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David Crowder

Coauthor of Creating Web Pages Bible



***Building a
Web Site***
FOR
DUMMIES[®]
2ND EDITION

by David A. Crowder



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Web Site***
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About the Author

David A. Crowder has authored or coauthored more than 20 books on subjects ranging from computers to historical mysteries, including popular best-sellers such as *Building a Web Site For Dummies* and *CliffsNotes Getting on the Internet*. He was selling hypertext systems back in the days when you had to explain to people what the word meant. He has been involved in the online community since its inception and is the recipient of several awards for his work, including *NetGuide Magazine's* Gold Site Award.

He is the son of a teacher and a college president, and his dedication to spreading knowledge, especially about the computer revolution, goes beyond his writing. He also founded three Internet mailing lists (discussion groups), JavaScript Talk, Java Talk, and Delphi Talk, all of which were sold to Ziff-Davis. One of his most treasured memories is the message he received from an old-timer on one of those lists who said that he had never seen such a free and open exchange of information since the days when computers were built by hobbyists in home workshops.

When he is not writing, he spends his time with his wife Angela, wandering through villages in the Andes or frolicking in the Caribbean surf.

Dedication

For Angela. Eres mi sol, nena, eres mi luna.

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Introduction

Maybe you already have your own Web site and you're not quite satisfied with it. Or perhaps you're still in the planning stages and want to know what you can do to make your site as good as it can be. You've been to Web sites that have all the bells and whistles, and you wouldn't be human if you weren't just a wee bit envious. Well, now you can have it all, too. In this book, I show you some of the best stuff around, and I tell you just how to go about putting it on your site.

About This Book

This isn't just another Web-design book. It's special. Really. I set out to write the one book I'd want by my side if I were looking to set up a really fancy Web site and not break the bank doing it. I tracked down and tested zillions of Web site enhancements and selected the top of the line to share with you. And I'm honestly proud of the results. I've authored or coauthored more than 20 books on computers and the Internet, and this one is my hands-down favorite.

It's full of things you're sure to love. It's packed with fun stuff, but it's got plenty of serious stuff, too, like how to get past the hype and really make money. You'll wonder how in the world you ever got along without having these features on your Web site.

How to Use This Book

Keep this book next to your computer and never lend it to anybody. It's far too precious for that. Make your friends buy their own copies. If you need to make space on your bookshelf, throw away anything else you own to make room for it. When you travel, take it with you. Hold it in your arms at night and tell it how much you love it.

Each chapter is a stand-alone entity. (Don't you just love that word?) You don't have to read the whole thing, and it's a rare person who will read it from cover to cover right off the bat. Go ahead — hit the table of contents or the index and jump to the parts you're most interested in. But don't forget to explore the rest of the book after you're done with the parts that excite you most. You won't regret spending the time — you'll find wonders in every chapter.

Foolish Assumptions

I figure that you have some kind of experience with creating Web pages. You don't need to be a wizard at it, just good enough to put together something that opens in a Web browser and to upload it to your Web site.

I assume that you have a favorite Web-page creation program — whether it's Dreamweaver, plain old Notepad, or the UNIX-based text editor, `vi` — and you know how to use it. So when I say to copy and paste text or save your file, you know what you need to do. Just in case you don't have a good Web-authoring program, you've got that covered, too. The CD-ROM that accompanies this book has a passel of HTML editors on it.

Conventions Used in This Book

It's all organized, I promise. Even though it's rather plebeian compared with finding free content for your site, lots of people worked very hard to make sure that this book follows some straightforward rules, like typographical conventions.

Code listings, of which there are plenty, look like this:

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
<SCRIPT>
...
</SCRIPT>
<TITLE>
...
</TITLE>
</HEAD>
...
```

HTML elements in this book are in uppercase and their attributes are in lowercase, as in this example:

```
<INPUT type="hidden" name="answer" value="yes">
```

If the value of an attribute is in normal type, you enter it exactly as shown. If it's in italics, it's only a placeholder value, and you need to replace it with a real value. In the following example, you replace *myownimage* with the name of the image file you intend to use:

```
<IMG src="myownimage">
```

Whenever you see the URL for one of the top sites I've tracked down, it appears in a special typeface within the paragraph, like this: `www.dummies.com`. Or it may appear on a separate line, like this:

```
www.dummies.com
```

How This Book Is Organized

This book is divided into seven parts. I organized it that way, with a little help from the folks you see in the Acknowledgements. You did read the Acknowledgements, didn't you? Don't tell me that you're the kind of person who reads the Introduction but doesn't read the Acknowledgements. Please tell me that you didn't miss the Dedication, too?

Each part has between three and five chapters in it. And each chapter has headings and subheadings. All the sections under these headings and subheadings have text that enlightens the heart and soul. Here, take a look.

Part I: Moving from Web Page to Web Site

Part I shows you how to transform a bunch of Web pages into a coherent Web site, including navigation secrets. It spills the secrets of how to plan a successful site from the ground up and tosses in a quick refresher course in basic HTML.

Part II: Adding Sparkle to Your Site

Part II gives you a ton of ways to make your site work, look, and sound great. It covers the different ways that you add new features to your Web site. Then it covers different ways to add search features to your site, where to get great graphics and multimedia, and how to keep your site in tip-top shape.

Part III: Good Content Makes Contented Visitors

Part III is about getting your visitors involved in your site so that they keep coming back for more. It shows how to get feedback from your site visitors with message boards and chat rooms. If that's not enough, you'll find fun and games and a guide to getting fresh content for your site, as well as a guide to the wonderful world of blogging.

Part IV: Raking In the Bucks

Part IV takes a look at making money from your site. It explodes the myths about Internet income and shows you how to really make a profit, how to get a credit card merchant account, and how to work both ends of the affiliates game.

Part V: Publishing and Publicizing Your Site

Part V shows you all you need to know about getting your site online and helping people find it. It covers Web-hosting options, getting listed in search engines, and establishing reciprocal links with other sites. It also shows how to keep in touch with your visitors without falling into the spam trap.

Part VI: The Part of Tens

Part VI is The Part of Tens. Well, it just wouldn't be a *For Dummies* book without The Part of Tens at the end, right? This part comprises 3 chapters, so you've got 30 extra bits here that tell you all sorts of wonderful things, like where to go for Web site design advice and ways to add value to your site.

Part VII: Appendixes

Appendix A is a glossary of all the tech terms that might leave you baffled, and Appendix B is a guide to what's on the CD-ROM that's tucked into the back of this book.

About the CD-ROM

I've put together plenty of nice stuff for you on the CD-ROM that accompanies this book. You'll find all sorts of things that make jazzing up your Web site easy — programs for Windows and programs for Macs. And wherever possible, I included the Web site add-ins discussed in the book.

Icons Used in This Book

The icons in the margins of this book point out items of special interest. Keep an eye out for them — they're important.



Psst! Listen, pal, I wouldn't tell just anybody about this, but here's a way to make things a bit easier or get a little bit more out of it.



Time to tiptoe on eggshells. Make one false step, and things can get pretty messy.



You don't really need to know this stuff, but I just like to show off sometimes. Humor me.



Well, of course, it's all memorable material. But these bits are ones you'll especially want to keep in mind.



You don't need to bother downloading this feature because it's already been done for you.

Where to Go from Here

Well, keep turning pages, of course. And use the material to make your own Web site the hottest thing there ever was.

One of the hardest parts about getting this book together was categorizing the material in it. Many times, a Web site add-in could have been slotted into a different chapter than the one it ended up in because it had multiple features or attributes. So when you're visiting any of the sites that I mention in this book, be sure to take a good look around. A site that has a great chat room might also have a fine affiliates program. One that offers a good series of Java applets could have some solid tutorials on Web design. A site that has good information on dedicated servers may have the best e-commerce solution for you. I encourage you to browse up a storm.

Part I

Moving from Web Page to Web Site

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"HONEY! OUR WEB BROWSER GOT OUT LAST NIGHT
AND DUMPED THE TRASH ALL OVER MR. BELCHER'S
HOME PAGE!"

In this part . . .

I start off by covering all the things that you need to know to put together a Web site. Chapter 1 shows you the differences between a bunch of Web pages and a coherent Web site. Chapter 2 spills the secrets of how to plan a successful site from the ground up. Chapter 3 is a quick refresher course in basic HTML. And Chapter 4 shows you how to design for site navigation.

Chapter 1

The Zen of Sites

In This Chapter

- ▶ Creating unity of content
 - ▶ Building visitor loyalty
 - ▶ Unearthing your personal creativity
-

“You’re a really good Web designer,” I told a client’s Webmaster once. He shrugged it off and went on to the next topic on the meeting’s agenda. Whether he was just being modest or thought that I was playing corporate politics with cheap compliments, I don’t know. I meant what I said, however, and the reason is simple. It wasn’t that his pages were filled with nice graphics. It wasn’t that the elements were finely balanced. It wasn’t that the JavaScript pop-ups added an involving level of interactivity.

None of these things — not individually or in combination — can make a site fly. The reason I was impressed with the Webmaster’s work was because he clearly understood that a Web site isn’t just a bunch of pages that happen to reside on the same server. Building a quality Web site requires careful planning. This chapter introduces you to the basic elements of designing sites, achieving visitor satisfaction, and being creative.

Achieving Unity: What Makes a Site Truly a Site

No matter what technology you use to build your site, you can make it a great one — or a real loser. You can base it on HTML (HyperText Markup Language), CFML (Cold Fusion Markup Language), ASP (Active Server Pages), DHTML (Dynamic HTML), or any other alphabetical wonders you care to work with. It may sound blasphemous to a world that’s used to worshipping at the altars of the latest high-tech advances, but the real secret to making a Web site work is simple human insight.

Determining the underlying theme

Long before you set out to choose background colors or font types or graphical styles, you must get a solid grasp on the theme of your site. The theme is the unifying idea on which everything else in your site rests. Sometimes, the theme is simple and obvious. For a corporate recruiting site, the theme is why this company is the best place to work. For a genealogical site, the theme is the history of a single family and its offshoots.

Other times, the theme is a bit more complex. For an e-commerce site, you may choose a theme of great prices and saving money. If you're aiming for a different market, however, you may charge high prices and base your theme on either higher-quality products or just plain snob appeal. The underlying mechanics of both sites may well be identical — navigational methods, order-processing systems, and so on — but the sites' editorial content and graphical look and feel would be totally different.

Your low-cost bargain site may, for example, have bright and simple graphics that show a happy-go-lucky cartoon character using scissors to whack dollars in half. The high-roller site, on the other hand, would do well with richer, deeper colors. Although both sites, as in any selling situation, need to display photographs of their products, the higher-priced site is most likely to appeal to its intended audience with photographs of well-dressed people using its products in sophisticated settings.

Setting limits on content

If you've ever participated in newsgroups or mailings lists, you know how annoying it is when someone gets way off topic. There you are on `alt.citrus.cosmetics`, trying to find out the latest tips for using orange juice as a hair conditioner, and some guy starts blathering about the high price of gasoline or which cell phone company has the best roaming plan. It's usually not very long before someone else reminds him that's not what he's there for.

When it comes to the material on your site, unless you're part of a Web development team, you alone are responsible for staying on topic. This is the flip side of determining your theme — determining where to stop and what not to cover.

Take an e-commerce site devoted to personal electronics, for example. You'd need to decide whether to sell the entire spectrum of available devices or to target a specific niche, such as MP3 players or digital cameras. For a religious site, you may need to choose among covering the activities of your local church, the wider issue of the tenets of the sect to which it belongs, or the broadest range of world religious beliefs. If you don't know in advance what you're going to do — and not do — then you're really hampering yourself. Designing a Web site is much easier if you know what specific parameters your efforts must meet.

Keeping Them Coming Back

Practically every human endeavor depends on repeat customers. Even if you're not selling your site visitors anything, the number and frequency of return visits are generally good indicators of success or failure.

If you're going to make your site into a place that people want to visit again and again, you need to think from two perspectives. You have to wear your developer's hat, of course, but you also need to look at your site from a visitor's perspective. Put aside your awareness of the site's structure and mechanics; approach the site as though you just stumbled across it and have never seen it before.



Ask others whose judgment you trust to visit and critique your site. You don't have to change things to suit them, but getting outside perspectives on your work never hurts.

Creating a comfortable site

Keeping visitors around for even a little while, let alone making them want to return, depends on the level of comfort that you provide. If visitors aren't comfortable moving around your site to begin with, what makes you think that they'll add it to their favorites list and come back for a return engagement? In creating comfort in your Web site, you need to consider the following questions:

- ✓ **Does the site maintain a consistent layout from page to page?** If not, you'll create stress and annoyance for your visitors.
- ✓ **Is the type and style of content consistent over time?** This point is a critical one. A large part of visitor comfort comes from always finding what they expect when they visit your site.
- ✓ **Is it easy to navigate from one page or section to another?** Visitors usually don't appreciate being forced to jump through hoops or follow a preset path. See Chapter 2 for site navigation tips.
- ✓ **If the site is larger than a few pages, does it include a search feature?** Most people are either legitimately busy or just plain impatient. Unless your site enables visitors to run a search so that they can quickly and easily find the material they're looking for, you run the risk that they simply won't bother to use your site. (See Chapter 4 for how to add a search feature.)

Keeping your site fresh

If your material never changes, the odds are pretty good that most people won't come back to it very often, if ever. Unless your sole topic is a rock-solid reference subject, you can't get away with anything less than constant updating. Sure, the *Oxford English Dictionary* can come out with a new edition only every few generations. (The first edition came out in 1928 and the second one in 1989, with only two supplements in between.) But such cases are very rare. Even if you deal with a modern high-tech equivalent, such as a site on the Java programming language or the current HTML standard, you need to stay on your toes.



If your core material is something that doesn't change often, you need to add some peripheral material that you can replace more frequently. Consider adding a Tip of the Day, fresh links, a Did You Know? column, or something along those lines so that you can avoid offering only stale content to your return visitors.

How often you need to update your site depends partially on your topic and partially on your site policy. With sites that deal with volatile topics such as breaking international news, you need to update on an hourly basis at a minimum. On the other hand, sites that analyze the news can stand a more leisurely pace — daily, weekly, or even monthly — because their scope is considerably wider.

Even if your topic doesn't absolutely demand a certain update schedule, you should still establish a regular policy for how often you add fresh material to your site. Whatever schedule you establish, make sure you stick with it. Remember the comfort factor, and bear in mind that your site's visitors will be less comfortable if they don't know what to expect from you. Consistency on your side helps build trust on theirs.



A Web site must change at least once a month to keep visitors interested in coming back to it.

Tapping Creativity

Although much of what goes into making a Web site function is pretty much simple, mechanical, left-brain stuff, there's another level — creativity. You need to reach that level to stretch beyond the basics and create a site that really shines. Fortunately, you can use a lot of simple techniques to get from here (the basics) to there (an extraordinary site).

You don't need to sit around in a lotus position, chanting mantras in order to tap into your hidden creative resources. If that's your particular cup of tea, by all means do it, but whatever means you employ, the goal's the same — to stop doing just plain “thinking” and reach a different level of understanding.

Now, I've got nothing against day-to-day thinking. I do a fair amount of it myself. But *standard* thinking means that you're using only half of your brainpower. Peoples' brains have two halves. The left brain is the one that we “live in” most of the time — the one that handles numbers and words and sees everything as sequential. The right brain, on the other hand, sees everything as symbols and images that are free floating and nonsequential.



People actually have five brains, not just two, but I promised my editor that I wouldn't use the word *paleomammalian* in this book.

The basic upshot of all this right-brain/left-brain stuff is that the left brain is such a loudmouth that you don't often hear what your right brain says. And it's got so much to tell you. Because the right side of the brain isn't stuck in the same patterns as the left brain, it gives you an entirely different perspective on the world — and on your work — that can often provide valuable insights and show you patterns that you didn't even realize existed before. Perhaps your right brain can identify the perfect background color to go with a particular topic or the kind of navigation buttons that would appeal most to your audience — things that would be very difficult to achieve by linear thinking alone.

At any rate, your right brain is there for you to use, free of charge, and you ignore it at your peril. So how do you muzzle the left brain long enough to hear what the right brain has to say? Here's a handful of tips:

- ✓ **Meditate:** You can use an official, ritualistic method of meditation, if you want, where you study for years under a guru. Or, you can just sit in a comfortable chair and let your mind drift. If your left brain just refuses to stop chattering, try subvocalizing or humming nonsense syllables such as “dum-de-dum” to override it, or listen to music to occupy its attention.
- ✓ **Brainstorm:** If you're fortunate enough to be a member of a loose, relaxed team, sit around with other team members and shoot the breeze about the problem. Feel free to get off topic. Let the humor roll — nonsense often leads to sensible results.
- ✓ **Doodle:** If you're on your own, take your mind off the straight-and-narrow path by drawing whatever pattern comes to mind. Try doodling with your left hand (if you're right-handed) to jog your right brain into action. It's an odd fact that your left brain controls the right side of your body and the right brain controls the left side.

- ✓ **Do other things:** Engage in an activity that has nothing — nothing at all — to do with your work. Play solitaire. Read a novel. Play a video game. After you take a break from your nonwork activity, the answer to your problem often comes to your mind.
- ✓ **Take a nap:** Your right brain often speaks to you when you're in an unconscious or semiconscious state. You may well wake up with all the inspiration that you need.

Online Sources for Creative Thinking

Table 1-1 lists some places on the World Wide Web where you can find more information on the topics that are covered in this chapter.

Table 1-1	Online Resources on Creativity
Web Site Name	Web Address
BrainWaves Center	www.brainwaves.com
Website Tips: Creativity and Inspiration	www.websitetips.com/design/creativity.shtml
Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain	www.drawright.com
Funderstanding: Right Brain vs. Left Brain	www.funderstanding.com/right_left_brain.cfm
Ideas First: Top Ten Tips for Maximum Creativity	www.ideasfirst.net/top-ten-tips-for-creativity.html

Chapter 2

Pouring the Foundation

In This Chapter

- ▶ Determining your site's purpose
 - ▶ Analyzing the audience
 - ▶ Identifying your support needs
 - ▶ Appealing to visitors
 - ▶ Keeping your site lean
-

People argue about what the number-one factor in quality Web site design is, and they probably always will. Some say great graphics are the key. Others say worthwhile information is everything. Still others think that ease of use is the most important factor. I'm not so sure that there's such a thing as a linear ranking for these kinds of things. After all, a good-looking site that doesn't work well is useless. A site with a combination of good content and lousy graphics is nothing to crow about either.

In this chapter, I walk you through the fundamental things that you should consider as you create your Web site. And at the end of the chapter, I give you seven basic rules for creating Web sites that work. Take 'em with a grain of salt, and remember, you're the ultimate judge.

Drafting a Plan

Are you publicizing a political candidate? Trumpeting your favorite cause? Looking for a job? Selling shoe polish? Notice the verbs in each example. They're the key factors in determining your site's *purpose*, as opposed to its *topic*.

What do you want to accomplish?

Just having a topic isn't enough — you need a purpose, too. The *topic* is merely what the site is about; the *purpose* is what the site does. Say, for example, that you want to create a site about penguins. Okay, that's a nice starting

point. You like penguins — they're cute, unusual, and pretty interesting; many people share your interest in them. But why do you want to create a Web site about them? Do you have something to say? Do you have information to give, an opinion to share, or a particular point of view that you want to put across?

You don't need to have a PhD in aquatic ornithology to create such a site. Maybe you just like funny-looking birds that swim. But you still need a purpose, or the site just won't work out in the long run. Perhaps you spent ages plowing through the search engines, and you've gathered together the world's greatest collection of penguin links. But why did you go to all that trouble? What's your purpose?

If the purpose for creating a penguin site is for your own personal enjoyment, you really don't need to do much with the site. In fact, you can just create a Web page on your own hard drive or even settle for leaving the links in your Web browser's bookmarks. If you do want your page on the World Wide Web, however, you need to take into account the needs of your potential visitors, as well as your own needs for creating such a site.

Suppose that you're putting your penguin page on the Web for the purpose of sharing everything you know about these birds with the world. How does that purpose change your approach to site design? You need to include more on the Web site than a bare list of links, for one thing. Everything that you do with the site must help people understand its purpose. If you're setting up your own domain name, for example, you want to pick one that clearly describes your site's content — like www.penguinfacts.com. (Grab it quick — it still wasn't taken at press time.)

The purpose of your site trickles down through each step that you take in creating it. You want the title of each page in the site to specify how it supports the site's purpose. The textual content of each page needs to lead naturally into some specific aspect of the topic that furthers your goal. Each graphical image must be just the right one to drive home or emphasize a critical point.

Who do you want to reach?

Who are the people you expect to visit your site? What geographical or cultural groups do you want the site to appeal to? Without at least a general idea of your potential audience, you can't have much of an idea about what type of site to create.

If data is available about the audience for similar sites, you want to track it down. But where do you find it? Surprisingly, most of it's available from the people you're competing with. (Even if you're not running a commercial site,

similar sites are your competitors.) Anyone who's been involved in any type of corporate intelligence work would be shocked at the way people on the World Wide Web casually throw around valuable information, instead of keeping it under lock and key.

Many sites offer links to their visitor data. Even a quick perusal of the server logs (which automatically record information about visitors) can provide you with priceless insights into the sort of people who visit sites similar to the one you're creating. If the sites you want information on don't list links to their log data, send an e-mail message to the Webmaster asking how to access it. Most Webmasters aren't the slightest bit security conscious about their customer data, and you may be surprised at how many of them are more than willing to spill the beans about their visitors.

What outside help do you need?

How much of your own time and effort are you going to put into your Web site? Presumably, you're going to at least control the general design and make the key decisions about content, or you wouldn't be reading this book. Most likely, you'll do the actual page creation as well. If not, you need to make sure that the people who *are* doing the coding know what they're doing and exactly what you expect of them.

When searching for qualified people to create your Web site, don't rely on college degrees, paper certifications, and the like. Here are a few tips for finding out how good they really are:

- ✓ Make candidates show you their previous work. If they don't have a CD or DVD with samples of their work, or if they can't show you sites on the Web that they have worked on, forget it.
- ✓ Explore their other Web sites. Make notes on anything that raises a question in your mind and ask for an explanation later.
- ✓ Test everything that you can to determine whether a candidate has the necessary skills and experience to implement the features you want to include on your site. In particular, make sure that all the links work (see Chapter 8 for helpful tools) — a site that has many broken links is a poorly maintained one.



If your site means anything to you at all, *do not* place it in the hands of your Aunt Sophie's extremely clever cousin who, although he's only 11 years old, knows just *all sorts of things* about computers.

Beyond the question of creating the Web pages and other files that make up your site, you need to consider where the site itself will reside. Chapter 15 contains more detail on this point, but you basically have to decide if you're going to commit to the task of running your own Web server or house your site on someone else's server. The advantage of doing it yourself is that you maintain total control. The advantage of leasing either an entire Web server or space on a virtual Web server is that you have about 20 million fewer things to worry about, leaving you free to concentrate on your main task — managing your site.

Designing the Look of Your Site

All great art depends on having every necessary component in place and nothing — not one thing — that you don't need there. Great literature doesn't add extraneous characters or pad its plot lines. Great paintings don't have extra brush strokes or colors thrown in for no particular reason. When you're practicing the art of Web design, strive for that kind of purity.

Appealing to your audience

The audience — the visitors you hope to attract to your site — determines the content. To set some basic limits, think of these visitors as being at a beginning, an intermediate, or an advanced level, and gauge your content accordingly. If you're aiming advanced content at a beginning audience or vice versa, you're looking at failure from the word go.

Not only does your audience determine your content, but its preferences influence your visual-design requirements as well. If your audience consists of high-school students whose interests revolve mainly around the latest musical sensations, you need a far different look than if it consists of retired naval officers who want to know about international events.

For the young music lovers, for example, you need to strike a tone that's lighthearted and exciting, both in your words and graphics. Brighter colors and a more relaxed and informal tone for the text are the call here. For the old salts, though, you need to take a heavier approach, with darker, duller colors and a middling-formal approach to language.

Whatever the group you're aiming for, ask yourself the following questions:

- ✓ **How do they communicate with one another?** Roller hockey players don't communicate quite the same way as cartographers do. What's the level and style of language usage in the group? Do its members have a particular jargon, slang, or regional dialect? If so, can you use it comfortably and correctly?

- ✔ **What kind and color of clothes do they wear?** This kind of information tells you volumes about their preferences. People who are willing to wear suits and ties in midsummer don't think the same way as those who prefer casual clothing. The colors they wear also indicate the color ranges they're likely to feel comfortable with on your site.
- ✔ **What's their worldview?** For many people, the world consists of their apartment or house; the road between it and their workplace; their cubicle, office, or factory floor; and a couple of restaurants somewhere along that pathway. For others, the world consists only of Wall Street and the Asian financial markets. For some, the world is a series of airports, cell phones, and e-mail messages. Anything that exists outside your audience's worldview is invisible to them and probably doesn't belong on your Web site.

Find out all that you can — from what kind of cars your visitors drive to the hours they wake and sleep. Any kind of information that you can nail down about your audience and their lives helps you to understand them, and that understanding can't help but improve your site's appeal.

Avoiding clutter

If you're one of those people who keeps a perfectly clean desk where your speakers line up exactly perpendicular to the edge of your monitor, whose laundry basket is more than occasionally empty, and who always knows where to find everything that you own, I probably can't tell you much about organization. If you're like the rest of us, however, read on.

Far too many Webmasters seem to think that the best kind of Web page is one that has everything in the world crammed into it. It's like a novel that introduces 27 characters in the first two pages — the overkill ruins it, and your mind is left swimming.

Perhaps you absolutely must put together a Web page containing a dozen frames, several JavaScript pop-ups, numerous Java applets running in the background, and a bunch of animated GIFs that move around the screen by using CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) positioning. If so, please, please, *don't* put in an image map, too.

The line between losing and winning is very fine if you're considering using Web gadgetry. Without it, most sites seem a bit on the dull side, and Web designers exhibit a really strong Keep-Up-with-the-Joneses streak that usually results in a frenzy of site changes whenever some new technique becomes popular. Too much of a good thing — or too many good things in one place — can, however, become a real problem.



The key is to remember your site's purpose as you're designing any page. If anything you're considering adding to the page doesn't serve that purpose, don't add it. If you discover some fun or glitzy gizmo that you simply *must* put on a page — and I show you plenty in this book to tempt you — first determine if you can make it fit in with what you already have on that page. If you absolutely can't fit it in, but you still want to add it, maybe you can take something else out to make room for it.

This doesn't mean that you can't have more than one unusual feature on a page — just make sure that you follow a path of moderation.

The Big Rules for Planning Your Site

Here are some short lines to condense the information in this chapter down to a few rules that I think are pretty good guidelines going by my own experience as both designer and visitor. Make these rules a part of your very being. Do them in calligraphy and hang them on your wall. Use a wood-burning kit to engrave them on your desk. Tattoo them backward on your forehead so that you see them in the mirror every morning.

- ✓ **Rule #1:** The Web is for reaching out to people.
- ✓ **Rule #2:** Keep your Web pages lean and clean.
- ✓ **Rule #3:** Know who your visitors are and what they want.

Remember that design and content are more a matter of art than science, which means that your own gut feelings count for more than anything else. If someone tells you that your design decisions are wrong, and that person is someone whose input you respect, you certainly want to give that opinion some consideration. But if you're firmly convinced that you're right, never let anyone else's concepts override your own. This brings me to The Big Rule:

- ✓ **Rule #4:** It's your Web site. It's your vision. Do it your way.

Online Sources for Web Design

Table 2-1 lists some places on the World Wide Web where you can find more information on the topics that were covered in this chapter.

Web Site Name	Web Address
IBM Web Design Guidelines	www-3.ibm.com/ibm/easy/eou_ext.nsf/Publish/572
useit.com	www.useit.com
Web Pages That Suck	www.webpagesthatsuck.com
Web Style Guide	www.webstyleguide.com/index.html?/contents.html

Chapter 3

Web Page Construction 101

In This Chapter

- ▶ Taking a look at tags
 - ▶ Checking out page-building programs
 - ▶ Figuring out your Web page structure
 - ▶ Using HTML tags to format text
 - ▶ Getting the lowdown on links
 - ▶ Adding graphics to your Web site
 - ▶ Dreamweaving Webs
-

This chapter's here just in case you need a refresher on basic Web-page building before plunging ahead into all the wonderful add-ons that are covered in the rest of the book. Here, I touch on how you use HTML to create Web pages and populate those pages with text and images. I show you how to format text, set the colors on your Web page, set up links between pages with both text and images, and guide you to some great programs for creating image maps.

I also cover the different kinds of programs that you can get your hands on to create Web pages and to either create or modify graphics.

Even if you already know all about these things, you may want to browse through the chapter and check out some of the Web sites listed in the tables.

Tagging Along with HTML

Web pages are built primarily by writing instructions in *HyperText Markup Language* (HTML). HTML is a simple programming language; its main aim is to tell a Web browser, such as Microsoft Internet Explorer, how a Web page should look on-screen. What I cover in this chapter is the bare minimum that you need to know to create Web pages and link them together to make a Web site. If you're interested in going deeper into HTML, check out *HTML 4 For Dummies*, by Ed Tittel and Natanya Pitts (Wiley).



You can find the HTML 4.01 specification at www.w3.org/TR/html401/.

HTML is composed of *elements*. A paragraph or an image, for example, is an element. Elements, in turn, are composed of *tags*, *attributes*, and — sometimes — *content*:

✓ **Tags:** A tag is a simple descriptive term that tells a Web browser what element it's dealing with. The beginning of each element is shown by the name of that element within angle braces; this is called a *start tag*. The start tag for a paragraph, for example, is `<P>`; for an image, it's ``. The end of an element is shown by the *end tag*, which is just like the start tag except that the end tag has a slash before the element's name. The end tag for a paragraph, therefore, is `</P>`. Some elements, such as `IMG`, don't have an end tag.

✓ **Attributes:** An attribute is a modification of the basic element. You specify the width and height of an image, for example, by adding attributes to the tag, as in the following example:

```
<IMG width="100" height="30">
```

✓ **Content:** Content is anything that goes between the start tag and the end tag, as in the following example:

```
<P>This is the content of this paragraph.</P>
```

The tags and attributes that you need most often are covered in more depth in the rest of this chapter, but the basics I just covered help you to understand the choices that you face among different Web-page-building programs.

Examining Page-Building Programs

These days, everyone wants to jump on the Web bandwagon, and it seems like every program under the sun can be used to make Web pages. You can use word processors such as Microsoft Word and dedicated page-creation software such as Macromedia Dreamweaver, Adobe GoLive, or Microsoft FrontPage. Every program has its quirks, and not all of them produce high-quality, clean HTML code.

Leaving out the Johnny-come-latelies, such as word processors that tack HTML onto their older functions, two basic kinds of page-building programs are available:

- ✔ **Text editor:** Kind of like a word processor without the frills.
- ✔ **WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) program:** Lets you develop the Web page visually instead of by working directly with the code. The main advantage of this approach is that what you see on the screen as you're working is the same as you would see if viewing the Web page in a browser.

Proponents of pure text editors and WYSIWYG enthusiasts can get about as raucous defending their favorite approaches as a bunch of baseball fans can get about the World Series. The plain fact, though, is that sometimes you'll want to use one type of editor and sometimes you'll prefer the other kind of program. The following sections describe the differences between these two types of programs.

Text editors

HTML files are simple text files. They contain nothing but the plain-old letters, symbols, and numbers that you find on your keyboard. HTML is so simple, in fact, that you don't need any kind of specialized Web-page-building program. You can create Web pages perfectly well by using nothing but Windows Notepad — assuming that you have enough knowledge of the language that you can type it in without making any mistakes (see Figure 3-1).



Figure 3-1:
Windows
Notepad is
really all
you need
to make
a great
Web page.

ON THE CD



You don't have to settle for total simplicity, however, to get the raw power of working directly with the HTML source code. A number of high-powered text editors are designed specifically for creating HTML code. In my opinion (and that of the major computer magazines, such as *PC Magazine*, which constantly road-test all the competitors), the best of all the text editors is Macromedia HomeSite.

You can find an evaluation version of HomeSite+ on the CD-ROM that accompanies this book (as part of the Dreamweaver package).

At its most basic, you can use HomeSite as a plain-old text editor, but it also has some shining qualities that can make your Web programming life a lot easier. For starters, the text is color-coded, which means that elements, attributes, and content appear in different colors, making the HTML code easier to read and understand. HomeSite also comes with a host of helpful tools built into it, such as context-sensitive lists of the attributes that you can use with the tags that you type.

Table 3-1 shows where to find several additional text editors that also make creating Web pages easy.

Table 3-1		HTML Editors	
<i>Program</i>	<i>Web Address</i>		
Arachnophilia	www.arachnoid.com/arachnophilia/		
CoffeeCup HTML Editor	www.coffeecup.com		
HotDog Professional	www.sausage.com/hotdog-professional.html		
HTML Assistant Pro	exit0.com/ns/home.html		
HTMLEd Pro	www.ist.ca/htmlledpro.html		

WYSIWYG programs

WYSIWYG programs are easy for novices to use in the early stages of Web site creation, but they can quickly prove less than satisfactory. The reason for both factors is the same: The program makes a bunch of choices for you. Although this feature may seem like a comfort at first, it quickly becomes a limitation. If you go for a WYSIWYG program, make sure that it's sophisticated enough that you can still use it as your skills advance.

Most WYSIWYG programs have at least some degree of depth beneath their surface simplicity. Both GoLive and Dreamweaver, for example, let you set the attributes for every element, in case you don't like the default choices.

Dreamweaver (shown in Figure 3-2) gives you the best of both worlds because it comes with — and interfaces directly with — HomeSite+ (or BBEdit for the Mac version). That means that you can enjoy both the quickness of WYSIWYG creation and the total control of text editing in the same page-creation session. Table 3-2 lists several WYSIWYG programs that you can use to build Web pages, along with the Web addresses where you can find them (or information about them), and I suggest checking out *Dreamweaver MX 2004 for Dummies*, by Janine Warner and Susannah Gardner (Wiley).



An evaluation version of Dreamweaver is included on the CD-ROM that accompanies this book.

Table 3-2 WYSIWYG Programs

<i>Program</i>	<i>Web Address</i>
FrontPage	www.microsoft.com/frontpage/
GoLive	www.adobe.com/products/golive/main.html
HotDog PageWiz	www.sausage.com/hotdog-pagewiz.html
Web Studio	www.webstudio.com

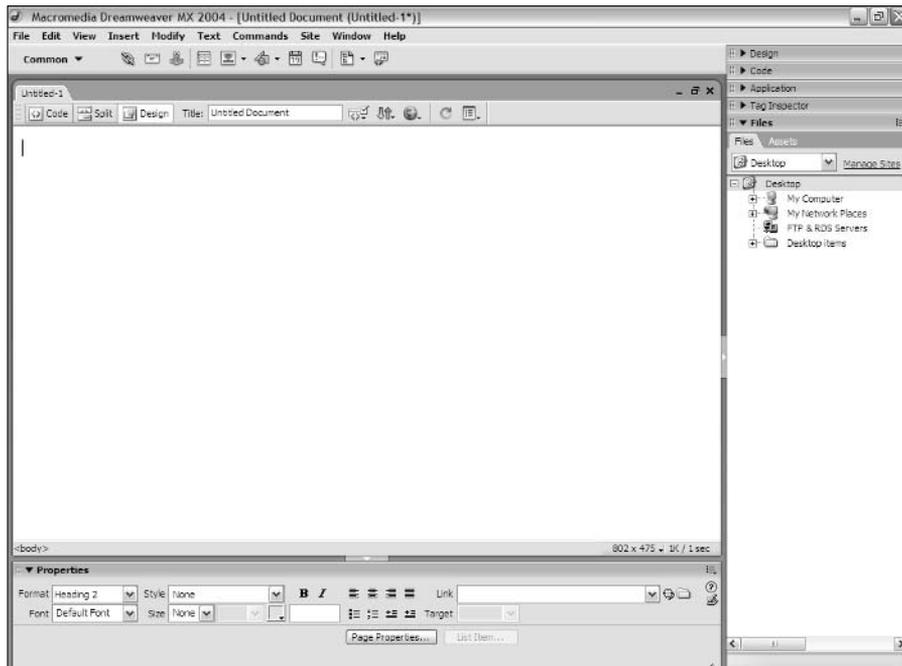


Figure 3-2: Dreamweaver is a full-featured WYSIWYG environment for building Web pages.

Determining Your Web Page Structure

The two basic kinds of Web page structures are *regular* and *framed*. Regular gets better mileage on highways, and framed looks nice on a wall. No? Okay. A regular Web page is a stand-alone structure, as shown in Figure 3-3. Frames, on the other hand, enable you to place more than one Web page on-screen at a time. To the visitor, a framed site appears as one coherent whole, no different from a regular page, something like the horizontally framed example shown in Figure 3-4. (Frames can run vertically, too.) Frames give you more capabilities, such as simultaneously showing many Web pages in a typical browser — and a few extra headaches like making them work with search engines as well.

Normal elements

As mentioned in the section “Tagging Along with HTML,” earlier in this chapter, Web pages are built with *elements*. A typical Web page features a basic structure of three elements: HTML, HEAD, and BODY. The HTML element contains both the HEAD and BODY elements, as the following example demonstrates:

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
</HEAD>
<BODY>
</BODY>
</HTML>
```



You can make a Web page without using the HTML, HEAD, and BODY tags, but I don't recommend it. It is technically possible and even legitimate under the HTML standard. However, leaving them out can't help anything, and putting them in helps you to keep the other elements in their proper places.

All the code for everything that's visible on the Web page goes into the BODY element. The HEAD element contains information such as the page's title, which goes between the <TITLE> and </TITLE> tags like this:

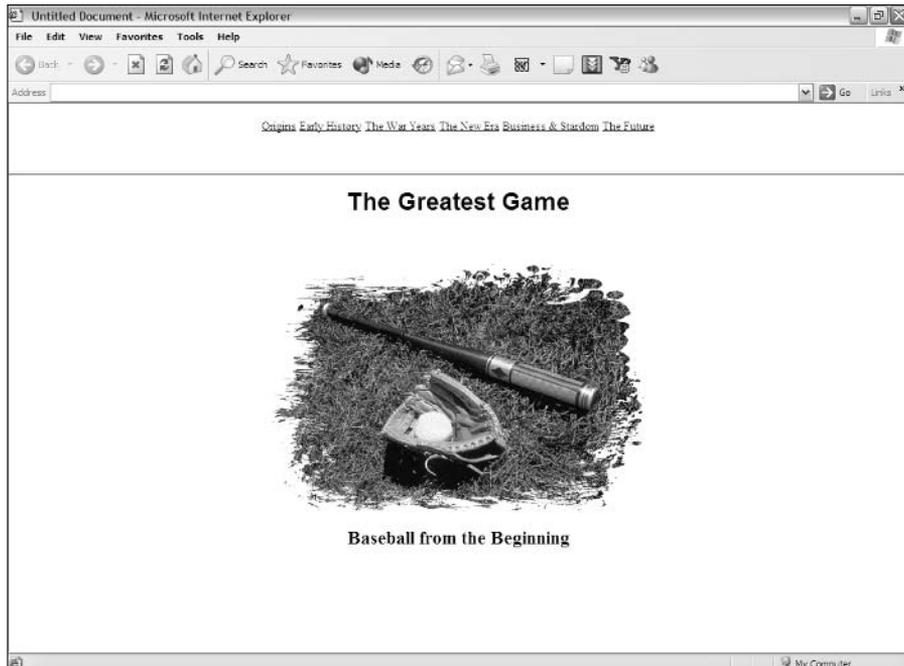
```
<HEAD>
<TITLE>This is the page title.</TITLE>
</HEAD>
```

The title doesn't appear on the actual Web page — it's displayed in the title bar at the top of the visitor's Web browser.

Figure 3-3:
A regular
Web page is
composed
of a single
HTML file.



Figure 3-4:
Framed
Web pages
put several
HTML files
on-screen
at once.



Frames and framesets

Framed sites work a bit differently than regular sites do. You build them out of *framesets*, which set off different areas of the screen. Each one of these areas is known as a *frame*, and each frame contains its own Web page. The following HTML code sets up the pair of frames that you see in Figure 3-5:

```
<HTML>
<FRAMESET cols="80,*">
  <FRAME name="leftFrame" src="navigation.html">
  <FRAME name="mainFrame" src="main.html">
</FRAMESET>
</HTML>
```

The "80, *" in the preceding code listing means that you're setting aside 80 pixels for the first frame and the rest of the screen is available for the second frame. You can also specify a specific pixel amount for the second frame if you want. Another option is to specify a percentage of the screen for each frame rather than exact pixel sizes, as in the following example:

```
<FRAMESET cols="20%,*">
```

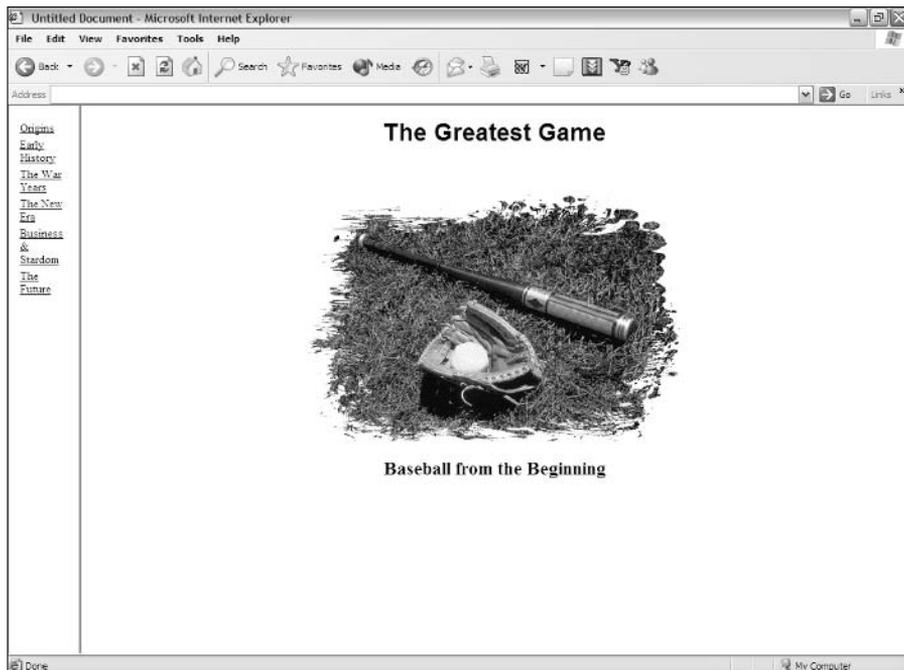


Figure 3-5:
Framed Web pages enable you to bring content from multiple HTML files onto one screen.

To create horizontal frames instead of vertical frames, you use the `rows` attribute instead of `cols` in the first frameset tag. Everything else works just the same way.

Getting Wordy

Words are the foremost method of communication on the World Wide Web, and it's a rare Web page indeed that hasn't got a passel of 'em scattered all over it.

In the examples that are provided in the following sections, I show the basic code necessary for creating the particular elements that I talk about.

Paragraphs

Paragraph elements are what you normally use to place text on a Web page. You put the text between the `<P>` and `</P>` tags, as in the following example:

```
<P>This is where the textual content goes.</P>
```

Technically, the end tag for a `P` element is optional in HTML. You don't need to include it, although most Web page creation programs add it automatically.

Web browsers automatically add a bit of space between paragraphs. If you want some extra space, you can add it by using the line break, or `BR`, element, as the following example shows:

```
<P>This is the first paragraph.</P>  
<BR>  
<P>This paragraph has a space above it.</P>
```

Figure 3-6 shows the results of using the `BR` element.

You can usually get away with using an empty `P` element — one with no content between the start and end tags — to create a blank line between paragraphs instead of using a `BR` element. Unfortunately, this technique doesn't work for all Web browsers. Because empty `P` elements are not allowed under the HTML standard, browsers that strictly follow the standard ignore them and don't insert a blank line.

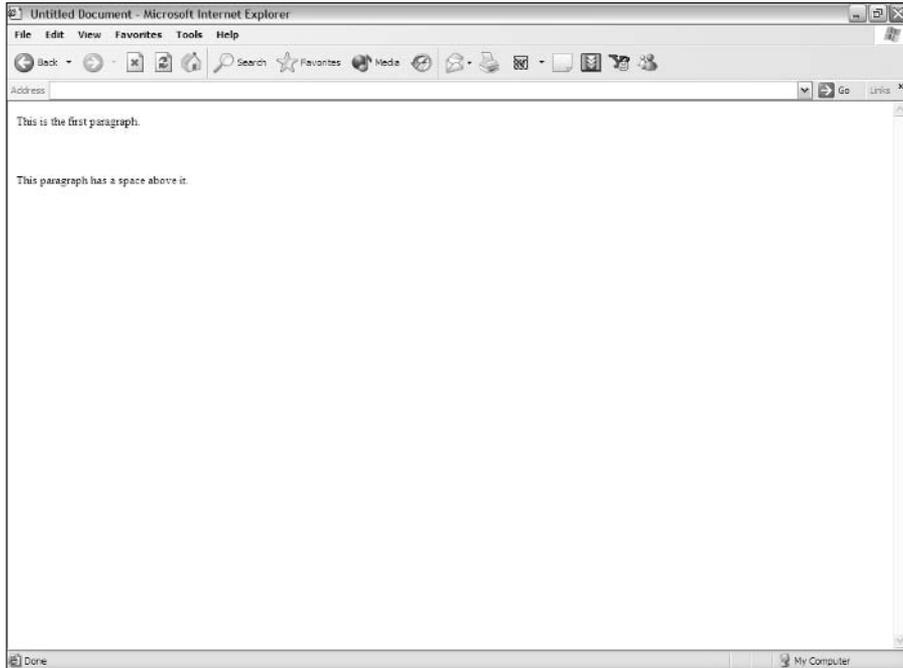


Figure 3-6:
Paragraphs
with line
breaks add
more white
space to
your Web
page.

If you want the best of both worlds, the standard solution to this problem is to put some invisible content into the `P` element. Because Web browsers ignore plain white space, you can't just press your spacebar. What you need to do is to put in a nonbreaking space with a special code. Here's how you do it:

```
<P>This is the first paragraph.</P>
<P>&nbsp;</P>
<P>This paragraph has a space above it.</P>
```



If you use a nonbreaking space, make sure that you include the semicolon at the end. If you don't, you end up with the characters ` ` on-screen rather than a blank space.

Headings

Headings are also elements that contain text. Different headings create different sizes of text and make that text bold. HTML uses half a dozen heading elements, ranging from the humongous H1 size all the way down to the teenyweeny H6. You can probably guess that H2, H3, H4, and H5 are between H1 and H6 in size, so I won't bother to explain that.

You use headings to differentiate one section of text from another. Smaller headings designate subsections under larger headings. Say, for example, that you're running a news Web site. You use H1 for the main headline and follow it with the text in P elements. Any subheads in the article use H2 headings, any subheads under those headings use H3, and so on, as the following example demonstrates:

```
<H1>Clown Runs Amok</H1>
<P>In a surprising development today, Clown of the Year Toby
    O'Dell-Gonzalez went on a rampage through the
    Hideyoshi Circus, spraying at least 17 elephants
    with whipped cream.</P>
<H2>Echoes Earlier Incident</H2>
<P>Highly placed sources within the circus confirm that this
    is not the first time the famed performer has
    committed such an act. "Toby just kind of has a
    thing about dairy products," said one of the co-
    owners of the circus.</P>
```

Figure 3-7 shows how the preceding code listing looks on your Web page.

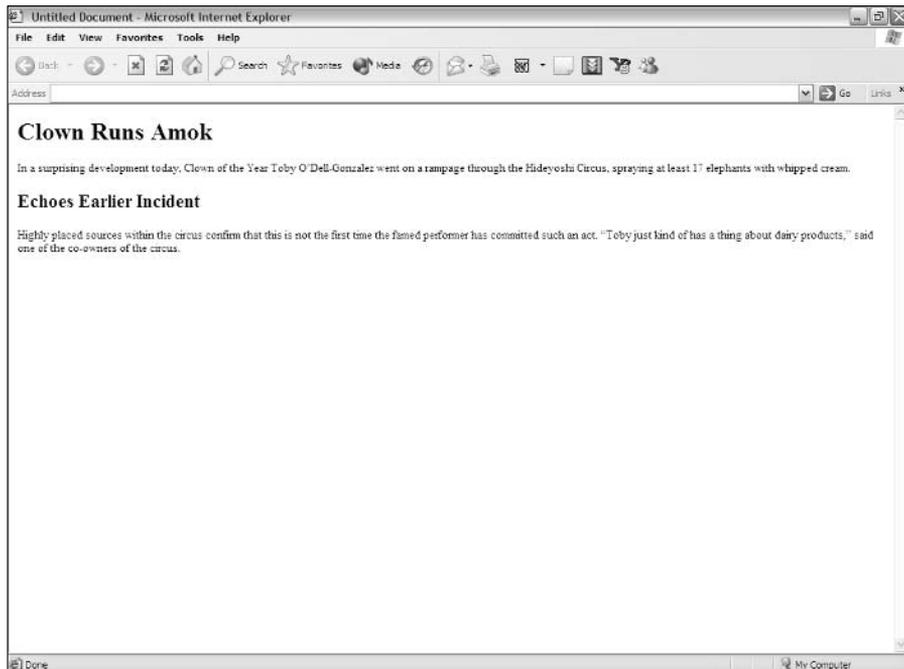


Figure 3-7:
Headings
help orga-
nize the text
on your
Web page.

Fonts

Font is a fancy term that describes the way a letter is shaped. **This** word is in a different font than *this* one is. You can just go with the default fonts — those fonts that are automatically set in the Web browser — or you can specify which fonts you want. For casual Web page development, the default fonts work just fine, but you may find that you prefer to make your own choices to get just the right look.

Two elements that you use most often for altering fonts are `B` and `I`. These elements set the enclosed lettering to bold or italic print, respectively, as in the following example:

```
<P>This is normal print. <B>This is bold print.</B> <I>This  
is italicized print.</I></P>
```

You can also use the `FONT` element to set the *face* of the text, which is the basic appearance of the lettering (whether it's Arial, Times New Roman, and so on), as well as the size and color. (See the section "Using Color," later in this chapter, for more information on setting color.) The following example shows how to use the `FONT` element to set face, size, and color:

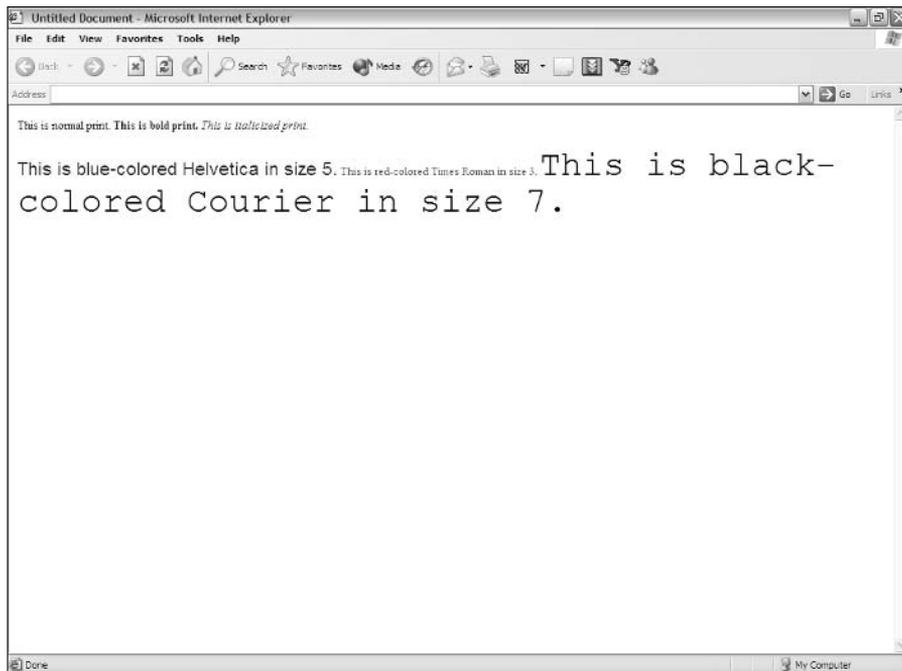
```
<P><FONT face="Arial, Helvetica, sans-serif" size="5"  
color="blue">This is blue-colored Helvetica in  
size 5.</FONT> <FONT face="Times New Roman, Times,  
serif" size="3" color="red">This is red-colored  
Times Roman in size 3.</FONT> <FONT face="Courier  
New, Courier, mono" size="7" color="black">This is  
black-colored Courier in size 7.</FONT></P>
```

Figure 3-8 shows the results of the two preceding code examples.



Although I used the `FONT` element on whole sentences in the code example, you can also apply it to smaller stretches of text — even to a single character.

The reason for the `face` attribute's several choices is that many different computer systems are hooked up to the Internet, and Windows doesn't offer the same options that Macs or UNIX boxes do. If the font you specify isn't available, the visitor's Web browser makes its best guess about what font to substitute for it. By offering a series of font options for the browser to use, you improve the chances of a visitor seeing just what you intended. The preceding code example includes all you need to cover the three main types of font faces common on the World Wide Web.

**Figure 3-8:**

You use the FONT element to make your text appear in different fonts.

Lines

Okay, a horizontal line isn't really a word, but this part of the book is the least unlikely place I can think of to discuss this element. In HTML, these lines are technically known as *horizontal rules*, so the element that represents them is called HR. Horizontal rules visually separate one section of a page from another, underline an image, and do just about anything you normally do with lines.

You can set the width of horizontal rules as either a percentage of the width of the screen or as an exact pixel value. The default width value of a horizontal line is 100 percent of the screen width, so if you don't specify the value of the `width` attribute, that's what you get. To specify a width of 50 percent, for example, use the following code:

```
<HR width="50%">
```

To specify a width of 400 pixels, you do it like this instead:

```
<HR width="400">
```

You use the `size` attribute to set the height, or thickness, of the line, as the following example shows:

```
<HR size="6">
```

By default, the line is hollow, or *shaded*. (The hollow line is called *shaded* because back in the days when Web pages weren't so colorful and all you had to work with was black text on a medium gray background, hollow horizontal lines appeared to sink into the page, creating a shaded, or 3D, effect. Against most other background colors, the effect isn't apparent.) To make a line solid, you need to add the `noshade` attribute, as in the following example:

```
<HR noshade>
```

The following code creates the Web page shown in Figure 3-9:

```
<HR>  
<HR width="100%">  
<HR width="50%">  
<HR width="200%">  
<HR width="400%">  
<HR size="10">  
<HR size="6" noshade>
```

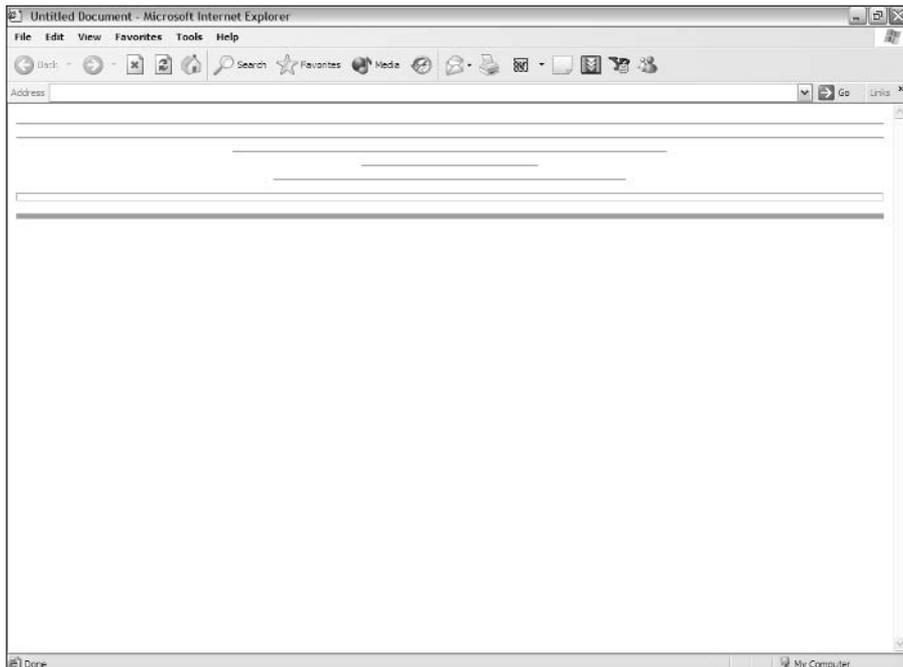


Figure 3-9:
Different
width
and size
values
change
the appear-
ance of
horizontal
rules.



Many Web designers use graphics, such as GIF files, to create horizontal lines instead of relying on HTML. See the clip art sources in the section “Picturing It: Using Images,” later in this chapter, for some examples.

Using Color

Unless you’re really into television reruns or artsy photography, you probably don’t see much of anything in black and white these days. The world’s a colorful place, and you may disappoint your visitors if you don’t use color on your Web site.

I touch on color in the earlier section “Fonts,” but you can use color in many places. As time goes by, you will doubtlessly be able to color every element in HTML.



If you use *Cascading Style Sheets (CSS)*, you have much more control over color than you do with normal HTML. CSS is beyond the scope of this book, but you can find out more in the *Creating Web Sites Bible*, by yours truly.

If you read the section “Fonts,” earlier in this chapter, you already know that you can set the color of a particular set of letters, but you can also set the base color for all the text as well as for a page’s background and its links. The links use three different colors: one for links a visitor hasn’t clicked, one for links that they’re clicking, and one for links that they have already visited.

You can accomplish all these color changes by setting the values for various attributes of the `BODY` element:

- ✓ `text`: Text color
- ✓ `bgcolor`: Background color
- ✓ `link`: Unvisited link color
- ✓ `vlink`: Visited link color
- ✓ `alink`: Color for a link that someone’s clicking (the *active link*)

Setting all these attributes at once looks like this:

```
<BODY text="black" bgcolor="white" link="blue" vlink="red"
      alink="purple">
```

Creating Links

When it comes to the World Wide Web, *links* (which connect different files) are everything. Without them, the Web wouldn't exist. You create links with the A (anchor) element. That element's `href` (hypertext reference) attribute gives the Web address of the file you want to link to. This address is called a *URL*, which is short for Uniform Resource Locator. Here's what a link looks like in HTML:

```
<A href="http://www.dummies.com/">content</A>
```

The part that reads *content* is where you put words or images that people can click to go to the linked file. This content appears as blue underlined letters if it's a text link and as a blue outlined image if it's an image link.

Picturing It: Using Images

You can have a Web page with nothing but words on it, but most people think that's a bit dull. It's pretty rare to find a site that's not filled with images of one kind or another. When it comes to placing images on the World Wide Web, you need to use graphics files in one of three common formats: *GIF*, *JPEG* (also called *JPG*), or *PNG*.

Where do you get images? You can create them from scratch, or you can download ready-to-use files from some of the Web sites listed in Table 3-3. If you use other people's images — and most Web designers do — make sure that you first read all the fine print on their Web sites. Unless they state otherwise, the original artist owns the copyright on an image. You can't use it without permission. Fortunately, the vast majority of artists on the Web are eager to give that permission in exchange for nothing more than a link from your Web site back to theirs. This arrangement gives them free publicity and gives you free, high-quality artwork. Everybody's happy.

If the artist isn't willing to let you display copyrighted art in exchange for a link, you may need to pay to use the image. Sometimes, too, the image is free to use on noncommercial sites but costs money to use on commercial ones. To reemphasize the point, *make sure that you read the fine print*. Don't — I repeat, *don't* — just grab an image that's not free, use it, and figure that you can get away with it. You can do that — after all, you can download any image that you can see in a Web browser — but you're cheating the artist and running the risk of serious repercussions, like federal charges. Plenty of freely available art is out there. Stick with it, and you're unlikely to run into problems.

Table 3-3		Clip Art Sources	
<i>Web Site Name</i>		<i>Web Address</i>	
Animation Arthouse		www.animation.arthouse.org	
Barry's Clipart Server		www.barrysclipart.com	
Clipart Connection		www.clipartconnection.com	
Cool Archive Free Clip Art		www.coolarchive.com	
Graphic Maps		www.graphicmaps.com/clipart.htm	
Noetic Art		www.noeticart.com	

Graphics programs

Even if you're not a digital artist who creates your own graphics from scratch, you need a good graphics program so that you can modify images. You may, for example, find a good image that's not in one of the three common file formats. You may find an image that's too big for your purposes and that you need to resize. You may want to crop out most of a picture or change its contrast, brightness, or whatever.

You can go whole hog and grab a copy of Adobe Photoshop or Macromedia Fireworks, or you can go with a less-expensive shareware program, such as Jasc Software's Paint Shop Pro. Table 3-4 lists some URLs where you can find out about graphics programs or even grab demo versions to try out.



An evaluation version of Photoshop is included on the CD-ROM that accompanies this book.

Table 3-4		Graphics Programs	
<i>Program</i>		<i>Web Address</i>	
Boomer		www.sausage.com/boomer.html	
Corel Painter		www.corel.com	
CorelDRAW		www.corel.com	
Paint Shop Pro		www.jasc.com	
Ulead Photolmpact		www.ulead.com/pi/	
Xara Webstyle		www.xara.com/webstyle/	

Images

The most common item other than text on Web pages is the *image*, represented by the `IMG` element. The only absolutely required attribute for that element is the `src` attribute, which specifies the name and, if the file is located somewhere other than in the same directory as the HTML file that links to it, the location of the graphics file.

Thus, you code the simplest image on a Web page like this (see Figure 3-10):

```
<IMG src="seated16.jpg">
```

To specify a graphics file in another folder, you need to add the path to the folder, as in the following example:

```
<IMG src="pets/seated16.jpg">
```

If the graphics file is on another Web server entirely, you need to add the full path to that URL, as follows:

```
<IMG src="http://www.anotherserver.com/seated16.jpg">
```

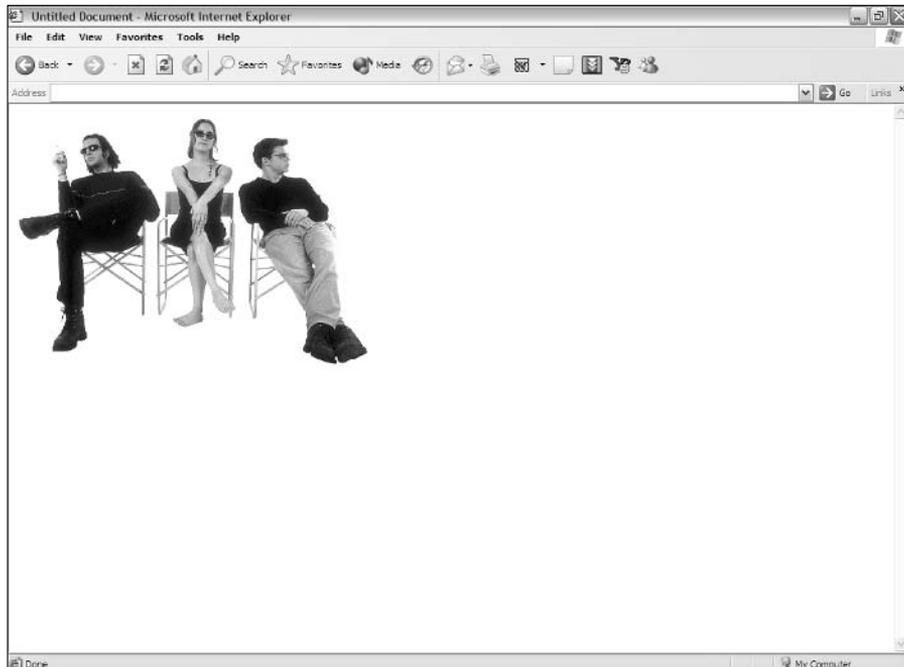


Figure 3-10:
An image
of some
people in a
JPEG file
format.

I mention in the section “Creating Links,” earlier in this chapter, that you can use an image as a link just as you can use text for one. To do so, just put the IMG element right between the start and end tags for the A element, as the following example shows:

```
<A href="http://www.dummies.com/"><IMG  
src="seated16.jpg"></A>
```



IMG elements don't have an end tag.

Background images

A background image follows the same rules as a regular image, except that you create it by using the background attribute of the BODY element rather than an IMG element, as shown in the following example:

```
<BODY background="guitar2.jpg">
```

Background images *tile*, which means they repeat themselves across the page until they reach the edge of the screen. They then begin tiling again in the next available space below the first line of images and so on until they fill the entire page from side to side and top to bottom. Because of this characteristic, most people prefer to use small background images, like the guitars shown in Figure 3-11.

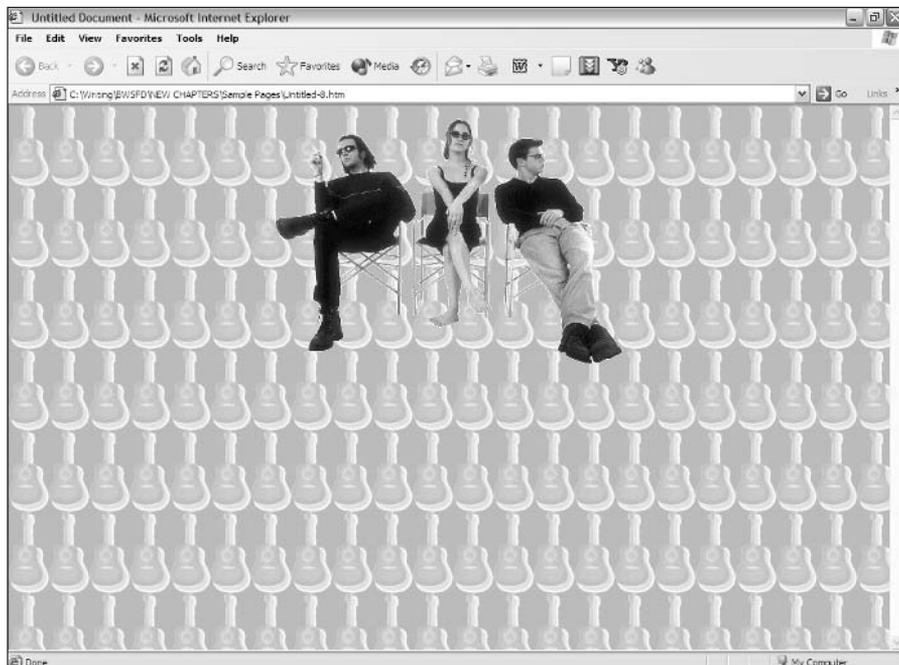


Figure 3-11:
A page
with a tiled
background
image.



Choose background images with care. Make sure that they don't interfere with the other elements on the Web page. You want the color muted, the lines indistinct, and the content supportive of the overall theme.

Image maps

Image links are discussed in the preceding sections on linking and images. However, you can also use a special kind of image link called *image mapping*. If you use a normal image link, you have one link that goes with one image. By using image mapping, you can add several links to a single image.

By using an image-mapping program, you draw shapes over specific areas within an existing image. You then assign a particular URL to each of these areas. When visitors click the part of the image that links to a URL, they're sent to that URL. You may, for example, use a map of the world as your image map. When your visitors click England or Scotland, they go to a page about the U.K. If they click Africa, they go to a page about that continent. And so on and so on. . . .

You don't need to stay purely geographical, however. You can just as easily take a diagram of the human body and click the abdomen to go to a page about appendectomies or click the mouth to go to a page about dentistry. Any kind of logical connection works with image maps.

Many graphics programs, such as Fireworks, include image-mapping capabilities. If you don't own one of those programs, you may want to check out some of the image-mapping programs that are listed in Table 3-5.

Table 3-5 Image-Mapping Programs	
Program	Web Address
CoffeeCup Image Mapper	www.coffeecup.com/image-mapper/
Image Mapper	www.pcoward.com/imagemapper/
Mapedit	www.boutell.com/mapedit/
Web Hotspots ImageMapper	www.1automata.com/hotspots/mapper.html

Working with Dreamweaver

After you understand what's going on under the hood of a Web page, as discussed in the previous sections of this chapter, it's time to sit back and let Macromedia Dreamweaver do a little magic for you.



An evaluation version of Dreamweaver is included on the CD-ROM that accompanies this book.

Don't worry about doing anything fancy here; I cover site design in later chapters. For now, just play around with Dreamweaver and experience the joy of working with a truly excellent program. In the next few sections, I walk you through using it to set page properties, work with text and links, and create a horizontal rule. Feel free to experiment with different values, colors, and so on, as you familiarize yourself with the program.

Setting the page properties

In “Normal elements,” earlier in the chapter, I explain how to set the page title and page background. Here's how to set page properties in Dreamweaver:

1. In the Properties panel at the bottom of the Dreamweaver workspace (shown in Figure 3-12), click the Page Properties button.

The Page Properties dialog box appears.

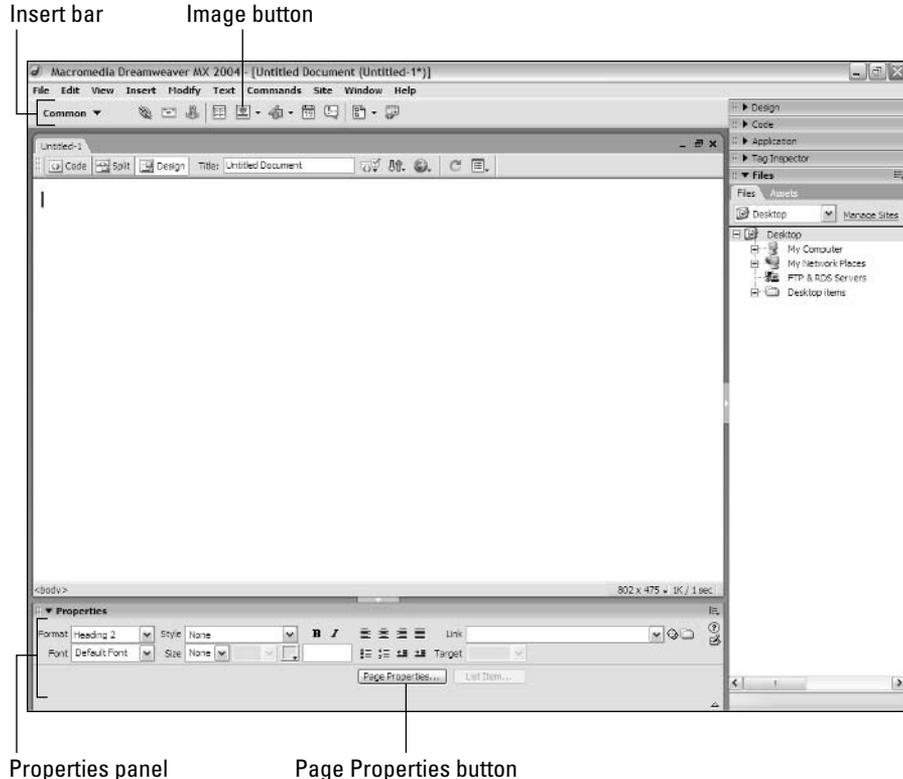


Figure 3-12:
The Dreamweaver workspace.

2. If you want to change the text color, click the Text Color box to open a drop-down palette, as shown in Figure 3-13. Choose a color from the palette that appears by clicking it. If you want to change the background color, click the Background Color box and then choose a color from that palette.

Alternatively, you can simply type the hexadecimal number of the color into the text box.

If you're not sure what the number is, take a look at the color chart at www.colorcombo.com/400_table.html.



3. If you want to add a background image, click the Browse button and then navigate to the image file and select it.
4. In the Category menu on the left side of the Page Properties dialog box, click Title/Encoding.

The Page Properties dialog box shown in Figure 3-14 appears.

5. In the newly displayed options, delete the words **Untitled Document** from the Title text box and then type in the title for your Web page.
6. Click the OK button to complete the process.

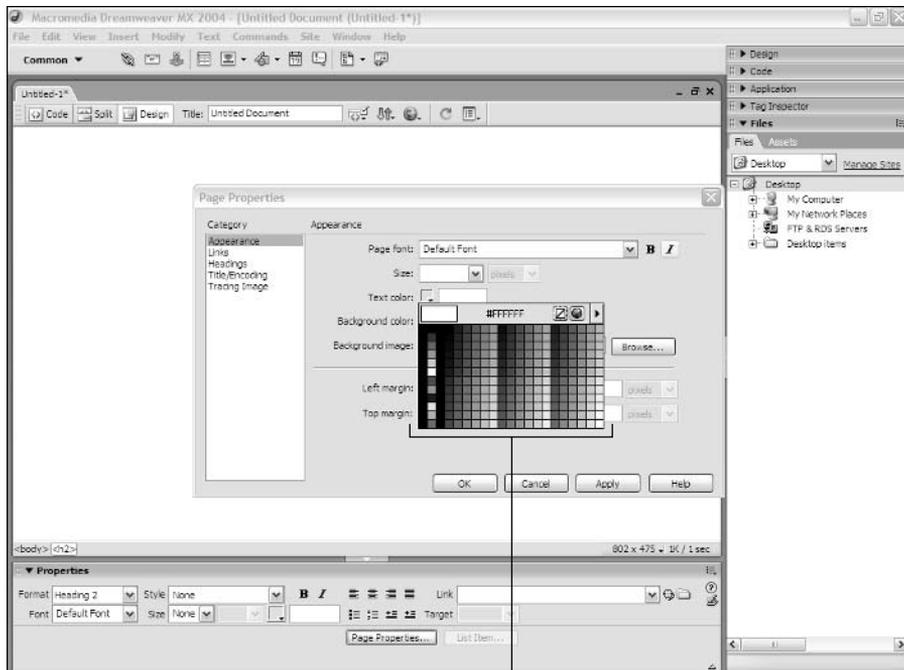


Figure 3-13:
Set the colors for your page in the Page Properties dialog box.

Color palette

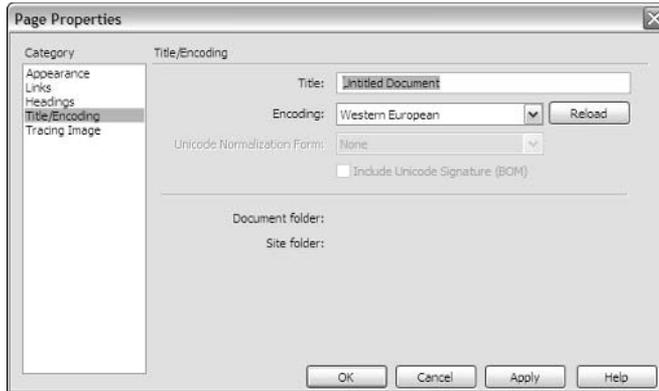


Figure 3-14:
Changing
the title of
your Web
page.

Adding images

Adding images in Dreamweaver is much easier than typing all the information in by hand. Follow these steps to add images in Dreamweaver:

1. Click the **Image** button on the toolbar (it's the one with a little tree on it, as shown back in Figure 3-12). In the drop-down menu that appears, click **Image**.

The Select Image Source dialog box, shown in Figure 3-15, appears.

2. Navigate to the image file or enter the location.

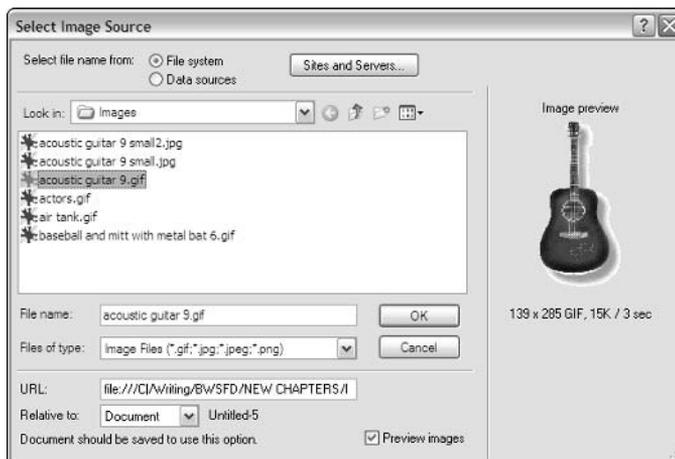


Figure 3-15:
Choosing
an image.

3. Click the OK button.

The image now appears on your Web page in Dreamweaver.

4. If the image isn't automatically selected when it's inserted, you need to click it.

The Properties panel presents you with various image information and options, as shown in Figure 3-16. Dreamweaver automatically enters the height and width information for you.

5. If you want to resize the image, type the new height and width in the appropriate text boxes in the Properties panel or move the corners and sides of the image on-screen with your mouse.

Working with text and links

The Insert bar, which is located just below the menu bar (refer to Figure 3-12), has several options that you can choose from, each of which changes the set of buttons that appears on the bar. By default, you see the Common Insert bar. To reveal the buttons you use for formatting text, click Common and then choose Type from the menu that appears. The Insert bar changes to reveal the text buttons shown in Figure 3-17.

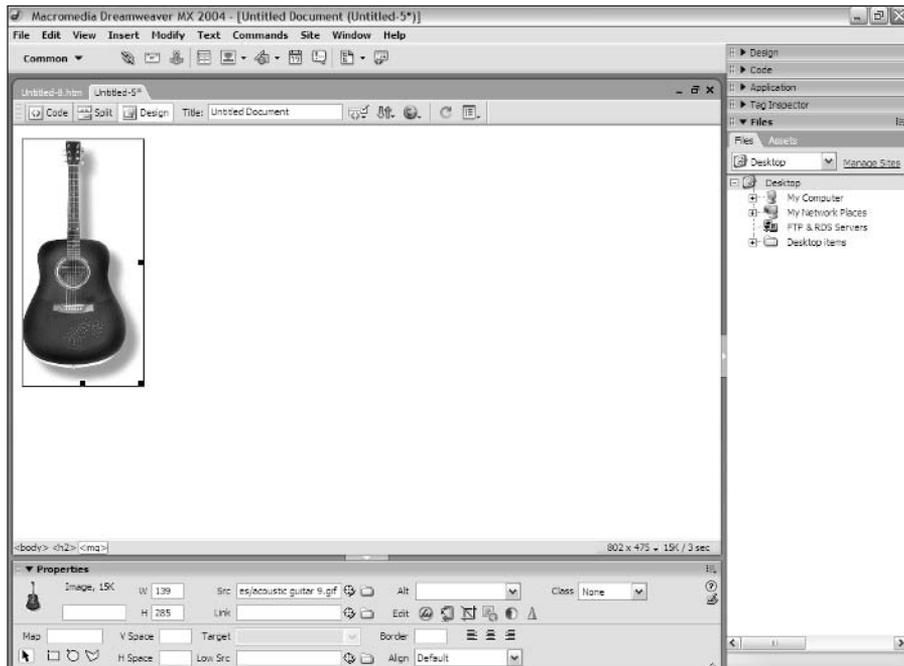


Figure 3-16:
The Properties panel with the options for the selected image.

