-Month"
(Addison-Wesley, 1975, ISBN 0-201-00650-2), an excellent early book
on software engineering. The myth in question has been most
tersely expressed as "Programmer time is fungible" and Brooks
established conclusively that it is not. Hackers have never

forgotten his advice; too often,
                management
                 still does. See
also
                creationism
                ,
                second-system effect
                ,

                optimism
                .

1.276 BRS

                BRS: /B-R-S/ n. Syn.
                Big Red Switch
                . This abbreviation is
fairly common on-line.

1.277 brute force

                brute force: adj. Describes a primitive programming style, one in
which the programmer relies on the computer's processing power
instead of using his or her own intelligence to simplify the
problem, often ignoring problems of scale and applying naive
methods suited to small problems directly to large ones. The term
can also be used in reference to programming style: brute-force
programs are written in a heavyhanded, tedious way, full of
repetition and devoid of any elegance or useful abstraction (see
also
                brute force and ignorance
).

The
                canonical
                 example of a brute-force algorithm is associated
with the 'traveling salesman problem' (TSP), a classical

                NP-
                hard problem: Suppose a person is in, say, Boston, and
wishes to drive to N other cities. In what order should the
cities be visited in order to minimize the distance travelled? The
brute-force method is to simply generate all possible routes and
compare the distances; while guaranteed to work and simple to
implement, this algorithm is clearly very stupid in that it
considers even obviously absurd routes (like going from Boston to
Houston via San Francisco and New York, in that order). For very
small N it works well, but it rapidly becomes absurdly

inefficient when N increases (for N = 15, there are
already 1,307,674,368,000 possible routes to consider, and for
N = 1000 --- well, see
              bignum
). Sometimes,
unfortunately, there is no better general solution than brute
force. See also
              NP-
              .

A more simple-minded example of brute-force programming is finding
the smallest number in a large list by first using an existing
program to sort the list in ascending order, and then picking the
first number off the front.

Whether brute-force programming should actually be considered
stupid or not depends on the context; if the problem is not
terribly big, the extra CPU time spent on a brute-force solution
may cost less than the programmer time it would take to develop a
more 'intelligent' algorithm. Additionally, a more intelligent
algorithm may imply more long-term complexity cost and bug-chasing
than are justified by the speed improvement.

Ken Thompson, co-inventor of UNIX, is reported to have uttered the
epigram "When in doubt, use brute force". He probably intended
this as a
              ha ha only serious
              , but the original UNIX kernel's
preference for simple, robust, and portable algorithms over

              brittle
               'smart' ones does seem to have been a significant
factor in the success of that OS. Like so many other tradeoffs in
software design, the choice between brute force and complex,
finely-tuned cleverness is often a difficult one that requires both
engineering savvy and delicate esthetic judgment.

1.278   brute force and ignorance

              brute force and ignorance: n. A popular design technique at many
software houses ---
              brute force
               coding unrelieved by any
knowledge of how problems have been previously solved in elegant
ways. Dogmatic adherence to design methodologies tends to
encourage this sort of thing. Characteristic of early
              larval

              stage
               programming; unfortunately, many never outgrow it. Often
abbreviated BFI: "Gak, they used a
              bubble sort
              ! That's

strictly from BFI." Compare
                bogosity
                .

1.279   BSD

                BSD: /B-S-D/ n. [abbreviation for `Berkeley System Distribution'] ←
                  a
family of
                UNIX
                 versions for the
                DEC

                VAX
                 and PDP-11
developed by Bill Joy and others at
                Berzerkeley
                 starting
around 1980, incorporating paged virtual memory, TCP/IP networking
enhancements, and many other features. The BSD versions (4.1, 4.2,
and 4.3) and the commercial versions derived from them (SunOS,
ULTRIX, and Mt. Xinu) held the technical lead in the UNIX world
until AT&T's successful standardization efforts after about 1986,
and are still widely popular. See
                UNIX
                ,
                USG UNIX
                .

1.280   BUAF

                BUAF: // [abbreviation, from alt.fan.warlord] n. Big
Ugly ASCII Font --- a special form of
                ASCII art
                . Various
programs exist for rendering text strings into block, bloob, and
pseudo-script fonts in cells between four and six character cells
on a side; this is smaller than the letters generated by older

                banner
                 (sense 2) programs. These are sometimes used to render
one's name in a
                sig block
                , and are critically referred to as
`BUAF's. See
                warlording
                .

1.281 BUAG

BUAG: // [abbreviation, from alt.fan.warlord] n. Big Ugly
ASCII Graphic. Pejorative term for ugly
ASCII ART
, especially
as found in
sig block
s. For some reason, mutations of the
head of Bart Simpson are particularly common in the least
imaginative
sig block
s. See
warlording
.

1.282 bubble sort

bubble sort: n. Techspeak for a particular sorting technique in
which pairs of adjacent values in the list to be sorted are
compared and interchanged if they are out of order; thus, list
entries 'bubble upward' in the list until they bump into one with a
lower sort value. Because it is not very good relative to other
methods and is the one typically stumbled on by
naive
 and
untutored programmers, hackers consider it the
canonical
example of a naive algorithm. The canonical example of a ←
really
bad algorithm is
bogo-sort
. A bubble sort might be used
out of ignorance, but any use of bogo-sort could issue only from
brain damage or willful perversity.

1.283 bucky bits

bucky bits: /buh'kee bits/ n. 1. obs. The bits produced by the
CONTROL and META shift keys on a SAIL keyboard (octal 200 and 400
respectively), resulting in a 9-bit keyboard character set. The
MIT AI TV (Knight) keyboards extended this with TOP and separate
left and right CONTROL and META keys, resulting in a 12-bit
character set; later, LISP Machines added such keys as SUPER,

HYPER, and GREEK (see
                space-cadet keyboard
). 2. By extension,
bits associated with 'extra' shift keys on any keyboard, e.g.,
the ALT on an IBM PC or command and option keys on a Macintosh.

It has long been rumored that 'bucky bits' were named for
Buckminster Fuller during a period when he was consulting at
Stanford. Actually, bucky bits were invented by Niklaus Wirth when
he was at Stanford in 1964--65; he first suggested the idea
of an EDIT key to set the 8th bit of an otherwise 7-bit ASCII
character. best-known). It seems that, unknown to Wirth, certain
Stanford hackers had privately nicknamed him 'Bucky' after a
prominent portion of his dental anatomy, and this nickname
transferred to the bit. Bucky-bit commands were used in a number
of editors written at Stanford, including most notably TV-EDIT and
NLS.

The term spread to MIT and CMU early and is now in general use.
Ironically, Wirth himself remained unaware of its derivation for
nearly 30 years, until GLS dug up this history in early 1993! See

                double bucky
                ,
                quadruple bucky
                .

1.284   buffer overflow

                buffer overflow: n. What happens when you try to stuff more data
into a buffer (holding area) than it can handle. This may be due
to a mismatch in the processing rates of the producing and
consuming processes (see
                overrun
                 and
                firehose syndrome
                ),
or because the buffer is simply too small to hold all the data that
must accumulate before a piece of it can be processed. For example,
in a text-processing tool that
                crunch
                es a line at a time, a
short line buffer can result in
                lossage
                 as input from a long
line overflows the buffer and trashes data beyond it. Good
defensive programming would check for overflow on each character
and stop accepting data when the buffer is full up. The term is
used of and by humans in a metaphorical sense. "What time did I
agree to meet you? My buffer must have overflowed." Or "If I
answer that phone my buffer is going to overflow." See also

                spam

,
overrun screw
.

1.285   bug

bug: n. An unwanted and unintended property of a program or piece
of hardware, esp. one that causes it to malfunction. Antonym of

feature
. Examples: "There's a bug in the editor: it writes
things out backwards." "The system crashed because of a hardware
bug." "Fred is a winner, but he has a few bugs" (i.e., Fred is
a good guy, but he has a few personality problems).

Historical note: Admiral Grace Hopper (an early computing pioneer
better known for inventing
COBOL
) liked to tell a story in
which a technician solved a
glitch
in the Harvard Mark II
machine by pulling an actual insect out from between the contacts
of one of its relays, and she subsequently promulgated
bug
in
its hackish sense as a joke about the incident (though, as she was
careful to admit, she was not there when it happened). For many
years the logbook associated with the incident and the actual bug
in question (a moth) sat in a display case at the Naval Surface
Warfare Center (NSWC). The entire story, with a picture of the
logbook and the moth taped into it, is recorded in the "Annals
of the History of Computing", Vol. 3, No. 3 (July 1981),
pp. 285--286.

The text of the log entry (from September 9, 1947), reads "1545
Relay #70 Panel F (moth) in relay. First actual case of bug being
found". This wording establishes that the term was already
in use at the time in its current specific sense --- and Hopper
herself reports that the term 'bug' was regularly applied to
problems in radar electronics during WWII.

Indeed, the use of 'bug' to mean an industrial defect was already
established in Thomas Edison's time, and a more specific and rather
modern use can be found in an electrical handbook from 1896
("Hawkin's New Catechism of Electricity", Theo. Audel & Co.)
which says: "The term 'bug' is used to a limited extent to
designate any fault or trouble in the connections or working of
electric apparatus." It further notes that the term is "said to
have originated in quadruplex telegraphy and have been transferred
to all electric apparatus."

The latter observation may explain a common folk etymology of the

term; that it came from telephone company usage, in which "bugs in
a telephone cable" were blamed for noisy lines. Though this
derivation seems to be mistaken, it may well be a distorted memory
of a joke first current among *telegraph* operators more than
a century ago!

Actually, use of 'bug' in the general sense of a disruptive event
goes back to Shakespeare! In the first edition of Samuel Johnson's
dictionary one meaning of 'bug' is "A frightful object; a
walking spectre"; this is traced to 'bugbear', a Welsh term for
a variety of mythological monster which (to complete the circle)
has recently been reintroduced into the popular lexicon through
fantasy role-playing games.

In any case, in jargon the word almost never refers to insects.
Here is a plausible conversation that never actually happened:

"There is a bug in this ant farm!"

"What do you mean? I don't see any ants in it."

"That's the bug."

[There has been a widespread myth that the original bug was moved
to the Smithsonian, and an earlier version of this entry so
asserted. A correspondent who thought to check discovered that the
bug was not there. While investigating this in late 1990, your
editor discovered that the NSWC still had the bug, but had
unsuccessfully tried to get the Smithsonian to accept it --- and
that the present curator of their History of American Technology
Museum didn't know this and agreed that it would make a worthwhile
exhibit. It was moved to the Smithsonian in mid-1991, but due to
space and money constraints has not yet been exhibited. Thus, the
process of investigating the original-computer-bug bug fixed it in
an entirely unexpected way, by making the myth true! --- ESR]

1.286 bug-compatible

          bug-compatible: adj. Said of a design or revision that has been
badly compromised by a requirement to be compatible with

          fossil
          s or
          misfeature
          s in other programs or (esp.)
previous releases of itself. "MS-DOS 2.0 used \ as a path
separator to be bug-compatible with some cretin's choice of / as an
option character in 1.0."

1.287 bug-for-bug compatible

                bug-for-bug compatible: n. Same as
                bug-compatible
                , with the
    additional implication that much tedious effort went into ensuring
    that each (known) bug was replicated.

1.288 buglix

                buglix: /buhg'liks/ n. Pejorative term referring to
                DEC
                's ULTRIX
    operating system in its earlier *severely* buggy versions.
    Still used to describe ULTRIX, but without nearly so much venom.
    Compare
                AIDX
                ,
                HP-SUX
                ,
                Nominal Semidestructor
                ,

                Telerat
                ,
                sun-stools
                .

1.289 bulletproof

                bulletproof: adj. Used of an algorithm or implementation
    considered extremely
                robust
                ; lossage-resistant; capable of
    correctly recovering from any imaginable exception condition --- a
    rare and valued quality. Syn.
                armor-plated
                .

1.290 bum

                bum: 1. vt. To make highly efficient, either in time or space,
    often at the expense of clarity. "I managed to bum three more

instructions out of that code." "I spent half the night bumming
the interrupt code." In
              elder days
              , John McCarthy (inventor
of
              LISP
) used to compare some efficiency-obsessed hackers
among his students to "ski bums"; thus, optimization became
"program bumming", and eventually just "bumming". 2. To
squeeze out excess; to remove something in order to improve
whatever it was removed from (without changing function; this
distinguishes the process from a
              featurectomy
). 3. n. A small
change to an algorithm, program, or hardware device to make it more
efficient. "This hardware bum makes the jump instruction
faster." Usage: now uncommon, largely superseded by v.
              tune
                 (and n.
              tweak
              ,
              hack
              ), though none of these exactly
capture sense 2. All these uses are rare in Commonwealth hackish,
because in the parent dialects of English 'bum' is a rude synonym
for 'buttocks'.

1.291   bump

bump: vt. Synonym for increment. Has the same meaning as
   C's ++ operator. Used esp. of counter variables, pointers, and
   index dummies in 'for', 'while', and 'do-while'
   loops.

1.292   burble

              burble: [from Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky"] v. Like
              flame
              ,
but connotes that the source is truly clueless and ineffectual
(mere flamers can be competent). A term of deep contempt.
"There's some guy on the phone burbling about how he got a DISK
FULL error and it's all our comm software's fault." This
is mainstream slang in some parts of England.

1.293   buried treasure

buried treasure: n. A surprising piece of code found in some
program. While usually not wrong, it tends to vary from
crufty
   to
bletcherous
, and has lain undiscovered only because it was
functionally correct, however horrible it is. Used sarcastically,
because what is found is anything *but* treasure. Buried
treasure almost always needs to be dug up and removed. "I just
found that the scheduler sorts its queue using
bubble sort
!
Buried treasure!"

1.294   burn-in period

burn-in period: n. 1. A factory test designed to catch systems
with
marginal
 components before they get out the door; the
theory is that burn-in will protect customers by outwaiting the
steepest part of the
bathtub curve
 (see
infant

mortality
). 2. A period of indeterminate length in which a person
using a computer is so intensely involved in his project that he
forgets basic needs such as food, drink, sleep, etc. Warning:
Excessive burn-in can lead to burn-out. See
hack mode
,

larval stage
.

1.295   burst page

burst page: n. Syn.
banner
, sense 1.

1.296 busy-wait

busy-wait: vi. Used of human behavior, conveys that the subject is
busy waiting for someone or something, intends to move instantly as
soon as it shows up, and thus cannot do anything else at the
moment. "Can't talk now, I'm busy-waiting till Bill gets off the
phone."

Technically, 'busy-wait' means to wait on an event by

spin
ning through a tight or timed-delay loop that polls for
the event on each pass, as opposed to setting up an interrupt
handler and continuing execution on another part of the task. This
is a wasteful technique, best avoided on time-sharing systems where
a busy-waiting program may
hog
 the processor.

1.297 buzz

buzz: vi. 1. Of a program, to run with no indication of progress
and perhaps without guarantee of ever finishing; esp. said of
programs thought to be executing tight loops of code. A program
that is buzzing appears to be
catatonic
, but never gets out
of catatonia, while a buzzing loop may eventually end of its own
accord. "The program buzzes for about 10 seconds trying to sort
all the names into order." See
spin
; see also
grovel
.
2. [ETA Systems] To test a wire or printed circuit trace for
continuity by applying an AC rather than DC signal. Some wire
faults will pass DC tests but fail a buzz test. 3. To process an
array or list in sequence, doing the same thing to each element.
"This loop buzzes through the tz array looking for a terminator
type."

1.298 BWQ

BWQ: /B-W-Q/ [IBM: abbreviation, 'Buzz Word Quotient'] The
percentage of buzzwords in a speech or documents. Usually roughly
proportional to
bogosity
. See

TLA
.

1.299   by hand

by hand: adv. 1. Said of an operation (especially a repetitive,
trivial, and/or tedious one) that ought to be performed
automatically by the computer, but which a hacker instead has to
step tediously through. "My mailer doesn't have a command to
include the text of the message I'm replying to, so I have to do it
by hand." This does not necessarily mean the speaker has to
retype a copy of the message; it might refer to, say, dropping into
a subshell from the mailer, making a copy of one's mailbox
file, reading that into an editor, locating the top and bottom of
the message in question, deleting the rest of the file, inserting
'>' characters on each line, writing the file, leaving the editor,
returning to the mailer, reading the file in, and later remembering
to delete the file. Compare
eyeball search
. 2. By extension,
writing code which does something in an explicit or low-level way
for which a presupplied library routine ought to have been
available. "This cretinous B-tree library doesn't supply a decent
iterator, so I'm having to walk the trees by hand."

1.300   byte

byte:: /bi:t/ [techspeak] n. A unit of memory or data equal to
the amount used to represent one character; on modern architectures
this is usually 8 bits, but may be 9 on 36-bit machines. Some
older architectures used 'byte' for quantities of 6 or 7 bits, and
the PDP-10 supported 'bytes' that were actually bitfields of
1 to 36 bits! These usages are now obsolete, and even 9-bit bytes
have become rare in the general trend toward power-of-2 word sizes.

Historical note: The term was coined by Werner Buchholz in 1956
during the early design phase for the IBM Stretch computer;
originally it was described as 1 to 6 bits (typical I/O equipment
of the period used 6-bit chunks of information). The move to an
8-bit byte happened in late 1956, and this size was later adopted
and promulgated as a standard by the System/360. The word was
coined by mutating the word 'bite' so it would not be
accidentally misspelled as
bit
. See also
nybble
.

1.301 bytesexual

bytesexual: /bi:t'sek'shu-*l/ adj. Said of hardware, denotes
willingness to compute or pass data in either
big-endian
 or

little-endian
 format (depending, presumably, on a
mode bit
   somewhere). See also
NUXI problem
.

1.302 bzzzt, wrong

bzzzt, wrong: /bzt rong/ [USENET/Internet] From a Robin Williams
   routine in the movie "Dead Poets Society" spoofing radio or
   TV quiz programs, such as *Truth or Consequences*, where an
   incorrect answer earns one a blast from the buzzer and condolences
   from the interlocutor. A way of expressing mock-rude disagreement,
   usually immediately following an included quote from another
   poster. The less abbreviated "*Bzzzt*, wrong, but thank you for
   playing" is also common; capitalization and emphasis of the
   buzzer sound varies.

1.303 C

C: n. 1. The third letter of the English alphabet. 2. ASCII
1000011. 3. The name of a programming language designed by
Dennis Ritchie during the early 1970s and immediately used to
reimplement
UNIX
; so called because many features derived
from an earlier compiler named 'B' in commemoration of
its parent, BCPL. Before Bjarne Stroustrup settled the
question by designing C++, there was a humorous debate over whether
C's successor should be named 'D' or 'P'. C became immensely
popular outside Bell Labs after about 1980 and is now the dominant
language in systems and microcomputer applications programming.
See also
languages of choice
,
indent style
.

C is often described, with a mixture of fondness and disdain
varying according to the speaker, as "a language that combines
all the elegance and power of assembly language with all the
readability and maintainability of assembly language".

1.304   C Programmer's Disease

C Programmer's Disease: n. The tendency of the undisciplined C
programmer to set arbitrary but supposedly generous static limits
on table sizes (defined, if you're lucky, by constants in header
files) rather than taking the trouble to do proper dynamic storage
allocation. If an application user later needs to put 68 elements
into a table of size 50, the afflicted programmer reasons that he
or she can easily reset the table size to 68 (or even as much as
70, to allow for future expansion) and recompile. This gives the
programmer the comfortable feeling of having made the effort to
satisfy the user's (unreasonable) demands, and often affords the
user multiple opportunities to explore the marvelous consequences
of
fandango on core
. In severe cases of the disease, the
programmer cannot comprehend why each fix of this kind seems only
to further disgruntle the user.

1.305   calculator

calculator: [Cambridge] n. Syn. for
bitty box
.

1.306   can

can: vt. To abort a job on a time-sharing system. Used esp.
when the person doing the deed is an operator, as in "canned from
the
console
". Frequently used in an imperative sense, as in
"Can that print job, the LPT just popped a sprocket!" Synonymous
with
gun
. It is said that the ASCII character with mnemonic
CAN (0011000) was used as a kill-job character on some early OSes.
Alternatively, this term may derive from mainstream slang

'canned' for being laid off or fired.

1.307   can't happen

can't happen: The traditional program comment for code executed
under a condition that should never be true, for example a file
size computed as negative. Often, such a condition being true
indicates data corruption or a faulty algorithm; it is almost
always handled by emitting a fatal error message and terminating or
crashing, since there is little else that can be done. Some case
variant of "can't happen" is also often the text emitted if the
'impossible' error actually happens! Although "can't happen"
events are genuinely infrequent in production code, programmers
wise enough to check for them habitually are often surprised at how
frequently they are triggered during development and how many
headaches checking for them turns out to head off. See also

firewall code
 (sense 2).

1.308   candygrammar

candygrammar: n. A programming-language grammar that is mostly

syntactic sugar
; the term is also a play on 'candygram'.

COBOL
, Apple's Hypertalk language, and a lot of the so-called
'4GL' database languages share this property. The usual intent
of such designs is that they be as English-like as possible, on the
theory that they will then be easier for unskilled people to
program. This intention comes to grief on the reality that syntax
isn't what makes programming hard; it's the mental effort and
organization required to specify an algorithm precisely that
costs. Thus the invariable result is that 'candygrammar'
languages are just as difficult to program in as terser ones, and
far more painful for the experienced hacker.

[The overtones from the old Chevy Chase skit on Saturday Night Live
should not be overlooked. This was a "Jaws" parody.
Someone lurking outside an apartment door tries all kinds of bogus
ways to get the occupant to open up, while ominous music plays in
the background. The last attempt is a half-hearted "Candygram!"
When the door is opened, a shark bursts in and chomps the poor
occupant. There is a moral here for those attracted to
candygrammars. Note that, in many circles, pretty much the same
ones who remember Monty Python sketches, all it takes is the word

```
"Candygram!", suitably timed, to get people rolling on the
floor. --- GLS]
```

1.309 canonical

```
            canonical: [historically, 'according to religious law'] adj. The
usual or standard state or manner of something.  This word has a
somewhat more technical meaning in mathematics.  Two formulas such
as 9 + x and x + 9 are said to be equivalent because
they mean the same thing, but the second one is in 'canonical
form' because it is written in the usual way, with the highest
power of x first.  Usually there are fixed rules you can use
to decide whether something is in canonical form.  The jargon
meaning, a relaxation of the technical meaning, acquired its
present loading in computer-science culture largely through its
prominence in Alonzo Church's work in computation theory and
mathematical logic (see
            Knights of the Lambda Calculus
            ).
Compare
            vanilla
            .
```

```
This word has an interesting history.  Non-technical academics do
not use the adjective 'canonical' in any of the senses defined
above with any regularity; they do however use the nouns 'canon'
and 'canonicity' (not **canonicalness or **canonicality). The
'canon' of a given author is the complete body of authentic works
by that author (this usage is familiar to Sherlock Holmes fans as
well as to literary scholars).  '*The* canon' is the body of
works in a given field (e.g., works of literature, or of art, or of
music) deemed worthwhile for students to study and for scholars to
investigate.
```

```
The word 'canon' derives ultimately from the Greek
'kanon'
(akin to the English 'cane') referring to a reed.  Reeds were used
for measurement, and in Latin and later Greek the word 'canon'
meant a rule or a standard.  The establishment of a canon of
scriptures within Christianity was meant to define a standard or a
rule for the religion.  The above non-techspeak academic usages
stem from this instance of a defined and accepted body of work.
Alongside this usage was the promulgation of 'canons' ('rules')
for the government of the Catholic Church.  The techspeak usages
("according to religious law") derive from this use of the Latin
'canon'.
```

```
Hackers invest this term with a playfulness that makes an ironic
contrast with its historical meaning.  A true story: One Bob
Sjoberg, new at the MIT AI Lab, expressed some annoyance at the
incessant use of jargon.  Over his loud objections, GLS and RMS
made a point of using as much of it as possible in his presence,
and eventually it began to sink in.  Finally, in one conversation,
```

he used the word 'canonical' in jargon-like fashion without
thinking. Steele: "Aha! We've finally got you talking jargon
too!" Stallman: "What did he say?" Steele: "Bob just used
'canonical' in the canonical way."

Of course, canonicality depends on context, but it is implicitly
defined as the way *hackers* normally expect things to be.
Thus, a hacker may claim with a straight face that 'according to
religious law' is *not* the canonical meaning of 'canonical'.

1.310 card walloper

card walloper: n. An EDP programmer who grinds out batch programs
that do stupid things like print people's paychecks. Compare

code grinder
. See also
punched card
,
eighty-column

mind
.

1.311 careware

careware: /keir'weir/ n.
Shareware
 for which either the
author suggests that some payment be made to a nominated charity
or a levy directed to charity is included on top of the
distribution charge. Syn.
charityware
; compare

crippleware
, sense 2.

1.312 cargo cult programming

cargo cult programming: n. A style of (incompetent) programming
dominated by ritual inclusion of code or program structures that
serve no real purpose. A cargo cult programmer will usually
explain the extra code as a way of working around some bug

encountered in the past, but usually neither the bug nor the reason
the code apparently avoided the bug was ever fully understood
(compare
            shotgun debugging
            ,
            voodoo programming
).

The term 'cargo cult' is a reference to aboriginal religions that
grew up in the South Pacific after World War II. The practices of
these cults center on building elaborate mockups of airplanes and
military style landing strips in the hope of bringing the return of
the god-like airplanes that brought such marvelous cargo during the
war. Hackish usage probably derives from Richard Feynman's
characterization of certain practices as "cargo cult science" in
his book "Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman" (W. W. Norton
& Co, New York 1985, ISBN 0-393-01921-7).

1.313   cascade

            cascade: n. 1. A huge volume of spurious error-message output
produced by a compiler with poor error recovery. Too frequently,
one trivial syntax error (such as a missing ')' or '}') throws the
parser out of synch so that much of the remaining program text is
interpreted as garbaged or ill-formed. 2. A chain of USENET
followups, each adding some trivial variation or riposte to the text
of the previous one, all of which is reproduced in the new message;
an
            include war
             in which the object is to create a sort of
communal graffito.

1.314   case and paste

            case and paste: [from 'cut and paste'] n. 1. The addition of a new

            feature
             to an existing system by selecting the code from an
existing feature and pasting it in with minor changes. Common in
telephony circles because most operations in a telephone switch are
selected using 'case' statements. Leads to
            software bloat
            .

In some circles of EMACS users this is called 'programming by
Meta-W', because Meta-W is the EMACS command for copying a block of
text to a kill buffer in preparation to pasting it in elsewhere.
The term is condescending, implying that the programmer is acting

mindlessly rather than thinking carefully about what is required to integrate the code for two similar cases.

At DEC, this is sometimes called 'clone-and-hack' coding.

1.315 casters-up mode

casters-up mode: [IBM, prob. fr. slang belly up] n. Yet another
    synonym for 'broken' or 'down'. Usually connotes a major
    failure. A system (hardware or software) which is 'down' may be
    already being restarted before the failure is noticed, whereas one
    which is 'casters up' is usually a good excuse to take the rest
    of the day off (as long as you're not responsible for fixing
    it).

1.316 casting the runes

                casting the runes: n. What a
                guru
                 does when you ask him or
    her to run a particular program and type at it because it never
    works for anyone else; esp. used when nobody can ever see what
    the guru is doing different from what J. Random Luser does.
    Compare
                incantation
                ,
                runes
                ,
                examining the entrails
                ;
    also see the AI koan about Tom Knight in "
                A Selection

                of AI Koans
                " (
                Appendix A
).

1.317 cat

                cat: [from 'catenate' via
                UNIX
                 'cat(1)'] vt.
    1. [techspeak] To spew an entire file to the screen or some other
    output sink without pause. 2. By extension, to dump large amounts

of data at an unprepared target or with no intention of browsing it
carefully. Usage: considered silly. Rare outside UNIX sites. See
also
              dd
              ,
              BLT
              .

Among UNIX fans, 'cat(1)' is considered an excellent example
of user-interface design, because it delivers the file contents
without such verbosity as spacing or headers between the files, and
because it does not require the files to consist of lines of text,
but works with any sort of data.

Among UNIX haters, 'cat(1)' is considered the
              canonical
                 example of *bad* user-interface design, because of its
woefully unobvious name. It is far more often used to
              blast
               a
file to standard output than to concatenate two files. The name
'cat' for the former operation is just as unintuitive as, say,
LISP's
              cdr
              .

Of such oppositions are
              holy wars
               made....

1.318   catatonic

              catatonic: adj. Describes a condition of suspended animation in
which something is so
              wedged
               or
              hung
               that it makes no
response. If you are typing on a terminal and suddenly the
computer doesn't even echo the letters back to the screen as you
type, let alone do what you're asking it to do, then the computer
is suffering from catatonia (possibly because it has crashed).
"There I was in the middle of a winning game of
              nethack
               and it
went catatonic on me! Aaargh!" Compare
              buzz
              .

1.319   cd tilde

cd tilde: /C-D til-d*/ vi. To go home. From the UNIX C-shell
   and Korn-shell command 'cd ~', which takes one to
   one's '$HOME' ('cd' with no arguments happens to do the
   same thing). By extension, may be used with other arguments; thus,
   over an electronic chat link, 'cd ~coffee' would
   mean "I'm going to the coffee machine."

1.320   cdr

               cdr: /ku'dr/ or /kuh'dr/ [from LISP] vt. To skip past the
   first item from a list of things (generalized from the LISP
   operation on binary tree structures, which returns a list
   consisting of all but the first element of its argument). In the
   form 'cdr down', to trace down a list of elements: "Shall we
   cdr down the agenda?" Usage: silly. See also
               loop through
               .

   Historical note: The instruction format of the IBM 7090 that hosted
   the original LISP implementation featured two 15-bit fields called
   the 'address' and 'decrement' parts. The term 'cdr' was originally
   'Contents of Decrement part of Register'. Similarly, 'car' stood
   for 'Contents of Address part of Register'.

   The cdr and car operations have since become bases for
   formation of compound metaphors in non-LISP contexts. GLS recalls,
   for example, a programming project in which strings were
   represented as linked lists; the get-character and skip-character
   operations were of course called CHAR and CHDR.

1.321   chad

               chad: /chad/ n. 1. The perforated edge strips on printer paper, ←
                   after
   they have been separated from the printed portion. Also called

               selvage
                and
               perf
               . 2. obs. The confetti-like paper bits punched
   out of cards or paper tape; this was also called 'chaff', 'computer
   confetti', and 'keypunch droppings'.

   Historical note: One correspondent believes 'chad' (sense 2)
   derives from the Chadless keypunch (named for its inventor), which
   cut little u-shaped tabs in the card to make a hole when the tab
   folded back, rather than punching out a circle/rectangle; it was

clear that if the Chadless keypunch didn't make them, then the
stuff that other keypunches made had to be 'chad'.

1.322 chad box

                chad box: n. A metal box about the size of a lunchbox (or in some
models a large wastebasket), for collecting the
                chad
                (sense 2)
that accumulated in
                Iron Age
                card punches. You had to open
the covers of the card punch periodically and empty the chad box.
The
                bit bucket
                was notionally the equivalent device in the CPU
enclosure, which was typically across the room in another great
gray-and-blue box.

1.323 chain

                chain: 1. [orig. from BASIC's 'CHAIN' statement] vi. To hand
off execution to a child or successor without going through the

                OS
                command interpreter that invoked it. The state of the
parent program is lost and there is no returning to it. Though
this facility used to be common on memory-limited micros and is
still widely supported for backward compatibility, the jargon usage
is semi-obsolescent; in particular, most UNIX programmers will
think of this as an
                exec
                . Oppose the more modern
'subshell'. 2. A series of linked data areas within an
operating system or application. 'Chain rattling' is the process
of repeatedly running through the linked data areas searching for
one which is of interest to the executing program. The implication
is that there is a very large number of links on the chain.

1.324 channel

                channel: [IRC] n. The basic unit of discussion on
                IRC
                . Once

one joins a channel, everything one types is read by others on that
channel. Channels can either be named with numbers or with strings
that begin with a '#' sign and can have topic descriptions (which
are generally irrelevant to the actual subject of discussion).
Some notable channels are '#initgame', '#hottub', and
'#report'. At times of international crisis, '#report'
has hundreds of members, some of whom take turns listening to
various news services and typing in summaries of the news, or in
some cases, giving first-hand accounts of the action (e.g., Scud
missile attacks in Tel Aviv during the Gulf War in 1991).

1.325   channel hopping

channel hopping: [IRC, GEnie] n. To rapidly switch channels on

IRC
, or a GEnie chat board, just as a social butterfly might hop
from one group to another at a party. This term may derive from the TV
watcher's idiom, 'channel surfing'.

1.326   channel op

channel op: /chan'l op/ [IRC] n. Someone who is endowed with
privileges on a particular
IRC
 channel; commonly abbreviated
'chanop' or 'CHOP'. These privileges include the right to

kick
 users, to change various status bits, and to make others
into CHOPs.

1.327   chanop

chanop: /chan'-op/ [IRC] n. See
channel op
.

1.328   char

```
char: /keir/ or /char/; rarely, /kar/ n. Shorthand for
   'character'.  Esp. used by C programmers, as 'char' is
   C's typename for character data.
```

1.329   charityware

```
              charityware: /cha'rit-ee-weir'/ n. Syn.
              careware
              .
```

1.330   chase pointers

```
              chase pointers: 1. vi. To go through multiple levels of
indirection, as in traversing a linked list or graph structure.
Used esp. by programmers in C, where explicit pointers are a very
common data type.  This is techspeak, but it remains jargon when
used of human networks.  "I'm chasing pointers.  Bob said you
could tell me who to talk to about...." See
              dangling

              pointer
               and
              snap
              . 2. [Cambridge] 'pointer chase' or
'pointer hunt': The process of going through a
              core dump
                (sense 1), interactively or on a large piece of paper printed  ↩
                   with
hex
              runes
              , following dynamic data-structures.  Used only in a
debugging context.
```

1.331   check

```
              check: n. A hardware-detected error condition, most commonly used
to refer to actual hardware failures rather than software-induced
traps.  E.g., a 'parity check' is the result of a
hardware-detected parity error.  Recorded here because the word
often humorously extended to non-technical problems. For example,
the term 'child check' has been used to refer to the problems
caused by a small child who is curious to know what happens when
```

s/he presses all the cute buttons on a computer's console (of
course, this particular problem could have been prevented with

        molly-guard
        s).

1.332 chemist

        chemist: [Cambridge] n. Someone who wastes computer time on

        number-crunching
         when you'd far rather the machine were doing
something more productive, such as working out anagrams of your
name or printing Snoopy calendars or running
        life
         patterns.
May or may not refer to someone who actually studies chemistry.

1.333 Chernobyl chicken

        Chernobyl chicken: n. See
        laser chicken
        .

1.334 Chernobyl packet

        Chernobyl packet: /cher-noh'b*l pak'*t/ n. A network packet that
induces a
        broadcast storm
        and/or
        network meltdown
        ,
in memory of the April 1986 nuclear accident at Chernobyl
in Ukraine. The typical scenario involves an IP Ethernet datagram
that passes through a gateway with both source and destination
Ether and IP address set as the respective broadcast addresses for
the subnetworks being gated between. Compare
        Christmas tree

        packet
        .

1.335   chicken head

         chicken head: [Commodore] n. The Commodore Business Machines logo,
   which strongly resembles a poultry part. Rendered in ASCII as
   `C='. With the arguable exception of the Amiga (see
         amoeba
         ),
   Commodore's machines are notoriously crocky little
         bitty box
         es
   (see also
         PETSCII
). Thus, this usage may owe something to
   Philip K. Dick's novel "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?"
   (the basis for the movie "Blade Runner"; the novel is now sold
   under that title), in which a `chickenhead' is a mutant with
   below-average intelligence.

1.336   chiclet keyboard

chiclet keyboard: n. A keyboard with a small, flat rectangular or
   lozenge-shaped rubber or plastic keys that look like pieces of
   chewing gum. (Chiclets is the brand name of a variety of chewing
   gum that does in fact resemble the keys of chiclet keyboards.)
   Used esp. to describe the original IBM PCjr keyboard. Vendors
   unanimously liked these because they were cheap, and a lot of early
   portable and laptop products got launched using them. Customers
   rejected the idea with almost equal unanimity, and chiclets are not
   often seen on anything larger than a digital watch any more.

1.337   chine nual

chine nual: /sheen'yu-*l/ [MIT] n.,obs. The LISP Machine Manual, so
   called because the title was wrapped around the cover so only those
   letters showed on the front.

1.338   Chinese Army technique

         Chinese Army technique: n. Syn.
         Mongolian Hordes technique
         .

1.339 choke

            choke: v. 1. To reject input, often ungracefully. "NULs make ↩
               System
V's 'lpr(1)' choke." "I tried building an
            EMACS
             binary to
use
            X
, but 'cpp(1)' choked on all those '#define's."
See
            barf
            ,
            gag
            ,
            vi
            .   2. [MIT] More generally, to fail at any
endeavor, but with some flair or bravado; the popular definition is
"to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory."

1.340 chomp

            chomp: vi. To
            lose
            ; specifically, to chew on something of
which more was bitten off than one can. Probably related to
gnashing of teeth. See
            bagbiter
            .

A hand gesture commonly accompanies this. To perform it, hold the
four fingers together and place the thumb against their tips. Now
open and close your hand rapidly to suggest a biting action (much
like what Pac-Man does in the classic video game, though this
pantomime seems to predate that). The gesture alone means 'chomp
chomp' (see "
            Verb Doubling
            " in the "
            Jargon

            Construction
            " section of the Prependices). The hand may be
pointed at the object of complaint, and for real emphasis you can
use both hands at once. Doing this to a person is equivalent to
saying "You chomper!" If you point the gesture at yourself, it
is a humble but humorous admission of some failure. You might do
this if someone told you that a program you had written had failed
in some surprising way and you felt dumb for not having anticipated
it.

1.341 chomper

chomper: n. Someone or something that is chomping; a loser. See

loser
,
bagbiter
,
chomp
.

1.342 CHOP

CHOP: /chop/ [IRC] n. See
channel op
.

1.343 Christmas tree

Christmas tree: n. A kind of RS-232 line tester or breakout box
   featuring rows of blinking red and green LEDs suggestive of
   Christmas lights.

1.344 Christmas tree packet

Christmas tree packet: n. A packet with every single option set ←
            for
whatever protocol is in use. See
            kamikaze packet
            ,
            Chernobyl

            packet
            . (The term doubtless derives from a fanciful image of each
little option bit being represented by a different-colored light
bulb, all turned on.)

1.345 chrome

chrome: [from automotive slang via wargaming] n. Showy features
added to attract users but contributing little or nothing to
the power of a system. "The 3D icons in Motif are just chrome,
but they certainly are *pretty* chrome!" Distinguished from

bells and whistles
 by the fact that the latter are usually
added to gratify developers' own desires for featurefulness.
Often used as a term of contempt.

1.346   chug

chug: vi. To run slowly; to
grind
 or
grovel
. "The disk is
chugging like crazy."

1.347   Church of the SubGenius

Church of the SubGenius: n. A mutant offshoot of

Discordianism
 launched in 1981 as a spoof of fundamentalist
Christianity by the 'Reverend' Ivan Stang, a brilliant satirist
with a gift for promotion. Popular among hackers as a rich source
of bizarre imagery and references such as "Bob" the divine
drilling-equipment salesman, the Benevolent Space Xists, and the
Stark Fist of Removal. Much SubGenius theory is concerned with the
acquisition of the mystical substance or quality of
slack
.

1.348   Cinderella Book

Cinderella Book: [CMU] n. "Introduction to Automata Theory,
Languages, and Computation", by John Hopcroft and Jeffrey Ullman,
(Addison-Wesley, 1979). So called because the cover depicts a girl
(putatively Cinderella) sitting in front of a Rube Goldberg device
and holding a rope coming out of it. On the back cover, the device
is in shambles after she has (inevitably) pulled on the rope. See
also

book titles
.

1.349   CI$

CI$: // n. Hackerism for 'CIS', CompuServe Information Service.
The dollar sign refers to CompuServe's rather steep line charges.
Often used in
sig block
s just before a CompuServe address.
Syn.

Compu$erve
.

1.350   Classic C

Classic C: /klas'ik C/ [a play on 'Coke Classic'] n. The
C programming language as defined in the first edition of
K&R
,
with some small additions. It is also known as 'K&R C'. The name
came into use while C was being standardized by the ANSI X3J11
committee. Also 'C Classic'.

An analogous construction is sometimes applied elsewhere: thus,
'X Classic', where X = Star Trek (referring to the original TV
series) or X = PC (referring to IBM's ISA-bus machines as opposed
to the PS/2 series). This construction is especially used of
product series in which the newer versions are considered serious
losers relative to the older ones.

1.351   clean

clean: 1. adj. Used of hardware or software designs, implies
'elegance in the small', that is, a design or implementation that
may not hold any surprises but does things in a way that is
reasonably intuitive and relatively easy to comprehend from the
outside. The antonym is 'grungy' or
crufty
. 2. v. To remove
unneeded or undesired files in a effort to reduce clutter: "I'm
cleaning up my account." "I cleaned up the garbage and now have
100 Meg free on that partition."

1.352 CLM

CLM: /C-L-M/ [Sun: 'Career Limiting Move'] 1. n. An action
   endangering one's future prospects of getting plum projects and
   raises, and possibly one's job: "His Halloween costume was a
   parody of his manager. He won the prize for 'best CLM'."
   2. adj. Denotes extreme severity of a bug, discovered by a
   customer and obviously missed earlier because of poor testing:
   "That's a CLM bug!"

1.353 clobber

            clobber: vt. To overwrite, usually unintentionally: "I walked off
   the end of the array and clobbered the stack." Compare
            mung

   ,

            scribble

   ,
   trash
   , and
   smash the stack
   .

1.354 clocks

            clocks: n. Processor logic cycles, so called because each
   generally corresponds to one clock pulse in the processor's timing.
   The relative execution times of instructions on a machine are
   usually discussed in clocks rather than absolute fractions of a
   second; one good reason for this is that clock speeds for various
   models of the machine may increase as technology improves, and it
   is usually the relative times one is interested in when discussing
   the instruction set. Compare
            cycle
            .

1.355 clone

clone: n. 1. An exact duplicate: "Our product is a clone of
their product." Implies a legal reimplementation from
documentation or by reverse-engineering. Also connotes lower
price. 2. A shoddy, spurious copy: "Their product is a
clone of our product." 3. A blatant ripoff, most likely violating
copyright, patent, or trade secret protections: "Your
product is a clone of my product." This use implies legal
action is pending. 4. 'PC clone:' a PC-BUS/ISA or
EISA-compatible 80x86-based microcomputer (this use is sometimes
spelled 'klone' or 'PClone'). These invariably have much
more bang for the buck than the IBM archetypes they resemble.
5. In the construction 'UNIX clone': An OS designed to deliver
a UNIX-lookalike environment without UNIX license fees, or with
additional 'mission-critical' features such as support for
real-time programming. 6. v. To make an exact copy of something.
"Let me clone that" might mean "I want to borrow that paper so I
can make a photocopy" or "Let me get a copy of that file before
you
                mung
                 it".

1.356 clone-and-hack coding

clone-and-hack coding: [DEC] n. Syn.
case and paste
.

1.357 clover key

clover key: [Mac users] n. See
feature key
.

1.358 clustergeeking

clustergeeking: /kluh'st*r-gee'king/ [CMU] n. Spending more time
at a computer cluster doing CS homework than most people spend
breathing.

1.359   COBOL

COBOL: /koh'bol/ [COmmon Business-Oriented Language] n.
(Synonymous with
evil
.) A weak, verbose, and flabby language
used by
card walloper
s to do boring mindless things on

dinosaur
 mainframes. Hackers believe that all COBOL
programmers are
suit
s or
code grinder
s, and no
self-respecting hacker will ever admit to having learned the
language. Its very name is seldom uttered without ritual
expressions of disgust or horror. See also
fear and loathing
,

software rot
.

1.360   COBOL fingers

COBOL fingers: /koh'bol fing'grz/ n. Reported from Sweden, a
(hypothetical) disease one might get from coding in COBOL. The
language requires code verbose beyond all reason (see

candygrammar
); thus it is alleged that programming too much in
COBOL causes one's fingers to wear down to stubs by the endless
typing. "I refuse to type in all that source code again; it would
give me COBOL fingers!"

1.361   code grinder

code grinder: n. 1. A
suit
-wearing minion of the sort hired in
legion strength by banks and insurance companies to implement
payroll packages in RPG and other such unspeakable horrors. In its
native habitat, the code grinder often removes the suit jacket to
reveal an underplumage consisting of button-down shirt (starch
optional) and a tie. In times of dire stress, the sleeves (if

```
long) may be rolled up and the tie loosened about half an inch.  It
seldom helps.  The
            code grinder
            's milieu is about as far from
hackerdom as one can get and still touch a computer; the term
connotes pity.  See
            Real World
            ,
            suit
            . 2. Used of or to a
hacker, a really serious slur on the person's creative ability;
connotes a design style characterized by primitive technique,
rule-boundedness,
            brute force
            , and utter lack of imagination.
Compare
            card walloper
            ; contrast
            hacker
            ,
            real

            programmer
            .
```

1.362   code police

```
            code police: [by analogy with George Orwell's 'thought police'] n.
A mythical team of Gestapo-like storm troopers that might burst
into one's office and arrest one for violating programming style
rules.  May be used either seriously, to underline a claim that a
particular style violation is dangerous, or ironically, to suggest
that the practice under discussion is condemned mainly by
anal-retentive
            weenie
            s.  "Dike out that goto or the code
police will get you!"  The ironic usage is perhaps more common.
```

1.363   codes

```
            codes: [scientific computing] n. Programs.  This usage is common
in people who hack supercumputers and heavy-duty

            number-crunching
            , rare to unknown elsewhere (if you say
"codes" to hackers outside scientific computing, their
first association is likely to be "and cyphers").
```

1.364   codewalker

codewalker: n. A program component that traverses other programs for
   a living. Compilers have codewalkers in their front ends; so do
   cross-reference generators and some database front ends. Other
   utility programs that try to do too much with source code may turn
   into codewalkers. As in "This new 'vgrind' feature would require a
   codewalker to implement."

1.365   coefficient of X

            coefficient of X: n. Hackish speech makes heavy use of
pseudo-mathematical metaphors. Four particularly important
ones involve the terms 'coefficient', 'factor', 'index', and
'quotient'. They are often loosely applied to things you cannot
really be quantitative about, but there are subtle distinctions
among them that convey information about the way the speaker
mentally models whatever he or she is describing.

'Foo factor' and 'foo quotient' tend to describe something for
which the issue is one of presence or absence. The canonical
example is
            fudge factor
            . It's not important how much you're
fudging; the term simply acknowledges that some fudging is needed.
You might talk of liking a movie for its silliness factor.
Quotient tends to imply that the property is a ratio of two
opposing factors: "I would have won except for my luck quotient."
This could also be "I would have won except for the luck factor",
but using *quotient* emphasizes that it was bad luck
overpowering good luck (or someone else's good luck overpowering
your own).

'Foo index' and 'coefficient of foo' both tend to imply
that foo is, if not strictly measurable, at least something that
can be larger or smaller. Thus, you might refer to a paper or
person as having a 'high bogosity index', whereas you would be less
likely to speak of a 'high bogosity factor'. 'Foo index' suggests
that foo is a condensation of many quantities, as in the mundane
cost-of-living index; 'coefficient of foo' suggests that foo is a
fundamental quantity, as in a coefficient of friction. The choice
between these terms is often one of personal preference; e.g., some
people might feel that bogosity is a fundamental attribute and thus
say 'coefficient of bogosity', whereas others might feel it is a
combination of factors and thus say 'bogosity index'.

1.366   cokebottle

cokebottle: /kohk'bot-l/ n. Any very unusual character,
particularly one you can't type because it it isn't on your
keyboard. MIT people used to complain about the
'control-meta-cokebottle' commands at SAIL, and SAIL people
complained right back about the '
        altmode
        -altmode-cokebottle'
commands at MIT. After the demise of the
        space-cadet

        keyboard
, 'cokebottle' faded away as serious usage, but was
often invoked humorously to describe an (unspecified) weird or
non-intuitive keystroke command. It may be due for a second
inning, however. The OSF/Motif window manager, 'mwm(1)', has
a reserved keystroke for switching to the default set of
keybindings and behavior. This keystroke is (believe it or not)
'control-meta-bang' (see
        bang
). Since the exclamation point
looks a lot like an upside down Coke bottle, Motif hackers have
begun referring to this keystroke as 'cokebottle'. See also

        quadruple bucky
        .

1.367   cold boot

cold boot: n. See
boot
.

1.368   COME FROM

COME FROM: n. A semi-mythical language construct dual to the 'go
to'; 'COME FROM' <label> would cause the referenced label to
act as a sort of trapdoor, so that if the program ever reached it
control would quietly and
        automagically
         be transferred to the
statement following the 'COME FROM'. 'COME FROM' was
first proposed in R.L. Clark's "A Linguistic Contribution to
GOTO-less programming", which appeared in a 1973
        Datamation
          issue (and was reprinted in the April 1984 issue of
"Communications of the ACM"). This parodied the then-raging

'structured programming'
            holy wars
              (see
            considered

            harmful
). Mythically, some variants are the 'assigned COME
FROM' and the 'computed COME FROM' (parodying some nasty control
constructs in FORTRAN and some extended BASICs). Of course,
multi-tasking (or non-determinism) could be implemented by having
more than one 'COME FROM' statement coming from the same
label.

In some ways the FORTRAN 'DO' looks like a 'COME FROM'
statement. After the terminating statement number/'CONTINUE'
is reached, control continues at the statement following the DO.
Some generous FORTRANs would allow arbitrary statements (other than
'CONTINUE') for the statement, leading to examples like:

        DO 10 I=1,LIMIT
  C imagine many lines of code here, leaving the
  C original DO statement lost in the spaghetti...
        WRITE(6,10) I,FROB(I)
   10   FORMAT(1X,I5,G10.4)

in which the trapdoor is just after the statement labeled 10.
(This is particularly surprising because the label doesn't appear
to have anything to do with the flow of control at all!)

While sufficiently astonishing to the unsuspecting reader, this
form of 'COME FROM' statement isn't completely general. After
all, control will eventually pass to the following statement. The
implementation of the general form was left to Univac FORTRAN,
ca. 1975 (though a roughly similar feature existed on the IBM 7040
ten years earlier). The statement 'AT 100' would perform a
'COME FROM 100'. It was intended strictly as a debugging aid,
with dire consequences promised to anyone so deranged as to use it
in production code. More horrible things had already been
perpetrated in production languages, however; doubters need only
contemplate the 'ALTER' verb in
            COBOL
              .

'COME FROM' was supported under its own name for the first
time 15 years later, in C-INTERCAL (see
            INTERCAL
              ,

            retrocomputing
            ); knowledgeable observers are still reeling
from the shock.

1.369   comm mode

comm mode: /kom mohd/ [ITS: from the feature supporting on-line
chat; the term may spelled with one or two m's] Syn. for

talk

mode

.

1.370   command key

command key: [Mac users] n. Syn.
feature key

.

1.371   comment out

comment out: vt. To surround a section of code with comment
delimiters or to prefix every line in the section with a comment
marker; this prevents it from being compiled or interpreted. Often
done when the code is redundant or obsolete, but is being left in
the source to make the intent of the active code clearer; also when
the code in that section is broken and you want to bypass it in
order to debug some other part of the code. Compare

condition out
, usually the preferred technique in languages
(such as
C
) that make it possible.

1.372   Commonwealth Hackish

Commonwealth Hackish:: n. Hacker jargon as spoken outside
the U.S., esp. in the British Commonwealth. It is reported that
Commonwealth speakers are more likely to pronounce truncations like
'char' and 'soc', etc., as spelled (/char/, /sok/), as
opposed to American /keir/ and /sohsh/. Dots in
newsgroup
names (especially two-component names) tend to be pronounced ←
more
often (so soc.wibble is /sok dot wib'l/ rather than /sohsh
wib'l/). The prefix

meta

may be pronounced /mee't*/;
similarly, Greek letter beta is usually /bee't*/, zeta is usually
/zee't*/, and so forth. Preferred

metasyntactic variable

s
include

blurgle

, 'eek', 'ook', 'frodo', and
'bilbo'; 'wibble', 'wobble', and in emergencies
'wubble'; 'banana', 'tom', 'dick',
'harry', 'wombat', 'frog',

fish

, and so on and
on (see

foo

, sense 4).

Alternatives to verb doubling include suffixes '-o-rama',
'frenzy' (as in feeding frenzy), and 'city' (examples: "barf
city!" "hack-o-rama!" "core dump frenzy!"). Finally, note
that the American terms 'parens', 'brackets', and 'braces' for (),
[], and {} are uncommon; Commonwealth hackish prefers
'brackets', 'square brackets', and 'curly brackets'. Also, the
use of 'pling' for

bang

is common outside the United States.

See also

attoparsec

,
calculator

,
chemist

,

console jockey

,
fish

,
go-faster stripes

,

grunge

,
hakspek

,
heavy metal

,
leaky heap

,

lord high fixer

,
loose bytes

,
muddie

,
nadger
,

noddy
,
psychedelicware
,
plingnet
,
raster

blaster
,
RTBM
,
seggie
,
spod
,
sun lounge
,

terminal junkie
,
tick-list features
,
weeble
,

weasel
,
YABA
, and notes or definitions under
Bad

Thing
,
barf
,
bogus
,
bum
,
chase pointers
,

cosmic rays
,
crippleware
,
crunch
,
dodgy
,

gonk

,
hamster
,
hardwarily
,
mess-dos
,

nybble
,
proglet
,
root
,
SEX
,
tweak
, and

xyzzy
.

1.373 compact

compact: adj. Of a design, describes the valuable property that it
can all be apprehended at once in one's head. This generally means
the thing created from the design can be used with greater facility
and fewer errors than an equivalent tool that is not compact.
Compactness does not imply triviality or lack of power; for
example, C is compact and FORTRAN is not, but C is more powerful
than FORTRAN. Designs become non-compact through accreting

feature
s and
cruft
 that don't merge cleanly into the
overall design scheme (thus, some fans of
Classic C
 maintain
that ANSI C is no longer compact).

1.374 compiler jock

compiler jock: n. See
jock
 (sense 2).

1.375   compress

            compress: [UNIX] vt. When used without a qualifier, generally
refers to
            crunch
            ing of a file using a particular
C implementation of compression by James A. Woods et al. and
widely circulated via
            USENET
            ; use of
            crunch
             itself in
this sense is rare among UNIX hackers. Specifically, compress is
built around the Lempel-Ziv-Welch algorithm as described in "A
Technique for High Performance Data Compression", Terry A. Welch,
"IEEE Computer", vol. 17, no. 6 (June 1984), pp. 8--19.

1.376   Compu$erve

            Compu$erve: n. See
            CI$
            . Synonyms CompuSpend and
Compu$pend are also reported.

1.377   computer confetti

            computer confetti: n. Syn.
            chad
            . Though this term is common,
this use of punched-card chad is not a good idea, as the pieces are
stiff and have sharp corners that could injure the eyes. GLS
reports that he once attended a wedding at MIT during which he and
a few other guests enthusiastically threw chad instead of rice. The
groom later grumbled that he and his bride had spent most of the
evening trying to get the stuff out of their hair.

1.378   computer geek

            computer geek: n. One who eats (computer) bugs for a living. One
who fulfills all the dreariest negative stereotypes about hackers:
an asocial, malodorous, pasty-faced monomaniac with all the
personality of a cheese grater. Cannot be used by outsiders
without implied insult to all hackers; compare black-on-black usage

of 'nigger'. A computer geek may be either a fundamentally
clueless individual or a proto-hacker in

        larval stage

        . Also
called 'turbo nerd', 'turbo geek'. See also

        propeller head

        ,

        clustergeeking

        ,

        geek out

        ,

        wannabee

        ,

        terminal

        junkie

        ,

        spod

        ,

        weenie

        .

1.379   computron

        computron: /kom'pyoo-tron`/ n. 1. A notional unit of computing
power combining instruction speed and storage capacity, dimensioned
roughly in instructions-per-second times megabytes-of-main-store
times megabytes-of-mass-storage. "That machine can't run GNU
EMACS, it doesn't have enough computrons!" This usage is usually
found in metaphors that treat computing power as a fungible
commodity good, like a crop yield or diesel horsepower. See

        bitty box

        ,
        Get a real computer!

        ,
        toy

        ,
        crank

        .
2. A mythical subatomic particle that bears the unit quantity of
computation or information, in much the same way that an electron
bears one unit of electric charge (see also

        bogon

). An
elaborate pseudo-scientific theory of computrons has been developed
based on the physical fact that the molecules in a solid object
move more rapidly as it is heated. It is argued that an object
melts because the molecules have lost their information about where
they are supposed to be (that is, they have emitted computrons).
This explains why computers get so hot and require air
conditioning; they use up computrons. Conversely, it should be

possible to cool down an object by placing it in the path of a
computron beam. It is believed that this may also explain why
machines that work at the factory fail in the computer room: the
computrons there have been all used up by the other hardware.
(This theory probably owes something to the "Warlock" stories
by Larry Niven, the best known being "What Good is a Glass
Dagger?", in which magic is fueled by an exhaustible natural
resource called 'mana'.)

1.380   con

con: [from SF fandom] n. A science-fiction convention. Not used
of other sorts of conventions, such as professional meetings. This
term, unlike many others of SF-fan slang, is widely recognized even
by hackers who aren't
fan
s. "We'd been corresponding on the
net for months, then we met face-to-face at a con."

1.381   condition out

condition out: vt. To prevent a section of code from being
compiled by surrounding it with a conditional-compilation directive
whose condition is always false. The
canonical
 examples of
these directives are '#if 0' (or '#ifdef notdef', though
some find the latter
bletcherous
) and '#endif' in C.
Compare
comment out
.

1.382   condom

condom: n. 1. The protective plastic bag that accompanies 3.5-inch
microfloppy diskettes. Rarely, also used of (paper) disk
envelopes. Unlike the write protect tab, the condom (when left on)
not only impedes the practice of
SEX
 but has also been shown
to have a high failure rate as drive mechanisms attempt to access
the disk --- and can even fatally frustrate insertion. 2. The

```
protective cladding on a
              light pipe
              . 3. 'keyboard condom':
A flexible, transparent plastic cover for a keyboard, designed to
provide some protection against dust and
              programming fluid
               without
impeding typing.  4. 'elephant condom': the plastic shipping bags
used inside cardboard boxes to protect hardware in transit.
```

1.383   confuser

```
confuser: n. Common soundalike slang for 'computer'.  Usually
   encountered in compounds such as 'confuser room', 'personal
   confuser', 'confuser guru'.  Usage: silly.
```

1.384   connector conspiracy

```
              connector conspiracy: [probably came into prominence with the
        appearance of the KL-10 (one model of the
              PDP-10
              ), none of
        whose connectors matched anything else] n. The tendency of
        manufacturers (or, by extension, programmers or purveyors of
        anything) to come up with new products that don't fit together with
        the old stuff, thereby making you buy either all new stuff or
        expensive interface devices.  The KL-10 Massbus connector was
        actually *patented* by
              DEC
              , which reputedly refused to license
        the design and thus effectively locked third parties out of
        competition for the lucrative Massbus peripherals market.  This
        policy is a source of never-ending frustration for the diehards who
        maintain older PDP-10 or VAX systems.  Their CPUs work fine, but
        they are stuck with dying, obsolescent disk and tape drives with
        low capacity and high power requirements.

        (A closely related phenomenon, with a slightly different intent, is
        the habit manufacturers have of inventing new screw heads so that
        only Designated Persons, possessing the magic screwdrivers, can
        remove covers and make repairs or install options.  Older Apple
        Macintoshes took this one step further, requiring not only a hex
        wrench but a specialized case-cracking tool to open the box.)

        In these latter days of open-systems computing this term has fallen
        somewhat into disuse, to be replaced by the observation that
        "Standards are great!  There are so *many* of them to choose
        from!"  Compare
              backward combatability
```

.

1.385 cons

cons: /konz/ or /kons/ [from LISP] 1. vt. To add a new element
to a specified list, esp. at the top. "OK, cons picking a
replacement for the console TTY onto the agenda." 2. 'cons up':
vt. To synthesize from smaller pieces: "to cons up an example".

In LISP itself, 'cons' is the most fundamental operation for
building structures. It takes any two objects and returns a
'dot-pair' or two-branched tree with one object hanging from each
branch. Because the result of a cons is an object, it can be used
to build binary trees of any shape and complexity. Hackers think
of it as a sort of universal constructor, and that is where the
jargon meanings spring from.

1.386 considered harmful

considered harmful: adj. Edsger W. Dijkstra's note in the
March 1968 "Communications of the ACM", "Goto Statement
Considered Harmful", fired the first salvo in the structured
programming wars. Amusingly, the ACM considered the resulting
acrimony sufficiently harmful that it will (by policy) no longer
print an article taking so assertive a position against a coding
practice. In the ensuing decades, a large number of both serious
papers and parodies have borne titles of the form "X
considered Y". The structured-programming wars eventually blew
over with the realization that both sides were wrong, but use of
such titles has remained as a persistent minor in-joke (the
'considered silly' found at various places in this lexicon is
related).

1.387 console

console:: n. 1. The operator's station of a
mainframe
. In
times past, this was a privileged location that conveyed godlike
powers to anyone with fingers on its keys. Under UNIX and other
modern timesharing OSes, such privileges are guarded by passwords
instead, and the console is just the
tty
the system was booted
from. Some of the mystique remains, however, and it is traditional
for sysadmins to post urgent messages to all users from the console

(on UNIX, /dev/console). 2. On microcomputer UNIX boxes, the main
screen and keyboard (as opposed to character-only terminals talking
to a serial port). Typically only the console can do real graphics
or run
            X
            . See also
            CTY
            .

1.388 console jockey

            console jockey: n. See
            terminal junkie
            .

1.389 content-free

            content-free: [by analogy with techspeak 'context-free'] adj.
Used of a message that adds nothing to the recipient's knowledge.
Though this adjective is sometimes applied to
            flamage
            , it more
usually connotes derision for communication styles that exalt form
over substance or are centered on concerns irrelevant to the
subject ostensibly at hand. Perhaps most used with reference to
speeches by company presidents and other professional manipulators.
"Content-free? Uh... that's anything printed on glossy
paper." (See also
            four-color glossies
            .) "He gave a talk on
the implications of electronic networks for postmodernism and the
fin-de-siecle aesthetic. It was content-free."

1.390 control-C

control-C: vi. 1. "Stop whatever you are doing." From the
    interrupt character used on many operating systems to abort a
    running program. Considered silly. 2. interj. Among BSD UNIX
    hackers, the canonical humorous response to "Give me a break!"

1.391   control-O

            control-O: vi. "Stop talking." From the character used on some
  operating systems to abort output but allow the program to keep on
  running. Generally means that you are not interested in hearing
  anything more from that person, at least on that topic; a standard
  response to someone who is flaming. Considered silly. Compare

            control-S
            .

1.392   control-Q

            control-Q: vi. "Resume." From the ASCII DC1 or
            XON
               character (the pronunciation /X-on/ is therefore also used), ←
                   used
  to undo a previous
            control-S
            .

1.393   control-S

            control-S: vi. "Stop talking for a second." From the ASCII DC3
  or XOFF character (the pronunciation /X-of/ is therefore also
  used). Control-S differs from
            control-O
             in that the person is
  asked to stop talking (perhaps because you are on the phone) but
  will be allowed to continue when you're ready to listen to him ---
  as opposed to control-O, which has more of the meaning of
  "Shut up." Considered silly.

1.394   Conway's Law

Conway's Law: prov. The rule that the organization of the software and
  the organization of the software team will be congruent; originally
  stated as "If you have four groups working on a compiler, you'll
  get a 4-pass compiler".

  Melvin Conway, an early proto-hacker who wrote an assembler for the
  Burroughs 220 called SAVE. The name 'SAVE' didn't stand for
  anything; it was just that you lost fewer card decks and listings

because they all had SAVE written on them.

1.395   cookbook

                cookbook: [from amateur electronics and radio] n. A book of small
code segments that the reader can use to do various
                magic
                   things in programs. One current example is the
"
                PostScript
                 Language Tutorial and Cookbook" by Adobe
Systems, Inc (Addison-Wesley, ISBN 0-201-10179-3), also known as
the
                Blue Book
                 which has recipes for things like wrapping text
around arbitrary curves and making 3D fonts. Cookbooks, slavishly
followed, can lead one into
                voodoo programming
                , but are useful
for hackers trying to
                monkey up
                 small programs in unknown
languages. This function is analogous to the role of phrasebooks
in human languages.

1.396   cooked mode

                cooked mode: [UNIX, by opposition with
                raw mode
                ] n. The
normal character-input mode, with interrupts enabled and with
erase, kill and other special-character interpretations performed
directly by the tty driver. Oppose
                raw mode
                ,
                rare mode
                .
This term is techspeak under UNIX but jargon elsewhere; other
operating systems often have similar mode distinctions, and the
raw/rare/cooked way of describing them has spread widely along with
the C language and other UNIX exports. Most generally, 'cooked
mode' may refer to any mode of a system that does extensive
preprocessing before presenting data to a program.

1.397   cookie

        cookie: n. A handle, transaction ID, or other token of agreement
between cooperating programs. "I give him a packet, he gives me
back a cookie." The claim check you get from a dry-cleaning shop
is a perfect mundane example of a cookie; the only thing it's
useful for is to relate a later transaction to this one (so you get
the same clothes back). Compare
        magic cookie
        ; see also

        fortune cookie
        .

1.398   cookie bear

        cookie bear: n. Syn.
        cookie monster
        .

1.399   cookie file

        cookie file: n. A collection of
        fortune cookie
        s in a format
that facilitates retrieval by a fortune program. There are several
different cookie files in public distribution, and site admins
often assemble their own from various sources including this
lexicon.

1.400   cookie jar

        cookie jar: n. An area of memory set aside for storing
        cookie
        s.
Most commonly heard in the Atari ST community; many useful ST
programs record their presence by storing a distinctive
        magic

        number
         in the jar. Programs can inquire after the presence or
otherwise of other programs by searching the contents of the jar.

1.401   cookie monster

cookie monster: [from the children's TV program "Sesame
Street"] n. Any of a family of early (1970s) hacks reported on

TOPS-10
,
ITS
,
Multics
, and elsewhere that would lock
up either the victim's terminal (on a time-sharing machine) or the

console
 (on a batch
mainframe
), repeatedly demanding "I
WANT A COOKIE". The required responses ranged in complexity from
"COOKIE" through "HAVE A COOKIE" and upward. See also

wabbit
.

1.402   copious free time

copious free time: [Apple; orig. fr. the intro to Tom Lehrer's
song "It Makes A Fellow Proud To Be A Soldier"] n. 1. [used
ironically to indicate the speaker's lack of the quantity in
question] A mythical schedule slot for accomplishing tasks held to
be unlikely or impossible. Sometimes used to indicate that the
speaker is interested in accomplishing the task, but believes that
the opportunity will not arise. "I'll implement the automatic
layout stuff in my copious free time." 2. [Archly] Time reserved
for bogus or otherwise idiotic tasks, such as implementation of

chrome
, or the stroking of
suit
s. "I'll get back to him
on that feature in my copious free time."

1.403   copper

copper: n. Conventional electron-carrying network cable with a
core conductor of copper --- or aluminum! Opposed to
light

pipe

or, say, a short-range microwave link.

1.404 copy protection

copy protection: n. A class of methods for preventing incompetent
   pirates from stealing software and legitimate customers from using
   it. Considered silly.

1.405 copybroke

copybroke: /kop'ee-brohk/ adj. 1. [play on 'copyright'] Used
to describe an instance of a copy-protected program that has been
'broken'; that is, a copy with the copy-protection scheme
disabled. Syn.
copywronged
. 2. Copy-protected software
which is unusable because of some bit-rot or bug that has confused
the anti-piracy check. See also
copy protection
.

1.406 copyleft

copyleft: /kop'ee-left/ [play on 'copyright'] n. 1. The
copyright notice ('General Public License') carried by
GNU

EMACS
 and other Free Software Foundation software, granting reuse
and reproduction rights to all comers (but see also
General

Public Virus
). 2. By extension, any copyright notice intended to
achieve similar aims.

1.407 copywronged

copywronged: /kop'ee-rongd/ [play on 'copyright'] adj. Syn. for

copybroke

.

1.408 core

core: n. Main storage or RAM. Dates from the days of
ferrite-core memory; now archaic as techspeak most places outside
IBM, but also still used in the UNIX community and by old-time
hackers or those who would sound like them. Some derived idioms
are quite current; 'in core', for example, means 'in memory'
(as opposed to 'on disk'), and both
core dump
 and the 'core
image' or 'core file' produced by one are terms in favor. Some
varieties of Commonwealth hackish prefer
store
.

1.409 core cancer

core cancer: n. A process that exhibits a slow but inexorable
resource
leak
 --- like a cancer, it kills by crowding out
productive 'tissue'.

1.410 core dump

core dump: n. [common
Iron Age
 jargon, preserved by UNIX]
1. [techspeak] A copy of the contents of
core
, produced when a
process is aborted by certain kinds of internal error. 2. By
extension, used for humans passing out, vomiting, or registering
extreme shock. "He dumped core. All over the floor. What a
mess." "He heard about X and dumped core." 3. Occasionally
used for a human rambling on pointlessly at great length; esp. in
apology: "Sorry, I dumped core on you". 4. A recapitulation of
knowledge (compare

```
           bits
           , sense 1).  Hence, spewing all one
knows about a topic (syn.
           brain dump
           ), esp. in a lecture or
answer to an exam question.  "Short, concise answers are better
than core dumps" (from the instructions to an exam at Columbia).
See
           core
           .
```

1.411   core leak

```
           core leak: n. Syn.
memory leak
           .
```

1.412   Core Wars

```
           Core Wars: n. A game between 'assembler' programs in a
simulated machine, where the objective is to kill your opponent's
program by overwriting it.  Popularized by A. K. Dewdney's column
in "Scientific American" magazine, this was actually devised
by Victor Vyssotsky, Robert Morris Sr., and Dennis Ritchie in the
early 1960s (their original game was called 'Darwin' and ran on a
PDP-1 at Bell Labs).  See
           core
           .
```

1.413   corge

```
           corge: /korj/ [originally, the name of a cat] n. Yet another

           metasyntactic variable
           , invented by Mike Gallaher and propagated
by the
           GOSMACS
            documentation.  See
           grault
           .
```

1.414 cosmic rays

cosmic rays: n. Notionally, the cause of
bit rot
. However, this is
a semi-independent usage that may be invoked as a humorous way to

handwave
 away any minor
randomness
 that doesn't seem worth the
bother of investigating. "Hey, Eric --- I just got a burst of
garbage on my
tube
, where did that come from?" "Cosmic rays, I
guess." Compare
sunspots
,
phase of the moon
. The British seem
to prefer the usage 'cosmic showers'; 'alpha particles' is also
heard, because stray alpha particles passing through a memory chip
can cause single-bit errors (this becomes increasingly more likely
as memory sizes and densities increase).

Factual note: Alpha particles cause bit rot, cosmic rays do not
(except occasionally in spaceborne computers). Intel could not
explain random bit drops in their early chips, and one hypothesis
was cosmic rays. So they created the World's Largest Lead Safe,
using 25 tons of the stuff, and used two identical boards for
testing. One was placed in the safe, one outside. The hypothesis
was that if cosmic rays were causing the bit drops, they should see
a statistically significant difference between the error rates on
the two boards. They did not observe such a difference. Further
investigation demonstrated conclusively that the bit drops were due
to alpha particle emissions from thorium (and to a much lesser
degree uranium) in the encapsulation material. Since it is
impossible to eliminate these radioactives (they are uniformly
distributed through the earth's crust, with the statistically
insignificant exception of uranium lodes) it became obvious that
one has to design memories to withstand these hits.

1.415 cough and die

cough and die: v. Syn.
barf
. Connotes that the program is
throwing its hands up by design rather than because of a bug or
oversight. "The parser saw a control-A in its input where it was
looking for a printable, so it coughed and died." Compare

die

,
die horribly
,
scream and die
.

1.416 cowboy

cowboy: [Sun, from William Gibson's
cyberpunk
 SF] n. Synonym
for
hacker
. It is reported that at Sun this word is often
said with reverence.

1.417 CP/M

CP/M:: /C-P-M/ n. [Control Program for Microcomputers] An early
microcomputer
OS
 written by hacker Gary Kildall for 8080- and
Z80-based machines, very popular in the late 1970s but virtually
wiped out by MS-DOS after the release of the IBM PC in 1981.
Legend has it that Kildall's company blew its chance to write the
OS for the IBM PC because Kildall decided to spend a day IBM's reps
wanted to meet with him enjoying the perfect flying weather in his
private plane. Many of CP/M's features and conventions strongly
resemble those of early
DEC
 operating systems such as

TOPS-10
, OS/8, RSTS, and RSX-11. See
MS-DOS
,

operating system
.

1.418 CPU Wars

CPU Wars: /C-P-U worz/ n. A 1979 large-format comic by Chas
Andres chronicling the attempts of the brainwashed androids of IPM
(Impossible to Program Machines) to conquer and destroy the
peaceful denizens of HEC (Human Engineered Computers). This rather
transparent allegory featured many references to
ADVENT
 and
the immortal line "Eat flaming death, minicomputer mongrels!"
(uttered, of course, by an IPM stormtrooper). It is alleged that
the author subsequently received a letter of appreciation on IBM
company stationery from the head of IBM's Thomas J. Watson Research
Laboratories (then, as now, one of the few islands of true
hackerdom in the IBM archipelago). The lower loop of the B in the
IBM logo, it is said, had been carefully whited out. See
eat

flaming death
.

1.419   crack root

crack root: v. To defeat the security system of a UNIX machine and
gain
root
 privileges thereby; see
cracking
.

1.420   cracker

cracker: n. One who breaks security on a system. Coined ca. 1985
by hackers in defense against journalistic misuse of
hacker
    (q.v., sense 8). An earlier attempt to establish 'worm' in ←
        this
sense around 1981--82 on USENET was largely a failure.

Use of both these neologisms reflects a strong revulsion against
the theft and vandalism perpetrated by cracking rings. While it is
expected that any real hacker will have done some playful cracking
and knows many of the basic techniques, anyone past
larval

stage
 is expected to have outgrown the desire to do so except for
immediate practical reasons (for example, if it's necessary to get
around some security in order to get some work done).

Thus, there is far less overlap between hackerdom and crackerdom
than the
                mundane
                 reader misled by sensationalistic journalism
might expect. Crackers tend to gather in small, tight-knit, very
secretive groups that have little overlap with the huge, open
poly-culture this lexicon describes; though crackers often like to
describe *themselves* as hackers, most true hackers consider
them a separate and lower form of life.

Ethical considerations aside, hackers figure that anyone who can't
imagine a more interesting way to play with their computers than
breaking into someone else's has to be pretty
                losing
                . Some
other reasons crackers are looked down on are discussed in the
entries on
                cracking
                 and
                phreaking
                . See also

                samurai
                ,
                dark-side hacker
                , and
                hacker ethic,

                the
                .

1.421   cracking

                cracking: n. The act of breaking into a computer system; what a

                cracker
                 does. Contrary to widespread myth, this does not
usually involve some mysterious leap of hackerly brilliance, but
rather persistence and the dogged repetition of a handful of fairly
well-known tricks that exploit common weaknesses in the security of
target systems. Accordingly, most crackers are only mediocre
hackers.

1.422   crank

crank: [from automotive slang] vt. Verb used to describe the
   performance of a machine, especially sustained performance.   "This

box cranks (or, cranks at) about 6 megaflops, with a burst mode
of twice that on vectorized operations."

1.423   CrApTeX

CrApTeX: /krap'tekh/ [University of York, England] n. Term of
abuse used to describe TeX and LaTeX when they don't work (when
used by TeXhackers), or all the time (by everyone else). The
non-TeX enthusiasts generally dislike it because it is more verbose
than other formatters (e.g.
troff
) and because (particularly
if the standard Computer Modern fonts are used) it generates vast
output files. See
religious issues
,
TeX
.

1.424   crash

crash: 1. n. A sudden, usually drastic failure. Most often said
of the
system
 (q.v., sense 1), esp. of magnetic disk drives
(the term originally described what happened when the air gap of a
hard disk collapses). "Three
luser
s lost their files in last
night's disk crash." A disk crash that involves the read/write
heads dropping onto the surface of the disks and scraping off the
oxide may also be referred to as a 'head crash', whereas the term
'system crash' usually, though not always, implies that the
operating system or other software was at fault. 2. v. To fail
suddenly. "Has the system just crashed?" "Something crashed
the OS!" See
down
. Also used transitively to indicate the
cause of the crash (usually a person or a program, or both).
"Those idiots playing
SPACEWAR
 crashed the system." 3. vi.
Sometimes said of people hitting the sack after a long
hacking

run
; see
gronk out
.

1.425   crash and burn

crash and burn: vi.,n. A spectacular crash, in the mode of the
conclusion of the car-chase scene in the movie "Bullitt" and
many subsequent imitators (compare
die horribly
). Sun-3
monitors losing the flyback transformer and lightning strikes on
VAX-11/780 backplanes are notable crash and burn generators. The
construction 'crash-and-burn machine' is reported for a computer
used exclusively for alpha or
beta
 testing, or reproducing
bugs (i.e., not for development). The implication is that it
wouldn't be such a disaster if that machine crashed, since only the
testers would be inconvenienced.

1.426   crawling horror

crawling horror: n. Ancient crufty hardware or software that is
kept obstinately alive by forces beyond the control of the hackers
at a site. Like
dusty deck
 or
gonkulator
, but connotes
that the thing described is not just an irritation but an active
menace to health and sanity. "Mostly we code new stuff in C, but
they pay us to maintain one big FORTRAN II application from
nineteen-sixty-X that's a real crawling horror...." Compare

WOMBAT
.

1.427   cray

cray: /kray/ n. 1. (properly, capitalized) One of the line of
supercomputers designed by Cray Research. 2. Any supercomputer at
all. 3. The
canonical

number-crunching
 machine.

The term is actually the lowercased last name of Seymour Cray, a
noted computer architect and co-founder of the company. Numerous
vivid legends surround him, some true and some admittedly invented
by Cray Research brass to shape their corporate culture and image.

1.428   cray instability

cray instability: n. A shortcoming of a program or algorithm that
manifests itself only when a large problem is being run on a
powerful machine (see
cray
). Generally more subtle than bugs
that can be detected in smaller problems running on a workstation
or mini.

1.429   crayola

crayola: /kray-oh'l*/ n. A super-mini or -micro computer that
provides some reasonable percentage of supercomputer performance
for an unreasonably low price. Might also be a
killer micro
.

1.430   crayola books

crayola books: n. The
rainbow series
 of National Computer
Security Center (NCSC) computer security standards (see
Orange

Book
). Usage: humorous and/or disparaging.

1.431   crayon

crayon: n. 1. Someone who works on Cray supercomputers. More
specifically, it implies a programmer, probably of the CDC ilk,
probably male, and almost certainly wearing a tie (irrespective of
gender). Systems types who have a UNIX background tend not to be
described as crayons. 2. A
            computron
             (sense 2) that
participates only in
            number-crunching
            . 3. A unit of
computational power equal to that of a single Cray-1. There is a
standard joke about this usage that derives from an old Crayola
crayon promotional gimmick: When you buy 64 crayons you get a free
sharpener.

1.432   creationism

            creationism: n. The (false) belief that large, innovative software
designs can be completely specified in advance and then painlessly
magicked out of the void by the normal efforts of a team of
normally talented programmers. In fact, experience has shown
repeatedly that good designs arise only from evolutionary,
exploratory interaction between one (or at most a small handful of)
exceptionally able designer(s) and an active user population ---
and that the first try at a big new idea is always wrong.
Unfortunately, because these truths don't fit the planning models
beloved of
            management
            , they are generally ignored.

1.433   creep

creep: v. To advance, grow, or multiply inexorably. In hackish usage
   this verb has overtones of menace and silliness, evoking the
   creeping horrors of low-budget monster movies.

1.434   creeping elegance

            creeping elegance: n. Describes a tendency for parts of a design
   to become
            elegant
             past the point of diminishing return,
   something which often happens at the expense of the less
   interesting parts of the design, the schedule, and other things

```
deemed important in the
            Real World
            .  See also
            creeping

            featurism
            ,
            second-system effect
            ,
            tense
            .
```

1.435   creeping featurism

```
            creeping featurism: /kree'ping fee'chr-izm/ n. 1. Describes a
systematic tendency to load more
            chrome
             and
            feature
            s onto
systems at the expense of whatever elegance they may have possessed
when originally designed.  See also
            feeping creaturism
            .  "You
know, the main problem with
            BSD
             UNIX has always been creeping
featurism."  2. More generally, the tendency for anything
complicated to become even more complicated because people keep
saying "Gee, it would be even better if it had this feature too".
(See
            feature
            .)  The result is usually a patchwork because it
grew one ad-hoc step at a time, rather than being planned.
Planning is a lot of work, but it's easy to add just one extra
little feature to help someone ... and then another ... and
another.... When creeping featurism gets out of hand, it's
like a cancer.  Usually this term is used to describe computer
programs, but it could also be said of the federal government, the
IRS 1040 form, and new cars.  A similar phenomenon sometimes
afflicts conscious redesigns; see
            second-system effect
            .  See
also
            creeping elegance
            .
```

1.436   creeping featuritis

creeping featuritis: /kree'ping fee'-chr-i:'t*s/ n. Variant of

creeping featurism
, with its own spoonerization: 'feeping
creaturitis'. Some people like to reserve this form for the
disease as it actually manifests in software or hardware, as
opposed to the lurking general tendency in designers' minds.
(After all, -ism means 'condition' or 'pursuit of', whereas
-itis usually means 'inflammation of'.)

1.437   cretin

cretin: /kret'in/ or /kree'tn/ n. Congenital
loser
; an obnoxious
person; someone who can't do anything right. It has been observed
that many American hackers tend to favor the British pronunciation
/kret'in/ over standard American /kree'tn/; it is thought this may
be due to the insidious phonetic influence of Monty Python's Flying
Circus.

1.438   cretinous

cretinous: /kret'n-*s/ or /kreet'n-*s/ adj. Wrong; stupid;
non-functional; very poorly designed. Also used pejoratively of
people. See
dread high-bit disease
 for an example.
Approximate synonyms:
bletcherous

,
bagbiting

losing

,

brain-damaged

.

1.439   crippleware

crippleware: n. 1. Software that has some important functionality
deliberately removed, so as to entice potential users to pay for a

working version. 2. [Cambridge]
          Guiltware
           that exhorts you to
donate to some charity (compare
          careware
          ,
          nagware
).
3. Hardware deliberately crippled, which can be upgraded to a more
expensive model by a trivial change (e.g., cutting a jumper).

An excellent example of crippleware (sense 3) is Intel's 486SX
chip, which is a standard 486DX chip with the co-processor dyked
out (in some early versions it was present but disabled). To
upgrade, you buy a complete 486DX chip with *working*
co-processor (its identity thinly veiled by a different pinout) and
plug it into the board's expansion socket. It then disables the
SX, which becomes a fancy power sink. Don't you love Intel?

1.440   critical mass

          critical mass: n. In physics, the minimum amount of fissionable
material required to sustain a chain reaction. Of a software
product, describes a condition of the software such that fixing one
bug introduces one plus
          epsilon
           bugs. (This malady has many
causes:
          creeping featurism
          , ports to too many disparate
environments, poor initial design, etc.) When software achieves
critical mass, it can never be fixed; it can only be discarded and
rewritten.

1.441   crlf

          crlf: /ker'l*f/, sometimes /kru'l*f/ or /C-R-L-F/ n. (often
capitalized as 'CRLF') A carriage return (CR, ASCII 0001101)
followed by a line feed (LF, ASCII 0001010). More loosely,
whatever it takes to get you from the end of one line of text to
the beginning of the next line. See
          newline
          ,
          terpri
          .
Under
          UNIX
           influence this usage has become less common (UNIX

uses a bare line feed as its 'CRLF').

1.442 crock

crock: [from the American scatologism 'crock of shit'] n. 1. An
awkward feature or programming technique that ought to be made
cleaner. For example, using small integers to represent error
codes without the program interpreting them to the user (as in, for
example, UNIX 'make(1)', which returns code 139 for a process
that dies due to
                segfault
). 2. A technique that works
acceptably, but which is quite prone to failure if disturbed in the
least. For example, a too-clever programmer might write an
assembler which mapped instruction mnemonics to numeric opcodes
algorithmically, a trick which depends far too intimately on the
particular bit patterns of the opcodes. (For another example of
programming with a dependence on actual opcode values, see
                The

                Story of Mel, a Real Programmer
                 in
                Appendix A
                .) Many crocks
have a tightly woven, almost completely unmodifiable structure.
See
                kluge
                ,
                brittle
                . The adjectives 'crockish' and
'crocky', and the nouns 'crockishness' and 'crockitude', are
also used.

1.443 cross-post

cross-post: [USENET] vi. To post a single article simultaneously ←↩
                to
several newsgroups. Distinguished from posting the article
repeatedly, once to each newsgroup, which causes people to see it
multiple times (which is very bad form). Gratuitous cross-posting
without a Followup-To line directing responses to a single followup
group is frowned upon, as it tends to cause
                followup
                 articles
to go to inappropriate newsgroups when people respond to only one
part of the original posting.

1.444   crudware

crudware: /kruhd'weir/ n. Pejorative term for the hundreds of
megabytes of low-quality
            freeware
            circulated by user's groups
and BBS systems in the micro-hobbyist world. "Yet *another*
set of disk catalog utilities for
            MS-DOS
            ? What crudware!"

1.445   cruft

cruft: /kruhft/ [back-formation from
            crufty
            ] 1. n. An
unpleasant substance. The dust that gathers under your bed is
cruft; the TMRC Dictionary correctly noted that attacking it with a
broom only produces more. 2. n. The results of shoddy
construction. 3. vt. [from 'hand cruft', pun on 'hand craft']
To write assembler code for something normally (and better) done by
a compiler (see
            hand-hacking
). 4. n. Excess; superfluous
junk; used esp. of redundant or superseded code.

This term is one of the oldest in the jargon and no one is sure of
its etymology, but it is suggestive that there is a Cruft Hall at
Harvard University which is part of the old physics building; it's
said to have been the physics department's radar lab during WWII.
To this day (early 1993) the windows appear to be full of random
techno-junk. MIT or Lincoln Labs people may well have coined the
term as a knock on the competition.

1.446   cruft together

cruft together: vt. (also 'cruft up') To throw together
something ugly but temporarily workable. Like vt.
            kluge up
            ,
but more pejorative. "There isn't any program now to reverse all
the lines of a file, but I can probably cruft one together in about
10 minutes." See
            hack together
            ,
            hack up
            ,
            kluge up

'

crufty

.

1.447   cruftsmanship

cruftsmanship: /kruhfts'm*n-ship / n. [from
cruft
] The
antithesis of craftsmanship.

1.448   crufty

crufty: /kruhf'tee/ [origin unknown; poss. from 'crusty']
adj. 1. Poorly built, possibly over-complex. The
canonical
example is "This is standard old crufty
DEC
software". In fact,
one fanciful theory of the origin of 'crufty' holds that was
originally a mutation of 'crusty' applied to DEC software so old
that the 's' characters were tall and skinny, looking more like
'f' characters. 2. Unpleasant, especially to the touch, often with
encrusted junk. Like spilled coffee smeared with peanut butter and
catsup. 3. Generally unpleasant. 4. (sometimes spelled
'cruftie') n. A small crufty object (see
frob
); often one
that doesn't fit well into the scheme of things. "A LISP property
list is a good place to store crufties (or, collectively,

random
 cruft)."

1.449   crumb

crumb: n. Two binary digits; a
quad
. Larger than a
bit
'
smaller than a
nybble

. Considered silly. Syn.
tayste
.

1.450   crunch

crunch: 1. vi. To process, usually in a time-consuming or
complicated way. Connotes an essentially trivial operation that is
nonetheless painful to perform. The pain may be due to the
triviality's being embedded in a loop from 1 to 1,000,000,000.
"FORTRAN programs do mostly
number-crunching
." 2. vt. To
reduce the size of a file by a complicated scheme that produces bit
configurations completely unrelated to the original data, such as
by a Huffman code. (The file ends up looking something like a
paper document would if somebody crunched the paper into a wad.)
Since such compression usually takes more computations than simpler
methods such as run-length encoding, the term is doubly
appropriate. (This meaning is usually used in the construction
'file crunch(ing)' to distinguish it from
number-crunching
.)
See
compress
. 3. n. The character '#'. Used at XEROX
and CMU, among other places. See
ASCII
. 4. vt. To squeeze
program source into a minimum-size representation that will still
compile or execute. The term came into being specifically for a
famous program on the BBC micro that crunched BASIC source in order
to make it run more quickly (it was a wholly interpretive BASIC, so
the number of characters mattered).
Obfuscated C Contest
entries are often crunched; see the first example under that
entry.

1.451   cruncha cruncha cruncha

cruncha cruncha cruncha: /kruhn'ch⋆ kruhn'ch⋆ kruhn'ch⋆/ interj.
An encouragement sometimes muttered to a machine bogged down in a
serious
grovel
. Also describes a notional sound made by
groveling hardware. See
wugga wugga
,

grind
 (sense 3).

1.452 cryppie

cryppie: /krip'ee/ n. A cryptographer. One who hacks or implements
   cryptographic software or hardware.

1.453 CTSS

CTSS: /C-T-S-S/ n. Compatible Time-Sharing System. An early
  (1963) experiment in the design of interactive time-sharing
operating systems, ancestral to
            Multics
            ,
            UNIX
            , and

            ITS
            . The name
            ITS
             (Incompatible Time-sharing System)
was a hack on CTSS, meant both as a joke and to express some basic
differences in philosophy about the way I/O services should be
presented to user programs.

1.454 CTY

CTY: /sit'ee/ or /C-T-Y/ n. [MIT] The terminal physically
  associated with a computer's system
            console
            . The term is a
  contraction of 'Console
            tty
            ', that is, 'Console TeleTYpe'.
  This
            ITS
            – and
            TOPS-10
            -associated term has become less
  common, as most UNIX hackers simply refer to the CTY as 'the
  console'.

1.455   cube

cube: n. 1. [short for 'cubicle'] A module in the open-plan
   offices used at many programming shops. "I've got the manuals in
   my cube." 2. A NeXT machine (which resembles a matte-black cube).

1.456   cubing

cubing: [parallel with 'tubing'] vi. 1. Hacking on an IPSC (Intel
   Personal SuperComputer) hypercube. "Louella's gone cubing
   again!!" 2. Hacking Rubik's Cube or related puzzles,
   either physically or mathematically. 3. An indescribable form of
   self-torture (see sense 1 or 2).

1.457   cursor dipped in X

            cursor dipped in X: n. There are a couple of metaphors in English
   of the form 'pen dipped in X' (perhaps the most common values of X
   are 'acid', 'bile', and 'vitriol'). These map over neatly to this
   hackish usage (the cursor being what moves, leaving letters behind,
   when one is composing on-line). "Talk about a
            nastygram
            ! He
   must've had his cursor dipped in acid when he wrote that one!"

1.458   cuspy

            cuspy: /kuhs'pee/ [WPI: from the
            DEC
             abbreviation CUSP, for 'Commonly
   Used System Program', i.e., a utility program used by many people]
   adj. 1. (of a program) Well-written. 2. Functionally excellent. A
   program that performs well and interfaces well to users is cuspy.
   See
            rude
            . 3. [NYU] Said of an attractive woman, especially one
   regarded as available. Implies a certain curvaceousness.

1.459   cut a tape

cut a tape: vi. To write a software or document distribution on
   magnetic tape for shipment. Has nothing to do with physically
   cutting the medium! Early versions of this lexicon claimed that
   one never analogously speaks of 'cutting a disk', but this has
   since been reported as live usage. Related slang usages are
   mainstream business's 'cut a check', the recording industry's
   'cut a record', and the military's 'cut an order'.

   All of these usages reflect physical processes in obsolete
   recording and duplication technologies. The first stage in
   manufacturing an old-style vinyl record involved cutting grooves in
   a stamping die with a precision lathe. More mundanely, the
   dominant technology for mass duplication of paper documents in
   pre-photocopying days involved "cutting a stencil", punching away
   portions of the wax overlay on a silk screen. More directly,
   paper tape with holes punched in it was an important early storage
   medium.

1.460   cybercrud

                cybercrud: /si:'ber-kruhd/ n. 1. [coined by Ted Nelson]
   Obfuscatory tech-talk. Verbiage with a high
                MEGO
                 factor. The
   computer equivalent of bureaucratese. 2. Incomprehensible stuff
   embedded in email. First there were the "Received" headers that
   show how mail flows through systems, then MIME (Multi-purpose
   Internet Mail Extensions) headers and part boundaries, and now huge
   blocks of hex for PEM (Privacy Enhanced Mail) or PGP (Pretty Good
   Privacy) digital signatures and certificates of authenticity. This
   stuff all services a purpose and good user interfaces should hide
   it, but all too often users are forced to wade through it.

1.461   cyberpunk

                cyberpunk: /si:'ber-puhnk/ [orig. by SF writer Bruce Bethke
   and/or editor Gardner Dozois] n.,adj. A subgenre of SF launched
   in 1982 by William Gibson's epoch-making novel "Neuromancer"
   (though its roots go back through Vernor Vinge's "True Names"
   (see "
                True Names ... and Other Dangers
                " in
   appendix C) to John Brunner's 1975 novel "The Shockwave
   Rider"). Gibson's near-total ignorance of computers and the
   present-day hacker culture enabled him to speculate about the role
   of computers and hackers in the future in ways hackers have since
   found both irritatingly na"ive and tremendously stimulating.
   Gibson's work was widely imitated, in particular by the short-lived

but innovative "Max Headroom" TV series. See

              cyberspace
              ,
              ice
              ,
              jack in
              ,
              go flatline
              .

Since 1990 or so, popular culture has included a movement or
fashion trend that calls itself 'cyberpunk', associated especially
with the rave/techno subculture. Hackers have mixed feelings about
this. On the one hand, self-described cyberpunks too often seem to
be shallow trendoids in black leather who have substituted
enthusiastic blathering about technology for actually learning and
doing it. Attitude is no substitute for competence. On the
other hand, at least cyberpunks are excited about the right things
and properly respectful of hacking talent in those who have it.
The general consensus is to tolerate them politely in hopes that
they'll attract people who grow into being true hackers.

1.462 cyberspace

              cyberspace: /si:'ber-spays/ n. 1. Notional 'information-space'
loaded with visual cues and navigable with brain-computer
interfaces called 'cyberspace decks'; a characteristic prop of

              cyberpunk
               SF. At the time of this writing (mid-1991),
serious efforts to construct
              virtual reality
               interfaces
modeled explicitly on Gibsonian cyberspace are already under way,
using more conventional devices such as glove sensors and binocular
TV headsets. Few hackers are prepared to deny outright the
possibility of a cyberspace someday evolving out of the network
 (see
              network, the
). 2. Occasionally, the metaphoric location
of the mind of a person in
              hack mode
              . Some hackers report
experiencing strong eidetic imagery when in hack mode;
interestingly, independent reports from multiple sources suggest
that there are common features to the experience. In particular,
the dominant colors of this subjective 'cyberspace' are often
gray and silver, and the imagery often involves constellations of
marching dots, elaborate shifting patterns of lines and angles, or
moire patterns.

1.463   cycle

cycle: 1. n. The basic unit of computation. What every hacker
wants more of (noted hacker Bill Gosper describes himself as a
"cycle junkie"). One can describe an instruction as taking so
many 'clock cycles'. Often the computer can access its memory
once on every clock cycle, and so one speaks also of 'memory
cycles'. These are technical meanings of
            cycle
            . The jargon
meaning comes from the observation that there are only so many
cycles per second, and when you are sharing a computer the cycles
get divided up among the users. The more cycles the computer
spends working on your program rather than someone else's, the
faster your program will run. That's why every hacker wants more
cycles: so he can spend less time waiting for the computer to
respond. 2. By extension, a notional unit of *human* thought
power, emphasizing that lots of things compete for the typical
hacker's think time. "I refused to get involved with the Rubik's
Cube back when it was big. Knew I'd burn too many cycles on it if
I let myself." 3. vt. Syn.
            bounce
             (sense 4),
            120 reset
            ;
from the phrase 'cycle power'. "Cycle the machine again, that
serial port's still hung."

1.464   cycle crunch

cycle crunch: n. A situation wherein the number of people trying
to use a computer simultaneously has reached the point where no one
can get enough cycles because they are spread too thin and the
system has probably begun to
            thrash
            . This scenario is an
inevitable result of Parkinson's Law applied to timesharing.
Usually the only solution is to buy more computer. Happily, this
has rapidly become easier since the mid-1980s, so much so that the
very term 'cycle crunch' now has a faintly archaic flavor; most
hackers now use workstations or personal computers as opposed to
traditional timesharing systems.

1.465   cycle drought

cycle drought: n. A scarcity of cycles. It may be due to a
cycle

crunch
, but it could also occur because part of the computer is
temporarily not working, leaving fewer cycles to go around.
"The
high moby
 is
down
, so we're running with only
half the usual amount of memory. There will be a cycle drought
until it's fixed."

1.466   cycle of reincarnation

cycle of reincarnation: [coined by Ivan Sutherland ca. 1970] n.
Term used to refer to a well-known effect whereby function in a
computing system family is migrated out to special-purpose
peripheral hardware for speed, then the peripheral evolves toward
more computing power as it does its job, then somebody notices that
it is inefficient to support two asymmetrical processors in the
architecture and folds the function back into the main CPU, at
which point the cycle begins again. Several iterations of this
cycle have been observed in graphics-processor design, and at least
one or two in communications and floating-point processors. Also
known as 'the Wheel of Life', 'the Wheel of Samsara', and other
variations of the basic Hindu/Buddhist theological idea. See also

blitter
,
bit bang
.

1.467   cycle server

cycle server: n. A powerful machine that exists primarily for
running large
batch
 jobs. Implies that interactive tasks such as
editing are done on other machines on the network, such as
workstations.

1.468   D. C. Power Lab

                  D. C. Power Lab: n. The former site of
                  SAIL
                  . Hackers thought
this was very funny because the obvious connection to electrical
engineering was nonexistent --- the lab was named for a Donald C.
Power. Compare
                  Marginal Hacks
                  .

1.469   daemon

                  daemon: /day'mn/ or /dee'mn/ [from the mythological meaning,
later rationalized as the acronym 'Disk And Execution MONitor'] n.
A program that is not invoked explicitly, but lies dormant waiting
for some condition(s) to occur. The idea is that the perpetrator
of the condition need not be aware that a daemon is lurking (though
often a program will commit an action only because it knows that it
will implicitly invoke a daemon). For example, under
                  ITS
                    writing a file on the
                  LPT
                   spooler's directory would invoke the
spooling daemon, which would then print the file. The advantage is
that programs wanting (in this example) files printed need neither
compete for access to nor understand any idiosyncrasies of the

                  LPT
                  . They simply enter their implicit requests and let the
daemon decide what to do with them. Daemons are usually spawned
automatically by the system, and may either live forever or be
regenerated at intervals.

Daemon and
                  demon
                   are often used interchangeably, but seem to
have distinct connotations. The term 'daemon' was introduced to
computing by
                  CTSS
                   people (who pronounced it /dee'mon/) and
used it to refer to what ITS called a
                  dragon
                  . Although the
meaning and the pronunciation have drifted, we think this glossary
reflects current (1993) usage.

1.470   dangling pointer

dangling pointer: n. A reference that doesn't actually lead
   anywhere (in C and some other languages, a pointer that doesn't
   actually point at anything valid). Usually this happens because it
   formerly pointed to something that has moved or disappeared. Used
   as jargon in a generalization of its techspeak meaning; for
   example, a local phone number for a person who has since moved to
   the other coast is a dangling pointer.

1.471   dark-side hacker

            dark-side hacker: n. A criminal or malicious hacker; a

            cracker
            . From George Lucas's Darth Vader, "seduced by the
dark side of the Force". The implication that hackers form a
sort of elite of technological Jedi Knights is intended. Oppose

            samurai
            .

1.472   Datamation

            Datamation: /day`t*-may'sh*n/ n. A magazine that many hackers
      assume all
            suit
            s read. Used to question an unbelieved quote,
as in "Did you read that in "Datamation?"" It used to
publish something hackishly funny every once in a while, like the
original paper on
            COME FROM
             in 1973, and Ed Post's "Real
Programmers Don't Use Pascal" ten years later, but it has since
become much more exclusively
            suit
            -oriented and boring.

1.473   DAU

            DAU: /dow/ [German Fidonet] n. German acronym for D"ummster
      Anzunehmender User (stupidest imaginable user). From the
      engineering-slang GAU for Gr"osster Anzunehmender Unfall, worst
      foreseeable accident, esp. of a LNG tank farm plant or something

with similarly disastrous consequences. In popular German, GAU is
used only to refer to worst-case nuclear acidents such as a core
meltdown. See
                cretin
                ,
                fool
                ,
                loser
                 and
                weasel
                .

1.474   day mode

                day mode: n. See
                phase
                 (sense 1). Used of people only.

1.475   dd

                dd: /dee-dee/ [UNIX: from IBM
                JCL
                ] vt. Equivalent to

                cat
                 or
                BLT
                . Originally the name of a UNIX copy command
with special options suitable for block-oriented devices; it was
often used in heavy-handed system maintenance, as in "Let's
'dd' the root partition onto a tape, then use the boot PROM to
load it back on to a new disk". The UNIX 'dd(1)' was
designed with a weird, distinctly non-UNIXy keyword option syntax
reminiscent of IBM System/360 JCL (which had an elaborate DD
'Dataset Definition' specification for I/O devices); though the
command filled a need, the interface design was clearly a prank.
The jargon usage is now very rare outside UNIX sites and now nearly
obsolete even there, as 'dd(1)' has been
                deprecated
                 for a
long time (though it has no exact replacement). The term has been
displaced by
                BLT
                 or simple English 'copy'.

1.476 DDT

DDT: /D-D-T/ n. 1. Generic term for a program that assists in
debugging other programs by showing individual machine instructions
in a readable symbolic form and letting the user change them. In
this sense the term DDT is now archaic, having been widely
displaced by 'debugger' or names of individual programs like
'adb', 'sdb', 'dbx', or 'gdb'. 2. [ITS] Under
MIT's fabled
                ITS
                 operating system, DDT (running under the alias
HACTRN) was also used as the
                shell
                 or top level command
language used to execute other programs. 3. Any one of several
specific DDTs (sense 1) supported on early
                DEC
                 hardware. The DEC
PDP-10 Reference Handbook (1969) contained a footnote on the first
page of the documentation for DDT that illuminates the origin of
the term:

  Historical footnote: DDT was developed at MIT for the PDP-1
  computer in 1961. At that time DDT stood for "DEC Debugging
  Tape". Since then, the idea of an on-line debugging program has
  propagated throughout the computer industry. DDT programs are now
  available for all DEC computers. Since media other than tape are
  now frequently used, the more descriptive name "Dynamic Debugging
  Technique" has been adopted, retaining the DDT abbreviation.
  Confusion between DDT-10 and another well known pesticide,
  dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane (C14-H9-Cl5) should be minimal
  since each attacks a different, and apparently mutually exclusive,
  class of bugs.

(The 'tape' referred to was, incidentally, not magnetic but paper.)
Sadly, this quotation was removed from later editions of the
handbook after the
                suit
                 s took over and DEC became much more
'businesslike'.

The history above is known to many old-time hackers. But there's
more: Peter Samson, compiler of the original
                TMRC
                 lexicon,
reports that he named 'DDT' after a similar tool on the TX-0
computer, the direct ancestor of the PDP-1 built at MIT's Lincoln
Lab in 1957. The debugger on that ground-breaking machine (the
first transistorized computer) rejoiced in the name FLIT
(FLexowriter Interrogation Tape).

1.477   de-rezz

de-rezz: /dee-rez'/ [from 'de-resolve' via the movie
   "Tron"] (also 'derez') 1. vi. To disappear or dissolve; the
   image that goes with it is of an object breaking up into raster
   lines and static and then dissolving. Occasionally used of a
   person who seems to have suddenly 'fuzzed out' mentally rather than
   physically. Usage: extremely silly, also rare. This verb was
   actually invented as *fictional* hacker jargon, and adopted in
   a spirit of irony by real hackers years after the fact. 2. vt. The
   Macintosh resource decompiler. On a Macintosh, many program
   structures (including the code itself) are managed in small
   segments of the program file known as 'resources'; 'Rez' and
   'DeRez' are a pair of utilities for compiling and decompiling
   resource files. Thus, decompiling a resource is 'derezzing'.
   Usage: very common.

1.478   dead

                 dead: adj. 1. Non-functional;
                 down
                 ;
                 crash
                 ed. Especially
   used of hardware. 2. At XEROX PARC, software that is working but
   not undergoing continued development and support.

1.479   dead code

                 dead code: n. Routines that can never be accessed because all
   calls to them have been removed, or code that cannot be reached
   because it is guarded by a control structure that provably must
   always transfer control somewhere else. The presence of dead code
   may reveal either logical errors due to alterations in the program
   or significant changes in the assumptions and environment of the
   program (see also
                 software rot
                 ); a good compiler should report
   dead code so a maintainer can think about what it means.
   (Sometimes it simply means that an *extremely* defensive
   programmer has inserted
                 can't happen
                  tests which really can't
   happen --- yet.) Syn.
                 grunge
                 .

1.480 DEADBEEF

DEADBEEF: /ded-beef/ n. The hexadecimal word-fill pattern for
   freshly allocated memory (decimal -21524111) under a number of
   IBM environments, including the RS/6000. As in "Your program is
   DEADBEEF" (meaning gone, aborted, flushed from memory); if you
   start from an odd half-word boundary, of course, you have
   BEEFDEAD.

