Bill Gates

Personalities

Bill Gates, **Business Personality**

- **Born:** 28 October 1955
- **Birthplace:** Seattle, Washington
- **Best Known As:** Founder and head of the Microsoft Corporation

Name at birth: William Gates III

Source

Bill Gates is the head of the software company Microsoft and is one of the world's wealthiest men. Gates and Paul Allen founded Microsoft in the 1970s, though Allen left the company in 1983. Gates oversaw the invention and marketing of the MS-DOS operating system, the Windows operating interface, the Internet Explorer browser, and a multitude of other popular computer products. Along the way he gained a reputation for fierce competitiveness and aggressive business savvy. During the 1990s rising Microsoft stock prices made Gates the world's wealthiest man; his wealth has at times exceeded $75 billion, making Gates a popular symbol of the ascendant computer geek of the late 20th century. In June of 2006, Gates announced that he would step down from day-to-day involvement in Microsoft by July of 2008. He said he would then remain chairman of the Microsoft board while focusing on his charitable foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Gates married Melinda French, a Microsoft employee, on 1 January 1994. The couple have three children: daughters Jennifer Katharine (b. 1996) and Phoebe Adele (b. 2002) and son Rory John (b. 1999)... Gates's personal chartiable initiative, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, has focused on global health issues, especially on preventing malaria and AIDS in poor countries; in 2005, ABC News reported that he had given away over six billion dollars in the previous five years... For their philanthropic activities, *Time* magazine named Bill and Melinda Gates (along with rock star and activist Bono) its Persons of the Year for 2005.

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Bill Gates (1955–)

Cofounder and chairman, [Microsoft Corporation](#)

Born: October 28, 1955, in Seattle, Washington.

Education: Attended Harvard University, 1973–1975.

Family: Son of William Henry Gates II (attorney) and Mary Maxwell (teacher); married Melinda French (Microsoft manager), January 1, 1994; children: three.

Career: Lakeside Programming Group, 1968–1969, founder; Traf-O-Data, 1970–1973, founder; Microsoft Corporation, 1975–, founder and chairman; 1975–2000, CEO; 1992–1998, president.

Awards: U.S. National Medal of Technology, 1993; [Chief Executive](#) of the Year, *Chief Executive*, 1994; President's Medal of Leadership Award, New York Institute of Technology, 1995; Louis Braille Gold Medal, Canadian National Institute for the Blind, 2002; Knight Commander of the Order of the [British Empire](#), 2004.

Publications: *The Road Ahead* (with Nathan Myhrvold and Peter Rinearson), 1995; *Business @ the Speed of Thought,* 1999.

Address: Microsoft Corporation, 1 Microsoft Way, Building 8, North O, Redmond, Washington 98052-6399; http://www.microsoft.com.

William Henry Gates III cofounded the Microsoft Corporation in 1975, built his software company into the one of the most successful businesses in the world, and established himself in the process as the world's richest man. Although Bill Gates started Microsoft as a small business based on a single innovative software program that he had helped to develop, his real genius was his business acumen. As the long-time CEO of Microsoft, Gates was able to borrow and integrate other computer

programmers' innovations and sell them to a new and rapidly expanding home computer market. In 1985, 10 years after Microsoft was founded, it had $140 million in revenue, which grew to $28 billion by 2002. One of the pioneers of home computing, Gates proved himself to be a technological visionary and software applications guru. According to industry analysts, he also demonstrated that he was a shrewd marketing strategist as well as an aggressive corporate leader.

A Precocious Pioneer

Gates grew up in a prosperous area of Seattle, Washington, with his parents and two sisters. The son of a lawyer and a schoolteacher, Gates attended a public grade school and then the Lakeside School, a private college preparatory institution. It was at Lakeside that he first became interested in the relatively new field of computer programming, met his friend and future business partner Paul Allen, and developed his first computer software program at the age of 13.

In 1968 the Lakeside School was still purchasing computer time on a machine owned by General Electric, as computers were extremely expensive in the late 1960s. Gates and his friends from Lakeside became fascinated with the machines and formed the Lakeside Programmers Group to try to make money in the computer field. The Programmers Group primarily earned its founders free computing time on machines owned by a company in Seattle. Gates and Allen then formed a company that they called Traf-O-Data. They put together a small computer for measuring traffic flow and made about $20,000. The company remained in business until Gates and Allen graduated from high school. Although Gates was interested in computers, he enrolled at Harvard University with the intention of becoming a lawyer like his father. By the time he was a sophomore in 1975, however, Gates was more interested in computers and electronics than in his pre-law studies.

What became the Microsoft Corporation grew out of two college undergraduates' bluff and bravado. Gates's old friend Allen showed him an advertisement for a kit to build a home computer. The two called the computer's manufacturer, MITS, saying that Gates had taken a primary computer language called BASIC and adapted it for the machine. When MITS expressed interest, Gates and Allen ignored their studies and spent the next four weeks frantically working on turning their boast into reality. In an interview in *Money*, Gates later recalled, "One little mistake would have meant the program wouldn't have run. The first time we tried it was at MITS, and it came home without a glitch" (July 1986).

