

MOUNTAIN STATE PARENTS CHILDREN AND  
ADOLESCENT NETWORK

# PARENT'S GUIDE TO THE INTERNET

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**Computer**—an electronic machine that can be programmed to store, retrieve, or process data. Another term you may hear is "PC," which mean personal computer.

## INTRODUCTION

This guide is for parents who have begun to see that computers and online services will be or already are a part of children's lives at school, at community centers, at home, or at the library—and who are looking for some guidelines and advice. It has been written with the computer novice in mind, and provides simple definitions and step-by-step instructions. We hope that parents who have already become online travelers will find useful tips as well. We recognize that it is not possible to meet the needs of every parent through one guide. But we're hopeful this guide provides a starting point for parents to get involved.

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The targeted area for our training is Philippi, which is located in Barbour County, West Virginia. A very special thanks goes out to Tina Swaney for all her hard work in making this possible. A big thank you goes out to the families who proofread the manual before we sent it to print. We also would like to acknowledge Teri Toothman, Executive Director for the Mountain State Parents Children and Adolescent Network (MSPCAN) for the long hours she has put into developing the manual which can be used by parents everywhere.

## WHAT IS THE INTERNET?

Basically, the Internet is a system that lets computers all over the world talk to each other. If you have access to a computer, you can probably use "the Net."

Back in the 1970's the U.S. Department of Defense's Advanced Research Projects Agency originally sponsored Internet development because it wanted a military communications system that could survive a nuclear war. Later, the Internet was funded as a research support system by the National Science Foundation. Today, support for the Internet comes almost entirely from commercial sources.

## WHAT IS SO GREAT ABOUT THE INTERNET?

What makes the Internet great is that it brings together the best qualities of the communications systems that preceded it while improving on their worst features:



**Postal mail (known as “snail mail” on the Net):** Letters take at least a day—often a week—to get to their destinations, and you must have envelopes, buy stamps, go to a mailbox and so on. If you are away from home, your mail piles up unanswered. E-mail is quicker to compose, arrives faster, and doesn’t require a stamp, an envelope, or a trip to the post office.



**The telephone:** The phone is limited because the other person must be available to talk, and usually no record exists of what was said. You can read E-mail when you feel like it, it doesn’t interrupt you during dinner, and you can save and print correspondence to keep track of the conversation.



**The fax machine:** It’s a chore to incorporate a fax in another document or to pass it on to someone else. Faxes of faxes of faxes become illegible. E-mail stays readable no matter how many times it’s forwarded.



**The public library:** You have to go to the library to find information and often, the book you want is checked out or missing. By the time information gets into the library, it is often out of date. The Internet is open 24 hours a day, seven days week, and much (but not all) of its information is current.



**The newspaper:** Most newspapers come out only once a day, and editors decide what news you get to see and what spin to put on it. On the Internet, news is updated continuously and you can get it from many different sources. (On the other hand, it’s hard to line a litter box with a web page.)



## WHAT'S INVOLVED IN SETTING UP TO GO ONLINE?

In order to “get connected,” you will need (see Figure 1):

**Software**—programs that allow you to do things with a computer. Software can include everything from the basic operating system, like a Windows screen, to fancy computer games. Software is different from hardware. Things that are considered hardware are machines or parts of machines, like a monitor, a hard drive, a modem, or a printer.

**Modem**—a machine that changes telephone signals into a form that is compatible with a computer, and vice versa. The word modem is actually made from two words: modulator and demodulator.

**Connections**—ways of hooking up to the Internet—often over a phone or cable line, using a modem.

**Internet Service Provider**—a company that sells access to the Internet. It's similar to a telephone service provider—without them, you couldn't get a dial tone or make a call.

