The Internet has been around for about 25 years. Here are the events that got us where we are today:

The World Wide Web
Tim Berners-Lee created user-friendly "Web pages" that could travel over the Internet, a network built to shuttle research between universities. The world logged on: 747 million adults in January.

E-mail
Tech's answer to the Pony Express. Programs such as 1988's Eudora made it easy to use. In-boxes have been filling up ever since. Nearly 97 billion e-mails are sent each day.

Graphical user interface (GUI)
Most computer displays were blinking lines of text until Apple featured clickable icons and other graphic tools in its 1984 Mac. Microsoft's Windows took GUI — pronounced "gooey" — to the masses.

AOL
AOL turned people on to Web portals, chat rooms and instant messaging. Early subscribers paid by the hour. AOL once boasted 35 million subscribers. It bought Time Warner for $106 billion in 2001.

Mosaic/Netscape
Created by Marc Andreessen and others, Mosaic was the first widely-used multimedia Web browser. Spin-off Netscape Navigator ruled the '90s until Microsoft's Internet Explorer took off around '98.

eBay
Thanks to eBay, we can all now buy and sell almost anything (skip the body parts). eBay has 230 million customers worldwide who engage in 100 million auctions at any given time.

Amazon.com
Jeff Bezos' baby began as an always-in-stock book seller. It survived the tech bubble and now is the definitive big box online store. It was the second most-visited online retailer in December, after eBay.

Instant Messaging
LOL! Web surfers began to "laugh out loud" and BRB ("be right back") in the mid-'90s, with the launch of ICQ and AOL Instant Messenger. Millions use it to swap messages and photos, even telephone pals.

Broadband
The answer to the drip-drip-drip of dial-up, high-speed Internet service fuels online entertainment. About 78% of home Internet users in the U.S. have broadband, up from less than 1% in 1998.
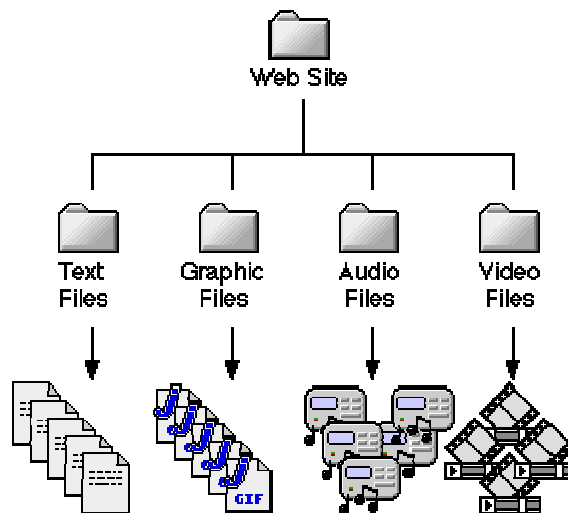
About the Web

Think of the web as the illustrated version of the Internet. It began in the late 1980's when physicist Dr. Berners-Lee wrote a small computer program for his own personal use. This program allowed pages, within his computer, to be linked together using keywords.

It soon became possible to link documents in different computers, as long as they were connected to the Internet. The document formatting language used to link documents is called HTML (Hypertext Markup Language.)

The Web remained primarily text based until 1992. Two events occurred that year that would forever change the way the Web looked. Marc Andreesen developed a new computer program called the NCSA Mosaic (National Center for Supercomputing Applications at the University of Illinois) and gave it away! The NCSA Mosaic was the first web browser. The browser made it easier to access the different Web sites that had started to appear. Soon Web sites contained more than just text, they also had sound and video files.

These pages, written in the hyper-text markup language, have "links" that allow the user to quickly move from one document to another…even when the documents are stored in different computers.

Web browsers "read" the html text and convert it into a page like the one you are now looking at.

Each web site has an address, or Uniform Resource Locator (URL). The URL contains a set of instructions that are read by the browser.

The beginning of the URL contains the protocol. This is usually "http" (Hypertext Transfer Protocol) or "ftp" (File Transfer Protocol). **The second section of the URL reveals the domain**. **Directories follow the domain.** Lastly is the name of the document. (If no document is named the browser will automatically open any document in the directory named "default" or "index."