

Browsing Basics and Beyond

Do you know you can tap the Space bar to scroll down one screen on a Web page? There are many ways to improve your experience browsing the web. Learn about keyboard shortcuts, securing your privacy, navigating the web, extending your browser, and using online etiquette. If you are uncomfortable with a computer or feel awkward online, this session is for you.

Browser Families

At the present time, there are five major families of browsers. In the following table, italics indicates basic compatibility with Blackboard, bolding indicates full Blackboard support, while shading is used to mark mobile (smartphone, PDA, or iPhone/iPod Touch versions).

Internet Explorer (IE)	Firefox	Safari ¹	Opera ²	Chrome ²
<i>IE 6</i>	<i>Firefox 2</i>	<i>Safari 2</i>	Opera 9.5	Chrome
<i>IE 7</i>	<i>Firefox 3</i>	<i>Safari 3</i>	Opera Mobile	
<i>IE 8³</i>	<i>Firefox 3.1/3.5</i>	<i>Safari 4</i>	Opera Mini	
IE Mobile	<i>Flock</i>	Safari for iPhone		
	<i>Camino</i>			
	Seamonkey			
	Minimo			
	Fennec			

¹Safari does not have access to the full Blackboard Visual Textbox Editor.

²Opera and Chrome are not presently supported by the University.

³IE 8 should only be used with Blackboard and other campus web applications in compatibility mode.

Short Cuts, Etc.

Keyboard & Mouse Shortcuts

For complete lists of keyboard shortcuts, see:

Firefox 3: <http://www.7is7.com/software/firefox/shortcuts.html>

Internet Explorer 7: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/it/access/ie7-shortcuts.html>

Safari 3: <http://docs.info.apple.com/article.html?artnum=42951>

Navigation shortcuts help you move around the web or around the browser, e.g., **Ctrl-f** for find or **spacebar** to move down one screen.

Appearance shortcuts make it easier to read or work with the contents of a page, e.g., **Ctrl +** or **Ctrl -** to increase or decrease the magnification.

Most browsers allow you to do many useful things with contextual menus (right click to open). What appears in the menu depends on the browser and installed plugins.

Tabs

Most browsers now support tabbed browsing, allowing you to keep multiple pages open and organized.

Open a new tab with **Ctrl-t**.
Open a link in a tab with a **right click**.

Contextual menus for tabs vary, but in newer browsers often allow repositioning or opening the tab in a new window. Hundreds of add-ons extend the functionality of tabs.

History

Browser history is one of the under-utilized features in browsers. Use it to recover pages or tabs recently visited for reference, or to start back at the same place.

Normally it is accessed in one of our ways:

1. As a menu item
2. As a sidebar
3. **Opt/Cmd-Z** or **Opt/Cmd-]**
4. In newer browsers at startup there is an option to restore the previous session.

Bookmarks

Bookmarks have been around for a long, long time, but in recent browsers bookmark bars and menus give a lot of flexibility in easily customizing browsers. In addition, bookmarklets are sometimes available that add functionality in a way similar to plugins.

When adding bookmarks, remember, you can:

1. Decide where to put them
2. Decide what to call them
3. Choose to tag them
4. Bookmark all open tabs
5. Create live bookmarks

Add bookmarklets to your bookmarks bar by dragging them from the source web page to the bookmarks bar.

Plugins & Add-ons

Plugins

Plugins extend the functionality of a web browser by allowing it to work with other programs. The most common are media plugins (such as Flash & Shockwave, Quicktime, Windows Media, and Real Player) and Java. These are necessary to use many advanced web pages with special features. Others may be available for programs you use frequently. These are normally documented on the product's webpages.

Add-ons

Add-ons extend the browser by adding tool bars, side bars, new features, and often by interacting with external servers. Some, such as Zotero, are virtually programs by themselves. There are many different kinds and types, serving a vast array of needs. These are merely a selection based on the author's personal experience.

Note that some browsers, such as Safari, do not support add-ons.

- ❑ **Cooliris**, sometimes also known as Piclens, enhances images searches with a graphical interface.
- ❑ **LibX** is a toolbar that installs in Firefox and IE allowing customized searches of academic libraries. Because users install versions customized for different institutions, this is not downloaded in the normal fashion. Go to <http://www.libx.org/> and click on Public Editions instead.
- ❑ **Zotero** is a note taking add-on for Firefox that is well integrated with library resources and has a Word plugin that allows easy export of notes and bibliographies. Ellis Library occasionally has classes in its use.
- ❑ **DownThemAll** is a Firefox add-on for mass downloads from the web. It can download all or selected links from a page, but is also useful in accelerating downloads.
- ❑ **Download Status Bar** is another Firefox download add-on that eases management of downloads.
- ❑ **Delicious** has an add-on that works with its social bookmarking service.
- ❑ **MiniMap** adds powerful mapping abilities to Firefox.
- ❑ **Loki** allows laptops to locate themselves and interact with the web in a manner similar to a smartphone.
- ❑ **Table2Clipboard** is a Firefox plugin that makes it simple to copy and paste tabular data from webpages into other programs (e.g., Excel).
- ❑ **Colorful Tabs** is a useful way to keep your Firefox tabs sorted out if you tend to pay attention to colors.

