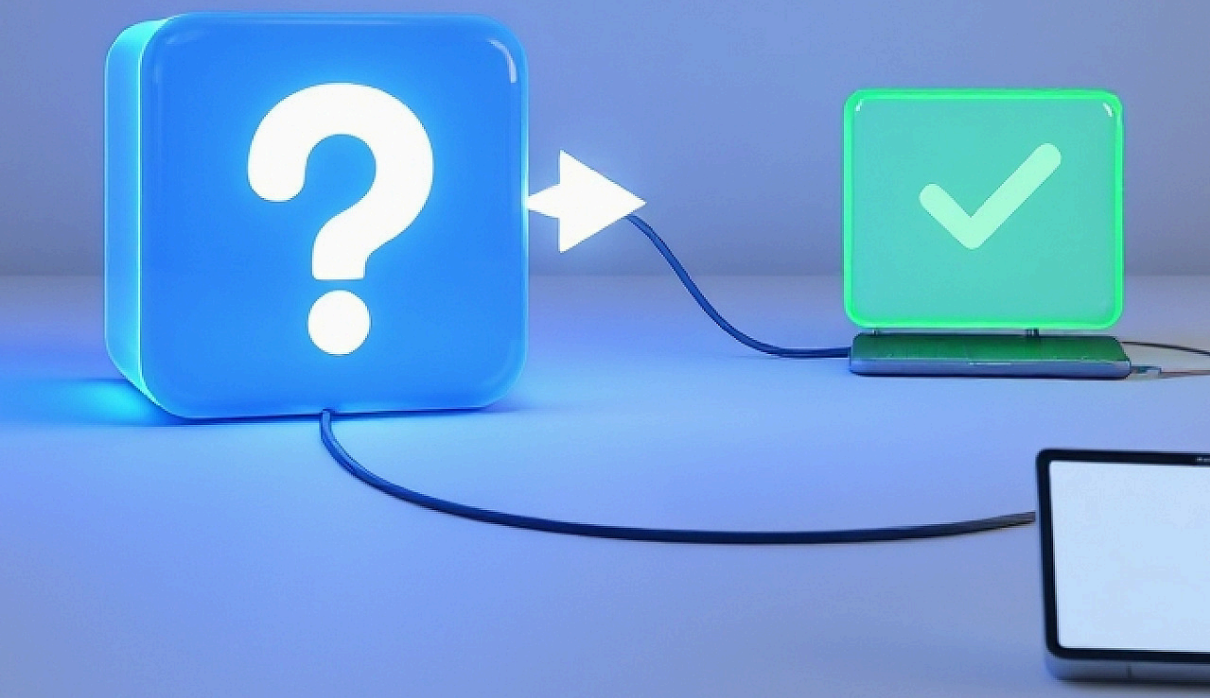
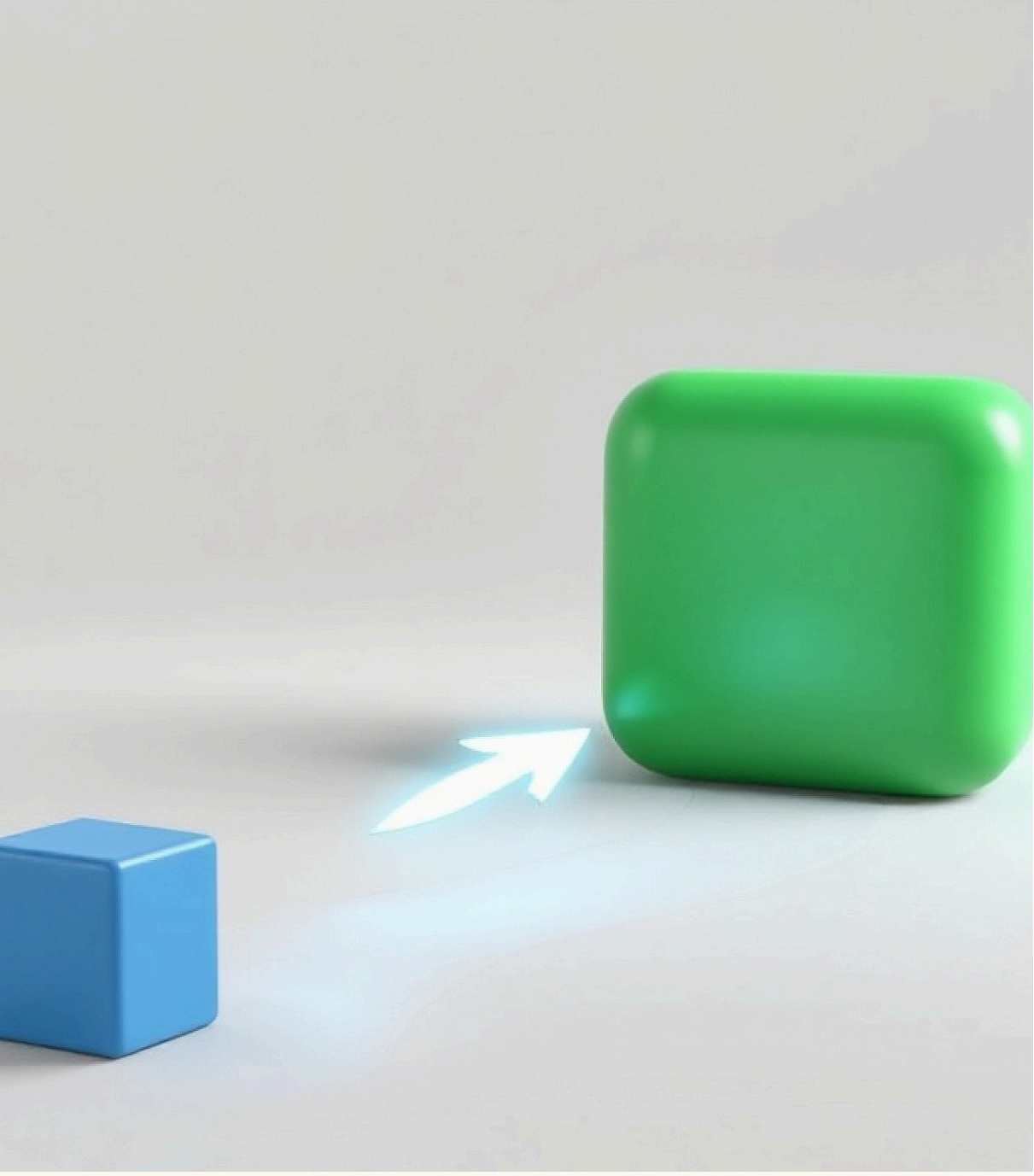
What is a client?

