

# Chapter 5: Customizing Your Browser Settings

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## *In This Chapter*

- ✓ Choosing a home page
- ✓ Working with the cache of temporary Internet files
- ✓ Adjusting History settings
- ✓ Speeding up your browser
- ✓ Synchronizing Web pages for offline viewing
- ✓ Using AutoComplete

**I**n preparation for your extensive travels on the World Wide Web via Internet Explorer, you might need to make some minor adjustments. This chapter is the place to look for information on everything from how to change the way Web pages are displayed on your screen to ways to tweak your browser's performance.

## *Changing Your Home Page*

Each time you start the Internet Explorer (IE) browser, it opens a specially designated page, which it calls the *home page*. The home page is also where IE goes when you click the Home button on the toolbar. (For more on IE, read Book I, Chapter 4.)

If your computer isn't connected to the Internet when you click Home, IE loads the home page locally from the cache. The *cache* is an area of a computer's hard drive used to store data recently downloaded from the Internet so that the data can be redisplayed quickly. If the page doesn't happen to be in the cache at the time (because you deleted its files before quitting the browser the last time), IE gives you an error message and displays an empty Web page called `about:blank`. To return to your home page, you must go online again and click the Home button.

To change the home page on your computer, follow these steps:

- 1. Launch the IE browser and go to the Web page that you want to make the new home page.**
- 2. Choose Tools → Internet Options.**

The Internet Options dialog box appears. Click the General tab if it isn't already selected.

- 3. In the Home Page section of the dialog box, click the Use Current button to make the current page your new home page.**

You can also type the URL of the page that you want to designate as your home page in the Address text box.

- 4. Click OK to close the Internet Options dialog box.**

After you designate the page of your choice as your home page, you can return to that page at anytime by clicking the Home button.



If, for the sake of speed, you want a blank Web page to be used as the home page, click the Use Blank button. IE then enters `about:blank` (the name of its standard blank page) in the Address text box. You also can click the Stop button on the navigation bar as soon as Internet Explorer starts loading the page.

## *Changing the Way Web Pages Look*

A Web page, depending on the computer displaying it, can appear in a variety of fonts and colors and can use various characters and symbols for different languages of the world. The combination of the Web browser settings and the design of the individual pages control how Web pages look in IE.



The changes that you make to the IE settings only affect the way Web pages look on your screen. You don't have to worry that you're actually changing somebody's Web page.

### *Changing the text size*

You can customize your copy of IE so that you get larger, easier-to-read text, or you can choose a smaller font size that lets you see more text at a time on the screen. To change the display size of text in Web pages, follow these steps:

- 1. Choose View⇨Text Size.**

A submenu appears with the following size options: Largest, Larger, Medium, Smaller, and Smallest. The Largest, Larger, Smaller, and Smallest font sizes are all relative to the Medium font size (which is the default size used by IE).

- 2. Choose the Largest or Larger option to make the text on the current Web page appear bigger. Choose the Smaller or Smallest option to make the text appear smaller.**

### *Selecting a different font*

Many Web pages do not specify a font for the proportional and fixed-width (or monospaced) text on the Web page, leaving that determination to IE. When you first start browsing the Web with IE, it uses Times New Roman to render nonspecifically defined proportional text and Courier New for all fixed-width text. If you prefer other fonts for rendering the proportional and

fixed-width text, you can modify one of the IE character sets (different styles of the alphabet and other symbols).

To choose other fonts, follow these steps:

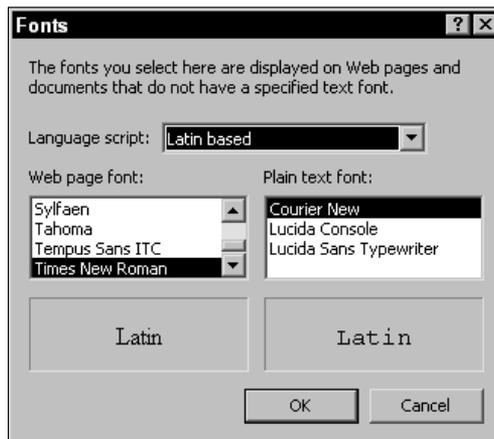
**1. Choose Tools⇒Internet Options.**

The Internet Options dialog box appears.

