

## INTERNET FAQ

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## 1. INTERNET CONNECTIONS AND DOWNLOAD TIMES

### 1.1. How do I calculate download times?

The first thing you need to know about Internet connections, is that bandwidth is measured in kilobits per second or kps (kilobit - 1000 bits, megabit – 1,000,000 bits, etc.). If you use a computer you are probably used to seeing files measured in bytes. One byte is comprised of 8 consecutive bits. So a file that is 10Kb in size is about 80 bits. It is “about 80 bits” because one Kilobyte is actually 1024 bytes. Since calculating download times is not an exact science due to other factors like Internet congestion and server traffic we will round the numbers off. For our purposes we will approximate that one byte is equal to 10 bits and one Kilobyte is equal to 1000 bytes.

With this in mind, we calculate estimated download time for a Web page by taking the file size of the complete page (including images) multiply that by 10 and divide it by the kps of the connection. So, a page that is 10Kb would download on a 50kps connection in 2 seconds.

**10Kb x 10 / 50kps = 2    page size x 10 / connection speed = download time**

### 1.2. Dial-Up Modems

The most common way people connect to the Internet is through a dial-up modem. The dial-up modem is an old technology that works in very much the same way as a common fax machine. The modem connects to a standard analog phone line and sounds are used to represent the “0’s” and “1’s” in the information uploaded and downloaded.

Modems are most commonly found in 4 varieties: 56k, 33.6 (pronounced thirty-three six), 28.8 (pronounced twenty-eight eight) and sometimes 14.4 (pronounced fourteen four). Currently most users have at least a 33.6 modem.

56k modems are a little tricky because they do not connect at 56kps. Due to legal restrictions they operate at only 53kps maximum.

### 1.3 ISDN

Abbreviation of Integrated Services Digital Network, an ISDN line usually consists of two phone lines and can connect a user at a maximum of 128 kps digitally. With the increasing availability of low cost “broadband” connection such as Cable Modems and DSL, ISDN has become less popular.

### 1.4 DSL

DSL stands for Digital Subscriber Line. Like an ISDN line DSL runs through the existing phone line, but is much faster. Download bandwidth is available up to 32000kps, although most consumer lines are between 250kps and 700kps.

### 1.5 Cable

Cable modems are an Internet connection that runs through the existing cable television lines. Download speed range from 256kps to 6000kps, but most are between 256kps and 700kps.





## 1.6 Other Connections

There are several other types of connections, but most are limited to businesses as they are very expensive. Most of these connections are shared by many users or are part of the Internet backbone carrying traffic between ISPs and Networks. They range from T1 (1500 kps) to OC256 (approx 13,000,000kps) the transatlantic connection that runs about \$1.5 million per month.

## 1.7 How can I reduce download times?

The easiest way to reduce download time is to limit the size and number of graphics, photos and Flash movies on your site. If large graphics cannot be avoided, they can be split into smaller graphics and pieced back together using HTML. The Q5 Media design team has programs to help reduce image size as well as programs to calculate page download times at various speeds.

## 2. BROWSERS

### 2.1. What is a browser?

A **browser** is the program you use to surf the Internet. Its function is to read programming code like HTML and JavaScript and return information in a graphical manner.

### 2.2. What are the different browsers people use?

Currently, there are two major browsers in the market – Netscape Navigator and Microsoft Internet Explorer (both are free), although Internet Explorer is the de facto standard with approximately 90% of Internet visitors using IE. Other browsers commonly used are Mozilla, Opera and the America Online browser (currently built around Netscape technology as the two companies merged.)

Browsers also have different versions that are often dramatically different. For example, Internet Explorer 6 (or IE6) has many features not supported by Internet Explorer 4 (IE4), the biggest difference being support for certain Cascading Style Sheet (or CSS) tags. Unless a particular tag is no longer accepted by the W3C standards, a later version of a browser will include all of its previous supported tags.

Netscape has its “4 series” and “6 series” which run on two completely different engines (Netscape 6 was not an upgrade of Netscape 4, rather a new program built from the ground up.) While Netscape 4 (or NS4) had quite a few problems with CSS and XML support, Netscape 6 (or NS6) more closely resembles IE and has incredible support for these technologies.

