

Michael Miller

501

WEBSITE

SECRETS®

*Unleash the
power of Google®,
Amazon®, eBay®,
and More!*

**Over
400 pages**
of insider tips
and tricks!

501 Web Site Secrets[®]

**Unleash the Power of
Google[®], Amazon[®], eBay[®], and More**

Michael Miller



Wiley Publishing, Inc.

501 Web Site Secrets®

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Google[®], Amazon[®], eBay[®], and More**

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Michael Miller has written more than fifty how-to and reference books over the last fifteen years, including Wiley's *Building Really Annoying Web Sites* (2001). Mr. Miller has established a reputation for practical, real-world advice and an unerring empathy for the needs of his readers. He is known for his casual, easy-to-read writing style and his ability to explain a wide variety of complex topics to an everyday audience.

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To Mark and Stephanie—thanks for a great Thanksgiving,
and keep the pool warm for my next visit!

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Introduction

Here's something cool I bet you didn't know . . .

That, in a nutshell, is what drove the creation of this book—cool stuff you probably didn't know about your favorite Web sites. *Secrets*, for want of a better word. Five hundred and one of them.

About This Book

What kind of secrets are included in *501 Web Site Secrets*? Well, there's parts of a site you didn't know existed. Or ways to use the site that you weren't aware of. Or special commands that help you get even more out of the site than you could before. Cool stuff like that—and more.

That's the nature of a secret—something that most users don't know about, but would get a kick out of if they did. These are the kinds of things that will make you say to yourself, "That's cool—I didn't know you could do that!" And then you'll want to go directly to the site to try the secret out for yourself. (Go ahead; it's allowed.)

Of course, not all 501 secrets in this book will be new to you. If you're Internet-savvy at all, you'll probably know some of what I reveal in these pages. That's okay; it only means that you're on your toes. I'm sure, however, that you'll find more than a few secrets you *didn't* know, and that they'll make this book a worthwhile read for you.

To be fair, many of these secrets are hidden in plain sight. There are few secrets in this book that are deliberately concealed from the general public. Most so-called secrets are things that are there if you look for them—and if you know where to look. You can discover lots of secrets on your own just by clicking all the links on all the pages of your favorite sites and poring over every single page of the site's help system. The sad fact is, most users never get beyond a site's home page—and there aren't too many secrets there!

How to Use This Book

Using this book is as simple as turning to the chapter on a particular site, reading through the secrets, then trying them on your own. You don't need any particular technical expertise to take advantage of these secrets, although some familiarity with the sites in question is helpful. There's no fancy programming, no high-level coding, just a lot of common-sense information that you probably didn't know before.

How This Book Is Organized

When collecting these 501 secrets, I focused on 20 of the top Web sites today. And that's exactly how the book is organized—20 total chapters divided into 4 major parts. (If your favorite site isn't included, I apologize; there were only so many pages available, and I had to make the cut-off somewhere!)

Part I: Secrets of the Internet Portals

This part covers the top Web portals, those sites that offer a little bit of everything and want to be the starting point for all your Web surfing. The biggest portals are covered here: Yahoo!, MSN, AOL.com, Excite, and Lycos.

Part II: Secrets of the Internet Search Engines

The most common online activity is searching, so this part covers the top search sites—including a few search engines you might not know about, but should. Look here for the search secrets of Google, AllTheWeb, Ask Jeeves, AltaVista, and HotBot.

Part III: Secrets of the Online News and Information Sites

More and more people are getting all their news and information from the Internet. This part tells you all about the top sites for news, sports, weather, and other information: CNN.com, ESPN.com, CBS MarketWatch, Weather.com, and Microsoft.com. (Yes, Microsoft.com—a great source for technical information!)

Part IV: Secrets of Online Shopping and Services

The final part covers those sites where you spend a lot of money—the Internet's top shopping and auction sites. Turn here for the inside information on eBay, Amazon.com, Napster, Expedia, and MapQuest.

Conventions Used in This Book

If I did my job right, you don't need an instruction book to read this text and take advantage of the 501 secrets. Just remember that anything you need to enter is in bold, like this: **enter this text**. And when there's site navigating to do, I'll lead you from page to page (and from link to link) by listing each of the pages in order with an arrow between them, like this: pageone ⇔ pagetwo. URLs are presented in monofont to make them stand out. It should be fairly easy to follow.

Icons Used in This Book

Throughout the book I've included even more advice and secrets beyond what you see in the main text. This subsidiary information is presented in icons set off from the regular text. I use three different types of icons for three different types of information:



Insider Insight icons present additional secrets and advice above and beyond the main secret. In other words—more cool stuff!

note

Notes present interesting, but not essential, information. Read these to get more background about the topic at hand.

caution

Caution icons alert you to potential problems or issues you need to know before you explore the relevant secret.

Where to Go from Here

501 Web Site Secrets covers 20 top Internet sites. There's one other site I'd like to mention—my own personal Web site, www.molehillgroup.com. I don't pretend that it ranks with the other sites presented in this book (it doesn't), but it's still a site you might want to check out—particularly if you're interested in what books I'm writing next. You can also find any corrections or clarifications to this book listed there.

I also welcome e-mails from readers; you can send your questions or comments to me at secrets@molehillgroup.com. I can't guarantee a personal response to every e-mail, but I definitely would like to hear what you think!

But I digress. It's time to get down to the serious business of uncovering the secrets of your favorite Web sites. So turn the page, fire up your Web browser, and get ready for some really cool stuff!

Part I

Secrets of the Internet Portals

Chapter 1: Yahoo! Secrets

Chapter 2: MSN Secrets

Chapter 3: AOL.com Secrets

Chapter 4: Excite Secrets

Chapter 5: Lycos Secrets

Yahoo! Secrets



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D o you Yahoo!?

If you connect to the Internet, chances are that you do.

Yahoo! is the most popular site on the Internet. More people visit Yahoo! every day than visit America Online or Google or Amazon.com or eBay or any other Internet destination. With more than 237 million users in 25 different countries (and 13 different languages), Yahoo! is visited by more than two-thirds of all Internet users at least once a month.

It's fair to assume that you're one of those 237 million users, and that you use Yahoo! to find other sites on the Web. But do you know *everything* you can do at Yahoo!? Do you know all about Yahoo! services, including free e-mail and online shopping and personal ads and stock quotes and TV schedules and travel reservations and interactive games and downloadable music radio and real-time chat and instant messaging and... well, *do you?*

Yahoo! At a Glance

You know, it's hard to believe that Yahoo! is ten years old. It was back in January of 1994 that Stanford University PhD students David Filo and Jerry Yang started

keeping track of their favorite sites on the Web, collecting and classifying hundreds and then thousands of different Web pages. As their little hobby grew more time-consuming, Filo and Yang created a custom database to house their Web links, and they made the database available for free on the Web. They named the database Yahoo! (an acronym for Yet Another Hierarchical Officious Oracle) and, after about a year, moved their site from the overloaded Stanford servers to the larger-capacity servers of Netscape Communications Corporation.

In the spring of 1995, Yang and Filo began to realize the commercial appeal of their increasingly popular site; they accepted some venture capital and turned Yahoo! into a full-time business. Of course, the Yahoo! of today is a far cry from the database that resided on Filo and Yang's personal workstations at Stanford. Yahoo! has expanded well beyond a simple Web directory (even though most Yahoo! visitors still use the site primarily for searching). Today, Yahoo! is a full-fledged Web portal, a site that not only guides you to content across the Internet, but also contains its own proprietary content and services—everything from stock quotes to online auctions to interactive chat to free e-mail.

Just about everything you want to do with Yahoo! can be accessed from the Yahoo! home page (www.yahoo.com). You can use the home page to click through to other Yahoo! sites and services, as well as search or browse through the Yahoo! directory.

As you can see in Figure 1-1, even though the Yahoo! home page is crammed full of links, it's divided into just a few major sections.

The screenshot shows the classic Yahoo! homepage layout from the late 1990s. At the top, there's a navigation bar with icons for Personalize, Finance, Shop, Mail, Messenger, and HotJobs, along with a Help link. Below the bar, a banner reads "Yahoo! Personals - It's time to give fate a nudge. [Create your profile](#) or [search for free](#)". A main menu bar includes "Web", "Images", "Yellow Pages", and "Products". A search bar says "Search the Web:" followed by a "Yahoo! Search" button and links for "Advanced" and "Preferences".

The left sidebar contains links for "New!", "Shop", "Find", "Connect", "Organize", "Fun", and "Info". The "New!" section links to "Y! Games Downloads - Puzzle Infy". The "Shop" section links to "Auctions", "Autos", "Classifieds", "Real Estate", "Shopping", "Travel", "HotJobs", "Maps", "People Search", "Personals", "Yellow Pages". The "Find" section links to "Chat", "GeoCities", "Greetings", "Groups", "Mail", "Messenger", "Mobile". The "Connect" section links to "Addresses", "Briefcase", "Calendar", "My.Yahoo", "PayDirect", "Photos". The "Organize" section links to "Games", "Horoscopes", "Kids", "Movies", "Music", "Radio", "TV". The "Fun" section links to "Finance", "Health", "News", "Sports", "Weather". The "Info" section links to "More Yahoo!...".

A "Personal Assistant" sidebar on the right shows a welcome message for "doctorwu_1997" and links to "Acct. Info", "Mail - Calendar - Addresses", and "Sign Out". It also features a "Web-only Offer" for "SBC Yahoo! DSL" starting at \$26.95 per month.

The main content area includes a "In The News" section with a timestamp of "11:05pm ET, Sat Nov 15" and a list of news items. There are also sections for "Marketplace" (with a "Free shipping at Dell" offer), "News - Photos - Sports - Stocks - Weather", and "Business Services" (listing "Web Hosting", "Sell Online", "Get a Domain", "Search Marketing").

Figure 1-1: The Yahoo! home page.

At the top of the page, on either side of the Yahoo! logo, are icons that link to Yahoo!'s most popular services: My Yahoo!, Yahoo! Finance, Yahoo! Shop, Yahoo! Mail, Yahoo! Messenger, and Yahoo! HotJobs. Click these icons to go directly to those services.

Just below the Yahoo! logo is a set of tabs. These tabs change the type of search enabled from the search box—Web (default), Images, Yellow Pages, and Products. The tabs sit on top of the search box, along with the Search button and links to the advanced search and preferences pages.

Below the search box, on the left side of the page (the main column), are links to almost every other Yahoo! service. Below this section is normally an ad for one of the many Yahoo! services, then links to Yahoo!'s business and premium services. The entire right-hand side of the page is devoted to news headlines and advertising links.

The next section in the main column contains the main categories of the Yahoo! Web Site Directory; click any link to start browsing. Then, at the bottom of the page, you find links to local and international versions of Yahoo!, as well as links to additional Yahoo! services.

There are two ways to use the Yahoo! site to find information on the Web. The first is to browse through the categories in the Yahoo! directory; you do this directly from the category links on the Yahoo! home page. The second method is to search the Web for information (what Yahoo! calls Web Search), which you do from the search box at the top of the Yahoo! home page. The results you get from each search are quite different, as you'll learn later in this chapter.



Secret #1: Go Directly to Almost Any Yahoo! Page—No Clicking Necessary

Read back to that list of services offered by Yahoo! in the chapter's introduction. How do you access all these services, anyway?

Well, you can access most of these services from links located somewhere on Yahoo!'s home page—if you can find the right link. If you *can't* find a link to a particular service on the home page, scroll down to the bottom of the page and click the Even More Yahoo! link. This takes you to a page that lists every site and service that Yahoo! offers.

Use the Direct Address

Even better, almost every Yahoo! service has its own unique URL that you can enter directly into your browser's address box, or bookmark as necessary. You might think that remembering dozens of unique URLs would be difficult. And, of course, you'd be right—if you actually had to memorize the URLs. Fortunately, Yahoo! uses an address scheme that's easy on the old memory, thanks to its common-sense nature.

Yahoo!'s address scheme is simple. Just take the yahoo.com domain and add the service name in front of it, like this: *service.yahoo.com*. So, for example, if you want to go to Yahoo! News, you enter *news.yahoo.com*. If you want to go to Yahoo! Mail, enter *mail.yahoo.com*.



The only major exception to this rule is the children's site **Yahooligans!**, which has the address www.yahooligans.com.

Still too much to remember? Then consult the address list in Table 1-1, where I did the hard work for you:

Table 1-1: Yahoo! Web Site Directory

Yahoo! Site/Service	URL
Yahoo! home page	www.yahoo.com
Yahooligans!	www.yahooligans.com
My Yahoo!	my.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Address Book	address.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Astrology	astrology.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Auctions	auctions.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Autos	autos.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Banking Center	banking.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Bookmarks	bookmarks.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Briefcase	briefcase.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Buzz Index	buzz.yahoo.com
Yahoo! by Phone	phone.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Calendar	calendar.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Chat	chat.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Classifieds	classifieds.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Companion (toolbar)	companion.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Education	education.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Entertainment	entertainment.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Fantasy Sports	fantasysports.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Finance	finance.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Games	games.yahoo.com
Yahoo! GeoCities	geocities.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Get Local	local.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Greetings	greetings.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Groups	groups.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Health	health.yahoo.com
Yahoo! HotJobs	hotjobs.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Insurance Center	insurance.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Launch (music)	launch.yahoo.com

continued

Table 1-1 (continued)

Yahoo! Site/Service	URL
Yahoo! Loan Center	loan.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Lottery Results	lottery.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Mail	mail.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Mail Plus	mailplus.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Maps	maps.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Message Boards	messages.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Messenger	messenger.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Mobile	mobile.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Movies	movies.yahoo.com
Yahoo! News	news.yahoo.com
Yahoo! PayDirect	paydirect.yahoo.com
Yahoo! People Search	people.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Personals	personals.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Pets	pets.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Photos	photos.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Picture Gallery	gallery.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Products Search	products.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Real Estate	realestate.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Shopping	shopping.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Small Business	smallbusiness.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Sports	sports.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Store	store.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Tax Center	taxes.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Travel	travel.yahoo.com
Yahoo! TV	tv.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Wallet	wallet.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Weather	weather.yahoo.com
Yahoo! Web Hosting	webhosting.yahoo.com

Use the Search Box Shortcut

If entering an entire URL is too much work, Yahoo! lets you use special shortcuts in its search box to go directly to a particular Yahoo! site. All you have to do is enter the feature name followed by an exclamation mark, like this: **feature!**.

So if you want to go to Yahoo! Travel, enter **travel!** into the search box and then click the Search button. If you want to go to Yahoo! Mail, enter **mail!**. You get the picture.



Secret #2: The Yahoo! Directory Has Higher-Quality Results than Yahoo! Web Search—but Fewer of Them

Yahoo! was created as a hand-picked directory of Web sites. Over the past decade, however, the Yahoo! directory has become a less and less important part of the Yahoo! pantheon of services—to the point where many users don't even know the directory exists. After all, if you use the search box on the Yahoo! home page—which Yahoo! obviously wants you to do—you pass over the directory entirely.

That's too bad, because the Yahoo! directory is actually a pretty good assemblage of what's out there on the Web. It's also arguably the *easiest* search site for Web surfers to use.

It all boils down to the basic difference between a directory and a search index. You see, there are two approaches to organizing all the information on the World Wide Web. One approach is to use a special type of software program (called a *spider* or *crawler*) to roam the Web automatically, feeding what it finds back to a massive bank of computers. These computers hold *indices* of the Web—in some cases, entire Web pages are indexed; in other cases, only the titles and important words on a page are indexed. This approach is the one taken by the big search engines, such as Google, AltaVista, and HotBot—and by Yahoo!'s Web Search feature (which is actually supplied by Google, as you'll learn in Secret #3).

The other approach—the one taken by the Yahoo! directory—is to have actual human beings physically look at each Web page and stick each one into a hand-picked category. After you get enough Web pages collected, you have something called a *directory*.

Unlike a search engine, a directory doesn't search the entire Web—in fact, a directory catalogs only a very small part of the Web. But a directory is very organized, and very easy to use, and lots and lots of people use Web directories (such as Yahoo!) every day.

Of course, that's not to say that the Yahoo! directory is perfect. Far from it. For starters, it's small—only 2 million pages, versus 3 *billion* or so in Yahoo!'s Google-supplied Web Search index. (That means that Yahoo!'s directory content represents less than $\frac{1}{10}$ of 1 percent of the total number of pages currently published on the Web—not very comprehensive at all.)

Fortunately, you don't have to limit yourself to the listings in the Yahoo! directory; Yahoo! supplements its directory listings with search results from a third-party search engine. Read on to learn another little secret about Yahoo!'s search capabilities.

Secret #3: When You Search Yahoo!, You're Searching Google

Okay, Yahoo! is known for its high-quality and well-organized Web directory. But when you use Yahoo!'s Web Search feature, you bypass the directory entirely and instead retrieve results supplied by a third-party search engine.

That's right. When you use the search box on Yahoo!'s home page, you're not searching Yahoo!—you're searching Google.

For some time now, Yahoo! has supplemented its directory listings with results from a partner search engine. Early on, Yahoo! offered results from the Inktomi search engine. Today, Yahoo! uses results provided by Google.



The contract that Yahoo! has with Google is not open-ended, which means that when the current contract expires, it's possible that Yahoo! might go with a different search index provider—such as Inktomi, which Yahoo! purchased in March of 2003, or AllTheWeb or AltaVista, which Yahoo! acquired later the same year. So it wouldn't take a great stretch of the imagination to envision Yahoo! delivering some blend of Inktomi/AllTheWeb/AltaVista results sometime in the future, either in place of or in addition to the current Google results.

Do your own comparison. Enter a query into the Yahoo! search box, then go to Google (www.google.com) and enter the same query. The results should look familiar.

Since searching with Yahoo! is the same as searching with Google, you can use Google's advanced search operators when you conduct a Yahoo! Web Search. These operators help you fine-tune your search by including or excluding specific words, searching for exact phrases, and narrowing your search to certain sites or domains. There's no point in repeating those operators twice in the same book, so turn to Chapter 6 to learn more—then utilize those advanced search operators the next time you construct a query on Yahoo!.



In addition to using Google's advanced search operators, Yahoo! also has a few special keywords of its own you can use in the home page search box. Read Secrets #8 through #12 to learn more.

Part #4: Yahoo!'s Advanced Search Page

As you just learned, Yahoo!'s Web Search is powered by Google, which means you can use all of Google's advanced search operators to construct your search queries. If that sounds too complicated, you can perform most of the same operations using Yahoo!'s Advanced Search page. The nice thing about using Advanced Search is that you don't have to remember those fancy operators. Just select the options you want from those listed and click the Search button; Yahoo! does the rest.

You access the Advanced Search page by clicking the Advanced link next to a particular page's Search button. Each type of Yahoo! search has its own specific Advanced Search page; for example, the Advanced Web Search page (shown in Figure 1-2) includes options specific to Web searching, while the Advanced Directory Search page includes options for finding categories in the Yahoo! directory.

The screenshot shows the Yahoo! Advanced Web Search interface. At the top, there's a banner with the Yahoo! logo and links for "Search Home - Yahoo! - Help". Below the banner, a message encourages users to "Click here to try the Yahoo! Product Search Beta". The main title is "Advanced Web Search". A note below the title says, "You can use the options on this page to create a very specific search. Just fill in the fields you need for your current search." To the right is a "Search" button. The search form includes several dropdown menus under the heading "Show results with":

all of these words	any part of the page
the exact phrase	any part of the page
any of these words	any part of the page
none of these words	any part of the page

A tip below the dropdowns says, "Tip: Use these options to look for an exact phrase or to exclude pages containing certain words. You can also limit your search to certain parts of pages." There's a "Updated" dropdown set to "anytime". Under "Site/Domain", there are radio buttons for "Any domain", ".com", ".edu", ".gov", and ".org", along with an option to "only search in this domain/site". A tip for this section states, "Tip: You can search for results in a specific website (e.g. yahoo.com) or top-level domains (e.g. .com, .org, .gov)." In the "Mature Content Filter" section, there are two radio buttons: "On - Filter out mature Web content" (selected) and "Off - Do not filter Web results". An advisory note explains, "Advisory: The mature content filter is designed to filter out explicit, adult-oriented content from Yahoo! Search results. However, Yahoo! cannot guarantee that all explicit content will be filtered out." At the bottom, there's a "Country" dropdown set to "any country".

Figure 1-2: Simplify sophisticated searches with Yahoo!'s Advanced Search page.

Part #5: Search for Images (Using Google Image Search)

Okay, here's another function Yahoo! shares with Google—image search. When you access Yahoo!'s Search for Images page (img.search.yahoo.com) you're actually accessing Google Image Search. That's not a bad thing; Google Image Search is one of the best search indexes on the Web for photographs, pictures, and other graphics. If you want to find a picture of something, this is the search to use.

I won't go into how to use Yahoo!'s image search function, as it's virtually identical to that of Google Image Search. Read the section on Google Image Search in Chapter 6 to learn more.

Part #6: Access All of Yahoo!'s Searches from a Single Page

As you're discovering, Yahoo! offers a variety of search options. There's Yahoo! Web Search (via Google) and the Yahoo! directory, as well as separate news, image, map, product, and Yellow Pages searches.

While you can go to each of these search pages separately, they're all easily accessed from the Yahoo! Search page (search.yahoo.com), shown in Figure 1-3. Just click the icon for the type of search you want to conduct, and then start searching!

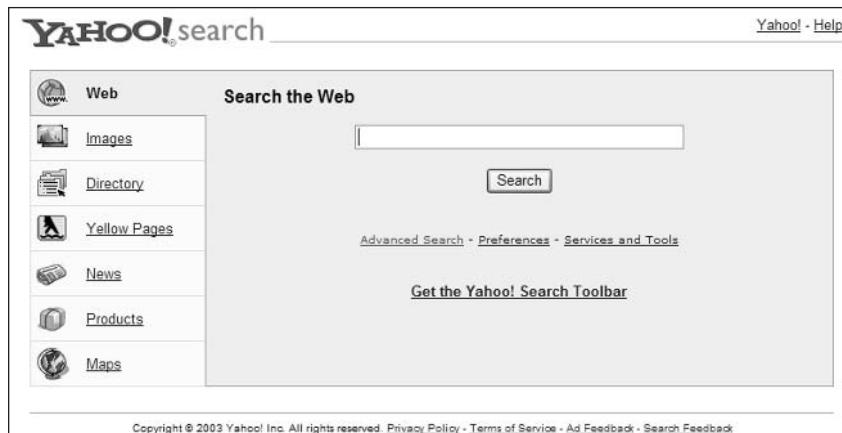


Figure 1-3: All your searches in one place—the Yahoo! Search page.

Secret #7: Expand Your Search Results

Just because you conduct one type of Yahoo! search doesn't mean you can't expand your query into other types of searches. It's as easy as clicking a new tab on your search results page.

As you can see in Figure 1-4, there are a series of tabs at the top of each search results page. These tabs are:

- ◆ **Web**—The default Web search using Google's search index
- ◆ **Images**—Finds related photographs and images
- ◆ **Directory**—Finds related sites listed in the Yahoo! directory
- ◆ **Yellow Pages**—Finds related businesses
- ◆ **News**—Searches Yahoo! News for related stories
- ◆ **Products**—Searches Yahoo! Shopping for matching products



Figure 1-4: Click a tab to expand your search into other areas of Yahoo!

Click one of these tabs to display a new page of search results.

Secret #8: Search for the Weather Forecast

In addition to the advanced search operators discussed in Secret #2, Yahoo! includes a number of keywords you can use to conduct specific types of searches directly from the search box on the Yahoo! home page. The first one we'll look at is the keyword **weather**, which you use to search for local weather forecasts.

To use this keyword, enter the keyword followed by the city and state that you're interested in, like this: **weather city state**. For example, if you want to display the weather forecast for Chicago, enter **weather chicago il** into the search box, then click the Search button. (You can also enter **weather zipcode** to display the forecast for a larger area.) Yahoo! will display a Yahoo! Weather box, like the one shown in Figure 1-5, with the current conditions and forecast, along with a link to a five-day forecast.



Figure 1-5: Use the **weather** keyword to search for local forecasts.

note

The **weather** keyword search is separate from the Yahoo! Weather page—which you can learn more about in Secret #27.

Secret #9: Search for News

Yahoo! also offers a dedicated keyword you can use to search for the latest news headlines on a specific topic. When you use the **news** keyword, Yahoo! displays the top three current headlines, as shown in Figure 1-6. Click any headline link to display the full story.



Figure 1-6: Use the **news** keyword to search for news headlines.

To use this keyword, enter the following into the Yahoo! search box: **news topic**. For example, to display the latest headlines about Iraq, enter **news iraq**.

note

The **news** keyword search is separate from the Yahoo! News page—which you can learn more about in Secret #27.

Secret #10: Search for Maps

Another keyword you can use is **map**, which searches for maps by address, city, or area code. Just enter this keyword along with information about a location into the Yahoo! search box; when you click the Search button, Yahoo! displays a small map like the one in Figure 1-7. Click the View Larger Map link to view an interactive, full-page version of this map.



Figure 1-7: Use the **map** keyword to search for maps.

To map a specific address, enter **map streetaddress city state**, like this: **map 123 n main st minneapolis mn**. To display a city map, enter **map city state**, like this: **map minneapolis mn**. To display a map of a larger area, it's a little different; enter **zipcode map**, like this: **93932 map**. You can also display country or regional maps by entering **map country** like this: **map australia**.

note

The **map** keyword search is separate from the Yahoo! Maps page—which you can learn more about in Secret #31.

SECRET #11: Search for Definitions

We're not through with keywords yet. There's one more keyword you can use in the Yahoo! search box, this one to display a dictionary definition for just about any English-language word. Just enter the keyword **define** followed by the word, like this: **define word**. For example, entering **define speed** displays the definition shown in Figure 1-8.

YAHOO! REFERENCE Dictionary Definition

speed: NOUN: 1. *Physics* The rate or a measure of the rate of motion, especially: a. Distance traveled divided by the time of travel. b. The limit of this quotient as the time of travel becomes vanishingly small; the first derivative of distance with respect to time. c. The magnitude of a velocity.

[View Complete Definition in The American Heritage® Dictionary](#)

Figure 1-8: Use the **define** keyword to search for dictionary definitions.

note

The **define** keyword search is separate from the Yahoo! Reference page—which you can learn more about in Secret #19.

#12: Go There Now!

When you use one of Yahoo!'s search keywords (**weather**, **news**, **map**, or **define**), Yahoo! displays the particular information you want in a small box at the top of an otherwise normal search results page. If you'd rather be taken to a full page of specific information—a full-page map from Yahoo! Maps, for example—you can bypass the search results page by adding what Yahoo! calls the "go there now" operator to the end of your query. This operator is a simple exclamation point (!).

So if you want to display a full-page map of Los Angeles, enter **map los angeles ca!**. If you want to view the full-page Yahoo! Weather forecast for Detroit, enter **weather detroit mi!**. If you want to view a full page of reference information about the word "fortify," enter **define fortify!**.

insider insight

As you might recall from Secret #1, you also use the "go there now" operator after Yahoo!'s site shortcuts—such as **news!** and **mail!**.

#13: Add a Yahoo! Toolbar to Internet Explorer

If you're using Internet Explorer 4.0 for Windows (or a later version), you can add a special Yahoo! toolbar—called the Yahoo! Companion—to your Web browser. This toolbar, shown in Figure 1-9, makes using Yahoo! easier by adding special Yahoo!-specific buttons to your Internet Explorer browser.



Figure 1-9: The Yahoo! Companion toolbar.

Here's some of what you'll find on the Yahoo! Companion toolbar:

- ◆ **Y!**—Go directly to the Yahoo! home page
- ◆ **Search**—Initiates a Web Search (by default); pull down the Search list to conduct directory, news, Yellow Pages, images, or maps searches
- ◆ **Mail**—Accesses your Yahoo! Mail inbox; an alert button will also appear when you have unread e-mail
- ◆ **My Yahoo!**—Go directly to My Yahoo!

To download and install the Yahoo! Companion, go to the companion.yahoo.com page and click the Get Yahoo! Companion Now button. Follow the onscreen instructions to download the toolbar to your computer and install it into IE.

• #14: Create Your Own Personal My Yahoo!

With everything Yahoo! has to offer, it's not surprising that many users use Yahoo! as their start page for all their Web travels. While the normal Yahoo! home page is an okay start page, it's rather generic. Wouldn't it be better to create your own personal version of Yahoo!, comprised of those services that you use most every day?

Well, Yahoo! makes it easy to create your own personal Yahoo!. It's called My Yahoo!, where you can pick and choose what you see—and what you *don't* see—every time you log on.

My Yahoo! is located at my.yahoo.com. Easy to remember, eh? The first time you visit My Yahoo!, you must register for the service and customize your page. After that, each time you go to My Yahoo!, you'll see *your* Yahoo! page exactly as you configured it.

After you've signed on, you see the generic My Yahoo! page shown in Figure 1-10. This is an okay page—it gives you an idea of what you can do with My Yahoo!—but the whole point of using My Yahoo! is to create a *customized* page, which you can do quite easily.

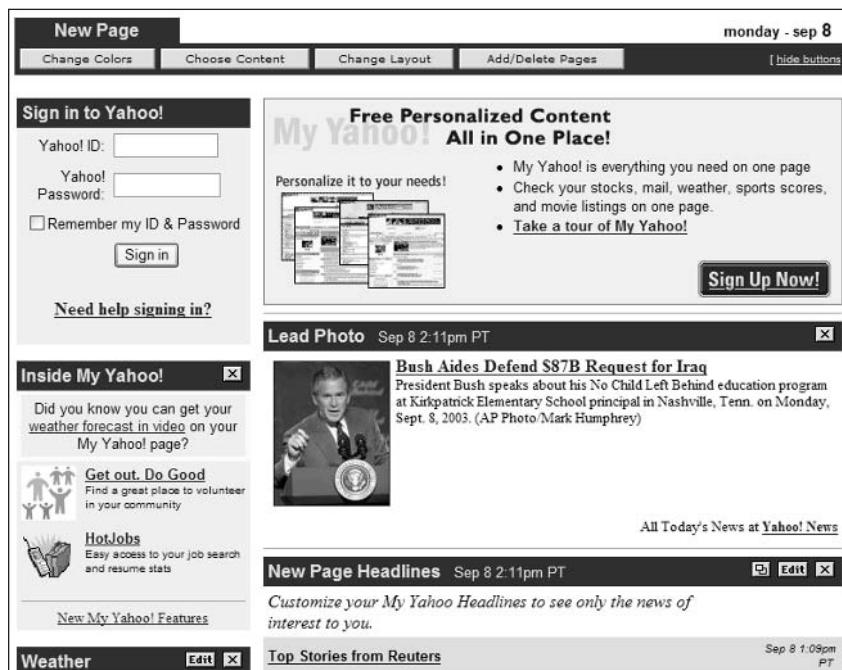


Figure 1-10: Turn My Yahoo! into *your* Yahoo!.

My Yahoo! can display a variety of different types of content, each in its own *module*. It's up to you to choose which content modules you want to display. To select which modules are displayed on your My Yahoo! page, click the Choose Content button. When the Personalize Page Content page appears, put a check mark next to each module you want to display and uncheck those topics you don't want to display.

Most modules let you customize the content that is displayed within; for example, you can create your own list of stocks to display in the Portfolios module and choose what types of news are displayed in the My Front Page Headlines module.

Although the specific customization is different for each module, the general steps you take are the same. Click the Edit button on the module you want to customize; when the next page appears, read the instructions carefully and then make the appropriate choices. This may include selecting or deselecting topics, choosing how many headlines are displayed, entering stock tickers for your portfolio, and so on.

After you've decided on all your content, you need to arrange that content on your page. By default, My Yahoo! uses a two-column layout, with the left column narrower than the right. You can also choose a three-column layout, with a big center column; just click the Choose Layout button to make your selection. You can then assign different content modules to different areas of the page.

If you don't like the default colors of the My Yahoo! page, you can choose from a variety of other color schemes. Just click the Change Colors button, then choose from one of the predefined color themes—or click the Customize Theme link to choose your own colors for each page element.

Your My Yahoo! is now complete—and ready to be changed again whenever you feel like it!

insider insight

Some modules—such as the Portfolio and Headlines modules—include a Detach button that's not found on other modules. When you click the Detach button, the contents of that module are displayed in a separate window on your desktop. This is a great way to display constantly updated information (such as stock prices) while freeing up your Web browser for other surfing.

• #15: Make Yahoo! Safe for Kids

As you're well aware, not every page on the Web is suitable for underage viewing. Fortunately, Yahoo! offers several options that help you protect your children from inappropriate content online.

Yahoo's Mature Content Filter

The first line of defense is to filter inappropriate content from Yahoo!'s search results. Yahoo! offers a Mature Content Filter you can apply when searching; with this filter activated, Web pages containing sex or language or other bad stuff are automatically deleted from all search results.

To activate Yahoo!'s Mature Content filter, click the Preferences link next to the Search button on Yahoo!'s home page. Scroll down the Search Preferences page to the Mature Content Filter section; you can choose from Strict (filters text and images) or Moderate (filters images only) filtering, or turn the filter off.

Yahoo! Family Accounts

Another available option is to create a Yahoo! Family Account. This enables you to create separate Yahoo! IDs for each of your children. You can then control what information your children give to Yahoo!—and determine which Yahoo! features your children can and can't access.

The key to managing your Family Account is to create separate Yahoo! IDs for each of your children. There are two classes of children's IDs available with Yahoo! Family Accounts: Under 13 and 13 to 18. Each age class has its own unique restrictions as part of a Family Account. Under 13 IDs are prohibited from entering any personal information online, participating in auctions or personals, or accessing any adult areas. The 13 to 18 IDs are only prohibited from participating in auctions and accessing adult areas—but they *can* leave personal information online.

In addition, the primary ID on a Family Account (meaning *you!*) can log into Yahoo! under any of the other IDs. This enables you to monitor and make changes to your child's account using all of Yahoo!'s various tools—such as blocklists, buddy lists, and so on.

Creating a Family Account is similar to creating a regular Yahoo! account. The big difference is that—to establish the age of the primary account member—you have to enter a credit card number. (The assumption is that no one under 18 has a credit card.) Yahoo! will not make charges to your card; it only uses the card for age ID purposes.

To create your Family Account, go to family.yahoo.com. You should see the Welcome to Yahoo! Family Accounts page; click the Sign Me Up link and complete the steps as instructed. (If you already have a Yahoo! account, just enter your Yahoo! ID and Password.)

Once you've created an account, you can add a new child ID for each of your children. From the Yahoo! Family Accounts page, click the Add Child Account button and follow the onscreen instructions.

Yahooligans!

Even better than filtering your children's Internet usage, why not give them their own kids-safe start page to use when they're surfing? Yahoo! provides just such a page—called Yahooligans!

Yahooligans! (www.yahooligans.com) is a kids-oriented directory that is part of the Yahoo! network of sites. Each site listed in the Yahooligans! directory has been carefully checked by an experienced educator to ensure that the site's content is appropriate for children aged 7 to 12.

As you can see in Figure 1-11, Yahooligans! works just like the main Yahoo! Web directory, which means you can find sites by either browsing through categories or directly searching. The difference is that this directory includes categories and sites of particular interest to children and teenagers—as well as additional features and services.



Figure 1-11: Yahoo! for kids—Yahooligans!

In addition to all the cool kids-friendly content, Yahooligans! offers a few other neat features to help protect your children online. For example, when you conduct a search on Yahooligans!, it searches only the Yahooligans! directory—it doesn't back out to the Web for a larger (unsupervised) index search. And the Yahooligans! directory doesn't include sites with any content inappropriate for younger Web surfers, so it's completely kids-safe.

In other words, Yahooligans! is the perfect start page for your kids.

insider insight

Yahooligans! is more than just a directory of family-friendly Web sites. Yahooligans! also includes a variety of fun and informational services, from downloadable pictures to interactive online games.



#16: Find a Local Yahoo!—or a Global One

You're familiar with the main U.S. Yahoo! site—but did you know that Yahoo! offers regionalized sites for more than 20 different countries, as well as local sites for thousands of communities throughout the United States?

Local Yahoo!

Yahoo! isn't just a big national site, it's also a network of thousands of local sites, customized to the events and listings of local communities across the United States. You can access any local site from the Yahoo! Get Local page (local.yahoo.com).

Each local site includes a variety of region-specific features, including links to local lottery results, maps and driving directions, local news headlines and sports scores, weather forecasts, and a local Web directory.

World Yahoo!

If you're a U.S. resident, the main Yahoo! site is a great site. But if you live outside the U.S., you could get frustrated at the American-centric site listings—and if you don't speak English, you might not be able to use the site at all!

For that reason, Yahoo! has been busy creating a network of World Yahoos!, complete with country-specific site listings and pages created in the native language. Figure 1-12 shows one of these sites, Yahoo! Mexico.

The screenshot shows the Yahoo! Mexico homepage. At the top, there are several icons: Yahoo! Net, Juegos, Mi Yahoo!, Correo, Grupos, Pláticas, and Ayuda. Below the header is a search bar with a placeholder 'Sigue a tu equipo favorito en Yahoo! Deportes, no te pierdas la acción de la nueva temporada!' and a 'Buscar' button. To the right of the search bar are links for 'Búsqueda avanzada' and 'Lo más buscado'. A sidebar on the left lists categories like 'Nuevo!', 'Compra', 'Comunica', 'Diviértete', 'Infórmate', 'Organiza', and 'Busca', each with sub-links. A large central banner says '¡Envía tus menajes cin herrores!' (Send your messages in style). The right side features a 'Noticias' section with a list of recent news items and a 'Centro comercial' section with links to various shopping and services. The bottom navigation bar includes 'Directorio de sitios' and 'Organizamos Internet para ti!'.

Figure 1-12: One of the many world Yahoo! sites—Yahoo! Mexico.

All the World Yahoos! are listed at the bottom of the U.S. Yahoo! home page, or you can go directly to the sites using the addresses listed in Table 1-2.

Table 1-2: World Yahoo!

World Yahoo!	Web Address
Argentina	ar.yahoo.com
Asia	asia.yahoo.com
Australia and New Zealand	au.yahoo.com
Brazil	br.yahoo.com
Canada	ca.yahoo.com
Catalan	ct.yahoo.com
China	cn.yahoo.com
Chinese (U.S. site in Chinese)	chinese.yahoo.com
Denmark	dk.yahoo.com
France	fr.yahoo.com
Germany	de.yahoo.com
Hong Kong	hk.yahoo.com
India	in.yahoo.com
Italy	it.yahoo.com
Japan	www.yahoo.co.jp
Korea	kr.yahoo.com
Mexico	mx.yahoo.com
Norway	no.yahoo.com
Singapore	sg.yahoo.com
Spain	es.yahoo.com
Spanish (U.S. site in Spanish)	espanol.yahoo.com
Sweden	se.yahoo.com
Taiwan	tw.yahoo.com
U.K. and Ireland	uk.yahoo.com



#17: Search for People

It's no surprise that one of the more popular types of Web searches involves looking for people—specifically, for people's street addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses. In the pre-Internet days, you'd conduct all your people and business searches using your local White Pages directory. Today, you can toss the paper directory and do all your people searching with Yahoo!.

Yahoo! People Search

When you want to search for someone's street address or phone number, use the Yahoo! People Search directory (people.yahoo.com). From this page, shown in Figure 1-13, you can search for people anywhere in the United States.

The screenshot shows the Yahoo! People Search interface. On the left, there are input fields for 'First Name' (with a placeholder 'Last Name (required)'), 'City/Town', and 'State'. Below these are radio buttons for 'Search for:' (White Pages or Email Address). At the bottom are 'Search' and 'Reset' buttons. On the right, there's a 'Featured Partner' section for 'US SEARCH' (1.800.US.SEARCH), a 'Product Spotlight' for 'NEW: Instant Criminal Reports', and a 'Other Services' section for 'Background Checks' (Bankruptcies, Criminal Records, Lawsuits) and 'Screening Services' (Nanny Check, Contractor Screening).

Figure 1-13: Searching for individuals with Yahoo! People Search.

When you conduct a Yahoo! People Search search, Yahoo! displays a list of names matching your query; each listing includes the full name, street address, city, state, zip code, and phone number. To display more information about any person listed, click the person's name. This displays the Detailed Information page, which includes a list of nearby businesses, a map of this person's neighborhood, and a wealth of other related links.

Yahoo! Member Directory

If the person you're looking for is a Yahoo! user, chances are that person has created a public profile. You can search these public profiles from the Yahoo! Member Directory page (members.yahoo.com). Yahoo! lets you search by Yahoo! ID, person's name, or interests. (The Yahoo! Member Directory page is a good starting point for all your people searching—it also includes search functionality for Yahoo! People Search and Yahoo! Personals.)



To create or edit your own Yahoo! public profile, go to the Yahoo! Profiles page (profiles.yahoo.com). Your public profile can contain your Yahoo! ID, real name, e-mail address, location, age, marital status, sex, occupation, photo, home page, and favorite cool links.

Yahoo! Personals

Of course, there's another reason you might want to search for someone online—you're interested in romance. When it comes to hooking up with that special someone, nothing beats browsing the online personal ads.

Yahoo! has its own personal ad service, called Yahoo! Personals (personals.yahoo.com). You can browse or search by relationship type, gender match, age,

and other factors. And, of course, you can also place your own personals ad. It's a great way to meet people.

note

Yahoo! Personals, like all personals sites, charges a monthly fee to use—which makes this feature one of the few parts of the Yahoo! site that isn't free.

18: Search for Businesses

Then there's the related business of searching for businesses. Searching for a particular business on Yahoo! is a lot like searching for an individual. The difference is you use Yahoo!'s Yellow Pages directory instead of the White Pages directory.

Yahoo! Yellow Pages

With Yahoo! Yellow Pages (yp.yahoo.com), shown in Figure 1-14, you can browse through different categories of businesses, or search for specific businesses or types of businesses. When you first access the Yellow Pages, you input your zip code, so Yahoo! can direct you to businesses in your area; you can also change your location at any time to search for businesses anywhere in the United States.

The screenshot shows the Yahoo! Yellow Pages homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Welcome, Guest User, Sign In, Yahoo! - Help, Maps, Yellow Pages, City Guides, Travel, and Yellow Pages Home. Below the navigation is a search bar with the placeholder "Your Search: [] Search" and a note below it: "Search by Category or Business Name (e.g. Hotel or Holiday Inn)". To the right of the search bar is a note: "Location: No location selected" with a "Change Location" link. A large central section is titled "Feature Your Business - Become a Yahoo! Yellow Pages Sponsored Business". It lists several categories under "Top Searches": Auto Dealers, Banks, Hotels, Restaurants, Dept. Stores, Pizza, Florist, and Hardware and Tools. Below this is a "Featured Sponsors" section with logos for eEnterprise, meineke car care center, Flower.com Send Flowers, and RITE AID PHARMACY. The main content area contains two columns of business categories:

• Automotive Dealers, Motorcycles, Repair ...	• Legal and Financial Banks, Insurance, Law Firms ...
• Community Government, Libraries, Religion ...	• Other Professional Services Pets, Jobs, Printing, Cellular ...
• Computers and Internet Computer Stores, Internet Services ...	• Personal Care Drug Stores, Hair Care, Nail Salons ...
• Education and Instruction Adult Education, Colleges and Universities, K-12 ...	• Real Estate Apartment Complexes, Agents, Rental Agencies ...
• Entertainment and Arts Nightclubs, Movies, Music ...	• Recreation and Sports Golf, Hobbies, Sporting Goods ...

To the right of the main content is a dark sidebar with the heading "ADVERTISEMENT" containing a list of benefits: "Free domain & email", "FrontPage support", "PHP and MySQL support", "Automated backup & restore", "24/7 Customer Support", and "More ...". Below this is another sidebar with the text "No html coding required. Another reason to build your Web site with" and the "YAHOO! Web Hosting" logo.

Figure 1-14: Searching for businesses with the Yahoo! Yellow Pages.

Each listing includes the name, address, city, state, and phone number for the business listed. If a business has a Web site, a Web site link appears next to the listing; click this link to jump to that site.

insider insight

If you want to see businesses in order of their proximity to a specific address, click the Find Near You link. This lists businesses in order of distance to your address, closest first. Each listing includes the approximate distance (in miles) from your address.

Searching for Businesses from the Search Box

Here's a bonus secret—you don't have to go to Yahoo! Yellow Pages to search for a business address. Yahoo! lets you search for businesses directly from the search box on the Yahoo! home page. All you have to do is enter the zip code for the business, followed by the business category or name, like this: **zipcode name/category**. For example, if you want to display all electricians in the 93032 zip code, you'd enter **93032 electrician**. If you're searching for Bob's Pizza in zip code 46224, enter **46224 bob's pizza**.

‡ #19: Look Up Reference Information—for Free

Yahoo! provides a variety of reference tools for your use, collected under the Yahoo! Reference banner. Go to education.yahoo.com/reference/ and you'll find links to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, the *American Heritage Spanish Dictionary*, *Roget's II: The New Thesaurus*, *Columbia Encyclopedia*, *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, *Gray's Anatomy of the Human Body*, and more—all free for the reading. It's kind of like having your own personal library on your own PC.

‡ #20: Get Free E-Mail

Chances are you already have one or more e-mail accounts through your Internet service provider or place of employment. Why in the world would you want yet another e-mail account?

Well, it's always good to have another e-mail account—especially if it's free. You can always use a new account to hide from spammers, or to use for specific purposes. In addition, having a Web-based e-mail account is great when you're traveling; you can access your e-mail from any Web browser on any computer anywhere there's an Internet connection.

If you want universal e-mail accessible from any Web browser on any PC—and you want it free of charge—then you want Yahoo! Mail. Yahoo! Mail is a Web-based e-mail service, totally free of charge, that you can use to replace or supplement your existing e-mail account(s).

If you've already signed up for a Yahoo! service, you already have a Yahoo! ID and password. Your Yahoo! ID becomes your Yahoo! Mail address; just add a @yahoo.com to your ID, and you're ready to go. (And if you haven't yet signed up for Yahoo!, do so now—it doesn't cost anything.)

You access Yahoo! Mail, at mail.yahoo.com. As you can see in Figure 1-15, the Yahoo! Mail home page provides access to your inbox and stored messages folders. This is also where you create new e-mail messages.



Figure 1-15: Get free Web-based e-mail with Yahoo! Mail.

insider insight

Yahoo! also offers a paid e-mail service, called Yahoo! Mail Plus (mailplus.yahoo.com). For \$29.99 (and up) a year, you get more storage capacity, as well as advanced spam filtering and message management.

#21: Listen to Your E-Mail by Phone

Here's something different. When you can't get to your computer, you can use Yahoo! by Phone to listen to your e-mail messages over any telephone. You access your account by voice recognition; just dial 1-800-MY-YAHOO to retrieve all waiting messages.

Yahoo! by Phone costs \$4.95 per month. You can get more information and sign up for this service at phone.yahoo.com.

#22: Chat with Other Yahoo! Users

People like to talk to one another. Communication is the foundation of our society, and the Internet has helped foster communication among hundreds of millions of computer users around the world. Blah, blah, blah.

You probably don't care about *why* people want to chat online—you only care about how to get chatting yourself. Well, that's the topic of our next secret. That's right, Yahoo! is one of the largest forums for online chat and messaging. Yahoo! members *really* like to talk to each other—either one-on-one, or in groups.

Yahoo! Chat

Let's start with group communications, which you do with Yahoo! Chat (chat.yahoo.com). Once you load the Yahoo! Chat software, you enter a topic-specific chat room where you join other users in a group conversation. You send messages to the room using your keyboard and read everyone else's messages on your computer screen. You can even send private messages to other users in a chat room, so you can keep your personal conversations out of the public eye.

The Yahoo! Chat page is your home page for all of Yahoo!'s chat activities. From here you can access featured chat rooms and chat events, or browse through the available chat rooms, organized by category.

When you enter a chat room, you see the screen shown in Figure 1-16. All messages are displayed in the Chat pane; everyone chatting in the room is listed in the Chatters pane. You enter your messages in the Send box and then click the Send button (or press Enter) to send the message to the room. After you send a message, it appears in the Chat pane, listed in-line with all the other messages.

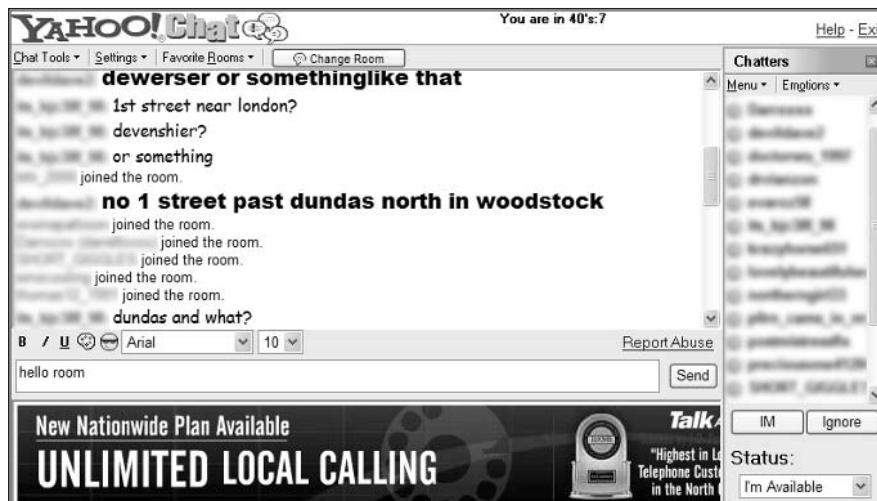


Figure 1-16: Chat with groups of people using Yahoo! Chat

insider insight

If you want your messages to stand out amidst the visual cacophony of a busy chat room, consider changing the color or style of your text. To change the color of your messages, select a different color from the Color list. To change the style of your message text, click the **B** (bold), **I** (italic), or **U** (underline) buttons.

Everybody else in your chat room is listed in the Chatters list. If you want to change chat rooms, click the Change Room button. When you click this button, Yahoo! displays the chat room list; click a room name to change to that room.

insider insight

If you have a microphone and speakers connected to your PC system, you can participate in Yahoo! Voice Chat, an audio version of normal Yahoo! Chat. To use Yahoo! Voice Chat, all you have to do is click the **Voice Chat** link on the Yahoo! Chat page, and then log into one of the Voice Chat rooms. From the Voice Chat screen, click and hold the **Talk** button, then speak into your microphone. The name of whichever user is currently talking is displayed in the box next to the Talk button.

Yahoo! Messenger

Yahoo! Messenger is both software and a service designed to let you communicate instantly—and privately—with other Yahoo! members. When the Yahoo! Messenger software is running, you can send instant messages to any other Yahoo! user currently online, as well as receive up-to-the-minute stock prices, news headlines, sports scores, weather forecasts, and notification of any waiting Yahoo! Mail.

You might not know it, but Yahoo! Messenger is one of the big players in instant messaging—right up there with AOL Instant Messenger, Windows Messenger (a.k.a. MSN Messenger), and ICQ. Like the other players, Yahoo! Messenger is a free service; all you have to do is download and install the Yahoo! Messenger software—which you do from the main Yahoo! Messenger page (messenger.yahoo.com).

After Yahoo! Messenger is running, you see the Yahoo! Messenger window shown in Figure 1-17. When you click the Friends tab, all the members of your Friends List are displayed in the main Messenger window; friends online are displayed in bold.

To send an instant message, double-click any name in your Friends List. When the Send Instant Message window appears, enter your message and click the Send button, or press the Enter key. (You can spice up your text with bold, italic, underline, or color, if you want.)

insider insight

When connected to the Internet, Yahoo! Messenger can also display news headlines, sports scores, weather forecasts and conditions, and stock prices. Click the Stocks tab to display prices for your portfolio, the News tab to display news headlines, the Scoreboard tab to display sports scores, or the Weather tab to display weather forecasts.



Figure 1-17: Using Yahoo! Messenger to chat with other users.

2 #23: Share Your Interests with Yahoo! Message Boards and Groups

The Internet is a great way for people with special interests to gather and exchange ideas. Whether you're into model trains, European soccer, or soap operas, you can find a legion of similar fans online.

Yahoo! makes it easy for you to hang out with people who share your special interests via Yahoo! Message Boards and Yahoo! Groups. When you gather via Yahoo!, it doesn't matter where you live—you can meet with friends around the globe in the Yahoo! community.

Yahoo! Message Boards

Yahoo! Message Boards (messages.yahoo.com) are the electronic equivalent of old-fashioned bulletin boards. Each message board is devoted to a specific topic; users can read the messages posted on the board and then reply or post their own new messages. All messages are visible to the entire public.

Yahoo! offers thousands of different message boards, each dedicated to a specific topic. At any given time, each board contains dozens or hundreds of messages; messages that reply to other messages (or other replies) are said to comprise a *message thread*.

You can browse Yahoo!'s message boards by category or search for a specific board. After you've selected a message board, you'll see the message board's main page like the one shown in Figure 1-18. The theme of the board (in the

form of a “starter” message) is sometimes displayed at the top of the page; all the message threads are listed (by topic) below the Topic heading. Click a topic to read the first message in a thread.

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Msgs</u>	<u>Last Post (ET)</u>
· LOS ANGELES	1236	9/8/03 7:39 am
· Why is CA having so many problems?	4	8/28/03 11:01 pm
· The Terminator for Governor?	8	8/14/03 9:29 pm
· bad attitude bus drivers go on strike	2	8/11/03 9:24 am
· Have you ever been to Osaka, Japan?	1	8/11/03 3:55 am
· Homeless in LA	1	8/10/03 8:13 pm
· Pay No Cigarette Taxes Los Angeles	1	8/10/03 7:19 am
· TCG Show!	1	8/7/03 9:07 pm
· The Color Green	2	8/7/03 9:06 pm
· IN love with DIANE ROSE A.	1	8/7/03 6:53 pm
· State Farm cancels servicemen's policies	3	8/7/03 5:52 pm
· New TLC show coming to Los Angeles Area	1	8/5/03 10:53 am
· I sure miss the 1950s	1	8/4/03 5:49 pm
· What About Us White-Ethnics?	1	8/4/03 5:22 pm
· Why Police are Molesting Children?	10	8/3/03 8:17 pm

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Figure 1-18: Gossip with other users on Yahoo! Message Boards.

Each message in the thread appears in its own page. Click the Next link to read the next message in the thread; click the Previous link to back up and read the previous message. To reply publicly to a message, click the Reply link; to send a private e-mail to the author of the message, click the author’s name.

insider insight

Some of the liveliest and most information Yahoo! Message Boards are those created for specific stocks and securities. If you want inside information about a specific stock, go to that stock’s message board and read to your heart’s content. (To find a stock’s message board, search for the specific stock symbol on the Yahoo! Message Boards home page.)

Yahoo! Groups

A Yahoo! Group is similar to a message board, but with added features. A group is more akin to an online “club” where you can gather with others who share your particular interests. There literally millions of different Yahoo! Groups are each devoted to a specific topic or interest; each group includes message boards, photo and file archives, related links, and so on.

You can search for groups of interest from the Yahoo! Groups home page (groups.yahoo.com). Once you find a group you like, you have to apply for membership; some groups have open membership, others need to manually approve new members, still others have invitation-only policies. You can find out more on the home page for each individual group.

Once you join a group, you can read messages in the group's message archive or elect to receive new messages via e-mail. Posting a new message is as simple as clicking a button; messages are threaded by topic line, so related messages are relatively easy to follow.

#24: Use Yahoo! to Manage Your Schedule and Contacts

Most computer users have an electronic calendar of some sort, as well as an electronic address book. You use your calendar to keep your private schedule, and your address book to hold the names addresses of friends, family, and business contacts.

The only problem is, you have your calendar on your work PC, so you can't access it from home. Or you have your address book on your home PC, and you can't access it from work, or when you're on the road.

Yahoo! solves this problem with a Web-based calendar and address book—that you can access from *any* PC, anytime, anywhere in the world!

Yahoo! Calendar

Yahoo! Calendar (calendar.yahoo.com) is a scheduling and calendar utility that houses your information on Yahoo!'s Web servers. Because the information is stored on Yahoo!'s computers, not yours, you can access your schedule from any PC with an Internet connection and a Web browser. All you have to do is enter your Yahoo! ID and password and you have universal access to your appointments and events.

The default Yahoo! Calendar page, shown in Figure 1-19, displays your schedule for today. To display more details, click any event or appointment. You can also display your Yahoo! Calendar in weekly, monthly, or yearly views; just click the Week, Month, or Year links.

To add a new appointment or event to your Yahoo! Calendar, click the Add Event button and follow the onscreen instructions.

**insider
insight**

Yahoo! Calendar lets you do more than just track simple appointments and events. You can also use Yahoo! Calender to manage a to-do list, track public events and holidays, share your calendar publicly (with family, co-workers, and so on), and synchronize with another calendar program or PDA.

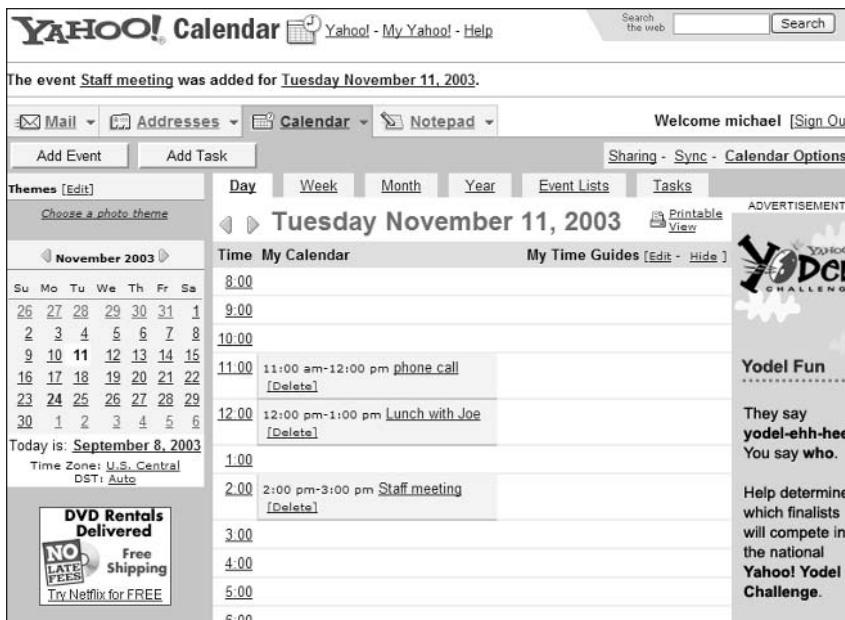


Figure 1-19: Manage your appointments with Yahoo! Calendar.

Yahoo! Address Book

If you want universal access to your contacts, no matter where you are (or what PC you're using), use Yahoo! Address Book (address.yahoo.com). Yahoo! Address Book stores your contact information on Yahoo!'s Web servers so that you can access the information from any PC with an Internet connection and a Web browser.

All your contacts are listed—sorted by last name—on the Yahoo! Address Book page. If you have a number of contacts, you can search for a specific name, display names by the first letter of the last name, re-sort the contacts by first name, company, or e-mail address, or pull down the View Category list to display only those contacts assigned to a specific category. Yahoo! displays icons next to each name indicating whether that person is online or offline at the moment.

To add a contact to your address book, click the Add Contact button. When the Add Contact page appears, enter as much information as possible for your new contact. You can add even more details by clicking the Add More Details button; click the Save button to add this new contact to your Yahoo! Address Book.

insider insight

If you already have an address book in another application—such as Microsoft Outlook—you can have Yahoo! Address Book import that data so that you don't have to re-enter it manually. Just click the Import/Export link on the Yahoo! Address Book page and follow the onscreen instructions. To synchronize the data in your Yahoo! Address Book with a contact management program or Palm Pilot organizer, click the Sync link and follow those instructions.



#25: Share Your Files and Photos with Other Users

Yahoo! provides two different ways for you to share your files with others—or to provide personal access for yourself when you're on the road. You can use Yahoo! Briefcase to store any type of file or Yahoo! Photos to store image files.

Yahoo! Briefcase

Yahoo! Briefcase (briefcase.yahoo.com) is a way to store files online—on Yahoo!'s Web servers—and then access them from any PC with an Internet connection and a Web browser. You can even set selective access to your Briefcase files so that your friends, family, and co-workers can view, access, and download designated files.

To add a file to your Briefcase, click the Add Files link and follow the onscreen instructions. You share the files or photos in your Briefcase by setting access levels for folders within your Yahoo! Briefcase. To change the access level for a folder within your Briefcase, click the Edit icon next to the folder on your Yahoo! Briefcase page, and then select the desired access level—Private, Friends, or Everyone.

If you want others to access your Yahoo! Briefcase page, they access a Web address that looks like this: briefcase.yahoo.com/yahooID/. Replace *yahooID* with your own Yahoo! ID to complete the URL. Anyone accessing a folder in your Yahoo! Briefcase can download any of the files in the folder.

Yahoo! Photos

Yahoo! Photos (photos.yahoo.com) is a separate service designed specifically for the management of digital photographs. Not only can you use Yahoo! Photos to print your photos (see Secret #26), you can use Yahoo! Photos to store your photos online and then share them with friends and family.

To share your photos online, you first have to create a photo album. You do this by clicking the Create a New Album link. You can then upload your digital photo files to this (or another) album; once you're done uploading, others can access your album and view your photos in their own Web browsers.

To share your photos, use this address: photos.yahoo.com/yahooID/. Replace *yahooID* with your own Yahoo! ID to complete the URL.



#26: Use Yahoo! to Print Your Favorite Photos

Here's another use of Yahoo! Photos (photos.yahoo.com)—to make photo prints of your digital photos. You can send any file in your Yahoo! Photo Album

to Yahoo's designated photo printing service (Shutterfly) by opening your photo album, selecting the photo(s), and then clicking the Order Prints button. Follow the onscreen instructions to choose your print size and complete your order.

2 #27: Use Yahoo! to Get the Latest News, Weather, and Sports

Yahoo! is all about information—and the latest, most important information is called *news*. Yahoo! offers a variety of ways for you to get the latest news—and weather and sports—from simple news headlines to hand-picked news alerts to Internet feeds of television and radio news. Read on to learn the many ways to read the news on the Yahoo! network of sites.

Yahoo! News

When you want all the latest news, Yahoo! is the place to go. Just about any combination of up-to-the-minute headlines and in-depth reporting is available on Yahoo!'s many news pages, and they're all just a few clicks away! (And by up-to-the-minute, I mean *up-to-the-minute*—news headlines at Yahoo! News are updated so fast that they often beat the TV news guys on breaking stories!)

Yahoo!'s main news page is Yahoo! News (news.yahoo.com), shown in Figure 1-20. This page includes all the latest headlines, stories, and photos, as well as a News Search feature that lets you search for stories, photos, and audio/video reports by topic.

Yahoo! Weather

If you want to know whether or not to break out the rain gear, sun block, or snowshoes, go to Yahoo! Weather (weather.yahoo.com). Yahoo! Weather lets you enter a zip code or city name, and then displays a full-featured weather page—complete with current conditions, a five-day forecast, and links to additional weather resources, including weather maps and news stories.

Yahoo! Sports

Yahoo!'s source for sports news, scores, and statistics is Yahoo! Sports (sports.yahoo.com), shown in Figure 1-21. Yahoo! Sports offers all the latest sports headlines, both concise scores and detailed box scores, and in-depth features on important sports topics. You'll even find links to separate pages for all major sports and leagues—including the NFL, NHL, NBA, MLB, NCAA football and basketball, NASCAR, world soccer, rugby, golf, and tennis.

Yahoo! Entertainment

The home base for all of Yahoo!'s entertainment offerings is Yahoo! Entertainment (entertainment.yahoo.com). Yahoo! Entertainment includes links to Yahoo!'s more specific entertainment sites—Movies, TV, Games, and Astrology—as well as the latest entertainment news, top ten lists, new releases, and listings and schedules. If you only go to one entertainment page on the Web, Yahoo! Entertainment is as good a site as any.

The screenshot shows the Yahoo! News homepage. At the top, there's a banner for "YAHOO! News" with an HP logo. To the right, links for "News Home - Yahoo! - Help" and "Personalize News Home Page - Sign Out" are visible. Below the banner, a search bar says "Search News Stories" with a dropdown menu and a "Search Advanced" button.

Top Stories

Feds Predict Bush's \$84B Request Will Pass
AP - 11 minutes ago
Both Republicans and Democrats predicted Monday that Congress will approve the \$87 billion President Bush wants for Iraq and Afghanistan, but they said approval won't be as speedy as last spring and lawmakers will demand details.
[Full Coverage](#)

More Top Stories

- Annan Plans Postwar Iraq Meeting at U.N. (AP)
- Next Space Shuttle Run to Be Test Flight (AP)
- Supreme Court Weighs Campaign Finance Law (AP)
- In Business: Can Anyone Get Factories Humming? (BusinessWeek Online)

Video

NASA Details Return to Flight Plan (AP Video) Indiana Gov. O'Bannon Found Unconscious (AP Video)

Business

Stocks Gain; Nasdaq Hits 1-1/2 Year High
Reuters - 45 minutes ago
Stocks rose on Monday, resuming last week's upward march, as investors welcomed reports from Wall Street analysts suggesting a rebound in the economy and corporate profits is on its way. [Full Coverage](#)

Top Stories Section

- AP
- Reuters
- AFP
- [The New York Times](#)
- [washingtonpost.com](#)
- [USA TODAY](#)
- NPR
- [U.S. News & World Report](#)

[ARCNEWS](#)
2 week free trial

washingtonpost.com in TOP STORIES
Fierce Fight Over Secrecy, Scope of Law

Figure 1-20: Get up-to-the-minute coverage at Yahoo! News.

The screenshot shows the Yahoo! Sports homepage. At the top, there's a banner for "YAHOO! SPORTS" with a "powered by hp" logo. To the right, links for "Welcome, [Sign Out, Account Info]" and "Yahoo! Help" are visible. Below the banner, a navigation bar includes links for "Home", "NFL", "MLB", "NBA", "NHL", "NCAA Football", "Golf", "NASCAR", "Tennis", "More...", "Fantasy", and "Shop".

Today in Sports

Bucs, Eagles turn it on for Monday night
The NFL returns to Monday night with a bang. In a rematch of last year's NFC Championship game, the Super Bowl champion Tampa Bay Buccaneers face the Philadelphia Eagles. Both teams come into the game sporting a few new looks and loads of confidence. If the Bucs hope to repeat as champs, Monday's game will be the [first of many tests](#).

More NFL

- Warner released from hospital
- Delhomme to start at QB for Carolina

Scoreboard Quick Links

MLB - NFL - NCAAF - PGA - TEN - WNBA

MLB	Today	Yesterday
My Teams - Sep 8		
Edit		
Customize your scoreboard to highlight the games of interest to you.		
Other Games - Sep 8		
Edit		
Toronto at NY Yankees	3	Final
Boston at Baltimore	0	7:05pm ET
Florida at NY Mets	0	7:10pm ET
Pittsburgh at Cincinnati	0	7:10pm Preview

Figure 1-21: Grab the latest sports scores and stories at Yahoo! Sports.

Yahoo! Movies

What new movies are playing in theaters this week? What were last week's top box office draws? What's happening in the world of Hollywood?

For the answers to all these questions—and more—go to Yahoo! Movies (movies.yahoo.com). In addition to all the industry news and reviews, you'll also find the latest videotape and DVD releases and a detailed list of showtimes at your local theaters. You can even view trailers for current and upcoming releases right from the Yahoo! Movies home page.

Yahoo! TV

Anything good on the tube tonight? You can find out quickly at Yahoo! TV (tv.yahoo.com). As you can see in Figure 1-22, Yahoo! TV includes TV news, gossip, reviews, ratings, and listings for your local area. (When you first log into Yahoo! TV, you'll be asked some questions about how you receive your TV signals, so Yahoo! TV can display customized listings for your broadcast stations, cable system, or satellite television provider.)

The screenshot shows the Yahoo! TV homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links to Home, TV Listings, Today's Picks, News & Gossip, Ratings, TV Show Database, and Soap Operas. Below the navigation is a banner for "ET previews the new Fall TV Season" with a "NEW on TV 2003" section featuring a "ET's INSIDER LOOK AT THE NEW SEASON!" heading. To the right of this is a "Local TV Listings" section with a search form for "Browse by Date & Time" and "Search listings by Keyword". Below these are sections for "Fall TV Preview" and "Daily TV Picks", each with blurred thumbnail images and text links. On the left, there's a sidebar for "Also Inside" with "Photo Galleries" for MTV VMAs Photos and Awards Coverage for the 55th Emmys. On the right, there's a "TV Tonight" section for Monday, Sep 8, 2003, showing a grid of program listings for ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC, and PBS. Each listing includes the show name and a link to more details.

	8:00pm	8:30pm	9:00pm	9:30pm	10:00pm	10:30pm
ABC	ESPN's Blunderful World of S....		NFL Football >			
CBS	Yes, Dear	Still Stan...	Ever... Loves Ray...	The King of Queens	CSI: Miami	
FOX	The O.C.		Paradise Hotel		Local Programming >	
NBC	Fear Factor		For Love or Money 2			
PBS	History Detectives		American Experience >			

Figure 1-22: Get local program listings at Yahoo! TV.

Yahoo! Lottery Results

Want to see the winning numbers from your local lottery—or from any state lottery? Then go directly to Yahoo! Lottery Results (lottery.yahoo.com). This page even includes lottery results from Spain and Germany!

Yahoo! Astrology

Get your daily horoscope—and link to biorhythm, numerology, and tarot sites—at Yahoo! Astrology (astrology.yahoo.com). Just click your sign to see what the stars have to say today!

#28: Use Yahoo! to Run a Fantasy Sports League

If you and your friends or colleagues are big into fantasy sports, you can use Yahoo! to organize and run your fantasy sports teams. Yahoo! Fantasy Sports (fantasysports.yahoo.com) includes leagues for football, baseball, basketball, hockey, auto racing, and other sports. You'll find all the information you need to run your own league, as well as links to related sports scores and stories.

#29: Use Yahoo! to Manage Your Finances and Pay Your Bills

Most people recognize Yahoo! as a great search site—but how many recognize Yahoo! as one of the best resources for financial information on the Internet? All too few, which leads us to this particular secret.

Truth be told, there are few sites better than Yahoo! when it comes to obtaining stock quotes, in-depth company data, and other financial information. In addition, Yahoo! has one of the most active financial message boards on the Web—a great place to pick up the latest rumors and whispers!

Yahoo! Finance

The home base for all of Yahoo!'s financial resources is Yahoo! Finance (finance.yahoo.com). The Yahoo! Finance home page, shown in Figure 1-23, provides links to proprietary information and other Web sites. In addition, links at the top of the page lead you directly to your personal portfolio and a search box lets you retrieve current quotes for any security.

Yahoo! Finance lets you create multiple portfolios; each portfolio can contain multiple stocks, securities, and market indices. You can choose to track actual portfolio performance (after you enter shares owned and price paid) or simple stock performance.

Even better, you can redesign the Yahoo! Finance site to include the specific financial information you're looking for on a daily basis. For example, you can choose which sources Yahoo! uses for its financial news headlines and how it displays those headlines. You can also configure the way quotes and charts are displayed on individual quotes pages. To redesign your quotes pages, click the Customize Finance link at the top of the quotes page and then follow the onscreen instructions.

Welcome, DoctorWu_1997 [Sign Out]

Services Accounts [add: bank credit cards] Portfolios [manage - create - add: brokerage, 401(k), mutual fund] Money Manager - [Hide Portfolios]

Bill Pay · Funds Transfer · PayDirect AIMRA · SEP IRA · Quotes FREE trial NEW! of Streaming Real-Time Quotes, Charts, and Screener

Yahoo! Finance

Monday, September 8 2003 5:49pm ET - U.S. Markets Closed

Enter symbol(s): e.g. YHOO, ^DJI Go Symbol Lookup | Finance Search

Streaming real-time quotes and news. Get MarketTracker.

ADVERTISEMENT

Market Summary

Nasdaq 8-Sep @ 4:00pm (C)Yahoo!

Dow	9,386.29 +82.95 (+0.87%)
Nasdaq	1,888.62 +30.38 (+1.63%)
S&P 500	1,031.64 +10.25 (+1.00%)
10-Yr Bond	4.389% +0.035
NYSE Volume	1,309,119,000
Nasdaq Volume	2,047,621,000

Quote data provided by Reuters
Brokers: Scottrade - CyberTrader - Ameritrade - Vanguard

Top Stories

Stocks Gain; Nasdaq Hits 1-1/2 Year High
Mon 4:57pm ET - Reuters
Stocks rose on Monday, resuming last week's upward march, as investors welcomed reports from Wall Street analysts suggesting a rebound in the economy and corporate profits is on its way.

Most Actives, US Indices, World Indices

Market Overview

Mon 4:38pm ET
It was business as usual on Wall Street as the indices set a course of progressive highs amid bullish market internals and

Scottrade Takes Care of You Like Nobody Else...

- \$7 Trades Online Market Orders
- 185+ Branch Offices Find the Office Near You!
- 9000 Mutual Funds No Transaction Fees
- No Inactivity Fees! Just \$500 to Get Started
- Free Scottrade Real-Time Quotes, etc.

Inside Yahoo! Finance

- Savings Finder - Shop for the cheapest long distance rate, switch for free
- FIFA Women's World Cup - Get breaking news, schedules, tickets and more.

Figure 1-23: One of the best personal finance sites on the Internet—Yahoo! Finance.



Don't forget that you can add personalized financial information—including your Yahoo! Finance portfolio—to your My Yahoo! page. See Secret #14 for more information.

You'll also find reams of financial news and information on the Yahoo! Finance site. In addition, the main Yahoo! Finance page links to a variety of related sites—for banking, insurance, loans, and taxes—which we'll discuss next.

Yahoo! Banking Center

The Yahoo! Banking Center (banking.yahoo.com) offers a variety of banking tools, as well as links to related sites and services. You can also use this site to learn more about online banking and credit cards.

Yahoo! Bill Pay

Tired of writing dozens of checks every month? Then sign up for Yahoo! Bill Pay (bills.yahoo.com) and pay all your bills online, using any Web browser. The Basic plan is free, and lets you make payments to more than 100 participating billers. The Premium plan can send bills to any biller, and costs \$4.95 per month (plus 40 cents for each payment after your first 12).

Yahoo! Insurance Center

Yahoo! provides links to all manner of insurance coverage—automobile, health, life, homeowners, and renters. The Yahoo! Insurance Center page

(insurance.yahoo.com) includes a wealth of insurance-related information, and even lets you obtain quotes online from major providers.

Yahoo! Loan Center

The Yahoo! Loan Center (loan.yahoo.com) features a variety of information related to financing. You'll find current rates for mortgage and auto loans as well as calculators to help you figure out how big a loan you can afford. You can even link from here to third-party lenders to get the entire loan process underway.

Yahoo! PayDirect

Yahoo! PayDirect (paydirect.yahoo.com) is an online electronic payment service. You can use PayDirect to send money over the Web, either to individuals or to businesses. PayDirect is especially popular among Yahoo! Auctions users and the merchants in Yahoo! Shopping. It's also good when you need to get cash to someone in a hurry or to send monetary gifts to friends and family. You fund your PayDirect transfers either by credit card or by enabling electronic access to your checking account.

Yahoo! Tax Center

The Yahoo! Tax Center (taxes.yahoo.com) is the place to go when it's time to figure your taxes. This site features a variety of tax guides and tips; you can also download federal and state tax forms come April of each year.

#30: Use Yahoo! to Shop Online

Online shopping is a big deal—and Yahoo! wants a cut of the action. That's why you'll find a wide variety of shopping-related services on the Yahoo! network.

Yahoo! Shopping

Yahoo!'s premiere online shopping service is, not surprisingly, Yahoo! Shopping (shopping.yahoo.com), which is both a Web search engine for specific products and a huge directory of online merchants—thousands of them listed in dozens of different categories. As you can see in Figure 1-24, you use the Search section at the top of the page to search for specific merchandise; the Browse section lets you browse the merchants by category.

