Goal: Search the Internet

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Introduction

Learning how to search the Internet opens the door to information and entertainment, e-mail, social networking sites, and e-business. Free Internet access is now available at public libraries and community technology centers. Internet searches as a part of your adult literacy tutoring sessions can be educational and fun. The Internet has become increasingly user-friendly so you can build your skills quickly if you are willing to explore.

Equally important to enjoying the Internet is your awareness of the dangers. Not all Internet sites are what they appear to be, so please proceed with some caution. The dangers include sites that ask you to provide personal information such as social security and credit card numbers, and those that offer illegal activities, like online gambling or purchase of sex. If you have doubts, talk to others before interacting with questionable websites!

Getting Started

To get started you need: a computer, a connection to the Internet and some essential software. You may be working with your own laptop, accessing the Internet by a wireless connection at a library or local coffee shop, or you may be using the computer at the literacy program computer lab. In all cases, it is best to spend some time getting comfortable with the setup you have at hand. Check your connection before you start – sometimes you might need outside assistance getting online.

Have a conversation about what skills and experience with the computer you already have, and what internet-related goals you have in mind. Review some essential vocabulary. Most important is hands-on experience turning on the machine, using menus, using a mouse and a keyboard, and understanding the elements of a computer screen.

Together walk through the process of powering up the computer and monitor, and executing the Internet connection. For some this might be as easy as double clicking on an icon, while others might be accessing their web browser from the Start menu. If you are at the library computer lab or at your literacy program computer lab, ask for help from the staff if you need it. Exiting the Internet connection, logging off and powering down the computer should also be covered at this stage.

Books & Materials

Books

Essential Vocabulary: Computer Words, New Readers Press, 2008 – Key vocabulary is introduced in context and then reinforced in motivating exercises that emphasize word pronunciations and definitions. Interesting stories and real life activities improve problem solving and writing skills.

Websites

http://www.internet4classrooms.com/search.htm - Good information on the variety of search engines available and their strengths and weaknesses; search engines that are safe for kids; where to search for pictures (images) or sounds; and good links to other educational sites.

http://www.learnthenet.com/english/section/www.html -- All about the internet to the point of information overload, so be careful! Can answer questions from "How the Web Works" to "Saving an Image from the Web." Animated pictures help illustrate how things work.

http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/FindInfo.html - An advanced tutorial provides the content of a web searching workshop. Even though some of this is very technical, there are some helpful resources such as a comparison of search engines Google and Yahoo; a glossary of web and internet jargon; and a check-list for evaluating the quality of web-pages, which is excerpted below.

Key Vocabulary

Address Bar – in Internet Explorer (also known as the location bar or address field) the address bar describes the text box where you type in a website's address in a browser. The address bar allows the user to enter a URL or initiate a search.

Computer hardware – are the physical components of the computer. Examples include the mouse, keyboard, monitor (screen), central processing unit (the heart of the computer, or CPU), power supply, and disk drives for CDs/DVDs. Some of the hardware can be loaded with the "software" that actually performs the functions of the computer.

Computer software – is the computer programs, procedures and documentation that perform some jobs on a computer system. Software is so called to distinguish it from computer hardware. Examples of software include operating systems (like Windows or Mac OS), word processors (like WordPerfect or Microsoft Word), websites and video games.

Domain – is a naming system for the Internet. A domain name usually consists of two or more parts, which are typically written separated by dots, such as: www.example.com (say, "w-w-w-dot-example-dot-com"). You can usually tell from the domain whether the website is

commercial and trying to sell you something (.com); a non-profit organization (.org or .net); part of a school or university (.edu); or part of the government (.gov/.mil/.us).

Home page – is the starting point of a website. Like the table of contents of a book or magazine, the home page usually provides an overview of what you'll find at the website.

Mouse (plural mouses, mice, or mouse devices) – is a pointing device. You use your hand or fingers to roll or move the mouse, which then helps you "move around" the computer and choose different functions. You can find a detailed description of mouse operations at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Right_click#Common_mouse_operations.