**2. Click the Fonts button on the General tab.**

The Fonts dialog box opens, as shown in Figure 5-1.

**Figure 5-1:**  
You can change the default fonts via the Fonts dialog box.



**3. To change the font used to render proportional text, choose a font in the Web Page Font list box.**

Your particular choices depend upon which fonts you have installed on the computer.

**4. To change the font used to render fixed-width text, choose a font in the Plain Text Font list box.**

**5. Click OK twice to close the Fonts dialog box and the Internet Options dialog box.**

### Changing the text and background colors

If you have problems reading the text on a Web page because of its text color and background, you might be able to modify these colors (assuming that the Web page author hasn't specified his or her own colors). By default, IE chooses black for the text color and battleship gray for the background (page) color. To set custom colors for your Web page background and text, follow these steps:

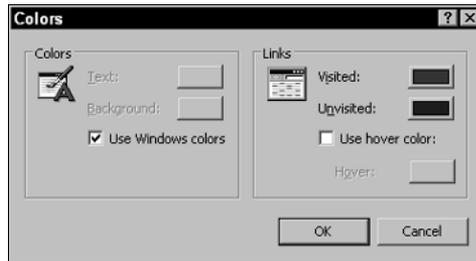
**1. Choose Tools⇒Internet Options.**

The Internet Options dialog box appears.

**2. Click the Colors button on the General tab.**

The Colors dialog box appears, as shown in Figure 5-2. In this dialog box, you can set colors for the text and background as well as the colors for visited and unvisited hyperlinks.

**Figure 5-2:** Change the color of Web page text and the background color.



- 3. In the Colors section of the Colors dialog box, deselect the Use Windows Colors check box.**

Deselecting this check box enables you to specify your own colors.
- 4. To change the text color, click the Text button in the Colors dialog box to open the Color dialog box, and then select a new color from the Basic Colors palette. Then click OK.**
- 5. To change the background color of the page, click the Background button in the Colors dialog box to open the Color dialog box, and then select a new color from the Basic Colors palette. Then click OK.**
- 6. When you finish setting the text and background colors that you want to use, click OK twice to close the Colors dialog box and the Internet Options dialog box.**

When the Internet Options dialog box closes, IE displays the current Web page in the text and background colors that you selected. If it doesn't, this means that the author of this Web page has explicitly set a style for the page, which takes precedence over the browser default settings that you set.

### ***Changing the way your browser displays hyperlinks***

Hypertext links (*hyperlinks*) are a special form of text that, when clicked, take you to a new location on the current page or to another page altogether. Traditionally, blue underlined text on-screen indicates the hypertext links that you haven't yet followed. When you follow a hypertext link and later return to the original page, IE lets you know that you've followed the link by displaying the same hyperlink in purple underlined text. People often refer to these links as *unvisited* and *visited* links. To modify the color of hypertext links in IE, follow these steps:

- 1. Choose Tools → Internet Options.**

The Internet Options dialog box appears.
- 2. Click the Colors button on the General tab.**

The Colors dialog box appears.

3. To change the color for visited hyperlinks, click the **Visited** button and choose a new color from the palette in the **Color** dialog box. Click **OK** to close the **Color** dialog box.
4. To change the color for unvisited hyperlinks, click the **Unvisited** button and choose a new color from the palette in the **Color** dialog box. Click **OK** to close the **Color** dialog box.

In addition to customizing the visited and unvisited hypertext colors, you can choose to assign a *hover* color: that is, the color that hyperlinked text becomes when you position your mouse pointer over it.

5. To have text hyperlinks turn a special color whenever your mouse pointer hovers above them, select the **Use Hover Color** check box. If you don't like the default color of red, click the **Hover** button and choose a new color from the palette in the **Color** dialog box. Click **OK** to close the **Color** dialog box.
6. When you're finished changing the link colors, click **OK** twice to close the **Colors** dialog box and the **Internet Options** dialog box.

## Customizing Toolbars

IE contains several toolbars, which you can customize to your liking. You can change the display size of toolbars, hide toolbars, and add buttons to toolbars. Refer to the Book I, Chapter 4 if you need a refresher on the toolbars included with IE.

