

25 Time Saving Tips For Internet Users

By

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How many hours a week do you spend on Internet? Do you get frustrated in not being able to find just what you're looking for in seconds rather than minutes? Would you like to get more of whatever it is you desire for work or play using Internet?

According to Internet World Stats latest report there are 220 million U.S. Internet users or roughly three-quarters of the population. If all of those users could save just 10 minutes per week using better Internet technique that would be a productivity increase of almost two billion hours a year – a very impressive number.

A recent [informal poll](#) reveals that a majority of experienced Internet users waste at least two hours per week in fruitless or ineffective activities. With that in mind, here are 25 time-saving tips to increase the productivity of Internet use.

1. Use **keyboard short-cuts**. [Shortcuts](#) can save many minutes each day and at the end of the year it may add a week of productivity. By pressing two or three keys at the same time you can dramatically speed up the manual processes that take more time when mousing. A favorite of mine is Ctrl+C to copy something in the browser, Alt+Tab to switch to a document running in another window then Ctrl+V to paste into the document and Alt+Tab to go back to the browser.
2. Set your browser (Google Chrome, Microsoft Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, etc.) **start-up page** to something useful. Going into “Tools” and then “Internet Options” you'll find a field in which you can type a web address. After you do this every time you start your browser it will open to the specified page.
3. While were on the topic of setting a specific start page, consider a customized home page. Google and Yahoo offer the capability to create a **customized page** with a dizzying array of possible uses. Google has [iGoogle](#) and Yahoo has [My Yahoo](#). They are similar in capabilities but I prefer iGoogle for its lack of jarring animated advertising but I also have a MyYahoo page. Sign up for a free account on either service and you'll be given the option to create a customized page which is accessible from any computer anywhere in the world provided you have your user name and password.
4. Use **quote marks when searching** for a person's first and last name or a phrase. This tells the search engine to show you only that exact combination of words so try a person's name with and without a middle name or letter. This literally improves searching at least 1,000 percent almost every time compared to not using quotation marks around a search term.
5. After you've searched and clicked on a search result link do you read through all of the text to locate what you originally sought via the search engine? Save many minutes each day by using **Ctrl+F to call up a search box** on your computer, type in the original search term and it will find the search term very quickly.
6. Do you really know what key words will give you exactly what you want to find? Sometimes not. The “**Directory Approach**” might be more productive. Sites like dmoz.org present information in categories. The deeper you go into categories and subcategories the more precise the information in a particular category.
7. Are you using **automatic systems**? If you are seeking a continuous stream of information on a very specific topic then set up an automatic search. It finds and forwards an email to you

- containing the desired information you want on an ongoing basis. Try [Google Alerts](#) and note the ability to specify the Internet sources you want to monitor. If you choose “comprehensive” from the drop down selections you will set up a very wide-scope “dragnet.”
8. While we're saving time with automatic systems consider RSS feeds too. Real Simple Syndication enables you to monitor changing information from a web site. For example, [Craigslist](#) provides that capability after you've searched for something. There's a tiny “RSS” at the bottom right of an individual listing. Copy that link and use it with a customized home page like iGoogle or My Yahoo.
 9. While I'm applauding Google I'll mention **Google Desktop**. This is a good example of a [desktop search](#) tool that enables you to rapidly search your hard-drive and/or a network drive to find desired information on your own computer. Download it from [desktop.google.com](#) and install it on your computer. Two nice features – when you do a web search using Google the Desktop software runs in the background and will display matches on your computer in the space above the regular web search results.
 10. Make sure your **computer is cleaned** and (no joke) dusted. The later won't save you any time but cleaning out dust could save your power supply from overheating and burning out. Regarding speedier Internet use, cache, cookies and a whole lot of other stuff puts a brake on your surfing speed. Defragment the hard drive. While the Microsoft Windows operating system has programs (usually tucked away in Programs>Accessories>System Tools) I use a great program called [CCleaner](#). If you really like it you can make a voluntary contribution.
 11. Where do I find all of these great **free programs**? The only site I fully trust is [download.com](#). If you only want to review freeware do a keyword search first then click on the By License Type: free link. You can quickly and efficiently review all types of software there and compare offerings from competitors too.
 12. Use **email filters** to manage the incoming flow. Most of the time you just want to read important email. Filters (see Microsoft “[Mail Rules](#)” and Mozilla [Thunderbird](#)) enable you to specify such criteria as sender, keywords, etc. and actions like deleting, routing to a specified folder (Google uses “Labels”) so they don't clog up your in-box. Yahoo combines filters with email or cell phone notification. If a message is filtered you have the option of having Yahoo send a notification message to your cell phone.
 13. You can go a step further with **Yahoo Mobile**. If you have a My Yahoo page you can use the [Mobile Alert](#) function to stay up to date on just about anything. You'll only pay for SMS messages but you'll avoid the surcharge that some cell phone plans charge for this type of service.
 14. **Centralize your calendars**. Perhaps the first important step toward good time management is to use only one calendar. There are many free web-based calendars but I firmly believe [Google's](#) is the most useful. There are many features available but the two I like best are sharing functions and event reminders sent via email or SMS.
 15. **Get help while you sleep**. Why struggle over a challenging question or problem when there's likely to be an expert somewhere who will be happy to help you? There are many “Answers” type sites where you can pose your problem and hopefully get an answer in a short time. [Yahoo Answers](#) is a good example of this type of Internet Resource.
 16. **Too busy to read a long document?** If you download an Adobe PDF document and you're using Adobe Acrobat Reader 9.2 you can activate the “Read Aloud” feature. If you have a pocket digital audio recorder connect it to the headphone output of your computer. It may take a little time to do the first time but thereafter you can have audio recordings of many PDF documents.
 17. **Call a meeting using chat** to avoid the walk, drive or flight to a central meeting place. There are many [chat and collaboration](#) services, many of which are free, that provide all kinds of

communications features way beyond just typing text back and forth. Check out several common chat services for details and be sure to look at Adobe ConnectNow.

18. Find images for your project using Google **Advanced Image Search**. The **form** provides a way to find exactly what you need including a selection for copyright status.
19. Use the new **People Metasearch** tools to find people. This is an interesting development and a few people might consider it intrusive but these powerful sites do the job. Try **123people**, **PeekYou**, or **pipl** to see how this type of search works.
20. Speaking of people search, do you ever need to find **public records**? Here's a tip that works very well in Google. Just search for a jurisdiction (**municipality**, **county**, **state**) name and the type of record you are seeking.
21. Are you a frequent user of **multiple blogs and/or social networks**? If so, try time-saving posting services like **atomkeep**, **Flock**, **Ping.fm**, or **posterous**. These "roboposters" can save you time and keep all of your friends and business contacts efficiently updated on your doings.
22. There an unknowable amount of very high quality information available via Internet but not all of it is free. For example, you can avoid the trip to a newstand and the purchase of an expensive **paper-based magazine** by using sites like **goreadgreen**, **issuu**, **zinio** Recently I needed a specific article from a popular national magazine. By the time I heard about it the magazine was no longer available but I got it via zinio for a small charge.
23. If you find yourself hitting a lot of **dead ends** while trying to find something you need here's a tactic you will find useful. Each time you find one of the bits and pieces or leads to follow copy it from the browser into a document running in another window on your computer. After collecting several of these initial leads copy them into a search engine and follow threads. This prevents you from going too far on each lead during your initial search. See tip number one for shortcuts to execute this tactic quickly and easily.
24. You might even benefit from using an overall framework for Internet activities. My PROActive process (Plan, Retrieve, Organize, Analyze and Communicate) helps. I teach this in my **workshops** and **webinars**.