

Internet for Beginners, Part II

INTRODUCTION

Now that you have dipped your toe into the waters of the internet, it's time to take the plunge and actively engage in the most powerful tool ever created. Many people are content to use the internet to read the news, check the weather, or listen to music online. Yet, this is only a small part of what is possible online. In this class we will discuss:

- Creating secure user names and passwords for websites
- Web page navigation
- Advanced browser features (time savers, tabs, & toolbars)
- Uploading and downloading files
- Internet slang

SECTION I: USERNAMES & PASSWORDS

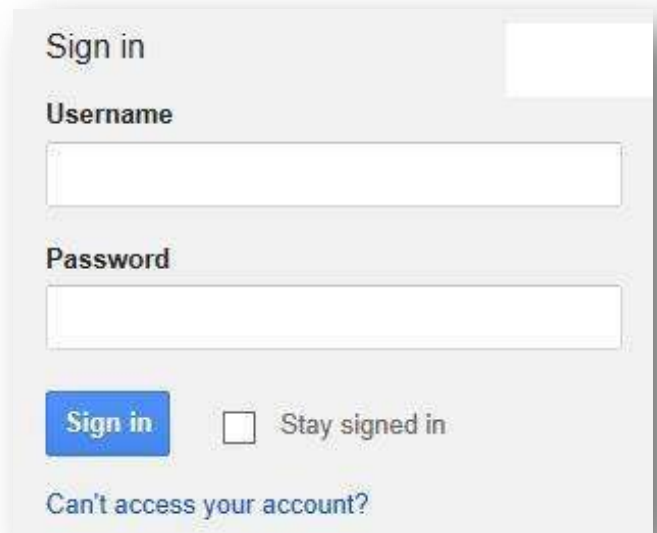
Most websites allow you to become a member (or "user") in one form or another. In most cases becoming a member is free and entitles you to greater access to a site and its services. Websites use different terms for becoming a member, such as "sign up", "join now" or "create an account." In all cases, this process involves creating a username and password. This applies to employment websites, free email accounts, YouTube and other video sharing sites, online discussion forums, and more. What is a good username? What is a good password?

Creating a Username

A *username* is your unique identity that allows you to have access to a website. Think of it as a badge that you flash before getting in to a secret club. By having a username, you can verify that you "belong" – and have greater access to the website. An important thing to remember is the word unique - a person who belongs to a site must select a username that no one else on that site is already using. If two people named John Douglas sign up for Outlook email accounts, one of them can choose johndouglas@outlook.com as his username and the other could use jdouglas@outlook.com, but they can't both have the email address johnconnor@yahoo.com. This is often a stumbling block for people when they sign up for a new site – remember to be unique!

It's also important to understand that while you may have the username johndouglas on Outlook, this does not prevent someone else from creating the username johndouglas on a different website like Yahoo. Each website has its own record of usernames and passwords. These records (called databases) are completely separate from every other website.

Your user name can be anything you like, from johndouglas to tacosofdoom1975 – as long as you comply with the specifications of the site you are joining. Most sites require that you choose a username that meets certain criteria. For example, many sites require that your username is at least a certain minimum length. This is usually specified by stating that a username must be so many characters long (i.e. "username must be at least 6 characters long"). A *character* is any symbol you can type on a keyboard, including letters, numbers, punctuation marks, and other symbols. Some sites may also require that you include numbers as part of your username, or they may forbid certain characters (such as #,?,>, or %).



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You may also choose to use your real name as your username. If your name is unique, like Jebidiah Thundercloud, you will typically find that using just jebidiahthundercloud will work as a username for most sites. Even on popular services like Gmail or Yahoo, there is not likely to be another Jebidiah Thundercloud. If your name is John Smith, however, you will find that johnsmith is already taken on most popular web services. Remember, the internet is vast. Think of how many John Smith's there are just in Ohio – not multiple that by the entire country and then the entire world! In order to create a unique username (remember usernames have to be unique on each individual website) you may need to add something more to your name. If you were born on July 4, 1960 you might find that johnsmith741960 is an available username.

