

3.1: Introduction to Software

The second component of an information system is software.

Definition: Software

Software is a collection of computing instructions that direct a computer or device on how to perform specific tasks. A group of instructions is also called a computer or a software program.

For example, when a user presses the letter ‘A’ key on the keyboard when using a word processing app, it is the word processing software that tells the hardware that the user pressed the key ‘A’ on the keyboard and fetches the image of the letter A to display on the screen as feedback to the user that the user’s data is received correctly.

Software is created through the process of programming. We will cover software creation in this chapter and more detail in Chapter 10. In essence, hardware is the machine, and software is the intelligence that tells the hardware what to do. Without software, the hardware would be rendered inoperable, and without hardware, the software would have no platform to run on.

The software component can be broadly divided into two categories: system software and application software.

Definition: System Software

System software is a collection of computer programs that provide a software platform for other software programs. It also insulates the hardware's specifics from the applications and users as much as possible by managing the hardware and the networks. It consists of

1. Operating System
2. Utilities

Definition: Application Software

Application software is a computer program that performs a specific user's activity (i.e., create a document, draw a picture). It can be for either:

1. a general-purpose (i.e., Microsoft Word, Google doc) or
2. for a particular purpose (i.e., weather forecast, CAD engineering)

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