Computer...server...computer...server….what's the difference?...and why all the different names? It's just soooo confusing.

The computer world is quite confusing at times. There are so many terms that most of us have no idea what their meaning is.

As we learned in the previous ezpaks, a computer has to be told what to do. We can tell it to do many, many different things. It's all in how we write the software.

A server is a general term used to describe a computer, or multiple computers, that are programmed to send you information via a network (local, wide, or internet) when you request it. This is also known as "serving" you the information. Thus the name "server".

Network is a term that is used to describe a "network" of computers all hooked together. They can be what is called a LAN (Local Area Network), a WAN (Wide Area Network), or the Internet. These are the basic types of networks. We don't want to get into the specifics here….too much info to take in…..not cool.

We now know that a server is just a computer programmed to "serve" up specific information to you. In this case we are talking about WEB SITES.

When you open your browser, you put in the address of the site you want to visit. This info is sent via the internet to the server wherever it is in the world. So it is basically just 2 computers talking to each other. Of course, there are many other pieces of hardware involved, but that's not important for what we are learning…..and besides, who cares...right?

Servers are programmed with many different types of software to allow web sites to be seen and used. These servers (computers) are only designed to support web sites. As with any type of computer, the software is designed specifically to interact with the server with the highest efficiency.

Also, as with home computers, there are different levels of capabilities that can be used in servers. Some are faster than others, some are more powerful.

The more visitors a site has, the more powerful the server has to be. Power in this case refers to a lot of things added together to make a server capable of handling the load (amount of visitors at any given moment). As an example of this power requirement, Google has almost a million servers around the world.

One last thing, a "server farm" is simply a whole bunch of computers (servers) in a building. With the proper equipment involved, they will be able to handle a pre-determined amount of traffic from users like you and me.