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Connect to the internet

1. Buy a modem for your computer so that your system is capable of connecting to the Internet.
2. Choose an Internet Service Provider, who will provide you with e-mail services and access to the Internet for a fee.
3. When you are connected, start using e-mail.
4. Start browsing the Internet.

How to buy a modem

If you already have a personal computer of a reasonable standard, then you have three options for buying a suitable modem to give you access to e-mail and the Internet:

An external modem: An 'external' modem is just a modem, which is housed in a separate box from your computer. This is probably the easiest approach if you already have a computer. External modems are now almost a commodity item, which can safely be picked up in a department store. An external modem also has the advantages of allowing you to see activity through its display of lights, and is easier to replace than an internal modem. These are the things you should look for in an external modem:

- Speed suitable to your business needs.
- Fax capability allowing you to send faxes direct from your computer.
- Cable suitable for your computer and the modem. The modem needs to plug in to your computer's serial port – a connector at the back of your computer.

An internal modem: A new computer will probably come fitted with an internal modem which sits inside the computer case. Even if you already have a computer, you can have an internal modem fitted. The only real advantage to an internal modem is that it takes up less desktop space and you don't need to worry about a cable.

Laptop Computer PCIMCIA Card: Modern laptop computers can be fitted with a modem on an insertable card. This is very similar to an internal modem for a desktop computer, but rather easier to install. It is probably still worth asking your computer dealer to fit it and install the appropriate software.

Choose an internet service provider

An Internet Service Provider (ISP) is an organisation, which offers access to the Internet to customers. In addition to access, almost all ISPs can provide you with an e-mail address, and host your web site. You should evaluate the service offered by an Internet Service Provider using these criteria:

- Does the ISP have a local phone number for Internet connection so that you won't need to use long-distance STD to connect up?
- What are the charges? ISPs generally offer either:
 - time based charges.
 - a package based on a monthly fixed cost for a certain number of free hours, with excess usage charged at an hourly rate.
 - a flat fee for unlimited internet connection.
 - a charge for the volume of data you send or receive on the internet.



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- Does the ISP charge for access on a per minute basis, or in, say, quarter hour parcels? If the latter, you would be charged for a full half an hour after being connected for only 16 minutes.
- How long a period does the standard connection agreement cover? You shouldn't have to sign up for a whole year because you may wish to change ISPs if you aren't getting good service.
- Does the package include an e-mail account? It would be very unusual these days to find an ISP which didn't include an e-mail account with its Internet access, but check anyway. Newer computers and modems come equipped with what is called a USB (Universal Serial Bus) port.
- Does the package allow you to set up your own simple 'home page' or small web site, and if so, at what cost? Many of the larger ISPs will let individuals set up small web sites for free if they have an Internet access account. However, in the longer term, you are likely to want to acquire a unique domain name for your company, which involves a more complex set up and some costs.
- Harder to evaluate, but important, is what kind of connection the company has to the Internet. The larger ISPs have very high-speed connections because they need to handle a lot of traffic. Smaller organisations may not be able to match this speed or reliability. Also worth considering is that at peak hours it can sometimes be difficult to connect to an ISP if all of their incoming lines are engaged. If you can get the information it would be useful to know how many incoming lines the ISP has open in your area.
- What sort of user support and help does the ISP provide?
- Ideally, don't sign an agreement with an ISP which locks you in to using their service, or paying a monthly fee, for any longer than a few months. If you are not happy with an ISP, it is perfectly acceptable to change to another. However, if you do this, be aware that your e-mail address may change.
- Will the ISP come to you to install connection software?

E-mail

By and large, it's easier to think of e-mail as just a modern version of ordinary mail, the sort that you write, put in an envelope, take to the post office and send off; the sort that you collect (usually in the form of bills or catalogs!) from the mailbox in front of your house, open and then read. All of these activities have their parallels when you are using electronic mail – e-mail.

E-mail programs: The big difference, of course, is that you generally need some kind of computer to send and receive electronic mail. In particular, you will need an e-mail program (sometimes called an "e-mail client") to handle most of the tasks involved in electronic mail.

It may well be that your Internet Service Provider (ISP) will provide you with a free copy of such a program, or you may have existing business software which includes an e-mail program (both Microsoft Internet Explorer and Netscape Communicator include one, for example).

E-mail addresses: When you sign up with an Internet Service Provider for an e-mail service, you will generally be asked to nominate a "user name". This is a short version of your name, which needs to be different from any other person's user name on the ISP's service. If your name is John Alan Smith, for example, you might need to try "jsmith", "jasmith", "john.smith", "jalansmith", or even "John_Alان_Smith" before you find a unique user name for yourself. Generally the custom is to use an abbreviated form with all lower case letters and no underscores, because it is easier to type.



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Your Internet Service Provider will operate a particular “domain name” which might be, for example, “myisp.com.au”. Think of the domain name as being like the street and suburb or your postal address. The full e-mail address is made up of the user name as discussed above, the “@” symbol (located above the number 2 on most keyboards) and the domain name. So our hypothetical user might have an e-mail address like: “jasmith@myisp.com.au”.