Navigation – is how you get from one webpage to another. There are several ways to navigate around the web. To go to a new website you might just type the URL of a web page into the address bar of your web browser and then press the Enter or Return key. Use the Back button on your toolbar to go to the webpages you have previously viewed. Then return to your current page by using the Forward button. Clicking a text link that is provided on the website or webpage like: www.just-an-example.com, or clicking a graphic, such as a button, photograph, or drawing can also take you to another webpage.

Back button

Forward button

LEARN THE NET: The Internet Owner's Manual - Microsoft Internet

http://www.learnthenet.com/english/index.html

Address bar

File   View   Favorites   Tools   Help

Personal computer (PC) – is any general-purpose computer whose size, capabilities, and price make it useful for individuals, and which is intended to be operated directly by you. A laptop (also known as a notebook) is a personal computer designed for mobile use and is small enough to sit on one's lap.

Search Engine – is a tool designed to search for information on the World Wide Web. The search results are usually presented in a list and are commonly called hits. The information may consist of web pages, images, information and other types of files. Popular search engines are Google (www.google.com) and Yahoo (www.yahoo.com).

URL (which stands for Uniform Resource Locator) – is the address of documents and other resources on the World Wide Web. For example, http://www.sbplibrary.org is the URL for the Santa Barbara Public Library.

Web browser is the software that enables you to display and interact with text, images, videos, music, games and other information typically located on a Web page at a Web site on the World Wide Web. Web browsers include Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, and AOL Explorer.

Web page – is what you see on your screen when you type in an address or URL.

WiFi – stands for wireless internet connections, which are available at many cafes, libraries, airports and hotels. Some charge for this connection, others are free. A person's home computer may access the Internet by WiFi, dial-up modem, cable, or other means.

World Wide Web (commonly abbreviated as "the Web" or www) – is a very large set of connected documents or "pages" accessed via the Internet. The Internet consists of a worldwide collection of computers and networks exchanging data. While the Web and the Internet are not exactly the same, these terms are commonly used interchangeably.

Reading Practice

- **Current Events.** You may be familiar with *News for You,* "America's only newspaper for adult learners" published by New Readers Press and you may enjoy reading (and listening to) top news stories at www.newsforyouonline.com.

- **Driving Directions.** Practice getting directions to and from a favorite spot with www.mapquest.com/directions/ or http://maps.yahoo.com/. Print out the directions and read them through.

- **Weather Forecast.** Check both the current and forecast weather in both the local and overseas locations. View short videos on various weather conditions. Try www.weather.com.

- **World View.** Read about one of the countries of the world at www.geographic.org, a division of www.theodora.com.

- **Evaluating Websites.** Since anyone can publish on the web, it is important to train your mind to think critically, even suspiciously, by asking a series of questions that will help you decide how much a web page is to be trusted. Use the check-list below to practice this critical thinking skill. First go to www.google.com and type in a controversial topic like "prisons danger" or "stem cells" then evaluate the suggested websites one-by-one using this check-list:

Web Page Evaluation Checklist	

Title and URL of page you are evaluating:	
Personal page or site?	☐ Personal ☐ Company/Organization ☐ Other _____
What type of domain is it? Appropriate for the content?	☐ com ☐ org/net ☐ edu ☐ gov/mil/us ☐ non-US_____ ☐ other:
Who publishes the site? Does it match the name of the site? Does it make sense?	Publisher: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Yes ☐ No
Who wrote the page?	Name: (If you really want to check up on this person you can "google" their name.)
How old is the site?	Date published _____ Current enough for what you need?
Are there links to more web resources? Do they work?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Yes ☐ No
Evidence of bias?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Why was the page put on the Web?	☐ Inform ☐ Persuade ☐ Sell ☐ Satire or parody? Other:
BOTTOM LINE: Is the page appropriate for what you are trying to do?	☐ Yes ☐ No

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Writing Practice

- **Hobbies & Interests.** Talk about your hobbies and interests and use these as search terms for research on the Internet. For example, if you love sports, go to your favorite search engine, enter the name of the sport, investigate the various websites suggested, print out items of interest and then write a brief summary of what you have learned.

- **Book Critic.** Search for a favorite book at www.amazon.com, read the reviews and write a review of your own.

