alt key – One of the *shifting keys* (see *shift*), often used in *keyboard shortcuts*.

bold – **Boldface type** is a kind of formatting that makes text appear darker or heavier, usually to place special emphasis on it, to make it stand out visually from the rest.

character – An individual symbol that carries meaning. For example, a letter is a character. A number is also a character. A punctuation mark is a character as well. Even a space or carriage return is a character. A character may have slightly different visual appearance, depending on the font and other formatting, but it is still the same character. For example, "a" is the same character as "a" or "*a*". On the other hand, "A" is another character altogether.

click – Point the mouse cursor at something and hold it stationary there while depressing and releasing the primary (usually leftmost) mouse button.

clipboard – A (normally invisible) location where one piece of text is stored temporarily, so that it can be copied or moved. See *cut*, *copy*, *paste*. These commands are found on the *edit menu*.

command – Something you can tell the computer to do. For example, the *save* command will tell the computer to save your document. The *print* command will tell it to send your document to the printer. *(On the Macintosh, there is also a key called the* command key*, with a picture of either an open apple or a clover or both. The closest equivalent on a PC keyboard is the* Ctrl *key.)*

copy – To place some (*selected*) text on the *clipboard* (q.v.), without removing it from its current location. This is usually done for the purpose of pasting (see *paste*) an additional copy someplace else, so that the same text appears in two or more places. See also *cut*.

ctrl key – One of the *shifting keys* (see *shift*), often used in *keyboard shortcuts*.

cursor – A visual indication of a position on the screen. The main cursor is the **text cursor**, which is the position where typed text is inserted, usually represented by a vertical bar or blinking underscore. However, the *mouse pointer* (q.v.) is sometimes also called a "mouse cursor".

cursor-movement keys – The arrow keys, as well as *home*, *end*, *PageUp*, and *PageDn*, are used to move the *cursor* (q.v.) around through the text of the document. *It is worth noting that these keys behave differently if you hold down* Ctrl*,* Shift*, or* Alt *while pressing them. For example,* home *by itself moves the cursor to the beginning of the line, but* Ctrl+home *goes clear to the beginning of the document.*

cut – To remove some (selected) text from its current position and place it on the *clipboard* (q.v.). This is usually done for the purpose of moving it to a new location (see *paste*). See also *copy*.

document – A file created by you, the user. It may be a letter, a term paper, a recipe, an inventory, a drawing, or a web page, to name only a few possibilities. However, in the context of word processing, a document is most often something you design for printing out on paper.

drag – To hold the primary (usually leftmost) mouse button down while moving the *mouse pointer*. The usual way to select a block or range of text is to drag from the beginning of it to the end.

face – See *font*.

font – A set of visual appearances used for displaying each character (either on the screen or in paper). Also called a *font face*. Fonts fall into general categories. *Serif* fonts (e.g., Georgia) have decorations (called *serifs*) on th ends of the stems of the letters, and often different parts of the letters have different thicknesses. Sans-serif fonts (e.g., Arial) have no serifs, and the lines are usually of uniform thickness. *Script fonts are designed to look like handwriting.* Grunge fonts are heavily stylized. *Proportional* fonts (e.g., Georgia or Arial) make different letters wider or narrower; whereas, a `fixed-width font` (e.g., `Lucida Console` or `Andale Mono`) makes every character exactly the same size.

formatting – Not the text itself, but how it is to be presented, e.g., whether it is bold or not, what font face it is displayed in, how large, whether the *paragraph* should be single-spaced or double-spaced, and where the tab stops and margins are set are all examples of formatting.

hard copy – A copy of a document on physical paper, as opposed to a *soft copy* (q.v.).

insert mode – The *default* mode, in which typed text is inserted at the *cursor*, meaning that any text following the cursor is moved over to make room. See also *overtype mode*.