It's the shopping search that's particularly cool; you can search by keyword or click the Advanced Product Search link to narrow your search to a particular price range. The shopping results page also lets you narrow your results by price as well as compare different products from different merchants and manufacturers. Each item on the results page has a Compare Prices link; click this link to find the lowest price at three different stores. Also useful is the User Reviews link next to each item, which lets you see what other consumers think about this particular product.

The screenshot shows the Yahoo! Shopping homepage. At the top, there's a search bar with the placeholder "Tell us what you think about the new Yahoo! Shopping." Below it, a "Search" button and links for "Advanced Search" and "Web Search". The "Welcome" link is visible at the top right. A "Compare" section displays three digital cameras: Canon PowerShot A70 (\$263.76), Nikon Coolpix 4300 (\$306.59), and Canon PowerShot S400 (\$389.79). The "Browse" section lists categories like Apparel, Accessories & Shoes, Flowers & Gifts, Bargains, Health & Personal Care, Beauty, Home, Garden & Garage, Books, Jewelry & Watches, and Computers & Office. To the right, there's an "ADVERTISEMENTS" sidebar with logos for Nordstrom, Staples, RadioShack, FTD.com, Sony, Amazon.com, hpshopping.com, and Dell.

Figure 1-24: Search by product or browse by category at Yahoo! Shopping.

The Yahoo! Shopping directory lists all variety of merchants, including traditional retail stores, name-brand catalog companies, small boutiques, and specialty shops. All of these merchants are linked not only to the common Yahoo! Shopping directory, but also to the Yahoo! Shopping Cart, a single place to finalize your purchases from multiple merchants.

After you enter a specific store and find the merchandise you want, follow the individual store instructions to place an order for a specific product. When you make a purchase at a Yahoo! Shopping store, your order is sent to the Yahoo! Shopping Cart. Actually, your Shopping Cart page will have *multiple* shopping carts listed, because each store has its own shopping cart. But your orders for all stores are listed on the same page and access the same check-out/purchasing information.

When it's time to check out, go to the Yahoo! Shopping Carts page by clicking the View Cart/Check Out link at the top of any Yahoo! Shopping page. From the Yahoo! Shopping Carts page, follow the onscreen instructions for checking out and paying for your merchandise.

caution

Remember, just because you're using the Yahoo! Shopping Cart (and Yahoo! Shopping directory), that *doesn't* mean you're actually buying from Yahoo!. When you make a purchase through Yahoo! Shopping, you're still purchasing from an individual merchant—and that merchant is handling all aspects of the fulfillment of your order. This also means that if you have any questions or problems, you need to contact the merchant who sold you the goods, not Yahoo!.

Yahoo! Wallet

If you get tired of entering your credit card information at every shopping site you visit, Yahoo! has a solution: Yahoo! Wallet. You can use Yahoo! Wallet to store your credit card information in one place and then have individual sites access your wallet rather than you entering the information separately at each site.

To use Yahoo! Wallet, go to wallet.yahoo.com and click the Sign Up Now link. Enter your Yahoo! user name and password, create a unique security key (kind of a second password), and enter your credit card information. Once this information is entered, you can use Yahoo! Wallet to speed up checkout at any store at Yahoo! Shopping—and it's completely secure.

Yahoo! Auctions

Online auctions are the hottest things going on the Internet today. With an online auction, you can buy or sell just about anything—from closeout merchandise to trendy collectibles.

The biggest auction site on the Internet, by far, is eBay—which we'll look at in Chapter 16. The number-two auction site, however, is Yahoo! Auctions (auctions.yahoo.com).

I'll be honest with you: Yahoo! Auctions may be the number-two player, but it's a distant second. If you're a seller looking for the largest number of potential bidders, you'll want to skip Yahoo! Auctions and go straight to the much larger base of customers at eBay. However, if you're a buyer, you can pick up some pretty good bargains at Yahoo! Auctions—and you stand a lesser chance of being outbid by some crazy person in a last-minute bidding frenzy.

insider
insight

Yahoo! Auctions is also a pretty good place to find a variety of close-out and overstock merchandise from legitimate retailers. A lot of the Yahoo! Shopping merchants also offer products for sale at Yahoo! Auctions; it's worth your while to see what's available if you're in the market.

Yahoo! Classifieds

The Yahoo! Classifieds service (classifieds.yahoo.com) is a great way to buy and sell items you'd normally sell in a newspaper classified ad. As you can see in Figure 1-25, you'll find classified ads grouped by the following major categories:

- ◆ Autos
- ◆ HotJobs
- ◆ Real Estate
- ◆ Rentals
- ◆ Personals
- ◆ Merchandise
- ◆ Tickets
- ◆ Pets

The screenshot shows the Yahoo! Classifieds homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for 'Welcome' (with a sign-in dropdown), '[Sign Out]', 'Classifieds Home - Yahoo!', and 'Help'. Below this is a header bar with the 'YAHOO!' logo and 'Classifieds' text, along with 'Yahoo Classifieds' and a 'Tour' link.

The main content area has several sections:

- Quick Search:** Includes fields for 'City & State or Zip', 'Vehicle' (set to 'All Makes'), 'Price Range' (set to '- Any - to - Any -'), 'Keywords', and a 'Search' button.
- Categories:** A sidebar with links for 'HotJobs', 'Real Estate', 'Rentals', 'Personals', 'Merchandise', 'Tickets', and 'Pets'.
- HotJobs:** Sub-links for 'Sell Your Car', 'Buy an SUV, Car, Truck or Motorcycle', and 'Find a Job, Post a Resume'.
- Real Estate:** Sub-links for 'Post an Ad, Buy, Sell, Finance', 'Find an Agent, Find a Mover', and 'Search Listings, Post an Ad, Credit Reports'.
- Personals:** Sub-links for 'Post a Free Ad' and 'Find Your Match'.
- Rentals & Roommates:** Sub-links for 'Search Listings, Post an Ad'.
- Merchandise:** Sub-links for 'Post an Ad, Find an Item' and 'Computers, Furniture, Sporting Goods'.
- My Classifieds:** A section for managing ads with links for 'My Ads' and '[View All]'.
- Saved Ads:** Instructions for saving ads.
- Saved Searches:** Instructions for saving searches.
- Featured Listings:** A section showing a listing for a '1980 Jeep/AMC J20 ... - \$2,000.00' located in 'Camden, Ohio'.

Figure 1-25: Browse the Yahoo! Classifieds for bargains on all sorts of merchandise.

Obviously, some of these categories take you to other sites in the Yahoo! network. (The Personals category, for example, takes you to Yahoo! Personals.) You'll find unique classified ads in the Merchandise, Tickets, and Pets categories.

When you start browsing or searching the Yahoo! Classifieds listings, you are asked to input your location or zip code. In return, Yahoo! displays those listings closest to your current location. Just like traditional newspaper classifieds, you don't actually buy anything through Yahoo! Classifieds. Instead, you contact the advertiser directly, via e-mail, and (hopefully) work out a deal between yourselves.

After you find an item or service you're interested in, display the full listing for that item. Each ad listing should include the seller's name, e-mail address, and phone number (optional). The easiest way to proceed is to click the Reply To This Ad link next to the person's e-mail address, which automatically prepares an e-mail to the seller. Compose a message expressing interest or asking a question and then send it out. If all goes well, the seller will respond (hopefully) and at that point the two of you can attempt to agree on purchasing arrangements.

Selling an item is as easy as clicking the Post an Ad link at the top of the page. Just choose a category, enter a description, and you're ready to sell!

Yahoo! Autos

Yahoo! Autos (autos.yahoo.com) is one of the best automotive resources on the Internet. From classified ads for used cars to detailed information on new cars—as well as online quotes for auto loans and insurance—you can find everything you need at Yahoo! Autos.

The Yahoo! Autos page offers a variety of information and services. You can research a new car, sell a used car, shop for a particular make and model of used car, and get information and advice about car maintenance and repair. In addition, the Talk Cars link takes you to the automotive-related sections of Yahoo! Chat, Groups, and Message Boards—great places to hang with fellow car buffs.

Yahoo! Real Estate

Moving into a new house is a major life event. You want to do as much research as possible *before* you move, for example to make sure you've picked the right neighborhood, the right home, and the right mortgage company.

That's where Yahoo! Real Estate (realestate.yahoo.com) comes in. This Yahoo! site serves as a guide for all moving-related issues—and includes a large number of property listings.

Yahoo! Real Estate centralizes information and services found at several Yahoo! sites, including Yahoo! Classifieds (classifieds.yahoo.com), Yahoo! Loans (loans.yahoo.com), and Insurance (insurance.yahoo.com). From the Yahoo! Real Estate home page you can search for homes for sale or rental, or post an ad to sell or rent your own house. When looking for a home you can narrow your search by price range, number of beds and baths, and whether you're looking for a new home, existing home, or foreclosure. You can also access neighborhood profiles and local school data and get a free valuation of your current home.



#31: Use Yahoo! (and Travelocity) to Plan Your Next Vacation or Business Trip

Yahoo! isn't just for stay-at-home Web surfers. When you're ready to hit the road, you can use Yahoo! for all your travel needs—from researching your trip to booking your reservations.

Yahoo! Travel

Everything you used to use a travel agent for and more is available at Yahoo! Travel (travel.yahoo.com). Whether you need to research destinations, make reservations, or get driving directions you can do it here.

Yahoo! Travel is the central hub for all of Yahoo!'s travel-related information and services. As you can see in Figure 1-26, Yahoo! Travel focuses on reservations (for air travel, car rental, hotel rooms, complete vacation packages, and cruises) and trip planning (by destination, activity, or lifestyle).

There are a number of subsections to the Yahoo! Travel site, all available as links at the top of the Yahoo! Travel home page. Most interesting is the information under the Travel Guides heading; here is where you find reviews and research on thousands of different destinations, hotels, and restaurants—provided by National Geographic Traveler, Rough Guides, Fodor's, and other sources.



Figure 1-26: You can make all your reservations at Yahoo! Travel.

Of course, most people use a travel site to make reservations, and Yahoo! Travel won't let you down here. Yahoo! Travel partners with Travelocity to offer safe and easy-to-use online reservations for flights, lodging, rental cars, cruises, and more—all accessible from the main Yahoo! Travel page.

Yahoo! Maps

After you get to where you're going, it helps to have a map of the surrounding area. To generate a map for virtually any location anywhere in the world, go to Yahoo! Maps (maps.yahoo.com). Enter a city, airport code, or specific address, and then click the Get Map button; Yahoo! Maps generates a map like the one shown in Figure 1-27. You can choose to print this map; use the controls at the top of the map to zoom in or zoom out to show either more detail or a larger region; or click the Find Nearby Businesses link to list businesses near the address at the center of the map.

If you need driving directions from one location to another, go to Yahoo! Maps and click the Driving Directions link. Enter your starting address and your destination address and Yahoo! generates turn-by-turn driving directions complete with a map of your entire route and a map of your destination. Just print out these instructions to help you get to where you're going without getting lost!

note

Another great map site is MapQuest, which you can read about in Chapter 20.

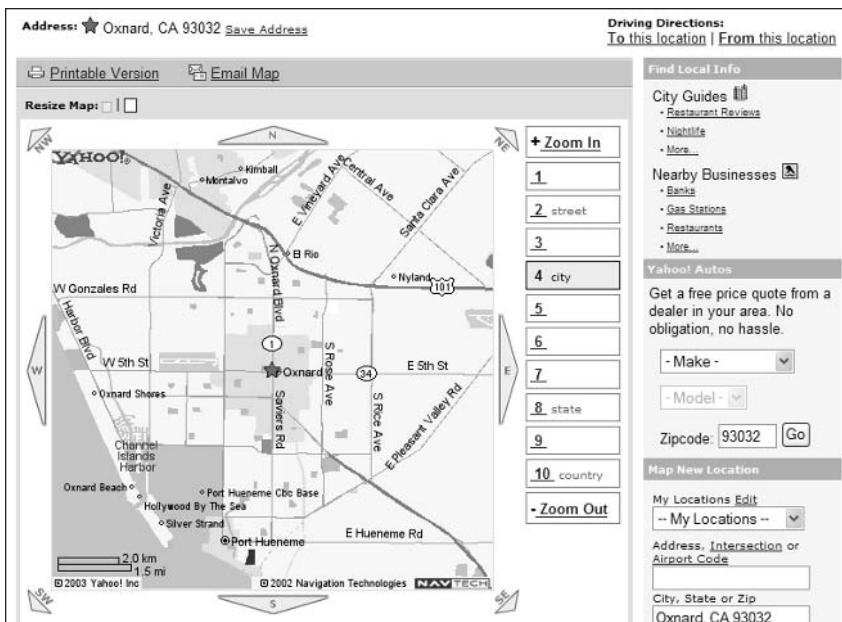


Figure 1-27: Map your destination at Yahoo! Maps.

2 #32: Use Yahoo! to Listen to Your Favorite Music

Online music is becoming a big business. While Yahoo! isn't the largest site for music downloads (that's either Napster, discussed in Chapter 18, or Apple's iTunes), it is a source for the latest music news—and a good place to watch the latest music videos and listen to commercial-free Internet radio.

Yahoo!'s main music site is called LAUNCH (launch.yahoo.com). As you can see in Figure 1-28, LAUNCH is the gateway to a variety of music-related information and services.

What can you find on LAUNCH? How about the latest music news, CD reviews, artist spotlights, and interviews. You can also watch the latest music videos, just by clicking your mouse. (Of course, watching videos on a small computer monitor isn't always the most impressive experience.)

And then there are the other services that LAUNCH links to—which we'll get to next.

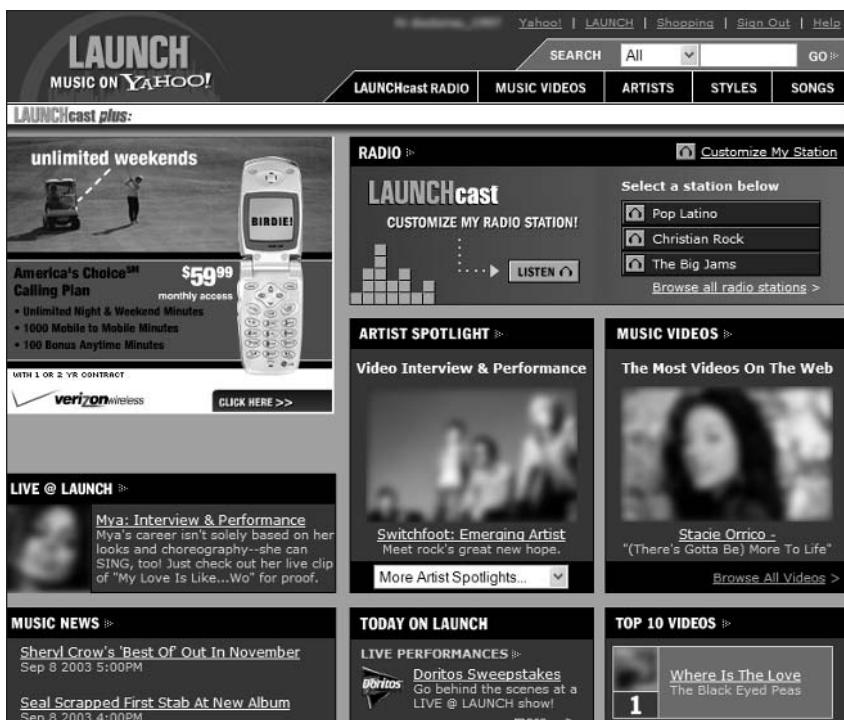


Figure 1-28: LAUNCH, Yahoo's music gateway.

» #33: Use Yahoo! to Listen to Internet Radio

Yahoo!'s LAUNCHcast (launch.yahoo.com/launchcast/) is *the* site if you want to listen to Internet radio. LAUNCHcast has arguably the largest list of Internet radio stations on the Web, organized by category. Just browse through a category until you find the station you want and then click to listen (using your PC, of course). Most stations are free; some (part of the LAUNCHcast Plus service) require a subscription.

» #34: Use Yahoo! to Play Games

Are you a game player? If so, turn to Yahoo! Games (games.yahoo.com). As you can see in Figure 1-29, Yahoo! Games is a collection of free Java-based games that you can play online from your Web browser. Some multiple-player games are designed to be played with other users; others are single-player in nature. You'll even find gaming leagues for certain games.



Figure 1-29: Play online games—for free—at Yahoo! Games.

Yahoo! Games also includes reviews and news of the latest PC and video games. You'll also find a burgeoning gaming community here; it's a good way to get tips and cheats for all your favorite games.

» #35: Use Yahoo! to Send Online Greeting Cards

Want to say hello to an old friend, wish someone a happy birthday, or thank a family member for a gift? If you do, you can send the electronic equivalent of a Hallmark card—an online greeting card—from Yahoo! Greetings.

A Yahoo! Greetings card is actually a Web page that contains a graphical message. When you access the Yahoo! Greetings page (greetings.yahoo.com), you can choose from one of the featured greetings or you can browse through the various greeting categories. After you've found the greeting you want to send (like the one in Figure 1-30), click the greeting to personalize it. Yahoo! Greetings sends recipients an e-mail notifying them that they have a greeting waiting on the Yahoo! Greetings site. This e-mail will include a link to the page containing the greeting; when they click this link, they jump directly to your greeting. Good feelings ensue—and it doesn't cost you a single penny.



Figure 1-30: Send an electronic greeting card with Yahoo! Greetings.

➲ #36: Use Yahoo! to Advance Your Education

Yahoo! Education (education.yahoo.com) offers a variety of resources for all ages of students, from K-12 to college. You'll find a variety of reference works, and sample SAT, GRE, GMAT, and LSAT tests. You can even use Yahoo! Education to search for campus and online courses, as well as colleges and graduate schools. As you can see, this is a particularly good resource for high school students planning for college.

➲ #37: Use Yahoo! to Advance Your Career

It should come as no surprise that Yahoo! includes a job posting and search engine as part of its network of sites. This particular service is actually HotJobs, a separate company that Yahoo! acquired early in 2002. The Yahoo! HotJobs site (hotjobs.yahoo.com) offers a variety of career-building tools, chief of which are job postings, resume postings, and the ability to search the HotJobs

database for particular types of jobs. As you can see in Figure 1-31, searching HotJobs is as easy as selecting a job category and location; you can narrow down your search by using specific keywords.

The screenshot shows the Yahoo! HotJobs homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Home, Job Search, My Searches, My Saved Jobs, My Resumes, and Career Tools. The user is logged in as 'michael'. On the right side, there's a sidebar titled 'Employers & Recruiters' with links for 'Post a Job' and 'Employer Sign-In'. Below that is a section for 'Featured Categories' with links to Health Care, Accounting/Finance, Law Enforcement, and Diversity Center. Another section for 'Dream Jobs' features three small portraits of diverse individuals. A third section for 'Now Hiring ...' includes a DuPont logo and a link to their careers page. The main content area has two main sections: 'Quick Job Search' and 'You may be interested in...'. The 'Quick Job Search' section contains fields for 'Keywords' (e.g., registered nurse or unix), 'Job Category' (with a dropdown menu showing 'Select a Job Category'), 'City' (Carmel), 'State' (IN), and a checkbox for 'Include surrounding cities'. It also has a 'Search' button and a 'Saved Searches' section showing 0 results. The 'You may be interested in...' section includes a newsletter sign-up form with 'Get Our Newsletter' and a 'Subscribe' button, and a list of recommended tools: 'Post your resume', 'Find online education opportunities', and 'Get a Resume That Gets Results!'.

Figure 1-31: Use Yahoo! HotJobs to search for employment.

You can also let potential employers search for you by posting your resume on the HotJobs site. Just click the My Resumes link to create a resume online; employers searching HotJobs can access your resume and contact you if they think you're a good match.

» #38: Use Yahoo! to Stay Healthy—or Find a Doctor if You Need One

Whether you're researching a potential medical condition, looking for a cure for a specific illness, exploring nutrition and fitness programs, or just searching for a doctor in your neighborhood, you can find the information you need at Yahoo! Health (health.yahoo.com). Yahoo! Health provides a variety of health-related resources, including a database of physicians in your area.

» #39: Yahoo! Isn't Just for Humans—It's Also for Pets

A lot of folks care as much about their pets as they do for themselves. If you're a pet lover, you'll love Yahoo! Pets (pets.yahoo.com), the Yahoo! site that

includes all sorts of news and information about cats, dogs, and other household pets. You can even use Yahoo! Pets to search Yahoo! Classifieds and Petfinder.com for pets to buy or adopt in your area.

2 #40: Use Yahoo! to Track Your Packages

The Yahoo! Small Business Postal Center (smallbusiness.yahoo.com/resources/postal_center.html) is a neat little service designed originally for Yahoo!'s small business users, but definitely of value for us regular folks, too (see Figure 1-32). The Postal Center includes a zip code lookup—just enter the street address and get the zip code—along with package tracking (for USPS, UPS, FedEx, and Airborne Express) and a variety of postal forms you can print on your own printer. If you mail a lot of letters or packages, this is one page you'll get a lot of use out of.

The screenshot shows the Yahoo! Postal Center interface. It has three main sections:

- Zip Code Lookup:** Contains fields for Street Address, City, State, and Country (set to United States), with a search button.
- Package Tracking:** Contains a list of tracking services: Airborne Express, FedEx, UPS, and US Postal Service, each with an "Add to My Yahoo!" link.
- Postal Forms:** Contains links to Change of Address, Hold Mail, Report Mail Fraud, Passports, and All USPS Forms.

Figure 1-32: Look up zip codes and track your packages at the Yahoo! Postal Center.

2 #41: Use Yahoo! to Create Your Own Web Page

Do all your friends have their own personal Web pages? Do you want to get in on the community of folks displaying their own Web handiwork, but don't know where to start? Then use Yahoo!'s Web hosting services to create your own personal Web page—with just a few clicks of the mouse.

Yahoo! GeoCities

Yahoo! GeoCities (geocities.yahoo.com) is a really big collection of personal Web pages—the world's largest. GeoCities hosts millions of personal Web pages, and lets you create your own personal Web page—for free, using a collection of easy-to-use page-creation tools.

As you can see in Figure 1-33, Yahoo! GeoCities offers several different ways to create your own Web pages. If you're an inexperienced Web page designer, you can use the Yahoo! PageWizards to build your page step-by-step using a series of menus and templates. More experienced users can use the Yahoo! PageBuilder application, which lets you design and customize your own pages; advanced users can code their own HTML with the built-in HTML Editor. You can even upload pages created with other applications (such as Microsoft FrontPage) by using GeoCities' File Manager.

The screenshot shows the Yahoo! GeoCities homepage. At the top, there's a banner for "YAHOO! SiteBuilder" with "Free download" and "Learn more" buttons. Below the banner, the main navigation bar includes "Welcome," "Yahoo! GeoCities," and the URL "http://www.geocities.com/". The left sidebar has sections for "Web Site Accounts" (with a "Add New Web Site" button), "My Service" (listing "View My Site" and "Service Announcements"), and "Getting Started" (with a link to "PageWizards"). The central content area features three main tools: "Build My Web Site" (using PageWizards), "Enhance My Web Site" (using PageBuilder), and "Advanced Toolbox" (containing links for "File Manager," "Easy Upload," "HTML Editor," and "Site Statistics"). A sidebar on the right lists "HOT DOWNLOADS" including "Paint Shop Photo Album 4.0," "Please 1.0," and "Say the Time."

Figure 1-33: Build your own personal Web page with Yahoo! GeoCities.

Whichever method you use to create your pages, you get up to 15MB of space for storage of your pages and accompanying files at no charge—which, for most users, should be more than enough. You also get 3GB of bandwidth per month, but your visitors will be subjected to ads when they visit your page.

If you want to get rid of the ads, you'll have to subscribe to a paid plan. The GeoCities Plus plan give you 25MB of basic space and 5GB of monthly bandwidth for \$4.95 per month. Also available is the GeoCities Pro plan, which gives you your own personalized domain name along with 10GB of monthly bandwidth and 25MB of disk space.

Yahoo! Picture Gallery

If you're looking for pretty pictures to put on your Web page, turn to the Yahoo! Picture Gallery (gallery.yahoo.com). You can browse or search the gallery for all manner of pictures, all of which are free for use on your personal pages.

Yahoo! Domains

Wherever you have your site hosted, you can use Yahoo! Domains (domains.yahoo.com) to register your own personal Web domain. You'll pay \$35 a year to register your domain; you can do it all from the main Yahoo! Domains page.

Yahoo! Web Hosting

If you're interested in putting together a business Web site, check out Yahoo! Web Hosting (webhosting.yahoo.com). This service offers a number of hosting plans designed for small businesses priced from \$11.95/month on up.



» #42: Add a Yahoo! Search Button to Your Own Web Page

When you're creating your own personal Web page, it's relatively easy to add a Yahoo! search box and button to your page. When visitors view your page, they can use the search box/button to conduct Yahoo! searches without having to leave your page. Convenient, eh?

To add a Yahoo! search box and button to your Web page, go to docs.yahoo.com/docs/yahootogo/search/. There you'll find a few lines of HTML code; copy this code to your own Web page's code, and you're ready to go.



» #43: Find Out What's Hot—and What's Not

What's the latest buzz? Yahoo! can tell you, based on what its users are searching for. The Yahoo! Buzz Index (buzz.yahoo.com) tracks Yahoo!'s top 20 searches each week and displays them in what it calls The Leaderboard. This page also performs some interesting breakdowns of searches by different demographics; for example, you can find out that females aged 13-17 searched for Christina Aguilera and Beyoncé Knowles, while males aged 30-34 searched for NASCAR and the U.S. Open. (Surprise!)



» #44: Access Bookmarked Pages from Anywhere

When you bookmark a favorite page in your Web browser, that bookmark is only available from that PC. When you're using another PC—from the office or the road—you have to create an entirely new set of bookmarks.

Yahoo! Bookmarks (bookmarks.yahoo.com) gets around this problem by storing your bookmarks on the Web. This way you can access your Yahoo! Bookmarks from any Web browser on any PC—so that your favorite sites are available wherever you're connecting from.

Creating a new bookmark is as easy as clicking the Add Bookmark link on the Yahoo! Bookmarks page. (You can also create a bookmark from the Yahoo! Companion toolbar, discussed in Secret #13.) Access the Yahoo! Bookmarks page to click directly to your bookmarked pages.



You can also import your existing Internet Explorer favorites into Yahoo! Bookmarks. Just click the Import Bookmarks link and follow the onscreen instructions.



#45: Get Alerted to the Latest News and Developments

Waiting for an important e-mail? Tracking a developing news story? Worried about the coming weather? Then use Yahoo! Alerts to notify you when something important happens by sending an alert right to your e-mail inbox, Yahoo! Messenger, or your cell phone or other mobile device.

You can set up various types of alerts from the Yahoo! Alerts home page (alerts.yahoo.com). It's as easy as clicking the icon for a specific type of alert and then entering information about how and where you want the alerts sent. Yahoo! will then notify you as directed when new information is available.

Summary

Now you understand why I said that you never have to leave the Yahoo! network of sites when you go online. Yahoo! is every bit as full-featured as a paid Internet service, such as America Online—and it's (pretty much) all free. Whatever your interests are, chances are Yahoo! has the information and services you need. Just go to the Yahoo! home page and click around until you find what you're looking for!

MSN Secrets

Chapter 2



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MSN—formerly known as the Microsoft Network—is one of the most popular portals on the Internet, rivaling both Yahoo! and America Online for number of users. (Some sources actually place MSN as the number-one portal in terms of average days per month per user.) That should come as no surprise; MSN has assembled a first-class assortment of content and services, and presents it all in a very attractive package. Of course, it doesn't hurt that Microsoft steers you in the direction of MSN when you use any Microsoft product or service—including Windows. In fact, if you're a Microsoft user (and who isn't?), you'd be hard pressed to avoid MSN.

According to Microsoft, MSN attracts a more experienced, more technically savvy user than does chief competitor America Online. That makes sense; in a way, MSN is like AOL for grown-ups.

The MSN Home Page

The MSN Home page (www.msn.com), shown in Figure 2-1, is where it all starts. Think of MSN Home as the contents page of a magazine; everything inside is linked from here, with the major items highlighted in some fashion.



Figure 2-1: The starting page for the entire MSN network of sites—MSN Home.

Along the top of the page are links to the most popular parts of the MSN network—MSN Home, My MSN, Hotmail, Search, Shopping, Money, and People & Chat. These links appear at the top of most pages on the MSN site, so you can quickly navigate from wherever you might happen to be.

Just below this link bar is MSN's Search the Web box. This is where you initiate your Web searches; enter your query into the box, then click the Search button.

The center of the MSN Home page contains the “hot” items *du jour*—featured items, news headlines, stock quotes, and the like. To the left is a column of links

to popular services, while the right column contains links to MSN's content *channels*. (Yeah, MSN calls its content sites "channels," as if you were watching TV.) MSN's wide variety of content and services are organized by MSN's channels. Many of these channels offer content from third-party providers, which means that MSN offers some of the best content on the Web. All of MSN's channels are accessible from the MSN Home page.

I already mentioned that you can conduct your Web searches from the Search the Web box at the top of the MSN Home page. MSN also offers a separate MSN Search page, shown in Figure 2-2. You access this page by clicking the Search link at the top of the MSN Home page, or by going directly to search.msn.com. You can choose a particular type of search, or browse through directory categories.

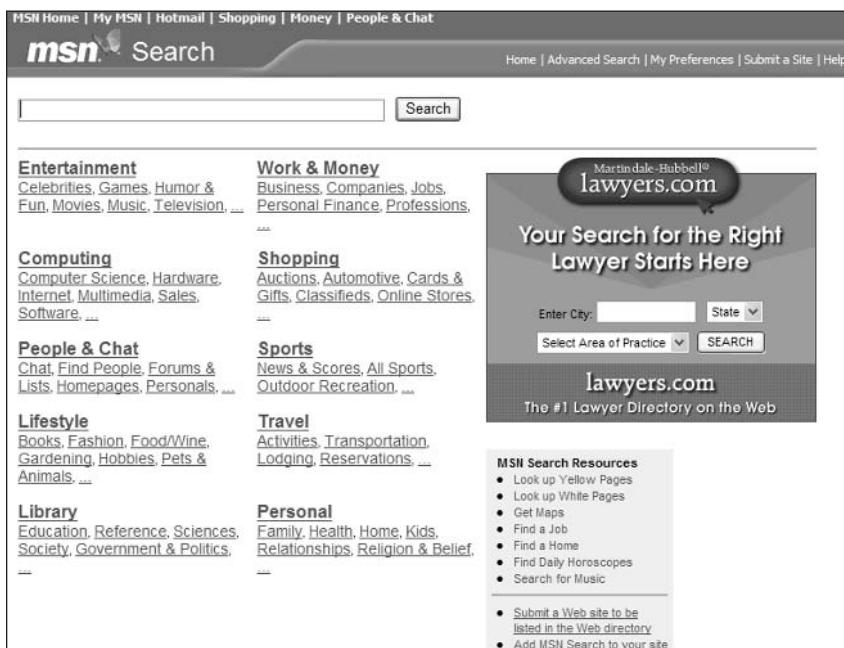


Figure 2-2: The dedicated MSN Search page.

1 #46: You Don't Have to Pay for MSN

If you're used to the similar services offered by America Online (or the AOL.com site, as discussed in Chapter 3), you'll be surprised by this really big secret. All the content and services offered by MSN are available totally free of charge. That's right, MSN is *free* for all comers. You don't have to pay \$20 or more a month to access these great features—just point your browser to www.msn.com and browse to your heart's content.

But wait—isn't MSN an Internet service provider, complete with dial-up and broadband access? Yes, it is. But MSN Internet access is separate from the MSN

portal, which is out there on the Web for anyone to use, whether you connect through MSN Internet access or another Internet Service Provider (ISP).

If you need a dial-up Internet service provider, MSN Internet access is worth your consideration. But you don't have to use MSN dial-up to access the MSN site; whichever ISP you use, you still have access to all the content and services on the MSN portal—at no charge.

• #47: MSN Explorer Is a Great Interface—if You Dial Up

If you do use MSN Internet access to connect to the Web, you get a nice little bonus—the use of MSN Explorer. MSN Explorer is meant to be a frontend to the Internet, much like that provided by America Online to its subscribers. In reality, however, MSN Explorer is a customized version of the Internet Explorer Web browser—which isn't necessarily a bad thing. If you know how to use IE, you know how to use MSN Explorer.

As you can see in Figure 2-3, MSN Explorer includes a number of buttons on top of what would normally be called the browser window. These buttons take you directly to MSN channels and services; think of them as shortcut links.



Figure 2-3: Use MSN Explorer to connect to the MSN service.

The other function of MSN Explorer is to actually connect you to the Internet. You use MSN Explorer to dial into the MSN service (if you're connecting via dial-up), or to perform log in functions if you're connecting via broadband.

You're provided with a sign-in screen that displays your different user names; click a name to connect and sign in.

Of course, you don't have to use MSN Explorer to access the MSN portal. Even if you're using MSN Explorer to connect to the Internet, once you get connected you can launch Internet Explorer (or any other Web browser) and access the MSN site from there. Other than the dedicated channel buttons, there's nothing special about MSN Explorer that's necessary to use the MSN site; you can also access it via the IE, Netscape, or Opera browsers.



#48: One Passport Takes You Everywhere

If you've used MSN at all, here's something you've probably noticed—you have to sign in to do just about anything. It's actually the same across all Microsoft sites; Microsoft tracks your access through a service called Microsoft Passport.

**note**

Learn more about Microsoft's other Web sites in Chapter 15.

Passport (technically called .NET Passport) offers password-protected service to all of Microsoft's Web sites, including MSN. You sign up for Passport once, and then you can enter any Microsoft site by entering your Passport name and password. In fact, if you already have a Hotmail or MSN e-mail account, you already have a Passport: it's your e-mail address.

There's no charge to get a Passport name and password. You can sign up at any number of sites, including the main Passport site at www.passport.net. (Any time you enter a members-only area of MSN you'll be prompted to enter or sign up for your Passport account.) You can even create special Kids Passport accounts for your children, which helps MSN and other sites obtain parental consent before collecting personal information.

You'll need a Passport account to take full advantage of MSN. Go ahead and sign up when you're prompted—it's free. Then you'll only have to remember a single name and password whenever you're prompted to log in, wherever you go on MSN.



#49: Find the One Page That Links to Everything

Unlike Yahoo!, which provides easy-to-remember URLs and keywords for direct access to all of its different sites and services, MSN pretty much forces you to return to its home page to access its various content channels. Unless, that is, you know the one page that contains links to the rest of the MSN site—and bookmark that page in your browser.

The page you want is the MSN Quick Links page, located at specials.msn.com/msnmore/moreql.asp. Not an easy-to-remember address, for sure, which is why you want to bookmark it. This page contains direct links to all the important pages in the MSN network, including the various MSN worldwide sites.

2 #50: Create Your Own Personal MSN

As nice as the MSN Home page is, it's a trifle cluttered. Fortunately, you can fine-tune MSN's content to create your own personal version of an MSN start page, and use it to display both local and personalized information.

MSN's personalized start page is called My MSN. You get to it by clicking the My MSN link at the top of the MSN Home page, or by going directly to my.msn.com.

You can customize My MSN to display a variety of different content, as shown in Figure 2-4. You can also customize the page colors and layout (in a three-column design), all by clicking the appropriate links at the top of the My MSN page. Given the wide assortment of content available, you can use My MSN to display only those items of direct interest, such as your local news and weather.

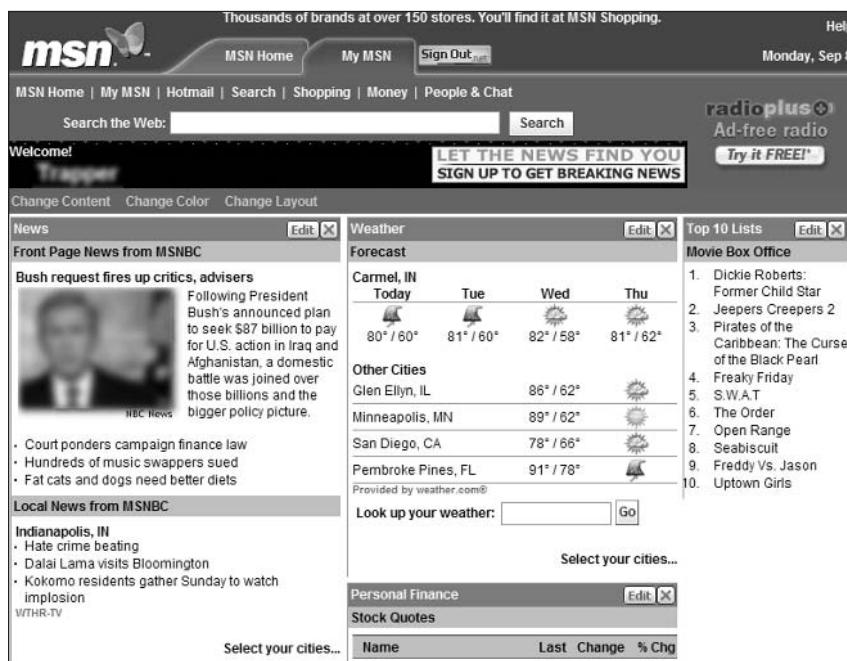


Figure 2-4: Your personal MSN with My MSN.

Once you have your My MSN page set up, configure your Web browser so that My MSN is your browser's start page. That way you'll go to the news and information you want whenever you launch your browser.

‡ #51: MSN Search Returns Four Types of Results

When you conduct a search with MSN Search, the search results page (like the one shown in Figure 2-5) includes four different types of results. At the very top of the page is a listing of Popular Topics that you can use to help refine your search. Next up is a short list of Featured Sites, followed by a longer list of Web Directory Sites, and then the much longer list of Web Pages. The sum total of all these results provides a “best of all worlds” search, unique among the major search sites; you get a blend of high-quality human-edited directory listings and high-volume automated search index listings.

So how do the four different types of search results differ? Read on to learn this secret behind the search.

The screenshot shows the MSN Home search results for the query "earth shoes". The search bar contains "earth shoes" and there is a "Search" button. The results are organized into several sections:

- FEATURED SITES - ABOUT**
 - [Shoebuy.com](#)
Order a pair of Earth shoes, or choose from a huge selection of footwear for men, women and teens. Site offers free shipping.
www.shoebuy.com
 - [eBay](#)
Shop for Earth Shoes, and find bargains on dozens of styles for men and women.
www.ebay.com
- SPONSORED SITES - ABOUT**
 - [Save 35-70% on Earth Shoes](#)
Sierra Trading Post offers savings on Earth brand footwear from sandals to slides and slip on casuals. Find great values while keeping your feet comfortable and in style.
www.sierratradingpost.com
 - [Free Shipping on Earth Footwear](#)
Free shipping from birkenstocksd.com on purchases of \$50 or more. Experience Earth footwear, with Anne Kalso's negative heel technology.
www.nexternal.com
 - [Buy Earth Shoes at Shoedini.com](#)
Shoedini carries over 125 quality shoe brands in hard to find sizes and widths. Free shipping on orders over \$75, 30-day satisfaction guarantee. Shoedini - making footwear magic since 1953.
store.yahoo.com
- WEB DIRECTORY SITES - ABOUT**
 - [Sierra Trading Post - Earth Shoes](#)
Purchase Earth shoes at Sierra Trading Post. Save up to 70 percent savings on men's and women's clothing, footwear, and outdoor gear at this name brand outlet store.
www.SierraTradingPost.com/xt_kc.asp?kc=WLSD03&pg=v&vid=5090
 - [Earth Shoes for Women - BizRate.com](#)
Save time and money by comparing prices on Earth shoes for women. Buy from more than 1,500 customer-rated stores.
www.bizrate.com/marketplace/search/search.xpmf?cat_id=10110000&keyword...
 - [Earth Shoes - Zappos.com](#)
Shop for men's and women's Earth shoes including nubuck and leather styles. Order sandals and Earth sneakers.
shop.zappos.com/n/br?brand_id=380
 - [Earth Shoes - eBay](#)
Buy or sell earth shoes on eBay and search for millions of other apparel items.
search.ebay.com/search/search.dil?MfcSAPICommand=GetResult&ht=1&SortP...
 - [St. James Ency. of Popular Culture - Earth Shoes](#)
Brief look at the back-to-nature shoes popular during the 1970s.
www.findarticles.com/g1epctov/2419100385/p1/article.jhtml

Figure 2-5: The results of an MSN Search search.

insider insight

There's actually a fifth category of results that pop up from time to time—Sponsored Sites. These listings are paid for by advertisers and are programmed to appear when certain keywords are entered into a search query.

Popular Topics

The Popular Topics listings at the top of the search results page are searches related to your query, ideally designed to help you narrow down your results. Click one of these links to start a new search and display a new search results page.

Featured Sites

Featured Sites are sites that are manually assembled by MSN's team of editors. MSN's editors monitor the most popular searches being performed with MSN Search and hand-pick sites they believe to be most relevant to these searches. Those sites appear in the Featured Sites section.

Note that the Featured Sites section won't appear on all search results pages; the more obscure your query, the less likely that MSN's editors have researched the topic. In addition, MSN will sometimes use this section to provide links to articles in the Microsoft Encarta encyclopedia, related MSNBC news articles, or related MSN content.

Web Directory Sites

The next big section on the search results page is Web Directory Sites. These results come from the LookSmart directory, which (like the Yahoo! Directory) is a hand-picked listing of the best sites on the Web. These are quality results that are definitely worth checking out.

insider insight

Microsoft has announced that it's not renewing its deal with LookSmart, which means that LookSmart directory results are here for the short term only. Expect the LookSmart results to be replaced by results from Microsoft's soon-to-be-announced proprietary search tool.

Web Pages

The bulk of MSN's search results fall into the Web Pages category. These results derive from the Inktomi search index, which lists three billion Web pages. You can compare Inktomi results to those from Google, which uses similar software-driven search technology.

insider insight

While MSN currently uses Inktomi for its search index, that might not be a long-term relationship. Sources say that Microsoft is developing its own proprietary search technology. When the time is right, expect Inktomi to be kicked out in favor of Microsoft's home-grown search results—especially because Inktomi is now owned by Yahoo!, Microsoft's chief portal rival.



#52: You Can Use Boolean Operators When You Search

Here's something you might not expect: MSN Search contains a fairly advanced search engine—more advanced, in some ways, than Google. One of the cool things about MSN Search is that you can use Boolean operators to fine-tune your searches. All you have to do is insert the appropriate operators when you enter your query in the search box and MSN Search will narrow your search accordingly.

AND

The first Boolean operator you can use with MSN Search is the AND operator. You use the AND operator to make sure that search results include both (or all) the words in your query. So, for example, you wanted to search for pages about Toyota Supras, you'd enter **toyota AND supra**.

Of course, you don't actually have to use the AND operator; all MSN searches are AND searches by default. So the AND is implied, and including it in your query is superfluous. Sorry.

OR

More interesting is the OR operator. You use the OR operator to conduct either/or searches. So, for example, if you wanted to search for pages about either hurricanes or tornadoes, you'd enter **hurricanes OR tornadoes**. The search results page will include hurricane pages, tornado pages, and even (but not exclusively) pages about both hurricanes and tornadoes.

NOT

The third Boolean operator supported by MSN Search is the NOT operator. You use the NOT operator to exclude specified words from your search results. So, for example, if you wanted to search for all Presidents of the United States except for Richard Nixon, you'd enter **presidents NOT nixon**.

insider
insight

MSN Search also lets you use the non-Boolean “plus” (+) and “minus” (-) operators to include and exclude words from your search.

Stringing Together Multiple Operators

MSN Search also lets you string together multiple Boolean operators together in a complex query. The operators work in order from left to right, just as if you were constructing an algebraic equation.

Here are a few examples:

- ◆ To search for cowboy movies that don't star Randolph Scott, enter **cowboy AND movies NOT scott**
- ◆ To search for fashion models that aren't blondes or redheads, enter **models NOT blondes OR redheads**
- ◆ To search for recipes using either beef or chicken, enter **recipes AND beef OR chicken**

And so on.

Exact Phrase Search

There's one more operator to mention, even if it isn't technically a Boolean one. That's the "exact phrase" operator—the quotation mark. When you want to restrict your search to an exact phrase, simply enclose the entire phrase in quotation marks. So if you're searching for the play *The Taming of the Shrew*, enter "**the taming of the shrew**". It's that simple.



» #53: MSN Search Automatically Searches for All Word Forms—No Wildcards Necessary

MSN Search employs a technology called *automatic word stemming*. This technology searches for all forms of a word when you enter the root word. So, for example, if you enter the word **run**, MSN Search will return results for the words "run," "running," and "runner"—without you doing anything more than entering the root word.

You can, however, if you want, use wildcards in your search—although, with automatic word stemming, you don't necessarily have to. That is, you *could* enter **run*** (the asterisk is the wildcard) and this will return results for the words "run," "running," "runner," and so on. It's the same as with the word "stemming." The difference is that **run*** will also return the words "rung," "runt," and "runic."

So you can use wildcards if you want—otherwise, let MSN Search's automatic word stemming do the work for you.



» #54: Fine-Tune Your Search Results with the Advanced Search Page

If you want to fine-tune your search but don't want to bother with Boolean operators, you can use MSN's Advanced Search page. You access this page, shown in Figure 2-6, by clicking the Advanced Search link on the MSN Search page.

The screenshot shows the MSN Advanced Search Options page. At the top, there is a search bar with the query "earth shoes" and a "Search" button. Below the search bar, the title "Advanced Search Options" is displayed, followed by a tip: "Tip: You do not need to specify all the options." There are three main sections: "Change how your search words are interpreted", "Change how your results are displayed", and "Restrict your results to those of a particular origin". Each section contains several dropdown menus and checkboxes for specifying search parameters.

Figure 2-6: MSN's Advanced Search page.

The Advanced Search page lets you apply a variety of parameters to your search query just by making a few simple selections. Table 2-1 details the options available on this page.

Table 2-1: MSN Advanced Search Options

Option	Description
Find	Activates selected Boolean operators to find all the words, any of the words, words in the title, the exact phrase, a Boolean phrase, or links to a URL
Show one result per domain	Limits display of multiple pages in a domain
Sort equally relevant results	Displays similar results, sorted in a variety of ways
Region	Limits search to a particular country or region
Language	Limits search to pages in a specific language
Domain	Limits search to a particular Web site or domain
Document directory depth	Selects how deep to go in the selected directory
Find specific file types PowerPoint, Excel, or Word documents	Limits search to either HTML, PDF/Acrobat,
Restrict your results by page content	Limits search to files with specific extensions



#55: MSN Has Some Great Content Partners

One of the things that makes MSN so good is that it doesn't try to do everything itself. Instead, it partners with top-notch content providers in a variety of categories to bring you the best of what the Web has to offer—all from the friendly face of the MSN Home page.

Let's look at a few of MSN's most popular channels, and where they get their content.

News: MSNBC

When you click the link for MSN's News channel, you're taken directly to the site of Microsoft's news-gathering partner MSNBC (www.msnbc.com). MSNBC is one of the premier news sites on the Web, assembling stories and reports from NBC, MSNBC, CNBC, *Newsweek*, and the *Washington Post*. As you can see in Figure 2-7, the MSNBC home page presents the top stories of the day; you can then link to more in-depth reports and articles on a variety of topics. You can also display live video of breaking stories, as well as, the local news and weather from newsgathering organizations in your hometown.

The screenshot shows the MSNBC News homepage. At the top left is the msn logo. To its right is the "MSNBC News" title. Below the title is the NBC peacock logo. On the left side, there's a vertical sidebar with links to "Today show", "Nightly News", "Dateline NBC", "MSNBC TV", "News", "Business", "Sports", "Tech + Science", "Entertainment", "Travel", "Health", "TV News", "Opinions", "Weather + Local", "Shop@MSNBC", "MSN.com", and "Headlines". There's also a "Newsweek" section featuring Fareed Zakaria's column. In the center, a large headline reads "BATTLE LINES DRAWN" with a sub-headline "Democrats blast Bush on \$87 billion budget for Iraq, war on terror". Below this is a photo of a person and the caption "What the money would go for". A "WP ANALYSIS: Bowing to post-war reality" box is also present. To the right of the main content area, there's a sidebar for "MORE TOP STORIES" and "ALSO IN THE NEWS". At the bottom, there's a "SEARCH MSNBC" bar, a "MSNBC QUICK LINKS" sidebar with links like "Free video", "Newsletters", "Today Concerts", etc., and a "MSNBC PARTNER FEATURE" section for DHL.

Figure 2-7: Access a wide variety of news from MSNBC.

Sports: ESPN

MSN gets its sports news from ESPN (msn.espn.go.com). ESPN is such a great site that I devote an entire chapter to it—turn to Chapter 12 to learn more.

Travel: Expedia

MSN's travel services are provided by Expedia (www.expedia.com). Expedia is such a great site that I devote an entire chapter to it—turn to Chapter 19 to learn more.

City Guides: Citysearch

MSN's City Guides channel (local.msn.com) is powered by Citysearch, the Web's premier provider of local information for major cities. Just enter your city's name or Zip code to display your local guide. Each local guide contains events listings, restaurant listings and reviews, sports information, traffic reports, TV listings, and a whole lot more.

Yellow Pages: SuperPages.com

MSN's Yellow Pages channel (yellowpages.msn.com) is powered by SuperPages.com, one of the largest providers of business listings in the U.S. You can use the Yellow Pages channel to search the SuperPages.com directory by category or business name; you can also search for businesses within a specific distance of a given location.

White Pages: InfoSpace

MSN's White Pages channel is powered by InfoSpace (www.infospace.com), one of the largest providers of such information on the Web. You can use the White Pages channel to search InfoSpace's extensive database of personal names, addresses, and phone numbers—and even conduct reverse phone number lookups.

Careers: Monster

MSN's Careers channel (careers.msn.com) is powered by Monster, the Internet's largest job search site. You can use the Careers channel to post your resume online and search the Monster database of more than 800,000 available jobs.

Dating & Personals: Match.com

MSN's Dating & Personals channel (msn.match.com) is powered by Match.com, the Internet's largest personal ad site. You can place your own ad, or search the Match.com database for matches in your area. There's lots of dating tips and advice, and even a section for gay and lesbian dating.

Games: Zone.com

MSN's Games channel (zone.msn.com) is powered by Zone.com, a separate Microsoft-owned site specifically for online gamers. From the Games channel you have access to all of Zone.com's single-player and multi-player online games, including puzzle games, word games, casino games, and card games. There are also games just for younger players, as well as multi-player links for commercial CD-ROM games, such as Age of Empires and Flight Simulator.



note Zone.com was formerly known as the Gaming Zone.

Health: WebMD

MSN's Health channel (health.msn.com) is powered by WebMD, the Internet's largest site for medical advice and information. From MSN Health you have access to a vast library of medical and healthcare information, including information about specific drugs and herbs, pregnancy, diet and nutrition, and more. You can also search the WebMD database to find a physician near you.



**insider
insight** Learn about another MSN content partnership—with Ticketmaster—in Secret #66.

» #56: MSN Autos—One of the Best Car Sites on the Web

While we're talking about MSN's content, let's single out the MSN Autos channel as seen in Figure 2-8 (autos.msn.com). If you're shopping for a new car, MSN Autos has one of the largest libraries of information and reviews, and can even help you obtain quotes from dealers in your area. If you're shopping for a used car, MSN Autos contains thousands of used car listings from all across the country. And if you're selling your car, MSN Autos is the place to list it, with a large number of potential buyers visiting daily.



note MSN Autos was formerly known as CarPoint.

In short, just about everything you could want regarding to automotive information or services is available here. You can even use MSN Autos to find financing and insurance, learn about product recalls, and research traffic and gasoline prices. It's all here, and it's all good.



Figure 2-8: MSN Autos—possibly the best automotive site on the Web

» #57: Download Maps to Your PDA

Okay, you'd expect a full-service portal to offer a mapping service. Yahoo! has one, as does America Online. Well, so does MSN, in its Maps & Directories channel (mappoint.msn.com).

This offers the mapping and driving directions you expect from any online mapping service. You can also use Maps & Directories to display areas of a world atlas, as well as quick maps of major countries and continents, maps of specific cities and locations, step-by-step driving directions, and traffic maps that pinpoint construction and accidents in real-time.

» #58: Use MSN to Shop Online

Every good portal has an online shopping channel and MSN is no exception. The MSN Shopping channel (shopping.msn.com), shown in Figure 2-9, lets you search for products online, or browse through a variety of shopping categories for the merchandise you want. The channel also includes a number of buyer's guides, as well as buying advice from ConsumerReports.org.

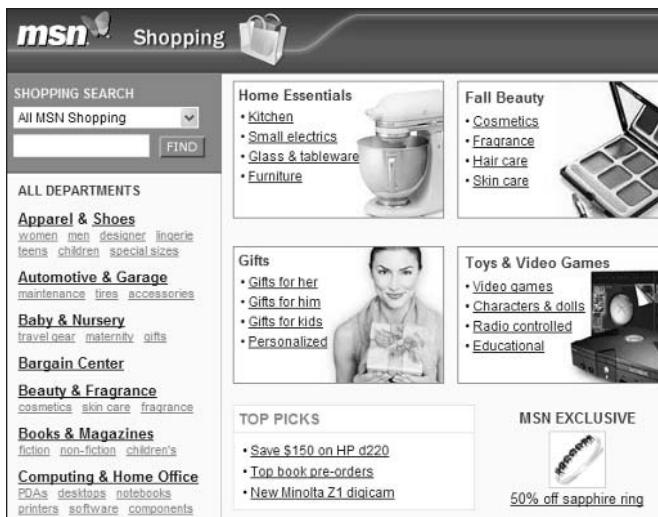


Figure 2-9: Shop online at MSN Shopping.

◆ #59: Use MSN to Share and Print Your Digital Photos

Digital photos are a big deal these days, and MSN's Photos channel (photos8.msn.com) makes it easy for you to manage all your digital photo needs. You can upload your photos to the Photos site and then share them with friends and family members. You can also order prints of any uploaded photos, and have those prints delivered directly to your home. You can even have your photos printed on mouse pads, t-shirts, tote bags, and posters. And MSN gladly provides links for you to order Microsoft's family of photo editing software—of course.

◆ #60: Use MSN for All Your Financial Information

MSN's Money channel (moneycentral.msn.com) is a full-service financial information site, complete with financial news and quotes from CNBC. The content and services offered here are almost too numerous to mention; they include:

- ◆ Stock quotes and charts
- ◆ Online bill payment
- ◆ Mortgage and loan rates and quotes
- ◆ Credit reports
- ◆ Retirement planning
- ◆ Tax preparation
- ◆ Capital gains analysis
- ◆ Breaking news from CNBC
- ◆ Financial message boards and chat rooms

The Money channel also includes links to Microsoft's Money financial management software. If you have the software, it can upload your personal information to your online portfolio and download the latest quotes to the program.

While some sites (such as CBS MarketWatch, discussed in Chapter 13) offer more in-depth financial resources, MSN Money functions just fine if all you want is basic financial information and advice. Check it out to see if it serves your personal financial needs.

insider insight

You can customize MSN Money to display your personal portfolios and the specific types of information you want. Just click the My Money link at the top of the Money page and follow the onscreen instructions.



» #61: Use MSN to Lose Weight and Get Fit

Here's content you don't find on all portal sites. The MSN Fitness & Recreation channel (fitness.msn.com) is a great place to help you get in tip-top shape. This channel lets you calculate your healthy weight range, and then provides tips and information for losing weight and getting in shape via exercise and training. The Fitness & Recreation channel is also a good gateway to information about participatory sports via the Play Sports link.



» #62: There's an MSN Channel Just for Women

Issues of interest to women are well covered in MSN's Women channel (women.msn.com), which includes sections on Beauty, Fashion & Style, Health & Wellness, Relationships, Home & Food, Career & Money, and Shopping. This is also where you'll find columns by Miss Manners, as well as a variety of other practical advice and interesting information. You can even sign up for the HotOnWomen e-mail newsletter, which offers diet and workout tips, recipes, Q&As, and more.



» #63: A Safe-Surfing MSN Channel Just for Kidz

What would a full-service portal be without a section just for kids? MSN's children's channel is called Kidz (kids.msn.com), and it includes all sorts of games, activities, and information just for the younger set. As you can see in Figure 2-10, Kidz even includes a KidzSafe Web Search, that filters out inappropriate content. In short, Kidz would make a good start page for your children's Web browsing.



Figure 2-10: MSN for Kidz.

» #64: Use MSN as an Online Encyclopedia

While we're on the subject of kids, when it's homework time, there's nothing like a good encyclopedia to help find the information they need. As you may be aware, Microsoft's Encarta is the best-selling encyclopedia software and MSN makes a version of Encarta available online in its Learning & Research channel (encarta.msn.com). This channel not only lets you search the online version of Encarta, it also includes a variety of other reference information, homework help, and information specifically for college-bound students and graduates. It's a good place to visit during the schoolyear!

» #65: Listen to Internet Radio—Without the Ads

If you like listening to Internet radio but don't like all the ads (and sometimes sporadic service) then subscribe to MSN Radio Plus, a new service that provides access to more than 200 specialty Internet radio stations. The subscription costs \$29.99 a year, but the stations offer faster streaming and better sound (near-CD quality) than you get at other Internet radio sites. It's also advertisement-free. Just click the Radio Plus link on the MSN Entertainment page to subscribe or access this service.

◆ #66: Get Movie and Event Tickets

Here's one you probably don't know about: You can use MSN to order tickets for movies, concerts, plays, and sporting events. You order your tickets online and then pick them up at the box office or have them mailed to you.

Buying tickets online is actually quite simple to do, thanks to MSN's partnership with Ticketmaster. Just go to MSN's Entertainment channel (entertainment.msn.com) and click the Tickets link at the top of the page. This takes you to the Find Event Tickets page shown in Figure 2-11. Select what type of ticket you want, then enter the name of the event, venue, artist, or movie. Follow the onscreen instructions to select your seating, enter payment information, and complete the process.



Figure 2-11: Buy tickets online with MSN and Ticketmaster.

◆ #67: MSN's *Slate* Is One of the Best Current Events Magazines Available—on the Web or Anywhere

Slate is one of my favorite parts of the MSN site, period. *Slate* (slate.msn.com) is an online magazine that ranks up there with the best of its print cousins. As you can see in Figure 2-12, *Slate* covers current events and politics, and does it well. It's opinionated, yes, but that's what makes it interesting—and often

provocative. The magazine's founding editor is Michael Kinsley, formerly of *The New Republic*. *Slate* was the 2003 winner of the prestigious National Magazine Award for General Excellence Online.

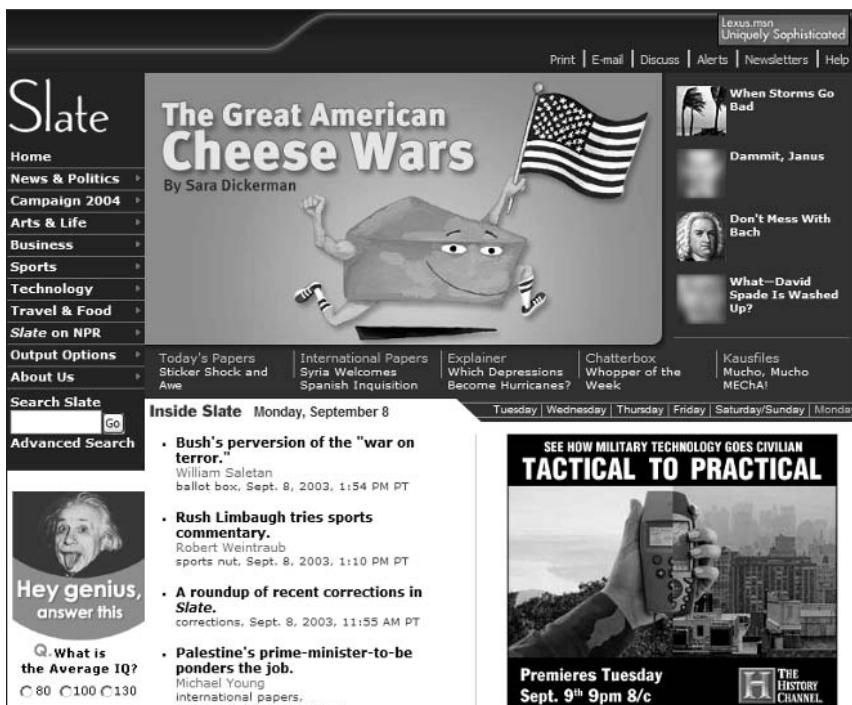


Figure 2-12: *Slate* magazine—informative and provocative.

Summary

So that's MSN. There's a lot more there than most users know about, and most of what's there is among the best of the Web. Combine the surprisingly robust content with a well-designed page and site layout, and you have a portal that's definitely worth your attention.

If you're currently using Yahoo!, you might find MSN's good looks and user-friendly navigation more appealing than Yahoo!'s utilitarian design. And if you're currently paying for America Online, you'll appreciate that MSN offers similar content at no charge. Either way, it's worth checking out what MSN has to offer.

AOL.com Secrets



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America Online is the world's largest commercial online service. AOL connects more people to the Internet than any other Internet service provider and provides a vast amount of its own unique content to boot.

Most AOL users access the AOL service via AOL's proprietary software. In fact, most AOL users think that this is the *only* way to access AOL.

They're wrong.

The AOL.com page includes links to all the AOL services that are available from the Web. These Web-enabled services include AOL Mail, AOL Instant Messenger, search, shopping, chats, groups, and so on—a large chunk of what you may have thought was only available via the AOL software.

**caution**

Unfortunately, you can't access most of these features unless you're an AOL subscriber, which means that AOL.com really isn't a public site, it's a private Web portal for AOL subscribers. So if you want to take advantage of these site features, you'll have to subscribe—which is easy to do from the AOL.com page.

Read on to learn one of the biggest secrets in the online world: how to use AOL services without ever launching the AOL software.



» #68: Access AOL from Any Web Browser—Without Using AOL Software

If you hate AOL's proprietary software interface, relief is at hand. You can actually access most of AOL's features from any Web browser—which means you never have to launch that horribly "user-friendly" AOL program. Being able to access AOL from the Web is also a good deal when you're traveling; you don't have to have the AOL software loaded on a computer to access the service, so you can log onto AOL from whatever machine you happen to be using at the time.

Accessing AOL from the Web is as easy as directing your browser to www.aol.com. At the top of the AOL.com page, shown in Figure 3-1, are boxes for you to enter your AOL screenname and password. Do this and click the Sign On button and you're in!



Figure 3-1: Access AOL from any Web browser—just go to the AOL.com page to log in.

#69: Don't Pay Full Price

So you want to subscribe to American Online. And you want to use the AOL.com page. But you don't need another Internet service provider, and you don't want to pay AOL's normal \$23.90 per month subscription fee.

Then it's time to learn about AOL's secret lower pricing plan.

If you already have Internet access—via a broadband provider, or another dial-up ISP—then you don't need AOL to function as your Internet service provider. All you need is access to the AOL.com portal (or the AOL service via AOL software), *not* access to AOL's dial-up connections. In this situation, you're eligible for AOL's "bring your own access" (BYOA) plan. This subscription plan lets you access the AOL service with no dial-up service provided for a reduced price of just \$14.95 per month.

Of course, you have to manually sign up for this plan; by default, new subscribers get the full plan, so if you're a new subscriber, you have to tell AOL that you want the lower-priced option. You switch to the BYOA plan by using your AOL software to go to keyword **Premium Services**. This is a good way to experience what AOL has to offer—without doubling up on ISP fees.

SECRET #70: You Don't Have to Subscribe to AOL to Use AOL Instant Messenger

Here's another good deal. AOL Instant Messenger (AIM) is the Internet's most popular instant messaging service—primarily because it's the instant messenger used by all AOL members. Well, you don't have to be logged onto the AOL service (via the AOL software) to use AIM, nor do you have to be an AOL subscriber. AOL's little secret is that anybody with a PC and an Internet connection can use AIM, at no charge. All you have to do is download the AIM software, which you can do by clicking the AOL Instant Messenger icon on the AOL.com page, or by going directly to www.aim.com.

The freestanding version of AIM, shown in Figure 3-2, operates just like the AOL version. In fact, if you're an AOL subscriber (and log in under your AOL screenname), the freestanding version of AIM will use your existing AOL Buddy Lists. It's a great way to chat with all your AOL pals without being logged on to the AOL service.

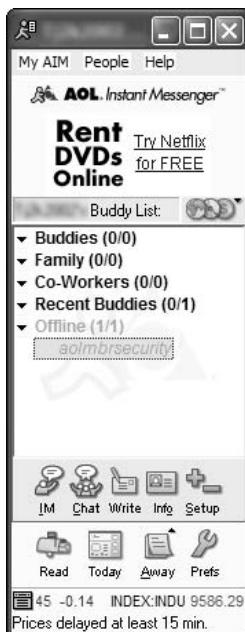


Figure 3-2: Use the freestanding version of AOL Instant Messenger—for free.

» #71: Retrieve Your AOL E-Mail from Any PC

Ever want to check your AOL e-mail but aren't at a computer with the AOL software installed? Now is a good time to use the AOL.com portal, which lets you retrieve your AOL e-mail from any PC with an Internet connection. Just direct your browser to the AOL.com home page and click the AOL Mail icon—or go directly to webmail.aol.com. This opens the AOL Mail page, shown in Figure 3-3, which closely resembles the Mail part of the traditional AOL service. From here you can read the mail in your inbox, retrieve old mail messages, and compose and send new mail. It works just as you'd think it would, and even provides access to your normal America Online address book. In fact, it's completely synchronized with your normal AOL e-mail, so you won't miss a single message.

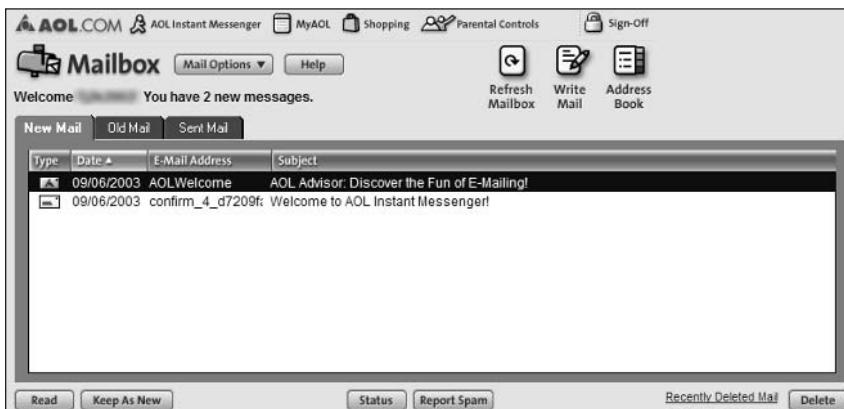


Figure 3-3: Access your AOL Mail from any Web browser.

» #72: Customize Your Own AOL Start Page on the Web

AOL actually provides a pretty good Web portal—if you know where to find it. The My AOL portal, shown in Figure 3-4, is accessible by clicking the My AOL link on the AOL.com page, or by going directly to my.aol.com. What's cool about My AOL is that you can completely customize it with the content and colors of your choosing. My AOL can also display local news and weather, as well as your personal financial portfolio. It's actually a better start page than that provided by the traditional AOL service!



Figure 3-4: Use My AOL as your personal gateway to the Web.

1 #73: View Your Local Weather

The My AOL page includes a brief local weather section. To view a more detailed local weather forecast, click the Weather link on the AOL.com page, or go directly to my.aol.com/weather/. This displays a full page of local weather, including current conditions and a five-day forecast. You'll also find links to weather maps and travel information, all provided by Weather.com.



Weather.com is the largest weather site on the Web. Learn more about this site in Chapter 14.



» #74: Display Local Information and Events

An even better way to display information of local interest is to access the AOL Anywhere page for your hometown—assuming you live in a big city, that is. AOL Anywhere is powered by Digitalcity.com and offers event and restaurant guides, nightlife and music reviews, and local yellow pages and personals for major cities across the U.S. You'll also find local news and sports scores, as well as a useful visitor's guide. Just click the City Guide link on the AOL.com page, or go directly to aol.digitalcity.com to find the AOL Anywhere page for your city.



» #75: When You Search AOL, You're Searching Google (Sort Of)

AOL uses Google as its primary search provider. That means that when you enter a query into the search box on the AOL.com page (or go directly to search.aol.com), you're querying the Google search index—and can use all the Google advanced search operators, as discussed in Chapter 6.

There are some differences between Google search and AOL search, however. AOL's version of Google's search results often include links to proprietary content on the AOL service. In addition, some Google search results features—such as cached pages—are not available in AOL search. Other than that, the search results should be the same.



insider insight

The AOL Search page (search.aol.com) also offers an Images search, using Google Image Search.



» #76: Search for People and E-Mail Addresses

For people-searching, AOL contracts with InfoSpace for its results. You access AOL's White Pages by clicking the White Pages link on the AOL.com page. As you can see in Figure 3-5, you initiate a people search by entering the person's last name, first name (optional), city, and state. Click the Search button to display a list of matching individuals.

AOL also lets you perform a reverse phone number lookup; just click the Search by Phone Number link on the White Pages page. InfoSpace also sponsors AOL's E-Mail Finder; just click the E-mail Finder link on the White Pages page.

The screenshot shows the AOL White Pages search interface. At the top, it says "AOL White Pages" and "Sponsored by InfoSpace INC". There are links for "Add/Modify your Info" and "About White Pages". Below that is a "White Pages Search" section with fields for "Last Name", "First Name", "City", "State/Province", and "Country". There's also a dropdown for "Search metro area (US Only)". A "Search" button and a "Search Tips" link are present. To the right is a sidebar titled "EXPANDED PEOPLE SEARCH" with links to "Court Records", "Social Security", "Public Records", "Driving Records", "Criminal Records", and "Background Checks". Below that is a "CLICK HERE" button with "GET INSTANT ACCESS". At the bottom of the sidebar is a "Related Products" section with links to "E-mail Finder", "Yellow Pages", "Search By Phone #", and "Join an Online Group".

Figure 3-5: Search AOL's White Pages.



• #77: Let AOL Track Your Calendar and Appointments

You can use AOL to track your entire schedule, and then access your calendar from any computer. This way your schedule is always available, even when you're traveling.

You access AOL Calendar by clicking the Calendar icon on the AOL.com page, or by going directly to calendar.aol.com. As you can see in Figure 3-6, you can display your calendar in either month, week, or day views. You can even create different calendars for different users, or for different applications. It's easy to add an event to your calendar; just click the Add Event button. You can print a copy to take with you by clicking the Print button.



• #78: Have AOL Remind You of Important Tasks

Want to be reminded about important tasks and events? Then use AOL Alerts & Reminders to send you an e-mail when the time is nigh.

You access AOL Alerts & Reminders by clicking the Remind Me link on the AOL.com page or by going directly to alerts.aol.com. Enter the name of the task, assign it a category, and then enter the due date and time. You can have AOL send you an alert when the task starts, or before.



Figure 3-6: Track your schedule over the Web with AOL Calendar.

! #79: Track Your Investments Using AOL.com

AOL lets you track your investment portfolio from the Web. Just click the Portfolios icon on the AOL.com page, or go directly to finance.aol.com. On your first visit, you'll be prompted to create a new portfolio; enter the stocks you want to track, and (optionally) the number of shares you own and at what price. AOL's My Portfolio will then display the most recent information about your stocks, as shown in Figure 3-7—including your current value. You can click a particular stock symbol to view more information about that stock.

The AOL My Portfolio interface. At the top, there's a banner for AOL Shopping. The main area has tabs for 'Portfolio Display', 'My Portfolio', 'Quotes', 'Charts', 'Symbol Lookup', and 'Markets'. It shows 'Last Updated: 6:07 PM on 09/08/03' and 'Total Value: 7,738.00'. Below that is a table of stocks:

Symbol	Shares	Last/NAV	Change	Pur. Price	Gain/Loss	Value	News	Charts
BKS	50	26.00	-0.07	15.00	+550.00	1,300.00		
MSFT	100	28.84	+0.46	50.00	-2,116.00	2,884.00		
YHOO	100	35.54	+0.65	25.00	+1,054.00	3,554.00		

Arrows indicate today's change. Click symbols for a detailed quote. Click column headings to re-sort data.

Notices & Terms Confirm all data with your broker before trading.

Delays: Nasdaq - 15 minutes.
NYSE & AMEX - 20 minutes.

Figure 3-7: Track your stocks in AOL's My Portfolio.

» #80: Access AOL Chat Rooms from the Web

One of the most popular parts of the AOL service is its chat rooms. Chat rooms are available for all conceivable topics, from women's health to hip hop music; millions of people subscribe to AOL just to participate in these online chats.

While you have to be an AOL member to use AOL chat, you don't have to use the proprietary AOL software. That's right, AOL chat is another service you can access from the Web, using any Web browser.

You access AOL chat by clicking the Hot Chats link on the AOL.com home page, or by going directly to the People & Chat Directory (www.aol.com/community/directory.html). From here you can browse through the different chat room categories or search for a particular chat room. When you click on a chat room to enter, AOL launches a separate chat window, like the one shown in Figure 3-8. From here chatting is as easy as entering your message and clicking the Send button.

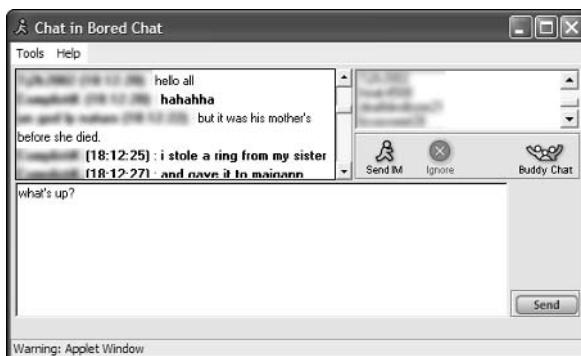


Figure 3-8: Chatting in an AOL Chat room, via the Web.



To use AOL's Web-based chat, you first have to have AOL Instant Messenger installed on your system.

» #81: Access AOL Message Boards and Groups from the Web

The AOL service hosts a plethora of topic-specific message boards that let users exchange their thoughts and opinions with other like-minded users. You can access all of these message boards from the Web by clicking the Message Boards link on the AOL.com page or by going directly to www.aol.com/messageboards/.

Figure 3-9 shows a typical message board. Click a link to access a particular message board; once there, you can read the latest messages, reply as desired, or start your own message threads.

The screenshot shows the AOL.com homepage with a navigation bar at the top. Below it is a "Welcome" banner and a breadcrumb trail: "You are here: Health Community: Illness/Condition Message Boards > ADD/ADHD". The main content area is titled "ADD/ADHD" and contains a brief description: "ADD/ADHD: Find support and information about the often misunderstood conditions known as ADD and ADHD." Below this is a table listing various topics with their item counts, last post dates, and unread status. At the bottom are links for "previous 10 | next 10", "Back to Board Topics", and community standards/notify AOL.

Topics	Items	Latest Post	
Introduce Yourselves	86	9/7/03	list unread
Symptoms & Diagnosis	15	9/6/03	list unread
Medications, Treatments & Procedures	64	9/6/03	list unread
Alternative Treatments & Therapies	105	9/4/03	list unread
ADD/ADHD	3	8/29/03	list unread
General Discussion	17	8/29/03	list unread
Schmooze Here!!!	167	9/8/03	list unread
ADD/ADHD in Children	586	9/8/03	list unread
ADD/ADHD in Teens	7	9/5/03	list unread
ADD/ADHD in Adults	315	9/8/03	list unread

Figure 3-9: Voice your opinion on AOL message boards.

Another proprietary AOL feature that's available from the Web is Groups@AOL. A group is like a Web site for a topic-specific club; each group can contain message boards, photo collections, event calendars, live chats, and similar features.

To access Groups@AOL, click the Groups@AOL on the AOL.com page, or go directly to groups.aol.com. You can browse through or search the available public groups; private groups are accessible via invitation only.

» #82: Send Group Invitations with AOL.com

Here's an interesting service that appears to be unique to AOL. AOL Invitations lets you send online invitations to your friends, family, and colleagues, for all different types of events—lunches, birthday parties, baby showers, reunions, you name it. You use AOL Invitations to create the invitation, then send it to your recipient list. You can then view the RSVPs online and keep track of who's coming and who's not.