Passwords: A password is just a key phrase that you keep secret in order to stop others from using your services, or to keep information private. Your ISP will ask you to provide a password in order to get private access to your e-mail. Choose a password that is easy enough for you to remember, but difficult for someone else to guess. For security reasons it is best to avoid simple words you might find in a dictionary. One way of avoiding this would be to include some numbers – for example, “jupiter245”.

Using your e-mail program: Firstly, check the basics. Are your computer and the modem both turned on? Is the modem plugged into the phone line? Now start up your e-mail program. If this is the first time you have used it, you will generally be asked to supply some basic details. Most e-mail programs come with something called a “connection wizard” which will step you through the information you need to supply. This would typically include the phone number your modem needs to dial to get on to your ISP’s service, your user name and your password. If you are having trouble, ring your ISP’s help line and ask for guidance through the process. Getting phone help can be awkward if you only have one phone line, as you’ll need to keep swapping the modem and the phone connected to the outside line, but it is worth persisting. If all else fails, ask the ISP to send someone out to get you connected (they may want to charge you for this, but remember, it is in their best interest to get you connected to their service). When all is well, your e-mail program will start up and connect to the ISP’s service (depending on how the program is set up, you may have to click on a “Send and Receive” button to connect rather than having it happen automatically when you start the program).

Writing an e-mail message: Your e-mail program will have a button or menu choice labeled “Compose a New Message” or something similar. Select that, and you will see a form, which has several areas for you to fill in.

- **To:** This is where you type the e-mail address of the person or organisation you want to send a message to. It’s important to get the address correct.
- **Cc:** This stands for “carbon copy” – to send to someone other than the addressee.
- **Bcc:** This field may not be immediately visible. It stands for “blind carbon copy”, and lets you send a copy of the message to someone other than the addressee without the addressee being aware of it.
- **Subject:** You should write a simple one-line summary of what the message is about so that the receiver can quickly understand its purpose.
- **Message:** This is where you type what you want to say. The computer will automatically enter such information as your return address and the date.

Now all you need to do is select the “Send” button or menu choice, and the message will be put in your “OutBox”.

Receiving a message: When you connect to your e-mail service, newly received messages will be placed in your “InBox”, from where you can open and read them. Most programs will indicate in some way (perhaps using bold type) which messages you haven’t yet opened.



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Reply and forward: When you receive a message and open it up, you will be given the choice (through buttons or menu choices) to reply to the message or to forward it. “Reply” saves you having to type in the return e-mail address, and it usually will automatically include the text of the message you received in case you want to comment on something specifically (if this annoys you, you can turn off this feature). “Forward” lets you pass on the whole message to someone else without the trouble of having to copy the original and paste it into a new message. It also retains the subject of the “original” message and places “RE:” at the beginning.

Folders: Most e-mail programs organise messages into various “folders” or “boxes”. At the very least, your program will have buttons, menu choices or folders marked “InBox”, “OutBox”, “Sent Items” and “Deleted Items”. You can generally add more folders of your own to organise your mail as you might do in a filing cabinet.

Junk mail: Alas, the electronic mail service is as plagued with unwelcome mail as is the ordinary postal service (though, for the moment, you get less bills that way!). You will receive many e-mails from people who are trying to sell you something. There’s not a great deal you can do about this except to quickly scan messages in your InBox and delete those that are of no interest. Some e-mail programs, however, will allow you to build up a list of the addresses of the senders of nuisance e-mails, and to have the system delete these before you even see them.

Address book: All e-mail programs will give you the ability to store the names and e-mail addresses of people to whom you often correspond electronically. Most will make it easy for you to add addresses to this list, for example, by right-clicking on the “From” field in an e-mail you have received, you might be given the chance to add the sender to your address book. Similarly, most programs allow you to insert an address from your address book to the “To” field of a new message.

Signatures: Most e-mail programs let you set up an automatic “signature” to be included at the end of every new e-mail message. (Not to be confused with “Digital Signatures”, which are a sophisticated security feature beyond the scope of this booklet.) Such a signature is usually just a text “sign off” with the sender’s name, company, address and / or phone numbers. Some people like to include other material such as jokes or favourite quotations. In a business environment, including such jokes (and possibly the quotations) may represent a lapse of taste, so be cautious!

E-mail etiquette (or “netiquette”): E-mails tend to be fairly casual, but as a matter of courtesy and good business practice it is advisable not to be too casual. Many people prefer to receive e-mails that start with their name and end with the “signature” of the sender, for example – although you probably don’t need to be as formal as starting with “Dear Sir” and ending with “Yours sincerely”.

Think about who you are sending a message to: it’s fine to be very casual with your friends, but an e-mail to a business correspondent should be professional. Don’t allow misspellings or slang abbreviations, for example.

