

The Language of the Internet

“Nothing in life is to be feared. It is only to be understood.”

—Marie Curie



You might have heard that HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) is the language of the Internet. It sounds ominous, doesn't it? Well, don't worry. HTML is the computer language that most of the web pages are written in, but you don't have to worry about learning it unless you want to. I'll tell you more about HTML in Chapter 9, "Putting Your Stuff on the Web." In the meantime, let's get into some easier stuff. In this chapter, I'll give you the basics about the everyday language of the Internet that you need to know. These are basics that are easy to learn and fun to work with: Internet address, acronyms, and emoticons.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Understanding Internet Addresses
- Email Addresses
- Acronyms and Emoticons

Understanding Internet Addresses

In today's world, we are inundated with web addresses. These addresses, commonly known as URLs, show up everywhere. You see and hear WWW addresses on television, in newspapers, on the radio, in magazines, on roadside billboards, and even in fortune cookies! Your bank has a website, and so does your alma mater. Many of the stores in which you shop have a Web address, as do most hotels, health organizations, sports teams, museums, newspapers, and magazines.



LINGO

URL stands for uniform resource locator. This is a system for addressing Internet sites, documents, and other resources on the World Wide Web.



Trivia

If you are familiar with an older operating system called DOS—disk operating system, you know that DOS uses the backslash (\), whereas UNIX uses the forward slash (/). Since the Internet is based on UNIX, it uses the forward slash (/).

Much of the trepidation regarding the computer world comes from the fact that many people don't understand the highly technical terminology associated with computers. In most cases, a person doesn't have to understand complex jargon to work with a computer, but every now and then some necessary geek-speak creeps in. This is the case with Internet addresses, which are also called uniform resource locators, or URLs for short. The Internet is a treasure chest of information. As a user, you must have a key to unlock this high-tech chest. URLs are one of the keys. The sooner you understand URLs, the faster you can open that treasure chest and begin enjoying the riches of the Internet.

A typical URL looks like this:

<http://www.cocacola.com>

HTTP stands for Hypertext Transfer Protocol. This is the protocol, or set of rules and standards, that enable computers to exchange information. It defines how web pages are formatted and transmitted. Although most Internet addresses have *www* after the *http://*, a few do not. Always type in the address exactly as it was given.

The colon and the two slashes are special separators that your computer understands. They are UNIX codes. Many of the servers and other main computers on the Internet use the UNIX operating system. Just in case you're interested, UNIX stands for UNIpleX information and computer services and is pronounced *yoo-niks*.

After the slashes, you usually see *www*. This stands for World Wide Web and will usually be part of the Web address. The World Wide Web, which is more commonly called the Web, is the popular multimedia branch of the Internet that consists of huge collections of documents stored on hundreds of thousands of computers around the world. Not all web pages are part of the World Wide Web, and *www* is not part of every web address or URL. A web page can reside on a part of the Internet that is not found on the World Wide Web. Such a URL would not contain *www*. An example of such a web address is:
<http://office.microsoft.com>.

The next part of a URL is the name of the computer where the information is located.

Geek-speaks call this the domain name. The domain name in <http://www.greatage.com> is *greatage*.

Following the domain name is the extension, which is the category of the domain. The domain name is followed by a period, and then the extension. Some websites are commercial; some are educational; others might be nonprofit organizations or governmental websites. Some common extensions are



LINGO

An Internet

domain name is an individual's or organization's unique name, which points to a specific Internet address. The domain name is the part of the Internet address that usually follows the *www*. For example, in the Web address <http://www.compukiss.com>, the domain name is *compukiss*.

- .com—commercial
- .edu—educational institution
- .gov—government
- .int—international
- .mil—military
- .net—network
- .org—organization

You might also see a country code as the extension of the address, such as

- .au—Australia
- .ca—Canada
- .fr—France
- .it—Italy
- .us—United States of America



Sandy's tip

If you aren't sure of the extension for a particular domain name, try typing the domain name into any search engine—you'll usually be given the correct site in the search results.