Having written the first computer language for a personal computer, Gates and Allen established the Microsoft Corporation in 1975. The name "Microsoft" was formed from the words "microcomputer" and "software." Gates then dropped out of Harvard in 1976 and focused on building the new business. He believed that there was a market for computer software and that the market was going to expand rapidly as affordable computers were developed for home use.

Right Place—right Time

Although Gates rightfully earned credit for building one of the fastest-growing and most profitable companies ever established, Microsoft started out on a shaky

foundation. Gates and Allen had sold their first commercially developed software for $3,000 and royalties. Before long, however, Microsoft found itself unable to cover its overhead. Even though Gates and Allen received royalties, their software was also pirated by computer hackers. This piracy led Gates to write an "Open Letter to Hobbyists," which said that computer software should not be copied by the then relatively small computer community without the developer's permission. Gates also recognized at this point in time that the future of computer software lay in owning a standard software package to be used on most computers.

By the late 1970s the computing giant IBM had plans for marketing a personal computer for home use. They approached Microsoft to develop the standard operating system for their home computer models. Gates and Allen then went out and purchased for $50,000 an operating system called Q-Dos, which had been developed by Seattle Computer. Q-Dos was compatible with the Intel processor that IBM intended to use. The two then adapted the Q-Dos system and presented it to IBM. *Money* magazine quoted Gates as recalling, "We bet all our resources on that system" (July 1986).

Gates had learned well his early lessons in the software business. He insisted that IBM make Microsoft the exclusive software licensee for their home computers, meaning that all IBM products would have Microsoft operating systems. Furthermore, Gates negotiated a contract that allowed Microsoft to retain the right to manufacture and license the software, which he and Allen had named MS-DOS, to other manufacturers. Because there were three other operating systems for microprocessors at that time, Gates didn't own the sole industry standard. But he was well on his way. He and Allen made MS-DOS the most attractive system to computer manufacturers because Microsoft offered a flat-fee license rather than a per-unit contract. Gates and Allen also encouraged software developers to create programs that would broaden their system's capabilities. Their strategy was a huge success because manufacturers initially saved money. In addition, the software developers had an easier job designing such single applications as word processing for use on computers made by other manufacturers.

These negotiations demonstrated that Gates was willing to defer immediate earnings for much greater future profits. His plan was based on building a mass of users for Microsoft products, which would mean the company would own the industry standard. Once Gates's company owned the standard, it could then revert to selling its software at per-unit prices rather than general licenses.

While the contract with IBM placed Microsoft on its way to legendary business growth, it also established a precedent for what some considered Gates's unsavory business practices. When he and Allen had approached Seattle Computer, the software's original developer, they omitted to mention that they were in negotiations with IBM to develop their operating system. Seattle Computer later sued Microsoft on the grounds that it had hidden its relationship with IBM in order to purchase Seattle's system at what turned out to be a bargain-basement price. The two companies came to an out-of-court settlement without Gates or Microsoft admitting to any guilt or duplicity in the original purchase.

Marketing Trumps Challengers

Paul Allen, who had been serving as Microsoft's head of research and new product development, left the company in 1982 after being diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease. The following year, Gates faced a major challenge to Microsoft's domination of operating systems for home computers when a company called VisiCorp developed a mouse-driven computer system with a user interface based on graphics rather than the keyboard-based and text-driven system of MS-DOS. Gates quickly recognized that VisiCorp's system would be the wave of the future because it was much easier for technologically unsophisticated people to use. Even though Microsoft did not have such a system in the works at that point, Gates started an advertising campaign with an announcement at the Plaza Hotel in New York City that a new Microsoft operating system with graphical user interface (GUI) would soon be marketed. This next-generation system was to be called "Windows."

Gates's announcement was a bluff; the truth was that Microsoft was nowhere near developing such a system. But the marketing ploy worked because people preferred to wait for a system designed to be compatible with their existing Microsoft products rather than undergo the trouble and expense of installing an entirely new operating system. Furthermore, Windows allowed users to avoid buying new software applications to replace the DOS-compatible programs they currently owned. Windows 1.0 was finally released in 1985. That same year Microsoft reported $140 million in revenue, including $46.6 million from overseas users.

Microsoft's growth continued to be relatively smooth in spite of several challenges, in part because the fiscally conservative Gates had financed most of the company's expansion entirely from its earnings. This cautious approach to financing, however, did not reflect an unwillingness to take risks. In January 1986 Gates launched an ambitious long-term project to develop a new data storage system based on a compact disk, or CD-ROM, that could hold any type of computer file, including music and visual files. In March of that same year, he took the company public. His 40 percent ownership of Microsoft shares made his net worth $390 million by June 1986.