- **Wikipedia.** Research a topic of interest at www.wikipedia.org, "the free encyclopedia," and develop a vocabulary list and definitions of the words from the articles you find there.

Games & Activities

If you don't have a lot of experience with a keyboard or the mouse, see the "Learn to type/use a computer keyboard" goal in this curriculum guide.

- **Solitaire.** Consider a "warm up" game, such as Solitaire, to allow for some practice clicking and dragging with the mouse. Solitaire is available as a virtual card game, where you are dealt cards one at a time and required to organize them in ascending order from Ace (low) to King (high.) Solitaire and other card games are frequently available as part of the "games" software accessed by clicking on "start" and "all programs." If you need some help with the rules of this game or the others below, see additional instructions at: http://www.learnthat.com/courses/fun/cardgames/klondike.shtml.

- **Jigsaw Puzzle.** If you enjoy puzzles you might also enjoy working a jigsaw puzzle at http://thinks.com/daily_jigsaw_puzzle.htm. Drag and drop the colorful pieces into place.

- **Sudoko.** A puzzle with numbers, try sudoku at www.sudoku.com, with the same benefit of gaining some confidence using the computer keyboard and mouse.

- **Crossword Puzzles.** You might enjoy testing your vocabulary with the crossword puzzles available at http://www.crossword-puzzles.co.uk/ . If you want to build your own crossword puzzle, use the vocabulary lists you have generated in the Wikipedia exercise, above.

Real World Practice

Find a Library Book. Another activity that will demonstrate the advantages of an online search begins with an introduction to your local library's website. If you don't know the URL of your public library, go to www.google.com and search for the library name with a city and state. Select from the websites listed there and read carefully to make sure you've got your own library (there's a Riverside Public Library in California but one in Illinois too!). Next:

1. Find the place on the library website where you can search for a book by title, author or subject.
2. Choose a favorite title, author or subject. Enter it into the search box.
3. Locate an available book in the library using the author's name or call number.
4. If the book is unavailable, follow the directions (on-line or from a staff person) to place a hold on that book.
5. If the book is available, write down the "call number" and search for the book on the library shelves.

Dream Vacation! Try planning a dream vacations by doing online research into the availability and costs of alternate transportation and accommodations in a location of your choice.

Shop On-line. Or do some comparative shopping online for a dream home or car.

Independent Practice/Homework Ideas

Compare Browsers. Experiment using various web browsers such as Yahoo! (www.yahoo.com), Google (www.google.com), Dogpile (www.dogpile.com) or WebCrawler (www.webcrawler.com). Try using the same search terms in these different search engines and compare your results.

Favorites. Once you start browsing the Internet, you will come across websites that you really enjoy and would like to find again in the future. To save or "bookmark" that particular website, add the URL to your list of favorites. Try adding the current URL by clicking on "Favorites" or "Bookmark" at the top of the screen. From the Favorites menu, click on Add to Favorites, type a new name for the page, if desired, and click OK. Click on Favorites again and verify URL has been added to list. The procedure for adding a favorite website may differ from one web browser to the next.

Milestones

- *Initial Effort* – You can turn on a computer and open the web browser. You can conduct a basic Internet search by entering an address or URL into the address line of a Web browser. You can navigate back and forth between web pages, and click on links which take you to new web resources.

- *Making Progress* – You conduct an Internet search on topics of interest using various search engines. You can find a selection of websites on a particular topic, and answer a specific question using information learned from the Internet.

- *Accomplished* – You can independently conduct an Internet search using variety of search engines, navigate between web pages and use the "Favorites" or "bookmark" function. You can distinguish the quality and credibility of a web site, telling the difference between a site that features a product for sale and another offering impartial information.

Contributor's Biography

Ruth E. Mudge. Ruth works at the Santa Barbara Adult Literacy office as a fulltime AmeriCorps Volunteer. Born and raised in Santa Maria, California, she served twenty years in the United States Navy. Her duty stations in the Navy included Washington DC, Norfolk Virginia, London UK, Naples Italy, and Korea. A lifetime learner, she has achieved an AS in Data Processing, BS in Computer Science, MS in Information Systems Management and AS in Fine Art.