

# Internet 101

## Welcome to the Digital Age

### **Joining the digital age is easy!**

Already, millions of people have discovered the wonders and benefits of using computers. Here at Women Work!, we believe you can too. Computers can enrich your life in many ways; they can help you job hunt, get resources and organize personal and financial affairs. This easy-to-follow guide has tips on how to purchase and set up a computer, and ways to become comfortable using one. (Note: bolded terms are defined in the glossary of this tip sheet)



### **Your Options:**

#### **Places to Use the Internet:**

Listed below are places where people are able to access the Internet, also known as the **World Wide Web**. Although all these options are possible, this tip sheet will focus on connecting you to the Internet using a personal connection at home.

- **Libraries and Community Centers** offer FREE Internet access. However, people must share this resource with others and must obey certain usage guidelines (like time limits and restricted access to inappropriate web sites).
- **Internet Cafes and Businesses**, such as FedEx Kinkos, provide Internet access but charge a pay-as-you-go fee. These providers are generally less crowded and restrictive than libraries and community centers, but they can be quite costly.

- A **Personal Internet Connection** on a home computer system is the most common way people access the Internet. Although potentially more expensive, this setup allows users to access the Internet at any time with the added bonus of retaining data on their personal **hard drives**.



### **The Equipment:**

Connection to the Internet requires two main components: 1) a computer and 2) a **modem** or **ethernet** card. Typically, modems and/or ethernet cards come pre-installed in most computer systems; these computer units are usually labeled “Internet ready.” For information about obtaining or using a computer, please refer to our “Computers 101” tip sheet, available at [www.womenwork.org](http://www.womenwork.org).



### **Getting Connected:**

#### **Preparing for and Using the Internet:**

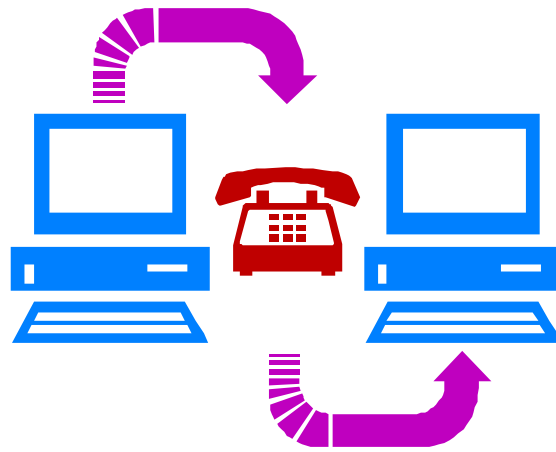
Once you have obtained a computer, it is important to determine if an ethernet card and/or modem has been installed; to do this, check your computer’s manual. You can also use your computer’s help function, or you can open up your computer’s Control Panel and look in the Network Connections folder to find out if an ethernet card or modem is installed. Because an ethernet card and modem connect to the Internet using different methods, you must choose which approach is best for your situation.



## Connecting to the Internet Via Dial-Up Modem:

Using a modem to connect to the Internet has benefits and drawbacks. Many consider modems to be more cost effective. Modems generally require the least amount of additional equipment. They also tend to have lower Internet subscription fees. However, some modems tie up phone lines because they use the phone to dial and communicate with an **Internet Service Provider**. Incoming calls do not always register when a dial-up modem is in use. Connection to the Internet using a modem also tends to be slow. Dial-up modems are not equipped to send or receive large data files in a short period of time.

Another type of connection called a digital subscriber line (DSL), uses the phone line to connect to the Internet, but unlike a dial-up modem, it does not tie up the phone line. A DSL connection is faster than a dial-up modem. With DSL you can dial and receive phone calls while connected to the Internet.



## Connecting to the Internet Via Broadband Ethernet:

Besides an ethernet card or modem, you need to buy a monthly Internet subscription from an Internet service provider. This is much like paying for a monthly phone service. For computers with an ethernet card, the price of a **broadband** Internet subscription and additional network equipment is usually much greater than the subscription for a dial-up connection. However, a broadband ethernet connection has more benefits than using a modem. With an ethernet card, users are always connected to the Internet at a very fast speed. Broadband Internet connections also do not tie up phone lines. This type of connection is often referred to as a “cable” connection and is often provided by your television cable provider.

