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Glossary

Here you can find definitions for many common computer terms, and automotive terms related to Techline software. For more detailed information, refer to the documentation that came with your system.

Clicking on a letter above will take you closer to the word you seek.

Term

Definition

A

active window

The currently selected window, where the next command (or anything typed) will be applied. The active window is always on top of overlapping windows, its title bar has a visible title and its scroll bars are active.

alert box

A box that pops on screen, announced by one or more beeps, that gives information or a warning. Alert boxes don't require any information, but a button may have to be clicked, such as OK or Cancel. Also called a message box.

application

Software that does relatively complex tasks and allows the user to create, view, print and modify documents. Common application types include word processors, spreadsheets, database managers, and graphics programs. Most programs are called applications, unless they are utilities or system software.

archive

A copy of a file (often created with a compression utility) that is stored on a separate disk for safe keeping or as a backup.

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

Term

Definition

B

backing up

Copying some or all of the files on your computer to disks or tape, so information won't be lost if the original versions are damaged, lost, or stolen. The copied files are called backups.

baud rate

A measure of the speed at which a modem sends and receives bits of data (in bits per second).

BCM

Body Control Module. An electronic device that controls vehicle body functions, such as door locks, windows, etc.

bit

Short for binary digit, this is the smallest unit of information the computer can process. It can represent only one of two things: yes or no, on or off, 0 or 1 (as it's expressed in the binary numbers used by computers). The computer usually groups bits together into bigger chunks such as bytes, kilobytes, and so forth.

bps

Bits per second, the correct way to express the data-transfer speed of a modem.

byte

Eight bits of computer data. A byte typically represents one character on the computer screen.

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

Term

Definition

C

Capture Info

When selected from the DTC menu function, the Tech 2 will gather stored information from the vehicle's PCM.

CD-ROM

Compact Disk, Read Only Memory. A type of storage disk that holds up to 700 MB of data. Data on a CD-ROM is permanent. It cannot be overwritten, nor can files be saved to a CD that has already been formatted and contains information.

checkbox

A button that works as a toggle—that is, if an option is turned on by clicking once in the empty checkbox (an **X** will appear), another click will turn it off.

chip

The most essential electronic component of a computer: a tiny piece of silicon (about the size of a baby's fingernail) with an electronic circuit embedded in it. RAM and ROM are examples of chips which are normally mounted on boards.

Class 2

The type of digital data stream utilized in GM OBD II diagnostic systems. Faster than UART, the data stream used on non-OBD II diagnostic systems. Class 2 uses two different pulse-widths and toggles between 0 (passive) and 7 volts (active).

clicking

Pressing and immediately releasing the mouse button. To click on something is to position the pointer over it and then click.

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

Term	Definition
client	The name given to a personal computer (PC) that is connected to a server . Clients are also called workstations. A client computer uses files and/or applications that are stored on the server, as well as files stored on the PC itself. Client PCs are different than stand-alone PCs in that stand-alone units have all their applications and files stored on the hard drive of the machine.
close box	A small box at the upper right end of the title bar in the active window . Clicking it closes the window.
command	The generic name for anything the computer is told to do. Commands are usually listed on menus or are invoked using keyboard shortcuts.
CPU	The Central Processing Unit interprets and executes the instructions contained in the software. In most CPUs, this task is divided between a control unit that directs program flow and one or more execution units that perform operations on data.
crash	A problem (often caused by a bug) that causes a program, or the entire operating system, to unexpectedly stop working.
cursor	The flashing line on the screen (usually seen when typing text information) that indicates placement. Sometimes referred to as a pointer (small arrow indicating where to click).

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

Term

Definition

D

data

The generic name of anything that is input into a computer , or anything it outputs to the user. It is the plural of datum, a single piece of information.

database

A file created by a database manager that contains a collection of information organized into records, each of which contains labeled categories (called fields).

DB9 adapter

Allows connection of an RS-232 cable to the serial port of a computer .

default

The option that will be used unless it is changed by the user .

default button

In a dialog box, the button with a heavy border that is activated when Enter is pressed.

