

Introduction to the Internet

This class is designed to cover the following basics:

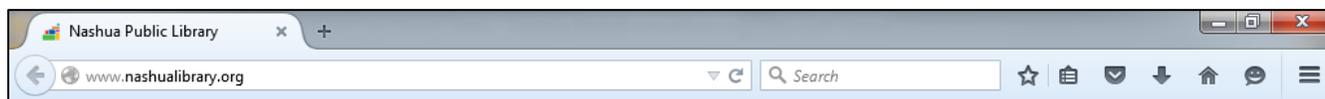
- Getting online
- Basic terminology and buttons for an internet browser
- How to use a web address
- What a search engine is
- Using search engines to find information and websites
- Evaluating websites and online information
- Using intermediate and advanced online tools and search features
- Contacting people and businesses online
- Ensuring online safety

The Internet



The Internet is a global system of interconnected computer networks that exchange data. To get onto the Internet, you need an Internet Service Provider (for example Comcast or Fairpoint) and software to access the Internet. This software is called a browser. There are different browsers you can choose from, including: Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, and Google Chrome. These different browsers basically do the same thing, they just look a little different. In this class, we will be using Mozilla Firefox.

What You Will See on Your Browser



While browsers do vary, there are several important features that translate throughout. The most important aspect that you'll interact with is the address bar. This thin white horizontal box at the top of your browser window will let you type in any specific web address that you want to visit. If you don't know the specific address you want to visit, you could navigate to a search engine such as www.google.com and search using keywords for the correct address.



Another important feature on your web browser is the ability to return to a page you were on previously using the "back" button. This button is located to the left of the address bar and is represented by an arrow pointing to the left. With this button you can return to a previous webpage. (Alternately, there is an arrow pointing to the right that will allow you to navigate forward if you go back too far.)



The other key button on the screen is the refresh button, which looks a bit different from browser to browser but will generally appear to be an arrow moving in a circular direction. This allows you to reload the content on a webpage if the page doesn't load correctly or if you want to see updated content.