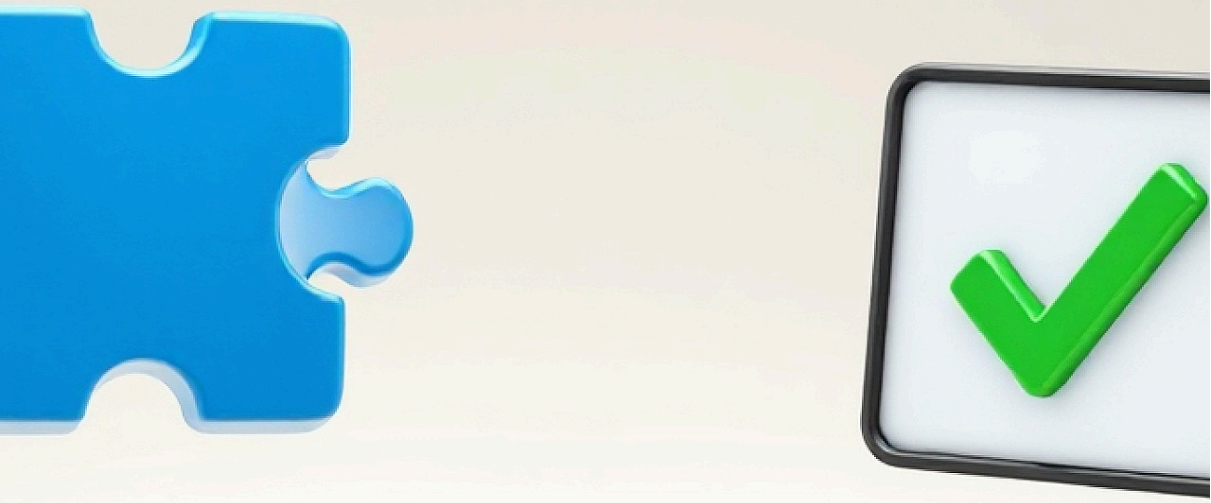


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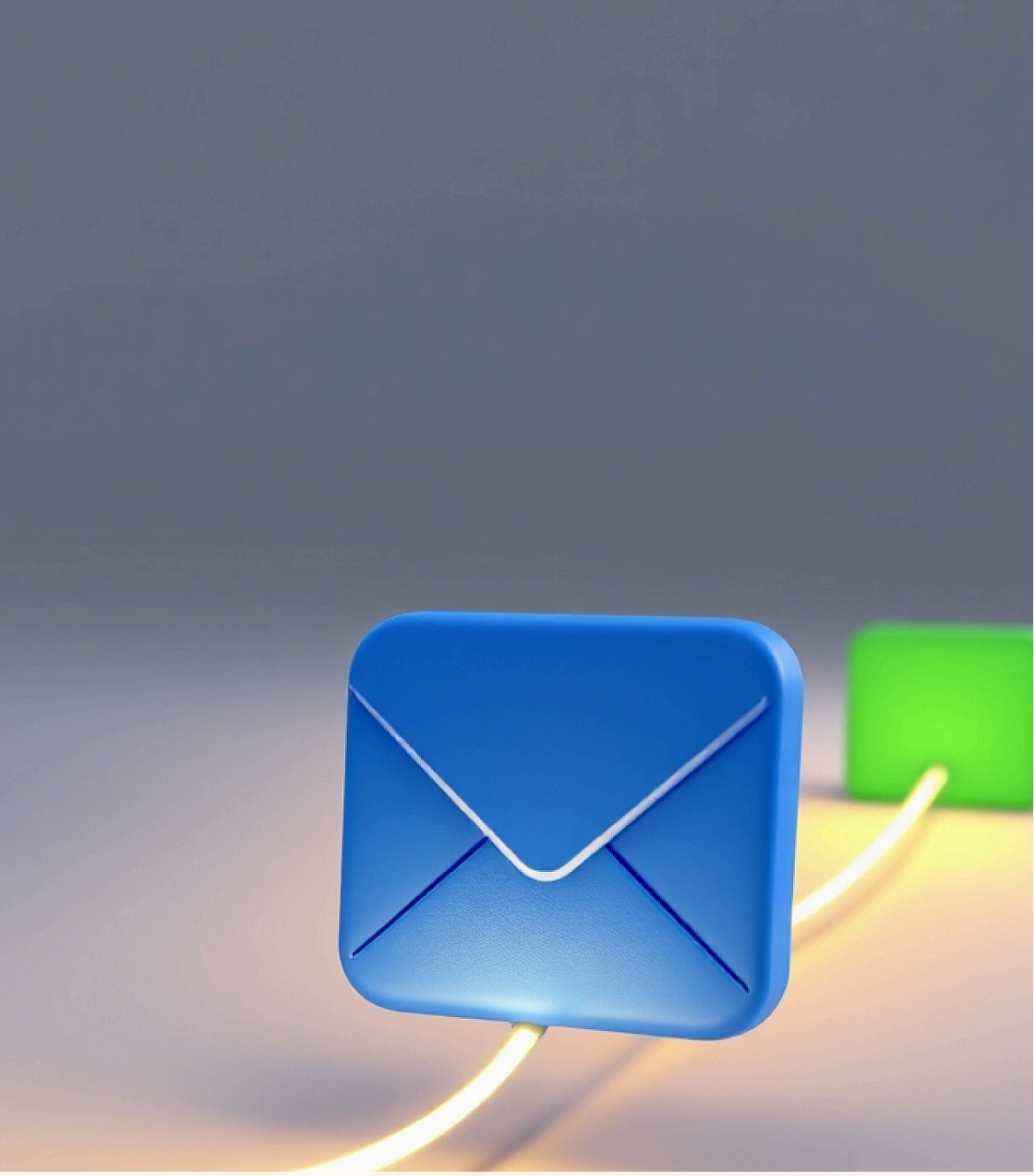
What is a client?