1.481 deadlock

              deadlock: n. 1. [techspeak] A situation wherein two or more
   processes are unable to proceed because each is waiting for one of
   the others to do something. A common example is a program
   communicating to a server, which may find itself waiting for output
   from the server before sending anything more to it, while the
   server is similarly waiting for more input from the controlling
   program before outputting anything. (It is reported that this
   particular flavor of deadlock is sometimes called a 'starvation
   deadlock', though the term 'starvation' is more properly used for
   situations where a program can never run simply because it never
   gets high enough priority. Another common flavor is
   'constipation', in which each process is trying to send stuff to
   the other but all buffers are full because nobody is reading
   anything.) See
              deadly embrace
              . 2. Also used of deadlock-like
   interactions between humans, as when two people meet in a narrow
   corridor, and each tries to be polite by moving aside to let the
   other pass, but they end up swaying from side to side without
   making any progress because they always move the same way at the
   same time.

1.482 deadly embrace

              deadly embrace: n. Same as
              deadlock
              , though usually used only when
   exactly two processes are involved. This is the more popular term in
   Europe, while
              deadlock
               predominates in the United States.

1.483 death code

death code: n. A routine whose job is to set everything in the
    computer --- registers, memory, flags, everything --- to zero,
    including that portion of memory where it is running; its last act
    is to stomp on its own "store zero" instruction. Death code
    isn't very useful, but writing it is an interesting hacking
    challenge on architectures where the instruction set makes it
    possible, such as the PDP-8 (it has also been done on the DG Nova).

    Perhaps the ultimate death code is on the TI 990 series, where all
    registers are actually in RAM, and the instruction "store
    immediate 0" has the opcode "0". The PC will immediately wrap
    around core as many times as it can until a user hits HALT. Any
    empty memory location is death code. Worse, the manufacturer
    recommended use of this instruction in startup code (which would be
    in ROM and therefore survive).

1.484   Death Star

            Death Star: [from the movie "Star Wars"] 1. The AT&T
corporate logo, which appears on computers sold by AT&T and bears
an uncanny resemblance to the Death Star in the movie. This usage
is particularly common among partisans of
            BSD
             UNIX, who tend
to regard the AT&T versions as inferior and AT&T as a bad guy.
Copies still circulate of a poster printed by Mt. Xinu showing a
starscape with a space fighter labeled 4.2 BSD streaking away from
a broken AT&T logo wreathed in flames. 2. AT&T's internal
magazine, "Focus", uses 'death star' to describe an
incorrectly done AT&T logo in which the inner circle in the top
left is dark instead of light --- a frequent result of
dark-on-light logo images.

1.485   DEC

            DEC: n. Digital Equipment Corporation. Before the
            killer

            micro
             revolution of the late 1980s, hackerdom was closely
symbiotic with DEC's pioneering timesharing machines. The first of
the group of cultures described by this lexicon nucleated around
the PDP-1 (see
            TMRC
            . Subsequently, the PDP-6,
            PDP-10
            ,

```
              PDP-20
              , PDP-11 and
              VAX
               were all foci of large and
important hackerdoms, and DEC machines long dominated the ARPANET
and Internet machine population.  DEC was the technological leader
of the minicomputer era (roughly 1967 to 1987), but its failure to
embrace microcomputers and UNIX early cost it heavily in profits
and prestige after
              silicon
               got cheap.  However, the
microprocessor design tradition owes a heavy debt to the PDP-11
instruction set, and every one of the major general-purpose
microcomputer OSs so far (CP/M, MS-DOS, UNIX, OS/2) were either
genetically descended from a DEC OS, or incubated on DEC hardware,
or both.  Accordingly, DEC is still regarded with a certain wry
affection even among many hackers too young to have grown up on DEC
machines.  The contrast with
              IBM
               is instructive.
```

1.486 dec

```
              dec: /dek/ v. Verbal (and only rarely written) shorthand for
decrement, i.e. 'decrease by one'.  Especially used by
assembly programmers, as many assembly languages have a 'dec'
mnemonic.  Antonym:
              inc
              .
```

1.487 DEC Wars

```
              DEC Wars: n. A 1983
              USENET
               posting by Alan Hastings and Steve
Tarr spoofing the "Star Wars" movies in hackish terms.  Some
years later, ESR (disappointed by Hastings and Tarr's failure to
exploit a great premise more thoroughly) posted a
3-times-longer complete rewrite called "UNIX WARS"; the
two are often confused.
```

1.488 decay

decay: [from nuclear physics] n.,vi. An automatic conversion which
is applied to most array-valued expressions in
C
; they 'decay
into' pointer-valued expressions pointing to the array's first
element. This term is borderline techspeak, but is not used in the
official standard for the language.

1.489 DEChead

DEChead: /dek'hed/ n. 1. A
DEC

field servoid
. Not flattering.
2. [from 'deadhead'] A Grateful Dead fan working at DEC.

1.490 deckle

deckle: /dek'l/ [from dec- and
nybble
; the original
spelling seems to have been 'decle'] n. Two
nickle
s;
10 bits. Reported among developers for Mattel's GI 1600 (the
Intellivision games processor), a chip with 16-bit-wide RAM but
10-bit-wide ROM.

1.491 DED

DED: /D-E-D/ n. Dark-Emitting Diode (that is, a burned-out
LED). Compare
SED
,
LER
,
write-only memory
. In the
early 1970s both Signetics and Texas instruments released DED spec
sheets as
AFJ
s (suggested uses included "as a power-off

indicator").

1.492   deep hack mode

deep hack mode: n. See
hack mode
.

1.493   deep magic

deep magic: [poss. from C. S. Lewis's "Narnia" books] n. An
awesomely arcane technique central to a program or system, esp. one
neither generally published nor available to hackers at large (compare

black art
); one that could only have been composed by a true

wizard
. Compiler optimization techniques and many aspects of

OS
 design used to be
deep magic
; many techniques in
cryptography, signal processing, graphics, and AI still are.
Compare
heavy wizardry
. Esp. found in comments of the form
"Deep magic begins here...". Compare
voodoo programming
.

1.494   deep space

deep space: n. 1. Describes the notional location of any program
that has gone
off the trolley
. Esp. used of programs that
just sit there silently grinding long after either failure or some
output is expected. "Uh oh. I should have gotten a prompt ten
seconds ago. The program's in deep space somewhere." Compare

buzz
,

          catatonic
          ,
          hyperspace
          . 2. The metaphorical
location of a human so dazed and/or confused or caught up in some
esoteric form of
          bogosity
           that he or she no longer responds
coherently to normal communication. Compare
          page out
          .

1.495   defenestration

defenestration: [from the traditional Czechoslovakian method of
   assassinating prime ministers, via SF fandom] n. 1. Proper karmic
   retribution for an incorrigible punster. "Oh, ghod, that was
   awful!" "Quick! Defenestrate him!" 2. The act of
   exiting a window system in order to get better response time from a
   full-screen program. This comes from the dictionary meaning of
   'defenestrate', which is to throw something out a window. 3. The
   act of discarding something under the assumption that it will
   improve matters. "I don't have any disk space left." "Well,
   why don't you defenestrate that 100 megs worth of old core dumps?"
   4. [proposed] The requirement to support a command-line interface.
   "It has to run on a VT100." "Curses! I've been
   defenestrated!"

1.496   defined as

          defined as: adj. In the role of, usually in an organization-chart
   sense. "Pete is currently defined as bug prioritizer." Compare

          logical
          .

1.497   dehose

          dehose: /dee-hohz/ vt. To clear a
          hosed
           condition.

1.498 delint

delint: /dee-lint/ v. To modify code to remove problems detected
when
lint
ing. Confusingly, this process is also referred to
as 'linting' code.

1.499 delta

delta: n. 1. [techspeak] A quantitative change, especially a small
or incremental one (this use is general in physics and
engineering). "I just doubled the speed of my program!" "What
was the delta on program size?" "About 30 percent." (He
doubled the speed of his program, but increased its size by only 30
percent.) 2. [UNIX] A
diff
, especially a
diff
 stored
under the set of version-control tools called SCCS (Source Code
Control System) or RCS (Revision Control System). 3. n. A small
quantity, but not as small as
epsilon
. The jargon usage of

delta
 and
epsilon
 stems from the traditional use of these
letters in mathematics for very small numerical quantities,
particularly in 'epsilon-delta' proofs in limit theory (as in the
differential calculus). The term
delta
 is often used, once

epsilon
 has been mentioned, to mean a quantity that is
slightly bigger than
epsilon
 but still very small. "The cost
isn't epsilon, but it's delta" means that the cost isn't totally
negligible, but it is nevertheless very small. Common
constructions include 'within delta of ---', 'within epsilon of
---': that is, 'close to' and 'even closer to'.

1.500 demented

demented: adj. Yet another term of disgust used to describe a
program. The connotation in this case is that the program works as
designed, but the design is bad. Said, for example, of a program
that generates large numbers of meaningless error messages,
implying that it is on the brink of imminent collapse. Compare

wonky
,
bozotic
.

1.501   demigod

demigod: n. A hacker with years of experience, a national ↩
    reputation,
and a major role in the development of at least one design, tool,
or game used by or known to more than half of the hacker community.
To qualify as a genuine demigod, the person must recognizably
identify with the hacker community and have helped shape it. Major
demigods include Ken Thompson and Dennis Ritchie (co-inventors of

UNIX
 and
C
) and Richard M. Stallman (inventor of

EMACS
). In their hearts of hearts, most hackers dream of
someday becoming demigods themselves, and more than one major
software project has been driven to completion by the author's
veiled hopes of apotheosis. See also
net.god
,
true-hacker
.

1.502   demo

demo: /de'moh/ [short for 'demonstration'] 1. v. To
demonstrate a product or prototype. A far more effective way of
inducing bugs to manifest than any number of
test
 runs,
especially when important people are watching. 2. n. The act of
demoing. "I've gotta give a demo of the drool-proof interface;
how does it work again?" 3. n. Esp. as 'demo version', can
refer either to an early, barely-functional version of a program

which can be used for demonstration purposes as long as the
operator uses *exactly* the right commands and skirts its numerous
bugs, deficiencies, and unimplemented portions, or to a special
version of a program (frequently with some features crippled) which
is distributed at little or no cost to the user for enticement
purposes.

1.503   demo mode

demo mode: [Sun] n. 1. The state of being
heads down
 in order
to finish code in time for a
demo
, usually due yesterday.
2. A mode in which video games sit by themselves running through a
portion of the game, also known as 'attract mode'. Some serious

app
s have a demo mode they use as a screen saver, or may go
through a demo mode on startup (for example, the Microsoft Windows
opening screen --- which lets you impress your neighbors without
actually having to put up with
Microsloth Windows
).

1.504   demon

demon: n. 1. [MIT] A portion of a program that is not invoked
explicitly, but that lies dormant waiting for some condition(s) to
occur. See
daemon
. The distinction is that demons are
usually processes within a program, while daemons are usually
programs running on an operating system. 2. [outside MIT] Often used
equivalently to
daemon
 --- especially in the
UNIX
 world,
where the latter spelling and pronunciation is considered mildly
archaic.

Demons in sense 1 are particularly common in AI programs. For
example, a knowledge-manipulation program might implement inference
rules as demons. Whenever a new piece of knowledge was added,
various demons would activate (which demons depends on the
particular piece of data) and would create additional pieces of

knowledge by applying their respective inference rules to the
original piece. These new pieces could in turn activate more
demons as the inferences filtered down through chains of logic.
Meanwhile, the main program could continue with whatever its
primary task was.

1.505 depeditate

depeditate: /dee-ped'*-tayt/ [by (faulty) analogy with
   'decapitate'] vt. Humorously, to cut off the feet of. When one is
   using some computer-aided typesetting tools, careless placement of
   text blocks within a page or above a rule can result in chopped-off
   letter descenders. Such letters are said to have been depeditated.

1.506 deprecated

                deprecated: adj. Said of a program or feature that is considered
   obsolescent and in the process of being phased out, usually in
   favor of a specified replacement. Deprecated features can,
   unfortunately, linger on for many years. This term appears with
   distressing frequency in standards documents when the committees
   writing the documents realize that large amounts of extant (and
   presumably happily working) code depend on the feature(s) that have
   passed out of favor. See also
                dusty deck
                .

1.507 deserves to lose

                deserves to lose: adj. Said of someone who willfully does the

                Wrong Thing
                ; humorously, if one uses a feature known to be

                marginal
                . What is meant is that one deserves the consequences
   of one's
                losing
                 actions. "Boy, anyone who tries to use

                mess-dos
                 deserves to
                lose
                !" (
                ITS

```
               fans used to say
the same thing of
               UNIX
               ; many still do.)  See also
               screw
               ,

               chomp
               ,
               bagbiter
               .
```

1.508 desk check

```
               desk check: n.,v. To
               grovel
                over hardcopy of source code,
mentally simulating the control flow; a method of catching bugs.
No longer common practice in this age of on-screen editing, fast
compiles, and sophisticated debuggers --- though some maintain
stoutly that it ought to be.  Compare
               eyeball search
               ,

               vdiff
               ,
               vgrep
               .
```

1.509 despew

```
               despew: /d*-spyoo'/ [USENET] v. To automatically generate a
large amount of garbage to the net, esp. from an automated posting
program gone wild.  See
               ARMM
               .
```

1.510 Devil Book

```
               Devil Book: n. "The Design and Implementation of the 4.3BSD
UNIX Operating System", by Samuel J. Leffler, Marshall Kirk
McKusick, Michael J. Karels, and John S. Quarterman (Addison-Wesley
Publishers, 1989, ISBN 0-201-06196-1) --- the standard reference
book on the internals of
```

                    BSD
                     UNIX. So called because the
cover has a picture depicting a little devil (a visual play on

                    daemon
) in sneakers, holding a pitchfork (referring to one of
the characteristic features of UNIX, the `fork(2)' system
call).

1.511   devo

                    devo: /dee'voh/ [orig. in-house jargon at Symbolics] n. A person ↩
                         in a
development group. See also
                    doco
                     and
                    mango
                    .

1.512   dickless workstation

                    dickless workstation: n. Extremely pejorative hackerism for
`diskless workstation', a class of botches including the Sun 3/50
and other machines designed exclusively to network with an
expensive central disk server. These combine all the disadvantages
of time-sharing with all the disadvantages of distributed personal
computers; typically, they cannot even
                    boot
                     themselves without
help (in the form of some kind of
                    breath-of-life packet
) from
the server.

1.513   dictionary flame

                    dictionary flame: [USENET] n. An attempt to sidetrack a debate
away from issues by insisting on meanings for key terms that
presuppose a desired conclusion or smuggle in an implicit premise.
A common tactic of people who prefer argument over definitions to
disputes about reality. Compare
                    spelling flame
                    .

1.514 diddle

diddle: 1. vt. To work with or modify in a not particularly
serious manner. "I diddled a copy of
ADVENT
so it didn't
double-space all the time." "Let's diddle this piece of code and
see if the problem goes away." See
tweak
and
twiddle
.
2. n. The action or result of diddling. See also
tweak
,

twiddle
,
frob
.

1.515 die

die: v. Syn.
crash
. Unlike
crash
, which is used
primarily of hardware, this verb is used of both hardware and
software. See also
go flatline
,
casters-up mode
.

1.516 die horribly

die horribly: v. The software equivalent of
crash and burn
,
and the preferred emphatic form of
die
. "The converter
choked on an FF in its input and died horribly".

1.517 diff

diff: /dif/ n. 1. A change listing, especially giving
differences between (and additions to) source code or documents
(the term is often used in the plural 'diffs'). "Send me your
diffs for the Jargon File!" Compare
vdiff
. 2. Specifically,
such a listing produced by the 'diff(1)' command, esp. when
used as specification input to the 'patch(1)' utility (which
can actually perform the modifications; see
patch
). This is a
common method of distributing patches and source updates in the
UNIX/C world. 3. v. To compare (whether or not by use of automated
tools on machine-readable files); see also
vdiff
,

mod
.

1.518 digit

digit: n. An employee of Digital Equipment Corporation. See also

VAX
,
VMS
,
PDP-10
,
TOPS-10
,
DEChead
,
double

DECkers
,
field circus
.

1.519 dike

dike: vt. To remove or disable a portion of something, as a wire
   from a computer or a subroutine from a program. A standard slogan
   is "When in doubt, dike it out". (The implication is that it is
   usually more effective to attack software problems by reducing
   complexity than by increasing it.) The word 'dikes' is widely
   used among mechanics and engineers to mean 'diagonal cutters',
   esp. the heavy-duty metal-cutting version, but may also refer to a
   kind of wire-cutters used by electronics techs. To 'dike
   something out' means to use such cutters to remove something.
   Indeed, the TMRC Dictionary defined dike as "to attack with
   dikes". Among hackers this term has been metaphorically extended
   to informational objects such as sections of code.

1.520 ding

ding: n.,vi. 1. Synonym for
               feep
               . Usage: rare among hackers,
but commoner in the
               Real World
               . 2. 'dinged': What happens
when someone in authority gives you a minor bitching about
something, esp. something trivial. "I was dinged for having a
messy desk."

1.521 dink

dink: /dink/ adj. Said of a machine that has the
               bitty box
                nature; a machine too small to be worth bothering with ---
sometimes the system you're currently forced to work on. First
heard from an MIT hacker working on a CP/M system with 64K, in
reference to any 6502 system, then from fans of 32-bit
architectures about 16-bit machines. "GNUMACS will never work on
that dink machine." Probably derived from mainstream 'dinky',
which isn't sufficiently pejorative. See
               macdink
               .

1.522 dinosaur

```
            dinosaur: n. 1. Any hardware requiring raised flooring and special
power.  Used especially of old minis and mainframes, in contrast
with newer microprocessor-based machines.  In a famous quote from
the 1988 UNIX EXPO, Bill Joy compared the liquid-cooled mainframe
in the massive IBM display with a grazing dinosaur "with a truck
outside pumping its bodily fluids through it".  IBM was not
amused.  Compare
            big iron
            ; see also
            mainframe
            . 2. [IBM]
A very conservative user; a
            zipperhead
            .
```

1.523   dinosaur pen

```
            dinosaur pen: n. A traditional
            mainframe
             computer room complete with
raised flooring, special power, its own ultra-heavy-duty air
conditioning, and a side order of Halon fire extinguishers.  See

            boa
            .
```

1.524   dinosaurs mating

```
            dinosaurs mating: n. Said to occur when yet another
            big iron
              merger or buyout occurs; reflects a perception by hackers that
these signal another stage in the long, slow dying of the

            mainframe
             industry.  In its glory days of the 1960s, it was
'IBM and the Seven Dwarves': Burroughs, Control Data, General
Electric, Honeywell, NCR, RCA, and Univac.  RCA and GE sold out
early, and it was 'IBM and the Bunch' (Burroughs, Univac, NCR,
Control Data, and Honeywell) for a while.  Honeywell was bought out
by Bull; Burroughs merged with Univac to form Unisys (in 1984 ---
this was when the phrase 'dinosaurs mating' was coined); and in
1991 AT&T absorbed NCR.  More such earth-shaking unions of doomed
giants seem inevitable.
```

1.525   dirtball

dirtball: [XEROX PARC] n. A small, perhaps struggling outsider;
   not in the major or even the minor leagues. For example, "Xerox
   is not a dirtball company".

   [Outsiders often observe in the PARC culture an institutional
   arrogance which usage of this term exemplifies. The brilliance and
   scope of PARC's contributions to computer science have been such
   that this superior attitude is not much resented. --- ESR]

1.526   dirty power

                dirty power: n. Electrical mains voltage that is unfriendly to
   the delicate innards of computers. Spikes,
                drop-outs
                , average
   voltage significantly higher or lower than nominal, or just plain
   noise can all cause problems of varying subtlety and severity
   (these are collectively known as
                power hit
                s).

1.527   disclaimer

disclaimer: n. [USENET] n. Statement ritually appended to many USENET
   postings (sometimes automatically, by the posting software) reiterating
   the fact (which should be obvious, but is easily forgotten) that the
   article reflects its author's opinions and not necessarily those of
   the organization running the machine through which the article
   entered the network.

1.528   Discordianism

                Discordianism: /dis-kor'di-*n-ism/ n. The veneration of

                Eris
                , a.k.a. Discordia; widely popular among hackers.
   Discordianism was popularized by Robert Shea and Robert Anton
   Wilson's novel "
                Illuminatus!
                " as a sort of
   self-subverting Dada-Zen for Westerners --- it should on no account
   be taken seriously but is far more serious than most jokes.
   Consider, for example, the Fifth Commandment of the Pentabarf, from

"Principia Discordia": "A Discordian is Prohibited of
Believing What he Reads." Discordianism is usually connected with
an elaborate conspiracy theory/joke involving millennia-long
warfare between the anarcho-surrealist partisans of Eris and a
malevolent, authoritarian secret society called the Illuminati.
See
              Religion
               under
              Appendix B
              ,
              Church of the

              SubGenius
              , and
              ha ha only serious
              .

1.529   disk farm

              disk farm: n. (also
              laundromat
) A large room or rooms filled
with disk drives (esp.
              washing machine
              s).

1.530   display hack

              display hack: n. A program with the same approximate purpose as a
kaleidoscope: to make pretty pictures. Famous display hacks
include
              munching squares
              ,
              smoking clover
              , the BSD UNIX
'rain(6)' program, 'worms(6)' on miscellaneous UNIXes,
and the
              X
               'kaleid(1)' program. Display hacks can also be
implemented without programming by creating text files containing
numerous escape sequences for interpretation by a video terminal;
one notable example displayed, on any VT100, a Christmas tree with
twinkling lights and a toy train circling its base. The
              hack

              value
               of a display hack is proportional to the esthetic value of
the images times the cleverness of the algorithm divided by the

size of the code. Syn.
            psychedelicware
            .

1.531 Dissociated Press

            Dissociated Press: [play on 'Associated Press'; perhaps inspired
by a reference in the 1949 Bugs Bunny cartoon "What's Up,
Doc?"] n. An algorithm for transforming any text into potentially
humorous garbage even more efficiently than by passing it through a

            marketroid
            . The algorithm starts by printing any N
consecutive words (or letters) in the text. Then at every step it
searches for any random occurrence in the original text of the
last N words (or letters) already printed and then prints
the next word or letter.
            EMACS
             has a handy command for this.
Here is a short example of word-based Dissociated Press applied to
an earlier version of this Jargon File:

  wart: n. A small, crocky
            feature
             that sticks out of
  an array (C has no checks for this). This is relatively
  benign and easy to spot if the phrase is bent so as to be
  not worth paying attention to the medium in question.

Here is a short example of letter-based Dissociated Press applied
to the same source:

  window sysIWYG: n. A bit was named aften /bee't*/ prefer
  to use the other guy's re, especially in every cast a
  chuckle on neithout getting into useful informash speech
  makes removing a featuring a move or usage actual
  abstractionsidered interj. Indeed spectace logic or problem!

A hackish idle pastime is to apply letter-based Dissociated Press
to a random body of text and
            vgrep
             the output in hopes of finding
an interesting new word. (In the preceding example, 'window
sysIWYG' and 'informash' show some promise.) Iterated applications
of Dissociated Press usually yield better results. Similar
techniques called 'travesty generators' have been employed with
considerable satirical effect to the utterances of USENET flamers;
see
            pseudo
            .

1.532 distribution

distribution: n. 1. A software source tree packaged for
distribution; but see
kit
. 2. A vague term encompassing
mailing lists and USENET newsgroups (but not
BBS

fora
); any
topic-oriented message channel with multiple recipients. 3. An
information-space domain (usually loosely correlated with
geography) to which propagation of a USENET message is restricted;
a much-underutilized feature.

1.533 disusered

disusered: adj. [USENET] Said of a person whose account on a computer
   has been removed, esp. for cause rather than through normal
   attrition. "He got disusered when they found out he'd been
   cracking through the school's Internet access." The verbal form
   'disuser' is live but less common. Both usages probably derive
   from the DISUSER account status flag on VMS; setting it disables
   the account.

1.534 do protocol

do protocol: [from network protocol programming] vi. To perform an
interaction with somebody or something that follows a clearly
defined procedure. For example, "Let's do protocol with the
check" at a restaurant means to ask for the check, calculate the
tip and everybody's share, collect money from everybody, generate
change as necessary, and pay the bill. See
protocol
.

1.535 doc

doc: /dok/ n. Common spoken and written shorthand for
   'documentation'. Often used in the plural 'docs' and in the
   construction 'doc file' (i.e., documentation available on-line).

1.536 doco

        doco: /do'koh/ [orig. in-house jargon at Symbolics] n. A
documentation writer. See also
        devo
         and
        mango
        .

1.537 documentation

        documentation:: n. The multiple kilograms of macerated, pounded,
steamed, bleached, and pressed trees that accompany most modern
software or hardware products (see also
        tree-killer
). Hackers
seldom read paper documentation and (too) often resist writing it;
they prefer theirs to be terse and on-line. A common comment on
this predilection is "You can't
        grep
         dead trees". See

        drool-proof paper
        ,
        verbiage
        ,
        treeware
        .

1.538 dodgy

        dodgy: adj. Syn. with
        flaky
        . Preferred outside the U.S.

1.539 dogcow

        dogcow: /dog'kow/ n. See
        Moof
        .

1.540 dogpile

dogpile: [USENET: prob. fr. mainstream "puppy pile"] v. When
   many people post unfriendly responses in short order to a single
   posting, they are sometimes said to "dogpile" or "dogpile on"
   the person to whom they're responding. For example, when a
   religious missionary posts a simplistic appeal to alt.atheism,
   he can expect to be dogpiled.

1.541 dogwash

               dogwash: /dog'wosh/ [From a quip in the 'urgency' field of a very
optional software change request, ca. 1982. It was something like
"Urgency: Wash your dog first".] 1. n. A project of minimal
priority, undertaken as an escape from more serious work. 2. v.
To engage in such a project. Many games and much
               freeware
                get
written this way.

1.542 domainist

               domainist: /doh-mayn'ist/ adj. 1. Said of an
               Internet

               address
                (as opposed to a
               bang path
) because the part to the
   right of the '@' specifies a nested series of 'domains';
   for example, esr@snark.thyrsus.com specifies the machine
   called snark in the subdomain called thyrsus within the
   top-level domain called com. See also
               big-endian
               , sense
2. 2. Said of a site, mailer, or routing program which knows how
   to handle domainist addresses. 3. Said of a person (esp. a site
   admin) who prefers domain addressing, supports a domainist mailer,
   or proselytizes for domainist addressing and disdains
               bang

               path
               s. This term is now (1993) semi-obsolete, as most sites have
   converted.

1.543   Don't do that, then!

            Don't do that, then!: [from an old doctor's office joke about a
patient with a trivial complaint] Stock response to a user
complaint. "When I type control-S, the whole system comes to a
halt for thirty seconds." "Don't do that, then!" (or "So don't
do that!"). Compare
            RTFM
            .

1.544   dongle

            dongle: /dong'gl/ n. 1. A security or
            copy protection
             device for commercial microcomputer programs consisting of a
serialized EPROM and some drivers in a D-25 connector shell, which
must be connected to an I/O port of the computer while the program
is run. Programs that use a dongle query the port at startup and
at programmed intervals thereafter, and terminate if it does not
respond with the dongle's programmed validation code. Thus, users
can make as many copies of the program as they want but must pay
for each dongle. The idea was clever, but it was initially a
failure, as users disliked tying up a serial port this way. Almost
all dongles on the market today (1993) will pass data through the
port and monitor for
            magic
             codes (and combinations of status
lines) with minimal if any interference with devices further down
the line --- this innovation was necessary to allow daisy-chained
dongles for multiple pieces of software. The devices are still not
widely used, as the industry has moved away from copy-protection
schemes in general. 2. By extension, any physical electronic key
or transferable ID required for a program to function. Common
variations on this theme have used parallel or even joystick
ports. See
            dongle-disk
            .

[Note: in early 1992, advertising copy from Rainbow Technologies (a
manufacturer of dongles) included a claim that the word derived from
"Don Gall", allegedly the inventor of the device. The company's
receptionist will cheerfully tell you that the story is a myth
invented for the ad copy. Nevertheless, I expect it to haunt my
life as a lexicographer for at least the next ten years. --- ESR]

1.545   dongle-disk

dongle-disk: /don'gl disk/ n. A special floppy disk that is
required in order to perform some task. Some contain special
coding that allows an application to identify it uniquely, others
are special code that does something that normally-resident
programs don't or can't. (For example, AT&T's "Unix PC" would
only come up in
            root mode
             with a special boot disk.) Also
called a 'key disk'. See
            dongle
            .

1.546   donuts

            donuts: n.obs. A collective noun for any set of memory bits. This
usage is extremely archaic and may no longer be live jargon; it
dates from the days of ferrite-
            core
             memories in which each bit
was implemented by a doughnut-shaped magnetic flip-flop.

1.547   doorstop

            doorstop: n. Used to describe equipment that is non-functional and
halfway expected to remain so, especially obsolete equipment kept
around for political reasons or ostensibly as a backup. "When we
get another Wyse-50 in here, that ADM 3 will turn into a doorstop."
Compare
            boat anchor
            .

1.548   dot file

            dot file: [UNIX] n. A file that is not visible by default to
normal directory-browsing tools (on UNIX, files named with a
leading dot are, by convention, not normally presented in directory
listings). Many programs define one or more dot files in which
startup or configuration information may be optionally recorded; a
user can customize the program's behavior by creating the
appropriate file in the current or home directory. (Therefore, dot
files tend to
            creep
             --- with every nontrivial application

program defining at least one, a user's home directory can be
filled with scores of dot files, of course without the user's
really being aware of it.) See also
                profile
                  (sense 1),
                rc

                file
                .

1.549   double bucky

                double bucky: adj. Using both the CTRL and META keys. "The
command to burn all LEDs is double bucky F."

This term originated on the Stanford extended-ASCII keyboard, and
was later taken up by users of the
                space-cadet keyboard
                 at
MIT. A typical MIT comment was that the Stanford
                bucky bits
                  (control and meta shifting keys) were nice, but there weren't
enough of them; you could type only 512 different characters on a
Stanford keyboard. An obvious way to address this was simply to
add more shifting keys, and this was eventually done; but a
keyboard with that many shifting keys is hard on touch-typists, who
don't like to move their hands away from the home position on the
keyboard. It was half-seriously suggested that the extra shifting
keys be implemented as pedals; typing on such a keyboard would be
very much like playing a full pipe organ. This idea is mentioned
in a parody of a very fine song by Jeffrey Moss called
"Rubber Duckie", which was published in "The Sesame
Street Songbook" (Simon and Schuster 1971, ISBN 0-671-21036-X).
These lyrics were written on May 27, 1978, in celebration of the
Stanford keyboard:

                     Double Bucky

     Double bucky, you're the one!
     You make my keyboard lots of fun.
         Double bucky, an additional bit or two:
     (Vo-vo-de-o!)
     Control and meta, side by side,
     Augmented ASCII, nine bits wide!
         Double bucky! Half a thousand glyphs, plus a few!
             Oh,
             I sure wish that I
             Had a couple of
                 Bits more!
             Perhaps a
             Set of pedals to
             Make the number of
                 Bits four:

```
            Double double bucky!
      Double bucky, left and right
      OR'd together, outta sight!
          Double bucky, I'd like a whole word of
          Double bucky, I'm happy I heard of
          Double bucky, I'd like a whole word of you!


      --- The Great Quux (with apologies to Jeffrey Moss)


   [This, by the way, is an excellent example of computer
            filk
              --- ESR]  See also
            meta bit
            ,
            cokebottle
            , and
            quadruple

            bucky
            .
```

1.550   double DECkers

```
double DECkers: n. Used to describe married couples in which both
   partners work for Digital Equipment Corporation.
```

1.551   doubled sig

```
              doubled sig: [USENET] n. A
              sig block
               that has been included
   twice in a
              USENET
               article or, less commonly, in an electronic
   mail message.  An article or message with a doubled sig can be
   caused by improperly configured software.  More often, however, it
   reveals the author's lack of experience in electronic
   communication.  See
              BIFF
              ,
              pseudo
              .
```

1.552   down

down: 1. adj. Not operating. "The up escalator is down" is
considered a humorous thing to say, and "The elevator is down"
always means "The elevator isn't working" and never refers to
what floor the elevator is on. With respect to computers, this
term has passed into the mainstream; the extension to other kinds
of machine is still hackish. 2. 'go down' vi. To stop
functioning; usually said of the
       system
       . The message from the

       console
        that every hacker hates to hear from the operator is
"System going down in 5 minutes". 3. 'take down', 'bring
down' vt. To deactivate purposely, usually for repair work or

       PM
       . "I'm taking the system down to work on that bug in the
tape drive." Occasionally one hears the word 'down' by itself
used as a verb in this vt. sense. See
       crash
       ;
oppose
       up
       .

1.553   download

download: vt. To transfer data or (esp.) code from a larger 'host'
system (esp. a
       mainframe
) over a digital comm link to a smaller
'client' system, esp. a microcomputer or specialized peripheral.
Oppose
       upload
       .

However, note that ground-to-space communications has its own usage
rule for this term. Space-to-earth transmission is always 'down'
and the reverse 'up' regardless of the relative size of the
computers involved. So far the in-space machines have invariably
been smaller; thus the upload/download distinction has been
reversed from its usual sense.

1.554   DP

DP: /D-P/ n. 1. Data Processing. Listed here because,
according to hackers, use of the term marks one immediately as a

```
                          suit
                          .  See
                          DPer
                          .  2. Common abbrev for
                          Dissociated


                          Press
                          .
```

1.555   DPB

```
DPB: /d*-pib'/ [from the PDP-10 instruction set] vt. To plop
  something down in the middle.  Usage: silly.  "DPB yourself into
  that couch there."  The connotation would be that the couch is
  full except for one slot just big enough for one last person to sit
  in.  DPB means 'DePosit Byte', and was the name of a PDP-10
  instruction that inserts some bits into the middle of some other
  bits.  Hackish usage has been kept alive by the Common LISP function
  of the same name.
```

1.556   DPer

```
                          DPer: /dee-pee-er/ n. Data Processor.  Hackers are absolutely
  amazed that
                          suit
                          s use this term self-referentially.
  *Computers* process data, not people!  See
                          DP
                          .
```

1.557   dragon

```
                          dragon: n. [MIT] A program similar to a
                          daemon
                          , except that
  it is not invoked at all, but is instead used by the system to
  perform various secondary tasks.  A typical example would be an
  accounting program, which keeps track of who is logged in,
  accumulates load-average statistics, etc.  Under ITS, many
  terminals displayed a list of people logged in, where they were,
  what they were running, etc., along with some random picture (such
  as a unicorn, Snoopy, or the Enterprise), which was generated by
  the 'name dragon'.  Usage: rare outside MIT --- under UNIX and most
  other OSes this would be called a 'background demon' or
```

daemon
. The best-known UNIX example of a dragon is
`cron(1)'. At SAIL, they called this sort of thing a
`phantom'.

1.558 Dragon Book

Dragon Book: n. The classic text "Compilers: Principles,
Techniques and Tools", by Alfred V. Aho, Ravi Sethi, and Jeffrey D.
Ullman (Addison-Wesley 1986; ISBN 0-201-10088-6), so called because
of the cover design featuring a dragon labeled `complexity of
compiler design' and a knight bearing the lance `LALR parser
generator' among his other trappings. This one is more
specifically known as the `Red Dragon Book' (1986); an earlier
edition, sans Sethi and titled "Principles Of Compiler Design"
(Alfred V. Aho and Jeffrey D. Ullman; Addison-Wesley, 1977; ISBN
0-201-00022-9), was the `Green Dragon Book' (1977). (Also `New
Dragon Book', `Old Dragon Book'.) The horsed knight and the
Green Dragon were warily eying each other at a distance; now the
knight is typing (wearing gauntlets!) at a terminal showing a
video-game representation of the Red Dragon's head while the rest
of the beast extends back in normal space. See also
book

titles
.

1.559 drain

drain: [IBM] v. Syn. for
flush
(sense 2). Has a connotation
of finality about it; one speaks of draining a device before taking
it offline.

1.560 dread high-bit disease

dread high-bit disease: n. A condition endemic to PRIME (a.k.a.
PR1ME) minicomputers that results in all the characters having
their high (0x80) bit ON rather than OFF. This of course makes
transporting files to other systems much more difficult, not to
mention talking to true 8-bit devices. Folklore had it that PRIME
adopted the reversed-8-bit convention in order to save 25 cents per

serial line per machine; PRIME old-timers, on the other hand, claim
they inherited the disease from Honeywell via customer NASA's
compatibility requirements and struggled heroically to cure it.
Whoever was responsible, this probably qualifies as one of the
most
            cretinous
             design tradeoffs ever made. See
            meta bit
            .
A few other machines have exhibited similar brain damage.

1.561   DRECNET

            DRECNET: /drek'net/ [from Yiddish/German 'dreck', meaning
filth] n. Deliberate distortion of DECNET, a networking protocol
used in the
            VMS
             community. So called because DEC helped write
the Ethernet specification and then (either stupidly or as a
malignant customer-control tactic) violated that spec in the design
of DRECNET in a way that made it incompatible. See also

            connector conspiracy
            .

1.562   driver

            driver: n. 1. The
            main loop
             of an event-processing program;
the code that gets commands and dispatches them for execution.
2. [techspeak] In 'device driver', code designed to handle a
particular peripheral device such as a magnetic disk or tape unit.
3. In the TeX world and the computerized typesetting world in
general, a program that translates some device-independent or other
common format to something a real device can actually
understand.

1.563   droid

            droid: [from 'android', SF terminology for a humanoid robot of
essentially biological (as opposed to mechanical/electronic)
construction] n. A person (esp. a low-level bureaucrat or
service-business employee) exhibiting most of the following

characteristics: (a) naive trust in the wisdom of the parent
organization or 'the system'; (b) a blind-faith propensity to
believe obvious nonsense emitted by authority figures (or
computers!); (c) a rule-governed mentality, one unwilling or unable
to look beyond the 'letter of the law' in exceptional
situations; (d) a paralyzing fear of official reprimand or worse
if Procedures are not followed No Matter What; and (e) no interest
in doing anything above or beyond the call of a very
narrowly-interpreted duty, or in particular in fixing that which is
broken; an "It's not my job, man" attitude.

Typical droid positions include supermarket checkout assistant and
bank clerk; the syndrome is also endemic in low-level government
employees. The implication is that the rules and official
procedures constitute software that the droid is executing;
problems arise when the software has not been properly debugged.
The term 'droid mentality' is also used to describe the mindset
behind this behavior. Compare
                suit
                ,
                marketroid
                ; see

                -oid
                .

1.564   drool-proof paper

                drool-proof paper: n. Documentation that has been obsessively
                dumbed

                down
                , to the point where only a
                cretin
                 could bear to read it, is
said to have succumbed to the 'drool-proof paper syndrome' or to
have been 'written on drool-proof paper'. For example, this is
an actual quote from Apple's LaserWriter manual: "Do not expose
your LaserWriter to open fire or flame."

1.565   drop on the floor

                drop on the floor: vt. To react to an error condition by silently
discarding messages or other valuable data. "The gateway
ran out of memory, so it just started dropping packets on the
floor." Also frequently used of faulty mail and netnews relay
sites that lose messages. See also
                black hole

```
            ,
            bit bucket
            .
```

1.566 drop-ins

```
            drop-ins: [prob. by analogy with
            drop-outs
            ] n. Spurious
characters appearing on a terminal or console as a result of line
noise or a system malfunction of some sort.  Esp. used when these
are interspersed with one's own typed input.  Compare

            drop-outs
            , sense 2.
```

1.567 drop-outs

```
            drop-outs: n. 1. A variety of 'power glitch' (see
            glitch
            );
momentary 0 voltage on the electrical mains.  2. Missing characters
in typed input due to software malfunction or system saturation
(one cause of such behavior under UNIX when a bad connection to a
modem swamps the processor with spurious character interrupts; see

            screaming tty
            ).  3. Mental glitches; used as a way of
describing those occasions when the mind just seems to shut down
for a couple of beats.  See
            glitch
            ,
            fried
            .
```

1.568 drugged

```
            drugged: adj. (also 'on drugs') 1. Conspicuously stupid,
heading toward
            brain-damaged
            .  Often accompanied by a
pantomime of toking a joint (but see
            Appendix B
            ).  2. Of hardware,
```

very slow relative to normal performance.

1.569 drum

drum: adj, n. Ancient techspeak term referring to slow,
cylindrical magnetic media that were once state-of-the-art storage
devices. Under BSD UNIX the disk partition used for swapping is
still called '/dev/drum'; this has led to considerable humor
and not a few straight-faced but utterly bogus 'explanations'
getting foisted on
newbie
s. See also "
The Story of Mel, a

Real Programmer
" in
Appendix A
.

1.570 drunk mouse syndrome

drunk mouse syndrome: (also 'mouse on drugs') n. A malady
exhibited by the mouse pointing device of some computers. The
typical symptom is for the mouse cursor on the screen to move in
random directions and not in sync with the motion of the actual
mouse. Can usually be corrected by unplugging the mouse and
plugging it back again. Another recommended fix for optical mice
is to rotate your mouse pad 90 degrees.

At Xerox PARC in the 1970s, most people kept a can of copier
cleaner (isopropyl alcohol) at their desks. When the steel ball on
the mouse had picked up enough
cruft
 to be unreliable, the
mouse was doused in cleaner, which restored it for a while.
However, this operation left a fine residue that accelerated the
accumulation of cruft, so the dousings became more and more
frequent. Finally, the mouse was declared 'alcoholic' and sent
to the clinic to be dried out in a CFC ultrasonic bath.

1.571 Duff's device

Duff's device: n. The most dramatic use yet seen of
fall

through
 in C, invented by Tom Duff when he was at Lucasfilm.
Trying to
bum
 all the instructions he could out of an inner
loop that copied data serially onto an output port, he decided to
unroll it. He then realized that the unrolled version could
be implemented by *interlacing* the structures of a switch and
a loop:

```
    register n = (count + 7) / 8;      /* count > 0 assumed */

    switch (count % 8)
    {
    case 0:        do {  *to = *from++;
    case 7:               *to = *from++;
    case 6:               *to = *from++;
    case 5:               *to = *from++;
    case 4:               *to = *from++;
    case 3:               *to = *from++;
    case 2:               *to = *from++;
    case 1:               *to = *from++;
                    } while (--n > 0);
    }
```

Shocking though it appears to all who encounter it for the first
time, the device is actually perfectly valid, legal C. C's default

fall through
 in case statements has long been its most
controversial single feature; Duff observed that "This code forms
some sort of argument in that debate, but I'm not sure whether it's
for or against."

[For maximal obscurity, the outermost pair of braces above could be
actually be removed --- GLS]

1.572   dumb terminal

dumb terminal: n. A terminal that is one step above a
glass tty
,
having a minimally addressable cursor but no on-screen editing or
other features normally supported by a
smart terminal
. Once upon a
time, when glass ttys were common and addressable cursors were
something special, what is now called a dumb terminal could pass for
a smart terminal.

1.573   dumbass attack

dumbass attack: /duhm'as *-tak'/ [Purdue] n. Notional cause of a
novice's mistake made by the experienced, especially one made while
running as
root
 under UNIX, e.g., typing `rm -r *' or
`mkfs' on a mounted file system. Compare
adger
.

1.574   dumbed down

dumbed down: adj. Simplified, with a strong connotation of
*over*simplified. Often, a
marketroid
 will insist that
the interfaces and documentation of software be dumbed down after
the designer has burned untold gallons of midnight oil making it
smart. This creates friction. See
user-friendly
.

1.575   dump

dump: n. 1. An undigested and voluminous mass of information about
a problem or the state of a system, especially one routed to the
slowest available output device (compare
core dump
), and most
especially one consisting of hex or octal
runes
 describing the
byte-by-byte state of memory, mass storage, or some file. In

elder days
, debugging was generally done by `groveling over'
a dump (see
grovel
); increasing use of high-level languages
and interactive debuggers has made such tedium uncommon, and the
term `dump' now has a faintly archaic flavor. 2. A backup. This
usage is typical only at large timesharing installations.

1.576 dumpster diving

dumpster diving: /dump'-ster di:'-ving/ n. 1. The practice of
sifting refuse from an office or technical installation to extract
confidential data, especially security-compromising information
('dumpster' is an Americanism for what is elsewhere called a
'skip'). Back in AT&T's monopoly days, before paper shredders
became common office equipment, phone phreaks (see
          phreaking
)
used to organize regular dumpster runs against phone company plants
and offices. Discarded and damaged copies of AT&T internal manuals
taught them much. The technique is still rumored to be a favorite
of crackers operating against careless targets. 2. The practice of
raiding the dumpsters behind buildings where producers and/or
consumers of high-tech equipment are located, with the expectation
(usually justified) of finding discarded but still-valuable
equipment to be nursed back to health in some hacker's den.
Experienced dumpster-divers not infrequently accumulate basements
full of moldering (but still potentially useful)
          cruft
          .

1.577 dup killer

dup killer: /d[y]oop kill'r/ [FidoNet] n. Software that is
   supposed to detect and delete duplicates of a message that may
   have reached the FidoNet system via different routes.

1.578 dup loop

dup loop: /d[y]oop loop/ (also 'dupe loop') [FidoNet] n. An
infinite stream of duplicated, near-identical messages on a FidoNet

          echo
          , the only difference being unique or mangled identification
information applied by a faulty or incorrectly configured system or
network gateway, thus rendering
          dup killer
          s ineffective. If
such a duplicate message eventually reaches a system through which
it has already passed (with the original identification
information), all systems passed on the way back to that system are
said to be involved in a

```
                    dup loop
                    .
```

1.579   dusty deck

```
            dusty deck: n. Old software (especially applications) which one is
obliged to remain compatible with, or to maintain (
            DP
             types
call this 'legacy code', a term hackers consider smarmy and
excessively reverent).  The term implies that the software in
question is a holdover from card-punch days.  Used esp. when
referring to old scientific and
            number-crunching
             software,
much of which was written in FORTRAN and very poorly documented but
is believed to be too expensive to replace.  See
            fossil
            ;
compare
            crawling horror
            .
```

1.580   DWIM

```
            DWIM: /dwim/ [acronym, 'Do What I Mean'] 1. adj. Able to guess,
sometimes even correctly, the result intended when bogus input was
provided.  2. n.,obs. The BBNLISP/INTERLISP function that attempted
to accomplish this feat by correcting many of the more common
errors.  See
            hairy
            . 3. Occasionally, an interjection hurled
at a balky computer, esp. when one senses one might be tripping
over legalisms (see
            legalese
            ).
```

Warren Teitelman originally wrote DWIM to fix his typos and
spelling errors, so it was somewhat idiosyncratic to his style, and
would often make hash of anyone else's typos if they were
stylistically different. Some victims of DWIM thus claimed that
the acronym stood for 'Damn Warren's Infernal Machine!'.

In one notorious incident, Warren added a DWIM feature to the
command interpreter used at Xerox PARC. One day another hacker
there typed 'delete *$' to free up some disk space. (The
editor there named backup files by appending '$' to the
original file name, so he was trying to delete any backup files

left over from old editing sessions.) It happened that there
weren't any editor backup files, so DWIM helpfully reported
'*$ not found, assuming you meant 'delete *'.' It then started
to delete all the files on the disk! The hacker managed to stop it
with a

Vulcan nerve pinch

 after only a half dozen or so files

were lost.

The disgruntled victim later said he had been sorely tempted to go
to Warren's office, tie Warren down in his chair in front of his
workstation, and then type 'delete *$' twice.

DWIM is often suggested in jest as a desired feature for a complex
program; it is also occasionally described as the single
instruction the ideal computer would have. Back when proofs of
program correctness were in vogue, there were also jokes about
'DWIMC' (Do What I Mean, Correctly). A related term, more often
seen as a verb, is DTRT (Do The Right Thing); see

Right

Thing
.

1.581 dynner

dynner: /din'r/ 32 bits, by analogy with
nybble
 and

byte
. Usage: rare and extremely silly. See also
playte
,

tayste
,
crumb
.

1.582 earthquake

earthquake: [IBM] n. The ultimate real-world shock test for
   computer hardware. Hackish sources at IBM deny the rumor that the
   Bay Area quake of 1989 was initiated by the company to test
   quality-assurance procedures at its California plants.

1.583   Easter egg

Easter egg: [from the custom of the Easter Egg hunt observed in
   the U.S. and many parts of Europe] n. 1. A message hidden in the
   object code of a program as a joke, intended to be found by persons
   disassembling or browsing the code. 2. A message, graphic, or
   sound effect emitted by a program (or, on a PC, the BIOS ROM) in
   response to some undocumented set of commands or keystrokes,
   intended as a joke or to display program credits. One well-known
   early Easter egg found in a couple of OSes caused them to respond
   to the command 'make love' with 'not war?'. Many
   personal computers have much more elaborate eggs hidden in ROM,
   including lists of the developers' names, political exhortations,
   snatches of music, and (in one case) graphics images of the entire
   development team.

1.584   Easter egging

               Easter egging: [IBM] n. The act of replacing unrelated components
more or less at random in hopes that a malfunction will go away.
Hackers consider this the normal operating mode of
               field

               circus
                techs and do not love them for it. See also the jokes
under
               field circus
               . Compare
               shotgun debugging
               .

1.585   eat flaming death

               eat flaming death: imp. A construction popularized among hackers ↩
                  by
the infamous
               CPU Wars
                comic; supposedly derive from a famously
turgid line in a WWII-era anti-Nazi propaganda comic that ran
"Eat flaming death, non-Aryan mongrels!" or something of the sort
(however, it is also reported that the Firesign Theater's
1975 album "In The Next World, You're On Your Own" included the
phrase "Eat flaming death, fascist media pigs"; this may have been
an influence). Used in humorously overblown expressions of
hostility. "Eat flaming death,
               EBCDIC
                users!"

1.586 EBCDIC

EBCDIC:: /eb's*-dik/, /eb'see`dik/, or /eb'k*-dik/ [abbreviation,
Extended Binary Coded Decimal Interchange Code] n. An alleged
character set used on IBM
dinosaur
s. It exists in at least six
mutually incompatible versions, all featuring such delights as
non-contiguous letter sequences and the absence of several ASCII
punctuation characters fairly important for modern computer
languages (exactly which characters are absent varies according to
which version of EBCDIC you're looking at). IBM adapted EBCDIC
from
punched card
 code in the early 1960s and promulgated it
as a customer-control tactic (see
connector conspiracy
),
spurning the already established ASCII standard. Today, IBM claims
to be an open-systems company, but IBM's own description of the
EBCDIC variants and how to convert between them is still internally
classified top-secret, burn-before-reading. Hackers blanch at the
very *name* of EBCDIC and consider it a manifestation of
purest
evil
. See also
fear and loathing
.

1.587 echo

echo: [FidoNet] n. A
topic group
 on
FidoNet
's echomail
system. Compare
newsgroup
.

1.588 eighty-column mind

eighty-column mind: [IBM] n. The sort said to be possessed by
persons for whom the transition from
punched card
 to tape was
traumatic (nobody has dared tell them about disks yet). It is said
that these people, including (according to an old joke) the founder

of IBM, will be buried 'face down, 9-edge first' (the 9-edge being
the bottom of the card). This directive is inscribed on IBM's
1402 and 1622 card readers and is referenced in a famous bit of
doggerel called "The Last Bug", the climactic lines of which
are as follows:

        He died at the console
        Of hunger and thirst.
        Next day he was buried,
        Face down, 9-edge first.

The eighty-column mind is thought by most hackers to dominate IBM's
customer base and its thinking. See
                IBM
                ,
                fear and

                loathing
                ,
                card walloper
                .

1.589   El Camino Bignum

        El Camino Bignum: /el' k*-mee'noh big'nuhm/ n. The road
mundanely called El Camino Real, a road through the San Francisco
peninsula that originally extended all the way down to Mexico City
and many portions of which are still intact. Navigation on the San
Francisco peninsula is usually done relative to El Camino Real,
which defines
                logical
                 north and south even though it isn't
really north-south many places. El Camino Real runs right past
Stanford University and so is familiar to hackers.

The Spanish word 'real' (which has two syllables: /ray-ol'/)
means 'royal'; El Camino Real is 'the royal road'. In the FORTRAN
language, a 'real' quantity is a number typically precise to seven
significant digits, and a 'double precision' quantity is a larger
floating-point number, precise to perhaps fourteen significant
digits (other languages have similar 'real' types).

When a hacker from MIT visited Stanford in 1976, he remarked what a
long road El Camino Real was. Making a pun on 'real', he started
calling it 'El Camino Double Precision' --- but when the hacker
was told that the road was hundreds of miles long, he renamed it
'El Camino Bignum', and that name has stuck. (See
                bignum
                .)

1.590   elder days

          elder days: n. The heroic age of hackerdom (roughly, pre-1980); ←↩
              the
era of the
          PDP-10
          ,
          TECO
          ,
          ITS
          , and the ARPANET. This
term has been rather consciously adopted from J. R. R. Tolkien's
fantasy epic "The Lord of the Rings". Compare
          Iron Age
          ;
see also
          elvish
           and
          Great Worm, the
          .

1.591   elegant

          elegant: [from mathematical usage] adj. Combining simplicity,
power, and a certain ineffable grace of design. Higher praise than
'clever', 'winning', or even
          cuspy
          .

The French aviator, adventurer, and author Antoine de
Saint-Exup'ery, probably best known for his classic children's
book "The Little Prince", was also an aircraft designer. He
gave us perhaps the best definition of engineering elegance when he
said "A designer knows he has achieved perfection not when there
is nothing left to add, but when there is nothing left to take
away."

1.592   elephantine

          elephantine: adj. Used of programs or systems that are both
conspicuous
          hog
          s (owing perhaps to poor design founded on

          brute force and ignorance
) and exceedingly
          hairy
           in source

form. An elephantine program may be functional and even friendly,
but (as in the old joke about being in bed with an elephant) it's
tough to have around all the same (and, like a pachyderm, difficult
to maintain). In extreme cases, hackers have been known to make
trumpeting sounds or perform expressive proboscatory mime at the
mention of the offending program. Usage: semi-humorous. Compare
'has the elephant nature' and the somewhat more pejorative

           monstrosity
           . See also
           second-system effect
            and

           baroque
           .

1.593   elevator controller

           elevator controller: n. An archetypal dumb embedded-systems
application, like
           toaster
            (which superseded it). During one
period (1983--84) in the deliberations of ANSI X3J11 (the
C standardization committee) this was the canonical example of a
really stupid, memory-limited computation environment. "You can't
require 'printf(3)' to be part of the default runtime library
--- what if you're targeting an elevator controller?" Elevator
controllers became important rhetorical weapons on both sides of
several
           holy wars
            .

1.594   ELIZA effect

           ELIZA effect: /*-li:'z* *-fekt'/ [AI community] n. The tendency of
humans to attach associations to terms from prior experience.
For example, there is nothing magic about the symbol '+' that
makes it well-suited to indicate addition; it's just that people
associate it with addition. Using '+' or 'plus' to mean addition
in a computer language is taking advantage of the ELIZA effect.

This term comes from the famous ELIZA program by Joseph Weizenbaum,
which simulated a Rogerian psychoanalyst by rephrasing many of the
patient's statements as questions and posing them to the patient.
It worked by simple pattern recognition and substitution of key
words into canned phrases. It was so convincing, however, that
there are many anecdotes about people becoming very emotionally
caught up in dealing with ELIZA. All this was due to people's

tendency to attach to words meanings which the computer never put
there. The ELIZA effect is a

                Good Thing
                 when writing a
programming language, but it can blind you to serious shortcomings
when analyzing an Artificial Intelligence system. Compare

                ad-hockery
                ; see also
                AI-complete
                .

1.595   elvish

                elvish: n. 1. The Tengwar of Feanor, a table of letterforms
resembling the beautiful Celtic half-uncial hand of the "Book
of Kells". Invented and described by J. R. R. Tolkien in "The
Lord of The Rings" as an orthography for his fictional 'elvish'
languages, this system (which is both visually and phonetically

                elegant
) has long fascinated hackers (who tend to be intrigued
by artificial languages in general). It is traditional for
graphics printers, plotters, window systems, and the like to
support a Feanorian typeface as one of their demo items. See also

                elder days
                . 2. By extension, any odd or unreadable typeface
produced by a graphics device. 3. The typeface mundanely called
'B"ocklin', an art-decoish display font.

1.596   EMACS

                EMACS: /ee'maks/ [from Editing MACroS] n. The ne plus ultra of
hacker editors, a programmable text editor with an entire LISP
system inside it. It was originally written by Richard Stallman in

                TECO
                 under
                ITS
                 at the MIT AI lab; AI Memo 554 described
it as "an advanced, self-documenting, customizable, extensible
real-time display editor". It has since been reimplemented any
number of times, by various hackers, and versions exist that run
under most major operating systems. Perhaps the most widely used
version, also written by Stallman and now called "
                GNU
                 EMACS"

or
                GNUMACS
                , runs principally under UNIX. It includes
facilities to run compilation subprocesses and send and receive
mail; many hackers spend up to 80% of their
                tube time
                 inside
it. Other variants include
                GOSMACS
                , CCA EMACS, UniPress
EMACS, Montgomery EMACS, jove, epsilon, and MicroEMACS.

Some EMACS versions running under window managers iconify as an
overflowing kitchen sink, perhaps to suggest the one feature the
editor does not (yet) include. Indeed, some hackers find EMACS too

                heavyweight
                 and
                baroque
                 for their taste, and expand the
name as 'Escape Meta Alt Control Shift' to spoof its heavy reliance
on keystrokes decorated with
                bucky bits
                . Other spoof
expansions include 'Eight Megabytes And Constantly Swapping',
'Eventually 'malloc()'s All Computer Storage', and 'EMACS
Makes A Computer Slow' (see
                recursive acronym
). See
also
                vi
                .

1.597 email

                email: /ee'mayl/ (also written 'e-mail') 1. n. Electronic mail
automatically passed through computer networks and/or via modems
over common-carrier lines. Contrast
                snail-mail
                ,

                paper-net
                ,
                voice-net
                . See
                network address
                .
2. vt. To send electronic mail.

Oddly enough, the word 'emailed' is actually listed in the OED; it
means "embossed (with a raised pattern) or arranged in a net work".
A use from 1480 is given. The word is derived from French
'emmailleure', network.

1.598   emoticon

emoticon: /ee-moh'ti-kon/ n. An ASCII glyph used to indicate an
emotional state in email or news. Although originally intended
mostly as jokes, emoticons (or some other explicit humor
indication) are virtually required under certain circumstances in
high-volume text-only communication forums such as USENET; the lack
of verbal and visual cues can otherwise cause what were intended to
be humorous, sarcastic, ironic, or otherwise non-100%-serious
comments to be badly misinterpreted (not always even by

newbie
s), resulting in arguments and
flame war
s.

Hundreds of emoticons have been proposed, but only a few are in
common use. These include:

  :-)
      'smiley face' (for humor, laughter, friendliness,
      occasionally sarcasm)

  :-(
      'frowney face' (for sadness, anger, or upset)

  ;-)
      'half-smiley' (
            ha ha only serious
            );
      also known as 'semi-smiley' or 'winkey face'.

  :-/
      'wry face'

(These may become more comprehensible if you tilt your head
sideways, to the left.)

The first two listed are by far the most frequently encountered.
Hyphenless forms of them are common on CompuServe, GEnie, and BIX;
see also
            bixie
            . On
            USENET
            , 'smiley' is often used as a
generic term synonymous with
            emoticon
            , as well as specifically
for the happy-face emoticon.

It appears that the emoticon was invented by one Scott Fahlman on
the CMU

```
            bboard
             systems around 1980.  He later wrote: "I wish I
had saved the original post, or at least recorded the date for
posterity, but I had no idea that I was starting something that
would soon pollute all the world's communication channels."  [GLS
confirms that he remembers this original posting].

Note for the
             newbie
             : Overuse of the smiley is a mark of
loserhood!  More than one per paragraph is a fairly sure sign that
you've gone over the line.
```

1.599   empire

```
empire: n. Any of a family of military simulations derived from a
   game written by Peter Langston many years ago.  Five or six
   multi-player variants of varying degrees of sophistication exist,
   and one single-player version implemented for both UNIX and VMS;
   the latter is even available as MS-DOS freeware.  All are
   notoriously addictive.
```

1.600   engine

```
             engine: n. 1. A piece of hardware that encapsulates some function
but can't be used without some kind of
             front end
             . Today we
have, especially, 'print engine': the guts of a laser printer.
2. An analogous piece of software; notionally, one that does a lot
of noisy crunching, such as a 'database engine'.

The hackish senses of 'engine' are actually close to its original,
pre-Industrial-Revolution sense of a skill, clever device, or
instrument (the word is cognate to 'ingenuity').  This sense had
not been completely eclipsed by the modern connotation of
power-transducing machinery in Charles Babbage's time, which
explains why he named the stored-program computer that
he designed in 1844 the 'Analytical Engine'.
```

1.601   English

```
             English: 1. n.,obs. The source code for a program, which may be in
   any language, as opposed to the linkable or executable binary
   produced from it by a compiler.  The idea behind the term is that
```

to a real hacker, a program written in his favorite programming
language is at least as readable as English. Usage: mostly by
old-time hackers, though recognizable in context. 2. The official
name of the database language used by the Pick Operating System,
actually a sort of crufty, brain-damaged SQL with delusions of
grandeur. The name permits
            marketroid
            s to say "Yes, and you
can program our computers in English!" to ignorant
            suit
            s
without quite running afoul of the truth-in-advertising laws.

1.602   enhancement

            enhancement: n.
            Marketroid
            -speak for a bug
            fix
            . This abuse
of language is a popular and time-tested way to turn incompetence
into increased revenue. A hacker being ironic would instead call
the fix a
            feature
             --- or perhaps save some effort by declaring
the bug itself to be a feature.

1.603   ENQ

            ENQ: /enkw/ or /enk/ [from the ASCII mnemonic ENQuire for
0000101] An on-line convention for querying someone's availability.
After opening a
            talk mode
             connection to someone apparently in
heavy hack mode, one might type 'SYN SYN ENQ?' (the SYNs
representing notional synchronization bytes), and expect a return
of
            ACK
             or
            NAK
             depending on whether or not the person felt
interruptible. Compare
            ping
            ,
            finger
            , and the usage of
'FOO?' listed under
            talk mode

.

1.604 EOF

EOF: /E-O-F/ [abbreviation, 'End Of File'] n. 1. [techspeak] The

out-of-band
 value returned by C's sequential character-input
functions (and their equivalents in other environments) when end of
file has been reached. This value is -1 under C
libraries postdating V6 UNIX, but was originally 0. 2. [UNIX] The
keyboard character (usually control-D, the ASCII EOT (End Of
Transmission) character) that is mapped by the terminal driver into
an end-of-file condition. 3. Used by extension in non-computer
contexts when a human is doing something that can be modeled as a
sequential read and can't go further. "Yeah, I looked for a list
of 360 mnemonics to post as a joke, but I hit EOF pretty fast; all
the library had was a
JCL
 manual." See also

EOL
.

1.605 EOL

EOL: /E-O-L/ [End Of Line] n. Syn. for
newline
, derived
perhaps from the original CDC6600 Pascal. Now rare, but widely
recognized and occasionally used for brevity. Used in the
example entry under
BNF
. See also
EOF
.

1.606 EOU

EOU: /E-O-U/ n. The mnemonic of a mythical ASCII control
character (End Of User) that would make an ASR-33 Teletype explode
on receipt. This construction parodies the numerous obscure
delimiter and control characters left in ASCII from the days when
it was associated more with wire-service teletypes than computers

(e.g., FS, GS, RS, US, EM, SUB, ETX, and esp. EOT). It is worth
remembering that ASR-33s were big, noisy mechanical beasts with a
lot of clattering parts; the notion that one might explode was
nowhere near as ridiculous as it might seem to someone sitting in
front of a
          tube
           or flatscreen today.

1.607   epoch

          epoch: [UNIX: prob. from astronomical timekeeping] n. The time
and date corresponding to 0 in an operating system's clock and
timestamp values. Under most UNIX versions the epoch is 00:00:00
GMT, January 1, 1970; under VMS, it's 00:00:00 of November 17, 1858
(base date of the U.S. Naval Observatory's ephemerides); on a
Macintosh, it's the midnight beginning January 1 1904. System time
is measured in seconds or
          tick
          s past the epoch. Weird
problems may ensue when the clock wraps around (see
          wrap

          around
          ), which is not necessarily a rare event; on systems
counting 10 ticks per second, a signed 32-bit count of ticks is
good only for 6.8 years. The 1-tick-per-second clock of UNIX is
good only until January 18, 2038, assuming at least some software
continues to consider it signed and that word lengths don't
increase by then. See also
          wall time
          .

1.608   epsilon

          epsilon: [see
          delta
          ] 1. n. A small quantity of anything.
"The cost is epsilon." 2. adj. Very small, negligible; less than

          marginal
          . "We can get this feature for epsilon cost."
3. 'within epsilon of': close enough to be indistinguishable for
all practical purposes, even closer than being 'within delta
of'. "That's not what I asked for, but it's within epsilon of
what I wanted." Alternatively, it may mean not close enough, but
very little is required to get it there: "My program is within
epsilon of working."

1.609   epsilon squared

           epsilon squared: n. A quantity even smaller than
           epsilon
           , as
small in comparison to epsilon as epsilon is to something normal;
completely negligible. If you buy a supercomputer for a million
dollars, the cost of the thousand-dollar terminal to go with it is

           epsilon
           , and the cost of the ten-dollar cable to connect them
is epsilon squared. Compare
           lost in the underflow
           ,
           lost

           in the noise
           .

1.610   era, the

           era, the: Syn.
           epoch
           . Webster's Unabridged makes these words
almost synonymous, but 'era' usually connotes a span of time rather
than a point in time. The
           epoch
            usage is recommended.

1.611   Eric Conspiracy

           Eric Conspiracy: n. A shadowy group of mustachioed hackers named
Eric first pinpointed as a sinister conspiracy by an infamous
talk.bizarre posting ca. 1986; this was doubtless influenced by the
numerous 'Eric' jokes in the Monty Python oeuvre. There do indeed
seem to be considerably more mustachioed Erics in hackerdom than
the frequency of these three traits can account for unless they are
correlated in some arcane way. Well-known examples include Eric
Allman (he of the 'Allman style' described under
           indent style
)
and Erik Fair (co-author of NNTP); your editor has heard from about
fifteen others by email, and the organization line 'Eric
Conspiracy Secret Laboratories' now emanates regularly from more

than one site.

1.612   Eris

Eris: /e'ris/ n. The Greek goddess of Chaos, Discord, Confusion,
and Things You Know Not Of; her name was latinized to Discordia and
she was worshiped by that name in Rome. Not a very friendly deity
in the Classical original, she was reinvented as a more benign
personification of creative anarchy starting in 1959 by the
adherents of
            Discordianism
             and has since been a semi-serious
subject of veneration in several 'fringe' cultures, including
hackerdom. See
            Discordianism
            ,
            Church of the SubGenius
            .

1.613   erotics

erotics: /ee-ro'tiks/ n. [Helsinki University of Technology,
   Finland] n. English-language university slang for electronics.
   Often used by hackers in Helsinki, maybe because good electronics
   excites them and makes them warm.

1.614   error 33

error 33: [XEROX PARC] n. 1. Predicating one research effort upon
   the success of another. 2. Allowing your own research effort to be
   placed on the critical path of some other project (be it a research
   effort or not).

1.615   evil

evil: adj. As used by hackers, implies that some system, program,
person, or institution is sufficiently maldesigned as to be not
worth the bother of dealing with. Unlike the adjectives in the

            cretinous
            /

```
          losing
          /
          brain-damaged
           series, 'evil' does
not imply incompetence or bad design, but rather a set of goals or
design criteria fatally incompatible with the speaker's.  This
usage is more an esthetic and engineering judgment than a moral one
in the mainstream sense.  "We thought about adding a
          Blue

          Glue
           interface but decided it was too evil to deal with."
"
          TECO
           is neat, but it can be pretty evil if you're prone to
typos."  Often pronounced with the first syllable lengthened, as
/eeee'vil/.  Compare
          evil and rude
          .
```

1.616   evil and rude

```
          evil and rude: adj. Both
          evil
           and
          rude
          , but with the
additional connotation that the rudeness was due to malice rather
than incompetence.  Thus, for example: Microsoft's Windows NT is
evil because it's a competent implementation of a bad design;
it's rude because it's gratuitously incompatible with UNIX in
places where compatibility would have been as easy and effective to
do; but it's evil and rude because the incompatibilities are
apparently there not to fix design bugs in UNIX but rather to lock
hapless customers and developers into the Microsoft way.  Hackish
evil and rude is close to the mainstream sense of
'evil'.
```

1.617   exa-

```
          exa-: /ek's*/ [SI] pref. See
          quantifiers
          .
```

1.618   examining the entrails

          examining the entrails: n. The process of
          grovel
          ling through
  a

          core dump
           or hex image in an attempt to discover the bug that
  brought a program or system down. The reference is to divination
  from the entrails of a sacrified animal. Compare
          runes
          ,

          incantation
          ,
          black art
          ,
          desk check
          .

1.619   EXCH

          EXCH: /eks'ch*/ or /eksch/ vt. To exchange two things, each
  for the other; to swap places. If you point to two people sitting
  down and say "Exch!", you are asking them to trade places. EXCH,
  meaning EXCHange, was originally the name of a PDP-10 instruction
  that exchanged the contents of a register and a memory location.
  Many newer hackers are probably thinking instead of the

          PostScript
           exchange operator (which is usually written in
  lowercase).

1.620   excl

          excl: /eks'kl/ n. Abbreviation for `exclamation point'. See

          bang
          ,
          shriek
          ,
          ASCII
          .

1.621   EXE

EXE: /eks'ee/ or /eek'see/ or /E-X-E/ n. An executable
   binary file. Some operating systems (notably MS-DOS, VMS, and
   TWENEX) use the extension .EXE to mark such files. This usage is
   also occasionally found among UNIX programmers even though UNIX
   executables don't have any required suffix.

1.622   exec

                  exec: /eg-zek'/ vt., n. 1. [UNIX: from 'execute'] Synonym for

                  chain
                  , derives from the 'exec(2)' call. 2. [from
   'executive'] obs. The command interpreter for an
                  OS
                   (see

                  shell
                  ); term esp. used around mainframes, and prob.
   derived from UNIVAC's archaic EXEC 2 and EXEC 8 operating systems.
   3. At IBM and VM/CMS shops, the equivalent of a shell command file
   (among VM/CMS users).

   The mainstream 'exec' as an abbreviation for (human) executive is
   not used. To a hacker, an 'exec' is a always a program,
   never a person.

1.623   exercise, left as an

                  exercise, left as an: [from technical books] Used to complete a
   proof when one doesn't mind a
                  handwave
                  , or to avoid one
   entirely. The complete phrase is: "The proof [or 'the rest'] is
   left as an exercise for the reader." This comment *has*
   occasionally been attached to unsolved research problems by authors
   possessed of either an evil sense of humor or a vast faith in the
   capabilities of their audiences.

1.624   external memory

external memory: n. A memo pad or written notes. "Hold on while
   I write that to external memory". The analogy is with store or

DRAM versus nonvolatile disk storage on computers.

1.625   eyeball search

```
            eyeball search: n.,v. To look for something in a mass of code or  ↩
                data
with one's own native optical sensors, as opposed to using some
sort of pattern matching software like
            grep
             or any other
automated search tool.  Also called a
            vgrep
            ; compare

            vdiff
            ,
            desk check
            .
```

1.626   face time

```
face time: n. Time spent interacting with somebody face-to-face (as
    opposed to via electronic links).  "Oh, yeah, I spent some face
    time with him at the last Usenix."
```

1.627   factor

```
            factor: n. See
            coefficient of X
            .
```

1.628   fall over

```
            fall over: [IBM] vi. Yet another synonym for
            crash
             or
            lose
            .
  'Fall over hard' equates to
            crash and burn
            .
```

1.629 fall through

                 fall through: v. (n. 'fallthrough', var. 'fall-through')
1. To exit a loop by exhaustion, i.e., by having fulfilled its exit
condition rather than via a break or exception condition that exits
from the middle of it. This usage appears to be *really* old,
dating from the 1940s and 1950s. 2. To fail a test that would have
passed control to a subroutine or some other distant portion of
code. 3. In C, 'fall-through' occurs when the flow of execution in
a switch statement reaches a 'case' label other than by
jumping there from the switch header, passing a point where one
would normally expect to find a 'break'. A trivial example:

```
  switch (color)
  {
  case GREEN:
     do_green();
     break;
  case PINK:
     do_pink();
     /* FALL THROUGH */
  case RED:
     do_red();
     break;
  default:
     do_blue();
     break;
  }
```

The variant spelling '/* FALL THRU */' is also common.

The effect of the above code is to 'do_green()' when color is
'GREEN', 'do_red()' when color is 'RED',
'do_blue()' on any other color other than 'PINK', and
(and this is the important part) 'do_pink()' *and then*
'do_red()' when color is 'PINK'. Fall-through is

            considered harmful
             by some, though there are contexts (such as
the coding of state machines) in which it is natural; it is
generally considered good practice to include a comment
highlighting the fall-through where one would normally expect a
break. See also
            Duff's Device
             .

1.630 fan

fan: n. Without qualification, indicates a fan of science
fiction, especially one who goes to
con
s and tends to hang out
with other fans. Many hackers are fans, so this term has been
imported from fannish slang; however, unlike much fannish slang it
is recognized by most non-fannish hackers. Among SF fans the
plural is correctly 'fen', but this usage is not automatic to
hackers. "Laura reads the stuff occasionally but isn't really a
fan."

1.631 fandango on core

fandango on core: [UNIX/C hackers, from the Mexican dance] n.
In C, a wild pointer that runs out of bounds, causing a
core

dump
, or corrupts the 'malloc(3)'
arena
 in such a way as
to cause mysterious failures later on, is sometimes said to have
'done a fandango on core'. On low-end personal machines without an
MMU, this can corrupt the OS itself, causing massive lossage.
Other frenetic dances such as the rhumba, cha-cha, or watusi, may
be substituted. See
aliasing bug

,
precedence lossage

,

smash the stack

,
memory leak

,
memory smash

,

overrun screw

,
core

.

1.632 FAQ

FAQ: /F-A-Q/ or /fak/ [USENET] n. 1. A Frequently Asked Question.
   2. A compendium of accumulated lore, posted periodically to

high-volume newsgroups in an attempt to forestall such questions.
Some people prefer the term 'FAQ list' or 'FAQL' /fa'kl/,
reserving 'FAQ' for sense 1.

This lexicon itself serves as a good example of a collection of one
kind of lore, although it is far too big for a regular FAQ
posting. Examples: "What is the proper type of NULL?" and
"What's that funny name for the '#' character?" are both
Frequently Asked Questions. Several FAQs refer readers to
this file.

1.633   FAQ list

FAQ list: /F-A-Q list/ or /fak list/ [USENET] n. Syn
FAQ
,
sense 2.

1.634   FAQL

FAQL: /fa'kl/ n. Syn.
FAQ list
.

1.635   faradize

faradize: /far'*-di:z/ [US Geological Survey] v. To start any
   hyper-addictive process or trend, or to continue adding current to
   such a trend. Telling one user about a new octo-tetris game you
   compiled would be a faradizing act --- in two weeks you might find
   your entire department playing the faradic game.

1.636   farkled

farkled: /far'kld/ [DeVry Institute of Technology, Atlanta] adj.
   Syn.
hosed
   . Poss. owes something to Yiddish 'farblondjet'
and/or the 'Farkle Family' skits on Saturday Nite Live.

1.637   farming

farming: [Adelaide University, Australia] n. What the heads of a
disk drive are said to do when they plow little furrows in the
magnetic media. Associated with a
crash
. Typically used as
follows: "Oh no, the machine has just crashed; I hope the hard
drive hasn't gone
farming
 again."

1.638   fascist

fascist: adj. 1. Said of a computer system with excessive or
annoying security barriers, usage limits, or access policies. The
implication is that said policies are preventing hackers from
getting interesting work done. The variant 'fascistic' seems to
have been preferred at MIT, poss. by analogy with 'touristic'
(see
tourist
). 2. In the design of languages and other
software tools, 'the fascist alternative' is the most restrictive
and structured way of capturing a particular function; the
implication is that this may be desirable in order to simplify the
implementation or provide tighter error checking. Compare

bondage-and-discipline language
, although that term is global
rather than local.

1.639   fat electrons

fat electrons: n. Old-time hacker David Cargill's theory on the
causation of computer glitches. Your typical electric utility
draws its line current out of the big generators with a pair of
coil taps located near the top of the dynamo. When the normal tap
brushes get dirty, they take them off line to clean them up, and use
special auxiliary taps on the *bottom* of the coil. Now,
this is a problem, because when they do that they get not ordinary
or 'thin' electrons, but the fat'n'sloppy electrons that are
heavier and so settle to the bottom of the generator. These flow
down ordinary wires just fine, but when they have to turn a sharp
corner (as in an integrated-circuit via), they're apt to get stuck.
This is what causes computer glitches. [Fascinating. Obviously,
fat electrons must gain mass by
bogon
 absorption --- ESR]

Compare
>   bogon
>   ,
>   magic smoke
>   .

1.640 faulty

>   faulty: adj. Non-functional; buggy. Same denotation as
>
>   bletcherous
>   ,
>   losing
>   , q.v., but the connotation is much
milder.

1.641 fd leak

>   fd leak: /F-D leek/ n. A kind of programming bug analogous to a
>
>   core leak
>   , in which a program fails to close file descriptors
('fd's) after file operations are completed, and thus eventually
runs out of them. See
>   leak
>   .

1.642 fear and loathing

>   fear and loathing: [from Hunter S. Thompson] n. A state inspired ↩
>   by the
prospect of dealing with certain real-world systems and standards
that are totally
>   brain-damaged
>   but ubiquitous --- Intel 8086s,
or
>   COBOL
>   , or
>   EBCDIC
>   , or any
>   IBM
>   machine except the
Rios (a.k.a. the RS/6000). "Ack! They want PCs to be able to
talk to the AI machine. Fear and loathing time!"

1.643 feature

feature: n. 1. A good property or behavior (as of a program).
Whether it was intended or not is immaterial. 2. An intended
property or behavior (as of a program). Whether it is good or not
is immaterial (but if bad, it is also a
misfeature
). 3. A
surprising property or behavior; in particular, one that is
purposely inconsistent because it works better that way --- such an
inconsistency is therefore a
feature
 and not a
bug
. This
kind of feature is sometimes called a
miswart
; see that entry
for a classic example. 4. A property or behavior that is
gratuitous or unnecessary, though perhaps also impressive or cute.
For example, one feature of Common LISP's `format' function is
the ability to print numbers in two different Roman-numeral formats
(see
bells, whistles, and gongs
). 5. A property or behavior
that was put in to help someone else but that happens to be in your
way. 6. A bug that has been documented. To call something a
feature sometimes means the author of the program did not consider
the particular case, and that the program responded in a way that
was unexpected but not strictly incorrect. A standard joke is that
a bug can be turned into a
feature
 simply by documenting it
(then theoretically no one can complain about it because it's in
the manual), or even by simply declaring it to be good. "That's
not a bug, that's a feature!" is a common catchphrase. See also

feetch feetch
,
creeping featurism
,
wart
,
green

lightning
.

The relationship among bugs, features, misfeatures, warts, and
miswarts might be clarified by the following hypothetical exchange
between two hackers on an airliner:

A: "This seat doesn't recline."

B: "That's not a bug, that's a feature. There is an emergency
exit door built around the window behind you, and the route has to
be kept clear."

A: "Oh. Then it's a misfeature; they should have increased the
spacing between rows here."

B: "Yes. But if they'd increased spacing in only one section it
would have been a wart --- they would've had to make
nonstandard-length ceiling panels to fit over the displaced
seats."

A: "A miswart, actually. If they increased spacing throughout
they'd lose several rows and a chunk out of the profit margin. So
unequal spacing would actually be the Right Thing."

B: "Indeed."

'Undocumented feature' is a common, allegedly humorous euphemism
for a

            bug
            .

1.644   feature creature

            feature creature: [poss. fr. slang 'creature feature' for a
horror movie] n. 1. One who loves to add features to designs or
programs, perhaps at the expense of coherence, concision, or

            taste
            . 2. Alternately, a mythical being that induces
otherwise rational programmers to perpetrate such crocks. See also

            feeping creaturism
            ,
            creeping featurism
            .

1.645   feature key

            feature key: n. The Macintosh key with the cloverleaf graphic on
its keytop; sometimes referred to as 'flower', 'pretzel',
'clover', 'propeller', 'beanie' (an apparent reference to the
major feature of a propeller beanie),
            splat
            , or the 'command

key'. The Mac's equivalent of an
                alt
                 key (and so labeled on
on some Mac II keyboards). The proliferation of terms for this
creature may illustrate one subtle peril of iconic interfaces.

Many people have been mystified by the cloverleaf-like symbol that
appears on the feature key. Its oldest name is 'cross of St.
Hannes', but it occurs in pre-Christian Viking art as a decorative
motif. Throughout Scandinavia today the road agencies use it to
mark sites of historical interest. Apple picked up the symbol from
an early Mac developer who happened to be Swedish. Apple
documentation gives the translation "interesting feature"!

There is some dispute as to the proper (Swedish) name of this
symbol. It technically stands for the word 'sev"ardhet'
(interesting feature) many of these are old churches. Some Swedes
report as an idiom for it the word 'kyrka', cognate to English
'church' and Scots-dialect 'kirk' but pronounced /shir'k*/ in
modern Swedish. Others say this is nonsense.

1.646   feature shock

feature shock: [from Alvin Toffler's book title "Future
   Shock"] n. A user's (or programmer's!) confusion when confronted
   with a package that has too many features and poor introductory
   material.

1.647   featurectomy

                featurectomy: /fee'ch*r-ek't*-mee/ n. The act of removing a
feature from a program. Featurectomies come in two flavors, the
'righteous' and the 'reluctant'. Righteous featurectomies are
performed because the remover believes the program would be more
elegant without the feature, or there is already an equivalent and
better way to achieve the same end. (Doing so is not quite the
same thing as removing a
                misfeature
                .) Reluctant
featurectomies are performed to satisfy some external constraint
such as code size or execution speed.

1.648   feep

feep: /feep/ 1. n. The soft electronic 'bell' sound of a
display terminal (except for a VT-52); a beep (in fact, the
microcomputer world seems to prefer
            beep
). 2. vi. To cause
the display to make a feep sound. ASR-33s (the original TTYs) do
not feep; they have mechanical bells that ring. Alternate forms:

            beep
            , 'bleep', or just about anything suitably
onomatopoeic. (Jeff MacNelly, in his comic strip "Shoe", uses
the word 'eep' for sounds made by computer terminals and video
games; this is perhaps the closest written approximation yet.) The
term 'breedle' was sometimes heard at SAIL, where the terminal
bleepers are not particularly soft (they sound more like the
musical equivalent of a raspberry or Bronx cheer; for a close
approximation, imagine the sound of a Star Trek communicator's beep
lasting for five seconds). The 'feeper' on a VT-52 has been
compared to the sound of a '52 Chevy stripping its gears. See also

            ding
            .

1.649   feeper

feeper: /fee'pr/ n. The device in a terminal or workstation (←
            usually
a loudspeaker of some kind) that makes the
            feep
            sound.

1.650   feeping creature

feeping creature: [from
            feeping creaturism
            ] n. An unnecessary
feature; a bit of
            chrome
            that, in the speaker's judgment, is
the camel's nose for a whole horde of new features.

1.651   feeping creaturism

feeping creaturism: /fee'ping kree`ch*r-izm/ n. A deliberate
spoonerism for
creeping featurism
, meant to imply that the
system or program in question has become a misshapen creature of
hacks. This term isn't really well defined, but it sounds so neat
that most hackers have said or heard it. It is probably reinforced
by an image of terminals prowling about in the dark making their
customary noises.

1.652   feetch feetch

feetch feetch: /feech feech/ interj. If someone tells you about
some new improvement to a program, you might respond: "Feetch,
feetch!" The meaning of this depends critically on vocal
inflection. With enthusiasm, it means something like "Boy, that's
great! What a great hack!" Grudgingly or with obvious doubt, it
means "I don't know; it sounds like just one more unnecessary and
complicated thing". With a tone of resignation, it means, "Well,
I'd rather keep it simple, but I suppose it has to be done".

1.653   fence

fence: n. 1. A sequence of one or more distinguished
(
out-of-band
) characters (or other data items), used to
delimit a piece of data intended to be treated as a unit (the
computer-science literature calls this a `sentinel'). The NUL
(ASCII 0000000) character that terminates strings in C is a fence.
Hex FF is also (though slightly less frequently) used this way.
See
zigamorph
. 2. An extra data value inserted in an array or
other data structure in order to allow some normal test on the
array's contents also to function as a termination test. For
example, a highly optimized routine for finding a value in an array
might artificially place a copy of the value to be searched for
after the last slot of the array, thus allowing the main search
loop to search for the value without having to check at each pass
whether the end of the array had been reached. 3. [among users of
optimizing compilers] Any technique, usually exploiting knowledge
about the compiler, that blocks certain optimizations. Used when
explicit mechanisms are not available or are overkill. Typically a
hack: "I call a dummy procedure there to force a flush of the
optimizer's register-coloring info" can be expressed by the
shorter "That's a fence procedure".

1.654   fencepost error

fencepost error: n. 1. A problem with the discrete equivalent of a
boundary condition, often exhibited in programs by iterative
loops. From the following problem: "If you build a fence 100 feet
long with posts 10 feet apart, how many posts do you need?"
(Either 9 or 11 is a better answer than the obvious 10.) For
example, suppose you have a long list or array of items, and want
to process items m through n; how many items are there? The
obvious answer is n – m, but that is off by one; the right
answer is n – m + 1. A program that used the 'obvious'
formula would have a fencepost error in it. See also
            zeroth
               and
            off-by-one error
            , and note that not all off-by-one errors
are fencepost errors. The game of Musical Chairs involves a
catastrophic off-by-one error where N people try to sit in
N – 1 chairs, but it's not a fencepost error. Fencepost
errors come from counting things rather than the spaces between
them, or vice versa, or by neglecting to consider whether one
should count one or both ends of a row. 2. [rare] An error
induced by unexpected regularities in input values, which can (for
instance) completely thwart a theoretically efficient binary tree or
hash table implementation. (The error here involves the difference
between expected and worst case behaviors of an algorithm.)

1.655   fepped out

fepped out: /fept owt/ adj. The Symbolics 3600 LISP Machine has a
Front-End Processor called a 'FEP' (compare sense 2 of
            box
).
When the main processor gets
            wedged
            , the FEP takes control of
the keyboard and screen. Such a machine is said to have
'fepped out' or 'dropped into the fep'.

1.656   FidoNet

FidoNet: n. A worldwide hobbyist network of personal computers
which exchanges mail, discussion groups, and files. Founded in 1984
and originally consisting only of IBM PCs and compatibles, FidoNet
now includes such diverse machines as Apple][s, Ataris, Amigas,
and UNIX systems. Though it is much younger than
            USENET
            ,

FidoNet is already (in early 1991) a significant fraction of
USENET's size at some 8000 systems.

1.657   field circus

field circus: [a derogatory pun on 'field service'] n. The field
service organization of any hardware manufacturer, but especially
DEC. There is an entire genre of jokes about DEC field circus
engineers:

```
  Q: How can you recognize a DEC field circus engineer
     with a flat tire?
  A: He's changing one tire at a time to see which one is flat.

  Q: How can you recognize a DEC field circus engineer
     who is out of gas?
  A: He's changing one tire at a time to see which one is flat.
```

[See

Easter egging
 for additional insight on these jokes.]

There is also the 'Field Circus Cheer' (from the
plan file
 for
DEC on MIT-AI):

```
  Maynard! Maynard!
  Don't mess with us!
  We're mean and we're tough!
  If you get us confused
  We'll screw up your stuff.
```

(DEC's service HQ is located in Maynard, Massachusetts.)

1.658   field servoid

field servoid: [play on 'android'] /fee'ld ser'voyd/ n.
Representative of a field service organization (see
field

circus
). This has many of the implications of
droid
.

1.659 Fight-o-net

Fight-o-net: [FidoNet] n. Deliberate distortion of
FidoNet
,
often applied after a flurry of
flamage
in a particular

echo
, especially the SYSOP echo or Fidonews (see {'Snooze}).

1.660 File Attach

File Attach: [FidoNet] 1. n. A file sent along with a mail message
from one BBS to another. 2. vt. Sending someone a file by using
the File Attach option in a BBS mailer.

1.661 File Request

File Request: [FidoNet] 1. n. The
FidoNet
equivalent of

FTP
, in which one BBS system automatically dials another and

snarf
s one or more files. Often abbreviated 'FReq'; files
are often announced as being "available for FReq" in the same way
that files are announced as being "available for/by anonymous
FTP" on the Internet. 2. vt. The act of getting a copy of a file
by using the File Request option of the BBS mailer.

1.662 file signature

file signature: n. A
magic number
, sense 3.

1.663   filk

filk: /filk/ [from SF fandom, where a typo for 'folk' was
adopted as a new word] n.,v. A popular or folk song with lyrics
revised or completely new lyrics, intended for humorous effect when
read, and/or to be sung late at night at SF conventions. There is a
flourishing subgenre of these called 'computer filks', written by
hackers and often containing rather sophisticated technical humor.
See
double bucky
 for an example. Compare
grilf
,

hing
 and
newsfroup
.

1.664   film at 11

film at 11: [MIT: in parody of TV newscasters] 1. Used in
conversation to announce ordinary events, with a sarcastic
implication that these events are earth-shattering. "
ITS
 crashes; film at 11." "Bug found in scheduler; film at 11."
2. Also widely used outside MIT to indicate that additional
information will be available at some future time, *without*
the implication of anything particularly ordinary about the
referenced event. For example, "The mail file server died this
morning; we found garbage all over the root directory. Film at
11." would indicate that a major failure had occurred but that the
people working on it have no additional information about it as
yet; use of the phrase in this way suggests gently that the problem
is liable to be fixed more quickly if the people doing the fixing
can spend time doing the fixing rather than responding to
questions, the answers to which will appear on the normal "11:00
news", if people will just be patient.

1.665   filter

filter: [orig.
UNIX
, now also in
MS-DOS
] n. A program that
processes an input data stream into an output data stream in some
well-defined way, and does no I/O to anywhere else except possibly

on error conditions; one designed to be used as a stage in a
'pipeline' (see
                plumbing
). Compare
                sponge
                .

1.666 Finagle's Law

                Finagle's Law: n. The generalized or 'folk' version of

                Murphy's Law
                , fully named "Finagle's Law of Dynamic
Negatives" and usually rendered "Anything that can go wrong,
will". One variant favored among hackers is "The perversity of
the Universe tends towards a maximum" (but see also
                Hanlon's

                Razor
). The label 'Finagle's Law' was popularized by SF author
Larry Niven in several stories depicting a frontier culture of
asteroid miners; this 'Belter' culture professed a religion
and/or running joke involving the worship of the dread god Finagle
and his mad prophet Murphy.

1.667 fine

                fine: [WPI] adj. Good, but not good enough to be
                cuspy
                . The word
'fine' is used elsewhere, of course, but without the implicit
comparison to the higher level implied by
                cuspy
                .

1.668 finger

                finger: [WAITS, via BSD UNIX] 1. n. A program that displays
information about a particular user or all users logged on the
system, or a remote system. Typically shows full name, last login
time, idle time, terminal line, and terminal location (where
applicable). May also display a
                plan file
                 left by the user

```
(see also
            Hacking X for Y
            ).  2. vt. To apply finger to a
username.  3. vt. By extension, to check a human's current state by
any means.  "Foodp?"  "T!"  "OK, finger Lisa and see if she's
idle."  4. Any picture (composed of ASCII characters) depicting
'the finger'.  Originally a humorous component of one's plan file
to deter the curious fingerer (sense 2), it has entered the arsenal
of some
            flamer
            s.
```

1.669   finger-pointing syndrome

```
finger-pointing syndrome: n. All-too-frequent result of bugs, esp.
   in new or experimental configurations.  The hardware vendor points
   a finger at the software.  The software vendor points a finger
   at the hardware.  All the poor users get is the finger.
```

1.670   finn

```
            finn: [IRC] v. To pull rank on somebody based on the amount of
   time one has spent on
            IRC
            .  The term derives from the fact
   that IRC was originally written in Finland in 1987.
```

1.671   firebottle

```
            firebottle: n. A large, primitive, power-hungry active electrical
   device, similar in function to a FET but constructed out of glass,
   metal, and vacuum.  Characterized by high cost, low density, low
   reliability, high-temperature operation, and high power
   dissipation.  Sometimes mistakenly called a 'tube' in the U.S.
   or a 'valve' in England; another hackish term is
            glassfet
            .
```

1.672   firefighting

firefighting: n. 1. What sysadmins have to do to correct sudden
operational problems. An opposite of hacking. "Been hacking your
new newsreader?" "No, a power glitch hosed the network and I spent
the whole afternoon fighting fires." 2. The act of throwing lots
of manpower and late nights at a project, esp. to get it out
before deadline. See also

gang bang

,

Mongolian Hordes

technique
; however, the term 'firefighting' connotes that the
effort is going into chasing bugs rather than adding features.

1.673   firehose syndrome

firehose syndrome: n. In mainstream folklore it is observed that
trying to drink from a firehose can be a good way to rip your lips
off. On computer networks, the absence or failure of flow control
mechanisms can lead to situations in which the sending system
sprays a massive flood of packets at an unfortunate receiving
system, more than it can handle. Compare

overrun

,

buffer

overflow

.

1.674   firewall code

firewall code: n. 1. The code you put in a system (say, a
telephone switch) to make sure that the users can't do any
damage. Since users always want to be able to do everything but
never want to suffer for any mistakes, the construction of a
firewall is a question not only of defensive coding but also of
interface presentation, so that users don't even get curious about
those corners of a system where they can burn themselves.
2. Any sanity check inserted to catch a

can't happen

error.
Wise programmers often change code to fix a bug twice: once to fix
the bug, and once to insert a firewall which would have arrested
the bug before it did quite as much damage.

1.675   firewall machine

firewall machine: n. A dedicated gateway machine with special
security precautions on it, used to service outside network
connections and dial-in lines. The idea is to protect a cluster of
more loosely administered machines hidden behind it from

cracker
s. The typical firewall is an inexpensive micro-based
UNIX box kept clean of critical data, with a bunch of modems and
public network ports on it but just one carefully watched
connection back to the rest of the cluster. The special
precautions may include threat monitoring, callback, and even a
complete
iron box
 keyable to particular incoming IDs or
activity patterns. Syn.
flytrap
,
Venus flytrap
.

1.676   fireworks mode

fireworks mode: n. The mode a machine is sometimes said to be in ←↩
                 when
it is performing a
crash and burn
 operation.

1.677   firmy

firmy: /fer'mee/ Syn.
stiffy
 (a 3.5-inch floppy disk).

1.678   fish

fish: [Adelaide University, Australia] n. 1. Another
metasyntactic

variable
. See

```
            foo
            . Derived originally from the Monty Python
skit in the middle of "The Meaning of Life" entitled
"Find the Fish".  2. A pun for 'microfiche'.  A microfiche
file cabinet may be referred to as a 'fish tank'.
```

1.679 FISH queue

```
FISH queue: [acronym, by analogy with FIFO (First In, First Out)]
   n. 'First In, Still Here'.  A joking way of pointing out that
   processing of a particular sequence of events or requests has
   stopped dead.  Also 'FISH mode' and 'FISHnet'; the latter
   may be applied to any network that is running really slowly or
   exhibiting extreme flakiness.
```

1.680 FITNR

```
FITNR: // [Thinking Machines, Inc.] Fixed In the Next Release.
   A written-only notation attached to bug reports.  Often wishful
   thinking.
```

1.681 fix

```
fix: n.,v. What one does when a problem has been reported too many
   times to be ignored.
```

1.682 FIXME

```
            FIXME: imp. A standard tag often put in C comments near a piece of
code that needs work.  The point of doing so is that a 'grep'
or a similar pattern-matching tool can find all such places quickly.

   FIXME: note this is common in
            GNU
             code.

   Compare
            XXX
            .
```

1.683 flag

flag: n. A variable or quantity that can take on one of two
values; a bit, particularly one that is used to indicate one of two
outcomes or is used to control which of two things is to be done.
"This flag controls whether to clear the screen before printing
the message." "The program status word contains several flag
bits." Used of humans analogously to
bit
. See also

hidden flag
,
mode bit
.

1.684 flag day

flag day: n. A software change that is neither forward- nor
backward-compatible, and which is costly to make and costly to
reverse. "Can we install that without causing a flag day for all
users?" This term has nothing to do with the use of the word

flag
to mean a variable that has two values. It came into use
when a massive change was made to the
Multics
timesharing
system to convert from the old ASCII code to the new one; this was
scheduled for Flag Day (a U.S. holiday), June 14, 1966. See also

backward combatability
.

1.685 flaky

flaky: adj. (var sp. 'flakey') Subject to frequent
lossage
.
This use is of course related to the common slang use of the word
to describe a person as eccentric, crazy, or just unreliable. A
system that is flaky is working, sort of --- enough that you are
tempted to try to use it --- but fails frequently enough that the
odds in favor of finishing what you start are low. Commonwealth
hackish prefers
dodgy
or
wonky

.

1.686 flamage

            flamage: /flay'm*j/ n. Flaming verbiage, esp. high-noise,
low-signal postings to
            USENET
             or other electronic
            fora
            .
Often in the phrase 'the usual flamage'. 'Flaming' is the act
itself; 'flamage' the content; a 'flame' is a single flaming
message. See
            flame
            .

1.687 flame

            flame: 1. vi. To post an email message intended to insult and
provoke. 2. vi. To speak incessantly and/or rabidly on some
relatively uninteresting subject or with a patently ridiculous
attitude. 3. vt. Either of senses 1 or 2, directed with
hostility at a particular person or people. 4. n. An instance of
flaming. When a discussion degenerates into useless controversy,
one might tell the participants "Now you're just flaming" or
"Stop all that flamage!" to try to get them to cool down (so to
speak).

USENETter Marc Ramsey, who was at WPI from 1972 to 1976, adds: "I
am 99% certain that the use of 'flame' originated at WPI. Those
who made a nuisance of themselves insisting that they needed to use
a TTY for 'real work' came to be known as 'flaming asshole lusers'.
Other particularly annoying people became 'flaming asshole ravers',
which shortened to 'flaming ravers', and ultimately 'flamers'. I
remember someone picking up on the Human Torch pun, but I don't
think 'flame on/off' was ever much used at WPI." See also

            asbestos
            .

The term may have been independently invented at several different
places; it is also reported that 'flaming' was in use to mean
something like 'interminably drawn-out semi-serious discussions'
(late-night bull sessions) at Carleton College during 1968--1971.

It is possible that the hackish sense of 'flame' is much older than
that. The poet Chaucer was also what passed for a wizard hacker in
his time; he wrote a treatise on the astrolabe, the most advanced

computing device of the day. In Chaucer's "Troilus and
Cressida", Cressida laments her inability to grasp the proof of a
particular mathematical theorem; her uncle Pandarus then observes
that it's called "the fleminge of wrecches." This phrase seems
to have been intended in context as "that which puts the wretches
to flight" but was probably just as ambiguous in Middle English as
"the flaming of wretches" would be today. One suspects that
Chaucer would feel right at home on USENET.

1.688   flame bait

flame bait: n. A posting intended to trigger a
flame war
, or one
that invites flames in reply.

1.689   flame on

flame on: vi.,interj. 1. To begin to
flame
. The punning
reference to Marvel Comics's Human Torch is no longer widely
recognized. 2. To continue to flame. See
rave
,
burble
.

1.690   flame war

flame war: n. (var. 'flamewar') An acrimonious dispute,
especially when conducted on a public electronic forum such as

USENET
.

1.691   flamer

flamer: n. One who habitually
flame
s. Said esp. of obnoxious

USENET
 personalities.

1.692 flap

flap: vt. 1. To unload a DECtape (so it goes flap, flap,
flap...). Old-time hackers at MIT tell of the days when the
disk was device 0 and
microtape
s were 1, 2,... and
attempting to flap device 0 would instead start a motor banging
inside a cabinet near the disk. 2. By extension, to unload any
magnetic tape. See also
macrotape
. Modern cartridge tapes no
longer actually flap, but the usage has remained. (The term could
well be re-applied to DEC's TK50 cartridge tape drive, a
spectacularly misengineered contraption which makes a loud flapping
sound, almost like an old reel-type lawnmower, in one of its many
tape-eating failure modes.)

1.693 flarp

flarp: /flarp/ [Rutgers University] n. Yet another
metasyntactic

variable
 (see
foo
). Among those who use it, it is associated
with a legend that any program not containing the word 'flarp'
somewhere will not work. The legend is discreetly silent on the
reliability of programs which *do* contain the magic word.

1.694 flat

flat: adj. 1. Lacking any complex internal structure. "That

bitty box

has only a flat filesystem, not a hierarchical
one." The verb form is
            flatten
            . 2. Said of a memory
architecture (like that of the VAX or 680x0) that is one big linear
address space (typically with each possible value of a processor
register corresponding to a unique core address), as opposed to a
'segmented' architecture (like that of the 80x86) in which
addresses are composed from a base-register/offset pair (segmented
designs are generally considered
            cretinous
).

Note that sense 1 (at least with respect to filesystems) is usually
used pejoratively, while sense 2 is a
            Good Thing
            .

1.695   flat-ASCII

            flat-ASCII: adj. Said of a text file that contains only 7-bit
ASCII characters and uses only ASCII-standard control characters
(that is, has no embedded codes specific to a particular text
formatter markup language, or output device, and no

            meta
            -characters). Syn.
            plain-ASCII
            . Compare

            flat-file
            .

1.696   flat-file

            flat-file: adj. A
            flatten
            ed representation of some database or
tree or network structure as a single file from which the
structure could implicitly be rebuilt, esp. one in
            flat-ASCII
               form. See also
            sharchive
            .

1.697   flatten

flatten: vt. To remove structural information, esp. to filter
something with an implicit tree structure into a simple sequence of
leaves; also tends to imply mapping to
flat-ASCII
. "This code
flattens an expression with parentheses into an equivalent

canonical
 form."

1.698   flavor

flavor: n. 1. Variety, type, kind. "DDT commands come in two
flavors." "These lights come in two flavors, big red ones and
small green ones." See
vanilla
. 2. The attribute that causes
something to be
flavorful
. Usually used in the phrase "yields
additional flavor". "This convention yields additional flavor by
allowing one to print text either right-side-up or upside-down."
See
vanilla
. This usage was certainly reinforced by the
terminology of quantum chromodynamics, in which quarks (the
constituents of, e.g., protons) come in six flavors (up, down,
strange, charm, top, bottom) and three colors (red, blue, green)
--- however, hackish use of 'flavor' at MIT predated QCD. 3. The
term for 'class' (in the object-oriented sense) in the LISP Machine
Flavors system. Though the Flavors design has been superseded
(notably by the Common LISP CLOS facility), the term 'flavor' is
still used as a general synonym for 'class' by some LISP hackers.

1.699   flavorful

flavorful: adj. Full of
flavor
 (sense 2); esthetically pleasing. See

random
 and
losing
 for antonyms. See also the entries for

taste

```
 and
elegant
.
```

1.700 flippy

```
flippy: /flip'ee/ n. A single-sided floppy disk altered for
   double-sided use by addition of a second write-notch, so called
   because it must be flipped over for the second side to be
   accessible.  No longer common.
```

1.701 flood

```
            flood: [IRC] v. To dump large amounts of text onto an
            IRC
               channel.  This is especially rude when the text is  ←↩
                   uninteresting
  and the other users are trying to carry on a serious conversation.
```

1.702 flowchart

```
            flowchart:: [techspeak] n. An archaic form of visual control-flow
  specification employing arrows and 'speech balloons' of various
  shapes.  Hackers never use flowcharts, consider them extremely
  silly, and associate them with
            COBOL
             programmers,
            card

            walloper
            s, and other lower forms of life.  This attitude follows
  from the observations that flowcharts (at least from a hacker's
  point of view) are no easier to read than code, are less precise,
  and tend to fall out of sync with the code (so that they either
  obfuscate it rather than explaining it, or require extra
  maintenance effort that doesn't improve the code).  See also

            pdl
            , sense 3.
```

1.703 flower key

```
flower key: [Mac users] n. See
feature key
.
```

1.704 flush

flush: v. 1. To delete something, usually superfluous, or to abort
   an operation. "All that nonsense has been flushed." 2. [UNIX/C]
   To force buffered I/O to disk, as with an 'fflush(3)' call.
   This is *not* an abort or deletion as in sense 1, but a
   demand for early completion! 3. To leave at the end of a day's
   work (as opposed to leaving for a meal). "I'm going to flush
   now." "Time to flush." 4. To exclude someone from an activity,
   or to ignore a person.

   'Flush' was standard ITS terminology for aborting an output
   operation; one spoke of the text that would have been printed, but
   was not, as having been flushed. It is speculated that this term
   arose from a vivid image of flushing unwanted characters by hosing
   down the internal output buffer, washing the characters away before
   they could be printed. The UNIX/C usage, on the other hand, was
   propagated by the 'fflush(3)' call in C's standard I/O library
   (though it is reported to have been in use among BLISS programmers
   at DEC and on Honeywell and IBM machines as far back as 1965).
   UNIX/C hackers find the ITS usage confusing, and vice versa.

1.705 flypage

```
flypage: /fli:'payj/ n. (alt. 'fly page') A
banner
, sense
```
   1.

