

Lecture 2: The Internet (Part 2)

INTRODUCTION

Now that you have dipped your toe into the waters of the internet, it's time to take the plunge and actively engage in the most powerful tool ever created. Many people are content to use the internet to read the news, check the weather, or listen to music online. Yet, this is only a small part of what is possible online.

USERNAMES & PASSWORDS

Most websites allow you to become a member (or "user") in one form or another. In most cases becoming a member is free and entitles you to greater access to a site and its services. Websites use different terms for becoming a member, such as "sign up", "join now" or "create an account." In all cases, this process involves creating a username and password. This applies to employment websites, free email accounts, YouTube and other video sharing sites, online discussion forums, and more. What is a good username? What is a good password?

Creating a Username

A *username* is your unique identity that allows you to have access to a website. Think of it as a badge that you flash before getting in to a secret club. By having a username, you can verify that you "belong" – and have greater access to the website. An important thing to remember is the word unique - a person who belongs to a site must select a username that no one else on that site is already using. If two people named John Douglas sign up for Outlook email accounts, one of them can choose johndouglas@outlook.com as his username and the other could use jdouglas@outlook.com, but they can't both have the email address johnconnor@yahoo.com. This is often a stumbling block for people when they sign up for a new site – remember to be unique!

It's also important to understand that while you may have the username johndouglas on Outlook, this does not prevent someone else from creating the username johndouglas on a different website like Yahoo. Each website has its own record of usernames and passwords. These records (called databases) are completely separate from every other website.

Your user name can be anything you like, from johndouglas to tacosofdoom1975 – as long as you comply with the specifications of the site you are joining. Most sites require that you choose a username that meets certain criteria. For example, many sites require that your username is at least a certain minimum length. This is usually specified by stating that a username must be so many characters long (i.e. "username must be at least 6 characters long"). A *character* is any symbol you can type on a keyboard, including letters, numbers, punctuation marks, and other symbols. Some sites may also require that you include numbers as part of your username, or they may forbid certain characters (such as #,?,>, or %).



Sign in

Username

Password

Sign in Stay signed in

[Can't access your account?](#)

You may also choose to use your real name as your username. If your name is unique, like Jebidiah Thundercloud, you will typically find that using just jebidiahthundercloud will work as a username for most sites. Even on popular services like Gmail or Yahoo, there is not likely to be another Jebidiah Thundercloud. If your name is John Smith, however, you will find that johnsmith is already taken on most popular web services. Remember, the internet is vast. Think of how many John smith's there are just in Ohio – not multiple that by the entire country and then the entire world! In order to create a unique username (remember usernames have to be unique on each individual website) you may need to add something more to your name. If you were born on July 4, 1960 you might find that johnsmith741960 is an available username.

Typically, when signing up for an account, you will be given instructions on the type of information you need to provide. Depending on the site or service you are signing up for, your user name may be visible to another user of a web site. It's preferred to keep your user name professional, especially when searching for jobs online.

The most important consideration though is to choose a username that you will remember. There are methods for recovering a forgotten username (or password) but these often take a lot of effort and can be frustrating.

Creating a password

A *password* is like a "key" for account. A username identifies the account, but the password proves you are the legitimate owner of the account and "unlocks" the account for you. When you use your debit card at an ATM you have to swipe the card so your account number can be recognized. Your card number is like a username. However, you also have to enter your PIN (Personal Identification Number) to access your funds. A password is the same thing as a PIN.

Just like with a username, every site will have special requirements for what type of password is acceptable. Most sites now require at least six if not eight characters. The majority of sites now also require you to include a number or special symbol somewhere in your password.

So, what makes a good password?

- Should be easy for you to remember, but difficult or impossible for others to guess
- Should not be a word that can be found in the dictionary
- Should contain a combination of upper- and lower-case letters as well as numbers
- For added security, throw in some special characters like # or \$.

Using a word like "computer" would be a poor password. But you can make it a little safer by adding an uppercase letter and a number. Computer1 is much better than just computer. Computer1 is even better.