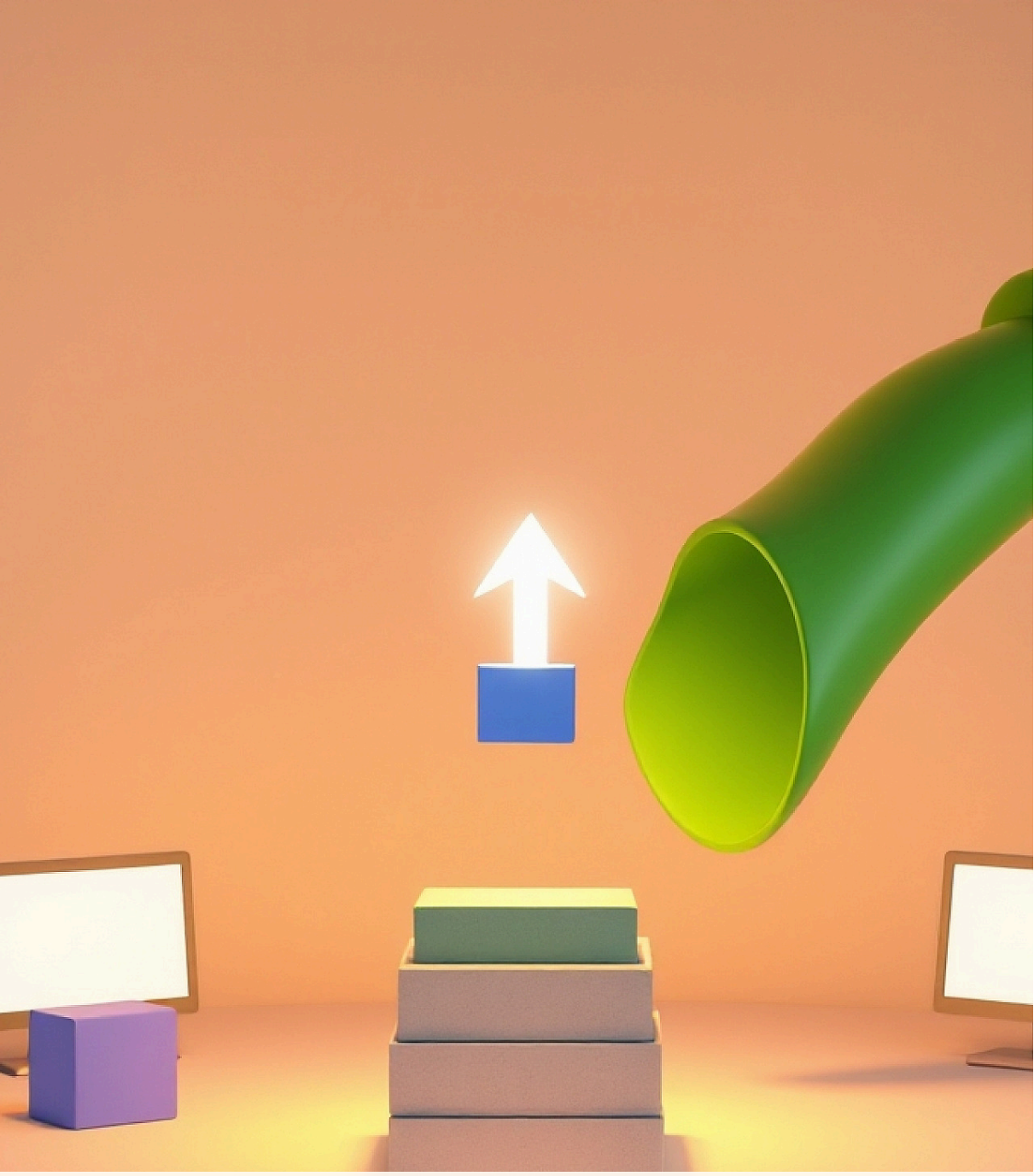
You have likely heard the word client in computing and want to know what it means. The short answer is simple: a client is a program or device that sends requests to a server in order to use a service. This book explains that answer step by step, starting from zero, so you can understand exactly what a client is and how it works.