- Adblock Plus** helps Firefox remove add content that slows page loading.
- Foxmarks** allows synchronizing bookmarks across several machines.
- Weave** is another add-in that does much the same thing.

In addition to Plugins and Add-ons, browsers may also support:

- Themes: custom sets of buttons and color palettes
- Search Engine add-ons: to add new search engines
- Bookmarklets: snippets of code that live in the bookmarks bar and perform special functions

Settings

For Browser settings to use with Blackboard, see:

<https://courses.missouri.edu/faculty/blackboard/software.php>

To use IE 8's compatibility mode, see:

<https://courses.missouri.edu/media/ie8-compat/ie8-compat.htm>

These are tips. Contact ET@MO or the Mizzou IT Help Desk if you need help with settings in a particular browser.

Default Browser

After installing a new browser or browser version, users are usually queried if they wish to set it as the default browser.

Windows users may also set their default browser from a control panel, In Windows XP, this is found at:

Start > Control Panel > Add or Remove Programs > Set Program Access and Defaults > Custom

In Windows Vista, the location is:

Start > Default Programs > Set Program Access and Defaults > Custom

On the Mac, the equivalent is found in Safari:

Safari > Preferences > General > Default Web Browser

Cookies, History, & Cache

These are key settings in maintaining your privacy and some aspects of security. See also Appendix.

Cookie settings determine who can request additional information from our computer. Be sure to allow cookies from "missouri.edu" but be careful with 3rd-party cookies.

Cache (or Temporary Files) are stored copies of web pages or graphics that have not changed since the last time they were visited. This speeds up loading of commonly visited pages; however, clearing the cache (temporary files) can fix some problems & preserve privacy.

Closely related are settings for filling in forms and storing passwords. Be careful with these if you are sharing a computer.

As discussed above, history is a useful tool, but it can reveal your activities to anyone with access to your computer account. You may wish to delete it after each session. Also be careful with it when using tools like Weave.

Appearance

It is important to find fonts and font sizes that are comfortable for you. The defaults may be physically or aesthetically discomfoting.

Likewise, there is no point in settling for the default home page. Find one that suits your needs or set one up. There are several free services that can do this, such as iGoogle. You can even create one on your computer by saving links in Windows and then saving the page as a web page.

Tabs are a useful feature, but they can be disturbing as well. There are a number of tab add-ons, such as Colorful Tabs mentioned earlier. Most browsers also have preferences for whether to open new pages in tabs or new windows, as well as whether to open tabs in the foreground or background. The latter is handy if you want to open linked pages after you have finished reading the current one.

Pop-ups are a common feature of the web. Block pop-ups (you can allow specific sites to open pop-ups) but be sure to allow them from "missouri.edu" to prevent problems with Blackboard.

Set the download folder location and file helper (program) preferences to avoid irritation when downloading files. The former is particularly important with Internet Explorer.

Avoiding Problems

Here are a few general points.

Browser Cues

Most browsers provide visual cues such as padlock icons to give access to quick access to information on security and other features. As you include more add-ons in your browser, notice that many of these provide cues in the location bar or status bar to alert you to special features on a page. Most browsers now alert you to the presence of RSS feeds by an icon in the location bar without plugins.

Security

Browser and operating systems now provide warnings of possible phishing sites. Be aware that some of these tools can compromise your privacy and may be overly active. Sometimes it is necessary to throttle back the settings.

Be careful with your passwords. Do not make them too simple and do not use your PawPrint password for non-MU sites. Change passwords from time to time.

Particularly important for Windows users, but also for others, use virus protection such as SEP and be careful about downloaded files.

As mentioned above, it is important to watch your cookie, cache, and history settings to protect privacy, and to a lesser extent security.

Emerging Technologies - The Immediate Future

Much of the material in this section is based on the 2009 Horizon Report (<http://wp.nmc.org/horizon2009/>).

Other sources include:

- For E-Book Initiatives: <http://connect.educause.edu/Library/EDUCAUSE+Review/EDUCAUSEReviewMagazineVol/47920> and <http://www.teleread.org/>.
- For Visualization, Self-Expression, and Social Apps: <http://web.missouri.edu/~wilsong/emergent.pdf>, <http://infosthetics.com/>, <http://mediatedcultures.net/ksudigg/>, & <http://www.presentationzen.com/presentationzen/>.
- For ARG's: <http://www.educause.edu/node/163614?time=1238701050>

See also:

- Vernor Vinge's idea of "Intelligence Amplification" from his 1993 article "The Coming Technological Singularity" (<http://manybooks.net/titles/vingevother05singularity.html>).
- Kevin Kelly's "Web 3.0" presentation (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J132shqliuY>).