You access AOL Invitations at webcenter.invitations.aol.com.

» #83: Send Online Greeting Cards with AOL.com

AOL partners with AmericanGreetings.com to let you send free online greeting cards to your friends and family. Just click the Greetings link on the AOL.com

page and then choose a card to send. There are thousands of different cards available in dozens of different categories. It's the online way to say that you care!

» #84: Shop Online with AOL.com

AOL offers the same shopping services on the Web as it offers in its traditional online service. You access AOL Shopping, shown in Figure 3-10, by clicking the Shopping link on the AOL.com Web page. From there you can browse through different merchandise departments (Apparel, Electronics, etc.), or search for specific products. It's a quick and easy way to find what you want to buy without having to log onto the AOL service proper.



Figure 3-10: Access AOL Shopping from the Web.

» #85: Apply Parental Controls to Manage Your Kids' Surfing

The AOL service is well-known for offering effective controls for younger members; it's easy for parents to monitor and restrict what their children can view and do while they're using AOL. These parental controls carry over to the AOL.com environment; you can create screennames for each of your children and then assign each screen name to a particular age category. Each age category carries its own appropriate restrictions—which can include blocking access to chat and similar features as well as deleting all e-mail containing pictures or attachments.

To set the AOL.com parental controls, click the Parental Controls icon on the AOL.com page or go directly to parentalcontrols.aol.com. From this page you can click a screen name to assign it a specific age category. The next time that member logs on, he or she will be subject to that category's particular controls.

At 86: Get AOL Features Free from Netscape

Many folks don't realize that a number of AOL features are available for free via the Netscape Network Web site (www.netscape.com). In fact, you'll find that parts of the Netscape site (shown in Figure 3-11) look a lot like parts of the AOL.com site; this is most notable on the My Netscape page, which was the inspiration for My AOL.

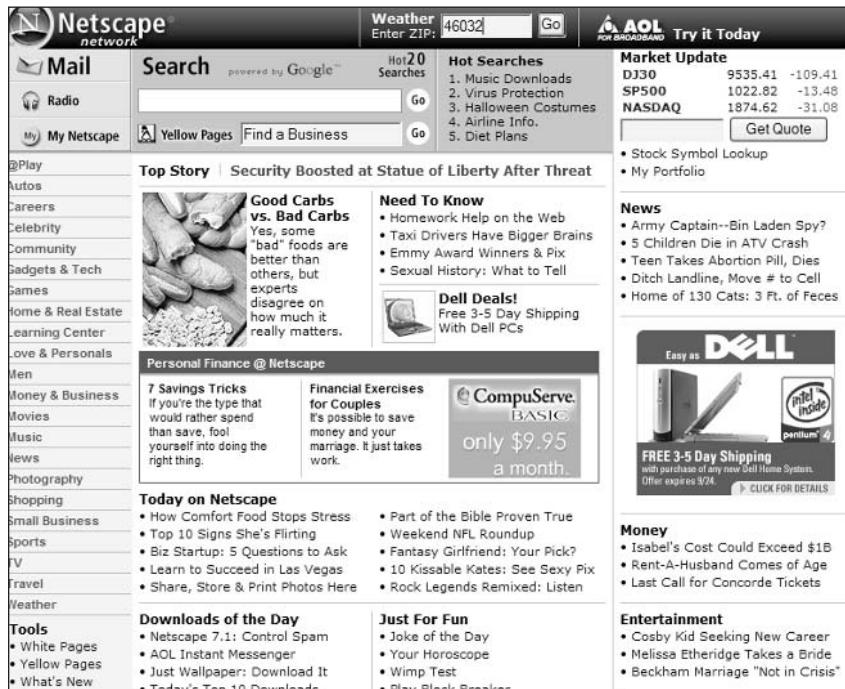


Figure 3-11: The Netscape Network home page.

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Why the similarity between AOL.com and the Netscape Network? It's simple—AOL owns Netscape, and has integrated many of its technologies and services.

What AOL features will you find on the Netscape Network site? Here's a short list:

- ◆ Netscape Mail, which also lets you access your AOL mail account
- ◆ Netscape Instant Messenger, which is fully compatible with AOL Instant Messenger and the AIM network
- ◆ Netscape Calendar, which offers all the same features as the AOL Calendar
- ◆ My Netscape, similar in look and feel to My AOL
- ◆ Access to Digitalcity.com local guides, same as with AOL Anywhere
- ◆ Access to the same shopping resources as AOL.com
- ◆ Google Web searching, same as on AOL.com
- ◆ InfoSpace white and yellow pages searching, same as on AOL.com
- ◆ Investment tracking, same as on AOL.com
- ◆ Access to much of the content found on the main AOL service, including news, sports, weather, and entertainment

So if you want some of what AOL offers without paying to become a member, check out the Netscape Network Web site. Even if you're not looking for AOL features, it's a pretty good portal!

Summary

This entire chapter falls into the "I bet you didn't know that. . ." category. The ability to access AOL from the Web is one of those secrets hidden in plain sight, but one that makes AOL infinitely more useable—and more appealing—to more technically sophisticated users. Taken on its own, the AOL.com portal is actually fairly attractive; that it also lets you access your AOL e-mail and chat rooms is a huge plus.

It almost makes you want to subscribe, doesn't it?

Excite Secrets



Chapter
4



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This chapter examines one of the oldest portals on the Web: Excite.com. Excite used to be a really big gun, and grabbed even more attention when it merged with cable giant @Home Network in 1998. Unfortunately, the acquisition didn't work out, and Excite suffered when @Home's cable business went belly up. Focus Interactive (who owned the iWon portal) subsequently picked up Excite at fire-sale prices and pretty much recreated the site from the bottom up.

The Excite you see today has little in common with the previous site. There's actually less content on the site now than there used to be, and the entire search function has been gutted and replaced with an arguably more useful meta-search tool.

The result is that Excite, unfortunately, is not the most exciting portal on the Web. In fact, it's kind of bland visually and the content sometimes leaves something to be desired. Still, Excite is one of the most heavily trafficked portals and does include some neat features—not the least of which is its unique meta-search capabilities.

Excite at a Glance

The Excite home page (www.excite.com), shown in Figure 4-1, is where it all begins. The top of the page contains the expected search box, and links to most of the site's content and services are down the left side of the page. The middle of the page contains news stories and additional links, while the right side is reserved for weather, horoscopes, and other personalized information. Once you register as a user, the Excite home page will display your local TV listings on the bottom of the page.

The screenshot shows the Excite home page with several key features:

- Top Left:** A search bar with placeholder text "Search Excite". Below it are links for "Join Now" and "Sign In".
- Top Center:** A sidebar with links to "Online Mortgage Loans" (with a "Get Quote" button), "Web-based CRM RightNow" (with a "Download White Paper" link), and a "Win a Trip a Day!" travel offer.
- Left Column:** A sidebar titled "My Excite" containing links for "My Portfolio", "My Scores", "My Weather", "My Movies", "My TV", "My Sign", and "My Lottery".
- Middle Left:** A "My Stocks" section showing market data for DOW, NASDAQ, and S&P 500, along with a "Get Quotes" input field.
- Middle Center:** A "Personalize" dropdown menu and a "Excite Meta-Search" form with options for "Web", "Directory", and "Photos".
- Middle Right:** A "Temp Your Way Into a Job!" section with links to Yellow Pages, White Pages, and Classifieds.
- Bottom Left:** A "Sports" section with links for NFL, NBA, NHL, and MLB.
- Bottom Center:** A "My News" section featuring news from AP, Reuters, and various media sources like New York Times, CBS, and FOX NEWS. It includes a "Bush War Funds Request" story and a video thumbnail.
- Bottom Right:** Personalized sections for "My Weather", "My Horoscope", and "Hot Travel Deals".
- Bottom Footer:** A "Top News - AP" summary and the date "Sep 8, 7:08 pm ET".

Figure 4-1: The Excite home page.



#87: Search Excite and You Search 11 Other Sites

Excite doesn't offer its own search engine.

That's not entirely unusual; many major sites (including Yahoo! and MSN) farm out some or all of their search functions.

What's unusual about Excite is that it doesn't contract with a single provider for search results. Instead, Excite offers search results from 11 different providers and combines those results for your use. This type of multiple-engine searching is called *meta-search*, and delivers a greater quantity of results than you'd typically get from a single search engine.

In Excite's case, here are the sites that are utilized when you conduct a search:

- ◆ About.com
- ◆ AllTheWeb (FAST)
- ◆ Ask Jeeves (Teoma)
- ◆ FindWhat
- ◆ Google
- ◆ Inktomi
- ◆ LookSmart
- ◆ Open Directory
- ◆ Overture
- ◆ Search Hippo
- ◆ Sprinks

That's an impressive list; all the major search engines and directories are represented. It also means that you can do all your searching from a single site. Because all these sites are searched, you don't have to jump from site to site if you can't get the results you want.

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insight

Excite searches even more sites for its news and photo searches, as discussed in Secrets #90 and #91.

Excite combines results from all these search engines into a single search results list. You'll know which engine returned which result by looking for the acknowledgment after the listing's URL. For example, the listing in Figure 4-2 was returned by Google, Inktomi, and LookSmart. (It's not uncommon for the same listing to be returned from multiple engines; that's not necessarily a bad thing.)

6. 007 - Die Another Day.
English, Français, Deutsch, Italiano, Português, Español.
<http://www.jamesbond.com/> (Non-Sponsored Result) | Google, Inktomi, LookSmart Reviewed Sites

Figure 4-2: An Excite search result returns from multiple search engines.

2 #88: Paid Listings are Mixed in with the Other Search Results

Most search sites accept payments from Web sites to be listed on their search results page. These paid listings are typically separated somehow from the normal search results, so that you don't confuse the "ads" from the true listings.

Not so on Excite.

Excite completely blends its paid results into the legitimate search results. One listing might be paid, the next might be legitimate, and the next might be another paid one. The only indication you have is a small "Sponsored Result" tag following the listing's URL, as shown in Figure 4-3. (Legitimate results are tagged "Non-Sponsored Result.") Frankly, this makes Excite's search results suspect; you can work around the paid listings, but it does take work.

The bottom line? Use Excite's search results with care—and beware of those sponsored results!

4. [Buy New-Issue & Secondary Bonds Online](#).
Online discount pricing on corporate and tax-free municipal bonds, treasuries, agencies, mortgage-backed and CDs for the fixed income marketplace.
<http://www.bondpage.com> (Sponsored Result) | Overture

Figure 4-3: Paid listings sneak into Excite's search results.



It should come as no surprise that most sponsored results come from Overture; Overture is the primary provider for serving up paid search listings. (Other providers of paid results include FindWhat and Sprinks.)

2 #89: Use Boolean Operators to Fine-Tune Your Search—Even for Those Sites That Don't Accept Boolean

Excite lets you use the Boolean AND, OR, and NOT operators to fine-tune your searches. What's interesting about this is that Excite searches sites (such as Google) that don't normally accept Boolean searches. But because the Excite front-end accepts Boolean operators, this is a way for you to search those non-Boolean sites in a Boolean fashion.

Got that?

As far as what operators we're talking about, consult Table 4-1:

Table 4-1: Excite's Advanced Search Operators

Operator	Description	Similar Operators
AND	Requires that the specified words exist in the search results	+
NOT	Requires that the specified word not be present in the search results	-
OR	Searches for either one word or the other	

Excite search also uses the “exact phrase” operator: the quotation mark. When you want to restrict your search to an exact phrase, simply enclose the entire phrase in quotation marks. So if you’re searching for actor George Clooney, enter **george clooney**, complete with quotation marks.

» #90: Meta-Search for News Stories

Excite also uses meta-searching when you search for news stories. It returns results from several different news search engines, including Fast News and the Dogpile Newscrawler.

To conduct a news search, select the News options in the Excite search box and then click the Search button. Matching news stories will be listed on the search results page, grouped by the particular search engine. Click the listing to view the complete story.

» #91: Meta-Search for Photos

Because of its meta-search capabilities, Excite ends up being a good site to use when you’re searching for pictures on the Web. When you select the Photos option next to the Excite search box, Excite returns results from several different image search engines, including Fast Image and Ditto. Results are grouped by search engine, as shown in Figure 4-4. Click the link below an image to view the originating page.



Figure 4-4: Results from Excite's photo meta-search.

SECRET #92: Display Local TV Listings

Excite lets you display television listings for your local broadcast channels, or for your cable or satellite service. You can even customize the listings to display only a particular set of channels; this is useful when you have hundreds of cable or satellite channels to deal with.

To display television listings, go to the Excite TV page (tv.entertainment.excite.com) and click the link on the left side of the page. You can also customize the Excite home page to display your TV listings there; see Secret #96 to learn more.



» #93: Track What's Playing at Your Local Movie Theater

Want to find out what movies are playing at the local megaplex this week? Then configure Excite to track your local movie showtimes. You can have Excite track up to 10 theaters, and then you can even order your tickets online. It's easy to do; just go to the Excite Movies page (movies.excite.com) and click the Set Up Your Movies link (on the left side of the page). Once configured, return to this page to see what's showing.



» #94: Keep Up on the Latest Celebrity Gossip

For some reason, Excite does a really good job of assembling gossip from all manner of celebrity magazines and Web sites. Just go to the Excite Entertainment page (entertainment.excite.com) and click the Celebrities link. This takes you to the Celebrity Gossip page, which gathers headlines from The National Enquirer Online, Star Online, TV Guide Online, PageSix.com, and other similar sites. If you like the trash, this is a page to bookmark!



» #95: Clean the Clutter with a "Lite" Excite

Is the main Excite page too cluttered for your tastes? If so, you can display a shorter, cleaner version called Excite Lite. As you can see in Figure 4-5, Excite Lite includes just the basics: a search box and links to the main Excite content pages. Nothing more, nothing less.

To display Excite Lite, click the Lite link at the top of the regular home page.



» #96: Personalize the Excite Home Page

Most portals let you create a separate "My" page, which you can personalize as you wish. Excite does it a little differently, letting you customize the actual Excite home page, which then becomes your My Excite page. Thereafter, whenever you go to www.excite.com it displays your personalized page.

Personalizing the Excite home page is as easy as clicking the Page Settings, Select Content, Layout, Colors, and Themes buttons. Make your selections and you turn the regular Excite home page into your own personal My Excite page—like the one shown in Figure 4-6.

The screenshot shows the Excite Lite homepage. At the top, there's a banner for "PC Remote Control" and "GoToMyPC". A "Win a Trip a Day!" contest is also advertised. The main navigation bar includes links for "Excite • Email • Help". Below the header, there's a "Welcome to Excite Lite" message and a "Lightning fast on even the slowest dial-up!" tagline. The left sidebar features "My Excite" sections like "My Money", "My Scores", "My Weather", "My Movies", "My TV", "My Sign", and "My Lottery". The central area has a "Excite Meta-Search" form with options for "Web", "Directory", and "Photos". Below it are links for "Yellow Pages", "White Pages", and "Classifieds". A "Temp Your Way Into a Job!" section follows. The right sidebar contains "Today on Excite" news, "Hot Travel Deals" (featuring Expedia.com), and a "Come to Expedia..." advertisement. The bottom of the page has a search bar for "Yellow Pages", "White Pages", and "The Web", along with dropdowns for "City", "State", and "Choose a State", and a "Find" button.

Figure 4-5: Excite Lite—less stuff, faster loading.

The screenshot shows the My Excite homepage. It features a "Miller's Page" section with weather forecasts for Indianapolis, Chula Vista, and Fort Lauderdale. The main content area is identical to the standard Excite Lite page, including the "Excite Meta-Search" form, "Temp Your Way Into a Job!" section, and various "Explore Excite" links. A prominent "eBay" advertisement for "The World's Online Marketplace" is displayed. The right sidebar includes "Today on Excite" news, "Hot Travel Deals", and a "Shop Travel Deals, Mortgages..." section. The bottom of the page has a "My News" section with headlines from various news sources and a "My Columnists" section featuring Dave Barry.

Figure 4-6: Turn the Excite home page into My Excite.

• #97: Don't Like My Excite? Use My Way Instead

The same company that owns Excite also owns a site called My Way. My Way (my.myway.com) uses the same personalization technology as My Excite, but delivers a customized page without any banners or pop-up ads. In fact, the My Way page (shown in Figure 4-7) links to services that are every bit as good as Excite's—and delivers faster loading times, to boot.

In a way, using My Way is like getting the best of My Excite with less hassle. Signing up for My Way takes less than half a minute because pretty much the only personal information it asks is your zip code; there are no long pages of questions to answer before you can get up and running. Customization is similar to My Excite, complete with links to various news and information sources.

My Way differs from Excite in that it doesn't offer meta-search capabilities. Instead, its search box offers results from Google—not a bad choice, given Google's immense popularity. You also get basic Web e-mail, also for no charge.

So if you kind of sort of like My Excite but have some issues with it, check out its cousin My Way. You might like what you see!



Figure 4-7: My Way—like My Excite, only better.

2 #98: Win Prizes When You Surf with iWon

There's another interesting site owned by Excite's parent company, Focus Interactive. That site is iWon (www.iwon.com), and it's interesting in that it's a portal that actually pays you for your visits. More accurately, every time you visit the iWon portal, shown in Figure 4-8, you get a chance to win a variety of prizes—up to and including a \$25 million grand prize. Yes, it sounds like gambling, but what the hey, it's no worse than playing the lottery—and the iWon site features much the same content as Excite besides.



Figure 4-8: Win prizes just for visiting the iWon portal.

Summary

Excite isn't quite as full-featured as Yahoo! or MSN, but it does have its high points. I happen to like the My Excite personalization a little better than the similar feature at other sites. Excite's meta-search feature is also a plus—definitely worth taking for a test drive if you haven't used it before.

Lycos Secrets

Chapter 5

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Lykos is one of the oldest brands on the Web—although it's not what it used to be. Launched way back in 1994, Lycos was originally a crawler-based search engine. Over time it evolved into a full-service portal, and its search capabilities took a backseat to its other content. In fact, Lycos ceased its own search operations several years ago, instead contracting with third-party providers for its search results.

Back in 1999 I wrote a whole book (now out of print) about Lycos; that was before the big change-up at the Lycos site. As I was preparing to attack the chapter you're now reading, I went back and took a look at that old book. Virtually nothing I wrote about Lycos then is still true today! So if you're an old-timer and think you know all there is to know about the Lycos site—think again.

Lycos at a Glance

The Lycos home page (www.lycos.com), shown in Figure 5-1, contains a variety of links to different content and services. There are links to major services (including My Lycos and Lycos Mail) at the very top of the page, with a search box just below that. The left side of the page contains links to Lycos topics with news and other highlights featured in the center of the page.

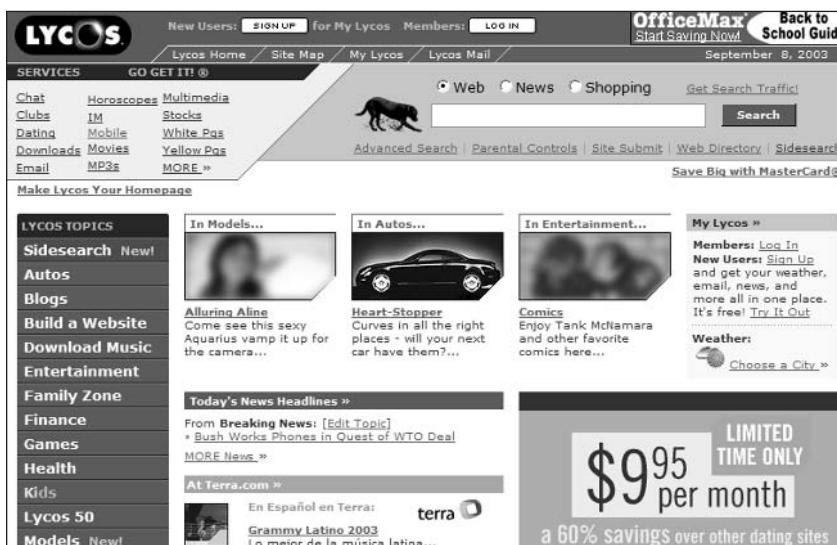


Figure 5-1: The Lycos home page.

• #99: Lycos Is Part of a Larger Network of Sites

Here's something most users don't know: Lycos is just part of a larger network of sites owned by the Terra Lycos company. The sites in the Terra Lycos

Network (www.terralycos.com) operate independently but also feed content into the main Lycos portal.

The following list gives you a quick look at these sites.

- ◆ **Angelfire:** Angelfire (www.angelfire.com) is a home page community that enables you to build your own personal Web pages. This is one of two home page communities owned by Terra Lycos; the other is Tripod, discussed a bit later in the chapter.
- ◆ **Animation Express:** Animation Express (www.animationexpress.com), originally part of the HotWired site (listed a bit later), offers a range of animated entertainment for your viewing pleasure.
- ◆ **a tu hora:** a tu hora (www.atuhora.com) is an e-commerce site for the Spanish market. It offers one-hour delivery of convenience products such as food and beverages, as well as books, music, electronics, and other merchandise.
- ◆ **Gamesville:** Gamesville (www.gamesville.com) is one of the Web's largest sites for interactive entertainment. Members can play both single-player and multi-player games, and compete in massive real-time gaming events. (See Secret #119 to learn more.)
- ◆ **HotBot:** Hotbot (www.hotbot.com) is one of the Web's leading search engines. Learn more about HotBot in Chapter 8.
- ◆ **htmlGEAR:** The htmlGEAR site (www.htmlgear.com) offers interactive content and add-ons for Web site developers.
- ◆ **Invertia.com:** Invertia.com (www.invertia.com) is a financial portal for the Latin American market—in particular, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Venezuela.
- ◆ **Lycos Zone:** Lycos Zone (www.lycoszone.com) is a site just for kids, including educational content and entertainment. (See Secret #120 to learn more.)
- ◆ **Matchmaker:** Matchmaker (www.matchmaker.com) is one of the Web's largest sites for personal ads.
- ◆ **Quote.com:** Quote.com (www.quote.com) is a full-service financial information site.
- ◆ **Raging Bull:** Raging Bull (ragingbull.lycos.com) is a lively community of financial message boards.
- ◆ **Rumbo:** Rumbo (www.rumbo.com) is a full-service travel portal.
- ◆ **Sonique:** Sonique (sonique.lycos.com) is a free media player program, popular among the MP3 set.
- ◆ **Terra:** Terra (www.terra.com) runs a variety of Web portals for the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking world. Terra also offers dial-up and broadband connection services to select European markets.
- ◆ **Tripod:** Tripod (www.tripod.lycos.com) is another home page community you can use to create and host your own personal Web pages. When you click the Build a Website link on Lycos' home page, this is where you're taken. (See Secret #123 to learn more.)
- ◆ **Webmonkey:** Webmonkey (www.webmonkey.com) is a terrific resource for both novice and experienced Web developers. It offers daily articles and news on all manner of technical topics, as well as an extensive archive of tutorials and features.

- ◆ **Whowhere:** Whowhere (www.whowhere.com) is one of the Web's top White Pages directories. You can use Whowhere to look up individual addresses and phone numbers, as well as e-mail addresses and personal Web pages. (See Secret #107 to learn more.)
- ◆ **Wired News:** Wired News (www.wired.com) is a source for daily technology news, and the online arm of *Wired* magazine.



#100: When You Search Lycos, You're Searching AllTheWeb

Lycos' search feature is powered by AllTheWeb, a third-party search provider owned by Overture—which in turn was recently acquired by Yahoo!. AllTheWeb, also called the FAST search engine, is a close rival to Google in terms of number of listings, search speed, and search accuracy, which makes Lycos search very, very good.

I won't get into all of AllTheWeb's features here; I devote an entire chapter (Chapter 7) to this search engine, so you can turn there to learn more. All you need to know is that the Lycos search retains all the features of AllTheWeb and delivers identical results.



#101: The First Results are Bogus

Almost all search sites accept paid listings from advertisers. To their benefit, most sites do a good job of separating these paid listings from the real search results, so as not to totally confuse users.

But not Lycos.

Lycos gets bad marks for placing their paid search results in-line with actual search results, and not labeling them as paid. When you look at a Lycos search results page, the first several listings are paid listings, even though they're not labeled as such. You don't get to the actual search results until you scroll down to the listings labeled *Web Results*.

So when you're searching with Lycos, skip the first few listings—and skip right to the real *Web Results*.



#102: There Are Other Search Options Available

As you just learned, Lycos' main search results are provided by the AllTheWeb search engine. If you're not satisfied with these results, however, Lycos makes it easy to expand your search with other search providers—in particular, the

Open Directory, HotBot, and Direct Hit. All you have to do is click the HotBot, AltaVista, Overture, or Web Directory options in the Need a Second Opinion section at the bottom of the search results page (shown in Figure 5-2) and then click the Search button. Lycos will direct your query to the selected provider and conduct a new search to display new results.



Figure 5-2: Use the options in the Need a Second Opinion section to expand your search to other providers.

HotBot

HotBot is a search site that, like Lycos, is part of the Terra Lycos Network. HotBot provides results from four different search indexes—Google, Inktomi, Teoma, and AllTheWeb. (You can access HotBot directly at www.hotbot.com; go to Chapter 10 to learn more.)

AltaVista

AltaVista is a search site that, like AllTheWeb, is owned by Overture—which was recently acquired by Yahoo!. The oldest search engine on the Web, AltaVista isn't nearly as powerful as AllTheWeb or Google, but it still returns quality results. (You can access AltaVista directly at www.altavista.com; go to Chapter 9 to learn more.)

Overture

Overture (www.overture.com) is the company that owns both AllTheWeb and AltaVista. It also provides its own search results, based on paid placements by participating Web sites—so its results are going to be less “pure” than those available elsewhere.

Lycos Directory (Open Directory)

When you select the Web Directory option, you direct your search to Lycos' proprietary version of the Open Directory Project. The Open Directory Project (accessible directly at www.dmoz.org) is the largest human-edited directory of Web sites. While even the largest directory is smaller than the smallest search index, the entries are hand-picked and quite often of higher quality than what you get from a search engine like AllTheWeb.

insider
insight

You can browse through the categories in the Lycos Directory at dir.lycos.com.

#103: Keep Your Search Results Open in a Separate Pane

Here's something unique—and uniquely useful: Lycos enables you to keep your search results handy while you check out individual links. When you click the Sidesearch link next to any listing on the search results page, two things happen. First, Lycos goes directly to the desired Web page. Second, it opens a new pane on the left side of your browser window, as shown in Figure 5-3, and transfers the search results page to this pane. With this Sidesearch pane open, it's easy to click directly to other listed pages without having to jump back and forth to the normal search results page.



Figure 5-3: Keep your search results handy in the Sidesearch pane.

You can also install Sidesearch as a permanent feature in your browser. Just go to install.sidesearch.lycos.com and click the Install Sidesearch button. With Sidesearch installed in this fashion, you can display the Sidesearch pane by clicking the Lycos Sidesearch button on your browser's toolbar.

#104: Fine-Tune Your Search with the Advanced Search Page

While you can use advanced search operators (including the Boolean AND, OR, and NOT) in the normal Lycos search box, it's easier to use Lycos' Advanced Search page when you want to fine-tune your searches. The Advanced Search page offers the filter options detailed in Table 5-1:

Table 5-1: Lycos Advanced Search Filters

Option	Description
Should include <i>word</i>	Searches for the keyword(s) in the text, title, URL, or referring URL
Must include <i>word</i>	Requires that the keyword(s) be included in the text, title, URL, or referring URL
Must not include <i>word</i>	Excludes pages where the specified word(s) appear in the text, title, URL, or referring URL
Domain/site	Restricts the search to a specified site or domain, or excludes specified site/domain from the search
Language	Restricts the search to specified language(s)
Block offensive content	Activates or deactivates moderate or strict content filtering (moderate filtering is turned on by default)
Catalog	Directs the search to the specified directory or catalog of sites



#105: Filter Objectionable Content from Your Search Results

Lycos offers an interesting way to filter adult content from your searches: Lycos' SearchGuard technology actually deletes certain objectionable keywords from your queries; type all you might, with SearchGuard enabled, all those dirty words never make it to the Lycos search index or directory.

SearchGuard also restricts access to certain areas on the Lycos site—in particular, e-mail, chat, and message boards. That makes it ideal for controlling your children's Web surfing; log them onto Lycos (with SearchGuard enabled) and they'll be relatively protected from the nasty things online.

To activate SearchGuard, you have to create a (free) Lycos username and password, and then configure your account appropriately. Get started by clicking the Parental Controls link on the Lycos home page, and follow the directions from there.



#106: Search for Merchandise to Buy

Lycos offers a fairly sophisticated search engine for online merchandise. Lycos Shopping Search, available from both the Lycos home page and the Lycos Shopping page (shop.lycos.com), not only returns good results, but also presents those results in a unique and extremely usable fashion.

The first page of results you see after you conduct a shopping search lists those shopping categories where the item you searched for can be found. For example, if you search for "silk shirt," you'll see that merchandise is listed in five different categories: Mens Shirts, Womens Shirts & Blouses, Other Womens Clothing, Other Junior & Teens Apparel, and Other Mens Clothing. Click a category and you see the catalog-type page shown in Figure 5-4. This is different from a plain text listing in that each listing includes a picture of the merchandise, a brief description, current price, and a link to the store where the merchandise is sold. All you have to do is click through to place your order.

The screenshot shows a shopping search results page. At the top, there's a navigation bar with a logo, a search field containing "Womens Shirts & Blouses" and a dropdown menu set to "silk shirt", and a search button. Below the navigation is a breadcrumb trail: Home > Clothing & Accessories > Womens Clothing > Womens Shirts & Blouses > silk shirt. A sub-navigation bar below the breadcrumb includes links for Shopping Home, Electronics, Computers, Software, Office, DVDs, Music, Clothing (which is highlighted), Health, Home & Garden, and More >>. To the left, there's a sidebar titled "Browse Product List" under "Womens Shirts & Blouses" with a list of categories: Dresses, Formalwear, Jeans, Other, Outerwear, Pants, Shirts & Blouses, Shorts, Skirts, Suits/Blazers, Sweaters/Vests, Swimwear, and T-Shirts. The main content area is titled "Matches for silk shirt in Womens Shirts & Blouses". It features a "Sort This Table" dropdown. There are three product listings for "Orvis - PAISLEY SILK SHIRT L/S": 1) A large image of a woman in a paisley shirt, a detailed description, and a "Customer Certified" badge with "Read 25,000+ reviews". 2) A smaller image of a woman in a white shirt, a description, and a "Customer Certified" badge with "Read 25,000+ reviews". 3) Another smaller image of a woman in a white shirt, a description, and a "Customer Certified" badge with "Read 25,000+ reviews". Each listing includes a "Price" (\$69.00), "In Stock" status, and a "Go!" button.

Figure 5-4: The results of a Lycos Shopping Search.

#107: Search for People and E-Mail Addresses

Lycos partners with sister site WhoWhere to provide White Pages searching. When you click the White Pages link (or go directly to www.whowhere.lycos.com) you're taken to the WhoWhere Web site, shown in Figure 5-5. Searching is as simple as entering a first and last name, selecting a city or state, and clicking the Search button. WhoWhere will return a list of matching names, complete with addresses and phone numbers.

You can also use WhoWhere to search for e-mail addresses—if they're available. Just pull down the Find list at the top of the WhoWhere page and select An Email Address, then enter the name and location information as usual. WhoWhere will return e-mail addresses for those individuals listed in the WhoWhere directory.



Figure 5-5: Searching for people at the WhoWhere site.

insider insight If you're searching for genealogical information, WhoWhere links to the Ancestry.com Web site; just click the Ancestry Search link.

#108: Search 2,000 Different News Sources

Lycos utilizes the FAST news index (as well as its own Lycos News site) to provide a first-class news search. When you search for a news story, you're searching content from more than 2,000 different news sites. As you might imagine, you'll most likely find what you're looking for.

You can conduct a basic news search from the Lycos home page; just select the News option next to the standard Search box. To narrow your news search somewhat, go to the Advanced Search page and click the News tab. Most of these advanced search options are the same as on the normal Advanced Search page; one unique option is the ability to restrict the search to specific news categories.

#109: Search for MP3 Music Files to Download

Looking for a particular song to download? You could connect to KaZaA or one of the other peer-to-peer file-swapping networks and deal with all that hassle (not to mention potential litigation), or subscribe to Napster or one of the subscription music services, and pay for what you download. Or you could use Lycos to search the Web for the songs you want and download them free of charge.

That's right. One of the hidden features of the Lycos site is a first-rate MP3 search engine. Lycos' MP3 search does a surprisingly good job of finding MP3 files on the Web; it's a much cleaner way of finding music than using a file-swapping network, and much less expensive than subscribing to a paid music service.

To use Lycos' MP3 search, go to the Lycos Music page (music.lycos.com) and enter the song or artist you're looking for in the search box, as shown in Figure 5-6. Choose to Search For MP3s, then click the Search button.



Figure 5-6: Use Lycos to search for MP3s on the Web.

Lycos now returns a page of search results. At the top of the list is a link to music on the Lycos Rhapsody subscription service; you can ignore this (it'll cost you money) and scroll down to the main results. Each matching file is ranked on a Good-Better-Best scale, and the file size (in MB) is noted.

Click a link to display a separate download window, like the one shown in Figure 5-7. From here you can choose to download the file or just play it from where it is.



Figure 5-7: Getting ready to download a music file.

What's great about Lycos is that it's one of the few sites that search the Web specifically for MP3 files, without tying you into a proprietary file-swapping network or subscription service. It also works quite well; I almost always find the music I'm searching for. That's why savvy music lovers use Lycos to find the MP3 files they want—at no risk and no fee.

insider insight

It's important to note that the results of a Lycos MP3 search link to files on sites all across the Web. Lycos is not part of a file-swapping network, and does not store any of these MP3 files on its own site. Lycos does, however, offer a separate subscription music service, called Rhapsody. Go to music.lycos.com/rhapsody/ to learn more.



#110: Search for Other Types of Audio Files

Lycos also offers a general audio search, which searches the Web for all types of audio files—not just MP3s. You can use this general audio search to find WAV, MIDI, RealAudio, and other types of audio files.

This general audio search is available on Lycos' Multimedia Search page (multimedia.lycos.com). Just enter your query into the search box, select the Audio search option, and then click the Search button.



#111: Search for Videos

Lycos' Multimedia Search also lets you scour the Web for video files in the AVI, MPEG, QuickTime, and Real Video formats. This is a somewhat unique feature; there aren't a whole lot of video search engines out there. You can use this video search to find music videos, movie trailers, and movie clips. Just go to the Multimedia Search page (multimedia.lycos.com), enter your query into the search box, select the Video search option, and then click the Search button.

insider insight

To keep Lycos' Multimedia Search from serving up tons of adult links, turn on the Parental Controls (located beneath the search box).

#112: Search for Pictures

There's one last feature in Lycos' Multimedia Search worth noting—the ability to search the Web for pictures. Lycos' picture search is one of the best on the Web, and directly accessible from the Multimedia Search page (multimedia.lycos.com). Just enter your query into the search box, select the Pictures search option, and then click the Search button. Lycos will deliver up a list of image files that match your request.

#113: Watch the Latest Music Videos on the Lycos Site

Lycos is a great place to find the latest music videos from the hottest artists. When you click the Videos link on the Lycos Music page, or the Music Videos link on the Lycos home page, Lycos opens a Lycos Video window like the one shown in Figure 5-8. From here you can browse the music videos by category or artist; click the Watch link to view any video.



Figure 5-8: Watch hot videos online at Lycos Music.

caution

Lycos' music video and movie clips play a whole lot better if you have a broadband Internet connection. Trying to watch these clips over a slow dial-up connection is frustrating at best, and often next to impossible.



#114: View Clips from Upcoming Movies on the Lycos Site

Lycos is big on this multimedia thing. In addition to the music videos we just discussed, the portal also offers a wide variety of movie previews and clips that you can watch online on your PC.

To do so just click the Trailers link on the Lycos Movies page (entertainment.lycos.com/movies/) or the Movie Clips link on the Lycos home page. This opens a new Lycos Video window; browse through the clips by movie title and then click the Watch link to view a specific clip.



#115: Find Out More About Your Favorite Movies

Lycos includes a large movie database that you can search from the Lycos Entertainment page (entertainment.lycos.com). Each movie listing includes a synopsis, one or more reviews, cast information, and credits. Recent movies also include a link to view the film's trailer. Just go to the Lycos Entertainment page, enter your query into the search box, and select the Movie Titles option.

insider insight

If you're really into movie information and trivia, nothing beats the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com)—a must-see site for all serious movie lovers.



#116: Find Out More About Your Favorite Celebrities

Still on the movie theme, Lycos offers up a fairly comprehensive database of movie stars. Each celebrity page includes a fairly comprehensive biography, along with a picture gallery and list of films and projects. You can search this database by going to the Lycos Entertainment page (entertainment.lycos.com), entering the star's name in the search box, and selecting the Celebrities option.

#117: Admire the Hottest Supermodels

Lycos is big on entertainment—to the point of offering some really quirky features. Case in point: Lycos is the only site I know that has a section just for pictures of supermodels. That's right, Lycos Models (models.lycos.com) features pictures, wallpapers, and screensavers of the world's most glamorous fashion models—you know, the women you see in all the ads and men's magazines, and in the swimsuit issue of *Sports Illustrated*. You can watch slideshows and download picture files to your heart's content. And remember to visit often; Lycos is constantly updating the content on this site, adding new and upcoming models to the list.

#118: Find the Lyrics to Your Favorite Songs

Ever find yourself trying to remember the words to a favorite song—and coming up short? Then you'll appreciate one of the quirkiest features of the Lycos site—the ability to search for and display song lyrics.

This definitely isn't a feature you'll find on other sites. I'm not even sure why Lycos offers it. But it's here nonetheless and is kind of cool, especially if you're a music lover.

To search for a particular lyric, go to the Lycos Music page (music.lycos.com); choose to Search for Lyrics; and then enter the song title, artist name, or a line from the song. When you click the Search button, Lycos displays a page of links to lyric archive sites; click a link to view the lyrics.

Neat, eh?

#119: Play Games Online and Win Prizes

Lycos partners with sister company Gamesville (www.gamesville.com) to offer a variety of online gaming to its users. Gamesville, shown in Figure 5-9, offers free single-player and multi-player games, in all popular categories—action, arcade, casino, and so on. The site also offers multi-player gaming for a number of PC and video games, including Madden NFL Football and Halo 2.

Gamesville is somewhat unique among other gaming portals in that it offers game contests in which you can win money and other prizes. For example, you can enter Gamesville's Bingo Zone and play for two dollars per game. Prizes are also available with a variety of casino games, including poker, blackjack, and online slot machines.

The screenshot shows the Gamesville homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for 'Lost Password?', 'Help', 'Bookmark Us', and 'Make Us Your Homepage'. Below this is a banner for 'FREE GAMES' with links to 'ARCADE', 'BINGO', 'BOARD', 'CARDS', and 'CASINO'. On the left, there's a sidebar with sections for 'GAME SEARCH', 'RECOMMENDED' (listing 'New Game Releases', 'Free Prize Games', 'Affiliates Program', and 'GV Store'), and 'MEMBER CENTRAL' (showing a profile for 'Kelly Donevant \$2,070 winner Three-Eyed Bingo'). The main content area features a 'FEATURED FREE GAME - MIAMI DICE' section with a large image of dice and the text 'MIAMI DICE'. Below it, a description reads: 'Feel the heat, pushing you to roll the dice! Win cash prizes every day...' and 'Sponsored by: **Engelbre**'. To the right are sections for 'POKER INFERNINO' (with a card table icon), 'CASINO JACKPOTS' (listing '\$310,975.28' and 'Choose Casino'), 'PRICE IS RIGHT' (with a game board icon), and 'GREAT ONLINE CASINOS' (listing 'River Belle', 'The Gaming Club', 'Lucky Nugget', and 'Jackpot City'). At the bottom, there's a 'MY FAVORITES' section with links to 'Poker Inferno', 'Three-Eyed Bingo', 'Frantic Fish', and 'Bingo Zone', along with a 'FREE BINGO GAMES' section.

Figure 5-9: Play games and win prizes at Gamesville.

#120: Put Your Kids in the Zone

As part of its various services, Lycos offers a fairly decent site for kids, called Lycos Zone (lycoszone.lycos.com). As you can see in Figure 5-10, Lycos Zone includes games, homework help (in the form of an encyclopedia, kids' dictionary, science projects, and more), comics, and a variety of reference information and entertainment. Kids can also view movie previews, music videos, and photo slideshows of their favorite celebrities. There's also a section just for teachers, as well as the extremely popular How Stuff Works. All in all, Lycos Zone is a site worth your children's attention.

The screenshot shows the Lycos Zone homepage from September 8, 2003. At the top, there's a search bar with the date 'September 8, 2003'. The main header is 'LYCOS ZONE'. Below it, there are links for 'Lykos Zone Home', 'Family Zone', and 'Teachers Zone'. A banner ad for 'Expedia.com' says 'We're Giving Away a Trip a Day!' and 'Click Now!'. The left sidebar has links for 'LykosZone Home', 'Games', 'Homework', 'How Stuff Works', 'Comics', 'L2 Slide Shows', 'Family Zone', 'Teachers', and 'Privacy Promise'. It also features a 'Fun Survey' logo. The central content area includes a 'L-Zone Feature!' section with an 'Anti-Drug' logo and text about supporting The White House's anti-drug efforts. There's also a 'Homework Help' section with links to an 'Encyclopedia', 'Kids Dictionary', 'Atlas', 'Translate It', 'Science Projects', and 'More'. To the right, there's a cartoon character with the text 'COOL GAMES!' and a link 'Click Here to Play!'. Another sidebar on the right is titled 'ADVERTISEMENTS' and features a 'Vertical Horizon' logo with the text 'Listen and WIN when you order'.

Figure 5-10: Lycos Zone offers tons of kids-friendly content and activities.

#121: Make Your Travel Reservations (via Orbitz)

Click the Travel link on the Lycos home page (or go to travel.lycos.com) and you can make all your flight, hotel, and car reservations online. Lycos partners with travel giant Orbitz to handle all its reservations, so you should be able to find the bookings you want at affordable prices.

#122: Create Your Own Personal Lycos

Like most other portals, Lycos offers a way to customize its content to create your own personal start page. This service, called My Lycos, is accessed by clicking the My Lycos link on the Lycos home page or by going directly to my.lycos.com.

You can customize your My Lycos page in a number of ways. As you can see in Figure 5-11, all My Lycos content is contained in separate boxes; you can select which content boxes you want to display and then arrange them anywhere on your page. You use the Add & Remove, Move, and Change Box Size buttons to manage your content boxes; the Change Colors button is used to apply a different color theme to the entire page.



Figure 5-11: Customize the content and design of your My Lycos page.



#123: Build Your Own Web Site—for Free

Lycos happens to be affiliated with two of the largest home page communities on the Web. Both Tripod and Angelfire are part of the Terra Lycos Network, and both offer free personal pages to members.

For whatever reason, Tripod (www.tripod.lycos.com) is the site of choice for Lycos users; it's what comes up when you click the Build a Website link on the Lycos home page. Tripod offers a variety of Web page building tools, including an easy-to-use Site Builder, a robust HTML Editor, and special tools for WebTV users.

Tripod's free entry-level plan gives you 20MB of storage space and 1GB of monthly bandwidth. It also pops up advertisements when visitors view your page, which is why it doesn't cost you anything. If you want a page without the ads (or with more space or features), you can sign up for one of Tripod's other plans; for example, the Tripod Plus plan, for \$4.95 a month, provides 25MB of storage space, 5GB of monthly bandwidth, and doesn't subject your visitors to any ads.

**insider
insight**

If, for some reason, you don't like Tripod, check out its sister service, Angelfire (www.angelfire.com). Angelfire offers similar plans at similar prices, including the ubiquitous free (with ads) plan.



#124: Create Your Own Blog

Tripod also offers a Blog Builder to all paid subscribers. (If you're using the free service, you're out of luck—sorry.) Blogs (short for *Web logs*) are the hottest thing going; they let you create a kind of online journal for all the world to see. You can use your blog to express your opinions and present your thoughts, or to log comments from visitors. Visitors' comments can be either moderated or unmoderated; it's your choice.

When you click the Blogs link on the Lycos home page, you're taken to Tripod's Blog Builder page (blog.tripod.lycos.com). From here you can click the Create & Edit Your Blog link to set up your blog on the Tripod site; it's as easy as filling in a few forms and choosing the appropriate options.

Once your blog is up and running, it's listed in the Tripod Blog Directory, also located on the Blog Builder page.

#125: Check Out the Lycos 50

Want to find out what's hot and what's not? Then check out the Lycos 50 (50.lycos.com), which details Lycos' top 50 searches for the previous week. The Lycos 50 is presented in the form of a Billboard-type list, complete with last week's position and the number of weeks on the list.

The Lycos 50 page also includes a Daily Report, focusing on interesting searches of the moment. This is always an interesting and entertaining read.

Summary

So that ends our tour of Lycos—and our examination of the top Web portals. As you've no doubt realized, whichever portal you're looking at, there's a lot more there than you knew about. That's not to say that all portals are created equal, because they're not. Some portals are just plain better than others, either because of their content, services, or design. And, while some portals do a great job of searching the Web, others are best used for searching only when you're in a pinch.

Because searching is so important, we'll next turn our focus to the Web's best search sites—Google, Ask Jeeves, and the rest. If you're serious about searching, these are the sites to use—so turn the page and check them out!

Part II

Secrets of the Internet Search Engines

Chapter 6: Google Secrets

Chapter 7: AllTheWeb Secrets

Chapter 8: Ask Jeeves Secrets

Chapter 9: AltaVista Secrets

Chapter 10: HotBot Secrets

Google Secrets

Chapter 6



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Google calls itself the "World's Best Search Engine," and by most accounts that statement is a true one. Google is not only the world's largest and most trafficked search site, it's also one of the 10 most popular sites on the entire Internet. Just look at these statistics:

- ◆ More than 73.5 million unique users visit Google each month
- ◆ Google is used for more than 200 million searches every day
- ◆ Google's search engine indexes more than 3 billion Web pages, more than 425 million images, and more than 700 million Usenet messages
- ◆ Google provides an interface for 88 different languages and offers results in 35 languages—more than half of Google's traffic is from outside the U.S.

Unlike a portal like Yahoo!, Google is all about searching—no e-mail, no personalized start page, no streaming audio or video. But that doesn't mean Google is just a simple query box. Google offers basic and advanced Web searching, an editor-driven directory, and dozens of specific searches—for images, news articles, Usenet newsgroup messages, street addresses and phone numbers, and stock quotes and information. Google's newest services let you search online catalogs and Web sites for products to buy and to narrow your searches to specific government and university sites. Google even lets Web site developers incorporate Google searches into their own Web sites and build custom applications using Google Web Application Programming Interfaces (APIs).

Google at a Glance

If you're a typical Internet user, you access Google several times a week, if not several times a day. As a typical user, you also don't use a tenth of Google's search power—which means you're not searching as effectively or as efficiently as you could. That's probably because you never move beyond Google's admittedly easy-to-use home page. The Google home page (www.google.com) is a marvel of simplicity and elegant Web page design. As you can see in Figure 6-1, most searches can be undertaken by entering a query into the search box and then clicking the Google Search button. This returns a list of results ranked in order of relevance.



Figure 6-1: Google's simple, easy-to-use home page.

caution Google queries cannot exceed 10 words in length.

Most users like Google's easy-to-use, uncluttered interface; its fast operation; and its quality search results. What most users don't know is that Google offers a variety of specialty search services that you can use to perform more targeted searches. Read on, then, to discover the secrets of Google searching—and become a Google power searcher.



#126: Why Google Delivers More Targeted Results Than Other Search Engines

Like most of the major search engines, Google assembles the pages in its search index by using special "searchbot" or crawler software to scour the Web. Found pages are automatically added to Google's ever-expanding database; when you perform a search, you're actually searching this database of Web pages, not the Web itself.

The results of your Google searches are ranked according to Google's trademarked PageRank technology. This technology measures how many other pages link to a particular page; the more links to a page, the higher that page ranks. In addition, PageRank assigns a higher weight to links that come from higher-ranked pages. So if a page is linked to from a number of high-ranked pages, that page will itself achieve a higher ranking.

The theory is that the more popular a page is, the higher that page's ultimate value. While this sounds a little like a popularity contest (and it is), it's surprising how often this approach delivers high-quality results.

The number of Web pages indexed by Google is among the largest of all search engines (Google and AllTheWeb are continually jockeying for "biggest" bragging rights), which means you stand a fairly good chance of actually finding what you were searching for. And the Google search engine is relatively smart; it analyzes the keywords in your query and recognizes the type of search result you're looking for. (For example, if you enter a person's name and city, it knows to search its phone book—not the general Web index.)



#127: Bypass the Search Results—and Go Directly to the First Page on the List

You have another option after you enter your search query, other than clicking the Google Search button. When you click the I'm Feeling Lucky button, Google shoots you directly to the Web page that ranked at the top of your search results, no extra clicking necessary. If you trust Google to always deliver the one best answer to your query, this is a fun option to try. For the rest of us, however, it's still best to view the rest of the search results to see what other sites might match what we're looking for.



#128: Google Automatically Corrects Your Spelling

That's right—you don't have to be a spelling bee winner to search with Google. That's because Google has built-in automatic spelling correction. If you inadvertently misspell a search query, Google recognizes what you meant to type and provides the correct spelling for you.

So go ahead and type as fast as you can. Google will correct all your spelling mistakes.



#129: Don't Bother with Capitalization

When you're entering a Google query, don't waste time pressing the Shift key on your computer keyboard. That's because the Google search engine isn't case

sensitive. So it doesn't matter how you capitalize the words in your query—**Red Dog** and **red dog** will both return the same results.

#130: Search for Similar Words

Not sure you're thinking of the right word for a query? Do you figure that some Web pages might use alternate words to describe what you're thinking of? Then use synonyms in your searches!

Google uses the tilde (~) operator to search for synonyms of a specific word. Just enter the tilde before the keyword, like this: **~keyword**.

For example, to search for words that are like the word "elderly," enter the query **~elderly**. This will find pages that include not just the word "elderly," but also the words "senior," "older," and so on.

#131: Conduct an Either/Or Search

When you enter multiple keywords in a search query, how does Google parse all those words?

It's quite simple, really. By default, Google searches for Web pages that contain *all* the words you entered. That means that Google is inserting an invisible "and" between the words in your search query.

For example, if you enter **red corvette** as your query, Google reads this as **red AND corvette**, and searches for pages that contain both the words "red" and "corvette." Results are likely to include pages dedicated to the Prince song, as well as to owners of crimson cruisers. But if a page is only about 'Vettes—and doesn't specifically mention red ones—it won't be listed.

The bottom line? You don't have to enter that AND between keywords; Google does it for you.

On the other hand (and here's where the secret starts), if you want to search for pages that contain either one or another keyword (but not necessarily both), you have to give Google explicit instructions. You do this by using the special OR operator. So, to search for pages that include either of the words you enter, you insert this OR operator between the words in your query. (Surrounded by spaces, of course.)

Using the example from the previous secret, if you want to search for pages that contain either the word "red" *or* the word "corvette," you enter the query **red OR corvette**. This will return all pages that include the word "red" as well as all pages that include the word "corvette," no intersection necessary. So, you'll get a lot of pages about red balloons and red robins, as well as general pages about Corvettes—as well as those pages that include both words.



#132: Search for an Exact Phrase

Here's one of Google's most powerful search tools, but also one that not enough users know about. When you want to search for a particular item that you describe in multiple words, enclose the entire phrase in quotation marks. This forces Google to search for the *exact phrase*, and thus returns more targeted results.

For example, if you're searching for Monty Python, you *could* enter **monty python** as your query, and you'd get acceptable results; the results will include pages that include both the words "monty" and "python." But these results will include not only pages about the British comedy troupe, but also pages about snakes named Monty, and guys named Monty who have snakes for pets. To limit the results just to pages about the Monty Python troupe, you want to search for pages that include the two words in that precise order. So you should enter the query "**monty python**"—making sure to include the quotation marks. This way if the word "monty" occurs at the top of a page and "python" occurs at the bottom, it won't be listed in the search results.

Let's take this a step further. Want to search for the movie *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*? Enter "**monty python and the holy grail**". Your results will be much more targeted than if your query includes all these words separately without the quotation marks.

#133: Let Google Complete the Phrase

Unlike most other search engines, Google does not support the use of wildcards to complete a keyword, nor does it use automatic stemming. Wildcards would let you search for all words that include the first part of a keyword; for example, a search for **book*** (with the * wildcard) would typically return results for "books," "bookstore," "bookkeeper," and so on. Stemming is kind of like an automatic wildcard, where entering the keyword **book** would return all the aforementioned results ("books," "bookstore," etc.), no wildcard necessary.

Since Google doesn't support wildcards or stemming, you have to enter all forms of any words you want to search for. Using the above example, you would have to enter the query **book OR books OR bookstore OR bookkeeper** to return all possible results. It's a bit of a bother and a real weakness when you're comparing Google to search engines with more powerful query features, such as AltaVista.

However, Google *does* let you use whole-word wildcards within a phrase search. That is, you can search for a complete phrase even if you're not sure of all the words in the phrase. You let the * wildcard character stand in for those words you don't know.

Here's an example. Let's say you want to search for pages that discuss Martin Luther King's famous "I have a dream" speech, but you're not sure whether he "has," "had," or "have" that dream. So you use the * wildcard to stand in for the word in question, and enter the following query: "**i * a dream**".

You can use multiple wildcards within a single phrase, within reason. While “* * **a dream**” might return acceptable results, “* * * **dream**” is a fairly useless query.

#134: Include Stop Words in Your Search

In an effort to produce more efficient searches, Google automatically disregards certain common words, called *stop words*, that you might include in your search queries. Including a stop word in a search normally does nothing but slow the search down, which is why Google excises them. Examples of the types of words that Google ignores are “where,” “how,” and “what,” as well as certain single letters (“a”) and digits. For example, if you enter the query **how electricity works**, Google ignores the “how” and searches only for “electricity” and “works.”

If you want to include specific stop words in your search, you have to instruct Google to do so. You do this by adding a plus sign (+) to your query, immediately followed (with no space) by the stop word you want to include. (Make sure you put a space *before* the plus sign but not afterwards!) Using our example, to include the stop word “how” in your search, you’d enter the following query: **+how electricity works**.

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If a particular stop word is part of a phrase, you can also use the phrase operator to include the stop word in your query. In this particular example, you could enter the query “**how electricity works**” and the stop word “how” would automatically be included.

#135: Exclude Words from Your Results

Just as you can use the “plus” operator to specifically include words in your results, you can use the contrasting “minus” operator to *exclude* pages that include specific words. This is particularly useful if you’ve used a word in your query that has more than one meaning.

For example, if you search for **cloud**, you could get pages about those fluffy floating things, or about a blurring or obscuring (of vision, of minds, etc.). If you don’t want your results to include clouds of the meteorological variety, enter a query that looks like this: **cloud -cumulus**. If you want to search for **bass**—the singer, not the fish—you’d enter **bass -fish**. And so on.

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You can also use the “plus” operator to make sure your results include pages that contain a specific word. Using the meteorological example, to search for pages about floating clouds, enter the query **cloud + cumulus**. (Although, technically, the “plus” operator isn’t necessary because Google includes an automatic AND between all the keywords in a query.)



#136: Narrow Your Search to Specific File Types

Google can search for information contained in all sorts of documents—not just HTML Web pages. In particular, Google searches for the following file types and extensions in addition to normal Web pages:

- ◆ Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF)
- ◆ Adobe PostScript (PS)
- ◆ Lotus 1-2-3 (WK1, WK2, WK3, WK4, WK5, WKI, WKS, WKU)
- ◆ Lotus WordPro (LWP)
- ◆ MacWrite (MW)
- ◆ Microsoft Excel (XLS)
- ◆ Microsoft PowerPoint (PPT)
- ◆ Microsoft Word (DOC)
- ◆ Microsoft Works (WDB, WKS, WPS)
- ◆ Microsoft Write (WRI)
- ◆ Rich Text Format (RTF)
- ◆ Text (ANS, TXT)

If you want to restrict your results to a specific file type, add the following phrase to your query: **filetype:filename**. For example, if you want to search only for Microsoft Word documents, enter **filetype:doc**.

To eliminate a particular file type from your search results, add the following phrase to your query: **-filetype:filename**. For example, if you want to eliminate PDF files from your results, enter **-filetype:pdf**.

#137: Narrow Your Search to a Specific Domain or Web Site

Maybe you want to search only those sites within a specific top-level Web domain, such as .com or .org or .edu—or, perhaps, within a specific country's domain, such as .uk (United Kingdom) or .ca (Canada). Google lets you do this by using the **site:** operator. Just enter the operator followed by the domain name, like this: **site:.domain**.

For example, to search only those sites within the .edu domain, you'd enter **site:.edu**. To search only Canadian sites, enter **site:.ca**. Remember to put the "dot" before the domain.

The **site:** operator can also be used to restrict your search to a specific Web site. In this instance, you enter the entire top-level URL, like this: **site:www.website.domain**. For example, to search only within my personal Molehill Group Web site (www.molehillgroup.com), enter **site:www.molehillgroup.com**. To search only within Microsoft's Web site (www.microsoft.com), enter **site:www.microsoft.com**. Your results will include only pages listed within the specified Web site.



#138: Narrow Your Search to Words in the Page's Title, URL, Body Text, or Link Text

Google offers two methods for restricting your search to the titles of Web pages, ignoring the pages' body text. If your query contains a single word, use the **intitle:** operator. If your query contains multiple words, use the **allintitle:** operator.

We'll look at some examples.

If you want to look for pages with the word "Toyota" in the title, use the **intitle:** operator and enter this query: **intitle:toyota**. If you want to look for pages with both the words "Toyota" and "Camry" in the title, use the **allintitle:** operator and enter this query: **allintitle: toyota camry**. Notice that when you use the **allintitle:** operator, all the keywords after the operator are searched for; you separate the keywords with spaces.



caution

If you enter **intitle:toyota camry**, Google will only search for the word "Toyota" in the page titles; it will conduct a normal full-page search for the word "Camry".

Similar to the **intitle:** and **allintitle:** operators are the **inurl:** and **allinurl:** operators. These operators let you restrict your search to words that appear in Web page addresses, or URLs. You use these operators in the same fashion: **inurl:** to search for single words and **allinurl:** to search for multiple words.

It's more likely that you'll want to search the body text of Web pages. You can restrict your search to body text only (excluding the page title, URL, and link text), by using the **intext:** and **allintext:** operators. The syntax is the same as the previous operators; use **intext:** to search for single words and **allintext:** to search for multiple words.

There's one more operator similar to the previous batch: **inanchor:** lets you restrict your search to words in the link, or anchor, text on a Web page. This is the text that accompanies a hypertext link—the underlined text on the page. For example, to search for links that reference the word "dinosaur," you'd enter **inanchor:dinosaur**.



#139: Travel Back in Time for Your Search

When you conduct your search, do you have in mind a particular page or article that you remember reading a year or so ago? Then what you want is a time machine—one that can take you back to search the Web as it existed at a particular point in time.

Google can be that time machine.



Google lets you limit your search results to Web pages created within a particular date range. This way you can eliminate newer (or older) pages from your results, and glimpse a snapshot of the Web the way it once was.

There are two ways to restrict your Google search to a specific date range. The first is the least practical, but it's worth discussing anyway.

When you use the **daterange:** operator, Google restricts its search to Web pages that match the dates you enter. Know, however, that Google dates the pages in its index based on when it indexed them—not when the pages were actually created. So if a page was created sometime back in 1999 but Google didn't get around to indexing it until June 15, 2003, it will be dated June 15, 2003. It's an imperfect way to approach this issue, but it's the only one that Google offers. And there's another catch to using the **daterange:** operator—you have to express the date as a Julian date, which is a continuous count of dates since January 1, 4713 BC.

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If you don't feel like calculating your own Julian dates—and who does?—you can look them up at the U.S. Naval Observatory Astronomical Applications Department Web site (aa.usno.navy.mil/data/docs/juliandate.html).

If you insist on using the **daterange:** operator, your query syntax should look like this: **daterange:startdate-enddate**. I won't bother with an example.

The better approach is to use the Date option on Google's Advanced Search page. This option lets you enter current dates; none of this Julian nonsense. Just enter a start date and an ending date, and Google will restrict its search to pages indexed during that time frame. (Skip ahead to Secret #144 to learn more about the Advanced Search page.)



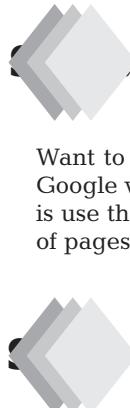
#140: Resurrect Dead Pages

What do you do if you click to a Web page in the search results list, but that page no longer exists? (It happens; thousands of older Web pages go dead every day.) You may still be in luck, because Google saves a copy of each page that it indexes as it existed at the time it was indexed. So even if a page is dead and gone, you may still be able to view the cached (saved) version of that page on Google's server.

To display a specific cached page, use the **cache:** operator, like this: **cache:URL**. For example, to display the cached version of my Molehill Group home page, enter **cache:www.molehillgroup.com**.

insider insight

Even if the page itself has been cached, that doesn't mean that all the elements on the page have also been saved. Some graphic elements might no longer exist, and thus might not display on the cached page.



#141: List Pages That Link to a Specific Page

Want to know which other Web pages are linked to a specific page? Because Google works by tracking page links, this is easy to find out. All you have to do is use the **link:** operator, like this: **link:URL**. For example, to see the thousands of pages that link to Microsoft's Web site, enter **link:www.microsoft.com**.

#142: List Similar Pages

Have you ever found a Web page you really like, and then wondered if there were any more like it on the Web? Wonder no more; you can use Google's **related:** operator to display pages that are in some way similar to the specified page. For example, if you really like the news stories on the CNN Web site (www.cnn.com), you can find similar pages by entering **related:www.cnn.com**.



#143: Find Out More about a Specific Page

Google collects a variety of information about the Web pages it indexes. In particular, Google can tell you which pages link to that page (see the **link:** operator, above), which pages are similar to that page (the **related:** operator), and which pages contain that page's URL. To get links to all this information on a single page, use Google's **info:** operator. For example, entering **info:www.molehillgroup.com** displays the information shown in Figure 6-2.

Advanced Search Preferences Language Tools Search Tips
info:www.molehillgroup.com Google Search

Showing web page information for www.molehillgroup.com

[The Molehill Group](#)
New Books! Take a look at these recently published books by author Michael Miller: ...

Google can show you the following information for this URL:

- Show Google's cache of [www.molehillgroup.com](#)
- Find web pages that are [similar to www.molehillgroup.com](#)
- Find web pages that [link to www.molehillgroup.com](#)
- Find web pages that [contain the term "www.molehillgroup.com"](#)

info:www.molehillgroup.com Google Search Search within results

Figure 6-2: Use the **info:** operator to display information about a specific URL.

#144: Use Google's Advanced Search Page

Not comfortable learning all those complicated search operators, but still want to fine-tune your search beyond the basic keyword query? Then here's a secret for you—almost all of this fine-tuning can be done from the simple pull-down menus and checkboxes on Google's Advanced Search page.

You can access the Advanced Search page by clicking the Advanced Search link on Google's home page. As you can see in Figure 6-3, the Advanced Search page contains a number of options you can use to fine-tune your searches, without having to learn all those advanced operators. All you have to do is make the appropriate selections on the page and Google will do all the fine-tuning for you.

What options are available on the Advanced Search page? Table 6-1 provides the details.

The screenshot shows the Google Advanced Search interface. At the top right, there are links for "Advanced Search Tips" and "All About Google". Below the header, there are several search filters:

- Find results:**
 - with all of the words: text input field, dropdown for 10 results, "Google Search" button
 - with the exact phrase: text input field
 - with at least one of the words: text input field
 - without the words: text input field
- Language:** dropdown menu set to "any language"
- File Format:** dropdown menu set to "any format"
- Date:** dropdown menu set to "anytime"
- Occurrences:** dropdown menu set to "anywhere in the page"
- Domain:** dropdown menu set to "only" with "e.g. google.com, .org" and a "More info" link
- SafeSearch:** radio buttons for "No filtering" (selected) and "Filter using SafeSearch"

Page-Specific Search:

- Similar:** text input field for "Find pages similar to the page" with "Search" button and example "e.g. www.google.com/help.html"
- Links:** text input field for "Find pages that link to the page" with "Search" button

Figure 6-3: Google's Advanced Search page.

Table 6-1: Options on Google's Advanced Search Page

Option	Description	<i>Same as this operator</i>
Results	Selects how many listings are displayed on the search results page	N/A
Find results with <i>all</i> of the words	Google's default search mode	N/A

Option	Description	Same as this operator
Find results with the <i>exact phrase</i>	Searches for the exact phrase entered	""
Find results with <i>at least one</i> of the words	Searches for either one word or another	OR
Find results <i>without</i> the words	Excludes pages that contain the specified word(s)	-
Language	Searches for pages written in a specific language	N/A
File Format	Limits search to specific file types	filetype:
Date	Limits search to Web pages created/updated within a specified date range	daterange:
Occurrences	Restricts the query to specified parts of the Web page: URL, body text, title, links, or anywhere	allintext:, allintitle:, allinurl:, inanchor:, intext:, intitle:, inurl:
Domain	Restricts the search to the specified Web site or domain	site:
SafeSearch	Activates SafeSearch content filter for this particular search	N/A
Similar	Finds pages similar to the specified Web page	related:
Links	Lists all pages that link to the specified Web page	link:

For many users, it's easier to use the Advanced Search page than it is to learn and enter Google's advanced operators into a standard search query. When you need to fine-tune the occasional search, this is the page to use!



#145: Get More from Your Search Results

For most searches, the list of sites on the search results page is all you need to find the information you're looking for. However, Google provides a number of ways to return even more information based on your search criteria. These "secret results" often contain information you might not have found otherwise.

Display Related News Stories

Google's search results page sometimes includes more than just Web pages that match your results. Depending on your specific query, Google's search results might include links to additional information—or to types of information specific to your request. The key is knowing what types of additional links Google might display, and how to use them.

For example, if the topic of your query was recently featured in the news, Google will display the three most recent headlines regarding the query at the top of the search results page. As you can see in Figure 6-4, these headlines link to stories sourced from the *New York Times*, Voice of America, and other major news organizations.

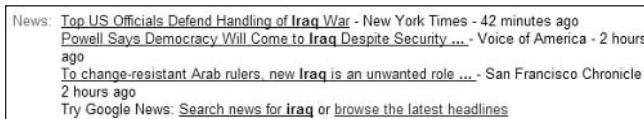


Figure 6-4: Google displays news headlines related to your search query.

Display Cached Pages

As you learned earlier in this chapter, a cached page is that version of a Web page saved by Google when the page was last indexed. If a page changes frequently, the cached page might contain information no longer available on the current page. In the case of a page that no longer exists, accessing the Google cache might be the only way to still view the page.

To view a cached version of a page listed on a Google search results page, click the Cached link at the bottom of the results listing. If that page still exists on Google's server, it will now be displayed.

Display Similar Pages

Underneath each listing on the search results page is a Similar Pages link. When you click this link, Google will display a list of pages that are somehow similar to this particular page. Using Google's Similar Pages feature is a good way to broaden your search without starting over from scratch.

Jump to the Google Directory Listing

Many things you search for will also appear within the Google Directory. As you'll learn in Secret #146, the Google Directory is a directory of Web pages that have been compiled by human editors—in contrast to the main Google index, which is assembled purely by robot software. The listings in the Google Directory are thus of higher quality than those available with a traditional Google search, or at least theoretically so.

If a matched Web page appears in the Google Directory, the associated directory category will be listed under the search result. Click this link and you'll be directed to that category in the Google Directory, which will typically include a list of pages that might also be of interest.

Search within Your Search Results

If Google gives you too many results to deal with, you can winnow down the results by conducting a further search within the original search results. To narrow an existing search, all you need to do is add more words to the end of your original search query. Just move your cursor to the search box—which contains the keywords of your current query—and tack on more words to fine-tune your search. Click the Google Search button again and the next page of search results should be more targeted.

#146: Find More Results in the Google Directory

Google indexes more than three billion Web pages. The only problem with indexing so many pages is that it's kind of a brute force approach; it's the issue of quantity versus quality, with quantity definitely taking precedence.

It's sometimes better to view a list of pages that have been personally selected for their content and appropriateness. When you want handpicked results to your search, you want a directory. Where search indexes (such as Google) provide a large number of results, an edited directory produces arguably better results—even though it contains far fewer listings than the large Web indexes.

Google offers just this sort of Web directory, called the Google Directory. The Google Directory, shown in Figure 6-5, contains Web page listings, organized by category, that have been handpicked by a team of human editors. You access the Google Directory by clicking the Directory tab on the Google home page or by going directly to directory.google.com.

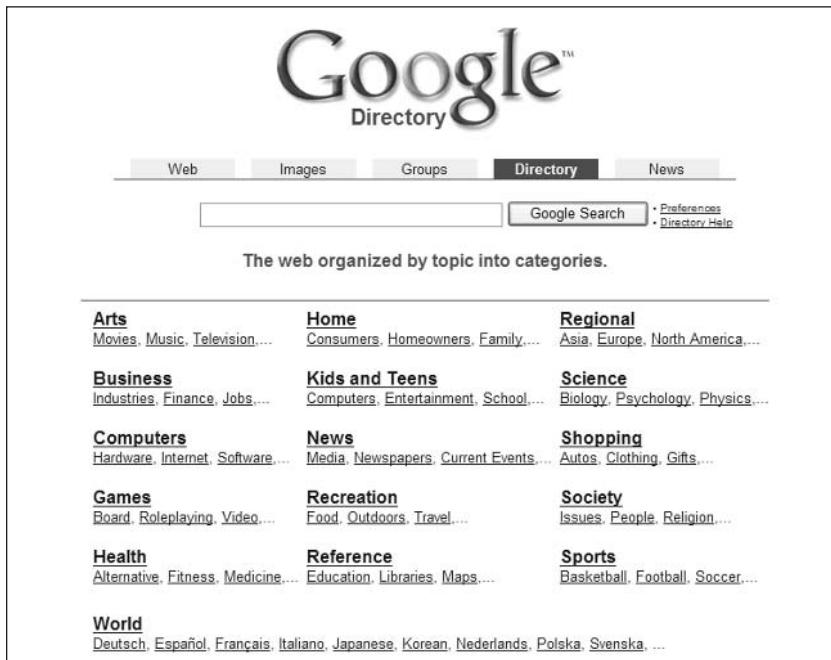


Figure 6-5: View a human-edited listing of Web sites with the Google Directory.

Now here's the funny thing. Google doesn't actually assemble its own directory. Instead, Google uses a third-party directory called the Open Directory Project. Google then grafts the Google interface and search engine on top of this directory. So, while the listings in the directory are assembled by Open Directory editors, they're ranked using Google's PageRank technology. If you compare a category in the Google Directory with the same category in the Open Directory, the listings will be the same, but arranged differently.

The good thing about the Open Directory is that it's perhaps the largest and highest-quality Web site directory available. The Open Directory Project is a huge undertaking, with thousands of users submitting reviews and rankings of Web sites and pages. Google made a good choice in partnering with the Open Directory; the combination of Google's interface with Open Directory listings makes the Google Directory the easiest-to-use and most useful directory on the Web.

insider insight

You can access the Open Directory directly at www.dmoz.org.

You can search the Google Directory by using the standard Google search box. You can also browse through the directory by clicking the individual category headings. Each Google Directory results page displays related categories at the top, followed by the pages within that category, ranked in order of appropriateness. What's nice about Google Directory listings is that each listing includes a brief synopsis of the page; this is something you don't get with normal Google search index results.

#147: Personalize Your Search Results

Most users aren't aware that they can personalize the way in which Google displays search results. You configure your search results from Google's Preferences page, shown in Figure 6-6. You access this page by clicking the Preferences link on Google's home page. Read on to learn more about each of the settings on this page.



Figure 6-6: Personalize your search results from Google's Preferences page.

Display Google in a Different Language

By default, Google displays all the text and buttons on its pages in English—unless you're accessing one of Google's international sites. But, assuming you're accessing the standard English-language Google site, everything is in English.

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Google has dedicated sites for 82 different countries. You can find a list of these local sites—and their URLs—by clicking the Language Tools link on the Google home page.

You can, however, configure Google's English-language site to display in other languages. As of this writing Google can display its pages in 88 different languages, from Afrikaans to Zulu. Make your choice in the Interface Language section of the Preferences page and all of Google's text and controls will display in the new language.

In addition to real languages, Google is also available in a number of fake languages. My favorites? Klingon, Pig Latin (shown in Figure 6-7), Elmer Fudd ("I'm Feewing Wucky"), and Bork, Bork, Bork!—the pseudo-Swedish spoken by the Muppets' Swedish Chef.

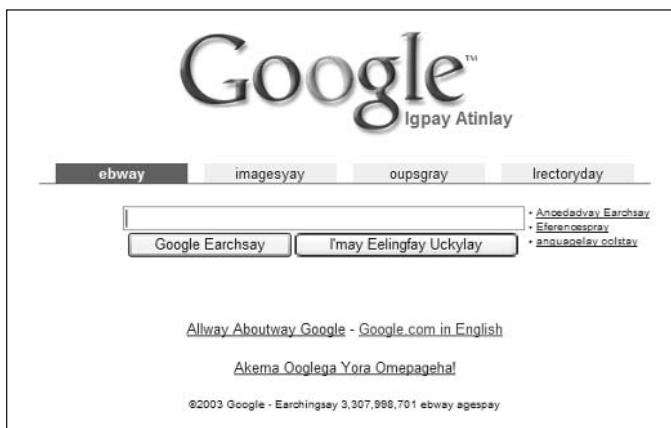


Figure 6-7: Google in Pig Latin—Google Search becomes Google Earchsay.

Search in a Different Language

While English might be the default language of the Web, it isn't the only language—not by any means. As the World Wide Web becomes more worldwide, more and more pages are posted in a variety of native languages. Whether your search includes pages in other languages or is limited to English-language pages, you can control this option from the Preferences page.

By default, Google searches for pages written in any language. If you want to limit your search to a language you can read, go to the Search Language section of the Preferences page and make a new selection. This will restrict your results solely to pages written in the specified language.

Search Safely

The SafeSearch Filtering section on Google's Preferences page activates a content filter for Google's search results. You use SafeSearch to filter out Web pages with offensive content. Read on to Secret #148 to learn more.

Display More Results Per Page

By default, Google displays ten results per page. This allows for a fairly fast display of results. If you want to see more results on your page, go to the Number of Results section of the Preferences page and change the setting to 20, 30, 50, or 100.

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You can specify the number of results on a per query basis when you use Google's Advanced Search page.

Open a New Results Window

By default, your search results are displayed in the same browser window you used to initiate your search. If you prefer to have Google open a new browser window containing your search results, go to the Results Window section of the Preferences page and select the Open Search Results in a New Browser Window option. With this option selected, any time you click the Search Google button a new browser window will open with the search results listed.



#148: Make Google Safe for Kids

There's a lot of unsavory content on the Internet. When you perform a Google search, some of these undesirable pages can end up in your search results—which is not a great thing if it's your kids who are doing the searching.

Fortunately, Google offers a content filter that you can apply to your Google searches. Google's SafeSearch filter screens the Google index for sites that contain adult information and then eliminates those pages from your search results. Google uses proprietary technology to check keywords, phrases, URLs, and Google Directory categories against a list of objectionable words and topics. When you activate SafeSearch, you're blocked from viewing results that contain these undesirable words and topics.

You activate the SafeSearch filter from Google's Preferences page. You have three choices:

- ◆ **Moderate filtering:** Blocks objectionable images from Google Image Search results; it doesn't block any pages based on objectionable text. This is the default configuration.
- ◆ **Strict filtering:** Blocks both objectionable words and images—and also includes a stricter image filter than the moderate filtering option.
- ◆ **Do not filter my search results:** This turns off the SafeSearch filter.