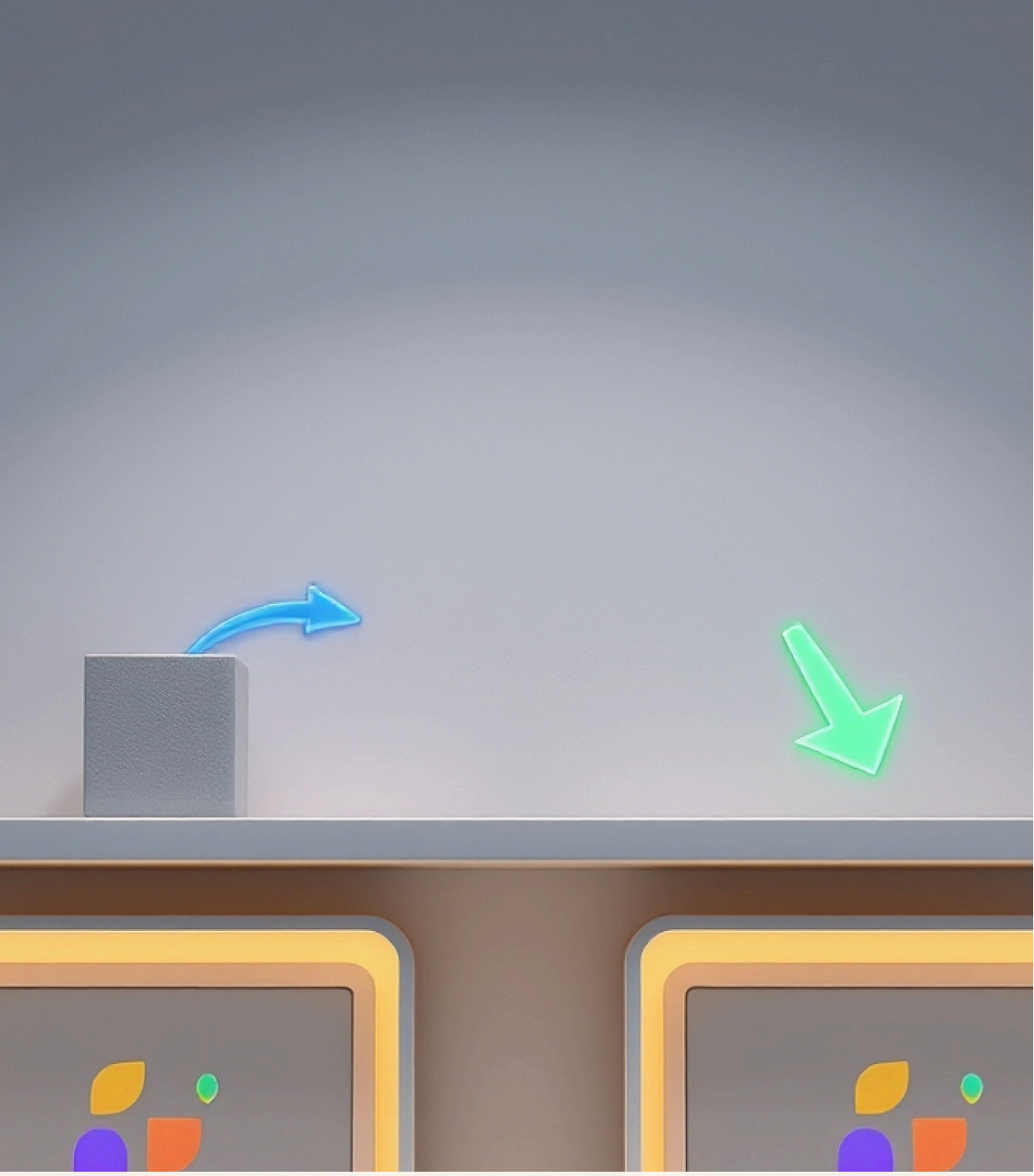
Any communication has two sides: one side asks for something, and the other side answers. Think of a question and an answer. The side that asks is called the client. The side that answers is called the server. These two roles work together in every exchange, and knowing which is which helps you understand networks.



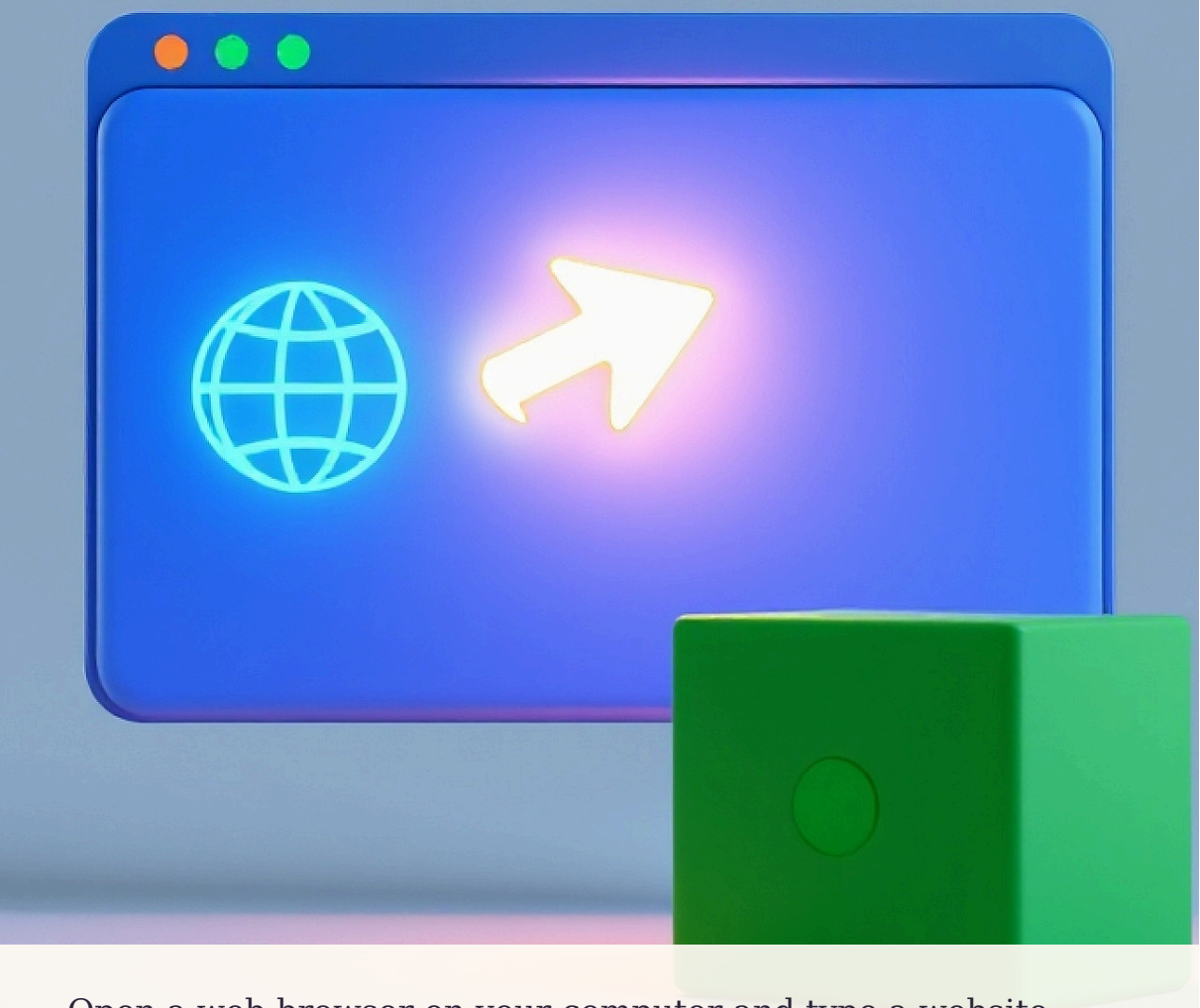
A request is a message that says please give me something or please do something for me. When you use a program that needs information from another computer, that program sends a request. The client is the one who sends this message. The request travels over a network to reach the server that can fulfill it.



