

Clients, Servers and Peers The most common categories of network software nowadays are clients and servers. Though this common usage has no detrimental practical effects for the majority of I.T. tasks, those I.T. personnel who are unaware of the distinction and subsequently undertake network programming are likely to be caused a significant amount of conceptual confusion until this distinction is made known to them. (These clients, of course, are also programs and are not human clients!)

Common services provided by such servers include the 'serving up' of Web pages (by Web servers) and the downloading of files from servers' host machines via the File Transfer Protocol (FTP servers). Indeed, it is often very convenient (as will be seen in subsequent chapters) for server and client(s) to be run on the same machine, since this provides a very convenient 'sandbox' within which such applications may be tested before being released (or, more likely, before final testing on separate machines). In some applications, such as messaging services, it is possible for programs on users' machines to communicate directly with each other in what is called peer-to-peer (or P2P) mode. For the former service, the corresponding client programs would be Web browsers (such as Firefox, Chrome or Internet Explorer).