You're connected to the Internet, you have your Web browser open, and you're ready to start surfing, cruising through Web sites and viewing all the terrific information the Web has to offer. But where do you start?

If you're looking for Web pages on a particular subject or the Web site of a specific company or organization, you can use a search engine to help you find out where to go on the Web. A search engine searches through Web sites and finds the ones that match your search request. One excellent example of a search engine is Google at http://www.google.com.

When Google opens, you will see the basic search screen. This screen will allow you to search for Web pages on a specific topic. Clicking on the "Images" tab will allow you to search for images (photographs, cartoon, drawings, etc.). You can simply enter words into the search box, then hit enter or click on the "Google Search" button.

As with any search engine, the quality of the search results depends on the way you construct your search. To get best results, you should be as specific as possible.
Google will look for Web pages that contain all the words that you placed in the search box. The results will be listed in order, with the Web sites that use the words most prominently or most often listed first.

Tip: Use quotation marks to search for phrases! If you're looking for words in a phrase, put quotation marks around them. Without the quotation marks, Google looks for the words to appear on the Web page without necessarily being together.

For example:

A search for **video rental** retrieves 1,350,000 Web pages.

A search for **"video rental"** retrieves 131,000 Web pages.

You can use phrases in quotation marks in combination with other words, like this: **"video rental" retail**

**Viewing your results**

The results page shows the number of matches to your search request and lists the first ten sites. A few lines from the page are shown to give you an idea of how your search words are used on the site.
Narrowing your search

Google has an **Advanced Search** feature that allows you to improve your search to eliminate many irrelevant websites. Click on **Advanced Search** to view a search form that will allow you to narrow your search. You can limit your search to Web pages that have been updated recently or look for your words only in specified places on the Web page.

Using the Directory

Another feature of Google that can be very helpful is the **Directory**. A directory differs from a search engine in that it provides the user with a list or directory of websites arranged by subject. So if you're not sure what to put in the search box, you can go to the Directory and look for Web sites in the subject listing. From the opening Google page, just click on the Directory tab.
The Big Bad Web

You're now ready to roam through the World Wide Web, exploring all the wonderful resources that are available through the power of the Internet. But be warned! Remember that it is very easy for anyone to post information to the Web, and unfortunately not all Web sites can be trusted. Always question the information you find and try to determine its source. Use caution and judgement when evaluating a Web site's credibility.

Web site addresses (also called URLs, or Uniform Resource Locators) will have certain extensions that give you information about the source. For example, the .com in www.microsoft.com represents a commercial business. There are extensions such as .edu for educational institution, .org for organization, .gov for branch of government, as well as various others. Also look at the bottom of the page for a "last updated" date to help you know whether the information is current.

More help

If you need more help using Google, be sure to look at Google's excellent collection of help screens. From the first page, click on the "Jobs, Press, and Help" link near the bottom right corner of the screen. On any other page, click on the "Search Tips" link at the top of the screen. Google can do many things that we haven't had room to mention here. Become a Google expert!