

GETTING CONNECTED



This document also available in HTML

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USING COMPUTERS FOR HEALTH PROMOTION

Communicating with the general public is a major aspect of health promotion work. Communicating with each other, among the communities we work with and accessing information are overlooked foundations in health promotion work. Emerging electronic venues of the Internet, e-mail and Intranets have opened new opportunities for health promotion to reach wider audiences and collaborate with others around the world. These technologies are changing the ways we work, our communications strategies and relationships. Mike Nelson remarked in a report to Health Canada on the new information technologies that "it is important to think about how health promotion wants to use these technologies and what role to play."

This resource package introduces you to the basics of getting connected to Internet. It introduces the core tools for

working on-line, such as e-mail, electronic discussion groups, and finding health promotion web-sites. Many of the issues and resources relevant to the area of computer technologies and health promotion, such as access, training and support, and quality of information, cannot be covered in this brief introduction. Additional resources in print and in electronic format are suggested for further exploration.

Using the Internet

The Internet is a new world for many people. It is very much like the familiar technology we use everyday – the phone system. If the phone number you dial is connected to the system, you can reach it, and talk to anyone who answers the phone. The Internet is the same, but there is a computer at each end, which is linked to thousands of computers in

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What Can Health Promoters do On-line?

- **Inform** - we can use email to send complex messages and materials to each other within a matter of minutes. E-mail can be faster than fax machines and much cheaper, especially across dispersed areas.
- **Communicate** - We can communicate with hundreds of people at the same time on our own time, for only the access charges of our Internet Service Providers. Through list-servs, usenet groups, electronic conferences and newer venues like Intranets, we can exchange information and news.
- **Collaborate** - We can use e-mail and similar on-line venues for working together and ensuring ongoing discussions within and between our organizations. A group that uses email lists can meet together on-line, share workloads, and work on drafts of proposals and reports.
- **Research** - We can use the search engines of the internet, and the archives of email lists to find current and unpublished documents, people and new information for our work.

Internet Connection Glossary

Modem: the device that allows your computer to talk to other computers over a phone line. Modem speed [or baud rate] ranges from about 2400 to 56,000 bytes per second. Faster modems save you money if you pay for your connect time.

Communications Software: the program to help your computer to talk to the modem and to other computers

Graphical access: a Windows or Macintosh environment that supports images and mouse navigation.

Text-only access: an operating environment that uses characters (instead of images) to get around.

Dial-up connections: where you use your computer, a modem and a phone line to dial another computer that connects you to the Internet

Comercial Online Service: including CompuServe, AOL and Sympatico. These online services are providing access to the Internet to subscribers as well as their own network with a range of resources, tools and web-sites.

Internet Service Provider (ISP): an organization that provides Internet access for a fee, plus a range of other services and support. ISPs offer different types of connections.

1. Dial-up shell accounts – a text-only Net interface, used with older computers, slow modems or only for e-mail; especially common with freenets.

2. SLIP/PPP (Serial Line Internet Protocol or Point-to-Point Protocol) for text and graphics on a dial-up Internet connection, the most common type of connection. Using a suite of communications protocols called TCP/IP (Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol), these accounts make your computer a 'node' on the Net.

Server: a computer that provides a service to another computer.

For more terms see:

<http://www.matisse.net/files/glossary.html>

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ways that let other users call them up. It is a 'network of networks'. The Internet is a means for computer networks and individual computers to link in a world-wide network.

If you haven't started using the Internet yet, you probably think of it as an add-on to an already over-crowded day. Once you get into it you will likely find it an invaluable resource, helping you to communicate with people and retrieve information quickly and efficiently. The challenge comes in making effective use of the Internet to achieve the goals we set for health promotion work.

There are several key questions that health promoters need to consider:

- How do we access the Internet – what special equipment and software do we need?
- How do we conduct ongoing conversations through the Internet that strengthen our work instead of draining away time?
- What information can we get through the Internet that isn't readily available elsewhere? How can we find and use it?
- What supports do we need to help us continue to use the Internet for our work?