As with extensions such as .com and .edu, the country code is always preceded by a period.

With the popularity of cell phones and the additional numbers of phone lines being installed in homes, many new area codes have been added to accommodate the growing number of telephone numbers. The same thing is happening to Internet addresses. New extensions are being added to support all the new Internet users. Some of the newest ones are

- .tv—entertainment or media
- .info—credible resource information
- .biz—small business
- .name—your name

When you are looking for a web page and you aren't sure of the address, many times you can figure it out based on the following formula. Most URLs begin with `http://www`. All URLs contain a domain name and an extension. If you can figure out the web page and its type, you can usually figure out the entire web address. Remember, the URL is generally in the following format:

`http://www.its domain name.its three-letter extension`

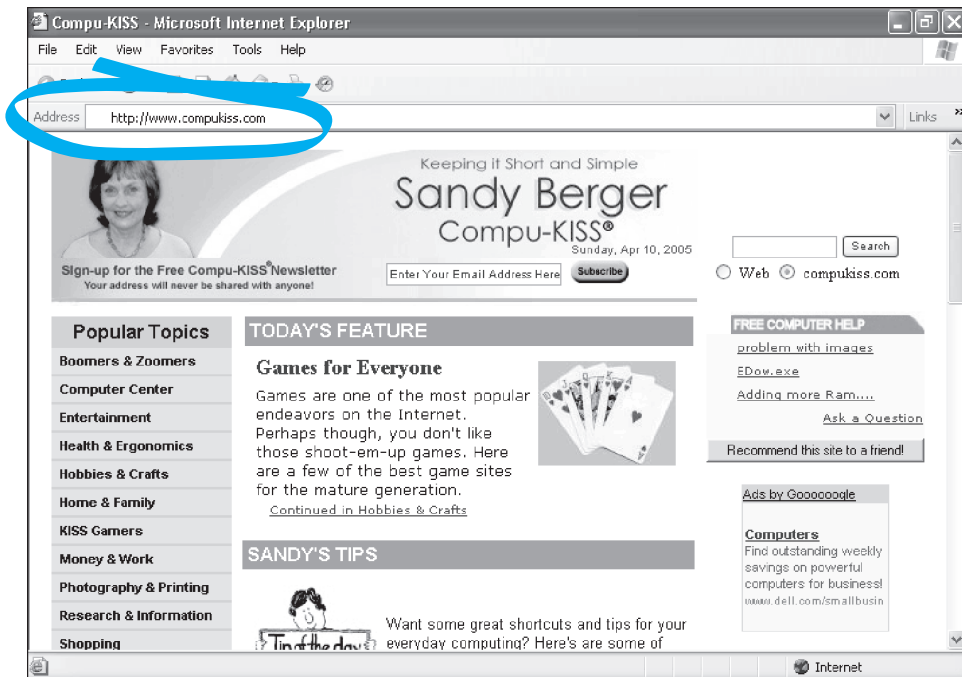


FIGURE 3.1

This is a typical Address Bar in a browser, showing the URL of the current page.



Sandy's tip

If you see a web address that reads `https://`, the “s” indicates that this web page is secure. (More on this is discussed in Chapter 5, “Security in Cyberspace”).



Trivia

The terms “Internet” and “World Wide Web” are used interchangeably in everyday applications, but the World Wide Web is really only a part of the Internet. The Internet is the vast collection of inter-connected networks of computers. The World Wide Web is the colorful, graphical part of the Internet.

For example, if you wanted to find the Coca-Cola Company on the Web, a good guess at the address would be `http://www.cocacola.com`. If you enter that address into your browser’s Address Bar, it will take you to the Coca-Cola website. Because most URLs begin with `http://`, you do not have to enter the `http://`. You simply type **`www.cocacola.com`**. If you don’t type in `http://`, your browser assumes that it is part of the address and fills it in for you. You might also try entering **`www.coke.com`**. Sometimes a company, organization, or individual will register more than one web address for the same website. When typing in web addresses, it’s important to type them correctly and place the periods—called dots—in the correct places.