If your kids use Google, consider activating SafeSearch's strict filtering option. It's not perfect, but it does a pretty good job of reducing the amount of bad stuff your kids might be exposed to.

#149: Get Answers from an Expert

If you can't find what you're looking for on Google (and, despite Google's advanced search technology, this sometimes happens), you have another course of action available to you—you can have an expert do the searching for you. Google Answers provides more than 500 paid researchers that will search the public Web and a variety of private databases for the information you request.

The Google Answers page (answers.google.com), shown in Figure 6-8, includes listings of previously answered questions, and also lets you enter new questions to be answered. The previously answered questions are organized by category; you can browse through the categories, or search for available answers using the Search Google Answers box.



Figure 6-8: Commission professional researchers at Google Answers.

To make a new request, enter your question into the Enter Your Question box, then click the Ask Question button. After you make your request, a Google researcher undertakes the search. When an answer is found, the researcher posts it to Google Answers, and notifies you via e-mail.

Using the Google Answers service comes at a price. You'll pay from \$2.50 and up for each question you ask, depending on its complexity. Note, however, that you're only charged for the information that is actually found; if Google's researchers draw a blank, you don't have to pay.

#150: Put Google in Your Browser

You don't have to go to the Google site to use Google search. Google enables you to install Google search functions in your Web browser, so you can use your browser to conduct a search, no entering of URLs necessary.

Google offers two methods of browser customization: Google Browser Buttons and the Google Toolbar. We'll look at each.

Google Browser Buttons

Google Browser Buttons are buttons that are added to your Web browser's personal or links toolbar. These buttons can be added to either Netscape or Internet Explorer browsers (versions 4.0 and later).

There are three Google Browser Buttons:

- ◆ **Google Search**—initiates a Google search when you highlight any word on a Web page and then click this button
- ◆ **GoogleScout**—finds Web pages that are similar to the currently displayed page
- ◆ **Google.com**—takes you to the Google home page

To install Google Browser Buttons in your Web browser, go to www.google.com/options/buttons.html and click the Get Your Google Buttons Here link. Follow the onscreen instructions to complete the installation.

Google Toolbar

An even better option is to install the dedicated Google Toolbar. As you can see in Figure 6-9, the Google Toolbar contains a lot more options and can even be customized to display only those options you desire.



Figure 6-9: The Google Toolbar.



The Google Toolbar is only compatible with Internet Explorer (version 5.5 or later).

Table 6-2 details what you'll find on the Google Toolbar:

Table 6-2: Google Toolbar Features

Button/Feature	Description
Google button	Takes you to the Google home page
Search box	Enter your queries here and then click the Search Web button; you can also click the down arrow to choose from a list of recent searched queries
Search Web	Click this button to initiate a Web search for the current query; click the down arrow to conduct other types of searches, including Search Site, I'm Feeling Lucky, Search Images, Search Groups, Search Directory, and Search Country
News	Takes you to the Google News page
PageRank	This section of the toolbar displays Google's ranking of the currently displayed page
X Blocked	This section appears when you activate Google's Pop-Up Blocker, which blocks pop-up ads while you're surfing the Web; the number represents the number of ads it's blocked
AutoFill	Completes Web forms with information you've saved on your own computer
Highlight	Automatically highlights (in yellow) the words you searched for on the current Web page
Page Info	Click this button to display a drop-down menu of informative options, including Cached Snapshot of Page, Similar Pages, Backward Links, and Translate into English
Options	Click this button to configure the buttons on and functions of the Google Toolbar
Up	Navigates up one level in the current Web site
Next	Displays the next page listed in the current search results
Previous	Displays the previous page listed in the current search results
Category	Displays the appropriate category page in the Google Directory for the topic of your current search
Voting buttons	Click the "happy face" button to tell Google you like the current page; click the "unhappy face" button to tell Google that you don't like it
Word find	These are buttons representing the words you just searched for (they appear at the far right of the toolbar); click a word find button to jump to the next occurrence of that word on the current page



Not all of these buttons appear on the Google Toolbar by default. You can customize what buttons appear on the toolbar by clicking the Options button and making the appropriate selections in the Options dialog box.



If you use Google a lot (and use a recent version of Internet Explorer), you'll like the Google Toolbar. Everything you normally do on the Google site is right there on the toolbar, just a click away. It's easy to use, and doesn't take up much screen real estate.

To install the Google Toolbar, go to toolbar.google.com and click the Get the Google Toolbar! button. Follow the onscreen instructions to download the software and complete the installation.

Google Deskbar

If you're a Windows user, you can take advantage of Google's latest navigational tool—the Google Deskbar. This little utility installs right in the Windows taskbar, and lets you search Google without even launching your browser. Once installed, you can access the Deskbar by pressing Ctrl+Alt+G, and then enter your query into the Deskbar search box. Your search results are displayed in a small inset window.

To download and install the Google Deskbar, go to toolbar.google.com/deskbar and click the Download Google Deskbar button. You need to be running either Windows 98, Me, XP, or 2000, along with Internet Explorer version 5.5 or higher.



#151: Search for Pictures

If you're looking for pictures on the Web, you can try a standard Google search and see what comes up. (Tip: try including the words "picture" or "photograph" in your query.) However, better results can be obtained by performing a search of a dedicated index of images—which is where Google Image Search comes in.

Google Image Search is an index of pictures. It doesn't index the text on a Web page, only photographs, drawings, logos, and other graphics. Of course, Google uses words to index these images—how else could you search for them? So, when you conduct an image search, you have to enter one or more words to describe the picture you're looking for. Google has categorized the images in its index by description, so as much as words can describe a picture, you'll be able to search the index for what you want.

Using Google Image Search

You access Google Image Search by clicking the Images tab on the Google home page or by going directly to images.google.com. The Image Search home page looks a lot like the regular Google home page. It works the same way, too. Just enter your query into the search box and then click the Google Search button.

The Image Search results page, however, looks a bit different from the normal Google search results. As shown in Figure 6-10, pictures that match your query are displayed as thumbnails; click the thumbnail to go to the page where the picture is displayed.

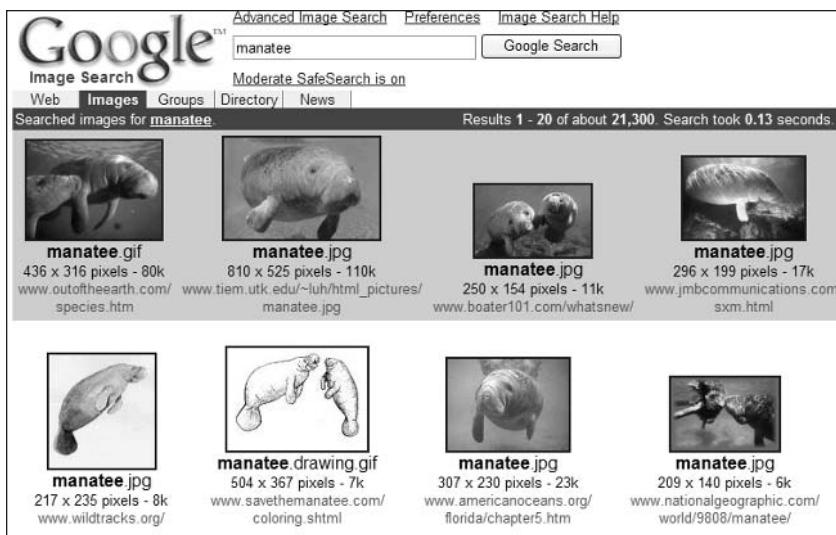


Figure 6-10: The results of a Google image search.

Advanced Image Search

Google Image Search also has some advanced search options that are accessible via its own Advanced Image Search page. The options are detailed in Table 6-3.

Table 6-3: Options in Google's Advanced Image Search

Option	Description
Find results related to <i>all</i> of the words	Default search mode
Find results related to the <i>exact phrase</i>	Searches for images related to the exact phrase entered
Find results related to <i>any</i> of the words	Searches for images related to any of the words in the query
Find results <i>not related</i> to the words	Excludes images that are not related to the specified word(s)
Size	Restricts search to images of a specified file size
Filetypes	Restricts search to images of a specified file type
Coloration	Restricts search to images of a specified color depth
Domain	Restricts search to a specified Web site or domain
SafeSearch	Activates moderate or strict SafeSearch filtering for this search

The Advanced Image Search page is great if you're looking for images of a particular file type, for example if you're looking only for JPG images. It's also good if you're looking for a high-resolution picture, which is likely to be of a larger file size, or a low-resolution picture, which is likely to be of a smaller file size.



#152: Search Usenet Newsgroups

Not all the information on the Internet resides on the World Wide Web. Usenet is the largest and oldest existing online community in the world, predating the World Wide Web—but using the Internet's basic infrastructure. Usenet is actually an assemblage of more than 30,000 online discussion groups, organized by topic. The messages exchanged in Usenet newsgroups often contain information relevant to the queries you might have.

The problem is that it's difficult to perform a "live" search among the 30,000 or so current newsgroups. Not only is that a lot of groups to search through, you're also faced with the problem of currentness. Because individual articles stay available in a newsgroup for only a limited period of time, articles "scroll off" particularly active newsgroups within a matter of days.

Fortunately for all of us, Google maintains a comprehensive archive of Usenet newsgroup messages, past and present. Google Groups is actually a continuation of the old DejaNews archive, which Google acquired in 2001. You can use Google Groups to search the newsgroup archives or to browse the current messages in any Usenet newsgroup.

You access Google Groups, shown in Figure 6-11, by clicking the Groups tab on Google's home page or by going directly to groups.google.com.

The screenshot shows the Google homepage with the 'Groups' tab selected. The main heading is 'Google™ Groups'. Below the search bar, there are links for 'Advanced Groups Search', 'Preferences', and 'Groups Help'. A section titled 'Post and read comments in Usenet discussion forums.' lists various newsgroup categories: **alt.** Any conceivable topic., **biz.** Business products, services, reviews..., **comp.** Hardware, software, consumer info..., **humanities.** Fine art, literature, philosophy..., **misc.** Employment, health, and much more... To the right of these, there are links: **news.** Info about Usenet News..., **rec.** Games, hobbies, sports..., **sci.** Applied science, social science..., **soc.** Social issues, culture..., and **talk.** Current issues and debates... At the bottom, there is a link to 'Browse complete list of groups...'.

Figure 6-11: Search Usenet newsgroups with Google Groups.

Searching the Newsgroups

Searching the Google Groups archive is as simple as entering a query into the search box, and then clicking the Google Search button. You can also use the **group:** operator to narrow your search to specific newsgroups, or the **author:** operator to search for messages from a particular user.

When you click the Google Search button, Google searches its newsgroup archive for messages that contain the keywords in your query. The search results page lists messages (from a variety of newsgroups) that match your query, along with a list of the top newsgroups pertaining to your search. For each matching message, Google includes the message's date and subject, which newsgroup the message appeared in, and the author of the message. Click the subject link to read the text of the message. From there you can view other messages in that particular thread or display other messages from that newsgroup.



You can also use Google Groups as a basic Web-based newsreader. Just click through the list of categories on the Google Groups home page until you reach a specific newsgroup; there you'll find a list of recent articles, which you can click to read.

Advanced Groups Search

Given the huge number of topic-specific newsgroups, you probably want to narrow down your search to specific groups—otherwise you'll be inundated with messages totally unrelated to the topic at hand. You can do this using the **group:** operator, as just discussed, or by accessing the Advanced Groups Search page. The advanced search options available are detailed in Table 6-4.

Table 6-4: Options in Google's Advanced Groups Search

Option	Description
Results	Selects how many listings are displayed on the search results page
Find messages with <i>all</i> of the words	Default search mode
Find messages with the <i>exact phrase</i>	Searches for messages that contain the exact phrase entered
Find messages with <i>at least one</i> of the words	Searches for messages that contain either one word or another
Find messages <i>without</i> the words	Excludes messages that contain the specified word(s)
Newsgroup	Searches for messages within the selected newsgroup
Subject	Searches only within the subject line of messages
Author	Searches for messages from the specified user

continued

Table 6-4 (continued)

Option	Description
Message ID	Searches for a specific message number
Language	Restricts search to messages written in the specified language
Message Date	Restricts search to messages created between the specified dates
SafeSearch	Activates the SafeSearch content filter for this search



#153: Search University, Government, and Technology Sites

By default, Google searches the entire Web for the words in your search queries. You can, of course, use the **site:** operator to narrow your search to a specific site or domain. But Google has identified a number of sites that are frequently searched by users and has created a series of site-specific searches you can execute without the use of special operators.

Search University Sites

There's a lot of good information to be found on the Web sites of major colleges and universities. That's why Google has made it easy to search specific university Web sites using Google University Search. You can use Google University Search to search for course schedules, admissions information, and the like.

You access Google University Search at www.google.com/options/universities.html. As of this writing, Google lists site-specific searches for more than 600 institutions worldwide, from Abilene Christian University to York University.

Search Government Sites

Google also makes it easy to search U.S. Government sites. When you access Google U.S. Government Search (www.google.com/unclesam/), Google directs your search to all the sites within the .gov domain—which include sites for all major U.S. government agencies, Congress, and the White House.

Search Technology Sites

Google has created several common technology-related searches. You can use these technology and site-specific searches to find technical support, software for downloading, and other computer-related information and services. These searches include:

- ◆ Google Apple Macintosh Search (www.google.com/mac/)
- ◆ Google BSD Search (www.google.com/bsd/)
- ◆ Google Linux Search (www.google.com/linux/)
- ◆ Google Microsoft Search (www.google.com/microsoft.html)

#154: Search for Names, Addresses, and Phone Numbers

Google includes its own White Pages directory of names, street addresses, and phone numbers. You can search this directory right from the Google home page. All you have to do is enter one of the following pieces of information into the search box and then click the Google Search button:

- ◆ First name or initial, last name, and city (state is optional)
- ◆ First name or initial, last name, and area code
- ◆ First name or initial, last name, and zip code
- ◆ First name or initial, last name, and state
- ◆ Last name, city, and state
- ◆ Last name and zip code
- ◆ Phone number (including area code)

Google will then display a list of matching names. Each listing includes the person's phone number and address; click the Yahoo! Maps or MapQuest link to view a map of that person's location. You can display additional listings by clicking the More Phonebook Listings link.



Google can only display names that are publicly available. If a person's phone number is unlisted, it won't be displayed.

You can also use Google for reverse phone number lookups. (That is, you know the phone number but don't know whose number it is.) To perform a reverse lookup, you use Google's **phonebook:** operator. Just enter the operator followed by the phone number (include the area code, with no spaces or dashes), like this: **phonebook:123456789**.

You can limit your search to residential phone numbers by using the optional **rphonebook:** operator, or to business phone numbers by using the optional **bphonebook:** operator.

#155: Display Street Maps

Not sure how to get to a particular location? In the old days you had to try to find addresses on your AAA roadmap. Thanks to the Internet, however, you can now use sites like MapQuest (www.mapquest.com) and MapBlast (www.mapblast.com) to generate online maps and driving directions.

Or you could just use Google.

Google's Street Maps feature knows when you've entered a street address in the search box, and displays an option for you to view a map of that location. Google partners with both Yahoo! Maps and MapBlast for the maps themselves; it's a pretty neat feature and a fast way to display the maps you want.

Here's how it works: enter a street and a city, or a street address and a zip code, into Google's search box and then click the Google Search button. The first listing on the search results page will be a Show Map listing like the one in Figure 6-12. Click the link to display the map from either Yahoo! Maps or MapBlast.

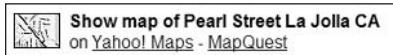


Figure 6-12: Click the link in the search results to display a map of the location.

#156: Search for Stock Quotes and Information

While Google isn't a full-service financial information site, like CBS MarketWatch (Chapter 13), it is a good source of basic financial data—and a gateway to even more information on the Web.

There are a number of ways for Google to display information about a particular stock. The easiest way is to simply enter the stock ticker into Google's search box without any additional keywords. At the top of the search results page will be a link that leads directly to a page of information about that stock, as shown in Figure 6-13.

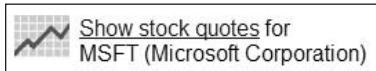


Figure 6-13: Use Google to search for and display information by stock ticker.

You can also use the **stocks:** operator to signify that the keywords following are ticker symbols. This method is recommended if you're looking up multiple stocks at one time. Just enter the **stocks:** operator followed by one or more stock symbols, separated by spaces. For example, to look up information on IBM (IBM), Microsoft (MSFT), and Yahoo! (YHOO), you'd enter the following query: **stocks: ibm msft yhoo**.

#157: Find the Latest News

Google has become one of the primary online resources for newshounds worldwide. Not that you have to search the Google index for old news stories (although you can, if you want to); no, Google does all the hard work for you with its Google News service.

View the Latest Headlines and Stories

Google News is a news-gathering service that identifies, assembles, and displays the latest news headlines from thousands of different news organizations. As you can see in Figure 6-14, Google News organizes its stories by category and lists hundreds of related stories under each lead headline. Click the link to access the originating news source and read the story, or click the Related link to view other sources' take on the story. You can also click the category links (World, U.S., Business, Sci/Tech, Sports, Entertainment, and Health) to view more stories in that category.

You access Google News by clicking the News tab on the Google home page, or by going directly to news.google.com.

The screenshot shows the Google News homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Web, Images, Groups, Directory, News (which is highlighted in black), and Advanced Search. Below the navigation is a search bar with the placeholder "Search News" and a "Search the Web" button. A banner below the search bar reads "Search and browse 4,500 news sources updated continuously." On the left side, there's a sidebar with links for Top Stories, World, U.S., Business, Sci/Tech, Sports, Entertainment, and Health. Under "Top Stories", there are two main news items: "Swedish Voters Reject Euro" (from Washington Post, 5 minutes ago) and "Powell in Iraq, Pledges that Democracy Will Come" (from Voice of America, 40 minutes ago). Each news item includes a thumbnail image, the source, and a brief summary. To the right of these, there are several other news items listed under categories like "Auto-generated 6 minutes ago", "Lamy to 'unbundle' Singapore issues at WTO", "What should the record industry do to stop or even accept online file sharing?", "Patience appears to be wearing thin for Holiday", "Fans, industry mourn Cash, country music's rebel king", and "Top Democrats say Bush policy will weaken HIV prevention programs".

Figure 6-14: Google News—presenting news from all around the world.

I find Google News to be one of the best sources of news available online. By assembling stories from literally hundreds of different newspapers, magazines, and Web sites, it provides a depth of coverage that simply isn't possible from single-source sites like CNN.com (discussed in Chapter 11). Granted, Google News focuses on the top stories only, but where else can you go to read coverage from the *New York Times*, the *Melbourne Herald Sun*, and the *Arabic News*—all on the same page?

While reading Google News' selected headlines is nice, if you're searching for specific stories you need to use Google's Advanced News Search. You access the Advanced News Search page from the Google News page. You can use the Advanced News Search to search by a variety of parameters, as detailed in Table 6-5.

Table 6-5: Options in Google's Advanced News Search

Option	Description
Results	Selects how many listings are displayed on the search results page
Sort by	Specifies in what order results are displayed—by relevance or by date
Find results with <i>all</i> of the words	Default search mode
Find results with the <i>exact phrase</i>	Searches for the exact phrase entered
Find results with <i>at least one</i> of the words	Searches for either one word or another
Find results <i>without</i> the words	Excludes pages that contain the specified word(s)
News source	Searches for articles from a specified newspaper or news site
Location	Searches for articles from news sources located in a specific country or state
Occurrences	Returns articles where the keywords occur in the article's headline, URL, or body, or anywhere in the article
Date	Returns articles published between specific dates

insider insight

Here's a bonus secret, based on Google's Advanced News Search: Once you create a query for a specific topic, company, or newsmaker, you can bookmark the first search results page in your Web browser. Every time you access this bookmark, you'll display an updated search results page containing the latest news stories on the specified topic. You can even put a shortcut to this bookmark on your desktop and double-click it when you want up-to-date news on the topic at hand.

#158: Have Google Deliver News Alerts to Your Inbox

Google also has the capability of notifying you via e-mail when news articles appear online that match the topics you specify. This way you can monitor breaking news stories, keep tabs on industries or competitors, or just stay up-to-date on specific types of events.

You activate Google News Alerts by going directly to www.google.com/newsalerts/. Enter your keyword(s) in the News Search box, select how often you want to receive alerts, enter your e-mail address, then click the Create News Alert button. Google will now keep you informed of new news relating to the topic you specified.

note

As of this writing Google News Alerts is still in testing as part of a Google Labs research project. Learn more about Google Labs in Secret #169.

#159: Shop for the Best Bargains

As online shopping becomes more ubiquitous, with more and more merchants offering their wares over the Web, it's becoming harder to find the specific merchandise you want to buy. While some sites—such as Amazon.com, discussed in Chapter 17—offer merchandise in a wide variety of categories, other sites tend to specialize in certain types of products. The problem is, how do you find a particular site that stocks the product you're looking for?

It should come as no surprise that Google can help you with your online shopping needs. In fact, Google offers two related services—Froogle and Google Catalogs—that let you search the Web for the products you want to buy.

Searching with Froogle

Google's main shopping service is called Froogle. (Froogle, *frugal*—get it?) Froogle is just like Google, except that it's tweaked to search only e-tailer Web sites. You access Froogle by clicking the Froogle tab on Google's home page or by going directly to froogle.google.com.

As you can see in Figure 6-15, you can search Froogle for the merchandise you want or browse through the product categories found on Froogle's home page. When you search Froogle, it returns results from all Web merchants that offer matching product; click the results link to view the product listing on the merchant's site.

Advanced Froogle Search

Searching with Froogle is similar to searching on Google; just enter your keywords and click the Google Search button. Even better, you can fine-tune your product search by using the Advanced Froogle Search page. This page lets you search by price range or category, and it's really easy to use. Table 6-6 details the advanced search options available.

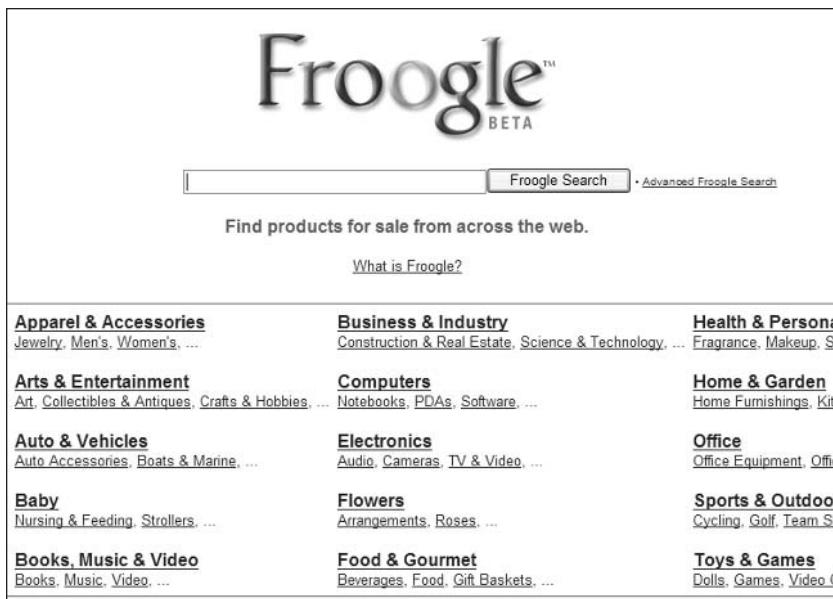


Figure 6-15: Use Froogle to find products you want to purchase.

Table 6-6: Options on the Advanced Froogle Search Page

Option	Description
Results	Selects how many listings are displayed on the search results page
Find products with <i>all</i> of the words	Google's default search mode
Find products with the <i>exact phrase</i>	Searches for the exact phrase entered
Find products with <i>at least one</i> of the words	Searches for either one word or another
Find products <i>without</i> the words	Excludes products that contain the specified word(s)
Price	Displays products priced within the specified range
Occurrences	Searches for products where the keywords occur in the product name, description, or both
Category	Searches for products within a specified product category

Searching Online Catalogs

Another shopping aid available from Google is Google Catalogs. This service makes catalogs from a variety of major merchants, such as L.L. Bean and Crate and Barrel, available for your online browsing. As you can see in Figure 6-16, you can search for a specific catalog or browse through all catalogs in a particular category. There's even an Advanced Catalog Search so you can fine-tune your search parameters; it works pretty much like the Advanced Froogle Search page.



Figure 6-16: Browse online catalogs at Google Catalogs.

You access Google Catalogs at catalogs.google.com. When you access a particular catalog, Google displays thumbnails of each catalog page. Click a thumbnail to display the page full size.

#160: Look Up Dictionary Definitions

Want to look up the definition of a particular word, but don't want to bother pulling out the old hardcover dictionary? Not sure of a specific spelling? Then use Google as an online dictionary to look up any word you can think of.

All you have to do is enter the word in question into Google's search box and then click the Search Google button. When Google returns the search results page, the word you entered will be listed at the top of the page ("Searched the Web for *keyword*") and underlined. Click the word and Google will display dictionary information for the word, supplied by Dictionary.com. As you can see in



Figure 6-17, this dictionary page includes the word's pronunciation and definitions, as listed in a variety of different dictionaries (*The American Heritage Dictionary*, *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, *Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary*, et al.).

4 entries found for *superfluous*.

superfluous [Pronunciation Key](#) (sō-pür'floo̞-əs)
adj.

Being beyond what is required or sufficient.

[Middle English, from Old French *superflueux*, from Latin *superfluos*, from *superfluere*, *to overflow* : *super-*, *super-* + *fluere*, *to flow*; see *bhleu-* in Indo-European Roots.]

super'fluously adv.
super'fluousness n.

Synonyms: *superfluous*, *excess*, *extra*, *spare*,
supernumerary, *surplus*
These adjectives mean being more than is needed, desired, required, or appropriate: *delete superfluous words*; *trying to lose excess weight*; *found some extra change on the dresser*; *sleeping in the spare room*; *supernumerary ornamentation*; *distributed surplus food to the needy*.

Source: The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition
Copyright © 2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company.
Published by Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.
[\[Buy It\]](#)

Figure 6-17: Have Google search for the dictionary definition of a particular word.

insider insight

Google Labs is working on a new dictionary service called Google Glossary. The Google Glossary (labs.google.com/glossary/) lets you enter a word or phrase and then displays a list of glossary definitions. It's a little more elegant than the standard dictionary search, but still in testing as of this writing.



#161: Solve Mathematical Equations

This is a neat one. When you can't be troubled to use the Windows Calculator, or to reach over and pick up the handheld calculator sitting on your desk, you can use Google as a calculator—the world's most overly complex calculator, to be sure, but a calculator nonetheless.

But I jest. It's actually quite convenient to enter an equation into the Google search box and get an answer right in your Web browser. I'm not sure exactly

why Google added this functionality to their site, but I'm sure it's getting a bit of use.

Basic Calculations

To use Google as a calculator, all you have to do is enter your equation or formula into the search box and then click the Google Search button. The result of the calculation is displayed as shown in Figure 6-18. It's that simple.

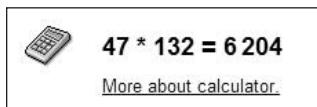


Figure 6-18: Use Google as a giant Web-based calculator.

You can use a number of algebraic operators to construct your calculations. Table 6-7 details the operators that Google recognizes.

Table 6-7: Google Calculator Operators

Function	Operator
Addition	+, plus, and
Subtraction	-, minus
Multiplication	*, times
Division	/, over
Exponents	to the (as in 2 to the 4th)

Let's work through an example. Let's say you want to add 2 plus 3. You enter the following equation into the search box: **2 + 3**. (Either with or without spaces.) Click the Google Search button and you get your results.

If you want to divide 91 by 7, enter **91 / 7**. If you want to multiple 12 times 5 divided by 4, enter **12 * 5 / 4**.

You can also created nesting equations by using appropriately placed parentheses. So, to divide the sum of 4 plus 3 by 5, you'd enter **(4 + 3) / 5**.

And, even better, Google recognizes English-language queries as well as proper mathematical ones. For example, you can query **2 and 3** or **7 times 6** or even **(4 plus 3) over 5**.

Advanced Calculations and Constants

Google's calculator isn't limited to basic addition and multiplication. It can also handle more advanced calculations and functions, including:

- ◆ Binary, hexadecimal, and octal
- ◆ Trig and hyperbolic trig functions
- ◆ Logarithm
- ◆ Factorials
- ◆ Imaginary numbers

Google also knows a variety of mathematical and scientific constants, such as pi, Avogadro's Number, and Planck's Constant. It also knows the radius of the Earth, the mass of the sun, the speed of light, the gravitational constant, and a lot more.

Let's check this out. Not sure what the speed of light is? Enter **speed of light**, and Google returns 299,792,458 m/s. What about the radius of the earth? Enter **radius of earth**, and Google returns 6378.1 kilometers.

Now let's get fancy. Try dividing the radius of the earth by pi. Enter **(radius of earth) / pi**; Google's answer is 2030.21229 kilometers. Or how about multiplying the radius of the Earth by the speed of light and then dividing the answer by Avogadro's Number? I'm not sure why you'd want to do this, but the query looks like this: **(radius of earth) * (speed of light) / (avogadro's number)**. (The answer is $3.17512652 \times 10^{-9}$ m²/s.)

#162: Convert Units of Measure

Another surprise is that Google's calculator also handles conversions. It knows miles and meters, furlongs and light years, seconds and fortnights, and even angstroms and Smoots—and it can convert from one unit of measurement to another.

Don't know how many feet equal a meter? Then enter the query **1 meter in feet**. Not sure how many teaspoons are in a cup? Enter **1 cup in teaspoons**. Want to find out your weight in kilos, or your age in seconds? Enter the queries **180 pounds in kg** or **45 years in seconds**. (The answers are 3.2808399 feet, 48 teaspoons, 81.6466266 kilograms, and $1.42006167 \times 10^{10}$ seconds, respectively.)

That's right, all the formulas necessary for these types of conversions are hard-wired into the Google search engine. Just state your query as clearly as possible and Google will do the rest.

Google even lets you do some nonsensical conversions. You can query **speed of light in knots** or **1 foot in smoots**. You can also use these conversions to create nonsense calculations, such as **(radius of earth) / 3 teaspoons**. It doesn't make any sense, but Google can do it.

#163: Ask Google the Answer to Life, the Universe, and Everything

Google's staff must have had some free time on their hands, because they hard-wired into their calculator the answers to some fairly complex—and often fanciful—calculations. My favorite is to ask the query **the answer to life the universe and everything**. Google's answer, shown in Figure 6-19, should delight long-time fans of Douglas Adams' *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.



the answer to life the universe and everything = 42

[More about calculator](#)

Figure 6-19: Let Google calculate the answer to life, the universe, and everything.

#164: Translate Foreign Words and Phrases

Ever get an e-mail from someone in another country—but don't know the language? Or maybe you've stumbled over a cool new Web site, but it's in German or French or some other language that's truly foreign to you? Have no fear—Google can translate that foreign text into English for you to read—or vice versa. Google's Translate tool will translate words and phrases from one language to another, and can even translate entire foreign-language Web pages.

note

Due to the subtleties of language, these translations aren't always perfect—but they're better than not being able to understand it at all.

To use Google's Translate tool, follow these steps:

1. Click the Language Tools link on Google's home page.
2. When the Language Tools page appears, as shown in Figure 6-20, go to the Translate section and enter the text you want to translate into the Translate Text box.
3. Pull down the From list and select the languages you want to translate from and to.
4. Click the Translate button.



Figure 6-20: Use Google's Translate tool to translate words and phrases from one language to another.

You can also use the Translate tool to translate entire foreign-language Web pages. Just go to the Translate a Web page section of the Language Tools page, enter the URL for the page, and then pull down the From list to select the translation languages. When you click the Translate button, the page is automatically translated.

At present, Google offers the following translations:

- ◆ English to German
- ◆ English to Spanish
- ◆ English to French
- ◆ English to Italian
- ◆ English to Portuguese
- ◆ German to English
- ◆ German to French
- ◆ Spanish to English
- ◆ French to English
- ◆ French to German
- ◆ Italian to English
- ◆ Portuguese to English

#165: Search Google from a Cell Phone or PDA

Google's search engine can be accessed from any number of wireless devices, including mobile phones, PDAs, and other Internet appliances. Complete information is available at www.google.com/options/wireless.html; Table 6-8 lists the basics.

Table 6-8: Google Mobile Instructions

Device	Instructions
Mobile phone (number search)	At the prompt, enter www.google.com/466453.com
WAP-enabled mobile phone	At the prompt, enter www.google.com/wml/
i-mode mobile phone	At the prompt, enter www.google.com/imode/
J-Sky mobile phone	At the prompt, enter www.google.com/jsky/
Palm handhelds	Enter www.google.com/palm/
Handspring Organizer	Tap the Google Search box and input query



#166: Search Google from Other Web Sites

Google sells its search services to other Web sites—including some fairly well-known search sites—so you don't always have to go to Google to do a Google search.

Here's a short list of major sites that as of this writing were using Google to power their main search results:

- ◆ AOL
- ◆ HotBot (part of that site's meta-search tools)
- ◆ Netscape
- ◆ Yahoo!

When you perform a search on these sites, the results you see come directly from the Google search index. So if you like to use My Yahoo! as your home page, but prefer Google for searching, you never have to leave the My Yahoo! site; when you search from the Yahoo! search box, it's Google's results you see.

By the way, these search partnerships tend to be short-term deals. For example, Yahoo! used to use Inktomi to power their search results; when the Inktomi deal was up, they switched to Google. (No telling which search engine Yahoo! will use when the Google contract runs out—especially since Yahoo! now owns AltaVista, AllTheWeb, and Inktomi!)



#167: Put Google Search on Your Own Web Site

Google likes to get around. That's why Google makes it easy to add Google search to your own personal Web pages, at no charge to you. All you have to do is go to www.google.com/searchcode.html, copy the HTML code listed there, and paste that code into the code for your Web page. The result will be a Google search box and Google Search button that your visitors can use to search the Web from your site.

There are actually three different versions of Google search you can add to your Web page. Each comes with its own specific cut-and-paste HTML code:

- ◆ **Google Free**—the same basic Google search available on the Google home page.
- ◆ **Google Free SafeSearch**—the same as Google Free, but with the SafeSearch content filter activated to filter out inappropriate results.
- ◆ **Google Free Web search with site search**—the basic Google Free search, but with additional capability for users to search your own Web site, as well.

If you're running a professional Web site, Google offers Custom WebSearch for businesses and other large sites. See www.google.com/services/websearch.html for more information about this paid service.

**insider
insight**

Professional software developers can also add Google to their computer programs and Web sites via the Google Web Application Programming Interface (API). More information about the Google Web API is available at www.google.com/apis/.



#168: Discover the Latest Search Patterns and Trends

Google is used by so many users that examining query patterns can reveal quite a bit about society's latest patterns and trends. The Google Zeitgeist (www.google.com/press/zeitgeist.html) tracks all the queries posed by Google users and lists a variety of interesting data-points that tell you what users are interested in at this given point in time.

At the top of the Google Zeitgeist page, shown in Figure 6-21, are lists of the Top 10 Gaining Queries and the Top 10 Declining Queries for the current week. The first list tells you what's getting hot, and the second what's growing cool. For example, for the week ending September 1, 2003, NASA and the U.S. Open were hot; the "Star Wars kid" and Mary Carey (candidate for Governor of California) were starting to cool down.

Google Zeitgeist - Search patterns, trends, and surprises according to Google

<p>For both breaking news and obscure information alike, people around the world search on Google at www.google.com. With a bit of analysis, this flurry of searches often exposes interesting trends, patterns, and surprises.</p> <p>On a monthly, weekly, and sometimes daily basis, this Google Zeitgeist page will be updated to reflect lists, graphs, and other tidbits of information related to Google user search behavior.</p>	<p>Top 10 Gaining Queries Week Ending Sept. 1, 2003</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>1. nasa</td></tr> <tr><td>2. us open</td></tr> <tr><td>3. planeta marte</td></tr> <tr><td>4. mtv music awards</td></tr> <tr><td>5. lord of the rings</td></tr> <tr><td>6. do not call list</td></tr> <tr><td>7. uefa</td></tr> <tr><td>8. charles bronson</td></tr> <tr><td>9. powerball</td></tr> <tr><td>10. betina holte</td></tr> </table>	1. nasa	2. us open	3. planeta marte	4. mtv music awards	5. lord of the rings	6. do not call list	7. uefa	8. charles bronson	9. powerball	10. betina holte	<p>Top 10 Declining Queries Week Ending Sept. 1, 2003</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>1. star wars kid</td></tr> <tr><td>2. mary carey</td></tr> <tr><td>3. mike gordon</td></tr> <tr><td>4. fernando alonso</td></tr> <tr><td>5. kelowna fire</td></tr> <tr><td>6. cricket</td></tr> <tr><td>7. reading festival</td></tr> <tr><td>8. india</td></tr> <tr><td>9. notting hill carnival</td></tr> <tr><td>10. aa j tak</td></tr> </table>	1. star wars kid	2. mary carey	3. mike gordon	4. fernando alonso	5. kelowna fire	6. cricket	7. reading festival	8. india	9. notting hill carnival	10. aa j tak
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5. kelowna fire																						
6. cricket																						
7. reading festival																						
8. india																						
9. notting hill carnival																						
10. aa j tak																						

Archived information [available here](#).

2002 Year-End Google Zeitgeist available [here](#).

August 2003 Zeitgeist

<p>Top 10 Gaining Queries August 2003</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>1. msblast</td></tr> <tr><td>2. mars</td></tr> </table>	1. msblast	2. mars	<p>Top 10 Declining Queries August 2003</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>1. tour de france</td></tr> <tr><td>2. big brother</td></tr> </table>	1. tour de france	2. big brother	<p>Operating Systems Used to Access Google - Aug. 2003</p> 
1. msblast						
2. mars						
1. tour de france						
2. big brother						

Figure 6-21: Find out what's hot—and what's not—with the Google Zeitgeist.

Below that are more detailed analyses of queries for the previous month; you'll find lists like Popular TV Shows, Popular News Queries, Popular Fictional Characters, Top Women Who Start with "C", and Popular Travel-Related Queries. (These lists vary by season, and by country.)

I'm not sure how accurate the Google Zeitgeist is as a measure of our current culture, but it's certainly a lot of fun to read!

#169: Uncover Even More Secrets in Google Labs

Believe it or not, Google has even *more* search projects in the works. The latest cutting-edge research can be found at Google Labs (labs.google.com), which is where Google's search experts concoct all manner of search projects. Google Labs is where the *next* Google features are often found.

As this book is being written, Google Labs has eight projects in the works. These projects include:

- ◆ **Google Compute:** Uses your PC's idle processing power for peer-to-peer computing projects
- ◆ **Google Deskbar:** Lets you search Google from the Windows taskbar (see Secret #150 to learn more)
- ◆ **Google Glossary:** Displays definitions for words you enter (see Secret #160 for more information)
- ◆ **Google Keyboard Shortcuts:** Lets you navigate your search results with your keyboard, no mouse necessary
- ◆ **Google News Alerts:** Sends e-mail alerts to your desktop when new stories appear online (see Secret #158 for more information)
- ◆ **Google Search by Location:** Lets you restrict your search to a specific geographic area
- ◆ **Google Sets:** Creates a set of related items based on a list of words you enter
- ◆ **Google Viewer:** Displays your search results as images in a kind of scrolling slide show
- ◆ **Google Voice Search:** Enables Google searching by Web phone
- ◆ **Google Webquotes:** Displays quotes about the pages in your search results

Go to the Google Labs page to learn more—and to test these and other new projects!

note

The researchers at Google Labs are always working on new projects, so the projects available when you're reading this book may be different from the projects listed here.



Summary

Forty-three secrets. That's a lot—especially for a site that isn't a portal. But then Google is a very popular site, and one that offers tremendous power to informed users. Yeah, it looks simple with that plain-Jane home page, but as you now know, there are a lot of cool features available that you can use to find the information you want.

The big secret to Google is that there's far more there than meets the eye. You can access specialty features, such as Google Image Search or Google News; use advanced operators to fine-tune your search box queries; or display the Advanced Search page to perform sophisticated searches with the click of your mouse. It's all good, and it's all at your fingertips—now that you know the secrets of Google!

AllTheWeb Secrets



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AllTheWeb (www.alltheweb.com) is the relatively new search engine that's giving Google a run for its money. It offers up just as many entries (in excess of three billion), a similarly simple interface, and high-quality search results. In other words, if you like Google, you'll probably like AllTheWeb, too.

AllTheWeb was originally owned by a company called FAST—which is why it's sometimes referred to as the FAST search engine. However, in early 2003, Overture acquired the AllTheWeb search engine from FAST, and in late 2003, Yahoo! acquired Overture. So, AllTheWeb is now part of Yahoo!'s growing search empire. (Yahoo! also owns the AltaVista and Inktomi search engines—although it uses Google for the search results on its own site. Go figure.)

#170: Direct Your Search to a Specific Index

Although you can access AllTheWeb's different search indexes by clicking the appropriate tab on the home page, you can also direct any query to a specific index within the general search box. Just enter the appropriate search index shortcut followed by your query in this format: **index: query**. For example, to search the image database for pictures of bats, you'd enter **image: bats**.

Table 7-1 lists the shortcuts for all of AllTheWeb's search indexes.

Table 7-1: AllTheWeb's Search Index Shortcuts

To go to this search index	Use this syntax
Web database (default)	web:
Image database	images: or image: or pics:
News database	news:
Audio database	audio: or mp3:
Video database	videos: or video:
FTP database	ftp:

#171: Restrict Your Search to a Specific Web Site

AllTheWeb uses other operators to help you restrict your searches in various ways. The first of these is the **site:** operator, which restricts your search to a specific Web site or domain. Just enter the name of the site or domain after the

operator, like this: **site:sitename**. For example, if you want to limit your search to the Microsoft Web site, you enter **site:www.microsoft.com**.

#172: Restrict Your Search to a Page's URL or Title

There are two other operators you can use to limit your search to specific parts of a Web page—in particular, the page's URL or title.

To search for words that appear only in the page's URL, use the **url:** operator. For example, to search for pages that include the word computer in their URL, enter **url:computer**.

To search for words that appear only in the page's title, use the **title:** operator. For example, to search for pages that include the word deal in their title, enter **title:deal**.

Both of these operators ignore a page's body text—so if your key word appears only on the page itself, it won't be returned as part of the search results.

#173: Restrict Your Search to Pages in a Specific Language

If you only want your search results to include Web pages in a particular language, use AllTheWeb's **language:** operator. Just enter the abbreviation for the language after the operator. For example, to search for pages written in French, enter **language:fr**.

To limit your searches to English-language pages, you don't have to use the **language:** operator. All you have to do is select the English option underneath the main search box. To display results from all languages, check the Any Language option.

#174: Restrict Your Search to Pages of a Certain Size

AllTheWeb also lets you restrict your search to pages of a certain file size. This can help you exclude really big or really small pages from your search. You use the **filesize:** operator in conjunction with the greater than and less than signs; all numbers are assumed to be in bytes.

For example, if you want to search only for pages that are less than 5 KB (5,000 bytes) in size, enter **filesize:<5000**.

You can also enter a file size range, within brackets; AllTheWeb will restrict its search to pages that fall within that range. For example, to search for pages between 2 KB and 4 KB in size, enter **filesize:[2000;4000]**.

#175: Restrict Your Search to Specific Types of Files

Most information on the Web is contained in HTML files—but not all. If you want to restrict your search to files of a specific type, AllTheWeb lets you use the **filetype:** operator. Just enter the operator, followed by the file type. For example, to restrict your search to Adobe Acrobat PDF files, enter **filetype:pdf**. To restrict your search to Microsoft Word documents, enter **filetype:msword**. To restrict your search to Macromedia Flash files, enter **filetype:flash**.

#176: Search for an Exact Phrase

As with Google and most other search sites, AllTheWeb enables you to search the Web pages that include a specific phrase. All you have to do is enclose the phrase in quotation marks. So if you want to search for the Beatle's final album, enter "**abbey road**".

#177: No Wildcards, Sorry

AllTheWeb is similar to Google in one other respect—AllTheWeb also doesn't recognize wildcards in your search. Nor does it support automatic word stemming. So if you want to search for additional word forms, you have to enter them all manually.

#178: No Boolean Either—Although There Are Some Workarounds

AllTheWeb also doesn't recognize any Boolean search operators in its regular search box. That means you can't use AND, OR, or NOT to fine-tune your searches. Sorry.

However, the absence of a Boolean AND search isn't a big deal, since AllTheWeb performs an "include all words" search by default. You can also get around the absence of NOT by using the "minus" (-) operator to exclude specific words. And—this is the big secret—AllTheWeb lets you perform an either/or search by enclosing a pair of word within parentheses. So if you want to search for pages that include either the word "shoe" or the word "boot," enter **(shoe boot)**.

note

AllTheWeb's use of parentheses for either/or searches should not be confused with the traditional Boolean use of parentheses to group complex search operations—as AltaVista lets you do. (See Chapter 9 to learn more.)

#179: Wait—You Can Create Boolean Query Searches, on the Advanced Web Search Page

If you want to construct queries using traditional Boolean operators, you have to use AllTheWeb's Advanced Search page. Just select the Boolean option at the top of the page and then enter your Boolean-enhanced query into the search box.

What Boolean operators can you use on AllTheWeb's Advanced Web Search page? Table 7-2 provides the details.

Table 7-2: AllTheWeb's Advanced Web Search Boolean Operators

Operator	Operation
AND	Searches for pages that include both words
OR	Searches for pages that include either of the two words
ANDNOT	Excludes pages that contain the specified word
RANK	Searches for pages that definitely contain the first word and preferably include the second

The Advanced Web Search page includes a number of other options worth investigating. These include language, word, domain, IP address, media type, and file format filters. Also useful are the options to limit searches to specific date and time ranges.

#180: Customize AllTheWeb to Your Own Personal Tastes

All search sites offer some degree of personalization, typically through a simple customization page. AllTheWeb offers five different pages in its Customize Preferences section so that you can customize Basic Settings, Advanced Settings, Language, Look and Feel, and Keyboard Shortcuts. You access this section by clicking the Customize Preferences link on the AllTheWeb home page.

Table 7-3 details what configuration options are available on each of these five pages.

Table 7-3: AllTheWeb's Customize Preferences Options

Customization page	Options
Basic settings	Offensive Content Filter, search results per page, highlight search terms, search type display (show/not show search type menu and Exact Phrase checkbox), default text size, open results in new window
Advanced Settings	Query rewrites (lets AllTheWeb automatically rewrite your queries for better results), query autocompletion, site collapsing (shows only one page per domain), default search catalog, number of integrated news results
Language	Select preferred language
Look and Feel	Enable custom style sheets, select custom style sheet or background color
Keyboard Shortcuts	Lets you navigate the AllTheWeb site without a mouse, using single-key keyboard shortcuts



#181: Make AllTheWeb Look Like Google—or Apply Other Skins

If you looked carefully, there was an item on one of the Customize Preferences pages that referred to custom style sheets and background colors. What is this all about?

It's simple. AllTheWeb is that rare search site that lets you customize not only what is displayed on each page but how the site looks in your browser. You can customize the look and feel of the site by applying custom *skins*—HTML style sheets that control the appearance of the underlying page.

Although you can apply a self-created style sheet (via the Look and Feel Custom Preferences page), the easier way to proceed is to use AllTheWeb's Alchemist Skins Gallery (www.alltheweb.com/help/alchemist/gallery.html). The gallery offers a variety of different skins for the site. Just click the Apply button to automatically download and install the desired skin; click the Restore Defaults button at the bottom of the page to return to the standard look and feel.

I particularly like the option of making AllTheWeb look like its chief competitor. Choose the I'm Feeling Lucky skin, and AllTheWeb looks just like Google!



#182: Narrow Your Search Results

One of the biggest complaints about any Web search is that you get too many results—the results are too broad, and you have to wade through too many

pages to find the information you want. Fortunately, AllTheWeb offers two ways to narrow your search by initiating a new search from within your previous results.

First, AllTheWeb offers up a short list of queries similar to the one you entered. These queries will often provide more targeted results or take you in new and sometimes interesting directions. Just scroll down to the bottom of the Search Results page and look for the Similar Queries list there.

While you're at the bottom of the page, observe the bottom-of-page search box. Next to the Search button is a Search within Your Results link. You can narrow your query by entering additional key words into the search box and then clicking this Search within Your Results link. This query will be sent only to those pages listed in your original results, thus narrowing the number of pages returned.

#183: Search for the Latest News

AllTheWeb is one of the best search engines on the Web if you're looking for either current or archived news items. Just select the News tab on the home page and AllTheWeb directs your search to an index of thousands of news sources. AllTheWeb constantly refreshes its news index, at a rate of up to 800 articles per minute, so the results are always up-to-date.

AllTheWeb offers an Advanced News Search page that is displayed when you click the Advanced Search link on the News tab. This page lets you restrict your search to various types of news sources (U.S., international, business, finance, and so on) and to specific domains.

#184: Search for Pictures

When you want to search the Web for pictures, click the Pictures tab on AllTheWeb's home page. This directs your search to AllTheWeb's pictures index, which restricts your search solely to image files. The results of your search are displayed as thumbnails on the search results page. Click a thumbnail to display the picture at full size.

AllTheWeb offers an Advanced Pictures Search page, displayed when you click the Advanced Search link on the Pictures tab. This page lets you restrict your search to specific file formats and image types (color, grayscale, line art) and to files with either transparent or nontransparent backgrounds.

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insight

The Advanced Pictures Search page also lets you turn the Offensive Content Filter on or off, which is useful for filtering adult pictures out of your results.



#185: Search for Videos

More and more users are opting to search the Web for video files—movie clips, music videos, you name it. AllTheWeb offers a dedicated video search index that's accessible by clicking the Video tab on the site's home page. The results of a video search are displayed in list format; each listing includes (when known) the file's length, size, and format (MPEG, AVI, etc.).

AllTheWeb offers an Advanced Video Search page that's displayed when you click the Advanced Search link on the Video tab. This page lets you restrict your search to specific file formats as well as to downloadable files or streaming videos.

**insider
insight**

The Advanced Video Search page also lets you turn the Offensive Content Filter on or off, which is useful for filtering adult movies out of your results.

#186: Search AllTheWeb for Audio Files

AllTheWeb also offers a dedicated audio search index, although it isn't quite as robust as that offered by some other search sites. (Lycos is particularly good for MP3 searches, as you learned in Chapter 5.) All you have to do is click the Audio tab on the AllTheWeb home page and your search is restricted to MP3 and other audio file types. There are no advanced search options for this audio search.

#187: Search for Computer Files to Download

If the audio search is a little weak, AllTheWeb more than makes up for it with a really powerful FTP search index. You use the FTP search to find computer files of all types—including full-fledged applications—to download from the Internet's network of FTP sites.

You initiate an FTP search by clicking the FTP Files tab on the AllTheWeb home page. Enter the filename you're searching for and AllTheWeb returns a list of FTP servers where that file is located. Click a filename in this results list to download the file to your computer.

When you're searching for files to download, it's often helpful to search for files of a specific size or on a particular site or domain. For that reason, the Advanced

FTP Files Search page is particularly useful. Access this page by clicking the Advanced Search link on the FTP Files tab and you'll find the following options:

- ◆ Search type
- ◆ Exact hits first
- ◆ Limit to domain
- ◆ Limit to path
- ◆ Limit size
- ◆ Date
- ◆ Hits (maximum)
- ◆ Hide (packages, distfiles, FreeBSD, OpenBSD, NetBSD, Linux)

#188: Investigate a URL

Want to know more about a particular URL—such as who owns the domain, when the page was last updated, how many pages link to that page, and so on? Then use AllTheWeb's cool URL Investigator feature. All you have to do is enter the URL as your query (no other operators needed), and the URL Investigator returns a page that includes the following information:

- ◆ Domain owner
- ◆ Language the page is written in
- ◆ Size of the page
- ◆ When the page was last updated
- ◆ Subdirectories
- ◆ How many pages link to the page
- ◆ How many pages are indexed from the domain
- ◆ A link to a cached version of the page—to see how it looked in the past

#189: Convert Units of Measure

AllTheWeb includes a built-in conversion calculator that you can use to convert all different units of measure. It knows all the popular length, time, speed, temperature, weight, area, and cooking/volume measurements. All you have to do is enter the **convert:** operator, followed by what you want to convert.

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insight

For what it's worth, AllTheWeb's conversion calculator is the same one used by sister company AltaVista—as you'll learn in Chapter 9.



#190: AllTheWeb Is Automatically Filtering Your Search Results

AllTheWeb's content filter is on by default—which means that offensive Web pages are automatically excluded from your AllTheWeb search results. That makes AllTheWeb a great search page for your kids. To turn the filter off, just go to the Search Customization page and deselect the Offensive Content Reduction option.



#191: There's No Directory

Here's a big secret—and a big surprise. Alone among the big search sites, only AllTheWeb delivers crawler-based results from its search index. It doesn't supplement those results with listings from a human-edited directory. (Google, in contrast, supplements its search index with results from the Open Directory, as does AltaVista.) So if you want the arguably better-qualified listings you get from a Web directory, you need to go elsewhere; AllTheWeb is as pure a search index as you're likely to find today.

Summary

AllTheWeb might not be as fully featured as Google, but it returns great results—and lots of them. It's quickly gaining converts from the ranks of cutting-edge Web searchers, including many who previously swore by Google. Unfortunately, AllTheWeb's very existence is somewhat of a secret—so get a jump on your friends by checking out this state-of-the-art search engine today!

Ask Jeeves Secrets



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Ask Jeeves originally garnered attention as the search site that let you ask your questions in plain English, supposedly thanks to what's called *natural language processing technology*. I say "supposedly" because most of Jeeves' natural-language appearance was powered by a team of a hundred or so human editors who monitored search logs and hand-assembled answers to the most common queries. If you asked a popular question then, the site certainly gave the appearance of having a natural-language search engine—even if it was a bit of smoke and mirrors.

Over the years, Ask Jeeves has repositioned itself as a major crawler-based search index, similar to Google and AllTheWeb. This repositioning was apparent with its 2001 acquisition of the Teoma search engine, which now feeds all of Ask Jeeves' results. While the Teoma search index isn't nearly as big as Google's or AllTheWeb's, its search engine is praised for its extremely high-quality (relevant) results. In addition, Ask Jeeves still responds to plain English queries, even though that's a less important part of its appeal these days.

Ask Jeeves at a Glance

The Ask Jeeves home page (www.ask.com) is as simple in its appearance as the home page of Google and AllTheWeb. As you can see in Figure 8-1, the page offers up a big search box (prefaced by a very polite message from Jeeves, the butler: "Greetings. Please enter your search or question." Enter your query into the search box, click the Ask button, and Ask Jeeves will deliver the expected page of search results.



Figure 8-1: Ask Jeeves your question, and get a page of search results.



#192: Ask Jeeves a Question—in Plain English

Unlike the other major search engines, Ask Jeeves responds to both key word queries and English-language questions. This means that you can phrase your

search in relatively plain English, just as if you were asking a question to another human being.

So if you want to know the name of George Washington's mother, you can enter the typical key word query **george washington mother** or the more natural **what is the name of george washington's mother?** The results should be similar.

#193: The Order Matters

When you're constructing a natural-language search, know that Ask Jeeves will still process your query in traditional left-to-right order. So **who is george washington's mother?** is a better query than **who is the mother of george washington?** The first query will narrow the search to George Washington sources first and then search for his mother; the second produces a more open-ended search for the word mother and then searches within those results for George Washington. It's a subtle difference, but an important one.

#194: There's No Advanced Search—Sorry

Unlike Google or AllTheWeb (or just about any other major search site), Ask Jeeves offers no advanced search options. You can use Boolean operators in the Ask Jeeves search box and the site offers no advanced search page. Although this might be fine for the average user (who typically doesn't utilize these advanced search options), the savvy searcher will be somewhat stymied by this lack of search sophistication.

Ask Jeeves is also lacking in that it doesn't back up its search index with a human-edited Web directory (like the Open Directory). Unfortunately, there's nothing you can do about this or the lack of advanced search operators—except use a different search site.

#195: Ask a Smart Question—Get a Smart Answer

Ask Jeeves does, however, provide what it calls "smart answers"—direct answers to particular types of direct questions. For example, if you ask for **driving directions to fresno**, that's what you'll get—driving directions to Fresno. Ask for a **list of state capitals** and Ask Jeeves will return just such a list.

There's no set list of just what smart answers Ask Jeeves offers, however. (I suspect that this list is growing daily, as hand-assembled by the site's human editors.) So you'll have to experiment with this feature yourself and see what pops up.

#196: Ask Additional Questions

Ask Jeeves has changed a lot since it incorporated the Teoma search index into its results. Now when you conduct a search, your search results page is full of standard listings generated by Teoma under the heading Web Results. (There's also a Sponsored Web Results section of paid links, but we'll try to ignore them.)

At the bottom of the search results page, however, is a section that bears some resemblance to the results generated by the original Ask Jeeves site. As you can see in Figure 8-2, this Refine Your Search section includes links to other searches that may or may not be related to your original query. For example, if you search for **warren zevon**, the Refine Your Search section includes related searches for pictures of the late Mr. Zevon, as well as his songs.

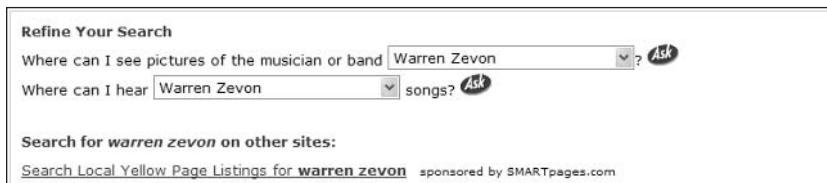


Figure 8-2: Access-related searches in the Refine Your Search section of the search results page.

One of the cool things about Ask Jeeves is how these related searches are presented—as separate English-language queries. For example, the related picture search is presented as the question “Where can I see pictures of the musician or band?” Pull down the list to target the new search, and then click the Ask button to see the results.

#197: Remove the Frame

One rather annoying thing about Ask Jeeves is that when you click through to a specific Web page (from the search results page), Ask Jeeves surrounds the outside page with a proprietary frame, complete with banner advertisement. Not only does this take up valuable space on your computer desktop, but it also prohibits you from bookmarking the target page—or even seeing that page's real URL!

If you're going to use Ask Jeeves for serious researching, the first thing you want to do is get rid of this irritating Ask Jeeves frame. There are two ways to do this.

The easiest way to get rid of the frame, if this option is available (it isn't always), is to click the Remove Frames link located below the framed ad. The second method is to right-click within the target page's frame and select Open Frame in New Window from the pop-up menu.

#198: Direct Your Search with Key Word Shortcuts

Ask Jeeves offers picture and news searches from links on its home page—as you'll learn over the next several secrets. You can also perform these type-specific searches from the main Ask Jeeves search box by including the appropriate key word shortcuts in your query.

These key words are easy to remember—to search for news stories, include the shortcut **news**; to search for pictures, include the key words **images**, **pictures**, or **photos**. For example, to search for pictures of Halle Berry, enter **pictures of halle berry**. Ask Jeeves will automatically direct your search to its pictures index.

#199: Search Ask Jeeves for Pictures

If you're looking for images on the Web, you can use Ask Jeeves' picture search. Click the Search Pictures icon on the bottom of the Ask Jeeves home page and you're taken to the Search Pictures page. The only special thing about this page is that it displays the most popular picture searches just in case you're interested in the topic or celebrity *du jour*. For all other searches, enter your query in the search box and then click the Ask button.

The results of a picture search are displayed as—surprise!—pictures. As you can see in Figure 8-3, the Picture Results page displays a series of thumbnails, all of which match your query. Click the Source link below a thumbnail to go to the hosting Web page.

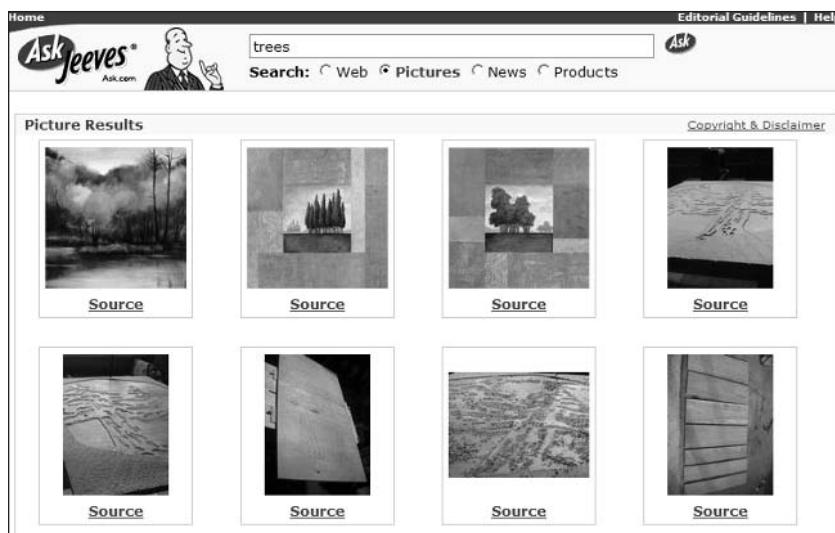


Figure 8-3: The results of an Ask Jeeves picture search.

#200: Search Ask Jeeves for News

Ask Jeeves offers a serviceable news search function. If you're looking for particular news stories, click the Search News icon on the bottom of the Ask Jeeves home page. This takes you to the Search News page shown in Figure 8-4. This page lists links to the day's top news stories along with the ubiquitous search box—which is what you use to conduct your search. The ensuing News Results page lists stories that match your query from a number of major news sources.

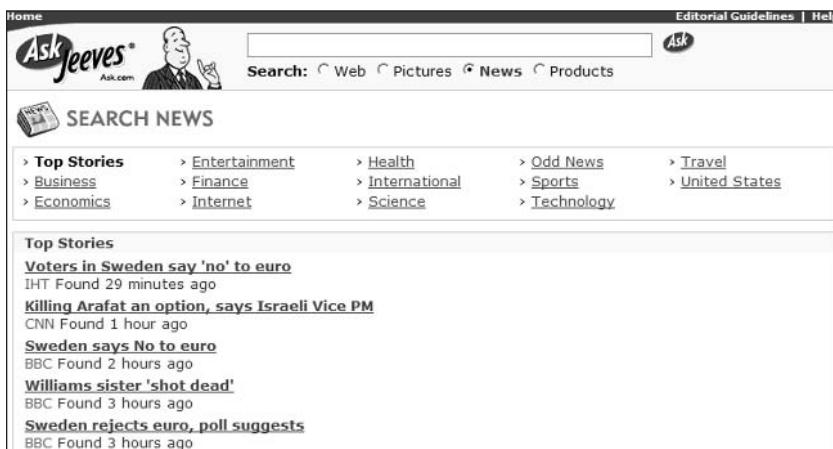


Figure 8-4: Search for news on the Ask Jeeves Search News page.

#201: Search Ask Jeeves for Products

If you're looking to spend your hard-earned money, you can use Ask Jeeves' shopping search. The site partners with PriceGrammer.com to offer a wide selection of merchandise from a large number of Internet merchants; just click the Search Products icon on the Ask Jeeves home page to display the Search Products page shown in Figure 8-5. From here you can browse by category or search for specific products.

When you conduct a product search, the search results page displays pictures of matching products organized by shopping category. You can also filter results by manufacturer or category, or compare product features, prices, and brands.

The screenshot shows the Ask Jeeves website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Home, Editorial Guidelines, and Help. The main header features the "Ask Jeeves" logo with a cartoon character. Below the header is a search bar with the placeholder "Search:" and options for Web, Pictures, News, and Products. To the right of the search bar is a small "Ask" button. The main content area is titled "SEARCH PRODUCTS". It has a sidebar on the left labeled "Categories" with links to Apparel, Babies & Kids, Books, Computers, and more. The main content area lists several product categories with sub-links: Movies (DVD & VHS), Music, Office Products, Photography, and Computers. To the right of the main content is a sidebar titled "Best Selling Products" which lists the top three products in various categories like Computers, Photography, Electronics, and Home & Garden, along with their prices.

Category	Product	Price
Computers	Combo Drive DVD+RW/+R DVD-RW/-R 4.7GB	\$145.00
Photography	Dual DVD+RW/+R DVD-RW/-R (16x/10x/40x)	\$108.00
Electronics	Tungsten T3 PDA	\$327.00
Books	PowerShot S400 Digital Camera	\$350.00
Office Products	C-750 UZ Digital Camera	\$399.00
Computers	PowerShot A70 Digital Camera	\$243.00
Home & Garden	PowerShot A70 Digital Camera	

Figure 8-5: Search for products or browse through product categories.

#202: Limit Your Exposure to Adult Content

Ask Jeeves, like most current search engines, offers a content filter to block potentially offensive listings from its search results. In fact, the Ask Jeeves filter is unusual in that it can be configured to not only block adult content but also to display a warning page whenever you enter a query containing certain sexually oriented terms.

Unfortunately, Ask Jeeves does a good job of hiding its filter. You'll need to go to www.ask.com/docs/prefs/adult.asp and then select from one of three options:

- ◆ Limit my exposure to Adult content within the search results.
- ◆ Always display Adult content in the search results without first displaying a "warning page."
- ◆ Always display a "warning page" when a sexually explicit search is run.

#203: A Better Kids-Friendly Search—Ask Jeeves Kids

One of the coolest parts of the Ask Jeeves site is that part devoted to the younger set—Ask Jeeves Kids (www.ajkids.com). Searches performed from the Ask Jeeves Kids page produce extremely user-friendly results—results that are quite similar to those from the original (pre-Teoma) Ask Jeeves site.

As you can see in Figure 8-6, Ask Jeeves Kids responds to your question with questions of its own. It analyzes your query and then tells you that it knows the answers to a list of questions. Pick the question that best matches your question, fine-tune the question by making a selection from the pull-down topic list, and then click the Ask button to provide a list of more traditional search results.

The screenshot shows a search interface for 'where is jupiter?'. At the top, it says 'You asked: where is jupiter?' followed by an 'Ask' button. Below that, it says 'Jeeves knows these answers:' and lists several questions with dropdown menus and a question mark icon. The questions are:

- Where can I find an astronomy page about Jupiter just for kids?
- Where can I find information for kids on the space topic Jupiter for reading level 1 ?
- Where can I find general information on the celestial body Jupiter ?
- Where can I see an animated movie about Jupiter ?
- Where can I find questions and answers about the astronomy topic Jupiter & Europa ?

Figure 8-6: The results of a search with Ask Jeeves Kids.

Ask Jeeves Kids also lists matches to your query culled from other kids-friendly search engines. Just pull down the list of topics to go to the matching questions.



#204: Use Ask Jeeves Kids for a Variety of Study Tools

What most users don't know is that Ask Jeeves Kids offers an extremely broad selection of study and reference tools that are useful for students of all ages. As you can see in Figure 8-7, Ask Jeeves Kids lists these tools on the right side of the page in the Study Tools column.

What tools are available? Here's a short list:

- ◆ **Dictionary:** Results from Word Central's *Student Dictionary*
- ◆ **Thesaurus:** Results from the online version of *Roget's Thesaurus*
- ◆ **Almanac:** Results from the *Information Please Fact Monster Almanac*
- ◆ **Biography:** Biographical entries from Ask Jeeves' own search index
- ◆ **Science:** Science-related entries from Ask Jeeves' own search index
- ◆ **Clip art:** All sorts of downloadable images from The Kids Domain
- ◆ **Astronomy:** Astronomy-related entries from Ask Jeeves' own search index
- ◆ **World atlas:** Maps from Encarta Online
- ◆ **Math help:** Math-related entries from Ask Jeeves' own search index
- ◆ **History:** History-related entries from Ask Jeeves' own search index

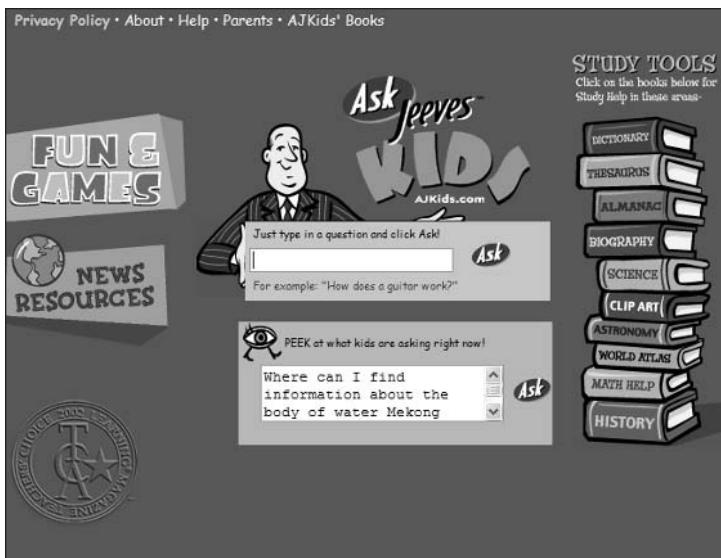


Figure 8-7: Study tools available at Ask Jeeves Kids.

#205: Find Out What's Hot

If you want to find out what other Ask Jeeves users are asking about, go to the Jeeves IQ page. Just click the Top Searches icon on the Ask Jeeves home page and you'll get a list of the top ten searches for the preceding week, along with the top advancing searches for the same week—those searches that are increasing in frequency.

#206: Put an Ask Jeeves Toolbar in Your Browser

If you want to access Ask Jeeves from wherever you are on the Web, you'll want to install the Ask Jeeves Toolbar in the Web browser—Internet Explorer only, Windows versions 5.0 or higher. As you can see in Figure 8-8, this toolbar lets you enter queries into its search box and then sends your search directly to the Ask Jeeves site. The toolbar also includes buttons for direct access to Ask Jeeves' News Search, Picture Search, and Ask Jeeves Kids, as well as other site features.



Figure 8-8: The Ask Jeeves toolbar for your Web browser.

You download the toolbar by clicking the Download Toolbar link at the top of the Ask Jeeves home page. Follow the onscreen instructions to complete the installation.

#207: Bypass Jeeves and Search Teoma Directly

As user-friendly as Ask Jeeves is, many users get frustrated by the way the site hides its underlying search index—and by its almost complete lack of advanced search tools. If you like Ask Jeeves' results but hate its interface, you may want to go directly to the search engine that powers the site, Teoma.

As you can see in Figure 8-9, the Teoma search site (www.teoma.com) provides a more traditional search interface. Teoma lets you use a variety of search operators in its search box and also offers an Advanced Search page with a full range of search modifiers. Because Teoma's search index is what powers the Ask Jeeves site, your search results should be similar, if not more targeted, thanks to Teoma's more flexible query options.

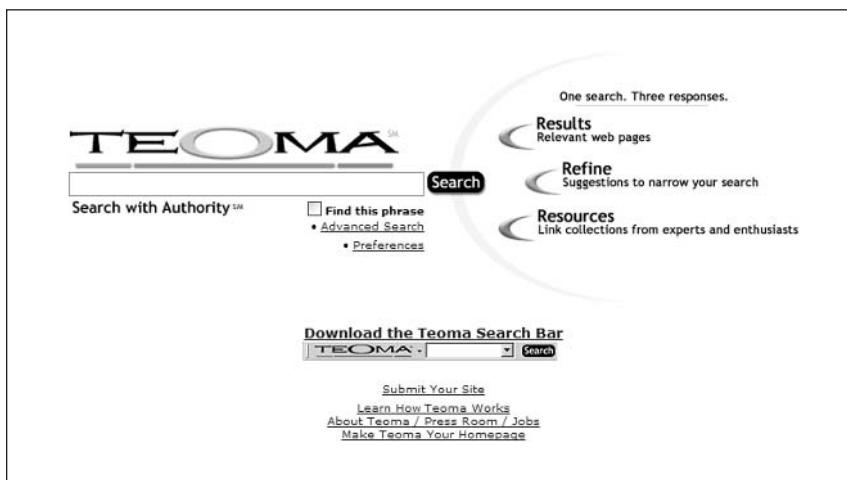


Figure 8-9: Use Teoma to get Ask Jeeves' results straight from the source.

Summary

Ask Jeeves has become a particularly popular search site. Even though it doesn't return the quantity of results of a Google or AllTheWeb, it offers the appearance of being easier to use—and, in fact, its quasi-natural-language search capabilities can offer a level of comfort to casual users not present at more traditional search sites. If you can live with Ask Jeeves' limitations (the framed search results, lack of directory listings, small search index, and so on), it does offer a somewhat user-friendly experience. Ask Jeeves is certainly worth a look for those who are intimidated by other search sites. And don't forget Ask Jeeves Kids—it's a first-class search and research site for grade school and high school students.

AltaVista Secrets



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A ItaVista has a long and storied history.

It all started back in 1995, when AltaVista debuted as the first full-text Internet search engine. The AltaVista search engine was created as a research product within the Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) research lab, and AltaVista remained a DEC subsidiary until 1999, when it was spun off into a private company controlled by Internet venture firm CMGI. AltaVista barely weathered the dot-com implosion, and in early 2003 the company was purchased by Overture, which supplies its own paid results to other search sites. At about the same time, Overture also purchased the AllTheWeb search engine from FAST. Then, later in 2003, Overture itself was purchased by Yahoo!. So now Yahoo! owns AltaVista (and AllTheWeb—and, via another purchase, Inktomi)—even though it doesn't use AltaVista results on its own site.

During the dot-com boom, AltaVista attempted to join the portal bandwagon, and added a variety of portal-like content and features to the main AltaVista search index. This attempt at diversification was unsuccessful, and following the dot-com bust, AltaVista returned to its more modest, dedicated search index engine roots. Unfortunately, during its period of portal envy, AltaVista lost its luster as a search engine and was surpassed in both quality and quantity of results by dedicated search engines such as Google and AllTheWeb.

Today, even though it's not as big as Google or AllTheWeb, AltaVista (www.altavista.com) does offer more powerful search tools, as well as some truly useful type-specific searches, such as its MP3 and video searches.



#208: Speed Up AltaVista with a Text-Only Search

AltaVista offers a speed-up option not found on other search sites, one that's particularly useful if you're accessing the Web via a slow dial-up connection. AltaVista's Text-Only Search eliminates all graphics from the search and search results pages, which makes things load just that much faster. You activate the Text-Only Search by clicking the More link in the Tools section on the AltaVista home page and then clicking the Text-Only Search link. (Or you can just go to www.altavista.com/web/text/.) As you'll see, this Text-Only Search page is a somewhat simplified version of the regular AltaVista home page.



#209: Restrict Your Search to U.S. Sites Only

As the World Wide Web becomes more worldwide, you're more apt to get foreign pages mixed in with your search results. If you find yourself overwhelmed by too many Russian, Japanese, and Brazilian Web pages in your listings, you can have AltaVista restrict its search to U.S. pages only. Just click the U.S. option under the search box on the AltaVista home page. Your search results will now eliminate non-U.S. pages from your search results.



#210: Restrict Your Search to English-Language Pages Only

Maybe you don't mind foreign pages, as long as you can read them. So you don't want to restrict your results to U.S. pages only, but you do want to filter out non-English pages? No problem. Just select the English option under the search box on AltaVista's home page and your search results will list English-language pages only.



#211: Use Babel Fish to Translate a Foreign Page

One of the other projects that originated in the DEC research labs was the Babel Fish translation engine. Babel Fish can translate everything from words and phrases to complete Web pages—all automatically. It's a pretty cool tool, and useful, too.

insider insight The name Babel Fish comes from Douglas Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, where a special breed of fish—the babel fish—is inserted into one's ear to translate all manner of intergalactic languages.

Babel Fish translation technology is included as part of the AltaVista search site in two different areas.

If you find a non-English page in your AltaVista search results, you can use Babel Fish to translate the entire page. Just click the Translate link next to the page's listing and you'll see an automatically translated version of the page in question.

You can also access and use Babel Fish manually to translate blocks of text. Just click the Translate link in the Tools section of the AltaVista home page, or go directly to babelfish.altavista.com. When the Babel Fish Translation page appears, enter the text in the Translate a Block of Text box, select the type of translation you want from the list, and then click the Translate button.

