Character Sets Encyclopedia Article

Character Sets

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Contents

Character Sets Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Character Sets.....3

Character Sets

A character set is a defined list of characters that is recognized by a computer. This allows the computer to recognize the input, and to accurately depict that information so as to be recognizable to the user.

A character is any symbol in a software program that requires one **byte** of storage. This includes character-based systems, such as **ASCII** and extended ASCII characters, and geometrical symbols that appear on a computer's screen. In graphics-based **applications**, character sets include letters, numbers, and punctuation symbols.

There are many character sets. **Programming** languages, such as **HTML**, for example, have unique character representations that require a character set. The ASCII character set uses the numbers 0 through 127 to represent all English characters and selected symbolic characters. Other character sets, under the umbrella of the European International Standards Organization (**ISO**), are similar to the ASCII set. However, the ISO sets contain additional characters that are of relevance to European spoken, or natural, languages.