The server is the side that receives requests and sends back answers. When a client asks for something, the server finds it and responds. The client and server work as a pair: one asks, the other answers. Without a server, a client would have no one to send its requests to, so both roles are needed for communication.



Client describes what a device or program is doing at that moment, not what it looks like. The same device can be a client now and something else later. For example, your laptop is a client when it requests a web page, but it could be a server if it sends files to another device. The word names a role, not a machine.



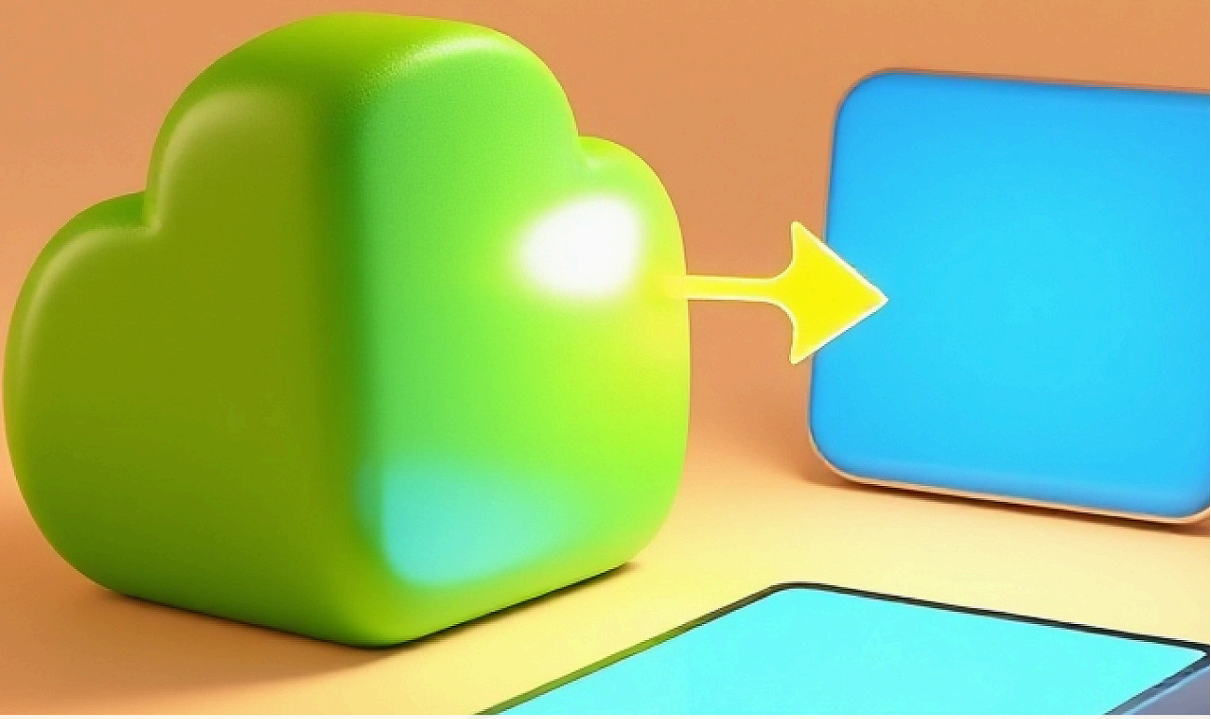
Open a web browser on your computer and type a website address. The browser sends a request to the web server that holds that website. In this exchange, the browser is acting as the client. It asks for the page, and the web server is the one that will answer. This is the most common example of a client.



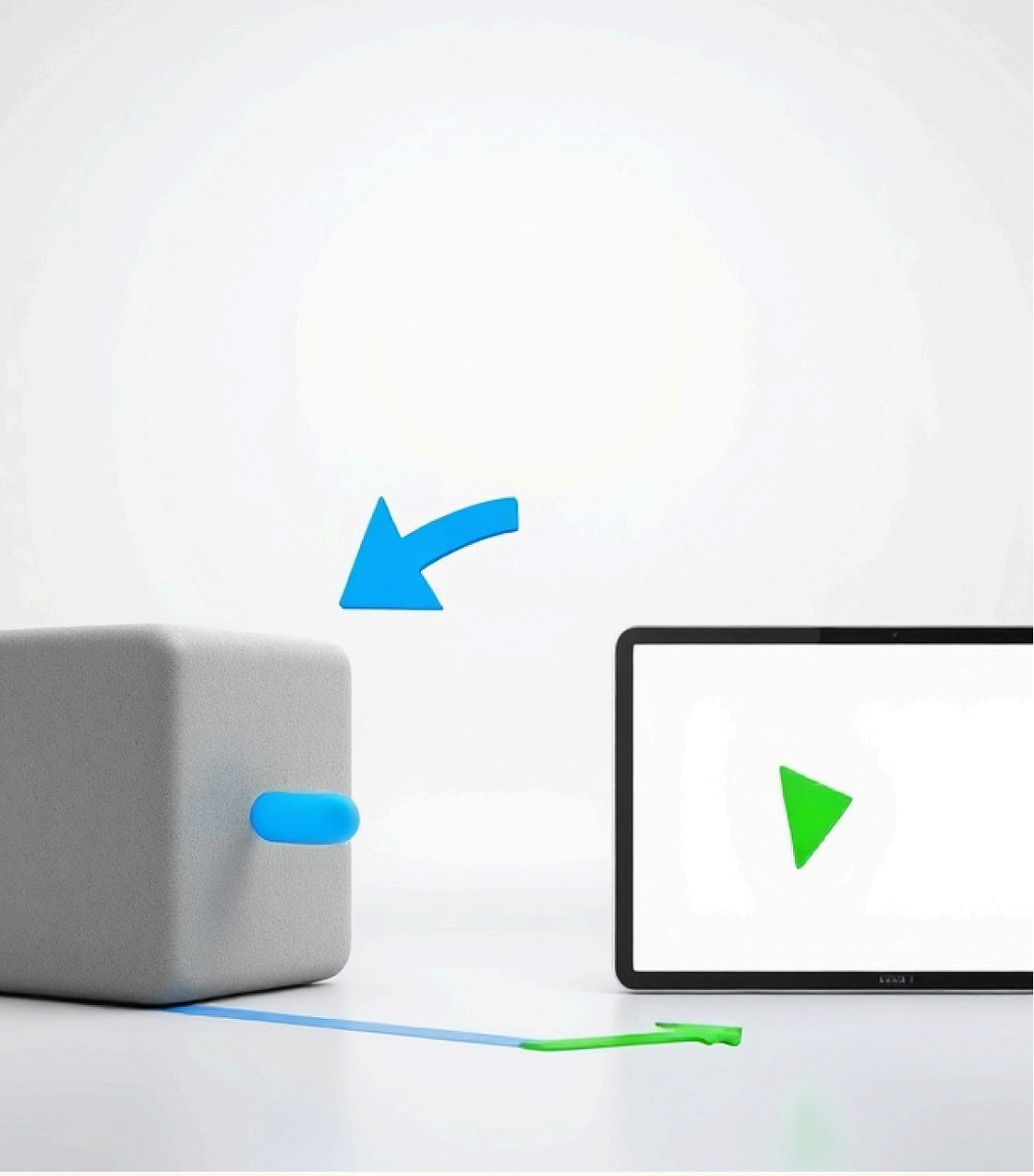
The web server receives the browser's request and sends back the page you asked for. Your browser then displays it on your screen. The client asked, and the server answered. This request-and-answer cycle happens every time you visit a website, and it shows the client-server pair in action.