Getting Connected

Before you can start sending E-mail and checking out all the interesting web-sites online, you'll need:

- A computer
- A modem to link your computer to your telephone line
- Some basic software
- An Internet account from an Internet Service Provider (ISP)

If you do not already have an Internet connection, then you will run into some new jargon. You will most likely be connected to the internet with a SLIP/PPP account through an Internet Service Provider (ISP), or through a national commercial online service. If you are getting connected at work, you still need to know these terms as most individuals and small organizations face these decisions when they wish to access the Internet.



Choices & Challenges

The first step in the process of connecting is the decision about how you want to get at all the resources offered online. Text-only or graphical access choices depend upon the computer hardware and operating system you have, your communications needs, the level of effort you can make, and your budget!

Choosing Hardware

The computer – As a rule, you need a more powerful computer to access graphics online, while any computer can be used for text only access. An older and slower machine (ie. a 286) may be hard to setup. For fully graphical access users PC users will need:

- At least a 486-66mhz PC running Windows 3.1 or a Macintosh LC2.

A Checklist for Support!

- Manuals that are comprehensive, clear and easy to read
- Technical support open at least 12 hours a day during the week and part of the weekend, and take less than 30 minutes to reach someone
- A computer whose box cover is easy to open and close
- Fast, on-site service available when the system crashes

- At least 8 megabytes of memory (RAM) and good sized hard drive (540 megabyte for PC hard drive; 80-100 megabytes for the MAC)
- At least a 14" monitor
- A modem – at least a 14.4 mhz modem, preferably 28.8 or greater, either internal or external

Additional considerations: a VGA video card for the PC, a sound card for audio files and 3 – 5 slots for peripherals such as CD-ROM.

Communications Software

You need to be able to tell your computer and modem how to talk to each other and how to connect to the outside world. The price of such software ranges from free (no manual, but a file for set-up information) to about \$250 with manuals, upgrades and access to technical support.

For text only access there are brand names such as ProComm or SmartCom.

For graphical access you can buy 'bundled' software with all the programs you need in one package for:

- Dialing your modem and activating the internet communication protocol (Connect!)
- Accessing graphical resources like World Wide Web (WWW) pages

(Netscape, Explorer)

- Reading and writing your mail (Eudora Pro)
- Accessing the text-based resources (Telnet)
- Transferring files (FTP)

The Internet Service Provider (ISP)

If you choose to go with a local service provider, consider a few basic questions and tips to help you:

Service – what quality of service will you get? Check on busy phone lines, being put on hold, system crashes. Are there long waits to access the WWW? What does it cost? Do the costs vary between 'prime time' and 'after-hours'?

Support – What type of support do they offer? When are they available – 7 days a week, evenings? Do they provide plain language guides to make access easy for new users?

Access – what type of access are you buying – graphical or text? What speed is their server and their connection? How many phone lines do they provide? A provider should have a large number of lines .

Software – Does the service provide tools (e-mail, browser, FTP) to its subscribers? If so, at what cost? Does the e-mail system permit you to organize your mail into folders?

Taking the time to understand these questions will help you to select the your best provider.

ISPs charge a fee for the service of providing Internet access. Charges vary and can depend on: type of connection; modem speed; level of service. Some ISPs charge for each hour that a user is connected. Other service providers charge a flat fee for unlimited connection time.

There are many sources of information about Internet Service Providers via the World Wide Web. Two sources are:

<http://thelist.iworld.com/>

<http://www.boardwatch.com/isp>



You're Online - Now What?

Once you have your Internet account, you need to hook your modem up to your computer and phone line, install your communications software and make sure that the modem and software are talking to each other. Connecting is a matter of trying, and if it doesn't work, checking the connections, cables or settings and trying again. You should:

- Expect some start-up difficulties
- Set aside at least a half-day to get everything going.
- Get help from a friend or colleague familiar with connecting
- Experiment by sending e-mail to yourself

Getting familiar with the on-line world of e-mail, discussion groups and the World-Wide Web can be done in the context of improving your health promotion skills and broadening your networks. For

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example you will be able to subscribe to an e-mail list on health promotion such as CLICK4HP, receive regular on-line health information newsletters such as OHPE, follow 'links' in these bulletins and lists to Internet sites and search for new resources and references. The rest of this resource package introduces you to some of the key elements of this on-line world. Look at some of the Resources for more information.

