

People with a visual or cognitive impairment find many web pages, with their complex layouts, variety of colours, font sizes and styles, and rapidly changing animated graphics, very difficult to access.

Others with a physical difficulty can find clicking on small graphical or text hyperlinks tricky.

This factsheet will briefly look at what can be adjusted within Windows and your web browser to make life a lot easier - not just for those with special needs, but possibly for everyone. After all, we are all individual and have very personal preferences and tastes, and it's good to know that you can make changes that might enhance the way you surf.

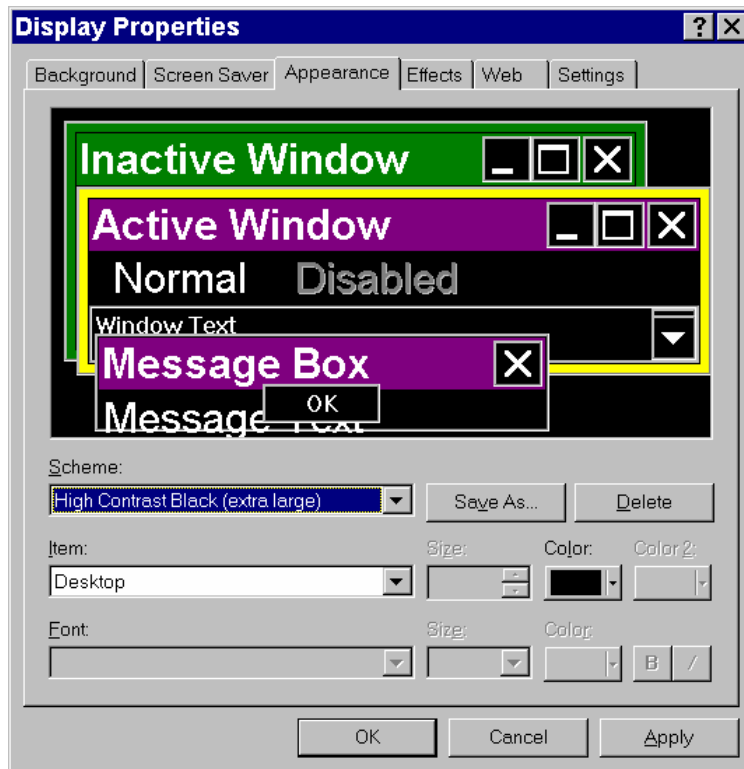
Tweaking keyboard and mouse

Surprisingly few people know how easy it is to alter the response of the keyboard and mouse. Take a look in the Control Panel (Start Menu/Settings) and you will find three items; "Accessibility", "Keyboard" and "Mouse". In these items you can adjust the response of the keyboard (no more accidental keystrokes when filling in forms on web pages), slow down the acceleration and double click speed of the mouse, and make some more advanced changes for those with pronounced keyboard and mouse difficulties. (Ask us for further factsheets)

Tweaking colours and fonts

Also in the Control Panel is an item called "Display". On the "Appearance" page you can change the colour scheme, and font sizes and styles that are reflected in almost all of your Windows applications. (Ask us for further factsheets)

Here's an example of one of the pre-defined colour schemes that includes larger fonts in a non-serifed style:



You may wish to ensure that your screen resolution is set to 800x600 on the "Settings" page. This is just about the lowest level you can get away with in Windows and it will result in somewhat bigger fonts in menus and web pages than you'd get with the higher screen resolutions.

Your browser

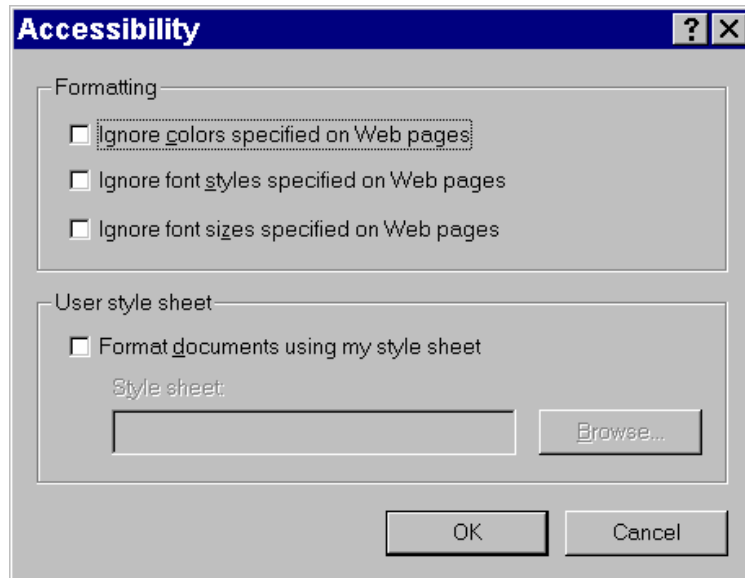
All the alterations mentioned above will have an effect on your surfing. There is yet more, however, that can be tweaked within your web browser to improve matters further if required.

