

Starting out online

Set up your Web browser and you are ready to surf the Net

Many people are daunted by the idea of venturing onto the Internet. But, in fact, going online for the first time is relatively simple. It is no more difficult than installing a new piece of software.

To connect to the Internet you need a modem and an Internet Service Provider (ISP). You also need a Web browser. This is a piece of software that opens the door through which you enter the world of the Web. Once your browser is set up, you can explore the fascinating world beyond.

Understanding Web browser

A Web browser is a piece of software that allows you to access Web sites and navigate between them. All Web browsers are the same in principle. They contain an address box, in which you type a Web address and an area in which Web pages are displayed.

Two of the most popular browsers, are Microsoft Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator. If you bought your PC in 1999 or later, Microsoft Internet Explorer will almost certainly have come preinstalled on your system. (If you can't see it loaded, consult your manual for installation instructions.)

Whether or not your PC came with its own browser, your ISP may also provide you with one in its start-up kit. This could be Microsoft Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator, but some ISPs, such as AOL and CompuServe, provide you with their own specially designed Web browser. You can have more than one Web browser, just as you can have more than one word processor or spreadsheet program.

When your ISP software first loads, look for a button that says "Internet," "Browse the Internet," "Explore," or something similar. Clicking on this will start up the browser.

Get to know your way around your Web browser

Your browser gives the Internet a face and allows you to view all its resources.

Learning to use it effectively will make surfing the Net more enjoyable and rewarding.

Most browsers have a main menu, similar to that found in Microsoft Word or Works. Through the menus you can print Web pages, configure your ISP settings and access help facilities.

The Address box is where you type Web addresses. Click on **Go** (or press **Enter** key) to download the Web page.

Use the Back and Forward buttons to navigate backwards or forwards through downloaded pages. Most browsers show these buttons as arrows.

Online Service Providers will list their content, usually in a panel on the left of the page. Click on these to access them.

Look for a toolbar containing buttons that allow you to set up automatic links to your favorite Web sites, organize your e-mail, and so on. To see what a button does, place your mouse pointer over it—a label will pop up.

Most browsers include some form of search facility to help you find information. Type a key word or words into the search box, then click on **Find** (or press the **Enter** key.)

This is the main viewing area, into which Web pages are downloaded and displayed.

Some ISPs, including CompuServe, have selected shortcuts to take you straight to sites that are often used.

Web addresses explained

Every Web address is unique, in the same way that your telephone number is. In fact, it's helpful to think of a Web address as a telephone number, whereby you "dial" the site's address to view it.

The "www" in a Web address tells you that the site belongs to the World Wide Web. After the "www" you are told the domain name (this "points" to the computer that holds the Web site) and, if the computer is located outside the United States, where the computer is located (".uk," for the UK; ".au" for Australia; and so on.)

If you see ".com" at the end of an address, this indicates that the site is commercial. If you see ".gov," the Web site is a government agency.

For many pages, extra text appears after the domain name. This shows that the location of the pages on the Web site.

How to find information

Exploring the Internet is easy once you know where to start

Once your Internet connection is up and running you are ready to explore the World Wide Web. The quickest way to find information is to type the Web address of a relevant site into your browser's address box and press the Enter key on your keyboard. The site's first page (known as the home page) will appear on the screen.

If you do not know the address, you can track down information using a search engine. Just type in the key words or categories that you are looking for in the 'Search for' box, and the engine will comb the web for sites that contain the words you selected. It will then present you with a list of sites that match. The key to effective use of the Internet is knowing how to narrow your searches so that the number of sites yielded is manageable.

Using a Search Engine

1. Connect to the Internet. In your Web browser's address box, type the address of a search engine (for example, www.google.com). Click on **Go**. The site's home page will appear in a few seconds. Type your key words into the search box and click on **Go Get It!**
2. A list of related Web sites will appear. (Some engines tell you how many sites have been found.) Use the scroll bar to the right of the page to view the list. To view a site, click on its underlined title. Use your browser's **Back** button to return to previous pages.
3. Some engines, including Yahoo (www.yahoo.com), allow you to search by category. The pointing finger will identify categories with links. Click one and you will be presented with sub-categories. Continue to narrow your search until a list of sites appears.
4. For example, to find information on scuba diving, click on the **Outdoors** section of the **Recreation & Sport** category on the Yahoo home page. Then click on **Scuba**. This reveals a list of sites, resources and chat areas. Click on a site to open it.

