

1– Basic architecture of a computer

(Unit 3, task 5)

...as you can see on the diagram, a **PC system consists of two parts - software and hardware**. Software is the programs that enable a computer to perform a specific task. This includes the operating system and application software such as a graphics package and a web browser.

Hardware is any electronic or mechanical part. The basic structure of a computer system is made-up of three main hardware sections: one, **the central processing unit – or CPU – two, the main memory and three, the peripherals**.

The CPU is a processor chip which executes program instructions and coordinates the activities of all the other components. In order to improve the computer's performance, the user can add expansion cards for video, sound and networking.

The main memory holds the instruction and the data which are currently being processed by the CPU. **This internal memory is made up of ROM and RAM chips**. RAM, or random access memory, is volatile, so it loses the stored data when the electricity – or power – is turned off. ROM, or read-only memory, is non-volatile.

The peripherals are the physical units attached to the computer. They include input, output and storage devices. **Input devices**, for example the keyboard and **the mouse**, enable us to present information to the computer. **Output devices** allow us to extract the results from the computer. For instance, we can see the output on the **monitor** or in printed form. **Storage devices** are used to store information permanently. For example, we use **hard disks**, DVDs or flash drives to store large amounts of information.