Typically when signing up for an account, you will be given instructions on the type of information you need to provide. Depending on the site or service you are signing up for, your user name may be visible to other users of a web site. It's preferred to keep your user name professional, especially when searching for jobs online. Stay away from user names like SexySuzyQ.

The most important consideration though is to choose a username that you will remember. There are methods for recovering a forgotten username (or password) but these often take a lot of effort and can be frustrating.

Creating a password

A *password* is like a “key” for an account. A username identifies the account, but the password proves you are the legitimate owner of the account and “unlocks” the account for you. When you use your debit card at an ATM you have to swipe the card so your account number can be recognized. Your card number is like a username. However, you also have to enter your PIN (Personal Identification Number) to access your funds. A password is the same thing as a PIN.

Just like with a username, every site will have special requirements for what type of password is acceptable. Most sites now require at least six if not eight characters. The majority of sites now also require you to include a number or special symbol somewhere in your password.

So what makes a good password?

- Should be easy for you to remember, but difficult or impossible for others to guess
- Should not be a word that can be found in the dictionary
- Should contain a combination of upper and lower case letters as well as numbers
- For added security, throw in some special characters like # or \$.

Using a word like “computer” would be a poor password. But you can make it a little safer by adding an uppercase letter and a number. Computer1 is much better than just computer. Computer1 is even better.

As you type your password on most sites, it will never appear on screen. Your password is represented by asterisks (****) or dots (••••) that appear for each character that you type. This is a security measure to make sure no one else who can see your screen will be able to read your password as you type. The bad thing is this can make it difficult to tell if you make a typo.



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Tip: Most new computer users think they are being “safe” by creating a different username and password for every site or service they sign up for. While this is certainly safe, it’s not very practical. After all, if you sign up for 10 different sites, how likely are you to remember the unique user name and password for each one? There are better approaches.

Stick to 2-3 different usernames/passwords for all sites. If possible, maybe group them in way that makes sense to you – for example all the job applications you do use the username “johndouglas,” all bill payment sites use “jdouglas1964,” and so on.

It’s not the worse idea to occasional change your password, but again this can cause confusion. If you stick to the same root word – let’s say computer – you can make different passwords with only slight modifications. For example, Computer1. compuTer2. C0mputer3. By using only a small number of usernames or passwords you can rest assured if you don’t remember the exact combo for a site then there are only a few other possibilities.

SECTION II: SAMPLE SIGN UP FORM

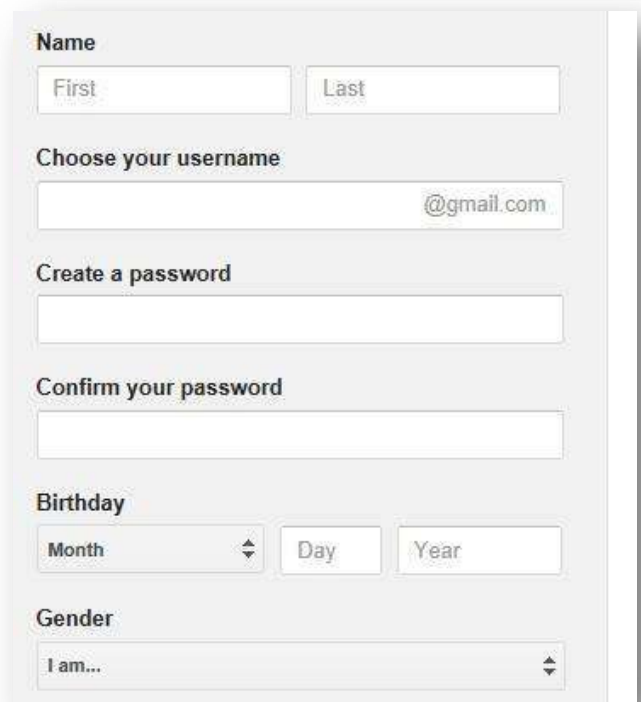
Now that we have an idea of what a good username and password is, you should be able to sign up with virtually any site on the internet. There are some things that you can expect to find in the sign-up process for each website. Some sites have a simple one step process (Choose a username and password, click accept), while others have a more complex sign up process involving an entire application. The applications can usually be divided into three main parts:

- Basic information
- Security and ID verification
- Policies (“the fine print.”)