The two most commonly used browsers are Microsoft Internet Explorer and Netscape navigator. Both have the ability to change colours, font sizes and styles, and alter how graphical images are displayed.

As Internet Explorer is the more "keyboard friendly" (importantly able to be used by those who find mousework difficult) we'll use it to illustrate how these changes can be made.

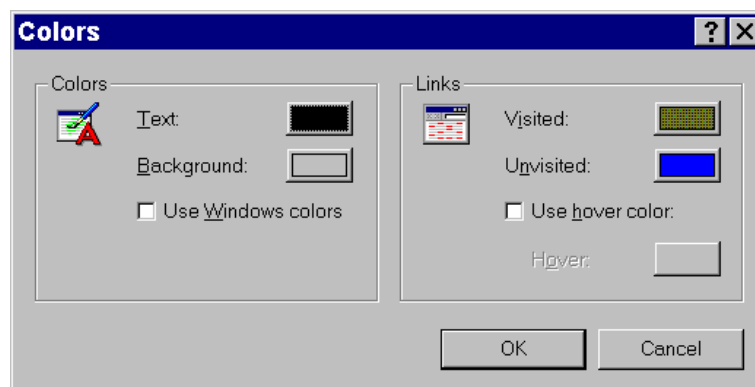
Every web page you visit will have its own colour for both text and background, and indeed may even include several differently coloured areas on the screen at the same time. Your browser needs to be told to ignore these colours in preference to your Windows colour scheme (see above section) or specified colours within your browser.

On the "General" page (Tools Menu/Internet Options) choose the "Accessibility" button. You are presented with several options:



Here you can tell your browser to ignore different aspects of the web page such as colours, font styles and sizes. These must be checked for the changes outlined below to take effect.

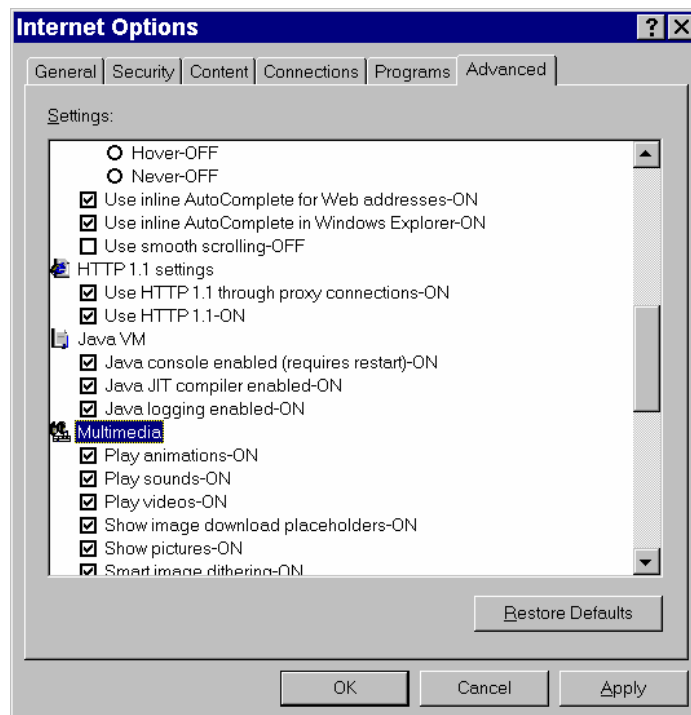
Still on the "General" page, by choosing the "Colours" button you are presented with several options:



Specify your own choice of text, background and hyperlink colours here, or check the box that imposes your preferred Windows colour scheme.

In the View Menu (main menu bar) there is an option called "Text Size" which produces a sub-menu allowing you to enlarge the font size considerably.

Finally, there are two ways in which you can alter the appearance of graphical images that appear on web pages. Choose the "Advanced" page (Tools Menu/Internet Options):



Here you will see an option called "Play Animations". Unselecting this will retain graphical images, but prevent those that might flash, or in some way move, from doing so.

There is also an option called "Show Pictures". Unchecking this will strip out all graphical images and replace them with any text description that has been provided.

Keyboard shortcuts

It may be useful to know a few of the keyboard shortcuts for surfing without the use of the mouse.

Internet Explorer	
Open a web page	Ctrl+O
Move through hyperlinks on a page	Tab and Shift+Tab
Go back and forward a page	Alt+Left and Right Arrows

A full list of keyboard shortcuts is available within the Help function within Internet Explorer, and also available from the Microsoft website at www.microsoft.com/enable/products/keyboard/keyboardsearch.asp

May 2003