1.706 Flyspeck 3

Flyspeck 3: n. Standard name for any font that is so tiny as to be
   unreadable (by analogy with names like 'Helvetica 10' for
   10-point Helvetica). Legal boilerplate is usually printed in
   Flyspeck 3.

1.707 flytrap

```
        flytrap: n. See
        firewall machine
        .
```

1.708 FM

```
        FM: /F-M/ n. *Not* `Frequency Modulation' but rather an
  abbreviation for `Fucking Manual', the back-formation from

        RTFM
        . Used to refer to the manual itself in the
        RTFM
        .
  "Have you seen the Networking FM lately?"
```

1.709 fnord

```
        fnord: [from the "Illuminatus Trilogy"] n. 1. A word used in
  email and news postings to tag utterances as surrealist mind-play
  or humor, esp. in connection with
        Discordianism
         and elaborate
  conspiracy theories.  "I heard that David Koresh is sharing an
  apartment in Argentina with Hitler. (Fnord.)" "Where can I fnord
  get the Principia Discordia from?"  2. A
        metasyntactic variable
        ,
  commonly used by hackers with ties to
        Discordianism
         or the

        Church of the SubGenius
        .
```

1.710 FOAF

```
FOAF: // [USENET] n. Acronym for `Friend Of A Friend'.  The
  source of an unverified, possibly untrue story.  This term was not
  originated by hackers (it is used in Jan Brunvand's books on urban
  folklore), but is much better recognized on USENET and elsewhere
  than in mainstream English.
```

1.711 FOD

FOD: /fod/ v. [Abbreviation for 'Finger of Death', originally a
spell-name from fantasy gaming] To terminate with extreme prejudice
and with no regard for other people. From
MUD
s where the
wizard command 'FOD <player>' results in the immediate and total
death of <player>, usually as punishment for obnoxious behavior.
This usage migrated to other circumstances, such as "I'm going to fod
the process that is burning all the cycles." Compare
gun
.

In aviation, FOD means Foreign Object Damage, e.g., what happens
when a jet engine sucks up a rock on the runway or a bird in
flight. Finger of Death is a distressingly apt description of
what this generally does to the engine.

1.712 fold case

fold case: v. See
smash case
. This term tends to be used
more by people who don't mind that their tools smash case. It also
connotes that case is ignored but case distinctions in data
processed by the tool in question aren't destroyed.

1.713 followup

followup: n. On USENET, a
posting
 generated in response to
another posting (as opposed to a
reply
, which goes by email
rather than being broadcast). Followups include the ID of the

parent message
 in their headers; smart news-readers can use
this information to present USENET news in 'conversation' sequence
rather than order-of-arrival. See
thread
.

1.714 fontology

fontology: [XEROX PARC] n. The body of knowledge dealing with the
    construction and use of new fonts (e.g., for window systems and
    typesetting software). It has been said that fontology
    recapitulates file-ogeny.

    [Unfortunately, this reference to the embryological dictum that
    "Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny" is not merely a joke. On the
    Macintosh, for example, System 7 has to go through contortions to
    compensate for an earlier design error that created a whole
    different set of abstractions for fonts parallel to 'files' and
    'folders' --- ESR]

1.715 foo

               foo: /foo/ 1. interj. Term of disgust. 2. Used very generally
    as a sample name for absolutely anything, esp. programs and files
    (esp. scratch files). 3. First on the standard list of

               metasyntactic variable
               s used in syntax examples. See also

               bar
               ,
               baz
               ,
               qux
               ,
               quux
               ,
               corge
               ,
               grault
               ,

               garply
               ,
               waldo
               ,
               fred
               ,
               plugh
               ,
               xyzzy
               ,

               thud
               .

    The etymology of hackish 'foo' is obscure. When used in
    connection with 'bar' it is generally traced to the WWII-era Army
    slang acronym FUBAR ('Fucked Up Beyond All Repair'), later

bowdlerized to
                foobar
                . (See also
                FUBAR
).

However, the use of the word 'foo' itself has more complicated
antecedents, including a long history in comic strips and cartoons.
The old "Smokey Stover" comic strips by Bill Holman often
included the word 'FOO', in particular on license plates of cars;
allegedly, 'FOO' and 'BAR' also occurred in Walt Kelly's
"Pogo" strips. In the 1938 cartoon "The Daffy Doc", a very
early version of Daffy Duck holds up a sign saying "SILENCE IS
FOO!"; oddly, this seems to refer to some approving or positive
affirmative use of foo. It has been suggested that this might be
related to the Chinese word 'fu' (sometimes transliterated
'foo'), which can mean "happiness" when spoken with the proper
tone (the lion-dog guardians flanking the steps of many Chinese
restaurants are properly called "fu dogs").

Earlier versions of this entry suggested the possibility that
hacker usage actually sprang from "FOO, Lampoons and Parody",
the title of a comic book first issued in September 1958, a joint
project of Charles and Robert Crumb. Though Robert Crumb (then in
his mid-teens) later became one of the most important and
influential artists in underground comics, this venture was hardly
a success; indeed, the brothers later burned most of the existing
copies in disgust. The title FOO was featured in large letters on
the front cover. However, very few copies of this comic actually
circulated, and students of Crumb's 'oeuvre' have established
that this title was a reference to the earlier Smokey Stover
comics.

An old-time member reports that in the 1959 "Dictionary of the
TMRC Language", compiled at
                TMRC
                 there was an entry that went
something like this:

  FOO: The first syllable of the sacred chant phrase "FOO MANE PADME
  HUM." Our first obligation is to keep the foo counters turning.

For more about the legendary foo counters, see
                TMRC
                . Almost
the entire staff of what became the MIT AI LAB was involved with
TMRC, and probably picked the word up there.

Very probably, hackish 'foo' had no single origin and derives
through all these channels from Yiddish 'feh' and/or English
'fooey'.

1.716 foobar

                    foobar: n. Another common
                    metasyntactic variable
                    ; see
                    foo
                    .
Hackers do *not* generally use this to mean
                    FUBAR
                     in
either the slang or jargon sense.

1.717 fool

                    fool: n. As used by hackers, specifically describes a person who
habitually reasons from obviously or demonstrably incorrect
premises and cannot be persuaded by evidence to do otherwise; it is
not generally used in its other senses, i.e., to describe a person
with a native incapacity to reason correctly, or a clown. Indeed,
in hackish experience many fools are capable of reasoning all too
effectively in executing their errors. See also
                    cretin
                    ,

                    loser
                    ,
                    fool file, the
                    .

1.718 fool file, the

                    fool file, the: [USENET] n. A notional repository of all the most
dramatically and abysmally stupid utterances ever. An entire
subgenre of
                    sig block
                    s consists of the header "From the fool
file:" followed by some quote the poster wishes to represent as an
immortal gem of dimwittery; for this usage to be really effective,
the quote has to be so obviously wrong as to be laughable. More
than one USENETter has achieved an unwanted notoriety by being
quoted in this way.

1.719 Foonly

```
            Foonly: n. 1. The
            PDP-10
             successor that was to have been
built by the Super Foonly project at the Stanford Artificial
Intelligence Laboratory along with a new operating system.  The
intention was to leapfrog from the old DEC timesharing system SAIL
was then running to a new generation, bypassing TENEX which at that
time was the ARPANET standard.  ARPA funding for both the Super
Foonly and the new operating system was cut in 1974.  Most of the
design team went to DEC and contributed greatly to the design of
the PDP-10 model KL10.  2. The name of the company formed by Dave
Poole, one of the principal Super Foonly designers, and one of
hackerdom's more colorful personalities.  Many people remember the
parrot which sat on Poole's shoulder and was a regular companion.
3. Any of the machines built by Poole's company.  The first was the
F-1 (a.k.a.  Super Foonly), which was the computational engine used
to create the graphics in the movie "TRON".  The F-1 was the
fastest PDP-10 ever built, but only one was ever made.  The effort
drained Foonly of its financial resources, and the company turned
towards building smaller, slower, and much less expensive
machines.  Unfortunately, these ran not the popular
            TOPS-20
             but a TENEX variant called Foonex; this seriously limited their
market.  Also, the machines shipped were actually wire-wrapped
engineering prototypes requiring individual attention from more
than usually competent site personnel, and thus had significant
reliability problems.  Poole's legendary temper and unwillingness
to suffer fools gladly did not help matters.  By the time of the
Jupiter project cancellation in 1983, Foonly's proposal to build
another F-1 was eclipsed by the
            Mars
            , and the company never
quite recovered.  See the
            Mars
             entry for the continuation and
moral of this story.
```

1.720   footprint

```
            footprint: n. 1. The floor or desk area taken up by a piece of
hardware.  2. [IBM] The audit trail (if any) left by a crashed
program (often in plural, 'footprints').  See also

            toeprint
            .
```

1.721   for free

for free: adj. Said of a capability of a programming language or
hardware equipment that is available by its design without needing
cleverness to implement: "In APL, we get the matrix operations for
free." "And owing to the way revisions are stored in this
system, you get revision trees for free." The term usually refers
to a serendipitous feature of doing things a certain way (compare

big win
), but it may refer to an intentional but secondary
feature.

1.722   for the rest of us

for the rest of us: [from the Mac slogan "The computer for the
rest of us"] adj. 1. Used to describe a
spiffy
 product whose
affordability shames other comparable products, or (more often)
used sarcastically to describe
spiffy
 but very overpriced
products. 2. Describes a program with a limited interface,
deliberately limited capabilities, non-orthogonality, inability to
compose primitives, or any other limitation designed to not
'confuse' a naive user. This places an upper bound on how far
that user can go before the program begins to get in the way of the
task instead of helping accomplish it. Used in reference to
Macintosh software which doesn't provide obvious capabilities
because it is thought that the poor lusers might not be able to
handle them. Becomes 'the rest of *them*' when used in
third-party reference; thus, "Yes, it is an attractive program,
but it's designed for The Rest Of Them" means a program that
superficially looks neat but has no depth beyond the surface flash.
See also
WIMP environment
,
Macintrash
,

point-and-drool interface
,
user-friendly
.

1.723   for values of

for values of: [MIT] A common rhetorical maneuver at MIT is to use

any of the canonical
          random numbers
           as placeholders for
variables. "The max function takes 42 arguments, for arbitrary
values of 42." "There are 69 ways to leave your lover, for
69 = 50." This is especially likely when the speaker has uttered
a random number and realizes that it was not recognized as such,
but even 'non-random' numbers are occasionally used in this
fashion. A related joke is that pi equals 3 --- for
small values of pi and large values of 3.

Historical note: this usage probably derives from the programming
language MAD (Michigan Algorithm Decoder), an Algol-like language
that was the most common choice among mainstream (non-hacker) users
at MIT in the mid-60s. It had a control structure FOR VALUES OF X
= 3, 7, 99 DO ... that would repeat the indicated instructions for
each value in the list (unlike the usual FOR that only works for
arithmetic sequences of values). MAD is long extinct, but similar
for-constructs still flourish (e.g., in UNIX's shell languages).

1.724   fora

          fora: pl.n. Plural of
          forum
          .

1.725   foreground

          foreground: [UNIX] vt. To bring a task to the top of one's

          stack
           for immediate processing, and hackers often use it in
this sense for non-computer tasks. "If your presentation is due
next week, I guess I'd better foreground writing up the design
document."

Technically, on a time-sharing system, a task executing in
foreground is one able to accept input from and return output to
the user; oppose
          background
          . Nowadays this term is primarily
associated with
          UNIX
          , but it appears first to have been used
in this sense on OS/360. Normally, there is only one foreground
task per terminal (or terminal window); having multiple processes
simultaneously reading the keyboard is a good way to
          lose

.

1.726 fork bomb

          fork bomb: [UNIX] n. A particular species of
          wabbit
           that can
be written in one line of C ('main() {for(;;)fork();}') or shell
('$0 & $0 &') on any UNIX system, or occasionally created by an
egregious coding bug. A fork bomb process 'explodes' by
recursively spawning copies of itself (using the UNIX system call
'fork(2)'). Eventually it eats all the process table entries
and effectively wedges the system. Fortunately, fork bombs are
relatively easy to spot and kill, so creating one deliberately
seldom accomplishes more than to bring the just wrath of the gods
down upon the perpetrator. See also
          logic bomb
          .

1.727 forked

          forked: [UNIX; prob. influenced by a mainstream expletive] adj.
Terminally slow, or dead. Originated when one system was slowed to
a snail's pace by an inadvertent
          fork bomb
          .

1.728 Fortrash

Fortrash: /for'trash/ n. Hackerism for the FORTRAN (FORmula
   TRANslator) language, referring to its primitive design, gross and
   irregular syntax, limited control constructs, and slippery,
   exception-filled semantics.

1.729 fortune cookie

          fortune cookie: [WAITS, via UNIX] n. A random quote, item of
trivia, joke, or maxim printed to the user's tty at login time or
(less commonly) at logout time. Items from this lexicon have often
been used as fortune cookies. See

```
            cookie file
            .
```

1.730   forum

```
            forum: n. [USENET, GEnie, CI$; pl. 'fora' or 'forums'] Any
discussion group accessible through a dial-in
            BBS
            , a

            mailing list
            , or a
            newsgroup
             (see
            network, the
            ).  A
forum functions much like a bulletin board; users submit

            posting
            s for all to read and discussion ensues.  Contrast
real-time chat via
            talk mode
             or point-to-point personal

            email
            .
```

1.731   fossil

```
            fossil: n. 1. In software, a misfeature that becomes
understandable only in historical context, as a remnant of times
past retained so as not to break compatibility.  Example: the
retention of octal as default base for string escapes in
            C
            , in
spite of the better match of hexadecimal to ASCII and modern
byte-addressable architectures.  See
            dusty deck
            . 2. More
restrictively, a feature with past but no present utility.
Example: the force-all-caps (LCASE) bits in the V7 and
            BSD
               UNIX tty driver, designed for use with monocase terminals.  (In ←-
                    a
perversion of the usual backward-compatibility goal, this
functionality has actually been expanded and renamed in some later

            USG UNIX
```

```
            releases as the IUCLC and OLCUC bits.)  3. The FOSSIL
(Fido/Opus/Seadog Standard Interface Level) driver specification
for serial-port access to replace the
            brain-dead
            routines in
the IBM PC ROMs.  Fossils are used by most MS-DOS
            BBS
            software
in preference to the 'supported' ROM routines, which do not support
interrupt-driven operation or setting speeds above 9600; the use of
a semistandard FOSSIL library is preferable to the
            bare metal
            serial port programming otherwise required.  Since the FOSSIL
specification allows additional functionality to be hooked in,
drivers that use the
            hook
            but do not provide serial-port
access themselves are named with a modifier, as in 'video
fossil'.
```

1.732   four-color glossies

```
            four-color glossies: 1. Literature created by
            marketroid
            s
that allegedly contains technical specs but which is in fact as
superficial as possible without being totally
            content-free
            .
"Forget the four-color glossies, give me the tech ref manuals."
Often applied as an indication of superficiality even when the
material is printed on ordinary paper in black and white.
Four-color-glossy manuals are *never* useful for finding a
problem.  2. [rare] Applied by extension to manual pages that don't
contain enough information to diagnose why the program doesn't
produce the expected or desired output.
```

1.733   fragile

```
            fragile: adj. Syn
            brittle
            .
```

1.734   fred

fred: n. 1. The personal name most frequently used as a

metasyntactic variable
 (see
foo
). Allegedly popular
because it's easy for a non-touch-typist to type on a standard
QWERTY keyboard. Unlike
J. Random Hacker
 or 'J. Random
Loser', this name has no positive or negative loading (but see

Mbogo, Dr. Fred
). See also
barney
. 2. An acronym for
'Flipping Ridiculous Electronic Device'; other F-verbs may be
substituted for 'flipping'.

1.735 frednet

frednet: /fred'net/ n. Used to refer to some
random
 and
uncommon protocol encountered on a network. "We're implementing
bridging in our router to solve the frednet problem."

1.736 freeware

freeware: n. Free software, often written by enthusiasts and
distributed by users' groups, or via electronic mail, local
bulletin boards,
USENET
, or other electronic media. At one
time, 'freeware' was a trademark of Andrew Fluegelman, the author
of the well-known MS-DOS comm program PC-TALK III. It wasn't
enforced after his mysterious disappearance and presumed death
in 1984. See
shareware
.

1.737 freeze

freeze: v. To lock an evolving software distribution or document
   against changes so it can be released with some hope of stability.
   Carries the strong implication that the item in question will
   'unfreeze' at some future date. "OK, fix that bug and we'll
   freeze for release."

   There are more specific constructions on this term. A 'feature
   freeze', for example, locks out modifications intended to introduce
   new features but still allows bugfixes and completion of existing
   features; a 'code freeze' connotes no more changes at all. At
   Sun Microsystems and elsewhere, one may also hear references to
   'code slush' --- that is, an almost-but-not-quite frozen state.

1.738   fried

                fried: adj. 1. Non-working due to hardware failure; burnt out.
   Especially used of hardware brought down by a 'power glitch' (see

                glitch
                ),
                drop-outs
                , a short, or some other electrical
   event. (Sometimes this literally happens to electronic circuits!
   In particular, resistors can burn out and transformers can melt
   down, emitting noxious smoke --- see
                friode
                ,
                SED
                 and

                LER
                . However, this term is also used metaphorically.)
   Compare
                frotzed
                . 2. Of people, exhausted. Said particularly
   of those who continue to work in such a state. Often used as an
   explanation or excuse. "Yeah, I know that fix destroyed the file
   system, but I was fried when I put it in." Esp. common in
   conjunction with 'brain': "My brain is fried today, I'm very
   short on sleep."

1.739   frink

                frink: /frink/ v. The unknown ur-verb, fill in your own meaning.
   Found esp. on the USENET newsgroup alt.fan.lemurs, where it is
   said that the lemurs know what 'frink' means, but they aren't
   telling. Compare
                gorets

.

1.740 friode

friode: /fri:'ohd/ [TMRC] n. A reversible (that is, fused or
blown) diode. Compare
fried
; see also
SED
,
LER
.

1.741 fritterware

fritterware: n. An excess of capability that serves no productive
end. The canonical example is font-diddling software on the Mac
(see
macdink
); the term describes anything that eats huge
amounts of time for quite marginal gains in function but seduces
people into using it anyway. See also
window shopping
.

1.742 frob

frob: /frob/ 1. n. [MIT] The
TMRC
 definition was "FROB = a
protruding arm or trunnion"; by metaphoric extension, a 'frob'
is any random small thing; an object that you can comfortably hold
in one hand; something you can frob (sense 2). See
frobnitz
.
2. vt. Abbreviated form of
frobnicate
. 3. [from the
MUD
   world] A command on some MUDs that changes a player's ←↩
         experience
level (this can be used to make wizards); also, to request

wizard

privileges on the 'professional courtesy' grounds
that one is a wizard elsewhere. The command is actually
'frobnicate' but is universally abbreviated to the shorter
form.

1.743   frobnicate

frobnicate: /frob'ni-kayt/ vt. [Poss. derived from

frobnitz
, and usually abbreviated to
frob
, but
'frobnicate' is recognized as the official full form.] To
manipulate or adjust, to tweak. One frequently frobs bits or other
2-state devices. Thus: "Please frob the light switch" (that is,
flip it), but also "Stop frobbing that clasp; you'll break it".
One also sees the construction 'to frob a frob'. See
tweak
      and
twiddle
.

Usage: frob, twiddle, and tweak sometimes connote points along a
continuum. 'Frob' connotes aimless manipulation; 'twiddle'
connotes gross manipulation, often a coarse search for a proper
setting; 'tweak' connotes fine-tuning. If someone is turning a
knob on an oscilloscope, then if he's carefully adjusting it, he is
probably tweaking it; if he is just turning it but looking at the
screen, he is probably twiddling it; but if he's just doing it
because turning a knob is fun, he's frobbing it. The variant
'frobnosticate' has been recently reported.

1.744   frobnitz

frobnitz: /frob'nits/, plural 'frobnitzem' /frob'nit-zm/ or
'frobni' /frob'ni:/ [TMRC] n. An unspecified physical object, a
widget. Also refers to electronic black boxes. This rare form is
usually abbreviated to 'frotz', or more commonly to
frob
.
Also used are 'frobnule' (/frob'n[y]ool/) and 'frobule'
(/frob'yool/). Starting perhaps in 1979, 'frobozz'
/fr*-boz'/ (plural: 'frobbotzim' /fr*-bot'zm/) has also
become very popular, largely through its exposure as a name via

Zork
. These variants can also be applied to nonphysical

objects, such as data structures.

Pete Samson, compiler of the original
                TMRC
                lexicon, adds,
"Under the TMRC [railroad] layout were many storage boxes, managed
(in 1958) by David R. Sawyer. Several had fanciful designations
written on them, such as 'Frobnitz Coil Oil'. Perhaps DRS intended
Frobnitz to be a proper name, but the name was quickly taken for
the thing". This was almost certainly the origin of the
term.

1.745 frog

                frog: alt. 'phrog' 1. interj. Term of disgust (we seem to have
a lot of them). 2. Used as a name for just about anything. See

                foo
                . 3. n. Of things, a crock. 4. n. Of people, somewhere in
between a turkey and a toad. 5. 'froggy': adj. Similar to

                bagbiting
                , but milder. "This froggy program is taking
forever to run!"

1.746 frogging

                frogging: [University of Waterloo] v. 1. Partial corruption of a
text file or input stream by some bug or consistent glitch, as
opposed to random events like line noise or media failures. Might
occur, for example, if one bit of each incoming character on a tty
were stuck, so that some characters were correct and others were
not. See
                terminak
                for a historical example. 2. By extension,
accidental display of text in a mode where the output device emits
special symbols or mnemonics rather than conventional ASCII. This
often happens, for example, when using a terminal or comm program
on a device like an IBM PC with a special 'high-half' character set
and with the bit-parity assumption wrong. A hacker sufficiently
familiar with ASCII bit patterns might be able to read the display
anyway.

1.747 front end

        front end: n. 1. An intermediary computer that does set-up and
filtering for another (usually more powerful but less friendly)
machine (a 'back end'). 2. What you're talking to when you
have a conversation with someone who is making replies without
paying attention. "Look at the dancing elephants!" "Uh-huh."
"Do you know what I just said?" "Sorry, you were talking to the
front end." See also
        fepped out
        . 3. Software that provides
an interface to another program 'behind' it, which may not be as
user-friendly. Probably from analogy with hardware front-ends (see
sense 1) that interfaced with mainframes.

1.748   frotz

        frotz: /frots/ 1. n. See
        frobnitz
        . 2. 'mumble frotz': An
interjection of mildest disgust.

1.749   frotzed

        frotzed: /frotst/ adj.
        down
         because of hardware problems. Compare

        fried
        . A machine that is merely frotzed may be fixable
without replacing parts, but a fried machine is more seriously
damaged.

1.750   frowney

        frowney: n. (alt. 'frowney face') See
        emoticon
        .

1.751   fry

fry: 1. vi. To fail. Said especially of smoke-producing hardware
failures. More generally, to become non-working. Usage: never
said of software, only of hardware and humans. See

fried

,

magic smoke
. 2. vt. To cause to fail; to
roach

,

toast

,

or

hose
 a piece of hardware. Never used of software or humans,
but compare

fried

.

1.752   FTP

FTP: /F-T-P/, *not* /fit'ip/ 1. [techspeak] n. The File
Transfer Protocol for transmitting files between systems on the
Internet. 2. vt. To
beam
 a file using the File Transfer
Protocol. 3. Sometimes used as a generic even for file transfers
not using
FTP
. "Lemme get a copy of "Wuthering
Heights" ftp'd from uunet.""

1.753   FUBAR

FUBAR: n. The Failed UniBus Address Register in a VAX. A good
example of how jargon can occasionally be snuck past the
suit
s;
see
foobar
, and
foo
 for a fuller etymology.

1.754 fuck me harder

fuck me harder: excl. Sometimes uttered in response to egregious
   misbehavior, esp. in software, and esp. of misbehaviors which
   seem unfairly persistent (as though designed in by the imp of the
   perverse). Often theatrically elaborated: "Aiighhh! Fuck me with
   a piledriver and 16 feet of curare-tipped wrought-iron fence
   and no lubricants!" The phrase is sometimes heard
   abbreviated 'FMH' in polite company.

   [This entry is an extreme example of the hackish habit of coining
   elaborate and evocative terms for lossage. Here we see a quite
   self-conscious parody of mainstream expletives that has become a
   running gag in part of the hacker culture; it illustrates the
   hackish tendency to turn any situation, even one of extreme
   frustration, into an intellectual game (the point being, in this
   case, to creatively produce a long-winded description of the
   most anatomically absurd mental image possible --- the short forms
   implicitly allude to all the ridiculous long forms ever spoken).
   Scatological language is actually relatively uncommon among
   hackers, and there was some controversy over whether this entry
   ought to be included at all. As it reflects a live usage
   recognizably peculiar to the hacker culture, we feel it is
   in the hackish spirit of truthfulness and opposition to all
   forms of censorship to record it here. --- ESR & GLS]

1.755 FUD

           FUD: /fuhd/ n. Defined by Gene Amdahl after he left IBM to found
   his own company: "FUD is the fear, uncertainty, and doubt that IBM
   sales people instill in the minds of potential customers who might
   be considering [Amdahl] products." The idea, of course, was to
   persuade them to go with safe IBM gear rather than with
   competitors' equipment. This implicit coercion was traditionally
   accomplished by promising that Good Things would happen to people
   who stuck with IBM, but Dark Shadows loomed over the future of
   competitors' equipment or software. See
           IBM
           .

1.756 FUD wars

           FUD wars: /fuhd worz/ n. [from
           FUD
           ] Political posturing engaged in
   by hardware and software vendors ostensibly committed to
   standardization but actually willing to fragment the market to
   protect their own shares. The UNIX International vs. OSF conflict
   is but one outstanding example.

1.757 fudge

```
fudge: 1. vt. To perform in an incomplete but marginally acceptable
   way, particularly with respect to the writing of a program.  "I
   didn't feel like going through that pain and suffering, so I fudged
   it --- I'll fix it later."  2. n. The resulting code.
```

1.758 fudge factor

```
            fudge factor: n. A value or parameter that is varied in an ad hoc  ↩
              way
to produce the desired result.  The terms 'tolerance' and

            slop
             are also used, though these usually indicate a one-sided
leeway, such as a buffer that is made larger than necessary
because one isn't sure exactly how large it needs to be, and it is
better to waste a little space than to lose completely for not
having enough.  A fudge factor, on the other hand, can often be
tweaked in more than one direction.  A good example is the 'fuzz'
typically allowed in floating-point calculations: two numbers being
compared for equality must be allowed to differ by a small amount;
if that amount is too small, a computation may never terminate,
while if it is too large, results will be needlessly inaccurate.
Fudge factors are frequently adjusted incorrectly by programmers
who don't fully understand their import.  See also
            coefficient

            of X
            .
```

1.759 fuel up

```
            fuel up: vi. To eat or drink hurriedly in order to get back to
  hacking.  "Food-p?"  "Yeah, let's fuel up."  "Time for a

            great-wall
            !"  See also
            oriental food
            .
```

1.760   fum

                    fum: [XEROX PARC] n. At PARC, often the third of the standard

                    metasyntactic variable
                    s (after
                    foo
                     and
                    bar
). Competes
    with

                    baz
                    , which is more common outside PARC.

1.761   funky

                    funky: adj. Said of something that functions, but in a slightly
        strange, klugey way. It does the job and would be difficult to
        change, so its obvious non-optimality is left alone. Often used to
        describe interfaces. The more bugs something has that nobody has
        bothered to fix because workarounds are easier, the funkier it is.

                    TECO
                     and UUCP are funky. The Intel i860's exception handling is
        extraordinarily funky. Most standards acquire funkiness as they
        age. "The new mailer is installed, but is still somewhat funky;
        if it bounces your mail for no reason, try resubmitting it."
        "This UART is pretty funky. The data ready line is active-high in
        interrupt mode and active-low in DMA mode."

1.762   funny money

funny money: n. 1. Notional 'dollar' units of computing time
    and/or storage handed to students at the beginning of a computer
    course; also called 'play money' or 'purple money' (in implicit
    opposition to real or 'green' money). In New Zealand and Germany
    the odd usage 'paper money' has been recorded; in Germany, the
    particularly amusing synonym 'transfer ruble' commemmorates the
    funny money used for trade between COMECON countries back when the
    Soviet Bloc still existed. When your funny money ran out, your
    account froze and you needed to go to a professor to get more.
    Fortunately, the plunging cost of timesharing cycles has made this
    less common. The amounts allocated were almost invariably too
    small, even for the non-hackers who wanted to slide by with minimum
    work. In extreme cases, the practice led to small-scale black
    markets in bootlegged computer accounts. 2. By extension, phantom
    money or quantity tickets of any kind used as a resource-allocation
    hack within a system. Antonym: 'real money'.

1.763 furrfu

                 furrfu: // [USENET] excl. Written-only equivalent of
   "Sheesh!"; it is, in fact, "sheesh" modified by
                 rot13
                 .
   Evolved in mid-1992 as a response to notably silly postings
   repeating urban myths on the USENET newsgroup
   alt.folklore.urban, after some posters complained that
   "Sheesh!" as a response to
                 newbie
                 s was being overused. See
   also
                 FOAF
                 .

1.764 fuzzball

fuzzball: [TCP/IP hackers] n. A DEC LSI-11 running a particular
   suite of homebrewed software written by Dave Mills and assorted
   co-conspirators, used in the early 1980s for Internet protocol
   testbedding and experimentation. These were used as NSFnet
   backbone sites in its early 56KB-line days; a few are still active
   on the Internet as of early 1991, doing odd jobs such as network
   time service.

1.765 G

                 G: [SI] pref.,suff. See
                 quantifiers
                 .

1.766 gabriel

gabriel: /gay'bree-*l/ [for Dick Gabriel, SAIL LISP hacker and
   volleyball fanatic] n. An unnecessary (in the opinion of the
   opponent) stalling tactic, e.g., tying one's shoelaces or combing
   one's hair repeatedly, asking the time, etc. Also used to refer to
   the perpetrator of such tactics. Also, 'pulling a Gabriel',
   'Gabriel mode'.

1.767   gag

        gag: vi. Equivalent to
        choke
        , but connotes more disgust. "Hey,
  this is FORTRAN code. No wonder the C compiler gagged." See also

        barf
        .

1.768   gang bang

        gang bang: n. The use of large numbers of loosely coupled
programmers in an attempt to wedge a great many features into a
product in a short time. Though there have been memorable gang
bangs (e.g., that over-the-weekend assembler port mentioned in
Steven Levy's "Hackers"), most are perpetrated by large
companies trying to meet deadlines; the inevitable result is
enormous buggy masses of code entirely lacking in

        orthogonal
        ity. When market-driven managers make a list of all
the features the competition has and assign one programmer to
implement each, the probability of maintaining a coherent (or even
functional) design goes infinitesimal. See also
        firefighting
        ,

        Mongolian Hordes technique
        ,
        Conway's Law
        .

1.769   garbage collect

        garbage collect: vi. (also 'garbage collection', n.) See
        GC
        .

1.770   garply

        garply: /gar'plee/ [Stanford] n. Another metasyntactic variable (↩
            see

```
            foo
            ); once popular among SAIL hackers.
```

1.771   gas

```
            gas: [as in 'gas chamber'] 1. interj. A term of disgust and
hatred, implying that gas should be dispensed in generous
quantities, thereby exterminating the source of irritation.  "Some
loser just reloaded the system for no reason!  Gas!"  2. interj. A
suggestion that someone or something ought to be flushed out of
mercy.  "The system's getting
            wedged
             every few minutes.
Gas!"  3. vt.  To
            flush
             (sense 1).  "You should gas that old
crufty software."  4. [IBM] n. Dead space in nonsequentially
organized files that was occupied by data that has since been
deleted; the compression operation that removes it is called
'degassing' (by analogy, perhaps, with the use of the same term
in vacuum technology).  5. [IBM] n. Empty space on a disk that has
been clandestinely allocated against future need.
```

1.772   gaseous

```
            gaseous: adj. Deserving of being
            gas
            sed.  Disseminated by
Geoff Goodfellow while at SRI; became particularly popular after
the Moscone-Milk killings in San Francisco, when it was learned
that the defendant Dan White (a politician who had supported
Proposition 7) would get the gas chamber under Proposition 7 if
convicted of first-degree murder (he was eventually convicted of
manslaughter).
```

1.773   GC

```
            GC: /G-C/ [from LISP terminology; 'Garbage Collect']
1. vt. To clean up and throw away useless things.  "I think I'll
GC the top of my desk today."  When said of files, this is
equivalent to
            GFR
            . 2. vt. To recycle, reclaim, or put to
```

another use. 3. n. An instantiation of the garbage collector
process.

'Garbage collection' is computer-science techspeak for a
particular class of strategies for dynamically but transparently
reallocating computer memory (i.e., without requiring explicit
allocation and deallocation by higher-level software). One such
strategy involves periodically scanning all the data in memory and
determining what is no longer accessible; useless data items are
then discarded so that the memory they occupy can be recycled and
used for another purpose. Implementations of the LISP language
usually use garbage collection.

In jargon, the full phrase is sometimes heard but the
          abbrev
           is
more frequently used because it is shorter. Note that there is an
ambiguity in usage that has to be resolved by context: "I'm going
to garbage-collect my desk" usually means to clean out the
drawers, but it could also mean to throw away or recycle the desk
itself.

1.774 GCOS

          GCOS:: /jee'kohs/ n. A
          quick-and-dirty

          clone
           of
System/360 DOS that emerged from GE around 1970; originally called
GECOS (the General Electric Comprehensive Operating System). Later
kluged to support primitive timesharing and transaction processing.
After the buyout of GE's computer division by Honeywell, the name
was changed to General Comprehensive Operating System (GCOS).
Other OS groups at Honeywell began referring to it as 'God's Chosen
Operating System', allegedly in reaction to the GCOS crowd's
uninformed and snotty attitude about the superiority of their
product. All this might be of zero interest, except for two facts:
(1) The GCOS people won the political war, and this led in the
orphaning and eventual death of Honeywell
          Multics
          , and
(2) GECOS/GCOS left one permanent mark on UNIX. Some early UNIX
systems at Bell Labs used GCOS machines for print spooling and
various other services; the field added to '/etc/passwd' to
carry GCOS ID information was called the 'GECOS field' and
survives today as the 'pw_gecos' member used for the user's
full name and other human-ID information. GCOS later played a
major role in keeping Honeywell a dismal also-ran in the mainframe
market, and was itself ditched for UNIX in the late 1980s when
Honeywell retired its aging
          big iron
           designs.

1.775 GECOS

GECOS:: /jee'kohs/ n. See
GCOS
.

1.776 gedanken

gedanken: /g*-dahn'kn/ adj. Ungrounded; impractical; not
well-thought-out; untried; untested.

'Gedanken' is a German word for 'thought'. A thought
experiment is one you carry out in your head. In physics, the term
'gedanken experiment' is used to refer to an experiment that is
impractical to carry out, but useful to consider because it can
be reasoned about theoretically. (A classic gedanken experiment of
relativity theory involves thinking about a man in an elevator
accelerating through space.) Gedanken experiments are very useful
in physics, but must be used with care. It's too easy to idealize
away some important aspect of the real world in constructing the
'apparatus'.

Among hackers, accordingly, the word has a pejorative connotation.
It is typically used of a project, especially one in artificial
intelligence research, that is written up in grand detail
(typically as a Ph.D. thesis) without ever being implemented to
any great extent. Such a project is usually perpetrated by people
who aren't very good hackers or find programming distasteful or are
just in a hurry. A 'gedanken thesis' is usually marked by an
obvious lack of intuition about what is programmable and what is
not, and about what does and does not constitute a clear
specification of an algorithm. See also
AI-complete
,

DWIM
.

1.777 geef

geef: v. [ostensibly from 'gefingerpoken'] vt. Syn.
mung
. See

also

blinkenlights

.

1.778 geek out

geek out: vi. To temporarily enter techno-nerd mode while in a
non-hackish context, for example at parties held near computer
equipment. Especially used when you need to do or say something
highly technical and don't have time to explain: "Pardon me while
I geek out for a moment." See
computer geek
; see also

propeller head
.

1.779 gen

gen: /jen/ n.,v. Short for
generate
, used frequently in both spoken
and written contexts.

1.780 gender mender

gender mender: n. A cable connector shell with either two male or
two female connectors on it, used to correct the mismatches that
result when some
loser
 didn't understand the RS232C
specification and the distinction between DTE and DCE. Used
esp. for RS-232C parts in either the original D-25 or the
IBM PC's bogus D-9 format. Also called 'gender bender',
'gender blender', 'sex changer', and even 'homosexual
adapter'; however, there appears to be some confusion as to whether
a 'male homosexual adapter' has pins on both sides (is doubly
male) or sockets on both sides (connects two males).

1.781   General Public Virus

General Public Virus: n. Pejorative name for some versions of the

GNU
 project
copyleft
 or General Public License (GPL), which
requires that any tools or
app
s incorporating copylefted code
must be source-distributed on the same counter-commercial terms as
GNU stuff. Thus it is alleged that the copyleft 'infects' software
generated with GNU tools, which may in turn infect other software
that reuses any of its code. The Free Software Foundation's
official position as of January 1991 is that copyright law limits
the scope of the GPL to "programs textually incorporating
significant amounts of GNU code", and that the 'infection' is not
passed on to third parties unless actual GNU source is transmitted
(as in, for example, use of the Bison parser skeleton).
Nevertheless, widespread suspicion that the
copyleft
 language
is 'boobytrapped' has caused many developers to avoid using GNU
tools and the GPL. Recent (July 1991) changes in the language of
the version 2.00 license may eliminate this problem.

1.782   generate

generate: vt. To produce something according to an algorithm or
program or set of rules, or as a (possibly unintended) side effect
of the execution of an algorithm or program. The opposite of

parse
. This term retains its mechanistic connotations (though
often humorously) when used of human behavior. "The guy is
rational most of the time, but mention nuclear energy around him
and he'll generate
infinite
 flamage."

1.783   gensym

gensym: /jen'sim/ [from MacLISP for 'generated symbol']
1. v. To invent a new name for something temporary, in such a way
that the name is almost certainly not in conflict with one already
in use. 2. n. The resulting name. The canonical form of a gensym
is 'Gnnnn' where nnnn represents a number; any LISP hacker would

recognize G0093 (for example) as a gensym. 3. A freshly generated
data structure with a gensymmed name. Gensymmed names are useful
for storing or uniquely identifying crufties (see

          cruft
).

1.784   Get a life!

          Get a life!: imp. Hacker-standard way of suggesting that the
person to whom it is directed has succumbed to terminal geekdom
(see
          computer geek
). Often heard on
          USENET
          , esp. as a
way of suggesting that the target is taking some obscure issue of

          theology
           too seriously. This exhortation was popularized by
William Shatner on a "Saturday Night Live" episode in a
speech that ended "Get a *life*!", but some respondents
believe it to have been in use before then. It was certainly in
wide use among hackers for at least five years before achieving
mainstream currency in early 1992.

1.785   Get a real computer!

          Get a real computer!: imp. Typical hacker response to news that
somebody is having trouble getting work done on a system that
(a) is single-tasking, (b) has no hard disk, or (c) has an address
space smaller than 16 megabytes. This is as of mid-1993; note that
the threshold for 'real computer' rises with time, and it may
well be (for example) that machines with character-only displays
will be generally considered 'unreal' in a few years (GLS points
out that they already are in some circles). See
          bitty box
           and

          toy
          .

1.786   GFR

GFR: /G-F-R/ vt. [ITS: from 'Grim File Reaper', an ITS and LISP
Machine utility] To remove a file or files according to some
program-automated or semi-automatic manual procedure, especially
one designed to reclaim mass storage space or reduce name-space
clutter (the original GFR actually moved files to tape). Often
generalized to pieces of data below file level. "I used to have
his phone number, but I guess I

GFR
ed it." See also

prowler
,
reaper
. Compare
GC
, which discards only
provably worthless stuff.

1.787 gig

gig: /jig/ or /gig/ [SI] n. See
quantifiers
.

1.788 giga-

giga-: /ji'ga/ or /gi'ga/ [SI] pref. See
quantifiers
.

1.789 GIGO

GIGO: /gi:'goh/ [acronym] 1. 'Garbage In, Garbage Out' ---
usually said in response to
luser
s who complain that a program
didn't "do the right thing" when given imperfect input or
otherwise mistreated in some way. Also commonly used to describe
failures in human decision making due to faulty, incomplete, or
imprecise data. 2. 'Garbage In, Gospel Out': this more recent
expansion is a sardonic comment on the tendency human beings have
to put excessive trust in 'computerized' data.

1.790   gilley

gilley: [USENET] n. The unit of analogical bogosity. According to
   its originator, the standard for one gilley was "the act of
   bogotoficiously comparing the shutting down of 1000 machines for a
   day with the killing of one person". The milligilley has been
   found to suffice for most normal conversational exchanges.

1.791   gillion

              gillion: /gil'y*n/ or /jil'y*n/ [formed from
              giga-
               by analogy
with mega/million and tera/trillion] n. 10^9. Same as an
American billion or a British 'milliard'. How one pronounces
this depends on whether one speaks
              giga-
               with a hard or
soft 'g'.

1.792   GIPS

              GIPS: /gips/ or /jips/ [analogy with
              MIPS
              ] n.
Giga-Instructions per Second (also possibly 'Gillions of
Instructions per Second'; see
              gillion
). In 1991, this is used
of only a handful of highly parallel machines, but this is expected
to change. Compare
              KIPS
               .

1.793   glark

              glark: /glark/ vt. To figure something out from context. "The
   System III manuals are pretty poor, but you can generally glark the
   meaning from context." Interestingly, the word was originally
   'glork'; the context was "This gubblick contains many
   nonsklarkish English flutzpahs, but the overall pluggandisp can be
   glorked [sic] from context" (David Moser, quoted by Douglas
   Hofstadter in his "Metamagical Themas" column in the
   January 1981 "Scientific American"). It is conjectured that

```
hackish usage mutated the verb to 'glark' because
            glork
             was
already an established jargon term.  Compare
            grok
            ,

            zen
            .
```

1.794   glass

```
            glass: [IBM] n. Synonym for
            silicon
            .
```

1.795   glass tty

```
            glass tty: /glas T-T-Y/ or /glas ti'tee/ n. A terminal that
has a display screen but which, because of hardware or software
limitations, behaves like a teletype or some other printing
terminal, thereby combining the disadvantages of both: like a
printing terminal, it can't do fancy display hacks, and like a
display terminal, it doesn't produce hard copy.  An example is the
early 'dumb' version of Lear-Siegler ADM 3 (without cursor
control).  See
            tube
            ,
            tty
            ; compare
            dumb terminal
            ,
            smart

            terminal
            .  See "
            TV Typewriters
            " (appendix A) for an
interesting true story about a glass tty.
```

1.796   glassfet

glassfet: /glas'fet/ [by analogy with MOSFET, the acronym for
'Metal-Oxide-Semiconductor Field-Effect Transistor'] n. Syn.

firebottle
, a humorous way to refer to a vacuum tube.

1.797 glitch

glitch: /glich/ [from German 'glitschen' to slip, via Yiddish
'glitshen', to slide or skid] 1. n. A sudden interruption in
electric service, sanity, continuity, or program function.
Sometimes recoverable. An interruption in electric service is
specifically called a 'power glitch' (also
power hit
), of
grave concern because it usually crashes all the computers. In
jargon, though, a hacker who got to the middle of a sentence and
then forgot how he or she intended to complete it might say,
"Sorry, I just glitched". 2. vi. To commit a glitch. See

gritch
. 3. vt. [Stanford] To scroll a display screen, esp.
several lines at a time.
WAITS
 terminals used to do this in
order to avoid continuous scrolling, which is distracting to the
eye. 4. obs. Same as
magic cookie
, sense 2.

All these uses of 'glitch' derive from the specific technical
meaning the term has in the electronic hardware world, where it is
now techspeak. A glitch can occur when the inputs of a circuit
change, and the outputs change to some
random
 value for some
very brief time before they settle down to the correct value. If
another circuit inspects the output at just the wrong time, reading
the random value, the results can be very wrong and very hard to
debug (a glitch is one of many causes of electronic
heisenbug
s).

1.798 glob

glob: /glob/, *not* /glohb/ [UNIX] vt.,n. To expand
special characters in a wildcarded name, or the act of so doing

(the action is also called 'globbing'). The UNIX conventions for
filename wildcarding have become sufficiently pervasive that many
hackers use some of them in written English, especially in email or
news on technical topics. Those commonly encountered include the
following:

    *
        wildcard for any string (see also
            UN*X
)

    ?
        wildcard for any single character (generally read this way
        only at the beginning or in the middle of a word)

    []
        delimits a wildcard matching any of the enclosed characters

    {}
        alternation of comma-separated alternatives; thus,
        'foobaz,qux' would be read as 'foobaz' or 'fooqux'

Some examples: "He said his name was [KC]arl" (expresses
ambiguity). "I don't read talk.politics.*" (any of the
talk.politics subgroups on
            USENET
). Other examples are given
under the entry for
            X
            . Note that glob patterns are similar,
but not identical, to those used in
            regexp
            s.

Historical note: The jargon usage derives from 'glob', the
name of a subprogram that expanded wildcards in archaic pre-Bourne
versions of the UNIX shell.

1.799 glork

            glork: /glork/ 1. interj. Term of mild surprise, usually tinged ←
                with
outrage, as when one attempts to save the results of two hours of
editing and finds that the system has just crashed. 2. Used as a
name for just about anything. See
            foo
            . 3. vt. Similar to

            glitch
            , but usually used reflexively. "My program just glorked
itself." See also
            glark
            .

1.800   glue

glue: n. Generic term for any interface logic or protocol that
connects two component blocks. For example,
Blue

Glue
 is IBM's SNA protocol, and hardware designers call anything
used to connect large VLSI's or circuit blocks 'glue logic'.

1.801   gnarly

gnarly: /nar'lee/ adj. Both
obscure
 and
hairy
 (sense
1). "
Yow!
 --- the tuned assembler implementation of BitBlt
is really gnarly!" From a similar but less specific usage in
surfer slang.

1.802   GNU

GNU: /gnoo/, *not* /noo/ 1. [acronym: 'GNU's Not UNIX!',
see
recursive acronym
] A UNIX-workalike development effort of
the Free Software Foundation headed by Richard Stallman
<rms@gnu.ai.mit.edu>. GNU EMACS and the GNU C compiler, two tools
designed for this project, have become very popular in hackerdom
and elsewhere. The GNU project was designed partly to proselytize
for RMS's position that information is community property and all
software source should be shared. One of its slogans is "Help
stamp out software hoarding!" Though this remains controversial
(because it implicitly denies any right of designers to own,
assign, and sell the results of their labors), many hackers who
disagree with RMS have nevertheless cooperated to produce large
amounts of high-quality software for free redistribution under the
Free Software Foundation's imprimatur. See
EMACS
,

```
                copyleft
                ,
                General Public Virus
                .  2. Noted UNIX hacker
John Gilmore <gnu@toad.com>, founder of USENET's anarchic alt.*
hierarchy.
```

1.803 GNUMACS

```
                GNUMACS: /gnoo'maks/ [contraction of 'GNU EMACS'] Often-heard
abbreviated name for the
                GNU
                 project's flagship tool,
                EMACS
                .
Used esp. in contrast with
                GOSMACS
                .
```

1.804 go flatline

```
                go flatline: [from cyberpunk SF, refers to flattening of EEG
traces upon brain-death] vi., also adjectival 'flatlined'. 1. To

                die
                , terminate, or fail, esp. irreversibly.  In hacker
parlance, this is used of machines only, human death being
considered somewhat too serious a matter to employ jargon-jokes
about.  2. To go completely quiescent; said of machines undergoing
controlled shutdown.  "You can suffer file damage if you shut down
UNIX but power off before the system has gone flatline."  3. Of a
video tube, to fail by losing vertical scan, so all one sees is a
bright horizontal line bisecting the screen.
```

1.805 go root

```
                go root: [UNIX] vi. To temporarily enter
                root mode
                 in order
to perform a privileged operation.  This use is deprecated in
Australia, where v. 'root' refers to animal sex.
```

1.806 go-faster stripes

```
            go-faster stripes: [UK] Syn.
            chrome
            .  Mainstream in some
parts of UK.  .
```

1.807 gobble

```
            gobble: vt. 1. To consume, usu. used with 'up'.  "The output
spy gobbles characters out of a
            tty
             output buffer."  2. To
obtain, usu. used with 'down'.  "I guess I'll gobble down a copy
of the documentation tomorrow."  See also
            snarf
            .
```

1.808 Godzillagram

```
            Godzillagram: /god-zil'*-gram/ n. [from Japan's national hero]
1. A network packet that in theory is a broadcast to every machine
in the universe.  The typical case is an IP datagram whose
destination IP address is [255.255.255.255].  Fortunately, few
gateways are foolish enough to attempt to implement this case!  2. A
network packet of maximum size.  An IP Godzillagram has
65,536 octets.  Compare
            super source quench
            .
```

1.809 golden

```
            golden: adj. [prob. from folklore's 'golden egg'] When used to
describe a magnetic medium (e.g., 'golden disk', 'golden tape'),
describes one containing a tested, up-to-spec, ready-to-ship
software version.  Compare
            platinum-iridium
            .
```

1.810   golf-ball printer

```
golf-ball printer: n. The IBM 2741, a slow but letter-quality
   printing device and terminal based on the IBM Selectric
   typewriter.  The 'golf ball' was a little spherical frob bearing
   reversed embossed images of 88 different characters arranged on
   four parallels of latitude; one could change the font by swapping
   in a different golf ball.  This was the technology that enabled APL
   to use a non-EBCDIC, non-ASCII, and in fact completely non-standard
   character set.  This put it 10 years ahead of its time --- where it
   stayed, firmly rooted, for the next 20, until character displays
   gave way to programmable bit-mapped devices with the flexibility to
   support other character sets.
```

1.811   gonk

```
            gonk: /gonk/ vt.,n. 1. To prevaricate or to embellish the truth
   beyond any reasonable recognition.  In German the term is
   (mythically) 'gonken'; in Spanish the verb becomes 'gonkar'.
   "You're gonking me.  That story you just told me is a bunch of
   gonk."  In German, for example, "Du gonkst mir" (You're pulling
   my leg).  See also
            gonkulator
            . 2. [British] To grab some
   sleep at an odd time; compare
            gronk out
            .
```

1.812   gonkulator

```
            gonkulator: /gon'kyoo-lay-tr/ [from the old "Hogan's Heroes" TV
   series] n. A pretentious piece of equipment that actually serves no
   useful purpose.  Usually used to describe one's least favorite
   piece of computer hardware.  See
            gonk
            .
```

1.813   gonzo

```
            gonzo: /gon'zoh/ [from Hunter S. Thompson] adj. Overwhelming;
   outrageous; over the top; very large, esp. used of collections of
   source code, source files, or individual functions.  Has some of
   the connotations of
            moby
```

```
            and
            hairy
            , but without the
implication of obscurity or complexity.
```

1.814   Good Thing

```
            Good Thing: n.,adj. Often capitalized; always pronounced as if
capitalized.  1. Self-evidently wonderful to anyone in a position
to notice: "The Trailblazer's 19.2Kbaud PEP mode with on-the-fly
Lempel-Ziv compression is a Good Thing for sites relaying
netnews."  2. Something that can't possibly have any ill
side-effects and may save considerable grief later: "Removing the
self-modifying code from that shared library would be a Good
Thing."  3. When said of software tools or libraries, as in "YACC
is a Good Thing", specifically connotes that the thing has
drastically reduced a programmer's work load.  Oppose
            Bad

            Thing
            .
```

1.815   gorets

```
            gorets: /gor'ets/ n. The unknown ur-noun, fill in your own
meaning.  Found esp. on the USENET newsgroup alt.gorets, which
seems to be a running contest to redefine the word by implication
in the funniest and most peculiar way, with the understanding that
no definition is ever final.  [A correspondent from the Former
Soviet Union informs me that 'gorets' is Russian for 'mountain
dweller' --- ESR] Compare
            frink
            .
```

1.816   gorilla arm

```
            gorilla arm: n. The side-effect that destroyed touch-screens as a
mainstream input technology despite a promising start in the early
1980s.  It seems the designers of all those
            spiffy
             touch-menu
systems failed to notice that humans aren't designed to hold their
arms in front of their faces making small motions.  After more than
a very few selections, the arm begins to feel sore, cramped, and
```

oversized --- the operator looks like a gorilla while using the
touch screen and feels like one afterwards. This is now considered
a classic cautionary tale to human-factors designers; "Remember
the gorilla arm!" is shorthand for "How is this going to fly in
real use?".

1.817 gorp

gorp: /gorp/ [CMU: perhaps from the canonical hiker's food, Good
Old Raisins and Peanuts] Another
metasyntactic variable
, like

foo
 and
bar
.

1.818 GOSMACS

GOSMACS: /goz'maks/ [contraction of 'Gosling EMACS'] n. The first

EMACS
-in-C implementation, predating but now largely eclipsed by

GNUMACS
. Originally freeware; a commercial version is now
modestly popular as 'UniPress EMACS'. The author (James Gosling)
went on to invent
NeWS
.

1.819 Gosperism

Gosperism: /gos'p*r-izm/ A hack, invention, or saying due to
arch-hacker R. William (Bill) Gosper. This notion merits its own
term because there are so many of them. Many of the entries in

HAKMEM
 are Gosperisms; see also
life
.

1.820 gotcha

gotcha: n. A
misfeature
 of a system, especially a programming
language or environment, that tends to breed bugs or mistakes
because it both enticingly easy to invoke and completely unexpected
and/or unreasonable in its outcome. For example, a classic gotcha
in
C
 is the fact that 'if (a=b) code;' is
syntactically valid and sometimes even correct. It puts the value
of 'b' into 'a' and then executes 'code' if
'a' is non-zero. What the programmer probably meant was
'if (a==b) code;', which executes 'code' if
'a' and 'b' are equal.

1.821 GPL

GPL: /G-P-L/ n. Abbreviation for 'General Public License' in
widespread use; see
copyleft
,
General Public

Virus
.

1.822 GPV

GPV: /G-P-V/ n. Abbrev. for
General Public Virus
 in
widespread use.

1.823 grault

grault: /grawlt/ n. Yet another
metasyntactic variable
, invented by
Mike Gallaher and propagated by the
GOSMACS
 documentation. See

corge

.

1.824 gray goo

gray goo: n. A hypothetical substance composed of
sagan
s of
sub-micron-sized self-replicating robots programmed to make copies
of themselves out of whatever is available. The image that goes
with the term is one of the entire biosphere of Earth being
eventually converted to robot goo. This is the simplest of the

nanotechnology
 disaster scenarios, easily refuted by arguments
from energy requirements and elemental abundances. Compare
blue

goo

.

1.825 Great Renaming

Great Renaming: n. The
flag day
 in 1985 on which all of the
non-local groups on the
USENET
 had their names changed from
the net.- format to the current multiple-hierarchies scheme. Used
esp. in discussing the history of newsgroup names. "The oldest
sources group is comp.sources.misc; before the Great Renaming,
it was net.sources."

1.826 Great Runes

Great Runes: n. Uppercase-only text or display messages. Some
archaic operating systems still emit these. See also
runes
,

smash case
,

        fold case
        .

Decades ago, back in the days when it was the sole supplier of
long-distance hardcopy transmittal devices, the Teletype
Corporation was faced with a major design choice. To shorten code
lengths and cut complexity in the printing mechanism, it had been
decided that teletypes would use a monocase font, either ALL UPPER
or all lower. The Question Of The Day was therefore, which one to
choose. A study was conducted on readability under various
conditions of bad ribbon, worn print hammers, etc. Lowercase won;
it is less dense and has more distinctive letterforms, and is thus
much easier to read both under ideal conditions and when the
letters are mangled or partly obscured. The results were filtered
up through
        management
        . The chairman of Teletype killed the
proposal because it failed one incredibly important criterion:

    "It would be impossible to spell the name of the Deity
    correctly."

In this way (or so, at least, hacker folklore has it) superstition
triumphed over utility. Teletypes were the major input devices on
most early computers, and terminal manufacturers looking for
corners to cut naturally followed suit until well into the 1970s.
Thus, that one bad call stuck us with Great Runes for thirty years.

1.827   Great Worm, the

        Great Worm, the: n. The 1988 Internet
        worm
         perpetrated by

        RTM
        . This is a play on Tolkien (compare
        elvish
        ,

        elder days
). In the fantasy history of his Middle Earth
books, there were dragons powerful enough to lay waste to entire
regions; two of these (Scatha and Glaurung) were known as "the
Great Worms". This usage expresses the connotation that the RTM
hack was a sort of devastating watershed event in hackish history;
certainly it did more to make non-hackers nervous about the
Internet than anything before or since.

1.828   great-wall

great-wall: [from SF fandom] vi.,n. A mass expedition to an
oriental restaurant, esp. one where food is served family-style
and shared. There is a common heuristic about the amount of food
to order, expressed as "Get N - 1 entrees"; the value of N,
which is the number of people in the group, can be inferred from
context (see
N
). See
oriental food
,
ravs
,

stir-fried random
.

1.829   Green Book

Green Book: n. 1. One of the three standard
PostScript
   references: "PostScript Language Program Design", bylined
'Adobe Systems' (Addison-Wesley, 1988; QA76.73.P67P66 ISBN
0-201-14396-8); see also
Red Book
,
Blue Book
, and the

White Book
   (sense 2). 2. Informal name for one of the three
standard references on SmallTalk: "Smalltalk-80: Bits of
History, Words of Advice", by Glenn Krasner (Addison-Wesley, 1983;
QA76.8.S635S58; ISBN 0-201-11669-3) (this, too, is associated with
blue and red books). 3. The "X/Open Compatibility Guide", which
defines an international standard
UNIX
   environment that is a
proper superset of POSIX/SVID; also includes descriptions of a
standard utility toolkit, systems administrations features, and the
like. This grimoire is taken with particular seriousness in
Europe. See
Purple Book
. 4. The IEEE 1003.1 POSIX Operating
Systems Interface standard has been dubbed "The Ugly Green
Book". 5. Any of the 1992 standards issued by the CCITT's tenth
plenary assembly. These include, among other things, the
X.400 email standard and the Group 1 through 4 fax standards. See
also
book titles
.

1.830   green bytes

green bytes: n. (also 'green words') 1. Meta-information
embedded in a file, such as the length of the file or its name; as
opposed to keeping such information in a separate description file
or record. The term comes from an IBM user's group meeting
(ca. 1962) at which these two approaches were being debated and the
diagram of the file on the blackboard had the 'green bytes' drawn
in green. 2. By extension, the non-data bits in any
self-describing format. "A GIF file contains, among other things,
green bytes describing the packing method for the image." Compare

out-of-band
,
zigamorph
,
fence
  (sense 1).

1.831   green card

green card: n. [after the "IBM System/360 Reference Data"
  card] A summary of an assembly language, even if the color is not
  green. Less frequently used now because of the decrease in the use
  of assembly language. "I'll go get my green card so I can check
  the addressing mode for that instruction." Some green cards are
  actually booklets.

  The original green card became a yellow card when the System/370
  was introduced, and later a yellow booklet. An anecdote from IBM
  refers to a scene that took place in a programmers' terminal room
  at Yorktown in 1978. A luser overheard one of the programmers ask
  another "Do you have a green card?" The other grunted and
  passed the first a thick yellow booklet. At this point the luser
  turned a delicate shade of olive and rapidly left the room, never
  to return..

1.832   green lightning

green lightning: [IBM] n. 1. Apparently random flashing streaks on
the face of 3278-9 terminals while a new symbol set is being
downloaded. This hardware bug was left deliberately unfixed, as
some genius within IBM suggested it would let the user know that
'something is happening'. That, it certainly does. Later

microprocessor-driven IBM color graphics displays were actually
programmed to produce green lightning! 2. [proposed] Any
bug perverted into an alleged feature by adroit rationalization or
marketing. "Motorola calls the CISC cruft in the 88000
architecture 'compatibility logic', but I call it green
lightning". See also
              feature
               (sense 6).

1.833   green machine

green machine: n. A computer or peripheral device that has been
  designed and built to military specifications for field equipment
  (that is, to withstand mechanical shock, extremes of temperature
  and humidity, and so forth). Comes from the olive-drab 'uniform'
  paint used for military equipment.

1.834   Green's Theorem

Green's Theorem: [TMRC] prov. For any story, in any group of
  people there will be at least one person who has not heard the
  story. A refinement of the theorem states that there will be
  exactly one person (if there were more than one, it wouldn't be
  as bad to re-tell the story). [The name of this theorem is a play
  on a fundamental theorem in calculus. --- ESR]

1.835   grep

              grep: /grep/ [from the qed/ed editor idiom g/re/p , where
re stands for a regular expression, to Globally search for the
Regular Expression and Print the lines containing matches to it,
via
              UNIX
               'grep(1)'] vt. To rapidly scan a file or set of
files looking for a particular string or pattern (when browsing
through a large set of files, one may speak of 'grepping
around'). By extension, to look for something by pattern. "Grep
the bulletin board for the system backup schedule, would you?"
See also
              vgrep
               .

1.836   grilf

```
          grilf: // n.  Girl-friend.  Like
          newsfroup
           and
          filk
          , a
typo incarnated as a new word.  Seems to have originated sometime
in 1992.
```

1.837   grind

```
          grind: vt. 1. [MIT and Berkeley] To prettify hardcopy of code,
especially LISP code, by reindenting lines, printing keywords and
comments in distinct fonts (if available), etc.  This usage was
associated with the MacLISP community and is now rare;
```

```
          prettyprint
           was and is the generic term for such
operations.  2. [UNIX] To generate the formatted version of a
document from the
          nroff
          ,
          troff
          ,
          TeX
          , or Scribe
source.  3. To run seemingly interminably, esp. (but not
necessarily) if performing some tedious and inherently useless
task.  Similar to
          crunch
           or
          grovel
          . Grinding has a
connotation of using a lot of CPU time, but it is possible to grind
a disk, network, etc.  See also
          hog
          . 4. To make the whole
system slow.  "Troff really grinds a PDP-11."  5. `grind grind'
excl. Roughly, "Isn't the machine slow today!"
```

1.838   grind crank

```
          grind crank: n. A mythical accessory to a terminal.  A crank on  ←
             the
side of a monitor, which when operated makes a zizzing noise and
causes the computer to run faster.  Usually one does not refer to a
grind crank out loud, but merely makes the appropriate gesture and
```

noise. See
                grind
                 and
                wugga wugga
                .

Historical note: At least one real machine actually had a grind
crank --- the R1, a research machine built toward the end of the
days of the great vacuum tube computers, in 1959. R1 (also known
as 'The Rice Institute Computer' (TRIC) and later as 'The Rice
University Computer' (TRUC)) had a single-step/free-run switch for
use when debugging programs. Since single-stepping through a large
program was rather tedious, there was also a crank with a cam and
gear arrangement that repeatedly pushed the single-step button.
This allowed one to 'crank' through a lot of code, then slow
down to single-step for a bit when you got near the code of
interest, poke at some registers using the console typewriter, and
then keep on cranking.

1.839   gripenet

gripenet: [IBM] n. A wry (and thoroughly unofficial) name for IBM's
   internal VNET system, deriving from its common use by IBMers to
   voice pointed criticism of IBM management that would be taboo in
   more formal channels.

1.840   gritch

                gritch: /grich/ 1. n. A complaint (often caused by a
                glitch
).
2. vi. To complain. Often verb-doubled: "Gritch gritch". 3. A
synonym for
                glitch
                 (as verb or noun).

1.841   grok

                grok: /grok/, var. /grohk/ [from the novel "Stranger in
a Strange Land", by Robert A. Heinlein, where it is a Martian word
meaning literally 'to drink' and metaphorically 'to be one
with'] vt. 1. To understand, usually in a global sense. Connotes
intimate and exhaustive knowledge. Contrast
                zen
                , which is similar

supernal understanding experienced as a single brief flash. See also

          glark
          . 2. Used of programs, may connote merely sufficient
understanding. "Almost all C compilers grok the 'void' type
these days."

1.842 gronk

          gronk: /gronk/ [popularized by Johnny Hart's comic strip
"B.C." but the word apparently predates that] vt. 1. To
clear the state of a wedged device and restart it. More severe
than 'to
          frob
          ' (sense 2). 2. [TMRC] To cut, sever, smash,
or similarly disable. 3. The sound made by many 3.5-inch diskette
drives. In particular, the microfloppies on a Commodore Amiga go
"grink, gronk".

1.843 gronk out

gronk out: vi. To cease functioning. Of people, to go home and go
   to sleep. "I guess I'll gronk out now; see you all tomorrow."

1.844 gronked

          gronked: adj. 1. Broken. "The teletype scanner was gronked, so
we took the system down." 2. Of people, the condition of feeling
very tired or (less commonly) sick. "I've been chasing that bug
for 17 hours now and I am thoroughly gronked!" Compare

          broken
          , which means about the same as
          gronk
           used of
hardware, but connotes depression or mental/emotional problems in
people.

1.845 grovel

          grovel: vi. 1. To work interminably and without apparent progress.
Often used transitively with 'over' or 'through'. "The file
scavenger has been groveling through the /usr directories for 10
minutes now." Compare
          grind
           and
          crunch
          . Emphatic form:
'grovel obscenely'. 2. To examine minutely or in complete detail.
"The compiler grovels over the entire source program before
beginning to translate it." "I grovelled through all the
documentation, but I still couldn't find the command I wanted."

1.846 grunge

          grunge: /gruhnj/ n. 1. That which is grungy, or that which makes
it so. 2. [Cambridge] Code which is inaccessible due to changes in
other parts of the program. The preferred term in North America is

          dead code
          .

1.847 gubbish

gubbish: /guhb'*sh/ [a portmanteau of 'garbage' and
   'rubbish'; may have originated with SF author Philip K. Dick]
   n. Garbage; crap; nonsense. "What is all this gubbish?" The
   opposite portmanteau 'rubbage' is also reported.

1.848 guiltware

          guiltware: /gilt'weir/ n. 1. A piece of
          freeware
           decorated
with a message telling one how long and hard the author worked on
it and intimating that one is a no-good freeloader if one does not
immediately send the poor suffering martyr gobs of money.
2.
          Shareware
           that works.

1.849 gumby

gumby: /guhm'bee/ [from a class of Monty Python characters,
   poss. with some influence from the 1960s claymation character] n.
   An act of minor but conspicuous stupidity, often in 'gumby
   maneuver' or 'pull a gumby'.

1.850 gun

            gun: [ITS: from the ':GUN' command] vt. To forcibly
   terminate a program or job (computer, not career). "Some idiot
   left a background process running soaking up half the cycles, so I
   gunned it." Compare
            can
            .

1.851 gunch

            gunch: /guhnch/ [TMRC] vt. To push, prod, or poke at a device
   that has almost (but not quite) produced the desired result.
   Implies a threat to
            mung
            .

1.852 gurfle

            gurfle: /ger'fl/ interj. An expression of shocked disbelief. "He
   said we have to recode this thing in FORTRAN by next week.
   Gurfle!" Compare
            weeble
            .

1.853 guru

            guru: n. [UNIX] An expert. Implies not only
            wizard
             skill but
   also a history of being a knowledge resource for others. Less
   often, used (with a qualifier) for other experts on other systems,
   as in 'VMS guru'. See

                    source of all good bits
                    .

1.854   guru meditation

                    guru meditation: n. Amiga equivalent of 'panic' in UNIX
(sometimes just called a 'guru' or 'guru event').   When the
system crashes, a cryptic message of the form "GURU MEDITATION
#XXXXXXXX.YYYYYYYY" may appear, indicating what the problem
was.   An Amiga guru can figure things out from the numbers.
Generally a
                    guru
                     event must be followed by a
                    Vulcan nerve

                    pinch
                    .

This term is (no surprise) an in-joke from the earliest days of the
Amiga.   There used to be a device called a 'Joyboard' which was
basically a plastic board built onto a joystick-like device; it
was sold with a skiing game cartridge for the Atari game machine.
It is said that whenever the prototype OS crashed, the system
programmer responsible would calm down by concentrating on a
solution while sitting cross-legged on a Joyboard trying to keep
the board in balance.   This position resembled that of a
meditating guru.   Sadly, the joke was removed in AmigaOS 2.04.

1.855   gweep

                    gweep: /gweep/ [WPI] 1. v. To
                    hack
                    , usually at night.   At
WPI, from 1977 onwards, one who gweeped coud often be found at the
College Computing Center punching cards or crashing the
                    PDP-10
                        or, later, the DEC-20. The term has survived the demise of ←
                         those
technologies, however, and is still alive in late 1991.   "I'm
going to go gweep for a while.   See you in the morning." "I gweep
from 8 PM till 3 AM during the week." 2. n. One who habitually
gweeps in sense 1; a
                    hacker
                    . "He's a hard-core gweep,
mumbles code in his sleep."

1.856   h

h: [from SF fandom] infix. A method of 'marking' common words,
   i.e., calling attention to the fact that they are being used in a
   nonstandard, ironic, or humorous way. Originated in the fannish
   catchphrase "Bheer is the One True Ghod!" from decades ago.
   H-infix marking of 'Ghod' and other words spread into the 1960s
   counterculture via underground comix, and into early hackerdom
   either from the counterculture or from SF fandom (the three
   overlapped heavily at the time). More recently, the h infix has
   become an expected feature of benchmark names (Dhrystone,
   Rhealstone, etc.); this is prob. patterning on the original
   Whetstone (the name of a laboratory) but influenced by the
   fannish/counterculture h infix.

1.857   ha ha only serious

         ha ha only serious: [from SF fandom, orig. as mutation of HHOK,
'Ha Ha Only Kidding'] A phrase (often seen abbreviated as HHOS)
that aptly captures the flavor of much hacker discourse. Applied
especially to parodies, absurdities, and ironic jokes that are both
intended and perceived to contain a possibly disquieting amount of
truth, or truths that are constructed on in-joke and self-parody.
This lexicon contains many examples of ha-ha-only-serious in both
form and content. Indeed, the entirety of hacker culture is often
perceived as ha-ha-only-serious by hackers themselves; to take it
either too lightly or too seriously marks a person as an outsider,
a
         wannabee
         , or in
         larval stage
         . For further
enlightenment on this subject, consult any Zen master. See also

         Humor, Hacker
         , and
         AI koans
         .

1.858   hack

         hack: 1. n. Originally, a quick job that produces what is needed,
but not well. 2. n. An incredibly good, and perhaps very
time-consuming, piece of work that produces exactly what is
needed. 3. vt. To bear emotionally or physically. "I can't hack
this heat!" 4. vt. To work on something (typically a program).
In an immediate sense: "What are you doing?" "I'm hacking
TECO." In a general (time-extended) sense: "What do you do
around here?" "I hack TECO." More generally, "I hack

'foo'" is roughly equivalent to "'foo' is my major interest
(or project)". "I hack solid-state physics." See
            Hacking X

            for Y
            . 5. vt. To pull a prank on. See sense 2 and
            hacker
                (sense 5). 6. vi. To interact with a computer in a playful and
exploratory rather than goal-directed way. "Whatcha up to?"
"Oh, just hacking." 7. n. Short for
            hacker
            . 8. See

            nethack
            . 9. [MIT] v. To explore the basements, roof ledges,
and steam tunnels of a large, institutional building, to the dismay
of Physical Plant workers and (since this is usually performed at
educational institutions) the Campus Police. This activity has
been found to be eerily similar to playing adventure games such as
Dungeons and Dragons and
            Zork
            . See also
            vadding
            .

Constructions on this term abound. They include 'happy hacking'
(a farewell), 'how's hacking?' (a friendly greeting among
hackers) and 'hack, hack' (a fairly content-free but friendly
comment, often used as a temporary farewell). For more on this
totipotent term see "
            The Meaning of 'Hack'
            ". See
also
            neat hack
            ,
            real hack
            .

1.859 hack attack

            hack attack: [poss. by analogy with 'Big Mac Attack' from ads
for the McDonald's fast-food chain; the variant 'big hack attack'
is reported] n. Nearly synonymous with
            hacking run
            , though the
latter more strongly implies an all-nighter.

1.860 hack mode

hack mode: n. 1. What one is in when hacking, of course. 2. More
specifically, a Zen-like state of total focus on The Problem that
may be achieved when one is hacking (this is why every good hacker
is part mystic). Ability to enter such concentration at will
correlates strongly with wizardliness; it is one of the most
important skills learned during
                larval stage
                . Sometimes
amplified as 'deep hack mode'.

Being yanked out of hack mode (see
                priority interrupt
) may be
experienced as a physical shock, and the sensation of being in hack
mode is more than a little habituating. The intensity of this
experience is probably by itself sufficient explanation for the
existence of hackers, and explains why many resist being promoted
out of positions where they can code. See also
                cyberspace
                   (sense 2).

Some aspects of hackish etiquette will appear quite odd to an
observer unaware of the high value placed on hack mode. For
example, if someone appears at your door, it is perfectly okay to
hold up a hand (without turning one's eyes away from the screen) to
avoid being interrupted. One may read, type, and interact with the
computer for quite some time before further acknowledging the
other's presence (of course, he or she is reciprocally free to
leave without a word). The understanding is that you might be in

                hack mode
                 with a lot of delicate
                state
                 (sense 2) in your
head, and you dare not
                swap
                 that context out until you have
reached a good point to pause. See also
                juggling eggs
                .

1.861   hack on

                hack on: vt. To
                hack
                ; implies that the subject is some
pre-existing hunk of code that one is evolving, as opposed to
something one might
                hack up
                .

1.862   hack together

hack together: vt. To throw something together so it will work. Unlike 'kluge together' or
cruft together
, this does not
necessarily have negative connotations.

1.863   hack up

hack up: vt. To
hack
, but generally implies that the result is
a hack in sense 1 (a quick hack). Contrast this with
hack on
.
To 'hack up on' implies a
quick-and-dirty
 modification to an
existing system. Contrast
hacked up
; compare
kluge up
,

monkey up
,
cruft together
.

1.864   hack value

hack value: n. Often adduced as the reason or motivation for
expending effort toward a seemingly useless goal, the point being
that the accomplished goal is a hack. For example, MacLISP had
features for reading and printing Roman numerals, which were
installed purely for hack value. See
display hack
 for one
method of computing hack value, but this cannot really be
explained, only experienced. As Louis Armstrong once said when
asked to explain jazz: "Man, if you gotta ask you'll never know."
(Feminists please note Fats Waller's explanation of rhythm: "Lady,
if you got to ask you ain't got it.")

1.865 hacked off

hacked off: [analogous to 'pissed off'] adj. Said of system
   administrators who have become annoyed, upset, or touchy owing to
   suspicions that their sites have been or are going to be victimized
   by crackers, or used for inappropriate, technically illegal, or
   even overtly criminal activities. For example, having unreadable
   files in your home directory called 'worm', 'lockpick', or 'goroot'
   would probably be an effective (as well as impressively obvious and
   stupid) way to get your sysadmin hacked off at you.

1.866 hacked up

            hacked up: adj. Sufficiently patched, kluged, and tweaked that the
surgical scars are beginning to crowd out normal tissue (compare

            critical mass
). Not all programs that are hacked become
'hacked up'; if modifications are done with some eye to coherence
and continued maintainability, the software may emerge better for
the experience. Contrast
            hack up
            .

1.867 hacker

            hacker: [originally, someone who makes furniture with an axe] n.
1. A person who enjoys exploring the details of programmable
systems and how to stretch their capabilities, as opposed to most
users, who prefer to learn only the minimum necessary. 2. One who
programs enthusiastically (even obsessively) or who enjoys
programming rather than just theorizing about programming. 3. A
person capable of appreciating
            hack value
            . 4. A person who is
good at programming quickly. 5. An expert at a particular program,
or one who frequently does work using it or on it; as in 'a UNIX
hacker'. (Definitions 1 through 5 are correlated, and people who
fit them congregate.) 6. An expert or enthusiast of any kind. One
might be an astronomy hacker, for example. 7. One who enjoys the
intellectual challenge of creatively overcoming or circumventing
limitations. 8. [deprecated] A malicious meddler who tries to
discover sensitive information by poking around. Hence 'password
hacker', 'network hacker'. The correct term is
            cracker
            .

The term 'hacker' also tends to connote membership in the global
community defined by the net (see

network, the
 and

Internet address
). It also implies that the person described
is seen to subscribe to some version of the hacker ethic (see

hacker ethic, the
.

It is better to be described as a hacker by others than to describe
oneself that way. Hackers consider themselves something of an
elite (a meritocracy based on ability), though one to which new
members are gladly welcome. There is thus a certain ego
satisfaction to be had in identifying yourself as a hacker (but if
you claim to be one and are not, you'll quickly be labeled

bogus
). See also
wannabee
.

1.868   hacker ethic, the

hacker ethic, the: n. 1. The belief that information-sharing
is a powerful positive good, and that it is an ethical duty of
hackers to share their expertise by writing free software and
facilitating access to information and to computing resources
wherever possible. 2. The belief that system-cracking for fun
and exploration is ethically OK as long as the cracker commits
no theft, vandalism, or breach of confidentiality.

Both of these normative ethical principles are widely, but by no
means universally, accepted among hackers. Most hackers subscribe
to the hacker ethic in sense 1, and many act on it by writing and
giving away free software. A few go further and assert that
all information should be free and *any* proprietary
control of it is bad; this is the philosophy behind the
          GNU
             project.

Sense 2 is more controversial: some people consider the act of
cracking itself to be unethical, like breaking and entering. But
the belief that 'ethical' cracking excludes destruction at least
moderates the behavior of people who see themselves as 'benign'
crackers (see also
          samurai
). On this view, it may be one of
the highest forms of hackerly courtesy to (a) break into a system,
and then (b) explain to the sysop, preferably by email from a

superuser
 account, exactly how it was done and how the hole

can be plugged --- acting as an unpaid (and unsolicited)
            tiger

            team
            .

The most reliable manifestation of either version of the hacker
ethic is that almost all hackers are actively willing to share
technical tricks, software, and (where possible) computing
resources with other hackers. Huge cooperative networks such as

            USENET
            ,
            FidoNet
             and Internet (see
            Internet address
)
can function without central control because of this trait; they
both rely on and reinforce a sense of community that may be
hackerdom's most valuable intangible asset.

1.869 hacking run

            hacking run: [analogy with 'bombing run' or 'speed run'] n. A
hack session extended long outside normal working times, especially
one longer than 12 hours. May cause you to 'change phase the hard
way' (see
            phase
).

1.870 Hacking X for Y

            Hacking X for Y: [ITS] n. Ritual phrasing of part of the
information which ITS made publicly available about each user.
This information (the INQUIR record) was a sort of form in which
the user could fill out various fields. On display, two of these
fields were always combined into a project description of the form
"Hacking X for Y" (e.g., '"Hacking perceptrons for
Minsky"'). This form of description became traditional and has
since been carried over to other systems with more general
facilities for self-advertisement (such as UNIX
            plan

            file
            s).

1.871 Hackintosh

Hackintosh: n. 1. An Apple Lisa that has been hacked into emulating a
   Macintosh (also called a 'Mac XL'). 2. A Macintosh assembled
   from parts theoretically belonging to different models in the line.

1.872 hackish

            hackish: /hak'ish/ adj. (also
            hackishness
             n.) 1. Said of
   something that is or involves a hack. 2. Of or pertaining to
   hackers or the hacker subculture. See also
            true-hacker
            .

1.873 hackishness

            hackishness: n. The quality of being or involving a hack. This
   term is considered mildly silly. Syn.
            hackitude
            .

1.874 hackitude

            hackitude: n. Syn.
            hackishness
            ; this word is considered sillier.

1.875 hair

            hair: [back-formation from
            hairy
            ] n. The complications that
   make something hairy. "Decoding
            TECO
             commands requires a
   certain amount of hair." Often seen in the phrase 'infinite
   hair', which connotes extreme complexity. Also in 'hairiferous'
   (tending to promote hair growth): "GNUMACS elisp encourages lusers

to write complex editing modes." "Yeah, it's pretty hairiferous
all right." (or just: "Hair squared!")

1.876 hairy

          hairy: adj. 1. Annoyingly complicated. "
          DWIM
           is incredibly
hairy." 2. Incomprehensible. "
          DWIM
           is incredibly hairy."
3. Of people, high-powered, authoritative, rare, expert, and/or
incomprehensible. Hard to explain except in context: "He knows
this hairy lawyer who says there's nothing to worry about." See
also
          hirsute
          .

A well-known result in topology called the Brouwer Fixed-Point
Theorem states that any continuous transformation of a surface into
itself has at least one fixed point. Mathematically literate
hackers tend to associate the term 'hairy' with the informal
version of this theorem; "You can't comb a hairy ball smooth."

The adjective 'long-haired' is well-attested to have been in
slang use among scientists and engineers during the early 1950s; it
was equivalent to modern 'hairy' senses 1 and 2, and was very
likely ancestral to the hackish use. In fact the noun
'long-hair' was at the time used to describe a person satisfying
sense 3. Both senses probably passed out of use when long hair
was adopted as a signature trait by the 1960s counterculture,
leaving hackish 'hairy' as a sort of stunted mutant relic.

1.877 HAKMEM

          HAKMEM: /hak'mem/ n. MIT AI Memo 239 (February 1972). A
legendary collection of neat mathematical and programming hacks
contributed by many people at MIT and elsewhere. (The title of the
memo really is "HAKMEM", which is a 6-letterism for 'hacks
memo'.) Some of them are very useful techniques, powerful
theorems, or interesting unsolved problems, but most fall into the
category of mathematical and computer trivia. Here is a sampling
of the entries (with authors), slightly paraphrased:

Item 41 (Gene Salamin): There are exactly 23,000 prime numbers less
than 2^18.

Item 46 (Rich Schroeppel): The most *probable* suit

distribution in bridge hands is 4-4-3-2, as compared to 4-3-3-3,
which is the most *evenly* distributed. This is because the
world likes to have unequal numbers: a thermodynamic effect saying
things will not be in the state of lowest energy, but in the state
of lowest disordered energy.

Item 81 (Rich Schroeppel): Count the magic squares of order 5
(that is, all the 5-by-5 arrangements of the numbers from 1 to 25
such that all rows, columns, and diagonals add up to the same
number). There are about 320 million, not counting those that
differ only by rotation and reflection.

Item 154 (Bill Gosper): The myth that any given programming
language is machine independent is easily exploded by computing the
sum of powers of 2. If the result loops with period = 1
with sign +, you are on a sign-magnitude machine. If the
result loops with period = 1 at -1, you are on a
twos-complement machine. If the result loops with period greater
than 1, including the beginning, you are on a ones-complement
machine. If the result loops with period greater than 1, not
including the beginning, your machine isn't binary --- the pattern
should tell you the base. If you run out of memory, you are on a
string or bignum system. If arithmetic overflow is a fatal error,
some fascist pig with a read-only mind is trying to enforce machine
independence. But the very ability to trap overflow is machine
dependent. By this strategy, consider the universe, or, more
precisely, algebra: Let X = the sum of many powers of 2 =
...111111 (base 2). Now add X to itself:
X + X = ...111110. Thus, 2X = X - 1, so
X = -1. Therefore algebra is run on a machine (the
universe) that is two's-complement.

Item 174 (Bill Gosper and Stuart Nelson): 21963283741 is the only
number such that if you represent it on the
            PDP-10
             as both an
integer and a floating-point number, the bit patterns of the two
representations are identical.

Item 176 (Gosper): The "banana phenomenon" was encountered when
processing a character string by taking the last 3 letters typed
out, searching for a random occurrence of that sequence in the
text, taking the letter following that occurrence, typing it out,
and iterating. This ensures that every 4-letter string output
occurs in the original. The program typed BANANANANANANANA.... We
note an ambiguity in the phrase, "the Nth occurrence of." In one
sense, there are five 00's in 0000000000; in another, there are
nine. The editing program TECO finds five. Thus it finds only the
first ANA in BANANA, and is thus obligated to type N next. By
Murphy's Law, there is but one NAN, thus forcing A, and thus a
loop. An option to find overlapped instances would be useful,
although it would require backing up N - 1 characters before
seeking the next N-character string.

Note: This last item refers to a
            Dissociated Press
                implementation. See also

```
            banana problem
            .
```

HAKMEM also contains some rather more complicated mathematical and
technical items, but these examples show some of its fun flavor.

1.878 hakspek

```
            hakspek: /hak'speek/ n. A shorthand method of spelling found on
many British academic bulletin boards and
            talker system
            s.
```
Syllables and whole words in a sentence are replaced by single
ASCII characters the names of which are phonetically similar or
equivalent, while multiple letters are usually dropped. Hence,
'for' becomes '4'; 'two', 'too', and 'to' become '2'; 'ck'
becomes 'k'. "Before I see you tomorrow" becomes "b4 i c u
2moro". First appeared in London about 1986, and was probably
caused by the slowness of available talker systems, which
operated on archaic machines with outdated operating systems and
no standard methods of communication. Has become rarer since.
See also
```
            talk mode
            .
```

1.879 hammer

```
            hammer: vt. Commonwealth hackish syn. for
            bang on
            .
```

1.880 hamster

```
            hamster: n. 1. [Fairchild] A particularly slick little piece of
code that does one thing well; a small, self-contained hack.  The
image is of a hamster
            happily
             spinning its exercise wheel.  2. A
tailless mouse; that is, one with an infrared link to a receiver on
the machine, as opposed to the conventional cable.  3. [UK] Any
item of hardware made by Amstrad, a company famous for its cheap
plastic PC-almost-compatibles.
```

1.881   hand cruft

```
hand cruft: [pun on 'hand craft'] vt. See
cruft
, sense 3.
```

1.882   hand-hacking

```
hand-hacking: n. 1. The practice of translating
hot spot
s from
```
an
```
HLL
 into hand-tuned assembler, as opposed to trying to
```
coerce the compiler into generating better code. Both the term and
the practice are becoming uncommon. See
```
tune
,
bum
,
by
```
```
hand
; syn. with v.
cruft
. 2. More generally, manual
```
construction or patching of data sets that would normally be
generated by a translation utility and interpreted by another
program, and aren't really designed to be read or modified by
humans.

1.883   handle

```
        handle: n. 1. [from CB slang] An electronic pseudonym; a 'nom
```
de guerre' intended to conceal the user's true identity. Network
and BBS handles function as the same sort of simultaneous
concealment and display one finds on Citizen's Band radio, from
which the term was adopted. Use of grandiose handles is
characteristic of
```
cracker
s,
weenie
s,
spod
s, and
```
other lower forms of network life; true hackers travel on their own
reputations rather than invented legendry. Compare

nick

. 2. [Mac] A pointer to a pointer to dynamically-allocated
memory; the extra level of indirection allows on-the-fly memory
compaction (to cut down on fragmentation) or aging out of unused
resources, with minimal impact on the (possibly multiple) parts of
the larger program containing references to the allocated memory.
Compare

snap

 (to snap a handle would defeat its purpose); see
also

aliasing bug

,
dangling pointer

.

1.884 hand-roll

hand-roll: [from obs. mainstream slang 'hand-rolled' in
opposition to 'ready-made', referring to cigarettes] v. To
perform a normally automated software installation or configuration
process

by hand

; implies that the normal process failed due to
bugs in the configurator or was defeated by something exceptional
in the local environment. "The worst thing about being a gateway
between four different nets is having to hand-roll a new sendmail
configuration every time any of them upgrades."

1.885 handshaking

handshaking: n. Hardware or software activity designed to start or
keep two machines or programs in synchronization as they

do

protocol

. Often applied to human activity; thus, a hacker might
watch two people in conversation nodding their heads to indicate
that they have heard each others' points and say "Oh, they're
handshaking!". See also

protocol

.

1.886 handwave

handwave: [poss. from gestures characteristic of stage magicians]
1. v. To gloss over a complex point; to distract a listener; to
support a (possibly actually valid) point with blatantly faulty
logic. 2. n. The act of handwaving. "Boy, what a handwave!"

If someone starts a sentence with "Clearly..." or
"Obviously..." or "It is self-evident that...", it is
a good bet he is about to handwave (alternatively, use of these
constructions in a sarcastic tone before a paraphrase of someone
else's argument suggests that it is a handwave). The theory behind
this term is that if you wave your hands at the right moment, the
listener may be sufficiently distracted to not notice that what you
have said is

bogus

. Failing that, if a listener does object,
you might try to dismiss the objection with a wave of your hand.

The use of this word is often accompanied by gestures: both hands
up, palms forward, swinging the hands in a vertical plane pivoting
at the elbows and/or shoulders (depending on the magnitude of the
handwave); alternatively, holding the forearms in one position
while rotating the hands at the wrist to make them flutter. In
context, the gestures alone can suffice as a remark; if a speaker
makes an outrageously unsupported assumption, you might simply wave
your hands in this way, as an accusation, far more eloquent than
words could express, that his logic is faulty.

1.887   hang

hang: v. 1. To wait for an event that will never occur. "The
system is hanging because it can't read from the crashed drive".
See

wedged

,
hung

. 2. To wait for some event to occur; to
hang around until something happens. "The program displays a menu
and then hangs until you type a character." Compare

block

.
3. To attach a peripheral device, esp. in the construction 'hang
off': "We're going to hang another tape drive off the file
server." Implies a device attached with cables, rather than
something that is strictly inside the machine's chassis.

1.888   Hanlon's Razor

Hanlon's Razor: prov. A corollary of
Finagle's Law
, similar
to Occam's Razor, that reads "Never attribute to malice that which
can be adequately explained by stupidity." The derivation of the
common title Hanlon's Razor is unknown; a similar epigram has been
attributed to William James. Quoted here because it seems to be a
particular favorite of hackers, often showing up in
sig

block
s,
fortune cookie
 files and the login banners of BBS
systems and commercial networks. This probably reflects the
hacker's daily experience of environments created by
well-intentioned but short-sighted people. Compare
Sturgeon's

Law
.

1.889   happily

happily: adv. Of software, used to emphasize that a program is
   unaware of some important fact about its environment, either
   because it has been fooled into believing a lie, or because it
   doesn't care. The sense of 'happy' here is not that of elation,
   but rather that of blissful ignorance. "The program continues to
   run, happily unaware that its output is going to /dev/null."

1.890   haque

haque: /hak/ [USENET] n. Variant spelling of
hack
, used
only for the noun form and connoting an
elegant
 hack. that is
a
hack
 in sense 2.

1.891   hard boot

hard boot: n. See
boot
.

1.892 hardcoded

hardcoded: adj. 1. Said of data inserted directly into a program,
where it cannot be easily modified, as opposed to data in some

profile
, resource (see
de-rezz
 sense 2), or environment
variable that a
user
 or hacker can easily modify. 2. In C,
this is esp. applied to use of a literal instead of a
'#define' macro (see
magic number
).

1.893 hardwarily

hardwarily: /hard-weir'*-lee/ adv. In a way pertaining to
hardware. "The system is hardwarily unreliable." The adjective
'hardwary' is *not* traditionally used, though it has recently
been reported from the U.K. See
softwarily
.

1.894 hardwired

hardwired: adj. 1. In software, syn. for
hardcoded
. 2. By
extension, anything that is not modifiable, especially in the sense
of customizable to one's particular needs or tastes.

1.895   has the X nature

has the X nature: [seems to derive from Zen Buddhist koans of the
form "Does an X have the Buddha-nature?"] adj. Common hacker
construction for 'is an X', used for humorous emphasis. "Anyone
who can't even use a program with on-screen help embedded in it
truly has the
loser
 nature!" See also
the X that can be Y

is not the true X
.

1.896   hash bucket

hash bucket: n. A notional receptacle, a set of which might be
used to apportion data items for sorting or lookup purposes. When
you look up a name in the phone book (for example), you typically
hash it by extracting its first letter; the hash buckets are the
alphabetically ordered letter sections. This term is used as
techspeak with respect to code that uses actual hash functions; in
jargon, it is used for human associative memory as well. Thus, two
things 'in the same hash bucket' are more difficult to
discriminate, and may be confused. "If you hash English words
only by length, you get too many common grammar words in the first
couple of hash buckets." Compare
hash collision
.

1.897   hash collision

hash collision: [from the technical usage] n. (var. 'hash
clash') When used of people, signifies a confusion in associative
memory or imagination, especially a persistent one (see

thinko
). True story: One of us [ESR] was once on the phone
with a friend about to move out to Berkeley. When asked what he
expected Berkeley to be like, the friend replied: "Well, I have
this mental picture of naked women throwing Molotov cocktails, but
I think that's just a collision in my hash tables." Compare

hash bucket
.

1.898   hat

          hat: n. Common (spoken) name for the circumflex (`^', ASCII
1011110) character. See
          ASCII
           for other synonyms.

1.899   HCF

          HCF: /H-C-F/ n. Mnemonic for `Halt and Catch Fire', any of
several undocumented and semi-mythical machine instructions with
destructive side-effects, supposedly included for test purposes on
several well-known architectures going as far back as the IBM 360.
The MC6800 microprocessor was the first for which an HCF opcode
became widely known. This instruction caused the processor to

          toggle
           a subset of the bus lines as rapidly as it could; in
some configurations this could actually cause lines to burn
up.

1.900   heads down

          heads down: [Sun] adj. Concentrating, usually so heavily and for
so long that everything outside the focus area is missed. See also

          hack mode
           and
          larval stage
          , although this mode is hardly
confined to fledgling hackers.

1.901   heartbeat

          heartbeat: n. 1. The signal emitted by a Level 2 Ethernet
transceiver at the end of every packet to show that the
collision-detection circuit is still connected. 2. A periodic
synchronization signal used by software or hardware, such as a bus
clock or a periodic interrupt. 3. The `natural' oscillation
frequency of a computer's clock crystal, before frequency division
down to the machine's clock rate. 4. A signal emitted at regular
intervals by software to demonstrate that it is still alive.
Sometimes hardware is designed to reboot the machine if it stops

hearing a heartbeat. See also
breath-of-life packet
.

1.902   heatseeker

heatseeker: [IBM] n. A customer who can be relied upon to buy,
without fail, the latest version of an existing product (not quite
the same as a member of the
lunatic fringe
). A 1993 example of a
heatseeker is someone who, owning a 286 PC and Windows 3.0, goes
out and buys Windows 3.1 (which offers no worthwhile benefits
unless you have a 386). If all customers were heatseekers, vast
amounts of money could be made by just fixing the bugs in each
release (n) and selling it to them as release (n+1).

1.903   heavy metal

heavy metal: [Cambridge] n. Syn.
big iron
.

1.904   heavy wizardry

heavy wizardry: n. Code or designs that trade on a particularly
intimate knowledge or experience of a particular operating system
or language or complex application interface. Distinguished from

deep magic
, which trades more on arcane *theoretical*
knowledge. Writing device drivers is heavy wizardry; so is
interfacing to
X
(sense 2) without a toolkit. Esp. found in
source-code comments of the form "Heavy wizardry begins here".
Compare
voodoo programming
.

1.905   heavyweight

heavyweight: adj. High-overhead;
baroque
; code-intensive;
featureful, but costly. Esp. used of communication protocols,
language designs, and any sort of implementation in which maximum
generality and/or ease of implementation has been pushed at the
expense of mundane considerations such as speed, memory
utilization, and startup time.
EMACS
 is a heavyweight editor;

X
 is an *extremely* heavyweight window system. This term
isn't pejorative, but one hacker's heavyweight is another's

elephantine
 and a third's
monstrosity
. Oppose
'lightweight'. Usage: now borders on techspeak, especially in
the compound 'heavyweight process'.

1.906   heisenbug

heisenbug: /hi:'zen-buhg/ [from Heisenberg's Uncertainty
Principle in quantum physics] n. A bug that disappears or alters
its behavior when one attempts to probe or isolate it. (This usage
is not even particularly fanciful; the use of a debugger sometimes
alters a program's operating environment significantly enough that
buggy code, such as that which relies on the values of
uninitialized memory, behaves quite differently.) Antonym of

Bohr bug
; see also
mandelbug
,
schroedinbug
. In C,
nine out of ten heisenbugs result from uninitialized auto
variables,
fandango on core
 phenomena (esp. lossage related
to corruption of the malloc
arena
) or errors that
smash

the stack
.

1.907   Helen Keller mode

Helen Keller mode: n. 1. State of a hardware or software system
that is deaf, dumb, and blind, i.e., accepting no input and
generating no output, usually due to an infinite loop or some other
excursion into
deep space
. (Unfair to the real Helen Keller,
whose success at learning speech was triumphant.) See also

go flatline
,
catatonic
. 2. On IBM PCs under DOS, refers
to a specific failure mode in which a screen saver has kicked in
over an
ill-behaved
 application which bypasses the very
interrupts the screen saver watches for activity. Your choices are
to try to get from the program's current state through a successful
save-and-exit without being able to see what you're doing, or to
re-boot the machine. This isn't (strictly speaking) a
crash.

1.908   hello, sailor!

hello, sailor!: interj. Occasional West Coast equivalent of

hello, world
; seems to have originated at SAIL, later
associated with the game
Zork
 (which also included "hello,
aviator" and "hello, implementor"). Originally from the
traditional hooker's greeting to a swabbie fresh off the boat, of
course.

1.909   hello, wall!

hello, wall!: excl. See
wall
.

1.910   hello, world

          hello, world: interj. 1. The canonical minimal test message in the
C/UNIX universe. 2. Any of the minimal programs that emit this
message. Traditionally, the first program a C coder is supposed to
write in a new environment is one that just prints "hello, world"
to standard output (and indeed it is the first example program
in
          K&R
). Environments that generate an unreasonably large
executable for this trivial test or which require a
          hairy
             compiler-linker invocation to generate it are considered to

          lose
           (see
          X
). 3. Greeting uttered by a hacker making an
entrance or requesting information from anyone present. "Hello,
world! Is the
          VAX
           back up yet?"

1.911   hex

          hex: n. 1. Short for
          hexadecimal
          , base 16. 2. A 6-pack
of anything (compare
          quad
          , sense 2). Neither usage has
anything to do with
          magic
           or
          black art
          , though the pun is
appreciated and occasionally used by hackers. True story: As a
joke, some hackers once offered some surplus ICs for sale to be
worn as protective amulets against hostile magic. The chips were,
of course, hex inverters.

1.912   hexadecimal

hexadecimal:: n. Base 16. Coined in the early 1960s to replace
   earlier 'sexadecimal', which was too racy and amusing for stuffy
   IBM, and later adopted by the rest of the industry.

   Actually, neither term is etymologically pure. If we take

'binary' to be paradigmatic, the most etymologically correct
term for base 10, for example, is 'denary', which comes from
'deni' (ten at a time, ten each), a Latin 'distributive'
number; the corresponding term for base-16 would be something like
'sendenary'. 'Decimal' is from an ordinal number; the
corresponding prefix for 6 would imply something like
'sextidecimal'. The 'sexa-' prefix is Latin but incorrect in
this context, and 'hexa-' is Greek. The word 'octal' is
similarly incorrect; a correct form would be 'octaval' (to go
with decimal), or 'octonary' (to go with binary). If anyone ever
implements a base-3 computer, computer scientists will be faced
with the unprecedented dilemma of a choice between two
correct forms; both 'ternary' and 'trinary' have a
claim to this throne.

1.913   hexit

hexit: /hek'sit/ n. A hexadecimal digit (0--9, and A--F or a--f).
Used by people who claim that there are only *ten* digits,
dammit; sixteen-fingered human beings are rather rare, despite what
some keyboard designs might seem to imply (see
space-cadet

keyboard
).

1.914   HHOK

HHOK: See
ha ha only serious
.

1.915   HHOS

HHOS: See
ha ha only serious
.

1.916   hidden flag

```
hidden flag: [scientific computation] n. An extra option added to
   a routine without changing the calling sequence.  For example,
   instead of adding an explicit input variable to instruct a routine
   to give extra diagnostic output, the programmer might just add a
   test for some otherwise meaningless feature of the existing inputs,
   such as a negative mass.  The use of hidden flags can make a
   program very hard to debug and understand, but is all too common
   wherever programs are hacked on in a hurry.
```

1.917   high bit

```
             high bit: [from 'high-order bit'] n. 1. The most significant
   bit in a byte.  2. By extension, the most significant part of
   something other than a data byte: "Spare me the whole
             saga
             ,
   just give me the high bit."  See also
             meta bit
             ,
             hobbit
             ,

             dread high-bit disease
             , and compare the mainstream slang
   'bottom line'.
```

1.918   high moby

```
             high moby: /hi:' mohb'ee/ n. The high half of a 512K

             PDP-10
             's physical address space; the other half was of course
   the low moby.  This usage has been generalized in a way that has
   outlasted the
             PDP-10
             ; for example, at the 1990 Washington D.C.
   Area Science Fiction Conclave (Disclave), when a miscommunication
   resulted in two separate wakes being held in commemoration of the
   shutdown of MIT's last
             ITS
              machines, the one on the upper
   floor was dubbed the 'high moby' and the other the 'low moby'.
   All parties involved
             grok
             ked this instantly.  See
             moby
             .
```

1.919 highly

highly: [scientific computation] adv. The preferred modifier for
overstating an understatement. As in: 'highly nonoptimal', the
worst possible way to do something; 'highly nontrivial', either
impossible or requiring a major research project; 'highly
nonlinear', completely erratic and unpredictable; 'highly
nontechnical', drivel written for
luser
s, oversimplified to the
point of being misleading or incorrect (compare
drool-proof

paper
). In other computing cultures, postfixing of
in the

extreme
 might be preferred.

1.920 hing

hing: // [IRC] n. Fortuitous typo for 'hint', now in wide
intentional use among players of
initgame
. Compare

newsfroup
,
filk
.

1.921 hirsute

hirsute: adj. Occasionally used humorously as a synonym for
hairy
.

1.922 HLL

HLL: /H-L-L/ n. [High-Level Language (as opposed to assembler)]
Found primarily in email and news rather than speech. Rarely, the
variants 'VHLL' and 'MLL' are found. VHLL stands for

'Very-High-Level Language' and is used to describe a

          bondage-and-discipline language
          that the speaker happens to
like; Prolog and Backus's FP are often called VHLLs. 'MLL' stands
for 'Medium-Level Language' and is sometimes used half-jokingly to
describe
          C
          , alluding to its 'structured-assembler' image.
See also
          languages of choice
          .

1.923 hobbit

          hobbit: n. 1. The High Order Bit of a byte; same as the
          meta

          bit
           or
          high bit
          . 2. The non-ITS name of vad@ai.mit.edu
(*Hobbit*), master of lasers.

1.924 hog

          hog: n.,vt. 1. Favored term to describe programs or hardware that
seem to eat far more than their share of a system's resources,
esp. those which noticeably degrade interactive response.
Not used of programs that are simply extremely large or
complex or that are merely painfully slow themselves (see
          pig,

          run like a
). More often than not encountered in qualified forms,
e.g., 'memory hog', 'core hog', 'hog the processor', 'hog
the disk'. "A controller that never gives up the I/O bus
gets killed after the bus-hog timer expires."   2. Also said
of *people* who use more than their fair share of resources
(particularly disk, where it seems that 10% of the people use 90%
of the disk, no matter how big the disk is or how many people use
it). Of course, once disk hogs fill up one filesystem, they
typically find some other new one to infect, claiming to the
sysadmin that they have an important new project to complete.

1.925 holy wars

holy wars: [from
USENET
, but may predate it] n.
flame

war
s over
religious issues
. The paper by Danny Cohen that
popularized the terms
big-endian
 and
little-endian
 in
connection with the LSB-first/MSB-first controversy was entitled
"On Holy Wars and a Plea for Peace". Other perennial Holy
Wars have included
EMACS
 vs.
vi
, my personal computer
vs. everyone else's personal computer,
ITS
 vs.
UNIX
,

UNIX
 vs.
VMS
,
BSD
 UNIX vs.
USG UNIX
,
C
   vs.
Pascal
,
C
 vs. FORTRAN, etc., ad nauseam. The
characteristic that distinguishes holy wars from normal technical
disputes is that in a holy wars most of the participants spend
their time trying to pass off personal value choices and cultural
attachments as objective technical evaluations. See also

theology
.

1.926   home box

home box: n. A hacker's personal machine, especially one he or she
   owns. "Yeah? Well, *my* home box runs a full 4.2 BSD, so
   there!"

1.927   home machine

            home machine: n. 1. Syn.
            home box
            . 2. The machine that
receives your email. These senses might be distinct, for example,
for a hacker who owns one computer at home, but reads email at
work.

1.928   hook

            hook: n. A software or hardware feature included in order to
simplify later additions or changes by a user. For example, a
simple program that prints numbers might always print them in base
10, but a more flexible version would let a variable determine what
base to use; setting the variable to 5 would make the program print
numbers in base 5. The variable is a simple hook. An even more
flexible program might examine the variable and treat a value of 16
or less as the base to use, but treat any other number as the
address of a user-supplied routine for printing a number. This is
a
            hairy
             but powerful hook; one can then write a routine to
print numbers as Roman numerals, say, or as Hebrew characters, and
plug it into the program through the hook. Often the difference
between a good program and a superb one is that the latter has
useful hooks in judiciously chosen places. Both may do the
original job about equally well, but the one with the hooks is much
more flexible for future expansion of capabilities (
            EMACS
            , for
example, is *all* hooks). The term 'user exit' is
synonymous but much more formal and less hackish.

1.929   hop

            hop: 1. n. One file transmission in a series required to get a
   file from point A to point B on a store-and-forward network. On
   such networks (including

                    UUCPNET
                     and
                    FidoNet
                    ), an
important inter-machine metric is the number of hops in the
shortest path between them, which can be more significant than
their geographical separation. See
                    bang path
                    . 2. v. To log in
to a remote machine, esp. via rlogin or telnet. "I'll hop over to
foovax to FTP that."

1.930   hose

                    hose: 1. vt. To make non-functional or greatly degraded in
performance. "That big ray-tracing program really hoses the
system." See
                    hosed
                    . 2. n. A narrow channel through which
data flows under pressure. Generally denotes data paths that
represent performance bottlenecks. 3. n. Cabling, especially
thick Ethernet cable. This is sometimes called 'bit hose' or
'hosery' (play on 'hosiery') or 'etherhose'. See also

                    washing machine
                    .