Which search engine?

The Web site at www.searchenginewatch.com explains how the man search engines work and how efficient they are. Here are the addresses of some popular search engines:

- www.altavista.com
- www.hotbot.com
- www.northernlight.com
- www.excite.com
- www.google.com
- www.yahoo.com

Your Internet Service Provider might also have its own search facility.

Search by batch

Most search engines present their lists of sites in batches (usually of 10.) When you reach the bottom of the first batch, click on **2** for the next batch and so on. Some, however, use "Back" and "Next" buttons. Click as appropriate.

Information collected for you

Some Web sites hold databases of information that make searching easy. For example, Bigfoot (www.bigfoot.com) lists individual e-mail addresses, and Deja (www.deja.com) indexes all the messages sent to newsgroups.

Deja has its own search engine that will find topics of discussion for you. Type, say, "New York Hotels," into the search box and press **Enter** and you'll find recommendations for accommodation in New York from its index of users.

Bookmarking Web pages

Browsers allow you to record the addresses of favorite Web sites. This save you the trouble of having to remember addresses or doing online searches over again. As long as you are connected to the Internet, a click on a bookmarked address will open up the site.

The process of bookmarking Web sites is similar in all browsers (look for a facility called "Bookmarks," "Favorites," or "Favorite places" on your browser's toolbar). To bookmark a site through CompuServe, first open the site, then go to the **Files** menu and click on **Add to Favorite Places**. The Define Favorite Places dialogue box appears with the address of the site you are visiting. Click **OK**.

To access this site again, click on the **Favorite Places** button on the CompuServe toolbar. A box appears with a list of your bookmarked addresses. Click on the relevant address to load the site (you must be connected, of course.)

Security on the Internet

How to ensure that users of your PC are protected when online

Internet newcomers are naturally concerned about security. They worry about whether its safe to send credit card details over the Internet, or whether children will come across undesirable material. Concerns over the privacy of e-mail and the unauthorized issue of e-mail addresses are also common.

All these concerns are valid, but there are measures you can take to guarantee the integrity of the sites your family visits, and that your own personal detail are kept confidential.

Keeping it safe and sound

Whether shopping, browsing, or e-mailing, there are ways to guarantee your security on the Internet.

Shopping and security

If a shopping Web site states that is uses “encryption” technology to transfer credit card details (a complex, almost unbreakable scrambling system), there should be no security problem. However, a good Web site will be able to offer alternative methods of payment, such as issuing an invoice, offering to take details over the phone, or faxing of mailing an order form.

Children and the Internet

The best way to protect children from coming across undesirable material on the Internet is to use special software. Programs, such as Cyber Patrol and Net Nanny, block access to sites known to have inappropriate content.

You can also get software that creates a log of all the sites that have been visited from your PC, and so keep a check on what your children have seen. You can also use the History button on your Web browser to do a similar job.

In Windows 98 you can set up a “Content Advisor” ratings system to control how much of Web sites a person can view according to its levels of language, nudity, sex and violence. To do this, go to the **Start** button and select **Settings** then **Control Panel**. Double-click the **Internet** icon, then click the **Content** tab and the **Enable** button. When you first click on the **Enable** button you’ll need to set a supervisor password. You must type it in every time you change the Content Advisor settings, o don’t lose it.

With the Ratings tab selected, click on each category, then set a rating level. Setting all categories at “Level One” effectively bars all access to the Web, apart from the most child-friendly sites. Click **OK** when you have finished.

Viruses on the Internet

Computer viruses can seriously damage your PC. The best way to avoid getting a virus from the Internet, or from any other source, is to use an anti-virus utility. For added security when downloading files, make sure the “Always ask before opening” box is checked on your virus scanner. Only disable this function if you are confident that a file of rile type is safe to open. There is also a risk of infection from “macro viruses” that enter your PC via e-mail attachments.

