



Radlett U3A Computer Group Internet and E mail - Supporting notes

Browsers

A browser can be defined as a software program which enables us to get on line to the internet. These can be either a facility provided by your ISP which uses its own servers or a specialist all purpose browser. An example of the former is AOL which provides it own content but uses the Google search facility.

The main ones in the latter category which can be downloaded for free are

Internet Explorer

Google Chrome

Mozilla Firefox

Opera

Safari (for Apple Macs)

They may include features such as extensive search facilities, news, weather etc and a means of accessing your e mail account (see below).

Internet connections

The principal means are:-

- dial up connection. This was the main type for many years but whilst relatively inexpensive it is slow and it is not possible to use the phone line for normal calls whilst connected
- broadband. This is now the most popular means of connection which is obtained through a normal phone company either for a separate charge or included in a bundle; it is much faster and does not tie up the phone line whilst you are on line
- cable. This is obtained through a cable company which may also provide TV programmes
- satellite dish. This is used mainly in rural areas where broadband reception is very poor or non existent.
- wireless hotspots. So long as you have a wireless enabled lap top you can use this to access the internet in many public places such as airports, cafes and hotels. In other cases you may need to obtain a password or key and if so you may have to pay a fee.
- smart phone. Particularly with the development of tablets this technology is increasingly being used to access the internet and e mails.

Accessing and browsing the net

Access can be obtained in the following ways:-

- by entering the full web site address in the address bar at the top of the screen
- using the search facility by entering all or part of the name of the organisation or the web site. This has the advantage that it is not always necessary to enter the full name and a number of suggested sites may be shown. It used to be important to show the exact wording using a + sign in the case of a phrase to indicate they were connected, for example if you were looking for golden retriever it would be advisable to use the + to avoid being given separate answers for each word. However modern search engines are much more flexible, but still be careful; if you type Manchester you could find yourself looking at something in the US!
- using the favourites or bookmark facility which enables you to click directly onto the web address. In order to set up a bookmark, log onto the relevant site and then click the appropriate icon; it is advisable to divide these details into folders so that they can be found easily, eg financial for your bank account and credit cards
- clicking on a link shown on the web site. This may be merely to a new page or a new address shown on

the web site. A link may also be provided by copying a web site address to an e mail (see below)

You can return to a previous web site or page by clicking the previous or next arrow. If you are likely to want to go back to a previous site it is also possible to open a new tab so you can move easily between a number of sites.

Internet safeguards

In addition to installing security software there a number of measures which should be taken to keep your computer and personal information secure including:-

- using In Private/Incognito which hides browsing history and cookies. It can only be turned on for each session, not permanently
- be very careful when downloading files or programs; if you do not know the web site or have any doubts about it do not proceed
- use common sense in deciding what personal information you show on line, eg on Face book.

Buying on the net

Many people are wary of buying anything on the internet but with more and more business being done this way it would be pity to lose out merely due to preconceived principles. All the major reputable retailers and suppliers of goods and services have extensive web sites which are easy to surf and are secure systems for payment - just look for the padlock sign to make sure that it is an ISIS approved secure site.

Obviously there can be no absolute guarantee that your bank account or credit card details will not be hacked, but the if this does happen and you do not do anything negligent you are unlikely to suffer any significant loss as they will refund you. In addition these companies are increasingly introducing additional verification procedures.

Passwords

It is of the utmost importance that you keep your passwords secret. Everyone has a different way of doing this, some better than others! Advice normally recommends that you do not use the same password for different sites, and at the same time do not keep a written record of these passwords. This is fine in principle but particularly as we register on more and more sites (perhaps 50 or more) and get older we find it more difficult to remember. As a result some compromise may be necessary. For example you might use one password for sites which are used for information only, but make sure that strong passwords are used for sites which contain more sensitive information, eg credit cards details. These apply to e mail as well as web sites.

The main recommended principles for strong passwords include:-

- they should of a reasonable length, at least 10 characters
- they should be a mixture of upper and lower case letters, characters and numbers and make no sense, for example spelling a word backwards
- they should be as obscure as possible and not be capable of identifying the individual or their family and other personal details
- the more sensitive the information the more frequently the password should be changed.

It is now possible to join a web site called last pass.com which requires only one password and then it holds all your individual passwords. This needs further investigation before use.

E Mail

E mail addresses can be set up with an individual ISP (internet service provider) or a general provider such

as Gmail, hotmail and yahoo. It is assumed that all members of the group do have an e mail address, so setting up is not covered here. But just a couple of points:-

- for confidential purposes it is as well not to use your own full name, although many people do
- take care in setting up your address so that it is not easily entered incorrectly.

E mail accounts should come with the following features:-

- adequate storage space for saved messages, preferably on the host servers and not on your computer
- an easy to use address book for saving the e mail addresses of all contacts, and the facility to set up groups to facilitate e mailing a group of people such as members of a club
- facilities to assist in such activities as formatting text and calendars and providing spell checks
- a good junk mail filtering system. It is helpful if these e mails are held on file for a period such as a month to enable you to look through to ensure they are all junk and to correct any which have been incorrectly identified. The system should enable you to specify particular addresses and phrases which should automatically be placed in the junk folder.
- a facility to collect all messages received in all your e mail addresses into one place, for example work and private
- the availability of separate folders for all main types of mail such as inbox/received, sent, drafts
- the facility to be able to set up separate folders in which to save e mails on a specific subject

It is also possible to attach a document to an outgoing e mail from those saved on your computer. Start a new e mail and click the attach button. This will open your computer home page and show your documents; scroll down to the relevant folder then highlight the individual document and click open and the title of the document will show in the Attach field text box. This can be done with a number of files. It is a good idea to do this before drafting the message as it is easy to forget to attach the file at the end! A paper clip sign is shown against the e mail where there is an attachment.

It is also possible to copy a web site address or some text from a site or another email by highlighting the relevant details on the original record and clicking copy and then clicking paste on the new document.

Other points in relation to e mails include:-

- make sure that you enter the exact correct e mail address; it is very easy to miss such things as . or _ between the first and second name
- remember to clear your inbox periodically either by deleting them or transferring to a folder
- beware of phishing e mails which are trying to obtain your personal details. Some may purport to come from someone known to you such as a family member but do look at the subject and e mail address carefully. You should be suspicious of all e mails received uninvited from an address not known to you. If in any doubt do not open them.
- it is particularly important not to open or download any attachments or links shown in such e mails.