Using URLs

Now that you know a bit about how a browser works, you need to know how to get to the information you are seeking. Web browsers use URLs to locate particular pages on the Web. The URL (Uniform Resource Locator) is the address for the site you wish to visit. For example , the address for Buckman Elementary School is

http://buckman.pps.k12.or.us

The letters http at the beginning of the URL indicate that the site is a Web server. The part after the double slashes indicates the name of the server that holds the requested information. The information to the right of a single slash is the path to the requested file.

HTTP
HyperText Transfer Protocol: a communication standard used by computers on the World Wide Web, seen at the beginning of most URLs (as http). Used for moving hypertext files across the Internet.

URL Tips

Typing counts! An Internet address must be typed exactly as you find it, with every dot and slash in place. Find out how to make the ~ symbol on your keyboard, because it appears in numerous URLs. A missing period or even the wrong case for a letter—for example, upper case instead of lower case—may result in a "File not found" message.

Web sites often change and even disappear. How can you know if the URLs on your Bookmarks or Favorites list are up to date? There are several services that will update your bookmarked URLs automatically. One such service is URL Minder, a free program that you can download from the NetMind Services Inc. Web site (www.netmind.com). The program notifies you when a URL for one of your bookmarked sites has changed.
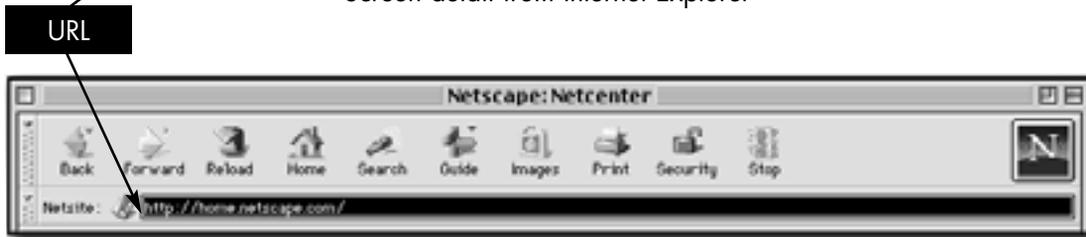
The information to the right of a slash gets more specific, so that the user can find more detail. For example, to find Buckman Elementary School's Room 100 Web site, you could page through the school site, looking for a link—or you could type its address:

http://buckman.pps.k12.or.us/room100/room100.html

The URL indicates that Room 100 has its own Web page within the Buckman site, and it has been prepared in the HTML programming language.

Screen detail from Internet Explorer

Screen detail from Netscape Navigator

To see the URL for the current page in Netscape Navigator or Internet Explorer, make sure that Show Location is checked in the Options or View menu. This displays the URL in a location box underneath the button tools.

You can type a URL into this box and press the Return or Enter key to go to that page. You need not type http://www. You can also use the cut, copy, and paste operations to enter a URL. For example, you can use the mouse to select and copy a URL from a word-processing document and then open your browser and paste the URL into the location box. Also, most e-mail programs allow you to click on a URL within a mail message, which will then launch your browser and take you directly to the Web site.