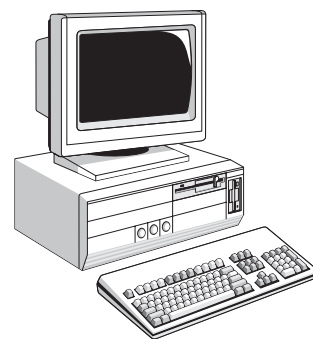


Connecting to and Navigating the Internet



Getting Connected

What is the Internet?

The Internet (sometimes called the “information superhighway”) is a global network of computers that allows rapid, worldwide communication. There are currently more than 12 million computers connected to the Internet. They range from personal computers to supercomputers. The two most popular uses of the Internet are electronic mail and the World Wide Web.

What is electronic mail?

Electronic mail (or e-mail) allows you to send messages to any of more than 50 million people who are connected to the Internet throughout the world. E-mail is inexpensive and allows you to send messages to multiple recipients and foreign locations with no additional charge. The messages reach their destination almost immediately.

What is the Web?

The largest and fastest-growing area of the Internet is the World Wide Web, or simply, the Web. You’ve probably seen references to Web sites (for example: <http://www.exnet.iastate.edu/>) on everything from TV shows to cereal boxes. Large and small businesses, government agencies, universities, and nonprofit organizations post information on the Web.

The Web is like a worldwide library. Using a computer language called HTML (Hypertext Markup Language), Web pages let you *hyperlink* or jump from document to document, regardless of where the documents themselves are located. The Web delivers text, pictures, sound, and video. It allows consumers to communicate with

information providers, buy and sell products and services, and much more.

The Web is changing so fast that future development is impossible to predict. It’s safe to say, however, that the Web is changing the way people communicate all over the world.

How do I get it?

You can get on the Web using either public or private access.

Public Access

In Iowa, limited public Internet access is provided in 22 Iowa State University Extension offices located throughout the state. The limited access will allow you to “surf” the Internet; it will not allow you to use e-mail, create your own Web pages, or play games. Iowa State University Extension’s Information Connection sites are currently located at the following ISU Extension offices:

- Adams County Extension in Corning
- Boone County Extension in Boone
- Buena Vista County Extension in Storm Lake
- Clay County Extension in Spencer
- Chickasaw County Extension in New Hampton
- Dubuque County Extension in Dubuque
- Grundy County Extension in Grundy Center
- Hancock County Extension in Garner
- Henry County Extension in Mt. Pleasant
- Jasper County Extension in Newton
- Johnson County Extension in Iowa City
- Linn County Extension in Marion
- Muscatine County Extension in Muscatine
- Monroe County Extension in Albia
- ISU Outreach Center (northeast area) in Waterloo
- ISU Outreach Center (northwest area) in Sioux City
- Pocahontas County Extension in Pocahontas
- Polk County Extension in Des Moines
- West Pottawattamie County Extension in Council Bluffs
- Shelby County Extension in Harlan
- Wayne County Extension in Corydon
- Wright County Extension in Clarion

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In addition to ISU Extension’s sites, many local libraries also have public Internet access.

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Private Access

Eventually, most Web users will want to get access directly from their homes or businesses. For private dial-up access, you'll need four things:

1. An Internet Provider—Some communities have local and national providers that offer Internet service. Look for a provider that offers a local telephone number (to avoid long-distance charges), a large number of incoming lines, and high speed Internet connections to better serve you. Some providers also offer an 800-number service (although there is usually an additional hourly charge). Compare several providers to get the best price and services that are right for you.

- **Internet Service Cost**

Most Internet service providers will give you an option of several service plans, including an hourly rate (usually \$2-\$3 per hour) or an unlimited rate (usually \$20-\$30 per month).

- **Who Provides Internet Access**

Providers typically include local phone companies (US WEST, GTE, etc.), long-distance carriers (AT&T, MCI, Sprint, etc.), national on-line service companies (America Online, Prodigy, Netcom, etc.), as well as locally owned firms in your community.

- **How to Locate an Internet Service Provider**

Contact your local or long-distance phone company, check the Yellow Pages of your phone book under *Internet Services*, check in computer magazines or local newspapers, or call local or 800 directory assistance for the phone number of the provider you are interested in. You can also check around to see what other individuals and businesses in your community are using. Through one of ISU Extension's Information Connection sites, you can access the State of Iowa Web page at <http://www.state.ia.us/> and then select Iowa Internet Links to see a listing of Iowa Internet sites as well as Iowa Internet providers.

2. A Computer—Most people use either PCs or Apple Macintosh computers to access the Internet. For PC access, a 486 or higher (Pentium preferred), with 8 MB of memory

(16 preferred), a color monitor (SVGA, 15" or larger is recommended for easier viewing), and the Windows 3.1 or Windows 95 operating system is recommended. A sound card and speakers are also recommended so you can hear the audio information made available over the Internet. If you purchase a Macintosh, you will probably want a Power Mac, which includes a faster computer processor and built-in multimedia capability. For more information on purchasing a computer, refer to Iowa State University Extension's publication *Shopping for a Computer for Home Use*, PM 1685.

3. A Modem—(with nearby access to a telephone line). This allows digital data to be transmitted to and from your computer over phone lines. Information can only reach you at the speed of your modem, so a fast modem is important (28.8 Kbps or faster is recommended). Most new computers now come with high speed built-in modems.

4. Software—You'll need a *browser* (a software program that allows you to look at Web pages). Usually the Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Explorer browser, along with the dial-up access software, are included in the materials you receive when you sign up with an Internet provider (check with your provider). If you purchase your own browser, Netscape has versions available for approximately \$50-\$100. Another popular browser, Microsoft Explorer, is free.