Gates had effectively cornered the market for operating software for the vast majority of personal computers (PCs) as well as developing a wide range of other popular programs. He effectively became a billionaire in March 1987, when his company's stock rose to $90.75 per share, up from $21.50 per share when the company went public. Brian O'Reilly commented a few months later in *Fortune*, "[Gates] apparently has made more money than anyone else his age, ever, in any business" (October 12, 1987).

Gates Switches Gears

Industry analysts had praised Gates for guiding his company on a path of growth that saw its revenue stream increasing by more than 50 percent per year in a extremely competitive, even cutthroat, market. They credited much of this success to Gates's ability to capitalize early and effectively on industry trends and his willingness to take risks on such fledgling technologies as Microsoft's CD-ROM-based software packages, which became industry standards. Furthermore, Gates had organized the company's structure so that it worked concurrently on all phases of a software product's business cycle from development to distribution. Larry Michels, an early software developer, told Mary Jo Foley of *Electronic Business*, "Other software

vendors have modeled themselves after the hardware business. Microsoft created its own model of how to do business" (August 15, 1988).

Although Gates had established himself as a visionary, he did not always hit the mark. For years he had paid little attention to the business potential of the Internet, which led him to say later that he regretted not having focused more closely on Microsoft's capabilities for e-mail and networking. In 1995, however, he did an about-face and began to redirect the company's efforts in this area. His success was measured by the fact that Microsoft's Internet Explorer Web browser had become the industry leader by 2000. Gates's success in developing a competitive Internet browser, as well as coming out on top of the desktop-database and office-suite wars of the 1990s, proved that he had formed a company nimble enough to jump into a market that others were developing and take the lead away from the competition.

In 1998 Gates announced a new phase in Microsoft's expansion that would allow him to concentrate his energies on strategy and product development. At the same time the company funneled larger amounts of money into improving customer support and feedback. Gates planned to direct the company's work in such areas as intelligent telephones and television, as well as the integration of such new computer input techniques as speech, vision, and handwriting. Although Windows had already gone through several upgrades, Gates wanted to continue improving its ease of use and reliability. To free himself up for this work, he stepped down as president, a position he had held since 1992, but remained Microsoft's chairman and CEO.

Showdown With the Government

Microsoft earned $19.75 billion in revenue during the fiscal year 1999. Bill Gates had become an icon not only in the computer and business worlds but also in the eyes of the general public. His ghostwritten book *The Road Ahead*, which outlined his vision of the future, topped many best-seller lists for more than three months. In spite of Gates's financial and literary success, however, he found himself facing his biggest challenge yet as the 1990s came to an end.

The challenge came this time from the United States government rather than from Microsoft's competitors. Gates and Microsoft had come under increasing scrutiny for unfair business practices from the time of the court case that followed Microsoft's purchase of the Q-Dos operating system from Seattle Computer in 1980. In 1993 the U.S. Justice Department began an investigation into Microsoft's contracts with other computer manufacturers that led to an agreement from Gates in 1994 to eliminate some of Microsoft's restrictions on the use of its products by other software makers. In 1997, however, the Justice Department sued Microsoft for forcing computer makers to sell its Internet browser as a condition of using the Windows system—a de facto violation of the 1994 consent decree. In December 1997 a U.S. district judge issued a preliminary injunction forcing Microsoft to temporarily stop requiring manufactures who sold Windows 95 "or any successor [program]" to install its Internet Explorer.

Microsoft appealed the injunction, but the following year the Justice Department and 20 state attorneys general sued Microsoft, charging that it illegally thwarted competition to protect and extend its software monopoly. Although Microsoft won its

initial appeal in 1998 to reverse the 1997 decision, Gates soon found himself being questioned for 30 hours over a three-day period in a videotaped deposition for the upcoming antitrust trial. The government finally rested its case on January 13, 1999, and the Microsoft defense team ended its case on February 26. The final oral arguments from each side were presented on September 21, 1999.

After the judge presented his findings of fact on the case on November 5, Gates issued a response disagreeing with many of the findings that went against Microsoft. In a statement released to the press as reported by *Court TV Online*, Gates noted, "Microsoft competes vigorously and fairly. Microsoft is committed to resolving this case in a fair and a factual manner, while ensuring that the principles of consumer benefits and innovation are protected" (November 6, 1999).*****

U.S. District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson ruled in June 2000 that Microsoft was a monopoly which had illegally exploited the dominance of Windows, at that point installed on over 95 percent of the world's personal computers. Judge Jackson then ordered Microsoft to be broken up into several smaller companies. It was the most severe antitrust ruling since the breakup of AT&T in 1984. Jackson's decision was reversed on appeal, however, and the company received a far less severe punishment directed toward restricting some of its business practices. In spite of this relatively favorable outcome, however, Gates continued to battle competitors in American courtrooms over Microsoft's business practices. In addition, he found himself subjected to litigation in Europe, where Microsoft was once again accused of exploiting its monopoly of Windows to control other computer-related industries, including media-player and server software companies.

