

The Basics of Using the Internet

1) What is the Internet?

The simplest explanation is: the connections that allow computers to talk to each other. Computers can be connected in a number of ways: phone line, cable line, fiber optic line, satellite, etc. The computers can be next to each other or on different continents – distance doesn't matter.

2) How does a computer/computer user get "on" the Internet?

- a) Must have two things: a web browser and a connection through an Internet Service Provider (ISP).
- b) A web browser is a program that "lives" on your computer.
- c) It "interprets" the messages that are sent between computers and displays them for you – like a TV set interprets TV signals and displays them.
- d) Two major "brands" of browsers are Internet Explorer and Firefox.
- e) Other options exist such as AOL, which is a combination ISP/browser.
- f) Most browsers are very similar in the way they work, though functions may have different names (i.e. bookmarks vs. favorites)
- g) To get the connection, most people pay an ISP – like paying the cable company to get cable service – many ISP's are listed in the yellow pages (under Internet Service Providers), your telephone and cable company and companies like AOL, etc. also provided Internet Service.

3) How is the Internet used?

- a) Most common uses include text, pictures, video, sound.

4) Internet Addresses

- a) Internet addresses may also be called URLs (Uniform Resource Locator).
- b) Like a postal address, it has several specific parts – unlike postal carrier, the computer cannot figure out an address if something is missing or wrong – must be letter-perfect, no spaces.
- c) Addresses have a short (Microsoft.com) and long version (<http://www.Microsoft.com>)
- d) Top-level domains (.com (commercial), .org (organization), .edu (educational), .mil (military), .gov (government), .net (network – often Internet Service Providers), two letter country codes like .ca (Canada)).

5) What's in a web page?

- a) Content and links.
- b) How to tell what is a link – often links are blue and underlined but sometimes you can only tell by moving your cursor over the word or picture and see if the I beam cursor or arrow cursor turns into a pointer finger cursor.

6) Opening web sites.

- a) If you know the address simply type it in the address bar. Spelling and punctuation count – you must type it exactly right, some browsers will give you suggestions to more popular web sites if you get the address slightly wrong.
 - b) If you don't know the address, use a search engine like www.yahoo.com or www.google.com.
- 7) Practice typing in addresses and moving around web sites
- a) www.cnn.com is a good short address to start.
 - b) Notice the search boxes (like at top of cnn.com), radio buttons, and check boxes.
 - c) At commercial sites you will usually see ads embedded within pages and get lots of pop-ups, which are ads which annoyingly just “pop up” uninvited.
- 8) Practice using a search engine/directory
- a) Yahoo www.yahoo.com and Google www.google.com are good search engines. There are many others.
 - b) Be as specific as possible, spelling counts (Google will “correct” your spelling by tactfully suggesting “did you mean...”), and generally inclosing a phrase in “double quotes” will retrieve the exact phrase (together in that order), see the “search tips” link or “advanced search” link on the search engine web page to improve your searching power. Practice using search engines will really pay off.
- 9) Things to remember about the Internet/Web
- a) Internet skills take practice.
 - b) Be a wary consumer.
 - c) Did you scroll all the way down?
 - d) READ THE SCREEN for hints.

Need More Help?

- Practice your skills using our Computer Center if you do not have your own computer. You may also want to check out a computer book from the library.
- Try our other computer classes: “The Basics of Keyboarding”, “The Basics of Using a Mouse”, “The Basics of Using a Computer”, “The Basics of E-mailing”, “The Basics of Microsoft Word”, “The Basics of Microsoft PowerPoint”, “The Basics of Microsoft Excel”, and “Download This”.
- LCCC offers more detailed computer classes: 778-LCCC
- View quick references on computer basics, Microsoft Office, using the Internet and more at customguide.com/quick_references.htm