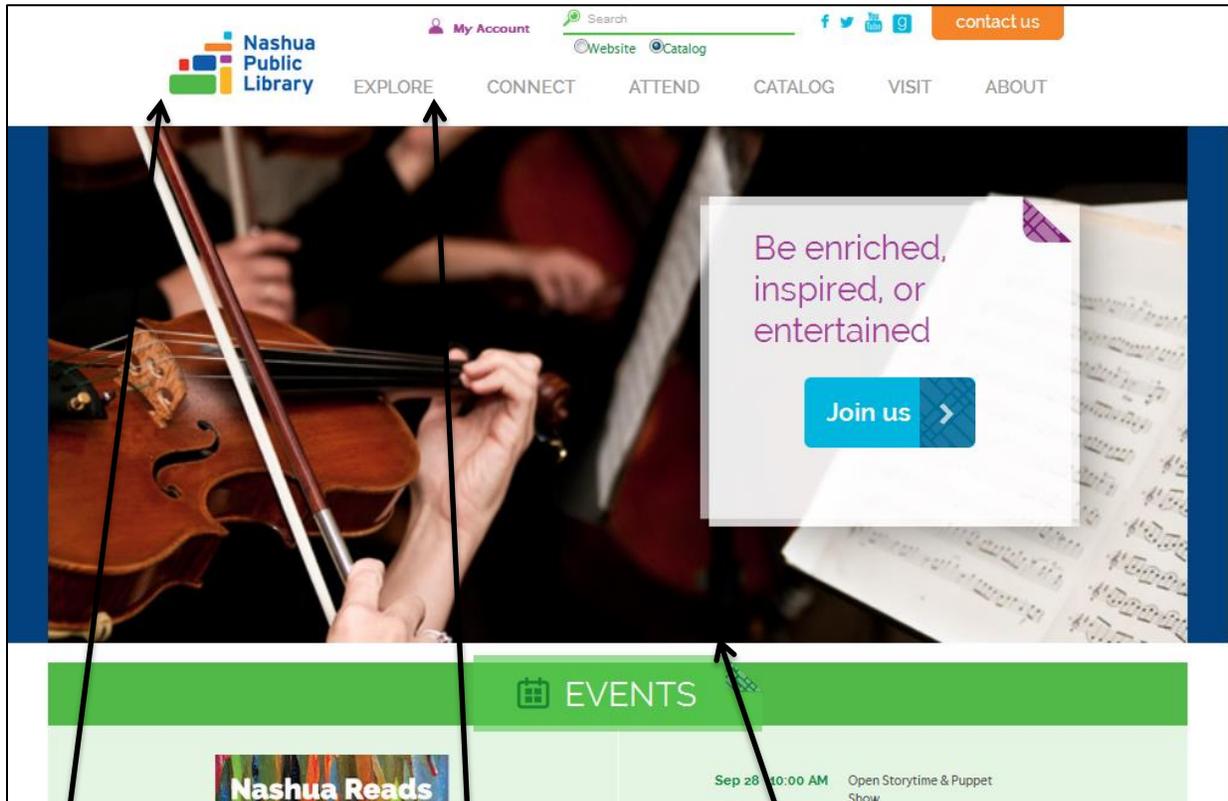


Many browsers will also have an embedded search box. This is a small, white box usually in the right corner of your browser window. In this box you can search for items on different, specific websites such as Google, Amazon, or Wikipedia. The page you are searching can be set through the drop-down icon in the left side of the box.

While there are other features that may appear on your browser depending on which you are using and what version it is, those listed above are present in each and work the same throughout.

What You Will See on a Webpage

Many webpages have similar layouts and similar information. Often there is a Header or Banner across the top which tells you the name of website you're visiting. Under the header or along the side of the page there is frequently a series of links or buttons showing different pages you can access within the website. When you hover over a link, your cursor will change shape into a pointing hand to let you know there's a link. Many pages have a search box that lets you search within the website. There could be an "About Us" or "Contact Us" link or button with information about the organization (including the address, phone numbers, or an online form to submit a comment). There may be a series of links along the bottom as well.



HEADER: Contains the branding for the website, usually visible on all pages	MENU BAR: Links to other sections or pages of the website	BODY: The main content portion of the webpage	FOOTER: Contains hours, contact, or copyright information
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Search Tools

One of the most common search tools is a web search engine. A search engine is a website designed to search for information on the Internet. Google is a very popular search engine. Once you've navigated your browser to www.google.com, you can proceed to search for Web pages, images, information and other types of files by entering keywords related to your search topic in the white box in the center of the screen.

Google isn't the only Web search engine out there. You can also try www.bing.com, www.yahoo.com, and www.ask.com.

Practice Keyword Searches: Try some of these searches in one of the search engines listed above and see what kind of results you get.

Here are some questions with an easier answer, see what you can find:

- What does the Pluto look like?
- What is the capital of Colorado?
- Who is the president of Kenya?
- Which teams played in the 1986 World Series?

Here are some questions that require more research:

- Why did Pluto stop being called a planet?
- How much does it cost to fly to Denver?
- When did the president of Kenya take office?
- What were the scores for the games of the 1986 World Series?

One thing you may notice is that you get different results than your neighbor. In order to improve the search process, Google and other web sites keep track of cookies, or tiny memories of your habits to help you find what you're looking for. While the vast majority of these cookies are harmless, they do create usage patterns on your computer and they can provide different results for two computer users sitting side by side when searching for the same piece of information.

Evaluating Websites for Quality

When evaluating a website, always remember your ABCs!

Accuracy:

- Can you verify the content through another source? Do other sources use the same information?

Bias:

- Is it clear who is sponsoring the site? Is it an advertisement or propaganda?

Content:

- Is the content "popular" or "scholarly"?
- Do the graphics and sounds add to the value of the site? Are there spelling or grammar errors?

Documentation:

- Is there a bibliography or sources cited listing on the site? Are they full enough to allow you to access the cited source in print or electronically?

Editorial Control:

- Who is the author or source of the site? Are their credentials listed on the site? Are they well known in the field?
- What is the authority or expertise of the individual or group who created the site? Information should be present to contact the author of a site.
- Is the site current? Is there a date of creation or most recent modification? Do all the links work properly?

Gut Feeling:

- Look closely at these sites, *are they for real?* Is the offer too good to be true?
- Does the site ask you for personal information that you feel uncomfortable sharing?

You can also use the chart on the next page to track the credibility of your source.

SOURCE SLEUTH GAME

Directions: Sit with a partner and access your assigned information page on the web. Take turns playing this game. When you land on a square, answer the prompt based on the source information on your site. Discuss each of your answers so there is agreement before taking the next turn.

What is the author's education, training or experience?	Does s/he have a professional title? What is it?	Is the author connected with an organization? Which one?	END
Can you contact the author or company? How?		Is the author unnamed? How can you find the name?	Do you feel this source is credible? Why or why not?
Does the author include a date for the information? What is it?		Is it important that the date is current? Why or why not?	Can you find other sources that share the same information?
Do the links on the site work?		What sources does the author of this information use?	Are there identified sources for any data or statistics in the content? Show one statistic and its source.
START		Are the sources the author uses listed in the article? Where?	Does the author include a works cited or other links? Identify one.