Despite the controversy over whether Gates had created a company that used its dominance of the desktop computer system to obtain unfair control of newer computer-related markets, Microsoft continued to prosper. Gates stepped down as CEO in 2000 but kept his position as chairman of Microsoft as well as its chief software architect. In 2004 he doubled the company's research and development budget to $6.8 billion and began pushing a new Windows personal computer operating system code-named Longhorn.

Management Style: Workaholic

Although Gates was long known as a "boy wonder" in the computer and business worlds, his management style was anything but immature. As was noted in a *BBC News* article, "Gates has come to be known for his aggressive business tactics and confrontational style of management" (January 26, 2004). Although he was considered a charismatic leader within his own company, he was also extremely tough—he fired Microsoft's first company president after only 11 months on the job.

An intense businessman who typically put in 16-hour days and took only two three-day vacations in the first five years after establishing the corporation, Gates was demanding and strong-willed about implementing his vision. Coworkers, clients, and industry analysts also remarked, however, that he did not surround himself with yes-sayers but was more than willing to change his mind if someone convinced him of a better alternative. Analysts also observed that one of the keys to Gates's success was his ability to focus on the fundamentals of the business while keeping office politics

or his own ego from getting in the way. "Most of what I do is leading," Gates once said in *Electronic Business*. "Managing applies to the people who work directly for me" (August 15, 1988).

Gates was known from the beginning of his career as the epitome of a hard-driving businessman respected by his allies and feared by his competitors. It was his vision that guided Microsoft's immense success. In addition, Gates had an uncanny ability to tackle both the managerial and technical sides of Microsoft's operations. He was especially noted for his success as a marketing strategist who priced his products for the mass market rather than computer specialists. In 1999 the *Journal of Business Strategy* listed Gates among a handful of people who had the greatest influence on business strategy over the last century.

Gates also had his fair share of critics. In addition to accusations of predatory and possibly illegal business practices, some analysts remarked that Gates did not really foster in-house product innovation but tended to focus his attention instead on blocking advances by other companies.

On the other hand, supporters of Gates's managerial style and business acumen pointed out that Microsoft continued to prosper even in the midst of the 2002 information technology slump, growing at 20 percent each quarter and posting a phenomenal 35 percent after-tax profit margin. Despite all his financial success, however, Gates remained a fiscal conservative. He was renowned for his penny-pinching traveling habits, demanding that his schedule be filled for the entire day when he was on the road promoting his company.

No Time to Rest

Gates was still the world's wealthiest person in early 2004, with a personal fortune estimated at $60.56 billion. He remained a hands-on leader at Microsoft, however, maintaining an active work schedule as the company's chairman and chief software architect. As noted by Ron Anderson in *Network Computer*, "… no doubt his presence [at the company] will make itself known well into the decades ahead" (October 2, 2000).

In addition to extending Microsoft's success, Gates also turned his attention to philanthropy, including the establishment of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Gates and his wife endowed the foundation with $24 billion to support philanthropic initiatives in the areas of global health and learning. For example, Gates made plans in February 2004 to donate $82.9 million for research to develop a new vaccine against tuberculosis. In addition to his duties at Microsoft and his efforts in philanthropy, Gates sat on the board of ICOS, a company that specialized in protein-based and small-molecule therapeutics.

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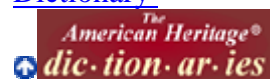
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Gates, William Henry (Known as "Bill.") Born 1955.

American computer software designer and business executive who cofounded Microsoft in 1975 and as chairman built it into one of the largest computer software manufacturers in the world.

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Bill Gates

(born Oct. 28, 1955, Seattle, Wash., U.S.) U.S. computer programmer and businessman. As a teenager, he helped computerize his high school's payroll system and founded a company that sold traffic-counting systems to local governments. At 19 he dropped out of Harvard University and cofounded Microsoft Corp. with Paul G. Allen (b. 1954). Microsoft began its domination of the fledgling microcomputer industry when Gates licensed the operating system MS-DOS to IBM in 1980 for use in IBM's first personal computer. As Microsoft's largest shareholder, Gates became a billionaire in 1986, and within a decade he was the world's richest private individual. Beginning in 1995, he refocused Microsoft on the development of software solutions for the Internet, and he also moved the company into the computer hardware and gaming markets with the Xbox video machine. In 1999 he and his wife created the largest charitable foundation in the U.S.

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From our Archives: Today's Highlights, October 28, 2005
Happy 50th birthday to mogul Bill Gates. The computer geek and Harvard's most famous drop-out joined forces with Paul Allen to found Microsoft in 1974 and sold the MS-DOS operating system to IBM. Both men now number among the world's richest people. Their corporation went on to create the Windows operating systems and became the world's largest producer of software for microcomputers. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation donates millions of dollars to global health care, education, libraries and the Pacific Northwest.