What if you wanted to visit the website for the *New York Times* or the University of California at Los Angeles? If you guessed `www.nytimes.com` or `www.newyorktimes.com` for the *New York Times* or `www.ucla.edu` for the University of California at Los Angeles, you would be correct. You won’t always be successful when trying to figure out URLs. Sometimes you might get a surprise.

Because you see and hear so much about dot-coms, don’t assume that all web addresses end in `.com`. Because the White House is owned by the

government, the address for the official White

House in Washington, D.C. is `www.whitehouse.gov`. For many years, `www.whitehouse.com` went to a pornographic website, resulting in quite a surprise for Web surfers who guessed the address incorrectly.

One important thing to remember about URLs is that there are no spaces in the addresses. Sometimes there will be an underscore (_) or a dash (-) in the address, but never a space.

There was a time when computers and Internet browsers could not properly translate uppercase letters in Internet addresses. So traditionally, all URLs are written in lowercase. Improvements in the software that runs the Internet now enable uppercase letters to be recognized. So typing in `www.coke.com` or `www.Coke.com` will take you to the same website.

Once you understand URLs, you will be able to find all of the information on the Internet more easily.

Email Addresses

Email addresses are similar to URLs, but they are simpler. They consist of two parts. The first part is the name of the person. This is followed by the @ sign. The @ sign is followed by the domain name of the Internet server you use. If you have chosen `marysmith` as your name and you use AOL, your email address will be `marysmith@aol.com`. If you use a company Internet server, your address will be `marysmith@yourcompany.com`. If you have your own website named `smithfamily.com`, your address would be `marysmith@smithfamily.com`. As with URLs, email addresses contain no spaces, but can contain uppercase letters.



BLOOPER ALERT

Never put a space in an Internet or email address.



Sandy's tip

In Internet Explorer and Opera, if the URL begins with `www.` and ends with `.com`, all you have to type is the domain name, and then hold down the Ctrl key as you press the Enter key on the keyboard. Firefox is so intuitive, all you have to do is type in the domain name and it figures out the rest of the address.

Acronyms and Emoticons

Our popular Internet email, as well as other online communication such as chat rooms and instant messaging, is informal, quick, and easy. Everybody loves communication that is short, concise, and to the point. The shorter, the better. As a matter of fact, in the name of brevity, you will often see a string of abbreviations, called *acronyms*, used in electronic communications. This easy-to-learn shorthand works like a simple code and makes communicating electronically more fun.



LINGO

An **acronym** is a word formed by combining parts of other words. For instance, modem is derived from MODulator/DEModulator. Often these are the first letters of a longer phrase. For instance, BTW is the acronym for By The Way, IMHO stands for In My Humble Opinion.

If you know what NASA or IRS refer to, you are already familiar with acronyms. Email acronyms are similar to regular acronyms—they are words formed from the capitalized letters of each of the first letters of a descriptive phrase or from a combination of letters that represents the long words. An acronym is actually a type of abbreviation. Although you sometimes see acronyms or abbreviations written with periods after each letter—for example, U.S.A.—periods are not used in online acronyms.

Understanding acronyms will add to your enjoyment of online communication. They seem to lighten up the content. Using acronyms is fun. It is like being a member of a club and knowing all the secret codes. Let's look at some fun ways to use this Internet shorthand.

Saying Goodbye

A whole classification of acronyms for saying goodbye and farewell has been created—a kind of online closing for an online communicating you are doing. Why not try some of these when writing your email or the next time you leave a chat room?

- BBL—Be back later
- BFN—Bye for now
- BRB—Be right back
- TTFN—Ta ta for now
- TTYL—Talk to you later

When you want to urge someone on or send them a word of encouragement, try this well-known acronym:

- WTG—Way to go

Many of these interjections can add expression and personality to your messages:

- BTW—By the way
- FWIW—For what it's worth
- GMTA—Great minds think alike
- IAE—In any event
- IMHO—In my humble opinion
- IOW—In other words
- JFYI—Just for your information
- OTOH—On the other hand
- WRT—With respect to
- WYSIWYG —What you see is what you get

It is easy to tell that this acronym was developed from chat room conversation.