Let’s take a look at each section, using the sign-up form for Gmail (a free email service) as an example.

Basic Information

- Your Name: First, last, and sometimes middle initial
- Gender: Male or female
- Your Street Address: Typically only if it’s a website you might expect mail from, like Duke Energy or an online shopping website
- Your city, state, or zip code: A way for the website to know where you are, without providing your street address
- Your email address: This is the main way the website will contact you—ignore this one if you are signing up for your first email account since you don’t yet have an email address
- Birthdate: To verify that you are of legal age to use the service
- Your desired username: The username you want to use for the site or service
- Your password: Typically it must be entered twice for verification purposes



The image shows a screenshot of a sign-up form for Gmail. The form is organized into several sections:

- Name:** Two text input fields labeled "First" and "Last".
- Choose your username:** A text input field with a dropdown menu showing "@gmail.com".
- Create a password:** A text input field.
- Confirm your password:** A text input field.
- Birthday:** A dropdown menu for "Month", and two text input fields for "Day" and "Year".
- Gender:** A dropdown menu with the text "I am..." and a downward arrow.

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Security & ID Verification

- A security question: This is used to verify your identity should you forget your username or password. Some sites allow you to create your own security question—for example “Where did I go to high school?” while other sites provide you with a list to choose from. Again, make sure it’s something you and only you are likely to be able to answer.
- A “secret answer:” This is the answer to your security question.
- A secondary email address: Again, in case there is a problem with your primary email account, this is a way for the site or service to get in contact with you or provide you with account information should you forget your user name or password.
- A CAPTCHA: A CAPTCHA is a jumble of letters and sometimes numbers that is used to verify that you are in fact a human and not a computer program. Many websites add in this feature because computer programs have been designed to sign up “spam” accounts, but the CAPTCHA feature requires a real pair of human eyes to read and repeat what is on screen.
- Mobile Phone: Websites increasingly ask for a mobile phone number. This can be useful if you forget your password, as they can just send you a text. If you do not have or do not wish to share your mobile phone number, enter something like (513) 999-9999

Terms of Service & Conditions

- The Fine Print: Either a complete listing of or a link to the Terms of Service and Privacy Policy for the website you are signing up with.
- Accept/I Agree Checkbox: There may be a checkbox that you have to click to indicate that you have read and understand the Terms of Service. Even if you fill out everything else in the form correctly, failing to check the “Accept/I Agree” box will prevent your account from being set up.
- Other disclaimers, policies, and legal stuff: All this information will tell you what the company will and won’t do as far as using your information, remind you of the legal responsibilities you may have to assume by using the service, and so forth.

Mobile phone

Your current email address



Default homepage

Set Google as my default homepage.

Your default homepage in your browser is the first page that appears when you open your browser.

Prove you're not a robot

Skip this verification (phone verification may be required)

Type the text:

Location

I agree to the [Google Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#)

Google may use my account information to personalize +1's on content and ads on non-Google websites. [About personalization.](#)

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Things you (likely) won't need to provide

There are a few things that you should rarely, if ever, need to provide.

- If you are not purchasing anything, you should never have to enter a credit card or banking account number.
- You typically won't have to provide a social security number, unless you are providing information to a government website like The Department of Jobs & Family Services.