You should think about:

- How will you be using the system?
- How will it change the way that you work?
- How is your organization exploring on-line communications?
- How much access does your organization provide staff and volunteers?
- How is the growth of the Internet affecting your services?

E-mail:

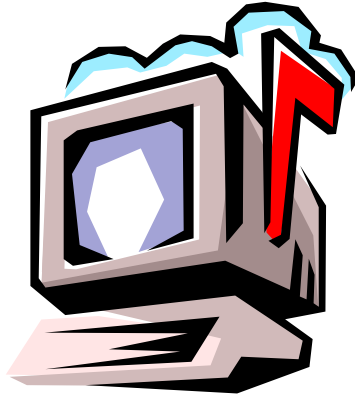
The most important Internet system you need to understand is electronic mail or E-mail – it is what you will be using the most, and what most of the people you need to reach will have available to them.

E-mail has become the fax of the late 90s, the cost-effective means of communication and distribution of information. E-mail can be used for sending files anywhere in the world, engaging in discussions through public listservs, and networking.

THE BASICS OF E-MAIL

Communicating with individuals is simple enough, once you know their online address and have established your own address, and have practiced sending and replying.

The e-mail message has three parts: the



message header, the body and the signature. The header contains information such as its sender, the subject, date and addresses of other people sent copies.

A typical e-mail address has the user's name and the domain where the user is based separated by the @ symbol. The domain name usually identifies the name of the organization, business, network provider, university or government institution. Many host-names end in a 3 or 4 letter identifier. The common 3 letter identifiers used in Canada include:

- .net – network resource
- .org – non-profit organization
- .com – commercial organization

You may also see 4 letter identifiers as on.ca (Ontario, Canada), or government identifiers as gov.on.ca (government) or city.guelph.on.ca (municipality). Your e-mail addresses are an important part of your networking and contacts. Become familiar with the addressing aspect of your e-mail program and whether it uses 'nicknames' or aliases' and whether you can create group addresses for sending messages to a group.

The message body contains the text of the message you create. You can also use e-mail to send documents, programs and pictures as attachments, or encoded using MIME or UUencode to transmit the binary file. It is very important to note

that if you are sending messages with an attachment, the recipient must have the same application or program you have used, in order to read the file.

Your e-mail program makes it possible for you to send mail to others and read mail that arrives, identifying the sender, date, subject and other information. Any e-mail program allows you to: *read* a message; *create* a new message; *reply to* a message; *forward to* another user; *delete* a message; *save* it and *sort* messages. These are important functions to know and to test.

You will probably be checking your e-mail regularly. If you join e-mail lists (like CLICK4HP) to network with like-minded people around the world, your e-mail can increase significantly. Much of what you get you'll read and delete. Some of it you'll file. There are a couple of things that will enhance your use of e-mail – etiquette (see box) and how to find people on e-mail (See Resources section for more information).

LISTSERVS & Mailing Lists

E-mail has created the opportunity to reach hundreds of people at one time through the use of Internet mailing lists such as *LISTSERVS*. These lists allow e-mail discussions among a group of people. Instead of sending a mail message to one person, you send the message to an e-mail address that identifies the list. The message is then redistributed to everyone who reads (or *subscribes to*) the list.

It is through e-mail lists where people share information and ideas and explore common projects. This can create enormous amounts of e-mail, so you will want to explore what various listservs offer. The decisions that you will make are which e-mail lists you choose to

subscribe to, what they offer and how to participate in a list.

To subscribe to a list, send a message to the `LISTSERV` address, leaving the subject blank and putting your commands or query in the message body. You can easily get information about a list by sending a message to the list address and simply putting 'help' in the body. You will receive a detailed message from the computer telling you about the list and how to subscribe. For example to subscribe to `CLICK4HP` you would send a message to: `listserv@yorku.ca` [leaving the subject line blank] and type in `subscribe click4hp your-name`. The same process is used to 'unsubscribe'.

