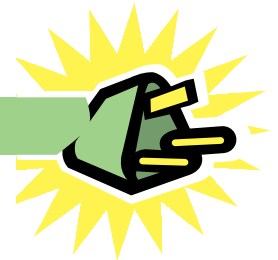


Decoding Technology

Web Browsers

by Tim Walker and Chip Donohue



More than ever early childhood administrators are relying on the Internet for information. A key to becoming an exceptional Web “surfer” is getting to know the ins and outs of the Web browser you use. There are several options available and almost all can be downloaded for free. However, you will find many of the functions and features they offer to be very similar. The following includes some essential terms, simple tools, and useful tips to improve your browsing experience.

Tech Terms

- **Browser:** Short for Web browser. Software used to visit and view Web pages. Popular Web browser programs include Apple® Safari™, AOL® Explorer, Microsoft® Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox®, and Netscape®.
- **Title Bar:** A bar found at the top of the browser window that displays the name of the Web page currently open.
- **Address or Location Bar:** A text box found towards the top of the browser window used to enter and display Web page addresses.
- **Back and Forward Buttons:** A set of navigation buttons found towards the top of the browser window that allows the user to move from page to page.
- **Homepage:** A Web page designated as the starting point when opening a browser. The Home button takes the user back to the browser’s default homepage.
- **Offline Browsing:** A feature in most browsers which allows users to save pages to their local drive so they can be viewed later without connecting to the Internet.
- **RSS:** Short for Rich Site Summary or Really Simple Syndication. A method for receiving new content without having to visit a Web site.
- **Tabbed Browsing:** A new feature in most browsers which allows multiple windows (or pages) to be open simultaneously.

- **History:** A list of recently visited Web page addresses.
- **Bookmark or Favorite:** The title and address of a Web page stored for easy reference.
- **Pop-up Blocker:** An option that prevents new windows from automatically opening when visiting a Web page or clicking on a link.
- **Cache:** Temporary memory that stores the files of recently viewed Web pages so they can be displayed



Tim Walker is director of technology for the McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National-Louis University. He oversees all technology-related initiatives including training, instructional design and delivery, Web site development, and technical assistance.

Chip Donohue, PhD, is the director of the Center for Early Childhood Professional Development & Leadership in the School of Continuing Education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee where he develops and teaches online courses for child care administrators and offers eTeaching Institutes for early childhood faculty and trainers. With Selena Fox of New Zealand Tertiary College, he is developing ecelearn, an innovative online approach for early childhood teacher education.



Common Keyboard Shortcuts for Internet Explorer® and Netscape®

Go to homepage	Alt+Home
Open a new tab	Ctrl+T
Open a new window	Ctrl+N
Open history	Ctrl+H
Open bookmarks or favorites	Ctrl+B (Netscape®) or Ctrl+I (IE®)
Save page to bookmarks or favorites	Ctrl+D
Switch to full screen view.....	F11
Increase page zoom.....	Ctrl++ (plus sign)
Decrease page zoom.....	Ctrl+- (minus sign)
No zoom	Ctrl+0 (zero)
Search for text on page	Ctrl+F
Reload or refresh a page.....	F5
Stop downloading a page.....	Esc
Print a page	Ctrl+P
Search for help	F1

much quicker the next time they are visited.

- **Temporary Internet Files:** A directory used by a browser to store recently viewed Web pages.
- **Cookie:** A small data file stored on the local drive while browsing a Web site. Cookies contain information that identifies a user the next time they visit the site.

Tech Tools

Whether you're searching for curriculum ideas, resources for parents, or professional development opportunities in your area, mastering your browser controls can get you there faster and much more efficiently. Here are some common tools bundled with today's

popular browsers that you'll want to become comfortable using:

- Any Web site that is a candidate for future visits should be added to your bookmarks or favorites collection. Look for a button or menu option in your browser window that contains the keyword ADD. Many browsers also let you organize these links into folders for quick reference.
- If you forget to bookmark a page and want to revisit it, try using the browser history. A typical browser is set to store the addresses to all of the pages you've visited for up to a week, and most will let you modify this timeframe to better fit your needs. Look for a button or menu option in your browser window that contains the keyword HISTORY.

- Over the past several years many Web designers have set up new windows to open automatically when a page is opened or a link is clicked. You may find a few of these to be helpful, but most tend to be a distraction and can dramatically slow down your quest for information. Newer browsers include pop-up blockers that can be turned on to stop extra windows from opening. Check under the Tools menu to see if your browser includes this useful feature.

- A plug-in is a program that's added to your browser to enhance its capabilities. One of the most common plug-ins is Adobe® Reader® which enables you to view PDFs in your browser window. Others such as Microsoft® Outlook allow you to send e-mail messages or add contacts directly in your browser. Be sure that your browser is configured to support the plug-ins you have installed on your computer.

Tech Tips

- **Modify the page view:** There are several options for changing how a Web page is displayed in your browser window. For lengthy pages, try switching to the full screen view. This will hide most of your browser's toolbars and buttons so there is more room to show the page you are viewing. If the text is too small to read, use your browser's zoom feature to increase its size.
- **Delete files:** Depending on the settings you have selected, over time your browser will save passwords and other personal information to the local drive. If you share a computer with coworkers, it's a good idea to delete these temporary files every so often or change the

browser settings. In many browsers you can find this option under the Tools menu.

- **Try offline browsing:** Those that are constantly “on the run” or have limited access to a live Internet connection may find offline browsing a nice alternative. With many browsers you can set bookmarks to be saved to your local drive for offline viewing. Newer browsers are also supporting RSS feeds that provide a way for you to subscribe to sites so that new content is updated automatically. Both provide you with the ability to access online information without connecting to the Internet.
- **Keep your browser updated:** As technology continues to advance, so must your Web browser. Otherwise, you may notice compatibility problems with some of the pages you visit. Use the Help menu to check the version of the browser you are using. If it’s a few generations old, update it — remember most browsers are free. You may also find a command on the Help or Tools menu that will start the update process for you.

Tech Links

- Apple® Safari™
www.apple.com/support/downloads/safari.html
- AOL® Explorer
<http://downloads.channel.aol.com/browser/>
- Microsoft® Internet Explorer
www.microsoft.com/windows/products/winfamily/ie/default.mspx
- Mozilla Firefox®
www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/
- Netscape®
<http://browser.netscape.com/ns8/>

Sources

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- Walker, T., & Donohue, D. (2006, November). Decoding Technology: Web Site Development and Design — Part 1. *Exchange*, 172, 78-79.

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