### Changing the size of toolbars

You can minimize the amount of space that the toolbar takes up by putting Internet Explorer in full screen view. To do so, choose **View**⇨**Full Screen** or press **F11**. The full screen view shrinks the amount of space given to the toolbars — IE hides all the toolbars except the **Standard Buttons** toolbar, which now uses smaller icons.

When IE is in full screen mode, the browser adds an **Auto-Hide** command to the shortcut menu that appears when you right-click the remaining **Standard Buttons** toolbar. Selecting the **Auto-Hide** command causes the entire toolbar to slide up until it's off the screen. To redisplay the toolbar, move the mouse pointer up to the top of the IE window. When the mouse pointer rolls over the area where the toolbar would normally be, the toolbar magically (and temporarily) reappears.

To again fix the **Standard Buttons** toolbar on the screen, choose the **Auto-Hide** command from the toolbar's shortcut menu. You can also take IE out of full screen mode by pressing **F11**.

### Hiding and unhiding a toolbar

You can hide the **Standard Buttons** toolbar, the **Address** bar, or the **Links** bar. To do so, choose **View**⇨**Toolbars**. From the submenu that appears, click to remove the check mark next to the toolbar that you want to hide. You can

also right-click any empty area of the toolbar and choose the appropriate name (Standard Buttons, Address bar, or Links) from the toolbar shortcut menu. To display the hidden toolbar again, reverse this procedure.

### ***Adding a button to the toolbar***

You can add a button to the Standard Buttons toolbar to make the button's command more accessible. Follow these steps:

- 1. Choose View⇨Toolbars⇨Customize or right-click the Standard Buttons toolbar and choose Customize from the shortcut menu.**

The Customize Toolbar dialog box appears.

- 2. In the Available Toolbar Buttons list box, click the button you want to add to the toolbar, and then click Add.**

IE adds the button to the end of the list in the Current Toolbar Buttons list box.

- 3. (Optional) To change the position of the newly added button on the toolbar, click the button in the Current Toolbar Buttons list box; then click the Move Up button one or more times.**

- 4. Click the Close button to close the Customize Toolbar dialog box.**

## ***Changing the History Settings***

When you come across a wonderful Web page, you can save the page to your Favorites list or create a shortcut to the page to make returning there easy. (See Book I, Chapter 4 for more details.) However, if you forgot to save a Web page to your Favorites list at the time it was displayed in the IE browsing window, you can still get back to it by finding its link in the History folder.

By default, the Internet Explorer History folder retains links to the pages that you visited during the last 20 days, but you might want to change the length of time that links remain in your History folder. For example, you can increase the time so that you have access to Web pages visited in the more distant past, or you can decrease the time if you're short on hard drive space. You can also purge the links in the History folder to free up space on your hard drive and restore all hyperlinks to pages that you've visited to their unvisited state (and colors).

To change the History settings, follow these steps:

- 1. Choose Tools⇨Internet Options.**

The Internet Options dialog box appears.

- 2. In the History section, type a new value in the Days to Keep Pages in History text box or click the up or down arrows to select the desired value.**

- 3. Click OK.**

To purge the links in the History folder, follow these steps:

**1. Choose Tools⇨Internet Options.**

The Internet Options dialog box appears.

**2. Click the Clear History button on the General tab.**

**3. Click Yes in the Internet Options alert box that appears, which asks whether you want to delete all items from your History folder.**

**4. Click OK to close the Internet Options dialog box.**

## Specifying Mail, News, and Internet Call Programs

IE can work with other programs to add to its functionality and capabilities. Microsoft has created certain programs that it intends to work so closely with IE that it refers to them as *members of the Internet Explorer Suite*.