### 2.3. What does this mean to my Web site?

Some technologies do not work the same (or at all) in all browsers and browser versions. Some browsers do not work on some operating systems. This can have a dramatic effect on how your Web site is built, what technologies will be used and how long it will take to build your site.

When developing a Web site, it is important to know what kinds of browsers will be visiting most. There are many statistics available showing the percentage of users using each browser to surf the Web. You may prefer to follow current trends into the future or stay away from new technologies in order to appease all browsers. You may opt to have Q5 Media design sites that work slightly differently in various browsers. If your Web site has a very small niche audience, you may prefer to have a design



most suitable for one type of browser with little regard to cross-browser compatibility.

#### 2.4. What factors I should consider regarding browser differences?

When considering browser compatibility, the biggest concern is CSS and what browsers will accept what. The World Wide Web Consortium has a standard set of rules to follow for CSS, but that doesn't mean all of the bells and whistles you want will be included in that standard. NS4 has very limited support of CSS. While NS6 has a much greater support, there are still several Microsoft-specific styles that are not currently supported by any version of Netscape. There are also CSS styles that are supported in IE 5.5 and 6, but not 4, and so on.

JavaScript is also sometimes affected by browser type. Some functions do not work in NS that work in IE, or do not work the same way. A function you may desire from JavaScript may have to be slightly altered to work in both browsers or may not even be possible in one or the other. You may opt to leave that function out of your Web site.

There is a very small difference between the way NS and IE render HTML code as well. Most HTML code is standard but small quirks might make it difficult to achieve the same results in all browsers.

#### 2.5. How can I make sure my Web site works well for the maximum amount of users?

The Q5 Media staff has been developing for the Web since the very earliest versions of Netscape and Internet Explorer were released. We have been keeping up with changes and have immeasurable experience working with and creating cross-platform sites.

Q5 Media can take whatever road you choose and create browser-specific versions of your Web site. Or we can design a site, within certain strict parameters, that will work and look the same on any browser. It is up to you, the client, to decide how much time and effort you want Q5 to devote to making sure your site works the same (or similarly) in the browsers you choose.

#### 2.6. How can I learn more about browser popularity?

There are many resources available on the Web where statistics are collected and analyzed about which browsers are being used.

Currently, IE5.x is the most popular browser being used but with the release of Windows XP (which comes pre-installed with IE6), the use of IE6 is growing rapidly. While Netscape is used by a very small percent of the population, many of its users are die-hards and will continue to use their brand of browser no matter what updates and new features are added to Internet Explorer.

The W3Cschool (<http://www.w3schools.com/browsers/>) has been collecting and analyzing browser information from The Counter (<http://www.thecounter.com>) since July 2001.

Writer Chuck Upsdell publishes the online browser news source Browser News (<http://www.upsdell.com/BrowserNews>) which not only contains up-to-date information on the browser world but also has browser statistics from three sources.

Use the sites mentioned above along with your own research to decide which is the best way for your Web site to be developed in terms of browsers. If you are unsure about what you should do, Q5 Media team members will work with you to help make a decision based on your needs.

### 3. SCREEN RESOLUTION AND COLOR DEPTH

#### 3.1. What is screen resolution?

Screen resolution is basically the size of what is displayed on your monitor. Resolution is measured in **pixels**. A pixel is a very small dot made up of three smaller dots (red, green and blue) that appears on your screen at varying degrees to form the colors you see.

Almost all modern monitors are SVGA monitors that can display between 256 colors and 16 million colors simultaneously, depending on the computer's video card and the **resolution** at which the computer is set.

The most common resolution for users at this time is 800 x 600 (800 pixels wide and 600 pixels high) as this is the default resolution for all versions of Windows after v3.11. This measurement is the same regardless of monitor display size (usually 15" or 17".) An image will appear smaller on a 15" monitor set at 800x600 than it will on a 17" monitor.