Online Discussion Forums

At least two other formats are commonly used for discussion and exchange of information on the Internet – USENETS or Newsgroups and electronic conferences. For information on the thousands of topic areas in 'newsgroups' see Resources. For e-conferences with threaded discussions,

see <http://www.opc.on.ca/conf.html>

An example of the use of a conference is the Ontario Health Resources Centres conference – an open discussion for exchanging health promotion. Postings via e-mail to:

`on.health.res@conf.web.net`.

USENETS or newsgroups are similar to many electronic bulletin boards. They are ongoing discussion groups on a huge variety of topics and issues. Special software is needed to subscribe to and use newsgroups, although the software is generally included with a package from an ISP or can be downloaded from the Internet. Your ISP may have a list of newsgroups they carry. You can also visit <http://tile.net> on the Internet to search for newsgroups by name to to view a large list of discussion groups and mailing lists.

The World Wide Web

Once you have easy access to the Internet, you probably will be checking World Wide Web (WWW) sites for information that you need on a day-to-day basis. Accessing information online

can become part of a daily routine, just as you scan a newspaper. But first you need a place to start, the means to navigate the Internet and finding your way home.

The Basics

Three things to know about navigating the World Wide Web are:

- 1 all the data that you seek is in a file on a computer somewhere,
- 2 the computer that maintains the files you access is a *server* and the software that coordinates it is server software, and;
- 3 each file on a Web server has an exact address of its own, described by a Uniform Resource Locator or URL.

When you first use a Web browser (Netscape, Mosaic, MS Explorer are the most common) to view information on the Internet, you will likely start at the 'home-page' of that browser. From there, you can head out onto the information highway by entering an URL for a place. A URL uniquely specifies the location of something on the Internet. URLs generally look like this one – "What's

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Kinds of Lists

Information lists: where people seek and offer specific information to each other on a an area of mutual concern.

An example for health promoters is the weekly moderated and edited Ontario Health Promotion E-mail Bulletin. For more information contact `alison@opc.on.ca`

Discussion lists: where subscribers exchange views on issues and ideas, provide leads to resources and ask questions about their common area of interest.

Two health promotion discussion lists are:

CLICK4HP: Health Promotion on the Internet – based in Toronto, an international dialogue on the uses of the internet for HP - open, non-moderated public list, co-led by Liz Rykert and Alison Stirling. To subscribe send e-mail to `listserv@yorku.ca` [leave subject blank] message: `sub click4hp your name`

HEALTH-PROMOTION: Health Promotion Research Internet Network – based in Sweden, an international forum of people interested in Health Promotion Research discussions on Internet, led by

Bo Haglund at Karolinska Institute. To subscribe, go to:

<http://www.ki.se/phs/hprin/>

Project lists: where subscribers use email to collaborate on a specific project on which all active list members are working.

For example –**Global Knowledge 97 project - GK97 Gender and Information Technology (IT)** where discussion is public in two formats: `gk97-gender`: a mailing list that anyone can subscribe to; and `gk97.gender`: a closed conference.



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New at the Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse”:

<http://www.opc.on.ca/new.html>

The *http* part tells us that we should use a Web browser to access this URL. Then, *www.opc.on.ca* is the name of the host machine that's running the Web server. The next part, */new.html*, is the path to the file on the OPC server.

Where to Start

The Internet with its hundreds of thousands of web sites can be an intimidating place. We suggest that you begin your journey at an organization's home-page that contains many links to resources and tools for searching and navigating the Internet. One place is the Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse <http://www.opc.on.ca>

From there you can 'click on' Tools and find useful Internet guides. The addresses to other web-sites and resources on the Internet are called *links* or 'hot links'. The producers of most web sites have located and often reviewed and rated other sites they think will prove useful to you.

To search for health promotion groups and references, look at OPC What's New listings of new publications, references, news and web sites on health promotion information. A comprehensive listing of Ontario,

Canadian and international health promotion web pages has been compiled by Alison Stirling and is available at <http://www.web.net/~stirling/>.

For other health information sites see <http://www.opc.on.ca/opc/healthpromo/dbanglist.html>, a list compiled by the Consumer Health Information Centre at St. Joseph's Community Health Centre in Hamilton.

