

Using Your Web Browser

By Ted Fessler

A web browser provides the instructions (software) your computer needs to obtain and display information from the internet. The major web browsers are **Chrome**, **Firefox**, **Internet Explorer**, **Opera**, and **Safari**. You can get any of these from the internet and put it into your computer. They all work pretty much the same way. I like **Firefox** and so that is the one I will talk about.

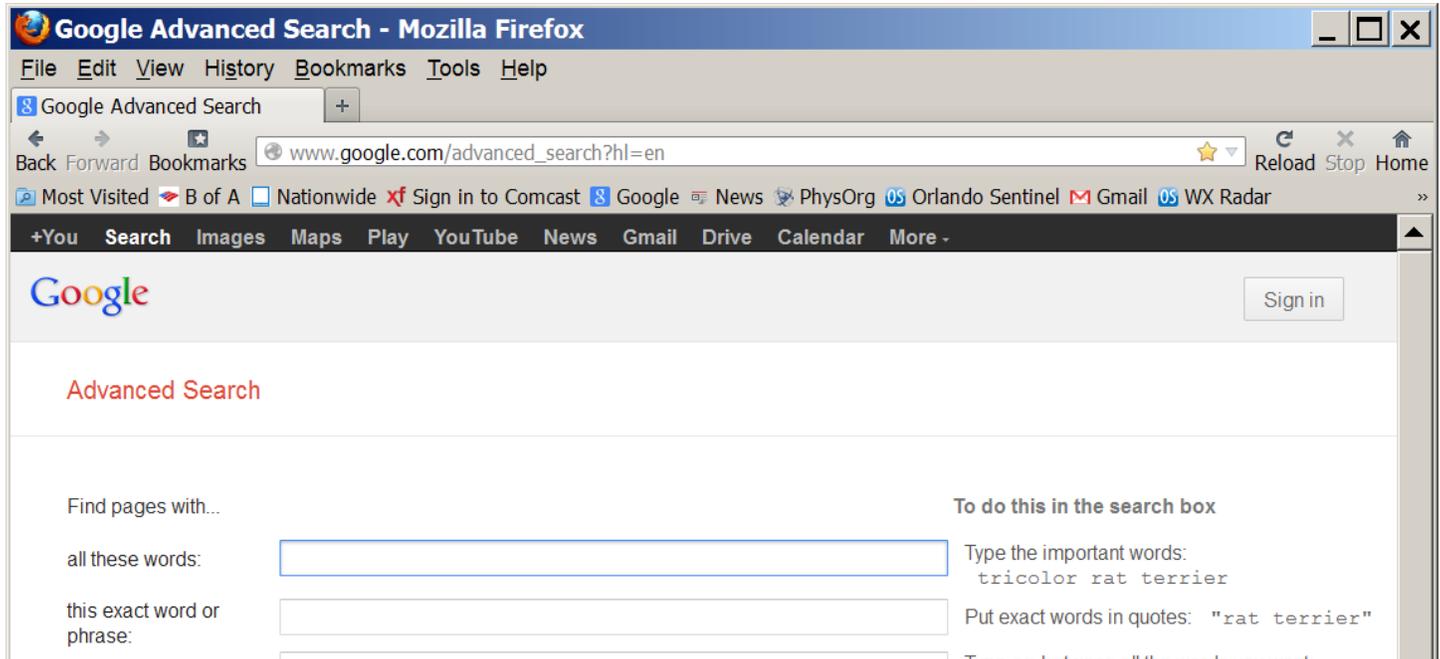
Web Pages – A Web page is a document or information resource that can be accessed via the Internet. There are billions of Web pages on the World Wide Web.

The URL -- Every Web page has a Web address, properly known as a Uniform Resource Locator (URL). If you know the address of the page you want, type it into the address box near the top of the browser window. Then, pressing the <Enter> key on your keyboard sends out a request for that page and it soon appears. For example, you can find our Computer Club website at www.villagecc.org.

Google Search – The Google search engine is a great way to find the page you want. I like to use Google's Advanced Search, at www.google.com/advanced_search?hl=en. In fact, I have made it my "home page" (the page that first appears when I click on the Firefox icon). You can too:

- Start Firefox, and go to the above URL.
- Click on Tools in the menu bar then click on "Options".
- Click on the icon labeled "General".
- Click the "Use Current Pages" button.

This is what the top of the home page looks like on my Windows XP computer:



Links -- Another way to get a page is to click on a "link". A link appears as a word, group of words, or an image that you can click on to jump to another web page. Links are what make the internet so powerful. When you move the mouse cursor over a link in a Web page, the cursor arrow will turn into

a little hand. At the same time, the URL of the link appears at the bottom of your screen. If you click on a link, a request for that page is sent to the Web. The progress in loading it is shown at the bottom of the screen in place of its URL.

Viewing past pages -- When you bring up a new page, the previous one is saved on top of a page "stack". You can bring up previous pages in the stack by using the back button (a left arrow icon labeled "Back" that appears near the top left corner of the browser screen). Clicking the back button is like removing the top page on the stack to reveal the one beneath it. Clicking the button labeled "Forward" puts back the last page removed.

Just below the browser menu icons you will see one or more "tabs" that look like the tabs you would find on a manila file folder. Each tab represents a stack of previously-viewed pages and it displays text identifying the top page on its stack.

Often, clicking on a link will automatically display a new tab. You can also start a new tab by clicking the + icon to the right of the right-most tab, or by holding down the <Ctrl> key on your keyboard when you go to a new page. You can switch to another stack by clicking on its tab. You can discard a stack (and its tab) by clicking on the x icon at the right end of the tab. Another way to go back to a previously viewed page is via the History menu.

Bookmarks -- There will be times when you want to save URLs so that you can bring up their pages in the future. Saved URLs are called Bookmarks. (Bookmarks are known as Favorites in Internet Explorer.) The easiest way to bookmark a page is to click on the star icon at the right end of the address box. The star icon will turn yellow and a bookmark for the page you're on will be created in the "Unsorted Bookmarks" folder. To change the name of a bookmark or save it in a different folder, click the yellow star a second time and an "Edit This Bookmark" dialog box will appear. In this box you can change any of these items:

- **Name:** This is the name that Firefox displays for the bookmark.
- **Folder:** The name of the folder to store your bookmark in. By clicking the ▼ icon at the end of the box, you can select a folder from the menu that appears (for example, the Bookmarks Menu or Bookmarks Toolbar). You can also select "Choose..." to display a list of all bookmarks folders. When you select Choose..., you will also see a "New Folder" button. By clicking it you can create a new folder with whatever name you desire.
- **Tags:** You can use tags to help you search through and organize your bookmarks (for more advanced users).

To see all of your bookmarks, click on the icon labeled "Bookmarks". (If you don't see this icon, open the View menu, click "Toolbars" then click "Bookmarks Toolbar".) You will notice that one of the folders is named "Bookmarks Toolbar". The bookmarks in this folder will appear in a toolbar near the top of the browser screen. Put your most-often used bookmarks in this folder.

Font size – If you are having trouble reading the text on a web page, you can change the size of the letters by holding down the <Ctrl> key on the keyboard and rolling up or down the wheel on your mouse. Or you get the same result by pressing the <+> or <-> keys on your keyboard while holding down the <Ctrl> key.