Three sets of core technologies will allow major changes to the way we use the web in the coming months and years. These three will enable or further several other key technologies.

1. Cloud Computing

Cloud Computing - huge data farms - will affect every aspect of computing and communication. Here I have only indicated the strong affiliations it will have with the Personal Web and Semantic-Aware Applications. The implications of this for cheap storage and massive processing power are mind-boggling.

2. Mobiles

Mobiles are a major category in and of themselves. They comprise smart phones, iPhones/iPods, PMP's, netbooks, laptops, and a variety of other portable devices.

Over the next few years, they may largely come to replace other devices as the principal delivery method for content. Their capabilities are expanding rapidly. We can expect our students to have them and use them in and out of the classroom. The challenge will be how to use them, rather than have them become obstacles.

3. Semantic-Aware Applications

These are applications that can literally understand some of the meaning of their content. In academics, one promising area is using them to augment information acquisition.

The Personal Web

The Personal Web is an amorphous concept. In this context, take it to mean the set of tools a person uses to collect, organize, and present information. It is important to understand that each individual will have his/her own, unique set of tools; however, the choice of tools is also shaped by peers, availability, and profession.

Smart Objects

These are just coming into focus. These are objects that can track where they are, provide information on their status, or on their environment. Their uses in education may range from things as simple as tracking the location of a book in a library to swarms of remote sensors tracking water quality for a class project.

Geo-Everything

More and more devices, phones, cameras, and vehicles are able to track and return their location. This has implications for a huge variety of areas, from privacy to Alternate Reality Gaming. In between, there are applications for education that include field research, guided tours, and even art. (William Gibson's 2006 novel, *Spook Country*, is worth reading in regard to locative art and espionage, among other uses of geo-tracking.)

Augmented Reality Games

Alternate Reality Games combine geo-location, mobile devices, and a story line (usually in the form of a mystery or a puzzle to be solved). These can be used to heighten student interest, but have also been used to extend case-based teaching techniques. Examples include casting students in the role of public health workers tracking down the source of an illness, criminal justice students investigating a crime scene, or having students in a FIG-type class become more engaged by solving the "theft" of a rare instrument from the campus museum.

Visualization

A picture may not be worth a thousand words, but one or two pictures might be worth a whole PowerPoint. A huge variety of tools can be used to create visual representations of the vast amounts of information and data with which we must now cope.

E-Book Initiatives

E-book initiatives by publishers, libraries, and other organizations are making a wide variety of content available. Since last fall, the number of people reading e-books in some form has increased considerably. Meanwhile, textbooks are increasingly going electronic.

Social Apps

Social Apps include not just Facebook and MySpace, but any application that allows sharing or collaboration. This is a category that continues to grow and grow. Within the next year or two, we are likely to see social elements in most programs and web applications.

Self-Expression

I have used this as a catch-all term for blogs, videos, images, and music produced and uploaded to share with others. Creative expression would be just as good a term. Increasingly these are being used for course work and for business presentations and communications.

Appendix: Clearing Private Data

Internet Explorer:

1. Open **Internet Options** from the IE Tool menu.
2. About halfway down the dialog that opens, there will be a section marked **Browsing History**.
3. Click the **Delete** button in that section.
4. Click **Delete Files** in the section marked Temporary Internet Files and confirm the deletion. This may take a couple of minutes.
5. Click **Delete Cookies** in the section marked Cookies and confirm the deletion.
6. You may also wish to delete the **History** or other stored information.
7. Click **OK**, then **OK** again.

Note that in IE 8, it is possible to check the boxes for several of these options at once, then click Delete.

Firefox

1. Open **Options** under the Firefox Tools menu. (Mac, open **Preferences** in the Firefox menu.)
2. Click on the **Privacy Tab**.
3. In the **Private Data** section and click on **Clear Now**.
4. A dialog box will open. Make sure that **Cache** and **Cookies** are checked. (Any other items in this section that are checked will be cleared out in the next step, so you may wish to uncheck them.)
5. Click **Clear Private Data Now**.
6. Click **OK**.

You may set Firefox to do this automatically in the Private Data Settings.

Safari

Safari handles things rather differently. To empty the Cache:

Windows: press **Ctrl+Alt-E**

Mac: Press **Option+Cmd-E**

To delete Cookies,

1. Open **Preferences** (under the Edit menu on Windows and under the Safari menu on Mac).
2. Select **Security**.
3. Click **Show Cookies**.
4. Click **Remove All**, then **Done**.

To clear History:

1. Open the **History** menu.
2. Click **Clear History**.