US computer and electronics company, manufacturer of the iPodMP3 music player, iPhone multimedia mobile telephone, Macintosh range of computers, and iPad tablet computer.

The company was founded in 1976 by Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak, who released the Apple II computer the following year. The Apple Lisa, introduced in 1983, was the first computer with a graphical user interface (GUI) and a mouse. The first Macintosh computer made its debut the following year, but its proprietary design meant that it was never able to gain enough market share to compete with thousands of firms making computers compatible with IBM's PCs. In 1994 Apple licensed the Macintosh for the first time, thus enabling other manufacturers to make cheaper machines, the first appearing in 1996. Apple proved unable to compete, however, and reversed its licensing strategy. The Macintosh developed a very strong following in the creative world, particularly in the publishing and the multimedia industries, thanks to its ease of use and the availability of the most popular software for these applications.

By 1997, the company was suffering low share prices and financial losses. Steve Jobs returned to run the company and began a process of product redesign that led to the introduction of the iMac in 1998.

In the 2000s, Apple began to focus on other electronic consumer goods such as mobile phones and portable media players. The company also began producing a range of professional and consumer software for video, photo, and music creation and editing, leading to the consumer iLife suite of software.

The company opened the first Apple shops in the USA in 2001, after launching the iPod MP3 music player. In 2003, Apple entered the music sector with the launch in the USA of its iTunes Music Store, an online music download service. In 2006 Apple launched its first Intel-chip computers, which can run both Windows and Mac operating systems. The following year Apple launched the iPhone, a combination mobile phone, MP3 music player, and Internet access device. The iPad, a tablet computer and e-reader, was introduced in 2010. In 2011, the company announced the introduction of iCloud, a Web-based system that allows customers to store music, photos, and documents online.

In the first decade of the 21st century, Apple redefined the music industry through the iPod and iTunes.
The iPhone had a similar effect on the mobile phone industry. The success of the company since 1998 was widely attributed to the return of Steve Jobs. In August 2011 Jobs stood down as CEO owing to ill health, but he continued to work for Apple as chair of the board until his death in October 2011.

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