- A **Computer**, including a screen, called the monitor; a keyboard; and a mouse, a small device attached to your computer by a cord, which lets you give commands to the computer.
- **Software**—most of the internal operating software comes with computers, but you may want to ask about word processing programs to use for writing letters, papers, etc. Internet connection software, and other educational or recreational products.
- A **Modem**, which connects you to the online world (can be built-in or external to your computer) by translating phone signals into computer signals and back again.
- **Connections**, usually a phone or cable line.
- An **Internet Service Provider**, which is a service that helps you access the information on the Internet. Also known as “ISPs” or “online providers,” familiar ones include America Online, Erols, Mindspring, and Compuserve. To get service from an ISP, you need to get the ISP's software, which usually comes on CD ROM (if you need it on a floppy disk you will need to specifically request this). You can get the software by calling any of the ISPs' 800 numbers, in the yellow pages, ads, or 800 directory assistance (800-555-1212). Once you get the software, there should be detailed directions on the

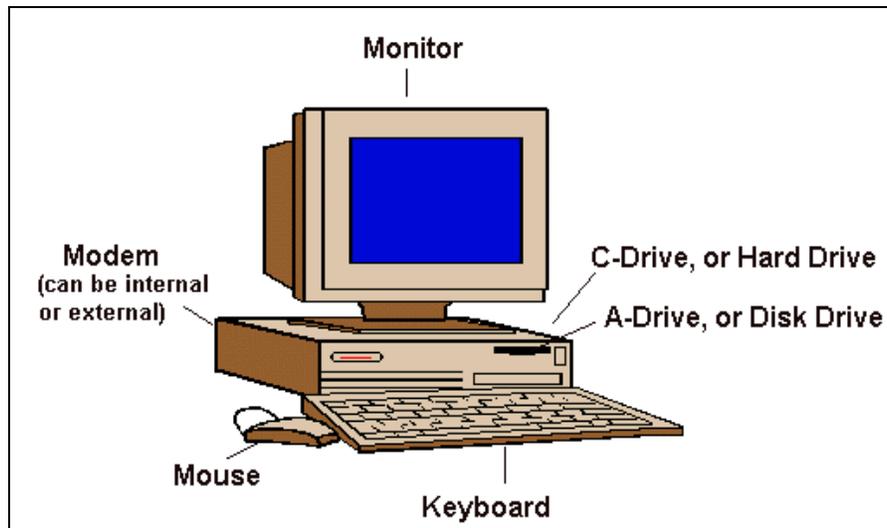
**Options**—additional parts of a computer (hardware) that expand the abilities of your machine.

software and the materials that come with it on how to sign up for service.

- **Options**, such as a CD-ROM, printer, parental control tools—either through the online provider or commercial software.

## GETTING TO KNOW YOUR COMPUTER

FIGURE 1  
COMPUTER MODEL



**Disk Drive**—the place on the hard drive where you can insert a floppy disk to store your data and take it with you.

**Hard Drive**—the main part of the computer where all the important processes take place and where data is stored

This is what a computer looks like. Some models may vary in size and shape. The monitor is the display—rather like a television screen. The C-drive, or **hard drive**, is where you store data on your computer. It is also where all the parts that make the computer run are located. The A-drive, or **disk drive**, is where you insert a disk to save data to take with you. The keyboard is what you use to type, and the mouse is a device you use to move around the screen by guiding it with your hand and clicking its button(s).



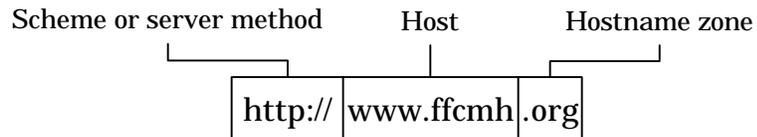
An external modem (pictured above) can be used to connect to the Internet too. Not all computers have an internal modem built in to their system. The external modem sits outside your computer, and plugs in to both your phone line and to the computer. It does exactly the same thing as an internal modem.

## GETTING STARTED

So you're all set up with a computer—now it's time to learn about the World Wide Web (WWW).

### WHAT IS IN A WEB ADDRESS?

Here is a sample web address for the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health.



A web address is known as a **URL** or **Uniform Resource Locator**. The first part of a URL is the text before the colon

( : ). This is called the **scheme** or **server method**, which describes the way a browser can get to the resource. The most common scheme by far is "http"\*. Other schemes you may see include "ftp," "file," and "gopher." The scheme is followed by a colon and two forward slashes ( // ), which tells the computer that this bit of text is a URL.

After the scheme comes the **host**. The host is the organization that makes the information available. The host in the example URL we are using is `www.ffcmh`. Sometimes you will see "www" as part of the host, but there are URLs that don't use it. One such example is the Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice, whose URL is `http://cecp.air.org`.