## Selecting an Internet Service Provider:

Once you have picked your method of connecting to the Internet (either through a dial-up modem, DSL modem or a broadband connection), the next step is to select an Internet service provider. The more popular choices, America Online (AOL), Earthlink and MSN have nationwide presence. For dial-up users, this means a wider selection of local Internet access numbers to connect you to the Internet.

However, these service providers tend to be more expensive. **For less expensive alternatives you should look into companies such as Juno, NetZero and PeoplePC.** These companies provide inexpensive dial-up and broad and Internet service. Some offer free Internet access in exchange for usage restrictions and online advertisements. Lastly, for local options, regional service providers can offer reasonably

priced Internet subscriptions. Although not as well-known, these companies can, in some cases, offer better service and more personalized care than larger national providers. To find a local service provider, ask a local expert such as a librarian or check the yellow pages.



## Internet Basics:

### E-mail Addresses, Web Browsing and Privacy:

After taking the steps to set up an Internet connection, it is time to begin “surfing” the Web. The Internet has many functions, but here we will explain **e-mail** and **web site browsing**.

## Learning to Use E-mail:

With the invention of the Internet, electronic communication is widespread. More people are relying on e-mail to correspond with family, friends and business contacts. **E-mail is also extremely useful in job hunting. Employers often use e-mail communication to correspond with applicants.** Using e-mail may seem complicated at first, but it is actually quite simple. The first step is to obtain an e-mail address. Typically, your Internet service provider will give you one. However, you can also sign up for free e-mail accounts at web sites such as hotmail.com, yahoo.com and gmail.com



After obtaining an e-mail address, you have the option of accessing your e-mail either through a **mail client program** such as Microsoft Outlook Express or through a

web site. The upside of using a mail client program is that it neatly organizes your files. The downside is that it can be difficult to set up.

Once you've decided to use either a mail client program or web site access, you are ready to send and receive e-mails. You can write messages, exchange files and share photo attachments. However, please beware. As you begin to send and receive e-mails, your chances of being bombarded by **spam** and/or computer **viruses** greatly increases. To avoid this, do not open any attachments or respond to any messages from e-mail addresses you are not familiar with. Never post your e-mail address on **message boards** or Web sites that seem suspect — if there is not a confidentiality disclaimer on the web site, you run the risk of having your e-mail address sold to online vendors. Spammers also use message boards to collect e-mail addresses. Credit card information, social security numbers and

other personal information should never be given out via e-mail.

It is also a good idea to set up a second e-mail account. This way, you can use one e-mail address to correspond with family, friends, employers or other personal contacts. The second e-mail can be used for less important purposes, like registering with web sites. This way, spam and e-mail advertisements won't clutter the account you use for important personal or business contacts.

Finally, we highly recommend buying or obtaining an antivirus software, this will keep your computer running at optimum efficiency and keep it free of viruses and unwanted programs.

## Protecting Your Computer:

Connecting to the Internet increases the risk that your computer system will get a virus, which can damage a computer's operating system. Computer damages can be expensive to repair. Viruses can be transmitted through files and e-mails sent over the Internet. To prevent viruses from damaging your computer system, buy and install antivirus software. Most computers come with an introductory subscription of antivirus software already installed and will say so on the box or in the owner's manual. Popular brands of antivirus software include McAfee and Norton. It is vital that you regularly update your antivirus software. Most software will do this automatically but you should check it regularly to ensure it has not been disabled by a virus.

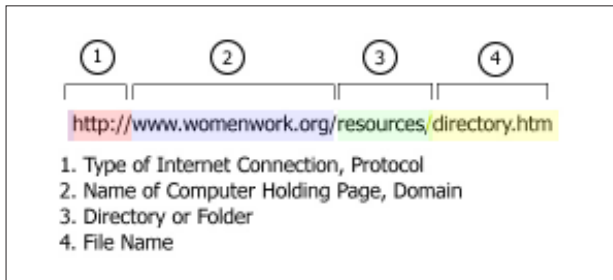
## Learning to Browse the Internet:

Depending on your computer system, you will need an Internet browsing program such as Internet Explorer, Netscape Navigator, Firefox or Safari to **surf** the Internet. Typically, one or even all of these browsing programs will have already been installed on your computer (although they might need to be **upgraded**). Using one of these programs, you can access web site

content and **upload** or **download** information you may need.