There is a non-profit, voluntary organization based in Switzerland called 'the Health of the Net Foundation'. It sets guidelines for medical web sites. When an organization agrees to abide by this code on their web-site, they can place an HON logo on their homepage.

Follow some of these links to different organizations and publications. Use the 'bookmark' function of your browser to add a marker to that site. The next time you go onto the Internet, you will be able to quickly go to these web-sites by directly clicking on your saved bookmark.

Searching

You may want to use the Internet for research and to look for texts, documents, statistics, or to find how specific programs operate. You will need to learn about various Internet search tools and how to sort through the results to find the site that you need. Again, we suggest that you take the time to learn the basics about search engines and boolean search terms (logical search terms). Start with a web-site that has a search engine for it's own references, and a clear explanation of using search terms. For example, the National Clearinghouse on Tobacco & Health has an excellent search engine for tobacco issues.

<http://www.cesh.ca/ncth/>

To search for an article, choose a subject, then enter a single word, several words, or a phrase. You can get search tips, or perform an advanced search. Another way

to explore searching techniques is to use the quick access points provided by your web browser (NetSearch for example) or ones provided by organizations such as OPC's tools page. Or go to one of the articles available on-line (and in some of the print handbooks noted in Resources) about using Search Engines. One of these is Bruce Grossan's article at

[http://www.webreference.com/content/search/What Search Engines Are, How They Work, and Practical Suggestions for Getting the Most Out of Them](http://www.webreference.com/content/search/What%20Search%20Engines%20Are,%20How%20They%20Work,%20and%20Practical%20Suggestions%20for%20Getting%20the%20Most%20Out%20of%20Them)".

As Rick Broadhead and Jim Carroll say in the Canadian Internet New Users Handbook "*Thinking skills do not disappear because of the Internet. Indeed, the veritable explosion of information on the network has made this skill even more important... It is easy to find information on the Internet. But it is important to know how to deal with the information once you have found it.*" (p.151)

Conclusion

Whatever approach you take, use the time to explore, to practice and to respond to web-sites that give you a way to comment. Your Internet experiences can be enriching, if you get on the open

information highway with a roadmap, and a willingness to explore! Use this resource package as an introduction for yourself and the people you work with, to 'get connected', find the equipment, software, provider and the resources to use the new information technologies.

By participating in some of the health promotion e-lists and reading some of the resources suggested, you will be able to get a broader view of the issues and possibilities of health promotion on the Internet.

New Opportunities for Health Promotion

The Internet, World Wide Web and their communication capabilities are changing the ways we work together, how we prepare materials, how we distribute, and, most importantly, our understanding of time and place.... Concerns about the personal, organizational and social impacts of this technology are considerable. How open are we prepared to become? How do we get access to the skills and resources necessary?

Participation in listservs and receipt of electronic bulletins requires only email. The world wide web creates entirely new opportunities for discussion, action and collaborative work.

In Idaho, four counties maintain a broad healthy communities initiative *Healthwise*, which combines web based info (<http://www.hcp.org/default.htm>), nurses available by phone, public information kiosks, workshops and a handbook delivered to every residence.

Netwellness (<http://ovchin.uc.edu/>), run in cooperation with the Univ. of Cincinnati Med. Ctr., features an on-line expert.

Join Together Online

(<http://www.jointogether.org/>) demonstrates how local communities are supported through an on-line resource centre. The centre links groups

and communities while selecting and making available the most current resources.

In Ontario, OPC and the Centre for Health Promotion have set up a virtual workspace at:

(<http://health.to.opentext.com/>) using Livelink IntraNet software. Teams with members from Quebec to Alberta are testing the software and learning new ways of working.

Questions for our future

- How connected are we individually and organizationally?
- How many practitioners or researchers in health promotion make program and research information available electronically?
- Where are the searchable databases of funded projects?
- What training provides us with an understanding of these new capabilities?
- What help is available when encountering a problem in the use of these complex systems?
- How strategically are our organizations planning their system developments?

Each of us has personal stories of success and failure in using computer communications and information technology. Research and common sense show that most learning takes place

among peers. Even in locations with technical support, co-workers provide most of the initial answers.

