

Chapter 17 - Web Browser Defined

A web browser is the software program you use to access the World Wide Web, the graphical portion of the Internet. The first browser, called NCSA Mosaic, was developed at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications in the early '90s. The easy-to-use point-and-click interface helped popularize the Web, although few then could imagine the explosive growth that would soon occur.

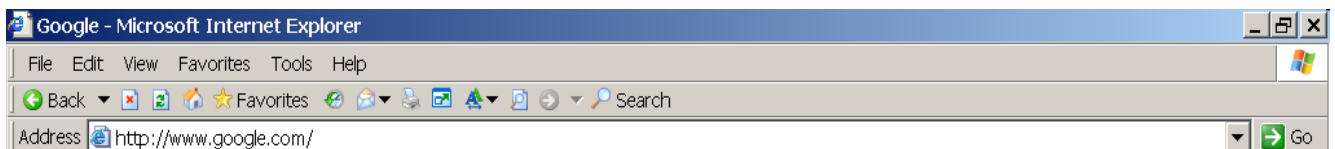
Although many different browsers are available, **Microsoft Internet Explorer** and **Netscape Navigator** have been the two most popular ones. Netscape (now owned by AOL) and Microsoft have put so much money into their browsers that the competition can't keep up, but that has changed lately with a number of free browsers being distributed on the Internet such as Opera, Mozilla's Firefox and Avant. The pitched battle between the companies to dominate the market has led to continual improvements to the software. Version 6.0 is the current version of Internet Explorer and is distributed FREE with your WindowsXP operating system (By the way, both are based on the original NCSA Mosaic.) Since Microsoft's Internet Explorer is the most commonly used web browser we will focus our attention on it.

Browser Anatomy

When you first launch your web browser, usually by double-clicking on the icon on your desktop, a predefined web page appears. This page is referred to as your **home page** or **start page**. With Internet Explorer for instance, you may be taken to Microsoft's Internet promotional site or to a page selected by your Internet Service Provider. If you want however, you can easily change your start page. We will start with the browser anatomy and exam each part of this graphical interface.

Title Bar

The blue bar at the top of the browser gives you the title of the web site that you are currently accessing. It also names the browser you are using.



Menu Bar

List the category of drop down menus available for accessing all the features of your browser.

Address Bar

Shows the active address you are currently using and allows you to insert the address you want by hand typing it. The drop down arrow to right shows recent addresses that you have inserted by hand into the address bar. The go arrow is the point of clicking to activate the address in address window. The "Go" arrow is the same as hitting your "Enter" key.

The Toolbar

The row of buttons at the top of your web browser, known as the toolbar is the preferred method of navigating the browser. In time you will quickly recognize the meaning and action of each Icon. It helps you travel through the web of possibilities, even keeping track of where you've been. We'll first describe what the buttons do and how the relate in order of their most common usage.



The **Back** button returns you to the previous page you've visited and the **Forward** button returns you to the page you just came from. The downward arrow to the right of the back button displays all of the pages you have visited this session or logged on with your browser. This allows you to go exactly to the page you want without paging back through the whole list.

Home takes you to the home page you've chosen as your default. (If you haven't selected one, it will return you to the initial default home page, usually the Microsoft or your ISP's website.)

Refresh does just that, re-reads and re-loads the web page again. Why would you want to do this? Sometimes all of the elements of a web page haven't loaded the first time, because the file transfer was interrupted. Also when you download a web page, the data is **cached** (pronounced "cashed"), meaning it is stored temporarily in your computer's memory. The next time you want that page, instead of requesting the file from the web server, your web browser accesses it from the cache. But if a web page is updated frequently, as may be the case with news, sports scores or financial data, you won't get the most current information. By reloading the page, this timely data is updated from the web server.

Print lets you make a hard copy from your printer of the current page loaded in your browser. You also have another button that allows you a **Print Preview**. This is very important in that what you see on your screen is not exactly the format of what prints out. What you see on your screen is one continuous page. Your printer must make multiple pages because it is restricted to the 8 1/2 by 11 size. The browser has no length limit and the width is determined by your display. Also the number of pages that it takes to print it out is displayed. It is most important to take a look at the print preview page before you print.

The **Stop** button stops the browser from loading the current page. When would you use the STOP Button? There's a good reason why the Web is referred to as the World Wide Wait. If you can't connect to a site for many reasons, use the STOP button and try again later, especially if you are trying to access a popular site.

Search connects to directory sites and other search tools set up by your operating system at initial installation. Your ISP may provide special search tools on their websites. A Whole chapter is devoted to searching the Web. The search program for this button can be customized to the search engine of your choice once you develop your search knowledge.

Favorites allows you to record the addresses of websites you want to revisit. Once you add a URL to your favorites it becomes easily accessible by just clicking on it rather than typing in the site address. URL is an acronym for Uniform Resource Locator. A URL is an exact address location of a web page on a web site on the world wide web.

History, not to be confused with favorites, opens up a window that allows you to return to a web site that you previously visited or viewed with your browser. It allows you to customize your history by date, site most visited, etc. This you need to experiment with as to what fits your fancy.

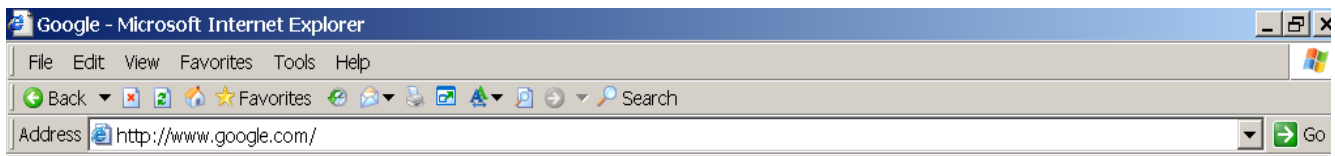


Size button allows you to adjust the size of the text displayed in your browser window. Every web site is able to display their text any size they choose. Sometimes it is too small for you to read especially if it is a lengthy document. You are able to adjust the size of the text to fit your comfort on your monitor screen.

Full Screen button changes your browser screen so that it displays only the web page eliminating all the tool panels etc. devoting your whole screen to the contents of the web page. Instead of clicking the tool bar button you can use your F11 function key to switch back and forth from the full screen and the browser function displays. This key stroke is especially handy when you are looking at a full screen without your icons being displayed.

Mail button allows you to access your Outlook Express or your e-mail program features from your browser. It even accesses Outlook Express directly so that you can either read your mail, create a new message or attach a web page to the message you that you suddenly get an impulse to send.

This Tool Bar is fully customizable to add or subtract the tools or buttons that fit your needs. If you feel that the Tool Bar becomes cluttered with buttons that you never use, remove them. You can also access the function you want from the menu bar. Customizing the Tool Bar is done from the View menu, then click on Tools, then click on Customize. We will review the Menu Bar just ahead in more



detail.

The Address Bar

Just under the toolbar, you will see a box labeled "Address." This is where you enter the address of a website you want to visit. After you enter it, press the **Return** or **Enter** key to access the site or click on the "Go" button to the right of the address box. By clicking the small triangle to the right of the Address box, you will get a drop-down list of the most recent websites you have visited. To revisit a site, just click on the address.

The Menu Bar

Located along the top of the browser window above the tool bar, the menu bar offers a complete list of things you can do with a web page or your browser, such as saving it to your hard drive or increasing the size of the text on a page, including the customizing of your tool bar. Many of the choices are the same as the buttons on the tool bar below it, so don't try to learn everything now. Each word accesses a drop-down menu, you then click on the selection you want to make.

We will review the Menu Bar in the chapter: **Browser Menu**