Other common resolutions are 1024x768, 1152x864, 1200x1024 and in some cases as high as 1600x1200.

#### 3.2. What is color depth?

Color depth is dependant on the user's amount of video memory. You may be able to see a particular shade of red on your computer but a user with a lower resolution or less video memory may see a different shade of red because the user's color palette doesn't have all the shades and colors available to make the same red.

Imagine color depth as jars of paint. Someone with a 24-bit color depth available would be able to mix about 16 million drops of paint together to get the desired color. On the other hand, a person with 8-bit color depth would only be able to mix 480,000 drops of paint together to get a similar match, but it wouldn't be the same color as the one using 16 million drops.



32-bit Color

Web Safe Colors

### 3.3. What are browser-safe colors?

**Browser-safe** colors are the 216 colors that are shared by the 256-color palette of the Mac OS and Windows OS. There was a point where a large number of users were still running 256-color displays, but that is no longer the case. With the proliferation of better video cards and monitors, the number of users viewing the web at 256 colors is less than 3%. Even for that minority, using a color palette outside of the 216 “browser-safe” colors does not exclude them from viewing your site. Their computer will approximate the color as best it can.



Browser Safe Color Palette

### 3.4. Why should I consider resolution and color depth when building my Web site?

Aside from the slight difference in color users might experience while visiting your site, size is also a factor. It is important to consider how a Web site will “fit” into the user’s monitor screen.

If a user comes to your site and she has a 800x600 resolution and your site has a graphic on it that is 820 pixels in width, the user will experience “side to side scroll” where a scrollbar will appear on the bottom of her screen so she can see the last 20 pixels in your graphic.

Graphics can be measured in pixels and so can tables (an HTML layout element), which usually contain text. Graphic and table size add up to form the physical width of your site. If you have two 300-pixel graphics side-by-side and a 200-pixel table next to those, the total would be 800 pixels and users with 800x600 resolution will have to scroll side-to-side.

Top-to-bottom scroll isn’t as big of a factor as side-to-side, but is still important to consider. Think of your Web site as a newspaper. Newspapers want the most important information “above the fold” and so do you. If your important information doesn’t come until 550 pixels down the page, it may very well be missed.

### 3.5. How can my Web site look good at any resolution?

When considering resolution and design for your Web site, you have two basic choices – **static** and **liquid** design.

A **static** design is one that is always the same size at any resolution. The page is never wider than you specify. Usually this size is about 780 pixels in width (to accommodate for the size of scrollbars on the screen) due to the popularity of 800x600 resolution. If someone comes to the site using an 800x600 resolution, the site will fill up the entire page. If they come with a 1024x768 resolution, there will be about 240 pixels of blank space to the right of the main content. As the user’s resolution goes up, so does the amount of blank space. 6

A **liquid** design is meant to fill up the user's entire browser window. Tables laid out based on the percentage of screen they should fill are used as opposed to tables with fixed sizes. With a liquid design, it's still important to make all of the content fit into the standard 800x600 design scheme (to avoid side-to-side scroll for those users) but ultimately there will be no blank space for users with higher resolution.

### 3.6. Which design – static or liquid – is best for me?

Q5 Media will help you decide by offering several design ideas for you, but the design ultimately comes down to content.

For example, a site with a lot of short paragraphs of text on every page will look quite different in different resolutions. A paragraph that takes up 12 lines on an 800x600 resolution might only take up 4 or 5 lines on a larger resolution, leaving a lot of blank space on your page if you have a liquid design.

On the other hand, a site with a lot of graphics and text might need as much as room possible to spread out. In this case it may be wise to let the design be liquid so it looks less crowded in higher resolutions and "just right" in lower resolutions. You may also not like the way your site looks with a lot of blank space to the side, so liquid design may be the way to go.

Certain design elements, especially using CSS, may need to be designed in a static environment. Ask your Q5 design team member what your options are regarding the elements you want to use if you are unsure how they will work in either design.