If you are buying anti-virus software, try to choose a package that automatically scans incoming messages and attachments.

In Word 97 you can put up another barrier to macro viruses. Go to the **Tools** menu and click on **Options**. Click on the **General** tab and put a check in the “Macro virus protection” box.

Safeguard your e-mail address

Sometimes, your e-mail address is obtained by companies or individuals who send you junk e-mail, known as “spam.” You can try to avoid this by omitting your e-mail address from forms that you fill in, either by hand or on the World Wide Web.

Only give your e-mail address to individuals of your choice. Reputable companies that trade on the Internet will give you the option of withholding your e-mail address from all other companies.

History button

A simple way to keep an eye on the Web sites that have been visited from your PC is to use the History button that comes with Internet Explorer. When you press it, a log of all sites that have been accessed will appear to the left of the Explorer window.

To set the number of days that the History button monitors, go to the **Start** button and select **Settings**, then **Control Panel**. Double-click the **Internet** icon. With the General tab selected, go to the “Days to keep pages in history” box and input the number of days that suits you.

Explore the world of multimedia

Use your computer to watch video clips and listen to the radio

The term multimedia describes the capability of modern computers to deliver many different kinds of information at once: The elements of multimedia are pictures, text, animations, sounds, and video.

On a well-designed Web site, multimedia enhances the level of information and enjoyment. For example, you might find a short clip to accompany a film review, or a live radio feed at a news site. There are also many badly designed sites, where the use of multimedia results in a confusing hodgepodge. As you learn to “surf,” you will encounter.

Sights and sounds on the Internet

In order to enjoy the extra dimension of multimedia, you may need to add extra features to your browser.

Bring your Web browser up to speed

All Web browsers, including Microsoft Explorer and Netscape Navigator, can handle basic forms of multimedia. However, to view video clips and animation on some sites, you need mini-programs called plug-ins. These can vary in sophistication, but the best, such as Shockwave, can play film clips and animations.

The most popular plug-ins concentrate on the playing sound, video and animation stored in different formats. RealPlayer from RealNetworks (www.real.com) and Shockwave from

Macromedia (www.macromedia.com) are among the most widely used. You can download plug-ins from Plaza (www.browserwatch.internet.com), have lists of plug-ins.

Downloading a plug-in

Connect to the Internet as usual. When the home page loads, type www.real.com into the address box and click on **Go** or press the **Enter** key. When the next page loads, look for the icon illustrating the free version of RealPlayer to download. Click on it.

Follow the steps to download the software: You have to fill in a registration form and select a location to download from (this depends where in the world you are).

When you click on the option to download, you will be asked if you want to run the program or save it to your disk. Choose to save it. You will then be asked to specify a file location (it might be worth creating a new folder called “Downloads” on your hard drive in which to save it before you begin). When you have done this, a screen will appear showing how the download is progressing.

Installing a plug-in

To install RealPlayer, double-click on the downloaded file on your hard drive, then follow the on-screen instructions. When installation is complete, a Shortcut icon to RealPlayer will appear on your Desktop. Double-click on it to open it, then look at the Net video channels available. Select a channel and wait for the screen to load. Remember, your Internet connection needs to be running in order for you to view a video clip.

Listen to the radio

Once you have the RealPlayer plug-in installed you can listen to live Internet radio broadcasts. This helps people keep in touch with local news and music around the world. Visit www.msnbc.com and www.timecast.com for a list of the latest broadcasts.

For you to listen to broadcasts, your PC must have speakers and a sound card (a piece of hardware that slots into your system unit and helps translates digital output into sound).

Turn off to speed up

Multimedia files can often be very large, which means that a Web pages with lots of multimedia elements in it can take a long time to open. If you would rather not have these elements present when you are using the Web, you can instruct your browser no to download them.

Go to the **Start** button and select **Settings**, then **Control Panel**. Double-click on the **Internet** icon. Click the **Advanced** tab, then use the scroll bars to move down to the Multimedia section.

Note that some items have checked boxes beside them. To get rid of the checks, click the boxes (you do not need to get rid of the check in the “Smart image dithering” box). Click **Apply**, then **OK**. Next time you access a Web page, it will appear without sound or images.