(from Google's Search Education-- Evaluating credibility of sources, beginner)

Online Safety

Email

Email is a great tool to communicate with people online. By signing up for an email account, you can send and receive messages from anyone who also has an email account. We're happy to help you set up an email account here at the library, stop and ask a reference librarian for assistance. Some Internet Service Providers like Comcast or Fairpoint will give you an email address when you sign up for internet. While these accounts are great, make sure you know if your email will still be available to you if you change ISPs or want to check your email at a different location. Free, online email accounts like Gmail or Yahoo Mail are easy to set up, free to use, and accessible from anywhere in the world with an internet connection.

Many banks, utilities, and other institutions provide the option to receive your statements or pay your bills online. If you opt-in to receiving your bank statements by email, you will no longer receive them through the postal mail. Your bank will likely expect you to login to your account with regularity and continue to monitor your statements for accurate information. This also applies to credit cards or utility providers, places you've applied for jobs and even friends. If you've started communicating online, it's expected that you'll continue to communicate in this way.

While most email is safe, you may occasionally receive spam, or junk mail. This is unsolicited mail that appears in your inbox or a junk mail folder. It may range from ads for odd products or malicious emails that are asking for your personal information. In almost all cases, it is best to simply delete this spam without opening the email or clicking any links within it.

Advertisements

Some sites may have advertising. Like in a magazine or on TV, some of it is good, some of it is bad. Use your best judgment before proceeding. If an advertisement monopolizes the webpage you're trying to view, don't panic. There is usually a small x or close button in the upper right corner. Once you close out of the ad, you'll return to the site you wanted to visit. Some ads may be for a company that you know and trust, while others might be suspicious. Make sure you feel comfortable with the company before providing confidential information.

Online Shopping

There are many different vendors on the internet trying to sell you their product. While many of them are perfectly safe, it's important to be careful.

Here are some tips from OnGuard Online

"Shopping on the internet can be economical, convenient, and no less safe than shopping in a store or by mail. To help keep your online shopping experience a safe one:

- Know who you're dealing with. Confirm the online seller's physical address and phone number in case you have questions or problems.
- Know exactly what you're buying. Read the seller's description of the product closely, especially the fine print.
- Know what it will cost. Factor shipping and handling — along with your needs and budget — into the total cost of the order.
- Pay by credit or charge card, for maximum consumer protections.
- Check out the terms of the deal, like refund policies and delivery dates.
- Print and/or save records of your online transactions."

Craigslist

Craigslist.org has been a very successful source for local classifieds online. It contains a wealth of listings for almost anything you could imagine, from apartment rentals to pet carriers to jobs. While many posts are legitimate, there may be some that are malicious.

Here's a link to some information published by the Better Business Bureau about Scams on the internet:

<http://www.bbb.org/blog/2011/07/the-top-10-online-scams/>

Contacting People and Businesses Online

Businesses: Using the internet will allow you to research more about businesses. Some companies will have a physical address and location, while others might only exist in an online format. Subsequently, their websites will provide you different ways to contact them.

People: Using search engines and websites like www.whitepages.com you are able to find the phone numbers and addresses of anyone regularly listed in the phone book. However, you should remember that as more people use cell phones, those numbers are not published and are not available publicly. Some sites might tell you that they can provide you with someone's phone number if you sign in or pay, but these sites are rarely trustworthy. While some people will share cell phone numbers on social networking sites like Facebook, it is unlikely that you'd be able to get their number without connecting with them on the site.

Places: Entering a search for a place into Google will often bring up a place page, or a compilation of information drawn together by Google to make the location easier to find. Note: not all this information is accurate. Google is trying to collect and provide this data, but does not verify it all. It falls to the business

owner to “claim” their place page and assure the information is correct. When it does display it will often have a phone number, address, and a map, with occasional hours of operation or local transit routes.

Password Safety

Some websites will ask if you to create an account and sign in to their site to post comments, shop, do your banking, play an online game, save information or many other reasons. Usually pages like this will require an email address and a password. When creating any kind of online account, it is good to think about making a safe password that you will remember and will be difficult for a hacker to recreate. Using something like “password” for a password is unfortunately both common and easy to guess. It’s recommended to choose a word or series of words that you’ll remember and you can make complex. Remember, if you use a capital letter in your password, you have to capitalize it every time.

