WHAT IS AN OPERATING SYSTEM

An operating system is a group of programs that help you operate your computer. It could be considered the "government" of your computer's internal society, the central program that tells the other programs what they may do and provides services they need. A computer might contain more than one operating system, but only one operating system at a time may be "in charge". The action of starting or loading the operating system is called "booting" the computer.

Windows 7 is one popular example of an operating system (though perhaps not the best example!). MS-DOS is (or was) also an operating system. Linux is an operating system as well. All of these systems perform similar tasks, and only one at a time can be in use. (Unless you have some special tools. We'll talk about those elsewhere.)

An operating system normally consists of some basic parts.

A *kernel*, a core program that controls the most essential hardware (the processor and memory, for example); some *device drivers* that control other system hardware (network cards, sound

cards); and a*shell*, a program that communicates with the user and allows the user to manipulate the computer.

The shell is the only part of the operating system that a normal computer user will see. Each operating system shell presents a different *user interface* or operating environment. An Apple computer running MacOS will look different from a PC running Windows 7 or Linux, and the way the user goes about accomplishing tasks and giving instructions to the computer is also different. MS-DOS requires you to type commands at a text prompt to start programs, whereas in MacOS you must use the mouse to click on a picture to perform the same task.

Source : http://www.control-escape.com/linux/whatisopsys.html