

IS 628: Computer-based Information Systems  
Reading Preparation Assignment  
Chapter 2  
Computer Systems

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Read (actually, more like look over as I will not be emphasizing in-depth discussion on different computing technologies) Chapter 2 of the text, pp. 19 – 56.

Be prepared for class discussion based on the following questions:

1. Some commentators have suggested that mainframe computer systems could be squeezed out of existence in the next few years, with the incredible advances in the capabilities of midrange systems and the power of supercomputers combining to divide up the present mainframe market. What do you think? Why?
2. What are the advantages and limitations of palmtop or handheld computers (including smartphones)? Do you have one? If so, for what do you use it? If not, what features would be particularly attractive to you?
3. What are the advantages and limitations of a tablet PC? Do you believe tablet PCs will be successful? Why or why not? Do you see yourself using a tablet PC in a few years?
4. With one firm (IBM) dominating the mainframe hardware market in the United States since its inception, and with that same firm currently near the top in every segment of the hardware industry (except microcomputers), has the computer hardware industry truly been competitive over the past five decades? Support your position.
5. List possible uses of a supercomputer in a business setting.
6. Which one category of personal productivity software is of most value to you? Why? Within this category, what is your favorite software package? Why? Do you think that the one category of personal productivity software of most value to you will change as you move into your career? Why?
7. You have probably had experience with at least one procedural (3 GL) language in either high school or college. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the particular language that you know best? Based on what you have gleaned from the text, what primary advantages would a nonprocedural 4 GL offer over the 3 GL that you know best? What disadvantages?
8. As you have read in newspapers and magazines, one firm seems to dominate the worldwide software market—Microsoft. With this degree of dominance by one firm, has the software industry truly been competitive, particularly over the past decade? Support your position.
9. In the late 1990s, the U.S. government, joined by several state governments, brought suit against Microsoft, arguing that Microsoft unfairly exercised monopoly power in the software industry. What was the outcome of these lawsuits? The European Union also brought suit against Microsoft for exercising monopoly power. What was the outcome of the European Union lawsuit? (Use the Web to conduct your research.)