SECTION III: BOOKMARKS, TABS, AND TOOLBARS

People who spend a lot of time on the computer are a notoriously impatient bunch. Therefore, there are always shortcuts and time savers built into programs. These shortcuts may eliminate a mouse click or a keystroke (or two) – and thus make your time spent on the computer more efficient.

Bookmarks

If you are using a computer at home, one excellent time saver is to save links to your most visited web sites. These links are called Bookmarks and they allow you to save a website address for easy access the next time you need it. Instead of typing out the whole address, you can simply go to your favorites and find the site you are looking for. Keep in mind that the exact wording and location for these links may vary from site to site. What one site calls "Locations" another site will call "Find a store." "Contact us" may be replaced with "Ask us a question." The point is not to look for one certain heading or terms, but to be able to identify where to begin your information quest and know which path to choose to get there. If you are using a shared computer, like here at the Library, you may be unable to save bookmarks to the browser. However, you can use an online bookmarking service like Delicious (<http://delicious.com/>) that allows you to store all of your bookmarks on the website, divide them up into categories and keywords, and access your bookmarks from any computer that has an internet connection.

Tabs

One of the features most web browsers offer is the ability to use browser tabs. Browser tabs allow you to view multiple webpages in the same browser without the need to open a separate browser window. To open a new tab, click on the small blank tab button to the far right (pictured above). A new tab will be opened to a text page called "about: Tabs." This page gives a brief explanation of tabs and acts as a placeholder for the user to type in a different website URL into the browser address bar. You can have several tabs open in the same browser window and switch between the different website tabs. To close a tab, click on the close button (X) that appears on any active tab.

Browser Toolbars

A browser toolbar is a type of browser extension, or add on. Browser toolbars add additional buttons to the browser interface to accomplish frequently used tasks. Typically, toolbars are offered as free downloads from popular sites like Google, Yahoo, Amazon, AOL, and Bing. Once downloaded, the toolbar will sit across the top of your viewing window in the web browser, and below the built in toolbar (where you will find the home, print, RSS feed, etc. buttons). So why would you want a toolbar? Toolbars can come in handy for tasks that you do frequently on the computer, like using a search engine. By installing the Google toolbar, for example, you can do a Google search from any page you are on. This saves time from having to open a new tab or browser window do a search. Toolbars also frequently have options like alerting you when you have new email, giving you the option to spell check text you have typed into a form, and allowing you to "bookmark" a website.

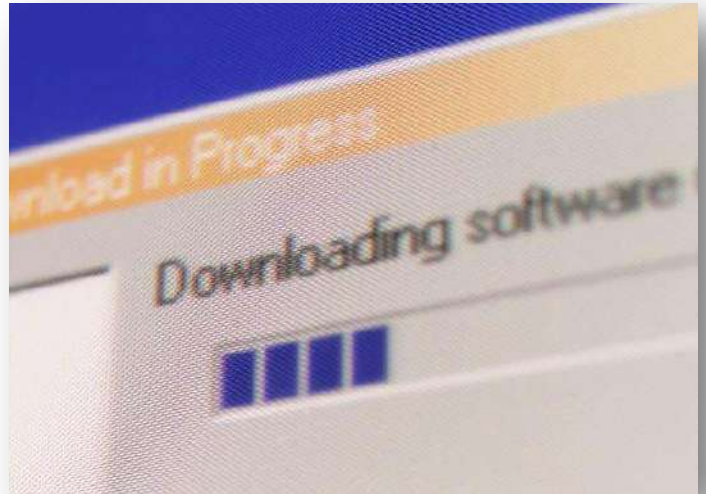
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SECTION IV: DOWNLOADING A FILE FROM THE INTERNET

Downloading is the process of transferring information from another computer to your own computer. This information can be any digital content, such as videos, pictures, or text. If the file is a picture, downloading is an easy process. First, find the picture you want to download (Figure 1). Put the mouse cursor over the image and click the right mouse button. This will display a menu (Figure 2). Select “Save Picture As.” You will then have to decide where to save the image to (generally the “My Pictures” folder will be the default location, although you may want to change it to a flash drive or other location). You can leave the file name the same if you so choose or you can change it to whatever name you would like. Click “save.”

