Net Terms

Device Driver

A device driver is a program that controls a particular type of device that is attached to your computer. Essentially, a device driver converts the more general input/output instructions from your computer's operating system into messages that the device can understand. There are device drivers for printers, monitors, CD-ROM and DVD drives, modems, and so on.

When you buy an operating system (such as Windows 95 or OS/8), many device drivers are already built into that system to recognize certain products. However, if you later buy a new type of device that the operating system didn't anticipate or doesn't understand, you'll have to install a new device driver for it to function properly.

Packet

Simply speaking, a packet is a unit of data that is routed between a starting point and a destination on the Internet. When any type of file (an e-mail message or a graphic image, for example) is sent from one place to another on the Internet, protocols divide the file into small, efficiently sized chunks ("packets") for sending.

Each of the packets that are sent include the Internet address of the destination point. Packets for a given file may not always travel the same route through the Net to get to the same place. Once they have all arrived, they are reassembled into the original file that you requested.

MARCH 1998