



Using the Internet

What is the Internet, anyway?

- Think of “Internet” as short for “**Inter**connected **Net**work.” A **network** is two or more computers that are connected to each other.
- The **Internet** is based on a series of standard technical protocols which allow various computers located around the world to access specified files on other computers and then view those files.
- When you access the Internet, you are simply using a series of protocols that have been developed so that you can view, download, and send and receive data from a computer that isn't yours. Pretty cool, eh?
- Also known as “the Net,” “the Information Superhighway,” “Cyberspace.”

What do I need to connect to the Internet?

- **Hardware**—a telephone modem, a cable modem, DSL (“digital subscriber line”) system, or a wireless card.
- **Software** that allows you to connect. This includes drivers for the above hardware, or software from your ISP.
- **ISP (or Internet Service Provider)**. Examples of ISPs include Bright House (cable modem), Comcast, CenturyLink, Verizon (DSL), AOL, Earthlink, Netzero... your ISP is whoever you **pay** to connect to the Internet.

USING A WEB BROWSER

- To surf the web, you need a **browser** program installed on your computer. Examples of web browsers include Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari, Netscape, Opera, and Flock.
- Each website has a **URL**. This stands for *uniform resource locator*. This is more commonly called a **web address**. Most web addresses start with HTTP:// Each address is unique and stands for a website’s location, like a street address.

What are the basic parts of a browser?

- Most browsers have the same parts as any other window (title bar, scroll bar, File/Edit/View menus, etc).
- **Address bar**: this is where you can see the URL (address) of whatever website you’re visiting. You can also type URLs directly into this box.
- **Back, Forward buttons**: these let you move quickly between recently viewed pages that are stored in the **cache** (the web browser’s memory).
- **Stop button**: stops the web page from loading. Useful if a web page is taking a long time to load, and you don’t want to wait.

- **Refresh/Reload button:** refreshes the web site to update content.
- **Search feature:** Most browsers come with a built in search engine on the top right corner of the browser. You can pick which search engine is the default.
- **Favorites/Bookmarks:** provides a place for you to mark web pages that you like or use a lot.
- **History:** allows you to see a list of pages you have recently visited.

PLACES TO GO, THINGS TO DO

Get an E-mail address:

- **E-mail** means “electronic mail.” You might have an e-mail address provided by an Internet Service Provider, such as AOL or Brighthouse. You may use Microsoft Outlook to access this e-mail.
- The basic look of an e-mail address follows this pattern: **userID@emailprovider.com**. (@ is a symbol for “at”)
- It is free to send an e-mail—no stamp required! You can get a free e-mail account from many different web sites. Here are a few examples:
 - **Yahoo Mail:** <http://mail.yahoo.com>
 - MSN Hotmail: <http://www.hotmail.com>
 - Google’s Gmail: <http://gmail.com>

These services are called **web-based** e-mail because your e-mail is stored remotely, on the web site’s server, as opposed to on your own computer.

Search for Information:

- **Search engines** are used to find information on the Internet. The user enters **keywords** into a search box, and the search engine will return pages that you might want, based on the keywords you choose. If your search does not bring back the results you’re after, try using different search terms.
- Some search engines, like **Yahoo!**, provide a **directory** of web sites. Web directories provide links that are picked and organized by people, not indexed by a computer program like the results on most search engines, thus adding context to your search. <http://dir.yahoo.com/>
- Be on the lookout for “sponsored links.” Although the links might lead you to useful information, search engines will sometimes give priority to links whose companies pay them for advertising, rather than the links that will provide the best information. Usually these links will be labeled as “sponsored” or “paid.”
- Popular search engines:
 - **Google:** <http://www.google.com>
 - **Yahoo!:** <http://www.yahoo.com>
 - **Bing:** <http://www.bing.com/>

- **Ask** (formerly Ask Jeeves): <http://www.ask.com>
 - **Dogpile**: <http://www.dogpile.com>
 - **MSN Search**: <http://search.msn.com>
- Search Engine tips:
 - Use lowercase letters in your search terms. Usually capitalization will not count.
 - Spelling does count, but most search engines will correct you if your spelling is a little off. Try searching for **oseola library** using Google or Yahoo. Both search engines will ask, “Did you mean **Osceola Library?**” and provide a link to search results, using the correct spelling.
 - Choose search terms that are specific, but not too narrow. For example, if you wanted information about adopting a dog, using “dogs” as the search term would be far too broad and return too many results for you to go through. Try “dog adoption.”
 - If your search terms do not return the results you want, go back and try something different. Don’t be afraid to try something new or add to your search terms. To continue using the dog example, maybe you’re only interested in Labradors, or maybe you want to adopt a pet from a local organization. Try using “Labrador” instead of “dog” or add a location to your search terms.
 - Try putting phrases in double quotation marks, “**like this.**”
 - Check the search engine web site for advanced search options that will help you narrow down your results.

INTERNET SAFETY

- **Look out for pop-ups.** Some browsers will allow you to block pop-ups, but others will not. Pop-ups, which are usually advertisements, can be tricky, because sometimes they look like an error message or something you would want to click on. To avoid problems, the best thing to do is to close the pop-up window. Either click the close button (the x) on the pop-up window itself or close the window by right-clicking the button on the desktop task bar and selecting “close.”
- **Look at the web address.** When surfing, you can tell a lot about a web site from its web address, especially the last three letters of that address. Here are some letters you will see the most often:
 - **.com** – Companies
 - **.gov** – Government
 - **.edu** – Educational
 - **.org** – Organizational
 - **.net** – Technology
 - **Designations for other countries** -- **.uk** for the United Kingdom, **.de** for Germany, **.es** for Spain, etc.

Knowing what these letters mean may help you find more reliable information. Say, for example, you need to know where to send your income tax forms. Typing **www.IRS.com** into your web browser brings up a site about taxes that might contain this information. However, the official site for the Internal Revenue Service is **www.IRS.gov** – it has a “dot gov” ending, because it is a government agency. Which site would you trust to provide the correct information?

- **Buying online** can be fun, convenient and safe, too. Always make sure the site you are giving your credit card information is secure. Look for a lock in the corner of your browser and read the company's security policies. The website should provide links to security and privacy policies, but you may have to hunt for it—check for an “About Us” or “Contact Us” link if you can't find it. Do not give your credit card information to a site that is not trustworthy.
- **If it sounds too good to be true...** it probably is. Be wary of any site or e-mail that offers you something for free, like an iPod, or tries to involve you in any sort of financial scheme. Most sites should not ask you for personal information like a social security number or your bank account number. If you encounter a site or receive an e-mail asking for this information, **do not** give out the information. Contact your bank or the company by phone to verify.

Happy Surfing!