

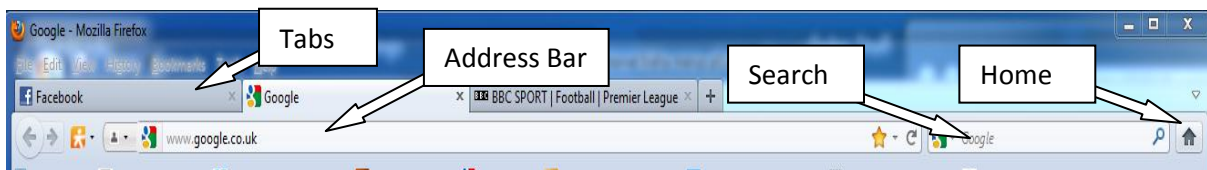
## Series 4 – How Do I Access the Internet?

Welcome back to a series of computer related articles brought to you by VistaSol Computer Solutions. Over the coming weeks we are going to be featuring articles based on the theme of ‘How do I . . .?’

This week we’re continuing our series of articles on the subject of ‘How Do I Access the Internet’ by exploring the Mozilla Firefox browser in depth:

### Part 6 – Firefox – The Top Bits!

Continuing on from last week’s article, this week we’re going to look at the other components which make up the top section of the Firefox browser.



The main components which make up the top section of the browser window are:

1. Tabs
2. Address Bar
3. Search
4. The ‘Home’ button

### Tabs

We’ve covered ‘tabs’ in earlier articles, but I thought I should also expand on other features of the Tabs. If you look carefully at the tabs you will notice a couple of things: Each tab has an ‘x’ in the right corner, and the tab to the furthest right is followed by a ‘+’ sign. Clicking on the ‘x’ on any of the tabs will close that particular tab. Clicking on the ‘+’ sign will add additional tabs.

If you click on the ‘+’ sign, a tab will open, but it will be blank – you’ll need to enter an address in the address bar.

## Address Bar

As its name suggests, the address bar contains the web address of the site you are visiting (or wish to visit, in the case of 'new' tabs). In most cases this will take the form 'http://www.vistasol.co.uk', however the 'http://www.' part of the address is 'assumed', so if you were entering a new address (for a new tab, say), you could shorten this to 'vistasol.co.uk' i.e. drop the 'http://www.' part of the address.

## Web Site Addresses

Web site addresses are made up of four parts:

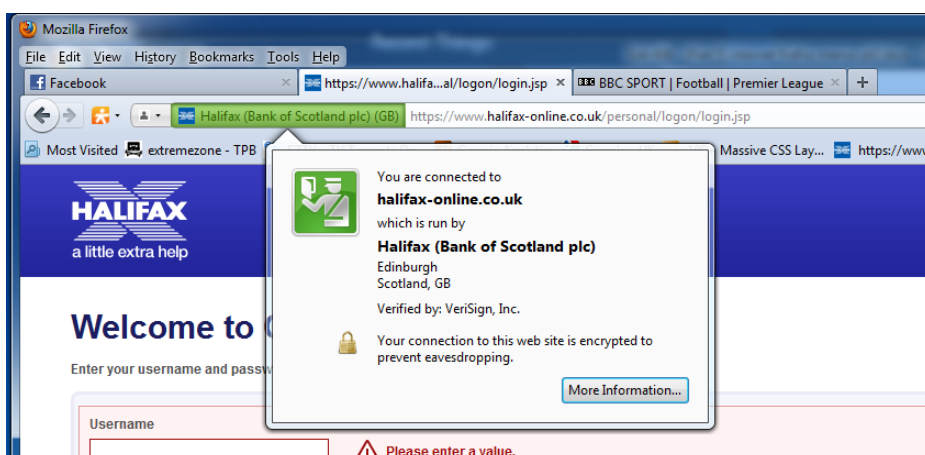
1. http://, or https://
2. www.
3. sitename.
4. .com, or .co.uk, .es, .ie, .au, etc,

For example: http://www.vistasol.co.uk/

## HTTP or HTTPS

Reading from left to right, the first part of the address is http://. This defines the type of web page being accessed (http=hypertext transfer protocol), and how the browser should display the web site. In this particular case the site is defined as a site with no encryption i.e. the web site is not classed as 'secure'. This should not cause alarm however because most general interest web sites are classed as not secure.

If however, you are accessing web sites for on-line banking, or on-line shopping, or even your emails, these sites should be encrypted to protect your on-line activities within that particular web site. These sites add an 's' to the first part of the address to show that they are secure – https://. The site usually becomes secure once you have entered your log-in details to access the secure area of the site. You can check if the site is securely encrypted by looking for the https:// at the start of the address and by clicking to the left of the address:



A window should appear displaying the web site's security credentials.

## **WWW**

This value is almost superfluous nowadays and assumed for web addresses (although, you should include this if writing the address outside of the browser, such as a shortcut in a document or email).

## **SITENAME**

This really speaks for itself, all I'll add is that it's not case sensitive, you can enter all or any part of it in capitals or lower case e.g. VistaSol, or vistasol, or VISTASOL.

## **COM, CO.UK, ES, etc**

The final part of the address in most cases establishes the country where the web site is registered. Big name web sites such as Google for instance have a whole range of regional associations – most extensions will be valid e.g. google.co.uk, google.ie, google.dk, google.es etc.

These sites will also have a '.com' extension, which is considered to be a 'global' domain. One of the main irritations about some .com web addresses is that they try to be clever and display the web site in the language of the country in which you are resident. This is because every computer on the World Wide Web has a unique numerical address (IP Address) which is allocated by your Internet Service Provider (ISP). These IP addresses are also grouped and allocated to specific countries. So, if you enter 'google.com' in the address bar, the page will be displayed in Spanish – you will also notice that the address will change to 'www.google.es'. [This is why you cannot access the BBC iPlayer in Spain – your unique 'IP address' is recognised as originating in Spain, and access is therefore denied].

If you find that a web site you are accessing is displayed in Spanish try changing the last part of the address to '.co.uk' e.g. change google.com to google.co.uk. If that fails, see if there's an option on the web page to display the contents in English. Some websites such as 'Yahoo' or 'MSN' require you to add UK at the beginning of the address i.e. uk.yahoo.com, or uk.msn.com.

I'll cover the remaining components of the top bit next week; in the meantime don't forget to keep an eye on the 'http' or 'https' part of the web sites you are visiting.