The Babel Fish Translation page can also be used to translate entire Web pages. Enter the Web page URL in the Translate a Web Page box, select the type of translation you want from the list, and then click the Translate button.



#212: Fine-Tune Your Search with Boolean Operators

AltaVista has always been one of the most powerful search engines around. This is because AltaVista recognizes a full range of Boolean operators, which you can use to create a more targeted query from within the normal search box. We'll look individually at each of the Boolean operators you can use in your AltaVista searches.

AND

You use the AND operator to find pages that contain both (or all) of the specified words or phrases. For example, to search for pages that contain both the words "microwave" and "oven," enter **microwave AND oven**.

OR

You use the OR operator to find pages that contain at least one of the specified words or phrases—in other words, to conduct an either/or search. For example, to search for pages about either microwaves or ovens, enter **microwave OR oven**.

AND NOT

This is a little different than what you might be accustomed to. While many sites recognize the NOT operator, AltaVista uses the more formal AND NOT operator. They work the same way; you use AND NOT to exclude pages that contain the specified word or phrase. So if you want to search for pages about microwaves that aren't about microwave ovens, enter **microwave AND NOT oven**.

NEAR

You may not be familiar with this operator; not many search engines recognize it. The NEAR operator is used to find pages that contain both specified words or phrases—as long as the words are within 10 words of each other. This operator helps to narrow your search to exact phrases (without formally doing so), as the nearness of the two words on a page are likely to be occurrences of the phrase. So if you want to search for microwave ovens, you could enter **microwave NEAR oven**.



#213: Create Complex Boolean Expressions

AltaVista is unique among the major search sites in that it lets you create complex Boolean queries by using parentheses. You use the parentheses as you

would in an algebraic equation—to group and order the operations within a query. AltaVista processes the operation within the parentheses first, and then works through the rest of the query from left to right.

We'll work through a few examples.

Let's say you want to search for all microwave ovens, except those by Amana. No problem; use the Boolean parentheses to construct the following query: **(microwave AND oven) AND NOT amana**.

Or maybe you want to search for pages about Batman and Robin or pages about Batman and Superman. Use Boolean parentheses to construct the following query: **batman AND (robin OR superman)**.

One more example, more complex this time. Let's say you want to search for pages about scrambled eggs and either bacon or sausage—but not toast. Here's your query: **(scrambled AND eggs) AND (bacon OR sausage) AND NOT toast**.

Just remember to group your keywords and operations in the order you want them executed. And if your query doesn't return enough results, try simplifying your query—it's possible to get *too* restrictive with these Boolean operators!



#214: Search for an Exact Phrase

Like most (but not all) search engines, AltaVista lets you use quotation marks to initiate a search for an exact phrase. So if you want to search for Major Matt Mason toys, you would enter **major matt mason toys**.

In addition (and this is a new one), AltaVista treats words with punctuation between them as if they were surrounded by quotes. So if you enter **red-hot**, AltaVista treats it as if you entered **red hot**. And all punctuation marks are treated equally; **red-hot** is the same as **red.hot** or **red/hot**.



#215: Expand Your Search with Wildcards

If you're not sure how to spell a word, or if you want to search for all words with a common root, AltaVista lets you use wildcards to substitute for any missing or questionable letters. Just use an asterisk (*) to stand in for the letters you don't know and AltaVista will search for pages that match all permutations of your wildcard-enabled keyword.

Let's look at how this works. The simplest use of the wildcard is when you want to search for both plural and singular forms of a word. Say you want to search for either one shoe or multiple shoes. Use the asterisk wildcard like this: **shoe***. AltaVista will return pages that contain either the word "shoe" or the word "shoes."

Because the wildcard can stand in for multiple missing letters, you can also use the wildcard to search for all alternate word forms. Let's say you want to search for "table," "tablet," and "tabular." Enter **tab*** and all these words will be returned.

You can also use the wildcard in the middle of words. For example, if you're not sure whether to use the British or the English spelling of the word "color," enter **col*r**; AltaVista will return both "color" and "colour." (Because the wildcard stands in for one or more unknown letters, this query also returns the word "columnar.")



#216: Search for Pages on a Specific Web Site or Domain

AltaVista offers a number of keyword operators you can use to narrow your search in various ways. The first operators we'll look at help you narrow your search to pages hosted on a particular Web site or in a specific domain.

You use the **domain:** operator to restrict your search to a specified domain. Just enter the operator followed by the domain like this: **domain:name**. So, for example, if you want to restrict your search to sites in the .edu domain you enter **domain:edu**.

You use the **host:** operator to restrict your search to a specific Web site or server, using the same syntax. So if you want to restrict your search to the CNN.com Web site, for example, you enter **host:www.cnn.com**.



#217: Restrict Your Search to a Page's Title, Text, or Links

The next operators define where on a page AltaVista will search for your keywords. You use the **url:** operator to restrict the search to a page's URL, the **anchor:** operator to restrict the search to the word or phrase within the text of a hyperlink, and the **text:** operator to restrict the search to the body text of the Web page itself. So to search for URLs that contain the word "brown," you enter **url:brown**; to search for hyperlinks that contain the word "brown," enter **anchor:brown**; and to search for Web pages that contain the word "brown" (but not in the URL or link text), enter **text:brown**.



#218: Search for Pages That Are Like a Specific Page

If you find a relevant Web page, it's sometimes useful to search for other pages that are in some way similar to that page. AltaVista lets you do this by using the **like:** operator. Just enter the operator followed by the first page's URL like this: **like:url**. For example, if you want to search for pages similar to the Weather.com home page, you'd enter **like:www.weather.com**.



#219: Search for Pages That Include a Specific Image

Here's an interesting one: suppose you want to search for Web pages that contain a specific image file. All you have to do is use AltaVista's **image:** operator followed by the image's full file name. For example, if you're looking for pages that contain a flower.jpg file you enter **image:flower.jpg**.



#220: Search for Pages That Include a Specific Applet or Object

Along the same lines, you can search for pages that include a specific Java applet or those that contain an object created in another program. To search for Java applets, use the **applet:** operator. To search for other objects (such as Flash animations), use the **object:** operator.



#221: Search for Pages That Link to a Given Page

Maybe you want to find pages that link to a given page—figuring, perhaps correctly, that these linked pages might contain similarly useful information. In this instance, you use the **link:** operator, followed by the first page's URL. So, for example, if you want to see all the pages that link to IBM's home page, you'd enter **link:www.ibm.com**.



#222: Speed Up Your Search with AltaVista Shortcuts

AltaVista provides a number of shortcuts you can use to go directly to certain types of results. For example, if you enter **maps**, AltaVista displays a form in which you can enter the city you want to map; if you enter **map of san francisco**, AltaVista skips the form and goes directly to a map of San Francisco.

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Some of these AltaVista shortcuts lead to services provided by third parties; some of these parties pay AltaVista for the links.

Table 9-1 details these shortcuts.

Table 9-1: AltaVista Search Shortcuts

Type of shortcut	Enter	Use
Area codes	area codes or <i>areacode</i> or <i>area code of city</i>	Display area code(s) for a city or the city associated with a specific area code
Driving directions	directions or directions to <i>location</i>	Displays a link to driving directions
Exchange rates	exchange rates or conversion rate <i>currency</i>	Displays a link to the current exchange rates or specific conversion
Images	images of <i>keyword</i> or pictures of <i>keyword</i>	Displays thumbnail images of particular person or item
Local information	<i>city</i> or <i>zipcode</i>	Displays local weather and links to other local information
Maps	maps or map of <i>location</i>	Displays a link to a map of the specified city
Movie showtimes	showtimes or showtimes <i>movie</i>	Displays links to movie show times
Movie trailers	trailer <i>movie</i>	Displays links to movie trailers
Recipes	cooking with <i>food</i> or <i>food recipes</i> or <i>recipes</i>	Displays a link to recipes
Software downloads	downloads or download <i>software</i>	Displays a link to a download page for that software
Stock quotes	quote <i>stock</i>	Displays the latest quotes for a specific stock symbol
Time	time zones or time in <i>location</i>	Displays list of time zones or current time in specified location
Weather	<i>location</i> weather	Displays weather conditions and forecast for specified city or state
White pages	whitepages	Displays a form you can use to enter a person's name
Yellow pages	<i>city</i> yellowpages	Displays yellow pages for specified city
zip codes	zip codes or <i>zipcode</i> or <i>zip code of city</i>	Display zip code(s) for a city or the city associated with a specific area code



#223: Apply More Precision to Your Searches

While you can use Boolean operators in the normal AltaVista search box, you might find it easier to construct advanced queries by using a "fill in the form" approach. AltaVista lets you do this from its home page (without going to the Advanced Search page—discussed next) by means of its More Precision form. Just click the More Precision link next to the Find button and then fill in the blanks to search for all these words, this exact phrase, any of these words, or none of these words. Click the Find button to initiate your search.



#224: Fine-Tune Your Search with AltaVista's Advanced Web Search Page

Even more powerful searching is possible from AltaVista's Advanced Web Search page (www.altavista.com/web/adv/). This page lets you build your query by entering keywords into a combination of text boxes. You can also create a free-form Boolean query, select how your results are displayed, and choose which domains or Web sites you want to search in. There's also an option to restrict your search to a specific date or time range—and it's all as easy as making the appropriate menu selections.



#225: Filter AltaVista's Search Results for Family Consumption

AltaVista's Family Filter analyzes the results of any search and automatically excludes those pages that contain adult or otherwise objectionable content. To activate the Family Filter, click the Settings link on the AltaVista home page and then click the Family Filter link. You can choose to filter all your results or only multimedia (images, video, and audio) files. This last option is particularly helpful when you're searching for images or videos; these types of searches, for whatever reasons, often return a fair amount of adult sites in their results.



#226: Personalize Your AltaVista Search Results

You can customize what AltaVista displays on its search results pages by clicking the Settings link on AltaVista's home page. This opens the Settings page, where you can change the language of your search results and AltaVista's site controls; turn on or off the Family Filter; determine how much information is displayed about each listing; and determine how you want your results displayed. Just make your selections and then click the Save Your Settings button.



#227: Narrow Your Search Results with AltaVista Prisma

AltaVista employs a technology it calls *Prisma* to display a list of topics closely related to your original query on your search results page. These topics are actually the most common terms contained on the Web pages that match your query. You can click these links to further refine your search.

When you click on a Prisma word, AltaVista automatically adds that word to your original query and then displays a new set of results. For example, if you search for **dinosaur**, one of the Prisma topics listed is Fossils. Click the Fossils link and AltaVista displays a new page of results (about dinosaur fossils) that are more targeted than your original results.

You can use Prisma to refine your search twice in a row. You can also choose to search for the Prisma topic only (without invoking your original search) by clicking on the >> link next to the topic.

#228: Expand Your Search with the Open Directory

Like Google, AltaVista uses the Open Directory to supplement its regular search index. AltaVista's version of the Open Directory is called the AltaVista Global Directory, and assembles hand-picked entries into a browseable-by-category list. You access the directory by clicking the Directory tab on the AltaVista home page.

#229: Search for Images

When you're searching for images on the Web, it's hard to beat AltaVista's Image Search. When you click the Images tab on the AltaVista home page, the search page changes to display a number of new options. What's interesting about AltaVista's Image Search is that you can easily narrow down your search to specific types of images. For example, you can choose to search for just photos, graphics, or buttons/banners. You can also narrow your search to black-and-white or color images; images from the Web, news sources, Corbis.com, or RollingStone.com; and images of a particular file size. Click the Find button and AltaVista displays your results as a series of thumbnail images. Click a thumbnail to go to the hosting Web page.

#230: Search for MP3 and Audio Files

AltaVista also offers a fairly robust audio search. Select the MP3/Audio tab on the AltaVista home page and the search page changes to display a number of

audio-specific options. You can choose to search for specific file types (MP3, WAV, WindowsMedia, Real, or other), songs of a particular length, and files from either the Web or from news sources. The Duration field is particularly interesting, as you can use it to filter "sample" files from your search; these files are typically short (less than one minute in length), so setting the Duration to > 1 Minute will usually return full-length songs. Search results detail (when available) the length of the file, whether it's mono or stereo, and who holds the copyright.



#231: Search for Video Files

If you like AltaVista's audio search, you'll really love its video search. You can use the Video Search to find movie trailers, music videos, video clips, and other movies anywhere on the Internet. When you select the Video tab on the home page, the search page changes to let you search for specific file types (AVI, MPEG, QuickTime, Windows Media, Real, and other), as well as files of a specific duration or from a specific type of source. The results are returned as a series of thumbnail images; click any thumbnail to play back the selected file.



#232: Search for News Headlines

The final tab on the AltaVista home page is News. When you click the News tab, the search page changes to provide a number of news-specific search options. You can opt to search for specific topics, in specific regions, from specific sources, and within a specified date range. The News search page also displays the most-recent headlines in a number of categories and from a number of major sources.



#233: Convert Units of Measure

Back in Secret #222 you learned about AltaVista's search shortcuts. Well, here's another one worthy of its own secret: the **convert** shortcut opens AltaVista's built-in conversion calculator, which displays all manner of length, time, speed, temperature, weight, area, volume, and cooking conversions. All you have to do is enter **convert measure**, and AltaVista will display a page of conversions.

For example, if you enter **convert 3 liters**, AltaVista displays a page listing nearly every liquid volume equivalent—metric and imperial. The conversion calculator recognizes almost any unit of measurement you can think of, using all standard abbreviations. The only thing it doesn't recognize is fractions, so you'll have to use either whole numbers or decimals— $1\frac{1}{2}$ oz. becomes 1.5 oz., for example.

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AltaVista's conversion calculator is the same one used by sister company AllTheWeb, as you learned in Chapter 7.



#234: Add an AltaVista Toolbar to Your Web Browser

If you can't be bothered to access the AltaVista Web site every time you want to search, you can install a dedicated AltaVista toolbar in your Web browser. (Internet Explorer only, Windows versions 5.0 or later.) Enter your searches into the toolbar and they'll automatically be sent to the AltaVista search engine.

The AltaVista Toolbar includes the standard search box along with a number of dedicated buttons: Search the Web, Translate, Highlight, and so on. It also includes an automatic pop-up blocker to defeat all those annoying pop-up ads.

To download the AltaVista Toolbar, click the Toolbar link on the AltaVista home page or go directly to www.altavista.com/toolbar/. Click the Download button and follow the onscreen instructions to install the toolbar in Internet Explorer.



#235: Access Other Services from the AltaVista Home Page

Not that AltaVista is trying to be a portal (it did that once, with miserable results), but it does include links on its home page to a variety of other services. In a bit of deliberate deception, AltaVista bills these links as "search centers" even though they don't have a whit to do with searching. They're just links to other services on the Web—all provided by third-party sites.

What will you find if you click these search center links? Table 9-2 details the services offered, and who provides them.

Table 9-2: AltaVista's Search Centers

Search Center	Provider
Maps	Yahoo! Maps
Mortgage Rates	IndyMac Bank
People Finder	SMARTpages.com
Personals & Dating	Yahoo! Personals
Shopping	DealTime
Travel	Orbitz
Weather	AccuWeather.com
Web Site Solutions	Interland
Yellow Pages	SMARTpages.com



#236: Find Out if Your Personal Web Pages Are in the AltaVista Index

This is a really unique feature—and one that's quite useful if you manage your own Web site or pages. You can use AltaVista's Webmaster Search to:

- ◆ Find your pages in the AltaVista Web index
- ◆ Find pages that link to your site or page
- ◆ Find pages that use your name (or your company's or product's name) in a link
- ◆ Find sites that are similar to your site

All these features are available on the AltaVista Webmaster Search page (www.altavista.com/web/webmaster/). Just enter your information in the appropriate box and AltaVista will return the information related to your particular Web page. It's a great way to see where your Web pages sort out on the Internet!



#237: See What Other People Are Searching For

Want to find out what the current top searches are on AltaVista's various search engines? Then go to the AltaVista Real Searches page (www.altavista.com/web/real_searches/). Here you can see the top five current Web, Images, Audio, Video, News, and Directory searches. If you're more interested in developing trends, go to the AltaVista Search Trends page (www.altavista.com/about/trends/). Here you'll find lists of Gaining Queries and Declining Queries—what's getting hotter and what's cooling down for the past week or so.

Summary

AltaVista might not be the biggest search engine on the Web, but it's among the most fully featured. It's certainly worth a look if you have a specific type of search in mind—if you can't find what you're looking for at Google or AllTheWeb. It's also the search engine of choice if you're a power searcher; it's the only search engine that lets you use a full range of Boolean operators directly from the home page search box.

HotBot Secrets

Chapter
10



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HotBot was born in May of 1996 as part of the Wired Digital network (owned by *Wired* magazine). The Wired Digital network (along with HotBot) was acquired by Lycos in 1998, which in turn was acquired by Terra in 1999. HotBot continues to be a part of the Terra Lycos network today.

In its early days, HotBot gained a reputation for both the quality and quantity of its search results—although even then HotBot didn't own its own search technology (it used the same search provider back then that it uses today: Inktomi). Through the various acquisitions, however, HotBot's search functionality began to suffer, and the site even went through the apparently ubiquitous (and ubiquitously unsuccessful) portal phase. In 2002, however, HotBot refocused on its core search functionality, and the site is once again one of the major search engines on the Web.

HotBot at a Glance

As you can see in Figure 10-1, the HotBot home page (www.hotbot.com) is relatively simple. There's the expected search box and button, of course, but there's something extra—a list of four different search engines. That's because HotBot lets you search not only its own search engine but also three other search engines—as you'll learn in our very first HotBot secret, coming up next.



Figure 10-1: Search four different search engines from the HotBot home page.



#238: HotBot Lets You Meta-Search Other Search Engines

Okay, if it's right in front of you on the home page, it's not that secret of a secret, but it's still a pretty cool thing. HotBot is unique among the major search sites in that it lets you search four major search engines directly from its home page. Depending on the option you select, you can direct your HotBot searches to any of the following search engines:

- ◆ HotBot (using the Inktomi engine)
- ◆ Lycos
- ◆ Google
- ◆ Ask Jeeves

So if you want to search the HotBot index, select HotBot, enter your query, and click the Search button. If you want to search Google, select Google instead. Same with Lycos and Ask Jeeves.

The results of your query are displayed on a normal search results page. Each search results page displays results from the selected search engine only—not from all the search engines combined. If you want to see the results from another search engine, you have to select that engine from the top of the search results page and then press the Search button to initiate a new search.

HotBot's meta-search functionality is cool, even if it does introduce a level of complexity to the site's operations. That's because the instructions for using each of the four search engines remain separate from each other. You have to follow Google's instructions to do a Google search, and Ask Jeeves' instructions to do an Ask Jeeves search, and so on.



#239: If You Want a *Real* Meta-Search, Try Dogpile (or MetaCrawler or Search.com or . . .)

HotBot isn't the only Web site that lets you search multiple search engines. It isn't even the best at doing this. That's because the top meta-search engines not only let you search multiple sites with a single query, but they also combine the results onto a single search results page. (HotBot doesn't.)

If you're interested in checking out some meta-search sites, take a look at Table 10-1, which lists the major meta-searchers, along with what sites they search. All of these sites consolidate their results into a single list and eliminate duplicate listings from the different search engines.

Table 10-1: Top Meta-Search Sites

Meta-Search Site	URL	Searches These Sites:
Dogpile	www.dogpile.com	About.com AllTheWeb AltaVista Ask Jeeves/Teoma FindWhat Google LookSmart Overture Yahoo! Directory

continued

**Table 10-1** (continued)

Meta-Search Site	URL	Searches These Sites:
GoGettem	www.gogettem.com	AllTheWeb AltaVista HotBot (Inktomi) Open Directory Teoma Yahoo! Directory Yahoo! (Google)
Mamma	www.mamma.com	About.com Business.com FindWhat LookSmart MSN Search Open Directory Teoma
MetaCrawler	www.metacrawler.com	AllTheWeb Ask Jeeves AstraWeb BoardReader Ditto FindWhat Google Inktomi LookSmart MP3Board Open Directory Overture PriceGrabber
Search.com	www.search.com	About.com AltaVista Ask Jeeves Britannica.com Business.com CNET Shopper FindWhat Kanoodle LookSmart My Simon Open Directory Overture Sprinks Surf Point Thunderstone Wisenu Yahoo! Directory

And then there's Excite. As you learned in Chapter 4, Excite searches 11 different search sites (About.com, AllTheWeb, Ask Jeeves, FindWhat, Google, Inktomi, LookSmart, the Open Directory, Overture, Search Hippo, and Sprinks), and it combines the results into a single search list. This makes Excite one of the best of the meta-search sites—even though it's technically a portal!

#240: HotBot's Own Search (by Inktomi) Is Pretty Good

Okay, so HotBot's main gimmick is the ability to search other search sites. But what about HotBot's built-in search engine? It does have one, you know.

The HotBot search engine—the first option in the list of search engines on HotBot's home page—is actually fairly decent. That's because it's powered by Inktomi, which also powers MSN Search (as you learned in Chapter 2). The Inktomi search index contains about three billion Web pages, which makes it just about as big as Google or AllTheWeb. It's also good at returning highly relevant results, and its advanced search options provide all the power desired by serious searchers.

insider insight A little bit of history about Inktomi. It was the Web's second-oldest crawler-based search engine, born at the University of California at Berkeley. The company went public in 1996 and signed up HotBot as its first customer. Today, Inktomi still functions as a behind-the-scenes search provider and still powers HotBot's search results—even though, as you'll learn next, it's now owned by Yahoo!.

#241: Inktomi Is Owned by Yahoo!— Though HotBot Is Owned by Terra Lycos

That's right, Inktomi is yet another search engine that is now owned by the Yahoo! megolith. (Yahoo! made this acquisition in early 2003.)

By this point, you're probably thinking that Yahoo! owns all the searches on the Web. It sure seems that way. Here's a list of the search services that Yahoo! has acquired over the past year or so:

- ◆ Inktomi (which powers HotBot)
- ◆ Overture (which provides paid search listings—and which previously acquired AllTheWeb and AltaVista)
- ◆ AllTheWeb
- ◆ AltaVista

Interestingly, even though Yahoo! owns all of these search engines, they each operate independently. So if you search HotBot (which is powered by Inktomi), you get different results than if you search AllTheWeb or AltaVista.

Also interestingly, Yahoo! does not use any of the search engines it owns to power the search results on its own Web site. It uses Google for that. (Why? Because they had a contract before Yahoo! went on its acquisition spree.)

So who's left to compete with the Yahoo!/Inktomi/Overture/AllTheWeb/AltaVista combination? Well, there's Google, of course (and it competes quite well, thank you). There's also Ask Jeeves, which owns the Teoma search



engine. Finally, in terms of directory results, you also have LookSmart and the Open Directory.

What does this matter to you? Not much, probably. But if Yahoo! does start consolidating its search holdings, it's possible that you'll end up with less search choices than you've had in the past. Until that happens, enjoy the fact that if you can't find what you want on one site, there's still other sites to search—even if most of them all happen to be owned by Yahoo!.

But don't get confused by all this search engine ownership stuff (it's easy to do). HotBot, which is powered by Inktomi (which is owned by Yahoo!), is *not* owned by Yahoo!. HotBot is owned by Terra Lycos. Yahoo! doesn't own Terra Lycos. So Yahoo! doesn't own HotBot. It just owns the company that provides HotBot's primary search results.

Got all that?



#242: Watch Out for the Paid Listings!

HotBot's search results pages (not to be confused by the search results generated when you select one of the other search engine options) look like any other search results—including the fact that they include a large number of paid listings (what HotBot calls "sponsored links"). To its credit, HotBot labels its paid listings as such, but it also puts them at the very top of the search results list. So you'll have to scroll past these sponsored links to get to the Web Results section—HotBot's legitimate search results.

By the way, some popular searches will generate results from the HotBot Directory (HotBot's version of the human-edited Open Directory), as well as what HotBot calls its "Top 10" results. This Top 10 list represents the most popular sites in a given category, as determined by a number of arcane technical factors. If your query generates a Top 10 list, you'll need to go to the second search results page to see the standard results from Inktomi's search index.



#243: Search for an Exact Phrase

Like most other search engines, HotBot lets you use quotation marks to search for exact phrases. So if you're interested in the movie *The Empire Strikes Back*, enter—in quotation marks—"the empire strikes back".



#244: Restrict Your Search to a Page's Title

HotBot recognizes a handful of key word operators that help you to narrow your search queries. The first one we'll look at is the **title:** operator, which you use to limit HotBot's search to the titles of Web pages. If you want to find Web pages that include a particular word in their title, enter **title:key word**. For example, to look for Web pages that include the word "super" in their title, enter **title:super**.



#245: Narrow Your Search to a Specific Domain

Another useful way to narrow your search is to search only for those pages within a particular Web site or domain. For this, you use the **domain:** operator followed by the domain or Web site. For example, if you want to search within the ESPN.com Web site, you enter **domain:espn.com**.



#246: Search for Pages That Link to a URL

It's sometimes useful to search for pages that link to a specific page. HotBot lets you do this by using the **linkdomain:** operator, followed by the page's URL. To look for all the Web pages that link to eBay's home page, you'd enter **linkdomain:www.ebay.com**.



#247: Filter Your Searches from the Home Page

A better way to narrow your HotBot searches is to apply custom filters to your search results. What's nice is that HotBot lets you apply these filters directly from the home page. All you have to do is tell HotBot which filters you want to use, and then you can apply them as appropriate when you're ready to search.

To configure HotBot to display specific filters, click the Add link next to the Custom Web Filters text on the home page. HotBot now displays the Filter Preferences page shown in Figure 10-2. Put a checkmark in the boxes in the Add to Home page column that correspond to the filters you want to display, and then click the Save button. Table 10-2 details the different filters that you can choose to display.

The screenshot shows the HotBot Filter Preferences interface. At the top, there's a logo and a search bar. Below that, a sidebar lists 'Homepage', 'Filter Prefs' (selected), 'Result Prefs', and 'HotBot Skins'. The main area has a title 'Customize HotBot!' and a sub-section 'Your search is currently using HotBot. To see other filter options, try Lycos, Google, or Ask Jeeves.' It includes a list of filter types: 'Filter Prefs - Select which filters appear on your homepage. You can also set permanent values to any filters (e.g., limiting your searches to French sites).', 'Result Prefs - Customize your search results.', and 'HotBot Skins - Choose your own colors for HotBot.' Below this is a table with four rows, each representing a filter type with checkboxes and dropdown menus. The columns are 'ADD TO HOMEPAGE', 'SET DEFAULT VALUES', and 'DIRECTIONS'. The 'Language' row has a dropdown for 'Any Language'. The 'Domain/Site' row has 'Include' and 'Exclude' fields with input boxes. The 'Region' row has a dropdown for 'Anywhere'. The 'Word Filter' row has two dropdowns for 'Any of the Words' and 'Anywhere in the Page', with additional rows for more words. A link '+More Word Filters | -Fewer Word Filters' is at the bottom.

ADD TO HOMEPAGE	SET DEFAULT VALUES	DIRECTIONS
<input type="checkbox"/> Language	Any Language	Limit results to a specific language
<input type="checkbox"/> Domain/Site	Include Exclude <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	Return results in specific domain (e.g. wired.com) or top-level domains (e.g., .gov). Multiple domains/sites may be specified, separated by commas.
<input type="checkbox"/> Region	Anywhere	Limit results to a specific continent or country.
<input type="checkbox"/> Word Filter	Any of the Words <input type="text"/> Anywhere in the Page <input type="text"/> Any of the Words <input type="text"/> Anywhere in the Page <input type="text"/>	Limit results to pages containing/excluding the words specified. Limit your query to specific parts of pages

Figure 10-2: Configure HotBot to display custom filters.

Table 10-2: HotBot's Custom Filters

Filter	Description/Options
Language	Limits your search results to pages written in a specific language
Domain/Site	Use to limit your search results to specific domains or Web sites, or to exclude specific domains or sites from your results; separate multiple entries with commas
Region	Restricts your search to Web sites in a particular county (or, within the U.S., to a particular top-level domain, such as .edu or .gov)
Word Filter	Lets you narrow your search by including or excluding the words specified, or to particular parts of pages
Date	Restricts your search to pages created within a specified period of time
Page Content	Narrows your search to specific file types (MP3, PDF, and so on)
Block Offensive Content	Blocks pages that contain adult or otherwise offensive content

Once you've selected your filters, the HotBot home page changes to display those filters. For example, Figure 10-3 shows a new HotBot home page with the Word Filter and Date filters displayed. Enter your query as normal, and apply each filter as desired before you click the Search button.



Figure 10-3: The HotBot home page with custom filters ready to use.

caution

Not all of the sites that HotBot searches support all the filters. (For example, Ask Jeeves doesn't support the Word Filter.) If you choose to search a site that doesn't support a given filter, HotBot will display the message "This filter is not yet supported."



#248: Fine-Tune Your Search on the Advanced Search Page

Another way to fine-tune your HotBot searches is to use the Advanced Search page shown in Figure 10-4. To access this page, click the Advanced Seach link on HotBot's home page.

As you can see, the options on the Advanced Search page are pretty much the same as you can display with HotBot's custom filters. You can narrow your search by language, domain/site, region, date, or page content. You can also choose to include or exclude specific words, search specific parts of a page, and activate the Block Offensive Content filter.

So if you can put all these filters on the HotBot home page, why bother accessing the Advanced Search page? I recommend using the custom filter option to display those filters you use most frequently, reserving the Advanced Search page for those search options you use less frequently. That way you don't clutter up the home page too much—but still have access to other advanced search options as you need them.

The screenshot shows the HotBot Advanced Search interface for "Web Pages". At the top, there's a logo and a title "Advanced Search: Web Pages (HotBot)". Below that, a search bar has "HotBot" selected from radio buttons for "Search using". There are also buttons for "Lycos", "Google", and "Ask Jeeves". A "SEARCH" button and a "Homepage" link are to the right of the search bar.

ADVANCED WEB FILTERS (HOTBOT)
To see other filter options select the Lycos, Google, or Ask Jeeves radio button above.

Language <small>add to homepage</small>	Any Language	Limit results to a specific language	
Domain/Site <small>add to homepage</small>	Include <input type="text"/>	Exclude <input type="text"/>	Return results in specific domain (e.g. wired.com) or top-level domains (e.g., .gov). Multiple domains/sites may be specified, separated by a comma.
Region <small>add to homepage</small>	Anywhere	Limit results to a specific continent or country.	
Word Filter <small>add to homepage</small>	Any of the Words <input type="text"/> Any of the Words <input type="text"/>	Anywhere in the Page <input type="text"/> Anywhere in the Page <input type="text"/>	Limit results to pages containing/excluding the words specified.
+More Word Filters -Fewer Word Filters			Limit your query to specific parts of pages.

Figure 10-4: HotBot's Advanced Search page.

insider insight

What's interesting about HotBot's Advanced Search page is that it's different for each search engine you select—because each search engine has its own advanced options. Figure 10-4 showed the Advanced Search page for HotBot; click the Lycos, Google, or Ask Jeeves options at the top of the page and you'll see specific Advanced Search pages for those search engines.

#249: Customize Your Search Results

If you'd like HotBot to display more or fewer results per page, or to list more or less information for each result, you have to customize the site's results preferences. Getting there is a bit tricky; you have to click the Preferences link on the home page and then click the Result Prefs link on the next page that appears. The HotBot Result Preferences page then appears with a variety of options for you to configure. What's nice about HotBot is that you can choose whether or not to display the Related Searches and Related Categories links that are typically hard-wired into the results pages of other search engines. Make your choices and then click the Save button.

#250: Change the Look of HotBot with New Skins

If you don't like the way HotBot looks (and not everybody does), you can give the site a new face by applying different skins. There are three ways to re-skin

HotBot—by applying a predesigned skin, by changing colors with the Style Picker, or by uploading your own custom style sheet (CSS) file.

The easiest way to apply a skin is to use one of HotBot's predesigned skins, such as the Tiki Beach Party skin shown in Figure 10-5. To do this, click the Skin HotBot link on the HotBot home page, choose a skin, and click the Save button. Simple enough, eh?



Figure 10-5: HotBot's Tiki Beach Party!

To manually change the colors on the HotBot site, click the Skin HotBot link on the home page and then click the Style Picker link. When the Style Picker page appears, enter new color values for each area of the page, and then click Save.

If you're into total customization, you can upload your own CSS file as a new skin. This isn't the place to go into the intricacies of custom style sheets, but if you know what you're doing, you can click the Skin HotBot link, click the Total CSS Control link, and then enter the URL of your CSS file. Click the Save button and HotBot will use the style choices in your style sheet from then on.



#251: Search HotBot—and Other Search Sites—from the Windows Taskbar

This is one of my favorite secrets in the entire book. HotBot lets you install what it calls the Quick Search Deskbar, which is a special toolbar that installs as part of the Windows Taskbar at the bottom of your desktop. What's cool about the Quick Search Deskbar is that it lets you use shortcut commands to send queries to just about any Web site you can think of—HotBot included.

You install the Deskbar by clicking the Tools link on the HotBot home page and following the onscreen instructions. Once the software is downloaded, you can display the Deskbar by right-clicking anywhere on the Windows Taskbar and choosing Toolbars → Add Quick Search from the context menu.

As you can see in Figure 10-6, the Quick Search Deskbar doesn't look like much. It just sits at the bottom of your screen next to the Windows system tray displaying the current date and time. Things start happening, however, when you enter a query and then press the Enter key on your keyboard. The Deskbar processes your query and displays the results in a new browser window.

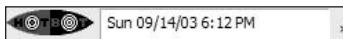


Figure 10-6: The Quick Search Deskbar.

Now here's the cool part. The Deskbar doesn't work just with HotBot—it can send queries to all major search sites and even process a variety of nonsearch commands. Enter a plain query with no additional commands and the query is sent to HotBot by default. You can use other commands, however, to direct the query to other sites. For example, to send your query to Google, enter the **gg** command, followed by your query, like this: **gg keywords**. Table 10-3 details just some of the commands available with the Quick Search Deskbar.

Table 10-3: Quick Search Deskbar Commands

Search	Command
About.com	<i>abt key words</i>
AcronymFinder	<i>af word</i>
AllTheWeb (FAST)	<i>fst key words</i>
AltaVista	<i>av key words</i>
Amazon.com	<i>amaz key words</i>
Ask Jeeves	<i>aj key words</i>
Bartlett's Familiar Quotations	<i>bq key words</i>
Bible Gateway	<i>bg key words</i>
Daypop (blogs)	<i>daypop key words</i>
Dictionary.com	<i>dic word</i>
Dogpile	<i>dp key words</i>
eBay	<i>ebay key words</i>
Encarta Online Encyclopedia	<i>encarta key words</i>
Encyclopedia Britannica	<i>brit key words</i>
Encyclopedia.com	<i>enc key words</i>
Excite	<i>ex key words</i>
FindLaw Law Library	<i>findlaw key words</i>
FindSounds (sound files)	<i>fs key words</i>
Google	<i>gg key words</i>
iTools (newspapers and magazines)	<i>mag key words</i>
Lycos	<i>ly key words</i>
MapQuest (driving directions)	<i>dir zip code or city</i>

Search	Command
MapQuest (maps)	<i>mq zip code or address</i>
Quote.com (stock quotes)	<i>qt ticker</i>
Teoma	<i>tm key words</i>
Thesaurus.com	<i>ths word</i>
Thomas Register (companies and products)	<i>tr /company or /product</i>
Weather Underground (weather conditions and forecast)	<i>wug zip code</i>
Yahoo!	<i>yh key words</i>

And that's not the half of it. The Quick Search Deskbar lets you direct searches to literally hundreds of different Web sites—and even includes commands for a variety of oddball functions, such as setting a desktop alarm or sending an instant message over AOL Instant Messenger. To view all of the Deskbar's available commands, use the ? command. This is one amazing tool!

insider insight You can also use the Deskbar as a calculator. Just enter your equation (complete with equal sign) and press **Enter**; the Deskbar will display your answer.

Summary

Okay, so HotBot isn't quite as fully featured as a Google and doesn't offer the powerful search tools of an AltaVista. Still, HotBot is a time-honored search engine, and its meta-search capabilities let you expand your search to other sites if you can't find what you want on HotBot proper. Even better, HotBot's Quick Search Deskbar is arguably the most versatile tool you can use for all your Web searches. The Deskbar alone makes a visit to HotBot worthwhile; while you're there, check out HotBot's Inktomi-driven search and see if you like it.

Part III

Secrets of the Online News and Information Sites

Chapter 11: CNN.com Secrets

Chapter 12: ESPN.com Secrets

Chapter 13: CBS MarketWatch Secrets

Chapter 14: Weather.com Secrets

Chapter 15: Microsoft.com Secrets

CNN.com Secrets



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The Internet has become a great resource for both casual and serious news-hounds. You can find just about all the news you want somewhere on the Web.

The most popular of all Internet news sites is CNN.com, the online arm of the venerable Cable News Network. CNN.com offers the expected news headlines as well as a lot that's unexpected—as you'll learn from the many secrets in this chapter. The CNN.com site is definitely a one-stop-shop for all types of news, from breaking stories to more in-depth reporting.

CNN.com at a Glance

As you can see in Figure 11-1, the CNN.com home page (www.cnn.com) serves up the latest news headlines at the top of the page with headlines by department below that. The left-hand column offers quick links to each department (Business, Sports, Politics, and so on), as well as links to the site's video and e-mail services. Click on any headline to read the full story.



Figure 11-1: The CNN.com home page.

#252: There's a Lot More Than What You See on the Home Page

This may sound like a rather obvious one, but you'd be surprised how many users never venture beyond the CNN.com home page (or, perhaps, the front page of their local newspaper). The stories listed on the home page are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to what's offered throughout the CNN.com site. If all you ever do is peruse the headlines on the home page, you'll miss hundreds of other stories that appear in each of CNN.com's many topic-specific sections. For example, the home page typically lists two or three headlines under the Politics section—but if you click the link to go to the Politics page, you'll see dozens of stories that weren't listed on the home page.

In other words, to see all that CNN.com has to offer, you have to click through to each of its individual sections—just as you have to read all the sections of your local newspaper.

#253: It Isn't All Free

Here's one of those secrets you don't like to see. Not everything on the CNN.com site is available free of charge. While most of the text-based news remains free, many of CNN.com's multimedia services are available for subscription only. Look for the gold Premium icon to identify content you have to pay for.

#254: Get In-Depth Reporting with CNN.com's Special Reports

Some of CNN's best reporting can be found when you click the Special Reports button on the site's home page. The Special Reports section (also accessible at www.cnn.com/specials/) offers in-depth analysis of the biggest ongoing stories. This is where you'll find comprehensive reporting on current high-profile topics. These reports are much longer than the typical Web news story; many offer multiple stories linked together to provide a comprehensive overview of the topic at hand.

This is definitely the part of the site to peruse when you want more than a cursory take on a given topic. These reports give you the detailed background you need to more fully understand today's most important issues. These special reports are recommended for informed readers of all persuasions.



The Special Reports section also includes archives of older special reports going all the way back to 1995. Just click the appropriate link to view all of the special reports for that year.

#255: Search CNN.com for Older News Stories

It's obvious from looking at the CNN.com home page that this is a great site for up-to-date news articles. It's less obvious, but no less true, that CNN.com offers a terrific archive of older news stories.

You can search CNN.com's news archive from the search box at the top of the site's home page. Just select the CNN.com option (*not* The Web option), enter your query in the search box, and click the Search button. Your query will be matched against the stories in CNN's news archive, with the results displayed on a separate search results page.

Interestingly, CNN.com's site search is powered by the Google search engine. That means you can use all of Google's advanced search operators to fine-tune your search. If you can't remember all these operators (such as +, 1, "", AND, and OR), go back to Chapter 6 to refresh your memory.

CNN's archives contain stories that go back at least five years. Results can be sorted either by relevance or by date.



CNN.com also offers a Google Web search from the same search box. Just select the The Web option, and your query will be directed to the Google search index.

#256: Ask the Folks at CNN to Do Your Research for You

Here's something you probably didn't know—even though, if you think about it, it makes a lot of sense: CNN has its own Research Department that you can utilize to obtain more information about a given topic. That's right, if it's a story on which CNN has reported, you can ask the Research Department to clarify or expand on the information in the report. It's a great way to have the newshounds at CNN help you research the big issues of the day.

To request additional research, go to www.cnn.com/feedback/research.html, and fill in the appropriate blanks in the Research Request Form. You'll need to supply your name, e-mail address, and telephone number, as well as the topic you're interested in and when you saw the CNN report. Then you can choose to share additional information with the CNN researchers or ask the researchers specific questions about the topic. You'll receive your reply (on the Research Department's timetable, of course) via e-mail.

#257: CNN.com Offers Exhaustive Political Reporting and Opinions

CNN.com's Inside Politics section (www.cnn.com/allpolitics/) is one of the top political sites on the Internet. This site, shown in Figure 11-2, offers in-depth coverage of all current campaigns, and is an especially good source for news and information during presidential election years. Look here when you want the real inside stuff on the most important local and national elections.

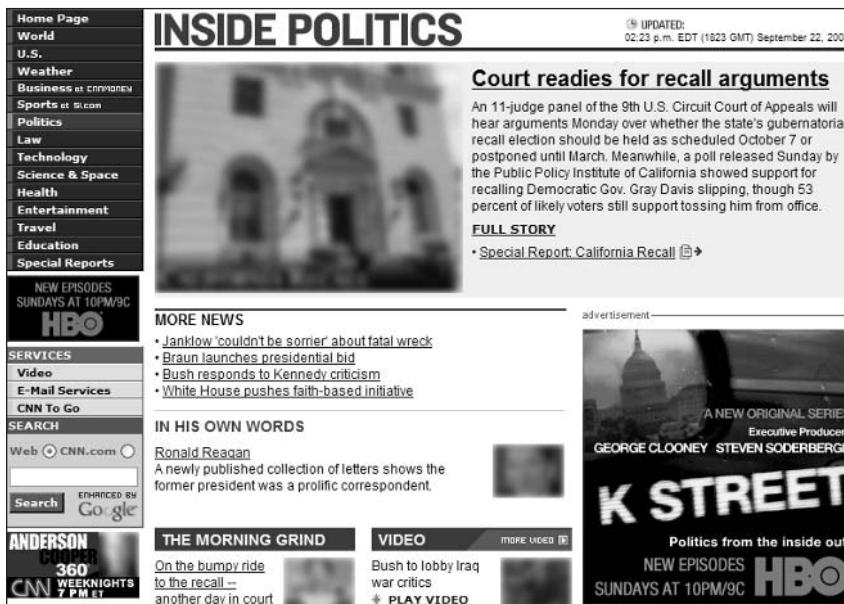


Figure 11-2: One of the best political sites on the Internet: CNN's Inside Politics.

Part of what makes CNN's Inside Politics such a good site is its offering of opinions and analyses from the nation's top political commentators. Scroll down to the Opinion & Analysis section and you'll find columns by the likes of Mark Shields and Robert Novak—hard-hitting, no-holds-barred Washington insiders who always have opinions to share.

#258: CNN.com Offers Interesting Feature Reporting

CNN.com isn't just hard news and politics. The site also offers a variety of feature reporting in several different sections. These feature sections include:

- ◆ **Law** (www.cnn.com/law/): Reports on the latest legal news and offers analysis of recent judicial proceedings and reports from partner Court TV.

- ◆ **Technology** (www.cnn.com/tech/): Includes dedicated sections for Internet, Personal Tech, Business Tech, and Fun & Games.
- ◆ **Science & Space** (www.cnn.com/tech/space/): Covers NASA and space travel (naturally), general astronomical issues, nature and the environment, and general science topics.
- ◆ **Health** (www.cnn.com/health/): Covers the latest medical and biotech developments, diet and fitness news, and parenting information; this section also includes a link to the health database at MayoClinic.com and health information of particular interest to seniors.



#259: CNN.com Provides Education News and Reference Information

CNN.com's Education section (www.cnn.com/education/) is unusual in that it presents not only education-related news stories but also a variety of reference information of value to students of all ages. Scroll down to the bottom of the page, and you'll see links to reference information provided by CNN partner Harcourt—including world maps, oral histories, census information, and so on. This page is one of the best-kept educational secrets on the Web and is well worth your attention if you have school-aged children.



#260: CNN.com Reports All the Latest Entertainment News and Gossip

CNN has always been a good source for the latest entertainment news, and CNN.com carries on this tradition in its Entertainment section (www.cnn.com/showbiz/). This section offers movie, music, TV, and book news, along with bestseller lists and the occasional special report. You can even get your daily supply of show business gossip in the Showbuzz section and click through to an extensive entertainment calendar of upcoming events.



#261: Get a Laugh with CNN.com's Offbeat News Stories

While we're on the topic of entertainment, let's look at one of the most entertaining (and well-hidden) parts of the CNN.com Web site—CNN's Offbeat News. This page (www.cnn.com/offbeat/) features the most unusual headlines of the day and even offers offbeat pictures and videos. (Sample headline from September 15, 2003: "Sean Connery May Lend Voice to Elevator.") Turn to the Offbeat News when the regular news gets too heavy to deal with—it's always good for a chuckle.



#262: CNN.com Serves Up Useful Travel News and Information—and the CNN Airport Network

CNN.com isn't one of the Web's most popular travel sites, but that may be an oversight. While CNN.com Travel (www.cnn.com/travel/) isn't a full-service travel site (you can't make reservations here), it does offer a surprisingly wide variety of travel news, information, and advice. Here you'll find in-depth articles about particular destinations, the latest travel headlines, up-to-the-minute advice and bulletins for both domestic and international travel, and general news about the travel industry.

You can find even more travel resources at the CNN Airport Network Web site (www.cnn.com/cnn/programs/airport.network/). If you do any traveling at all, you recognize the Airport Network as that version of CNN produced especially for viewing in airport terminals. The CNN Airport Network Web site, however, doesn't offer any news. Instead, it serves as a gateway to all manner of resources for your travel needs.

Here's just a sampling of what you'll find on the CNN Airport Network Web site:

- ◆ Airport listings
- ◆ Currency converter
- ◆ Destination information
- ◆ Driving directions
- ◆ Maps
- ◆ Passport information
- ◆ Time converter
- ◆ Travel warnings and advisories
- ◆ U.S. Customs information
- ◆ Weather forecasts

Granted, some of these are just links to information located elsewhere on the Web. But that's okay; the Airport Network page puts all these links on a single page, which makes the CNN Airport Network a convenient, must-bookmark site for all frequent travelers.



#263: CNN.com Delivers Your Local Weather Conditions and Forecast

The daily weather forecast is an integral part of any newscast, so it makes sense that CNN.com offers a robust weather section on its Web site. When you click the Weather button on the site's home page (or go directly to www.cnn.com/weather/), you're taken to the CNN.com Weather page. As you can see in Figure 11-3, this is a general weather page—think of it like the national weather forecast you see every hour on CNN proper.

WEATHER

© UPDATED:
11:08 a.m. EDT (1508 GMT) September 22, 2003

CURRENT CONDITIONS
Carmel, IN
Updated 2:22 PM EST
 Cloudy
Temp: 71 F (22 C)

FORECASTS

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Hl: 71 F Lo: 50 F	Hl: 70 F Lo: 49 F	Hl: 73 F Lo: 49 F	Hl: 62 F Lo: 43 F	Hl: 62 F Lo: 45 F

[Full Conditions](#)
[Change your default](#)

FIND WEATHER AROUND THE WORLD

Enter city name or U.S. Zip Code:
Or select location from a list

VIDEO MORE VIDEO

Isabel slices North Carolina cape

SERVICES
Video
E-Mail Services
CNN To Go
SEARCH
Web
 ENHANCED BY Google

ANDERSON **CNN 360** WEEKNIGHTS 7 P.M. ET

Figure 11-3: Get local and national weather on CNN's Weather page.

From here you can access forecasts, temperatures, satellite and radar maps from around the world—North America, Central America/Caribbean, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, and the Middle East. This page also offers local weather conditions and forecasts for all major national and international locations as well as a brief overview of the current conditions in your particular zip code.

For more detailed local weather you have to click the Full Conditions link under your local forecast. This takes you to your local weather page, which features current conditions (including sunrise and sunset times), a five-day forecast, and local weather maps and radar. This is a good page to bookmark so that you can access the current local weather with the click of a mouse.



Learn more about one of the Web's other great weather site—Weather.com—in Chapter 14.



#264: Get the Latest Sports News with CNN.com—and Sports Illustrated

By now you're probably getting the idea that CNN.com is as much a portal as it is a news site. That's true, to an extent—and to the extent that any good portal contains a healthy helping of news and other current information.

Just as all portals (and all newspapers) contain a sports section, so does the CNN.com site. Well, to be more accurate, CNN.com *links* to a sports site—the SI.com Web site, jointly run by CNN and *Sports Illustrated*.

SI.com (sportsillustrated.cnn.com) isn't your run-of-the-mill portal sports site. Hey—this is *Sports Illustrated* we're talking about here, the premier sports magazine of all time! As you can see in Figure 11-4, SI.com offers news, scores, and analysis for all popular sports—including the NFL, NBA, MLB, NHL, NCAA football and basketball, golf, racing, soccer, tennis, and more. The site also offers video clips, fantasy sports leagues, commentary, and an online version of the famous *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit edition.



Figure 11-4: Sports online with CNN's SI.com.

note

Learn more about one of the Web's other great sports sites—ESPN.com—in Chapter 12.



#265: Get Stock Quotes and Financial News at CNN/Money

CNN.com's Money section is actually a separate site run in conjunction with *Money* magazine. The CNN/Money site (money.cnn.com) offers a mix of stock

quotes, daily financial stories, and more in-depth commentary and analysis from *Money* magazine. The site also carries stories from CNNfn TV and presents a variety of financial calculators for your personal use. It's one of the better financial sites on the Web.



#266: Get In-Depth Business Reporting with CNN.com and Business 2.0

CNN.com supplements its CNN/Money site with the Business 2.0 site (www.business2.com), run in conjunction with *Business 2.0* magazine. This site, like the magazine, offers longer and more detailed financial stories, with a particular emphasis on technology. This is a good site to visit to get invaluable background on the day's most important financial issues.



#267: CNN.com Lets You Read Time Magazine Online—for Free

Money and *Business 2.0* aren't the only magazines that partner with CNN.com. The site's big partner is fellow Time Warner subsidiary *Time* magazine. The version of *Time* on the CNN.com site (and at its own URL, www.time.com) is an online mirror of the print magazine. Here you'll find all the in-depth coverage that *Time* is famous for as well as its various feature articles. *Time* online includes all of the magazine's sections, including Nation, World, Business & Tech, Entertainment, Science & Health, Special Reports, Photos, Graphics, and Columnists. It's the same great coverage you're used to, available for free online.



#268: CNN.com International Offers a Different Take on Today's News

Here's something most Americans don't realize: CNN is a global operation that serves up a respected international version that is broadcast virtually worldwide. But the international version of CNN is substantially different from the U.S. version, with more hard news and fewer features and personality-driven programs. Most critics prefer CNN international to CNN domestic.

Well, just as there's an international version of the broadcast CNN, there's also a separate international version of CNN.com, called CNN.com International. You access CNN.com International by clicking the International Edition link at the top of the normal CNN.com home page or by going directly to edition.cnn.com. You can compare the different focus of the CNN.com International site by comparing its home page, shown in Figure 11-5, with the home page of the U.S. site, back in Figure 11-1. Same day, much different focus.

The screenshot shows the CNN.com International homepage. At the top, there's a banner for "CNN Traveller" with the tagline "Travel the world with CNN." and a "SUBSCRIBE HERE" button. Below the banner, there's a search bar with "The Web" and "CNN.com" dropdowns, and a "Search" button. To the right of the search bar is a "Google" logo with "ENHANCED BY Google". On the left side, there's a vertical sidebar with links for "Home Page", "World", "U.S.", "World Business", "Technology", "Science & Space", "Entertainment", "World Sport", "Travel", "Weather", and "Special Reports". Below this sidebar is a box titled "Be the first to know." with dropdown menus for "ON TV", "What's on", "Biz International", "Business Traveller", "Music Room", "Talk Asia", "Services", and "Languages". The main content area has a timestamp "September 22, 2003 – Updated 1912 GMT (0312 HKT)". A large thumbnail image is visible, and below it is a headline: "Chaplain arrest 'prompts probe'". The text of the article discusses a broad investigation into security breaches at Guantanamo Bay following the arrest of an Islamic chaplain. There are also links for "FULL STORY", "Video: Muslim chaplain under investigation", and "On the scene: Cleric's future unclear". To the right of the main content, there are two small images with captions: "EUR FLIES" (Mink hunt after farm raid) and "FIERY END" (Galileo bows out in style). Below these are "MORE TOP STORIES" and "WORLD BUSINESS" sections. The "WORLD BUSINESS" section includes a "STOCK/FUND QUOTES" form and a "MARKETS" table showing updated 1910 GMT data for Nikkei, H.SENG, FTSE, DAX, and DJIA.

	NIKKEI	H.SENG	FTSE	DAX	DJIA
choose exchange	London	-95	-28	-122	-105
enter symbol	<input type="text"/>	10873	4226	3456	8639
GET		-0.9%	-0.7%	-3.4%	-1.1%
	10475	10873	4226	3456	8639
	-4.2%	-0.9%	-0.7%	-3.4%	-1.1%

Figure 11-5: The best world news on the Web—CNN.com International.

CNN.com offers coverage of all major world events from CNN's local news bureaus. This means that you get world news from a local perspective, without the normal U.S. bias you see from other American media. It also means that CNN.com International offers *more* world news—more stories, more analysis, and more features—than you can find elsewhere. You'll even find a unique international perspective on U.S. news stories.

This international coverage is organized both by region and by topic. Additional stories—and streaming videos—are sourced from major CNN International broadcasts, including Business International (global business and finance), Business Travel (international travel), The Music Room (world music), and Talk Asia (an Asian-focused talk show).

Don't confuse CNN.com International with the World section of the U.S. CNN.com site (www.cnn.com/world/). As you can see in Figure 11-6, the World section offers an expected U.S.-centric view of world events, whereas the CNN.com International site offers true local coverage. Not that the CNN.com World section is bad, mind you—it's as good as, if not better than, the international section of any U.S. news site. It's just that CNN.com International offers a worldview not often seen in the traditional U.S. media—which is what makes it so valuable.

The screenshot shows the CNN.com World section. At the top left is a vertical sidebar with links like Home Page, World, U.S., Weather, etc. Below it is a "Help in your Community?" box and service links for Video, E-Mail Services, CNN To Go, and Search. A banner for "ANDERSON COOPER 360 CNN WEEKNIGHTS 7 P.M. ET" is visible. The main header "WORLD" is at the top center. Below it is a large, blurry image of a bombing scene. Headlines include "Bomber attacks U.N. in Iraq" (with a link to a full story), "FUR FLIES" (about mink hunt after farm raid), and "AWARDS NIGHT" (mentioning Raymond Sopranos' sweep Emmys). On the right, there's a sidebar with "MORE NEWS" links (Mastermind reveals 9/11 details, Iran: Murder charge in journalist's death, Koizumi names new cabinet, Dutch minister gets NATO top job, Quake shakes Dominican Republic, Prince Harry passes Army test) and an advertisement for "Sept. 1-Oct. 12 1000s of local employers. New jobs every day." The bottom right features a video thumbnail for "Deadly explosion in Baghdad".

Figure 11-6: The World section of the U.S. CNN.com site.

#269: CNN.com Is Available in Five Different Languages

CNN.com International is designed for English-speaking users, either in the U.S. or abroad. CNN.com also offers five foreign-language sites designed for non-English users; these sites offer even more local news and information and are designed to compete with native news sites in foreign countries. (Some of these sites are even hosted in partnership with local news-gathering operations.) For example, Figure 11-7 shows the Arabic version of CNN, created especially for Middle Eastern users.

Table 11-1 details the different language versions of CNN, along with their URLs.

CNN بالعربي

واحصلوا على آخر الأخبار باللغة العربية.

الأخبار

أجتماعات صندوق النقد والبنك الدولي في دبي 2003

أخبار أخرى

، قاض إسباني يأمر بسجن 4 أشخاص لصلتهم بالقاعدة ، وزراء عراقيون يتهدون بتجاوز عثرات النظام السابق ، هون ينفي الضلوع بمؤامرة لتطليخ اسم "كيلي" ، باكستان تعقل شقيق جندي لمحالفته قاتلون الهمزة ، الملا عمر ينظم صفوفه لشن هجمات في أفغانستان

منشورات مالية

2315 (GMT +4)	-0.7% FTSE	-1.1% DOW	-4.2% NIKKEI
-3.4% DAX	-1.8% NAS	-0.9% H SENG	
-2.7% CAC	-1.4% S&P	-0.9% S. TIMES	

حوافر لاحتشام طالبات بانكوك جوانز ذهب وألماس التخل عن الملابس المثيرة

اشترك في خدمة آخر خبر المجانية من CNNarabic.com

2304 (GMT+04:00) - 22/09/03

صفحة الرئيسية

شرق الأوسط

عالم

اقتصاد

علوم وتكنولوجيا

نوادرات

ياسنة

طقوس

لغات خاصة

شغف هنا

CNN بالعربي

خدمات

من نحن؟

لاحداث

من حيث الخاصة

CNN

تلفزيون CNN

سأل CNN

كيف تشاهد CNN على الشاشة

biz internation

وأقتنا الأخرى

Figure 11-7: The Arabic version of CNN.com.

Table 11-1: Local-Language CNN Sites

Site	URL
Arabic	arabic.cnn.com
German	www.n-tv.de
Italian	Cnnitalia.it
Japanese	www.cnn.co.jp
Korean	www.joins.com/cnn/
Spanish	cnnenespanol.com

#270: Listen to the Latest News—Live—with CNNRadio

You're probably aware of the technology known as Internet radio, which lets you listen to live or streaming radio broadcasts over the Internet on your PC. Well, CNN.com takes advantage of Internet radio technology to offer a live version of CNNRadio over the Web—for free.

CNNRadio is normally broadcast over a network of 2,000 radio stations across the U.S. and around the world. The version of CNNRadio available over the Internet is the exact same feed you hear on your AM dial, commercials and all. And it's yours for listening, at no charge.

To listen to CNNRadio, all you need is your PC and an Internet connection—although having a fast broadband Internet connection certainly helps. (The audio stream will sometimes overload a slower dial-up connection.) When you click the CNNRadio link on the CNN.com home page, a separate window opens on your desktop. Select which audio player you want to use (Windows Media Player or RealPlayer) and the CNNRadio broadcast will commence momentarily. Feel free to minimize the window if you want and then listen to your heart's content.



Learn more about CNNRadio at www.cnnradio.com. This page also lets you access the Spanish-language broadcasts of CNN en Espanol Radio.



#271: Watch CNN Video Clips on Your PC Screen

If you're more of a visual kind of person, then you'll love CNN.com's numerous PC video feeds. That's right, CNN.com offers a large amount of news clips and reports from CNN broadcasts, all available for the viewing on your personal computer. When you click the Video link on the CNN.com home page, you're taken to the Video page, which lists all the available broadcasts organized by video channel. Click the Play link next to a specific video and a separate video window opens on your desktop.



CNN.com streams its videos via the RealVideo format, so you'll need to have the RealVideo player installed on your desktop. Go to www.real.com to download the player if you don't already have it installed.

As with CNNRadio, CNN.com's videos play a whole lot better if you're connected to the Internet via a broadband connection. These video clips are rather large and take a long time to download if you're connecting via dial-up.

There's one more thing you need to know about these CNN video clips—most of them aren't free. That's right, when you peruse the CNN.com Video page, you see that Premium icon next to a large number of clips, and we all know what that means: if you want to play, you have to pay.

The only way you can watch CNN.com's premium videos is to subscribe to the CNN NewsPass or RealOne SuperPass programs. CNN NewsPass is the lower-cost option, at \$4.95 per month, but it only provides access to these CNN videos. The RealOne SuperPass costs \$9.95 a month, but it includes everything in CNN NewsPass *plus* CNN QuickCasts (see Secret #272), video and news programs from ABCNews, financial news from the *Wall Street Journal*, entertainment news from E! Online and IFilm, and a variety of sports news and highlights from MLB.com, NBA.com, NASCAR.com, and FoxSports.

To learn more about both programs or to subscribe, click on the CNN NewsPass logo on the CNN.com Video page.



#272: Sign Up to View CNN's Web-Only Newscast

CNN produces a Web-only newscast, called CNN QuickCast, exclusively for RealOne SuperPass subscribers. QuickCast is similar to Headline News, offering national and world headlines, and it's updated hourly. Go to the CNN.com Video page to learn more.



#273: Get CNN's TV Schedule Online

Want to find out when your favorite CNN show is being broadcast on your cable or satellite network? Well, let's not forget that CNN.com is part of the CNN organization—which means that the site offers full broadcast television schedules for the CNN, CNN Headline News, and CNN International networks. Just scroll down to the bottom of the CNN.com home page and click the appropriate link; this will take you to a network-specific site where you'll find daily and weekly broadcast schedules.



#274: View Transcripts of Your Favorite CNN Shows

There's a lot of important information imparted on CNN's broadcast programs, especially on shows like *Crossfire*, *The Capitol Gang*, and *Larry King Live*. If you want to find exactly who said what, it's easy to view transcripts for any CNN program directly on the CNN.com Web site. Just click the Transcripts link at the bottom of the CNN.com home page (or go directly to www.cnn.com/transcripts/) and you'll find a list of CNN shows along with a monthly calendar. You can search for shows by program name or date and then click through to order specific show transcripts. The transcripts are displayed onscreen; use your browser's Print button to create your own hard copies.



#275: Contact Your Favorite CNN News Anchors

Want to send a comment to a CNN broadcast personality? Then go to the CNN.com Contact Us page (www.cnn.com/feedback/). You can send comments or fan mail direct to specific anchors or to the producers of any CNN show. Just click the link and fill in the form!



#276: Sign Up to Receive CNN.com News Alerts via E-Mail

CNN.com offers a terrific service designed to keep you informed of breaking news stories via e-mail. When you sign up for Breaking News Alerts, you'll receive a text through e-mail whenever there's a big breaking story. (The e-mail typically contains just a headline or a brief sentence or two and then directs you to the CNN.com site for more information.) To sign up, click the E-Mail Services link on the CNN.com home page, or go directly to www.cnn.com/email/.



#277: Have CNN.com Deliver a Morning "Newspaper" to Your E-Mail Inbox

Here's something else you can sign up for from the E-Mail Services page—a morning online "newspaper." *American Morning Quick News* is an HTML-format e-mail that functions as an online newspaper, complete with top stories, local weather, and a variety of feature stories. It's a great way to start your day—and gets you up and running on the latest news and issues before you put your foot out the door.



#278: Get CNN on Your Cell Phone

If your cell phone has Internet access—or even just text messaging—you can access CNN's news headlines when you're on the go. Depending on your cellular service, you can sign up to have news alerts sent directly to your phone, or you can access CNN's wireless Web site. Click the CNN To Go link on the CNN.com home page to learn what's available from your particular cellular provider.



#279: Other Great News Sites on the Internet

As great as CNN.com is, it's just one of many full-service news sites on the Internet. There are several other equally comprehensive news sites, as well as sites for most major newspapers and magazines. There are even sites that offer databases of archived news articles—great for researching older issues and topics. Read on to learn about the best of the rest—the Internet's *other* news sites.

insider insight

Don't forget that you can use your personalized portal start page—such as My Yahoo! or My MSN—to deliver custom-selected news headlines as part of the whole start page experience.

General News Sites

CNN.com is what you might call a full-service news site, offering both news headlines and in-depth reporting from an established news-gathering organization. All major news-gathering organizations have online branches, and some of these sites rival CNN's in terms of coverage and features. If you're a real news junkie, you'll want to check out all these sites to see which you like best.

These full-service sites are listed in Table 11-2.

Table 11-2: Internet News Sites

News Site	URL
ABCNews	abcnews.go.com
BBC News	news.bbc.co.uk
CBSNews	www.cbsnews.com
CNET News.com (technology news)	www.news.com
FOXNews	www.foxnews.com
Google News	news.google.com
MSNBC	www.msnbc.com
Reuters News Online	www.reuters.com
WorldNews Network	www.worldnews.com

insider insight

There's one other general news site that deserves mention. If you can get past its obvious political bias, the Drudge Report (www.drudgereport.com) does a terrific job of highlighting important news headlines from around the Internet—and it's often the first site to expose breaking stories.

Newspaper Sites

Most major newspapers also deliver their content via full-featured Web sites, often at no charge—even if you're not a subscriber. The best of these online newspapers are listed in Table 11-3.

Table 11-3: Newspaper Web Sites

Newspaper	URL
<i>Boston Globe</i>	www.boston.com/news/globe/
<i>Chicago Tribune</i>	www.chicagotribune.com
<i>Denver Post</i>	www.denverpost.com
<i>Detroit Free Press</i>	www.freep.com
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	www.latimes.com
<i>Miami Herald</i>	www.herald.com
<i>Minneapolis Star Tribune</i>	www.startribune.com
<i>New York Times</i>	www.nytimes.com
<i>San Francisco Chronicle</i>	www.sfgate.com
<i>USATODAY</i>	www.usatoday.com
<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	www.wsj.com
<i>Washington Post</i>	www.washingtonpost.com



Just as the national newspapers have their own Web sites, so do many local newspapers. These local newspaper Web sites are good places to go for local news, as are local radio and television station sites. For a listing of these local media Web sites, go to NewsLink (www.newslink.org).

Magazine Sites

Almost all of the major weekly news magazines have first-rate Web sites, much like www.time.com. Table 11-4 details a few of the more popular newsmagazine sites on the Web.

Table 11-4: Magazine Web Sites

Magazine	URL
<i>Business Week</i>	www.businessweek.com
<i>Entertainment Weekly</i>	www.ew.com
<i>Harper's</i>	www.harpers.org
<i>National Review</i>	www.nationalreview.com
<i>Newsweek</i>	www.newsweek.com

Magazine	URL
<i>The New Republic</i>	www.tnr.com
<i>People</i>	www.people.com
<i>Time</i>	www.time.com
<i>TV Guide</i>	www.tvguide.com
<i>U.S. News and World Report</i>	www.usnews.com

Summary

That wraps up our coverage of CNN.com, the Web's most popular dedicated news site. As you can see, CNN puts a lot of effort into this site and there's a lot there—more than most people know about. If you have a nose for news, it's a site that's certainly worth exploring. In fact, because of the unique features of the Internet, it's possible to argue that CNN.com offers more coverage than the CNN network itself—and maybe even more than what you get in most traditional newspapers. I find myself clicking from one story to the next whenever I visit the site, always finding something else of interest to read. It's certainly *my* news site of choice!

ESPN.com Secrets



Secrets in This Chapter

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#283: Check Out Even More Coverage at ABC Sports	235
#284: ESPN.com Offers Deep Background and Analysis	235
#285: ESPN.com Offers Strong Opinions	236
#286: Get the Line on the Big Games	236
#287: Use ESPN.com to Discover the Business behind the Sports Business	236
#288: Go to EXPN for Extreme Sports Coverage	236
#289: Better Than Box Scores—ESPN GameCasts	237
#290: ESPN.com Offers Great Coverage of Fishing, Hunting, and Other Outdoor Activities	237
#291: Let ESPN.com Help You Get into Shape	237
#292: ESPN.com Covers Sports Video Games	238
#293: Use ESPN.com to Run Your Fantasy Sports League	238
#294: Share Your Opinions with Other Sports Fans on ESPN.com Message Boards	239
#295: Rub Elbows with Big-Time Sports Stars with ESPN.com Chat	240
#296: Get the Latest Sports Scores on Your Windows Desktop	240
#297: Listen to ESPNRadio Live on Your PC—for Free	240
#298: Use ESPN Motion to Watch TV-Quality Video Clips on Your PC	241
#299: Find Out What's Playing Tonight on ESPN TV and Other Sports Networks	242
#300: Buy Sports Stuff at the ESPN Store	242
#301: Bid for Sports Memorabilia at ESPN Auctions	242
#302: Visit ESPN.com, Win Prizes	242

#303: Get ESPN.com in Spanish—and Heavy on the Fútbol	243
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ESPN is the biggest sports network in the world. It follows that ESPN.com would be the largest sport site on the Internet—and also the most popular. ESPN.com offers in-depth coverage of virtually every sport both in the U.S. and abroad. The site offers scores, news, opinions and analysis, and even video clips and live radio feeds. In fact, there's little that ESPN.com doesn't offer sports-wise.

If you're a sports fan, chances are you already have ESPN.com bookmarked in your Web browser. But even if you're a regular ESPN.com visitor, the site offers so much content that it's unlikely that you know everything that's available. You can spend an entire day browsing the site and still not see everything!

ESPN.com at a Glance

Of course, you start your exploration of the ESPN.com site (msn.espn.go.com) on the home page, shown in Figure 12-1. Big stories are smack in the middle of the page, while individual sports and sections are in the long column on the left. The top of the page includes links to ESPN's several sister sites.

Figure 12-1: The ESPN.com home page.

But that's just the start. Read on to learn the many secrets of ESPN.com—and get an even bigger fix for your sports jones!

#280: ESPN.com Is Part of MSN—and Also Part of the Go Network

You've probably noticed that the ESPN.com site has a rather unusual URL: msn.espn.go.com. The "espn" and ".com" parts are understandable, but what's this "msn" and "go" nonsense?

The multipart URL is necessary because the ESPN.com site is part of two separate Web networks. First, ESPN.com functions as the sports section of the MSN portal, which you learned about in Chapter 2. Second, ESPN.com is also part of another network of sites run by the Disney entertainment conglomerate called the Go network. Disney's Go network includes ESPN.com, ABCNews.com, ABC.com, Movies.com, Disney.com, and several other sites. The centerpiece of the Go network is the Go.com portal (www.go.com), shown in Figure 12-2. Go.com is actually a strong competitor to Yahoo!, MSN, and the other major portals, offering news from ABCNews, sports from ESPN, and family content from various Disney properties. If you're a big ESPN fan, you might want to consider making Go.com your start page; sports news from ESPN.com is strategically located at the top of the page!

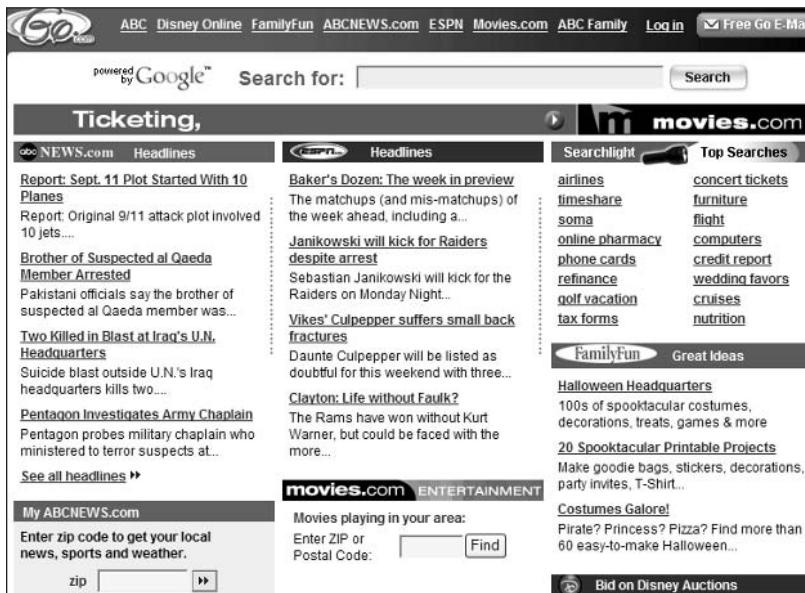


Figure 12-2: The Go.com portal—with ESPN content at the top of the page.

So if ESPN is owned by Disney and ESPN.com is part of Disney's Go.com network, then how come ESPN.com is also part of MSN—and carries extremely visible MSN branding at the top of every page? It's just one of the many wacky Web partnerships that are part and parcel of the dot-com business. Microsoft needed sports content, ESPN/Disney needed a distribution partner, and thus a

contractual relationship was established. That it results in an unnecessarily long and confusing URL is simply an unfortunate side effect. Luckily, www.espn.com redirects to the site, so if you don't want to remember the silly URL you don't have to.



#281: View a Less-Filling Version at ESPN.com Lite

If the main ESPN.com home page is a little too much for you—or if you're on a slow Internet connection and it has trouble loading—then you can choose to display the ESPN.com Lite site. This is a primarily text-based site with far fewer graphic elements (and no Flash content), which should load a lot faster on slow connections.

Unfortunately, ESPN.com keeps its Lite site a bit of a secret. To load the ESPN.com Lite site, you have to scroll down to the very bottom of the ESPN.home page to the block of fine print below the last story. In the middle of that paragraph is a sentence (in parentheses) that reads, "You may also visit our lite site if you're having problems viewing our home page." Click the "lite site" link to load the ESPN.com Lite page.



#282: ESPN.com Covers Every Sport You Can Think Of—and Then Some

Okay, it's no secret that ESPN and ESPN.com cover all sorts of sports. You know that the ESPN.com site is the place to go for major league baseball, basketball, football, and hockey coverage. You probably knew that ESPN.com covered golf and tennis, and maybe even auto and horse racing. You may have even known that ESPN.com covered boxing and soccer and most college sports. But did you know that ESPN.com covers figure skating, cricket, and sailing?

That's probably because you only click the links that appear on the ESPN.com home page. There's a lot of them, for sure, but the site covers even more sports than that. All you have to do is click the More Sports link (you missed that one, didn't you?), and you'll see that ESPN.com offers coverage of the following:

- ◆ Arena football
- ◆ Canadian football
- ◆ Cricket
- ◆ Cycling
- ◆ Figure skating
- ◆ Gymnastics
- ◆ High school sports
- ◆ Iditarod
- ◆ Little league world series
- ◆ Minor league baseball
- ◆ Minor league hockey
- ◆ NBDL
- ◆ NFL Europe
- ◆ Olympic sports
- ◆ Rugby
- ◆ Sailing
- ◆ Track and field

And remember, once you locate the page for a specific sport, you can bookmark it in your Web browser so that you can access it without having to hunt through the More Sports page.

#283: Check Out Even More Coverage at ABC Sports

As much content as ESPN.com offers, the site also links to a number of partner sites that provide even more sports coverage. Chief among these sites is sister company ABC Sports (espn.go.com/abcsports/). As you can see in Figure 12-3, this site presents network-specific coverage of all the sports that ABC covers, as well as commentary by John Madden. The ABC Sports site also offers an updated schedule of ABC's network sports programs—including Monday Night Football and other major events.



Figure 12-3: Network sports coverage at ABCSports.com

#284: ESPN.com Offers Deep Background and Analysis

When you want in-depth background information and analysis of the top sports stories, click the ESPN Intelligence link on the ESPN.com home page. ESPN Intelligence offers insights assembled from ESPN.com, ESPN TV, and *ESPN The Magazine* on all the top sporting events and stories. This is the place for serious sports fans; with ESPN Intelligence you'll discover the stories behind the stories and learn why a team is winning or losing.

#285: ESPN.com Offers Strong Opinions

Analysis is one thing; opinion is another. ESPN.com offers plenty of opinions, from some of the most opinionated personalities in sports journalism—including Nick Bakay, Jim Caple, Whitney Casey, Michael Davies, Wayne Drehs, Mike Greenberg, Graham Hays, Tim Keown, Chris McKendry, Jeff Merron, Alysse Minkoff, Brian Murphy, Eric Neel, Stacy Pressman, Darren Rovell, Dan Shanoff, Bill Simmons, Jason Whitlock, Ralph Wiley, and Hunter S. Thompson (!). All of these opinion makers have regular columns in ESPN.com's Page 2 section. Just click the Page 2 link at the top of the hom page, or go directly to espn.go.com/page2/, to read what these experts are saying about your favorite sport. I particularly like Dan Shanoff's Daily Quickie, which offers opinions and insights in fun, bite-sized portions.