### 3.7. Do I have to use 800x600 resolution for my design?

You do not have to use 800x600 resolution for design. There are resources available for researching the most used resolutions and the trend towards different resolutions. Until recently, 640x480 was the standard "low end" because VGA monitors were still being used as much as SVGA (which have much higher resolutions available.) However, the most common resolution as of now (August 2002) is 800x600 at 50% use, with the higher resolutions of 1024x768 and beyond with 44% (source: TheCounter.com.)

You may want to consider design based on your research if you see a trend arising towards higher resolutions. This decision is completely up to you. The Q5 Media design team is able to conform to the standards you decide on, or help you make that choice.

A good tip is to look at your target audience. Is your audience comprised of a very distinct audience, i.e. graphic design professionals or avid computer gamers, these group will almost exclusively use high-end computers with high resolutions and 24-32bit color resolution. In this case you could get away with designing for a higher resolution. On the other hand, if your target audience is diverse, you may be better served to design for the lowest common denominator to avoid excluding anyone potential clients.

## 4. PHOTOS, GRAPHICS AND FONTS

### 4.1. What are the photo and graphic standards?

The two Web standards for photo and graphic files are JPG and GIF. On the other hand, print graphics

are usually TIFF or EPS files and cannot be seen in most Web browsers. These files are easily converted into JPG or GIF files.

**4.2. What is the difference between JPG and GIF?**

Without getting too technical, GIF files are generally used for non-photo graphics and JPG files are best for photos. GIF files can also be **animated** and/or **transparent** (meaning you can put the graphic on top of any color and it appears to be a shaped or rounded image on a solid color background.)

A graphic with just a few colors will look generally the same as both file types. If a graphic is very small or contains text or a line drawing a GIF would probably be the best choice. If the image is a photograph or uses gradients or shading, a JPG file would in most cases be a better option.





#### 4.3. How big should my images be?

“Big” is a relative term when it comes to file size. A picture can be big in height and width, or big in file size. It is important to consider both measurements when making a Web site.

A file that is big in physical size (30Kb or above) will take a long time for some users to download, depending on their connection speed. Changing the width and height of a photo will help the file size to be smaller. Q5 Media will also help you change the resolution of photos and graphics to have the best download time while still preserving the look of the image.

#### 4.4. What do I have to do with images?

Basically there is little more for you to do with images other than to provide necessary ones to Q5 Media in a digital format. It is best to leave graphics in their original size and file type and let our designers make the correct changes to go on the Web. Remember it is always easier to make a file smaller than to make it bigger.

#### 4.5. What kind of fonts can I use on my site?

Any font can be used in a graphic as long as the designer has it or it is provided to the company (please be mindful of font licenses and copyrights.) Font faces and sizes must be easy to read. It is important to use as few fonts as possible in graphics to keep a uniform look across the site.

A font that is used to display text on a Web site should be commonly used on all operating systems. Typically a font face is given as a family or set of fonts that are similar and may be used, in order. For example and font face may be given as “Arial, Helvetica, Sans-serif.” This means that the font face will be Arial, unless the user doesn’t have Arial (a common Windows font), in which case the face will be the similar Helvetica (a common Apple font), or if neither font is available, use any sans-serif font.

A **sans-serif** font is one without curls or lines at the end of a character. **Serif** fonts, on the other hand, are fonts such as Times New Roman and Courier that have lines at the end of characters.

It is easiest to read sans-serif fonts online because the characters have less decoration and more space between them.

If you choose to use an un-common font for basic text, fonts must be embedded into your Web site and will have to be downloaded by the user. This may very well prompt a user to leave your site because of an un-necessary download.

### 5. CLIENT-SIDE AND SERVER-SIDE TECHNOLOGY

#### 5.1. What is client-side and server-side technology?

The **client** is the end-user and its computer. The **server** is the machine that hosts your Web site. Client-side technology is things you have on your Web site that depend on what the user has on his machine. Server-side technology depends on what is able to be done by the server machine. The speed of client-side technology depends on the client’s machine, while the speed of server-side technology depends on the server. Code that is written in a server-side language cannot be seen by clients because it is **rendered** or executed and turned into text or HTML before it reaches the client.



