

Using the internet (updated March 2006)

Web browsers

There are a range of software packages - known as web browsers – available for accessing the internet. The most commonly used is Internet Explorer, developed by Microsoft. Other browsers include Firefox, Safari, Opera, Mozilla and Netscape. All are available for free, and updates can also be downloaded for free.

Going to websites

To go to a specific website, simply type in its internet address in the "location" or "address" window of the browser and press the return key on your keyboard. It is not necessary to type in the "http://" as the browser will add this automatically if you have not done so, but it **is** necessary to type in the "www.", although not all websites contain this. The address typed in must be absolutely exact, and it is very easy to make a mistake. Remember to put the dots in the right place, and that there are never spaces or accents in internet addresses. It usually does not matter if you put the address in capitals rather than small letters. If you have used the address before, the computer will usually input it into the address window after you have typed the first few characters.

Navigating the Internet using hyperlinks

The main way of navigating the internet is by means of hyperlinks. A hyperlink is an area of a webpage containing the address of another site. By clicking on this area you will call up the page located at this address. This will usually happen in the same browser window, but sometimes a new window will be opened. If you do not need both windows open, close one of the sites by clicking on the cross (x) icon in the very top right-hand corner of the window. If you do not close one of the sites, this may slow down your computer.

Hyperlinks and cursors

When you move the cursor (which has the form of an "I" in ordinary text or an arrow in a space) over a hyperlink it will take on the form of a hand. Also, the address of the hyperlink will appear in the grey horizontal bar at the bottom of the page. Text hyperlinks are by convention coloured blue and are underlined, but often sites do not adhere to this. In this case, in order to detect a hyperlink you need to move the cursor over the text to see if it changes to the hand icon. Hyperlinks can also take the form of images, and link information will often be contained in a small yellow box that usually opens up when you move the cursor over the image.

Page history

A page history is when a computer keeps a record of the sites you have visited. When you have arrived at a page via a hyperlink, you can return to the one you were originally on by clicking on the back icon, the left-pointing arrow towards the top left of the screen. To return to the new page you can click on the forward icon, the right-pointing arrow to the right of the back icon. The browser makes a temporary record of the various pages you have visited during your session. If you wish to go back to a page you visited five clicks previously, click on the downward-pointing arrow to the right of the back button and select the relevant numbered link. The temporary record is deleted when you close the browser. However, many addresses are stored, and can be accessed by clicking on the downward-pointing arrow to the right of the "location" or "address" window and selecting using the mouse.

Bookmarking

If you wish to make a permanent record of a particular address, you can store it as a "bookmark" or "favorite". The process is different according to the browser. For Internet Explorer do as follows : in the page whose address you wish to store, click on "Favorites" then "Add to Favorites...". Then select the folder in which you wish to store the address (or create a new folder by clicking on "New Folder..."), and click on "OK." If you wish to save the page so that you can view it off-line, check the "Make available offline" box.

Saving web pages

It is possible to save a webpage and store it on your hard drive or memory stick so that you can view it later, without the need for an internet connection. To do this, select "Save As", and, as you would in Windows, select the drive you wish to save it in before clicking on "Save" (The "Save as type" option, which is selected by default, will also save other related files such as images for better viewing offline. To retrieve, and click on "File", then "Open" or "Open Page". Then click on "Browse" or "Choose File", and select the relevant drive (e.g. memory sticks tend to be the D or E drive). Double click on the file in question, then click on "Open" or "OK".

If you wish to save text for use in a word processor like Microsoft Word, simply highlight the text by dragging the mouse from the beginning to the end of the text with the left button clicked down, then press Control+C to copy the text, and Control+V to paste it into Word. If this does not work, this may be because the text is in fact an image. To save an image, right click on the image and select "Save Picture As..." or "Save Image As...". Select the appropriate drive and click on "Save".

Increasing text size

If you are finding it difficult to read the writing on a web page, it is often possible to increase the size of the text. For example, in Internet Explorer select "View", then "Text size", then "Larger" or "Largest". If your visual difficulties are more significant, many websites have a "text only" alternative, which projects the website through a text enlarger.

If you are new to the internet and would like more information, have a look at the following page created by the Department of Information and Communications at MMU:

<http://www.hlss.mmu.ac.uk/infocomms/internet-resources/about-the-internet/>