#286: Get the Line on the Big Games

If you're known to place a bet or two, you probably want to find out the point spread on the upcoming big games. ESPN.com doesn't disappoint; click the Daily Line link on the home page to view the line on all upcoming games—pro and college.

#287: Use ESPN.com to Discover the Business behind the Sports Business

The casual fan might like to think that sports is a game, but it's really a big business. ESPN.com offers the business aspect of sports in its Sports Business section. Want to find out who's spending money on what (or whom)? Then this is the section for you. You'll discover what's up behind the scenes at all major professional sports leagues and how that's impacting ticket sales and player salaries. The Sports Business section is definitely all business about covering the financial aspect of sports today.

#288: Go to EXPN for Extreme Sports Coverage

It's extreme, man! If you're into extreme sports—skateboarding, snowboarding, motocross, and the like—then ESPN's sister site, EXPN (expn.go.com), is for you. EXPN covers the extreme sports world the same way that ESPN covers traditional sports—which makes it the place for all your X Games news and information.



#289: Better Than Box Scores—ESPN GameCasts

Now this is something neat. If you can't get to a TV set to watch the big game, you can still keep up on the game's progress via ESPN GameCast—real-time play-by-play coverage of all the game action displayed on your personal computer screen.

GameCasts are available for selected Major League Baseball, NFL, and college football games. Just click the GameCast link on the ESPN.com home page and select the game you want to watch; a separate GameCast window launches on your computer desktop. Click a tab at the top to view the game status, box score, or game summary.

The real action occurs on the Game Status tab. Here you can view a quarter/inning summary or a detailed summary; the detailed summary follows the game play by play (or pitch by pitch), showing all the action for each play or at-bat. It's almost like being there—or, perhaps, like having a box score updated in real time.



#290: ESPN.com Offers Great Coverage of Fishing, Hunting, and Other Outdoor Activities

You expect ESPN.com to offer detailed coverage of all major spectator sports. But hunting and fishing? ESPN? Really?

Yes, really. ESPN Outdoors (click the Outdoors link on the home page) is a great site for the outdoor sportsman. The site, shown in Figure 12-4, includes sections for fishing, hunting, conservation, and sporting dogs. There are even links to outdoor games and hunting/fishing weather, as well as a link to the separate Bassmaster.com site (www.bassmaster.com). If you're a serious outdoorsman, you'll find plenty to like here.



#291: Let ESPN.com Help You Get into Shape

As you now know, ESPN.com isn't just for spectator sports. If you're a runner or otherwise interested in sports training, ESPN.com's Training Room section should be of interest. Just click the Training Room link on the site's home page, and you'll find all sorts of stories and information about training, with a special focus on running and marathons. The section also links to injury reports for all major professional sports, and it offers a message board where you can share training strategies with other fitness buffs. It's a well-hidden little corner of the ESPN.com site—but it's a secret no more!



Figure 12-4: Outdoor sports get covered at ESPN Outdoors.

#292: ESPN.com Covers Sports Video Games

If you're more interested in exercising your fingers than your lats and abs, then ESPNgamer is for you. This section of the ESPN.com site covers all the top sports video and computer games, complete with professional reviews, user reviews, and gamer message boards. Many video gamers wouldn't think to look for game tips and reviews on a sports site, but that's their loss; ESPNgamer is actually a really good source of information if your interest is sports games.

#293: Use ESPN.com to Run Your Fantasy Sports League

Big into fantasy sports? Then ESPN.com is the place for you, thanks to its Fantasy Games section. ESPN.com offers information and services for all manner of fantasy sports—baseball, football, basketball, hockey, racing, golf, and more (there's even a section for fantasy fishing!). Form a league, manage a team, discuss your picks with other members—everything you need is all here in one place. Pay particular attention to the regularly scheduled chats with fantasy sports experts, where you can learn a lot from the people who know. (Read Secret #295 to learn more about ESPN.com's chats.)

#294: Share Your Opinions with Other Sports Fans on ESPN.com Message Boards

Sports fans aren't typically shy about expressing their opinions. That's why ESPN not only offers opinions from industry experts (see Secret #285), but it also offers a forum for the average fan to vent opinions. That forum is found in ESPN's message boards, accessible when you click the SportsNation link on the ESPN.com home page.

ESPN.com offers hundreds of different message boards for all major sports and teams. You'll find boards for Major League Baseball, NFL, NHL, NBA, college basketball, soccer, CART and NASCAR, outdoors sports, fantasy sports, tennis, and golf—you name it. Just go to the SportsNation page, click the Message Boards link, and then choose the board you want to access. As you can see in Figure 12-5, messages are sorted by time of posting; click a subject to read or respond to a message or click the Post a Message icon to post a new message.

Time(PDT)/Date	Subject	Author	Hits/Recs
12:49 PM	Re: How will Wendel be involved?...	Butkusman	1-0
12:49 PM	Re: Cubs biggest offseason needs...	humdinger	5-0
12:48 PM	Re: Cubs biggest offseason needs...	iu76perfect	9-1
12:47 PM	Re: How will Wendel be involved?...	PinetarRosin	7-1
12:46 PM	Re: How will Wendel be involved?...	humdinger	8-1
12:46 PM	Re: Limited view?	humdinger	9-1
12:45 PM	Re: How will Wendel be involved?...	iu76perfect	11-0
12:45 PM	Re: Limited view?	CubsFanCuddy	14-0
12:45 PM	Re: Simon Losing It?	andydean01	13-0
12:44 PM	Re: Cubs biggest offseason needs...	humdinger	11-0
12:43 PM	Re: Limited view?	iu76perfect	10-0

Figure 12-5: Discuss your favorite sport on a SportsNation message board.

Know that these message boards can get quite lively and that some posters are *quite* opinionated. ESPN.com's message boards are *the* forum to discuss sports of all sorts, so if you want a spirited and (sometimes) informed discussion, you've come to the right place!

#295: Rub Elbows with Big-Time Sports Stars with ESPN.com Chat

ESPN.com also offers live public chats with sports experts, players, and coaches. These chats take place in virtual chat rooms, where thousands of users gather to pose questions to the guest of the day. You can find out about upcoming chats by clicking the Chat link on the SportsNation page; click a link to enter an ongoing chat or to view a transcript of a previous chat. (Scroll down to the bottom of the page to see the current chat calendar.)

#296: Get the Latest Sports Scores on Your Windows Desktop

On a busy sports weekend it's tough to keep up on all the latest scores. That's why you need to install ESPN's BottomLine software on your PC. As long as your PC is connected to the Internet, BottomLine will deliver up-to-the-minute scores in a special toolbar on your Windows desktop. As you can see in Figure 12-6, the BottomLine toolbar scrolls scores and other headlines; you can also click a tab to view information about specific sports.



Figure 12-6: Scroll the scores on your desktop with the BottomLine toolbar.

To install the BottomLine toolbar, click the BottomLine link on the ESPN.com home page or go directly to espn.go.com/bottomline/. Follow the onscreen instructions to download the software and complete the installation.

#297: Listen to ESPNRadio Live on Your PC—for Free

The ESPNRadio Network is arguably the largest nationwide sports radio network. ESPNRadio offers the same combination of 24/7 sports news, opinion, and play-by-play coverage as the TV network. ESPNRadio is the home of MLB and the World Series, the college football Bowl Championship Series, the NBA, and the WNBA. The full network is carried on more than 215 stations; another 500 affiliates carry selected ESPNRadio programming.

Thanks to streaming audio technology, you can listen to ESPNRadio on your personal computer. Not only can you listen to the current live broadcast, but you can also listen to "best of" audio clips on your own time. All you have to do is click the ESPNRadio link on the ESPN.com home page or go directly to espnradio.espn.go.com. To listen to the live broadcast, click the Listen Now link; to listen to other clips, just click the appropriate link.

note

As with all streaming audio, you'll get best results if you listen to ESPNRadio over a fast broadband Internet connection. Listening over dial-up connection can result in lower quality and frequent audio dropouts. ESPNRadio uses Windows Media Player technology to receive its broadcasts; you'll need to have the latest version installed on your PC to listen.



#298: Use ESPN Motion to Watch TV-Quality Video Clips on Your PC

It's no surprise that ESPN.com offers a plethora of video clips on its site—including game highlights and reporting from its various broadcasts. What is surprising is how good these clips are. Unlike most sites that offer streaming video clips, ESPN Motion video clips are remarkably smooth and high-resolution, making you feel almost like you're watching a regular TV broadcast.

That's because the ESPN Motion clips aren't streaming video; they're actually video files that are downloaded to your computer ahead of time and are then available for playback from your hard disk at your request. Downloading files, as opposed to using streaming video on demand, allows ESPN Motion to use larger files—and larger files means better-quality video.

All of this works seamlessly in the background when you subscribe to the ESPN Motion service. The downloading occurs automatically when new clips become available; they're then listed under the ESPN Motion window on the ESPN.com home page. Click the link to a clip and the video file plays in the Motion window in the middle of the home page.

There are lots of clips available. A typical day finds four or five top clips listed on the home page, with many more clips accessible via the sport-specific links underneath. You'll also be alerted to the latest clips by an icon in the Windows System Tray in the lower-right corner of your desktop; you can click this icon to start playing these new clips.

To subscribe to ESPN Motion (it's free, but you still have to register), click the ESPN Motion link on the ESPN.com home page and then follow the onscreen instructions to complete the installation of the ESPN Motion software.

caution

ESPN Motion requires a high-speed broadband Internet connection; it will not run over a dial-up connection.

Of course, ESPN.com also offers a variety of other click-on-demand video clips, sprinkled throughout its site. These clips use normal streaming video technology, so they'll play back at a lower quality level. But you don't have to sign up to view these clips, and you don't have to download anything in advance; just click to play.



#299: Find Out What's Playing Tonight on ESPN TV and Other Sports Networks

ESPN Networks programs three broadcast channels—ESPN, ESPN2, and ESPN Classic. (There's arguably a fourth network, ESPNHD, for high-definition broadcasts—but it carries the same schedule as the main ESPN channel.) Between the three channels you can find a variety of programming, all of which is detailed when you click the More From ESPN link on the ESPN.com home page, and then click TV Listings. The TV Listings page includes current listings for all three channels; you can also retrieve future and past schedules and search for programs by sport.

Interestingly, you can also consult the ESPN TV Listings page to find out when and where your favorite games are being broadcast on other networks. Big upcoming games are listed at the bottom of the page, along with which network (if any) is doing the broadcasting and when the game starts. It's an incredibly useful service, provided in the public interest by the good folks at ESPN.com.



#300: Buy Sports Stuff at the ESPN Store

Want to buy an ESPN T-shirt? How about a Los Angeles Lakers jersey? Or a New York Yankees cap? Then get out your credit card and head over to the ESPN Mall, where all manner of sports merchandise is available to purchase. Just click the ESPN Mall link on the ESPN.com home page and you can shop by sport or by team—or purchase exclusive ESPN-branded merchandise.



#301: Bid for Sports Memorabilia at ESPN Auctions

ESPN also offers a variety of merchandise via online auctions. ESPN Auctions (www.espnauCTIONS.com) is run in conjunction with eBay. (You'll learn more about eBay in Chapter 16.) The ESPN Auctions page lets you browse all current auctions by category; from there you can bid on items just as you would on the regular eBay site. It's a good place to find sports memorabilia, autographed merchandise, and the like.



#302: Visit ESPN.com, Win Prizes

It's only fair. ESPN.com makes it easy to spend your money, so it's good to have the opportunity to win some of it back. ESPN.com offers a variety of online contests in which you can play to win a variety of prizes. Click the ESPN.com Contests link on the site's home page to learn more.

#303: Get ESPN.com in Spanish—and Heavy on the Fútbol

Sports are big all over the world, and ESPN isn't U.S.-centric in its coverage. Case in point: ESPN Deportes (espn deportes.espn.go.com) is a separate site for the Hispanic sports fan. As you can see in Figure 12-7, the entire site is in Spanish, and coverage is heavy on fútbol (soccer) and other sports of interest to Mexican and Latin American fans. The site also includes links to ESPN's Soccernet (soccernet.espn.go.com) and ESPN Brasil (www.espn.com.br), two other sites with big Hispanic followings.



Figure 12-7: ESPN Deportes—fútbol and more!

#304: Become an ESPN Insider and Get Local Coverage

Believe it or not, there's even more available on ESPN.com than what you can access publicly. Much of the coverage on the site is available to "insiders" only—and you become an insider by purchasing an ESPN Insider account. Subscriptions run \$4.95 per month, or \$39.95 per year, and let you access all the content in the ESPN Insider section (insider.espn.go.com). The ESPN Insider features news and information above and beyond what you find on the regular ESPN.com site, including coverage of local sports in your area. Insiders also get access to an online version of *ESPN The Magazine*, as well as sports-specific analysis and opinions. If you're a hardcore sports fan, it's worth checking out.

#305: Other Great Sports Sites on the Internet

As great as ESPN.com is, there's even more sports information on the Internet—and if you're a really big sports fan, you'll want to grab all the scores and information you can. Read on to check out alternatives to the ESPN.com site, as well as sites that offer information you can't find anywhere else.

Sports Portals

The best sports sites on the Web are like ESPN.com—they're actually portals to all sorts of content and services, including up-to-the-minute scores, postgame recaps, in-depth reporting, and much more. If ESPN.com doesn't have what you want, check out one of the other sites listed in Table 12-1.

Table 12-1: Major Sports Portals

Web Site	URL
CBS SportsLine	www.sportsline.com
FOXSports	www.foxsports.com
NBC Sports	www.nbcsports.com
SI.com (Sports Illustrated)	sportsillustrated.cnn.com
SportingNews.com	www.sportingnews.com
Yahoo! Sports	sports.yahoo.com

Professional Sports Sites

Each of the major professional sports leagues runs its own official Web site. Some of these sites, such as NBA.com, are affiliated with ESPN.com; others operate independently. Table 12-2 details the sites for all the major sports leagues.

Table 12-2: Web Sites for Professional Sports

League	Web Site
Major League Baseball	www.mlb.com
Major League Soccer	www.mlynet.com
NASCAR	www.nascar.com
National Basketball Association	www.nba.com
National Football League	www.nfl.com
National Hockey League	www.nhl.com
Professional Golfer's Association	www.pga.com
Women's National Basketball Association	www.wnba.com

College Sports Sites

Web sites for college sports tend to be part of a school's overall Web site. However, you can find general college sports information—and links to other sites—at NCAA Online (www.ncaa.org). This site offers news, statistics, and an online hall of champions, among other information.

Participatory Sports Sites

If you'd rather play than watch, there are plenty of Web sites for you, too. All major participatory sports are well represented on the Internet, as you can see in Table 12-3.

Table 12-3: Web Sites for Participatory Sports

Sport	Web Site	URL
Baseball	USA Baseball	www.usabaseball.com
Basketball	Basketball Highway	www.bbhighway.com
Boating	Boating America	www.boatingamerica.com
Bowling	Bowl.com	www.bowl.com
Camping and adventure travel	GORP	www.gorp.com
Extreme sports	ExtremeSports.com	www.extremesports.com
Fishing	The Fishing Network	www.the-fishing-network.com
Golf	GolfServ	www.golf.com
Gymnastics	Gymn-Forum.com	www.gymn-forum.com
Hiking	thebackpacker.com	www.thebackpacker.com
Hockey	USA Hockey	www.usahockey.com
Running	Cool Running	www.coolrunning.com
Snow skiing	OnTheSnow.com	www.onthesnow.com
Soccer	U.S. Youth Soccer	www.usysa.org
Swimming	Swimmersworld.com	www.swimmersworld.com
Tennis	TennisONE	www.tennisone.com
Youth sports (all)	InfoSports.net	www.infosports.net

Summary

Now you know the secrets of ESPN.com. It's amazing just how much sports information is out there, and how much of it is available—for free—on the ESPN.com site. It doesn't matter which sports you follow; you should be able to find the information you want on ESPN.com—or if not there, on one of the other major sports sites on the Web.

CBS MarketWatch Secrets



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The Internet is a perfect medium for investors. Not only can you track your investments (in real time), you can use the Web's many resources to research your investments beforehand and to help you plan other financially-related activities.

One of the leading personal finance sites on the Web is CBS MarketWatch. MarketWatch gathers news and analysis from 100 journalists in 13 bureaus worldwide; the site is so content rich that it's difficult to imagine not finding the information you need for any investment decision. In fact, the hardest part of using CBS MarketWatch is sorting through the available content and services to find just what you need at a given point in time. The secret, then, is knowing what MarketWatch offers and how to get to it.

CBS MarketWatch at a Glance

As you can see in Figure 13-1, the main page of the CBS MarketWatch site (cbs.marketwatch.com) features a series of navigational tabs along the top. Each tab takes you to a specific channel; within each channel are a half-dozen or so more focused sub-channels. Additional features within each sub-channel are accessed from columns that run down the sides of each page.

The screenshot shows the CBS MarketWatch homepage from September 22, 2003, at 3:58 pm ET. The top navigation bar includes links for Member ID, Password, Free Membership - Special Offers, and Nasdaq: MKT. Below the navigation is the CBS MarketWatch logo. A sidebar on the left contains a search field for symbols, a quote/news dropdown, and a keyword search box. The main content area features a large headline "Tumbling dollar exacts a toll". Below the headline are several news snippets: "Dow sees triple-digit fall as stocks suffer a nearly across-the-board decline on dollar dent, bond slump.", "After Hours: The evening agenda", "G-7 ministers seek flexibility, boosting yen and euro at dollar's expense", "See: Bonds whacked by dollar fall", "METALS Gold shines", "As dollar is dented, back-in-favor gold rises to a seven-year high.", "M&A MONDAY Record deal?", "EMI confirms talks to buy Warner Music", "Deal's value is put near \$1.6 billion, with the bulk in cash.", "Mark Hulbert: Do mergers pay?", "Market Pulse: News as it happens", "Schlumberger sells IT unit", "Technology division being sold to French firm for \$1.5 billion.", "Diller nabs Hotwire", "Acquisitive InterActiveCorp books latest buy, paying \$680 million.", "A Alerts: Free fast news bulletins", and "Visa Business". The sidebar on the right features a "Visa Business" section with a photo of a man and text about focusing on what you love about your business.

Figure 13-1: The CBS MarketWatch home page.



#306: It's Free

Here's the best thing about using CBS MarketWatch—it's free. Many personal finance sites offer some basic content at no charge but then try to step you up to a paid subscription to access more advanced features. While MarketWatch does offer some paid content—primarily in the form of insider newsletters (as discussed in Secret #323)—the bulk of the site is available for free, no paid subscription necessary. This is probably the largest collection of free financial information on the Web, which is one of the things that makes MarketWatch so popular.

Even though the site is free, however, you still have to register to use many of the site's features. That's because MarketWatch lets you create and track your own personal portfolio (as discussed in Secret #313), and it can't do that unless it knows who you are. Registration is free.



#307: Use MarketWatch to Learn about Stocks and Personal Finance

If you're a novice to stocks and bonds, it's easy to be intimidated by all the information presented on the CBS MarketWatch site. So before you get scared off, skip everything else and go Personal Finance ⇨ Getting Started. This page is your gateway to tutorials about all important personal finance topics, from stocks and mutual funds to futures and options. Click a link to learn more about a particular topic.



#308: Browse MarketWatch's Library of Personal Finance Articles

One of the true treasures of the MarketWatch site is its collection of personal finance articles. These articles, dating back several years, contain the collected wisdom of dozens of financial experts, and can help you strategize just about any personal finance issue.

To access the Personal Finance Library, go to the Personal Finance page and then click the Personal Finance Library link (located in the Top Ten Features box). The articles are organized into the following topics: Mutual Funds, Real Estate, Taxes, Life & Money, Retirement, and The Good Life.



#309: Look Up Terms You Don't Know

Don't know an option from a dividend? Then bone up on your financial vocabulary with MarketWatch's glossary of personal finance and general finance terms. The glossary is available at Personal Finance ⇨ Getting Started.

#310: Use MarketWatch to Track Market—and Individual Security—Performance

Well, the site's called MarketWatch—of course you can use it to watch the markets! We'll look at three of the most common market-tracking activities—tracking the overall market, tracking specific industries, and tracking individual securities.

General Market Performance

The best place to track overall market performance is the Market Overview page (Investor Tools → Market Overview). As you can see in Figure 13-2, this page displays a ton of summary market performance information for all major indexes—the Dow Jones Industrials, NASDAQ, S&P 500, NYSE, AMEX, Russell 2000, you name it. All essential data is presented and the most-active securities are listed. This is a great page to get a snapshot of market performance—it's worth bookmarking in your browser.



Figure 13-2: Bookmark the Market Overview page for a snapshot of market performance.

Specific Industry Performance

To track the performance of specific industries, go to Investor Tools → Industries. This page lists the 10 best- and worst-performing industries and includes links to more detailed data about specific sectors (consumer, financial, industrial, and so on).

Individual Security Performance

You can check the current price of any security by entering the ticker symbol into the quote box located at the top left of most MarketWatch pages and then clicking the arrow button. If you don't know the symbol for a specific security, click the Find Symbol link below the quote box; this takes you to the symbol lookup page where you can search for symbols by name.



More detailed information is available on the Stocks tab of the Investor Tools page. This page lets you search for a security and then retrieve a variety of data—news, historical quotes, financials, SEC filings, and so on.

Each quote page features a variety of different views that are all accessible from the pull-down list next to the quote box. The basic Quote/Chart/News view, shown in Figure 13-3, displays a variety of pricing information along with key ratios. Other views provide more detailed information.

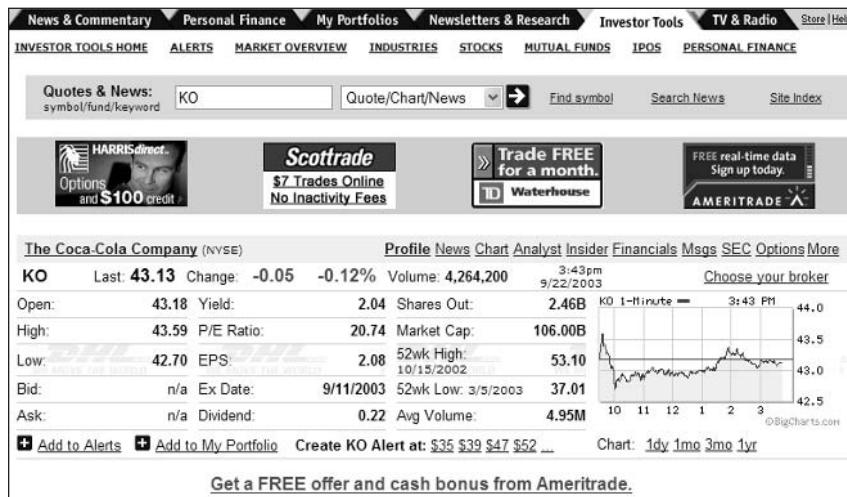


Figure 13-3: MarketWatch's Basic Quote/Chart/News view.



All intraday quotes are delayed by at least 15 minutes.



#311: Use MarketWatch to Get Options Quotes

MarketWatch not only tracks traditional securities, it also tracks stock options. To retrieve an option quote, you'll need to know the option symbol, the expiration

code, and the strike price. With this information in hand, you enter the following into any quote box: **optionsymbol=expirationcode strikepricecode** (with no space between the codes). For example, to retrieve the quote for an option on Apple Computer stock (AAQ) with a July call (code G) at \$20 (code D), you enter **AAQ=GD**. You can look up the option symbol, expiration code, and strike price code via MarketWatch's symbol lookup function.

#312: Use MarketWatch to Track Your Personal Portfolio

One of MarketWatch's most powerful tools is its My Portfolios page. All you have to do is create one or more portfolios containing your own collection of stocks and funds and then you can track their performance—in a number of ways—by accessing the My Portfolios page.

When you create a new portfolio, you can do it the simple way or the more complicated way. The simple way is to enter ticker symbols only (separated by spaces), and track the general performance of these securities. The more complicated way requires you to enter your cash position for each security—how many shares you own, when you bought them, and how much you paid. When you enter this information, My Portfolios can display the financial performance of your portfolio along with the general security performance.

Figure 13-4 shows a typical My Portfolio page. The Basic view on the Overview tab displays each security's current price, change from previous, and the percent change from your purchase price. The Detailed view displays all manner of ratio analyses for each of your stocks; the Performance view is similar to the Basic view, but with more gain/loss analysis; and the Fundamentals view displays the market cap and P/E ratio. You can add new stocks to a portfolio by clicking the Add a Stock link; to buy or sells securities from within a portfolio, click the Adjust Position button next to the stock's ticker symbol.

The screenshot shows the MarketWatch My Portfolios page with the following details:

- Default Portfolio** is the selected portfolio.
- OVERVIEW** tab is active.
- Preset Views:** Basic, Detailed, Performance, Fundamentals. **None** is selected.
- My Custom Views:** Create/Edit, Download View.
- Today's Change:** -403.00
- Today's % Change:** -2.51 %
- Current Value of this Portfolio:** 15,645.00
- Simple Return:** 20.00 %
- Stocks in Portfolio:**

Symbol	Shares	Last Change	% Value Change	Volume	Quote Date & Time	More Information
IBM	100	91.13	-2.15	51.88 %	6,451,700 9/22/2003 3:46:00 PM	chart news msgs
MSFT	100	28.93	-1.03	-42.14 %	60,155,062 9/22/2003 3:51:00 PM	chart news msgs
YHOO	100	36.39	-0.85	81.95 %	10,937,898 9/22/2003 3:51:00 PM	chart news msgs
Cash (USD)	-	-	-	-	-	-
- Totals:** 20.35 %

Figure 13-4: Viewing an overview of your stocks on the My Portfolios page.

Then you have the other tabs. Table 13-1 details what is displayed on each tab.

Table 13-1: My Portfolios Tab

Tab	Contents
Overview	Fundamental stock performance info
Analyzer	Performance charts
Allocation	An analysis of your portfolio holdings, in pie chart format
News	Recent news headlines for each of the stocks in your portfolio
Insider	Insider trade information
Financials	Income statements for each of the stocks



#313: Track Your Portfolio on Your Desktop

You can also track your portfolio(s) in a separate window on your desktop using the MarketWatch Portfolio Tracker. This way you can leave the Portfolio Tracker window open while you browse other Web sites or work with other computer applications.

The Portfolio Tracker window, shown in Figure 13-5, lists basic quote information about each of the stocks in your portfolios. It also displays a current market overview complete with Dow Jones, NASDAQ, and S&P 500 performance.

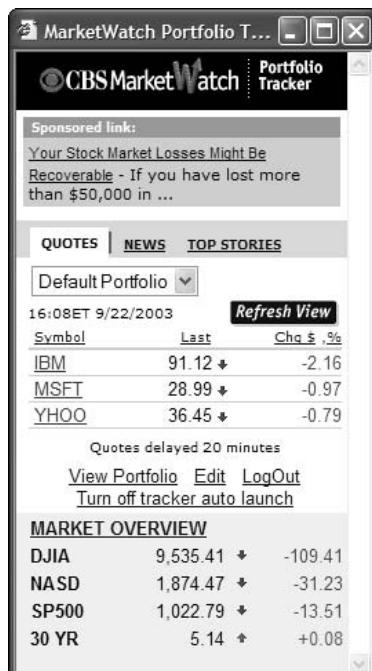


Figure 13-5: MarketWatch's Portfolio Tracker window.

You open the Portfolio Tracker by going to the Investor Tools page and clicking the My Portfolio Tracker link.

#314: Use MarketWatch to Create Fancy Charts

CBS MarketWatch offers a wide selection of charts you can use to visually analyze the performance of a stock or fund. MarketWatch's charts are interactive, which means you can customize them to display data in a manner best suited for your specific purpose.

There are two levels of charts available—Basic and Advanced.

You access MarketWatch's charts by going to the Investor Tools link and clicking the Interactive Charting link. Create a Basic chart by entering the ticker symbol into the Enter Symbols box and then clicking the arrow button. Once the chart, like the one in Figure 13-6, is displayed, you can change the time frame (anywhere from 1 day to 5 years), comparison to major indexes (Nasdaq, Dow Jones Industrial Average, and S&P 500), and indicators (splits, earnings, and dividends).



Figure 13-6: Creating a basic stock chart.

Click the Advanced tab and you increase the number of options available. You have more time frame options, more available comparisons, and the ability to show both upper and lower indicators (including money flow, volume, and so

on). You also get the ability to customize the type of chart to display—Open, High, Low Close (OHLC); High, Low, Close (HLC); Close, Candlestick, Mountain, Dots, Logarithmic, High Price, or Bar.

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The Java tab enables you to create similar advanced charts, but these can be manipulated by clicking within the charts themselves.

#315: Get Stock Alerts via E-Mail

Want to know when a stock hits a specific price? Or when trading reaches a certain level? Or when new news or reports are available for a given company?

If so, you need to take advantage of MarketWatch's e-mail alerts. Select what type of information you want to be alerted to and MarketWatch will send you an e-mail when an alert is warranted.

MarketWatch lets you choose from many different types of alerts. You can choose from the following:

- ◆ Breaking news alert (general news)
- ◆ Price/volume (for a specific security)
- ◆ News by symbol
- ◆ News by column
- ◆ News for My Portfolio
- ◆ News by keyword
- ◆ News by industry

You can even select which news services you want to include in your request. You can choose from CBS MarketWatch news, Associated Press, CBS News, CNET News.com, FT.com, Knight Ridder, Motley Fool, New York Times, Reuters, TheDeal.com, and United Press International—as well as press releases from BusinessWire, PR Newswire, and PrimeZone.

To set up your MarketWatch alerts, go to Investor Tools → Alerts. Choose the type of alert you want, select all appropriate options, and enter your e-mail address. You can opt to receive each alert immediately or at a specified time once a day.

#316: Get Stock Alerts on Your Cell Phone or PDA

Just as you can configure MarketWatch to send you financial news alerts via e-mail, you can opt to receive these alerts from your cell phone or PDA. You can also use your Web-enabled phone to view your portfolio on MarketWatch's wireless Web site; click the Mobile link at the bottom of the MarketWatch home page to learn more.

#317: Use MarketWatch to Get the Latest Market News

General market news can be found on MarketWatch's Front Page (News & Commentary ↔ Front Page). If you only have time to view one news page, this is the one to read. The MarketWatch Front Page features the most important articles from the entire site, as well as a short list of the most recent news headlines and general market performance charts.

To view market news by sector, click the Markets tab. The Markets page is a gateway to information about the airline, biotech, energy, and other specific market sectors. This page also includes links to a weekly earnings calendar, as well as a list of movers and shakers.

Of course, your personal finance is always influenced by the overall economy. To keep up on general economic news, click the Economy & Politics tab. The Economy & Politics page includes the latest news from Washington, as well as the latest economic reports and previews.

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If you're interested in upcoming initial public offerings, click the IPOS tab. This page not only includes IPO news, but also links to SEC filings, an IPO calendar, and a list of best-performing IPOs.

#318: Use MarketWatch to Keep Current on Foreign Markets

For news on international markets, go to News & Commentary ↔ Global Markets. The Global Markets page features news and information about the European and Asian markets, as well as a good amount of country-specific news. Even better, the left column of this page lists current performance of all the major foreign markets, including the FTSE 100, Nikkei 225, and Mex Bolsa. Click a link to display more detailed information about a particular market.

#319: Use MarketWatch to Search the Web for Financial News and Information

Here's a relatively well-hidden feature of the MarketWatch site—the ability to search a variety of news providers for financial news and information. MarketWatch calls this feature the NewsFinder and you can find it by clicking the Keyword Search link under the quote search box on the MarketWatch home page. You can use Newsfinder to search, by ticker, a number of different

financial news sources, including Edgar Online, FT.com, Motley Fool, and TheDeal.com. You can limit your searches for stories posted on or before a given date.

I find NewsFinder to be one of the best tools for finding financial news on the Web. That's a strong statement, but it's just that good. It returns very targeted results, better than what you'd get at a Google or other mainstream search site. That's because it limits its search to financial news providers, so the signal-to-bandwidth ratio is fairly high; there's not a lot of junk in these results.

#320: Use MarketWatch to Research Companies and Stocks

When you're thinking about investing in a company's stock, you want to research that company's current and projected performance as much as possible. You can perform basic research from MarketWatch's stock profile page, which you access from the company's quote page (or by pulling down the list under the quote box and selecting Profile when you're searching by ticker symbol). The Profile page displays basic company data, key ratios, recent insider trades, and current news headlines; it also includes a link to the company's most recent annual report. Click the Analyst link on this page and MarketWatch displays the stock's performance rating, as well as recent analyst recommendations.

For more detailed research, you'll have to spend some bucks. MarketWatch links to a number of financial research sites—it calls them its *market advisors*—that you can use to obtain a variety of in-depth research reports. These companies include 10K Wizard, Dun & Bradstreet, Dow Theory Forecasts, Morningstar.com, The Motley Fool, RealMoney, ValuEngine, and Zacks. Just go to Newsletters & Research ↗ Market Advisors; more information and links are available there.

note

For a list of even more financial sites, see Secret #333.

#321: Discuss Stocks and Trends on MarketWatch's Message Boards

Sometimes the best advice comes from fellow investors. Whether you want to discuss specific stocks or general economic topics, the place to go is MarketWatch's online message boards. MarketWatch features message boards for all active ticker symbols as well as for a variety of financial and political topics. Just scroll to the bottom of the MarketWatch home page and click the Message Boards link; from there, you can search for a board by name. Discussions within a board are listed in order of when they were posted; click a link to read or reply.

#322: Get Market Smart with Expert Commentary and Analysis

You gain financial knowledge not just by perusing the charts, but also by listening to what the experts are saying. CBS MarketWatch offers commentary from a large number of financial experts, all of which are worth reading.

The bulk of MarketWatch's commentary is found on the Commentary page (News & Commentary ⇨ Commentary). This is where you find daily columns from a number of experts; these columns include Market Map, Net Sense, TechWatch, Editor's View, and Media Web.

Additional commentary and analysis is found on the Newsletters & Research home page. Here you'll find more in-depth analysis and investing advice from the likes of Mike Ashbaugh, Peter Brimelow, Thom Calandra, and Mark Hulbert.

#323: Subscribe to an Investment Newsletter—After You Do Your Homework

Financial newsletters are big business. In fact, one of the most surefire ways to make money in financial markets is to write a newsletter offering your investment advice. (It's less risky than actually investing!) MarketWatch offers a variety of newsletters on its Newsletters & Research page, including several newsletters from its own analysts. (And, as you might expect, subscriptions are seldom free.)

If you're not sure which—if any—newsletter to subscribe to, go to Newsletters & Research ⇨ The Guru's Corner. This page offers insights from several major investment newsletters—for free. Even better (and this is the part I really like), it lists the top performing newsletters over the past twelve months. Use this list to determine which newsletters offer the best advice, and are (perhaps) worth subscribing to.

If you want to see a more complete list of available newsletters, go to Newsletters & Research ⇨ Directory. This page lists dozens of different newsletters, along with their subscription information and pricing. As you'll see, these subscriptions are not cheap—some run over a thousand dollars a year—so it's definitely worth doing your homework before you subscribe.

#324: View—and Listen to—Market Experts on Your PC Desktop

CBS MarketWatch is part of the CBS News combine—which means that a lot of its reporting is available via television and radio. You can access these audio and video reports via the MarketWatch Web site, on the TV and Radio page.

You can view (or listen to) these reports using either Windows Media Player or RealPlayer. Just click a report to open it in a separate media window on your desktop.

#325: Find Stocks That Meet Specific Criteria

Here's a really cool tool that's extremely well-hidden deep within the MarketWatch site: when you want to find a stock that matches specific criteria—pricing, volume, return, and so on—you can use MarketWatch's Stock Screener tool shown in Figure 13-7. Access this tool by going to Investor Tools → Stocks; the Stock Screener is about midway down the page. You can select a preselected screen from the Samples list or click the Build Your Own Screen link to enter your own criteria. The Stock Screener will do the rest, returning a list of securities that match what you're looking for.



The screenshot shows a web-based stock screener interface. At the top, there is a dropdown menu labeled "Samples:" containing the option "Nasdaq stocks up 20%, producing block trades over 100k". Below this is a table with columns: Symbol, Company Name, Price, Change, Change %, and Volume. Three rows of data are listed:

Symbol	Company Name	Price	Change	Change %	Volume
SPPI	Spectrum Pharmaceuticals	7.12	+2.21	45.01%	3,327,808
CRDM	Cardima Inc	1.18	+0.28	31.11%	27,205,205
PRTN	Proton Energy Sys Inc	2.86	+0.66	30.00%	3,827,513

At the bottom left of the interface, there is a link labeled "Build your own screen ...".

Figure 13-7: Use the Stock Screener tool to hunt for specific types of stocks.

#326: Find the Best Mutual Funds for Your Needs

With so many mutual funds available today, how do you determine which is the best investment for you? One way is to use the information on MarketWatch's Mutual Funds page. Just go to Investor Tools → Mutual Funds; here you'll find a list of the top ten funds (YTD) as well as the top 100 funds by fund type. You can also use this page to research specific mutual funds via the Fund Finder tool (located at the top right corner of the page). Enter a fund name, enter the time period to research, and then click the Go! button.

Even better is MarketWatch's Fund Comparison tool, shown in Figure 13-8. Enter multiple fund tickers, select whether you want to compare returns, risk, fees, or holdings and then click Go!. This will help you determine which of several funds offer the best performance.

The screenshot shows the MarketWatch Fund Comparison tool. At the top, there's a "Fund Finder" section with dropdown menus for "Fund Type" (set to "All Types") and "Fund Period" (set to "1 Day"), along with a "Go!" button. Below this is the "Fund Comparison Tool" section, which includes a "Enter tickers:" input field and a "Go!" button. Underneath are four radio buttons labeled "Returns", "Risk", "Fees", and "Holdings". At the bottom of the tool is a note: "Data provided by Lipper".

Figure 13-8: Compare different mutual funds with the Fund Comparison tool.

#327: Obtain a Prospectus for a Mutual Fund

If you're serious about investing in a mutual fund, you need to obtain the official prospectus for that fund. MarketWatch makes this process easy; you can order just about any prospectus direct from the MarketWatch site.

Here's how it works. Go to Investor Tools ⇨ Mutual Funds. Click the Mutual Fund Prospectuses link or use the links in the U.S. Mutual Funds Alpha Listing to locate a specific fund. Click through to complete the ordering form.

#328: Trade Stocks and Funds Online

The ability to trade stocks online has created a completely new investor class. No longer do you have to deal with a stodgy investment house and wait your turn with an investment specialist; now you can do all your trading online from your personal computer.

CBS MarketWatch isn't an online trading firm, so you can't place trades on the MarketWatch site. MarketWatch does, however, provide links to six major online trading sites—Ameritrade, Brown Co., Direct Access Broker, Harrisdirect, Scottrade, and TD Waterhouse. These links are located at the bottom of almost every MarketWatch page; just click through to open your personal trading account and start trading online.

#329: Use MarketWatch to Find Out Today's Rates

Want to know the current rate for a 30-year fixed mortgage? How about a 3-month treasury bill—or a 30-year bond? If so, you want MarketWatch's Today's Rates page, as shown in Figure 13-9. Just go to Investor Tools → Personal Finance; all the relevant data is presented there.

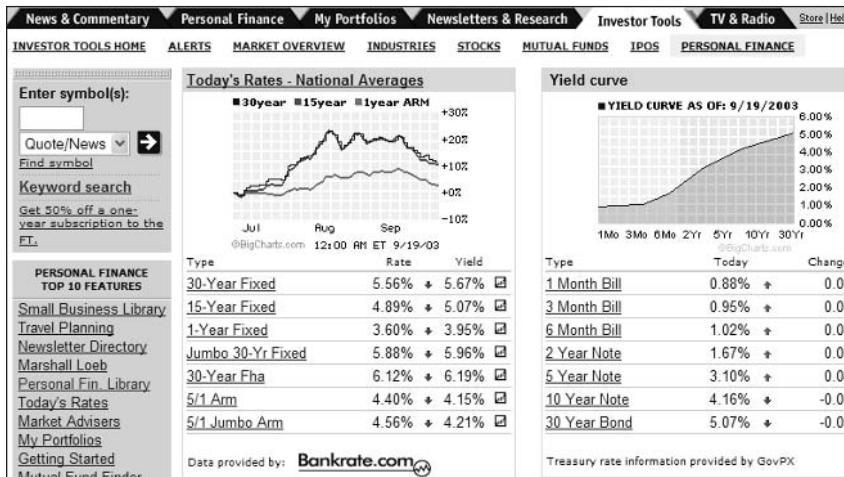


Figure 13-9: Today's rates, all in one place.

#330: Let MarketWatch Help You Find a Home Loan

If you're in the market for a new home, check out the real estate information and tools available from MarketWatch. Just go to Personal Finance → Real Estate. Here you'll find news stories of note, a list of current mortgage rates, and links to various real estate and loan finder sites.

#331: Use MarketWatch for Your Tax Planning

Death and taxes. MarketWatch doesn't deal in death, but it can help you plan for your yearly tax burden. Go to Personal Finance → Taxes; the Taxes page includes all manner of tax-related news and information. Most useful are the articles in the Taxes Library (click through in the middle of the page), as well as the hands-on "Ask the Taxman" column.

#332: Let MarketWatch Help You Plan for Your Retirement

You're never too young to start planning for your retirement. MarketWatch offers a variety of news and tools for retirement planning, all accessible from Personal Finance ↔ Retirement. Retirement news is easy enough to find (it's right there at the top of the page); more in-depth information is found in the Retirement Library, which you can click through from the Retirement page. The Retirement Library includes articles on 401(k)s and IRAs, estate planning, social security, long-term care, and more. It's worth checking out.

#333: Other Great Financial Sites on the Web

CBS MarketWatch is a great financial site—one of the best. But it's not the only site out there; there are many other sites that offer a similar array of content and services. Most of these are full-service sites offering stock quotes, portfolio tracking, company news, historical financial information, message boards, and the like. Other sites are more specialized, focusing just on mutual funds or in-depth company info.

Whether you use CBS MarketWatch or another site, you'll want to base your choice on the amount and types of information you need, the kind of investing you do, and the amount of time you want to put into this activity. Table 13-2 details some of the most popular of these financial Web sites.

Table 13-2: Financial Web Sites

Site	Description	URL
Bankrate.com	Up-to-the-minute rates for auto loans, mortgages, CDs, and so on	www.bankrate.com
BigCharts	Financial charts of all shapes and sizes; this is the site that feeds MarketWatch with all its charts and graphs	www.bigcharts.com
CNN/Money	Full-service financial site from CNN and <i>Money</i> magazine	money.cnn.com
Corporate Information	Search engine for information on both public and private companies	www.corporateinformation.com
Dun and Bradstreet Million Dollar Database	Information on more than 1.5 million small, nonpublic companies	www.dnbmdd.com/mddi/

Site	Description	URL
FreeEDGAR	SEC documents, including quarterly and annual reports	www.freeedgar.com
Hoover's Online	Detailed corporate news and financial information	www.hoovers.com
Motley Fool	Full-service financial site, with terrific message boards and company analysis	www.fool.com
MSN MoneyCentral	MSN's full-service financial site	moneycentral.msn.com
Multex Investor	Massive database of company and industry research reports	multex.multexinvestor.com
PCQuote.com	Full-service finance site	www.pcquote.com
SEC EDGAR Database	Official corporate filings, including quarterly reports, annual reports, and IPO filings	www.sec.gov/edgar/searchedgar/webusers.htm
Yahoo! Finance	Full-service finance site on the Yahoo! portal	finance.yahoo.com

insider insight Not sure where to start? Then check out **InvestorLinks** (www.investorlinks.com), a huge directory of links to other financial sites.

If all you want to do is track current stock prices, you can skip these sites and go directly to the personalized start pages offered by any of the major Web portals, such as My Yahoo! or My MSN. You can customize these pages to display stock quotes, trading volume, and other up-to-the-minute information about your own individual portfolio of securities—thus creating your personal financial portal.

Summary

MarketWatch is a deceptively large Web site. There's a ton of information here, most of it extremely useful—there's not a lot of chaff among the grain. In fact, there's so much information here that it's easy to get overwhelmed. My recommendation is to spend a few hours exploring the site and then bookmark those particular pages you want to use on a recurring basis. It's a lot easier to go to a specific page than it is to burrow through all the channels and subchannels—especially when it's valuable information you'll want to be accessing over and over.

Weather.com Secrets



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I really like the Weather.com site. Not that I'm a hardcore weather buff, nor do I know all the names of the forecasters on the Weather Channel (some people do, believe it or not); what I like are all the various ways that Weather.com slices and dices the available meteorological data for extremely practical purposes. If you're like most users, you know that Weather.com delivers general weather news and local forecasts—but did you know you can use Weather.com to plan your vacation, find out about airport delays, discover how much sun block to wear, determine when to water your lawn, and find out if you need to buy a humidifier? Weather.com provides all this information and a whole lot more. Even though it's relatively targeted in terms of its content, the site offers more information than you find at some portals. And it's all driven by the weather!

Weather.com, of course, is the Internet arm of The Weather Channel, the premiere 24/7 television weather network. The Weather Channel media combine also includes The Weather Channel Radio Network (in more than 250 markets across the U.S.) and The Weather Channel Newspaper Service. The Weather.com site consistently rates among the top five news and information sites on the Web, and in the top twenty of all sites; it claims more than 20 million regular users.

The secrets in this chapter aren't very long, but they're all fairly cool. They're short secrets because they're easy to do and easy to understand; they're cool because... well, because you probably never figured that boring weather forecasts could be used in such creative and practical ways!

Weather.com at a Glance

The basic Weather.com home page (www.weather.com), shown in Figure 14-1, doesn't look to be much of anything special. In fact, until you enter your local city or zip code (see Secret #334), the home page doesn't even offer any weather forecasts, instead it devotes its space to the latest weather news. From viewing this page, you have no idea of the multitude of features hidden within the site.

And where are all these features hidden? The secret is in the tabs along the top of the page. These tabs link you to activity-specific sections of the sites—Health, Travel, Driving, Events, Recreation, Home & Garden, and so on. It's from these sections that all the cool features are to be found.



Figure 14-1: The Weather.com home page.

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Another way to find specific parts of the Weather.com site is to use the Site Map page. Access the site map by clicking the Site Map link at the bottom of the Weather.com home page.

#334: Use Weather.com to Grab Your Local Forecast

Weather.com offers current conditions and forecasts for more than 80,000 locations worldwide. All you have to do is enter your city or zip code in the Local Forecast box at the top of the home page and Weather.com will display a Local Weather page like the one in Figure 14-2. This page presents your current weather conditions, a live Doppler Radar map, and links to various local forecasts. To display the weather forecast, click the Detailed Forecast link.



Figure 14-2: Your local weather page.

insider insight

You can configure Weather.com to automatically display a link to your local weather by clicking the Want Us to Remember Your Location? link next to the Local Forecast box at the top of the home page.



#335: Plan Your Day with an Hour-By-Hour Forecast

Weather.com's standard Detailed Forecast isn't really that detailed; it's just a few brief sentences about the upcoming weather. If you want to plan your activities with more precision, use Weather.com's Hourly Forecast, which projects conditions hour-by-hour for the next eight hours or so. Just go to your Local Weather Page and click the Hourly Forecast link. The Hourly Forecast page presents projected conditions, temperature, dew point, precipitation percentage, and humidity. It's a great way to pinpoint exactly when you need to put the top up on the convertible or bring the dog inside!



#336: Find Out the Weather Ten Days in Advance

Forecasting today's weather is one thing. But what about the weather this weekend—or next week? When you want to make long-term plans, check out Weather.com's 10-Day Forecast page. This page presents brief (one-line) forecasts, complete with high/low temperature and precipitation probability, for the next ten days. As meteorological technology improves, this long-term forecast is becoming surprisingly accurate. Just go to your Local Weather Page and click the 10-Day Forecast link.



#337: Follow Severe Weather As It Happens

It should come as no surprise that Weather.com offers in-depth coverage of all breaking weather stories—especially stories concerning severe weather. In fact, Weather.com offers detailed alerts for all types of severe weather, from thunderstorms to floods to winter storms to hurricanes. Just go to the Storm Watch page (News ⇔ Storm Watch), and you'll find all the current severe weather across the entire U.S., along with storm-related news and information.



#338: Use Weather.com to Determine Where You Want to Travel

If you're thinking about a vacation, but aren't sure where you want to go, let Weather.com help. Weather.com's Destination Finder lets you enter your weather preferences—how hot you like it, when you'll be traveling, what type of location you're looking for—and then returns a list of destinations that fit the bill. Access the Destination Finder at Travel ⇔ Vacation Finder.

You probably never thought of using a weather site to plan your vacation, but here it is. Once again, Weather.com offers a pleasant surprise!



#339: Learn What the Weather Will Be Like Where You're Visiting

When it's time to plan for your next vacation, it helps to know what kind of weather to expect when you get to where you're going. One thing to do, of course, is to check the 10-day forecast for your vacation destination. You do this by going to Travel ⇔ Vacation Planner and entering a location into the Destination Finder.

While you're on the local forecast page, click the Averages & Records link. This displays the average high and low temperatures and precipitation for each month of the year. You can also click the Daily Average tab to view the daily climatological averages.



#340: Check Airport Weather—and Find Out about Airport Delays

If you're scheduled to fly in the near future, it pays to check the weather conditions at both your home and destination airport. (Bad weather means potential delays.) Weather.com makes this easy with its Airport Conditions page, which presents forecasts for all airports near a given city. Access this page by clicking Travel ⇔ Daily Traveler, and then entering the city or zip code for a location. You can click through any given airport link to see a 10-day forecast.

If you prefer to get your information visually, go to Travel ↴ Daily Traveler and then scroll down and click the Airport Impact Forecast Maps link. This displays the Airport Impact map, shown in Figure 14-3, which shows the expected impact of any nasty weather on major airports across the U.S.



Figure 14-3: Check for flight delays on the Airport Impact map.

#341: Use Weather.com to Track Your Flight Status—and Send You Flight Alerts

Even better, you can have Weather.com alert you to any delays for specific flights. There are a number of ways to do this.

First, you can check the flight status from the Daily Traveler page (Travel ↴ Daily Traveler). Go to the Check Flight Status section, select your airline, and enter your flight number and the day you're traveling. Weather.com returns a page that lists scheduled and estimated departure and arrival times, along with hour-by-hour weather for both the departure and arrival cities.

Checking the Web site for travel updates is great—if you're in the office. That's why Weather.com lets you register to receive flight alerts via either e-mail or text messaging on your pager, PDA, or cell phone. Go to the Weather Tools page and click the Travel Alerts link and then enter your itinerary; Weather.com will send you daily alerts starting two days before your trip and keep you updated with any expected airport delays. This service is free.



#342: Find Out the Driving Conditions along Your Route

When you're driving from city to city, it's really nice to know what kind of driving conditions to expect. Weather.com recognizes this need and offers an Interstate Forecast that informs you of current and upcoming weather conditions along your route.

You access the Interstate Forecast page by clicking [Driving](#) \Rightarrow [Interstate Forecast](#). Click an area of the country on the map to view a detailed forecast map; from there you can click a link to view the conditions for a specific stretch of Interstate highway.



#343: Discover When the Fall Foliage Will Be at Its Peak

Like to watch the leaves turn? Then use Weather.com's Fall Foliage Forecast to find out when the colors will be at their peak. Click through to [Recreation](#) \Rightarrow [Fall Foliage](#), and you can access foliage reports and regional maps to help you plan your fall sight-seeing.



#344: Find Out What the Weather's Like at the National Parks

If your vacation plans include a trip to a national park, then Weather.com has some information you can use. The site's National Parks Forecast ([Recreation](#) \Rightarrow [National Parks](#)) provides detailed daily and 10-day forecasts for all national parks; just select the park you want and go from there.



#345: See If It's a Good Day for Playing Golf

Weather.com is a great site for golfers. Not only can you find out if today's a good golf day weather-wise, you can also find out the golfing conditions anywhere in the U.S.—specifically at current PGA tour events.

You get all this great information by clicking through to [Recreation](#) \Rightarrow [Golf](#). From here you can view your current weather conditions, see the Golf Index (on a scale of 1 to 10) for your local golf courses, or click through to see the tournament forecast for the next PGA event. You can even click the Golf Forecast Maps link to view the Golf Index numbers across the country, as shown in Figure 14-4. If you pull down the list below the map, you can display other maps of interest to avid golfers, including thunderstorm forecast, forecast winds, and wind chill maps.



Figure 14-4: Weather.com's Golf Index map.

#346: See If It's a Good Day for Swimming or Boating

Want to find out your area's marine forecast? Or the tide conditions? Or just general coastal weather? Then check out Weather.com's Boat & Beach page (Recreation → Boat & Beach). Here you'll find boat and beach conditions, coastal water temperatures, and various water-related maps.

#347: Discover the Ski Conditions for a Slope Near You

Thinking about going skiing this weekend? You can check the slope conditions at Weather.com's Ski Outlook page (Recreation → Ski Outlook). This page presents snow conditions, forecasts, and resort information for nearby ski areas. You can also use the Snow Finder to enter your ideal snow conditions and let Weather.com recommend a ski resort that fits the bill.

#348: Find Out How Good (or Bad) the Air Quality Will Be Today

Some areas of the country have clean air all year long. Some don't. If your city is prone to pollution, check out Weather.com's Air Quality page (Health → Air Quality). This page links to detailed weather quality charts for each state (with city-by-city listings) as well as a national map of ozone levels. Also available are air quality forecast and respiratory index maps.

#349: Discover How Much Sun Block You Need If You Go Outside

This one's cool—especially if you burn easily. Use Weather.com's Skin Protection page (Health ⇨ Skin Protection) to determine how much protection you'll need if you're going out in the sun. When you access this page, you'll need to answer some questions:

- ◆ What day are you looking at?
- ◆ How long will you be outside?
- ◆ What type of skin do you have?
- ◆ What type of activity will you be doing?
- ◆ What's your age?

Click the Go! button when you've answered the questions and Weather.com displays your personal Sun Safety recommendation, as shown in Figure 14-5. This tells you what type of sunscreen you should be using and how much UV radiation you'll be exposed to. It's a great tool for the fair-skinned among us!



Figure 14-5: Your personal sun safety recommendation.

#350: Determine If Your Allergies Will Be Acting Up Today

Sneezing? Eyes itching? Nose running? You know what the problem is—your allergies are acting up. To get a heads-up on current pollen conditions, use Weather.com's Allergies page (Health ⇨ Allergies). Enter your location to find out today and tomorrow's pollen level (on a scale of 1 to 10), along with the predominant pollens (ragweed, nettle, and so on) in your area in case you have specific allergies. You can also view the pollen levels nationwide by clicking the Pollen Hot Spots link or display national tree pollen, grass pollen, ragweed, and mold spores maps.

insider insight You can also get daily pollen alerts sent via e-mail or to your cell phone or text pager. These alerts will tell you when pollen levels reach the Low, Moderate, or High levels. Go to Weather Tools ⇨ Pollen Alerts to sign up.

#351: See If Today's Weather Will Cause Your Joints to Act Up

This feature is something totally unexpected; you won't find anything like it on any other weather site. Certain types of weather can affect some people's joints, causing all manner of aches and pains. You can predict how stiff you'll be tomorrow by using Weather.com's Aches & Pains page (Health ⇨ Aches & Pains). Enter your location to view a variety of health-related information based on your local forecast, including the Aches & Pains Index, which rates the potential for ache-inducing weather on a scale of 1 to 10. It also details the chance of precipitation and the anticipated humidity and temperature change over the next six hours—all factors in whether your sore elbow will start throbbing or not.

#352: Stay Aware During Cold and Flu Season

Winter maladies tend to come in waves. If you want to track how bad this year's cold and flu season is in your area, use Weather.com's Flu Reports page (Health ⇨ Cold & Flu). This page lists flu reports for your state, on a weekly basis. You can also click the National Flu Map link to view flu conditions nationwide.

#353: Find Out When's the Best Day to Water Your Grass—or Plant Your Flowers

If you love to do yardwork or gardening, you definitely need to bookmark Weather.com's Gardener's Local Forecast page (Recreation ⇨ Lawn & Garden). This page details the specific weather data you need to plan your upcoming planting and watering—chance of precipitation, hours of daylight, wind speed, and so on. Of particular value are the rows in the 10-day forecast for Watering Need, Frost Risk, and Freeze Risk.

Also extremely useful is the Garden Care Calendar, which you can click to from the Gardener's Local Forecast page. Enter the month, category (annuals, bulbs, and so on), and the specific plant and you'll get a list of recommended activities. This is a great resource if you're not an experienced gardener—just follow the recommendations to give your plants the best care possible.

#354: Find Out If Your House Is Too Humid—or Too Dry

Does your house feel too dry during the winter—or too damp in the summer? Then you need to keep better track of your home's humidity levels, and perhaps

invest in a humidifier (for the winter) or dehumidifier (for the summer). Weather.com can help you with your planning via its Indoor Humidity Meter located at Home & Garden ⇨ Home ⇨ Indoor Humidity Meter. This tool automatically enters the current outdoor temperature and humidity; you have to enter your thermostat setting and tell it whether you're using an air conditioner. Click the Go button and the Indoor Humidity Meter tells you your house's current humidity level.

Your house is too dry if the humidity level is less than 30 percent; it's too wet if the level is above 50 percent.

#355: See If You Need to Use the Furnace—or the Air Conditioner

Want to better plan your heating and cooling needs? Then consult Weather.com's Indoor Heating and Cooling Forecast. Go to Maps ⇨ Activity ⇨ Financial, and select one of the Heating and Cooling maps from the list. The extended maps are great for anticipating high heating or cooling needs.

#356: Find Out the Weather for Upcoming Outdoor Events

Got a football game coming up? Or a big outdoor festival? Then let Weather.com help you dress warmly with its special events forecasts. Click the Events tab on the Weather.com home page and then click either Sporting Events or Special Events. Weather.com will list all major upcoming events along with a forecast for that day.

#357: Get the Weather for Anywhere in the World

It's easy to get weather forecasts for any major city around the world. Just enter the city and country name into the Local Forecast box on the Weather.com home page or click the World tab and enter the location information there. You'll find the same information for foreign cities as you do for U.S. cities.

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To view forecasts for all cities within a country, just enter the name of the country.

Weather.com also offers several country-specific versions of its site. These are detailed in Table 14-1.

Table 14-1: International Versions of Weather.com

Country	URL
Brazil	www.canaldotempo.com
France	www.meteo123.com
Germany	www.wetter123.com
Latin America	www.weather.com/espanol/
United Kingdom	uk.weather.com



#358: Whatever Kind of Weather Map You Want, Weather.com Has It

Okay, so far we've examined two dozen or so different maps and forecasts available at the Weather.com site. The thing is, this represents just a few of the hundreds of different maps available there. That's right, Weather.com offers even *more* maps—including severe weather maps, forecast maps, Doppler Radar maps, you name it.

You can find a list of all the site's maps when you click the Maps tab on the Weather.com home page. The Maps Selector organizes maps by activity, geography, or type. Just remember that when you find the map you want, bookmark it—so you can access it faster in the future!



#359: Customize Your Personal My Weather Page

Like many other Web sites, Weather.com lets you create your own personalized page complete with your local weather report and other information of your choosing. You can customize your My Weather page (my.weather.com) with conditions and forecasts for up to 11 different cities and with up to 6 different weather maps. To get started, go to the My Weather page and enter your preferences. Weather.com uses this data to create your personal page, like the one shown in Figure 14-6. From now on, you'll probably want to make this My Weather page your main weather page—so remember to bookmark it in your browser!

The screenshot shows a personalized weather page for Carmel, IN (46032). The top left panel, 'News Center', displays a story about a cold front pushing off the Eastern Seaboard. The top right panel, 'Maps', shows a radar map of the United States with a legend for various weather conditions. Below these are two more panels: 'Top Stories' and 'Seasonal Links' (Tropical Update, Storm Watch). The bottom section, 'My Forecast and Current Conditions', includes a 'Local Severe Weather Alerts' header with a link to a hydrologic statement. It then displays 'Current Conditions' for Carmel, IN, showing a sun icon, a temperature of 72°F, and a detailed forecast for wind, dew point, humidity, visibility, and barometer. A temperature converter is also present. At the bottom of the page are links for averages and records, detailed local forecasts, hour-by-hour details, audio, and video forecasts.

Figure 14-6: A personalized My Weather page.

#360: Design Your Own Ad-Free Weather.com Site with Weather.com Gold

The basic Weather.com site is fine for most of us, but if you want all weather all the time there's even more available. Weather.com Gold is a service that lets you design your own Weather.com pages (without advertising), display faster (and personalized) radar maps, and track weather in multiple locations. This service costs \$14.99 per year; you sign up by clicking the Weather Tools tab on the Weather.com home page and then scrolling down to the Weather.com Gold section and following the onscreen instructions.

#361: Get the Latest Weather on Your Desktop

When you want to be constantly aware of changing weather conditions, you can put a version of Weather.com on your computer desktop. That way you can view current conditions and forecasts with the click of your mouse, no matter what else you're doing with your PC.

Weather.com offers two ways to track weather on your desktop: the free way and the way that costs you money.

Desktop Weather

Weather.com's Desktop Weather is the free tool—and it's not much more than your local temperature displayed in the Windows System Tray. As a bonus, the temperature display will blink when there's a severe weather alert; double-click the display to launch a separate window containing the alert. You can also double-click the display at any time to access local and national weather maps and forecasts.

To install Desktop Weather on your computer, click the Weather Tools link on Weather.com's home page, scroll to the Desktop Weather section, and then follow the onscreen instructions.

Desktop Weather Platinum

If you want even more weather information on your desktop—without annoying ads—then you want Desktop Weather Platinum. This desktop weather tool offers up-to-the-minute animated Doppler Radar maps, local video forecasts from The Weather Channel, customizable severe weather alerts, and more. Of course, you'll pay for all this—\$29.99 per year, to be exact. But if you're a true weather junkie, Desktop Weather Platinum is more than worth the price. Go to the Weather Tools page to sign up.

#362: Start the Day Off Right with a Daily Weather Inbox Weather Report

Weather.com publishes a daily e-mail weather report that it sends out every morning to subscribers. This is a free (ad-supported) service; all you have to do is sign up to receive it, which you do from the Weather Tools page; just click the Seven-Day Forecasts by E-Mail link. This daily Inbox Weather e-mail includes today's detailed local forecast, an extended seven-day forecast, links to Doppler Radar and maps, and a variety of lifestyle content. It's a great way to start the day!

#363: Sign Up for Weather Alerts—via E-Mail, Phone, or PDA

Weather.com's Notify! service can notify you of any pending severe weather. You can choose to receive these alerts via phone, text messaging, e-mail, or the Web. The cost is \$5.99 per month (or \$49.99 per year); sign up from the Weather Tools page.

#364: View Forecasts and Doppler Radar on Your Cell Phone

If you have a Web-enabled cell phone, your local weather is just a few buttons away. Weather.com's mobile phone service lets you access full-color forecasts from The Weather Channel along with current Doppler Radar images and severe weather information. You'll pay \$3.99 per month for this service; go to the Weather Tools page to learn more.

#365: View Video Clips and Forecasts with WeatherPass

You don't have to turn on your TV to watch The Weather Channel. Broadcast forecasts and reports are available on your computer desktop using streaming video technology. When you subscribe to the WeatherPass service, for \$4.95 per month, you can view all of these clips—and more—using the RealVideo player. Go to the Weather Tools page to learn more.

#366: Put a Weather.com Module on Your Own Web Site

Have your own personal Web page? Then add a Weather.com module to it so your visitors can see what the current weather is like where you live. You get a number of different designs to choose from, like the Sunday Drive design shown in Figure 14-7; the information displayed includes current temperature, humidity, wind speed, and weather conditions. Additional links display air quality, pollen count, health maps, and the 10-day forecast.

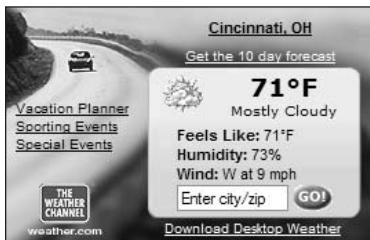


Figure 14-7: A Weather.com magnet for your Web page.

Adding one of these Weather Magnets (as Weather.com calls them) is fairly easy—and free. Just go to Weather Tools ⇔ Weather On Your Site and click the Sign Up! button. Follow the onscreen instructions to sign up; Weather.com will send you an e-mail with detailed instructions on how to add the Weather Magnet code to your Web page's HTML code.

#367: Buy Fun Weather Gear—Including Meteorological Instruments

Our last Weather.com secret involves spending even more money. That's right, Weather.com offers The Weather Channel Store, where you can buy all manner of weather-related merchandise. This includes the expected Weather Channel shirts and jackets, along with books, videos, and travel gear. The coolest products, however—especially if you're a weather junkie—are the items in the Weather Instruments section, including weather radios, thermometers, barometers, rain gauges, hygrometers, and full-blown weather stations. This is one serious store for the serious weather watcher!

#368: Other Great Weather Sites on the Internet

Yeah, it's hard to believe, but as good as Weather.com is, there are still other sites on the Web offering a variety of weather forecasts and reporting. Some of these sites are quite good, and while none offer the range of features as Weather.com, some offer a different approach that might be more appealing to you. Table 14-2 lists the most popular of these other weather-related sites.

Table 14-2: Other Weather Sites

Site	URL
AccuWeather.com	www.accuweather.com
Intellicast.com	www.intellicast.com
My-Cast	www.my-cast.com
NOAA	www.noaa.gov
Weather Underground	www.wunderground.com
WX.com	www.wx.com

Summary

Okay, that's a lot of tips—and a lot of weather. If all you need is the daily forecast, then forget all this and stick to Weather.com's home page. If you want to realize the full value of all that Weather.com offers, however, then you have a lot of clicking to do. There's a lot of useful stuff on this site, even if you're not a hardcore weather junkie. It's easy enough to let the Weather.com folks do the work and just benefit from their recommendations!

Microsoft.com Secrets



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If you use an Apple computer or a beige box that runs the Linux operating system, you can skip this chapter. But for the other ninety-odd percent of you, it's a good thing to get to know the Microsoft.com site—because you'll likely end up spending time there at some point in the future.

That's right, Microsoft.com is one of the most heavily trafficked sites on the Web—and it's not because it's such an appealing site. (It's not that appealing—really.) The site is popular because most computer users have a bunch of Microsoft software installed on their PCs, and if you have any trouble at all with a Microsoft product, Microsoft.com is where you end up. You may be directed there manually to search for a fix or download a file, or your computer might go there of its own accord to update itself with the latest Windows patches. In any case, Microsoft.com is fast becoming the nexus of the IBM-compatible computing world—like it or not.

Interestingly, the Microsoft.com site is just one of literally hundreds of sites run by Microsoft. You've already read about one sister site, MSN; you'll read about another (Expedia) in Chapter 19. In addition, Microsoft runs international versions of its site in just about every major country and also offers a variety of sites for developers, network administrators, and other IT professionals.

Microsoft.com at a Glance

The main Microsoft.com site, however, is the one you're interested in. This is the site that offers all the consumer-oriented technical support tools; it's also where you go to download the latest updates to all your Microsoft software and operating systems.

As you can see in Figure 15-1, the Microsoft.com home page (www.microsoft.com) is designed to help you find information about and support for specific Microsoft products. Yes, there's a semblance of news down the center and along the right side of the page, but it's the links on the left that really matter.

For most users, the best way to navigate the site is to click through to a specific product in the Product Families section of the page and then find the product-specific resources you need there. You can also go directly to Microsoft's support and download resources (in the Resources section), but most users find the product-specific pages to be easier to navigate.

That said, we'll look at some of the most common and useful activities you can perform on the Microsoft.com site—many of which involve (surprise!) technical support and downloading.

The screenshot shows the Microsoft.com homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for All Products, Support, Search, and Microsoft.com Guide. Below that is a search bar and a sidebar with links for Microsoft Home, MSN Home, Subscribe, and Manage Your Profile.

Product Families: Windows, Office, Mobile Devices, Business Solutions, Servers, Developer Tools, Games and Xbox, MSN Services, All Products.

Resources: Support, Downloads, Windows Update, Office Update, Learning Tools, Communities, Security.

Information For: Home Users, IT Professionals.

Home Content:

- Attend a free Microsoft Office System launch event:** You'll receive a free kit to evaluate the Microsoft Office System and be eligible to win valuable prizes. (U.S. only)
- home & entertainment:**
 - Tips to help keep unwanted e-mail out of your inbox
 - 2 simple steps to find the right PC for you
 - Watch the latest video trailer for *Dungeon Siege II*
- technical resources:**
 - Explore XML in the Microsoft Office System
 - Attend a free Exchange Server 2003 launch event
 - Download the Microsoft Data Access Components (MDAC) 2.8
- business agility:**
 - Meet anywhere, at a moment's notice, with Live Meeting
 - Get more from volume licenses with new Software Assurance
 - Do research and reference in Office 2003 Editions

Right Column:

- 1 2 3**
- today's news:**
 - 3 steps to help ensure your PC is protected
 - Get the latest Windows security update
 - Virus notice: Do not open e-mail attachments you don't recognize
 - Chat on September 23: Give us your feedback about the Exchange Web site
 - Coming in October: PDC 2003 -- register by September 24, and save \$300
- More News ...**
- downloads**

Figure 15-1: The Microsoft.com home page.

#369: Use Microsoft.com to Keep Your Version of Windows Up-to-Date and Secure

This is the big one, boys and girls. Given all the press attention of late (due to rampant computer viruses and worms), it shouldn't be a secret that you need to keep your version of Windows up-to-date with the latest security patches and upgrades. Unfortunately, this must be a secret, because every new virus finds victims that have not updated their computers for months (if ever), and are thus needlessly at risk. Why all computer users don't as a matter of course regularly update their copies of Windows is beyond me; maybe it's too much trouble, or too confusing, or something. (Or—and this one, I'll admit, is an issue—if you're connecting to the Internet via a dial-up connection, the updates may be too big to comfortably download.)

The bottom line is that Microsoft didn't make Windows perfect, so it's necessary to download the various bug fixes and upgrades when they become available. In recent versions of Windows, this updating *should* occur automatically via the Windows Update feature built into the operating system. However, because this feature can be overridden, it's important that you know how to update Windows manually over the Web.

Which is where Microsoft.com comes in.

Microsoft offers all of its operating system updates and patches on its Web site. The easiest way to make sure that your version is completely up to date is to go directly to the Windows Update site at windowsupdate.microsoft.com. When you access this site, shown in Figure 15-2, click the Scan for Updates link; Windows Update then scans your computer to see how current your operating system is and based on those findings then determines what patches you need to download. Follow the onscreen instructions to download and install what you need to.

When the process is done, your computer is now completely up-to-date—until Microsoft issues the next patch.



Figure 15-2: Use Windows Update to keep your copy of Windows up-to-date.

#370: Use Microsoft.com to Update All Your Microsoft Software

Microsoft doesn't update just Windows over the Internet; it's constantly offering bug fixes and patches for all its products, from Office to Visual Studio.

Most bug fixes don't need to be downloaded unless you're suffering from a particular problem. (In fact, you probably won't even find out about the bug fix unless you do a search of Microsoft's Knowledge Base, which you'll learn about in Secret #371.) However, Microsoft does, on a semi-regular basis, gather all its interim updates for a program together into a big single update that it calls a *service pack*. When a service pack is issued, you probably ought to install it.

You can find and download the latest service pack for any Microsoft product on the Service Packs page. Go to the Help and Support page (support.microsoft.com), click the Download Software link, and then click the Service

Packs link. Select the product you want to update and then follow the instructions to download and install the service pack.

caution

Microsoft's Service Packs are rather huge, and can take a long time to download—especially on dial-up connections.

#371: Search the Microsoft Knowledge Base for Answers to Software Problems

When you have a problem with a Microsoft product (and if you haven't, you will), chances are some other user has had that problem, too—which means that you don't have to knock your head against the wall too much, because it's just possible that Microsoft knows about the problem and has a fix for it.

Known problems—and their fixes—are stored in Microsoft's Knowledge Base. This is a database of technical support issues, accessible over the Web, that you can search to find the solution to your particular problem.

You get to the Knowledge Base by clicking the Support link on the Microsoft.com home page (or by going directly to support.microsoft.com), and then clicking the Search the Knowledge Base link. As you can see in Figure 15-3, searching the Knowledge Base is a lot like using the advanced search page at Google or some other search engine; asking your question is a matter of filling in the blank and selecting the appropriate search parameters.

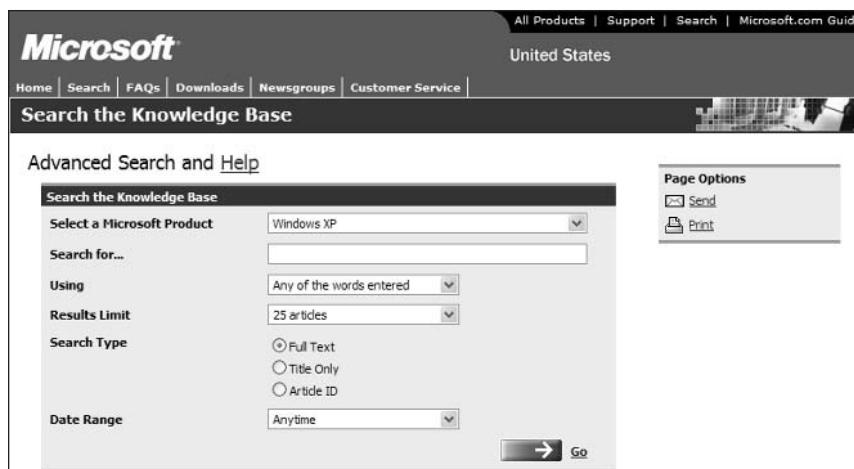


Figure 15-3: Searching the Microsoft Knowledge Base.

The process is quite simple:

1. Select the problem product from the Select a Microsoft Product list.
2. Enter your query into the Search For box.

3. Pull down the Using list to search for any of the words, all of the words, or an exact phrase; and then click the Go button. You can also choose to limit your search to the full text, title only, or ID of the tech support article; limiting the article's date range is another option.

By default, a Knowledge Base search looks for all the words in your query. You can perform a Boolean search by pulling down the Using list and selecting Boolean; this lets you use the AND, OR, and AND NOT operators, which you should be familiar with by now. I've found that it's best to perform a fairly broad search (that is, not to narrow the results unnecessarily), as the technical wording of a given problem is likely to be somewhat different from the wording you might be apt to use.

Therein lies the challenge of using the Knowledge Base—learning to think like a Microsoft technical support person. When you read a Knowledge Base article, the first thing you'll notice is that it appears to be written by technical people for technical people. If you're not technically inclined, you may stumble over the heavy computerese. Like I said, that's a challenge.

But that's a challenge worth tackling, because it's likely that there's a Knowledge Base article that addresses your specific problem. The fix might be in the form of a workaround, a downloadable software page (accessible from the article), or a larger service pack update. (Or, sometimes, the fix might be along the lines of "we know it's a problem, but you'll just have to live with it.") In any case, if it's a relatively common problem, there's probably an article about it somewhere in the Microsoft Knowledge Base.

#372: Contact Microsoft for Technical Support

What do you do if you can't find a fix for your problem in the Knowledge Base? Well, if it's a Microsoft problem, Microsoft ought to help you fix it. That's why you need to get to know the Help and Support page (support.microsoft.com). This page is your gateway not just to the Knowledge Base, but also to Microsoft's other technical support resources—including downloadable software patches and driver updates, product FAQs, and product support personnel.

That's right, you can actually contact real live people at Microsoft to help you with your computer problems.

You make the contact by clicking the Contact Microsoft link on the Help and Support page. This takes you to the Contact Microsoft page, where you can find phone numbers for telephone support, submit a request for online help, and find other contact information. Because phone support costs money (after the initial warranty period), you'll probably end up using the online help; this isn't a bad option, as Microsoft personnel should answer your request (via e-mail) within a reasonable period of time.



If your problem is of a nontechnical nature, use the Customer Service link on the Help and Support page instead.



