Technology Basics
Browsers and Search Engines

What is a "web address" or "url"

If you want to go to the home of a friend, you will need their address. If you write down the address incorrectly (switch the order of the numbers or write the street name wrong), you will not arrive at the proper location.

The same is true for websites – you have to know the proper address. Website addresses are a string of words that directs the internet to the website you want to visit. Most website addresses start with "https://", then the name of the website, and finally either ".com" ".org" ".net" or ".edu".

Examples:
OLLI's Online Registration System: https://northwesternolli.augusoft.net
Canvas: https://canvas.northwestern.edu
The Chicago Public Library: https://www.chipublib.org

What is a browser?

A web browser is a software program that allows a user to locate, access, and display web pages. In common usage, a web browser is usually shortened to "browser." Web browsers are used primarily for displaying and accessing websites on the internet.

The most commonly used browsers are as follows. *OLLI recommends using Chrome, as Canvas and the OLLI Online Registration System operate best with Chrome:*

Safari	**Firefox**	**Chrome**	**Edge** ᴺᴱᵂ	**Opera**
Apple	Mozilla	Google	Microsoft	Opera Software
MacOS, iOS	MacOS, MS Windows, Linux OS Android OS	MacOS, MS Windows, Linux OS, Android OS, Chrome OS	MS Windows, MacOS, iOS Android OS	MacOS, MS Windows, Linux OS, Android OS

They can all be used on either a computer or a phone/tablet, and work on either Apple or non-Apple devices (Microsoft, Samsung, Dell, HP, etc.).

If you're using Internet Explorer, you should consider switching to one of the newer browsers. Microsoft no longer provides security updates or technical support for old versions of Internet Explorer (version 10 and older).
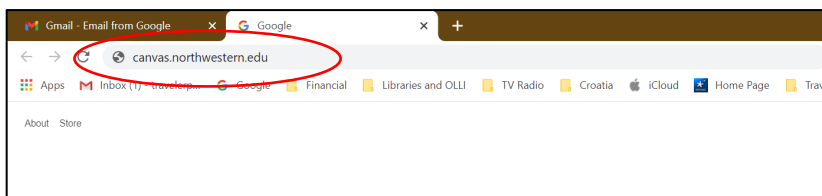
What is a search engine?

Search engine is a service that allows Internet users to search for content via the World Wide Web (www). A user enters keywords or key phrases into a search engine and receives a list of Web content results in the form of websites, images, videos or other online data.

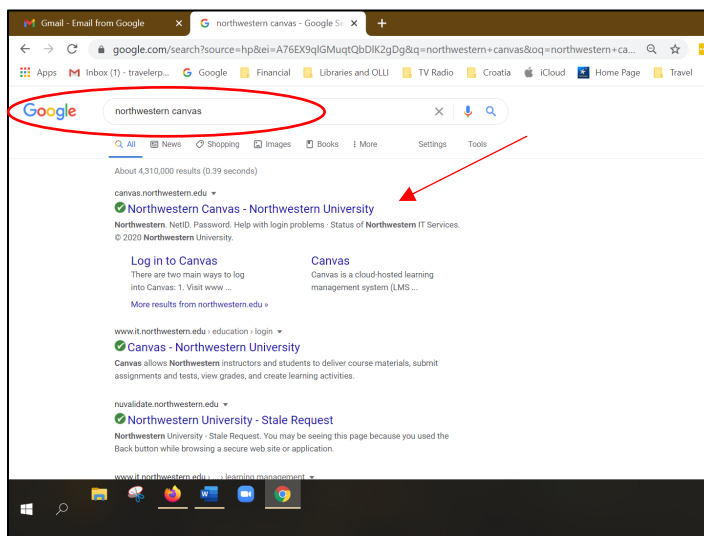The most used search engines are Google, Microsoft's Bing, and Yahoo.

How do I get to a website?

You can get to a website in two ways. Let's say, for example, you want to access Northwestern's Canvas website.

Option #1: If you know the exact url (web address), you can type it directly in the address bar at the top of the search engine or browser (for example: www.canvas.northwestern.edu)

Option #2: You can type a description of what you're looking for in the search box (for example: "Northwestern's Canvas"). This will produce a list of possible websites that match your search criteria and you can select the one you want:
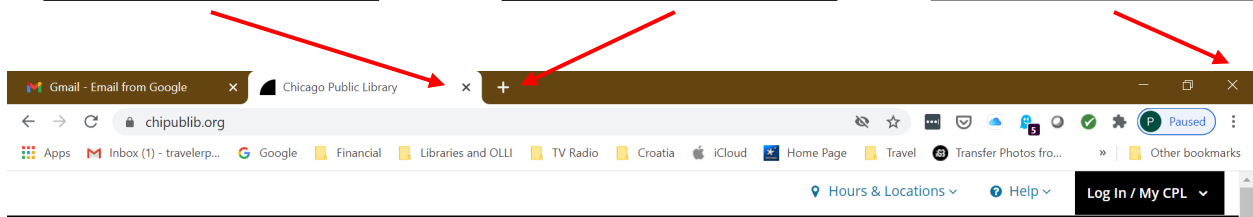
What are "tabs"?

You can have more than one website open at the same time. That way, you can easily switch between them. In the image below there are two tabs open – one for email and one for the library. You can switch between them without closing one. For example, if you're searching for a book on the library website and hear a "ping" that tells you a new email has arrived, you can simply click on the email tab and look at the email without closing the library tab. When you're finished reading the email, you can go back to the library website. This is useful if you want to copy something from a website, for example, and paste it into an email message.

Click the "**x**" at the right edge of any tab to close that tab.

To add another tab, click the "**+**" to the right of the two open tabs.

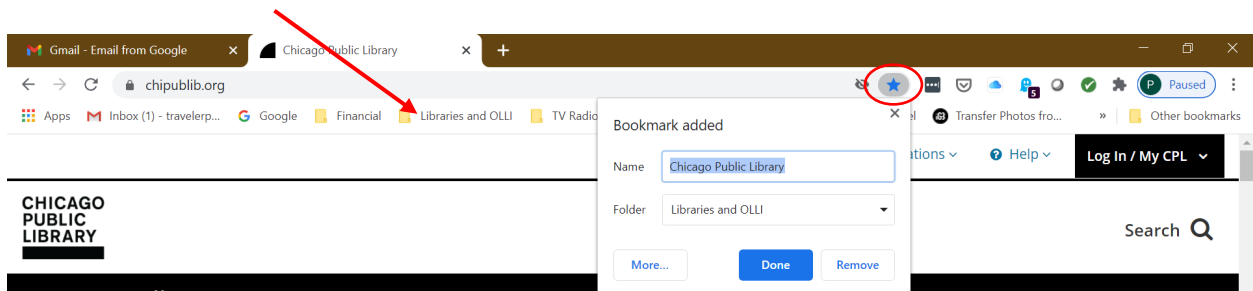Click the "x" here to close the entire web browser and all open tabs.

What are Bookmarks?

Just as you can place a bookmark to save the location of a recipe in a cookbook or the page where you stopped reading in a novel, you can save a web page so you can find it again without searching.

To save a website (such as the Northwestern Canvas site), click on the star ⭐ at the end of the address bar. A box will appear where you will can name this bookmark (preferably something easy to remember). Now you don't have to remember how to get to Canvas or what the web address is – you just click on that Bookmark and it will take you directly there.

Bookmarks will appear under the address bar as you've named them.

You can also create folders to hold similar websites. For example, here's a folder with several websites related to OLLI that is named "Libraries and OLLI".