

From the TechnoManor

While in the office last week, Jan asked why something wasn't working when she tried to access a web site using her computer. I explained why and realized this was an article begging to be written. (Some people hear voices. I hear unwritten articles. Go figure.)

Jan was having a problem with the results from a Yahoo! search box. What used to work, didn't.

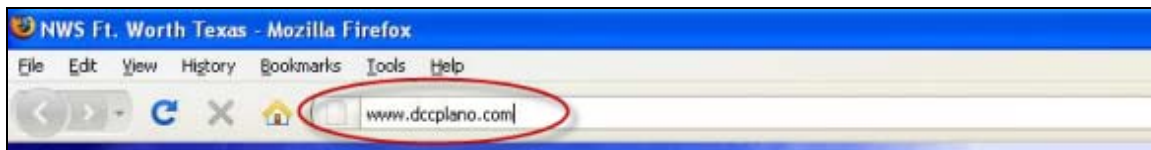
So, what is, an *address bar*, a *search bar*, and a *toolbar* in a Web browser (i.e. in Chrome, Firefox, Internet Explorer, or Safari)? Do you need them? Which one should you use and when? Can you get rid of them?

You type the web address of a site (e.g., **www.dccplano.com**) into the *address bar*. This will look up the IP address of the web site then display its web page. The address bar is typically the long open area near the top left of the browser. If you know a web address, this is the most efficient way to visit a web site.

In Internet Explorer



In Firefox



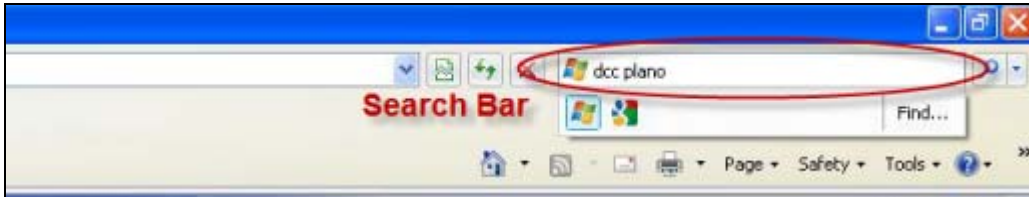
Side Note: For the sake of simplicity, I'm calling **www.dccplano.com** a web address. They're technically called domain names. I talk more about domain names and IP addresses in my March 26, 2009 article.

You use a *search bar* if you don't know the web address, but know some words describing it. You type these words in the search bar. The search bar is a smaller open area near the top right of a browser. The words are sent to one of the major search services on the Web (Firefox uses Google, Internet Explorer uses Microsoft Live Search). A web page is displayed with possible matches for those words. If the web site you're looking for is on this page, click the link to open its web page.

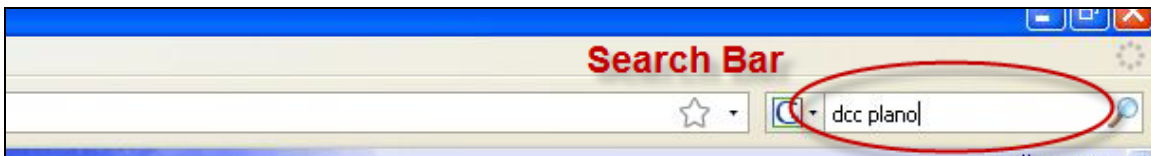
Side Note: Microsoft has re-branded their search service. What used to be called MSN Search, then Windows Live Search, is now called “Bing”. So, if you see Bing (or www.bing.com), that’s what happened.

This method allows you to get by without knowing a web address. However, it adds another step by looking up the search words in a catalog and displaying the results for you to review.

In Internet Explorer



In Firefox



Results from search bar



Before search bars were included in Web browsers, Web search services like Google and Yahoo! provided search boxes as part of their Web site. In fact, those sites started life as a “go to” place on the Web where you could locate other Web sites. Eventually, they evolved to become the information destinations they are today.

