Boot camp : **Archive**

Bootcamp 267: Internet Explorer - hints and tips
(Filed: 19/03/2003)

COMPLETE BOOTCAMP ARCHIVE

Top traumas solved by Rick Maybury

Top tips
Jargon filter

We've reached the halfway point in this brief roundup of hints and tips for popular PC applications and, this week, it's the turn of Internet Explorer. Incidentally, they've all been tested on IE version 6 but most of them should work on version 5 without any problems.

IE has its fair share of shortcomings and comes in for a lot of stick, but there's still nothing to equal it on flexibility and compatibility with all the Internet has to offer.

However, because IE is so widely used it has become a target for hackers and viruses. Security is a big concern for a lot of people, so make sure you have the latest Critical Updates installed either automatically or by regularly visiting the IE homepage on the Microsoft web site at: http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/default.asp. (In IE6 auto update is enabled from Internet Option on the Tools menu. Select the Advanced tab and check the item 'Automatically check for updates...')

If you are still using IE versions 4 or 5 it's worth considering upgrading to IE6 but only if you are using Windows 98 onwards, and please read the installation notes first!

Generally speaking, IE is quite reliable but when it does go wrong it can bring Windows crashing down

EXTERNAL LINKS
Internet Explorer 6 - Microsoft
Support - Poweroid.com
International IT company database - Poweroid
Drivers, driver downloads - Poweroid
Support - Symantec
Support - Microsoft
Technical database (knowledge base) - Microsoft

around it. Fortunately most problems are easily resolved, either with the Repair utility, uninstalling and reinstalling, or reverting to an earlier version (if available).

If IE starts playing up the first thing to do is go to Add/Remove Programs in Control Panel, double click on Microsoft Internet Explorer and the option to Add, Repair or Restore will appear.

There's a lot you can do to improve the way IE looks and functions. Try increasing the area of the desktop by reducing the size of the toolbars and icons at the top of the screen. Simply right-click on an empty area of the toolbar and select Customize. In the Text Options drop-down menu choose 'Selective Text on Right' or 'No Text Labels' and underneath, under Icon Options, choose 'Small Icons'.

You can also use the Customize menu to add and remove items from the toolbars, or move them to more convenient positions.

Another quick way to increase the size of the desktop - handy if you can't see the whole of a web page - is to press the F11 key, which toggles the display between a normal and full-screen display.

You probably know that you can bookmark any page by adding it to your Favourites list, but if you have several web sites that you visit frequently you can call them up with a single click from an icon on the Links toolbar (if it's not showing, enable it from the View menu, select Toolbars then select Links).

To add a web site, go to the page then drag the icon in the address field onto the Links toolbar. To remove or shorten the name of a Link (so you can fit more on the bar) right click on the icon and select Rename or Delete.

If you haven't already done so, get a 'wheel' mouse: they make web surfing so much easier (and they come in useful in many other programs as well). The wheel lets you scroll up and down through documents far quicker than using a mouse pointer on the scroll bars on the side of the page. A wheel mouse has other uses in IE. If you can't read the tiny words on some web pages, you can resize text ’on the fly’ by holding down the Ctrl key and using the wheel to increase or decrease the font size.

Google (www.google.co.uk) is, without doubt, the best search engine on the web and you can make it even more accessible by adding a Google Toolbar to your browser.

This puts a Google search window on every web page. You’ll find a link to it on the Google home page under Services and Tools. There are actually two of them. One reports page links back to Google for ratings purposes, so if you are concerned about privacy I recommend that you choose the version ’Without Advanced Features’; it’s fully explained before the download proceeds.

Finally, two major gripes. The first is when you click on a page link and another IE window opens but it’s not maximised. We’ve covered this in the past and published several solutions but here’s one that seems to work quite well.

Click the link to open a new page and straight away close the first IE window. Use the mouse to drag the borders of the new window to full screen - do not use the Maximise button! Finally, hold down the Ctrl key and click the close window ’X’ in the top right corner of the window.

The other annoyance is pop-up advertisements and banners. After numerous experiments I finally have them both under control. The best pop-up stopper I’ve found to date is Free Surfer: there’s no configuration and it’s free. The latest version can be downloaded from:
http://www.kolumbus.fi/eero.muhonen/FS/Index.html

My firewall program takes care of banner advertising. I use Agnitum Outpost (freeware http://www.agnitum.com/products/outpost/). You have to teach it which sites are downloading the rubbish.

To do so, watch the bottom left hand corner of the IE browser window and when banner ads are loading look for web addresses like ’adclick.com’,

’doubleclick.net’ and so on. Add these addresses to Outpost’s Content Blocking list (Options > Plug In Setup > Content). Web pages load faster and a simple message panel replaces the ads.

Jargon filter

Critical Updates

Downloadable files provided by software companies that fix problems or security loopholes in programs.

Search Engine

Internet sites that seek out information, by topic, keyword or name.

Spam

Unwanted and unsolicited junk email.

Return to top

Top tips

If you have several web sites on your Favorites list that require passwords to access, but you don’t want them to be automatically remembered, here’s a trick to make them easily accessible, but hidden from normal view. Open your Favorites list, right-click on the entry for a site that needs a password and select Rename. Press the space bar a half dozen or so times to enter in some blank spaces then type in your password; you can jumble or reverse the order if you’re really cautious. Because of the width of the Favorites list your password won’t normally be visible but you can show it by dragging the Favorites list border a few centimetres to the right.

Next week: Outlook Express Hints & Tips