

What is an operating system?

An operating system is software that provides critical support services for other software. It is usually considered to include the "kernel" and utilities for configuring and maintaining the system.

Key responsibilities of the kernel include:

- Managing access to resources, such as allocation of memory and controlling which users have access to what files.
- Incorporating "device drivers" to provide a consistent interface between hardware and application software. This generally frees applications from the responsibility of dealing with specific hardware, allowing them to be smaller and more portable.