

DIGITAL BEAT

The Lexicon of Technology

By Darin E. Hartley

Stumped by a
new tech term?
Look here.

Many words, phrases, and terms are especially salient to the Digital Beat. Numerous technology-enabled dictionaries are available for ready access to those cumbersome words. Some of those dictionaries are technical in nature; some focus on the various aspects of chat and similar technologies; and some cover a mixture of terms, phrases, and the like. The beauty of these dictionaries is that you can access them in real time with just a couple of mouse clicks.

Google for me

When I need information—from Jimmy Buffett lyrics to a list of restaurants in Toledo, Ohio—I first go to www.google.com. I love to sleuth around, typing combinations of words and phrases to get the right matches. Often during a search, I find related content by clicking through the links listed—kind of like information piggy-back riding.

But where should you go when you want to get definitions specifically for

technology-related topics? Go to one of the many online dictionaries available, a few of which are described below.

NetLingo

NetLingo [↪ www.netlingo.com](http://www.netlingo.com) is an online dictionary featuring technical terms, definitions, and slang that describe the online world of business, technology, and communication. This Website includes not only a powerful dictionary, but also additional tools—such as Web design coloring books, acronyms, text shorthand, and emoticons. (FYI: The emoticons are really funny. For example, :-.) is the emoticon for Cindy Crawford.)

Select “Click here for The NetLingo Dictionary” located at the upper left portion of the Webpage and you’re in. The layout places a list of numbers, letters, words, terms, and acronyms in a frame at left, with the right-hand frame presenting a definition for your selected term.

Some of the words and phrases included in the definitions are hyperlinked to other definitions. I like this feature.

Webopedia

Webopedia [↪ www.pcwebopedia.com](http://www.pcwebopedia.com) is similar in structure to NetLingo. This Website’s menu includes such features as a term of the day, new terms, pronunciation help, new links, and tech support. It also has a list of the “Top 15 Terms.” Providing contextual links related to the searched term is the biggest benefit of this site. For example, look up “IP address,” and you’ll get a detailed definition of the term followed by a partial list of links, such as the following:

- TCP/IP and IPX routing
- Find out your IP address
- IP addressing tutorial
- LearnToSubnet.com.

Techdictionary.com

If you want a dictionary that’s structured more like a search engine, go to [↪ www.techdictionary.com](http://www.techdictionary.com) to search by term or key-

word. If you’re a fan of those word-of-the-day calendars, select “Find a Random Term” and a single random technology term is presented with a definition. (I got “x-terminal” when I tried out this feature).

I searched “FTP” by *term* and got a list of phrases that contained FTP with definitions: anonymous FTP, FTP, FTP site, FTP by mail, FTP Explorer, FTP server, and FTP client. When I searched FTP by *keyword*, the Website brought up all of those terms plus many related items, such as Archie, control panel, and fetch. This feature is excellent for getting familiar with technology-based terms.

TechWeb

TechWeb [↪ www.techweb.com/encyclopedia](http://www.techweb.com/encyclopedia) is an online dictionary that boasts 20,000 IT terms. The site’s interface is easy to use: Type the term you’re curious about in the Define This IT Term textbox to link to its definition. Type a partial word, and you’re presented with a list of words that begin with the letters you typed. Select “random definition” to be introduced to a new term, a feature similar to the one at techdictionary.com.

Key areas about IT are presented as the following navigational buttons at the top of TechWeb’s homepage: mobile, software, security, e-business and management, networking, hardware, and pipeline sites. Pipeline sites—for example, compliance, outsourcing, and desktop—are related areas of interest in the IT field. You should think of pipeline sites as places to delve deeper for information.

Hometown favorite

Many other technology dictionaries exist on the Web—such as [↪ www.whatis.com](http://www.whatis.com), [↪ www.techtionary.com](http://www.techtionary.com), and [↪ www.geek.com/glossary](http://www.geek.com/glossary)—and I can’t cover them all here. But I’d be remiss not to mention the glossary at ASTD’s Webzine, *Learning Circuits*. www.learningcircuits.org/glossary

This glossary not only highlights e-learning terms, but also includes a variety of general technical terms. Try some of these sites out, and, if you find them helpful, bookmark them in your list of favorites.

Darin E. Hartley is the director of solutions development at *Intrepid Learning Solutions*: dhartley@intrepidls.com.

Digital Beat covers technology trends, news, and tips. Send comments, questions, and items of interest to digitalbeat@astd.org.

Ten Tips for Tech Dictionaries

1. Have a general idea of how to spell the word you are trying to find.
2. Visit a couple of sites—not all dictionaries have the same definitions.
3. Feel free to Google—or use another search engine to narrow your focus.
4. Ask your IT department about their favorite Web-based technical dictionaries.
5. Ask your peers too.
6. Tech dictionaries are updated (practically) daily. So, use them on a regular basis.
7. Leverage the links.
8. Bookmark your favorites.
9. Use a large search engine and search for “Technology Dictionary.”
10. Use a new term as soon as you learn it—that’ll help you retain your new knowledge.

Your Input

To suggest new technologies you’d like covered, contact Darin Hartley at dhartley@intrepidls.com.