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Gates, Bill (William Henry Gates 3d), 1955–, American business executive, b. Seattle, Wash. At the age of 19, Gates founded (1974) the Microsoft Corp., a computer software firm, with Paul Allen. They began by purchasing the rights to convert an existing software package. In 1980 they agreed to produce the operating system for the personal computer being developed by International Business Machines (IBM). That system, MS-DOS (Microsoft Disk Operating System), and subsequent programs (including the Windows operating systems) made Microsoft the world's largest producer of software for microcomputers.

In 1997 the U.S. Justice Dept. accused Microsoft of violating a 1995 antitrust agreement, because the Windows 95 operating system required consumers to load Microsoft's Internet browser—thus giving Microsoft a monopolistic advantage over other browser manufacturers. In late 1999 the trial judge decided that Microsoft was a monopoly that had stifled competition, and the following June he ordered the breakup of Microsoft into two companies, a decision that Microsoft appealed. Although the appeals court overturned (2001) the breakup, it agreed that Microsoft had stifled competition and returned the case to a lower court for resolution. Subsequently the government and the company agreed to a settlement that placed some restrictions on Microsoft but would not essentially diminish the advantage its operating system monopoly gave the software giant; several states contested the settlement, but a judge approved it in 2002. In the European Union the company has also faced scrutiny over anticompetitive concerns, and there it has twice (2004, 2006) been fined hundreds of millions of euros.

Gates, who is chairman of Microsoft, is the wealthiest person in the world, with assets estimated in the early 21st cent. at some $50 billion. In 1994 he founded the William H. Gates Foundation (focusing on health issues in developing countries) and in 1997 established the Gates Library Foundation, later renamed the Gates Learning Foundation (providing education assistance). In 1999 the former was renamed the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the latter was merged (2000) into it. He subsequently (2006) announced that, while remaining as company chairman, over a two-year period he would withdraw from daily participation in the running of Microsoft in order to devote more time to the foundation. Gates has written *The Road Ahead* (1995, with N. Myhrvold and P. Rinearson) and *Business @ the Speed of Thought* (1999).

Bibliography

See J. Wallace, *Hard Drive* (1992).

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Note: click on a word meaning below to see its connections and related words.

The *noun* William Henry Gates has one meaning:

[Meaning #1](#): United States computer entrepreneur whose software company made him the youngest multi-billionaire in the history of the United States (born in 1955)
  Synonyms: [Gates](#), [Bill Gates](#)

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Bill Gates

Quotes:

❝*We all learn best in our own ways. Some people do better studying one subject at a time, while some do better studying three things at once. Some people do best studying in structured, linear way, while others do best jumping around, surrounding a subject rather than traversing it. Some people prefer to learn by manipulating models, and others by reading.*❞

❝*There are no significant bugs in our released software that any significant number of users want fixed*❞

❝*Often you have to rely on intuition.*❞

For more famous quotes by Bill Gates, visit [QuotationsBook](#).

Wikipedia

Bill Gates

William Henry Gates III

Bill Gates at IT Forum in Copenhagen, Denmark, November 16, 2004, photo by Kees de Vos

Born:	October 28 1955 (age 51) Seattle, Washington, USA
Occupation:	Chairman, Microsoft
Salary:	US$966,667[1]
Net worth:	▲7.5% to US$53.0 billion (2006)[2]
Spouse:	Melinda Gates
Children:	3
Website:	microsoft.com/billgates Gates Foundation

For other persons named Bill Gates, see Bill Gates (disambiguation).

William Henry Gates III (born October 28 1955 in Seattle, Washington) is an American entreprenuer and the co-founder, chairman, former chief software architect, and former chief executive officer of Microsoft, the world's leading software company. *Forbes* magazine's The World's Billionaires list has ranked him as the richest person on earth for the last thirteen consecutive years, with a current net worth of approximately $53 billion. When family wealth is considered, his family ranks second behind the Walton family.[3][4]

Gates is one of the best-known entrepreneurs of the personal computer revolution. He is widely respected for his foresight and ambition.[5][6] He is also frequently criticized as having built Microsoft through unfair or unlawful business practices. Since amassing his fortune, Gates has pursued a number of philanthropic endeavors, donating large amounts of money to various charitable organizations and scientific research programs through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, founded in 2000.