As you type your password on most sites, it will never appear on screen. Your password is represented by asterisks (*****) or dots (••••) that appear for each character that you type. This is a security measure to make sure no one else who can see your screen will be able to read your password as you type. The bad thing is this can make it difficult to tell if you make a typo.

SAMPLE SIGN UP FORM

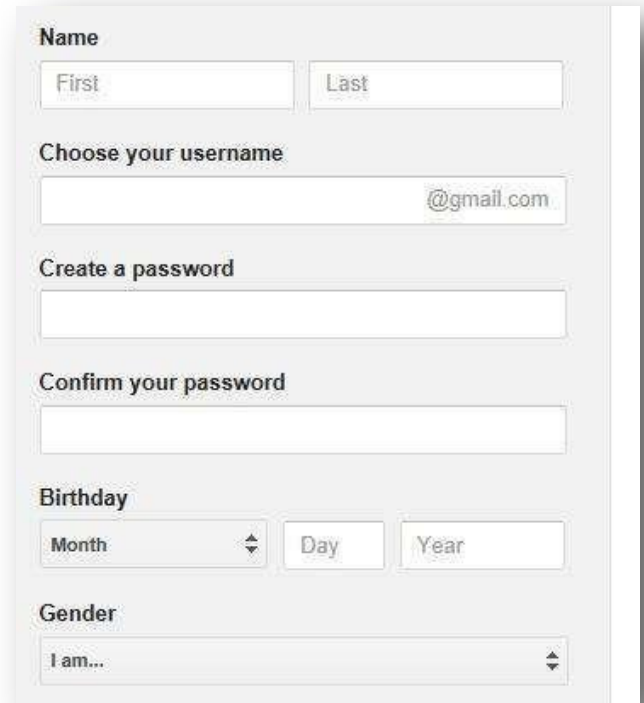
Now that we have an idea of what a good username and password is, you should be able to sign up with virtually any site on the internet. There are some things that you can expect to find in the sign-up process for each website. Some sites have a simple one step process (Choose a username and password, click accept), while others have a more complex sign up process involving an entire application. The applications can usually be divided into three main parts:

- Basic information
- Security and ID verification
- Polices the fine print.

Let's take a look at each section, using the sig-up form for Gmail (a free email service) as an example.

Basic Information

- Your Name: First, last, and sometimes middle initial
- Gender: Male or female
- Your Street Address: Typically, only if it's a website you might expect mail from, like Duke Energy or an online shopping website
- Your city, state, or zip code: A way for the website to know where you are, without providing your street address
- Your email address: This is the main way the website will contact you—ignore this one if you are signing up for your first email account since you don't yet have an email address
- Birthdate: To verify that you are of legal age to use the service
- Your desired username: The username you want to use for the site or service
- Your password: Typically, it must be entered twice for verification purposes



The image shows a sample sign-up form for Gmail. It includes the following sections and fields:

- Name:** Two input fields labeled "First" and "Last".
- Choose your username:** A single input field with a placeholder "@gmail.com".
- Create a password:** A single input field.
- Confirm your password:** A single input field.
- Birthday:** Three input fields labeled "Month", "Day", and "Year".
- Gender:** A dropdown menu with the text "I am..." and a downward arrow.

Security & ID Verification

- A security question: This is used to verify your identity should you forget your username or password. Some sites allow you to create your own security question—for example “Where did I go to high School?” while other sites provide you with a list to choose from. Again, make sure it’s something you and only you are likely to be able to answer.
- A “secret answer:” This is the answer to your security question.
- A secondary email address: Again, in case there is a problem with your primary email account, this is a way for the site or service to get in contact with you or provide you with account information should you forget your user name or password.
- A CAPTCHA: A CAPTCHA is a jumble of letters and sometimes numbers that is used to verify that you are in fact a human and not a computer program. Many websites add in this feature because computer programs have been designed to sign up “spam” accounts, but the CAPTCHA feature requires a real pair of human eyes to read and repeat what is on screen.
- Mobile Phone: Websites increasingly ask for a mobile phone number. This can be useful if you forget your password, as they can just send you a text. If you do not have or do not wish to share your mobile phone number, enter something like (513) 999-9999