A weather app on your phone needs current weather data. When you open it, the app connects to a weather service and sends a request for the data. Here the weather app is the client, and the weather service is the server. The app asks for information, and the service is set up to provide it.



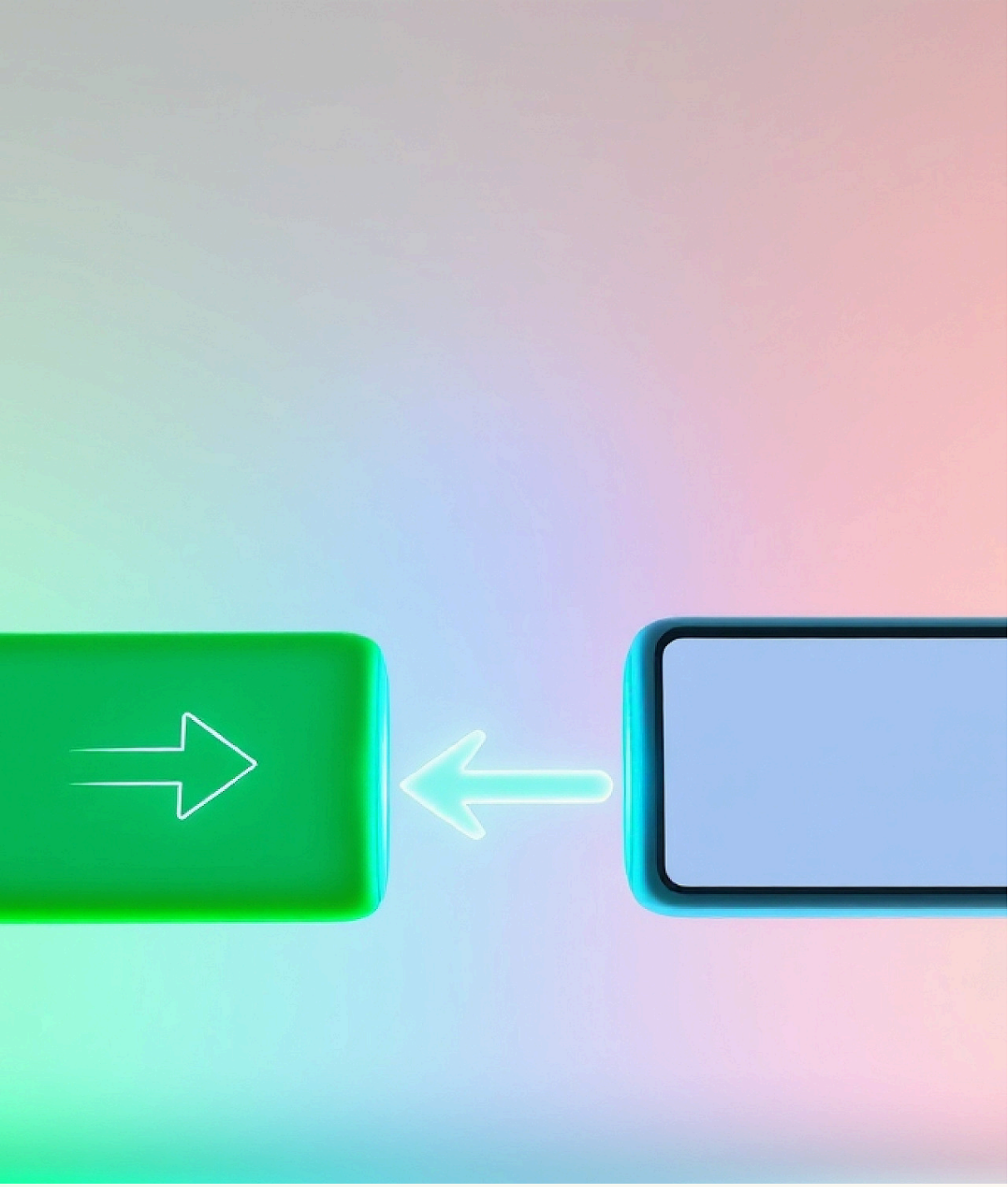
The weather service sends the data back to your app. The app receives it and shows you the forecast on your screen. This works because the app made the request as a client. Without that request, the service would not know to send anything. The client starts the conversation by asking.