What is Web TV?

Television sets that access the Internet through a low-cost computer device that connects to your phone line or cable TV hookup became available in late 1996. Although these new low-cost devices have limitations compared to a personal computer (no printer, no disk storage, and a lower resolution display), for many people, the disadvantages may be offset by Web TV's apparent ease of use and low cost.

Where can I get more information?

Bookstores (and some libraries) carry a wide range of Internet-related books. Many magazines specialize in Internet and other computer-related information. Some news magazines and newspapers have technology sections. Many television programs feature Internet topics.

Navigating the World Wide Web

Once you are connected to the World Wide Web, through a public access site or privately in your home or business, there is some basic information you will need to know.

Basic concepts

- Use the mouse to move through the Web page. The arrow indicator will change to a hand shape when you are on a “link.” Select the link to move to that information.
- “Links” can be text or graphics. A text link will be indicated by underlined text. A graphic link can be determined when the arrow indicator changes shape.
- Every page on the Internet has a unique URL (Uniform Resource Locator) that gives you the address for that page. Often, you see URLs listed in newspapers, on television, in advertisements, and even in this publication. URLs must be entered exactly as written, including specific capital and lowercase letters and punctuation. A sample URL is listed here:

<http://www.exnet.iastate.edu/Pages/pubs/>
(Protocol) (Server) (Pathname)

- Some documents may take longer to download, depending on the size of the document, the speed of your network connection, and the speed of the server on which the document is located.
- Documents with images are generally much larger than those just containing hypertext.
- Many publications are in PDF format. This format allows you to see and print a document as it was originally designed but requires Adobe Acrobat Reader software on your computer. You can get information about the reader, including how to download it, by going to the “Publications” link on ISU Extension’s homepage at (<http://www.exnet.iastate.edu/>).
- Many computer addresses in the United States end with one of the following abbreviations, indicating the type of organization.

edu educational site
mil military site
com corporate or company site
gov government site
net administrative organization for a network
org private organizations that don’t fit the above categories

Child safety on the Internet

With more schools and homes having Internet access, children have more opportunities to be influenced by the variety of on-line services and information. Here are a few suggestions to those concerned that children could have access to adult-theme material or become targets of crime or exploitation by people they’ve “met” on-line.

- Never allow a child to meet someone without parental permission that he or she has met on-line.
- Help your child understand that people on-line may not be what they seem.
- Get to know the services your child uses. Become familiar with the Internet and with ways to block out objectionable material.

For more information about safety on the Internet, call the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 800-843-5678. Ask for the brochure “Child Safety on the Information Highway.” An on-line version of the brochure is available at the Interactive Services Association’s Web site (<http://interac.baweb.com/project-open/child.html>).

There are also many types of software available that allow parents some control over what is accessible over the Internet. Listed below are a few of the many types of software that are available. You can do your own search on the Internet to find additional software that may meet your needs.

- SafeSurf (<http://www.safesurf.com>) SafeSurf uses a rating system to code good sites for kids. Only the sites identified with the code can be accessed by kids.
- CYBERSitter (<http://www.solidoak.com>) Allows parents to block, block and alert, or simply alert when access is attempted to an objectionable site.
- Cyber Patrol Home Edition (<http://www.cyberpatrol.com>) Provides time management with parental control and application blocking including filtering pornographic material. Free download for home users.
- SurfWatch (<http://www.surfwatch.com>) Gives parents and educators the ability to limit unwanted material without restricting access rights of other users. Screens many different types of sites.

Analyzing the accuracy of information

Almost anyone can put information on the Internet. It is fortunate that the people who really do have the “facts” are able to share what they know with the world. It is unfortunate that people can knowingly or unknowingly spread false information via the Internet. When analyzing a Web page, look at the page itself. Is there an author’s name, title, and address on it? Does the address look reasonable? Have you, your coworkers, or friends heard of the organization that put the information on the Web? Are references and information sources cited on the Web page?

You may want to check some of the references to see if they support facts found in the Web article. Use your common sense; if the information looks suspicious, do some keyword searches on the Web to see if you can find other sites that have similar information with the same “facts.” If you cannot duplicate the “facts” at a different Web site, think twice about the accuracy of the information.

Searching for information on the Web

Finding what you are looking for on the Web can be a rewarding experience. Iowa State University Extension has a variety of information available on the Web. If you are looking for information not available at ISU, you can use one of the many search engines available to locate the information you need. The ISU Extension Web page (<http://www.exnet.iastate.edu/>) has an “Internet Resources” link that provides a list of commonly used search engines.

World Wide Web sites to explore

Millions of Web sites are available. Here are a few sites that might be of interest. As of this printing (June 1998) the Web sites listed are located at the accompanying URLs. Because it is easy to move a Web page, you might find that some of the sites have moved and the URL listed will no longer work.

Iowa State University Extension
<http://www.exnet.iastate.edu/>

Iowa State University
<http://www.iastate.edu/>

Food Safety
<http://www.exnet.iastate.edu/Pages/families/fs/>

National Ag Library
<http://www.nalusda.gov/>

State of Iowa
<http://www.state.ia.us/>

The White House
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/>

MapQuest—an interactive street atlas of the United States
<http://www.mapquest.com/>

National Pork Producers Council
<http://www.nppc.org/>

Chicago Board of Trade
<http://www.cbot.com/menu.htm>

The Iowa General Assembly
<http://www.legis.state.ia.us/>

U.S. House of Representatives
<http://www.house.gov/>

U.S. Senate
<http://www.senate.gov/>

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... and justice for all

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