The Kaplan eGuide to Office XP

The Internet & Internet Explorer

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WHAT IS THE INTERNET?

If you are reading this, chances are that you were recently logged onto (or are currently logged onto) the Internet. You probably know that, but if you are like most people, you may not be sure what the Internet actually is.

As you learned in Lesson 1, two computers can connect to each other and share information and resources through a network connection. Many homes and small offices can simply install network connections between their handful of computers. This is a peer-to-peer network: When one computer needs information from another computer, it connects to that computer and gets the information.

Of course, if you are working in a large office, this could quickly become confusing. For that reason, most large offices have highly centralized client-server networks. On a client-server network, the shared resources are located on one or more central computers called servers. When individual computers, or clients, need the shared information, they access (or log onto) the server to find that information. The information that flows back and forth from client computers to server computers is called network traffic. The problem, of course, is that if anything happens to the server, none of the computers in the network can communicate.

The Internet is a combination of thousands (if not millions) of servers all making at least some of their information available to millions of client computers located across the globe. In fact, your computer is a client computer that is communicating with dozens of different servers (including the Kaplan College servers) every time you log onto the Internet. If there is a problem with one server, some users may experience trouble and some information may not be available, but the rest of the users and the rest of the information will not have any problems.

With so many client and server computers, certain Internet computers are set aside to manage the Internet's network traffic. These computers are known as the Internet backbone.

YOUR ISP

While your workplace computer connects to the Internet through your company's network, your home computer connects to the Internet by connecting (or signing in) to a larger network that servers as your Internet service provider or ISP. Some of the oldest and most popular ISPs include AOL, Prodigy, and Earthlink, though a number of smaller companies also provide Internet access. Recently, both cable and telephone companies have begun to provide Internet access.

When shopping for an ISP, you will probably have a choice of three or four different types of connections:

- The **dial-up connection** is the oldest and most popular way to connect your home computer to the Internet. A dial-up connection means that your computer's modem (see Lesson 1) uses your phone line to connect to your ISP. While this is inexpensive and easy to set up, it is also slow (and means that you cannot use that phone line for anything else until you disconnect). Also, more and more companies are increasing the price of a dial-up connection in order to encourage people to choose higher-speed connections.

- A **DSL** (digital subscriber line) connection also works through your phone line, but does not prohibit you from using your phone and provides a connection speed that is several times faster than a dial-up connection.

- A **cable modem** uses the same wires that bring cable channels to your television to provide your computer with a connection to the Internet. It is usually the fastest connection that home users will have available, though it may not be available in all areas.

Two other options that you may find in your area are DSS and ISDN.

DSS (digital satellite service) connects your computer to the ISP through a satellite. While it was once fairly expensive, it is becoming as affordable as DSL and may sometimes be the best option for those in rural areas.

ISDN (integrated services digital network) works through your phone line much like DSL, but is not as fast and may be more expensive. ISDN is an older technology that is becoming less and less popular.

WHAT IS THE WORLD WIDE WEB?

In the early days of the Internet, much information was widely available, but was often hard to find. Using the Internet required becoming familiar with several pieces of software that often worked very differently and provided users with access to only a certain amount of information.

That was changed by the creation of the World Wide Web.

The World Wide Web (or WWW, or just the Web) provided users with a way to organize, present, connect, and find various bits of online information. These days, the Web can provide users with a variety of types of information that users can download (download simply means that the information is transferred from the server computer to the user's client computer). Because information on Web pages is connected to information on other Web pages, allowing users to move easily from one page to another, using the Web for research is often called "surfing."

On the Web, information is organized into Web pages (individual "pages" of information you can see at one time), with several Web pages making up one website. The materials found on these pages can include:

- **Text:** Users can find everything from short stories, to articles, to software documentation, to how-to tutorials, to full-length novels on the Web.

- **Graphics:** Many websites include graphics such as charts, photographs, or artwork. The two most popular types are jpegs and GIFs (or general image files) because their smaller sizes allow them to download more quickly.

