

25 ways to... Use the Internet



You can make money, find out how to fix that leaky faucet—or even just have fun *by Rich Gray*

It seems that wherever you turn lately, you can't help but run into a "www" this or a ".com" that. The Internet is quickly changing the way we do so many things. From choosing a baby name to obtaining health information, there's a wealth of services and data at your fingertips—most of it free. Try these suggestions to get started.

Click Here For Help If...

1 **That rosebush won't bloom.** Having trouble with a garden or houseplant? Plant encyclopedias from both Time Life (vg.com) and SierraHome (www.sierrahome.com/sierrahome/gardening/encyc) list almost 3,000 plants by name or attribute, and provide pictures, descriptions and cultivation/care tips.

2 **You can't stop that leaky faucet.** To repair just about anything, get directions from the Home Repair and Maintenance site, a Michigan State University Extension (www.msue.msu.edu/msue/imp/mod02/master02.html). It's also an excellent resource for information on tools, paints and materials. Search by keyword (e.g., faucet) or browse the alphabetical listing. Another good site: eHow Home & Garden Center at www.ehow.com/index/index.asp?categoryid=12.

3 **You need to research a medical condition.** For the latest health news, or links to in-depth information on a particular disease or condition, go to WebMD.com (www.webmd.com), or Mayo Clinic's Health Oasis (www.mayohealth.org). For nutrition info and advice, access the Tufts University Nutrition Newsletter at navigator.tufts.edu.

4 **Fido is also under the weather.** Keep your cat or dog healthy and happy with free health encyclopedias from VetInfo. From diseases and medication to behavioral problems and parasites, these A-Z listings are informative and easy to understand. (For cats, go to www.vetinfo.com/catindex.html, and for dogs, see www.vetinfo.com/dogindex.html.) Need advice on how to safeguard your pet? Stop by the Veterinary Pet Insurance site at www.veterinarypetinsurance.com.

5 **You need a new recipe.** Tap into a gold mine of culinary delights at the Searchable Online Archive of Recipes, which offers more than 60,000 recipes in dozens of categories. Whether you're looking for standard fare such as slow-cooker meals or more exotic cuisines, you can look for recipes by name or food. Go to soar.berkeley.edu/recipes. Two other great sites to check out: RecipeAmerica.com (www.recipeamerica.com) and Barbeque Recipe.com (www.barbequerecipe.com).

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Photograph by Sang An

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6 You could use a break at the supermarket. Val-Pak Coupons On-Line lets you choose coupons for stores in your area. Categories range from car transportation to beauty and fitness. Print the coupons you want and redeem them. Go to www.valpak.com. Also try eCoupons (www.ecoupons.com).

7 Junior needs help with a book report. Britannica.com lets you search the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Merriam-Webster Dictionary and other sources free at search.britannica.com. If you're looking for more specialized items (such as quotes or translations), try the big list of reference sources at Thor Virtual Reference Desk, from Purdue University Libraries. Dial up thorplus.lib.purdue.edu/reference/dict.html.

Just Log On for...

8 A new job. Sites such as HotJobs.com (www.hotjobs.com) and Monster.com (www.monster.com) list thousands of employment opportunities. You can search by location or type of job, or even apply online for positions that interest you. Also, iVillage.com's career center offers a wide range of information and support for women in—or ready to enter—the workforce. Go to www.ivillage.com/career.

9 Classes you can take online. Distance learning and the Internet were tailor-made for each other. TeleCampus (www.telecampus.edu) lets you find thousands of courses that are now being offered online. If you're looking to learn about a given topic but aren't necessarily shooting for a degree, go to Free-ed.net (www.free-ed.net) for an array of free online courses.

10 College campus tours. For free "virtual tours" of many schools across the U.S., go to CampusTours.com. It also offers interactive campus maps and college Webcam shots for a slice-of-life experience. There's also a substantial "paying for college" section to help you figure out how to foot those tuition bills. Type in www.campustours.com. If you're just starting to look for the right school, College Opportunities On-Line, a U.S. Department of Education site, lets you find colleges by degree, program or location. Go to nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cool/COOLHome.asp.

11 Today's headlines. To read newspapers from across town or around the world, go to the reading room at the Internet Public Library at www.ipl.org/reading/news. Search by region or title; each description tells you the language, links and features of a particular paper. Also check out NewspaperLinks.com at www.newspaperlinks.com.

