Internet

Networks

When computers and other devices are linked together they form a network. There are different types of networks, depending on the distance between the computers making up the network. The most common are:

Local Area Networks (LANs) cover a small area – a single room, a whole building or a factory. The school network is an example of a LAN.

Wide Area Networks (WANs) cover a large geographical area – a town, country or a whole continent. In fact, the internet is the largest WAN on earth.

Networks are very important because

- resources such as printers can be shared

- they improve the communication and collaboration between different users

- data and programs can be shared among users

However, one has to keep in mind that networks

- are vulnerable to viruses and hacker attacks

- expensive to set up

Internet

A world-wide system of interconnected computer networks linking billions of devices. It consists of millions of private, public, academic, business, and government networks, connected by a wide range of electronic, wireless, and optical networking technologies. The Internet offers a number of very important services to the millions of users all over the world:

▸ **World Wide Web (Web)** - Interlinked documents and other resources.

▸ **Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)** - a technology that allows you to talk with other people using the Internet. This system is ideal when you need to make a lot international calls.

▸ **Electronic mail (Email)** - allows you to send a message to another person almost instantly, anywhere in the world.

▸ **Instant Messaging (IM)** - a tool for real-time communication between two or more people sending text messages to their computers or other devices.

▸ **Social Networking** - an online platform which people use to build social networks or social relations with other people who share similar personal or career interests, activities, backgrounds or real-life connections.

Internet at home

In order to be able to use the Internet at home the user must have:

- A Computer

- A Modem connected to a telephone line or cable service

- An ISP account

- An Internet Browser

Modem - In order to be able to send messages from one computer to the other over a telephone line, you need a modem. A Modem changes the data from digital to analogue to be sent over the telephone lines and back to digital when data is received on the other end to be used by the computer.

ISP - ISP is short for Internet Service Provider - the name given to the companies which provide high speed connections to the Internet. A user must buy an internet connection from these ISPs and the user is given an account ie. a username and password so that others do not use his/her account.

Browser - In order to be able to browse the Internet, a user must have an Internet browser such as Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox or Google Chrome. This is a software program used to navigate the Internet. Without a browser a user cannot view websites and webpages. All the websites on the Internet have a particular address and it is through this address that the user can access a website. This address, which is called a URL is written in the browser and the browser views the required website. URL stands for Uniform Resource Location.

Important Terms

Search Engine - A search engine is a website connected to a database which returns a list of websites related to a particular topic entered by the user. Google, Yahoo and MSN are the most used search engines.

Bookmarks/Favourites - Bookmarks are links to frequently used websites. The user uses these links so that s/he does not have to write the URL every time one of the favourite websites is to be accessed.

E-Mail - E-mail stands for electronic mail and it involves sending message from one computer to another over a network. This is very similar to the sending of letters to other persons but with several advantages such as:

- Very fast
- No paper is involved
- It is more accurate and to the point
- Can be sent to several recipients at once
- Less costs are involved
- All type of files and objects could be sent with a message
- There is no need for person receiving email to be online
- Emails could be read from anywhere

It is important to note that when an email is received it is placed inside the inbox. So, the user has to open the inbox to read any new mail. Also, when an email is sent it is saved into the outbox.