1.931   hosed

                    hosed: adj. Same as
                    down
                    . Used primarily by UNIX hackers.
Humorous: also implies a condition thought to be relatively easy to
reverse. Probably derived from the Canadian slang 'hoser'
popularized by the Bob and Doug Mackenzie skits on SCTV, but this
usage predated SCTV by years in hackerdom (it was certainly already
live at CMU in the 1970s). See
                    hose
                    . It is also widely used
of people in the mainstream sense of 'in an extremely unfortunate
situation'.

Once upon a time, a Cray that had been experiencing periodic
difficulties crashed, and it was announced to have been hosed.
It was discovered that the crash was due to the disconnection of
some coolant hoses. The problem was corrected, and users were then
assured that everything was OK because the system had been rehosed.
See also

dehose
.

1.932   hot spot

hot spot: n. 1. [primarily used by C/UNIX programmers, but
spreading] It is received wisdom that in most programs, less than
10% of the code eats 90% of the execution time; if one were to
graph instruction visits versus code addresses, one would typically
see a few huge spikes amidst a lot of low-level noise. Such spikes
are called 'hot spots' and are good candidates for heavy
optimization or
hand-hacking
. The term is especially used of
tight loops and recursions in the code's central algorithm, as
opposed to (say) initial set-up costs or large but infrequent I/O
operations. See
tune
,
bum
,
hand-hacking
. 2. The
active location of a cursor on a bit-map display. "Put the
mouse's hot spot on the 'ON' widget and click the left button."
3. A screen region that is sensitive to mouse clicks, which trigger
some action. Hypertext help screens are an example, in which a hot
spot exists in the vicinity of any word for which additional
material is available. 4. In a massively parallel computer with
shared memory, the one location that all 10,000 processors are
trying to read or write at once (perhaps because they are all doing
a
busy-wait
on the same lock). 5. More generally, any place
in a hardware design that turns into a performance bottleneck due
to resource contention.

1.933   house wizard

house wizard: [prob. from ad-agency tradetalk, 'house freak']
   n. A hacker occupying a technical-specialist, R&D, or systems
   position at a commercial shop. A really effective house wizard can
   have influence out of all proportion to his/her ostensible rank and
   still not have to wear a suit. Used esp. of UNIX wizards. The
   term 'house guru' is equivalent.

1.934 HP-SUX

HP-SUX: /H-P suhks/ n. Unflattering hackerism for HP-UX,
Hewlett-Packard's UNIX port, which features some truly unique bogosities
in the filesystem internals and elsewhere (these occasionally create
portability problems). HP-UX is often referred to as 'hockey-pux'
inside HP, and one respondent claims that the proper pronunciation
is /H-P ukkkhhhh/ as though one were about to spit. Another such
alternate spelling and pronunciation is "H-PUX" /H-puhks/.
Hackers at HP/Apollo (the former Apollo Computers which was
swallowed by HP in 1989) have been heard to complain that
Mr. Packard should have pushed to have his name first, if for no
other reason than the greater eloquence of the resulting acronym.
Compare
AIDX
,
buglix
. See also
Nominal Semidestructor
,

Telerat
,
Open DeathTrap
,
ScumOS
,
sun-stools
.

1.935 huff

huff: v. To compress data using a Huffman code. Various programs
that use such methods have been called 'HUFF' or some variant
thereof. Oppose
puff
. Compare
crunch
,
compress
.

1.936 humma

humma: // excl. A filler word used on various 'chat' and
'talk' programs when you had nothing to say but felt that it was
important to say something. The word apparently originated (at
least with this definition) on the MECC Timeshare System (MTS, a

now-defunct educational time-sharing system running in Minnesota
during the 1970s and the early 1980s) but was later sighted on
early UNIX systems.

1.937 Humor, Hacker

Humor, Hacker:: n. A distinctive style of shared intellectual
humor found among hackers, having the following marked
characteristics:

1. Fascination with form-vs.-content jokes, paradoxes, and humor
having to do with confusion of metalevels (see
            meta
). One way
to make a hacker laugh: hold a red index card in front of him/her
with "GREEN" written on it, or vice-versa (note, however, that
this is funny only the first time).

2. Elaborate deadpan parodies of large intellectual constructs,
such as specifications (see
            write-only memory
            ), standards
documents, language descriptions (see
            INTERCAL
            ), and even
entire scientific theories (see
            quantum bogodynamics
            ,

            computron
).

3. Jokes that involve screwily precise reasoning from bizarre,
ludicrous, or just grossly counter-intuitive premises.

4. Fascination with puns and wordplay.

5. A fondness for apparently mindless humor with subversive
currents of intelligence in it --- for example, old Warner Brothers
and Rocky & Bullwinkle cartoons, the Marx brothers, the early
B-52s, and Monty Python's Flying Circus. Humor that combines this
trait with elements of high camp and slapstick is especially
favored.

6. References to the symbol-object antinomies and associated ideas
in Zen Buddhism and (less often) Taoism. See
            has the X nature
            ,

            Discordianism
            ,
            zen
            ,
            ha ha only serious

,
AI koans
.

See also
        filk
        ,
        retrocomputing
        , and
        Appendix B
        . If you
have an itchy feeling that all 6 of these traits are really aspects
of one thing that is incredibly difficult to talk about exactly,
you are (a) correct and (b) responding like a hacker. These traits
are also recognizable (though in a less marked form) throughout

        science-fiction fandom
        .

1.938   hung

        hung: [from 'hung up'] adj. Equivalent to
        wedged
        , but more
common at UNIX/C sites. Not generally used of people. Syn. with

        locked up
        ,
        wedged
        ; compare
        hosed
        . See also
        hang
        .
A hung state is distinguished from
        crash
        ed or
        down
        , where the
program or system is also unusable but because it is not running
rather than because it is waiting for something. However, the
recovery from both situations is often the same.

1.939   hungry puppy

        hungry puppy: n. Syn.
        slopsucker
        .

1.940   hungus

hungus: /huhng'g*s/ [perhaps related to slang `humongous'] adj.
   Large, unwieldy, usually unmanageable. "TCP is a hungus piece of
   code." "This is a hungus set of modifications."

1.941   hyperspace

              hyperspace: /hi:'per-spays/ n. A memory location that is *far*
   away from where the program counter should be pointing, often
   inaccessible because it is not even mapped in. "Another core
   dump --- looks like the program jumped off to hyperspace
   somehow." (Compare
              jump off into never-never land
              .) This
   usage is from the SF notion of a spaceship jumping `into
   hyperspace', that is, taking a shortcut through higher-dimensional
   space --- in other words, bypassing this universe. The variant
   `east hyperspace' is recorded among CMU and Bliss hackers.

1.942   hysterical reasons

              hysterical reasons: (also `hysterical raisins') n. A variant on
   the stock phrase "for historical reasons", indicating
   specifically that something must be done in some stupid way for
   backwards compatibility, and moreover that the feature it must be
   compatible with was the result of a bad design in the first place.
   "All IBM PC video adapters have to support MDA text mode for
   hysterical reasons." Compare
              bug-for-bug compatible
              .

1.943   I didn't change anything!

              I didn't change anything!: interj. An aggrieved cry often heard as
   bugs manifest during a regression test. The
              canonical
               reply to
   this assertion is "Then it works just the same as it did before,

```
doesn't it?"  See also
              one-line fix
              . This is also heard from
applications programmers trying to blame an obvious applications
problem on an unrelated systems software change, for example a
divide-by-0 fault after terminals were added to a network.
Usually, their statement is found to be false.  Upon close
questioning, they will admit some major restructuring of the
program that shouldn't have broken anything, in their opinion,
but which actually
              hosed
               the code completely.
```

1.944   I see no X here.

```
              I see no X here.: Hackers (and the interactive computer games they
write) traditionally favor this slightly marked usage over other
possible equivalents such as "There's no X here!" or "X is
missing."  or "Where's the X?".  This goes back to the original
PDP-10
              ADVENT
              , which would respond in this wise if you asked
it to do something involving an object not present at your location
in the game.
```

1.945   IBM

```
              IBM: /I-B-M/ Inferior But Marketable; It's Better Manually;
Insidious Black Magic; It's Been Malfunctioning; Incontinent Bowel
Movement; and a near-
              infinite
               number of even less complimentary
expansions, including 'International Business Machines'.  See

              TLA
              . These abbreviations illustrate the considerable
antipathy most hackers have long felt toward the 'industry leader'
(see
              fear and loathing
              ).

What galls hackers about most IBM machines above the PC level isn't
so much that they are underpowered and overpriced (though that does
count against them), but that the designs are incredibly archaic,

              crufty
              , and
              elephantine
```

```
                ... and you can't *fix* them
--- source code is locked up tight, and programming tools are
expensive, hard to find, and bletcherous to use once you've found
them.  With the release of the UNIX-based RIOS family this may have
begun to change --- but then, we thought that when the PC-RT came
out, too.
```

```
In the spirit of universal peace and brotherhood, this lexicon now
includes a number of entries attributed to 'IBM'; these derive from
some rampantly unofficial jargon lists circulated within IBM's own
beleaguered hacker underground.
```

1.946   IBM discount

```
                IBM discount: n. A price increase.  Outside IBM, this derives from
the common perception that IBM products are generally overpriced
(see
                clone
                ); inside, it is said to spring from a belief that
large numbers of IBM employees living in an area cause prices to
rise.
```

1.947   ICBM address

```
                ICBM address: n. (Also 'missile address') The form used to
register a site with the USENET mapping project includes a blank
for longitude and latitude, preferably to seconds-of-arc accuracy.
This is actually used for generating geographically-correct maps of
USENET links on a plotter; however, it has become traditional to
refer to this as one's 'ICBM address' or 'missile address', and
many people include it in their
                sig block
                 with that name.
(A real missile address would include target altitude.)
```

1.948   ice

```
ice: [coined by USENETter Tom Maddox, popularized by William
  Gibson's cyberpunk SF novels: a contrived acronym for 'Intrusion
  Countermeasure Electronics'] Security software (in Gibson's novels,
  software that responds to intrusion by attempting to literally kill
  the intruder).  Also, 'icebreaker': a program designed for
  cracking security on a system.
```

Neither term is in serious use yet as of mid-1993, but many hackers
find the metaphor attractive, and each may develop a denotation in
the future. In the meantime, the speculative usage could be
confused with 'ICE', an acronym for "in-circuit emulator".

1.949   idempotent

idempotent: [from mathematical techspeak] adj. Acting as if used
only once, even if used multiple times. This term is often used
with respect to
C
header files, which contain common
definitions and declarations to be included by several source
files. If a header file is ever included twice during the same
compilation (perhaps due to nested #include files), compilation
errors can result unless the header file has protected itself
against multiple inclusion; a header file so protected is said to
be idempotent. The term can also be used to describe an
initialization subroutine that is arranged to perform some
critical action exactly once, even if the routine is called several
times.

1.950   If you want X, you know where to find it.

If you want X, you know where to find it.: There is a legend that
Dennis Ritchie, inventor of
C
, once responded to demands for
features resembling those of what at the time was a much more
popular language by observing "If you want PL/I, you know where to
find it." Ever since, this has been hackish standard form for
fending off requests to alter a new design to mimic some older
(and, by implication, inferior and
baroque
) one. The case X =

Pascal
manifests semi-regularly on USENET's comp.lang.c
newsgroup. Indeed, the case X = X has been reported in
discussions of graphics software (see
X
).

1.951   ifdef out

```
            ifdef out: /if'def owt/ v. Syn. for
            condition out
            , specific
   to
            C
            .
```

1.952 ill-behaved

```
            ill-behaved: adj. 1. [numerical analysis] Said of an algorithm or
computational method that tends to blow up because of accumulated
roundoff error or poor convergence properties.  2. Software that
bypasses the defined
            OS
             interfaces to do things (like screen,
keyboard, and disk I/O) itself, often in a way that depends on the
hardware of the machine it is running on or which is nonportable or
incompatible with other pieces of software.  In the IBM PC/MS-DOS
world, there is a folk theorem (nearly true) to the effect that
(owing to gross inadequacies and performance penalties in the OS
interface) all interesting applications are ill-behaved.  See also
```

```
            bare metal
            . Oppose
            well-behaved
            , compare
            PC-ism
            .  See

            mess-dos
            .
```

1.953 IMHO

```
IMHO: // [from SF fandom via USENET; abbreviation for 'In My Humble
   Opinion']  "IMHO, mixed-case C names should be avoided, as
   mistyping something in the wrong case can cause hard-to-detect
   errors --- and they look too Pascalish anyhow."  Also seen in
   variant forms such as IMNSHO (In My Not-So-Humble Opinion) and IMAO
   (In My Arrogant Opinion).
```

1.954 Imminent Death Of The Net Predicted!

Imminent Death Of The Net Predicted!: [USENET] prov. Since

USENET
first got off the ground in 1980--81, it has grown
exponentially, approximately doubling in size every year. On the
other hand, most people feel the
signal-to-noise ratio
of
USENET has dropped steadily. These trends led, as far back as
mid-1983, to predictions of the imminent collapse (or death) of the
net. Ten years and numerous doublings later, enough of these
gloomy prognostications have been confounded that the phrase
"Imminent Death Of The Net Predicted!" has become a running joke,
hauled out any time someone grumbles about the
S/N ratio
or
the huge and steadily increasing volume, or the possible loss of a
key node or link, or the potential for lawsuits when ignoramuses
post copyrighted material, etc., etc., etc.

1.955   in the extreme

in the extreme: adj. A preferred superlative suffix for many ↩
hackish
terms. See, for example, 'obscure in the extreme' under
obscure
,
and compare
highly
.

1.956   inc

inc: /ink/ v. Verbal (and only rarely written) shorthand for
increment, i.e. 'increase by one'. Especially used by
assembly programmers, as many assembly languages have an 'inc'
mnemonic. Antonym:
dec
.

1.957   incantation

incantation: n. Any particularly arbitrary or obscure command that
one must mutter at a system to attain a desired result. Not used
of passwords or other explicit security features. Especially used
of tricks that are so poorly documented that they must be learned
from a
                wizard
                . "This compiler normally locates initialized
data in the data segment, but if you
                mutter
                 the right
incantation they will be forced into text space."

1.958   include

include: vt. [USENET] 1. To duplicate a portion (or whole) of
another's message (typically with attribution to the source) in a
reply or followup, for clarifying the context of one's response.
See the discussion of inclusion styles under "Hacker
Writing Style". 2. [from
                C
                ] '#include <disclaimer.h>'
has appeared in
                sig block
                s to refer to a notional 'standard

                disclaimer
                 file'.

1.959   include war

include war: n. Excessive multi-leveled including within a
discussion
                thread
                , a practice that tends to annoy readers. In
a forum with high-traffic newsgroups, such as USENET, this can lead
to
                flame
                s and the urge to start a
                kill file
                .

1.960   indent style

indent style: [C programmers] n. The rules one uses to indent code
in a readable fashion. There are four major C indent styles,
described below; all have the aim of making it easier for the
reader to visually track the scope of control constructs. The
significant variable is the placement of '{' and '}'
with respect to the statement(s) they enclose and to the guard or
controlling statement ('if', 'else', 'for',
'while', or 'do') on the block, if any.

'K&R style' --- Named after Kernighan & Ritchie, because the
examples in
            K&R
             are formatted this way. Also called 'kernel
style' because the UNIX kernel is written in it, and the 'One True
Brace Style' (abbrev. 1TBS) by its partisans. The basic indent
shown here is eight spaces (or one tab) per level; four spaces are
occasionally seen, but are much less common.

```
  if (cond) {
          <body>
  }
```

'Allman style' --- Named for Eric Allman, a Berkeley hacker who
wrote a lot of the BSD utilities in it (it is sometimes called
'BSD style'). Resembles normal indent style in Pascal and
Algol. Basic indent per level shown here is eight spaces, but four
spaces are just as common (esp. in C++ code).

```
  if (cond)
  {
          <body>
  }
```

'Whitesmiths style' --- popularized by the examples that came
with Whitesmiths C, an early commercial C compiler. Basic indent
per level shown here is eight spaces, but four spaces are
occasionally seen.

```
  if (cond)
          {
          <body>
          }
```

'GNU style' --- Used throughout GNU EMACS and the Free Software
Foundation code, and just about nowhere else. Indents are always
four spaces per level, with '{' and '}' halfway between the
outer and inner indent levels.

```
  if (cond)
    {
      <body>
    }
```

Surveys have shown the Allman and Whitesmiths styles to be the most
common, with about equal mind shares. K&R/1TBS used to be nearly
universal, but is now much less common (the opening brace tends to

get lost against the right paren of the guard part in an 'if'
or 'while', which is a
                Bad Thing
). Defenders of 1TBS
argue that any putative gain in readability is less important than
their style's relative economy with vertical space, which enables
one to see more code on one's screen at once. Doubtless these
issues will continue to be the subject of
                holy wars
                .

1.961   index

                index: n. See
coefficient of X
                .

1.962   infant mortality

                infant mortality: n. It is common lore among hackers (and in the
electronics industry at large; this term is possibly techspeak by
now) that the chances of sudden hardware failure drop off
exponentially with a machine's time since first use (that is, until
the relatively distant time at which enough mechanical wear in I/O
devices and thermal-cycling stress in components has accumulated
for the machine to start going senile). Up to half of all chip and
wire failures happen within a new system's first few weeks; such
failures are often referred to as 'infant mortality' problems
(or, occasionally, as 'sudden infant death syndrome'). See

                bathtub curve
                ,
                burn-in period
                .

1.963   infinite

                infinite: adj. Consisting of a large number of objects; extreme.
Used very loosely as in: "This program produces infinite
garbage." "He is an infinite loser." The word most likely to
follow 'infinite', though, is
                hair
                . (It has been pointed out
that fractals are an excellent example of infinite hair.) These

uses are abuses of the word's mathematical meaning. The term
'semi-infinite', denoting an immoderately large amount of some
resource, is also heard. "This compiler is taking a semi-infinite
amount of time to optimize my program." See also
                semi
                .

1.964   infinite loop

                infinite loop: n. One that never terminates (that is, the machine

                spin
                s or
                buzz
                es forever and goes
                catatonic
).   There
is a standard joke that has been made about each generation's
exemplar of the ultra-fast machine: "The Cray-3 is so fast it can
execute an infinite loop in under 2 seconds!"

1.965   Infinite-Monkey Theorem

                Infinite-Monkey Theorem: n. "If you put an
                infinite
                 number
of monkeys at typewriters, eventually one will bash out the script
for Hamlet." (One may also hypothesize a small number of monkeys
and a very long period of time.) This theorem asserts nothing about
the intelligence of the one
                random
                 monkey that eventually
comes up with the script (and note that the mob will also type out
all the possible *incorrect* versions of Hamlet). It may be
referred to semi-seriously when justifying a
                brute force
                   method; the implication is that, with enough resources thrown ←
                     at
it, any technical challenge becomes a
                one-banana problem
                .

This theorem was first popularized by the astronomer Sir Arthur
Eddington. It became part of the idiom of through the classic short
story "Inflexible Logic" by Russell Maloney, and many younger
hackers know it through a reference in Douglas Adams's
"Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy".

1.966 infinity

```
infinity: n. 1. The largest value that can be represented in a
   particular type of variable (register, memory location, data type,
   whatever).  2. 'minus infinity': The smallest such value, not
   necessarily or even usually the simple negation of plus infinity.
   In N-bit twos-complement arithmetic, infinity is
   2^(N-1) - 1 but minus infinity is - (2^(N-1)),
   not -(2^(N-1) - 1).  Note also that this is different from
   "time T equals minus infinity", which is closer to a
   mathematician's usage of infinity.
```

1.967 initgame

```
                  initgame: /in-it'gaym/ [IRC] n. An
                  IRC
                   version of the
   venerable trivia game "20 questions", in which one user changes
   his
                  nick
                   to the initials of a famous person or other named
   entity, and the others on the channel ask yes or no questions, with
   the one to guess the person getting to be "it" next.  As a
   courtesy, the one picking the initials starts by providing a
   4-letter hint of the form sex, nationality, life-status,
   reality-status.  For example, MAAR means "Male, American, Alive,
   Real" (as opposed to "fictional").  Initgame can be surprisingly
   addictive.  See also
                  hing
                   .
```

1.968 insanely great

```
                  insanely great: adj. [Mac community, from Steve Jobs; also BSD  ←
                     UNIX
   people via Bill Joy] Something so incredibly
                  elegant
                   that it is
   imaginable only to someone possessing the most puissant of

                  hacker
                  -natures.
```

1.969 INTERCAL

INTERCAL: /in't*r-kal/ [said by the authors to stand for
  'Compiler Language With No Pronounceable Acronym'] n. A
  computer language designed by Don Woods and James Lyons in 1972.
  INTERCAL is purposely different from all other computer
  languages in all ways but one; it is purely a written language,
  being totally unspeakable. An excerpt from the INTERCAL Reference
  Manual will make the style of the language clear:

  It is a well-known and oft-demonstrated fact that a person whose
  work is incomprehensible is held in high esteem. For example, if
  one were to state that the simplest way to store a value of 65536
  in a 32-bit INTERCAL variable is:

```
    DO :1 <- #0$#256
```

  any sensible programmer would say that that was absurd. Since this
  is indeed the simplest method, the programmer would be made to look
  foolish in front of his boss, who would of course have happened to
  turn up, as bosses are wont to do. The effect would be no less
  devastating for the programmer having been correct.

INTERCAL has many other peculiar features designed to make it even
more unspeakable. The Woods-Lyons implementation was actually used
by many (well, at least several) people at Princeton. The language
has been recently reimplemented as C-INTERCAL and is consequently
enjoying an unprecedented level of unpopularity; there is even an
alt.lang.intercal newsgroup devoted to the study and ...
appreciation of the language on USENET.

1.970 interesting

          interesting: adj. In hacker parlance, this word has strong
connotations of 'annoying', or 'difficult', or both. Hackers
relish a challenge, and enjoy wringing all the irony possible out
of the ancient Chinese curse "May you live in interesting times".
Oppose
          trivial
          ,
          uninteresting
          .

1.971 Internet address

          Internet address:: n. 1. [techspeak] An absolute network address ←
             of
  the form foo@bar.baz, where foo is a user name, bar is a

                    sitename
                    , and baz is a 'domain' name, possibly including
periods itself. Contrast with
                    bang path
                    ; see also
                    network,

                    the
                     and
                    network address
                    . All Internet machines and most UUCP
sites can now resolve these addresses, thanks to a large amount of
behind-the-scenes magic and PD software written since 1980 or so.
See also
                    bang path
                    ,
                    domainist
                    . 2. More loosely, any
network address reachable through Internet; this includes
                    bang

                    path
                     addresses and some internal corporate and government
networks.

Reading Internet addresses is something of an art. Here are the
four most important top-level functional Internet domains followed
by a selection of geographical domains:

   com
        commercial organizations
   edu
        educational institutions
   gov
        U.S. government civilian sites
   mil
        U.S. military sites

Note that most of the sites in the com and edu domains are in
the U.S. or Canada.

   us
        sites in the U.S. outside the functional domains
   su
        sites in the ex-Soviet Union (see
                    kremvax
).
   uk
        sites in the United Kingdom

Within the us domain, there are subdomains for the fifty
states, each generally with a name identical to the state's postal
abbreviation. Within the uk domain, there is an ac subdomain for
academic sites and a co domain for commercial ones. Other
top-level domains may be divided up in similar ways.

1.972   interrupt

          interrupt: 1. [techspeak] n. On a computer, an event that
interrupts normal processing and temporarily diverts
flow-of-control through an "interrupt handler" routine. See also

          trap
          . 2. interj. A request for attention from a hacker.
Often explicitly spoken. "Interrupt --- have you seen Joe
recently?" See
          priority interrupt
          . 3. Under MS-DOS, nearly
synonymous with 'system call', because the OS and BIOS routines
are both called using the INT instruction (see
          interrupt list,

          the
) and because programmers so often have to bypass the OS (going
directly to a BIOS interrupt) to get reasonable
performance.

1.973   interrupt list, the

interrupt list, the:: [MS-DOS] n. The list of all known software
   interrupt calls (both documented and undocumented) for IBM PCs and
   compatibles, maintained and made available for free redistribution
   by Ralf Brown <ralf@cs.cmu.edu>. As of late 1992, it had grown to
   approximately two megabytes in length.

1.974   interrupts locked out

          interrupts locked out: adj. When someone is ignoring you. In a
restaurant, after several fruitless attempts to get the waitress's
attention, a hacker might well observe "She must have interrupts
locked out". The synonym 'interrupts disabled' is also common.
Variations abound; "to have one's interrupt mask bit set" and
"interrupts masked out" are also heard. See also
          spl
          .

1.975 IRC

IRC: /I-R-C/ [Internet Relay Chat] n. A worldwide "party
line" network that allows one to converse with others in real
time. IRC is structured as a network of Internet servers, each of
which accepts connections from client programs, one per user. The
IRC community and the
USENET
 and
MUD
 communities overlap
to some extent, including both hackers and regular folks who have
discovered the wonders of computer networks. Some USENET jargon
has been adopted on IRC, as have some conventions such as

emoticon
s. There is also a vigorous native jargon,
represented in this lexicon by entries marked '[IRC]'. See also

talk mode
.

1.976 iron

iron: n. Hardware, especially older and larger hardware of

mainframe
 class with big metal cabinets housing relatively
low-density electronics (but the term is also used of modern
supercomputers). Often in the phrase
big iron
. Oppose

silicon
. See also
dinosaur
.

1.977 Iron Age

Iron Age: n. In the history of computing, 1961--1971 --- the
formative era of commercial
mainframe
 technology, when
ferrite-core
dinosaur
s ruled the earth. The Iron Age began,
ironically enough, with the delivery of the first minicomputer (the

PDP-1) and ended with the introduction of the first commercial
microprocessor (the Intel 4004) in 1971. See also
            Stone Age
            ;
compare
            elder days
            .

1.978   iron box

            iron box: [UNIX/Internet] n. A special environment set up to trap
a
            cracker
             logging in over remote connections long enough to be
traced. May include a modified
            shell
             restricting the cracker's
movements in unobvious ways, and 'bait' files designed to keep
him interested and logged on. See also
            back door
            ,

            firewall machine
            ,
            Venus flytrap
            , and Clifford Stoll's
account in "
            The Cuckoo's Egg
            " of how he made and used
one (see the Bibliography in appendix C). Compare
            padded

            cell
            .

1.979   ironmonger

            ironmonger: [IBM] n. A hardware specialist (derogatory). Compare

            sandbender
            ,
            polygon pusher
            .

476 / 865

1.980 ITS

ITS:: /I-T-S/ n. 1. Incompatible Time-sharing System, an
influential but highly idiosyncratic operating system written for
PDP-6s and PDP-10s at MIT and long used at the MIT AI Lab. Much
AI-hacker jargon derives from ITS folklore, and to have been 'an
ITS hacker' qualifies one instantly as an old-timer of the most
venerable sort. ITS pioneered many important innovations,
including transparent file sharing between machines and
terminal-independent I/O. After about 1982, most actual work was
shifted to newer machines, with the remaining ITS boxes run
essentially as a hobby and service to the hacker community. The
shutdown of the lab's last ITS machine in May 1990 marked the end
of an era and sent old-time hackers into mourning nationwide (see

high moby
). The Royal Institute of Technology in Sweden is
maintaining one 'live' ITS site at its computer museum (right next
to the only TOPS-10 system still on the Internet), so ITS is still
alleged to hold the record for OS in longest continuous use
(however,

WAITS
 is a credible rival for this palm). See

Appendix A
. 2. A mythical image of operating-system perfection
worshiped by a bizarre, fervent retro-cult of old-time hackers and
ex-users (see

troglodyte
, sense 2). ITS worshipers manage
somehow to continue believing that an OS maintained by
assembly-language hand-hacking that supported only monocase
6-character filenames in one directory per account remains superior
to today's state of commercial art (their venom against UNIX is
particularly intense). See also

holy wars
,

Weenix
.

1.981 IWBNI

IWBNI: // [abbreviation] 'It Would Be Nice If'. Compare
WIBNI
.

1.982   IYFEG

         IYFEG: // [USENET] Abbreviation for 'Insert Your Favorite Ethnic
Group'. Used as a meta-name when telling ethnic jokes on the net
to avoid offending anyone. See
         JEDR
         .

1.983   J. Random

         J. Random: /J rand'm/ n. [generalized from
         J. Random Hacker
         ]
Arbitrary; ordinary; any one; any old. 'J. Random' is often
prefixed to a noun to make a name out of it. It means roughly
'some particular' or 'any specific one'. "Would you let
J. Random Loser marry your daughter?" The most common uses are
'J. Random Hacker', 'J. Random Loser', and 'J. Random Nerd'
("Should J. Random Loser be allowed to
         gun
          down other
people?"), but it can be used simply as an elaborate version of

         random
          in any sense.

1.984   J. Random Hacker

         J. Random Hacker: [MIT] /J rand'm hak'r/ n. A mythical figure
like the Unknown Soldier; the archetypal hacker nerd. See

         random
         ,
         Suzie COBOL
         . This may originally have been
inspired by 'J. Fred Muggs', a show-biz chimpanzee whose name was a
household word back in the early days of
         TMRC
         , and was
probably influenced by 'J. Presper Eckert' (one of the co-inventors
of the electronic computer).

1.985   jack in

jack in: v. To log on to a machine or connect to a network or

BBS
, esp. for purposes of entering a
virtual reality
   simulation such as a
MUD
 or
IRC
 (leaving is "jacking
out"). This term derives from
cyberpunk
 SF, in which it was
used for the act of plugging an electrode set into neural sockets
in order to interface the brain directly to a virtual reality.
It is primarily used by MUD and IRC fans and younger hackers on BBS
systems.

1.986   jaggies

jaggies: /jag'eez/ n. The 'stairstep' effect observable when an
   edge (esp. a linear edge of very shallow or steep slope) is
   rendered on a pixel device (as opposed to a vector display).

1.987   JCL

JCL: /J-C-L/ n. 1. IBM's supremely
rude
 Job Control
Language. JCL is the script language used to control the execution
of programs in IBM's batch systems. JCL has a very
fascist
   syntax, and some versions will, for example,
barf
 if two
spaces appear where it expects one. Most programmers confronted
with JCL simply copy a working file (or card deck), changing the
file names. Someone who actually understands and generates unique
JCL is regarded with the mixed respect one gives to someone who
memorizes the phone book. It is reported that hackers at IBM
itself sometimes sing "Who's the breeder of the crud that mangles
you and me? I-B-M, J-C-L, M-o-u-s-e" to the tune of the
"Mickey Mouse Club" theme to express their opinion of the
beast. 2. A comparative for any very
rude
 software that a
hacker is expected to use. "That's as bad as JCL." As with

```
            COBOL
            , JCL is often used as an archetype of ugliness even by
those who haven't experienced it.  See also
            IBM
            ,
            fear and

            loathing
            .
```

1.988 JEDR

```
            JEDR: // n. Synonymous with
            IYFEG
            .  At one time, people in
the USENET newsgroup rec.humor.funny tended to use 'JEDR'
instead of
            IYFEG
             or '<ethnic>'; this stemmed from a public
attempt to suppress the group once made by a loser with initials
JEDR after he was offended by an ethnic joke posted there.  (The
practice was
            retcon
            ned by the expanding these initials as
'Joke Ethnic/Denomination/Race'.)  After much sound and fury JEDR
faded away; this term appears to be doing likewise.  JEDR's only
permanent effect on the net.culture was to discredit
'sensitivity' arguments for censorship so thoroughly that more
recent attempts to raise them have met with immediate and
near-universal rejection.
```

1.989 JFCL

```
JFCL: /jif'kl/, /jaf'kl/, /j*-fi'kl/ vt., obs. (alt.
   'jfcl') To cancel or annul something.  "Why don't you jfcl that
   out?"  The fastest do-nothing instruction on older models of the
   PDP-10 happened to be JFCL, which stands for "Jump if Flag set and
   then CLear the flag"; this does something useful, but is a very
   fast no-operation if no flag is specified.  Geoff Goodfellow, one
   of the jargon-1 co-authors, had JFCL on the license plate of his
   BMW for years.  Usage: rare except among old-time PDP-10
   hackers.
```

1.990 jiffy

jiffy: n. 1. The duration of one tick of the system clock on the
computer (see
          tick
). Often one AC cycle time (1/60 second in
the U.S. and Canada, 1/50 most other places), but more recently
1/100 sec has become common. "The swapper runs every 6 jiffies"
means that the virtual memory management routine is executed once
for every 6 ticks of the clock, or about ten times a second.
2. Confusingly, the term is sometimes also used for a 1-millisecond

          wall time
           interval. Even more confusingly, physicists
semi-jokingly use 'jiffy' to mean the time required for light to
travel one foot in a vacuum, which turns out to be close to one
nanosecond. 3. Indeterminate time from a few seconds to
forever. "I'll do it in a jiffy" means certainly not now and
possibly never. This is a bit contrary to the more widespread use
of the word. Oppose
          nano
          . See also
          Real Soon Now
          .

1.991   job security

job security: n. When some piece of code is written in a
particularly
          obscure
           fashion, and no good reason (such as time
or space optimization) can be discovered, it is often said that the
programmer was attempting to increase his job security (i.e., by
making himself indispensable for maintenance). This sour joke
seldom has to be said in full; if two hackers are looking over some
code together and one points at a section and says "job security",
the other one may just nod.

1.992   jock

jock: n. 1. A programmer who is characterized by large and ←
                somewhat
brute-force programs. See
          brute force
          . 2. When modified by
another noun, describes a specialist in some particular computing
area. The compounds 'compiler jock' and 'systems jock' seem to be
the best-established examples.

1.993   joe code

            joe code: /joh' kohd'/ n. 1. Code that is overly
            tense
             and
unmaintainable. "
            Perl
             may be a handy program, but if you look
at the source, it's complete joe code." 2. Badly written,
possibly buggy code.

Correspondents wishing to remain anonymous have fingered a
particular Joe at the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory and observed
that usage has drifted slightly; the original sobriquet 'Joe code'
was intended in sense 1.

1.994   jolix

            jolix: n. /joh'liks/ n.,adj. 386BSD, the freeware port of the
BSD Net/2 release to the Intel i386 architecture by Bill Jolitz and
friends. Used to differentiate from BSDI's port based on the same
source tape, which is called BSD/386. See
            BSD
            .

1.995   JR[LN]

            JR[LN]: /J-R-L/, /J-R-N/ n. The names JRL and JRN were
sometimes used as example names when discussing a kind of user ID
used under
            TOPS-10
             and
            WAITS
            ; they were understood to be
the initials of (fictitious) programmers named 'J. Random Loser'
and 'J. Random Nerd' (see
            J. Random
). For example, if one
said "To log in, type log one comma jay are en" (that is,
"log 1,JRN"), the listener would have understood that he should
use his own computer ID in place of 'JRN'.

1.996   JRST

JRST: /jerst/ [based on the PDP-10 jump instruction] v.,obs. To
suddenly change subjects, with no intention of returning to the
previous topic. Usage: rather rare except among PDP-10 diehards,
and considered silly. See also
          AOS
          .

1.997   juggling eggs

          juggling eggs: vi. Keeping a lot of
          state
           in your head while
modifying a program. "Don't bother me now, I'm juggling eggs",
means that an interrupt is likely to result in the program's being
scrambled. In the classic first-contact SF novel "The Mote in
God's Eye", by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, an alien describes
a very difficult task by saying "We juggle priceless eggs in
variable gravity." See also
          hack mode
          .

1.998   jump off into never-never land

          jump off into never-never land: [from J. M. Barrie's "Peter
Pan"] v. Same as
          branch to Fishkill
          , but more common in
technical cultures associated with non-IBM computers that use the
term 'jump' rather than 'branch'. Compare
          hyperspace
          .

1.999   jupiter

          jupiter: [IRC] vt. To kill an
          IRC

          robot
           or user and
then take its place by adopting its
          nick
           so that it cannot
reconnect. Named after a particular IRC user who did this to

NickServ, the robot in charge of preventing people from
inadvertently using a nick claimed by another user.

1.1000 K

K: /K/ [from
kilo-
] n. A kilobyte. Used both as a spoken
word and a written suffix (like
meg
 and
gig
 for megabyte
and gigabyte). See
quantifiers
.

1.1001 K&R

K&R: [Kernighan and Ritchie] n. Brian Kernighan and Dennis Ritchie ←
's
book "The C Programming Language", esp. the classic and influential
first edition (Prentice-Hall 1978; ISBN 0-113-110163-3). Syn.

White Book
,
Old Testament
. See also
New Testament
.

1.1002 kahuna

kahuna: /k*-hoo'n*/ [IBM: from the Hawaiian title for a shaman] n.
Synonym for
wizard
,
guru
.

1.1003 kamikaze packet

kamikaze packet: n. The 'official' jargon for what is more ←
        commonly
called a
Christmas tree packet
.
RFC
-1025, "TCP and IP Bake Off"
says:

  10 points for correctly being able to process a "Kamikaze"
  packet (AKA nastygram, christmas tree packet, lamp test
  segment, et al.). That is, correctly handle a segment with the
  maximum combination of features at once (e.g., a SYN URG PUSH
  FIN segment with options and data).

See also
        Chernobyl packet
        .

1.1004 kangaroo code

kangaroo code: n. Syn.
spaghetti code
.

1.1005 ken

ken: /ken/ n. 1. [UNIX] Ken Thompson, principal inventor of
UNIX. In the early days he used to hand-cut distribution tapes,
often with a note that read "Love, ken". Old-timers still use
his first name (sometimes uncapitalized, because it's a login name
and mail address) in third-person reference; it is widely
understood (on USENET, in particular) that without a last name
'Ken' refers only to Ken Thompson. Similarly, Dennis without last
name means Dennis Ritchie (and he is often known as dmr). See
also
        demigod
        ,
        UNIX
        . 2. A flaming user. This was
originated by the Software Support group at Symbolics because the
two greatest flamers in the user community were both named Ken.

1.1006 kgbvax

```
kgbvax: /K-G-B'vaks/ n. See
kremvax
.
```

1.1007 KIBO

```
        KIBO: /ki:'boh/ 1. [acronym] Knowledge In, Bullshit Out.  A
summary of what happens whenever valid data is passed through an
organization (or person) that deliberately or accidentally
disregards or ignores its significance.  Consider, for example,
what an advertising campaign can do with a product's actual
specifications.  Compare
        GIGO
        ; see also
        SNAFU principle
        .
2. James Parry <kibo@world.std.com>, a USENETter infamous for
various surrealist net.pranks and an uncanny, machine-assisted
knack for joining any thread in which his nom de guerre is
mentioned.
```

1.1008 kiboze

```
        kiboze: [USENET] v. To
        grep
         the USENET news for a string,
especially with the intention of posting a follow-up.  This activity was
popularised by Kibo (see
        KIBO
        , sense 2).
```

1.1009 kick

```
        kick: [IRC] v. To cause somebody to be removed from a
        IRC
           channel, an option only available to
        CHOP
        s.  This is an
extreme measure, often used to combat extreme
        flamage
         or
```

flood

ing, but sometimes used at the chop's whim. Compare

gun

.

1.1010 kill file

kill file: [USENET] n. (alt. 'KILL file') Per-user file(s) used
by some
USENET
 reading programs (originally Larry Wall's
'rn(1)') to discard summarily (without presenting for reading)
articles matching some particularly uninteresting (or unwanted)
patterns of subject, author, or other header lines. Thus to add
a person (or subject) to one's kill file is to arrange for that
person to be ignored by one's newsreader in future. By extension,
it may be used for a decision to ignore the person or subject in
other media. See also
plonk
.

1.1011 killer micro

killer micro: [popularized by Eugene Brooks] n. A
microprocessor-based machine that infringes on mini, mainframe, or
supercomputer performance turf. Often heard in "No one will
survive the attack of the killer micros!", the battle cry of the
downsizers. Used esp. of RISC architectures.

The popularity of the phrase 'attack of the killer micros' is
doubtless reinforced by the movie title "Attack Of The Killer
Tomatoes" (one of the
canonical
 examples of
so-bad-it's-wonderful among hackers). This has even more flavor
now that killer micros have gone on the offensive not just
individually (in workstations) but in hordes (within massively
parallel computers).

1.1012 killer poke

killer poke: n. A recipe for inducing hardware damage on a machine
via insertion of invalid values (see
poke
) into a memory-mapped
control register; used esp. of various fairly well-known tricks
on
bitty box
es without hardware memory management (such as the
IBM PC and Commodore PET) that can overload and trash analog
electronics in the monitor. See also
HCF
.

1.1013 kilo-

kilo-: [SI] pref. See
quantifiers
.

1.1014 KIPS

KIPS: /kips/ [abbreviation, by analogy with
MIPS
 using
K
] n.
Thousands (*not* 1024s) of Instructions Per Second. Usage:
rare.

1.1015 KISS Principle

KISS Principle: /kis' prin'si-pl/ n. "Keep It Simple, Stupid".
A maxim often invoked when discussing design to fend off

creeping featurism
 and control development complexity.
Possibly related to the
marketroid
 maxim on sales
presentations, "Keep It Short and Simple".

1.1016   kit

kit: [USENET; poss. fr. DEC slang for a full software
distribution, as opposed to a patch or upgrade] n. A source
software distribution that has been packaged in such a way that it
can (theoretically) be unpacked and installed according to a series
of steps using only standard UNIX tools, and entirely documented by
some reasonable chain of references from the top-level
README

file
. The more general term
distribution
 may imply that
special tools or more stringent conditions on the host environment
are required.

1.1017   klone

klone: /klohn/ n. See
clone
, sense 4.

1.1018   kludge

kludge: /klooj/ or /kluhj/ n. Common (but incorrect) variant
of
kluge
, q.v.

1.1019   kluge

kluge: /klooj/ [from the German 'klug', clever] 1. n. A Rube
Goldberg (or Heath Robinson) device, whether in hardware or
software. (A long-ago "Datamation" article by Jackson Granholme
said: "An ill-assorted collection of poorly matching parts,
forming a distressing whole.") 2. n. A clever programming trick
intended to solve a particular nasty case in an expedient, if not
clear, manner. Often used to repair bugs. Often involves

ad-hockery
 and verges on being a
crock

```
                      .  In fact, the
TMRC Dictionary defined 'kludge' as "a crock that works".  3. n.
Something that works for the wrong reason.  4. vt. To insert a
kluge into a program.  "I've kluged this routine to get around
that weird bug, but there's probably a better way."  5. [WPI] n. A
feature that is implemented in a
                      rude
                       manner.
```

```
Nowadays this term is often encountered in the variant spelling
'kludge'.  Reports from
                      old fart
                      s are consistent that
'kluge' was the original spelling, reported around computers as
far back as the mid-1950s and, at that time, used exclusively of
*hardware* kluges.  In 1947, the "New York Folklore
Quarterly" reported a classic shaggy-dog story 'Murgatroyd the
Kluge Maker' then current in the Armed Forces, in which a 'kluge'
was a complex and puzzling artifact with a trivial function.  Other
sources report that 'kluge' was common Navy slang in the WWII era
for any piece of electronics that worked well on shore but
consistently failed at sea.
```

```
However, there is reason to believe this slang use may be a decade
older.  Several respondents have connected it to the brand name of
a device called a "Kluge paper feeder" dating back at least to
1935, an adjunct to mechanical printing presses.  The Kluge feeder
was designed before small, cheap electric motors and control
electronics; it relied on a fiendishly complex assortment of cams,
belts, and linkages to both power and synchronize all its
operations from one motive driveshaft.  It was accordingly
tempermental, subject to frequent breakdowns, and devilishly
difficult to repair --- but oh, so clever!  One traditional
folk etymology of 'kluge' makes it the name of a design engineer;
in fact, 'Kluge' is a surname in German, and the designer of the
Kluge feeder may well have been the man behind this myth.
```

```
                      TMRC
                       and the MIT hacker culture of the early '60s seems to
have developed in a milieu that remembered and still used some WWII
military slang (see also
                      foobar
                      ).  It seems likely that
'kluge' came to MIT via alumni of the many military electronics
projects that had been located in Cambridge (many in MIT's
venerable Building 20, in which
                      TMRC
                       is also located) during
the war.
```

```
The variant 'kludge' was apparently popularized by the
```

```
                      Datamation
                       article mentioned above; it was titled "How
to Design a Kludge" (February 1962, pp. 30, 31).  Some people
who encountered the word first in print or on-line jumped to the
```

reasonable but incorrect conclusion that the word should be
pronounced /kluhj/ (rhyming with 'sludge'). The result of this
tangled history is a mess; in 1993, many (perhaps even most)
hackers pronounce the word correctly as /klooj/ but spell it
incorrectly as 'kludge' (compare the pronunciation drift of

            mung
). Some observers consider this appropriate in view of
its meaning.

1.1020   kluge around

            kluge around: vt. To avoid a bug or difficult condition by
inserting a
            kluge
            . Compare
            workaround
            .

1.1021   kluge up

            kluge up: vt. To lash together a quick hack to perform a task; ←
               this
is milder than
            cruft together
             and has some of the connotations
of
            hack up
             (note, however, that the construction 'kluge on'
corresponding to
            hack on
             is never used). "I've kluged up this
routine to dump the buffer contents to a safe place."

1.1022   Knights of the Lambda Calculus

Knights of the Lambda Calculus: n. A semi-mythical organization of
   wizardly LISP and Scheme hackers. The name refers to a
   mathematical formalism invented by Alonzo Church, with which LISP
   is intimately connected. There is no enrollment list and the
   criteria for induction are unclear, but one well-known LISPer has
   been known to give out buttons and, in general, the *members*
   know who they are....

1.1023 Knuth

Knuth: /knooth/ [Donald E. Knuth's "The Art of Computer
Programming"] n. Mythically, the reference that answers all
questions about data structures or algorithms. A safe answer when
you do not know: "I think you can find that in Knuth." Contrast

literature, the
. See also
bible
.

1.1024 kremvax

kremvax: /krem-vaks/ [from the then large number of
USENET

VAXen
 with names of the form foovax] n. Originally, a
fictitious USENET site at the Kremlin, announced on April 1, 1984
in a posting ostensibly originated there by Soviet leader
Konstantin Chernenko. The posting was actually forged by Piet
Beertema as an April Fool's joke. Other fictitious sites mentioned
in the hoax were moskvax and
kgbvax
. This was probably
the funniest of the many April Fool's forgeries perpetrated on
USENET (which has negligible security against them), because the
notion that USENET might ever penetrate the Iron Curtain seemed so
totally absurd at the time.

In fact, it was only six years later that the first genuine site in
Moscow, demos.su, joined USENET. Some readers needed
convincing that the postings from it weren't just another prank.
Vadim Antonov, senior programmer at Demos and the major poster from
there up to mid-1991, was quite aware of all this, referred to it
frequently in his own postings, and at one point twitted some
credulous readers by blandly asserting that he *was* a
hoax!

Eventually he even arranged to have the domain's gateway site
named kremvax, thus neatly turning fiction into truth
and demonstrating that the hackish sense of humor transcends
cultural barriers. [Mr. Antonov also contributed the
Russian-language material for this lexicon. --- ESR]

In an even more ironic historical footnote, kremvax became an
electronic center of the anti-communist resistance during the
bungled hard-line coup of August 1991. During those three days the
Soviet UUCP network centered on kremvax became the only
trustworthy news source for many places within the USSR. Though
the sysops were concentrating on internal communications,

cross-border postings included immediate transliterations of Boris
Yeltsin's decrees condemning the coup and eyewitness reports of the
demonstrations in Moscow's streets. In those hours, years of
speculation that totalitarianism would prove unable to maintain its
grip on politically-loaded information in the age of computer
networking were proved devastatingly accurate --- and the original
kremvax joke became a reality as Yeltsin and the new Russian
revolutionaries of 'glasnost' and 'perestroika' made
kremvax one of the timeliest means of their outreach to the
West.

1.1025 kyrka

kyrka: /shir'k*/ [Swedish] n. See
feature key
.

1.1026 lace card

lace card: n. obs. A
punched card
 with all holes punched
(also called a 'whoopee card' or 'ventilator card'). Card
readers tended to jam when they got to one of these, as the
resulting card had too little structural strength to avoid buckling
inside the mechanism. Card punches could also jam trying to
produce these things owing to power-supply problems. When some
practical joker fed a lace card through the reader, you needed to
clear the jam with a 'card knife' --- which you used on the joker
first.

1.1027 language lawyer

language lawyer: n. A person, usually an experienced or senior
software engineer, who is intimately familiar with many or most of
the numerous restrictions and features (both useful and esoteric)
applicable to one or more computer programming languages. A
language lawyer is distinguished by the ability to show you the
five sentences scattered through a 200-plus-page manual that
together imply the answer to your question "if only you had
thought to look there". Compare
wizard
,
legal

,

legalese

.

1.1028 languages of choice

languages of choice: n.
C
 and
LISP
. Nearly every
hacker knows one of these, and most good ones are fluent in both.
Smalltalk and Prolog are also popular in small but influential
communities.

There is also a rapidly dwindling category of older hackers with
FORTRAN, or even assembler, as their language of choice. They
often prefer to be known as
Real Programmer
s, and other
hackers consider them a bit odd (see "
The Story of Mel, a

Real Programmer
" in
Appendix A
). Assembler is generally no longer
considered interesting or appropriate for anything but
HLL
   implementation,
glue
, and a few time-critical and
hardware-specific uses in systems programs. FORTRAN occupies a
shrinking niche in scientific programming.

Most hackers tend to frown on languages like
Pascal
 and

Ada
, which don't give them the near-total freedom considered
necessary for hacking (see
bondage-and-discipline language
),
and to regard everything even remotely connected with
COBOL
 or
other traditional
card walloper
 languages as a total and
unmitigated
loss

.

1.1029   larval stage

larval stage: n. Describes a period of monomaniacal concentration
on coding apparently passed through by all fledgling hackers.
Common symptoms include the perpetration of more than one 36-hour

hacking run
in a given week; neglect of all other activities
including usual basics like food, sleep, and personal hygiene; and
a chronic case of advanced bleary-eye. Can last from 6 months to 2
years, the apparent median being around 18 months. A few so
afflicted never resume a more 'normal' life, but the ordeal
seems to be necessary to produce really wizardly (as opposed to
merely competent) programmers. See also
wannabee
. A less
protracted and intense version of larval stage (typically lasting
about a month) may recur when one is learning a new
OS
or
programming language.

1.1030   lase

lase: /layz/ vt. To print a given document via a laser printer.
   "OK, let's lase that sucker and see if all those graphics-macro
   calls did the right things."

1.1031   laser chicken

laser chicken: n. Kung Pao Chicken, a standard Chinese dish
containing chicken, peanuts, and hot red peppers in a spicy
pepper-oil sauce. Many hackers call it 'laser chicken' for
two reasons: It can
zap
you just like a laser, and the
sauce has a red color reminiscent of some laser beams.

In a variation on this theme, it is reported that some Australian
hackers have redesignated the common dish 'lemon chicken' as
'Chernobyl Chicken'. The name is derived from the color of the
sauce, which is considered bright enough to glow in the dark (as,
mythically, do some of the inhabitants of Chernobyl).

1.1032   Lasherism

Lasherism: [Harvard] n. A program that solves a standard problem
(such as the Eight Queens puzzle or implementing the
life
     algorithm) in a deliberately nonstandard way. Distinguished ←
          from a

crock
 or
kluge
 by the fact that the programmer did it on
purpose as a mental exercise. Such constructions are quite popular
in exercises such as the
Obfuscated C contest
, and
occasionally in
retrocomputing
. Lew Lasher was a student at
Harvard around 1980 who became notorious for such behavior.

1.1033   laundromat

laundromat: n. Syn.
disk farm
; see
washing machine
.

1.1034   LDB

LDB: /l*'d*b/ [from the PDP-10 instruction set] vt. To extract
from the middle. "LDB me a slice of cake, please." This usage
has been kept alive by Common LISP's function of the same name.
Considered silly. See also
DPB
.

1.1035   leaf site

leaf site: n. A machine that merely originates and reads USENET
news or mail, and does not relay any third-party traffic. Often
uttered in a critical tone; when the ratio of leaf sites to
backbone, rib, and other relay sites gets too high, the network
tends to develop bottlenecks. Compare
backbone site
,
rib

site
.

1.1036   leak

leak: n. With qualifier, one of a class of resource-management ↩
bugs
that occur when resources are not freed properly after operations
on them are finished, so they effectively disappear (leak out).
This leads to eventual exhaustion as new allocation requests come
in.
memory leak
 and
fd leak
 have their own entries; one
might also refer, to, say, a 'window handle leak' in a window
system.

1.1037   leaky heap

leaky heap: [Cambridge] n. An
arena
 with a
memory leak
.

1.1038   leapfrog attack

leapfrog attack: n. Use of userid and password information
  obtained illicitly from one host (e.g., downloading a file of
  account IDs and passwords, tapping TELNET, etc.) to compromise
  another host. Also, the act of TELNETting through one or more

hosts in order to confuse a trace (a standard cracker procedure).

1.1039   legal

legal: adj. Loosely used to mean 'in accordance with all the
relevant rules', esp. in connection with some set of constraints
defined by software. "The older =+ alternate for += is no longer
legal syntax in ANSI C." "This parser processes each line of
legal input the moment it sees the trailing linefeed." Hackers
often model their work as a sort of game played with the
environment in which the objective is to maneuver through the
thicket of 'natural laws' to achieve a desired objective. Their
use of 'legal' is flavored as much by this game-playing sense as by
the more conventional one having to do with courts and lawyers.
Compare
language lawyer
,
legalese
.

1.1040   legalese

legalese: n. Dense, pedantic verbiage in a language description,
product specification, or interface standard; text that seems
designed to obfuscate and requires a
language lawyer
 to

parse
 it. Though hackers are not afraid of high information
density and complexity in language (indeed, they rather enjoy
both), they share a deep and abiding loathing for legalese; they
associate it with deception,
suit
s, and situations in which
hackers generally get the short end of the stick.

1.1041   LER

LER: /L-E-R/ [TMRC, from 'Light-Emitting Diode'] n. A
light-emitting resistor (that is, one in the process of burning
up). Ohm's law was broken. See also
SED
.

1.1042   LERP

LERP: /lerp/ vi.,n. Quasi-acronym for Linear Interpolation, used as a
   verb or noun for the operation. "Bresenham's algorithm lerps
   incrementally between the two endpoints of the line."

1.1043   let the smoke out

            let the smoke out: v. To fry hardware (see
            fried
). See

            magic smoke
             for a discussion of the underlying mythology.

1.1044   letterbomb

            letterbomb: 1. n. A piece of
            email
             containing
            live data
               intended to do nefarious things to the recipient's machine or
   terminal. It is possible, for example, to send letterbombs that
   will lock up some specific kinds of terminals when they are viewed,
   so thoroughly that the user must cycle power (see
            cycle
            , sense
   3) to unwedge them. Under UNIX, a letterbomb can also try to get
   part of its contents interpreted as a shell command to the mailer.
   The results of this could range from silly to tragic. See also

            Trojan horse
            ; compare
            nastygram
            . 2. Loosely, a

            mailbomb
            .

1.1045   lexer

```
lexer: /lek'sr/ n. Common hacker shorthand for 'lexical
   analyzer', the input-tokenizing stage in the parser for a language
   (the part that breaks it into word-like pieces).  "Some C lexers
   get confused by the old-style compound ops like '=-'."
```

1.1046   lexiphage

```
               lexiphage: /lek'si-fayj'/ n. A notorious word
               chomper
                on
   ITS.  See
               bagbiter
               .  This program would draw on a selected
   victim's bitmapped terminal the words "THE BAG" in ornate
   letters, followed a pair of jaws biting pieces of it off.
```

1.1047   life

```
               life: n. 1. A cellular-automata game invented by John Horton
   Conway and first introduced publicly by Martin Gardner
   ("Scientific American", October 1970); the game's popularity
   had to wait a few years for computers on which it could reasonably
   be played, as it's no fun to simulate the cells by hand.  Many
   hackers pass through a stage of fascination with it, and hackers at
   various places contributed heavily to the mathematical analysis of
   this game (most notably Bill Gosper at MIT, who even implemented
   life in
               TECO
               !; see
               Gosperism
               ).  When a hacker mentions
   'life', he is much more likely to mean this game than the
   magazine, the breakfast cereal, or the human state of existence.
   2. The opposite of
               USENET
               .  As in "
               Get a life!
               "
```

1.1048   Life is hard

Life is hard: [XEROX PARC] prov. This phrase has two possible
   interpretations: (1) "While your suggestion may have some merit, I
   will behave as though I hadn't heard it." (2) "While your
   suggestion has obvious merit, equally obvious circumstances prevent
   it from being seriously considered." The charm of the phrase lies
   precisely in this subtle but important ambiguity.

1.1049   light pipe

```
        light pipe: n. Fiber optic cable.  Oppose
        copper
        .
```

1.1050   lightweight

```
        lightweight: adj. Opposite of
        heavyweight
        ; usually found in
combining forms such as 'lightweight process'.
```

1.1051   like kicking dead whales down the beach

```
            like kicking dead whales down the beach: adj. Describes a slow,
   difficult, and disgusting process.  First popularized by a famous
   quote about the difficulty of getting work done under one of IBM's
   mainframe OSes.  "Well, you *could* write a C compiler in
   COBOL, but it would be like kicking dead whales down the beach."
   See also
        fear and loathing
        .
```

1.1052   like nailing jelly to a tree

like nailing jelly to a tree: adj. Used to describe a task thought
   to be impossible, esp. one in which the difficulty arises from
   poor specification or inherent slipperiness in the problem domain.
   "Trying to display the 'prettiest' arrangement of nodes and arcs
   that diagrams a given graph is like nailing jelly to a tree,
   because nobody's sure what 'prettiest' means algorithmically."

1.1053   line 666

line 666: [from Christian eschatological myth] n. The notional
   line of source at which a program fails for obscure reasons,
   implying either that *somebody* is out to get it (when you are
   the programmer), or that it richly deserves to be so gotten (when
   you are not). "It works when I trace through it, but seems to
   crash on line 666 when I run it." "What happens is that whenever
   a large batch comes through, mmdf dies on the Line of the Beast.
   Probably some twit hardcoded a buffer size."

1.1054   line eater, the

                  line eater, the: [USENET] n. 1. A bug in some now-obsolete
versions of the netnews software that used to eat up to BUFSIZ
bytes of the article text. The bug was triggered by having the
text of the article start with a space or tab. This bug was
quickly personified as a mythical creature called the 'line
eater', and postings often included a dummy line of 'line eater
food'. Ironically, line eater 'food' not beginning with a space or
tab wasn't actually eaten, since the bug was avoided; but if there
was a space or tab before it, then the line eater would eat
the food *and* the beginning of the text it was supposed to be
protecting. The practice of 'sacrificing to the line eater'
continued for some time after the bug had been
                  nailed to the

                  wall
                  , and is still humorously referred to. The bug itself is
still (in mid-1991) occasionally reported to be lurking in some
mail-to-netnews gateways. 2. See
                  NSA line eater
                  .

1.1055   line noise

                  line noise: n. 1. [techspeak] Spurious characters due to
electrical noise in a communications link, especially an RS-232
serial connection. Line noise may be induced by poor connections,
interference or crosstalk from other circuits, electrical storms,

                  cosmic rays
                  , or (notionally) birds crapping on the phone
wires. 2. Any chunk of data in a file or elsewhere that looks like
the results of line noise in sense 1. 3. Text that is
theoretically a readable text or program source but employs syntax
so bizarre that it looks like line noise in senses 1 or 2. Yes,
there are languages this ugly. The canonical example is
                  TECO

```
                   ;
it is often claimed that "TECO's input syntax is indistinguishable
from line noise."  Other non-
                WYSIWYG
                 editors, such as Multics
'qed' and Unix 'ed', in the hands of a real hacker, also
qualify easily, as do deliberately obfuscated languages such as

                INTERCAL
                .
```

1.1056   line starve

```
                line starve: [MIT] 1. vi. To feed paper through a printer the
wrong way by one line (most printers can't do this).  On a display
terminal, to move the cursor up to the previous line of the screen.
"To print 'X squared', you just output 'X', line starve, '2', line
feed."  (The line starve causes the '2' to appear on the line
above the 'X', and the line feed gets back to the original line.)
2. n. A character (or character sequence) that causes a terminal to
perform this action.  ASCII 0011010, also called SUB or control-Z,
was one common line-starve character in the days before
microcomputers and the X3.64 terminal standard.  Unlike 'line
feed', 'line starve' is *not* standard
                ASCII
                 terminology.  Even among hackers it is considered a bit silly.
3. [proposed] A sequence such as \c (used in System V echo, as well
as
                nroff
                 and
                troff
                ) that suppresses a
                newline
                 or
other character(s) that would normally be emitted.
```

1.1057   link farm

```
                link farm: [UNIX] n. A directory tree that contains many links to
files in a master directory tree of files.  Link farms save space
when one is maintaining several nearly identical copies of the same
source tree --- for example, when the only difference is
architecture-dependent object files.  "Let's freeze the source and
then rebuild the FROBOZZ-3 and FROBOZZ-4 link farms."  Link farms
may also be used to get around restrictions on the number of
'-I' (include-file directory) arguments on older
C preprocessors.  However, they can also get completely out of
hand, becoming the filesystem equivalent of
```

spaghetti

code

.

1.1058   link-dead

link-dead: [MUD] adj. Said of a
MUD
 character who has frozen in
place because of a dropped Internet connection.

1.1059   lint

lint: [from UNIX's `lint(1)', named for the bits of fluff it
supposedly picks from programs] 1. vt. To examine a program closely
for style, language usage, and portability problems, esp. if
in C, esp. if via use of automated analysis tools, most esp. if
the UNIX utility `lint(1)' is used. This term used to be
restricted to use of `lint(1)' itself, but (judging by
references on USENET) it has become a shorthand for
desk check
    at some non-UNIX shops, even in languages other than C. Also ←
        as
v.
delint
. 2. n. Excess verbiage in a document, as in "This
draft has too much lint".

1.1060   lion food

lion food: [IBM] n. Middle management or HQ staff (or, by
   extension, administrative drones in general). From an old joke
   about two lions who, escaping from the zoo, split up to increase
   their chances but agree to meet after 2 months. When they finally
   meet, one is skinny and the other overweight. The thin one says:
   "How did you manage? I ate a human just once and they turned out
   a small army to chase me --- guns, nets, it was terrible. Since
   then I've been reduced to eating mice, insects, even grass." The
   fat one replies: "Well, *I* hid near an IBM office and ate a
   manager a day. And nobody even noticed!"

1.1061 Lions Book

```
Lions Book: n. "Source Code and Commentary on UNIX level 6",
   by John Lions.  The two parts of this book contained (1) the entire
   source listing of the UNIX Version 6 kernel, and (2) a commentary
   on the source discussing the algorithms.  These were circulated
   internally at the University of New South Wales beginning 1976--77,
   and were, for years after, the *only* detailed kernel
   documentation available to anyone outside Bell Labs.  Because
   Western Electric wished to maintain trade secret status on the
   kernel, the Lions book was never formally published and was only
   supposed to be distributed to affiliates of source licensees (it is
   still possible to get a Bell Labs reprint of the book by sending a
   copy of a V6 source license to the right person at Bellcore, but
   *real* insiders have the UNSW edition).  In spite of this, it
   soon spread by samizdat to a good many of the early UNIX
   hackers.
```

1.1062 LISP

```
              LISP: [from 'LISt Processing language', but mythically from
   'Lots of Irritating Superfluous Parentheses'] n. AI's mother
   tongue, a language based on the ideas of (a) variable-length lists
   and trees as fundamental data types, and (b) the interpretation of
   code as data and vice-versa.  Invented by John McCarthy at MIT in
   the late 1950s, it is actually older than any other
              HLL
               still
   in use except FORTRAN.  Accordingly, it has undergone considerable
   adaptive radiation over the years; modern variants are quite
   different in detail from the original LISP 1.5.  The dominant HLL
   among hackers until the early 1980s, LISP now shares the throne
   with
              C
              . See
              languages of choice
              .

   All LISP functions and programs are expressions that return
   values; this, together with the high memory utilization of LISPs,
   gave rise to Alan Perlis's famous quip (itself a take on an Oscar
   Wilde quote) that "LISP programmers know the value of everything
   and the cost of nothing".

   One significant application for LISP has been as a proof by example
   that most newer languages, such as
              COBOL
               and
              Ada
              , are full
   of unnecessary
              crock
              s.  When the
```

```
            Right Thing
             has already
been done once, there is no justification for
            bogosity
             in newer
languages.
```

1.1063   literature, the

```
            literature, the: n. Computer-science journals and other
publications, vaguely gestured at to answer a question that the
speaker believes is
            trivial
            .  Thus, one might answer an
annoying question by saying "It's in the literature."  Oppose

            Knuth
            , which has no connotation of triviality.
```

1.1064   lithium lick

```
lithium lick: n. [NeXT] n. Steve Jobs.  Employees who have gotten
   too much attention from their esteemed founder are said to have
   'lithium lick' when they begin to show signs of Jobsian fervor and
   repeat the most recent catch phrases in normal conversation --- for
   example, "It just works, right out of the box!"
```

1.1065   little-endian

```
            little-endian: adj. Describes a computer architecture in which,
within a given 16- or 32-bit word, bytes at lower addresses have
lower significance (the word is stored 'little-end-first').  The
PDP-11 and VAX families of computers and Intel microprocessors and
a lot of communications and networking hardware are little-endian.
See
            big-endian
            ,
            middle-endian
            ,
            NUXI problem
            .  The
term is sometimes used to describe the ordering of units other than
bytes; most often, bits within a byte.
```

1.1066   live data

live data: n. 1. Data that is written to be interpreted and takes
over program flow when triggered by some un-obvious operation, such
as viewing it. One use of such hacks is to break security. For
example, some smart terminals have commands that allow one to
download strings to program keys; this can be used to write live
data that, when listed to the terminal, infects it with a
security-breaking
                virus
                 that is triggered the next time a
hapless user strikes that key. For another, there are some
well-known bugs in
                vi
                 that allow certain texts to send
arbitrary commands back to the machine when they are simply viewed.
2. In C code, data that includes pointers to function
                hook
                s
(executable code). 3. An object, such as a
                trampoline
                , that is
constructed on the fly by a program and intended to be executed as
code. 4. Actual real-world data, as opposed to 'test data'.
For example, "I think I have the record deletion module
finished." "Have you tried it out on live data?" This usage usually
carries the connotation that live data is more fragile and must not
be corrupted, or bad things will happen. So a more appropriate
response to the above claim might be: "Well, make sure it works
perfectly before we throw live data at it." The implication here
is that record deletion is something pretty significant, and a
haywire record-deletion module running amok on live data would
probably cause great harm.

1.1067   Live Free Or Die!

Live Free Or Die!: imp. 1. The state motto of New Hampshire, which
appears on that state's automobile license plates. 2. A slogan
associated with UNIX in the romantic days when UNIX aficionados saw
themselves as a tiny, beleaguered underground tilting against the
windmills of industry. The "free" referred specifically to
freedom from the
                fascist
                 design philosophies and crufty
misfeatures common on commercial operating systems. Armando
Stettner, one of the early UNIX developers, used to give out fake
license plates bearing this motto under a large UNIX, all in New
Hampshire colors of green and white. These are now valued
collector's items.

1.1068 livelock

livelock: /li:v'lok/ n. A situation in which some critical stage
of a task is unable to finish because its clients perpetually
create more work for it to do after they have been serviced but
before it can clear its queue. Differs from
deadlock
 in that
the process is not blocked or waiting for anything, but has a
virtually infinite amount of work to do and can never catch up.

1.1069 liveware

liveware: /li:v'weir/ n. 1. Synonym for
wetware
. Less
common. 2. [Cambridge] Vermin. "Waiter, there's some liveware in
my salad..."

1.1070 lobotomy

lobotomy: n. 1. What a hacker subjected to formal management
training is said to have undergone. At IBM and elsewhere this term
is used by both hackers and low-level management; the latter
doubtless intend it as a joke. 2. The act of removing the
processor from a microcomputer in order to replace or upgrade it.
Some very cheap
clone
 systems are sold in 'lobotomized' form
--- everything but the brain.

1.1071 locals, the

locals, the: pl.n. The users on one's local network (as opposed, say,
   to people one reaches via public Internet or UUCP connects). The
   marked thing about this usage is how little it has to do with
   real-space distance. "I have to do some tweaking on this mail
   utility before releasing it to the locals."

1.1072   locked and loaded

```
            locked and loaded: [from military slang for an M-16 rifle with
magazine inserted and prepared for firing] adj. Said of a removable
disk volume properly prepared for use --- that is, locked into the
drive and with the heads loaded.  Ironically, because their heads
are 'loaded' whenever the power is up, this description is never
used of
            Winchester
             drives (which are named after a rifle).
```

1.1073   locked up

```
            locked up: adj. Syn. for
            hung
            ,
            wedged
            .
```

1.1074   logic bomb

```
            logic bomb: n. Code surreptitiously inserted into an application  ←
              or
OS that causes it to perform some destructive or
security-compromising activity whenever specified conditions are
met.  Compare
            back door
            .
```

1.1075   logical

```
            logical: [from the technical term 'logical device', wherein a
physical device is referred to by an arbitrary 'logical' name]
adj. Having the role of.  If a person (say, Les Earnest at SAIL)
who had long held a certain post left and were replaced, the
replacement would for a while be known as the 'logical' Les
Earnest.  (This does not imply any judgment on the replacement.)
Compare
            virtual
            .

At Stanford, 'logical' compass directions denote a coordinate
system in which 'logical north' is toward San Francisco,
```

'logical west' is toward the ocean, etc., even though logical
north varies between physical (true) north near San Francisco and
physical west near San Jose. (The best rule of thumb here is that,
by definition, El Camino Real always runs logical north-and-south.)
In giving directions, one might say: "To get to Rincon Tarasco
restaurant, get onto
                El Camino Bignum
                 going logical north."
Using the word 'logical' helps to prevent the recipient from
worrying about that the fact that the sun is setting almost
directly in front of him. The concept is reinforced by North
American highways which are almost, but not quite, consistently
labeled with logical rather than physical directions. A similar
situation exists at MIT: Route 128 (famous for the electronics
industry that has grown up along it) is a 3-quarters circle
surrounding Boston at a radius of 10 miles, terminating near the
coastline at each end. It would be most precise to describe the
two directions along this highway as 'clockwise' and
'counterclockwise', but the road signs all say "north" and
"south", respectively. A hacker might describe these directions
as 'logical north' and 'logical south', to indicate that they
are conventional directions not corresponding to the usual
denotation for those words. (If you went logical south along the
entire length of route 128, you would start out going northwest,
curve around to the south, and finish headed due east, passing along
one infamous stretch of pavement that is simultaneously route 128
south and Interstate 93 north, and is signed as such!)

1.1076   loop through

                loop through: vt. To process each element of a list of things.
"Hold on, I've got to loop through my paper mail." Derives from
the computer-language notion of an iterative loop; compare 'cdr
down' (under
                cdr
                ), which is less common among C and UNIX
programmers. ITS hackers used to say 'IRP over' after an
obscure pseudo-op in the MIDAS PDP-10 assembler.

1.1077   loose bytes

                loose bytes: n. Commonwealth hackish term for the padding bytes or

                shim
                s many compilers insert between members of a record or
structure to cope with alignment requirements imposed by the
machine architecture.

1.1078   lord high fixer

lord high fixer: [primarily British, from Gilbert & Sullivan's
'lord high executioner'] n. The person in an organization who knows
the most about some aspect of a system. See
wizard
.

1.1079   lose

lose: [MIT] vi. 1. To fail. A program loses when it encounters
an exceptional condition or fails to work in the expected manner.
2. To be exceptionally unesthetic or crocky. 3. Of people, to
be obnoxious or unusually stupid (as opposed to ignorant). See
also
deserves to lose
. 4. n. Refers to something that is

losing
, especially in the phrases "That's a lose!" and "What
a lose!"

1.1080   lose lose

lose lose: interj. A reply to or comment on an undesirable
situation. "I accidentally deleted all my files!" "Lose,
lose."

1.1081   loser

loser: n. An unexpectedly bad situation, program, programmer, or
person. Someone who habitually loses. (Even winners can lose
occasionally.) Someone who knows not and knows not that he knows
not. Emphatic forms are 'real loser', 'total loser', and
'complete loser' (but not **'moby loser', which would be a
contradiction in terms). See
luser
.

1.1082   losing

```
        losing: adj. Said of anything that is or causes a
        lose
         or

        lossage
        .
```

1.1083   loss

```
        loss: n. Something (not a person) that loses; a situation in which
something is losing.  Emphatic forms include 'moby loss', and
'total loss', 'complete loss'.  Common interjections are
"What a loss!"  and "What a moby loss!"  Note that 'moby loss'
is OK even though **'moby loser' is not used; applied to an abstract
noun, moby is simply a magnifier, whereas when applied to a person
it implies substance and has positive connotations.  Compare

        lossage
        .
```

1.1084   lossage

```
        lossage: /los'*j/ n. The result of a bug or malfunction.  This
is a mass or collective noun.  "What a loss!" and "What
lossage!" are nearly synonymous.  The former is slightly more
particular to the speaker's present circumstances; the latter
implies a continuing
        lose
         of which the speaker is currently a
victim.  Thus (for example) a temporary hardware failure is a loss,
but bugs in an important tool (like a compiler) are serious
lossage.
```

1.1085   lost in the noise

```
        lost in the noise: adj. Syn.
        lost in the underflow
        . This term
is from signal processing, where signals of very small amplitude
cannot be separated from low-intensity noise in the system.  Though
popular among hackers, it is not confined to hackerdom; physicists,
```

engineers, astronomers, and statisticians all use it.

1.1086   lost in the underflow

lost in the underflow: adj. Too small to be worth considering;
more specifically, small beyond the limits of accuracy or
measurement. This is a reference to 'floating underflow', a
condition that can occur when a floating-point arithmetic processor
tries to handle quantities smaller than its limit of magnitude. It
is also a pun on 'undertow' (a kind of fast, cold current that
sometimes runs just offshore and can be dangerous to swimmers).
"Well, sure, photon pressure from the stadium lights alters the
path of a thrown baseball, but that effect gets lost in the
underflow." Compare
epsilon
,
epsilon squared
; see also

overflow bit
.

1.1087   lots of MIPS but no I/O

lots of MIPS but no I/O: adj. Used to describe a person who is
   technically brilliant but can't seem to communicate with human
   beings effectively. Technically it describes a machine that has
   lots of processing power but is bottlenecked on input-output (in
   1991, the IBM Rios, a.k.a. RS/6000, is a notorious recent
   example).

1.1088   low-bandwidth

low-bandwidth: [from communication theory] adj. Used to indicate a
talk that, although not
content-free
, was not terribly
informative. "That was a low-bandwidth talk, but what can you
expect for an audience of
suit
s!" Compare
zero-content
,

bandwidth

```
            ,
            math-out
            .
```

1.1089 LPT

```
LPT: /L-P-T/ or /lip'it/ or /lip-it'/ n. Line printer, of
   course.  Rare under UNIX, more common among hackers who grew up
   with ITS, MS-DOS, CP/M and other operating systems that were
   strongly influenced by early DEC conventions.
```

1.1090 Lubarsky's Law of Cybernetic Entomology

```
Lubarsky's Law of Cybernetic Entomology: prov. "There is *always*
   one more bug."
```

1.1091 lunatic fringe

```
lunatic fringe: [IBM] n. Customers who can be relied upon to accept
   release 1 versions of software.
```

1.1092 lurker

```
            lurker: n. One of the 'silent majority' in a electronic forum;
   one who posts occasionally or not at all but is known to read the
   group's postings regularly.  This term is not pejorative and indeed
   is casually used reflexively: "Oh, I'm just lurking."  Often used
   in 'the lurkers', the hypothetical audience for the group's

            flamage
            -emitting regulars.
```

1.1093 luser

```
            luser: /loo'zr/ n. A
            user
            ; esp. one who is also a
```

                    loser
                    .   (
                    luser
                     and
                    loser
                     are pronounced
identically.) This word was coined around 1975 at MIT. Under
ITS, when you first walked up to a terminal at MIT and typed
Control-Z to get the computer's attention, it printed out some
status information, including how many people were already using
the computer; it might print "14 users", for example. Someone
thought it would be a great joke to patch the system to print
"14 losers" instead. There ensued a great controversy, as some
of the users didn't particularly want to be called losers to their
faces every time they used the computer. For a while several
hackers struggled covertly, each changing the message behind the
back of the others; any time you logged into the computer it was
even money whether it would say "users" or "losers". Finally,
someone tried the compromise "lusers", and it stuck. Later one
of the ITS machines supported 'luser' as a request-for-help
command. ITS died the death in mid-1990, except as a museum piece;
the usage lives on, however, and the term 'luser' is often seen
in program comments.

1.1094 M

                    M: [SI] pref. (on units) suff. (on numbers) See
                    quantifiers
                    .

1.1095 macdink

                    macdink: /mak'dink/ [from the Apple Macintosh, which is said to
encourage such behavior] vt. To make many incremental and
unnecessary cosmetic changes to a program or file. Often the
subject of the macdinking would be better off without them. "When
I left at 11 P.M. last night, he was still macdinking the
slides for his presentation." See also
                    fritterware
                    ,

                    window shopping
                    .

1.1096   machinable

machinable: adj. Machine-readable. Having the
softcopy
 nature.

1.1097   machoflops

machoflops: /mach'oh-flops/ [pun on `megaflops', a coinage for
`millions of FLoating-point Operations Per Second'] n. Refers to
artificially inflated performance figures often quoted by computer
manufacturers. Real applications are lucky to get half the quoted
speed. See
Your mileage may vary
,
benchmark
.

1.1098   Macintoy

Macintoy: /mak'in-toy/ n. The Apple Macintosh, considered as a

toy
. Less pejorative than
Macintrash
.

1.1099   Macintrash

Macintrash: /mak'in-trash'/ n. The Apple Macintosh, as described
by a hacker who doesn't appreciate being kept away from the
real computer by the interface. The term
maggotbox
 has
been reported in regular use in the Research Triangle area of North
Carolina. Compare
Macintoy
. See also
beige toaster
,

WIMP environment
,

```
            point-and-drool interface
            ,

            drool-proof paper
            ,
            user-friendly
            .
```

1.1100   macro

```
            macro: /mak'roh/ [techspeak] n. A name (possibly followed by a
formal
            arg
            list) that is equated to a text or symbolic
expression to which it is to be expanded (possibly with the
substitution of actual arguments) by a macro expander.  This
definition can be found in any technical dictionary; what those
won't tell you is how the hackish connotations of the term have
changed over time.

The term 'macro' originated in early assemblers, which encouraged
the use of macros as a structuring and information-hiding device.
During the early 1970s, macro assemblers became ubiquitous, and
sometimes quite as powerful and expensive as
            HLL
            s, only to fall
from favor as improving compiler technology marginalized assembler
programming (see
            languages of choice
            ).  Nowadays the term is
most often used in connection with the C preprocessor, LISP, or one
of several special-purpose languages built around a macro-expansion
facility (such as TeX or UNIX's [nt]roff suite).

Indeed, the meaning has drifted enough that the collective
'macros' is now sometimes used for code in any special-purpose
application control language (whether or not the language is
actually translated by text expansion), and for macro-like entities
such as the 'keyboard macros' supported in some text editors
(and PC TSR or Macintosh INIT/CDEV keyboard enhancers).
```

1.1101   macro-

```
            macro-: pref. Large.  Opposite of
            micro-
            . In the mainstream
and among other technical cultures (for example, medical people)
this competes with the prefix
```

```
              mega-
              , but hackers tend to
restrict the latter to quantification.
```

1.1102 macrology

```
              macrology: /mak-rol'*-jee/ n. 1. Set of usually complex or crufty
macros, e.g., as part of a large system written in
              LISP
              ,

              TECO
              , or (less commonly) assembler.  2. The art and science
involved in comprehending a macrology in sense 1.  Sometimes
studying the macrology of a system is not unlike archeology,
ecology, or
              theology
              , hence the sound-alike construction.  See
also
              boxology
              .
```

1.1103 macrotape

```
              macrotape: /mak'roh-tayp/ n. An industry-standard reel of tape, as
opposed to a
              microtape
              . See also
              round tape
              .
```

1.1104 maggotbox

```
              maggotbox: /mag'*t-boks/ n. See
              Macintrash
              .  This is even
more derogatory.
```

1.1105 magic

        magic: adj. 1. As yet unexplained, or too complicated to explain;
compare
        automagically
         and (Arthur C.) Clarke's Third Law:
"Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from
magic." "TTY echoing is controlled by a large number of magic
bits." "This routine magically computes the parity of an 8-bit
byte in three instructions." 2. Characteristic of something that
works although no one really understands why (this is especially
called
        black magic
). 3. [Stanford] A feature not generally
publicized that allows something otherwise impossible, or a feature
formerly in that category but now unveiled. Compare
        black

        magic
        ,
        wizardly
        ,
        deep magic
        ,
        heavy wizardry
        .

For more about hackish 'magic', see
        A Story About 'Magic'
         (in
        Appendix A
).

1.1106 magic cookie

        magic cookie: [UNIX] n. 1. Something passed between routines or
programs that enables the receiver to perform some operation; a
capability ticket or opaque identifier. Especially used of small
data objects that contain data encoded in a strange or
intrinsically machine-dependent way. E.g., on non-UNIX OSes with a
non-byte-stream model of files, the result of 'ftell(3)' may
be a magic cookie rather than a byte offset; it can be passed to
'fseek(3)', but not operated on in any meaningful way. The
phrase 'it hands you a magic cookie' means it returns a result
whose contents are not defined but which can be passed back to the
same or some other program later. 2. An in-band code for changing
graphic rendition (e.g., inverse video or underlining) or
performing other control functions (see also
        cookie
). Some
older terminals would leave a blank on the screen corresponding to
mode-change magic cookies; this was also called a

```
            glitch
             (or
occasionally a 'turd'; compare
            mouse droppings
            ).  See also

            cookie
            .
```

1.1107   magic number

```
            magic number: [UNIX/C] n. 1. In source code, some non-obvious
constant whose value is significant to the operation of a program
and that is inserted inconspicuously in-line (
            hardcoded
            ),
rather than expanded in by a symbol set by a commented
'#define'.  Magic numbers in this sense are bad style.  2. A
number that encodes critical information used in an algorithm in
some opaque way.  The classic examples of these are the numbers
used in hash or CRC functions, or the coefficients in a linear
congruential generator for pseudo-random numbers.  This sense
actually predates and was ancestral to the more common sense 1.
3. Special data located at the beginning of a binary data file to
indicate its type to a utility.  Under UNIX, the system and various
applications programs (especially the linker) distinguish between
types of executable file by looking for a magic number.  Once upon
a time, these magic numbers were PDP-11 branch instructions that
skipped over header data to the start of executable code; 0407,
for example, was octal for 'branch 16 bytes relative'.  Nowadays
only a
            wizard
             knows the spells to create magic numbers.  How do
you choose a fresh magic number of your own?  Simple --- you pick
one at random.  See?  It's magic!
```

```
*The* magic number, on the other hand, is 7+/-2.  See
"The magical number seven, plus or minus two: some limits on
our capacity for processing information" by George Miller, in the
"Psychological Review" 63:81-97 (1956).  This classic paper
established the number of distinct items (such as numeric digits)
that humans can hold in short-term memory.  Among other things,
this strongly influenced the interface design of the phone system.
```

1.1108   magic smoke

```
            magic smoke: n. A substance trapped inside IC packages that  ←-
                enables
```

them to function (also called 'blue smoke'; this is similar to
the archaic 'phlogiston' hypothesis about combustion). Its
existence is demonstrated by what happens when a chip burns up ---
the magic smoke gets let out, so it doesn't work any more. See

        smoke test

        ,

        let the smoke out

        .

USENETter Jay Maynard tells the following story: "Once, while
hacking on a dedicated Z80 system, I was testing code by blowing
EPROMs and plugging them in the system, then seeing what happened.
One time, I plugged one in backwards. I only discovered that
after I realized that Intel didn't put power-on lights under
the quartz windows on the tops of their EPROMs --- the die was
glowing white-hot. Amazingly, the EPROM worked fine after I erased
it, filled it full of zeros, then erased it again. For all I know,
it's still in service. Of course, this is because the magic smoke
didn't get let out." Compare the original phrasing of
        Murphy's

        Law

        .

1.1109   mailbomb

        mailbomb: (also mail bomb) [USENET] 1. v. To send, or urge
others to send, massive amounts of
        email
         to a single system or
person, esp. with intent to crash or
        spam
         the recipient's
system. Sometimes done in retaliation for a perceived serious
offense. Mailbombing is itself widely regarded as a serious
offense --- it can disrupt email traffic or other facilities for
innocent users on the victim's system, and in extreme cases, even
at upstream sites. 2. n. An automatic procedure with a similar
effect. 3. n. The mail sent. Compare
        letterbomb

        ,

        nastygram

        .

1.1110   mailing list

mailing list: n. (often shortened in context to 'list') 1. An

email
 address that is an alias (or
macro
, though that word
is never used in this connection) for many other email addresses.
Some mailing lists are simple 'reflectors', redirecting mail sent
to them to the list of recipients. Others are filtered by humans
or programs of varying degrees of sophistication; lists filtered by
humans are said to be 'moderated'. 2. The people who receive
your email when you send it to such an address.

Mailing lists are one of the primary forms of hacker interaction,
along with
USENET
. They predate USENET, having originated
with the first UUCP and ARPANET connections. They are often used
for private information-sharing on topics that would be too
specialized for or inappropriate to public USENET groups. Though
some of these maintain almost purely technical content (such as the
Internet Engineering Task Force mailing list), others (like the
'sf-lovers' list maintained for many years by Saul Jaffe) are
recreational, and many are purely social. Perhaps the most
infamous of the social lists was the eccentric bandykin
distribution; its latter-day progeny, lectroids and
tanstaafl, still include a number of the oddest and most
interesting people in hackerdom.

Mailing lists are easy to create and (unlike USENET) don't tie up a
significant amount of machine resources (until they get very large,
at which point they can become interesting torture tests for mail
software). Thus, they are often created temporarily by working
groups, the members of which can then collaborate on a project
without ever needing to meet face-to-face. Much of the material in
this lexicon was criticized and polished on just such a mailing
list (called 'jargon-friends'), which included all the co-authors
of Steele-1983.

1.1111   main loop

main loop: n. The top-level control flow construct in an input- or
event-driven program, the one which receives and acts or dispatches
on the program's input. See also
driver
.

1.1112   mainframe

             mainframe: n. Term originally referring to the cabinet
containing the central processor unit or 'main frame' of a
room-filling
             Stone Age
              batch machine. After the emergence of
smaller 'minicomputer' designs in the early 1970s, the
traditional
             big iron
              machines were described as 'mainframe
computers' and eventually just as mainframes. The term carries the
connotation of a machine designed for batch rather than interactive
use, though possibly with an interactive timesharing operating
system retrofitted onto it; it is especially used of machines built
by IBM, Unisys, and the other great
             dinosaur
             s surviving from
computing's
             Stone Age
             .

It has been common wisdom among hackers since the late 1980s that
the mainframe architectural tradition is essentially dead (outside
of the tiny market for
             number-crunching
              supercomputers (see

             cray
             )), having been swamped by the recent huge advances in IC
technology and low-cost personal computing. As of 1993, corporate
America is just beginning to figure this out --- the wave of
failures, takeovers, and mergers among traditional mainframe makers
have certainly provided sufficient omens (see
             dinosaurs

             mating
).

1.1113   management

             management: n. 1. Corporate power elites distinguished primarily ↩
                by
their distance from actual productive work and their chronic
failure to manage (see also
             suit
). Spoken derisively, as in
"*Management* decided that ...". 2. Mythically, a vast
bureaucracy responsible for all the world's minor irritations.
Hackers' satirical public notices are often signed 'The Mgt'; this
derives from the "Illuminatus" novels (see the Bibliography in

```
Appendix C
).
```

1.1114 mandelbug

```
        mandelbug: /man'del-buhg/ [from the Mandelbrot set] n. A bug
whose underlying causes are so complex and obscure as to make its
behavior appear chaotic or even non-deterministic.  This term
implies that the speaker thinks it is a
        Bohr bug
        , rather than a

        heisenbug
        .  See also
        schroedinbug
        .
```

1.1115 manged

```
        manged: /mahnjd/ [probably from the French 'manger' or Italian
'mangiare', to eat; perhaps influenced by English n. 'mange',
'mangy'] adj. Refers to anything that is mangled or damaged,
usually beyond repair.  "The disk was manged after the electrical
storm."  Compare
        mung
        .
```

1.1116 mangle

```
        mangle: vt. Used similarly to
        mung
         or
        scribble
        , but more violent
in its connotations; something that is mangled has been
irreversibly and totally trashed.
```

1.1117 mangler

mangler: [DEC] n. A manager. Compare
mango
; see also

management
. Note that
system mangler
 is somewhat different
in connotation.

1.1118   mango

mango: /mang'go/ [orig. in-house jargon at Symbolics] n. A manager ←
 .
Compare
mangler
. See also
devo
 and
doco
.

1.1119   manularity

manularity: /man'yoo-la'ri-tee/ [prob. fr. techspeak 'manual'
+ 'granularity'] n. A notional measure of the manual labor
required for some task, particularly one of the sort that
automation is supposed to eliminate. "Composing English on paper
has much higher manularity than using a text editor, especially in
the revising stage." Hackers tend to consider manularity a symptom
of primitive methods; in fact, a true hacker confronted with an
apparent requirement to do a computing task
by hand
 will
inevitably seize the opportunity to build another tool (see

toolsmith
).

1.1120   marbles

marbles: [from mainstream "lost all his/her marbles"] pl.n. The
minimum needed to build your way further up some hierarchy of tools

or abstractions. After a bad system crash, you need to determine
if the machine has enough marbles to come up on its own, or enough
marbles to allow a rebuild from backups, or if you need to rebuild
from scratch. "This compiler doesn't even have enough marbles to
compile
              hello, world
              ."

1.1121   marginal

              marginal: adj. 1. Extremely small. "A marginal increase in

              core
               can decrease
              GC
               time drastically." In everyday
terms, this means that it is a lot easier to clean off your desk if
you have a spare place to put some of the junk while you sort
through it. 2. Of extremely small merit. "This proposed new
feature seems rather marginal to me." 3. Of extremely small
probability of
              win
              ning. "The power supply was rather marginal
anyway; no wonder it fried."

1.1122   Marginal Hacks

              Marginal Hacks: n. Margaret Jacks Hall, a building into which the
Stanford AI Lab was moved near the beginning of the 1980s (from the

              D. C. Power Lab
).

1.1123   marginally

              marginally: adv. Slightly. "The ravs here are only marginally
better than at Small Eating Place." See
              epsilon
              .

1.1124 marketroid

marketroid: /mar'k*-troyd/ alt. 'marketing slime',
'marketeer', 'marketing droid', 'marketdroid'. n. A member
of a company's marketing department, esp. one who promises users
that the next version of a product will have features that are not
actually scheduled for inclusion, are extremely difficult to
implement, and/or are in violation of the laws of physics; and/or
one who describes existing features (and misfeatures) in ebullient,
buzzword-laden adspeak. Derogatory. Compare
droid
.

1.1125 Mars

Mars: n. A legendary tragic failure, the archetypal Hacker Dream
Gone Wrong. Mars was the code name for a family of PDP-10
compatible computers built by Systems Concepts (now, The SC Group):
the multi-processor SC-30M, the small uniprocessor SC-25M, and the
never-built superprocessor SC-40M. These machines were marvels of
engineering design; although not much slower than the unique

Foonly
 F-1, they were physically smaller and consumed less
power than the much slower DEC KS10 or Foonly F-2, F-3, or F-4
machines. They were also completely compatible with the DEC KL10,
and ran all KL10 binaries (including the operating system) with no
modifications at about 2--3 times faster than a KL10.

When DEC cancelled the Jupiter project in 1983, Systems Concepts
should have made a bundle selling their machine into shops with a
lot of software investment in PDP-10s, and in fact their spring
1984 announcement generated a great deal of excitement in the
PDP-10 world. TOPS-10 was running on the Mars by the summer of
1984, and TOPS-20 by early fall. Unfortunately, the hackers
running Systems Concepts were much better at designing machines
than at mass producing or selling them; the company allowed itself
to be sidetracked by a bout of perfectionism into continually
improving the design, and lost credibility as delivery dates
continued to slip. They also overpriced the product ridiculously;
they believed they were competing with the KL10 and VAX 8600 and
failed to reckon with the likes of Sun Microsystems and other
hungry startups building workstations with power comparable to the
KL10 at a fraction of the price. By the time SC shipped the first
SC-30M to Stanford in late 1985, most customers had already made
the traumatic decision to abandon the PDP-10, usually for VMS or
UNIX boxes. Most of the Mars computers built ended up being
purchased by CompuServe.

This tale and the related saga of
Foonly
 hold a lesson for hackers:

```
if you want to play in the
              Real World
            , you need to learn Real World
moves.
```

1.1126   martian

```
martian: n. A packet sent on a TCP/IP network with a source
   address of the test loopback interface [127.0.0.1].  This means
   that it will come back labeled with a source address that is
   clearly not of this earth.  "The domain server is getting lots of
   packets from Mars.  Does that gateway have a martian filter?"
```

1.1127   massage

```
              massage: vt. Vague term used to describe 'smooth' transformations  ←↩
               of
a data set into a different form, esp. transformations that do
not lose information.  Connotes less pain than
              munch
               or
              crunch
               .
"He wrote a program that massages X bitmap files into GIF
format."  Compare
              slurp
               .
```

1.1128   math-out

```
              math-out: [poss. from 'white-out' (the blizzard variety)] n. A
paper or presentation so encrusted with mathematical or other
formal notation as to be incomprehensible.  This may be a device
for concealing the fact that it is actually
              content-free
               . See
also
              numbers
               ,
              social science number
               .
```

1.1129   Matrix

Matrix: [FidoNet] n. 1. What the Opus BBS software and sysops call

FidoNet
. 2. Fanciful term for a
cyberspace
expected to
emerge from current networking experiments (see
network, the
).
3. The totality of present-day computer networks.

1.1130   maximum Maytag mode

maximum Maytag mode: What a
washing machine
or, by extension,
any hard disk is in when it's being used so heavily that it's
shaking like an old Maytag with an unbalanced load. If prolonged
for any length of time, can lead to disks becoming
walking

drives
.

1.1131   Mbogo, Dr. Fred

Mbogo, Dr. Fred: /*m-boh'goh, dok'tr fred/ [Stanford] n. The
archetypal man you don't want to see about a problem, esp. an
incompetent professional; a shyster. "Do you know a good eye
doctor?" "Sure, try Mbogo Eye Care and Professional Dry
Cleaning." The name comes from synergy between
bogus
and the
original Dr. Mbogo, a witch doctor who was Gomez Addams' physician
on the old "Addams Family" TV show. Compare
Bloggs Family,

the
, see also
fred
.

1.1132 meatware

```
meatware: n. Synonym for
wetware
. Less common.
```

1.1133 meeces

```
        meeces: /mees'*z/ [TMRC] n. Occasional furry visitors who are
not
        urchin
        s.  [That is, mice. This may no longer be in live
use; it clearly derives from the refrain of the early-1960s cartoon
character Mr. Jinx: "I hate meeces to *pieces*!" --- ESR]
```

1.1134 meg

```
meg: /meg/ n. See
quantifiers
.
```

1.1135 mega-

```
mega-: /me'g*/ [SI] pref. See
quantifiers
.
```

1.1136 megapenny

```
megapenny: /meg'*-pen`ee/ n. $10,000 (1 cent * 10^6).
   Used semi-humorously as a unit in comparing computer cost and
   performance figures.
```

1.1137 MEGO

MEGO: /me'goh/ or /mee'goh/ ['My Eyes Glaze Over', often 'Mine
Eyes Glazeth (sic) Over', attributed to the futurologist Herman
Kahn] Also 'MEGO factor'. 1. n. A
handwave
intended to
confuse the listener and hopefully induce agreement because the
listener does not want to admit to not understanding what is going
on. MEGO is usually directed at senior management by engineers and
contains a high proportion of
TLA
s. 2. excl. An appropriate
response to MEGO tactics. 3. Among non-hackers, often refers not
to behavior that causes the eyes to glaze, but to the eye-glazing
reaction itself, which may be triggered by the mere threat of
technical detail as effectively as by an actual excess of it.

1.1138 meltdown, network

meltdown, network: n. See
network meltdown
.

1.1139 meme

meme: /meem/ [coined by analogy with 'gene', by Richard
Dawkins] n. An idea considered as a
replicator
, esp. with
the connotation that memes parasitize people into propagating them
much as viruses do. Used esp. in the phrase 'meme complex'
denoting a group of mutually supporting memes that form an
organized belief system, such as a religion. This lexicon is an
(epidemiological) vector of the 'hacker subculture' meme complex;
each entry might be considered a meme. However, 'meme' is often
misused to mean 'meme complex'. Use of the term connotes
acceptance of the idea that in humans (and presumably other tool-
and language-using sophonts) cultural evolution by selection of
adaptive ideas has superseded biological evolution by selection of
hereditary traits. Hackers find this idea congenial for tolerably
obvious reasons.

1.1140   meme plague

```
            meme plague: n. The spread of a successful but pernicious

            meme
            , esp. one that parasitizes the victims into giving
their all to propagate it.  Astrology, BASIC, and the other guy's
religion are often considered to be examples.  This usage is given
point by the historical fact that 'joiner' ideologies like
Naziism or various forms of millennarian Christianity have
exhibited plague-like cycles of exponential growth followed by
collapses to small reservoir populations.
```

1.1141   memetics

```
            memetics: /me-met'iks/ [from
            meme
            ] The study of memes.  As of
mid-1993, this is still an extremely informal and speculative
endeavor, though the first steps towards at least statistical rigor
have been made by H. Keith Henson and others.  Memetics is a
popular topic for speculation among hackers, who like to see
themselves as the architects of the new information ecologies in
which memes live and replicate.
```

1.1142   memory farts

```
memory farts: n. The flatulent sounds that some DOS box BIOSes
   (most notably AMI's) make when checking memory on bootup.
```

1.1143   memory leak

```
            memory leak: n. An error in a program's dynamic-store allocation
logic that causes it to fail to reclaim discarded memory, leading
to eventual collapse due to memory exhaustion.  Also (esp. at
CMU) called
            core leak
            .  These problems were severe on older
machines with small, fixed-size address spaces, and special "leak
detection" tools were commonly written to root them out.  With the
advent of virtual memory, it is unfortunately easier to be sloppy
about wasting a bit of memory (although when you run out of memory
on a VM machine, it means you've got a *real* leak!).  See
```

```
          aliasing bug

,
fandango on core

,
smash the stack

,

precedence lossage

,
overrun screw

,
leaky heap

,

leak

.
```

1.1144 memory smash

          memory smash: [XEROX PARC] n. Writing through a pointer that
doesn't point to what you think it does. This occasionally reduces
your machine to a rubble of bits. Note that this is subtly
different from (and more general than) related terms such as a

```
          memory leak
           or
          fandango on core
           because it doesn't imply
an allocation error or overrun condition.
```

1.1145 menuitis

          menuitis: /men'yoo-i:'tis/ n. Notional disease suffered by ←
               software
with an obsessively simple-minded menu interface and no escape.
Hackers find this intensely irritating and much prefer the
flexibility of command-line or language-style interfaces,
especially those customizable via macros or a special-purpose
language in which one can encode useful hacks. See

```
          user-obsequious

,
drool-proof paper

,
WIMP environment

,

for the rest of us
```

.

1.1146 mess-dos

mess-dos: /mes-dos/ n. Derisory term for MS-DOS. Often followed
by the ritual banishing "Just say No!" See
MS-DOS
. Most
hackers (even many MS-DOS hackers) loathe MS-DOS for its
single-tasking nature, its limits on application size, its nasty
primitive interface, and its ties to IBMness (see
fear and

loathing
). Also 'mess-loss', 'messy-dos', 'mess-dog',
'mess-dross', 'mush-dos', and various combinations thereof. In
Ireland and the U.K. it is even sometimes called 'Domestos' after a
brand of toilet cleanser.

1.1147 meta

meta: /me't*/ or /may't*/ or (Commonwealth) /mee't*/ [from
analytic philosophy] adj.,pref. One level of description up. A
metasyntactic variable is a variable in notation used to describe
syntax, and meta-language is language used to describe language.
This is difficult to explain briefly, but much hacker humor turns
on deliberate confusion between meta-levels. See
Humor,

Hacker
.

1.1148 meta bit

meta bit: n. The top bit of an 8-bit character, which is on in
character values 128--255. Also called
high bit
,
alt bit
,
or
hobbit
. Some terminals and consoles (see
space-cadet

```
        keyboard
        ) have a META shift key.  Others (including,
*mirabile dictu*, keyboards on IBM PC-class machines) have an
ALT key.  See also
        bucky bits
        .
```

Historical note: although in modern usage shaped by a universe of
8-bit bytes the meta bit is invariably hex 80 (octal 0200), things
were different on earlier machines with 36-bit words and 9-bit
bytes. The MIT and Stanford keyboards (see

```
        space-cadet

        keyboard
        ) generated hex 100 (octal 400) from their meta keys.
```

1.1149   metasyntactic variable

```
        metasyntactic variable: n. A name used in examples and understood
to stand for whatever thing is under discussion, or any random
member of a class of things under discussion.  The word
        foo
         is
the
        canonical
         example.  To avoid confusion, hackers never
(well, hardly ever) use 'foo' or other words like it as permanent
names for anything.  In filenames, a common convention is that any
filename beginning with a metasyntactic-variable name is a

        scratch
         file that may be deleted at any time.
```

To some extent, the list of one's preferred metasyntactic variables
is a cultural signature. They occur both in series (used for
related groups of variables or objects) and as singletons. Here
are a few common signatures:

```
        foo
        ,
        bar
        ,
        baz
        ,
        quux
        , quuux, quuuux...:
        MIT/Stanford usage, now found everywhere (thanks largely to early
        versions of this lexicon!).  At MIT (but not at Stanford),
        baz
                        dropped out of use for a while in the 1970s and '80s. ←
                        A common
```

recent mutation of this sequence inserts
    quux
     before

    quux
    .

bazola, ztesch:
Stanford (from mid-'70s on).

    foo
    ,
    bar
    , thud, grunt:
This series was popular at CMU. Other CMU-associated variables
include
    gorp
    .

    foo
    ,
    bar
    , fum:
This series is reported to be common at XEROX PARC.

    fred
    ,
    barney
    :
See the entry for
    fred
    . These tend to be Britishisms.

    toto
    , titi, tata, tutu:
Standard series of metasyntactic variables among francophones.

    corge
    ,
    grault
    ,
    flarp
    :
Popular at Rutgers University and among
    GOSMACS
     hackers.

zxc, spqr,
    wombat
    :
Cambridge University (England).

shme
Berkeley, GeoWorks, Ingres. Pronounced /shme/ with a short /e/.

    foo
    ,
    bar
    , zot
Helsinki University of Technology, Finland.

```
   blarg, wibble
        New Zealand
```

Of all these, only 'foo' and 'bar' are universal (and

```
            baz
               nearly so).  The compounds
            foobar
             and 'foobaz' also enjoy
```

very wide currency.

Some jargon terms are also used as metasyntactic names;

```
            barf
               and
            mumble
            , for example.  See also
            Commonwealth Hackish
               for discussion of numerous metasyntactic variables found in  ↩
                  Great
```

Britain and the Commonwealth.

1.1150   MFTL

```
            MFTL: /M-F-T-L/ [abbreviation: 'My Favorite Toy Language'] 1. adj.
```

Describes a talk on a programming language design that is heavy on
the syntax (with lots of BNF), sometimes even talks about semantics
(e.g., type systems), but rarely, if ever, has any content (see

```
            content-free
            ).  More broadly applied to talks --- even when
```

the topic is not a programming language --- in which the subject
matter is gone into in unnecessary and meticulous detail at the
sacrifice of any conceptual content. "Well, it was a typical MFTL
talk". 2. n. Describes a language about which the developers are
passionate (often to the point of prosyletic zeal) but no one else
cares about. Applied to the language by those outside the
originating group. "He cornered me about type resolution in his
MFTL."

The first great goal in the mind of the designer of an MFTL is
usually to write a compiler for it, then bootstrap the design away
from contamination by lesser languages by writing a compiler for it
in itself. Thus, the standard put-down question at an MFTL talk is
"Has it been used for anything besides its own compiler?". On
the other hand, a language that *cannot* be used to write
its own compiler is beneath contempt. See

```
            break-even point
               .
```

(On a related note, Doug McIlroy once proposed a test of the
generality and utility of a language and the operating system under
which it is compiled: "Is the output of a FORTRAN program
acceptable as input to the FORTRAN compiler?" In other words, can
you write programs that write programs? (See

```
            toolsmith
            .)
Alarming numbers of (language, OS) pairs fail this test,
particularly when the language is FORTRAN; aficionados are quick to
point out that
            UNIX
             (even using FORTRAN) passes it handily.
That the test could ever be failed is only surprising to those who
have had the good fortune to have worked only under modern systems
which lack OS-supported and -imposed "file types".)
```

1.1151 mickey

```
mickey: n. The resolution unit of mouse movement.  It has been
   suggested that the 'disney' will become a benchmark unit for
   animation graphics performance.
```

1.1152 mickey mouse program

```
            mickey mouse program: n. North American equivalent of a
            noddy
             (that is, trivial) program.  Doesn't necessarily have the
   belittling connotations of mainstream slang "Oh, that's just
mickey mouse stuff!"; sometimes trivial programs can be very
useful.
```

1.1153 micro-

```
            micro-: pref. 1. Very small; this is the root of its use as a
quantifier prefix.  2. A quantifier prefix, calling for
multiplication by 10^(-6) (see
            quantifiers
            ).  Neither
of these uses is peculiar to hackers, but hackers tend to fling
them both around rather more freely than is countenanced in
standard English.  It is recorded, for example, that one
CS professor used to characterize the standard length of his
lectures as a microcentury --- that is, about 52.6 minutes (see
also
            attoparsec
            ,
            nanoacre
            , and especially
            microfortnight
```

). 3. Personal or human-scale --- that is,
capable of being maintained or comprehended or manipulated by one
human being. This sense is generalized from 'microcomputer',
and is esp. used in contrast with 'macro-' (the corresponding
Greek prefix meaning 'large'). 4. Local as opposed to global (or

            macro-
). Thus a hacker might say that buying a smaller car to
reduce pollution only solves a microproblem; the macroproblem of
getting to work might be better solved by using mass transit,
moving to within walking distance, or (best of all) telecommuting.