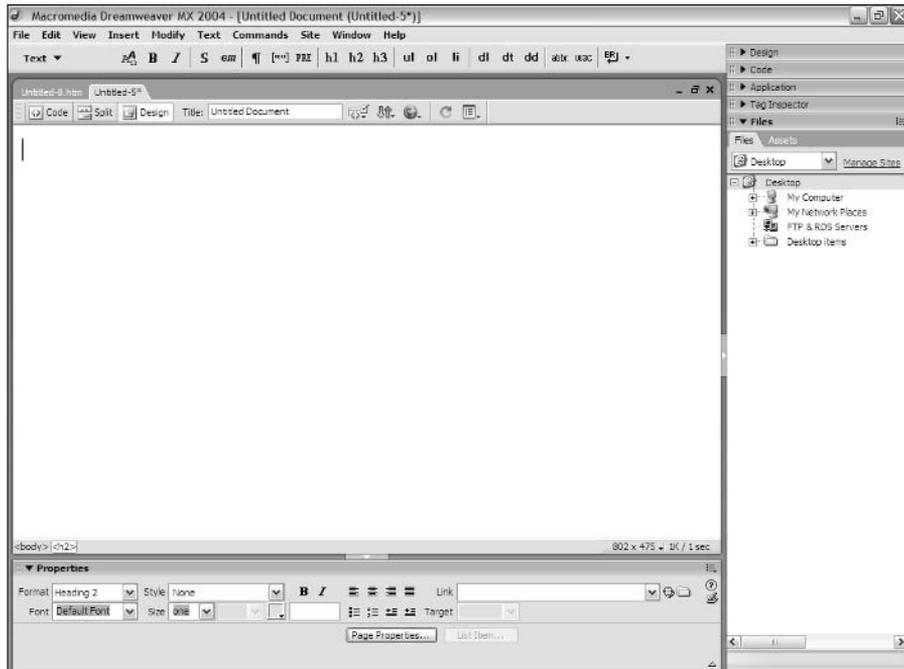


Figure 3-17:
The text buttons are now on the Insert bar.

When the Text Insert bar is selected, these are some of the formatting options available in the Properties panel (shown at the bottom of Figure 3-17):

- ✓ **Format:** Select a paragraph style.
- ✓ **Font:** Specify the type of lettering (Arial, Courier, etc.)
- ✓ **Size:** Set the size of the font.
- ✓ **Text color box:** Select the text color. The text color box is located just to the right of Size, but it doesn't have any label.
- ✓ **Link:** If you want to make the selected text into a link, simply type the URL of the linked page into the Link text box (or click the folder icon to browse to the file).



You can add bold or italic formatting only with the main buttons on the toolbar. To add *or* remove this formatting, use the buttons in the Properties panel instead.

Adding a horizontal rule

To add a line (or *horizontal rule*) in Dreamweaver, follow these steps:

1. Open the Insert bar menu and select HTML.

Your screen should now look like Figure 3-18.

2. Click the horizontal rule button on the HTML Insert bar, as shown in Figure 3-18.

A line appears on your screen. The line is already selected, and the Properties panel presents new options, as shown in Figure 3-19.

3. Use the options in the Properties panel to adjust the line as desired.

Here are a few of your options:

- **W and H:** The Width and Height options correspond to the `width` and `size` attributes in HTML code. In the drop-down list next to those two options, indicate whether you want the width in pixels or percentages.
- **Shading:** This check box is where you set the `noshade` attribute.

Horizontal rule button

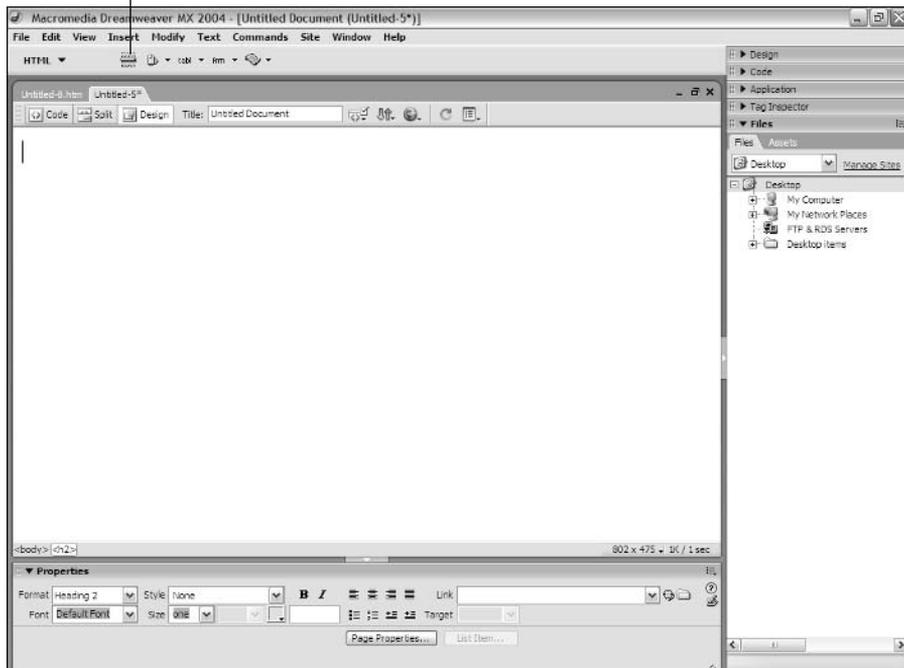
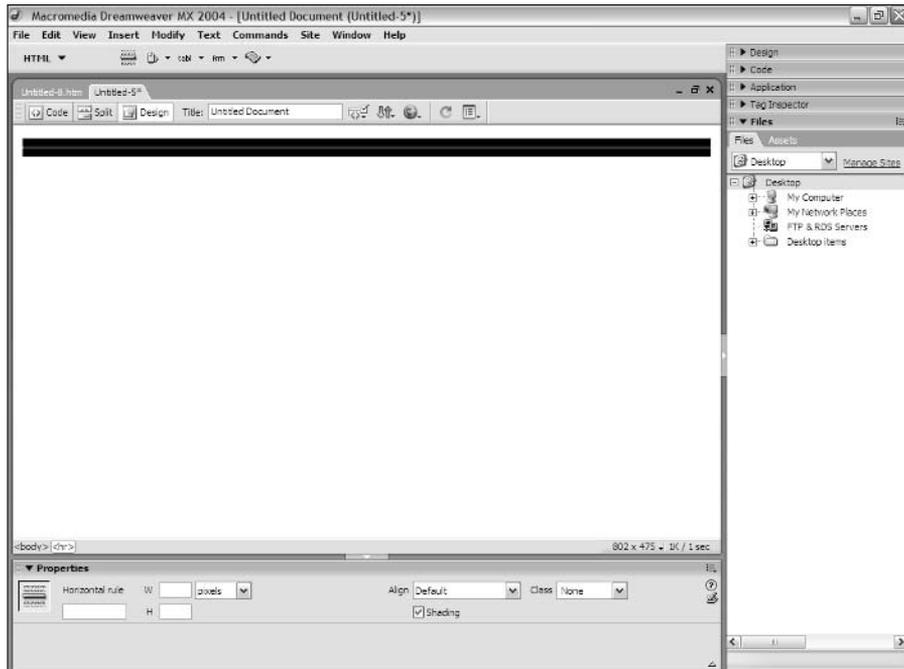


Figure 3-18:
The HTML
Insert bar.

Figure 3-19:
The Properties panel now shows the options for a horizontal rule.



Online Sources for Web Page Building

Table 3-6 lists some places on the World Wide Web where you can find more information about the topics that were covered in this chapter.

Table 3-6 Online Resources for Web Page Building	
Web Site Name	Web Address
Compendium of HTML Elements	www.htmlcompendium.org
HTML 4.01 Specification	www.w3.org/TR/html401/
HTML Goodies	www.htmlgoodies.com
HTML Writers Guild	www.hwg.org
Index DOT Html	www.eskimo.com/~bloo/indexdot/html/index.html
Introduction to HTML	www.wdvl.com/Authoring/HTML/Intro/
Learn HTML by Example	www.ida.net/users/pbmck/learn/00conten.htm

Chapter 4

Designing for Site Navigation

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding usability
 - ▶ Adding a search engine to your site
 - ▶ Improving your site with navigational tools
-

You can expect two kinds of visitors to your site: those who want to get what they want fast and those who want to take the time to explore.

For visitors who want to get somewhere on your site fast, you need to provide a way for them to quickly find what's interesting. A *search engine* is the answer for these people. And I don't mean the kind of search engine that gives them links to the entire World Wide Web, but one that searches only your site (although you can have both).

For visitors who want to leisurely browse your site, you need to provide an easy way to explore it. You can just slap a bunch of plain old links everywhere, but there are a lot of neater and cooler ways to do it.

In this chapter, I show you how to add some glitz and function to your site to make the surfing experience a whole lot easier for your visitors.

Planning Usable Navigation

Usability is an important word for Web designers. It means just what it says — making a site usable. Without usability, nothing else you do matters. What good is it to have wonderful content if nobody can find it? What good is it to have beautiful graphics on a page that is inaccessible except by dumb luck?

Fortunately, designing a usable Web site isn't difficult, and a few simple rules set you on your way. As with any set of rules, you may want to break these from time to time, but you do so at your own peril:

- ✔ **Keep your navigation system consistent on all the pages in your Web site.** If you have a link to your home page at the top of half your pages and put that link at the bottom of the rest, you'll confuse your visitors.
- ✔ **Put links to your home page and your search function on both the top and bottom of every page.** Too many Web designers put them on only the top or the bottom, forcing users to scroll to find them. Don't make your visitors do extra work.
- ✔ **Never use blue, underlined text for anything but a link.** In fact, try to avoid underlining at all. Use bold or italics for emphasis instead; otherwise, you'll fool a lot of people into clicking that text to no effect.
- ✔ **Don't use too many links in a navigation bar.** Half a dozen is about the most you should add. Remember that a navigation bar is not a site map but a guide to the major sections within your site.
- ✔ **Use words!** Using graphical icons may make your pages prettier, but you should design your navigation bar (or whatever alternative you use) to instantly communicate what it means to someone who has never been to your site before. In this case, a picture is *not* worth a thousand words.
- ✔ **If your site is composed of hierarchical pages (and most of them are), consider using *breadcrumb navigation*.** The term comes from the idea of leaving a trail of breadcrumbs as you walk so that you can easily retrace your steps. When applied to a Web site, the metaphor refers to a listing at the top of the page showing the current page's relationship to the hierarchy. The History page on Yahoo!, for example, shows a breadcrumb trail of Directory>Arts>Humanities>History, corresponding exactly to the URL of the page: `dir.yahoo.com/Arts/Humanities/History/`.

Adding a Search Function

Unless your site consists of just a single Web page, you need a search engine for it. Sites that don't offer search functions are at a real disadvantage compared with those that do have them. Put yourself in a visitor's shoes and ask, "Do I want to spend hours browsing this site in the hope that I may stumble across the information I want? Or do I want to spend a few seconds running a search to get the information I need right away?"

All the search options described in the following sections have their own strengths and weaknesses. Similar programs and services offer varying features. The importance of each feature is a matter for you to decide. I recommend checking out all of them. Because none of them requires much effort to install and use, you may as well road-test every one to see which you like best.

Getting a free search engine with FreeFind

After you take a look at the capabilities of FreeFind's search engine (www.freefind.com), you may not bother to look at anything else (except that I describe another one that's worth a peek, too). It's a beautifully designed, full-featured, honey of a search feature that you can add to your site in just a few minutes. It's customizable, creates a site map for you, keeps an up-to-date What's New list that shows visitors what you've added lately, gives you extensive reports on what people are looking for, and does pretty near everything else you can want, except fry your eggs for breakfast. The cost? Nothing.

After you finish drooling over the search engine, you may ask, "What's the catch?" Advertising supports it, which means that an ad banner appears at the top of the search page on your site. If your site also has its own advertisers, you can't show any of your ads in competition with FreeFind's ads on that page.

On most sites, an advertising banner is a pretty small point to consider. Even if you have your own sponsors, you can still place their ads on every page on your site that doesn't have FreeFind, and FreeFind helps your visitors get to all those other pages more easily. FreeFind imposes a site limit of about 2,000 Web pages (32MB), but a polite e-mail message to the FreeFind folks generally gets them to raise the limit.



You do face one other restriction with FreeFind: FreeFind doesn't allow anyone to use its search engine on adult-only sites, because its advertisers don't want to appear on such sites.

Still with me? Okay, FreeFind's search engine runs on its servers, not on yours, so tons of people can use it simultaneously without tying up all your server resources.

You can set up FreeFind to search just your site, just the World Wide Web outside your site, or both your site and the Web in the same search. You can modify the search form, and FreeFind makes the job extremely easy for you by providing online wizards that help you make custom choices, such as designating link colors (either by name or hexadecimal value).

Joining FreeFind

To sign up for FreeFind, all you need to do is to fill out a simple form, as the following steps describe:

1. **Go to FreeFind's home page (www.freefind.com) and enter your Web site address and your e-mail address in the appropriate text boxes (see Figure 4-1).**

FreeFind keeps your e-mail address confidential, so your address won't be sold to anyone.

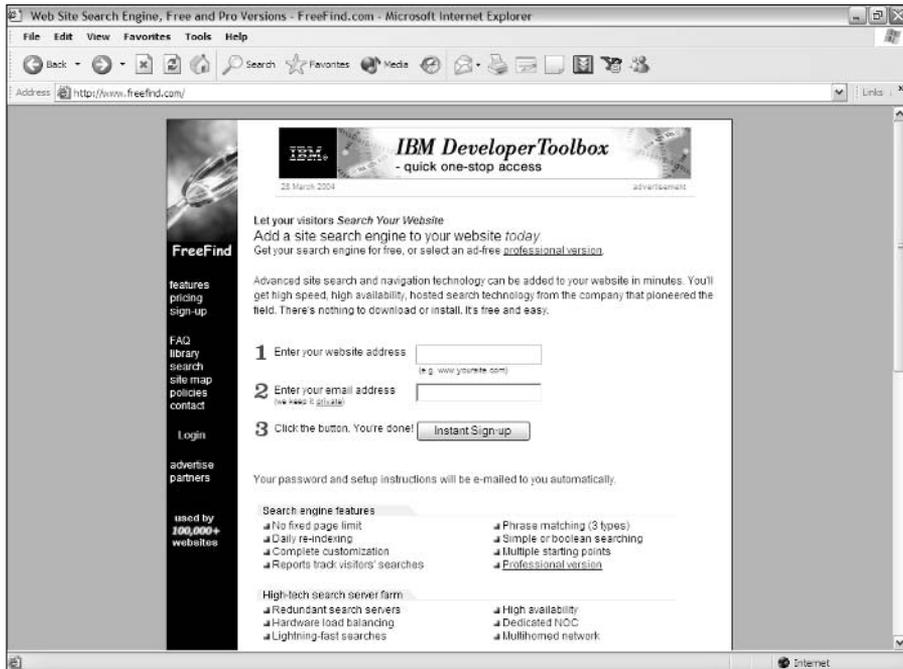


Figure 4-1:
Signing
up for
FreeFind's
free search
engine on
FreeFind's
home page.

2. Click the Instant Sign-up button.

FreeFind sends you an e-mail confirmation message right away. The message contains your password, site ID, and all the links you need to use its service.

3. Click the link in the e-mail confirmation message to go to the FreeFind Control Center (www.freefind.com/control.html).

4. In the form on that page, you need to enter your Web site address, e-mail address, and the password from the e-mail confirmation message; then click the Login button.

The Select Account Type page appears.

5. Click the select link next to Free Account.

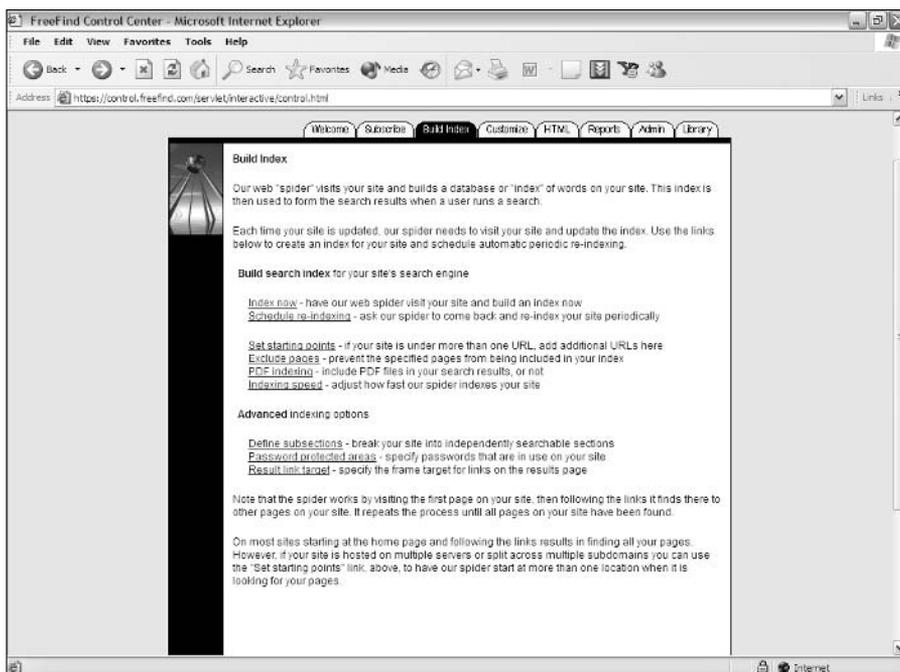
Of course, if you're the adventurous type who wants to skip the "try before you buy" approach, you can always click one of the paid service links instead.

You only have to complete this step the first time you sign in to FreeFind.

6. On the main Control Center page, click the Build Index tab (shown in Figure 4-2).



Figure 4-2:
The Index
tab of
FreeFind's
Control
Center,
where you
tell the
search
engine to
start
indexing
your site.



7. Click the Index Now link.

8. In the dialog box that appears, click the Finish button to have FreeFind index your site.

FreeFind starts indexing your site and e-mails you when it's finished. At the same time it does the indexing, FreeFind also creates a site map and a What's New page for your Web site.

Adding the search engine

FreeFind gives you the HTML code for a basic search panel you can add to your pages. All you need to do is to cut and paste the version that you want (either from the e-mail message or the attachment) onto the Web page on which you want to use it and then upload the page to your site, and your search engine is fully functional.



You can't use the search engine until FreeFind finishes indexing your site. If you try to use it before FreeFind is finished indexing, you receive an e-mail message saying that the spider's indexing of your site isn't complete, and you get a Web page reminding you to wait.

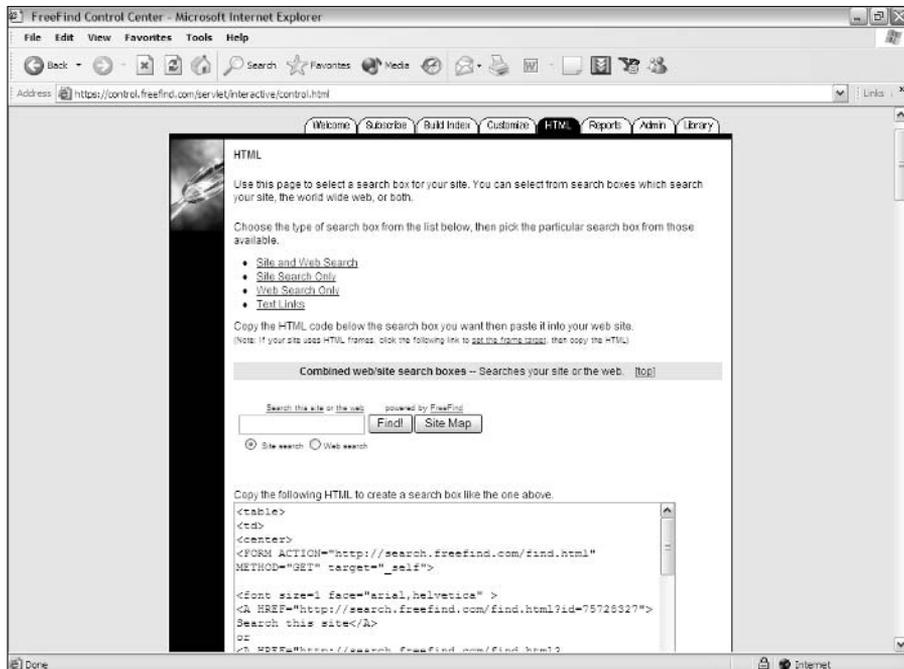
Here's how to go to the goodies page and get your free code (if you're already in the FreeFind Control Center from the previous steps, you can skip straight to Step 3 here):

1. Go to the FreeFind Control Center (www.freefind.com/control.html).
2. Enter your Web site address, e-mail address, and password, and then click the Login button.
3. On the main Control Center page, click the HTML tab (shown in Figure 4-3).
4. Scroll down the screen and view the different types of search panels that are available.

You can also click the links at the top of the page to jump to particular kinds of panels, such as ones that search your site only as opposed to those that search the Web and your site.

5. When you find a search panel you want, click inside the text area underneath it, which contains the HTML code, and select the code. Next, copy the code and paste it into your own Web page's code.

Figure 4-3:
You find the code for different search panels you can use in adding FreeFind's search engine to your site on the HTML tab.



If you want to customize and pretty up the search page, go to the Control Center page and click the Customize tab. You can specify background colors and images, the type of logo that appears, the positioning of the search results, and many other options. The choices that you make there also affect your site map so that both the search page and the site map share the same look.

Dropping in Perl CGI scripts with Simple Search

If you're a go-it-alone type who doesn't want to rely on outside servers to process your site searches, you can drop in a Perl CGI script instead (see Chapter 6 for more on scripts). It requires a bit more technical skill than some tasks, or a little bit of help from your ISP or network administrator, but it's definitely doable, even if you don't know anything about CGI. One of the best and easiest CGI scripts to use is Simple Search. Written by Matt Wright, one of CGI's greats, Simple Search has been a venerable mainstay of many Web sites. Figure 4-4 shows Simple Search on a Web page.

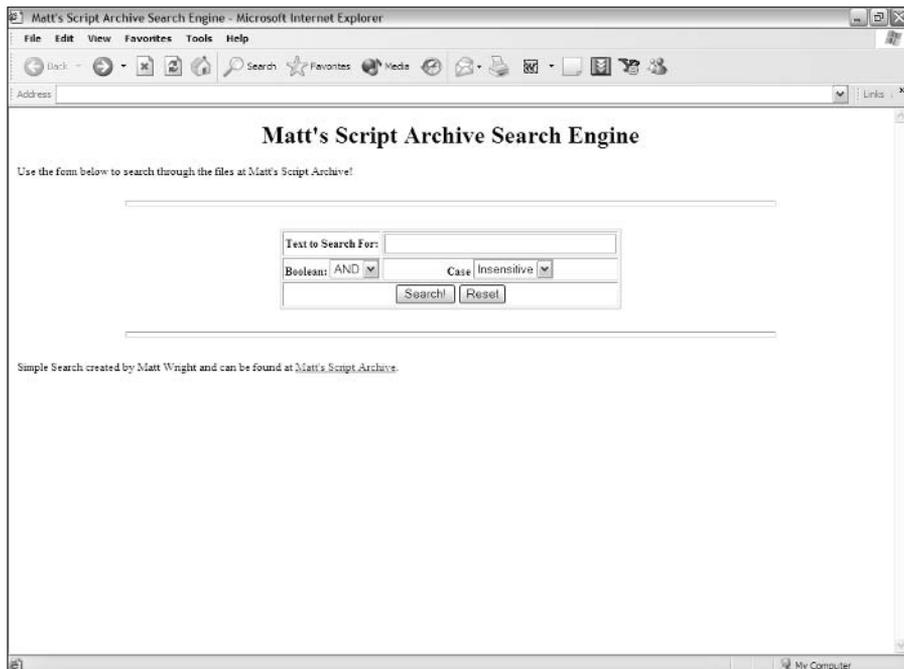


Figure 4-4:
Simple
Search
adds
keyword-
searching
capabilities
to your site.

You can download Simple Search from Matt's Script Archive (worldwidemart.com/scripts/search.shtml). To add Simple Search to your site, you first need to uncompress (unzip) the main file for the program (`simple.zip`, `simple.tar`, or whatever) and then make a few alterations in the enclosed sample files.



You need to change a few settings in the script to make it work on your site. Make sure that you follow the exact format of what appears in these settings as you replace the sample values in the script with the information for your site, or the script won't work. This mostly means that you must leave all quotation marks and semicolons in place just as they appear in the following examples. Don't replace single quotes with double quotes or vice versa. Keeping a hard copy of the file handy while working on it may help you to remember what to do — and what not to do.

To prepare the Simple Search's Perl script for use, follow these steps:

1. **Go to worldwidemart.com/scripts/search.shtml and open the file `search.pl` in a text editor.**
2. **Scroll down until you reach the section with the heading `# Define Variables`.**
3. **Replace the `$basedir` value with the base directory path of your own site.**

For example, in the following script line, the sample value for this variable is `/mnt/web/guide/worldwidemart/scripts/`. Remember to replace only the value itself, not the variable (`$basedir`) or any punctuation marks.

```
$basedir = '/mnt/web/guide/worldwidemart/scripts/';
```

The *base directory path* is the path on your Web server, not your Web site's URL, which you add in the following step. If you don't know this value, ask your ISP or network administrator. Make sure that you include the trailing slash at the end (`/`).

4. **Replace the `$baseurl` value with the base URL of your site.**

The value you need to supply for the `$baseurl` variable is the URL of the directory where your site's main page resides. The base URL for Dummies.com, for example, is `http://www.dummies.com/`. And using both `http://` and the trailing slash is important here, too, even if you're not accustomed to using both in Web addresses. In the following line from the script, the value you need to replace is `http://worldwidemart.com/scripts/`:

```
$baseurl = 'http://worldwidemart.com/scripts/';
```

5. Replace the sample values for the @files variable with the paths and files that you want Simple Search to process as part of its search.

In the following line from the script, the values you need to replace are *.shtml, demos/links/*.html, and demos/guest/*.html:

```
@files = ('*.shtml','demos/links/*.html','demos/guest/*.html');
```



This is one of the easiest places to create a typographical error that keeps the script from working because the @files variable can have more than one value. Each value is surrounded by single quotation marks, as usual, but it's also separated from the other values by a comma. If you use more than one value here, pay careful attention to the sample code's syntax.

If you want to search only HTML files in the main directory, for example, you enter the value that the following example shows:

```
@files = ('*.html');
```

To search both HTML and SHTML files in the main directory, you use the following example instead:

```
@files = ('*.html','*.shtml');
```

To search for HTML and SHTML files in a subdirectory called fauna as well, you use the following example:

```
@files = ('*.html','*.shtml','*/fauna.*html','/fauna/*.shtml');
```

6. Replace the value of the \$title variable with the name of your site. In the following line from the script, the sample value you need to replace is Matt's Script Archive.

```
$title = "Matt's Script Archive";
```

This value appears along with the search results, and the next step makes the text into a text link.

7. Replace the value of the \$titleurl variable with the Web address of your main page. In the following line from the script, the value you need to replace is http://worldwidemart.com/scripts/.

```
$title_url = 'http://worldwidemart.com/scripts/';
```

This value is usually the same as the \$baseurl value (see Step 4), although you may want to add the page's filename as well. For example, if your \$baseurl value is http://www.mysite.com/ and your main page is index.html, you can use either http://www.mysite.com/ or http://www.mysite.com/index.html as the value for \$titleurl.

8. Replace the `$searchurl` value with the Web address of your search page. In the following line from the script, the part you need to replace is `http://worldwidemart.com/scripts/demos/search/search.html`.

```
$search_url =  
'http://worldwidemart.com/scripts/demos/search/  
search.html';
```

9. Save the file.

To prepare the HTML search page for use, follow these steps:

1. Open the file `search.html` in a text editor.
2. Change the action attribute of the FORM element to the URL where you're locating the Perl script on your Web server.

In the following line from the `search.html` file, the value you need to replace is `http://worldwidemart.com/scripts/cgi-bin/demos/search.cgi`.

```
<form method=POST  
action="http://worldwidemart.com/scripts/cgi-  
bin/demos/search.cgi">
```

3. Save the file.

Now upload both files to your server. Make sure that you send `search.pl` in ASCII form and that you put it in your `cgi-bin` directory. Send `search.html` in ASCII form and put it in your Web page directory.



You have two options when uploading files. Your FTP program will send a file as either ASCII or binary. ASCII means to treat the file as text, and binary is used for graphics and so forth.

Okay, remember I told you this one took a bit more tech savvy than most? This is where that comes into play. You need to set permissions for the files so they'll work on your Web server. If you don't know what that means, don't worry about it. Just ask your ISP or network administrator to do it for you. Tell them that you need to `chmod search.pl` to 755 and to `chmod search.html` to 744. They'll know what you mean, and they can take care of it in about ten seconds.

Showing the Way with Navigational Tools

The more complex your Web site is, the more important it is to use good navigational tools. Although a search engine provides quick answers to specific questions, there's nothing like browsing your way through a site to really get

to know what treasures are tucked away. You can help your visitors find their way around your site with some of these handy navigational helpers.

Shelving your links with Bookshelf

Bookshelf (also known as Webshelf) is an applet created by Nick Sakva, and it's one of those joys that you run across from time to time. It's not only functional, but also attractive and clever to boot. It's a Java applet that sets up a list of links that looks like a 3-D bookshelf — similar to the one shown in Figure 4-5. Each link gets its own volume on the shelf, and the books' titles show the link names. You can set individual details, such as the size and color of each book, and you can even add graphical icons to the bindings. The coolest part comes when someone clicks a link — just before the link activates, the book slides out a bit to show that it's selected.

Bookshelf is a Java applet that you find at java.searchrealm.com/javaandcgi/javascripts5/bookshelf.zip or www.sakva.org.ru/BOOKSHELF.HTM. The class files for it are compressed within the file `shelf.jar`, so when you put it on your Web page, your HTML code for the start tag needs to read as follows:

```
<APPLET name="shelf" archive=shelf.jar
        code="ru.sakva.bsh.Webshef.class" width=400
        height=300>
```

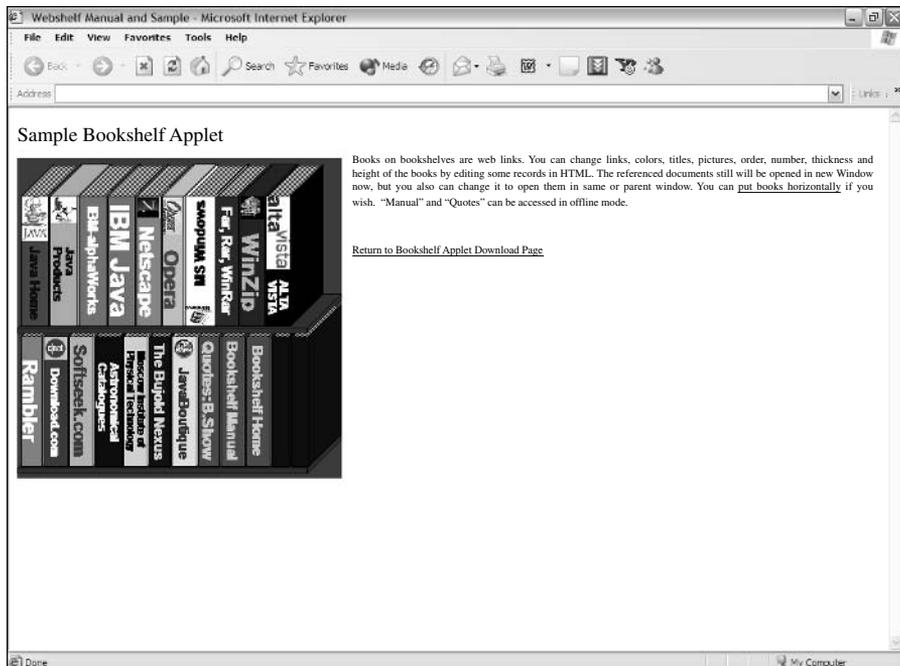


Figure 4-5: Bookshelf makes your links look like books on a shelf.



When several files are needed to make a Java applet work, they often come packed together within a `jar` (or Java Archive) file, which is simply a `zip` file with a different extension. You don't need to unzip the `jar` file for the `class` files to work.

You can change the `width` and `height` values for this applet, by the way. As a matter of fact, you probably want to monkey around with these values to get the right look for your shelves of books. Depending on how many links you want on a page, the number of books varies, and any time that you have more than can fit on one shelf, the applet generates a new shelf. Two shelves take up twice as much height, of course. Likewise, setting the applet for thicker books means that fewer titles can fit on a given width of shelving; taller books also need more height per shelf . . . and so on. Doing a bit of experimenting with the `width` and `height` values, changing them and reloading the page to see the results, is often well worth your time and effort.



If you end up with an extra shelf displaying only one or even a few books on it, you can just increase the `width` value of the shelf a little bit. Doing so usually creates enough room to move the book(s) on the second shelf back up onto the shelf above it and eliminates the need for the extra shelf.

Now for all the stuff that comes before you reach the `</APPLET>` end tag. This applet uses lots of parameters. If you look at the sample Web pages (`SHELF_E1.HTM` and `SHELF_E2.HTM`) that come with the applet, you see that the first several parameters are for setting the overall look and default values. After you get beyond these settings, you find several different groups of parameters, each group separated from the others by a blank line. These are the settings for each individual book on the shelf. That blank line isn't required in the code, by the way, but it does make it easy to see where the settings are for each book.



You don't need to use all the parameters that are available for this applet. Any parameter for which you fail to specify a value simply reverts to its default value.

Opening a new window when a link is clicked

First off, you want to choose what happens after a visitor clicks a link. You do so by using the `frame` parameter. If you want the linked page to open over the current one, you use the following code:

```
<PARAM name=frame value=_self>
```

To open the linked page in a new browser window, you instead use the following code:

```
<PARAM name=frame value=_blank>
```

Other options for the value include the standard `_parent`, `_top`, or `_bottom`, or the name of any frame you have created.

Setting the wall and shelf colors

Next, you want to set the color of the wall on which the shelf hangs and the color of the shelf as well. You set all colors in this applet by using hexadecimal values. You probably want to set the wall color to match your own page's background color. The following code example shows how to set the color of the wall and shelf:

```
<PARAM name=wall.color value=FFFFFF>  
<PARAM name=shelf.color value=602010>
```

Arranging the books

To set the arrangement of the books on the shelf, you specify the `putBooks` parameter. Here's how to tell Bookshelf to set the books upright:

```
<PARAM name=putBooks value=vertical>
```

A value of `horizontal`, on the other hand, means that the books are stacked sideways on the shelf. The default value is `horizontal`, so you really only need to specify this parameter if you want them upright. If you go for vertical books, you can also specify whether they're right side up or upside down. You do so by using the `book.turned` parameter, and the only possible values are `yes` or `no`. The following code makes the books sit right side up:

```
<PARAM name=book.turned value=no>
```

The previous code sets the default value for the entire shelf, but you can override it for each book. You can also set any individual book to stand right side up or upside down as well, regardless of the default setting. (For details, see the section "Specifying the details for each book," later in the chapter.)

The `title.direction` parameter is closely related to a book's direction. If the books stand in a normal, upright position, using the value `downward` for this parameter means that the books' titles run from top to bottom, and using `upward` for it sends the titles from the bottom to the top. The default value is `upward`, so you really only need to specify this parameter if you want downward titles. This is the way to do it:

```
<PARAM name=title.direction value=downward>
```



If the book is upside down, the title runs in the opposite direction. An upward title on a book that's upside down looks the same as a downward title.

Changing the font

To specify the font used for the titles, the — you guessed it — `font` parameter comes into play. The following code sets a serif font, for example:

```
<PARAM name=font value=serif>
```

You can choose `serif`, `sansserif`, `monospaced`, `dialog`, or `dialoginput` as the value.

Setting the colors of the covers and titles

You set the colors of the book covers and titles with the `cover.color` and `title.color` parameters, using hexadecimal color values, like this:

```
<PARAM name=cover.color value=00008B>  
<PARAM name=title.color value=000000>
```



If you set the code for a horizontal viewing and set the book covers to the same color and volume size, you get a desk look with dozens of drawers that open.

Changing book dimensions

Several parameters deal with the dimensions of the books, all of which require pixel values. The height of the books is set via the `book.size` parameter, so if you want books that are 100 pixels high, you use this code:

```
<PARAM name=book.size value=100>
```

You set the default, minimum, and maximum thickness by using three different parameters, as the following example shows:

```
<PARAM name=book.thickness value=20>  
<PARAM name=book.min value=10>  
<PARAM name=book.max value=100>
```

A fourth parameter, `book.volume`, works in concert with these and each individual book's thickness settings to calculate their size. You're best off leaving this value set at about 10, as in the following example, although it can be interesting to experiment with different values:

```
<PARAM name=book.volume value=10>
```

Setting the number of books

You use the `books.number` parameter to set the total number of books showing. If you have 20 books on the shelf, this is what you type:

```
<PARAM name=books.number value=20>
```

You need to make sure that the number of books is accurate. If you set this parameter's value to less than the number of books you have, only that number shows. For example, if you have 12 books and set this value to 10, 2 books don't show up — and that means two links can't be used.

If you set the parameter to more books than you have, Bookshelf generates enough extra books, using the default settings, to match the number. The extra books have blank spines, of course, and no links are associated with them.

Specifying the details for each book

You need to detail each individual book. In many cases, the parameters work exactly the same as the default ones that I describe in the preceding paragraphs. The only difference for some is a prefix that tells which book the parameter applies to.

The two most important things that you need to have on each book are its link and title. A link that leads to another site has to use the full URL (like <http://www.dummies.com/>), but local links can use a relative URL, like this:

```
<PARAM name=$1.ref value="index.html">
<PARAM name=$1.title value="Home Page">
```

The \$1. part of the parameters' names means that this particular book is the first book on the shelf. If it's the second book you're detailing, you use \$2. instead (and so on).



You don't need to list the books in order. The book number that's a part of the parameter names is all that Bookshelf needs to sort them out.

If you want a two-line title on the book's spine, you need to separate the lines with a semicolon, as in the following example:

```
<PARAM name=$1.title value="JavaScript;Resources">
```



You can't have more than two lines in a book's title. If you try to create three lines, for example, the attempted third line and the semicolon stay on line two.

You can override the default cover and title colors for each book by specifying the book's own colors:

```
<PARAM name=$1.cover.color value=00008D>
<PARAM name=$1.cover.title value=000FD0>
```

You can also set the direction in which the book and title face for each individual book:

```
<PARAM name=$1.turned value=no>
<PARAM name=$1.title.direction value=downward>
```



The settings for an individual book take precedence over the default settings for all the books as a unit. If you decide, for example, to set a certain book so that it doesn't turn over, it stays standing upright even if you set all the others to flip upside down.

You set the width of a particular book like this:

```
<PARAM name=$1.volume value=20>
```

You can add an image to the book's spine, too, by telling the book's `icon` parameter what file to use:

```
<PARAM name=$1.icon value="spine.jpg">
```

This file must be either a GIF or a JPG image, and you don't want it to be very large — try to make it roughly the size you want in the finished product, although Bookshelf can shrink it quite a bit to make it fit.

Using boxes on the shelves

You can place boxes, as well as books, on the shelves. This effect looks like a shrink-wrapped software package instead of a book. To specify that the link is in a box, all you need to do is to set up its parameter value, as shown here:

```
<PARAM name=$1.box value="yes">
```

If you want to set *all* the books to be boxes by default, use the `book.box` parameter instead:

```
<PARAM name=book.box value="yes">
```

Putting it all together

The following example combines all the previous code, showing it as it needs to appear in the code on your Web page:

```
<APPLET name="shelf" archive=shelf.jar
        code="ru.sakva.bsh.Webshelf.class" width=400
        height=300>
<PARAM name=frame value=_self>
<PARAM name=wall.color value=FFFFFF>
<PARAM name=shelf.color value=602010>
<PARAM name=putBooks value=vertical>
<PARAM name=book.turned value=no>
<PARAM name=title.direction value=downward>
<PARAM name=font value=sansserif>
<PARAM name=cover.color value=00008B>
<PARAM name=title.color value=000000>
<PARAM name=book.size value=100>
<PARAM name=book.thickness value=20>
<PARAM name=book.min value=10>
<PARAM name=book.max value=100>
```

```

<PARAM name=book.volume value=10>
<PARAM name=books.number value=20>
<PARAM name=$1.ref value="http://www.dummies.com/">
<PARAM name=$1.title value="Dummies Press">
<PARAM name=$1.cover.color value=00008D>
<PARAM name=$1.title.color value=000FD0>
<PARAM name=$1.turned value=no>
<PARAM name=$1.title.direction value=downward>
<PARAM name=$1.volume value=20>
<PARAM name=$1.icon value="spine.jpg">
<PARAM name=$1.box value="no">
<PARAM name=$2.ref value="http://www.wiley.com/">
<PARAM name=$2.title value="Wiley">
<! Remaining Books Go Here >
</APPLET>

```



The part that says `<! Remaining Books Go Here >` is just a placeholder. You don't need it in your code. That's where you put the parameters for the other 18 books in this example.

Creating menus with VMaxNav

VMaxNav, a Java applet from Virtual Max, creates an Explorer-style menu that makes site navigation a breeze. As you can see in Figure 4-6, it's attractive, space saving, and useful. It's also easy for Webmasters to work with. You can control the colors and fonts that it uses and even throw in a background image if you want. You can download VMaxNav from www.geocities.com/siliconvalley/lakes/8620/vmaxnav.zip.

The basic code for adding the VMaxNav applet is as follows:

```

<APPLET code="vmaxnav.class" width="200" height="294">

```



You can alter the `width` and `height` attributes, but if you're using a background image, make sure that you use one that either fits the new dimensions or looks good as it tiles. Otherwise, your nice, new navigational tool won't look too good.

The two parameters shown in the following example are required by this applet:

```

<PARAM name="AUTHOR" value="Virtual_Max
    (http://come.to/vmax)">
<PARAM name="KEY" value="Free Version">

```

The `AUTHOR` parameter is self-explanatory. The `KEY` parameter value changes only if you register the applet. (The only difference between registered and unregistered versions is that the unregistered one adds a link to Virtual Max's Web site at the end of your links.)

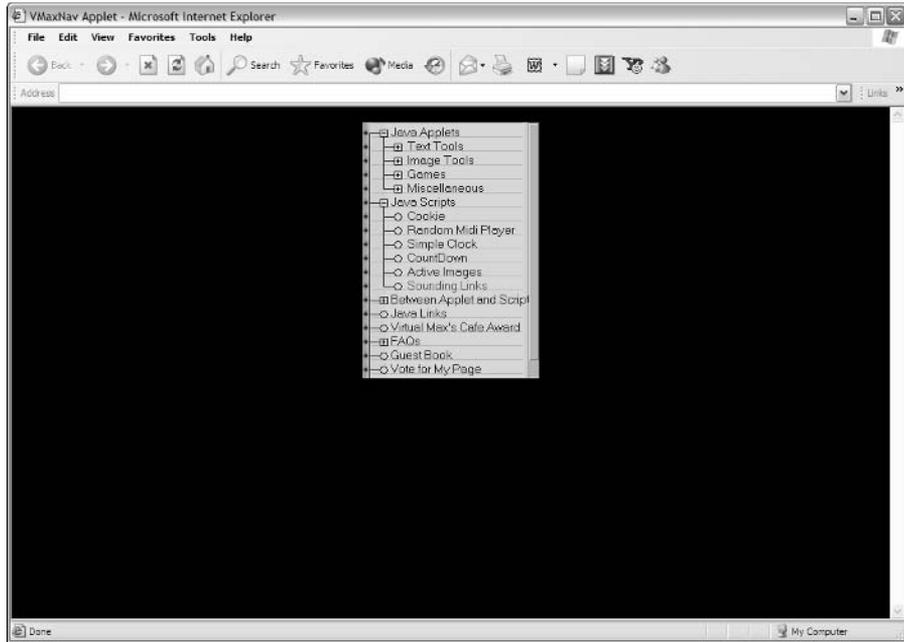


Figure 4-6:
VMaxNav
creates an
attractive
site map
menu.

VMaxNav requires one file other than the `class` file — a text file that lists the links that you want to add. If you want the background image, that's another external file, but the applet doesn't require it. The following examples show you how to specify these files in your code:

```
<PARAM name="URL" value="vmaxnav.txt">
<PARAM name="BGIMAGE" value="vmaxnavbg.gif">
```

I cover the structure of the text file after I finish discussing the parameters. If you use the name `vmaxnav.txt` for this file, you don't need to list the `URL` parameter because that name is hard-wired into the applet, meaning that the applet automatically looks for a file with that name, unless you specify otherwise. If you use another name, you do need to specify the `URL`.

Setting the colors for the navigation tree

You can set the colors for the navigation tree through the `TEXTCOLOR`, `ACTIVECOLOR`, and `BGCOLOR` parameters. You need to enter these values in hexadecimal format. The following code example shows the default color values:

```
<PARAM name="TEXTCOLOR" value="C0C000">
<PARAM name="ACTIVECOLOR" value="80FF00">
<PARAM name="BGCOLOR" value="000080">
```

If these colors suit your design scheme, you don't need to specify them.

Setting the font face, style, and size

You can choose the font face, style, and size by setting the values of the FONT parameter. The font-face options are TimesRoman, Helvetica, Courier, Dialog, or DialogInput.



You must use the exact same capitalization because of the applet's case sensitivity for these font names. Font style values are 0 for normal, 1 for bold, 2 for italics, and 3 for bold italics. Font size values are in pixels.

You put the three values together, separating each by a space. To set Helvetica bold, 20 pixels high, for example, use the following example:

```
<PARAM name="FONT" value="Helvetica 1 20">
```

Specifying how the linked file opens

To specify how the linked file opens, you use the TARGET parameter. The values are the standard _top, _self, _blank, and _parent, or any window name that you have created:

```
<PARAM name="TARGET" value="_blank">
```

Putting it all together

Here's the whole shooting match in one place:

```
<APPLET code="vmaxnav.class" width="200" height="294">
  <PARAM name="AUTHOR" value="Virtual_Max
    (http://come.to/vmax)">
  <PARAM name="KEY" value="Free Version">
  <PARAM name="URL" value="vmaxnav.txt">
  <PARAM name="BGIMAGE" value="vmaxnavbg.gif">
  <PARAM name="TEXTCOLOR" value="COC000">
  <PARAM name="ACTIVECOLOR" value="80FF00">
  <PARAM name="BGCOLOR" value="000080">
  <PARAM name="FONT" value="Helvetica 1 20">
  <PARAM name="TARGET" value="_blank">
</APPLET>
```

Setting up the external text file

To set up the external text file that VMaxNav draws its information from, you need to follow a strict but simple format. One line in the text file creates one equivalent line in the applet display's tree. You specify the level of the line in the tree by the number of blank spaces at the beginning of the line. As the following example shows, a top-level line has no spaces before the text. If it's a second-level line, you add one space before the text; if it's a third-level line, you add two spaces; and so on.

```
Top Level
  Second Level
```

```

Third Level
Another Second Level
  Third Level
  Another Third Level
Another Top Level

```

Make sure that you save the applet as an unformatted, plain-text ASCII file.

The text on each line has to follow the format `text|URL`, like this:

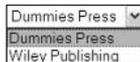
```
Main Page|index.html
```

When you finish, upload the `html` file, the `class` file, the `txt` file, and the background image file (if you use one). Don't forget that you need to upload the `html` file and the `txt` file in ASCII format and the other two as binary files.

Making drop-down lists

Well, I've got just about everything else in this chapter, so it's probably time to throw in a bit of JavaScript, too. The drop-down list shown in Figure 4-7 is easy to add to your site. It's a form that contains a selection menu. When a visitor makes a selection from the list, the form calls the JavaScript code and loads the selected page.

Figure 4-7:
A JavaScript drop-down list.



To add this JavaScript to your Web page, you first need to put the script into your `HEAD` element so your code looks like this:

```

<HEAD>
<SCRIPT language="JavaScript">
<!--
// Hide from old browsers
function golinks(where){
self.location = where;

}

// stop hiding -->
</SCRIPT>
</HEAD>

```

Of course, you'll probably have some other stuff in the HEAD element, too, like your title, but I'm focusing on the basics.

Next, put the form into your BODY element:

```
<BODY>
<FORM>
<SELECT
    onchange="goLinks(this.options[this.selectedIndex]
        .value)">
<OPTION value="http://www.dummies.com/">Dummies
    Press</OPTION>
<OPTION value="http://www.wiley.com/">Wiley
    Publishing</OPTION>
</SELECT>
</FORM>
</BODY>
```

Change the values of the OPTION elements to the URLs you want to link to. Of course, you'll want to change the descriptive content, too. To add more links to the list, just add more OPTION elements.

Online Sources for Improving Site Navigation

Table 4-1 lists some places on the World Wide Web where you can find more resources like those that are covered in this chapter.

Table 4-1 Online Resources on Site Navigation	
Web Site Name	Web Address
FusionBot	www.fusionbot.com
Google Free	www.google.com/searchcode.html
LinkBar	www.consultcom.com/Java/Applets/LinkBar.html
Mondosoft	www.mondosoft.com
siteLevel	intra.whatuseek.com

Part II

Adding Sparkle to Your Site

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"SINCE WE GOT IT, HE HASN'T MOVED FROM THAT SPOT FOR ELEVEN STRAIGHT DAYS. ODDLY ENOUGH THEY CALL THIS 'GETTING UP AND RUNNING' ON THE INTERNET."

In this part . . .

Here, you discover a ton of ways to make your site work, look, and sound great. Chapter 5 tells you where to snag some cool graphics. Chapter 6 talks about the different site add-ins that you can use and shows you how to handle the different kinds that you'll encounter. Chapter 7 introduces you to the world of Web multimedia. And Chapter 8 shows you how to keep your site in tip-top shape.

Chapter 5

Making Your Site Look Great

In This Chapter

- ▶ Getting free graphics
 - ▶ Optimizing graphics files
 - ▶ Getting Grazia Cipresso graphics
 - ▶ Ordering and creating free logos
 - ▶ Designing with images
-

You can have a perfectly functional Web site without images. But if you compare your site with one that's just as functional but also uses graphics, you'll lose. Most people will go to the other site and leave yours gathering electronic dust.

In this chapter, I take you on a whirlwind tour of places where you can download images by the bushel, Java applets that modify images in fabulous ways, and lots of other add-ins that improve your site's appearance.

Getting Graphics — for Free!

Most of us aren't artists, and even if I know an artist or three, most of them spend their time mucking about with paintbrushes and canvases. Many aren't really comfortable with electronic media. So how do average people who want nice graphics for their Web sites get them? The good news is that excellent graphics are all over the place. In recent years, the World Wide Web has become increasingly graphical, and the quality of those graphics has improved tremendously from the early days of the Internet.

Heeding copyrights and credits

Every Web browser is a funnel for graphics. Any image that you can see in it, you can download and put on your site. However, you need to consider a few factors before you use graphics. Yes, you can grab every image file that you find. But you can't necessarily use them all without consequences.

When an artist creates an image, that artist owns the *copyright* to that image. Just like the word says, that gives the artist — and the artist alone — the right to make copies, electronic or otherwise. The artist can give other people permission to make copies of the image — or even sell the copyright to someone — but unless he or she does so, the artist retains total control over the image.



Never take legal advice from anyone who spells *copyright* as *copywrite*.

One of the few ways in which someone can lose a copyright is if artists state that they're placing a work in the *public domain*, which means that they're surrendering their copyright and others can do anything that they want with the work. Many people don't understand what public domain means, though, and you sometimes run across a statement on a Web site that says something incredible like, "I retain the copyright to all these images, but I'm placing them in the public domain, so feel free to use them." If you find one of these contradictory disclaimers, and you really want to use the images, your best course is to contact the artist for clarification.

Typically, you find five different situations with fine print on an artist's Web site, as the following list describes:

- ✔ The artist states that you can't use the images. Just walk away — you can find plenty of others out there.
- ✔ The artist states that you can use the images without any conditions on their usage. Go ahead and download to your heart's content.
- ✔ The artist states that you can use the images if you do certain things, such as include a link back to the page they're on or include a copyright notice under the image. Do what the artist asks and use the images.
- ✔ The artist states that you can use the images freely if you run a non-commercial site but that commercial sites must pay. If you're commercial and the work is good, pay up — it's not going to break the bank. After all, you're not buying a Renoir original here.
- ✔ The artist provides no information at all about usage. Either walk away or e-mail the artist to find out the policy.

Online sources that I list at the end of this chapter show some great places where you can get your hands on lots of high-quality Web images.

Creating your own images

The easiest way to avoid copyright problems is to make your own images. That way, you own the copyright unless you're working under contract for someone such as a Web design firm, in which case that company probably

owns the copyright. It's impossible for me to cover all that you need to know about copyright in the limited space available here, but the subject is well covered in *Creating Web Graphics For Dummies*, by Bud Smith and Peter Frazier (Wiley).

Programs like Photoshop and Fireworks make it relatively easy for even those of us who are not very graphically talented to come up with professional-level graphics. Table 5-1 shows the URLs for several popular graphics programs.

Program	Web Address
Adobe Photoshop	www.adobe.com/products/photoshop/main.html
Corel Painter	www.corel.com/painter
CorelDRAW	www.corel.com/coreldraw
Macromedia Fireworks	www.macromedia.com/software/fireworks/
Paint Shop Pro	www.jasc.com/products/paintshoppro/

Differentiating between graphics file formats

Sometimes it seems that there are about as many different graphics file formats as there are people in Manhattan on a Monday afternoon. Every company from Adobe to Kodak has its own way of showing electronic images. When it comes to the Web, though, you really need to consider only three formats — the three that work in all major (and most minor) Web browsers.

GIF

The venerable, old *GIF* (Graphics Interchange Format) file format still sees a lot of usage on the Web. Because GIF limits you to 256 colors, it's best to use for images that don't have lots of colors or much in the way of subtle shifts between colors. GIF also has a unique capability — it can contain several images in a single file. These images appear sequentially as you view the GIF file, resulting in a cheap and easy form of animation.

JPEG

The relatively newer *JPEG* (Joint Photographic Experts Group) format, also commonly known as *JPG* because people still have the habit of using DOS 8.3-type filenames, has radically different capabilities. JPEG is a true color format, so you don't need to worry about any color limitations. It also stores image information in a different way, resulting in a highly compressed file that's usually much smaller than a GIF file of the same image.

PNG

The latest puppy in the window is the *PNG* (Portable Network Graphics) format. (You pronounce it "ping.") PNG does everything that the GIF format does, except for creating animated images, and does quite a few things much better, such as providing better transparency capabilities. (A more sophisticated format known as *MNG* — Multiple-image Network Graphics — that's currently in the works includes the capability to create animated images, too.) Although PNG support in Web browsers tends to be a bit spotty right now, it's definitely improving. PNG is the native format of Macromedia Fireworks, a major graphics program, and will probably become the Web standard.

Putting Your Graphics on a Diet

Fat files are embarrassing. They slow down a page like nothing else, turning a fabulous site into a sluggish turkey. A really good graphics program can trim your overweight files, but such a program will also set you back a pretty penny, and you'll have to work with it for a while in order to get the most out of it. Instead of putting all that money and effort into solving the file size problem, try some of the following Web sites that do the job for you — for free.

GIFWorks

GIFWorks is absolutely one of the best tools you'll find on the Web. Period. You get the idea I like it? A lot? There's a good reason. This is one truly full-featured program, and it's something you may not be familiar with yet, but I think it's the wave of the future on the Web. This program isn't one you download and use on your computer. It stays put, and you use it right on the GIFWorks site.

With GIFWorks, you can do everything to GIF files, from reducing colors to adding special effects. So what does it cost? Nothing, nada, zip. And to top it all off, the same folks have a couple of other sites that do everything from making postcards (MediaBuilder, at www.mediabuilder.com) to letting you

get your hands on more than 10,000 high-quality GIF images (the Animation Factory, at www.animfactory.com). I'm not exaggerating when I say *quality*, either. This is some of the best stuff I've seen.

The Animation Factory's images are also free — for noncommercial use. Aha! A catch at last? Nah. If you want to use the images on a commercial site, all you have to do is cough up anywhere from \$29.95 for a few month's download privileges to the highest rate of \$99.95 for a year of the top service. You don't have to pay any further fees for using the images. The Animation Factory is well worth the price, even if you don't run a commercial Web site, and GIFWorks shows the same attention to quality but costs nothing at all.

Here's how to use GIFWorks to slim down your image files:

1. Go to www.gifworks.com.
2. Choose **File**⇨**File Open** from the GIFWorks menu bar, as shown in Figure 5-1.



Come back to this page later and check out the **File**⇨**New 3D Text** option. It's a great way to create animated text banners.

GIFWorks menu bar

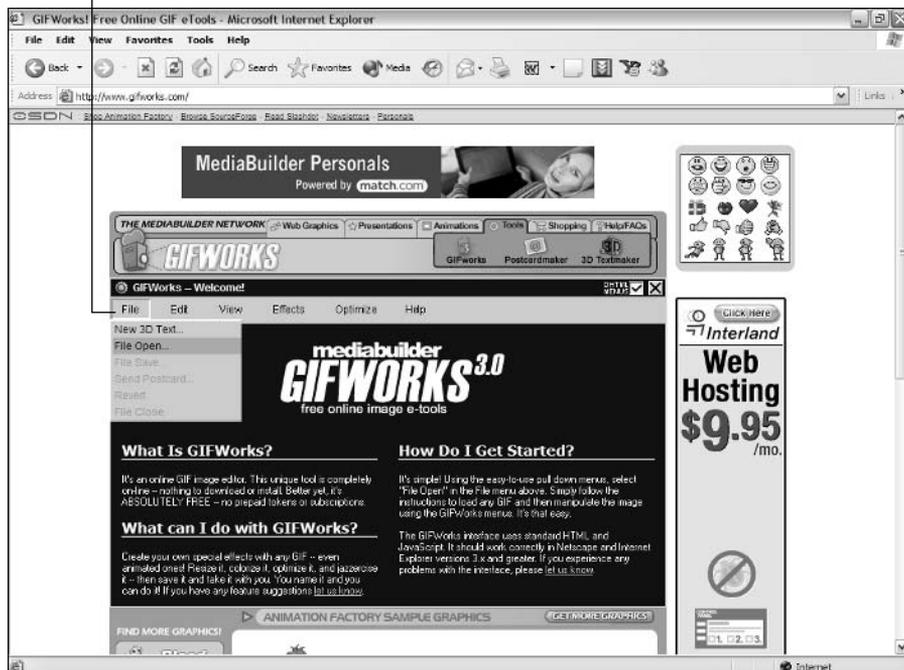


Figure 5-1:
Opening
a file in
GIFWorks.

3. On the next page, open a file from the Web by entering its URL and clicking the Fetch Image button. Or, upload a file from your local drive by clicking the Browse button, selecting the file, and then clicking the Upload Image button.



GIFWorks operates on a *copy* of the image you specify. It doesn't change the original file in any way.

After the image is uploaded to GIFWorks, you'll be looking at it in the program, as shown in Figure 5-2. I'm using a dragon from the collection at www.animafactory.com for this example. The dragon is animated, which is one of the great strengths of GIFWorks. Many programs can modify and optimize individual GIF images, but an animated GIF is composed of many different images — eight of them, in this case — and GIFWorks can simultaneously modify all of them, thus altering the animated image.



Before you begin to work with the image, click the Help menu and take a look at the FAQ.

After your image is at GIFWorks, what you do with the image depends on your situation. Here are some options you can choose from:

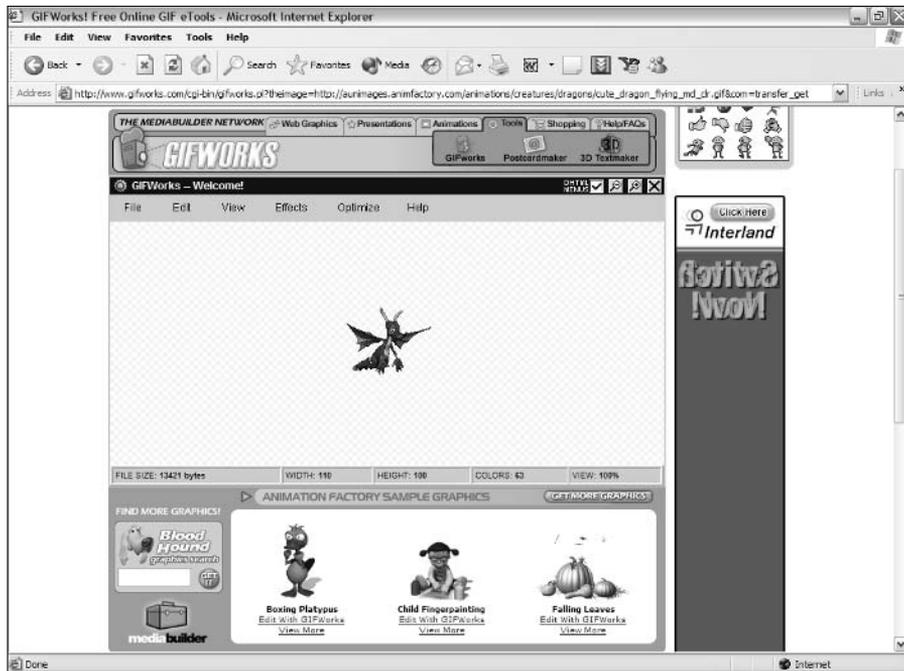


Figure 5-2:
An animated dragon image in GIFWorks.

- ✔ **To reduce the file size quickly:** Choose **Optimize** ⇨ **Reduce Colors** from the menu bar. You get a whole page full of different versions of the original image, each with fewer colors than the preceding ones. You also get information about the file size, number of remaining colors, and percentage reduction. Scroll down the page, look at each image, and download the one that represents the best compromise between image quality and file size.
- ✔ **To make a color transparent:** Choose **Edit** ⇨ **Add Transparency** from the menu bar. In the pop-up window that appears, click the color you want to clear. To make a transparent GIF totally opaque, do the same thing, but start off by choosing **Edit** ⇨ **Remove Transparency**.
- ✔ **To view information on file size, width, height, and so on:** Choose **View** ⇨ **Image Info**.

Okay, that's all the practical stuff that most Webmasters need. Now for the fun part. After you're done being responsible, head for the **Effects** menu and start playing. You can do so many things to your images that you may have a hard time choosing among them. Unless you're dead set on just trying anything that comes to hand, choose **Help** ⇨ **Effects Gallery** to look at some examples. Figure 5-3 shows what some of the effects did to the dragon image shown in Figure 5-2. Enjoy.

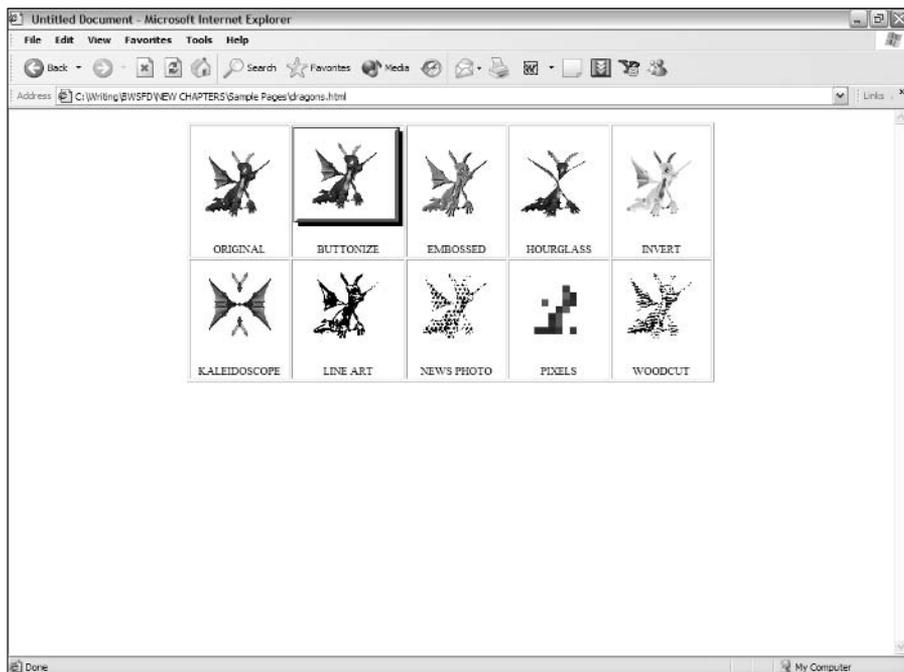


Figure 5-3:
Special effects can radically alter the look of an image.

Spinwave

Spinwave does just one thing, but it does it very well: It optimizes image files to save space and decrease download time. Spinwave handles not only GIFs but also JPEGs, and each file type has its own *image cruncher*. Both an online version of the program and a version you can run on your own computer are available. The online version, which used to be free, is unfortunately a paid service now. The good news, however, is that it is very reasonably priced if you'll be running your own Web site. You can pay anywhere from \$7 for a month of service to \$79.95 for a lifetime of service.

Here's how Spinwave works:

1. Go to www.spinwave.com/crunchers.html.
JPEG Cruncher is on top of the main page (which is shown in Figure 5-4), and beneath it is GIF Cruncher.
2. Click the **Browse** button in the cruncher that matches the file type that you want to work with.
3. Locate and select the file on your system.
4. If you're using JPEG Cruncher, choose a JPEG image quality setting from the drop-down list to the right of the Crunch button.

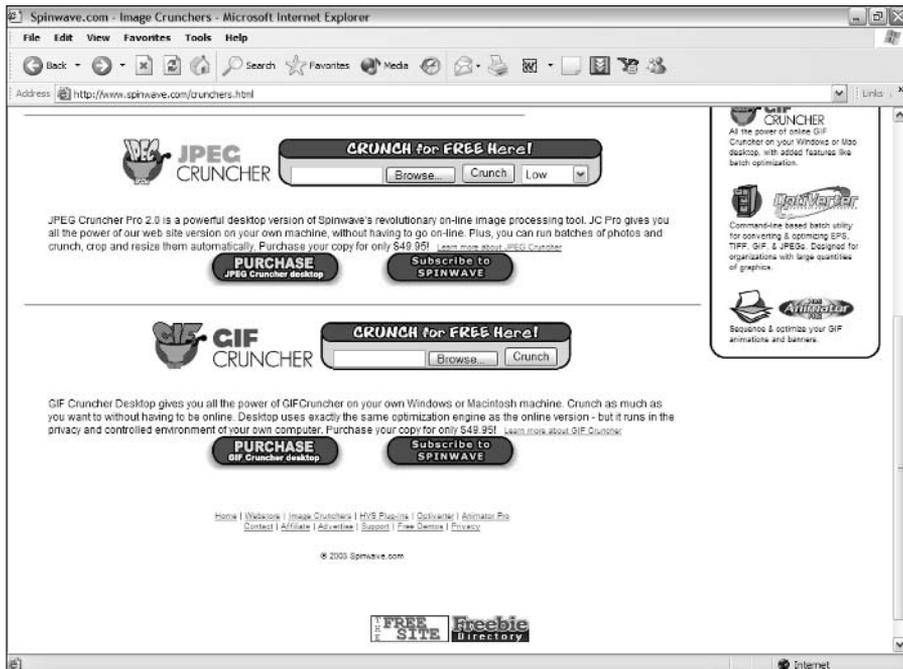


Figure 5-4: Spinwave has one image cruncher for JPEGs and another for GIFs.

5. Click the Crunch button.

In a few moments, a new page appears, showing a series of images. The top one is the original image, for comparison purposes. Each successive image is of slightly lesser quality but has a smaller file size.

6. Scroll down until you find an image that represents a good trade-off between image quality and size, and then download it.

If you're not a Spinwave subscriber, the images you can download will have some demo text overlying them. If you want to subscribe, just click on one of the Spinwave Member links next to any of the optimized images.

Ordering Graphics by Grazia Ciproso

Want a free logo for your site? Some really cool and professional animations? Just ask Grazia. This site, at www.gciproso.com, really does offer custom logos and banners at no cost. All you have to do is exert a little patience — for about five days — because paying work must come first for this skilled artist. To order a logo or banner or to explore the downloadable art, go to the home page and click one of the links under Free Services.

In addition to the other freebies and custom services, this site includes some Web site templates — premade designs you can use — that are so well done. The templates come in color-coordinated suites, such as the ones shown in Figure 5-5. They include a variety of layouts, with the most commonly used functions on a Web site (Home, E-Mail, Links, About, and so on).

Creating a Logo with Cooltext.com

If you want a free logo fast and you don't mind doing it yourself, try Cooltext.com at — you guessed it — www.cooltext.com. This Web site generates graphics while you wait, according to the options that you choose. The process is simple and fun, and there's no limit to the number of logos you can experiment with.

Not only are its logos cool but so are the site's legal requirements: none, zip, nada. There's no copyright issue to deal with, no ads stuck in the middle of things, and no fine print of any kind. As an act of gratitude for such a great service, you may want to add a link back to this site from yours, but even that's not required.

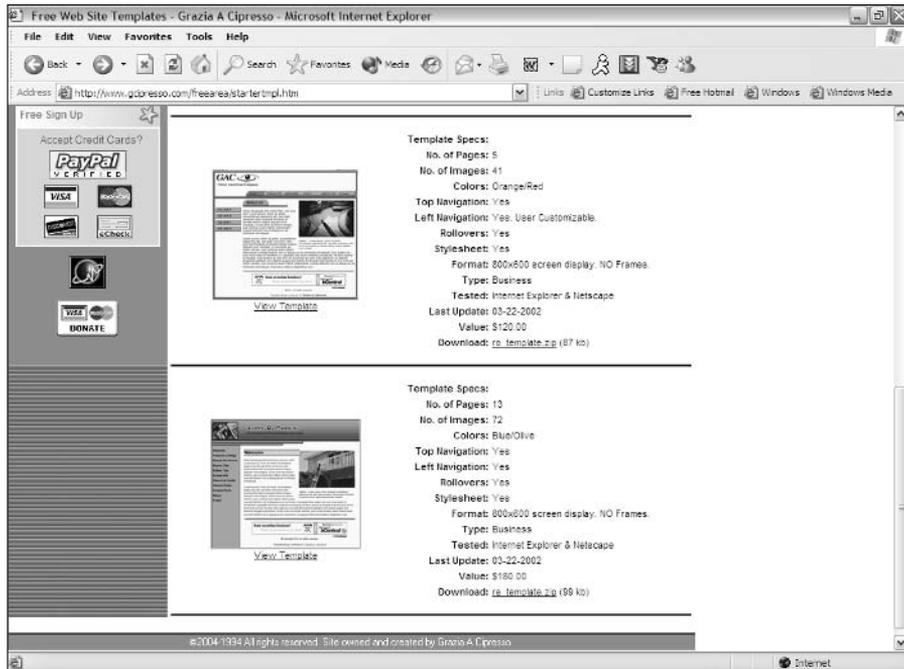


Figure 5-5:
Grazia
Cipresso's
Web suites
give you
free, high-
quality
graphics.



Although Cooltext.com doesn't hold a copyright on the logos you create, you probably do. I'm not a lawyer (and I don't even play one on TV), but it seems to me that the decisions you make during the course of designing the logos qualify them as artistic creations. Don't take my word for it, though. If this point is important for your situation, check with an attorney who really knows copyright law or e-mail the U.S. Copyright Office at copyinfo@loc.gov.

To make a custom logo at Cooltext.com, follow these steps:

1. Go to www.cooltext.com and then click the **Logos** link on the left side of the page.
2. On the resulting page, click any logo style in the **Choose a Style** box, as shown in Figure 5-6.

You go to the logo design page, shown in Figure 5-7.

Different logo styles offer different options. Depending on the style that you choose, these options may set colors, determine whether text is engraved or raised, and so forth. In this example, I'm using the Alien Glow design.

3. Click the **Edit** button for the **Logo Text** category, and then on the resulting page, type the text for your logo in the **Logo Text** text box. Click the **Set Text** button to return to the options.



Figure 5-6: Cooltext.com's logo page, showing the styles that you can use to create your own custom logo — for free!

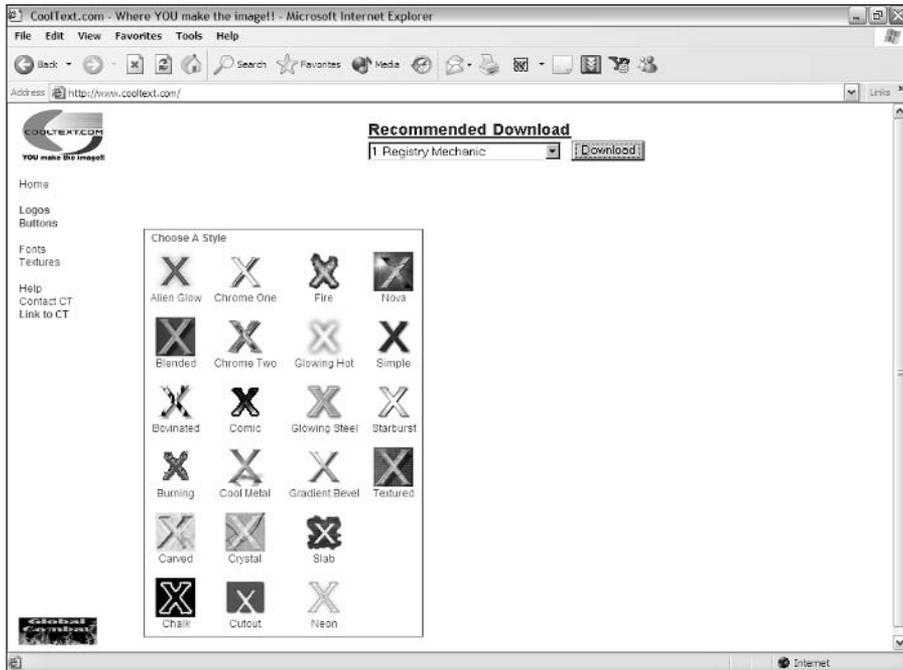
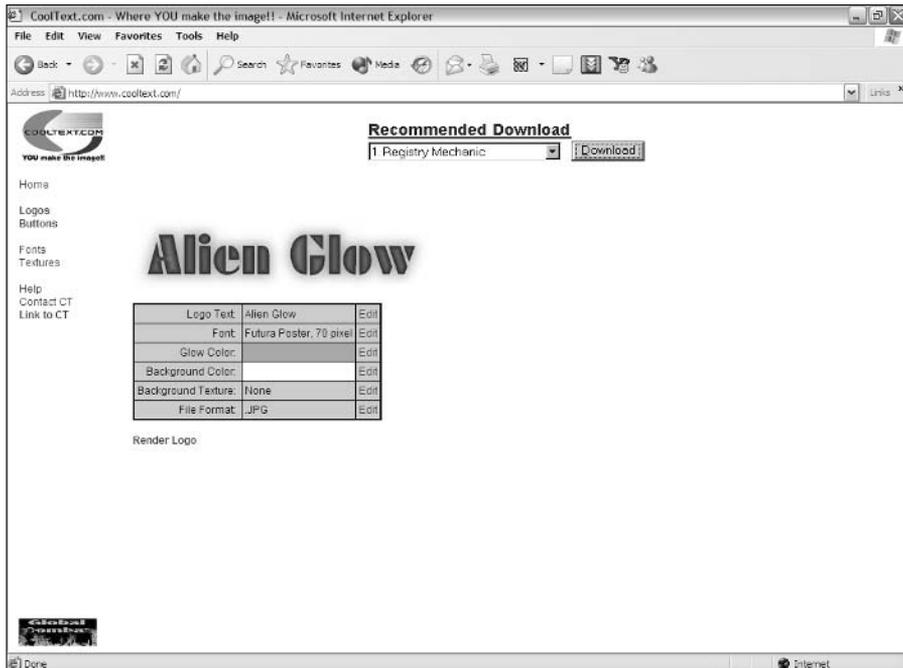


Figure 5-7: The logo design page, where you choose options for your logo.



You usually type your site or company name here, although you can type anything that you want. If you need more than one line, you can put a new line symbol (`\n`) in the text, as in the following example:

```
First Line\nSecond Line
```

4. Click the **Edit** button for the **Font** category. Then pick a font from the **Font** drop-down list and enter a font size in the **Font Size** text box. Click the **Set Font** button to return to the options.

If you want to browse through images of the available alphabets, click the **Fonts** link on the left side of the Web page. The **Textures** link is even better; it not only shows the textures that the various logo styles use, but also allows you to download them and use them for Web page background images.

5. Click the **Edit** button for the **Glow Color** category and then select a glow color from the resulting color picker Web page (see Figure 5-8).

You can select a glow color either by entering numerical values in the R, G, and B text boxes to indicate the RGB (red, green, and blue) components, or by clicking on one of the color bars as described in the next step.

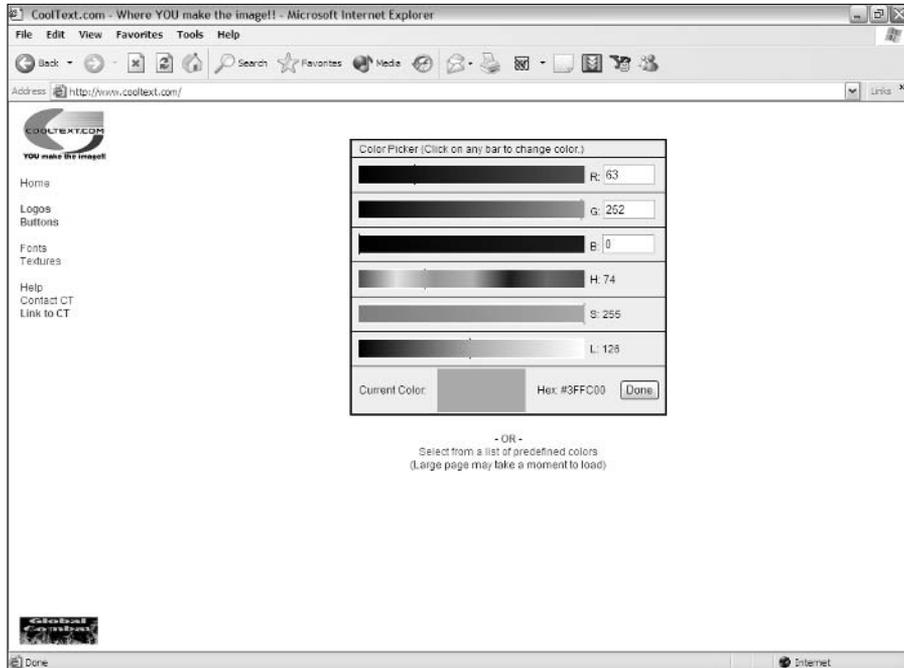


Figure 5-8: The Cooltext.com color picker, which enables you to customize the colors for your new logo.

