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READY NET GO ... NEWS

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Tip of the Month

Activating the Links bar in IE

The Links bar in IE is a shortcut bar for frequently accessed webpages. It sits below the main menu (and standard and address toolbars) at the top of the screen. To view or add items to the Links bar:

1. Open IE, click **View**, scroll down to **Toolbars** and over to **Links**
2. The Links toolbar appears. You'll see the word Links and Customize Links on the left side.
3. To add a webpage, navigate to the desired page, left click the icon of the page in the address bar and drag it to an open area of the links toolbar. The link is established but you may want to edit it if the name is long.
4. To edit a link, right click the link and choose **Properties**.
5. Click the **General** tab and in the box next to the IE shortcut icon, delete any words that are unnecessary to save space.
6. Click **OK**

NOTE: If the name of a link is too long, you won't be able to see any more links, even if you appear to have more space available on the toolbar.

In this case, you'll see a **Links >>** button at the far right side of the toolbar. Click the Links button and you'll see your webpage with the extra long label. Simply edit the name of the link and it will move to the active toolbar. When the active toolbar fills up, the **Links >>** button will always be visible from which you can access additional shortcut links.

Surfing the Web ... Choices, Choices

If you're like most people, when you want to research something, you open up Internet Explorer (IE), navigate to a search engine like Google, type in a word or phrase and then browse the results. For simple tasks this is what a browser does best – displays webpages so you can access information easily.

Browsers do much more than display webpages though. Good ones will help you search quickly and efficiently, will have security controls built-in and will offer many features without having to download third party software. The most well known PC browsers are **Internet Explorer**, **Firefox**, and **Opera**. It's important to have more than one browser installed on your PC because, as we mentioned in last month's newsletter, when a problem arises it's valuable for troubleshooting purposes. Let's take a look at each of these browsers and see which ones may be the best for you.

Internet Explorer

Nearly everyone uses IE or at least is familiar with this program. It comes standard on most computers because it is embedded within the Microsoft Operating System (e.g., Windows 98, 2000, XP). Because IE is so ubiquitous, web designers take time to write code that displays properly in this browser (most of the time).

Disadvantages: Security flaws – lots of them! Microsoft created ActiveX technology which allows web designers to increase functionality of their websites (i.e., Pest Patrol can offer a free online scan of your personal computer without the need to purchase or download software). Unfortunately, ActiveX technology can be a large, unlocked door for malicious entry. Firefox and other browsers do not allow ActiveX technology so while some sites may have reduced functionality ultimately they're more secure than IE.

TIP: If you use IE regularly, only accept ActiveX controls from reputable companies. Remember – when a dialog box opens asking you to download a file, click **NO** if you're not sure what will happen!

Another disadvantage is IE's size especially if your PC is storage challenged. Depending on your operating

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system and present version of IE, downloading the latest version, IE 6 sp1, will use between 11 and 75MB of space. **Note:** It is **NOT** advisable to remove IE so if you dislike using IE, your best bet is to download and use alternative browsers like Mozilla's Firefox or Opera.

Lastly, Microsoft finally offered a pop-up blocker for IE 6 in the Windows XP sp2 update. Older versions of IE can download third party pop-up blocking tools but overall, if you're concerned about security, IE is not the best browser for you right now.

TIP: If you want to continue to use IE, make sure you run and update your anti-virus and anti-spyware software often (and **backup your data regularly**).

Mozilla Firefox [<http://www.mozilla.org>]

As far as browsers go, Firefox has a lot of advantages over IE and since it's free, it's a worthy alternative. One of the best advantages is the lack of security issues. Firefox is not targeted (yet) for viruses, browser hijacks and related malicious attacks which makes it a more secure browser to use. It has also listened to people's needs and has integrated useful features into the program like **tabbed browsing** and a **Google search box** on the navigation toolbar. The Firefox program is only 4.5 MB making it miniscule in comparison to IE.

Disadvantages: Firefox displays nearly all web pages properly but when it comes to printing, especially printing frames, the browser needs some fine tuning. If the print preview doesn't look right in Firefox, open the page in IE and print it. It is also incompatible with **Outlook Web Access (OWA)** so if you use this program regularly you'll still have to use IE. **Windows Update** will only work with IE as well. So, as long as you have Windows software installed, you'll need IE to install OS and Office updates.

Another difference between Firefox and IE is in how the history section is laid out. The history section in IE groups webpages in a hierarchy with parent pages that can be expanded to view the child pages. In Firefox, all pages are visible grouped alphabetically. Depending on how you like to access data, either system may be a plus or a minus. If you visit a lot of sites and need to easily access your prior searches, then IE may be the better browser.

Bonus: If you already have a bunch of bookmarks in IE, when you download Firefox, you'll be asked if you want to import your Favorites from IE – handy if you have a lot of bookmarks neatly organized.

Opera [<http://www.opera.com>]

Created by folks in Norway, Opera began in 1995 and has steadily won praise for an efficient web browser. The latest version, Opera 7.54 has many benefits including: **tabbed browsing**, ability to **tile webpages** within one window, automatic **pop-up ad blocking**, and **voice technology integration** for shopping and navigating sites. Given the functionality of the software, at 3.4MB Opera still manages to be one of the smallest browser downloads you can get (downloading JAVA will increase the download to about 16MB, still much smaller than IE). Opera is also making its mark in the **handheld browser market** with new technology that allows webpages to be sized appropriately for mobile devices.

Disadvantages: While Opera is a worthy competitor, it isn't free like Firefox unless you don't mind seeing an advertising bar at the top of your browser window. For \$40 (US), you can get an ad-free version. Opera has a learning curve for many of its features; it can look cluttered with all of the toolbars visible; and has recently acknowledged some security issues which have been patched.

Overall impression: Opera has a lot of features and functionality, Firefox has stability, great features and is user-friendly, and IE is necessary for updates and web access if you use Windows programs. So go ahead and try them all – having a choice in browsers has been long overdue!