Because most e-mails don’t reproduce such formatting as bold, italic or underlining, it is sometimes necessary to use capitals to emphasise a point. For this reason, it is considered bad manners to use ALL capitals throughout a message – it is rather like the equivalent of shouting.



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You may also see little “smileys” like this :-) in messages you receive (look at it sideways to see the smiling face). These are a way of indicating the sender’s emotion, which is difficult to convey in any other way in unformatted text. :-) probably means the sender is joking, :-(that they are sad, ;-)) is the equivalent of a wink, and so on. Again, think carefully about using these in your own e-mails. They would be appropriate for some addressees and not for others.

How to browse the internet

Many new users expect the Internet to be a unified and organised source of information. The first important lesson to learn is that it is not.

The Internet is the result of the connection of literally millions of computers around the world, and the content that you see on the Internet has been contributed by millions of different people and organisations, all with their own interests and reasons for publishing that information. Almost anyone can publish material on the Internet. It ranges from a one page web site published by a school child about her favourite cartoon characters, up to the massive sites made up of tens of thousands of pages operated by major corporations such as IBM or Microsoft. *And it is all accessible in the same way, at the same level, almost instantly.*

No one organises this content as a whole. There is no overall index, no contents page. Many organisations try to establish some kind of order; but the information on the Internet is constantly growing, and constantly changing. Some web sites stop publishing for no obvious reason; others spring up in their place. Don’t panic! There are ways of finding information and indexes that cover some of the content, and after a while you will grow used to the quirkiness of the Internet and find the places that hold information of particular value to you and your organisation.

Browser software: To browse (or “surf”) the Internet, you’ll need an Internet Service Provider (ISP) account, a computer and a modem, and a piece of computer software called a “browser”. Almost certainly your ISP will provide you with one of the free browsers that are available, or it may have come with your computer when you bought it. The job of the browser software is to display Internet content and to allow you to move through it by clicking on “links” – highlighted text or graphics which take you from one web site page to another.

Using your browser: Firstly, check the basics. Are your computer and the modem both turned on? Is the modem plugged into the phone line? Now start up your browser program. If this is the first time you have used it, you will generally be asked to supply some basic details. See “Using Your e-Mail Program” for more information – the same setup information will be required.

After it is set up, your browser will generally attempt to connect with whatever page has been set up as its “Home Page” – this is usually pre-set by the browser manufacturer. Please note that you can change this starting page to any other web page you like, usually through a menu choice such as “Tools” or “Options”. From here, you can just click on links to go from page to page, or you can use a variety of other tools to start looking at another web site, as follows:

The address bar: This is a field where you can directly type in the web site address (or Uniform Resource Locator (URL)) of a company or organisation you are looking for. For example: www.sony.com will take you to Sony Corporation’s home page and www.ibm.com to that of IBM. Some addresses are not so obvious (or so short), but are generally advertised well by the company. Australian companies will generally have addresses of the form www.company.com.au.



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A web site address: A web site address is made up of numerous components separated by . (dots) and sometimes / (slashes). The first component is **http://**, which stands for “hypertext transfer protocol”. It refers to the basic language or operating system of the Internet and generally does not need to be included in the address. **www** stands for “world wide web” and refers to the commercial component of the Internet which we all use everyday. The **ibm** or **sony** component is the name of the company, which owns the web site. **.com** refers to the type of organisation publishing the web site.

The usual choices are as follows:

.com commercial	.org organisation (community)
.edu educational	.net ISP or company with own server
.asn association	.gov Government body or agency

.au refers to the country of origin of the company which owns the web site. Some examples are:

.au Australia	.uk United Kingdom
.it Italy	.jp Japan

When nothing follows .com, this refers to the US, where the Internet originated.

Search: Some browsers have a built in search facility, into which you can type a word or phrase and then see a list of pages which match your search. These inbuilt search facilities are convenient, but less flexible than using the major “search engines” (see below).

Search engines: There are a number of organisations, which provide various methods to search the vast amount of information on the Internet. Some simply search for a word or phrase, but allow you to specify criteria such as whether you are simply looking for a page which features all of your search words, or whether the exact phrase you’ve typed in must appear. Some popular search engines include Google (www.google.com), Lycos (www.lycos.com), WebCrawler (www.webcrawler.com) and Yahoo (www.yahoo.com).

Be aware that search for a common set of words is likely to return hundreds or even thousands of “hits”. Many hits may not be relevant to what you are looking for. It is best to try to refine your search to a very specific phrase or to an uncommon word if possible.

Bookmarks / favourites: Once you have located a web site of interest, it is a very good idea to save a “bookmark” or put it in your “favourites”. Most browser programs make it easy to save a site in this way and to group related sites into folders. When you want to go back to the site, it is just a matter of looking at your bookmarks and clicking on the one you want.

History: Browser programs also usually keep a list of sites you have visited recently. This can be very useful when you remember that you’ve been to an interesting place in the last week or so and have forgotten to create a bookmark.

Further information

The following fact sheet provides further information about these issues:

- Benefits of e-commerce