

What Is...a URL (a definition)

<http://web.archive.org/web/20000303215618/www.whatis.com/url.htm>

URL (Uniform Resource Locator)

A URL (Uniform Resource Locator) (pronounced YU-AHR-EHL or, in some quarters, UHRL) is the address of a file (resource) accessible on the Internet. The type of resource depends on the Internet application protocol. Using the World Wide Web's protocol, the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP), the resource can be an HTML page (like the one you're reading), an image file, a program such as a CGI application or Java applet, or any other file supported by HTTP. The URL contains the name of the protocol required to access the resource, a domain name that identifies a specific computer on the Internet, and a hierarchical description of a file location on the computer.

On the Web (which uses the Hypertext Transfer Protocol), an example of a URL is:

```
http://www.mhrcc.org/kingston
```

which describes a Web page to be accessed with an HTTP (Web browser) application that is located on a computer named `www.mhrcc.org`. The specific file is in the directory named `/kingston` and is the default page in that directory (which, on this computer, happens to be named `index.html`).

An HTTP URL can be for any Web page, not just a home page, or any individual file. For example, this URL would bring you the `whatis.com` logo image:

```
http://whatis.com/whatisAnim2.gif
```

A URL for a program such as a forms-handling CGI script written in Perl might look like this:

```
http://whatis.com/cgi-bin/comments.pl
```

A URL for a file meant to be downloaded would require that the "ftp" protocol be specified like this one:

```
ftp://www.somecompany.com/whitepapers/widgets.ps
```

A URL is a type of URI (Uniform Resource Identifier).

Selected Links

▶ The World Wide Web Consortium's Introduction to HTML 4.0 includes a good introduction to URIs and URLs.

Assistance was provided by Jerzy Kardach and David Lam.

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