The last part of a URL is the **hostname zone**. This tells you what kind of group owns the name. Some of the most common hostname zones are:

com	Company or individual
edu	Educational institution
gov	U.S. Federal government
mil	U.S. Military
net	Network organization
int	International organization

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\* HTTP stands for **Hypertext Transfer Protocol**, which is the Net's native transfer technique. Hypertext is a system of writing and displaying text that enables the text to be linked in multiple ways. Hypertext Transfer Protocol, or the way pages are sent over the Net, should not be confused with **Hypertext Markup Language (HTML)**, which is the language used to compose web pages on the Net.

**URL**—Uniform Resource Locator, the address of each page on the Internet.

**Browser**—computer software that finds and displays web pages.

**Scheme or server method**—the first part of a URL. Schemes, or server methods, describe ways a browser gets to information on the Internet. Examples of schemes are http (hypertext transfer protocol), ftp (file transfer protocol), or file. They tell the browser where to look and what to expect to find.

**Host**—the "name" of the computer that is hosting the web site.

**Hypertext transfer protocol**—one of the main ways information is sent over the Internet.

**Hypertext markup language**—the computer language that is used to write web pages.

**Hostname zone**—the type of organization that is providing a web site. Examples of hostname zones are com, org, net, mil, gov, and edu.

**Subdirectory**—a directory (or category) below the main one that is more specific. For example, if the directory is about health, some subdirectories within health might be mental health, health care, medicine, and long term care.

**Filename**—the name of an electronic file.

**Point-to-point protocol**—a method of providing a direct connection to the Internet over a telephone line with a modem.

org Nonprofit or other noncommercial organization

Every URL must have these three parts: scheme, host, and hostname zone. Those three parts together are a base URL, and they will get you as far as the main entry page for the site. Often, a page you want will be in a **subdirectory** (similar to folders for Windows and Mac users) of the site. The URL for a page in a subdirectory would be the base URL followed by a combination of other words, symbols, numbers, and forward slashes, such as <http://cecp.air.org/guide/>. Often, a URL will end in a **filename**, such as [index.html](#) or [main.htm](#). An example of such a URL is:

<http://cecp.air.org/fba/problembehavior/main.htm>.

## WHAT IS A WEB BROWSER?

A web browser is the software that finds web pages and displays them on the screen.

If you already have a PPP (Point to Point Protocol- a way for connecting your computer to the Internet) account or if you use an online service (such as America Online), you can use cool, modern web browsers. The two most common web browsers are Netscape Navigator and Internet Explorer. We will look at both options in this guide. Other browsers may look a bit different but should perform the same tasks functions.

When you start or “open” a Web browser, you see a screen similar to the ones that are shown below.

