

WHAT IS HOST?

The term “**host**” is used in several contexts, in each of which it has a slightly different meaning:

- 1) In Internet protocol specifications, the term “host” means any computer that has full two-way access to other computers on the Internet. A host has a specific “local or host number” that, together with the network number, forms its unique **IP address**. If you use **Point-to-Point Protocol** to get access to your access provider, you have a unique IP address for the duration of any connection you make to the Internet and your computer is a host for that period. In this context, a “host” is a node in a network.
- 2) For companies or individuals with a Web site, a host is a computer with a Web server that serves the pages for one or more Web sites. A **host** can also be the company that provides that service, which is known as hosting.
- 3) In **IBM** and perhaps other mainframe computer environments, a host is a mainframe computer (which is now usually referred to as a “*large server*”). In this context, the mainframe has intelligent or “**dumb**” workstations attached to it that use it as a host provider of services. (This does not mean that the host only has “servers” and the workstations only have “clients.” The **server/client** relationship is a programming model independent of this contextual usage of “host.”)
- 4) In other contexts, the term generally means a device or program that provides services to some smaller or less capable device or program.