

PART TWO - APPLICATION SOFTWARE

1. The second major category of software is application software. Application software is, essentially, software that allows the user to accomplish some goal or purpose. For example, if you have to write a paper, you might use the application-software program Microsoft Word. If you want to listen to music, you might use iTunes. To surf the web, you might use Internet Explorer or Firefox. Even a computer game could be considered application software.

The "Killer" App

2. When a new type of digital device is invented, there are generally a small group of technology enthusiasts who will purchase it just for the joy of figuring out how it works. However, most of us, until a device can actually do something useful, are not going to spend our hard-earned money on it. A "killer" application is one that becomes so essential that large numbers of people will buy a device just to run that application. For the personal computer, the killer application was the spreadsheet. In 1979, VisiCalc, the first personal-computer spreadsheet package, was introduced. It was an immediate hit and drove sales of the Apple II. It also solidified the value of the personal computer beyond the relatively small circle of technology geeks. When the IBM PC was released, another spreadsheet program, Lotus 1-2-3, was the killer app for business users.

Productivity Software

3. Along with the spreadsheet, several other software applications have become standard tools for the workplace. These applications, called *productivity software*, allow office employees to complete their daily work. Many times, these applications come packaged together, such as in Microsoft's Office suite. Here is a list of these applications and their basic functions:

4. Word processing: This class of software provides for the creation of written documents. Functions include the ability to type and edit text, format fonts and paragraphs, and add, move, and delete text throughout the document. Most modern word-processing programs also have the ability to add tables, images, and various layout and formatting features to the document. Word processors save their documents as electronic files in a variety of formats. By far, the most popular word-processing package is Microsoft Word, which saves its files in the DOCX format. This format can be read/written by many other word-processor packages.

5. Spreadsheet: This class of software provides a way to do numeric calculations and analysis. The working area is divided into rows and columns, where users can enter numbers, text, or formulas. It is the formulas that make a spreadsheet powerful, allowing the user to develop complex calculations that can change based on the numbers entered. Most spreadsheets also include the ability to create charts based on the data entered. The most popular spreadsheet package is Microsoft Excel, which saves its files in the XLSX format. Just as with word processors, many other spreadsheet packages can read and write to this file format.

6. Presentation: This class of software provides for the creation of slideshow presentations. Harkening back to the days of overhead projectors and transparencies, presentation software allows its users to create a set of slides that can be printed or projected on a screen. Users can add text, images, and other media elements to the slides. Microsoft's PowerPoint is the most popular software right now, saving its files in PPTX format.

7. Some office suites include other types of software. For example, Microsoft Office includes Outlook, its e-mail package, and OneNote, an information-gathering collaboration tool. The professional version of Office also includes Microsoft Access, a database package.

8. Microsoft popularized the idea of the office-software productivity bundle with their release of Microsoft Office. This package continues to dominate the market and most businesses expect em-