Beware of the Typosquatters!

We all make typing mistakes (or 'typos') once in a while, and they're rarely more than a minor irritation: a quick correction and we carry on working. But if you make a mistake when you're typing the address of a website into your browser, the consequences could be far more serious.

Typing mistakes are common

When you mistype an address and then press (Enter) to visit it, you can't be sure what will happen. Perhaps you'll arrive at an error page telling you that no website could be found at that address, which would prompt you to look at what you'd typed, spot the mistake and correct it. Or perhaps you'd end up at the right website anyway: some companies buy up misspellings of their own names because they know we make mistakes: typing 'amazon.com' or 'aqmazon.com' would still take you to 'amazon.com'; typing 'microsft.com' would take you to Microsoft's website.

But what if you mistype a web address?

But perhaps you'd end up at a different site altogether. Online tricksters and criminals buy up misspellings of popular websites' names and set up their own sites at those addresses, a practice known as 'typosquatting'. They may do this to display ads and earn a penny or two from accidental visits, but equally they may try to foist malicious software on us.

You may arrive at a different website…

Worse, a typosquatter may set up a clone of the site we expected to arrive at. If you thought you'd typed the address of a famous online store, for instance, and then arrived at a website that looked just like it, would you bother to check what you'd typed? You might well type your login details, or try to pay for goods, or provide other sensitive information the site was requesting from you.

…perhaps a fraudulent one!

To avoid falling victim to typosquatters, check the addresses you type into your browser carefully before pressing (Enter) to visit them. Or, better still, visit Google (www.google.co.uk)

Check what you type, or search by website name

and search for a website by name: even if you type its name wrongly, Google is smart enough to recognise most mistakes and should still give you a link to the site you really wanted.

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Microsoft Edge: Read Online Articles More Comfortably

If you use Windows 10, here's a useful tip to keep in mind. It concerns a feature catchily named the 'Immersive Reader' which makes web pages easier on the eye.

Look for the 'Immersive Reader' icon

When you come across a web page containing an article you want to read, have a look at the address box at the top of the window. If you see a book-and-loudspeaker icon near the right-hand end of the address box, it means Edge has determined it can display this page in 'Immersive Reader' view.

A clearer view of online articles

Click this icon and Edge will strip out ads, sidebars, background images and unnecessary pictures. It also adjusts the font, text size and layout to be more eye-friendly and places all this on a clear black-on-white page. You can now read the page easily, without all the usual web page paraphernalia getting in your way. As an added bonus if you need it, Edge can even read the page aloud to you: just click the page and a bar appears at the top where you can click **Read aloud**.

As I mentioned, this Immersive Reader isn't available for every web page you visit, only those containing a reasonably-lengthy chunk of writing. If you want to see it in action and you can't quickly find a web page at which

web page at which it's available, try this page about a subject close to my heart: **tinyurl.com/qja4ka8**.
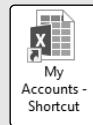
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Spice Up Your Desktop Shortcuts with Different Icons

In the past, we've explained the benefits of creating shortcuts on the desktop to the items you use most, especially frequently-used files and folders. To create a desktop shortcut, just right-click any file or folder, move the mouse to **Send to** and choose **Desktop (create shortcut)** and a shortcut to that file or folder lands on your desktop.

When you create a shortcut…

When you create a shortcut, it will be given the same icon as the 'real' file or folder to which it refers. But shortcuts can have any icon you like: if you'd prefer to use a different icon for a shortcut, you can, and Windows offers a collection of built-in icons to choose from. After creating a shortcut, here's how to pick a different icon for it:

…you can give it a more attractive icon

1. First right-click the shortcut and choose **Properties**.
2. In the dialog that appears, click the **Change Icon** button.
3. Another dialog will appear containing this collection of alternative icons. You can scroll through the collection horizontally to find an icon you like.
4. When you see an icon you want to use, click it once

Choose an icon from this collection

to select it and then click **OK**, then click **OK** again in the first dialog.

The icon of your shortcut changes

After a second or two, you'll see the icon of your shortcut change to the one you've just chosen. If you're not keen on the result, or you fancy a change sometime in the future, just repeat the same steps to pick a different one.
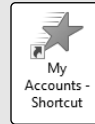
How Old Do I Look?

This should be fun. What I mean is, it's supposed to be fun, so don't take it too seriously! It's a Microsoft website that aims to guess your age from a photo.

Choose a photo of yourself...

Start your favourite web browser and visit **www.how-old.net**. When you arrive, either click one of the example photos and click **Use This Photo** or (to truly experience the 'fun'), click **Use your own photo**, select a photo of yourself from your collection and click **Open**.

...and see if the website can guess your age!

After a few seconds, you'll see your photo accompanied by a little flag showing an icon for your gender and the website's estimation of your age. After celebrating or cursing, as appropriate, you can click **Try Another Photo!** to repeat the process.

In my case, the website always over-estimated my age by up to 10 years, leading me to wonder why it wouldn't at least subtract a few years to spare my feelings a little. And then, rather glumly, to consider that perhaps it was already doing that. Anyway, I hope it's a little kinder to you!