Early life

William Henry Gates III was born in Seattle, Washington to William H. Gates, Jr. (now *Sr.*) and Mary Maxwell Gates. His family was wealthy; his father was a prominent lawyer, his mother served on the board of directors for First Interstate Bank and the United Way, and her father, J. W. Maxwell, was a national bank president. Gates has one older sister, Kristi (Kristianne), and one younger sister, Libby. He was the fourth of his name in his family, but was known as William Gates III or "Trey" because his father had dropped his own "III" suffix.[7] Several sources have claim that Maxwell set up a million-dollar trust fund for Gates.[8] However, a 1993 biographer who interviewed both Gates and his parents (among other sources) found no evidence of this and dismissed it as one of the "fictions" surrounding Gates's fortune.[7] Gates vehemently denied the trust fund story in a 1994 interview with *Playboy*,[9]

Gates excelled in elementary school, particularly in mathematics and the sciences. At thirteen he enrolled in the Lakeside School, Seattle's most exclusive preparatory school where tuition in 1967 was $5,000 (Harvard tuition that year was $1,760). When he was in the eighth grade, Lakeside obtained an ASR-33 teletype terminal and a donation of computer time on a General Electric computer from a "Mothers Club" rummage sale.[7] Gates took an interest in programming the GE system in BASIC and was excused from math classes to pursue his interest. After the Mothers Club donation was exhausted he and other students sought time on other systems, including DEC PDP minicomputers. One of these systems was a PDP-10 belonging to Computer Center Corporation, which banned the Lakeside students for the summer after it caught them exploiting bugs in the operating system to obtain free computer time.

Bill Gates was arrested at least twice in New Mexico: once in 1975 for speeding and driving without a license, and in 1977 when this photograph was taken.

At the end of the ban, the Lakeside students (Gates, Paul Allen, Ric Weiland, and Kent Evans) offered to find bugs in CCC's software in exchange for free computer

time. Rather than use the system via teletype, Gates went to CCC's offices and studied source code for various programs that ran on the system, not only in BASIC but FORTRAN, LISP, and machine language as well. The arrangement with CCC continued until 1970, when it went out of business. The following year Information Sciences Inc. hired the Lakeside students to write a payroll program in COBOL, providing them not only computer time but royalties as well. Gates also formed a venture with Allen, called Traf-O-Data, to make traffic counters based on the Intel 8008 processor.[10][11]

According to a press inquiry, Bill Gates stated that he scored 1590 on his SATs.[12] He enrolled at Harvard University in the fall of 1973 intending to get a pre-law degree,[13] but did not have a definite study plan,[14] While at Harvard he met his future business partner, Steve Ballmer.

Microsoft

Main article: Microsoft

BASIC

After reading the January 1975 issue of *Popular Electronics* that demonstrated the Altair 8800, Gates contacted MITS (Micro Instrumentation and Telemetry Systems), the creators of the new microcomputer, to inform them that he and others were working on a BASIC interpreter for the platform.[15] In reality, Gates and Allen did not have an Altair and had not written code for it; they merely wanted to gauge MITS's interest. MITS president Ed Roberts agreed to meet them for a demo, and over the course of a few weeks they developed an Altair emulator that ran on a minicomputer, and then the BASIC interpreter. The demonstration, held at MITS's offices in Albuquerque, was a success and resulted in a deal with MITS to distribute the interpreter as Altair BASIC. Gates took a leave of absence from Harvard to work with Allen at MITS, and they dubbed their partnership Micro-Soft.[16]

In 1984, Bill Gates appeared on the cover of TIME Magazine; he has since appeared seven more times.

Microsoft's BASIC was popular with computer hobbyists, but Gates discovered that a pre-market copy had leaked into the community and was being widely copied and distributed. In February 1976, Gates wrote an Open Letter to Hobbyists in the MITS newsletter saying that MITS could not continue to produce, distribute, and maintain high-quality software without payment.[17] This letter was unpopular with many computer hobbyists, but Gates persisted in his belief that software developers should be able to demand payment. Microsoft became independent of MITS in late 1976, and it continued to develop programming language software for various systems.

Gates with Steve Jurvetson of DFJ, Stratton Sclavos of Verisign and Greg Papadopoulos of Sun Microsystems, October 1, 2004.

According to Gates, people at Microsoft often did more than one job during the early years; whoever answered the phone when an order came in was responsible for packing and mailing it. Gates oversaw the business details, but continued to write code as well. In the first five years, he personally reviewed every line of code the company shipped, and often rewrote parts of it as he saw fit.

IBM partnership

In 1980 IBM approached Microsoft to make the BASIC interpreter for its upcoming personal computer, the IBM PC. When IBM's representatives mentioned that they needed an operating system, Bill Gates referred them to Digital Research, makers of the widely used CP/M operating system.[18] Despite at least two rounds of negotiation, IBM and DRI did not reach a licensing agreement. IBM representative Jack Sams mentioned the licensing difficulties during a subsequent meeting with Gates, and Gates told him about 86-DOS (QDOS), an operating system similar to CP/M that Seattle Computer Products had made for hardware similar to the PC. Gates asked Sams whether he wanted to talk to SCP or let Gates arrange the deal, and Sams left the negotiations to Gates. Microsoft made a deal with SCP to become the exclusive licensing agent for 86-DOS, but did not mention that IBM was a potential customer. After adapting the operating system for the PC, Microsoft delivered it to IBM as PC-DOS in exchange for a one-time fee.[19] Gates never understood why DRI had walked away from the deal, and in later years he claimed that DRI founder Gary Kildall capriciously "went flying" during an IBM appointment, a characterization that Kildall and other DR employees would deny.