## 5.2. What are some examples of client-side technology?

**JavaScript** is a language that is very useful when creating Web pages. Most **browsers** are able to correctly execute a well-written piece of JavaScript code. As discussed above, browsers do differ slightly in execution or may not execute some code at all. Almost all browsers today allow the user to turn off JavaScript execution and a very small number doesn't support JavaScript (or at least the latest version of JavaScript) at all. The usual trend, according to the W3Cschool Web site ([http://www.w3schools.com/browsers/browsers\\_stats.asp](http://www.w3schools.com/browsers/browsers_stats.asp)) is that over 80% of clients support the latest version of JavaScript while about 11% do not have JavaScript available at all. It may be important in your research to decide how important it is for your site to rely heavily on JavaScript and where it should be used.

**Cookies** are tiny text files that help the server communicate directly with the client and provide unique information about the specific user. Cookies are generally used to create custom Web pages that "know" the client's information that was provided to the server when the client filled out a form. While cookies cannot spread viruses or collect un-authorized information, some users find cookies intrusive and disable them in their browser. When considering using cookies in your Web site design, think about how important it is for those cookies to be implemented. If your site will not work without cookie support, you may have to come up with an alternative for the increasing number of users who disable cookies. It is also common practice to include a privacy policy on your site to explain to users how you will be using cookies. For more information on cookies, read The Unofficial Cookie FAQ at <http://www.cookiecentral.com/faq>.

**Cascading Style Sheets** or CSS are designer-defined specifications for how things on your site should appear. CSS is generally global, meaning styles will be the same on every page and save many hours of time because styles are defined on one page and designers don't have to change code on every page to make a change. The most noticeable use for CSS is text color, size and font. CSS is rendered differently in each browser, with IE5.5+ and NS6 having the best support for tags. Rarely, clients will disallow CSS to be used while viewing Web pages in their browsers in return for using their own defined styles. It is easy and common for a designer to create style sheets for each browser so the site looks just as good for any client using CSS.

**Plug-ins** are small programs that are independent of browsers but work along with the browser to render certain types of media often found on Web pages. All common plug-ins are free to download and are often "bundled" with a browser – meaning the browser company releases the plug-in already installed with the browser. If a client does not have a plug-in that is needed to view your Web site, she will be prompted to download and install the plug-in which usually takes minimal time and effort. The most popular and often-used plug-ins are:

**Macromedia Flash** – Flash technology is used to create small or large interactive "movies" that are embedded into Web sites. Flash is currently on version 6, and some movies need a particular version (or higher) to properly execute. Flash movies are designed to check to see if the correct version is installed and prompt the user to download if needed. According to a survey by NPD research, more than 97% of users today can view all Flash content without needing a download (source: <http://www.macromedia.com/software/flash/survey>).

**Sun Microsystems Java** - Java (not to be confused with JavaScript) is a language used to create small **applets** or programs for the Web. These applets are most commonly found online as chat rooms, games, statistic programs and Webmail interfaces. According to TheCounter.com, a very small percentage of the online population has Java disabled, while 87% have Java capabilities and 11% are



“unknown.” Sometimes, users will have a difficult time installing the Java plug-in if it is not already installed.

**Microsoft ActiveX** – ActiveX is much like Java (and has the same basic functionality), but since it was developed by the Microsoft Corporation, an ActiveX Control on a Web page has more access to the user’s Windows operating system than Java does. While this may be helpful in achieving exactly what you want to do with a Web site, it is also a hindrance because many users opt to disable ActiveX in their browsers for security reasons. Newer versions of IE will support ActiveX by default and Netscape users will have to install the plug-in.

**Quicktime, RealMedia and Windows Media** – These three technologies are made by three different companies and handle completely different kinds of files but in general do the same thing – play movies and audio from the Web. If you use any Quicktime file formats on your Web site (PICT, PNG, AIFF, AU, MOV, etc.) the user will need to have to appropriate version of Quicktime installed. The same goes for Real formats like RAM, RM and RPM. Windows Media files are generally WMA, WM and WMV. Most browsers and operating systems come with a basic version of these plug-ins already installed, but it is quite common for a user to have to download newer versions if they haven’t been updated in a while. Audio and video clips made with these technologies can be **embedded** into a Web page so a user is able to watch or hear the clip within the context of your site.