Each web site has an address, or **Uniform Resource Locator** (URL). The URL tells a web browser, like Internet Explorer, where the web site is on the

Figure A



Internet. The URL contains a set of instructions that are accessed by the browser: the protocol, domain, directories and file name (Refer to Figure A.). To go to a web site, you must type the URL into the browser. Most browsers do not require all this information to access a site. For instance, typing in `womenwork.org` will usually substitute in most browsers for `http://www.womenwork.org`.

### Warnings and Cautions:

Exploring the Internet is fun and informative, but it is important to be aware of the kind of information you reveal about yourself online. **NEVER** give out your personal information (social security number, address, birthdate, credit card number, driver's license information) unless the site is a secured web site. (Look for a small lock at the bottom of your screen or a URL starting with `http://`, which generally means that the site is secured). Even so, it is best to withhold personal information, if it is not absolutely necessary. While the Internet can be a very rich source for information, careless behavior can lead to identify



4 - theft and other personal complications. If possible, try to conduct all money transactions over the phone (in a private area) or in person.



## Technical Support:

### What to do When Something Stops Working:

It is important to keep in mind that if you run into difficulties setting up or operating your computer on the Internet, there are usually technical support phone numbers that you can call for assistance. Your computer's user manual will usually have phone numbers to call for technical assistance if you need help setting up the computer. Making a copy of



registration/serial numbers will help you when you speak to the customer service department. You can also call your Internet Service Provider for help with the Internet.

In addition, save the contact information for the retailers that sold or distributed your computer or software and for your Internet Service Provider. If there is a warranty on your computer system, they may be able to repair it at a reduced cost should anything happen.

*\*See the page 5 for a glossary on Internet terms.*



**Broadband:** It is a class of communication channel capable of supporting a wide range of frequencies, typically from audio up to video frequencies. The term has come to be used for any kind of Internet connection with a download speed of more than 56 kbps, usually some kind of Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) or cable connection.

**Download:** To transfer (data or programs) from a server or host computer to one's own computer or device.

**Ethernet:** A type of networking technology for local area networks or LAN. A LAN is a local computer network for communication between computers, often used to create a communication system between offices or to connect multiple computers in a home.

**Hard Drive:** A disk drive that reads and stores information in your computer. Usually designated as C:\.

**Internet Service Providers:** A business that allows a person to access the Internet, either for free or for a monthly fee. For instance, AOL and Earthlink are both Internet service providers because they allow for Internet service from the home.

**Mail Client Program:** Any software program that allows users to send, receive, and read e-mail messages, such as Outlook Express or Pegasus.

**Message Boards:** An Internet-based forum for an interest group; also called bulletin board, discussion board, interactive message board.

**Modem:** Electronic equipment consisting of a device used to connect to the Internet through phone lines. Modems can also be used for faxing from a computer.

**Spam:** Unsolicited e-mail, often of a commercial nature, sent indiscriminately to multiple mailing lists, individuals, or newsgroups; junk e-mail.

**Software:** A program that can be installed on the computer. Word processors, computer games and other programs on the computer are all software.

**Surf:** To browse (the Internet or television channels, for example).

**Uniform Resource Locator:** The address of a web page on the World Wide Web, such as [www.womenwork.org](http://www.womenwork.org).

**Upgrade:** To replace (a software program or hardware device) with a more recently released, enhanced version.

**Upload:** To transfer data or programs from a computer or device to a central, often remote computer.

**World Wide Web:** Computer network consisting of a collection of Internet sites that offer text, graphics, sound and animation resources. The terms Internet and World Wide Web are often used interchangeably.

**Virus:** A computer program that can generate copies of itself, and thereby spread to other computers, and can allow illegal access to your system and personal files. Most computer viruses are harmful to computer systems.

*Note: Definitions adapted and provided by [dictionary.reference.com](http://dictionary.reference.com)*