italic – Technically, *italic* is typesetting terminology for an alternate, fancier version of a font face, based on the main font but intended for special emphasis. However, if a font does not come with a real italic face, most word processing software will "fake it" by applying an *oblique* slant to the regular typeface. For example, this sentence is typeset in Georgia, which comes with a *real italic face, like this.* Arial does not come with a real italic, *so it just gets slanted, like this.*

keyboard shortcut – Combination of keys on the keyboard that can be used to activate a *command* quickly, without using the *mouse* or the *menus*. On the *menus*, keyboard shortcuts are often listed off to the right of some commands, as a reminder. *For instance, to the right of the* save *command on the* file *menu, it says "Ctrl+S". This means that holding the* ctrl *key while pressing the key for the letter s will activate the save command. You don't have to pull down the menu to use the shortcut.*

margins – Areas that will be left blank around a page or *paragraph*. *A document has "global" margins on all sides, which can usually be adjusted in the Page Format or Page Setup. Paragraphs also have "local" margins, which can be adjusted on the ruler bar or under Format Paragraph.*

menu – A list of *commands* (thinks you can do).

menubar – A row across the top of the window containing the names of several *menus*. Each menu can be "pulled down" (by clicking on it) to reveal a number of available *commands*.

mouse – Pointing device used to move the *mouse pointer* around the screen.

mouse pointer – Sometimes also called the **mouse cursor**, the pointer indicates a location on the screen. Any *click* or *drag* actions that you perform will happen at this point. *The mouse pointer will take on a different appearance over different areas. For instance, when pointing to a menu it usually looks like an arrow, but over editable text it normally changes to an I-beam text selection pointer.*

open – To retrieve a *document* that you previously *saved* so that you can work with it again.

overtype mode – Also called **overwrite mode**, causes any *characters* you type to replace ("overtype") the characters at the cursor. You can switch between overtype mode and *insert mode* (q.v.) by pressing the *insert* key (abbreviated *ins* on some keyboards).

paragraph – The text between one ***paragraph break*** and the next. In word processing, a paragraph break is inserted by pressing the *enter* or *return* key. You can also remove a paragraph break with *backspace* or *delete* the same as you would any other *character*. Some word processors have a "View All Characters" or "Show Paragraph Breaks" mode that will display a symbol for each paragraph break so you can more easily see where they are.

paste – To insert the text currently held in the *clipboard* (q.v.) at the cursor. See also *cut*, *copy*.

print – To display or render something. In the context of word processing, "print" usually means "print a *hard copy* on paper".

print preview – An on-screen preview of what a document will look like if it is printed on paper.

ruler bar – A special toolbar that resembles a ruler. Used to set paragraph *margins* and *tab stops*.

save – To write the document's current state to a storage device (usually either the computer's internal *hard drive* or some kind of *removable diskette*). *As you edit a document, it is stored in the computer's temporary working memory (RAM) and can be lost if the software "crashes", if the power goes out, or if you make a mistake. Once you save, however, if anything goes wrong, you can* open *the last version that you saved. Think of saving as a way to make your changes permanent. If you delete a paragraph by mistake, you can open the last saved version of the document and so retrieve the paragraph, but if you delete a paragraph and then save your changes, the paragraph may be gone forever. If you want to keep both versions, use the* Save As *command and give the changed version a new name.*

select – To designate something. Any *formatting* changes that you make, apply to whatever text is currently selected. Commands like *cut* and *copy* also apply to the currently-selected text. To select a range of text, *drag* from the beginning of the part you want to the end of it.

shift – Keys held down while pressing another key, to change the effect of the other keys, include *shift*, *ctrl*, and *alt*. These ***shifting keys*** are used to capitalize letters, to obtain the symbols on the number keys, to select text with the *cursor movement keys*, and in *keyboard shortcuts*.

soft copy – A copy of a document that is stored on a disk or other computer storage device. See also *hard copy*. *Think of soft as meaning "flexible", since you can easily make changes to a soft copy. In contrast, the only way to make changes to a* hard copy *is to retype it from scratch.*

tabs – ***tab stops*** are places where text can be made to line up. You can set a tab stop by clicking on the *ruler bar* at the desired position. A ***tab character*** in your text (entered by pressing the *tab* key) will advance to the next tab stop, and the text that follows it will line up there. Tab stops can be set differently for each *paragraph*. *The term "tab stop", comes from early mechanical typewriters, which used a metal tab to stop the advancing carriage at the desired position.*

text – The actual letters, numbers, punctuation, and other characters that make up the informational content of a document. (Besides text, a word processing document can also contain images.) See also: *formatting*.

text cursor – See *cursor*.

word wrap – The mechanism that automatically causes words to move from the end of one line to the beginning of the next, or vice versa, to maintain the shape of the *paragraph* within the designated *margins*.