1.1154 MicroDroid

MicroDroid: [USENET] n. A Microsoft employee, esp. one who posts
   to various operating-system advocacy newsgroups. MicroDroids post
   follow-ups to any messages critical of Microsoft's operating
   systems, and often end up sounding like visiting Mormon
   missionaries.

1.1155 microfloppies

            microfloppies: n. 3.5-inch floppies, as opposed to 5.25-inch

            vanilla
             or mini-floppies and the now-obsolete 8-inch variety.
This term may be headed for obsolescence as 5.25-inchers pass out
of use, only to be revived if anybody floats a sub-3-inch floppy
standard. See
            stiffy
            ,
            minifloppies
            .

1.1156 microfortnight

            microfortnight: n. 1/1000000 of the fundamental unit of time in
the Furlong/Firkin/Fortnight system of measurement; 1.2096 sec. (A
furlong is 1/8th of a mile; a firkin is 1/4th of a barrel; the mass
unit of the system is taken to be a firkin of water). The VMS
operating system has a lot of tuning parameters that you can set
with the SYSGEN utility, and one of these is TIMEPROMPTWAIT, the
time the system will wait for an operator to set the correct date
and time at boot if it realizes that the current value is bogus.
This time is specified in microfortnights!

Multiple uses of the millifortnight (about 20 minutes) and

                nanofortnight
                 have also been reported.

1.1157 microLenat

                microLenat: /mi:'-kroh-len'-*t/ n. The unit of
                bogosity
                ,
written uL; the consensus is that this is the largest unit
practical for everyday use. The microLenat, originally invented by
David Jefferson, was promulgated as an attack against noted
computer scientist Doug Lenat by a
                tenured graduate student
                 at
CMU. Doug had failed the student on an important exam for giving
only "AI is bogus" as his answer to the questions. The slur is
generally considered unmerited, but it has become a running gag
nevertheless. Some of Doug's friends argue that *of course* a
microLenat is bogus, since it is only one millionth of a Lenat.
Others have suggested that the unit should be redesignated after
the grad student, as the microReid.

1.1158 microReid

                microReid: /mi:'kroh-reed/ n. See
                bogosity
                .

1.1159 Microsloth Windows

                Microsloth Windows: /mi:'kroh-sloth' win'dohz/ n. Hackerism for
  'Microsoft Windows', a windowing system for the IBM-PC which is
so limited by bug-for-bug compatibility with
                mess-dos
                 that it
is agonizingly slow on anything less than a fast 486. Also just
called 'Windoze', with the implication that you can fall asleepm
waiting for it to do anything; the latter term is extremely common
on USENET. Compare
                X
                ,

```
           sun-stools
           .
```

1.1160   microtape

```
           microtape: /mi:'kroh-tayp/ n. Occasionally used to mean a
DECtape, as opposed to a
           macrotape
           . A DECtape is a small
reel, about 4 inches in diameter, of magnetic tape about an inch
wide.  Unlike those for today's
           macrotape
           s, microtape
drivers allowed random access to the data, and therefore could be
used to support file systems and even for swapping (this was
generally done purely for
           hack value
           , as they were far too
slow for practical use).  In their heyday they were used in pretty
much the same ways one would now use a floppy disk: as a small,
portable way to save and transport files and programs.  Apparently
the term 'microtape' was actually the official term used within
DEC for these tapes until someone coined the word 'DECtape',
which, of course, sounded sexier to the
           marketroid
           s; another
version of the story holds that someone discovered a conflict with
another company's 'microtape' trademark.
```

1.1161   middle-endian

```
           middle-endian: adj. Not
           big-endian
            or
           little-endian
           .
Used of perverse byte orders such as 3-4-1-2 or 2-1-4-3,
occasionally found in the packed-decimal formats of minicomputer
manufacturers who shall remain nameless.  See
           NUXI problem
           .
```

1.1162   milliLampson

milliLampson: /mil'*-lamp`sn/ n. A unit of talking speed,
   abbreviated mL. Most people run about 200 milliLampsons. The
   eponymous Butler Lampson (a CS theorist and systems implementor
   highly regarded among hackers) goes at 1000. A few people speak
   faster. This unit is sometimes used to compare the (sometimes
   widely disparate) rates at which people can generate ideas and
   actually emit them in speech. For example, noted computer
   architect C. Gordon Bell (designer of the PDP-11) is said, with
   some awe, to think at about 1200 mL but only talk at about 300; he
   is frequently reduced to fragments of sentences as his mouth tries
   to keep up with his speeding brain.

1.1163   minifloppies

               minifloppies: n. 5.25-inch
               vanilla
                floppy disks, as opposed to
   3.5-inch or
               microfloppies
                and the now-obsolescent 8-inch
   variety. At one time, this term was a trademark of Shugart
   Associates for their SA-400 minifloppy drive. Nobody paid any
   attention. See
               stiffy
               .

1.1164   MIPS

               MIPS: /mips/ [abbreviation] n. 1. A measure of computing speed;
   formally, 'Million Instructions Per Second' (that's 10^6
   per second, not 2^(20)!); often rendered by hackers as
   'Meaningless Indication of Processor Speed' or in other
   unflattering ways. This joke expresses a nearly universal attitude
   about the value of most
               benchmark
                claims, said attitude being
   one of the great cultural divides between hackers and

               marketroid
               s. The singular is sometimes '1 MIP' even though
   this is clearly etymologically wrong. See also
               KIPS
                and

               GIPS
               . 2. Computers, especially large computers, considered
   abstractly as sources of
               computron

```
            s.   "This is just a
workstation; the heavy MIPS are hidden in the basement."  3. The
corporate name of a particular RISC-chip company; among other
things, they designed the processor chips used in DEC's 3100
workstation series.  4. Acronym for 'Meaningless Information per
Second' (a joke, prob. from sense 1).
```

1.1165 misbug

misbug: /mis-buhg/ [MIT] n. An unintended property of a program
that turns out to be useful; something that should have been a

```
        bug
         but turns out to be a
        feature
        .  Usage: rare.  Compare

        green lightning
        .  See
        miswart
        .
```

1.1166 misfeature

misfeature: /mis-fee'chr/ or /mis'fee`chr/ n. A feature that
   eventually causes lossage, possibly because it is not adequate for
   a new situation that has evolved. Since it results from a
   deliberate and properly implemented feature, a misfeature is not a
   bug. Nor is it a simple unforeseen side effect; the term implies
   that the feature in question was carefully planned, but its
   long-term consequences were not accurately or adequately predicted
   (which is quite different from not having thought ahead at all). A
   misfeature can be a particularly stubborn problem to resolve,
   because fixing it usually involves a substantial philosophical
   change to the structure of the system involved.

   Many misfeatures (especially in user-interface design) arise
   because the designers/implementors mistake their personal tastes
   for laws of nature. Often a former feature becomes a misfeature
   because trade-offs were made whose parameters subsequently change
   (possibly only in the judgment of the implementors). "Well, yeah,
   it is kind of a misfeature that file names are limited to six
   characters, but the original implementors wanted to save directory
   space and we're stuck with it for now."

1.1167   Missed'em-five

              Missed'em-five: n. Pejorative hackerism for AT&T System V UNIX,
generally used by
              BSD
               partisans in a bigoted mood. (The
synonym 'SysVile' is also encountered.) See
              software bloat
              ,

              Berzerkeley
              .

1.1168   missile address

              missile address: n. See
              ICBM address
              .

1.1169   miswart

              miswart: /mis-wort/ [from
              wart
               by analogy with
              misbug
              ] n.
  A
              feature
               that superficially appears to be a
              wart
               but has been
determined to be the
              Right Thing
              . For example, in some versions
of the
              EMACS
               text editor, the 'transpose characters' command
exchanges the character under the cursor with the one before it on the
screen, *except* when the cursor is at the end of a line, in
which case the two characters before the cursor are exchanged.
While this behavior is perhaps surprising, and certainly
inconsistent, it has been found through extensive experimentation
to be what most users want. This feature is a miswart.

1.1170   moby

          moby: /moh'bee/ [MIT: seems to have been in use among model
railroad fans years ago. Derived from Melville's "Moby Dick"
(some say from 'Moby Pickle').] 1. adj. Large, immense, complex,
impressive. "A Saturn V rocket is a truly moby frob." "Some
MIT undergrads pulled off a moby hack at the Harvard-Yale game."
(See "
          The Meaning of 'Hack'
          "). 2. n. obs. The
maximum address space of a machine (see below). For a 680[234]0 or
VAX or most modern 32-bit architectures, it is 4,294,967,296 8-bit
bytes (4 gigabytes). 3. A title of address (never of third-person
reference), usually used to show admiration, respect, and/or
friendliness to a competent hacker. "Greetings, moby Dave. How's
that address-book thing for the Mac going?" 4. adj. In
backgammon, doubles on the dice, as in 'moby sixes', 'moby
ones', etc. Compare this with
          bignum
           (sense 3): double sixes
are both bignums and moby sixes, but moby ones are not bignums (the
use of 'moby' to describe double ones is sarcastic). Standard
emphatic forms: 'Moby foo', 'moby win', 'moby loss'. 'Foby
moo': a spoonerism due to Richard Greenblatt. 5. The largest
available unit of something which is available in discrete
increments. Thus, ordering a "moby Coke" at the local fast-food
joint is not just a request for a large Coke, it's an explicit
request for the largest size they sell.

This term entered hackerdom with the Fabritek 256K memory added to
the MIT AI PDP-6 machine, which was considered unimaginably huge
when it was installed in the 1960s (at a time when a more typical
memory size for a timesharing system was 72 kilobytes). Thus, a
moby is classically 256K 36-bit words, the size of a PDP-6 or
PDP-10 moby. Back when address registers were narrow the term was
more generally useful, because when a computer had virtual memory
mapping, it might actually have more physical memory attached to it
than any one program could access directly. One could then say
"This computer has 6 mobies" meaning that the ratio of physical
memory to address space is 6, without having to say specifically
how much memory there actually is. That in turn implied that the
computer could timeshare six 'full-sized' programs without having
to swap programs between memory and disk.

Nowadays the low cost of processor logic means that address spaces
are usually larger than the most physical memory you can cram onto
a machine, so most systems have much *less* than one theoretical
'native' moby of
          core
          . Also, more modern memory-management
techniques (esp. paging) make the 'moby count' less significant.
However, there is one series of widely-used chips for which the term
could stand to be revived --- the Intel 8088 and 80286 with their
incredibly
          brain-damaged
           segmented-memory designs. On these, a

'moby' would be the 1-megabyte address span of a segment/offset
pair (by coincidence, a PDP-10 moby was exactly 1 megabyte of 9-bit
bytes).

1.1171 mockingbird

mockingbird: n. Software that intercepts communications
(especially login transactions) between users and hosts and
provides system-like responses to the users while saving their
responses (especially account IDs and passwords). A special case
of
Trojan Horse
.

1.1172 mod

mod: vt.,n. 1. Short for 'modify' or 'modification'. Very
commonly used --- in fact the full terms are considered markers
that one is being formal. The plural 'mods' is used esp. with
reference to bug fixes or minor design changes in hardware or
software, most esp. with respect to
patch
 sets or a
diff
.
2. Short for
modulo
 but used *only* for its techspeak sense.

1.1173 mode

mode: n. A general state, usually used with an adjective
describing the state. Use of the word 'mode' rather than
'state' implies that the state is extended over time, and
probably also that some activity characteristic of that state is
being carried out. "No time to hack; I'm in thesis mode." In its
jargon sense, 'mode' is most often attributed to people, though
it is sometimes applied to programs and inanimate objects. In
particular, see
hack mode
,
day mode
,
night mode

```
                ,

                demo mode
                ,
                fireworks mode
                , and
                yoyo mode
                ; also

                talk mode
                .
```

One also often hears the verbs 'enable' and 'disable' used in
connection with jargon modes. Thus, for example, a sillier way of
saying "I'm going to crash" is "I'm going to enable crash mode
now". One might also hear a request to "disable flame mode,
please".

In a usage much closer to techspeak, a mode is a special state
that certain user interfaces must pass into in order to perform
certain functions. For example, in order to insert characters into a
document in the UNIX editor 'vi', one must type the "i" key,
which invokes the "Insert" command. The effect of this command
is to put vi into "insert mode", in which typing the "i" key
has a quite different effect (to wit, it inserts an "i" into the
document). One must then hit another special key, "ESC", in
order to leave "insert mode". Nowadays, modeful interfaces are
generally considered
                losing
                 but survive in quite a few
widely used tools built in less enlightened times.

1.1174 mode bit

```
                mode bit: n. A
                flag
                , usually in hardware, that selects between
two (usually quite different) modes of operation.  The connotations
are different from
                flag
                 bit in that mode bits are mainly
```
written during a boot or set-up phase, are seldom explicitly read,
and seldom change over the lifetime of an ordinary program. The
classic example was the EBCDIC-vs.-ASCII bit (#12) of the Program
Status Word of the IBM 360. Another was the bit on a PDP-12 that
controlled whether it ran the PDP-8 or the LINC instruction set.

1.1175 modulo

modulo: /mod'yu-loh/ prep. Except for. An overgeneralization of
mathematical terminology; one can consider saying that
4 equals 22 except for the 9s (4 = 22 mod 9). "Well,
LISP seems to work okay now, modulo that
GC
bug." "I feel
fine today modulo a slight headache."

1.1176 molly-guard

molly-guard: /mol'ee-gard/ [University of Illinois] n. A shield
to prevent tripping of some
Big Red Switch
by clumsy or
ignorant hands. Originally used of the plexiglass covers
improvised for the BRS on an IBM 4341 after a programmer's toddler
daughter (named Molly) frobbed it twice in one day. Later
generalized to covers over stop/reset switches on disk drives and
networking equipment.

1.1177 Mongolian Hordes technique

Mongolian Hordes technique: [poss. from the Sixties counterculture
expression 'Mongolian clusterfuck' for a public orgy]
n. Development by
gang bang
. Implies that large numbers of
inexperienced programmers are being put on a job better performed
by a few skilled ones. Also called 'Chinese Army technique'; see
also
Brooks's Law
.

1.1178 monkey up

monkey up: vt. To hack together hardware for a particular task,
especially a one-shot job. Connotes an extremely
crufty
and
consciously temporary solution. Compare
hack up
,
kluge up

,

cruft together

.

1.1179 monkey, scratch

monkey, scratch: n. See
scratch monkey

.

1.1180 monstrosity

monstrosity: 1. n. A ridiculously
elephantine
 program or
system, esp. one that is buggy or only marginally functional.
2. The quality of being monstrous (see 'Overgeneralization' in the
discussion of jargonification). See also
baroque

.

1.1181 monty

monty: /mon'tee/ [US Geological Survey] n. A program with a
ludicrously complex user interface written to perform extremely
trivial tasks. An example would be a menu-driven, button clicking,
pulldown, pop-up windows program for listing directories. The
original monty was an infamous weather-reporting program, Monty the
Amazing Weather Man, written at the USGS. Monty had a
widget-packed X-window interface with over 200 buttons; and all
monty actually *did* was
FTP
 files off the network.

1.1182 Moof

Moof: /moof/ [MAC users] 1. n. A semi-legendary creature, also
called the 'dogcow', that lurks in the depths of the Macintosh
Technical Notes Hypercard stack V3.1; specifically, the full story
of the dogcow is told in technical note #31 (the particular Moof
illustrated is properly named 'Clarus'). Option-shift-click will
cause it to emit a characteristic 'Moof!' or '!fooM' sound.
Getting to tech note 31 is the hard part; to discover how to
do that, one must needs examine the stack script with a hackerly
eye. Clue:
             rot13
             is involved. A dogcow also appears if you
choose 'Page Setup...' with a LaserWriter selected and click on
the 'Options' button. 2. adj. Used to flag software that's a hack,
something untested and on the edge. On one Apple CD-ROM, certain
folders such as "Tools & Apps (Moof!)" and "Development
Platforms (Moof!)", are so marked to indicate that they contain
software not fully tested or sanctioned by the powers that be.
When you open these folders you cross the boundary into
hackerland.

1.1183   Moore's Law

Moore's Law: /morz law/ prov. The observation that the logic
density of silicon integrated circuits has closely followed the
curve (bits per square inch) = 2^((t - 1962)) where t
is time in years; that is, the amount of information storable on
a given amount of silicon has roughly doubled every year since the
technology was invented. See also
             Parkinson's Law of

             Data
             .

1.1184   moose call

moose call: n. See
whalesong
.

1.1185   moria

moria: /mor'ee-*/ n. Like
nethack

            and
            rogue
            , one of
the large PD Dungeons-and-Dragons-like simulation games, available
for a wide range of machines and operating systems. The name is
from Tolkien's Mines of Moria; compare
            elder days
            ,

            elvish
            . The game is extremely addictive and a major consumer
of time better used for hacking.

1.1186 MOTAS

            MOTAS: /moh-tahz/ [USENET: Member Of The Appropriate Sex, after

            MOTOS
             and
            MOTSS
            ] n. A potential or (less often) actual sex
partner. See also
            SO
            .

1.1187 MOTOS

            MOTOS: /moh-tohs/ [acronym from the 1970 U.S. census forms via
USENET: Member Of The Opposite Sex] n. A potential or (less often)
actual sex partner. See
            MOTAS
            ,
            MOTSS
            ,
            SO
            . Less
common than MOTSS or
            MOTAS
            , which have largely displaced it.

1.1188 MOTSS

MOTSS: /mots/ or /M-O-T-S-S/ [from the 1970 U.S. census forms
via USENET] n. Member Of The Same Sex, esp. one considered as a
possible sexual partner. The gay-issues newsgroup on USENET is
called soc.motss. See
            MOTOS
             and
            MOTAS
            , which derive
from it. See also
            SO
            .

1.1189   mouse ahead

mouse ahead: vi. Point-and-click analog of 'type ahead'. To
manipulate a computer's pointing device (almost always a mouse in
this usage, but not necessarily) and its selection or command
buttons before a computer program is ready to accept such input, in
anticipation of the program accepting the input. Handling this
properly is rare, but it can help make a
            WIMP environment
             much
more usable, assuming the users are familiar with the behavior of
the user interface.

1.1190   mouse around

mouse around: vi. To explore public portions of a large system, ←
                esp.
a network such as Internet via
            FTP
             or
            TELNET
            , looking for
interesting stuff to
            snarf
            .

1.1191   mouse belt

mouse belt: n. See
rat belt
            .

1.1192 mouse droppings

```
mouse droppings: [MS-DOS] n. Pixels (usually single) that are not
   properly restored when the mouse pointer moves away from a
   particular location on the screen, producing the appearance that
   the mouse pointer has left droppings behind.  The major causes for
   this problem are programs that write to the screen memory
   corresponding to the mouse pointer's current location without
   hiding the mouse pointer first, and mouse drivers that do not quite
   support the graphics mode in use.
```

1.1193 mouse elbow

```
            mouse elbow: n. A tennis-elbow-like fatigue syndrome resulting  ←
               from
excessive use of a
            WIMP environment
            .  Similarly, 'mouse
shoulder'; GLS reports that he used to get this a lot before he
taught himself to be ambimoustrous.
```

1.1194 mouso

```
            mouso: /mow'soh/ n. [by analogy with 'typo'] An error in mouse  ←
               usage
resulting in an inappropriate selection or graphic garbage on the
screen.  Compare
            thinko
            ,
            braino
            .
```

1.1195 MS-DOS

```
            MS-DOS:: /M-S-dos/ [MicroSoft Disk Operating System] n. A

            clone
             of
            CP/M
```

for the 8088 crufted together in 6 weeks by
hacker Tim Paterson, who is said to have regretted it ever since.
Numerous features, including vaguely UNIX-like but rather broken
support for subdirectories, I/O redirection, and pipelines, were
hacked into 2.0 and subsequent versions; as a result, there are two
or more incompatible versions of many system calls, and MS-DOS
programmers can never agree on basic things like what character to
use as an option switch or whether to be case-sensitive. The
resulting mess is now the highest-unit-volume OS in history. Often
known simply as DOS, which annoys people familiar with other
similarly abbreviated operating systems (the name goes back to the
mid-1960s, when it was attached to IBM's first disk operating
system for the 360). The name further annoys those who know what
the term

operating system

does (or ought to) connote; DOS is
more properly a set of relatively simple interrupt services. Some
people like to pronounce DOS like "dose", as in "I don't work on
dose, man!", or to compare it to a dose of brain-damaging drugs
(a slogan button in wide circulation among hackers exhorts:
"MS-DOS: Just say No!"). See

mess-dos

,
ill-behaved

.

1.1196 mu

mu: /moo/ The correct answer to the classic trick question
"Have you stopped beating your wife yet?". Assuming that you
have no wife or you have never beaten your wife, the answer "yes"
is wrong because it implies that you used to beat your wife and
then stopped, but "no" is worse because it suggests that you have
one and are still beating her. According to various Discordians
and Douglas Hofstadter the correct answer is usually "mu", a
Japanese word alleged to mean "Your question cannot be answered
because it depends on incorrect assumptions". Hackers tend to be
sensitive to logical inadequacies in language, and many have
adopted this suggestion with enthusiasm. The word 'mu' is
actually from Chinese, meaning 'nothing'; it is used in
mainstream Japanese in that sense, but native speakers do not
recognize the Discordian question-denying use. It almost certainly
derives from overgeneralization of the answer in the following
well-known Rinzei Zen teaching riddle:

  A monk asked Joshu, "Does a dog have the Buddha nature?"
  Joshu retorted, "Mu!"

See also

has the X nature

,
AI Koans
, and Douglas

Hofstadter's "G"odel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid"
(pointer in the Bibliography in
            Appendix C
).

1.1197 MUD

            MUD: /muhd/ [acronym, Multi-User Dungeon; alt. Multi-User
Dimension] 1. n. A class of
            virtual reality
             experiments
accessible via the Internet. These are real-time chat forums with
structure; they have multiple 'locations' like an adventure
game, and may include combat, traps, puzzles, magic, a simple
economic system, and the capability for characters to build more
structure onto the database that represents the existing world.
2. vi. To play a MUD. The acronym MUD is often lowercased and/or
verbed; thus, one may speak of 'going mudding', etc.

Historically, MUDs (and their more recent progeny with names of MU-
form) derive from a hack by Richard Bartle and Roy Trubshaw on the
University of Essex's DEC-10 in the early 1980s; descendants of
that game still exist today and are sometimes generically called
BartleMUDs. There is a widespread myth (repeated,
unfortunately, by earlier versions of this lexicon) that the name
MUD was trademarked to the commercial MUD run by Bartle on British
Telecom (the motto: "You haven't *lived* 'til you've
died on MUD!"); however, this is false --- Richard Bartle
explicitly placed 'MUD' in PD in 1985. BT was upset at this, as
they had already printed trademark claims on some maps and posters,
which were released and created the myth.

Students on the European academic networks quickly improved on the
MUD concept, spawning several new MUDs (VAXMUD, AberMUD, LPMUD).
Many of these had associated bulletin-board systems for social
interaction. Because these had an image as 'research' they
often survived administrative hostility to BBSs in general. This,
together with the fact that USENET feeds have been spotty and
difficult to get in the U.K., made the MUDs major foci of hackish
social interaction there.

AberMUD and other variants crossed the Atlantic around 1988 and
quickly gained popularity in the U.S.; they became nuclei for large
hacker communities with only loose ties to traditional hackerdom
(some observers see parallels with the growth of USENET in the
early 1980s). The second wave of MUDs (TinyMUD and variants)
tended to emphasize social interaction, puzzles, and cooperative
world-building as opposed to combat and competition. In 1991, over
50% of MUD sites are of a third major variety, LPMUD, which
synthesizes the combat/puzzle aspects of AberMUD and older systems
with the extensibility of TinyMud. The trend toward greater
programmability and flexibility will doubtless continue.

The state of the art in MUD design is still moving very rapidly,
with new simulation designs appearing (seemingly) every month.
There is now (early 1991) a move afoot to deprecate the term

            MUD
             itself, as newer designs exhibit an exploding variety of
names corresponding to the different simulation styles being
explored. See also
            bonk/oif
            ,
            FOD
            ,
            link-dead
            ,

            mudhead
            ,
            talk mode
            .

1.1198 muddie

            muddie: n. Syn.
            mudhead
            . More common in Great Britain, possibly
  because system administrators there like to mutter "bloody
  muddies" when annoyed at the species.

1.1199 mudhead

            mudhead: n. Commonly used to refer to a
            MUD
             player who eats,
sleeps, and breathes MUD. Mudheads have been known to fail their
degrees, drop out, etc., with the consolation, however, that they
made wizard level. When encountered in person, on a MUD, or in a
chat system, all a mudhead will talk about is three topics: the
tactic, character, or wizard that is supposedly always unfairly
stopping him/her from becoming a wizard or beating a favorite MUD;
why the specific game he/she has experience with is so much better
than any other; and the MUD he or she is writing or going to write
because his/her design ideas are so much better than in any
existing MUD. See also
            wannabee
            .

To the anthropologically literate, this term may recall the
Zuni/Hopi legend of the mudheads or 'koyemshi', mythical

half-formed children of an unnatural union. Figures representing
them act as clowns in Zuni sacred ceremonies.

1.1200   multician

            multician: /muhl-ti'shn/ [coined at Honeywell, ca. 1970] n.
Competent user of
            Multics
            . Perhaps oddly, no one has ever
promoted the analogous 'Unician'.

1.1201   Multics

            Multics:: /muhl'tiks/ n. [from "MULTiplexed Information and
Computing Service"] An early (late 1960s) timesharing operating
system co-designed by a consortium including MIT, GE, and Bell
Laboratories. Multics was very innovative for its time --- among
other things, it introduced the idea of treating all devices
uniformly as special files. All the members but GE eventually
pulled out after determining that
            second-system effect
             had
bloated Multics to the point of practical unusability (the
'lean' predecessor in question was
            CTSS
). Honeywell
commercialized Multics after buying out GE's computer group, but it
was never very successful (among other things, on some versions one
was commonly required to enter a password to log out). One of the
developers left in the lurch by the project's breakup was Ken
Thompson, a circumstance which led directly to the birth of

            UNIX
            . For this and other reasons, aspects of the Multics
design remain a topic of occasional debate among hackers. See also

            brain-damaged
             and
            GCOS
            .

1.1202   multitask

multitask: n. Often used of humans in the same meaning it has for
computers, to describe a person doing several things at once (but
see
           thrash
). The term 'multiplex', from communications
technology (meaning to handle more than one channel at the same
time), is used similarly.

1.1203   mumblage

mumblage: /muhm'bl*j/ n. The topic of one's mumbling (see

           mumble
). "All that mumblage" is used like "all that
stuff" when it is not quite clear how the subject of discussion
works, or like "all that crap" when 'mumble' is being used as
an implicit replacement for pejoratives.

1.1204   mumble

mumble: interj. 1. Said when the correct response is too
complicated to enunciate, or the speaker has not thought it out.
Often prefaces a longer answer, or indicates a general reluctance
to get into a long discussion. "Don't you think that we could
improve LISP performance by using a hybrid reference-count
transaction garbage collector, if the cache is big enough and there
are some extra cache bits for the microcode to use?" "Well,
mumble ... I'll have to think about it." 2. [MIT] Expression
of not-quite-articulated agreement, often used as an informal vote
of consensus in a meeting: "So, shall we dike out the COBOL
emulation?" "Mumble!" 3. Sometimes used as an expression of
disagreement (distinguished from sense 2 by tone of voice and other
cues). "I think we should buy a
           VAX
           ." "Mumble!" Common
variant: 'mumble frotz' (see
           frotz
           ; interestingly, one does
not say 'mumble frobnitz' even though 'frotz' is short for
'frobnitz'). 4. Yet another
           metasyntactic variable
           , like

           foo
           . 5. When used as a question ("Mumble?") means "I
didn't understand you". 6. Sometimes used in 'public' contexts
on-line as a placefiller for things one is barred from giving

details about. For example, a poster with pre-released hardware in
his machine might say "Yup, my machine now has an extra 16M of
memory, thanks to the card I'm testing for Mumbleco." 7. A
conversational wild card used to designate something one doesn't
want to bother spelling out, but which can be
              glark
              ed from
context. Compare
              blurgle
              . 8. [XEROX PARC] A colloquialism
used to suggest that further discussion would be fruitless.

1.1205   munch

              munch: [often confused with
              mung
              , q.v.] vt. To transform
information in a serial fashion, often requiring large amounts of
computation. To trace down a data structure. Related to
              crunch
                and nearly synonymous with
              grovel
              , but connotes less pain.

1.1206   munching

              munching: n. Exploration of security holes of someone else's
computer for thrills, notoriety, or to annoy the system manager.
Compare
              cracker
              . See also
              hacked off
              .

1.1207   munching squares

              munching squares: n. A
              display hack
               dating back to the PDP-1
(ca. 1962, reportedly discovered by Jackson Wright), which employs
a trivial computation (repeatedly plotting the graph Y = X XOR T
for successive values of T --- see
              HAKMEM
               items 146--148) to

produce an impressive display of moving and growing squares that
devour the screen. The initial value of T is treated as a
parameter, which, when well-chosen, can produce amazing effects.
Some of these, later (re)discovered on the LISP machine, have been
christened 'munching triangles' (try AND for XOR and toggling
points instead of plotting them), 'munching w's', and 'munching
mazes'. More generally, suppose a graphics program produces an
impressive and ever-changing display of some basic form, foo, on a
display terminal, and does it using a relatively simple program;
then the program (or the resulting display) is likely to be
referred to as 'munching foos'. [This is a good example of the
use of the word
            foo
             as a
            metasyntactic variable
            .]

1.1208   munchkin

            munchkin: /muhnch'kin/ [from the squeaky-voiced little people in
L. Frank Baum's "The Wizard of Oz"] n. A teenage-or-younger micro
enthusiast hacking BASIC or something else equally constricted. A
term of mild derision --- munchkins are annoying but some grow up
to be hackers after passing through a
            larval stage
            . The term

            urchin
             is also used. See also
            wannabee
            ,
            bitty box
            .

1.1209   mundane

            mundane: [from SF fandom] n. 1. A person who is not in science
fiction fandom. 2. A person who is not in the computer industry.
In this sense, most often an adjectival modifier as in "in my
mundane life...." See also
            Real World
            .

1.1210   mung

mung: /muhng/ [in 1960 at MIT, 'Mash Until No Good'; sometime after that the derivation from the
recursive acronym
'Mung
Until No Good' became standard] vt. 1. To make changes to a file, esp. large-scale and irrevocable changes. See
BLT
. 2. To
destroy, usually accidentally, occasionally maliciously. The system only mungs things maliciously; this is a consequence of

Finagle's Law
. See
scribble
,
mangle
,
trash
,
nuke
. Reports from
USENET
suggest that the pronunciation
/muhnj/ is now usual in speech, but the spelling 'mung' is still common in program comments (compare the widespread confusion over the proper spelling of
kluge
). 3. The kind of beans of
which the sprouts are used in Chinese food. (That's their real name! Mung beans! Really!)

Like many early hacker terms, this one seems to have originated at

TMRC
; it was already in use there in 1958. Peter Samson (compiler of the original TMRC lexicon) thinks it may originally have been onomatopoeic for the sound of a relay spring (contact) being twanged. However, it is known that during the World Wars, 'mung' was army slang for the ersatz creamed chipped beef better known as 'SOS'.

1.1211   munge

munge: /muhnj/ vt. 1. [derogatory] To imperfectly transform information. 2. A comprehensive rewrite of a routine, data structure or the whole program.

This term is often confused with
mung
and may derive from it,
or possibly vice-versa.

1.1212 Murphy's Law

        Murphy's Law: prov. The correct, *original* Murphy's Law
reads: "If there are two or more ways to do something, and one of
those ways can result in a catastrophe, then someone will do it."
This is a principle of defensive design, cited here because it is
usually given in mutant forms less descriptive of the challenges of
design for lusers. For example, you don't make a two-pin plug
symmetrical and then label it 'THIS WAY UP'; if it matters which
way it is plugged in, then you make the design asymmetrical (see
also the anecdote under

        magic smoke
).

Edward A. Murphy, Jr. was one of the engineers on the rocket-sled
experiments that were done by the U.S. Air Force in 1949 to test
human acceleration tolerances (USAF project MX981). One experiment
involved a set of 16 accelerometers mounted to different parts of
the subject's body. There were two ways each sensor could be glued
to its mount, and somebody methodically installed all 16 the wrong
way around. Murphy then made the original form of his
pronouncement, which the test subject (Major John Paul Stapp)
quoted at a news conference a few days later.

Within months 'Murphy's Law' had spread to various technical
cultures connected to aerospace engineering. Before too many years
had gone by variants had passed into the popular imagination,
changing as they went. Most of these are variants on "Anything
that can go wrong, will"; this is sometimes referred to as

        Finagle's Law
        . The memetic drift apparent in these mutants
clearly demonstrates Murphy's Law acting on itself!

1.1213 music

        music:: n. A common extracurricular interest of hackers (compare

        science-fiction fandom
        ,
        oriental food
        ; see also

        filk
). Hackish folklore has long claimed that musical and
programming abilities are closely related, and there has been at
least one large-scale statistical study that supports this.

Hackers, as a rule, like music and often develop musical
appreciation in unusual and interesting directions. Folk music is
very big in hacker circles; so is electronic music, and the sort of
elaborate instrumental jazz/rock that used to be called
'progressive' and isn't recorded much any more. The hacker's
musical range tends to be wide; many can listen with equal
appreciation to (say) Talking Heads, Yes, Gentle Giant, Pat Metheny,
Scott Joplin, Tangerine Dream, King Sunny Ade, The Pretenders, or
the Brandenburg Concerti. It is also apparently true that
hackerdom includes a much higher concentration of talented amateur
musicians than one would expect from a similar-sized control group
of
                mundane
                 types.

1.1214   mutter

                mutter: vt. To quietly enter a command not meant for the ears, ↩
                    eyes,
or fingers of ordinary mortals. Often used in 'mutter an

                incantation
                '. See also
                wizard
                .

1.1215   N

                N: /N/ quant. 1. A large and indeterminate number of objects:
"There were N bugs in that crock!" Also used in its
original sense of a variable name: "This crock has N bugs,
as N goes to infinity." (The true number of bugs is always
at least N + 1; see
                Lubarsky's Law of Cybernetic

                Entomology
                .) 2. A variable whose value is inherited from the
current context. For example, when a meal is being ordered at a
restaurant, N may be understood to mean however many people
there are at the table. From the remark "We'd like to order
N wonton soups and a family dinner for N - 1" you
can deduce that one person at the table wants to eat only soup,
even though you don't know how many people there are (see

                great-wall
). 3. 'Nth': adj. The ordinal counterpart
of N, senses 1 and 2. "Now for the Nth and last
time..." In the specific context "Nth-year grad

```
student", N is generally assumed to be at least 4, and is
usually 5 or more (see
            tenured graduate student
            ).  See also

            random numbers
            ,
            two-to-the-N
            .
```

1.1216 nadger

```
nadger: /nad'jr/ [Great Britain] v. Of software or hardware (not
   people), to twiddle some object in a hidden manner, generally so
   that it conforms better to some format.  For instance, string
   printing routines on 8-bit processors often take the string text
   from the instruction stream, thus a print call looks like 'jsr
   print:"Hello world"'.  The print routine has to 'nadger' the
   saved instruction pointer so that the processor doesn't try to
   execute the text as instructions when the subroutine returns.
```

1.1217 nagware

```
            nagware: /nag'weir/ [USENET] n. The variety of
            shareware
               that displays a large screen at the beginning or end reminding  ←
                  you
   to register, typically requiring some sort of keystroke to continue
   so that you can't use the software in batch mode.  Compare

            crippleware
            .
```

1.1218 nailed to the wall

```
nailed to the wall: [like a trophy] adj. Said of a bug finally
   eliminated after protracted, and even heroic, effort.
```

1.1219 nailing jelly

```
                  nailing jelly: vi. See
                  like nailing jelly to a tree
                  .
```

1.1220 naive

naive: adj. Untutored in the perversities of some particular
   program or system; one who still tries to do things in an intuitive
   way, rather than the right way (in really good designs these
   coincide, but most designs aren't 'really good' in the
   appropriate sense). This trait is completely unrelated to general
   maturity or competence, or even competence at any other specific
   program. It is a sad commentary on the primitive state of
   computing that the natural opposite of this term is often claimed
   to be 'experienced user' but is really more like 'cynical
   user'.

1.1221 naive user

```
                  naive user: n. A
                  luser
                  . Tends to imply someone who is
   ignorant mainly owing to inexperience.  When this is applied to
   someone who *has* experience, there is a definite implication
   of stupidity.
```

1.1222 NAK

```
                  NAK: /nak/ [from the ASCII mnemonic for 0010101] interj.
   1. On-line joke answer to
                  ACK
                  ?: "I'm not here."
   2. On-line answer to a request for chat: "I'm not available."
   3. Used to politely interrupt someone to tell them you don't
   understand their point or that they have suddenly stopped making
   sense.  See
                  ACK
                  , sense 3.  "And then, after we recode the
   project in COBOL...."  "Nak, Nak, Nak!  I thought I heard you
   say COBOL!"
```

1.1223 nano

nano: /nan'oh/ [CMU: from 'nanosecond'] n. A brief period of
time. "Be with you in a nano" means you really will be free
shortly, i.e., implies what mainstream people mean by "in a
jiffy" (whereas the hackish use of 'jiffy' is quite different ---
see
jiffy
).

1.1224 nano-

nano-: [SI: the next quantifier below
micro-
; meaning *
10^(-9)] pref. Smaller than
micro-
, and used in the same rather
loose and connotative way. Thus, one has
nanotechnology
(coined by hacker K. Eric Drexler) by analogy with
'microtechnology'; and a few machine architectures have a
'nanocode' level below 'microcode'. Tom Duff at Bell Labs has
also pointed out that "Pi seconds is a nanocentury".
See also
quantifiers
,
pico-
,
nanoacre
,
nanobot
,

nanocomputer
,
nanofortnight
.

1.1225 nanoacre

nanoacre: /nan'oh-ay'kr/ n. A unit (about 2 mm square) of real
estate on a VLSI chip. The term gets its giggle value from the
fact that VLSI nanoacres have costs in the same range as real acres
once one figures in design and fabrication-setup costs.

1.1226   nanobot

nanobot: /nan'oh-bot/ n. A robot of microscopic proportions, presumably built by means of
nanotechnology
. As yet, only
used informally (and speculatively!). Also called a 'nanoagent'.

1.1227   nanocomputer

nanocomputer: /nan'oh-k*m-pyoo'tr/ n. A computer with molecular-sized switching elements. Designs for mechanical nanocomputers which use single-molecule sliding rods for their logic have been proposed. The controller for a
nanobot
would
be a nanocomputer.

1.1228   nanofortnight

nanofortnight: [Adelaide University] n. 1 fortnight * 10^-9, or about 1.2 msec. This unit was used largely by students doing undergraduate practicals. See
microfortnight
,
attoparsec
,
and
micro-
.

1.1229   nanotechnology

nanotechnology:: /nan'-oh-tek-no'l*-jee/ n. A hypothetical fabrication technology in which objects are designed and built with the individual specification and placement of each separate atom. The first unequivocal nanofabrication experiments took place in 1990, for example with the deposition of individual xenon atoms on a nickel substrate to spell the logo of a certain very large computer company. Nanotechnology has been a hot topic in the hacker subculture ever since the term was coined by K. Eric Drexler in his book "Engines of Creation", where he predicted that nanotechnology could give rise to replicating assemblers,

permitting an exponential growth of productivity and personal
wealth. See also
               blue goo
               ,
               gray goo
               ,
               nanobot
               .

1.1230 nasal demons

nasal demons: n. Recognized shorthand on the USENET group
   comp.std.c for any unexpected behavior of a C compiler on
   encountering an undefined construct. During a discussion on that
   group in early 1992, a regular remarked "When the compiler
   encounters [a given undefined construct] it is legal for it to make
   demons fly out of your nose" (the implication is that the compiler
   may choose any arbitrarily bizarre way to interpret the code
   without violating the ANSI C standard). Someone else followed up
   with a reference to "nasal demons", which quickly became
   established.

1.1231 nastygram

               nastygram: /nas'tee-gram/ n. 1. A protocol packet or item of
   email (the latter is also called a
               letterbomb
) that takes
   advantage of misfeatures or security holes on the target system to
   do untoward things. 2. Disapproving mail, esp. from a

               net.god
               , pursuant to a violation of
               netiquette
                or a
   complaint about failure to correct some mail- or news-transmission
   problem. Compare
               shitogram
               ,
               mailbomb
               . 3. A status
   report from an unhappy, and probably picky, customer. "What'd
   Corporate say in today's nastygram?" 4. [deprecated] An error
   reply by mail from a
               daemon
               ; in particular, a
               bounce

               message

.

1.1232   Nathan Hale

        Nathan Hale: n. An asterisk (see also
        splat
        ,
        ASCII
). Oh,
  you want an etymology? Notionally, from "I regret that I have only
  one asterisk for my country!", a misquote of the famous remark
  uttered by Nathan Hale just before he was hanged. Hale was a
  (failed) spy for the rebels in the American War of Independence.

1.1233   nature

        nature: n. See
        has the X nature
        .

1.1234   neat hack

        neat hack: n. 1. A clever technique. 2. A brilliant practical
  joke, where neatness is correlated with cleverness, harmlessness,
  and surprise value. Example: the Caltech Rose Bowl card display
  switch (see "
        The Meaning of 'Hack'
        ", appendix A). See
  also
        hack
        .

1.1235   neats vs. scruffies

        neats vs. scruffies: n. The label used to refer to one of the
  continuing
        holy wars
         in AI research. This conflict tangles
  together two separate issues. One is the relationship between

human reasoning and AI; 'neats' tend to try to build systems
that 'reason' in some way identifiably similar to the way humans
report themselves as doing, while 'scruffies' profess not to
care whether an algorithm resembles human reasoning in the least as
long as it works. More importantly, neats tend to believe that
logic is king, while scruffies favor looser, more ad-hoc methods
driven by empirical knowledge. To a neat, scruffy methods appear
promiscuous, successful only by accident, and not productive of
insights about how intelligence actually works; to a scruffy, neat
methods appear to be hung up on formalism and irrelevant to the
hard-to-capture 'common sense' of living intelligences.

1.1236 neep-neep

          neep-neep: /neep neep/ [onomatopoeic, from New York SF fandom]
n. One who is fascinated by computers. Less specific than

          hacker
          , as it need not imply more skill than is required to
boot games on a PC. The derived noun 'neeping' applies
specifically to the long conversations about computers that tend to
develop in the corners at most SF-convention parties (the term
'neepery' is also in wide use). Fandom has a related proverb to
the effect that "Hacking is a conversational black hole!".

1.1237 neophilia

          neophilia: /nee'oh-fil'-ee-*/ n. The trait of being excited and
pleased by novelty. Common among most hackers, SF fans, and
members of several other connected leading-edge subcultures,
including the pro-technology 'Whole Earth' wing of the ecology
movement, space activists, many members of Mensa, and the
Discordian/neo-pagan underground. All these groups overlap heavily
and (where evidence is available) seem to share characteristic
hacker tropisms for science fiction,
          music
          , and
          oriental

          food
          . The opposite tendency is 'neophobia'.

1.1238 net.-

net.-: /net dot/ pref. [USENET] Prefix used to describe people and
events related to USENET. From the time before the
Great

Renaming
, when most non-local newsgroups had names beginning
'net.'. Includes
net.god
s, 'net.goddesses' (various
charismatic net.women with circles of on-line admirers),
'net.lurkers' (see
lurker
), 'net.person',
'net.parties' (a synonym for
boink
, sense 2), and
many similar constructs. See also
net.police
.

1.1239 net.god

net.god: /net god/ n. Accolade referring to anyone who satisfies
some combination of the following conditions: has been visible on
USENET for more than 5 years, ran one of the original backbone
sites, moderated an important newsgroup, wrote news software, or
knows Gene, Mark, Rick, Mel, Henry, Chuq, and Greg personally. See

demigod
. Net.goddesses such as Rissa or the Slime Sisters
have (so far) been distinguished more by personality than by
authority.

1.1240 net.personality

net.personality: /net per'sn-al'-*-tee/ n. Someone who has made a ←
name
for him or herself on
USENET
, through either longevity or
attention-getting posts, but doesn't meet the other requirements of

net.god
hood.

1.1241   net.police

net.police: /net-p*-lees'/ n. (var. 'net.cops') Those USENET
readers who feel it is their responsibility to pounce on and

flame
 any posting which they regard as offensive or in
violation of their understanding of
netiquette
. Generally
used sarcastically or pejoratively. Also spelled 'net police'.
See also
net.-
,
code police
.

1.1242   NetBOLLIX

NetBOLLIX: [from bollix: to bungle] n.
IBM
's NetBIOS, an
extremely
brain-damaged
 network protocol that, like
Blue

Glue
, is used at commercial shops that don't know any better.

1.1243   netburp

netburp: [IRC] n. When
netlag
 gets really bad, and delays
between servers exceed a certain threshhold, the
IRC
 network
effectively becomes partitioned for a period of time, and large
numbers of people seem to be signing off at the same time and then
signing back on again when things get better. An instance of this
is called a 'netburp' (or, sometimes,
netsplit
).

1.1244 netdead

netdead: [IRC] n. The state of someone who signs off
IRC
,
perhaps during a
netburp
, and doesn't sign back on until
later. In the interim, he is "dead to the net".

1.1245 nethack

nethack: /net'hak/ [UNIX] n. A dungeon game similar to

rogue
 but more elaborate, distributed in C source over

USENET
 and very popular at UNIX sites and on PC-class machines
(nethack is probably the most widely distributed of the freeware
dungeon games). The earliest versions, written by Jay Fenlason and
later considerably enhanced by Andries Brouwer, were simply called
'hack'. The name changed when maintenance was taken over by a
group of hackers originally organized by Mike Stephenson; the
current contact address (as of mid-1993) is
nethack-bugs@linc.cis.upenn.edu.

1.1246 netiquette

netiquette: /net'ee-ket/ or /net'i-ket/ [portmanteau from "network
etiquette"] n. The conventions of politeness recognized on
USENET
,
such as avoidance of cross-posting to inappropriate groups and
refraining from commercial pluggery outside the biz groups.

1.1247 netlag

netlag: [IRC, MUD] n. A condition that occurs when the delays in
the
IRC
 network or on a
MUD

```
                become severe enough that
servers briefly lose and then reestablish contact, causing messages
to be delivered in bursts, often with delays of up to a minute.
(Note that this term has nothing to do with mainstream "jet lag",
a condition which hackers tend not to be much bothered by.)
```

1.1248   netnews

```
                netnews: /net'n[y]ooz/ n. 1. The software that makes
                USENET
                    run.  2. The content of USENET.  "I read netnews right after my
mail most mornings."
```

1.1249   netrock

```
                netrock: /net'rok/ [IBM] n. A
                flame
                ; used esp. on VNET,
IBM's internal corporate network.
```

1.1250   netsplit

```
                netsplit: n. Syn.
                netburp
                .
```

1.1251   netter

```
                netter: n. 1. Loosely, anyone with a
                network address
                . 2. More
specifically, a
                USENET
                 regular.  Most often found in the
plural.  "If you post *that* in a technical group, you're
going to be flamed by angry netters for the rest of time!"
```

1.1252   network address

network address: n. (also 'net address') As used by hackers,
means an address on 'the' network (see
network, the
; this is
almost always a
bang path
 or
Internet address
). Such an
address is essential if one wants to be to be taken seriously by
hackers; in particular, persons or organizations that claim to
understand, work with, sell to, or recruit from among hackers but
don't display net addresses are quietly presumed to be
clueless poseurs and mentally flushed (see
flush
, sense 4).
Hackers often put their net addresses on their business cards and
wear them prominently in contexts where they expect to meet other
hackers face-to-face (see also
science-fiction fandom
). This
is mostly functional, but is also a signal that one identifies with
hackerdom (like lodge pins among Masons or tie-dyed T-shirts among
Grateful Dead fans). Net addresses are often used in email text as
a more concise substitute for personal names; indeed, hackers may
come to know each other quite well by network names without ever
learning each others' 'legal' monikers. See also
sitename
,

domainist
.

1.1253   network meltdown

network meltdown: n. A state of complete network overload; the
network equivalent of
thrash
ing. This may be induced by a

Chernobyl packet
. See also
broadcast storm
,
kamikaze

packet
.

1.1254 network, the

network, the: n. 1. The union of all the major noncommercial,
academic, and hacker-oriented networks, such as Internet, the old
ARPANET, NSFnet,
BITNET
, and the virtual UUCP and
USENET
'networks', plus the corporate in-house networks and commercial
time-sharing services (such as CompuServe) that gateway to them. A
site is generally considered 'on the network' if it can be reached
through some combination of Internet-style (@-sign) and UUCP
(bang-path) addresses. See
bang path
,
Internet address
,

network address
. 2. A fictional conspiracy of libertarian
hacker-subversives and anti-authoritarian monkeywrenchers described
in Robert Anton Wilson's novel "Schr"odinger's Cat", to which
many hackers have subsequently decided they belong (this is an
example of
ha ha only serious
).

In sense 1, 'network' is often abbreviated to 'net'. "Are
you on the net?" is a frequent question when hackers first meet
face to face, and "See you on the net!" is a frequent goodbye.

1.1255 New Jersey

New Jersey: [primarily Stanford/Silicon Valley] adj. Brain-damaged
or of poor design. This refers to the allegedly wretched quality
of such software as C, C++, and UNIX (which originated at Bell Labs
in Murray Hill, New Jersey). "This compiler bites the bag, but
what can you expect from a compiler designed in New Jersey?"
Compare
Berkeley Quality Software
. See also
UNIX

conspiracy
.

1.1256 New Testament

New Testament: n. [C programmers] The second edition of K&R's
"The C Programming Language" (Prentice-Hall, 1988; ISBN
0-13-110362-8), describing ANSI Standard C. See
K&R
.

1.1257   newbie

newbie: /n[y]oo'bee/ n. [orig. from British public-school and
military slang variant of 'new boy'] A USENET neophyte.
This term surfaced in the
newsgroup
talk.bizarre but is
now in wide use. Criteria for being considered a newbie vary
wildly; a person can be called a newbie in one newsgroup while
remaining a respected regular in another. The label 'newbie'
is sometimes applied as a serious insult to a person who has been
around USENET for a long time but who carefully hides all evidence
of having a clue. See
BIFF
.

1.1258   newgroup wars

newgroup wars: /n[y]oo'groop worz/ [USENET] n. The salvos of
dueling 'newgroup' and 'rmgroup' messages sometimes
exchanged by persons on opposite sides of a dispute over whether a

newsgroup
should be created net-wide, or (even more
frequently) whether an obsolete one should be removed. These
usually settle out within a week or two as it becomes clear whether
the group has a natural constituency (usually, it doesn't). At
times, especially in the completely anarchic alt hierarchy, the
names of newsgroups themselves become a form of comment or humor;
e.g., the spinoff of alt.swedish.chef.bork.bork.bork from
alt.tv.muppets in early 1990, or any number of specialized
abuse groups named after particularly notorious
flamer
s, e.g.,
alt.weemba.

1.1259   newline

newline: /n[y]oo'li:n/ n. 1. [techspeak, primarily UNIX] The ASCII LF character (0001010), used under
UNIX
as a text line
terminator. A Bell-Labs-ism rather than a Berkeleyism; interestingly (and unusually for UNIX jargon), it is said to have originally been an IBM usage. (Though the term 'newline' appears in ASCII standards, it never caught on in the general computing world before UNIX). 2. More generally, any magic character, character sequence, or operation (like Pascal's writeln procedure) required to terminate a text record or separate lines. See

crlf
,
terpri
.

1.1260 NeWS

NeWS: /nee'wis/, /n[y]oo'is/ or /n[y]ooz/ [acronym; the 'Network Window System'] n. The road not taken in window systems, an elegant
PostScript
-based environment that would almost certainly have won the standards war with
X
if it hadn't been

proprietary
to Sun Microsystems. There is a lesson here that too many software vendors haven't yet heeded. Many hackers insist on the two-syllable pronunciations above as a way of distinguishing NeWS from
news
(the
netnews
software).

1.1261 news

news: n. See
netnews
.

1.1262 newsfroup

newsfroup: // [USENET] n. Silly synonym for
newsgroup
,
originally a typo but now in regular use on USENET's talk.bizarre
and other lunatic-fringe groups. Compare
hing
,
grilf
,
and
filk
.

1.1263 newsgroup

newsgroup: [USENET] n. One of
USENET
's huge collection of
topic groups or
fora
. Usenet groups can be 'unmoderated'
(anyone can post) or 'moderated' (submissions are automatically
directed to a moderator, who edits or filters and then posts the
results). Some newsgroups have parallel
mailing list
s for
Internet people with no netnews access, with postings to the group
automatically propagated to the list and vice versa. Some
moderated groups (especially those which are actually gatewayed
Internet mailing lists) are distributed as 'digests', with groups
of postings periodically collected into a single large posting with
an index.

Among the best-known are comp.lang.c (the C-language forum),
comp.arch (on computer architectures), comp.unix.wizards
(for UNIX wizards), rec.arts.sf-lovers (for science-fiction
fans), and talk.politics.misc (miscellaneous political
discussions and
flamage
).

1.1264 nick

nick: [IRC] n. Short for nickname. On
IRC
, every user must

pick a nick, which is sometimes the same as the user's real name or
login name, but is often more fanciful. Compare
            handle
            .

1.1265 nickle

            nickle: /ni'kl/ [from 'nickel', common name for the U.S.
5-cent coin] n. A
            nybble
             + 1; 5 bits. Reported among
developers for Mattel's GI 1600 (the Intellivision games
processor), a chip with 16-bit-wide RAM but 10-bit-wide ROM. See
also
            deckle
            .

1.1266 night mode

            night mode: n. See
            phase
             (of people).

1.1267 Nightmare File System

            Nightmare File System: n. Pejorative hackerism for Sun's Network
File System (NFS). In any nontrivial network of Suns where there
is a lot of NFS cross-mounting, when one Sun goes down, the others
often freeze up. Some machine tries to access the down one, and
(getting no response) repeats indefinitely. This causes it to
appear dead to some messages (what is actually happening is that it
is locked up in what should have been a brief excursion to a higher

            spl
             level). Then another machine tries to reach either the
down machine or the pseudo-down machine, and itself becomes
pseudo-down. The first machine to discover the down one is now
trying both to access the down one and to respond to the
pseudo-down one, so it is even harder to reach. This situation
snowballs very quickly, and soon the entire network of machines is
frozen --- worst of all, the user can't even abort the file access
that started the problem! Many of NFS's problems are excused by
partisans as being an inevitable result of its statelessness, which
is held to be a great feature (critics, of course, call it a great

```
misfeature
          ).  (ITS partisans are apt to cite this as proof of
UNIX's alleged bogosity; ITS had a working NFS-like shared file
system with none of these problems in the early 1970s.)  See also

          broadcast storm
          .
```

1.1268   NIL

```
          NIL: /nil/ No.  Used in reply to a question, particularly one
asked using the '-P' convention.  Most hackers assume this derives
simply from LISP terminology for 'false' (see also
          T
          ), but
NIL as a negative reply was well-established among radio hams
decades before the advent of LISP.  The historical connection
between early hackerdom and the ham radio world was strong enough
that this may have been an influence.
```

1.1269   Ninety-Ninety Rule

```
Ninety-Ninety Rule: n. "The first 90% of the code accounts
   for the first 90% of the development time.  The remaining 10% of
   the code accounts for the other 90% of the development time."
   Attributed to Tom Cargill of Bell Labs, and popularized by Jon
   Bentley's September 1985 "Bumper-Sticker Computer Science"
   column in "Communications of the ACM".  It was there called
   the "Rule of Credibility", a name which seems not to have stuck.
```

1.1270   NMI

```
          NMI: /N-M-I/ n. Non-Maskable Interrupt.  An IRQ 7 on the PDP-11
or 680[01234]0; the NMI line on an 80[1234]86.  In contrast with a

          priority interrupt
           (which might be ignored, although that is
unlikely), an NMI is *never* ignored.
```

1.1271   no-op

no-op: /noh'op/ alt. NOP /nop/ [no operation] n. 1. (also v.)
A machine instruction that does nothing (sometimes used in
assembler-level programming as filler for data or patch areas, or
to overwrite code to be removed in binaries). See also
         JFCL
         .
2. A person who contributes nothing to a project, or has nothing
going on upstairs, or both. As in "He's a no-op." 3. Any
operation or sequence of operations with no effect, such as
circling the block without finding a parking space, or putting
money into a vending machine and having it fall immediately into
the coin-return box, or asking someone for help and being told to
go away. "Oh, well, that was a no-op." Hot-and-sour soup (see

         great-wall
) that is insufficiently either is 'no-op soup';
so is wonton soup if everybody else is having hot-and-sour.

1.1272   noddy

noddy: /nod'ee/ [UK: from the children's books] adj.
1. Small and un-useful, but demonstrating a point. Noddy programs
are often written by people learning a new language or system. The
archetypal noddy program is
         hello, world
         . Noddy code may be
used to demonstrate a feature or bug of a compiler. May be used of
real hardware or software to imply that it isn't worth using.
"This editor's a bit noddy." 2. A program that is more or less
instant to produce. In this use, the term does not necessarily
connote uselessness, but describes a
         hack
          sufficiently trivial
that it can be written and debugged while carrying on (and during
the space of) a normal conversation. "I'll just throw together a
noddy
         awk
          script to dump all the first fields." In North
America this might be called a
         mickey mouse program
         . See

         toy program
         .

1.1273 NOMEX underwear

```
        NOMEX underwear: /noh'meks uhn'-der-weir/ [USENET] n. Syn.

        asbestos longjohns
        , used mostly in auto-related mailing lists
and newsgroups.  NOMEX underwear is an actual product available on
the racing equipment market, used as a fire resistance measure and
required in some racing series.
```

1.1274 Nominal Semidestructor

```
        Nominal Semidestructor: n. Soundalike slang for 'National
Semiconductor', found among other places in the 4.3BSD networking
sources.  During the late 1970s to mid-1980s this company marketed
a series of microprocessors including the NS16000 and NS32000 and
several variants.  At one point early in the great microprocessor
race, the specs on these chips made them look like serious
competition for the rising Intel 80x86 and Motorola 680x0 series.
Unfortunately, the actual parts were notoriously flaky and never
implemented the full instruction set promised in their literature,
apparently because the company couldn't get any of the mask
steppings to work as designed.  They eventually sank without trace,
joining the Zilog Z8000 and a few even more obscure also-rans in
the graveyard of forgotten microprocessors.  Compare
        HP-SUX

        ,

        AIDX

        ,
        buglix

        ,
        Macintrash

        ,
        Telerat

        ,
        Open

        DeathTrap

        ,
        ScumOS

        ,
        sun-stools

        .
```

1.1275 non-optimal solution

non-optimal solution: n. (also 'sub-optimal solution') An
astoundingly stupid way to do something. This term is generally
used in deadpan sarcasm, as its impact is greatest when the person
speaking looks completely serious. Compare
stunning
. See also

Bad Thing
.

1.1276 nonlinear

nonlinear: adj. [scientific computation] 1. Behaving in an erratic
and unpredictable fashion; unstable. When used to describe the
behavior of a machine or program, it suggests that said machine or
program is being forced to run far outside of design
specifications. This behavior may be induced by unreasonable
inputs, or may be triggered when a more mundane bug sends the
computation far off from its expected course. 2. When describing
the behavior of a person, suggests a tantrum or a
flame
.
"When you talk to Bob, don't mention the drug problem or he'll go
nonlinear for hours." In this context, 'go nonlinear' connotes
'blow up out of proportion' (proportion connotes linearity).

1.1277 nontrivial

nontrivial: adj. Requiring real thought or significant computing
power. Often used as an understated way of saying that a problem
is quite difficult or impractical, or even entirely unsolvable
("Proving P=NP is nontrivial"). The preferred emphatic form is
'decidedly nontrivial'. See
trivial
,
uninteresting
,
interesting
.

1.1278 not ready for prime time

not ready for prime time: adj. Usable, but only just so; not very
robust; for internal use only. Said of a program or device. Often
connotes that the thing will be made more solid
            Real Soon

            Now
            . This term comes from the ensemble name of the original cast
of "Saturday Night Live", the "Not Ready for Prime Time
Players". It has extra flavor for hackers because of the special
(though now semi-obsolescent) meaning of
            prime time
            . Compare

            beta
            .

1.1279 notwork

            notwork: /not'werk/ n. A network, when it is acting
            flaky
               or is
            down
            . Compare
            nyetwork
            . Said at IBM to have
originally referred to a particular period of flakiness on IBM's
VNET corporate network ca. 1988; but there are independent reports
of the term from elsewhere.

1.1280 NP-

NP-: /N-P/ pref. Extremely. Used to modify adjectives
   describing a level or quality of difficulty; the connotation is
   often 'more so than it should be' (NP-complete problems all seem
   to be very hard, but so far no one has found a good a priori
   reason that they should be.) "Coding a BitBlt implementation to
   perform correctly in every case is NP-annoying." This is
   generalized from the computer-science terms 'NP-hard' and
   'NP-complete'. NP is the set of Nondeterministic-Polynomial
   algorithms, those that can be completed by a nondeterministic
   Turing machine in an amount of time that is a polynomial function
   of the size of the input; a solution for one NP-complete problem
   would solve all the others. Note, however, that the NP- prefix is,
   from a complexity theorist's point of view, the wrong part of
   'NP-complete' to connote extreme difficulty; it is the completeness,
   not the NP-ness, that puts any problem it describes in the
   'hard' category.

1.1281   nroff

               nroff:: /N'rof/ [UNIX, from "new roff" (see
               troff
)] n. A
companion program to the UNIX typesetter
               troff
               , accepting
identical input but preparing output for terminals and line
printers.

1.1282   NSA line eater

               NSA line eater: n. The National Security Agency trawling program
sometimes assumed to be reading the net for the U.S. Government's
spooks. Most hackers describe it as a mythical beast, but some
believe it actually exists, more aren't sure, and many believe in
acting as though it exists just in case. Some netters put loaded
phrases like 'KGB', 'Uzi', 'nuclear materials',
'Palestine', 'cocaine', and 'assassination' in their
               sig

               block
               s in a (probably futile) attempt to confuse and overload the
creature. The
               GNU
                version of
               EMACS
                actually has a
command that randomly inserts a bunch of insidious anarcho-verbiage
into your edited text.

There is a mainstream variant of this myth involving a 'Trunk Line
Monitor', which supposedly used speech recognition to extract words
from telephone trunks. This one was making the rounds in the
late 1970s, spread by people who had no idea of then-current
technology or the storage, signal-processing, or speech recognition
needs of such a project. On the basis of mass-storage costs alone
it would have been cheaper to hire 50 high-school students and just
let them listen in. Speech-recognition technology can't do this
job even now (1993), and almost certainly won't in this millennium,
either. The peak of silliness came with a letter to an alternative
paper in New Haven, Connecticut, laying out the factoids of this
Big Brotherly affair. The letter writer then revealed his actual
agenda by offering --- at an amazing low price, just this once, we
take VISA and MasterCard --- a scrambler guaranteed to daunt the
Trunk Trawler and presumably allowing the would-be Baader-Meinhof
gangs of the world to get on with their business.

1.1283 nude

nude: adj. Said of machines delivered without an operating system
(compare
bare metal
). "We ordered 50 systems, but they all
arrived nude, so we had to spend a an extra weekend with the
installation tapes." This usage is a recent innovation reflecting
the fact that most PC clones are now delivered with DOS or
Microsoft Windows pre-installed at the factory. Other kinds of
hardware are still normally delivered without OS, so this term is
particular to PC support groups.

1.1284 nuke

nuke: /n[y]ook/ vt. 1. To intentionally delete the entire
contents of a given directory or storage volume. "On UNIX,
'rm -r /usr' will nuke everything in the usr filesystem."
Never used for accidental deletion. Oppose
blow away
.
2. Syn. for
dike
, applied to smaller things such as files,
features, or code sections. Often used to express a final verdict.
"What do you want me to do with that 80-meg
wallpaper
file?"
"Nuke it." 3. Used of processes as well as files; nuke is a
frequent verbal alias for 'kill -9' on UNIX. 4. On IBM PCs,
a bug that results in
fandango on core
can trash the operating
system, including the FAT (the in-core copy of the disk block
chaining information). This can utterly scramble attached disks,
which are then said to have been 'nuked'. This term is also used
of analogous lossages on Macintoshes and other micros without
memory protection.

1.1285 number-crunching

number-crunching: n. Computations of a numerical nature, esp.
those that make extensive use of floating-point numbers. The only
thing
Fortrash
is good for. This term is in widespread
informal use outside hackerdom and even in mainstream slang, but
has additional hackish connotations: namely, that the computations

```
are mindless and involve massive use of
            brute force
            .  This is
not always
            evil
            , esp. if it involves ray tracing or fractals
or some other use that makes
            pretty pictures
            , esp. if such
pictures can be used as
            wallpaper
            .  See also
            crunch
            .
```

1.1286   numbers

```
            numbers: [scientific computation] n. Output of a computation that
may not be significant results but at least indicate that the
program is running.  May be used to placate management, grant
sponsors, etc.  'Making numbers' means running a program
because output --- any output, not necessarily meaningful output
--- is needed as a demonstration of progress.  See
            pretty

            pictures
            ,
            math-out
            ,
            social science number
            .
```

1.1287   NUXI problem

```
            NUXI problem: /nuk'see pro'bl*m/ n. Refers to the problem of
transferring data between machines with differing byte-order.  The
string 'UNIX' might look like 'NUXI' on a machine with a
different 'byte sex' (e.g., when transferring data from a
            little-endian
             to a
            big-endian
            , or vice-versa).  See also
            middle-endian
            ,
            swab
            , and
```

```
                bytesexual
                .
```

1.1288 nybble

```
                nybble: /nib'l/ (alt. 'nibble') [from v. 'nibble' by analogy
with 'bite' => 'byte'] n. Four bits; one
                hex
                 digit;
a half-byte.  Though 'byte' is now techspeak, this useful relative
is still jargon.  Compare
                byte
                ,
                crumb
                ,
                tayste
                ,

                dynner
                ; see also
                bit
                ,
                nickle
                ,
                deckle
                . Apparently
this spelling is uncommon in Commonwealth Hackish, as British
orthography suggests the pronunciation /ni:'bl/.
```

1.1289 nyetwork

```
                nyetwork: /nyet'werk/ [from Russian 'nyet' = no] n. A network,
when it is acting
                flaky
                 or is
                down
                . Compare
                notwork
                .
```

1.1290 Ob-

```
            Ob-: /ob/ pref. Obligatory.  A piece of
            netiquette
               acknowledging that the author has been straying from the
newsgroup's charter topic.  For example, if a posting in alt.sex is
a response to a part of someone else's posting that has nothing
particularly to do with sex, the author may append 'ObSex' (or
'Obsex') and toss off a question or vignette about some unusual
erotic act.  It is considered a sign of great
            winnitude
             when
one's Obs are more interesting than other people's whole postings.
```

1.1291 Obfuscated C Contest

```
            Obfuscated C Contest: (in full, the 'International Obfuscated C
Code Contest', or IOCCC) n. An annual contest run since 1984 over
USENET by Landon Curt Noll and friends.  The overall winner is
whoever produces the most unreadable, creative, and bizarre (but
working) C program; various other prizes are awarded at the judges'
whim.  C's terse syntax and macro-preprocessor facilities give
contestants a lot of maneuvering room.  The winning programs often
manage to be simultaneously (a) funny, (b) breathtaking works of
art, and (c) horrible examples of how *not* to code in C.
```

This relatively short and sweet entry might help convey the flavor
of obfuscated C:

```
  /*
   * HELLO WORLD program
   * by Jack Applin and Robert Heckendorn, 1985
   */
  main(v,c)char**c;{for(v[c++]="Hello, world!\n)";
  (!!c)[*c]&&(v--||--c&&execlp(*c,*c,c[!!c]+!!c,!c));
  **c=!c)write(!!*c,*c,!!**c);}
```

Here's another good one:

```
  /*
   * Program to compute an approximation of pi
   *  by Brian Westley, 1988
   */

  #define _ -F<00||--F-OO--;
  int F=00,OO=00;
  main(){F_OO();printf(¨%1.3f\n¨,4.*-F/OO/OO);}F_OO()
  {
           _-_-_-
        _-_-_-_-_-_-_-
      _-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-
    _-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-
   _-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-
  _-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-
```

```
    _-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_
    _-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_
   _-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_
  _-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_
   _-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_
   _-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_
    _-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_
     _-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_-_
       _-_-_-_-_-_-_
         _-_-_-_-_
           _-_-_-_
  }
 Note that this program works by computing its own area.  For more
 digits, write a bigger program.  See also
                 hello, world
                  .
```

1.1292   obi-wan error

         obi-wan error: /oh'bee-won` er'*r/ [RPI, from 'off-by-one' and
 the Obi-Wan Kenobi character in "Star Wars"] n. A loop of
 some sort in which the index is off by 1. Common when the index
 should have started from 0 but instead started from 1. A kind of

         off-by-one error
         . See also
         zeroth
         .

1.1293   Objectionable-C

         Objectionable-C: n. Hackish take on "Objective-C", the name of
 an object-oriented dialect of C in competition with the
 better-known C++ (it is used to write native applications on the
 NeXT machine). Objectionable-C uses a Smalltalk-like syntax, but
 lacks the flexibility of Smalltalk method calls, and (like many
 such efforts) comes frustratingly close to attaining the
         Right

         Thing
          without actually doing so.

1.1294   obscure

obscure: adj. Used in an exaggeration of its normal meaning, to
   imply total incomprehensibility. "The reason for that last crash
   is obscure." "The 'find(1)' command's syntax is obscure!"
   The phrase 'moderately obscure' implies that something could be
   figured out but probably isn't worth the trouble. The construction
   'obscure in the extreme' is the preferred emphatic form.

1.1295   octal forty

                octal forty: /ok'tl for'tee/ n. Hackish way of saying "I'm
   drawing a blank." Octal 40 is the
                ASCII
                 space character,
   0100000; by an odd coincidence,
                hex
                 40 (01000000) is the

                EBCDIC
                 space character. See
                wall
                .

1.1296   off the trolley

                off the trolley: adj. Describes the behavior of a program that
   malfunctions and goes catatonic, but doesn't actually
                crash
                 or
   abort. See
                glitch
                ,
                bug
                ,
                deep space
                .

1.1297   off-by-one error

                off-by-one error: n. Exceedingly common error induced in many
   ways, such as by starting at 0 when you should have started at 1 or
   vice-versa, or by writing '< N' instead of '<= N' or
   vice-versa. Also applied to giving something to the person next to
   the one who should have gotten it. Often confounded with

```
                    fencepost error
                    , which is properly a particular subtype of it.
```

1.1298   offline

```
                    offline: adv. Not now or not here.  "Let's take this
        discussion offline."  Specifically used on
                    USENET
                     to suggest
        that a discussion be moved off a public newsgroup to email.
```

1.1299   ogg

```
ogg: /og/ [CMU] v. 1. In the multi-player space combat game
    Netrek, to execute kamikaze attacks against enemy ships which are
    carrying armies or occupying strategic positions.  Named during a
    game in which one of the players repeatedly used the tactic while
    playing Orion ship G, showing up in the player list as "Og".
    This trick has been roundly denounced by those who would return to
    the good old days when the tactic of dogfighting was dominant, but
    as Sun Tzu wrote, "What is of supreme importance in war is to
    attack the enemy's strategy."  However, the traditional answer to
    the newbie question "What does ogg mean?" is just "Pick up some
    armies and I'll show you."  2. In other games, to forcefully
    attack an opponent with the expectation that the resources expended
    will be renewed faster than the opponent will be able to regain his
    previous advantage.  Taken more seriously as a tactic since it has
    gained a simple name.  3. To do anything forcefully, possibly
    without consideration of the drain on future resources.  "I guess
    I'd better go ogg the problem set that's due tomorrow."  "Whoops!
    I looked down at the map for a sec and almost ogged that oncoming
    car."
```

1.1300   old fart

```
                    old fart: n. Tribal elder.  A title self-assumed with remarkable
        frequency by (esp.) USENETters who have been programming for more
        than about 25 years; often appears in
                    sig block
                    s attached to
        Jargon File contributions of great archeological significance.
        This is a term of insult in the second or third person but one of
        pride in first person.
```

1.1301   Old Testament

```
            Old Testament: [C programmers] n. The first edition of
            K&R
            , the
sacred text describing
            Classic C
            .
```

1.1302   one-banana problem

```
            one-banana problem: n. At mainframe shops, where the computers
have operators for routine administrivia, the programmers and
hardware people tend to look down on the operators and claim that a
trained monkey could do their job.  It is frequently observed that
the incentives that would be offered said monkeys can be used as a
scale to describe the difficulty of a task.  A one-banana problem
is simple; hence, "It's only a one-banana job at the most; what's
taking them so long?"

At IBM, folklore divides the world into one-, two-, and
three-banana problems.  Other cultures have different hierarchies
and may divide them more finely; at ICL, for example, five grapes
(a bunch) equals a banana.  Their upper limit for the in-house

            sysape
            s is said to be two bananas and three grapes (another
source claims it's three bananas and one grape, but observes
"However, this is subject to local variations, cosmic rays and
ISO").  At a complication level any higher than that, one asks the
manufacturers to send someone around to check things.

See also
            Infinite-Monkey Theorem
            .
```

1.1303   one-line fix

```
            one-line fix: n. Used (often sarcastically) of a change to a
program that is thought to be trivial or insignificant right up to
the moment it crashes the system.  Usually 'cured' by another
one-line fix.  See also
            I didn't change anything!
```

1.1304   one-liner wars

```
            one-liner wars: n. A game popular among hackers who code in the
language APL (see
            write-only language
             and
            line noise
            ).
The objective is to see who can code the most interesting and/or
useful routine in one line of operators chosen from
APL's exceedingly
            hairy
             primitive set.  A similar amusement
was practiced among
            TECO
             hackers and is now popular among

            Perl
             aficionados.

Ken Iverson, the inventor of APL, has been credited with a
one-liner that, given a number N, produces a list of the
prime numbers from 1 to N inclusive.  It looks like this:

    (2 = 0 +.= T o.| T) / T <- iN

where 'o' is the APL null character, the assignment arrow is a
single character, and 'i' represents the APL iota.
```

1.1305   ooblick

```
            ooblick: /oo'blik/ [from the Dr. Seuss title "Bartholomew
and the Oobleck"] n. A bizarre semi-liquid sludge made from
cornstarch and water.  Enjoyed among hackers who make batches
during playtime at parties for its amusing and extremely
non-Newtonian behavior; it pours and splatters, but resists rapid
motion like a solid and will even crack when hit by a hammer.
Often found near lasers.

Here is a field-tested ooblick recipe contributed by GLS:

  1 cup cornstarch
  1 cup baking soda
  3/4 cup water
  N drops of food coloring

This recipe isn't quite as non-Newtonian as a pure cornstarch
ooblick, but has an appropriately slimy feel.

Some, however, insist that the notion of an ooblick *recipe*
is far too mechanical, and that it is best to add the water in
small increments so that the various mixed states the cornstarch
```

goes through as it *becomes* ooblick can be grokked in
fullness by many hands. For optional ingredients of this
experience, see the "
                Ceremonial Chemicals
                " section of

                Appendix B
                .

1.1306   op

                op: /op/ n. 1. In England and Ireland, common verbal
    abbreviation for 'operator', as in system operator. Less common in
    the U.S., where
                sysop
                 seems to be preferred. 2. [IRC] Someone
    who is endowed with privileges on
                IRC
                , not limited to a
    particular channel. These are generally people who are in charge
    of the IRC server at their particular site. Sometimes used
    interchangeably with
                CHOP
                . Compare
                sysop
                .

1.1307   open

open: n. Abbreviation for 'open (or left) parenthesis' --- used when
    necessary to eliminate oral ambiguity. To read aloud the LISP form
    (DEFUN FOO (X) (PLUS X 1)) one might say: "Open defun foo, open
    eks close, open, plus eks one, close close."

1.1308   Open DeathTrap

                Open DeathTrap: n. Abusive hackerism for the Santa Cruz
    Operation's 'Open DeskTop' product, a Motif-based graphical
    interface over their UNIX. The funniest part is that this was
    coined by SCO's own developers.... Compare
                AIDX
                ,

                Macintrash

```
            Nominal Semidestructor
            ,
            ScumOS
            ,

            sun-stools
            ,
            HP-SUX
            .
```

1.1309 open switch

```
open switch: [IBM: prob. from railroading] n. An unresolved
    question, issue, or problem.
```

1.1310 operating system

```
            operating system:: [techspeak] n. (Often abbreviated 'OS') The
    foundation software of a machine, of course; that which schedules
    tasks, allocates storage, and presents a default interface to the
    user between applications.  The facilities an operating system
    provides and its general design philosophy exert an extremely
    strong influence on programming style and on the technical cultures
    that grow up around its host machines.  Hacker folklore has been
    shaped primarily by the
            UNIX
            ,
            ITS
            ,
            TOPS-10
            ,

            TOPS-20
            /
            TWENEX
            ,
            WAITS
            ,
            CP/M
            ,
            MS-DOS
            , and

            Multics
             operating systems (most importantly by ITS and
    UNIX).
```

1.1311   optical diff

```
optical diff: n. See
vdiff
.
```

1.1312   optical grep

```
optical grep: n. See
vgrep
.
```

1.1313   optimism

```
        optimism: n. What a programmer is full of after fixing
the last bug and just before actually discovering the *next*
last bug.  Fred Brooks's book "The Mythical Man-Month" (See
"Brooks's Law") contains the following paragraph that describes
this extremely well:

  All programmers are optimists.  Perhaps this
  modern sorcery especially attracts those who believe in happy
  endings and fairy god-mothers.  Perhaps the hundreds of nitty
  frustrations drive away all but those who habitually focus on the
  end goal.  Perhaps it is merely that computers are young,
  programmers are younger, and the young are always optimists.  But
  however the selection process works, the result is indisputable:
  "This time it will surely run," or "I just found the last bug.".

See also
        Lubarsky's Law of Cybernetic Entomology
        .
```

1.1314   Orange Book

```
        Orange Book: n. The U.S. Government's standards document
"Trusted Computer System Evaluation Criteria, DOD standard
5200.28-STD, December, 1985" which characterize secure computing
architectures and defines levels A1 (most secure) through D
(least).  Stock UNIXes are roughly C1, and can be upgraded to
about C2 without excessive pain.  See also
        crayola books
        ,
```

```
          book titles
          .
```

1.1315   oriental food

```
          oriental food:: n. Hackers display an intense tropism towards
oriental cuisine, especially Chinese, and especially of the spicier
varieties such as Szechuan and Hunan.  This phenomenon (which has
also been observed in subcultures that overlap heavily with
hackerdom, most notably science-fiction fandom) has never been
satisfactorily explained, but is sufficiently intense that one can
assume the target of a hackish dinner expedition to be the best
local Chinese place and be right at least three times out of four.
See also
          ravs
          ,
          great-wall
          ,
          stir-fried random
          ,

          laser chicken
          ,
          Yu-Shiang Whole Fish
          .  Thai, Indian,
Korean, and Vietnamese cuisines are also quite popular.
```

1.1316   orphan

```
          orphan: [UNIX] n. A process whose parent has died; one inherited  ↩
               by
'init(1)'.  Compare
           zombie
          .
```

1.1317   orphaned i-node

```
          orphaned i-node: /or'f*nd i:'nohd/ [UNIX] n. 1. [techspeak] A
file that retains storage but no longer appears in the directories
of a filesystem.  2. By extension, a pejorative for any person no
longer serving a useful function within some organization, esp.

          lion food
```

without subordinates.

1.1318   orthogonal

orthogonal: [from mathematics] adj. Mutually independent; well
   separated; sometimes, irrelevant to. Used in a generalization of
   its mathematical meaning to describe sets of primitives or
   capabilities that, like a vector basis in geometry, span the
   entire 'capability space' of the system and are in some sense
   non-overlapping or mutually independent. For example, in
   architectures such as the PDP-11 or VAX where all or nearly all
   registers can be used interchangeably in any role with respect to
   any instruction, the register set is said to be orthogonal. Or, in
   logic, the set of operators 'not' and 'or' is orthogonal,
   but the set 'nand', 'or', and 'not' is not (because any
   one of these can be expressed in terms of the others). Also used
   in comments on human discourse: "This may be orthogonal to the
   discussion, but...."

1.1319   OS

                OS: /O-S/ 1. [
                Operating System
                ] n. An abbreviation heavily
   used in email, occasionally in speech. 2. n.,obs. On ITS, an
   output spy. See "
                OS and JEDGAR
                " (in
                Appendix

                A
).

1.1320   OS/2

                OS/2: /O S too/ n. The anointed successor to MS-DOS for Intel
   286- and 386-based micros; proof that IBM/Microsoft couldn't get it
   right the second time, either. Often called 'Half-an-OS'.
   Mentioning it is usually good for a cheap laugh among hackers ---
   the design was so
                baroque
                , and the implementation of 1.x so
   bad, that 3 years after introduction you could still count the
   major
                app

s shipping for it on the fingers of two hands --- in
unary. The 2.x versions are said to have improved somewhat, and
informed hackers now rate them superior to Microsoft Windows (an
endorsement which, however, could easily be construed as damning
with faint praise). See
                monstrosity

                ,
                cretinous

                ,

                second-system effect
                .

1.1321 out-of-band

                out-of-band: [from telecommunications and network theory] adj.
1. In software, describes values of a function which are not in its
'natural' range of return values, but are rather signals that
some kind of exception has occurred. Many C functions, for
example, return a nonnegative integral value, but indicate failure
with an out-of-band return value of -1. Compare
                hidden

                flag
                ,
                green bytes
                ,
                fence
                . 2. Also sometimes used to
describe what communications people call 'shift characters',
such as the ESC that leads control sequences for many terminals, or
the level shift indicators in the old 5-bit Baudot codes. 3. In
personal communication, using methods other than email, such as
telephones or
                snail-mail
                .

1.1322 overflow bit

                overflow bit: n. 1. [techspeak] A
                flag
                 on some processors
indicating an attempt to calculate a result too large for a
register to hold. 2. More generally, an indication of any kind of
capacity overload condition. "Well, the
                Ada
                 description was

         baroque
          all right, but I could hack it OK until they got to
the exception handling ... that set my overflow bit." 3. The
hypothetical bit that will be set if a hacker doesn't get to make a
trip to the Room of Porcelain Fixtures: "I'd better process an
internal interrupt before the overflow bit gets set".

1.1323   overflow pdl

         overflow pdl: [MIT] n. The place where you put things when your

         pdl
          is full. If you don't have one and too many things get
pushed, you forget something. The overflow pdl for a person's
memory might be a memo pad. This usage inspired the following
doggerel:

  Hey, diddle, diddle
  The overflow pdl
     To get a little more stack;
  If that's not enough
  Then you lose it all,
     And have to pop all the way back.
                                   --The Great Quux

The term
         pdl
          seems to be primarily an MITism; outside MIT this
term is replaced by 'overflow
         stack
         '.

1.1324   overrun

         overrun: n. 1. [techspeak] Term for a frequent consequence of data
arriving faster than it can be consumed, esp. in serial line
communications. For example, at 9600 baud there is almost exactly
one character per millisecond, so if a
         silo
          can hold only two
characters and the machine takes longer than 2 msec to get to
service the interrupt, at least one character will be lost.
2. Also applied to non-serial-I/O communications. "I forgot to
pay my electric bill due to mail overrun." "Sorry, I got four
phone calls in 3 minutes last night and lost your message to
overrun." When
         thrash
         ing at tasks, the next person to make a

request might be told "Overrun!" Compare
            firehose

            syndrome
            . 3. More loosely, may refer to a
            buffer overflow
               not necessarily related to processing time (as in
            overrun

            screw
).

1.1325   overrun screw

            overrun screw: [C programming] n. A variety of
            fandango on

            core
             produced by scribbling past the end of an array (C
implementations typically have no checks for this error). This is
relatively benign and easy to spot if the array is static; if it is
auto, the result may be to
            smash the stack
             --- often resulting
in
            heisenbug
            s of the most diabolical subtlety. The term
'overrun screw' is used esp. of scribbles beyond the end of
arrays allocated with 'malloc(3)'; this typically trashes the
allocation header for the next block in the
            arena
            , producing
massive lossage within malloc and often a core dump on the next
operation to use 'stdio(3)' or 'malloc(3)' itself. See

            spam
            ,
            overrun
            ; see also
            memory leak
            ,
            memory

            smash
            ,
            aliasing bug
            ,
            precedence lossage
            ,
            fandango on

            core
            ,

secondary damage
.

1.1326 P-mail

P-mail: n. Physical mail, as opposed to
email
. Synonymous
with

snail-mail
.

1.1327 P.O.D.

P.O.D.: /P-O-D/ Acronym for 'Piece Of Data' (as opposed to a
code section). Usage: pedantic and rare. See also
pod
.

1.1328 padded cell

padded cell: n. Where you put
luser
s so they can't hurt
anything. A program that limits a luser to a carefully restricted
subset of the capabilities of the host system (for example, the
'rsh(1)' utility on USG UNIX). Note that this is different
from an
iron box
because it is overt and not aimed at
enforcing security so much as protecting others (and the luser)
from the consequences of the luser's boundless naivet'e (see

naive
). Also 'padded cell environment'.

1.1329 page in

page in: [MIT] vi. 1. To become aware of one's surroundings again
after having paged out (see
page out
). Usually confined to
the sarcastic comment: "Eric pages in,
film at 11
!"
2. Syn. 'swap in'; see
swap
.

1.1330   page out

page out: [MIT] vi. 1. To become unaware of one's surroundings
temporarily, due to daydreaming or preoccupation. "Can you repeat
that? I paged out for a minute." See
page in
. Compare

glitch
,
thinko
. 2. Syn. 'swap out'; see
swap
.

1.1331   pain in the net

pain in the net: n. A
flamer
.

1.1332   paper-net

paper-net: n. Hackish way of referring to the postal service,
analogizing it to a very slow, low-reliability network. USENET

sig block
s sometimes include a "Paper-Net:" header just
before the sender's postal address; common variants of this are
"Papernet" and "P-Net". Note that the standard
netiquette

```
            guidelines discourage this practice as a waste of bandwidth,  ←
                 since
netters are quite unlikely to casually use postal addresses.
Compare
            voice-net
            ,
            snail-mail
            ,
            P-mail
            .
```

1.1333 param

```
param: /p*-ram'/ n. Shorthand for 'parameter'.  See also

parm
; compare
arg
,
var
.
```

1.1334 PARC

```
PARC: n. See
XEROX PARC
.
```

1.1335 parent message

```
parent message: n. What a
followup
 follows up.
```

1.1336 parity errors

```
parity errors: pl.n. Little lapses of attention or (in more severe
   cases) consciousness, usually brought on by having spent all night
   and most of the next day hacking.  "I need to go home and crash;
```

I'm starting to get a lot of parity errors." Derives from a
relatively common but nearly always correctable transient error in
RAM hardware. Parity errors can also afflict mass storage and
serial communication lines; this is more serious because not always
correctable.

1.1337 Parkinson's Law of Data

Parkinson's Law of Data: prov. "Data expands to fill the space
available for storage"; buying more memory encourages the use of
more memory-intensive techniques. It has been observed over the
last 10 years that the memory usage of evolving systems tends to
double roughly once every 18 months. Fortunately, memory density
available for constant dollars also tends to double about once
every 12 months (see
Moore's Law
); unfortunately, the laws of
physics guarantee that the latter cannot continue indefinitely.

1.1338 parm

parm: /parm/ n. Further-compressed form of
param
. This term
is an IBMism, and written use is almost unknown outside IBM
shops; spoken /parm/ is more widely distributed, but the synonym

arg
 is favored among hackers. Compare
arg
,
var
.

1.1339 parse

parse: [from linguistic terminology] vt. 1. To determine the
syntactic structure of a sentence or other utterance (close to the
standard English meaning). "That was the one I saw you." "I
can't parse that." 2. More generally, to understand or
comprehend. "It's very simple; you just kretch the glims and then
aos the zotz." "I can't parse that." 3. Of fish, to have to
remove the bones yourself. "I object to parsing fish", means "I
don't want to get a whole fish, but a sliced one is okay". A
'parsed fish' has been deboned. There is some controversy over

whether 'unparsed' should mean 'bony', or also mean
'deboned'.

1.1340 Pascal

          Pascal:: n. An Algol-descended language designed by Niklaus Wirth
on the CDC 6600 around 1967--68 as an instructional tool for
elementary programming. This language, designed primarily to keep
students from shooting themselves in the foot and thus extremely
restrictive from a general-purpose-programming point of view, was
later promoted as a general-purpose tool and, in fact, became the
ancestor of a large family of languages including Modula-2 and

          Ada
           (see also
          bondage-and-discipline language
). The
hackish point of view on Pascal was probably best summed up by a
devastating (and, in its deadpan way, screamingly funny) 1981 paper
by Brian Kernighan (of
          K&R
           fame) entitled "Why Pascal is
Not My Favorite Programming Language", which was turned down by the
technical journals but circulated widely via photocopies. It was
eventually published in "Comparing and Assessing Programming
Languages", edited by Alan Feuer and Narain Gehani (Prentice-Hall,
1984). Part of his discussion is worth repeating here, because its
criticisms are still apposite to Pascal itself after ten years of
improvement and could also stand as an indictment of many other
bondage-and-discipline languages. At the end of a summary of the
case against Pascal, Kernighan wrote:

  9. There is no escape

  This last point is perhaps the most important. The language is
  inadequate but circumscribed, because there is no way to escape its
  limitations. There are no casts to disable the type-checking when
  necessary. There is no way to replace the defective run-time
  environment with a sensible one, unless one controls the compiler
  that defines the "standard procedures". The language is closed.

  People who use Pascal for serious programming fall into a fatal
  trap. Because the language is impotent, it must be extended. But
  each group extends Pascal in its own direction, to make it look
  like whatever language they really want. Extensions for separate
  compilation, FORTRAN-like COMMON, string data types, internal
  static variables, initialization, octal numbers, bit operators,
  etc., all add to the utility of the language for one group but
  destroy its portability to others.

  I feel that it is a mistake to use Pascal for anything much beyond
  its original target. In its pure form, Pascal is a toy language,
  suitable for teaching but not for real programming.

Pascal has since been almost entirely displaced (by
            C
) from the
niches it had acquired in serious applications and systems
programming, but retains some popularity as a hobbyist language in
the MS-DOS and Macintosh worlds.

1.1341 pastie

            pastie: /pay'stee/ n. An adhesive-backed label designed to be
attached to a key on a keyboard to indicate some non-standard
character which can be accessed through that key. Pasties are
likely to be used in APL environments, where almost every key is
associated with a special character. A pastie on the R key, for
example, might remind the user that it is used to generate the rho
character. The term properly refers to nipple-concealing devices
formerly worn by strippers in concession to indecent-exposure
laws; compare
            tits on a keyboard
            .

1.1342 patch

            patch: 1. n. A temporary addition to a piece of code, usually as a

            quick-and-dirty
             remedy to an existing bug or misfeature. A
patch may or may not work, and may or may not eventually be
incorporated permanently into the program. Distinguished from a

            diff
             or
            mod
             by the fact that a patch is generated by more
primitive means than the rest of the program; the classical
examples are instructions modified by using the front panel
switches, and changes made directly to the binary executable of a
program originally written in an
            HLL
            . Compare
            one-line

            fix
            . 2. vt. To insert a patch into a piece of code. 3. [in the
UNIX world] n. A
            diff
             (sense 2). 4. A set of modifications to
binaries to be applied by a patching program. IBM operating

systems often receive updates to the operating system in the form
of absolute hexadecimal patches. If you have modified your OS, you
have to disassemble these back to the source. The patches might
later be corrected by other patches on top of them (patches were
said to "grow scar tissue"). The result was often a convoluted

          patch space
           and headaches galore. 5. [UNIX] the
'patch(1)' program, written by Larry Wall, which automatically
applies a patch (sense 3) to a set of source code.

There is a classic story of a
          tiger team
           penetrating a secure
military computer that illustrates the danger inherent in binary
patches (or, indeed, any patches that you can't --- or don't ---
inspect and examine before installing). They couldn't find any

          trap door
           s or any way to penetrate security of IBM's OS, so
they made a site visit to an IBM office (remember, these were
official military types who were purportedly on official business),
swiped some IBM stationery, and created a fake patch. The patch
was actually the trapdoor they needed. The patch was distributed
at about the right time for an IBM patch, had official stationery
and all accompanying documentation, and was dutifully installed.
The installation manager very shortly thereafter learned something
about proper procedures.

1.1343   patch space

          patch space: n. An unused block of bits left in a binary so that
it can later be modified by insertion of machine-language
instructions there (typically, the patch space is modified to
contain new code, and the superseded code is patched to contain a
jump or call to the patch space). The widening use of HLLs has
made this term rare; it is now primarily historical outside IBM
shops. See
          patch
           (sense 4),
          zap
           (sense 4),
          hook
           .

1.1344   path

```
                path: n. 1. A
                bang path
                 or explicitly routed
                Internet

                address
                ; a node-by-node specification of a link between two
    machines.  2. [UNIX] A filename, fully specified relative to the
    root directory (as opposed to relative to the current directory;
    the latter is sometimes called a 'relative path').  This is also
    called a 'pathname'.  3. [UNIX and MS-DOS] The 'search
    path', an environment variable specifying the directories in which
    the
                shell
                  (COMMAND.COM, under MS-DOS) should look for commands.
    Other, similar constructs abound under UNIX (for example, the
    C preprocessor has a 'search path' it uses in looking for
    '#include' files).
```

1.1345 pathological

```
pathological: adj. 1. [scientific computation] Used of a data set
    that is grossly atypical of normal expected input, esp. one that
    exposes a weakness or bug in whatever algorithm one is using.  An
    algorithm that can be broken by pathological inputs may still be
    useful if such inputs are very unlikely to occur in practice.
    2. When used of test input, implies that it was purposefully
    engineered as a worst case.  The implication in both senses is that
    the data is spectacularly ill-conditioned or that someone had to
    explicitly set out to break the algorithm in order to come up with
    such a crazy example.  3. Also said of an unlikely collection of
    circumstances.  "If the network is down and comes up halfway
    through the execution of that command by root, the system may just
    crash."  "Yes, but that's a pathological case."  Often used to
    dismiss the case from discussion, with the implication that the
    consequences are acceptable, since they will happen so infrequently
    (if at all) that it doesn't seem worth going to the extra trouble
    to handle that case (see sense 1).
```

1.1346 payware

```
                payware: /pay'weir/ n. Commercial software.  Oppose
                shareware
                   or
                freeware
                .
```

1.1347 PBD

PBD: /P-B-D/ [abbrev. of 'Programmer Brain Damage'] n. Applied
to bug reports revealing places where the program was obviously
broken by an incompetent or short-sighted programmer. Compare

UBD
; see also
brain-damaged
.

1.1348 PC-ism

PC-ism: /P-C-izm/ n. A piece of code or coding technique that
takes advantage of the unprotected single-tasking environment in
IBM PCs and the like, e.g., by busy-waiting on a hardware register,
direct diddling of screen memory, or using hard timing loops.
Compare

ill-behaved
,
vaxism
,
unixism
. Also,
'PC-ware' n., a program full of PC-isms on a machine with a more
capable operating system. Pejorative.

1.1349 PD

PD: /P-D/ adj. Common abbreviation for 'public domain', applied
to software distributed over

USENET

and from Internet archive
sites. Much of this software is not in fact public domain in
the legal sense but travels under various copyrights granting
reproduction and use rights to anyone who can

snarf

a copy. See

copyleft
.

1.1350 PDL

PDL: /P-D-L/, /pid'l/, /p*d'l/ or /puhd'l/ 1. n. 'Program
Design Language'. Any of a large class of formal and profoundly
useless pseudo-languages in which
                management
                 forces one to
design programs. Too often, management expects PDL descriptions to
be maintained in parallel with the code, imposing massive overhead
to little or no benefit. See also
                flowchart
                . 2. v. To design
using a program design language. "I've been pdling so long my
eyes won't focus beyond 2 feet." 3. n. 'Page Description
Language'. Refers to any language which is used to control a
graphics device, usually a laserprinter. The most common example
is, of course, Adobe's
                PostScript
                 language, but there are many
others, such as Xerox InterPress, etc.

1.1351 pdl

                pdl: /pid'l/ or /puhd'l/ [abbreviation for 'Push Down List'] n.
1. In ITS days, the preferred MITism for
                stack
                . See

                overflow pdl
                . 2. Dave Lebling, one of the co-authors of

                Zork
                ; (his
                network address
                 on the ITS machines was at one
time pdl@dms). 3. Rarely, any sense of
                PDL
                , as these are not
invariably capitalized.

1.1352 PDP-10

                PDP-10: [Programmed Data Processor model 10] n. The machine that
made timesharing real. It looms large in hacker folklore because
of its adoption in the mid-1970s by many university computing
facilities and research labs, including the MIT AI Lab, Stanford,
and CMU. Some aspects of the instruction set (most notably the
bit-field instructions) are still considered unsurpassed. The 10
was eventually eclipsed by the VAX machines (descendants of the

PDP-11) when DEC recognized that the 10 and VAX product lines were
competing with each other and decided to concentrate its software
development effort on the more profitable VAX. The machine was
finally dropped from DEC's line in 1983, following the failure of
the Jupiter Project at DEC to build a viable new model. (Some
attempts by other companies to market clones came to nothing; see

> Foonly
> and
> Mars
> .) This event spelled the doom of

> ITS
> and the technical cultures that had spawned the original

Jargon File, but by mid-1991 it had become something of a badge of
honorable old-timerhood among hackers to have cut one's teeth on a
PDP-10. See
> TOPS-10
>
> ,
> ITS
>
> ,
> AOS
>
> ,
> BLT
>
> ,
> DDT
>
> ,
>
> DPB
>
> ,
> EXCH
>
> ,
> HAKMEM
>
> ,
> JFCL
>
> ,
> LDB
>
> ,
> pop
>
> ,
>
> push
>
> ,
> Appendix A
>
> .

1.1353 PDP-20

> PDP-20: n. The most famous computer that never was.
> PDP-10
>   computers running the
> TOPS-10
> operating system were labeled

'DECsystem-10' as a way of differentiating them from the PDP-11.
Later on, those systems running
            TOPS-20
             were labeled
'DECSYSTEM-20' (the block capitals being the result of a lawsuit
brought against DEC by Singer, which once made a computer called
'system-10'), but contrary to popular lore there was never a
'PDP-20'; the only difference between a 10 and a 20 was the
operating system and the color of the paint. Most (but not all)
machines sold to run TOPS-10 were painted 'Basil Blue', whereas
most TOPS-20 machines were painted 'Chinese Red' (often mistakenly
called orange).

1.1354   peek

            peek: n.,vt. (and
            poke
) The commands in most microcomputer
BASICs for directly accessing memory contents at an absolute
address; often extended to mean the corresponding constructs in any

            HLL
             (peek reads memory, poke modifies it). Much hacking on
small, non-MMU micros consists of 'peek'ing around memory, more
or less at random, to find the location where the system keeps
interesting stuff. Long (and variably accurate) lists of such
addresses for various computers circulate (see
            interrupt list,

            the
). The results of 'poke's at these addresses may be highly
useful, mildly amusing, useless but neat, or (most likely) total

            lossage
             (see
            killer poke
).

Since a
            real operating system
             provides useful, higher-level
services for the tasks commonly performed with peeks and pokes on
micros, and real languages tend not to encourage low-level memory
groveling, a question like "How do I do a peek in C?" is
diagnostic of the
            newbie
            . (Of course, OS kernels often have to
do exactly this; a real C hacker would unhesitatingly, if
unportably, assign an absolute address to a pointer variable and
indirect through it.)

1.1355   pencil and paper

        pencil and paper: n. An archaic information storage and
transmission device that works by depositing smears of graphite on
bleached wood pulp. More recent developments in paper-based
technology include improved 'write-once' update devices which use
tiny rolling heads similar to mouse balls to deposit colored
pigment. All these devices require an operator skilled at
so-called 'handwriting' technique. These technologies are
ubiquitous outside hackerdom, but nearly forgotten inside it. Most
hackers had terrible handwriting to begin with, and years of
keyboarding tend to have encouraged it to degrade further. Perhaps
for this reason, hackers deprecate pencil-and-paper technology and
often resist using it in any but the most trivial contexts. See
also
        Appendix B
        .

1.1356   peon

        peon: n. A person with no special (
        root
         or
        wheel
)
privileges on a computer system. "I can't create an account on
foovax for you; I'm only a peon there."

1.1357   percent-S

        percent-S: /per-sent' es'/ [From the code in C's 'printf(3)'
library function used to insert an arbitrary string argument] n. An
unspecified person or object. "I was just talking to some
percent-s in administration." Compare
        random
        .

1.1358   perf

        perf: /perf/ n. Syn.
        chad
         (sense 1). The term 'perfory'
/per'f*-ree/ is also heard. The term

perf
 may also refer to
the perforations themselves, rather than the chad they produce when
torn.

1.1359   perfect programmer syndrome

perfect programmer syndrome: n. Arrogance; the egotistical
conviction that one is above normal human error. Most frequently
found among programmers of some native ability but relatively
little experience (especially new graduates; their perceptions may
be distorted by a history of excellent performance at solving
toy

problem
s). "Of course my program is correct, there is no need to
test it." "Yes, I can see there may be a problem here, but
I'll never type 'rm -r /' while in
root mode
."

1.1360   Perl

Perl: /perl/ [Practical Extraction and Report Language, a.k.a
Pathologically Eclectic Rubbish Lister] n. An interpreted language
developed by Larry Wall <lwall@jpl.nasa.gov>, author of
'patch(1)' and 'rn(1)') and distributed over USENET.
Superficially resembles 'awk(1)', but is much hairier (see

awk
). UNIX sysadmins, who are almost always incorrigible
hackers, increasingly consider it one of the
languages of

choice
. Perl has been described, in a parody of a famous remark
about 'lex(1)', as the "Swiss-Army chainsaw" of UNIX
programming.

1.1361   person of no account

person of no account: [University of California at Santa Cruz] n.
Used when referring to a person with no
network address

```
                , frequently
to forestall confusion.  Most often as part of an introduction:
"This is Bill, a person of no account, but he used to be
bill@random.com".  Compare
                return from the dead
                .
```

1.1362 pessimal

```
pessimal: /pes'im-l/ [Latin-based antonym for 'optimal'] adj.
   Maximally bad.  "This is a pessimal situation."  Also 'pessimize'
   vt. To make as bad as possible.  These words are the obvious
   Latin-based antonyms for 'optimal' and 'optimize', but for some
   reason they do not appear in most English dictionaries, although
   'pessimize' is listed in the OED.
```

1.1363 pessimizing compiler

```
pessimizing compiler: /pes'*-mi:z'ing k*m-pi:l'r/ [antonym of
   'optimizing compiler'] n. A compiler that produces object code that
   is worse than the straightforward or obvious hand translation.  The
   implication is that the compiler is actually trying to optimize the
   program, but through excessive cleverness is doing the opposite.  A
   few pessimizing compilers have been written on purpose, however, as
   pranks or burlesques.
```

1.1364 peta-

```
                peta-: /pe't*/ [SI] pref. See
                quantifiers
                .
```

1.1365 PETSCII

```
                PETSCII: /pet'skee/ [abbreviation of PET ASCII] n. The variation
          (many would say perversion) of the
                ASCII
                 character set used by
          the Commodore Business Machines PET series of personal computers
          and the later Commodore C64, C16, and C128 machines.  The PETSCII
          set used left-arrow and up-arrow (as in old-style ASCII) instead of
```

underscore and caret, placed the unshifted alphabet at positions
65--90, put the shifted alphabet at positions 193--218, and added
graphics characters.

1.1366 phage

phage: n. A program that modifies other programs or databases in
unauthorized ways; esp. one that propagates a
virus
 or

Trojan horse
. See also
worm
,
mockingbird
. The
analogy, of course, is with phage viruses in biology.

1.1367 phase

phase: 1. n. The offset of one's waking-sleeping schedule with
respect to the standard 24-hour cycle; a useful concept among
people who often work at night and/or according to no fixed
schedule. It is not uncommon to change one's phase by as much as 6
hours per day on a regular basis. "What's your phase?" "I've
been getting in about 8 P.M. lately, but I'm going to
wrap

around
 to the day schedule by Friday." A person who is roughly
12 hours out of phase is sometimes said to be in 'night mode'.
(The term 'day mode' is also (but less frequently) used, meaning
you're working 9 to 5 (or, more likely, 10 to 6).) The act of
altering one's cycle is called 'changing phase'; 'phase
shifting' has also been recently reported from Caltech.
2. 'change phase the hard way': To stay awake for a very long
time in order to get into a different phase. 3. 'change phase
the easy way': To stay asleep, etc. However, some claim that
either staying awake longer or sleeping longer is easy, and that it
is *shortening* your day or night that is really hard (see

wrap around
). The 'jet lag' that afflicts travelers who
cross many time-zone boundaries may be attributed to two distinct
causes: the strain of travel per se, and the strain of changing
phase. Hackers who suddenly find that they must change phase
drastically in a short period of time, particularly the hard way,

experience something very like jet lag without traveling.