The *search box* behaves like the search bar in a Web browser. That is, you type the words of a place you’re looking for in this box. The search service displays web sites matching those words. You choose one of the sites, and away you go.

It kind of looks like this:



Doing this works, but you now have a 4-step process:

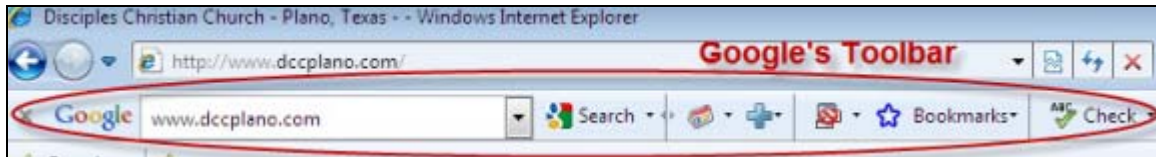
1. Visit the search service. (Some people use this as their home page.)
2. Type the words for the search service to look up in its catalog.
3. Receive a page showing Web sites matching your words.
4. Click on a link to go to that Web site.

Sometimes, the search service will jump directly to the right place (skipping steps 3 and 4). And sometimes, you get raspberries.

When you get raspberries, the search service may be having problems with its catalog, not necessarily that the web site you're looking for went away.

In my opinion, visiting a search service, typing words into a search box, and waiting is one of the slowest ways to get around the Web. Using the address bar or the search bar are far more efficient.

What about those toolbars that everybody wants to give you? They look like the following:



I know Google, MSN (Microsoft), Yahoo!, and others “invite” you to download their toolbar for your Web browser. These *toolbars* are an extra line (or bar) that appear near the top of your Web browser. They provide convenient buttons to access specific features of their name-sake Web sites.

My advice: tell them “thanks, but no thanks.”

Other than a pretty convenience, they add no value to accessing the Web. And they bring along the following baggage:

- They load and run one or more programs in the background in addition to your Web browser. If you have downloaded more than one of these toolbars, each one is adding a load to your computer. So, if you’re wondering why your computer is slowing down: Get rid of those toolbars!
- They are always in contact with their name-sake Web site. Which means your computer is “talking” on the Internet, even if you’re doing nothing.
- They add little “programlets” inside your Web browser (called add-ons or plug-ins). These “programlets” also increase the amount of time it takes your Web browser to start, and the amount of memory it uses.
- They decrease the amount of visual “real estate” you have to view a Web page.
- All toolbars want you to use their service for all your Web searches, want to change your Web home page to their place, and typically add unbidden “extras” like a program to keep them updated.

To get rid of these toolbars (in Windows), do the following.

In Windows Vista and Windows 7:

- Click Start circle.
- Type **Programs and Features** in the Search programs and files box.
- Click **Programs and Features** in the programs list.
- Locate the toolbar programs (such as Google Toolbar or MSN Toolbar)
- Select the toolbar program.

In Windows XP:

- Click **Start**.
- Click **Settings** (if you don’t see Control Panel).
- Click **Control Panel**.
- Click **Add or Remove Programs**.
- Locate the toolbar programs (such as Google Toolbar or MSN Toolbar)
- Select the toolbar program.

- Click **Uninstall** (at top).
- Repeat the last three steps until all the toolbar programs are gone. Then click “X” (in upper right).
- Click **Remove**.
- Repeat the last three steps until all the toolbar programs are gone. Then click “X” (in upper right).

The bottom line: I’m a minimalist. I avoid adding junk to my Web browser and use only what came with it. It’s one of my tricks to keep my computer(s) running smoothly and not slowing down. I’ve never had problems finding things on the Web (I keep writing these articles, don’t I?).

Uh oh, Woody (my youngest greyhound) is getting restless. Guess that means it’s time to wrap this up and take all the woofs for a walk. If you have a question, drop me email at:

frenchygrey@gmail.com

I’ll answer your question(s) for the next two weeks in *The Link*.

I really do read email at this address! I have learned, though, that Google decided a few email addresses should be shunted into the Spam folder. I’m now on the lookout for this so it doesn’t recur!

Dave Gillen