- **Animation:** Web pages can display simple animations (created by showing a series of pictures one after another) as well as more complex animations that are created just for the Web.

- **Audio:** Web browsers can provide users access to audio files, including music, recorded news stories or books, and radio station broadcasts. There are two types of audio files: downloadable and streaming. Downloadable audio is first downloaded as a new file to the client computer and then played; the user has to wait to listen to it, but the file can be played again and again, even after the user has signed off the Internet. Streaming audio plays while it downloads but cannot be stored on the user's computer. One of the most popular uses of streaming audio is to provide Internet radio stations. Because of their compact size, MP3 files are among the most popular types of audio files.

- **Video:** As faster connections become available, video is becoming more popular. Many Web users connect to the Internet to find movie trailers, news footage, educational videos, and short films. Much like audio, video can be either downloadable or streaming. Because of their compressed size, MPEG (or Moving Picture Experts Group) files are among the most popular types of video files.

WHAT IS A WEB BROWSER?

In order to get access to the World Wide Web, you will need to use a Web browser. In fact, you already use your Web browser to gain access to Kaplan College, so this is a piece of software you are already familiar with!

The most popular Web browser, and the one Kaplan College recommends, is Internet Explorer. If you are new to using Internet Explorer, you will want to check out Internet Explorer's online tour.

Open Internet Explorer, then click the Help menu and see if you have an option called **Tour**. If so, click it! If not, you can either go to Help and click **Contents and Index** to read a basic introduction to Internet Explorer (choose "Learning how to browse the Web faster and easier" from the right side of the screen), or you can go to http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/ie5/tour/default.htm to read "The Basics."

Before you go on with this tutorial, make sure you know the following words:

- **URL:** A URL is a Web address—the words you type in to tell your browser where to look for information. For example, www.kaplancollege.edu is the URL or Web address of Kaplan College.

- **HTTP:** Almost all information you get when using Internet Explorer will come to you via HTTP (hypertext transfer protocol). You will see this in the Internet Explorer **address bar** (the bar just above the area you view a website that tells you the Web address you are viewing).

- **Link (or hyperlink):** A link is a word, phrase, or graphic (usually underlined) that takes you to a new Web address when you click it. Some links actually take you to a different spot on the same Web page. These links are called **anchors**. They are often found on large Web pages with a lot of information.

You should also be familiar with some of the standard menus and buttons you will see:
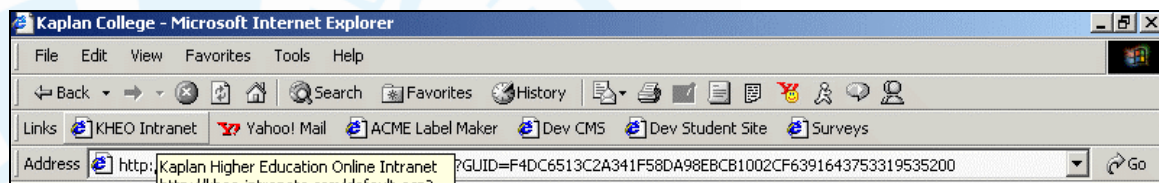
First, at the very top of your browser window, you will see the official title of the Web page you are viewing (if it has a title). The first row under that is the menu, which includes the following options:

- **File:** The file menu is where you can go to print a Web page, save it for your own future reference, or quickly email a copy to a friend.

- **Edit:** This is where you will find your copy and paste commands, as well as the find command (which is especially when you are trying to find one bit of information of a very long page).

- **View:** If you want to change which buttons and menus your browser displays, go here.

- **Favorites:** Much like the preset buttons on a car stereo, you can tell your browser which websites you most like to visit so that you can get back to them quickly.

- **Tools:** This menu has a number of features, such as Internet Options, that you will have a chance to explore later.

- **Help:** This menu provides you with a number of help topics, resources, and pointers for getting more information on Internet Explorer.

