

? Web Addresses (URLs)

Unfamiliar with or confused by web addresses?

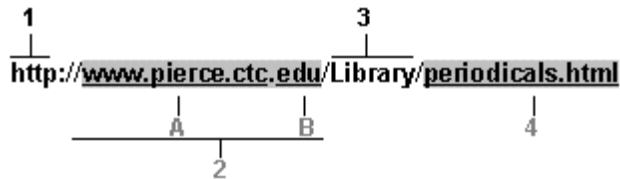
Sometimes you'll hear people call web site addresses "URLs." URL stands for **U**niform **R**esource **L**ocator, which is just the technical term for addresses of Internet resources.

Let's start with two definitions: (1) "protocols" are languages that two computers agree to use while communicating, and (2) "web browsers" are software used for looking at web sites (two common browsers are Netscape Navigator and Internet Explorer).

Parts of Addresses: Dissecting URLs

There are several distinct parts of addresses:

1. Protocol
2. Domain name
 - A. Server/Host name
 - B. Suffix
3. Directory/Folder
4. Page/Document/Filename



Knowing the different parts of URLs gives you clues about whether a web site is commercial or educational and sometimes about who owns it and where it is physically located.

1. Protocols. The first part of the URL is the protocol your web browser will use to interpret the web page you ask it to show you. The most common protocols you'll see are:

Protocol	Type of resource	Example	Owner
http	Hypertext Transfer Protocol	http://arts.endow.gov	National Endowment for the Arts
ftp	File Transfer Protocol (transfers computer files)	ftp://ftp.merit.edu	Merit Network, Inc. (nonprofit internet service provider)
telnet	telnet site (allows remote access to computer resources)	telnet://fedworld.gov	FedWorld: National Technical Information Service
news	usenet groups (news services)	news:news.announce.newusers	New Users (news group for new Internet users)

Except for usenet addresses, protocols are followed by a colon and two slashes (://). Hypertext (the "h" in "http") is sometimes referred to as hyperlink. Hypertext is text that is linked to other information. This is how web pages are linked (connected) together. When you click on hypertext words, phrases or pictures, your web browser will take you to other information. Because most URLs begin with "http," often the protocol and following punctuation (http://) is not written or said. For example, you might see "http://arts.endow.gov" written as "arts.endow.gov" instead.

2. Domain names. Most, but not all, computers storing web pages have names beginning with "www" (for **W**orld **W**ide **W**eb). Domain names have at least two sections, but often they have more.

A. Server names (sometimes called host name). These are the name of the server (which is the computer serving pages to visitors). These are at least one word, but can be more. The domain name for the web server at Pierce College is "www.pierce.ctc.edu." The "pierce" stands for Pierce College and the "ctc" is the Center for Information Services (CIS) (which provides computing support for community and technical colleges in Washington). Capitalization of letters is important: upper and lower case letters are considered two different characters.

B. Suffix. This indicates either the type of organization the web site is affiliated with or the country the server is in. Most domains in the United States have the following suffixes:

Suffix	Type of organization	Example	Owner
com	Commercial	imdb.com	Internet Movie Database
edu	Educational	www.cwu.edu	Central Washington University
gov	Government	www.whitehouse.gov	U. S. White House
org	Non-profit organization	www.sierraclub.org	Sierra Club
net	Network (miscellaneous)	gwpc.site.net	Ground Water Protection Control
mil	Military	www.army.mil	United States Army

2. *B. continued...* Domains in other countries, and some in the U.S., end with two-letter country codes. For example:

Suffix	Country	Example	Owner
us	United States	www.pcl.lib.wa.us	Pierce County Library
ca	Canada	www.sha.sk.ca	Saskatchewan Hockey Association
jp	Japan	jpop.hatch.co.jp	Bonsai's Jpop (Japanese pop music) Pages

Some URLs stop at this point. Others include the following:

- 3. Directories** (also called folders). These further specify where on the server computer a certain web page is located. You'll see slashes (/) before and sometimes after directory names. The address "www.pierce.ctc.edu/Library/" leads to a server computer called "www.pierce.ctc.edu" where there is a directory called "Library." There are no limits to the number of directories addresses can include. Check out "www.pierce.ctc.edu/Library/stuck/" on the library's web site. Some domains include directories for individual people and call them "users," "people," or "members." For example "www.nsf.gov/nsb/members/lubchenc.htm."
- 4. Pages** (also called documents or filenames). You'll see a slash before specific names of files. The address "www.pierce.ctc.edu/Library/periodicals.html" leads to a file called "periodicals.html" in the "Library" directory on the computer called "www.pierce.ctc.edu."

Deciphering Addresses

As noted earlier, addresses give clues about whether a web site is commercial or educational and sometimes about who owns it and where it is physically located. Using some of our sample URLs, here's how you can interpret the information.

- www.pcl.lib.wa.us ⇒ "pcl" stands for **Pierce County Library**, "lib" stands for **library**, "wa" stands for **Washington State**, and "us" stands for the **United States**.
- www.sha.sk.ca ⇒ "sha" stands for **Saskatchewan Hockey Association**, "sk" stands for **Saskatchewan**, and "ca" stands for **Canada**.
- www.tacoma.washington.edu/business/ ⇒ this leads you to the Business Administration department at UW Tacoma.

Speaking about Addresses

There are special ways to pronounce items in URLs, especially the punctuation marks. Here are some tips:

- URL is pronounced "u, r, l," one letter at a time, instead of as a word.
- Protocols are spelled out: "h, t, t, p." Often the protocol with punctuation ("http://") part is not stated because most URLs begin with http (see "Parts of Addresses" above).
- Periods (.) in URLs are pronounced "dot."
- You can either spell out each letter or say words appearing in URLs. See the pierce example below.
- Slashes (/) in URLs are referred to as either "slash" or "forward slash".
- Many addresses have tilde symbols (~). This is pronounced "**till** duh". This is often an indication that the page is a personal web page. For example: "www.emich.edu/~linguist/".
- There are never spaces in URLs, but underscores or underlines () can look like spaces. For example: "www.baylor.edu/~Scott_Moore/Phi_Rel_info.html".
- Capitalization is important: upper and lower case letters are considered two different characters.

To say "http://www.pierce.ctc.edu," say: "h, t, t, p, colon, slash, slash, w, w, w, dot, pierce, dot, c, t, c, dot, e, d, u". You could spell-out "p, i, e, r, c, e" instead of saying it. Sometimes you'll also hear domain suffixes as words rather than spelled out. For example, ".net" can be said "dot net" instead of "dot, n, e, t."

Writing Down Addresses and Site Information

For bibliographies, you'll need to keep track of several important pieces of web site information:

- The full address, including the protocol. For example http://www.wolfenet.com/~greenway/.
- The owner of the site. The sample above belongs to Linda Greenway.
- The title of the site or individual page. This site is called "Puget Sound Green Pages."
- The date you accessed the web site.
- The date it was last updated (if available).

Format the information following as your style guide dictates. Ask at the Reference Desk for help citing bibliographic information.

Typing Addresses in Web Browsers

If you know an address for a web page and want to go directly to it, you can type it into your web browser. Using Netscape as your web browser, type the address in the "Location" box (sometimes this is labeled the "Go To" box) in the gray area the top of your screen. When using Internet Explorer, type it into the "Address" box in the gray area the top of your screen.