# THE FORENSIC INTERNET: BEGINNERS WELCOME

## by Alfred C. Snider

Pardon the basic nature of this piece. My assumption is that you either know all of this and can go on, or you do not know all of this and have been afraid to ask. If you have built a web page before you probably don't need to read this essay. However, if you know very little about the world wide web and want to build a web page, this is the essay for you!

One piece of advice - try the free stuff first. Find out what works and what doesn't and then spend money later. Use as many freebies as you can. There are lots of them.

### WHAT IS THE WORLD WIDE WEB?

It is a loose network of computers which are all connected together into one huge system. You send "packets" of information bouncing around this global network, and it comes to an address you specify from a place you specify. A web page is simply a page of information offered to everyone in the world from some address.

### WHAT IS A URL?

It is a "universal resource locator," or an address. A URL is an address on the web where there might be some content you may want to look at. When you find a web page which interests you and you might want to go back, you simply bookmark it or label it as one of your favorites.

### WHAT IS HTML?

It is hypertext markup language, or a simple way to write web pages so that anyone can look at them easily. Every web page has "source code," the words in the text plus some commands (or tags) to layout the page, display graphics, or supply other design functions. Every word processor, for example, has hidden "format codes" which layout your document. Likewise, every web page has html code which lays out the document. When you build your web page you will do it using html code, but you probably won't really need to see it, just like you don't really need to see the formatting commands on your word processing documents.

### WHAT IS A BROWSER?

A browser is a piece of software you have on your computer which allows you to locate, visit, view, remember, and print out the various web pages you examine. It remembers where you go and displays web pages according to your preferences. It allows you to merely "click" on things on the screen in order to make things happen. If the world wide web is programming, then your browser is like your television set.

Most people use one of the popular browsers, like Netscape or Internet Explorer, but I urge people to try other browsers like Opera for PC and iCab for Macintosh. Your first browser is likely to be free, but you will have to upgrade it every so often as the technology of the web advances. Learn how to use your browser, as it is your most important tool in enjoying and using the web.

Your browser will also allow you to download things from the web, things like software, graphics, ideas from other people about how to build a web page, and manuals you might need. Try looking under the "View" pull down menus and select "source" while you are looking at a favorite web page, and you will see the html code revealed.

### WHAT ARE THE COMPONENTS OF MY WEB PAGE?

You will have text on your web pages, and you can just type that text in when the time comes. Some parts of the text will be headings while others will be content. Some text will be underlined (and most often blue), and if you click on that part of the text it acts as a "link" to another page, but on a relevant subject. Links are what the web is all about, as every page has links to other related pages and resources.

There will be graphics on your web pages as well. There are a number of formats for graphics, but most often they are either .gif or .jpg images. These are information protocols which produce high quality images with a minimum of information, thus allowing a lot graphic content to flood into your browser very quickly. Graphics can be illustrations, drawings, pictures, designs, headings, or any number of things. Some of these graphics, like .gif documents, can be crudely animated to give movement to the web pages look. Any graphics can also be a link, or the links can be "mapped" on the image, so when you click on different parts of a picture of a tree, you learn about the different parts of the plan, for example.

It is also now possible to put slide shows, sounds and music, and video on to various web pages through the use of helper applications and special html code.

### HOW CAN I GET A WEB PAGE BUILDER?

Remember, try the free stuff first. I advise people to start with Netscape Communicator because it is free and the web page builder is clean and easy to use.

### GET NETSCAPE COMMUNICATOR

http://home.netscape.com/computing/download/index.html

Download it, open it up, and start experimenting right away. Just try things out, and consult a manual only when you have to. Manuals are for finding out the nonobvious things about a piece of software, you can teach yourself the basics by just pushing buttons and picking options. Type some text on the screen and then work with it, changing its size, font, layout, and anything else you can think of. Type the name of your favorite web page and try to create a link to it in your sample document. Finally, try importing a graphic image into your sample document. Once you can make some sample documents that work, it is time to start building your web page.

### READY TO GO!

Build a web page that does something: for your speech and debate team, for your friends and family, as a tribute to your favorite artist or musician, or even just a personal "here is who I am."

You need a plan. Take a piece of paper and sketch out your ideas. Look at the web pages of others which you like (you can even borrow some of their design ideas/code). Don't be afraid to make a very

simple web page to start with.

Write your text carefully in a word processing program. Check for spelling and grammar. You don't need to show your spelling errors to the entire world.

Choose some tools for graphic design. Remember, free tools are good!

## FREE WEBMASTER TOOLS

http://www.guarding-our-earth.com/webmasterlinks.htm

Find yourself some graphics and art which you can use in your design. There are lots of freebies out there!

## MIKEY'S ANIMATED GIF COLLECTION

http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/1085/

## netCREATORS ICON PAGE

http://animatedgifs.simplenet.com/

## ANIMATION CREATIONS

http://animationcreations.com/animated/gifs_index4.htm

Don't be afraid to take a few pictures yourself, and then you can find someone with a scanner and turn them into .gif or .jpg images which can go on your web page — you and your friends can be the stars!

Now use your browser to look at your page. See how it looks. Make changes. Try using a simple graphics program to make your own banners and headings. Print it out and show it to people, get their input on your efforts. Parents will probably feel that it is both good and mysterious what the children are doing building web pages, so looking at the result will make them feel a lot better.

Now it is time to get that page on the web! If your school has a server, try to use it. Many internet accounts also come with free web page hosting. Or, you can use any one of the free hosting spots which exist on the web, although many will show advertisements to your visitors, but that's why it is free!

## EZARTS FREE WEBPAGE LISTINGS

http://www.ezart.com/freesite.htm

## WEBSITE HOSTING INFORMATION

http://www.whatsonthe.net/webhostingmks.htm

## FREEDOMWORKS FREE WEB HOSTING

http://www.freedomworks.net/

## FREE WEBSITES AT MAXPAGES

http://www.maxpages.com/

## NETSCAPE WEBSITE CENTRAL

http://www.netscape.com/sitecentral/index.html?cp=hom04p7

## NOW SHOW PEOPLE YOU ARE ON THE WEB, AND START IMPROVING

Give people your URL so they can check out what you have done. However, this is only the beginning. Web sites which stay the same are boring and people don't come back to them. The secret to having a good web site is to keep working to improve it.

UPDATE the information so it doesn't stay static, change the material and the graphics, make it a living document.

FIND NEW MATERIAL, look for new information and new ideas, things which will keep people occupied at your site.

TRY NEW TECHNIQUES, learn new html tricks, discover animated images, join groups of related sites, exchange links with other sites, contact people who have sites you like and learn from them.

CONTENT, CONTENT, CONTENT, is all important. The information superhighway shouldn't be just links to links to links, it needs to have destinations and things people can use and/or enjoy.

REMEMBER, THIS IS PUBLIC, and anyone could see your web page, so try and be sensitive to those from other areas, countries, cultures, and/or political views who might visit. It is best to behave yourself in what your web pages do, because they have your name and contact on them.

VOLUNTEER YOUR ABILITIES, find a group or charity or club that needs a web page and help them build one. Build your family a web page, or perhaps a web page for a family business. Share what you have learned.

## WARNING:

This article does not endorse or guarantee any service, software, or web site. Always investigate for yourself before trying anything on the internet.

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