Browse Here for Instant Info on...

12 The foods you're eating. The USDA Nutrient Data Laboratory (www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp) gives you vitamin, mineral and other nutritional information on practically any food, whether frozen, fresh or cooked. For help in figuring out food labels, go to KidsHealth.org's Deciphering Food Labels site (www.kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition/_fit/nutrition/food_labels.html). If you often eat on the run, Fast Food Facts ([www.olen.com/food](http://www olen.com/food)) will help you make healthier choices by comparing foods from popular fast-food restaurants.

13 The latest forecast. Find the weather forecast in your backyard—or anywhere else in the world—as well as seasonal sections on skiing, foliage, and home and garden, by dialing up the Weather Channel (www.weather.com). Or, get weather by e-mail at www.weatherbyemail.com.

14 Choosing a baby name. If you're searching for just the right one, check www.babynames.com. Search through an extensive collection of names alphabetically or by meaning, or browse through such lists as "Top Names 1999," "Soap Opera Names," even "Shakespeare Names." If you really get stuck, you can always try the site's personalized naming service. Another good site: Homepagers Baby Names (www.homepagers.com/names).

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15 Digging into your past. Interested in knowing where your family came from? Ancestry.com (www.ancestry.com) gives you a ton of free information on genealogy, including a database with more than 550 million records. A great tutorial is also available at "Getting Started in Genealogy and Family History." Log on to www.genuki.org.uk/gs.

16 Naming your price. Priceline.com takes a unique approach to shopping: Name your price for new cars, hotel rooms or airline tickets. If they find a match, they'll alert you. East Coast, Midwest and Southeast residents can even name their price for groceries through this service. Go to www.priceline.com. For information on purchasing safely online, go to www.safeshopping.org.

17 Adding anything. The handy site www.calculator.com features links to dozens of calculators that let you figure out anything from your mortgage payments to converting cooking measurements.

18 Writing your congress member. Both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate keep lavish homes on the Internet. You can obtain contact information on any representative or senator, view his or her voting records, and link to his or her official Web site at www.house.gov and www.senate.gov.

Let Us (Virtually) Entertain You

19 Read movie reviews. Deciding if a movie is right for your child is a snap, thanks to www.screenit.com. Screen It! analyzes new and recently released films by examining potential problem areas such as smoking, language or nudity. To find out what several critics think about a movie, try Critics.com (www.critics.com).

20 Plan your vacation. Preview Travel.com consistently earns high praise for its one-stop travel shopping. Get instant news and travel info for vacation packages, cruises, flights, hotel rooms, car rentals and more. Up-to-the-minute pricing makes it easy to compare fares and get the best bargain. Head over to www.previewtravel.com/Home. Another popular site: Travelocity.com (www.travelocity.com).

21 Get free craft patterns. Handcrafters village.com (www.handcraftersvillage.com/freecraft2.html) gives you hundreds of free projects and patterns in many areas, including rubber stamps, kids', holiday and more. Knitters may also want to try Wool Works Patterns' free patterns section at www.woolworks.org/patterns.html. If you prefer cross-stitching, try Sue's Cross Stitch Freebie Finder (powerup.com.au/~sheal/freebies.html).

22 Buy a greeting card. At Sparks.com (www.sparks.com), you can browse through thousands of cards by your favorite brands. Have your cards packaged and sent to you to fill out yourself, or if you're really pressed for time, have the cards personalized and sent for you. To send free electronic greetings, also go to Blue Mountain Arts' Electronic Greeting Cards (www.bluemountain.com or www.americangreetings.com).

23 Play a game. The gaming section at Yahoo! (games.yahoo.com) lets you play gin, backgammon, word games and other activities online with fellow Internet users. Need a little extra cash? Go to ABC-TV's *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* (abc.go.com/primetime/millionaire/mill_play.html) to find out how to get on the show or play the game online.

24 Visit a museum. To find museum Web sites, go to www.musee-online.org. Search through an extensive list grouped by geography, type, name or even review score.

25 Play the stock market. Internet stock trading has become a booming success, and E*Trade (www.etrade.com/) ranks as one of the best online brokerages. If you join as a customer or registered member, you can play their monthly stock market games to get a feel for the market and win cash prizes. Two other sites: Gomez.com (gomez.com) or Internet Investing (www.internetinvesting.com). **WD**