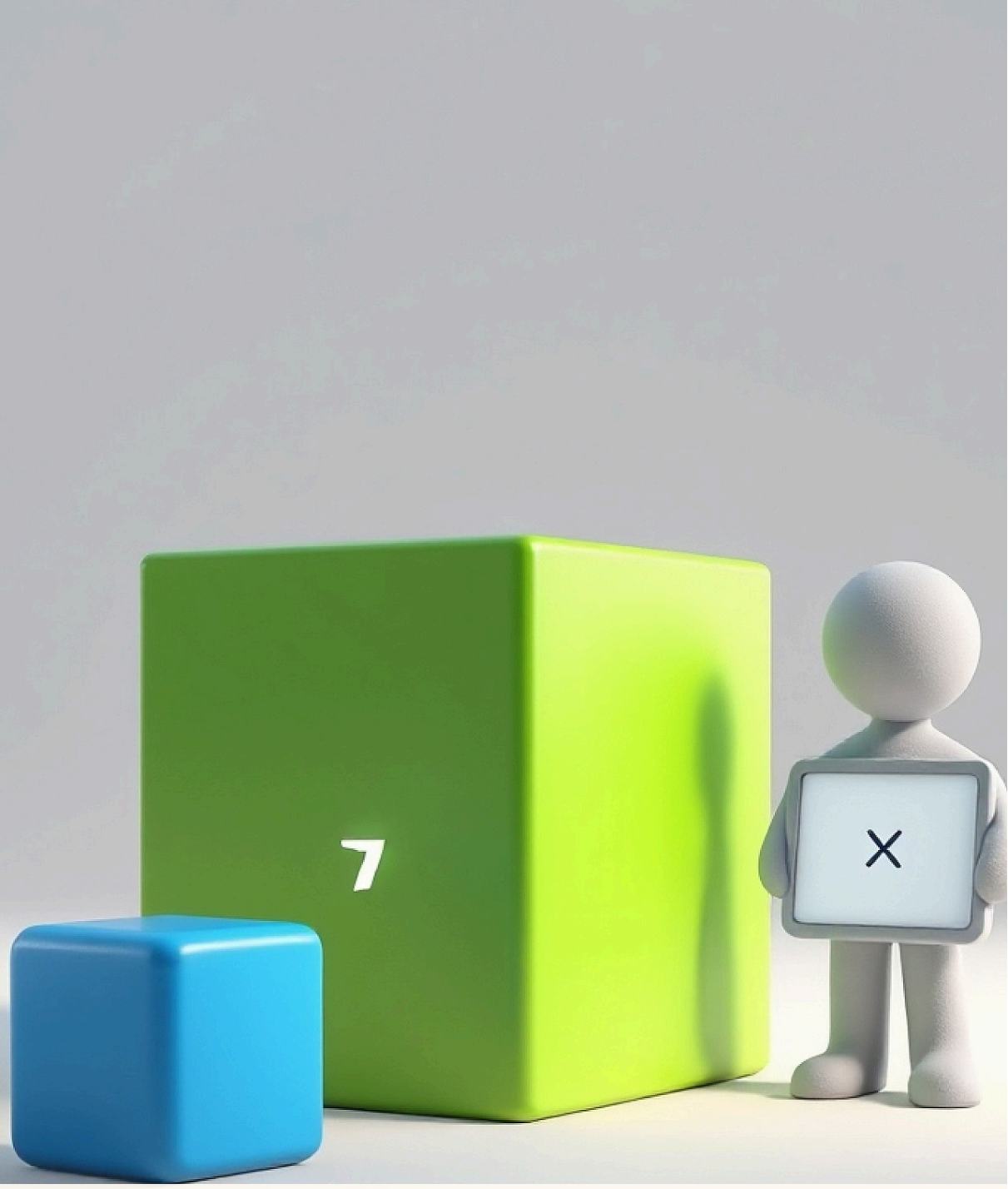
One computer can be a client in one situation and a server in another. For example, your laptop is a client when it requests a web page from a website. But if you run a file-sharing program that sends files to another computer, your laptop acts as a server. The role depends on who is asking and who is answering.



You cannot tell a client by how it looks. A client is not a special box or a particular brand of computer. You tell it by what it is doing in the communication. If a device sends a request to another device, it is acting as a client at that moment. Appearance does not matter; behavior does.



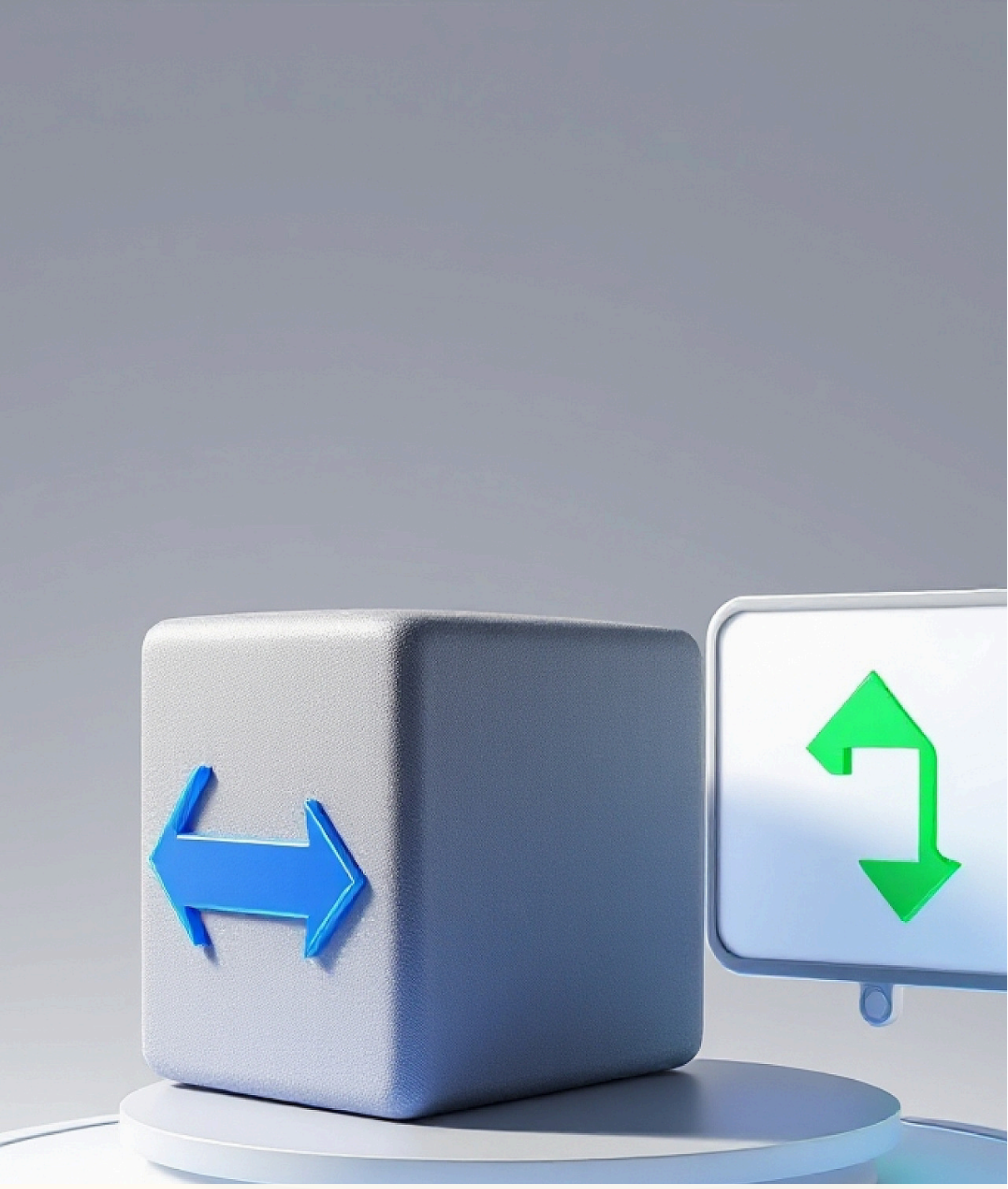
Picture the client and server as two ends of one conversation. One end sends the request, and the other end sends the answer. They need each other to complete the exchange. The client starts by asking, and the server responds with what was asked for. Together they form a complete communication link.