The download will now begin. You may also come across files

with a direct download link. Microsoft Word files, for example, will usually have a link that says “Click here to download” or something similar. Simply click on that link and select where you want to save the file and give the file a name, just like the above process. For smaller files like pictures, it should take only a second or two to download. For larger files like music or videos, it may take a few minutes. Note the status bar which will give you an estimated wait time before your download is complete. Once the file is complete, you will be asked to “Open,” “Open Folder,” or “Cancel.” If you select Open, the file will automatically open in the appropriate program (a picture will open in the Windows Picture Viewer, a song in Windows Media Player, a text file in Microsoft Word, etc.) If you select “Open Folder” then the folder you saved the file in will open up (for example, the “My Pictures” folder). If you do not need to view the file once you download it, you can simply click cancel—this does not delete the download, it simply allows you to skip the process of viewing it immediately.



SECTION V: UPLOADING A FILE TO THE INTERNET

The opposite of downloading a file is uploading a file— in this case you are sending information from your computer to the internet. Common examples of uploading are adding videos to websites such as YouTube or resumes to websites like CareerBuilder. When you go to upload a file you will see a button that says “Browse...” When you click on the Browse button it will open Windows Explorer and allow you to locate the file you wish to upload. When you find the file, click on it and select “Open.” Now click “Upload” on the webpage to transfer the file. Like with a download, the length of time an upload will take depends on the size of the file. A picture or word document should only take a few seconds. A music or video file may take several minutes, depending on size. Do not navigate away from the page until the upload is complete, as this will cause your file to not be transferred properly. Open a new tab if you wish to visit another web page while uploading. When your file transfer is finished, you should receive a message stating that the upload was successfully completed.

Keep in mind that when you save a file in “My Documents” (or any other folder on your computer) that file is only recorded on the computer in front of you. Another computer will not have a copy of that file, even though another computer may have a folder titled “My Documents.” If you are interested in transferring files from one computer to another, you should purchase a USB flash drive or portable hard drive.

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SECTION VI: POPULAR ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS ONLINE

AFK: Away From Keyboard

BRB: Be Right Back

BTW: By The Way

JK: Just Kidding

LOL: Laugh Out Loud

NP: No Problem

OMG: Oh My God

ROFL: Rolling On the Floor Laughing

TTYL: Talk To You Later

TY: Thank You

WB: Welcome Back

YW: You're Welcome

SECTION VII: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Classes

The TechCenter at the Main Branch of the Public Library of Cincinnati & Hamilton County hosts over two dozen technology related classes each month. Ask your instructor today for a calendar of upcoming events or visit our website at <http://www.cincinnati.org/programs> for a complete list of all Library events.

If you are liked our *Internet for Beginners, Part II* class, you may also find these related classes of interest:

- *Computer Safety for Everyone*
- *Facebook for Beginners*

Feel free to ask for a copy of any class handout at the Technology Center desk or talk to your instructor today.

Online

The Public Library of Cincinnati & Hamilton County offers a variety of databases to all card holders which provide excellent learning opportunities on a variety of topics, including computers and technology.

Learning Express Library offers a wide variety of interactive computer classes (Complete Microsoft Office Suite, Adobe CS3, Windows, and Mac OSX). Videos and screencasts make learning easy while quizzes help assess your progress. Free with your library card. From <http://www.cincinnati.org>, click on Research & Homework > Research Databases > Education > Learning Express Library.

Universal Class offers more than 500 classes on many topics. These classes are instructed by real teachers who guide your learning and provide feedback on your work. Learn about Microsoft Office, Web Design, Computer Basics, Business Applications, and more! Free with your library card. From <http://www.cincinnati.org>, click on Research & Homework > Research Databases > Education > Universal Class.