Also, you may want to take a look at some of the buttons you did not cover in your Internet Explorer online tour. For instance:

Back and forward buttons: The back and forward buttons will help you move around the Web and find information you viewed previously. The **back** button will take you to the previous Web pages you have already visited. This can be useful if you followed a link and now want to go back and review the original website. If you have moved back, you can also move the **forward** button to return to the most recent page you visited.
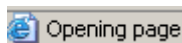
The left-hand bottom corner of the Internet Explorer window is the status bar, which gives you information on progress of Web pages that are loading.

The refresh button reloads the information on the website. This is useful if the website updates its information several times throughout the day (such a news or financial site) or if some of the graphics did not load correctly.

The stop button will stop a page from downloading. This is helpful if a page is taking too long to download or if you realize you have gone to the wrong page.

The media button will open the media menu. If you are using a high-speed Internet connection (e.g., connecting from work or using DSL or a cable modem at home), you can use this menu to watch video clips, movie trailers, of listen to Internet radio stations.

The print button will print a copy of the Web page you are currently viewing. By default, when you print a page, background colors and graphics will not show up, and most text will print as black.

Have you ever found a long article while browsing the Web and wanted to save it to read later? This button will let you load the content of the page you are viewing into Microsoft Word. Then you can then save the page to your own hard disk. Remember, you do not have the right to redistribute the page without the author's permission. Also, if you are tempted to plagiarize, remember that instructors are on the lookout for material copies from the Web: If you found it, your instructor can too!

Don't look for this in your tool bar! Instead keep an eye out for this whenever you want to buy something online or when you are asked to enter personal information. The small padlock, symbolizing security, will appear at the bottom right corner of your browser window. This ensures two things:

1) That the people running the website are who they say they are.

2) That any information you send them (or that they send you) from this page will be encrypted to protect your privacy.

This symbol is especially important whenever you buy something over the Web or your Web browser to submit or retrieve personal information, such as information from a doctor's office or government agency.

You will also see icons in the address bar right in front of the URL (or address) for the site you are visiting. Sometimes, these will be customized for the website you are visiting, but they all still work the same way. You can drag this icon and drop it into the Favorites folder on the toolbar, or even drop it right onto the Links bar to allow you to easily visit again.

Of course, Internet Explorer is not the only Web browser. Each different type of browser has its own fans, strengths, and weaknesses.

The first Windows Web browser was built in 1993 by the National Center for Supercomputer Applications (NCSA), part of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and was called NCSA Mosaic. It was quickly displaced by commercial browsers (created and owned by U.S. corporations) that began appearing as early as 1994.

The oldest commercial browser is Netscape (http://www.netscape.com), currently owned by AOL/Time-Warner. Until the late 1990s, Netscape was the most popular browser on the market. It is currently distributed and available at no charge, but no new versions are being created.

Opera (http://www.opera.com/) is a European browser that has a growing U.S. market. The free version has banner ads over the browser window, but for around $40.00 you can get an ad-free version.

Mozilla (http://mozilla.org/) is a free browser that closely resembles Netscape. It is owned and updated by a non-profit group of programmers called The Mozilla Foundation. Because it allows volunteer programmers to work with them on developing the product, they are constantly improving it, and it has become very popular with computer professionals.

HOW DO I KEEP TRACK OF INFORMATION I FIND?

You may often find sites that have a lot of good information, but you may have no idea how to remember their names or Web addresses.

Luckily, Internet Explorer comes with several built-in features that allow you to keep track of where you have been.
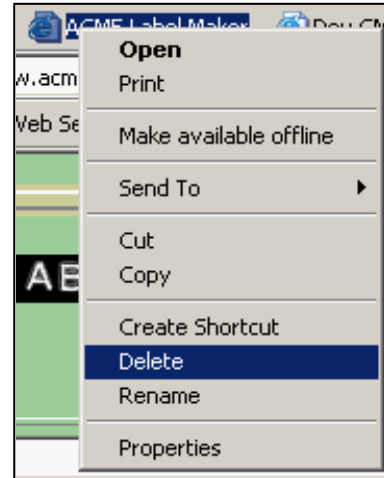
The Links Bar

The most important feature is the Links bar, which is right next to the Address bar. This is the best place to keep track of links you visit on a regular basis, such as

your Hotmail account (discussed in the next tutorial), your Kaplan College login page, your favorite newspaper, and one or more websites that relate to your courses or major. When you want to visit that page, simply click the button.

