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Biometrics

Biometrics is the technology of authenticating a person's identity by verifying a personal characteristic. Biometrics devices give users access to programs, systems, or rooms by analyzing some biometric trait (Schmidt-54-62). A biometric trait is a physical or behavioral characteristic. Examples include fingerprints, facial-features, hand geometry, voice-patterns, signatures, and eye patterns.

A biometric device translates a personal characteristic into a digital code that is compared with a digital code stored in the computer. If the digital code in the computer does not match the personal characteristic's code, the computer denies access to the individual.

The most widely used biometric device today is a fingerprint scanner. A fingerprint scanner captures curves and indentations of a fingerprint. With the cost of fingerprint scanners less than \$100, experts believe this technology will become the home user's authentication device for e-commerce transactions. To conduct a credit card transaction, the Web site would require users to hold a fingerprint on the scanner. External fingerprint scanners usually plug into a parallel or USB port.¹ Businesses use fingerprint scanners to authenticate users before they can access a personal computer

¹ According to Carter and Jaurez, newer keyboards and notebook computers have a fingerprint scanner built directly into them. (42-53)