

ONLINE INFORMATION SKILLS

Understanding the Internet

Online information skills means learning to use the internet and search engines in the most efficient and effective way. It means understanding and learning to retrieve, evaluate and use information in the best possible way. Understanding how the Internet is made up and how it works is vital. It is important to understand that the internet is a connection of various computers world wide through a telecommunications link and the World Wide Web is a system of hypertext documents sitting on the Internet. These documents can contain text, graphics, photographs, pictures, videos and sound.

Every resource on the web has a URL [Uniform Resource Locators] also known as 'Website Address'. A URL has 3 parts to it -

Protocol + Domain Name + Path to file/resource (directory) - this can be more than 1

e.g. http://www.channel4.com/food/recipes/chefs/nigella-lawson/pasta-with-meatballs-in-tomato-sauce-recipe_p_1.html - what does this address mean, see the table below

http	Transfer protocol [type of information being transferred]
www.channel4.com	Website name or host name
Channel4	Second level domain name
com	1st level domain name – this tells us the location or organisation or the audience whom the site is aimed at.
food	Directory name
recipes	1 st Sub directory name
chefs	2 nd Sub directory name
nigella-lawson	3 rd Sub directory name
Pasta-with-meatballs-in-tomato-sauce p 1	File name
html	Format the resource is written in

Other important top level domain name you should be aware shown in the table below

Domain	Type of website
.edu	Educational site (usually a college or university) e.g. www.princeton.edu
.gov	Government site .gov usually followed by country code e.g. www.direct.gov.uk
.com	Commercial business site e.g. www.google.com
.co	Commercial site usually followed by country code e.g. http://www.bbc.co.uk
.mil	Military sites e.g. www.navy.mil
.net	Network or internet or providers e.g. www.ukwebsites.net
.org	Non-profit organisations and others e.g. www.amnesty.org
.info	Information e.g. www.freegan.info
.biz	Business e.g. www.dramaclases.biz
.int	International e.g. www.who.int
.ac	Academic colleges and universities e.g. www.le.ac.uk

Internet documents are stored in a file format and the most common ones are listed below

File type	Type of documents
html	Text e.g. a word documents
tif	Mostly images e.g. Photographs, illustrations
jpg	Mostly images .e.g. Photographs, illustrations
gif	Mostly images e.g. Photographs, illustrations
bmp	Mostly images .e.g. Photographs, illustrations
mpeg	Mostly music and video files

Many domain names also provide two letter country codes showing the origin of the resource e.g.

Domain Country Codes	Country Name	Domain Country Codes	Country Name
.uk	United Kingdom	.bd	Bangladesh
.us	United States of America	.de	Germany
.ca	Canada	.fr	France
.in	India	.es	Spain
.pk	Pakistan	.jp	Japan
.sa	Saudi Arabia	.za	South africa
.eg	Egypt	.au	Australia
.ru	Russia	.pl	Poland

In the current digital age, the internet provides information or sources of information fast, promptly and conveniently. However, the internet is a huge, complex information superhighway and the quality of information and sources of information is variable, therefore, any information or sources of information needs to be carefully selected, explored and evaluated before being used.