FIGURE 2  
SAMPLE NETSCAPE SCREEN

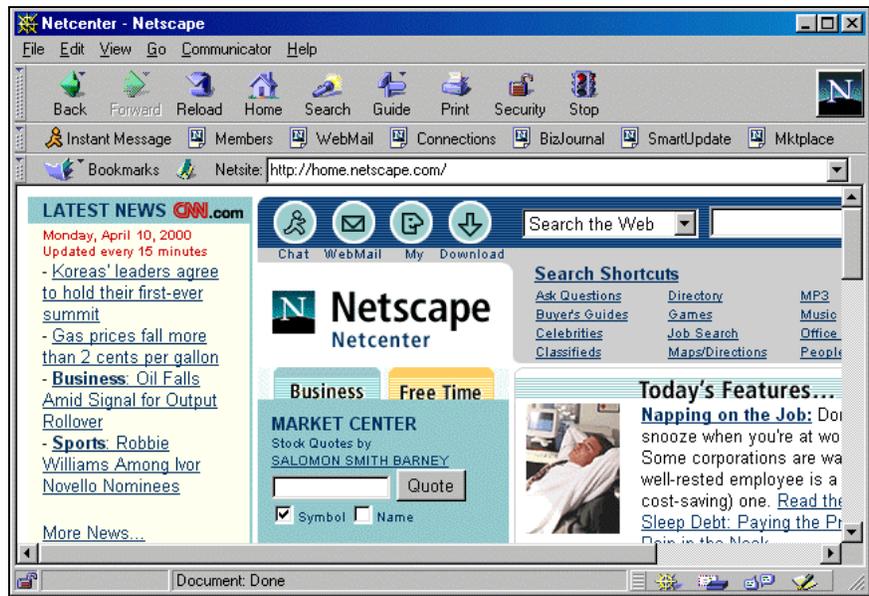
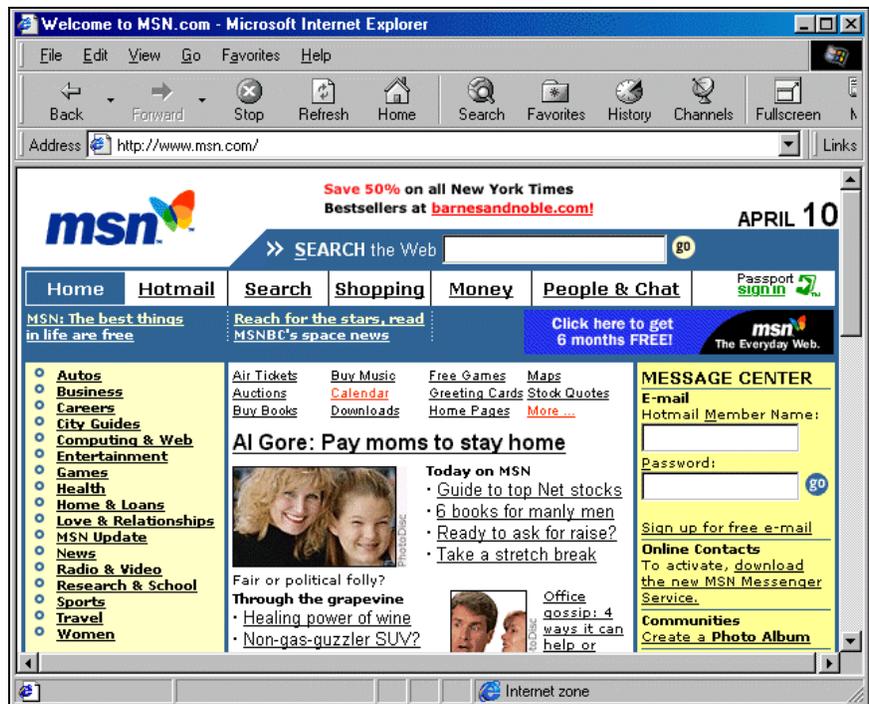


FIGURE 3  
SAMPLE INTERNET EXPLORER SCREEN



At the top of the window is the "tool bar" with buttons or words you can use to perform different tasks. There is also the

Location (Netscape) or Address (Internet Explorer) line, which contains the URL for the current page. Netscape sometimes labels this box Netsite. Explorer sometimes calls it a shortcut. Remember that URLs are the most important part of web use because they're the names of all the pages on the Net.

## LET'S SURF THE NET

A home page is the main Web page for a person, organization, company, or government agency. When you see a URL you want to check out, here's what you do:

1. Using the mouse, click in the Location or Address box, near the top of the Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Internet Explorer window to move your cursor there.
2. Type the URL in the box.
3. Press enter or return.

## NAVIGATING A SITE

The primary skill you will use is moving from page to page on the Net.

Navigating a site is easy: you just click any link that looks interesting. Underlined blue text and blue-bordered pictures are often used to mark links (**Some links may be a different color depending on the web page design**). You can tell when you are on a link because the mouse pointer changes to a little hand, and the address may appear along the bottom of your browser window.

Web browsers remember the last few pages you visited, so if you are not happy with the page you are on, you can easily go back to the preceding one. To go back, click the back button on the toolbar (its icon is an arrow pointing to the left). Once you have gone back to a page you visited earlier, you can use the forward button (arrow pointing right) to move ahead through the list of pages you have visited.

## HOW DO I SIGN OFF THE WEB?

You sign off the web first by exiting your browser program. You leave Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Internet Explorer in the same way you leave any other Windows program: by choosing **F**ile **A**Exit (**F**ile **A**Close for Windows Internet Explorer). In Windows 95 or 98 you can also click the Close button in the upper-right corner of the window. If you have a dial-up connection, you should also make sure to disconnect from your ISP. If your ISP is America Online, you may hear a voice say "Goodbye."