New invention and usage shape technology. None of us is likely to invent the 'next great thing' in computers. However, we can innovate in its' application to health promotion and to the ways we work together. Those working within organizations should insist on broad participation in decisions around technology access and use. Re-examine your services and activities. Take the opportunity to shape the application of technology. Insist on it serving you, your community, and your organization. Be open to learning new skills and extending current ones.

excerpts from "Using Electronic Communications and Information Technology in Health Promotion," a presentation by Simon Mielniczuk, <http://www.opc.on.ca/~simon/presentations/HPsummer97/index.html>



RESOURCES

Print

Jim Carroll & Rick Broadhead, **The Canadian Internet New User's Handbook** (1996) \$16.95

The 1997 Canadian Internet Handbook, (1997) \$29.95

Prentice Hall Canada, Scarborough,
These two books are the best Canadian introduction to all aspects of the Internet. Information is at:
<http://www.handbook.com>

Ed Schwartz, **Net Activism: How citizens use the Internet**. Songline Studios & O'Reilly Associates, CA 1996. (includes CD-ROM disk). \$49.95
A comprehensive U.S. book helping the reader to get connected, use e-mail and lists, searching for information.

M. Nelson & NHN Consulting Group
Health Promotion and the New Information Technologies, Health Canada, 1996. Available from Health Canada, Rm. 473, Jeanne Mance Building. Postal Locator 1904A2, Ottawa ON K1A 1B4

This report critiques current use of the Internet. Two additional resources on Internet Tools for H.P. and Surfing & Searching the Internet, have old links.

M. James & L. Rykert **Working Together Online**, Toronto, 1997

A fascinating and useful book on facilitation guides and collaborative work using e-mail, lists and e-conferences.

M. Surnam **Getting Online: A CAP-C Start-Up Guide**, Toronto, 1997

A soon to be published guidebook for getting connected, finding resources and accessing electronic mail and conferences.

For both contact: Web Networks, 401 Richmond St. W. suite 102, Toronto, Tel. 800- 932-7003 or 416-596-0212,

e-mail: outreach@web.net,

Internet <http://www.web.net>.

Online/Internet Resources

Cochran Libraries compiled an excellent general introduction to the Internet with many different categories leading to extensive handbooks and detailed guides to the Internet. Start with **The Beginner's Guide**

(<http://www.screen.com/start/guide>) and look at the Overview section.

The classic introduction to the Internet is **Patrick Crispens' Road Show**. You'll learn a lot in this 27 lesson training course with practical homework exercises using e-mail. Find it at:

<http://www.mobiusweb.com/~mobius/Roadmap/>

At InterNIC there are basic '15 minutes' introductions to the Internet. These are highly recommended for use with groups and are available as teaching modules in Power-Point or HTML formats. Find them at:

<http://rs.internic.net/nic-support/15min/>

Adam Engst's book **The Internet Starter Kit** is now completely available online. It is intended to be used with the paper version, but the online version is very useful on its own. The Internet Starter Kit is available for Macintosh and Windows users. Find it at:

<http://www.mcp.com/hayden/iskm/book.html>

The Faculty of Information Studies at University of Toronto has **The Internet Guide** (TIG) a web-based course prepared especially for people eager to become quickly adept in using the Internet. It costs \$50. For a demonstration of The Internet Guide (prepared by Sandy Wood & Gwen Harris) see:

<http://www.fis.utoronto.ca/conted/TIG/Demo/>



Popular Directories of WWW sites

The Argus Clearinghouse:
<http://www.clearinghouse.net>

Maple Square
<http://www.mckinley.com>

World Wide Web Virtual Library
<http://www.w3.org/vl/>

E-Mail Address Locators:
<http://www.whowhere.com>

<http://www.esp.co.uk>

Health Promotion Web sites listings

Ontario, Canadian, International HP organizations:

<http://www.web.net/~stirling/>

Health Promotion Research Internet Network & public health resources around the world:

<http://www.ki.se/phs/hprin/>

Your comments are welcome!

Contact the **Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse** at:

1-800-263-2846 (Ontario) or

(416) 408-2121,

fax 416-408-2122, and

E-mail: info@opc.on.ca or

the Internet <http://www.opc.on.ca>