

# @WORK

## Spring Outlook

By William Powell

By the time the first day of spring rolls around, I feel like a survivor. I've spent all winter fighting off colds, leaving work after dark to trudge through sleet, snow, or biting cold. But here in the D.C. Metro area, it's time for the cherry blossoms <img alt="arrow icon" data-bbox="362 821 378 834"/> [www.nationalcherryblossomfestival.org](http://www.nationalcherryblossomfestival.org). In Paris, the gardens are also beginning to bloom <img alt="arrow icon" data-bbox="411 851 427 864"/> [www.abcparislive.com](http://www.abcparislive.com). Everywhere you go, there's rebirth and renewal.

In that spirit, here are a few tips to spruce up your Internet experience,

and one that will change your Outlook significantly.

**Shed your skin.** It's time to liven up your browser: The latest versions of Microsoft Internet Explorer, Netscape Navigator, and Opera allow you to change the "skin" of your browser. Simply put, skins are a way of changing the appearance of an interface, such as a Web browser or MP3 player, without changing its functionality.

Photo by Eyewire

Sites such as HotBar.com offer thousands of skins for IE. Netscape (which refers to skins as *themes*) and Opera offer *galleries* on their sites.

Even if you consider yourself technically challenged, this is a good way to get a new view of the Web and personalize your browsing experience. Steps for installation are minimal. Most major sites provide detailed instructions for download and installation.

**Add a little color.** Windows offers a slew of options to customize its appearance. If you've never changed from the default blue and white, you owe it to yourself to try something new. From your Start menu, click on Settings, Control Panel, and Display. From there, choose the appropriate tabs to alter the appearance, background, and screensaver.

If you see an image on the Web that you like, you can use it to wallpaper your Windows desktop. From Microsoft IE, right-click on the image, then select "save as wallpaper." Use same process with Netscape Navigator and Opera.

If you're more adventurous, consider changing your Windows theme. It's the same process as changing individual characteristics via the appearance panel, except that someone else has saved you some trouble by arranging fonts, colors, and backgrounds into a coherent style or theme.

Users of Windows 98 or later already have themes installed on their computers; notice the desktop themes icon located on the control panel. If Microsoft's canned selection of themes doesn't suit you, the Web is littered with shareware themes on almost every interest: movies, cars, gardening, travel—you name it. Websites such as Cnet's download.com and Tucows.com are sure to offer a theme that fits your style.

**Improve your view.** One of the easiest ways to improve your experience while using IE is by increasing your view of the page. Press the F11 function key to toggle between the standard and full-screen view within your browser. If you're concerned about losing the forward and back arrows for navigation, don't be. Alt+back arrow and Alt+forward arrow will move you back and forth between pages in all of the major browsers.

Any of the previous tips should refresh your Internet experience. But don't forget to step away from the computer now and then and head outside. Webcams of Paris are nice, but basking in the cool fresh air of spring, wherever you live, is better.



## Surf Shorts

### Godfrey Parkin

President of MindRise, a full-service outsourcing shop that specializes in adapting and deploying corporate training for the Web

↳ [www.mindrise.com](http://www.mindrise.com)

**The Zen of Surfing.** Many people perceive e-learning as technology, but to me it's not about technology; it's about connecting people, sharing experience, and building sustainable learning communities. The Internet has had an immeasurable impact on human communication and knowledge transfer. Yet, we're only just beginning to discover what it can do for us.

#### Favorite Websites

↳ [www.elearningpost.com](http://www.elearningpost.com) Great for updates on developments in e-learning. Provides articles and daily news summaries, neither myopic nor parochial. The site also covers knowledge management, learning communities, and instructional design.

↳ [cyberatlas.internet.com](http://cyberatlas.internet.com) The best place to keep track of the Internet quantitatively. Publishes daily summaries of new research, covering everything from broadband-penetration levels in Japan to forecasts, such as the size of global b2b e-commerce by 2005.

↳ [www.theonion.com](http://www.theonion.com) *The Onion* purports to be a news magazine, but for high production-value humor that's dark, satirical, and clever, there's no better place.

↳ [www.edge.org](http://www.edge.org) Edge is an offshoot of The Well, the first online community. A fascinating place to go when you want to exercise your mind and imagination. Edge has a resident panel of digerati in philosophy, technology, and society.

↳ [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com) Blogs may be the missing link between knowledge management and e-learning. You get great insight into how well (and how badly) blogging can work by visiting Blogger.com.



## Multiple Origami

The Geode Origami Mobile Communicator from National Semiconductor is the Swiss Army knife of portable handheld devices. It's a phone, it's a PDA, it's a portable video camera. It also has a still camera, a built-in QWERTY keyboard, a 4-inch touch-screen display, USB and compact flash ports, and two-way pager with built-in Bluetooth, wireless Web access, Instant Messaging, and Windows XP. *Whew!*

Every twist of the device reveals a new function—except tweezers and a bottle opener. Origami will be available later this year.

For more information [www.national.com](http://www.national.com).

# Secure Your Outlook

Last month, I mentioned that Microsoft's Outlook is especially vulnerable to worms and other email viruses. One such vulnerability that has been noted is the preview pane. Certain viruses can infect Outlook without their transport messages being read but just previewed. To turn off the preview pane, go to Outlook's main menu, choose View, then press the Preview Pane button to unselect.

It's a small preventative measure, so don't let it give you a false sense of security. To really put the kibosh on viruses, you'll want to deactivate the Active Scripting option within Outlook. Scripting is a simplified form of the Visual Basic programming language, allowing for interactive objects and controls within your email.

The steps to deactivate active scripting are straightforward. From the main menu bar, choose Tools and then Options. Click on the Security tab and then the button marked Security.

Choose Restricted Sites from the Zone dropdown menu. Next, click on Zone Settings and OK. Click on Custom Level, scroll down to Scripting; under Active Scripting, select Disable. Click OK three times and you're done! That should significantly improve the security of Outlook. Of course, the safest measure is not to open any mysterious attachments.

**William Powell** is an associate editor of *T+D*; [wpowell@astd.com](mailto:wpowell@astd.com).

**@Work** covers Internet technology trends, news, and tips. Send comments, questions, and items of interest to [atwork@astd.org](mailto:atwork@astd.org).

## FastFacts

"The average Web visitor is blasted with 520 marketing messages per day."

Source/Jupiter Media Metrix

By 2007, Chinese will surpass English as the most-used language on the Internet.

Source/United Nations World Intellectual Property Organization

Pittsburgh, the Steel City, tops a recent ranking of the fastest growing U.S. cities in terms of Internet population. With 20.4 percent, it edged out Olympic host Salt Lake City, which had an increase of 20 percent in Internet use. Rounding out the top five:

Phoenix 17%    Raleigh, North Carolina 13.4%    Philadelphia 12.8%

Source/Nielson/Netratings