Desktop

Defined by the operating system, the menu bar , background pattern, icons, files, folders, and other elements that appear when first logging on to your PC.

device

Another word for hardware.

dialog box

A box that appears on the screen (often after a command is issued).

disk drive

See **drive**.

DIU

Digital Interface Unit. The control unit of the dealership's Pulsat equipment. The DIU prepares incoming and outgoing signals for communication and allows compatible devices to talk to GM computers.

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

Term	Definition
DLC	An acronym for Data Link Connector. Formerly referred to as the ALDL, this is the connector to which diagnostic scan tools will be connected. Under OBD II, the DLC will be a standardized 16-cavity connector and will have a standardized location under the driver-side instrument panel.
double-clicking	Clicking two times on a selection without moving the mouse between clicks. Double-clicking is a common way to initiate an action on a PC.
dpi	Dots per inch is a measure of the resolution of a printer , scanner, or monitor. It refers to the number of dots in a one-inch line. The more dots per inch, the higher the resolution.
drive	A motorized device that reads information from, and writes information onto, disks or tapes. The main types are hard disk drives, but there are also drives for CD-ROMs, removable media, and tape.
driver	A piece of software that tells the computer how to operate an external device, such as a printer, hard disk, CD-ROM drive, or scanner. For instance, it is not possible to print without a printer driver.
drop-down menu	The kind of menu found on the menu bar that drops down when you click on its title.
DTC	An acronym for Diagnostic Trouble Code. It is also referred to as a fault code or code. Any code stored in the PCM memory.

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

Term

Definition

E

ECM

An acronym for Engine Control Module, the on-board computer that controls fuel and emissions, as well as diagnostics, for the vehicle's engine management system. In SI, the ECM is referred to as an ECU.

ECU

See **ECM**.

EEPROM

Electrically Erasable Programmable Read Only Memory ("double E PROM"). This is a type of memory used in many computers such as the vehicle's engine controller and contains information that the computer needs to run. An EEPROM may have only sections of the memory reprogrammed.

F

file

A collection of information on a disk, usually a document or a program, that is lumped together and called by one name.

Flash EPROM

A type of electrically erasable memory for computers. The entire memory of the EPROM must be erased before it may be reprogrammed.

fragmentation

A condition in which parts of a file are stored in different locations on a disk. When a file is fragmented, the drive's read/write head has to jump from place to place to read the data; if many files are fragmented, it can slow the drive's performance.

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

Term

Definition

G

GHz

An abbreviation for gigahertz, which indicates computer speed.

gigabyte

A measure of computer memory, disk space, and the like that's equal to 1,024 megabytes (1,073,741,824 bytes), or about 179 million words. Sometimes a gigabyte is treated as an even billion bytes (giga means billion). Abbreviated G, GB, or gig.

GUI

Graphical User Interface.

H

hard disk

A rigid (usually nonremovable) disk, and/or the drive that houses it. Actually, hard disks usually have several disks (or platters), and they store much more data and access it more quickly than disks do. Also called a hard drive or hard disk drive.

hardware

The actual physical parts of the computer system, such as hard disks, printers, modems, scanners, cards, keyboards, mice, and the computer itself.

hardware lock

A device, usually connected to the printer port of the PC, that acts as a security measure for allowing software to load and/or run. If a software application that requires the security hardware lock does not detect it, the software will not run. A hardware lock can also define the computer so that proper functions load during PC startup.

hierarchical menus

Menus that contain more than one level of listing. Hierarchical menus are identified with a small arrow to the right of the item name.

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

Term

Definition

highlight

To make something stand out from its background in order to show that it's selected or active.

hyperlinking

A technique in computer documents for automatically linking related pieces of information. Generally, hyperlinked items are displayed in a different color on the screen. Clicking on the item causes the computer to call up whatever the item is linked to, either a graphic, text, or another document.

I

icon

The little picture that represents a file, folder, disk, or tool. Click it once to select it, double-click it to open a file, folder or disk.

input device

Anything that is used to directly input information to the computer: a mouse, keyboard, trackball, graphics tablet, joystick—even a scanner or digital camera.

IPC

Instrument Panel Cluster.

K

keyboard shortcut

A combination of keystrokes (almost always involving Shift, Option, and/or Control) that executes a command without having to be chosen from a menu. Also called a key combination or keyboard equivalent.