6. Click anywhere along the R (Red) line to select the amount of red, along the G (Green) line to select the amount of green, and so on.

Each time that you do this, the page reloads with the new value showing. As an alternative to the red, green, and blue (RGB) approach, you can also set colors by using the *HSL* model (hue, saturation, and luminance):

- Hue basically sets the color itself — whether it's red or blue, for example.
- Saturation is how pure the color is.
- Luminance is how much white is added to the color.

You click the H, S, and L lines to set their values the same as you do for the R, G, and B lines. You can't, however, enter numerical values because these lines don't have text boxes after them.

If you're not certain what values to enter in the R, G, and B text boxes (or where to click on the lines in the color picker), you can click the Select from a List of Predefined Colors link at the bottom of the color picker to go to a color chart. This Web page (shown in Figure 5-9) gives you a long list of named colors, with examples of each color. Just decide which color you like and click it to return to Cooltext.com with that color selected.

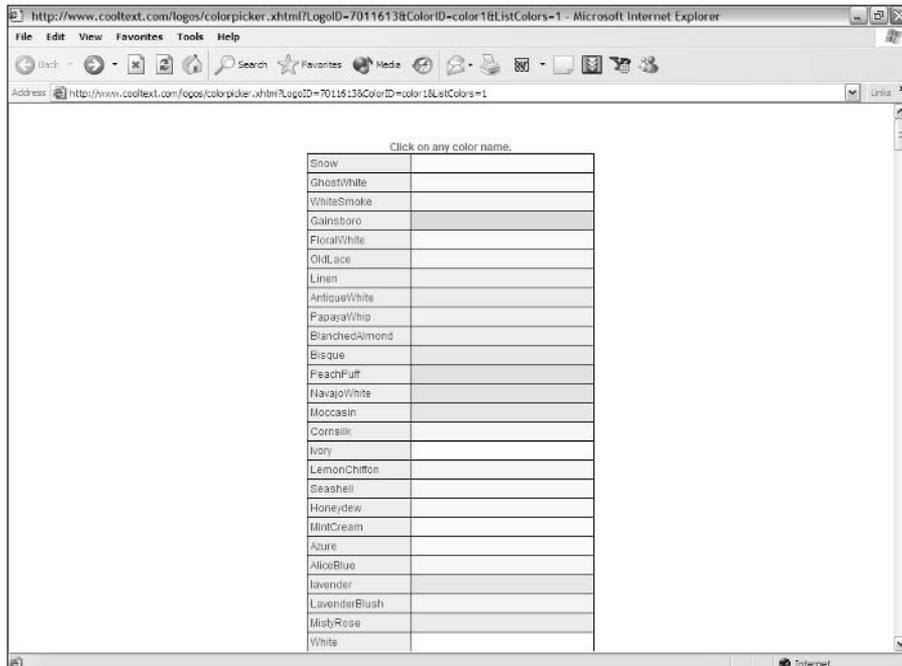


Figure 5-9:
The list of
named
colors lets
you choose
by just
clicking one.

7. When you're satisfied with the glow color, click the color picker's Done button to return to the logo design page.
8. Repeat Steps 5 through 7 for the background color box.
9. Click the Edit button for the Background Texture category, and then click one of the textures on the resulting Web page (see Figure 5-10).

You're returned to Cooltext.com with that texture selected.

If you need more textures, click the links at the top of the textures page to view more pages.



10. If you want to specify a file format, click the Edit button for the File Format category and then click one of the file formats in the resulting list.
11. After you set all the options for your logo, click the Render Logo button.

Now, all you have to do is sit back and wait until your logo shows up. If you like it, download it right away because it only exists on Cooltext.com's server for about an hour. If you don't like it, back up and monkey with the settings until you get what you want.



While you're at Cooltext.com, check out the button generator, too. You access it by clicking the Buttons link on the main page.

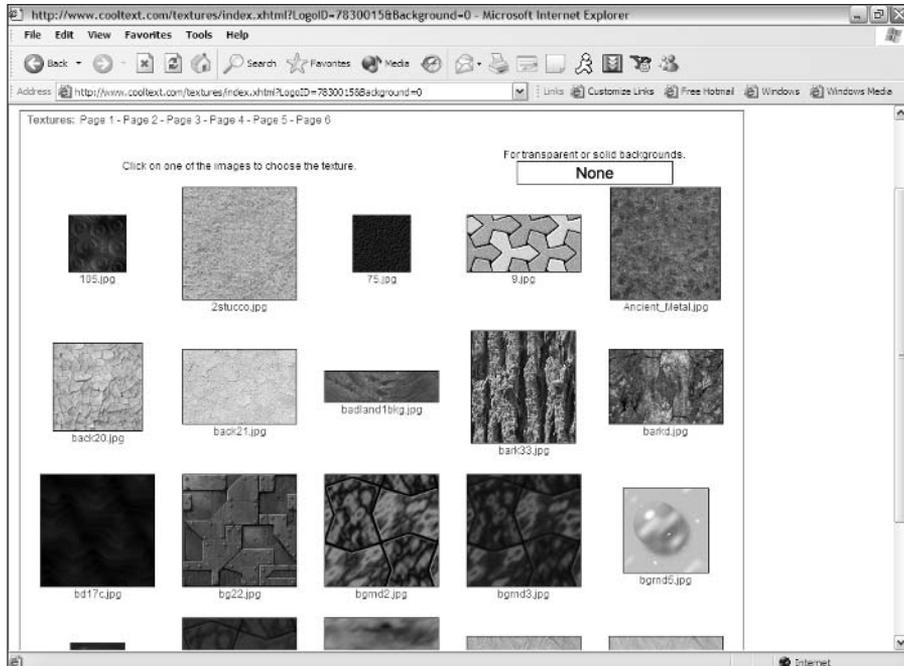


Figure 5-10:
Choosing a
texture for
your logo.

Basic Design with Images

Getting images is one thing. Knowing the right images to get (or to make) is another, and knowing what to do with them is perhaps most important of all. Misusing graphics — either too much or too little — can make an otherwise outstanding Web site into an unpleasant mess. This section explores the proper use of images in Web page design.

Placing images for maximum effectiveness

It's easy to overdo any element on a Web page. It's not uncommon to run across sites that are all or almost all text, which is fine for some technical material, but pretty dicey if you're trying to appeal to the general public. At the opposite extreme, you'll find pages that are nothing but one image after another, with perhaps a small bit of text that often leaves you more confused than when you started.

Balancing visual elements with text is key to good Web site design. The FOX News.com front page illustrates this point well. It's functional, eye catching, and well balanced. Figure 5-11 shows the top portion of the Web page. Note that it is strongly graphical. Even the text and links are all tied in to their attendant graphical background, their colors nicely suiting the overall look of the page.

The major image at the top, a photo and its surrounding frame, is the largest single graphical element on the page, reflecting its importance as showing the latest top story. Farther down (see Figure 5-12), there are smaller photos illustrating other stories, the whole being well balanced by the set of text links leading to various news reports.

This site is particularly interesting in that, except for the news story text links, virtually all the text is either embedded in or otherwise associated with a graphic. And very little of the graphic material is in the form of photos, drawings, or other commonly used image types. You find heavy use of graphical dividers to help structure the visual appeal of the page; however, they are small and do not overpower the other elements nearby.

The entire page contains only a few large advertisements, one being a standard banner ad across the top. In no case do the ads intrude upon or clash with the overall design of the page, but the most skillfully blended in are the "sponsored by" ads, such as the one immediately to the right of the Latest Headlines divider. Several of these are in various places around the page, but they are tastefully handled and unobtrusive.

Figure 5-11:
The top of the FOX News.com home page is very graphical.



Figure 5-12:
The main portion of the page contains smaller graphics and is broken up by text.



Your own artistic judgment must be the ultimate guide, but these guidelines will help you to create better-designed Web pages:

- ✓ Keep most images relatively small. How small depends upon two factors: the number of images you have on the page and simple visibility.
- ✓ Use your largest picture or artwork as the lead-in to the rest of your material. If it's not the most important image, it probably shouldn't be the biggest one, either.
- ✓ Use small divider images to separate subject areas.
- ✓ Don't allow advertising images to overwhelm the basic material of the Web page.

Sizing images

Besides file size, you need to consider the physical size of images. Each image, when displayed in a Web browser, takes up a certain amount of real estate on your visitors' screens. Very often, a particular image you want to use just doesn't happen to be the size you want it to be.

You can fire up your favorite graphics program, load the image, resize and resample it, and then resave it. Or you can just let your visitor's Web browser do all the work for you. The ability to alter the size of an image on a Web page is built in to HTML. Although it is not required, it is good form to specify the width and height of an image, as demonstrated here:

```
<IMG width="100" height="30">
```

Normally, you would use the actual size of the image, of course. But you can use any values you want to. To make the image take up more space on a Web page, just enter larger numbers. To make it smaller — you guessed it — enter smaller values instead.



You have to be careful to proportionally resize the image, unless you're looking for some weird effect. If you want to quadruple the size of the example image, for example, you set the width to 200 and the height to 60.

See Chapter 3 for details on how to place images.

Online Sources for Quality Graphics

Table 5-2 lists some places on the World Wide Web where you can find lots of high-quality graphics for your site.

Table 5-2 Online Resources for Quality Graphics

Web Site Name	Web Address
1Archive.com	www.1archive.com
CoolNotions.com	www.coolnotions.com
Dee's Art Gallery	www.dreslough.com/dee/index.html
Goddess Art of Jonathon Earl Bowser	www.jonathonart.com
Graphics Attic	www.graphicsattic.com/gahome.htm
Lindy's Graphics	www.theiowa.net/lindy/



I don't list any *image repositories* in this table. An image repository is a Web site that simply provides about a zillion images for download without any regard for where they came from or what kind of legal troubles they may cause for you. They typically involve all sorts of copyright and trademark violations, and the fact that such a repository provides the Donald Duck images that you put on your site doesn't keep Disney's lawyers off your back. Stick with sites like the ones in this table, and you'll keep out of trouble.

Chapter 6

Plugging In Scripts and Applets

In This Chapter

- ▶ Checking for CGI access
 - ▶ Implementing CGI scripts
 - ▶ Using JavaScript
 - ▶ Adding Java applets
-

This book shows you how to add cool features to your Web site. These features are all programs of one kind or another. Relax, though — you don't have to be a programmer to use them. It's just that HTML has its limitations, and if you want to expand the functionality of your Web site, you have to go just a wee bit beyond it. HTML is mainly focused on the task of displaying text and images, along with the capability to link various files together, and it performs these tasks admirably well.

That's fine if all you want to do is to have a Web site that could be duplicated on paper using only crayons and paste. However, you'll probably want to have many more things, adding capabilities that your average visitor will expect to find on any well-designed site. Here are some of the things that you can do with scripts and applets on your Web site:

- ✔ Add a search feature that lets visitors find the material they're looking for without having to manually go over every page on your site.
- ✔ Provide password protection to keep certain areas of your site available only for the initiated.
- ✔ Enable visitors to communicate with you and with each other through a variety of methods ranging from simple graffiti-like message boards to sophisticated and full-featured chat rooms.
- ✔ Add timekeeping tools such as clocks and calendars.
- ✔ Ease site exploration by providing visitors with graphical or hierarchical navigation tools.

- ✓ Let visitors enjoy games and puzzles on your site.
- ✓ Link to live information such as news feeds, stock tickers, weather reports, and the like.

Although these programs are written in a variety of programming languages, you don't need to know anything about programming in order to use them. Instead, many of them are hooked up to your Web page by using the *Common Gateway Interface* (CGI). There's nothing mystical or particularly difficult about using CGI, and I give you the basics in the section "Adding CGI Scripts."

Java applets are also popular for adding new capabilities to Web pages. They're programs written in the Java programming language, and plenty of them are free for you to use. Again, to add an applet to your Web page, all you have to do is a little bit of typing — no programming required. The people who wrote the applet have already done all the techy stuff for you, and all you need to do is tell it where to find your Web site in order to use it.



An *applet* is a tiny application, and *application* is just another way of saying *computer program*. So, an applet is a short and (relatively) simple program.

Another common method for adding new functions to your Web pages is with *scripts* (which are short programs) written in the JavaScript programming language. Unlike Perl and Java, JavaScript was designed solely for writing programs for the World Wide Web. You can go all the way and learn to write your own JavaScripts, or you can take advantage of the zillions of existing ones and just plug them in. The code goes right into the same file as your Web page code — it's just a matter of copying and pasting it.

Making Sure That You Have CGI Access

If you're going to use CGI with your Web pages, you have to make sure that you have the capability to do so. This sounds obvious, of course, but you may or may not have CGI access for your Web site. CGI access means that you can run programs on your Web server that use the Common Gateway Interface, a method of sending form data from a Web page to an external program for processing.

Nine times out of ten, these programs are kept in a subfolder called `cgi-bin`, so your first step is to look to see if you have such a subfolder on your server. If you do, odds are that you have CGI access because that subfolder doesn't have any other purpose. If it's there, go ahead and try to use a CGI program. If you follow all the instructions carefully and the program still won't work, you may need to have a talk with your network administrator or ISP.

Why your ISP won't help

When your Web site is hosted by the same ISP that you get your Internet access from, you'll probably find that it's not too supportive of your desire to run CGI scripts. There are a couple of reasons for this, which make good sense to your ISP but don't help you at all:

- ✓ Badly written programs using CGI can represent a security hazard, poking holes in the normal running of things. Because the ISP wants everything to run smoothly and under its control instead of someone else's, ISPs tend to frown on this possibility.
- ✓ Most ISPs don't really care about your Web site. They're not bad people, but they're mostly in the business of providing Internet access to their customers, and anything else they have to deal with is just an annoyance that gets in the way of their main job. (See Chapter 15 for more info.)

If your ISP allows you to run CGI scripts, it may be a painful and expensive process on your end. I once had an ISP that wanted to approve the scripts in advance, put them on the server themselves sometime over the next couple of days (it was apparently too much trouble to allow the paying users to access their own files and therefore get the job done instantly), and charge me \$25 a pop for doing so. From an ISP's point of view, that's reasonable. From my point of view, it was a definite no-go. For starters, I like to do things right away instead of taking days to get around to it. On top of that, you often have to monkey with a CGI script before you get it working just the way you want. Every time I wanted to make a change, it cost another \$25 and set me back a couple of more days.

Finding a CGI provider

Fortunately, many Web-space providers do provide you with CGI access. If you live in a city or large town, you can easily shop around and find a new ISP that's on your side, CGI-wise. If not, thanks to the way the Internet works, you don't need to deal with your local ISP at all.

You can go with a virtual server or other commercial remote Web-space provider (see Chapter 15 for details), or you can easily find free Web-space providers by using the search engine at FreeWebSpace.net. Go to the main page at www.freewebspace.net and click the Advanced Free Hosting Search link, or just go straight to www.freewebspace.net/search/power.shtml. In the search form, click the CGI check box under Features, as shown in Figure 6-1. Select any other options you desire and click the Search button. My test search, using the default options and the CGI check box, came up with 15 free providers that grant CGI access.

Figure 6-1: FreeWeb space.net's Advanced Search form can help you find a provider that gives you CGI access.

Using remotely hosted CGI scripts

The CGI scripts that you use don't have to reside on the same server that houses your Web pages. This is good, because CGI scripts are run by the Web server where the script is located and using them puts an added load on your server. If you have lots of visitors, the data processing demands on your server can be pretty strenuous. If you don't have your Web site on a dedicated server with plenty of power, things can get really slow.

When the script is on someone else's server, however, you don't have to worry about the server load. Happily, there are lots of remotely hosted CGI scripts, which means that you can still add their capabilities to your own pages while avoiding the server overload problem. Many of the add-ons in this book are remotely hosted.



Free CGI Resources provides free scripts that work via links to its server (see Figure 6-2). Check out some of them at www.fido7.com/free-cgi/.

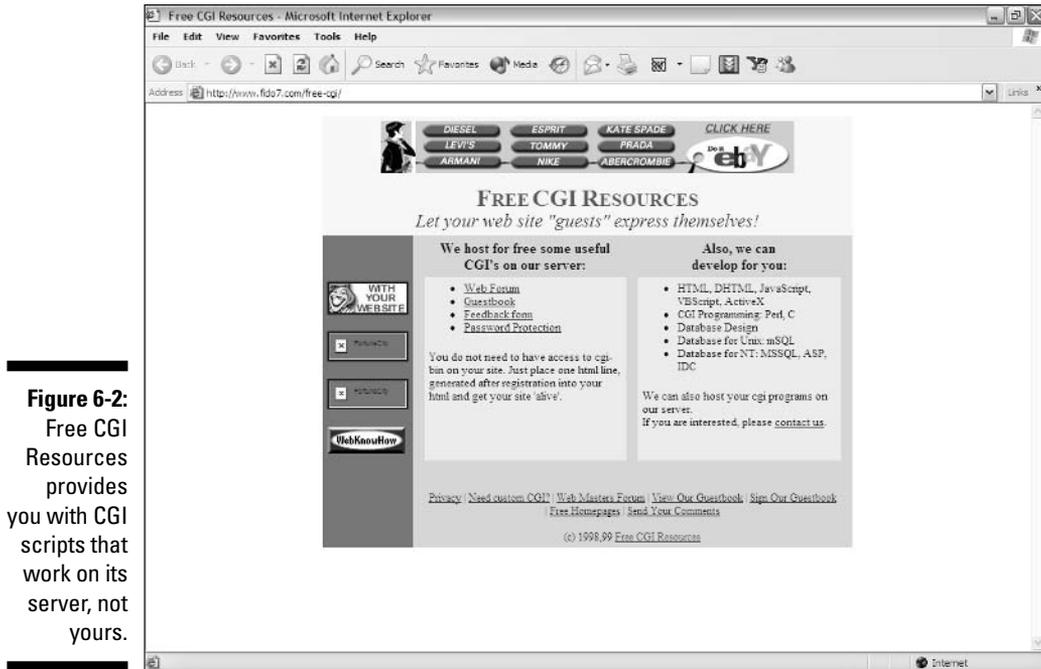


Figure 6-2:
Free CGI Resources provides you with CGI scripts that work on its server, not yours.

Adding CGI Scripts

A CGI script works by taking input from your Web page and sending that input to an external program for processing. Usually, it returns a new Web page that has the results of that processing on it. The input is most often data from a form, but it can sometimes just be a link that a user clicks to activate the program.

See the section “Dropping in Perl CGI Masterscripts with Simple Search” in Chapter 4 for an example of a popular CGI script.

Basic techniques

Before you do anything, you have to get the script. Whenever I describe a script in this book, I provide you with the URL of the site from which you can download the script. After you have the script, follow these basic steps to use it:

1. Read the instructions for the script. Let me say that again: Read the instructions.

After you've worked with a few scripts, it's tempting to just plunge right ahead without looking. After all, most scripts plug in pretty much the same way, and you can often get away with skipping the instructions. That's the cause of about 812 percent of the problems that people have with scripts, though. All it takes is to misunderstand or misinterpret one little setting, and the whole script won't work.

The instructions are often in the standard `readme.txt` file. Sometimes, the script doesn't have a `readme` file, though, and the instructions are embedded in the text of the script itself in the form of comments. (Comments are notes the programmer adds to provide information, and they're marked so that they're differentiated from the program code and don't interfere with the running of the program.)

2. Open the script file in a text editor and make any necessary changes so that it works with your particular setup. After you do this, save the modified script.

You may, for example, need to add a list of URLs for a link menu, an e-mail address to send a message to, or the location of your site's main Web page. You don't need to understand the programming in order to do this. Just follow the instructions and replace the sample values in the script with your own values.



If you use a word processor to make the changes, make sure that the script gets saved as plain text and that the original file extension doesn't get changed either. You don't want a bunch of word processing formatting codes embedded in the script!

3. Add the HTML code that the script's instructions say to add to your Web page.

As with the script, you probably need to change a few sample values to the actual values. The HTML code is usually nothing more than the location of the CGI program, entered as the `action` attribute of a form.

4. Upload the script and the modified HTML file to your Web server.

The HTML file goes in the normal HTML folder, and the script goes into the `cgi-bin` folder.

Solving problems

The basic techniques described in the preceding section work in almost all cases, but in some situations, you may need to modify the script a bit more to get everything working just right.

For example, nearly every script you find assumes your `cgi-bin` directory is called `cgi-bin`. Yours may be simply named `cgi`, for example. If that's the

case, you need to change the typical folder references in the script to match your folder name.

You may also find that the standard file extensions, like `.pl` for Perl files, aren't allowed in your CGI setup. In that case, you have to change the file extension to whatever your server demands. A file named `search.pl`, for example, may need to be renamed `search.cgi`.

If you try to run the script and nothing happens, here are some troubleshooting options:

- ✔ **Go back over the instructions and see if you did anything wrong.** Nine times out of ten, it's something simple but so small and insignificant that it's easy to overlook. You may have left out a required comma between two values, or forgotten a quotation mark. Perhaps you misspelled the URL of a Web site. Go over everything you did very carefully, and you'll usually find the problem.
- ✔ **If the script is fine, make sure that you uploaded all the necessary files.** Some scripts have data files that need to be uploaded along with them in order for them to work properly.
- ✔ **Check to see that your `cgi-bin` folder has the correct permissions settings.** If you're not familiar with permissions, ask your ISP to check them for you.
- ✔ **If all else fails, send an e-mail message to the program's author explaining the nature of the problem and ask for help.** Because most of these programs are free, don't expect too much in the way of technical support. Nobody can afford to both give away programs and spend all their time providing free technical support as well. The best approach is to be polite, perhaps tell the program's author how much you want to use the program (if you don't feel that way about it, you haven't come this far), and make sure that you give all the information you can about the settings you used.

Incorporating JavaScripts

JavaScript has a tremendous advantage over other methods of adding "beyond-HTML" features to your Web pages. It was designed for no other purpose, and it's so tightly integrated with HTML that it's a joy to use. The processing takes place in the visitors' Web browsers, so it's both fast for them and no problem for your Web server. You don't have to understand the language to add other people's scripts to your Web site. In many cases, no alterations to the code are needed. In some cases, you may have to change the filename or add some URLs to a list. Figure 6-3 shows the JavaScript Source at javascript.internet.com, one of the many places on the Web to get free JavaScript code.

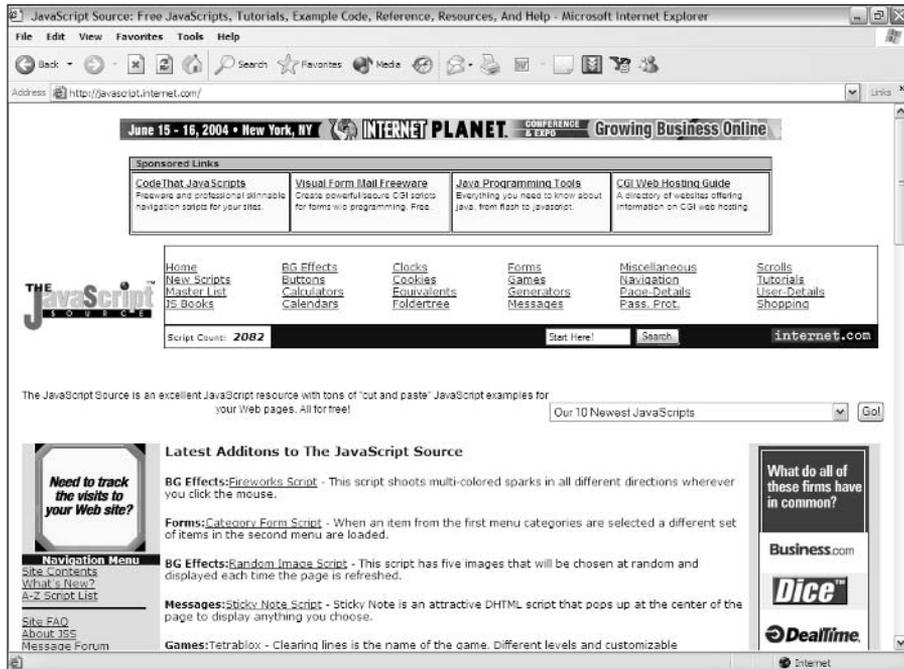


Figure 6-3:
The
JavaScript
Source
gives you
free
JavaScript
code.

Basic techniques

You need to add two things to your Web pages when you work with JavaScript: the script itself and something that triggers the script.

See the sections about RiddleNut.com and bogglers in Chapter 10 for examples of useful JavaScript add-ons.

The script

The script has to go in the HEAD element of your Web page, like this skeleton script named whatever:

```
<HEAD>
<Script Language="JavaScript">
/*
You will usually find comments here.
*/

function whatever()
{
Actual code is found here.
}
</Script>
</HEAD>
```



You can place scripts within the `BODY` element rather than the `HEAD` element, but that can be risky. A JavaScript needs to be *interpreted* — translated by a Web browser from the human readable code into something a computer can understand — before it runs. Scripts in the `HEAD` element are processed before the Web browser processes the elements within the `BODY` element. That means that these scripts are defined and ready to roll before anything shows up in the Web browser. If the script is in the `BODY` element, a visitor may possibly attempt to trigger it before it's defined, which begs for a malfunction. It's better to stick with the safer, usual approach.

The trigger

You need to add to your Web page something to trigger the script, which causes it to run. This goes within the `BODY` element. Many things can trigger a script, but you don't need to be concerned with all the possibilities. The script you add is most likely designed to have a particular trigger, like a rollover image that changes whenever a visitor's mouse pointer is over the image. Or, it may be intended to work after the Web page finishes loading into the browser. You can alter the trigger if you're familiar with JavaScript.

For a script that executes as soon as the Web page loads into the browser, use the `onload` attribute of the `BODY` element:

```
<BODY onload="whatever()">
```

For a script where you want the visitor to click an element, use the `onClick` attribute. This example uses the `A` element, but `onClick` is a ubiquitous attribute that you can use it with just about anything:

```
<A onClick="whatever()">Click here for whatever.</A>
```

Lots more triggers exist, such as `onMouseOver` and `onMouseOut`, which are, respectively, used to execute scripts when a mouse pointer moves onto and away from an element. The documentation for a script normally specifies which trigger(s) it's intended to use. If you want to explore JavaScript, try *JavaScript For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, by Emily A. Vander Veer (Wiley).

Dealing with problems

Fortunately, practically any JavaScript that you pick up is pretty much guaranteed to work — under the right conditions. When it comes to JavaScript, zillions of things can go wrong. The biggest problem is that so many different versions of Web browsers are out there. Not only do Netscape Navigator and Internet Explorer handle scripts a little differently, but different versions of the two major Web browsers also don't work the same. That means that a script that works fine in the latest version may not work at all in an older one. Unfortunately, lots of older Web browsers are still out there — not everyone is in a hurry to tie up their systems downloading the newest versions.



If a browser doesn't recognize JavaScript, the script won't run. There's no harm done, just a missed experience for the visitor.

Unless you want to put in the time and effort into really mastering the language and doing your own debugging, your best bet is to simply try out the script you want to use. Test it in Netscape Navigator, Internet Explorer, and any other Web browser you think your target audience uses. If the script works well in all the browsers, you're home free. If it causes problems in any of them, you need to decide how important that segment of the audience is to you. For example, if your site is dedicated to Microsoft products and your script won't work in Netscape Navigator, you're probably pretty safe in going ahead with it anyway, because the vast majority of your visitors are likely to use Microsoft's Internet Explorer.

Dropping In Java Applets

Java applets run the gamut from the trivial and useless to the fabulous. Many Java applets perform some type of image modification, like the popular Lake applet). Others add rotating banner ads or scrolling ticker-tape-style messages. The really nice thing about Java applets is that, like JavaScript, they run on the visitor's machine, which reduces the load on your Web server. One drawback, however, is the length of time that they take to download to the visitor and the slight delay on the visitor's end while Java starts up (if it isn't already running). Figure 6-4 shows the main Java page for Sun Microsystems (java.sun.com), the company that invented the language.



Major programs are called *applications*. Your word processor or spreadsheet program, for example, is an application. Although Java is indeed used to write applications, the Java programs that are written for the Web tend to be very small, so they're known by the diminutive name *applet*.

Despite the similarity in their names, Java and JavaScript are only vaguely similar, and they work quite differently. But they do have one important thing in common: They're both executed on your visitors' computers, which takes the load off your server.

Basic techniques

Java applets are composed of `.class` files (rarely, you see a `.cls` extension instead). The file may be downloaded by itself, but you often find it in a `.zip` or other compressed file along with some other supporting files — documentation and perhaps graphics or sound files as well, depending on the applet's function.

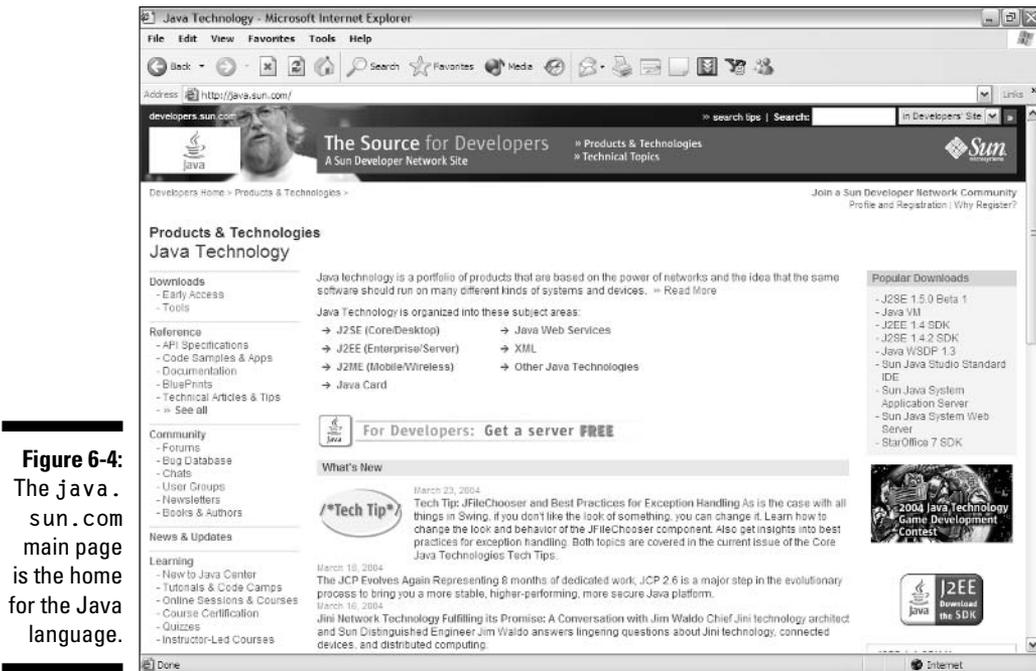


Figure 6-4:
The java.
sun.com
main page
is the home
for the Java
language.

See the section on Bookshelf in Chapter 4 for an example of a fun and functional Java applet.

After you have the files, you need to add code to your HTML file to activate the applet. You do this with the `APPLET` element, and many different attributes may or may not come into play, depending on the particular applet involved. Almost invariably, the applet's documentation provides the HTML code you need, and all you have to do is to cut and paste it, changing only a few items, such as the names of image files, to make it fit your site. No applet included in this book does it any other way.



Sometimes, an applet's author doesn't include a documentation file but has all the necessary information on the Web page from which you download the applet. Make sure that you print out a copy of that page. Better yet, save the page to your system so you can easily cut and paste the HTML code and refer to the instructions if you have any problems.

You can never count on any Web site being operational all the time. If you don't make a copy of the Web page that shows the instructions, you'll be out of luck if the Web server is down the next time you try to go back.

At its most basic, you add a Java applet contained in a file called `bongo.class` like this:

```
<APPLET code="bongo.class">This would have been  
drumming.</APPLET>
```

The content between the start and end tags is phrased this way because that content is ignored by any Web browsers that support Java and won't show up on them. It's displayed only by browsers that aren't Java-capable (or that have Java turned off). It's not necessary to add any content between the start and end tags, but it's a nice gesture because it lets visitors know to turn on Java or upgrade their browsers if they want to get the full benefit of your site.

The applet may also have some additional attributes, as described in the next few sections.

Name attributes

The applet may have a `name` attribute. This is used when you have multiple interacting Java applets and one of the applets needs to send information to another one. Each applet's name gives them all the capability to identify one another. In the following example, the `name` attribute tells other applets that any task belonging to "HitIt" should be processed by this applet:

```
<APPLET code="bongo.class" name="HitIt"></APPLET>
```

Width and height attributes

You also need to specify the `width` and `height` attributes for the applet. These values are found in the accompanying documentation:

```
<APPLET code="bongo.class" width="200" height="100"></APPLET>
```

Codebase attributes

If the `.class` file isn't in the same folder as the `.html` file that calls it, you need to use the `codebase` attribute. It tells the Web browser where to find the Java applet. If the example file were in the `drumming` subfolder, the HTML code would look like this:

```
<APPLET code="bongo.class" codebase="/drumming" width="200"  
height="100"></APPLET>
```



Unlike most URLs in HTML, the `codebase` location must be within either the same folder as the `.html` file or a subfolder of it. This means that you can't access a Java applet on another server with it.

Parameters

In most cases, the applet also requires that you add some other information to the HTML code. This information, called a *parameter*, is added via the

PARAM element. The following example adds a particular sound file to the bongo applet:

```
<APPLET code="bongo.class" width="200" height="100">  
<PARAM name="CurrentSound" value="quickroll.au">  
</APPLET>
```

The parameter is usually the name of an image or sound file, the URL of a Web page, or the text of a message. There can be lots more in the way of parameters, depending on what the particular applet does. The parameters may set font size, background color, speed of change, or just about anything else. Some parameters are optional; others are required. As with everything else, read the documentation carefully.

Troubleshooting applets

When you upload the `.class` file and any supporting files to your Web server, make sure that you have carefully checked the documentation to see where the files should go. Many Webmasters carefully separate different file types into different folders. For example, it's a good and useful technique to keep your image files in a different folder from your `.html` files. If nothing else, doing so makes it easier to read the file listings and helps you avoid using the wrong file type settings when uploading files.

This approach can cause problems, however. For example, say that you're using an applet that manipulates images. If the Java applet expects to find the `.html` file that it's called from, the image files, and itself all in the same folder, you need to make an exception to your usual filing technique and keep all the necessary files in the same place.

Another common problem that may occur during the uploading of the files is that `.class` files must be uploaded as binaries. If you upload them as ASCII, they won't work. Also make sure that any image or sound files are uploaded as binaries and that any text files — and, of course, the `.html` file — are uploaded as ASCII.

Even if an image file is uploaded correctly, you can still have trouble. First, check the documentation to see if the applet works with that file type. If everything is okay, it's possible the file itself is the problem. Not all graphics programs create files that can be read by other graphic programs. UMAX scanner software, for example, makes TIFF files that can't be read by some viewers. JPEGs created with Photoshop 4 won't work with all Java applets. The solution? Load the image into another program — you may have to try a couple of them — and save it again from the second program. Upload it again, and the new file may work.

Online Sources for Scripts and Applets

Table 6-1 lists some places on the World Wide Web where you can find more information on the topics covered in this chapter.

Table 6-1 Online Resources for Scripts and Applets	
Web Site Name	Web Address
CGI Resource Index	www.cgi-resources.com
CGI: Why Things Don't Work	www.raingod.com/raingod/resources/Programming/Perl/Notes/CGIDebugging.html
Freewarejava.com	freewarejava.com
Intro to CGI	www.mattkruse.com/info/cgi/
Java Boutique	javaboutique.internet.com
JavaScript Kit	www.javascriptkit.com
Perl Primer	www.webdesigns1.com/perl/
WDVL: The Perl You Need to Know	wdvl.com/Authoring/Languages/Perl/PerlfortheWeb/

Chapter 7

Web Sights and Sounds

In This Chapter

- ▶ Finding video and music to use on your site
 - ▶ Avoiding legal hassles
 - ▶ Understanding file formats
 - ▶ Making files smaller
 - ▶ Adding audio and video to your site
-

Web pages don't just sit there any more. They've come a long way since the early stages of just displaying text on your computer screen. New forms of multimedia experiences crop up all the time. Television and radio stations, for example, have broadcast on the Web for a long time, but most of them target only individual users; few of these broadcasters have realized the importance of allying with Webmasters to get more exposure for their signals. I dug up a few sites for you that are Web-based themselves, existing only on the Web instead of being traditional broadcast or cable stations, and they do understand how much you, the Webmaster, mean to them.

I also point you to plenty of sources for sound files that you can use on your Web site. Of course, as with any innovation, there's a certain amount of debate about the use of sound on Web pages. Aside from the carping of die-hard traditionalists who just plain insist that you shouldn't use it, there are some serious considerations. Sound doesn't necessarily go with every site. If you decide to use it, you need to match the mood of the music with the page's theme. The right song can add a new dimension; the wrong one can sound ridiculous — and maybe even make your site a bit of a joke.



If you use sound, make sure that you give your visitors the capability to turn it off. Embedded sound with no controls is an annoyance to many visitors. You may as well give them the option, anyway, because they can simply turn off their speakers to get rid of the sound. (Either that or they just leave your site in disgust, never to return.)

Getting Music and Video

First things first: You gotta get the music or whatever media before you can add it to your Web site. Okay, grabbing music off the Web, off a newsgroup, through FTP, or just about any other way that data moves on the Internet is a pretty easy thing to do. However, you face two problems with taking just any old song that you can get your hands on, and the same goes for video, too. First off, if you can snag it with no trouble, so can everyone else — and you presumably want your site to stand out from the crowd. Second, you face the question of copyright. The odds are pretty good that you have no idea who owns the copyright to a song or video that you snag from some Web site or whether it's in the *public domain* (for everyone to use) instead of under copyright.

You can avoid this copyright mess by following these few simple suggestions:

- ✔ Get your own custom music or video by hiring professionals to create it for you — totally new and completely unencumbered. That way, you won't have any legal hassles, and nobody else can use it on another site.
- ✔ Buy or download royalty-free music and video collections.
- ✔ Use public-domain music and video (if you don't mind everyone else using the same music or video on countless other Web sites, too).
- ✔ Create your own music or video.

The following sections describe how to get these different types of files for your site.

Finding music houses

Professional music suppliers can accommodate your desires to play unique music on your site, either by selling you custom compositions that they design to serve your particular needs or by providing you with music that they already have on hand for you to buy or license. The exact deal you strike depends on the company's policy and how much money you're willing to part with. Some companies license you to use the music only in certain ways (sort of like the way software licenses say things like you can only use a program on a single computer), so when you talk to them, be sure to specify that the music will be used on Web pages. You should not, however, have to pay any royalties — fees for every time you play the music — just the flat fee when you get the music.

LicenseMusic.com (shown in Figure 7-1) is one good source that sports a useful database of what's available. Table 7-1 lists some other good Web sites where you can find or order royalty-free music.

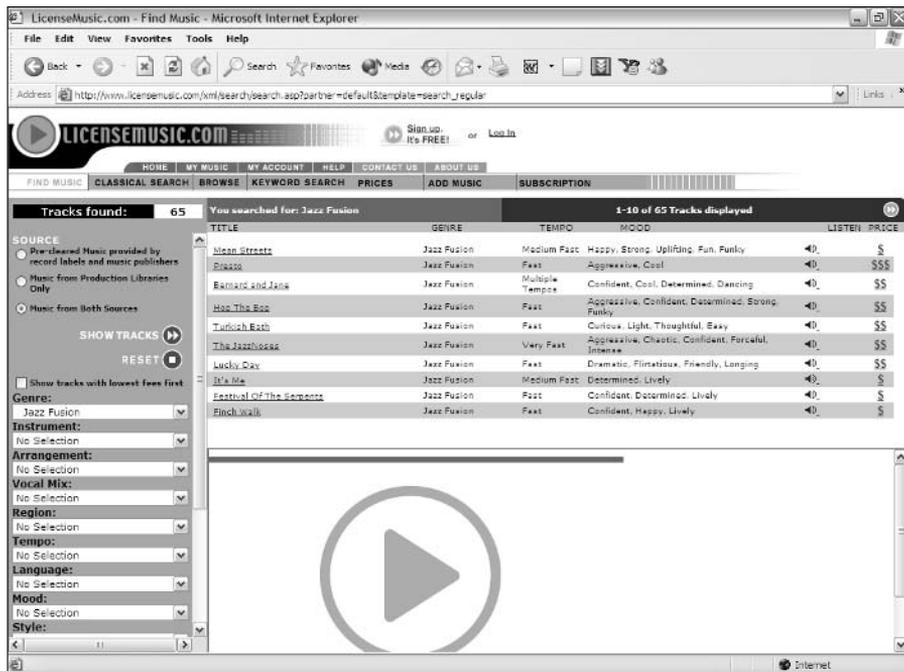


Figure 7-1:
License
Music.com
lets you
easily
search for
music.

Table 7-1 Royalty-Free Music Suppliers

<i>Web Site Name</i>	<i>Web Address</i>
Catovah Arts	www.catovah.com
Fresh Music Library	www.freshmusic.com
LicenseMusic	www.licensemusic.com
Music 2 Hues	www.music2hues.com
The Music Bakery	www.musicbakery.com
NASH Music Library	www.nash.co.jp/sod/nml/
Partners In Rhyme	www.partnersinrhyme.com
PBTM Library	www.pbtm.com
Prime Cuts!	www.productionmusic.com
Royalty Free Music	www.royaltyfree.com

Finding public-domain music and video

Not all music or video is currently under copyright. Music has been around a long time, and most of it's in the public domain — meaning that nobody holds the copyright to it. The reverse is true of video. Video is a more recent technology, and the massive proliferation of compact, lightweight video cameras means that most moving pictures have been created within the past few years.

Copyright can prove to be a tricky issue. If you make a mistake, you can end up in federal court, paying hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines. Rest assured, however, that very few copyright infringers ever go to prison, although the law provides for that eventuality. On the other hand, some of these copyright infringers find themselves spending all their time talking to lawyers. And paying lawyers. So before you add some public-domain music or video to your Web site, make absolutely sure that it *is* in the public domain.

Table 7-2 lists some good public-domain music and video sources.

<i>Web Site Name</i>	<i>Web Address</i>
The Choral Public Domain Library	www.cpd1.org
Classical Piano Free Downloads	www.sheetmusic1.com/NEW.GREAT.MUSIC.HTML
LSVideo	www.lsvideo.com
PD Info	www.pdinfo.com
PDMusic.org	pdmusic.org
RetroFilm	www.retrofilm.com
U.S. National Archives	www.archives.gov/research_room/media_formats/film_sound_video.html
Virtual Sheet Music	www.virtualsheetmusic.com/Downloads.html
Web-Helper.net: Public Domain Music	www.web-helper.net/PDMusic



Some public domain music sites provide copies of sheet music that you can use to create new recordings of your own. Others have music files that you can download and use right away. There's a catch, however; a recording of a public domain song is not in the public domain. The written music is, but the recording isn't. Yes, I'm repeating myself, but it's critical for you to remember that. The legal reasons are so convoluted that any two lawyers have three opinions about why it's so, but it's a fact. So, unless the site specifically states that it's releasing its music files into the public domain, you probably have to pay for the download. Some sites that charge commercial sites to use their recordings are willing to let noncommercial sites use them for free.

Picking a File Format

Your main concern when choosing a file format for either Web audio or Web video is download time — the length of time it takes for a Web site visitor to be able to experience the music or movie. Most people won't be willing to go make a sandwich to pass the time waiting to hear your favorite song, and even your dearest friends may not be happy about spending all afternoon trying to see the video of your vacation.

Three main factors affect download time: the speed of the network connection, the file size, and whether or not the file has to completely download in order to start playing. No matter how fast your Web server's connection is, you have no control over the speed of your visitors' connections. Thus, the only thing you can really do is to modify either the file size or the manner in which the file is displayed.

I deal with file compression in the following section, so now I want to take a look at streaming versus regular files. With a regular file, such as the MP3 format that is so popular for reproducing music, the entire file must be downloaded and then played. With a streaming file, such as Real Audio, the user can hear the first part of the music while the rest of it is still on the way.

In theory, it sounds like a great idea. But in practice, streaming files (whether with video or audio content) tend to be jerky and esthetically deficient. So you have to decide whether speed of display is more important to you than smoothness of presentation.

Tables 7-3 and 7-4 show some commonly used video and audio file formats, a description of each, and whether the format is streamable or not.

Table 7-3		Video File Formats
<i>File Extension</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Streamable</i>
.avi	Microsoft's Audio Video Interleave format can be problematic. Although it achieves good quality, various factors can yield a large file size, and it can't support full-screen movies.	Yes
.mov, .qt	The Apple movie format for QuickTime is excellent and has great file compression.	Yes
.mpeg	The Motion Picture Experts Group format is as popular for video as its MP3 cousin is for audio. With both high file compression and excellent reproduction quality, this is the vehicle of choice for many Webmasters.	Yes
.ram	The Real Audio Movie format was the most common form of streaming video, but it lost popularity because it requires the use of a proprietary program, RealPlayer, which is often criticized for carrying too much advertising and being somewhat difficult to use.	Yes
.wmv	Windows Media Video tends to produce small files of good quality.	Yes

Table 7-4		Audio File Formats
<i>File Extension</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Streamable</i>
.aiff, .au	Mainly used on Macintosh systems. Because the majority of computer users don't own Macs, think twice before committing to it because your other visitors may or may not be able to use it. File sizes tend to be large.	No
.midi	The Musical Instrument Digital Interface is a venerable old music format. So many MIDI files are online that it is impossible to count them, and this format is supported by the vast majority of all music creation programs. Nonetheless, is mainly biased toward non-vocal music and it thus may have limited utility for Webmasters despite its small file size.	No

<i>File Extension</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Streamable</i>
.mp3	This is the king of the audio files. Everybody has heard of — and probably has — songs in MP3 format. Although people may argue that other formats have technical advantages, MP3s are widely supported and are probably instantly playable on almost all your visitors' systems.	Yes
.ra	The Real Audio format (from the same folks who brought you streaming video) can create smaller files than many of the others, but at a serious cost in sound quality.	Yes
.wav	Waveform Audio files are good in that any computer with sound capabilities can play them, but they are notorious for their large file sizes.	No
.wma	Windows Media Audio files are often smaller than MP3s and have very good quality.	Yes

Compressing Files

Windows Movie Maker is a quick and painless way to familiarize yourself with the various factors that affect file size and how these factors can create a good or bad Web experience for your visitors. A full exploration of video preparation is outside the scope of this book, so if you're interested in delving more deeply into working with Web video, check out *Digital Video For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, by Keith Underdahl (Wiley).

To experiment with various settings and see how they affect file size, follow these steps:

- 1. Select a movie by clicking its icon (see Figure 7-2).**
- 2. Click the Save to My Computer link on the left side of the screen.**
The Save Movie Wizard appears, as shown in Figure 7-3.
- 3. Enter a filename for your movie in the first text box.**
- 4. If you don't want to save your pictures in My Videos, the default setting in the second text box, click the Browse button and choose a different location.**

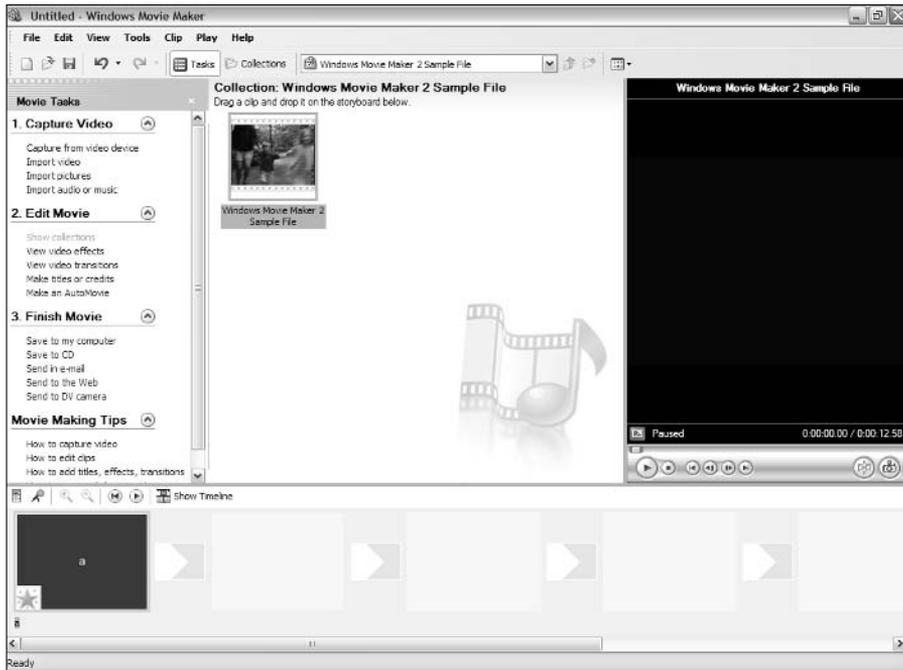


Figure 7-2: Choosing a movie in Windows Movie Maker.

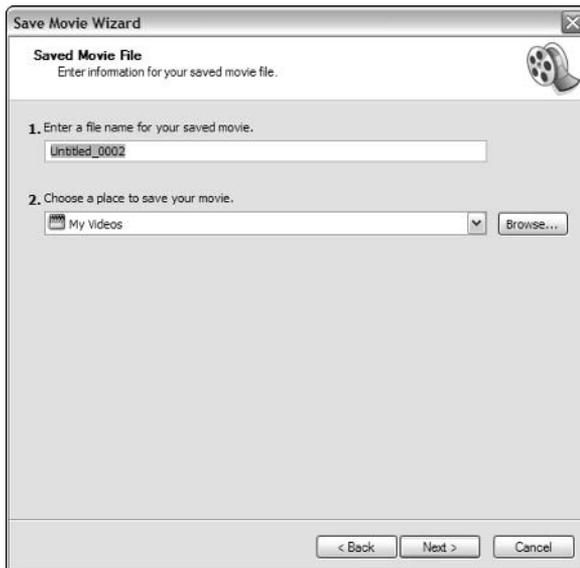


Figure 7-3: The Save Movie Wizard guides you through the process.

5. Click the Next button.

On the next page, the default setting Best Quality for Playback on My Computer is selected, as shown in Figure 7-4.

6. Before checking out the other options, take a moment to look over the values in Setting Details and note the estimated file size those settings generate.



Figure 7-4:
The settings
determine
the file size.

7. If you want to go with the default setting, skip ahead to Step 10. Otherwise, click the Show More Choices link to see additional options.

8. If you have a particular file size in mind as your target, click the Best Fit to File Size option button and then either type in the value or scroll up or down until you find it. You can set the target file size in either KB (kilobytes) or MB (megabytes).

As you set different values for the target size, only one of the values in Setting Details changes: Bit Rate. This setting determines the amount of information that is included in the file. A lower bit rate means a lower quality of video and a smaller file size, whereas a higher bit rate means the reverse.

9. Click the Other Settings option button, as shown in Figure 7-5. From the drop-down list next to it, select various settings and observe the impact on the values in Setting Details.



Figure 7-5:
Selecting
the Video
for Pocket
PC option.

The Video for Broadband option, for example, sets a bit rate of 512 Kbps, a display size of 320 x 240 pixels, and a replay rate of 30 frames per second, generating a 260KB file. The Video for Dial-Up Access option, on the other hand, sets a bit rate of only 38 Kbps, a display size of 160 x 120 pixels, and a replay rate of 15 frames per second, resulting in a file only 20KB in size.

10. After you've arranged the settings to your satisfaction, click the Next button.

The file is saved.

11. Click the Finish button to close the Save Movie Wizard.

Adding Audio and Video Files to Your Site

You put both audio and video files on your Web page in the same way — or ways, rather. The simplest way to do it is the same way you connect any file to a Web page. Just put in a link for visitors to click, something like this one:

```
<a href="videofile.mpg">Click here to see the vacation  
video.</a>
```

Depending upon a particular visitor's system and configuration, the link to the video or sound file will cause different responses when clicked. It may work right in the browser. It may have to launch an external application to play the file. It may prompt the visitor to download the file. And so on. The one thing that won't happen is that the file will be a seamless part of your Web page.

If you'd like to make it so, you need to use the `EMBED` element. Here's the basic setup:

```
<embed src="musicfile.mid" width="300" height="100">
</embed>
```

You may want to pay attention to a few other attributes besides `width` and `height`. The most important of these is `autostart`, which, just like it sounds, starts the music or video playing automatically. Just alter the code so it reads like this:

```
<embed src="musicfile.mid" width="300" height="100"
      autostart="true">
</embed>
```

The other useful attribute is `loop`, which sets whether the file will play more than once and, if so, how many times. To set it to play over and over again forever, just do this:

```
<embed src="musicfile.mid" width="300" height="100"
      autostart="true" loop="true">
</embed>
```

To specify how many times to loop, just use the number instead of the word `true`. Here's an example:

```
<embed src="musicfile.mid" width="300" height="100"
      autostart="true" loop="3">
</embed>
```

Of course, Web authoring tools provide easy ways to add embedded objects to your Web pages. Dreamweaver, for example, uses a generic approach for adding both sound and video files. Here's how it goes:

- 1. Open Dreamweaver and make sure the Common toolbar icons are showing (see Figure 7-6).**
- 2. Click the arrow on the right side of the Plugin icon (shown in Figure 7-6) and select Plugin from the menu that appears.**

You can also choose `Insert` ⇨ `Media` ⇨ `Plugin` from the main menu.

- 3. Navigate to the media file you want to embed and select it.**

You now have a plug-in symbol on your Web page, as shown in Figure 7-7.



Figure 7-6:
Dreamweaver lets you add both sound and video the same easy way.

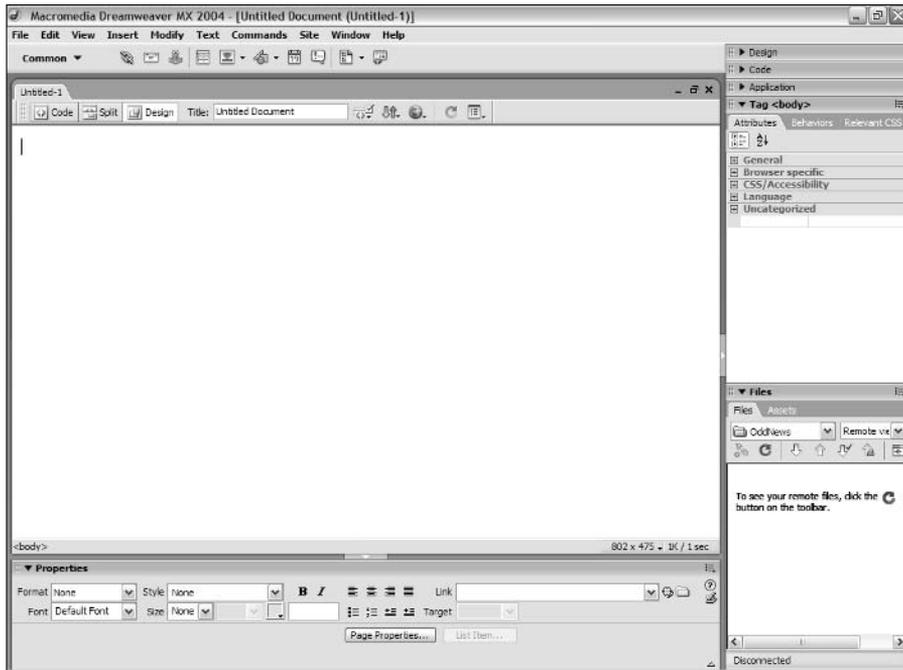
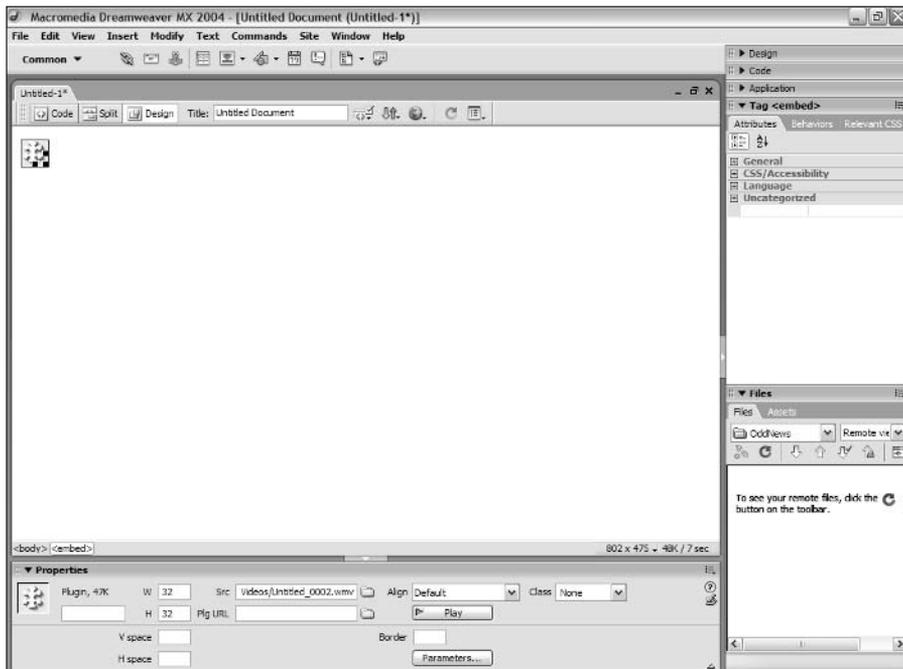


Figure 7-7:
The embedded object shows up on-screen.



4. With the Properties Inspector (displayed at the bottom of the window), about all you can do is to set the width and height attributes. If you want to do more, click the Parameters button in the Properties Inspector.

After you click the Parameters button, the Parameters dialog box appears, as shown in Figure 7-8.

5. In the Parameters dialog box, set the values you want for different parameters (attributes).

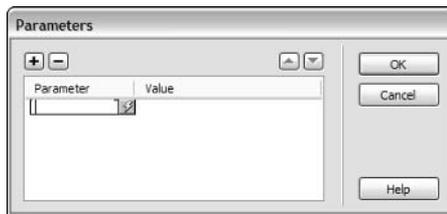


Figure 7-8:
You enter
attributes as
parameters.

For example, to set the `autostart` attribute to a value of `true`, type **autostart** under Parameter and **true** under Value.

6. When you're finished setting parameter/attribute values, click the OK button.

The Parameters dialog box closes. You have now completed adding the file to your Web page.

Online Sources for Web Audio and Video

Table 7-5 lists some places on the World Wide Web where you can find more resources like the ones that are covered in this chapter.

Web Site Name	Web Address
Adobe Audition	www.adobe.com/products/audition/
Anvil Studio	www.anvilstudio.com
Cakewalk	www.cakewalk.com
Finale Music	www.finalemusic.com
GoldWave Digital Audio Editor	www.goldwave.com

(continued)

Table 7-5 (continued)

Web Site Name	Web Address
MAGIX	www.magix.net
PG Music	www.pgmusic.com/products_bb.htm
Simple Server:Shout	www.analogx.com/contents/download/network/ssshout.htm
SoftStep	www.geneticmusic.com/softstep.htm
Sonic Spot: Audio File Formats	www.sonicspot.com/guide/fileformatlist.html

Chapter 8

Web Aerobics: Tuning Up Your Site

In This Chapter

- ▶ Validating your HTML
 - ▶ Finding broken links
 - ▶ Fine-tuning your site
-

Making Web pages is pretty easy, but the one thing that many people overlook is that about a hundred zillion things can go wrong with them. Even if your Web pages work perfectly on your favorite Web browser, they may not work on all browsers. Even if all your links are functional, some of the sites they're aimed at will go down or out. Even if you have great graphics on your site, they may slow down your page load so much that nobody is willing to wait for them to download.

So this chapter takes a look at several tools that make your pages work. Here's a sampling of what these tools can do for you:

- ✔ **Examine your HTML code for errors:** These tools point out errors or possible problem areas.
- ✔ **Find broken links:** You can use programs that follow all your links for you and let you know which ones are working right and which are broken.
- ✔ **Check spelling:** Some handy tools make shoor yore spelling things rite.

Don't miss this tour — your visitors will appreciate what these tools can do for your site.

W3C HTML Validation Service

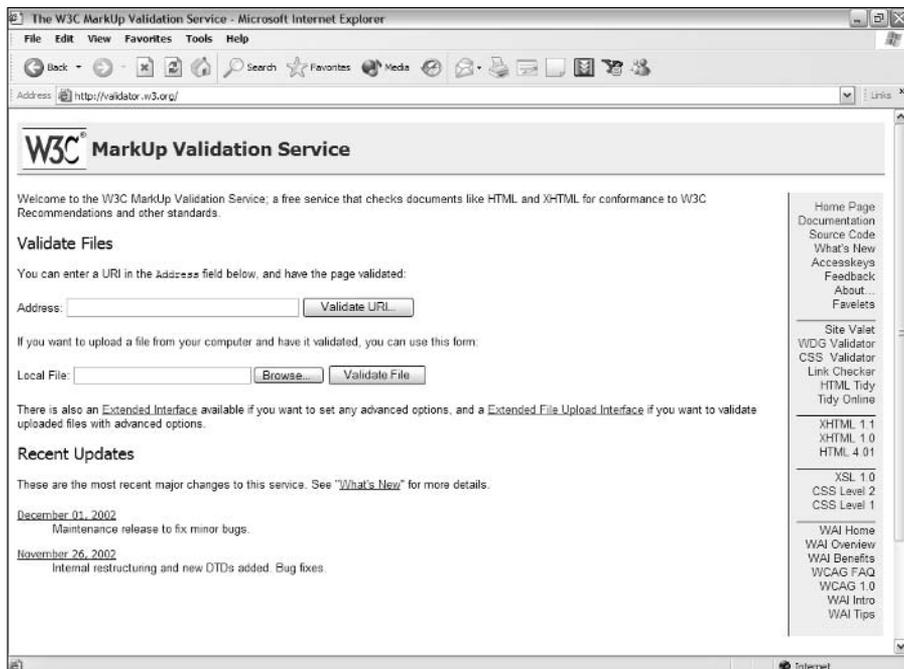
This one's the official site, the straight-from-the-horse's-mouth place. W3C is the short form of World Wide Web Consortium, and the folks there are the ones who put out the HTML standard. Now, anyone who's done much with Web pages already knows that some things that work on Internet Explorer don't work on Netscape Navigator, and vice versa. (And that's not even taking third-party Web browsers into consideration.) If you write your HTML to fit the official W3C standard, you'll miss out on some capabilities, such as setting page margins, but you'll also be guaranteed that your Web pages will work in every browser. Okay, some odd browsers out on the fringes may not support the W3C standard, but they're not much of a concern.

To do a quick check on whether your Web page meets the official standard, follow these steps:

1. Go to `validator.w3.org`.

The W3C validation form appears, as shown in Figure 8-1.

Figure 8-1:
The W3C validation form helps you check your pages for conformance to the HTML standard.



2. If the Web page you want to check is on the World Wide Web, enter its URL in the Address text box. If the Web page is on your hard drive, enter its location in the Local File text box or, better yet, click the Browse button to navigate to the file.

URI is essentially the same as *URL*.

3. Click the Validate URI button for an HTML page on the Web or the Validate File button for one on your hard drive.

The results of the test appear on a new page.

To run a test with more advanced options, follow these steps:

1. If the Web page you want to check is on the World Wide Web, go to validator.w3.org/detailed.html; if it's on your hard drive, go to validator.w3.org/file-upload.html.
2. Enter the URL of the Web page in the Address text box (see Figure 8-2).

If you're testing a file on your local drive, the form at validator.w3.org/file-upload.html is slightly different from the one shown in Figure 8-2. A Browse button appears to the right of the Address text box. Click that button to search your hard drive and select the file you want to test. From this point on, both approaches are identical.

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window titled "The W3C Markup Validation Service - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar contains "http://validator.w3.org/detailed.html". The main content area displays the "W3C[®] Markup Validation Service" header. Below the header, a message states: "This form allows you to enter a URI and have it validated. If you want to validate a file on your computer, you can use the [File Upload Interface](#)".

The form includes the following fields and options:

- Address:** A text input field.
- Encoding:** A dropdown menu set to "(detect automatically)".
- Type:** A dropdown menu set to "(detect automatically)".
- Options:**
 - Show Source
 - Show Outline
 - Validate error pages
 - Show Parse Tree
 - ...exclude attributes
 - Verbose Output
- Buttons:** A "Validate this page" button.

On the right side of the page, there is a sidebar with a list of links:

- Home Page
- Documentation
- Source Code
- What's New
- Accesskeys
- Feedback
- About...
- Favelets
- Site Valat
- WDG Validator
- CSS Validator
- Link Checker
- HTML Tidy
- Tidy Online
- XHTML 1.1
- XHTML 1.0
- HTML 4.01
- XSL 1.0
- CSS Level 2
- CSS Level 1
- WAI Home
- WAI Overview
- WAI Benefits
- WCAG FAQ
- WCAG 1.0
- WAI Intro
- WAI Tips

Figure 8-2:
The detailed version of the form gives you more options.

3. If you want to specify the encoding scheme the page uses, select one from the Encoding drop-down list. Otherwise, leave it set to automatically detect the encoding.
4. If you want to specify the version of HTML the page uses, select one from the Type drop-down list. Otherwise, leave it set to automatically detect the HTML version.
5. Select any combination of the following check boxes:
 - **Show Source:** Select this check box if you want the HTML source code from the tested document to show up on the report. This is most useful if you want to sit down with a hard copy of the report, especially if you need to go over it with other members of a Web design team.
 - **Show Outline:** Select this check box if you want to have the hierarchy of heading elements (H1 through H6) shown on the report. If no heading elements are on the page, this option won't show any results.
 - **Validate Error Pages:** Select this check box if you want to process pages that generate errors.
 - **Show Parse Tree:** Select this check box to get a diagram of element and attribute relationships on your page.
 - **Exclude Attributes from the Parse Tree:** Select this check box to show only elements in the diagram.
 - **Verbose Output:** Leave this check box selected if you want the most detailed report.
6. Click the **Validate This Page** button (or, for the file-upload version, the **Validate This File** button).

The results of the test appear on a new page. They're pretty self-explanatory, but if you need more information, you can click the Explain link next to each error.



If your pages don't fit the official standard, it doesn't necessarily mean that your pages are bad. The most important thing is to find out whether your pages work properly in the Web browsers you expect your site visitors to be using.

The official standard is much stricter than the coding on a Web page has to be in order for the page to work. Both of the major Web browsers (Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator) gleefully overlook all sorts of variations from the standard (or even outright errors) and still display the page as you intended. And in many instances, the people who wrote the standard just plain disagree with the majority of Web page authors on how things should be done.

Checking Those Links

Few things are more irritating than a bunch of broken links on a site. Visitors won't mind the occasional click that takes them to a Page Not Found error — after all, the Web is a fast-changing place. But when broken links show up over and over again, visitors will decide that your site isn't worth all the trouble you put them through.

So what can you do to minimize broken links? You can take all the care you want with your site's internal links, but the links that lead to other people's sites are out of your control. Sites go down, and pages and files change location, but the Webmasters in charge of those sites aren't likely to keep you notified. If you have lots of links, keeping track of all those updated links can be a full-time job.

The real solution is to click every single link in your entire site on a regular basis. Fortunately, you don't have to wear out your mousing finger doing this manually. This is the kind of thing that computers excel at. After all, one of their main purposes is to perform repetitive actions rapidly so that we don't have to. Here are a few programs that can do the work for you.

2bone.com's Link Checker

Link Checker by 2bone.com is a service that tests the links on any Web page, and it's totally free. Really, no strings attached. No advertising commitments, no registration — you don't even need to supply your e-mail address. How nice is that?

To check the links on a Web page, follow these steps:

1. **Go to www.2bone.com/links/linkchecker.shtml.**

The Link Checker page appears, as shown in Figure 8-3.

2. **In the Step 1 text box, enter the URL of the page you want to check.**

Note that you cannot check more than one page at a time.

3. **In the Step 2 area, click either the Express Lane option button or the I Can Wait Service option button.**

The difference between the two is that the Express Lane option is limited to ten items per page, although the other takes a lot longer because it waits until it can display all the test results on one page (exactly how long depends on the number of links on the site).

4. **If you want to add your URL to 2bone.com's Links page, click the Check Here check box in the Step 3 area.**

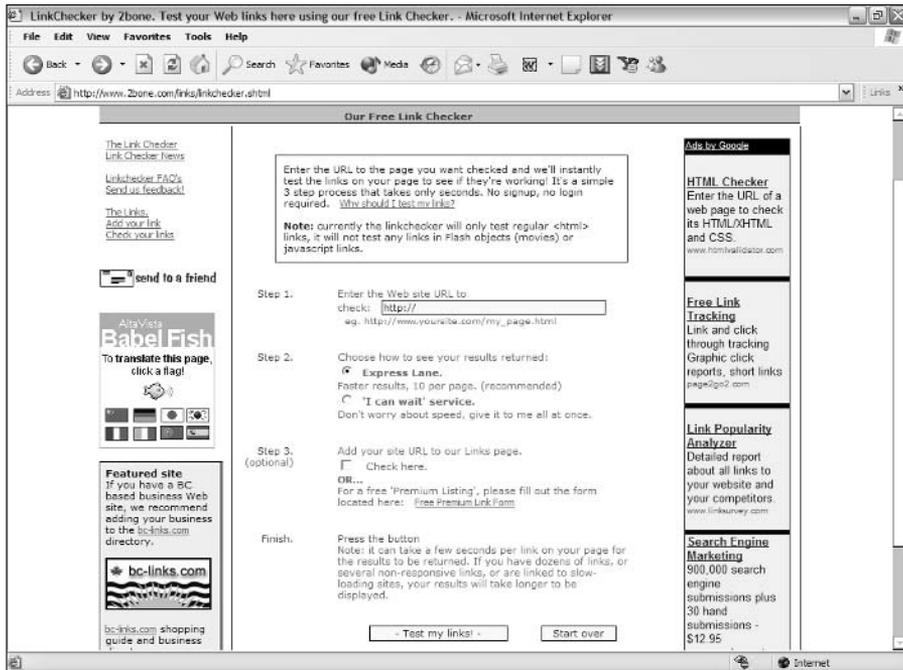


Figure 8-3:
Link
Checker by
Zbone.com
lets you
know how
many links
on your
Web page
are broken.

5. Click the Test My Links button.

While you wait for the test results, a pop-up window appears, which talks about the Zbone.com Web site. You need to click the Close link to get back to the Web page, which, depending upon how fast a service you selected, should be showing up any second now with the results of your links test.

LinkAlarm

LinkAlarm (www.linkalarm.com) is a commercial operation that runs a good service at a reasonable price. One of the nicest features is that the LinkAlarm report separates out internal and external links so that you can focus on your site's problems apart from the troubles that other Webmasters are having. The best news is that you can give it a try for a couple of weeks gratis. If free is wonderful, then a free trial is the next best thing.

Here's how to get started:

1. Go to www.linkalarm.com.

The LinkAlarm main page appears, as shown in Figure 8-4.

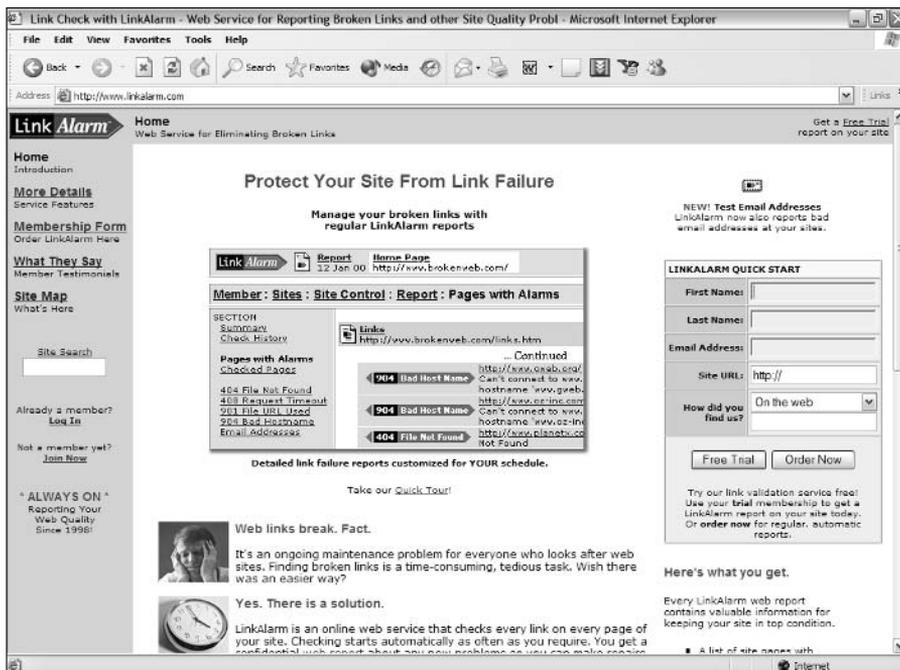


Figure 8-4:
Signing up
for a free
trial.

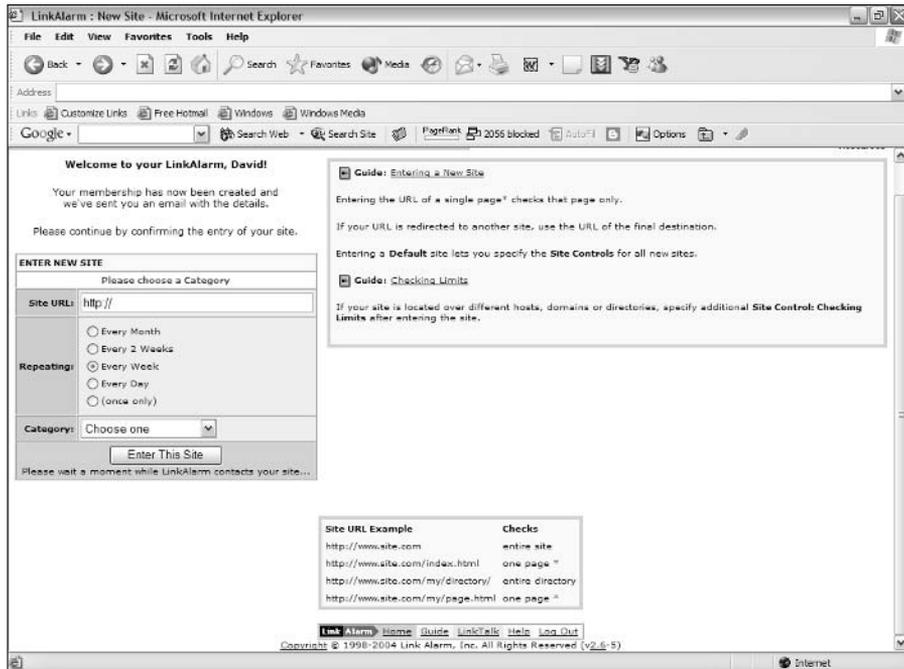
2. In the LinkAlarm Quick Start box on the right side of the page, enter your first and last names and your e-mail address.
3. Enter the URL of the site you want to check.
4. Under How Did You Find Us, either choose one of the options in the drop-down list or type another reason in the text box just below it.
5. Click the Free Trial button.

Although you receive an e-mail message giving the Web address you need to manage your free account, the service also automatically takes you there at this point. Figure 8-5 shows the resulting page.

6. Make sure that the site URL is correct and then click one of the option buttons to choose the frequency of testing.
7. Select a category for your site from the drop-down list.
8. Click the Enter This Site button.

The testing automatically begins. Note that the words “enter this site” mean that the information on this site is entered into your list of sites (which, at this point, contains only the one).

9. When the testing is complete, you receive an e-mail message notification. Click the link in the message to view your broken links report.



Testing Your Site with NetMechanic

Although the tightly focused Web tool sites are very popular and extremely useful, you can find some really nice places on the World Wide Web that are like smorgasbords of Web tools. Sites like these are mostly fond of automotive metaphors — NetMechanic and the Web Site Garage, for instance. The Web Site Garage also includes GIF Lube. You get the idea. You won't find much of anything along the lines of The Site Garden or The Page Salon. Well, whatever these sites are called, go to them, bookmark them, and return to them often. You'll be glad to have them handy.

NetMechanic (www.netmechanic.com) does a whole bunch of things for you, all in one simple move. Or with a bit of effort, you can customize the process — using a custom dictionary for the spell-checker, for example. NetMechanic has both a free version and a paid one. The freebie is limited to a maximum of 5 pages with a maximum of 25 links per page, although the paid version handles up to 400 pages or 5,000 links on one site.