The auxiliary programs that are included with IE as part of the suite depend upon which type of installation you perform:

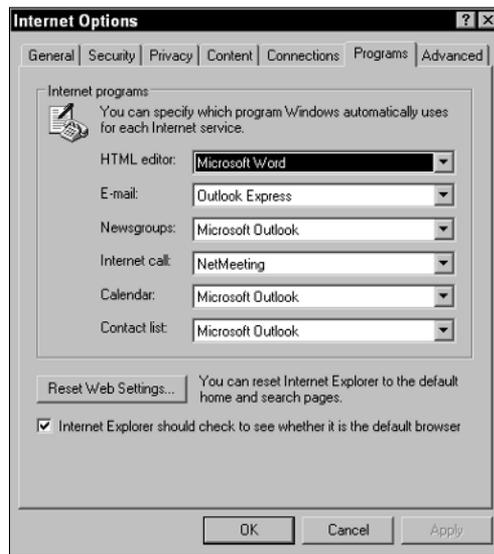
- ◆ **Custom:** This installation lets you select which auxiliary programs are installed along with the browser and Outlook Express.
- ◆ **Minimal:** This installation gives you the Microsoft Internet Connection Wizard along with IE.
- ◆ **Typical:** This installation includes the browser plus Outlook Express, Windows Media Player, and a few multimedia enhancements.

One of the most practical of these many auxiliary programs is Microsoft *Outlook Express*, which adds e-mail and news-reading capabilities to IE. If you do the typical installation and your computer is equipped with sound and video hardware, such as a microphone and video camera, you can use NetMeeting to make Internet calls or set up video conferencing. Even if you don't have such hardware, you can use Chat (originally known as Comic Chat) as part of NetMeeting to participate in online chat sessions.

To see which programs are configured to run from IE (such as the Mail, News, and Internet call programs) and (if necessary) change them, follow these steps:

- 1. Choose Tools⇨Internet Options; then click the Programs tab (see Figure 5-3).**
- 2. To change the program listed in the HTML Editor, E-Mail, Newsgroups, Internet Call, Calendar, or Contact List text boxes, select a new program by using the drop-down list boxes.**
- 3. After you finish checking over the programs and making any changes to them, click OK.**

**Figure 5-3:**  
Use the Programs tab to view or select programs used with Internet Explorer.



If you have installed another Web browser (such as Netscape Navigator) after installing IE, you can click the Reset Web Settings button in this dialog box to restore your original IE default settings for search pages and your home page. Clicking this button also restores the prompt to ask you whether you want to make IE your default browser each time you launch Microsoft's browser.

## Speeding Up the Display of Web Pages

You can speed up the display of Web pages on your computer, but unless you do it by getting a faster connection (with a modem upgrade, a DSL or ISDN line, or a cable modem), the increase in speed comes at the expense of hard drive space or viewing content. You can also dramatically speed up the display of Web pages by turning off the display of most pictures, animations, videos, and sounds. To make this kind of change to IE, follow these steps:

- 1. Choose Tools → Internet Options; then click the Advanced tab.**
- 2. In the Multimedia section of the Settings list box, deselect the check boxes of as many of the items as you want to disable to get a sufficient speed boost.**  
These items include Play Videos, Play Sounds, Smart Image Dithering, Show Pictures, and Play Animations.
- 3. Click OK to update the new settings and close the Internet Options dialog box.**

Now when you open new Web pages, weird (but fast) generic icons replace the multimedia contents that you've disabled. If you still see graphics on the Web pages that you visit, click the Refresh button on the Internet Explorer toolbar to remove their display.

After disabling the Show Pictures and Play Videos settings, you can still choose to display a particular graphic or play a particular video. Just

right-click the icon placeholder and choose Show Picture from its shortcut menu. IE then downloads and displays the particular graphic or video that you selected.

To restore the multimedia items that you disabled, click the Advanced tab of the Internet Options dialog box again and mark the check boxes to select the desired Multimedia items (or simply click the Restore Defaults button). Then click OK to save your changes and close the Internet Options dialog box. Remember that you have to use the Refresh button on the Internet Explorer toolbar to see and hear multimedia items on pages that were downloaded to the cache when these items were disabled.

## Synchronizing Offline Web Pages

To make sure that you have the most current data from an Active Channel or a Favorites Web site that you've made available for browsing offline, you might want to update the contents of your cache — a process known as *synchronization*. To synchronize individual Active Channels or favorite Web sites, follow these steps:

### 1. Choose Tools⇨Synchronize.

The Items to Synchronize dialog box appears.

### 2. In the Select the Check Box for Any Items You Want to Synchronize list box, make sure that the check box for each offline Web page you want updated is selected. Deselect the check box of any offline Web page you don't want updated.

