

How to Get on the Internet

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I have found that there is an ever-increasing amount of information available to us on the Internet. We can find the specifications about the latest mowing equipment. We can read the latest university results on fungicide test and turf trials. I have even downloaded the latest irrigation head information for use in my Network 8000 central. Associations have put out great web pages to learn more about them or, in the case of the GCSAA, get useful information from our association. I know I have not even scratched the surface on what is available to us on the "net." I do feel that we should all attempt to use this new tool so the technology won't pass us up.

First, you need a computer. I use a 486 at work and a Pentium at home. I would not use anything less than a 486. You almost have to use Windows 3.0 or Windows 95. You can use a Macintosh, but I have no idea how they work. You should have at least 6 to 8 MB of RAM. The hard drive can be whatever size you want, but it should have plenty of room to store or "cache" the information you receive from the Internet. I recommend a minimum of 45 MB of hard drive. The most important item is the modem. I would not even attempt to get on the Internet with any modem less than 14.4 baud. I have noticed that modems with speeds of 28.8 and 33.6 are available at reasonable costs.

Just a note on saving money with modems. If you can turn a screwdriver and read instructions, then buy an inter-

GCSAA Online

With the click of your mouse or a few keystrokes, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's (GCSAA) Web site provides a "hole in one" when it comes to quick access to tools and information about the golf course superintendent's profession in one worldwide location.

GCSAA Online features a public-access area focusing on environmental issues and the role superintendents play in preserving the beauty of golf, plus an exclusive members-only section with access to GCSAA services, operational information and links to other industry sites.

New information is added weekly, so bookmark this page to stay updated on GCSAA and the golf course industry.

GCSAA's Home Page: <http://www.gcsaa.org/gcsaa>

*For additional information, contact GCSAA at:
913/832-4493; 800/472-7878; dbishop@gcsaa.org*

nal modem vs. an external. With an internal modem you will get just the PC board and the install disk. The board just snaps into an open expansion slot in the back of your PC. If you are running Windows 95 and purchase a modem that has Plug 'N Play capabilities, then the installation is almost foolproof. If you are nervous about opening the case to your computer, then an external modem is for you; but you will pay, in some cases, almost double than an internal.

Now you need the Internet provider. There are many providers around. I use the IBM Internet connection. They are competitive with their pricing, and I almost never have a busy signal. The provider is where your modem dials up to and connects with another modem and then connects to the Internet. This is where you have to pay to get on.

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Most places charge a flat fee of \$19 for unlimited access. This means you can be on for an hour a month or 100 hours a month but pay the same rate. If you are on for only four hours a month, then use a cheaper rate. IBM has a rate of, I think, \$7.50 for four hours with an hourly charge after that.

Remember that the call to your provider is a local call and is charged as such. It is not a long-distance call, unless you are calling a long-distance modem connection; in which case, I would ask your provider for a local number. When I am at the course in Schaumburg, I call a number in Arlington Heights; and when I am at home in St. Charles, I call in a number in Geneva—both local calls. I can give anyone free software to the IBM network that can connect you to the Internet if you just let me know. This software has the provider, modem dialer and Netscape 2.5 all for free. You pay for signing up to the provider the first time you log on.

There is a difference in using America Online vs. going directly to the Internet. America Online has access to the Internet and e-mail, but it also has many other features you might want to try. The difference between AOL and a direct connection to the Internet is that AOL has areas to visit that are only found on AOL. That in itself is not a problem. In fact, some of the sites are very informative and interesting. The downside is it is very slow when you connect to the Internet using AOL as your provider. The upside is it is free for the first month, provided you can get on at all.

Next you need to get a web browser. This is the software that you use to surf the Internet. There are two browsers that are the most popular. One is Netscape, and the other is Microsoft's Internet Explorer. I have used both, but I prefer Netscape. The browser is where you type in the URL of the site you wish to visit. The URL is the www.xyz.com, the address of the site. It also is where your Internet address is stored and where you can bookmark your favorite sites or store the e-mail address of friends and business sites. The browser is like any other piece of software. The more you use it, the more you get to know its features and what you like to use and what you can ignore.

Next month, I will explain e-mail and Internet search engines. ■

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