# USING THE NET

## BASIC SEARCH STRATEGIES

When you are looking for topics on the Net, you can begin with one of the web guides below:

Web searches use “**search engines**” to find pages that relate to the topic you are interested in. A search engine is a web site that is designed to scan the Net for any word or phrase you ask it to. Some of the most commonly used search engines include:

- Yahoo—<http://www.yahoo.com>
- Altavista—<http://www.altavista.com>
- Webcrawler—<http://www.webcrawler.com>
- Infoseek—<http://www.infoseek.com>
- Google—<http://www.google.com>
- Excite—<http://www.excite.com>
- Hotbot—<http://www.hotbot.com>
- Northern Light—<http://www.northernlight.com>

You use them all in the same general way.

1. Start your web browser (such as Netscape Navigator or Internet Explorer)
2. Type in the URL of the search engine you would like to use. Once you press return (or enter), your browser will take you there. Once the search engine’s page is loaded, you can do one of two things:
  - A. If a search box is displayed, type in a few words that describe the topic you are interested in, such as children’s mental health. These words are known as **keywords**. Press Enter or click on the Search or Go button near the box.

This is the “index” approach that will let you look for topic areas or web pages that match your keywords.

An index page will appear with links to pages that match your keywords. The list of links may be way too long to deal with—like 300,000 of them. Usually the first 10 “hits” are displayed with some brief description and the number of times your keyword appears.

**Search engine**—a web site that you can use to scan the Internet for information on a particular topic.

**Keyword**—a word that describes the basic idea of a topic. When using the Internet, you may often do “keyword searches.” In a keyword search, you are looking on the Internet for sites and pages relating to a topic that interests you, like recreation. One of your keywords might be “recreation,” others could be “sports,” “hobbies,” “activities,” or “outdoors.”

**Index**—a list of items, such as book titles, topics, or links.

- B. If you see a list of links to topic areas (Health, Education, Business, Entertainment, etc.), click on a topic area that interests you.

This is the “directory” approach, in which you begin at a general topic and proceed to more and more specific topics as you follow links. Each page has links to more links that get more specific until they link to actual pages that are likely to be of interest. For example, you could start at “Health” and move through the choices to get to the Federation’s web site!

→Health

→Mental health

→Organizations

→Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health!

**Directory**—a list in which items have been classified into categories.

## SEARCH ENGINES OF INTEREST

In this section we describe features of two major search engines, Yahoo and AltaVista.

### Yahoo

<http://www.yahoo.com>

Yahoo lets you search its index by keyword, which is good if you have some idea of the specific topic you're looking for. Every Yahoo screen has a search box near the top where you can type words that describe what you're looking for.

FIGURE 4

### YAHOO SCREEN



Yahoo has other databases available, each with a link you can click just under the box in which you can enter search terms:

- **Yellow Pages:** Gets a business directory
- **People Search:** Finds addresses and phone numbers, like the white pages of a telephone directory

- **Maps:** Gets a more or less accurate map of a street address you type
- **Classifieds:** Lets you read and submit ads for automobiles, apartments, computers, and jobs
- **Personals:** Lets you read and submit ads for dates and romance
- **Chat:** Gets you into online “chat rooms” through the Web
- **Email:** Is a free web-based E-mail service
- **My Yahoo:** Accesses a customized starting page just for you, with headlines, sports scores, and other news based on your preference
- **Today’s News, Stock Quotes, and Sports Scores:** Gets news from Reuters.

