Software

Application Software

Application software refers to programs that you can either buy off-the-shelf or develop to solve a specific problem or perform a particular task. Off-the-shelf software can be stand-alone, modular, integrated or part of a suite. The programs that are individually developed for a single user are called customised software and are generally more expensive than off-the shelf software.

ⓘ Lesson Outcomes

By the end of the lesson, you should be able to:
- Describe the purpose of application software;
- Discuss the benefits of off-the-shelf software and tailor-made or custom software.

☺ Curriculum Links

This task supports the assessment of:
LO 1: Hardware and System Software
- Identify and distinguish between computer types and associated software.
- Distinguish between system software and application software (including user-developed and development software).

◎ Lesson Notes

System software is software that is needed to control, support and run the computer. On the other hand, application software refers to programs that you can either buy or develop to solve a particular problem or perform a particular task. Examples of application software are Microsoft Word and StarOffice.

Software can be bought at computer stores or it can be developed independently for a limited number of users with very specific needs. Software bought at computer stores like Incredible Connection is called off-the-shelf software because you just take it off the shelf in the shop and pay for it.

Customised software is specially developed by a computer programmer for a computer user or company with specific needs that cannot be addressed by an off-the-shelf program. Customised programs are normally more expensive than off-the-shelf programs but have the advantage of being custom-made for your computer system and requirements. When you buy an off-the-shelf program you must make sure that it is compatible with your computer hardware and operating system. You must also evaluate it for cost, reliability and speed to make sure you are satisfied with the product.

Off-the-shelf software can be stand-alone, modular, part of an integrated package or part of a suite. Stand-alone software is bought for one specific purpose and that is all that the program can do, for example, virus protection software, games and encyclopedias. Modular software is made up of different parts that can be bought one by one as you need them, for example, a modular accounting package such as Pastel allows you to buy the basic accounting program and if your company grows you can buy additional modules covering stocktaking, dispatch, payroll etc. An integrated package (e.g. Microsoft Works) contains a number of applications such as a word processor, spreadsheet and database. These applications are not independent modules that can be purchased separately neither are they the complete application program such as the one included in a software suite.

Software

Lesson Notes continued...

The main advantages of such an integrated package are the low cost and the limited space taken up on the hard drive making it suitable for home or school use. A software suite (e.g. StarOffice)

each application is more extensive than that in the integrated package. The cost of a suite is more than that of an integrated package but less than buying each application separately.

❓ Task

1. Write a short paragraph that explains the purpose of application software.
2. Compare and contrast the difference between integrated packages and software suites.

mindset learn