#373: Chat with Microsoft Product Specialists Live, Online

While we're on the topic of live people at Microsoft, not everyone knows that Microsoft offers regular online chats with its product specialists. These are online forums where you can find out the latest news about particular products and ask questions of the people behind the scenes.

You can find out about upcoming product chats on the Microsoft Technical Communities page. Just click the Communities link on the Microsoft.com home page and when the Microsoft Technical Communities page appears, click the Technical Chats link.



#374: Communicate with Other Microsoft Users in Web-Based Newsgroups

Another good source of technical support and product information is from other serious users. Microsoft fields its own batch of newsgroups, more than 2,000 of which are available on some Usenet servers or on the Web via the Microsoft.com site. Microsoft has separate newsgroups for each version of its major products—and for specific applications or activities of some of the bigger products.

You access Microsoft's product newsgroups from the Help and Support page; just click the Post Your Question to a Community Newsgroup link to see a list of newsgroups, then click through the one you want. Reading, replying to, and posting messages works similar to the way most Web-based message boards are set up. (And, if your Usenet server carries these groups—in the `microsoft.public` domain—you can access them with your normal newsgroup reader.)



#375: Find Out More about Microsoft's Games—including Xbox Games

Microsoft isn't just operating systems and business applications. It's also a pretty important game company, as witnessed by the offerings on the Microsoft Game Studios site (www.microsoft.com/games/ or click the Games and Xbox link on the Microsoft.com home page). As you can see in Figure 15-4, the Game Studios site includes offerings for Xbox games, Windows games, and online games (at Zone.com). Click through for more information.

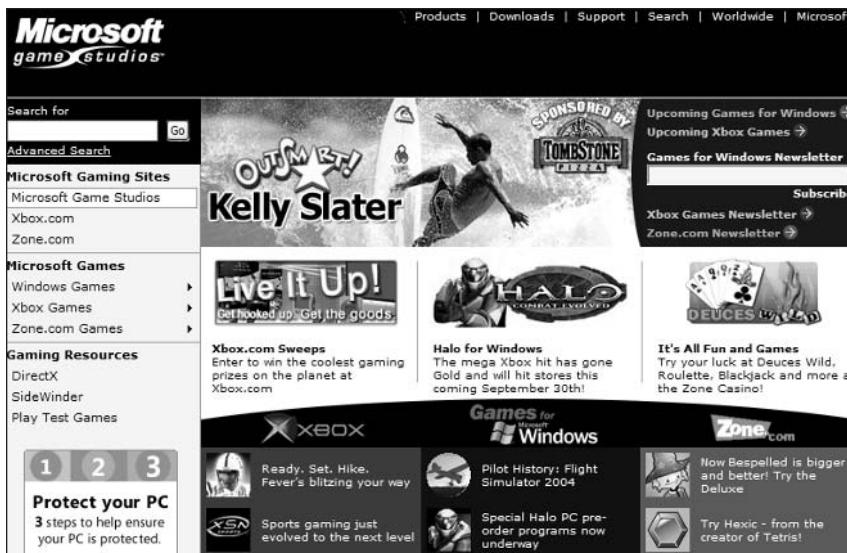


Figure 15-4: Games galore at Microsoft Game Studios.

#376: Microsoft Runs a Pretty Good Music and Media Site

Here's another little secret that most users don't know: Microsoft runs a fairly robust online music and media site, under the auspices of its Windows Media Player software. WindowsMedia.com (www.windowsmedia.com) is nothing less than a full-featured entertainment portal, complete with music downloads (in WMA format, most for 99 cents), streaming audio, downloadable and streaming music videos, movie trailers, live Internet radio, and entertainment news. Naturally, all this content centers around the Windows Media Player, but it's still quite a package—and very well hidden. (Although, to be fair, this is the page that loads when you first start up the Windows Media Player software.)

In any case, if you're a music or movie lover, this is a site worth checking out—and one you probably didn't know about. I particularly like its extensive list of Internet radio stations, as well as the music previews you can listen to for free.

#377: Buy Microsoft Products Online—But Not from Microsoft

Microsoft sells a wide variety of products, from consumer applications to games to high-end servers and databases—and even hardware, in the form of mice, keyboards, and wireless networking adapters. If you want to buy one of these products, you can find more information in Microsoft's Product and Technology Catalog (www.microsoft.com/catalog/), or click the All Products link on the Microsoft.com home page. Here Microsoft organizes its products by type and

offers a lot of useful product information. However, Microsoft doesn't sell any of its products itself; instead it relies on a network of traditional retailers to do that job. What you will find, however, are links to online retailers that offer each individual product, including current pricing and availability—which lets you do your price shopping right on the Microsoft product Web page. Once you find the dealer you want, click through to place your order.

#378: Download Windows PowerToys

One of the many secrets of the Microsoft.com site is that Microsoft offers a fairly large number of useful utilities and add-ons for free downloading. You can access all of Microsoft's downloadable files from the main Downloads page, which you get to by clicking the Downloads link on the Microsoft.com home page. It's perhaps easier to find downloads for specific programs, however, by going to that product home page and then clicking the Downloads link there; this returns a more manageable list of targeted files. For example, to download Windows utilities, click the Windows link on the Microsoft.com home page, and then when the Windows home page (www.microsoft.com/windows/) appears, click the Download link.

In the Windows world, some of the most useful tools for your operating system are filed under the general title Windows PowerToys. These are utilities that extend the operation of Windows, adding practical features that should have been in the operating system but weren't.

Among the best of the PowerToys is a program called Tweak UI that lets you customize your Windows desktop beyond what the operating system normally lets you do. There are versions of Tweak UI for most versions of Windows; Tweak UI for Windows XP (shown in Figure 15-5) is the latest and greatest version of this neat little utility.

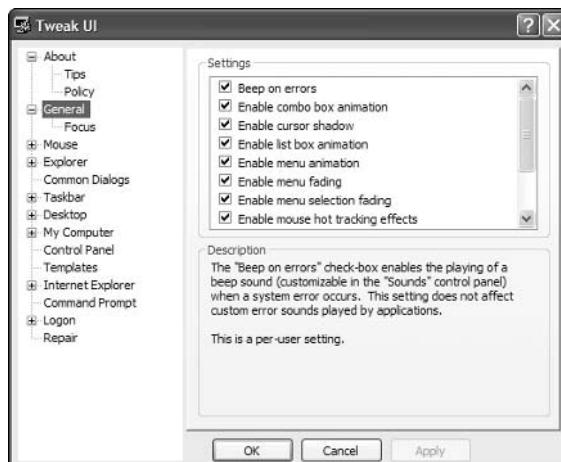


Figure 15-5: Use Tweak UI to customize your version of Windows.

When you launch Tweak UI, you access all of its settings via either a directory tree or a series of tabs (depending on which version of Windows you have). These settings let you configure things such as which icons are displayed on your desktop, which drives are displayed in the My Computer window, which icons are displayed in the Control Panel, how you log onto your network on startup, whether various file histories are kept or cleared, how your mouse operates, and whether various Windows effects are turned on or off. There's also a Repair utility that lets you rebuild any damaged icons on your desktop, repairs any corrupted or overwritten system files, resets the Registry Editor to its default parameters, and restores the default file type icons and associations.

If you aren't yet using Tweak UI, give it a try. It's one of those secret utilities that you'll wonder how you ever did without!



#379: Find Other Sites to Download Windows Desktop Themes and Such

Microsoft.com isn't the only site that offers Windows utilities, desktop themes, and the like. There are a number of other worthy sites on the Web, most of which offer a selection of free downloads (and in many cases paid ones, as well). If you're interested in enhancing your version of Windows, check out the sites in Table 15-1.

Table 15-1: Non-Microsoft Sites for Windows Downloads

Site	URL
Desktop Links	www.desktoplinks.com
Digital-Burn.com	www.digital-burn.com
GetSkinned.org	www.getskinned.org
Themes Unlimited	www.themesunlimited.com
ThemeXP	www.themexp.org
Top Themes	www.toptemplates.com



#380: Download Office Templates, Add-Ins, and Clip Art

While we're on the topic of downloading, there are a ton of templates, add-ins, and clip art available on the Microsoft.com site for every Microsoft Office application from Word to PowerPoint. You can find all these files on the Microsoft Office Online site (office.microsoft.com)—which is also a great site to find information and advice on all Office applications. Just click the Downloads link and you'll find downloads organized by Office version (2003, XP, and so on) and

then by individual application. Click through to find and download the items you want.

#381: Let Microsoft Help You Run Your Small Business

If you run your own small business, Microsoft wants to be your pal. The Microsoft bCentral site (www.bcentral.com), shown in Figure 15-6, was designed specifically for small businesses and offers a variety of news, information, and services that can help you run your business more efficiently. bCentral is particularly useful for online businesses, as it presents a number of Web site analysis tools and services including Web hosting and e-commerce management software. It's a surprisingly decent site, with a lot more good stuff than you might expect.

The screenshot shows the Microsoft bCentral homepage. At the top, there's a banner with the text "Pride. Determination. Hard work. Meet our Qwest families." and "Run a better business! Use software from bCentral." Below the banner is a navigation bar with links for Welcome, Products & Services, News & Resources, My Business, Sign In, and Checkout | Help. On the left side, there's a sidebar with a search bar, a "Welcome to bCentral" message, and links for Sales & Marketing, Web Sites & Commerce, Finance & Retail, Product Advisor, and Site Map. A callout box titled "Protect your PC" says "3 steps to help ensure your PC is protected." In the center, a large image shows hands using a computer mouse, with the text "Stay in touch with customers. Reach out to new ones." Below this, there are three main sections: "Sales & Marketing" (with a "Submit It!" form), "Web Sites & Commerce" (with a "FastCounter Pro" section), and "Finance & Retail" (with a "Small Business Manager" section). Each section has a "Details" link and a "More Services" link below it.

Figure 15-6: A Microsoft site for small businesses—bCentral.

#382: Check Out the Projects They're Working On at Microsoft Research

The folks at Microsoft are always working on something new. The newest of the new is found at the Microsoft Research site (research.microsoft.com), which details all the projects in process at Microsoft's research labs. What kind of products are we talking about? How about an auto DJ; collaborative video viewing; data management, exploration, and mining; junk e-mail filtering (yay!); machine learning and perception; or something called the World Wide

Telescope. Want to learn more? Then explore the Microsoft Research Web site—and learn the secrets of what cool Microsoft products are coming next.



#383: Explore Microsoft's Other Web Sites

As you've seen, Microsoft.com is just one of Microsoft's many Web sites. There are a lot more sites to explore if you have a particular interest.

For example, Microsoft hosts more than 50 technical community Web sites. These include the product-specific sites for Windows, Office, and so on, as well as more technical sites. You can find a list of these sites by clicking the Communities link on the Microsoft.com home page and then clicking the Find a Community link.

While we're on the topic of technical sites, let's not forget the Microsoft Developer's Network (MSDN), located at msdn.microsoft.com. This site is designed by developers for developers and includes a large library of downloadable code and other useful information.

And then there are all of Microsoft's country-specific sites. Microsoft is a multi-national corporation, so it makes sense that it has versions of its Web site for all the major countries in which it operates. Click the Microsoft Worldwide link on the Microsoft.com home page (or go to www.microsoft.com/worldwide/) for a complete list.

Summary

That completes our look at the Microsoft family of sites—Microsoft.com in particular. If you're a somewhat technical computer user, this is definitely a site to get to know—for its technical support resources, if nothing else. It's also a great site to visit occasionally just to check up on the latest software developments—program updates in particular. And remember—if you haven't updated your version of Windows lately, go to Microsoft.com *immediately* and let Windows Update do its job. You have to stay a step ahead of all the virus writers out there!

Part IV

Secrets of Online Shopping and Services

Chapter 16: eBay Secrets

Chapter 17: Amazon.com Secrets

Chapter 18: Napster 2.0 Secrets

Chapter 19: Expedia Secrets

Chapter 20: MapQuest Secrets

eBay Secrets

Chapter 16



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If you can't find it anywhere else, you can probably find it on eBay.

eBay is the world's largest person-to-person marketplace. It uses the concept of online auctions to enable individuals (and businesses) around the world to sell all manner of merchandise—to the highest bidder. On any given day eBay has more than 12 million items listed for auction; in 2002, that translated into 638 million total auctions, selling almost \$15 billion worth of merchandise.

That's a lot of stuff!

In many ways, eBay is the high-tech equivalent of an old-fashioned garage sale. If you have something to sell, eBay helps you find someone to buy it. It's all automated; just fill out the online forms and eBay launches and runs the entire auction process for you. When the auction is over, the high bidder wins; after receiving payment, the seller then ships the item and another auction is successfully completed.

eBay at a Glance

All of this activity takes place on the eBay site (www.ebay.com). As you can see in Figure 16-1, the eBay home page is the gateway to all the auctions currently running on the site. You can browse through the merchandise categories until you come across something you want to bid on or use the search box to find specific items.

Selling an item is as easy as clicking the Sell button at the top of the page. eBay then displays a series of Sell Your Item pages; fill in the blanks to get your auction started. You can choose from 3-, 5-, 7-, or 10-day auctions (7-day is the default). You have to choose a starting bid price, but potential buyers will bid the price up from there. (You'll also owe eBay a small listing fee based on the starting price you set.)

At the end of the auction, eBay notifies both the high bidder and the seller of the final price. The seller then owes eBay a final value fee based on a percentage of the final selling price. Bidders and buyers owe eBay nothing; items are paid for directly to the seller.



Figure 16-1: The eBay home page.

#384: Discover Hard-To-Find Pages

eBay makes it easy enough to search for an auction or to launch your own auction. But where do you go if you want to retract a bid, report a deadbeat bidder, change your credit card billing information, or find out more about selling or shipping? eBay offers a huge amount of content and services on its site, but most of these individual pages are buried well within the site. Unless you know the specific URL for a page, you might find yourself clicking hopelessly through multiple pages, trying in vain to find that particular feature you're looking for.

Fortunately, eBay offers a single page that links to all the quasi-hidden pages on its site. That page is the Site Map page, and you get to it by clicking the Site Map link above the Navigation bar on the eBay home page. eBay's Site Map includes links to more than a hundred separate pages—which makes it worth bookmarking on its own. In many cases, it's the only way to get to where you want to go!

#385: Contact eBay for Help

Another thing that eBay makes hard to find is the method of contacting the site's administrators if you have a problem. In the old days, eBay used to let you

e-mail them directly for help—but not anymore. Now you have to click the Help link on a particular page and then click through multiple help pages until you get to a contact form. If that's too much hassle (and it is for me), you can go directly to the Contact Customer Support page, located at pages.ebay.com/help/contact_inline. You'll still have to do some clicking (to identify the type of problem you're having), but when you click the Continue button, you'll find a Submit Email form into which you can enter your question. Click the Submit button and your question is sent to eBay support staff, who will respond via e-mail.



#386: Get Answers and Advice from Other eBay Users

While the eBay staff can be helpful, they're often busy. An equally good source of information and advice—and one that's often faster than going through official channels—is the huge universe of fellow eBay users. eBay makes it easy to communicate with other users by providing a number of topic-specific discussion boards and chat rooms.

You access all of eBay's discussion forums from the eBay Community page (pages.ebay.com/community/), which you can open by clicking the Community button on the eBay Navigation bar. Feel free to ask any appropriate question of your fellow members; you may be surprised how fast you get a response!



#387: Use My eBay to Keep Track of All Your Auction Activity

Whether you're a buyer or a seller, keeping track of all your auction activity can sometimes be a daunting proposition—especially if you're selling or bidding on a lot of different items simultaneously. Well, eBay has a way to keep track of all this activity on a single page—and it's the site's best-kept secret.

The My eBay page, like the one shown in Figure 16-2, tracks all your bidding and selling activity, automatically. You can also use My eBay to manage your eBay account.

You get to My eBay by clicking the My eBay link on the eBay Navigation bar. My eBay is actually a set of seven pages, accessed by tabs at the top of each page. These tabs are detailed in Table 16-1.

I find My eBay to be an invaluable tool and have it bookmarked at the top of my browser Favorites list. It's the page I use as my gateway to all my eBay auctions.

The screenshot shows the eBay 'My eBay' page with several tabs at the top: Bidding/Watching, Selling Manager, Favorites, Accounts, Feedback, Preferences, and All. The 'Bidding/Watching' tab is selected. Below the tabs is a navigation bar with links: Go to: Items I'm Bidding On | Items I've Won | Items I'm Watching | Items I Didn't Win, and a 'Need Help?' link. A 'Protect Yourself From Fake Emails' message with a 'Learn How' link is also present. The main content area is divided into three sections:

- Items I'm Bidding On (0 Items)**: A message stating "No items currently appear within this section." with a "Back to top" link.
- Items I've Won (1 Item)**: A table showing one item: "iron on t shirt transfer - Giant Superman S" (Item # 2856910496, End Date Sep-28 15:48:30, Bid \$10.00, Paid \$10.00). Buttons include "Delete selected items" and "Leave Feedback". A "See totals" link is available.
- Items I Didn't Win (0 Items)**: A message stating "No items currently appear within this section." with a "Back to top" link.

Figure 16-2: Use your My eBay page to view all your buying and selling activity.

Table 16-1: My eBay Tabs

Tab	Function
Bidding/Watching	Keeps track of all items you're bidding on, are watching, have recently won, or have recently lost. This page also includes links to all of eBay's buying-related services.
Selling	Keeps track of all the items you're currently selling or have recently sold. This page also includes links to all of eBay's selling-related services. (If you're using eBay's Selling Manager tool—discussed in Secret #413—this tab is replaced by a Selling Manager tab.)
Favorites	Lists your favorite categories, searches, and sellers.
Accounts	Lets you view your account status and balance, and update your account settings.
Feedback	Lists your most recent feedback comments and serves as a gateway into eBay's feedback system.
Preferences	Lets you configure various eBay settings.
All	Displays all your auction information on a single page.

#388: Find Specific Items for Sale

While eBay makes it easy to browse through the numerous categories of merchandise offered for sale, there are so many items listed in most categories that browsing in this fashion is virtually impractical. It's much more efficient to use eBay's search function to search the millions of active auctions for those particular items you're shopping for.

Using eBay search is like using the search function at Google and similar sites. Enter one or more keywords into the search box on eBay's home page and then click the Search button. Items matching your query are then listed on a separate results page.

Using Advanced Search Operators

eBay automatically searches for items that include all the words in your query. (It's the old "assumed AND" search.) If you instead want to do an OR-type search, or search for an exact phrase, or exclude words from the search, then you have to use advanced search operators in conjunction with your keywords. eBay's accepted search operators are detailed in Table 16-2.

Table 16-2: eBay Search Operators

Function	Operator
Search for part of a word (wildcard)	*
Search for either word	(word1,word2)—with no spaces between the words
Search for an exact phrase	"phrase"
Must include a word	+word
Must exclude a word	-word
Must exclude two or more words	-(word1,word2)
Must include a year or number	#number

Using eBay's Search Page

You can also perform more detailed searches from eBay's dedicated Search page, shown in Figure 16-3. You access this page by clicking the Search link on eBay's Navigation bar.

The Search page offers seven tabs designed for seven different types of searches. These tabs—and their functions—are listed in Table 16-3.

The screenshot shows the Advanced Search tab selected on eBay's search interface. The search bar at the top contains placeholder text "Search keywords or item number (required)". Below it, there are several search refinement sections:

- Refine your search (optional):** Includes fields for "Price range(\$)" from/to, "Category" (set to "All Categories"), "Words to exclude" (empty), and checkboxes for "Title and description", "Completed Items only", "Buy It Now Items only", "Gift Items only", and "Quantity greater than 1".
- Display format (optional):** Includes dropdowns for "View results" (set to "All items") and "Sort by" (set to "Items ending first").
- Location / International (optional):** Includes radio buttons for "Items from eBay.com" (selected), "Items available to ...", and "Items located in ...", each with dropdowns for "All regions", "United States", and "United States".
- Payment method (optional):** Includes a checkbox for "Search for items that accept PayPal" and dropdowns for "Currency" (set to "Any currency") and "Search" button.

Figure 16-3: The Advanced Search tab on eBay's Search page.

Table 16-3: Advanced Search Tabs

Tab	Function
Search	Search title and/or description; exclude specific words; limit search by price range, location, or category
Advanced Search	Same as basic Search, with additional limits by region and type of item (all, completed, or Buy It Now)
By Item Number	Search for specific item numbers
By Seller	Search for all auctions listed by a specific seller
By Bidder	Search for all auctions bid on by a specific buyer
Search Stores	Searches items for sale in eBay Stores (this is eBay's fixed-price marketplace)
Completed Items	Limits your search to completed auctions



#389: Save—and Repeat—Your Favorite Searches

Once you've completed a successful search, there's no reason to re-enter your query every time you want to run it again. eBay lets you save your favorite

searches and then access them with a click of your mouse from the My eBay page.

To save a search, all you have to do is click the Save This Search link located at the top of any search results page. To repeat a saved search go to your My eBay page, select the Favorites tab, scroll down to the My Favorite Searches section, and click the search you want to re-run. Your query is now executed, and fresh results are returned.



#390: Get Automatic Notification of New Search Matches

When you're on the lookout for a particular item, you don't want to be constantly re-running the same search. Far better to have eBay do the looking for you and let you know when new items matching your query are listed for auction.

You start by running your search and then saving it to your My eBay Favorites page. From there, click the Preferences link next to the search link; when the Preferences page appears, check the Email Daily Whenever There Are New Items option then click the Submit button. eBay will now send you a daily e-mail whenever new items are found that match your search. I like getting up every morning and checking my mailbox for these search results messages—and then going directly to the best auctions to place my bids!



#391: Watch Auctions Before You Bid

Once you find an auction you're interested in, you don't have to bid immediately. Instead, you can add this item to your watch list and track the status on your My eBay page—and save your bidding until later in the auction. (See Secret #393 for more about last-minute bidding.)

To watch an item, click the Watch This Item link at the top of the item listing page. The item will now be tracked in the Items I'm Watching section of the My eBay Bidding Watching page. Go there to keep up-to-date on the auction's status.



#392: Let eBay Do Your Bidding for You

Many users unfamiliar with online auctions think that they work like real-world auctions, where one person makes a bid, then someone else ups that bid, then the first person has to come back with another bid to stay in the running. eBay works a little differently, in that much of this auction process is automated, using a software that works like a proxy bidder. That is, you don't have to keep bidding and bidding every time someone else enters the auction; you can let eBay handle all your bidding activity for you.

The way it works is simple: When you place a bid, you enter the maximum amount you're willing to pay—which may be a lot higher than the current bid price. eBay will keep your maximum bid secret, and bid for you only the minimum amount necessary. When another user bids, eBay will respond (as your proxy) by placing a new, higher bid for you. If the other bidder goes higher, eBay continues to respond in kind until your maximum bid level is reached. When that happens eBay drops you out of the bidding and lets you know (via e-mail) that your maximum bid has been exceeded. At that point you can call it a day or decide to enter a new maximum bid and start the process all over again.

This proxy bidding process means that you don't have to stay at your computer, constantly checking on the progress of all auctions in which you're bidding. Enter the highest price you're willing to pay and log off—eBay will handle the bidding for you. Of course, the whole concept takes a little getting used to. Imagine that you're bidding on an item that you think is worth \$20, but which has a current bid price of \$2.00. You might be tempted to enter a bid for a little over the current price—\$2.50, let's say. But that amount could lead to you quickly getting outbid, and then you'd have to come right back and manually enter another bid, then another, then another. Better to enter a maximum bid of \$20, and let eBay (automatically) place the \$2.50 bid—and all subsequent bids—for you, as necessary. If no other bidders enter the fray, you'll only have to pay \$2.50; if other bidders get involved, eBay will make sure you pay the lowest amount necessary to win the auction.

So don't get caught up in a bidding frenzy. Put your best bid on the table, and let eBay manage the auction for you!

#393: Win by Sniping

That's not to say, however, that you should get into the bidding on day one of a seven-day auction. The earlier you bid, the more likely it is that you'll be outbid. In essence, when you place an early bid on an auction, you're tipping your hand. Other bidders see your bid and feel they have to respond to stay in the game. This raises the current bid price—and the more bidders, the higher the price. While this is good for the seller, it's lousy for you if the item gets bid up too high, too fast.

A much better strategy is to *not* bid on an item right away. Wait until the very end of the auction—even as late as the last ten seconds—and then swoop in unexpectedly. In fact, if you bid late enough in the game, you won't leave other bidders any time to respond—which leaves your last-second bid the winning bid. This strategy of last-second bidding is called *sniping*, and its how you can win a lot of eBay auctions without unduly driving up the bidding price early on. The key to sniping is to make just one bid in an auction and to make it as late as possible in the process. That means making your bid literally in the last seconds of an auction, and making that bid high enough to beat any other bidders' (unknown to you) maximum bids.

The trick to placing a successful snipe is to have your bid lined up and ready to go while you watch the clock. Synchronize your clock with eBay's official time and have your finger on the Confirm Bid button. Wait until exactly 10 seconds left on the clock, and then click the button. This gives you just enough time for your bid to be sent to and registered with eBay, but doesn't leave enough time

for any other bidders to realize what's going on and respond in kind. If your bid was high enough, you'll win!



#394: Win by Pennies

Here's another bidding secret. Most users bid an even dollar amount—\$5 or \$10 or whatever. You can win a lot of auctions by bidding a few pennies more. That's right, instead of bidding \$10, bid \$10.03. You'll outbid the \$10 guys, and without upping the price by a large (even) amount. You'd be surprised how many bids are won by that odd penny!



#395: Research How Similar Items Have Sold

When you're bidding on an item, how do you know how much is enough to bid? And if you're getting ready to sell an item, how do you know what kind of price to expect?

The secret of smart bidding and selling is *research*. Yes, that means doing your homework before you start bidding or selling. You don't want to go blind into an eBay auction—especially when there's plenty of information out there to help you get smart about what you're doing.

The easiest—and cheapest—way to research auction prices is to use eBay's Completed Items search, which you learned about in Secret #388. Click the Search link on the eBay Navigation bar to open the eBay Search page and then select the Completed Items tab. Enter your search criteria and click the Search button. eBay will return a list of recently closed auctions that match your query. Look at the final selling price of these items; this will give you an idea of what similar items are selling for. (Of course, if a lot of auctions closed without any bids, that means that the demand for that type of item is fairly low—or that the starting bid prices were set too high.)

insider
insight

Another way to research auction pricing is to use a third-party service called Ándale Research (www.andalere.com). For \$2.95 per month you can use Ándale to generate pricing reports by general category or specific product; these reports include the average selling price, number of items listed and sold, and the percent of successfully completed auctions.



#396: The Best Time to Start (and End) Your Auctions Is Sunday Evening

When you're selling an item on eBay, you can maximize your chance of success (and your final selling price) by making sure that your auction is exposed to as

many people as possible. That means listing your item for a full seven days, and making sure that the auction ends when as many potential buyers as possible are home to make last-second snipes.

So the question is—when are most eBay users at home and at their computers?

It's easy enough to determine bad times to list. List during the day and too many potential buyers are at work or at school. List during the very late evening (after midnight, let's say), and too many potential buyers are asleep. List on a Friday or Saturday night and too many potential buyers are out dining or partying.

This leaves a small window of highest opportunity. You want to start (and thus end) your auctions during prime time hours—and that means prime time on both coasts. Remember, when it's 8:00 P.M. in New York, it's only 5:00 P.M. in California, and many users aren't home for work yet. And when it's 9:00 in California, it's midnight in New York, and many users are already in bed. The prime auction ending time, then, is between 9:00 P.M. and 11:00 P.M. EST, or between 6:00 P.M. and 8:00 P.M. PST. That will catch most users at home and in front of their computers.

Which day of the week is best? Remember, Friday and Saturday are bad. Other weekdays are better, but you still run into a lot of folks on business trips or attending school events. The best day, by a hair, is Sunday, when a higher percentage of people are likely to be home and ready to bid.

Combine all this information, and you'll schedule the majority of your auctions to end on Sunday evening, between 9:00 P.M. and 11:00 P.M. on the East Coast.

#397: Start Your Auctions on a Time Delay

But what if you're not home on Sunday evening to start your auctions? eBay lets you list your auctions at your convenience and schedule them to start automatically at a later time. This feature will cost you 10 cents to use, but it's worth it if you can't afford to be tied to your computer every Sunday evening.

To schedule a specific start time for your auction, make sure you select the Schedule to Start On option when you're creating your auction listing.

#398: Use HTML to Create Better-Looking Item Listings

Now that we're on the topic of auction listings, have you noticed that some sellers have really cool looking listings, complete with fancy text and colors and such? Ever wonder how those sellers created those eye-popping listings?

The secret is the use of HTML code. This is the same code used to create Web pages, and eBay lets you incorporate HTML code in your item listings. (You can't use HTML in your titles, though—just the item description.)

What kind of codes are we talking about? If you know your way around basic HTML, you'll find you can use all the essential formatting codes in your item descriptions. That means bold (), italic (), and underline (), along

with paragraph (`<p>`) and line (`
`) breaks. You can even use the `` code to specify specific fonts, and the `` code to specify different color text.

insider insight

A good source for basic HTML information is *HTML in Ten Simple Steps or Less* by Robert Fuller and Laurie Ulrich (also by Wiley Publishing) or Lycos' WebMonkey Web site (www.webmonkey.com).

If you don't know HTML from HDTV, don't despair. eBay includes a basic HTML Text Editor as part of its Sell Your Item page. Just click the HTML Text Editor link next to the Description box to launch the HTML Text Editor tool, shown in Figure 16-4. This tool lets you add HTML effects in a WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) environment, much the same way that you add bold and italics in your word processor. Highlight the text you want to format and then click the appropriate formatting button. With this tool, you don't have to know any HTML to create great-looking item descriptions.

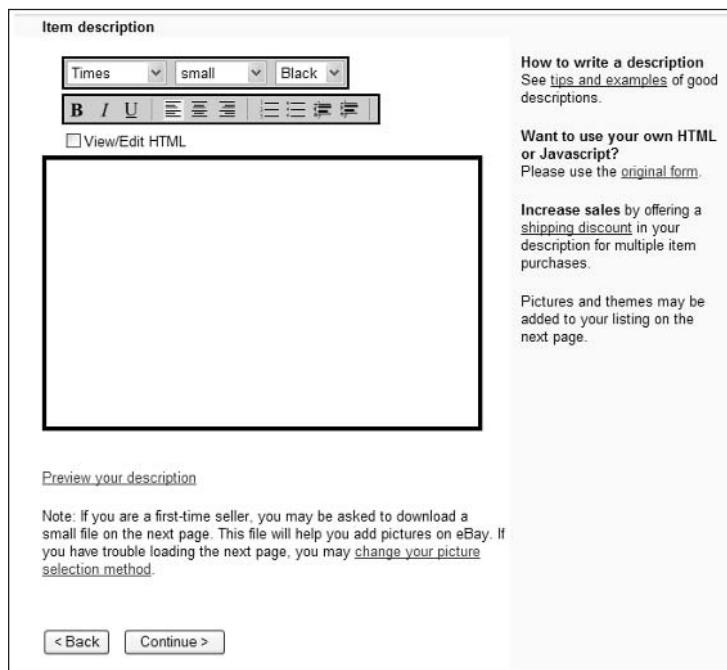


Figure 16-4: eBay's HTML Text Editor tool.



#399: Apply a Colorful Theme to Your Listing

Another way to create a great-looking item listing is to apply a pre-designed theme to the entire listing. These themes include special text formatting, color

backgrounds, and graphics; the special effects are added automatically to your standard item title and description.

eBay lets you apply themes from the Sell Your Item page using its Listing Designer tool. You'll pay 10 cents to use the Listing Designer, shown in Figure 16-5, but if you do you'll have more than two dozen themes to choose from. Just choose a theme from the Select a Theme list and then choose a page layout from the Select a Layout list. It's an easy way to make your listing stand out from the millions of others on the eBay site.

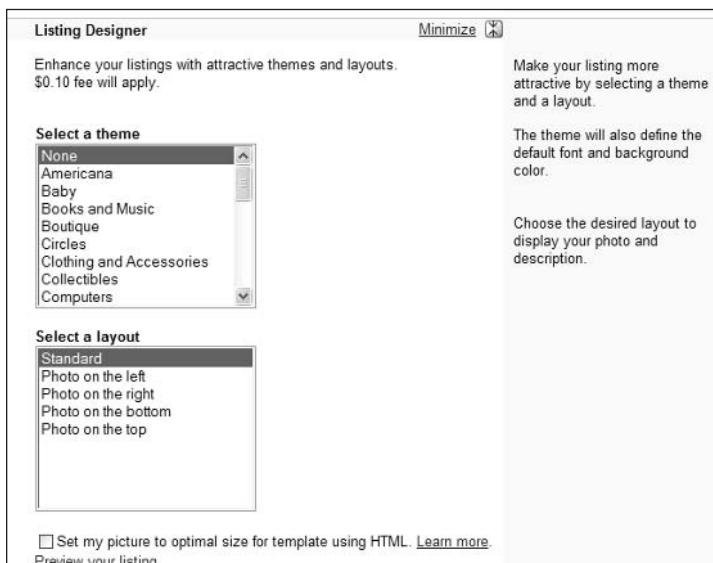


Figure 16-5: Use the Listing Designer to apply a pre-designed theme to your item description.

#400: Pictures Sell

The most effective way to increase your odds of auction success is to include photographs of your items in the auction listings. Shoppers like to see pictures of things before they buy; pictures definitely add to the appeal of any auction item.

To add a picture to your listing, you first have to have a photograph of your item. The easiest way to do this is with a digital camera; make sure the photograph is sized to no more than 300 × 300 pixels. (If you can't set picture size from within your camera, use a photo editing program—such as Photoshop Elements—to perform the resizing.) Once the picture file is on your hard drive, you can add it to your item listing from the Sell Your Item page.

eBay offers several different photo-hosting options. Your first photo is free, but each additional photo in your listing will cost 15 cents each. You can also choose to create a slide show of multiple pictures (75 cents) or allow potential bidders

to “supersize” your pictures (another 75 cents). If you have a lot of photos, the better option is eBay’s Picture Pack, with gives you up to six supersized photos for a buck.

To insert photos into your listing, you’ll want to work your way to the Pictures & Details page, scroll down to the Add Pictures section, and select the eBay Picture Services tab shown in Figure 16-6. Click the Add Picture button in the First Picture—Free box; when the Open dialog box appears, locate and select the photo you want to use and then click the Open button. Repeat this procedure to add extra pictures.

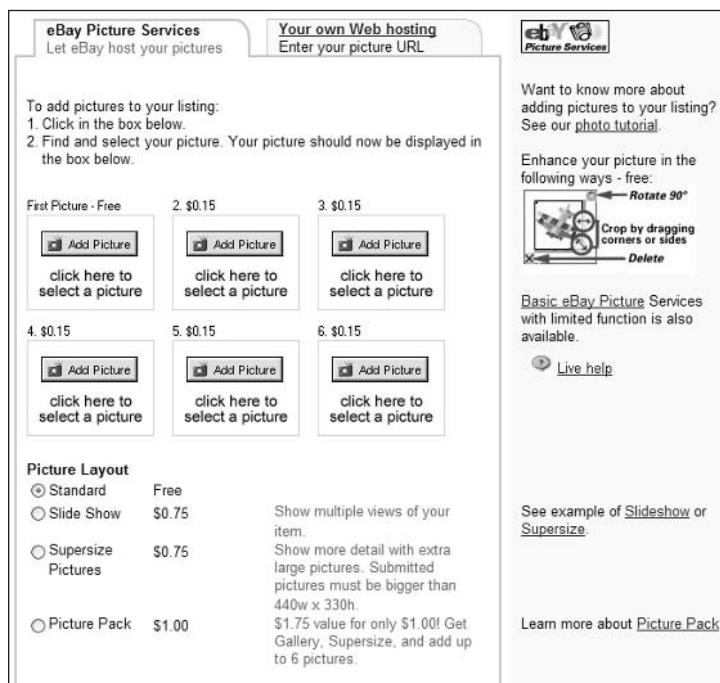


Figure 16-6: Add up to six photographs to your item listing.

Then, in the Picture Layout section, select the options you want—Standard, Slide Show, Supersize Pictures, or Picture Pack. If you’ve previously chosen to use the Listing Designer (see Secret #399), you can scroll to the Listing Designer section and select a position for your photo from the Select a Layout list.

eBay will now automatically upload your pictures from your hard disk and automatically insert those pictures into your item listing.



#401: Count Your Auction Traffic—Secretly

eBay provides the option of adding a traffic counter to the bottom of your item listings on the Sell Your Item page. (These counters are provided—free of charge—by Ándale.) When you add a counter you can see how many potential

bidders have viewed the listing. Unfortunately, potential bidders can also see how much traffic an item is generating—and if the traffic count is low, they'll know that they won't have to bid very high.

A better option is to choose a hidden counter. This is a counter that tracks the traffic, but doesn't display the results on the listing page. Instead, you have to visit the Andale site (www.andale.com) to view your traffic numbers. You'll know how popular your auction is—but your potential bidders won't.

#402: Reserve the Right to Not Sell If the Price Isn't High Enough

Okay, this next secret gets a little complicated, so pay attention. In regular eBay auctions, you (the seller) specify a starting bid price, and as long as one user makes a bid at that level or above, you're obligated to sell the item for the highest bid price. So if you start an item at \$1 and it gets a single \$1 bid, you have to sell the item for \$1—even if you think the item is worth a lot more.

If you like the idea of a low starting bid price (to get the bidding started), but don't want to sell the item unless it reaches a higher price, you want to engage in what is called a *reserve price auction*. In a reserve price auction, you have to determine two prices: the starting bid price, and the higher reserve price. The auction isn't successful unless the bids have met or exceeded your reserve price.

Let's take an example. Say that you start an auction with a \$1 starting bid price, but specify a \$10 reserve price—which is hidden from bidders. The bidding starts (at \$1), and continues until the auction ends, at which point the highest bid is \$8. Since the \$8 high bid is lower than the \$10 reserve price, the auction ends with no winner. If, on the other hand, this fictional auction ends with a high bid of \$11, that bidder wins the auction.

So if you think your item has a certain value, but don't want to start the bidding that high, then choose the Reserve Price option on the Sell Your Item page. Remember to enter a reserve price higher than your starting bid price and then see how it plays out.

#403: Let Bidders Buy Your Item Now

Another option most sellers don't know about is the ability to sell your item at a fixed price, using eBay's Buy It Now (BIN) feature. When you use BIN, you set both a starting bid price and a (presumably higher) fixed sales price for your item. If users want to buy your items right now, without waiting for the auctions to end, all they have to do is click the Buy It Now button and pay you the fixed price you entered. If the buyers want to chance the entire auction process (and risk having a losing bid), then they can bid on the item as normal. (The BIN option disappears once the first bid has been made—or, in a reserve price auction, once the reserve price has been met.)

Buy It Now is great for when you're selling something that has an established value that you want to move quickly. Just remember to set your BIN price at the

level you really want to receive; it essentially becomes the maximum price you're likely to achieve in the auction.

#404: Have eBay Calculate Your Shipping Costs Automatically

Calculating shipping costs is a pain. Whether you use the U.S. Postal Service, UPS, or some other carrier, most rates vary by the weight and size of the package you're shipping, as well as the distance shipped. Because you don't know ahead of time where you're going to ship the item (that depends on who wins your auction!), it's almost impossible to quote a flat shipping charge up-front in your auction listing.

That's why eBay's Shipping Calculator is such a neat tool. When you include the Shipping Calculator, shown in Figure 16-7, into your auction listings, buyers can enter their zip codes and have shipping charges calculated automatically. The Shipping Calculator is also utilized when winning bidders use eBay's Checkout at the end of the auction, or pay via PayPal.



Calculate shipping 

Enter your US ZIP Code:

Calculate

[Learn more about how calculated shipping works.](#)

Buyers outside US: If seller ships to your country, see item description or contact seller for details.

Figure 16-7: Add eBay's Shipping Calculator to your item listings.

eBay offers the Shipping Calculator for free. All you have to do is select the Shipping Calculator option when you're creating your auction listing, enter the package weight (in pounds and ounces), select a package size, select the shipping service you plan to use, enter your zip code, enter any additional handling fee you want to charge, and then select whether you want to offer insurance. Everything else is handled automatically.

#405: You Don't Have to Be a Merchant to Accept Credit Cards

In the old days (like, say, five years ago), if you wanted to accept payment by credit card, you had to go to your bank and sign up for a merchant credit card account. This was a big hassle and often somewhat expensive. And, more often than not, you'd get rejected because you weren't a real retailer.

That little problem has been solved by the emergence of PayPal, a middleman service (owned by eBay) that facilitates the processing of credit cards in online auctions. When you sign up for the PayPal service, your auction winners can use their credit cards to pay PayPal; PayPal then pays you (after deducting a fee), and everybody's happy.

You can sign up for PayPal from eBay's Sell Your Item page, or directly at PayPal's Web site (www.paypal.com). You can sign up for one of three different types of accounts: Personal (for buyers), Premier (for low-volume sellers), and Business (for businesses selling online). For most eBay sellers, the Premier account is the one to go with.

There are no fees for becoming a PayPal member; fees are charged only when one of your auctions winners pays via PayPal. (The buyer doesn't pay any fees; only sellers do.) Fees are either 2.2 percent or 2.9 percent of the total amount paid, depending on your volume level.

Given how many buyers prefer to play with plastic, signing up for PayPal is a virtual necessity if you're a serious eBay seller.

#406: List Multiple Items Simultaneously with Turbo Lister

If you're really into this eBay thing, you'll soon find yourself running multiple auctions simultaneously. Once you get up to a dozen or so auctions per week, you'll find that creating all those item listings is quite time consuming. Wouldn't it be great if you could work from a standard template to create your listings faster and then list all your auctions at one time?

Well, the secret's out. eBay offers the Turbo Lister bulk-listing program that lets you create all your auctions offline, on your own time, and then upload them all at once when you're done. With Turbo Lister, shown in Figure 16-8, you can use HTML-based themes to spruce up your listings and copy your old listings to new listings so that you don't have to reinvent the wheel with each new auction. Launching your auctions is then as simple as clicking a button; Turbo Lister logs on to eBay, uploads all your listings, and starts all the auctions simultaneously.

To download the Turbo Lister software, go to pages.ebay.com/turbo_lister/. The program is free and there are no monthly subscription fees.

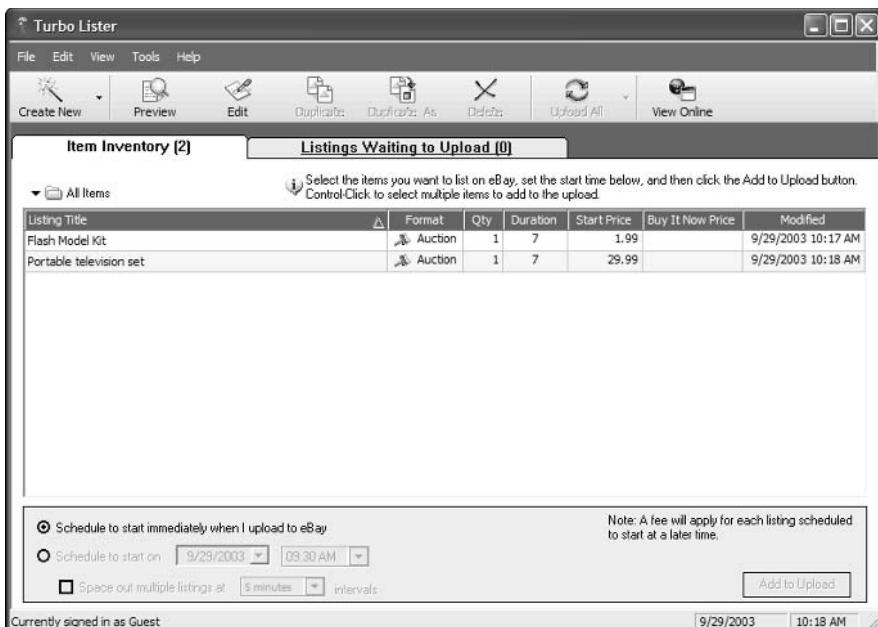


Figure 16-8: Use Turbo Lister to create great-looking item listings—and list them in bulk.

#407: Edit Your Listing After the Auction's Started

Have you ever started an auction and then discovered that you made a mistake in the item listing? Don't fret—eBay lets you edit your listing after the auction has started, as long as you haven't received any bids yet. All you have to do is go to the item listing page, click the Revise Item link (located in the Seller Services section), and follow the onscreen instructions.

After you've received your first bid, you can no longer edit the listing—although you can add on to the description. Go to the Site Map page and click the Add to My Item Description link; when the next page appears, enter the item number of the auction you want to update and click Revise Item. When the Add to Description page appears, enter your new text and then click the Save Changes button.

#408: Stop an Auction Before It's Over

Sometimes you decide to end an auction early. Maybe you decide you don't really want to sell the item after all. Or maybe someone down the street offered to buy it from you. Whatever the reason, eBay lets you cancel an in-progress auction—if you don't mind jumping through a few hoops.

The first step to canceling an auction is to cancel all the bids on the item. You'll need to go to the Site Map page, click the Cancel Bids on My Item link, and follow the onscreen instructions—for each and every bid.

After you've canceled all the bids, go back to the Site Map page and click the End My Listing Early link. When the Ending Auction page appears, enter the item number of the auction, click the Continue button, and then follow the onscreen instructions to formally end the auction.

#409: Re-list an Unsold Item—for Free

When you have an item on eBay that doesn't sell, all hope is not lost. eBay lets you re-list the item in a follow-up auction—and it won't charge you an insertion fee for the new auction. (You still owe the insertion fee for the first time around, however.)

To re-list an unsold item, go to the original item listing page and click the Re-list This Item link. You'll then have to walk through the normal listing creation procedure, although all the information will already be present from the first auction; you can make any changes you want at this point. Complete the auction listing process and your new auction will be launched.

#410: Get a Refund from eBay If Your Buyer Doesn't Pay

Every now and then you get a winning bidder who drops out of sight and doesn't pay. When you get a *deadbeat bidder*, you're stuck with an unsold item and no money to show for it—in fact, you still owe eBay the insertion and final value fees, even though you didn't get paid. Unless, that is, you let eBay know that you got hosed.

You can get a refund on your final value fee if you report the deadbeat bidder to eBay. The proper procedure is to file a Non-Paying Bidder Alert between 7 and 45 days after the end of the auction. You file the alert by going to the Site Map page and clicking the Request Final Value Fee Credit link. This page gives you all the instructions you need for dealing with bad bidders; follow these instructions to file the Non-Paying Bidder Alert.

After a Non-Paying Bidder Alert is filed, you have to wait another 10 days before you can request a refund of your final value fee. Again, you have to request the refund; go to the Site Map page and click the Final Value Fee Request link. Follow the instructions there to receive your credit; eBay generally issues a credit to your account within 48 hours.



Note that eBay doesn't refund insertion fees, even if you have a deadbeat bidder. You can, however, re-list your item (as described in Secret #409) and eBay won't charge you a second insertion fee.

#411: Find Out More about Specific Buyers or Sellers

How do you know if you're dealing with a reputable seller—or if a bidder is a potential deadbeat? The best way to uncover who you're dealing with is to check their reputation in eBay's feedback system. Next to every buyer and seller's name on eBay is a number and (more often than not) a colored star. These numbers and stars represent that user's feedback rating; the higher the feedback rating, the more satisfactory auctions that user has completed.

It's also useful to read the feedback comments left by other users. You can do this by clicking the user's feedback number; this displays that user's Feedback Profile, with all individual comments listed.

If you're suspicious about someone bidding in one of your auctions or if you can't contact a winning bidder via normal e-mail, you can ask eBay for more complete contact information. Just click the Search link on the eBay Navigation bar to go to the main Search page; click the Find Members button to open the Find Members page. Scroll down to the Contact Info section, enter the user's ID and the item number of the auction, and click Submit. eBay will display the user's contact information and ID history.

note

You can only request user information for users bidding in a current auction or for sellers of auctions in which you're currently bidding.

#412: Block Bidders from Your Auctions

If you think you have a deadbeat bidding in one of your auctions, you can block that user from bidding in *any* of your auctions. Go to the Site Map page and click the Blocked Bidder/Buyer List link. When the Bidder/Buyer Management page appears, scroll to the Blocked Bidder/Buyer List section and click Continue. When the Blocked Bidder/Buyer List page appears, add the buyer's user name to the list; separate multiple names with commas. Click the Submit button and the buyer is then blocked from bidding in your current and future auctions, no questions asked.

#413: Use Selling Manager to Help You Manage Your Auctions

When you're running a lot of auctions every week, it gets tough keeping track of all that activity—especially who's won what and paid when. The end-of-auction process is easier to manage if you use eBay's Selling Manager tool,

which helps you keep track of all that post-auction activity, send out e-mails to all your auction winners, and even print invoices and mailing labels.

eBay Selling Manager costs \$4.99 per month; you can sign up at pages.ebay.com/selling_manager/. When you subscribe to Selling Manager, the Selling tab of your My eBay page turns into a Selling Manager tab with all your current and closed auctions listed (as shown in Figure 16-9). Click any link to see a finer cut of your activity—to view your active listings, for example, or those listings that are paid and ready to ship.

Summary		
Last updated on Sep-29-03 08 10:05 PDT		
Quick Stats	GMS	# of listings
Pending Listings	\$0.00	0
Starting within the next hour	0	0
Starting today	0	0
Active Listings	\$0.00	0
Closing within the next hour	0	0
Closing today	0	0
Sold Listings	\$0.00	0
Awaiting payment	0	0
Paid and ready to ship	0	0
Paid and waiting for feedback	0	0
Paid and shipped	0	0

* Updates every 10 mins.

Tip:

 **Sell more** with attractive listing templates using Turbo Lister!

[Download Now!](#) 

Figure 16-9: eBay Selling Manager helps you keep track of all your selling activity.

When you go to any of the Sold Listings pages, Selling Manager lists all your closed auctions with the customer status indicated by a series of icons. Open any listing to mark the item paid or shipped, or to send post-auction e-mail to the buyer. It's a great way to handle all that repetitive post-auction activity—and to communicate with your winning bidders.



For higher-volume sellers, eBay offers a more fully featured tool called *Selling Manager Pro*. This tool lets you manage multiple auctions in bulk and provides automated end-of-auction e-mails. The price is \$15.99 per month.

#414: Make Things Easier with Third-Party Auction Management Tools

If you're a really high-volume seller, eBay's Selling Manager tools might not be powerful enough for you. When it comes to creating truly customized item listings, hosting lots of image files, and managing all post-auction communication and operations, turn to one of several third-party auction management sites. These sites are aimed at professional eBay sellers and offer a variety of auction-management tools—for a price.

What services are we talking about? Here's a short list of common tools:

- ◆ Auction research
- ◆ Inventory management
- ◆ Image hosting
- ◆ HTML-based listing themes
- ◆ Bulk listing creation
- ◆ End-of-auction e-mail
- ◆ Auction galleries
- ◆ Checkout
- ◆ Bulk feedback posting
- ◆ Retail storefront

Different sites offer different packages of tools at different prices, so it pays to shop around before you sign up. See Table 16-4 for a list of some of the most popular third-party sites.

Table 16-4: Auction Management Sites

Site	URL	Pricing
Ándale	www.andale.com	"Quick Packs" from \$10.95 a month (40 listings); individual services priced separately
Auction Hawk	www.auctionhawk.com	From \$12.99 a month
AuctionHelper	www.auctionhelper.com	1.95 percent of sales (min. \$0.15, max. \$1.25), plus \$0.02 per transaction; \$10 min. monthly fee
Auctionworks	www.auctionworks.com	2 percent of sales (min. \$0.10, max. \$3.00); \$14.95 minimum monthly fee
Auctiva	www.auctiva.com	From \$9.95 a month
ChannelAdvisor	www.channeladvisor.com	From \$29.95 a month
HammerTap	www.hammertap.com	A la carte pricing for individual tools
SpareDollar	www.sparedollar.com	\$4.95 a month
Vendio	www.vendio.com	Various plans from \$12.95 a month plus combination of listing and final value fees

#415: Use eBay to Sell Your Car

You probably think of eBay as a place to sell small stuff—CDs, collectibles, clothing, and the like. But what about selling something bigger—like your car?

Well, eBay offers a special site just for the trading of used and collectible automobiles. eBay Motors (pages.ebay.com/ebaymotors/) offers categories for all manner of vehicles, from cars to motorcycles to campers to aircrafts. If it moves, you can sell it—or buy it—on eBay Motors.

eBay Motors differs from the regular eBay site in that it's fine-tuned for automotive sales. Item listings include standard automotive information, including mileage, engine type/size, number of doors, type of transmission, title status, included options, and the car's vehicle identification number (VIN).

The site also provides many useful (optional) services to automotive buyers. These include limited and extended warranties, purchase insurance, vehicle inspection, payment protection, auto insurance, vehicle shipping, and a lemon check via the Carfax service. Listing fees are a little higher here than on the regular eBay site; sellers pay a flat \$40 to list most vehicles plus a flat \$40 final value fee—no percentages.

#416: Show Yourself Off with an About Me Page

If you're a frequent eBay seller, you may want to promote yourself a little to potential bidders. eBay lets you do this by creating a personalized About Me Web page that can be viewed when a user clicks on the Me icon next to your eBay user ID. This page can include all sorts of information about yourself, including your picture, your favorite Web links, a list of your most recent feedback comments, and all your current eBay auctions.

To create your About Me page, click the Services link on the eBay Navigation bar and then click the About Me link. Follow the onscreen instructions to select a page style (one-, two-, or three-column) and template, and to enter your personal information. It's as easy as filling out a few Web forms; there's no HTML coding necessary.

#417: Add an eBay Toolbar to Your Browser

Our last eBay secret is ideal for frequent bidders. The eBay Toolbar, shown in Figure 16-10, installs in your Web browser and lets you track auctions you've bid on or are on your watch list. It also lets you search auction listings from the toolbar, go directly to your My eBay page, and view top picks in selected categories. Go to pages.ebay.com/ebay_toolbar/ to download and install the software. (The toolbar works on Windows only; Netscape 4.x or IE 5.0 or higher are required.)



Figure 16-10: Track your bidding with the eBay Toolbar.

Summary

That concludes our look at eBay, the Internet's largest online auction site. eBay has a lot of secrets; knowing them can give you a real competitive edge over other buyers and sellers. Use this power wisely.

And when you're bidding on an eBay auction, remember one last bonus secret. Don't spend more than you really want to pay, or more than what an item is worth. It's easy—way too easy—to get caught up in an eBay bidding frenzy and end up paying a lot more than you should. Go into every auction knowing what the item is worth to you and set that amount as your maximum bid. Don't bid over that amount, no matter what. If the bidding goes higher, just bow out gracefully; bidding to win at any cost will end up costing you a lot!

Amazon.com Secrets



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In the ever-growing world of online shopping, there are a lot of big e-tailing sites, but there's only one true giant: Amazon.com. Amazon offers millions of items for sale in most major product categories; in 2002 the company sold almost \$4 billion worth of merchandise.

Amazon got its start selling books. In fact, in its early days the site billed itself as the "World's Largest Bookstore." That was a bit disingenuous, as Amazon didn't (and doesn't) physically stock all the books listed on its site. And can a company that doesn't have a bricks-and-mortar presence accurately call itself a bookstore? Whatever the case, Amazon quickly became (along with Barnes & Noble and Borders) one of the top three booksellers in the United States and most definitely the largest Internet-based bookseller.

If all you know Amazon for is books, you're in for a real treat. That's because today Amazon is more than a bookstore. (Their new slogan is "Earth's Biggest Selection.") The site offers merchandise in dozens of different stores and aims to be your one-stop-shop for all your online purchases. That it can be—plus you can use the site for all manner of non-shopping activities, as you'll learn in this chapter.

Amazon.com at a Glance

If you've ever shopped at Amazon before, the site remembers you—and creates your own personal start page, like the one in Figure 17-1. This page features products that Amazon thinks you'll be interested in, based on your past purchases. (Secret #435 reveals how you can influence these recommendations.)

Along the top of every Amazon page is the navigational bar, a series of tabs that takes you directly to key sections of the site. Above the navigational bar are links to important account functions, including your shopping cart and wish list.

The screenshot shows a personalized Amazon start page for Michael Miller. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links like 'VIEW CART', 'WISH LIST', 'YOUR ACCOUNT', 'HELP', and 'SEE MORE STORES'. Below the navigation is a banner for 'Michael's Gold' stores. The main content area includes a search bar, a promotional offer for the Amazon.com Visa® Card, and a 'Wish List' section. On the left, there's a 'SEARCH' box, a 'WEB SEARCH' box powered by Google, and a 'BROWSE' section with links to 'Featured Stores' (Sporting Goods, Apparel & Accessories, Office Products), 'Books, Music, DVD' (Books, DVD, Magazine Subscriptions, Music, Video), and 'INTERNATIONAL' links. The right side features a 'NEW FOR YOU' section with a calendar icon showing '29', a 'Your Message Center' with 5 new messages, a 'Your Shopping Cart' with 0 items, and a 'Your New Releases' section. A central column displays recommendations for 'Clark Kent: The Early Years' and 'Ella Fitzgerald Sings The Cole Porter Songbook'.

Figure 17-1: Your personal Amazon start page.

On the left side of the page you'll find Amazon's search box, which you can use to search for specific products. Also on the left are links to Amazon's individual stores for specific product categories. These stores include:

- ◆ Apparel & Accessories
- ◆ Arts & Hobbies
- ◆ Audio & Video
- ◆ Baby
- ◆ Books
- ◆ Camera & Photo
- ◆ Car Parts & Accessories
- ◆ Cell Phones & Service
- ◆ Computer & Video Games
- ◆ Computers
- ◆ DVD
- ◆ Electronics
- ◆ Health & Beauty
- ◆ Home & Garden
- ◆ Industrial Supplies
- ◆ Kids & Baby Clothing
- ◆ Kitchen & Housewares
- ◆ Magazine Subscriptions
- ◆ Medical Supplies
- ◆ Music
- ◆ Office Products
- ◆ Outdoor Living
- ◆ Pet Toys & Supplies
- ◆ Scientific Supplies
- ◆ Shoes
- ◆ Software
- ◆ Sporting Goods
- ◆ Tools & Hardware
- ◆ Toys & Games
- ◆ Video

Click a link to browse all the merchandise in a store, or use the search box to search for specific merchandise.

You should also become familiar with two other pages:

- ◆ Click the See More Stores tab on the navigation bar to view a list of all available Amazon stores; this is often the quickest way to navigate from one store to another.
- ◆ The Friends & Favorites page (go to Your Store ⇔ Friends & Favorites) offers a collection of useful personal services, including discussion boards and gift registries.



#418: When You Shop at Amazon, You're Not Always Buying from Amazon

From the looks of things, Amazon must be one of the largest and most diverse retailers on the face of the planet. Just look at all that stuff Amazon has for sale—everything from compact discs to compact cars! But just because an item is for sale on the Amazon site doesn't mean that it's actually Amazon that's doing the selling. Read on to learn more about where the stuff you buy on Amazon actually comes from.

Distributors and Manufacturers

First off, even when Amazon is the actual retailer of a product, the company doesn't always physically possess the item you want to order. While Amazon does maintain several large warehouses across the United States, it also relies on a network of third-party distributors to stock many of the items it offers for sale. So when you order a particular book title, for example, that book is just as likely to come from the warehouse of distributor partner Ingram (a large book wholesaler) as it is to come from Amazon's own warehouse.

In other instances, Amazon never takes possession of merchandise from the manufacturer. Your order is forwarded from Amazon's site directly to the manufacturer; your order is then fulfilled by the manufacturer without ever hitting Amazon's distribution center.

This reliance on third parties sometimes results in odd shipping scenarios. You might order three different books, expecting them to ship in a single box, but then find that your order is shipped in three different boxes sent from three different locations. All the boxes might say Amazon on them, and they all might contain Amazon invoices. (That's because Amazon's partners work hard to make you think that it's actually Amazon that's fulfilling your order.) But if you look closely, you'll see that the senders' addresses are all different, and that (sometimes) the invoices are subtly different from those contained in a real Amazon shipment. (For example, some Amazon partners don't include shipment totals on their invoices; Amazon itself always does.)

There's nothing wrong with this, per se, other than being a little confusing. That's because Amazon treats the multiple shipments as a single order for the purposes of calculating your shipping costs. If it costs more to break up a shipment into multiple components from multiple locations (which it almost certainly does), Amazon absorbs the cost.

note

Don't confuse this multiple-location shipping with your option of either combining items into a single shipment (to reduce shipping costs) or splitting items into multiple shipments (to get faster delivery), which is discussed in Secret #427.

Partner Retailers

Another way that Amazon can offer more items for sale is by partnering with large bricks-and-mortar retailers to offer their products online. For example, Amazon partners with toy retailer Toys R Us; this lets Amazon sell toys on its Web site and also provides Toys R Us with a very efficient online sales channel. In most of these partnerships, Amazon handles all the online selling and marketing, while the bricks-and-mortar partner handles the inventory and fulfillment.

Who all does Amazon partner with? Table 17-1 offers a list of the major partnerships:

Table 17-1: Amazon's Retail Partners

Partner	Product
Borders	Books
Marshall Field's	General merchandise
Office Depot	Office supplies and electronics
Target	General merchandise
Toys R Us	Toys

insider insight

Amazon also partners with Segway to offer its Human Transporter motorized scooter gizmo.

Amazon Merchants

There's another category of Amazon partner that's a few steps below that of Target or Toys R Us. These are smaller retailers, called Amazon Merchants, which offer less-common items to Amazon customers. Products offered by these merchants often pop up in the More Buying Choices section of a product listing page, enabling Amazon to offer merchandise that wouldn't otherwise be available to its customers.

When you buy from an Amazon Merchant, your order is taken and processed by Amazon, the same as any other order, and is then sent along to the merchant. The individual merchant is then responsible for shipping the item to you. (And if you have any problems, you have to deal directly with the Amazon Merchant—not with Amazon.)

Amazon's biggest merchants are known as zShops; visit the zShop page (www.amazon.com/zshops/) to learn more.

#419: Pick Up a Bargain on Used Merchandise

If Amazon doesn't have an item in stock, it's possible that you may be able to locate that item on the used market. Amazon facilitates this process by linking to used copies for sale on its product listing pages. If you see a Buy Used link on a product listing page, some seller somewhere has a used copy to sell; click the link to find out more and order the item. Any used item you purchase is added to your standard Amazon Shopping Cart, and you check out and pay as you would normally. The difference is that the item is shipped directly from the independent seller, not from Amazon proper.

It's important to know that some of the sellers offering used items are not traditional retailers; most of these sellers are actually individuals selling used or collectible items out of their garages. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, especially if you're hunting for rare or out-of-print items, such as vintage books. If it's not available through traditional retailing channels, why not buy a used copy from an individual—especially when Amazon will handle the entire process? And even if a new item is in stock, you can often save a few bucks by buying used instead.



You can also use the Amazon Marketplace to sell your own used items. See Secret #447 for more details.

#420: Shop for Closeouts at Amazon's Outlet Store

Amazon offers a special store just for closeout and remaindered merchandise. The Amazon Outlet (go to See More Stores ⇨ Outlet) offers clearance items in all major categories, from apparel to toys and games. There are even sub-stores offering used and factory-reconditioned products. This little-known store offers some of the best bargains on all of Amazon—check it out!

#421: Buy a Product with a Single Click

Amazon goes out of its way to make it easy for you to spend your money. One of the site's coolest features is 1-Click ordering, where you can order an item with the click of a single button.

Normally when you order an item, it's placed in your Amazon Shopping cart. You then have to manually go through Amazon's Checkout when you're ready to finalize your order. With 1-Click ordering, however, all you have to do is click the 1-Click button shown in Figure 17-2, and the item you're looking at will be automatically billed to your default credit card and shipped to your designated shipping address. It's a great tool for the too-frequent purchaser.

insider insight

All items ordered via 1-Click within the same 90-minute period are consolidated, based on availability, into a single order. So if you order several items all at once, they'll be combined into a single order to reduce your shipping costs.



Figure 17-2: Amazon's 1-Click ordering button.

To use 1-Click ordering, you first have to activate it and enter some basic information. To do this, click the Your Account button at the top of any Amazon page, scroll to the Personal Information section, and click View or Change 1-Click Settings. When the next page appears, verify your shipping address and payment information and then turn on the 1-Click status.

insider insight

Here's a bonus secret. You can send gifts via 1-Click by adding another address ahead of time (for the gift recipient) on the 1-Click settings page. You'll then have this second ship-to option whenever you place a 1-Click order.

#422: You Don't Have to Pay by Credit Card

Most people think that a credit card is mandatory when you're purchasing online. While it's certainly the most convenient way to pay, it's not the *only* way to pay—at least at Amazon. In addition to the standard method of entering your credit card information online, Amazon lets you call in your credit card number over the phone (great if you're concerned about online credit card fraud) or pay by check or money order. These options are all available on every order form when you check out. Select the desired payment option and then follow the onscreen instructions to finalize your payment.

#423: Pick Up Your Order in Person

If you order certain items, you don't have to wait for the item to be delivered—you can drive right over and pick it up. Amazon has partnered with Borders,

Circuit City, and Office Depot to make thousands of books, CDs, DVDs, electronics, office products, and computer software available for pickup at thousands of stores across the United States.

Look for the Available for In-Store Pickup Now designation on the right side of the product listing page; if it's there, then you can pick up the item at a store near you—assuming that store is near you, of course, and that they have the item in stock. Enter your zip code in the More Buying Choices box to see which store has the item in stock. After you place your order, you should receive an e-mail from the retailer letting you know that the item is ready for pickup.



You can browse through all the items offered for pickup on the In-Store Pickup page. Just go to See More Stores ⇨ In-Store Pickup.

When you go to pick up your order, you'll need to take with you a printout of the confirmation e-mail, a proper photo ID (a driver's license is fine), and the credit card you used to make the purchase. Forget any of these items, and the store won't let you have what you ordered!



#424: Send a Gift—and Have It Wrapped in Advance

Amazon has this gift-giving business down pat. You can specify anything you order as a gift, have it shipped to a different address than yours, include a gift card, and even have the item gift-wrapped. Amazon is also smart enough not to include the price on the special invoice it encloses with all gift orders—so the recipient won't know how much you spent on them!

To designate an item as a gift purchase, go to your Shopping Cart and check the Add Gift-Wrap/Note box for that item. You'll then have the option of shipping to another address and adding a personal note on a gift card.

Gift wrap and cards cost \$3.49 for a small item, \$4.49 for a medium item, or \$4.99 for a large item (CDs cost just \$2.99.). Not all items are available for gift wrap, in particular, items from some of Amazon's retail partners.

Of course, you can also send someone an Amazon gift certificate and let them choose their own gift. Gift certificates are available in any amount from \$5 to \$5,000 and can be sent either via e-mail or snail mail. Go to See More Stores ⇨ Gift Certificates for more details.



A cool thing to do is to send someone an electronic greeting card (e-card) with a gift certificate attached. Go to Your Store ⇨ Friends & Favorites and click the Free e-Cards link to make it so.

#425: Don't Know What to Buy Someone? Use Amazon's Gift Wizard

If you're like me, you have one or more friends or family members that are just plain difficult to buy for. When you have no idea what to give Uncle Fred or Cousin Abby for Christmas, let Amazon figure out what they'll like by using Amazon's Gift Wizard.

You access the Gift Wizard, shown in Figure 17-3, by going to See More Stores ↗ Gifts Store and then clicking the By Recipient link. You start by telling the wizard if the gift recipient is a male, female, or a kid and then continue choosing more detailed options. At the end of the process you'll have a short list of recommended items; click the one you want and follow the steps in Secret #424 to send the gift on its way.



Figure 17-3: Use the Gift Wizard to pick a perfect gift.

#426: Check on Your Amazon Orders

Want to know the status of any order you've placed with Amazon? Then click the Your Account link at the top of the Amazon home page to go to the Your Account page. Your most recent orders will be listed at the top of the page; to view other orders, pull down the View By Order list and select Open and Recently Shipped Orders, Orders Placed in the Last 6 Months, or Complete Order History Sorted by Year.

In addition, Amazon sends you an e-mail notification when every order is shipped. Included in this e-mail are basic shipping information and a tracking number. Follow the links in the e-mail to track the item with the designated delivery service.



#427: Combine Your Orders for Free Shipping—or Separate Them for Faster Delivery

When you order more than one item, you can choose to group all the items into a single shipment, which reduces your shipping charges, or to have the items split into multiple shipments, which costs more but might get your items to you faster. Which option you choose should depend on which items are actually in stock and how much shipping you're willing to pay.

If all the items are in stock (designated as shipping in 24 hours, or shipping in 2-3 days), you're best off choosing the Group My Items Into as Few Shipments as Possible option. While this doesn't mean you'll actually receive the items in a single box (see Secret #418), it does mean that Amazon will treat your order as a single shipment and charge you a single combined shipping charge. In fact, if your order runs \$25 or more of qualifying products, you're eligible for free Super Saving Shipping—assuming you've chosen this group shipping option.

On the other hand, if Amazon indicates that one or more items is out of stock, or if you're pre-ordering an item that's not yet available, choosing the Group My Items options will guarantee that you won't get your order until all the items are available. This is a huge pain, especially if one item is in stock and another won't be available for a month or two. That in-stock item stays in stock, and it won't be shipped to you until the other item becomes available. It is better in this situation to choose the I Want My Items Faster option.

The only problem with the I Want My Items Faster option—and it's what probably causes most people to choose the Group My Items option—is that it can dramatically increase your shipping costs. That's because Amazon assumes two (or more) shipments and charges you accordingly. It also disqualifies you from any free shipping offers. But if you're placing a big order and you want some of it now (even if not all of it is available), the I Want My Items Faster option is the one you want.

There is another option, of course—place two or more separate orders. Let's say you're ordering three books, two of which are available now and the third is set to be published in 60 days. Place one order for the two in-stock books and select the Group My Items option; you'll get these books right away at the lowest possible shipping cost (even free, if they meet the minimum). Then place a second

order (technically a pre-order) for the yet-to-be released book so that it won't hold up the shipment of the other items.



#428: Shop at Amazon from Your Cell Phone

If you have an Internet-enabled cell phone, you can shop at Amazon from just about anywhere using the Amazon Anywhere service. That's not to say that you can phone in your Amazon order; Amazon adamantly doesn't accept phone orders. But you *can* direct your cell phone's Web browser to the Amazon Anywhere site and place your order over the wireless Internet. To do so, visit www.amazon.com/phone/.

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One use of Amazon Anywhere is to compare prices when you're out shopping at a bricks-and-mortar retailer.



#429: Fine-Tune Your Product Searches from the Advanced Search Page

Finding a product on Amazon is as simple as using the search box found on the left side of most Amazon pages. You'll probably want to pull down the category list to select a specific product category and then enter one or more keywords into the search box. Click the Go! button and Amazon returns a list of products that match your query.

This works fine most of the time, but if the number of search results is too overwhelming, you can fine-tune your search using advanced search pages. Amazon offers these advanced search pages for many of its product categories—and each advanced search page is different, using parameters unique to a particular type of product. (If there's an advanced search page available, you'll find an Advanced Search, More Search Options, or similar link under the main search box.)

For example, the Advanced Book Search page, shown in Figure 17-4, lets you narrow your search by author, title, subject, ISBN number, publisher, format (hardcover or softcover), reader age, language, or publication date. The Classical & Opera Search page lets you narrow your CD search by title, composer, performer, conductor, ensemble, label name, or catalog number.

Search Books

Fill in **at least** one field. Fill in more to narrow your search. Need more flexibility? Try [Power Search](#). Need help? Go to [search tips](#).

Author:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="button" value="Search Now"/>
Title:	<input type="text"/>	
Subject:	<input type="text"/>	
ISBN:	<input type="text"/>	
Publisher:	<input type="text"/>	

Refine your search (optional):

Used Only:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Format:	<input type="text" value="All formats"/> <input type="button" value="▼"/>
Reader age:	<input type="text" value="All ages"/> <input type="button" value="▼"/>
Language:	<input type="text" value="All languages"/> <input type="button" value="▼"/>
Publication date:	<input type="text" value="All dates"/> <input type="button" value="▼"/> <input type="text" value="Clear this form to start over with blank fields."/> (e.g. 1999)
Sort results by:	<input type="text" value="Featured Items"/> <input type="button" value="▼"/>

Figure 17-4: Amazon's Advanced Book Search page.

Use these pages when a simple keyword search returns too many results.



#430: Turbocharge Your Book Searches with Power Search Operators

Amazon started out as an online bookseller, and it still offers many features unique to that particular market. One of the coolest features is its Power Search, which lets you use advanced search operators to really focus your search for particular books.

You use Power Search by going to the Advanced Book Search page and scrolling down to the Power Search section at the bottom of the page. You enter the Power Search operator into the form, followed by a variable (no space), followed by your normal keyword(s), like this: *operator:variable*. For example, if you want to search for all books published by Wiley Publishing, use the *publisher*: operator like this: *publisher:wiley*.

What Power Search operators are available? Table 17-2 provides a list:

Table 17-2: Amazon Power Search Operators

Operator	Description
author	Searches for all books by a particular author
ISBN	Searches for all books by ISBN code (should return the same results as the ASIN operator)
keyword	Searches for all books where the title or author contains designated keywords
language	Searches for books written in a specific language

Operator	Description
pubdate	Searches for books published before, during, or after a particular date, using the <i>before</i> , <i>during</i> , or <i>after</i> syntax
publisher	Searches for books published by a specific publisher
subject	Searches for books about a specific topic
title	Searches for books with specific words in the title

You can also use the Boolean AND, OR, and NOT operators to create complex queries. Going back to our previous example, if you want to narrow this search down to Wiley's computer books, use the Boolean AND operator and the *subject*: Power Search operator, like this: *publisher:wiley AND subject:computers*. If you also want to exclude any books published by me, Michael Miller, enter *publisher:wiley AND subject:computers NOT author:miller*. As you can see, it's relatively easy to create very targeted queries for specific types of books.



#431: Sort Your Search Results

This is a simple one, but one that most users don't know about. By default, the results of an Amazon product search are displayed with featured items first, and then sorted by sales level. You can change how the results are sorted by pulling down the Sort By list above the first listing and selecting one of these options:

- ◆ Featured items
- ◆ Bestselling
- ◆ Average customer review
- ◆ Price (lowest to highest)
- ◆ Price (highest to lowest)
- ◆ Publication date
- ◆ Alphabetical (A to Z)
- ◆ Alphabetical (Z to A)

For example, if you want to see the highest-rated products first, choose the Average Customer Review option. If you want to see the lowest-priced products first, choose the Price: Low to High option.



#432: Jump Directly To Any Product Listing

Amazon assigns every product it offers a unique number, called an Amazon Standard Item Number (ASIN). If you know a product's ASIN, it's easy to jump directly to that item's product listing page. Just enter the ASIN into Amazon's search box, and instead of being served up a page full of search results, Amazon will display the product-listing page associated with that ASIN.

How do you find a product's ASIN? If you're looking for a book, the ASIN is the same as the book's International Standard Book Number (ISBN), which is located above the bar code, typically on the book's back cover or inside flap. For other products, well, you're pretty much out of luck. That's because the ASIN doesn't relate at all to a product's Universal Product Code (UPC), which is used to create a product's bar code. So you'll have to look up the ASIN via a traditional Amazon product search; the ASIN is listed in the Product Details section of a product listing page, as shown in Figure 17-5.

Product Details

- **Paperback:** 1152 pages ; Dimensions (in inches): 1.88 x 9.18 x 7.40
- **Publisher:** John Wiley & Sons; Book and CD-ROM edition (August 1, 2002)
- **ISBN:** 0764549316
- **Average Customer Review:** ★★★★☆ Based on 17 reviews. [Write a review.](#)
- **Amazon.com Sales Rank:** 7,421

Figure 17-5: The ASIN displayed in a listing's Product Details.

Once you know the ASIN, you access the product listing page, as the ASIN is used to create the page's URL. Just enter the following URL, with the actual ASIN replacing the *number*: www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/number/. So, for example, if the ASIN is 123456789, you'd enter www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/123456789/.