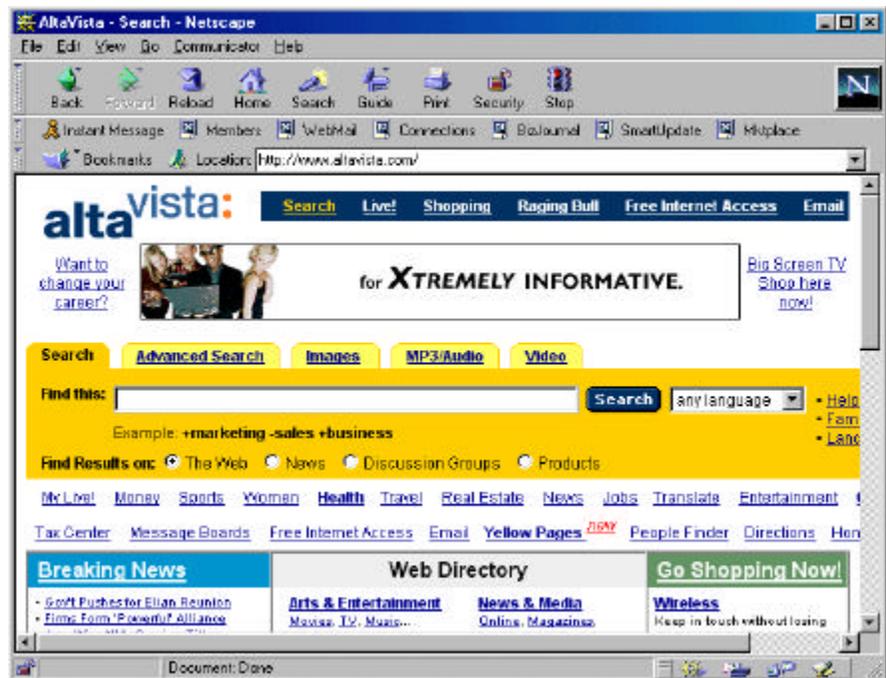
## AltaVista

<http://www.altavista.digital.com>

AltaVista is an index, not a directory. It has about ten times as many pages as Yahoo. This search engine may give as many as 15,000,000 pages on your first try. If you refine your request you can usually get the number of pages down to a somewhat more manageable number.

FIGURE 5

### ALTA VISTA



You can use a combination of keywords, or put a phrase in quotes.

### ***Combination of keywords: children's mental health***

AltaVista will find pages that have occurrences of the words children's, mental, and health in any order. This is a good strategy to use when you are just trying to see what's out there on a particular topic. As you can imagine, there are quite a lot of pages that mention those three words—over 10 million! Don't worry—you don't have to visit each and every one of them. The screen will show about ten options at a time, and at the bottom of the screen, you can use links to see the options on other pages. AltaVista puts the pages with the most occurrences of

your topic words at the top of their list, so towards the bottom of the list there may be pages with just one of your words mentioned once. Just click on any links that look interesting, and remember you can use your back button to return to the AltaVista screen if the page you picked isn't what you need. Sometimes searching by keyword gives you lots of pages that don't seem helpful—if this happens, you might want to try a more narrow search by putting the topic in quotes, like below.

***Topic in quotes: “children’s mental health”***

AltaVista will only find pages with the words children’s mental health all together and in that exact order. This is a good strategy to use when you are looking for something specific or you want to narrow your search. This search only returned about 8,000 pages, a lot less than the keyword search above. Just like before, the screen will show about ten options at a time, and at the bottom of the screen, you can use links to see the options on other pages. AltaVista puts the pages with the most occurrences of your topic words at the top of their list, so towards the bottom of the list there may be pages with your words mentioned only once. Again, you don't have to visit every single site—just look for ones that interest you, and remember you can use your back button to return to the AltaVista screen if the page you picked isn't what you need. Sometimes a phrase in quotes won't give you enough information—in these cases it's helpful to widen your search by not using quotes, like above.

## SAVING MATERIAL FOUND ON THE WEB

Frequently, you will see something on the web you may want to save for later use.

In either Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Internet Explorer, choose **F**ile **A** Save **A**s to save the current web page in a file. You will see the standard Save As dialog box, in which you will specify the name to save the incoming file. The name of the file will appear and then you will click OK, which is found at the bottom left hand of the screen.

Saving pages this way isn't always the best option for keeping track of material you like. Why?

1. Saved web pages will not display graphics when viewed later. This is because each graphic is a separate file and would have to be saved as well. It can be time-consuming to save all the images on a page.
2. Saved pages and images take up memory on your computer or a disk.
3. Web pages are often updated with new information. Saving a page is like taking a picture of a child—the child will grow and change, but the picture stays the same.