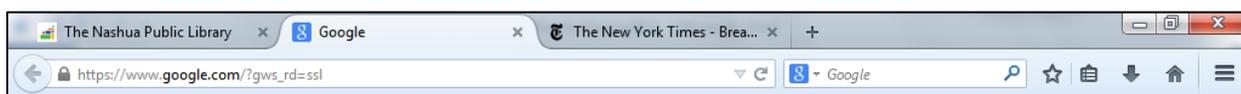
Hints: Take a phrase or a song title you like, and reduce it to the first letter of each word. Another option is to use a story to create your password; it can often help you remember it later on. For example, two college roommates and lived in 43 Lewis Hall. The password could turn into something like: College43Lewis. This is more secure than using a dog’s name or a birthday, and yet still easy to remember the information. It’s important with passwords to not share them with too many people, or to choose to save them somewhere on a computer unless you’re the only person who will be using it. It’s also a good idea to change your passwords periodically.

Test out a sample password at this site: <http://howsecureismypassword.net> NOTE: Don’t use an actual password; this is just to demonstrate the basic rules of password safety.

The best rule for Online Safety is **if it seems too good to be true, it probably is**. Don’t let this prevent you from exploring and considering all that the Internet has to offer, but do be cautious and aware of your actions.

Other Topics

Tabbed Browsing



Most web browsers will allow you to look at multiple pages at the same time. This is done through tabbed browsing. In this case, along the top of your browser window (between the address bar and the content of the webpage) you’ll see multiple titles appear if you click to a secondary link or choose to open a new browser viewing area. This can be helpful if you want to look at a couple things at the same time. Say you want to buy a toaster. You might want the brands of toasters and the prices on one page, and the reviews of these toasters on another page. By using tabbed browsing you can click back and forth to look at each without having to retype all the addresses or search criteria and lose what you were previously doing. It also makes it easy to copy and paste from a news article into an email or a Word document.

Adding a Webpage to your Favorites



To add a webpage to your favorites, click the star outline that appears to the right of the search box. When a page is your favorite, the star will be blue. To get to your favorites later, click the button that looks like a list to the right of the star.

Downloading



When you download something you are taking a file or image that you found on the internet and saving the file to your computer. Many websites have a link to allow you to download a file. If you don't see a link to download the file, right-click on the file and save it. Once you download a file, the arrow on your web browser will turn green. Click on it to find the files you have recently downloaded.

Copy and Paste

It's always helpful to be able to save text and pictures that you see online. One way of doing this is copying and pasting. You'll digitally copy text from one page, and paste it into another location, such as an email, a word processing document, or another location. To copy an item, you'll want to start by highlighting the item you want to replicate. You can do this by clicking and dragging over the text until it is highlighted or turns blue. Once the text is selected, click on the right button on your mouse and choose copy. Everything you currently have in blue will be copied to a clipboard on the computer, and you can go to paste the item by navigating to the place you want to paste it, clicking the right side of your mouse, and choosing paste.

Printing

Printing from the Internet may vary from one website to the next. Depending on the content of the website, you might get exactly what you see on the screen in front of you or you might be left with a mostly blank page or some of your text cut off. The best way to avoid this is to use a printer-friendly layout. Many, but not all, websites have a printer-friendly layout you can use. This is usually represented by a print icon. They look different from site to site, but they all have a similar printer shape.



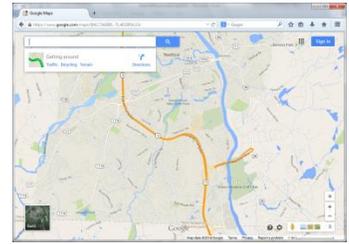
If the website you wish to print from does not have a print icon, use the print option in the main Firefox menu. When you select print, it will open a print preview page that will allow you to see what the website will look like when printed. If you choose to continue printing, you can click on the print button. If you decide not to print, you can click on close and you will return to the web browser.

6 Fun and Useful Websites

Maps

maps.google.com

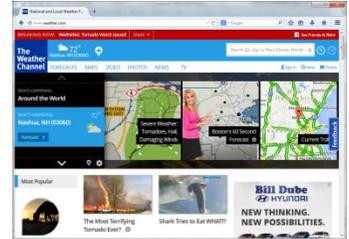
Use this site to search for directions, look at a location on a map, or make a customized route. In addition to driving directions, it also gives walking, public transportation, or bicycle directions.



Weather

www.weather.com

Look up the weather based on location. The site provides satellite maps, 10 day forecasts, weather related news, and videos of events happening in real time.



News

www.cnn.com

Up-to-date articles and videos on US and World news in addition to Business, Sports, Technology, Health, Living and many other categories. It also includes user-submitted content for current events.



Information

www.wikipedia.org

Wikipedia is a free, online, collaborative encyclopedia where users can edit and create entries. Content will change as different users update an article.



Shopping

www.amazon.com

Amazon started as an online bookstore but now sells nearly everything! All purchasing must be done online.



Fun

www.youtube.com

Watch user-made videos about almost everything! Users can create their own videos, start a video channel, and share media with friends.