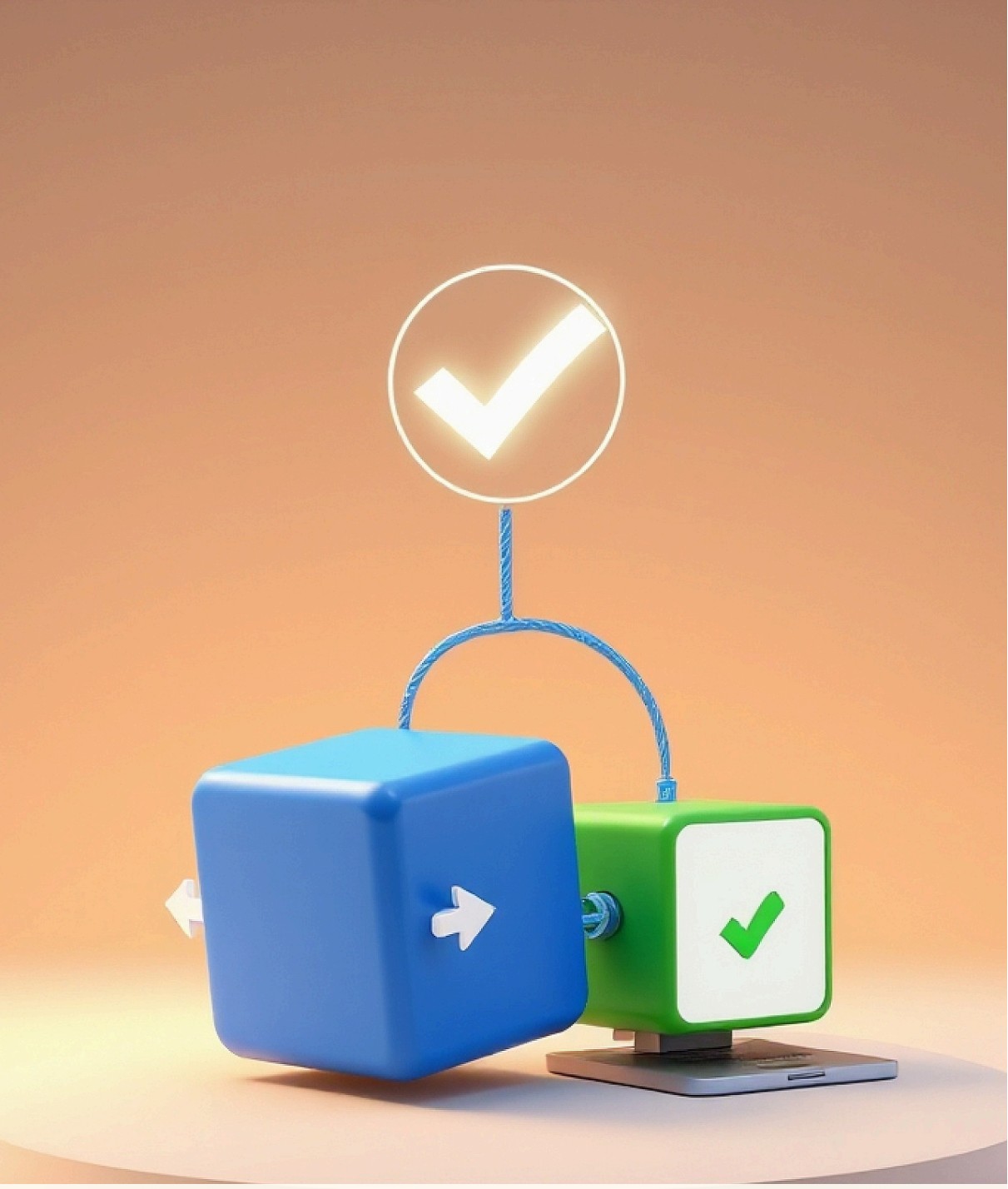
A common mistake is to think a client must be a human customer. In computing, a client is a program or device that sends requests, not a person. When you use a web browser, the browser is the client, not you. You are the user, but the software acts as the client on your behalf.



Another mistake is to think a client is a special type of machine, like a small computer. Any device can take the client role when it sends a request. A phone, a laptop, a tablet, or even a smart speaker can be a client. The word describes what the device does, not what kind of device it is.



A device is not always a client or always a server. The same device can switch roles depending on the situation. Your computer is a client when it asks for a web page, but it can be a server when it provides a file to another device. Roles are temporary and depend on the direction of the request.



To sum up, a client is a program or device that sends requests to a server to use a service. Remember that these words describe a role in communication, not an appearance. Any device can be a client when it asks for something. The key is the action of sending a request, not the type of machine.