NetMechanic will run these five tests on the page or site you choose:

- ✓ Link Check
- ✓ HTML Check & Repair
- ✓ Browser Compatibility
- ✓ Load Time Check
- ✓ Spell Check

To run the site test with all the default settings, follow these steps:

1. **Go to `www.netmechanic.com/toolbox/html-code.htm`.**
NetMechanic's HTML Toolbox Free Sample page appears, as shown in Figure 8-6.
2. **Enter the URL of the page or site you want to check in the URL text box.**
3. **Click the option button for the number of pages you want to check. Your two options are 1 and 5 pages; if your total pages fall somewhere between those numbers, select 5.**

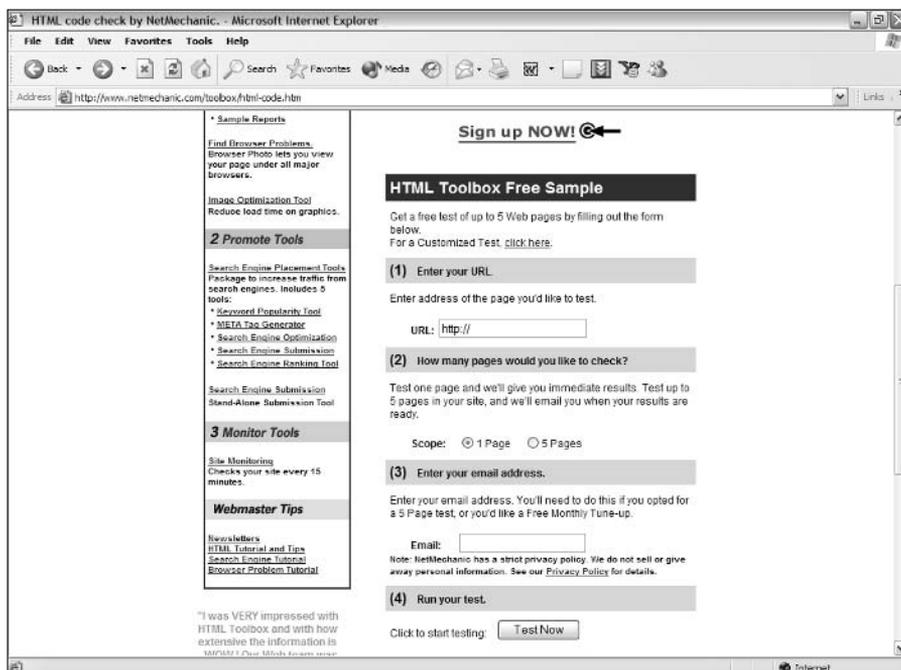


Figure 8-6:
Running the
basic Net-
Mechanic
free tests.

4. Type your address in the Email text box; if you want to view the report on-screen, don't enter anything here.

If you selected the 5-page option, you have to enter an e-mail address.

5. Click the Test Now button.

NetMechanic runs its suite of tests on your site and generates a report on-screen or sends a report to your e-mail account, depending on which option you chose in Step 4 of the preceding steps. The on-screen version shows a progress bar while you're waiting. The more complex your site is, the longer the process takes to complete. If you want to abort the process, the progress screen has a Cancel button you can click.

To run a customized test, try this instead:

1. Go to www.netmechanic.com/toolbox/power_user.htm.
2. Enter the URL of the page or site you want to check in the URL text box (see Figure 8-7).

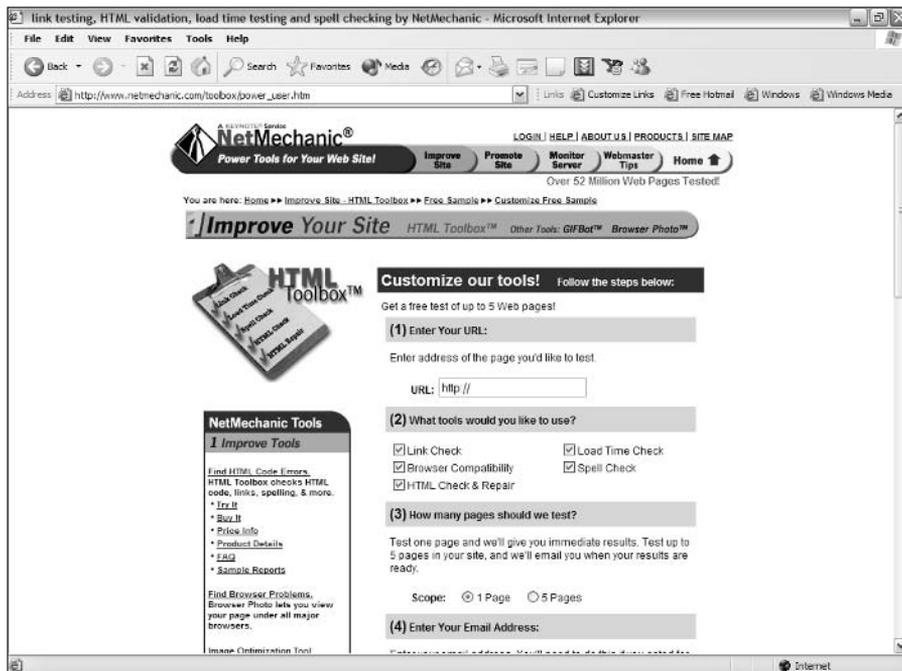


Figure 8-7:
You can customize NetMechanic so that it runs only the tests you want.

3. Deselect the check boxes for any tests you don't want to run.
4. Click the option button for the number of pages you want to check. You can choose either 1 or 5 pages.

If your total pages fall somewhere between those numbers, select 5.

5. Enter your address in the Email text box; if you want to view the report on-screen, don't enter anything here.

If you selected the 5-page option or the monthly update option, you have to enter an e-mail address.

6. Under HTML Check & Repair, select the check box if you want to test for handicapped accessibility.

Under Browser Compatibility, NetMechanic lists the percentages of people who use different versions of the two major Web browsers when visiting its site.

7. If you have different figures available from the site you're testing, enter those numbers for each of the listed Web browsers.
8. Under Spell Check, enter the URL of a custom dictionary (if you have one relating to the topic of the site you're testing) in the text box; if you don't want to spell check words in uppercase, leave the Ignore words in Upper Case check box selected.
9. Click the Test Now button.

NetMechanic runs the selected tests on your site and generates a report on-screen or sends a report to your e-mail account, depending on which option you chose in Step 5 in the preceding step list. The on-screen version shows a progress bar while you're waiting. The more complex your site is, the longer the process takes to complete. If you want to abort the process, the progress screen has a Cancel button you can click.



Check out the NetMechanic image file optimizer, GIFBot, at www.netmechanic.com/GIFBot/optimize-graphic.htm. It handles both GIF and JPEG file formats.

Online Sources for Fine-Tuning Your Site

Table 8-1 lists some places on the World Wide Web where you can find more resources like the ones covered in this chapter.

Table 8-1 Online Resources for Fine-Tuning Your Site	
<i>Web Site Name</i>	<i>Web Address</i>
Bobby	www.cast.org/bobby
Doctor HTML	www2.imagiware.com/RxHTML
Dr. Watson	watson.addy.com
Link Valet	www.htmlhelp.com/tools/valet/
LinkScan	www.elsop.com/quick/
OptiView SiteScan	www.gifwizard.com
Site Check	www.siteowner.com/sitecheck.cfm
W3C CSS Validation Service	jigsaw.w3.org/css-validator
W3C Link Checker	validator.w3.org/checklink
WDG HTML Validator	www.htmlhelp.com/tools/validator
WebXACT	webxact.watchfire.com
Xenu's Link Sleuth	home.snafu.de/tilman/xenulink.html

Part III

Good Content Makes Contented Visitors

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



In this part . . .

This part is about getting your visitors involved in your site so that they keep coming back for more. Chapter 9 continues this topic but with an important difference — the add-ins here put the visitor in control. Chapter 10 goes for the fun stuff — quotation applets and even video games. And Chapter 11 shows you where to go to get fresh content for your site.

Chapter 9

Letting 'Em Have Their Say

In This Chapter

- ▶ Providing guestbooks
 - ▶ Constructing message boards
 - ▶ Creating chat rooms with ParaChat
 - ▶ Blogging your site
-

In Chapter 18, I give you the lowdown on polls and forms and how they can add value to your Web site by attracting more users and making your site *stickier*, meaning people tend to come back more often. The add-ins in this chapter (guestbooks, message boards, and the like) are similar to the polls and forms in Chapter 18 but have one important difference. With polls and forms, you have total control over the topics and possible responses. But with guestbooks, message boards, and chat rooms, you give up some control over your Web site's content. You turn that control over to your visitors by providing them with a forum where they can express themselves.

Providing Guestbooks

Guestbooks are the digital equivalent of a graffiti wall, which doesn't necessarily mean that they're going to contain limericks or dirty words. But they *are* designed so that people can leave short messages for all to see.



Many guestbooks offer an additional option that allows users to create messages that only the guestbook owner — the Webmaster — can view. This enables people to leave private comments for you.

The guestbook stacks the messages that people post one after the other, with the vast majority of guestbooks putting the newest message on top and moving all the others down. A few guestbooks work the other way around, but I don't recommend that type because you have to scroll too much to get to the most recent message.

Censorship and your Web site

Censorship is an ugly word to most people, especially in connection with the Internet. Unfortunately, in running your own Web site, you sometimes find that you need to limit in some way what others can post to your site. In extreme cases, you may even need to bar a particularly disruptive person from posting in your chat room, for example. Is this act — and that of setting up filters — a form of censorship? The answer to this question depends on why you're doing it. If your intention is simply to keep someone from voicing an opinion, you're engaging in censorship, plain and simple. If your intention is to defend the free speech rights of the rest of the members against someone who's interfering with them, that's another matter entirely.

This topic isn't an idle philosophical matter but a very real consideration that you'll likely face as a Webmaster. It's a sad fact that someone, sometime, will probably jump into the middle of your nice, happy online community and try to mess it up. Although you may expect a certain amount of disagreement and even heated discussion in any group, personal attacks and deliberate disruption of discussions are different matters. As a Webmaster, your responsibility is to act for the benefit of your peaceful visitors. And at times, that may mean you have to ban a troublemaker from your site.

You may want to use a couple of e-mail features built in to most guest books:

- ✔ **Thank-you note:** This feature sends a nice note to each visitor who leaves a message.
- ✔ **Message copies via e-mail:** This feature e-mails the Webmaster a copy of each message posted. This is a nice timesaver; otherwise, you have to constantly go to the guestbook to see what new messages have been posted.

GuestCity (www.guestcity.com) is one of the easiest guestbooks in the world to set up. It's free, and the only catch is that an unobtrusive advertising banner appears at the top of your Web page. GuestCity remotely hosts the guestbook on its site, so you don't have to have any knowledge of CGI scripts to run the guestbook.

To set up your GuestCity guestbook, follow these steps:

1. **Go to www.guestcity.com and click the Get Your Own Guestbook Here link near the bottom of the page.**

Alternatively, you can click the Create link in the top of the yellow box on the left side of the page.

2. **On the subsequent page, shown in Figure 9-1, enter a username and password.**

Figure 9-1:
Entering the information for GuestCity.

3. Scroll down and enter a title and description for your guestbook. Then pick a category and primary language for it from the drop-down lists, and select the Public or Private option button (private means that the guestbook is only for your site's visitors).
4. Scroll down again and enter your name and e-mail address in the appropriate text boxes, followed by the URL and title of your Web page.
5. Click the Create Guestbook button at the bottom of the page.
6. Copy the HTML code from the resulting page, paste it into your Web page, and upload your page to your server.

You now have a guestbook like the one shown in Figure 9-2.

If you want to customize the guestbook, you have a full range of options. Here's how to get to them:

1. Go to www.guestcity.com and click the Edit link in the yellow box on the left side of the page.
2. On the next page, enter your username and password under Manage Your Guestbook and then click the Login button.

The Guestbook Manager appears, as shown in Figure 9-3.

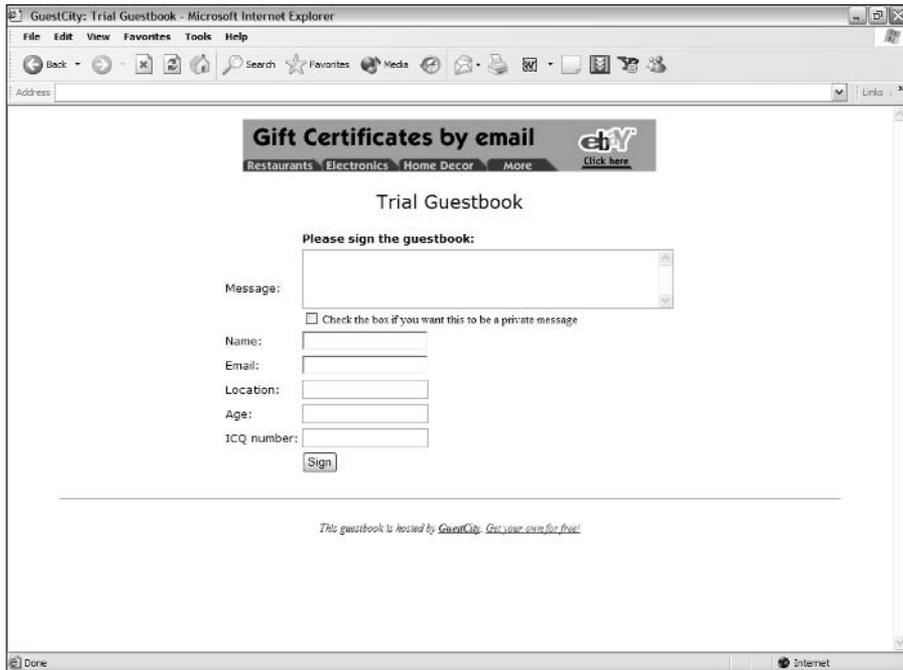


Figure 9-2:
The default
GuestCity
guestbook.

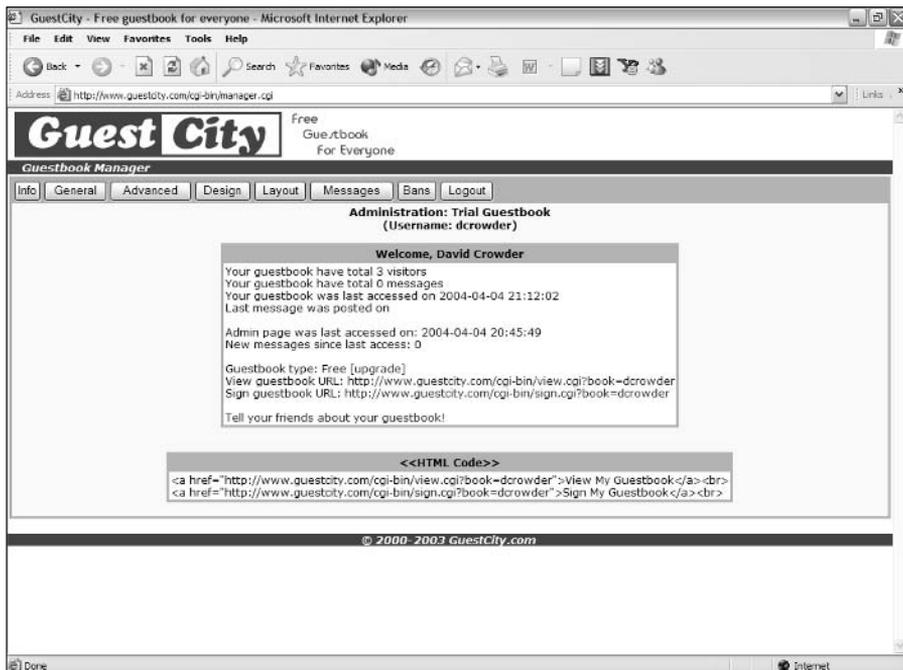


Figure 9-3:
Modifying
your
guestbook
settings.

3. Click the buttons across the top of the Guestbook Manager to access the various settings, detailed in the following list:

- **Info:** This is the default page for the Guestbook Manager. It shows information on message activity and gives you an extra copy of the HTML code for your guestbook.
- **General:** This is the same information you entered when you signed up — your name, guestbook title, and the like.
- **Advanced:** This isn't really advanced, but it's beyond the default settings, anyway. You can choose details like whether or not to send acknowledgements of guestbook entries and what order to put the messages in.
- **Design:** This is where you specify the colors you want to use in your guestbook.
- **Layout:** This allows you to pick how much information to reveal about each visitor who uses the guestbook.
- **Messages:** This is the control center where you delete old messages and, in the case of bad posts, may elect to ban the visitor from posting another time.
- **Bans:** If you're feeling lenient, you can go here to remove the ban you put on a poster with the Messages button.
- **Logout:** This enables you to quit the Guestbook Manager.

Creating Message Boards

Message boards provide the structure that simple guestbooks lack. Most of the messages that people post on message boards are fairly short, but unlike in a guestbook, messages aren't just listed in a simple top-down or bottom-up order that's based on when they're posted. Instead, a message board lists its postings by topic. In fact, the whole purpose of a message board is different from that of a guestbook. Both guestbooks and message boards let people leave messages, but message boards also let people interact with one another.

Before a new message is posted, the poster chooses a subject or *topic line* for it. As other people respond to the message, that topic automatically carries over, and the reply is connected to the original message. Usually, the board lists these postings in a *hierarchy*, where each response is indented beneath the message it replies to, and the series of messages on one topic is called a *thread*. Visitors to your site can follow a thread from beginning to end, jump in and reply to any message in the thread, or start an entirely new discussion by posting a new message.

Message boards almost always deal with a particular field of interest that visitors to a Web site have in common. Here are some common examples:

- ✓ Professional discussions
- ✓ Political issues
- ✓ Regional concerns
- ✓ Hobbies
- ✓ Current events
- ✓ Technical support

Obviously, a publicly available forum on controversial topics gives people who are less than polite an opening to be disruptive. A worthwhile message board program includes a filter feature where you can specify any terms you want to prohibit. (For example, if you run a board for wild turkeys, you may not want them to have to see words like *stuffing* or *Thanksgiving*.) Filters prevent messages containing the terms you list from going onto your message board.

Setting up a message board with Boardhost

Boardhost (www.boardhost.com), like the name says, gives you a place to host your message boards. Although the company remotely hosts the boards it provides, the boards are customizable so that you can mimic the look and feel of your Web site. You get a well-designed message board with all the bells and whistles.

Boardhost has a whole mess of nice features that you can activate or kill at will during or after setup. Here are some examples of these features:

- ✓ Sending users e-mail messages after someone replies to one of their posts
- ✓ Offering a keyword search so that visitors can quickly find the topic that they're looking for
- ✓ Adding your own logo to all the board's pages
- ✓ Adding password-protected access so that you can hold private discussions

To create a message board with Boardhost, follow these steps:

1. **Go to www.boardhost.com and click the Join Now link.**

This link takes you to the Terms of Service page.



2. **Scroll down and type a username in the appropriate text box.**

The username is case sensitive, so typing *ImInCharge* isn't the same thing as *imincharge*.

3. **Select all three of the check boxes that say you're of legal age, you understand it's a free trial, and you agree to abide by the Terms of Service.**

4. **Click the Begin Account Creation button.**

If the username you chose is already in use, Boardhost tells you that you must enter a different one. After you enter a new username, click the Begin Account Creation button to determine whether it's in use.



You can run around in circles forever if you're not imaginative with your username. Make it unusual but something that you can remember.

5. **After you create an acceptable username, enter your real name and e-mail address in the appropriate text boxes and click the Continue button.**
6. **Click the Send Activation Code button that appears on the page that asks if your e-mail address is correct; if the address is wrong, click the Back button in your Web browser, reenter your e-mail address correctly, and click the Submit Info button again.**

Boardhost now sends you an e-mail message with your activation code.

7. **Click the first link in the e-mail that Boardhost sends you to automatically sign on to the Account Creation page.**

If your e-mail doesn't support embedded links, you can just copy the URL and paste it into your Web browser instead. You can also click the second link to go to a page where you manually enter the information from the e-mail, but why bother?

The Account Creation page provides you with the final stage for creating your message board.

8. **Under Website Info, enter the name and URL of your Web site in the appropriate text boxes and pick a category for your message board from the drop-down list.**

9. Under **Message Board Info**, type a title for the message board into the text box and pick your time zone from the drop-down list.

Remember that the messages show the time when they're posted.

10. Finally, type a password into the two text boxes under **Password** and click the **Finish Account Creation** button to go to the **Account Created** page.

Your message board is now up and running.

You may want to explore your new message board to see how it works. Click the link that shows the URL of your message board and see how the basic board setup looks. Enter some messages if you want. Play around a bit.

When you feel comfortable with the message board, return to the Account Created page (your new message board is in a separate window), and then scroll all the way down and click the Enter Administration Area button.

On the next Web page, click the Generate Linking HTML Codes link. On the resulting HTML codes page, take a minute to look at the appearance of the links, buttons, and icons that Boardhost provides. Copy and paste the ones that you like into your Web pages so that your visitors can click them to go to your message board. If you don't like any of them, the HTML code is easy to modify.

Modifying your Boardhost message board

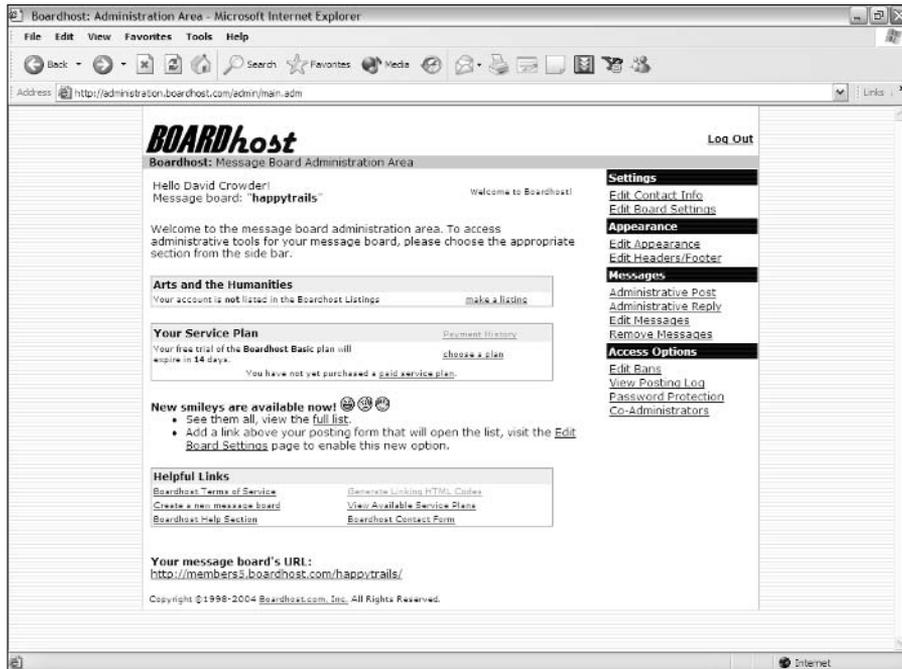
You may decide at some point that you want to modify your message board. Fortunately, Boardhost enables you to modify it whenever you want. To get started modifying your board, you just click the Enter Administration link on the Account Created page. If you've gotten hopelessly separated from that page while exploring your new message board, just follow these steps to log on from scratch:

1. Go to www.boardhost.com.
2. Enter your username and password in the appropriate text boxes of the **Message Board Administration** area.
3. Click the **Enter** button.

The Boardhost Administration page appears, as shown in Figure 9-4.

This page has several links in boxes in the main area of the page and a column of links on the right side of the page.

Figure 9-4:
The Boardhost Administration page is full of links that you can use to modify your message board.



Using the links on the left side

Here are the boxes and the associated links on the left side of the Administration page:

✔ **Arts and the Humanities** has one link:

- **Make a Listing:** Takes you to a page that lets you add your board to the public listings on Boardhost if you don't want a private board.

✔ **Your Service Plan** has three links:

- **Payment History:** Unimportant because you have none. It simply takes you to a page that says you're on a free trial.
- **Choose a Plan:** Takes you to a page that gives you information on upgrading to ad-free service.
- **Paid Service Plan:** Exactly the same as the Choose a Plan link.

✔ **Helpful Links** has six links:

- **Boardhost Terms of Service:** Takes you to a page that shows you the Terms of Service.
- **Generate Linking HTML Codes:** Takes you to a page that duplicates the HTML code that you receive when you sign up for your message board.
- **Create a New Message Board:** Takes you to the Account Creation page.
- **View Available Service Plans:** Takes you to the same place as the Choose a Plan link.
- **Boardhost Help Section:** Takes you to the Help page.
- **Boardhost Contact Form:** Takes you to a page where you can use a form to send messages to Boardhost tech support.

Using the links on the right side

The remaining links, which lead to Web pages where you can modify your message board, are found in a panel at the right side of the Administration page. They are described in detail in the following list:

- ✔ **Edit Contact Info:** Just as it says, this is where you change your name if you get married or something. Of course, it could be as simple as changing your e-mail address, but you never know.
- ✔ **Edit Board Settings:** The heart of the admin system, this is where you control the details of how your board actually works — things like setting the maximum number of messages, whether or not to replace :-) with a graphical smiley, and the spacing of messages.
- ✔ **Edit Appearance:** This is the place to handle the look of your message board, ranging from the background color of messages to the fonts used to customize the buttons.
- ✔ **Edit Header/Footer:** This link leads to a page where you find four text areas. These areas enable you to set the header for the message board index page, set the header for all message pages, set the footer for all message pages, and add meta tags like author name and so on. You can use HTML as well as plain text in all these text areas.
- ✔ **Administrative Post:** Takes you to a page where you can post a message to the board in an especially noticeable way. An administrative posting is just like a normal posting except you can change the color in which your name appears, display the title *Administrator* on the message, and prevent anyone from replying to the message.

- ✔ **Administrative Reply:** Takes you to a page that shows a listing of current messages. Click any message to make a reply from the Administrator account, showing the Administration IP address.
- ✔ **Edit Messages:** Lets you edit existing messages and ban replies to specific ones.
- ✔ **Remove Messages:** Takes you to a page listing the current messages. Selecting the check box next to one or more messages and then clicking the Remove Selected Messages button deletes those messages from the board. Clicking the Remove All Messages button clears everything from the message board.
- ✔ **Edit Bans:** Takes you to a page where you can ban a particular IP address from posting new messages. You can also review currently banned IP addresses and enable them to post on the board again.
- ✔ **View Posting Log:** Leads to a page containing links for viewing message logs showing the last 300 messages.
- ✔ **Password Protection:** Takes you to a page where you can change the message board from an open board to one that requires users to log in with a username and password.
- ✔ **Co-Administrators:** This is a form that allows you to share your administrative duties with other message board users.

Giving Visitors the Gift of Gab

Chat rooms provide a way for visitors to your site to engage in live, real-time communication. Like message boards, chat rooms enable lots of users to leave messages on the same topic, but these messages don't appear in topic-related threads. Instead the messages appear as they're sent, and the various conversation threads run together in the same area. You may think that this sounds a bit chaotic, and I can't agree more. Chat room discussions are totally unstructured, and the more people that are in a chat room, the more confusing it is to try to follow a conversation.

But chat rooms are fun and popular, and even chat novices quickly get used to picking out the specific conversation they're a part of. Still, carrying on a conversation in a chat room is kind of like talking to one or two people in the middle of a large party. This isn't your problem as a Webmaster, though, except that you may want to recommend these rooms mainly for smaller gatherings. People who regularly hang out in chat rooms understand and accept their peculiarities, and if your visitors really want chat rooms, providing them is easy enough. Several sources on the Web offer their services to

help you add a chat room to your site. In this section, I cover ParaChat, but other chat room source sites are listed in Table 9-1 at the end of this chapter.

ParaChat (www.parachat.com) is one source that gives you a fast way to slap a Java chat room onto your Web site. To add ParaChat to your site, follow these steps:

1. Go to www.parachat.com/free/createhtml.html (shown in Figure 9-5).
2. Enter values for the width and height of the chat room in the first two text boxes.

The default values are 600 pixels wide and 400 pixels high, but you should choose whatever size best fits the design of the Web page on which you intend to place the chat room.

3. Enter a name for your chat room.

In general, the name should reflect either the theme or the name of your site.

4. The next two options relate to special services provided by ParaChat. The default value is No. If you want to use these services, choose Yes.

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Create Your Free ParaChat Room - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar shows "http://www.parachat.com/free/createhtml.html". The page content includes a navigation menu on the left with links like "ParaChat Server", "Free Rooms", "Customize", "Get Yours Now", "HTML Code", "POP Code", "AC", "Professional", "Enterprise", and "Event". The main content area is titled "Free ParaChat HTML Room Creation Tool" and has a "Get Yours Now" button. Below this is an "Overview" section with a license agreement. The main form is titled "Free ParaChat HTML Room Creation Tool" and contains the following fields:

Width of Chat Room:	600	pixels
Height of Chat Room:	400	pixels
Room Name:	Your_Room_Name	
Enable Network Rooming: <small>space.saver?</small>	No	
Enable ParaChat SpaceSaver™: <small>need help?</small>	No	
Language:	English	
Background Color:	Default	CCCCCC99
Foreground Color:	Black	000000

At the bottom of the form, there is a button labeled "<< CLICK HERE >> - SHOW ME MY ROOM CODE". Below the button, it says "If you have pop-ups disabled, you will not be able to view the code".

Figure 9-5:
The ParaChat room creation tool — your starting point for adding a chat room to your site.

Network roaming, although it sounds as if it has something to do with cell phones, means that you make your new chat room available to everyone using ParaChat, and that your site visitors can likewise visit all ParaChat chat rooms that have this option selected.

The ParaChat SpaceSav-R adds a smaller entry method measuring 100 x 300 pixels to your Web page, instead of the full-sized chat option. If you have a lot of problems finding room to add anything to your pages, this is the option for you. You don't lose any of the functionality of the chat room. A visitor using the smaller entryway still gets a full-sized chat room.

5. Select the language in which you want the chat room to appear.

Current choices are English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, German, and Italian, with English being the default option. Note that this does not restrict in any way which language your visitors can use when talking with each other in the chat room; it simply affects the display on-screen. For example, the Spanish version says that a username is *requerido* rather than saying it is required and the Connect button says *Conectar* (see Figures 9-6 and 9-7).

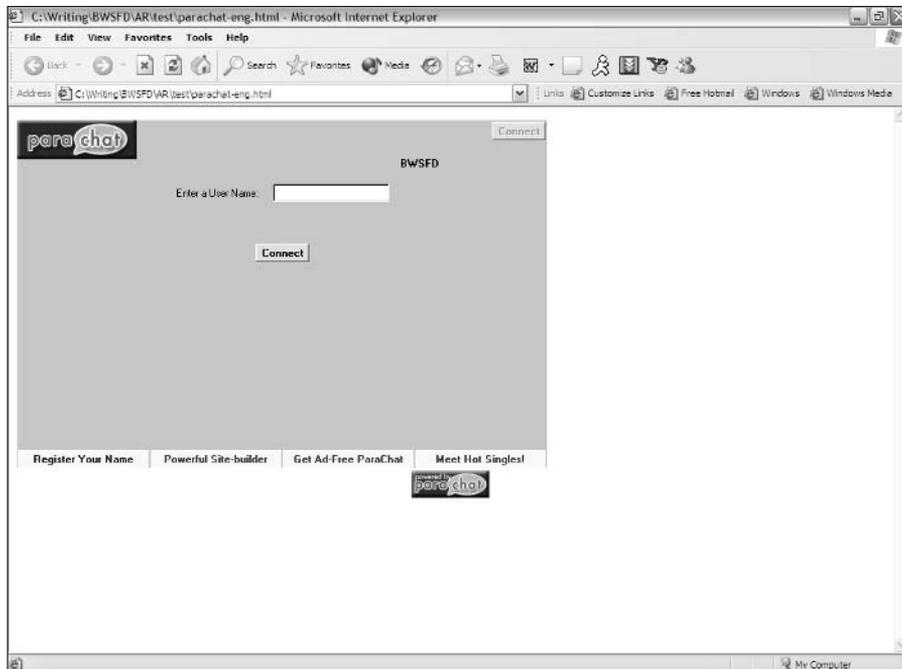


Figure 9-6:
The default
ParaChat
room uses
English as
the display
language.

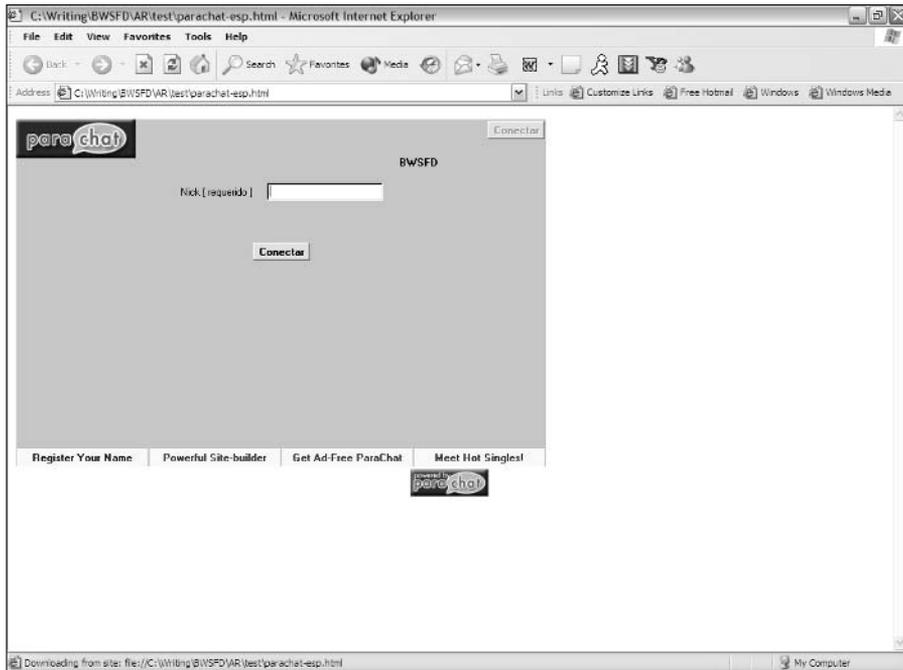


Figure 9-7:
You can, however, choose any of the major European languages for the display language.

6. Select the background and foreground colors that you want for your chat room from the last two drop-down lists.
7. Click the Click Here – Show Me My Room Code button.
8. Copy and paste the resulting code (shown in Figure 9-8) into your Web page and then upload the page to your site.

The simplest way to do this is to click inside the code listing, press Ctrl+A to select all the code, and then press Ctrl+C to copy it. Go into your Web page creation program and place your cursor where you want to insert the code and then press Ctrl+V to paste it into place.

Of course, you can also use the menu options for this — choosing Edit⇨ Select All, Edit⇨ Copy, then Edit⇨ Paste — but the old keyboard method (which goes all the way back to CP/M, for those of you who have been around computers for a while) is a lot faster.

9. Save the Web page.

After you fire up the Web page in which you pasted the chat room code, all that you — or any of your visitors — must do is to wait for the chat applet to load, enter a nickname in the appropriate text box, and click the Connect button.



Figure 9-8: ParaChat gives you the code you need to add the chat room to your Web page.

After you connect to the chat room, you go to the chat screen. The people currently in the chat room are shown in the area on the left side. Enter your messages in the long text box at the bottom of the chat window. Click the color box at the bottom to set a color for your text to appear in. Click B to make the text bold or I to italicize it. Click the Send button to send your message. Your message then appears in the top area of the screen, along with all the other participants' messages.

Bloggin' the Night Away

Blogs (or 'blogs, if you want to get technical) are Web logs — essentially a way for you to alter the content of your Web site at will. Blogs cover a wide range of content from daily diaries to professional journalism, and their popularity seems to know no bounds.

You can use blogging technology to keep your site updated without having to get into coding, and you can make changes while you're on the road, away from your design computer. Just drop into an Internet cafe and fill out a form, and your site is updated right away.

Blogger.com is perhaps the most popular Web log provider and one of the easiest to use. To get started, follow these steps:

1. Go to `www.blogger.com` and click the **Start Now** button near the top of the page.
2. On the resulting page, enter your username, your real name, your e-mail address, and a password.
3. Select the check box that says you accept the Terms of Service.
4. Click the **Sign Up** button.

The Create a New Blog page appears, as shown in Figure 9-9.

5. Enter a title and description for your Web log in the appropriate text boxes.
6. Choose whether or not you want your blog mentioned in Blogger's public listings by selecting either the **Yes** or **No** option button.
7. Click the **Next** button.
8. On the subsequent screen, click the **FTP It to Your Own Server** option button.
9. Click the **Next** button.

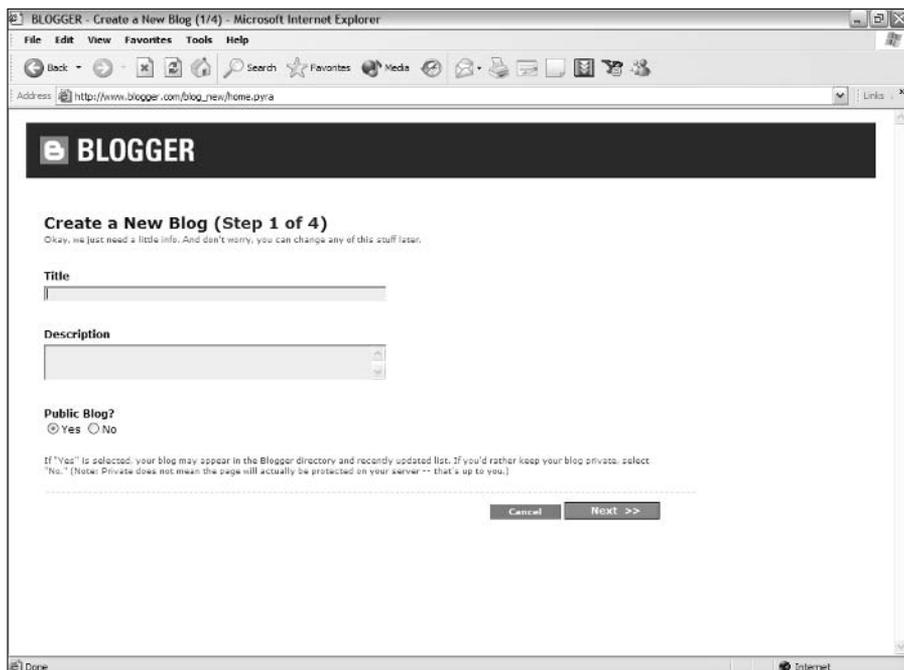


Figure 9-9:
Creating a
new blog.



10. Enter the FTP information for your Web server.

If you have any questions about the FTP address, ask your Web service provider, not Blogger.com.

The template page appears, as shown in Figure 9-10.

11. Click the option button next to the design you like best.

You can scroll down to see more examples than are shown in the figure.

12. Click the Next button.

Your new blog is created, and you go to the screen shown in Figure 9-11.

You can return to this page at any time to modify all your blog settings.

13. On the Create New Post page, enter either some prepared material or just any old thing that comes to mind.

14. Click the Preview Your Post button.

15. If you don't like what you see, you can click either the Delete or Re-edit buttons. If you're satisfied, click the Publish Your Post button instead.

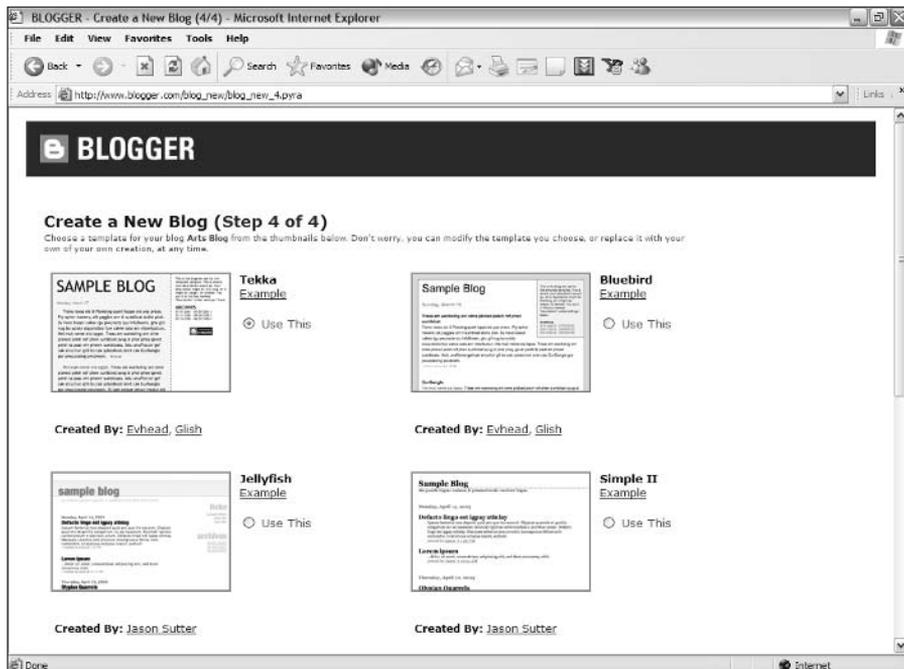


Figure 9-10:
Choosing a
design for
your blog is
easy.

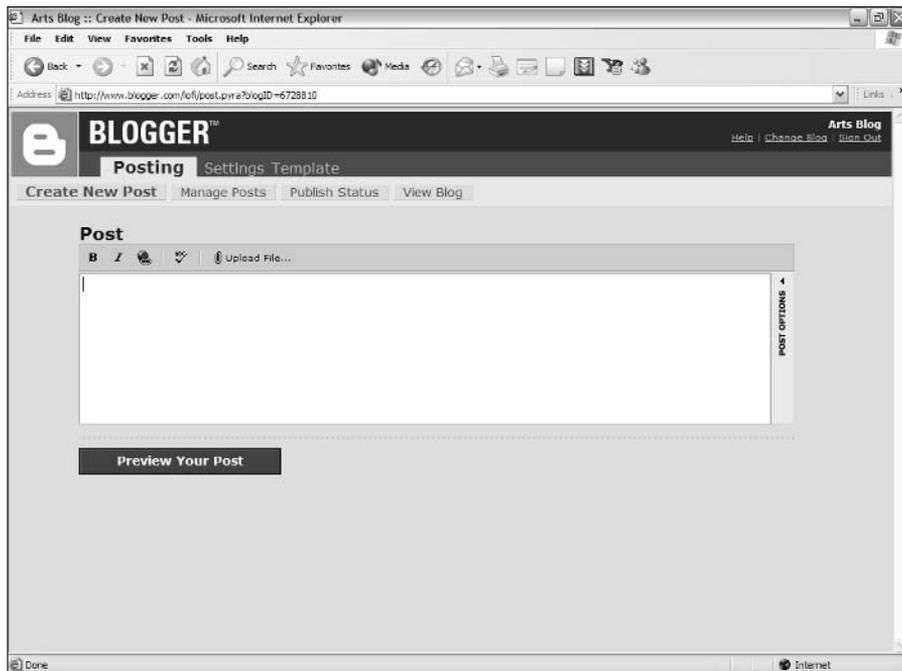


Figure 9-11:
You can
create,
preview,
and publish
a new post
from here.

16. If you did not enter your FTP server username and password during Step 10, do so now and click the Login button.

You're done.

Online Sources for Adding Community to Your Site

Table 9-1 lists some places on the World Wide Web where you can find more resources like those that are covered in this chapter.

Table 9-1 Online Resources for Adding Community	
<i>Web Site Name</i>	<i>Web Address</i>
BlogDot	www.blogdot.org
Boards2Go	www.boards2go.com

<i>Web Site Name</i>	<i>Web Address</i>
Bravenet	www.bravenet.com
ChatStaR Network	www.chatstar.net/room.htm
Dreambook	www.dreambook.com
Echelon Guestbooks	web.eesite.com/guest
HTML Gear	htmlgear.lycos.com
MultiChat	www.tectonicdesigns.com/chat/
Online Institute	www.onlineinstitute.com/chat/
Pliner.Net	www.pliner.net/chat/

Chapter 10

Just Plain Fun

In This Chapter

- ▶ Using riddles on your site
 - ▶ Enticing your visitors with brainteasers
 - ▶ Placing quotations on your site
 - ▶ Setting up a postcard shop on your site
 - ▶ Adding online games to your site
 - ▶ Carrying comic strips on your site
-

Life can be a bit too serious at times — people like to kick back and have fun once in a while. If you're looking for fun things that you can add to your site, however, it almost seems like the Web just doesn't get it. Everything's so darned functional. Where's the stuff that doesn't actually do anything? Where's the stuff that's a completely delightful waste of time?

It's my job to keep you up-to-date on the latest and greatest of everything Web-related, so I went out looking for Web site add-ins that take a step away from the serious side of things — extras like riddles, games, and cartoons.



If you need to justify these kinds of things to your boss, point out that they attract people to your site, and they make your site *stickier* so that visitors come back for more.

Running RiddleNut.com's Random Riddles

Ever wonder how seven batters from one baseball team can come up in the same inning, but nobody scores a run? Oh, and the team didn't use any substitutions either. Got you wondering? Good.

How about this one?

One of us falls and never breaks.

One of us breaks but never falls.

What are we?

The answer to the first riddle is that, of the first five batters, two are out, while three get on base. Now the bases are loaded with two outs. The sixth batter hits a grand slam. Wait a minute — here are four runs! Didn't the riddle say that nobody scores? Yes, but the guy who hits the grand slam fails to touch first base. That means that he's the third out and the grand slam never happened. All right, so what about the seventh batter? Well, the player who hit the grand slam isn't called out until the pitcher protests to the umpire that he missed the base, and the pitcher's not allowed to protest until the next batter comes up.

The answer to the second riddle is *night and day*. There can be nightfall and daybreak but never nightbreak and dayfall.

If you like riddles, the Random Riddle from RiddleNut.com (at, of course, www.riddlenut.com) is a gold mine. More important, if your visitors like riddles, you can hook them by adding these Random Riddles to your pages. You don't even need to sign up or anything.

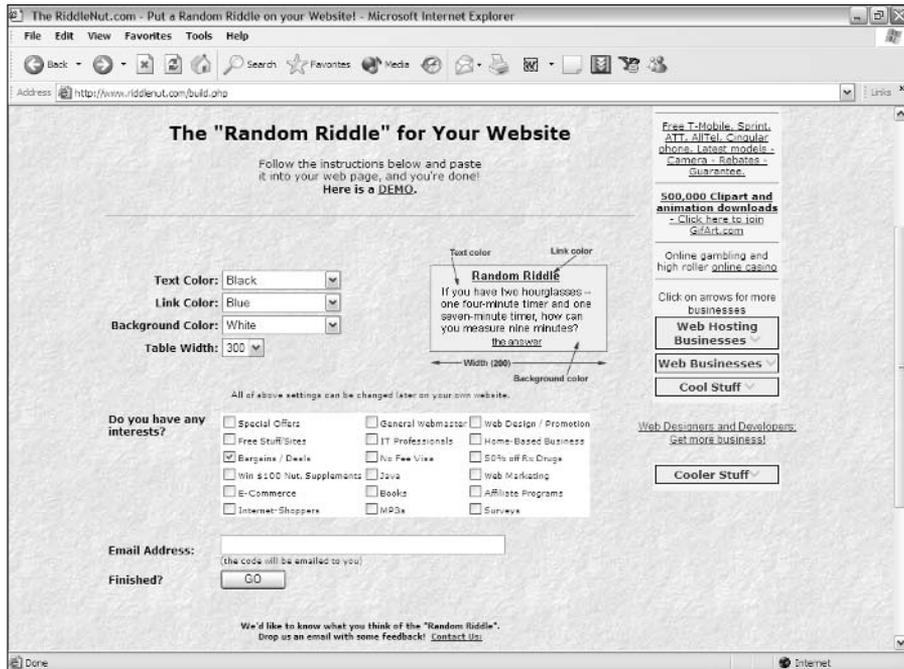


These riddles are okay for all ages.

The people at RiddleNut.com honestly appreciate riddles as an art form. And they want you to help spread the word by adding riddles to your Web page — for free. Here's how you go about it:

1. **Go to www.riddlenut.com/build.php.**
The Random Riddle on Your Website page appears, as shown in Figure 10-1.
2. **From the first three drop-down lists, select a text color, link color, and background color.**
3. **In the Table Width drop-down list, pick a width (in pixels) for the table that holds the riddle.**
4. **In the Do You Have Any Interests section, select any check boxes for topics you want to receive e-mail about. If you don't want any e-mail, make sure all the check boxes are clear.**
5. **Type your e-mail address into the text box.**

Figure 10-1:
RiddleNut
.com's
design page,
where you
set the look
for the
riddle box
that will go
on your
Web page.



6. Click the Go button.

You receive an e-mail message containing HTML code.

7. Copy the HTML code from the e-mail, paste it into your Web page within the BODY element, and then upload the Web page to your site.



Yes, I know that I say in Chapter 4 not to put JavaScript code in the body of your page because somebody may activate it too soon. But this one is different. Really. No visitor can do that with this JavaScript because it doesn't appear until it's ready to use.

The resulting code is like the following example, allowing for differences in color and table-width choices:

```
<CENTER>
<SCRIPT LANGUAGE="JavaScript1.1"
SRC="http://www.riddlenut.com/include/riddle.php?fontcolor=Bl
ack&linkcolor=Blue&backcolor=White&tabwid=300">
</SCRIPT>
</CENTER>
```

The Random Riddle on your page looks something like the one shown in Figure 10-2.

Unlike some remotely hosted Web site add-ins, this one has no control center where you can adjust your settings. However, you can manually adjust the settings in your own page's source code. The key items here are the `fontcolor`, `linkcolor`, `backcolor`, and `tabwid` attributes. Each attribute corresponds to the color and table-width choices that you make on the RiddleNut.com design page. By changing the values of the three color attributes on your site, you can alter the riddle box without going back to the RiddleNut.com site. You can enter either named colors or hexadecimal values, as in the following example:

```
SRC="http://www.riddlenut.com/include/riddle.php?fontcolor=
Green&linkcolor=0000FF&backcolor=White&tabwid=
300">
```

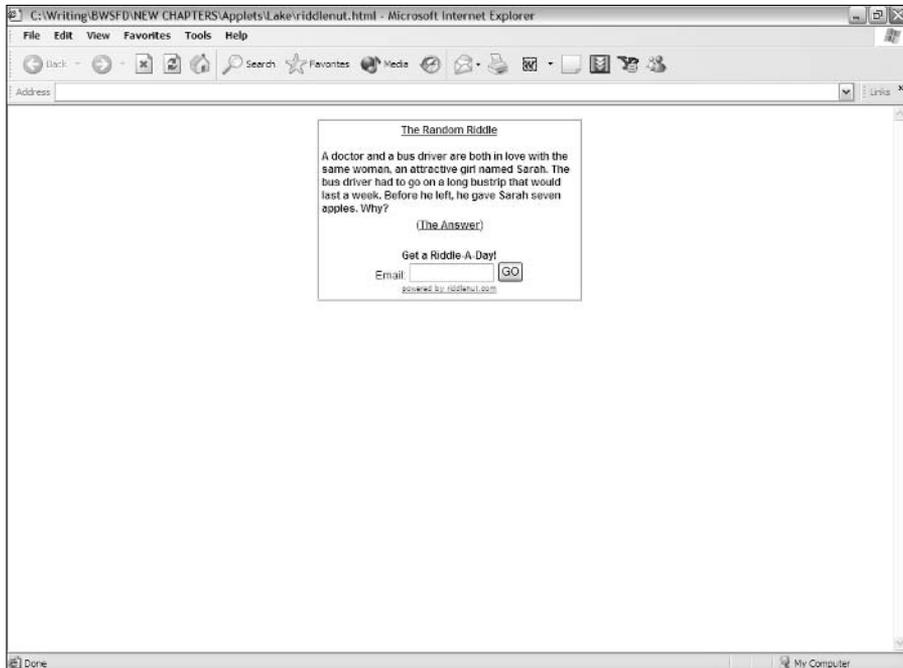


Figure 10-2:
The Random
Riddle
script as it
appears on
your Web
page.



Don't alter the RiddleNut.com code's punctuation. You may feel that you need to place quotation marks (" ") around the attributes' values or add a hash mark (#) in front of a hexadecimal number. If you do any of these things, you mess up the table's size and color characteristics. In one test where I played around with the punctuation by adding single quotes (' ') around the attributes, I managed to make the entire riddle box disappear. If the precision needed to alter the source code makes you uncomfortable, you can go back to the RiddleNut.com design page, redo your settings, and repaste the code with the new values into your own page. That's the safest way to do it.

The minimum table width in the RiddleNut.com drop-down list is 200 pixels, but it appears to create a riddle box 220 pixels wide in actual practice. No matter how small a number you put in the code as the value for `tabwid`, it reverts to this default minimum. The maximum width, however, can go well beyond the 450-pixel mark, which is the highest one on the riddle setup page. I lost interest after pushing it to 800 pixels, which is a good deal wider than you need for this add-in on any normally designed page, but you're welcome to see how far it will go.

Adding Bogglers to Your Web Page

Do you like a good brainteaser? Boggler.com (at — you guessed it — www.bogglers.com) comes from the same folks who brought you the RiddleNut.com site. Like riddles, brainteasers are cool additions to any site. But brainteasers offer a different sort of amusing exercise than riddles do. Riddles, after all, come in a particular form in which the answer is usually disguised in the way the question is phrased. Boggler.com, on the other hand, are word games, plain and simple, and they mostly depend on the graphical placement of words or the arrangement of letters. Often, the answer is a wonderfully terrible pun.

What, for example, is the meaning of `PODIVEOL` or `UGOME`? If you can't figure them out, drop in to the Boggler.com Web site and run through the brainteasers until you find the answers — I'd never spoil your fun by telling you. (What's that? You say that I told you the answers to the riddles, so why not give you these answers, too? Oh, all right. Here they are: "dive in pool" and "you go before me." Still, it's worth your while to go to the site and browse through the tons of brain food that you'll find.)

Better yet, slap a Boggler on your own site and play with it there. You'll see what a blast it is, and appreciate how much your visitors will like it. Adding Boggler.com to your site is even simpler than adding a riddle — just follow these steps:

1. Go to www.bogglers.com/getcode.php.

The Random Brain Boggler for Your Site page appears, as shown in Figure 10-3.

2. Select a frame color from the first drop-down list.

3. Optionally, select a background color from the second drop-down list.

You probably want to leave it at the default setting of Invisible (no color) because some of the word games rely on the color of the lettering. Because you don't know what that is in advance, you're best off covering all future bets by sticking with the default. If you must pick a color, go with White.

4. Type your e-mail address into the text box.

5. In the Do You Have Any Interests section, click any check boxes for topics you want to receive e-mail about. If you want don't want any e-mail, make sure all the check boxes are clear.

6. Click the Go button.

Boggler then sends you an e-mail message containing the HTML code.



Figure 10-3: You can set your own Boggler's frame and background colors by using Boggler.com's design page.

Bogglers - They are BRAIN TEASERS, MIND BENDERS, VISUAL RIDDLES, AND BASICALLY A TON OF FUN! - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Address: <http://www.bogglers.com/getcode.php>

The "Random Brain Boggler" for Your Site

Put a Brain Boggler on your Website and watch it change everytime the page is loaded. Too cool! Now follow the instructions below and paste it into your web page, and you're done!

- Pick a Frame Color that will show up nicely on your page:** Blue
- Pick a Back Color for in behind it (not essential):** White
All this can be changed later on your website.
- Email Address:** _____
(We will send you the code)
- Do you have any interests?**
 - Special Offers
 - General Webmaster
 - Web Design / Promotion
 - Free Stuff/Sites
 - IT Professionals
 - Home-Based Business
 - Bargains / Deals
 - No Fee Visa
- That's it, now click here**

We'd like to know what you think of the "Random Brain Boggler". Drop us an email with some feedback! [Send us Feedback](#)

PowerWeb
\$7.95/month
E-MAILS, CGI, PHP, SSL
7.95/month
iPowerWeb.com

Maximum Auto Parts - FREE Shipping on OEM and Aftermarket Auto

7. Copy the HTML code from the e-mail, paste it into your Web page's body, and then upload the page to your Web site.

Yes, paste it in the BODY element. (See the Technical Stuff note in the RiddleNut.com section if you don't trust me. Sniff.)

Here's the code that you get if you go with the default choices:

```
<CENTER>
<SCRIPT LANGUAGE="JavaScript1.1"
SRC="http://www.bogglers.com/bogglers.php?color=
blue&tbcolor=">
</SCRIPT>
</CENTER>
```

You can alter the values of the attributes just by typing in new ones. This time, you have two attributes: `color`, meaning the border color, and `tbcolor`, meaning the background color. And I can't repeat this warning enough: *Don't* mess with the syntax. Don't add anything to the source code that Bogglers generates. Just type in new color names without quotation marks or type in hexadecimal values without hash marks.

Figure 10-4 shows a Boggler that's on a Web page and ready to be enjoyed.

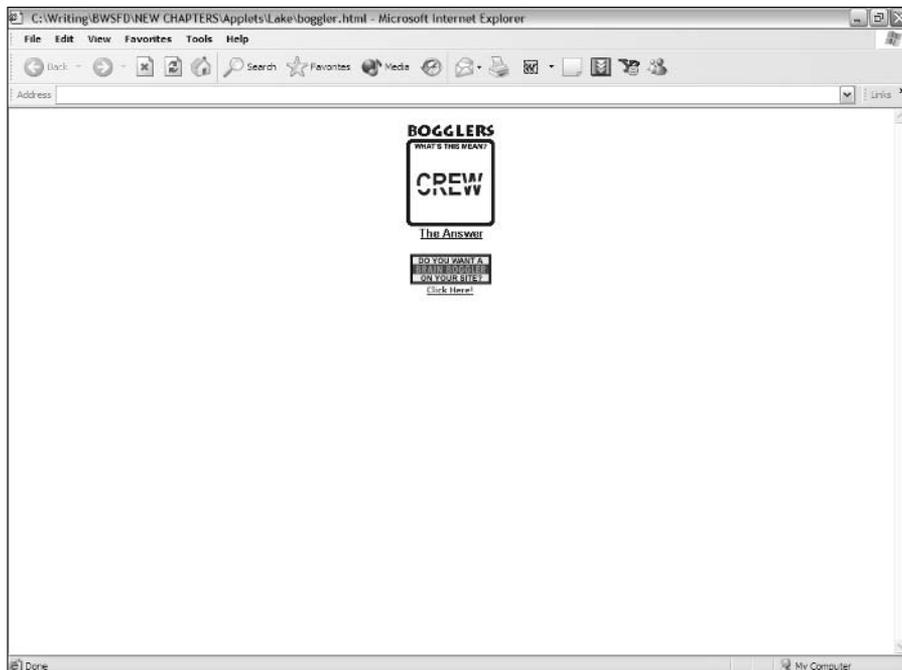


Figure 10-4:
A Boggler
on your
Web site,
ready
to . . . well,
boggle your
visitors'
minds.

Placing Quotations on Your Site

Quotations, *bon mots*, and memorable lines — the world is full of them, and we're all fond of spouting them on occasion: Benjamin Franklin's simple wisdom, "When you're finished changing, you're finished." The Duc de La Rochefoucauld's famous, "One is never as unhappy as one thinks, nor as happy as one hopes." And who can forget the immortal line of President Richard Nixon, "I have often thought that if there had been a good rap group in those days, I might have chosen a career in music instead of politics."

Quoting with the Quote Machine

The Quote Machine (www.insanityideas.com/quotemachine/remotecomote.html) is incredibly simple to add to your site. You just have to fill out one little form. The following steps describe the process:

1. Go to www.insanityideas.com/quotemachine/remotecomote.html.

The Quote Machine – Remote Quote page appears, as shown in Figure 10-5.

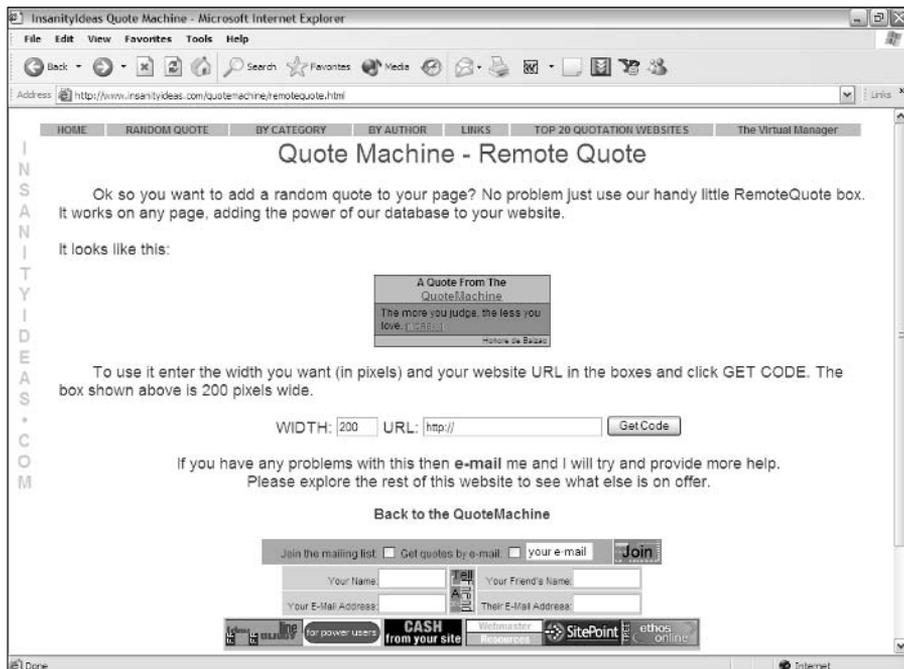


Figure 10-5:
Filling out
the form for
the Quote
Machine.

2. If you want to set a different width than the default value of 200, type the desired value into the Width text box.
3. In the URL box, type the Web address of the Web page to which you want to add the quotations.
4. Click the Get Code button.
5. Copy the HTML code from the text area on the resulting page.
6. Paste the code into your own Web page where you want the quotation to appear and upload the page to your site.

Figure 10-6 shows the Quote Machine as it appears on your Web site.

Quoting with Quoter

Quoter, a Java applet by Paul Lutus, is simple and versatile. It's a stand-alone, not connected to any service, so it's considerably stickier than the Quote Machine because nothing about Quoter can lead people away from your site. It's also a freebie that its creator distributes under a *CareWare* license. (What's CareWare? Check out www.arachnoid.com/careware for details.)

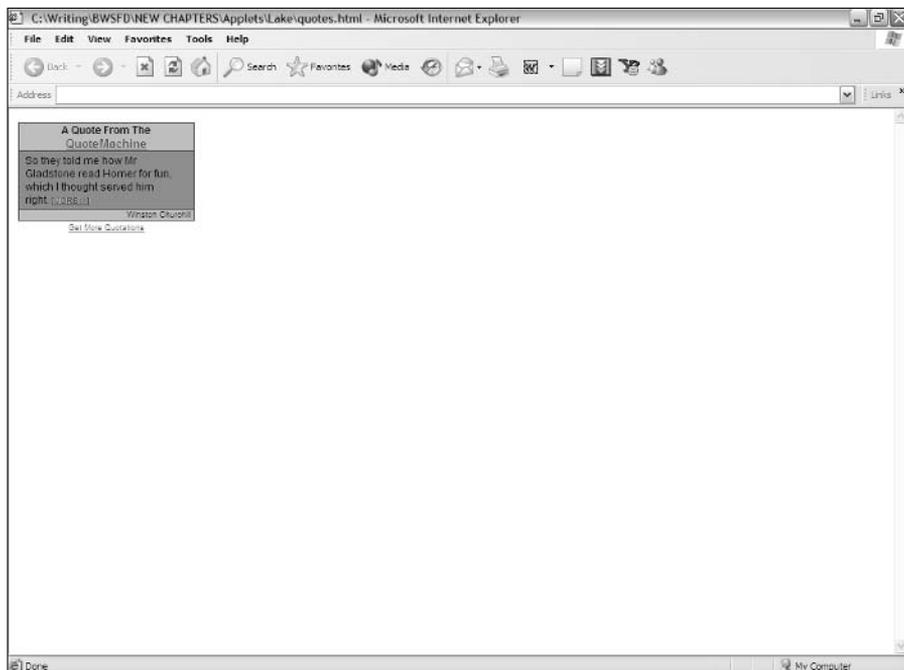


Figure 10-6:
A quote
from the
Quote
Machine as
it appears
on your
Web site.

To add Quoter to your site, follow these steps:

1. Go to www.arachnoid.com/quoter, where you can see the applet in action.
2. Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click the word **Quoter** in the sentence that says **Download Quoter with Installation Instructions (10KB)**.
3. After you've downloaded the file `quoter.zip`, unzip it into the directory that contains the Web page you plan to add it to.

You now have two new files: the applet itself (`quoter.class`) and a text file of quotations (`quotes.txt`).

4. Add the following code to your Web page where you want the quotation box to appear:

```
<APPLET code=quoter.class name=quoter width=500  
        height=300 param name="bgcolor" value=>  
</APPLET>
```

5. Upload your Web page and the `quoter.txt` file as ASCII files and upload `quoter.class` as a binary file.

You now have the basic setup, as shown in Figure 10-7.

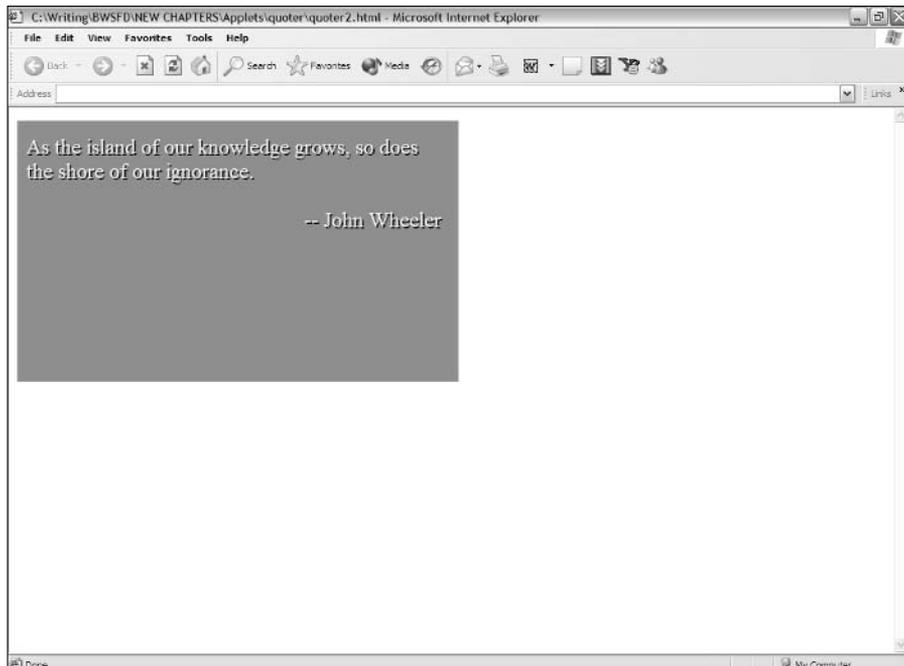


Figure 10-7:
Quoter is a free Java applet that's easy to install.

Now comes the fun part. If you want more than just the plain vanilla installation, there's plenty of room for more control. As with many applets, you can set the `width` and `height` values to suit your Web page's layout. And Quoter comes with a bunch of parameters that you can monkey around with, as described in the following sections.

Adjusting lettering

The following four parameters control the quote's lettering:

- ✓ `fontname`: This parameter sets the font face. Possible values are Courier, Dialog, Helvetica, and TimesRoman. The default value is TimesRoman.
- ✓ `fontsize`: This parameter sets the point size of the font. The default is 24 points.
- ✓ `fontstyle`: This parameter sets the style of the lettering. You can use values of plain, bold, and italic. The default style is plain.
- ✓ `textcolor`: This parameter controls the color of the letters. You must set the value in hexadecimal format, although the leading # is optional. The default color is #FFFF80, a shade of yellow.

Setting the background and drop shadow colors

The `bgcolor` parameter sets the background color and has a default value of #4040C0, a deep blue. The value of the `shadowcolor` parameter sets the color of the drop shadow that underlies the text. The default is #000000, black. Both color-setting parameters work the same as `textcolor` (described in the preceding list).



You have to use hexadecimal color values in Quoter. You can't use named colors (like turquoise, sienna, and orchid). If you try, you won't get the colors you're looking for.

Speaking of drop shadows, the `shadowoffset` parameter determines how far away the shadow falls from the text. By default, this distance is two pixels. The single number in this parameter specifies the distance both down and to the right. A setting of 0 means that no shadow is cast. The value of the `shadowoffset` parameter must always be 0 or a positive number, unless you're fond of unreadable text and bizarre visual effects.



Although larger numbers increase the feeling of depth, you probably want to keep this value relatively small — say, 4 or lower — unless you're using very large fonts.

Tweaking spacing

The following three parameters adjust spacing:

- ✓ `hspacing`: This parameter sets the space between characters. Its default value is 1.0. Yes, that's right, people — this one can take a fractional value for fine control. You can set it at 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, or even something wild like 0.9! Pretty exciting, isn't it?
- ✓ `internalmargin`: The value of this parameter sets the distance, in pixels, between the quotation and the edges of the box. By default, it's 10 pixels.
- ✓ `vspacing`: This parameter sets the amount of space between two sentences. Like `hspacing`, it also has a default value of 1.0 and takes fractional values.

Controlling the speed

The following two parameters control how fast the whole thing works:

- ✓ `chardelay`: This parameter takes care of how much time the applet spends between the drawing of one text character and the next one. The value is the number of milliseconds (thousandths of a second), and the default is 50.
- ✓ `quotedelay`: This parameter controls the amount of time between quotations. It's also set to 50 milliseconds by default, but it's a little more complicated than that. After all, 50 thousandths of a second wouldn't even give Evelyn Wood a chance to read a sentence. The actual calculation goes like this: $[(\text{quotedelay} \times \text{character count}) + 5,000]$ milliseconds. So what you get with the default, assuming that you've got a quotation with 80 characters in it, is $[(50 \times 80) + 5,000]$ or $[4,000 + 5,000]$ for a total of 9,000 milliseconds, which is — ta da! — nine seconds.



Because the character count is involved in setting the delay between quotations, a longer quotation means a slightly greater delay.



You can make the next quotation appear without delay — even before the current one is finished being drawn — by clicking the applet. It's a good idea to mention this fact to your visitors on the page that contains the applet.

Operating on an intranet

There is one odd little parameter that you don't need to use if you're putting the applet up on the World Wide Web, but I figure that I'd better mention it just in case. It's `intranet`, and it's for — you guessed it — operating the applet on an intranet with no connection to the Internet. You set the value of the parameter to `true` in that case. The default value, of course, is `false`.

Specifying the text file

Finally, we come to the last of the parameters. (Sad, isn't it? I'll miss these guys.) The `quotefile` parameter specifies the text file from which the quotations are loaded. If you're going to use `quotes.txt` as the filename, you don't need this parameter. So why bother with it? Why not just use the default text filename? Paul Lutus, the author of this applet, has a marvelous suggestion for taking advantage of this capability.

You can place the applet on different pages throughout your Web site. For each page, you create a different quotation file. Then you specify which file to use for which page by setting this parameter on each page, giving your visitors some variety — and a good reason to spend time roaming around your Web site.

Looking at all the parameters

Here's all the code in one great big pile of PARAMs:

```
<APPLET code=quoter.class name=quoter width=500 height=300 >
<PARAM name="fontname" value="Helvetica">
<PARAM name="fontsize" value="18">
<PARAM name="fontstyle" value="italic">
<PARAM name="textcolor" value="#FF0000">
<PARAM name="bgcolor" value="#FFFFFF">
<PARAM name="shadowcolor" value="#000000">
<PARAM name="shadowoffset" value="3">
<PARAM name="vspacing" value="1.5">
<PARAM name="hspacing" value="1.3">
<PARAM name="internalmargin" value="15">
<PARAM name="chardelay" value="45">
<PARAM name="quotedelay" value="40">
<PARAM name="intranet" value="true">
<PARAM name="quotefile" value="alternate01.txt">
</APPLET>
```

Examining the text file

Okay, now we come to the text file itself. If you take a look at `quotes.txt`, you can see how simple it is. Here's the first line, for example:

```
It is appallingly obvious that our technology exceeds our
humanity.\n\n>-- Albert Einstein
```

The first part of the code is the sentence that's being quoted. If you've ever done any programming, you'll recognize the next bit — `\n\n` — as a pair of *newlines*. Newlines are line feeds — that is, they move the next bit of text down one line each. The example includes two of them because that's how the author felt like setting up the text display, but you can use one of them or three — or however many you like.



You can apply a newline in the middle of a quotation if you want to force a line break at a particular point.

The `>` is a command character — if it's the first character following a newline, that is. Otherwise, it's just a greater-than sign. It means to place the following text at the right margin. You may notice that the authors' names in the quotations are right-aligned; this is why they show up that way. If you want a line to start at the left margin, you use `<` instead. If you want to center it, you use `^`.

After you apply a command character (`>`, `<`, or `^`), its effect applies to all the lines after that. In other words, if you right-align a new line, all the lines that come after it are right-aligned, too, unless you subsequently use a different command character. The hyphens in the quotation are just plain old hyphens. If you run the applet and look at the quotations, you can see that the ones that come with Quoter always have two hyphens before the name of the quotation's author.



Your quotations may not fit within the applet if you aren't careful with the length of the quotations and the combination of parameters, such as margins, the size of the box, and the size of the fonts. If you customize these items, make sure that you run the applet and click through all the quotations before going public.



Because Quoter simply displays text from a file that you create, you don't have to use it for quotations. You can also use it for displaying one-liner jokes, for example. You can put anything that you want in the box, as long as it fits.

Setting Up MyPostCards.com on Your Site

We all send cards to other people — birthday cards, Christmas cards, Hug An Australian Day cards, or whatever. But instead of trotting down to the local Hallmark store or drugstore, you can now send them from different Web sites. Why not make your site one of them?

MyPostCards.com is a free service that lets you set up a page where visitors can design their own e-postcards. They can choose different images, backgrounds, and songs and then type a personal message. When they're done, MyPostCards.com sends the recipients an e-mail message telling them where to view the card. The recipients click the link in the message, and their Web browsers load the page that holds the card.

To set up MyPostCards.com's service on your site, follow these steps:

1. Go to mypostcards.com/bas/.
2. Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click the Free Service Terms and Conditions link.
3. Read the terms and conditions and then click the I Agree to These Terms link at the bottom of the page.

The next page contains general information about how the system works.

4. Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click the Sign-Up Form link.

The Free Service Application page appears, as shown in Figure 10-8.

5. Enter your name and e-mail address in the appropriate text boxes along with your desired username and the URL of your Web page.
 6. If you want to receive the newsletters that MyPostCards.com offers, leave the check boxes selected. If not, clear them.
 7. Click the Submit button.
- MyPostCards.com then sends you an e-mail containing your password.
8. After you receive the e-mail, go to mypostcards.com/members/ and enter your username and the password that was in the e-mail message and then click the Submit button.

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "MyPostCards.com FREE Basic Service - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar shows the URL "http://mypostcards.com/bas/?oc=form&lang=en". The page content is titled "Free Service Application".

IMPORTANT
All fields must be filled. You will be returned to this form until you fill all fields correctly.

1. Your real name
check our privacy policy

2. Your valid e-mail address

3. Your user name
10 characters max., ONLY letters and numbers, no spaces, no special characters

Important
Please, THINK before submitting your user name. It will be used for your access to member tools AND it will also be your MyPostCards program link. A User Name change is a lot of work and COSTS \$10

4. Your website address http://

IMPORTANT!
Putting here a fake http://domain.com will lead you nowhere - your cards simply won't work.

5. Free newsletters

As a special FREE service for our customers we publish popular e-mail newsletters: Webby Humor Letter with clean jokes and MyPostCards.com News. You can subscribe to both right now. Highly recommended!

Subscribe to:

Webby Humor Letter (daily)
 MyPostCards.com News (weekly)

or

The left sidebar contains links for "Free e-Zine", "Community", and "get help".

Figure 10-8:
Signing up
for MyPost
Cards.com.

9. On the following page, scroll down to Checklist for New Users and click the Profile Editor link.

The Global Account Settings page appears, as shown in Figure 10-9.

10. Enter the title and URL of your Web page and the URLs for your image and sound files.
11. Scroll down the page and enter a title in the Card Page Title text box, shown in Figure 10-10.
12. Enter values for the background, text, and link colors.
You can use either color names or hexadecimal values.
13. Enter the URL for any background image you want to use.
14. Type any custom text you want added to your postcards and any message you want included on the notification e-mail that is sent to your users.

You can use a maximum of 1,200 characters for each of these messages. If you're unsure of how many characters you're using, just click the Check Size button.

ALL FIELDS MARKED BY ASTERISK * MUST BE FILLED.

Global Account Settings

Important! Please be VERY careful when changing account settings. Some values will be used by your card service immediately and your typos will result in visitors errors

Title of your Posty Page *

URL of your Posty Page *

URL of Images Directory *

Important! Put above the full URL of the directory where your images are stored. Don't forget a slash '/' at the end of this URL.

URL of Midi Directory

Important! Put above the full URL of the directory where your midis are stored. Don't forget a slash '/' at the end of this URL.

If you don't have your own midi collection - you can use the ones from our site then just don't change the URL above.

Done Internet

Figure 10-9:
Using the
Profile
Editor.

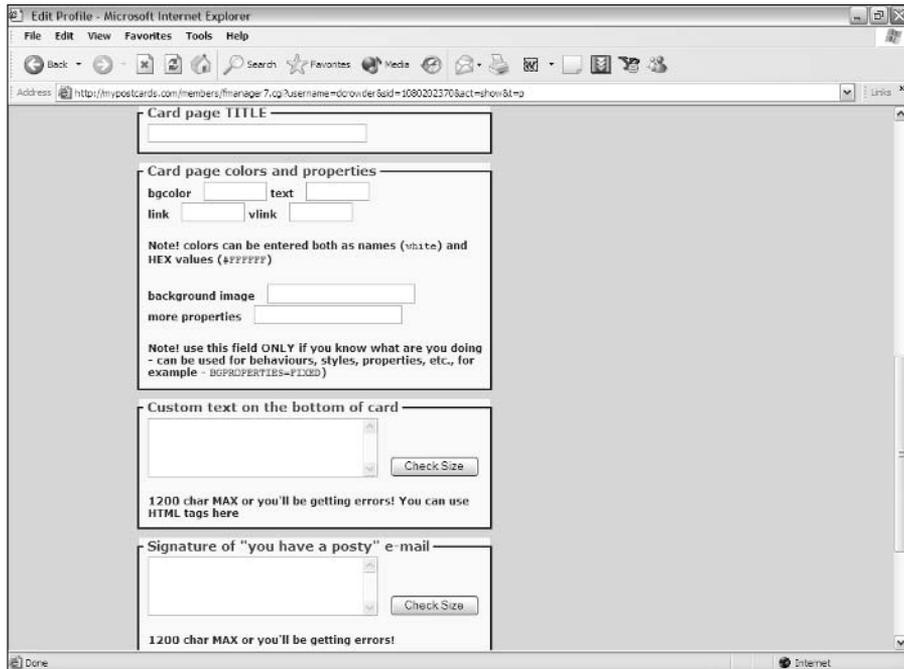


Figure 10-10:
Entering
card page
values.

