

## A Web as Wide as the Whole World

Announced as the Third Industrial Revolution, The Internet is a system of interconnected computers which communicate one to another by means of a common language (called a Protocol) to serve billions of users all over the world.

This “network of networks” links millions of private, public, university, business, and government networks and offers to its users a large quantity of free information and services. Some of its most commonly uses include the World Wide Web (or WWW, the huge hypertext which inter-links documents) and the e-mail system.



### The Internet History

During the *Cold War* period, American military scientists decided to build a system to connect all their computers in order to arrange defence against a possible enemy attack: the year was 1969 and its name was ARPANET.

But when in 1987, US President Ronald Reagan and Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Gorbachev signed at the White House the end of the Cold War, it was decided to open such network to commercial purposes.

The Internet began expanding non-stop in most of the world, and it came to a turning point when the use of e-mail surpassed that of traditionally delivered mail.

Nowadays, people born since the 1990s are commonly called “Digital Natives” meaning that the Internet already existed when they were born.

### How it works

The Internet is commonly used at home, in public places and in schools, and its use is becoming cheaper and cheaper. New applications for it are created almost daily, the last of which is the famous *Facebook* social network. But... do you know *how* The Internet *really works*?

When you send an e-mail, or you share a chatroom with your best friends, your message is split into many packets and forwarded to your friend's computer. These packets never follow the same route and they sometimes may reach the opposite part of the world before they get together on your friend's computer screen and reveal you message!

This explains why The Internet can sometimes be so slow: it all depends on how many packets are travelling on the same routes at the same time.

And when you surf The Net and visit a Website, the Server which hosts the page that you want to read, sends your browser (the software you use to connect to The Net, like *Mozilla Firefox* ®, for example) a real copy of the page on your computer. Did you ever notice how the pages that you commonly surf, are faster to appear than those that you surf for the first time? Now you know why!

Now answer to these questions

1. Which is the Third Industrial Revolution?
2. What is “a Protocol”?
3. What is the WWW?
4. Who did sign the end of the Cold War and where?
5. Which was the crucial point in the advancement of The Internet?
6. Are you a Digital Native? Why?
7. What was ARPANET and what was its goal?
8. How are *Firefox* and *Internet Explorer* commonly called?
9. What do people use them for?
10. What for do you commonly use The Internet? Explain how you regularly use it.