

From The TechnoManor

Uh oh, it's past deadline. There's nothing in my Inbox. So, what should I write about?

Customer support told me I need Internet Explorer version 7 to access their Web site How do I know what version I have? And what does it mean?

If you've heard something like this before, let me explain.

Computer programs change at the drop of a hat these days. Each edition of a program can do certain things. Newer editions can do more things than older editions. But how do companies keep track of which edition of a program does what?

They assign a unique number to the program. This is called the *version number*.

Unfortunately, it's not a simple number like "version 10" It's more like

10.4.35

That first **10** is the significant part of a version number. The rest of the numbers (the **.4.35**) further identify the edition. You only need to pay attention to the last part of the number if someone asks for it, or you read some instructions that say, "our program only works with version 10.4.35 or higher of this other program."

(Side Note: version numbers can be compared to one another. 10.4.35 is higher than 10.3.1. 10.4.35 is lower than 11.1.0. Comparison is performed between the pieces of a version number, starting with the left-most piece. The **10** and **11** in this case.)

So, how do you know what version of a program you have?

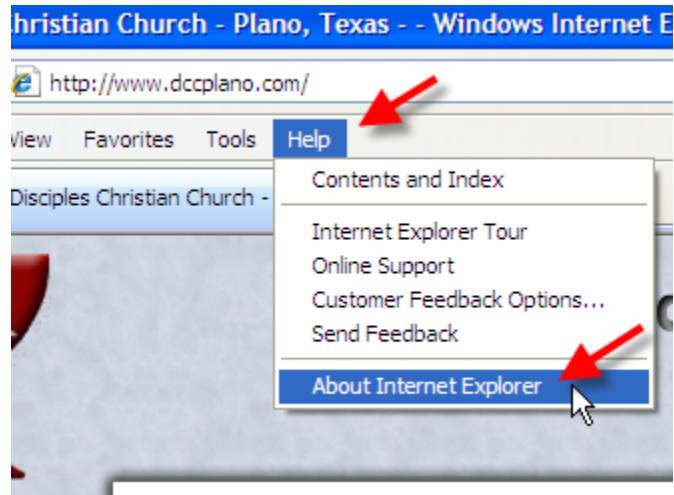
The easiest way is to look at the *About* menu item.

Huh?

Let me show you.

Typically, you click the **Help** menu, then the **About** menu item. In this case, **About Internet Explorer**..

The *About Internet Explorer* window opens. It displays the true name of the program and its version number.



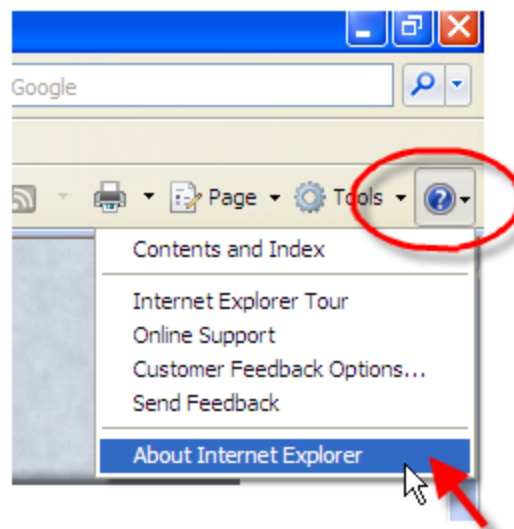
In this example, the version number for Internet Explorer is **7.0.5730.13**. The important part is the **7**.

Yes, the title also proclaims *Internet Explorer 7*. But the true version number is 7.0.5730.13.



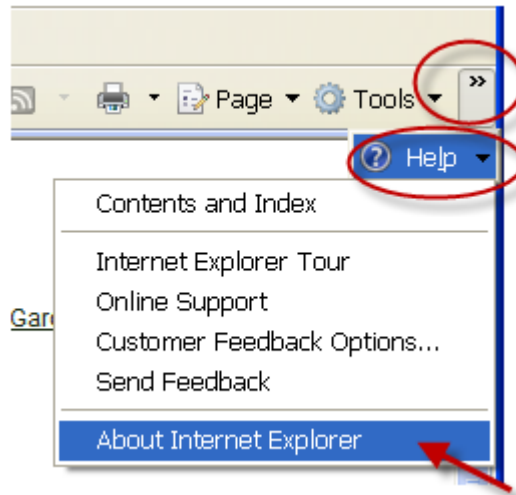
Sometimes you may not see a **Help** menu. So, how do you get to the **About** menu item?

Newer programs pack information inside icons. An example is at right. Here, you would click on the tiny black downward-pointing nub next to the question mark (circled). It would display a Help menu (like above).



In a second example, you would click the tiny double-right arrows (circled), then the downward-pointing nub (circled), and finally **About Internet Explorer**.

Programs can be pesky sometimes, can't they?



Although I've been talking about Internet Explorer, all programs have a version number. This applies to Windows computers, Apple Macs, and Linux computers. The method for finding the version number is similar for all those computers.

So, the next time a customer support person asks, "and what version of our program do you have?" You can answer with confidence, "I have version 7.0.5730.13. Now fix it!"

Got a computer, email, Web, or related question? Scratch out an email message and send it to me at:

frenchygrey@gmail.com

I'll attempt to answer one each week in *The Link*. If you don't send me questions, I have to ask my wife for ideas!

Dave Gillen