- PMFJI—Pardon me for jumping in



Trivia

WYSIWYG, pronounced wiz-ee-wig, stands for What You See Is What You Get. It was originally coined as a computer term that meant what you see on the screen is what will print. This catchphrase originated with the Geraldine character in *The Flip Wilson Show* of the early 1970s.

How about a few regarding something funny?

- LOL—Laughing out loud
- ROTFL—Rolling on the floor laughing

Some of the common response acronyms seem somewhat flippant and even a little sarcastic. Quite a few of them originated from chat room banter. Perhaps because online communications have no face-to-face contact, it is very easy to overlook the feelings of your reader. You might try using these common responses, which show sensitivity:

- HSIK—How should I know
- NBD—No big deal
- NOYB—None of your business
- OIC—Oh, I see
- OTL—Out to lunch
- TIC—Tongue in cheek



BLOOPER ALERT

Never type in all capital letters. In the Internet world, this is considered SHOUTING!

FAQR—a new acronym I just coined for “For a quick review”—why not join in the acronym fun? To speed up your messages, pepper them lightly with the appropriate acronyms, but use them sparingly. No one wants to spend hours cracking an over coded message. Remember to use acronyms with sensitivity, in the event that your reader might not know the tone in which you are writing. And last,

but not least, be sure to get them right; otherwise, you might have family and friends ROTFL over your attempt to say BFN when you typed NBD instead.

Another very entertaining form of Internet shorthand is using emoticons. Emoticons are keyboard characters that resemble human facial expressions. Emoticons are used to convey emotion or state of mind.

Email, chat rooms, and online conversations such as instant messaging are the Web’s truly unique methods of communication. Electronic

communications are somewhat like a cross between a letter without details and a phone call without vocal tones and expressions. In order to convey these missing qualities, a new shorthand can indicate when you are happy, when you are sad, and even when you want to scream. This shorthand uses standard keyboard symbols to produce cute little pictures called emoticons or smileys.

The three most common emoticons created with a keyboard are

- :-) A smiley face indicating happiness.
- :(The sad face indicating unhappiness.
- ;-) The winky face indicates a flirtatious or sarcastic remark.



LINGO

Emoticons are combinations of keyboard shortcuts that resemble the human face.

To get the full impact of the emoticons, you have to lean your head to the left as you look at them. Other emoticons include

- ;(Crying
- :-0 Yelling
- :-@ Screaming
- :-X A kiss
- :-l Frowning
- l-o Bored
- #:-) Bad hair day
- #-) Oh, what a night
- :-I Indifferent
- >>:-<< Mad
- @,@ WOW! (eyes bugging out)
- :-P Sticking tongue out
- :~(Shedding a tear



Sandy's tip

Although it's fun to use emoticons, if you want to be taken seriously, you should be sure to use them sparingly.

