Ports Parallel vs Serial

Q: What's the difference between parallel and serial ports?

A: The most obvious difference is size. The parallel port on the back of your computer is a 25-pin port, while the serial port has room for nine pins.

But the real difference is in the way they handle data. A serial port processes data one bit at a time. A parallel port processes more than one bit at a time. Parallel ports typically are used for connecting accessories, such as printers, CD-ROM drives and tape backups, that require high data speeds.

Serial ports generally are used to connect accessories that can run at slower speeds, such as joysticks, modems and scanners.

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