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While it's true that a product's ASIN is embedded in the URL for its product page, the URL that you see in your browser is actually a lot longer than is necessary. That's because Amazon adds various tracking information to all its URLs, essentially creating custom URLs for every visit of every user. You can shorten any URL (good if you want to copy it for other users) by deleting all the data after the ASIN number. So if the URL reads www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/123456789/othernumbers, just delete the *othernumbers* and use the www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/123456789/ URL.



#433: If You Can't Find What You Want, Try a Foreign Amazon Site

The U.S. Amazon site (www.amazon.com) isn't the only one the company runs. Amazon also runs a number of foreign sites, offering goods for sale in other countries. Sometimes these country-specific sites offer different merchandise than what's available in the United States—even though they'll still ship to you here in the states. Searching one of these foreign sites is a particularly good way to find foreign editions of books and CDs not generally available in the United States.

Table 17-3 lists the URLs for all the country-specific sites that Amazon runs.

Table 17-3: Amazon's Foreign Sites

Country	URL
Canada	www.amazon.ca
France	www.amazon.fr
Germany	www.amazon.de
Japan	www.amazon.co.jp
United Kingdom	www.amazon.co.uk



#434: Find Out What Other Users Think—and Write Your Own Reviews, Also

One of the great things about Amazon is that it has become a real community of involved users. This is particularly evident in the reviews that users write about individual products. It's like having a group of amateur critics at your disposal; you can find out how much (or how little) users just like you like a particular product and why. Smart shoppers use these third-party opinions to help determine which products to buy.

And some of these reviews are quite good, particularly those of books, music, and movies. The most prolific reviewers—dubbed *Top Reviewers* by Amazon, and highlighted accordingly—offer near-professional insights; their opinions are surprisingly reliable.

To write your own review of a product, scroll down the page to the All Customer Reviews section and click the Write an Online Review link. Keep your review short (1,000 words or less) and to the point, and remember to add a 1 to 5 star rating. After you click the Save button, your review will itself be reviewed by Amazon, and then (after a week to 10 days) appear in the reviews section for that product.



#435: Fine-Tune the Products That Amazon Recommends to You

Amazon works hard to personalize your shopping experience. One of the ways it does this is to create your own personal store—actually, a page that offers individual recommendations for future purchases. Amazon calls this feature Your Store; in reality, the store carries your own name (mine is called Michael's Store). You access your store from the Your Store tab on the Amazon.com navigation bar.

A big part of the Your Store page is the list of products that Amazon recommends. (This list of recommendations also pops up when you first access the Amazon site, and in several other site activities.) If you're like me, you'll find that this list of recommendations is a mix of targeted picks and items that I'd never like in a million years.

How can this be? Amazon bases its recommendations on items that you purchase and then compares them to items purchased by other users. If you've purchased one Vic Damone CD, Amazon will recommend another one to you. If other people who purchase Vic Damone CDs also purchase CDs by Jack Jones, you'll find Jack Jones CDs on your recommendation list.

While this works in theory, the theory breaks down when you either (a) purchase an item as a gift for someone else or (b) purchase something that you end up not liking. That's because Amazon assumes everything you purchase is for yourself and that you like everything you purchase. It also has no way of knowing other stuff that you like or other items you purchase elsewhere.

What you want to do, then, is tell Amazon more about what you like—and what you don't. You do this by going to the Your Store page and clicking the Improve Your Recommendations link. This opens the Improve Your Recommendations page, shown in Figure 17-6.

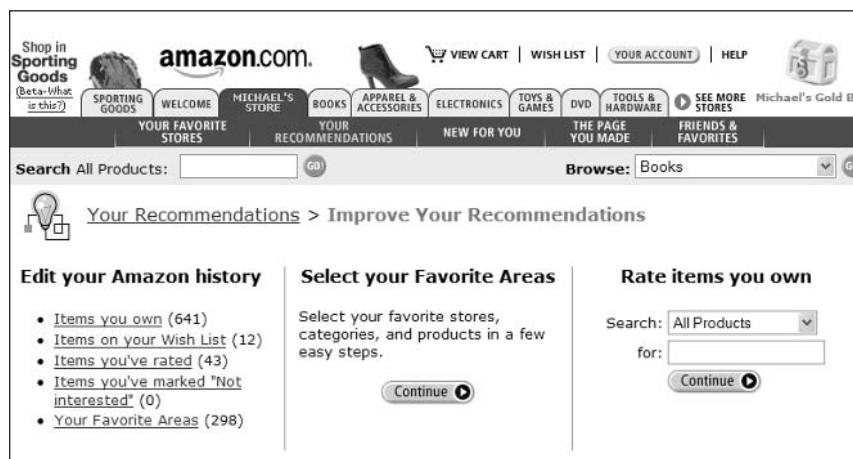


Figure 17-6: Improving Amazon's recommendations.

The first thing to do is to rate those items you've purchased from Amazon. You do this by clicking any of the links in the Edit Your Amazon History section. For every item you've purchased, you can tell Amazon whether you own it or if it was purchased as a gift, give it a rating of from 1 to 5 stars, and select whether the item should be used to make recommendations.

Next, you can tell Amazon about other items you own that you didn't purchase on Amazon. You do this in the Rate Items You Own section; you'll need to search on an item-by-item basis, then you can tell Amazon you own it and enter a rating. You can also tell Amazon what your favorite categories and products are in the Select Your Favorite Areas section.

Remember: the more information you enter, the better Amazon's future recommendations will be.

#436: Recommend Items to Other Users

Find a product that you really like—and want to recommend it to other users? Or, perhaps, you think a particular product isn't that great, and you want to recommend an alternative. Then add your own product recommendation to any product listing page. Just go to the What's Your Advice? section on any product listing page, shown in Figure 17-7, and enter a product into the I Recommend box. (Make sure you select whether your recommendation is in addition to the current product, or instead of it.) Your recommendation will be added to the Top Customer Recommendations section on the product listing page.

The screenshot shows a form titled "What's Your Advice?" with the following text: "Is there an item you'd recommend instead of or in addition to this one? Let the world know! Enter the item's ASIN ([what's an ASIN?](#)) in the box below, select advice type, then click Submit." Below the text is a text input field labeled "I recommend:

Listmania Lists

Are you a lists freak? Do you constantly organize your life into top ten lists? Can you quickly name your favorite albums—or books, or movies?

If you're into lists, then Amazon provides the perfect forum for your obsession. (Excuse me—your *interests*.) You can create Listmania Lists about any topic you can think of; Amazon displays these lists alongside products that are included in the list. So, for example, if you create a list of your top ten Westerns and include the film *The Magnificent Seven*, your list might be displayed on the product page for *The Magnificent Seven* DVD.

To create a Listmania List, go to Your Store → Friends & Favorites and then click the Add a Listmania List link. Give your list a name, enter your qualifications (if any—"fan" is as good as any), and then select up to 25 products. Amazon will create the list, automatically inserting links to pictures of the products you selected. Once your list is completed, it will be listed on your About You page.

So You'd Like To... Guides

Similar are Amazon's guides, which are short tutorials to various subjects, also written by Amazon users. If you fancy yourself an expert on a given topic, you

can create your own guide to the topic, which is then listed on product pages for those products listed within the guide. For example, if you wrote a guide about how to use Amazon and mentioned this book, your guide would be listed on this book's product page.

To create a guide, go to Your Store ⇨ Friends & Favorites and then click the Write a So You'd Like to... Guide link. Enter a title for your guide and then start writing. Each guide has to mention at least three products; you link to these products from within the guide by using the following code: <ASIN: *number*>, replacing *number* with the product's ASIN code. Once your guide is completed, it will be listed on your About You page.



#438: Create an Online Wish List or Gift Registry

Here's a cool feature: if a big birthday or holiday is coming up, Amazon lets you create a Wish List of items you want. Your friends and family can then browse your Wish List and order any item directly. It's a great way to ensure you'll get at least some of what you really want—and it takes the guesswork out of them shopping for you, as well.

You create your Wish List one item at a time. Just open any product listing page and click the Add to My Wish List button. To edit your Wish List and send the list to potential gift-givers (via e-mail), click the Wish List link at the top of any Amazon page. You can return to your Wish List at any time to see what items have been purchased for you or to update the list manually.

Along the same lines, Amazon offers Baby Registries (in conjunction with Babies R Us) and Wedding Registries. Find out more by going to Your Store ⇨ Friends & Favorites and then clicking either the Baby Registry or Wedding Registry link.



#439: Create a Personal About You Page

If you want people to know a little more about you, Amazon lets you create your own personal About You Web page on the Amazon site. You can use this page to display a short bio, picture, and your Wish List. When you create an Amazon list, guide, or Wish List (see Secrets #437 and #438), Amazon will include a link to your About You page.

To create an About You page, like the one in Figure 17-8, select the Your Store tab in the Amazon navigation bar and then click the Your About You Area link. When the next page appears, click Edit About You to add or change your personal information. Click the appropriate links in the About You section (at the top of the page) to add or edit the information on your page.

The screenshot shows the 'About You' section of an Amazon user profile. On the left, there's a sidebar with a search bar ('SEARCH') and a dropdown menu ('People'). Below it are sections for 'Your Content' (Wish List, Baby Registry, Wedding Registry), 'Gift Helpers' (Free e-Cards, Gift Certificates, Your Reminders), and 'Community Features' (Purchase Circles, Discussion Boards, Top Reviewers, Share the Love). A large 'Your Favorite People' section follows, featuring a placeholder for adding friends and a link to learn more.

About You

Viewable by the public:
Name: Michael Miller
Nickname: mmiller@molehillgroup.com
About me: My name is Michael Miller, and I'm the author of more than 50 books. I write about computers, ...
[see more](#)

[Edit Name](#) [Edit About You](#) [Edit Image](#)

[E-mail this page to a friend](#)

Your Wish List - [See your entire Wish List](#)

North by Northwest DVD ~ Cary Grant
List Price: \$19.98
Buy new: \$14.99
You Save: \$4.99 (25%)
[Add to cart](#) or [Buy with 1-click](#)

Availability: Usually Ships in 1 to 2 business days

[Add to Wish List](#) [Add to Wedding Registry](#)

Rear Window - Collector's Edition DVD ~ James Stewart
 Vertigo - Collector's Edition DVD ~ James Stewart

Figure 17-8: A typical About You page.

#440: Fine-Tune the Alerts That Amazon E-Mails to You

Amazon is one monster promotional machine. Once Amazon has you as a customer, it will milk you for all the future purchases you're worth. While this promotional activity is sometimes helpful (letting you know about new releases by your favorite authors or artists), it can also get just a tad annoying.

Fortunately, Amazon lets you manage the promotional e-mail messages (called Amazon Alerts) that it sends to you. You do this by going to the Your Account page, scrolling down to the E-Mail Notifications section, and clicking the Managing Your Alerts link. Your current alerts will be listed; modify or delete these alerts as appropriate, then click the Update button.

#441: Listen to Music Online

Here's a neat feature of Amazon that not enough users take advantage of: you can use Amazon to sample music from all manner of artists on your own computer. Most CD product listings include track listings of that CD's songs. Many of these tracks come with short (typically under a minute) audio samples of the songs; tracks with samples are underlined and have a music icon, as shown in Figure 17-9. Click a link to launch a music player and listen to the song. It's a great way to hear music before you buy—and expand your musical universe!

Listen to Samples

To hear a song sample, click on the "Listen" icon. Visit our [audio help page](#) for more information.

(1) Listen to all Try our music sampler to hear song samples from this album.

	Music Sampler	Windows Media	RealOne Player
1. Just A Little Lovin'	Listen	Listen	Listen
2. So Much Love	Listen	Listen	Listen
3. Son Of A Preacher Man	Listen	Listen	Listen
4. I Don't Want To Hear It Anymore	Listen	Listen	Listen
5. Don't Forget About Me	Listen	Listen	Listen

Figure 17-9: Listen to sample CD tracks.

#442: Read Books Online

Just as Amazon includes samples from audio CDs, it also includes samples from books—in some cases, complete chapters! That's right, many book product listings include sample text that you can read on your computer screen. Just click the Look Inside This Book link under the cover picture and then browse through the available pages. You'd be surprised at the amount of content you can read for free—without making a single purchase!

#443: Find Out About the Latest Products First

Waiting for the latest release from your favorite singer or author? Or for the latest hit movie to be released on DVD? Amazon can help you learn about all upcoming product releases—and take your order for when the product is available.

Coming Soon Lists

Many Amazon stores include lists of upcoming releases. For example, the Music store includes (at the bottom of the page) short lists of upcoming CDs by date, with a further link to More Hot Future Releases. Click this link to view all future titles by release date; click a product link to read more or pre-order the item for delivery on release.

E-Mail Alerts

Amazon also will let you know when new products you're looking for are released. Go to www.amazon.com/alerts/ and enter information about what products you want to track. Amazon will send you an e-mail alert when new products that match your criteria become available.

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If you're looking for truly innovative products, Amazon's Early Adopters page is for you. This page lists some of the newest and coolest gizmos available today, from the latest computers and home theater equipment to cameras and personal transporters. Go to See More Stores → Early Adopters to check it out.



#444: Shop for New and Used Cars

Okay. Amazon really doesn't sell cars. (Then again, it doesn't actually sell many of the items offered on its site, as you learned in Secret #418.) But it does offer a pretty nice Cars store (go to See More Stores → Cars), courtesy of CarsDirect. You can search for information and pricing on new cars, search over 400,000 used car listings, or list your current car for sale. This store also offers a variety of automatic information and services, including free credit reports and lemon checks. Check it out!



#445: Discover Amazon's Best-Selling Items

As you might expect, Amazon keeps close track of the items it sells. Because everything is computerized, it's able to generate real-time sales rankings for its best-selling merchandise.

Every product listing page includes a Sales Rank number within the Product Details section. (Look back to Figure 17-5 to refresh your memory.) This number tells you how well this item is currently selling in relation to all of the products Amazon has for sale. The smaller the number, the higher the rank.

Note, however, that these numbers only show a snapshot of sales. The top 10,000 sellers are updated *hourly*, so it's possible for something to have a high ranking early in the day and a much lower ranking later. (After the first 10,000 items, the next 100,000 best-selling items are updated daily; all other rankings are updated monthly.)

insider insight

Here's a bonus secret. You can track Amazon's sales rankings over time at the JungleScan Web site (www.junglescan.com). JungleScan lets you create a portfolio of items you'd like to track, and then produces charts that track the items' performance, updated every 24 hours.

Amazon also offers a separate Top Sellers page, accessible from the Top Sellers button on the Amazon navigation bar. This page lists the top sellers in a variety of categories—music, DVD, books, electronics, toys and games, and kitchen and housewares. These top sellers are updated hourly.

#446: Link to Amazon from Your Own Web Site—and Earn Commissions

How would you like to get into some of this e-tailing action without opening your own online store or stocking any products for sale? It's easy; all you have to do is link to Amazon from your Web site. When visitors follow your link over to Amazon and make their purchase there, you'll earn commissions on all items sold.

Amazon encourages this sort of partnership via its Amazon Associates program. Amazon Associates earn money for every item their visitors buy from Amazon—as long as they get to Amazon from a link on the Associate's Web site. The commission rate varies according to volume and other variables, but averages around 5 percent, with a maximum of 15 percent under certain conditions. All you have to do is sign up for the program, put a few links to Amazon on your Web site, and let Amazon do the rest. The money you earn is paid quarterly, either via check, direct deposit to your checking account, or Amazon gift certificate.

You don't have to be an established retail business to become an Amazon Associate—anyone can do it. All you need is your own Web page, and the HTML code to create the Amazon links (which Amazon provides). Many Associates create pages about specific products and then link to Amazon for purchasing. For example, I include a list of the books I've written on my Web site (www.molehillgroup.com/bookstor.htm), and each book links to its Amazon product page; every visitor who clicks through to buy a book earns me a commission. (Yay!)

There are several different ways you can link to Amazon as an Associate. You can link to Amazon generally (typically via a banner ad) or to individual product listing pages (typically via a text or graphic link or button). You can even include a link to the Amazon Shopping Cart, so that visitors can purchase from Amazon directly from your site.

Joining the Amazon Associates program is free; go to associates.amazon.com to learn more and sign up.

#447: Sell Your Own Stuff on Amazon

If you actually have products to sell, Amazon will help you sell them. That's right, you can tap into Amazon's established marketing and sales infrastructure to offer your merchandise to Amazon's millions of customers—and even let Amazon handle all the checkout and payment operations.

Amazon Marketplace

If you have something to sell—even if it's just a used book or CD—the Amazon Marketplace is the place to be. The Marketplace lets individuals and small businesses sell all manner of new and used items; it's particularly well-suited to

selling used books, CDs, videotapes, and DVDs, although you're not limited to just these items.

Marketplace items are listed in the Marketplace store and also as options on normal product listing pages in the More Buying Choices section. Customers place their orders with and pay Amazon, and then Amazon informs you of the sale and transfers payment (less their fees and plus a reimbursement for shipping costs) to you. You ship the item to the customer.

You pay 99 cents to list an item in the Marketplace and then pay Amazon a percentage of the final selling price. (You pay a 6 percent fee for computers, 8 percent for electronics and cameras, and 15 percent for all other items.) Each listing lasts for 60 days.

To learn more or place a listing, click the Marketplace link near the bottom of the Amazon home page.

Pro-Merchants

If you're a high-volume Marketplace seller, you can sign up for a Pro-Merchant subscription. For a \$39.99 per month fee, Amazon waives the normal 99-cent listing fee for your Marketplace items, although you still pay a percentage of the final selling price. Pro-Merchant listings don't expire.

zShops

If you're a Pro-Merchant and you'd like to have your own online storefront, sign up for Amazon's zShops service. zShops let you sell merchandise outside the normal Amazon listing pages and can be customized with your own business logo and graphics. Go to www.amazon.com/zshops/ to learn more.

Amazon Auctions

A final selling option is Amazon Auctions. I haven't talked much about Amazon Auctions, because it's a weak competitor to eBay (discussed in Chapter 16). That said, Amazon Auctions has a slightly lower fee structure than eBay; you pay a flat 10-cent listing fee for each item and a maximum 5 percent final value fee. (The final value fee is lower on higher-priced items—and if you have a Pro-Merchant account, you don't have to pay the listing fee.)

Go to auctions.amazon.com to learn more.

#448: Chat with Other Amazon Users

Amazon has definitely become a community of users. There's no better sign of this than Amazon's chat rooms and discussion boards, where you can trade opinions and advice with other Amazon users.

Chat

Amazon lets you chat in real-time with other users via its numerous category-specific chat rooms. Most (but not all) Amazon stores feature Start Chatting buttons; click the button to launch the Java Chat applet and start chatting with

other members of this chat room. It's a great way to discuss specific products or categories with like-minded shoppers.

Discussion Boards

Chatting's nice, but it doesn't let you communicate with everyone you might like to reach. A better way of communicating with other Amazon users is through the site's discussion boards. You can use Amazon's discussion boards to share comments about products or categories, or about the Amazon site in general.

To access Amazon's discussion boards, go to Your Store ⇨ Friends & Favorites and click the Discussion Boards link.



#449: Let Amazon Remind You of Important Occasions

Most special occasions are gift-buying opportunities—and, for Amazon, opportunities to sell you more stuff. It makes perfect sense, then, that Amazon offers an event reminder service that notifies you (via e-mail) of upcoming important events. And it's no surprise that these reminder e-mails also include gift recommendations.

To set up an event reminder, go to Your Store ⇨ Friends & Favorites and click the Add a Reminder link. (Or go directly to www.amazon.com/reminders/.) When the event reminder form appears, fill in the appropriate details (the person's name, occasion, date, and so on), and then click the Create Reminder button. The event will now be registered with Amazon, and you'll receive the reminder as requested.



#450: Use Amazon to Find Movie Showtimes

Here's a service you'd never imagine Amazon would offer—movie showtimes. That's right, you can use Amazon to look up what's showing (and when) at your local movie theater. You can even have Amazon send you regular e-mails containing this showtime information. Pretty cool, eh?

While you can click through See More Stores ⇨ Movie Showtimes to access the Movie Showtimes page, it's easier to go directly to www.amazon.com/movies/. Enter your zip code and Amazon will list all your nearby theaters and their schedules. This page also includes links to current movie trailers that you can play on your desktop.

To have Amazon e-mail the showtime schedule to you, scroll down to the bottom of the Movie Showtimes page. Enter your zip code in the box and click the Subscribe button. Amazon will now send you a Weekly Movie Showtimes e-mail, every Friday.



#451: Use Amazon to Browse Menus from Local Restaurants

This is another totally unexpected service: if you live in Boston, Chicago, New York City, San Francisco, Seattle, or Washington D.C., you can browse menus from top local restaurants on the Amazon site. Go to See More Stores → Restaurants and then browse through or search for available restaurants. In most cases the full menu is available online along with customer reviews. It's a great service to check out before you head out for dinner!



#452: Discover Other Online Shopping Sites

Finally, we have the secret that Amazon would prefer you didn't know. Even though Amazon wants to offer everything in the world to everyone in the world, Amazon isn't the only shopping site around. In fact, depending on what you're shopping for, it might not even be the best site at which to shop.

The number of category-specific e-tailers is so large that I can't even begin to start listing them here. However, there are a number of sites you can use to search for online retailers or even for specific merchandise. The best of these shopping search/comparison sites are listed in Table 17-4:

Table 17-4: Online Shopping Search/Comparison Sites

Site	URL
Active Sales Assistant	www.activebuyersguide.com
BizRate.com	www.bizrate.com
CNET Shopper	shopper.cnet.com
Froogle	froogle.google.com
MySimon	www.mysimon.com
Shopping.com	www.shopping.com
Yahoo! Shopping	shopping.yahoo.com

Summary

That concludes our look at Amazon.com, one of the most popular shopping sites on the Web—and one of the most popular sites, period. For many frequent shoppers, Amazon is every bit the portal as Yahoo! or MSN. And when you consider the variety of content and services available on the site, you can see how you can spend hours just browsing the various Amazon stores—even if you never spend a penny!

Napster 2.0 Secrets

Chapter
18



Secrets in This Chapter

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The business of downloading digital music is big—really big.

The whole music downloading thing exploded back in 1999, with the advent of the Napster file-trading service. The original Napster was a peer-to-peer (P2P) network that let users trade digital music files—unfortunately, without regard to copyright laws. The music industry objected, strenuously, and after a series of lawsuits Napster was forced out of business.

Until now.

The Napster name was eventually acquired by Roxio, which had been running its own online music subscription service called Pressplay. On October 29, 2003, Napster was reborn as a legal online music service, incorporating bits and pieces of both the old Napster and Pressplay. I must say, it looks like it's going to be a hit.

Napster at a Glance

The new Napster 2.0 offers more than a half-million songs for downloading at 99 cents apiece; entire albums can be downloaded for \$9.95. In addition, Napster offers a \$9.95 per month subscription option (called *Premium membership*) that provides streaming Internet radio stations and the ability to download an unlimited number of songs. (You still have to purchase tracks individually if you want to burn them to a CD or transfer them to a portable music player, however.) It's definitely the best of the many online music services out there.

Before you can use Napster 2.0, you have to download the Napster software, which you do from Napster's Web site (www.napster.com). When you launch the Napster software, it takes you to the main Napster site and displays the home page, as shown in Figure 18-1. (This means, of course, that you have to be online when you're using the Napster service.) You'll need to sign up for Napster membership before you can download any music; basic membership is free.

As you'll learn in Secret #454, you can browse the Napster site for the music you want or search for specific songs or artists. Buying a track is as simple as clicking the Buy Track (or Buy Only) button. To purchase all the tracks from an album at one time, click the Buy Album button. The tracks you purchase are added to your Library, and (after you've authorized the purchase) automatically downloaded to your PC in the background—with no intervention on your part necessary.

note

Songs with a Buy Track button can be both downloaded and streamed to your computer in real time (if you're a Premium member). Songs with a Buy Only button can only be downloaded—if you try to stream them, you only hear a 30-second preview.

note

Your purchases are billed to your credit card once a day, so you won't see a lot of little 99-cent charges on your bill.



Figure 18-1: The Napster 2.0 home page.

The Napster software makes navigating the Napster 2.0 service relatively easy. At the top of the software window is a Navigation bar that includes Home, Back, and Forward buttons along with buttons that, when clicked, take you directly to Napster's Browse and Library pages. The top of the window also includes the Search bar, which you use for searching the service.

When you're on the home page, the software displays a series of tabs below the Navigation bar. Click a tab to access different parts of Napster: Music, Radio, Magazine, or Message Boards. There are also links along the left of the window to go directly to different music category pages—Alternative, Classical, Country, and so on. At the bottom of the window is the Button bar, containing Play, Download, Add to Playlist, and Send to a Friend buttons.

The Napster software includes its own music player and CD burner programs. The music player is located in the top right window; the bottom right window contains the tracklist for the currently selected playlist or Napster Radio station. The CD burner is displayed in a separate Burn Staging window when you click the Burn button at the bottom of the main Napster window.

caution

Napster works best when you have a high-speed broadband Internet connection. While you can use Napster over a dial-up connection, downloading can get a tad tedious—and streaming audio can be choppy.

Unlike some other music services, Napster 2.0 is pretty good about giving you fairly full rights to the music you purchase. When you pay your 99 cents for a song, you can download it to your PC, play it on up to three different PCs, burn it to CD, or transfer it to a portable music player. The only limitation is that you

can't burn the same playlist over and over; but as long as you change the order of the songs on the CDs you burn, you can burn each song an unlimited number of times.

All the songs you've purchased and listened to are stored in your personal library. Click the Library button in the Navigation bar to view the folders in your library—All Tracks, Artists, Albums, My Playlists, Purchased Tracks, History, Download Tracks, Saved Members, Inbox, and Portable Device.



#453: It's a Store . . . No, It's a Service . . . No, It's a Store *and* a Service

At its most basic, Napster 2.0 is an online store that sells downloadable music. You access the site (using the Napster software), you find the songs you want, you click the Buy button, and (after you pay for your purchase) you download your music. It's that straightforward.

In this aspect, Napster 2.0 is a lot like Apple's iTunes Music Store.

Napster 2.0 is more than just songs for download, however. If you subscribe to Napster's Premium service (\$9.95 per month), you get a whole bunch of extras, including:

- ◆ **Unlimited downloads to your PC:** You still have to purchase tracks if you want to burn to CD or download to a portable music player, however.
- ◆ **Real-time streaming of an unlimited number of full songs:** Non-Premium members can only listen to 30-second preview clips.
- ◆ **Access to Napster Radio:** This offers a variety of real-time streaming audio feeds—with sound quality a cut above most other Internet radio streaming services

So, for non-Premium members (that's the free membership), Napster is a store, like iTunes. For Premium members (that's the \$9.95 membership), it's a service that still requires you to purchase some items. Which is the better deal? I personally like to listen to streaming music while I'm surfing and to download tons of songs to my PC, so the Premium membership makes sense for me. If you're more interested in burning CDs or downloading to a portable device, you may want to stay on the pay-as-you-go free membership. Whichever works for you!



#454: Search by Album, Song, or Artist—or Just Browse through the Categories

With a half-million songs available on the Napster service, you might think it would be difficult to find that one track you want to listen to. Fortunately, Napster offers two different ways to find the music you want—by browsing or by searching.

Browsing for Music

The tracks in Napster's central library are organized into a variety of different musical genres. Browsing through Napster's many genres is as easy as clicking the Browse button in the Navigation bar.

There are five ways to browse Napster, each accessible via its own tab in the Browse section:

- ◆ **Artists/Albums:** Lets you browse specific genres
- ◆ **Just Added:** Lists Napster's newest tracks
- ◆ **Now Streaming:** Shows which songs are now being streamed to other Napster users (by category)
- ◆ **Charts:** Displays Napster's most popular songs (by category) in the form of Top Downloads, Top Streams, Top Artists, and Top Albums; you can also opt to display the most popular songs on the current *Billboard* charts
- ◆ **Member's Collections:** Displays songs collected by other Napster users (see Secret #461)

For example, to browse by artist or album, select the Artists/Albums tab, select a type of music from the Choose Genre list, then pull down the Top Artists list and select a subgenre. As you can see in Figure 18-2, matching artists are listed in the Artists/Albums tree in the left-hand window; click an artist to see all of that artist's available albums and to display artist information in the center of the window. Select an album to view available tracks in the tracklist in the bottom window. (This also changes the artist information area to display information about the selected album.)



Figure 18-2: Browsing by artist and album.

To purchase a track, click the Buy Track (or Buy Only) button next to the track. If you're a Premium member, you can listen to the track without downloading it—just double-click the track, select the track, and click the Play button, or drag the track into the Now Playing tracklist to the right of the main window.

Searching for Tracks

If you have a specific artist or song in mind, it's probably easier for you to search the 500,000 or so songs available on the Napster service for what you want. Use the Search bar at the top of the Napster software window; you can search by Artist, Album, Track, or Member. (Use this last option to find other Napster members—see Secret #461 for more.)

The results of your search are displayed in the tracklist window at the bottom of the Search Results window; select a track to display information about it in the top window. You can then play or purchase any track, as described previously.

#455: Create Your Own Custom Playlists—and Mix Tapes

Seldom do I listen to just one song. When I listen to music, I listen to lots of songs all in a row. The joy of using a service like Napster is that you can create your own playlists that contain a variety of different songs from different artists. Napster stores the contents of your playlists, so all you have to do is select a playlist to play it back at your discretion.

Building a Playlist

You create a new playlist by pulling down the Playlists list at the top of the Now Playing tracklist and selecting Create New Playlist. When the Add to Playlist dialog box appears, as shown in Figure 18-3, give your new playlist a name and then click the Save button.

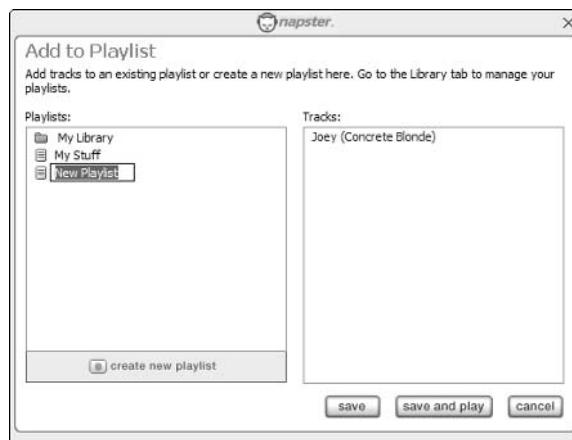


Figure 18-3: Creating a new playlist.

Once a playlist is created, you can add a track to the playlist in any number of ways:

- ◆ Use your mouse to drag the track onto a playlist displayed in the Now Playing tracklist (remember to click the Save button at the bottom of the Now Playing tracklist to save changes to this playlist)
- ◆ Select the track and then click the Add to Playlist button in the Button bar
- ◆ Right-click the track and select Add To ↗ Existing Playlist

You select which playlists to play from the Playlists list at the top of the Now Playing tracklist. You manage the contents of your playlists from Napster's Library page, which you access by clicking the Library button on the Navigation bar.

Listening to and Creating Mix Tapes

The title's a misnomer in this digital age, but you know what Napster means when it says *mix tape*—it's a collection of songs from a variety of artists, assembled into a single playlist for real-time listening or burning to CD. Napster devotes an entire section of its sites to mix tapes, with a number of preselected mixes and the option of creating your own mixes.

You access the Mix Tapes page by clicking the Mix Tapes link on the bottom of Napster's home page. Here you'll find preassembled mix tapes organized by genre; click a mix to view the tracks. To listen to the mix, click the Play button; to save the mix as one of your playlists, click the Save As Playlist button; to download the complete playlist to your computer, click the Download button.

To create your own version of one of these mixes, just select the individual tracks you want from the tracklist. You can then play, download, or save as a playlist those selected tracks. You can also drag selected tracks to the Burn Staging window (see Secret #459) to create your own mix CD.



Napster offers custom CD inserts and labels for its mix tapes. Click the Download Your Custom CD Cover Art button and Napster creates custom artwork based on your selected tracks. This artwork is in PDF format, which can be printed (using your computer's printer) on standard blank CD labels.



#456: Import Your Own Music to Your Napster Library

As big as Napster's music library is, chances are you have songs in your personal collection that aren't yet available from Napster. If you want to listen to these non-Napster songs along with the songs in your Napster playlists, you can import WMA and MP3 files into your Napster Library. These songs are added to your Library virtually; the files remain on your hard disk and don't get uploaded to the Napster service.

To import a file, choose File ↗ Import Tracks to My Library. When the Import Tracks to My Library dialog box appears, browse through the files on your PC

and select those you want to import. Click the Add button and these tracks will then appear on your Napster Library page. You can now add these tracks to any of your Napster playlists.

#457: Listen to Napster While You Surf

If you're a Napster Premium member, you have a lot of "live" listening options—not just Napster Radio, but also the ability to listen to Napster's entire library while you're surfing.

Using Napster's Music Player to Stream Real-Time Music

One of the many neat things about Napster is that its music player—displayed at the right of the main Napster window, and shown in Figure 18-4—stays open and active no matter where you are on the Napster service. You can browse for tracks or chat on the message boards and still have the player open and playing your favorite music.



Figure 18-4: Napster's built-in music player.

If you're a Napster Premium member, you can use the Napster player to listen to almost any song available on the Napster service. The songs are played via streaming audio, which means they play directly from the Napster service without downloading to your hard disk first. Just select any track in a browse, search, or playlist window and initiate playback using one of the following methods:

- ◆ Double-click the track
- ◆ Right-click the track and select Play from the shortcut menu
- ◆ Highlight the track and click the Play button in the Button bar
- ◆ Use the mouse to drag the track into the album art section at the top of the Napster player

Use the transport controls in the player window to pause a song or change the volume level. Use your mouse to rearrange the playback order. Information about the currently playing track is displayed in the player window; album art, when available, is also displayed here.

note

Remember, not all songs are available for full-length streaming. Tracks identified by a Buy Only button only let you hear a 30-second preview.

If you want to listen to Napster while you're otherwise surfing the Web, you don't have to keep the full Napster window open. You can display the Napster music player in detached mode (shown in Figure 18-5) along the bottom of your PC's desktop; in this mode, only basic track information and playback controls are visible. To minimize the player in this fashion, just click the down-arrow button at the top of the Napster software window.



Figure 18-5: Napster's music player in detached mode.

Listening to Napster Radio

Napster Radio features programming selected by Napster's in-house disk jockeys, organized by genre. You access Napster Radio, shown in Figure 18-6, by clicking the Radio tab at the top of the Napster software window. Select a station from the Top Stations, Other Stations, or Genre Stations lists, and Napster will initiate playback. The songs on this station's playlist are listed in the Now Playing tracklist; you can listen to the songs in order, double-click any song to play it immediately, or click the Shuffle button at the bottom of the window to randomize the order of the songs to be played.

You can add a song playing on Napster Radio to one of your personal playlists by selecting it and then clicking the Add to Playlist button in the Button bar. You can purchase any song you hear by right-clicking the track in the Now Playing tracklist and selecting Buy Track from the pop-up menu. Change stations by pulling down the Radio list at the top of the Now Playing tracklist.



Figure 18-6: Pick your favorite station from the Napster Radio page.

#458: Let Napster Build Your Own Personal Radio Station

One of the coolest aspects of Napster Radio is that you can have it create your own personal radio station based on your unique musical tastes. When you click the Create Now button in the Custom Radio Station section of the Radio page, Napster analyzes the songs you've added to your Library and uses that as a basis to create custom Napster Radio programming. It's a good way to expand your listening based on what you already like.

Another, possibly better way to create your own radio station is to build it based on selected tracks in your Now Playing tracklist or Library. Just select three or more tracks (hold the Shift key while you're selecting), right-click the selection, and select Build Radio Station from the pop-up menu. Napster uses these tracks to build a selection of similar tracks for you to listen to.

#459: Burn Your Music to CD

Napster 2.0 lets you burn all the music you purchase to CD—and it makes it easy by incorporating Roxio's CD-burning software into its service. (The CD-burning software is automatically downloaded and installed when you first install the Napster software.)

note

Napster's tracks are all 128-bit WMA files—what many call “near-CD” quality. “Near” isn’t the same as “exactly,” however, which means that the CDs you burn from Napster won’t sound quite as good as store-bought CDs, which are encoded at much higher bit rates.

To burn a CD, you start by clicking the Burn button at the bottom of the Napster software window. This opens the Burn Staging window, shown in Figure 18-7. You assemble the list of tracks you want to burn by dragging and dropping individual tracks into the Burn Staging window. (The Burn Staging window will stay open as you move between Napster’s Search, Browse, and Library sections.) Use your mouse to arrange the tracks in the order you want and then click the Burn button to begin the burning process. If you’re burning songs you haven’t yet purchased, Napster will prompt you to buy the tracks before you proceed. Make sure you have a blank CD inserted into your CD-R/RW drive and Napster will do the rest, converting its WMA-format files into the universal CD audio format as it burns.

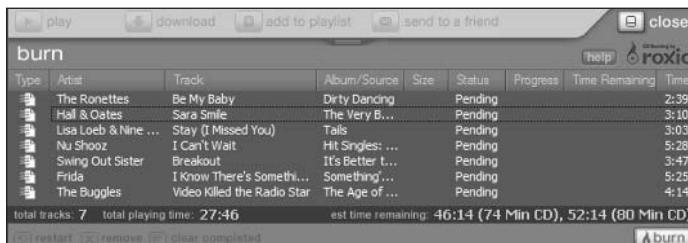


Figure 18-7: Use Napster to burn your songs to CD.

insider insight

If you have Roxio’s separate Napster Label Creator software installed on your PC, at the end of the burn process you’ll be prompted to create a custom label for your CD. (To download your free copy of Napster Label Creator, pull down Napster’s My Account menu and select Update Client; when the next dialog box appears, click the Install Napster CD Label Creator button.)

#460: Transfer Music to Your Portable Music Player

Just as the iTunes service (discussed in Secret #464) is optimized for use with Apple’s iPod portable music player, Napster 2.0 is optimized for use with Samsung’s Napster Player. When you plug the Napster Player into one of your PC’s USB ports, it automatically appears as a listing in your Napster Library.

**insider
insight**

You can purchase the Samsung Napster Player at Best Buy and other consumer electronics stores; suggested retail price is \$399. One of its more unique features is a built-in miniature FM transmitter, so that you can listen to your downloaded music over your car or home stereos—wirelessly!

Downloading music to a Samsung Napster Player is a piece of cake. Make sure the Napster Player is connected to your PC and then click the Library button in Napster's Navigation bar. When the Library page appears, select the tracks, album, or playlist you want to download and then drag the selection(s) onto the Napster Player icon in the Library tree. If you try to download a track you haven't yet purchased, you'll be prompted to buy the track before the download continues.

You also use the Library page to delete tracks from your Samsung Napster Player. Just go to the Library page and double-click the Napster Player icon. This displays all the tracks stored on your Napster Player; select the tracks you want to delete and then click the Remove button.

But you're not limited to using the Samsung Napster Player; you can use any portable music player that supports the WMA file format. If you're using another portable music player, you'll need to use Windows Media Player software (series 9 or greater) to perform the downloading. Connect your portable music player to your PC, launch the Windows Media Player software, select the Copy to CD or Device tab, select an artist, album, or playlist, and then click the Copy button.

caution

The one portable music player that you *can't* use with Napster is Apple's iPod, which doesn't support WMA files. (If you're an iPod user, you're pretty much tethered to Apple's companion iTunes service.)



#461: Browse Other Members' Music Collections

Napster, even (and especially) in its original incarnation, has always been about community. The new Napster 2.0 promotes this community aspect by letting you view the songs collected by other members. Find a member with similar musical tastes, and you can browse his or her collection to find other music that you might like.

You browse Napster member collections by clicking the Browse button in the Navigation bar and then selecting the Members' Collections tab. You'll need to select a genre from the list at the top of the window, and then all matching members are displayed in the left-side Member's Collection tree. Click a member name to view his or her collection sorted by Artists, Albums, or My Playlists. Select a folder to view its contents in the tracklist at the bottom of the window. You can also right-click a member's name to view his or her profile. If you find a member you like, save that member in your Library by right-clicking the name and selecting Save Member.

insider insight

If you know a member's user name, you can view that member's collection by using Napster's search function. Just enter the user name in the Search bar at the top of the Napster software window, select Member from the search list, and click the Search button.



#462: Share Songs—and Opinions—with Other Users

Speaking of community, Napster 2.0 makes it easy for users to share the music they like—without engaging in the technically illegal file sharing that sank the original Napster service. Read on to learn how to let your friends know about your favorite songs, as well as how to gossip with other users on Napster's message boards.

Share Songs via E-Mail

Find a song you think a friend will like? Then let Napster send that song to your friend via e-mail. Your friend doesn't even have to be a Napster member!

Of course, Napster doesn't really e-mail the digital audio file—it e-mails a link to the file on the Napster service. And if your friend isn't a member yet, he or she is prompted to join up to listen to the song. (Remember, basic membership is free—although downloading costs money.)

To send a song to another user, highlight the track and click the Send to a Friend button in the Button bar. Napster now displays the Send Music to Friend window, shown in Figure 18-8. Enter your friend's Napster user name or e-mail address, create a subject line and a short message, and then click the Send button. Napster members will receive your message in their Napster inboxes; non-Napster members will receive your message in their normal e-mail inboxes.

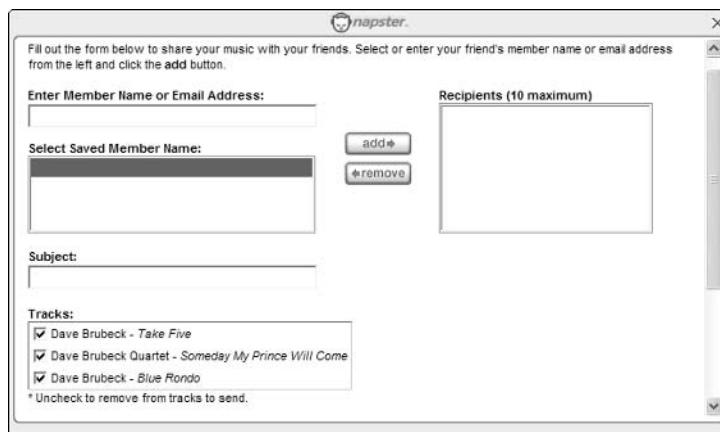


Figure 18-8: Let Napster send your favorite music to other users.

insider insight

Access your own Napster inbox by clicking the Inbox icon located below the Search bar.

Communicate via Napster's Message Boards

Want to share your opinions with other Napster users? Then check out Napster's community message boards. Napster offers message boards for all musical genres, from Alternative to Vocal/Nostalgia, as well as boards for Napster issues and general discussions. To access the boards, click the Message Boards tab from Napster's home page.



#463: Napster Has Music Videos, Too

The music business isn't just about music; it's also about music videos. That's why Napster 2.0 offers a variety of music videos for free online viewing. Click the Music Video link at the bottom of the Napster home page to display the Music Videos page; click the Play button under a video to play the clip in a separate window.

caution

Napster's video player isn't terribly smart; if you play a video while you're listening to Napster Radio or streaming audio, it won't cut off the music—which means you'll have to pause the music player manually, unless you like listening to two songs simultaneously.



#464: Discover Other Music Download Sites

Without mentioning any of the unlicensed file-trading services (such as Grokster, KaZaA, or Morpheus), there are several other sites that compete with Napster 2.0 in offering licensed music for downloading. Some of these sites operate on a per-song payment system, as Napster does; others require a monthly subscription to access a set number of downloads. None of these sites offer music from all artists or labels—which means you may need to visit several different sites to find all the music you want.

iTunes

iTunes (www.apple.com/itunes/) is Napster's closest competitor, offering similar single-song purchase options and pricing—but with fewer songs (400,000) in its catalog. iTunes started out as an Apple-only service, but recently it expanded to include Windows compatibility. It's not quite as full-featured as

Napster, however, since it only offers 30-second song previews, with no full-length streaming audio options. It's also hotwired to work exclusively with the iPod portable music player, which isn't any good if you want to use another brand player. More problematic is the fact that iTunes uses the less common AAC file format, which isn't compatible with the WMA format used by Napster and other services. That said, iTunes is a very popular service, in many ways the inspiration for Napster and other pay-per-song download sites.

BuyMusic

BuyMusic (www.buymusic.com) is a lot like iTunes—in fact, many regard BuyMusic as a Windows-only clone of the originally Macintosh-only iTunes. Like iTunes, BuyMusic offers downloadable music for purchase on a per-song basis only, without any monthly fees, using a simple retail-like shopping and checkout interface. Currently, BuyMusic offers about 300,000 songs for download, priced from 79 cents apiece (with most singles going for 99 cents); albums are priced from \$7.99.

Musicmatch Downloads

Musicmatch Downloads (www.musicmatch.com) is a single-song-purchase site, much like the basic Napster service. It offers a similar selection of songs, as well, with single tracks priced at 99 cents and most albums at \$9.99. Much as Napster uses its own access software, Musicmatch Downloads works hand-in-hand with the venerable Musicmatch Jukebox software. Musicmatch Downloads doesn't offer any streaming audio or Internet radio services; it also offers much fewer tracks than Napster does.

eMusic

Another competing music download service is eMusic (www.emusic.com). While eMusic doesn't offer quite the music catalog as Napster (its focus is on new and independent artists), it's a very consumer-friendly service. All downloads are in the popular MP3 format, and once you download a song you're free to use it any way you want—to copy to another computer, transfer to a portable player, or burn to CD. As the site advertises, "download once, play anywhere." You'll pay \$9.99 per month for 40 song downloads, or \$14.99 per month for 65 downloads.

Rhapsody

Rhapsody (www.listen.com) is a subscription music service run by RealNetworks and licensed by Lycos and other sites. Rhapsody is a lot like Napster in that it pushes both streaming audio (via monthly subscription) and individual downloads (for a per-track fee). As with Napster, Rhapsody charges a \$9.95 per month fee for unlimited listening, but then you have to pay an additional 79 cents per track fee to burn music to CDs. Rhapsody claims a library of 345,000 songs.

Summary

We're still in the early days of officially licensed downloadable music, so sites like the new Napster 2.0 are true pioneers—and are still working out some of the kinks. It's not even a given that Napster will be the leading music download site; there's a lot of competition out there for the online music consumer.

All that said, Napster 2.0 makes downloading music quick and easy—and legal. It's easy enough that even nontechnical music lovers can use it; buying virtual music from Napster is little different than buying physical merchandise from Amazon.com. So if you love music and want to purchase specific tracks (or whole albums), you can do worse than check out Napster; downloading your favorite song is as simple as clicking a few buttons!

Expedia Secrets

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Being able to make all your travel reservations online has revolutionized the travel business. Thanks to Internet travel sites, booking a complete vacation online is as easy as clicking your mouse—no travel agent or reservations clerk necessary. Many users discover that they find *better* accommodations, reservations, and travel information online—and save a few bucks, besides.

One of the most popular online travel sites is Expedia, originally launched by Microsoft but now owned by IAC/InterActiveCorp (formerly USA Interactive). Expedia can handle all your reservations, provide detailed information about your destination, and even create maps and driving directions for long car trips. The advantage of a one-stop-shop travel site is that you don't have to deal with multiple companies for your plane, hotel, and rental car reservations; you only have to enter your arrival and departure dates (and credit card number) once and Expedia handles the rest.

Expedia at a Glance

The Expedia home page (www.expedia.com) not only serves as a gateway to the rest of the site, but it also lets you make basic reservations right there. The tabs at the top of the page take you to the major parts of the site—Flights, Hotels, Cars, Vacation Packages, Cruises, and so on. There are also a variety of useful utilities in the Travel Tools box on the left side of the page; the far right column contains sponsored travel deals.

If you have a simple trip planned (no multiple-leg flights and you're not too demanding about your hotel or rental car preferences), you can enter your travel information into the Build Your Own Trip form in the middle of the page. If you'd rather take advantage of all available reservation options, skip this form and go directly to the Flights, Hotels, or Cars tabs.

However you choose to plan your trip, you'll need to enter when you're traveling (your departure and return dates), how many people are traveling, and any special considerations you have for your trip. Armed with this information, Expedia will search for the flights (and rooms and cars) that best match your requirements. From there, finalizing your arrangements is as simple as clicking a few buttons and providing your credit card number.

**insider
insight**

It's a good idea to print out all your reservation confirmation information and take all these printouts to the airport with you. You'll need proof of confirmation to pick up your tickets and to get through airport security. (You'll also need this information in case you have to change your reservations—especially if you're forced to switch airlines.) It also doesn't hurt to call and confirm your reservations a day or two before you leave on your trip. That means calling the airline, and the hotel, and the car rental agency—not Expedia! By this point in time your reservations should be in the various companies' systems, so they're the places to call. (If nothing else, it's worth a call just to make sure that the departure and arrival times haven't changed.)



#465: Not All Airlines Are Listed with Expedia

Here's something you probably don't know. While most major airlines (American, Delta, United, and so on) are listed with Expedia, some smaller airlines *aren't*. In particular, you won't be able to use Expedia to make reservations on JetBlue, Southwest, and many other discount carriers. To make reservations on these airlines, you'll have to go to their own Web sites.



#466: Restrict Your Search to Specific Airlines

If you're a frequent flyer on one or two specific airlines, you might want to restrict Expedia's search to flights from those airlines. You can do this from the Search for Flights page. Scroll down to the Do You Have Any Preferences? section, pull down the Airline list, and select those airlines you want to fly on.



#467: Book a Multileg Plane Trip

Want to fly from New York to San Francisco—with a stopover in Des Moines? Or maybe you want a multicity trip, with short flights from one city to the next? When your flight arrangements involve more than a simple round trip, you'll need to activate Expedia's multiple destinations feature. When you click the Flights tab to open the Search for Flights page, select the Multiple Destinations option at the top of the page. This displays a different Search for Flights page that lets you input multiple legs for your trip. Make your trip as complex as you want—Expedia can handle it!



#468: Display Flights Based on Departure or Arrival Time—Instead of Price

When you search for flights on Expedia, you'll most often get a long list of results to pick from. By default, these flights are listed in descending order of price with the lowest-priced flights first. Personally, I find it more convenient to list these flights by departure or arrival time—I know when I want to leave (or arrive), and this lets me more easily choose the flights that fit my schedule.

To change the order in which flights are listed, check either the Departure Time or Arrival Time options in the Sort By section at the top of the results page. You can also choose to sort the listings by Shortest Flights first.

#469: Tell Expedia Your Meal and Seating Preferences

Like to sit in a window seat? Require a vegetarian or Kosher meal? Then tell Expedia your preferences ahead of time so that your needs can be accommodated—as best as possible, that is.

The time to enter these preferences is before you make a reservation. Click the My Profile link at the top of the Expedia home page to open the Profile Overview page and then scroll down to the Travelers Associated with This Profile section. Your name should be listed; click the Flight, Hotel, or Car links to change the appropriate preferences. For example, when you edit your Flight preferences, you can choose a seating preference (aisle or window), special meals (child's meal, low-fat, low-sodium, Kosher, and so on), whether you need special assistance at the gate, and so on. (You can also add profiles for additional travelers by clicking the Add a New Traveler link.)

#470: Pick a Specific Seat

Here's a neat feature: When you make a reservation, Expedia lets you choose your specific seat for each leg of your flight, via the Seat Pinpointer. After you've made your flight selections and advanced to the Traveler Preferences page, scroll to the bottom of the page and click the Request Specific Seats link. This tool displays the seating layout for your specific plane, with reserved and available seats noted. All you have to do is click the seat you want, and it will be reserved in your name. If you don't like any of the available seats, just back up through the process and choose another flight!



The Seat Pinpointer isn't available for all flights on all airlines.

#471: Save an Itinerary—without Making Reservations

Expedia isn't just for making reservations. You can also use the site to plan out trips in advance without any commitment to purchase on your part. All you have to do is work through the reservation process until you come to the Flight Details page. At this point you can choose to continue on and make your reservations or save all the details up to this point in an online itinerary. When you scroll down to the bottom of the page and click the Save This Information in an Itinerary, Expedia saves your flight information for your future reference.

To retrieve a saved itinerary, click the My Trips link at the top of the Expedia home page. This displays the Saved Itineraries and Favorite Destinations page; click a specific trip to view the details. If you want, you can then choose to make reservations—or not.



#472: Discover What There Is to Do at the Airport

With today's increased airport security, you're advised to get to the airport well in advance of your scheduled departure time. But once you get past the security gate, what do you do with all that free time?

Most airports have a lot of different shops, dining establishments, and other activities. Find out what's available at any given airport with Expedia's Stuck at the Airport guides. Just click the Airport Information link in the Traveler Tools section on Expedia's home page to open the Airport Information page; pull down the Choose an Airport list in the Airport Guides section, select an airport, and click the Go button. Expedia provides detailed airport guides for more than 65 major airports worldwide. Each guide includes information about the airport's layout and amenities and can really help you get the most of a long layover.



#473: Check the Status of Any Flight

Worried about flight delays? Expedia provides up-to-the minute flight status information for flights on all major domestic and international airlines. Just click the Flight Status link in the Traveler Tools section of the Expedia home page; Expedia now displays the Flight Status page. Select an airline, then opt to search by either flight number or arrival/departure time. Click the Display Flight Status link to display the current status of the selected flight.



#474: Find a Hotel near a Specific Location

It's easy enough to make hotel reservations on Expedia; just select the Hotels tab and enter the appropriate information. The best thing is, you can enter a specific address, and Expedia will locate all hotels near the address—and display them on an area map centered around the address you entered. This is great if you want a hotel near a company's office, or if you know you'll be spending a lot of time at a specific attraction.

All you have to do is click the Search Near an Address link on the Hotels page. Enter an address (along with your check-in and check-out dates) and then click the Search button. Expedia will display a list of nearby hotels, listing the closest first. Click the Show on a Map link to display a map with these hotels pinpointed around your location.

#475: Request a Particular Type of Rental Car

Reserving a rental car is equally easy—you can even specify what type of car you want to drive. Just select the Cars tab to display the Cars page, enter the city you're going to, indicate when you want to pick up and drop off the car, and then select the class of car you'd like. The four main types (besides "no preference") are minivan, SUV, sports car, and convertible; you can select other types of vehicles by pulling down the Car Class list.

#476: Book an Entire Vacation at Once

In addition to offering discrete flight, hotel, and rental car reservations, Expedia also offers complete vacation packages. These specially priced trips are some of the best deals on the site; all you have to do is select the Vacation Packages tab and enter your travel preferences. Note, however, that vacation packages aren't available for all locations—only for Expedia's top destinations.

Other vacation deals are available on Expedia's Deals page. These are deals from travel packages as opposed to the assembled deals found on Expedia's Vacation Packages page. The difference is that the packages on the Deals page are apt to be less flexible than Expedia's Vacation Packages. Pricing, however, should get your attention.

#477: Have Expedia Notify You of Travel Deals

Want to know when there's a good deal to a particular destination? Then sign up for Expedia's Travel Deals e-mail. All you have to do is click the Get Deals via E-Mail link in the Traveler Tools section of Expedia's home page. Expedia will then send you periodic e-mails containing the latest and greatest promotions and offers.

#478: Let Expedia Help You Determine Where You Want to Go

Not sure where you want to go on your next vacation? Then let Expedia help you decide!

Expedia offers a number of informative destination guides; just click the Destinations & Interests tab to see what's available. This page includes information on specific destinations as well as guides to special interest travel, such as beach travel, romantic travel, golf travel, and the like. Click a destination or type of travel to learn more.



#479: Book a Cruise

If your idea of a great vacation is an ocean cruise, Expedia can help you out with cruises, as well. Click the Cruises tab to search for a variety of cruises; specify when you want to travel (and for how long), where you want to go, and a variety of other preferences. Expedia will return a list of matching cruises from all the major cruise lines.



#480: Check Out the Latest Travel Alerts and Advisories

When you're traveling, it helps to keep up-to-date on the latest travel news, policy changes, and such. You can find out the latest information with Expedia's Travel Alerts; just click the Travel Alerts link in the Traveler Tools section of the Expedia home page. This page also includes links to airline toll-free telephone numbers, tips and news from the Transportation Security Administration, State Department travel advisories, and the Department of Homeland Security's Advisory System page.



#481: Convert Your Currency

Traveling outside the U.S.? Want to find out how many lira to the dollar or yen to the pound? Then use Expedia's Currency Converter. Get there by clicking the Currency Converter link in the Traveler Tools section of the Expedia home page. Enter the number of units, which currency you're converting from, and which currency you're converting to. Click the Display the Results link to make the conversion.



#482: Find Out the Weather Where You're Going

Want to know whether to pack a raincoat or a swimsuit? Then use Expedia to display the weather forecast for wherever you're traveling. Click the Weather link in the Traveler Tools section of Expedia's home page; this opens the Weather Forecast page. Click a region anywhere in the world or select a major U.S. city to display detailed weather conditions and forecast.

#483: Get Maps and Driving Directions

It's no surprise that Expedia offers mapping and driving directions as part of its list of travel services. You can access both from Expedia's Maps page; click the Find a Map link to display a map of your travel destination or click the Get Driving Directions link if you intend to drive instead of fly.

#484: You Can Call Them If You Have Problems

Just because you made your reservations online doesn't mean that you can't talk to an actual human being. Expedia offers round-the-clock telephone support, which is especially useful if you're stuck at an airport and need to change your reservations. Call them at 800-EXPEDIA (800-397-3342) or 404-728-8787.

#485: Check Out Other Web Travel Sites

I've been using Expedia for my travel reservations for a number of years now, but it's not the only site I use. There are a number of travel sites on the Web, most of which function similarly to Expedia, but some of which sometimes offer different or better options and pricing. Since it often pays to shop around, you might want to check out the travel sites listed in Table 19-1, just to see what's available.

Table 19-1: Other Internet Travel Sites

Site	URL
American Express Travel	travel.americanexpress.com
Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel Online	www.frommers.com
CheapTickets.com	www.cheaptickets.com
HotWire	www.hotwire.com
OneTravel.com	www.onetravel.com
Orbitz	www.orbitz.com
Priceline	www.priceline.com
Qixo.com	www.qixo.com
TravelNow.com	www.travelnow.com
Travelocity	www.travelocity.com

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insight**

Also useful are sites that offer travel guides and destination information. The best of these sites include Concierge.com (www.concierge.com), Fodors (www.fodors.com), Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com), and VirtualTourist.com (www.virtualtourist.com).

Summary

Expedia is designed to handle all your travel needs. It's nice to be able to search for flights and hotels anywhere in the world from the comfort of your personal computer. And remember—Expedia is a full-service travel agency. So if you have any problems, contact them, either via e-mail or phone. They're there to help you—and to make sure you have a great trip!

MapQuest Secrets



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Want to know how to get from here to there? Curious about the layout of a new city or neighborhood? Don't want to lug around that old *Rand McNally Road Atlas* every time it's time to take a trip?

Then you'll appreciate the detailed maps available at MapQuest, the Web's most popular online mapping site. What's really cool, though, are the services that MapQuest offers above and beyond basic maps—which you'll learn about in this chapter.

MapQuest at a Glance

Most users never get beyond MapQuest's home page (www.mapquest.com), shown in Figure 20-1. That's because the home page lets you create basic maps by entering an address into the Get a U.S. Map section and then clicking the Get Map button. If that's all you need to do, the home page is the place to do it. To get to all the cool stuff on the MapQuest site, however, you'll need to click one of the navigation icons at the top of the home page.



Figure 20-1: Create basic maps from the MapQuest home page.

#486: MapQuest Is More Than a Web Site

MapQuest is not your typical dot-com business. The company has been around long before the Internet—since 1967, to be exact, when it was founded as a division of R.R. Donnelley & Sons, one of the nation's largest commercial printers. Now a subsidiary of America Online, MapQuest offers online mapping and directions through its own site, via AOL, and to hundreds of other Web sites.

What most people don't know is that the Web site is just part of what MapQuest does. In addition to its Internet mapping service, MapQuest creates custom mapping programs for textbooks, directories, travel guides, and other reference works. The company provides business-to-business mapping and routing solutions to more than 1,400 major companies via its MapQuest Business Solutions division. In addition, the MapQuest Digital Mapping Services division provides digital and print cartographic products to the publishing industry. Learn more at the company's parent Web site (www.oneworldmapping.com).

#487: Map a Specific Address, City, Zip Code, Area Code, Latitude/Longitude, or Airport

There are many ways to create a map on MapQuest—of which only one is available from the home page. All the other options are available from the main Maps page, shown in Figure 20-2, which you access by clicking the Maps icon at the top of the MapQuest home page.

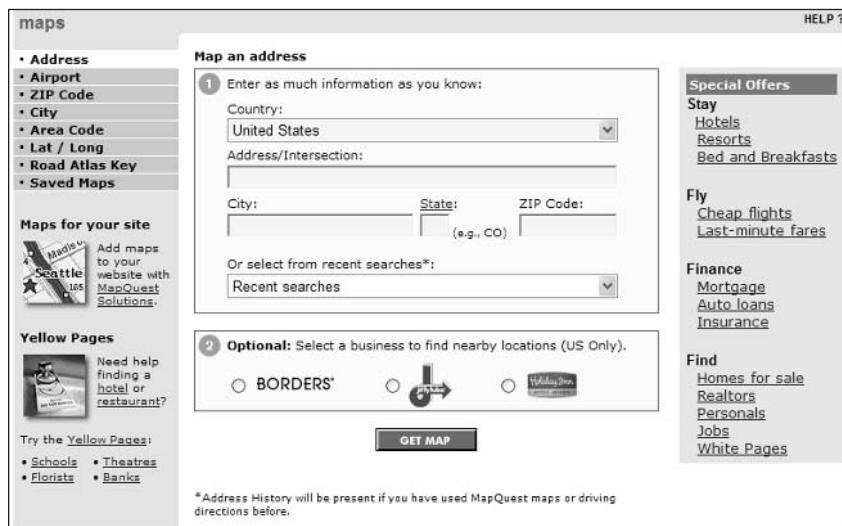


Figure 20-2: Access more mapping options on the Maps page.

All your mapping options are listed on the left side of the page. While the default mapping method is to enter a specific address, you can also create a map by entering the following:

- ◆ Name of a nearby airport
- ◆ Zip code
- ◆ City name
- ◆ Area code
- ◆ Latitude and longitude
- ◆ Coordinates from MapQuest's printed road atlas

This flexibility proves to be extremely useful. For example, if you want to display a map for an entire metropolitan area, use the City option. If you want to see just where a particular zip code lies, use the Zip Code option. If you want to find out where a person is calling from, use the Area Code option. It's that easy.

But that's not all. Here are few more mapping secrets:

- ◆ Map by intersection on the Address page by using the words "and" or "at," or the ampersand (&) between street names. For example, to map the intersection of 42nd Street and Broadway, enter **42nd street and broadway**.
- ◆ Map an interstate or highway on the Address page by spelling out (completely) the words "interstate" or "highway." For example, to map the whole of Interstate 65, enter **interstate 65**.
- ◆ You can use the words "north," "south," "east," and "west," or the single-letter abbreviations (N, S, E, W)—but *not* the two-letter abbreviations "No." and "So."
- ◆ You have to spell out the entire city name; you can't use a city abbreviation. So New York City can't be abbreviated NYC—you have to spell it out.

#488: Zoom In or Re-Center a Map

All MapQuest maps, like the one in Figure 20-3, are interactive. That means you're not stuck with the map as originally displayed; you can manipulate the map to display exactly the area that you want—either by zooming in or by re-centering the map.



Figure 20-3: An interactive MapQuest map.

Zoom In

There are two ways to zoom into a point on the map:

- ◆ You can click the Zoom In option below the map, and then click your mouse on a point anywhere on the map. The map will zoom in to the point you clicked.
- ◆ The second method is perhaps the better one: along the right side of the map are Zoom In and Zoom Out controls. You can click the + or – buttons to zoom in or out, or click any button in between to zoom to a particular level. Using these controls, you can not only zoom in but also zoom back out—which you can't do with the point-and-click method.



If you want to display a larger full-screen map, click the Big Map button at the top right of the map.

Re-Center

Sometimes you want to see the area just outside a given map—but don't necessarily want to zoom out the entire map. Instead you want to re-center the map. Again, there are two ways to do this.

You can re-center via the point-and-clicking method by selecting the Re-Center option below the map. With this option selected, when you click a point on the map, the map will be redrawn, with your click point as the new center point.

Another option is to use the North, East, South, and West controls along the sides of the map. Click the North control to pan the map north; use the East control to pan the map east; and so on.



#489: Customize a Map—or Add a Second Location

MapQuest offers several different ways to customize your maps. You access the Customize Map page, shown in Figure 20-4, by clicking the Customize Map link underneath any map you display.

There are several options on the Customize Map page. These include the following:

- ◆ Change the map's title
- ◆ Select a different map size
- ◆ Select a different map style (color scheme)
- ◆ Change the label and icon for the location that you mapped

You can also add other locations to the map you created. Go back to the map page and click the Add a Location link underneath the map. Enter another address or location (and select a new icon), and it will then be indicated on the map you created alongside your original location.

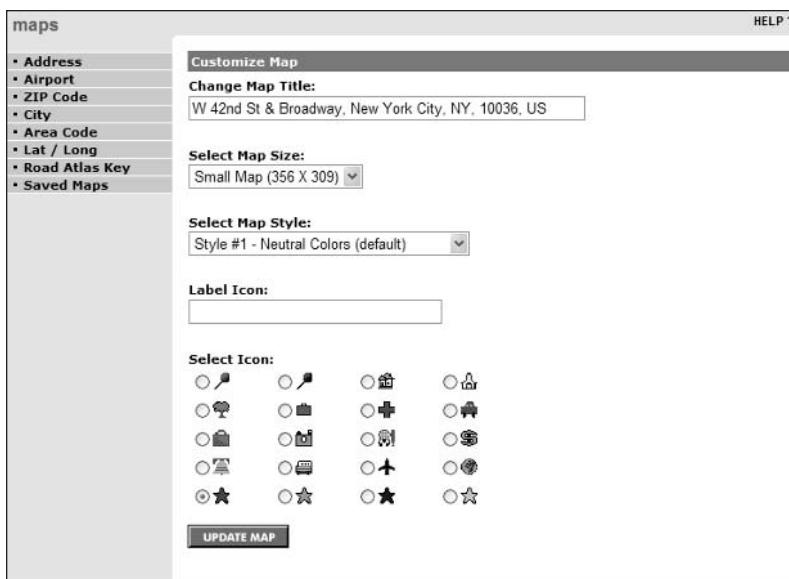


Figure 20-4: Customize the way any map is displayed.



#490: E-Mail a Map to a Friend

When you create a map you'd like to share with someone else, MapQuest lets you e-mail that map to anyone over the Internet. Just click the E-Mail Map button above the map you created and follow the onscreen instructions to send it via e-mail. (If you're e-mailing the map to multiple recipients, separate the addresses with spaces.)



#491: Access MapQuest Maps and Directions from Your Cell Phone

You can also access MapQuest maps and directions from any Web-enabled cell phone or PDA—which is great if you get lost when you're on the go. Find out more (before you leave home) by going to www.mapquest.com/mobile/ and clicking either the Web Phones or PDA icon. From there you'll find information for accessing MapQuest's wireless Web site from all major cellular services.

#492: Display an Aerial Photo of Your Location

Here's a really cool feature: for many locations, MapQuest lets you display not only a normal map, but also an aerial photo of the area. All you have to do is click the Aerial Photo tab above your original map. As you can see in Figure 20-5, you can zoom in and re-center this map just as you would a normal MapQuest map—as well as print or e-mail it to another user. Cool!

insider insight

MapQuest's aerial photos are supplied by GlobeXplorer (www.globexplorer.com). Depending on the area, these photos are anywhere from several months to several years old.



Figure 20-5: Use MapQuest to display aerial photos of your location.

#493: Find a Jiffy Lube near You

Okay, this is a sponsored feature, but it still shows the power of the MapQuest engine. When it's time to get your oil changed, have MapQuest display a map of nearby Jiffy Lube locations by selecting the Jiffy Lube option on the Maps page. MapQuest will now overlay specific locations on the map it generates. (You can also use this feature to display Borders bookstores and Holiday Inn motels on your maps.)

#494: Display Maps for Any City in the World

MapQuest doesn't just map U.S. cities. It also offers detailed street-level maps for cities in 13 foreign countries:

- ◆ Austria
- ◆ Belgium
- ◆ Canada
- ◆ Denmark
- ◆ France
- ◆ Germany
- ◆ Italy
- ◆ Luxembourg
- ◆ Netherlands
- ◆ Spain
- ◆ Sweden
- ◆ Switzerland
- ◆ United Kingdom

In addition, MapQuest provides city-level (but not street-level) coverage throughout all other countries around the globe. So wherever you go, anywhere in the world, MapQuest has a map for you.

insider insight

MapQuest also offers three country-specific sites, for Germany (www.mapquest.de), France (www.mapquest.fr), and the United Kingdom (www.mapquest.co.uk).

#495: View World Atlas Maps

Speaking about global mapping, did you know that MapQuest offers a really cool online world atlas? Probably not; MapQuest keeps this a secret, for some reason, by not including a link to it from the MapQuest home page. You'll need to point your browser to www.mapquest.com/atlas/, and you'll see the World Atlas page shown in Figure 20-6. You can navigate to specific continent, country, state, ocean, or region maps from the links in the left column; by using the pull-down lists at the top right of the page; or by clicking on a country or region on the main map.

#496: Generate Turn-by-Turn Driving Directions

Even though it's a big feature of the site, many users still don't know that they can use MapQuest to generate driving directions to and from any address. These directions are fairly detailed, indicating every turn you need to make.

You start by clicking the Driving Directions icon at the top of the Expedia home page. When the Driving Directions page shown in Figure 20-7 appears, enter the address you're starting from and the address you're going to and then click the Get Directions button.

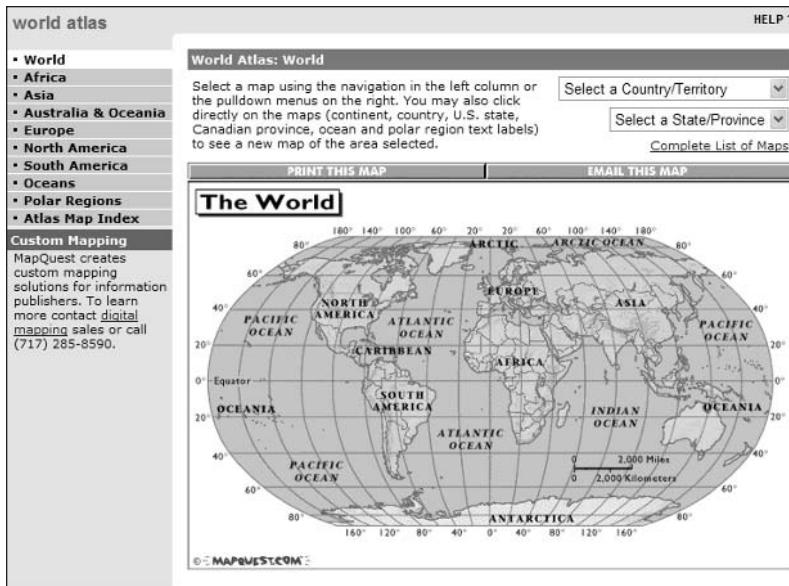


Figure 20-6: MapQuest's secret online world atlas.

The screenshot shows the 'driving directions' section of the MapQuest website. On the left, there's a sidebar with 'North America', 'Europe', and 'Saved Routes' links, and a 'Maps for your site' section with a 'Maplets' icon. The main content area has two large input fields for 'Start' and 'End' locations, each with 'Address/Intersection', 'Places of Interest', and 'Recent Searches' dropdowns. To the right of these fields is a sidebar with 'Special Offers' (Stay, Hotels, Resorts, Bed and Breakfasts), 'Fly' (Cheap flights, Last-minute fares), 'Finance' (Mortgage, Auto loans, Insurance), and 'Find' (Homes for sale, Realtors, Personals, Jobs, White Pages) sections.

Figure 20-7: Use MapQuest to get driving directions to any location.

#497: Fine-Tune Your Driving Directions

By default, MapQuest displays your driving directions as text instructions with a single large map at the bottom of the page. If you'd rather see maps for each step of the trip, click the Add Options button on the Driving Directions page to display the Routing Options page. Pull down the Display Directions As list and select Turn-by-Turn Maps with Text; your map will now be redisplayed as directed.

You can also choose to have MapQuest generate a route that avoids toll roads or ferry lanes. Again, use the Routing Options page, and select the appropriate Avoid If Possible option.

#498: Let MapQuest Plan Your Entire Road Trip

Driving from one place to another involves more than just following a map. You also want to know what to see along the way and where to stop at night. Fortunately, you can use MapQuest to plan your entire road trip—including the rest areas along your route.

Start by clicking the Road Trip Planner button at the top of the MapQuest home page. When the Road Trip Planner page appears, give your trip a name and then click either the One-Way or Round-Trip button. When the next page appears, enter detailed information about where you're going. MapQuest now displays Your Route and What's Nearby buttons. Use the former to access driving directions, a destination map, and rest areas for each segment of your trip; use the latter to display nearby attractions, entertainment, essential services (banks, dry cleaners, and so on), lodging, recreation, shopping, restaurants, and transit locations. It's like having a travel planner inside your computer!

#499: Create Instant Maps with the MapQuest Toolbar

If you're a frequent traveler, you'll appreciate the ability to generate maps and driving directions directly from your Internet Explorer Web browser (Windows only; version 5.0 or higher required). The MapQuest Toolbar, shown in Figure 20-8, lets you directly input an address and then jump to the MapQuest site to generate the map or driving directions. Click the Download the MapQuest Toolbar! link on the home page to download and install the software.



Figure 20-8: Generate maps from your browser with the MapQuest Toolbar.



#500: Add a Free Map Link to Your Web Site

MapQuest offers a variety of interactive maps you can display on your Web site. It charges for most of these maps (the fancy ones designed for business sites), but there is a way to include a free map on your personal Web site.

Actually, you can't display the map itself; you have to display a link to the map on the MapQuest site. You can find out how to do this by clicking the Maps for Your Site link on the MapQuest home page. When the Business Solutions page appears, click the LinkFree link. (The Solutions link takes you to the maps you have to pay for—starting at just \$4,400!) Follow the instructions on this page to create a URL for a specific address and then insert the HTML code for that URL into your Web page code.



#501: There Are Lots of Other Maps on the Web

Road maps like those offered by MapQuest aren't the only types of maps available on the Web. For example, the Subway Navigator (www.subwaynavigator.com) offers maps of more than 60 subway systems around the world, including most of the major subways in the U.S. For more comprehensive mass transit maps, go to Routes International (www.routesinternational.com) and click the City Transit Links link; this displays bus and subway routes for all major cities.

If you're traveling by train, try the Amtrak site (www.amtrak.com), which displays maps for all its routes. And if you're traveling by bus, you can go to Greyhound's Web site (www.greyhound.com) to view all their route maps online.

There are also several sites that offer maps that can help you avoid traffic jams and bottlenecks caused by accidents and the typical summer road construction. For example, Rand McNally's AccuTraffic site (www.accutraffic.com) routes you to the Department of Transportation pages of each individual state in the U.S.; from there, you can click the appropriate links to display information about road construction projects and traffic delays. And if your right foot gets a little heavy at times, go to the Speed Trap Exchange (www.speedtrap.org) to find radar speed traps by location, as submitted by alert users.

Summary

This completes our look at MapQuest—and marks the end of the book. I hope you enjoyed the 501 secrets included here, and found at least a few of them useful enough to employ on a regular basis. There's a lot of cool stuff out there on the Web, especially at the major Web sites, if you only know about it. So now that you're in on the secrets, you can take advantage of even more that these sites have to offer.

Does that make you smarter than everyone else on the Internet? Probably not. But, still, it's gratifying to realize that you now know a bunch of stuff that few users are aware of. That might not make you smarter, but it definitely makes you more informed—and helps you be a more effective and more efficient Internet user.

So keep this book next to your computer when you're online—and keep on clicking!

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