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

Term

Definition

L

load Get something ready to use. It can mean install (as in loading new fonts) or open.

M

media 1. The physical component of a USB, hard disk, cartridge, tape or CD-ROM that stores computer data. The main storage strategies are magnetic and optical.
2. The various ways of communicating, including print, video, and audio.

megabyte A measure of computer memory, disk space, application size, and the like that's equal to 1,024K (1,048,576 bytes) or about 175,000 words. Abbreviated MB or meg.

menu A list of commands. To select one, drag down the menu until the desired command is highlighted, then release the mouse button. (If a command is unavailable, it will be dimmed.) Three types of menus include popup, pull-down and sub.

menu bar The horizontal strip across the top of the screen that contains the menu titles.

MHz An abbreviation for megahertz, which indicates computer speed.

microprocessor See **processor**.

modem A device that lets computers communicate by converting an analog signal (sound) to digital and vice versa, for transmission of data primarily over telephone lines. (The word is a contraction of modulator/demodulator.)

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

Term

Definition

monitor

The piece of hardware that contains the screen that allows work to be viewed. It is also called a display or CRT and can be monochrome (black and white), grayscale, or color. It is connected to a display port or video card.

motherboard

The central or primary circuit board making up the computer . A typical computer is comprised of a microprocessor, main memory, and other basic components on the motherboard. Other components of the computer such as external storage, control circuits for video display and sound, and peripheral devices are typically attached to the motherboard via connectors or cables.

N

network

In general, a group of computers set up to communicate to each other . A network can be a small system physically connected by cables (a LAN), or separate networks can be connected together to form larger networks (called WANs). The Internet, for example, is made up of thousands of individual networks.

O

on-line service

A commercial service that (for a price) provides products such as e-mail, discussion forums, tech support, software libraries, news, weather reports, stock prices, plane reservations, even electronic shopping malls.

operating system

The basic software that runs the computer.

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

Term

Definition

P

parallel port

A type of port that transmits data in parallel—several bits side by side. These are common printer interfaces on PCs.

peripheral

A piece of hardware that is outside (peripheral to) the main computer. In practice, it usually refers to external hardware—such as disk drives, printers and scanners—sold by a third party.

PC

An acronym for Personal Computer. A PC is used by individual(s) to perform tasks. The PC can either be a stand-alone unit that contains all of the software it needs to run, or it can be connected to a network in which case the PC is called a client or workstation.

PCM

An acronym for Powertrain Control Module, the on-board control module that monitors both engine and transmission/transaxle functions.

PCMCIA card

An acronym for Personal Computer Memory Card Industry Association. This group has established a standard for the usage of memory cards in personal computers.

platform

Usually refers to a particular type of computer running a particular operating system. Windows is one platform, Macintosh is another, and Unix is still another.

pop-up menu

A menu, typically found in a dialog box or palette, that pops up (or down or to the side) when the mouse button is pressed on its title (a box with a drop shadow around it).

port

Computerese for a socket (or jack) where cables are plugged in to connect devices.

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

Term	Definition
printer	A device that takes the text and graphics sent from the computer and puts them on a piece of paper. Most are computers in their own right, with CPUs and memory. The range of printer types includes laser, inkjet, dot-matrix, thermal-fusion, dye-sublimation and imagesetters.
processor	Short for microprocessor, and also called the CPU. The processor is like the brain of the computer and is located on the motherboard.
program	Another word for software application.
pull-down menu	See drop-down menu .
Q	
quitting	Leaving a program and returning to the desktop.
R	
radio button	A group of buttons of which only one can be on at a time. When you select one radio button, the others are deselected. Compare to checkbox.
RAM	Random Access Memory is a type of computer storage of software, files, and other temporary data that can be accessed in any order. RAM is usually used to hold active, changing information that is deleted when the computer shuts down.

