

Software

2

Difference Between Application and System Software

A computer needs software to be able to function properly. You get two types of software namely, system software and application software. System software supports, controls and runs the computer and application software performs a particular task or solves a specific problem. You need to have loaded an operating system (part of system software) on your computer before you can use any application software.

Lesson Outcomes

By the end of the lesson, you should be able to:

- Distinguish between system software and application software;
- Describe system software and application software;
- State briefly the purpose of each.

Curriculum Links

This task supports the assessment of:

LO 1: Hardware and System Software

- Distinguish between system software and application software (including user-developed and development software).
- Demonstrate an ability to successfully install and uninstall new software programs.

Lesson Notes

System software (e.g. device drivers, operating systems and graphical user interfaces) supports, controls, and runs the computer. Application software (e.g. Microsoft Word, Encarta, computer games) performs a particular task or solves a specific problem. Application software can only run on a computer if system software has been installed.

One of the most important programs to run on any computer is the operating system. Examples of operating systems include UNIX, Windows and Linux. Operating systems allow hardware devices, such as the keyboard and the display screen, to talk to each other.

UNIX ®

When you buy a computer it may not have any software installed on it and

you will have to install or load the operating system of your choice before you can continue. To install any software you must insert the relevant CD-ROM into the CD drive, and follow the instructions given to you on the screen. Some of these instructions involve a license agreement which helps to curb piracy and to ensure that your software is legal.

Once the operating system is loaded on your new computer, there will be a few basic utilities available to you, such as a calculator. However you will need to load application software programs to get the full benefit of your computer. For example, you could decide to load Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Encarta and a few games to keep you busy when you are not doing your homework!

Task

1. Find five different types of software packages. Categorise the software into application or system software.
2. Briefly describe the purpose of each of the packages you have found.