### 3. Click the Synchronize button.

IE then connects you to the Internet and begins the process of checking each selected offline Web page for updated content, which is then automatically downloaded into your computer's cache. Synchronizing enables you to browse the updated contents (using the Favorites Explorer bar) when you're not connected to the Internet.



If you connect to the Internet over a local area network (LAN) or via a cable modem, digital subscriber line (DSL), or Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) connection (you can therefore go online at anytime), you might want to specify when and under what conditions particular offline Web pages are synchronized. (Read all about the different Internet connection types in Book I, Chapter 1.) To do this, choose Tools⇨Synchronize. Then with the Offline Web Pages folder selected, click the Setup button. When you click this button, Internet Explorer opens the Synchronization Settings dialog box.

The Synchronization Settings dialog box contains three tabs: Logon, On Idle, and Scheduled:

- ◆ **Logon/Logoff tab:** Use this tab to select the offline pages that you want synchronized whenever you log onto or log off a networked computer. Select the check boxes for the offline pages to be synchronized when you log onto your computer; then select the When I Log On to My Computer check box.

- ◆ **On Idle tab:** Use this tab to select the offline pages that you want synchronized whenever your computer is idle for a particular period of time. Select the check boxes for the offline pages to be synchronized when your computer is idle for a particular period, and then select the Synchronize the Selected Items When My Computer Is Idle check box. To specify how long an idle period to use, click the Advanced button and change the settings in the Idle Settings dialog box.
- ◆ **Scheduled tab:** Use this tab to set up a custom schedule by which selected offline pages are routinely synchronized. To create a new schedule to be used, click the Add button and use the Scheduled Synchronization Wizard to take you through the steps of creating and naming a new custom schedule for certain offline Web pages. To edit the settings for a particular default schedule, click the name of the schedule (such as CNN Desktop Scores Recommended Schedule); then click the Edit button to open a dialog box in which you can modify the current settings. (The name of the dialog box and its tabs and options vary depending on the particular synchronization schedule that you're editing.) This tab is useful for downloading Web sites you like to read when a connection is unavailable, like, for example, when you are on a long plane trip.

## Customizing Your AutoComplete Settings

The AutoComplete feature makes it easier to fill out addresses, forms, and passwords by providing a drop-down list of suggestions as you type, based on your previous entries. IE has added the capability to customize the AutoComplete settings. To customize your AutoComplete settings, follow these steps:

**1. Choose Tools⇨Internet Options and click the Content tab.**

**2. Click the AutoComplete button.**

The AutoComplete Settings dialog box appears.

**3. Select the check boxes for the items for which you want to use AutoComplete.**

Select the Web Addresses check box to have AutoComplete suggest URLs for previously visited Web pages. Select the Forms check box if you want AutoComplete to match the field values from the most recently submitted form. Select User Names and Passwords on Forms if you want AutoComplete to retain your user ID and password for sites that require them.

**4. (Optional) To delete the form information that AutoComplete retains, click the Clear Forms button. To delete the list of user IDs and passwords that AutoComplete retains, click the Clear Passwords button.**

To delete the list of Web addresses that AutoComplete keeps on file, you must click the Clear History button on the General tab of the Internet Options dialog box.

**5. Click OK twice to close both dialog boxes.**



CHECK IT OUT

### Stopping Script Debugging

How many times have you run across a pop-up message that asks whether you want to debug a Web page? Debugging is one of the most annoying so-called features in IE. If there's a bug in a Web page — that is, if the person who created the Web page made a mistake — why would *you* want to fix it? Relax if you're worried that you are at fault for triggering these unwanted Debug messages. You didn't do anything. The messages occur because IE can't figure out how to read a Web page. The person who wrote the Web page screwed up. Not you.

Fortunately, it's easy to turn the blasted error messages off, permanently:

- 1. Start Internet Explorer.**
- 2. Choose Tools ⇨ Internet Options ⇨ Advanced.**
- 3. Select the Disable Script Debugging check box (if it's not selected by default), in the Browsing section.**

The Internet Options dialog box appears.

It's probably not selected, and that's why you see the Do You Wish to Debug? messages.
- 4. Deselect the Display a Notification About Every Script Error check box.**

It's probably not selected already, but you should make sure it stays that way.
- 5. Click OK.**

You'll never be asked to debug a script again.

