

Selecting Software

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

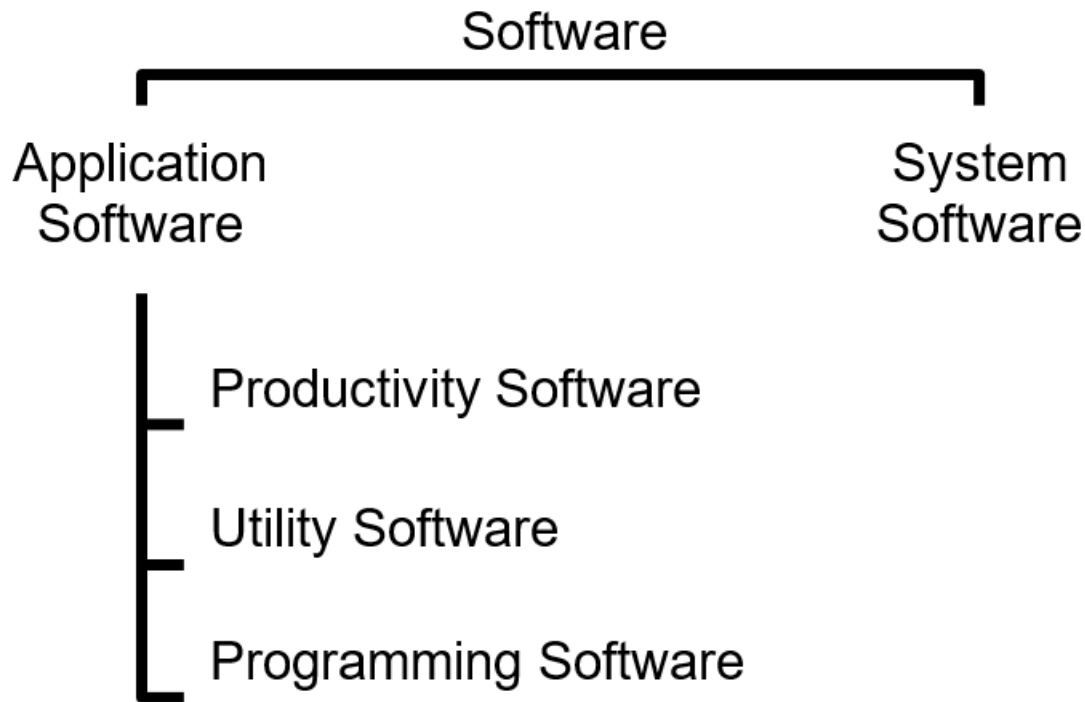
Software can perform many different tasks, and there are many different software packages that exist for computer users today. Although only two major categories of software exist — application software and system software — people further categorize application software based on commonalities such as function and field in which they are used. In this tutorial we will examine the categories in which application software falls.

Our discussion will break down as follows:

1. Software Categories

Software can be categorized at different levels. At the broadest level, there are two groups of **software categories**: application software and system software. Application software provides the user with the ability to accomplish a goal or purpose. System software (the operating system) performs the task required to keep the system running, and provides the main interface for the user.

Application software can be further categorized into three groups: productivity software, utility software, and programming software. Productivity software allows people to complete daily work, and is typically utilized in business or organizational settings. Utility software allows you to fix or modify your computer in some way. Programming software allows us to make more software.



TERM TO KNOW

Software Categories

Classifications of software based on function, such as word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation.

2. Productivity Software

Perhaps the most familiar type of software familiar to the everyday computer user is productivity software. Productivity software includes applications such as Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, and other applications that are typically offered as a package or suite. We can indeed further categorize productivity software based on its function or intended purpose. Major categories of productivity software, based on function, are word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation software. Listed below are common productivity software categorized by their function.

Category:	Word Processing	Spreadsheet	Presentation	Other
Suite:				
Microsoft Office	Word	Excel	PowerPoint	Outlook (email), Access (database), OneNote (information gathering)
Apple iWork	Pages	Numbers	Keynote	Integrates with iTunes, iCloud, and other Apple software
OpenOffice	Writer	Calc	Impress	Base (database), Draw (drawing), Math (equations)
Google Drive	Document	Spreadsheet	Presentation	Gmail (email), Forms (online form data collection), Draw (drawing)

3. Software Domains

Software applications make computers useful by completing tasks and ultimately making users productive. The key to understanding how to evaluate whether a software package can complete a specified task is to understand the domains in which the software is best suited. A **software domain** refers to the environment or situation in which a particular piece of software is designed to be operational. Education, entertainment, and business are a few examples of the domains in which software is used. Listed below are the domains in which various categories of software are best.

Software Category	Domain
Word Processing	Business: grant proposals, professional resumes, press releases Education: academic papers, speech outlines, lab reports Entertainment: film manuscripts, theater bills, jacket inserts for CDs/DVDs
Spreadsheet	Business: financial reports, tracking inventory, employee scheduling Education: data for creating charts and graphs, perform calculations Entertainment: ticket sales, resource planning, event schedules
Presentation	Business: quarterly reviews, sales and advertising, training new employees Education: enhancing lectures, student assessment, all-school assemblies Entertainment: promotions and trailers, audio/visual effects
Database	Business: customer interactions, merchandise inventory, payroll Education: course enrollments, research statistics Entertainment: digital marketing, trends and predictions, ratings forecasting



TRY IT

Consider the case of an academic professor in the following scenario(s) and see if you can make a determination as to which type of software would be best used based on the situation.

A professor has collected data for five years and now needs to organize it to look for patterns. What type of software application should he/she choose? +

The professor would be best served by database software, as this type of application would give the researcher one place in which to enter and manage the data. Additionally, a database package would provide the professor with the tools to make a request for specific pieces of information contained within the database, or to perform operations on the information so that patterns apparent within the data can be observed.

A professor has concluded with research and must now write a report that summarizes the findings and that can be shared with colleagues in the scientific community. What type of software application should he/she choose? +

In this scenario the professor would be best served by using a word processing application, such as Microsoft Word, to format and type a report. Tables with data points can be included in the report.

A professor has collected data for five years and now needs to share his findings at a conference. What type of software application should he/she choose?

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The professor in this situation would be best served by presentation software, as it will provide large customizable slides to which information can be added and viewed by a large audience.



TERM TO KNOW

Software Domain

Refers to the environment or situation in which a particular piece of software is designed to be operational.



SUMMARY

In this tutorial we covered the various categories of software and the domains in which these software categories tend to be utilized. On a broad level, software is categorized as either application software or system software. However, application software can be categorized into productivity, utility, and programming software. Software domains describe the typical situations in which the software package is best suited, such as academic, business, or entertainment domains.

Source: Derived from Chapter 3 of “Information Systems for Business and Beyond” by David T. Bourgeois. Some sections removed for brevity.

<https://www.saylor.org/site/textbooks/Information%20Systems%20for%20Business%20and%20Beyond/Textbook.html>



TERMS TO KNOW

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