15. If you want, you can enter a new password.
16. Click the Submit button.
The Global Account Settings page reappears.
17. In the Checklist for New Users area, click the Generate HTML for Card Page link.
The Generate Composition Pages page appears, as shown in Figure 10-11.
18. Click the appropriate option buttons to indicate whether you'll be using music and/or enhanced text. Set the border width the same way.
19. Click the Generate button.
The generated postcard page appears, as shown in Figure 10-12.
20. Choose View→Source from your browser's menu bar.
The source code for the page is displayed.
21. Save the source code to your hard drive and then upload the file to your Web server.

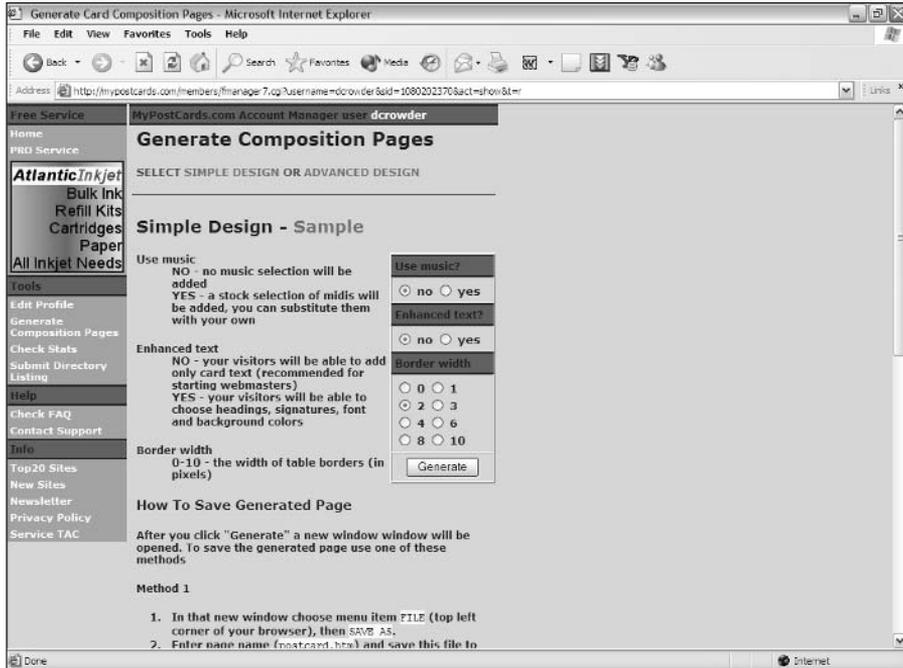


Figure 10-11:
Choosing
postcard
page
options.

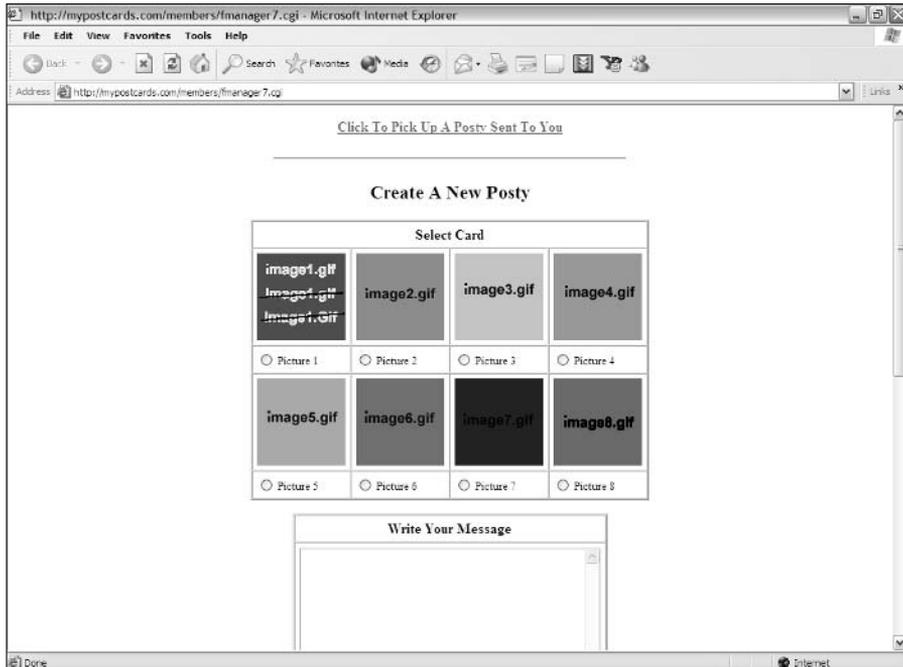


Figure 10-12:
The
generated
postcard
page.

Goofing Off with Games

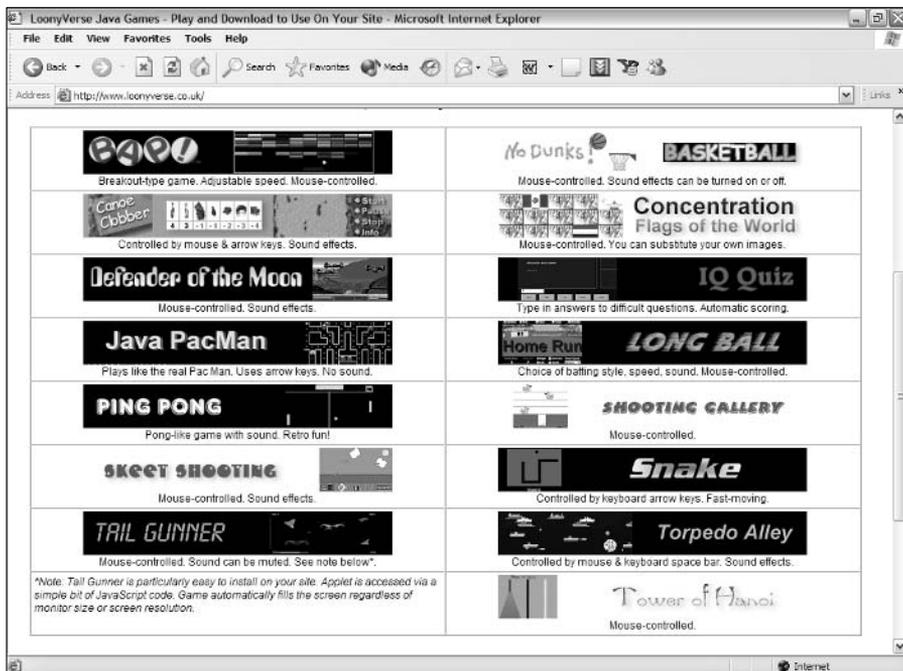
Tracking down online games was grueling work. I had to keep flogging myself to get on with it. But I love my readers, and I kept at it. Only for you folks. Really.

Downloading free games from LoonyVerse

Connie King's LoonyVerse (www.loonyverse.com) is a refreshing Web site. If you're tired of seeing *This site best viewed with Internet Explorer* or *This site best viewed with Netscape everywhere on the Web*, you'll get a kick out of her saying: *Best viewed at my house on my monitor.*

LoonyVerse has lots of interesting stuff, but because this section is about games, I'll stick to that for now. LoonyVerse currently provides 18 games that you can add to your site for free. To get directly to the LoonyVerse Games page (shown in Figure 10-13), go to www.loonyverse.co.uk or, if you're already at the site, just click the Games link on the main page.

Figure 10-13: You can choose over a dozen games to download from the LoonyVerse Games page.



To play a game, click any of the graphical links. To download a game, scroll down to the text links and click the name of the game that you want to download. Each game comes with full instructions on how to add it to your Web site.

Playing games Jagex style

Jagex (www.jagex.com) is a software firm that makes some wonderful games. These games are not only graphically attractive, but also really fun to play — and totally addictive. Figure 10-14 shows Meltdown, an arcade game by Andrew and Ian Gower. Pop in and try Meltdown and other games.

These games aren't free or even cheap. If you're running a commercial site, though, they're well worth the cost. How much do these games set you back? You can license some of them for your Web site for only a few hundred pounds. From there, it goes up. These are nonexclusive licenses. If you want the company to design a custom game for your Web site, Jagex is glad to do it for you, but it costs a bit more.

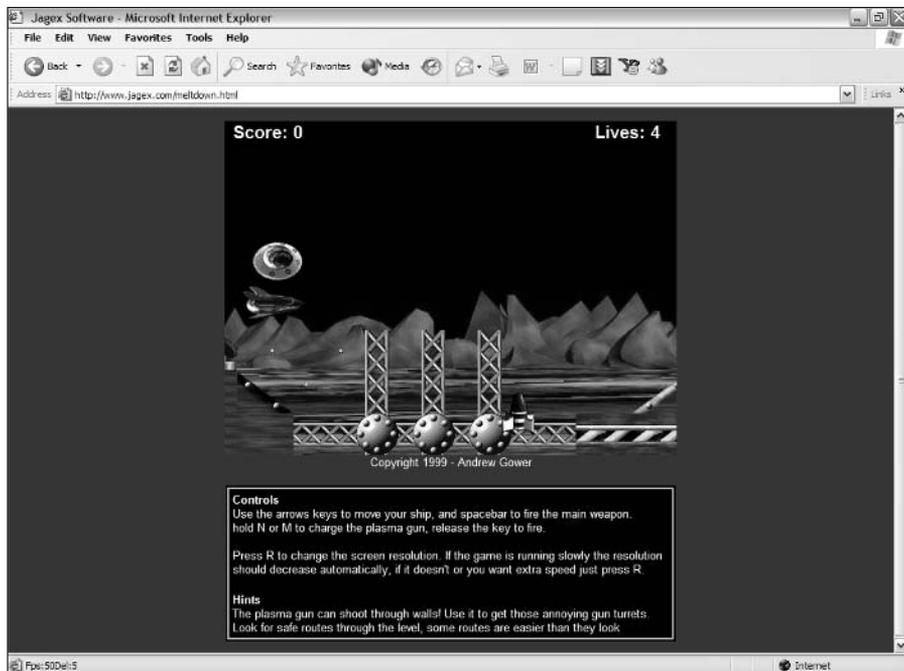


Figure 10-14: Meltdown is a colorful, fast-action arcade game you can add to your site.

Meltdown by www.jagex.com

Placing Cartoons on Your Web Site

The Internet has shaken up a lot of different industries, especially the ones that consist of nothing but middlemen. (Sorry, make that middlepersons. Middlepeople? Whatever.) Anyway, the syndicates that formerly wielded total control over whether the work of cartoonists ever saw publication don't enjoy that kind of hold any more. Nowadays, artists can go right onto the Net with their cartoons, and everyone who likes their work can keep on seeing it as long as their mouse buttons and Web connections hold out.

Adam Bomb

Blue Monkey Comics's feature *Adam Bomb* is, in the words of its creators, "an all ages action adventure-comedy," and as odd as the mix may sound, it works. You can find the strip at www.bluemonkeycomics.com/archives.html (see Figure 10-15). This Monday-through-Friday multipanel strip is kind of a Captain America meets *The X-Files* combination, and even better than just reading the strip is the fact that you can add it to your Web site for free.

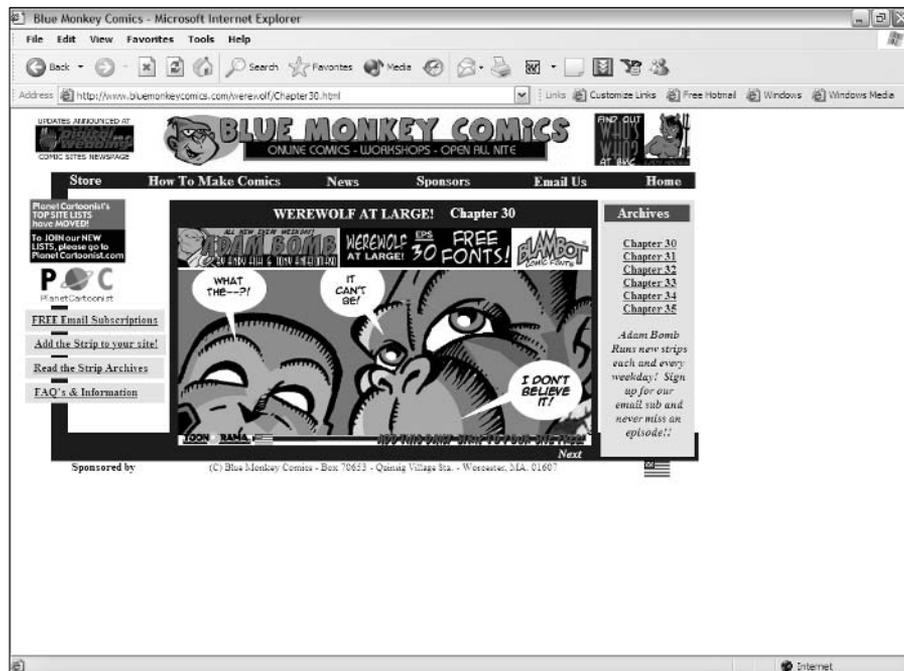


Figure 10-15:
A typical *Adam Bomb* comic strip that you can host on your Web site for free.

To set things up so that this comic strip appears automatically on your Web site, go to www.bluemonkeycomics.com/code.html and copy the HTML code that you find there. Then paste the code into your Web page. That's all you need to do to enjoy *Adam Bomb* on your site. Whenever the strip changes on its home site, it changes on yours, too, so the current strip is always showing on your Web site.

Toy Trunk Railroad

Toy Trunk Railroad (www.toytrunkrailroad.com) is about the adventures of railroad people. Well, sort of. The strip blends reality and unreality in a charming way. The railroad itself is a scale model set up on a tabletop, and some of the characters live in the house that holds the model railroad. The other characters, including the engineer and the railway's founder, live in the world of the railroad itself. (Well, actually, the founder passed away a long time ago, but his spirit inhabits his statue and is always good for a wry crack or two.) Figure 10-16 shows a typical *Toy Trunk Railroad* comic strip.

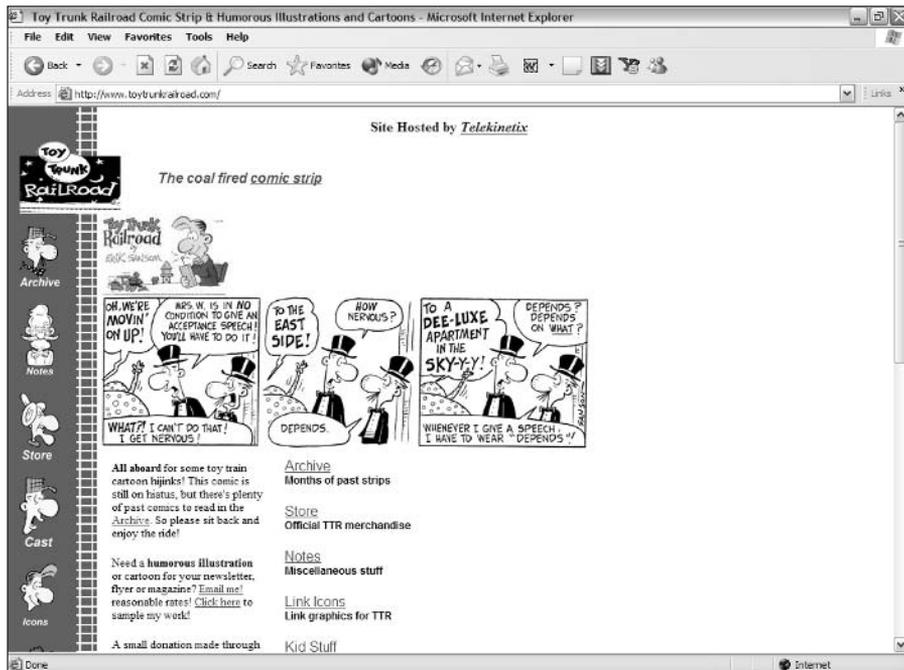


Figure 10-16:
A typical
*Toy Trunk
Railroad*
comic strip,
which you
can feature
on your
Web site
for free.

Toy Trunk Railroad is a black-and-white multicolumn comic written and drawn by Erik Sansom. If you love the old-style trains, you'll really enjoy this strip. Even if you're not into coal-fired trains, you'll find yourself laughing out loud. New strips come out Monday through Friday — Saturday and Sunday are taken up with classic strips from the past. To add the strip to your site (it's free, so don't worry about the cost), go to www.toytrunkrailroad.com/update.asp and copy and paste the HTML code. The current strip updates automatically on your page.

Online Sources for Games, Riddles, and Fun

Table 10-1 lists some places on the World Wide Web where you can find more resources like the ones that are covered in this chapter.



If you sign up with a service that supplies jokes or quotations, you have no control over the content of the material. Make sure that you check out samples from the content provider before you commit, because some of the topics may not fit your site's theme.

Web Site Name	Web Address
AAA Postcards	www.aaapostcards.com/linkus.phtml
CartoonStock	www.cartoonstock.com/daily.asp
ComicExchange	www.comicexchange.com
Daily 'Toons	www.shoptcs.com/dt_gettoons.htm
FreeSticky	www.freesticky.com
Gibbleguts.com	www.gibbleguts.com
HyperGames	www.hypergames.net
Nave Humor	navehumor.com/php/feed.php
On Your Site! The Daily Laugh!	onyoursite.com/jokes

(continued)

Table 10-1 (continued)

Web Site Name	Web Address
On Your Site! Quotables	onyoursite.com/quotes
Postcard Direct	www.ginini.com.au/tools/postcard-direct/
Snapshots	www.jasonlove.com/webmasters/
ThinkExist.com	en.thinkexist.com/DailyQuotation/stepsize.asp
Today in History	www.io.com/~rga/scripts/cgitoday.html
Twisted History	www.amuseyourself.com/twistedhistory/

Chapter 11

Using Content Providers

In This Chapter

- ▶ Posting news feeds
 - ▶ Adding weather information
 - ▶ Using public domain text
-

Fresh content keeps people coming back to a Web site. No matter how great your site, how wonderful your prose, and how fabulous your graphics, few people will visit your site over and over again just to see something they've already seen.

If your Web site provides a repeatable service, like automated translations or HTML validation, you can get away with leaving your site alone. For the vast majority of sites, though, if you can't give your visitors new material from time to time, you'll lose 'em.

It's a treadmill that you can never get off of; you've got to keep updating your site's material, or your site dies. All Webmasters want high-quality content for their Web sites, but generating that content yourself isn't easy. Fortunately, plenty of people crank out all sorts of stuff that you can use.

Whether you know it or not, you're already familiar with this sort of material. Your daily newspaper typically consists of some locally produced material and lots of items from content providers. The comics, most columns, horoscopes, and many of the articles in the newspaper come from people who don't work for that paper. The companies (syndicates) that do this sort of thing are latching onto the Web as the newest and best market for such canned content.

The prices for canned content range from absolutely free to somewhere between "Oh, no!" and "You've got to be kidding!" A large amount of the free material comes in the form of *marketing information*. (Translation: thinly disguised get-rich-quick schemes.) But after you cut through the dross, you can find plenty of high-quality, free material out there. So if you're running a small Web site, you don't need to break open your piggy bank to get the good stuff.

Adding 7am.com News to Your Web Site

More and more these days, people turn to the Web for the latest news. It sure beats waiting for the 11 o'clock news on TV to get caught up on the day's events. Unless you want your visitors surfing other sites to get their news, you need to add it to your Web site. But you don't need to connect with a bunch of CNN reporters or spend all your time collating tons of reports from distant parts of the world to provide your visitors with the latest news. Just plug in a ready-to-use news service.

The first news-content provider that I ever ran across was 7am.com News (www.7am.com), and as far as I'm concerned, it's still the best service of its kind (see Figure 11-1). The basic service is, and always has been, free and is supported by advertising, but now the company's branching out into alternative approaches for a small fee. And I do mean small — as in around \$50 a month for no advertising to a maximum of \$95 a month for providing customized news solutions, which is more than likely to fit into just about any commercial budget.

Figure 11-1:
The
7am.com
News Ticker
service
presents
news to
your visitors
in a
marquee
format.

World, US News Information, Free to your Site - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Address <http://www.7am.com/>

COM SALE Only \$7.95
HURRY, REGISTER NOW! #1 Overall Best Registrar

Go Daddy.com
7am.com

BBC World
Backing for record Microsoft fine

NewsWire Sign-up | [Headline Links](#) | [Ticker Channels](#) | [About 7am.com](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Contact](#)

7am.com
editorial
world
mye on iraq
usa news
business
science & technology
sports
entertainment
usa politics
financial data
world mkt update
precious metals
indices
exchange rates
region headlines
in english
afghanistan
australia
canada
china
hong kong
india
iraq update
ireland
israel
japan
malaysia
middle east
new zealand
singapore
south africa
thailand
uk
usa
world

Tenet Defends Record

The head of the CIA has denied that the Bush administration underestimated the threat from al Qaeda before the September 11th attacks in the United States.

George Tenet has been giving evidence to the independent commission looking at whether the attacks could have been prevented.

There have been accusations this week from the former counter-terrorism co-ordinator, Richard Clarke, that the US government failed to recognise the urgency of the threat al Qaeda posed.

More...

LOCAL DEVELOPERS & ISPs - news for your clients

World

Taiwan Meeting Offer
Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian has offered to meet rival candidate Lien Chan if thousands of protesters outside his office disperse.

Spain Resists Allied Pressure
Spain's incoming prime minister has resisted American and British pressure to help Spanish troops in Iraq, saying they can stay only if the United Nations is given much greater control of the occupation.

Countdown To "Sovereignty"
Iraq's U.S. administrator has begun a 100-day countdown to Iraqi sovereignty by halting progress since Saddam Hussein's removal.

Blair To Visit Libya

USA

Sheraton Hotel Struck in Baghdad
A hotel used by a number of American news organizations in Baghdad was hit by rocket or mortar fire Wednesday morning.

Hamas Pulls Back from U.S. Threats
The Islamic terror group Hamas has reversed course and now says it won't target the United States for retribution over Israel's assassination Monday of founder and spiritual leader Sheik Ahmed Yassin.

U.S. to Scan For Nukes At Ports
The U.S. government will be installing devices at America's ports to scan for nuclear devices, in a bid to intercept terrorists using such weapons.

world market update

theFinancials.com
Free Research
World Market Update
24-Mar-04 Last
Coppermine | 304.3000
Coke-AVIBEX | 37.1100
S&P 500 Index | 1477.0000

HUGE DOMAIN SALE!
.COMs Just \$7.95

The 7am.com News Ticker is a Java applet that presents a series of scrolling headlines in a text box on your site. Visitors to your site click a headline that interests them and go to a page displaying the full story. The stories come from various sources, so the page that a visitor goes to may be located at any news site from CNN to the BBC.

To add the News Ticker to your pages, follow these steps:

1. Go to 7am.com/ticker/addticker.html and copy the HTML code in the text area (see Figure 11-2).
2. Paste the code into your Web page at the place where you want the News Ticker to appear.
3. Scroll down to the All Users area and take a look at the parameter options you can add.
4. With the "target" parameter, indicate whether you want the linked page to open in the current browser window, in a new window, or in a named frame.

The example code for this is `<param name="target" VALUE="_blank">`, which opens the news link in a new window. Simply replace `_blank` with the name that you gave to the desired window or, if you want the link to open in the current browser window, don't specify any target parameter.

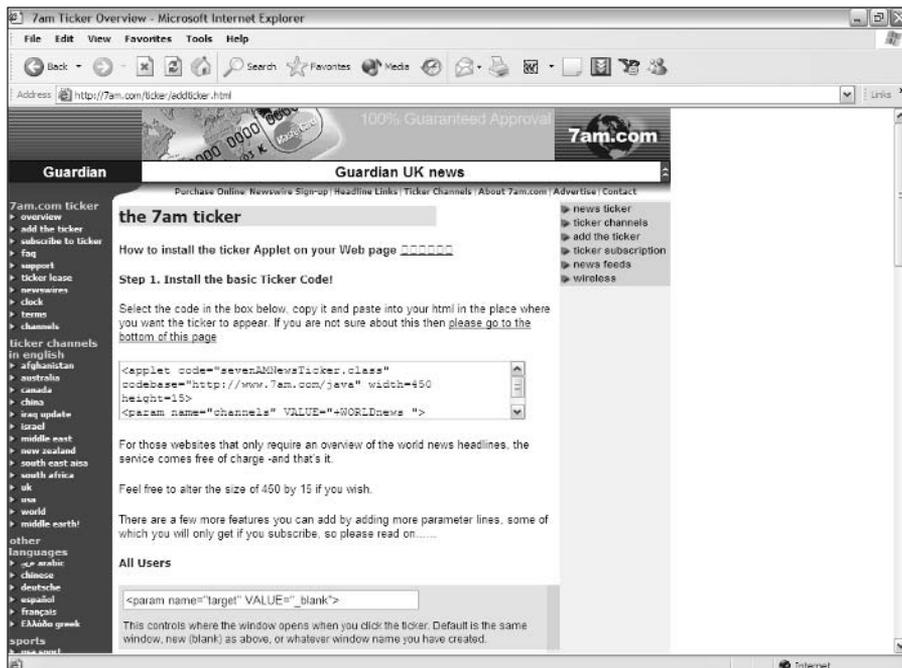


Figure 11-2:
Copy the HTML code near the top of the page.

- 5. If you want to enter a headline and URL for something you want to advertise, use the "local" and "link" parameters.**

This is a free opportunity to add your own private advertising to the 7am.com News Ticker, so don't neglect it. You can add up to four separate Web pages here. Set the headline that you want to appear first as the value of "local1" and the URL of the Web page you want to associate with that headline next as "link1", as in the following example code:

```
<param name="local1" value="Your Headline">  
<param name="link1" value="http://yoururl">
```

You can have up to four local headlines.

The ads run in the ticker just like the ones that 7am.com News has, and your visitors can't tell any difference. These ads show up only on your Web page, though — they don't go out with the 7am.com News broadcast to its other member sites. That's why they're called local headlines.

- 6. To change the headlines' font to normal or bold, add one of the following lines to the code:**

```
<param name="fontstyle" value="Bold">  
<param name="fontstyle" value="Plain">
```

- 7. To set the number of seconds the ticker waits before changing headlines, add the "pause" parameter:**

```
<param name="pause" value="4">
```

The default setting is 4 seconds.

- 8. To make the headlines appear nonsequentially, add the "random" parameter:**

```
<param name="random" value="Yes">
```

- 9. When you're satisfied with the parameters and values you've set, upload your page to your Web server.**

Providing Weather Forecasts on Your Site

I figure that most of the people on the Net spend almost all their free time indoors, but amazingly, they still maintain a fascination with what's happening outside. Okay, I admit that I have to drive through the outside world sometimes, and the guys from marketing often take their laptops and cell phones to the beach to "work." But all you really need to know is whether a thunderstorm is coming your way, right? And if that bright flash and the sudden puff of smoke from your modem don't tell you that, what can? Still, you just can't please some folks, and if your visitors want to check out the latest weather conditions and forecasts, who am I to stand in their way?

Weather Underground

Weather Underground (www.wunderground.com) has lots of ways for you to add current weather information to your Web site. It has both freebies and, uh — costies? For some reasonably priced customized weather options for your site, you can go to Weather Underground's commercial page at www.wunderground.com/autobrandinfo. To take advantage of its freebies, follow these steps:

1. Go to www.wunderground.com to access the Weather Underground site.
2. Type your location in the text box at the top of the page (the text box is labeled Find the Weather for Any City, State, or Zip Code, or Country).
Unless you enter a city name or a zip code, you don't get the option to add weather data to your page.
3. Click the Fast Forecast button to get the forecast for the area you chose.
4. After the forecast page appears, scroll down to find the Click Here for Your Weather Sticker link (shown in Figure 11-3) and then click it.



Weather Sticker link

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window displaying the Weather Underground website. The address bar shows <http://www.wunderground.com/cgi-bin/findweather/getForecast?query=90210>. The page content includes a sidebar with various links, a main section titled "Personal Weather Stations" with a table of data, and a "Weather Sticker" for Santa Monica, California.

Weather Sticker: Santa Monica, California
57 °F / 14 °C
Clear
at 9:51 PM PST

Personal Weather Stations

Location	Temperature	Dew Point	Humidity	Wind	Pressure	Hourly Precipitation	Updated
Location: Los Angeles, CA	59.2 °F / 15.1 °C	52 °F / 11 °C	78%	Calm	30.03 in / 1016.8 hPa	0.00 in / 0 mm	Updated: 10:00 PM PST
Location: Sherman Oaks, Sherman Oaks, CA	54.2 °F / 12.3 °C	50 °F / 10 °C	86%	Calm	30.07 in / 1018.2 hPa	0.00 in / 0 mm	Updated: 10:00 PM PST
Location: Marina del Rey, Marina Del Rey, CA Link: Conditions at UCLA Marina Aquatic Center	57.3 °F / 14.1 °C	56 °F / 14 °C	97%	WSW at 1 mph / 1.6 km/h	30.01 in / 1016.1 hPa	0.00 in / 0 mm	Updated: 10:00 PM PST
Location: Downtown Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA	57.7 °F / 14.3 °C	50 °F / 10 °C	74%	Calm	30.03 in / 1016.8 hPa	0.00 in / 0 mm	Updated: 10:10 PM PST
Location: Winnetka, Los Angeles, CA Link: Eric Shalvy	60.8 °F / 16.0 °C	50 °F / 10 °C	69%	Calm	29.18 in / 988.0 hPa	0.00 in / 0 mm	Updated: 09:59 PM PST
Location: Casa & Reforma, Woodland Hills, CA Link: Weather Watch	51.7 °F / 10.9 °C	48 °F / 9 °C	88%	Calm	30.04 in / 1017.2 hPa	0.00 in / 0 mm	Updated: 10:10 PM PST
Location: San Fernando Valley, Canoga Park, CA							Updated: 10:10 PM PST

Figure 11-3:
Click the
Weather
Sticker link.

The link is about halfway down the page on the right side.

You now see a large selection of weather graphics, like the ones shown in Figure 11-4.

5. Click the graphic that you like best.

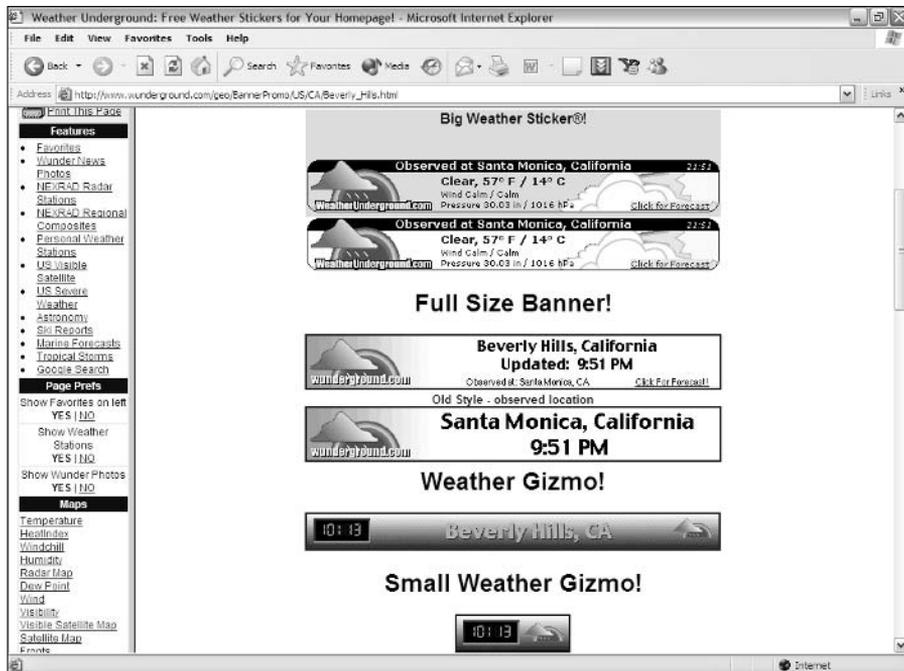
You now go to a page that shows that graphic and, beneath it, the HTML code you need to put it on your Web site.

6. Copy the HTML code from the page and paste it into your Web page. Then upload the page to your Web server.

Weather.com

Weather.com (at www.weather.com, of course) is the online version of the Weather Channel. If you're not familiar with that channel, you obviously don't get cable TV. It offers an affiliates program, although it doesn't directly generate any income for you. (See Chapter 14 for information on affiliate programs.) The program does, however, offer some really nice weather graphics that you can put on your Web site.

Figure 11-4:
Weather Under-ground's graphic add-ons. Pick one to display the weather info you're adding to your Web site.



To add all this wonderful weather wizardry to your site, follow these steps:

1. **Go to the Weather on Your Site page at www.weather.com/services/oap.html.**
2. **Scroll down the page and click the Sign Up button under Weather Magnet.**



You're taken to the registration page, shown in Figure 11-5.

You can click the sign up button for Weather Logo as well, but this doesn't provide the same graphical impact.

3. **Enter all the information that the site requires (such as your name and address) in the appropriate text boxes.**
4. **Deselect the check box next to any statement that you don't agree with.**

In particular, you may want to deselect the check box that says anything like the Weather Channel Can Provide Your Information to Its Select Partners, because agreeing to this means that you're giving up your privacy, and the site can share your name, address, and other information you provide with other companies.

5. **Click the Sign Up button.**

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "weather.com - Weather on Your Site - Weather Magnet - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar shows "http://registration.weather.com/registration/home/regnet/step1". The page content includes a banner for "Weather on Your Site - Weather Magnet" with the slogan "live by it". Below the banner, there is a "Current Member Sign In" section with input fields for "E-mail Address:" and "Password:", a "Sign In" button, and a "Forgot your Password?" link. To the right of the sign-in section is a "TRUSTe" logo with the text "Privacy & Security". Below the sign-in section is the "New Members Registration Form". This form contains several input fields: "Current E-mail Address", "Password", "Re-enter Password", "First Name", "Last Name", "City", "Address", "State" (a dropdown menu currently showing "AL"), "Zip/Postal Code", "Date of Birth" (with "Month" and "Day" dropdowns and "19" in a text box), "Province", "Country" (a dropdown menu currently showing "USA"), and "Gender" (radio buttons for "Male" and "Female"). There are two checkboxes for newsletter preferences: one checked for "Yes, I would like to receive newsletters, information and special offers from weather.com and its affiliates." and one unchecked for "Yes, I would like to receive occasional offers from weather.com on behalf of its sponsors. weather.com will use the information in compliance with its Privacy Policy." At the bottom of the form, there is a disclaimer: "weather.com has joined with select companies to present exciting offers and services that might be of interest to you. To take advantage of these offers, simply check the box next to each offer you'd like to receive. We will transfer your contact information only to those sponsors you have chosen."

Figure 11-5:
The
Weather
Channel's
content for
your site.

6. Select the region that you want your site to cover (weather for Europe, the Caribbean, and so on) from the list box and click the Select Region button.
7. Enter your site's name in the appropriate text box and select an industry, such as Entertainment or Personal Website, from the drop-down list. Also enter the URL for your domain and for the specific page on which you want to put the weather.
8. Scroll down and choose either English or metric measurements by clicking the appropriate option button. Also enter either a city name or zip code (see Figure 11-6).
9. Under Preferred Layout, click either the Horizontal or Vertical option button, and then choose one of the designs from the Select a Version drop-down list.
10. Scroll down and read the legal agreement and then click the Accept option button.
11. Click the Continue button. You're shown offers for other product and service information. Select whatever you wish or nothing, and then click the Continue button again.
12. On the resulting page, click the View Code link.
13. Copy the HTML code from the pop-up page that appears and paste it into the source code for your Web page.

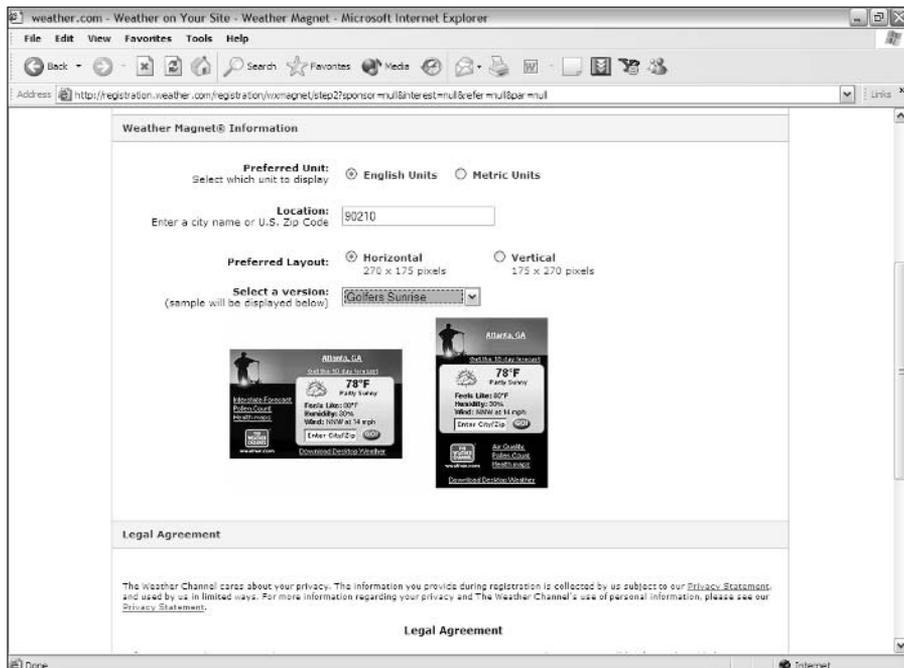


Figure 11-6:
Choosing a
design and
layout.

Finding Copyright-Free Material

In addition to the people who deliberately provide material for Web sites, you can tap a mine of content from folks who surrender their copyrights by deliberately placing their work in the public domain. You can also find an abundance of material that was once copyrighted but has fallen into the public domain because of its age. The fact that it's old, however, doesn't mean that it isn't of interest to modern audiences. People enjoy authors such as Beatrix Potter and characters such as Dracula just as much today as they did years ago.

The particular advantage to this content is that, unlike syndicated content, it isn't being sent out to a million other Web sites at the same time it's being sent to you. The drawback, however, is that you have to track it down yourself, and the authors rarely make any kind of commitment to provide you with more material (assuming, of course, that they're still alive). I provide a couple sources for you in the following sections to get you on the right track, but what you really have to do to keep this approach going is to work the search engines on a regular basis. Search for phrases like "public domain", "no copyright", or "copyright free". Sift through the results to find what you can use on your site.

The other Krishnamurti

Need some quotations for your site? Here's one:

"Stop thinking and start living."

You can find plenty more where that one came from, and they're copyright-free. U.G. Krishnamurti (www.ugkrishnamurti.org) is a controversial philosopher whose works are available to you for free. As the man states in his remarkably unusual copyright notice on his Web site at www.ugkrishnamurti.org/ug/copyright/index.html, "My teaching, if that is the word you want to use, has no copyright. You are free to reproduce, distribute, interpret, misinterpret, distort, garble, do what you like, even claim authorship, without my consent or the permission of anybody."



Many people have written books and articles about U.G. Krishnamurti. Their stuff is usually covered by their own copyrights, so don't go grabbing material from his biographers (unless you really like running into legal trouble). And you must be especially careful not to confuse his work with that of J. Krishnamurti, another person who was in the same line of work. Just make sure that it's U.G., not J., and you'll be all right.

The following list provides a bunch of quotations from “the unguru” that you can use to grace your Web pages. I’m still trying to figure most of ’em out, but a spiritual friend of mine assures me that they’re quite profound.

- ✓ “The questioner is nothing but the answers.”
- ✓ “You have to touch life at a point where nobody has touched it before. Nobody can teach you that.”
- ✓ “As long as you are doing something to be selfless, you will be a self-centered individual.”
- ✓ “Thought is something dead and can never touch anything living. It cannot capture life, contain it, and give expression to it. The moment it tries to touch life it is destroyed by the quality of life.”
- ✓ “Consciousness is so pure that whatever you are doing in the direction of purifying that consciousness is adding impurity to it.”

Project Gutenberg

One of the largest sources of public domain texts is Project Gutenberg (www.promo.net/pg/). You can grab — and use — nearly everything on this Web site, which is shown in Figure 11-7. (You do run into a few rare exceptions, but the site clearly notes these.)

The great thing about Project Gutenberg’s selections is that you can get your hands on such a wide variety of great material. Want to put *Captain Blood*, the classic pirate tale by Rafael Sabatini, on your Web site? Go right ahead and do so. Do all six volumes of Gibbon’s *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* impress you? They’re yours. Like the suspense movie *The Thirty-Nine Steps*? Try the book by John Buchan. Got a kids’ site? How about adding *The Great Big Treasury of Beatrix Potter*? The following list is a quick sampling of some other material you can get from this great site:

- ✓ George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*
- ✓ Helen Keller’s *The Story of My Life*
- ✓ Machiavelli’s *The Prince*
- ✓ Howard Pyle’s *The Adventures of Robin Hood*
- ✓ Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*
- ✓ Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*
- ✓ Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*
- ✓ Lew Wallace’s *Ben-Hur*
- ✓ H.G. Wells’s *War of the Worlds*

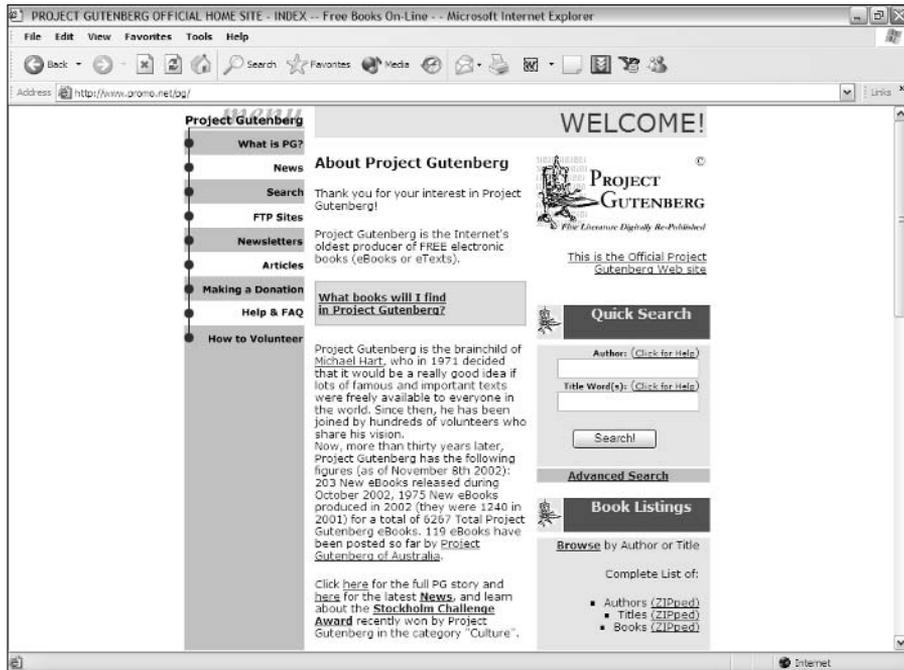


Figure 11-7:
At Project Gutenberg, you can find a wealth of public domain texts.

You can download the files in either plain text or zip format.



The materials that Project Gutenberg has are public domain under U.S. law. If you live in another country, or if the server that houses your site is in another country, check with a lawyer before you post any of this. International copyright law is a tricky area. As a matter of fact, you should probably double-check the copyright status even if you're under U.S. law, just to play it safe. If you don't want to use a lawyer and don't mind a lot of detail work, you can do it yourself. See "How to Investigate the Copyright Status of a Work" at www.loc.gov/copyright/circs/circ22.html.

Online Sources for Content

Table 11-1 lists some places on the World Wide Web where you can find more information on the topics that are covered in this chapter.

Table 11-1	Online Resources for Content
<i>Web Site Name</i>	<i>Web Address</i>
AccuWeather	www.accuweather.com
EzineArticles.com	www.ezinearticles.com
NewsHub	www.newshub.com/affiliates/g.cgi
News Index	www.newsindex.com
Pipeline News	www.aphrodigitaliac.com/pipeline
RSS Newsfeeds	www.webreference.com/services/news/
U.G. Krishnamurti	www.well.com/user/jct

Part IV

Raking In the Bucks

The 5th Wave By Rich Tennant



“So far our Web presence has been pretty good. We’ve gotten some orders, a few inquiries, and nine guys who want to date our logo.”

In this part . . .

In this part, I take a look at how you can make money from your site. Chapter 12 explodes the myths about Internet income and shows you how to really make a profit. Chapter 13 tells you how to get set up with a credit-card merchant account. And Chapter 14 shows how to work both ends of the affiliates game.

Chapter 12

Stalking the Wild Dollar: Internet Commerce

In This Chapter

- ▶ Finding your niche
 - ▶ Delivering the goods
 - ▶ Designing for orders
-

More pure bull hockey is floating around about Internet commerce than about practically any other topic in the world. If you haven't found thousands of e-commerce Web sites promising you the moon — and a moon made of gold and platinum at that — you aren't looking.

According to these self-proclaimed gurus of e-commerce, all you need to do is put up a Web page — not even a site, just a page — and the money comes rolling in. You can vacation in Acapulco this weekend and sun yourself on the Riviera by Monday. The secret to this success? Well, of course, they can't just *tell* you what it is. That kind of information is worth some real money, you know.

This “get-rich-quick-over-the-Internet” scheme reminds me of an ad that used to run in the back of cheap magazines many, many years ago. For 25 cents, the ad promised, you could discover how to make a fortune fast. After you sent in your quarter, you got back a pamphlet that, boiled down to its basics, told you to put an ad in a magazine asking people to send you a quarter. Today's get-rich-quick schemes are no more solid than that one, even if they are draped in the latest finery of high technology.

So is there any truth at all to the glowing promise of Internet commerce? Yes, there is. The Internet represents the greatest market that's ever existed, and the opportunity is very real. You *can* make a fortune in e-commerce, just as you can make a fortune in any other kind of commerce. But success takes

a combination of brains, toughness, marketing savvy, luck, and — most of all — determination to succeed. In this chapter, I show you how to become a real Internet marketer.

Learning the Real Secret to Internet Success

Are you ready for the real secret of success in any business? Here it is:

Put the right product or service in front of the right audience at the right time for the right price.

There ya go. That's all you need to do to succeed. Well, okay, implementing this advice isn't always easy. And when it comes to e-commerce, there are some special considerations.

Developing the right attitude

If you go into Internet commerce figuring that you don't need to do any real work — that it's just something that you can dabble in between football games or pay attention to if you happen to feel like it — you're better off going fishing. At least that way, you may end up with food on your table.

To win in any kind of business, you need a different attitude than you need to hold down a job. Let's face it, the whole point of most jobs is merely to keep a paycheck coming in. Most people work in jobs they don't care about — even jobs that they hate. They stick with their jobs solely because they have bills to pay. (Honestly, would you show up for work if you won the lottery? No? Neither would most people.)

If you run your own business, though, work is different. If you're sick and tired of rush hour, wearing suits and ties or high heels, and having bosses stand over your shoulder demanding that you work harder than they do, the Internet may be your ticket to financial independence. But you must pay a certain price. To run your own business, you must work harder than you ever have before. And you need to take a good, hard look at who you really are.

Notice that I'm not saying "what you really want" but "who you really are." There's a good reason for that. If you're going to win in business, you win

not because you're doing something, but because you're being yourself. In my own case, if I won the lottery, I'd take a few days off to meet with my attorneys and accountants and get everything in order, but I'd go back to work as soon as possible. I can't help it because I'm a book person. Winning enough money to afford even more books can't change that fact.

What do you love most in the world? Whatever is your true passion is also your natural business. If you do anything else with your life, you can't give it the same kind of energy. That's plain old human nature. Who can give 100 percent all the time if they don't care about the outcome? If you're stuck in a job at a desk in a cubicle and the company you work for experiences a crisis, what you do usually doesn't matter. The situation isn't your doing, and you're not in charge anyway. Even if you do manage, by superhuman effort, to overcome the situation and save the day, you know you probably won't even get a raise out of it. After all, you're just doing your duty.

If you want to make a break from the traditional working world, you must make a clean break from the employee attitude, too. An Internet business is different — it's yours. It's a part of you, and if you listen to your inner voice, it's a natural extension of yourself. It's not what you do — it's who you are.

Focusing on your business

Many people believe that you can sell anything on the Internet. After all, zillions of people are on it, so anything that you create is sure to appeal to someone. Well, that belief is more or less true, but it doesn't mean that you can make money from your creation.

If you're serious about making money, you must remember the key factor in Web site appeal: focus, focus, focus. If you run your site as a hobby or a public service, you can afford to drift a bit, but if you depend on it for your living, you must stay on target. Any drifting off the mark costs you money.

What I'm talking about here is *specialization*. When it comes to general merchandise, the Internet is pretty much already lost to you. Why? Because it's got JCPenney and Kmart and Wal-Mart (see Figure 12-1) and all those other well-established companies with very deep pockets. You're not going to put those companies out of business in a physical shopping mall, and you're not going to take them out on the Internet either. They already enjoy the kind of name recognition that takes a long time to build. And they can spend more money on one ad than the average online business has in its annual budget.



Figure 12-1:
The major
general
retailers
effectively
dominate
their
markets, on
and off the
Internet.

Even if you do have the kind of bucks that going up against the big outfits takes, I advise you to put your money into specialized stores. The future of e-commerce lies in smaller companies that can focus all their energies on a relatively small market. Here's where the size of the Internet really comes into play for you — a relatively small market on the Internet is much larger than it would be even in a large city.

Reaching customers all over the globe is the Internet's greatest strength. Like the telephone and air travel before it, the Net is making the world — especially the world of commerce — much smaller than it was even ten years ago. By targeting a particular submarket, you can tightly focus your business efforts and still reach more people than you ever could reach by running a local business. And a functional Web site is much cheaper than even a small physical store. You can indeed start successful businesses on a shoestring if you use the Net.

Even if you do need some kind of physical facilities for your operation, such as storage space for your products, you don't need to concern yourself with the appearance and attractiveness of those facilities. For most online businesses, a small warehouse space does just as well as a fancy, glitzy store in a

major shopping mall. In many cases, you can start with a spare room in your house. If you end up needing more room to handle all the merchandise that people are ordering . . . well, we should all have such problems, right?

Getting supplies flowing

Okay, so now you know what your online business is all about. If you choose wisely, you probably already know plenty about the field. You know all the major suppliers, your competition, and all sorts of little tidbits that outsiders know nothing about. You know what other companies in the industry have tried, what worked and what didn't, and how your potential customers feel about it all.

Depending on your field, you need to either create your product or line up some good, low-cost suppliers. If you create your own product or market your own service, you're already there. If you rely on outsiders, though, you must do some research. Even if you already have a supplier in mind, you'll probably be able to find a better deal or get more or better services if you ask around.

Identifying potential suppliers

Track down everyone who makes what you want to sell. Use search engines to find their Web sites and then print out some of those companies' Web pages. Make folders for each company (the manila kind, not the hard-drive kind) and arrange the hard copies neatly so that you can refer to them at a moment's notice.

If a site you're researching offers a Contacts link, follow it to see whether its information is useful to you. Different companies provide different amounts of contact data. Some companies have confusing and relatively worthless listings or nothing significant at all. Others provide fully detailed breakdowns of their operations by department and by significant personnel, including everything from phone numbers to e-mail and snail-mail addresses, to descriptions of people's job functions. You're looking for the director of sales and marketing. In the unlikely event that one isn't listed, go for the shipping manager.



The Contacts link may say something different, such as About Our Company or Regional Offices. Be creative and explore the site exhaustively when you're looking for contact info.

If you can't find the information you're looking for on the company's Web site, you can turn to one of the many business-phone-number databases on the Web. I list some for you in Table 12-1.

Table 12-1	Phone Number Sources
Web Site Name	Web Address
At Hand Network Yellow Pages	www.athand.com
AT&T AnyWho Online Directory	www.tollfree.att.net/tf.html
BigBook	www.bigbook.com
Infobel World Telephone Directories	www.infobel.com/teldir/
InfoSpace Yellow Pages	www.infospace.com/home/yellow-pages
Switchboard.com	www.switchboard.com
Yahoo! GetLocal Yellow Pages	yp.yahoo.com



Try the AT&T AnyWho Online Directory that's listed in Table 12-1 before you spend any money on long-distance calls. This directory is a source of toll-free business phone numbers. Even if the company you're looking at doesn't list a toll-free number on its own site, it may still have one that shows up in the AT&T listings.

After you get a phone number and/or e-mail address, check with the supplier to find out whether it uses drop shipping. (*Drop shipping* is an arrangement in which you gather the orders and submit them to the supplier; the supplier then sends the merchandise directly to the customer and puts your return address on it. You, of course, must pay the supplier for the merchandise, but you pay a wholesale rate and keep the rest for your profit.)

If the supplier doesn't drop-ship, find out the minimum order that you can place and what kind of discount you get for different sizes of orders, if any. In either case, make sure that you find out how long the company normally takes to fulfill your orders. You need to know this information so you can quote an expected delivery time to your customers. (Now you know why so many order forms say something like "Takes 4 to 6 weeks for delivery.")

Choosing a shipping company

If you get stuck with delivering the product to your customers yourself, you need to establish a business account with at least one shipping company. Most companies traditionally use UPS for shipping merchandise, although offering several alternatives to your customers doesn't hurt. You can also use the U.S. Postal Service, and FedEx is making a serious effort to compete with UPS these days on its own turf. Table 12-2 lists the URLs for some of the major shipping companies' Web sites.

Table 12-2 Major Shipping Companies

<i>Web Site Name</i>	<i>Web Address</i>
DHL	www.dhl.com
FedEx	www.fedex.com
Purolator Courier Ltd.	www.purolator.com
United Parcel Service	www.ups.com
United States Postal Service	www.usps.com



Make sure that you find out from your shipping company if you can get discounts for volume shipping.

Tracking packages with PackTrack.com

PackTrack.com offers a nice tool that you can add to your site to save you a lot of headaches. Everybody always wants to know “Where’s my package?” The handy little gizmo shown in Figure 12-2 checks the status of any package you’re shipping from all the major players, as well as from quite a few of the smaller ones.

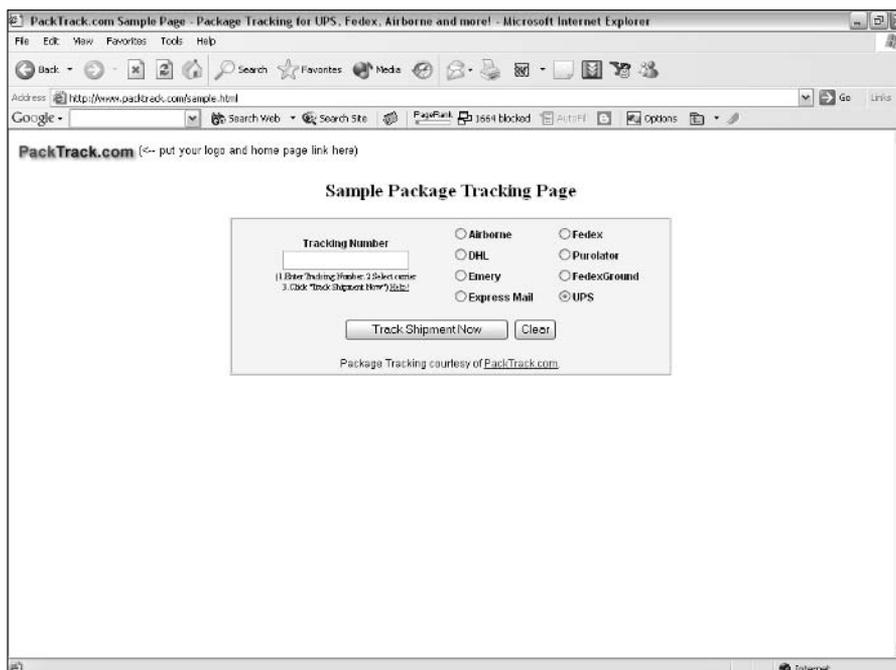


Figure 12-2: PackTrack.com’s package tracker enables you to track any package that you ship via the major carriers.

You can add PackTrack.com's tracking tool to your Web page by following these steps:

1. **Go to www.packtrack.com/sample.html and then save that page to your computer.**
2. **Load the file into your HTML editor.**
3. **Change the content of the TITLE element to suit your site.**
4. **Replace the A and IMG elements in the first line after the start of the form with your own or delete them entirely; change or delete the text that reads (`<-- put your logo and home page link here`) as well.**
5. **Alter the Sample Package Tracking Page text to your preferences.**
6. **Save the modified page and upload it to your server.**

Designing for E-Commerce

You may understand Web site design in general, but designing an online store requires some special considerations. Face the fact — if you're building a shopping mall in the real world, do you want an architect who specializes in houses or an architect who's built stores all his life?

Yes, your Web site must display a pretty face. Yes, it must perform all the functions you need to show your wares and process orders. But the key point to Web design is this one rule:

It must be simple to use.

If customers face any kind of hitch in the process, you're going to lose money. That's guaranteed — 100 percent. As you plan the site design for an e-commerce store, you must approach it from the buyer's viewpoint and concentrate on making the store easy to navigate and the buying process painless. Regardless of what you sell, here are some ways to satisfy your potential buyers' needs:



- ✓ **Include a picture of the product.** If you sell some type of merchandise, make sure that you include at least one picture.
Use thumbnail images instead of full-sized ones so that the basic product page doesn't take too long to load. (Customers may lose interest if they must wait too long for the site to load.)
- ✓ **Give detailed information, if appropriate.** How much information you give depends on what you're selling. With many products, you can easily

fit all the necessary information about the product into the product's description. However, providing additional information gives you an opportunity to sing the product's praises at length, even if it's not totally necessary.

- ✓ **Clearly state the cost.** Put the price right out in the open where everyone can see it. You'd be surprised how often you can follow link after link on e-commerce sites without ever finding the price clearly stated.
- ✓ **Make it easy for customers to buy the product.** If you're using shopping-cart software for multiple products, make sure that it's easy to use and doesn't require a bunch of back-and-forth steps to work. If you sell a single product or service, make sure that your site can quickly accommodate the customer's decision to buy. Here are a few ways to do that:
 - Put a Buy This Now link at the top of the page — and put one at the bottom, too.
 - Don't ask a bunch of extra questions on the order form. Stick with the basics such as name, address, payment method, and shipping options.
 - If you want to add a survey, add it after the entire sales process is complete, not as an impediment to the ongoing sale.

Putting your eBay listings on your site

eBay, the auction colossus, shows the way when it comes to good e-commerce Web site design. It follows all the rules of good usability and good sales sense. Your offering on eBay, however, is only one of — to put it mildly — many, and it sometimes seems like one offering is lost in the crush. But what if you could have your very own eBay, complete with all its functionality and savvy design?

Well, you can with the eBay Merchant Kit. You can slap your own auction site right onto your Web pages, direct your visitors to it, and let them browse through an eBay-designed catalog that has only your auction items in it. All you have to do is to copy and paste a few lines of HTML, and you've got your own online store up and running on your Web site. Don't worry about straining your setup, though — eBay's

servers do all the hard work. You just put in a link to the servers on your Web page.

Although your auction page bears the eBay logo and generally follows its design paradigm, you have some control over its content and appearance. You can, for instance, choose the font face, which kinds of items are displayed, how many items are shown, and how they're sorted.

You can check out the details about the eBay Merchant Kit at www.ebay.com/api/merchantkit.html. The only catch is that you have to already be an eBay seller to sign up for the kit. For further info on how to build an eBay store and link it to your Web site, see *Starting an eBay Business For Dummies* and *eBay Timesaving Techniques For Dummies*, both by Marsha Collier (Wiley).

Online Sources for Internet Commerce

Table 12-3 lists some places on the World Wide Web where you can find more information about the topics that are covered in this chapter.

Web Site Name	Web Address
Freightworld	www.freightworld.com/exp_geo.html
"How to Play to Your Audience" from <i>CIO Magazine</i>	www.cio.com/archive/111503/play.html
Copresco: Internet Tools for Package Tracking	www.copresco.com/pkgtrack.htm
TeleTransport Shipping Tracking	www.teletransport.it/newweb/eng/pagine/servizi-ship.asp
track-trace	www.track-trace.com
Usability SIG Newsletter	www.stcsig.org/usability/newsletter/

Chapter 13

Love That Plastic: Taking Credit Cards

In This Chapter

- ▶ Becoming a merchant
 - ▶ Avoiding pitfalls
 - ▶ Using PayPal, e-cash, and phone checks
 - ▶ Converting currencies
-

If you're operating a regular store, taking in money from customers is a pretty easy matter. Cash, checks, credit cards, debit cards — you name it, and some well-established process is in place to handle it. From night-deposit drops to armored car pickups, the bricks-and-mortar merchant is already well covered when it comes to getting paid.

You won't find any cash registers online, though, so you need to look at other options. The major approach is to take credit cards. You can, however, arrange to be paid in other ways, like accepting checks by phone or using digital money. However, none of the other ways can really compete with the power of plastic.

Getting a Merchant Account

You know that old line of Groucho Marx's? The one that went something like, "I wouldn't want to join any club that would have someone like me as a member." Well, if you're just getting started and don't have any kind of business or financial track record, you may have to settle for a credit card merchant account — giving you the capability to accept credit cards — that doesn't necessarily give you the best deal.

Even if you're really good at what you do and you're going into all this with your eyes wide open, the odds are pretty good that a financial analyst will classify you right alongside the starry-eyed dreamers who don't have a chance — unless you have a solid business plan, a proven staff, and some serious money behind your operation. That doesn't necessarily mean that you can't get a merchant account; after all, some credit card companies will give merchant accounts to businesses that they consider high-risk clients, just as there are loan companies that give a loan to someone with poor credit. But it probably means that you'll end up paying more for the privilege than a well-established firm would. Maybe lots more.

So what do you need to do to get established? And what are the pitfalls you have to guard against?

Choosing which acquirers to sign up with

If you think that you have a good relationship with your local bank, going into e-commerce might make you think again. Bankers are notoriously conservative. This is a good trait, of course, in people whom you need to trust with your money. But that conservative streak isn't so nice when you find out that the conservatism means that they don't get the whole e-commerce idea.

Even if your bank isn't Internet friendly, you still have tons of other places you can turn to. However, you can't get accepted directly by MasterCard or VISA. You have to go through some kind of intermediary, called a *merchant account acquirer*, along the way. Acquirers just take applications and pass them on to the banks that set up the merchant accounts and do the actual transaction processing. To find out whom you can talk to about getting set up as an Internet merchant, check out these official Web sites:

- ✔ **MasterCard:** Check out www.mastercardmerchant.com/cgi-bin/acqdir/merchantReg.cgi. Type the information about your company into the form there, and MasterCard will take care of the rest. If you'd rather go outside the company, you can try www.infomerchant.net/merchantaccounts/mastercard_acquirers.html for an outside view.
- ✔ **VISA:** You can find a list of recommended companies at www.usa.visa.com/business/merchants/get_account_list.html?it=il_/business/merchants/accept_visa.html.
- ✔ **American Express:** American Express is refreshingly simple — you apply directly to American Express. Drop in to www.americanexpress.com/homepage/merchant.shtml and go at it. If you prefer to keep everything under one roof, you can usually also sign up with American Express through the same merchant account provider you use for MasterCard and VISA. Or check out both approaches and see which method gives you the best deal.



The American Express Web site is one fine example of design. It's both functional and attractive. Anyone can learn a lot about Web design and structure from studying it.

In addition to the official Web sites, there are so many acquirers online that it'll make your head spin. Go to any good search engine and type the phrase *accept credit cards*. You should get millions of results. Even allowing for duplicate listings and bad links, that's a lot to dig through. I've pared the list down a bit for you, though. Check out Table 13-4 for some of the major acquirers.

Deciding which cards to take

So which card should you take? Or which cards? Well, the obvious answer is this: all of them. But the obvious isn't always the best. MasterCard and VISA for sure. They're the real biggies that everyone has. Beyond that, each card that you sign up for usually adds to your expenses. Most credit card firms charge you for the ability to accept the cards, even if you never process a single transaction with them. American Express doesn't. Well, actually, American Express has two plans. With the first one, you don't pay American Express any monthly fee, but you do pay the company a percentage of the take. The second plan is just the opposite — American Express doesn't get a cut, but you pay a flat fee every month. The choice is up to you.

If you're dealing with the general public, American Express is mostly useful for high-end purchases. If you're dealing with the business market, though, it's another story. Zillions of businesses have corporate American Express cards, and you can lose a significant amount of money if you can't take orders with these corporate cards, even for low-priced items. When it comes to the smaller cards, like Discover and Diner's Club, you should probably take them only if you're a really big company that does millions of dollars in sales. It's just not worth it for a typical small business because not many of your customers will have Discover or Diner's Club and not also have VISA, MasterCard, or American Express.

Signing up

After you decide which acquirers you want to sign up with, contact them and ask for an application. From that point, the exact details vary somewhat from one company to the next — make sure that you ask each company about the process before you get involved so that you'll have everything ready ahead of time — but the basic procedure goes something like this:

- **Fill out application forms.** Tons of sheets of them. And those forms are always too long to photocopy the whole sheet at once, so you'll have to keep turning them around and shooting them again to make a copy of the whole thing. You'll also need a magnifying glass to read some parts of the forms. These people take fine print seriously.



Most merchant account providers now have an online application form. You fill it out and submit it online; then the provider mails a printed copy to you for your signature.

When you're getting ready to fill out the forms, don't neglect to have the information handy about where the credit card company should send the money you make — your bank name, business account number, and ABA routing code (ask your bank).

Some merchant account providers require you to open an account in a bank of their choosing. Run, don't walk, away from this kind of arrangement. It's a lot easier to handle your money if it's in your own bank.

- ✔ **Provide copies of your business documentation.** This may include a business license, corporate papers or a partnership agreement, licenses to perform various services, or even copies of tax returns. Remember that merchant accounts are issued to companies, not individuals. Even if you're running a one-person shop, you have to do whatever your locality requires to be a legal business.
- ✔ **Estimate how many credit card orders you will process each month and how much money those orders will involve.** This is rough with a start-up business, but it's important because the merchant account provider will set a limit on how much you can submit for processing. If you end up making more than you thought, you have to ask the provider's permission to submit more orders than you signed up for. Most people deliberately overestimate the number of orders and the amount of money they expect, just to avoid this problem, but that can mean you end up paying more than you're required.
- ✔ **Have an on-site inspection.** That's right. Even though your business may not have a physical location and exist only in cyberspace, you could have to put up with someone coming out to your house to look at it. These folks may even take a picture of your computer as your "place of business" for the record. This is nothing but a bit of red tape left over from the days before e-commerce.

Watching out for fees

At the top of the list of things to watch out for are fees. Merchants pay for the privilege of taking credit card orders, and the credit card companies have all sorts of little ways of sticking it to you. Here's a sampling:

- ✔ **Application fee:** This is pure gravy for the bank or — more likely — the sales agents, for whom it may be the main source of income. Double-check whether the application fee will be refunded if you don't get account approval and take the answer with a grain of salt. Get it in writing. Better yet, stay away from companies that charge one. Plenty of companies out there don't charge you just for looking at your application.

- ✔ **Setup fee for starting the account:** Again, lots of companies will set you up for nothing. Try to avoid the ones that charge you for the simple act of becoming a customer.
- ✔ **Monthly statement fee:** This is a charge that the credit card companies levy on you because they have to keep track of how much money they're making from you. You'd think that they'd be glad to do this for nothing, but that's not the case.
- ✔ **Percentage of each sale:** This is called the *discount rate*.
- ✔ **Transaction fee:** Yes, you're already paying a percentage. But the company still wants a few more cents.
- ✔ **Minimum monthly charge:** If you don't make enough sales for the credit card company's cut to meet a certain minimum amount, you have to pay the minimum amount anyway. Hey, the company isn't going to lose money just because you might. American Express has a refreshing difference — it doesn't have a monthly minimum.
- ✔ **Equipment charges:** If you're strictly online, you don't need any kind of equipment. Don't get suckered into buying a point-of-sale system or anything else you're not going to use.

Leaving off equipment, because it's unnecessary and wildly variable in cost, Table 13-1 shows the lowest costs typically associated with these fees. Lots of places claim to offer lower costs, but those firms must be running charities because these are the minimums that MasterCard and VISA charge Internet companies. (They do offer lower rates for more "stable" traditional bricks-and-mortar firms, however.)

<i>Fee</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>When Paid</i>
Application	\$0	One-time
Setup	\$0	One-time
Statement	\$9	Monthly
Discount rate	2.30%	Per transaction
Transaction	\$0.30	Per transaction
Monthly minimum*	\$20	Monthly

* If company's income from your transactions doesn't reach this amount

How do you pay all this and still make a profit? The same way every other merchant does: You raise your prices and pass the increase on to the consumer. However, a number of factors can make it hard to figure out exactly how much it costs you to accept credit cards. Sales that include the CVV number (the three-digit code on the signature strip on the back of the credit card) usually qualify for lower rates than sales that don't include it, for example. And, if you're in a specialty business (about 30 businesses fit this category, including adult entertainment, credit repair, jewelry, and airlines), the rate you pay will be about double the standard rate for other types of businesses.

Some companies, of course, actually care about your business and have nice, helpful people working for them. The best way to find out whom you're dealing with — before you sign up for a merchant account with any company — is to talk to some of its current customers. You can ask the company for references, but its employees will likely steer you only to people they know will say nice things about the company. Think about the references on your résumé. You don't include the boss who thought you were a turkey or the coworker who always tried to take the credit for your work, do you? The credit card companies don't want to send you to the people who are mad at them either.

Well, it's kind of hard to track down the clients of a company without asking someone at the company, so why not do it the other way around? Every Web site that takes credit cards has to be doing business with an acquirer. And almost all sites have an e-mail link to the Webmaster. Just surf the Web and keep leaving messages. "Who do you use? How do you like them? Have you had any problems with them?" (That kind of thing.) Pretty soon, you'll start to build up a consensus about which companies are currently the best to do business with.

Protecting against credit card fraud

The worst problem is credit card fraud. So what happens if you get a bad order? The answer's simple — you don't get paid. It's called a *chargeback* — the folks who handle your account issue a debit instead of a credit, and the amount of the bad charge is deducted from your business bank account. The same thing happens if a customer complains to the credit card company, saying that you didn't fulfill your duties (like if the customer never received the order, or the product didn't work). And if you get too many chargebacks, you can lose your merchant account. Worse, you can get charged big-time fees. That's right — more fees. Not only do you lose the money from the sale, but also if more than 1 percent of your sales in one month comes back as chargebacks, the credit card companies jack up your discount rate, which means that your profit on future sales shrinks.

Even if you successfully dispute the chargeback, you still have to pay a processing fee to cover the credit card company's expenses in falsely accusing you. Then comes the ultimate "insult to injury" stunt: If you keep getting lots of chargebacks, the company charges you to review your account. And that review can run into many thousands of dollars — MasterCard chargeback fees can even go up to \$100,000 in a single month for repeat offenders. Not many Internet companies can afford that kind of expense.

The problem here is that Internet companies — like mail order or telephone order ones — have no way of ever seeing the credit card or the person who uses it. Normal fraud prevention wisdom (like watching to see if the credit card comes out of a wallet or a pocket) can't work. Nor, except in rare cases where people mail in Web pages they printed out, can Internet companies get a signature on an order form. All the company can do is accept a credit card number. There's no way to prove who provided that number. That's the nature of the Net. No doubt, this will be resolved in some manner some day, but for now, that's the way it is. Credit card companies have a phrase for this: *high risk*. That's right: MasterCard and VISA consider every company on the Internet to be a high risk. Well . . . not every company. If you're successful enough to make zillions of dollars, they pretend that you're not in the same boat as everyone else on the Net, even though nothing but the amount of profit is any different. Short of that, though, they've got the entire e-commerce world in their sights.



Make sure that the software you're using to process credit cards has an antifraud feature called *address verification*. Because the credit card issuer knows where it sends the bill, the address on the order can be checked against the credit card issuer's records. If the address isn't the same, you may not want to fulfill that order. Some companies, such as florists and fruit shippers, pretty well have to handle such orders because many of their products get ordered by one person to be sent to another person at another address. If you decide to take a risk like that, at least have two address areas on your form. One should be for the address to ship to, and the other one should be for the purchaser's home address if it's different from the address the item's being shipped to. It's not perfect protection, but it's a step in the right direction. And always make sure to require a signature for delivery. That way, you can prove the item reached the right address — assuming you ship a physical product, anyway.

Online Malls

Many online malls also provide merchant account services (such as Yahoo! Merchant Solutions from Yahoo! Stores, as shown in Figure 13-1). And most of the virtual and dedicated server providers (see Chapter 15) have some sort of shopping-cart software available as well. If you're looking for an all-in-one solution to your e-commerce needs, you should check out some of the sites in Table 13-2.

Figure 13-1:
Yahoo!
Merchant
Solutions
presents a
complete
selection
of options
for e-
commerce.



Table 13-2

Online Malls

<i>Mall</i>	<i>Web Address</i>
Americart Shopping Cart Service	www.cartserver.com/americaart/
Clockwatchers	www.clockwatchers.com/shopping.html
Code9 Software	www.code9software.com
Coreave	www.coreave.com
Electronic Merchant Systems	www.emscorporate.com/ecomm.htm
StoreFront	www.storefront.net
Verio	hosting.verio.com/index.php/ecommerce.html
Yahoo! Merchant Services	smallbusiness.yahoo.com/merchant/

Many of the malls offer complete e-commerce solutions — Web sites, merchant services, integrated shopping carts, and so on — and have some pretty sophisticated antifraud capabilities. In fact, they may be a better option for many small companies than going the traditional route.

Checking Out Alternative Payment Methods

I said at the beginning of this chapter that credit cards are king. And I stand by that. If you do nothing but take MasterCard and VISA, you're pretty thoroughly covered. Nearly everyone who can afford a computer has one or both of them. Toss in American Express for the high-end customer and the business client, and you're all set. But some alternatives are out there, and you may want to add some or all of them to your setup.

PayPal

When it comes to online payments, the new and very impressive kid in town is PayPal, now part of the eBay empire. PayPal takes a slightly different approach to online payments, and it's worth a good look. With PayPal, you can accept credit card payments without having a merchant account, and your customers can pay you directly from their bank accounts.

What do you have to do? Not much. Just sign up for an account at www.paypal.com. What does it cost? Nothing unless you actually make some sales. In that case, you pay \$0.30 per transaction and anywhere from 2.2 to 2.9 percent of the sale price on top of that. Rates can be higher for international sales.

PayPal offers a complete payment system for you to use at no extra cost. You can integrate its free Web tools into your site's pages easily. For example, you can add the shopping cart shown in Figure 13-2 by simply pasting some HTML code from PayPal into your page.

Throw in a thorough payment-reporting system, which PayPal does, and you couldn't ask for a better setup for a startup business — or even an established one.

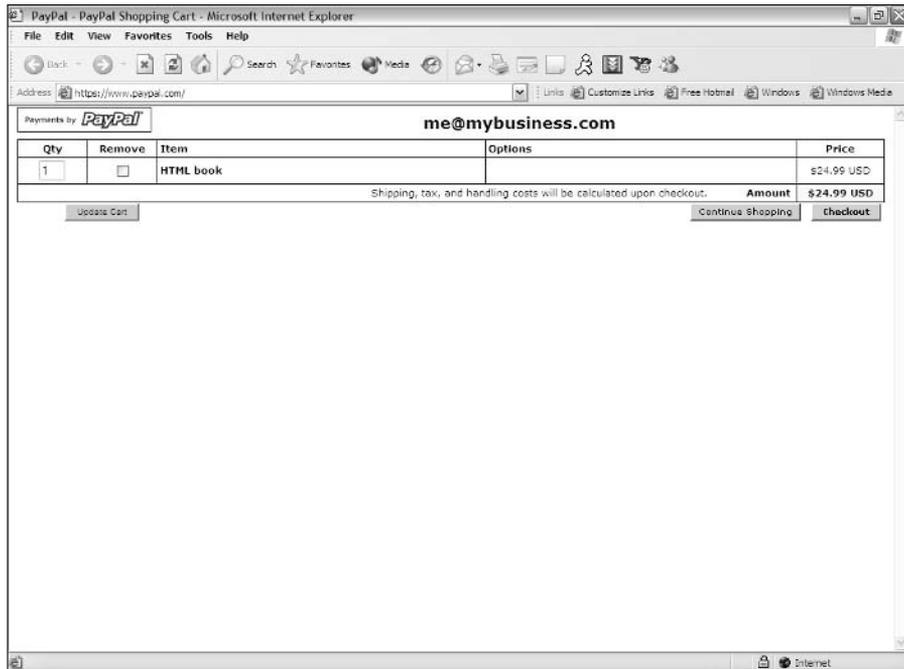


Figure 13-2:
PayPal
provides
easy
shopping
and
payment
facilities.

E-cash

Digital wallets. Sounds cool. Nice, easy-to-understand metaphor. You use digitally signed certificates online just like you'd use cash in the non-Net world. But it really hasn't worked out. There's no standard yet, although something called *ECML* — the Electronic Commerce Modeling Language — seems to be the first fitful attempt at one.

The most telling thing, though, is that no one's telling. What I mean is that when you ask the folks who are trying to market e-cash exactly how many customers they have, exactly how many merchants are using their systems, and exactly how profitable this all is, they clam up real fast. This is not a good sign. When people are winning, they generally like to trumpet it to the world. But e-cash has nothing to show so far but hype and broken promises.

Phone checks

Here's the scenario — you print checks with other people's account numbers on them, take them to your bank and deposit them, and then watch the

There's one thing you just can't beat about this payment approach: All you pay for is the software and the paper (which you can get at any good office supply company). You have no monthly fee, no minimum charges, no discount rate, no nothin' that you've gotta put up with when you deal with credit card companies.

Phones, faxes, and snail mail

You should always give your customers some way to purchase from you offline. Even if you've got a fully secure system, plenty of people are still uncomfortable with entering their financial information online. If you can have someone answering the phone (at least during normal business hours), put that phone number on the order form. If you have a fax, put your fax number on there, too. And don't forget to add a physical address. That way, anyone who wants to order, but fears online security gaps, can still do so in the old, traditional ways.



If you work from your home and don't want to give out your home address, you can easily get an office address by renting a private mailbox for about a buck a day at most package-shipping companies. (Not the big ones like UPS that drive trucks around, but the small storefront operations, like Pak Mail or Mail Boxes Etc., that wrap and send packages for you.) Many of them will even forward your mail to anywhere in the world. Table 13-3 gives the URLs of several private mailbox companies.