Instead of saving pages to your computer or to a disk, you can tell your browser to remember certain pages on the web so you can return to them and view them later. This way, you'll get to see the images each time, you won't take up memory on your computer, and if the page has changed, your browser will show you the most current version of the page. Both Netscape Navigator and Internet Explorer let you automatically record the location of pages you want to come back to.

- Netscape calls it "bookmarking" a page. To do it, place your mouse over the page you are viewing and right-click. From the menu that pops up, select "Add Bookmark." Alternatively, on many versions of Netscape, there is a Bookmark button on the taskbar. Click the button and select "Add Bookmark." You can also use this button to return to a bookmarked site. Once you've added a site to your bookmarks, it will be included on a list that pops up when you click the Bookmark button. Move your mouse to the page you want and click it.

**Bookmark**—a bookmark is usually something that helps you find a particular page in a book. If you think of the Internet as a really big (constantly changing) book, a bookmark will help you find a page or a site you liked and wanted to return to. Netscape calls these helpers "bookmarks," but Internet Explorer calls them "Favorites."

**Favorites**—in Internet Explorer, Favorites refers to sites you've wanted to mark so you can easily find them when you want to go back.

- Explorer calls these pages “Favorites.” To add a page to your favorites, place your mouse over the page you are viewing and right-click. From the menu that pops up, select “Add to Favorites.” To visit a Favorite site, click the Favorites button on the taskbar. Your list of Favorite sites will appear on the left-hand side of the screen. Move your mouse to the page you want, and click it.

## PRINTING THE MATERIAL YOU FIND ON THE WEB

To print a page from Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Internet Explorer, just click the Print button on the toolbar, or choose **F**ile **A** **P**rint.

## SENDING MAIL

Everyone with “E-mail” access to the Net has an E-mail address, which is the cyberspace equivalent to your postal address or phone number. When you send an E-mail message, you enter the addresses of the person or people who you are sending the mail to.

Your E-mail address is your “username,” which is the name your Internet Service Provider assigns to your account. Sometimes you get to choose your own username, but if it is already being used you must choose a different one. (For example, TeriT001@aol.com)

Eudora is the most popular mail server that is used. Other mail servers include cc:Mail, MS Outlook, and Pegasus Mail.

### **How to use Eudora E-mail:**

1. From Windows, start Eudora by double clicking the Program manager icon, which looks like an envelope. In Windows 95 and 98, the icon is on the desktop or on the Start **A** **P**rograms menu.
2. To send a message, click the new message button (the button with the paper and pencil) on the toolbar. Or choose Message **A** New message from the menu.

Eudora opens up a new message window, with spaces in which you type the address, subject, and text of a message.

**Username**—an identity for computers, similar to your telephone number for the phone system. You may use a username and a password to get connected to a computer network, to get on the Internet, or to send E-mail.

3. On the “To” line, type the recipient’s address (TeriT001@aol.com for example).
4. Press Tab to skip past the From line (which is already filled in) to the Subject line and then type a subject.

The subject line should be short and specific.

5. Press Tab a few more times to skip the cc: and Bcc: fields (or type the addresses of people who should get carbon copies and blind carbon copies of your message.)

The term “carbon copy” is a holdover from the good old days when typewriters were manual and multiple copies were made using carbon paper. It is simply a copy of the message you send. All recipients on both the To: and cc: lines see who’s getting this message. Blind copies (Bcc:) are sent to people without putting their names on the message so that the other recipients can’t tell.

6. Press Tab or use the mouse to click in the large area, then type your message.
7. To send the message, click the Send button. In Eudora, it is in the upper right corner of the message window.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

This is just an overview to get you started in surfing the net.

Here are a few useful “**Netiquette Tips.**”

- Remember that everyone else on the Net is human too.
- Communication on the Net tends to be less formal than in written letters or memos. Forgive spelling mistakes and typing errors.
- Take your time to think before responding in anger or insisting on getting the last word.
- DON'T TYPE IN ALL CAPS! It's the Net-equivalent of shouting.
- Post messages to mailing lists only if you have something new to add.
- Don't pass along chain letters, make money-fast messages, avoid-this-virus warnings, or other bogus mail.

Finally, “The Internet for Dummies” an invaluable resource that was very helpful in composing this manual and may help you as you get more and more into surfing.

***Happy Surfing!***