1.1368   phase of the moon

        phase of the moon: n. Used humorously as a random parameter on
which something is said to depend. Sometimes implies unreliability
of whatever is dependent, or that reliability seems to be dependent
on conditions nobody has been able to determine. "This feature
depends on having the channel open in mumble mode, having the foo
switch set, and on the phase of the moon." See also

        heisenbug
        .

True story: Once upon a time there was a bug that really did depend
on the phase of the moon. There was a little subroutine that had
traditionally been used in various programs at MIT to calculate an
approximation to the moon's true phase. GLS incorporated this
routine into a LISP program that, when it wrote out a file, would
print a timestamp line almost 80 characters long. Very
occasionally the first line of the message would be too long and
would overflow onto the next line, and when the file was later read
back in the program would
        barf
        . The length of the first line
depended on both the precise date and time and the length of the
phase specification when the timestamp was printed, and so the bug
literally depended on the phase of the moon!

The first paper edition of the Jargon File (Steele-1983) included
an example of one of the timestamp lines that exhibited this bug,
but the typesetter 'corrected' it. This has since been
described as the phase-of-the-moon-bug bug.

1.1369   phase-wrapping

        phase-wrapping: [MIT] n. Syn.
        wrap around
        , sense 2.

1.1370   phreaking

phreaking: /freek'ing/ [from 'phone phreak'] n. 1. The art and science of cracking the phone network (so as, for example, to make free long-distance calls). 2. By extension, security-cracking in any other context (especially, but not exclusively, on communications networks) (see
cracking
).

At one time phreaking was a semi-respectable activity among hackers; there was a gentleman's agreement that phreaking as an intellectual game and a form of exploration was OK, but serious theft of services was taboo. There was significant crossover between the hacker community and the hard-core phone phreaks who ran semi-underground networks of their own through such media as the legendary "TAP Newsletter". This ethos began to break down in the mid-1980s as wider dissemination of the techniques put them in the hands of less responsible phreaks. Around the same time, changes in the phone network made old-style technical ingenuity less effective as a way of hacking it, so phreaking came to depend more on overtly criminal acts such as stealing phone-card numbers. The crimes and punishments of gangs like the '414 group' turned that game very ugly. A few old-time hackers still phreak casually just to keep their hand in, but most these days have hardly even heard of 'blue boxes' or any of the other paraphernalia of the great phreaks of yore.

1.1371 pico-

pico-: [SI: a quantifier meaning $* 10^{-12}$]
pref. Smaller than
nano-
; used in the same rather loose connotative way as
nano-
and
micro-
. This usage is not yet common in the way
nano-
and
micro-
are, but should be instantly recognizable to any hacker. See also
quantifiers
,
micro-
.

1.1372   pig, run like a

pig, run like a: v. To run very slowly on given hardware, said of
software. Distinct from
hog
.

1.1373   pilot error

pilot error: [Sun: from aviation] n. A user's misconfiguration or
misuse of a piece of software, producing apparently buglike results
(compare
UBD
). "Joe Luser reported a bug in sendmail that
causes it to generate bogus headers." "That's not a bug, that's
pilot error. His 'sendmail.cf' is hosed."

1.1374   ping

ping: [from the TCP/IP acronym 'Packet INternet Groper', prob.
originally contrived to match the submariners' term for a sonar
pulse] 1. n. Slang term for a small network message (ICMP ECHO)
sent by a computer to check for the presence and alertness of
another (the UNIX command 'ping(8)' can be used to do this
manually). Occasionally used as a phone greeting. See
ACK
,
also
ENQ
. 2. vt. To verify the presence of. 3. vt. To get
the attention of. 4. vt. To send a message to all members of a

mailing list
requesting an
ACK
(in order to verify that
everybody's addresses are reachable). "We haven't heard much of
anything from Geoff, but he did respond with an ACK both times I
pinged jargon-friends." 5. n. A quantum packet of happiness.
People who are very happy tend to exude pings; furthermore, one can
intentionally create pings and aim them at a needy party (e.g., a
depressed person). This sense of ping may appear as an
exclamation; "Ping!" (I'm happy; I am emitting a quantum of
happiness; I have been struck by a quantum of happiness). The form
"pingfulness", which is used to describe people who exude pings,
also occurs. (In the standard abuse of language, "pingfulness"
can also be used as an exclamation, in which case it's a much
stronger exclamation than just "ping"!). Oppose

        blargh

        .

The funniest use of 'ping' to date was described in January 1991 by
Steve Hayman on the USENET group comp.sys.next. He was trying
to isolate a faulty cable segment on a TCP/IP Ethernet hooked up to
a NeXT machine, and got tired of having to run back to his console
after each cabling tweak to see if the ping packets were getting
through. So he used the sound-recording feature on the NeXT, then
wrote a script that repeatedly invoked 'ping(8)', listened for
an echo, and played back the recording on each returned packet.
Result? A program that caused the machine to repeat, over and
over, "Ping ... ping ... ping ..." as long as the
network was up. He turned the volume to maximum, ferreted through
the building with one ear cocked, and found a faulty tee connector
in no time.

1.1375 Pink-Shirt Book

        Pink-Shirt Book: "The Peter Norton Programmer's Guide to the IBM
PC". The original cover featured a picture of Peter Norton with a
silly smirk on his face, wearing a pink shirt. Perhaps in
recognition of this usage, the current edition has a different
picture of Norton wearing a pink shirt. See also
        book titles

        .

1.1376 PIP

        PIP: /pip/ [Peripheral Interchange Program] vt.,obs. To copy;
from the program PIP on CP/M, RSX-11, RSTS/E, TOPS-10, and OS/8
(derived from a utility on the PDP-6) that was used for file
copying (and in OS/8 and RT-11 for just about every other file
operation you might want to do). It is said that when the program
was originated, during the development of the PDP-6 in 1963, it was
called ATLATL ('Anything, Lord, to Anything, Lord'; this played on
the Nahuatl word 'atlatl' for a spear-thrower, with connotations
of utility and primitivity that were no doubt quite intentional).
See also
        BLT

        ,

        dd

        ,

        cat

        .

1.1377   pistol

```
pistol: [IBM] n. A tool that makes it all too easy for you to
   shoot yourself in the foot.  "UNIX 'rm *' makes such a nice
   pistol!"
```

1.1378   pizza box

```
pizza box: [Sun] n. The largish thin box housing the electronics
   in (especially Sun) desktop workstations, so named because of its
   size and shape and the dimpled pattern that looks like air holes.

   Two meg single-platter removable disk packs used to be called
   pizzas, and the huge drive they were stuck into was referred to as
   a pizza oven.  It's an index of progress that in the old days just
   the disk was pizza-sized, while now the entire computer is.
```

1.1379   pizza, ANSI standard

```
             pizza, ANSI standard: /an'see stan'd*rd peet'z*/ [CMU] Pepperoni
   and mushroom pizza.  Coined allegedly because most pizzas ordered
   by CMU hackers during some period leading up to mid-1990 were of
   that flavor.  See also
             rotary debugger
             ; compare
             tea, ISO

             standard cup of
             .
```

1.1380   plaid screen

```
             plaid screen: [XEROX PARC] n. A 'special effect' that occurs
   when certain kinds of
             memory smash
             es overwrite the control
   blocks or image memory of a bit-mapped display.  The term "salt and
   pepper" may refer to a different pattern of similar origin.
   Though the term as coined at PARC refers to the result of an error,
   some of the
             X
              demos induce plaid-screen effects deliberately
   as a
             display hack
             .
```

1.1381   plain-ASCII

```
plain-ASCII: /playn-as'kee/ Syn.
flat-ASCII
.
```

1.1382   plan file

```
plan file: [UNIX] n. On systems that support
finger
, the
```
'.plan' file in a user's home directory is displayed when the user
is fingered. This feature was originally intended to be used to
keep potential fingerers apprised of one's location and near-future
plans, but has been turned almost universally to humorous and
self-expressive purposes (like a
```
sig block
).  See also

Hacking X for Y
.
```

A recent innovation in plan files has been the introduction of
"scrolling plan files" which are one-dimensional animations made
using only the printable ASCII character set, carriage return and
line feed, avoiding terminal specific escape sequences, since the

```
finger
 command will (for security reasons; see

letterbomb
) not pass the escape character.
```

Scrolling .plan files have become art forms in miniature, and some
sites have started competitions to find who can create the longest
running, funniest, and most original animations. Various animation
characters include:

```
  Centipede:
      mmmmme
  Lorry/Truck:
      oo-oP
  Andalusian Video Snail:
      _@/
```

and a compiler (ASP) is available on USENET for producing them.
See also

twirling baton
.

1.1383 platinum-iridium

platinum-iridium: adj. Standard, against which all others of the
same category are measured. Usage: silly. The notion is that one
of whatever it is has actually been cast in platinum-iridium alloy
and placed in the vault beside the Standard Kilogram at the
International Bureau of Weights and Measures near Paris. (From
1889 to 1960, the meter was defined to be the distance between two
scratches in a platinum-iridium bar kept in that same vault --- this
replaced an earlier definition as 10^(-7) times the distance
between the North Pole and the Equator along a meridian through
Paris; unfortunately, this had been based on an inexact value of
the circumference of the Earth. From 1960 to 1984 it was defined
to be 1650763.73 wavelengths of the orange-red line of krypton-86
propagating in a vacuum. It is now defined as the length of the
path traveled by light in a vacuum in the time interval of
1/299,792,458 of a second. The kilogram is now the only unit of
measure officially defined in terms of a unique artifact.) "This
garbage-collection algorithm has been tested against the
platinum-iridium cons cell in Paris." Compare
golden
.

1.1384 playpen

playpen: [IBM] n. A room where programmers work. Compare
salt

mines
.

1.1385 playte

playte: /playt/ 16 bits, by analogy with
nybble
 and

byte
. Usage: rare and extremely silly. See also
dynner
    and

```
          crumb
          .
```

1.1386 plingnet

```
          plingnet: /pling'net/ n. Syn.
          UUCPNET
          .  Also see

          Commonwealth Hackish
          , which uses 'pling' for
          bang
           (as in

          bang path
          ).
```

1.1387 plokta

```
plokta: /plok't*/ [Acronym for 'Press Lots Of Keys To Abort']
   v. To press random keys in an attempt to get some response from
   the system.  One might plokta when the abort procedure for a
   program is not known, or when trying to figure out if the system is
   just sluggish or really hung.  Plokta can also be used while trying
   to figure out any unknown key sequence for a particular operation.
   Someone going into 'plokta mode' usually places both hands flat
   on the keyboard and mashes them down, hoping for some useful
   response.

   A slightly more directed form of plokta can often be seen in mail
   messages or USENET articles from new users --- the text might end
   with

          ^X^C
          q
          quit
          :q
          ^C
          end
          x
          exit
          ZZ
          ^D
          ?
          help

   as the user vainly tries to find the right exit sequence, with the
   incorrect tries piling up at the end of the message....
```

1.1388 plonk

plonk: [USENET: possibly influenced by British slang 'plonk' for
cheap booze, or 'plonker' for someone behaving stupidly] The sound
a
newbie
makes as he falls to the bottom of a
kill file
.
Used almost exclusively in the
newsgroup
talk.bizarre,
this term (usually written "*plonk*") is a form of public
ridicule.

1.1389 plugh

plugh: /ploogh/ [from the
ADVENT
game] v. See
xyzzy
.

1.1390 plumbing

plumbing: [UNIX] n. Term used for
shell
code, so called
because of the prevalence of 'pipelines' that feed the output of
one program to the input of another. Under UNIX, user utilities
can often be implemented or at least prototyped by a suitable
collection of pipelines and temp-file grinding encapsulated in a
shell script; this is much less effort than writing C every time,
and the capability is considered one of UNIX's major winning
features. A few other OSs such as IBM's VM/CMS support similar
facilities. Esp. used in the construction 'hairy plumbing'
(see
hairy
). "You can kluge together a basic spell-checker
out of 'sort(1)', 'comm(1)', and 'tr(1)' with a
little plumbing." See also
tee
.

1.1391 PM

PM: /P-M/ 1. v. (from 'preventive maintenance') To bring down
a machine for inspection or test purposes. See
provocative

maintenance
; see also
scratch monkey
. 2. n. Abbrev. for
'Presentation Manager', an
elephantine
 OS/2 graphical user
interface.

1.1392 pnambic

pnambic: /p*-nam'bik/ [Acronym from the scene in the film
version of "The Wizard of Oz" in which the true nature of the
wizard is first discovered: "Pay no attention to the man behind
the curtain."] 1. A stage of development of a process or function
that, owing to incomplete implementation or to the complexity of
the system, requires human interaction to simulate or replace some
or all of the actions, inputs, or outputs of the process or
function. 2. Of or pertaining to a process or function whose
apparent operations are wholly or partially falsified.
3. Requiring
prestidigitization
.

The ultimate pnambic product was "Dan Bricklin's Demo", a program
which supported flashy user-interface design prototyping. There is
a related maxim among hackers: "Any sufficiently advanced
technology is indistinguishable from a rigged demo." See

magic
, sense 1, for illumination of this point.

1.1393 pod

pod: [allegedly from abbreviation POD for 'Prince Of Darkness'] n. ←
          A
Diablo 630 (or, latterly, any letter-quality impact printer). From
the DEC-10 PODTYPE program used to feed formatted text to it. Not

```
to be confused with
            P.O.D.
            .
```

1.1394 point-and-drool interface

```
            point-and-drool interface: n. Parody of the techspeak term
'point-and-shoot interface', describing a windows, icons, and
mouse-based interface such as is found on the Macintosh.  The
implication, of course, is that such an interface is only suitable
for idiots.  See
            for the rest of us
            ,
            WIMP environment
            ,

            Macintrash
            ,
            drool-proof paper
            .  Also 'point-and-grunt
interface'.
```

1.1395 poke

```
            poke: n.,vt. See
            peek
            .
```

1.1396 poll

```
poll: v.,n. 1. [techspeak] The action of checking the status of an
   input line, sensor, or memory location to see if a particular
   external event has been registered.  2. To repeatedly call or check
   with someone: "I keep polling him, but he's not answering his
   phone; he must be swapped out."  3. To ask.  "Lunch?  I poll for
   a takeout order daily."
```

1.1397 polygon pusher

polygon pusher: n. A chip designer who spends most of his or her
   time at the physical layout level (which requires drawing
   lots of multi-colored polygons). Also 'rectangle
   slinger'.

1.1398 POM

               POM: /P-O-M/ n. Common abbreviation for
               phase of the moon
               . Usage:
   usually in the phrase 'POM-dependent', which means
               flaky
               .

1.1399 pop

               pop: /pop/ [from the operation that removes the top of a stack,
   and the fact that procedure return addresses are usually saved on
   the stack] (also capitalized 'POP') 1. vt. To remove something from
   a
               stack
                or
               pdl
               . If a person says he/she has popped
   something from his stack, that means he/she has finally finished
   working on it and can now remove it from the list of things hanging
   overhead. 2. When a discussion gets to a level of detail so deep
   that the main point of the discussion is being lost, someone will
   shout "Pop!", meaning "Get back up to a higher level!" The
   shout is frequently accompanied by an upthrust arm with a finger
   pointing to the ceiling.

1.1400 POPJ

               POPJ: /pop'J/ [from a
               PDP-10
                return-from-subroutine
   instruction] n.,v. To return from a digression. By verb doubling,
   "Popj, popj" means roughly "Now let's see, where were we?"
   See
               RTI
               .

1.1401 post

```
        post: v. To send a message to a
        mailing list
         or
        newsgroup
                .
Distinguished in context from 'mail'; one might ask, for
example: "Are you going to post the patch or mail it to known
users?"
```

1.1402 postcardware

```
        postcardware: n.
        Shareware
         that borders on
        freeware
         , in
that the author requests only that satisfied users send a postcard
of their home town or something.  (This practice, silly as it might
seem, serves to remind users that they are otherwise getting
something for nothing, and may also be psychologically related to
real estate 'sales' in which $1 changes hands just to keep the
transaction from being a gift.)
```

1.1403 posting

```
        posting: n. Noun corresp. to v.
        post
         (but note that

        post
         can be nouned).  Distinguished from a 'letter' or ordinary

        email
         message by the fact that it is broadcast rather than
point-to-point.  It is not clear whether messages sent to a small
mailing list are postings or email; perhaps the best dividing line
is that if you don't know the names of all the potential
recipients, it is a posting.
```

1.1404 postmaster

postmaster: n. The email contact and maintenance person at a site
connected to the Internet or UUCPNET. Often, but not always, the
same as the
admin
. The Internet standard for electronic mail
(
RFC
-822) requires each machine to have a 'postmaster' address;
usually it is aliased to this person.

1.1405   PostScript

PostScript:: n. A Page Description Language (
PDL
), based on
work originally done by John Gaffney at Evans and Sutherland in
1976, evolving through 'JaM' ('John and Martin', Martin Newell) at

XEROX PARC
, and finally implemented in its current form by
John Warnock et al. after he and Chuck Geschke founded Adobe
Systems Incorporated in 1982. PostScript gets its leverage by
using a full programming language, rather than a series of
low-level escape sequences, to describe an image to be printed on a
laser printer or other output device (in this it parallels

EMACS
, which exploited a similar insight about editing
tasks). It is also noteworthy for implementing on-the fly
rasterization, from Bezier curve descriptions, of high-quality
fonts at low (e.g. 300 dpi) resolution (it was formerly believed
that hand-tuned bitmap fonts were required for this task). Hackers
consider PostScript to be among the most elegant hacks of all time,
and the combination of technical merits and widespread availability
has made PostScript the language of choice for graphical
output.

1.1406   pound on

pound on: vt. Syn.
bang on
.

1.1407   power cycle

power cycle: vt. (also, 'cycle power' or just 'cycle') To
power off a machine and then power it on immediately, with the
intention of clearing some kind of
hung
 or
gronk
ed
state. Syn.
120 reset
; see also
Big Red Switch
. Compare

Vulcan nerve pinch
,
bounce
 (sense 4), and
boot
, and
see the AI Koan in "
A Selection of AI Koans
" (in

Appendix A
) about Tom Knight and the novice.

1.1408   power hit

power hit: n. A spike or drop-out in the electricity supplying
your machine; a power
glitch
. These can cause crashes and
even permanent damage to your machine(s).

1.1409   PPN

PPN: /P-P-N/, /pip'n/ [from 'Project-Programmer Number'] n. A
user-ID under
TOPS-10
 and its various mutant progeny at SAIL,
BBN, CompuServe, and elsewhere. Old-time hackers from the PDP-10
era sometimes use this to refer to user IDs on other systems as
well.

1.1410 precedence lossage

precedence lossage: /pre's*-dens los'*j/ [C programmers] n.
Coding error in an expression due to unexpected grouping of
arithmetic or logical operators by the compiler. Used esp. of
certain common coding errors in C due to the nonintuitively low
precedence levels of `&', `|', `^', `<<',
and `>>' (for this reason, experienced C programmers
deliberately forget the language's
baroque
 precedence
hierarchy and parenthesize defensively). Can always be avoided by
suitable use of parentheses.
LISP
 fans enjoy pointing out
that this can't happen in *their* favorite language, which
eschews precedence entirely, requiring one to use explicit
parentheses everywhere. See
aliasing bug

,
memory leak

,

memory smash

,
smash the stack

,
fandango on core

,

overrun screw

.

1.1411 prepend

prepend: /pree`pend'/ [by analogy with `append'] vt. To
   prefix. As with `append' (but not `prefix' or `suffix' as a
   verb), the direct object is always the thing being added and not
   the original word (or character string, or whatever). "If you
   prepend a semicolon to the line, the translation routine will pass
   it through unaltered."

1.1412 prestidigitization

prestidigitization: /pres`t*-di`j*-ti:-zay'sh*n/ n. 1. The act
   of putting something into digital notation via sleight of hand.
   2. Data entry through legerdemain.

1.1413   pretty pictures

pretty pictures: n. [scientific computation] The next step up from

numbers
.   Interesting graphical output from a program that may
not have any sensible relationship to the system the program is
intended to model. Good for showing to
management
.

1.1414   prettyprint

prettyprint: /prit'ee-print/ (alt. 'pretty-print') v. 1. To
generate 'pretty' human-readable output from a
hairy
     internal representation; esp. used for the process of

grind
ing (sense 1) program code, and most esp. for LISP code.
2. To format in some particularly slick and nontrivial way.

1.1415   pretzel key

pretzel key: [Mac users] n. See
feature key
.

1.1416   prime time

prime time: [from TV programming] n. Normal high-usage hours on a
timesharing system; the day shift. Avoidance of prime time was
traditionally given as a major reason for
night mode
 hacking.
The rise of the personal workstation has rendered this term, along
with timesharing itself, almost obsolete. The hackish tendency to
late-night
hacking run
s has changed not a bit.

1.1417 printing discussion

printing discussion: [XEROX PARC] n. A protracted, low-level,
   time-consuming, generally pointless discussion of something only
   peripherally interesting to all.

1.1418 priority interrupt

                priority interrupt: [from the hardware term] n. Describes any
   stimulus compelling enough to yank one right out of
                hack mode
                .
Classically used to describe being dragged away by an
                SO
                 for
   immediate sex, but may also refer to more mundane interruptions
   such as a fire alarm going off in the near vicinity. Also called
   an
                NMI
                 (non-maskable interrupt), especially in PC-land.

1.1419 profile

                profile: n. 1. A control file for a program, esp. a text file
   automatically read from each user's home directory and intended to
   be easily modified by the user in order to customize the program's
   behavior. Used to avoid
                hardcoded
                 choices (see also
                dot

                file
                ,
                rc file
). 2. [techspeak] A report on the amounts of
   time spent in each routine of a program, used to find and
                tune
                   away the
                hot spot
                s in it. This sense is often verbed. Some
   profiling modes report units other than time (such as call counts)
   and/or report at granularities other than per-routine, but the idea
   is similar.

1.1420   proglet

> proglet: /prog'let/ [UK] n. A short extempore program
written to meet an immediate, transient need. Often written in
BASIC, rarely more than a dozen lines long, and containing no
subroutines. The largest amount of code that can be written off
the top of one's head, that does not need any editing, and that
runs correctly the first time (this amount varies significantly
according to one's skill and the language one is using). Compare

> toy program
> ,
> noddy
> ,
> one-liner wars
> .

1.1421   program

program: n. 1. A magic spell cast over a computer allowing it to
   turn one's input into error messages. 2. An exercise in
   experimental epistemology. 3. A form of art, ostensibly intended
   for the instruction of computers, which is nevertheless almost
   inevitably a failure if other programmers can't understand it.

1.1422   Programmer's Cheer

Programmer's Cheer: "Shift to the left! Shift to the right! Pop
   up, push down! Byte! Byte! Byte!" A joke so old it has hair on
   it.

1.1423   programming

programming: n. 1. The art of debugging a blank sheet of paper (or,
   in these days of on-line editing, the art of debugging an empty
   file). 2. A pastime similar to banging one's head against a
   wall, but with fewer opportunities for reward. 3. The most fun
   you can have with your clothes on (although clothes are not
   mandatory).

1.1424   programming fluid

programming fluid: n. 1. Coffee. 2. Cola. 3. Any caffeinacious
stimulant. Many hackers consider these essential for those
all-night hacking runs. See
unleaded
,
wirewater
.

1.1425   propeller head

propeller head: n. Used by hackers, this is syn. with
computer

geek
. Non-hackers sometimes use it to describe all techies.
Prob. derives from SF fandom's tradition (originally invented by
old-time fan Ray Faraday Nelson) of propeller beanies as fannish
insignia (though nobody actually wears them except as a joke).

1.1426   propeller key

propeller key: [Mac users] n. See
feature key
.

1.1427   proprietary

proprietary: adj. 1. In
marketroid
-speak, superior; implies a
product imbued with exclusive magic by the unmatched brilliance of
the company's own hardware or software designers. 2. In the
language of hackers and users, inferior; implies a product not
conforming to open-systems standards, and thus one that puts the
customer at the mercy of a vendor able to gouge freely on service
and upgrade charges after the initial sale has locked the customer
in.

1.1428 protocol

protocol: n. As used by hackers, this never refers to niceties
about the proper form for addressing letters to the Papal Nuncio or
the order in which one should use the forks in a Russian-style
place setting; hackers don't care about such things. It is used
instead to describe any set of rules that allow different machines
or pieces of software to coordinate with each other without
ambiguity. So, for example, it does include niceties about the
proper form for addressing packets on a network or the order in
which one should use the forks in the Dining Philosophers Problem.
It implies that there is some common message format and an accepted
set of primitives or commands that all parties involved understand,
and that transactions among them follow predictable logical
sequences. See also
handshaking
,
do protocol
.

1.1429 provocative maintenance

provocative maintenance: [common ironic mutation of 'preventive
maintenance'] n. Actions performed upon a machine at regularly
scheduled intervals to ensure that the system remains in a usable
state. So called because it is all too often performed by a

field servoid
 who doesn't know what he is doing; such
'maintenance' often *induces* problems, or otherwise
results in the machine's remaining in an *un*usable state for
an indeterminate amount of time. See also
scratch monkey
.

1.1430 prowler

prowler: [UNIX] n. A
daemon
 that is run periodically (typically
once a week) to seek out and erase
core
 files, truncate
administrative logfiles, nuke 'lost+found' directories, and
otherwise clean up the
cruft
 that tends to pile up in the
corners of a file system. See also

GFR

,

reaper

,

skulker

.

1.1431 pseudo

pseudo: /soo'doh/ [USENET: truncation of 'pseudonym'] n. 1. An
electronic-mail or
                USENET
                persona adopted by a human for
amusement value or as a means of avoiding negative repercussions of
one's net.behavior; a 'nom de USENET', often associated with
forged postings designed to conceal message origins. Perhaps the
best-known and funniest hoax of this type is
                BIFF
                .
2. Notionally, a
                flamage
                -generating AI program simulating a
USENET user. Many flamers have been accused of actually being such
entities, despite the fact that no AI program of the required
sophistication yet exists. However, in 1989 there was a famous
series of forged postings that used a phrase-frequency-based
travesty generator to simulate the styles of several well-known
flamers; it was based on large samples of their back postings
(compare
                Dissociated Press
). A significant number of people
were fooled by the forgeries, and the debate over their
authenticity was settled only when the perpetrator came forward to
publicly admit the hoax.

1.1432 pseudoprime

pseudoprime: n. A backgammon prime (six consecutive occupied
    points) with one point missing. This term is an esoteric pun
    derived from a mathematical method that, rather than determining
    precisely whether a number is prime (has no divisors), uses a
    statistical technique to decide whether the number is 'probably'
    prime. A number that passes this test is called a pseudoprime.
    The hacker backgammon usage stems from the idea that a pseudoprime
    is almost as good as a prime: it does the job of a prime until
    proven otherwise, and that probably won't happen.

1.1433   pseudosuit

pseudosuit: /soo'doh-s[y]oot`/ n. A
suit
 wannabee; a hacker
who has decided that he wants to be in management or administration
and begins wearing ties, sport coats, and (shudder!) suits
voluntarily. It's his funeral. See also
lobotomy
.

1.1434   psychedelicware

psychedelicware: /si:`k*-del'-ik-weir/ [UK] n. Syn.

display hack
. See also
smoking clover
.

1.1435   psyton

psyton: /si:'ton/ [TMRC] n. The elementary particle carrying the
sinister force. The probability of a process losing is
proportional to the number of psytons falling on it. Psytons are
generated by observers, which is why demos are more likely to fail
when lots of people are watching. [This term appears to have been
largely superseded by
bogon
; see also
quantum bogodynamics
.
--- ESR]

1.1436   pubic directory

pubic directory: [NYU] (also `pube directory' /pyoob'
d*-rek't*-ree/) n. The `pub' (public) directory on a machine that
allows
FTP
 access. So called because it is the default
location for
SEX

(sense 1). "I'll have the source in the
pube directory by Friday."

1.1437   puff

puff: vt. To decompress data that has been crunched by Huffman
coding. At least one widely distributed Huffman decoder program
was actually *named* 'PUFF', but these days it is usually
packaged with the encoder. Oppose
huff
.

1.1438   punched card

punched card:: alt. 'punch card' [techspeak] n.obs. The
signature medium of computing's
Stone Age
, now obsolescent
outside of some IBM shops. The punched card actually predated
computers considerably, originating in 1801 as a control device for
mechanical looms. The version patented by Hollerith and used with
mechanical tabulating machines in the 1890 U.S. Census was a piece
of cardboard about 90 mm by 215 mm. There is a widespread myth
that it was designed to fit in the currency trays used for that
era's larger dollar bills, but recent investigations have falsified
this.

IBM (which originated as a tabulating-machine manufacturer) married
the punched card to computers, encoding binary information as
patterns of small rectangular holes; one character per column,
80 columns per card. Other coding schemes, sizes of card, and
hole shapes were tried at various times.

The 80-column width of most character terminals is a legacy of the
IBM punched card; so is the size of the quick-reference cards
distributed with many varieties of computers even today. See

chad
,
chad box
,
eighty-column mind
,
green card
,
dusty deck
,

```
          lace card
          ,
          card walloper
          .
```

1.1439 punt

```
          punt: [from the punch line of an old joke referring to American
football: "Drop back 15 yards and punt!"] v. 1. To give up,
typically without any intention of retrying.  "Let's punt the
movie tonight."  "I was going to hack all night to get this
feature in, but I decided to punt" may mean that you've decided
not to stay up all night, and may also mean you're not ever even
going to put in the feature.  2. More specifically, to give up on
figuring out what the
          Right Thing
           is and resort to an
inefficient hack.  3. A design decision to defer solving a
problem, typically because one cannot define what is desirable
sufficiently well to frame an algorithmic solution.  "No way to
know what the right form to dump the graph in is --- we'll punt
that for now."  4. To hand a tricky implementation problem off
to some other section of the design.  "It's too hard to get the
compiler to do that; let's punt to the runtime system."
```

1.1440 Purple Book

```
          Purple Book: n. 1. The "System V Interface Definition".  The
covers of the first editions were an amazingly nauseating shade of
off-lavender. 2. Syn.
          Wizard Book
          . See also
          book

          titles
          .
```

1.1441 purple wire

```
          purple wire: [IBM] n. Wire installed by Field Engineers to work
around problems discovered during testing or debugging.  These are
called 'purple wires' even when (as is frequently the case) their
actual physical color is yellow....  Compare
          blue wire
```

,

yellow wire
, and
red wire
.

1.1442 push

push: [from the operation that puts the current information on a
stack, and the fact that procedure return addresses are saved on a
stack] (Also PUSH /push/ or PUSHJ /push'J/, the latter based on
the PDP-10 procedure call instruction.) 1. To put something onto a

stack
 or
pdl
. If one says that something has been pushed
onto one's stack, it means that the Damoclean list of things
hanging over ones's head has grown longer and heavier yet. This
may also imply that one will deal with it *before* other
pending items; otherwise one might say that the thing was 'added
to my queue'. 2. vi. To enter upon a digression, to save the
current discussion for later. Antonym of
pop
; see also

stack
,
pdl
.

1.1443 quad

quad: n. 1. Two bits; syn. for
quarter
,
crumb
,

tayste
. 2. A four-pack of anything (compare
hex
, sense 2).
3. The rectangle or box glyph used in the APL language for various
arcane purposes mostly related to I/O. Former Ivy-Leaguers and
Oxford types are said to associate it with nostalgic memories of
dear old University.

1.1444   quadruple bucky

quadruple bucky: n., obs. 1. On an MIT
space-cadet keyboard
,
use of all four of the shifting keys (control, meta, hyper, and
super) while typing a character key. 2. On a Stanford or MIT
keyboard in
raw mode
, use of four shift keys while typing a
fifth character, where the four shift keys are the control and meta
keys on *both* sides of the keyboard. This was very difficult
to do! One accepted technique was to press the left-control and
left-meta keys with your left hand, the right-control and
right-meta keys with your right hand, and the fifth key with your
nose.

Quadruple-bucky combinations were very seldom used in practice,
because when one invented a new command one usually assigned it to
some character that was easier to type. If you want to imply that
a program has ridiculously many commands or features, you can say
something like: "Oh, the command that makes it spin the tapes
while whistling Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is
quadruple-bucky-cokebottle." See
double bucky
,
bucky

bits
,
cokebottle
.

1.1445   quantifiers

quantifiers:: In techspeak and jargon, the standard metric
prefixes used in the SI (Syst'eme International) conventions for
scientific measurement have dual uses. With units of time or
things that come in powers of 10, such as money, they retain their
usual meanings of multiplication by powers of $1000 = 10^3$.
But when used with bytes or other things that naturally come in
powers of 2, they usually denote multiplication by powers of
$1024 = 2^{(10)}$.

Here are the SI magnifying prefixes, along with the corresponding
binary interpretations in common use:

```
  prefix  decimal  binary
  kilo-   1000^1   1024^1 = 2^10 = 1,024
  mega-   1000^2   1024^2 = 2^20 = 1,048,576
  giga-   1000^3   1024^3 = 2^30 = 1,073,741,824
  tera-   1000^4   1024^4 = 2^40 = 1,099,511,627,776
  peta-   1000^5   1024^5 = 2^50 = 1,125,899,906,842,624
  exa-    1000^6   1024^6 = 2^60 = 1,152,921,504,606,846,976
  zetta-  1000^7   1024^7 = 2^70 = 1,180,591,620,717,411,303,424
  yotta-  1000^8   1024^8 = 2^80 = 1,208,925,819,614,629,174,706,176
```

Here are the SI fractional prefixes:

```
  *prefix  decimal     jargon usage*
  milli-  1000^-1     (seldom used in jargon)
  micro-  1000^-2     small or human-scale (see
             micro-
             )
  nano-   1000^-3     even smaller (see
             nano-
             )
  pico-   1000^-4     even smaller yet (see
             pico-
             )
  femto-  1000^-5     (not used in jargon---yet)
  atto-   1000^-6     (not used in jargon---yet)
  zepto-  1000^-7     (not used in jargon---yet)
  yocto-  1000^-8     (not used in jargon---yet)
```

The prefixes zetta-, yotta-, zepto-, and yocto- have been included
in these tables purely for completeness and giggle value; they were
adopted in 1990 by the '19th Conference Generale des Poids et
Mesures'. The binary peta- and exa- loadings, though well
established, are not in jargon use either --- yet. The prefix
milli-, denoting multiplication by 1000^(-1), has always
been rare in jargon (there is, however, a standard joke about the
'millihelen' --- notionally, the amount of beauty required to
launch one ship). See the entries on

             micro-

             ,
             pico-
             , and

             nano-
              for more information on connotative jargon use of these
terms. 'Femto' and 'atto' (which, interestingly, derive not
from Greek but from Danish) have not yet acquired jargon loadings,
though it is easy to predict what those will be once computing
technology enters the required realms of magnitude (however, see

             attoparsec
).

There are, of course, some standard unit prefixes for powers of
10. In the following table, the 'prefix' column is the
international standard suffix for the appropriate power of ten; the
'binary' column lists jargon abbreviations and words for the
corresponding power of 2. The B-suffixed forms are commonly used

for byte quantities; the words 'meg' and 'gig' are nouns that may
(but do not always) pluralize with 's'.

```
  prefix    decimal    binary        pronunciation
  kilo-        k        K, KB,        /kay/
  mega-        M        M, MB, meg    /meg/
  giga-        G        G, GB, gig    /gig/,/jig/
```

Confusingly, hackers often use K or M as though they were suffix or
numeric multipliers rather than a prefix; thus "2K dollars", "2M
of disk space". This is also true (though less commonly) of G.

Note that the formal SI metric prefix for 1000 is 'k'; some use
this strictly, reserving 'K' for multiplication by 1024 (KB is
thus 'kilobytes').

K, M, and G used alone refer to quantities of bytes; thus, 64G is
64 gigabytes and 'a K' is a kilobyte (compare mainstream use of
'a G' as short for 'a grand', that is, $1000). Whether one
pronounces 'gig' with hard or soft 'g' depends on what one thinks
the proper pronunciation of 'giga-' is.

Confusing 1000 and 1024 (or other powers of 2 and 10 close in
magnitude) --- for example, describing a memory in units of
500K or 524K instead of 512K --- is a sure sign of the

            marketroid
            . One example of this: it is common to refer to the
capacity of 3.5"
            microfloppies
             as '1.44 MB' In fact, this is a
completely
            bogus
             number. The correct size is 1440 KB, that
is, 1440 * 1024 = 1474560 bytes. So the 'mega' in '1.44 MB' is
compounded of two 'kilos', one of which is 1024 and the other of
which is 1000. The correct number of megabytes would of course be
1440 / 1024 = 1.40625. Alas, this fine point is probably lost on
the world forever.

[1993 update: hacker Morgan Burke has proposed, to general
approval on USENET, the following additional prefixes:

groucho
     10^-30
harpo
     10^-27
harpi
     10^27
grouchi
     10^30

We observe that this would leave the prefixes zeppo-, gummo-, and
chico- available for future expansion. Sadly, there is little
immediate prospect that Mr. Burke's eminently sensible proposal
will be ratified.]

1.1446 quantum bogodynamics

quantum bogodynamics: /kwon'tm boh'goh-di:-nam'iks/ n. A theory
that characterizes the universe in terms of bogon sources (such as
politicians, used-car salesmen, TV evangelists, and
suit
s in
general), bogon sinks (such as taxpayers and computers), and
bogosity potential fields. Bogon absorption, of course, causes
human beings to behave mindlessly and machines to fail (and may
also cause both to emit secondary bogons); however, the precise
mechanics of the bogon-computron interaction are not yet understood
and remain to be elucidated. Quantum bogodynamics is most often
invoked to explain the sharp increase in hardware and software
failures in the presence of suits; the latter emit bogons, which
the former absorb. See
bogon
,
computron
,
suit
,
psyton
.

1.1447 quarter

quarter: n. Two bits. This in turn comes from the 'pieces of
eight' famed in pirate movies --- Spanish silver crowns that could
be broken into eight pie-slice-shaped 'bits' to make change.
Early in American history the Spanish coin was considered equal to
a dollar, so each of these 'bits' was considered worth
12.5 cents. Syn.
tayste
,
crumb
,
quad
. Usage:
rare. See also
nickle
,
nybble
,
byte
,
dynner

.

1.1448 ques

ques: /kwes/ 1. n. The question mark character ('?', ASCII
0111111). 2. interj. What? Also frequently verb-doubled as
"Ques ques?" See
wall
.

1.1449 quick-and-dirty

quick-and-dirty: adj. Describes a
crock
 put together under time
or user pressure. Used esp. when you want to convey that you think
the fast way might lead to trouble further down the road. "I can
have a quick-and-dirty fix in place tonight, but I'll have to
rewrite the whole module to solve the underlying design problem."
See also
kluge
.

1.1450 quine

quine: /kwi:n/ [from the name of the logician Willard V. Quine, ←↩
via
Douglas Hofstadter] n. A program that generates a copy of
its own source text as its complete output. Devising the shortest
possible quine in some given programming language is a common
hackish amusement. Here is one classic quine:

```
  ((lambda (x)
    (list x (list (quote quote) x)))
   (quote
      (lambda (x)
        (list x (list (quote quote) x)))))
```

This one works in LISP or Scheme. It's relatively easy to write
quines in other languages such as Postscript which readily handle
programs as data; much harder (and thus more challenging!) in
languages like C which do not. Here is a classic C quine for ASCII
machines:

```
char*f="char*f=%c%s%c;main(){printf(f,34,f,34,10);}%c";
main(){printf(f,34,f,34,10);}
```

For excruciatingly exact quinishness, remove the interior line
breaks. Some infamous
            Obfuscated C Contest
             entries have been
quines that reproduced in exotic ways.

1.1451   quote chapter and verse

            quote chapter and verse: [by analogy with the mainstream phrase]
v. To cite a relevant excerpt from an appropriate
            bible
            . "I
don't care if 'rn' gets it wrong; 'Followup-To: poster' is
explicitly permitted by
            RFC
            -1036. I'll quote chapter and
verse if you don't believe me." See also
            legalese
            ,

            language lawyer
            ,
            RTFS
              (sense 2).

1.1452   quotient

            quotient: n. See
            coefficient of X
            .

1.1453   quux

            quux: /kwuhks/ [Mythically, from the Latin semi-deponent verb
quuxo, quuxare, quuxandum iri; noun form variously 'quux' (plural
'quuces', anglicized to 'quuxes') and 'quuxu' (genitive
plural is 'quuxuum', for four u-letters out of seven in all,
using up all the 'u' letters in Scrabble).] 1. Originally, a

            metasyntactic variable
             like
```

```
              foo
               and
              foobar
              .
Invented by Guy Steele for precisely this purpose when he was young
and naive and not yet interacting with the real computing
community.  Many people invent such words; this one seems simply to
have been lucky enough to have spread a little.  In an eloquent
display of poetic justice, it has returned to the originator in the
form of a nickname.  2. interj. See
              foo
              ; however, denotes very
little disgust, and is uttered mostly for the sake of the sound of
it.  3. Guy Steele in his persona as 'The Great Quux', which is
somewhat infamous for light verse and for the 'Crunchly' cartoons.
4. In some circles, used as a punning opposite of 'crux'.  "Ah,
that's the quux of the matter!" implies that the point is
*not* crucial (compare
              tip of the ice-cube
              ).  5. quuxy:
adj. Of or pertaining to a quux.
```

1.1454   qux

```
              qux: /kwuhks/ The fourth of the standard
              metasyntactic

              variable
              , after
              baz
               and before the quu(u...)x series.
See
              foo
              ,
              bar
              ,
              baz
              ,
              quux
              .  This appears to be a
recent mutation from
              quux
              , and many versions (especially older
versions) of the standard series just run
              foo
              ,
              bar
              ,

              baz
              ,
              quux
              , ....
```

1.1455   QWERTY

QWERTY: /kwer'tee/ [from the keycaps at the upper left] adj.
Pertaining to a standard English-language typewriter keyboard
(sometimes called the Sholes keyboard after its inventor), as
opposed to Dvorak or foreign-language layouts or a
                space-cadet

                keyboard
                 or APL keyboard.

Historical note: The QWERTY layout is a fine example of a
                fossil
                .
It is sometimes said that it was designed to slow down the typist,
but this is wrong; it was designed to allow *faster* typing
--- under a constraint now long obsolete. In early typewriters,
fast typing using nearby type-bars jammed the mechanism. So Sholes
fiddled the layout to separate the letters of many common digraphs
(he did a far from perfect job, though; 'th', 'tr', 'ed', and 'er',
for example, each use two nearby keys). Also, putting the letters
of 'typewriter' on one line allowed it to be typed with particular
speed and accuracy for
                demo
                s. The jamming problem was
essentially solved soon afterward by a suitable use of springs, but
the keyboard layout lives on.

1.1456   rabbit job

rabbit job: [Cambridge] n. A batch job that does little, if any,
real work, but creates one or more copies of itself, breeding like
rabbits. Compare
                wabbit
                ,
                fork bomb
                .

1.1457   rain dance

rain dance: n. 1. Any ceremonial action taken to correct a
hardware problem, with the expectation that nothing will be
accomplished. This especially applies to reseating printed circuit

boards, reconnecting cables, etc. "I can't boot up the machine.
We'll have to wait for Greg to do his rain dance." 2. Any arcane
sequence of actions performed with computers or software in order
to achieve some goal; the term is usually restricted to rituals
that include both an
              incantation
               or two and physical activity
or motion. Compare
              magic
              ,
              voodoo programming
              ,
              black

              art
              ,
              cargo cult programming
              ,
              wave a dead chicken
              .

1.1458   rainbow series

              rainbow series: n. Any of several series of technical manuals
distinguished by cover color. The original rainbow series was the
NCSC security manuals (see
              Orange Book
              ,
              crayola books
              );
the term has also been commonly applied to the PostScript reference
set (see
              Red Book
              ,
              Green Book
              ,
              Blue Book
              ,
              White

              Book
). Which books are meant by "'the' rainbow series"
unqualified is thus dependent on one's local technical culture.

1.1459   random

              random: adj. 1. Unpredictable (closest to mathematical
definition); weird. "The system's been behaving pretty

randomly." 2. Assorted; undistinguished. "Who was at the
conference?" "Just a bunch of random business types."
3. (pejorative) Frivolous; unproductive; undirected. "He's just a
random loser." 4. Incoherent or inelegant; poorly chosen; not
well organized. "The program has a random set of misfeatures."
"That's a random name for that function." "Well, all the names
were chosen pretty randomly." 5. In no particular order, though
deterministic. "The I/O channels are in a pool, and when a file
is opened one is chosen randomly." 6. Arbitrary. "It generates
a random name for the scratch file." 7. Gratuitously wrong, i.e.,
poorly done and for no good apparent reason. For example, a
program that handles file name defaulting in a particularly useless
way, or an assembler routine that could easily have been coded
using only three registers, but redundantly uses seven for values
with non-overlapping lifetimes, so that no one else can invoke it
without first saving four extra registers. What

       randomness

       !

8. n. A random hacker; used particularly of high-school students
who soak up computer time and generally get in the way. 9. n.
Anyone who is not a hacker (or, sometimes, anyone not known to the
hacker speaking); the noun form of sense 2. "I went to the talk,
but the audience was full of randoms asking bogus questions".
10. n. (occasional MIT usage) One who lives at Random Hall. See
also

       J. Random

       ,

       some random X

       .

1.1460   random numbers

       random numbers:: n. When one wishes to specify a large but random
number of things, and the context is inappropriate for

       N

       , certain
numbers are preferred by hacker tradition (that is, easily
recognized as placeholders). These include the following:

  17

     Long described at MIT as 'the least random number'; see 23.

  23

     Sacred number of Eris, Goddess of Discord (along with 17 and
     5).

  42

     The Answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and
     Everything. (Note that this answer is completely fortuitous.
     ':-)')

  69

     From the sexual act. This one was favored in MIT's ITS
     culture.

  105

     69 hex = 105 decimal, and 69 decimal = 105 octal.

```
   666
        The Number of the Beast.
```

For further enlightenment, study the "Principia Discordia",
"
              The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy
              ", "The Joy
of Sex", and the Christian Bible (Revelation 13:18). See also

              Discordianism
               or consult your pineal gland. See also
              for

              values of
              .

1.1461   randomness

              randomness: n. 1. An inexplicable misfeature; gratuitous
inelegance. 2. A
              hack
               or
              crock
               that depends on a complex
combination of coincidences (or, possibly, the combination upon
which the crock depends for its accidental failure to malfunction).
"This hack can output characters 40--57 by putting the character
in the four-bit accumulator field of an XCT and then extracting
six bits --- the low 2 bits of the XCT opcode are the right
thing." "What randomness!" 3. Of people, synonymous with
'flakiness'. The connotation is that the person so described is
behaving weirdly, incompetently, or inappropriately for reasons
which are (a) too tiresome to bother inquiring into, (b) are
probably as inscrutable as quantum phenomena anyway, and (c) are
likely to pass with time. "Maybe he has a real complaint, or maybe
it's just randomness. See if he calls back."

1.1462   rape

              rape: vt. 1. To
              screw
               someone or something, violently; in
particular, to destroy a program or information irrecoverably.
Often used in describing file-system damage. "So-and-so was
running a program that did absolute disk I/O and ended up raping
the master directory." 2. To strip a piece of hardware for parts.
3. [CMU/Pitt] To mass-copy files from an anonymous ftp site.
"Last night I raped Simtel's dskutl directory."

1.1463 rare mode

rare mode: [UNIX] adj. CBREAK mode (character-by-character with
interrupts enabled). Distinguished from
raw mode
 and
cooked

mode
; the phrase "a sort of half-cooked (rare?) mode" is used
in the V7/BSD manuals to describe the mode. Usage: rare.

1.1464 raster blaster

raster blaster: n. [Cambridge] Specialized hardware for

bitblt
 operations (a
blitter
). Allegedly inspired by
'Rasta Blasta', British slang for the sort of portable stereo
Americans call a 'boom box' or 'ghetto blaster'.

1.1465 raster burn

raster burn: n. Eyestrain brought on by too many hours of looking ←
          at
low-res, poorly tuned, or glare-ridden monitors, esp. graphics
monitors. See
terminal illness
.

1.1466 rat belt

rat belt: n. A cable tie, esp. the sawtoothed, self-locking plastic
   kind that you can remove only by cutting (as opposed to a random
   twist of wire or a twist tie or one of those humongous metal clip
   frobs). Small cable ties are 'mouse belts'.

657 / 865

1.1467   rave

rave: [WPI] vi. 1. To persist in discussing a specific subject.
2. To speak authoritatively on a subject about which one knows
very little. 3. To complain to a person who is not in a position
to correct the difficulty. 4. To purposely annoy another person
verbally. 5. To evangelize. See

flame

. 6. Also used to
describe a less negative form of blather, such as friendly
bullshitting. 'Rave' differs slightly from

flame

in that
'rave' implies that it is the persistence or obliviousness of the
person speaking that is annoying, while

flame

implies somewhat
more strongly that the tone or content is offensive as well.

1.1468   rave on!

rave on!: imp. Sarcastic invitation to continue a

rave

, often by
someone who wishes the raver would get a clue but realizes this is
unlikely.

1.1469   ravs

ravs: /ravz/, also 'Chinese ravs' n. Jiao-zi (steamed or
boiled) or Guo-tie (pan-fried). A Chinese appetizer, known
variously in the plural as dumplings, pot stickers (the literal
translation of guo-tie), and (around Boston) 'Peking Ravioli'. The
term 'rav' is short for 'ravioli', which among hackers always
means the Chinese kind rather than the Italian kind. Both consist
of a filling in a pasta shell, but the Chinese kind includes no
cheese, uses a thinner pasta, has a pork-vegetable filling (good
ones include Chinese chives), and is cooked differently, either by
steaming or frying. A rav or dumpling can be cooked any way, but a
potsticker is always the fried kind (so called because it sticks to
the frying pot and has to be scraped off). "Let's get
hot-and-sour soup and three orders of ravs." See also

oriental food

.

1.1470   raw mode

raw mode: n. A mode that allows a program to transfer bits
directly to or from an I/O device (or, under
bogus
 systems
that make a distinction, a disk file) without any processing,
abstraction, or interpretation by the operating system. Compare

rare mode
,
cooked mode
. This is techspeak under UNIX,
jargon elsewhere.

1.1471   rc file

rc file: /R-C fi:l/ [UNIX: from the startup script
'/etc/rc', but this is commonly believed to have been named
after older scripts to 'run commands'] n. Script file containing
startup instructions for an application program (or an entire
operating system), usually a text file containing commands of the
sort that might have been invoked manually once the system was
running but are to be executed automatically each time the system
starts up. See also
dot file
,
profile
 (sense 1).

1.1472   RE

RE: /R-E/ n. Common spoken and written shorthand for
regexp
.

1.1473   read-only user

read-only user: n. Describes a
luser
 who uses computers almost
exclusively for reading USENET, bulletin boards, and/or email,
rather than writing code or purveying useful information. See

twink

,

terminal junkie

,

lurker

.

1.1474 README file

README file: n. Hacker's-eye introduction traditionally included
   in the top-level directory of a UNIX source distribution,
   containing a pointer to more detailed documentation, credits,
   miscellaneous revision history, notes, etc. (The file may be named
   README, or READ.ME, or rarely ReadMe or readme.txt or some other
   variant.) In the Mac and PC worlds, software is not usually
   distributed in source form, and the README is more likely to
   contain user-oriented material like last-minute documentation
   changes, error workarounds, and restrictions. When asked, hackers
   invariably relate the README convention to the famous scene in
   Lewis Carroll's "Alice's Adventures In Wonderland" in which
   Alice confronts magic munchies labeled "Eat Me" and "Drink Me".

1.1475 real

real: adj. Not simulated. Often used as a specific antonym to

virtual
 in any of its jargon senses.

1.1476 real estate

real estate: n. May be used for any critical resource measured in
units of area. Most frequently used of 'chip real estate', the
area available for logic on the surface of an integrated circuit
(see also

nanoacre
). May also be used of floor space in a

dinosaur pen
, or even space on a crowded desktop (whether
physical or electronic).

1.1477   real hack

```
                  real hack: n. A
                  crock
                  .  This is sometimes used affectionately;
see
                  hack
                  .
```

1.1478   real operating system

```
                  real operating system: n. The sort the speaker is used to.  People
from the BSDophilic academic community are likely to issue comments
like "System V?  Why don't you use a *real* operating
system?", people from the commercial/industrial UNIX sector are
known to complain "BSD?  Why don't you use a *real*
operating system?", and people from IBM object "UNIX?  Why don't
you use a *real* operating system?"  See
                  holy wars
                  ,

                  religious issues
                  ,
                  proprietary
                  ,
                  Get a real computer!
```

1.1479   Real Programmer

```
                  Real Programmer: [indirectly, from the book "Real Men Don't
Eat Quiche"] n. A particular sub-variety of hacker: one possessed
of a flippant attitude toward complexity that is arrogant even when
justified by experience.  The archetypal 'Real Programmer' likes
to program on the
                  bare metal
                   and is very good at same,
remembers the binary opcodes for every machine he has ever
programmed, thinks that HLLs are sissy, and uses a debugger to edit
his code because full-screen editors are for wimps.  Real
Programmers aren't satisfied with code that hasn't been
                  bum
                  med
into a state of
                  tense
                  ness just short of rupture.  Real
Programmers never use comments or write documentation: "If it was
hard to write", says the Real Programmer, "it should be hard to
understand."  Real Programmers can make machines do things that
were never in their spec sheets; in fact, they are seldom really
```

happy unless doing so. A Real Programmer's code can awe with its
fiendish brilliance, even as its crockishness appalls. Real
Programmers live on junk food and coffee, hang line-printer art on
their walls, and terrify the crap out of other programmers ---
because someday, somebody else might have to try to understand
their code in order to change it. Their successors generally
consider it a
                Good Thing
                 that there aren't many Real
Programmers around any more. For a famous (and somewhat more
positive) portrait of a Real Programmer, see "
                The Story

                of Mel, a Real Programmer
                " in
                Appendix A
                . The term itself
was popularized by a 1983 Datamation article "Real
Programmers Don't Use Pascal" by Ed Post, still circulating on
USENET and Internet in on-line form.

1.1480   Real Soon Now

Real Soon Now: [orig. from SF's fanzine community, popularized by
   Jerry Pournelle's column in "BYTE"] adv. 1. Supposed to be
   available (or fixed, or cheap, or whatever) real soon now according
   to somebody, but the speaker is quite skeptical. 2. When one's
   gods, fates, or other time commitments permit one to get to it (in
   other words, don't hold your breath). Often abbreviated RSN.

1.1481   real time

real time: 1. [techspeak] adj. Describes an application which
   requires a program to respond to stimuli within some small upper
   limit of response time (typically milli- or microseconds). Process
   control at a chemical plant is the classic example. Such
   applications often require special operating systems (because
   everything else must take a back seat to response time) and
   speed-tuned hardware. 2. adv. In jargon, refers to doing something
   while people are watching or waiting. "I asked her how to find
   the calling procedure's program counter on the stack and she came
   up with an algorithm in real time."

1.1482   real user

real user: n. 1. A commercial user. One who is paying *real*
money for his computer usage. 2. A non-hacker. Someone using the
system for an explicit purpose (a research project, a course, etc.)
other than pure exploration. See
user
. Hackers who are also
students may also be real users. "I need this fixed so I can do a
problem set. I'm not complaining out of randomness, but as a real
user." See also
luser
.

1.1483 Real World

Real World: n. 1. Those institutions at which 'programming' may
be used in the same sentence as 'FORTRAN', '
COBOL
',
'RPG', '
IBM
', 'DBASE', etc. Places where programs do such
commercially necessary but intellectually uninspiring things as
generating payroll checks and invoices. 2. The location of
non-programmers and activities not related to programming. 3. A
bizarre dimension in which the standard dress is shirt and tie and
in which a person's working hours are defined as 9 to 5 (see

code grinder
). 4. Anywhere outside a university. "Poor
fellow, he's left MIT and gone into the Real World." Used
pejoratively by those not in residence there. In conversation,
talking of someone who has entered the Real World is not unlike
speaking of a deceased person. It is also noteworthy that on the
campus of Cambridge University in England, there is a gaily-painted
lamp-post which bears the label 'REALITY CHECKPOINT'. It marks the
boundary between university and the Real World; check your notions
of reality before passing. This joke is funnier because the
Cambridge 'campus' is actually coextensive with the center of
Cambridge. See also
fear and loathing
,
mundane
, and

uninteresting
.

1.1484   reality check

reality check: n. 1. The simplest kind of test of software or
hardware; doing the equivalent of asking it what 2 + 2 is
and seeing if you get 4. The software equivalent of a

smoke test
. 2. The act of letting a
real user
 try out
prototype software. Compare
sanity check
.

1.1485   reaper

reaper: n. A
prowler
 that
GFR
s files. A file removed in
this way is said to have been 'reaped'.

1.1486   rectangle slinger

rectangle slinger: n. See
polygon pusher
.

1.1487   recursion

recursion: n. See
recursion
. See also
tail recursion
.

1.1488   recursive acronym

recursive acronym:: pl.n. A hackish (and especially MIT) tradition
is to choose acronyms/abbreviations that refer humorously to
themselves or to other acronyms/abbreviations. The classic
examples were two MIT editors called EINE ("EINE Is Not EMACS")
and ZWEI ("ZWEI Was EINE Initially"). More recently, there is a
Scheme compiler called LIAR (Liar Imitates Apply Recursively), and

GNU
 (q.v., sense 1) stands for "GNU's Not UNIX!" --- and a
company with the name CYGNUS, which expands to "Cygnus, Your GNU
Support". See also
mung
,
EMACS
.

1.1489   Red Book

Red Book: n. 1. Informal name for one of the three standard
references on
PostScript
 ("PostScript Language Reference
Manual", Adobe Systems (Addison-Wesley, 1985; QA76.73.P67P67; ISBN
0-201-10174-2, or the 1990 second edition ISBN 0-201-18127-4); the
others are known as the
Green Book
, the
Blue Book
, and
the
White Book
 (sense 2). 2. Informal name for one of the 3
standard references on Smalltalk ("Smalltalk-80: The
Interactive Programming Environment" by Adele Goldberg
(Addison-Wesley, 1984; QA76.8.S635G638; ISBN 0-201-11372-4); this
too is associated with blue and green books). 3. Any of the
1984 standards issued by the CCITT eighth plenary assembly. These
include, among other things, the X.400 email spec and the Group
1 through 4 fax standards. 4. The new version of the
Green

Book
 (sense 4) --- IEEE 1003.1-1990, a.k.a ISO 9945-1 --- is
(because of the color and the fact that it is printed on A4 paper)
known in the U.S.A. as "the Ugly Red Book That Won't Fit On The
Shelf" and in Europe as "the Ugly Red Book That's A Sensible
Size". 5. The NSA "Trusted Network Interpretation" companion
to the
Orange Book
. See also

```
            book titles
            .
```

1.1490   red wire

```
            red wire: [IBM] n. Patch wires installed by programmers who have
no business mucking with the hardware.  It is said that the only
thing more dangerous than a hardware guy with a code patch is a
```

```
            softy
             with a soldering iron....  Compare
            blue wire
            ,

            yellow wire
            ,
            purple wire
            .
```

1.1491   regexp

```
            regexp: /reg'eksp/ [UNIX] n. (alt. 'regex' or 'reg-ex')
1. Common written and spoken abbreviation for 'regular
expression', one of the wildcard patterns used, e.g., by UNIX
utilities such as 'grep(1)', 'sed(1)', and 'awk(1)'.
These use conventions similar to but more elaborate than those
described under
            glob
            .  For purposes of this lexicon, it is
sufficient to note that regexps also allow complemented character
sets using '^'; thus, one can specify 'any non-alphabetic
character' with '[^A-Za-z]'.  2. Name of a well-known PD
regexp-handling package in portable C, written by revered USENETter
Henry Spencer <henry@zoo.toronto.edu>.
```

1.1492   register dancing

```
register dancing: n. Many older processor architectures suffer
    from a serious shortage of general-purpose registers.  This is
    especially a problem for compiler-writers, because their generated
    code needs places to store temporaries for things like intermediate
    values in expression evaluation.  Some designs with this problem,
    like the Intel 80x86, do have a handful of special-purpose
    registers that can be pressed into service, providing suitable care
```

is taken to avoid unpleasant side effects on the state of the
processor: while the special-purpose register is being used to hold
an intermediate value, a delicate minuet is required in which the
previous value of the register is saved and then restored just before
the official function (and value) of the special-purpose register is
again needed.

1.1493   reincarnation, cycle of

reincarnation, cycle of: n. See
cycle of reincarnation
.

1.1494   reinvent the wheel

reinvent the wheel: v. To design or implement a tool equivalent to
an existing one or part of one, with the implication that doing so
is silly or a waste of time. This is often a valid criticism.
On the other hand, automobiles don't use wooden rollers, and some
kinds of wheel have to be reinvented many times before you get them
right. On the third hand, people reinventing the wheel do tend to
come up with the moral equivalent of a trapezoid with an offset
axle.

1.1495   religion of CHI

religion of CHI: n. /ki:/ [Case Western Reserve University] n.
Yet another hackish parody religion (see also
Church of the

SubGenius
,
Discordianism
). In the mid-70s, the canonical
"Introduction to Programming" courses at CWRU were taught in
Algol, and student exercises were punched on cards and run on a
Univac 1108 system using a homebrew operating system named CHI.
The religion had no doctrines and but one ritual: whenever the
worshipper noted that a digital clock read 11:08, he or she would
recite the phrase "It is 11:08; ABS, ALPHABETIC, ARCSIN, ARCCOS,
ARCTAN." The last five words were the first five functions in the
appropriate chapter of the Algol manual; note the special
pronunciations /obz/ and /ark'sin/ rather than the more common
/ahbz/ and /ark'si:n/. Using an alarm clock to warn of 11:08's
arrival was
considered harmful

.

1.1496 religious issues

religious issues: n. Questions which seemingly cannot be raised without touching off
holy wars
, such as "What is the best
operating system (or editor, language, architecture, shell, mail reader, news reader)?", "What about that Heinlein guy, eh?", "What should we add to the new Jargon File?" See
holy wars
;
see also
theology
,
bigot
.

This term is a prime example of
ha ha only serious
. People
actually develop the most amazing and religiously intense attachments to their tools, even when the tools are intangible. The most constructive thing one can do when one stumbles into the crossfire is mumble
Get a life!
and leave --- unless, of course,
one's *own* unassailably rational and obviously correct choices are being slammed.

1.1497 replicator

replicator: n. Any construct that acts to produce copies of itself; this could be a living organism, an idea (see
meme
), a
program (see
quine
,
worm
,
wabbit
,
fork bomb
,
and
virus

), a pattern in a cellular automaton (see
life
,
sense 1), or (speculatively) a robot or
nanobot
. It is even
claimed by some that
UNIX
and
C
are the symbiotic halves
of an extremely successful replicator; see
UNIX conspiracy
.

1.1498 reply

reply: n. See
followup
.

1.1499 restriction

restriction: n. A
bug
or design error that limits a program's
capabilities, and which is sufficiently egregious that nobody can
quite work up enough nerve to describe it as a
feature
. Often
used (esp. by
marketroid
types) to make it sound as though
some crippling bogosity had been intended by the designers all
along, or was forced upon them by arcane technical constraints of a
nature no mere user could possibly comprehend (these claims are
almost invariably false).

Old-time hacker Joseph M. Newcomer advises that whenever choosing a
quantifiable but arbitrary restriction, you should make it either a
power of 2 or a power of 2 minus 1. If you impose a limit of
17 items in a list, everyone will know it is a random number --- on
the other hand, a limit of 15 or 16 suggests some deep reason
(involving 0- or 1-based indexing in binary) and you will get less

flamage
for it. Limits which are round numbers in base 10 are
always especially suspect.

1.1500 retcon

retcon: /ret'kon/ [short for 'retroactive continuity', from
   the USENET newsgroup rec.arts.comics] 1. n. The common
   situation in pulp fiction (esp. comics or soap operas) where a
   new story 'reveals' things about events in previous stories,
   usually leaving the 'facts' the same (thus preserving
   continuity) while completely changing their interpretation. For
   example, revealing that a whole season of "Dallas" was a
   dream was a retcon. 2. vt. To write such a story about a character
   or fictitious object. "Byrne has retconned Superman's cape so
   that it is no longer unbreakable." "Marvelman's old adventures
   were retconned into synthetic dreams." "Swamp Thing was
   retconned from a transformed person into a sentient vegetable."
   "Darth Vader was retconned into Luke Skywalker's father in
   "The Empire Strikes Back".

   [This term is included because it is a good example of hackish
   linguistic innovation in a field completely unrelated to computers.
   The word 'retcon' will probably spread through comics fandom and
   lose its association with hackerdom within a couple of years; for
   the record, it started here. --- ESR]

   [1993 update: some comics fans on the net now claim that retcon was
   independently in use in comics fandom before rec.arts.comics.
   In lexicography, nothing is ever simple. --- ESR]

1.1501 RETI

               RETI: v. Syn.
               RTI

1.1502 retrocomputing

               retrocomputing: /ret'-roh-k*m-pyoo'ting/ n. Refers to emulations
   of way-behind-the-state-of-the-art hardware or software, or
   implementations of never-was-state-of-the-art; esp. if such
   implementations are elaborate practical jokes and/or parodies,
   written mostly for
               hack value
               , of more 'serious' designs.
   Perhaps the most widely distributed retrocomputing utility was the
   'pnch(6)' or 'bcd(6)' program on V7 and other early UNIX
   versions, which would accept up to 80 characters of text argument
   and display the corresponding pattern in

```
            punched card
             code.
Other well-known retrocomputing hacks have included the programming
language
            INTERCAL
            , a
            JCL
            -emulating shell for UNIX, the
card-punch-emulating editor named 029, and various elaborate PDP-11
hardware emulators and RT-11 OS emulators written just to keep an
old, sourceless
            Zork
             binary running.
```

1.1503   return from the dead

```
            return from the dead: v. To regain access to the net after a long
   absence.  Compare
            person of no account
            .
```

1.1504   RFC

```
RFC: /R-F-C/ [Request For Comment] n. One of a long-established
   series of numbered Internet informational documents and standards
   widely followed by commercial software and freeware in the Internet
   and UNIX communities.  Perhaps the single most influential one has
   been RFC-822 (the Internet mail-format standard).  The RFCs are
   unusual in that they are floated by technical experts acting on
   their own initiative and reviewed by the Internet at large, rather
   than formally promulgated through an institution such as ANSI.
   For this reason, they remain known as RFCs even once
   adopted as standards.

   The RFC tradition of pragmatic, experience-driven, after-the-fact
   standard writing done by individuals or small working groups has
   important advantages over the more formal, committee-driven process
   typical of ANSI or ISO.  Emblematic of some of these advantages is
   the existence of a flourishing tradition of `joke' RFCs; usually
   at least one a year is published, usually on April 1st.  Well-known
   joke RFCs have included 527 ("ARPAWOCKY", R. Merryman, UCSD; 22
   June 1973), 748 ("Telnet Randomly-Lose Option", Mark R. Crispin;
   1 April 1978), and 1149 ("A Standard for the Transmission of IP
   Datagrams on Avian Carriers", D. Waitzman, BBN STC; 1 April
   1990).  The first was a Lewis Carroll pastiche; the second a parody
   of the TCP-IP documentation style, and the third a deadpan
   skewering of standards-document legalese, describing protocols for
   transmitting Internet data packets by carrier pigeon.
```

The RFCs are most remarkable for how well they work --- they manage to
have neither the ambiguities that are usually rife in informal
specifications, nor the committee-perpetrated misfeatures that often
haunt formal standards, and they define a network that has grown to
truly worldwide proportions.

1.1505   RFE

RFE: /R-F-E/ n. 1. [techspeak] Request For Enhancement (compare

RFC
). 2. [from 'Radio Free Europe', Bellcore and Sun] Radio
Free Ethernet, a system (originated by Peter Langston) for
broadcasting audio among Sun SPARCstations over the
ethernet.

1.1506   rib site

rib site: [by analogy with
backbone site
] n. A machine that
has an on-demand high-speed link to a
backbone site
 and serves
as a regional distribution point for lots of third-party traffic in
email and USENET news. Compare
leaf site
,
backbone site
.

1.1507   rice box

rice box: [from ham radio slang] n. Any Asian-made commodity
   computer, esp. an 80x86-based machine built to IBM PC-compatible
   ISA or EISA-bus standards.

1.1508   Right Thing

Right Thing: n. That which is *compellingly* the correct or
appropriate thing to use, do, say, etc. Often capitalized, always
emphasized in speech as though capitalized. Use of this term often
implies that in fact reasonable people may disagree. "What's the
right thing for LISP to do when it sees '(mod a 0)'? Should
it return 'a', or give a divide-by-0 error?" Oppose

Wrong Thing
.

1.1509 RL

RL: // [MUD community] n. Real Life. "Firiss laughs in RL"
means that Firiss's player is laughing. Oppose
VR
.

1.1510 roach

roach: [Bell Labs] vt. To destroy, esp. of a data structure.   ↩
    Hardware
gets
toast
ed or
fried
, software gets roached.

1.1511 robot

robot: [IRC, MUD] n. An
IRC
 or
MUD
 user who is actually
a program. On IRC, typically the robot provides some useful
service. Examples are NickServ, which tries to prevent random
users from adopting
nick
s already claimed by others, and
MsgServ, which allows one to send asynchronous messages to be
delivered when the recipient signs on. Also common are
'annoybots', such as KissServ, which perform no useful function
except to send cute messages to other people. Service robots are

less common on MUDs; but some others, such as the 'Julia' robot
active in 1990--91, have been remarkably impressive Turing-test
experiments, able to pass as human for as long as ten or fifteen
minutes of conversation.

1.1512   robust

robust: adj. Said of a system that has demonstrated an ability to
recover gracefully from the whole range of exceptional inputs and
situations in a given environment. One step below
bulletproof
.
Carries the additional connotation of elegance in addition to just
careful attention to detail. Compare
smart
, oppose

brittle
.

1.1513   rococo

rococo: adj.
Baroque
 in the extreme. Used to imply that a
program has become so encrusted with the software equivalent of
gold leaf and curlicues that they have completely swamped the
underlying design. Called after the later and more extreme forms
of Baroque architecture and decoration prevalent during the
mid-1700s in Europe. Alan Perlis said: "Every program eventually
becomes rococo, and then rubble." Compare
critical

mass
.

1.1514   rogue

rogue: [UNIX] n. A Dungeons-and-Dragons-like game using character
graphics, written under BSD UNIX and subsequently ported to other
UNIX systems. The original BSD 'curses(3)' screen-handling
package was hacked together by Ken Arnold to support
'rogue(6)' and has since become one of UNIX's most important
and heavily used application libraries. Nethack, Omega, Larn, and

an entire subgenre of computer dungeon games all took off from the
inspiration provided by `rogue(6)'. See also
                nethack
                .

1.1515   room-temperature IQ

                room-temperature IQ: [IBM] quant. 80 or below. Used in describing ←
                    the
expected intelligence range of the
                luser
                . "Well, but
how's this interface going to play with the room-temperature IQ
crowd?" See
                drool-proof paper
                . This is a much more insulting
phrase in countries that use Celsius thermometers.

1.1516   root

                root: [UNIX] n. 1. The
                superuser
                 account (with user name
`root') that ignores permission bits, user number 0 on a UNIX
system. The term
                avatar
                 is also used. 2. The top node of the
system directory structure (home directory of the root user).
3. By extension, the privileged system-maintenance login on any
OS. See
                root mode
                ,
                go root
                , see also
                wheel
                .

1.1517   root mode

                root mode: n. Syn. with
                wizard mode
                 or `wheel mode'. Like
these, it is often generalized to describe privileged states in
systems other than OSes.

1.1518   rot13

rot13: /rot ther'teen/ [USENET: from 'rotate alphabet
13 places'] n., v. The simple Caesar-cypher encryption that
replaces each English letter with the one 13 places forward or back
along the alphabet, so that "The butler did it!" becomes "Gur
ohgyre qvq vg!" Most USENET news reading and posting programs
include a rot13 feature. It is used to enclose the text in a
sealed wrapper that the reader must choose to open --- e.g., for
posting things that might offend some readers, or
spoiler
s. A
major advantage of rot13 over rot(N) for other N is
that it is self-inverse, so the same code can be used for encoding
and decoding.

1.1519   rotary debugger

rotary debugger: [Commodore] n. Essential equipment for those
late-night or early-morning debugging sessions. Mainly used as
sustenance for the hacker. Comes in many decorator colors, such as
Sausage, Pepperoni, and Garbage. See
pizza, ANSI standard
.

1.1520   round tape

round tape: n. Industry-standard 1/2-inch magnetic tape (7- or
9-track) on traditional circular reels. See
macrotape
, oppose

square tape
.

1.1521   RSN

RSN: /R-S-N/ adj. See
Real Soon Now
.

1.1522 RTBM

RTBM: /R-T-B-M/ [UNIX] imp. Commonwealth Hackish variant of

RTFM
; expands to 'Read The Bloody Manual'. RTBM is often the
entire text of the first reply to a question from a
newbie
;
the *second* would escalate to "RTFM".

1.1523 RTFAQ

RTFAQ: /R-T-F-A-Q/ [USENET: primarily written, by analogy with

RTFM
] imp. Abbrev. for 'Read the FAQ!', an exhortation that
the person addressed ought to read the newsgroup's
FAQ list
   before posting questions.

1.1524 RTFB

RTFB: /R-T-F-B/ [UNIX] imp. Acronym for 'Read The Fucking
   Binary'. Used when neither documentation nor source for the
   problem at hand exists, and the only thing to do is use some
   debugger or monitor and directly analyze the assembler or even
   the machine code. "No source for the buggy port driver?   Aaargh! I
   hate proprietary operating systems. Time to RTFB."

   Of the various RTF? forms, 'RTFB' is the least pejorative against
   anyone asking a question for which RTFB is the answer; the anger
   here is directed at the absence of both source *and* adequate
   documentation.

1.1525 RTFM

RTFM: /R-T-F-M/ [UNIX] imp. Acronym for 'Read The Fucking
Manual'. 1. Used by
guru
s to brush off questions they
consider trivial or annoying. Compare
Don't do that, then!
.
2. Used when reporting a problem to indicate that you aren't just
asking out of
randomness
. "No, I can't figure out how to
interface UNIX to my toaster, and yes, I have RTFM." Unlike
sense 1, this use is considered polite. See also
FM
,

RTFAQ
,
RTFB
,
RTFS
,
RTM
, all of which mutated
from RTFM, and compare
UTSL
.

1.1526 RTFS

RTFS: /R-T-F-S/ [UNIX] 1. imp. Acronym for 'Read The Fucking
Source'. Variant form of
RTFM
, used when the problem at hand
is not necessarily obvious and not answerable from the manuals ---
or the manuals are not yet written and maybe never will be. For
even trickier situations, see
RTFB
. Unlike RTFM, the anger
inherent in RTFS is not usually directed at the person asking the
question, but rather at the people who failed to provide adequate
documentation. 2. imp. 'Read The Fucking Standard'; this oath can
only be used when the problem area (e.g., a language or operating
system interface) has actually been codified in a ratified
standards document. The existence of these standards documents
(and the technically inappropriate but politically mandated
compromises that they inevitably contain, and the impenetrable

legalese
 in which they are invariably written, and the

unbelievably tedious bureaucratic process by which they are
produced) can be unnerving to hackers, who are used to a certain
amount of ambiguity in the specifications of the systems they use.
(Hackers feel that such ambiguities are acceptable as long as the

Right Thing
 to do is obvious to any thinking observer; sadly,
this casual attitude towards specifications becomes unworkable when
a system becomes popular in the
Real World
.) Since a hacker
is likely to feel that a standards document is both unnecessary and
technically deficient, the deprecation inherent in this term may be
directed as much against the standard as against the person who
ought to read it.

1.1527   RTI

RTI: /R-T-I/ interj. The mnemonic for the 'return from
interrupt' instruction on many computers including the 6502 and
6800. The variant 'RETI' is found among former Z80 hackers
(almost nobody programs these things in assembler anymore).
Equivalent to "Now, where was I?" or used to end a
conversational digression. See
pop
; see also
POPJ
.

1.1528   RTM

RTM: /R-T-M/ [USENET: abbreviation for 'Read The Manual']
1. Politer variant of
RTFM
. 2. Robert T. Morris Jr.,
perpetrator of the great Internet worm of 1988 (see
Great Worm,

the
); villain to many, naive hacker gone wrong to a few. Morris
claimed that the worm that brought the Internet to its knees was a
benign experiment that got out of control as the result of a coding
error. After the storm of negative publicity that followed this
blunder, Morris's username on ITS was hacked from RTM to

RTFM
.

1.1529 rude

rude: [WPI] adj. 1. (of a program) Badly written. 2. Functionally
poor, e.g., a program that is very difficult to use because of
gratuitously poor (random?) design decisions. Oppose
cuspy
.
3. Anything that manipulates a shared resource without regard for
its other users in such a way as to cause a (non-fatal) problem.
Examples: programs that change tty modes without resetting them on
exit, or windowing programs that keep forcing themselves to the top
of the window stack. Compare
all-elbows
.

1.1530 runes

runes: pl.n. 1. Anything that requires
heavy wizardry
 or

black art
 to
parse
: core dumps, JCL commands, APL, or
code in a language you haven't a clue how to read. Not quite as
bad as
line noise
, but close. Compare
casting the runes
,

Great Runes
. 2. Special display characters (for example, the
high-half graphics on an IBM PC).

1.1531 runic

runic: adj. Syn.
obscure
. VMS fans sometimes refer to UNIX as
'Runix'; UNIX fans return the compliment by expanding VMS to 'Very
Messy Syntax' or 'Vachement Mauvais Syst'eme' (French; lit.
"Cowlike Bad System", idiomatically "Bitchy Bad System").

1.1532   rusty iron

rusty iron: n. Syn.
tired iron
. It has been claimed that this
is the inevitable fate of
water MIPS
.

1.1533   rusty memory

rusty memory: n. Mass-storage that uses iron-oxide-based magnetic
media (esp. tape and the pre-Winchester removable disk packs used
in
washing machine
s). Compare
donuts
.

1.1534   S/N ratio

S/N ratio: // n. (also 's/n ratio', 's:n ratio'). Syn.

signal-to-noise ratio
. Often abbreviated 'SNR'.

1.1535   sacred

sacred: adj. Reserved for the exclusive use of something (an
   extension of the standard meaning). Often means that anyone may
   look at the sacred object, but clobbering it will screw whatever it
   is sacred to. The comment "Register 7 is sacred to the interrupt
   handler" appearing in a program would be interpreted by a hacker
   to mean that if any *other* part of the program changes the
   contents of register 7, dire consequences are likely to ensue.

1.1536 saga

saga: [WPI] n. A cuspy but bogus raving story about N random broken people.

Here is a classic example of the saga form, as told by Guy L. Steele:

Jon L. White (login name JONL) and I (GLS) were office mates at MIT for many years. One April, we both flew from Boston to California for a week on research business, to consult face-to-face with some people at Stanford, particularly our mutual friend Richard P. Gabriel (RPG; see
Gabriel
).

RPG picked us up at the San Francisco airport and drove us back to Palo Alto (going
logical
 south on route 101, parallel to
El

Camino Bignum
). Palo Alto is adjacent to Stanford University and about 40 miles south of San Francisco. We ate at The Good Earth, a 'health food' restaurant, very popular, the sort whose milkshakes all contain honey and protein powder. JONL ordered such a shake --- the waitress claimed the flavor of the day was "lalaberry". I still have no idea what that might be, but it became a running joke. It was the color of raspberry, and JONL said it tasted rather bitter. I ate a better tostada there than I have ever had in a Mexican restaurant.

After this we went to the local Uncle Gaylord's Old Fashioned Ice Cream Parlor. They make ice cream fresh daily, in a variety of intriguing flavors. It's a chain, and they have a slogan: "If you don't live near an Uncle Gaylord's --- MOVE!" Also, Uncle Gaylord (a real person) wages a constant battle to force big-name ice cream makers to print their ingredients on the package (like air and plastic and other non-natural garbage). JONL and I had first discovered Uncle Gaylord's the previous August, when we had flown to a computer-science conference in Berkeley, California, the first time either of us had been on the West Coast. When not in the conference sessions, we had spent our time wandering the length of Telegraph Avenue, which (like Harvard Square in Cambridge) was lined with picturesque street vendors and interesting little shops. On that street we discovered Uncle Gaylord's Berkeley store. The ice cream there was very good. During that August visit JONL went absolutely bananas (so to speak) over one particular flavor, ginger honey.

Therefore, after eating at The Good Earth --- indeed, after every lunch and dinner and before bed during our April visit --- a trip to Uncle Gaylord's (the one in Palo Alto) was mandatory. We had arrived on a Wednesday, and by Thursday evening we had been there at least four times. Each time, JONL would get ginger honey ice

cream, and proclaim to all bystanders that "Ginger was the spice
that drove the Europeans mad! That's why they sought a route to
the East! They used it to preserve their otherwise off-taste
meat." After the third or fourth repetition RPG and I were getting
a little tired of this spiel, and began to paraphrase him: "Wow!
Ginger! The spice that makes rotten meat taste good!" "Say! Why
don't we find some dog that's been run over and sat in the sun for
a week and put some *ginger* on it for dinner?!" "Right! With a
lalaberry shake!" And so on. This failed to faze JONL; he took it
in good humor, as long as we kept returning to Uncle Gaylord's. He
loves ginger honey ice cream.

Now RPG and his then-wife KBT (Kathy Tracy) were putting us up
(putting up with us?) in their home for our visit, so to thank them
JONL and I took them out to a nice French restaurant of their
choosing. I unadventurously chose the filet mignon, and KBT had je
ne sais quoi du jour, but RPG and JONL had lapin (rabbit).
(Waitress: "Oui, we have fresh rabbit, fresh today." RPG: "Well,
JONL, I guess we won't need any *ginger*!")

We finished the meal late, about 11 P.M., which is 2 A.M Boston
time, so JONL and I were rather droopy. But it wasn't yet
midnight. Off to Uncle Gaylord's!

Now the French restaurant was in Redwood City, north of Palo Alto.
In leaving Redwood City, we somehow got onto route 101 going north
instead of south. JONL and I wouldn't have known the difference
had RPG not mentioned it. We still knew very little of the local
geography. I did figure out, however, that we were headed in the
direction of Berkeley, and half-jokingly suggested that we continue
north and go to Uncle Gaylord's in Berkeley.

RPG said "Fine!" and we drove on for a while and talked. I was
drowsy, and JONL actually dropped off to sleep for 5 minutes. When
he awoke, RPG said, "Gee, JONL, you must have slept all the way
over the bridge!", referring to the one spanning San Francisco
Bay. Just then we came to a sign that said "University Avenue". I
mumbled something about working our way over to Telegraph Avenue;
RPG said "Right!" and maneuvered some more. Eventually we pulled
up in front of an Uncle Gaylord's.

Now, I hadn't really been paying attention because I was so sleepy,
and I didn't really understand what was happening until RPG let me
in on it a few moments later, but I was just alert enough to notice
that we had somehow come to the Palo Alto Uncle Gaylord's after
all.

JONL noticed the resemblance to the Palo Alto store, but hadn't
caught on. (The place is lit with red and yellow lights at night,
and looks much different from the way it does in daylight.) He
said, "This isn't the Uncle Gaylord's I went to in Berkeley! It
looked like a barn! But this place looks *just like* the one back
in Palo Alto!"

RPG deadpanned, "Well, this is the one *I* always come to when I'm
in Berkeley. They've got two in San Francisco, too. Remember,
they're a chain."

JONL accepted this bit of wisdom. And he was not totally ignorant
--- he knew perfectly well that University Avenue was in Berkeley,
not far from Telegraph Avenue. What he didn't know was that there
is a completely different University Avenue in Palo Alto.

JONL went up to the counter and asked for ginger honey. The guy at
the counter asked whether JONL would like to taste it first,
evidently their standard procedure with that flavor, as not too
many people like it.

JONL said, "I'm sure I like it. Just give me a cone." The guy
behind the counter insisted that JONL try just a taste first.
"Some people think it tastes like soap." JONL insisted, "Look, I
love ginger. I eat Chinese food. I eat raw ginger roots. I
already went through this hassle with the guy back in Palo Alto. I
know I like that flavor!"

At the words "back in Palo Alto" the guy behind the counter got a
very strange look on his face, but said nothing. KBT caught his
eye and winked. Through my stupor I still hadn't quite grasped
what was going on, and thought RPG was rolling on the floor
laughing and clutching his stomach just because JONL had launched
into his spiel ("makes rotten meat a dish for princes") for the
forty-third time. At this point, RPG clued me in fully.

RPG, KBT, and I retreated to a table, trying to stifle our
chuckles. JONL remained at the counter, talking about ice cream
with the guy b.t.c., comparing Uncle Gaylord's to other ice cream
shops and generally having a good old time.

At length the g.b.t.c. said, "How's the ginger honey?" JONL said,
"Fine! I wonder what exactly is in it?" Now Uncle Gaylord
publishes all his recipes and even teaches classes on how to make
his ice cream at home. So the g.b.t.c. got out the recipe, and he
and JONL pored over it for a while. But the g.b.t.c. could contain
his curiosity no longer, and asked again, "You really like that
stuff, huh?" JONL said, "Yeah, I've been eating it constantly back
in Palo Alto for the past two days. In fact, I think this batch is
about as good as the cones I got back in Palo Alto!"

G.b.t.c. looked him straight in the eye and said, "You're *in* Palo
Alto!"

JONL turned slowly around, and saw the three of us collapse in a
fit of giggles. He clapped a hand to his forehead and exclaimed,
"I've been hacked!"

[My spies on the West Coast inform me that there is a close relative
of the raspberry found out there called an 'ollalieberry' --- ESR]

[Ironic footnote: it appears that the
                meme
                 about ginger vs.
rotting meat may be an urban legend. It's not borne out by an
examination of medieval recipes or period purchase records for
spices, and appears full-blown in the works of Samuel Pegge, a

gourmand and notorious flake case who originated numerous food
myths. --- ESR]

1.1537   sagan

sagan: /say'gn/ [from Carl Sagan's TV series "Cosmos";
   think "billions and billions"] n. A large quantity of anything.
   "There's a sagan different ways to tweak EMACS." "The
   U.S. Government spends sagans on bombs and welfare --- hard to say
   which is more destructive."

1.1538   SAIL

             SAIL:: /sayl/, not /S-A-I-L/ n. 1. The Stanford Artificial
   Intelligence Lab. An important site in the early development of
   LISP; with the MIT AI Lab, BBN, CMU, XEROX PARC, and the UNIX
   community, one of the major wellsprings of technical innovation and
   hacker-culture traditions (see the
                 WAITS
                  entry for details).
   The SAIL machines were shut down in late May 1990, scant weeks
   after the MIT AI Lab's ITS cluster was officially decommissioned.
   2. The Stanford Artificial Intelligence Language used at SAIL
   (sense 1). It was an Algol-60 derivative with a coroutining
   facility and some new data types intended for building search trees
   and association lists.

1.1539   salescritter

             salescritter: /sayls'kri'tr/ n. Pejorative hackerism for a ↵
                 computer
   salesperson. Hackers tell the following joke:

     Q. What's the difference between a used-car dealer and a
        computer salesman?
     A. The used-car dealer knows he's lying. [Some versions add:
        ...and probably knows how to drive.]

   This reflects the widespread hacker belief that salescritters are
   self-selected for stupidity (after all, if they had brains and the
   inclination to use them, they'd be in programming). The terms
   'salesthing' and 'salesdroid' are also common. Compare

                 marketroid

                 ,

suit

,

droid

.

1.1540   salt

salt: n. A tiny bit of near-random data inserted where too much
regularity would be undesirable; a data
frob
(sense 1). For example,
the Unix crypt(3) man page mentions that "the salt string is
used to perturb the DES algorithm in one of 4096 different ways."

1.1541   salt mines

salt mines: n. Dense quarters housing large numbers of programmers
working long hours on grungy projects, with some hope of seeing the
end of the tunnel in N years. Noted for their absence of sunshine.
Compare
playpen
,
sandbox
.

1.1542   salt substrate

salt substrate: [MIT] n. Collective noun used to refer to potato
chips, pretzels, saltines, or any other form of snack food
designed primarily as a carrier for sodium chloride. From the
technical term 'chip substrate', used to refer to the silicon on the
top of which the active parts of integrated circuits are deposited.

1.1543   same-day service

same-day service: n. Ironic term used to describe long response
time, particularly with respect to
MS-DOS
system calls (which
ought to require only a tiny fraction of a second to execute).

```
Such response time is a major incentive for programmers to write
programs that are not
                well-behaved
                .  See also
                PC-ism
                .
```

1.1544   samizdat

```
                samizdat: [Russian, literally "self publishing"] n. The process
of disseminating documentation via underground channels.
Originally referred to photocopy duplication and distribution of
banned books in the former Soviet Union; now refers by obvious
extension to any less-than-official promulgation of textual
material, esp. rare, obsolete, or never-formally-published computer
documentation.  Samizdat is obviously much easier when one has
access to high-bandwidth networks and high-quality laser printers.
Note that samizdat is properly used only with respect to documents
which contain needed information (see also
                hacker ethic, the
                )
but which are for some reason otherwise unavailable, but *not*
in the context of documents which are available through normal
channels, for which unauthorized duplication would be unethical
copyright violation.  See
                Lions Book
                 for a historical example.
```

1.1545   samurai

```
                samurai: n. A hacker who hires out for legal cracking jobs,
snooping for factions in corporate political fights, lawyers
pursuing privacy-rights and First Amendment cases, and other
parties with legitimate reasons to need an electronic locksmith.
In 1991, mainstream media reported the existence of a loose-knit
culture of samurai that meets electronically on BBS systems, mostly
bright teenagers with personal micros; they have modeled
themselves explicitly on the historical samurai of Japan and on the
"net cowboys" of William Gibson's
                cyberpunk
                 novels.  Those
interviewed claim to adhere to a rigid ethic of loyalty to their
employers and to disdain the vandalism and theft practiced by
criminal crackers as beneath them and contrary to the hacker ethic;
some quote Miyamoto Musashi's "Book of Five Rings", a classic
of historical samurai doctrine, in support of these principles.
See also
                Stupids
```

,
social engineering
,
cracker
,

hacker ethic, the
, and
dark-side hacker
.

1.1546   sandbender

sandbender: [IBM] n. A person involved with silicon lithography ←
        and
the physical design of chips. Compare
ironmonger
,
polygon

pusher
.

1.1547   sandbox

sandbox: n. 1. (also 'sandbox, the') Common term for the
R&D department at many software and computer companies (where hackers
in commercial environments are likely to be found). Half-derisive,
but reflects the truth that research is a form of creative play.
Compare
playpen
. 2. Syn.
link farm
.

1.1548   sanity check

sanity check: n. 1. The act of checking a piece of code (or
anything else, e.g., a USENET posting) for completely stupid mistakes.
Implies that the check is to make sure the author was sane when it
was written; e.g., if a piece of scientific software relied on a
particular formula and was giving unexpected results, one might
first look at the nesting of parentheses or the coding of the
formula, as a 'sanity check', before looking at the more complex

I/O or data structure manipulation routines, much less the
algorithm itself. Compare
            reality check
            . 2. A run-time test,
either validating input or ensuring that the program hasn't screwed
up internally (producing an inconsistent value or state).

1.1549   Saturday-night special

            Saturday-night special: [from police slang for a cheap handgun]
n. A
            quick-and-dirty
             program or feature kluged together
during off hours, under a deadline, and in response to pressure
from a
            salescritter
            . Such hacks are dangerously unreliable,
but all too often sneak into a production release after
insufficient review.

1.1550   say

            say: vt. 1. To type to a terminal. "To list a directory
verbosely, you have to say 'ls -l'." Tends to imply a

            newline
            -terminated command (a 'sentence'). 2. A computer
may also be said to 'say' things to you, even if it doesn't have
a speech synthesizer, by displaying them on a terminal in response
to your commands. Hackers find it odd that this usage confuses

            mundane
            s.

1.1551   scag

            scag: vt. To destroy the data on a disk, either by corrupting the
filesystem or by causing media damage. "That last power hit scagged
the system disk." Compare
            scrog
            ,
            roach
            .

1.1552   scanno

scanno: /skan'oh/ n. An error in a document caused by a scanner
glitch, analogous to a typo or
thinko
.

1.1553   schroedinbug

schroedinbug: /shroh'din-buhg/ [MIT: from the Schroedinger's Cat
thought-experiment in quantum physics] n. A design or
implementation bug in a program that doesn't manifest until someone
reading source or using the program in an unusual way notices that
it never should have worked, at which point the program promptly
stops working for everybody until fixed. Though (like
bit

rot
) this sounds impossible, it happens; some programs have
harbored latent schroedinbugs for years. Compare
heisenbug
,

Bohr bug
,
mandelbug
.

1.1554   science-fiction fandom

science-fiction fandom:: n. Another voluntary subculture having a
very heavy overlap with hackerdom; most hackers read SF and/or
fantasy fiction avidly, and many go to 'cons' (SF conventions) or
are involved in fandom-connected activities such as the Society for
Creative Anachronism. Some hacker jargon originated in SF fandom;
see
defenestration
,
great-wall
,
cyberpunk
,
h
,

ha ha only serious

,

IMHO

,

mundane

,

neep-neep

,

Real Soon Now
. Additionally, the jargon terms
cowboy

,

cyberspace

,

de-rezz

,

go flatline

,

ice

,

phage

,

virus

,

wetware

,

wirehead
, and
worm
    originated in SF stories.

1.1555   scram switch

scram switch: [from the nuclear power industry] n. An
emergency-power-off switch (see
Big Red Switch
), esp. one
positioned to be easily hit by evacuating personnel. In general,
this is *not* something you
frob
 lightly; these often
initiate expensive events (such as Halon dumps) and are installed
in a
dinosaur pen
 for use in case of electrical fire or in
case some luckless
field servoid
 should put 120 volts across
himself while

Easter egging
. (See also
molly-guard
,

TMRC
.)

1.1556   scratch

scratch: 1. [from 'scratchpad'] adj. Describes a data
structure or recording medium attached to a machine for testing or
temporary-use purposes; one that can be
scribble
d on without
loss. Usually in the combining forms 'scratch memory',
'scratch register', 'scratch disk', 'scratch tape',
'scratch volume'. See also
scratch monkey
. 2. [primarily
IBM] vt. To delete (as in a file).

1.1557   scratch monkey

scratch monkey: n. As in "Before testing or reconfiguring, always
mount a
scratch monkey
", a proverb used to advise caution
when dealing with irreplaceable data or devices. Used to refer to
any scratch volume hooked to a computer during any risky operation
as a replacement for some precious resource or data that might
otherwise get trashed.

This term preserves the memory of Mabel, the Swimming Wonder
Monkey, star of a biological research program at the University of
Toronto. Mabel was not (so the legend goes) your ordinary monkey;
the university had spent years teaching her how to swim, breathing
through a regulator, in order to study the effects of different gas
mixtures on her physiology. Mabel suffered an untimely demise one
day when a DEC engineer troubleshooting a crash on the program's VAX
inadvertently interfered with some custom hardware that was wired
to Mabel.

It is reported that, after calming down an understandably irate
customer sufficiently to ascertain the facts of the matter, a DEC
troubleshooter called up the
field circus
manager responsible

and asked him sweetly, "Can you swim?"

Not all the consequences to humans were so amusing; the sysop of
the machine in question was nearly thrown in jail at the behest of
certain clueless droids at the local 'humane' society. The moral
is clear: When in doubt, always mount a scratch monkey.

[There is a version of this story, complete with reported dialogue
between one of the project people and DEC field service, that has
been circulating on Internet since 1986. It is hilarious and
mythic, but gets some facts wrong. For example, it reports the
machine as a PDP-11 and alleges that Mabel's demise occurred when
DEC
              PM
              ed the machine. Earlier versions of this entry were
based on that story; this one has been corrected from an interview
with the hapless sysop. --- ESR]

1.1558   scream and die

              scream and die: v. Syn.
              cough and die
              , but connotes that an
error message was printed or displayed before the program crashed.

1.1559   screaming tty

screaming tty: [UNIX] n. A terminal line which spews an infinite
  number of random characters at the operating system. This can
  happen if the terminal is either disconnected or connected to a
  powered-off terminal but still enabled for login; misconfiguration,
  misimplementation, or simple bad luck can start such a terminal
  screaming. A screaming tty or two can seriously degrade the
  performance of a vanilla UNIX system; the arriving "characters"
  are treated as userid/password pairs and tested as such. The UNIX
  password encryption algorithm is designed to be computationally
  intensive in order to foil brute-force crack attacks, so although
  none of the logins succeeds; the overhead of rejecting them all can
  be substantial.

1.1560   screw

              screw: [MIT] n. A
              lose
              , usually in software. Especially used for

user-visible misbehavior caused by a bug or misfeature. This use
has become quite widespread outside MIT.

1.1561 screwage

screwage: /skroo'*j/ n. Like
lossage
 but connotes that the
failure is due to a designed-in misfeature rather than a simple
inadequacy or a mere bug.

1.1562 scribble

scribble: n. To modify a data structure in a random and
unintentionally destructive way. "Bletch! Somebody's
disk-compactor program went berserk and scribbled on the i-node
table." "It was working fine until one of the allocation routines
scribbled on low core." Synonymous with
trash
; compare
mung
,
which conveys a bit more intention, and
mangle
, which is more
violent and final.

1.1563 scrog

scrog: /skrog/ [Bell Labs] vt. To damage, trash, or corrupt a
data structure. "The list header got scrogged." Also reported
as 'skrog', and ascribed to the comic strip "The Wizard of
Id". Compare
scag
; possibly the two are related. Equivalent
to
scribble
 or
mangle
.

1.1564   scrool

scrool: /skrool/ [from the pioneering Roundtable chat system in
    Houston ca. 1984; prob. originated as a typo for 'scroll'] n. The
    log of old messages, available for later perusal or to help one get
    back in synch with the conversation. It was originally called the
    'scrool monster', because an early version of the roundtable
    software had a bug where it would dump all 8K of scrool on a user's
    terminal.

1.1565   scrozzle

scrozzle: /skroz'l/ vt. Used when a self-modifying code segment runs
    incorrectly and corrupts the running program or vital data. "The
    damn compiler scrozzled itself again!"

1.1566   scruffies

            scruffies: n. See
            neats vs. scruffies
            .

1.1567   SCSI

SCSI: [Small Computer System Interface] n. A bus-independent
    standard for system-level interfacing between a computer and
    intelligent devices. Typically annotated in literature with 'sexy'
    (/sek'see/), 'sissy' (/sis'ee/), and 'scuzzy' (/skuh'zee/) as
    pronunciation guides --- the last being the overwhelmingly
    predominant form, much to the dismay of the designers and their
    marketing people. One can usually assume that a person who
    pronounces it /S-C-S-I/ is clueless.

1.1568   ScumOS

            ScumOS: /skuhm'os/ or /skuhm'O-S/ n. Unflattering hackerism
    for SunOS, the UNIX variant supported on Sun Microsystems's UNIX
    workstations (see also
            sun-stools
            ), and compare
            AIDX
            ,

Macintrash

,

Nominal Semidestructor

,

Open DeathTrap

,

HP-SUX
. Despite what this term might suggest, Sun was
founded by hackers and still enjoys excellent relations with
hackerdom; usage is more often in exasperation than outright
loathing.

1.1569   search-and-destroy mode

search-and-destroy mode: n. Hackerism for a noninteractive
search-and-replace facility in an editor, so called because an
incautiously chosen match pattern can cause
infinite
damage.

1.1570   second-system effect

second-system effect: n. (sometimes, more euphoniously,
'second-system syndrome') When one is designing the successor to
a relatively small, elegant, and successful system, there is a
tendency to become grandiose in one's success and design an

elephantine
feature-laden monstrosity. The term was first
used by Fred Brooks in his classic "The Mythical Man-Month:
Essays on Software Engineering" (Addison-Wesley, 1975; ISBN
0-201-00650-2). It described the jump from a set of nice, simple
operating systems on the IBM 70xx series to OS/360 on the
360 series. A similar effect can also happen in an evolving
system; see
Brooks's Law
,
creeping elegance
,
creeping

featurism
. See also
Multics
,
OS/2

```
             ,
             X
             ,
             software

             bloat
             .
```

This version of the jargon lexicon has been described (with
altogether too much truth for comfort) as an example of
second-system effect run amok on jargon-1....

1.1571   secondary damage

secondary damage: n. When a fatal error occurs (esp. a

             segfault
) the immediate cause may be that a pointer has been
trashed due to a previous
             fandango on core
             . However, this
fandango may have been due to an *earlier* fandango, so no
amount of analysis will reveal (directly) how the damage occurred.
"The data structure was clobbered, but it was secondary damage."

By extension, the corruption resulting from N cascaded
fandangoes on core is ‘Nth-level damage’. There is at least
one case on record in which 17 hours of
             grovel
             ling with
‘adb’ actually dug up the underlying bug behind an instance of
seventh-level damage! The hacker who accomplished this
near-superhuman feat was presented with an award by his fellows.

1.1572   security through obscurity

security through obscurity: alt. ‘security by obscurity’ n. A
term applied by hackers to most OS vendors’ favorite way of coping
with security holes --- namely, ignoring them, documenting neither
any known holes nor the underlying security algorithms, trusting
that nobody will find out about them and that people who do find
out about them won’t exploit them. This "strategy" never works
for long and occasionally sets the world up for debacles like the

             RTM
              worm of 1988 (see
             Great Worm, the
             ), but once the

brief moments of panic created by such events subside most vendors
are all too willing to turn over and go back to sleep. After all,
actually fixing the bugs would siphon off the resources needed to
implement the next user-interface frill on marketing's wish list
--- and besides, if they started fixing security bugs customers
might begin to *expect* it and imagine that their warranties
of merchantability gave them some sort of *right* to a system
with fewer holes in it than a shotgunned Swiss cheese, and
then where would we be?

Historical note: There are conflicting stories about the origin of
this term. It has been claimed that it was first used in the
USENET newsgroup in comp.sys.apollo during a campaign to get
HP/Apollo to fix security problems in its UNIX-
              clone
                Aegis/DomainOS (they didn't change a thing).
              ITS
               fans, on the
other hand, say it was coined years earlier in opposition to the
incredibly paranoid
              Multics
               people down the hall, for whom
security was everything. In the ITS culture it referred to (1) the
fact that that by the time a tourist figured out how to make
trouble he'd generally gotten over the urge to make it, because he
felt part of the community; and (2) (self-mockingly) the poor
coverage of the documentation and obscurity of many commands. One
instance of *deliberate* security through obscurity is
recorded; the command to allow patching the running ITS system
(
              altmode
               altmode control-R) echoed as $$^D. If you actually
typed alt alt ^D, that set a flag that would prevent patching the
system even if you later got it right.

1.1573   SED

              SED: [TMRC, from 'Light-Emitting Diode'] /S-E-D/ n.
Smoke-emitting diode. A
              friode
               that lost the war. See also

              LER
              .

1.1574   segfault

```
segfault: n.,vi. Syn.
segment
,
segmentation fault
.
```

1.1575 seggie

```
seggie: /seg'ee/ [UNIX] n. Shorthand for
segmentation fault
   reported from Britain.
```

1.1576 segment

```
segment: /seg'ment/ vi. To experience a
segmentation fault
              .
Confusingly, this is often pronounced more like the noun 'segment'
than like mainstream v. segment; this is because it is actually a
noun shorthand that has been verbed.
```

1.1577 segmentation fault

```
segmentation fault: n. [UNIX] 1. An error in which a running  ←
             program
attempts to access memory not allocated to it and
         core dump
         s
with a segmentation violation error.  2. To lose a train of
thought or a line of reasoning.  Also uttered as an exclamation at
the point of befuddlement.
```

1.1578 segv

```
segv: /seg'vee/ n.,vi. Yet another synonym for
segmentation

fault
 (actually, in this case, 'segmentation violation').
```

1.1579 self-reference

```
self-reference: n. See
self-reference
.
```

1.1580 selvage

```
selvage: /sel'v*j/ [from sewing and weaving] n. See
chad
   (sense 1).
```

1.1581 semi

```
        semi: /se'mee/ or /se'mi:/ 1. n. Abbreviation for
'semicolon', when speaking.  "Commands to
        grind
         are
prefixed by semi-semi-star" means that the prefix is `;;*',
not 1/4 of a star.  2. A prefix used with words such as
'immediately' as a qualifier.  "When is the system coming up?"
"Semi-immediately."  (That is, maybe not for an hour.)  "We did
consider that possibility semi-seriously."  See also

        infinite
        .
```

1.1582 semi-infinite

```
semi-infinite: n. See
infinite
.
```

1.1583 senior bit

```
          senior bit: [IBM] n. Syn.
          meta bit
          .
```

1.1584 server

```
          server: n. A kind of
          daemon
           that performs a service for the
requester and which often runs on a computer other than the one on
which the server runs.  A particularly common term on the Internet,
which is rife with 'name servers', 'domain servers', 'news
servers', 'finger servers', and the like.
```

1.1585 SEX

```
          SEX: /seks/ [Sun Users' Group & elsewhere] n. 1. Software
EXchange.  A technique invented by the blue-green algae hundreds of
millions of years ago to speed up their evolution, which had been
terribly slow up until then.  Today, SEX parties are popular among
hackers and others (of course, these are no longer limited to
exchanges of genetic software).  In general, SEX parties are a
```

```
          Good Thing
          , but unprotected SEX can propagate a
          virus
          .
See also
          pubic directory
          . 2. The rather Freudian mnemonic
often used for Sign EXtend, a machine instruction found in the
PDP-11 and many other architectures.  The RCA 1802 chip used in the
early Elf and SuperElf personal computers had a 'SEt X register'
SEX instruction, but this seems to have had little folkloric
impact.
```

```
DEC's engineers nearly got a PDP-11 assembler that used the
'SEX' mnemonic out the door at one time, but (for once)
marketing wasn't asleep and forced a change.  That wasn't the last
time this happened, either.  The author of "The Intel 8086
Primer", who was one of the original designers of the 8086, noted
that there was originally a 'SEX' instruction on that
processor, too.  He says that Intel management got cold feet and
decreed that it be changed, and thus the instruction was renamed
'CBW' and 'CWD' (depending on what was being extended).
Amusingly, the Intel 8048 (the microcontroller used in IBM PC
```

keyboards) is also missing straight `SEX' but has logical-or
and logical-and instructions `ORL' and `ANL'.

The Motorola 6809, used in the U.K.'s `Dragon 32' personal
computer, actually had an official `SEX' instruction; the 6502
in the Apple II with which it competed did not. British hackers
thought this made perfect mythic sense; after all, it was commonly
observed, you could (on some theoretical level) have sex with a
dragon, but you can't have sex with an apple.

1.1586 sex changer

        sex changer: n. Syn.
        gender mender
        .

1.1587 shambolic link

shambolic link: /sham-bol'ik link/ n. A UNIX symbolic link,
   particularly when it confuses you, points to nothing at all, or
   results in your ending up in some completely unexpected part of the
   filesystem....

1.1588 sharchive

        sharchive: /shar'ki:v/ [UNIX and USENET; from /bin/sh archive]
n. A
        flatten
        ed representation of a set of one or more files,
with the unique property that it can be unflattened (the original
files restored) by feeding it through a standard UNIX shell; thus,
a sharchive can be distributed to anyone running UNIX, and no
special unpacking software is required. Sharchives are also
intriguing in that they are typically created by shell scripts; the
script that produces sharchives is thus a script which produces
self-unpacking scripts, which may themselves contain scripts. (The
downsides of sharchives are that they are an ideal venue for

        Trojan horse
         attacks and that, for recipients not running
UNIX, no simple un-sharchiving program is possible; sharchives can
and do make use of arbitrarily-powerful shell features.)
Sharchives are also commonly referred to as `shar files' after the
name of the most common program for generating them.

1.1589   Share and enjoy!

Share and enjoy!: imp. 1. Commonly found at the end of software
release announcements and
README file
s, this phrase indicates
allegiance to the hacker ethic of free information sharing (see

hacker ethic, the
, sense 1). 2. The motto of the Sirius
Cybernetics Corporation (the ultimate gaggle of incompetent

suit
s) in Douglas Adams's "Hitch Hiker's Guide to the
Galaxy". The irony of using this as a cultural recognition signal
appeals to freeware hackers.

1.1590   shareware

shareware: /sheir'weir/ n.
Freeware
 (sense 1) for which the
author requests some payment, usually in the accompanying
documentation files or in an announcement made by the software
itself. Such payment may or may not buy additional support or
functionality. See also
careware
,
charityware
,

crippleware
,
guiltware
,
postcardware
, and

-ware
; compare
payware
.

1.1591   shelfware

shelfware: /shelfweir/ n. Software purchased on a whim (by an
   individual user) or in accordance with policy (by a corporation or
   government agency), but not actually required for any particular
   use. Therefore, it often ends up on some shelf.

1.1592   shell

               shell: [orig.
               Multics
                techspeak, widely propagated via UNIX] n.
   1. [techspeak] The command interpreter used to pass commands to an
   operating system; so called because it is the part of the operating
   system that interfaces with the outside world. 2. More generally,
   any interface program that mediates access to a special resource
   or
               server
                for convenience, efficiency, or security reasons; for
   this meaning, the usage is usually 'a shell around' whatever.
   This sort of program is also called a 'wrapper'.

1.1593   shell out

shell out: [UNIX] n. To spawn an interactive subshell from within
   a program (e.g., a mailer or editor). "Bang foo runs foo in a
   subshell, while bang alone shells out."

1.1594   shift left (or right) logical

               shift left (or right) logical: [from any of various machines'
   instruction sets] 1. vi. To move oneself to the left (right). To
   move out of the way. 2. imper. "Get out of that (my) seat! You
   can shift to that empty one to the left (right)." Often
   used without the 'logical', or as 'left shift' instead of
   'shift left'. Sometimes heard as LSH /lish/, from the
               PDP-10
                 instruction set. See
               Programmer's Cheer
               .

1.1595   shim

shim: n. A small piece of data inserted in order to achieve a desired memory alignment or other addressing property. For example, the PDP-11 UNIX linker, in split I&D (instructions and data) mode, inserts a two-byte shim at location 0 in data space so that no data object will have an address of 0 (and be confused with the C null pointer). See also
loose bytes
.

1.1596   shitogram

shitogram: /shit'oh-gram/ n. A *really* nasty piece of email.
Compare
nastygram
,
flame
.

1.1597   short card

short card: n. A half-length IBM PC expansion card or adapter that will fit in one of the two short slots located towards the right rear of a standard chassis (tucked behind the floppy disk drives). See also
tall card
.

1.1598   shotgun debugging

shotgun debugging: n. The software equivalent of
Easter egging
;
the making of relatively undirected changes to software in the hope that a bug will be perturbed out of existence. This almost never works, and usually introduces more bugs.

1.1599   shovelware

```
shovelware: /shuh'v*l-weir`/ n. Extra software dumped onto a
   CD-ROM or tape to fill up the remaining space on the medium after
   the software distribution it's intended to carry, but not
   integrated with the distribution.
```

1.1600 showstopper

```
showstopper: n. A hardware or (especially) software bug that makes
   an implementation effectively unusable; one that absolutely has to
   be fixed before development can go on.  Opposite in connotation
   from its original theatrical use, which refers to something
   stunningly *good*.
```

1.1601 shriek

```
           shriek: n. See
           excl
           . Occasional CMU usage, also in common use
   among APL fans and mathematicians, especially category theorists.
```

1.1602 Shub-Internet

```
           Shub-Internet: /shuhb in't*r-net/ [MUD: from H. P. Lovecraft's
   evil fictional deity 'Shub-Niggurath', the Black Goat with a
   Thousand Young] n. The harsh personification of the Internet,
   Beast of a Thousand Processes, Eater of Characters, Avatar of Line
   Noise, and Imp of Call Waiting; the hideous multi-tendriled entity
   formed of all the manifold connections of the net.  A sect of
   MUDders worships Shub-Internet, sacrificing objects and praying for
   good connections.  To no avail --- its purpose is malign and evil,
   and is the cause of all network slowdown.  Often heard as in
   "Freela casts a tac nuke at Shub-Internet for slowing her down."
   (A forged response often follows along the lines of:
   "Shub-Internet gulps down the tac nuke and burps happily.")  Also
   cursed by users of
           FTP
            and
           telnet
            when the system slows
   down.  The dread name of Shub-Internet is seldom spoken aloud, as
   it is said that repeating it three times will cause the being to
   wake, deep within its lair beneath the Pentagon.
```

1.1603   sidecar

            sidecar: n. 1. Syn.
            slap on the side
            . Esp. used of add-ons
    for the late and unlamented IBM PCjr. 2. The IBM PC compatibility
    box that could be bolted onto the side of an Amiga. Designed and
    produced by Commodore, it broke all of the company's own design
    rules. If it worked with any other peripherals, it was by

            magic
            .

1.1604   SIG

SIG: /sig/ n. (also common as a prefix in combining forms) A Special
    Interest Group, in one of several technical areas, sponsored by the
    Association for Computing Machinery; well-known ones include
    SIGPLAN (the Special Interest Group on Programming Languages),
    SIGARCH (the Special Interest Group for Computer Architecture) and
    SIGGRAPH (the Special Interest Group for Computer Graphics).
    Hackers, not surprisingly, like to overextend this naming
    convention to less formal associations like SIGBEER (at ACM
    conferences) and SIGFOOD (at University of Illinois).

1.1605   sig block

            sig block: /sig blok/ [UNIX; often written '.sig' there] n.
    Short for 'signature', used specifically to refer to the
    electronic signature block that most UNIX mail- and news-posting
    software will
            automagically
             append to outgoing mail and news.
    The composition of one's sig can be quite an art form, including an
    ASCII logo or one's choice of witty sayings (see
            sig quote
            ,

            fool file, the
            ); but many consider large sigs a waste of

            bandwidth
            , and it has been observed that the size of one's sig
    block is usually inversely proportional to one's longevity and
    level of prestige on the net. See also
            doubled sig
            .

1.1606 sig quote

sig quote: /sig kwoht/ [USENET] n. A maxim, quote, proverb, joke,
or slogan embedded in one's
sig block
 and intended to convey
something of one's philosophical stance, pet peeves, or sense of
humor. "Calm down, it's only ones and zeroes."

1.1607 sig virus

sig virus: n. A parasitic
meme
 embedded in a
sig block
.
There was a
meme plague
 or fad for these on USENET in late
1991. Most were equivalents of "I am a .sig virus. Please reproduce
me in your .sig block.". Of course, the .sig virus's memetic hook
is the giggle value of going along with the gag; this, however,
was a self-limiting phenomenon as more and more people picked up
on the idea. There were creative variants on it; some people
stuck 'sig virus antibody' texts in their sigs, and there was at
least one instance of a sig virus eater.

1.1608 signal-to-noise ratio

signal-to-noise ratio: [from analog electronics] n. Used by ←
    hackers
in a generalization of its technical meaning. 'Signal' refers to
useful information conveyed by some communications medium, and
'noise' to anything else on that medium. Hence a low ratio implies
that it is not worth paying attention to the medium in question.
Figures for such metaphorical ratios are never given. The term is
most often applied to
USENET
 newsgroups during
flame war
s.
Compare
bandwidth
. See also
coefficient of X
,
lost in

the noise

.

1.1609   silicon

silicon: n. Hardware, esp. ICs or microprocessor-based computer
systems (compare
iron
). Contrasted with software. See also

sandbender

.

1.1610   silly walk

silly walk: [from Monty Python's Flying Circus] vi. 1. A ←↩
ridiculous
procedure required to accomplish a task. Like
grovel
, but more

random
and humorous. "I had to silly-walk through half the
/usr directories to find the maps file." 2. Syn.
fandango on

core

.

1.1611   silo

silo: n. The FIFO input-character buffer in an RS-232 line card. So
called from DEC terminology used on DH and DZ line cards for the
VAX and PDP-11, presumably because it was a storage space for
fungible stuff that went in at the top and came out at the bottom.

1.1612   Silver Book

Silver Book: n. Jensen and Wirth's infamous "Pascal User Manual
and Report", so called because of the silver cover of the
widely distributed Springer-Verlag second edition of 1978 (ISBN
0-387-90144-2). See
book titles
,
Pascal
.

1.1613   since time T equals minus infinity

since time T equals minus infinity: adv. A long time ago; for as
long as anyone can remember; at the time that some particular frob
was first designed. Usually the word 'time' is omitted. See also
time T
; contrast
epoch
.

1.1614   sitename

sitename: /si:t'naym/ [UNIX/Internet] n. The unique electronic
name of a computer system, used to identify it in UUCP mail,
USENET, or other forms of electronic information interchange. The
folklore interest of sitenames stems from the creativity and humor
they often display. Interpreting a sitename is not unlike
interpreting a vanity license plate; one has to mentally unpack it,
allowing for mono-case and length restrictions and the lack of
whitespace. Hacker tradition deprecates dull,
institutional-sounding names in favor of punchy, humorous, and
clever coinages (except that it is considered appropriate for the
official public gateway machine of an organization to bear the
organization's name or acronym). Mythological references, cartoon
characters, animal names, and allusions to SF or fantasy literature
are probably the most popular sources for sitenames (in roughly
descending order). The obligatory comment when discussing these is
Harris's Lament: "All the good ones are taken!" See also
network address
.

1.1615   skrog

```
skrog: v. Syn.
scrog
.
```

1.1616 skulker

```
skulker: n. Syn.
prowler
.
```

1.1617 slack

```
        slack: n. 1. Space allocated to a disk file but not actually used
to store useful information.  The techspeak equivalent is 'internal
fragmentation'.  2. In the theology of the
        Church of the

        SubGenius
        , a mystical substance or quality that is the
prerequisite of all human happiness.

