Computer Hardware Peripherals

Peripherals are a generic name for any device external to a computer, but still normally associated with it's extended functionality. The purpose of peripherals is to extend and enhance what a computer is capable of doing without modifying the core components of the system. A _____ (1) is a good example of a peripheral. It is connected to a computer, extends its functionality, but is not actually part of the core machine.

Do not confuse computer peripherals with computer accessories. An accessory can be any _____(2) associated with a computer, such as a printer or a mousepad. A printer is a peripheral, but a mousepad is definitely not one. A mousepad does not extend the functionality of a computer, it only enhances the user experience.

Peripherals are often sold apart from computers and are normally not essential to its functionality. You might think the _____(3) and a few vital input devices such as the mouse and keyboard would be necessary, but certain computers such as servers or embedded systems do not require _____(4), keyboards, or even displays to be functional.

Peripherals are meant to be easily interchangeable, although you may need to install new _____(5) to get all the functionality you expect out of a new peripheral device. The technology which allows peripherals to work automatically when they are plugged in is called plug and play. A plug and play device is meant to function properly without configuration as soon as it is connected. This isn't always the case however. For this reason some people sarcastically refer to the technology as 'plug and _____'(6).

Still, plug and play was a big deal when it was introduced in the 1990's. Before then, installing a new peripheral could take hours, and could even require changing some jumper settings, DIP switches, or even hacking away at drivers or _____ (7)files. It was not a fun time except for real hardware _____(8). With plug and play technology, all the nasty jumpers and DIP switches moved inside the peripheral and were virtualized into firmware. This was a clear victory for the common, nontechnical person!

Peripherals normally have no function when not connected to a computer. They connect over a wide array of interfaces. Some common ones from the past include: PS2 ports, serial ports, _____ (9)ports, and VGA ports. These are all being replaced by some new standards including USB, Bluetooth, wifi, DVI, and _____ (10)ports.

The most common peripheral linking device is probably USB technology. Why? USB is good because you can daisy chain a lot of peripherals together quickly, it is quite fast and growing ever faster in recent editions, and it even provides enough power to supply some smaller peripheral devices like webcams and _____ (11)drives.

Some peripherals are even used for security. A good example of this is the _____(12). The dongle is often used to protect very expensive applications from software piracy.

Here is a list of common peripherals you should be familiar with as an IT
_____(13). Keep in mind the list is always changing due to changing
technologies:
- _____(14) or displays
- scanners
- printers
- external modems
- dongles
- _____(15)
- webcams
- external microphones
- external storage devices such as USB-based flash drives and portable hard disk drives
- input devices such as keyboards, mice, etc are normally considered peripherals as well

Now you know a little more about peripherals and what makes them different from
components and accessories.

I hope you enjoyed the reading!