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

Term	Definition
read/write head	The part of a drive that reads data off the disk platters.
reboot	To restart a computer.
removable media	Any storage media, including USBs, that can be inserted into and removed from the computer drive.
resolution	A measurement of size and/or clarity of an image. Usually stated in dots-per-inch (dpi) or pixels per inch (ppi). Used to describe printers, monitors and scanner .
ROM	Read-Only Memory is the portion of computer memory that stores startup information for the computer. Its main uses lie in the distribution of software that is closely related to hardware, and does not need frequent upgrading. ROM is not erased when the computer shuts down.
RS-232	A computer industry standard connection which allows two computers to communicate with each other. On the Tech 2 this port is used to connect the Tech 2 to the PC.
RS-485	A computer industry standard connection which allows two computers to communicate with each other. On the Tech 2 this may be used for future add-on test capabilities.

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

Term

Definition

S

save	To retain data by writing it to a disk.
scroll bar	Navigation tools that appear at the sides or bottom of a window . Using buttons and/or arrows, you can move around the window to see items hidden from display .
scrolling	Using the scroll bars to move through a window or document.
select	To use the mouse or keyboard to make a choice in a document, dialogue box, menu, or list. Generally, the left mouse button is used for making selections. With the keyboard, items can often be chosen by holding down the Alt key and pressing the underlined letter of the item's name.
serial data	Communication from a computer that comes in a "series" of bits of information (one bit at a time).
serial port	A type of connection that transmits data one bit at a time.
server	A powerful computer to which other computers ("clients") connect to form a network. Rather than having files and applications stored on every computer on the network, the server can store files and/or applications that everyone can share.
SI	Service Information: GM's electronic service manual information. SI also has built-in service bulletin search capabilities.
SIMM	See chip .

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

Term	Definition
software	Programs that a computer runs.
SPS	Service Programming System. A method for updating calibration files stored in a vehicle's on-board controller. SPS involves using the scan tool and computer terminal to download new calibration files from the PC to the scan tool, then to the controller .
stand-alone PC	A personal computer that is not connected to a network. A stand-alone unit contains all the programs it needs to run on its hard drive; it doesn't need files from a server. See workstation for a comparison.
submenu	A secondary menu that appears next to the primary menu. Usually indicated by an arrow appearing to the right of a menu item.
T	
Tech 2	A handheld computer that allows technicians to interface with on-board controller(s) in order to perform diagnostics.
text file	A file containing words without any formatting.
TIS	Techline Information System, formerly known as the Component Oriented Service Information Delivery System (COSIDS). A group of applications that allow technicians to perform SPS, update the Tech 2, and view Tech 2 snapshot data.
title bar	The horizontal bar running across the top of a window that contains the window name.

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

Term

Definition

U

UART

An acronym for Universal Asynchronous Receive and Transmit. The type of data stream used on non-OBD II diagnostic systems. UART toggles between 5 volts (passive) and 0 volts (active).

UPS

Uninterruptable Power Supply: A device that guards against power loss at a PC or server. It houses several batteries that provide power to the computer in case of electrical outage.

upload

To send a file from one computer device to another, either using a modem or by directly connecting the devices, such as when the Tech 2 is connected to the terminal or the DLC during SPS.

user interface

The way in which a computer program is designed. See **GUI**.

V

VCI

An acronym for Vehicle Communication Interface, which is a module that fits into the lower end of the Tech 2. The VCI acts as an interface between a vehicle and the Tech 2, which allows the tool to communicate with the vehicle. (VCI is also an acronym for Vehicle Configuration Index, which may be used during Service Programming in special situations.)

VCM

An acronym for Vehicle Control Module, the on-board computer that controls the engine management, transmission, and other systems such as antilock brakes.

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

Term

Definition

video card

An add-on hardware component that controls the computer monitor . The video card is equipped with circuitry and video RAM (VRAM) that determine the number of colors and the resolution the monitor can display.

VTD

Vehicle Theft Deterrent.

W

window

An area on the screen that contains either a file, an application, a group of icons, or a list. The window has scroll bars, a title bar, and minimize/maximize/close boxes.

workstation

The name given to a personal computer (PC) that is connected to a server . A workstation uses files and/or applications that are stored on the server , as well as files stored on the workstation itself. Workstations are different than stand-alone PCs in that stand-alone units have all their applications and files stored on the hard drive of the machine. Workstations are also called “clients.”