Since UNIX files are stored compactly, except for the unavoidable
wastage in the last block or fragment, it might be said that "Unix
has no slack".  See
        ha ha only serious
        .
```

1.1618 slap on the side

```
        slap on the side: n. (also called a
        sidecar
        , or abbreviated
'SOTS'.)  A type of external expansion hardware marketed by
computer manufacturers (e.g., Commodore for the Amiga 500/1000
series and IBM for the hideous failure called 'PCjr').  Various
SOTS boxes provided necessities such as memory, hard drive
controllers, and conventional expansion slots.
```

1.1619 slash

slash: n. Common name for the slant ('/', ASCII 0101111)
character. See
ASCII
for other synonyms.

1.1620 sleep

sleep: vi. 1. [techspeak] To relinquish a claim (of a process on a
multitasking system) for service; to indicate to the scheduler that
a process may be deactivated until some given event occurs or a
specified time delay elapses. 2. In jargon, used very similarly to
v.
block
; also in 'sleep on', syn. with 'block on'.
Often used to indicate that the speaker has relinquished a demand
for resources until some (possibly unspecified) external event:
"They can't get the fix I've been asking for into the next
release, so I'm going to sleep on it until the release, then start
hassling them again."

1.1621 slim

slim: n. A small, derivative change (e.g., to code).

1.1622 slop

slop: n. 1. A one-sided
fudge factor
, that is, an allowance for
error but in only one of two directions. For example, if you need
a piece of wire 10 feet long and have to guess when you cut it,
you make very sure to cut it too long, by a large amount if
necessary, rather than too short by even a little bit, because you
can always cut off the slop but you can't paste it back on again.
When discrete quantities are involved, slop is often introduced to
avoid the possibility of being on the losing side of a
fencepost

error
. 2. The percentage of 'extra' code generated by a compiler
over the size of equivalent assembler code produced by

hand-hacking
; i.e., the space (or maybe time) you lose because
you didn't do it yourself. This number is often used as a measure
of the goodness of a compiler; slop below 5% is very good, and
10% is usually acceptable. With modern compiler technology, esp.
on RISC machines, the compiler's slop may actually be
negative; that is, humans may be unable to generate code as
good. This is one of the reasons assembler programming is no
longer common.

1.1623   slopsucker

slopsucker: /slop'suhk-r/ n. A lowest-priority task that
waits around until everything else has 'had its fill' of machine
resources. Only when the machine would otherwise be idle is the
task allowed to 'suck up the slop'. Also called a 'hungry puppy'
or 'bottom feeder'. One common variety of slopsucker hunts for
large prime numbers. Compare
background
.

1.1624   slurp

slurp: vt. To read a large data file entirely into
core
 before
working on it. This may be contrasted with the strategy of reading
a small piece at a time, processing it, and then reading the next
piece. "This program slurps in a 1K-by-1K matrix and does
an FFT." See also
sponge
.

1.1625   smart

smart: adj. Said of a program that does the
Right Thing
 in a
wide variety of complicated circumstances. There is a difference
between calling a program smart and calling it intelligent; in
particular, there do not exist any intelligent programs (yet ---
see
AI-complete
). Compare

```
          robust
           (smart programs can be

          brittle
          ).
```

1.1626   smart terminal

smart terminal: n. 1. A terminal that has enough computing
capability to render graphics or to offload some kind of front-end
processing from the computer it talks to. The development of
workstations and personal computers has made this term and the
product it describes semi-obsolescent, but one may still hear
variants of the phrase 'act like a smart terminal' used to
describe the behavior of workstations or PCs with respect to
programs that execute almost entirely out of a remote
          server
          's
storage, using said devices as displays. 2. obs. Any terminal with
an addressable cursor; the opposite of a
          glass tty
          . Today, a
terminal with merely an addressable cursor, but with none of the
more-powerful features mentioned in sense 1, is called a
          dumb

          terminal
          .

There is a classic quote from Rob Pike (inventor of the
          blit
             terminal): "A smart terminal is not a smart*ass* terminal,
but rather a terminal you can educate." This illustrates a common
design problem: The attempt to make peripherals (or anything else)
intelligent sometimes results in finicky, rigid 'special
features' that become just so much dead weight if you try to use
the device in any way the designer didn't anticipate. Flexibility
and programmability, on the other hand, are *really* smart.
Compare
          hook
          .

1.1627   smash case

smash case: vi. To lose or obliterate the uppercase/lowercase
distinction in text input. "MS-DOS will automatically smash case
in the names of all the files you create." Compare
          fold case

.

1.1628   smash the stack

smash the stack: [C programming] n. To corrupt the execution stack
by writing past the end of a local array or other data structure.
Code that smashes the stack can cause a return from the routine to
jump to a random address, resulting in some of the most insidious
data-dependent bugs known to mankind. Variants include 'trash'
the stack,
scribble
 the stack,
mangle
 the stack; the term
**
mung
 the stack is not used, as this is never done
intentionally. See
spam
; see also
aliasing bug
,

fandango on core
,
memory leak
,
memory smash
,

precedence lossage
,
overrun screw
.

1.1629   smiley

smiley: n. See
emoticon
.

1.1630   smoke

smoke: vi. 1. To
crash
 or blow up, usually spectacularly. "The
new version smoked, just like the last one." Used for both hardware
(where it often describes an actual physical event), and software
(where it's merely colorful). 2. [from automotive slang] To be
conspicuously fast. "That processor really smokes." Compare

magic smoke
.

1.1631 smoke and mirrors

smoke and mirrors: n. Marketing deceptions. The term is
mainstream in this general sense. Among hackers it's strongly
associated with bogus demos and crocked
benchmark
s (see also

MIPS
,
machoflops
). "They claim their new box cranks 50
MIPS for under $5000, but didn't specify the instruction mix ---
sounds like smoke and mirrors to me." The phrase has been said to
derive from carnie slang for magic acts and 'freak show' displays
that depend on 'trompe l'oeil' effects, but also calls to mind
the fierce Aztec god Tezcatlipoca (lit. "Smoking Mirror") for
whom the hearts of huge numbers of human sacrificial victims were
regularly cut out. Upon hearing about a rigged demo or yet another
round of fantasy-based marketing promises, hackers often feel
analogously disheartened.

1.1632 smoke test

smoke test: n. 1. A rudimentary form of testing applied to
electronic equipment following repair or reconfiguration, in which
power is applied and the tester checks for sparks, smoke, or other
dramatic signs of fundamental failure. See
magic smoke
.
2. By extension, the first run of a piece of software after
construction or a critical change. See and compare
reality

check
.

There is an interesting semi-parallel to this term among
typographers and printers: When new typefaces are being punch-cut by
hand, a 'smoke test' (hold the letter in candle smoke, then press
it onto paper) is used to check out new dies.

1.1633   smoking clover

           smoking clover: [ITS] n. A
           display hack
            originally due to
Bill Gosper. Many convergent lines are drawn on a color monitor in

           AOS
            mode (so that every pixel struck has its color
incremented). The lines all have one endpoint in the middle of the
screen; the other endpoints are spaced one pixel apart around the
perimeter of a large square. The color map is then repeatedly
rotated. This results in a striking, rainbow-hued, shimmering
four-leaf clover. Gosper joked about keeping it hidden from the
FDA (the U.S.'s Food and Drug Administration) lest its
hallucinogenic properties cause it to be banned.

1.1634   SMOP

SMOP: /S-M-O-P/ [Simple (or Small) Matter of Programming] n.
   1. A piece of code, not yet written, whose anticipated length is
   significantly greater than its complexity. Used to refer to a
   program that could obviously be written, but is not worth the
   trouble. Also used ironically to imply that a difficult problem
   can be easily solved because a program can be written to do it; the
   irony is that it is very clear that writing such a program will be
   a great deal of work. "It's easy to enhance a FORTRAN compiler to
   compile COBOL as well; it's just an SMOP." 2. Often used
   ironically by the intended victim when a suggestion for a program
   is made which seems easy to the suggester, but is obviously (to the
   victim) a lot of work.

1.1635   smurf

           smurf: /smerf/ [from the soc.motss newsgroup on USENET,
   after some obnoxiously gooey cartoon characters] n. A newsgroup
regular with a habitual style that is irreverent, silly, and
cute. Like many other hackish terms for people, this one may
be praise or insult depending on who uses it. In general, being

referred to as a smurf is probably not going to make your day
unless you've previously adopted the label yourself in a spirit of
irony. Compare
                old fart
                .

1.1636   SNAFU principle

            SNAFU principle: /sna'foo prin'si-pl/ [from a WWII Army
acronym for 'Situation Normal, All Fucked Up'] n. "True
communication is possible only between equals, because inferiors
are more consistently rewarded for telling their superiors pleasant
lies than for telling the truth." --- a central tenet of

            Discordianism
            , often invoked by hackers to explain why
authoritarian hierarchies screw up so reliably and systematically.
The effect of the SNAFU principle is a progressive disconnection of
decision-makers from reality. This lightly adapted version of a
fable dating back to the early 1960s illustrates the phenomenon
perfectly:

  In the beginning was the plan,
        and then the specification;
  And the plan was without form,
        and the specification was void.

  And darkness
        was on the faces of the implementors thereof;
  And they spake unto their leader,
        saying:
  "It is a crock of shit,
        and smells as of a sewer."

  And the leader took pity on them,
        and spoke to the project leader:
  "It is a crock of excrement,
        and none may abide the odor thereof."

  And the project leader
        spake unto his section head, saying:
  "It is a container of excrement,
        and it is very strong, such that none may abide it."

  The section head then hurried to his department manager,
        and informed him thus:
  "It is a vessel of fertilizer,
        and none may abide its strength."

  The department manager carried these words
        to his general manager,
  and spoke unto him
        saying:

```
   "It containeth that which aideth the growth of plants,
        and it is very strong."

   And so it was that the general manager rejoiced
        and delivered the good news unto the Vice President.
   "It promoteth growth,
        and it is very powerful."

   The Vice President rushed to the President's side,
        and joyously exclaimed:
   "This powerful new software product
        will promote the growth of the company!"

   And the President looked upon the product,
        and saw that it was very good.


  After the subsequent disaster, the
                suit
                s protect themselves by
  saying "I was misinformed!", and the implementors are demoted or
  fired.
```

1.1637   snail

```
             snail: vt. To
             snail-mail
              something. "Snail me a copy of those
  graphics, will you?"
```

1.1638   snail-mail

```
             snail-mail: n. Paper mail, as opposed to electronic.  Sometimes
  written as the single word 'SnailMail'.  One's postal address is,
  correspondingly, a 'snail address'.  Derives from earlier coinage
  'USnail' (from 'U.S. Mail'), for which there have even been
  parody posters and stamps made.  Oppose
             email
             .
```

1.1639   snap

```
             snap: v. To replace a pointer to a pointer with a direct pointer;
  to replace an old address with the forwarding address found there.
  If you telephone the main number for an institution and ask for a
```

particular person by name, the operator may tell you that person's
extension before connecting you, in the hopes that you will 'snap
your pointer' and dial direct next time. The underlying metaphor
may be that of a rubber band stretched through a number of
intermediate points; if you remove all the thumbtacks in the
middle, it snaps into a straight line from first to last. See

            chase pointers
            .

Often, the behavior of a
            trampoline
             is to perform an error
check once and then snap the pointer that invoked it so as
henceforth to bypass the trampoline (and its one-shot error check).
In this context one also speaks of 'snapping links'. For
example, in a LISP implementation, a function interface trampoline
might check to make sure that the caller is passing the correct
number of arguments; if it is, and if the caller and the callee are
both compiled, then snapping the link allows that particular path
to use a direct procedure-call instruction with no further
overhead.

1.1640   snarf

            snarf: /snarf/ vt. 1. To grab, esp. to grab a large document
or file for the purpose of using it with or without the author's
permission. See also
            BLT
            . 2. [in the UNIX community] To
fetch a file or set of files across a network. See also

            blast
            . This term was mainstream in the late 1960s, meaning
'to eat piggishly'. It may still have this connotation in
context. "He's in the snarfing phase of hacking ---
            FTP
            ing
megs of stuff a day." 3. To acquire, with little concern for
legal forms or politesse (but not quite by stealing). "They
were giving away samples, so I snarfed a bunch of them."
4. Syn. for
            slurp
            . "This program starts by snarfing the
entire database into core, then...." 5. [GEnie] To spray
food or
            programming fluid
            s due to laughing at the wrong
moment. "I was drinking coffee, and when I read your post I
snarfed all over my desk." "If I keep reading this topic, I think
I'll have to snarf-proof my computer with a keyboard
            condom
            ."

[This sense appears to be widespread among mundane teenagers ---
ESR]

1.1641   snarf & barf

         snarf & barf: /snarf'n-barf`/ n. Under a
         WIMP environment
            ,
the act of grabbing a region of text and then stuffing the contents
of that region into another region (or the same one) to avoid
retyping a command line. In the late 1960s, this was a mainstream
expression for an 'eat now, regret it later' cheap-restaurant
expedition.

1.1642   snarf down

         snarf down: v. To
         snarf
          , with the connotation of absorbing,
processing, or understanding. "I'll snarf down the latest
version of the
         nethack
          user's guide --- it's been a while
since I played last and I don't know what's changed recently."

1.1643   snark

         snark: [Lewis Carroll, via the Michigan Terminal System] n. 1. A
system failure. When a user's process bombed, the operator would
get the message "Help, Help, Snark in MTS!" 2. More generally,
any kind of unexplained or threatening event on a computer
(especially if it might be a boojum). Often used to refer to an
event or a log file entry that might indicate an attempted security
violation. See
         snivitz
          . 3. UUCP name of
snark.thyrsus.com, home site of the Jargon File 2.*.* versions
(i.e., this lexicon).

1.1644 sneakernet

sneakernet: /snee'ker-net/ n. Term used (generally with ironic
    intent) for transfer of electronic information by physically
    carrying tape, disks, or some other media from one machine to
    another. "Never underestimate the bandwidth of a station wagon
    filled with magtape, or a 747 filled with CD-ROMs." Also called
    'Tennis-Net', 'Armpit-Net', 'Floppy-Net' or 'Shoenet'.

1.1645 sniff

sniff: v.,n. Synonym for
poll
.

1.1646 snivitz

snivitz: /sniv'itz/ n. A hiccup in hardware or software; a small,
transient problem of unknown origin (less serious than a

snark
). Compare
glitch
.

1.1647 SO

SO: /S-O/ n. 1. (also 'S.O.') Abbrev. for Significant
Other, almost invariably written abbreviated and pronounced
/S-O/ by hackers. Used to refer to one's primary
relationship, esp. a live-in to whom one is not married. See

MOTAS
,
MOTOS
,
MOTSS
. 2. The Shift Out control
character in ASCII (Control-N, 0001110).

1.1648   social engineering

    social engineering: n. Term used among
    cracker
    s and

    samurai
     for cracking techniques that rely on weaknesses in

    wetware
     rather than software; the aim is to trick people into
revealing passwords or other information that compromises a target
system's security. Classic scams include phoning up a mark who has
the required information and posing as a field service tech or a
fellow employee with an urgent access problem. See also the

    tiger team
     story in the
    patch
     entry.

1.1649   social science number

    social science number: [IBM] n. A statistic that is

    content-free
    , or nearly so. A measure derived via methods of
questionable validity from data of a dubious and vague nature.
Predictively, having a social science number in hand is seldom much
better than nothing, and can be considerably worse.
    Management
       loves them. See also
    numbers
    ,
    math-out
    ,
    pretty

    pictures
    .

1.1650   soft boot

    soft boot: n. See
    boot
    .

1.1651   softcopy

softcopy: /soft'kop-ee/ n. [by analogy with 'hardcopy'] A
machine-readable form of corresponding hardcopy. See
bits
,

machinable
.

1.1652   software bloat

software bloat: n. The results of
second-system effect
 or

creeping featuritis
. Commonly cited examples include
'ls(1)',
X
,
BSD
,
Missed'em-five
, and
OS/2
.

1.1653   software laser

software laser: n. An optical laser works by bouncing photons back
and forth between two mirrors, one totally reflective and one
partially reflective. If the lasing material (usually a crystal)
has the right properties, photons scattering off the atoms in the
crystal will excite cascades of more photons, all in lockstep.
Eventually the beam will escape through the partially-reflective
mirror. One kind of
sorcerer's apprentice mode
 involving

bounce message
s can produce closely analogous results, with a

cascade
 of messages escaping to flood nearby systems. By
mid-1993 there had been at least two publicized incidents of this
kind.

1.1654   software rot

software rot: n. Term used to describe the tendency of software
that has not been used in a while to
lose
; such failure may be
semi-humorously ascribed to
bit rot
. More commonly,
'software rot' strikes when a program's assumptions become out
of date. If the design was insufficiently
robust
, this may
cause it to fail in mysterious ways.

For example, owing to endemic shortsightedness in the design of
COBOL programs, most will succumb to software rot when their
2-digit year counters
wrap around
at the beginning of the
year 2000. Actually, related lossages often afflict centenarians
who have to deal with computer software designed by unimaginative
clods. One such incident became the focus of a minor public flap
in 1990, when a gentleman born in 1889 applied for a driver's
license renewal in Raleigh, North Carolina. The new system
refused to issue the card, probably because with 2-digit years the
ages 101 and 1 cannot be distinguished.

Historical note: Software rot in an even funnier sense than the
mythical one was a real problem on early research computers (e.g.,
the R1; see
grind crank
). If a program that depended on a
peculiar instruction hadn't been run in quite a while, the user
might discover that the opcodes no longer did the same things they
once did. ("Hey, so-and-so needs an instruction to do
such-and-such. We can
snarf
this opcode, right? No one uses
it.")

Another classic example of this sprang from the time an MIT hacker
found a simple way to double the speed of the unconditional jump
instruction on a PDP-6, so he patched the hardware. Unfortunately,
this broke some fragile timing software in a music-playing program,
throwing its output out of tune. This was fixed by adding a
defensive initialization routine to compare the speed of a timing
loop with the real-time clock; in other words, it figured out how
fast the PDP-6 was that day, and corrected appropriately.

Compare
bit rot
.

1.1655   softwarily

softwarily: /soft-weir'i-lee/ adv. In a way pertaining to software ←
           .
"The system is softwarily unreliable." The adjective
**'softwary' is *not* used. See
           hardwarily
           .

1.1656   softy

softy: [IBM] n. Hardware hackers' term for a software expert who
   is largely ignorant of the mysteries of hardware.

1.1657   some random X

           some random X: adj. Used to indicate a member of class X, with the
   implication that Xs are interchangeable. "I think some random
   cracker tripped over the guest timeout last night." See also

           J. Random
           .

1.1658   sorcerer's apprentice mode

           sorcerer's apprentice mode: [from Friedrich Schiller's "Der
   Zauberlehrling" via the film "Fantasia"] n. A bug in a
   protocol where, under some circumstances, the receipt of a message
   causes multiple messages to be sent, each of which, when received,
   triggers the same bug. Used esp. of such behavior caused by

           bounce message
            loops in
           email
            software. Compare

           broadcast storm
           ,
           network meltdown

,
software

laser
,
ARMM
.

1.1659 SOS

SOS: n.,obs. /S-O-S/ 1. An infamously
losing
 text editor.
Once, back in the 1960s, when a text editor was needed for the
PDP-6, a hacker crufted together a
quick-and-dirty
 'stopgap
editor' to be used until a better one was written. Unfortunately,
the old one was never really discarded when new ones (in
particular,
TECO
) came along. SOS is a descendant ('Son of
Stopgap') of that editor, and many PDP-10 users gained the dubious
pleasure of its acquaintance. Since then other programs similar in
style to SOS have been written, notably the early font editor BILOS
/bye'lohs/, the Brother-In-Law Of Stopgap (the alternate expansion
'Bastard Issue, Loins of Stopgap' has been proposed). 2. /sos/
vt. To decrease; inverse of
AOS
, from the PDP-10 instruction
set.

1.1660 source of all good bits

source of all good bits: n. A person from whom (or a place from
which) useful information may be obtained. If you need to know
about a program, a
guru
 might be the source of all good bits.
The title is often applied to a particularly competent secretary.

1.1661 space-cadet keyboard

space-cadet keyboard: n. A now-legendary device used on MIT LISP
machines, which inspired several still-current jargon terms and
influenced the design of
          EMACS
          . It was equipped with no
fewer than *seven* shift keys: four keys for
          bucky bits
          ('control', 'meta', 'hyper', and 'super') and three like
regular shift keys, called 'shift', 'top', and 'front'. Many
keys had three symbols on them: a letter and a symbol on the top,
and a Greek letter on the front. For example, the 'L' key had an
'L' and a two-way arrow on the top, and the Greek letter lambda on
the front. By pressing this key with the right hand while playing
an appropriate 'chord' with the left hand on the shift keys, you
could get the following results:

  L
       lowercase l

  shift-L
       uppercase L

  front-L
       lowercase lambda

  front-shift-L
       uppercase lambda

  top-L
       two-way arrow
       (front and shift are ignored)

And of course each of these might also be typed with any
combination of the control, meta, hyper, and super keys. On this
keyboard, you could type over 8000 different characters! This
allowed the user to type very complicated mathematical text, and
also to have thousands of single-character commands at his
disposal. Many hackers were actually willing to memorize the
command meanings of that many characters if it reduced typing time
(this attitude obviously shaped the interface of EMACS). Other
hackers, however, thought having that many bucky bits was overkill,
and objected that such a keyboard can require three or four hands
to operate. See
          bucky bits
          ,
          cokebottle
          ,
          double bucky
          ,

          meta bit
          ,
          quadruple bucky
          .

Note: early versions of this entry incorrectly identified the

space-cadet keyboard with the 'Knight keyboard'. Though both
were designed by Tom Knight, the latter term was properly applied
only to a keyboard used for ITS on the PDP-10 and modeled
on the Stanford keyboard (as described under
          bucky bits
). The
true space-cadet keyboard evolved from the Knight keyboard.

1.1662 SPACEWAR

          SPACEWAR: n. A space-combat simulation game, inspired by
E. E. "Doc" Smith's "Lensman" books, in which two spaceships
duel around a central sun, shooting torpedoes at each other and
jumping through hyperspace. This game was first implemented on the
PDP-1 at MIT in 1960--61. SPACEWAR aficionados formed the core of
the early hacker culture at MIT. Nine years later, a descendant
of the game motivated Ken Thompson to build, in his spare time on a
scavenged PDP-7, the operating system that became
          UNIX
          . Less
than nine years after that, SPACEWAR was commercialized as one of
the first video games; descendants are still
          feep
          ing in video
arcades everywhere.

1.1663 spaghetti code

spaghetti code: n. Code with a complex and tangled control
   structure, esp. one using many GOTOs, exceptions, or other
   'unstructured' branching constructs. Pejorative. The synonym
   'kangaroo code' has been reported, doubtless because such code
   has so many jumps in it.

1.1664 spaghetti inheritance

          spaghetti inheritance: n. [encountered among users of object- ↩
               oriented
languages that use inheritance, such as Smalltalk] A convoluted
class-subclass graph, often resulting from carelessly deriving
subclasses from other classes just for the sake of reusing their
code. Coined in a (successful) attempt to discourage such
practice, through guilt-by-association with
          spaghetti code
          .

1.1665   spam

            spam: [from the
            MUD
            community] vt. 1. To crash a program by
overrunning a fixed-size buffer with excessively large input data.
See also
            buffer overflow
            ,
            overrun screw
            ,
            smash the

            stack
            . 2. To cause a newsgroup to be flooded with irrelevant or
inappropriate messages. You can spam a newsgroup with as little as
one well- (or ill-) planned message (e.g. asking "What do you
think of abortion?" on soc.women). This is often done with

            cross-post
            ing (e.g. any message which is crossposted to
alt.rush-limbaugh and alt.politics.homosexuality will
almost inevitably spam both groups).

1.1666   special-case

            special-case: vt. To write unique code to handle input to or
situations arising in a program that are somehow distinguished from
normal processing. This would be used for processing of mode
switches or interrupt characters in an interactive interface (as
opposed, say, to text entry or normal commands), or for processing
of
            hidden flag
            s in the input of a batch program or
            filter
            .

1.1667   speedometer

            speedometer: n. A pattern of lights displayed on a linear set of
LEDs (today) or nixie tubes (yesterday, on ancient mainframes).
The pattern is shifted left every N times the operating
system goes through its

```
        main loop
          .  A swiftly moving pattern
indicates that the system is mostly idle; the speedometer slows
down as the system becomes overloaded.  The speedometer on Sun
Microsystems hardware bounces back and forth like the eyes on one
of the Cylons from the wretched "Battlestar Galactica" TV
series.

Historical note: One computer, the GE 600 (later Honeywell 6000)
actually had an *analog* speedometer on the front panel,
calibrated in instructions executed per second.
```

1.1668   spell

```
        spell: n. Syn.
incantation
        .
```

1.1669   spelling flame

```
        spelling flame: [USENET] n. A posting ostentatiously correcting a
previous article's spelling as a way of casting scorn on the point
the article was trying to make, instead of actually responding to
that point (compare
        dictionary flame
        ).  Of course, people who
are more than usually slovenly spellers are prone to think
*any* correction is a spelling flame.  It's an amusing comment
on humAn nature that spelling flames themselves often contain
spelling errors.
```

1.1670   spiffy

```
        spiffy: /spi'fee/ adj. 1. Said of programs having a pretty,
clever, or exceptionally well-designed interface. "Have you seen
the spiffy
        X
         version of
        empire
         yet?"  2. Said
sarcastically of a program that is perceived to have little more
than a flashy interface going for it.  Which meaning should be
drawn depends delicately on tone of voice and context.  This word
was common mainstream slang during the 1940s, in a sense close
```

to 1.

1.1671 spike

spike: v. To defeat a selection mechanism by introducing a
(sometimes temporary) device that forces a specific result. The
word is used in several industries; telephone engineers refer to
spiking a relay by inserting a pin to hold the relay in either the
closed or open state, and railroaders refer to spiking a
track switch so that it cannot be moved. In programming
environments it normally refers to a temporary change, usually for
testing purposes (as opposed to a permanent change, which would be
called
hardwired
).

1.1672 spin

spin: vi. Equivalent to
buzz
. More common among C and UNIX
programmers.

1.1673 spl

spl: /S-P-L/ [abbrev, from Set Priority Level] The way
traditional UNIX kernels implement mutual exclusion by running code
at high interrupt levels. Used in jargon to describe the act of
tuning in or tuning out ordinary communication. Classically, spl
levels run from 1 to 7; "Fred's at spl 6 today" would mean
that he is very hard to interrupt. "Wait till I finish this; I'll
spl down then." See also
interrupts locked out
.

1.1674 splash screen

splash screen: [Mac] n. Syn.
banner
, sense 3.

1.1675 splat

splat: n. 1. Name used in many places (DEC, IBM, and others) for
the asterisk ('*') character (ASCII 0101010). This may derive
from the 'squashed-bug' appearance of the asterisk on many early
line printers. 2. [MIT] Name used by some people for the
'#' character (ASCII 0100011). 3. [Rochester Institute of
Technology] The
feature key
 on a Mac (same as
alt
,
sense 2). 4. obs. Name used by some people for the
Stanford/ITS extended ASCII
circle-x
character. This character is also called 'blobby' and 'frob',
among other names; it is sometimes used by mathematicians as a
notation for 'tensor product'. 5. obs. Name for the
semi-mythical Stanford extended ASCII
circle-plus
character. See also
 ASCII
 .

1.1676 spod

spod: [Great Britain] n. A lower form of life found on
talker

system
s and
MUD
s. The spod has few friends in
RL
 and
uses talkers instead, finding communication easier and preferable
over the net. He has all the negative traits of the
computer

geek
 without having any interest in computers per se. Lacking any
knowledge of or interest in how networks work, and considering his
access a God-given right, he is a major irritant to sysadmins,

clogging up lines in order to reach new MUDs, following passed-on
instructions on how to sneak his way onto Internet ("Wow! It's in
America!") and complaining when he is not allowed to use busy
routes. A true spod will start any conversation with "Are you
male or female?" (and follow it up with "Got any good
numbers/IDs/passwords?") and will not talk to someone physically
present in the same terminal room until they log onto the same
machine that he is using and enter talk mode. Compare
              newbie

              ,

              tourist

              ,

              weenie

              ,

              twink

              ,

              terminal junkie

              .

1.1677   spoiler

              spoiler: [USENET] n. 1. A remark which reveals important plot
elements from books or movies, thus denying the reader (of the
article) the proper suspense when reading the book or watching the
movie. 2. Any remark which telegraphs the solution of a problem or
puzzle, thus denying the reader the pleasure of working out the
correct answer (see also
              interesting
). Either sense readily
forms compounds like 'total spoiler', 'quasi-spoiler' and even
'pseudo-spoiler'.

By convention, articles which are spoilers in either sense should
contain the word 'spoiler' in the Subject: line, or guarantee via
various tricks that the answer appears only after several
screens-full of warning, or conceal the sensitive information via

              rot13
              , or some combination of these techniques.

1.1678   sponge

              sponge: [UNIX] n. A special case of a
              filter
               that reads its
entire input before writing any output; the canonical example is a
sort utility. Unlike most filters, a sponge can conveniently

overwrite the input file with the output data stream. If a file
system has versioning (as ITS did and VMS does now) the
sponge/filter distinction loses its usefulness, because directing
filter output would just write a new version. See also
          slurp
          .

1.1679   spoo

          spoo: n. Variant of
          spooge
          , sense 1.

1.1680   spooge

spooge: /spooj/ 1. n. Inexplicable or arcane code, or random
   and probably incorrect output from a computer program. 2. vi. To
   generate spooge (sense 1).

1.1681   spool

          spool: [from early IBM 'Simultaneous Peripheral Operation
   On-Line', but this acronym is widely thought to have been contrived
   for effect] vt. To send files to some device or program (a
   'spooler') that queues them up and does something useful with
   them later. Without qualification, the spooler is the 'print
   spooler' controlling output of jobs to a printer; but the term has
   been used in connection with other peripherals (especially plotters
   and graphics devices) and occasionally even for input devices. See
   also
          demon
          .

1.1682   spool file

          spool file: n. Any file to which data is
          spool
          ed to await the
   next stage of processing. Especially used in circumstances where
   spooling the data copes with a mismatch between speeds in two

devices or pieces of software. For example, when you send mail
under UNIX, it's typically copied to a spool file to await a
transport
            demon
            's attentions. This is borderline techspeak.

1.1683   square tape

            square tape: n. Mainframe magnetic tape cartridges for use with
IBM 3480 or compatible tape drives; or QIC tapes used on
workstations and micros. The term comes from the square (actually
rectangular) shape of the cartridges; contrast
            round tape
            .

1.1684   stack

            stack: n. The set of things a person has to do in the future. One
speaks of the next project to be attacked as having risen to the
top of the stack. "I'm afraid I've got real work to do, so
this'll have to be pushed way down on my stack." "I haven't done
it yet because every time I pop my stack something new gets
pushed." If you are interrupted several times in the middle of a
conversation, "My stack overflowed" means "I forget what we were
talking about." The implication is that more items were pushed
onto the stack than could be remembered, so the least recent items
were lost. The usual physical example of a stack is to be found in
a cafeteria: a pile of plates or trays sitting on a spring in a
well, so that when you put one on the top they all sink down, and
when you take one off the top the rest spring up a bit. See also

            push
             and
            pop
            .

At MIT,
            pdl
             used to be a more common synonym for
            stack
             in
all these contexts, and this may still be true. Everywhere else

            stack
             seems to be the preferred term.
            Knuth
                ("The Art of Computer Programming", second edition, vol. 1,
p. 236) says:

Many people who realized the importance of stacks and queues
independently have given other names to these structures:
stacks have been called push-down lists, reversion storages,
cellars, nesting stores, piles, last-in-first-out ("LIFO")
lists, and even yo-yo lists!

1.1685   stack puke

stack puke: n. Some processor architectures are said to 'puke their
   guts onto the stack' to save their internal state during exception
   processing. The Motorola 68020, for example, regurgitates up to
   92 bytes on a bus fault. On a pipelined machine, this can take a
   while.

1.1686   stale pointer bug

                 stale pointer bug: n. Synonym for
                 aliasing bug
                  used esp. among
   microcomputer hackers.

1.1687   state

                 state: n. 1. Condition, situation. "What's the state of your
   latest hack?" "It's winning away." "The system tried to read
   and write the disk simultaneously and got into a totally
                 wedged
                   state." The standard question "What's your state?" means
   "What are you doing?" or "What are you about to do?" Typical
   answers are "about to gronk out", or "hungry". Another
   standard question is "What's the state of the world?", meaning
   "What's new?" or "What's going on?". The more terse and
   humorous way of asking these questions would be "State-p?".
   Another way of phrasing the first question under sense 1 would be
   "state-p latest hack?". 2. Information being maintained in
   non-permanent memory (electronic or human).

1.1688   steam-powered

steam-powered: adj. Old-fashioned or underpowered; archaic. This
   term does not have a strong negative loading and may even be used
   semi-affectionately for something that clanks and wheezes a lot
   but hangs in there doing the job.

1.1689   stiffy

                stiffy: [University of Lowell, Massachusetts.] n. 3.5-inch

                microfloppies
                , so called because their jackets are more rigid
   than those of the 5.25-inch and the (now totally obsolete) 8-inch
   floppy. Elsewhere this might be called a 'firmy'.

1.1690   stir-fried random

                stir-fried random: alt. 'stir-fried mumble' n. Term used for the
   best dish of many of those hackers who can cook. Consists of
   random fresh veggies and meat wokked with random spices. Tasty and
   economical. See
                random
                ,
                great-wall
                ,
                ravs
                ,
                laser

                chicken
                ,
                oriental food
                ; see also
                mumble
                .

1.1691   stomp on

                stomp on: vt. To inadvertently overwrite something important, ←↩
                usually
   automatically. "All the work I did this weekend got
   stomped on last night by the nightly server script." Compare

                scribble
                ,

```
            mangle
            ,
            trash
            ,
            scrog
            ,
            roach
            .
```

1.1692   Stone Age

            Stone Age: n., adj. 1. In computer folklore, an ill-defined period
from ENIAC (ca. 1943) to the mid-1950s; the great age of
electromechanical
            dinosaur
            s. Sometimes used for the entire
period up to 1960--61 (see
            Iron Age
            ); however, it is funnier
and more descriptive to characterize the latter period in terms of
a 'Bronze Age' era of transistor-logic, pre-ferrite-
            core
               machines with drum or CRT mass storage (as opposed to just ←
                  mercury
delay lines and/or relays). See also
            Iron Age
            . 2. More
generally, a pejorative for any crufty, ancient piece of hardware
or software technology. Note that this is used even by people who
were there for the
            Stone Age
              (sense 1).

1.1693   stone knives and bearskins

            stone knives and bearskins: [from the Star Trek Classic episode
"The City on the Edge of Forever"] n. A term traditionally
used to describe (and deprecate) computing environments that are
grotesquely primitive in light of what is known about good ways to
design things. As in "Don't get too used to the facilities here.
Once you leave SAIL it's stone knives and bearskins as far as the
eye can see". Compare
            steam-powered
              .

1.1694 stoppage

stoppage: /sto'p*j/ n. Extreme
lossage
 that renders
something (usually something vital) completely unusable. "The
recent system stoppage was caused by a
fried
 transformer."

1.1695 store

store: [prob. from techspeak 'main store'] n. In some
varieties of Commonwealth hackish, the preferred synonym for

core
. Thus, 'bringing a program into store' means not that
one is returning shrink-wrapped software but that a program is
being
swap
ped in.

1.1696 strided

strided: /str:'d*d/ [scientific computing] adj. Said of a
   sequence of memory reads and writes to addresses, each of which is
   separated from the last by a constant interval called the 'stride
   length'. These can be a worst-case access pattern for the standard
   memory-caching schemes when the stride length is a multiple of the
   cache line size. Strided references are often generated by loops
   through an array, and (if youre data is large enough that
   access-time is significant) it can be worthwhile to tune for better
   locality by inverting double loops or by partially unrolling the
   outer loop of a loop nest. This usage is borderline techspeak; the
   related term 'memory stride' is definitely techspeak.

1.1697 stroke

stroke: n. Common name for the slant ('/', ASCII 0101111)
character. See
 ASCII
  for other synonyms.

1.1698   strudel

              strudel: n. Common (spoken) name for the at-sign ('@', ASCII
   1000000) character. See
              ASCII
               for other synonyms.

1.1699   stubroutine

stubroutine: /stuhb'roo-teen/ [contraction of 'stub
   subroutine'] n. Tiny, often vacuous placeholder for a subroutine
   that is to be written or fleshed out later.

1.1700   studly

              studly: adj. Impressive; powerful. Said of code and designs which
   exhibit both complexity and a virtuoso flair. Has connotations
   similar to
              hairy
               but is more positive in tone. Often in the
   emphatic 'most studly' or as noun-form 'studliness'. "Smail
   3.0's configuration parser is most studly."

1.1701   studlycaps

              studlycaps: /stuhd'lee-kaps/ n. A hackish form of silliness
   similar to
              BiCapitalization
               for trademarks, but applied
   randomly and to arbitrary text rather than to trademarks. ThE
   oRigiN and SigNificaNce of thIs pRacTicE iS oBscuRe.

1.1702   stunning

stunning: adj. Mind-bogglingly stupid. Usually used in sarcasm.
   "You want to code *what* in ADA? That's a ... stunning
   idea!"

1.1703 stupid-sort

```
stupid-sort: n. Syn.
bogo-sort
.
```

1.1704 Stupids

```
Stupids: n. Term used by
samurai
 for the
suit
s who
```
employ them; succinctly expresses an attitude at least as common,
though usually better disguised, among other subcultures of
hackers. There may be intended reference here to an SF story
originally published in 1952 but much anthologized since, Mark
Clifton's "Star, Bright". In it, a super-genius child
classifies humans into a very few 'Brights' like herself, a huge
majority of 'Stupids', and a minority of 'Tweens', the merely
ordinary geniuses.

1.1705 Sturgeon's Law

```
          Sturgeon's Law: prov. "Ninety percent of everything is crap".
Derived from a quote by science fiction author Theodore Sturgeon,
who once said, "Sure, 90% of science fiction is crud.  That's
because 90% of everything is crud."  Oddly, when Sturgeon's Law is
cited, the final word is almost invariably changed to 'crap'.
Compare
          Hanlon's Razor
          ,
          Ninety-Ninety Rule
          .  Though this
maxim originated in SF fandom, most hackers recognize it and are
all too aware of its truth.
```

1.1706 sucking mud

```
          sucking mud: [Applied Data Research] adj. (also 'pumping
mud') Crashed or
          wedged
          .  Usually said of a machine that provides
```

some service to a network, such as a file server. This Dallas
regionalism derives from the East Texas oilfield lament, "Shut
'er down, Ma, she's a-suckin' mud". Often used as a query. "We
are going to reconfigure the network, are you ready to suck mud?"

1.1707   sufficiently small

sufficiently small: adj. Syn.
suitably small
.

1.1708   suit

suit: n. 1. Ugly and uncomfortable 'business clothing' often
worn by non-hackers. Invariably worn with a 'tie', a
strangulation device that partially cuts off the blood supply to
the brain. It is thought that this explains much about the
behavior of suit-wearers. Compare
droid
. 2. A person who
habitually wears suits, as distinct from a techie or hacker. See

loser
,
burble
,
management
,
Stupids
,
SNAFU

principle
, and
brain-damaged
. English, by the way, is
relatively kind; our Moscow correspondent informs us that the
corresponding idiom in Russian hacker jargon is 'sovok', lit. a
tool for grabbing garbage.

1.1709   suitable win

```
suitable win: n. See
win
.
```

1.1710   suitably small

```
          suitably small: [perverted from mathematical jargon] adj. An
expression used ironically to characterize unquantifiable
behavior that differs from expected or required behavior.  For
example, suppose a newly created program came up with a correct
full-screen display, and one publicly exclaimed: "It works!"
Then, if the program dumped core on the first mouse click, one might
add: "Well, for suitably small values of 'works'."  Compare
the characterization of pi under
          random numbers
          .
```

1.1711   sun lounge

```
sun lounge: [Great Britain] n. The room where all the Sun
   workstations live.  The humor in this term comes from the fact
   that it's also in mainstream use to describe a solarium, and all
   those Sun workstations clustered together give off an amazing
   amount of heat.
```

1.1712   sun-stools

```
          sun-stools: n. Unflattering hackerism for SunTools, a pre-X
windowing environment notorious in its day for size, slowness, and
misfeatures.
          X
          , however, is larger and slower; see

          second-system effect
          .
```

1.1713   sunspots

```
          sunspots: n. 1. Notional cause of an odd error.  "Why did the
program suddenly turn the screen blue?"  "Sunspots, I guess."
2. Also the cause of
          bit rot
           --- from the myth that sunspots
will increase
          cosmic rays
          , which can flip single bits in memory.
See also
          phase of the moon
          .
```

1.1714   super source quench

```
          super source quench: n.  A special packet designed to shut up an  ←
              Internet
host.  The Internet Protocol (IP) has a control message called Source
Quench that asks a host to transmit more slowly on a particular
connection to avoid congestion.  It also has a Redirect control
message intended to instruct a host to send certain packets to a
different local router.  A "super source quench" is actually a
redirect control packet, forged to look like it came from a local
router, that instructs a host to send all packets to its own local
loopback address.  This will effectively tie many Internet hosts up in
knots.  Compare
          godzillagram
          ,
          breath-of-life packet
          .
```

1.1715   superprogrammer

```
          superprogrammer: n. A prolific programmer; one who can code
exceedingly well and quickly.  Not all hackers are
superprogrammers, but many are.  (Productivity can vary from one
programmer to another by three orders of magnitude.  For example,
one programmer might be able to write an average of 3 lines of
working code in one day, while another, with the proper tools,
might be able to write 3,000.  This range is astonishing; it is
matched in very few other areas of human endeavor.)  The term
'superprogrammer' is more commonly used within such places as IBM
than in the hacker community.  It tends to stress naive measures
of productivity and to underweight creativity, ingenuity, and
getting the job *done* --- and to sidestep the question of
whether the 3,000 lines of code do more or less useful work than
three lines that do the
          Right Thing
```

. Hackers tend to prefer
the terms

hacker
and
wizard

.

1.1716 superuser

superuser: [UNIX] n. Syn.
root
,
avatar
. This usage has
spread to non-UNIX environments; the superuser is any account with
all
wheel
bits on. A more specific term than
wheel
.

1.1717 support

support: n. After-sale handholding; something many software
vendors promise but few deliver. To hackers, most support people
are useless --- because by the time a hacker calls support he or
she will usually know the software and the relevant manuals better
than the support people (sadly, this is *not* a joke or
exaggeration). A hacker's idea of 'support' is a
t^ete-'a-t^ete with the software's designer.

1.1718 Suzie COBOL

Suzie COBOL: /soo'zee koh'bol/ 1. [IBM: prob. from Frank
Zappa's 'Suzy Creamcheese'] n. A coder straight out of training
school who knows everything except the value of comments in plain
English. Also (fashionable among personkind wishing to avoid
accusations of sexism) 'Sammy Cobol' or (in some non-IBM circles)
'Cobol Charlie'. 2. [proposed] Meta-name for any
code

grinder
, analogous to
J. Random Hacker
.

1.1719 swab

swab: /swob/ [From the mnemonic for the PDP-11 'SWAp Byte'
instruction, as immortalized in the 'dd(1)' option 'conv=swab'
(see

dd

)] 1. vt. To solve the
NUXI problem
 by swapping
bytes in a file. 2. n. The program in V7 UNIX used to perform this
action, or anything functionally equivalent to it. See also

big-endian

,
little-endian

,
middle-endian

,

bytesexual

.

1.1720 swap

swap: vt. 1. [techspeak] To move information from a fast-access
memory to a slow-access memory ('swap out'), or vice versa
('swap in'). Often refers specifically to the use of disks as
'virtual memory'. As pieces of data or program are needed, they
are swapped into

core

 for processing; when they are no longer
needed they may be swapped out again. 2. The jargon use of these
terms analogizes people's short-term memories with core. Cramming
for an exam might be spoken of as swapping in. If you temporarily
forget someone's name, but then remember it, your excuse is that it
was swapped out. To 'keep something swapped in' means to keep it
fresh in your memory: "I reread the TECO manual every few months
to keep it swapped in." If someone interrupts you just as you got
a good idea, you might say "Wait a moment while I swap this
out", implying that a piece of paper is your extra-somatic
memory and that if you don't swap the idea out by writing it down it
will get overwritten and lost as you talk. Compare

page in

,

page out

.

1.1721   swap space

```
swap space: n. Storage space, especially temporary storage space
   used during a move or reconfiguration.  "I'm just using that corner
   of the machine room for swap space."
```

1.1722   swapped in

```
            swapped in: n. See
            swap
            . See also
            page in
            .
```

1.1723   swapped out

```
            swapped out: n. See
            swap
            . See also
            page out
            .
```

1.1724   swizzle

```
            swizzle: v. To convert external names, array indices, or  ↩
                references
   within a data structure into address pointers when the data
   structure is brought into main memory from external storage (also
   called 'pointer swizzling'); this may be done for speed in
   chasing references or to simplify code (e.g., by turning lots of
   name lookups into pointer dereferences).  The converse operation is
   sometimes termed 'unswizzling'.  See also
            snap
            .
```

1.1725   sync

sync: /sink/ (var. 'synch') n., vi. 1. To synchronize, to
bring into synchronization. 2. [techspeak] To force all pending
I/O to the disk; see
flush
, sense 2. 3. More generally, to
force a number of competing processes or agents to a state that
would be 'safe' if the system were to crash; thus, to checkpoint
(in the database-theory sense).

1.1726   syntactic salt

syntactic salt: n. The opposite of
syntactic sugar
, a feature
designed to make it harder to write bad code. Specifically,
syntactic salt is a hoop the programmer must jump through just to
prove that he knows what's going on, rather than to express a
program action. Some programmers consider required type
declarations to be syntactic salt. A requirement to write
'end if', 'end while', 'end do', etc. to terminate
the last block controlled by a control construct (as opposed to
just 'end') would definitely be syntactic salt. Syntactic salt
is like the real thing in that it tends to raise hackers' blood
pressures in an unhealthy way. Compare
candygrammar
. .

1.1727   syntactic sugar

syntactic sugar: [coined by Peter Landin] n. Features added to a
language or other formalism to make it 'sweeter' for humans,
features which do not affect the expressiveness of the formalism
(compare
chrome
). Used esp. when there is an obvious and
trivial translation of the 'sugar' feature into other constructs
already present in the notation. C's 'a[i]' notation is
syntactic sugar for '*(a + i)'. "Syntactic sugar causes
cancer of the semicolon." --- Alan Perlis.

The variants 'syntactic saccharin' and 'syntactic syrup' are
also recorded. These denote something even more gratuitous, in
that syntactic sugar serves a purpose (making something more
acceptable to humans), but syntactic saccharin or syrup serve no
purpose at all. Compare
candygrammar

```
,
syntactic salt
.
```

1.1728 sys-frog

```
sys-frog: /sis'frog/ [the PLATO system] n. Playful variant of
   'sysprog', which is in turn short for 'systems programmer'.
```

1.1729 sysadmin

```
            sysadmin: /sis'ad-min/ n. Common contraction of 'system
  admin'; see
            admin
            .
```

1.1730 sysape

```
            sysape: /sys'ayp/ n. A rather derogatory term for a computer
  operator; a play on
            sysop
             common at sites that use the banana
  hierarchy of problem complexity (see
            one-banana

            problem
            ).
```

1.1731 sysop

```
            sysop: /sis'op/ n. [esp. in the BBS world] The operator (and
  usually the owner) of a bulletin-board system.  A common neophyte
  mistake on
            FidoNet
             is to address a message to 'sysop' in an
  international
            echo
            , thus sending it to hundreds of sysops
  around the world.
```

1.1732   system

system: n. 1. The supervisor program or OS on a computer. 2. The
   entire computer system, including input/output devices, the
   supervisor program or OS, and possibly other software. 3. Any
   large-scale program. 4. Any method or algorithm. 5. 'System
   hacker': one who hacks the system (in senses 1 and 2 only; for
   sense 3 one mentions the particular program: e.g., 'LISP
   hacker')

1.1733   systems jock

            systems jock: n. See
            jock
            , sense 2.

1.1734   system mangler

            system mangler: n. Humorous synonym for 'system manager', poss.
   from the fact that one major IBM OS had a
            root
             account called
   SYSMANGR. Refers specifically to a systems programmer in charge of
   administration, software maintenance, and updates at some site.
   Unlike
            admin
            , this term emphasizes the technical end of the
   skills involved.

1.1735   SysVile

            SysVile: /sis-vi:l'/ n. See
            Missed'em-five
            .

1.1736   T

T: /T/ 1. [from LISP terminology for 'true'] Yes. Used in
reply to a question (particularly one asked using
                 The '-P'

                 convention
). In LISP, the constant T means 'true', among other
things. Some hackers use 'T' and 'NIL' instead of 'Yes' and 'No'
almost reflexively. This sometimes causes misunderstandings. When
a waiter or flight attendant asks whether a hacker wants coffee, he
may well respond 'T', meaning that he wants coffee; but of course
he will be brought a cup of tea instead. As it happens, most
hackers (particularly those who frequent Chinese restaurants) like
tea at least as well as coffee --- so it is not that big a problem.
2. See
                 time T
                 (also
                 since time T equals minus infinity
).
3. [techspeak] In transaction-processing circles, an abbreviation
for the noun 'transaction'. 4. [Purdue] Alternate spelling of

                 tee
                 . 5. A dialect of
                 LISP
                 developed at Yale.

1.1737   tail recursion

                 tail recursion: n. If you aren't sick of it already, see
                 tail

                 recursion
                 .

1.1738   talk mode

                 talk mode: n. A feature supported by UNIX, ITS, and some other
OSes that allows two or more logged-in users to set up a real-time
on-line conversation. It combines the immediacy of talking with
all the precision (and verbosity) that written language entails.
It is difficult to communicate inflection, though conventions have
arisen for some of these (see the section on writing style in the
Prependices for details).

Talk mode has a special set of jargon words, used to save typing,
which are not used orally. Some of these are identical to (and
probably derived from) Morse-code jargon used by ham-radio amateurs

since the 1920s.

BCNU
    be seeing you
BTW
    by the way
BYE?
    are you ready to unlink? (this is the standard way to end a
    talk-mode conversation; the other person types 'BYE' to
    confirm, or else continues the conversation)
CUL
    see you later
ENQ?
    are you busy? (expects 'ACK' or 'NAK' in return)
FOO?
    are you there? (often used on unexpected links, meaning also
    "Sorry if I butted in ..." (linker) or "What's up?" (linkee))
FWIW
    for what it's worth
FYI
    for your information
FYA
    for your amusement
GA
    go ahead (used when two people have tried to type
    simultaneously; this cedes the right to type to the other)
GRMBL
    grumble (expresses disquiet or disagreement)
HELLOP
    hello? (an instance of the '-P' convention)
JAM
    just a minute (equivalent to 'SEC....')
MIN
    same as 'JAM'
NIL
    no (see
          NIL
)
O
    over to you
OO
    over and out
/
    another form of "over to you" (from x/y as "x over y")
\
    lambda (used in discussing LISPy things)
OBTW
    oh, by the way
R U THERE?
    are you there?
SEC
    wait a second (sometimes written 'SEC...')
T
    yes (see the main entry for
          T
)
TNX

```
        thanks
TNX 1.0E6
        thanks a million (humorous)
TNXE6
        another form of "thanks a million"
WRT
        with regard to, or with respect to.
WTF
        the universal interrogative particle; WTF knows what it means?
WTH
        what the hell?
<double newline>
        When the typing party has finished, he/she types two newlines
        to signal that he/she is done; this leaves a blank line
        between 'speeches' in the conversation, making it easier to
        reread the preceding text.
<name>:
        When three or more terminals are linked, it is conventional
        for each typist to
                prepend
                 his/her login name or handle and
        a colon (or a hyphen) to each line to indicate who is typing
        (some conferencing facilities do this automatically).  The
        login name is often shortened to a unique prefix (possibly a
        single letter) during a very long conversation.
/\/\/\
        A giggle or chuckle.  On a MUD, this usually means 'earthquake
        fault'.
```

Most of the above sub-jargon is used at both Stanford and MIT.
Several of these expressions are also common in
                email
                , esp.
FYI, FYA, BTW, BCNU, WTF, and CUL. A few other abbreviations have
been reported from commercial networks, such as GEnie and
CompuServe, where on-line 'live' chat including more than two
people is common and usually involves a more 'social' context,
notably the following:

```
  <g>
        grin
  <gr&d>
        grinning, running, and ducking
  BBL
        be back later
  BRB
        be right back
  HHOJ
        ha ha only joking
  HHOK
        ha ha only kidding
  HHOS

                ha ha only serious
                    IMHO
        in my humble opinion (see
                IMHO
```

```
            )
   LOL
         laughing out loud
   NHOH
         Never Heard of Him/Her (often used in
                initgame
                )
   ROTF
         rolling on the floor
   ROTFL
         rolling on the floor laughing
   AFK
         away from keyboard
   b4
         before
   CU l8tr
         see you later
   MORF
         male or female?
   TTFN
         ta-ta for now
   TTYL
         talk to you later
   OIC
         oh, I see
   rehi
         hello again
```

Most of these are not used at universities or in the UNIX world,
though ROTF and TTFN have gained some currency there and IMHO is
common; conversely, most of the people who know these are
unfamiliar with FOO?, BCNU, HELLOP,
                NIL
                , and
                T
                .

The
                MUD
                 community uses a mixture of USENET/Internet emoticons,
a few of the more natural of the old-style talk-mode abbrevs, and
some of the 'social' list above; specifically, MUD respondents
report use of BBL, BRB, LOL, b4, BTW, WTF, TTFN, and WTH. The use
of 'rehi' is also common; in fact, mudders are fond of re-
compounds and will frequently 'rehug' or 'rebonk' (see

                bonk/oif
) people. The word 're' by itself is taken as
'regreet'. In general, though, MUDders express a preference for
typing things out in full rather than using abbreviations; this may
be due to the relative youth of the MUD cultures, which tend to
include many touch typists and to assume high-speed links. The
following uses specific to MUDs are reported:

```
   CU l8er
         see you later (mutant of 'CU l8tr')
   FOAD
```

                fuck off and die (use of this is generally OTT)
     OTT
                over the top (excessive, uncalled for)
     ppl
                abbrev for "people"
     THX
                thanks (mutant of 'TNX'; clearly this comes in batches of 1138
                (the Lucasian K)).
     UOK?
                are you OK?

     Some
                    BIFF
                    isms (notably the variant spelling 'd00d')
     appear to be passing into wider use among some subgroups of
     MUDders.

     One final note on talk mode style: neophytes, when in talk mode,
     often seem to think they must produce letter-perfect prose because
     they are typing rather than speaking. This is not the best
     approach. It can be very frustrating to wait while your partner
     pauses to think of a word, or repeatedly makes the same spelling
     error and backs up to fix it. It is usually best just to leave
     typographical errors behind and plunge forward, unless severe
     confusion may result; in that case it is often fastest just to type
     "xxx" and start over from before the mistake.

     See also
                    hakspek
                    ,
                    emoticon
                    .

1.1739 talker system

                    talker system: n. British hackerism for software that enables
     real-time chat or
                    talk mode
                    .

1.1740 tall card

                    tall card: n. A PC/AT-size expansion card (these can be larger
     than IBM PC or XT cards because the AT case is bigger). See also

                    short card
                    . When IBM introduced the PS/2 model 30 (its last
     gasp at supporting the ISA) they made the case lower and many

industry-standard tall cards wouldn't fit; this was felt to be a
reincarnation of the
            connector conspiracy
            , done with less
style.

1.1741 tanked

            tanked: adj. Same as
            down
            , used primarily by UNIX hackers. See
also
            hosed
            . Popularized as a synonym for 'drunk' by Steve
Dallas in the late lamented "Bloom County" comic strip.

1.1742 TANSTAAFL

            TANSTAAFL: /tan'stah-fl/ [acronym, from Robert Heinlein's
classic "The Moon is a Harsh Mistress".] "There Ain't No
Such Thing As A Free Lunch", often invoked when someone is balking
at the prospect of using an unpleasantly
            heavyweight
              technique, or at the poor quality of some piece of free ←
                software,
or at the
            signal-to-noise ratio
             of unmoderated USENET
newsgroups. "What? Don't tell me I have to implement a database
back end to get my address book program to work!" "Well,
TANSTAAFL you know." This phrase owes some of its popularity to
the high concentration of science-fiction fans and political
libertarians in hackerdom (see
            Appendix B
).

1.1743 tar and feather

            tar and feather: [from UNIX 'tar(1)'] vt. To create a
transportable archive from a group of files by first sticking them
together with 'tar(1)' (the Tape ARchiver) and then
compressing the result (see
            compress
). The latter action is

dubbed 'feathering' partly for euphony and (if only for contrived
effect) by analogy to what you do with an airplane propeller to
decrease wind resistance, or with an oar to reduce water
resistance; smaller files, after all, slip through comm links more
easily.

1.1744   taste

taste: [primarily MIT] n. 1. The quality in a program that tends
to be inversely proportional to the number of features, hacks, and
kluges programmed into it. Also 'tasty', 'tasteful',
'tastefulness'. "This feature comes in N tasty flavors."
Although 'tasteful' and 'flavorful' are essentially
synonyms, 'taste' and
flavor
 are not. Taste refers to
sound judgment on the part of the creator; a program or feature
can *exhibit* taste but cannot *have* taste. On the other
hand, a feature can have
flavor
. Also,
flavor
 has the
additional meaning of 'kind' or 'variety' not shared by
'taste'.
Flavor
 is a more popular word than 'taste',
though both are used. See also
elegant
. 2. Alt. sp. of

tayste
.

1.1745   tayste

tayste: /tayst/ n. Two bits; also as
taste
. Syn.
crumb
,

quarter
. Compare
byte
,
dynner
,

                    playte
                    ,

                    nybble
                    ,
                    quad
                    .

1.1746   TCB

                    TCB: /T-C-B/ [IBM] n. 1. Trouble Came Back. An intermittent or
    difficult-to-reproduce problem that has failed to respond to
    neglect or
                    shotgun debugging
                    . Compare
                    heisenbug
                    . Not to
    be confused with: 2. Trusted Computing Base, an 'official'
    jargon term from the
                    Orange Book
                    .

1.1747   tea, ISO standard cup of

tea, ISO standard cup of: [South Africa] n. A cup of tea with milk
    and one teaspoon of sugar, where the milk is poured into the cup
    before the tea. Variations are ISO 0, with no sugar; ISO 2, with
    two spoons of sugar; and so on.

    Like many ISO standards, this one has a faintly alien ring in North
    America, where hackers generally shun the decadent British practice
    of adulterating perfectly good tea with dairy products and
    prefer instead to add a wedge of lemon, if anything. If one were
    feeling extremely silly, one might hypothesize an analogous 'ANSI
    standard cup of tea' and wind up with a political situation
    distressingly similar to several that arise in much more serious
    technical contexts. Milk and lemon don't mix very well.

1.1748   TechRef

TechRef: /tek'ref/ [MS-DOS] n. The original "IBM PC
    Technical Reference Manual", including the BIOS listing and
    complete schematics for the PC. The only PC documentation in the
    issue package that's considered serious by real hackers.

1.1749   TECO

TECO: /tee'koh/ obs. 1. [originally an acronym for '[paper] Tape
Editor and COrrector'; later, 'Text Editor and COrrector'] n. A
text editor developed at MIT and modified by just about everybody.
With all the dialects included, TECO may have been the most
prolific editor in use before
            EMACS
            , to which it was directly
ancestral. Noted for its powerful programming-language-like
features and its unspeakably hairy syntax. It is literally the
case that every string of characters is a valid TECO program
(though probably not a useful one); one common game used to be
mentally working out what the TECO commands corresponding to human
names did. 2. vt. Originally, to edit using the TECO editor in one
of its infinite variations (see below). 3. vt.,obs. To edit even
when TECO is *not* the editor being used! This usage is rare
and now primarily historical.

As an example of TECO's obscurity, here is a TECO program that
takes a list of names such as:

  Loser, J. Random
  Quux, The Great
  Dick, Moby

sorts them alphabetically according to surname, and then puts the
surname last, removing the comma, to produce the following:

  Moby Dick
  J. Random Loser
  The Great Quux

The program is

  [1 J^P$L$$
  J <.-Z; .,(S,$ -D .)FX1 @F^B $K :L I $ G1 L>$$

(where ^B means 'Control-B' (ASCII 0000010) and $ is actually
an
            alt
             or escape (ASCII 0011011) character).

In fact, this very program was used to produce the second, sorted
list from the first list. The first hack at it had a
            bug
            : GLS
(the author) had accidentally omitted the '@' in front
of 'F^B', which as anyone can see is clearly the
            Wrong Thing
            . It
worked fine the second time. There is no space to describe all the
features of TECO, but it may be of interest that '^P' means
'sort' and 'J<.-Z; ... L>' is an idiomatic series of commands
for 'do once for every line'.

```
In mid-1991, TECO is pretty much one with the dust of history,
having been replaced in the affections of hackerdom by
            EMACS
            .
Descendants of an early (and somewhat lobotomized) version adopted
by DEC can still be found lurking on VMS and a couple of crufty
PDP-11 operating systems, however, and ports of the more advanced
MIT versions remain the focus of some antiquarian interest.  See
also
            retrocomputing
            ,
            write-only language
            .
```

1.1750   tee

```
            tee: n.,vt. [Purdue] A carbon copy of an electronic transmission.
"Oh, you're sending him the
            bits
             to that?  Slap on a tee for
me."  From the UNIX command `tee(1)', itself named after a
pipe fitting (see
            plumbing
            ).  Can also mean `save one for me',
as in "Tee a slice for me!"  Also spelled `T'.
```

1.1751   teledildonics

```
            teledildonics: /tel`*-dil-do'-niks/ n. Sex in a computer
simulated virtual reality, esp. computer-mediated sexual
interaction between the
            VR
             presences of two humans.  This
practice is not yet possible except in the rather limited form of
erotic conversation on
            MUD
            s and the like.  The term, however,
is widely recognized in the VR community as a
            ha ha only
            serious
             projection of things to come.  "When we can sustain a
multi-sensory surround good enough for teledildonics, *then*
we'll know we're getting somewhere."
```

1.1752 Telerat

Telerat: /tel'*-rat/ n. Unflattering hackerism for 'Teleray', a
line of extremely losing terminals. Compare
AIDX

,

Macintrash

Nominal Semidestructor

,
Open DeathTrap

,

ScumOS

,
sun-stools

,
HP-SUX

.

1.1753 TELNET

TELNET: /tel'net/ vt. To communicate with another Internet host
using the TELNET (
RFC
 854) protocol (usually using a program
of the same name). TOPS-10 people used the word IMPCOM, since that
was the program name for them. Sometimes abbreviated to TN
/T-N/. "I usually TN over to SAIL just to read the AP News."

1.1754 ten-finger interface

ten-finger interface: n. The interface between two networks that
   cannot be directly connected for security reasons; refers to the
   practice of placing two terminals side by side and having an
   operator read from one and type into the other.

1.1755 tense

tense: adj. Of programs, very clever and efficient. A tense piece
of code often got that way because it was highly
bum
med, but

sometimes it was just based on a great idea. A comment in a clever
routine by Mike Kazar, once a grad-student hacker at CMU: "This
routine is so tense it will bring tears to your eyes." A tense
programmer is one who produces tense code.

1.1756   tenured graduate student

tenured graduate student: n. One who has been in graduate school
   for 10 years (the usual maximum is 5 or 6): a 'ten-yeared'
   student (get it?). Actually, this term may be used of any grad
   student beginning in his seventh year. Students don't really get
   tenure, of course, the way professors do, but a tenth-year graduate
   student has probably been around the university longer than any
   untenured professor.

1.1757   tera-

            tera-: /te'r*/ [SI] pref. See
            quantifiers
            .

1.1758   teraflop club

teraflop club: /te'r*-flop kluhb/ [FLOP = Floating Point
   Operation] n. A mythical association of people who consume
   outrageous amounts of computer time in order to produce a few
   simple pictures of glass balls with intricate ray-tracing
   techniques. Caltech professor James Kajiya is said to have been
   the founder.

1.1759   terminak

            terminak: /ter'mi-nak'/ [Caltech, ca. 1979] n. Any
   malfunctioning computer terminal. A common failure mode of
   Lear-Siegler ADM 3a terminals caused the 'L' key to produce the
   'K' code instead; complaints about this tended to look like
   "Terminak #3 has a bad keyboard. Pkease fix." See
            AIDX
            ,

            Nominal Semidestructor

```
,
Open DeathTrap
,
ScumOS
,

sun-stools
,
Telerat
,
HP-SUX
.
```

1.1760   terminal brain death

```
            terminal brain death: n. The extreme form of
            terminal illness
               (sense 1).  What someone who has obviously been hacking
continuously for far too long is said to be suffering from.
```

1.1761   terminal illness

```
            terminal illness: n. 1. Syn.
            raster burn
               . 2. The 'burn-in'
condition your CRT tends to get if you don't have a screen saver.
```

1.1762   terminal junkie

```
            terminal junkie: [UK] n. A
            wannabee
             or early
            larval

            stage
             hacker who spends most of his or her time wandering the
directory tree and writing
            noddy
             programs just to get a fix of
computer time.  Variants include 'terminal jockey', 'console
junkie', and
            console jockey
            .  The term 'console jockey'
seems to imply more expertise than the other three (possibly
```

because of the exalted status of the
            console
             relative to an
ordinary terminal). See also
            twink
            ,
            read-only

            user
            .

1.1763   terpri

            terpri: /ter'pree/ [from LISP 1.5 (and later, MacLISP)] vi. To
output a
            newline
            . Now rare as jargon, though still used as
techspeak in Common LISP. It is a contraction of 'TERminate PRInt
line', named for the fact that, on some early OSes and hardware, no
characters would be printed until a complete line was formed, so
this operation terminated the line and emitted the output.

1.1764   test

            test: n. 1. Real users bashing on a prototype long enough to get
thoroughly acquainted with it, with careful monitoring and followup
of the results. 2. Some bored random user trying a couple of the
simpler features with a developer looking over his or her shoulder,
ready to pounce on mistakes. Judging by the quality of most
software, the second definition is far more prevalent. See also

            demo
            .

1.1765   TeX

            TeX:: /tekh/ n. An extremely powerful
            macro
            -based
text formatter written by Donald E.
            Knuth
            , very popular in the
computer-science community (it is good enough to have displaced
UNIX

```
        troff
        , the other favored formatter, even at many
UNIX installations).  TeX fans insist on the correct (guttural)
pronunciation, and the correct spelling (all caps, squished
together, with the E depressed below the baseline; the
mixed-case 'TeX' is considered an acceptable kluge on ASCII-only
devices).  Fans like to proliferate names from the word 'TeX'
--- such as TeXnician (TeX user), TeXhacker (TeX
programmer), TeXmaster (competent TeX programmer), TeXhax,
and TeXnique.
```

Knuth began TeX because he had become annoyed at the declining
quality of the typesetting in volumes I--III of his monumental
"Art of Computer Programming" (see

        Knuth
        , also

        bible
). In a manifestation of the typical hackish urge to
solve the problem at hand once and for all, he began to design his
own typesetting language. He thought he would finish it on his
sabbatical in 1978; he was wrong by only about 8 years. The
language was finally frozen around 1985, but volume IV of "The
Art of Computer Programming" has yet to appear as of mid-1993. The
impact and influence of TeX's design has been such that nobody
minds this very much. Many grand hackish projects have started as
a bit of

        toolsmith
        ing on the way to something else; Knuth's
diversion was simply on a grander scale than most.

TeX has also been a noteworthy example of free, shared, but
high-quality software. Knuth used to offer monetary awards to people
who found and reported bugs in it; as the years wore on and the few
remaining bugs were fixed (and new ones even harder to find), the
bribe went up. Though well-written, TeX is so large (and so full of
cutting edge technique) that it is said to have unearthed at least
one bug in every Pascal system it has been compiled with.

1.1766 text

        text: n. 1. [techspeak] Executable code, esp. a 'pure code'
portion shared between multiple instances of a program running in a
multitasking OS. Compare
        English
        . 2. Textual material in the
mainstream sense; data in ordinary
        ASCII
         or
        EBCDIC
           representation (see
        flat-ASCII
). "Those are text files;

you can review them using the editor." These two contradictory
senses confuse hackers, too.

1.1767   thanks in advance

thanks in advance: [USENET] Conventional net.politeness ending a
posted request for information or assistance. Sometimes written
'advTHANKSance' or 'aTdHvAaNnKcSe' or abbreviated 'TIA'. See

net.-
,
netiquette
.

1.1768   That's not a bug, that's a feature!

That's not a bug, that's a feature!: The
canonical
 first
parry in a debate about a purported bug. The complainant, if
unconvinced, is likely to retort that the bug is then at best a

misfeature
. See also
feature
.

1.1769   the X that can be Y is not the true X

the X that can be Y is not the true X: Yet another instance of
hackerdom's peculiar attraction to mystical references --- a common
humorous way of making exclusive statements about a class of
things. The template is from the "Tao te Ching": "The
Tao which can be spoken of is not the true Tao." The implication
is often that the X is a mystery accessible only to the
enlightened. See the
trampoline
 entry for an example, and
compare
has the X nature
.

1.1770 theology

theology: n. 1. Ironically or humorously used to refer to

religious issues
. 2. Technical fine points of an abstruse
nature, esp. those where the resolution is of theoretical
interest but is relatively
marginal
with respect to actual use of
a design or system. Used esp. around software issues with a
heavy AI or language-design component, such as the smart-data vs.
smart-programs dispute in AI.

1.1771 theory

theory: n. The consensus, idea, plan, story, or set of rules that
   is currently being used to inform a behavior. This usage is a
   generalization and (deliberate) abuse of the technical meaning.
   "What's the theory on fixing this TECO loss?" "What's the
   theory on dinner tonight?" ("Chinatown, I guess.") "What's
   the current theory on letting lusers on during the day?" "The
   theory behind this change is to fix the following well-known
   screw...."

1.1772 thinko

thinko: /thing'koh/ [by analogy with 'typo'] n. A momentary,
correctable glitch in mental processing, especially one involving
recall of information learned by rote; a bubble in the stream of
consciousness. Syn.
braino
; see also
brain fart
.
Compare
mouso
.

1.1773 This can't happen

This can't happen: Less clipped variant of
can't happen
.

1.1774   This time, for sure!

          This time, for sure!: excl. Ritual affirmation frequently uttered
during protracted debugging sessions involving numerous small
obstacles (e.g., attempts to bring up a UUCP connection). For the
proper effect, this must be uttered in a fruity imitation of
Bullwinkle J. Moose. Also heard: "Hey, Rocky! Watch me pull a
rabbit out of my hat!" The
          canonical
           response is, of course,
"But that trick *never* works!" See
          Humor, Hacker
          .

1.1775   thrash

          thrash: vi. To move wildly or violently, without accomplishing
anything useful. Paging or swapping systems that are overloaded
waste most of their time moving data into and out of core (rather
than performing useful computation) and are therefore said to
thrash. Someone who keeps changing his mind (esp. about what to
work on next) is said to be thrashing. A person frantically trying
to execute too many tasks at once (and not spending enough time on
any single task) may also be described as thrashing. Compare

          multitask
          .

1.1776   thread

thread: n. [USENET, GEnie, CompuServe] Common abbreviation of
   'topic thread', a more or less continuous chain of postings on a
   single topic. To 'follow a thread' is to read a series of USENET
   postings sharing a common subject or (more correctly) which are
   connected by Reference headers. The better newsreaders can present
   news in thread order automatically.

1.1777   three-finger salute

three-finger salute: n. Syn.
Vulcan nerve pinch
.

1.1778 thud

thud: n. 1. Yet another
metasyntactic variable
 (see
foo
).
It is reported that at CMU from the mid-1970s the canonical series of
these was 'foo', 'bar', 'thud', 'blat'. 2. Rare term
for the hash character, '#' (ASCII 0100011). See
ASCII
 for
other synonyms.

1.1779 thumb

thumb: n. The slider on a window-system scrollbar. So called
   because moving it allows you to browse through the contents of a
   text window in a way analogous to thumbing through a book.

1.1780 thunk

thunk: /thuhnk/ n. 1. "A piece of coding which provides an
address", according to P. Z. Ingerman, who invented thunks
in 1961 as a way of binding actual parameters to their formal
definitions in Algol-60 procedure calls. If a procedure is called
with an expression in the place of a formal parameter, the compiler
generates a thunk which computes the expression and leaves the
address of the result in some standard location. 2. Later
generalized into: an expression, frozen together with its
environment, for later evaluation if and when needed (similar to
what in techspeak is called a 'closure'). The process of
unfreezing these thunks is called 'forcing'. 3. A

stubroutine
, in an overlay programming environment, that loads
and jumps to the correct overlay. Compare
trampoline
.
4. People and activities scheduled in a thunklike manner. "It

```
occurred to me the other day that I am rather accurately modeled by
a thunk --- I frequently need to be forced to completion." ---
paraphrased from a
            plan file
              .
```

Historical note: There are a couple of onomatopoeic myths
circulating about the origin of this term. The most common is that
it is the sound made by data hitting the stack; another holds that
the sound is that of the data hitting an accumulator. Yet another
suggests that it is the sound of the expression being unfrozen at
argument-evaluation time. In fact, according to the inventors, it
was coined after they realized (in the wee hours after hours of
discussion) that the type of an argument in Algol-60 could be
figured out in advance with a little compile-time thought,
simplifying the evaluation machinery. In other words, it had
'already been thought of'; thus it was christened a 'thunk',
which is "the past tense of 'think' at two in the morning".

1.1781   tick

```
            tick: n. 1. A
            jiffy
              (sense 1).  2. In simulations, the
```
discrete unit of time that passes between iterations of the
simulation mechanism. In AI applications, this amount of time is
often left unspecified, since the only constraint of interest is
the ordering of events. This sort of AI simulation is often
pejoratively referred to as 'tick-tick-tick' simulation,
especially when the issue of simultaneity of events with long,
independent chains of causes is
```
            handwave
            d.  3. In the FORTH
```
language, a single quote character.

1.1782   tick-list features

tick-list features: [Acorn Computers] n. Features in software or
    hardware that customers insist on but never use (calculators in
    desktop TSRs and that sort of thing). The American equivalent
    would be 'checklist features', but this jargon sense of the
    phrase has not been reported.

1.1783   tickle a bug

tickle a bug: vt. To cause a normally hidden bug to manifest
   itself through some known series of inputs or operations. "You
   can tickle the bug in the Paradise VGA card's highlight handling by
   trying to set bright yellow reverse video."

1.1784   tiger team

                tiger team: [U.S. military jargon] n. 1. Originally, a team whose
   purpose is to penetrate security, and thus test security measures.
   These people are paid professionals who do hacker-type tricks,
   e.g., leave cardboard signs saying "bomb" in critical defense
   installations, hand-lettered notes saying "Your codebooks have
   been stolen" (they usually haven't been) inside safes, etc. After
   a successful penetration, some high-ranking security type shows up
   the next morning for a 'security review' and finds the sign,
   note, etc., and all hell breaks loose. Serious successes of tiger
   teams sometimes lead to early retirement for base commanders and
   security officers (see the
                patch
                 entry for an example).
   2. Recently, and more generally, any official inspection team or
   special
                firefighting
                 group called in to look at a problem.

   A subset of tiger teams are professional
                cracker
                s, testing the
   security of military computer installations by attempting remote
   attacks via networks or supposedly 'secure' comm channels. Some of
   their escapades, if declassified, would probably rank among the
   greatest hacks of all times. The term has been adopted in
   commercial computer-security circles in this more specific sense.

1.1785   time bomb

                time bomb: n. A subspecies of
                logic bomb
                 that is triggered by
   reaching some preset time, either once or periodically. There are
   numerous legends about time bombs set up by programmers in their
   employers' machines, to go off if the programmer is fired or laid
   off and is not present to perform the appropriate suppressing
   action periodically.

   Interestingly, the only such incident for which we have been
   pointed to documentary evidence took place in the Soviet Union in
   1986! A disgruntled programmer at the Volga Automobile Plant

(where the Fiat clones called Ladas were manufactured) planted a
time bomb which, a week after he'd left on vacation, stopped the
entire main assembly line for a day. The case attracted lots of
attention in the Soviet Union because it was the first cracking
case to make it to court there. The perpetrator got 3 years in
jail.

1.1786   time sink

time sink: [poss. by analogy with 'heat sink' or 'current sink'] n.
   A project that consumes unbounded amounts of time.

1.1787   time T

             time T: /ti:m T/ n. 1. An unspecified but usually well-understood
   time, often used in conjunction with a later time T+1.
   "We'll meet on campus at time T or at Louie's at
   time T+1" means, in the context of going out for dinner:
   "We can meet on campus and go to Louie's, or we can meet at Louie's
   itself a bit later." (Louie's was a Chinese restaurant in Palo Alto
   that was a favorite with hackers.) Had the number 30 been used instead
   of the number 1, it would have implied that the travel time from
   campus to Louie's is 30 minutes; whatever time T is (and
   that hasn't been decided on yet), you can meet half an hour later at
   Louie's than you could on campus and end up eating at the same time.
   See also
             since time T equals minus infinity
             .

1.1788   times-or-divided-by

times-or-divided-by: [by analogy with 'plus-or-minus'] quant.
   Term occasionally used when describing the uncertainty associated
   with a scheduling estimate, for either humorous or brutally honest
   effect. For a software project, the scheduling uncertainty factor
   is usually at least 2.

1.1789   tip of the ice-cube

tip of the ice-cube: [IBM] n. The visible part of something small and
    insignificant. Used as an ironic comment in situations where 'tip
    of the iceberg' might be appropriate if the subject were at all
    important.

1.1790   tired iron

            tired iron: [IBM] n. Hardware that is perfectly functional but
    far enough behind the state of the art to have been superseded by new
    products, presumably with sufficient improvement in bang-per-buck that
    the old stuff is starting to look a bit like a
            dinosaur
            .

1.1791   tits on a keyboard

            tits on a keyboard: n. Small bumps on certain keycaps to keep
    touch-typists registered (usually on the '5' of a numeric
    keypad, and on the 'F' and 'J' of a
            QWERTY
            keyboard;
    but the Mac, perverse as usual, has them on the 'D' and
    'K' keys).

1.1792   TLA

            TLA: /T-L-A/ [Three-Letter Acronym] n. 1. Self-describing
    abbreviation for a species with which computing terminology is
    infested. 2. Any confusing acronym. Examples include MCA, FTP,
    SNA, CPU, MMU, SCCS, DMU, FPU, NNTP, TLA. People who like this
    looser usage argue that not all TLAs have three letters, just as
    not all four-letter words have four letters. One also hears of
    'ETLA' (Extended Three-Letter Acronym, pronounced /ee tee el
    ay/) being used to describe four-letter acronyms. The term
    'SFLA' (Stupid Four-Letter Acronym) has also been reported. See
    also
            YABA
            .

The self-effacing phrase "TDM TLA" (Too Damn Many...) is
often used to bemoan the plethora of TLAs in use. In 1989, a
random of the journalistic persuasion asked hacker Paul Boutin
"What do you think will be the biggest problem in computing in
the 90s?" Paul's straight-faced response: "There are only

```
17,000 three-letter acronyms." (To be exact, there are 26^3
= 17,576.)
```

1.1793 TMRC

TMRC: /tmerk'/ n. The Tech Model Railroad Club at MIT, one of
the wellsprings of hacker culture. The 1959 "Dictionary of
the TMRC Language" compiled by Peter Samson included several terms
that became basics of the hackish vocabulary (see esp.

foo

,

mung
, and
frob
).

By 1962, TMRC's legendary layout was already a marvel of complexity
(and has grown in the thirty years since; all the features
described here are still present). The control system alone
featured about 1200 relays. There were

scram switch
es located

at numerous places around the room that could be thwacked if
something undesirable was about to occur, such as a train going
full-bore at an obstruction. Another feature of the system was a
digital clock on the dispatch board, which was itself something of
a wonder in those bygone days before cheap LEDS and seven-segment
displays. When someone hit a scram switch the clock stopped and
the display was replaced with the word 'FOO'; at TMRC the scram
switches are therefore called 'foo switches'.

Steven Levy, in his book "Hackers" (see the Bibliography in

Appendix C
), gives a stimulating account of those early
years. TMRC's Power and Signals group included most of the early
PDP-1 hackers and the people who later bacame the core of the MIT
AI Lab staff. Thirty years later that connection is still very
much alive, and this lexicon accordingly includes a number of
entries from a recent revision of the TMRC dictionary.

1.1794 TMRCie

TMRCie: /tmerk'ee/, [MIT] n. A denizen of
TMRC
.

1.1795   to a first approximation

to a first approximation: 1. [techspeak] When one is doing certain
   numerical computations, an approximate solution may be computed by
   any of several heuristic methods, then refined to a final value.
   By using the starting point of a first approximation of the answer,
   one can write an algorithm that converges more quickly to the
   correct result. 2. In jargon, a preface to any comment that
   indicates that the comment is only approximately true. The remark
   "To a first approximation, I feel good" might indicate that
   deeper questioning would reveal that not all is perfect (e.g., a
   nagging cough still remains after an illness).

1.1796   to a zeroth approximation

to a zeroth approximation: [from 'to a first approximation'] A
   really sloppy approximation; a wild guess. Compare

social science number

.

1.1797   toast

toast: 1. n. Any completely inoperable system or component, esp.
one that has just crashed and burned: "Uh, oh ... I think the
serial board is toast." 2. vt. To cause a system to crash
accidentally, especially in a manner that requires manual
rebooting. "Rick just toasted the
firewall machine
 again."
Compare
fried
.

1.1798   toaster

toaster: n. 1. The archetypal really stupid application for an
   embedded microprocessor controller; often used in comments that
   imply that a scheme is inappropriate technology (but see

```
          elevator controller
          ).   "
          DWIM
           for an assembler?  That'd be
as silly as running UNIX on your toaster!"  2. A very, very dumb
computer. "You could run this program on any dumb toaster."  See

          bitty box
          ,
          Get a real computer!
          ,
          toy
          ,
          beige toaster
          .
3. A Macintosh, esp. the Classic Mac.  Some hold that this is
implied by sense 2.  4. A peripheral device.  "I bought my box
without toasters, but since then I've added two boards and a second
disk drive."
```

1.1799   toeprint

```
          toeprint: n. A
          footprint
           of especially small size.
```

1.1800   toggle

```
          toggle: vt. To change a
          bit
           from whatever state it is in to the
other state; to change from 1 to 0 or from 0 to 1.  This comes from
'toggle switches', such as standard light switches, though the
word 'toggle' actually refers to the mechanism that keeps the
switch in the position to which it is flipped rather than to the
fact that the switch has two positions.  There are four things you
can do to a bit: set it (force it to be 1), clear (or zero) it,
leave it alone, or toggle it.  (Mathematically, one would say that
there are four distinct boolean-valued functions of one boolean
argument, but saying that is much less fun than talking about
toggling bits.)
```

1.1801   tool

tool: 1. n. A program used primarily to create, manipulate,
modify, or analyze other programs, such as a compiler or an editor
or a cross-referencing program. Oppose
app
,
operating

system
. 2. [UNIX] An application program with a simple,
'transparent' (typically text-stream) interface designed
specifically to be used in programmed combination with other tools
(see
filter
,
plumbing
). 3. [MIT: general to students
there] vi. To work; to study (connotes tedium). The TMRC
Dictionary defined this as "to set one's brain to the
grindstone". See
hack
. 4. [MIT] n. A student who studies
too much and hacks too little. (MIT's student humor magazine
rejoices in the name "Tool and Die".)

1.1802   toolsmith

toolsmith: n. The software equivalent of a tool-and-die
specialist; one who specializes in making the
tool
s with which
other programmers create applications. Many hackers consider this
more fun than applications per se; to understand why, see

uninteresting
. Jon Bentley, in the "Bumper-Sticker Computer
Science" chapter of his book "More Programming Pearls",
quotes Dick Sites from DEC as saying "I'd rather write programs to
write programs than write programs".

1.1803   topic drift

topic drift: n. Term used on GEnie, USENET and other electronic
fora to describe the tendency of a
thread
 to drift away from
the original subject of discussion (and thus, from the Subject
header of the originating message), or the results of that

tendency. Often used in gentle reminders that the discussion has
strayed off any useful track. "I think we started with a question
about Niven's last book, but we've ended up discussing the sexual
habits of the common marmoset. Now *that's* topic drift!"

1.1804 topic group

topic group: n. Syn.
forum
.

1.1805 TOPS-10

TOPS-10:: /tops-ten/ n. DEC's proprietary OS for the fabled
PDP-10
   machines, long a favorite of hackers but now effectively ←
        extinct.
A fountain of hacker folklore; see
Appendix A
. See also
ITS
,

TOPS-20
,
TWENEX
,
VMS
,
operating system
. TOPS-10 was
sometimes called BOTS-10 (from 'bottoms-ten') as a comment on the
inappropriateness of describing it as the top of anything.

1.1806 TOPS-20

TOPS-20:: /tops-twen'tee/ n. See
TWENEX
.

1.1807 toto

toto: /toh-toh'/ n. Reportedy the default scratch file name
among French-speaking programmers --- in other words, a francophone

foo
. It is reported that the phonetic mutations "titi",
"tata", and "tutu" canonically follow 'toto', analogously to

bar
,
baz
 and
quux
 in English.

1.1808 tourist

tourist: [ITS] n. A guest on the system, especially one who
generally logs in over a network from a remote location for
comm

mode
, email, games, and other trivial purposes. One step below

luser
. Hackers often spell this
turist
, perhaps by
some sort of tenuous analogy with
luser
 (this also expresses the
ITS culture's penchant for six-letterisms). Compare
twink
,

read-only user
.

1.1809 tourist information

tourist information: n. Information in an on-line display that is
   not immediately useful, but contributes to a viewer's gestalt of
   what's going on with the software or hardware behind it. Whether a
   given piece of info falls in this category depends partly on what
   the user is looking for at any given time. The 'bytes free'
   information at the bottom of an MS-DOS 'dir' display is
   tourist information; so (most of the time) is the TIME information

```
in a UNIX 'ps(1)' display.
```

1.1810   touristic

```
         touristic: adj. Having the quality of a
         tourist
         . Often used
as a pejorative, as in 'losing touristic scum'.  Often spelled
'turistic' or 'turistik', so that phrase might be more properly
rendered 'lusing turistic scum'.
```

1.1811   toy

```
         toy: n. A computer system; always used with qualifiers.
1. 'nice toy': One that supports the speaker's hacking style
adequately.  2. 'just a toy': A machine that yields
insufficient
         computron
         s for the speaker's preferred uses.  This
is not condemnatory, as is
         bitty box
         ; toys can at least be fun.
It is also strongly conditioned by one's expectations; Cray XMP
users sometimes consider the Cray-1 a 'toy', and certainly all RISC
boxes and mainframes are toys by their standards.  See also
         Get

         a real computer!
         .
```

1.1812   toy language

```
         toy language: n. A language useful for instructional purposes or
as a proof-of-concept for some aspect of computer-science theory,
but inadequate for general-purpose programming.
         Bad Thing
         s
can result when a toy language is promoted as a general purpose
solution for programming (see
         bondage-and-discipline

         language
         ); the classic example is
         Pascal
         . Several moderately
```

well-known formalisms for conceptual tasks such as programming Turing
machines also qualify as toy languages in a less negative sense.
See also
                MFTL
                .

1.1813   toy problem

                toy problem: [AI] n. A deliberately oversimplified case of a
challenging problem used to investigate, prototype, or test
algorithms for a real problem. Sometimes used pejoratively. See
also
                gedanken
                ,
                toy program
                .

1.1814   toy program

                toy program: n. 1. One that can be readily comprehended; hence, a
trivial program (compare
                noddy
). 2. One for which the effort
of initial coding dominates the costs through its life cycle.
See also
                noddy
                .

1.1815   trampoline

                trampoline: n. An incredibly
                hairy
                 technique, found in some

                HLL
                 and program-overlay implementations (e.g., on the
Macintosh), that involves on-the-fly generation of small executable
(and, likely as not, self-modifying) code objects to do indirection
between code sections. These pieces of
                live data
                 are called
'trampolines'. Trampolines are notoriously difficult to understand
in action; in fact, it is said by those who use this term that the
trampoline that doesn't bend your brain is not the true

```
trampoline.  See also
             snap
             .
```

1.1816 trap

```
             trap: 1. n. A program interrupt, usually an interrupt caused by
some exceptional situation in the user program.  In most cases, the
OS performs some action, then returns control to the program.
2. vi. To cause a trap.  "These instructions trap to the
monitor."  Also used transitively to indicate the cause of the
trap.  "The monitor traps all input/output instructions."

