

# IEEE Standard Glossary of Computer Languages

Sponsor

**Standards Coordinating Committee  
of the  
IEEE Computer Society**

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**IEEE Standards Board**

**Abstract:** This glossary defines terms that pertain to computer languages. It includes types of computer languages, such as page description languages, and names of computer languages. The languages included are those that are standard languages, languages of historical significance, and those in wide usage at the time this standard was developed.

**Keywords:** computer glossary, computer languages, computer terminology

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## Introduction

(This introduction is not a part of IEEE Std 610.13-1993, IEEE Standard Glossary of Computer Languages)

The computer field is continuing to expand. New terms are being generated and new meanings are being adopted for existing terms. The IEEE Computer Dictionary project (the 610 computer glossary series of documents) was undertaken to document this vocabulary. Its purpose is to identify terms currently in use in the computer field and to establish standard definitions for these terms. The dictionary is intended to serve as a useful reference for those in the computer field and for those who come into contact with computers, either through their work or in their everyday lives.

The completed dictionary will contain terms from each of the following areas: computer hardware, software engineering, mathematics of computing, theory of computation, computer applications, artificial intelligence, data management, image processing and pattern recognition, modeling and simulation, computer graphics, computer networking, computer languages, and computer security and privacy. This glossary contains the terms related to computer languages.

Every effort has been made to use definitions from established standards in this dictionary. When existing standards were found to be incomplete, unclear, or inconsistent with other entries in the dictionary, new, revised, or composite definitions have been developed.

At the time this glossary was approved, the following people formed the steering committee of the computer dictionary working group:

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# IEEE Standard Glossary of Computer Languages

## 1. Overview

### 1.1 Scope

This glossary defines terms that pertain to computer languages. It includes types of computer languages, such as “page description language,” and names of computer languages, such as “BASIC.”

In order to qualify for inclusion, a computer language had to be at least one of the following:

- a) A standard language, documented and standardized by a nationally or internationally recognized standards organization.
- b) A language of historical significance in the evolution of computers and computer languages.
- c) A language that is considered by the members of the working group to be in wide usage at this time.

Some terms are the names of commercial products. Many times such products are developed by a particular group, then the product name is accepted as a generic description of all products performing similar functions. For this reason, this glossary does not, in most cases, attempt to identify the owner or developer of a product. The reader should exercise caution in drawing inferences concerning ownership, trademarks, and copyright of names.

Many of the languages defined in this glossary have been standardized by various national and international organizations. Since identification of such languages was not identified as an objective of this document, it does not attempt to identify which languages are considered “standard languages.”

The inclusion of a language in this glossary is intended to associate that language with the computer industry and to define and identify its com-

monly accepted usage. This inclusion does not imply that a given language is the only language that can perform a stated function, nor does it imply a preference for the included language over one that has not been included. If the reader knows of additional languages that should be included in this glossary, it is suggested that such comments be addressed to the IEEE Standards Board, as instructed in the front of this document.

Some technical terms that appear in the definitions are defined in other glossaries in the 610 series and are not included as entries here.

### 1.2 Glossary structure

Entries in the glossary are arranged alphabetically. An entry may consist of a single word, such as “ALGOL” or “preprocessor,” or a phrase, such as “fifth generation language.” Phrases are given in their natural order, as in “job control language,” rather than in reversed order, “language, job control.” Blanks and numerals precede all other characters in alphabetizing. Hyphens and slashes are treated as blanks.

The names of many computer languages are acronyms or abbreviations for phrases that are rarely used, such as “formula translator” for FORTRAN. These phrases are not listed as separate entries, but are noted in the primary entry for the language name. Also, a number of the names are trademarks. However, identification of these has not been made in the glossary.

If a term has more than one definition, the definitions are numbered. The order of the definitions does not imply preference or frequency of use. In most cases, noun definitions are given first, followed by verb and adjective definitions as applicable. Examples and notes have been added to clarify selected definitions.