### 5.3. What are some examples of server-side technology?

**ASP** – Active Server Pages are a product of Microsoft and require a Microsoft Server to run. ASP provides for dynamic content and database connectivity. ASP generally uses Access or SQL databases to store and retrieve data but also has many built-in functions that run independently of stored data. The most common language for writing ASP applications is **Visual Basic Script**.

**PHP** – PreHypertext Processor has many of the same capabilities of ASP. Commonly it is used to connect to a MySQL database. PHP can be run on all servers. PHP applications are written in **PHP Script**.

**CGI** – Common Gateway Interface is most commonly used for processing forms and does not connect to a database. While it is still often used (it can be run on all types of servers), it is taking a backseat to PHP and ASP technology because it can greatly reduce the speed of a high-traffic Web site by putting strain on the server. The most common language for writing CGI applications is **Perl**.





**6. CONSIDERATIONS CHECKLIST**

Based on your research and the information above, choose the statements that best describe how your Web site should look and work.

**6.1. Browser Compatibility –**

My Web site should:

- Look and work exactly the same in all browsers from Internet Explorer 4.0 and Netscape Navigator 4.0 and up (requires strict guidelines including exclusion of certain technologies).
- Look and work similarly in all browsers from Internet Explorer 4.0 and Netscape Navigator 4.0 and up with considerations to differences.
- Look and work best in Internet Explorer 5.5 and up with consideration to Netscape browsers
- Look and work best in Netscape Navigator 4 with consideration to other browsers.

**6.2. Screen Resolution and Color Depth –**

In regards to Screen resolution, my Web site should:

- Have a static design based on an 800x600 resolution.
- Have a static design based on a 1024x768 resolution.
- Have a static design based on a 640x480 resolution.
- Have a liquid design based on an 800x600 resolution.
- Have a liquid design based on a 1024x768 resolution.
- Have a liquid design based on a 640x480 resolution.

In regards to color-depth, my Web site should:

- Use only the color-safe palette
- Use any colors I choose, even though they might appear differently on different computers.

**6.3. Photos and Graphics –**

I will be able to provide (in a digital format):

- No photos or graphics. Please create them for me.
- Some photos but no graphics.
- Some graphics.
- All photos and graphics.
- Photos and graphics, but not in a digital format.

**6.4. Fonts –**

I would like to use the following fonts in graphics on my site:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I would like to use the following font for the plain text on my site:

<b>Arial</b>	<b>Helvetica</b>
<b>Verdana</b>	<b>Times New Roman</b>



**6.5. Client-side technology –**

JavaScript:

- I prefer not to have any JavaScript on my Web site.
- I prefer to have minimal JavaScript on my Web site.
- I prefer to use JavaScript regardless of how it may affect functionality for some users.

Cookies:

- I prefer not to have any Cookies on my Web Site and will not collect any user information.
- I prefer not to have cookies but would like to explore other information-collecting options and a privacy policy.
- Cookies will be useful and should be implemented on my Web site along with a privacy policy.

Cascading Style Sheets:

- I prefer not to have Cascading Style Sheets on my site and I understand it might be more tedious to not use them.
- I prefer to have one style sheet for all browsers.
- I prefer to have a different style sheet for each browser as necessary.

You may use these plug-ins where needed:

- Macromedia Flash
- Sun Microsystems Java
- Microsoft ActiveX
- Apple Quicktime
- Real Media
- Windows Media

**6.6. Server-Side Technology –**

My server is capable of handling:

- ASP
- PHP
- CGI
- I don't know
- I use the Q5 Media servers

I prefer to use the following database(s):

- Access
- Microsoft SQL
- MySQL
- DB2
- Oracle
- Other
- I don't know
- Help me decide

My Web site should use:

- HTML only
- ASP and HTML (recommended)
- PHP and HTML
- CGI and HTML
- It doesn't matter
- Help me decide