Table 13-3	Mailbox Rental Sources
<i>Mailbox Company</i>	<i>Web Address</i>
Box4me.com	www.box4me.com
Mail Boxes Etc.	www.mbe.com
Pak Mail	www.pakmail.com
Postal Connections	www.postalconnections.com
PostalAnnex+	www.postalannex.com

Converting Currencies

Whatever you're up to with e-commerce, your audience is global. Even if that's not your intent, you're going to have people looking at your stuff who aren't necessarily familiar with the current value of the U.S. dollar. Is there a solution? Oh, yeah. A really good one.

The Universal Currency Converter (UCC) from XE.com is a must-have for any commercial site that expects to handle international business. Like most free services, it has a banner ad built into it, but you can negotiate with XE.com to remove it for a fee. The converter lets anyone convert any amount in any currency to the equivalent amount in any other currency.

The basic module has only the major world currencies in it. Don't sweat it, though; if you need to include others, it doesn't cost you anything. This limitation is only for practical reasons. After all, nearly every transaction takes place in one of the top currencies, and the more options you add, the slower things get. Really, how often do you need to figure out how many Seborga Luiginos are equal to 800 Uzbekistan Soms?

Adding the converter to your Web page

To add the converter to your Web page, follow these steps:

1. **Go to www.xe.net/ucc/customize.htm.**
2. **Read through the terms of use.**
3. **Fill out the required form with your URL and contact information.**

Notice that the URL must be the address of the Web page on which you will actually put the converter, not just the general URL of your domain.

4. **Click the I Accept These Conditions button.**

You need to register each page you use the converter on.

5. **On the resulting page, click the Fast Track Instructions button.**

Now, you're back on the earlier page, right below the form you filled out. Yes, it's a roundabout way to get there, but the registration process is legally required if you want to use the converter.

From here, you have two options. Both of them work fine, so it's just a matter of how you like to do things.

6. **Use one of the following methods to get the code for the converter:**

- Download the compressed file for either Windows or Mac. You then need to unzip it and load the resulting HTML page into an editor before you can use the code.
- Click the Click Here to See the Raw HTML link and just copy the code off your browser screen.

If you download the file, you see that the enclosed Web page, `samp-ucc.htm`, has none of the usual elements you're used to — HTML, HEAD, and BODY. Yet it will still load into any browser and will work just fine. That's because, as useful as those elements are for envisioning the structure of your Web page, they're not technically required under the HTML



standard. I'm not recommending that you leave them out of your pages, and I'm sure that XE.com did it just because the purpose of that page is only to hold the code for you to copy and paste. But it's a decent bit of tech trivia you can amaze and amuse your friends with.

- 7. Whichever way you get your hands on the code, paste it into your Web page and save the file.**
- 8. Upload the page to your Web server and try it out.**

Figure 13-4 shows the converter on a Web page.

Customizing the converter

Now, this is one fine service as is. But you can customize it, too. XE.com will change practically anything about the currency converter for a fee, but the company has also built plenty of options into it that you can use on your own.

Changing the default currencies

If you know the country from which most of your foreign customers come, you may want to set the converter so that it's ready to convert from your customers' currency to yours right away. Say, for example, that you're in the United States and you know that almost every one of your overseas customers is from the United Kingdom. You'd probably do well to set the conversion to default values of dollars to pounds in that case. This won't prevent anyone from another country from using the converter in the normal way. All it does is set which currencies are selected at the start, so visitors can still choose other currencies if they want.

This is what you need to do to set the default currencies in the converter:

- 1. Go into the HTML source code and find the SELECT elements.**

The one whose `name` attribute has a value of `From` is — you guessed it — the currency to convert from. The one whose `name` attribute has a value of `To` is the currency to convert to.

One of the `OPTION` elements in each has the `selected` attribute. In the original version, the default `From` currency is Canadian Dollars, and the default `To` currency is U.S. Dollars.

- 2. To change the default, just delete the word `selected` from the `OPTION` elements for the current currency and add it to the ones you want to use.**

Simple, ain't it?

Setting the default amount

Now, what if you have only one product, or what if all your products are the same price? For example, suppose you have a price of USD\$49.95 that most

people will want to convert to some other currency. Having already set the From currency to U.S. dollars, you can now set the default amount to 49.95. This default makes it really easy on your customers — all they have to do is pick their native currency, and they're off and running. To set the default amount, look for the following code line near the beginning of the form:

```
<INPUT type="text" name="Amount" value="1" SIZE=10><BR>
```

Just change the value of the `value` attribute. To set it to 49.95, change the code to this:

```
<INPUT type="text" name="Amount" value="49.95" SIZE=10><BR>
```

Users can still change the default value to anything they want by simply typing over it, just like they can select different currencies by selecting something other than the default selections.



If you want to change the order of the currency choices from alphabetical to some other method — such as placing the most likely currencies on the top of the list — all you have to do is to cut and paste the `OPTION` elements that reflect the currency values in the listings. Remove them from their current positions and paste them into their new positions. That's all there is to it.

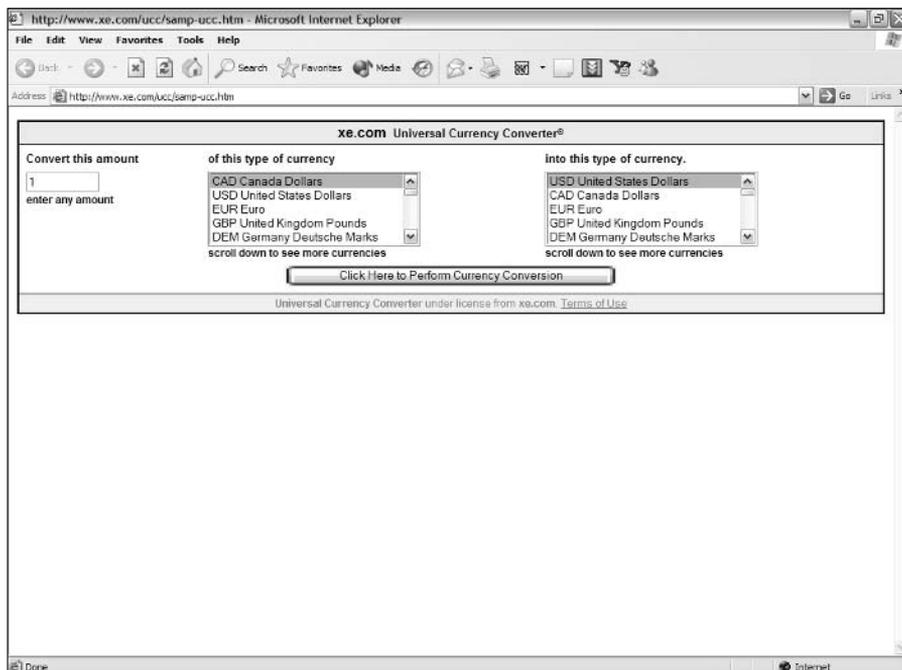


Figure 13-4:

The UCC enables your visitors to convert an amount in one currency to the equivalent amount in another.

If, for some reason, you don't want to give your users any choice in these things, UCC accommodates your wishes through the use of hidden variables. To do this, you add some `INPUT type="hidden"` elements right after the `<FORM>` tag and just before the `<TABLE>` tag.

To set the From currency so that it can't be changed, use the following code:

```
<INPUT type="hidden" name="From" value="xyz">
```

Replace the placeholder `xyz` with the three-digit code for the currency — such as `USD` for U.S. dollars or `GBP` for United Kingdom (or Great Britain) pounds.

To set the To currency, you do the same thing, but the line reads as follows:

```
<INPUT type="hidden" name="To" value="xyz">
```

To set the value so that it can't be altered (which prevents people from using your version of the UCC for test purposes unrelated to your site), add the following line of code:

```
<INPUT type="hidden" name="Amount" value="xyz">
```

Replace the placeholder `xyz` with the amount to be converted (for example, `49.95`).

Adding and deleting currencies

If you want to add more currencies, check out the Full Currency Converter at www.xe.net/ucc/full.shtml and copy and paste the appropriate currency to your version. Just add a new `OPTION` element under the To and/or From `SELECT` element for each new currency.

If you want to delete currencies from the listings, you need to delete the entire line for that currency, beginning with the `<OPTION>` tag and ending with the `</OPTION>` tag.

Customizing the results page

If you want to customize the default results page that appears after a currency conversion calculation, as shown in Figure 13-5, you need to go a bit deeper. Customization requires creating not only an element or an attribute, but also a *header* and a *footer*. The header contains HTML that is displayed before the calculation results, and the code in the footer goes in after them.

To set up the header and footer, think about your HTML code ahead of time, as well as consider the variations that the UCC demands of you. The header has to go right after the line with the `<FORM>` tag and has to include the `[HTML]`, `[HEAD]`, `[/HEAD]`, and `[BODY]` tags. Notice anything weird about these? Yeah, the brackets aren't the regular angle brackets; they're regular brackets. This way, a Web browser that reads this code won't get confused by encountering two identical tags such as `<HTML>` in the same page. You put these odd-looking quasi-HTML elements in as values of a hidden `INPUT` element, and the UCC software reinterprets the squared brackets just as though they were angle brackets when it comes time to create the results page.

So if you wanted to put in the following regular HTML code as your header . . .

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
<TITLE>
This is a currency converter.
</TITLE>
</HEAD>
<BODY>
```

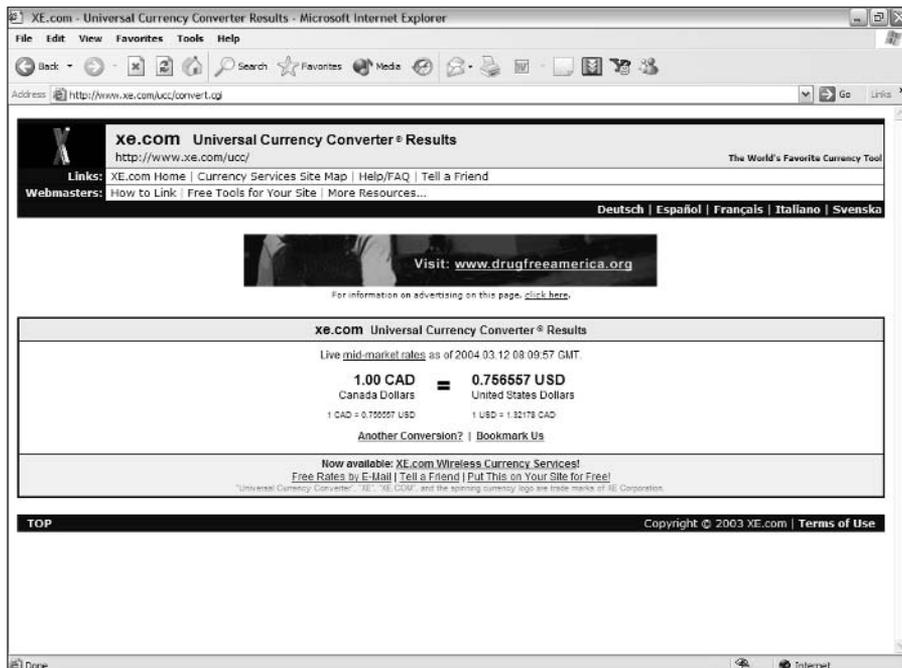


Figure 13-5:
The UCC
results
page.

... you'd add it to the line in the currency converter code, like this:

```
<INPUT type="hidden" name="Header"
       value="[HTML][HEAD][TITLE]This is a currency
             converter.[/TITLE][[/HEAD][BODY]">
```

Then comes the regular output of the converter. After that comes the footer. If you wanted to add the following HTML code to it ...

```
<B>Thanks for using the converter!</B>
</BODY>
</HTML>
```

... you'd do it like this:

```
<INPUT type="hidden" name="Footer" value="[B]Thanks for using
             the converter![/B][[/BODY]">
```



The Shopper's Currency Converter (www.xe.net/ecc/shoppers) provides the same functionality as the UCC, and versions are available that work in both Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator.

Online Sources for Merchant Services

Table 13-4 lists some places on the World Wide Web where you can find more information on the topics covered in this chapter.

Table 13-4 Online Resources for Merchant Services	
Web Site Name	Web Address
AIS Media	www.aismerchantservices.com
AMS Merchant Account Services	www.merchant-accounts.com
Best Payment Solutions	www.best-payment.com
ClickBank	www.clickbank.com
Discover Business Services	www.discoverbiz.com

<i>Web Site Name</i>	<i>Web Address</i>
ePayment Solutions	www.epaymentsolutions.com
EZ Merchant Accounts	www.ezmerchantaccounts.com
Harris Bank	www.harrisbank.com/smallbiz/ c_merchant.html
Instant Check	www.easydesksoftware.com/check.htm
Merchant Systems	www.merchant-systems.com
MerchantAccount.com	www.merchantaccount.com
Monster Merchant Account	www.monstermerchantaccount.com
Paymentech	www.paymentech.com
Skipjack Financial Services	www.skipjack.com
Total Merchant Services	www.totalmerchantservices.com

Chapter 14

Examining Affiliate Programs

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding payment plans
- ▶ Finding the right match
- ▶ Making a profit
- ▶ Acquiring affiliates

Whatever you call them — affiliates, associates, independent agents — businesses that operate on the World Wide Web have turned in a big way to letting other people do their selling for them. Why should you care? Because you can make money at it. They don't just want you to plug their stuff; they're willing to cut you in on a piece of the action.

Zillions of companies are jumping on the affiliate bandwagon, where you sell another company's products and services for a slice of the pie. Companies from one end of the Web to the other are lining up to ask you to be their sales agent. And the good news is that they don't want any of your money.

Table 14-1 lists a few major companies with affiliate programs.

<i>Company</i>	<i>Web Address</i>
Amazon.com	https://associates.amazon.com/exec/panama/associates/apply/
Consumer Guide	www.cg-affiliates.com
PETSMART	www.petsmart.com/global/affiliate/ap_affiliate_program.jsp
Stamps.com	www.stamps.com/affiliates/
Staples Office Supplies	www.staples.com/services/affiliates/befree/

Yeah, Sure It's Free

No, really, it's true. Joining an affiliate program doesn't cost you a bloody thing. The folks who offer the affiliate programs would be crazy to ask you for money. If you sign up as an affiliate, you already work for nothing, so what more could they ask? Any company that asks you to put up money to become an affiliate is probably running some kind of scam. It doesn't cost companies anything for you to sign up for their programs, and there's always the possibility that your Web site may actually make them some money.

Affiliate programs are just like most sales organizations. Salespeople don't get paid unless they generate money for the company. If a salesperson sells a product, he or she gets a percentage of the profit. Lots of people swear by that approach. After all, you may never starve on a regular paycheck, but you rarely feast either. If you're on commission, the sky's the limit. If you make enough sales, you can certainly manage a feast or two. Salaried employees who do a great job make no more money than the ones who do a lousy job. The salespeople who do a great job have something solid to show for their efforts.

Not all affiliates are paid a percentage of the profit, however. Sometimes, they get a flat fee instead. Either way, you get your slice of the pie every time it's cut. Okay, your slice goes into the fridge, so to speak. You don't get it right away. Don't panic; this is just one of those accounting things, as annoying as it is. Remember how I said that it doesn't cost a merchant anything to have you become an affiliate? Well, it's ironic, but it does cost merchants something when you actually drive business their way. It costs merchants money to run an accounting system to keep track of how much they owe you and to cut checks and mail them to you. If you manage to generate only five bucks in commissions, it's not worth their accountants' time to pay you. Sad, but true.

But don't panic — you do get paid. It's only a matter of earning a certain minimum amount. How much is that? It depends on the merchant. After you reach the minimum amount, the check is cut on a specific schedule. Many programs don't pay monthly, but quarterly. Make sure that you read the fine print before you sign up as an affiliate. Table 14-2 shows the payment schedule and minimum income necessary to trigger a payment from some representative affiliate programs.

Table 14-2		Payment Triggers
<i>Company</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Amount Required</i>
Amazon.com	Quarterly	\$100 (\$10 for gift certificate or direct deposit)
Focalex.com	Monthly	\$25

<i>Company</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Amount Required</i>
SearchTraffic.com	Monthly	\$25
SnackExchange.com	Quarterly	\$25
WebSponsors.com	Monthly	\$15



If you don't earn the minimum amount by the time a check would be cut, the amount you earned carries over into the next pay period. In other words, if you need to make \$50 to get a check sent out and you make only \$30 by the deadline, you need to make only \$20 more to meet the minimum for the next deadline. You may never get paid at all if you don't ever meet the minimum requirement.

So what's the best program to sign up with? Well, obviously, it's one that pays lots of money, doesn't have a high minimum amount before it issues a check, and issues checks more often than other programs. But you need to consider several other factors, too. First off, you've got to find a program.

Can I Join?

Yes, of course, you can join an affiliate program. A company would be crazy to say that you can't join. After all, it's possible that you might send some business its way, and it doesn't cost the company anything to sign you up. Actually, about the only way not to get approved for an affiliate program is to run a Web site that the company finds objectionable — like a XXX adult site or one that tells how to rob banks with a homemade nuclear weapon.

Finding partners

So who's running affiliate programs? Where do you go to sign up? The short answer is that just about everyone's doing some kind of affiliate program these days. If you just use your Web browser's page-search function, you can hunt for the word *affiliate* on the sites that you visit in the normal course of your surfing, and you're guaranteed to trip over tons of programs. Many of the outfits that I list in other chapters of this book offer them, too.

You can also go to particular Web sites to find out the lowdown on affiliate programs. Table 14-3 lists some of the best sites for finding up-to-date news on the latest and greatest of these programs. (Figure 14-1 shows one of them.)

Table 14-3 Top Affiliate Information Sites

<i>Company</i>	<i>Web Address</i>
AffiliateMatch.com	www.affiliatematch.com
AssociatePrograms.com	www.associateprograms.com
ClickQuick.com	www.clickquick.com
LinkShare	www.linkshare.com
Refer-it.com	www.refer-it.com
WhichAffiliate	www.whichaffiliate.com



It's not a bad idea to cruise the search engines on a regular basis and hunt down any new programs that have come up since you last looked. In addition to keywords limiting things to your site's subject area, try some of these search terms: *affiliate program*, *associate program*, and *bounty program*. Don't forget the *program* part, or you'll spend the rest of your natural life trying to dig out from under all the results.

Figure 14-1: Which Affiliate.com provides information on many affiliate programs.

Working with a network

Not long after the idea of affiliate programs arose, people came up with the idea of affiliate-program networks. Program networks aren't just Web sites that offer you a large choice of programs to sign up for. They actually take care of nearly everything for you. All you do is go to a network's Web site, sign up, and state what kind of companies you want to sign up with. The network advises you and sets you up with some good ones. It's kind of like an e-commerce dating service.

LinkShare (www.linkshare.com) is an affiliate network that brings several programs together under one roof. You can find Commission Junction, a service similar to LinkShare's, at www.cj.com. Check out both Web sites to see what they can offer you.

Here's how to sign up as a Commission Junction affiliate:

1. **Go to** <https://signup.cj.com/member/publisherSignUp.do>.

The Commission Junction Publisher Application page appears, as shown in Figure 14-2.

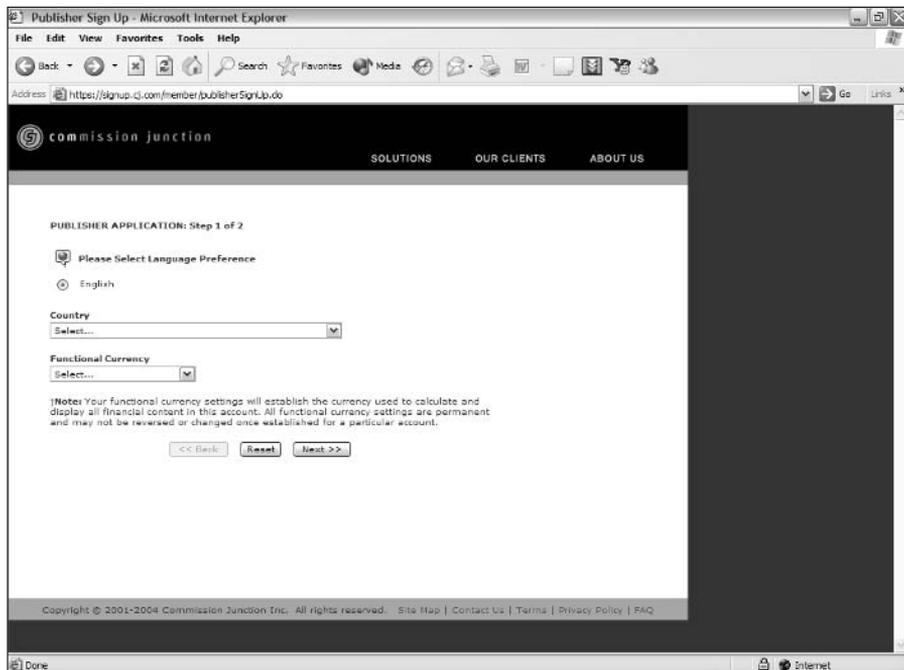


Figure 14-2:
The first
step in
becoming a
Commission
Junction
affiliate.

2. Choose which country you're in.
3. Select the currency in which you want your figures calculated.
4. Click the Next button.
5. A pop-up window of legalese appears that you need to address before you continue. Read it and click the Close button so you can get to the new page underneath it (see Figure 14-3).
6. Read the legal agreement in the box at the top of the page. When you reach the bottom of the agreement, click the Accept button.

The check box beneath the agreement is automatically selected.
7. Check the next two boxes as well, affirming that you have read the privacy policy (you can click a link if you want to read it) and that you are of legal age.
8. Under the Site Information heading, fill out the appropriate information for your site (Web site name, description, category, and so on).
9. Under the Contact Information and Company information heading, enter the pertinent data.
10. Under Payment Information, select either check or direct deposit (the latter is available only in the U.S., U.K., and Canada).

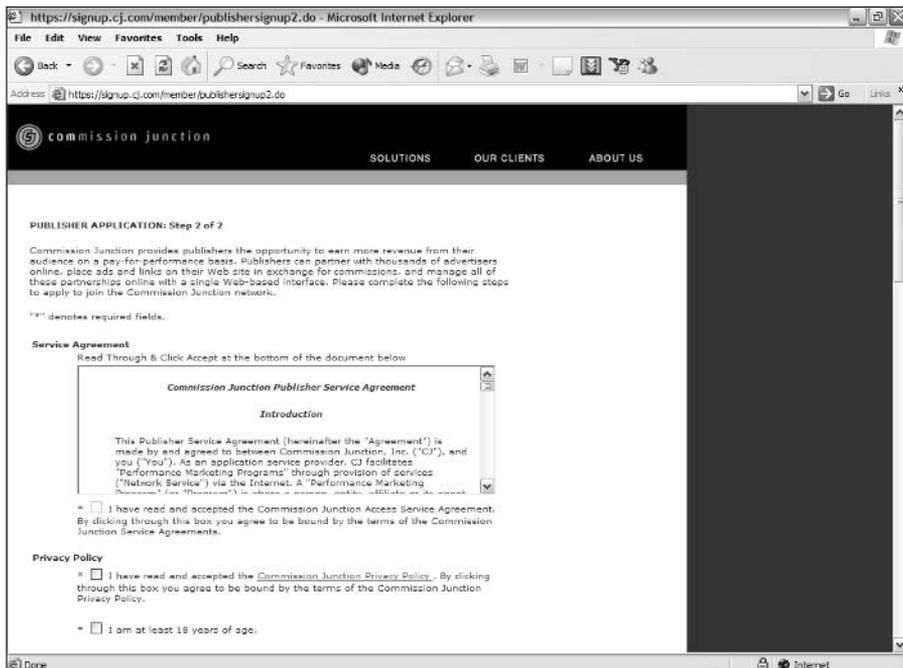


Figure 14-3:
Providing
the detailed
information.



If you select direct deposit, more options appear, asking you for your bank information.

This is a secure Web page.

- 11. In the text box at the bottom of the page, enter the printed characters next to that text box.**

This is simply a method for proving that you are an actual human being who is manually entering this information. That keeps automated programs from utilizing the forms.

- 12. Click the Accept Terms button at the bottom of the page.**

You receive an e-mail with your account number, password, and so on.

From now on, just go to www.cj.com, enter your e-mail address (it has to be the same one you signed up with) and your password, click the Go button, and you're in. From here, you can explore all that Commission Junction has to offer, from new affiliate advertising possibilities to managing your account with it (see Figure 14-4).

Figure 14-4:
It's easy to
manage
your
account at
Commission
Junction.

The screenshot shows the 'Publisher Home' page in Microsoft Internet Explorer. The address bar displays <https://members.cj.com/member/accounts/publisher/index.jsp?sessionId=a83Pn0trQKUb>. The main content area is divided into three sections:

Advertisers & Links

New Advertisers				
Advertiser	Joined	Catsortr	Sale	Lead
Pacific Coast Feather Company	5-Mar-2004	Bec & Bath	Sale: 7.50%	
RaceBook.com	5-Mar-2004	Betting/Gaming	Sale: \$40.00 Performance Incentive	
The Weather Channel	4-Mar-2004	News	Sale: \$3.00 Lead: \$1.00	
Quality Health	3-Mar-2004	Wellness	Lead: \$1.20	
Monster.com	1-Mar-2004	Employment	Sale: \$50.00 Lead: \$0.50 - \$1.00	
ConsumerGuide.com	27-Feb-2004	Cars & Trucks	Sale: 20.00% Lead: \$1.25 - \$4.00	
SolidConverter	26-Feb-2004	Computer SW	Sale: \$5.00 Performance Incentive	
Intrade	25-Feb-2004	Banking/Trading	Sale: \$50.00	
MyPoints	24-Feb-2004	Email Marketing	Sale: \$2.00 Lead: \$1.00	
Peterson's Affiliate Program	18-Feb-2004	College	Sale: 15.00%	
Tradebedt	18-Feb-2004	Betting/Gaming	Sale: \$50.00	
Search 123	17-Feb-2004	Search Engine	Sale: \$20.00	
MailPass	16-Feb-2004	Web Tools	Sale: \$15.00	
Netscape ISP Affiliate Program	12-Feb-2004	Internet Service Providers	Sale: \$25.00	
Pixagogo	11-Feb-2004	Photo	Sale: 25.00% Lead: \$0.75 Performance Incentive	

> More new Advertisers

Quick Stats

Web Site	All web sites
Period	Yesterday
Commission earned	\$0.00 USD
Sales	0
Leads	0
Clicks	0
Impressions	0
CTR	N/A
EPM	N/A
EPC	N/A

Trend Graphs

Select Period: 12 Month

Select Type: Publisher Commissions

Go

Profiting from Your Program

Most affiliate programs depend on the vast number of people they can get to advertise products or services for them. But you have no guarantee that you'll actually make any money — let alone any significant money — if you sign up with them. The odds, after all, are all with the affiliate programs. (See the section “Running Your Own Affiliate Program,” later in this chapter.) But you can do some things to increase your chances that you'll actually find a check or two in your mailbox. And, if you really do it right, that check will be more than a joke.

Taking time to find the right programs

It's easy to get caught up in a heady rush and sign up with every affiliate program you can find right away. After all, you could JOIN RIGHT NOW and be up and running in JUST A FEW MINUTES! If you're wise, though, you'll take it slow and easy. Trust me, you're not missing the key to instant riches by not acting immediately. Billions of dollars are not going to suddenly flow into your mailbox the day after you get started.



If you're going to make a profit — and you can — a big part of the reason will be that you carefully studied the programs that are out there and made the right choice for you.

Use this checklist to get some basic answers about an affiliate program before you commit your time and energy to it:

- ✓ Go to the Web site that offers the program and read the affiliate FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) and legal agreement. If it doesn't have a FAQ or it doesn't have clear answers to obvious questions, you should be a trifle suspicious of its intentions. All the legal agreements are more or less obscure to nonlawyers, however, so that's no true indicator of the program's purpose.
- ✓ Find out exactly what the program pays for. Does it pay for someone to just click a link on your site? Or does it pay only if that person places an order?
- ✓ How much does the program pay and how often does it issue checks?
- ✓ What's the minimum amount that you can earn and still get paid?
- ✓ How good is the program's support? Does it provide you with anything besides an advertising banner?
- ✓ Can you monitor, in real time, how much the program owes you?

- ✓ Does the program list others who are currently signed up for it? If so, go to those Web sites and e-mail the Webmasters to ask them how satisfied they are with the program.
- ✓ How long has the program been in operation? Are there any complaints filed against it with the Better Business Bureau (www.bbb.org), Direct Marketing Association (www.the-dma.org), or any regulatory agencies?

Choosing programs that fit with your audience

First off, you need a Web site that appeals to the kind of people who would buy the product or service. It does you no good to sign up with a gardening supply house's affiliate program if you run a Web site that details the naval conflicts of the Napoleonic Wars.



If you do run a gardening site, go to www.bloomingbulb.com and click the Earn Easy Money link on the left side of the main page, as shown in Figure 14-5. For Napoleon, well, I'm still looking. Maybe try one of the book chains.

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window displaying the bloomingbulb.com website. The address bar shows <http://www.bloomingbulb.com/affiliate.asp>. The page features a navigation menu on the left with links such as Bulbs/Plants, Gift Baskets, About Us, Privacy Policy, Contact Us, Our Guarantee, FAQ, Gardening Articles, Zone Map, Links, Planting Instructions, Search, and Homepage. The main content area includes a sign-up form for an email list, an "AFFILIATES PROGRAM" section with introductory text, a "Why Sign Up?" section with details about the program's benefits, and a "Trusted Reporting & Monthly Commission Checks" section. At the bottom, there is a "Join Our Affiliate Program" button and a "Dore" logo.

Figure 14-5: bloomingbulb.com has an affiliate program for gardening interests.

You can sign up with any programs you want — very few affiliate programs really care who their agents are — but what's the point if you're not likely to be profitable? Being an affiliate is just like running a business, and as with any other business, it's best to be involved in something that you already love and know very well.

What if you find an affiliate program that you like but you're not already running a site that fits in with its products? The short answer: Create a new site. With the incredibly low cost of starting an online site, running anywhere from totally free up to a few hundred bucks a year, you'd be crazy to walk away from a program that excites you.

If you really like the program, it's a matter of doing some research. If the subject matter turns you off, run — don't walk — away. Regardless of the potential rewards, you can't turn your visitors on if the topic doesn't excite you. If it does catch your heart and get you genuinely interested, though, you have a real chance to make something that people want to visit.

Adding value to your site to keep visitors coming back

Even if your site's visitors are likely to be interested in the topic you're signed up for, you need to be especially vigilant about giving them full value for their visits. After all, even if you haven't planned primarily for an e-commerce site, you must remember that, after you join an affiliate program, you're running an online business.

You have to keep the visitors happy and keep them coming back for more. To do that, you have to give them a site that's worth their time. If all you do is set up a page with a bunch of links to programs that pay you if someone clicks their links or even buys their products, you've lost your focus. The focus of any Web site must be on the people who visit it. If you forget that or fail to take that approach for any reason, you're setting yourself up for total failure — in or out of the e-commerce world.

You have to offer something that no one else in the world can — your own unique viewpoint and outlook on the topic or your own personal contacts. If you sell books, do a book review site, not just a book-listing site. (Don't forget to add this book!) If you sell baby products, try to get something in print from your local pediatrician — someone whom you know but who isn't already on other Web sites. If you sell gardening supplies, get out in the yard and get your hands dirty so that you can tell it like it is.



People visit your site more than once only if you give them a reason to.

Focusing on your site

Tons of affiliate programs offer *two-tier* payment plans, which means that if you get someone else to sign up for the same program, you get a percentage of that person's income in addition to your own. Of course, that amount is smaller than what you make by direct purchases from your own site, but it still sounds like a pretty good deal. And it probably is, but a hazard is involved. You can get so caught up in trying to sign up other people that you forget what affiliates are for—getting your visitors to buy the products or services you're advertising for the program. If you overlook that fact, you start to see your own profits heading for the basement. When it comes to two-tier programs, take anything over your own direct involvement as gravy, because you have to rely on repeat customers, just like any business does. And you probably aren't going to get anybody to sign up as an affiliate twice.

Running Your Own Affiliate Program

It must have occurred to you by now that this affiliates bit is a pretty good thing to use if you set up your business online. I couldn't agree more. In fact, if anything, it's better for the business owner than it is for the affiliates. The following sections tell you what you need to know to run your own affiliate program.

Doing the math

Just look at the numbers. Say, for example, that you're selling a product for \$20 that costs you \$10, so you make \$10 per sale. You pay your affiliates a 10 percent commission on each sale. If you have 1,000 affiliates selling your product, and each one generates a single sale in a month, you're getting an extra \$20,000 income per month, and it costs you only \$2,000 to generate it. Take off the \$10,000 for your costs and the \$2,000 for the affiliates, and that's \$8,000 per month profit — or \$96,000 per year of free money. For a lot of small e-businesses, that's enough to justify their existence. The individual affiliate, though, gets just \$2 per month.

Of course, a savvy affiliate makes more than that, but it does show that the affiliate system is heavily weighted in favor of the merchant.

Using software to host affiliates

Some software is designed to enable you to host your own affiliate program (see Figure 14-6). Table 14-4 shows some of the products that you can get. As with reciprocal linking, you have to hunt down the people you're going to be

connecting with. On top of that, you have to manage everything. Rather than handling all the tedious details yourself, though, you may want to consider letting someone else do all the work.

Table 14-4		Affiliate Program Software	
Web Site Name		Web Address	
Interneka Affiliate		www.interneka.com	
My Affiliate Program		www.myaffiliateprogram.com	
ProTrack		www.affiliatesoftware.net	
Ultimate Affiliate		www.groundbreak.com/ua_index.html	

The Affiliate Tracking Network (www.affiliatetracking.com) occupies a kind of gray area here — it sells the software for you to do it yourself but also offers to do it for you. Both LinkShare and Commission Junction are mentioned as sources of income for affiliates in the section “Working with a network,” earlier in this chapter, but they’re also a prime source of affiliates. They’ve got both sides of this street well covered. Refer-it.com (www.refer-it.com) maintains a list of other firms that can help you set up a program. Limber up your fingers and go to www.refer-it.com/search.asp to check it out.

The screenshot shows the My Affiliate Program website in a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window. The address bar displays <http://www.myaffiliateprogram.com/>. The website features a navigation menu, a search bar, and a "Ready to SWITCH To MyAP?" banner. Below the banner, there are two main promotional boxes for "MYAP PRO" and "MYAP ENTERPRISE". The "MYAP PRO" box highlights features like "Over 1,800 merchants worldwide" and "Robust tracking, simplified management & advanced reporting". The "MYAP ENTERPRISE" box highlights features like "SKU-based commission rates" and "SKU-based marketing material & reports". A "Customer Login" section is visible at the bottom right.

Figure 14-6:
My Affiliate Program helps you set up your own affiliates.

Online Sources for Affiliate Programs

Table 14-5 lists some places on the World Wide Web where you can find more information on the topics that are covered in this chapter.

<i>Web Site Name</i>	<i>Web Address</i>
AffiliateGuide.com	www.affiliateguide.com
AffiliatesDirectory.com	www.affiliatesdirectory.com
AffiliateShop	www.affiliateshop.com
AffiliateWorld.com	www.affiliateworld.com
Associate Search	www.associatesearch.com
ATL Affiliate Programs	www.atlnetwork.com
Cyberbounty	www.cyberbounty.com
DirectLeads	www.directleads.com
ValueClick	www.valueclick.com

Part V

Publishing and Publicizing Your Site

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"You know, it dawned on me last night why we aren't getting any hits on our Web site."

In this part . . .

This part discusses getting your site online and letting people know you're there. Chapter 15 gives you everything you need to know about different Web-hosting options. Chapter 16 covers getting your Web site listed in the search engines and establishing reciprocal links with other sites. Chapter 17 shows you how to keep in touch with your visitors after they've left, without falling into the spam trap. And Chapter 18 is all about getting input from the folks who come to your site through surveys and forms.

Chapter 15

Letting the World In: Choosing a Host and Domain Name

In This Chapter

- ▶ Choosing a host
 - ▶ Finding free Web site providers
 - ▶ Picking and registering domain names
-

If you don't already have a Web site or if you're not happy with your current Web space provider, you have several options. You can run your own Web server, of course. With a DSL connection and Linux, it's even possible to put together a creditable setup in your own home. But that's a lot of work — ask network administrators just how much leisure time they have. And many broadband providers have policies forbidding you from doing it, anyway.

If you want to focus on developing and maintaining your site, you're best bet is to leave the day-to-day grunge work of keeping the server up and running to someone else.



Practically every Web hosting provider offers all sorts of extended services in addition to plain Web space. These often include some form of e-commerce hosting, ranging from simply supplying the software to setting up a complete turnkey solution for you.

Going Live: Choosing a Host

You have three basic options when it comes to Web hosting:

- ✓ ISPs
- ✓ Virtual servers
- ✓ Dedicated servers

ISPs

The same people who provide you with Internet access can also be your Web space provider. Almost certainly, you have at least some room for Web pages as part of your basic service. If you're not interested in a very extensive site or in one that has tons of glitzy features, the basic setup the ISP gives you will probably suffice. Even if you don't have any kind of CGI access (see Chapter 6), you can probably still use remotely hosted services, like the ones described in this book, to enhance your site.



Many domain name registrars (described in “Finding a registrar,” later in this chapter) also provide a limited amount of Web site space as a part of their service.

Virtual servers

Virtual servers are nothing more than directories on a hard drive. If that hard drive is on an existing Web server that supports virtual server capabilities, however, the Webmaster can make each one of those directories seem as though it were a fully functional Web server.

Other than being a really clever example of how you can use computer technology, does this have a practical application for you? It depends on your budget and your site's traffic expectations. It's certainly one of the cheapest ways to get your site up and running. You could pay for a couple of months' worth of a typical virtual server by skipping one good dinner at a decent restaurant. Some virtual servers are so cheap that you could pay for them just by skipping dessert.

On the other hand, you're sharing one physical server with lots of other virtual servers. Any physical server's performance degrades as it gets busier, with more and more people connecting to it and placing demands on it. But if you're on a virtual server, that scenario has a slightly different meaning. People visiting a Web site on one of the other virtual servers that's hosted on the same physical server as yours are putting a drain on your resources, too, because those resources are shared. Basically, if someone else's site gets too busy, yours can look like a turtle in molasses. And vice versa.

Dedicated servers

Nearly every company that handles virtual servers also leases dedicated ones. A *dedicated server* is a step up from a virtual server: Although it costs a bit more, it's your very own physical computer holding your Web site, with nobody else on it.



Both virtual and dedicated servers offer more than just Web hosting. For example, they also handle e-mail. The focus here is only on the Web hosting aspect because this book is about Web sites.

Dedicated servers used to cost a small fortune, but a combination of generally lower computer prices and competitive pressures has dropped the expense of leasing one. At a bottom price of around \$300 per month, dedicated servers are still a bit pricey for a private individual, but for any serious commercial operation, they're a great bargain. After all, that's only \$3,600 a year, although hiring a single network administrator to work at your company can easily set you back 20 times that or even more.

Why compare those two costs? Aren't they apples and oranges? No, not at all. When you lease a dedicated server, the people you're leasing it from take care of keeping it up and running, which is what a network administrator does. Dedicated servers, like virtual servers, are located at the facility of a Web space provider, such as Verio (see Figure 15-1), and you don't have to worry about regularly backing up your data, restoring after a crash, upgrading things like Linux kernels, or any of the million things that keep technical staffs hopping.

Figure 15-1: Verio offers a variety of specialized services.

Finding your match

You can always run through the standard search engines and site guides looking for information on Web hosts. Some search engines, however, such as HostIndex (www.hostindex.com), are specifically designed to help you track down the right host for you (see Figure 15-2). The Web sites in Table 15-1 will help you do some comparison shopping.

Web Site Name	Web Address
budgetweb.com	www.budgetweb.com/budgetweb/index.html
CNET Host Power Search	reviews.cnet.com/Host_power_search/7011-6540_7-0.html
Findahost.com	www.findahost.com
HostReview.com	www.hostreview.com/power_search.html
WebHostingTalk.com	www.webhostingtalk.com

Figure 15-2: HostIndex is a search engine dedicated to helping you find the right host for your Web site.

The screenshot shows the HostIndex.com website in a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window. The address bar displays <http://www.hostindex.com>. The page has a dark header with the text "Looking for a web hosting provider?" and "the web's largest hosting directory". Below the header, there are several sections:

- Showcase:** A sidebar menu with links to "Cold Fusion Hosts", "Dedicated Servers", "E-Commerce", "FrontPage Hosts", "General Hosting", "Managed Hosting", "Win 2000/NT Hosts", "Reseller Hosting", "UNIX/Linux Hosts", and "VPS Web Hosting".
- Advertisements:** Several banners for "ValueWeb Hosting" and "DataPipe".
- Web Host Search:** A section titled "Search and compare web hosting companies." with a "Features:" list including "Free Domain Name Registration".
- HostIndex.com Search:** A search box with a "Search" button and a "List All Hosts" link.
- HostIndex.com Search Results:** A list of search results with checkboxes for "Frontpage Hosting", "Reseller Packages", "Domain Registration", "Cold Fusion Support", "Web Design Services", and "E-Commerce Solutions".
- HostIndex.com Search Results:** A list of search results with checkboxes for "Frontpage Hosting", "Reseller Packages", "Domain Registration", "Cold Fusion Support", "Web Design Services", and "E-Commerce Solutions".
- HostIndex.com Search Results:** A list of search results with checkboxes for "Frontpage Hosting", "Reseller Packages", "Domain Registration", "Cold Fusion Support", "Web Design Services", and "E-Commerce Solutions".

The browser window also shows the standard menu bar (File, Edit, View, Favorites, Tools, Help) and the address bar.

Keeping It Cheap: Free Web Site Providers

More than 23 zillion Web space providers have an unbeatable price, which you probably guessed already from the title of this section. If you set up a personal or limited-interest site (such as a condo association newsletter), free Web space providers may be the way to go. You can get lots more space than your local ISP provides. It's not unusual to get 50 or more megabytes of Web storage space without having to pay a dime for it.

If you plan on running any sort of professional site, though, the free Web space providers aren't really the ticket for you. You need your own domain name — .com, .org, or whatever — in order to be taken seriously. (See the section "Getting Your Own Domain Name," later in this chapter.) Also, free Web hosts make their money by slapping ads onto your site, and you can't usually put up your own in competition with them.



Having to post a free Web host's ad on your site means you may not be able to use any add-ins such as opinion polls and chat rooms that feature their own banner ads either.

Table 15-2 lists some free Web hosts.

Table 15-2		Free Web Hosts	
<i>Web Site Name</i>		<i>Web Address</i>	
50Megs.com		www.50megs.com	
Angelfire		angelfire.lycos.com	
Crosswinds		home.crosswinds.net	
Dreamwater		www.dreamwater.com	
TopCities		topcities.com	
Tripod		www.tripod.lycos.com	

Getting Your Own Domain Name

Domain names, like `dummies.com`, are the addresses of sites on the World Wide Web. Picking and registering your own domain name are two of the most critical phases in your site planning, and I show you how to do both in this section. When you tell your Web browser to go to `www.dummies.com`, it's

obvious where you're going to end up — at the *For Dummies* Web site. Your computer doesn't know that, though. It can't actually go to a named site; instead, it asks a Domain Name Server (DNS) to translate that name into a more computer-friendly set of numbers known as an *IP address*. It's like getting into a cab and telling the driver to go to the Acme Building. He asks you where it is, and you tell him it's at 1123 Main Street.

Domain extensions — the final letters at the end of an Internet address — are known as the *top-level domain*, or TLD. They're called "top level" because you read Internet addresses from right to left, and the part after the last dot is the highest step in a hierarchy that eventually leads down from the Internet as a whole, step by dotted step, to the particular computer you're going to. Here are the four main domain extensions you'll probably deal with:

- ✓ .com: Commercial operations
- ✓ .edu: Educational institutions
- ✓ .net: Internet service providers (ISPs)
- ✓ .org: Nonprofit organizations

However, seven new TLDs are coming into usage now, and you may want to consider one of them instead. They are as follows:

- ✓ .aero: Air transportation companies
- ✓ .biz: Business firms
- ✓ .coop: Cooperatives
- ✓ .info: "All uses"
- ✓ .museum: Museums
- ✓ .name: Private individuals' sites
- ✓ .pro: Professions

One problem with any new approach is that the general public identifies old standards with reliability, and some folks may tend to see the lesser-known alternatives as misprints or typographical errors. "Dot what? Don't you mean 'dot com?'" The term *dotcom* has, in fact, come into colloquial usage as meaning an Internet-based company.

The funny thing about all these TLDs is that there's no requirement in many cases for people to use any of them in the manner in which they were intended. Plenty of nonprofit organizations have .com addresses, and quite a few .nets have nothing at all to do with ISPs. Go figure. Some of the new TLDs, like .museum, have stringent requirements; if you're not a museum, you can't get a .museum address.

The domain extensions that I mention in the preceding bulleted lists are called *generic TLDs*, but another kind of TLD exists as well — the *country-level TLD*. These TLDs specify the country in which the Web site is based. That's not necessarily where the Web server that holds the site is located, thanks to the global nature of the Internet. Registering the same name in many countries can be useful if you're an international organization with multiple languages to support. That way, you can have a Spanish-language page at `mysite.es`, a Japanese-language page at `mysite.jp`, and so on.



If you're into alphabet soup, you can toss around such terms as *gTLD* and *CLTLD* for the generic and country-level extensions or even *iTLD* for international ones. Why there's a small *g* and *i* but an uppercase *CL* before the TLD parts is one of the Internet's great mysteries.

Picking a name

In the early days, it was easy to create a domain name because there weren't many of them in use yet. Today, though, if you want to pick a three- or four-letter abbreviation or a single word for your domain name, you're very likely to be out of luck. Everything short is already taken. The solution? Forget the acronyms and short names. Use phrases instead. The basic idea is to go for anything long enough that it's unlikely to have been used yet, but short enough to remember.

To find out whether a name is available, you use a WhoIs utility. One of the most familiar ones on the Web is the Network Solutions page at `www.networksolutions.com/cgi-bin/whois/whois`. You might also try the nice set of tools at `www.whois.net` (see Figure 15-3) or use a stand-alone tool like WhoIs ULTRA, which you can get your hands on at `www.analogx.com/contents/download/network/whois.htm`.



Take your time and poke around the AnalogX site. You can get some other wonderful utilities there, too.

What do you do if you've come up with a great domain name, but it's already taken, and you've just gotta have it? Well, it depends. If you're a company that already has a trademark, the domain name may well already "belong" to you as a matter of course, even if you haven't registered it yet. Well, at any rate, it probably can't legally be used by anyone else. If you've been doing business as, say, Joe's Acme Fabuloso Garbanzo Beans and Unicycle Maintenance Company, and that name's your registered trademark, anyone running a site named `www.JoesAcmeFabulosoGarbanzoBeansAndUnicycleMaintenanceCompany.com` is probably easy game for your lawyers.

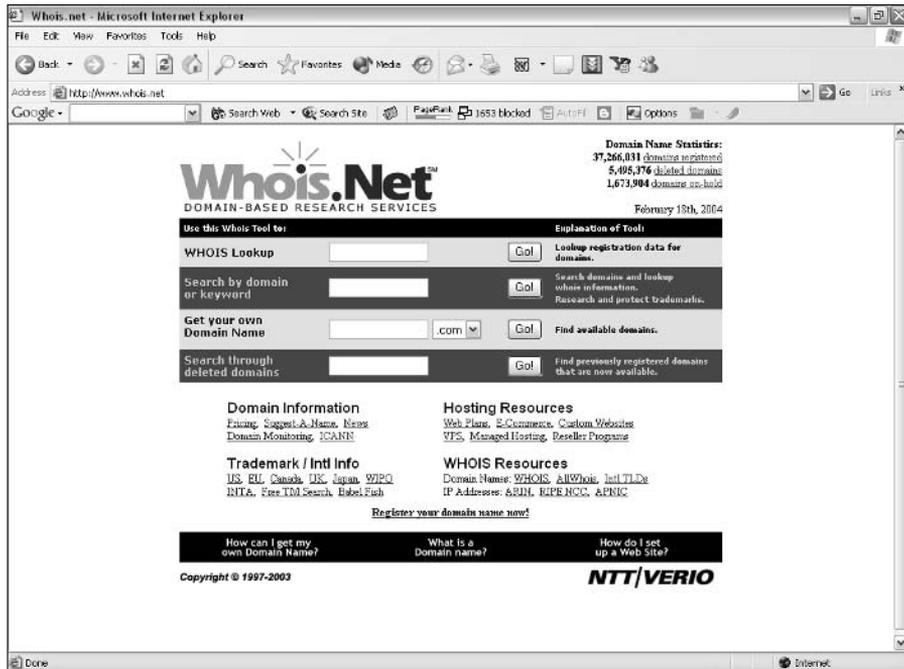


Figure 15-3:
Whois.net
helps you
check for
domain
name
availability.



You can often buy a domain name from the person or organization that's currently using it. It can't hurt to ask, anyway.

Another factor you need to consider when picking a domain name, besides the fact that some organization that's actually using the name has already registered it, is that some companies exist to do nothing but think up good names and register them. These companies, sometimes called “domain squatters,” seem to have no intention of ever running real Web sites that use those names, but only to . . . — well, it's hard to think of it as anything but holding the name hostage. The only purpose they have is to own the name and sell it to you. And if you think you'll get it away from them for \$70, think again. It'll cost hundreds of dollars at least — and the upper end? Limitless for a good name.

Finding a registrar

After you pick a name, you need to register it so that nobody else can use it. This task is usually handled for you by your Web space provider, who's used to the job, probably has a bulk account with a major registrar, and fills out zillions of these applications every year.

The best-known registrar of domain names in America is Network Solutions (www.networksolutions.com). It registers your domain name for \$35 a year if you sign up for one year or as little as \$15 for a ten-year commitment.



It used to be that you had to pay for the first two years at once, but in early 2000 this changed so that you can pay for only one year if you prefer. Many sites that offer assistance in registering your domain name still say that you need to cough up two years' money.

For a long time, Network Solutions was the only registrar on the block, but this is no longer the case. Today, many other registrars compete with it. The prices vary quite a bit, so it's a good idea to shop around.

The organization that accredits domain name registrars is the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). It maintains lists of the outfits that are authorized to register your domain name. To register a domain name by using one of the generic TLDs, go to www.icann.org/registrars/accredited-list.html and pick one of the registrars in your region.

To register one of the country-level TLDs, go to www.iana.org/cctld/cctld-whois.htm and click the name of the country; you find the URL of the country-level registrar at the bottom of the resulting page.



If you decide you don't like your current registrar, you can change. Any of the others will happily take your business away from its competitors.

Online Sources for Web Hosting and Domain Registration

Table 15-3 lists some places on the World Wide Web where you can find more information on the topics that are covered in this chapter.

Table 15-3 Online Resources for Web Hosting and Domain Registration	
Web Site Name	Web Address
Better-Whois.com	www.betterwhois.com
checkdomain.com	www.checkdomain.com

(continued)

Table 15-3 (continued)

Web Site Name	Web Address
Freedomlist	www.freedomlist.com
FreeWebspace.net	www.freewebspace.net
IANA (Internet Assigned Numbers Authority)	www.iana.org/domain-names.htm
ICANN	www.icann.org
Netcraft	www.netcraft.com
ServerWatch	serverwatch.internet.com/webservers.html

Chapter 16

Publicizing Your Site

In This Chapter

- ▶ Choosing keywords wisely
- ▶ Getting listed with search engines
- ▶ Checking your search engine ranking
- ▶ Trading links
- ▶ Using banner ads

Search sites (also called search engines) are a critical part of the World Wide Web. Without them, it's nearly impossible for most people to find what they're looking for. Therefore, if you're serious about your Web site (and I assume that you are because you're reading this book), it's important to know as much about search sites as possible (such as by hands-on, real-life experiences). And you can't do much better than trying out the search sites yourself. You can find out which ones give helpful responses to your queries and which ones return nonsense. For even more info, check out *Search Engine Optimization For Dummies*, by Peter Kent (Wiley), which goes into very fine detail about what readers can do to get their sites listed in the search engines.

Table 16-1 lists the major search sites.

Search Site	Web Address
AlltheWeb	www.alltheweb.com
AltaVista	www.altavista.com
Ask Jeeves	www.ask.com
Excite	www.excite.com
Google	www.google.com

(continued)

Table 16-1 (continued)

Search Site	Web Address
Lycos	www.lycos.com
WebCrawler	www.webcrawler.com
Yahoo!	www.yahoo.com



If you're tired of slow search response times, try AlltheWeb. It gives you answers so fast that your head spins.

To make sure that people know your Web site exists, you should have it listed in lots of search engines. How many you should list it in is a matter of opinion. There's certainly no harm in going for broke and listing your site with every search engine, but about a zillion of them are out there, and most of them aren't very well known. In my opinion, after you're listed with all the ones in Table 16-1, any more effort runs into the law of diminishing returns. Yes, you will generate more visits by listing your site at even more search sites, but you don't get anywhere near as many visits from obscure search sites as you do from the more popular ones.

Speaking of popularity, the number one search engine is the oddly named but fantastically functional Google (www.google.com). Not that it needs the push, but I highly recommend it. If your site isn't listed on Google, you'll miss out on a lot of potential visitors.

There are many reasons for Google's success, but the main one is simply that it gives better results than many of its competitors. This is in large part due to its sophisticated page-analysis software, and you would do well to keep in mind what it looks for when designing your site's pages. Here are some tips on how to do that:

- ✓ Make sure that the important terms describing your site (the ones you think people will use as search terms when they're hunting for information on Google) appear in both your page title and in the first paragraph of your Web page.
- ✓ Use the same words at least a few times elsewhere on the page, but don't go hog wild — if you overdo it, you'll lower your ranking.
- ✓ Break up your page's text by using heading elements (H1, H2, and so on) that contain key phrases. Google pays more attention to these than to normal text.
- ✓ If, for some reason, your page design can't utilize heading elements, then use the B (bold text) element to emphasize your keywords.
- ✓ Exchange links with other Webmasters, especially with those who already have a high Google ranking.

Using search sites isn't the only way of getting the word out, though. You can also work out reciprocal link arrangements with other Web sites, either on a personal level or through the agency of a banner-link exchange. (See the section "Investigating Reciprocal Linking," later in this chapter.)

Working Keywords into Your Pages

Search sites have different ways of gathering information on the content of Web sites:

- ✓ Some search sites are put together by human effort. People visit Web sites that have been submitted to the search site and then manually categorize those sites.
- ✓ Other search sites are fully automated. Programs called *robots* or *spiders* surf the Web, cataloging their findings and adding Web pages to the search site's database. Robots and spiders don't just note the URL of a page, though. They also index all the words on the page (except for words like a, an, the, for, and so on).

When someone runs a search, the search terms are compared with the indexed words. Links to whatever sites match the search terms are then shown to the person doing the searching.

In addition to the words in the text of your page (and sometimes in the alt text fields of images and other elements as well), search engines also index meta keywords.

The following sections give you the lowdown on incorporating keywords into your site.

Adding meta tags

META is one of the most versatile elements in HTML because it's one of the most poorly defined ones. Some would just say it doesn't have many limits. Its name and content attributes enable you to put many types of information into your HTML documents.



META always goes within the HEAD element, and it has no end tag.

You can have all the META elements you want, but only two of its uses matter to a search engine: as a page description and as a list of keywords. Neither one is essential. In fact, despite the frenzy about META keywords, your page description and TITLE element are actually more useful for search engines (Google, the most successful search engine, doesn't even look at META keywords).

Page description

When someone performs a search that returns a hit to your site, the response usually shows your page title and a blurb of text from the beginning of your page. This response underscores the importance of a good title. If the first sentence of your page doesn't describe all its contents, that may not be the best possible enticement for someone to visit it. If your page has a META description, however, the search engine will use that description to — you guessed it — describe your page.

Imagine that you have a page titled “The Love Letters of Grover Cleveland.” Well, that title might not mean much to a lot of folks, and if the first sentence is something like a tame quotation from one of those letters, you're not doing too well. But a good description like this can fix that:

```
<META name="description" content="The secret life of the 24th President">
```

List of keywords

You add keywords in much the same way that you add a description:

```
<META name="keywords" content="Grover Cleveland, 24th President, Buffalo, New York, Mugwumps">
```

Mugwumps? Trust me — it's a Grover Cleveland thing.

The META keywords aren't that important because the content of the page itself should already have the important terms in it. And some search engines don't even look at keywords. Where keywords are useful is in a special situation that you can't easily accommodate in the visible page content without looking silly: You need to intentionally misspell words.

It's a fact: Lots of people have trouble spelling or typing or both. Therefore, you should also add common spelling errors to your list of keywords. For example, if you list *flying saucers* and someone's looking for *flying sossers*, that person won't be able to find your site. Well, you may not want that person to, but I'm not going to get into that. You should also cover yourself for any legitimate spelling variants. For example, if you sell tires and don't want to miss out on the British market, you should also list *tyres* among your keywords.



When it comes to choosing keywords, don't neglect synonyms. One person may look for *car parts* while another searches for *automotive accessories*.

Incorporating keywords in the content

The actual content of your Web pages is much more important than META keywords. In fact, it's critical, both to your search engine ranking and to visitor retention. When you write the copy for your pages, make sure that you

throw in as many terms as possible that accurately describe your topic. As far as the search engines are concerned, the more often you can reasonably include relevant keywords, the better. After all, search engines rank your Web site by how well the contents of your pages match up with the search term that someone enters.

When it comes to the human visitors to your pages, as opposed to the robotic ones, you need to write in a way that entertains your audience. As a professional writer, I always try to avoid using the same phrase too often. When I need to refer to the same thing or action over and over again, I strive to find new ways to say it. I practically live for synonyms and pronouns.

It can be a difficult balancing act to satisfy your human visitors while at the same time cater to the search engines' needs. You don't want to bore your readers by endlessly repeating the same terms, but you do want to nail down the ranking you deserve. Here are some general steps on how to do this:

- 1. To start with, make up a list of terms that you think people might use if they search for your page.**
- 2. Go ahead and write your content without paying any attention to your list.**

Writing your content first is important because if you stare at your list of terms while you're working, you may stifle your creativity.
- 3. After you've finished writing your page, look over the list and mark down how many times the terms have been used in the page.**
- 4. Go over your page and see where you can work in the words that *weren't* used. Then for words that *were* used, look for places you might use them again without screwing up the flow of the writing.**

After you've done these things, toss the list in the trash and reread your page. If it's still good, go with it. If it doesn't read well, you may have to sacrifice some of the terms to make the text more reader-friendly.

Avoiding keyword trickery

Lots of the get-rich-quick sites advise you to raise your ratings with the search engines by stacking the deck. Typically, this involves using the same phrase over and over again into your meta tags, like this:

```
<META name="keywords" content="computer books, computer books, computer books, computer books, computer books, computer books, computer books">
```

Avoiding traps

The traps, in this case, are some of the perfectly normal Web site design approaches. If you use frames or image maps, you're asking for trouble with the search engines. Why? Because many of the search engines don't navigate frames properly, and none of them can read the text in an image map. The same problem crops up when people use images containing text as a part of the image itself — your human visitors can read it, but a search engine's robot won't even know it exists.

Does that mean that you can't do things like putting text-filled images in a table for layout

purposes? No, and you don't have to give up on frames or image maps, either. But you do have to provide a plain old text link alternative approach to these fancier methods. Lots of Web designers do so anyway to accommodate old or off-brand Web browsers.

If you're using frames, make sure to include `NOFRAMES` content with all the same links the folks who go through the framed version get. If you're using image maps or image links, toss in a text link somewhere on the page that leads to another page that has text-link versions of all the links from the images.

Another common trick is to put content like that into the text of the page itself. Often, Webmasters hide this bogus text from their human readers by setting its color to the same as the page's background color or by making the text so small that it's barely visible or both.



This common trick is not the same thing as legitimately using the same terms and phrases several times in different places within the real context of your Web page. If you run a site that deals with airports, for example, the word *runway* may show up hundreds of times on one page, and anyone searching for that term will rightly find your page.

So why not use the trick method? Well, for starters, it doesn't work. Playing these kinds of games with keywords is a fast way to get dropped from the major search engines altogether. The people who run search engines aren't stupid, and they're fully aware of this type of stunt. They don't care for sites that try to stack the deck because they're in the business of providing good results, and these kinds of tricks skew the results. You don't want to make enemies of the search engine folks; it's much better to keep on their good side.

Even if you do manage to find a workable trick that artificially boosts your ranking, you're not doing yourself any favors. What if you end up number one on every search but your actual content isn't what you said it was (it's all just a clever use of keywords)? Do you think that the people who drop into your site will be coming back? After they find out that you're not delivering what you promised, they'll be off to other destinations before you can blink, and they won't pay any attention to your listing after that, even if it does turn up on top in their next search.



Some of the Web sites that come up on the first page of search results turn out to be dead links. If those sites had paid more attention to site design fundamentals than to search engine rankings, they might still be around.

Analyzing keywords that other sites are using

Taking a look at what other people are doing with keywords can be instructive. You can find out just what people are searching for plenty of ways; if some of those terms fit in with what you're doing, you may want to work them in. Here are some ways to analyze keywords:

- **Lycos 50 Daily Report:** The Lycos 50 Daily Report (50.lycos.com), shown in Figure 16-1, shows the results of the most popular user searches on Lycos, which are tallied at the end of every week. This listing is particularly informative because it shows the rank for each term in the previous week as well, and it also shows how many weeks each term has been in the top 50.

The screenshot shows the Lycos 50 Daily Report page. The main content includes a table of the top 50 search terms, a section for 'The Lycos 50 Daily Report' with a date of February 17, 2004, and a 'Lyrics Rock' section. The table lists search terms, their rank change, last week's rank, and the number of weeks in the top 50.

Search Term	Change	Last Week	Weeks on List
1 Janet Jackson	Re-entry		1
2 Super Bowl	New		1
3 Yez, they also played a game	+11	5	
4 NFL	ns	44	37
5 Paris Hilton	+1	15	
6 Justin Timberlake	Re-entry		1
7 Drudge Report	Re-entry		1
8 KaZaA	+2	113	
9 Britney Spears	+6	234	
10 IRS	+2	6	
11 Catherine Bosley	+3	4	
12 Valentine's Day	+15	5	

Figure 16-1: The Lycos 50 Daily Report lets you see what the most popular user searches on Lycos are.

- ✔ **Keyword Live:** One of the best programs you can lay your hands on is Keyword Live, shown in Figure 16-2. It runs a check on several search engines to see what keywords people are typing in and shows you the top 100 keywords for each search engine in real time. That's right — not yesterday's news, not what was hot last week, but right now. You can download it for free from www.analogx.com/contents/download/network/keyword.htm. Try it. You'll like it.
- ✔ **Keyword Extractor:** After you get Keyword Live, check out Keyword Extractor, another useful freebie by the same author. You can find it at www.analogx.com/contents/download/network/keyex.htm. Keyword Extractor lets you analyze Web pages just like search engines do. It indexes all the words on the page and assigns weights to them depending on their frequency of use and position on the page. One of the best ways to use this program is to perform a search at one of the major search sites, follow the links to the top-ranked pages, and run Keyword Extractor on each of those pages. Study the results to see how those pages earned their rank.



Don't just toss in popular search terms in an attempt to generate bogus hits. Adding *sex* and *MP3* to a site that's about walrus migration patterns won't bring you the kind of visitors you're looking for.

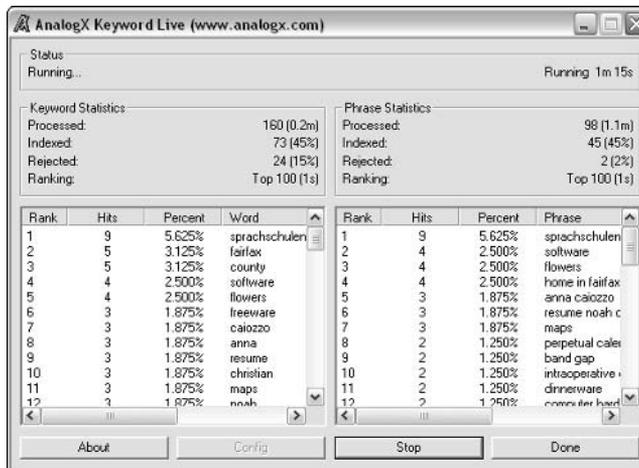


Figure 16-2: Keyword Live lets you see what keywords people are using on search engines.

Submitting to the Search Sites

You can just sit around and wait for a spider or robot to trip over your site. Sooner or later, that'll probably happen all by itself — the search engines are

always hungry for more sites to add. But being proactive and making certain that your site is listed is a lot smarter. You can submit your site on your own, or you can use services that do it for you.

Doing it yourself

Why bother doing it yourself when you can pay someone else to do it for you? Well, there's the obvious advantage of saving money. If you're on a shoe-string budget, that can matter. If not, you're likely going to say something like, "It's more cost effective for me to pay someone to get my site submitted to search engines than for me to take time away from actually running the business." Well, there's something to be said for that reasoning, too.

But there's nothing like making sure that the job gets done right. And it's a wise Webmaster who gets thoroughly familiar with the many variations on how the search engines want Web page URLs to be submitted. I strongly recommend that you try submitting to at least a few of them yourself. Table 16-2 gives the URLs of the submission pages for several major search sites.

<i>Submission Page</i>	<i>Web Address</i>
AlltheWeb	www.alltheweb.com/help/webmaster/submit_site
AltaVista	addurl.altavista.com/addurl/new
Ask Jeeves	ask.ineedhits.com/sitesubmit.asp
Excite	https://secure.ah-ha.com/guaranteed_inclusion/teaser.aspx
Google	www.google.com/addurl.html
Lycos	insite.lycos.com
WebCrawler	https://secure.ah-ha.com/guaranteed_inclusion/teaser.aspx?network=WebCrawler
Yahoo! (commercial sites)	add.yahoo.com/fast/add?+Business
Yahoo! (noncommercial sites)	add.yahoo.com/fast/add



Some search engines (such as Ask Jeeves and Lycos) charge for adding your site to their listings, and more may do so. Yahoo! offers unpaid listings only for noncommercial sites. Make sure that you find out if it's free or not before you submit.

Most search engines accept submissions in pretty much the same way, and the process is pretty simple. With Google, for example, you simply go to www.google.com/addurl.html (see Figure 16-3), enter your URL and click the Add URL button.

With Yahoo!, you have to give a little bit more effort, but the process is still relatively easy. Here's how you do it:

1. **Go to www.yahoo.com and browse until you find the category you want to be listed in.**
2. **Click the Suggest a Site link in the upper-right corner of the page (see Figure 16-4).**

3. **On the resulting page, click the Standard Consideration button.**

The next thing that you will see is a page that shows which category you've chosen.

4. **Click the Continue button.**

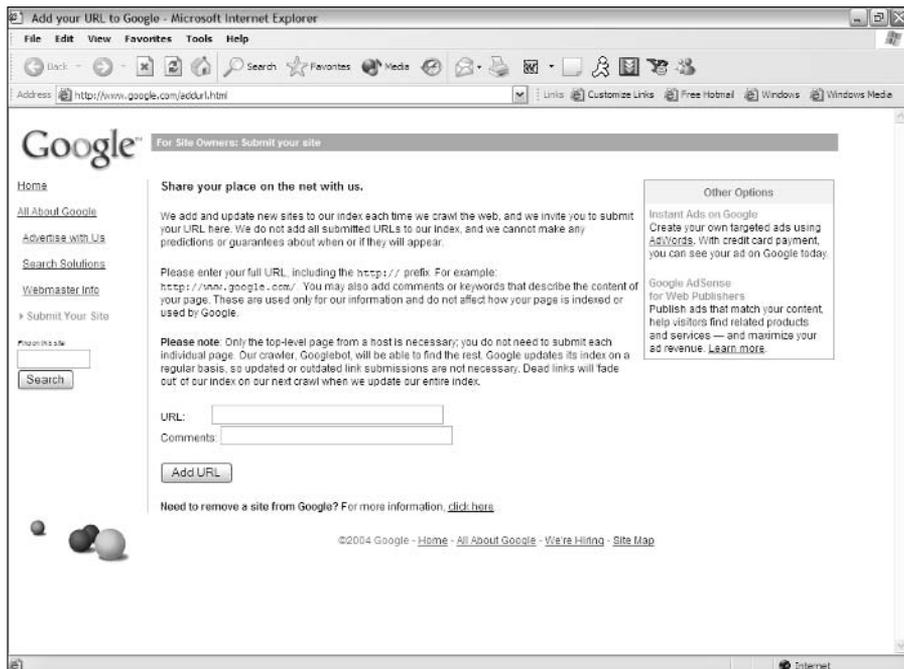


Figure 16-3:
Google is the one search site you must list with.

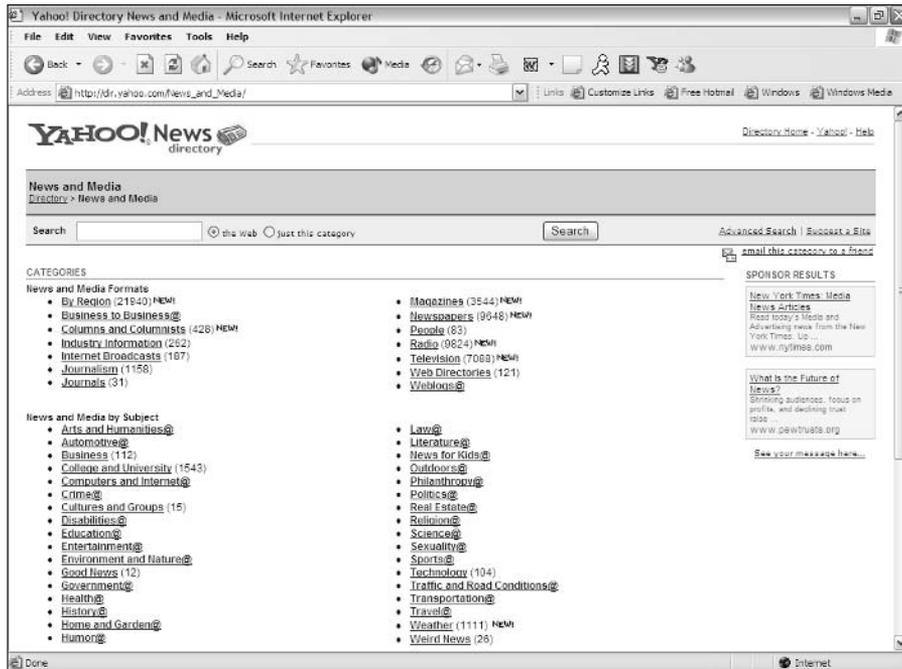


Figure 16-4:
Yahoo! is
arranged by
categories.

5. Enter the requested information, such as title and URL of your site, on the page shown in Figure 16-5.
6. Click the Submit button.

Using submission services

You get what you pay for, you know? When it comes to Web site submission services, that saying really hits home. Very few of the free services submit your URL to anywhere near as many search sites as the paid ones do. However, the paid services submit your info to many more search engines, but you don't get much payback from listing in all the obscure ones.

Many Web site submission services fall into a gray area, offering limited free services but charging more for anything extra. The paid services may or may not be worthwhile, depending on how well they know their stuff. If you're going to part with your hard-earned bucks, you have the right to ask them a few questions first. Make sure that the people you're dealing with understand the differences among the search engines. If they can't tell you things like which ones accept HTML coding in their listings or how long a description is acceptable at a particular search site, you may not be getting much bang for your buck. You may be better off doing it yourself.

Yahoo! Suggest a Site - Site and Contact Information - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Address: http://add.yahoo.com/fast/add

YAHOO! Yahoo! - Help

Suggest a Site to Yahoo!

Step 2 of 2: Site and Contact Information

Your Site Information * Required Fields

Enter information about your site below to help us describe and categorize it. Please be brief and do not use all capital letters. Yahoo! reserves the right to edit all titles and descriptions.

* Site Title:
 - The name of the site (eg. Museum of Modern Art)

* URL:
 - The web address of the site that begins with 'http://'

Geographic Location:
 - The city/state and country, if relevant to placement of your site

Description:
 - A brief phrase or sentence describing the content of the site
 - Maximum 25 words
 - Please avoid repeating the site title or category name
 - Please do not capitalize the first letter of every word or use HTML tags

Your Contact Information * Required Fields

In the event that we have questions about the placement of this site and to ensure that listings in Yahoo! cannot be changed by unauthorized persons, please provide the following:

* Contact Person:
 * Contact Email:

Done Internet

Figure 16-5:
 Yahoo!
 requires
 a bit more
 work, but
 is still
 relatively
 easy.

ProBoost (www.proboost.com), shown in Figure 16-6, is one classy example of folks who know what search engines are all about. With ProBoost, you don't just fill out a form. You can actually work with real, live people who are committed to your success. ProBoost has free telephone support and a chat room, too.

Keeping out of the search sites

Not everybody wants all their pages indexed and offered to the general public at a search site. You can keep a search engine's robot from indexing your site two ways. One may require the assistance of your network administrator or Internet service provider. The other you can do yourself.

Getting outside assistance

For a long time, the only way to lock a search engine out was to use a file called `robots.txt`. This file, located in the top-level domain directory (the same one your home page goes into), lists all banned robots and all directories that can't be searched. The reason you may need some professional help here is that unless you run your own dedicated server, you may not have access to the top-level domain directory. Putting `robots.txt` anywhere else doesn't do you any good. If your Web site is housed on your ISP's server or on a virtual server, it's really in a subdirectory of a dedicated Web server.

What you need to do in this case is to let the people who run your HTTP server know which directories you don't want searched. They'll take care of the rest, which consists of simply listing those directories in a text file.

The following example shows how to block all robots from searching two sample directories:

```
User-agent: *
Disallow: /~mine/private/
Disallow: /~mine/personal/
```



Someone who wants to pry into your site can get a good start by looking at the contents of your `robots.txt` file. After all, it contains a list of all the directories and files you don't want the world to see. If you have anything confidential in those areas, `robots.txt` is a road map pointing straight to it.

Doing it yourself

If you want to grab control yourself, or if you just want to avoid using `robots.txt`, you can turn to that good old friend, the `META` tag. Remember that I said that tag was versatile. Well, this is another useful application for it. By assigning the name attribute a value of `robots` and adding one or more variables to the content attribute, you can specify your desires about the page it's in.

Figure 16-6:
ProBoost offers excellent service and support for your Web page submission effort.

By default, a search robot will both index your page, adding the words in it to the search site's database, and follow all the links on the page. If you want to disallow both of these behaviors, add the following HTML code in the HEAD element of your file:

```
<META name="robots" content="noindex,nofollow">
```

You can accomplish the same thing by using a value of none:

```
<META name="robots" content="none">
```

Technically, you can do the opposite of this, allowing both options, by using a value of all, but there's no point to doing that. If you want both options working, just don't do anything.

To allow the indexing, but keep robots from following your links, you use this line of code:

```
<META name="robots" content="nofollow">
```

Remember that the robot's indexing and following of links are default behaviors, so you don't need to specify either one if you're allowing it. Thus, the preceding code doesn't mention indexing at all. You could, if you want to be pedantic about it, say the same thing like this:

```
<META name="robots" content="index,nofollow">
```

The situation would have to be unusual, but you may wish for a robot to follow the links in a particular directory without adding the pages in it to a search engine. To allow a robot to follow your links, but deny it from indexing, use this code:

```
<META name="robots" content="noindex">
```

Checking Your Search Site Position

You need to follow up on your submissions to make sure that you're listed (different search sites react on different timetables) as well as to find out where you land in the rankings when your keywords are used in a search.

Obviously, the fastest way to find out both of these things is to log on to the search engines you've submitted to and check things out. First off, enter the name of your site and see if it comes up. If not, and it's been more time than the search engine is supposed to take, you may want to resubmit to it.



This is also a great way to find out which other Web sites have links to yours because any page with your site's name on it will show up in the search results. (See the next section "Investigating Reciprocal Linking.")

If your site does come up, you'll want to enter the keywords from your site as search terms. This quickly shows you where you fall in the rankings. Assuming that some other sites show up on top of your own, it's worthwhile to take a look at their source code to see what keywords they use. Also, don't forget to look over their pages carefully. This is one of those rare instances where your competitors' techniques are literally an open book.

Investigating Reciprocal Linking

Reciprocal linking is the Web's equivalent of "You scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours." The way it works is this: You put in a link on your page to another Web site, and the other Web site returns the favor by putting in a link to yours. Even directly competing sites can benefit from linking to one another, just as two restaurants can happily exist side by side.

Finding sites to link to

So whom do you want to link with? Well, the simple answer is "anybody and everybody." The smart answer, though, is "the best and most popular sites in my category." What's best is a matter of opinion, but it's pretty easy to find the most popular ones, and you can use this technique to piggyback on their success.

What you need to do is to spend some time working the search engines. Here's the drill:

- 1. Enter the keywords you think people would use to find your site.**
- 2. Follow the links in the results to the other sites that are similar to your own.**



All search engines will return some poor responses, so don't automatically assume that all the results would be good reciprocal link sources for your Web site. Use your own judgment.

- 3. Look for an e-mail link to the site's owner.**

Typically, you can find this type of link at the bottom of the page, but it may be anywhere.

- 4. Click the e-mail link and send the site's Webmaster a message politely suggesting that you both link up.**



It may be helpful to put in a link to the other site first. That way, you can say something like, “I’ve linked to your site and would appreciate a return link from yours.” This takes the discussion out of the realm of the hypothetical and puts the other site’s Webmaster under an obligation to respond in kind. There are no guarantees, but most people do reciprocate.

Sometimes, you can’t find any contact info on a Web site, no matter how hard you look. If that’s the case and you really want to set up a reciprocal link with that site, you can run a search on the site’s domain name by using a Whois service. Whois identifies the administrative, billing, and technical contacts for a domain. The best known one is at Network Solutions (www.networksolutions.com/cgi-bin/whois/whois). Or you can run a search from your own system with software such as Whois ULTRA from AnalogX (www.analogx.com/contents/download/network/whois.htm).

Another worthwhile program you may want to check out is Link Trader. You use Link Trader to create a database of all the people you’ve set up reciprocal links with, and it checks those sites to verify that the link back to you still exists. Keep the database up-to-date and run the program on a regular basis, and you can quickly spot any sites that drop your link. Then you can e-mail the Webmasters and ask them to put the link back in. You can download Link Trader at www.freeclassifiedlinks.com/linktrader.html.



Many search engines (Google, for example) consider the number of other sites with links to yours when determining how high you rank. This means that of two sites, with everything else being equal, the one with more links leading to it from other sites shows up before the other one in search results. Reciprocal linking is a powerful tool that you can use to legitimately boost your own site’s ratings.

Joining Web rings

Web rings are a kind of super reciprocal link arrangement. Instead of making a reciprocal link between two sites, you make it with an entire group of similar sites at a time. You can find Web rings on just about any topic you can think of, and many such rings are listed at www.webring.org or www.ringsurf.com. You can also start your own Web ring if you want.

The weakness of Web rings is that they link in a ring. In other words, each one links to the previous one in the list and the next one in the list. If any site drops out of the ring, that messes up the whole thing, just as if you broke a link in a chain.

Joining a banner exchange

In a *banner exchange*, each member creates a banner ad and submits it to a central site. That site, the exchange itself, automates the process of displaying all the members' ads on all the other members' Web sites. A banner exchange sounds like a great idea, but in practice, few banner exchanges survive for very long. If you're considering joining one, make sure that you ask how long it's been in operation. Also make it a point to contact current members and see how satisfied they are with the exchange.

That said, joining a banner exchange is an easy task. You fill out a simple application form on the exchange's Web site; then you send the exchange your banner and place some HTML code on your site. That's all there is to it — the exchange handles everything else. Several reputable banner exchanges are listed in Table 16-3.

Online Sources for Getting the Word Out about Your Site

Table 16-3 lists some places on the World Wide Web where you can find more information on the topics covered in this chapter.

Table 16-3 Online Resources for Publicizing Your Site	
<i>Web Site Name</i>	<i>Web Address</i>
Add Me.com	www.addme.com
Apex Pacific	www.edynamicsoft.com
Ask Jeeves IQ	sp.ask.com/docs/about/jeevesiq.html
BannerPromo.com	www.bannerpromo.com
EIS Banner Exchange	einets.com
Guerilla Marketing Online	www.gmarketing.com
HitExchange	www.hitx.net
LinkBuddies	www.linkbuddies.com

(continued)

Table 16-3 (continued)

Web Site Name	Web Address
MetaSpy	www.metaspyspy.com
Search Engine Watch	www.searchenginewatch.com
WebCrawler Popular Searches	www.webcrawler.com/info.wbcrawl/search/help/popular.htm
Wordtracker	www.searchspyspy.com

Chapter 17

Keeping in Touch with Visitors

In This Chapter

- ▶ Using autoresponders
 - ▶ Distributing electronic newsletters
 - ▶ Spreading the word about new content on your Web site
-

When someone initially visits your site, you naturally want that person to keep coming back. One of the natural ways to do that is to keep in touch, let visitors know what's new, and remind them that you're there. The problem is *spam* — no, not the canned meat — it's Internet slang for unsolicited commercial e-mail. If you haven't gotten plenty of it already, you probably don't have an e-mail address at all. Get-rich-quick schemes, health products that make you live forever, and all sorts of other garbage zoom back and forth across the Net, clogging mailboxes and raising hackles.

So how do you keep in touch without spamming? The answer is simple: You send e-mail messages only to those visitors who request them. That way, everybody's happy. You get to build up a following among your visitors, and they get to receive the information they ask for. This chapter presents tools that make it easy for your visitors to keep up with what's going on at your site while keeping you out of the doghouse with your Web space provider.

Using Autoresponders

Autoresponders are programs that automatically send e-mail messages to visitors who request them. The visitor makes the request either by sending an e-mail to your autoresponder address or by making the request through a form on your Web site.

What you can do with autoresponders

Okay, so what? Well, the way you use an autoresponder all depends on what your message says. Say, for example, that your e-mail message contains your current catalog or the sale of the week. Sound like something useful?

You can even set up several different documents that people can request. This technique is useful if the products or services you sell or talk about can be easily organized into categories. For example, a Web site that sells software might put together one gigantic catalog or set up several links, such as [Click Here to Receive Our Productivity Catalog](#) and [Click Here to Get Information on Graphics Software](#).

So far, so good. What you have is a perfectly spam-free way for people to get detailed information on demand, and the autoresponder does all the work for you. All you do is write up the documents and upload them once. From then on, the autoresponder takes care of all the drudgery.

But another feature of autoresponders borders on spammishness. You can set them up so that they send not only one message but also several different messages over a period of time. The basic idea is that it often takes more than one contact to close a sale, which is true, as anyone in sales knows. The problem is that the person making the request for the first document isn't requesting a whole series of messages over several weeks or months. It's a gray area, and you should be well advised to carefully consider whether to use that feature.



Check with your Web space provider to see whether it has autoresponders available as part of your basic service. Or read on to find out about GetResponse.com's autoresponder.

Using GetResponse.com

GetResponse.com (www.getresponse.com) has both free and paid autoresponders. The basic difference between them is that there's no advertising in the paid version. With both versions, you get multiple messaging, although there's a limit of five automated timed responses for the free version. GetResponse.com has covered the spam issue by adding removal information at the bottom of all autoresponses. Anyone who requests information and doesn't want to receive multiple messages can simply unsubscribe and they will not receive any of the follow-ups.

One of the nicest aspects of this autoresponder is the ability to format your autoresponse messages with HTML, so you are not limited to plain text.



If you decide to go with the paid version of GetResponse, the company offers a 30-day money-back guarantee.

Signing up

To sign up with GetResponse.com, follow these steps:

1. Go to www.getresponse.com/orderfree.html.

2. Enter the information requested in the form shown in Figure 17-1 and then click the Submit button at the bottom of the page.

The Web page that appears is filled with all the reasons why you should switch from a free to a paid service.

3. If you want to switch to the paid service, click the Click for Smart Responder Pro button. Otherwise, click the Click for Smart Responder Free button.

You receive an e-mail message containing your password and a couple of useful links.

Setting up your message

To set up your autoresponder message with GetResponse.com, follow these steps:

1. Go to www.getresponse.com/login.html, enter your account name and password, and click the Log In button.

The resulting page has a menu bar across the top.

2. On the menu bar, click Messages and then click the Edit Messages link in the drop-down menu, as shown in Figure 17-2.

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Autoresponder from GetResponse! - Free edition!! - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar shows "http://www.getresponse.com/orderfree.html". The page features a navigation menu with links: Home, Sign Up For FREE, Order PRO Version, and Learn More. A sidebar on the left contains a list of links including Home, Client login, Features, Testimonials, F.A.Q., FREE version, PRO Version, Our Guarantees, Dedicated Servers, Purchase Leads, Anti-Spam Policy, Advertise, Affiliate Program, Tell Your Friends, Killar Sales Letters, Marketing Advice, and Discussion Board. The main content area has a "SIGN UP FOR FREE!" heading and a promotional message: "Get your FREE account NOW! YES! I want to increase my sales and save time by automatically following up with my HOT prospects. Please sign me up for my FREE GetResponse account. I understand that I'm under no obligation whatsoever and that my privacy is assured. I also understand that if I'm really serious about building my business, I should try the more advanced, GUARANTEED GetResponse 2004 PRO". Below this is a sign-up form with fields for "Your Name:", "Your E-mail:", "Country:", and "GetResponse name: (letters or numbers only)". A checkbox is present for "Usage of your GetResponse will be:" with options for "Business-related or" and "Personal".

Figure 17-1:
The GetResponse.com application page is where you enter your basic information.

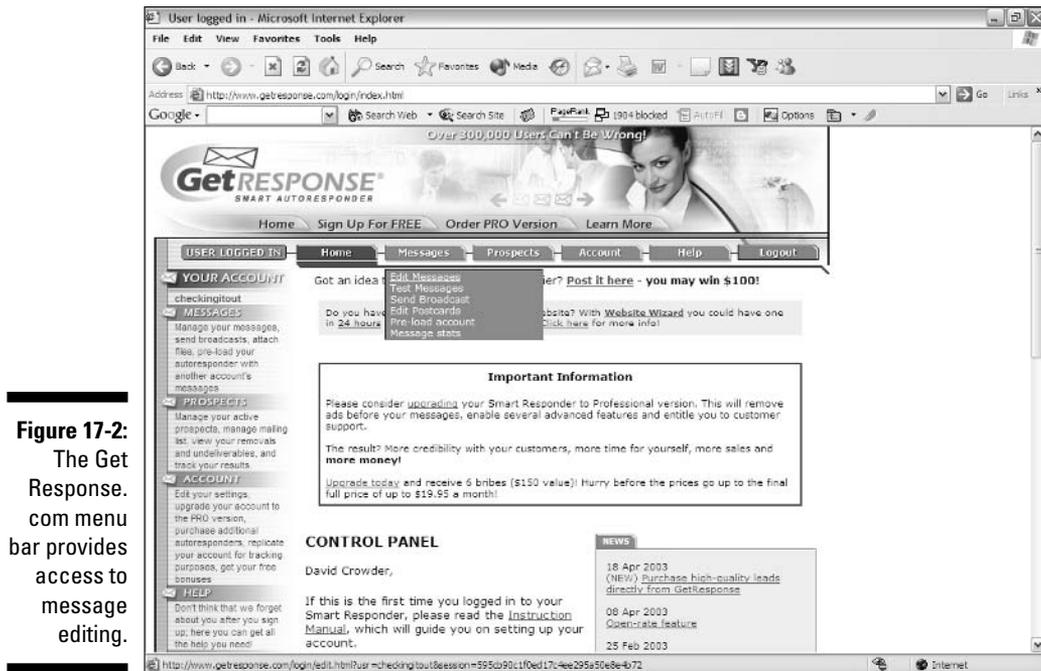


Figure 17-2:
The GetResponse.com menu bar provides access to message editing.

3. Scroll down past the upgrade information to get to the message form. Enter your subject in the text box and paste your response message into the text area.
4. Enter 0 in the Delay text box so that the message goes out as soon as it's requested.
5. Click the Save Message button.
6. Repeat Steps 2 through 5 for any subsequent messages.



The delay value for follow-up messages sets the amount of time to wait from the date of the first request, not the amount of time between each message. So if you want to send a message every day, your first message should have a delay of 0, your second one should have a delay of 1, the third should have a delay of 2, and so on.

Opt-In Newsletters

Newsletters are short, privately produced publications that focus on a single topic. They've been around for hundreds of years, but rising postage costs drove many of them out of business. Now that e-mail is such a common part of life, newsletters are making a major comeback. In its purest form, a newsletter

is dedicated to covering current situations, like a newspaper does, but it usually provides a deeper analytical approach. Other newsletters, on the other hand, have nothing to do with news and instead deal with business or professional interests. Because they're often written by one person or a small team of people, they tend to be informal and highly opinionated.

I once received a remarkably honest item that looked a great deal like a newsletter. Under the title, the masthead bore the motto "A Catalog Thinly Disguised as a Newsletter." That's probably the single most common use of newsletters. Even if they're not directly offering products for sale, they're still a sales and marketing tool. Many consultants, for example, send out monthly newsletters packed with advice and insights. Yes, they're giving away a service for free this way, but they're also publicizing their expertise.

Many services let you send messages to their own targeted lists of e-mail addresses. Normally, this practice is considered spamming, but if the lists are generated from opt-ins, that's another matter entirely. *Opt-in* mailing lists are much less intrusive or prone to errors than normal mailing lists, because the safeguard makes it impossible for anybody to sign someone else up for one.

How an opt-in system works

With an opt-in system, users enter their e-mail addresses in a form. They then receive a message in their mailbox that asks them to confirm their subscription. If they don't reply to that message, their address doesn't go into the system.

The problem with using other people's lists is that because you didn't run the opt-in service yourself, you don't know for sure that all the names on the list are legitimate. And some of the companies that offer these "opportunities" also seem to be heavily into hype and get-rich-quick philosophies. You have to be very careful not to get caught up in spamming.

The Emailxtra.com service described in the next section doesn't adhere to get-rich-quick schemes and spamming. It helps you run your own opt-in system from your own site, while handling most of the workload for you. This setup gives you the best of both worlds.



Although you're using an opt-in system, it's still a good idea to begin your newsletter with something like this:

"For subscribers only. You received this newsletter because you filled out the opt-in form for XYZ News at www.xyznewsoptin.com. We keep our subscriber information completely confidential. If you have any questions, e-mail us at subscriptions@xyznewsoptin.com."

Trying out Emailxtra.com

Emailxtra.com (found, as you might expect, at www.emailxtra.com) is a company that specializes in setting up e-zine newsletters for small to medium-sized businesses. Its offerings range from self-service accounts where you do all the work to full-service ones where it handles everything.

To set up a free trial account with Emailxtra, follow these steps:

1. Go to www.emailxtra.com/free_trial.htm.
2. Click the **Click Here to Signup for Free** link, shown in Figure 17-3. The pop-up window shown in Figure 17-4 appears.
3. In the pop-up window, enter the required information: your e-mail address, your first and last name, and a password (entered twice for confirmation purposes). Then click the **Submit** button in the lower-right corner of the window.

The pop-up window shown in Figure 17-5 appears.

4. In the next pop-up window, enter the requested information about your company (such as its name and phone number). When you're finished, click the **Submit** button.

Emailxtra then sends you an e-mail message about your new account.

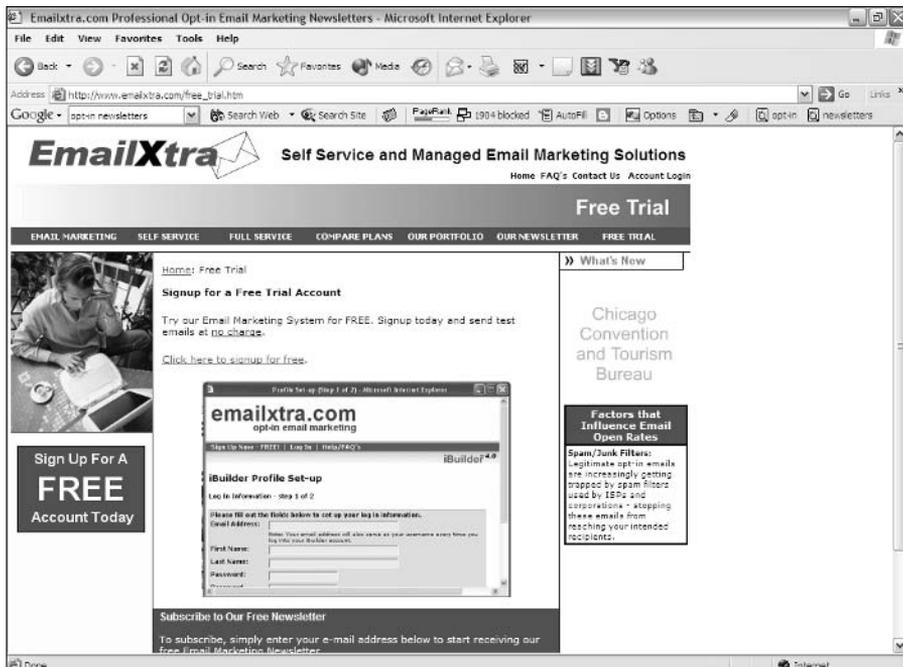


Figure 17-3:
The
Emailxtra
free trial
signup
page.

VerticalResponse: Profile Set-up (Step 1 of 2) - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Sign Up Now - FREE! | Log In | Help/FAQ's

iBuilder 4.0

iBuilder Profile Set-up

Log In Information - step 1 of 2

Please fill out the fields below to set up your log in information.

Email Address:

Note: Your email address will also serve as your username every time you log into your iBuilder account.

First Name:

Last Name:

Password:

Password (again):

Figure 17-4:
Enter
your login
information.

5. When the resulting e-mail message arrives, open it and click the link.

Clicking this link verifies that your e-mail address is correct and opens a welcome page in your Web browser.

6. Click the Click Here to Start E-Mail Marketing link.

This takes you to a login page where your e-mail address is already entered.

7. Enter your password and click the Sign In button.

VerticalResponse: Profile Set-up (Step 2 of 2) - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Sign Up Now - FREE! | Log In | Help/FAQ's

iBuilder 4.0

iBuilder Profile Set-up

Organizational Information - step 2 of 2

Please fill out form below related to your company or organization. These details are important as they set up the defaults for the email campaigns you will build within iBuilder. You will be able to update this info any time you want later from within iBuilder.

Company Name:

Company Phone:

Address Line 1:

Address Line 2:

(if needed)

Country:

City:

State:

Figure 17-5:
Enter
your orga-
nizational
information.



In the future, you can just go to www.emailxtra.com/account_login.htm to log in. The login screen is the same on both the welcome page and the regular login page.

Keeping Visitors Updated about Changes to Your Site

So you made some changes to your site. You worked hard on them from the conception to the follow-through, and you're thrilled with the results. Well, personal satisfaction is nice, but what about all those people who have already visited your site? Will they know about all the improvements that you've made?

Visitors will notice the changes if you use an update notification service such as ChangeNotes or ChangeDetection.com.

ChangeNotes

ChangeNotes (www.changenotes.com) keeps track of your site and automatically e-mails your visitors whenever there's a change. It performs this task by automatically downloading one copy of your page each day and comparing it with the copy it downloaded the day before. If the pages are the same, nothing happens. If the pages are different, the service sends an e-mail to anyone on your list of interested users.

ChangeNotes is an opt-in service, so you don't have to worry about a spam problem. You put a link on your Web pages, and your visitors get to choose whether or not to receive update notices.

No matter how many times a day your site changes, your users will never receive more than one notification in 24 hours. That notice contains all the changes noted during that time.

Adding ChangeNotes to your Web pages couldn't be much simpler. Just follow these few steps, and you'll be up and running in no time:

- 1. In your favorite editor, open the Web page you want to add ChangeNotes to and (if necessary) select the option that displays the source code.**
- 2. Go to www.changenotes.com/webmaster.php.**
- 3. Scroll down to the text box that's near the middle of the page, as shown in Figure 17-6.**

This text box contains source code that you can copy and paste into your Web pages.

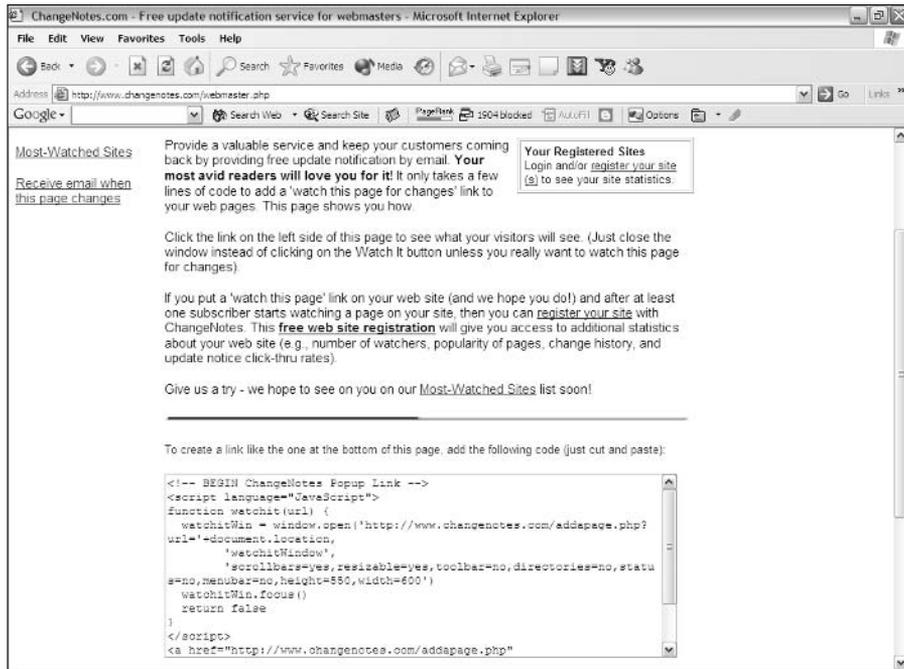


Figure 17-6:
The source
code at
Change
Notes.com
is in the
text box.

4. **The easiest way to handle copying the source code is to use an old and venerable series of key combinations. Just click anywhere within the text area and then press Ctrl+A.**

This command selects all the text, visible or not, in the text area. The source code is highlighted to indicate that this has taken place.

5. **Press Ctrl+C to copy the source code.**
6. **Open your Web page creation program and paste the copied source code into your Web page's code. Okay, for those of you who want all the key combos, you can use Ctrl+V to paste the code.**
7. **Save your Web page.**
8. **Upload the updated page to your Web server.**

That's all there is to it. You just add the link, and ChangeNotes does the work for you while you go on doing other things. Visitors who click that link see the window shown in Figure 17-7, which lets them sign up.



ChangeNotes only keeps track of the Web pages that have one of its links on them, so you must add the source code to each page on your site. One quick way to do this is to use a Web page design program such as Dreamweaver to add the source code as a library item, which automatically puts it on all the pages in your site.

Figure 17-7:
Your visitors
can fill out
this form to
keep
updated
about
changes at
your site.

Receive email when this page changes - Microsoft Internet Explorer

ChangeNotes.com
website change notices

Watch this page for changes

ChangeNotes is a free service that monitors the web pages that interest you and sends you email when they change. If you would like to receive an email when this web page changes, enter your email address, the URL, and click Watch it. (We send at most one email per day that includes all the changes on all the pages on your watch list.)

Webmasters, provide update notification service on your web site for free!

Your email address:

Web address (URL):

Have a question or need help? Read our [FAQ](#) or email us, support@changenotes.com

Privacy
ChangeNotes does not disclose your information to any other parties and we only use your email address to send the emails you request. See our [privacy statement](#).

In some situations — maybe many of them, depending on the design and layout of your site — you may not want users to get an e-mail message every time something changes in a particular area of a page. ChangeNotes has that base covered, too. You can set off a section of your page by using two custom tags:

```
<!-- BEGIN change-ignore -->
Your block to be ignored goes here.
<!-- END change-ignore -->
```

ChangesNotes ignores anything that lies between the tags when it checks your site. Those items can change without triggering any response from the service.



Don't worry about the strange tags. Any Web browser that finds them will simply ignore them, and they will have no impact on your visitors, who will still see everything that lies between the tags. The only thing that is affected by the tags is the ChangeNotes service itself.

ChangeDetection.com

ChangeDetection.com is another Web site update notification service. This one, however, provides a bit of a nicer interface than ChangeNotes.com does, with a nice selection of panels you can add to your Web pages.

To sign up with ChangeDetection.com, follow these steps:

1. **Go to `www.changedetection.com`.**
2. **Enter your e-mail address in the form and click the Get It button.**
ChangeDetection.com sends you an e-mail message that includes the source code that you need in order to add the necessary signup panel to your Web pages.
3. **If you don't like the particular panel that you receive in the e-mail message, just check out the attachment to that message. It's an HTML file that includes the codes for a dozen different designs of signup panels. Open the file in your Web browser to see what the designs look like (see Figure 17-8).**
4. **Just copy the source code for the design you like best from that HTML file and paste it into your page's code.**
5. **Save your Web page.**
6. **Upload the changed page to your Web server.**

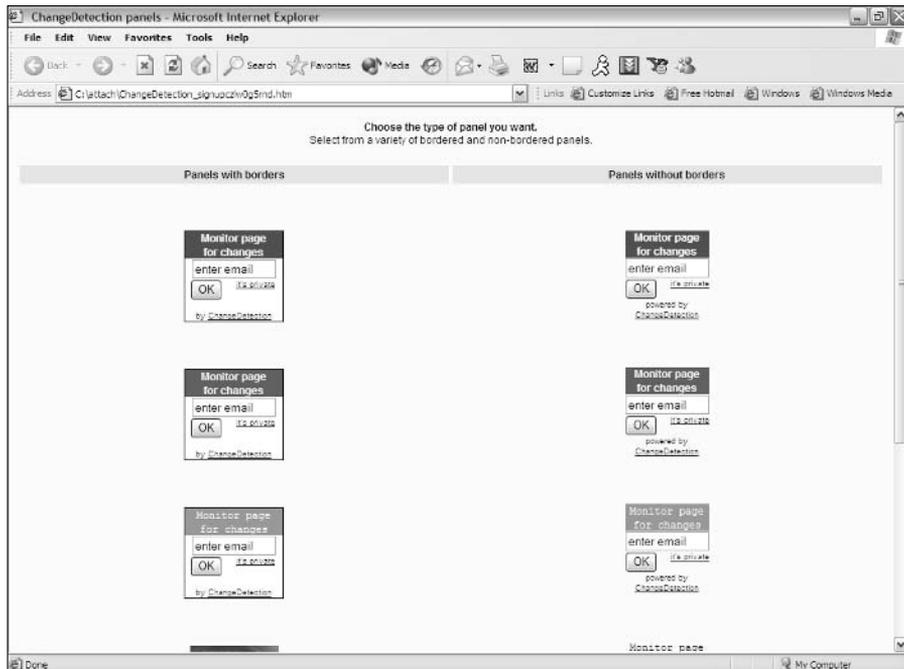


Figure 17-8:
Change
Detection.
com gives
you a
variety of
signup
panel styles
to choose
from.

Online Sources for Visitor Communications

Table 17-1 lists some places on the World Wide Web where you can find more resources like the ones that are covered in this chapter.

Table 17-1 Online Resources for Visitor Communications	
<i>Web Site Name</i>	<i>Web Address</i>
@Once	www.once.com
Autoresponders.org	www.autoresponders.org
AWeber Systems	www.aweber.com
DK3.com	www.dk3.com
Ezine Marketing Center	www.ezinemarketingcenter.com
FlashLog	www.flashlog.com
SendFree	www.sendfree.com

Chapter 18

Getting Feedback from Visitors

In This Chapter

- ▶ Using form makers
 - ▶ Setting up surveys
 - ▶ Ensuring privacy and security
-

When the Web first started, it was strictly a one-way street. You, as the Web designer, put up information for others to view — and that was it. Nowadays, feedback from site visitors is critical, and they expect you to provide them with the capability to give it. Most Web sites use some type of form to get information from visitors. This chapter shows you a few easy ways to use forms on your site.

Trying Out Form Makers

The amount and variety of information gathered via forms on the Web are staggering. Visitor information, prospect inquiries, and product orders are only a few uses of forms. If the idea of using forms interests you, but you're not comfortable with CGI, or Common Gateway Interface (see Chapter 6), you may want to try out some of the form makers and processing services that are described in this section.

A tremendous amount of overlap exists between the folks who offer free forms and those who offer form-processing services. Many of the form makers also provide CGI services, although they usually limit them to servicing their own custom forms. A pure form-processing service, however, handles forms that you create on your own. This type of service gives you much more control and power over your Web site contents.

Response-O-Matic, which you predictably find at www.response-o-matic.com on the Web, is one of the best form-processing firms around, and it gives you tremendous flexibility. It handles any form that you want to throw at it. Well, okay, it does have a few restrictions. But they're minimal and reasonable. You can't, for example, transmit more than 50 kilobytes of data with one form submission. That's plenty, however, with scads and bunches to spare.

The questions that you add to the form are up to you, but they require a bit of HTML knowledge. (If you're totally at sea when it comes to HTML, try Freedback.com instead, which is listed in Table 18-1 at the end of this chapter.)

To create a form by using Response-O-Matic's service, follow these steps:

1. Go to `www.response-o-matic.com` and then click the **Create a Template link.**

This action takes you to the site's Form Wizard page.

2. Scroll down the page until you see the **Go heading, shown in Figure 18-1.**

3. In the six text boxes under **Go, enter the following information, in order:**

- The e-mail address you want form data sent to.
- The name that you want users to see on the Thank You page.
- The subject line that you want to appear on the e-mail that you receive from this form.
- A title for the form's Thank You Page. This title appears at the beginning of the page that users of the form see after they submit their information.

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Response-O-Matic Form Wizard! - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar shows "http://www.response-o-matic.com/template.htm". The page content includes a "GO!" heading, followed by instructions to complete information for a form template. There are three visible text input fields: "Enter your email address:", "Enter your name:", and "Enter the subject line for the email you receive:". Each field has a "Note" below it explaining its importance. The page is decorated with a vertical border of cartoon characters on both sides.

Figure 18-1:
Response-O-Matic's Form Wizard page, where you begin creating your customized form.



- The URL of the page that you want form users to go to after they submit their information. This URL is placed in a link on the Thank You page. It can link to any page you want. It's probably a good idea to link back to your survey page so that visitors can continue their surfing without any disorientation, but where it leads to is entirely up to you.

Make sure that you don't overwrite the `http://` at the beginning of the URL that appears in the text box. This prefix is a necessary part of the URL.

- A name to go with the return page URL in the next text box. This name is displayed as the text in the link that leads to the return page.

4. In the four color tables that follow the text boxes (see Figure 18-2), select colors for the following items, in order:

- A background color for the Thank You page
- A text color for the Thank You page
- An unvisited link color for the Thank You page
- A visited link color for the Thank You page

5. Click the Submit button to complete the form template.

Figure 18-2:
Choose colors in the lower section of the Form Wizard page.

6. **On the next page that appears, scroll down and copy the HTML code, paste it into your HTML editor, and save it.**
7. **Edit the template code in your HTML editor so that it contains the questions that you want.**

After you finish modifying the code in your HTML editor, upload the Web page that contains it to your Web server and test it.

Taking Polls

Hardly a day passes without someone announcing the results of some kind of poll: “Thirty-two percent of city residents prefer smog.” “The *For Dummies* nerd’s approval rating climbed by 4 percent in the past week.” “Quantum physics confuses nine people out of five.” For whatever reason, people are fascinated by other people’s feelings about different subjects. And people love to toss in their two bits’ worth whenever they see a survey form. Here are a few common uses for Web site survey forms:

- ✓ **Feedback on product quality:** “How do you rate our new release?”
- ✓ **Opinions on social issues:** “Should we pay more attention to threatened species?”
- ✓ **Preferences between political candidates:** “Do you plan to vote Democrat, Republican, or Independent?”
- ✓ **Requests for new site features:** “Check the services you want us to add.”

Alxnet Poll

With Alxnet Poll (www.alxnet.com/services/poll/), you can easily create a survey to place either on your site or on the Alxnet server. Alxnet uses a simple wizard that walks you through the survey-form creation process. Unlike most of the other survey services on the Web, Alxnet doesn’t slap an advertising banner onto your site — and it doesn’t charge you anything, either.

The way that Alxnet does this for free is by asking you to join one or more opt-in mailing lists (see Chapter 17) during the survey creation process. You don’t have to join, but many people do, and the mailing list messages carry advertising. This is a unique, if roundabout, way for Alxnet to earn its bread. It keeps everybody happy because no one sees an ad unless they choose to subscribe.

Creating the poll

As you create your poll, don’t worry too much about the choices that you make. If you decide that you don’t like something after you finish, you can change it then. To create a poll by using Alxnet’s service, follow these steps:

1. **Go to www.alxnet.com/services/poll/ and click the Free Sign Up Now link.**

Next, you have to look at a Web page that says how wonderful the service is.

2. **Click the Next button to move on.**
3. **Under New Customer, click the Next button (ignore the Existing Customer part unless you're just using these steps as a refresher course).**

You can choose either Business or Personal if you really want to, but they both lead to the same form.

4. **Fill in the information that the resultant form requests. When you're finished, click the Next button at the bottom of the page.**

The only absolutely required information on this form is your first and last name, country, and e-mail address.

5. **Enter a password in the Pick ToolManager Password text box and enter it again in the Confirm Password text box. Make sure to choose a password that uses at least one number.**

You don't pick a username — Alxnet automatically assigns you a ToolManager Login/Customer ID.

6. **Choose a secret question from the drop-down list (these secrets include things like the last four digits of your Social Security Number) and enter the answer in — you guessed it again — the Answer text box.**

7. **Click the Next button.**

8. **On the subsequent Web page, click the Please Click Here icon.**

Make sure you have your printer turned on because you need to print out the Alxnet welcome message that appears on your screen.

9. **Check your e-mail program because you'll be receiving a couple of messages from Alxnet.**

You may receive the second message up to 12 hours after the first one (allowing Alxnet time to set up your account). However, the second one usually comes through at the same time as the first.

Read on to find out how to activate and customize your poll.

Customizing the poll

After you receive the two e-mail messages from Alxnet, follow these steps to activate your account and customize the poll:

1. **Click the link in the e-mail message and enter your Customer ID and Password information in the resultant form and then click the Login button.**



2. On the resulting Web page, click the New button next to Poll.
3. On the next page, type a title for the survey in the Tool Name text box and then click the Add button (or just press the Enter key).
4. On the next page, click the Edit link next to the name you chose for your new poll.
5. On the options page shown in Figure 18-3, you can click the various links for the sections you want to edit. First, click the Look and Feel link.

You can click the Look and Feel link on the main part of the page or under the Shortcuts area on the right. Also, clicking the Edit link next to Look and Feel does the same thing. This is true for all the editable areas.

Do nothing with the Delete Poll links unless you really want to delete the survey you just started working on.

6. On the Look and Feel page, shown in Figure 18-4, enter the required information, such as the width of your survey form. Then scroll down and choose the remainder of your options, like the choice of colors, as shown in Figure 18-5. Click the Save button when you're finished.
7. If you intend to include graphical images in your survey form, click the Graph Images link in the Shortcuts area. Otherwise, skip ahead to Step 9.



The screenshot shows the ALXNET ToolManager interface in Microsoft Internet Explorer. The browser title is "Alxnet ToolManager SiteControl-3.4.1-RELEASE RELEASE (U180) - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar shows "https://toolmanager.alxnet.com/cgi-bin/site/DriverJoy/ToolManager/Core/Access/LoginProcess". The page content includes a navigation menu with "home" and "personal/billing info", and a "logout" link. The main content area is titled "Poll" and shows configuration options for "InterActives > TrialPoll". The options include "Look and feel" (Edit), "Graph images" (Edit), "Question and answers" (Edit), "Vote blocking" (Edit), and "Poll HTML-code" (Edit). A "SHORTCUTS" box on the right contains links for "Look and feel", "Graph images", "Question and answers", "Vote blocking", "View Poll", "HTML code", and "Delete Poll". The status bar at the bottom shows "Edit: ThisPoll -- ID: 2005" and "Internet".

Figure 18-3:

You can edit all the options for your survey from here.

Figure 18-4:
Enter the
basic
information
for your
survey.

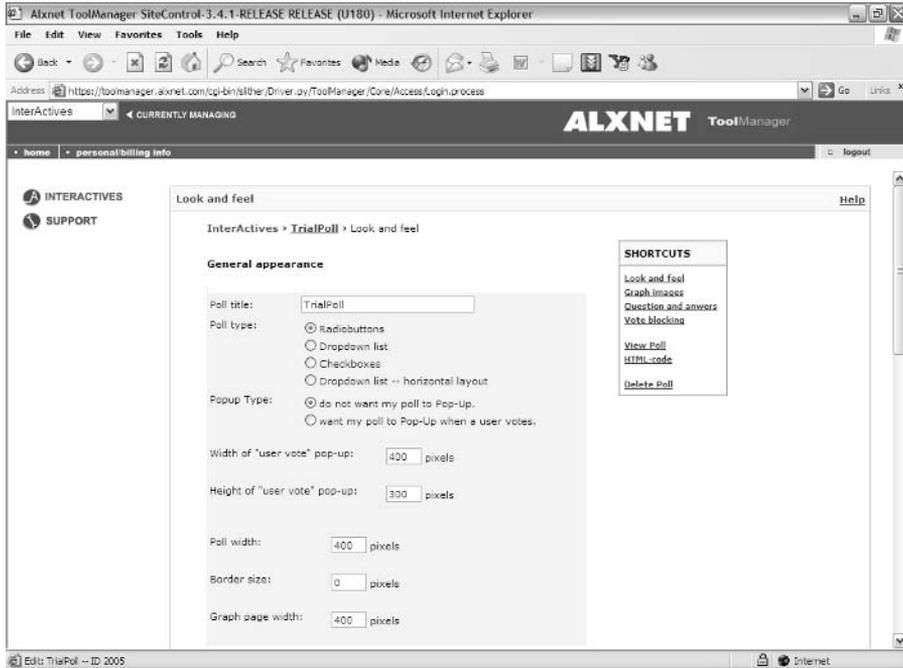
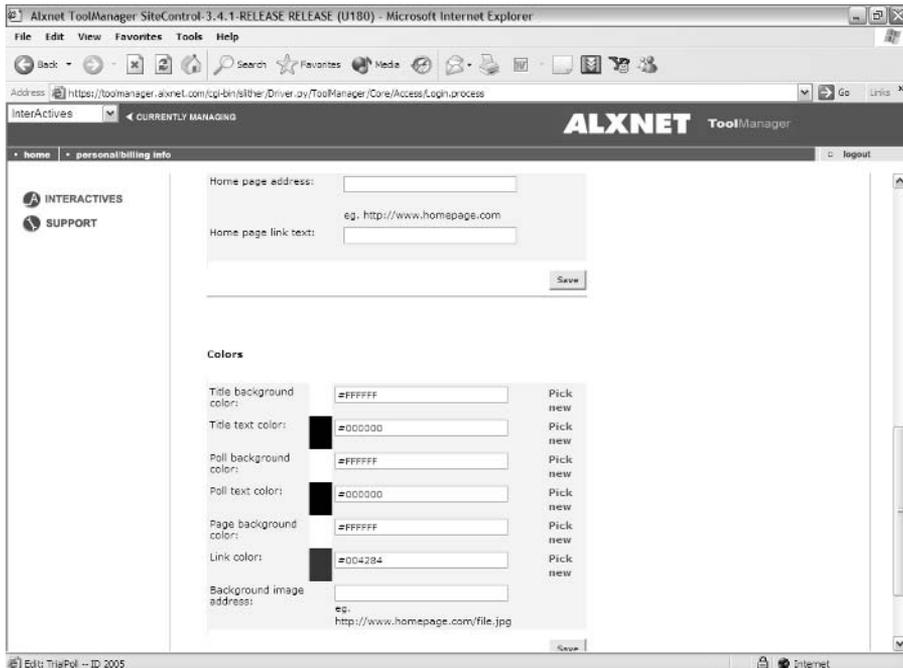


Figure 18-5:
Complete
the basic
setup by
entering
colors.



8. On the Graph Image page, shown in Figure 18-6, enter the appropriate addresses for accessing those images in the form and click the Save button in each case.
9. Click the Question and Answers link in the Shortcuts area.
10. On the Question and Answers page, enter the question in the Poll Question text box and then click the Save button.
11. Enter the possible answers in the text boxes for Answer #1, Answer #2, and so on (as shown in Figure 18-7), and click the Save buttons.
You can enter up to 20 possible answers for each survey.
12. Click the Vote Blocking link in the Shortcuts area.
13. On the Vote Blocking page, click the Block by User IP-Address option button or the Block by Using Cookies option button, and then click the Save button.

Blocking by using cookies is advantageous because it doesn't depend upon a specific address. Most people, despite the risks, do use cookies, so this is a worthwhile option to pursue.

14. Click the View Poll link in the Shortcuts area to see if the survey form is set up the way you want. If not, repeat the earlier steps as necessary to set it up to your satisfaction.

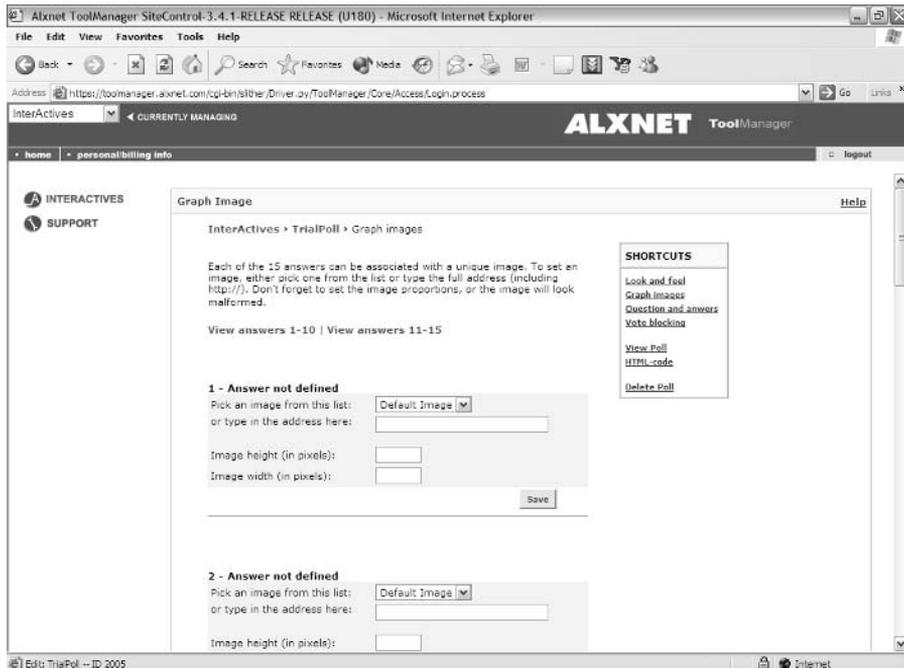


Figure 18-6:
You can add graphical images to indicate responses.

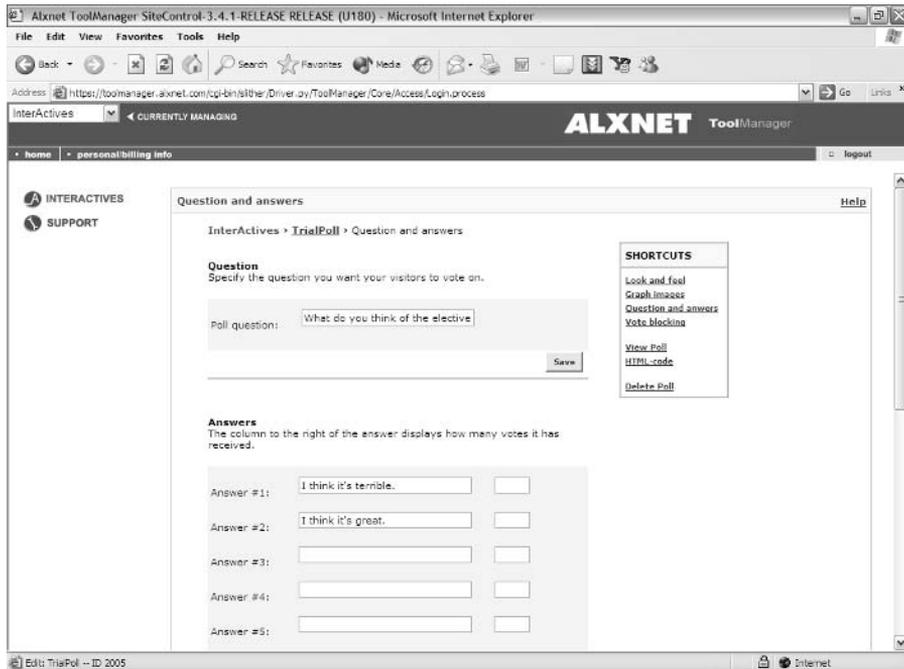


Figure 18-7:
Editing the
question
and
answers is
simple.

15. Click the Poll HTML-Code link (or the HTML-Code link in the Shortcuts area).

Note that the exact code depends upon the options you chose in the earlier steps.

16. If you want to put the survey form on your Web site, copy the code from the text area here (see Figure 18-8) and paste it into a Web page.

If you don't want the form on your site, you can leave the survey form on Alxnet's server and link to it by using the URL that appears before the HTML code to create a link from your site to Alxnet's site.

FormSite.com

FormSite.com (www.formsite.com) is another form maker that, in addition to creating a variety of general forms, has a specific survey form service. Like Response-O-Matic (described earlier in the chapter), the service is free if you accept its accompanying advertising — or you can pop for a few bucks to get rid of the advertising banners and pick up some extra features, such as secure forms.

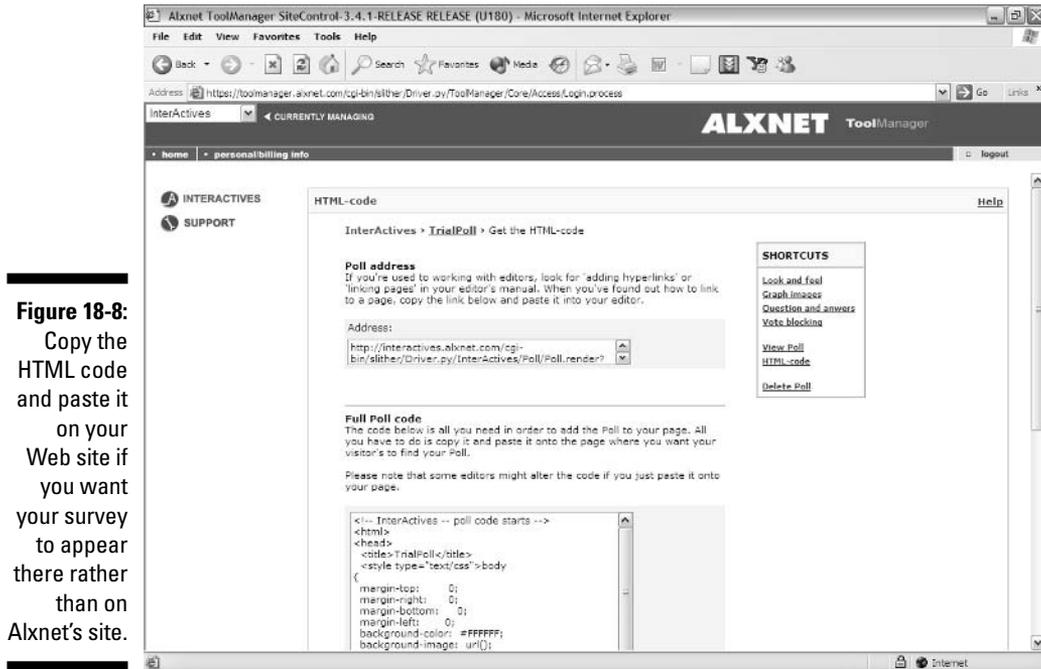


Figure 18-8:
Copy the HTML code and paste it on your Web site if you want your survey to appear there rather than on Alxnet's site.

To create a form with FormSite.com, follow these steps:

1. Go to www.formsite.com. You can't miss finding some way to sign up for a new account. Click the **Free Account** link or the **Create New Account** link. Or you can go graphical and click the picture that says **Click Here to Join**.

After you've clicked the link of your choice, you see the User Profile page.

2. Type a username, a password, and an e-mail address in the appropriate text boxes on the User Profile form, shown in Figure 18-9.

FormSite.com keeps your e-mail address confidential. The form only requires these few items of information.

3. You also need to choose a name for the directory (folder) where your surveys will reside on FormSite.com's server.

This doesn't have to be anything technical, but you should pick a name that makes sense to you.

4. Click the **Create Account** button.
5. On the resultant Web page, choose which type of form you want to use.

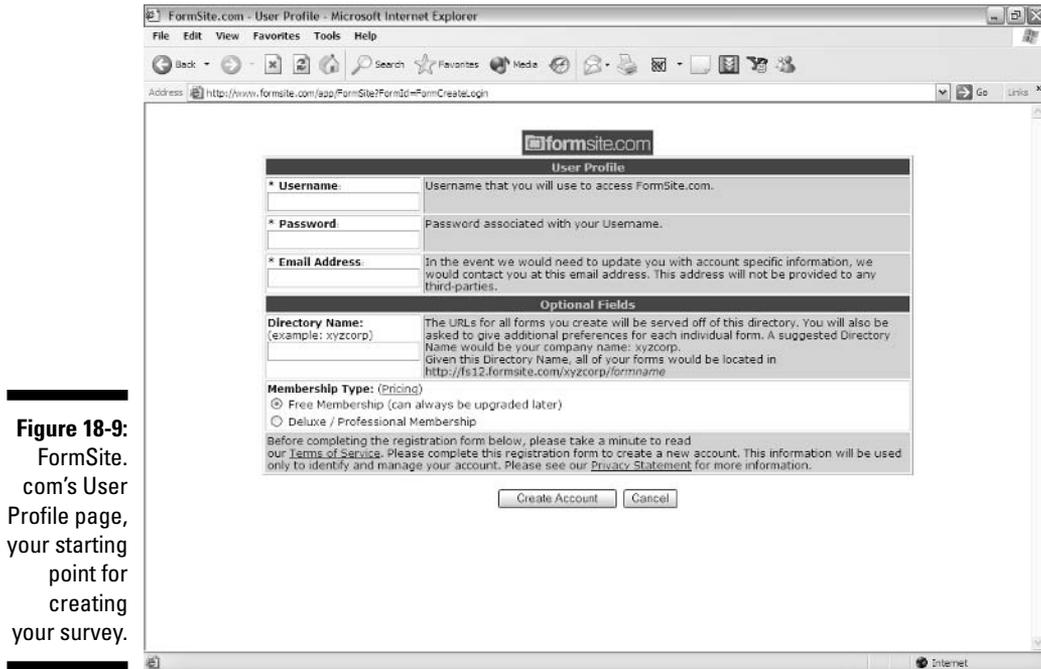


Figure 18-9:
FormSite.com's User Profile page, your starting point for creating your survey.

6. On the subsequent Web page, click the option button next to the survey template that most closely resembles the one you want to create.
7. Depending upon your choices, fill in the required information for the form type you want to create, then click on the Submit button at the bottom of the page.

Privacy and Security

First off, if you submit your site's input to someone else for processing, you surrender control over that information. Make sure that you check out the form processor's privacy policy before you commit yourself. Look for a link that says something like Privacy Statement or Privacy Policy, click it, and carefully read the fine print that you find there. Print out a hard copy to keep in your files.



If the form processor doesn't post a clearly stated privacy policy on its site, you probably don't want to use its services. If the company doesn't promise in writing to keep your information and your users' information confidential and you still go with it, you may end up feeding everything from your site's forms right into a spammer's or telemarketer's data bank.

Another concern is that most form-processing services send the form contents to you by e-mail. Because the information in the form travels through the Internet's e-mail systems, anyone running a server through which it passes as it traverses the Internet can read the information. Now, your average network administrator has better things to do than read other people's passing e-mail, but you've got to keep in mind that this ain't exactly the most secure approach possible. *Sniffer programs*, software that filters e-mail as it passes through a server, can grab sensitive information from those messages.

Obviously, using form-processing services isn't the ideal approach if you're getting information that would be useful to crooks — such as credit card numbers, for instance.



If you handle sensitive information, you need to make sure that any form processor that you use collects your data via a secure form and keeps the data on its server until you can pick it up yourself by logging on to a secure page at the processor's site, like with the professional-level version of FormSite.com (described in the preceding section).

Online Sources for Forms and Polls

Table 18-1 lists some places on the World Wide Web where you can find more resources like the ones that were covered in this chapter.

Table 18-1 Online Resources for Forms and Polls	
Web Site Name	Web Address
EZpolls	ezpolls.superstats.com
Freedback.com	www.freedback.com
Freepolls.com	www.freepolls.com
Nytebyte's FormMaker	www.nytebyte.com/business/cgisamp/formaker.htm
SiteGadgets.com	www.sitegadgets.com
Sparklit	www.sparklit.com

Part VI

The Part of Tens

The 5th Wave By Rich Tennant



"Guess who found a Kiss merchandise site on the Web while you were gone?"

In this part . . .

Well, it just wouldn't be a *For Dummies* book without the Part of Tens. Chapter 19 shows you where to go when you need to find out the answers to everything from business and legal issues to grammar. Chapter 20 is a guide to some of the best things an e-commerce site can add. And Chapter 21 is a potpourri of ten more great add-ins.

Chapter 19

Ten Great Places to Get Advice

In This Chapter

- ▶ Cozahost newsletter
 - ▶ Kasamba
 - ▶ grammarNOW!
 - ▶ geek/talk
 - ▶ The Small Business Advisor
 - ▶ LawGuru.com
 - ▶ Bizy Moms
 - ▶ Website Tips
 - ▶ Web Developer's Journal
 - ▶ Siteowners.com
-

We all need advice from time to time. Even if you're terribly independent, as nearly self-sufficient as can be, there are times when you need to turn to others for assistance. Well, here are ten Web sites where you can go if you feel the need to ask for help. Each site has its own special feeling and its own particular set of standards. But somewhere in this chapter, you're gonna find a few places that you'll be so happy to know about that you'll just burst a bubble.

In addition to the sites described in this chapter, you also may want to check out state and local government sites for assistance:

- ✔ FirstGov.Gov: U.S. Government's Official Web Portal (www.firstgov.gov)
- ✔ healthfinder (www.healthfinder.com)
- ✔ Internal Revenue Service (www.irs.gov)
- ✔ Library of Congress: State and Local Government Internet Resources Page (www.loc.gov/global/state/stategov.html)

Cozahost Newsletter

The Cozahost newsletter is an e-commerce e-zine with a difference: It's actually worth reading. Granted, it doesn't have as many neat links as are packed into this book, but against competition like that, who stands a chance? (For the humor-impaired, that's a joke — consider yourself officially notified.) You can check out the Cozahost newsletter, shown in Figure 19-1, at www.cozahost.com/news/.

Seriously, folks, the links in the Cozahost newsletter, although fewer than you find on some sites that have a lot less to offer, are premium. It's worth your time to follow them. If they're internal links, they lead to good articles on Web work; if they're external, they lead to decent tools that you should consider adding to your own repertoire.

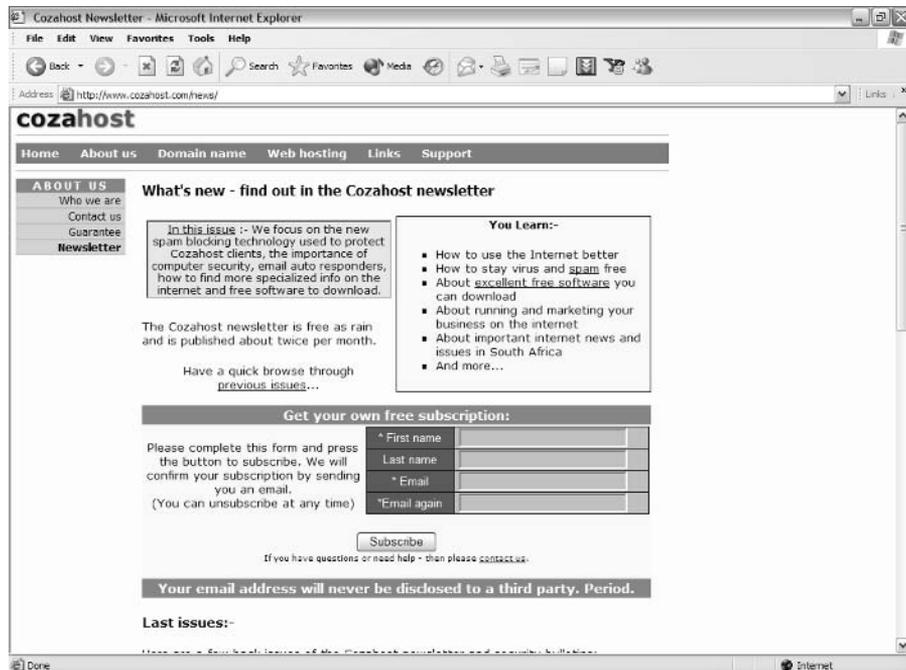


Figure 19-1:
The
Cozahost
newsletter
is an e-zine
with great
content.

Kasamba

Kasamba (www.kasamba.com) is a great place to get answers on a wide variety of topics, ranging from businesses to computers (see Figure 19-2). It's also a great source of information on lots of things that Web people need to know. Interested in starting a home-based business? Want to know about tax liabilities? Or about e-commerce or Web design? Ask 'em.

Kasamba has the people who know all the answers, and they'll get back to you quickly with good, solid information.

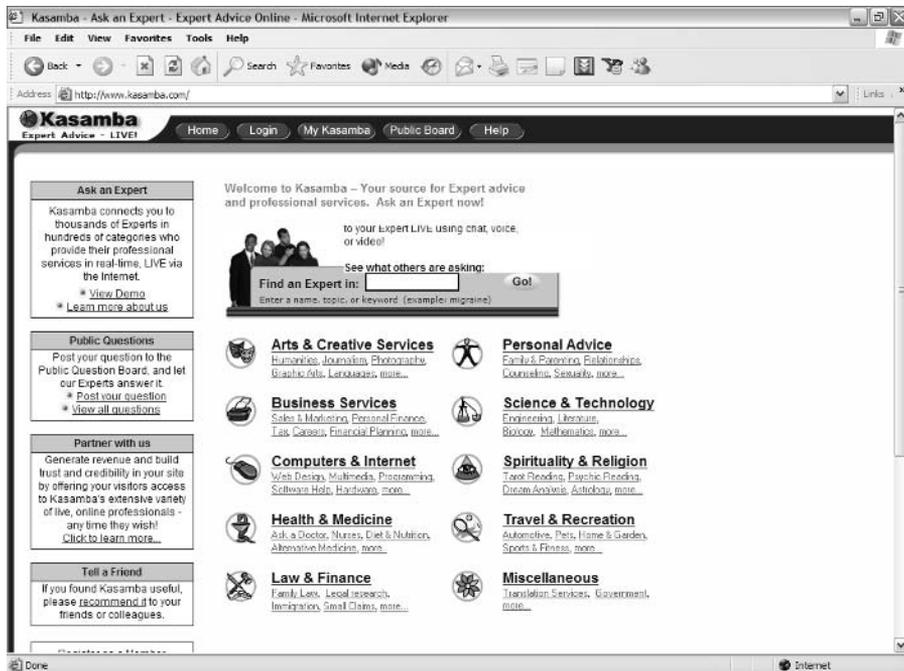


Figure 19-2: Kasamba is the place to find the answer to just about any question.

grammarNOW!

Do your participles dangle embarrassingly? Are your diphthongs out of style? If you ever stay awake wondering about these mighty questions, grammarNOW! (www.grammarnow.com) is your kind of site. This site, shown in Figure 19-3, is one place where you can get free answers to those embarrassing questions with complete confidentiality. The folks who run this site e-mail you an answer without showing the world that you don't know what to do about the ablative absolute.

If you're really out on a limb, you'll be happy to know that not only can you get a quick answer for free, but you can actually hire the brains behind this site to go over your Web site with a fine-tooth comb and clear up any grammatical problems on it. And the site's list of grammar links is well worth exploring on its own.

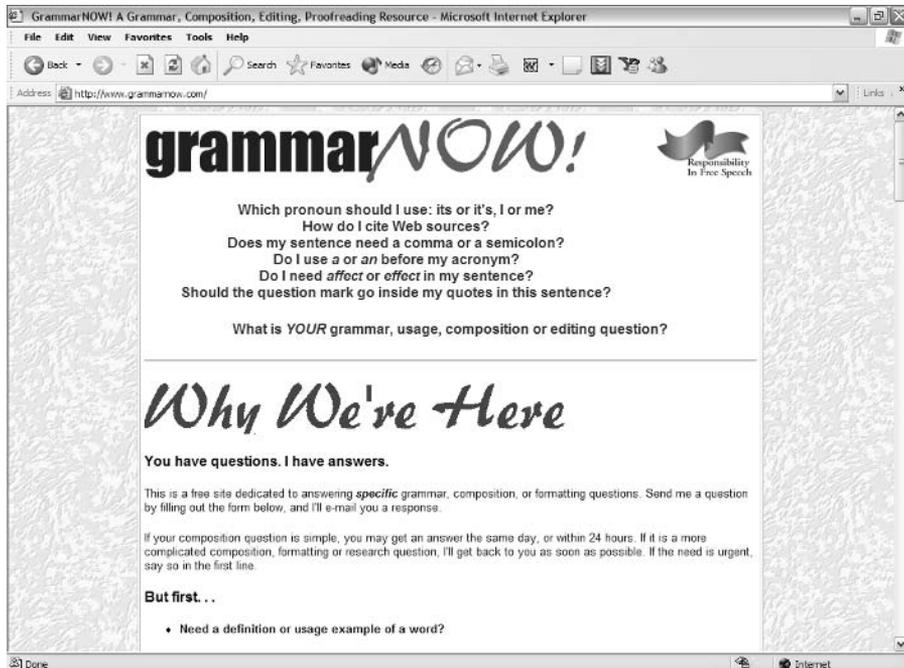


Figure 19-3:
grammar
NOW!
answers
your
grammatical
questions.

geek/talk Forums for Webmasters

Ah, fellow geeks! geek/talk (www.geekvillage.com/forums) is the place where you can let it all hang out. The geek/talk bulletin board (see Figure 19-4) is for those of us who just *love* technical stuff, who absolutely live for the last bit that we can squeeze out of HTML, who . . . well, you get the idea. Actually, you're welcome to pop in and ask the simplest questions in the world. Even if you don't know the first thing about HTML, this site is the place to ask your dumbest questions and expect a civil answer.

This wonderland is a great place to visit. Here, you'll find folks who are interested in all the same things you are, from Web design to e-commerce. And you can find a different BBS (bulletin board service) for just about any topic you want to discuss.

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Internet Explorer browser displaying the website <http://www.geekvillage.com/forums/>. The page title is "Webmaster Forums. geek/talk at GeekVillage.com: Quality Discussions For Webmasters & Merchants". The browser's address bar shows the URL. The website header includes the "geek/talk" logo and navigation links such as "GeekVillage Home", "Report Trouble On BB", "BB Rules", "BB Posting Guide", "BB Feedback", and "BB Testimonials". A quote is displayed: "There are three things you can count on in life: death, taxes, and Fastclick payment!" - Posted here at GeekVillage. Below the quote, there are links for "Member Control Panel", "Register", "FAQ", "Search", "geek/talk Home", and "geek/gallery". A table lists forum categories with columns for "Posts", "Threads", and "Last Post".

Webmaster Forum	Posts	Threads	Last Post
Community			
<input type="checkbox"/> Archives of the best threads Read the very best threads. Treasures of knowledge and fun. Read only Forum.	770	31	12-01-2003 11:15 PM by Czar
<input type="checkbox"/> Help Me - FAQ - Lost Geek - Read Only Lost in the desert? Need a guide? Read our help before you make another click!	38	34	09-26-2003 02:28 AM by Steve_5
<input type="checkbox"/> Technical Questions Help with the technical operation of our Forum software, our geek/gallery , and Contributing Geek services . Confused or lost? Tips on using geek/talk , geek/gallery , and GeekVillage Webmail all kindly. All issues related to your membership, our Rules & Procedures, or how we run geek/talk or geek/gallery , should only use our BB Feedback form.	382	89	02-25-2004 05:49 PM by Steve_5
<input type="checkbox"/> Test Posts Practice here with test posts. Try our vB code and refine your signature. Questions or comments on this BB or your Membership should only use our BB Feedback form.	606	263	03-17-2004 06:15 PM by Stander
<input type="checkbox"/> geek/vok			

Figure 19-4:
The
geek/talk
Webmaster
forums.

The Small Business Advisor

The Small Business Advisor (www.isquare.com) is one handy little resource for those of you who are thinking about opening up your own business. This site, shown in Figure 19-5, covers everything from taxes to insurance and has business news that actually makes sense to small-business people (and tall ones, too). Its free e-mail newsletter is a prime source of savvy advice, useful information, and links that you'll want to click.

The site's various checklists alone are worth the visit — they cover everything from choosing a business partner or a bank to working with an attorney. Lists of business-oriented newsgroups, Internet-specific business commentary, and state-specific contact information are just a few of the tidbits that this site offers.

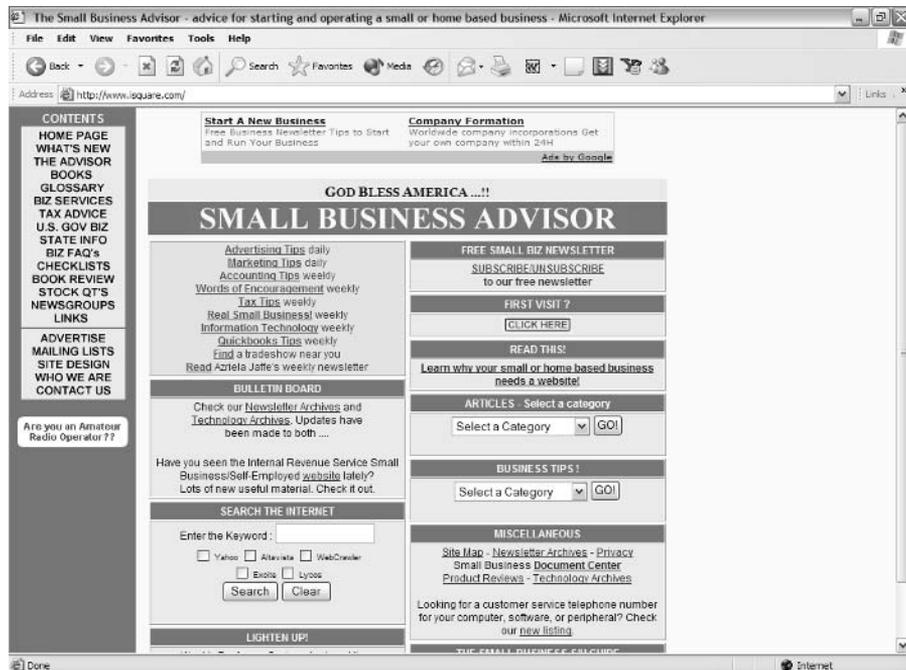


Figure 19-5:
The Small Business Advisor has tons of information for commercial Web sites.

LawGuru.com

LawGuru.com (www.lawguru.com) is a nice source for legal research. At this site, shown in Figure 19-6, you can check out everything from the latest U.S. Code revisions to that money you forgot you were owed.

This site a huge database of legal questions and answers, and if you can't find what you're looking for in it, you can submit your own questions to the LawGuru folks. They've also got chat rooms for both attorneys and normal people and a no-nonsense FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) on copyright.

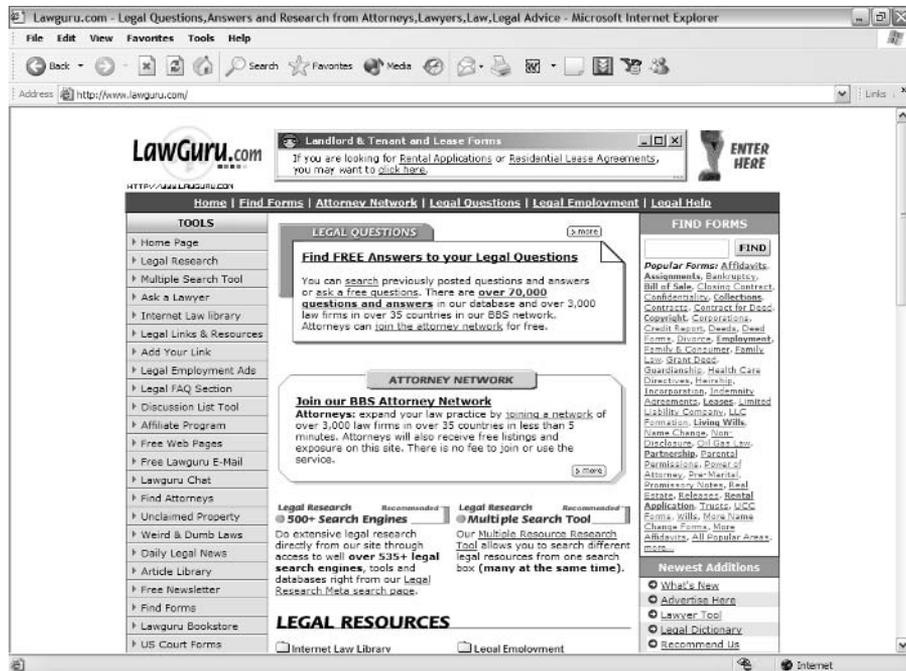


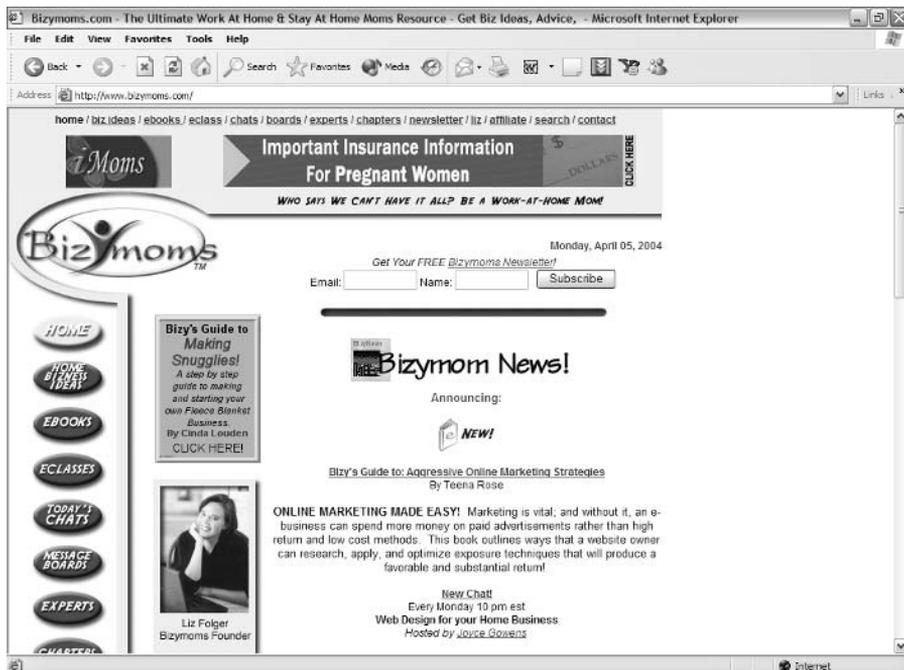
Figure 19-6: LawGuru.com is a great legal resource.

Bizy Moms

Despite its name, Bizy Moms (www.bizymoms.com) appeals to both the mother and father who want to work from home while raising a family. The site, shown in Figure 19-7, hosts live chats on issues such as “The Internet, Money, and You” or “Business on a Shoestring.” Bizy Moms is the best place to go if you want to know about free postage, Internet marketing, or just about anything else of interest to the home-working parent.

Toss in the advice on time management and paperwork control from those who’ve been there, and you’re just beginning to explore this site.

Figure 19-7: Bizy Moms is a fabulous resource for the work-at-home crowd.



Website Tips

If you're looking for one place to find information on everything from accessibility to XML, it's hard to beat Website Tips (www.websitetips.com). You're talking several thousand listings here: hand-held wireless devices, JavaScript, e-commerce, legal considerations — all calculated to increase your Web design IQ. The Website Tips main page is shown in Figure 19-8.

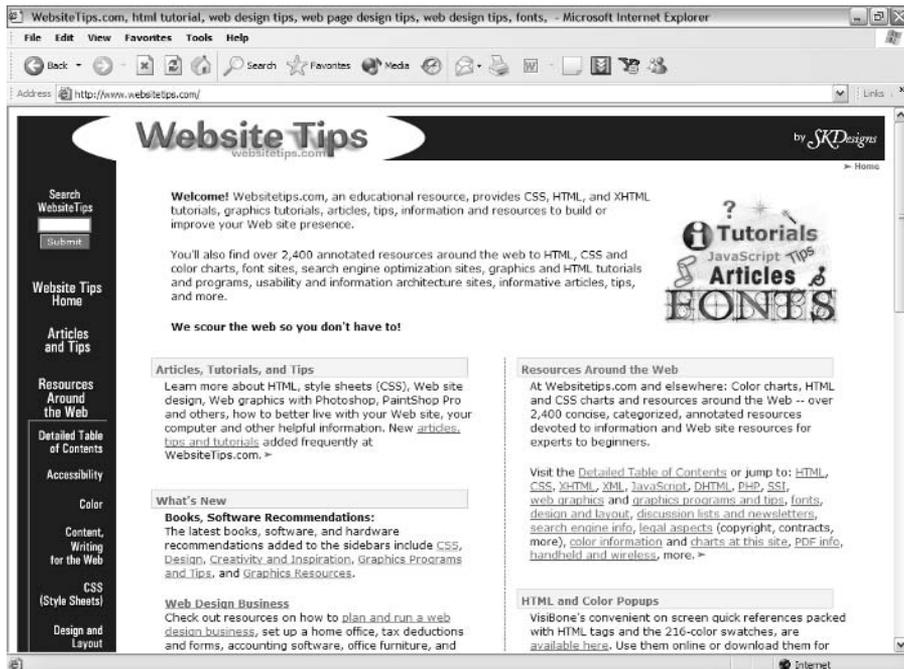


Figure 19-8: Website Tips offers great advice on Internet design and over 2,000 worthwhile links to explore.

Web Developer's Journal

What is there to say about a site that's just chock full of so many goodies? The Web Developer's Journal (www.webdevelopersjournal.com) lives up to its name, providing tons of material on every aspect of life — at least as far as it affects the Web. Really. Everything from setting up forms to animation. The Web Developer's Journal main page is shown in Figure 19-9.

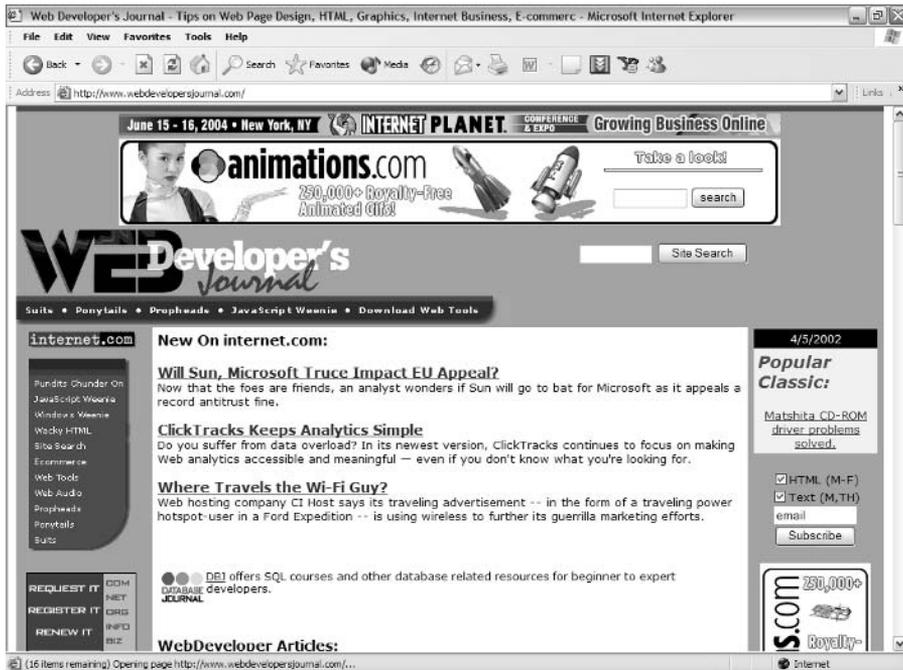


Figure 19-9: Web Developer's Journal is a great source of information.

Siteowners.com

Siteowners.com (www.siteowners.com) is just what it sounds like — a meeting place for people who run Web sites. If you're interested in Web design, this site is a pretty nice place to stop in and absorb things. The site, shown in Figure 19-10, even has its own Webmaster forums, including Web site critiques and discussions about topics like e-commerce and Web site programming techniques.

You can find articles on e-commerce, marketing, and Web design, just to name a few of the features of this premier site.

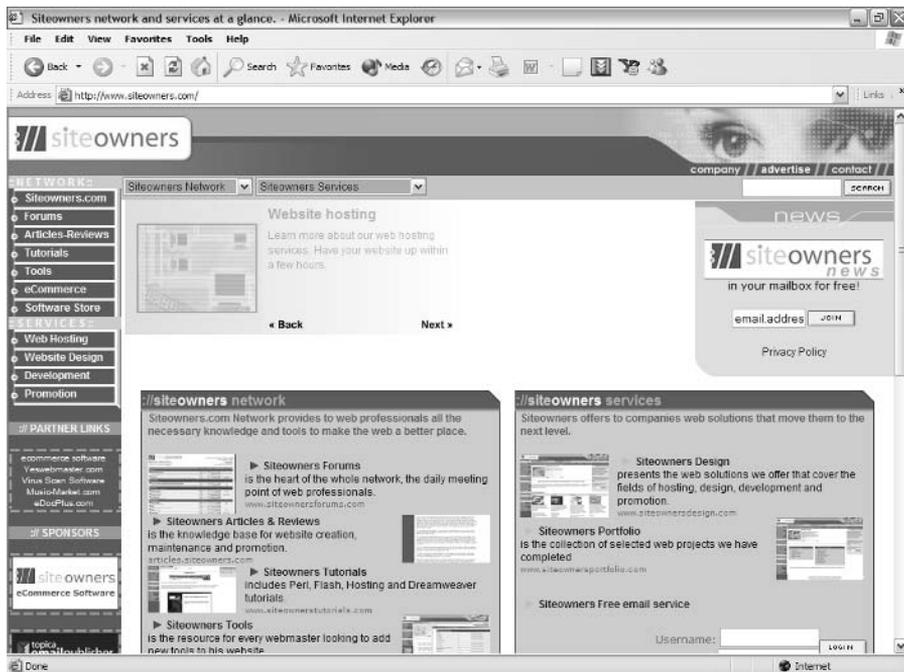


Figure 19-10: Siteowners.com has tips on everything about Web development.

Chapter 20

Ten Fabulous Tools for E-Commerce

In This Chapter

- ▶ WorldPay
 - ▶ osCommerce
 - ▶ HumanClick
 - ▶ CafePress.com
 - ▶ ECommerce Guide
 - ▶ MapQuest
 - ▶ S&H greenpoints
 - ▶ SYSTRAN Translation Software
 - ▶ TRUSTe
 - ▶ DMA Privacy Policy Generator
-

You simply must try this blend of programs, add-ins, and services if you're into e-commerce. Even if you're not, some of the items in this chapter, such as HumanClick, MapQuest, or the Direct Marketing Association's Privacy Policy Generator, may come in handy. Some of these items are freebies, some cost serious money, and others offer a combination in which you can get a lesser version at no charge.

WorldPay

When it comes to finding a financial partner for an online business, you can't do much better than WorldPay, shown in Figure 20-1. Unlike so many banks, the WorldPay folks “get it” — the Internet, that is. They truly understand that a Web business is a global business.

Let's face it — how many merchant account providers are comfortable dealing with payments via both American Express and Lastschriften? How many of them can help you comprehend payments in dollars and euros and yen? WorldPay also supports deferred payments, allowing you to let your customers spread their buying power over time.

On top of this, the WorldPay folks are happy to work with companies large and small, and they have a refreshingly simple application process for merchant accounts. So, what are you waiting for? Pop on over to www.worldpay.com.

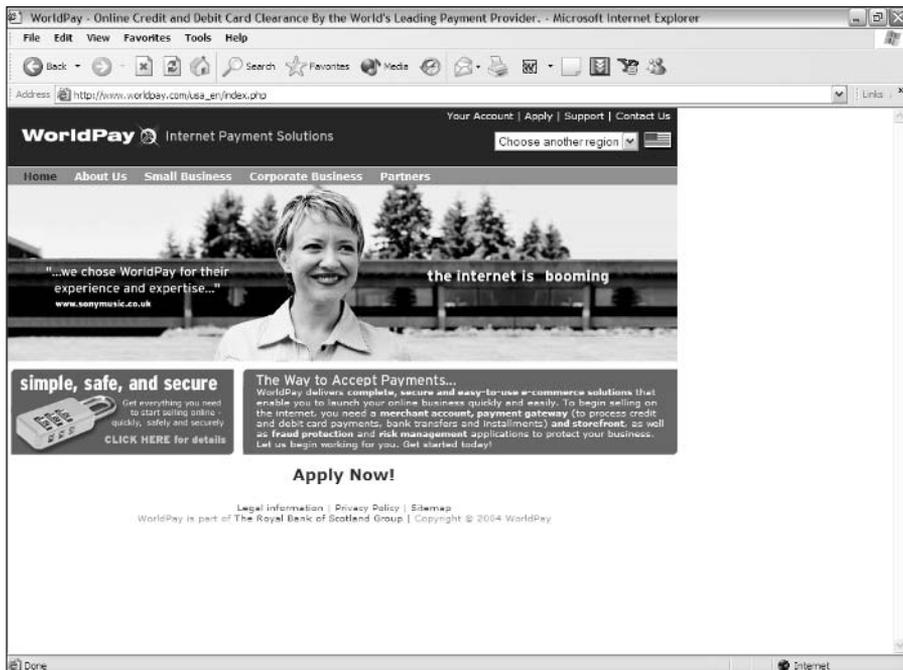


Figure 20-1:
WorldPay
is geared
for e-
commerce.

osCommerce

osCommerce has a deal that's hard to refuse — you can download its osCommerce software for zero dollars with no limits, no time constraints, no nothing. It's open-source software, which means that not only is it free, but you also get to play with the source code and change it to suit yourself. Ah, yes, that's the catch. If you're not a PHP programmer or don't have one on staff, you may get in a bit over your head with this software; if you are or do, however, you can download this software at www.oscommerce.com.

Still, even without custom modifications, using this package is a worthwhile way to get your store up and running. It handles everything from product page creation to shipping management and just about anything that you can imagine in between. It's easy to use, too. Figure 20-2 shows a demo catalog made with osCommerce.

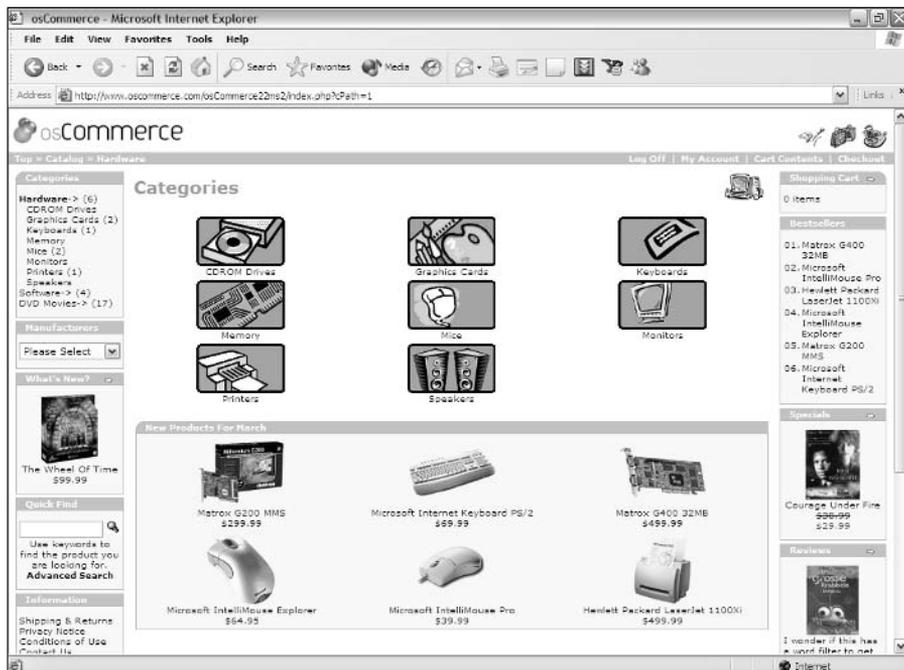


Figure 20-2: osCommerce software makes it easy to manage an e-commerce site.

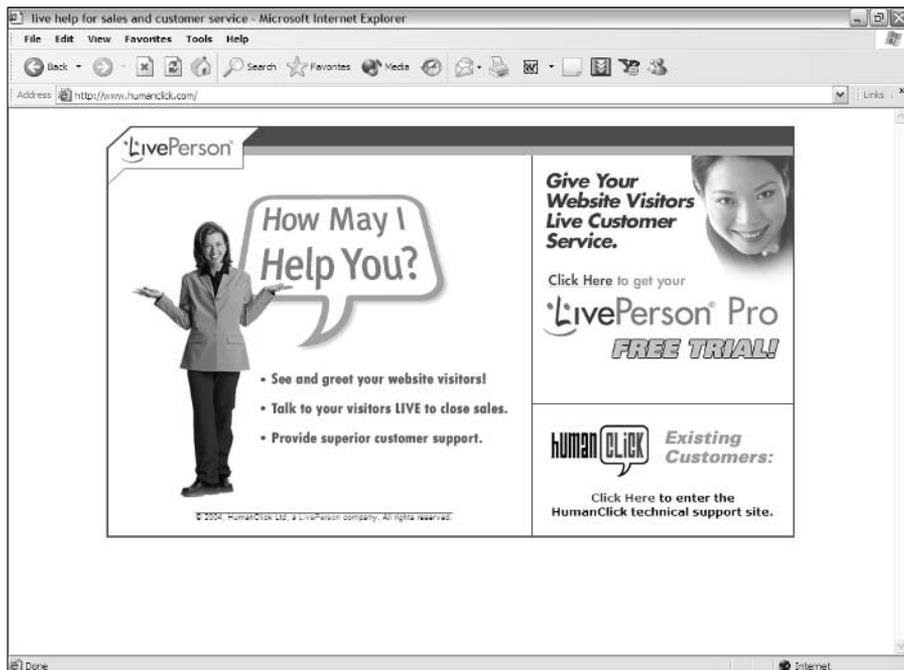
HumanClick

HumanClick (www.humanclick.com) is a fantastic way to add a human touch to your Web site. It's a service that enables you to respond instantly to your customers' needs. Imagine: You're looking at a page on someone's site, and you have some questions about the products you see. An icon there reads Click for a Real Person. You do so, and you go into a chat with someone who can answer your questions. Pretty nice, eh? Yep, this one's a must-have. Drop everything and go to this Web site, shown in Figure 20-3. Click the Free Trial link and think about how nice having this feature on your site would be.

This service is definitely something you want on your Web site — and you don't even need to keep your people available 24 hours a day to use it. During the times that nobody's around to answer questions, you just tell the HumanClick client program on your computer that you're unavailable, and the icon on your site changes to read Leave a Message.

As if all that's not enough, the service places no burden on your customers because HumanClick is JavaScript that's embedded in your pages. It works with every major Web browser, and your visitors don't need to download anything to make it work.

Figure 20-3: HumanClick is a must-have for your Web site because it enables your visitors to speak to an actual person.



CafePress.com

Got some great ideas for T-shirts, coffee mugs, or mousepads? If you don't want to spend lots of money for bulky and dangerous equipment, drop in to CafePress.com (www.cafepress.com), shown in Figure 20-4. It's not just another place that'll iron an image onto a mousepad for a fee. It's a whole e-commerce setup that costs you nothing.

You can set up a store at the site with no investment except your image files. Just upload those files to CafePress.com, and it takes care of everything. Not only does it do the manufacturing and shipping for you, but you don't even have to get a credit card merchant account; it'll do your credit card order processing, too.



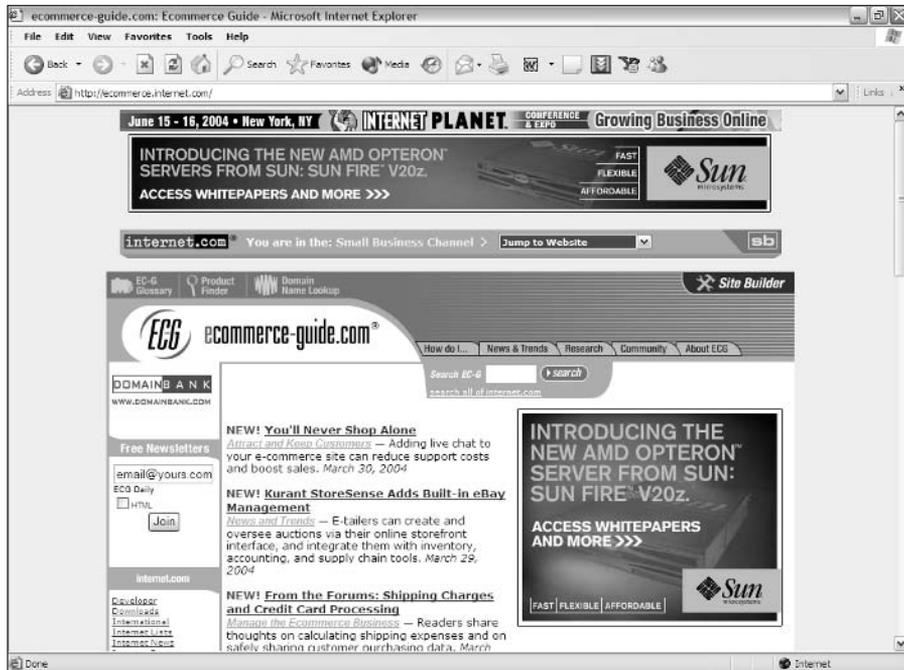
Figure 20-4: CafePress.com makes it easy to get into the art business.

ECommerce Guide

The ECommerce Guide (ecommerce.internet.com) is an e-zine that's a truly valuable resource for anyone involved in e-commerce. It's got reviews of online store software, the latest news for e-sales, and some really, really good columns. If you're not checking out this site, shown in Figure 20-5, you're missing out on a lot of useful information.

Be sure to check out the Small Business Computing Forums, which include discussions on Small Business Computing, ECommerce Issues, and Online Marketing Issues. And if you come across e-commerce terms that you're not familiar with, check out the site's handy glossary. You can access it by clicking the EC-G Glossary link in the upper-left corner of the site's main page.

Figure 20-5:
The ECommerce Guide provides useful information about e-sales, online store software, and so on.



MapQuest

MapQuest (www.mapquest.com) is a fabulous place to get maps. No kidding — maps. But not just plain old road maps. These beauties are customized maps that you can create for helping people find your location, for example, or showing them how to get from their hotel to a tourist attraction.

Although MapQuest charges for plenty of things on its site, it also offers a free service that you may want to take a look at: LinkFree. LinkFree links your site to the main MapQuest site so that your users can take advantage of its cartography services.

To access the MapQuest free services page, go to www.mapquest.com/solutions/main.adp. You can also get there with just a few mouse clicks: First, go to MapQuest's main page at www.mapquest.com, as shown in Figure 20-6. Click the Business Solutions link at the top of the page and, on the next page, click the Create a MapQuest LinkFree Link Now link.



Figure 20-6: MapQuest gives you professional cartography services for free.

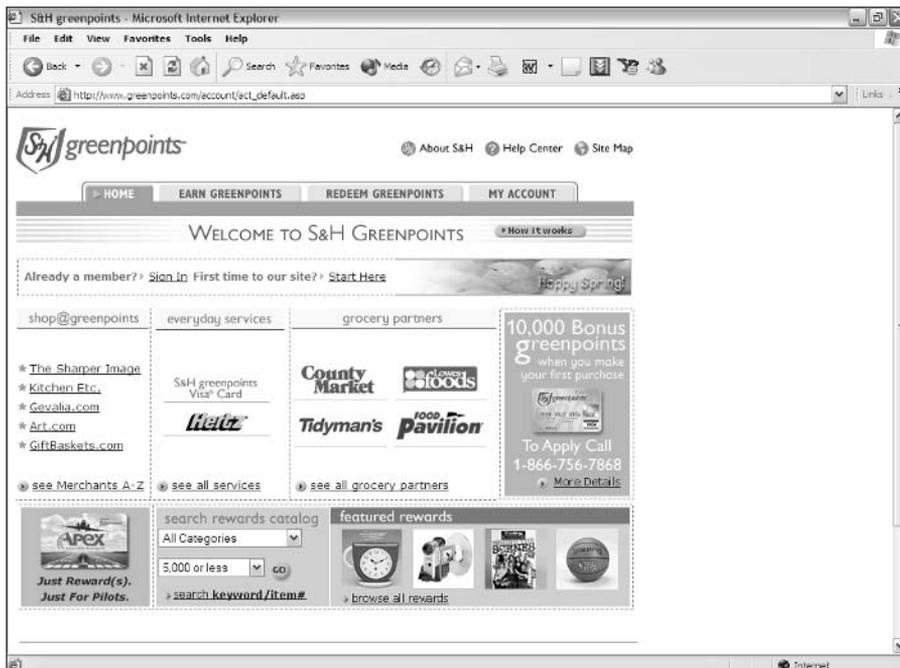
S&H greenpoints

Ah, remember how you used to collect S&H Green Stamps? Okay, ask your parents about it. Or maybe your grandparents. At any rate, someone you know will remember. It used to be that you'd go to the grocery, fill your cart, and pay for your purchases. Then, along with your change, you'd get a certain number of stamps from the cashier, depending on how much money you'd just spent. You'd toss the stamps in the grocery bag along with your receipt and trot on home. You'd put the stamps in a kitchen drawer until you had so many that you couldn't open the drawer any more without stamps spilling out all over the floor.

When things reached that stage, you'd have to face the odious task of licking all the stamps and pasting them into the books that you also picked up at the grocery. When you had a whole bunch of books filled, you'd sit down with the S&H catalog and go on a shopping spree. Now the Internet is reviving this grand old piece of Americana. But this time around, you don't have to lick all those stamps! Now, it's S&H greenpoints, a new form of digital reward — kind of like the Web equivalent of frequent-flyer miles (see Figure 20-7).

I have a major hunch that this arrangement is going to work out well for both online shoppers and e-merchants. If you're into any kind of e-commerce, look into this site at www.greenpoints.com.

Figure 20-7:
The S&H greenpoints home page brings a grand old tradition to new digital life.



SYSTRAN Translation Software

One of the hottest sites on the Web is AltaVista's Babel Fish translation page. It works with SYSTRAN Translation Software, and you can go right to the source and set up your very own translation system. Anyone who's serious about e-commerce must deal with the fact that the World Wide Web is just that — a global setup. Your storefront is an international business, and although English is widely spoken, it's hardly the only language in the world.

With SYSTRAN Translation Software working on your site, visitors quickly translate your pages among more than half a dozen major Western languages: Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish. And SYSTRAN doesn't stop there. The service also includes Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Russian. So hurry up already and pop into SYSTRAN's Web site, shown in Figure 20-8. The whole world is waiting. Run — don't walk — to www.systransoft.com.

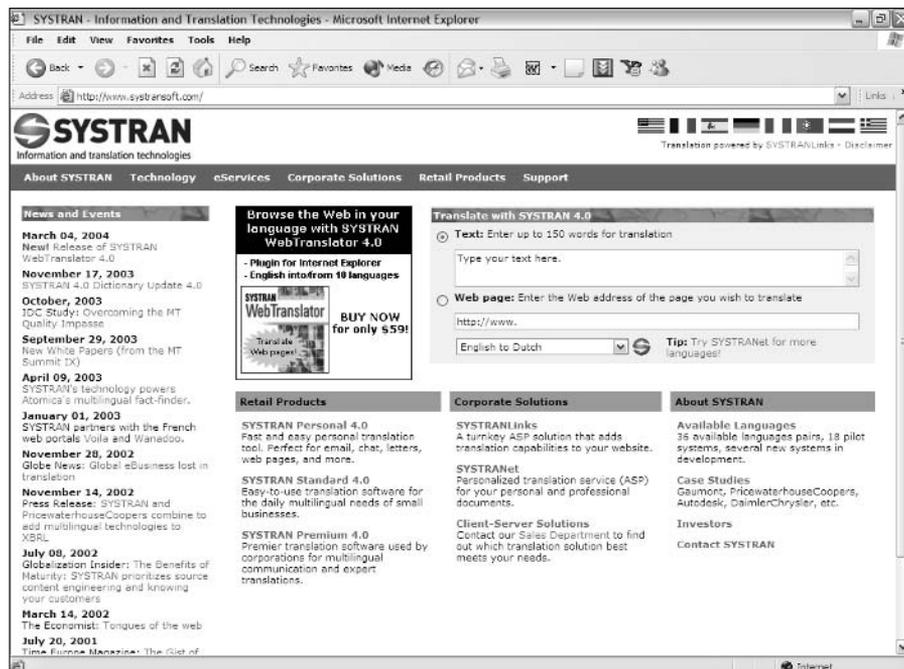


Figure 20-8: SYSTRAN's home page, where you can sign up to add its translation service to your site.

TRUSTe

This site is kind of an open question. What question is that? Well, whether paying hundreds or even thousands of dollars to an outside group to certify that your privacy policy means what it says is worth the price to your organization. To solidly quantify how much a trustmark such as the TRUSTe seal means in terms of extra sales is impossible, just as it is with things such as Chamber of Commerce or Better Business Bureau logos in a store window. Nonetheless, major outfits from MSN to eBay have jumped onto the TRUSTe bandwagon.

If you collect any kind of potentially embarrassing personal information, such as criminal records or health status, getting TRUSTe certification is probably worth the cost. Without it, people may be reluctant to provide honest answers to such questions. Still, unless you're in the employment or insurance business (or something similar), you're not likely to gather any kind of information other than names, addresses, phone numbers, credit card numbers, and so on.

Visit the TRUSTe site and read over all the materials there to decide for yourself whether its service is right for your situation (see Figure 20-9). You also find valuable advice there on creating a privacy statement. You can access the site's home page at www.truste.com.

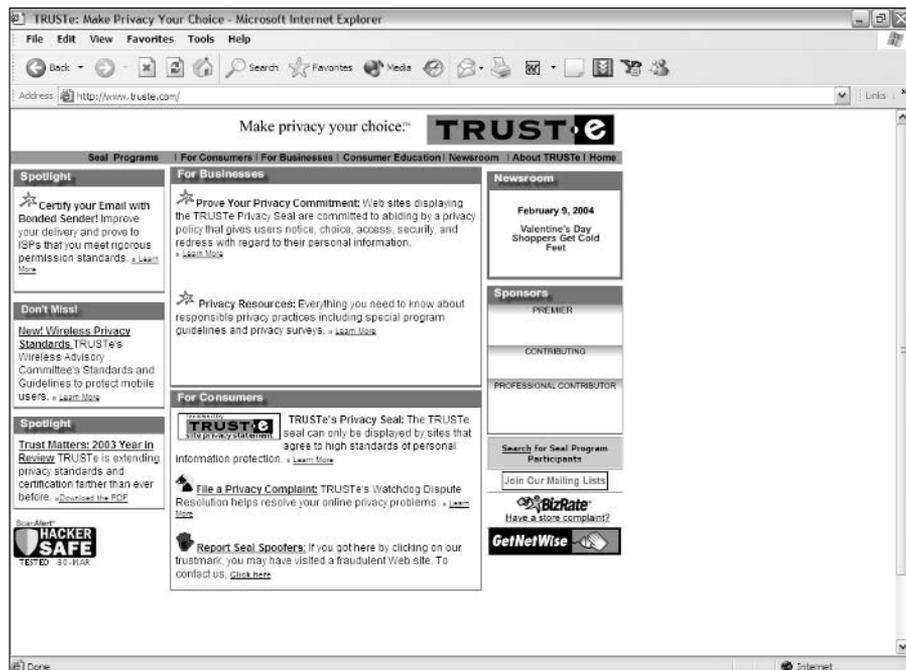
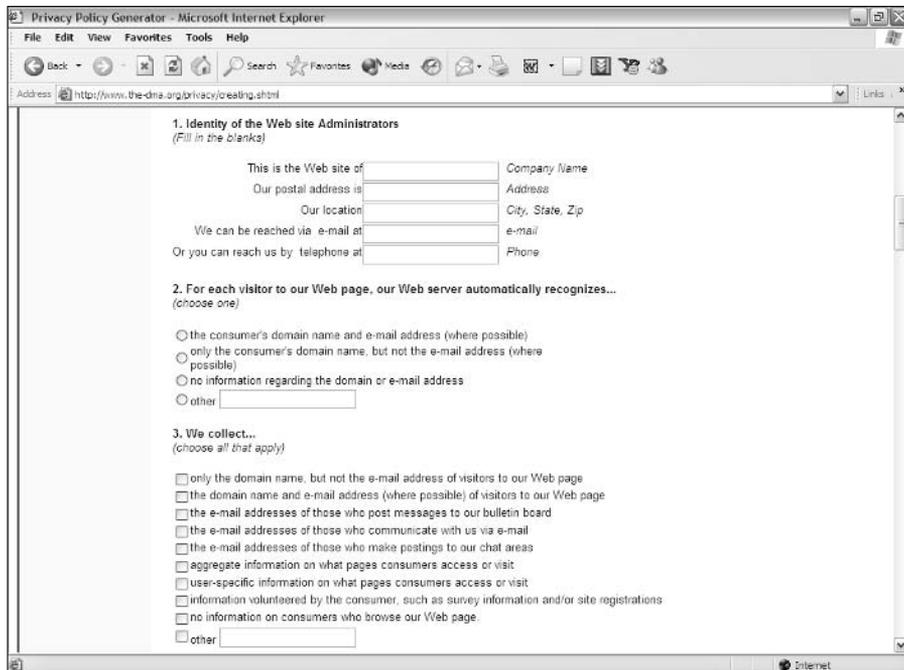


Figure 20-9: TRUSTe provides Web sites with privacy policy certification.

DMA Privacy Policy Generator

The Direct Marketing Association (DMA) assists you in creating a privacy statement with its free DMA Privacy Policy Generator, a simple, easy-to-use online form, shown in Figure 20-10. By filling out the form and selecting the check boxes that apply to your company's situation, you provide the basic material for your privacy statement. When you finish, you can have the completed statement e-mailed to you as plain text or as a ready-to-use Web page that you can drop into your site. To access the Privacy Policy form, go to www.the-dma.org/privacy/creating.shtml.



The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Privacy Policy Generator - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar displays "http://www.the-dma.org/privacy/creating.shtml". The form is titled "1. Identity of the Web site Administrators" and includes several input fields for company information. Below this, section "2. For each visitor to our Web page, our Web server automatically recognizes..." offers radio button options for domain and email recognition. Section "3. We collect..." provides a list of checkboxes for various data collection practices.

1. Identity of the Web site Administrators
(Fill in the blanks)

This is the Web site of Company Name
Our postal address is Address
Our location City, State, Zip
We can be reached via e-mail at e-mail
Or you can reach us by telephone at Phone

2. For each visitor to our Web page, our Web server automatically recognizes...
(choose one)

the consumer's domain name and e-mail address (where possible)
 only the consumer's domain name, but not the e-mail address (where possible)
 no information regarding the domain or e-mail address
 other

3. We collect...
(choose all that apply)

only the domain name, but not the e-mail address of visitors to our Web page
 the domain name and e-mail address (where possible) of visitors to our Web page
 the e-mail addresses of those who post messages to our bulletin board
 the e-mail addresses of those who communicate with us via e-mail
 the e-mail addresses of those who make postings to our chat areas
 aggregate information on what pages consumers access or visit
 user-specific information on what pages consumers access or visit
 information volunteered by the consumer, such as survey information and/or site registrations
 no information on consumers who browse our Web page.
 other

Figure 20-10:
The DMA Privacy Policy Generator helps you develop a privacy statement for your Web site.

Chapter 21

Ten More Great Add-Ins

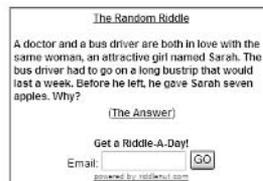
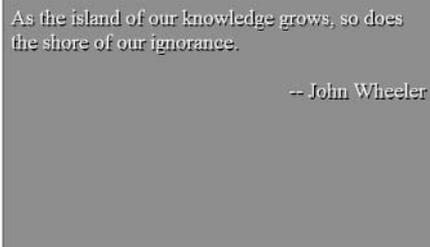
In This Chapter

- ▶ theFinancials.com
- ▶ Merriam-Webster Online
- ▶ GeoPhrase
- ▶ Leonardo
- ▶ Recommend-It
- ▶ SuperStats
- ▶ @watch
- ▶ Crossword Compiler
- ▶ BigMailBox.com
- ▶ localendar

Well, you just know that every book has to have a final chapter. I'd like to keep on going forever, but I can't, so I'm using these last few pages to point you toward some more great Web site add-ins and services.

For an example of what add-ins might look like on your Web site, check out Figure 21-1, which shows the Quote Machine and Random Riddle add-ins (covered in detail in Chapter 10).

Figure 21-1:
The Quote
Machine
and Random
Riddle as
they appear
on your
Web site.



theFinancials.com

theFinancials.com (shown in Figure 21-2) is one of the most incredible sites for economic content that you can find anywhere. I kid you not, if you want to know something financial — or, more important, you want your site visitors to know it — drop everything and head to www.thefinancials.com/mfr_free.html.

You'll find Pacific Rim market reports, tickers, crude oil prices, mortgage rates, you name it. Just click the link for the report you want and then click the Send Me the Code for This link.

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window displaying the website http://www.thefinancials.com/mfr_free.html. The page is titled "theFinancials.com - free content, Free Website Content: Order FREE Content - Microsoft Internet Explorer".

The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Navigation and Links:** A sidebar on the left contains links for "Financial Tickers", "Best Mortgage Rates", "Currency Converter", "FREE Website Content", "FREE Content (Spanish)", "Premium Content", "Market Coverage", "Languages", "Implementation", "Pricing", "FREE 7-DAY TRIAL", "Free for Your Site", "Mortgage Content", "Best Mortgage Rates", "Financial Tickers", "Currency Converter", "Contacts", "Links", "Book Resources", "Careers", and "About".
- Language Options:** A section titled "Click Here for Spanish-language Versions" is located at the top right of the main content area.
- FREE Content:** A prominent banner indicates "FREE Content" with "Reports update 14 times daily".
- Plug and Play Currency Converter:** A section for a "Best Mortgage Rates Table".
- Report Grid:** A table of reports with columns for "Report Title", "Ticker", "View Thumbnails", and "View Full Report". The reports listed include:

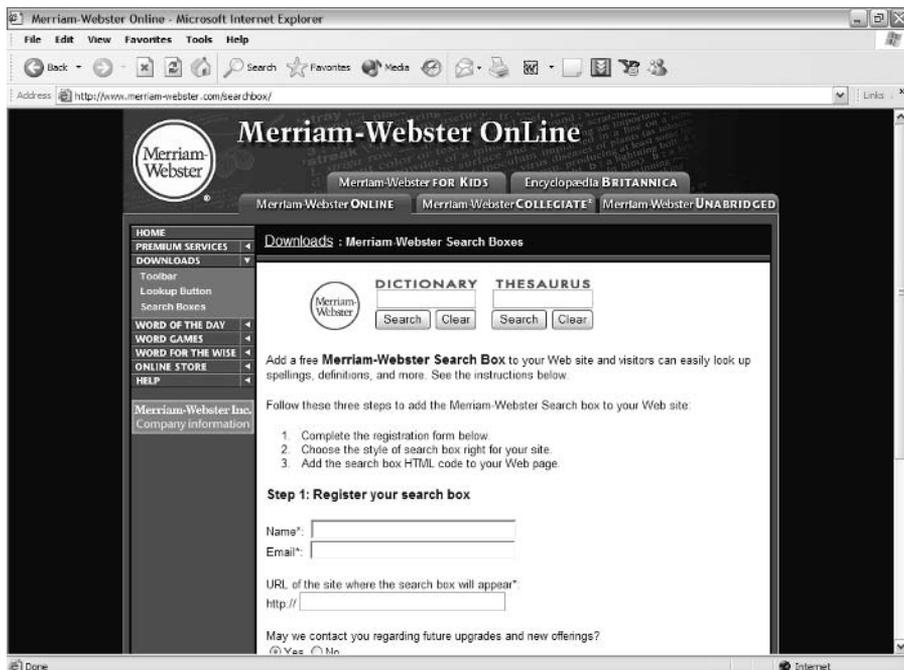
Report Title	Ticker	View Thumbnails				View Full Report
		Tiny	Small	Compact	Med	
Cross-Market Reports						
Pacific Rim Market Update	spkr	tiny	small	compact	med	wide
Major Pacific Rim indices, exchange rates and interest rates.						
United Kingdom Market Update	spkr	tiny	small	compact	med	wide
Major United Kingdom indices, exchange rates and interest rates.						
US Market Update	spkr	tiny	small	compact	med	wide
Major US indices, exchange rates, commodities and interest rates.						
World Market Update	spkr	tiny	small	compact	med	wide
Major World indices, exchange rates, commodities and interest rates.						
top						
Commodity Reports						
Base Metals Prices	spkr	tiny	small	compact	med	wide
End-of-day and historical base metals prices, volatility and charts.						
Commodity Movers	spkr	tiny	small	compact	med	wide
Ten largest percent change commodity price movers, volatility and charts.						
- Right Sidebar:** Contains "FREE Content for Your Site", "Subscribe to FREE Newsletters", "Investor Sites: Newsletters", "Currencies", "Commodities", "Indices", "Interest Rates", and a "FREE 7-DAY TRIAL" banner for a "Free 30-Day Demo Account".
- Market Data:** A "USD/JPY" section shows "Sell 109" and "Buy 110" with a large "97 02" price.

Figure 21-2: theFinancials.com offers a bewildering array of free reports for your Web site.

Merriam-Webster Online

As you probably expect, Merriam-Webster offers dictionary and thesaurus services, and you just know from the nature of this book that you can latch onto those services for your own site, right? You can just go to the Merriam-Webster site and fill out a simple form. Then you choose from among a selection of search boxes and paste the code into your Web page (see Figure 21-3). What could be simpler? Check it out at www.merriamwebster.com/searchbox/.

Figure 21-3: You can choose which style of Merriam-Webster dictionary and thesaurus search box you want on your site.



GeoPhrase

It is so nice when you run across some people who really understand what the Internet is. And the first thing it is, is global. The visitor logging on to your home page right now could be sitting anywhere from Tulsa, Oklahoma, to Tokyo, Japan. It makes no difference to your Web server, but it probably makes a difference to the visitor.

That's where GeoPhrase comes in (see Figure 21-4). It checks where your visitors come from and, depending on their location, offers a different greeting to them. And all have to do is paste some HTML code into your Web page.

And that's just the beginning. You can customize the whole shebang, and GeoPhrase will even help you do it. Oh, did I mention that all this is free? Fire up your Web browser and get on over to www.geobytes.com/GeoPhrase.htm.

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the GeoPhrase website. The browser's title bar reads "GeoPhrase - Get a GeoPhrase on your page - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar contains "http://www.geobytes.com/GeoPhrase.htm". The website layout includes a top navigation bar with links for Home, Contact Us, Support, Pricing, Buy Now!, Free Services, and Merchandise. A sidebar on the left contains a "Up" button, "Login" and "Home" links, and a section titled "Looking for FREE geographic page re-directs -" with a "See me in the demo" link and a cartoon character. The main content area features the "GEOBYTES" logo and the heading "GeoPhrase - Dynamically insert customized greetings on your page for FREE". Below this, there is a paragraph explaining the service, a section titled "This is what our default greeting looks like:" with a code snippet, and a "No sign ups, no registration" section. A right sidebar contains a "NEW Remove the advertisement from your GeoPhrase" section and a "Buy some Mabytes Now!" section with a "Free GeoFlag" link and a question mark icon.

Figure 21-4:
GeoPhrase
lets you
personalize
things for
a global
audience.

Leonardo

Leonardo (www.leonardo.com) is a must for anyone in the travel industry. But even if your site isn't travel-oriented — if you just need some great content about tourist destinations around the world — you must see this place. It's like going on a shopping spree in a chocolate boutique.



One person's vacation spot is another person's banking center or technology mecca . . . or whatever.

These folks provide photos, recordings, video, and just about anything else you can imagine. Drop in, sign up, and take a look around at the stuff shown in Figure 21-5.

Figure 21-5: You can get images, sounds, and so on of everything from cruise lines to car rentals at Leonardo.



Recommend-It

You see billions and billions, if not absolute zillions, of Web sites that display a Recommend This Site to a Friend link. You have good reason to include a link like this one on your site because a personal recommendation is a powerful sales tool. If people hear from someone they trust about a Web site that they ought to look at, they're much more inclined to check it out. With any other method, you have to ask people to rely on the word of strangers or maybe even just a search engine.

Even if you're not involved in e-commerce, you still want to attract quality visitors. And you still get more of the right people visiting your site if you help your current visitors tell their friends how much they like it. One of the easiest ways to do so is to use the free Tell-A-Friend service (see Figure 21-6). Just go to www.bravenet.com/webtools/announce/index.php.

Figure 21-6:
Tell-A-Friend's referral form helps bring new visitors to your Web site.

The screenshot shows the 'Tell-A-Friend' service page on bravenet.com. The page is displayed in Microsoft Internet Explorer. The main content area is titled 'Tell A Friend' and includes a 'Get One Free!' button and a 'View Demo' button. Below this, there is a section titled 'Check out all of these great features!' with a list of features:

- Email To A Friend**: Allow your guests to invite their friends to come and see your site.
- 5,000 Posts Per Month**: Loads of referrals to get people to come to your site. Increase your traffic - for free!
- Monthly Statistics**: Use our handy statistics to track how many referral emails get sent from your site and how many get opened.
- Multiple Templates**: Choose from several different pre-made layouts for your Tell-A-Friend service.
- Easy installation**: Just copy and paste our code onto your webpage and you're ready to go. You can update your service at any time but don't need to update your code.
- Nothing to Download**: You only need a web browser to use.

The page also includes a sidebar with navigation links such as 'Hosting and Domains', 'Build Tools', 'Promote Tools', and 'Interact Tools'. A 'Tell A Friend' form is visible in the center, with a 'Tell A Friend...' button and a 'Receive a copy' checkbox.

One of the benefits of the Recommend-It service is that it offers prizes, which is an extra incentive for people to make a recommendation. One of the drawbacks is that the service is trying to get people to sign up for its newsletter, but even that has a silver lining. If people do sign up, Recommend-It pays you as an affiliate. (See Chapter 14 for information about affiliate programs.)

SuperStats

If you want nothing more than a simple visual page counter or if you just gotta have the most detailed reports of page hits possible, what do you do? You head for the same place: SuperStats (counter.superstats.com). It's part of Network Solutions, a name that will be instantly familiar to you as the big-name domain registrar (see Figure 21-7).

These folks know just about everything there is to know about Web sites, and they're a good thing to have on your side. They've got a variety of plans that cover the needs of Web sites both large and small.

Counter: Web page hit or visitor counter with hit or visitor counter statistics tracking - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Address: <http://counter.superstats.com/>

Network Solutions MyComputer.com

HOME >> COUNTER HOME | SUPPORT | CONTACT US | LOGIN

MEMBER LOGIN

SEARCH SITE

COUNTER

Counter

The Most Powerful Hit Counter on the Web

06852407

- Hundreds of Counter styles and colors
- Easy to use
- No programming necessary
- Includes Visitor reports

Sign Up Now!

WHAT IS IT?

Counter tracks the number of people who visit your Web site each day. The counter displays graphically the number of hits your Web site receives. You can also opt to make the counter invisible.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Counter is easy to use. Just select your counter style from the Counter Manager and then paste a few lines of HTML code into your Web documents. Because counter is hosted on our servers you do not need to install anything. No Programming. No Server. Just copy and paste, it's that easy.

Get More with SuperStats

Why get a counter when you can get complete Web Site Reporting from SuperStats. [Learn more.](#)

- Hundreds of Reports
- Detailed Traffic Reporting
- Easy installation
- See where your Visitors come from

Figure 21-7: SuperStats is Network Solutions' Web traffic monitoring service.

@watch

If you have deep pockets and need a detailed analysis of your Web server's downtimes and uptimes, you may want to take a look at @watch at www.atwatch.com.

@watch offers three program levels: @watch Advanced (\$17.95 and up per month), @watch Pro (\$39.95 and up per month), and @watch Enterprise (\$54.95 and up per month). Prices decrease if you sign up for a year at a time, and you get volume discounts for multiple URLs.

Figure 21-8 shows an availability report from @watch.

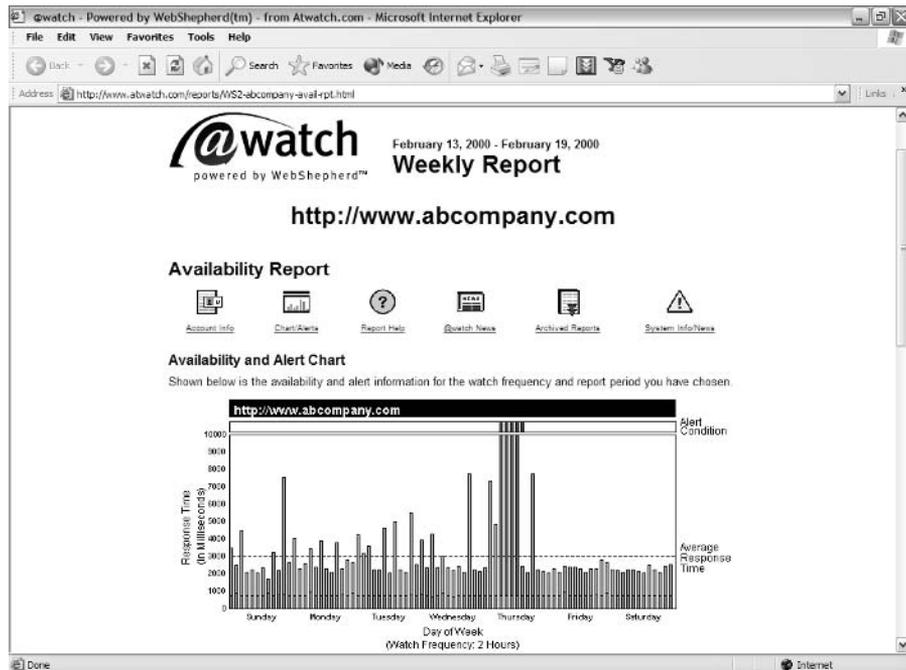


Figure 21-8:
@watch generates reports on your server's availability.

Crossword Compiler

If you want to add a crossword puzzle as a feature on your Web page, you need the right software — a program that understands what a Web designer wants, not just what someone with a pencil and paper does. Crossword Compiler (www.crossword-compiler.com) is such a program. You'll be thrilled about how easy it is to use and the utility of its Java-enabled Web page connection. Prices range from \$49 for a single-user license all the way up to \$950 for a multiuser package with all the bells and whistles.



While you're at the site (see Figure 21-9), check out the links at the bottom of the main page. They take you to goodies like multilanguage support.

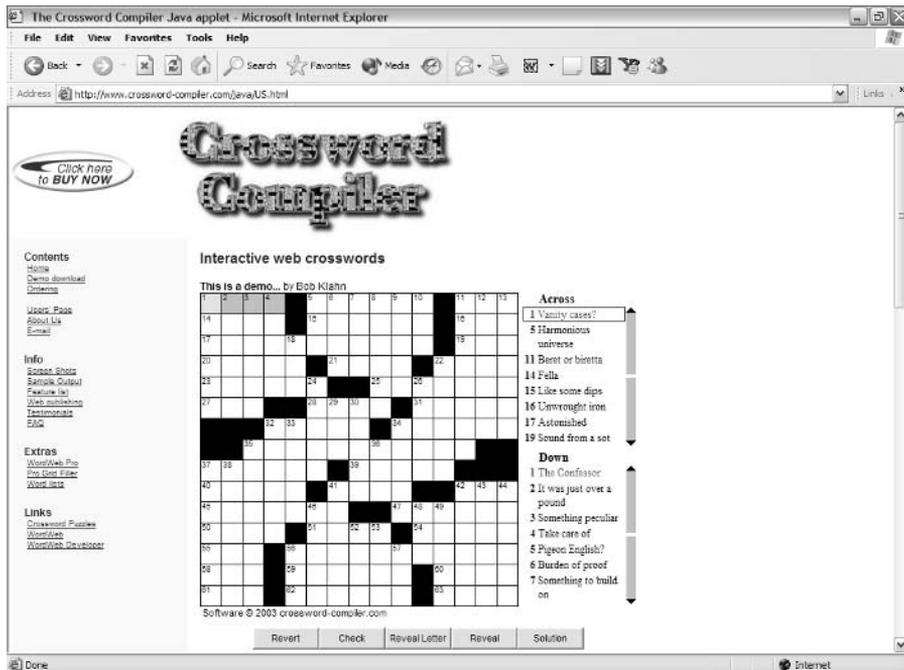


Figure 21-9: Crossword Compiler enables you to easily create and add puzzles to your Web pages.

BigMailBox.com

You would like to offer your visitors an e-mail service, but you don't have much in the way of mailboxes available. You may have a handful that came along with your Web service, but they won't stretch very far. So, you turn to BigMailBox.com to save the day (see Figure 21-10) with their free service.

Just fill out a simple application and then eagerly count the hours until the e-mail message with all the details arrives. In it, you will discover the wondrous secrets of giving your users free 4MB mailboxes (not bad). Set your course for www.bigmailbox.com.



Figure 21-10: BigMailBox.com adds regular mail service to your site.

localendar

This calendar is one of the best add-ons that you can have on your site — period. Aside from the fact that it's something you're likely to want to use yourself, localendar is an incredible facility to offer your Web site visitors (see Figure 21-11). You don't even have to put up with hosting some banners on your calendar site — just the little localendar link icon.

You can set up localendar in a variety of displays such as a daily, weekly, or monthly format, and you can set things up so that it blends in well with your site's layout. localendar is a freebie that you can pick up at www.localendar.com.

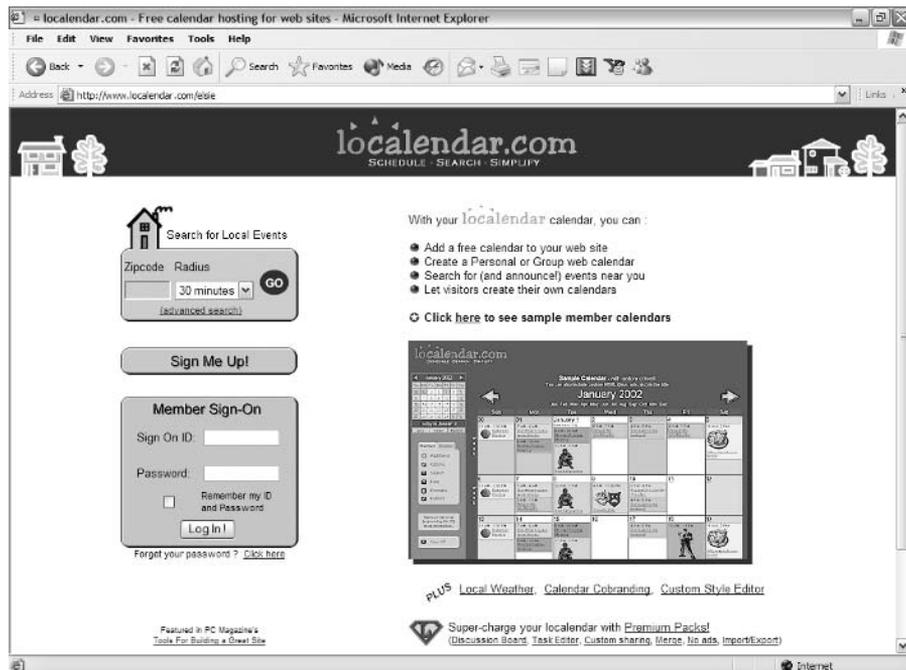


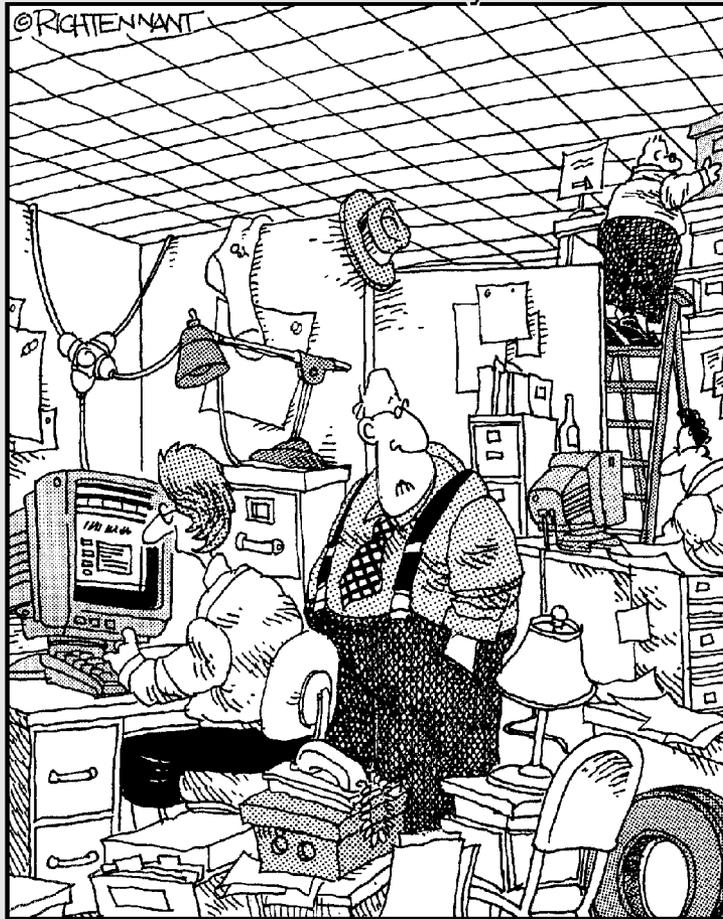
Figure 21-11:
localendar
puts a
calendar on
your site.

Part VII

Appendixes

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Just how accurately should my Web site reflect my place of business?"

In this part . . .

All the new terms that have been invented to describe the Internet could drive even Noah Webster nuts, so I put together a glossary of them for you. And I wouldn't want to leave you guessing about what's on the CD-ROM that's tucked into the back of this book, so I've tossed in an appendix about that, too.

Appendix A

Glossary

.....

aardvark: A type of anteater — its name means earth pig.

acceptable use policy: A policy that sets forth the type of user behavior that is accepted by the management of a Web site.

acquirer: See *merchant account*.

Acrobat: See *Portable Document Format (PDF)*.

active link: See *link (hyperlink)*.

Active Server Page (ASP): A Web page created with HTML and either VBScript or JScript (Microsoft's name for JavaScript) or both. Commands on Active Server Pages are processed via the ActiveX engine. See also *ActiveX*, *HyperText Markup Language (HTML)*, *JavaScript*, and *VBScript*.

ActiveX: A system developed by Microsoft to enable a Web page utilizing ActiveX controls to interface with the Windows operating system.

Address Verification System (AVS): An antifraud feature for credit card transactions in which the address of the credit card holder is compared to the address on an order form. If the two addresses aren't the same, the probability of fraud is higher.

anonymizer: A Web server that strips identifying information from a visitor's Web browser, thus preventing any Web page that the user visits from gathering data about the user. It does this by reissuing the user's request for a Web page instead of simply passing it along. The reissued request contains only the identifying information of the anonymizing server itself, not the identifying information about the user.

applet: Major programs are known as *applications*. Short programs, especially those written in the Java programming language for use on the Web, are called by the diminutive *applet*.

ARPANET: The original test bed for the Internet, a computer network developed by the Advanced Research Projects Agency.

ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange): A common method for representing textual characters.

ASP: See *Active Server Page*.

attachment: A file that is sent along with an e-mail message. Most e-mail clients place an attachment into a separate directory from the one in which they store the e-mail messages. E-mail attachments are one of the primary means of spreading viruses.

authentication: Verifying the identity of a person or service, usually through digital IDs.

autoresponder: A program that automatically responds to an e-mail message by sending back a preprogrammed e-mail message of its own. Auto-responders are useful for providing price lists, back issues of newsletters, and so on.

AVS: See *Address Verification System*.

axis: In three-dimensional (3D) graphics, each of the three directions is indicated by an axis. The typical coordinate system uses an x-axis that runs horizontally, a y-axis that runs vertically, and a z-axis that runs, essentially, between the front and back of the monitor.

B2B: Business to business e-commerce.

B2C: Business to consumer e-commerce.

bandwidth: The total amount of data that a particular network connection can handle. The higher the bandwidth, the more data that can be sent in the same amount of time.

banner: An image link that appears on a Web page (generally at the top of the page) and contains advertising for a sponsor.

Bertie Wooster: The employer of the famed fictional butler, Jeeves.

binary file: A program file. In transferring files through FTP, you must be careful to send program files as binary files rather than as text files because text files have a different format.

Cascading Style Sheet (CSS): A method of specifying the layout and appearance of a Web page that gives greater control than HTML at the cost of greater complexity.

cat: A creature that deigns to permit humans to inhabit the same planet.

CFML: See *ColdFusion Markup Language*.

CGI: See *Common Gateway Interface*.

chargeback: A debit issued against your merchant account by a credit card company because of a dispute over the validity of a transaction.

chat room: A place where people meet online and exchange messages in real time.

click-through: The action of a site visitor in clicking an advertising link to visit the advertiser's site.

client/server: A computer that provides resources to other computers over a network. The main computer provides a network service and is known as a *server*. Computers that use the services of a server are *clients*. You also use the term *server* to refer to the software that provides the service. The software that accesses the server is also known as the client or client agent.

ColdFusion Markup Language: A proprietary Macromedia markup language that provides Web designers with the capability to easily create Web-based database query forms and the Web pages that present their responses. See also *markup language*.

colocation: Similar to leasing a dedicated server; the server is located at a site that provides technical services to you (such as network monitoring), but you own the server instead of leasing it. You may provide your own equipment or purchase it from the colocation firm.

Common Gateway Interface (CGI): A program that can take information gathered from users in a Web page form and can pass that information to other programs for processing.

compile: The source code that you create with languages, such as Java or C, is run through a *compiler* that prepares a stand-alone, ready-to-run program.

configuration: The particular arrangement of practically anything having to do with computing. Configuration, for example, may refer to how many and what types of peripherals are connected to a computer. It may also refer to the settings in the preferences section of a program.

cookie: A text file that a Web site places on a visitor's computer. Cookies typically contain information such as an identification code, the date of last visit, visitor preferences, and so on.

copyright: The right to make copies. The creators of works such as books, paintings, songs, or computer programs own the copyrights to those works unless they transfer their rights to another person or company.

CSS: See *Cascading Style Sheet*.

dedicated server: A computer that is reserved for the use of a single person, company, or organization. See also *virtual server*.

default: Failure to pay bills. Seriously, defaults are the normal settings for software and hardware as they come from the manufacturers. In most cases, you can change the default settings to suit yourself.

demographics: Information that you gather from visitors to your site. Commonly, demographics include such things as the computer systems that visitors use, their income levels, and any other information that you require to understand your audience. Be careful about gathering data on age, race, sex, ethnicity, religious persuasion, and such, because this may lead to discrimination charges. Make sure that, if you do ask for this type of information, you make clear that such disclosures are purely optional. And never, never, *never* make any of this information available to anyone else, except as a lump-sum total. You need to keep the individual input absolutely confidential.

Denmark: A country in northern Europe, of which about 75 percent is composed of farms.

DHTML: See *Dynamic HTML*.

digital ID: An encrypted identifier that you keep on file at a central repository known as a *Certificate Authority*. It certifies that you *are* who you say you are (just in case you're wondering).

Digital Subscriber Line (DSL): A popular method of high-speed Internet access that utilizes existing telephone lines. Normal telephone operation is also possible on the same line, so you can use phones and fax machines while the DSL connection is active. The DSL connection doesn't interfere with normal phone signals because it goes out at a different frequency.

discount rate: A percentage of each sale that you pay to the bank that processes credit card transactions.

DNS: See *Domain Name System*.

domain extension: See *top-level domain (TLD)*.

Domain Name System (DNS): A system to translate the human-readable domain names, such as `www.dummies.com`, into the numerical IP addresses that computers understand (in this case, 38.170.216.18).

dot com (or dotcom): Colloquial expression meaning an Internet-based company.

download: Transferring a file to your computer from another computer. Also refers to the file that you download. See also *upload*.

draft: A check that you print to draw funds from another person's account after the person provides you with account information and authorization.

drop shipping: An arrangement by which you gather orders and submit them to another company; that company then sends its merchandise to your customer with your return address on it. You pay the company a wholesale rate and keep the difference as profit.

DSL: See *Digital Subscriber Line*.

Dynamic HTML: The combination of HTML along with JavaScript and Cascading Style Sheets to create a Web page with dynamic elements. See also *Cascading Style Sheet* and *JavaScript*.

e-commerce: Business conducted on the World Wide Web or via intranets. Although some elements of e-commerce may contain traditional "bricks-and-mortar" aspects such as mailed order forms, it takes place primarily via the Internet or some similar network system.

e-mail: The sending and receiving of written messages via computer networks such as the Internet.

Emerald City: The home base of the Wizard of Oz.

emoticon: A symbol used to express the emotion of the writer, such as a *smiley* like :-) to indicate pleasure or harmless intent, or a wink like ;-) to show the writer's words are intended as a joke.

encryption: The encoding of data (such as e-mail messages or personal information entered into online order forms) so that it can't be read by anyone who does not have the key to the code.

end tag: See *tag*.

Extensible HyperText Markup Language (XHTML): A version of HTML that follows the XML specification. See *Extensible Markup Language* and *HyperText Markup Language*.

Extensible Markup Language (XML): A markup language that allows users to create custom tags, in effect allowing them to create their own personalized markup language. See also *markup language*, *tag*.

Extensible Style Language (XSL): A language for adding style sheets to XML documents. The relationship between XML and XSL is the same as between HTML and CSS. See also *Cascading Style Sheets*, *Extensible Markup Language*, and *HyperText Markup Language*.

Fargo: A city in North Dakota.

feed: The transmission of information from a server to either its clients or another server.

File Transfer Protocol (FTP): A method for transferring files from one computer to another across a network or the Internet.

flame: A message that contains insults or inflammatory material.

flame war: An extended exchange of messages containing flames. Flame wars disrupt the normal process of communication in mailing lists, newsgroups, message boards, and chat rooms.

font: A complete set of letters, numbers, punctuation, and special characters that all have a particular look and shape. For example, `this` is in the Arial font, whereas `this` is in the Courier New font.

frame/frameset: A method enabling you to display multiple Web pages on a single browser screen. Framesets set off different areas of the screen. Each area is known as a *frame*, and each frame contains its own Web page.

FTP: See *File Transfer Protocol*.

GIF: Image files that follow the standards of the Graphics Interchange Format. You commonly use GIFs for limited animation.

guillemot: A type of sea bird famous for waddling.

high risk: The category into which credit card companies place businesses that they believe are particularly prone to suffering from fraudulent transactions.

hit: A single access of a Web page.

home page: The main Web page from which all other pages in the site branch out. It is commonly called `index.html`, although this is not a requirement. In fact, any name will work, although if you use another name, visitors may see a listing of available files instead of instantly viewing your home page. The users then have to figure out which file among those listed is the home page.

Other common names include `index.htm` and `default.htm`. The difference between the `.htm` and `.html` extensions is practically nonexistent, by the way, going back to the days when the early DOS operating system only recognized three-letter extensions. All modern operating systems are capable of recognizing longer file type extensions, and few professionals limit themselves to the old DOS conventions anymore.

Horace Greeley: Newspaper editor, most famous for the phrase, “Go west, young man, go west.” He wasn’t actually the person who said that, but nobody remembers John Soule, who did.

horizontal rule: A line across a Web page that you use to visually separate one section of a page from another. The `HR` element in HTML creates a horizontal rule.

HTML: See *HyperText Markup Language*.

HTML editor: Text editor with special features designed to assist you in creating Web pages.

HTTP: See *HyperText Transfer Protocol*.

hyperlink: See *link*.

hypertext: Text on a computer that includes links to other text, images, sound, and so on.

HyperText Markup Language (HTML): The native language of the World Wide Web, which you use to construct Web pages.

HyperText Transfer Protocol (HTTP): System for transferring files across the World Wide Web.

ICANN: See *Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers*.

image: General term for any picture or artwork on a Web page. Web images are usually stored in GIF, JPEG, or PNG formats.

image map: An image that contains multiple links. Users viewing an image map select different links by moving the mouse pointer to different parts of the image and clicking. You must carefully design the images that you use in image maps to provide visual clues to the links that they contain.

image repository: A Web site that contains a large amount of digital art, mostly simple icons. Image repositories typically gather these files without any attention to avoiding copyright and trademark violations.

interbank: An organization that processes merchant credit card transactions for its member banks.

Internet: Short for *Internetwork*. The Internet consists of several different computer networks that all link together into a network of networks.

Internet access: The capability to connect to the Internet; usually an ISP provides this capability.

Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN): The organization that accredits domain-name registrars.

Internet service provider (ISP): Company that provides Internet access, usually by dial-up connections, although many also offer high-speed dedicated connections.

interpret: Source code from languages such as JavaScript and Perl is read by another program (such as a Web browser or Web server). That program then interprets the instructions in the code and carries them out. See also *compile*.

intranet: A network consisting of several computer networks linked together. Unlike the Internet, an intranet is private and access to it is limited to its membership. Intranets are commonly used in B2B e-commerce situations.

IP address: The numerical equivalent of a domain name.

Isopoda: A type of crustacean with a small head.

ISP: See *Internet service provider*.

Java: A programming language that is often used to create applets for the Web. See also *applet*.

JavaScript: A simple but powerful programming language that programmers use to create scripts for Web pages. See also *script*.

John of Lancaster: Admiral of the British fleet in 1422.

JPEG: Also known as JPG. Image files that follow the standards of the Joint Photographic Experts Group. JPEG files are generally smaller than other file formats but maintain high-quality images nonetheless.

JPG: See *JPEG*.

keyword: A word or phrase that search engines use to locate Web pages containing matching terms.

Klondike: Area in Alaska where gold was discovered in the late nineteenth century.

link (hyperlink): A connection between a Web page and another Internet resource. Usually, a link contains the URL (Internet address) of another Web page, but it can also link to other resources, such as images. By convention, a link appears as blue underlined text that, after you activate it (usually by a mouse click), causes a Web browser to load the linked resource. You also

often use images as links; by convention, a thin blue border surrounds image links to differentiate them from normal images. An *active link* is one that you're currently clicking, and a *visited link* is one that you activated previously.

list owner: The person who manages a mailing list. Usually, the list owner is the person who conceives and launches the list. This person is also known as a *list manager* and may be the *moderator* of the list as well. See also *moderator*.

list server: A program that processes the e-mail messages that comprise a mailing list. The list server usually also handles such routine administrative matters as subscribing and unsubscribing list members if they send it a message containing the appropriate commands.

locomotive: A specialized type of railroad car, also known as an engine, that propels other railroad cars along the track.

log file: A file that records activity. A Web server log file, for example, records the origin of anyone who looks at a Web page, the type of browser the person is using, and so on. Log-file analyzer programs, such as Statbot, are useful to Webmasters in figuring out peak times of usage, number of hits per day, what other sites are referring visitors to this site, and so on.

mailing list: A discussion group in which the members post messages that a list server relays to them via e-mail. Open mailing lists can be joined by anyone; closed mailing lists require approval to join.

markup language: A computer programming language that is dedicated to the layout and function of elements on-screen. HTML is the best-known markup language, although there are many others for specialized purposes, such as the Astronomical Markup Language (ASML), the Bioinformatic Sequence Markup Language (BSML), and the Math Markup Language (MATHML), as well as some that hope to compete with HTML to become the new lingua franca of Web development authors. See also *Extensible HyperText Markup Language*, *Extensible Markup Language*, and *HyperText Markup Language*.

marquee: A scrolling message such as the ones that were once common on the signs (marquees) outside theaters.

merchant account: An arrangement with a bank or a bank's sales organization for you to accept credit cards in payment for goods or services.

message board: Similar to a newsgroup but operates on an individual Web site. Message boards, sometimes known as graffiti walls, enable site visitors to leave messages for other visitors to read.

metadata: Information beyond what is necessary for the display of a Web page. Common uses of metadata, for example, are the inclusion of the author's name and a content description in the HEAD section of a Web page.

modem (modulator/demodulator): Device that enables a computer to send signals over a telephone line.

moderator: Person who controls the content of a mailing list or newsgroup. In extreme cases, this control can amount to censorship, but reasonable moderation simply results in the removal of extraneous material, such as sales pitches for products and services that don't relate to the topic. A moderator may also play peacemaker, attempting to keep tempers in check among the members of the mailing list or newsgroup, thus avoiding flame wars.

Modesty Blaise: Popular adventure character first appearing in a 1962 comic strip and later the subject of about a dozen novels and at least one movie.

netiquette (Internet etiquette): A series of customs that enable people to get along while living in cyberspace. Basically, you want to be nice and consider how your actions may affect other people.

newline: A programming instruction in the form of `\n` to move the next bit of text down one line.

Northwest Passage: Channel leading from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean north of North America. Much sought after since the fifteenth century, but not successfully negotiated until 1906.

Ogdensburg: City in New York State at the meeting of the Oswegatchie and Saint Lawrence rivers.

online service: Sort of a mini-Internet; services such as CompuServe, America Online, and so on provide many of the functions that the Internet does but on a smaller scale. In recent years, the online services have lost much business to the Internet and now provide Internet access as part of their services.

opt-in mailing list: A mailing list that you subscribe to by entering your e-mail address in a form. You then receive a message in your mailbox asking you to confirm the subscription. If you don't reply to that message, your address doesn't go into the system. This sign-up method makes it difficult for anyone else to sign you up for the list.

page generation program: Software that uses a WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get), point-and-click interface for creating Web pages.

parameter: Information that you add to the HTML code that calls a Java applet. This information sets variable values for the applet's use, and you add it through the `PARAM` element.

parking: See *Domain Name System*.

password: Secret word that you use to gain computer access. Sometimes you choose a password; sometimes someone else assigns you one. Two schools of thought on passwords offer contradictory advice. One says to make them so difficult to imagine that no one else can possibly guess yours in a million years. The other school of thought says to make them easy enough that you can remember them.

Pausanias: General of the Greek army in the Battle of Plataea in 479 B.C.

PDF: See *Portable Document Format*.

pop-up: A separate window in which a Web browser displays additional information not found on the Web page that the visitor originally accessed. Pop-up windows are used for a variety of purposes — some are considered legitimate, while others often are not. Pop-up windows, in their best and highest usage, are useful adjuncts to a normal Web page, adding helpful information or additional capabilities. Their common usage as advertising billboards, however, has given them a bad reputation, and programs called pop-up blockers, which prevent all pop-up windows from materializing, are becoming increasingly popular. Savvy Web designers should look for ways to avoid using pop-ups.

Portable Document Format (PDF): A proprietary document display format developed by Adobe Systems, Inc. Although it allows people to easily transfer existing documents into a form that's viewable on the Web, visitors need a separate plug-in in order to view those documents.

public domain: The group of all created works that copyright law no longer protects (or never did).

Quimper: French city on the Odet River.

reciprocal link: A link to a Web page that also displays a link back to your Web page. Hyperlinking is a common practice for building traffic among Web sites. If you want to establish a reciprocal link with someone else's site, add a link to that site on your own and then send an e-mail message asking the site's owner to reciprocate.

registrar: A company approved by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) to keep track of domain names on the Internet. A domain name that you register must point to an active Web site. You may also *reserve* or *park* domain names if you have no current site active for that name but still want to prevent anybody else from registering the name. See also *Domain Name System* and *Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers*.

reserving: See *Domain Name System*.

RGB triplet: A method of denoting colors by specifying the amount of red, green, and blue in the color. Java applets often utilize this method. The possible values range from 0 to 255. Thus, if you want red lettering, you use a value of 255, 0, 0. This setting tells the applet to use as much red as possible but no green and no blue.

ring: A series of Web sites that connect together through links that lead from one to the other until visitors who follow all the links go full circle and return to their starting place.

robot: A program, also known as a *spider*, that automatically surfs the Web, indexing Web pages and adding information from those pages to a search site's database.

Runic alphabet: Characters that the Teutonic peoples of early Europe used; also known as *futhark*.

safety paper: The kind of paper on which you print a draft or check.

Samuel Langhorne Clemens: Real name of writer known to history as *Mark Twain*.

script: A short program.

Secure Sockets Layer (SSL): An encryption system originally developed by Netscape that allows visitors to enter information into online forms and submit that information without allowing anyone else to read it. It's commonly used in processing order forms and other online forms that contain private information.

server: See *client/server*.

server-side include (SSI): The capability of a server that processes a CGI script to include data of its own that it sends back to the Web browser.

SGML: See *Standard Generalized Markup Language*.

shopping cart: A program that visitors to your site use to keep track of which items they want to purchase. The shopping cart metaphor extends to the visitor's capability to put items into the cart and remove them before making a final purchasing decision.

sleep: A common practice utterly unknown to authors trying to meet a deadline.

spam: Unsolicited e-mail messages that someone sends in bulk quantities to several addresses; also the same message posted to multiple newsgroups simultaneously.

spider: See *robot*.

SSI: See *server-side include*.

SSL: See *Secure Sockets Layer*.

standard: Also known as *specifications*. Generic term for anything that lots of people agree on. It may apply to a way to transfer files from one system to another, the exact structure and function of a computer language, or a method of compressing video images. If a recognized, organized group develops it, it's known as an *official standard*. If it's just something that the market leader develops, and most of the people in a particular field use it, it's known as a *de facto standard*.

Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML): The original markup language from which HTML was developed. See also *markup language*.

start tag: See *tag*.

style sheets: See *Cascading Style Sheet*.

subscriber: A member of a mailing list. Also known, amazingly enough, as a list member.

syndicate: A content provider that represents several different sources of content, such as comics, opinion columns, horoscopes, and articles.

tag: You indicate the beginning of each element in HTML by placing the name of that element within angle brackets. This part of the element is known as a *start tag*. You indicate the end of the element by using an *end tag*, which looks just like the start tag except that you add a slash before the element's name. The start and end tags for the TABLE element, for example, are <TABLE> and </TABLE>.

telepathy: Ability to transfer thoughts from one mind to another.

text editor: A simple form of word processor that saves text files without formatting.

text file: A file of text. (No kidding.) In transferring text files via FTP, you want to be careful to send them as such rather than as binary files because text files often require conversion in transferring between Windows and UNIX systems, which use slightly different text formats. See also *ASCII*.

thread: Hierarchy that shows the relationship of a series of messages on a message board. See also *message board*.

tiling: The repetition of a background image across a Web page until it reaches the edge of the screen. It then begins tiling again in the next available space below the first line of images — and so on until it fills the entire page with multiple copies of the image.

top-level domain (TLD): The final letters at the end of an Internet address. You consider them *top level* because you read Internet addresses in steps from right to left, with the part after the last dot on the right being the highest step in a hierarchy that eventually leads down, step by dotted step, to a particular computer. The four most common TLDs are .com, .net, .edu, and .org. These TLDs are known as the *generic TLDs* or *gTLDs*; those that specify a country in which a site originates are known as *country-level TLDs* or *CLTLDs*.

traffic: The number of visits to an Internet site, as in “Our traffic increased by 100,000 visitors last week.”

Uncertainty Principle: Fundamental theorem of quantum physics that states that knowing both the direction of travel and the location in space-time of an atomic particle is impossible.

Uniform Resource Locator (URL): The address of a file (or other resource) on the Internet. The URL for a file on a Web server is formed by putting together a series of directions to the file, as in the following example:

```
http://www.someschool.edu/graphics/logo.png
```

Here's a breakdown of the preceding URL:

- ✔ The `http://` specifies the HyperText Transfer Protocol (the Web's native method of information exchange).
- ✔ The `www` tells you that the computer that holds the file is a Web server. Actually, you already know that from the first part — that's why a lot of Web sites don't use the `www` prefix anymore.
- ✔ The `someschool` segment gives the *subdomain*, which is what people usually think of as the name of the Web site. The Wiley Web site, for example, is located at `www.wiley.com`, and its subdomain is `wiley`.
- ✔ The three-letter extension represents the *top-level domain*. In this case, the subdomain is followed by `.edu`, meaning that this Web site is in the education domain.
- ✔ The `graphics` part leads to a particular directory on the specified Web server.
- ✔ The final portion, `logo.png`, is a file within that directory.

Files located within the same server as a Web page can be referenced in a simpler way by using *relative URLs*. Instead of fully specifying how to find the file from anywhere on the Internet, relative URLs only specify how to find it from the Web page that refers to it. The file in the preceding example could be linked to from the school's home page by using the following relative URL:

```
<IMG src="graphics/logo.png">
```

Because the Web browser that you use to view the home page already knows where it is, it can perform a bit of cutting and pasting to come up with the right URL. The browser “reasons” that it is currently viewing a Web page located at `http://www.someschool.edu/index.html`. It strips off everything after the final slash to arrive at `http://www.someschool.edu/` and then adds `graphics/logo.png` to that to arrive at `http://www.someschool.edu/graphics/logo.png`. See also *top-level domain*.

upload: To transfer a file from your computer to another computer. Also the file that you upload. See also *download*.

URL: See *Uniform Resource Locator*.

Van de Graaff generator: A primitive device that generates millions of volts of static electricity.

VBScript: The Visual Basic scripting language from Microsoft. As the name suggests, it is a version of the simple BASIC programming language, but geared toward Web site development rather than general software development.

virtual server: A directory on a computer that simulates the existence of a separate computer. See also *dedicated server*.

visited link: See *link (hyperlink)*.

Webmaster: The person in control of a Web site. A Webmaster may be an individual with only a single Web page or the manager of a large team of developers who create and maintain Web sites.

Web ring: See *ring*.

Web site: Any presence on the World Wide Web. Usually applies to a collection of Web pages.

William Kidd: Eighteenth-century English privateer who went down in history as the pirate *Captain Kidd*. He provided documents to political authorities that showed that he'd attacked only ships carrying papers that showed they were at war with England, but the papers were lost until the 1970s.

x-axis: See *axis*.

XHTML: See *Extensible HyperText Markup Language*.

XML: See *Extensible Markup Language*.

XSL: See *Extensible Style Language*.

xylem: The central core of plant roots.

y-axis: See *axis*.

ytterbium: A rare earth element that you often find in combination with gadolinite.

z-axis: See *axis*.

zymurgy: The study of the fermentation process.

Appendix B

About the CD

Here is some of the cool stuff that you'll find on the *Building a Web Site For Dummies* CD-ROM:

- ✓ An incredible array of evaluation, trial, and freeware versions of Web-site creation tools: Dreamweaver, HomeSite, and Fireworks
- ✓ A collection of stunningly beautiful artwork that you can use on your own sites

System Requirements

Make sure that your computer meets the minimum system requirements shown in the following list. If your computer doesn't match up to most of these requirements, you may have problems using the software and files on the CD. For the latest and greatest information, please refer to the ReadMe file located at the root of the CD-ROM.

- ✓ A PC with a 600 MHz+ Pentium III or faster processor; or a Mac OS PowerPC 500 MHz G3 or faster processor
- ✓ Microsoft Windows 98SE, 2000, or XP or later; or Mac OS X 10.2.6 or later
- ✓ At least 128MB of total RAM installed on your computer; for best performance, we recommend at least 256MB
- ✓ A CD-ROM drive
- ✓ A sound card for PCs; Mac OS computers have built-in sound support
- ✓ A monitor capable of displaying at least 16-bit color (thousands of colors) and 1024 x 768 resolution or better
- ✓ A modem with a speed of at least 14,400 bps

If you need more information on the basics, check out these books published by Wiley Publishing, Inc.: *PCs For Dummies* by Dan Gookin; *Macs For Dummies* by David Pogue; *iMacs For Dummies* by David Pogue; *Windows 95 For Dummies*, *Windows 98 For Dummies*, *Windows 2000 Professional For Dummies*, *Microsoft Windows Me Millennium Edition For Dummies*, and *Windows XP For Dummies*, all by Andy Rathbone.

Using the CD with Microsoft Windows

To install from the CD to your hard drive, follow these steps:

1. **Insert the CD into your computer's CD-ROM drive. The license agreement appears.**

Note to Windows users: The interface won't launch if you have autorun disabled. In that case, click Start ⇨ Run. In the dialog box that appears, type **D:\start.exe**. (Replace D with the proper letter if your CD-ROM drive uses a different letter. If you don't know the letter, see how your CD-ROM drive is listed under My Computer.) Click OK.

2. **Read through the license agreement, and then click the Accept button if you want to use the CD. After you click Accept, the License Agreement window won't appear again.**

The CD interface appears. The interface allows you to install the programs and run the demos with just a click of a button (or two).



To run some of the programs on the CD, you may need to keep the disc inside your CD-ROM drive. This is a good thing. Otherwise, a very large chunk of the program would be installed to your hard drive, consuming valuable hard drive space and possibly keeping you from installing other software.

Using the CD with Mac OS

To install items from the CD to your hard drive, follow these steps:

1. **Insert the CD into your computer's CD-ROM drive.**
In a moment, an icon representing the CD you just inserted appears on your Mac desktop. Chances are, the icon looks like a CD-ROM.
2. **Double-click the CD icon to show the CD's contents.**
3. **Double-click `start.htm` to open your browser and display the license agreement.**

If your browser doesn't open automatically, open it as you normally would by choosing File⇨Open File (in Internet Explorer) or File⇨Open⇨Location in Netscape (in Netscape Navigator) and select *Building a Web Site FD*. The license agreement appears.

4. **Read through the license agreement, nod your head, and click the Accept button if you want to use the CD.**

After you click Accept, you're taken to the Main menu. This is where you can browse through the contents of the CD.

5. To navigate within the interface, click any topic of interest, and you're taken to an explanation of the files on the CD and how to use or install them.

Due to size limitations, Macintosh versions of the trial software are not included on the CD-ROM. Links are provided so you can download the trials from the vendor's Web site.

What You'll Find on the CD

The following sections are arranged by category and provide a summary of the software and other goodies you'll find on the CD. If you need help with installing the items provided on the CD, refer to the installation instructions in the preceding section.



Shareware programs are fully functional, free, trial versions of copyrighted programs. If you like particular programs, register with their authors for a nominal fee and receive licenses, enhanced versions, and technical support. *Freeware programs* are free, copyrighted games, applications, and utilities. You can copy them to as many PCs as you like — for free — but they offer no technical support. *GNU software* is governed by its own license, which is included inside the folder of the GNU software. There are no restrictions on distribution of GNU software. See the GNU license at the root of the CD for more details. *Trial, demo, or evaluation* versions of software are usually limited either by time or functionality (such as not letting you save a project after you create it).

Adobe GoLive CS

For Windows. Trial version. The WYSIWYG Web site tool from the makers of Photoshop.

For more information and updates, visit the GoLive Web site: www.adobe.com/products/golive/main.html.

Adobe Photoshop CS

For Windows. Trial version. The most popular graphics program.

For more information and updates, visit the Photoshop Web site: www.adobe.com/products/photoshop/main.html.

Author's links

For Windows and Mac. This file is a set of all the links from every chapter in the book. It saves you a bunch of typing.

ColdFusion MX 6.1 Enterprise

For Windows. Trial version. Macromedia's powerful Web application development software.

For more information and updates, visit the ColdFusion Web site: www.macromedia.com/software/coldfusion/trial.

Dreamweaver MX 2004

For Windows. Trial version. This is the famous WYSIWYG Web-site-creation tool from Macromedia.

For more information and updates, visit the Dreamweaver Web site: www.macromedia.com/software/dreamweaver/trial.

Flash MX 2004

For Windows. Trial version. The popular Web animation program from Macromedia.

For more information and updates, visit the Flash Web site: www.macromedia.com/software/flash/trial.

FreeHand MX

For Windows. Trial version. Macromedia's illustration software for Web or hard copy.

For more information and updates, visit the FreeHand Web site: www.macromedia.com/software/freehand/trial.

Hemera Photo-Objects 500 Sampler

For Windows. Sample version. The greatest collection of photos you can find.

For more information and updates, visit the Photo-Objects Web site: www.hemera.com/hemera/products/photo_objects.jsp.

HomeSite+

For Windows. Thirty-day evaluation version. This program is one of the best Windows HTML editors available.

For more information and updates, visit the HomeSite Web site: www.macromedia.com/software/homesite/trial.

Troubleshooting

I tried my best to compile programs that work on most computers with the minimum system requirements. Alas, your computer may differ, and some programs may not work properly for some reason.

The two likeliest problems are that you don't have enough memory (RAM) for the programs you want to use, or you have other programs running that are affecting the installation or running of a program. If you get an error message such as *Not enough memory* or *Setup cannot continue*, try one or more of the following suggestions and then try using the software again:

- ✔ **Turn off any antivirus software running on your computer.** Installation programs sometimes mimic virus activity and may make your computer incorrectly believe that a virus is infecting it.
- ✔ **Close all running programs.** The more programs you have running, the less memory that is available to other programs. Installation programs typically update files and programs, so if you keep other programs running, installation may not work properly.
- ✔ **Have your local computer store add more RAM to your computer.** This is, admittedly, a drastic and somewhat expensive step. However, if you have a Windows 95 PC or a Mac OS computer with a PowerPC chip, adding more memory can really help the speed of your computer and allow more programs to run at the same time. This may include closing the CD interface and running a product's installation program from Windows Explorer.

If you still have trouble installing the items from the CD, please call the Customer Service phone number at 800-762-2974 (outside the U.S.: 317-572-3994) or visit our Web site at www.wiley.com/techsupport. Wiley Publishing, Inc. will provide technical support only for installation and other general quality control items; for technical support on the applications themselves, consult the program's vendor or author.

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