The quickest way to move a link on to the Link bar is to go to the page you want to add, grab the Address bar icon (the small icon 🔵 that appears next to the address in the Address bar), and drag it to your Link bar. Once you drop it there, your link will become a Link bar button.
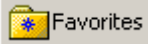
Note: Internet Explorer may come with several links preinstalled. You might eventually want to move or delete these. We will discuss how to move them below, but if you want to simply delete the button, right-click it and click **Delete** on the pop-up menu. You can also use this method to shorten the name of your button if it is too long by clicking **Rename**.
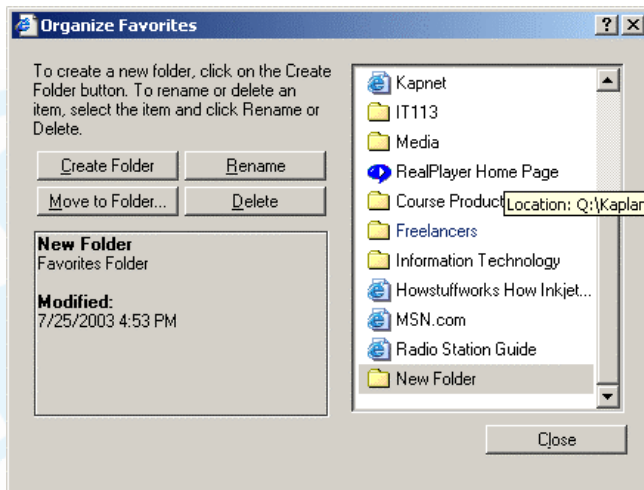
Favorites

Since space on the Links bar is fairly limited, you can also keep track of your favorite websites on your Favorites menu.

To keep track of a particular page or site you have visited while viewing that page or site, either:

- Drag and drop the Address bar icon to the favorites button. 🔖 Favorites .

- On the Favorites menu, click **Add to Favorites**.

However, if you are like most people, your Favorites list will get quite long. Fortunately, you can also organize your favorite sites by clicking **Organize Favorites** on the Favorites menu.

You will already see a folder set aside for your Links bar. You can add additional folders, such as a folder for links you find in this class, to put your new links into. You can then use the "Move to Folder" button to move links into folders.

If you move new folders to your Link bar folder, you will be able to add more websites to your Links bar.

To see you list of Favorites, either click the **Favorites** button or choose the Favorites menu.

History

If you forget to add an important website to your Favorites list, you can look back through the sites you have visited in your History list to find it.

How do you use your History list? First, click the **History** button. This will open the History menu on the left side of your screen.

The first thing the History menu will show you is the titles of the websites you visit most frequently. You can use the View button to see a list of page you have visited by date, by site, or even in the order you visited in the last 24 hours.

Internet Explorer will save your history for up to three weeks.
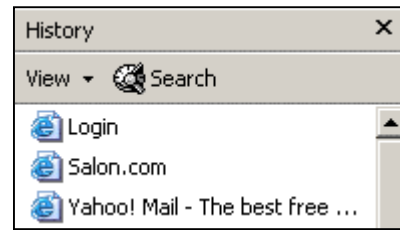
Home Pages

If there is one page you read every day or even every morning, you can set that page as your homepage, which means it will be the first page your browser opens when it starts. For example, if the first thing you do each morning is read the headlines from the *Washington Post* or CNN, you can set http://www.washingtonpost.com/ or http://www.cnn.com/ as your homepage. To do this, go to the Web page you want to set as your homepage. Then, do the following steps:

- From the Tools menu, click **Internet Options.**

- Click the **General** tab.

- Under the section called "Home page," click **Use Current**.