Terms of Service & Conditions

- The Fine Print: Either a complete listing of or a link to the Terms of Service and Privacy Policy for the website you are signing up with.
- Accept/I Agree Checkbox: There may be a checkbox that you have to click to indicate that you have read and understand the Terms of Service. Even if you fill out everything else in the form correctly, failing to check the “Accept/I Agree” box will prevent your account from being set up.
- Other disclaimers, policies, and legal stuff: All this information will tell you what the company will and won’t do as far as using your information, remind you of the legal responsibilities you may have to assume by using the service, and so forth.

The screenshot shows a Google account verification form with the following sections:

- Mobile phone:** A dropdown menu showing the United States flag.
- Your current email address:** An empty text input field.
- Default homepage:** A checked checkbox labeled "Set Google as my default homepage." Below it, text reads: "Your default homepage in your browser is the first page that appears when you open your browser."
- Prove you're not a robot:** An unchecked checkbox labeled "Skip this verification (phone verification may be required)". Below it is a CAPTCHA image showing the numbers "6423429" and "18A". A text input field labeled "Type the text:" is positioned below the image, with refresh, volume, and help icons to its right.
- Location:** A dropdown menu showing "United States".

The screenshot shows the Terms of Service and Conditions section with the following elements:

- An unchecked checkbox labeled "I agree to the [Google Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#)".
- A checked checkbox labeled "Google may use my account information to personalize +1's on content and ads on non-Google websites. [About personalization.](#)".
- A blue "Next step" button.

BOOKMARKS, TABS, AND TOOLBARS

People who spend a lot of time on the computer are a notoriously impatient bunch. Therefore, there are always shortcuts and time savers built into programs. These shortcuts may eliminate a mouse click or a keystroke (or two) – and thus make your time spent on the computer more efficient.

Bookmarks

If you are using a computer at home, one excellent time saver is to save links to your most visited web sites. These links are called Bookmarks and they allow you to save a website address for easy access the next time you need it. Instead of typing out the whole address, you can simply go to your favorites and find the site you are looking for. Keep in mind that the exact wording and location for these links may vary from site to site. What one site calls “Locations” another site will call “Find a store.” “Contact us” may be replaced with “Ask us a question. The point is not to look for one certain heading or terms, but to be able to identify where to begin your information quest and know which path to choose to get there. If you are using a shared computer, like here at the Library, you may be unable to save bookmarks to the browser. However, you can use an online bookmarking service like Delicious (<http://delicious.com/>) that allows you to store all of your bookmarks on the website, divide them up into categories and keywords, and access your bookmarks from any computer that has an internet connection.

Tabs

One of the features most web browsers offer is the ability to use browser tabs. Browser tabs allow you to view multiple webpages in the same browser without the need to open a separate browser window. To open a new tab, click on the small blank tab button to the far right (pictured above). A new tab will be opened to a text page called "about: Tabs." This page gives a brief explanation of tabs and acts as a placeholder for the user to type in a different website URL into the browser address bar. You can have several tabs open in the same browser window and switch between the different website tabs. To close a tab, click on the close button (X) that appears on any active tab.

Browser Toolbars

A browser toolbar is a type of browser extension, or add on. Browser toolbars add additional buttons to the browser interface to accomplish frequently used tasks. Typically, toolbars are offered as free downloads from popular sites like Google, Yahoo, Amazon, AOL, and Bing. Once downloaded, the toolbar will sit across the top of your viewing window in the web browser, and below the built in toolbar (where you will find the home, print, RSS feed, etc. buttons). So why would you want a toolbar? Toolbars can come in handy for tasks that you do frequently on the computer, like using a search engine. By installing the Google toolbar, for example, you can do a Google search from any page you are on. This saves time from having to open a new tab or browser window do a search. Toolbars also frequently have options like alerting you when you have new email, giving you the option to spell check text you have typed into a form, and allowing you to “bookmark” a website.

