

Course Name : O Level(B3-1st sem.)
Topic : Computer generations
and Computer types

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Computer generations

Computer generations are based on when major technological changes in computers occurred, like the use of vacuum tubes, transistors, and the microprocessor. As of 2018, there are five generations of the computer.

Following are the main five generations of computers.

S.No	Generation & Description
1	First Generation The period of first generation: 1946-1959. Vacuum tube based.
2	Second Generation The period of second generation: 1959-1965. Transistor based.
3	Third Generation The period of third generation: 1965-1971. Integrated Circuit based.
4	Fourth Generation The period of fourth generation: 1971-1980. VLSI microprocessor based.
5	Fifth Generation The period of fifth generation: 1980-onwards. ULSI microprocessor based.

Types of Computer

We can categorize computer by two ways: data handling capabilities and size.

On the basis of data handling capabilities

- Analogue Computer
- Digital Computer
- Hybrid Computer

1) Analogue Computer

Analogue computers are designed to process the analogue data. Analogue data is continuous data that changes continuously and cannot have discrete values such as speed, temperature, pressure and current.

Speedometer and mercury thermometer are examples of analogue computers.

2) Digital Computer

Digital computer is designed to perform calculations and logical operations at high speed. It accepts the raw data as digits or numbers and processes it with programs stored in its memory to produce output. All modern computers like laptops and desktops that we use at home or office are digital computers.

3) Hybrid Computer

Hybrid computer has features of both analogue and digital computer. It is fast like analogue computer and has memory and accuracy like digital computers. It can process both continuous and discrete data. So it is widely used in specialized applications where both analogue and digital data is processed. For example, a processor is used in petrol pumps that converts the measurements of fuel flow into quantity and price.

On the basis of size

1) Supercomputer

Supercomputers are the biggest and fastest computers. They are designed to process huge amount of data. A supercomputer can process trillions of instructions in a second. It has thousands of interconnected processors.

Supercomputers are particularly used in scientific and engineering applications such as weather forecasting, scientific simulations and nuclear energy research. First supercomputer was developed by Roger Cray in 1976.

2) Mainframe computer

Mainframe computers are designed to support hundreds or thousands of users simultaneously. They can support multiple programs at the same time. It means

they can execute different processes simultaneously. These features of mainframe computers make them ideal for big organizations like banking and telecom sectors, which need to manage and process high volume of data.

3) Miniframe computer

It is a midsize multiprocessing computer. It consists of two or more processors and can support 4 to 200 users at one time. Miniframe computers are used in institutes and departments for the tasks such as billing, accounting and inventory management.

4) Workstation

Workstation is a single user computer that is designed for technical or scientific applications. It has faster microprocessor, large amount of RAM and high speed graphic adapters. It generally performs a specific job with great expertise; accordingly, they are of different types such as graphics workstation, music workstation and engineering design workstation.

5) Microcomputer

Microcomputer is also known as personal computer. It is a general purpose computer that is designed for individual use. It has a microprocessor as a central processing unit, memory, storage area, input unit and output unit. Laptops and desktop computers are examples of microcomputers.

Exercise:

Write short notes on

1. Computer generations
2. Types of computer