

**programming language:** A set of symbols and associated rules or conventions for writing programs. BASIC, Logo, and Pascal are programming languages.

**prompt:** A message on the screen that tells you of some need for response or action. A prompt usually takes the form of a symbol, a message, a dialog box, or a menu of choices.

**prompt character:** A text character displayed on the screen, usually just to the left of a **cursor**, where your next action is expected. The prompt character often identifies the program or component of the system that's prompting you. For example, Applesoft BASIC uses a square bracket prompt character (]); Integer BASIC, an angle bracket (>); and the System Monitor program, an asterisk (\*).

**prompt line:** A specific area on the display reserved for prompts.

**protocol:** A formal set of rules for sending and receiving data on a communication line.

**push:** To add an entry to the top of a **stack**, moving the stack pointer to point to it. Compare **pop**.

**queue:** A list in which entries are added at one end and removed at the other, causing entries to be removed in first-in, first-out (FIFO) order. Compare **stack**.

**QWERTY keyboard:** The standard layout of keys on a typewriter keyboard; its name is formed from the first six letters on the top row of letter keys. Compare **Dvorak keyboard**.

**radio-frequency (RF) modulator:** A device that makes your television set work as a monitor.

**RAM:** See **random-access memory**.

**random-access memory (RAM):** Memory in which information can be referred to in an arbitrary or random order. As an analogy, a book is a random-access storage device in that it can be opened and read at any point. RAM usually means the part of memory available for programs from a disk; the programs and other data are lost when the computer is turned off. A computer with 512K RAM has 512 kilobytes available to the user. (Technically, the read-only memory (ROM) is also *random access*, and what's called RAM should correctly be termed *read-write memory*.) Compare **read-only memory**, **read-write memory**.

**random-access text file:** A text file that is partitioned into an unlimited number of uniform-length compartments called *records*. When you open a random-access text file for the first time, you must specify its record length. No record is placed in the file until written to. Each record can be individually read from or written to—hence, *random-access*.

**raster:** The pattern of parallel lines making up the image on a video display screen. The image is produced by controlling the brightness of successive points on the individual lines of the raster.

**read:** To transfer information into the computer's memory from outside the computer (such as a disk drive or modem) or into the computer's processor from a source external to the processor (such as the keyboard or main memory).

**read-only memory (ROM):** Memory whose contents can be read, but not changed; used for storing **firmware**. Information is placed into read-only memory once, during manufacture; it then remains there permanently, even when the computer's power is turned off. Compare **random-access memory**, **read-write memory**.