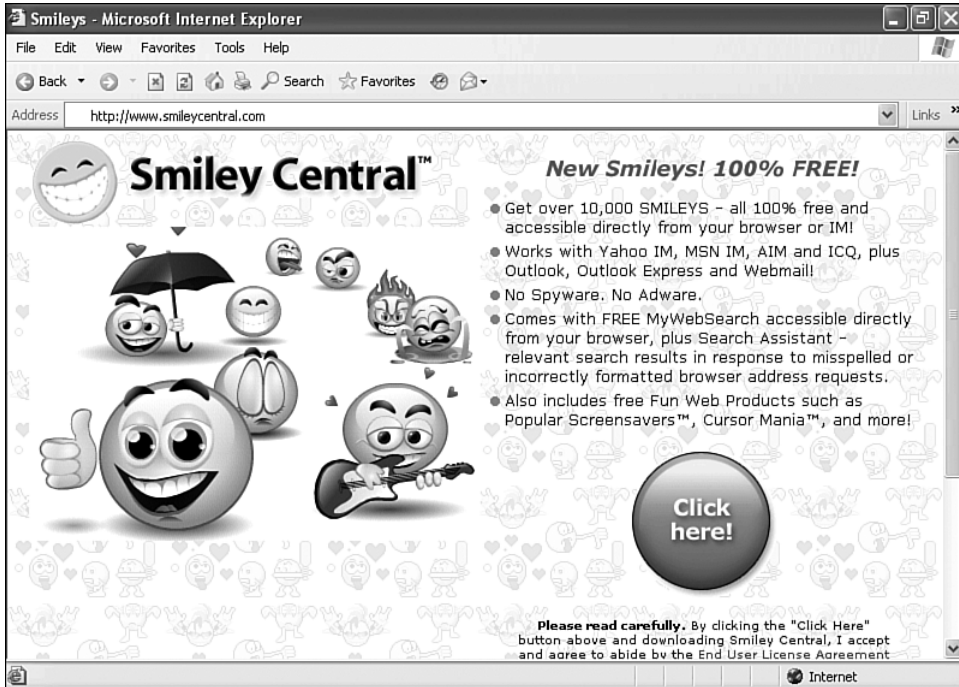
Emoticons are so popular that they have advanced into other areas. Although these emoticons have nothing to do with emotions, they include some clever combinations that are just plain fun.

:-\$	Put your money where your mouth is!
d:-)	Baseball fan
~:o	A baby
(:-)	Bald
"~)	Needs a nose job
{:- }	User with moustache and toupee
://	Guy with duck tape over his mouth

Emoticons are even used to represent famous people, cartoon characters, and animals. See if you can spot the resemblance or the connection to the person or character noted.

:-.)	Cindy Crawford or Marilyn Monroe
+-<:-)	The pope
= :-)=	Uncle Sam
Cl:-=	Charlie Chaplin
:-)8	Dolly Parton
:\$)	Donald Trump
*< :o>	Santa Claus
%~~	Picasso
3:*>	Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer
8(-)	Mickey Mouse
:-----}	Pinocchio
@@@@8^)	Marge Simpson
8:]	Gorilla
:8)	Pig
:>()<	Penguin

These simple emoticons are still used everyday in chat rooms and email. They have given rise to even more graphical emoticons such as the ones shown in Figure 3.2. These emoticons are easy to use. You can download them free from many websites such as Smileytown at www.smileytown.com or Smiley Central at www.smileycentral.com. You can even purchase special animated emoticon collections—such as sports and entertainment, holiday, and cat and dog—with programs such as GetSmile at www.getsmile.com.

**FIGURE 3.2**

These graphical emoticons are used in message boards and email.

Don't you agree that emoticons are fun? Creating them has become a hobby for some. Even if you don't want to spend the time to create your own, understanding these cute little computer faces will certainly add to your enjoyment of online communications. And they can always lighten up your email. Try it; you'll like it. :-)



Sandy's tip

Before you download free emoticons or anything else from the Internet, be sure to read the "End User License Agreement" that will tell you if the website plans to download additional programs to your computer or if the site will share your email address or other information you give it with others.



Sandy's Summary

The Internet has a language of its own that is used in Internet addresses. Understanding the components of Internet and email addresses such as domain names and extensions is not difficult, and it is sure to make your web surfing easier. Once you have that down pat, you can move on to more fun online things such as acronyms and emoticons.

Acronyms are words formed from the capitalized letters of each of the first letters of a descriptive phrase. These short ditties are also part of the fun of email, instant messaging, and chat rooms. A good example is LOL, for Laughing Out Loud.

When you talk to someone in person or on the telephone, you can express your emotions by facial or vocal expressions. This is one thing that you cannot do when communicating online.

So a new way of expressing feelings was developed.

Emoticons, which are also called smileys, are fun little symbols that can show when you are happy, sad, bored, or angry. There are also emoticons for people like Dolly Parton and Donald Trump. Emoticons have even expanded to include fun graphic symbols.

If you thought that learning the language of the Internet would be difficult and boring, I hope this chapter changed your mind.

Sandy Berger