Later, after Compaq successfully cloned the IBM BIOS, the market saw a flood of IBM PC clones.[20] Microsoft was quick to license DOS to other manufacturers,

calling it [MS-DOS](#) (for Microsoft [Disk](#) [Operating System](#)). By marketing MS-DOS aggressively to manufacturers of IBM-PC clones, Microsoft went from a small player to one of the major software vendors in the home computer industry. Microsoft continued to develop operating systems as well as [software applications](#).[21][22]

Windows

See also: [History of Microsoft Windows](#)

In the early 1980s Microsoft introduced its own version of the [graphical user interface](#) (GUI), based on ideas pioneered by the [Xerox](#) corporation, and further pioneered and developed by Apple.[23] Microsoft released "[Windows](#)" as an addition and alternative to their DOS command line, and to compete with other systems on the market that employed a GUI. By the early 1990s, Windows had pushed other DOS-based GUIs like [GEM](#) and [GEOS](#) out of the market. The release of [Windows 3.0](#) in 1990 was a tremendous success, selling around 10 million copies in the first two years and cementing Microsoft's dominance in operating systems sales.[24]

By continuing to ensure, by various means, that most computers came with Microsoft software pre-installed, the Microsoft corporation eventually became the largest software company in the world, earning Gates enough money that [Forbes Magazine](#) named him the wealthiest person in the world for several years.[25][26] Gates served as the [CEO](#) of the company until 2000, when [Steve Ballmer](#) took the position.[15] Microsoft has thousands of patents, and Gates has nine patents to his name.[27]

Bill Gates' role

Bill Gates giving his deposition at Microsoft on [August 27](#) [1998](#)

Since Microsoft's founding in 1975 and as of 2006, Gates has had primary responsibility for Microsoft's product strategy. He has aggressively broadened the company's range of products, and wherever Microsoft has achieved a dominant position he has vigorously defended it. Many decisions that have led to [antitrust](#) litigation over Microsoft's [business practices](#) have had Gates' approval. In the 1998 *[United States v. Microsoft](#)* case, Gates gave deposition testimony that several journalists characterized as evasive. He argued over the definitions of words such as: *compete*, *concerned*, *ask*, and *we*.[28] BusinessWeek reported:

Early rounds of his deposition show him offering obfuscatory answers and saying 'I don't recall' so many times that even the presiding judge had to chuckle. Worse, many of the technology chief's denials and pleas of ignorance were directly refuted by prosecutors with snippets of e-mail Gates both sent and received.[29]

Despite denials by Bill Gates, the judge ruled that Microsoft had committed monopolization and tying, blocking competition, in violation of the Sherman Act.

Gates meets regularly with Microsoft's senior managers and program managers. By all accounts he can be extremely confrontational during these meetings, particularly when he believes that managers have not thought out their business strategy or have placed the company's future at risk.[30][31] He has been described shouting at length at employees before letting them continue, with such remarks as "That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard!" and "Why don't you just give up your options and join the Peace Corps?"[32] However, he often backs down when the targets of his outbursts respond frankly and directly.[33] When he is not impressed with the technical hurdles managers claim to be facing, he sometimes quips, "Do you want me to do it over the weekend?"[34]

Gates' role at Microsoft for most of its history has been primarily a management and executive role. However, he was an active software developer in the early years, particularly on the company's programming language products. He has not officially been on a development team since working on the TRS-80 Model 100 line, but he wrote code as late as 1989 that shipped in the company's products.[35] On June 15 2006, Gates announced that he would transition out of his day-to-day role over the next two years to dedicate more time to philanthropy. He appointed Ray Ozzie as the new Chief Software Architect and planned to remain as chairman, advising the company on key projects.[36] One of his last initiatives before announcing his departure was the creation of a robotics software group at Microsoft.

Personal life

Bill Gates and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in Davos. January 26 2003

Bill Gates married Melinda French of Dallas, Texas on January 1 1994. They have three children: Jennifer Katharine Gates (1996), Rory John Gates (1999) and Phoebe Adele Gates (2002). Bill Gates' house is one of the most expensive houses in the world, and is a modern 21st century earth-sheltered home in the side of a hill

overlooking Lake Washington in Medina, Washington. According to King County public records, as of 2006, the total assessed value of the property (land and house) is $125 million, and the annual property tax is just under $1 million. Also among Gates' private acquisitions are the Codex Leicester and a collection of writings by Leonardo da Vinci which Gates bought for USD $30.8 million at an auction in 1994.[37]

Gates's e-mail address has been widely publicized and he received as many as 4,000,000 e-mails per day in 2004, most of which were spam. He has almost an entire department devoted to filtering out junk emails.[38] Gates says that most of this junk mail "offers to help [him] get out of debt or get rich quick," which "would be funny if it weren't so irritating."[39]