This term is associated with assembler programming ('interrupt'
or 'exception' is more common among
             HLL
              programmers) and
appears to be fading into history among programmers as the role of
assembler continues to shrink.  However, it is still important to
computer architects and systems hackers (see
             system
             ,
sense 1), who use it to distinguish deterministically repeatable
exceptions from timing-dependent ones (such as I/O interrupts).
```

1.1817 trap door

```
             trap door: alt. 'trapdoor' n. 1. Syn.
             back door
              --- a

             Bad Thing
             . 2. [techspeak] A 'trap-door function' is one
which is easy to compute but very difficult to compute the inverse
of.  Such functions are
             Good Thing
             s with important
applications in cryptography, specifically in the construction of
public-key cryptosystems.
```

1.1818 trash

trash: vt. To destroy the contents of (said of a data structure).
The most common of the family of near-synonyms including

mung

,

mangle
, and
scribble
.

1.1819   trawl

trawl: v. To sift through large volumes of data (e.g., USENET
   postings, FTP archives, or the Jargon File) looking for something
   of interest.

1.1820   tree-killer

tree-killer: [Sun] n. 1. A printer. 2. A person who wastes
paper. This epithet should be interpreted in a broad sense;
'wasting paper' includes the production of

spiffy

 but

content-free
 documents. Thus, most
suit
s are
tree-killers. The negative loading of this term may reflect the
epithet 'tree-killer' applied by Treebeard the Ent to the Orcs
in J.R.R. Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings" (see also

elvish

,
elder days
).

1.1821   treeware

treeware: /tree'weir/ n. Printouts, books, and other information
media made from pulped dead trees. Compare
tree-killer
, see

documentation
.

1.1822 trit

trit: /trit/ [by analogy with 'bit'] n. One base-3 digit; the
amount of information conveyed by a selection among one of three
equally likely outcomes (see also
bit
). Trits arise, for
example, in the context of a
flag
 that should actually be able
to assume *three* values --- such as yes, no, or unknown. Trits are
sometimes jokingly called '3-state bits'. A trit may be
semi-seriously referred to as 'a bit and a half', although it is
linearly equivalent to 1.5849625 bits (that is,
log2(3)
bits).

1.1823 trivial

trivial: adj. 1. Too simple to bother detailing. 2. Not worth the
speaker's time. 3. Complex, but solvable by methods so well known
that anyone not utterly
cretinous
 would have thought of them
already. 4. Any problem one has already solved (some claim that
hackish 'trivial' usually evaluates to 'I've seen it before').
Hackers' notions of triviality may be quite at variance with those
of non-hackers. See
nontrivial
,
uninteresting
.

1.1824 troff

troff:: /T'rof/ or /trof/ [UNIX] n. The gray eminence of UNIX
text processing; a formatting and phototypesetting program, written
originally in PDP-11 assembler and then in barely-structured early
C by the late Joseph Ossanna, modeled after the earlier ROFF which
was in turn modeled after Multics' RUNOFF by Jerome Saltzer
(*that* name came from the expression "to run off a copy"). A

companion program,
                nroff
                , formats output for terminals and
line printers.

In 1979, Brian Kernighan modified 'troff' so that it could
drive phototypesetters other than the Graphic Systems CAT. His
paper describing that work ("A Typesetter-independent troff,"
AT&T CSTR #97) explains troff's durability. After discussing the
program's "obvious deficiencies --- a rebarbative input syntax,
mysterious and undocumented properties in some areas, and a
voracious appetite for computer resources" and noting the ugliness
and extreme hairiness of the code and internals, Kernighan
concludes:

  None of these remarks should be taken as denigrating
  Ossanna's accomplishment with TROFF. It has proven a
  remarkably robust tool, taking unbelievable abuse from a
  variety of preprocessors and being forced into uses that
  were never conceived of in the original design, all with
  considerable grace under fire.

The success of
                TeX
                 and desktop publishing systems have
reduced 'troff''s relative importance, but this tribute
perfectly captures the strengths that secured 'troff' a place
in hacker folklore; indeed, it could be taken more generally as an
indication of those qualities of good programs that, in the long
run, hackers most admire.

1.1825   troglodyte

troglodyte: [Commodore] n. 1. A hacker who never leaves his
   cubicle. The term 'Gnoll' (from Dungeons & Dragons) is also
   reported. 2. A curmudgeon attached to an obsolescent computing
   environment. The combination 'ITS troglodyte' was flung around
   some during the USENET and email wringle-wrangle attending the
   2.x.x revision of the Jargon File; at least one of the people it
   was intended to describe adopted it with pride.

1.1826   troglodyte mode

                troglodyte mode: [Rice University] n. Programming with the lights
turned off, sunglasses on, and the terminal inverted (black on
white) because you've been up for so many days straight that your
eyes hurt (see
                raster burn
). Loud music blaring from a stereo

stacked in the corner is optional but recommended. See
            larval

            stage
            ,
            hack mode
            .

1.1827   Trojan horse

            Trojan horse: [coined by MIT-hacker-turned-NSA-spook Dan Edwards]
n. A malicious, security-breaking program that is disguised as
something benign, such as a directory lister, archiver, game, or
(in one notorious 1990 case on the Mac) a program to find and
destroy viruses! See
            back door
            ,
            virus
            ,
            worm
            ,

            phage
            ,
            mockingbird
            .

1.1828   tron

            tron: [NRL, CMU; prob. fr. the movie "Tron"] v. To become
inaccessible except via email or 'talk(1)', especially when
one is normally available via telephone or in person. Frequently
used in the past tense, as in: "Ran seems to have tronned on us
this week" or "Gee, Ran, glad you were able to un-tron
yourself". One may also speak of 'tron mode'; compare

            spod
            .

1.1829   true-hacker

            true-hacker: [analogy with 'trufan' from SF fandom] n. One who
exemplifies the primary values of hacker culture, esp. competence
and helpfulness to other hackers. A high compliment. "He spent

6 hours helping me bring up UUCP and netnews on my FOOBAR 4000
last week --- manifestly the act of a true-hacker." Compare

                demigod
                , oppose
                munchkin
                .

1.1830   tty

                tty: /T-T-Y/ [UNIX], /tit'ee/ [ITS, but some UNIX people say it
this way as well; this pronunciation is not considered to have
sexual undertones] n. 1. A terminal of the teletype variety,
characterized by a noisy mechanical printer, a very limited
character set, and poor print quality. Usage: antiquated (like the
TTYs themselves). See also
                bit-paired keyboard
                .
2. [especially UNIX] Any terminal at all; sometimes used to refer
to the particular terminal controlling a given job. 3. [UNIX] Any
serial port, whether or not the device connected to it is a
terminal; so called because under UNIX such devices have names of
the form tty*. Ambiguity between senses 2 and 3 is common but
seldom bothersome.

1.1831   tube

                tube: 1. n. A CRT terminal. Never used in the mainstream sense of
TV; real hackers don't watch TV, except for Loony Toons, Rocky &
Bullwinkle, Trek Classic, the Simpsons, and the occasional cheesy
old swashbuckler movie (see
                Appendix B
). 2. [IBM] To send
a copy of something to someone else's terminal. "Tube me that
note?"

1.1832   tube time

tube time: n. Time spent at a terminal or console. More inclusive
   than hacking time; commonly used in discussions of what parts of
   one's environment one uses most heavily. "I find I'm spending too
   much of my tube time reading mail since I started this revision."

1.1833   tunafish

tunafish: n. In hackish lore, refers to the mutated punchline of
an age-old joke to be found at the bottom of the manual pages of
'tunefs(8)' in the original
BSD
4.2 distribution. The
joke was removed in later releases once commercial sites started
using 4.2. Tunefs relates to the 'tuning' of file-system
parameters for optimum performance, and at the bottom of a few
pages of wizardly inscriptions was a 'BUGS' section consisting of
the line "You can tune a file system, but you can't tunafish".
Variants of this can be seen in other BSD versions, though it has
been excised from some versions by humorless management

droid
s. The [nt]roff source for SunOS 4.1.1 contains a
comment apparently designed to prevent this: "Take this out and a
Unix Demon will dog your steps from now until the 'time_t''s
wrap around."

1.1834   tune

tune: [from automotive or musical usage] vt. To optimize a program
or system for a particular environment, esp. by adjusting numerical
parameters designed as
hook
s for tuning, e.g., by changing
'#define' lines in C. One may 'tune for time' (fastest
execution), 'tune for space' (least memory use), or
'tune for configuration' (most efficient use of hardware). See

bum
,
hot spot
,
hand-hacking
.

1.1835   turbo nerd

turbo nerd: n. See
computer geek
.

1.1836   Turing tar-pit

                Turing tar-pit: n. 1. A place where anything is possible but
nothing of interest is practical. Alan Turing helped lay the
foundations of computer science by showing that all machines and
languages capable of expressing a certain very primitive set of
operations are logically equivalent in the kinds of computations
they can carry out, and in principle have capabilities that differ
only in speed from those of the most powerful and elegantly
designed computers. However, no machine or language exactly
matching Turing's primitive set has ever been built (other than
possibly as a classroom exercise), because it would be horribly
slow and far too painful to use. A 'Turing tar-pit' is any
computer language or other tool that shares this property. That
is, it's theoretically universal --- but in practice, the harder
you struggle to get any real work done, the deeper its inadequacies
suck you in. Compare
                bondage-and-discipline language
                . 2. The
perennial
                holy wars
                 over whether language A or B is the "most
powerful".

1.1837   turist

                turist: /too'rist/ n. Var. sp. of
                tourist
                , q.v. Also in
adjectival form, 'turistic'. Poss. influenced by
                luser
                 and
'Turing'.

1.1838   tweak

                tweak: vt. 1. To change slightly, usually in reference to a
value. Also used synonymously with
                twiddle
                . If a program is
almost correct, rather than figure out the precise problem you
might just keep tweaking it until it works. See
                frobnicate
                 and
                fudge factor
                ; also see
                shotgun debugging
                . 2. To

```
             tune
              or
             bum
              a program; preferred usage in the U.K.
```

1.1839   tweeter

```
             tweeter: [University of Waterloo] n. Syn.
             perf
             ,
             chad
                (sense 1).  This term (like
             woofer
             ) has been in use at
   Waterloo since 1972 but is elsewhere unknown.  In audio jargon, the
   word refers to the treble speaker(s) on a hi-fi.
```

1.1840   TWENEX

```
             TWENEX:: /twe'neks/ n. The TOPS-20 operating system by DEC ---
   the second proprietary OS for the PDP-10 --- preferred by most
   PDP-10 hackers over TOPS-10 (that is, by those who were not
```

```
             ITS
              or
             WAITS
              partisans).  TOPS-20 began in 1969 as Bolt,
   Beranek & Newman's TENEX operating system using special paging
   hardware.  By the early 1970s, almost all of the systems on the
   ARPANET ran TENEX.  DEC purchased the rights to TENEX from BBN and
   began work to make it their own.  The first in-house code name for
   the operating system was VIROS (VIRtual memory Operating System);
   when customers started asking questions, the name was changed to
   SNARK so DEC could truthfully deny that there was any project
   called VIROS.  When the name SNARK became known, the name was
   briefly reversed to become KRANS; this was quickly abandoned when
   someone objected that 'krans' meant 'funeral wreath' in Swedish
   (though some Swedish speakers have since said it means simply
   'wreath'; this part of the story may be apocryphal).  Ultimately
   DEC picked TOPS-20 as the name of the operating system, and it was
   as TOPS-20 that it was marketed.  The hacker community, mindful of
   its origins, quickly dubbed it TWENEX (a contraction of 'twenty
   TENEX'), even though by this point very little of the original
   TENEX code remained (analogously to the differences between AT&T V6
   UNIX and BSD).  DEC people cringed when they heard "TWENEX", but
   the term caught on nevertheless (the written abbreviation '20x'
   was also used).  TWENEX was successful and very popular; in fact,
```

there was a period in the early 1980s when it commanded as fervent
a culture of partisans as UNIX or ITS --- but DEC's decision to
scrap all the internal rivals to the VAX architecture and its
relatively stodgy VMS OS killed the DEC-20 and put a sad end to
TWENEX's brief day in the sun. DEC attempted to convince TOPS-20
users to convert to
            VMS
            , but instead, by the late 1980s,
most of the TOPS-20 hackers had migrated to UNIX.

1.1841 twiddle

            twiddle: n. 1. Tilde (ASCII 1111110, '~'). Also
called 'squiggle', 'sqiggle' (sic --- pronounced /skig'l/),
and 'twaddle', but twiddle is the most common term. 2. A small
and insignificant change to a program. Usually fixes one bug and
generates several new ones (see also
            shotgun debugging
).
3. vt. To change something in a small way. Bits, for example, are
often twiddled. Twiddling a switch or knob implies much less sense
of purpose than toggling or tweaking it; see
            frobnicate
            . To
speak of twiddling a bit connotes aimlessness, and at best doesn't
specify what you're doing to the bit; 'toggling a bit' has a more
specific meaning (see
            bit twiddling
            ,
            toggle
).

1.1842 twilight zone

            twilight zone: [IRC] n. Notionally, the area of cyberspace where
            IRC
              operators live. An
            op
             is said to have a "connection to the
twilight zone".

1.1843 twink

                    twink: /twink/ [UCSC] n. Equivalent to
                    read-only user
                    .
    Also reported on the USENET group soc.motss; may derive from
    gay slang for a cute young thing with nothing upstairs (compare
    mainstream 'chick').

1.1844   twirling baton

twirling baton: [PLATO] n. The overstrike sequence -/|\-/|\- which
    produces an animated twirling baton. If you output it with a
    single backspace between characters, the baton spins in place. If
    you output the sequence BS SP between characters, the baton spins
    from left to right. If you output BS SP BS BS between characters,
    the batton spins from right to left.

    The twirling baton was a popular component of animated signature
    files on the pioneering PLATO educational timesharing system. The
    'archie' Internet service is perhaps the best-known baton
    program today; it uses the twirling baton as an idler indicating
    that the program is working on a query.

1.1845   two pi

two pi: quant. The number of years it takes to finish one's
    thesis. Occurs in stories in the following form: "He started on
    his thesis; 2 pi years later..."

1.1846   two-to-the-N

                    two-to-the-N: quant. An amount much larger than
                    N
                     but smaller
    than
                    infinity
                    . "I have 2-to-the-N things to do before I can
    go out for lunch" means you probably won't show up.

1.1847   twonkie

twonkie: /twon'kee/ n. The software equivalent of a Twinkie (a
variety of sugar-loaded junk food, or (in gay slang) the male
equivalent of 'chick'); a useless 'feature' added to look sexy
and placate a
              marketroid
               (compare
              Saturday-night

              special
).   The term may also be related to "The Twonky",
title menace of a classic SF short story by Lewis Padgett (Henry
Kuttner and C. L. Moore), first published in the September 1942
"Astounding Science Fiction" and subsequently much
anthologized.

1.1848   UBD

              UBD: /U-B-D/ [abbreviation for 'User Brain Damage'] An
abbreviation used to close out trouble reports obviously due to
utter cluelessness on the user's part.   Compare
              pilot error
              ;
oppose
              PBD
              ; see also
              brain-damaged
              .

1.1849   UN*X

              UN*X: n. Used to refer to the UNIX operating system (a trademark ↩
               of
AT&T) in writing, but avoiding the need for the ugly

              (TM)
               typography.
Also used to refer to any or all varieties of Unixoid operating
systems.   Ironically, lawyers now say that the requirement for the
TM-postfix has no legal force, but the asterisk usage is
entrenched anyhow.   It has been suggested that there may be a
psychological connection to practice in certain religions
(especially Judaism) in which the name of the deity is never
written out in full, e.g., 'YHWH' or 'G--d' is used.   See also

              glob
              .

1.1850   undefined external reference

undefined external reference: excl. [UNIX] A message from UNIX's
   linker. Used in speech to flag loose ends or dangling references
   in an argument or discussion.

1.1851   under the hood

                under the hood: [hot-rodder talk] prep. 1. Used to introduce
   the underlying implementation of a product (hardware, software, or
   idea). Implies that the implementation is not intuitively obvious
   from the appearance, but the speaker is about to enable the
   listener to
                grok
                 it. "Let's now look under the hood to see
   how ...." 2. Can also imply that the implementation is much
   simpler than the appearance would indicate: "Under the hood, we
   are just fork/execing the shell." 3. Inside a chassis, as in
   "Under the hood, this baby has a 40MHz 68030!"

1.1852   undocumented feature

                undocumented feature: n. See
                feature
                .

1.1853   uninteresting

                uninteresting: adj. 1. Said of a problem that, although

                nontrivial
                , can be solved simply by throwing sufficient
   resources at it. 2. Also said of problems for which a solution
   would neither advance the state of the art nor be fun to design and
   code.

Hackers regard uninteresting problems as intolerable wastes of
time, to be solved (if at all) by lesser mortals. *Real*
hackers (see
                toolsmith
) generalize uninteresting problems
enough to make them interesting and solve them --- thus solving the
original problem as a special case (and, it must be admitted,
occasionally turning a molehill into a mountain, or a mountain into

a tectonic plate). See
          WOMBAT
          ,
          SMOP
          ; compare
          toy

          problem
          , oppose
          interesting
          .

1.1854   UNIX

          UNIX:: /yoo'niks/ [In the authors' words, "A weak pun on
Multics"] n. (also 'Unix') An interactive time-sharing system
invented in 1969 by Ken Thompson after Bell Labs left the Multics
project, originally so he could play games on his scavenged PDP-7.
Dennis Ritchie, the inventor of C, is considered a co-author of the
system. The turning point in UNIX's history came when it was
reimplemented almost entirely in C during 1972--1974, making it the
first source-portable OS. UNIX subsequently underwent mutations
and expansions at the hands of many different people, resulting in
a uniquely flexible and developer-friendly environment. By 1991,
UNIX had become the most widely used multiuser general-purpose
operating system in the world. Many people consider this the most
important victory yet of hackerdom over industry opposition (but
see
          UNIX weenie
           and
          UNIX conspiracy
           for an opposing point
of view). See
          Version 7
          ,
          BSD
          ,
          USG UNIX
          .

1.1855   UNIX brain damage

          UNIX brain damage: n. Something that has to be done to break a
network program (typically a mailer) on a non-UNIX system so that
it will interoperate with UNIX systems. The hack may qualify as
'UNIX brain damage' if the program conforms to published standards
and the UNIX program in question does not. UNIX brain damage
happens because it is much easier for other (minority) systems to

change their ways to match non-conforming behavior than it is to
change all the hundreds of thousands of UNIX systems out there.

An example of UNIX brain damage is a
              kluge
               in a mail server to
recognize bare line feed (the UNIX newline) as an equivalent form
to the Internet standard newline, which is a carriage return
followed by a line feed. Such things can make even a hardened

              jock
               weep.

1.1856   UNIX conspiracy

              UNIX conspiracy: [ITS] n. According to a conspiracy theory long
popular among
              ITS
               and
              TOPS-20
               fans, UNIX's growth is the
result of a plot, hatched during the 1970s at Bell Labs, whose
intent was to hobble AT&T's competitors by making them dependent
upon a system whose future evolution was to be under AT&T's
control. This would be accomplished by disseminating an operating
system that is apparently inexpensive and easily portable, but also
relatively unreliable and insecure (so as to require continuing
upgrades from AT&T). This theory was lent a substantial impetus
in 1984 by the paper referenced in the
              back door
               entry.

In this view, UNIX was designed to be one of the first computer
viruses (see
              virus
) --- but a virus spread to computers indirectly
by people and market forces, rather than directly through disks and
networks. Adherents of this 'UNIX virus' theory like to cite the
fact that the well-known quotation "UNIX is snake oil" was
uttered by DEC president Kenneth Olsen shortly before DEC began
actively promoting its own family of UNIX workstations. (Olsen now
claims to have been misquoted.)

1.1857   UNIX weenie

              UNIX weenie: [ITS] n. 1. A derogatory play on 'UNIX wizard',
common among hackers who use UNIX by necessity but would prefer
alternatives. The implication is that although the person in

question may consider mastery of UNIX arcana to be a wizardly
skill, the only real skill involved is the ability to tolerate (and
the bad taste to wallow in) the incoherence and needless complexity
that is alleged to infest many UNIX programs. "This shell script
tries to parse its arguments in 69 bletcherous ways. It must have
been written by a real UNIX weenie." 2. A derogatory term for
anyone who engages in uncritical praise of UNIX. Often appearing
in the context "stupid UNIX weenie". See

Weenix

,
UNIX

conspiracy
. See also
weenie
.

1.1858   unixism

unixism: n. A piece of code or a coding technique that depends on
the protected multi-tasking environment with relatively low
process-spawn overhead that exists on virtual-memory UNIX systems.
Common

unixism

s include: gratuitous use of 'fork(2)'; the
assumption that certain undocumented but well-known features of
UNIX libraries such as 'stdio(3)' are supported elsewhere;
reliance on

obscure

side-effects of system calls (use of
'sleep(2)' with a 0 argument to clue the scheduler that you're
willing to give up your time-slice, for example); the assumption
that freshly allocated memory is zeroed; and the assumption that
fragmentation problems won't arise from never 'free()'ing
memory. Compare

vaxocentrism

; see also
New Jersey
.

1.1859   unleaded

unleaded: adj. Said of decaffeinated coffee, Diet Coke, and other
imitation

programming fluid

s. "Do you want regular or
unleaded?" Appears to be widespread among programmers associated
with the oil industry in Texas (and probably elsewhere). Usage:

silly, and probably unintelligible to the next generation of
hackers.

1.1860   unswizzle

unswizzle: v. See
swizzle
.

1.1861   unwind the stack

unwind the stack: vi. 1. [techspeak] During the execution of a
procedural language, one is said to 'unwind the stack' from a
called procedure up to a caller when one discards the stack frame
and any number of frames above it, popping back up to the level of
the given caller. In C this is done with
'longjmp'/'setjmp', in LISP with 'throw/catch'.
See also
smash the stack
. 2. People can unwind the stack as
well, by quickly dealing with a bunch of problems: "Oh heck, let's
do lunch. Just a second while I unwind my stack."

1.1862   unwind-protect

unwind-protect: [MIT: from the name of a LISP operator] n. A task you
must remember to perform before you leave a place or finish a
project. "I have an unwind-protect to call my advisor."

1.1863   up

up: adj. 1. Working, in order. "The down escalator is up."
Oppose
down
. 2. 'bring up': vt. To create a working
version and start it. "They brought up a down system."
3. 'come up' vi. To become ready for production use.

1.1864 upload

upload: /uhp'lohd/ v. 1. [techspeak] To transfer programs or
data over a digital communications link from a smaller or
peripheral 'client' system to a larger or central 'host'
one. A transfer in the other direction is, of course, called a

download
(but see the note about ground-to-space comm under
that entry). 2. [speculatively] To move the essential patterns and
algorithms that make up one's mind from one's brain into a
computer. Those who are convinced that such patterns and
algorithms capture the complete essence of the self view this
prospect with pleasant anticipation.

1.1865 upthread

upthread: adv. Earlier in the discussion (see
thread
), i.e.,
'above'. "As Joe pointed out upthread, ..." See also

followup
.

1.1866 urchin

urchin: n. See
munchkin
.

1.1867 USENET

USENET: /yoos'net/ or /yooz'net/ [from 'Users' Network'] n.
A distributed
bboard
(bulletin board) system supported mainly
by UNIX machines. Originally implemented in 1979--1980 by Steve
Bellovin, Jim Ellis, Tom Truscott, and Steve Daniel at Duke
University, it has swiftly grown to become international in scope
and is now probably the largest decentralized information utility
in existence. As of early 1993, it hosts well over 1200

newsgroup
s and an average of 40 megabytes (the equivalent of
several thousand paper pages) of new technical articles, news,
discussion, chatter, and
flamage
 every day.

1.1868   user

user: n. 1. Someone doing 'real work' with the computer, using
it as a means rather than an end. Someone who pays to use a
computer. See
real user
. 2. A programmer who will believe
anything you tell him. One who asks silly questions. [GLS
observes: This is slightly unfair. It is true that users ask
questions (of necessity). Sometimes they are thoughtful or deep.
Very often they are annoying or downright stupid, apparently
because the user failed to think for two seconds or look in the
documentation before bothering the maintainer.] See
luser
.
3. Someone who uses a program from the outside, however skillfully,
without getting into the internals of the program. One who reports
bugs instead of just going ahead and fixing them.

The general theory behind this term is that there are two classes
of people who work with a program: there are implementors (hackers)
and
luser
s. The users are looked down on by hackers to some
extent because they don't understand the full ramifications of the
system in all its glory. (The few users who do are known as
'real winners'.) The term is a relative one: a skilled hacker
may be a user with respect to some program he himself does not
hack. A LISP hacker might be one who maintains LISP or one who
uses LISP (but with the skill of a hacker). A LISP user is one who
uses LISP, whether skillfully or not. Thus there is some overlap
between the two terms; the subtle distinctions must be resolved by
context.

1.1869   user-friendly

user-friendly: adj. Programmer-hostile. Generally used by hackers ←
in
a critical tone, to describe systems that hold the user's hand so
obsessively that they make it painful for the more experienced and
knowledgeable to get any work done. See

```
            menuitis
            ,
            drool-proof

            paper
            ,
            Macintrash
            ,
            user-obsequious
            .
```

1.1870 user-obsequious

```
            user-obsequious: adj. Emphatic form of
            user-friendly
            . Connotes
  a system so verbose, inflexible, and determinedly simple-minded
  that it is nearly unusable.  "Design a system any fool can use and
  only a fool will want to use it."  See
            WIMP environment
            ,

            Macintrash
            .
```

1.1871 USG UNIX

```
            USG UNIX: /U-S-G yoo'niks/ n. Refers to AT&T UNIX
  commercial versions after
            Version 7
            , especially System III and
  System V releases 1, 2, and 3.  So called because during most of
  the lifespan of those versions AT&T's support crew was called the
  'UNIX Support Group'.  See
            BSD
            ,
            UNIX
            .
```

1.1872 UTSL

```
            UTSL: // [UNIX] n. On-line acronym for 'Use the Source, Luke' (a
  pun on Obi-Wan Kenobi's "Use the Force, Luke!" in "Star
  Wars") --- analogous to
```

RTFS
(sense 1), but more polite. This
is a common way of suggesting that someone would be better off
reading the source code that supports whatever feature is causing
confusion, rather than making yet another futile pass through the
manuals, or broadcasting questions on USENET that haven't attracted

wizard
s to answer them.

Once upon a time in
Elder Days
, everyone running UNIX had
source. After 1978, AT&T's policy tightened up, so this objurgation
was in theory appropriately directed only at associates of some
outfit with a UNIX source license. In practice, bootlegs of UNIX
source code (made precisely for reference purposes) were so
ubiquitous that one could utter it at almost anyone on the network
without concern.

Nowadays, free UNIX clones are becoming common enough that almost
anyone can read source legally. The most widely distributed is
probably Linux, with 386BSD (aka
jolix
) running second. Cheap
commercial UNIXes with source such as BSD/386 are accelerating this
trend.

1.1873 UUCPNET

UUCPNET: n. The store-and-forward network consisting of all the
world's connected UNIX machines (and others running some clone of
the UUCP (UNIX-to-UNIX CoPy) software). Any machine reachable only
via a
bang path
 is on UUCPNET. See
network address
.

1.1874 vadding

vadding: /vad'ing/ [from VAD, a permutation of ADV (i.e.,

ADVENT
), used to avoid a particular
admin
's continual
search-and-destroy sweeps for the game] n. A leisure-time activity

of certain hackers involving the covert exploration of the
'secret' parts of large buildings --- basements, roofs, freight
elevators, maintenance crawlways, steam tunnels, and the like. A
few go so far as to learn locksmithing in order to synthesize
vadding keys. The verb is 'to vad' (compare
          phreaking
          ; see
also
          hack
          , sense 9). This term dates from the late 1970s,
before which such activity was simply called 'hacking'; the older
usage is still prevalent at MIT.

The most extreme and dangerous form of vadding is 'elevator
rodeo', a.k.a. 'elevator surfing', a sport played by wrasslin'
down a thousand-pound elevator car with a 3-foot piece of
string, and then exploiting this mastery in various stimulating
ways (such as elevator hopping, shaft exploration, rat-racing, and
the ever-popular drop experiments). Kids, don't try this at home!
See also
          hobbit
            (sense 2).

1.1875   vanilla

          vanilla: [from the default flavor of ice cream in the U.S.] adj.
Ordinary
          flavor
          , standard. When used of food, very often does
not mean that the food is flavored with vanilla extract! For
example, 'vanilla wonton soup' means ordinary wonton soup, as
opposed to hot-and-sour wonton soup. Applied to hardware and
software, as in "Vanilla Version 7 UNIX can't run on a
vanilla 11/34." Also used to orthogonalize chip nomenclature; for
instance, a 74V00 means what TI calls a 7400, as distinct from
a 74LS00, etc. This word differs from
          canonical
           in that the
latter means 'default', whereas vanilla simply means 'ordinary'.
For example, when hackers go on a
          great-wall
          , hot-and-sour
wonton soup is the
          canonical
           wonton soup to get (because that
is what most of them usually order) even though it isn't the
vanilla wonton soup.

1.1876   vannevar

vannevar: /van'*-var/ n. A bogus technological prediction or a
foredoomed engineering concept, esp. one that fails by implicitly
assuming that technologies develop linearly, incrementally, and in
isolation from one another when in fact the learning curve tends to
be highly nonlinear, revolutions are common, and competition is the
rule. The prototype was Vannevar Bush's prediction of
'electronic brains' the size of the Empire State Building with a
Niagara-Falls-equivalent cooling system for their tubes and relays,
a prediction made at a time when the semiconductor effect had
already been demonstrated. Other famous vannevars have included
magnetic-bubble memory, LISP machines,

videotex

, and a paper
from the late 1970s that computed a purported ultimate limit on
areal density for ICs that was in fact less than the routine
densities of 5 years later.

1.1877   vaporware

vaporware: /vay'pr-weir/ n. Products announced far in advance of
any release (which may or may not actually take place). See also

brochureware

.

1.1878   var

var: /veir/ or /var/ n. Short for 'variable'. Compare
arg

,

param

.

1.1879   VAX

VAX: /vaks/ n. 1. [from Virtual Address eXtension] The most
successful minicomputer design in industry history, possibly
excepting its immediate ancestor, the PDP-11. Between its release
in 1978 and its eclipse by

killer micro

s after about 1986, the
VAX was probably the hacker's favorite machine of them all, esp.
after the 1982 release of 4.2 BSD UNIX (see
            BSD
). Esp.
noted for its large, assembler-programmer-friendly instruction set
--- an asset that became a liability after the RISC revolution.
2. A major brand of vacuum cleaner in Britain. Cited here because
its alleged sales pitch, "Nothing sucks like a VAX!" became a
sort of battle-cry of RISC partisans. It is even sometimes claimed
that DEC actually entered a cross-licensing deal with the
vacuum-Vax people that allowed them to market VAX computers in the
U.K. in return for not challenging the vacuum cleaner trademark in
the U.S.

It is sometimes claimed that this slogan was *not* actually
used by the Vax vacuum-cleaner people, but was actually that of a
rival brand called Electrolux (as in "Nothing sucks
like..."). It has been reliably confirmed that Electrolux (a
Swedish company) actually did use this slogan in the late 1960s; it
has apparently become a classic example (used in textbooks) of the
perils of not knowing the local idiom.

It appears, however, that the Vax people thought the slogan a
sufficiently good idea to copy it. Several British hackers report
that their promotions used it in 1986--1987, and we have one report
from a New Zealander that the infamous slogan surfaced there in TV
ads for the product as recently as 1992!

1.1880 VAXectomy

VAXectomy: /vak-sek't*-mee/ [by analogy with 'vasectomy'] n. A
  VAX removal. DEC's Microvaxen, especially, are much slower than
  newer RISC-based workstations such as the SPARC. Thus, if one knows
  one has a replacement coming, VAX removal can be cause for
  celebration.

1.1881 VAXen

            VAXen: /vak'sn/ [from 'oxen', perhaps influenced by 'vixen'] n.
  (alt. 'vaxen') The plural canonically used among hackers for the
  DEC VAX computers. "Our installation has four PDP-10s and twenty
  vaxen." See
            boxen
            .

1.1882 vaxherd

vaxherd: n. /vaks'herd/ [from 'oxherd'] A VAX operator.

1.1883 vaxism

vaxism: /vak'sizm/ n. A piece of code that exhibits

vaxocentrism
 in critical areas. Compare
PC-ism
,

unixism
.

1.1884 vaxocentrism

vaxocentrism: /vak'soh-sen'trizm/ [analogy with
'ethnocentrism'] n. A notional disease said to afflict
C programmers who persist in coding according to certain
assumptions that are valid (esp. under UNIX) on
VAXen
 but
false elsewhere. Among these are:

1. The assumption that dereferencing a null pointer is safe because it
   is all bits 0, and location 0 is readable and 0. Problem: this may
   instead cause an illegal-address trap on non-VAXen, and even on
   VAXen under OSes other than BSD UNIX. Usually this is an implicit
   assumption of sloppy code (forgetting to check the pointer before
   using it), rather than deliberate exploitation of a misfeature.

2. The assumption that characters are signed.

3. The assumption that a pointer to any one type can freely be cast
   into a pointer to any other type. A stronger form of this is the
   assumption that all pointers are the same size and format, which
   means you don't have to worry about getting the casts or types
   correct in calls. Problem: this fails on word-oriented machines or
   others with multiple pointer formats.

4. The assumption that the parameters of a routine are stored in
   memory, on a stack, contiguously, and in strictly ascending or
   descending order. Problem: this fails on many RISC architectures.

5. The assumption that pointer and integer types are the same size,
   and that pointers can be stuffed into integer variables (and
   vice-versa) and drawn back out without being truncated or mangled.

       Problem: this fails on segmented architectures or word-oriented
       machines with funny pointer formats.

  6. The assumption that a data type of any size may begin at any byte
     address in memory (for example, that you can freely construct and
     dereference a pointer to a word- or greater-sized object at an odd
     char address). Problem: this fails on many (esp. RISC)
     architectures better optimized for
                  HLL
                   execution speed, and can
     cause an illegal address fault or bus error.

  7. The (related) assumption that there is no padding at the end of
     types and that in an array you can thus step right from the last
     byte of a previous component to the first byte of the next one.
     This is not only machine- but compiler-dependent.

  8. The assumption that memory address space is globally flat and that
     the array reference 'foo[-1]' is necessarily valid. Problem: this
     fails at 0, or other places on segment-addressed machines like
     Intel chips (yes, segmentation is universally considered a

                  brain-damaged
                   way to design machines (see
                  moby
                  ), but that is a
     separate issue).

  9. The assumption that objects can be arbitrarily large with no
     special considerations. Problem: this fails on segmented
     architectures and under non-virtual-addressing environments.

 10. The assumption that the stack can be as large as memory. Problem:
     this fails on segmented architectures or almost anything else
     without virtual addressing and a paged stack.

 11. The assumption that bits and addressable units within an object are
     ordered in the same way and that this order is a constant of
     nature. Problem: this fails on
                  big-endian
                   machines.

 12. The assumption that it is meaningful to compare pointers to
     different objects not located within the same array, or to objects
     of different types. Problem: the former fails on segmented
     architectures, the latter on word-oriented machines or others with
     multiple pointer formats.

 13. The assumption that an 'int' is 32 bits, or (nearly equivalently)
     the assumption that 'sizeof(int) == sizeof(long)'. Problem: this
     fails on PDP-11s, 286-based systems and even on 386 and 68000
     systems under some compilers.

 14. The assumption that 'argv[]' is writable. Problem: this fails in
     many embedded-systems C environments and even under a few flavors
     of UNIX.

Note that a programmer can validly be accused of vaxocentrism
even if he or she has never seen a VAX. Some of these assumptions
(esp. 2--5) were valid on the PDP-11, the original C machine, and
became endemic years before the VAX. The terms 'vaxocentricity'
and 'all-the-world's-a-VAX syndrome' have been used synonymously.

1.1885   vdiff

vdiff: /vee'dif/ v.,n. Visual diff. The operation of finding
differences between two files by
            eyeball search
            . The term
'optical diff' has also been reported, and is sometimes more
specifically used for the act of superimposing two nearly identical
printouts on one another and holding them up to a light to spot
differences. Though this method is poor for detecting omissions in
the 'rear' file, it can also be used with printouts of graphics, a
claim few if any diff programs can make. See
            diff
            .

1.1886   veeblefester

veeblefester: /vee'b*l-fes'tr/ [from the "Born Loser"
comix via Commodore; prob. originally from "Mad" Magazine's
'Veeblefeetzer' parodies ca. 1960] n. Any obnoxious person engaged
in the (alleged) professions of marketing or management. Antonym
of
            hacker
            . Compare
            suit
            ,
            marketroid
            .

1.1887   ventilator card

ventilator card: n. Syn.
            lace card
            .

1.1888 Venus flytrap

Venus flytrap: [after the insect-eating plant] n. See
firewall

machine
.

1.1889 verbage

verbage: /ver'b*j/ n. A deliberate misspelling and ←
   mispronunciation of

verbiage
 that assimilates it to the word 'garbage'. Compare

content-free
. More pejorative than 'verbiage'.

1.1890 verbiage

verbiage: n. When the context involves a software or hardware
system, this refers to
documentation
. This term borrows the
connotations of mainstream 'verbiage' to suggest that the
documentation is of marginal utility and that the motives behind
its production have little to do with the ostensible subject.

1.1891 Version 7

Version 7: alt. V7 /vee' se'vn/ n. The 1978 unsupported release of

UNIX
 ancestral to all current commercial versions. Before
the release of the POSIX/SVID standards, V7's features were often
treated as a UNIX portability baseline. See
BSD
,
USG UNIX
,

UNIX

. Some old-timers impatient with commercialization and
kernel bloat still maintain that V7 was the Last True UNIX.

1.1892   vgrep

vgrep: /vee'grep/ v.,n. Visual grep. The operation of finding
patterns in a file optically rather than digitally (also called an
'optical grep'). See
grep
; compare
vdiff
.

1.1893   vi

vi: /V-I/, *not* /vi:/ and *never* /siks/ [from
'Visual Interface'] n. A screen editor crufted together by Bill Joy
for an early
BSD
 release. Became the de facto standard
UNIX editor and a nearly undisputed hacker favorite outside of MIT
until the rise of
EMACS
 after about 1984. Tends to frustrate
new users no end, as it will neither take commands while expecting
input text nor vice versa, and the default setup provides no
indication of which mode the editor is in (one correspondent
accordingly reports that he has often heard the editor's name
pronounced /vi:l/). Nevertheless it is still widely used (about
half the respondents in a 1991 USENET poll preferred it), and even
EMACS fans often resort to it as a mail editor and for small
editing jobs (mainly because it starts up faster than the bulkier
versions of EMACS). See
holy wars
.

1.1894   videotex

videotex: n. obs. An electronic service offering people the
privilege of paying to read the weather on their television screens
instead of having somebody read it to them for free while they
brush their teeth. The idea bombed everywhere it wasn't
government-subsidized, because by the time videotex was practical
the installed base of personal computers could hook up to

```
timesharing services and do the things for which videotex might
have been worthwhile better and cheaper.  Videotex planners badly
overestimated both the appeal of getting information from a
computer and the cost of local intelligence at the user's end.
Like the
              gorilla arm
               effect, this has been a cautionary tale
to hackers ever since.  See also
              vannevar
              .
```

1.1895   virgin

```
              virgin: adj. Unused; pristine; in a known initial state.  "Let's
bring up a virgin system and see if it crashes again."  (Esp.
useful after contracting a
              virus
               through
              SEX
              .)  Also, by
extension, buffers and the like within a program that have not yet
been used.
```

1.1896   virtual

```
              virtual: [via the technical term 'virtual memory', prob. from
the term 'virtual image' in optics] adj. 1. Common alternative
to
              logical
              ; often used to refer to the artificial objects
(like addressable virtual memory larger than physical memory)
created by a computer system to help the system control access to
shared resources.  2. Simulated; performing the functions of
something that isn't really there.  An imaginative child's doll may
be a virtual playmate.  Oppose
              real
              .
```

1.1897   virtual Friday

```
virtual Friday: n. (also 'logical Friday') The last day before
  an extended weekend, if that day is not a 'real' Friday.  For
  example, the U.S. holiday Thanksgiving is always on a Thursday.
  The next day is often also a holiday or taken as an extra day off,
```

in which case Wednesday of that week is a virtual Friday (and
Thursday is a virtual Saturday, as is Friday). There are also
'virtual Mondays' that are actually Tuesdays, after the three-day
weekends associated with many national holidays in the U.S.

1.1898   virtual reality

             virtual reality: n. 1. Computer simulations that use 3-D graphics
and devices such as the Dataglove to allow the user to interact
with the simulation. See
             cyberspace
             . 2. A form of network
interaction incorporating aspects of role-playing games,
interactive theater, improvisational comedy, and 'true confessions'
magazines. In a virtual reality forum (such as USENET's
alt.callahans newsgroup or the
             MUD
             experiments on Internet),
interaction between the participants is written like a shared novel
complete with scenery, 'foreground characters' that may be
personae utterly unlike the people who write them, and common
'background characters' manipulable by all parties. The one
iron law is that you may not write irreversible changes to a
character without the consent of the person who 'owns' it.
Otherwise anything goes. See
             bamf
             ,
             cyberspace
             .

1.1899   virtual shredder

             virtual shredder: n. The jargonic equivalent of the
             bit bucket
              at shops using IBM's VM/CMS operating system. VM/CMS ↩
                officially
supports a whole bestiary of virtual card readers, virtual
printers, and other phantom devices; these are used to supply some
of the same capabilities UNIX gets from pipes and I/O redirection.

1.1900   virus

             virus: [from the obvious analogy with biological viruses, via SF]
n. A cracker program that searches out other programs and 'infects'
them by embedding a copy of itself in them, so that they become

Trojan horse
s. When these programs are executed, the embedded
virus is executed too, thus propagating the 'infection'. This
normally happens invisibly to the user. Unlike a
worm
, a
virus cannot infect other computers without assistance. It is
propagated by vectors such as humans trading programs with their
friends (see
SEX
). The virus may do nothing but propagate
itself and then allow the program to run normally. Usually,
however, after propagating silently for a while, it starts doing
things like writing cute messages on the terminal or playing
strange tricks with the display (some viruses include nice

display hack
s). Many nasty viruses, written by particularly
perversely minded
cracker
s, do irreversible damage, like
nuking all the user's files.

In the 1990s, viruses have become a serious problem, especially
among IBM PC and Macintosh users (the lack of security on these
machines enables viruses to spread easily, even infecting the
operating system). The production of special anti-virus software
has become an industry, and a number of exaggerated media reports
have caused outbreaks of near hysteria among users; many

luser
s tend to blame *everything* that doesn't work as
they had expected on virus attacks. Accordingly, this sense of
'virus' has passed not only into techspeak but into also popular
usage (where it is often incorrectly used to denote a
worm
 or
even a
Trojan horse
). See
phage
; compare
back door
;
see also
UNIX conspiracy
.

1.1901   visionary

visionary: n. 1. One who hacks vision, in the sense of an
Artificial Intelligence researcher working on the problem of

getting computers to 'see' things using TV cameras. (There isn't
any problem in sending information from a TV camera to a computer.
The problem is, how can the computer be programmed to make use of
the camera information? See
            SMOP
            ,
            AI-complete
            .) 2. [IBM]
One who reads the outside literature. At IBM, apparently, such a
penchant is viewed with awe and wonder.

1.1902   VMS

            VMS: /V-M-S/ n. DEC's proprietary operating system for its VAX
minicomputer; one of the seven or so environments that loom largest
in hacker folklore. Many UNIX fans generously concede that VMS
would probably be the hacker's favorite commercial OS if UNIX
didn't exist; though true, this makes VMS fans furious. One major
hacker gripe with VMS concerns its slowness --- thus the following
limerick:

    There once was a system called VMS
    Of cycles by no means abstemious.
        It's chock-full of hacks
        And runs on a VAX
    And makes my poor stomach all squeamious.
                                    --- The Great Quux

See also
            VAX
            ,
            TOPS-10
            ,
            TOPS-20
            ,
            UNIX
            ,
            runic
            .

1.1903   voice

            voice: vt. To phone someone, as opposed to emailing them or
connecting in
            talk mode
            . "I'm busy now; I'll voice you later."

1.1904   voice-net

```
           voice-net: n. Hackish way of referring to the telephone system,
analogizing it to a digital network.  USENET
           sig block
           s not
uncommonly include the sender's phone next to a "Voice:" or
"Voice-Net:" header; common variants of this are "Voicenet" and
"V-Net".  Compare
           paper-net
           ,
           snail-mail
           .
```

1.1905   voodoo programming

```
           voodoo programming: [from George Bush's "voodoo economics"] n.
The use by guess or cookbook of an
           obscure
            or
           hairy
            system,
feature, or algorithm that one does not truly understand.  The
implication is that the technique may not work, and if it doesn't,
one will never know why.  Almost synonymous with
           black magic
           ,
except that black magic typically isn't documented and
*nobody* understands it.  Compare
           magic
           ,
           deep magic
           ,

           heavy wizardry
           ,
           rain dance
           ,
           cargo cult programming
           ,

           wave a dead chicken
           .
```

1.1906   VR

```
           VR: // [MUD] n. On-line abbrev for
           virtual reality
```

, as
opposed to
RL
.

1.1907   Vulcan nerve pinch

Vulcan nerve pinch: n. [from the old "Star Trek" TV series via
Commodore Amiga hackers] The keyboard combination that forces a
soft-boot or jump to ROM monitor (on machines that support such a
feature). On many micros this is Ctrl-Alt-Del; on Suns, L1-A; on
some Macintoshes, it is <Cmd>-<Power switch>! Also called

three-finger salute
. Compare
quadruple bucky
.

1.1908   vulture capitalist

vulture capitalist: n. Pejorative hackerism for 'venture
capitalist', deriving from the common practice of pushing contracts
that deprive inventors of control over their own innovations and
most of the money they ought to have made from them.

1.1909   wabbit

wabbit: /wab'it/ [almost certainly from Elmer Fudd's immortal
line "You wascawwy wabbit!"] n. 1. A legendary early hack
reported on a System/360 at RPI and elsewhere around 1978; this may
have descended (if only by inspiration) from hack called RABBITS
reported from 1969 on a Burroughs 55000 at the University of
Washington Computer Center. The program would make two copies of
itself every time it was run, eventually crashing the system.
2. By extension, any hack that includes infinite self-replication
but is not a
virus
 or
worm
. See
fork bomb
 and

rabbit job
, see also

```
            cookie monster
            .
```

1.1910 WAITS

```
            WAITS:: /wayts/ n. The mutant cousin of
            TOPS-10
             used on a
handful of systems at
            SAIL
             up to 1990.  There was never an
```
'official' expansion of WAITS (the name itself having been arrived
at by a rather sideways process), but it was frequently glossed as
'West-coast Alternative to ITS'. Though WAITS was less visible
than ITS, there was frequent exchange of people and ideas between
the two communities, and innovations pioneered at WAITS exerted
enormous indirect influence. The early screen modes of
```
            EMACS
            ,
```
for example, were directly inspired by WAITS's 'E' editor --- one
of a family of editors that were the first to do 'real-time
editing', in which the editing commands were invisible and where
one typed text at the point of insertion/overwriting. The modern
style of multi-region windowing is said to have originated there,
and WAITS alumni at XEROX PARC and elsewhere played major roles in
the developments that led to the XEROX Star, the Macintosh, and the
Sun workstations.
```
            Bucky bits
             were also invented there ---
```
thus, the ALT key on every IBM PC is a WAITS legacy. One notable
WAITS feature seldom duplicated elsewhere was a news-wire interface
that allowed WAITS hackers to read, store, and filter AP and UPI
dispatches from their terminals; the system also featured a
still-unusual level of support for what is now called 'multimedia'
computing, allowing analog audio and video signals to be switched
to programming terminals.

1.1911 waldo

```
            waldo: /wol'doh/ [From Robert A. Heinlein's story "Waldo"]
```
1. A mechanical agent, such as a gripper arm, controlled by a human
limb. When these were developed for the nuclear industry in the
mid-1940s they were named after the invention described by Heinlein
in the story, which he wrote in 1942. Now known by the more
generic term 'telefactoring', this technology is of intense
interest to NASA for tasks like space station maintenance. 2. At
Harvard (particularly by Tom Cheatham and students), this is used
instead of

```
           foobar
            as a metasyntactic variable and general
nonsense word.  See
           foo
           ,
           bar
           ,
           foobar
           ,
           quux
           .
```

1.1912   walk

```
           walk: n.,vt. Traversal of a data structure, especially an array or
linked-list data structure in
           core
           .  See also
           codewalker
           ,

           silly walk
           ,
           clobber
           .
```

1.1913   walk off the end of

```
           walk off the end of: vt. To run past the end of an array, list, or
medium after stepping through it --- a good way to land in trouble.
Often the result of an
           off-by-one error
           .  Compare

           clobber
           ,
           roach
           ,
           smash the stack
           .
```

1.1914   walking drives

walking drives: n. An occasional failure mode of magnetic-disk
drives back in the days when they were huge, clunky
washing

machine
s. Those old
dinosaur
 parts carried terrific angular
momentum; the combination of a misaligned spindle or worn bearings
and stick-slip interactions with the floor could cause them to
'walk' across a room, lurching alternate corners forward a couple
of millimeters at a time. There is a legend about a drive that
walked over to the only door to the computer room and jammed it
shut; the staff had to cut a hole in the wall in order to get at
it! Walking could also be induced by certain patterns of drive
access (a fast seek across the whole width of the disk, followed by
a slow seek in the other direction). Some bands of old-time
hackers figured out how to induce disk-accessing patterns that
would do this to particular drive models and held disk-drive races.

1.1915   wall

wall: [WPI] interj. 1. An indication of confusion, usually spoken
with a quizzical tone: "Wall??" 2. A request for further
explication. Compare
octal forty
. 3. [UNIX, from 'write
all'] v. To send a message to everyone currently logged in,
esp. with the wall(8) utility.

It is said that sense 1 came from the idiom 'like talking to a
blank wall'. It was originally used in situations where, after you
had carefully answered a question, the questioner stared at you
blankly, clearly having understood nothing that was explained. You
would then throw out a "Hello, wall?" to elicit some sort of
response from the questioner. Later, confused questioners began
voicing "Wall?" themselves.

1.1916   wall follower

wall follower: n. A person or algorithm that compensates for lack
of sophistication or native stupidity by efficiently following some
simple procedure shown to have been effective in the past. Used of
an algorithm, this is not necessarily pejorative; it recalls
'Harvey Wallbanger', the winning robot in an early AI contest
(named, of course, after the cocktail). Harvey successfully solved
mazes by keeping a 'finger' on one wall and running till it came

out the other end. This was inelegant, but it was mathematically
guaranteed to work on simply-connected mazes --- and, in fact,
Harvey outperformed more sophisticated robots that tried to
'learn' each maze by building an internal representation of it.
Used of humans, the term *is* pejorative and implies an
uncreative, bureaucratic, by-the-book mentality. See also
            code

            grinder
            ,
            droid
            .

1.1917   wall time

            wall time: n. (also 'wall clock time') 1. 'Real world' time (what
the clock on the wall shows), as opposed to the system clock's idea
of time. 2. The real running time of a program, as opposed to the
number of
            tick
            s required to execute it (on a timesharing
system these always differ, as no one program gets all the
ticks, and on multiprocessor systems with good thread support
one may get more processor time than real time).

1.1918   wallpaper

            wallpaper: n. 1. A file containing a listing (e.g., assembly
listing) or a transcript, esp. a file containing a transcript of
all or part of a login session. (The idea was that the paper for
such listings was essentially good only for wallpaper, as evidenced
at Stanford, where it was used to cover windows.) Now rare,
esp. since other systems have developed other terms for it (e.g.,
PHOTO on TWENEX). However, the UNIX world doesn't have an
equivalent term, so perhaps
            wallpaper
             will take hold there.
The term probably originated on ITS, where the commands to begin
and end transcript files were ':WALBEG' and ':WALEND',
with default file 'WALL PAPER' (the space was a path
delimiter). 2. The background pattern used on graphical
workstations (this is techspeak under the 'Windows' graphical user
interface to MS-DOS). 3. 'wallpaper file' n. The file that
contains the wallpaper information before it is actually printed on
paper. (Even if you don't intend ever to produce a real paper copy
of the file, it is still called a wallpaper file.)

1.1919   wango

wango: /wang'goh/ n. Random bit-level
grovel
ling going on in
a system during some unspecified operation. Often used in
combination with
mumble
. For example: "You start with the '.o'
file, run it through this postprocessor that does mumble-wango ---
and it comes out a snazzy object-oriented executable."

1.1920   wank

wank: /wangk/ [Columbia University: prob. by mutation from
Commonwealth slang v. 'wank', to masturbate] n.,v. Used much as

hack
is elsewhere, as a noun denoting a clever technique or
person or the result of such cleverness. May describe (negatively)
the act of hacking for hacking's sake ("Quit wanking, let's go get
supper!") or (more positively) a
wizard
. Adj. 'wanky'
describes something particularly clever (a person, program, or
algorithm). Conversations can also get wanky when there are too
many wanks involved. This excess wankiness is signalled by an
overload of the 'wankometer' (compare
bogometer
). When the
wankometer overloads, the conversation's subject must be changed,
or all non-wanks will leave. Compare 'neep-neeping' (under

neep-neep
). Usage: U.S. only. In Britain and the Commonwealth
this word is *extremely* rude and is best avoided unless one
intends to give offense.

1.1921   wannabee

wannabee: /won'*-bee/ (also, more plausibly, spelled
'wannabe') [from a term recently used to describe Madonna fans
who dress, talk, and act like their idol; prob. originally from
biker slang] n. A would-be
hacker
. The connotations of this
term differ sharply depending on the age and exposure of the
subject. Used of a person who is in or might be entering

                larval stage
                , it is semi-approving; such wannabees can be
annoying but most hackers remember that they, too, were once such
creatures. When used of any professional programmer, CS academic,
writer, or
                suit
                , it is derogatory, implying that said person
is trying to cuddle up to the hacker mystique but doesn't,
fundamentally, have a prayer of understanding what it is all about.
Overuse of terms from this lexicon is often an indication of the

                wannabee
                 nature. Compare
                newbie
                .

Historical note: The wannabee phenomenon has a slightly different
flavor now (1993) than it did ten or fifteen years ago. When the
people who are now hackerdom's tribal elders were in
                larval

                stage
                , the process of becoming a hacker was largely unconscious
and unaffected by models known in popular culture --- communities
formed spontaneously around people who, *as individuals*, felt
irresistibly drawn to do hackerly things, and what wannabees
experienced was a fairly pure, skill-focused desire to become
similarly wizardly. Those days of innocence are gone forever;
society's adaptation to the advent of the microcomputer after 1980
included the elevation of the hacker as a new kind of folk hero,
and the result is that some people semi-consciously set out to
be hackers and borrow hackish prestige by fitting the
popular image of hackers. Fortunately, to do this really well, one
has to actually become a wizard. Nevertheless, old-time hackers
tend to share a poorly articulated disquiet about the change; among
other things, it gives them mixed feelings about the effects of
public compendia of lore like this one.

1.1922   warlording

                warlording: [from the USENET group alt.fan.warlord] v. The act
of excoriating a bloated, ugly, or derivative
                sig block
                .
Common grounds for warlording include the presence of a signature
rendered in a
                BUAF
                , over-used or cliched
                sig quote
                s, ugly

                ASCII art

, or simply excessive size. The original 'Warlord'
was a
                BIFF
                -like
                newbie
                 c.1991 who featured in his sig a
particularly large and obnoxious ASCII graphic resembling the sword
of Conan the Barbarian in the 1981 John Milius movie; the group
name alt.fan.warlord was sarcasm, and the characteristic mode
of warlording is devastatingly sarcastic praise.

1.1923   warm boot

                warm boot: n. See
                boot
                .

1.1924   wart

                wart: n. A small,
                crock
                y
                feature
                 that sticks out of an
otherwise
                clean
                 design. Something conspicuous for localized
ugliness, especially a special-case exception to a general rule.
For example, in some versions of 'csh(1)', single quotes
literalize every character inside them except '!'. In ANSI C,
the '??' syntax used for obtaining ASCII characters in a foreign
environment is a wart. See also
                miswart
                .

1.1925   washing machine

                washing machine: n. Old-style 14-inch hard disks in floor-standing
cabinets. So called because of the size of the cabinet and the
'top-loading' access to the media packs --- and, of course, they
were always set on 'spin cycle'. The washing-machine idiom
transcends language barriers; it is even used in Russian hacker
jargon. See also
                walking drives

.   The thick channel cables
connecting these were called 'bit hoses' (see
              hose
              , sense 3).

1.1926   water MIPS

water MIPS: n. (see
              MIPS
              , sense 2) Large, water-cooled
machines of either today's ECL-supercomputer flavor or yesterday's
traditional
              mainframe
               type.

1.1927   wave a dead chicken

wave a dead chicken: v. To perform a ritual in the direction of
crashed software or hardware that one believes to be futile but
is nevertheless necessary so that others are satisfied that an
appropriate degree of effort has been expended. "I'll wave a dead
chicken over the source code, but I really think we've run into an
OS bug." Compare
              voodoo programming
              ,
              rain dance
              .

1.1928   weasel

weasel: n. [Cambridge] A naive user, one who deliberately or
accidentally does things that are stupid or ill-advised. Roughly
synonymous with
              loser
              .

1.1929   wedged

wedged: adj. 1. To be stuck, incapable of proceeding without
help. This is different from having crashed. If the system has
crashed, it has become totally non-functioning. If the system is
wedged, it is trying to do something but cannot make progress; it
may be capable of doing a few things, but not be fully
operational. For example, a process may become wedged if it

deadlock
s with another (but not all instances of wedging are
deadlocks). See also
gronk
,
locked up
,
hosed
.
2. Often refers to humans suffering misconceptions. "He's totally
wedged --- he's convinced that he can levitate through
meditation." 3. [UNIX] Specifically used to describe the state of
a TTY left in a losing state by abort of a screen-oriented program
or one that has messed with the line discipline in some obscure
way.

There is some dispute over the origin of this term. It is usually
thought to derive from a common description of recto-cranial
inversion; however, it may actually have originated with older
'hot-press' printing technology in which physical type elements
were locked into type frames with wedges driven in by mallets.
Once this had been done, no changes in the typesetting for that
page could be made.

1.1930 wedgie

wedgie: [Fairchild] n. A bug. Prob. related to
wedged
.

1.1931 wedgitude

wedgitude: /wedj'i-t[y]ood/ n. The quality or state of being

wedged
.

1.1932   weeble

weeble: /weeb'l/ [Cambridge] interj. Used to denote frustration,
usually at amazing stupidity. "I stuck the disk in upside down."
"Weeble...." Compare
gurfle
.

1.1933   weeds

weeds: n. 1. Refers to development projects or algorithms that ↩
have
no possible relevance or practical application. Comes from 'off in
the weeds'. Used in phrases like "lexical analysis for microcode
is serious weeds...." 2. At CDC/ETA before its demise, the
phrase 'go off in the weeds' was equivalent to IBM's
branch to

Fishkill
 and mainstream hackerdom's
jump off into never-never

land
.

1.1934   weenie

weenie: n. 1. [on BBSes] Any of a species of luser resembling a
less amusing version of
BIFF
 that infests many
BBS
 systems. The typical weenie is a teenage boy with poor social
skills travelling under a grandiose
handle
 derived from
fantasy or heavy-metal rock lyrics. Among sysops, 'the weenie
problem' refers to the marginally literate and profanity-laden

flamage
 weenies tend to spew all over a newly-discovered BBS.
Compare
spod
,
computer geek
,
terminal junkie
.

2. [Among hackers] When used with a qualifier (for example, as in

UNIX weenie
, VMS weenie, IBM weenie) this can be either an
insult or a term of praise, depending on context, tone of voice,
and whether or not it is applied by a person who considers him or
herself to be the same sort of weenie. Implies that the weenie has
put a major investment of time, effort, and concentration into the
area indicated; whether this is good or bad depends on the hearer's
judgment of how the speaker feels about that area. See also

bigot
. 3. The semicolon character, ';' (ASCII
0111011).

1.1935   Weenix

Weenix: /wee'niks/ [ITS] n. A derogatory term for
UNIX
,
derived from
UNIX weenie
. According to one noted ex-ITSer, it
is "the operating system preferred by Unix Weenies: typified by
poor modularity, poor reliability, hard file deletion, no file
version numbers, case sensitivity everywhere, and users who believe
that these are all advantages". Some ITS fans behave as though
they believe UNIX stole a future that rightfully belonged to them.
See
ITS
, sense 2.

1.1936   well-behaved

well-behaved: adj. 1. [primarily
MS-DOS
] Said of software
conforming to system interface guidelines and standards.
Well-behaved software uses the operating system to do chores such
as keyboard input, allocating memory and drawing graphics. Oppose

ill-behaved
. 2. Software that does its job quietly and
without counterintuitive effects. Esp. said of software having
an interface spec sufficiently simple and well-defined that it can
be used as a
tool
 by other software. See

```
                cat
                .
```

1.1937   well-connected

```
                well-connected: adj. Said of a computer installation, asserts
        that it has reliable email links with the network and/or that
        it relays a large fraction of available
                USENET
                 newsgroups.
        'Well-known' can be almost synonymous, but also implies that the
        site's name is familiar to many (due perhaps to an archive service
        or active USENET users).
```

1.1938   wetware

```
                wetware: /wet'weir/ [prob. from the novels of Rudy Rucker] n.
        1. The human nervous system, as opposed to computer hardware or
        software.  "Wetware has 7 plus or minus 2 temporary registers."
        2. Human beings (programmers, operators, administrators) attached
        to a computer system, as opposed to the system's hardware or
        software.  See
                liveware
                ,
                meatware
                .
```

1.1939   whack

```
                whack: v. According to arch-hacker James Gosling, to "...modify a
        program with no idea whatsoever how it works." (See
                whacker
                .)
        It is actually possible to do this in nontrivial circumstances if
        the change is small and well-defined and you are very good at

                glark
                ing things from context.  As a trivial example, it is
        relatively easy to change all 'stderr' writes to 'stdout'
        writes in a piece of C filter code which remains otherwise
        mysterious.
```

1.1940 whacker

            whacker: [University of Maryland: from
            hacker
            ] n. 1. A person,
    similar to a
            hacker
            , who enjoys exploring the details of
    programmable systems and how to stretch their capabilities.
    Whereas a hacker tends to produce great hacks, a whacker only ends
    up whacking the system or program in question. Whackers are often
    quite egotistical and eager to claim
            wizard
             status,
    regardless of the views of their peers. 2. A person who is good at
    programming quickly, though rather poorly and ineptly.

1.1941 whales

            whales: n. See
            like kicking dead whales down the beach
             .

1.1942 whalesong

whalesong: n. The peculiar clicking and whooshing sounds made by a
    PEP modem such as the Telebit Trailblazer as it tries to
    synchronize with another PEP modem for their special high-speed
    mode. This sound isn't anything like the normal two-tone handshake
    between conventional modems and is instantly recognizable to anyone
    who has heard it more than once. It sounds, in fact, very much
    like whale songs. This noise is also called "the moose call" or
    "moose tones".

1.1943 What's a spline?

What's a spline?: [XEROX PARC] This phrase expands to: "You have
    just used a term that I've heard for a year and a half, and I feel
    I should know, but don't. My curiosity has finally overcome my
    guilt." The PARC lexicon adds "Moral: don't hesitate to ask
    questions, even if they seem obvious."

1.1944   wheel

wheel: [from slang 'big wheel' for a powerful person] n. A
person who has an active
wheel bit
. "We need to find a
wheel to unwedge the hung tape drives." (See
wedged
, sense
1.)

1.1945   wheel bit

wheel bit: n. A privilege bit that allows the possessor to perform
some restricted operation on a timesharing system, such as read or
write any file on the system regardless of protections, change or
look at any address in the running monitor, crash or reload the
system, and kill or create jobs and user accounts. The term was
invented on the TENEX operating system, and carried over to
TOPS-20, XEROX-IFS, and others. The state of being in a privileged
logon is sometimes called 'wheel mode'. This term entered the
UNIX culture from TWENEX in the mid-1980s and has been gaining
popularity there (esp. at university sites). See also
root
.

1.1946   wheel wars

wheel wars: [Stanford University] A period in
larval stage
   during which student hackers hassle each other by attempting to ←
         log
each other out of the system, delete each other's files, and
otherwise wreak havoc, usually at the expense of the lesser users.

1.1947   White Book

White Book: n. 1. Syn.
K&R
. 2. Adobe's fourth book in the
PostScript series, describing the previously-secret format of Type
1 fonts; "Adobe Type 1 Font Format, version 1.1",
(Addison-Wesley, 1990, ISBN 0-201-57044-0). See also

Red Book

,

Green Book

,
Blue Book

.

1.1948 whizzy

whizzy: [Sun] adj. (alt. 'wizzy') Describes a
cuspy
 program;
one that is feature-rich and well presented.

1.1949 WIBNI

WIBNI: // [Bell Labs: Wouldn't It Be Nice If] n. What most
requirements documents and specifications consist entirely of.
Compare
IWBNI
.

1.1950 widget

widget: n. 1. A meta-thing. Used to stand for a real object in
didactic examples (especially database tutorials). Legend has it
that the original widgets were holders for buggy whips.   "But
suppose the parts list for a widget has 52 entries...."
2. [poss. evoking 'window gadget'] A user interface object in

X
 graphical user interfaces.

1.1951 wiggles

wiggles: n. [scientific computation] In solving partial differential
   equations by finite difference and similar methods, wiggles are
   sawtooth (up-down-up-down) oscillations at the shortest wavelength

representable on the grid. If an algorithm is unstable, this is
often the most unstable waveform, so it grows to dominate the
solution. Alternatively, stable (though inaccurate) wiggles can be
generated near a discontinuity by a Gibbs phenomenon.

1.1952   WIMP environment

            WIMP environment: n. [acronym: 'Window, Icon, Menu, Pointing
device (or Pull-down menu)'] A graphical-user-interface environment
such as
            X
             or the Macintosh interface, esp. as described by a
hacker who prefers command-line interfaces for their superior
flexibility and extensibility. However, it is also used without
negative connotations; one must pay attention to voice tone and
other signals to interpret correctly. See
            menuitis
            ,

            user-obsequious
            .

1.1953   win

            win: [MIT] 1. vi. To succeed. A program wins if no unexpected
conditions arise, or (especially) if it sufficiently
            robust
             to
take exceptions in stride. 2. n. Success, or a specific instance
thereof. A pleasing outcome. "So it turned out I could use a

            lexer
             generator instead of hand-coding my own pattern
recognizer. What a win!" Emphatic forms: 'moby win', 'super
win', 'hyper-win' (often used interjectively as a reply). For
some reason 'suitable win' is also common at MIT, usually in
reference to a satisfactory solution to a problem. Oppose

            lose
            ; see also
            big win
            , which isn't quite just an
intensification of 'win'.

1.1954   win big

```
              win big: vi. To experience serendipity.  "I went shopping and won
  big; there was a 2-for-1 sale."  See
              big win
              .
```

1.1955 win win

```
              win win: interj. Expresses pleasure at a
              win
              .
```

1.1956 Winchester

```
Winchester:: n. Informal generic term for 'floating-head'
   magnetic-disk drives in which the read-write head planes over the
   disk surface on an air cushion.  The name arose because the
   original 1973 engineering prototype for what later became the
   IBM 3340 featured two 30-megabyte volumes; 30--30 became
   'Winchester' when somebody noticed the similarity to the common
   term for a famous Winchester rifle (in the latter, the first 30
   referred to caliber and the second to the grain weight of the
   charge).
```

1.1957 window shopping

```
              window shopping: [US Geological Survey] n. Among users of
              WIMP

              environment
              s like
              X
               or the Macintosh, extended
  experimentation with new window colors, fonts, and icon shapes.
  This activity can take up hours of what might otherwise have been
  productive working time.  "I spent the afternoon window shopping
  until I found the coolest shade of green for my active window
  borders --- now they perfectly match my medium slate blue
  background."  Serious window shoppers will spend their days
  with bitmap editors, creating new and different icons and
  background patterns for all to see.  Also: 'window dressing', the
  act of applying new fonts, colors, etc.  See
              fritterware
              ,
  compare
```

```
macdink
.
```

1.1958 Windoze

```
Windoze: /win'dohz/ n. See
Microsloth Windows
.
```

1.1959 winged comments

```
winged comments: n. Comments set on the same line as code, as
opposed to
boxed comments
.  In C, for example:

  d = sqrt(x*x + y*y);  /* distance from origin */

Generally these refer only to the action(s) taken on that line.
```

1.1960 winkey

```
winkey: n. (alt. 'winkey face')  See
emoticon
.
```

1.1961 winnage

```
winnage: /win'*j/ n. The situation when a lossage is corrected, or
  when something is winning.
```

1.1962 winner

winner: 1. n. An unexpectedly good situation, program, programmer,
or person. 2. 'real winner': Often sarcastic, but also used as
high praise (see also the note under
             user
). "He's a real
winner --- never reports a bug till he can duplicate it and send in
an example."

1.1963   winnitude

winnitude: /win'*-t[y]ood/ n. The quality of winning (as opposed
to
             winnage
             , which is the result of winning). "Guess what?
They tweaked the microcode and now the LISP interpreter runs twice
as fast as it used to." "That's really great! Boy, what
winnitude!" "Yup. I'll probably get a half-hour's winnage on the
next run of my program." Perhaps curiously, the obvious antonym
'lossitude' is rare.

1.1964   wired

wired: n. See
hardwired
.

1.1965   wirehead

wirehead: /wi:r'hed/ n. [prob. from SF slang for an
   electrical-brain-stimulation addict] 1. A hardware hacker,
   especially one who concentrates on communications hardware. 2. An
   expert in local-area networks. A wirehead can be a network
   software wizard too, but will always have the ability to deal with
   network hardware, down to the smallest component. Wireheads are
   known for their ability to lash up an Ethernet terminator from
   spare resistors, for example.

1.1966   wirewater

            wirewater: n. Syn.
            programming fluid
            . This melds the
mainstream slang adjective 'wired' (stimulated, up, hyperactive)
with 'firewater'; however, it refers to caffeinacious rather
than alcoholic beverages.

1.1967   wish list

            wish list: n. A list of desired features or bug fixes that ←
                probably
won't get done for a long time, usually because the person
responsible for the code is too busy or can't think of a clean way
to do it. "OK, I'll add automatic filename completion to the wish
list for the new interface." Compare
            tick-list features
            .

1.1968   within delta of

            within delta of: adj. See
            delta
            .

1.1969   within epsilon of

            within epsilon of: adj. See
            epsilon
            .

1.1970   wizard

            wizard: n. 1. A person who knows how a complex piece of software
  or hardware works (that is, who
            grok
            s it); esp. someone who
can find and fix bugs quickly in an emergency. Someone is a

            hacker

            if he or she has general hacking ability, but is a wizard
with respect to something only if he or she has specific detailed
knowledge of that thing. A good hacker could become a wizard for
something given the time to study it. 2. A person who is permitted
to do things forbidden to ordinary people; one who has
            wheel
            privileges on a system. 3. A UNIX expert, esp. a UNIX systems
programmer. This usage is well enough established that 'UNIX
Wizard' is a recognized job title at some corporations and to most
headhunters. See
            guru
            ,
            lord high fixer
            . See also

            deep magic
            ,
            heavy wizardry
            ,
            incantation
            ,
            magic
            ,
            mutter
            ,
            rain dance
            ,
            voodoo programming
            ,
            wave a

            dead chicken
            .

1.1971 Wizard Book

            Wizard Book: n. Hal Abelson's, Jerry Sussman's and Julie Sussman's
"Structure and Interpretation of Computer Programs" (MIT
Press, 1984; ISBN 0-262-01077-1), an excellent computer science text
used in introductory courses at MIT. So called because of the
wizard on the jacket. One of the
            bible
            s of the LISP/Scheme
world. Also, less commonly, known as the
            Purple Book
            .

1.1972   wizard mode

```
               wizard mode: [from
               rogue
               ] n. A special access mode of a
program or system, usually passworded, that permits some users
godlike privileges.  Generally not used for operating systems
themselves ('root mode' or 'wheel mode' would be used
instead).  This term is often used with respect to games that have
editable state.
```

1.1973   wizardly

```
               wizardly: adj. Pertaining to wizards.  A wizardly
               feature
                is one
that only a wizard could understand or use properly.
```

1.1974   womb box

```
womb box: n. 1. [TMRC] Storage space for equipment.  2. [proposed]
   A variety of hard-shell equipment case with heavy interior padding
   and/or shaped carrier cutouts in a foam-rubber matrix; mundanely
   called a 'flight case'.  Used for delicate test equipment,
   electronics, and musical instruments.
```

1.1975   WOMBAT

```
               WOMBAT: [Waste Of Money, Brains, And Time] adj. Applied to  ←
                  problems
which are both profoundly
               uninteresting
                in themselves and
unlikely to benefit anyone interesting even if solved.  Often used
in fanciful constructions such as 'wrestling with a wombat'.  See
also
               crawling horror
               ,
               SMOP
               .  Also note the rather different
usage as a metasyntactic variable in
               Commonwealth Hackish
               .
```

1.1976 wonky

            wonky: /wong'kee/ [from Australian slang] adj. Yet another
approximate synonym for
            broken
            . Specifically connotes a
malfunction that produces behavior seen as crazy, humorous, or
amusingly perverse. "That was the day the printer's font logic
went wonky and everybody's listings came out in Tengwar." Also in
'wonked out'. See
            funky
            ,
            demented
            ,
            bozotic
            .

1.1977 woofer

            woofer: [University of Waterloo] n. Some varieties of wide paper
for printers have a perforation 8.5 inches from the left margin
that allows the excess on the right-hand side to be torn off when
the print format is 80 columns or less wide. The right-hand excess
may be called 'woofer'. This term (like
            tweeter
) has been
in use at Waterloo since 1972, but is elsewhere unknown. In audio
jargon, the word refers to the bass speaker(s) on a hi-fi.

1.1978 workaround

            workaround: n. 1. A temporary
            kluge
            used to bypass, mask, or
otherwise avoid a
            bug
            or
            misfeature
            in some system.
Theoretically, workarounds are always replaced by
            fix
            es; in
practice, customers often find themselves living with workarounds
for long periods of time. "The code died on NUL characters in the
input, so I fixed it to interpret them as spaces." "That's not a
fix, that's a workaround!" 2. A procedure to be employed by the
user in order to do what some currently non-working feature should
do. Hypothetical example: "Using META-F7

```
            crash
            es the 4.43 build
of Weemax, but as a workaround you can type CTRL-R, then SHIFT-F5,
and delete the remaining
            cruft
             by hand."
```

1.1979   working as designed

```
            working as designed: [IBM] adj. 1. In conformance to a wrong or
inappropriate specification; useful, but misdesigned.
2. Frequently used as a sardonic comment on a program's utility.
3. Unfortunately also used as a bogus reason for not accepting a
criticism or suggestion.  At
            IBM
            , this sense is used in
official documents!  See
            BAD
            .
```

1.1980   worm

```
            worm: [from 'tapeworm' in John Brunner's novel "The
Shockwave Rider", via XEROX PARC] n. A program that propagates
itself over a network, reproducing itself as it goes.  Compare

            virus
            . Nowadays the term has negative connotations, as it is
assumed that only
            cracker
            s write worms.  Perhaps the
best-known example was Robert T. Morris's 'Internet Worm' of 1988,
a 'benign' one that got out of control and hogged hundreds of
Suns and VAXen across the U.S.  See also
            cracker
            ,
            RTM
            ,

            Trojan horse
            ,
            ice
            , and
            Great Worm, the
            .
```

1.1981   wound around the axle

wound around the axle: adj. In an infinite loop. Often used by older
  computer types.

1.1982   wrap around

             wrap around: vi. (also n. 'wraparound' and v. shorthand
  'wrap') 1. [techspeak] The action of a counter that starts over
at zero or at 'minus infinity' (see
             infinity
) after its
maximum value has been reached, and continues incrementing, either
because it is programmed to do so or because of an overflow (as
when a car's odometer starts over at 0). 2. To change
             phase
                gradually and continuously by maintaining a steady wake-sleep ↩
                   cycle
somewhat longer than 24 hours, e.g., living six long (28-hour) days
in a week (or, equivalently, sleeping at the rate of
10 microhertz). This sense is also called
             phase-wrapping
             .

1.1983   write-only code

             write-only code: [a play on 'read-only memory'] n. Code so
  arcane, complex, or ill-structured that it cannot be modified or
even comprehended by anyone but its author, and possibly not even
by him/her. A
             Bad Thing
             .

1.1984   write-only language

             write-only language: n. A language with syntax (or semantics)
  sufficiently dense and bizarre that any routine of significant size
is automatically
             write-only code
             . A sobriquet applied
occasionally to C and often to APL, though
             INTERCAL
              and

```
            TECO
             certainly deserve it more.
```

1.1985   write-only memory

write-only memory: n. The obvious antonym to ‘read-only
memory’. Out of frustration with the long and seemingly useless
chain of approvals required of component specifications, during
which no actual checking seemed to occur, an engineer at Signetics
once created a specification for a write-only memory and included
it with a bunch of other specifications to be approved. This
inclusion came to the attention of Signetics
            management
             only
when regular customers started calling and asking for pricing
information. Signetics published a corrected edition of the data
book and requested the return of the ‘erroneous’ ones. Later,
around 1974, Signetics bought a double-page spread in "Electronics"
magazine’s April issue and used the spec as an April Fools’ Day
joke. Instead of the more conventional characteristic curves, the
25120 "fully encoded, 9046 x N, Random Access, write-only-memory"
data sheet included diagrams of "bit capacity vs. Temp.",
"Iff vs. Vff", "Number of pins remaining vs. number of socket
insertions", and "AQL vs. selling price". The 25120 required a
6.3 VAC VFF supply, a +10V VCC, and VDD of 0V, +/− 2%.

1.1986   Wrong Thing

Wrong Thing: n. A design, action, or decision that is clearly
incorrect or inappropriate. Often capitalized; always emphasized
in speech as if capitalized. The opposite of the
            Right Thing
            ;
more generally, anything that is not the Right Thing. In cases
where ‘the good is the enemy of the best’, the merely good ---
although good --- is nevertheless the Wrong Thing. "In C, the
default is for module-level declarations to be visible everywhere,
rather than just within the module. This is clearly the Wrong
Thing."

1.1987   wugga wugga

          wugga wugga: /wuh'g* wuh'g*/ n. Imaginary sound that a computer
program makes as it labors with a tedious or difficult task.
Compare
          cruncha cruncha cruncha
          ,
          grind
           (sense 4).

1.1988 wumpus

          wumpus: /wuhm'p*s/ n. The central monster (and, in many
versions, the name) of a famous family of very early computer games
called "Hunt The Wumpus", dating back at least to 1972 (several
years before
          ADVENT
) on the Dartmouth Time-Sharing System.
The wumpus lived somewhere in a cave with the topology of an
dodecahedron's edge/vertex graph (later versions supported other
topologies, including an icosahedron and M"obius strip). The player
started somewhere at random in the cave with five 'crooked
arrows'; these could be shot through up to three connected rooms,
and would kill the wumpus on a hit (later versions introduced
the wounded wumpus, which got very angry). Unfortunately for
players, the movement necessary to map the maze was made hazardous
not merely by the wumpus (which would eat you if you stepped on
him) but also by bottomless pits and colonies of super bats that would
pick you up and drop you at a random location (later versions added
'anaerobic termites' that ate arrows, bat migrations, and
earthquakes that randomly changed pit locations).

This game appears to have been the first to use a non-random
graph-structured map (as opposed to a rectangular grid like the
even older Star Trek games). In this respect, as in the
dungeon-like setting and its terse, amusing messages, it prefigured

          ADVENT
           and
          Zork
           and was directly ancestral to both (Zork
acknowledged this heritage by including a super-bat colony).
Today, a port is distributed with SunOS and as freeware for the
Mac. A C emulation of the original Basic game is in circulation
as freeware on the net.

1.1989 WYSIAYG

          WYSIAYG: /wiz'ee-ayg/ adj. Describes a user interface under

which "What You See Is *All* You Get"; an unhappy variant of

        WYSIWYG
        . Visual, 'point-and-shoot'-style interfaces tend to
have easy initial learning curves, but also to lack depth; they
often frustrate advanced users who would be better served by a
command-style interface. When this happens, the frustrated user
has a WYSIAYG problem. This term is most often used of editors,
word processors, and document formatting programs. WYSIWYG
'desktop publishing' programs, for example, are a clear win for
creating small documents with lots of fonts and graphics in them,
especially things like newsletters and presentation slides. When
typesetting book-length manuscripts, on the other hand, scale
changes the nature of the task; one quickly runs into WYSIAYG
limitations, and the increased power and flexibility of a
command-driven formatter like
        TeX
         or UNIX's
        troff
          becomes not just desirable but a necessity. Compare
        YAFIYGI
        .

1.1990 WYSIWYG

        WYSIWYG: /wiz'ee-wig/ adj. Describes a user interface under
which "What You See Is What You Get", as opposed to one that uses
more-or-less obscure commands that do not result in immediate
visual feedback. True WYSIWYG in environments supporting multiple
fonts or graphics is a a rarely-attained ideal; there are variants
of this term to express real-world manifestations including
WYSIAWYG (What You See Is *Almost* What You Get) and
WYSIMOLWYG (What You See Is More or Less What You Get). All these
can be mildly derogatory, as they are often used to refer to
dumbed-down
        user-friendly
         interfaces targeted at
non-programmers; a hacker has no fear of obscure commands (compare

        WYSIAYG
). On the other hand,
        EMACS
         was one of the very first
WYSIWYG editors, replacing (actually, at first overlaying) the
extremely obscure, command-based
        TECO
        . See also
        WIMP

        environment
        . [Oddly enough, WYSIWYG has already made it into the
OED, in lower case yet. --- ESR]

1.1991   X

X: /X/ n. 1. Used in various speech and writing contexts (also
in lowercase) in roughly its algebraic sense of 'unknown within a
set defined by context' (compare
N
). Thus, the abbreviation
680x0 stands for 68000, 68010, 68020, 68030, or 68040, and 80x86
stands for 80186, 80286 80386 or 80486 (note that a UNIX hacker
might write these as 680[0-4]0 and 80[1-4]86 or 680?0 and 80?86
respectively; see
glob
). 2. [after the name of an earlier
window system called 'W'] An over-sized, over-featured,
over-engineered and incredibly over-complicated window system
developed at MIT and widely used on UNIX systems.

1.1992   XEROX PARC

XEROX PARC: /zee'roks park'/ The famed Palo Alto Research
Center. For more than a decade, from the early 1970s into the
mid-1980s, PARC yielded an astonishing volume of groundbreaking
hardware and software innovations. The modern mice, windows, and
icons style of software interface was invented there. So was the
laser printer and the local-area network; and PARC's series of D
machines anticipated the powerful personal computers of the 1980s
by a decade. Sadly, the prophets at PARC were without honor in
their own company, so much so that it became a standard joke to
describe PARC as a place that specialized in developing brilliant
ideas for everyone else.

The stunning shortsightedness and obtusity of XEROX's top-level

suit
s has been well anatomized in "Fumbling The Future:
How XEROX Invented, Then Ignored, the First Personal Computer" by
Douglas K. Smith and Robert C. Alexander (William Morrow & Co.,
1988, ISBN 0-688-09511-9).

1.1993   XOFF

XOFF: /X-of/ n. Syn.
control-S
.

1.1994 XON

XON: /X-on/ n. Syn.
control-Q
.

1.1995 xor

xor: /X'or/, /kzor/ conj. Exclusive or. 'A xor B' means
   'A or B, but not both'. "I want to get cherry pie xor a
   banana split." This derives from the technical use of the term as
   a function on truth-values that is true if exactly one of its two
   arguments is true.

1.1996 xref

xref: /X'ref/ vt., n. Hackish standard abbreviation for
   'cross-reference'.

1.1997 XXX

XXX: /X-X-X/ n. A marker that attention is needed.
   Commonly used in program comments to indicate areas that are kluged
   up or need to be. Some hackers liken 'XXX' to the notional
   heavy-porn movie rating. Compare
            FIXME
            .

1.1998 xyzzy

xyzzy: /X-Y-Z-Z-Y/, /X-Y-ziz'ee/, /ziz'ee/, or /ik-ziz'ee/
   [from the ADVENT game] adj. The
            canonical
             'magic word'.
   This comes from
            ADVENT

, in which the idea is to explore an
underground cave with many rooms and to collect the treasures you
find there. If you type 'xyzzy' at the appropriate time, you can
move instantly between two otherwise distant points. If,
therefore, you encounter some bit of
                magic
                , you might remark
on this quite succinctly by saying simply "Xyzzy!" "Ordinarily
you can't look at someone else's screen if he has protected it, but
if you type quadruple-bucky-clear the system will let you do it
anyway." "Xyzzy!" Xyzzy has actually been implemented as an
undocumented no-op command on several OSes; in Data General's
AOS/VS, for example, it would typically respond "Nothing
happens", just as
                ADVENT
                did if the magic was invoked at the
wrong spot or before a player had performed the action that enabled
the word. In more recent 32-bit versions, by the way, AOS/VS
responds "Twice as much happens". See also
                plugh
                .

1.1999 YA-

                YA-: [Yet Another] abbrev. In hackish acronyms this almost
invariably expands to
                Yet Another
                , following the precedent set
by UNIX 'yacc(1)' (Yet Another Compiler-Compiler). See

                YABA
                .

1.2000 YABA

                YABA: /ya'b*/ [Cambridge] n. Yet Another Bloody Acronym.
Whenever some program is being named, someone invariably suggests
that it be given a name that is acronymic. The response from those
with a trace of originality is to remark ironically that the
proposed name would then be 'YABA-compatible'. Also used in
response to questions like "What is WYSIWYG?" See also

                TLA
                .

1.2001   YAFIYGI

              YAFIYGI: /yaf'ee-y*-gee/ adj.   [coined in response to WYSIWYG]
   Describes the command-oriented ed/vi/nroff/TeX style of word
   processing or other user interface, the opposite of
              WYSIWYG
              .
   Stands for "You asked for it, you got it", because what you
   actually asked for is often not apparent until long after it is too
   late to do anything about it. Used to denote perversity ("Real
   Programmers use YAFIYGI tools...and *like* it!") or, less
   often, a necessary tradeoff ("Only a YAFIYGI tool can have full
   programmable flexibility in its interface.").

   This precise sense of "You asked for it, you got it" seems to
   have first appeared in Ed Post's classic parody "Real
   Programmers don't use Pascal"; the acronym is a more recent (as of
   1993) invention.

1.2002   YAUN

YAUN: /yawn/ [Acronym for 'Yet Another UNIX Nerd'] n. Reported
   from the San Diego Computer Society (predominantly a microcomputer
   users' group) as a good-natured punning insult aimed at UNIX
   zealots.

1.2003   Yellow Book

Yellow Book: [proposed] n. The print version of this Jargon File;
   "The New Hacker's Dictionary", MIT Press, 1991 (ISBN
   0-262-68069-6). Includes all the material in the 2.9.6 version of
   the File, plus a Foreword by Guy L. Steele Jr. and a Preface by
   Eric S. Raymond. Most importantly, the book version is nicely
   typeset and includes almost all of the infamous Crunchly cartoons
   by the Great Quux, each attached to an appropriate entry.

1.2004   yellow wire

              yellow wire: [IBM] n. Repair wires used when connectors
   (especially ribbon connectors) got broken due to some schlemiel
   pinching them, or to reconnect cut traces after the FE mistakenly
   cut one. Compare
              blue wire
              ,
              purple wire

,
red wire
.

1.2005   Yet Another

             Yet Another: adj. [From UNIX's 'yacc(1)', 'Yet Another
Compiler-Compiler', a LALR parser generator] 1. Of your own work: A
humorous allusion often used in titles to acknowledge that the
topic is not original, though the content is. As in 'Yet Another
AI Group' or 'Yet Another Simulated Annealing Algorithm'. 2. Of
others' work: Describes something of which there are already far
too many. See also
             YA-
             ,
             YABA
             ,
             YAUN
             .

1.2006   YKYBHTLW

YKYBHTLW: // Abbreviation of 'You know you've been hacking too
   long when...', which became established on the USENET group
   alt.folklore.computers during extended discussion of the
   indicated entry in the Jargon File.

1.2007   You are not expected to understand this

             You are not expected to understand this: [UNIX] cav. The canonical
comment describing something
             magic
              or too complicated to
bother explaining properly. From an infamous comment in the
context-switching code of the V6 UNIX kernel.

1.2008   You know you've been hacking too long when...

                You know you've been hacking too long when...: The set-up line
    for a genre of one-liners told by hackers about themselves. These
    include the following:

    *   not only do you check your email more often than your paper
         mail, but you remember your
                  network address
                   faster than your
         postal one.
    *   your
                  SO
                   kisses you on the neck and the first thing you
         think is "Uh, oh,
                  priority interrupt
                  ."
    *   you go to balance your checkbook and discover that you're
         doing it in octal.
    *   your computers have a higher street value than your car.
    *   in your universe, 'round numbers' are powers of 2, not 10.
    *   more than once, you have woken up recalling a dream in
         some programming language.
    *   you realize you have never seen half of your best friends.

    [An early version of this entry said "All but one of these
    have been reliably reported as hacker traits (some of them quite
    often). Even hackers may have trouble spotting the ringer." The
    ringer was balancing one's checkbook in octal, which I made up out
    of whole cloth. Although more respondents picked that one
    out as fiction than any of the others, I also received multiple
    independent reports of its actually happening, most famously
    to Grace Hopper while she was working with BINAC in 1949. --- ESR]

1.2009   Your mileage may vary

Your mileage may vary: [from the standard disclaimer attached to
    EPA mileage ratings by American car manufacturers] cav. 1. A ritual
    warning often found in UNIX freeware distributions. Translates
    roughly as "Hey, I tried to write this portably, but who
    knows what'll happen on your system?" 2. More generally,
    a qualifier attached to advice. "I find that sending flowers
    works well, but your mileage may vary."

1.2010   Yow!

                Yow!: /yow/ [from "Zippy the Pinhead" comix] interj. A favored ↩
                    hacker
    expression of humorous surprise or emphasis. "Yow! Check out what
    happens when you twiddle the foo option on this display hack!"

Compare
               gurfle
               .

1.2011   yoyo mode

yoyo mode: n. The state in which the system is said to be when it
   rapidly alternates several times between being up and being down.
   Interestingly (and perhaps not by coincidence), many hardware
   vendors give out free yoyos at Usenix exhibits.

   Sun Microsystems gave out logoized yoyos at SIGPLAN '88. Tourists
   staying at one of Atlanta's most respectable hotels were
   subsequently treated to the sight of 200 of the country's top
   computer scientists testing yo-yo algorithms in the lobby.

1.2012   Yu-Shiang Whole Fish

               Yu-Shiang Whole Fish: /yoo-shyang hohl fish/ n. obs. The
         character gamma (extended SAIL ASCII 0001001), which with a loop in
         its tail looks like a little fish swimming down the page. The term
         is actually the name of a Chinese dish in which a fish is cooked
         whole (not
               parse
               d) and covered with Yu-Shiang (or Yu-Hsiang)
         sauce. Usage: primarily by people on the MIT LISP Machine, which
         could display this character on the screen. Tends to elicit
         incredulity from people who hear about it second-hand.

1.2013   zap

               zap: 1. n. Spiciness. 2. vt. To make food spicy. 3. vt. To make
         someone 'suffer' by making his food spicy. (Most hackers love
         spicy food. Hot-and-sour soup is considered wimpy unless it makes
         you wipe your nose for the rest of the meal.) See
               zapped
               .
         4. vt. To modify, usually to correct; esp. used when the action
         is performed with a debugger or binary patching tool. Also implies
         surgical precision. "Zap the debug level to 6 and run it again."
         In the IBM mainframe world, binary patches are applied to programs
         or to the OS with a program called 'superzap', whose file name is
         'IMASPZAP' (possibly contrived from I M A SuPerZAP). 5. vt. To
         erase or reset. 6. To
               fry

                    a chip with static electricity.
  "Uh oh --- I think that lightning strike may have zapped the disk
  controller."

1.2014   zapped

              zapped: adj. Spicy. This term is used to distinguish between food
  that is hot (in temperature) and food that is *spicy*-hot.
  For example, the Chinese appetizer Bon Bon Chicken is a kind of
  chicken salad that is cold but zapped; by contrast,
              vanilla
                  wonton soup is hot but not zapped. See also
              oriental food
              ,

              laser chicken
              . See
              zap
              , senses 1 and 2.

1.2015   zen

              zen: vt. To figure out something by meditation or by a sudden ↩
                  flash
  of enlightenment. Originally applied to bugs, but occasionally
  applied to problems of life in general. "How'd you figure out the
  buffer allocation problem?" "Oh, I zenned it." Contrast
              grok
              ,
  which connotes a time-extended version of zenning a system.
  Compare
              hack mode
              . See also
              guru
              .

1.2016   zero

              zero: vt. 1. To set to 0. Usually said of small pieces of data,
  such as bits or words (esp. in the construction 'zero out'). 2. To
  erase; to discard all data from. Said of disks and directories,
  where 'zeroing' need not involve actually writing zeroes throughout
  the area being zeroed. One may speak of something being
  'logically zeroed' rather than being 'physically zeroed'. See

```
            scribble
            .
```

1.2017 zero-content

```
            zero-content: adj. Syn.
            content-free
            .
```

1.2018 zeroth

```
            zeroth: /zee'rohth/ adj. First.  Among software designers, comes
from C's and LISP's 0-based indexing of arrays.  Hardware people
also tend to start counting at 0 instead of 1; this is natural
since, e.g., the 256 states of 8 bits correspond to the binary
numbers 0, 1, ..., 255 and the digital devices known as
'counters' count in this way.

Hackers and computer scientists often like to call the first
chapter of a publication 'chapter 0', especially if it is of an
introductory nature (one of the classic instances was in the First
Edition of
            K&R
            ).  In recent years this trait has also been
observed among many pure mathematicians (who have an independent
tradition of numbering from 0).  Zero-based numbering tends to
reduce
            fencepost error
            s, though it cannot eliminate them
entirely.
```

1.2019 zigamorph

```
            zigamorph: /zig'*-morf/ n. 1. Hex FF (11111111) when used as a
delimiter or
            fence
             character.  Usage: primarily at IBM shops.
2. [proposed] n. The Unicode non-character +UFFFF
(1111111111111111), a character code which is not assigned to any
character, and so is usable as end-of-string.  (Unicode (a subset
of ISO 10646) is a 16-bit character code intended to cover all of
the world's writing systems, including Roman, Greek, Cyrillic,
Chinese, hiragana, katakana, Devanagari, Easter Island
```

'rongo-rongo', and even
Elvish
.)

1.2020 zip

zip: [primarily MS-DOS] vt. To create a compressed archive from a
group of files using PKWare's PKZIP or a compatible archiver. Its
use is spreading now that portable implementations of the algorithm
have been written. Commonly used as follows: "I'll zip it up and
send it to you." See
tar and feather
.

1.2021 zipperhead

zipperhead: [IBM] n. A person with a closed mind.

1.2022 zombie

zombie: [UNIX] n. A process that has died but has not yet
relinquished its process table slot (because the parent process
hasn't executed a 'wait(2)' for it yet). These can be seen in
'ps(1)' listings occasionally. Compare
orphan
.

1.2023 zorch

zorch: /zorch/ 1. [TMRC] v. To attack with an inverse heat
sink. 2. [TMRC] v. To travel, with v approaching c
[that is, with velocity approaching lightspeed --- ESR]. 3. [MIT]
v. To propel something very quickly. "The new comm software is
very fast; it really zorches files through the network." 4. [MIT]
n. Influence. Brownie points. Good karma. The intangible and
fuzzy currency in which favors are measured. "I'd rather not ask
him for that just yet; I think I've used up my quota of zorch with
him for the week." 5. [MIT] n. Energy, drive, or ability. "I
think I'll
punt

```
                that change for now; I've been up for 30 hours
and I've run out of zorch."  6. [MIT] v. To flunk an exam or
course.
```

1.2024 Zork

```
                Zork: /zork/ n. The second of the great early experiments in  ←↩
                   computer
fantasy gaming; see
                ADVENT
                . Originally written on MIT-DM
during the late 1970s, later distributed with BSD UNIX (as a patched,
sourceless RT-11 FORTRAN binary; see
                retrocomputing
                ) and
commercialized as 'The Zork Trilogy' by Infocom.  The FORTRAN
source was later rewritten for portability and released to USENET
under the name "Dungeon".  Both FORTRAN "Dungeon" and
translated C versions are available at many FTP sites.
```

1.2025 zorkmid

```
                zorkmid: /zork'mid/ n. The canonical unit of currency in
hacker-written games.  This originated in
                zork
                 but has spread
to
                nethack
                 and is referred to in several other games.
```

1.2026 'Snooze

```
                'Snooze: /snooz/ [FidoNet] n. Fidonews, the weekly official on- ←↩
                   line
newsletter of FidoNet.  As the editorial policy of Fidonews is
"anything that arrives, we print", there are often large articles
completely unrelated to FidoNet, which in turn tend to elicit

                flamage
                 in subsequent issues.
```

1.2027 (TM)

                    (TM): // [USENET] ASCII rendition of the trademark-superscript ↩
                         symbol
appended to phrases that the author feels should be recorded for
posterity, perhaps in future editions of this lexicon. Sometimes
used ironically as a form of protest against the recent spate of
software and algorithm patents and 'look and feel' lawsuits. See
also
                    UN*X
                    .

1.2028 -oid

                    -oid: [from 'android'] suff. 1. Used as in mainstream English to
indicate a poor imitation, a counterfeit, or some otherwise
slightly bogus resemblance. Hackers will happily use it with all
sorts of non-Greco/Latin stem words that wouldn't keep company with
it in mainstream English. For example, "He's a nerdoid" means
that he superficially resembles a nerd but can't make the grade; a
'modemoid' might be a 300-baud box (Real Modems run at 9600 or
up); a 'computeroid' might be any
                    bitty box
                    . The word
'keyboid' could be used to describe a
                    chiclet keyboard
                    , but
would have to be written; spoken, it would confuse the listener as
to the speaker's city of origin. 2. More specifically, an
indicator for 'resembling an android' which in the past has been
confined to science-fiction fans and hackers. It too has recently
(in 1991) started to go mainstream (most notably in the term
'trendoid' for victims of terminal hipness). This is probably
traceable to the popularization of the term
                    droid
                     in
"Star Wars" and its sequels.

Coinages in both forms have been common in science fiction for at
least fifty years, and hackers (who are often SF fans) have
probably been making '-oid' jargon for almost that long
[though GLS and I can personally confirm only that they were
already common in the mid-1970s --- ESR].

1.2029 -ware

                    -ware: [from 'software'] suff. Commonly used to form jargon terms
for classes of software. For examples, see

careware

,

crippleware

,

crudware

,

freeware

,

fritterware

,

guiltware

,

liveware

,

meatware

,

payware

,

psychedelicware

,

shareware

,

shelfware

,

vaporware

,

wetware

.

1.2030 /dev/null

/dev/null: /dev-nuhl/ [from the UNIX null device, used as a data
sink] n. A notional 'black hole' in any information space being
discussed, used, or referred to. A controversial posting, for
example, might end "Kudos to rasputin@kremlin.org, flames to
/dev/null". See
bit bucket
.

1.2031 0

0: Numeric zero, as opposed to the letter 'O' (the 15th letter of
the English alphabet). In their unmodified forms they look a lot
alike, and various kluges invented to make them visually distinct

have compounded the confusion. If your zero is center-dotted and
letter-O is not, or if letter-O looks almost rectangular but zero
looks more like an American football stood on end (or the reverse),
you're probably looking at a modern character display (though the
dotted zero seems to have originated as an option on IBM 3270
controllers). If your zero is slashed but letter-O is not, you're
probably looking at an old-style ASCII graphic set descended from
the default typewheel on the venerable ASR-33 Teletype
(Scandinavians, for whom slashed-O is a letter, curse this
arrangement). If letter-O has a slash across it and the zero does
not, your display is tuned for a very old convention used at IBM
and a few other early mainframe makers (Scandinavians curse
this arrangement even more, because it means two of their
letters collide). Some Burroughs/Unisys equipment displays a zero
with a *reversed* slash. And yet another convention common on
early line printers left zero unornamented but added a tail or hook
to the letter-O so that it resembled an inverted Q or cursive
capital letter-O. Are we sufficiently confused yet?

1.2032 1TBS

1TBS: // n. The "One True Brace Style"; see
indent style
.

1.2033 120 reset

120 reset: /wuhn-twen'tee ree'set/ [from 120 volts, U.S. wall
voltage] n. To cycle power on a machine in order to reset or unjam
it. Compare
Big Red Switch
,
power cycle
.

1.2034 2

2: infix. In translation software written by hackers, infix 2 often
represents the syllable *to* with the connotation
'translate to': as in dvi2ps (DVI to PostScript), int2string
(integer to string), and texi2roff (Texinfo to [nt]roff).

1.2035   @-party

                    n. (alt. `@-sign party' /at'si:n par'tee/) A semi-closed
party thrown for hackers at a science-fiction convention (esp.
the annual Worldcon); one must have a
            network address
             to
get in, or at least be in company with someone who does. One of
the most reliable opportunities for hackers to meet face to face
with people who might otherwise be represented by mere phosphor
dots on their screens. Compare
            boink
            .

1.2036   @Begin

1.2037   \begin

            \begin: // [from the LaTeX command] With \end, used
humorously in writing to indicate a context or to remark on the
surrounded text. For example:

  \begin
            flame
                Predicate logic is the only good programming
  language. Anyone who would use anything else
  is an idiot. Also, all computers should be
  tredecimal instead of binary.
  \end
            flame
              The Scribe users at CMU and elsewhere used to use @Begin/@End ↩
                 in
an identical way (LaTeX was built to resemble Scribe). On USENET,
this construct would more frequently be rendered as `<FLAME
ON>' and `<FLAME OFF>', or `#ifdef FLAME' and `#endif FLAME''.

1.2038   (Lexicon Entries End Here)

(Lexicon Entries End Here):

1.2039   G¨odel, Escher, Bach

```
G"odel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid:
Douglas Hofstadter
Basic Books, 1979
ISBN 0-394-74502-7
```

```
This book reads like an intellectual Grand Tour of hacker
preoccupations.  Music, mathematical logic, programming, speculations on
the nature of intelligence, biology, and Zen are woven into a brilliant
tapestry themed on the concept of encoded self-reference.  The perfect
left-brain companion to "Illuminatus".
```

1.2040   Illuminatus!

```
                Illuminatus!:
    I.   "The Eye in the Pyramid"
    II.  "The Golden Apple"
    III. "Leviathan".
Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson
Dell, 1988
ISBN 0-440-53981-1
```

```
This work of alleged fiction is an incredible berserko-surrealist
rollercoaster of world-girdling conspiracies, intelligent dolphins, the
fall of Atlantis, who really killed JFK, sex, drugs, rock'n'roll, and
the Cosmic Giggle Factor.  First published in three volumes, but there
is now a one-volume trade paperback, carried by most chain bookstores
under SF.  The perfect right-brain companion to Hofstadter's "G"odel,
Escher, Bach".  See
                Eris
                ,
                Discordianism
                ,
                random numbers
                ,
                Church

                of the SubGenius
                .
```

1.2041   The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

```
                The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy:
Douglas Adams
Pocket Books, 1981
ISBN 0-671-46149-4
```

This 'Monty Python in Space' spoof of SF genre traditions has been
popular among hackers ever since the original British radio show. Read
it if only to learn about Vogons (see
                bogon
) and the significance of
the number 42 (see
                random numbers
) --- and why the winningest chess
program of 1990 was called 'Deep Thought'.

1.2042   The Tao of Programming

The Tao of Programming:
James Geoffrey
Infobooks, 1987
ISBN 0-931137-07-1

This gentle, funny spoof of the "Tao Te Ching" contains much that is
illuminating about the hacker way of thought. "When you have learned to
snatch the error code from the trap frame, it will be time for you to
leave."

1.2043   Hackers

Hackers:
Steven Levy
Anchor/Doubleday 1984
ISBN 0-385-19195-2

Levy's book is at its best in describing the early MIT hackers at the
Model Railroad Club and the early days of the microcomputer revolution.
He never understood UNIX or the networks, though, and his enshrinement
of Richard Stallman as "the last true hacker" turns out (thankfully) to
have been quite misleading. Numerous minor factual errors also mar the
text; for example, Levy's claim that the original Jargon File derived
from the TMRC Dictionary (the File originated at Stanford and was
brought to MIT in 1976; the co-authors of the first edition had never
seen the dictionary in question). There are also numerous misspellings
in the book that inflame the passions of old-timers; as Dan Murphy, the
author of TECO, once said: "You would have thought he'd take the trouble
to spell the name of a winning editor right." Nevertheless, this
remains a useful and stimulating book that captures the feel of several
important hackish subcultures.

1.2044   The Devil's DP Dictionary

```
The Devil's DP Dictionary:
Stan Kelly-Bootle
McGraw-Hill, 1981
ISBN 0-07-034022-6
```

This pastiche of Ambrose Bierce's famous work is similar in format to
the Jargon File (and quotes several entries from jargon-1) but somewhat
different in tone and intent. It is more satirical and less
anthropological, and is largely a product of the author's literate and
quirky imagination. For example, it defines 'computer science' as "a
study akin to numerology and astrology, but lacking the precision of the
former and the success of the latter" and "the boring art of coping with
a large number of trivialities."

1.2045   The Devouring Fungus

```
                    The Devouring Fungus: Tales from the Computer Age:
Karla Jennings
Norton, 1990
ISBN 0-393-30732-8
```

The author of this pioneering compendium knits together a great deal of
computer- and hacker-related folklore with good writing and a few
well-chosen cartoons. She has a keen eye for the human aspects of the
lore and is very good at illuminating the psychology and evolution of
hackerdom. Unfortunately, a number of small errors and awkwardnesses
suggest that she didn't have the final manuscript checked over by a
native speaker; the glossary in the back is particularly embarrassing,
and at least one classic tale (the Magic Switch story, retold here under

```
              A Story About 'Magic'
               in
              appendix A
              ) is given in incomplete and
```
badly mangled form. Nevertheless, this book is a win overall and can be
enjoyed by hacker and non-hacker alike.

1.2046   The Soul of a New Machine

```
The Soul of a New Machine:
Tracy Kidder
Little, Brown, 1981
(paperback: Avon, 1982
ISBN 0-380-59931-7)
```

This book (a 1982 Pulitzer Prize winner) documents the adventure of the
design of a new Data General computer, the MV-8000 Eagle. It is an
amazingly well-done portrait of the hacker mindset --- although largely
the hardware hacker --- done by a complete outsider. It is a bit thin
in spots, but with enough technical information to be entertaining to
the serious hacker while providing non-technical people a view of what
day-to-day life can be like --- the fun, the excitement, the disasters.
During one period, when the microcode and logic were glitching at the
nanosecond level, one of the overworked engineers departed the company,
leaving behind a note on his terminal as his letter of resignation: "I
am going to a commune in Vermont and will deal with no unit of time
shorter than a season."

1.2047   Life with UNIX

Life with UNIX: a Guide for Everyone:
Don Libes and Sandy Ressler
Prentice-Hall, 1989
ISBN 0-13-536657-7

The authors of this book set out to tell you all the things about UNIX
that tutorials and technical books won't. The result is gossipy, funny,
opinionated, downright weird in spots, and invaluable. Along the way
they expose you to enough of UNIX's history, folklore and humor to
qualify as a first-class source for these things. Because so much of
today's hackerdom is involved with UNIX, this in turn illuminates many
of its in-jokes and preoccupations.

1.2048   True Names ... and Other Dangers

True Names ... and Other Dangers:
Vernor Vinge
Baen Books, 1987
ISBN 0-671-65363-6

Hacker demigod Richard Stallman believes the title story of this book
"expresses the spirit of hacking best". This may well be true; it's
certainly difficult to recall a better job. The other stories in this
collection are also fine work by an author who is perhaps one of today's
very best practitioners of hard SF.

1.2049   Cyberpunk

Cyberpunk: Outlaws and Hackers on the Computer Frontier:
Katie Hafner & John Markoff
Simon & Schuster 1991
ISBN 0-671-68322-5

This book gathers narratives about the careers of three notorious
crackers into a clear-eyed but sympathetic portrait of hackerdom's dark
side. The principals are Kevin Mitnick, "Pengo" and "Hagbard" of the
Chaos Computer Club, and Robert T. Morris (see
                RTM
                , sense 2) .
Markoff and Hafner focus as much on their psychologies and motivations
as on the details of their exploits, but don't slight the latter. The
result is a balanced and fascinating account, particularly useful when
read immediately before or after Cliff Stoll's
                The Cuckoo's Egg
                . It
is especially instructive to compare RTM, a true hacker who blundered,
with the sociopathic phone-freak Mitnick and the alienated, drug-addled
crackers who made the Chaos Club notorious. The gulf between
                wizard
                and
                wannabee
                 has seldom been made more obvious.

1.2050   Technobabble

Technobabble:
John Barry
MIT Press 1991
ISBN 0-262-02333-4

Barry's book takes a critical and humorous look at the 'technobabble' of
acronyms, neologisms, hyperbole, and metaphor spawned by the computer
industry. Though he discusses some of the same mechanisms of jargon
formation that occur in hackish, most of what he chronicles is actually
suit-speak --- the obfuscatory language of press releases, marketroids,
and Silicon Valley CEOs rather than the playful jargon of hackers (most
of whom wouldn't be caught dead uttering the kind of pompous,
passive-voiced word salad he deplores).

1.2051   The Cuckoo's Egg

The Cuckoo's Egg:
Clifford Stoll
Doubleday 1989

Clifford Stoll's absorbing tale of how he tracked Markus Hess and the
Chaos Club cracking ring nicely illustrates the difference between
'hacker' and 'cracker'. Stoll's portrait of himself, his lady Martha,
and his friends at Berkeley and on the Internet paints a marvelously
vivid picture of how hackers and the people around them like to live and
how they think.