Wealth and investments

Gates in Poland, 2006

Gates has been number one on the "Forbes 400" list from 1993 through to 2006 and number one on *Forbes* list of "The World's Richest People" from 1995-2006 with 50 billion US dollars. In 1999, Gates' wealth briefly surpassed $100 billion making him the world's first centibillionaire (as measured in U.S. dollars).[40] Since 2000 the nominal value of his Microsoft holdings has declined due to a fall in Microsoft's stock price after the dot-com bubble and the multi-billion dollar donations he has made to his charitable foundations. In May 2006, Gates said in an interview that he wished that he were not the richest man in the world, stating that he disliked the attention it brought.[41]

Gates has several investments outside Microsoft. He founded Corbis, a digital imaging company, in 1989. In 2004 he became a director of Berkshire Hathaway, the investment company headed by longtime friend Warren Buffett.[42] He is a client of Cascade Investment Group, a wealth management firm with diverse holdings.

Philanthropy

In 2000, Gates founded the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, a charitable organization, with his wife. The foundation's grants have provided funds for college scholarships for under-represented minorities, AIDS prevention, diseases prevalent in third world countries, and other causes. In 2000, the Gates Foundation endowed the University of Cambridge with $210 million for the Gates Cambridge Scholarships. The Foundation has also pledged over $7 billion to its various causes, including $1 billion to the United Negro College Fund. According to a 2004 *Forbes* magazine

article, Gates gave away over $29 billion to charities from 2000 onwards. These donations are usually cited as sparking a substantial change in attitudes towards philanthropy among the very rich, with philanthropy becoming the norm.[43]

On June 16, 2006, Bill Gates announced that he would move to a part-time role with Microsoft (leaving day-to-day operations management) in 2008 to begin a full-time career in philanthropy, but would remain as chairman. Days later Warren Buffett announced that he would begin matching Gates's contributions to the Foundation.[44]

Publicity

Awards and recognition

Time Magazine named Gates one of the 100 people who most influenced the 20th century, as well as one of the 100 most influential people of 2004, 2005 and again in 2006. Gates and Oprah Winfrey are the only two people to make all four lists. Time also collectively named Gates, his wife Melinda and U2's lead singer Bono as the 2005 Persons of the Year for their humanitarian efforts. That same year he was made an honorary Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth II. In 2006, Gates Foundation was awarded the *Premio Príncipe de Asturias en Cooperación Internacional*. In a list compiled by the magazine *New Statesman* in 2006, he was voted eighth in the list of "Heroes of our time".[45] Gates was listed in the *Sunday Times* power list in 1999, named CEO of the year by *Chief Executive Officers magazine* in 1994, ranked number one in the "Top 50 Cyber Elite" by *Time* in 1998, ranked number two in the *Upside* Elite 100 in 1999 and was included in *The Guardian* as one of the "Top 100 influential people in media" in 2001.

Gates has received three honorary doctorates, from the Nyenrode Business Universiteit, Breukelen, The Netherlands in 2000,[46] the Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden in 2002 and Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan in 2005. Gates was also given an honorary KBE (Knighthood) from Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom in 2005,[47] in addition to having entomologists name the Bill Gates flower fly, *Eristalis gatesi*, in his honor.[48]

Bill and Melinda received the Prince of Asturias Award for International Cooperation on May 4, 2006, in recognition of their world impact through charity giving.[49] In November 2006, he and his wife were awarded the Order of the Aztec Eagle for their philanthropic work around the world in the areas of health and education, particularly in Mexico, and specifically in the program "Un país de lectores".[50]

Popular portrayals

> Main article: *List of portrayals of and references to Bill Gates*

Gates is often characterized as the quintessential example of a super-intelligent "nerd" with immense power and wealth. This has in turn led to pop culture stereotypes of Gates as a tyrant or evil genius, often resorting to ruthless business techniques. As such he has been the subject of numerous parodies in film, television, and video games.

Works

Bill Gates at Consumer Electronics Show, January 4, 2006

Gates has published several essays throughout the years based on his theories, predictions and visions of the computing industry. In these publications he often expresses his personal views on current topics, and discusses Microsoft's plans. His writings have been published by *BusinessWeek*, *Newsweek*, *USA Today*, *The Economist* and *Time*. Some of his publications since 1997 include:

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- *The New World of Work*, Executive E-mail, May 19 2005
- *The PC Era Is Just Beginning*, Business Week, March 22 2005
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Key figures of **[Microsoft](#)** history
Bill Gates - [Steve Ballmer](#) - [James Allchin](#) - [Paul Allen](#)

Persondata

NAME	Gates, William Henry,III
ALTERNATIVE NAMES	Gates, Bill
SHORT DESCRIPTION	Business entrepreneur
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PLACE OF BIRTH	[Seattle, Washington](#)
DATE OF DEATH	N/A
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"Most of what I do is leading," Gates once said in *Electronic Business*. "Managing applies to the people who work directly for me" (August 15, 1988).